

artsweek

FILM)) UCSB SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, CATHERINE ZETA-JONES SHOWS HER TUSH IN "ENTRAPMENT" MUSIC)) CD REVIEWS ART)) FOURTEEN THIRTY FOUR SHOPTALK)) THEATER)) WOVEN PREVIEW BRAYN SIRJUNZ REPORT

SACRED HOOP ARE NOT CHRISTIAN RAPPERS.

It's been more than 20 years since Kool Herc rocked parties, introducing a sound that would permanently transform the world's perception of urban culture.

music))

It's been more than 10 years since rhymes first dripped with Jheri-curled juice, only to be partially eclipsed by advocates of consciousness and their visions of overcoming a white society. It's been a while since Vanilla Ice gave white emcees the authenticity of Britney Spear's breasts, and the silhouette of Elvis's spectre looming behind Eminem's popularity is quite recognizable.

However, one must not lose sight of several basic principles. Within every crowd there exist fake marks, coexisting with individuals who are concerned with active participation fueled by pure and untainted motives.

See INTEREST, p.(guess)

a-twice

hip hop elitist



It's an effort of 80-hour weeks, inevitably filled with immense pain, anguish and the usual blood, sweat and tears, but come May 7, the kids in Film Studies 106 will be able to relive their day of glory.

Not to be confused with Reel Loud, Film Studies 106, which is under the instruction of Dana Driskel, is the most advanced of the film production classes at UCSB. This year, four student films were chosen to be made. The entire process actually begins sometime during the summer when prospective students of the class get together to brainstorm, write scripts and revise and rewrite. The primary requirement for this class, it seems, is simply a love of filmmaking, because ultimately it consumes the life of each student involved.

This year's films premiered March 26 to sold-out audiences at Isla Vista Theater and will screen again this Friday. The 19th annual UCSB Short Film Festival is a fund-raising event for which the proceeds are equally divided among the UCSB filmmakers in order to ease the burden of post-production costs as well as provide another opportunity for the public to view the films, which range from an animated project to a pseudo film noir.

"Then Again ..."

"Then Again ...," written and directed by Cody Knox, is about a young woman's journey of finding herself, shedding the identity of friend or girlfriend, and discovering that she doesn't need anyone.

When asked about the filmmaking experience, producer Sara Hill says, "These films are not easy to make. It takes a lot of hard work and patience when working with people, and you never know what is going to happen." Hill continued to say that making this film created an opportunity to learn everything about the film process from cinematography to editing.

"Miss Gentibelle"

"Miss Gentibelle" is a film based upon a short story by "Twilight Zone" writer Charles Beaumont. Director Tara Miele and producer P.K. Eiselt adapted the screenplay of the dark drama that follows the life of a woman who is so hurt by

society and men that she struggles to accept the new man in her life, her son. She ultimately raises him as a little girl. It's an interesting premise and, according to Miele, is "basically a creepy horror story."

The film is full of dead birds and is the only project using two adult professional actors and a 13-year-old boy as the principal characters. As for Miele, the making of this film has been an adventure.

"If you can make a movie with UCSB equipment, you can make a movie anywhere," Miele says. She expresses a sense of

and worst experiences. You put so much into it; time, money and energy. But to see something you actually made on screen is the best feeling, and once the film is on the screen, every problem is gone."

"Shadow of a Drought"

The only animated film project is "Shadow of a Drought," a documentation loosely based on the film "Citizen Kane." Producer Daniel Kutner and director Brian Emerson wanted to make a film that told the history of animation while simultaneously paying homage to "Citizen Kane." The story of "Shadow of a Drought" takes the structure of "Citizen Kane" — the breakdown of a man's life and his fall from glory — according to producer Daniel Kutner. The film is unique in its integration of three mediums: claymation, computer graphics, and traditional ink and paint cell animation.

The film's main character is a mythical dragon named Charley McClaren. He is a friendly dragon with big, bright eyes and is the most loved character of all time, like Mickey Mouse. Kutner says, "We wanted to portray the history of animation, where it's from and where it's going."

The film opens in a postmodern world as the backdrop for a biblical shootout. According to Kutner, "It's the Ten Commandments with tanks."

The filmmaker's and animator's experience with this film has been a labor of love.

"You can't really teach film without giving people the experience of making one, and this is where our production classes come in, such as Film Studies 106," Kutner says. "It's the prestige class."

"Shadow of a Drought" expresses a personal note from the director and producer.

"This film is about finding your place in the world and being comfortable there and not caring about what anybody else thinks."

Words to live by.

All four films, along with an additional, "The Wrath of Suddath," will be shown at Isla Vista Theater, Friday, May 7, at 7 p.m. Tickets are currently on sale at the UCSB Film Studies Dept. For information, call 893-2347.

"the primary requirement for this class is simply a love of filmmaking."

camaraderie that exists between the crews of each film, and highlighted that the Film Dept. is a supportive community throughout the entire process.

"Bob and Betty's Big Bump"

"Bob and Betty's Big Bump," written and directed by Jared Pfeifer, focuses on two 20-somethings looking for love in the want ads. Producer Joy Kuraitis has experienced many a sleepless night these past two quarters along with her devoted crew.

Despite this lack of sleep, she says, "Overall this has been a really good experience, to learn about film by actually doing it. It's a good way to get a comprehensive understanding about film, from conception to distribution."

Has this been a worthwhile experience for these filmmakers? Kuraitis says, "Making this film has been one of the best

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PIGMENTS OF THE ELITE

ART STUDIO GRAD STUDENTS BRING THEIR WORKS TO GALLERY¹⁴³⁴

artistic groupie tami mnoian

Four painters and one image maker will be the first group of art studio graduate students to show in Gallery 1434 next week. I wish I'd had a tape recorder on hand while chatting with these five exceptional artists, as conversation proved interesting and proceeded at a pace faster than I could write.

I had the rare opportunity to preview each artist's work, promising to be the gallery's best ensemble show yet. However, my time was brief, and unfortunately I must resort to brief snippets of what I saw — a kind of laundry list if you will — in hopes of sparking your curiosity and urging you to see for yourself.

According to Sherra Giffin-Murphy, all five artists "operate somewhere in the realm of painting," and this is their

common thread, their only thread. Giffin-Murphy's works are large canvas paintings with unusual images and bright, yet personal colors. When asked about these pieces, she said, "They are odd figures that I manufacture, locked into relationships, uncomfortable but compelling."

Tiffany Chung paints white handkerchiefs and pieces them together, creating a kind of patchwork in her installations. She creates a larger canvas with these smaller, individual works, and her colors are just plain fun. Heidi Hafmeister has created a piece tailored to the space using an actual gallery wall.

Mark J. Mulrone uses images of dogs as the main theme for his work. They are like wooden puzzles pieced together

and painted. It's interesting wall art with a certain marketable quality.

The work of Dimitri Kozyrev is simply based on himself. He is the subject and object of his paintings. Is this ultimate vanity? Probably, and we at *Artsweek* commend this noble and artistic venture.

The work of these artists opens in Gallery 1434, May 11. Also, Friday, May 21, all 10 graduate students will host an open house at Harder Stadium, in the graduate studios, from 7-9 p.m. Yeah, who knew the Art Dept. had studios next door to the women's soccer office?

Stay tuned for the second installment of the next batch of art studio grad students.

INTEREST

Continued from p.1A

The latter-mentioned are not afraid to infuse authentic reflections of their personality into their art, creating a synthesis of two seemingly conflicting realities that manage to harmonize in a stable manner. In other words, muhfuckers need not fake the funk.

Which brings me to the introduction of Sacred Hoop, for these cats are far from perpetuating intolerable fabrication. In fact, these muhphukkers are crazy. I remember the last time I talked to these Bay Area veterans, they were featured guests on my KCSB radio show. Providing hilarious commentaries ranging from creative glue sniffing to wacky TV trivia, I engaged in uncontrollable laughter as the program was dominated by their onslaught of nihilistic humor.

In the hip hop world, underground cats such as Sacred Hoop may still be barely shining, as they are just beginning to garner acclaimed recognition from fellow peers. But if you ask members Vrse Murphy (beat maker), Luke Sick (rhymes) and DJ Marz (cuts and quirky sound effects) of the Space Travellers, they'll tell you that they don't give a phukk. Sacred Hoop is set to being themselves and infusing their personalities with hip hop to create a carnival of nihilism and Generation-X sensibilities. If it means not aligning with "traditional," purist notions of hip hop, then phukkk it. By the way, did I mention that the shit is dope?

After numerous excursions into the game of phone tag, Luke Sick and I talked about various subjects, ranging from Sacred Hoop's latest album, drug use and punk rock. Peep the following ...

Artsweek: First, I'm going to run off the basic generic questions and afterward it'll be a kind of free format. First, where are you all from?

Luke Sick: Palo Alto, that's where we're pretty much based out of, but Vrse is from Phoenix, and Marz is actually from Milbrae.

So if Vrse is from Arizona and Marz is from Milbrae, how did you all meet?

I met Vrse out in Arizona, I was going to college for a while at the University of Santa Clara, and I had some pretty poor grades, so they kicked me out and I left; I just jumped on the road. I went out there with my buddy Fun Douglas, who is a deejay on our first two tapes, and he knew Vrse was making beats so we hooked up in Tucson, Ariz. And I think a year later we regrouped out here. But Vrse doesn't usually stay out here, he's usually in Phoenix or on the road mostly. And then we just met Marz through DJ Kwest from the Space Travellers and Live Humans. Marz was in the Space Travellers.

If Vrse is in Arizona most of the time or he's traveling not usually up in the Bay, how do you all collaborate and get together and do music?

We get together, like he'll come into town for a month, or I'll go out to Arizona, or we'll meet in a cabin somewhere. We get together in spurts and work really hard, especially when we didn't have any money we'd work our jobs, get enough money, get together, do the preproduction in the house. Like *Retired* was totally done in our house. But the way we did this new shit that's coming out, and then we just get it all tight, everyone quits their jobs and takes like a month off, get the preproduction done really tight so we don't waste any time once we get in the studio. We've been going to Matt Kelly up at Haight Street. He does a lot of the Hieroglyphics stuff. He does some projects with George Clinton and some other stuff.

One thing I noticed is your music is a combination of beats that lean towards more of an East Coast sensibility with vocal styles that have a Bay Area feel.

East Coast. As far as the beats, that's because we're in the older age group when we were listening to music, it first came from there so I think we really got into that as much. I've always had respect for West Coast groups most, but when you think of what hip hop is to me, it seems like most of the hip hop groups are from the East Coast.

Stay tuned for next week, when the second part of the Sacred Hoop interview runs.

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"When I see Flex / I'ma ask him why he's playing records from a bunch of homos"

— Kool Keith AKA Dr. Doom

... on Billy the Saucy Hobo, part 1

"Mmmmm, what a night," I thought. Who knew that after hours of "reading at Java Jones" (AKA bullshittin' or sleeping), I would almost get mobbed on by a forty-chugging Vietnam vet with knee pains and cancer. Well, not quite mobbed on. In fact, it all started when Billy, the gentleman being mentioned, stated that he used to be a boxer. After a wise-assed heckle from Trey's homie, Billy the Saucy Hobo growled, "What? You wanna fight?" He staggered as he raised both trembling hands in a boxing formation. Hastily reassuring him about our nonviolent nature, we had him calm down.

"I drink eeevvery day, you know that? Every day! I've killed a guy in New Orleans!" he slurred.

"Word? Damn, you're a 'G', a straight loc, huh?"

"Whuut? Lo ... huh?!"

... on gladiating white emcees

Here's a little something about beef between rappers. Of course, battling is old news, but here's a new breed: gladiating white emcees. I'm sure by now that everybody knows Eminem wants to "tie a rope around his penis and then jump off a tree." However, did y'all know that *Insane Clown Posse*, the group of silly fools from Detroit that make white rappers look worse and worse, recorded an Eminem diss track? On top of that, underground enigma *Cage* spit a verse to shit on Slim Shady as well. (Check "And So Kiddies ..." by DJ Eli and Shan Boog.)

Don't forget about *Milkbone*, now currently signed to Death Records, who recorded an Eminem diss track for the upcoming "Chronic 2000: Still Smokin'." Hold your breath though; before we let our shining icons kill each other, also entering the fray is El-P (of *Company Flow*) and Sole (of *Deep Puddle Dynamics* and *Anticon*). In response to Sole's scathing "Dear Elpee," (we can have a contest to see who's the biggest wigger / oops, you win again), El-P has released a track on the Internet called "Linda Tripp." In the most unprecedented move in the history of emcee battling, the track utilizes snippets of a phone conversation, which El-P recorded, in which Sole can be heard saying "I love *Company Flow*" and "I wanna be down" for the hook.

... on Billy the Saucy Hobo, part 2

"... FOONDUUUU? DID YOU SAY, 'FOND-DUUUU?'" Billy's red face burst with rage and perspiration as he responded to my question. I should've known better than to

ask a drunk Vietnam vet whether or not he liked Jane Fonda. "That bith! She's ah, ah, phluckking leth-bian communisth!!!" After asking him whether or not he thought *Barbarella* (Jane Fonda's cheesy heroine from the cult movie "Barbarella") had dope titties, he instantaneously screamed, "FOOOONDD-DUUUU?!" as a sudden moment of murderous clarity glared beyond his stagnant drunken stupor. "Hey now, hey now," I calmly mentioned, "don't knock cheese fondu, it tastes dope."

I'm pretty sure a penis the size of the Mother bug from "Starship Troopers" can't hold the ego that *Robbie Williams* has. That's right, I'm talking about the former singer from *Take That*, the UK's definitive pretty-boy group. Armed with an arsenal of talent and hot producers such as Erik Sermon, Vance Wright, Babyface, DJ Kiilu, Yanni, Mumbles and El-P, this singin' assed Brit is poised to take the underground AND commercial realm by storm. His singing is so crytalyzed, purified and powerful, it's, like, like, magic ...

Just kidding, marks.

... on upcoming hip hop

Here we go again with some industry insider info. For all *De La Soul* heads, never fear; the projected release for a *De La Soul* (that's right, *TRES*) album is tenatively listed for next winter. Will they be the first hip hop group to make multi-disc albums work?

Folks who come into my work (*Morninglory Music*, *Isla Vista*) to ask me about the new *Mobb Deep* album, never fear; here's information about the release date that should stop your inquiries. "Murda Muzik," *Mobb Deep*'s fourth album, has been pushed back to August. There you go, and don't ask me about it again.

Phife Dawg is scheduled to release a solo album titled "The Return of Muddy Ranks," which is currently accompanied by a tour with *Defari* and *Tash*. *Q-Tip*, on the other hand, has signed an album deal with *Arista*. I dunno, y'all, *Phife* going solo may be as dope as hearing *Vinnie* from *Naughty By Nature* going solo. As for *Q-Tip*'s solo joint? Won't it be like another *Tribe Called Quest* album?

The *GZA/Genius* has an album titled *Beneath The Surface*, which might be released before *Inspecta Deck*'s upcoming album, *Uncontrolled Substance*.

... on upcoming hip hop performances

Despite the flack from the police, gigantic L.A. raves seem to keep poppin' off. That's right, y'all, I'm talking about May 29, L.A. Colosseum. Not only is it featuring drum 'n' bass and techno star deejays en masse, the hip hop room's stellar lineup should blow muhfuckers away: *Brand Nubian*, *Run-DMC*, *Mixmaster Mike*, *DJ Q-Bert*, *Xecutioners* and *DJ Spooky*,

'nuff said. Better get some information and buy tickets beforehand, y'all, and bring plenty of glue to sniff.

Speaking of events, lets not forget the upcoming saucy event before the school year ends: *The Seventh Seal*, featuring *Souls of Mischief* at the Yucatan, May 27. All y'all Hieroglyphics pants can stop hyperventilating now.

... on Nas

I'm pretty sure it ain't no mystery by now that *Nas* is officially boring, but did his manager have to get beat down by *Puffy* for it? That's right, the cat that only wanted to make you dance earned his first "keepin' it real" points by having *Steve Stout*

"Nas is officially boring"

(*Nas*'s manager) catch a bad one. Supposedly this is in regards to a piece of footage in the video, which depicted *Puffy* on a crucifix. That upset *Puff*, so off he commenced to whoride hip hop style. C'mon yo, I understand all the stress in regards to the video for "Hate Me Now." After all, both *Puff* and *Nas* were seen on the set chased by the tigers used in the video. That would be some funny shit, seeing both acclaimed rap icons screaming, "OH SHIT OH SHIT, FUCK, OH SHIT, IT'S GONNA BITE MY ASS!"

... on Billy the Saucy Hobo, part 3

While standing on the corner of *Freebirds* listening to Billy, the drunk who seems to have climbed *Jacob's Ladder*, the sound of an automobile passed behind me. As we faced the direction, we noticed a police car, driving off toward *Del Playa*.

"Damn cops," Billy uttered, "they can, k, k, kiss my redneck ass."

As a grin slowly crept upon my face, I calmly said, "They can kiss my black ass, too."

Billy slowly turned to me, and after moments of contemplation burst out into gleeful laughter. "Heh heh heh, yeah, heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh ha ha heh. Buurrrp." It was a moment of clarity and cross-generation understanding. "... Jane Fonda."

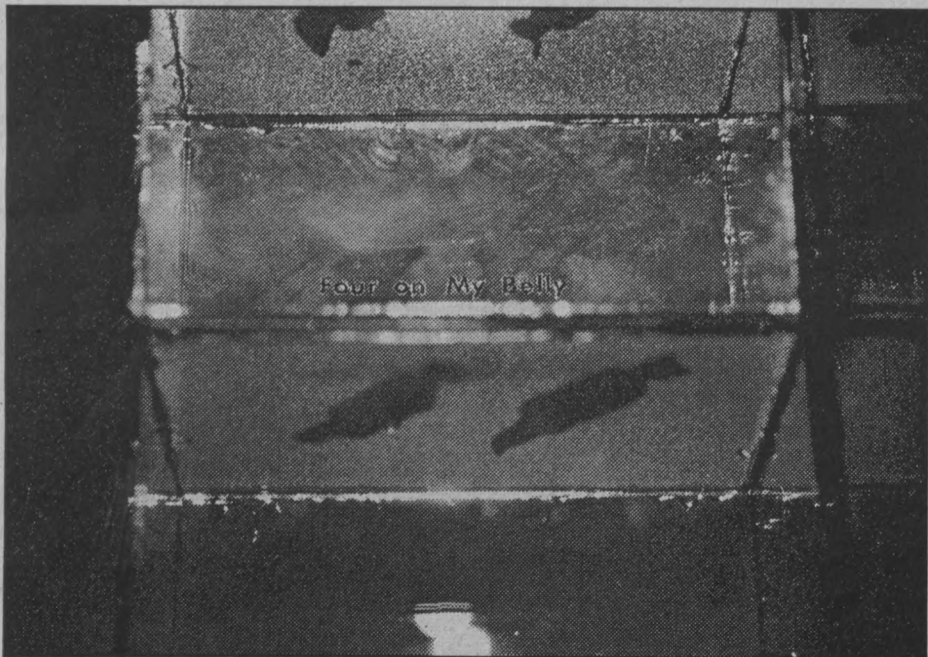
"FOOOONDDDDUUUUUU?!"

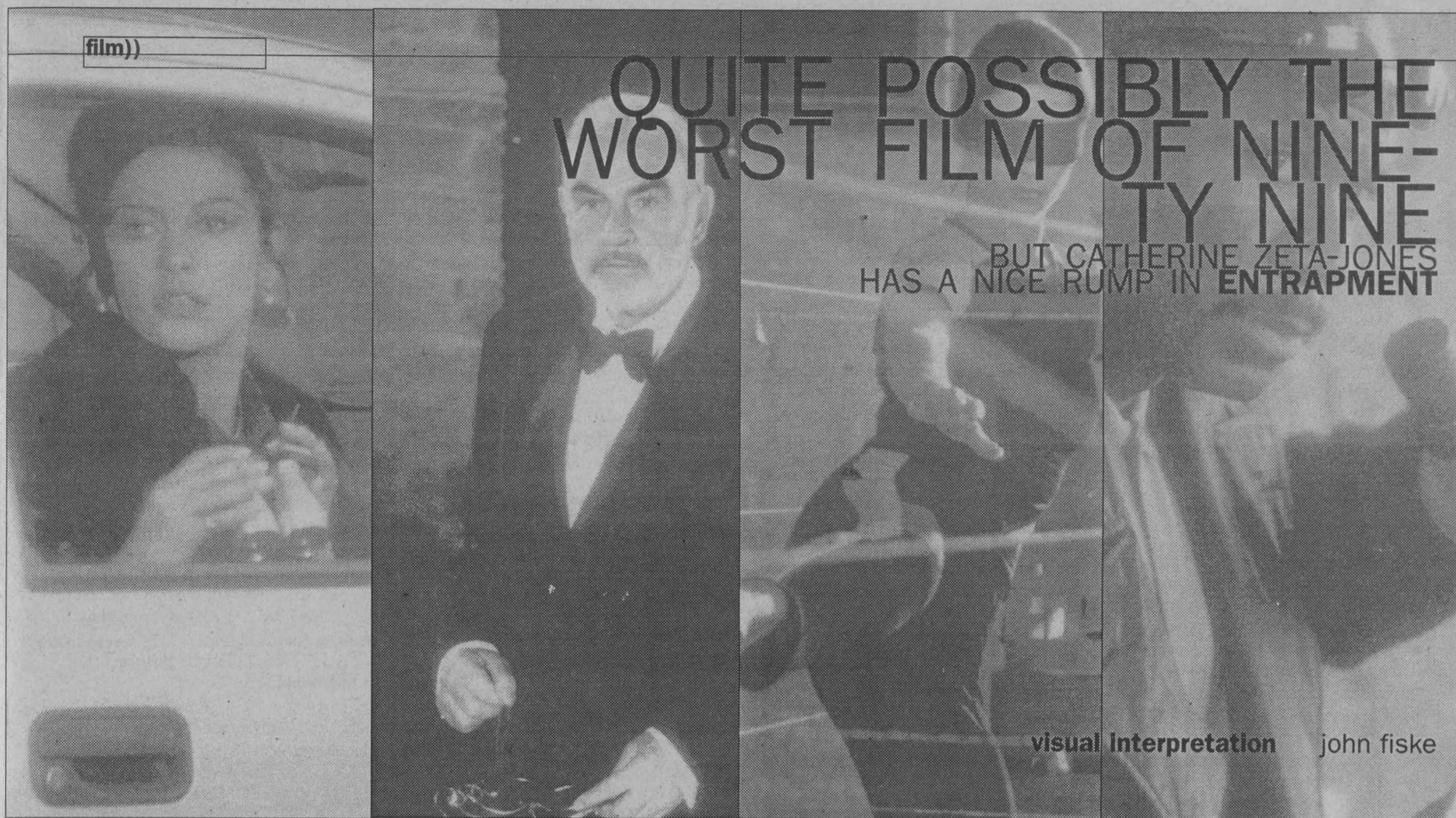
"I'm just playing man, just playing ..."

For everyone who thinks *A-Twice* is just negative, check out his hip hop show, *Subway Tales*, Sunday nights at 10 p.m., *KCSB 91.9 FM*.

art)) ongoing at gallery¹⁴³⁴

snaphocked jason schock





The title sequence for "Entrapment" begins with the word "trap," with the "en" and the "ment" fading in to flank it. It's perfect — the whole film seems to be made for someone who needs a three-syllable word sounded out to them.

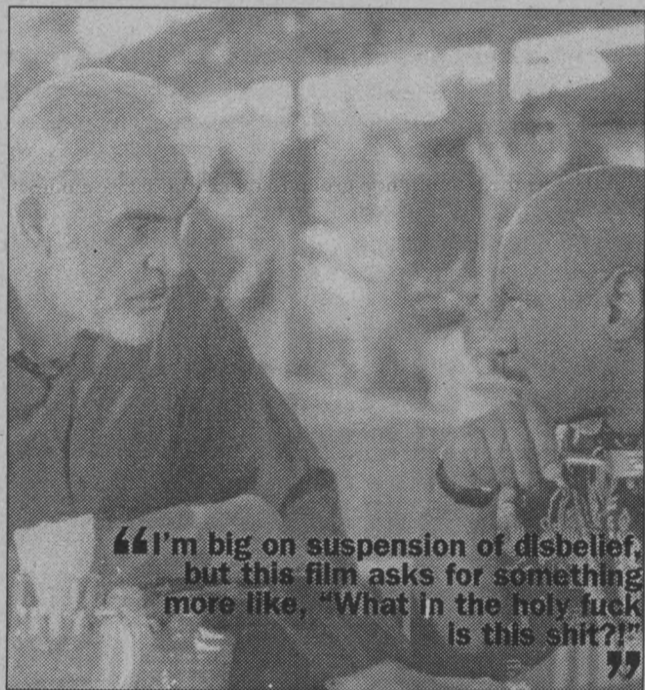
Envisioned as one of those great romantic caper films from the past, like "To Catch a Thief" or "The Thomas Crown Affair," "Entrapment" is a film that rests on the charisma and the chemistry of its two stars, Sean Connery and Catherine Zeta-Jones. Unfortunately, their chemistry runs lukewarm, like Julia Roberts and Nick Nolte in "I Love Trouble," instead of steamy like George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez in last year's wonderful film, "Out of Sight." Most of this comes from the makers' misunderstanding of what the wit is. For that, I refer you to the writings of Stan Brakhage (if you even know who that is), because for "Entrapment" it's merely timeworn clichés rewritten as double entendres.

We begin with a mysterious and expert robbery of a Rembrandt painting from a New York high rise. Gin (Zeta-Jones), an insurance investigator, thinks she knows who's behind it: an ace thief known as Mac (Connery). So what does she do to catch him? She joins him, of course. Naturally, when you're trying to get a criminal in the act you join them in the crime, right? In any case, Gin partners up with him to steal a priceless gold mask for private collector Conrad Greene (Maury Chaykin, doing God knows what in his role). And now that she has the mask and they have both decided to screw each other over (she's really a master thief herself, playing both sides against the middle), what do they do? They decide to work together again to steal \$8 billion from a company in Kuala Lumpur with a day and a half of preparation. Right.

One of "Entrapment's" biggest drawbacks is its plausibility. I'm big on suspension of disbelief, but this film asks for something more like suspension of "What in the holy fuck is this shit?" It also lacks a level of verisimilitude with all of its break-ins. The technology used by Mac and Gin is never really explained the way it should be, instead it's just all this flashy stuff with lights and gears, like old school "Star Trek." "Entrapment" could have used the lived-in feel of Michael Mann's heist films — "Thief," with James Cann, and his masterpiece "Heat" from a

couple years back. This seems to be much of what the film is about. Nobody really understands what it is. Nobody can explain it. But, shit, it looks really cool.

There are a lot of unimaginably dumb moments in the film as well. At one point another insurance investigator pulls a gun



during an FBI bust, as if they're issued weapons. And the major crux of Gin's plan revolves around a 30-second window when systems shut down due to the Y2K problem. But she needs another 10 seconds to download the money. So how does she do this? She has a machine that tricks the system's computers into slowing down 1/10 of a second for every minute for the entire hour before the millennium changes. Meanwhile I'm thinking in my head, 1/10 of a second for every minute for one hour only gets you six seconds, not 10.

John Amiel's direction is way below standard. He has no flair for the action sequences, which are edited together like a music video. We're not talking art, but Brian DePalma's CIA break-in from "Mission: Impossible" was great because it didn't stylize Tom Cruise's silent descent from the ventilation shaft — it racked your nerves by forcing you to pay attention to how quiet you needed to be. But what's Amiel going for here?

To his credit he makes time for two motifs — fetishizing Zeta-Jones' ass through every fabric imaginable and finding a way to waste actors like Chaykin, Will Patton and Ving Rhames — and anyone who can make either of those uninteresting is in serious trouble. He's done the latter before, misusing Bill Pullman in "Somersby" and Patton and Dermot Mulroney in "Copycat."

Something should also be said about Ron Bass, the co-writer and one of the executive producers. For a long time now he's been one of the preeminent writers in Hollywood, making some of its best work, from "My Best Friend's Wedding" to "When a Man Loves a Woman" to "Rain Man" (for which he won an Oscar). But if he has his on days, he certainly has his off, like "How Stella Got Her Groove Back," his preposterous dialogue for "What Dreams May Come," and now "Entrapment." This time his characters, usually his strong suit, are distilled to caricatures too stupid to understand the plot they're in, let alone manipulate it. Does anybody think a company will just not notice a billion dollars missing?

And at the center of the film is a relationship that doesn't hold up under any scrutiny. I mean, seriously, Connery and Zeta-Jones, without anyone even hinting that Mac looks like a struck match? The makers almost get one sequence right, Mac watching Gin practice dodging laser beams in a training room, to the sound of Gin's strained breathing. But it also is overdone to the point of absurdity, with Connery made to give one of those aw-shucks-Charlie-Brown looks, when he knows he'll end up with her at the end.

It's hard to bash a film this hard without seeming bitter or hyperbolic. But just think of it this way: good work attracts like. "Entrapment" shows the antithesis works just as well.

theater))

PASTICHE MAKES THE PERFORMANCE

A PREVIEW FOR UPCOMING **WOVEN**

textual analysis brett richardson

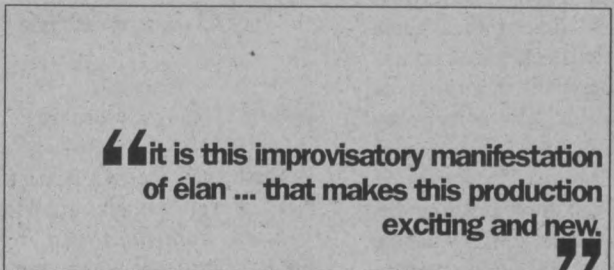
Pastiche: an ensemble bringing together various ideas to form a sum greater than the parts. This French word so carefully usurped by the "American" language typifies our society — an amalgam of all peoples, languages and cultures from everywhere creating a melting pot, to coin a passé phrase.

This is the essence of "Woven," a 2- to 3-hour conglomeration of theater, music, movement, acting and rivalry created by UCSB graduate Noah Harpster. This self-titled "box-office guy" at Center Stage Theater by day doubles by night as director and performer of this new brand of theater for a "new generation of theater-goers."

In the director's own words, "Woven" has emerged out of an intense workshop where the 12- to 20-something cast members, a fresh, eager and very talented bunch, have created their own music, movement and dialogue combining for an unforgettable evening, live band and all.

Although this production is still generically referred to as

"theater," it belongs to a new genre. It consists of a playlist, similar to that of a musician's setlist. The ensemble cast has assembled several vignette-like pieces of theater, connected



thematically via live original music, all of which can be rearranged at the drop of a hat.

It is this improvisatory manifestation of élan and the daz-

zling repartee of the multitalented cast that makes this production exciting and new. In short, said cast will improvise transitions between pieces, meaning the show is never the same.

Therefore, the atmosphere, or ambience, as it were, is of the utmost importance. The seating, which consists of couches, rugs and beanbags, is on a first-come, first-serve basis. There will be free beer during the pre-party, which begins at 6:30 p.m., a carnival type interval, and a post-party each night. It should prove to be an absolutely fantastic evening.

"Woven" has two performances at Center Stage Theater on May 8 and 9, the pre-party beginning at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For more information, call 963-0408.



nine inch nails. fragile

nine inch nails / fragile / nothing

It's finally here! Five years of waiting has come to end, and not a moment too soon. Trent Reznor has returned and, as predicted, might just save the music industry from its most desperate slump to date.

Fragile is everything it has been touted to be: an epic, a classic, a breakthrough. The two-disk set works a little like *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, the first disk is titled "Fallen Within" and the second is aptly titled "Fallen Under." "Fallen Within" contains the majority of the lyrical material, while "Fallen Under" includes a lengthy instrumental piece "Myst," a cover of "Gimme Shelter," "Personal Jesus" and, believe it or not, a version Ani DiFranco's "In or Out" that you will have to hear to believe.

"Fallen Under" is a simply amazing piece of work that will undoubtedly ascend, in many people's minds, to the stature of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and The Beatles' *White* album. Songs such as "Felt Myself Slipping," "Too Close" and "Cut Away" display the type of simplistic and sparse arrangements that set this album apart from anything Reznor has done in the past. One can't help but be overwhelmed by lyrics like *You saw so far into me/ still you stayed when all there was black*, set against a single, ingeniously simple synth line. Reznor also brings his vocals completely to the top of an already-sparse mix, creating the kind of naked, gushing, soul-bearing music that he has only ever hinted at making.

Thematically, *fragile* picks up right after "Hurt," the last track of 1994's *the downward spiral*. Hope vs. desperation is the new theme with which Reznor is obsessed. However, he manages to offer a way out of his token theme of desperation without sounding cheesy or judgmental. Reznor may have finally found his "happy place."

1999 will, without question, be known for exactly two things: Skywalker and Reznor. There couldn't be a better way to close out a millennium.

This is complete bullshit. There will be a new nine inch nails album released someday, but not when I'm going to be writing here, and I'm just a little bitter about it so I'm sharing my anger and pain with everyone else ... hmmm ... actually Trent might be sort of proud.

— R

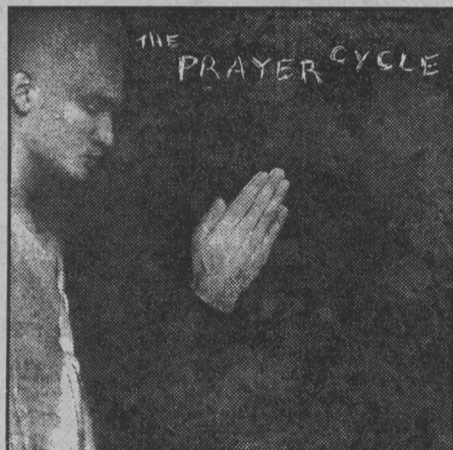
Jonathan Elias / *The Prayer Cycle* / Sony Classical

Stress is an ugly foe. As some well-documented cases show, it has led people into formidable bouts of delirious insanity, often causing them to commit gruesome crimes involving (but not limited to) a certain barnyard animal and some really bored gas-station clerks. And of course you wouldn't want to join the long line of the terminally insane even though it looks like a viable option at the moment, would you? Then kick back, turn down the lights and surrender to the beauty that is Jonathan Elias' *The Prayer Cycle*.

Entirely choral (well, almost, there are a few instrumental solos here and there), this work moves through nine movements that

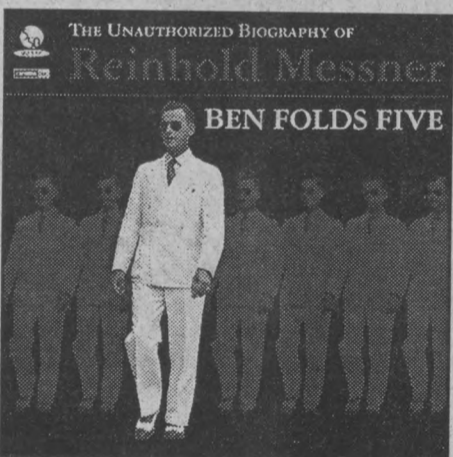
also happen to be biblical themes such as hope and strength. In order to pull the whole thing off, conductor and writer Jonathon Elias enlisted the help of several notables such as James Taylor, Perry Farrell (of Porno for Pyros), Alanis Morissette and Musrat Fatch Ali Kahn. Incidentally, this record showcases the last musical endeavors of Kahn, who passed on shortly before the completion of this project. Although some would turn tail at the mention of Alanis Morissette, her trademark whine is surprisingly absent on this recording, thus assuring the listener that none of their sacred coolness quotient will be lost.

What you get is a tangible collage of solemn, sonorous voices. Instead of the usual bombardment of religious nuggets o' wisdom, the emptiness and breadth of emotions



that issue forth from the speakers confide this sense of darkness that no religious record would dare touch. Instead of dwelling in the dark elements, à la the Smashing Pumpkins, *The Prayer Cycle* takes it, examines it and then blows it away, as if it never really existed. All the while, gently removing it like a well-practiced surgeon removes a brain tumor from a sedated patient. In this case, the tumor can be anything you want it to be, whether it be stress, depression or the anguish you get from being bombarded by your roommate's Eminem CD a few too many times. *The Prayer Cycle* is pure therapy at best. And for about 15 bucks, it sure beats paying to sit on some shrink's couch.

— Matt Sweetland



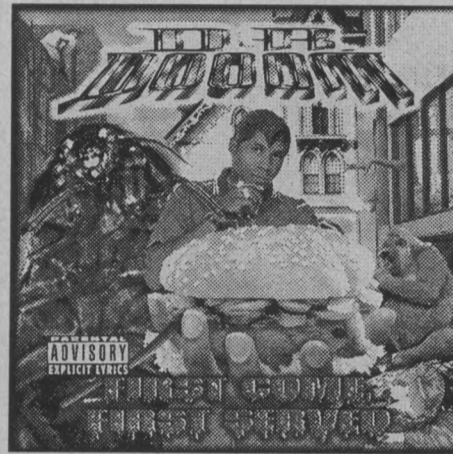
Ben Folds Five / *The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner* / Epic

Ben Folds Five is not your typical rock group, and their latest album *The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner* sounds like a mixture of Jeff Buckley and Elliot Smith gone awry in a happy-go-lucky sort of way. In a satirically introspective manner, Ben Folds pokes fun at what is possibly the biography of his existence. Suffice it to say, the stripped-down sounds of their three-instrument lineup have been jazzed up with allusions to rock opera, yet this album remains purely Ben Folds. The comedy and bubble-gum rock element remain. Imagine, if you will, the opening to a '70s sitcom like "Bosom Buddies," and now imagine Ben Folds composing its theme. This is what distinguishes *Reinhold Messner* from previous albums.

Light pop sounds intermingled with heavy instrumentation give us a quirky look at life and the relationships we have with

others. Radio friendly songs like "Army," keep with the introspective theme of this album, yet ultimately fail to represent what *Reinhold Messner* encompasses. Ben Folds presents a concept album that looks inward in a self-analytical, Woody Allen kind of way. It is an attempt at maturity and another step forward in the evolution of Ben Folds.

— Tami Mnoian and Merrari Abdiani wrote this together after a fabulous lunch yesterday



Dr. Doom / *First Come, First Served* / Funky Ass

Oh my goodness gracious. Kool Keith is back after a relatively long absence from full-length releases, this time under the alias Dr. Doom. Doom is kind of a combination of the hardness of the Ultra *Big Time* album and the belligerence of *Sex Style*. Yeah, Keith is coming correct on this one, as the following evidence will show.

Exhibit One: The No Limit cover that isn't. At first glance, *First Come, First Served* looks like it was designed by Master P(rick), with its obviously fake graphics and loud orange lining. Upon closer inspection, you see that it's not No Limit style at all. There are no cutout big booty hos, cars or pit bulls. It's simply a deranged picture of Keith with a mouseburger (there is actually a mouse in the middle of the burger) surrounded by animals and broken-down apartment buildings. I laughed my ass off when I saw a guy pick it up along with his copy of Silk's *Made Men*.

Exhibit Two: The insane style that only Kool Keith can get away with. Let's see Too \$hort try to do a chorus like, *I'm the man of the hour watchin' girls takin' a shower / I run rap, tell emcees to watch their back*. Notice he said "emcees", not "wack emcees." Keith doesn't care if you're dope or wack; you're below him either way. He's not scared to call people out directly either, just check the diss to Mr. Escobar on "No Chorus." I bet Nas regrets ever watching "Casino" after that one. Then there are the spiritual releases on songs like "Neighbors Next Door," with the uplifting chorus *We the neighbors next door down on the next floor / Sorry 'bout the noise last night*. Wow, that's deep.

Exhibit Three: The hidden track, now taken for granted with Kool Keith albums. This time around, the subject is Keith's fetish for bald women. Take the wig off, ladies, Kool Keith is single!

As if all this wasn't enough, *First Come, First Served* can even make the listener feel like a topnotch lawyer. Look what it did for me, this review just got me accepted at Harvard Law School.

— Trey Clark is transferring, beeyatch!

Nas / *I Am ...* / Columbia

Track one, "Intro": After a nice mix of Nas's previous singles showing his fall to wackness from *Illmatic* to *It Was Written*, Nas's thugged-out homies rant and rave about how ignorant they are. Pointless introduction.

Track two, "NY State of Mind Part 2": This is a decent attempt to recapture the feel

of *Illmatic*. I like the first one better, but this is pretty good.

Track three, "Hate Me Now" featuring Puff Daddy: I actually kinda like this. The beat is nice and Nas makes a good argument, saying that the reason people hate him is because he is successful. Puff makes a total fool out of himself on the chorus, screaming, *I got millions of thugs on salary! Sure you do ...*

Track four, "Small World": Nas spits some half-assed, "conscious" rhymes over a wack beat.

Track five, "Favor for a Favor" feat. Scarface: ignorance in its purest form. The "NY-Texas Connection" talks about how they will kill each others' enemies as a favor. Why don't they just each kill their own enemies?

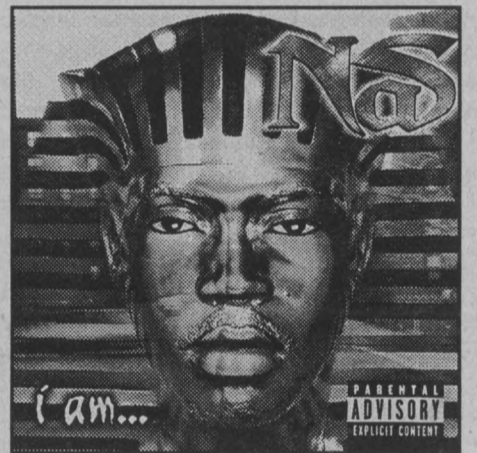
Track six, "We Will Survive": an ode to Biggie and 2Pac. Decent lyrics ruined by an awful sample.

Track seven, "Ghetto Prisoners": See "Small World."

Track eight, "You Won't See Me Tonight" feat. Aaliyah and Timbaland's interjections: terrible. Skip it.

Track nine, "I Want to Talk to You": See "Small World" and "Ghetto Prisoners." Skip it.

Track 10, "Dr. Knockboot": sex advice over a booty beat. I'd rather read *Details* ma-



gazine. Skip it.

Track 11, "Life is What You Make It" feat. DMX: Skip.

Track 12, "Big Things": Nas does his best BONE impression. *SKIP!!*

Track 13, "Nas is Like": Nas shows that he still has the ability to be dope, although most of the time he chooses not to.

Track 14, "K-I-SS-I-N-G": a poorly thought-out tale of Nas's dream woman. Wait at least 30 minutes after listening to the chorus before riding any upside-down roller coasters.

Track 15, "Money is My Bitch": better than you would expect. Nas raps about how he fell in love with money and admits he is pussy whipped. Surprisingly honest.

Track 16, "Undying Love": If only this song had a better beat. Nas tells a chilling story that ends in tragedy. If Nas would have made more songs like this and "Nas is Like" then the album would have been much better. Woulda, shoulda, coulda ...

— Trey Clark hopes Nas doesn't have a Santa Barbara connection who owes him a favor

LootPack / *Soundpieces* / Stones Throw

While listening to this album by Oxnard's own LootPack, I can't help but think, "Wow ... these cats are gonna blow the fuck up." As peculiar as it seems, it still hasn't registered to me that the trio of Madlib, DJ Romes and Wildchild are on the verge of achieving prominent underground status. Eventually, they may be able to break through underground status. Their 12-inch singles, "The Anthem / Lost Art / Likwit Fusion" and "Whenimondamic" are already overseas underground favorites. Whenever running into headz that proclaim to love the LootPack, I think, "Man, shit changes. We're talking about the same cats that used to come through my show to freestyle, play new shit, joke around and talk shit. I see Madlib kick-

soundstyle



ing it at Zelo's and Alex's all the time." When the folks you see and talk to are highlighted in several different magazines, radio shows and concerts, it is a surreal experience at a minimal level.

Fuck it though, these cats deserve to get their props. "Soundpieces," their first full length on Stones Throw records, establishes them as a unique entity in the underground. As affiliates of the ever-so-expanding Likwit crew (which includes The Alkaholiks, Defari, Declaime and Dilated Peoples, who are also featured on the album), producer Madlib avoids recycling the steez of their predecessors with innovative sample use and catchy rhythms. All 23 tracks radiate with an original feel that is sure to establish itself as the LP's signature sound. The rhymes are simple and one-dimensional at times. However, Wildchild and Madlib's voices and styles compliment the production accurately, as they skillfully bounce around tracks with the confidence of a young Muhammad Ali, taking jabs at the contemporary industry and wack emcees. Most importantly, their honesty and love for true hip hop culture radiates brightly like a firefly on a clear night. "B-boy style / B-boy style / B-boy style ..."

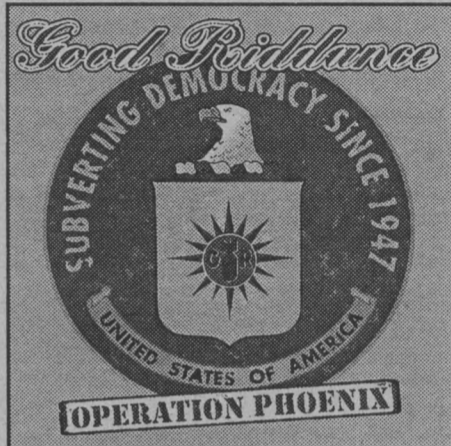
— A-Twice is John Blaze, son, John Blaze!

Good Riddance / Operation Phoenix / Fat Wreck Chords

It has a long while since I picked up some Good Riddance. I admit I have been trapped in the endless stream of poppy songs about girls. However, I can repent; I have hope and all of you (1 or 2?) will read my confession.

Yeah right. Anyway, proceeding along, the Santa Cruz quartet comes at us with a new album designed to shake the moral

foundations of your beliefs. One of the first things to note before even listening to the album is that a portion of the sales of this album go to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). They also include a recommendation for reading about veganism. I won't talk about how I do not like veganism and vegetarianism or how much I dislike organizations to start with. Besides, I just said it all, so there.



Like typical Good Riddance, the songs on Operation Phoenix won't discuss the pretty side of America. The song "Article IV" talks about the Vietnam War and the views of the government upon civil protest. They also discuss capitalism and the hidden corporate greed in charitable causes. Of course, I could be totally wrong and they could be talking about your mom, but that is just my interpretation.

This album is pretty good and is straight punk. It sounds a lot like Sick Of It All and, surprise, that is the first band they thank on the back of the CD. If you are a fan of For God And My Country (an earlier Good Riddance album) you will be missing the lead riffs and singy choruses. However, I would

still check this one out, and get ready to have your moral rug snatched from beneath you.

— Dan Villain wants to play in a band, too!



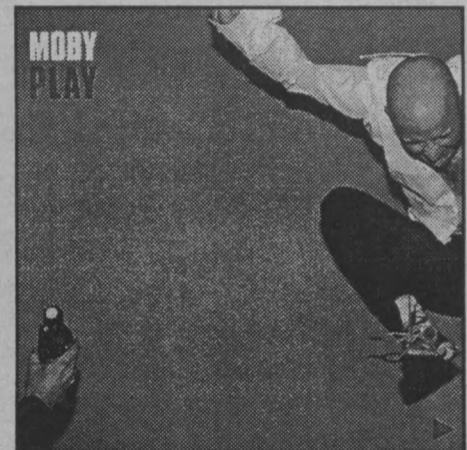
Funky Green Dogs / Star / TWISTED

Blasting back into clubland comes the Funky Green Dogs with their sophomore album Star. Under the remix moniker The Murk Boys, producers Oscar Gaetan and Ralph Falcon have enjoyed considerable success. But it was as the Funky Green Dogs that this dynamic duo, joined by vocalist Tamara, did house music a favor. Their debut album Get Fired Up! wielded the smash hits "Fired Up" and "The Way," and Star is apt to follow suit.

Take the first single, "Body," for instance. With its summertime disco vibe, "Body" is a testament to the improved musicality with which Falcon and Gaetan imbued Star. The track's same groove-infused feel is captured in cuts like "Won't Stop Loving You," "Keep Walking" and "It's Over." The Funky Green

Dogs retain their underground integrity on tribal-spiked tracks like "Tomorrow" and "Discotek," while the insouciant down-tempo ditty "Just A Little Luck" simply must be released as a future single. The Club 69 Future Mix of "Body" is also included, and its orgasmic tribal percussion patterns make it irresistible turntable material. The lack of any vibrant salsa sounds — characteristic of The Murk Boys' work — is Star's only flaw; let us hope this is remedied in the album's remixes. Otherwise, the Funky Green Dogs insist you get your "Body" out on the dance floor and m*o*v*e.

— dj mix n magic hosts the ever-pulsating "Put Your Dance On!" on 91.9 FM, Tuesdays at 10 p.m.



Moby / Play / V2

Moby used to fun, but this just plain sucks. It is in no way enjoyable and if you ever liked Moby, this will simply ruin it for you.

— Art Decco

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ASPB & BSU Present

ASPB & BSU Present

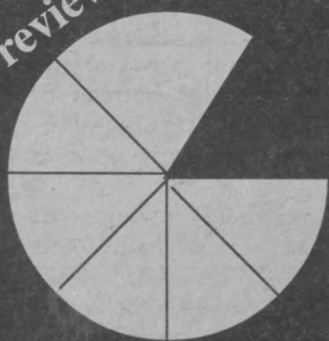
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