

ARTS

week

june 24 - june 30

The arts and entertainment section of the Daily Nexus

INSIDE:

Batman: more than hype

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Faith No More is drugs

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SYLLABUS:

Thursday, June 25

•Fried Green Tomatoes, UCSB Campbell Hall, 8p.m.

Saturday, June 27

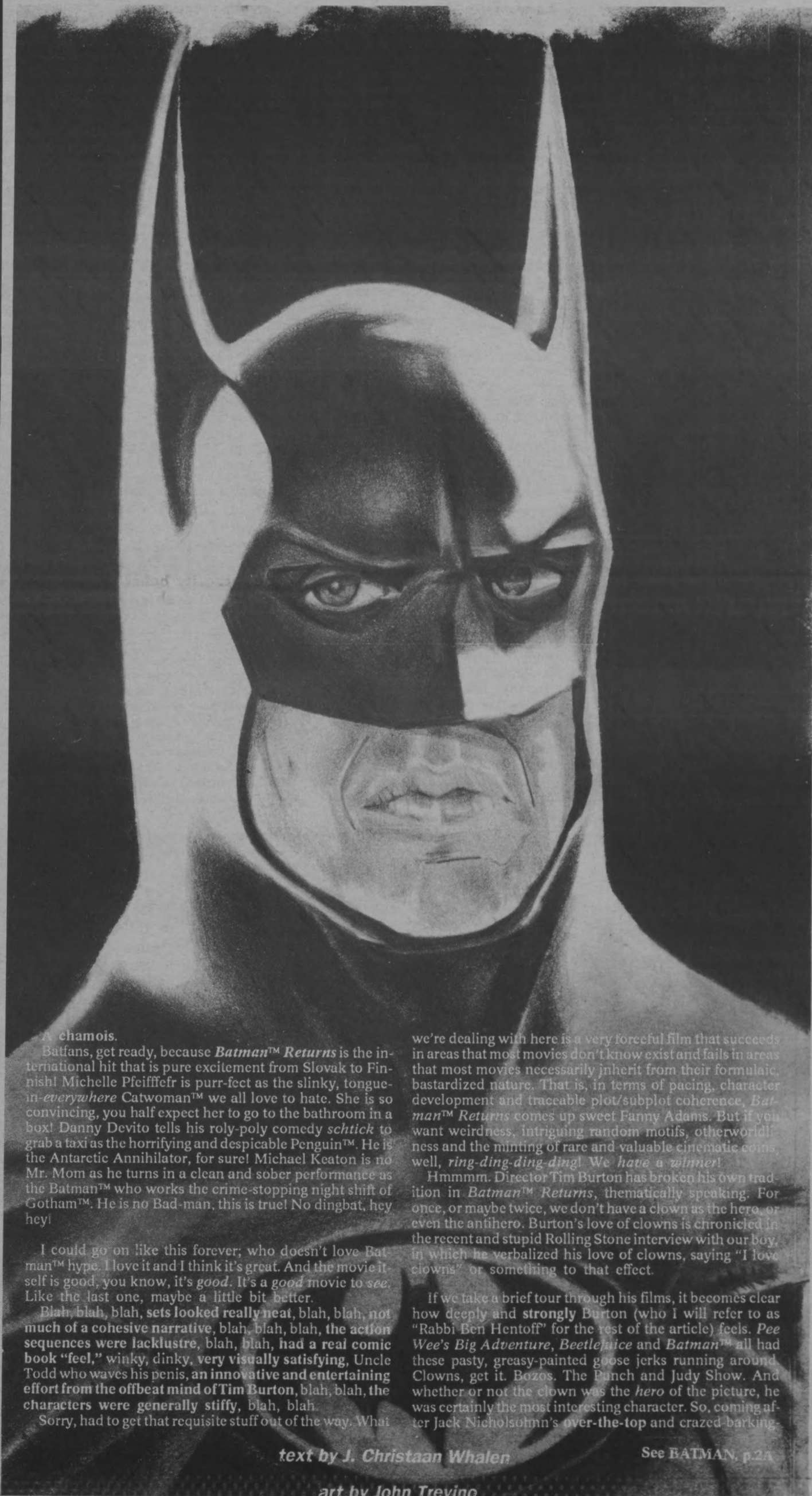
•Rock/reggae/country band The Samples play The Brewhouse in downtown Santa Barbara
•Opening reception for *Artist, Mentor and Children of Light*, an exhibition of art by Montessori Center School children; 653 Paseo Nuevo, second floor, 2-4 p.m.

•UNBELIEVABLE RUMMAGE SALE to raise funds for Santa Barbara's Access Theatre; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Access Theatre offices, 527 Garden Street

Sunday, June 28

•The Double Life of Veronique, a film by Krzysztof Kieslowski, UCSB Campbell Hall, 8 p.m.

•Santa Barbara Therapeutic Riding Academy's Festival in the Park! featuring Bo Derek, in Toro Canyon Park, Montecito, noon to 6 p.m.



chamois.

Batfans, get ready, because *Batman™ Returns* is the international hit that is pure excitement from Slovak to Finnish! Michelle Pfeiffer is purr-fect as the slinky, tongue-in-everywhere Catwoman™ we all love to hate. She is so convincing, you half expect her to go to the bathroom in a box! Danny Devito tells his roly-poly comedy *schtick* to grab a taxi as the horrifying and despicable Penguin™. He is the Antarctic Annihilator, for sure! Michael Keaton is no Mr. Mom as he turns in a clean and sober performance as the Batman™ who works the crime-stopping night shift of Gotham™. He is no Bad-man, this is true! No dingbat, hey hey!

I could go on like this forever; who doesn't love Batman™ hype. I love it and I think it's great. And the movie itself is good, you know, it's good. It's a good movie to see. Like the last one, maybe a little bit better.

Blah, blah, blah, sets looked really neat, blah, blah, not much of a cohesive narrative, blah, blah, blah, the action sequences were lacklustre, blah, blah, had a real comic book "feel," winky, dinky, very visually satisfying, Uncle Todd who waves his penis, an innovative and entertaining effort from the offbeat mind of Tim Burton, blah, blah, the characters were generally stiffy, blah, blah.

Sorry, had to get that requisite stuff out of the way. What

we're dealing with here is a very forceful film that succeeds in areas that most movies don't know exist and fails in areas that most movies necessarily inherit from their formulaic, bastardized nature. That is, in terms of pacing, character development and traceable plot/subplot coherence, *Batman™ Returns* comes up sweet Fanny Adams. But if you want weirdness, intriguing random motifs, otherworldliness and the minting of rare and valuable cinematic coins, well, ring-ding-ding-ding! We have a winner!

Hmmmm. Director Tim Burton has broken his own tradition in *Batman™ Returns*, thematically speaking. For once, or maybe twice, we don't have a clown as the hero, or even the antihero. Burton's love of clowns is chronicled in the recent and stupid Rolling Stone interview with our boy, in which he verbalized his love of clowns, saying "I love clowns" or something to that effect.

If we take a brief tour through his films, it becomes clear how deeply and strongly Burton (who I will refer to as "Rabbi Ben Hentoff" for the rest of the article) feels. *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice* and *Batman™* all had these pasty, greasy-painted goose jerks running around. Clowns, get it. Bozos. The Punch and Judy Show. And whether or not the clown was the hero of the picture, he was certainly the most interesting character. So, coming after Jack Nicholson's over-the-top and crazed-barking-

text by J. Christaan Whalen

See BATMAN, p.2A

art by John Trevino

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FILManalysis

Penguin to Persian: the Good Politics of *Batman*

By Charles Homberger
Staff Writer



"The liberation of Gotham has begun."
—The Penguin

As the Penguin, misshapen and streaked with black blood from his rotting nose and mouth, rose up on a guano-covered pile of sewer cement to proclaim war on Gotham City, Marlin Fitzwater must have winced.

It was only 18 months earlier, of course, that The White House Spokesman had stepped up to a microphone-covered podium to say almost exactly the same thing. Only minutes after the bombs began dropping on Baghdad, a stern-faced Fitzwater greeted the American public with these words: "The liberation of Kuwait has begun."

With the release of *Batman Returns*, those words have come back to haunt him. Through that repetition, Tim Burton's film becomes more than Hollywood's latest extravagance—it becomes a piece of scathing political satire.

The repetition of the White House's official words is the most concrete example of how Burton and screenwriter Daniel Waters have woven sophisticated political commentary into—of all things—a mainstream Hollywood film. (So far, the highly political subtext of *Batman Returns* has been almost entirely obscured by media gasps about the usual hype: the film's \$55 million price tag, Burton's "gothic vision" or the casting for Catwoman.)

Simply put, those six words transfigure the war-makers into psychotic, bloodthirsty freaks. The next scene—in which penguins march on downtown Gotham with red, white and blue missiles strapped on their backs—metamorphose Allied fleets of F-14 Tomcats and A-6 Intruders into waddling platoons of flightless birds. And finally, Burton mocks

the U.S.' failure to bring democracy to Kuwait by turning the penguins back home before accomplishing what they set out to do.

Aside from its spoofery of the Gulf War, *Batman Returns* is also probably the only Hollywood film that could double as a feminist and environmentalist manifesto. The film's pro-environment diatribe is rather boringly mainstream, essentially pitting the interests of business against "the future of Gotham City" with feeble enthusiasm at best.

But the feminist undercurrent to the struggle between Batman and Catwoman is refreshingly unique; read from this perspective, the clash becomes a blueprint for the politics of gender in the world of superheroes.

Underscored by the serious degradation of women (and specifically of Michelle Pfeiffer) in the early scenes, Catwoman's ack-

Batman: Returns

Continued from p.1A

loon performance as the Joker™ ("Ha ha!" Remember that laugh? It's true!), it's like trading a bin of luscious crab apples for a steaming bowl of high-piling "mud fish" to have Danny Devito's simply grating Penguin™ squawk around like Tiny Tim's retarded half-cousin. It's true! Remember?

In the *Batman*™ comic books as well as the "campy" '60s TV show, the Penguin™ was a natty, be-tuxed artisan with some class. Monocle, groovy cigarette filter, top hat, walks like a penguin ... you get the idea. A clown. In a weird turn, Burton takes that clown element away from him, making him merely a freak who acts like a bozo. I mean, this Penguin™ guy is disgusting. Bad hair, really overweight, he runs around in the sewer in this stupid all-terrain duck, and for some reason—while eschewing the top hat, cigarette filter, etc.—needs a bushel and a peck of umbrellas that can do everything short of compile a list of additional names.

But—oh my God!—Michelle Pfeiffer is comely! She's a dang first-rate mate and first-class lass, sir! *Domo Ori-gato, Mr. Robot!* Thank you! Perhaps the only redeemable aspect of Annette Bening's far too public "alliance" with Warren "Ned" Beatty is Annette's resulting pregnancy, causing her to give up the part of Catwoman™ to Ms. Pfeiffer. Thank your personal Zeus for that, *mon frer*, because Pfeiffer is cock-sure and magic. No words can describe it. *Doo lang, doo lang, doo lang!*

To see her and *Batman*™ tossing it off on some Gotham™ rooftop is the sexual equivalent of gravy, all gravy. It's true! Remember? Mr. Keaton, dressed to the ears in the essentially immobilizing *Batman*™ get-up, and Ms. Pfeiffer wearing a coat of shiny black sex paint is, simply, *admissible in court*.

You know, any chemist worth his potash will tell you that everything has its flaws. Therefore, we can say that *Batman*™ *Returns* is flawed up the yazoo, serious. Let us not forget that this is a *Batman*™ movie, ostensibly about a guy who flies around and Ju-jitsus stinking cur dogs. You know, buildings, airplanes, explosions—essentially, an *action* movie.

nowledged desire to "de-grade" Batman casts a new light on the struggle for power. Rather than just of-fing him and taking his place, Catwoman wants to

bring him down from the strangely altruistic and asexual pedestal that most male superheroes occupy in order to *compete* with him for preeminence.

FILM review

Don't Tell Mom Housesitter is Good

Steve Martin's got that anxiously befuddled character down. In *Parenthood*, we got the dad who couldn't get the promotion and control a neurotic kid at the same time. In the new *Housesitter* we get an ar-

chitect who can't get the promotion and control a neurotic fraudulent wife at the same time. He's only too lucky that she turns out to be the answer to all of his problems, and those of the film.

Director Frank Oz takes a good concept and makes it work. Here's the formula: Take an obsessive liar, hilariously played by Goldie Hawn, put her in a small

town where everyone knows everyone, start inserting characters, and watch Steve Martin play damage control with the tangled web that results.

It's perfect. It allows for a twisty plot, and Martin gets to wander around the set with that winning confused and anxious look of his. And at the end, the two can get married and settle down in that tangled web.

The only problem is that there are not enough skeptics. No one pushes Martin to the wall, really makes him squirm in the face of all the fraud. The only questioning soul in the movie is the Other Love Interest, played by Dana Delaney of "China Beach" fame, and she only makes him squirm by withholding sex.

In a summer market that is dominated by the must-

be-seen-on-screen Batwon- ders of Tim Burton, *Housesitter* probably will get more viewing when it comes out on video, but it deserves better. Lots of good laughs and the absence of obscene McDonald's marketing schemes make this movie a good bet for any anti-consumer with a sense of humor.

—Daniel Hilldale



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ALBUM reviews

Me Phi Me, Buffett are Good

Me Phi Me
Me Phi Me
Unknown Records
★★★★

The future of hip hop ain't what it used to be. When you buy the Me Phi Me album you'll know why. This is — by far — the most original and uplifting hip hop album I've ever listened to.

Interestingly enough, the name is a play on the fraternity system, and the album indicts the lack of individuality and self-expression that pervade both Black and white fraternities. The album's message is clear: Be yourself.

Me Phi Me follows this message in their lyrics and music. The rhymes are straight dope, and tell it like it is. But this effective social documentation is combined with a very positive message — without the violence, misogyny and homophobia traditionally prominent in mainstream rap.

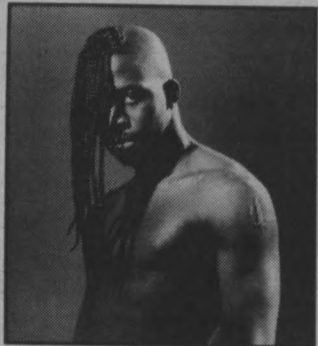
The album starts off with the sounds of a step show, moves to its credo and then drops into the beautiful song "Sad New Day," which outlines the despair of the human condition and yet offers the hope of self-enlightenment as a path to personal happiness.

"Black Sunshine," an essay on homelessness, almost magically combines the depressing topic with powerful music, leaving behind not only an unsettling feeling, but also the sense that something can be done.

This is the greatest strength of the album. It tells the truths about the Black experience without selling itself cheap to the forces of negativity and hopelessness that are so easy to give into.

This departure from standard rap is emphasized by the musical quality of the album. Live instruments are the norm, and they're played with thick sensitivity. Beats are fat, and the melodies could make a grown man cry.

The future of hip hop is here, and it's about time.
—Cactus Raazi



Me Phi Me

Jimmy Buffett
Boats, Beaches, Bars and Ballads Box Set
MCA
★★★★

Jimmy Buffett is the latest in a long list of artists to do the hip thing by putting out a Box Set.

And why shouldn't he? It's simple. Take Led Zeppelin. All they did was jumble some popular songs together, add a few rare B-sides, a glossy book and there you go. It's easy! But Jimmy didn't do it that way.

True, the Buffett Box Set, *Boats, Beaches, Bars and Ballads*, is made up of his best music and some unreleased stuff. And, yes, the book is glossy. But he's done something strange in Box Set Land, he actually spent time putting it together.

The Box has four CDs (or tapes) in it. Each of the discs is titled after the four subjects on the Set title. Quite ironically, the songs on the discs pertain to their titles. *Boats* is about boats and all that comes with them, with songs like "One Particular Harbor."

Beaches is mainly about hangovers and contains lots of "oh-my-head-hurts-don't-play-loud-music-why-don't-you-play-some-Jimmy-Buffett-Music."

Bars has all the songs you listened to the night before, like "Why Don't We Get Drunk (and Screw)?"

Ballads is self explanatory.

This is a four CD set that is comprehensive in defining an artist's philosophy and entire range of work — all that a Box Set should be, and it was all done by a drunk guy from Florida.

—Denis Faye



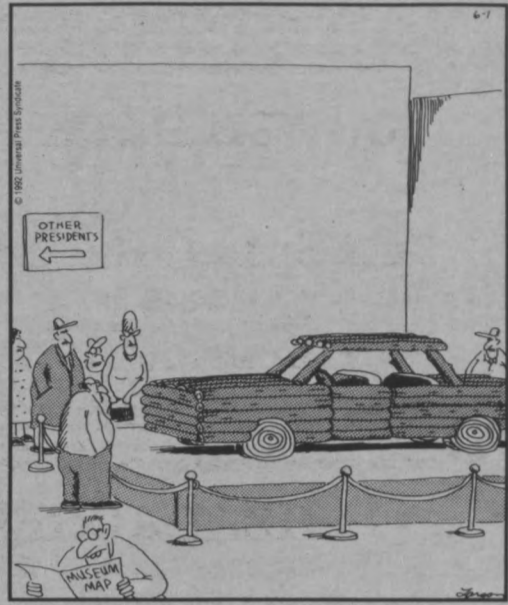
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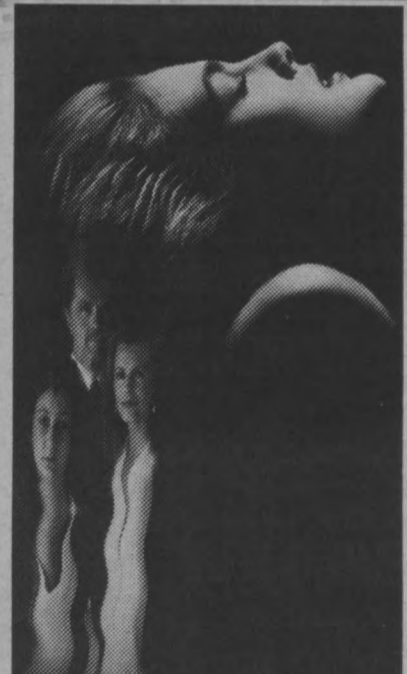
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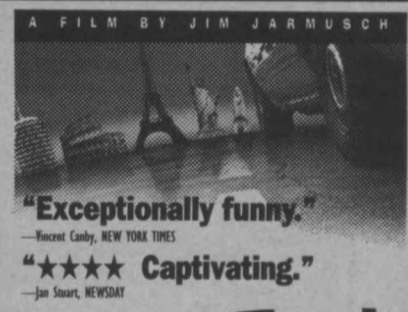


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ALBUM *review*

Faith No More es Bueno

Faith No More
Angel Dust
Slash Records

So you take a guitar player with bad hair and a penchant for speedmetal, a dreadlocked drummer, a bass player who's funky as hell, a keyboardist with an attitude and a *really* strange guy and throw them all together. Toss in some frogs and a cheerleading squad, shake it up real good and what have you got?

A mind-blowing batch of *Angel Dust*.

Faith No More's long-awaited fourth album, *Angel Dust*, is a mixture of wackiness and wonder. The quintet of oddballs has taken their signature style and run with it, producing an album that's anything but ac-

cessible and everything but boring. Put this one on the stereo and it's guaranteed to produce screwed-up countenances on anyone within earshot. Bass lines reminiscent of Primus, rapidly repeated guitar chords, occasional screaming and singing keyboard lines don't make for easy listening. It's Liberace meets Slayer. But once you acquire a taste for the band's unique formula, it's easy to become addicted.

Angel Dust is more inventive than Faith No More's 1989 release *The Real Thing*, an album which was propelled to the top of the charts when MTV started playing the smash single "Epic" every five minutes. Lead singer Mike Patton didn't actually contribute anything but lyrics to

The Real Thing, having joined the band at the last minute. But he played a big role this time around and his influence is obvious — the album is weird. And if you've ever heard Patton's other band, polka-carnival-rockers Mr. Bungle, you know he's weird.

Tracks like "Kindergarten," "Land of Sunshine" and "Everything's Ruined" follow the standard Faith No More formula which combines funky bass with heavy-handed guitar while Patton — whose voice ranges from demonic to operatic — alternately sings and raps. The band wanders off into musical never-never-land on songs like the dreamy "RV," which combines bluesy piano with narrative and throaty vocal

lines. The bouncy track "Be Aggressive" even features a bunch of chanting pubescent cheerleaders.

The great thing about this album is that Faith No More breaks free of rock and roll convention to create something new. And since all of the members of the band, while stylistically diverse, are top-notch musicians, they are able to pull off this weird, rocking musical journey. At worst, *Angel Dust* is interesting; at best it's brilliant, with the eccentricity which goes hand in hand with genius.

Oh, and the frogs? Listen carefully — you'll hear 'em. Croak-croak.

—Bonnie Bills

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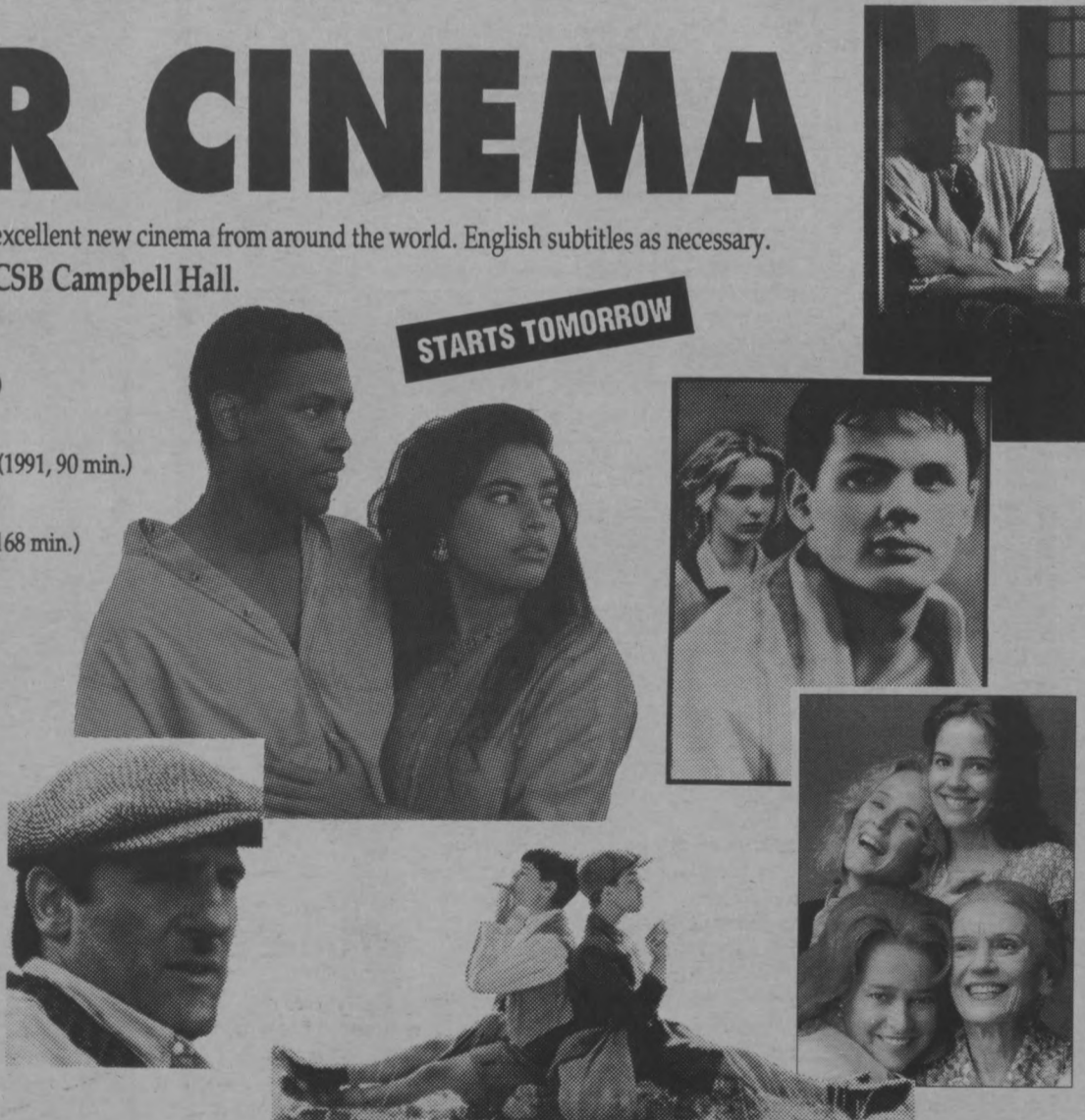


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- Sun. 6/28 **The Double Life of Veronique** (1991, 90 min.)
- Thu. 7/2 **Until the End of the World** (1991, 168 min.)
- Sun. 7/5 **Europa Europa** (1991, 115 min.)
- Thu. 7/9 **Andrei Rublev** (1966, 185 min.)
- Sun. 7/12 **Uranus** (1990, 99 min.)
- Thu. 7/16 **My Father's Glory** (1990, 110 min.)
- Sun. 7/19 **My Mother's Castle** (1990, 98 min.)
- Thu. 7/23 **Let Him Have It** (1991, 116 min.)
- Sun. 7/26 **Mississippi Masala** (1991, 113 min.)



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