

artsweek

just stick it in ...

Deep Shallu

*artsweek goes to the movies.
four fantastic film reviews*

film | review



NO SEX IN THE CHAMPAGNE ROOM

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD IS MORE PRETENTIOUS THAN BECOMING

something about grits **patrick adam wright**

This is a love story. Boy meets girl in the non-threatening coffee shop. Boy finds out girl is a rock drummer by day and stripper by night. Boy shows up at club for a lap dance from girl in the hope of sparking a deeply emotional and intellectually stimulating ... well, maybe just stimulating, relationship. Reviewer leaves theater thinking he would have rather watched his laundry swirl in the washing machine for an hour and a half than sit through this film.

Wayne Wang ("Smoke," "The Joy Luck Club") attempts to make a statement on effects of technology on personal relationships in his most recent offering "The Center of the World." The sometimes erotic, if not graphically sexual, content tends to overshadow the consequences of voyeurism through digital media while the script uses nonsensical dialogue to eat up running time. Shot entirely on DV (digital video), the sometimes grainy and handheld visuals are the best format for representing the seedy underbelly of the adult entertainment industry. The movie is extremely visually appropriate, as the technique makes one feel as though they are intruding upon the action as it unfolds. Unfortunately, it is a depressing film that fails to create believable characters because the dialogue comes off as trite, forced and bor-

dering ridiculous.

Richard Longman (Peter Sarsgaard) is a twenty-something, socially inept and sexually frustrated Silicon Valley millionaire. When he meets Florence (Molly Parker) and discovers her alternate persona, he instantly proposes a trip for two to luxurious, romantic — you guessed it — Las Vegas for which Flo will be compen-

“ A TWENTY-SOMETHING, SOCIALLY INEPT AND SEXUALLY FRUSTRATED SILICON VALLEY MILLIONAIRE ”

sated to the tune of \$10,000. She concedes, with due apprehension, to accompany Richard under several conditions, not the least of which is *no penetration* (sorry smut-lovers).

A freckled nymphette with low self-esteem, Flo grows

closer to breaking the arrangement with each passing night. Richard's charms — which include awkward smiles, personal confessions and computer game prowess — appear to be winning her over. Evidently, dollar bills are not what strippers want. They clearly need to be wine and dined.

Between simulations of hand jobs and milling about casinos, our characters must have something to talk about, something in common if their love is meant to last. Yet their meaningless dialogue made me want to leave my seat in favor of the local watering hole. American theaters need to take a cue from the continent: Start serving beer.

A similar movie was made several years back called "Sliver". Though that movie was nothing to e-mail home about, at least it didn't try to be something it was not. An overly pretentious independent film that insults my intelligence is not worth the price of admission. As strippers were once a dime a dance, indie films such as "The Center of the World" are becoming a dime a dozen. So why pay more than 10 cents to see this movie? Put that pocket change to good use at the Laundromat and you'll have money left over for "College Night" at the Rhino. No cover.

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film | review



KOOL HEATH

SHOULD A KNIGHT'S TALE BE SUCH A SILLY ONE?

hella kool_andy sywak

After watching the first couple of minutes unfold in "A Knight's Tale," one quickly figures out that they're going to have to get into a different frame of mind in order to enjoy the film. As soon as the opening medieval crowd chants Queen's "We Will Rock You" with all the unity of a basketball audience, the realization comes about: This movie is not supposed to be taken seriously.

Taken at face value as some medieval fable about a peasant who rises to become the mightiest knight in the land, the movie surely falls flat. Anybody with a cursory knowledge of the Brothers Grimm can predict the direction of the plot. But taken as a comedy that has no pretenses to win an Oscar or alter the way one views medieval society, it is a good, entertaining — if a bit long — weekend afternoon popcorn movie. Still, the question must be asked: Why did an accomplished writer/director like Brian Helgeland, who wrote the amazing and painstakingly historical "L.A. Confidential," decide to make such a film?

Australian poster boy Heath Ledger plays William Thatcher, a peasant who enters a jousting tourney when the knight he serves suddenly dies. Winning the bout, he persuades two friends and a traveling Geoff Chaucer (Paul Bettany) to help him train so that he can win more

tourneys and earn more gold pieces. Feigning a noble background in order to compete, the young William becomes increasingly successful as he meets the lovely, high maintenance woman of his dreams, Jocelyn (Shannyn Sossamon). She thinks he's handsome and dashing and likes his cute, innocent peasant humility. He thinks she's hot.

But as Helgeland paints the numbers of his script, he comes to the point where a villain needs to emerge. Enter

In a film that is basically a novelty, Helgeland recruited a lot of talented theatrical actors, and their performances are awfully good. Bettany's Chaucer often steals the show with his charisma and comedic range, anchoring the film through its aimless points. Twenty-year-old newcomer Sossamon also delivers a convincing performance despite her character's lack of dimension. Ledger is pretty decent throughout the film, although at times his earnestness borders on overwhelming.

But the question remains, why did Helgeland decide to include so many classic rock songs in the film? Its presence degrades an otherwise convincing period piece into a pulp fairy tale. There are enough serious performances by talented actors to make the audience members want to invest themselves in its direction, but the presence of scenes where William trains to "Lowrider," make the audience members sit back in their seats again as they realize they're watching some escapist novelty.

The chief strengths of "A Knight's Tale" lie in its exciting jousting scenes and period scenery. Helgeland's tactful direction brings these scenes to life in a fashion that downplays the negative violence. Still, when one leaves the theater, the question arises: "Was I supposed to laugh at that or with that?"

“ HE THINKS SHE'S HOT ”

the smug, aristocratic Count Adhemar (Rufus Sewell), a brilliant jouster who embodies all the hierarchical values William stands against. If you can't guess the rest from here, I'm afraid you need to enroll in remedial English.



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theater | interview



A DREAM NOT DEFERRED

A RAISIN IN THE SUN MAKES A SOCIAL STATEMENT

heavy_jenne raub

"A Raisin in the Sun," for many readers, may immediately bring to mind the last line of Langston Hughes' famous poem, "A Dream Deferred." Lorraine Hansberry's classic play takes its name from the poem, spotlighting the Youngers — an African-American family living in a small apartment on the south side of Chicago — as they await the arrival of a \$10,000 check, the payment from the late patriarch's life insurance policy. As the drama unfolds, the Youngers must make choices that powerfully illuminate the demands of an oppressive society in 1950s America.

Judith Olason, director of the play, shared a few insights about this compelling drama.

Artsweek: Describe the play.

Judith Olason: Well, the play is "A Raisin in the Sun." It's a play written by an African-American playwright back in the '50s, and she wrote it about her point of view of a family in the south side of Chicago, which is a pretty run-down tenement kind of ghetto, and how three generations of this family are living together in one tiny apartment and how they hope for a better life. Lorraine Hansberry, who wrote the play, was very much experiencing this kind of life because she lived on the other side of the coin; she lived in a more privileged society. Her father was a kind of landlord of these kinds of apartments, and she saw the struggles that these black families were having, and so had a great deal of sympathy for that. This is the very first play that she ever wrote, and she was pretty determined that she was going to have the theater work in a way that would better the situation of the African-American populace in Chicago who were living in this area, and to also point out the hopes and the dreams of these people, [and] how they were important in this period in time. This is all pre-civil rights movement era, and so it is sort of a prelude to that. I think it denotes a kind of passion that she has for the theater itself, and also the idea that she was very much an idealist and an idealistic writer who saw the good side of the coin all the time, the good side of bad situations and always felt as though there was a solution to it — the solution being education, understanding, compassion and learning. That sort of thing.

What were some of the biggest challenges that you

encountered as a director of this play?

It's been a long dream of mine to direct this production, and one of the biggest problems I've had in directing it was finding a cast, because it is completely African-American except for one white role. Because we have a really intense [bachelor of arts] actors' training program, obviously all of us as directors like to use [bachelor of arts] actors, although the auditions are open. But we've never really had a relatively large pool of African-American actors to choose from. So, at this point in time, these young actors are coming up — two of them are seniors, two are juniors, and two are B.A. students. One is a community actor — a young boy, an 11-year-old boy — and I was able to find these actors and round them up and gather them together, and realize that I had a really strong cast for the show.

One character is Mama, the grandmother, who has to be played by an African-American woman who has real strength and power, and [with] a physicality that would match. And I had that, in an African-American actress,

“HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A POWER AND NOBILITY IN THEM AND THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE VICTIMS ...”

who is a senior in our [bachelor of arts] program right now, who will be graduating this year. So the biggest challenge, I think, was being able to anticipate that I would have the actors to fill these roles.

I think the other big challenge is the fact that I am not African-American. And that perhaps those who might participate in it wouldn't accept my point of view of the play. But that has not proven to be the case. I think if you really carefully read the play, and if you really have a repair with the playwright, even though you haven't had that particular experience, I think if you're really true to the playwright, then the play really sort of comes out by itself. And certainly the actors have brought it out, too.

You've worked with Theatre UCSB as both an actor and director. Do you prefer one to the other?

My whole training before I came to UCSB was as an actress. I took this position as a teacher of acting, but it's blossomed over the years as I've been here into other areas, such as directing. I think when you come to a certain point in your life, I think you start to have preferences of one over the other. But I would hate to say that my acting career is at an end because my directing career is flourishing, or vice versa. I would say that I still have that passion for acting that probably nothing will ever replace. But directing has been extremely fulfilling, because it's more collaborative and I work with many other artists and have an opportunity to share a lot of ideas with them in producing a play.

What do you hope audiences gain from "A Raisin in the Sun"?

I hope that they understand what Hansberry wanted everyone to understand, and that was that human beings have a power and nobility in them, and they don't have to be victims or they don't have to be confused. And they could make good decisions, and they can be very brave about those decisions. And they need to be true to themselves. I think that's primarily what she wanted to say. She also wanted to make a social statement, and I think I do. That is that we all have a social responsibility to each other, and we have a responsibility to learn about each other, to learn about particular families in particular periods of time, in this particular time and place, if that makes sense.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I would like to say that the actors that I'm working with right now are superb. I don't think I've ever worked with a cast that's so close and so attached to a play as this cast has been. It's been a real joy working with them. I guess that's basically what I feel after working with them for the past month and a half, that they are deeply committed to this play, and their understanding of it is astounding. So I'm very grateful to have directed it.

"A Raisin in the Sun" opens Friday, May 18 at the Performing Arts Theatre, 8 p.m. and runs through May 26. For additional performance dates, tickets and other information, please call 893-3535.

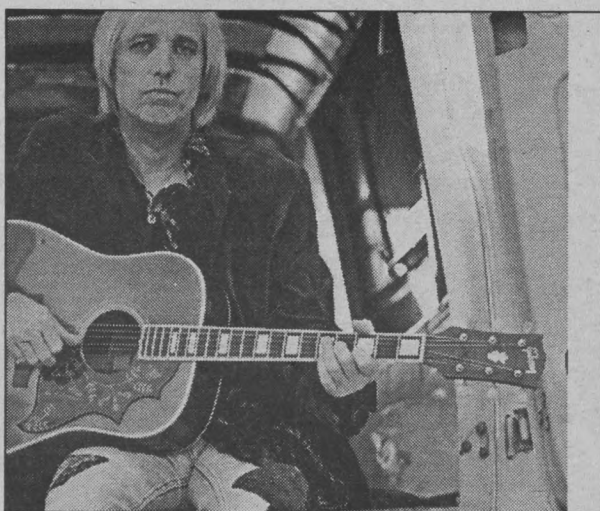
thingstodo >> calendar

today | thursday



Yeah, we'd like to tell you to go to the Ibiza Foam Party at the Ventura Theatre, but our conscience got the better of us. Instead of partying in up to 5 feet of foam, go to the Living Room to catch indie bands Mirah, Dear Nora and the Stoppaps (who feature an ex-Artsweek writer!) There, all ages can come and no one can swallow. DJ Webster Hall spinning hard house and trance, or cutting edge indie bands? The choice is yours. 430 S. Fairview, Goleta. 8 p.m.

tomorrow | friday



If you're hell bent on catching Tom Petty live but didn't manage to score tickets, Artsweek recommends you stake out some land on a trail overlooking the Santa Barbara Bowl. Hey, then you can bring your own beer and save your hard-earned cash. Or you can venture downtown for House Cup's CD release party. Enjoy free Volcom giveaways as Choppers and Pepper rock the stage as well. The fun all goes down at Kennedy's, 435 State St. 21+

weekend | saturday



Saturdays are always brimming over with excitement and activity, aren't they? After a hearty morning of sleeping in and MTV specials, it's time to satisfy your inner rocker. May we recommend the following? Go to the Living Room and check out these incredible indie rock and pop bands, such as the Bangs, Janes Friday, Titsofrenix, Youth Miracle and the Basement The fun all starts at 8 p.m. at 430 S. Fairview. Oh! And it's all ages.

film | review



CAPE TOWN BLUES

BOESMAN AND LENA HIGHLIGHTS SOUTH AFRICAN POVERTY

one writer's story **patrick wright**

Athol Fugard's play "Boesman and Lena" is brought to the screen in this adaptation by John Berry. Bringing his prowess as a stage director to this work, the dialogue-driven story delivers brilliant performances from Angela Bassett ("What's Love Got to Do With It?") and Danny Glover ("Beloved"). Set against the backdrop of the desolate mud flats outside Cape Town, South Africa, it is a tale of loss and survival during that nation's period of apartheid.

The film begins with a black-and-white flashback of bulldozers destroying the shantytown that Boesman (Glover) and Lena (Bassett) inhabited. As they have been forced to do many times before, the two push on, setting up another temporary camp that will provide meager shelter and set the stage for a night of realizations and reconstructions.

As Boesman erects a lean-to from scavenged materials, Lena rebuilds her past hoping to discover the key to how it all went wrong. Lena struggles to unearth these happier images, making a map of the places they've traveled with pots and pans she embeds in the earth. This quest poses a threat to Boesman's control over Lena, and to her frustration, he rearranges the landmarks until she is in utter confusion. Somewhere in the long scorching days and cold nights, the once affectionate man has become a beast of burden lashing out at his partner with verbal and physical violence.

At the height of Lena's hysteria, an old black man

(*kaffir*, as Boesman calls him) is discovered by the river-side. Over Boesman's protests, Lena entreats the man to join their party. In the old man, Lena is given the chance to retell her tale. It matters little for Lena that a language barrier exists between her and the Xhosa tribesman. She now has another "pair of eyes" to bear witness to her story and provide the empirical proof of her existence that she so desperately seeks. At the breaking point, the old man could be the tinder for Lena's sense of strength to be reborn and tie her and Boesman together again.

The film retains nearly all the content of Fugard's play with the brilliant dialogue deftly acted by Bassett and Glover. Special attention is given to Lena in this adaptation as Bassett responds in kind, giving her best performance since receiving an Oscar nod for "What's Love Got to Do With It?" She creates in Lena a woman struggling to recapture a past to save herself and Boesman. Repulsion over the South African policy of apartheid and its effects on an entire population of people drives this conscientious film. Though that era is officially over, the consequences live beyond it with the social condition of the nation's poor, huddled masses.

A striking film, "Boesman and Lena" forces us to deal with these notions of social class. I would highly

encourage anyone to bear witness to this moving film.

"Boesman and Lena" screens Sunday, May 20, 7:30 p.m., at Campbell Hall. \$5 students; \$6 general.

“ SHE CREATES IN LENA A WOMAN STRUGGLING TO RECAPTURE A PAST TO SAVE HERSELF AND BOESMAN ”

straight to video classics



BORN AGAIN

LEFT BEHIND REINVENTS KIRK CAMERON FOR CHRISTIAN VIDEO

growing pains **trey clark**

Watching movies is kind of like playing the stock market: You want to get in on the action before things get too popular. True, being the last to see a film won't risk your financial future as stocks tend to do, but you certainly don't want to be the sucka who waited until the last minute to jump on the bandwagon.

Instead of a specific film, there is a whole genre of films that is blowing up that you need to know about if you consider yourself a true film connoisseur. That genre is Christian home video.

This recent movement began a little over a year ago with "The Omega Code," an apocalyptic look into how the prophecies of the book of Revelation will manifest themselves in the very near future. The current torchbearer for the movement is "Left Behind," an apocalyptic look into how the prophecies of the book of Revelation will manifest themselves in the very near future.

The biggest difference between these films is the starring role. "The Omega Code" stars Casper Van Dien, who has only had one mainstream starring role ("Starship Troopers", where he took off a girl's shirt, exposing her breasts. Shame!). "Left Behind" stars, and some would say resurrects, Kirk Cameron, the '80s teen heartthrob from the TV show "Growing Pains". The supporting roles in "Left Behind" are also noteworthy, especially Cameron's real-life hot wife Chelsea Noble, who surely earned the role and didn't just get it as some type of package deal with her husband.

Cameron plays Buck Williams, a well-respected news reporter for GNN (the inability to use CNN's name provided me with my first laughs). Williams is

see **BEHIND**, p.6A

thingstodo >> calendar

weekend | **monday**



Monday nights always pose a problem for any die-hard partier in Santa Barbara. If you've tired of Brazilian nights and crave a more enlightening experience, buy a pack of cigarettes and head to SOHo for a night of jazz extravaganza. Hey, go all out, and round up your smartest friends for a night of red wine drinking and intellectual conversing to the smooth, sweet sounds of Jeff Elliot's jazz. The fun all takes place upstairs at 1221 State Street.

next week | **tuesday**



Since its quiet release in 1999, "Office Space" has become quite the cult classic. If you haven't yet seen this funny flick depicting the mundane politics of the corporate world, then by all means head to I.V. Theater for a night of laughter. If it's one of your favorites already, don't pass up this opportunity to chuckle once again. At the very least, it will leave you questioning whether you really want to graduate after all. 7 and 10 p.m. \$3 students.

next week | **wednesday**



Surely you're looking for new ways to incorporate some political understanding into your culturally-savvy ways. Check out "The Silent Natives of Fuga," a documentary that looks at how global economic imperatives are changing Fuga's indigenous community at the MCC Theater, 8 p.m. It's free! After, incorporate some new music (and drink specials!) into your life by supporting local band Red Handed at Madhouse, 434 State St. 21+

BLOSSOMING BEATS

ARTSWEEK'S GUIDE TO THE LATEST IN ELECTRONIC PLEASURES (MUSIC, SILLY!)

booty shakin' funk *jenne raub*

Spring, as I'm sure you've garnered from the warm weather and flower-powered Ross commercials, has sprung, and a new crop of CDs have landed on the *Artsweek* desk in ripe abundance. Now's the time to take a good, hard look at your current collection, weed out the stupid selections, sell them back to Morninglory and replenish your mind, body and soul with the best in electronic delights. Get ready for summer listening with *Artsweek's* guidance.

Erick Morillo | Subliminal Sessions One | Subliminal

Oh, man, is this CD good. *Subliminal Sessions One* is a funky mix of bright, happy house from Erick Morillo with a distinct, uplifting Chicago-house vibe. I must admit, when I first received this CD I was so annoyed that the promotional copy didn't have breaks between tracks that I put it in a separate pile to check out later. Good thing I finally gave it a real listen. Not even into the third track of the first disc, I knew this would become a favorite summer disc. Sure, there are some corny moments when Erick Morillo treads into campier memories of disco glory. But he also isn't afraid to tread into the more beautiful areas of disco, tribal and hard house, and the entire album culminates in an amazing expression of the power and sheer fun of house.

Fred Everything | Under the Sun | Turbo

In the last few months, *Artsweek* has received a stack of releases from Turbo but has sadly neglected to get them reviewed. Although everything we've received has been above par, *Under the Sun* stands out like a well-manicured

thumb. Luscious, deep house awaits this album's listener. Although the album has a few solid, stand-out tracks, the whole album plays like an easy, breezy night at a club: relaxing and refreshing!

Max Graham | Transport 4 | Kinetic

One can't help but wonder why trance has had the perverse effect on mainstream music listeners that it has. After Paul Oakenfold's *Tranceport* launched in 1998, thousands of new kids donned baggy pants and flooded the gates of any rave near you, and not just because dealers were finally selling real ecstasy. *Transport 4*, the fourth in the same series that launched Oakenfold's career, if not trance, features up-and-coming deejay Max Graham, a big name in Canada but practically unheard of here. *Transport 4* showcases his subtle, infectious sound and smooth mixing skills, so chuck those stupid, generic trance mixes you thought you'd like, and replace it with this two-disc album instead.



Gavin Hardkiss | Through Rose Tinted Glasses | Shadow

Make no mistakes — this is a brilliantly mixed house album from one of San Francisco's most innovative deejays. Here, he takes records originally released on the Sunburn label and throws together a

kaleidoscope of sounds, rhythms and ideas. *Through Rose Tinted Glasses*, as he puts it on the back of the CD, mixes "obscure house, Chicano hip hop, pirelli breaks, dreamy drum 'n' bass, tex-mex electro, sensitive white boy music and booty shakin' funk." In other words, it's eclectic, but it's damn good.



Nicola Conte | Bossa Per Due | Eighteenth Street Lounge

In true Eighteenth Street Lounge fashion, Italy's own Nicola Conte explores the outer reaches of '60s soundtracks, beat jazz, rare soul and Brazilian sounds. He's long been a favorite destination of renowned taste-makers like Gilles Peterson, and now releases his first ever full-length album. A perfect album for sipping Krystal in your front yard on a Saturday afternoon soaking in the sun and dreaming of glamorous lands.

Hive | The Raw Uncut EP | Celestial

Hive's approach to drum 'n' bass has always made him more an innovator than an imitator. Yet, while subtly pushing boundaries of the genre's often-static walls, his sound always manages to fit right into the genre's current context. It's no surprise that his latest EP offers up more of the same dirty, raw breaks and beats.

BEHIND, cont from p.5A

in Jerusalem covering the story of some magical formula that can turn the most barren land into fertile cornfields. His return trip to Chicago is piloted by Rayford Steele (Brad Johnson), who is cheating on his Christian (and trusting) wife with stewardess Hattie Durham (Noble). The voyage starts getting a little shaky as the rapture occurs mid-flight.

Back on the ground there is utter chaos. Everyone is freaking about missing family members and friends. All of the

children in the world were taken in the rapture, although we never find out exactly what age limit God has set up for automatic rapturing. Steele's wife and son are gone, leaving him searching for answers. He wanders into church only to find his church minister (Clarence Gilyard, Chuck Norris' sidekick in "Texas Rangers") ranting about how he fooled everyone but God. Together they realize the rapture has come, and they need to place their faith in God.

Meanwhile, Williams is trying to find out what happened so he can get the story

for GNN. The United Nations blames it on radiation and suggests that all nuclear weapons be destroyed at once. Little does anyone know, but new U.N. leader Nicolae Carpathia (Gordon Currie) from Russia will use this situation to take over the world and become the Antichrist.

Carpathia's plan is to unite the world in peace and use the magic formula to control the world's food supply. At first Williams loves the idea and supports Carpathia. Later, however, a sniper's botched assassination attempt leaves him injured and on the doorstep of Steele.

Steele takes Williams to the church, where the minister breaks down how everything that happened had been prophesized in Revelation. Williams doesn't realize the truth of the Bible until it is too late, and Carpathia is well on his way to world domination.

The amazing thing about "Left Behind" is how well the writers understand the book of Revelation. After almost 2,000 years, we finally understand what it all means — The leader of the United Nations will be: 1) Russian and 2) the Antichrist. I'm glad that's settled.

Act Globally, Think Locally

So maybe all these previously mentioned artists hail from regions all over the world. Sure, your dollar helps feed the struggling deejays and artists, but you owe yourself and your music community support as well. Beatnix Labs, a local Santa Barbara record label, will soon be releasing *Bassplugger: Beatnix-002*. If you desire to hear their unique tech-meets-funk soundscapes live, you can check them out the second Friday of every month on KCSB 91.9 FM at midnight during msb's "Hypnotic States" show. KCSB offers seven shows they dub "electric," so get the Spring 2001 program guide and turn in.

When you're not listening to our local deejays, and if you're over 21, be sure to head downtown where more beats await. Here's a brief list of a few local favorites that are not only fun but also spotlight our own local talent.

Thursdays. "The ZOO," brought to us almost every week at Zelo, offers both outstanding, big-name deejays as well as featuring local deejays on the outside patio spinning everything from house to drum 'n' bass. Plus, it's the only 18+ place in town. 630 State St. Or, you can join Isla Vista's own Todd, Rick Jones and JB, who — in addition to running I.V.'s only record shop — bring loud, fun house into Madhouse, 434 State St.

Fridays. Deejays Manabu and Inti bring chilled-out hip hop, downtempo and the occasional rare soul record into Elsie's low-key, off-the-beaten-path environment. 117 W. De La Guerra St.

Saturdays. "Therapy," every other Saturday night, puts Santa Barbara's biggest deejay, Calvin, behind the decks and ensures that its loyal patrons can flaunt their "very importantness," even if such V.I.P.s are simply bartenders and not, say, Jay-Z or anything. Don't worry, you don't actually have to be in the food service industry to enjoy the night. "Therapy" takes place again on June 2. 423 State St.

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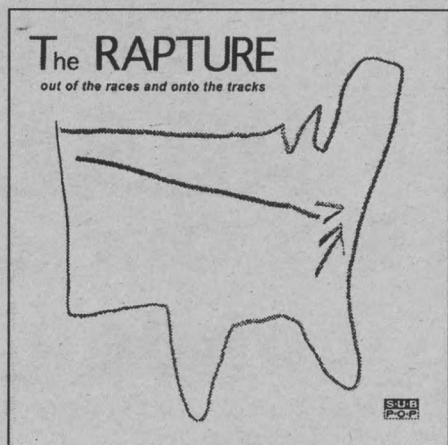
Alien Ant Farm | ANThology | New Noize

Despite the apparently political connotations of this record, Alien Ant Farm truly relies on the interesting and conflicting relationship between contemporary alternative metal and sentiments of life and fantasy. Constructed on the premise of establishing emotion through music, ANThology essentially is emotions and aesthetics for the insecure, creating a barrage of power-driven riffs overlaid with instances of vulnerability and the typical and ambiguous questions of the self.

As a record, it serves as an example of production and layout. The sound is consistent, and the transitions and leads between tracks lay a solid, developed foundation. Perhaps the biggest standout on this record is "Summer," where lead singer Dryden Mitchell's lyricism and the band's ability to establish the critical chorus stands out and really individualizes itself from the rest of the album. Simple and direct, it overcomes the rest of the

album's repetitiveness and lack of originality.

With a replication of "Smooth Criminal" and a desire to fuse musical emotions and political graphics, it's hard to tell this band's focus. Alien Ant Farm can consider itself a band with a multi-faceted, open approach to music in an art where opinion and standpoint need to be established. [Collin Mitchell]

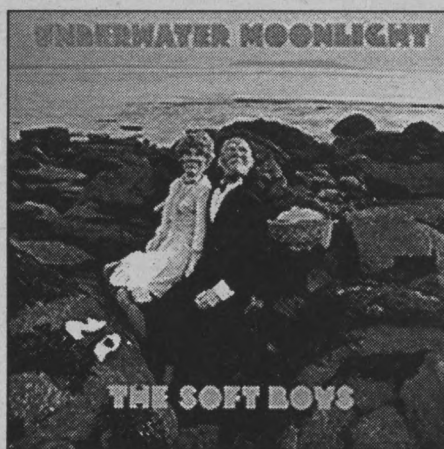


The Rapture | Out of the Races and Onto the Tracks | Sub Pop

Now that the founder of Up Records is dead, and Matador Records' taste is nearly as moribund, Sub Pop is left as one of the last high-profile indie rock labels in the biz. Fortunately for those of us who might have heard Seabaguided By Pavement one too many times, the label has had its ear to the ground and quietly accumulated a formidable art-punk roster. Pay special attention to New York City's The Rapture, a band that locks down a

spare-but-maniac brand of new wave nouveau like you've never heard.

The band comes off a bizarrely conceptual LP on Gravity Records with this six-song EP, and it's revised its sound a bit. No more long stretches of electronic noises; now the songs are carried effectively and coherently between Matty Safer's dance-club bass lines, Luke Jenner's schizophrenic yelps and Vico Roccoforte's instinct for simple but off-kilter rhythms. Jenner's guitar work is full of strange-picked melodies, mutes and dissonant pedal tricks. Samples and odd instruments round out the mix. The band cites Pil, the Byrds and the Happy Mondays among its influences, but make no mistake: The Rapture is definitely something new. [DJ Fatkid is nothing if not sickly thick]



Soft Boys | Underwater Moonlight | Matador

Two discs of reissue bliss, Soft Boys' Underwater Moonlight kicks out the jams.

British rock god Robyn Hitchcock released a legendary album in 1980 with his first cool band, the Soft Boys. Now 2001 rolls around and Matador decides to reissue this masterpiece with a bonus CD of unreleased live material. This is going on my desert island list. And, yes, the first disc does have "I Wanna Destroy You" for all you punks.

Why did I not hear about the Soft Boys sooner? They take all the best parts of the Stones, Nirvana, the Pixies, Iggy and the Stooges, the Members and Bauhaus, then mix it all up into an insanely romantic fizzy-lifting drink like Charlie and Grandpa Joe drank in the Chocolate Factory. Thanks to Robyn and the Boys, I love the sound of guitars again. Underwater Moonlight tastes best when prepared with mind-altering substances, strawberries and blue light bulbs, but anytime is a good time for the Soft Boys. Since I procured this disc it has frequently been the soundtrack for my multiple dreams about strolling hand in hand with Winona Rider in the forests of Ithaca.

Dear heart, this album destroys me and then fills me back up again like OK Computer or The Wall. I don't make these comparisons lightly; the Soft Boys are not to be underestimated. [Joseph Martinez]

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