



arts

Great Balls 2A

Great Hats 3A

Great Dude 4A

Spike Does The Right Thing

Spike Lee's New Film "Do The Right Thing"

by matt welch

Less than halfway through **Do the Right Thing**, Da Mayor (Ossie Davis) delivers a proudly eloquent rebuttal to a verbal attack unleashed on him by four young mouths from the neighborhood, who bag on him for being an old drunken fool who thinks he owns the damn place. Da Mayor, with anger welling in his throat, tells the whippersnappers they have no right to give him shit when they haven't seen what he's seen.

It's as moving a defense for one man's poor lifestyle as you'll ever see. But then one of the young guys gets back into *Da Mayor's* face, saying he'd never let himself see what the mayor has seen because he'd be busy making something of his life instead of getting hammered.

And there it is. In his third (and best) film, writer-director-producer-star-cult-hero Spike Lee gives us no easy answers to any of the serious questions and problems that exist above (and below) the surface of one predominantly Black block in Brooklyn. Instead, he creates a situation rich in the very dichotomy that both sustains and divides life itself. In the process, he gives us a hilariously tragic look at racism in America and proves (as if there was a doubt) that he is the force to be reckoned with in American film today.

Critics who've questioned Spike's unique "artistic choices" in the past (such as overlong song and dance



numbers in **School Daze**) will be hard-pressed to find faults with his direction in **Do the Right Thing**. This time around, Spike's use of the camera equals his use of the pen, which is saying a bunch. As easy as it would be for an ultra-talented young Black film *auteur* like Spike to make the white man out to be the Big Villain and the Black man out to be the Big Martyr, he cunningly avoids that trap.

Buggin' Out (played to the frantic hilt by Giancarlo Esposito), who starts the boycott of Sal's Pizzeria — for not having any Blacks on his Wall of Fame — that leads to a riot, is himself a misfiring activist who at one point asks Spike's character Mookie why he's hanging out with a white guy. Sal (Danny Aiello, in a meaty role) is one hell of a guy who loves the neighborhood and the people in it, but harbors deep-seated but subtle prejudiced notions that surface in the face of conflict. Mookie, the movie's central character, is an even-headed well-liked guy who is a bad father and an irresponsible goof.

No one single character is devoid of noticeable faults. Sal's son Pino is the only one we have no sympathy for, but even in this case, Spike makes sure we know where Pino's hatred and anger toward Black people come from.

Spike still finds the time to create and develop a dozen or so characters with more depth than the six thirtysomething schmucks in the Big Chill.

The result is a moviegoing experience that no two persons will interpret the same. Some people will laugh hard when out of nowhere five people spew racist insults at the camera against five different races; some people will cringe. Some people will cheer when all hell breaks loose, and some people will find fault in the hellraisers. Achieving this kind of moral ambiguity is no mean feat. Achieving it while recognizing and portraying every argument on every side of every issue in an intelligent, incisive and funny way is genius.

Amid all this, Spike still finds the time to create and develop a dozen or so

characters with more depth than Lawrence Kasdan portrayed six thirtysomething schmucks in **The Big Chill** (well, except for William Hurt). He also manages to do weird things — like having a DJ rattle off the name of most every influential Black in the music biz — without disrupting the narrative one bit.

A lot has been said about the seemingly conflicting quotes from Malcolm X and Martin Luther King that appear at the end of the film, but critics there have missed the boat. From the opening shot, Spike paints us a conflicting picture, symbolized by a stuttering guy who wanders around trying to sell copies of a photo of the two civil rights activists together. Spike's not telling us what we should do; he's showing us how things are and how the status quo can erupt at any time, with no clear-cut causers of problems and no easy solutions. He allows the audience to make up its own mind about the issue instead of preaching or talking down to them.

And to those who complain about Spike's "lack of realism" in portraying a downtrodden neighborhood (i.e., why there are no crack dealers), I have this to ask: why talk shit when nine out of 10 movies off the rack don't portray a positive Black person, in any context?

Spike Lee has elevated himself in the film industry to that rarified air in which one just sort of holds his/her breath waiting to see what he'll put out next. In this case, it's going to be a jazz movie with Denzel Washington. Look out, Clint.



Prince Spike



Although he often gets compared to Woody Allen for writing, directing, producing and starring in his own dramatic/comedy films, no one has compared Spike Lee to Prince. Prince has three movies that he wrote, produced, directed and starred in. Spike now has three — he just caught up. Prince's **Purple Rain** was Warner's most profitable film in 1984, while Spike's **School Daze** was Columbia's most profitable flick last year.

Spike's **She's Gotta Have It** (1986) cost \$175,000, took 12 days to complete, won Best New Director at Cannes, and was shot in black and white. In 1986, however, Prince spent \$175,000 on the first day of shooting **Under the Cherry Moon** (also in b/w), but the critics hated it and nobody went to see it.

Maybe that's why Michael Jordan asked for Spike to direct his Air Jordan commercials.



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Film about "The Killer" dies



Dennis Quaid

by jeffrey c. whalen

Jerry Lee Lewis never had a number one song. That fact is only one of the many that have been overlooked in an attempt to glorify Jerry Lee's life and career in the insincere film *Great Balls of Fire*, now playing at the Riviera Theatre.

Dennis Quaid, the better-looking half of the Quaid Brothers, stars as Jerry Lee Lewis, one of the more powerful performers of the '50s. Quaid's performance is brilliant, but only if Jerry Lee was melodramatic all the time and always looked like he was overacting. At any rate, Quaid gives a consistent portrayal, and his acting is far better than his mediocre lip-synching.

Lewis, who was more bumpkin *inbred* looking than charming and Hollywood, shot quickly to fame in the late fifties, only to have his dreams

dashed as media backlash ruined his reputation. The main controversy in the film involves Lewis' marriage to his cousin, not Jimmy Swaggart, but 13-year-old Myra Gale Brown (played by Wynona Ryder). Ryder understood her role well, but she gets no support from the script or direction, and ends up wandering through the film like a be-zombied extra from *A Hard Day's Night*.

According to all sources (excluding this movie), Jerry Lee was an uncharismatic egomaniac offstage, and the true (and sole) triumph of his life was his music. His music made people love him, including Myra, unfortunately the music is not the focus of this film; in fact, nothing comes into focus.

Half the fun of *The Buddy Holly Story* and *La Bamba* was watching the stars

write their famous songs and work out the kinks in the recording studio. By doing that, the film gives the audience the feeling they are somehow *insiders* and are coming as close as possible to actually witnessing a great moment in rock and roll history. *Great Balls of Fire* denies us of that pleasure, opting instead for excessive shots of screaming Lewis-manics.

The intriguing dark aspects of Jerry Lee's life (drugs, wife abuse, alcohol abuse) and music (payola, jealousies) are never brought out. Whenever it looks like director Jim McBride might probe into that heretofore unexplored territory, he quickly resorts to cheap comedy bits or phony sentimentality to back him out of a scene. The film often gets silly, sometimes because of a lack of comedic sense, but usually because of a lack of factual content.

Great Balls of Fire has as much cultural realism about the fifties as an episode of *Happy Days*. There is one scene where Jerry Lee drives up to Myra's school in a shiny convertible lip-synching his new tune, "High School Confidential." Lotsa tough guys in leather jackets and chicks in tight sweaters and billowy skirts patently do flips and dance *in unison*. What am I watching? *Fame*

There is something

deeply wrong about a film that doesn't seem to care that evangelist, cousin, and close childhood companion to Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart (played by Alec Baldwin), is an important character. Swaggart, a celebrity in his own right, is portrayed as an honest, caring, and occasionally "correct" Southern preacher. Opportunities to have someone like Swaggart play a part in someone else's biography don't come around very much, and when that opportunity is wasted, it is truly a shame.

Redeeming qualities are few, but they come nonetheless. Lewis' 1989 re-recordings of his classic tunes are spanking. There's also a witty little thread of Elvis-bashing that goes on through the film. Lewis came upon the music scene just as Elvis was beginning to get soft and singing songs like "(I Just Wanna Be Your) Teddy Bear." Lewis' raw, spiritual quality is properly punctuated when viewed in comparison with Elvis' growing pop sellout; no less than three references to "Teddy Bear" are made during the film.

Great Balls of Fire, though, flops because the film only traces Lewis' life during 1956-1958: his peak years, while failing to make a hero out of a great rock and roller.

The Killer still doesn't have a number one hit.

phranc enjoys being a girl

by walker "guitar" wells

The last year has borne witness to a widespread resurgence of folk music. Tracy Chapman hit it big, 10,000 Maniacs was heard from radios everywhere and Michelle Shocked strummed her way into the hearts of music lovers from Amsterdam to Anchorage. While all this was well and good, something (or someone) was strangely amiss. A couple of years before it became cool to play a steel string and wear baggy clothes, there was a woman who played some great folk music, had a bunch of fans, and then strangely disappeared. This woman calls herself Phranc.

Her first record, *Folksinger*, showed her to be both competent with a guitar and bitingly insightful. Not your typical female musician, Phranc sports a crew cut, a swimmer's body, and has an affinity for jeans and turtlenecks. Opening up for the Violent Femmes at the Arlington back in '86, her unusual appearance made a few folks a little uncomfortable. A feeling that was compounded by her hardline feminist lyrics and truly odd musings about surfing, swimming, and the trials and tribulations of being a woman in a man's world. Although the drunken rednecks in front of me tried their hardest to get her attention, her focused, intense, heartfelt music won out in the end as she put on a triumphant show, convincing all doubters that this woman was a force to be reckoned with.

Then she vanished. No one heard a peep from Phranc the whole time the



rest of the folk world was making big noise and big bucks. Now finally, she has reappeared. Her second album, humorously titled *I Enjoy Being a Girl*, shows her to have matured and improved without losing her vision.

The jacket is in a sixties just-moving-to-stereo-sound style (the kind where they reassure you that your mono equipment will still produce quality sound) and the music inside spans styles from country to polka to blues. Her guitar technique has improved vastly, the songs seem richer and more focused, and her thin voice sounds even stronger. The songs range from the burning intensity of "Take off that Swaztika" — as she tells the neo-Nazis that "maybe if you were in those ovens, you wouldn't think it's so cool" — to the good time goofy fun of "Toys Are Us," her favorite place on a depressing day.

(See PHRANC, p.4A)

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july 5

— jazz great **Edgar Winter** will release the first ever rock soundtrack inspired by best-selling book *Mission Earth*. This is Winter's first album in 8 years. It's based on the 10 volume M.E. series, written by L. Ron Hubbard, who also wrote the words and music for the record.

july 6

— artist **John McCracken** will show slides and lecture about his fiberglass and plywood boxes and planks. If you like Minimalism with a So. Cal/metaphysical flair, run down to the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State St., at 7:30 ... 963-4364 for details. \$6, \$5, or \$4 depending who u r.

july 8

— bang your head from noon till midnight at the Graduate and see **Danzig, Excel, Accept, Armored Saint**, local bands, and surprise guests. All ages, tickets at Rockpile cost \$15 which is about \$1.25/hr for quality metal right in our own backyard.



july 9

— **Moulin Rouge** is the first in a series of four Sunday afternoon Paris/-Vienna films being shown in the Auditorium of the S.B. Museum of art. Showtimes of *Moulin Rouge* are at 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Series tickets by mail, others at the door.

— see old Spanish women smoking cigars at the Arts and Lectures showing of **Half of Heaven** 8 p.m. at Campbell Hall.



july 12

— read **Friday Magazine** available only in the Wednesday Daily Nexus, brought to you by students stuck taking summer classes just like you. Located in garbage pails everywhere.

july 13

— don't bring the kids to this Swiss retelling of **Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland**. Czech animator *Jan Svankmajer* mixes live action with animation that's no Roger Rabbit. Alice starts 8 p.m. at Campbell Hall. Eat me.



july 15-16

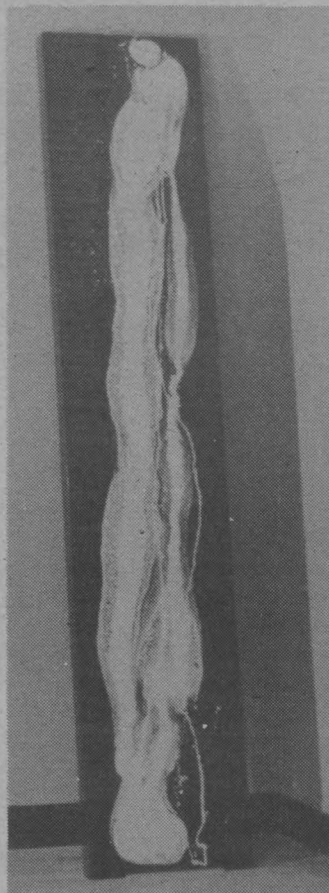
— celebrate Bastille Day Weekend at the **2nd Annual French Festival** at Oak Park in S.B. Beaucoup food, mimes, can-can's, fashion shows, impressionists, antique french autos, and films. Don't miss the huge Eiffel Tower. While you're at it enter your poodle into the Poodle Parade that happens at 5 p.m. each evening. It's free to get in. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Tres hip.

july 16

— **The Life of Emile Zola** will be screened at S.B. Museum of Art at 1 and 3:30 p.m. Go. You get skin cancer at the beach so sit in the dark and look at the wall instead. 963-4364

— **I've Heard Mermaids Singing** at Campbell Hall, 8 p.m. A&L.

If all this isn't enough to keep you all occupied during what is turning out to be a long hot summer then it's either time to find a new love interest or start sampling some of the latest recreational hallucogenics. — your pals Walker and Tony.



John McCracken's "5-11-74" at the Santa Barbara Museum o' Art.

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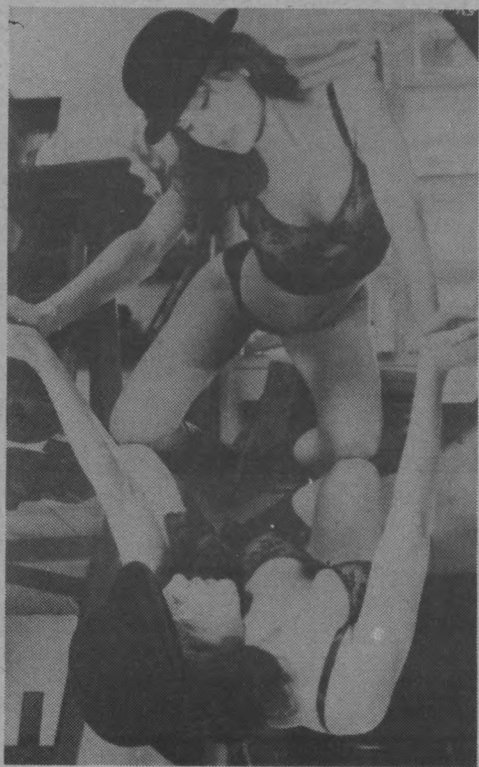
by dawn mermer

In the early '80s, Philip Kaufman artfully directed the film adaptation of Tom Wolfe's "The Right Stuff." 1988 found Kaufman once again doing justice to a famous novel. This time, it is Czech emigre Milan Kundera's "The Unbearable Lightness of Being".

Set in Prague, 1968, it is the story of a brilliant young doctor and chronic womanizer, played by Daniel Day-Lewis of *My Beautiful Laundrette* fame. Although his longtime lover Sabina, played by Swedish actress Lena Olin, is probably the only woman who understands him, he falls deeply in love with a naive photographer. She understands the strength of his love but becomes confused by its complexities as she wrestles with her husband's vice, saying "Life for you is light; it's not so easy for me." Maybe this is what Perry Ferrel meant by the line "Sex is violence." In a volatile mix of love and politics, this passionate tale is played against a backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Prague.

As *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is consistently noted for being a modern erotic masterpiece, the sex in this film, hat and all, is enough to steam up your glasses. Especially notable is the scene where wife and lover get together for a session of nude photography. Throughout the scene, fright, lust and curious yearnings mix, mingle and unfold to give the viewer a beautifully poignant, somewhat comical glimpse into the inner workings of these two very different women.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, despite its somewhat controversial themes, has



8 p.m., July 6, Campbell Hall.

the feeling of an epic. The film moves, changes and swells to all proportions, finally leading to a suitably unlikely (but kind of sappy) ending. I haven't read Kundera's novel, but Kaufman's film is phenomenal in its own right. The experimental cinematography of Ingmar Bergman's sidekick Sven Nykvist is exceptional, and Kaufman's deft handling of the tricky topics of lovemaking's latent violence, the potential violence of true love, and the actual violence occurring outside shows him to be a brave and talented man.

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Shows Starting Friday, July 7: Arlington Batman (PG13) 11:45, 2:20, 5:00, 7:50 No passes or group sales Granada Lethal Weapon II (R) 12:20, 2:40, 5:10, 8:10, 10:15 No passes or group sales Field of Dreams (PG) 1:30, 3:15, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 Indiana Jones... (PG13) 12:25, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 No passes or group sales Plaza de Oro Star Trek V... (PG) At both theatres 3:15, 7:15, 9:30 Sat & Sun also 12 No passes or group sales Riviera Great Balls of Fire (PG13) 1:30, 3:15, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 No passes or group sales		Cinema Lethal Weapon II 1:30, 3:15, 5:30, 8:10, 10:15 No passes or group sales Indiana Jones... (PG13) 12:20, 2:40, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 No passes or group sales Fairview Ghostbusters II (PG) 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 No passes or group sales Batman (PG13) 12:20, 2:40, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30 No passes or group sales Goleta DOUBLE FEATURE Honey I Shrunk the Kids (PG) 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15 No passes or group sales Tummy Trouble (G) 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15 No passes or group sales	
S.B. Drive-In DOUBLE FEATURES Weekend at Bernie's (PG13) 9:15, 1:05 am No passes or group sales Working Girl (R) 11:05 No passes or group sales Karate Kid III (PG) 9: F, S & S also 12:40 am No passes or group sales Troop Beverly Hills (PG) 11:00			

Photography Earns Respect at SB Museum

by walker "guitar" wells

This year marks the 150th anniversary of photography. Strange as it may seem, back in the eighteen thirties if you wanted your picture taken it meant sitting still for about ten hours while a portrait painter whipped out a quick canvas rendition. Thanks to some bright guys who spent too many hours playing with chemicals, we now have a much easier way of capturing the moment. Throughout its short life, photography's status as an art form has been under constant attack. One hundred and fifty years later the debate continues as to whether the "democratic art form" is an art form at all. In various attempts to settle the matter for the time being and to celebrate the anniversary, most major museums across the country have been sponsoring exhibits spanning the history of the medium from the days of huge silver oxide coated glass plates to Cindy Sherman's excursions to the land of the disturbed and disturbing.

Refreshingly, The Santa Barbara Museum of Art has chosen a different tactic. The current exhibit entitled **Attitudes Revisited** focuses on recent changes in aesthetic, attitudes, and technique in an attempt to explore the present day condition of photography as a whole.

Featuring current work by sixteen photographers including Robert D'Allesandro, Richard Ross, Marsha Burns, Francis Murray, and Frank Gohlke, the show is a next decade reflection on the



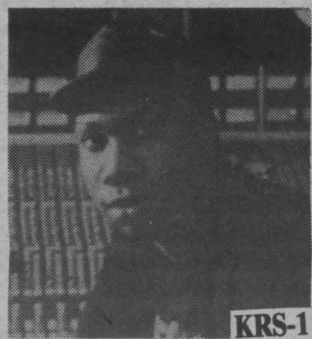
Marsha Burns' "Carlos Rome," 1987.

museum's 1979 exhibit "Attitudes."

Walking through the exhibit, I felt like a kid in a candy store. So many interesting images in one place were a visual feast. The exhibit holds together well; the different styles are easily noticable without one over-shadowing the others and they provide a limited but well-balanced sample of current trends. Richard Ross' large triptych from his "Museology" series is as intriguingly humorous as ever. Both Robert D'Alessandro's "6 Pack Dinosaur" and Frank Golke's "Woman Watering Her Lawn Near Kirkville Mississippi" cleverly capture the ridiculous heart of middle America in their work, while Francis Murray's eye has a definite leaning towards the remotely sinister side of tenderness and sexuality. One photo I found especially fascinating was Jo Ann Callis' "Woman With Wet Hair." Although obviously a staged shot, the tension created through the lighting is accentuated by the thin line of water flowing down the woman's back. The result is a powerful reflection on the sensual beauty of the female form.

Upon leaving the exhibit it was impossible to think anything except that photography is one of our most flexible, vital, and insightful art forms. If the first one hundred and fifty years produced such an incredible body of work, we can only wait anxiously to see what the future has in store. "Attitudes Revisited" is showing until September 10 at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Admission is free.

ROCKBOX



KRS-1

by tony pierce

The Beastie Boys are back, with as much venom, humor and drunken abandon as ever. The stuff that made them Columbia Record's number-one selling debut act — ever. Their new record is called **Paul's Boutique**, but since the Boys are tangled in legal trouble with their founding label Def Jam, who says the group owes money to the company, the album's release date is questionable. Fortunately, CBS has released two singles to radio stations just to prove there actually is new material from the Beasties. And, friends, the noise rocks!

Instead of ripping off AC/DC and Led Zeppelin, this time the Boys steal generously from Parliament's sonic bass booms and funky wā-wa guitar riffs. "Shake Your Rump" will have even those permanent wallflowers tapping their toes. Parents offended by past B.B. songs talking about crack will be glad to know that only Whip-its are glorified in this song. See, the Boys are maturing.

"Hey Ladies" borders on commercial disco-rap without pulling itself under. A funny song about the Beastie's favorite subject, it's full of hooks, cowbells, disco handclaps and rhymes about drinking and being in cars. The

Boys also steal a little from Prince. And like the Purple one, the Beasties make a fine transition between styles. It doesn't look like *Paul's Boutique* will be a disappointment.

"Disappointment" is the only word I can give to Boogie Down Production's new LP **Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop**. It doesn't actually suck, but it isn't half as hard as their first album, or a quarter as tough as NWA's records. BDP leader KRS-1 raps about Black pride and knocks pop-rap and white folks in general, but the real problem I have with him is that he *talks* about how underground real rap is, but his songs are almost as mainstream as DJ Jazzy Jeff's.

"Jah Rules" and "Ghetto Music" are innovative in that there is a lot of roots music going on in it as Ms. Melodie sings sweet tributes to God (Jah), but mixing reggae and rap is nothing new and true roots listeners will be able to recognize the insincerity.

Redhead Kingpin & the FBI doesn't, I repeat, doesn't do the title track to Spike Lee's new movie, but listening to it for a while with all its references to race relations gives me the impression that they tried to sell it to him, but he didn't bite (Spike chose Public Enemy in exchange for directing their new video). Their song "Do the Right Thing," though, is great on its own, even without a movie to back it. If club dancers can get beyond the confrontive lyrics (which isn't that big a hurdle), it should be a hit. The additional production on the 12" is worth the extra bucks for the additional three minutes.

Neil Neil Neil



Yeah, sure it's easy to ridicule Neil Diamond, to wish he'd just throw in the towel once and for all, if you're an idiot. If you're not, the Solitary Man's six-year writing slump and cheesy Dean Martin schlockishness still deserve a few good befuddled gazes to the heavens. *But it still doesn't matter.*

The man has written some seriously great songs since 1966 or so, and he dragged most of 'em out for the second of his record 10-night stand at the Fabulous Forum.



Sure, at times he did annoying things like sing "Yes hands yes oh yes touching hands yes oh yes reaching out yes..." and it was disturbing that the forty to fifty-something audience responded loudest to "Coming to America," complete with flag-raising.

But this is still the guy who wrote "Pot Smoker's Song" and a whole lot of groovy numbers about drinking wine and hanging out. And he's still got those lungs o' leather to make you believe that he'll be wearing those blue jeans forever. Besides, now that Elvis isn't doing any shows, Neil is the next best thing.

Phranc

(Continued from p.4A)

When I first heard Michelle Shocked's stuff, I felt as if I was having a Phranc flashback of sorts. Both women look equally tomboyish and the tonal qualities of their voices are in many ways similar, but the more I hear Phranc's music, the better I have come to understand her unique talent. Unlike Shocked, who with her Dylanesque lyrics and bluesy guitar playing is a folk musician in the traditional style, Phranc is more of a sociologist with a guitar. Her music doesn't follow any specific style — one song is salsa, the next is jazzy, while the next might be just a folk song. And her lyrics don't follow the

hey-let's-tell-a-story pattern, either. She spends most of her time exploring the world of feelings, unwritten cultural rules, and that feeling in the pit of your stomach that you just cannot understand.

All in all, *I Enjoy Being a Girl* is an album that will charm with its versatility and great songwriting long before you get around to thinking about the message spinning around between your ears. Maybe it's a good thing that Phranc missed out on the big folk wave; she might have been caught up, overlooked and forgotten. So next time you're shoppin' for a new piece of wax, take a look at the ridiculously airbrushed face of Phranc, America's favorite Jewish lesbian folksinger. Enjoy.