

# Violin about as boring as a book can get

BY LYNN DECKER

Violin

Anne Rice

Knopf Canada

*Violin* is the latest offering from Anne Rice, and to all those who are expecting another addictive, tantalizing novel like the *Vampire Chronicles* — think again.

I was very eager to read *Violin* and I set myself up for disappointment. If it were not for

the fact that the story took place in New Orleans, as most of her novels do, I wouldn't have even known it was by the same author. This was about as boring as a book can get.

The first half of the novel is filled with endless descriptions of music and thoughts going on inside the mind of the main character, Triana. Nauseating run-on sentences pervade this novel, such as "It was the sea again, that ocean clear and blue and frothing wild into the flopping prancing ghosts with every wave that hit the beach". The book

is filled with page after page of paragraphs that have no dialogue and tell no story.

The book has a few brief interesting moments when Rice actually allows us the details of Triana's miserable life; from her first husband having an affair with her sister, to her second husband dying of AIDS.

Yet, sure enough, just as you find yourself absorbed in Triana's despair, Rice again writes with lavish descriptions of Triana's dreams of the clear, blue, frothing

ocean, and you lapse back into a coma.

Triana is being haunted by a Russian, violin-playing ghost named Stefan. She steals his phantom violin from him so he rips her into his ghostly world to prove why she should return his precious Stradivarius.

Stefan transports her back to Vienna to a time when Beethoven was alive and taught him to play the violin. He shows her how he gave up everything for his Strad, including his life. It is these few

chapters that save the novel from being a total waste of time. They are riveting chapters and somewhat reminiscent of the classic Anne Rice style.

If you are a hardcore Rice fan, you may be able to squeeze some pleasure out of this novel, but I doubt it. Wait for the next one. As for those who haven't delighted in Rice's stories yet, this isn't the one to start with — go grab yourself a copy of *Interview with a Vampire* and stay miles away from this *Violin*.

## CD REVIEW EXTRAVAGANZA

### REVIEWS



### + SPEWS

Melt

Artificial Joy Club

Interscope

This past summer, Alberta's airwaves were polluted with the usual sort of happy pop-land feel-good kind of tunes; each one sounding the same as the last. Now imagine the universal relief when Artificial Joy Club's "Sick and Beautiful" appeared one fine day. My initial thought was "wow, this song is truly strange and twisted. I love it!"

If you are a sucker for originality, rejoice now because this band scores double points for original lyrics. It's not so much that the lyrics are intensely deep or poetic in a conventional way, but more whimsical and random without being just plain nonsensical. It is refreshing to find a band that can find a good lyrical balance.

As for the musical quality of the album, I'm afraid I was a wee bit disappointed to find that some of the album fell into that typical "alternative rock" category. I was hoping for a little more variety in their sound, but what this album has is your typical line-up of mostly mid-tempo songs with a few ballads strewn in between. My favourite song on the album is "I Say", an attitude-filled tune concerning not giving a shit about other people's opinions. It made me want to mosh gracefully around the room.

So, all in all, I would buy *Melt* — if it were on sale. It isn't the most original record I've ever heard, by

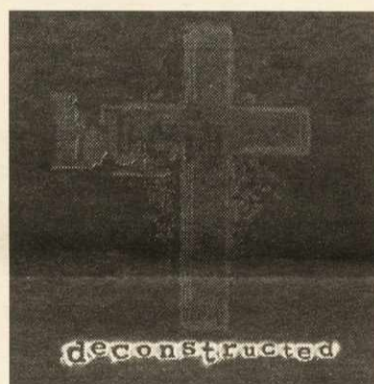
far, but it had groovy lyrics and rocking tunes, if you like typical "alternative rock." This is technically their third album (the previous two were released under the band name Sal's Birdland), so they should have been able to come up with a sound that's a bit more distinct.

JANET FRENCH

Deconstructed

Bush

Interscope/Universal



"Like Jo-joe the idiot circus boy with his pretty new pet."

We can all remember these words blared by Chris Farley in the movie *Tommy Boy*, and those words are the best ones to describe *Deconstructed*. The band has taken perfectly good music and killed it by setting it to a techno/electronica background.

The album consists of various Bush songs from their previous two albums which have been mixed with dance beats.

The songs would be good if they were just plain Bush songs or dance songs, but together the tunes pump forth a mass of muddled garbage.

It is a shame to see Bush trying to give way to popular culture by turning their songs into rave music. While the rave culture is becoming increasingly popular among Bush's target audience, their devoted fans would probably respect the band more if they had stuck with their original style of music.

Both *Sixteen Stone* and *Razorblade Suitcase* met with success and elevated Bush to a level of fame and popularity. However, this album doesn't even include

new songs by Bush. All of the songs are simply remixes of older songs. And most of the mixes which accompany the songs are decent, but by way of dance music, they aren't particularly inventive.

The bottom line is that Bush is not Prodigy and they should definitely not attempt to become them. They are a good band, but *Deconstructed* was not a good idea.

In the future Bush should stick to rock and let other bands take care of the electronica side of music. It just goes to show that you can't have your cake and eat it too.

Better luck next time.

PATRICK SHAUNESSY

So Much For the Afterglow

Everclear

EMI

*So Much For the Afterglow* is Everclear's follow-up to the somewhat popular 1995 release *Sparkle and Fade*.

There are certainly consistencies in Everclear's repertoire, for both albums tend to address the more negative aspects of humanity. Although *So Much For the Afterglow* is another album with tracks about subjects like abuse, faults, and disappointment, the music itself is not all so depressing as it may seem.

On this album, the band has



become a bit more experimental and has incorporated sampling and sound clips as parts of songs, which certainly adds spice to what would be another "alternative rock" CD. However, a die-hard fan relayed that he thought Everclear was trying too hard to be creative. Perhaps this is true, since their style is somewhat homogeneous at times.

All in all, this album isn't amazing. It doesn't bore me, but it isn't growing on me all that much either.

*So Much For the Afterglow* is

really an album for Everclear fans (and Everclear fans only). First time explorers should really check out *Sparkle and Fade* first.

JANET FRENCH

The 18th Letter: Always and Forever

Rakim

Universal

Due to all the shortcomings on Rakim's highly anticipated return to the rap world, it is easy to overlook its bright spots. It's easy to ignore those occasions where the New York legend not only escapes mediocrity, but displays the flashes of brilliance that in his prime earned him Jordan-esque esteem. *The 18th Letter* serves as official notice that hip-hop's most revered MC has lost a step.

Rakim Allah established himself at the forefront of an avant-garde movement in the mid 1980s that would come to be known as the New School. His trademark raspy drawl begged comparisons to the sax of Coltrane, or the keys of Monk. The R's claims to possessing intellectual and esoteric knowledge of spiritual matters went undisputed. Most of all, the microphone fiend brought to the mic an unparalleled dignity — one that Nas or Wu-Tang could never match, even as they mimicked other aspects of Rakim's style.

The album, as stated, is not without its moments. The Pete Rock-produced "The Saga begins" pleases lyrically, as does "New York (Ya Out There)". "When I'm Flowin'" would have been a satisfactory cut on any of Ra's other albums, but the overall effort is sub-par.

Maybe if Rakim had forsaken mainstream distinction and worked solely with independent producers, he may have found the creativity this album sorely lacks. Or maybe if he had collaborated with disciples of other musical schools, he may

have been able to pull off something innovative and dynamic. Maybe. So it is there that Rakim fails.

'Maybe' should never have to be used in conjunction with the work of a man who was once the greatest MC in the land.

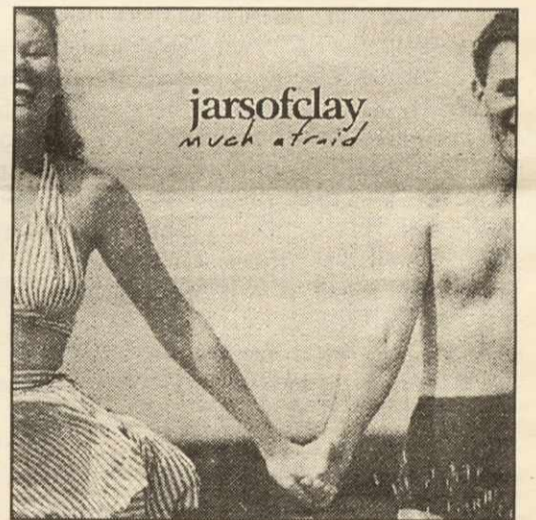
SOHRAB FARID

Much Afraid

Jars of Clay

Essential Records

I was introduced to the music of Jars of Clay while travelling across the country with a group of people who considered my



musical choices (Jann Arden and Alanis Morissette) sacreligious. Christian music, be it rock, rap, or gospel, was the order of the day. *Jars of Clay* turned out to be our only common ground.

The band has a unique way of embodying Christian morals in their music without screaming God, guilt, or sin at their listeners. It was a refreshing change.

Their new album, *Much Afraid*, was strangely disappointing, however.

While I am a fan of secular music, I was disappointed to see that they have dropped the religious tone from the majority of their songs. While it can't be denied that their music does not contradict Christian values, they appear to be selling out somewhat in an attempt to get more secular airplay. The only exception to this is the final song on their CD, entitled "Hymn", which doesn't follow the trend of the rest of the album and sounds more like, well, a hymn.

The music itself, though, is a wonderfully mellow mix; and very enjoyable, for both Christian and secular audiences.

NATALIE MACLELLAN

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