

CD REVIEW EXTRAVAGANZA



Tremolo
Blue Rodeo
WEA/Warner

With *Tremolo*, Blue Rodeo has begun to discover that improving on perfection is indeed a trying task.

In the past years, Blue Rodeo has written many amazing tunes, some of which 99.7548% of Canadians know well and probably have heard in an elevator or doctor's office or hummed unconsciously on occasion.

With the release of *Nowhere to Here* a scant two years ago, *Tremolo* is a premature birth, with some tracks that seem like potential ideas for good songs if only given the chance to age.

It isn't that this CD sounds bad, because it certainly does not, it is just a little less diverse than some of their past creations. There are some songs that are certainly impressive. For instance, "Fallen From Grace" and the first single, "It Could Happen To You" are both done in that comforting classical Blue Rodeo style we have all grown to love.

But, although a song does not have to be uplifting to be good or meaningful, the percentage of slow paced bluesy tracks seems to have doubled on this album from previous ones; perhaps someone got dumped. However, as with most music, the more you listen to it, the more it grows on you.

It would be an overstatement to say that *Tremolo* is a disappointment, but at the same time, it is not Blue Rodeo's best

piece of work.

JANET FRENCH

Troublizing
Ric Ocasek
Columbia

Ric Ocasek's career as the Cars' vocalist has influenced his new album, *Troublizing*, as the disk contains upbeat hooks and tons of energy.

Troublizing has eleven tracks which simultaneously exploit eighties new wave and nineties pop. Ocasek had help from friends Melissa Auf der Maur (Hole), Ira Elliot (Nada Surf) and



Billy Corgan (the Smashing Pumpkins) in finding that modern edge.

To say this is innovative music is false, but it is ear candy, loaded with pop riffs, power chords and all the bravado of Ocasek's earlier work.

Despite Ocasek's obvious enthusiasm, endorsing this disc wholeheartedly would be difficult. *Troublizing* contains inane lyrics (like those that plagued some Cars songs).

There is also a definite difference between the tracks that feature Corgan and those that do not. Songs such as "The Next Right Moment" and "Situation", on which Corgan plays guitar, have a fullness that isn't found on the rest of the record. Negatively, the final track, "Asia Minor", which Corgan wrote, is a piece of electronica which has no business on the CD; the very fact that it is the last track seems to imply that it is an add-on, and that is what it

feels like.

Even though the record carries some biting tracks like "Society Trance", which examines heavier social issues, Ocasek does little to deviate from typical power pop.

Cars fans will dig this CD, and so will fans of post-grunge pop, but it's hard to say if anyone else will.

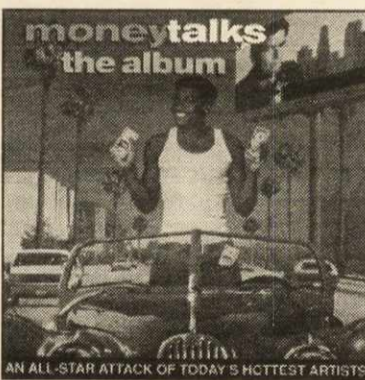
GREG MCFARLANE

Money Talks: The Album
Various Artists
Arista/ BMG

As the title of the album says, this is "An All-star Attack of Today's Hottest Artists", and the artists in question are the phattest that hiphop and R&B have to offer. Can you seriously go wrong with the Refugee Camp All-Stars, Barry

White, Faith Evans, Puff Daddy, Mary J. Blige, Lil' Kim, Naughty By Nature, SWV, Mase, Deborah Cox, and many more all on the same record?

If you're a fan of hiphop, you'll love this album! "Avenues", the remake of the '80s Eddy Grant hit "Electric Avenue" by the Refugee Camp All Stars, is so sweet I need an insulin shot. The Barry White and Faith Evans collaboration, "My Everything", is also great. Barry adds the right touch of soul to the song, showing that he's still one of the best R&B/



Soul singers out there. We also get a reminder of what Barry did back in the day with "You're the First, the Last, My Everything", from 1974, reappearing on this album.

What's interesting is Puff Daddy's song with Black Rob, "No Way Out". That's the title of Puff's own album, but appears on this CD as well. This joint shows off a harder edge for Puffy than most commercial hiphop listeners are

used to.

Also live is the Lil' Kim jam "Money Talks", which has the Big Mamma doing her same thing, but soundin' good nonetheless.

The money track on the album, though, is Mase's "Feel So Good", which you'll be hearin' at a party near you, if you haven't heard it yet. No matter whether you like the Bad Boy family or not, you have to admit that this boy has skills.

If you're looking for a good album to add to your collection, let your money talk, and pick up *Money Talks: The Album*.

ASHIR SIDDIQUI

Forest for the Trees
Forest for the Trees
Dreamworks

My goodness, these Forest for the Trees people are a strange lot.

one hand.

The lyrics are lost on the monotonous tunes of some songs, which is a complete shame because the lyrics are pretty snazzy. The best songs on this album are definitely "Dream" and "Wet Paint", mainly because they are uplifting and catchy.

If you are looking for something totally weird and funky, go pick this one up, or hey, maybe just get a They Might Be Giants CD instead: they're weirder and have better tunes.

JANET FRENCH

FireCracker
Lisa Loeb
Geffen

If you have heard Lisa Loeb's previous big hit "Stay" then you have heard every musical component in this album. Maybe Loeb couldn't think of a good new song so she thought she would re-release "Stay" with a few new sets of lyrics.

The whole album is cheese and wine — the no-name brand kinds.

This CD is nothing but acoustic guitars and soft piano, set to lyrics about every lousy male Lisa ever screwed; sickening sweet molasses goup about a sex life I wasn't interested in. The rest of our lives could be spent discussing all the ways Lisa rewrites the same stupid song, but I doubt she put enough time into this album to warrant our efforts.

TAMARA BOND

K-Ci and JoJo
Love Always
MCA Records

In case you don't recognize the names K-Ci and JoJo, they are none other than the Haley brothers from the top record selling group Jodeci. The last time you may have heard of them was on the single "How Do You Want It", by the late Tupac Shakur.

After Jodeci's "The Show", "The Hotel", and "The After Party", K-Ci and JoJo decided to leave the group for a while and experiment on their own. Their first solo CD is the result of that experiment. The sound produced is geared towards the slow and mellow tracks Jodeci was originally known for, rather than the party jams which they seemed to concentrate on in their more recent projects.

There is no question as to the quality of the vocals on this album. The Haley brothers dynamic sound illuminates every track to a classier level of R & B than what we've been accustomed to, especially when compared to groups like H-Town, AZ Yet and others. The best songs on the album are "You Bring Me Up", "Baby Come Back", and the bonus joint from the *Bulletproof* soundtrack, "How Could You".

If you folks are out there lookin' for an album to get your groove on to, then K-Ci and JoJo may just be the one. After all, you don't always have to listen to Boyz II Men and Keith Sweat.

ASHIR SIDDIQUI

REVIEWS



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This self-titled creation is quite the mixture of everything. Two recurring themes are R&B/rap sort of rhythms and bagpipe music. Its sort of like Ashley-McIsaac-meets-Coolio stuff, and throw-in-some-backup-singers-while-we're-at-it.

Believe it or not, this combination actually works, creating this catchy groove that reminds you why the repeat button is on your remote. A lot of tracks aren't quite as easy to describe, as they fall into categories ranging from funky to just plain monotonous. Sampling is used quite a bit and it effectively creates the mood and enforces ideas. The album has a plethora of great originality, with more strange sounds than you could shake a stick at, but one big downfall is that they sometimes leave out a melody. Songs like "Ohm", "Infinite Cow" and "Fall" have great rhythm, sound effects and beat, but one can count the number of notes used in all three songs collectively on

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