

AURAL SECTION



skinny puppy

Puppy's ribs are showing

by "Switch"

Skinny Puppy
Too Dark Park
Netzwerk/Capitol Records

The emaciated young dog returns to the world of doom gloom destruction, dragging a piece of half rotted meat as an offering. Many will welcome its return and worship this god in canine form but I refuse to succumb to the questionable delights of this Vancouver band.

Skinny Puppy are popular and they sell albums. They are played in clubs and they played two nights at the Concert Hall to accommodate fans. But why?

I'm not sure there is one answer but I'll give it a shot.

Skinny Puppy are the creation of the death doom and destruction movement who have been begging for a politically based band with no musical talent to spew meaningful lyrics out in groans, screams and drones over feedback guitars, repetitive bass and various machines.

Skinny Puppy are an Industrial Gothic band with a commercially pleasing candy coating which is supposed to make them easier to swallow, like vitamins except not quite as healthy.

The new album *Too Dark Park* is probably the most listenable of Puppy's music to date. It is more



together production wise, more solid and has prettier packaging than any of its predecessors.

The lyrics are meaningful in the "have to think about and hypothesize what they're trying to say" form.

Musically, (being one that listens to all sorts of music and who likes discordant music when its creative) "Grave Wisdom" is the only track which wins me over. The rest of the album is bland, nothing outstanding. I suppose if you want background noise, this is the disc for you, but that's not the point to *Too Dark Park*

It is obvious to me that **Skinny Puppy** does have something to meaningful to say, anyone who goes to their concerts will know that.

Skinny Puppy have very strong ideas about important issues like lab testing, animal protection and environmental issues. My biggest problem with them is that their music detracts from their message and I question what are they really trying to do. Spreading the word can be accomplished using various methods. Puppy's music does not educate as well as a pamphlet might. Maybe they should donate all the proceeds of albums and concerts to the appropriate organizations or give contact lists on their record sleeve. But this does not happen. Yet again commercialism, and greed are linked to relevant issues, obscuring the real political concerns.

Why do people listen to **Skinny Puppy**? To reinforce their own political ideals? To feel that someone famous agrees with them? Whatever the answer, if you like dogs with ribs showing you'll probably like *Too Dark Park*. If you find them commercial and/or fluffy — check out some old Swans or some of the noisy European industrial stuff which may not be as pretty or as tame but at least they say something new.

Oh Yeah, the cover (by Jim Cummins) is really cool. See . . . you can tape it to your wall and call it ART

The Dream Warriors are here

by Billy Ross

Dream Warriors
And Now the Legacy Begins
Island Records

Frankly speaking, I should not be a rap fan.

Being a person who likes a mixture of J.S. Bach and Axel Rose, odds are I'd be more at home listening to **Skid Row** or **Lines'N'Noses**. However, I'll be brief, blunt, and brutally honest. I've been anticipating the release of *And Now the Legacy Begins* since Christ was a cowboy.

I absolutely loved this whole tape. Not because it's a CanCon thing; or because it samples that old childhood dreary chestnut TV game show "Definition" *(POP QUIZ: What was Jim Perry's NATURAL hair color? Where, exactly in beautiful suburban Agincourt, was the studio? Do we care?)* and not because I got this cassette for free. No, simply put, this tape kicks some serious butt.

The **Dream Warriors** are a local crew who have one goal or so it seems. They're concerned with putting some substance and credibility into the Canadian hip-hop/rap scene. This is quite refreshing seeing as most of Canada's other rap/hip-hop artists have gone the way of American-Euro commercialistic sell-out (read: Maestro Fresh Wes, Kon Kan, etc.).

Proving the first single (the cool and dancy "Wash Your Face In My Sink") was no fluke, DW deliver 15 solid tracks throughout their rookie Island release *And Now the Legacy Begins*.

Cuts such as "Follow Me Not", "Mystery of the 12-Sided Dice", and the current single "Ludi" tell listeners to discover their roots, be proud of their culture, and develop their own personas; not to follow in the footsteps of others. The sneaky thing is that while they're educating, they get your feet dancing! Even when

they're dissin' some sucker meeces, they're being nice about it.

The songwriting here is top-notch. We aren't assaulted with the typical reference to homeboys, fly bitches, 5.0s, professional sports teams (read LA Raiders "real men wear black"), or male sexual organs.

In fact, Capital Q is against all of that . . . saying, "I walk with a gold cane/ A gold brain/ And no gold chain . . ." They are more than Kango caps and jumpsuits, big clocks and baby bottles, or Bally rings on their fingers.

The lyrics as a whole are akin to the preachings of **Chuck D.**, **Ice T.**, and **Grandmaster Flash** circa "The Message" or "White Lies". Realistic pictures are painted. This ain't no house party. This is schooling.

The sampling here is top of the line as well. Going against the usual buzz saw police siren james brown scream in a raid whistle chick panting nasty ass drum machine

dog calling whistles a Saturday nite at the ex on the double loopersonic version of a hangover, the samples blend in well with the songs.

Using keyboards, drum machines, and tape loops of various other bands such as **The Tom Tom Club**, **Parliament/Funkadelic**, soca faves **Arro**, and **Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five** to round out the songs, one has to be impressed.

On some tracks the instruments are real; which is no small feat considering studio costs these days. The only track that really falls victim to the above mentioned monstrosity is "U Could Get Arrested" (obviously these guys went to the Prince school of song titles). Yet, how could anybody who loops George Clinton in their stuff be wrong? If you're going to steal, steal from the best I always say.

Getting technical, the various producers (there are about nine or so, all from the local hip-hop scene,

including Ron Nelson Toronto's hip-hop/rap/dance guru, the Beat Factory Production crew, fellow rapper and **Ice T** clone HIV, as well as Maximum 60) could have brought the vocals up just a tad in some places and lots more in others.

Sometimes the songs come across as having too many chefs in the kitchen; therefore the soup is spoiled. That's too bad. Better production in areas could make this tape really shine.

No heavy attitude. No flash-in-the-pan here-today-gone-later-today inkings. No style without substance. No predictability. No bullshit. The **Dream Warriors** are here.

They're for real. Dissin' the suckers. Educating the fools. Kicking more ass than a twenty-mule team. The legacy has begun and it's too late to stop it. I follow the path or be left out in the cold. There are no in-betweens.

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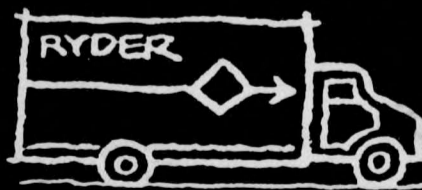
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