

**Ballbreaker**  
AC/DC  
Atlantic/Warner

AC/DC is NOT a band known for their musical variety. And their fans wouldn't have it any other way.

They're sure to be pleased with *Ballbreaker*, an 11-track CD on which any song could be mistaken for one on any of their previous albums. Little has changed since they made their 10-million selling *Back in Black*, and it is likely little ever will.

This is not always a BAD thing, however, and AC/DC can still put out some kick-ass albums such as their last record, 1991's "Razor's Edge." However, it's just not enough on *Ballbreaker*, and the album sometimes lapses into boring.

"Harder Than A Rock," the first single, so obviously points this out. The first thing you hear, the song's "hook," is a trebly little rhythm that is neither as interesting as "For Those About To Rock" or as energetic sounding as "Thunderstruck" — it's simple and lackadaisical. I find it a strange choice for a single, because there are much better songs on *Ballbreaker*. "Furor," for in-

stance, is a tune that seems to break the set mold of an AC/DC song — it doesn't sound so regurgitated. This song is, however, the only example of this which stands out in my mind. Everything else has been done ten times before.

The band puts on the expected performance, with Angus Young's superb lead guitar being the major contributor. Brian Johnson's voice is its usual screeching self, though he lets it down to actually sound normal on "Boogie Man" and "Whiskey On The Rocks." This IS different, and is a good thing, because I was beginning to wonder if he actually talked like that.

This is simply another mediocre offering from a top-rated band. It's nothing special. However, if you are an avid fan, and wouldn't have AC/DC any other way than the way they've always been, then buy *Ballbreaker*. It's definitely for you.

**BRANDON BUTLER**

**Sparkle and Fade**  
Everclear  
Capitol/EMI

Ever listen to a CD for one song and then find out later that you

love the whole darn thing?

Well, that's happening to me with Everclear's *Sparkle and Fade*.

There are some songs on this album that, to be honest, I don't think I'll quite come to love, but the body of work as a whole has tremendous appeal. The band kind of reminds me of a cleaner, more pop-rocky Nirvana, without the dark-hearted depression of Kurt Cobain. Singer/guitarist Art Alexakis writes from a lot of the same drugged-out experiences, but doesn't wallow in self-pity. Sure, the lyrics sometimes get a little cheesy, but if you prefer a sharp, clear taste to a bitter one, then you may find Everclear (a 180 proof liquor) to your liking.

Lead vocalist Alexakis sings with a slurring, swaying voice that's on the edge of whining but never becomes a bother. The harmonies are understated and serve to make the vocals cut more.

Alexakis alternates between clean guitar jangling and distorted riffing, with expert rhythmic backing from bassist Craig Montoya and drummer Greg Eklund. The songs on *Sparkle and Fade* similarly leap from soft into roaring. It's these transitions that make a lot of the music exciting. The open-

ing "Electra Made Me Blind," "Heroin Girl," and "Nehalem" all rock alongside the steadier flow of "You Make Me Feel Like A Whore" and "Heartspark Dollarsign." The songs deal with personal feelings and experiences that range from interracial relationships to having a friend OD. As I've listened to the record more, the appeal of the tunes on *Sparkle and Fade* has grown from indifference to enjoyment to nod-along, air-guitar bliss.

*Sparkle and Fade* was released last year to great press after Capitol Records signed the Oregon band and re-released their indie *World of Noise* in 1994. The Canadian Music Journal voted S&F the #3 "Record That Should Have Been Huge" of 1995. I saw Everclear on TV a long time ago and they seemed like pretty decent guys who didn't have agendas or egos; they just wanted to play and tell their story. And even though the kiddie shots of the band members on the album cover make the band out to be too pop-cute, Everclear come across as pop-real. They even look honest.

By the way, the song which I wanted this album for is "Santa Monica," which is coming into heavier rotation on MuchMusic.

It's got one of the coolest, not-a-care-in-the-world, neutrally optimistic choruses ever: "We can live beside the ocean/Leave the fire behind/Swim out past the breakers/And watch the world die."

I can see it.

**TIM COVERT**

**Scatman's World**  
Scatman John  
Iceberg/RCA/BMG

OK, so "Scatman," Europe's ultimate summer hit for the 90s, eventually hit Halifax last year...just in time for Halloween. So every drunk clubber thought that Scatman John was the bee's knees or whatever...for about five seconds. So he looks like your father's unattractive high school chum...in a somewhat alcohol-infused way. SO WHAT?

*Scatman's World* is a lovely (yes, lovely) collection of meaningless little ditties about bugger all. And, I warn you, it is highly addictive. One listen and you catch yourself humming tunes like "Only You" in the shower. Or, even worse, in public.

For you fans of useless information, 'scata' in Greek means 'shit.' And shit it is. Just listen to the intro, "Welcome To Scotland."

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