



Emancipation

The-Artist-Formerly-Known-As-Prince
Paisley Park

The-Artist-Formerly-Known-As-Prince (TAFKAP) has released another album and my initial response was, "Lord, not again." An elder statesman of the global pop scene, TAFKAP has recently been a victim of his own self-indulgent whims (the name thing) and some very average music — average for him anyways. All of this has left his fans a little on edge, in fact,



the "name thing" has lost its cuteness and is really starting to piss me off.

Representing oneself with a symbol is a novel idea, and the choice of a symbol that embraces androgyny seems appropriate, but dammit, why not create a verbal companion to it? TAFKAP is not any kind of name for a guy to have (or a writer to write).

The album is a three-CD set entitled *Emancipation* and it presents a variety of music that is as diverse as TAFKAP's wardrobe. Disc one is dominated mostly by toned-down gangsta rap, and some pop-ish dance tunes that are reminiscent of the TAFKAP of old (Prince). The TAFKAP of present also hops on the swing-music-fad-bandwagon for a finger-snapping little ditty called "Courtin' Time" that could put Sinatra right back in hospi-

tal. "Damned If I Do" is TAFKAP's attempt at alternative pop music — unbearable without a few Birdland drinks to wash it down.

The artist also seems a bit upset that Disney has picked Phil Collins to write songs for their upcoming movies, but the song "Betcha By Golly Wow" proves that TAFKAP could have done the job. With lines like, "Never thought fairy tales came true/But they do, when I'm near you/You're a genie in disguise," the song reaches unprecedented levels of schmaltz — leaving Disney and Phil eating dust.

Disc two is mostly swanky R+B stuff and if that crap turns your crank then there is definitely enough of it on each of these discs to make the set a worthwhile purchase. I know some people like it as background noise to sex, but personally it puts me to sleep (not really the desired effect).

With song titles like "Sex In The Summer", "One Kiss At A Time", "Dreamin' About U" and "Let's Have A Baby", you can imagine the sap a listener is forced to endure. The song title "Curious Child" doesn't really fit with the other romantic titles, unless...TAFKAP hasn't learned anything from that ugly Michael Jackson incident.

Disc Three, with only a couple of exceptions, rocks. The funky sound of songs like "Slave", "Face Down" and "Style", and the 70's horn sound of "Sleep Around", make it a pleasant reward for having survived discs one and two.

There are some great tunes on *Emancipation*, unfortunately they're buried under too many layers of fat. Maybe if TAFKAP had trimmed that fat down to one CD, *Emancipation* would have been a worthwhile purchase.

ANDREW SIMPSON

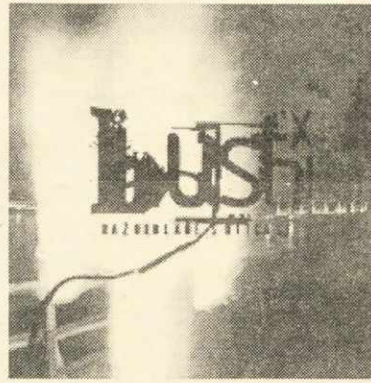
Razorblade Suitcase

Bush X
Trauma Records

Three million copies of their first album sold worldwide, helping make a name for themselves in the music world. Following in the footsteps of fellow British bands Oasis and Radiohead, Bush X appear to be making it big. The Media are constantly throwing

them into our face. So how will their second album sell? Will they reach even higher levels of stardom?

Razorblade Suitcase is a changeable album. Vocalist and guitarist Gavin Rossdale, who writes most of the material, is leading the band towards the sale of a



million records. The influence of bands like Pearl Jam and Soundgarden is evident in their music — Bush X seems to almost feed off these bands.

From moody, mellow moments to hardhitting times the album and the songs change as they flow along. An example of this is their first single "Swallowed". It starts off slow and progressively gets heavier and louder. This is much the same as many of the other songs on the album. "Insect Kin" reminds me of Nirvana, both in music and vocals. Some of the best tracks are "Personal Holloway" and "Straight No Chaser" along with "Swallowed", but the album seems to become obsolete and boring towards the end.

STUART MCMILLAN

Enigma³ — Le Roi est Mort.

VIVE le Roi!
Enigma
Virgin

"Roger, you're a one niner at three zero." The sounds reappear. The body exhales. The world of Enigma returns. The beat hypnotises. The vibrations massage. The chanting continues. The mind is lost and found. The time distorts. "Things are changing,

but nothing changes, and still there are changes."

What kind of stupid saying is that? If you're sober, if your attention is elsewhere, *Enigma³* will make you laugh. What you will hear is some of the dumbest sayings and most hilariously irrelevant thoughts. These are eloquently combined with the incoherent yelling of people who sound like they are being castrated, choked, or having their tongue removed.

Hold on lover girl, we're going to make sweet love with a heavy slant towards the tasty. I'm going to take you somewhere else. "Smell your skin, feel your breath." Oh, baby, feel the beat, let your mind go free. Just remember the colours. It was "TNT for the Brain".

From another angle, the sounds generated by *Enigma³* facilitate a study environment conducive to efficient and effective work — the result of a hypnotic pace and incomprehensible lyrics.

Enigma is a European world which is "enlightened" by the rest of the human, spiritual, and environmental world in which we all live. Some love the mystical sounds, slow techno beat, and thought provocation which Enigma successfully creates. Others find it stupid or even funny. If you are from the latter group, I suggest listening to this album when your mind is high (by natural means is sufficient), and body relaxed. In such a state, you will most enjoy this CD. For those of you who are familiar with this state, *Enigma³* does not go beyond what was presented in Enigma's two previous CD's — it almost sounds like a re-mix.

DAVID LEES

Soul On Ice

Ras Kass
Priority

While it shouldn't come as any surprise to fans of Ras Kass that an entire album of his controversial brand of underground West Coast hip-hop would be so worthwhile, many an

eyebrow in our part of the continent should be raised.

What makes *Soul On Ice*, Ras Kass' debut entry into the commercial hip hop wasteland, so significant is its how much the potentially objectionable lyrics are emphasized. The sheer volume of lyrics is so large, and at times undecipherable — if not for the liner notes much of Ras Kass' message would be lost.

The song that really resonates is the eight-minute "Nature of the Threat". This piece chronicles the plight of the African since the dawn of mankind, and allows Ras to shed light on popular misconceptions: "Christians get your facts right/'Cause Christ was not his name/That's Greek for 'one who was anointed'/Yoshua Ben Yosef was his name, do Christians know this?". The song not only comes off as anti-organized religion, but is also implicitly racist and homophobic. Its story also spans an amazing amount of time. Needless to say, the song conjures up a variety of emotions.

The production on the album is, for the most part, barely sufficient to hold interest, save for a few tracks. The most aurally pleasing song on the album is the dark "Etc...", where Ras Kass best matches lyrics and flow and a dope beat: "Relevant to relentless sentences if renegade rebels resent this wicked syntax/Then jacks! re-vert to re-revolution Ras re-verse re-verberates re-volvin with written re-talliation". On "Sonset", the Bay Area's ShortKut drops by to remind everyone "where the world's pre-eminent DJs come from. But as for the song "Drama", I'm baffled as to why Coolio was chosen as the album's only guest MC, considering the plethora of talented MCs out there.

If one is willing to take a grain of salt with some parts of this album (you might as well bring a salt shaker), *Soul On Ice* can be, as I said, worthwhile. For those who lack patience, or who are not interested in a lyric-intensive album of this nature, the album certainly will fail to satisfy.

SOHRAB FARID

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I am.
CANADIAN