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arts

Six CD reviews!!

by Michael Graham

This past summer I found myself in the surprising position of having a job (albeit part time) and money. Enough money, in fact, to afford some cds. I picked six cds which were bought over the summer to review. Some of them aren't recent releases, but they were new to me and haven't been reviewed here before.

Joe Satriani, *The Extremist*

What impresses me most about Satriani is the consistently impressive arrangements of his songs. On most tunes Satriani lays down very solid rhythm tracks to play over. This, combined with his perfect tone and incredible solos gives the songs a very rich and full sound.

The Extremist is a collection of some of the best instrumental rock guitar tunes you will ever find. There are two beautifully melodic songs as well; "Tears in the Rain", an acoustic, is especially good. There isn't much to complain

Uzeb, *Noisy Nights*

I really set myself up for a disappointment by thinking that Uzeb in the studio would be as great to listen to as Uzeb live. On first listen, Uzeb's jazz-fusion instrumentals sounded lifeless and over produced. Some of the songs on *Noisy Nights* still come across that way, but I have grown to enjoy about 2/3's of the cd. The title track is great - with amazing fretless piccolo bass playing from Alain Caron (who I consider to be the best all-around bassist in the world). Overall however, I would have to recommend spending a few extra bucks for their more recent, two hour, double live cd *World Tour 1990* which is unbelievably good.

Faith No More, *Angel Dust*

Are they rock? Are they metal? Who cares? They make great music and *Angel Dust* is proof. This is a great album - a very strong follow-up to *The Real Thing* and I think that it is slightly better. It has a bit more crunch than the previous album (although they do a very mellow rendition of the theme from

pinned down I would say that they are good alternative rock-pop. They sort of sound like a distorted version of the Pixies with Ian Curtis-like vocals. This cd was worth the price (so to speak) just for their version of "Falling" from the *Twin Peaks* soundtrack.

Beastie Boys, *Check Your Head*

The masters of rhyming, scratching and sampling and are back - and this time they even play their own instruments - very well in fact! *Check Your Head* is an extremely diverse album with rap, punk (they started out as a punk-hardcore band), funk, and great instrumental jams. Only about 3 of the 20 tracks are in any way weak. The other 17 just ask to be blasted out your speakers at full volume!

Check Your Head isn't quite the insane sampling spree that *Paul's Boutique* was, but there are lots of completely off the wall samples, which will make you do many a double take. It is obvious that the band put a lot effort into their playing for



Grand total; \$95.28... I worked 12 hours for this!?

about with this cd - it lives up to Satriani's previous stuff and has taken up semi-permanent residence in my cd player.

Sonic Youth, *Dirty*

This cd is ok. Not great, not bad, just ok. When I first played it I thought it was just boring grunge, but it has grown on me ever so slightly. There doesn't seem to be much progression from *Goo* to *Dirty*. The latter just isn't quite as accessible. You've probably seen the video for "100%" on *Much Music*, and if you are thinking of buying this album on the basis of that song (as I did), don't. Most of this typically atonal album is forgettable, although it does have it's moments ("Youth Against Fascism" and "Chapel Hill" are pretty good and "Purr" isn't bad). If you do buy this, make sure to get the cd with the orange, see through tray. There's a very cute little photo behind it.

"Midnight Cowboy"). Mike Patton's vocals are great and the whole band plays incredibly. "Everything's Ruined" and "Malpractice" (which sounds a bit like recent Ministry) are both brilliant as are the two current singles "Midlife Crisis" and "A Small Victory". However my favorite song, and the heaviest, is "Jizzlobber" - a killer song on a killer album.

The Wedding Present, *Hit Parade 1*

The Wedding Present is a band which I have never cared about. Then one day I was listening to CKDU when I heard "The first person to call in will win this Wedding Present cd" I thought about it for a full minute, wondering if I should bother, then I decided to call and I won! The album is a compilation of the first six singles that the band has put out this year (one a month!). I thought that I would give it a listen, be bored, and sell it used. Much to my surprise, I actually liked most of it. If

this album. Mike D is a fantastic drummer - funky as hell (listen to "Pow" or "In 3's" for instance). MCA is on bass and lays down some very memorable grooves, especially on the three instrumentals. Adrock got stuck with the guitar, but is a serviceable player.

What I like the most about the Beastie Boys is the fact that they don't rap over completely pathetic, annoying, and droning, so-called "music" as do most rap acts (P.E. & Ice-T included). These bands may have more "important" (?) lyrics, but behind them is nothing, musically speaking. The Beastie Boys don't take themselves as seriously, don't preach, and they make their music just as interesting and/or fun as their lyrics. In addition, their use sampling and scratching is extremely creative, eclipsing anything done by other rap acts.