

Stompin' The Grapes

**The Grapes of Wrath
Now and Again
Netwerk/Capitol**

College faves Grapes of Wrath are back with their second full-length LP, *Now and Again*. The title expresses the exact degree of complacency contained in the music. Impotent, unimportant porridge.

It's not the fact that the music is mellow that makes it boring. It's the fact that the music is boring that makes it boring. Many softer bands create extremely interesting music. The Go-Betweens and Throwing Muses are just two examples. The Grapes of Wrath, on the other hand, get bogged down in some acoustical, chordy, netherworld-ho-humming their way through 45 minutes of album tracks.

It's too bad. There's definitely talent in this band. But darn it if they're not such wimps! I mean, mellowness is one thing, wimpiness is another. I think of their first hit, "Peace of Mind." That song is really moving. Sure it's soft, but it's urgent at the same time. That song is important. Nothing on *Now and Again* is important. It's too bad.

I know I probably just pee-oed about a jillion sassy college kids, but let's lay it out like it is. Music should have flavour. Like, would you eat mashed potatoes without gravy? Well, that's how I feel listening to The Grapes of Wrath. Except the Grapes get so bogged down in sameness it's like having mashed potatoes without gravy every meal, everyday, for the rest of your life and afterwards. They should change their name to the potatoes of complacency. That would be infinitely more apt, now and again of course.

- Ron Kuipers



A Grape of Wrath

**24-7 Spyz
Harder Than You
Relativity/WEA**

24-7 Spyz arrive with their debut, and it's in your face, sucker. Born and bred in New York City, weaned on the hardcore sounds emanating from CBGB's on sweaty summer nights, the Spyz dish out a virtual melting pot of musical styles.

There's a lot to be found here — from the burning metal riff of the opening cut "Grandma Dynamite," to the funky out version of Kool and the Gang's "Jungle Boogie," to the straight-out thrash of "Spill My Guts." While being an admirable approach, this can also be a potentially dangerous move. Covering so many different styles can often times produce a vacuous album, one which lacks cohesiveness. But these bros manage to pull it off. Led by Jimi Hazel's brutal guitar attack (in the credits he thanks Hendrix for inspiration at age 7) and backed by the rhythm section of Rick Skatore (bass) and Anthony Johnson (skin pounder), the band manages to keep da riddim, while frontman P. Fluid expresses thoughts covering subjects both serious and comical, from racism to tales of sexual bravado.

Unfortunately, in today's music world, it's fairly rare to have black musicians who play hard-edged rock and roll, so there's the inevitable (albeit inaccurate) comparisons to Bad Brains, Fishbone, Living Color, et al. But that's just the lazy person's way out. The Spyz groove in a style all their own, and have fun while they're doing it. Be advised to check out the jams.

- Glenn Drexhage

**Stompin' Tom
Fiddle & Song
Capitol Records**

Stompin' Tom must have had arthroscopic surgery on his right foot during his long layoff from recording, because his trademark stomping cannot be heard on his new effort, *Fiddle & Song*. What he has replaced it with is a sometimes grating fiddle sound that is as off-key as his singing.

Not only does he dedicate the album to k.d. lang, his favorite Canadian artist, but he even writes a song about her. *lady k.d. lang*, the album's first cut, is classic Stompin' Tom, despite the lack of stomping. Then he shows off his new hobby, "playing" the fiddle.

Stompin' Tom is a bad fiddler. But if you had Yehudi Menuyn accompanying Stompin' Tom's vocals, his yarns would sound worse. When you mix Stompin' Tom's vocals with his fiddle playing, it does work. Somehow.

His lyrics again suggest blue-collar Canadian situations. "Hey, hey, what do you say, I just jumped into English Bay/ now I got pneumonee-ay/ and a mermaid is my darlin.'" In nearly every song, Stompin' Tom is proud of his Canadian birth, and especially in the

album's first single "It's Canada Day, Up Canada Way."

Show me a person who is ambivalent towards Stompin' Tom Connors, and I'll show you someone who is deaf. You either love

'im or you hate 'im. If you love his Canadian yarns and his twangy twang, go out and get *Fiddle & Song*, but if you don't, stay away, away, away.

- Alan Small



Stompin' Tom sings out of tune and plays a real bad fiddle on a real good album.

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