

Angelou's book an uneven journey of spirit

by Daniel Spencer

Maya Angelou's book, *Wouldn't Take Nothing For My Journey*, searches for the expression of wisdom from her living, knowledge from her personal history, and passion from her loving and being loved. These timidly peek out from behind a curtain of cliché, pseudo-philosophic, dry (dead?), style-colour clashing words. Yet once the

LITERATURE

Wouldn't take Nothing For My Journey
Maya Angelou
Random House

curtain finally goes up, only a few sections into the book, their dance is haltingly that of an experienced storyteller. The stories told leave me both

inspired and sad. Inspired by her understanding of the world and its people apparent behind her words, I'm also saddened for without awaiting the storyteller's arrival, many will put this book down.

The storyteller begins using youth recollections to speak of what it is to be a woman. Storyteller quickly degrades into her ideal 'woman' shopping list. Most women would agree with her ideal. "The woman who survives intact and happy must ... [realize] that she, her values, and her choices are important." Her ideas are present but lack depth with which their meaning would not merely be understood, they'd be felt.

The curtain rises for the second scene and the storyteller's chair sits empty, or is it? There is a little brochure on it. She has gone on vacation and left a travel brochure. It reads like what I

imagine a book on how to care for you pet poodle would read. But don't despair, she'll be back for Sunday mass.

Death unknown her dance turns to personal history

Indeed, "The Sweetness of Charity" starts out sounding like a sermon. Finally it melts into a distracted story. Wisdom is there and sound, yet she seems to fear a disrespect her style could do to the biblical source. Yet true to her words, "[w]hen we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is

blessed," she gives more story.

Her words remind that "[e]ach of us has the right and responsibility to assess the road... ahead," and those travelled. This done, if uninviting, "we need to gather our resolve and... step off that road into another direction." The storyteller fades momentarily.

After a quick distraction of 'style' she gets back into the spirit of things. Personal heritage and personal present are connected. Quickly following, 'humour', at the expense of oneself or others, is somewhat stiffly asked to leave. Death takes this as its cue to enter right stage. Treated with respect yet personally she listens carefully to death.

Death unknown, her dance turns to personal history. It speaks of personal style where the section "Style" does poorly. She deals with more than style, specifically countering the 'beauty myth'. Her "be so much yourself that the clothes you choose increase your naturalness and grace," both literally and metaphorically speaks its wisdom.

Another story begins well, uncovering often missed wealth found among the financially poor. Her voice swells with "love of life, ... great pleasure from small offerings, ... the world owes you nothing and that every gift is exactly that, a gift." Sadly she moves to the reader. Where her story allows us to speak with her through association, her waning philosophic speaks for us. Continuing the same on virtue, ideas worth hearing sadly sound like a lecture.

She hides not behind the lectern for long. For the next 10 sections, almost half the book with 60 pages, the storyteller returns. Stories of meaningful faith, the reframing of failure into much needed experience, and the absurdity of complaining when there are always others worse off, can easily uplift, encourage and help the reader find perspective in life without dictating 'truths'. A brief change allows us to share her soul search. "Too many times for comfort I have expected to reap good when I know I have sown evil."

Onward, her stories flow: growth without impatience, respect, and hidden personal prejudice. Staying in step



she drops a little common sense (or so it seems to me) morality against brutality.

Sad yet hopeful she continues helping exemplify hidden racism. It sends not only a plea to become aware and counter such, but to do so with patience, passion and forgiveness. Then she's the poet, complimenting the storyteller. The poet becomes silent and a short yet powerful wisdom on jealousy embraces the reader.

The book would end well here, powerfully. But alas two more sections weaken it. The second to last section reads like a self-help pamphlet on planned pregnancy. The storyteller, half awake, drifts leaving the last section with a cliché empty feeling.

All in all, it's a book chopped full of value. Just more than half of it is wonderfully told. Storytelling for expressing wisdom, knowledge and passion has been recognized throughout the ages by many cultures. It's only our 'rational', science-oriented thought system built on hierarchy, domination and fear that has left little space for this wealth. Here Maya Angelou seems to be trapped between the wisdom of her cultural heritage and the dominant thought system of her surrounding world. The lack of cohesion between sections mixed with a writing style seemingly not hers reflects a fragmentation. Perhaps, just perhaps, as a woman so well known and widely published she finds herself trapped between who she is and what the world (or perhaps her publisher) expects from her.

Pixies take separate flights

by Michael Graham

The Pixies: consistently brilliant and fortunately gone. After five albums, critical praise, big-time underground success and a few months opening for U2 they called it quits. Past glories unable to be equalled, The Pixies went into the woods for the Big Sleep when its time had arrived.

MUSIC

Frank Black
The Breeders
4ad

The band may be dead, but lead singer Black Francis and bassist Kim Deal are still drawing breath with their current bands. Black Francis (né Charles Thompson) has now taken, as his nom de disque, Frank Black and has released a eponymous album. Kim Deal has continued on with her band, the Breeders, which formed in 1990 as a Pixies side-project.

If for no other reason, Frank Black's album is great because it has the loudest-ever recorded bass drum on the lead off song "Los Angeles". THUD! It's a great song — especially if you're into speaker detonation. However, there are many other reasons why this cd is easily one of the best releases of the year.

Frank Black may be an arrogant, ego-maniac control freak, but more importantly, he is a brilliant songwriter. This solo release has been out since late spring and it has probably taken up more time in my cd player than any other of my \$19.99 +18 per cent tax purchases. Why? The reason is very simple: 15 great songs. This album is just as guitar driven as any

Pixies album, but Frank Black has tastefully sprinkled in some keyboards and horns. However, the departure from the Pixies sound is stronger than that. It is hard to nail down, but if definitely has something to do with the emphasis that each instrument is given. The basslines are more melodic and out

should not go unmentioned as it is a killer instrumental with a great, blaring horn section.

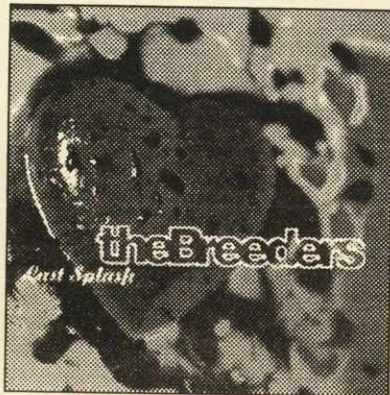
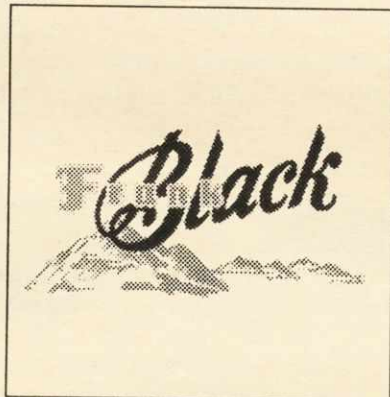
"Spitting in a wishing well/Blown to hell...crash/I'm the last splash". Kim Deal put together the Breeders somewhere around 1990. Since that time the band has released the brilliant album, *Pod.*, the *Safari* EP, the *Cannonball* EP (featuring a terrific cover of Aerosmith's "Lord of the Thighs"), and now, after the Pixies we have *Last Splash*.

Last Splash is a fun album. Almost all of the songs are bouncy and very catchy. Think of the Go Go's song "Our Lips are Sealed". Ok, now take away the vocal harmonies and add a ton of distorted guitar. Now you have a slight feel for the Breeders' sound on *Last Splash*.

The lead single "Cannonball" has a great loopy bassline coupled with a kick-ass chorus. Other party tunes are "Divine Hammer" (the next single), "Invisible Man", "New Year", "Saints", "Hag" and "Flipside" — a smokin' instrumental. In addition to these being really fun songs, the production gives the album a great live, straight-off-the-floor feel.

Part of the appeal with this album is the fact that Kim is singing almost everything. While in the Pixies, she sang "Gigantic", "Into the White" and some back up vocals. She has a terrific voice, but it was rarely ever heard. Now, when you listen to a song like "Drivin' On 9" you just want to write her a love letter because her voice is so damn sweet...but I digress... here.

The only thing that I don't particularly like about *Last Splash* is the inclusion of "Do You Love Me Now" since the version on *Safari* is almost identical. Otherwise, this album is a blast!



front, the guitar sound is bigger and F.B.'s voice is not strained to the limit.

With his band, F.B. has basically beaten the traditional rock idiom into the ground. There are power chords and raunch in songs like "Ten Percenter", "Los Angeles" and "Czar". Then there are the beautiful "Places Named After Numbers" and "Every Time I Go Around Here". "Tossed"

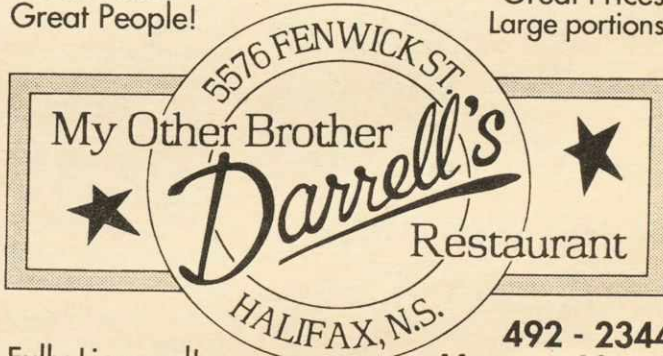
DOING YOUR LAUNDRY !

Doesn't have to be a drag

But it has to be done! Come on over and give us a try!... We'll take the edge off of that mundane chore!

Great Food!
Great People!

Great Prices!
Large portions!



Fully Licensed!

492 - 2344
11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Upstairs

5576 Fenwick St.
Halifax, N.S.

Downstairs

Metro's Nicest Laundromat
We've Got Atmosphere

- Big Screen T.V.
- Clean, Modern Equipment
- Complimentary Coffee
- Friendly Service
- Great Location

We'd love to hear from you!



OPEN 8am - 9pm DAILY 492 - 2349