

Primus deserving of 'best new artist'

By MARK BRETT

Poor Milli Vanilli. Better than Dylan and Elvis, and they get their Grammy stripped from them, just because they have no discernible talents beyond making fools of themselves on national television.

The real joke of all this, of course, is that the music was garbage, no matter who sang it. "Milli Vanilli," whoever they really are, produced a record of corporate rap-reggae, written according to some mathematician's demographic survey of American tastes to give it the widest possible range of acceptance and all the emotional substance of a Frosted Flakes jingle. They didn't deserve the Grammy in the first place.

Grammys are supposedly given out according to musical merit, not popularity, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Maybe if the record companies

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would stop their self-defeating policy of pushing only "safe" music that sounds basically alike, some fresh new blood might get in, and we'd have artists winning Grammys who really deserve them.

One such artist, a should-be nominee for Best New Artist of 1990, is Primus, a three-man "funk-metal" band from San Francisco. Primus is serious, delirious, and quirky; their style can best be described as Rick James meets Metallica under the influence of the theme from "Baretta." Understandably then, their debut album, "Frizzle Fry," is intensely goofy, deadly serious, blatantly surreal, and above all chaotic.

The album opens with "To

Defy the Laws of Tradition," an apt beginning with a lot of pinging cymbals that come to an abrupt end with a sickening tape drag, sending the listening scurrying to his stereo's "eject" button. That tape owner's survival instinct immediately shuts off, however, when the real song starts a second later, gyrating into oblivion.

From that moment on, the listener is off-balance, never quite knowing what to expect next. The wild chaos of "To Defy" is followed by the controlled chaos of "Ground Hog's Day," a song narrated by (I think) a Ground Hog. The guitars swing off into appropriately portentous gusts here, only to jerk back into tight, heavy riffing for "Too Many Puppies," a song protesting war. "Too many puppies," singer Les Claypool drones, "with guns in their hands/Too many puppies in foreign lands."

Next is "Mr. Knowitall," which includes the wonderful lines, "They call me Mr. Knowitall, I am so eloquent/Per-

fection is my middle name, and whatever rhymes with eloquent." This song is followed by "Frizzle Fry" itself, which has a droning, sing-song quality that works well with its topic: a creature that destroys belief, faith, and innocence (sort of like puberty).

Side Two begins with "John the Fisherman," the song that best melds the funk and heavy metal sounds Primus deals with. In "The Toys are Winding Down," the guitars and drums work together to produce a droning, clock-work rhythm that grinds into "Pudding Time," a wildly gyrating rave-up that seems to be about deserts (the mind boggles).

Next is "Sathington Willoughby," a song about some authoritarian legislator, which seems to share a dimensional space with "Spegetti Western," about what you do when you're an unemployed member of the middle class (this entails a lot of TV viewing, apparently). Finally, we have "Harold of the Rocks," a really odd song about a guy

named Harold.

"Harold" ends with another wrenching tape drag, and leads into a short instrumental reprise of "To Defy the Laws of Tradition." Thus the listener, after being jerked and pummelled mercilessly by the sheer standard-breaking brutality of the rest of "Frizzle Fry," finds himself gently deposited once again on the shores of "normalcy," blinking and confused, but changed. For better or for worse.

With these words, your humble reviewer steps down from this position. I'm headed for the real world, where I plan to stumble around blindly for awhile. I leave you with these thoughts: Look beyond the surface of the ordinary; things are not always as they seem.

When encountering the strange, look beneath its surface, too; things there may not be what they seem, but at least they're interesting. And, finally, above all, have fun; if you don't you're doing something wrong.

Students get involved

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Overall, I commend each and every one of you for your efforts during the last week. Whether you were involved as actual sponsors or participated as a member of the audience, each of you are to be commended for your participation. The possibilities for future offerings at Wesleyan at endless if we can maintain this level of excitement and participation.

Pam Gourley,

Director of Campus Activities

Yellow ribbons awkward as symbol for patriotism

Dear Editor:

Assuming that yellow ribbons symbolize concern for the safety of soldiers and civilians on both sides whose lives and safety are jeopardized by our military building up Saudi Arabia, it is a good thing that they have appeared on our campus.

Two points should be considered. First, a symbol can mean what people want it to mean, but we should remember that when Tony Orlando sang, "Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree," he was asking that it symbolize his girlfriend's desire to resume their relationship after his incarceration in prison for, if I remember correctly, murder. He was pleading for reacceptance and forgiveness.

It is odd that our culture has

so easily accepted yellow ribbons as a symbol for the hope of a safe return of, first, hostages in Iran who had been convicted of no crime, and second, for our troops in Saudi Arabia, who have neither committed a crime nor been incarcerated. Reacceptance and forgiveness do not enter into either situation.

Second, and more important: the troops in Saudi Arabia are part of a volunteer army. Thus they are disproportionately from groups low on the socio-economic scale and from racial and ethnic minorities. It is a good thing, of course, to wish for their safe return.

But if one believes that their mission in the Middle East is proper, that it is worth risking lives for cheap oil, the Kuwaiti ruling dynasty, or the "new world order" that Mr. Bush has yet to define clearly, the proper action should be to volunteer oneself or, at least, call for the reinstatement of the draft. Thus the burden of death and pain can justly be shared. Putting yellow ribbons on trees seems futile at best and, at worst, hypocritical.

If one believes the mission in Arabia to be reckless and irresponsible, then the yellow ribbons are appropriate, but to protest against Mr. Bush's policy is also necessary.

R.L. Watson

Professor of History

Concern more talk than action

By TERESA PITTS

I have discovered that there is a truth to the statement about being all talk and all action. Many people who claim to be environmentally conscious rarely adhere to the beliefs and suggestions they preach about.

I noticed this several weeks ago when I went to an "environmental" shop with a friend. He bought a recycling button, but he doesn't recycle. He thinks that recycling is a good idea, but he

doesn't take the time to sort his trash and take it to recycling containers. I guess he thinks he'll spread the word and hope that others will recycle. But how can you expect others to recycle when you don't?

Also, while I was in the store I saw a lady purchase an environmental tee-shirt with the logo "save the planet." Ironically, she was carrying plastic bags containing purchases from other stores. Some concern.

Being environmentally aware

seems to be just a trend for some people. For example, I was flipping through a magazine which had a page touting tips about preserving the environment and pictures of clothes with eco-sayings. However, on the same page was an advertisement for a disposable camera. Either the environmental issues aren't being taken seriously or they're being seen as a fad.

Some celebrities are starting to show some environmental concern. Many may genuinely be interested in the environmental problems, but others seem to be showing their concern for the environment in order to receive good publicity.

For example, actress Bette Midler is supposedly involved with environmental causes and a year ago played "Mother Earth" in a TV special about Earth Day. Later, I read that she loved shoes, pocketbooks, and belts made from reptile skin. Maybe she is unaware that protecting the environment involves all facets — even reptiles.

I think we must realize that our environment is a serious issue and that people must be genuinely concerned with preserving it. You cannot preach about environmental problems and then wait for others to start correcting them.

Who has instructions?

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trying to program it to do what she had bought it to do, but evidently forgot to buy the Ph.D. who could figure out what the instructions said and the magnifying glass to read what the VCR was flashing at her.

Having learned a lesson from her, I bought a VCR which has on-screen programming so I can at least see the words which I still cannot understand. I was okay, though, until one time I tried to unprogram what I decided I didn't need to tape. My VCR and I have never bonded since. Every

Wednesday at 11:30, no matter what I'm watching, the VCR takes over and changes the channel and starts flashing for me to put in a tape.

Anyway, back on the floor with my new blinds and unintelligible instructions, I grabbed the hammer and some nails and nailed the suckers up. I don't care if they ever work; I threw out the instructions.

Now I'm trying to follow this recipe which tells me to pulverize (do not grind) six cumin seeds bought only at night with peso obtained from authentic Mexican cooks.