

NEW MUSIC

→ The Skatalites

Box of Fire

Rating: 7

BY PAIGE MCRAE
Features Music Critic

Formed in Kingston, Jamaica, the Skatalites have been creating authentic ska for three decades now



PHOTO COURTESY OF POLYGRAM RECORDS

and were recently nominated for two Grammys. *Ball of Fire* finds the Skatalites on a new label, Island Jamaica Jazz, and features Jamaican guitar virtuoso Ernest Ranglin as guest artist. Four of the original group remain—tenor saxophone player Roland Alphonso, Lester Sterling on alto sax, bassist Lloyd Brevett and Lloyd Knibb on drums. Even though core member Don Drummond died in 1969 after a battle with mental illness, his legacy lives on in such compositions on *Ball of Fire* as “Occupation” and “Eastern Standard



Time.”

Ball of Fire features extended reworkings of classic Skatalites songs. It starts out with a skankable version of the James Bond theme which points to a connection between the ska and mod scenes. Among other things, both camps appreciate a sharp dresser. “Latin Goes Ska” is catchy, but grows a little long. I was reminded of Motown from time to time, the Four Tops in particular. The musicianship on this album is a fine example of ensemble work while allowing individual expression. The title track “Ball of Fire” is intriguing, spotlighting the superlative rhythm section. Other songs are a bit slower, more immediately recognizable as linked to

reggae.

Even though I am not terribly familiar with ska, I find this a worthy album. Some songs seemed overlong, but the sheer quality of the musicianship made up for it. This is music meant for intimate settings where that can be fully appreciated live.

→ Everything

Super Natural

Rating: 5

BY JEFF IRVING
Features Music Critic

Everything is a band that has a lot of credibility on the happy/hippie/jam band circuit, but these bands have a specific appeal that for the most part eludes me.

If I want to get my mind blown, I’d rather listen to a Pink Floyd-based band as opposed to a Grateful Dead template.

Nothing against the Dead, but I prefer something that ominously teeters on the brink a bit as opposed to a “feel-the-groove-let-me-tell-you-how-much-I-love-you-feelin’-good-peace/love/harmony” type of “psychedelia,” which is what this band is.

Which is not to say that *Super Natural* should be avoided, as is



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACKBIRD RECORDINGS

does have many fine moments. The lead-off title track has some electrified verve despite very average verses.

Many songs have a pleasant R&B feel infused in them. They also use drum loops and some 311/Gravity-Kills-ish guitar grind sometimes, which would set them apart enough from Widespread Panic and Phish. Their sax players do more than fill in the blanks. They have been blessed with their own sound by the time of this major-label release.

Having your own sound also means you have to work it into some satisfying songs if you want to attract listeners.

These 11 songs may work well live with plenty of acid, shrooms, and weed being passed around, but on

record, a pop tune needs to go somewhere. Many parts of these songs seem like functional filler but aren’t particularly ear-grabbing.

The lyrics aren’t too interesting either.

They are usually a little more articulate than that of 311, but aren’t often very compelling.

There are “feelin’ good” songs like “Hooch” (“Who got the love/Who got the fresh-freshy?”), songs of prayer, faith, and redemption like “Spent” and “Transition Man,” a few textbook mate-love and humankind-love songs, and a lot of attempts at mysticism. You better be happy with the small selection of themes, or you’re going to be very bored.

This may actually be your pot of tea, and if it sounds like it is, then go and pick up *Super Natural*.

Some of us, though, would rather listen to something a little less giddy and lovin’.

Want to perform at a Coffeehouse?

The First-Year Advisory Board is sponsoring a coffeehouse for prospective students on April 3 at 8:00 p.m.

We need students to perform so if you sing, play a guitar, write poetry, or have other talents that may attract students to Guilford, please sign up to perform.

Call Alison Johnson at extension 3463 to sign up.

Rating System

10	Essential
9	Superb
8	Excellent
7	Very Good
6	Above Average
5	Good
4	So-So
3	Ho-hum
2	Gawd awful
1	I didn't think Bon Jovi was still together!