

More Arts and Culture...

automatic for the people

On the cover is a metallic statuette superimposed on a grey background with the words "Automatic for the People" emblazoned in white lettering across the top. More importantly, the acronym R.E.M. is centered boldly in the foreground of the scene, catching the eye of the passers-by. The treasure, packaged in a protective cardboard covering and wrapped cellophane, is R.E.M.'s latest release from Warner Brothers Records.

After stealing the show at MTV's Music Awards over a year ago, and coming up with two surprising grammys last March, the band had promised the public a hard-rock, fast-paced, old-R.E.M.-like album. Instead, *Automatic for the People*, R.E.M.'s ninth album, is the exact opposite. Earning a perfect five star rating from *Rolling Stone*, the album places emphasis on the folk-rock, southern balladry that was evident in *Out of Time*'s "Half a World Away." It is scored with various string and wind arrangements by Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones and Psychedelic Furs' Knox Chandler. The album was co-produced by Scott Litt, who also produces for various artists such as John Wesley Harding and Matthew Sweet, and was recorded in both New York and Florida.

Nine of the twelve songs available on the new release are soft-spoken, lyrical, compositions that soar straight through the heart, including the titles "Try Not to Breathe" and "Find the River." The songs pay tribute to the listener, as singer-lyricist Michael Stipe no longer wails and mumbles in accompaniment to the music, but instead, carries the melody with a clarity and style. The song "Nightswimming," by far R.E.M.'s greatest attempt at a love song yet, captures the whole essence of the album as images of midnight car rides and un-

dertows, old photographs and headlong tides are all tied together through the unifying theme of "Nightswimming, deserves a quiet night."

The Athens, Georgia-based band, started in 1978, has since grown from an underground cult to a world renown act. Slowly, they have climbed to the top of the charts with such titles as "The One I Love (*Document* 1987)," "Stand (*Green* 1988)," and "Losing My Religion (*Out of Time* 1990)," which, to the surprise of most everyone, made it to number one. The band has been known to take an active, however controversial, role in various political gatherings and are well documented as being patrons of organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. Throughout their evolution, R.E.M. has yet to conform to anyone's standard though many die-hard fans have cried "sell-out" in the past four years since they've signed on with Warner Brothers.

"In the past, it was easy to write those fast songs that didn't really have to be understood," states drummer Mike Mills, "but it's getting harder to write songs that are slower with a meaning and feeling to it (*Spin* 1992)."

A tour this time around for *Automatic for the People* seems highly unlikely. Are there plans to dismantle the band and hang up the R.E.M. logo any time soon? Nope. (Or at least not until they finish up their six album contract with Warner Brothers Records of which they still have three more albums to go.) Will the music continue to flourish in style and quality? A definite yes.

Jennifer Lee

THE CHASE

Note from the Editors...

In recent years, few artists have equalled the impact and success of Garth Brooks. With the success of his first three albums, *Garth Brooks*, *No Fences*, and *Ropin' the Wind*, the recent success of his early Christmas release, *Beyond the Season*, and his success at the Country Music Awards, he has definitely achieved star status.

The newest effort to be released, *The Chase*, is one of Garth's best. The only factor that may hold sales is the \$16.98 list price. While the price is exorbitant, the album definitely merits attention. Once again, he is producing an overall success that far outstrips the efforts of most country artists.

Throughout the album, Garth adopts styles that set the work apart from his earlier albums. The high

points are achieved with the feeling written into "Every Now and Then" and the social commentary in "We Shall Be Free." The only down points of the album are "Walking After Midnight", a decent idea that come out in the studio, and the fact that the album itself only contains ten songs. The remainder of the songs on the album not only give the album merit, but qualify it as one of Garth's best.

After the success of his Christmas release, which is surprising for an early season release, this album more than recalls past success. For the fan of country music, it is yet another example of Brook's success at moving country music into the popular spectrum.

Stephen Williard

The opinions and ideas expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the entire staff, editors, faculty, or administration of this school. That having been said, I leave you with the following quote, which does represent my opinion at least.

"This is not a black and white world,
To be alive, I say the colors must swirl,
And I believe, that maybe one day,
We will all come to appreciate---
The Beauty of Grey."

--Live from *Mental Jewelry*
--Stephen Williard