

4B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

RuPaul's sophomore effort is OK



By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

RuPaul
Foxy Lady
Various producers
Rhino Records

☆☆ 1/2

RuPaul's first record was a dancer's delight. His, excuse me, her campy vocals were set to thunderous beats that rocked a party.

I'm not exactly sure what to call the stuff on Ru's new recording. It's more techno with a little house thrown in than anything else. The beats still slam, but techno can be such forgettable stuff.

RuPaul does give it her all. The opening song, "Happy," begs for a remix. "Ru Nasty" has a "Planet Rock" type beat that nearly works. The lyrics are a scream.

"Falling" brings Ru back to r&b's slower side, while "Dolores" combines house with a Spanish flair. This is the kind of stuff she should have used throughout the CD. The rest is forgettable. Very forgettable.

Salt of The Earth
Come Let's Worship
James Bullard and Jerry Peters, executive producers
Interscope Records

☆☆☆

Salt of the Earth did an excellent recording a couple of years ago which included a version of the Gospel Music Workshop of America Women of Worship's "Order My Steps." There were plenty of other good songs on the disc, but "Steps" got all the air play.

There's no "Steps" on the group's sophomore release, but that doesn't ruin the recording. There are plenty of good songs for the liking. The opening song, "Bound For Mount Zion," sung by Paul Porter, features old-time gospel with a twist of contemporary flair. "Worthy Is Your Word" is one of those songs a choir could tear up at a worship service. The r&b arrangement on "Tis So Sweet" fits with the energetic choir arrangement.

Day to Day
Take Your Time
Various Producers
MCA Records

☆☆☆

It's almost impossible to keep up with the number of male vocal groups either getting or fighting for air play. The number is staggering. When one has a minor hit and fades away, another pops up.

Day To Day is one of the latest in the growing number. They aren't getting much air play but they deserve to do so. Why? They actually can sing. And get this, they sing about meaningful subjects. Love, not sex. Relationships, not one-night stands. That's refresh-

See SOUNDS page 5B

Despite a lot of junk, 1996 had its moments

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

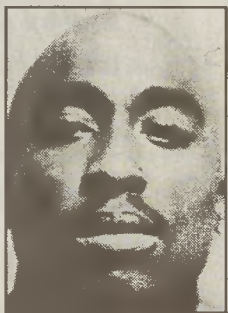
Why is it easier to remember the stuff you hate than the stuff you love?

Maybe because it takes more energy to put the stuff you hate out of your mind. I can clearly remember Tupac Shakur's wretched *Killuminati* CD, Martin Lawrence's highly unnecessary "A Thin Line Between Love and Hate" and Michael Jordan's silly "Space Jam." Yeah, I know, each made money, but rarely is that a sign of artistic relevance.

Anyway, instead of doing a best-of/worst-of list, I'm concentrating on good stuff. I ditched the idea of a Top Ten because I didn't see 10 movies that I really liked and I think I heard way more than 10 good CDs. So, here's my favorite stuff from 1996, not necessarily in order.

INTERVIEWS

Buddy Guy - I don't get to talk to living legends all that often, however when I do I want them all to be like Guy. He has few peers in the blues, although he would tell you dif-



Shakur

ferently. He loves B.B. King, the man who inspired him to play. He also loves to talk about his experiences, but not in a boastful manner. Nope, Guy's a downhome boy who's appreciative of his fame and his fans. I didn't get a chance to see his House of Blues-sponsored tour, but how could it be anything but good?

Babyface - Talk about shy people. Face has no problem writing hit songs, but he's uncomfortable talking about himself. It's just not what he wants to do. Interviews take away from the time he spends doing what he loves - writing and producing. He seems more in awe of the people he produces than the millions he's amassed. That was refreshing. So was the love he has for his craft. This man truly loves to create wonderful songs.

Riley - Here's another young man with his head on straight. Riley's not quite Babyface, but he's close, in talent and demeanor. He talks more openly, but he too likes to talk more about working with other people. He also loves his new group BLACKStreet and his family.

MOVIES

Get On The Bus - I couldn't understand why so few people saw this film, clearly the year's best. Reggie "Rock" Bythewood's poignant and even-handed script about the Million Man March was just the right vehicle for Spike Lee's kinetic directing style. It's certainly one of Lee's most



Whitney Houston and Denzel Washington take to the ice in "The Preacher's Wife."

passionate works. It belongs on a shelf beside "Malcolm X," "Do The Right Thing," and "Jungle Fever." The performances - especially by Andre Braugher, Charles Dutton and Ossie Davis - are worthy of Oscar consideration.

A Time To Kill - Movies about the racist South generally leave me more upset than anything else. Not this one. Here's a story where every black person doesn't run from the Ku Klux Klan. In some scenes they take them head on. It also has people who aren't caricatures or stereotypical. And how about Sam Jackson's magnificent performance? Can you say Oscar?

I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

The Preacher's Wife - No, this wasn't a great film, but I couldn't remember the last time I felt that good when I left a theater. The storyline was sugary sweet, but what holiday movie isn't? Denzel Washington was his usual self: charming, likable and believable. Whitney Houston was OK. She's not a great actress, maybe not even good, but she was believable as Julia. Courtney B. Vance continues to impress me. Heck, he's marrying Angela Bassett. That's impressive enough. Jennifer Lewis as Houston's mom is a scream.

MUSIC

Curtis Mayfield, New World Order - It's so good to have Mayfield back. He may never return to top form, but this CD proves he's got a lot left in him. The title song was featured in "Get On The Bus." Check out "Miss Martha" featuring Mavis Staples and "Back To Living Again," which features Aretha Franklin. Did I say it is good to have Mayfield back?

Luther Vandross, Your Secret Love - I can remember when I didn't particularly care for Vandross. Now he can sing a dial tone and I'm

See MUSIC on page 5B

Does new film do justice to memory of Medgar Evers?

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - "Ghosts of Mississippi" relates the climax of a 30-year-old fight to see justice done in the murder of civil rights activist Medgar Evers.

But the question of whether director Rob Reiner's new film does justice to Evers or the civil rights movement has provoked critics and drawn impassioned declarations from those connected with the movie.

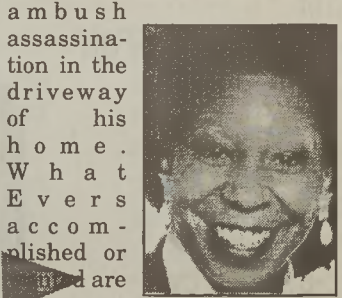
The debate goes beyond the factual accuracy of a project that appears carefully researched. Now the history of black America is told in films, from whose perspective and by whom, are the broader issues.

"Ghosts of Mississippi" stars Alec Baldwin as Bobby DeLaughter, who prosecutes the case against white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith (James Woods) nearly three decades after juries twice failed to reach a verdict.

We see the white DeLaughter's tenacious pursuit of De La Beckwith - "Delay" to his friends - despite skepticism from DeLaughter's boss and the antagonism of his parents, wife and community.

DeLaughter's effort is painted in detailed terms, as is his family life and the psychological torment he faces. He is every bit the flesh-and-blood hero of the movie.

Evers, by comparison, is an unknown shadow figure, gunned down as the early minutes of the film depict his 1963



Goldberg

ambush assassination in the driveway of his home. What Evers accomplished are explored.

Also nearly invisible are his wife, Myrlie (Whoopi

Goldberg) and their children, and little is expressed of the family's loss or their frustration with justice delayed.

"When future generations turn to this era's movies for an account of the struggle for racial justice in America, they'll learn the surprising lesson that such battles were fought and won by square-jawed white guys," begins a scathing review in the trade paper *Daily Variety*.

Similar criticism was raised in 1988 when "Mississippi Burning" made white FBI agents the fictional heroes of a chapter of civil rights history involving three slain activists.

Attacks on that film clearly didn't deter Frederick Zollo, who made 1988's Oscar-nominated "Mississippi Burning," from producing "Ghosts of Mississippi." And it didn't stop Reiner's involvement.

"I'm getting some criticism for being a white person making a movie that has civil rights as a backdrop, and in which there's a white person who's the focus of the film," said Reiner.

"To me it's very unfortunate, because we're living in a time when everybody is so divisive," he said.

Bad reviews don't bother him; ill-founded attacks do, he said.

"This story actually happened. I didn't make up that Byron De La Beckwith was convicted in February of 1994. I may be an idiot, but I think it's kind of interesting that 30 years after a man committed a heinous crime, the district attorney's office would go after him."

"You're not just going to make any film about any civil rights issue. You've got to have a compelling story to it," Reiner said - and a story the filmmaker feels equipped to tell.

Taking DeLaughter's point of view "was my way to this subject matter," the filmmaker said.

See GHOST page 6B

Kirk Franklin visits hospital

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Carrying a blood-soaked strip of shirt, gospel music star Kirk Franklin went back to the Regional Medical Center.

This time the Fort Worth, Texas, native was a thankful visitor, handing out concert tickets and hugs, instead of a head-injury patient who had fallen 10 feet off a stage.



FRANKLIN

"It reminds me. When I think about what could have happened. It keeps me from getting a big head," said Franklin, 26, of the cloth.

He refused to sign autographs, saying he didn't come for acclaim, but for handshakes and hugs.

Except for occasional headaches, Franklin says he's fully recovered from the Nov. 1 accident, when he fell from a stage into an orchestra pit during a concert.

The accident and his recovery in Memphis and at his Texas home interrupted Franklin's "Tour of Life." The 45-city tour resumed Thursday in New Orleans and arrived in Memphis Friday.

New Edition is back on top

By Nekesa Mubi Moody
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY, New York - Of all the reunited bands hitting the road this year, New Edition may be the only group whose members are decades away from collecting Social Security and have a hit record on the charts.

After spending eight years apart experiencing the highs - and lows - of life as solo entities, Bobby Brown, Ralph Tresvant, Johnny Gill, Ricky Bell, Michael Bivins and Ronnie DeVoe have come back to the group that made them preteen sensations when they made their debut in 1983.

Back then, the group - minus Johnny Gill, who joined as Brown's replacement in 1987 - was hailed as the next Jackson Five and became an instant hit with bubble-gum hits such as "Candy Girl," and "Mr. Telephone Man." They sold millions of albums and helped the industry refocus on teen-age talent, a trend that is still evident on the charts today.

Fast forward to 1996, and it's like nothing ever changed. Their new recording, "Home Again," debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart a month ago and has already sold more than 2 million copies and produced two hits. It will be the primary focus of the group's upcoming tour, which will mark the first time all the men - now in their late 20s - have toured together.

"It feels like we're a brand-new group," Bell said. "It's a real positive feeling ... that we're still here, that we still have fans out there."

"I think more than anything we feel blessed," Gill said. "There has been such a demand for this project for many years."

But just a few years ago, the prospect of a New Edition reunion seemed like an idea that would never gel.

Brown was, on top of the charts with his hugely successful album "Don't Be Cruel." Gill and Tresvant were also riding high on their own solo projects. And Bell, DeVoe and Bivins found platinum success as the hip-hop dance group BVD.

Yet, despite a consistent string of hits, the group racked up as New Edition, they were unable to sustain the success of the projects that made them solo sensations. Brown, Gill and Tresvant all followed up their albums with disappointing sales, and BVD failed to garner one hit off their sophomore project.

"When we did the last run, between that, the concert support and things that we wanted to do with those projects, it never elevated to another level. So up to a certain point, we just kind of left them alone," Tresvant said.

While it may not have benefited their solo careers, the slump was a boost to New Edition. "Had those second attempts been as successful as the first ones, we wouldn't be here right now," he said.

On top of trying to hold on to shaky solo careers, some of the group also made big changes in their personal lives. Brown married Whitney Houston and became a father, and also went through much-publicized legal battles with law-enforcement officials. On the other end of the spectrum, Bivins started Biv 10 Records with Motown, and is credited with guiding the careers of Boyz II Men, among other groups.

"There are families, there are kids, there are other obligations that we all had," Gill said.

See NEW EDITION page 7B