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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Jackson delivers remix CD

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Michael Jackson
Blood On The Dance Floor: HIStory In The Mix
Michael Jackson, executive producer
Epic

☆☆☆

Fans of Michael will probably buy this remix album eventually, but I doubt that many will stand in line to do so. It's not bad, but most of this stuff has been available on various CD singles.

Not that some of these remixes lack energy. Frankie Knuckles gets big props for turning "You Are Not Alone" into a string-drenched house jam. Kudos also go out to Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis for turning the originally so-so "Scream" into the too-funky "Scream Louder." Wyclef Jean's (of Fugees fame) reworking of "2 Bad" is also worth the remix.

But lots of the remixes fall flat. Whose bright idea was it not to use the Notorious B.I.G.'s rap on "This Time Around?" The light-weight music doesn't help much either. "Stranger In Moscow" works, but the lush original is much better. And despite a much needed work-over, "HIStory" still rambles.

There are five new songs, the most noteworthy of which are the Teddy Riley co-penned title song and "Ghosts." Both songs kind of keep Jackson near his r&b base. "Morphine" does not. The music is harsh and metallic sounding. The lyrics, as best I can figure, are about a drug addict. But what was the need for Jackson to say "Your dog's a bitch, baby?" Mike, please.

I also have to question Jackson's decision to ignore the stuff Babyface has written for him. I'm told there are a number of unreleased songs, including "Heart On The Line" which was used in Spike Lee's "Get On The Bus." I hope the songs make his next album. He needs them.

Various Artists
...And Then There Was Bass
Tony Mercedes, executive producer
Tony Mercedes Records

☆☆☆

By now nearly everyone in America has heard "MyBabyDaddy," the annoying, but oh so catchy novelty song about paternity. It's part of this ...And Then There Was Bass collection from Tony Mercedes records, which is now distributed by Arista's LaFace Records. Who'd a thunk it.

There's other stuff that's as catchy but not quite as annoying. Dana Harris does a nice job of turning Shirley Murdock's "As We Lay" into a dance song. J.T. Money featuring Verb's "Make A Playa Rich" is booty music at its best. What is what you can say about the rest of this CD. Mindless? Sure, but boring it

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Franklin brings 'Tour of Life' to Charlotte

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

When Kirk Franklin hits the stage with his "Tour of Life" May 30, he'll have a lot to shout about. He's alive.

He didn't have to be. Franklin was involved in a near-fatal accident late last year which forced the cancellation of his tour. While leaving the stage, Franklin fell into an orchestra

pit. He lay in a pool of his own blood before being rushed to a hospital. He spent days in a coma. His doctors, wife and fans waited cautiously, not knowing whether he would live or die.

But as Franklin testifies, God pulled him through. Franklin hasn't looked back since. His recovery seemed quick. If you saw him on the Stellar awards accepting one of several for his



Fred Hammond and Radical For Christ



Franklin

Whatcha Lookin' 4? CD, you would never have known he was ever near death. Franklin went into a shouting frenzy which brought the audience to its feet.

But Franklin has a way of doing that. Since his self-titled debut CD, he's mesmerized

audiences with his energetic live performances. Young folks can't seem to get enough of him. His "Why We Sing" became a staple of black radio in 1995. It was never released as a single, but strong air play made it a Top 20 hit.

Franklin's album was the

first gospel debut ever to sell a million copies. His sophomore effort *Whatcha Lookin' 4* is gold, heading for platinum. It spent months at the top of Billboard's gospel chart and is currently No. 2 behind "The

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Hailey brothers pause from Jodeci for first solo CD

By Mark Pengrass
THE CHARLOTTE POST

After three double platinum albums, five Billboard awards, three Soul Train awards, several American Music award and Grammy Award nominations...where is Jodeci?

Rumor has it that they have broken up. Not! Rumor has it that they are living in Charlotte. Wrong!

Rumors say K-Ci and JoJo Hailey have completed a new album to be released next month. Right!

The Monroe natives decided to take their show on the road with their new album on the MCA label titled *Love Always*.

With the first single "You Bring Me Up" hitting the airwaves, the album gives the Haileys a chance to highlight their vocal talents as well as production skills.

"It only took us month to complete the project," K-Ci said during a phone interview from a video shoot in California. "Our record company took the initiative and time to search for all the right producers and the best songs suitable for us. They put 100 percent of their time in this project to make sure it will be a success and I must admit...It's On."

Love Always is filled with a diverse array of ballads and up tempo tunes that allows the Haileys to display versatility as vocalists, writers, and producers. Despite the long list of established songwriter/producers such as Babyface, Mtume, Jeff Redd and Jodeci's Devante (Swing), K-Ci and JoJo's traditional gospel flavor and soulful harmonies stand out on every track.

The Haileys co-wrote and/or produced seven of the tracks on the album. They credit this effort to their inspirational partnership and family atmosphere in the studio. "There was no plan...most of the time, we'd just put the track up and start singing. JoJo has an excellent ear for harmonies and my thing is funk," K-Ci said. "Put that together and you've got the Hailey brothers' sound."

Since 1991, when the r&b/hip-hop audience was introduced to the brothers, their fans supported their unique voices, their street driven hip-hop grooves and bedroom ballads. However, the Haileys were not alone in their previous endeavors. Since then, they have been looking forward to the opportunity to attempt new projects.

"I'm not gonna say it wasn't kinda scary at first," JoJo said. "You've got MCA looking at you saying 'We know you can do it,' but we were asking ourselves that same question. I know what people want musically, because I am one of the people. So when K-Ci started writing the song 'Last Night's Letter,' that inspired me...and I said 'let's do this.'"

K-Ci and JoJo are traveling the country on a promotional tour to introduce the new album. With a mature sound and sincere lyrics, the Haileys anticipate acquiring an older audience as well as their current fans. K-Ci & JoJo's remake of Jeffrey Osborne's classic hit "Love Ballad" has already opened eyes of '70s r&b lovers.

"I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Osborne while in New York City and he complimented me on performing his song," K-Ci said. "Mr. Osborne told me his wife heard me perform the song at a concert in L.A. and immediately called him to let him know how much she enjoyed it. The next day, Jeffrey Osborne himself called to congratulate me on the remake."

Despite the pessimism on

performing yet another cover song on this album, the classic selection was performed under the production of producer/songwriter Mtume. It is apparent that K-Ci and JoJo possess the talents to creatively enhance songs from various eras and give them a '90s flavor.

When asked 'where Jodeci has been hiding, K-Ci said: "We haven't been hiding. We had three consecutive multi-million selling albums, toured throughout the U.S. and abroad, taped TV shows, scheduled interviews and thought it was time for a break, not a break-up."

Devante is finding and producing and has found success. He co-wrote and produced 'It's on Tonight' with Montell Jordan. Mr. Dalvin is doing the executive thing with his record/production company. In a year or two, Jodeci will return to the studio to work on the fourth album.

K-Ci, a graduate of Forest Hills High School and JoJo a graduate of East Union High School, frequently visit Charlotte to see family and friends.

Although they live in New York City, the Haileys say they "love Charlotte and all our people there. We want to thank you for all the support over the years...even when we were singing gospel as Cedric & the Hailey Brothers."

With over 12 years in the business of music, the Haileys have spent half their lives surrounded with music.

K-Ci and JoJo recently finished taping the video for the first single which will feature West Coast rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg and BET VJ/model Brett Walker. They are also scheduled to begin taping the video for the second single 'Don't Rush' with Lazy Bone of the rap group Bone Thugs N



PHOTO/TREISIG & TAYLOR

K-Ci and JoJo Hailey

Harmony. The Haileys hope to shoot a video here in Charlotte one day.

"We've been asking the record company to let us shoot a video in Charlotte to show our city we still have love for them," K-Ci said. "Just like the Panthers and the Hornets, we want to represent by showing our hometown in a video."

Just as the interview was completed, the phone rang

again with a return call from the Haileys. They said they admired a sign in Marshville acknowledging Grammy Award winning country singer Randy Travis on Highway 74. With the rags to riches story from the Haileys and their celebrity status, K-Ci & JoJo feel they should be supported by their hometown fans and given a sign and/or mural in the Queen City to honor their success. "We love Charlotte...so show us how much you love us."

Cosby ponders future of his CBS show and life without his son

By Frazier Moore
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Bill Cosby is talking whipped cream.

"...A vat of whipped cream," he proposes, "with a paintbrush in it where you just slap it on him." By "him" Cosby means Hilton Lucas, the character he plays on his CBS sitcom.

He is standing in cavernous

Stage E at Kaufman Astoria Studios in Queens, consulting with executive producer Norman Steinberg.

It's the end of a long rehearsal, the day before taping the season's 25th and final episode of the day before the Los Angeles police announce the capture of the man they say killed Cosby's son in January, a tragedy that has

hung over the show and haunted its star the two months since).

But at the moment, Cosby is consumed with just one thing: fixing the script's slapstick finale. How to stage it remains somewhat uncertain.

"Uncertain" could describe "Cosby" overall. Extremely high-profile (as if any TV show Cosby did could be otherwise),

his new sitcom knocked nobody's socks off in its freshman season.

Even some of those present on Stage E this March afternoon concede the vexing truth: A series built around television's most identifiable star continues to suffer an identity crisis.

"... The tag is, he has been kind enough," riffs Cosby, still

sketching out the episode's finale in his free-form, almost-be-bop style of expressing ideas, "the tag for this is, y'know, he's been kind enough to let the kid — you know what I mean? And I'm sitting there and I have to take it, y'understand? OK?"

"OK," says Steinberg, who really does understand. Then

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