

arts & entertainment

The Morning After

by salamander east

Review

by richard abernathy

A live album is usually released when a performer is at the crest of his popularity. This is precisely the case with Paul Simon and his current "Live Rhymin'" album. After "There Goes Rhymin' Simon," which was a success both artistically and commercially, Simon has released a new album with songs from "Rhymin' Simon" as well as some Simon and Garfunkel tunes.

The album, however, is more or less a failure. One of the reasons for its failure is Simon himself. Simon simply doesn't sound as good in person as he does on his records done in the studio. Another reason the album doesn't come off is his choice of backup groups. Though Urubamba is a fine group that backs Simon well, his other group, The Jesse Dixon Singers, upstages him.

Where Simon is best on the album is when he sings only accompanied by himself on guitar. The songs where he does this are: "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard," "American Tune,"

"Homeward Bound," and "America."

Most of the other songs, though, don't work out. "Bridge Over Troubled Water," Simon's best song ever, seems to be begging for Art Garfunkel or Aretha Franklin to sing it. On "Mother and Child Reunion" and "Loves Me Like A Rock," Simon is pushed into the background by The Jesse Dixon Singers.

What this album seems to prove is that Simon's best work is done in the recording studio. Where many performers are uneasy in the technical labyrinth of the studio, Simon seems to thrive on the very complexity of recording. Simon doesn't hesitate to double or triple-track his voice when he is recording an album, an innovation that gives a singer more richness and clarity to his voice. He also uses the best musicians available and produces his albums to perfection. Unfortunately, this album as well as any other "live" album, lacks all this technical expertise.

There wasn't anything better to do on Sunday, so I decided to catch up on my reading. I haphazardly picked up a copy of a book that I had purchased at the bookstore earlier that week, grabbed a six-pack and headed for the lake to read. I usually don't read an entire 280 page novel at one sitting, but after reading forty some pages, I was so engrossed and so totally depressed that I had to know the outcome. The name of the book was *The Morning After*, which incidentally was made into a television movie starring Dick Van Dyke. Though the story deals with a man's struggle with alcoholism, author Jack B. Weiner seems to be able to steer away from all the melodramatic overtones which are usually present in this kind of novel. I would go as far to say that *The Morning After* is much more impressive than *The Lost Weekend* or *Days of Wine and Roses*. Not to say that these works aren't good, but *Morning After* is a bit more creative and conveys more thought and imagination.

The novel is the first person account of Charlie Lester, a big time public relations man. He earns \$40,000 a year and has a plush home in Malibu. He also has a drinking problem (understatement). His problem is what makes the book so readable. Charlie tries his damndest to

convince us that he is not an alcoholic. He justifies and tries to present legitimate arguments every opportunity he gets. Still, though we sympathize with him, he doesn't sway us in the least bit. One never gets disgusted with Charlie because of the fact that his wife does not try to understand his problem and help him help himself until it is too late. She is a nagging sarcastic woman. Though Charlie wears her down mentally, she merits no sympathy for the fact that she has not divorced him or tried to aid him. I kept getting the idea that she was a mental masochist. Also, the fact that she does not give Charlie attention is brought out by the fact that Charlie has various extra-marital affairs throughout the novel. It is subtly implied that his wife is the cause of this.

The author has the decency not to try to psychoanalyze Charlie's problem. Instead, he gives us various bits of information which could possibly have a bearing on the origin of his drinking problem. These factors you will have to decide on your own.

My main objection to the novel was the over-usage of graphic sexual passages to fill in space. Though most of the passages are stark but tastefully done, it does nothing to further the book's plot. Author Weiner's narrative is so intense that at times one wonders what the point is in all those erotic passages. It seems that at times he is more concerned with Charlie's sex life, not his drinking. The only merit among these passages that I could find was the fact that when men get drunk they do tend to be over-sexed and act in such a manner. Thus, that is the only justification for why Charlie would want the reader to know all the gory details. After all, I suppose, Charlie is drunk at the time that he is conveying this, so it would only tend to add more impact and realism to his account.

Be sure you have your dictionary on hand while you are reading *The Morning After*. Though the book reads very fast, some of Weiner's choice of words are totally mind-boggling. I just can't picture Charlie being so intellectual during a drunken black-out!! Perhaps the author accidentally had Charlie step out of character for a few moments???

I won't spoil the ending for you, but I think I should give you fair warning that the novel's finale is bleak. There is absolutely no hope, only total despair and the wreckage of several people's lives. This is the main reason I am recommending this book. The author does not cop out with a half-way happy ending like his predecessors. Instead, he presents a dark gloomy, sordid tale of one man's downfall and his failure to come to the realization that he is an alcoholic. The presentation is very crude and harsh. But, isn't alcoholism a crude and harsh subject to begin with???

If you get depressed very easily, I suggest that you do not read the last chapter. It is one that will stick in your mind for weeks on end. If you are an alcoholic, don't worry about having a sermon thrust down your throat. Weiner keeps his narrative very objective and never enters in to the morality of the subject. He merely cites Charlie as a case study. Somehow, I am surprised that this is not required reading in a psychology or sociology course. Whether it is or not, it is a book that I feel you will find worthwhile.

The Ivory Snow Girl

by salamander east

It is not my policy to devote a review to a porno flick unless it is a national controversy. You might say that *Behind the Green Door* is a minor sensation. Let's see, it was banned in Los Angeles, a town that never bans anything (that should give you some inkling), for four months. Next, the Ivory soap people tried to sue the film's star, Marilyn Chambers, since she is simultaneously appearing as an innocent mother on Ivory soap commercials across the nation, in addition to having her picture splashed across boxes of Ivory Snow in various supermarkets. Yep, it's slightly scandalous, and it's playing at the Chateau Arts Cinema here in Charlotte. So, out of curiosity I went.

The plot, naturally, is shoe string thin. Basically, a sort of freak side show circus troop kidnaps Marilyn. They then use her to act out all their bizarre sexual fantasies. I won't tell you what they are because they would take all the fun out of it. From what I understand, the film is fairly faithful to the book which was written by anonymous (though it's rumored in Hollywood that Truman Capote wrote it).

Marilyn Chambers, as amply described by *Playboy*, is a porno version of Cybil Shepherd. She does fairly well in her role. At

least she acts half-way believable during some of the more bizarre sex scenes, but let's face it, she ain't no Georgina Spelvin. If Georgina Spelvin had been playing the lead (Spelvin was in *The Devil in Miss Jones*), the film would have been excellent. The main difference between Spelvin and Chambers is the fact that Chambers tries to put too much emotional feeling into her sex. She misses the entire point of the character, who is out to have sex for the fun of it. Whereas, Spelvin makes love to a person's body, not to their mind — which is what the plot requires.

Actually, the film is nothing to rave about, unless you are a porno veteran and really appreciate bizarre scenes of erotica. As for originality, *The Devil in Miss Jones* has *Behind the Green Door* beaten by a mile. The film's color texture is poor. The sound is very poor. Half the time I could not decipher what was being spoken on screen. The musical selection was hideous. As for Ms. Chambers' body (did you know that she is married and has two kids), Florida Jackson has a much more sculptured body.

All in all, the whole thing was rather disasterous, even though I found myself dying with laughter. You knew the whole thing was a flop for the fact that none of the

males in the audience had overcoats over their laps. Actually, Ivory Snow shouldn't prosecute, because Chambers will probably make them a lot of money!!!



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