

FAMILY *from page 30*

deprogramming seminar. Filmed in tight close-up, Mathews' final speech to the camera, in which he tearfully hopes that his parents will never have to go through the kind of pain he is enduring, is a cry from the heart.

Family Fundamentals is a moving and important film, in part due to Dong's careful refusal to condemn parents for their actions. He doesn't mock them but simply shows us the results of their behavior: broken families, alienated children. It seems unlikely Brett Mathews' parents will ever see this film. But by bravely sharing his own anguish, Brett will surely help many others.

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GAYETY *from page 30*

This PlanetOut story noted too that more than "70 percent of straight male respondents also admitted to having visited a gay club in order to meet single women."

Boy, no wonder much of the world thinks all English men are gay.

I'm guessing the inference here is many straight women go to gay bars to hang out with gay male friends. Straight men know this. So much for women going to those clubs to evade predatory males.

The final tidbit in this story? "The results also suggest that 90 percent of straight British women have had a one-time gay sexual experience."

Don't even get me started.

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AUDIOPHILE • DAVID STOUT

Timberlake's solo turn a stunning success

I'm just gonna be blunt and say this straight out: *Justified* is the best pop/R&B release I've heard in ages and Justin Timberlake clearly possesses a degree of talent that's only been hinted at during his tenure with the mega-successful boy band 'N Sync.

Working in close collaboration with super producers The Neptunes (on seven cuts), Timbaland (four), Brian McKnight and The Underdogs (one each), Timberlake evokes memories of *Off The Wall*-era Michael Jackson, classic Stevie Wonder and various '70s soul singers without subverting his own identity.

In large part, this is due to the crucial input of The Neptunes, prodigies Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo, who forego the hip hop party beats that define their style in favor of a retro-soul sheen — highlighted by live playing from the duo — that sounds vintage but never old.

Before entering the studio to record tracks for *Justified*, Williams says that he and Hugo drove Timberlake around Los Angeles listening to old Earth, Wind & Fire albums to get in the proper mindset for the sessions.

The old skool vibe that the trio mines isn't evinced just in the album's soundscapes, but it permeates the songwriting as well in the form of razor-sharp melodies and counter-



melodies and sophisticated bridges as catchy as ebola. Timberlake, who penned all 13 cuts with his producers, occasionally gets too cliché or maudlin with his lines, but he's a creditable songwriter who will probably be great.

And his development in this area is a certainty if he continues to turn out work like "Cry Me A River," the Timbaland-produced second single that's a vicious swipe at a double-crossing past love — who may or may not be a certain teen pop princess. Over a dark, jittery beat, Timberlake spits, "You don't have to say / what you did / I already know / I found out from *him*." He bites even deeper on the chorus, "Told me you love me / why did you leave me all alone / now you tell me you need me / when you call me on the phone / girl I refuse / you must have me con-

fused / with some other guy / bridges were burned / now it's your turn to cry / so cry me a river."

While love is a central theme among the songs, most don't approach the subject as defiantly. "Still On My Brain," the lone contribution from The Underdogs, sounds like an aural filet sliced right from Timberlake's broken heart. "Now I could say that I don't love you no more / and I could say that I've closed the door / to our love / and I could tell you it's time for us to go our separate ways / but baby I just wouldn't be the same / because your love is still on my brain."

But not to worry, even in these plaintive moments, *Justified* is never far from the party. On the next track Janet Jackson shows up to coo her trademark sexy come-ons on "(And She Said) Take Me Now." Justin and Janet scorch over a Timbaland track that ends with two full minutes of futuristic drum programming. The cut has hit single written all over it.

Though, really, there's no track on the album without strong chart appeal. Which is one reason it's going to be fascinating to see how Jive Records handles the project over the next year — and beyond.

It's a safe bet that *Justified* is going to be around for a long time and it won't be a surprise to see it achieve classic status in a few years: Justin Timberlake and his colleagues have created a work that will probably change the game and certainly raises the bar for their contemporaries. As a fan of thoughtful pop music, I couldn't be more pleased.

The "Top Ten" DJ picks will return in the December 21 Audiophile column

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