

'Soul Asylum' languishing in shadows

By MARK BRETT

When discussing the best rock bands that you've never heard of, Soul Asylum comes immediately to mind. Coming out of the early '80s Minneapolis punk scene, Soul Asylum has been languishing in the shadows for ten years, churning out songs of solid, if a bit loose, music and perversely brilliant lyrics.

Their latest release, "And the Horse They Rode In On," is more of the same; a sweatier, more intelligent collection of rock and roll you won't find anywhere. The fun starts with "Spinnin'," a gyrating rave-up that gets the proceedings off on the right foot.

"If I lost my mind," lead singer David Pirner croons in the chorus, "would you help me find it?" Anyone who says no might as well stop right there, because from then on, we're in the dark world of the Soul Asylum, where even the ups are downs.

In "Bitter Pill," this philosophy is well borne out. A typically dystopian piece of Soul Asylum

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grunge-work, right down to Pirner's screaming vocals from Hell, this song includes the cheery phrase, "Then you fall into the pit at the end of your rainbow."

Next is "Veil of Tears," a solid rock-style tune that contains a lot of (appropriately enough) veiled political imagery. More openly political is "Nice Guys (Don't Get Paid)," a fable of decadence about some enterprising men who are forced by a bad economy to create the best designer drug in the world. They, of course, become incredibly rich and thus achieve the American dream.

This theme of success is continued in "Something Out of Nothing," a funky little tune about desire, wanting, and instant total gratification. Next is "Gullible's Travels," an intelligent, ballady number with an epic scope and unrelentingly depressing lyrics like, "Everything's turning but

mostly just turning out wrong."

Soul Asylum seems to enjoy subverting (some would say perverting) country music styles and using them for their own twisted ends, as they do in "Brand New Shine," a punk-bluegrass tune about assembly-line optimism.

The theme of success is touched upon once again in "Easy Street," an easy-sounding progressive-rock style song about the difficulty in finding utopias. Next is "Grounded," a sad, boozy rock tune that, unusually, isn't incredibly brilliant lyrically. Oh, well. Soul Asylum's bad days are better than many bands' best.

"Be On Your Way," another solid rock number, should strike home with all of us graduating seniors, as Soul Asylum delves into the frightening world of career opportunities! "No sense of direction/No sense at all," Pirner groans at one point. Yeah. I know all about that one.

"We 3" sounds incredibly sappy at first, but a more careful listen reveals an intelligent, worldwide, and painfully truthful song about the eternal triangle: two male best friends and one's girlfriend.

The album ends with "All the King's Friends," a song of such scope and complexity that I quite honestly can't grasp it all. Buried in the middle of an avalanche of numbingly good lyrics, however,

is the line "You never know just what you've got until it's gone." Poison builds an entire song around this cliché; Soul Asylum apologetically throws it in to get a point across and moves on to better things. I think that just about says it all.

Overall an album with a mellow feel, "And the Horse They Rode In On" nonetheless conveys the sheer rawness that should have made Soul Asylum famous and

did, indeed, make them infamous in some circles. Though rough around the edges and unrelentingly downbeat, this is an excellent album that should appeal to anyone who's interested in good rock and roll.

This, of course, means that it will be quickly forgotten by all but the group's core of supporters, just like the rest of Soul Asylum's work. And you wonder why they're so downbeat.

Life not really absolute

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tics of fear, hatred, and division. Let us find a different way.

So, first of all, we should not say that everyone who voted for Sen. Helms is a bigot; we should not say that we are embarrassed to be from North Carolina. We must, instead, revitalize ourselves, wave good-bye to Mr. Helms as he goes back up to Washington, and, above all, keep talking to the people who

don't agree with us. If we believe we are right about an issue, we must find a way of spreading our message, a way which will make people of all persuasions want to be like us, to be with us.

Life is too complex for absolutes. For instance, now I'm thinking that Jim Morrison's "Strange Days" is the '60s song. But I'm willing to listen to the people who support Aretha.

Fast food hurts planet

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A problem exists of determining where fast-food restaurants get their beef. What fast food chain will admit that they import beef from the South American rain forests when they are aware of the current controversy associated with this? If cattle aren't raised in the rain forest, then they graze on open land in the United States or are raised in feed lots — these, too, complete complete with environmental ills.

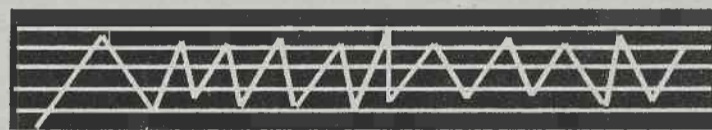
For example, cattle grazing on open land is responsible for erosion that occurs in the Midwest and Great Plains regions. Also, cattle raised on feed lots are fattened for slaughter; antibiotics are usually

injected into the cows to fatten them. Therefore, when you eat the meat, you are also eating everything that was pumped into the cow.

Fast-food restaurants seem unappealing. Not only are various environmental problems associated with them, but the food they serve is unhealthy. So when you are debating whether or not to eat at Hardee's, remember that when you purchase a hamburger in styrofoam packaging you are contributing to various environmental problems.

Every time you spend a dollar at a fast-food restaurant, you are showing support for their harmful practices.

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