

Vertical Horizon Redefines Sound for Mass Audience

By CARL JACOBS
Staff Writer

After three successful independent releases, Vertical Horizon's major label debut seems to be everything the radio wants. *Everything You Want* is chock-full of catchy songs destined for G105 and teenage soap operas like "Party of Five."

The album epitomizes the music of the '90s, with its hard-core pop sound and choruses that you start singing along with on the first listen.

CD REVIEW

Vertical Horizon
Everything You Want

★★★★★

Although this formula is becoming tiresome, *Everything You Want* is as good as the formula gets.

With this album, Vertical Horizon took the opportunity to redefine the acoustic rock sound that sold 70,000 albums without any label assistance.

This move will certainly abandon some of the loyal grass-roots fans that the band has built since its 1991 inception. However, the change also creates

a radio-friendly sound that is much more accessible to the general public.

Kane said the new sound was an attempt to better express the band's changing life experience.

"After six or seven years of touring, toughing out relationships, struggling; you begin to feel a little more realistic about life," Kane stated in a press release. "That realism, that anger sounded really good on electric guitar."

The first single, "We Are," isn't the album's best track, but my guess is Vertical Horizon is easing into the radio. "We Are," though average on an album with many radio-worthy tunes, does establish the band's new, harder sound.

The released tracks should culminate with "Best I Ever Had," the album's token beautiful track. The song is almost a sure thing, with its slow, melodious underlying cello, sweet vocals and sad lyrics: "It's not so bad/I don't want you back/You're only the best I ever had."

At the end of the decade, the band's sound is probably too old to remain on the charts for too long. But unless something new catches on really soon, Vertical Horizon is destined for temporary fame, and the radio will benefit from its contribution.

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Voodoo Daddy's Second Swing Misses Mark

By FERRIS MORRISON
Staff Writer

With the release of its second album, *This Beautiful Life*, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy makes another attempt at success in the music industry but falls short of the popularity the band so desires.

Most noted for its contribution to the "Swingers" soundtrack and the theme for the TV show "Third Rock From the Sun," Big Bad Voodoo Daddy is one of the many swing bands that has infiltrated the music scene since the genre became popular a few years ago.

CD REVIEW

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy
This Beautiful Life

★★★★

Listeners crowd auditoriums to hear the music played live, allowing fans to catch a piece of the madness that fills their dancing shoes with jitterbugs.

When you are listening to *This Beautiful Life*, visions of those crowds jumping and jiving to these guys don't come to mind. Rather, the sound creates an image of the band in some studio, stuck in a sound booth, trying unsuccessfully to create that live feeling.

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy takes no liberties with this album, leaving inventive solos out of some tracks that could have

made the album a little more interesting.

Instead, repetitive lyrics and poor vocals plague the album. Songs like "Some Things" and "Big and Bad" make the album cumbersome. It's as if they've forgotten the crescendo, leaving fans wanting something more powerful.

"Still In Love With You" offers some hope for success with a soothing saxophone solo that swoons over lovers past.

"When It Comes to Love," a sleepy, jazzy tune, creates the image of a smoky singles lounge with patrons that need a little advice on the subject.

One of the few songs both well-done and fun to listen to, "I Wanna Be Like You" jazzes things up with its crazy salsa beat. Unfortunately, it's simply a new mix and cover of the same song from one of Disney's animated films.

But there is hope for Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. Since swing is one of the easier music types to compose, it shouldn't be too hard to take this album back to the drawing board and add some spice to these bland and unoriginal tracks.

And thanks to the undying popularity that swing music seems to have, it looks like the band has some time to reinvent itself before this fad is retired to the history books.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.



Big Bad Voodoo Daddy makes an attempt to keep the swing trend alive and kicking with *This Beautiful Life*.

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'Poppy, Philosophical' Lud Climbs Local Ladder

By JOSH BAYLIN
Staff Writer

When I picked up *Epiflot*, local act Lud's second release, it had what one could call an informal press pack, really just more of a handwritten note to the Divisions editor.

After mentioning that Lud's first CD, *Sparkling Rope*, was rated one of the best

local releases in 1997, it quickly asked the reviewer to be mindful of the "deep philosophical" and "poppy songs" Lud had to offer.

CD REVIEW

Lud
Epiflot

★★★★

A challenge had been issued to this reviewer, so I bravely accepted and began listening to *Epiflot*.

First and foremost, due to the deep philosophical content I was preparing myself for, I felt I had to find out what their seemingly odd name meant.

After much deliberation, I've concluded that it has to do with a man named Ned Lud, who in 1779 broke into a factory and destroyed two knitting machines. Lud and his followers the Ludites were waging the war of man vs. machine. In my humble opinion, this is perhaps what Lud stands for.

Epiflot starts off with "Work in a Restaurant," which could undoubtedly replace the current theme song to NBC's "Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place." The catchy tune has a recognizable guitar riff and droning lyrics, creating an anthem for workers in restaurants everywhere.

This is the pop side of Lud.

Playing on another catchy guitar riff, "Tree Lud" challenges the conventional rock sound by feeding lead vocals through a felanger, giving an underwater sound to the tune.

Another pop installment. Two songs really stand out as the deeply philosophical (really, what I just

like to call well-written) songs. "The Song of the Ambulance Driver" is slow and has an almost bluesy feel to it. Another solid guitar riff aids the vocals of Kirk Ross and Sara Bell. Their chilling harmonies amplify the tune's message about the horror of death.

"Rocket to Kinshasa" speaks of the revolution to come in the Congo and the "confederacy of dunces and assholes."

Deeply philosophical, but more importantly, meaningful.

While both the self-deemed "poppy tunes" and "deeply philosophical" ones grab my ear, the songs that really offer the most are the instrumental tracks that are in a whole new category themselves. "Eritrea," "Valiant" and "Bud" showcase the band's real talent. The great guitar, driving drums and extremely complex bass lines keep the music fresh.

"Picante" is just that, hot and full of energy. Can we say Carlos Santana of old?

The one problem with "Epiflot" is that some songs on the album just get lost. "Patron Saint of Lost Causes" and "Epiflot" are weak songs that seem to interrupt the flow of rocking tunes.

With another couple of releases, this Lud should get those production errors out of the way and make a push toward being a great local band.

Despite this reviewer's initial doubt, Kirk Ross was right when he described Lud's new album as poppy yet philosophical. Lud's newest release is "sure to please," in both my own words and Kirk's.

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