

Cure Bleeds Sadness on New Album

BY JOANNA PEARSON
Staff Writer

The Cure has never been known as a lighthearted band, but *Bloodflowers* is the saddest album of all.

Not only are the tracks doleful, in typical Cure fashion, but there's an overall feeling that frontman Robert Smith is worn out after all these years of splendid sadness.

Listening to this album is akin to seeing a favorite grandparent in a nursing home — he seems old and weak now, but you remember how powerful he used to be.

Of course, just like with the grandparent, you have to give The Cure a lot of credit. It's the band's third decade, and it's still kicking — pretty good for a Brit goth-pop band that spawned a seemingly faddish following.

In fact, The Cure is even trying to live up to the mastery of earlier albums

Pornography and *Disintegration* with this release, the supposed third in a trilogy.

But *Bloodflowers* fails to live up to its fellow trilogy albums. Of course, this is somewhat understandable since it would be hard to match either of the earlier albums' beautiful darkness.

Smith still has the winning combinations of tinkling noises, echoing melodies and tortured vocals. He's still delivering Camus-inspired lyrics ("The world is neither fair nor unfair"). He's still wandering through memories of standing with a girl in the rain.

In fact, all the essentially Cure elements are there, they're just toned down. None of the songs on *Bloodflowers* are terribly bad, but none of them are memorable. To borrow and rephrase one of Smith's own lyrics, "The album is neither good nor ungood."

A true sign of age is when one starts feeling nostalgic not for past events, but for earlier songs about past events. In *Bloodflowers*, this stagnancy replaces the fresh wistfulness of previous albums. Rather than sounding entirely original, the songs seem like generic versions of

earlier favorites.

Both "Out of This World" and "There Is No If" are reminiscent of "Pictures of You," while "Where the Birds Always Sing" bears a melodic similarity to "Why Can't I Be You."

More than anything, *Bloodflowers* seems like a musical euphemism for The Cure's oft-threatened departure from the musical scene. Nearly every song conveys a feeling of ending and farewell.

A quick lyrical survey supports this claim: "And I know we have to go/ I realize we only get to stay so long," or "I used to feed the fire, but the fire is almost out."

If, as Smith seems to be claiming, the long miserable fire of The Cure is nearly out, then it is a sad day for pop music.

Though *Bloodflowers* is a more disappointing representation of the downward slope, it is still unmistakably The Cure and therefore part of a wonderful legacy of self-indulgent, extravagant and darkly beautiful music.

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Vocals Lighten Lyrical Weight On Tracy Chapman's Latest

BY CARMEN WOODRUFF
Staff Writer

She tells the stories of the dark times and the bright. Multiplatinum, Grammy-winning Tracy Chapman is back with another album overflowing with emotion.

The lyrics have a deeper meaning than any catchy pop tune. Chapman spills her soul quietly, with the background of acoustic and electric guitar dominating. *Telling Stories* has a mellow feel — one can sit back and relax, or listen intently and absorb the stories of wisdom offered in each track.

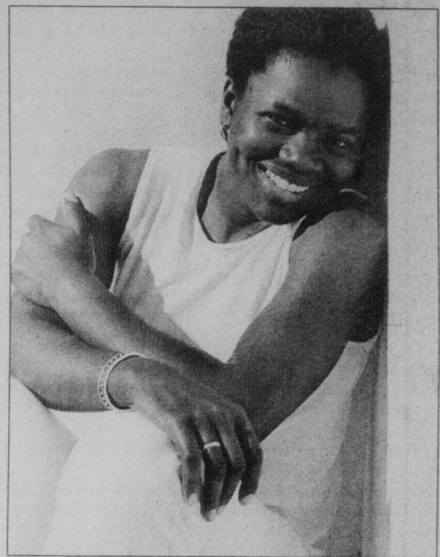
In the title track, contrasting beats and electric guitar chords underlie lyrics that define the space between fantasy and reality. And it's all spun together with a catchy melody.

The startling beating of drums in "Nothing Yet" brings back the days of slavery. It pounds out images of hot fields, plows and pain. Bemoaning blacks' continuous struggle with prejudice, Chapman sings: "Hands untied/ but the same shuffle once again/ running all the time/ ain't going nowhere/ It's a new page in the same book."

Although her lyrics carry much weight, her light voice allows the listeners to decide what they want to think for themselves. It is not in any way preachy.

"Wedding Song" captures the beauty of Chapman's rich simplicity with bass background that continues throughout the song like the eternal vows in the ceremony. It is a passionate, midtempo song that could be successful as a single. The wedding day is "sacred and holy," Chapman proclaims, asking, "Can I get a witness?" In "Paper and Ink," she muses on how people place significance in transient things like money while ignoring life's beauty.

Chapman has come a long way in the 12 years since her first album. But throughout this time, she never lost herself. *Telling Stories* is just another project where she has the oppor-



On her new album, *Telling Stories*, Tracy Chapman mixes catchy melodies with soulful wisdom.

tunity to share her experiences and to stay real. As well as being the sole lyricist, she offers her talents on the acoustic guitar, melody harp and electric guitar.

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Musician Spins Classics Into New Orbit

BY CARL JACOBS
Staff Writer

With what began as a project to entertain friends, William Orbit created something that will please many more.

Featuring 11 electronic interpretations of classical works by composers such as Vivaldi and Beethoven, *Pieces in a Modern Style* is unique. It's also meditative and it definitely has style.

What it's not, as Rolling Stone wrongfully states, is a bridge between classical and Brit-pop. Classical fans will probably be appalled at the synthesized instruments and trippy beats.

Some might also say that the integrity of the compositions has been compromised, but coming from an ambient-house perspective, this album has a lot to offer. And that's what's important (People married to the classical genre are going to ignore this album anyway).

The result is a wonderfully crafted ambient album. The songs range from soundtrack-worthy relaxing pieces to meditative drum and bass works to club-bound European techno mixes.

Although the single "Adagio for Strings" has already reached the top 5 on UK charts, it seems inappropriate to single out any of the songs because they are all top 5-worthy.

Pieces is the solo debut of a musician who has already developed an extensive résumé in the electronica genre. Orbit won two Grammys as co-producer of

Madonna's *Ray of Light*; he is acclaimed for work on albums like Blur's *13*.

With *Pieces*, Orbit proves for the first time that he can create a successful album of his own.

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CD REVIEW
William Orbit
Pieces in a Modern Style



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Skybolt Lacks Originality, Mimics Raleigh Rockers

BY JOSH LOVE
Staff Writer

Picture the quintessential Chapel Hill band. Immediately Archers of Loaf, Superchunk and Polvo spring to mind, three bands that epitomized the angular, jaded alt-rock ultimately immortalized as "the Chapel Hill sound."

Now picture the quintessential Raleigh band. The Connells achieved remarkable success, but never managed to grant Raleigh the level of nationwide attention that descended upon Chapel Hill in the early '90s.

Essentially, Raleigh boasts a loosely defined hodgepodge of a scene with three faithful but disparate pillars for support: a minor alt-country movement, the reliable Connells and an admirable legacy of bar-band rock.

Skybolt 6 seems poised to become the epitome of the Raleigh scene through the sheer inclusiveness of its debut, *The Bells of Bricktown*. The album incorporates nearly every niche from the past two decades of Raleigh-based rock, as the band liberally borrows from each of its Capitol City predecessors.

Actually, I failed to detect any hints of Corrosion of Conformity in Skybolt 6, but aside from the lack of influence from that hard-rock institution, the band seems to have all of its bases covered.

Unfortunately, *The Bells of Bricktown* serves as more of a mixed bag of unconnected Raleigh reference points than a cohesive statement from an innovative artist. Amidst such a single-minded pursuit of Raleigh-rock mimicry, Skybolt 6 too often forgets to include its own voice, and ultimately the band can claim no original voice at all.

The album opens with the title track, essentially an outtake from a late '80s Connells album, with Skybolt 6 vocalist Eric West as the less-expressive version of Connells frontman Doug MacMillan.

But two songs later on "Revolution Radio," West metamorphoses into a wannabe honky-tonker, a half-attempted persona he revisits on "One Shot." "Colorado" at least journeys outside the Southeast to copycat Chicago's Urge Overkill for no discernible reason.

Also in the realm of the utterly unexplained, Skybolt 6 covers Bob Dylan's classic "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." Not surprisingly, the band downplays Dylan's sublime poetry so that West can emote in his best Southern drawl.

Skybolt 6 boasts that its songs have been likened to those of U2 and David Bowie. But Bono would never allow himself to wallow in awkward rhymes

like "the new synthetic gilded-age/ that brought us to this final stage," while the Thin White Duke would likely rather re-release *Let's Dance* than come within a time zone of these musical clichés.

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CD REVIEW
Skybolt 6
The Bells of Bricktown



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- 16 TH Vic Chesnut / Kristin Hersh
- 17 FR PATRIOT w/ Disorderly Conduct
- 18 SA BRUTHER MONK
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- 22 WE FU MANCHU
- 23 TH Jupiter Coyote
- 24 FR YO LA TENGO** (\$10)
- 25 SA HIPBONE
- 26 SU THE SELDOM SCENE** (8 pm)
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- 31 FR BLUE RAGS (\$8)

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