

Toni Braxton's Sister Releases Talented First CD

By CARMEN WOODRUFF
Staff Writer

When her first single, "If You Don't Wanna Love Me" hit the radio waves, everyone was raving about "that new Toni Braxton song."

But she's not Toni — she's her younger sister. Tamar Braxton proves that she can hold her own ground on her first,

self-titled album, *Tamar*.

With a sound similar to her sister's, Tamar's demonstrates an even broader range. She hits high notes comparable to those of Mariah Carey, and her rich deep tones accentuate this cool contrast.

There is no doubt that in the 10 years that separate the two sisters, Tamar will grow even stronger in both ranges.

The album explodes with different flavors of jazz, Latin, R&B and flowing ballads. Along with the variety of styles, Tamar worked with numerous stars to compile her first solo project.

In "No Disrespect," Tamar joins

forces with Missy Elliot to demand the respect she deserves. Every woman should be able to relate to this one.

She's working with some of the most well-respected names in the recording industry to make a lasting impression. Her style embodies longevity. Nothing is too faddish.

Like Toni, she can draw diverse audiences with the versatility of her voice. Hip-hop fans will enjoy "Get None" with its So So Def appeal.

Most importantly, Tamar is experimenting with her own creativity. She co-wrote three songs on the record. "I'm Over You" is one of Tamar's original tunes. It's a smooth ballad with gospel undertones.

The majority of the lyrics tell stories of love, heartbreak and anticipation. The voice behind the lyrics possesses what many singers lack these days.

It has a rich, trained tone that can compete without accompanying beats. Tamar possesses a natural talent that the world will hear more from in the future.

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

Rocked Out? Lou Reed Sounds Tired

By MATT MANSFIELD
Staff Writer

You might think the album title *Ecstasy* means that Lou Reed has discovered new drugs to feed his rock 'n' roll addiction.

But his walk on the wild side ended years ago. *Ecstasy* has polished guitar sounds with Reed's famous distortion quietly going crazy in the background.

The album has a mellow sound that sometimes succeeds with melancholy ballads and sometimes doesn't with spiritless songs.

The title song is melodic, with its soft guitar and sorrowful violin playing in the background.

But songs such as "Mad," whose title

indicates a venting of frustrations, seem like Reed had trouble getting his over-50-years-old body out of bed to sing that morning.

However, Reed does manage to muster some energy and rock out on a few songs.

The only problem is that he overemphasizes the distortion without backing it up with the rhythmic percussion that gave his previous albums needed direction.

"Like a Possum," certainly a cousin of "Sister Ray," kicks the distortion into high gear for a full 18 minutes on its track.

But, unlike the song "Sister Ray," it doesn't have the rhythmic quality to make you want it to keep going for 18 minutes.

Reed seems to have forgotten that he needs the drumbeats of good ol' Maureen Tucker to make a 15-minute-plus song interesting.

Reed, with his patented poignancy of

personal experience, still cranks out lyrics with bite.

"Modern Dance" tells the story of an old man lamenting his unfulfilling relationships and expressing the desire to travel the world to experience the fullness of life.

You can't help but want to smuggle this man in your backpack as you fly to Europe and bum around with him for a few months.

Another ballad, "Baton Rouge," recollects bittersweet memories of love lost after a disagreement over whether or not to have children.

This song makes you realize that Reed can still make you feel pensive for the rest of the day.

But on the whole, Lou Reed's talent has declined, and unless you are a diehard fan, you'll be disappointed with this album.

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Local Group Grunts On, Shows Promise

By JOANNA PEARSON
Staff Writer

Anna to the Infinite Power is just your regular ol' group of guys with a guitar, a bass and some drums who want to rock. Whether or not they're good at it will hardly stop them.

The Chapel Hill trio has been slopping out a "tasty hybrid of pop, punk and rock" since 1995. Its second release, *The Idea Guy*, is nothing special, but it seems sincere.

Most of the tracks consist of a lot of grunt-grunt-grunting guitar topped with the yell-singing of the lead vocalist.

Anna is that opening band you wouldn't mind sitting through, but wouldn't buy the CD from either. In all fairness, even though Anna sounds unappealing to me, many bands with a similar sound have met with success.

So they've definitely got some potential. First of all, they have this cutesy band title. They are also fortunate enough to be located in Chapel Hill, a place that breeds indie-rock ambition like stagnant water breeds mosquitoes.

They'll have plenty of opportunity to open up around here, and then, when the stars are aligned just so and the wind is blowing a certain way, they'll land some G105 airplay right after that song about meeting Virginia.

So, what hit single should we expect from Anna? "They Saw Us" stands out as the best of the grunty guitar tracks.

When Anna relaxes the cock-rock even slightly, however, they are able to make a listener-friendly song like "Gina."

My personal favorite was "I Quit the Band," and not because of the title's ironic significance, but because the guitar sounded more like an instrument than a noise machine.

Even though no one is expecting lyrical genius from Anna, the song-writing is a letdown from the intriguing titles. For instance, "Wordsworth's Words" has very little to do with the poet, but instead focuses on the unpoetic refrain, "Why won't you listen woman?"

Despite all *The Idea Guy's* weaknesses, Anna seems like a band that does have some staying power.

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