

Aparo's Debut Shallow, But Reveals Potential

By JOSH LOVE
Staff Writer

First there's the name, Angie Aparo. Now, I know that countless rockers, from David Bowie to Michael Jackson, have suffered from some serious sexual identity crises, but all of them were at least christened male. Not so for male modern-rock newcomer Angie Aparo, but don't expect him to cover Prince's "If I Was Your Girlfriend" in the near future.

CD REVIEW

Angie Aparo
The American



Instead, on *The American*, Aparo specializes in the kind of overproduced cross that reminds us all of that pop-radio golden age of 1998. You remember that time, before the reign of misplaced misogynistic rap-rock, when the world was safe for a guy to sing about how he must be lonely because it's 3 a.m.

Which means it's no coincidence that Matt Serletic, the man behind the boards for *The American*, also produced Matchbox 20's ridiculously huge debut album, not to mention Carlos Santana's beyond ridiculously huge comeback single "Smooth."

True to his platinum-certified form, Serletic dominates the album. The producer sweetens, homogenizes and essentially robs the pulse from the would-be hits on *The American* for optimum G105 target market impact.

Sure enough, Aparo started out as a dyed-in-the-wool folkie, armed with only an acoustic guitar and an unfortunate case of the PC syndrome.

In the hands of third-rate modern-rock svengali Serletic, *The American* sounds like Edwin McCain, Nine Days and Train all rolled into one, but because I can't tell the difference between these G105 staples, I guess that's not much of an achievement.

The American routinely plunders the cookie cutter of countless pop-rock radio gold mines, from the trademark Third Eye Blind falsettos of the current single "Spaceship" to the countryish bent of "Cry," in which Aparo tries to imitate Train, in vain. Worst of all, "It's Alright" passes off a weak Latin groove in a desperate attempt to remain current. Unfortunately, Aparo lacks a Carlos Santana to lend credibility to his "Smooth"-ish sham.

Literally, Aparo can't seem to decide which fork in the pseudo-wordsmith road to take: is he a reservoir of glib whimsy like his modern-rock brethren (as he seems on "Spaceship"), or the futile troubadour of dated political diatribe like the pro-environment "Green Into Gold" and the anti-racism "Memphis City Rain"?

Ultimately, however, Serletic deserves most of the blame for this disappointment. Aparo escapes dismissal solely because of the album's final listed track, "Wonderland," which reveals a passionate singer-songwriter who stretches his voice and his music beyond the strict pop-rock radio parameters. This heartfelt gem, which Serletic inexplicably leaves unadorned, only illuminates what an unfortunate conformist move Aparo makes with the rest of *The American*.

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



The Virginia-based Pat McGee Band has been building grassroots support for years. The band's major-label debut, *Shine*, pulls from a variety of influences to create an album that transcends musical generations and will earn the band a place on rock radio.

Pat McGee's Shine Sure to Please Every Fan

By RUSS LANE
Staff Writer

As Beck condenses every 20th century musical style into a few albums, The Pat McGee Band takes the entire rock canon into account on its major-label debut, *Shine*.

CD REVIEW

Pat McGee Band
Shine



The band bridges popular music's generation gap, buffering the lines drawn between '70s country-rock and the conscious eclecti-

cism of more modern bands. Composed of equal parts Fleetwood Mac and Rusted Root, The Eagles and Dave Matthews, the band is all things to rock fans of all ages and tastes.

Producer Jerry Harrison's work on the album wraps these influences in a blanket of familiarity. The listener is granted the reassuring luxury of knowing exactly what chord comes next, which lyric will follow the chorus.

The Pat McGee Band's constant association with bands past and present would give the album a stale quality if not for Harrison's production. The band mixes its benign sound with traces of

banjo, slide guitar and various saxophones. The minor accents liven *Shine*'s straightforward approach, ultimately rescuing the album from mediocrity.

While the album is not adventurous High Art, the band skillfully avoids an Oasis-like cannibalization of the rock genre. "Runaway" sounds at home on the radio, its tight harmonies filling the power vacuum left following The Eagle's lengthy sabbatical from G-105.

Only a few moments of *Shine* let the musical name-dropping get out of hand — the title track sounds like a throwaway Jackson Browne tune gone awry.

Aside from its obvious influences,

every song in *Shine* exudes sincerity without irony. "Minute's" chorus has no trace of banality or ulterior motive — it serves as a "clean" version of Dave Matthews' infamous "hike up your skirt a little more" line in "Crash."

Over: 1, The Pat McGee Band's everyband approach to rock reserves their place on the radio, specializing in accessible albeit passive country-rock. Their style nods to their predecessors while remaining contemporary. In four words — good but not remarkable.

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Rah Digga Lives Up to Its Hype

By SHINDY CHEN
staff writer

In the rap world, album release dates are a tease. Rah Digga's *Dirty Harriet*, the highly anticipated album from the up-and-coming female artist, was finally released April 11 after long delays.

As a consolation, the album undeniably lives up to the hype surrounding the FlipMode Squad's first lady, who claims she's the "ghetto diva in The Source with the three-page ad."

CD REVIEW

Rah Digga
Dirty Harriet



Digga's greatest quality is her voice. And she makes it quite clear on the album that she doesn't try to make it deeper to sound hard or thuggish; take her or leave her for who she is.

Her voice is low and outspoken, and her style is clear and enunciated, though sometimes her flow may sound a little perforated and choppy. Her lyrics however, are the most articulate and clever of any current female emcees. And yes, she does write her own rhymes.

On the flip side, her voice can sometimes be a little too demanding, and then she crosses the line into tedium and monotony. This could be due to some weak production which doesn't back her up adequately, or just a lack of oomph in her rhyming.

One of the songs that's most interesting is "Curtains," produced by Busta Rhymes. It's a little awkward at first and the hook is a little weird, but it grows on you like a fungus. Digga raps: "I'm gettin' money off the books like I'm Beatnuts/ Make 'em sign pre-nups,



Up-and-coming rap star Rah Digga, the "first lady" of Busta Rhymes' FlipMode Squad, makes her presence felt with her debut, *Dirty Harriet*.

word to my C-cups." "Do the Ladies Run This" showcases Digga, Eve of the Ruff Ryders and Sonja Blade. The song definitely has a Swizz Beatz feel, though it's produced by Shok, an up-and-coming member of the Ruff Ryder clique.

"Showdown" is a foreseable single. It bounces with a happy, bumpy track that sounds like something Redman and Meth would rhyme to.

Another track that might bring in the cheddar is "So Cool," with new soul crooner Carl Thomas, the man who will save Bad Boy Entertainment's R&B sector. Just listening to Thomas sing: "Cuz she is soooooo coooooool/ and you

can't be as fly as she/ Money baby can't you see ..." is enough even without Digga's role in the song.

Add to these the singles "Tight" and "Imperial" and a couple bonus tracks, and there's a pretty decent album there.

Give it up for the only FlipMode member besides Busta who's simultaneously making a name for her clique and showing that hip-hop might not be a male-dominated music form for long.

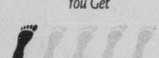
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MUSIC BRIEFS

Leeds-based pop-punk eight-piece Chumbawamba's 1997 single "Tubthumping" started out listenable, but soon grew tiring. So did the album it came from, *Tubthumper*. Now its aimless follow-up, *What You See Is What You Get*, skips past the "listenable" period rapidly.

MUSIC BRIEFS

Chumbawamba
What You See Is What You Get



What you see on opening the liner notes is a large photo of one dog humping another. The paying listener might imagine himself the second dog; the band, the first.

Of the album's 22 tracks, only two prove satisfying. The rest, many of which are under two minutes, seem more like juvenile jokes than songs.

Particularly wrenching, supposedly subversive numbers include "The Physical Impossibility of Death in Jerry Springer." Perhaps one who chuckles at titles like this would be amused by the mercifully brief corresponding songs.

Apparently, Chumbawamba's members think highly of their own wit.

They might be forgiven, if the tunes were less derivative or even more catchy. Each song tackles a genre of pop music, from flower-child folk to surf rock, but instead of commenting on the genres' conventions, the band creates dumb facsimiles with dumber lyrics.

Not a single track has the hook or urgency of "Tubthumping." Throw one more one-hit wonder on the pyre.

Slightly more interesting is the American debut of Norwegian trio Alice Deejay. Self-described as "dance-trance pop" (three genres that don't immediately call the term "good" to mind), the music on *Who Needs Guitars Anyway?* manages to rise above expectations — occasionally.

The first two tracks (coincidentally the first two singles released) are actually good. The trance beats hook in the

listener aggressively. I won't bother with their lyrics, though, as the band obviously didn't either.

Still, a lack of annoying embellishments and frontwoman Judy's smooth vocalizations make the tunes pleasing enough for club or home. That's a rare feat for trance music, even trance music like this — so pop it hardly fits the genre.

Unfortunately, the rest of the album is trance-inducing in a different sense. Only a few of the record's 12 remaining tracks stick out. The rest form a bland sludge of far less distinguishable material. My advice: Get the singles.

Compiled by Jeremy Hertz

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