

Wallflowers Deliver Rock Without Hype; Bad Vocals Mar White Octave

Limp Bizkit
Chocolate Starfish and the Hot Dog Flavored Water
★ 1/2

The most fascinating thing about Limp Bizkit is that the band actually takes itself seriously. Not only do the members dedicate about half of their new album to even more wannabe Rage-Meets-Insane-Crown-Pose rants that sound as if they could be the same song with several different titles, but they have the audacity to name it *Chocolate Starfish and the Hot Dog Flavored Water*.

Fortunately for Limp Bizkit, *Chocolate Starfish* offers a little hope that everyone else might be able to take them seriously as musicians another seven or 17 albums from now.

Examples include "Hold On," a slower, more melodic tune reminiscent of Alice in Chains, in which the band manages to resist the temptation to burst regularly into an angry chorus.

See also the sampling and guitar work on "My Generation," which amazingly avoids being ruined by frontman Fred Durst's ridiculous lyrics.

He wears out the already-tired theme of the disillusionment and anger of Generation X, which he calls Generation Strange. He actually begins the song with the lyric "Welcome to the jungle punk," which, when you stop laughing, matches Durst's comparisons of his band with Guns N' Roses.

Indeed, "Full Nelson" is Durst's own version of GNR's "Get in the Ring," in which he addresses his detractors whose "mouth's writing checks/that your ass can't cash." Musically, the song varies little from Limp Bizkit's hit "Break Stuff," a formula that no fewer than six of the album's 13 songs share.

The most interesting of these might well be "Hot Dog," a piece about how "the world is a f--- up place," and in which the word "f---" is used 46 times to make some sort of political statement that's too deep for me to interpret.

His emphasis shifts from hurling insults and angry whining to more sulky self-pity in love songs like "The One" and "Boiler." When one ignores the lyrics, his voice can actually assume a richness similar to, but better than, that of Perry Farrell. In fact, some of the band's best moments

come when it sounds a bit like Jane's Addiction.

Other flashes of potential pop up in the hip-hoppy "Getcha Groove On," but Durst and his bandmates prove to be incredibly awkward at fusing the rock and hip-hop elements of their music.

Durst has said he believes that combining rock and hip hop will direct the future of music, and he's probably right. At the same time, he and his bandmates could get over themselves and their rage and realize that putting together crappy, repetitive elements of both doesn't make them part of that future.

By Warren Wilson

Robbie Williams
Sing When You're Winning
★★★ 1/2

British pop star Robbie Williams has an interesting way of changing his style to suit his mood. The songs on *Sing When You're Winning* range from pure pop/dance music to soulful, at times almost mournful, ballads.

His debut U.S. album, *The Ego Has Landed*, was gold-certified. He had several hits, including "Angels," "Millennium" and "Let Me Entertain You," off previous albums.

The majority of his songs are able to catch your attention in one way or another.

The ballads make you stand up and take notice because of the emotion which comes through in his singing.

The dance songs, on the other hand, have an infectious beat that really makes you want to tap your feet, at the bare minimum.

In addition to the creative lyrics and songs, the disc includes an interactive video clip. The video is almost as catchy as the song; lights flash and people dance in a grand display of hedonism.

However, the end is absolutely disgusting. Williams stands in the center of the dance club and strips off all his clothes, then proceeds to rip his own skin to pieces and throw it at his adoring fans.

Many of the rest of the songs on the album are pretty much what you would expect from this guy. His previous American hits were characterized by innovative lyrics and a generally upbeat tone. His new works are no different in that respect.

Some of the songs, however, are not

what you would expect. Several have a bubble-gum beat that is somewhat reminiscent of what you would hear on a kids' show.

Williams' music is kind of like the Beach Boys'; it's nice for a while, but can get quite tiring after listening to a few songs.

However, these bubble-gum songs help to add to the variety characterizing this album. One minute you will be listening to a hard-hitting dance mix, while the next you will be hearing a soulful ballad.

Williams creates an intriguing mix of songs that will, at the very least, keep you listening to see what he does next.

One song, "The Road to Mandalay," is a true juxtaposition of sentiments. The song sounds like pure fluff, but its lyrics are another story. Floating over a catchy pop beat, they are rather dramatic and depressing, with Williams discussing drowning in a sea of his own mistakes.

Sing When You're Winning will hold your interest with its broad scope. The variety and cohesion definitely make it worth your while.

By Aimee Wilson

The Wallflowers
Breach
★★★ 1/2

The Dylan family name is back on the scene with the release of the Wallflowers' third album, *Breach*.

Often marketed as the son of folk rock legend Bob Dylan, Jakob Dylan stands on his own as the Wallflowers' songwriter, lead singer and guitarist. But it seems that the eldest Dylan's *savoir faire* for spiritually cryptic lyrics and provocative social commentary has been passed down to the next generation.

The Wallflowers landed spots in the top 40 charts with the singles "One Headlight" and "6th Avenue Heartache" off of their 1996 album *Bringing Down the Horse*. Promoting their success, the band toured extensively for 2 1/2 years. After a six-month break in the activity, Jakob returned to the studio in 1999 to begin working on what would become the Wallflowers' most mature and sophisticated album to date.

Breach moves away from the catchy and easily repeatable choruses of *Bringing Down the Horse*. Jakob explores his relationship with his father and the effects of living in the shadow of the Dylan legacy in "Hand Me Down." Melancholy, yet cynical Jakob sings: "You won't ever amount to much/You won't be anyone/Now tell me what you were thinking of/How could you think you would be enough."

Along with "Hand Me Down," the up-tempo pseudo-love song "Sleepwalker" is gaining popularity on radio stations across the country.

In the pre-top 40 days, Jakob frequently played under a name other than Dylan or even Jakob. His bandmates often did not know Jakob was Bob Dylan's son until several months after meeting.

"He just said he was Jake. I was not



Jakob Dylan, Wallflowers frontman and son of Bob, explores his thoughts about his famous father's rock legacy on *Breach*, the Wallflowers' third album.

a last-name guy. I didn't care," said Rami Jaffe, the Wallflowers' keyboard player, in *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Despite his pointed efforts to avoid his father's influences, the Dylan family sound underlies much of Jakob's work, especially "Mourning Train" and "Up From Under."

Returning to the roots of rock, Dylan simplifies things on these two songs. Mellow companions to the rest of the album, "Mourning Train" and "Up From Under" are primarily acoustic with an emphasis on lyricism and harmony.

The faults of *Breach* lie with its almost overly personal sessions of introspection. All of Dylan's songs seem to be telling some sort of story, releasing some sort of pent-up anguish or asking for forgiveness which was never really needed anyway. (Nobody blames you for being Bob Dylan's son, Jakob. In fact we all think it's kind of cool, even if you don't.)

This incredibly personal angle is a good thing for those of us looking for music with metaphorical meaning, a bad thing for those who just want to groove down to a pop tune with a solid beat.

Yet what is most impressive about *Breach* is the fact that it isn't a sellout. It will not be No. 1 on the MTV video charts, it will not spawn hordes of teenyboppers to go crazy and buy all the Wallflowers' albums and 10 tons of useless autographed memorabilia.

Breach is good music without the hype, plain and simple — excluding those middle-aged original Dylan fans who keep having those pesky flashbacks and think it's suddenly the late '60s again.

Keep the love beads at home, Mom

and Dad: The Wallflowers are making it in modern style.

By Sarah Kucharski

The White Octave
Style No. 6312
★★ 1/2

Fran Drescher's voice made her famous. Stephen Pederson's won't. Chapel Hill's The White Octave, with Pederson at its helm, creates an odd kind of dualism — emotion and annoyance — on its debut album *Style No. 6312*.

The White Octave, now signed to Deep Elm Records, started recording *Style No. 6312* in October 1999 with Bob Weston (Archers of Loaf, Chavez, Shiner).

On two separate occasions friends told me the vocals were horrible and to turn the stereo off. At first I thought they just didn't appreciate the intricacies of indie rock, but soon the vocals began to grate on my nerves as well.

Pederson's voice is strained and forced, but it reflects the cathartic release needed in any emo album.

On a side note, I never could figure out why the vocals had a distant British accent. Strange.

It is possible I expected something on the same level as Pederson's former band, Cursive, in which he played guitar. What I found, though, was something very far from the crisp and easily addictive Cursive.

The melancholy lyrics about depression and pain certainly resemble Cursive, but again, the abrasive voice was the clearest contrast.

"Crashing the Clarion" helped to pick up, or rather drown out, some of the jarring vocals. In something similar

to a round, voices were lapped over each other singing "I don't want to play" and "The subject survives because you give it weight/while I'm still losing this game."

Slowly, a few of the breakdowns in songs such as "Call the Kiss" began to chip away at my view of the band — or rather, its voice. In this song, many of the qualities a good emo band should have were finally visible.

With octave changes and passionate lyrics such as "If I could split my heart in two/I'd give the beating half to you/ If these words never rise above us/I swear I'd slit my wrists for you," it's easy to picture a group of broken-hearted indie rock kids screaming out a lung during many of the sentimental lines.

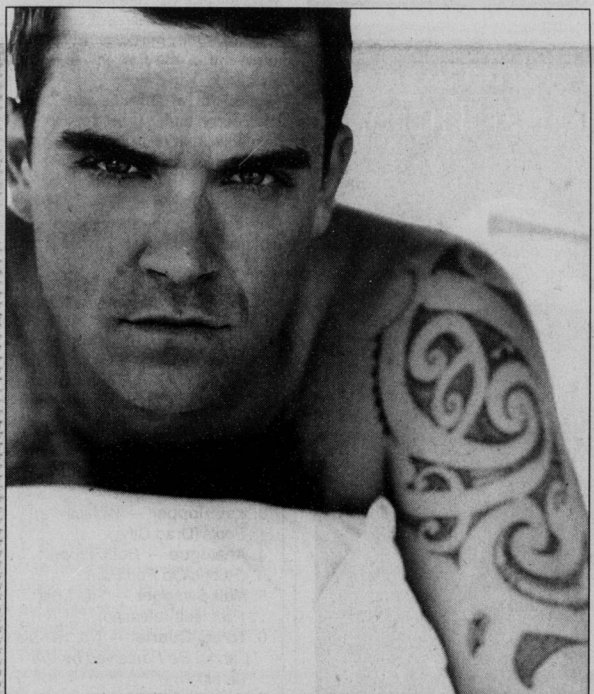
It's also virtually impossible to understand how any listener could be unaffected.

In one of the tightest songs, "South," the contrast between quiet guitar line and strong full-force drumming displays the band's diversity. The clear transitions in rhythm and spastic screams show this band has clear talent and precision.

The album contains three instrumental songs, which are not only a relief from the vocals, but also combine the guitar, bass and drums into a dreamlike, mystical and soothing sound that all listeners could appreciate.

Despite the annoying vocals, I have no doubt The White Octave would put on an amazing show. The strong guitar lines, prominent bass riffs and emotional lyrics bring conviction and energy that would surely be reflected by an audience.

By Meredith Bullard



Brit-popper Robbie Williams experiments with his established sound, peppering *Sing When You're Winning* with different styles.

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