

Crow, Snoop Dogg Provide Fresh Air for Otherwise Dreary Kid Rock Return

By KRISTEN WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Kid Rock introduced himself in his 1998 single "Bawitdaba" with his infamous line "My name is Kiiiiiiiiiiiiid Rock!" In his new effort, *Cocky*, the world gets to know him a little better.

But that might not be a good thing. Yes, there is more talk of his exploits with women, drinking and drugging. Tiring as this mixture might be, Rock manages to make it interesting for at least part of the album.



Kid Rock
Cocky
★★★★☆

In the first single "Forever," Rock raps about his mixture of rock and hip-hop, his wealth and best of all, Oprah and Al Roker.

Rock boasts of his huge rhymes and quips, "thick like Al Roker/pumping out hits getting chips like Oprah." — there are few things more frightening than hearing America's talk show matriarch evoked through the wiles of "Kiiiiiiiiiiiiid Rock!"

His social commentary adds some humorous lyrics to the album, but his collaborations with Sheryl Crow and Snoop Dogg make it something a little different from other rap-rockers.

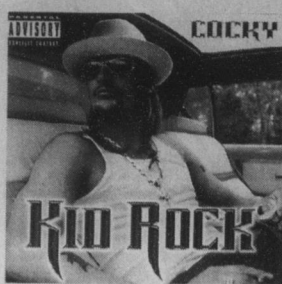
Crow joins Rock on the country-tinged "Picture," while on "WCSR"

Rock raps with Snoop Dogg.

While Crow's song might be more thoughtful than the sex-driven tune with Snoop, both songs provide evidence of Rock's diversity.

Although he didn't collaborate with Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rock meshes a guitar riff from "Freebird" into the funky "You Never Met a Mother***** Like Me."

Beginning with slow, bluesy melodies



infused with deep bass beats and electronic sounds, the song sounds like a departure from Rock's style.

But when the chorus begins, so do Rock's raspy screams, which is disappointing considering the song's potential. Wasted opportunities

around throughout *Cocky* because on many tracks he uses the same formula of slow exposition leading to a screaming, hard rocking chorus.

"You Never Met a Mother**ker Like Me" speaks of Rock's love for being at home, and his fame, including the lyrics "Now I been on the cover of the Rolling Stone/Now I met the president when I was half stoned."

This song isn't the last interaction between a president and Rock. In the closing track of the album, Rock kicks his "sex rhymes" with Snoop Dogg and tells a tale including a stewardess, Bill Clinton and himself. The lyrics aren't printable, so this one you've got to hear for yourself.

Initially, the mixing of Rock's intense raps with Snoop Dogg's laid-back sound make for a great song, especially with the funny sexual references to Clinton.

But after the lyrics Snoop and Rock serve up, the song slowly descends into a headache-inducing, droning beat with too many references to ecstasy, weed and Cristal champagne.

Aspects of Rock's new album are great, but in a few ways it falls short. The various tempo changes diversify his songs, but the album contains too many of them matched with too similar subject matter. It's like three-day leftovers — Rock made way too much of the same thing.

After all, you can only have so much T & A before getting bored.

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Scatterbrained Phi Previews Upcoming LP; Groban Falts on Pop-eratic Debut

The Rat Pack
Live at the Sands
★★★★☆

Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. They were all famous singers and entertainers in their own right, but when they joined forces in the early weeks of 1960 at The Copa Room night club in New York, they became known as the Rat Pack.

They were a fraternity of chauvinists, racists, drinkers, smokers and they cared not what anybody had to say about it. In their heyday, it was the Rat Pack's world and everyone else was just living in it.

Our generation, however, did not grow up to their music or movies, yet they still manage to represent the definition of hip.

The music industry and Hollywood have caught onto this fact, and coinciding with the release of "Ocean's 11" (a remake of the Rat Pack film of the same name), Capitol records has released a live show from the height of the Rat Pack's fame.

What hits you immediately as you listen to this historic recording is the pristine sound. The clear, dynamic sound quality, from the punch of the horn to the clinking of glasses in the audience, really transports you to that night. This seems to be the real triumph of *Live at the Sands*.

Many classic recordings are here: Martin's "Volare," Sinatra's "Luck Be a Lady," "Guys and Dolls" and Davis' "The Lady is a Tramp," but most of the show is the Rat Pack joking around.

Whether they are making up songs ("Nothing could be finer than to shag it with a minor"), making fun of their classic tunes or just ribbing each other between songs, it is obvious that the boys weren't taking anything too seriously.

While it certainly must have been a thrill to see them in their heyday, some of their jokes have lost their kick in the 38 years that have passed since their telling. Their bawdy humor certainly isn't politically correct and, at times, isn't funny either (Sinatra: "How do you

make a fruit cordial?" Martin: "I don't know. Be nice to him?")

Davis, who was often bemoaned as an Uncle Tom figure to Sinatra and Martin's racist humor, proves that he could dish it out as well as take it. He makes it clear that just because he's laughing, doesn't mean he thinks racism is funny: "You guys have a ball, because you ain't got many rights left."

Times changed and the ball did finally end for the Rat Pack, but for one night at The Sands, the kings of cool were in rare form swinging, singing and defining hip.

By James Russ

Kidneythieves
Phi in the Sky
★★★★☆

It's obvious that the Los Angeles-based Kidneythieves have yet to serve a main course of their current sound, but they have put out a pretty tasty sample.

The industrial group's new EP, *Phi in the Sky*, consists of six tracks. Two are original versions and four are remixes of songs that will soon appear on their LP, *Zerospace*, slated for a February release.

While it's not "the real thing," so to speak, *Phi in the Sky* nevertheless has its own high points.

The two originals, "Black Bullet" and the version of "Zerospace" that will appear on the LP of the same name, are

the EP's strongest tracks. Both are distinguished by the group's metallic guitar fuzz and by Free Dominguez's captivating vocals. While they aren't as conceptually ambitious as anything by standouts such as Nine Inch Nails, they are still delicious slices of industrial rock.

The remixes are weaker, but not by much. DJ Merrit's take on "Zerospace" is the most impressive — it's danceable with spacey keyboard effects, steady beats and a smooth bass line riding underneath.

While the remixes are all interesting enough to begin with, they have their faults. In general, they go on for too long without diverging into new directions and don't fit extremely well with the rock-metal of the originals.

Since it's essentially a jumbled collection of dissimilar tracks, *Phi in the Sky* lacks the type of cohesion that a carefully produced *Zerospace* would do well to benefit from. When heard all the way through, the EP does sound like a precursor to something else. In the end, it's merely a big appetizer, undermining the power of some of the tracks.

It's unfortunate, because the individual parts of *Phi in the Sky* are in good working order — if only they had a real connection with which to form a full-fledged industrial machine.

By Elliott Dube

Josh Groban
Josh Groban
★★★★☆

It's easy to make a star, but making an album with sincerity and solid musical

ideas takes more than marketing. In the rush of young, classically trained musicians not finding enough fame in the world of classical music, Josh Groban has joined the ranks. His debut album is a personal attempt to break into the mainstream without breaking away from his roots.

A cherubic face and a tenor voice to match, Josh Groban has a warm tone, a wide range and good managers. He is a marketing dream, landing one of his tracks "To Where You Are" on the hit television show *Ally McBeal*.

But while he has the makings of a star, what's missing in this self-titled LP is character — his album is the aural equivalent of a chick flick. Instead of attempting to garner listeners with his musical sensibilities, Groban falls back onto blatant lyrical sentimentality and comes off as trite.

Trying to appeal to too many audiences at once, the first track "Alla Luce Del Sole" is a musical soup. World beats, Italian aria, a full choral background and even hints of techno samples appear, occasionally clinging to the ends of a few choice phrases.

Although the album is overproduced and predictable, it has its redeeming moments when Groban's good, but masked, musical instincts sneak in.

He knows what suits his solid tenor, like the respectable cover of the love theme from "Cinema Paradiso."

Groban's rich voice fills the song's delicate melody like red wine into a crystal glass, and it's probably the most satisfying track on the album.

Unfortunately, he chooses to round off his album performing a duet with the poster child of over-marketed classically trained vocalists, Charlotte Church. "The Prayer" is not intrinsically flawed, it's just overdone.

And that's where the album goes wrong. Groban has a voice that can stand on its own, he just needs the confidence to allow it to do so and leave all the bells and whistles at home.

By Brooks Fifth

Shannon McNally
Jukebox Sparrows
★★★★☆

Shannon McNally's debut album, *Jukebox Sparrow*, is a classic example of production gone wrong.

The New Jersey-born singer-songwriter is the newest addition to the line of blue-eyed-soul singers spawned from the recent successes of artists like Fiona Apple and Shelby Lynne.

Her voice is smokey and emotive in the vein of Joan Osborne, and at its best on tracks like the slow-burning opener "Down And Dirty" and the haunting "I'll Always Be Around."

But Ron Aniello's tepid and monotonous production unfortunately renders her fiery delivery and compositions helpless. Especially on "Now That I Know," as it drowns in Aniello's mid-tempo soup of keyboards and bells.

It's a crime, because McNally is one artist who seems capable of channeling blues and soul into pop music.

By Michael Abernethy

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