

Young explores; Vee formulaic

Neil Young & Crazy Horse
GREENDALE
★★★★

Neil Young tries to weave a story over his simple, tattered rock on *Greendale*, but he's not exactly sure how the story goes and how he's supposed to tell it.

Young has created a new album of rambling thickness that, while it might not be musically brilliant, makes for beautifully ambiguous storytelling.

Simply said, *Greendale* needs CliffsNotes.

And Young provides them. He gives explanations of each song in the liner notes, detailed genealogy on his Web site and a bonus DVD featuring a live performance.

The consensus found within this information is that Young is as confused with *Greendale* as the listener. "I mean I made (the town of Greendale) up and I don't know what the hell is goin' on," Young states in the liner notes.

Despite the fact that it spins one's head, the confusion doesn't deter; rather, it propels the listener deeper into the chaos. Young's lyrics scramble through subject matter such as a news ticker below the talking heads on CNN.

The only things that are clear are Young's feelings. The disjointed nature of the album's story proves better at illuminating these feelings than conciseness and clear intentions ever could.

The story revolving around the townspeople of Greendale (the town) is jumbled, with multiple points of view and a cast of characters that is hard to follow. It relies on highlighting how a simple town still faces the death grin of life.

Through these voices Young alludes to some of the human problems — media, drugs, religious wars and just pure unkindness — that seem to be causing social decay.

He states these problems, but he doesn't choose to expand on them

like he has on past recordings. Maybe he sees his inability to explain the problems as a stronger statement than an idealistic solution.

But maybe the quick murmurs of Young's own voice channeled through Grandpa — "That guy who just keeps singin', can't somebody shut him up?/I don't know for the life of me where he comes up with this stuff" — that maybe he's full of crap.

The sound of the album is weary in order to overshadow its tone and lyrics. It's as dirty as Young ever has been, allowing the lyrics to find their absolute truth.

Greendale rings anomalously over the characteristically overproduced format of the rock opera (Tommy, The Wall).

Young and Crazy Horse, known for their brand of straight grit-rock that walks at 4/4 time with distortion and twang fueling its feet, rebel even more against the soundboard and find a sound that would scare even members of the retro kickback squad.

With lyrics and music, listeners' ears rest on a bed of overriding cynicism and displeasure. This is a storm you are just going to have to deal with.

By Kemp Baldwin

Andi Camp
THE AWFUL TRUTH
★★★★

It isn't the music you first notice when you purchase Andi Camp's *The Awful Truth*, it's the packaging — individually numbered, in a red cover and tied with a blue ribbon for good measure, all painstakingly assembled by the artist herself.

Impressed by her dedication to the presentation, you put it in the stereo for the first time and are struck even further by its repetitive blandness. By Camp's brand of piano-based confessional pop that sounds like some serviceable Tori Amos outtakes.

But you're stubborn. Camp labored to make the album look nice, so you're willing to give it another chance.

And only now do you begin to discern the subtleties it offers.

The Awful Truth is a charming, intimate affair that blends a nightclub flavor with Camp's deft piano work and personal songs.

The immediate comparison is to Norah Jones, who has made such music commercially viable again. Though Camp's voice doesn't quite possess the seductive allure that Jones' does, it fits her material effectively enough.

The band Camp uses understands its role, staying where it belongs — in the background.

Eleven songs breeze by in just more than half an hour, with minimum excess. No self-indulgent drum solos found here; every note sounds like it's meant to be there.

But Camp's lyrics often straddle the line between clever sentiment and embarrassing melodrama.

Consider "The Miss": "It's you I should have waited for/I've got the miss worse than before/It's yours for the taking."

A cheesy lyric, to be sure, but it's delivered with such unbridled sincerity that you buy it completely.

Camp is most compelling when she allows herself, and her songs, to venture out. Certain tracks, such as "Pocketbook," actually rock harder than you'd expect.

There's also a brief moment during "Tall Drink of Water," the album's penultimate track, when Camp channels the Ben Folds within and — surprisingly — unleashes a piano solo.

The solo itself is nothing virtuosic. But since it comes after a long sequence of antiseptic balladry, this foray into instrumentation sounds bombastic and liberating. It's the high point of the album.

Camp has created something pleasant and engaging here — nothing more, nothing less. It's music that warrants a place in your stereo, but simply isn't distinctive enough to stay there for long.

Unfortunately, that's *The Awful Truth*.

By Michael Pucci

Vee
REACHING YOU
★★

There is nothing really wrong with Vee's *Reaching You* — but

there's nothing special about it either.

All of the integral parts are there. Catchy pop-rhythm guitar. A firm bass backbone. Sing-along lyrics. Crisp snare and a high tuned crash. Check.

But nothing leaps out or up. There is no experimentation or bravery, and so Vee is reduced to good, low-volume, background pop.

The Wilmington trio (Veronica Lasher, Marc Killian and Joe Paris) makes the kind of music it heard on the radio — over and over and over.

It's pop rock by numbers.

Take six step riffs, A, plug in pretty lyrics, B, and add a structured, generic melody, C. A times B times C equals X. If X doesn't sound like Smash Mouth, Matchbox 20 or the Dixie Chicks, you missed a step.

Because Vee adheres so strictly to "the" formula, it's never able to stretch its legs and show what it can do. Every member of the band is clearly a talented musician, which is more than you can say for half the aforementioned rockers, but they're so chained by structure, they lose any identity.

"California" has a brief guitar solo, and "Thorn" lets Lasher (vocals) off her leash for a bit, but it's still predictable.

Even the electronic, limp-wristed attempt at a hardcore cut, "Somebody Help Me," is a Creed-inspired regurgitation of what producers say sell. Chugga, chugga, scream, chugga, scream, wail, fade to heartbroken whimper, pause to look sentimental, chugga, chugga, chugga, crash.

The whole album falls into the same trap. It opens with the poppy single, segues into a rocky ballad, and says goodbye with a sentimental song of sorrow. Copy ... paste ... print — perfect.

Vee is just selling itself short. It's lost in a place it doesn't belong and is too smart for anyway — like a professor at a nightclub.

There are other bands doing the same thing — the exact same thing — that have prettier smiles, trendier clothes and better haircuts.

So if Vee is aiming for MTV, then it has a world of clones to war with. But if Lasher and crew want to be taken seriously as musicians the solution is simple.

Just turn off the bloody radio.

By Nick Parker

Mix of styles makes for bright 'Morning'

BY PHILIP MCFEE
ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

The combination of sounds that My Morning Jacket, a quintet of Louisville, Ky., rockers, churn out on *It Still Moves* sounds like the vinyl selection at an indie kid's yard sale.

Based with hesitance in alt-country, the band often swings into curious instrumentation and throbbing rock reverb.

That, and singer Jim James' voice is a spot-on match for Wayne Coyne of the Flaming Lips.

Plus, the majority of the songs on *It Still Moves*, the band's latest effort, stretch on into Mogwai-esque crescendos that interweave with canned, distant vocals a la Interpol's "NYC."

So, this is Sigur Rós by way of Kentucky? My Morning Jacket did play a show Aug. 26 in the Icelandic rockers' native Reykjavik.

Curious.

With its third release, the first on a major label, My Morning Jacket finally could gain the notoriety it deserves — a criminally underappreciated band hailing from a long-overlooked region for rock.

It wouldn't be at all misplaced to refer to *It Still Moves* as epic. The 12-song, 72-minute album not only evolves throughout its duration, but offers a spectrum of sound in each track.

Take "Easy Morning Rebel." The rollicking cowbell rhythm features metallic organ while James' thin, metallic tone soars above the mix.

At two-and-a-half minutes, a horn section emerges, playing back and forth with slide steel guitar. Two minutes later, the complex instrumentation resolves into an all-out, straight-rock ending.

"Golden," a marked change of pace, throws some airy synth and guitar picking into the light foot-stomping mix. Present, as always, are James' wailing harmonies and drifting lines.

The sounds of *It Still Moves* can echo like residual notes through an



MUSICREVIEW
MY MORNING JACKET
IT STILL MOVES

★★★★★

empty dance hall.

Frequently, as on the fourth track, "Master Plan," the lonesome highway yearning meets heavy rock, just begging for a live show.

True, that show would be long.

Very long. It's rare that a song on *It Still Moves* will dip below six minutes. Listeners not accustomed to the style of the My Morning Jacket's aforementioned Icelandic counterparts may find the buildups too excessive.

It's all part of the final effect, though — the band effectively utilizes every second of sonic tension.

My Morning Jacket cut a split EP with Songs: Ohia in 2002, and its latest release comes over as a type of split LP, with the band switching styles almost every track.

For all its versatility, the Kentucky bunch never forgets its Southern roots. On "Dancefloors," James bleats like a wounded, country Thom Yorke: "dancefloors, headlights, in my blood there's gasoline/ for an urban boy on a dirty tour I never felt so clean."

The winning backcountry pastiche My Morning Jacket weaves has the same engrossing effect that the Allman Brothers once possessed.

The mourning is over.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

DIVERECOMMENDS

Clutch, *Slow Hole to China* Regarding Clutch, think classic rock in the vein of Mountain... but heavy.

As difficult to define as they are for record companies to market, Clutch again has opted for the route of independent release. *Slow Hole to China* includes outtakes from *Pure Rock Fury*, a few new tunes and a cover of John Coltrane's "Equinox."

Most of these tracks have floated about online in demo format for more than two years after Clutch curiously omitted them from its disappointing last album.

But with *Slow Hole's* release, consider amends made.

Nab it at Clutch concerts or its merchandise site — <http://store.merch.com/clutch> — while awaiting the crumble of U.S. corporate radio.

"Adaptation" You're probably

asking yourself why Nicolas Cage would do a movie like "Adaptation" after "Con Air" and "Gone In 60 Seconds."

Oh yeah — because those two movies were terrible!

Regardless, Cage proves that he can act, playing two nuanced characters — the timid Charlie Kaufman and his goofy twin brother Donald — in this 2002 Spike Jonze release.

Adapted from the book "The Orchid Thief," "Adaptation" is a movie about the adaptation of that book into this movie.

It's as amusing to watch as that sentence was to write — an ironic and self-referential unfolding of wit, love and introspection. Uh, the movie that is — not that amusing sentence.

Contact Brandon Whiteside at whitbran@email.unc.edu.

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