

Fresh lyrics pull off LP Poet embraces world's flaws

Sigel's rhymes cut guest noise

BY JACKY BRAMMER
STAFF WRITER

Ever since Beanie Sigel laid a mad verse on "Adrenaline" from the Roots' *Things Fall Apart*, people have been eagerly awaiting for him to further display his talents.

He even showed signs of brilliance on "Pop 4 Roc" on Jay-Z's *Volume 3: Life and Times of S. Carter*: "I'm the truth, I'm not lying/ I'm the reason why Jay feel comfortable retiring."

But audiences were still waiting for Beanie Sigel to come into his own.

His first album, 2000's *The Truth*, was a good start. But soon he was bogged down in legal problems, pet projects (State Property) and clothing lines.

His second album, 2001's *The Reason*, was an uninspired rehash of better material.

After a few years of downtime, Philadelphia's Sigel is back — and lyrically in old form — with *The B. Coming*, but his supporting cast largely disappoints.

The first three tracks are all good enough to be singles. Redman provides a strong verse on "One Shot Deal," and Heavy D offers bluesy production for "Feel It In The Air." "I Can't Go

On This Way" is the best song outright, getting the album off to a good start.

Unfortunately, outside Sigel's rhymes and flow, the rest of the album is a mixed bag.

Still, this wouldn't be nearly as much of a problem if there weren't such an overabundance of guest artists.

On practically every song, Sigel splits mic time with other rappers. He even sounds like he's the backup performer on the irritating "Gotta Have It," where he and Twista valiantly steal airwaves trying to save the track from an abrasive chorus and fail.

The laconic Snoop manages to fit time in between "Girls Gone Wild" tours to lay down the hook for the Neptunes-produced "Don't Stop," but this partnership is a tedious style clash with the menacing Sigel.

The shortsighted forays into R&B production continue with "Change" and "Lord Have Mercy," as the refrains overpower Sigel's introspective and intimidating rhymes.

Soulful beats are difficult to perfect, but when they are done correctly by a master, like Just Blaze (producer of Jay-Z's fabulous "December 4th") on "Bread and Butter," not even a grating chorus can slow down the momentum.

Sigel's energy is even more evident on "Tales of a Hustler Pt.



MUSICREVIEW

BEANIE SIGEL
THE B. COMING

★★★

2." The lyrical mixmaster shares his experience as a cautionary tale about the highs and lows of street life:

"Conversation with demons when I'm dreamin/ Manic-depressive/ Like the man upstairs tryin to pass me a lesson/ But I can't catch it."

As a whole, the album is a mild success only because of the occasional earnest, affecting production and Sigel's malevolent presence and forceful lyrics.

Hopefully on his next release, listeners will get less of the unsatisfying guest artists and more of the Philly rap-slinger. After all, that's what people want to hear.

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

BY ANDREW CHAN
STAFF WRITER

Among the American poets who became prominent in the 1990s, Mark Doty has maintained one of the most easily recognizable voices.

His poems are popular because they beg to be read aloud and possess a reliable intimacy.

"School of the Arts," his seventh book, is an extension of a familiar style, shifting toward a more restrained diction and emotional storytelling.

From Doty's controlled tone, it's hard to tell that he is writing in a decade of high stakes, where it's a relief to find a major contemporary poet working in a gay sensibility.

Admitting that poetry often operates politically, he has made himself important by taking on a new aesthetic and discovering how it can be defined on its own terms — free of concessions to, or finger-pointing at, a heterosexual audience.

Since his third and greatest book, 1993's "My Alexandria," found redemptive language in the devastation of AIDS, Doty's eroticism and spirituality have been haunted by impermanence.

BOOKREVIEW

MARK DOTY
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

The new book is dedicated to God with Doty's characteristic sincerity and skepticism. As a glutton of the physical world and its beauty, he is in many ways an updated version of the gay Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose effusive verse sang in praise of God's grandeur.

Doty's work never seems divorced from matters of faith, though he sometimes chooses sexual pleasure as his religion.

The seven-part poem "The Vault" is a rehash of his earlier odes to gay men's sexuality.

It's the longest piece in the book but also one of the laziest, inheriting its sweaty atmosphere from Constantine Cavafy and ending with an unearned allusion to James Wright's "A Blessing" ("if he remained in his body/...then he would break into flower").

In these new poems, it is jarring to notice how Doty's love of sight and textures has lost its ability to surprise.

His imagery has become a formula of ecstatic apprehension, in

which the senses transform everything into light and shimmer.

The poems have come to matter less than their making, and their style is sometimes so loose it risks a lack of cohesion.

Toward the end of the collection, "Heaven for Beau" reminds us how skillful Doty is at narrative and how respectfully he can borrow from his predecessors.

While elegizing the dogs who appear frequently in Doty's books, the poem adds a twist of hope to Elizabeth Bishop's tear-jerking classic "One Art."

In "Oncoming Train" and "Heaven for Paul," he flirts with death, affirming its possibilities without negating his restless joy in life.

Doty continues to write as a passionate participant in the world, never as its outsider — even as gay rights become a more public struggle for assimilation and inspire a hostile backlash.

What distinguishes him in today's poetry scene is his lustful ownership of our undesirable world.

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

DIVERRECOMMENDS

■ Aztec Camera, *High Land, Hard Rain* — If the Smiths had never existed, people would point to this 1983 record as a touchstone in British pop music. The guitars jangle, the vocals sigh with reverb and melancholy, and the lyrics whine in ways that only Morrissey could whine.

Of course, the Smiths did exist, and it's hard to argue that *High Land, Hard Rain* tops their best work. But the pop bliss of British hit "Oblivious," the overwrought drama of "The Bugle Sounds Again" and the Iggy Pop-inspired drive of "Queen's Tattoos" come close.

■ "Wayne's World" — Originally, this space recommended "Yi Yi," a marvelous film from 2000 that keeps a steady, compassionate and deft focus on the pain and joy in our everyday lives.

But you know what? It's April. Exams and papers loom. Spring's blossomed. The Tar Heels won it all.

For days like these, we need "Wayne's World."

It hits you with the crude ("Claudia Schiffer, we salute you"), but its brilliance is in the way it manages to juxtapose those yaks with more clever, self-aware send-ups of pop culture ("I once thought I had mono for an entire year. Turned out I was just really bored.")

Some have said the film caught the last gasp of the '80s before the alternative zeitgeist.

Those people are English majors. Really, y'all, it's just funny.

Schwing.
■ George Plimpton, "The Curious Case of Sidd Finch" — The

greatest April Fool's joke ever pulled off came 20 years ago courtesy of Plimpton, a writer for Sports Illustrated who thought it would be funny to invent a story about a Mets pitching phenom who could throw a baseball 168 mph while pitching with one shoe on.

Thing is, people believed him. And until the hoax was up, it gave Mets fans everywhere — including my father, who never really believed the article but, I suspect, wanted it to be true — reason to hope.

Flash forward 20 years, and Pops has passed on to me both his cynicism and love for the Mets.

Who, of course, are 2-5 and in last place as of press time.

Contact Chris Coletta at ccoletta@email.unc.edu.

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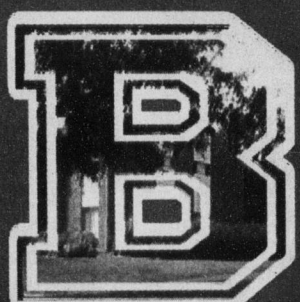
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