

Pussycat Dolls: not so talented with the music

BY ANDREW CHAN
STAFF WRITER

Don't cha wish this girl group would go away? Don't cha?

Well, it just might. The Pussycat Doll's debut album, *PCD*, makes it clear that the group isn't hoping to be anything more than a one-hit wonder.

It would be unfair to expect more from the Dolls. They're actually a Los Angeles-based burlesque dance revue that, for no apparent reason, has landed a record deal.

Part of the fun is in realizing that they have no idea what they're doing in the spotlight. Their album has the feel of an EP that can't sustain itself past the first two songs.

Funny enough, it also has its share of surprises. This summer's favorite female sex anthem — the Dolls' Cee-Lo-produced lead single "Don't Cha" — isn't half bad.

The verses are adequately slinky R&B, even if the come-on chorus (variations on the line "Don't cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me?") has the irritating redundancy of someone tapping you on the shoulder.

What listeners might not be ready for is a double surprise on the second track. Who would expect this group to have another winner on their hands, and who on earth would have imagined it would come from the Black Eyed Peas' fairly untalented MC Will.i.am?

On "Beep," the album's catchiest moment, he drops the self-importance and gives himself up to gimmicks and amusement.

The disc's only upsetting let-downs are the Timbaland and Rich Harrison songs. They are bottom-of-the-barrel throwaways from two producers who once made R&B's most enjoyable beats but now are growing tiresome.

To emphasize their air of disposability, the Dolls have enlisted a member from the short-lived girl



MUSIC REVIEW
THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS

PCD

★★

group Eden's Crush as their main diva. Nicole Scherzinger laid down most of the vocals with reasonable style, so one wonders what role the original members are meant to serve.

The group poses as anachronistic, rounding out their first release with unlistenable, overworked covers of Soft Cell, the Supremes and Nina Simone.

But the worst traits of their debut are the ones that hearken back to the golden age of disco. (They even rip off Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff.")

Like Andrea True — the porn actress who sang the disco classic "More, More, More" — the Dolls are selling carnality as the only facet of their personalities. For them, even the cultivation of a substantial image is incidental.

Swaggering, finger-snapping and playing hard to get are their only means of communicating their disengaged and juvenile form of sexuality.

Worst of all, unlike the best of disco, most of their music lacks a healthy sense of abandon.

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

AIM kills in haunting flick

Internet horror full of surprises

BY HARRY KAPLOWITZ
STAFF WRITER

Whatever happened to teenagers using the Internet to spam their way to free iPods and search for pornography?

Apparently that's not enough for the kids of Westlake Prep in Rogue Pictures' latest screamer, "Cry_Wolf."

The flick revolves around the premise that a group of bored, overeducated prep school students create a serial killer after they hear about a local murder.

Using AOL Instant Messenger and the campus listserv to spread the news, the well-formed yet overly complex characters lie, cheat and kill their way to a surprise ending and a baffling level of quality not often seen in the genre.

"Cry_Wolf" is kind of like playing soccer: You do well in soccer so long as you don't screw up; as long as you're running down the field with some apparent intended purpose, you're doing your job.

The movie does a lot of running around, with an intended direction most of the time, and goes to painstaking levels to make sure it

doesn't self-destruct by replicating too many slasher-flick cliches. The effort pays off.

"Cry_Wolf" wraps up with two surprise endings. First, there's the film's climax, a well-written final blow with an obligatory plot twist. And then there's the sheer surprise that the movie wasn't as bad as one would originally suspect.

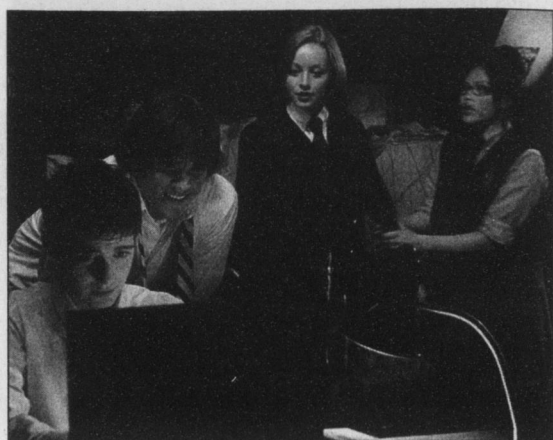
Take a look at the makings: a shoestring budget (reportedly, a paltry \$1 million); a relatively unknown cast (save for the random inclusion of Jon Bon Jovi) and a first-time feature director at the project's helm.

Sounds like a recipe for cinematic disaster, right? Somehow though, director Jeff Wadlow and company make it work.

Sure, you'll find yourself LOL-ing (hehe, get it?) at the idiocy of some of the plot twists, but that's the beauty of it.

Sure, the film has about as much cinematic ingenuity as Randy Quaid, but the genre isn't exactly known for its creativity.

The last whodunit to do anything original was 1996's "Scream," and that's only because writer Kevin Williamson knew it hadn't been done right in a while. And, in so doing, he spawned the pseudo-creativity of the masses.



COURTESY OF ROGUE PICTURES

In director Jeff Wadlow's slasher feature debut, audiences are treated to an inside look at a young aristocracy's dirty little Internet secrets.

MOVIE REVIEW
'CRY_WOLF'

★★★

Thanks, Kevin.

Don't be fooled, though. "Cry_Wolf" isn't just a cheap slasher movie. It's a cheap slasher movie with style and market savvy.

Every shot appears as seamless as any moderately budgeted

Wes Craven or, dare it be said, M. Night Shyamalan film. Wadlow made his meager allowance work for him, and it shows on screen.

"Cry_Wolf" tries so hard not to be stupid that it actually tricks itself into believing that it may, in fact, be clever.

OMG — Now that's scary.

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

Switchfoot changes its tune

Latest LP lacks proven sound

BY RACHEL RICHEY
STAFF WRITER

The fifth studio album from San Diego's breakout Christian rock quintet Switchfoot brings both a new sound and a new band member to the mix.

"Nothing is Sound" opens with the soul-stirring chord structure the group is known for, featuring guitarist Andrew Shirley's official debut as the group's fifth member.

As a result, Switchfoot uses its latest release as a vehicle for experimentation with both harder and softer guitar riffs.

The band's harder electric edge is showcased on tracks like "Politicians" and the hit-single-

to-be "Stars."

The heavier sound is complemented by the group's choice to include U2-esque ballads such as "The Shadow Proves the Sunshine" and "We Are One Tonight."

Rapidly gaining momentum in the modern rock circuit, Switchfoot has managed to break away from the negative industry stigma traditionally associated with Christian rock.

"Nothing is Sound" runs the gamut in terms of genre from country-pop to straightforward pop-rock — all the while dabbling in alt-rock riffs.

"The Fatal Wound" boasts an acoustic, harmonica-rock style sound similar to Tom Petty's and maintains the raspy purity of frontman Jonathan Foreman's signature voice.

While the band has shown sig-

MUSIC REVIEW
SWITCHFOOT

NOTHING IS SOUND

★★★

nificant musical growth, it has taken a colossal leap backward lyrically.

Switchfoot has toned down the spiritual emphasis of its lyrics considerably.

The boys have opted instead towards more traditional themes such as commercialism, patriotism and society's bastardization of all things sexual.

That is a disappointing turn from a group known for its passionate lyrical ballads that are so divinely subtle in nature that they lend themselves to a variety of open interpretations.

Considering the ongoing success of 2003's *The Beautiful*

Letdown, it's tempting to wonder if this lackluster album is another example of what can happen with a premature release.

Having come to expect nothing short of spectacular from such a talented group, this half-hearted effort — though decent in structure and composition — is indeed a beautiful letdown.

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