

Meaningless sex acts abound in '9 Songs'

BY ALAN HAYES
STAFF WRITER

Less than two minutes into "9 Songs," anyone watching Michael Winterbottom's film will realize what an incredibly uncomfortable experience it is to sit in a theater and view an extremely graphic depiction of two normal people having normal sex.

This movie wastes little time with foreplay and neither will I — the gratuitous and graphic depictions of sex in this movie are a gimmick, meant to cover up a complete lack of plot and character development.

From a personal perspective, this is one of the worst movies I have ever seen, and had I not been assigned to do this review, I would've walked out at the half-way point.

I'm no prude, but there is no cinematic merit in watching two people sitting in a bathtub poking at each other's genitals with their feet.

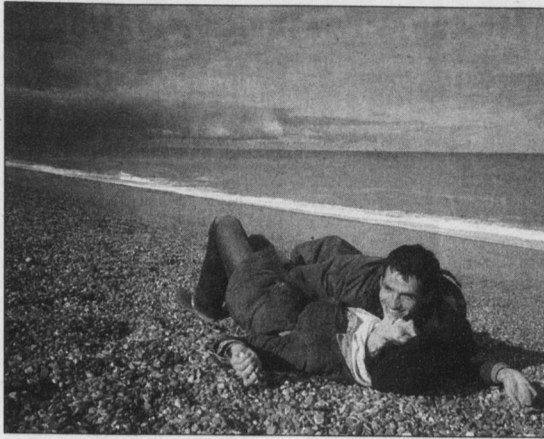
The only reaction to the above scene that I could muster was a laugh; it's a ridiculous thing to be sitting in a darkened theater with complete strangers and watching it on the big screen.

Unfortunately, the movie precludes any sort of humorous approach to its subject matter, taking itself way too seriously.

However, the film's main flaw is that, even with a running time of just more than an hour, it somehow manages to be incredibly boring and repetitive.

One might inquire, "How could a movie which is half people doing the nasty and half concert footage of sweet bands like Franz Ferdinand be boring?"

Well, like this: The sound quality during the concert scenes is mediocre at best, indicating yet again that everything outside of the sexual exploits of the two main characters is an



Kieran O'Brien and Margo Stilley star in the indie skin flick '9 Songs,' which takes an up close and personal look at the limits of intimacy.

MOVIE REVIEW '9 SONGS'

★

afterthought.

The two lovers' names are barely mentioned — the character development is that minimal.

More than this though, it's much less titillating than one might think watching two people going at it again and again ... and again.

At one point, the British director seems to think to himself, "Ey! All this snogging is getting a might dull! Better throw in some light bondage, 'ey guv'na?"

So he does, but it fails to enliven the proceedings.

The film tries to generate interest by showing the scope of a relationship through its physical aspects.

It's actually an interesting concept, showing how even the most passionate sexual relationship can

cool with time and end abruptly, but for this to work the audience has to be convinced that the characters are worth caring about.

Brief pillow talk about condom use and ice fail to arouse the sympathy of the viewer.

The film concludes with a breakup, the girl goes to America and the guy — apparently some sort of scientist — goes to Antarctica and records a stupid voiceover about how icebergs are better than women.

Ironically, Matt (the male character's name, according to the closing credits) is the only one that ends up with a "happy ending" of any sort, and it unfortunately is explicitly depicted on-screen.

By the film's end the audience has watched people have sex for more than an hour and somehow will still leave the theater unsatisfied.

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

Songwriter's repetitive sound hampers album

Long-awaited project fails by the end

BY ANDREW CHAN
STAFF WRITER

Annie Hayden's *The Enemy of Love* doesn't sound like the kind of album that would take four years to release.

The singer-songwriter's second solo release is a quiet affair and only lasts about half an hour.

But her impeccable balance of emotion and restraint reveal a musician who knows exactly how she wants to sound.

Listeners won't mistake her persona for being a meek or dull one.

But in her lyrics and vocals, Hayden never breaks with her hushed, slightly fragile style.

There are some outstanding songs here, particularly during the first half of the album. The opener, "Cara Mia," and "Your Carnival" introduce Hayden's nerdy sound and her good humor.

In the latter, she repeats the line "Please don't please me" with a cutesy woundedness.

Her tone becomes darker on

"Hip Hurray," despite the track's perky piano and nonsensical words, and the same occurs on "Money Trouble," the album's most appealing indie-pop melody.

It's refreshing to hear a talented artist who isn't a showoff, especially since the current music scene maintains the narrow choice between big-voiced and quirky narcissism.

Hayden holds the same artistic values as she did when she was a member of the overlooked band Spent and, at first, you might wonder what exactly she thinks she's doing with all this subtlety.

In fact, the music is so purged of histrionics that it verges on sounding comatose. At its least interesting, Hayden's voice is a spiritless purr.

On unnecessary tracks ("Piano," "Gray") or merely atmospheric ones ("Anytime," "Willie's Fortune"), Hayden leads one to suspect that she's just killing time on the album's instrumental interludes and two-minute throwaways.

MUSIC REVIEW
ANNIE HAYDEN
THE ENEMY OF LOVE
★★★

One hastens to find comparisons to contextualize Hayden's music. Of her major influences, she lacks the sarcasm of Liz Phair, the fun of Fleetwood Mac and the brilliance of Joni Mitchell.

But like the more-miffed and theatrical Martha Wainwright, Hayden seems to improvise her way through songs and land on beautiful moments by luck.

When she covers the Replacements' great and lonely "Swingin' Party," you can imagine her becoming as good a songwriter as Paul Westerberg was.

Her potential becomes apparent as she sustains the tuneful quality throughout most of this album.

Unfortunately, one doubts that being prolific would be such a good thing for an artist so consistently similar.

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

Peace drops unhealthy LP

BY RACHEL RICHEY
STAFF WRITER

Usually it's tricky business determining what went wrong when an album is neither good nor bad but merely average in every aspect.

In the case of Our Lady Peace's sixth album, *Healthy In Paranoid Times*, it is quite simple.

A lack of emotional and instrumental investment combined with a failure to highlight the group's strong suits makes the latest release destined to float aimlessly in a sea of midrange pop efforts.

The album starts off well enough with the catchy track

MUSIC REVIEW
OUR LADY PEACE
HEALTHY IN PARANOID TIMES
★★★

"Angels/Losing/Sleep," featuring a sparkling hook and the best instrumentation the album has to offer.

But the band's most recent effort is a far cry from 1999's *Happiness Is Not A Fish That You Can Catch*.

Whereas *Happiness* served as a testament to the group's creative vision and the vocal stylings of frontman Raine Maida, *Healthy* only shows what happens when your heart isn't in it.

Having perfected a mellow-meets-mind-altering with the release of *Happiness*, it is tempting to expect much more from the band this time around.

Unfortunately, in the wake of their latest attempt, the boys appear to be doing nothing more than playing with fiery mediocrity. It's only a matter of time before their reputation is permanently burned.

For a group known for its atmospheric rock, the album surprisingly drags on with torpid tracks that exceed the usual time standard and feature instrumentation that simply isn't up to the challenge.

In a steady decline since



the uneventful 2002 release of *Gravity*, Our Lady Peace has consistently failed to meet the standards set for the band in the past.

Still, the track "Where Are You" is a surefire radio hit, boasting a stylistic throwback to the days of "One Man Army."

Unfortunately, much as the next track title suggests, the rest of the album literally does "Wipe That Smile Off Your Face."

Failing to showcase the vocal talent of a singer like Raine Maida is not a wise move for a group that already is starting to lose steam.

Overall, the album's eleventh track, "Walking in Circles," says it best — the band continues to retreat tired ideas and uninspired songwriting.

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Brother's variety show disappointing

Major-label debut not all together

BY TANNER SLAYDEN
STAFF WRITER

Little Brother has grown up, and unlike the trio's name, its latest release was supposed to deliver big.

With soulful beats straight out of the '70s and a conceptual blueprint as unique as Deltron 3030's first album, the trio's major-label debut, *The Minstrel Show*, is a blend of social commentary and humor.

But 9th Wonder, Phonte and Big Pooh have their share of growing pains.

The whole album depicts a black vaudevilian show that is a satire on urban entertainers.

The members of Little Brother claim that commercial hip-hop personas are the modern-day blackface performers, and the whole album pokes fun at the bling-bling community.

This is an ambitious concept LP, but *The Minstrel Show* couldn't have arrived at a worse time.

Although less respectable urban acts are on the Billboard 200, this is the year of Kanye West.

Late Registration garnered critical acclaim, mass approval and a Time magazine cover story.

Artists like Common and The Game also negate the overall message of the Durham-based rap group's album, and the fact that Little Brother got signed because of its progressive sound shows that the business isn't as black and white as the CD suggests.

Every genre of music has its jokes, and the trio's goal to resurrect the rap game comes off impertinent and overzealous.

Even the production, the feature of the band that has earned national attention, becomes a pitfall.

9th Wonder's beats and samples are juxtaposed to make a subtle sound reminiscent of The Roots' *Illadelph Halflife*, but the music grows anemic by the end of the record.

Like the variety-show theme, the same drum line runs through the entire record.

There are notable exceptions, though. A diva chorus line in "Welcome to the Minstrel Show" and "Minstrel Show Closing Theme" is the soul of the album, and the group's single, "Lovin' It," has an infectious hook that proves to be one of the album's best.

But Little Brother seems to predict the media's critical nature on "Still Lives Through."

"One day, they giving you the thumbs up/The next, they telling 9th to go and switch his drums up."

The lyric undermines any critique on 9th Wonder's beat work, and

the track's production stands out because of its vitality. Little Brother has covered its bases.

But this variety show definitely does get something right: Humor.

Though the album can come off as didactic at times, tracks such as "Cheatin,'" in addition to the skits on the LP, are quite clever.

And let's be honest, rappers don't usually produce skits worth a laugh — take Kanye's "Broke Phi Broke" skits for example.

"Cheatin'" is also an accurate illustration of what R&B has become: "And I say 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Can't think of nothing that rhymes with



15." Acts like R. Kelly that have become known for their inane lyrics seem to be the butt of this joke.

The Minstrel Show has been touted as one of this year's most anticipated albums. It delivers while showing that the group has

MUSIC REVIEW
LITTLE BROTHER
THE MINSTREL SHOW
★★★

paid attention to their older brothers — De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest. But there is still work to be done.

Besides, little brothers never do anything right the first time.

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