

# Covering the Dead to the Stones, unplugged

## Tesla

Five Man Acoustical Jam  
Geffen Records

●●●●

**T**he recent acoustic movement continues with Tesla's latest album, *Five Man Acoustical Jam*.

By acoustic movement, I mean that a few years ago, acoustic guitar songs came back into style. Now every band has an acoustic song on its album. MTV has an all-acoustic show called *UnPlugged*. Like fellow hard-rockers Guns N' Roses, Tesla has decided to take a chance and release an acoustic album.

Recorded live in a club in Philadelphia, *Five Man Acoustical Jam* combines cover tunes and acoustic versions of some of Tesla's original songs. The album opens with "Comin' Atcha Live," the group's usual opener. The original version of this song is hard-rocking; on *Acoustical Jam*, Tesla turns it into a foot-stomping, country-flavored tune that segues into the Dead's "Truckin'."

The next song is "Heaven's Trail," and slide electric guitar is replaced

## MIKE LONG

### Albums

with slide acoustic. A cover of The Beatles "We Can Work It Out" follows, and this goes straight into the first single from the album, "Signs," originally done by The Five Man Electrical Band. The next three songs are acoustic versions of "Gettin' Better," "Before My Eyes" and "Paradise."

The next two songs are covers that don't work, Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Lodi" and the Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper," but the album comes back to life with spectacular new versions of "Modern Day Cowboy" and "Love Song." The album closes with two acoustic originals, "Tommy's Down Home" (featuring guitarist Tommy Skeoch) and "Down Fo' Boogie." Both of these songs have a great honky-tonk appeal, and they prove Tesla can write acoustic songs.

Except for drummer Troy Luccketta, who only plays on a few songs, every member of the group shines. Guitarists Frank Hannon and Tommy Skeoch trade leads and solos and prove they can be awesome



Brian Wheat, Tommy Skeoch, Jeff Keith, Frank Hannon and Troy Luccketta of Tesla

without forty amplifiers. Bassist Brian Wheat plays an acoustic bass and takes his place at the piano for "Paradise." Singer Jeff Keith's scratchy voice

sounds perfect with the acoustic guitars.

The album shows that some hard rock bands are able to be diverse. The

audience for the album is diverse as well. Fans of *G N' R Lies*, Tesla or of acoustic guitar will enjoy this "unplugged" experience.

# Teenybop princess to controversial egomaniac

## Madonna

The Immaculate Collection  
Warner Brothers/Sire

●●● 1/2

**W**hat happens when Madonna gets up enough erotic experimental gall to follow Ziggy Stardust and make love with her own ego? Oh, just a 17-song greatest hits collection that spans her career and hints at her musical future, modestly titled *The Immaculate Collection*.

All of this ambitious blond's hits

## LAYTON CROFT

### Albums

are here, as well as two new releases. Even more than Madonna's epochal and controversial history as a pop star, sex symbol and arbiter of fashion, this album insightfully traces her music and its metamorphosis.

*The Immaculate Collection* is interesting in its chronological effect as a stringent yet comprehensive overview of American dance pop over the past decade.

She began as a teenybop princess, dishing out instant dance hits like "Holiday," "Lucky Star" and "Border-

line," all off her 1983 debut. The songs are catchy, but quirky three-minute techno-tunes with harmlessly trite messages. The music lacks real soul and revered instrumentation.

But a step is taken with "Like a Virgin" and "Into the Groove," songs that see Madonna beginning to shape a more mature, qualified sound. "Crazy For You" and "Live to Tell" proved Madonna's knack for making likeable songs despite the upbeat frenzy. They departed from the dance-groove category and regressed into the close-bodied slow-dance realm, yet achieved sizeable "hit" status.

"Papa Don't Preach" and "Like A Prayer" offered worthwhile and controversial messages from the emerging pop queen, indicating substance

behind her outrageous style. But the be-bop optimism remained in ever-catchy tunes like "Open your Heart" and "Cherish," keeping Madonna likeable and hip.

Now looking into the future, we have "Vogue" and "Justify My Love," two current radio hits starkly different in sound, but equally "with the times" in terms of state-of-the-art Top 40.

"Vogue" is set on a Euro-style house beat, complete with a golden mid-song piano break that has become a staple in contemporary dance music. "Justify My Love," just recently released, is groundbreaking for Madonna, with its drop-thump rappersque beat and not much other instrumentation at all. Instead, Madonna uncharacteristically whispers

and groans instead of singing, but characteristically delivers erotic lyrics of sex, lust and desire.

Yep, Madonna always has an exciting trick up her sleeve to keep us on our toes and to keep her rich. *The Immaculate Collection* is not only for the Madonna fanatic, but also for the music fan intrigued by her glistening chart record and her ability to turn the page and change face before the previous one sets in.

Even if you don't particularly like Madonna's glitter and fanfare, yet like danceable music, give this record a chance. Tape it from a friend or something.

However, if you abhor Madonna's Top 40 dance-style music, don't even bother.

# Rapping Wonder Woman could use a few singing lessons

## Betty Boo

Boomania

Sire/Reprise/Rhythm King

●● 1/2

**B**etty Who?

Betty Boo — a carefree name for a carefree rapper whose debut album, *Boomania*, is booming despite her less-than-polished voice.

On the album, Boo successfully mixes strong, funky beats with whin-

## JASMINE HIGHTOWER

### Albums

sical rap. The resulting tracks jam harder than any produced outside New York City should, while making the listener want to move.

The amount of energy coming from the album should come as no surprise to anyone who has seen the cover. It features a cartoon motif, in which Boo is drawn as a sort of cartoon superhero — a kind of rapping Wonder Woman.

Inasmuch as she is a solo act who has enjoyed a seat at the top of the United Kingdom's charts with "Doing the Do," the depiction is not far from accurate.

Boo, a former member of such internationally-unheard-of bands as The She Rockets and Hit 'n' Run, said she decided to go solo to get away from differences in personalities. This must have been the right move for her, because she has gained star status on the U.K.'s rap scene.

Even though the Malayan-Scottish Boo doesn't say anything earth-shattering in her songs, the music, with its wonderful scratching in all

the right places, can keep the clubs jumping.

This is important when you basically have nothing to say and can't really sing that well.

The songs with the best beats are "Doin' the Do" and "Hey DJ/I Can't Dance," which work mainly because the music works. The Beatmasters earn their name by making these otherwise ordinary tracks rock.

Although Betty Boo will not save the world with any visionary message or sing any beast into submission, she can provide an evening of high-impact, uptempo dancing. What the 20-year-old Boo — formerly Allison

Clarkson of London — lacks in vocal range and genuine crooning ability, the percussion in her music more than makes up for.

Besides, M.C. Hammer has proved you don't have to be a good singer to be a good rapper.

## THE RATINGS

- — forget it
- — wait for bargain bin buy
- — tape it from a friend
- — buy it
- — buy it for everyone