

LPs

9 to 5 and Odd Jobs
Dolly Parton
 Produced and Arranged by
 Mike Post
 RCA, AHL1-3852

Dolly Parton, as you may have heard, has recently been garnering praise as one of the stars of a new Hollywood comedy called *9 to 5*. Her latest album, not without coincidence, also bears the same title, as well as the addendum *And Odd Jobs*. It's an album comprised of songs about various modes of work and poverty. I only wish Parton and her producer-arranger Mike Post had worked a little harder to make this album.

That Parton is a seasoned professional performer who knows her craft cannot be denied, even when she's just along for the ride on a certain song (as in this album's weakest track "Sing for the Common Man," an

anemic rehash of Mick Jagger's and Keith Richard's "Salt of the Earth"), she still delivers. Except for a couple of the songs on *9 to 5* she just doesn't seem to give what she's capable of giving.

Those exceptions, however, are almost worth the price of the album. Parton shines in the title track, which was also used in the film. It's a snappy, straight-ahead little rocker with a good deal of life and sparkle. Incidentally, Post did not produce this cut.

One he did produce, which works very well regardless, is the opener to side two, an ode to the "Working Girl." It starts with and maintains a strong, pervasive beat, almost a military cadence, around and through which Larry Carlton laces his electric guitar licks. This cut also has an edge to it, a bit of a bite in lyrics like: "Some men find her sexy, some men disa-

gree/But if she's not it's not because she doesn't want to be/She wears a push-up bra from Frederick's, five inch high heel shoes/Maybelline and Rubenstein, and Avon's best perfume/And she's a working girl." Although Parton delivers it all in a straightforward, non-judgmental manner. Each verse examines a different type of working girl.

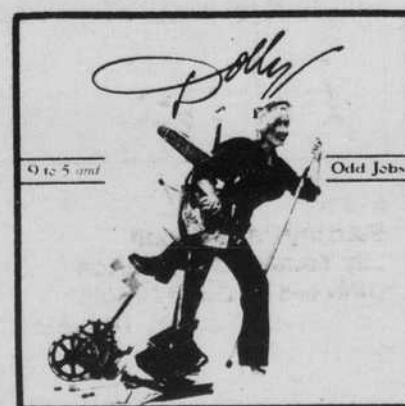
The last song, "Poor Folks Town," which Parton wrote in 1972, is a cheery, positive little ditty with spirited lyrics along the lines of "We got no carpets on the floor/We got wall to wall love/Who could ask for more." It's an upbeat number that sticks with you throughout the day.

Parton also dabbles in disco with a version of "House of the Rising Sun." Granted, it's a song no two performers ever seem to cover the same way, but disco? Maybe Parton and Post

just wanted us to know she could do disco. She can, but why bother? At any rate, it must be heard to be believed.

What is wrong with the rest of the album is a certain lack of spirit on Parton's part (she does her job, but doesn't seem to put much true conviction into her phrasings), and a lack of taste from Post. The latter seems to think songs, especially quiet, moving pieces like Woody Guthrie's "Deportee" and Merle Travis' "Dark as a Dungeon," are improved by starting them out simply with voice and guitar, or piano and synthesized flute and then layering on another instrument and/or a full string section with each additional verse so that the climax can be a big, mushy, glorious statement.

Post even overarranges and mucks up tried-and-true cry-in-your-beer tunes like "Detroit City" and "But You Know I Love You." What has made these



songs work over all these years is their simplicity and honesty; Post gives us the lush Hollywood version.

Maybe everyone just felt rushed to get the album out in order to coincide with the film's release. I don't know. But what we are left with is a rather short, over-produced work, containing a few notable songs and several forgettable ones. It's easily Dolly Parton's most commercial (employing all the connotations, both positive and negative, of that term) album in quite a while. She's done better in the past; I hope she will do so in the future.

By Robert Webb

Books

Side Effects
 By Woody Allen
 Simon and Schuster, 149 pages.

Maybe one of the most revealing things about Woody Allen's new book *Side Effects* is its classification as a nonfiction piece of literature. If the 149 pages of the book aren't fiction, then *Side Effects* is an insightful interpretation of Reality.

Insightful, only as Woody Allen can make it. And, for the most part, humorous enough to make for enjoyable reading.

How many of us know Woody Allen the book writer? Most of his work extends to us by way of his films, and this is where Allen has gained most of his reputation and critical acclaim. But Woody Allen on paper is every bit as good as Woody Allen on celluloid. If he has won your heart in any of his movies, there is something in *Side Effects* for you. It is sort of a Woody Allen movie in itself — incorporating his characteristic off-the wall brand of humor along with his sensitive philosophical views of life. In short, *Side Effects* is almost a "best of" Woody Allen.

Sixteen short essays are the essence of the book. Essays? Well, sort-of essays. Most of them read like short stories, and a couple of them are in the format of a one-act play. But all this

is nonfiction, remember. So we must treat them as observations of the real world. That is, real as only Woody Allen sees it.

For those Woody Allen fans who loved his earlier, more satirical films, such as *Bananas* and *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex*, there are several pieces in *Side Effects* that will knock you on the floor in fits of laughter. And for those who prefer Allen's later, more serious and introspective films, like *Interiors* and *Manhattan*, there are pieces for you, too.

But this is not to say that one has to have seen and appreciated a Woody Allen film in order to appreciate this book. Far from it, for the book stands on its own as a fine piece of work. It is both deep-sighted and funny as hell; it makes for both quick reading and inspired reflection. Something for the whole spectrum of humanity? Perhaps. At least the American species. It's hard to imagine someone not finding *anything* in *Side Effects* that turns them on. But it might be safe to say here that if you have absolutely despised every movie Woody Allen has ever made, then you might not want to buy this book. It's Woody Allen, through and through.

The best piece in this book (my favorite, anyway) is entitled "The Kugelmass Episode." It is

one of several pieces in the book which are written in the short story format; its plot is so zany it makes you wonder how this could be called anything but fiction. Fiction of the wildest sort.

Kugelmass is a despondent college professor living in (of course) New York City. He is unhappily married and desires a wild, romantic affair with a young, beautiful woman. He goes to an analyst, who, after listening to the troubles of the short, bald, Jewish Kugelmass, declares himself "only an analyst — not a magician." He refers Kugelmass to a magician friend of his. The magician has this sort of "magic cabinet" which will transport a person into the book of his choice. Just place the book and the person into the cabinet, tap three times, and presto — he's in the book. Kugelmass decides he'd like an affair with Emma Bovary, and so into the cabinet he goes, along with a paperback copy of Flaubert's novel. The next moment he is standing in the bedroom of Charles and Emma Bovary's house in Yonville. Charles is out of town; Emma falls in love with Kugelmass; his fantasy comes true.

But: "What he didn't realize was that at this very moment students in various classrooms across the country were saying to their teachers, 'Who is this

character on page 100? A bald Jew is kissing Madame Bovary?'"

And as the affair develops, Kugelmass brings Emma back to New York with him. "I cannot get my mind around this," a Stanford professor said. "First a strange character named Kugelmass, and now Emma's gone from the book. Well, I guess the mark of a classic is that you can reread it a thousand times and always find something new."

The ending of The Kugelmass Episode is one of the most hilarious points in the book. The wild imagination of Woody Allen at its comic best.

Allen includes several purely philosophical — but still humorous — pieces in the book. In "The Condemned" the plot is based upon the existential views of Jean-Paul Sartre. And Allen's view of Socratic philosophy is given in "My Apology," Allen's rendition of the classic by Plato.

Allen, playing the part of Socrates in this one-act play, twists the gravity of the original *Apology* into a comic affair. The scene is, of course, a prison cell, and Socrates is condemned to drink the cup of hemlock.

Agathon: Ah, my good friend and wise old sage. How go your days of confinement?

Allen: What can one say of confinement, Agathon? Only the body may be circumscribed. My mind roams freely, unfettered by the four walls and therefore in truth I ask, does confinement exist?

Agathon: Well, what if you want to take a walk?

Allen: Good question. I can't.

But unlike Socrates, Allen is afraid of death, and he tries to convince his friends that it is no virtuous thing to drink the hemlock.

Agathon: But you have proved many times that the soul is immortal.

Allen: And it is! On paper. See, that's the thing about philosophy — it's not all that functional once you get out of class.

Side Effects is a good book to have around. Though it can be read in an evening, its lasting value lies in its ability to bring comic relief to a sometimes overbearing world. Pick up a copy and put it on your bookshelf, right next to Kurt Vonnegut or Plato — it's comfortable either place. And when you find yourself despaired in the middle of a long night of textbook reading this winter, pick it up and read a story or two. Or the whole book, even for a second or third time. It's good therapy.

By Kirk Knighton

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