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**Marillion**  
*Clutching at Straws*  
EMI

Someone really ought to tell Marillion that art rock just isn't as popular as it used to be. Even the art rock demi-gods Genesis realized that and made the beeline for mainstream.

And at least someone should teach the band members if they are going to be an art rock band, they should be able to disguise it well enough so non-art rock fans are able to appreciate the music.

"Clutching at Straws" is as art rock as an art rock band can be these days. Which is fine, I suppose, if one is a fan of such music. Otherwise, the grand illusions and allusions are lost to an unappreciative audience.

And "Clutching" is not a BAD art rock album, it seems out of place. The lyrics are filled with interesting descriptions and stories, and musically the band performs solidly. Fish, the lead vocalist is sounding good, as do the rest of the British

quintet: Steve Rothery on guitar, Mark Kelly on keyboards, Pete Trewavas on bass and Ian Mosley on drums and percussion.

"Hotel Hobbies" is an intriguing look at the characters who hang out and consume illegal substances in less-than-five-star hotels. While "Just for the Record" tells the tale of an alcoholic who has not come to terms with his illness yet.

However, songs like "White Russian" and "Incommunicado" fall short of their noble goals. "Incommunicado" deals with the trials and tribulations of a celebrity and leaves the listeners thinking "ah, poor baby. Life is hard, isn't it?"

The two highlights of this record are "Torch Song" and "Sugar Mice." Both are more on the mellow side with less of the art rock grandeur that tends to make the rest of the album annoying. These two are the closest Marillion get to recreating its English number one hit "Kayleigh," which also introduced them stateside.

People who enjoyed "Kayleigh" may be disappointed in "Clutching at Straws." If they can get past the overwhelming guitar and drum parts in some spots, however, it may be enjoyable.

**Pick Hits**

*Here's what to expect to be the hot choices on record buyers and rock critics' lists:*

**John Cougar Mellencamp**  
*The Lonesome Jubilee*

The first single "Paper and Fire" has taken off, and the follow-up to "Scarecrow" shows the continued progress Mellencamp made on that album. However, what remains to be seen is if Mellencamp can shake off the inevitable comparisons to Bruce Springsteen. Something else to watch is if "The Lonesome Jubilee" can match the success of "Scarecrow," which spawned five hit singles.

**R.E.M.**  
*Document*

The ultimate college band has come out with another album, its first real studio record since "Lifes Rich Pageant" ("Dead Letter Office," the latest release, was a collection of previously unreleased tracks). The first single, "The One I Love" is nothing short of beautiful and is bound to attract more to R.E.M.'s ever-expanding audience.

**The Cars**  
*Door to Door*

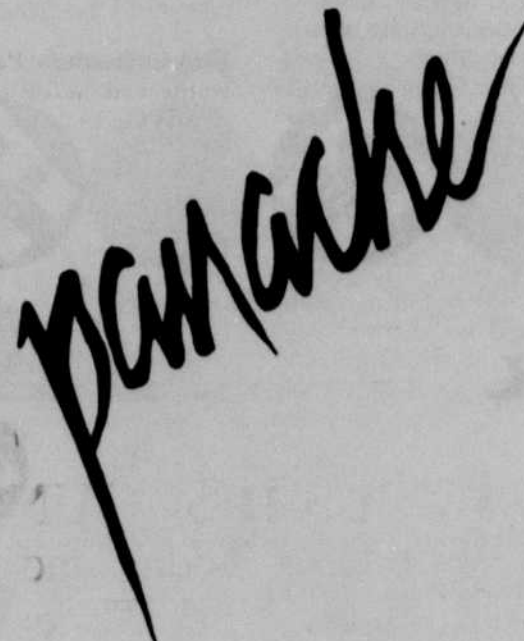
The immensely popular "Heartbeat City" and a myriad of solo projects may prove to be a difficult hurdle to overcome for this Boston-based quintet. And those who have followed The Cars through the band's climb to success over the years will have to decide for themselves if the increasingly pop sound is to their liking. Under the careful hand of Ric Ocasek, the Cars have released a

solid record that should do well, however.

**Michael Jackson**  
*Bad*

Obviously the most talked about record of the year, "Bad" may be a victim of overkill before its been on the racks for three months. Critical response to Jackson's follow up to the monster-hit "Thriller" has been lukewarm at best, but the public has responded favorably enough. Although it will take awhile for it to top "Thriller" if it ever does. Only time will tell. And for those who scoff at Jackson and his image, well he may be a little weird, but wouldn't you be a little strange if you had to top the biggest-selling record of all time?

Students can also look for new releases from the likes of: Bruce Springsteen, Sting, Pink Floyd, Bananarama, Pet Shop Boys, INXS, Rush, Elton John, Mick Jagger and Billy Idol to name a few. Better pray your financial aid checks come in time...



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