



Julian Cope

Cope still fails to set himself apart

By Jeff Clark
 ■ The Signal
 Georgia State U.

Julian Cope is a puzzling case. His polished psychedelic pop breaks no new ground, but all of his albums, both his solo works and those with his former band The Teardrop Explodes, contain some memorable songs.

Cope is so obsessed with his idols that his music practically screams out "Doors! Stooges! Bowie!" That in itself is not such a bad thing; in fact, almost every neo-psychedelic band around has the same habit. But Cope's version is seeping with incompleteness — an insincerity that effectively flattens his overreaching intentions.

My Nation Underground is Cope's first record since 1987's *St. Julian*, by far his best album. While *Underground* is more conventional musically, it lacks the cohesiveness and bouncy enthusiasm that made *St. Julian* click. Only two numbers really stand out: his cover of The Vogues' "5 O'Clock World" and his own "Charlotte Anne," which is repetitious but "haunting."

Both of these tunes sound great on the radio, although the latter is marred by Cope's hokey poetry. Julian would probably be better off if he exorcised a few of his role models. Until he sheds the image-obsessed shell, he'll amount to nothing more than a forgotten blip on the '80s and '90s music scene.

MUSIC

Dead Milkmen: A handful o' nuts

By Mark Piorowski
 ■ The Cavalier Daily
 U. of Virginia

I know it's the queers Stuart / They're in it with the aliens / Building landing strips for gay Martians.
 — The Dead Milkmen, on "Stuart."

Middle America, beware. The Dead Milkmen are back with a new album, *Beelzebubba*, which targets one of this Philadelphia-based band's favorite pet-peeves: the paranoia, closed-mindedness and general ignorance that they consider the dominant traits of many bucolic Americans.

Lead singer Rodney Amadeus Anonymous and Co. paint a frighteningly authentic portrait of rural hell in a wild collection of 17 songs. He dusts off his best white-trash accent in "R.C.'s Mom," a stinging indictment of macho stupidity in the land of trailer parks: *I'm gonna beat my wife / I'm gonna beat her with a lead pipe / I'm gonna beat her*

with a two-by-four.

But *Beelzebubba* doesn't just lambast middle-American morons. It also celebrates the anarchy that arises out of the boredom of youth. Following this vein, "Punk Rock Girl" is musically the best cut on the album, and one of the most entertaining lyrically: *We got into her car and then we started rollin' / I asked her 'How much did this cost?' / She said, 'nothin' man, it's stolen.'*

Musically, *Beelzebubba* is somewhat monotonous. Many of the songs, with the exception of "Punk Rock Girl," sound remarkably similar. However, the essence of The Dead Milkmen is found in their creative and subversive lyrics. The music is, for the most part, an added bonus.

Milkmen fans who were afraid that the band had reached its peak with its last album, *Bucky Fellini*, have nothing to fear. *Beelzebubba* is the Milkmen at their very best and their very worst. For them, that's pretty good.



Listen up — The Dead Milkmen let loose some dairy diatribe for America on their newest album, *Beelzebubba*. From left to right: Rodney Amadeus Anonymous, Lord Maniac, Jasper Thread and Dean Clean.

SOUNDbites



The Violent Femmes

Violent Femmes

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I get nervous whenever a great band makes a comeback, because greatness, especially in rock music, tends to be transitory. And the Violent Femmes were a great band — even though they never recorded a great album. The Violent Femmes were great because they took chances, and when they hit home, they hit harder than almost anyone else. Drawing their energy from Gordon Gano's inner conflict — he is half preacher and half snot-punk — the Femmes attacked with savage abandon and an impish sense of humor.

The most surprising thing about the new album is its consistency. On previous records, the Femmes never stomped the same ground twice. It lacks the furious energy of the earlier stuff, but it's hardly an embarrassment. They handled the production themselves. Guitars sting, drums sound solid and Gano's whine pierces without grating.

There's cynicism and compassion here, along with generous helpings of the humor that rescued so many Femmes songs from self-indulgence: *I hope you got fat / cause if you really got fat / you just might want to come back and see me.*

If their music has lost a little bite, it has gained a new confidence. If the songs lean a lot closer to folk than punk, it's because Gano has always had a lot more in common with Johnny Cash than Johnny Rotten. It might not be challenging, but it is emotive, lonely and a lot of fun. Angst for grownups. ■ Glen Hirshberg, *The Montana Kaimin*, U. of Montana

Motorhead

No Sleep At All

What could be better than a vicious conglomeration of heavy metal power? How about a *live* conglomeration of heavy metal power? And not just any heavy metal, but the thrashing speed-metal of Motorhead. Formed in 1975, Motorhead has gone through numerous personnel changes, but their music has always been the battling guitar and screaming vocal sound that resulted in several U.K. top-five albums and top-30 singles. *No Sleep At All* is a run through the band's past hits. All 10 tracks on the album have the same manic beat and the melodies and guitar work boast a rigid uniformity. Highlights include the driving power of "Built For Speed" and "Overkill." ■ Jim Morgan, *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, U. of Pennsylvania

Old style may be history, but Rush still rocks with best

By C. Fredrick Lathrop
 ■ The State News
 Michigan State U.

Since its debut album in 1974, Rush has become perhaps the premier arena rock attraction in music history. The band's live shows are always well-received, and the sheer musical brilliance of Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart takes on an even greater dimension in a concert setting.

The outstanding element that exists in Rush's first two live albums, 1976's *All The World's A Stage* and 1981's *Exit . . . Stage Left*, is an incredible sense of timing — both were released at critical points in the band's career, when it was on the verge of a drastic change in musical direction.

Since 1981, the band's collective musical vision has taken it in a direction not always appreciated by fans and critics. Rush has now become the ultimate high-tech band, smoothing out its previously aggressive stylings in favor of synthesizers and state-of-the-art electronics.

It is this side of Rush that is presented on the new double-live *A Show Of Hands*. Although difficult to do, it is important to

disregard Rush's past when weighing the merits of this album. The days of "Free Will" and lengthy conceptual pieces are gone. This is what Rush does now — exceptionally well.

The most striking aspect of this album is the incredible sound quality. Lee's bass and pedals come through the speakers with a substantial, but not overwhelming, amount of muscle, particularly when he latches on to Peart's drums. Lifeson also makes his presence felt, slashing his way through the mix with sharp, metallic guitar lines.

Musically, there are some exceptional moments and few disappointing ones. The band engages in some breakneck jamming on "Marathon" and "Mission," displaying elements of tightness and adventure not found on the studio versions. Lifeson cuts loose on one of his more impressive solos on "Turn The Page," which is also better live.

It's a shame that Rush's recent albums have been given the cold shoulder by fans. Rush shouldn't be penalized for exploring new avenues. *A Show Of Hands* is a must for anyone who appreciates amazing sound and incredible talent, not those who insist on dwelling in the past.



Steady Rush lineup: Neil Peart, Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee.