

Music of today can't compare to the 'classics'

By Gregory K. McIver
■ Indiana Daily Student
U. of Indiana

What has happened to today's music? Not since the oh-so-golden age of disco have the leaders of the music industry needed to be lined up and shot, shot again, and then have their lifeless bodies dragged up and down the streets of town by a team of horses.

I can't take it anymore. Milli Vanilli, New Kids on the Block, Paula Abdul, Tone Lōc, 2 Live Crew . . . the list of musical ineptitude could go on forever. These people can't write music. Their songs lack any soul, any depth, any inner quality that makes me want to listen to them over and over.

It seems the prerequisites for success in today's music market are merely an ability to dance and to look good while doing it. Paula Abdul is not a songwriter. She gyrates to a Casio. She does it remarkably well, but she's not a musician. She's an MTV viewer's dream.

Where are the classics? Where are the songs, such as "American Pie" or "Stairway to Heaven," that can stop a bar full of patrons from doing whatever they are doing and

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join together in song? In order to be a classic, a song, like a good bottle of wine, must go through an aging process. One can't write a song today and have it be a classic tomorrow. But has anyone heard a song lately that even has the potential to be a classic?

During the '60s and '70s, songs that eventually became classics were in abundance. These decades had songwriters who wrote lyrics that meant as much as the melody. Songs of yesterday also reflected the attitudes of the day and were representative of the social changes going on at the time. Who is writing these socially conscious songs today?

Does this mean all music must probe into the inner reaches of our gray matter and cause us to critically analyze the world in which we live? No, that would be asking too much of the youth of this country. If they can't find China on the map, they sure don't need the added burden of having to think when listening to music. Besides, music often can and should be pure, uninhibited, dance-the-night-away fun. But is it asking too much that the lyrics contain more than the teen-age panty-wetter musical themes of unrequited love?

Maybe the music scene is not that bleak. Maybe there exist some musical talents out there who are ready to pounce on the music scene and devour the limited-talent masses that dominate today's airwaves. And maybe I'm just not paying attention and there's a lot of terrific music being played today.

Like what?

MUSIC

Student's musical examines racial tensions on campuses

By Julia Ferrara
■ The Amherst Student
Amherst College

Interested in the recently reported wave of racism at small liberal arts colleges, an Amherst College senior completed a rock musical based on actual racist occurrences.

"Whitewash" is the joint project of student Tom Marshall and theater professor Doug Anderson. Fusing an original musical score and script, the musical depicts the way racism becomes institutionalized at the fictitious "Moreau College." The story line and dialogue were drawn from actual racial incidents and their subsequent responses at such schools as Stanford, Smith, Middlebury and Oberlin.

"It's a rock 'n' roll concert telling a story," Marshall said. "It's frightening in terms of the political context, and the dangers of this being misinterpreted are huge."

Marshall wrote about 20 songs on the topic of racism, 12 of which he used in "Whitewash." He then approached Anderson, who was very interested in the project, as he taught at Middlebury when racial problems were occurring.

"This is truly a collaborative effort," said Marshall. "We contacted several campus organizations that dealt directly with racism, attended meetings and then held auditions for the show." The script was created in part from dialogue and responses heard at the meetings.

The play's style directly counters that

of traditional theater, Marshall said. While the band is traditionally below the stage and out of sight to the audience, in "Whitewash" the guitar, bass, percussion, synthesizer and saxophone band is onstage throughout the play. Almost all of the 15-member cast perform several roles, he said.

"The line between band member and actor is blurred, as the band members also serve to inform the cast," Marshall said.

A professional musician for 10 years, Marshall toured the country with various groups before deciding to go back to

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— Tom Marshall,
Playwright

college. Creating the fictitious Moreau College and its various traditions was a trying experience in realizing the racism within college communities, he said.

"The play affirms that racism not only exists, but that it is institutionalized," he said. "What (the authors are) interested in is making theatre accessible and drawing the audience into it," said Herschel Farbman, a cast member. "It's a way to shock the audience by fusing rock 'n' roll and dialogue."

Although the authors present the explosive racial issues in a relatively non-threatening style, Marshall warns against the play being construed as light-hearted entertainment.

"I want the audience to come away feeling like something happened to them," he said. "I don't want people to leave saying, 'That was a good play,' or 'That was entertaining.'"



PHOTO COURTESY OF POLYGRAM RECORDS
Jon Bon Jovi fizzles — not sizzles — with his latest, "Blaze of Glory."

Jon Bon Jovi's latest is a bomb... Western-themed 'Blaze of Glory' goes up in smoke

By Jane Bostwick
■ The Ball State Daily News
Ball State U.

I didn't go into this review looking for blood. Really.

Although I don't personally own any of Mr. Bon Jovi's albums, I can appreciate the way he has carved such a successful niche in the pop marketplace. The man from Jersey (so far) has had no problem giving his audience exactly what it wants. Light on the metal and heavy on the catchy choruses — the formula at its best creates some crisp, unpretentious high school pop anthems.

Well, pardners, it appears the fun may be over sooner than we thought. It seems our boy Jon has decided to get serious and take a solo turn. He's got a new album of music from and inspired by a gen-u-wine Western, "Young Guns II."

On "Blaze of Glory," lyrical clichés are bustin' out all over: "I'm a loner on the run/I'm just looking for tomorrow/And I ain't gonna hurt anyone" from "Justice in the Barrel" is representative of the lot. "Justice in the Barrel" also features the

Making music: Machine allows listeners to record customized tapes

By Caryn Brooks
■ The Daily Collegian
Pennsylvania State U.

You hear a great song on the radio, think about it all day and sing it frequently. You rush to a record store and shell out 15 hard-earned dollars to buy the CD, only to be disappointed because the rest of the album is trash.

A new technology called the Personics System is out to solve your problem.

Found in West Coast and Northeast record stores, the Personics System legally allows consumers to make high quality tapes of their favorite hits.

The Personics listening booth looks like something out of a futuristic movie. The customer can use headphones to listen to a sampling of the more than 4,000 titles available, including rock, soul, rap, classical, jazz, oldies and sound effects. Each selection costs \$1.10.

After picking songs, the customer can have a high quality custom tape recorded by a store worker in about 10 minutes on a machine equivalent to a high-speed jukebox.

"Whenever there's a new technology, there's resistance," said Steven Cristol, director of marketing for Personics. Cristol said he is confident Personics will sway more record labels over to the system. So far, more than 70 labels have joined.

Currently, Personics Systems are featured at mostly large chain stores in California, Texas, Ohio, North Carolina, New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. But Cristol said Personics plans to expand to other areas and stores.

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album's biggest cringe point — real, authentic Indian war whoops. Right. Sixties' cheesefest "Indian Reservation (Cherokee People)" suddenly sounds a lot better now.

Santa Fe, N.M. gets its (overlong) musical moment with Jon. Like several tracks, "Santa Fe" could have been trimmed and tightened. Jon's got a lot of big names helping him out on this album,

including Jeff Beck and Elton John, but sometimes it gets too crowded in the studio. The organ riffs on "Santa Fe" and "Dyin' Ain't Much of a Livin'" really should hit the road.

If Jon and record label Polygram are smart, they'll release "Billy Get Your Guns" as the next single. It's got the Bon Jovi pumped-up chorus for a hook, and it cuts it relatively short at 4:48.

Let's hope that Jon's cameo in the "Young Guns" flick sates his Western appetite. Then he can go back to his Jersey roots and make the airwaves safe for pop consumption once more.