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TOO HIGH TO DIE

★★★

GROUP: Meat Puppets
LABEL: London

You can try with all your might to classify the music of the Meat Puppets, but you just can't do it.

You can't really compare them to any other current alternative bands because many of the current hot alternative, including Soul Asylum and Nirvana constantly speak of the inspiration they got from the Meat Puppets' early work.

Strangely, this is the first Meat Puppets album in more than four years. My guess is that after the band put out three or four albums, it decided its music had run its course and called it quits, only to retire a year and half prior to the big boom in the sales and popularity of alternative music.

With so many of the today's megastars, the Meat Puppets likely thought twice about breaking up and set out to make a new album.

The result, I would have guessed, would be a 10-song klunker filled with boring rehashed crap.

Not so.

On *Too High to Die*, the Meat Puppets continue to swirl around the musical universe, not pausing for a moment to give people like me the chance to pigeonhole them and give them a label like alternative, grunge, punk, etc.

Too High opens with a crunchy tune that opens with a heavy guitar riff that backs some wonderful harmonies. At times, the voices of the band resemble folk music and sometimes even gospel like on the closing song of the CD "Comin' Down."

"Never To Be Found," is another folksy-country sounding song that is surprisingly catchy considering its laid-back atmosphere.

As hard as it is to find where the Meat Puppets are trying to go with this album, by the halfway point, their great songwriting is obvious and you begin to put your trust in the band, letting them take you wherever it wants to go.

— DAVE CHARBONNEAU
Oregon Daily Emerald

WHISKEY FOR THE HOLY GHOST

★★★★½

ARTIST: Mark Lanegan
LABEL: Sub Pop

Whiskey For The Holy Ghost, the second solo project from Screaming Trees front-man Mark Lane-

QUICK PICKS

FLOWERS

THE EX & TOM CORA — *And the Weathermen Shrugged Their Shoulders (Fistpuppet/Cargo)* 3 stars. An odd and inventive bunch of New Zealanders got together with Mr. Cora to make a strange yet ear-pleasing album. These mostly mid tempo songs range from bare-bones instrumentation to orchestra-like rock colleges, all tilted slightly left of center.

COURSE OF EMPIRE — *Initiation (Zoo)* 3 1/2 stars. Sometimes, in fact, quite often, I see albums put out that make me wonder why major labels don't realize they're throwing their money away on garbage (then I remember that sometimes it turns into tomorrow's Stone Temple Pilots). This isn't one of those. This is a great band that just happened to sign a major and not an indie first. Resides in the same neighborhood as Hitting Birth, Prong, and Tool; these four band are the future of heavy rock.

ALICE IN CHAINS — *Jar of Flies (Columbia)* 3 stars. Kinda like the *Sap* EP with the same tempo, 'cept its electric, not acoustic. Some of the songs, stylewise, are definitely new territory for the band; "Swing On This," for example. Layne has the same depress-

ing, dark lyrics.

LOIS — *Strumpet (K)* 4 stars. Think about The Spinanes. Now add a bass player. That's Lois. Makes sense when you think about it because Rebecca of The Spinanes is buddies with Lois. They're bound to rub off on each other. Very beautiful songs.

HOLY ROLLERS — *Holy Rollers (Dischord)* 3 stars. Pop/punk done solid by a D.C. quartet, 'nuff said.

VELVET CACTUS SOCIETY — *26 Songs (Shimmy Disc)* 3 stars. Weird like Ween, only a little less happy, a little more sarcastic. Check out "When I Sleep Naked" and "Can I Borrow Your Baby?"

FERTILIZER

LEMONS — *Marvel (Macola)* 1 star. These guys are lemons, all right. The name says it all.

SHONE KNIFE — *Rock Animals (Virgin)* 1 1/2 stars. Oh man, are these girls annoying. A lot of people at the radio station disagree with men on this one, but what do they know. If you want cute Japanese women rockin' out with pop/punk go listen to the 5,6,7,8's, not this.

— SCOTT DREW
Music Director KWVA

gan, makes a powerful statement for this Northwest, gruff-voiced vocalist. Unlike his first solo project back in 1990 titled *The Winding Sheet* which sounds more like the Trees than a personal expression from Lanegan, *Whiskey* takes a deep, introspective look into the psyche of a very talented vocalist and lyricist.

Don't get the wrong idea, though. Lanegan's solo work on this album does not stray so far from the distinct Screaming Trees sound to the point of him changing his own writing and singing style, which actually ends up sounding relatively similar to his latest Trees work. He in fact draws from many of the same references, such as whiskey and loss, that are so evident with the Screaming Trees.

The reason *Whiskey* is so powerful is that the instrumental music on it is emotionally consistent with the feeling in his lyrics and vocal style. Bluesy acoustic guitars, pianos, stand-up basses, organs and saxophones all give to the album, but the magic in *Whiskey* is credited to Lane-

gan's voice joined with the dark acoustic arrangements of Mike Johnson's guitar. Lanegan's voice, hauntingly similar to the low-grainy voice of Jim Morrison, finally gets the lazy, blues-drenched back-up that allows it to set the album's entire mood.

Speaking of Mike Johnson *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost* has a lineup of talent that is almost as impressive as the recording itself. Aside from Lanegan who plays back-up rhythm guitar on four songs, Johnson, Dinosaur Jr.'s bass player, takes care of the bulk of guitar and piano work. Lanegan draws the most talent for his drumming needs, getting help from Tad Doyle of Tad, Dan Peters from Mudhoney, and J. Mascis, the now guitar-gur, from Dinosaur Jr. Jack Endino, formerly of Skin Yard, also appears playing bass on one song.

This album is medicine for your emotions, and you can do it justice by sitting down on an old comfortable chair, turning it on, and pouring yourself a nice glass of, say... *Whiskey*.

— JEREMY MACRIGEANIS
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

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