

SOUND OFF

How the hell did I get stuck with this? Is there anything more difficult to do than review a new Sonic Youth album?

I have never been a big fan of Sonic Youth. Occasionally they come up with a song that actually has an ample amount of catchiness to it ("Cool Thing,"



EXPERIMENTAL JET SET

ARTIST: Sonic Youth
LABEL: DGC

★★★½

For diehard Sonic Youth fans

★★★½

For average Joes

I mean, they were sloppy before it was popular to be so. In fact, they are the ones that made it cool. So who were the people who first jumped onto the Sonic Youth express? Who were the ones who first said, "Hey guys, listen to this album. It's two people with boring voices singing over guitars being played with tongues. It's great!"?

Who knows. Now they are an alternative institution.

So anyway, if this were a CD by a new band, I would probably trash it. But, of course, I would write it off as a Sonic Youth ripoff band.

I liked Sonic Youth's previous two albums (*Goo* and *Dirty*) but the reason I liked them was that they both were leaning more toward mainstream than their previous releases.

Diehard Sonic Youth fans, however, generally seem to think those two albums represent the band's plunge into major label sellout status. So the fact that I don't think their new album *Experimental Jet Set*, *Trash and No Star* is up to par with their last two releases bodes well for the rabid followers of Sonic Youth.

It means that the new one is more like the older stuff and therefore is more appealing to the fans of old school Sonic Youth.

With that in mind, here are the songs that turn my crank on the new one (remember, these are the catchier songs on the album and thus are the ones true fans likely will scoff at).

"Bull in the Heather" is the song I found myself singing over and over after I listened to it a couple of times. Neat drums and a pretty little guitar break, plus I usually prefer the songs where Kim Gordon does the singing.

"Screaming Skull" sounds just like Nirvana's "Big Cheese," so of course I like that one.

"Waist" and "Quest For The Cup" also are very cool songs.

I admire Sonic Youth because they know exactly what they want to do, and they do it. What other band would be allowed to put five postcard-like inserts inside the cover that fall on the floor when you open the CD?

If you've loved Sonic Youth from the start, I have to believe you'll love this one. If you want to buy the new one because having Sonic Youth on your CD shelf represents your alternative music hipness,

so be it. If you like music for music, and not for the to-hell-with-the-establishment attitude, you'll find Sonic Youth's new album entertaining at times, but weird and, yes, truly annoying at times.

Just ask the *Emerald* staff members who were trying to write stories while I was listening to the CD for this review.

- DAVE CHARBONNEAU
Oregon Daily Emerald

Musicians have a 'sound,' something about them that makes their music stand out. Maybe it's songwriting, maybe it's how they sing or the how they play, but it's always something.

And thankfully, in 'Swamp Ophelia,' the latest release by the Indigo Girls, they haven't abandoned their 'sound,'—the solid songwriting or the creative instrumentation that keeps them from being just another folk duo with guitars.



SWAMP OPHELIA

★★★★

ARTIST: Indigo Girls
LABEL: Epic

The album's songs include ones on love, growing up and occasional social issues. The most notable of these is 'This Train

Revisited,' an updated version of the spiritual, 'This Train Is Bound For Glory.' What used to be a good-times, clap-your-hands sort of song is now a tense and searing condemnation of the Holocaust with startling and disturbing images.

The duo's songwriting is a good blend of the abstract and specific with songs like 'Dead Man's Hill,' which combines lyrics like "Talk to me face to face lying on the bright blue jumping mat/ dinner bell is ringing/ barking dogs and model planes/ and the sound of passing trains," with the more abstract "Don't you write it down/ remember this in your head/ don't take a picture/ remember this in your heart."

Their versatility is apparent as well on songs like 'Touch Me Fall,' which in the course of only a few minutes, smoothly segues from one musical style to another. A string quartet blends into vocals which blend into something that could sound psychedelic but doesn't quite make it before the song ends with bass, drums and two electric guitars.

The diversity in sound is helped by the assortment of backing musicians on the duo assembled, including a string quartet on some tracks and a trumpet and flugelhorn player on others.

The percussion moves beyond the expected rock and roll drum set as well and includes an assortment of other instruments like bongos, triangles, snare drums, timpani and a marimba, all of which would usually be found backing the New York Philharmonic or a high school band rather than two women with guitars.

The intelligent songwriting and creative instrumentation makes this an album Indigo Girls fans will want and probably an album that will create some new fans as well.

- MEG DEDOLPH
Oregon Daily Emerald




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