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Busta Rhymes moves in on gansta rap

By Damon Houx
Freelance Reporter

Rap has gone through many periods of change. From its early, more drum beat-oriented sound, to the influx of such influential groups as Public Enemy, De La Soul and Dr. Dre, rap has changed and moved to different kinds of sounds quickly.

Of late, the main product of rap has been gangsta rap, which has raised a stormload of controversy. However, it may have already peaked, because The Fugees, Coolio, and now Busta Rhymes, are dominating the rap scene of late.

Not to say that I think gangsta is dead; I don't. I'm just pointing out that gangsta may be getting old to rap fans.

There is a family of artists that consists of De La Soul, Tribe Called Quest, and Leaders of The New School. Busta Rhymes, who is a part of Leaders of The New School, has released his first solo Album entitled *The Coming*. It features the hit single "Woo-hah! Got You All In Check."

The album is great. It has a strong base track to bump one's head to, and the lyrics are fine, though the language could be characterized as rough; I don't think there is a song that doesn't feature foul language. But for all the foul language there isn't a track that doesn't make me want to nod my head to the beats.

Busta is a good rapper, as he proved with his work with the Leaders of the New School, and his voice is fun to listen to.

Cracked Mary release shows growth, maturity

By Les Zaczek
Freelance Reporter

Since their last album, members of Eugene's Cracked Mary have evolved their sound and have found a niche somewhere between power pop and heavier rock, with a dash of "grunge."

Qualite is packed with emotional and raw songs that show a band maturing and opening up their sound to increase intensity.

The album starts with a rocking number, "Judas," that shows some impressive instrumental work, especially on the part of the bass player and the rhythm section.

"Generenovation" is pure power pop, with super-catchy riffs and some great tempo changes and drum parts. The vocalist strains through the song, translating the emotional output well, and makes the listener feel as though he is sincere.

"No Thank You" shows some funk influences with a thick bass and a groovy guitar solo.

"Company," an acoustic ballad, shows that Cracked Mary knows how to fingerpick and write a good song without distortion and drums. This would be a definite MTV hit, and it puts ballads by the Goo Goo Dolls to shame. Eventually the song speeds up and grooves with gentle drums and a sweet melody.

"Little Kingdoms" is one of the best tracks on the album and finds the vocalist pushing his limits, yet holding his edge. The song is catchy and rocking with a great chorus and vocal harmonies.

Qualite also includes two of the better tracks from Cracked Mary's last album, the heavy and



COURTESY PHOTO
Busta Rhymes recently released his first solo CD.

The music has the sound of the Other Tribe or De La Soul albums, but is a little harder. It doesn't have the white funk influences of Beastie Boys or De La Soul; it's grittier - more Motown.

It's a satisfying album to listen to - not just a collection of songs, with certain songs noticeable as songs meant to be singles. This is an album that is pleasurable, smart, funny, and smooth. It comes highly recommended for those who have grown tired of gangsta rap posturing, or those who care for rap at all.

MUSIC REVIEW

Cracked Mary

Qualite

★★★ 1/2

slower "Please" and "Happy," a brilliant song in its own right.

The last song on the album, "Li'l Abner's Steakhouse," proves that Cracked Mary is not all about angst and can write a fun rockabilly tune just for the hell of it.

Lyricaly, Cracked Mary continues to write poignant and honest material. The lyrics seem to be more like thoughts, flowing out and hitting the listener with their raw content.

One example is "Hiccup Truck," a song about self-destruction: "... the denying liar, welcome back from LA-LA land, we hope you had fun, suicide's so much faster, when you use a shotgun."

On "Nothing Special," the lyrics turn to self-loathing: "look at me, you see someone else, I got no time, I'm nothing, I'm nothing special."

Any band that can put together a collection of 14 good songs deserves praise in my book. Cracked Mary has shown huge improvement since their last album, relying less on their Seattle influences and creating their own unique sound.

The overall quality and mixing of the album is also much better this time, letting the instruments and the vocals really shine.

Cracked Mary also deserves bonus points for the neat CD cover design. This CD is definitely worth checking out.

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