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# 'Live Monsters' locked into boredom

By Jason George  
for the Emerald

I was once in a sterile room. No windows, just padding, like being inside a hollow marshmallow. Actually, it was quite peaceful — but that is a different story.

I recalled such an experience after listening to the Big Head Todd and the Monsters' recent release "Live Monsters." The first live foray from this Colorado trio attempts to prove how much soul BHTM has in concert. The verdict: Like their five studio productions, "Live Monsters" is a padded room: safe, but not very interesting.

The problem with "Live Monsters" is that there are no mistakes. It is a wart-free offering of tried and true pop-rock. Todd Mohr's guitar work is predictable and overly pristine. Brian Nevin plays the drums like a studio musician robot, and Rob Squires' bass playing is akin to any high school dreamer with an amp.

For example, Squires' bass solo in "The Leaving Song" is boring to the point that it is humorous and somewhat reminiscent of The Cranberries' "Zombie" in melody and lack of originality. The backing vocals come from your typical

## 'Live Monsters'

Big Head Todd and the Monsters

TYPE: pop-rock

RATING:

★★★★★

override soul singer, Hazel Miller.

The one song on "Live Monsters" that comes off well is "Tangerine," the classic gem from Led Zeppelin. With the help of steel guitarist John Macy, BHTM spins it with a country twang and makes it sound remarkably fresh. Ironically, this cover song is the only glimmer of originality on "Live Monsters."

But pop ballads such as "Bittersweet" and "Broken Hearted Savior" are disappointing: songs that could have been great. Mohr's lyrics and chord changes on "Bittersweet" demonstrate his writing talent, but his inability to pull it off in a performance is frustrating.

The band's record company, Giant, calls "Sister Sweetly" "straight up R&B," but I would liken this track more to aggressive Muzak. It reminds me of the fight song played by my junior high pep band, except the pep band

was a bunch of 14-year-old guys who had picked up their instruments the summer before.

On the same note, a brazen cover of John Lee Hooker's "Boom Boom" is starched and pressed white-boy blues. In fact, I believe I heard the exact same version by a casino bar band in Tunica, Miss.

These guys would make a great frat party band. But I guess after selling two million albums, they might view it as a regressive career move. Seriously, most of the songs were recorded at the legendary Austin Music Hall in Austin, Texas, but the songs on "Live Monsters" are more suited for greek socials or bar openings.

BHTM is just an average band and "Live Monsters" is another mediocre album. I would only recommend this CD to two groups of people: 1) someone into bands such as the Gin Blossoms, Toad the Wet Sprocket, et al; 2) a financially strapped fraternity that wants live entertainment but lacks the appropriate funds.

The padded walls confine BHTM to the room of banal rock. Perhaps, someday, they can find the key, but "Live Monsters" is no such freedom ticket.

## Paperboys

Continued from Page 5A

step on stage to give the best show ... as if it were their last."

Opening for the Paperboys is local band Ashleigh Flynn and the Equestrian Bonnets. Critics describe Flynn's recently released CD, "Selkie," as a mix of blues, country and folk. A Eugene resi-

dent, Flynn often performs at venues such as WOW Hall and Cafe Paradiso.

The show starts 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the EMU Ticket Office and House of Records at 258 E. 13th Ave. Tickets are \$9 for students and \$11 for general public.

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■ For More Information, contact Matt Radochonski, Cultural Forum 541-346-4376

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