

CD reviews

# Carefully perfected stories

**Yael Menahem**  
Oregon Daily Emerald

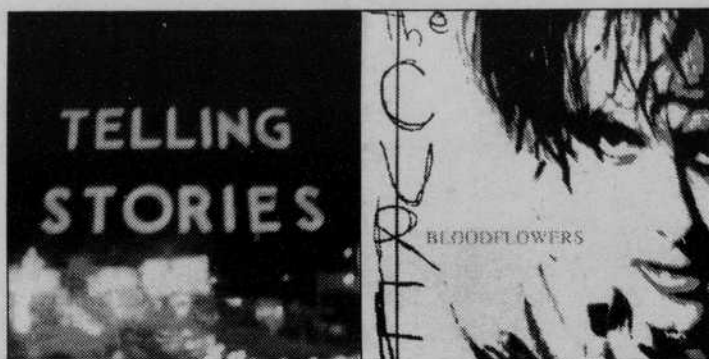
"Telling Stories" is a perfectly fitting title to the latest release from one of music's best story tellers, Tracy Chapman. Chapman, who usually focuses on social issues in her songs, makes no exception in this release.

The title track immediately captures the audience with Chapman's distinctive sound that includes a haunting musical arrangement. Although it's distinctly her, Chapman manages to keep her fresh through rich lyrics and familiar guitar.

In the fourth track, "It's OK," Chapman tries "to keep the walls from falling down" with beautifully written guitar riffs and an abrupt ending that leaves listeners wanting more. The song is followed by "Wedding Song," which takes a new turn with a more up-tempo sound.

The album's strongest song is the 10th track, "The Only One," with Emmylou Harris joining Chapman on background vocals. The ballad-like song — with its subtle folk and country sound — could've made for the perfect ending for the CD with both these talented singers' soothing voices leading listeners through the song.

Chapman sings about love, life and touches on the progress of black people in America in "Nothing Yet" when she poignantly sings "from 40 acres to a 40 ounce." With such hard-hitting lyrics, her audience knows to expect only the best from this singer who can attack social is-



Courtesy CD covers

The Cure's Robert Smith says 'Bloodflowers' is the band's most perfect CD ever. Tracy Chapman, who plays the Hult Center on April 22, has a pretty strong effort herself with 'Telling Stories.'

sues as well as the pain of love. "Telling Stories" is one of those CDs you can listen to repeatedly and appreciate every time.

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Where did The Cure go in the 1990s?

Even though the band released several CDs, among them 1992's "Wish" album, which featured "Friday I'm in Love" and the favorite "Letter to Elise," the group's latest release, "Bloodflowers," will likely leave its best mark yet.

The band's inescapable melancholy sound is still present throughout the nine-track CD, but its sounds are soothing as well.

Most of the songs feature one-and-a-half minute beautifully strung introductions that enrich them in ways that makes "Bloodflowers" truly a Cure CD.

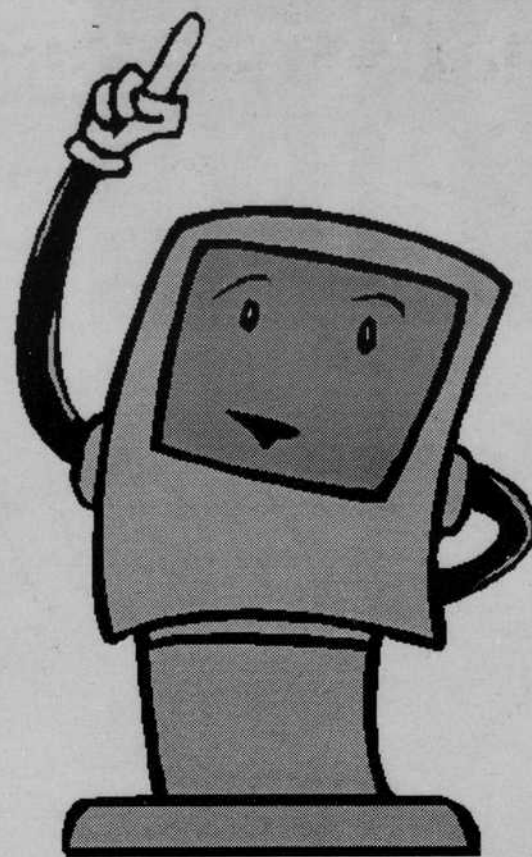
The title track "Out of this World" begins with an acoustic

guitar, haunting background sounds and the Cure's signature keyboards as Robert Smith's voice surfaces. At times the vocals sound painful for Smith to produce, but he is able to rise from his torturous lyrics to leave an impact on the audience.

"Where the Birds Always Sing," the third track, is one of the strongest songs on the album. Even though Smith sings of a fair and unfair world, the piano, electric guitars and his vocals blend together perfectly.

The seventh track, "The Loudest Sound," is another mellow track that features a touch of electronica, making listeners feel like they're on a different planet.

After 20 years and 13 studio releases, not many bands can top their previous hits. But the Cure does so successfully in "Bloodflowers"; even Smith, in a press release, says this is the most perfect Cure album ever.



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