

# 'Romeo Must Die' CD short on creativity



**MUSIC**

**Romeo Must Die**  
Various artists, Warner Bros.  
★★★★☆

By **Jessica Blanchard**  
Oregon Daily Emerald

"It's been a long time/I shouldn't have left you/without a dope beat to step to," begins rapper Timbaland on the first track of the "Romeo Must Die" soundtrack. And indeed, the CD offers plenty of "dope beats" — so that's not the problem.

At first glance, this CD looks like a rap or R&B-lover's delight: it's packed with big-name artists such as Aaliyah, Destiny's Child, DMX, Cash Money, Timbaland, Ginuwine and Mack 10. But while most of the tracks on this album have some nice harmonies or interesting lyrics, there are no real vocal acrobatics or hard-hitting verses that we've come to expect from these established artists.

Aaliyah's tracks on the album are likely the driving force behind its recent surge in sales. But while she is an accomplished singer with a great voice, and her tracks on this CD work, it still feels like she's not really into it — like she's

not using her full vocal range.

Overall, the album is worth buying — and Aaliyah is almost guaranteed at least two hits off this album — "Try Again" and "I Don't Wanna" are already receiving airtime on the radio.

"Try Again," an uplifting, feel-good anthem set to a driving beat, is one of the catchier songs off the CD, despite its simplistic chorus.

In "Are You Feelin' Me?," Aaliyah sounds like she's mimicking fellow artist Missy Elliot with her breathy delivery. Big surprise — Elliot wrote the track, which sounds similar to some of her own hits, like "All In My Grill."

DMX helps Aaliyah out in "Come Back In One Piece," but I admit I'm a little biased here — I can't stand this guy's voice. But honestly, I don't think I've heard a worse duet. Give the guy props for being so successful, but please don't try to meld his loud, obnoxious voice with Aaliyah's delicate delivery. To be fair, the track has a decent beat, but when Aaliyah is asking her boyfriend to promise her he'll come back in one piece, she sounds more like a mother chastising her son than a girlfriend pleading with her boyfriend.

Her other already-successful track, "I Don't Wanna," is another mellow song in which she begs her lover to work things out be-

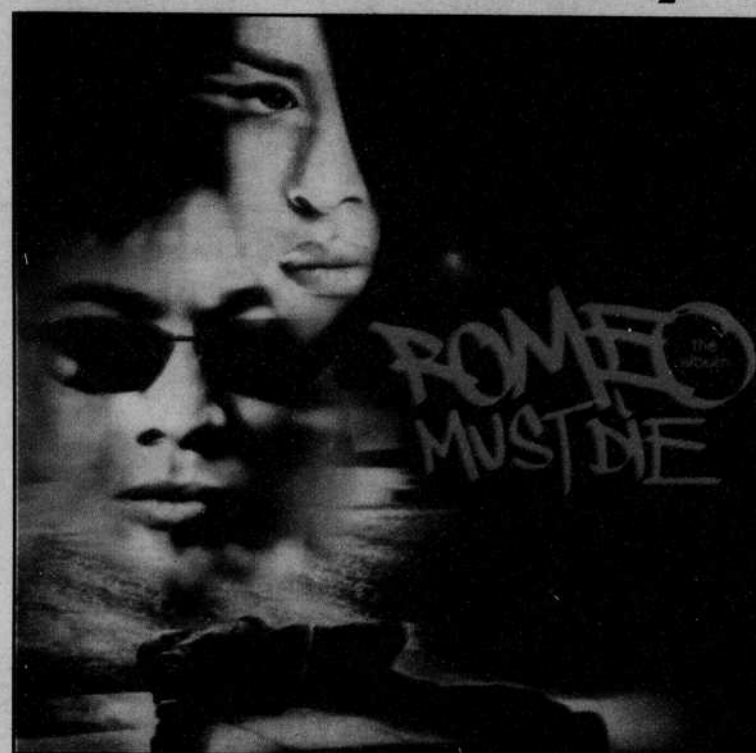
cause she doesn't "wanna be alone."

"Do you realize/ I can't even sleep without you/ think without you/ eat without you/ speak without you/ be without you/ I can't even breathe without you," she sings. This was a simple tune with lots of lyrical repetition, but I still liked it, despite some annoying Pop-Up Video background noises toward the end.

Though Aaliyah is clearly driving this album, there are other notable performances, such as the mellow "Rose In A Concrete World" by Joe. The artist(s) show great vocal range, reminiscent of fellow R&B group Dru Hill. The listener almost doesn't care what the lyrics are because it's so mellow. It's just nice to get lost in the harmony.

And fans of sex-obsessed R&B artist Ginuwine will be able to overlook his bad grammar and enjoy "Simply Irresistible." Fans are listening to him not for his deep lyrics or powerful message, but because he's a master of naughty lyrics.

Fans have come to expect Ginuwine's songs to be naughty and not lyrically deep, which is good, because they're not going to get anything deep from this track's chorus: "Simply irresistible/ that is you, that is me/ can't wait to get physical/ I want you, you want me/ Now it's getting critical/ I

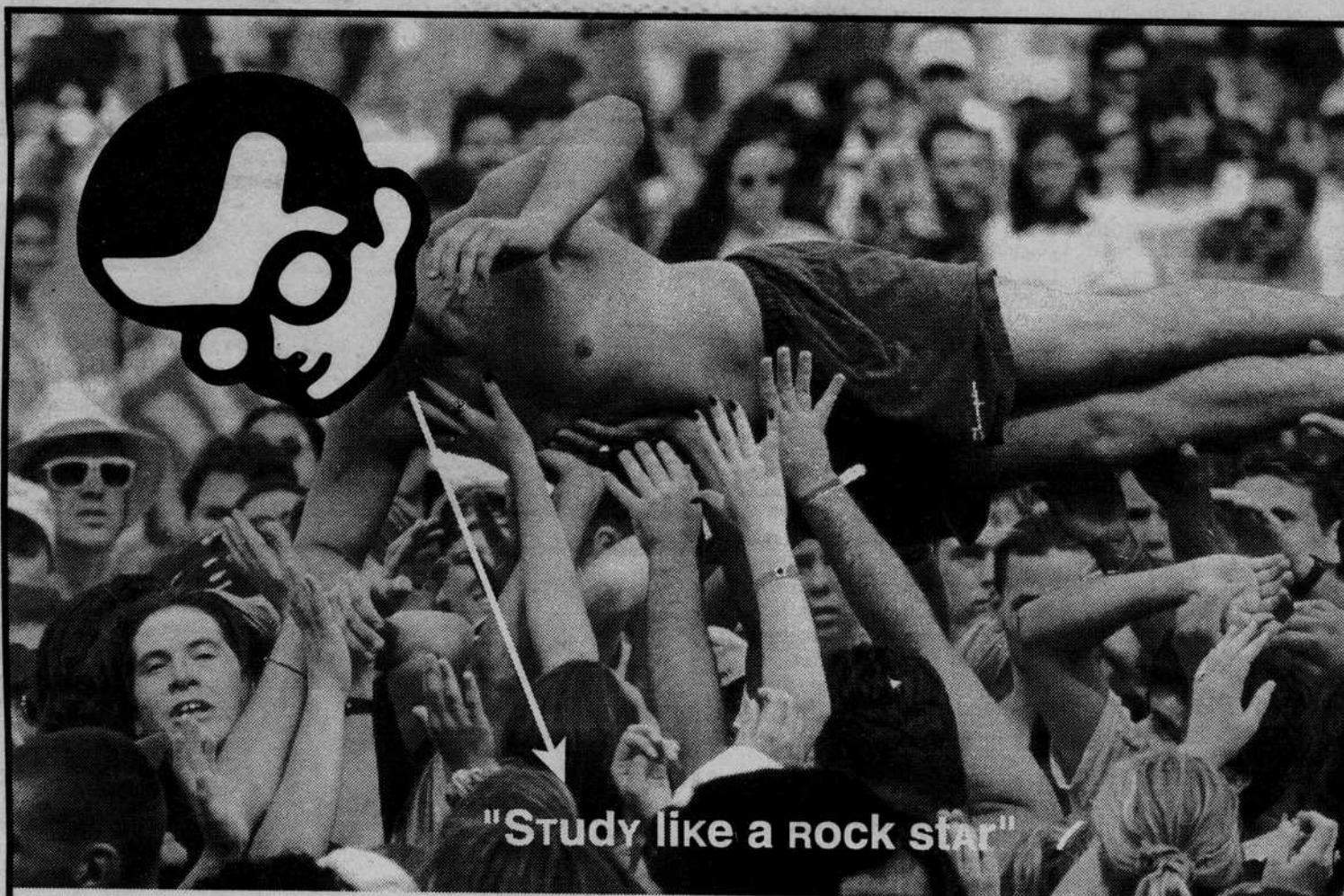


Courtesy of Warner Bros.

need you, you need me/ I'm so tired of typical/ but that ain't you, and that ain't me."

One disappointment was "Perfect Man," the track by Destiny's Child. The group members are all capable performers, even though they've had lots of turnover in the last couple months. But it just seems like it doesn't have the

heart that can be found in some of their previous hits. Though there are some great harmonies in this track, it's spoiled by a weird bongo-and-xylophone beat. I could have handled the bongos, but this track could have been a lot better if they hadn't added the xylophone — it gets real old, real fast.



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