

Green Day's latest more Dylan than 'Dookie'

■ The sometime punk band branches out into Paul Simon and Elliott Smith territory



Green Day 'Warning'

Reprise

★★★★☆

By Josh Ryneal
Oregon Daily Emerald

It must be hard getting old. At least, it must be for Billie Joe Armstrong, lead singer of Green Day. On "Warning," the band's sixth album, he seems to be experiencing a mid-life crisis with all its awkward transitions.

There must be a point in all adults' lives when they have put away the hard-rockin' music of their youth and embraced music easier on aging ears, such as James

Taylor or Steve Miller.

When Green Day exploded into the national spotlight with 1994's "Dookie," mallrats everywhere were taken with the band's punk nihilism and snarling lyricism. The grinding bass, speed-freak guitars and Billie Joe's hoarse yet tuneful voice were the perfect recipe for success during the mid-'90s punk boom. But Green Day came from California, not Never-Neverland, so it was inevitable that they would grow up sometime.

Fans should have seen it coming. On their last album, "Nimrod," the only big single was "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)," a catchy mid-tempo ballad that was a startling departure from the snot-nosed bubblegum punk of "Dookie."

Now, the trio has sold its Sex Pistols and Clash albums, and from the sound of "Warning," they used the money to buy up the entire Bob Dylan back catalog, with a used copy of Paul Simon's "Graceland" for good measure.

"Hold On," with its strumming guitars and harmonica solo, sounds like a cover of a Bruce Springsteen/Tom Petty collaboration. Sure, Armstrong is a wealthy family man now, so now he's tackling more complex themes than "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you," but the band's transition from punk standard-bearers to melancholy baby-boomers is not always believable.

At times, Armstrong seems caught in limbo. The confusion of middle age has never been captured so well as when he whines about rules and authority on the title track and "Minority," then switches gears into the accordion-fueled gypsy tune of "Misery." That song would sound as though it came from a collection of Paul Simon B-side — if Simon had developed a sudden penchant for baseball-bat violence and drug deals gone wrong.

"Fashion Victim" is an old-man rant on "those kids today." Who would have thought a punk-rock singer could sound so crotchety?

The album's best track, "Macy's Day Parade," which sounds like a lost Elliott Smith song, is so totally out of character for the band that listeners may check their CD players to make sure they haven't put the wrong album in. However, the song is definitely an achievement, a rumination on mortality with glorious guitar strums, and it ranks among the band's best.

It's not that these songs are "soft" or even that bad; they still carry a hint of the old Green Day if you listen closely. The album even has a few old-school rockers, such as "Castaway" and "Deadbeat Holiday," but the biggest surprise is the kinky "Blood, Sex and Booze," an ode to bondage and domination that seems out of place compared to the



rest of the "adult" tracks.

"Warning" is not a terrible album, but it suffers from the "transition curse." Most bands that live past their third records inevitably put out albums that reflect a "broader perspective" and "growing maturity." Some are bad, some are good, and this one still has some growing up to do.

Those who liked the whiplash-inducing punk rawk of "Dookie" will be somewhat disappointed, but give it a chance. Remember, you'll be old some day too.

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