

Pulse brief

Neil Young biography takes dim view of offstage persona

Neil Young got his nickname, "Shakey," because of the physical ailments that led to onstage fainting spells and convulsions. But the name takes a broader meaning in Jimmy McDonough's 788-page biography of the Woodside, Calif., singer-songwriter.

Young, the 56-year-old artist whose four-decade career ranks in the highest sphere of popular music, has been about as shaky and unpredictable as an earthquake in his dealings with those around him: band mates, managers, friends and wives.

"Neil's not going to do what you think he's going to do or what he said last week," says one of Young's

tour managers, Bob Sterne, in the book. "It's not a good place for the average person to be. The people who are looking for a paycheck don't last long."

What emerges in McDonough's book is a portrait of an artist who is not only fanatical about his music, but who rarely compromises, even in a recording industry built around watering down the singular vision to make it palatable for the masses.

"Neil's run by his art," his long-time manager, Elliot Roberts, tells McDonough. "If Neil perceives he's being jive, he can't do it."

Young has rolled over people around him with little regard, usually because they got in the way of his vision of the moment. Musicians who hoped to tie their fortunes to him found themselves dumped out on the highway.

— Brad Kava (KRT)

Blackalicious

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evolution of hip-hop. The song is impressive because each Gift of Gab, Saul Williams and Lyrics Born have a go at the microphone and contribute their style to the song. Gift of Gab and Chief X-Cel met in high school and worked together on and off through their days at the University of California — Davis, releasing their first album "Melodica" in 1993. Blackalicious' sound has continually matured and become freer since their first album. Both 1999's "A26" and 2000's "Nia" sold well and were helped by the fact that they both included the song "A to G," which became a huge underground hit with its fast-paced crescendo of vocal stylings.

Like most modern hip-hop, the group accentuates its sound with a variety of eclectic samples. The most poignant one is the title track, which includes a short sample from the song "Me and my Arrow"

from the children's movie "The Point," a trippy morality cartoon narrated by Ringo Starr. Gift of Gab's lyrics are interspersed with the joyful chant, "Me and my arrow / straighter than narrow / Me and my arrow / taking the high road."

On "Sky is Falling," Gift of Gab explodes with a melodic wave of rage. The song continues to build in intensity as Gab chants "Children in high school rollin' and smoke in they classes up and people that is rich don't be checking for what is happenin' degrading the women knocking them up leavin' 'em smackin' 'em up there is no way to reach us we sleeping like hell's masters." It then it dissolves into a frantic sample, "Rain and thunder and lightening crumbling."

The album is perfect for dancing, chilling, driving and studying.

Blackalicious will be coming to the WOW Hall on May 27.

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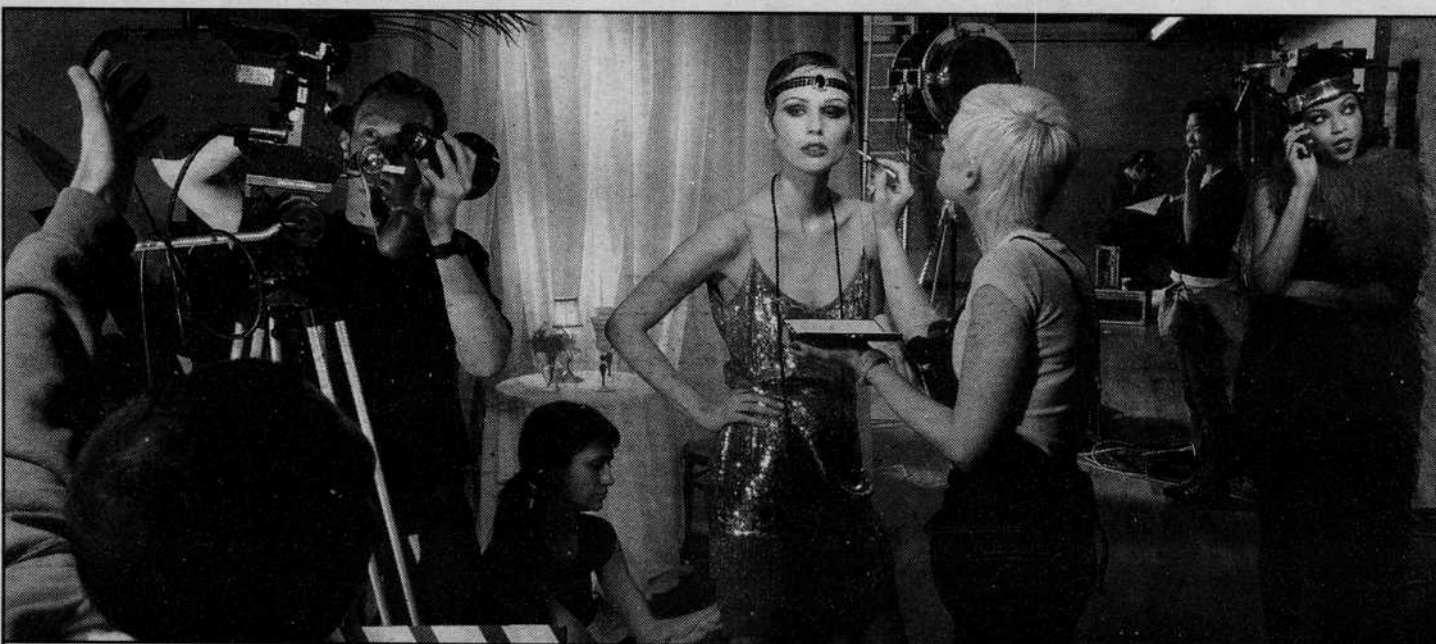


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