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Music industry appears to be in transitional stage

By Ryan Nyburg
for the Emerald

What the hell is the music industry up to? After we had to suffer through its infatuation with teen pop acts that felt more like market tools than music, it now seems to have come to its senses this summer when the major releases are by bands of the likes of Korn and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. How do you gauge an industry that just a few short years ago was riding on Britney Spears and now seems to be bargaining its future on Sonic Youth?

Strange goings-on indeed. The summer concert season seems to sum up the transitional stage that mainstream music is experiencing. First off, we have some nostalgia acts such as Little Feet and Jimmy Buffet making appearances. This is standard concert material, and these guys all stopped producing relevant music years ago. Though I will admit it's not nearly as bad as the Rolling Stones parading around again. At least Jimmy Buffet doesn't look like something out of "Night of the Living Dead." Buffet will be at the Rose Garden on Sept. 24, and the Feet play at the McDonald Theatre on Aug. 20 for those who feel like reliving their childhood.

Speaking of horror shows, here comes Jay-Z and his pain parade, a group of wanna-be leftovers from the alt-rock era, along with some up-and-coming music twits of the week. They call it the Sprite Liquid Mix tour, which I take as a sign of the devil's work, and includes co-headliners Jay-Z and 311, along with Hoobastank, Nappy Roots, N.E.R.D. and Talib Kweli. This is one tour I hope crashes into a damn ditch before it comes anywhere near where I might have a chance of hearing it. Not only does it have a corporation promoting itself shamelessly, it also includes a startling lack of talent or originality in its lineup.

Despite his latest album being fawned over by a major music magazine that will remain nameless (hint: Begins with an "R," ends with "olling Stone"), Jay-Z has never been able to rise beyond the generic trappings of modern hip-hop. He dresses, sounds and



Courtesy Photo

Glenn Tipton (left) and K. K. Downing, members of Judas Priest, are once again touring. The band is promoting its latest album, 'Demolition,' and will be in Portland on Aug. 20.

GUEST COLUMNIST

Ryan Nyburg

uses the same lyrical content of every other hip-hop artist since the early '90s. 311 should have sunk into a dark hole when grunge died, since they seem to have decided not to do anything more worthy of the respect they somehow attained from fans. As for the rest, well, at least they write their own songs. I'm just glad they aren't coming any closer than San Francisco.

Thought satanic heavy metal went out with the '80s? Wrong. Inexplicably, Judas Priest is touring again, still promoting this past year's album "Demolition." Another non-relevant nostalgia act or a stunning powerhouse of metal, back for more? You decide. They'll be at the Roseland The-

ater in Portland on Aug. 20 if anyone is interested.

Finally, the highlight of the summer — for me anyway. Sonic Youth is back on tour to promote its new album, "Murray Street." These iconoclastic noisemakers have proved many times that the distortion and feedback delirium they produce has made some of the best music of the past 20 years. These guys are famous for their uniquely loud live shows, and they'll be breaking windows at the Crystal Ballroom in Portland on Aug. 30. If you can't get tickets, just sit outside and listen to the buzzing.

So where is mainstream music heading? A few bright spots among a Hit Parade from Hell, or are there signs of better things to come? Let's just hope for the best.

Ryan Nyburg is a freelance columnist. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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