

Neil Young revives concept album



Ryan Nyburg
Budget rack

Concept albums must have gotten a bad name: You don't see too many of them anymore. It's true that they are often dull, impractical and reeking of the worst sort of artistic pretentiousness, but I don't think this should detract from the idea as a whole.

I got on this whole concept album trip with the release of Neil Young's latest album, "Greendale." The album tells the story of a small California town and the trials and tribulations of its residents. It's wrapped up in a distorted roadhouse rock groove that diligently stays in the background while the story takes hold. Great stuff from Young, and more worthwhile than last year's "Are

You Passionate?" Remember the knee-jerk post-9/11 homage song "Let's Roll"? Neither do I.

It's not much of a surprise that an old pro like Young is the one putting out a concept album today. The 1970s were the heyday for them. Now, people just seem to lack the time or patience.

But Pink Floyd's "The Wall" and The Who's "Tommy" are great albums, and what makes them great is not only the quality of the songs, but the themes sustained among them.

Most people attribute the birth of the concept album to the same group every other great thing in rock is attributed to: The Beatles. "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" is usually given the title of the first.

As far as the more sophisticated concept albums go, I've always had a fondness for Frank Zappa's "Joe's Garage," a three-part rock opera about a musician in a near-future world of obedient consumers, mechanical pseudo-religions and a totalitarian authority that believes in "total criminalization" of the populace. The plot is so convoluted that it ap-

proaches total anarchy, the characters are two-dimensional and the whole thing borders on the irrational. Much like a real opera, when you get down to it.

But what is on the outside surface isn't the point; it's what's under the façade that matters. The album shows a depressing vision of a dehumanized society that reality resembles more every passing day. While the album has other merits, like Zappa's stellar guitar work and compositional skills, it is this unifying vision that makes the whole thing worthwhile.

Another favorite of mine is The Who's "The Who Sell Out." It's otherwise known as the other Who concept album, long overshadowed by the success of "Tommy" and, to some extent, "Quadrophenia." The difference is that those two were rock operas with narrative stories. "Sell Out" is just a concept with no story attached or necessarily needed.

Incorporating original Radio London commercial ads with songs full of product references, The Who do in fact sell out, but in such an extravagant way

that you know it's a joke. The songs are tuneful, catchy and melodious, just like radio jingles are supposed to be. Personal fave: "Odorono," a song about a singer who is rejected by a man because her antiperspirant breaks down, an embarrassment that leads to her giving up her musical career. She should have used Odorono.

So is anyone releasing concept albums today? Other than the eminent Mr. Young and his band, Crazy Horse, Tool is the only group that comes to mind, with the album "Enima" in particular. Describing life in Southern California after an apocalyptic earthquake, the album is a big, rumbling, scary trip through the minds of a group of Jungian metal freaks. What could be more fun?

So there's still hope for the concept album, so long as musicians keep having ideas bigger than a single song can contain. Keep up that big thinking, boys and girls. I'm listening.

Contact the senior pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Greek & Mediterranean Cuisine
Lunch & Light Dinners
Catering

(541) 485-3391

5TH STREET MARKET
EUGENE, OREGON 97401

We've got sports 24/7
www.dailymerald.com

Pure Soaking Pleasure

Settle in.
The warmth surrounds you.
Look up. The sky greets you.
You're at Onsen.
In one of our 14 private
outdoor hot tubs.
Peace at last.

4 for the price of 2

Save \$8
Reservations recommended



ONSEN

Spa Rentals and Sales

1883 Garden Ave. Eugene
(two blocks North of U of O dorms)

345-9048

Why pay for one dish when you can sample 24 for 1 low price?

Choose from:

Broccoli Beef

Sweet and Sour chicken

Fried Rice

Lo Mein noodles

Orange chicken

Soups

Appetizers and more

GOLDEN CHINA BUFFET

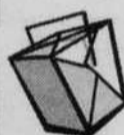
1525 Franklin Blvd.

Eugene, OR 97402

541-343-2828

11:30am-9:00pm Daily

Next to Campus



ALL YOU CAN EAT

(every night \$7.99 includes drink and ice cream)

come eat buffet-style or order to go



24

Szechwan and Mandarin dishes to choose from



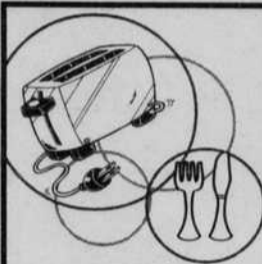
New, one of a kind,
& recycled fashions

Buying hours:
Thursdays by appointment

Dare to be you

Anything but
PLAIN
JANE
CLOTHES

MARKETPLACE WEST • 3045 W. 11th • EUGENE • [541] 684-0585



Need good stuff

CHEAP???

**GENTLY USED
HAS THE SOLUTION**

ASSISTANCE LEAGUE® OF EUGENE THRIFT STORE

"The best kept secret in Eugene!"

EVERYTHING FOR THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Quality used housewares
clothing • books • linens

1149 Willamette

Open Tues. to Sat., 10am to 4pm

Your purchase provides
clothing and dental service to
children of low-income families
in our community.

WOW HALL

Community
Center for the
Performing Arts

8th &
Lincoln

■ Tonight ■

Dick Dale

Courtesy Clerks

The Danged

King of the Surf Guitar
\$12 advance, \$14 door, 8:00 pm

■ Wednesday, September 24 ■

Mogwai

Isis

Scottish Post-Rock

\$14 advance, \$16 door, 8:00 pm

■ Thursday, September 25 ■

James McMurtry

Whopner County Country All-Stars

Singer-Songwriter

\$10 advance, \$12 door, 8:00 pm

■ Friday, September 26 ■

KFLY & Hard Times Present:

Rejudikata

Servants of the End

Sik 9

Grynych

Rock

\$7 door, \$4 with Hard Times T-Shirt, 8:00 pm

■ Saturday, September 27 ■

Railroad Earth

The Waybacks

Bluegrass

\$10 advance, \$12 door, 8:00 pm

■ Monday, September 29 ■

Battle Ax Presents:

The Showtyme Don't Stop Tour

Abstract Rude (A.T.U.)

Sunspot Ionz

DJ Drez (Project Blowed)

Sleep & Onry (Ol' Dominion)

Hip Hop

\$13 advance, \$15 door, 9:00 pm

■ Friday, October 3 ■

Rock 'n' Roll Soldiers

The Koozies

Electric Turn To Me

The Empty

Rock

\$5 door, 8:00 pm

All Ages Welcome • 687-2746