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X's 'Los Angeles' is uniquely punk

Members of LA-based X have been defining punk for themselves since 1980

By Aaron Shakra
Pulse Editor

This review will risk making generalizations and raise two critiques of punk music: 1) It isn't particularly melodic and 2) The instrumentation is rather staid.

However, you can't hold any of this against X, one of Los Angeles' seminal punk bands. Enter Ray Manzarek, best known as organist of The Doors, who produced and played on X's 1980 debut album and gave the group the unorthodox kick needed to distinguish itself from the outset.

FORGOTTEN ALBUMS

Given the group's geographical location, it should come as no surprise that the album is called "Los Angeles."

Everyone in the group is talented in their own right; it would be silly to give all the credit to Manzarek. Although, it is often hard to determine this with punk music's emphasis on simple chord progressions. X is configured in the classic power trio formation, with D.J. Bonebrake on drums, John Doe on bass and vocals, and Billy Zoom on guitar. However, the exception to this format is the group's lead singer, Exene Cervenka, whose voice is representative of the band's sound.

Most of the songs are short, but isn't that the essence of a lot of punk? Most amusing is the band's cover of The Doors' "Soul Kitchen," which is at first almost unrecognizable from the original version largely because of the fast-paced tempo. I must have heard the song two or three times before I realized what it was.

"Nausea" is a highlight among nine tracks. The repetition of the lyrics "Nausea / bloody red eyes go to nausea / nausea / bloody red eyes go to sleep" may not look like much in print, but of course, with lyrics, how the words are said often takes on as much importance as what is said. Intention counts.

The 2001 remaster of "Los Angeles" includes five bonus tracks, including a tune called "Adult Books," which proves that the band was more diverse than the "punk" genre label would indicate. Also notable are critic Kristine McKenna's liner notes, which describe the music scene X arose from and provide brief character sketches of the performers.

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Clapton's CD pays homage to legend

'Me and Mr. Johnson' acts as a modern interpretation of a '30s blues artist's music

By Natasha Chilingerian
Pulse Reporter

ERIC CLAPTON, ME AND MR. JOHNSON
Courtesy

Eric Clapton has finally paid tribute to the man he calls "the keystone of his musical foundation." That man is 1930s blues artist Robert Johnson, and in a new album entitled "Me and Mr. Johnson" Clapton pours his creative energy into uniting their souls.

CD REVIEW

Robert Johnson's dark history makes him a worthy blues artist. He spent most of his life searching for his real father and experienced the death of his 16-year-old wife while she was giving birth. The baby did not survive. His life ended tragically when he was poisoned in 1938 by his girlfriend's angry husband. Nevertheless, his music has inspired such musical greats as Clapton, who said that Johnson "was only singing for himself."

Clapton, a guitar genius who has turned out such songs as "I Shot the Sheriff" (originally written by Bob Marley and The Wailers) and "Layla," is a deserving blues player himself. He endured drug and alcohol addiction, a difficult love triangle between late

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