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# Reed's double live release exemplifies musicianship

The Velvet Underground's former frontman proves he belongs among the best with 'Animal Serenade'

By **Ryan Nyburg**  
Senior Pulse Reporter

It's amazing that Lou Reed is not considered one of the great songwriters to come out of the 1960s and 1970s. He writes killer lyrics within a strong personal aesthetic and puts them into songs with strong, moving melodies. Yet despite his power and proficiency, he's often overlooked in favor of more obvious choices, such as Bob Dylan, Neil Young or even David Bowie.

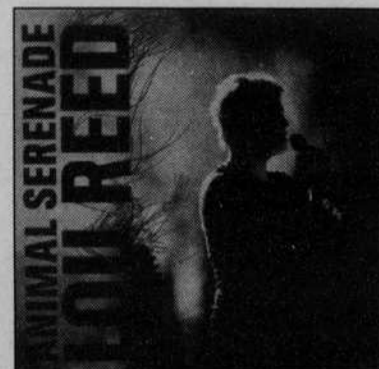
## CD REVIEW

that Reed hasn't done himself.

His new double live album, "Animal Serenade," is the great expression of his songwriting power. Though it pales in comparison to some of his better studio work, the performance shows an artist in constant forward motion, always reworking old ideas while trying out new ones. Though he can be accused of many things, complacency isn't one of them.

The album opens with the instantly recognizable opening chords of "Sweet Jane," which suddenly comes to a stop when the audience begins to applaud. It turns out to be a joke on Reed's part, and he tells the audience that he "would explain to you how you make a career out of three chords."

The album really begins a couple of songs later with "Men of Good Fortune," a song from Reed's criminally underrated "Berlin" album. It's a moving meditation on class distinctions that is able to avoid the pitfalls of elitism and hypocrisy. The song sets the tone for the rest of the album: cool, mellow, almost funereal in tone, like a eulogy that describes the good times a person had while reflecting on the loss.



Courtesy

Lou Reed's new double live album, "Animal Serenade," isn't his best release but is still a good listen with mellow material.

The next great track on the album is "Ecstasy," one of Reed's best songs and one that typifies most of his work. It's incredibly cool, juxtaposing the melodic and the noisy but preferring the former. You can tell that this is a song written by the man who made wearing sunglasses in the middle of the night seem acceptable.

"Street Hassle" typifies another kind of Reed's songs, the sort that depend heavily on monotonous arrangement. Playing around with monotony is a dangerous thing for

any composer to do, because there is the risk of boring the audience. But here is where Reed's lyrical powers come into play. His grimy narratives of New York City street life draw people in, while the grinding guitars and cellos sound like the noise of the city.

The first disc ends with the first Velvet Underground song of the performance, "Venus in Furs." Though it's missing John Cale's electric viola, which gave the original its punch, this version works on its own as a more atmospheric piece. The second disc contains four more songs from Reed's work with the VU, ranging from the pastoral "Sunday Morning" to the pulsating "Heroin," which is probably the best expression of junkie nihilism. How can you beat lines like "I'm as good as dead / Thank God I'm not aware / Thank God I just don't care"?

For all its better qualities, the album is not without faults, particularly in Reed's over-dependence on ballads. While there is nothing inherently wrong with ballads, and Reed writes some of the best, they don't hold much interest for the six to eight minutes Reed and his band stretches them out to. Also, since many of these songs have been recorded before, and in better versions, the album doesn't feel terribly essential.

But then again, bad Lou Reed is twice as good as most of the acts performing today. And for anyone who is a fan of his work, or who is looking for an introduction to it, "Animal Serenade" is definitely a worthwhile performance.

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at [ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com](mailto:ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com).

# Music and Dance

UO School of Music & Department of Dance

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For more information on School of Music events, call 346-5678.

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UO Dance Department 8 p.m., Dougherty Theatre  
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- Fri. 5/14 OREGON JAZZ ENSEMBLE + LAB BANDS**  
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# Mirah's third album offers miraculous, unified sound

'C'mon Miracle' exhibits powerful instrumentation and divine, intimate lyrics

By **Aaron Shakra**  
Pulse Editor

Mirah's latest album, "C'mon Miracle," is her most satisfying work to date. This record is not a statement of quality, but rather consistency. Her music has been beautiful from the start, but on this release, her sound has been refined to the point where it can rightfully be called divine.

## CD REVIEW

For the uninitiated, this release is the musician's third album, following 2000's "You Think It's Like This But Really It's Like This" and 2002's "Advisory Committee." Listeners might be tempted to call her a singer-songwriter, but her albums represent more than typical folksy pop songs, in large part due to Mirah's strong musical relationship with collaborator Phil Elvrum.

Yet whereas Mirah and Elvrum's techniques brought together numerous, often disparate styles on her first two releases, the 11 tracks of "C'mon Miracle" are more cohesive, and don't sacrifice any of the musical diversity and unique production values.

The first track, "Nobody Has to Stay," serves up a melancholic string section to the haunting delivery of the lyrics, "Rest up in the gentle sway / Sister make a flower place / The mother father brother greys / Of river stones to keep her safe." The result is lithe and dreamy.



Courtesy

Mirah will play with Liabird and Tara Jane O'Neill at WOW Hall next Wednesday.

The instrumentation gives the album its atmosphere, as with the auto-harp on "We're Both So Sorry." The indie rock sound from previous albums is still intact, especially in "Jerusalem" and "The Light."

Still, Mirah's guitar shines through when it must; the power of her playing lies not in technical prowess, but in the connection to her lyrics. The music is unquestionably inseparable

from the lyrics. In "Don't Die In Me," the singer tackles both personal and physical geographies, waxing, "The mighty continents divide / for a second time in all history / they found themselves just floating free / from all responsibility / without the weight of being whole / some fruits evolved all on their own." The lyrics alternate and fall into groovy, minimal percussive solos.

"The Dogs of B.A." is a sunnier tune, almost samba-like, decked out with accordion and repetitive, alternating guitar lines, while remaining minimal. Lyrics are appropriately breezy: "The dogs of Buenos Aires / they will take you from your sleep / between the firecrackers cackling and the taxis in the street / and if you wake up lonely better throw some shoes on those feet / to keep the heartbreak from taking your life."

Let it be known there are few contemporary performers as special as this one. Her words are intimate, beautiful and honest. These are undeniably qualities.

Mirah plays WOW Hall on Wednesday, May 12, with Liabird (Themba Lewis of the group contributed to "C'mon Miracle") and Tara Jane O'Neill. Tickets are \$8; doors open at 8 p.m.; showtime is 8:30. WOW Hall is located at 291 W. 8th Ave.

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