

Gallo's expertise evident in 2001's 'When' recording

The artist better known for acting and filmmaking combines girlish vocals with retro sound on 'When'

By Helen Schumacher
Pulse Columnist

Vincent Gallo's "When" is an album with a sound that is very much a product of the materials with which it was made. A self-described hustler, yet best known as an actor and filmmaker, Gallo also is an obsessive collector of antique and primitive recording tools and, as this album proves, a master at manipulating those tools to create a warm and grainy aesthetic.

The album was recorded at Gallo's The University for the Development and Theory of Magnetic Tape Recorded Music Studios and released in 2001 by Warp Records, a label whose roster reads like a who's who of electronic music and includes Aphex Twin, Squarepusher and Prefuse 73. Like his labelmates, Gallo relies heavily on technology (or in this case anti-technology) to shape the music's sound. The sound, when combined with his feminine vocals, brings to mind a 1970s 8mm movie of a lonely Los

Angeles afternoon, one in which the colors of the scenery are faded by the smog and sunlight.

On the first track — titled with the brilliantly pretentious "I Wrote This Song for the Girl Paris Hilton" and written years before any home sex videos and Fox reality shows — a slow jazz beat oozes through the speakers with a drowsy swagger, setting the mood for the rest of the album.

Every song conveys a similar theme and tone, and there is no emotional rise and fall, but each escapes being repetitive. The album's title track is characterized by Gallo singing a cascade of dooo-do do-do do-dos that seem to belong to a heartbroken woman. On "Honey Bunny" he sings "Honey bunny, my baby girlfriend / sweetheart, my sugar girlfriend ... Oh darling, you're my darling" and makes it sound depressing and beautiful rather than sappy and vomit-inducing.

There is a reason for the cult following of Gallo's work. This record, like the movie "Buffalo '66," demonstrates that he's in top form when in control of every aspect of a project. Both show a man with clearly defined artistic sensibilities and an understanding of the importance of fine details. This album is a well-guided trip into Gallo's dreamy vision.

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FORGOTTEN ALBUMS

PULSE BRIEF

Students to give poetry reading Tuesday

Eleven University students will read their works of poetry in the EMU Amphitheater on Tuesday. "The reading is for the sake of

the language, poetry and art itself," said student George Vidas, one of the event's organizers.

The event, which is officially titled "Articulate Orgasm", begins at 2 p.m. regardless of weather, and will go "until death," Vidas said.

Free bagels will be provided.

— Aaron Shakra

Style, form exploration feed short story's soul

The short story is an interesting stylistic form. Anyone who has taken a high school or college creative writing course has dabbled in it, yet it has never really gained the prominence afforded to longer works. It just sits in a modern literary gutter of obscure publications and cheap anthologies, passing drinks back and forth with that other downtrodden style, poetry.

But unlike poetry, short stories have been down so long that it's probably starting to look like up (to paraphrase one of my favorite poets). Can you name five people off the top of your head that have become famous for short stories alone? I can get to about three before my brain peters out and I begin to scramble (can Raymond Carver really be considered famous?).

Short stories have been a hobby/obsession/lifestyle of mine for quite some time now. In my youth I imagined turning these pieces into longer works, the old Great American Novel dream. Now I just enjoy the simple pleasures of short-and-to-the-point — or pointless, as the case may be. Many a night have I spent in my secluded workspace, staring blankly at a screen and deciding on whether or not a sentence would end better with "duplicious" or "hypocritical." Many an afternoon have I happily wasted scribbling into a notebook at some coffee shop, my hands becoming shaky from the intense caffeine intake, so much so that my usually scrawled handwriting begins to look as if it was written by a hyperactive chimp attempting to transcribe Japanese into Sanskrit.

One good thing about writing in a style that usually gains little public recognition is that no one is paying attention to what you are doing. I know that doesn't sound all that wonderful, but there is a great deal of freedom that comes when no one has any preconceived notions of your work. Provided, the odds of getting published are small (Harvard has a higher



Ryan Nyburg
Budget rack

acceptance rate than most small literary magazines). But these odds are still better than trying to get a novel published, especially if it's one that is hard to categorize.

The key to publishing in magazines is finding a publication that is right for your style of writing. A quick flip through the Novel & Short Story Writer's Market should yield something, as there is a magazine out there for absolutely everything: Horror, fantasy, romance, drama, Icelandic Sheepdogs (no, I'm not kidding), whatever. There are a thousand niches out there; you can certainly be pigeonholed into at least one of them.

Personally, I find that it's best to write in a myriad of styles. This variation gives me a lot of options as far as publications go, and I find that it also satisfies my curious and unfocused mind. I'm interested in writing that messes around with forms and styles. Not just good old-fashioned genre chemistry (it's "Dracula" meets "Finnegans Wake"!), but real mind-bending form twisters. My current favorite is Jorge Luis Borges, the great Argentinean writer. Book reviews for books that didn't exist, mysteries done as metaphysical conundrums and westerns that question the existence of the self; Borges did all that and more. How about a story about an old man who meets a younger version of himself on a park bench? Writers such as Borges just kick my ass every time.

Another favorite right now is "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner,

a story which is told in first person plural. In other words, it is narrated by an entire community. Wrap your brain around that one. Jesus.

Here's another one for you: Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," which is about a man about to be hung from a bridge, thinks he has escaped his executioners and then realizes it is all in his mind just as he is about to die. Sweetness.

It's sad that so many writers today choose the easy way out, writing what is essentially memoir minus the prerogative of truth. A whole world of literary invention is out there ready to be toyed with, yet few people are taking it up. Instead, they write about childhood traumas, relationship difficulties or (and this is the one that bugs me the most) about their adventures abroad. The next time I have to read a story about a sexually abused young man who breaks up with his girlfriend in Prague, I swear I'll start causing some violent trauma of my own.

What's worse is a story that does experiment with form but for no purpose other than to show how clever the author is. This doesn't happen as often, but when it does it can be unbearable. The point is to find some balance between experimentation and substance — between those, the truth lies.

But enough of that. In the end, it all comes down to simply enjoying the act of writing and finding some comfort in storytelling. It really doesn't matter if you get published or not, since you won't really be paid and will only be read by other writers hoping to be published. It helps to view it as a hobby, or maybe just a lifestyle choice. Just remember to keep it to the point.

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

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