

■ Reporter's notebook

Britney Spears' shotgun wedding: is it a publicity ploy?

The pop princess' marriage to Kevin Federline continues a singer-weds-backup dancer trend

BY AMY LICHY
PULSE REPORTER

Supermarket newsstands. TV shows. Newspaper reports. It's hard to avoid the news about Britney Spears getting hitched to fiancé Kevin Federline in a surprise ceremony in Studio City, Sept. 18. What you may not know, however, is who Federline is and how he managed to marry one of pop culture's most famous women.

Federline has one of the most sought-after jobs for anyone wanting to date a famous singer. He's a backup dancer. After incredibly famous women such as Janet Jackson, LeAnne Rimes and Jennifer Lopez married unknown backup dancers, it only seemed natural that Spears would follow the trend. She isn't even the only pop princess to find love grooving behind her. Rival Christina Aguilera dated backup dancer Jorge Santos for two years before breaking it off in 2001. Even Justin Timberlake fell for Jenna Dewan, a backup dancer for *NSYNC, shortly after his breakup with Spears.

But Federline isn't Spears' first taste of backup dancer love. Her

messy 2002 breakup from Timberlake was sparked by rumors that she cheated with dancer/choreographer Wade Robson, which is still just speculation. Shortly after, she had a fling with backup dancer Columbus Short. They were spotted making sweet music together for a short time, despite the fact that Short was married and reportedly expecting a child.

Fast forward to April 2004. Four months after her infamous Las Vegas nuptials to childhood friend Jason Alexander, Spears and Federline made their first public appearance at a beach in LA's Pacific Palisades area. No one knew at the time who Federline was, but that changed quickly as his history was plastered all over the pages of *Us Weekly* and *People* magazines — including the fact that he had a pregnant girlfriend at the time, who he had a two-year-old child with. Regardless, the relationship blossomed and turned into an engagement this July.

But with all the hoopla, reports are surfacing that this marriage was a hoax. According to *Us Weekly*, this "wedding" was a fake, partially

because the two "newlyweds" couldn't come to an agreement on the prenuptial details. They say they hold a document that states: "Britney Spears and Kevin Federline... agree that they intend to participate in a 'faux' wedding on September 18, 2004; however, they do not intend to and shall not validly marry one another on said date."

People magazine, however, got the exclusive on both the engagement and the wedding, and they stick by the story that this is the real deal. Federline even told *People*: "Basically, those reports that we didn't legally wed are bullshit."

Spears added: "I'm really upset that somebody someplace decides to write a false headline about a special day that I've dreamed about since I was a little girl. It's too bad. I don't understand the thinking behind it."

Why would Spears fake her own wedding anyway? Well, there are circumstances that could possibly indicate this was a publicity stunt. It just so happened that's Spears' newest single, "My Perogative," a cover of the song Bobby Brown made famous in 1988, recently hit the radio. Even more suspicious is that the video for the song, which shows

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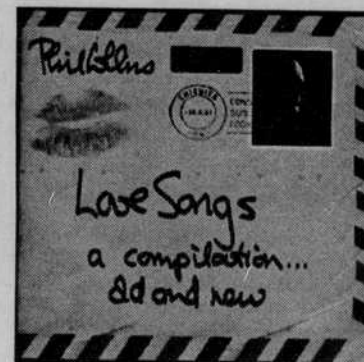
Sound: Collins, Louque pale in comparison to Green Day

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opera" and "perfect pop-punk record" used to describe "American Idiot," but considering what is a steady decline in quality since the release of its breakthrough album, "Dookie," this seemed impossible. Besides, "Idiot" is about as novel as a pop-punk band can get.

Teetering skillfully on the brink of overproduction, "Idiot" doesn't so much depart from the pop-punk formula as much as create a pastiche of influences using the formula as a framework. The album kicks off with the unapologetically Costello-esque title track, followed by "Jesus of Suburbia," the first of two tracks that belie an affinity for the rock-operas of Pete Townshend. At about nine minutes apiece, these five-part ditties can be considered nothing less than epic when stacked up against the average four-chord fare of Green Day's peers. From there, the album goes on to deliver an intelligent but undeniably pop-sensible selection, occasionally flirting with the street-punk sound of Green Day's youth, with more than a nod and a wink to The Clash, The Kinks, Husker Du and even Meatloaf along the way.

The most notable aspect of this album is that each song possesses its own personality, yet contributes to the whole, which is the mark of a classic. Even lyrically, this album is difficult to criticize. While the title suggests that the listener is about to be subjected to yet another barrage



COURTESY

Singer Phil Collins scrapes the barrel with "Love Songs," his newest album.

of rehearsed, anti-Bush rhetoric, vocalist Billy Joe Armstrong manages to deliver a fairly personalized impression of the post-9/11 paranoia and hysteria, complete with character portraits and a semi-coherent plot line. Fans expecting more of the same will be disappointed, and that's why this album is good.

Last, and least, is Louque's album, "So Long," yet another mediocre turd in the seemingly endless torrent of fecal matter released by Lava Records. If this band were even slightly memorable, it would matter that its name is impossible to pronounce, but don't worry because you'll never have any reason to talk about them. Imagine a bland Jack Johnson with electric drums, and your expectations are already way too high.

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