

■ CD review

New pop music releases meet, sometimes exceed standards

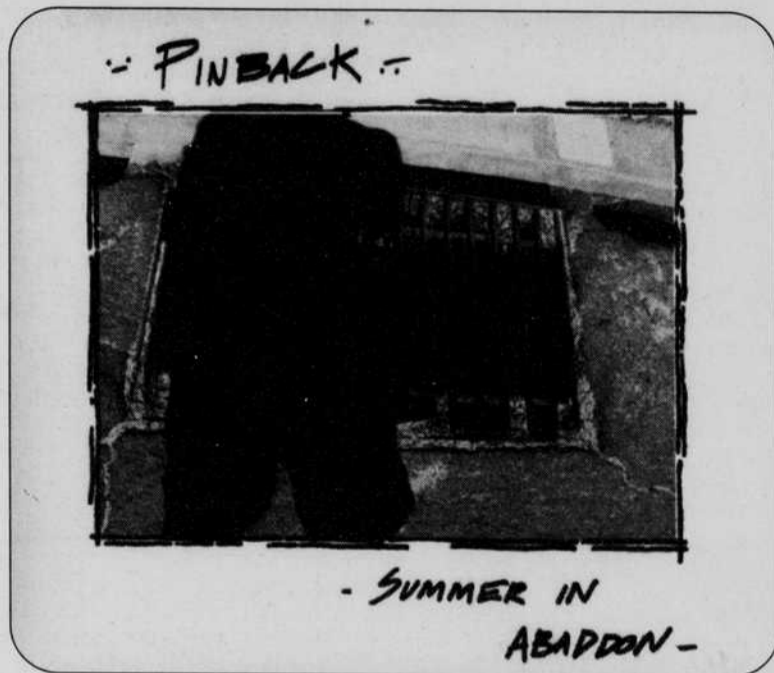
While Ditty Bops deliver a varied musical vision, Brennan lacks creativity

BY RYAN NYBURG
PULSE EDITOR

Ah, the euphonic sounds of unabashed pop music. It often gets a bad name from certain quarters, those that equate pop with mass-market corpo-trash not worth the silicone it and its singers are created from. To these people I say "phshaw." Just as I believe there should be heavy doses of grinding, aggravating noise available for consumer purchase, I think the balance should be maintained through the sugar-sweet melodies of cheery pop. That said, there should be standards.

And the latest release from Pinback, "Summer in Abaddon," meets those standards by crafting cool, moody, intelligent pop songs through intricate vocals and instrumental arrangements. Everything about this release is a testament to the power of good arrangements and production values in creating great songs. Everything here is intricately arranged and has been formed into compositions bordering on small-band architecture.

The album is not without its faults. The band seems to have found a specific sound they like and they stick to it throughout the entire album. Hardly anything rises above mid-tempo and many of the songs fail to distinguish themselves in any relevant way. A little more eclecticism would have led to an overall better effort, but why look a gived horse in the mouth? Overall, this is



COURTESY

Pinback offers intricate pop music with intelligent lyrics and a dazzling production.

another excellent release from Touch and Go Records.

The latest from Keven Brennan, "God is a Mighty Gourd," comes to pop music from a different angle — that of a deconstructionist. (I'm thinking of going for the academic triple crown and mentioning post-modernism and Foucault before this article is over.) In an attempt to meld jazz, funk, R&B and hip-hop with an avant-garde compositional structures and surrealist lyrics, Brennan has created a unique musical vision. Of course this doesn't translate into an interesting album.

Brennan suffers from a simple lack of creativity. He obviously knows

what he wants to do, it's just that what he wants to do is boring and trite. His lyrics flip between self-conscious surrealism and rote love lyrics, his vocals sound like Leonard Cohen without the poetry and his arrangements often stretch a minute or two longer than anyone else would consider necessary.

Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart stand out as influences, but Brennan lacks Zappa's humor, Beefheart's drive and either one's musical ability. He works with a couple of good backing bands and occasionally their talent makes up

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IN BRIEF

Royalty attends premiere

LONDON — It was more regal than most movie premieres — two dames and the queen were in attendance at a showing of "Ladies in Lavender" in Leicester Square.

Dame Judi Dench and Dame Maggie Smith, both 69 and co-stars of the film, were given second

billing Monday as Queen Elizabeth II was the guest of honor.

Proceeds from the event went to the Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund, of which the queen has been patron for 52 years.

Dench and Smith, who have previously appeared together in "A Room With a View," portray two spinsters who take in a mysterious young Polish man they find half-drowned on a beach.

— The Associated Press



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