

# Nyburg: Noam Chomsky doesn't exude sex appeal

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the human inner life. It's not just religion that they talk about, but also politics, which is another topic that apparently actors and musicians seem to be well-informed about. Every election cycle we have to suffer through egotistical dickheads such as Sean Penn blabbering about their latest views on the American government. Celebrities are invited to speak at rallies and splatter their opinions all across the media landscape, doing nothing but dumb down the general tone of debate. Just once I would like to have every political party invite

serious, thoughtful political commentators to come and give calm, informative speeches about the merits of whatever side they're on. But that won't happen because Noam Chomsky's ass doesn't move like Jennifer Aniston's (well, I suppose we can be grateful for that).

Alright, time to calm down. Have a seat, drink some chai tea and take a deep breath. It might be good to get out of here in a few weeks. Maybe I'll live longer once I can get my blood pressure back down.

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## CD review

# Girlyman can't dodge the 'Punches' from superior album

World Leader Pretend proves its ability to construct pop music on its sophomore album, while "Little Star" crashes

BY RYAN NYBURG  
PULSE EDITOR

The difference between good songwriting and bad songwriting is a fine one. Something either works or it doesn't; there is very little middle ground.

On one end of the scale is the latest from Girlyman, "Little Star," an album by a group that apparently wants to be the next Nickel Creek. That's a pretty low standard, and the fact that they don't meet it should give you an idea of the depths of mediocrity this band has reached.

Playing a simple form of folk

adorned with some mildly creative instrumentation, the band sings songs about relationships, 1950s television stars, politics and other topics that should be interesting but end up sounding banal in the hands of this boring group of people.

The lyrics are often creative and pleasant enough, which is a shame because they are sung in dull, even tones with flat melodies that rarely evoke any sense of passion or joy. That the group rotates lead vocal duties between three singers but still can't strike an interesting note speaks to some fatal flaw in the construction of its music. Nothing is sung with any immediacy and no

more painful to sit through. It's a boring album by a group that should probably expand its range a little before its next outing.

Now for something that works: The New Orleans-based band World Leader Pretend traffics in an ornate, meticulously constructed style of pop music that is both immediately catchy while also being deeply layered. It is fun the first time while also improving with repeat listens. Its sophomore effort, "Punches," is a complex, well-crafted pop album of the type not often seen since the Cure was still the bee's knees among disaffected youths.

No one's going to end up disaffected by this though. Opening with a song that sounds like a remixed track from R.E.M.'s recent catalog (the only time on the album that the band resembles the group from which they drew their name) the band begins layering the music, turning songs that start out simple enough into complex, Brian Wilson-ish pop beasts. New melodies and rhythms are added continuously, causing some songs to be recast in a new light every few seconds.

It's a lot to absorb in a single sitting, but every listen reveals something new. This gives the album a shelf-life only the greats can accomplish. The music also avoids the clichés and easy nostalgia of some modern pop music, remaining original and inventive on its own terms. Great album. Go buy it.

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## IN BRIEF

### Hollywood meets its box office match in Hong Kong

HONG KONG —Darth Vader, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are feeling the heat at the box office from an unusual rival: a movie based on a Japanese comic book, directed by Hong Kongers and starring a Taiwanese pop star making his debut in the movies.

"Initial D," the story of a young street car racer, has stunned "Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith" and the action thriller "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," starring Jolie and Pitt, at the Hong Kong box office.

The movie grossed \$3.6 million over 10 days. By comparison, the latest Star Wars installment has made just \$2.4 million over 46 days. "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" fared better, earning \$2.8 million in 25 days.

"Initial D," filmed in Japan, is a

testament to the far reach of Japanese popular culture and marks a unique cultural cross-pollination. Some of the Chinese entertainment industry's top creative talent teamed up to bring the work of Japanese comic artist Shuichi Shigeno to life.

At the helm are Andrew Lau and Alan Mak — the directing duo behind the acclaimed Hong Kong police thriller "Infernal Affairs," which is being remade into a Hollywood film directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Leading the cast is Asian pop sensation Jay Chou, a singer-songwriter and one of Chinese-language music industry's biggest names.

Rounding out the cast are veteran Hong Kong actor Anthony Wong, local heartthrobs Edison Chen and Shawn Yue and singers Jordan Chan and Kenny Bee. Japanese actress Anne Suzuki plays Fujiwara's classmate and love interest, Natsuki Mogi.

—The Associated Press

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