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Tenth Season
1989-90

THE PORTLAND GAY MEN'S CHORUS

David York, Conductor

OLD FRIENDS NEW FRIENDS

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Short-haired gals and more

Baring soul, heart and not a few frayed nerves . . .

BY DR. TANTALUS

It's been two years since "old baldy" released her last record and played at Starry Night in downtown Portland. With a new haircut (a fuzztop) and a new record, *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, Sinead O'Connor is back to cut another swath through the land of rock 'n' roll.

When Sinead (still pronounced Shin-ade) first appeared on the pop horizon a couple of years ago, there were some who grumbled that her shaven pate was a mere attention grabber, another gimmick meant to pave the way to

album with "Feel So Different" and continues with "Black Boys On Mopeds," a scathing indictment of Thatcherite England: "England's not the mythical land of Madame George and roses/ It's the home of police who kill black boys on mopeds." Her artistry allows her to convey such sentiments, not with rancor, but only sadness, as if she's been chosen to tell this unfortunate tale so that others need not.

Among the many highlights of the album is her version of Prince's "Nothing Compares 2 U." Stripped to its essentials by her bare bones performance, the song conjures up an affection for a former lover, at once sad and heavy with the knowledge that it can never be. For once, the video of this song adds to its emotional weight by focusing intently on her face and eyes.

Those who heard O'Connor's first album may be surprised to find how different this one really feels. Gone are the excesses that made the first record a joy and a distraction. In their place are solid works of art, well-crafted and well-performed.

Another short-haired gal (no, not K.D. Lang) releasing a new album is Michelle Shocked, the folkie who is so PC that it's almost a crime. On *Captain Swing* she adds depth to her basic sound by including horns and percussion to achieve a slightly different mood and more of a rollicky feel to the music. The result is at least as consistent as her last effort, which is goo, but it breaks no new ground and places "Our Lady of the Immaculate Perceptions" back onto square one.

Another artist mining the same vein is England's Nick Lowe, who for the past fifteen years has been cranking out "pub-rock" with the best of them. With *Party of One*, Lowe reunites with former bandmate Dave Edmunds to recreate the style he either loves or can't leave.

It's an engaging style, especially when he scores a direct hit with "All Men Are Liars," where both lyrics and music soar. "Liars"

condemns the other members of his sex as knaves incapable of telling the truth in matters of love. He effectively parodies Rick Astley (rhymes with ghastly) and other teen idols portraying endless fidelity and honesty.

Another felicitous combination of words, rhythm and melody is "Refrigerator White," in which Lowe attempts to thaw his date. However, some songs simply churn in place. Worse yet, other tunes ("Rocky Road") use borrowed riffs and music with the intelligence quotient of cotton candy. Dr. Tantalus suspects that Nick is simply borrowing from himself, which only goes to show you how long Lowe has worked in the same narrow genre.

Nurse Consuelo has been getting her kicks this year from dance singles rather than entire records. She insists that the Doctor give the B-52's "Roam" honorable mention, finding the longer version to that found on the album. When reminded by her surgical partner that "Love Shack" was a better tune, she simply smiled, agreed, and kept on dancing.

Another of her favorites is Electronic's "Getting Away With It..." Performed by members of the Pet Shop Boys, New Order and The Smiths, the song is a good display of clever hooks and good decent lyrics. The style is still derivative Pet Shop Boys, however, and Nurse Consuelo thinks Neil Tennant is trying too hard to write hits. It's a nit-picking comment, but when she's right, she's right.

Finally, our favorite missionary to the musically impaired, Nurse Consuelo, has confessed that she harbors a Madonna fixation. This is equivalent to the Joy of Cooking kitchen admitting that it gets its recipes from fast food chains. Yet her itch was recently scratched by the release of "Vogue," the perfect vehicle for self-conscious posing. Fortunately, Madonna is able to work past her hype to deliver the goods when the beat's on the line. "Vogue" manages to convey its simple message (it's fun to lose yourself in the dance) in a sophisticated way, which is about all you can expect from the dance scene anyway.

Be it for quality or fun, and the two are not mutually exclusive, it's time to stop reading the column and pump up the jam. ▼

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