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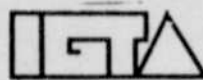
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Is Ethel Merman far behind?

*Judy Garland's music is out in a new collection and the
"mope-rock" kings have a new release*

by Dr. Tantalus

OK, everybody. It's lesbian and gay pride month, and not a moment too soon to bring your Cary Grant impersonation out of the closet and blast off into the Judy Garland zone. So all together now: "Judy! Judy! Judy!"

Unlike our rival River City reviewers, *Just Out* doesn't attract a ton of freebies, so the receipt of some selections from a relatively new Judy Garland box set put our heads into quite a spin. So, thank you, Capitol Records. Now that the thanks are out of the way, let's talk some dirt.

It seems clear to us that somebody at Capitol Records is operating under some pretty stereotypical assumptions about what gay and lesbian audiences want to listen to. No doubt they call this "target marketing" or something equally nonoffensive and implausible.

Well, we are here to remind you that our collections are filled with more than Barbara Streisand, Judy Garland, Holly Near, Ethel Merman, Liberace, the Weather Girls, the Pet Shop Boys and the Village People.

Which brings us back around to Ms. Garland. Because she is such a well-known commodity, reviewing her music is a little bit like reviewing Christmas: you all know what to expect. Is there anyone out there who doesn't know what she sounds like? Is there anyone who doesn't know the take of tragedy: the grand successes; the failed marriages; the overdose of drugs *before* it became a popular sport?

The selections we received came from a box set that contains live concert recordings, previously unreleased material and the obligatory introduction by daughter Liza Minelli. Fans will probably be enamored of this collection, but others might consider whether they need this much Judy Garland in their life to make them happy.

As often happens with boxed sets, the result is a rather mixed bag. Judy had a great voice, and her recordings of national standards like "Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody," "That's Entertainment," and (of course) "Over the Rainbow" are classics of that show-biz genre. They are certainly superior to her previously-released duet with Liza of "Don't Rain on My Parade" (ouch!) and even Pavarotti couldn't help her through "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," although it might be fun to hear him try. Lord knows they are superior to anything Liza has done in the last decade.

Just as fun, and much less stereotypical, is the latest recording by the Cure, the so-called "mope-rock" kings of the modern age. While musically they are several light years away from Ms. Garland, they emit a similar sad aura. Thus it is not surprising that they chose to quote Shelly on their liner notes ("Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught/Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought...")

In their previous recording, *Disintegration*, singer-songwriter Robert Smith compressed his considerable angst into songs of indescribably sadness. Their latest release, *Wish*, finds them somewhat less mournful and perched halfway between *Disintegration* and its predecessor, the prop-oriented *Kiss Me! Kiss Me! Kiss Me!*

From a point-headed intellectual viewpoint



MUSIC

(Nurse Consuelo's specialty) the Cure's music is attractive because no one else seems to be working the same musical territory, an aural landscape that has been painstakingly developed over the past 14 years. The Cure, like many rock bands, rely heavily on guitar, bass and synthesizer, but unlike many minimalist groups, they know how to create a big sound from the few instruments available.

Their trademark style is one of carefully structured and elaborately produced layers of sound, placed on top of one another until each song is awash with a multiplicity of competing and complimentary waves of music. At their best, the Cure are able to create their own musical universe, consistent within itself, which draws the listener inevitably inward.

Robert Smith's voice, which might charitably be described as heartfelt, and often as tortured, adds to the musical mix. But don't be fooled by this description: Smith is no dog howling at the moon. His over-the-top singing is the epitome of rock: deliberately defiant, it packs an emotional wallop that others would surely envy. In fact it's hard to imagine that a "regular" singer could even perform with the rest of the group.

Despite Smith's acknowledgment of his hangups, fears and excesses, there is never a hint that he has given up trying to find his way. There is no sense that he has lost his feeling of self-worth, only that he recognizes his limitations and struggles against them. The saddest songs may indeed be the sweetest, but Smith uses them in order to purge his demons.

We don't mean to make too much of this analogy, but gay pride month is a time when gay and lesbian people are encouraged to fight their own demons, particularly the ones imposed upon them from the outside. They can do so through song, as the Cure tries to do. They can do so by marching and rejecting the stereotypes that the world continues to impose upon them, as Capitol Records occasionally does.

As Andrew Holleran put it in *Dancer from the Dance*, "The point is that we are not doomed because we are homosexual, my dear, we are doomed only if we live in despair because of it...."

New and noted: Those of you who enjoy pianist Jim Blackburn and bassist Duthie, who regularly perform at Hobo's will be glad to know that they have released a tape called *Straight Ahead*. Well-recorded, it contains the standards (Gershwin, etc.) that you expect to hear. Next time you're in their neighborhood, don't forget to ask about it.