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MUSIC

Straight, gay and no way

Morissette unplugs, Cartolari unwinds
 and Cleopatra unleashes pure musical evil

BY KATY DAVIDSON

MTV UNPLUGGED
 Alanis Morissette • Maverick

Why do I love Alanis Morissette? Being the indie rock snob (wink wink) that I am, one might think I'd deem her cheesy, too mainstream, overproduced and annoying.

But I don't. Maybe it's my irrepressible Canadian fixation, but I am continuously captivated by this woman. Morissette's first album, *Jagged Little Pill*, is clearly a firecracker of melody—it produced at least five rocking, well-deserved hit singles—and her 1998 album, *Former Supposed Infatuation Junkie*, holds some true gems as well.

I know Morissette is not queer and a lot of lesbians probably don't care either way, but I'm willing to bet there are a slew of dykes out there who kneel by their beds each night and pray to a pagan goddess that Morissette will someday see the proverbial light at the end of the gay tunnel. (But that's not important, right?! It's the music that matters!)

Anyway, following a somewhat successful '90s trend, Morissette has recently blessed us with an MTV *Unplugged* album. The eponymous television series, which began a few years back, features well-known mainstream acts performing their songs in a stripped-down, acoustic format.

I believe the best *Unplugged* sessions are delivered by artists who regularly use a lot of electronic sounds—it's in this acoustic format that we're able to glean the songs' structures and basic forms. Morissette is an ideal candidate for MTV *Unplugged* because her previously released albums contain a fair share of programmed beats and electric guitars.

On this hour-long disc, Morissette treats us to chilled-out versions of songs from both her albums, as well as a few new songs. The album opens with the familiar feel-good chords of "You Learn," but just when you start singing

along, you discover that tricky ol' Alanis has sneaked in some new falsetto breaks to catch you by surprise.

Next, she moves into a more-cryptic-than-usual version of "Joining You," then eases into a new ballad, "No Pressure Over Cappuccino." Both tracks are emotionally rousing, but they go on a little too long, I fear. (One can be emotionally aroused for only so long.)

Without a doubt, Morissette chooses the best tracks to acoustically represent *Jagged Little Pill*, like "Head Over Feet" and "Irony." The great part is, she changes around her vocal presentation enough to keep you as interested as the first time you heard them.

She closes the disc with "Uninvited," a track she originally contributed to the *City of Angels* soundtrack. This song is possibly the spookiest Top 40 song ever recorded, and the

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 Alanis Morissette

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