

MUSIC

This album morphs the best of two worlds—the musical underground and aboveground—in a swirl of sounds and personalities. Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein lays down a spooky, interesting guitar track on "The Skin," and punk cheerleader Kathleen Hanna rocks out on "Stepping Up to the Mic."

"Hope," the most memorable song on *Featuring...*, stars Lois Maffeo as a sultry slow-jam singer. The melody allows the multitasking Maffeo to explore her range and fluidity while sounding like a Top 40 temptress—yes!

Featuring... is a promising pickup. It's important to remember that behind all these great guest performances is Schuster, a talented artist himself.

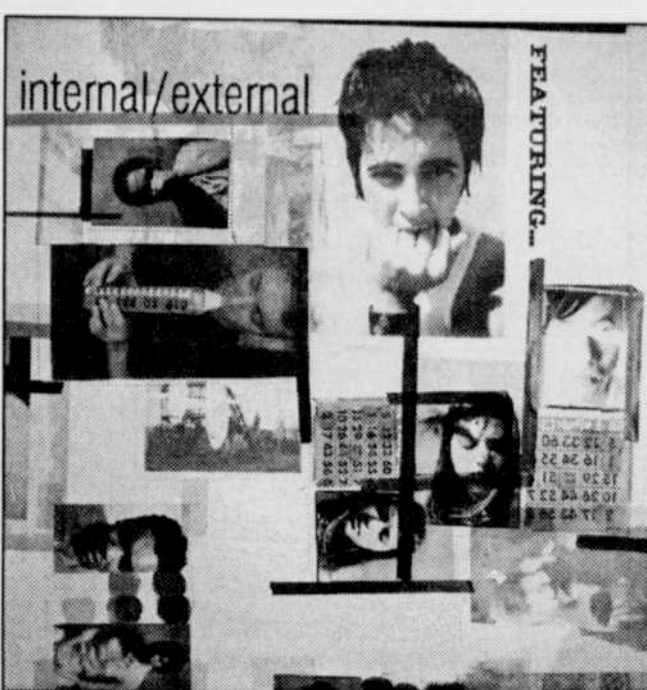
SHE'S SO CONTROL
Sub Debs • K Records

I appreciate what the Sub Debs stand for. To me, their dress and demeanor at a November show indicated a mockery of the mainstream, a denouncement of the classic American pretty girl. That's pretty cool, as far as image goes.

But when it comes to the actual music, I'm picky. There is some inspirational material on the Sub Debs' first record, *She's So Control*, but the majority is sadly tiresome and similar-sounding.

The song "Don't Mess with Us" is actually one of the winners. First it revs up with an ecstatic drumbeat, then cranks into high gear when the guitars crash in. The epitome of revisited '80s pop-punk, the song flows with good energy. "Let's Go" is another great rocker.

These two gems are shadowed, however, by



a forest of duds. Many of the other songs blend together because of their similar tempo and lyrical choices. I think I counted three songs that use the same chord progression.

"Into the Night" is a slower, contemplative breath of fresh air at the end of the CD, but it doesn't redeem the aural displeasure that is the rest of the album.

ISN'T SHE GREAT:
ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK
Burt Bacharach • Decca Records

Picture a tall, gorgeous *Just Out* staff writer. Now picture that same staff writer snoring like a bear. Finally, picture that staff writer snoring like a bear while listening to the soundtrack of the recently released Bette Midler flick *Isn't She Great*. (Excuse me, but isn't the phrase supposed to have a question mark attached to it?)

Burt Bacharach is obviously a well-known, talented guy. I don't mean to slam him by slamming a soundtrack he so carefully composed, but boredom is a difficult mental state to ignore. I'm sure these songs fit well with the plot and atmosphere of the movie, but without the visuals to aid the listening experience, I'm left with a tired look in my eyes and a slowly descending droplet of drool connected to the edge of my lip.

Excluding some fantastic guest appearances by Dionne Warwick and Vanessa Williams, I suggest this soundtrack be called *Isn't This Boring* (without a question mark).

■ KATY DAVIDSON is a nerd, and she doesn't even try to be one.



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