

## MUSIC

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT POSES RUFUS WAINWRIGHT POSES



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# This is no poser

Rufus Wainwright's sophomore album is as original and fresh as his debut BY MICHAEL WAYNE KECK

will transport you to another place. In large part because of Wainwright's hypnotic voice, when he sings you immediately will be drawn in.

Sure, it doesn't hurt that the 26-year-old Canadian hottie is as gay as the sun is bright. There's nothing better for the psyche than knowing the guy serenading you is singing about stuff fags know best: fear of being alone, the loss of a loved one from AIDS, wanting and waiting for our Prince Charming. But beyond the gay factor, Wainwright has the ability to strike a chord of real emotion.

The title track, which was the first to be written, set the tone for *Poses*. "I realized that song would be the anchor; a lot of the album's

material springs from it," Wainwright says.

He adds: "I was writing about things in my life as they were happening, which is why I recorded a lot of the songs pretty soon after they were written. I was tackling more personal subject matter this time."

The catchiest tune on the album is "Cigarettes and Chocolate Milk." It's an upbeat ditty about loving things that are bad for you. Wainwright sings, "Everything it seems I like is a little bit stronger, a little bit thicker, a little bit harmful for me."

"Cigarettes" appears twice on the album. The first version is done in classic Rufus style: textured, complex and filled with that fabulous piano playing he does. (Remember that cool holiday Gap commercial featuring a singer tickling the ivories? That's him!)

The reprise has more of a studio feel with a hip beat laid over it and seems better suited for radio. I think this was a good move on the label's part—whatever it takes to get people to discover this delicious singer.

The one cover on his album, "One Man Guy," was written by another famous Wainwright: his dad, singer-songwriter Loudon III. "When we perform it live, it always brings the house down, so we had to do it for the album," he says. "But I could also just kick myself for including it because I know it will be some people's favorite—and I didn't write it!"

Well, he's right. With just its acoustic guitar and voices, it will be some people's favorite, and it certainly is one of mine.

The first time I heard it (and I know this sounds so "gay"), my heart melted. I felt like he was singing it just for me. His voice has the ability to capture so much sincere emotion, it made my stomach knot up when I heard him croon this beautiful ballad.

So for an upbeat, romantic sound get *Rufus Wainwright*. For heartfelt, gritty emotion listen to *Poses*. But trust me, either way you can't go wrong with this true musical original; he really is a brilliant young artist. **JW**

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT will perform 8 p.m. May 4 at Roseland Grill, 10 N.W. Sixth Ave. Tickets are \$18 through Fastixx.

MICHAEL WAYNE KECK does not consider himself a Rufus groupie. He prefers the term "Band-Aid." E-mail him at michaelwaynekeck@hotmail.com.

come from a generation brainwashed by one-hit wonders like Vanilla Ice, talentless sensations like Mariah Carey and prepackaged bubble gum pop stars like Britney Spears. It's a rare occasion when a singer cracks through the media matrix of publicity and hype and reaches me with nothing other than raw talent.

And folks, let me tell you, singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright has done just that. His abili-

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ty and originality are a refreshing reminder of what great music is all about: heartfelt lyrics, a stellar sound and an amazing voice.

His self-titled 1998 release was a huge critical success. He was named Best New Artist by *Rolling Stone* and was on numerous Top 10 Album of the Year lists including ones in the *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Although I have to admit I only discovered this gem of a CD a few months ago, I can't stop listening to it. His music is like nothing I ever have heard before.

The sound and rhythm initially are a little offbeat and quirky. But combined with lyrics that are simple but painfully real, his songs become somewhat larger than life, grandiose even.

Needless to say, when I found out he had a new CD coming out—*Poses*, due in stores next month—I was giddy at the thought of hearing what he would come up with next. It's been three years since his debut album; would he still have it? The answer, put simply, is yes!

To be honest, at first listen of *Poses*, I was thrown a little off guard. It certainly is a far cry from the romance of *Rufus Wainwright*.

*Poses* comes across as dark and melancholy, not nearly as upbeat as the first album. After a second and third listen, though, I found that the CD stands on its own two feet, without the help of its predecessor's success, as a diverse and original work of art.

Wainwright again has created something that is like nothing I ever have heard before. *Poses* has 11 new songs and one cover that



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