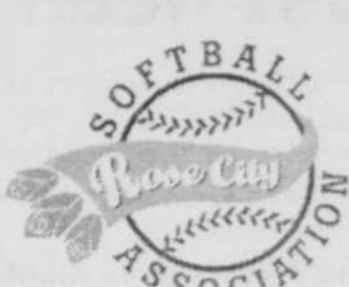


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NOW PLAYING
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MUSIC

The colors of queer music

Pink outshines Gold, and Ani just goes bleak

TRY THIS
Pink • La Face

Pink likes to try (on) whatever she damn well pleases, so on her latest album, *Try This*, she has changed course again with a style all fishnets and leather.

Still in part crowd-pleasing material, it's rougher than her previous R & B-infused pop-rock disc, *M!ssundaztood*, and less compromising than its lackadaisical commercial predecessor, *Can't Take Me Home*.

The new Pink has pushed the personal envelope, uncovering her inner punk, edgy spunk and raucous rocker ways: "To me, it's just about alchemy, turning shit into gold, using what you have and doing the best you can with it," she croons.

Initially, Pink created three songs leaning on former collaborating habits with self-proclaimed "safe place" (and dyke songwriting superstar) Linda Perry. Fortunately, she also ended up on tour with Rancid's front singer, Tim Armstrong, with whom 10 pop-punk/pop-rock songs emerged one short week later.

So, with its brand new attire, *Try This* is a lot less revealing, soul searching or emotive for the free-spirited artist. ("Pink won't be yapping about her problems," notes Perry.) Most cuts are rowdy, outgoing, party-loving or raging mad, as shown in the perfect kickoff song, "Trouble": "If you see me coming down the street then you know it's time to go" or in the hard-hitting "Last to Know": "Fuck for parts, that's just not how I roll, move it on down the road."

Try This also has Pink's first love song and her not-to-be-missed sexy duet with controversial queer rapper Peaches. It is one of the album's best tracks, appropriately titled "Oh My God."

Pink's opinion of Peaches is not surprising and clear as a bell: "She's hot and raunchy, and I like her a lot." I wonder when she'll follow her lead and come out?

—Els Debbaut

SPACE UNDER SUN
Ari Gold • Gold 18 Records

There's something disconcertingly contemporary-Christian about gay R & B singer Ari Gold's new disc,

Space Under Sun. Gold is no fundamentalist, but his evident sonic aspiration is precisely that of "Christian rock"—to mimic contemporary Top 40 music while interjecting his own identity (urban, Jewish, gay). Gold's twists include lyrics about having sex with other guys in public ("Caught"), bantering with a girlfriend about an object of desire's orientation ("He's on My Team") and unironic Madonna worship ("Fan-Tastic").

The songs' themes are actually more intriguing than their rather one-dimensional, standard-issue, plastic-bombastic execution. The vocoders and synth squiggles on the title track echo Kraftwerk's "Spacelab," and that's



about it for anything sonically adventurous or witty.

Gold has a strong, beautiful voice, which he dutifully, "professionally" whips into the syllable-elongating hysteria that apparently signifies musical emotion these days. He could be sucking up to the *American Idol* judges, which is the last thing pop music, gay or straight, needs more of.

The queer audience, as much as any pop-culture-consuming demographic, deserves to be demanding—to expect something interesting, unique,

affecting, even life-changing, not just slavish photocopies of the same homogenized thing. It would seem that queer artists are in a singular position to re-create pop culture into something fresh, smart, lively and provocative, but *Space Under Sun* doesn't even try.

—Christopher McQuain

EDUCATED GUESS

Ani DiFranco • Righteous Babe

Ani goes solo all the way. No longer with her husband or her accompanying band, Ani DiFranco's latest is, much like her second album, *Not So Soft*, stripped down completely.



Out come guitar and the folk singer's powerful voice, providing all lead and backing vocals. This self-proclaimed "all powerful amazon warrior" takes her words to heart, composing every song, playing every instrument.

And, for the first time, the self-sufficient diva takes on all mixing and producing. The minimalist *Educated Guess* was recorded at DiFranco's own home on a reel-to-reel, and sounds of raindrops and passing trains were left as they naturally occurred.

Educated Guess is a delectable package of self-imposed simplicity. It's a potent formula of basics meant to direct focus on the artist's genuine words, which reveal painful statements about love gone wrong and democracy gone imperialist.

In the poem "Grand Canyon," the slam-poet-at-heart redefines patriotism in a less myopic way ("Why can't all decent men and women call themselves feminists? Out of respect for those who fought for this") and in "Animal," she means the cultural ignorance of the American collective soul ("Cuz I know when you grow up surrounded by willful ignorance you learn that mercy has its own country and that it is borderless").

The all-inspiring outreach and the new uncomplicated modus operandi are where this album succeeds unquestionably. Unfortunately, after the last song is past, it's hard not to feel cheated out of the familiar energy kick. The legendary zealous Ani audience is used to more crowd-charming entertainment, more dynamite, more chutzpah.

To make up for the bleak palette of movement on *Educated Guess*, the little folk singer needs to be experienced on stage instead. So if you want to be moved, get reeled in real life. It's the perfect cure for the "is this it" sentiment the album leaves behind.

—ED J