

MUSIC

Off Broadway

Delaria delights, Disney (and Lloyd Webber) bites

Double Standards

Lea Delaria • Telarc

When you think of Lea Delaria, the foul-mouthed lesbian comedian, you probably don't think subtle chanteuse. Yet her latest album, *Double Standards*, conjures up images of smoky nightclubs filled with hipster patrons and sultry sirens.

On Delaria's previous album, *Play It Cool*, she reinterpreted Broadway fare with a jazz flair. Now she turns her sights to pop and rock, infecting songs by Patti Smith, the Pretenders and even Jane's Addiction with a silky sound that is reminiscent of Peggy Lee.

With Delaria, Blondie's "Call Me" becomes a slinky '60s ballad (think Eartha Kitt) and No Doubt's "Just a Girl" becomes a peppy, upbeat swing number that would have been perfect for Ella Fitzgerald (Delaria is a terrific scat singer). Best of all is her tender rendition of Neil Young's haunting "Philadelphia" from the seminal Tom Hanks film.

Delaria is accompanied by a first-rate ensemble including pianist Gil Goldstein (who also arranged 10 of the 11 songs) and bassist Christian McBride, executive director of the Jazz Museum in Harlem and a protégé of legendary jazzman Wynton Marsalis.

With *Double Standards*, Delaria has clearly expanded her appeal beyond the Broadway crowd.



On the Record

Various Artists • Disney

Disney is a company that's as well known for marketing savvy as it is for creative ingenuity. Its latest theatrical venture, *On the Record*, hasn't come to Portland yet and, with luck, won't.

A smorgasbord of more than 60 tunes, *On the Record* takes place in a recording studio where a group of performers and musicians come together to record songs from 75 years of Disney films beginning with

Mickey Mouse's earliest black-and-white animated shorts from the 1920s. Selections are also included from live-action films, television shows, park attractions and stage productions.

The songs are chirped by eight capable but bland voices, the kind you normally encounter on a cruise ship or at a Disney theme park. (Imagine a grown-up version of the Mickey Mouse Club where the principals sing with the soulless conviction of Miss America contestants.)



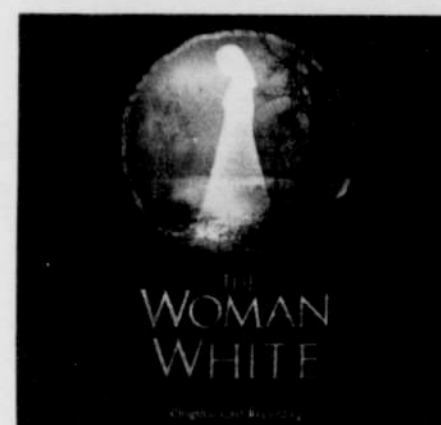
It remains to be seen whether the slight premise is enough to build an entire evening around. As for the recording, if you find the animatrons of "It's a Small World" adorable, then you'll probably enjoy *On the Record*. But if you're like me and find Disney Cute cloying, then this mishmash of slickly packaged and sickly sweet sounds will send you flying for the pause button. On the other hand, now I don't have to shop for my 4-year-old goddaughter's next birthday present.

The Woman in White

Andrew Lloyd Webber • EMI

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Woman in White* is a pedestrian piece of overwrought drivel that spends more time paying homage to the composer than expressing any new musical ideas, thoughts or emotions.

The Woman in White is "freely adapted" from Wilkie Collins' Victorian novel of the same name. I haven't read it, and after listening to the newly released discs (which were recorded live on opening night in London), I have no desire to. The slim plot concerns Laura, who has been married off to Sir Percival Glyde, an abusive cad only interested in her fortune. Enter a ghostlike figure claiming to



have a deep, dark secret that will set Laura free. But after an excruciatingly long first act, who cares?

Lloyd Webber's music here is like second-rate Victor Herbert. There are few of the lush, romantic melodies

that we expect from the composer of *The Phantom of the Opera*, and the words by gay lyricist David Zippel (*The Goodbye Girl*, *City of Angels*) range from trite to downright bad ("Nothing's duller/than my watercolor...ing" lands with a thud).

In the title role, Angela Christian sounds a lot like Bernadette Peters but has the same annoying habit of gasping between phrases as Idina Menzel (*Wicked*). It appears that a whole generation of young musical theater wannabes is beginning to imitate Menzel's wheezing vocal technique, and the art form is not well served by it. The usually wonderful Michael Crawford (the original Phantom) is wasted in a ridiculous secondary role. What a sad state the theater must be in when even Crawford can't get a decent part in an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical.

Perhaps the production itself will overcome the shortcomings of the score and lyrics. (It certainly worked for other Lloyd Webber fiascoes like *Cats* and *Starlight Express*.) But as a stand-alone recording, with its tinny, synthesized sound, there is little reason to listen to this clunker. **J**

Within Portland free-lance writer FLOYD SKLAVER is a Broadway Baby just bursting to belt out.

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