



## The Cult is off the warpath with 'Ceremony'

by Tricia Romano

Not so long ago, a friend and I got into a heated argument over whether or not The Cult was alternative or

produced by a tribe of Indians chanting. "White," one of the longer tracks on the record, shows the versatility of the band. It changes tempo and moods several times throughout.

### COMMENTARY

heavy metal. I stressed that they were clearly a hard rock band while she insisted that they have always been on the alternative scene.

What I learned after listening to their new album *Ceremony*, is that The Cult is neither of the two. They are something else: a very inventive band from both angles.

As a metal band, they stand out for unique choices that are interwoven in their songs. Check out "Wild Hearted Son," which is in-

the standard babes-and-booze tales for lyrics. Instead lead singer Ian Astbury wails through words of true love in "Sweet Salvation," words of sorrow for the Earth on "Earth Mofo," and words of war in "Ceremony."

In the highly-competitive alternative scene, The Cult remains fresh and new with heavy riffs interspersed with acoustics bits. While "Wonderland," a tune about youth and partying, brings the house down, "Bangkok

Rain" and "Indian" softly and poetically show off guitarist Billy Duffy's acoustical talents.

Astbury has had an ongoing interest in American Indian culture. This topic was flirted with on "Sonic Temple" and has come full circle with *Ceremony*. "Indian" and the title track touch upon the new Cult motto of "Earth Soul and Rock and Roll."

While all of this is well and good, this album is lacking. Astbury's voice does not drip of sexuality like it did on *Electric*. In some songs, his voice is completely drowned out by the guitars. *Ceremony* is missing that extra something that was so prominent in *Sonic Temple*. The songs don't go for the gut emotion, and at the same time, it's not unemotional, it's just a little stale.



Ian Astbury explores American Indian culture in the new Cult album 'Ceremony'

## Harry Connick, Jr. and Billy Bragg exhibit style and energy in their new releases

### ALBUM REVIEW

HARRY CONNICK, JR.-  
BLUE LIGHT, RED LIGHT

BILLY BRAGG -  
DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

by Jared Dean

After his first appearance in Las Vegas, and a substantial appearance it was, Harry Connick, Jr. has given fans his much promised and heavily awaited new album, *Blue Light, Red Light*; 12 songs created in his masterful style and arranged by Connick himself.

Found within this latest creation is an extensive blend of Dixieland-meets-Rogers and Hammerstein; and less Connick on piano. Once again, Connick stuns

the listener with his maturity in his early 20s. Not only has he written each song, but arranged, and if that wasn't enough, orchestrated them. A feat that might promote conceit? Possibly in most, but written among his special lyrics is a little thank you note to the listener:

"Can you imagine the thrill of writing your own songs,

thinking of a crazy arrangement, and then hearing it

played by the hardest swing musicians in the world?

WOW! I am one lucky guy."

No conceit present there. He goes on to say that he is only partly lucky to be among talented musicians, the other side to his fortune

is his fans. They are the ones that keep him going and excited about bringing jazz and swing to the entire world.

That is precisely what he has done.

The album kicks off with a bang. "Blue Light, Red Light (Someone's There)" is the title track and first song. This is Connick at his best. In front of a primed up horn section and jazzed percussion, he displays a rich story of life in a run down flat and dreams of moving uptown. But whether it's downtown or uptown he knows someone's there. Of course we know that someone is us - his fans.

Connick sings, "When you try and love two people, you can't love either one, 'cause after a while you'll have to choose or else love self denial."

Another poetic genius who is trying to get his message out through music hails from Britain. His name is Billy Bragg and his eight years of experience have paid off in yet another slew of thought provoking prose.

In a day where overworked verse and forced rhyme seem to be the radio version of popular, Bragg promotes higher consciousness through carefully written lyrics and highly tempting toe tapping tunes.

His newest release, *Don't Try This At Home*, is filled with political, social and sexual awareness. Bragg sounds at times like he is forcing his British accent to the hilt, but he more than makes up for his overworked speech with his acoustic ambiance. Plus the added bonus of Johnny



Billy Bragg tries to get the message out with his album 'Don't Try This at Home.'

Marr's (The Smiths) guest adds even more flavor to the appearance on "Sexuality" album.