

Monks of Doom pops the head off of pop

Pop or not, the band plays the Huntridge Theatre tonight with Cries & Whispers and Scrubs

by Brent Legault

Pop bands are often bland and tasteless, packaged like a frozen TV dinner.

"I consider ourselves a pop band," said Chrise Pederson, drummer for Monks of Doom.

Don't believe it.

Monks of Doom is not a pop band.

Admittedly, many of their songs on their newest release, *Forgery*, should be popular. Songs like, "Free Jack" and "Virtual Lover" have received airplay on college stations like our very own KUNV. But, they are too good to be merely pop. Their sound is like a mouthful of familiar flavors, in unfamiliar combinations. Like ice cream and Tobasco.

"We're four individuals with really strong opinions," answered Pederson when asked about the Monks' writing style. "(These opinions) are the strength and weakness of this band."

Monks of Doom consists of David Immergluck, Greg Lisher, Victor Krummenacher, and the aforementioned Pederson—all former members of Camper Van Beethoven, masters of satirical weirdness. The Monks maintain the standard of musicianship, and the down-to-earth sensibilities founded in Camper.

In fact, they surpass it. And they aren't afraid to surprise an audience with intelligent and powerful lyrics, or none at all. The Monks believe a good band should

be able to play anything, and after listening to *Forgery*, they achieve that end.

"In pop music... if you don't have some vocals as the primary focus of the song, then people seem to lose interest," said Pederson. "And that's a shame. Really great bands from the '60s, like the Ventures, were able to pull off some really good songs that were entirely instrumental."

True. And Monks of Doom "pull off" some good instrumentals, too. Their first album, *Breakfast on the Beach of Deception*, was almost vocal free. There was so much music, and so little voice, they convincingly passed it off as a movie soundtrack.

Don't get the idea this band is so weird an audience can't relate. They have an eclectic style that demands the listener's attention. They are bizarre, but not ridiculous. Progressive, but not out of touch. Best of all, they jam.

Some of their older songs, like "Trapped," "Visions From the Acid Couch," "The Traveler," and "The Insect God," not only have movement, but they move you. Songs from *Forgery* do the same thing. Check out "Flow" and "What Does A Man Require?"

Scrubs and Cries & Whispers play with Monks of Doom tonight, at the Huntridge Theatre. The show starts at 8 p.m.

Prepare to be fascinated. This band pops the head off pop.



The Monks of Doom continue to transgress from their Beethoven era with their fifth album "Forgery" released from IRS.

Arc Angel gets a celestial uplift from Charlie Sexton

by Jonathan Weber

Ye-e-e-haw. Grab your pitchforks and put on your stompin' shoes. You'll need them to properly grasp Arc Angel's new self-titled release; *A Good Stomping May Get it's Heart Beating*.

There's not much musical heart to Arc Angel and you'd be lucky if your pitchfork prongs hit anything more substantial than one-four-five dronings (that's tonic-subdominant-dominant for you freshman music majors).

What a shame. We could've used a fully-functional Charlie Sexton, who appears in Arc Angel as a watered-down apparition of his earlier MCA years. Okay, Sexton's vocals are just like old times

in "Sweet Nadine." Yes, his lead guitars have that remotely Steve Stevens quality on "Spanish Moon," adding his growling low tenor to the mix. With the exception of these two tracks and possibly the first track on side two, "See What Tomorrow Brings," the recording is one yawner after another.

The other guys have an excuse. For the most part, the overwhelming mundaneness of Arc Angel is due to the Fabulous Thunderbirds' Doyle Bramhall, who shares lead vocal/guitar/writing duties with Sexton. True, the Fab T-Birds had a few catchy tunes but I'm not

convinced anyone in that band had a pulse.

Chris Layton, drums, and Tommy Shannon, bass, played like the rhythm section for the late Stevie Ray Vaughan, a band slightly more aggressive than the T-Birds. Clearly, Arc Angel has enough Texas royalty to choke a horse, producer Steven Van Zandt notwithstanding. The sad truth is that big names and impressive backgrounds don't always insure a quality release.

Arc Angel, with all its high expectations largely unmet, does possess its share of subtle qualities. The guitar textures are

pleasantly diverse, varying from acoustic to a myriad of analog and digital effects. Their style is unique: a little blues, a little Credence, and a little Stones. Sexton and Bramhall compliment each other vocally and instrumentally, blending rather than bumping into each other.

Still Arc Angel is somewhat of a disappointment, especially for Sexton fans. No more "Beats So Lonely," "Impressed," or "Hold Me," all from Sexton's first solo project "Pictures for Pleasure" which went gold and boasted three Top-20 hits. Not bad for a then 17-

year-old.

"That was then, this is now," Sexton said cryptically during our brief phone conversation. In an interview consisting mainly of "yeah"s and "uh-huh"s, Sexton's sterile comments gave little indication of his enthusiasm for Arc Angel over his nearly-finished third solo album.

"I'm concentrating on Arc Angel at this point," Sexton said.

The question is, where's his potentially powerful contribution to Arc Angel? Maybe he's saving it for the tour. Maybe not finishing that third album was a mistake. Maybe he doesn't need the money. Can Sexton survive Arc Angel? Je ne sais pas, mais je spered.