

Christmas CD reviews

by Jonathan Weber

Here it comes; another Christmas season's worth of new music vying for your precious consumer dollar. And as usual, most big bands are saving their killer release dates for summer.

So what do we have to choose from this season? It's slim pickings, but there are some new releases not only worthy of giving, but worth keeping for yourself.

The mainstream CD worth checking out this Christmas is the self-titled release from Exposé. Yes, the same trois femmes that rocked junior high dances of the early '80s with megahits like "Let Me Be The One" and "Come Go With Me" are still alive and kicking with their traditional "house" style, introduced over a decade ago.

As the first two tracks, "I Think I'm in Trouble" and "You Don't Know What You Got," prove to be hits, an unmerciful Wilson-Phillips jam ensues. Ick. Apparently Exposé thought one sniveling, three-part vocal nightmare wasn't enough ("As Long As I Can Dream")

so they gave us another ("In Walked Love"). Oh goodie. These two whiner tunes dampen the polished snap established earlier in the CD.

On a happier note, Exposé is a fresh sampler of house music which I highly recommend if you can find it on sale. Exposé possesses dynamic technical production and solid house style without the slimy, phlegm-like smut factor of other recent blond house wannabe's who pitifully lack class, self-respect, or talent.

Shifting up 50 beats per minute from house to techno, another excellent self-titled sampler, from The Movement, has something with a little of everything on it. This techno CD lives up to its split-billing of hip-hop, techno, house and reggae. There's even a tribal mix of their fifth track "Bingo," rounding out their theme and variation pattern.

Blistering techno jams like "Jump," "Shake That—," and "Tell Tu Mama" showcase The Movement's talent for switching midstream between tempos and styles. The Movement uses

rap judiciously, never allowing it to last long enough to become tiresome. With frequent rhythm changes and never-ending techno textures, The Movement is a must for techno hardcores, or for someone who just wants to bring the underground club sound home with them.

Instead of eggnog this year, try some Milk. Raw as the pre-Christmas winds which send Vegas temperatures plummeting into the low '50s, my bet is that Milk's new release *Tantrum*, doesn't sound like anything you've heard before.

Powerful and barbaric, Milk bludgeons your musical senses into submission without the pretentious silliness which plagues even the more established bands. Though explosive tracks like "Claws" and "Girth" bear a resemblance to the sub-pop, jet-city sound, it's far less polished. Less catchy—more honest. It's not often you'll hear rhythm guitars mixed above the lead vocals, but for Milk's purposes, it works. Punctuated with snappy straight ahead drum lines, "Tantrum"

catches your ear with an out-of-balance mix that is as intriguing as it is dissonant.

Somewhat more refined than the rip-roaring Milk but just as straight ahead, North Carolina-bred Animal Bag offers its initial self-titled release for Yuletide enjoyment. Along with Cajun buddies Tesla and Tora Tora, Animal Bag proves Seattle isn't the only valuable piece of musical real estate in the U.S. these days.

Lead vocalist Luke Edwards' voice overflows with personality on tracks like "Darker Days" and "Moon-song." Expertly making use of verse/chorus vocal bridges, Edwards inserts four- and six-part harmonies reminiscent of the good-old Freddie Mercury days. Guitars and drums have an

equally impressive crunch sound that won't quit. Animal Bag mixes fairly complex guitar and drum syn-copations with simple, engaging song ideas which end up sounding a lot like Living Color's first CD (but heavier). It's almost like having the power and diversity of Metallica without that bitter after-taste...

Overall, the crisp instrument mix with Edwards' overwhelming vocal presence makes Animal Bag the newest grunge band to watch for. Anyone who grew up listening to Styx, Yes, or more recently Living Color and Metallica, should totally get into Animal Bag. Quoting the famous Cajun Lay's potato chip man, I can confidently echo his sentiments: "They'z wondamous,

Christmas, you mean I get presents?

by Tricia Romano

What do you want for Christmas?

Mojo Nixon, famed crazy man: "In the JC Penney catalog there's a four foot tall plastic Afro-American Santa Claus. I call him Soul Claus."

Joe Sib, singer for Wax: "I want to go on the road

with the Clash for the Clash Reunion Tour."

Josh Freese, drummer for Xtra Large: "A sweater and a pack of cigarettes."

Russell Rader, singer for Endless Mindless: "I want a rhinoceros and for my underwear not to bunch up in my pants."

Favorite Christmas?

Nixon: "When I got the drum set. It was probably my neighbor's least favorite Christmas."

Sib: "Last year because my Grandmother was still alive."

Freese, "The year I got the Death Star from Star Wars and the 15 action figures. I guess I was seven or eight."

...

Nixon at it again

That wild and crazy guy Mojo Nixon is at it again. He releases a special Christ-

mas record this year with his bandmates the Toadliquors, entitled "Horny Holidays," featuring a mix of cover tunes and a few original titles, as well. Some nutty titles include "Trim Yo' Tree," "Mr. Grinch," and "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus."

The Mojo man had a few words to say about his record while having a bite to eat at a truck stop in Elko. It turned out the man himself was just the same as his music; a little insane. Nixon referred to the new record as "the Christmas album for bad eggs—it's the Louis of Christmas records."

He described his record as the album that people listen to at work Christmas parties "while making Xerox copies of their butts."

Watch for Nixon on Dec. 20 as he brings his brand of insanity to the Vegas valley, playing an all ages show at Favorites.

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