

A cleansing review

by Jonathan Weber



Kowanko Grey Crayon

Woody Allen fans, your ship just came in! Yes, somehow nouveau artist Chris Kowanko has managed to embody that self-defeatist "loser" attitude in a 12-track tear-wiping, debut titled *Grey Crayon*. Is it the curse of Big Apple artists, to depress the rest of the world with their dreary pessimisms? Though Kowanko is certainly full of savy themes, by the time you've finished listening, you're not sure if you just lost your best friend or if your dog just died.

Immediately your ears recognize the David Byrne (Talking Heads)-Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) vocal style. This is undoubtedly the most impressive feature of which Kowanko can boast. Perched precariously on the bandwagon of the subtly different, Kowanko thinks to inform listeners of today's important social issues without the meat and/or potatoes of solid music writing. I'm not talking about sell-out tactics or bubblegum tricks; maybe just some above-average guitar playing, melodic hooks, or even a chainsaw solo here or there.

Instead, what Chris Kowanko offers is that rainy-day, poor-me crap that makes you wonder how cool you have to be to like the cutting edge stuff. Even acoustic/folk-giants like Jim Croche or Bruce Hornsby are able to insert enough positive energy into their music to make it occasionally fun to listen to. Kowanko contains none of the mastery of either legend listed above, crashing terribly before he ever leaves the ground.

"You can't hold me down like a second job or night school...if you pull me down

I'll surely drown as a periscope," whines Kowanko in "Turn Me Down." Kowanko loses again in the tear-stained "My House" ("Just like a toy I was waiting for you, but you never came and I found myself alone..."). Boo-hoo. You had me then you lost me...

Are there any redeeming factors whatsoever offered by Kowanko? Well, at least Kowanko attempts to deal with issues like the homeless ("My House"), but even here, Kowanko is unable to lyrically resolve his feelings toward the problem. Track nine ("I Work I Think I am in Love") has a Bosa-Nova thing happening which is kind of catchy—at least it's happy. Kowanko actually painted the front cover, showing viable talent.

"I have a college art school background, really," Kowanko said. "I found there were practical hassles to painting and it was easier for me to thrash around in the practice room with my piano."

You should've stuck with painting, Chris.



Therapy? Nurse

On the other extreme, the Irish trio Therapy? scrapes, claws, and screams with its fifth release *Nurse*.

"It's like being doused in petrol and having an orgasm at the same time in outer space at zero gravity," drummer/vocalist Fyfe Ewing explains.

With techno-nails scratching on a musically-metal blackboard, *Nurse* is as violent and angry as it can be without turning into meaningless chaos.

"Accelerator" is a notably dynamic head-basher, while "Teethgrinder" and "Disgracelands" use a stronger techno-base from which they

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