

ENTERTAINMENT

Janet CD juiced with sex

By Jesse Washington
Associated Press

"Relax. It's just sex."

Impossible. Although Janet Jackson delivers those instructions a mere six minutes into her new CD, "Damita Jo," relaxation is the last thing on her agenda with this sinfully appealing concoction of infectious beats and scandalous lyrics.

Even before her Super Bowl shuffle pushed the FCC over the edge, the freak-quency of Jackson's exposure had been increasing ever since she released "janet" in 1993. That album cover offered the first glimpse of the breasts that launched a thousand V-chips, beneath the small hands of her then-husband.

Next came "Velvet Rope" in 1997, complete with songs about bondage and magazine photos showing Jackson with her nipple pierced, butt be-thonged, crotch tattooed and body pricked by an ice pick. And her last album was 2001's "All For You," which featured more than a few songs that can't be quoted here without what, in the printed form, would amount to a ten-word delay.

Now comes "Damita Jo," which is so sex-drenched it's bound to raise even more hackles among moral conservatives and questions about whether Jackson planned her halftime peep show. Such content isn't unusual in today's pop culture landscape, where cable TV's raunch is stealing viewers and awards from broadcast networks and the Cat in the Hat tells dirty jokes on movie screens. But if this is what it's come to for the woman who once played little Penny on "Good Times," what's next - Hilary Duff swinging from the stripper pole?

Remember "Nasty" in 1986? Title notwithstanding, that hit song was a 20-year-old Jackson's demand for modesty, with lines like "the only nasty thing I like / is a nasty groove ... so close the door if you want me to respond / 'cause privacy is my middle name." Actually, Jackson's middle name is the title of both her new album and its first song, in which Miss Jackson now proclaims herself "freak undercover / I do movies, I do dance / I do music, I love doing my man / I want a nasty boy, put it on me good ..."

My, how she's grown. Still, it's a great song from Jackson's longtime producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, with a contagious chorus and beat perfectly balanced between hip-hop and R&B. As always, Jackson's voice is sweet and frosting-light - there's not one vamp or soaring note on the whole album.

But we've never looked for vocal extravaganzas from Jackson, now 38. We look for her to entertain us with excellent videos, saturate the radio with catchy tunes, and move our bodies in the club.

"Damita Jo" has the goods to do exactly that. Among the many excellent tunes are



Janet Jackson holds a copy of her newest CD during a store signing in Harlem, New York. Jackson's new album 'Damita Jo' arrived in stores on Tuesday.

"My Baby," featuring the atypical rapper/producer Kanye West; the Babyface-penned-and-produced "Thinkin' Bout My Ex," which might have Jackson's current boyfriend Jermaine Dupri looking over his shoulder; and the soulful dance track "SloLove," which is not slow at all with production from Murlyn Music of Sweden.

Unlike brother Michael, whose music went downhill after two incredible albums (1979's "Off the Wall" and 1982's "Thriller"), Janet's output has remained consistently good, even eclipsing Michael's in recent years. But one thing Michael will always have is songs that mean something. Janet hasn't touched that since 1989's "Rhythm Nation." And judging from this album, she probably needs to remake "Looking For Love (in All The Wrong Places)."

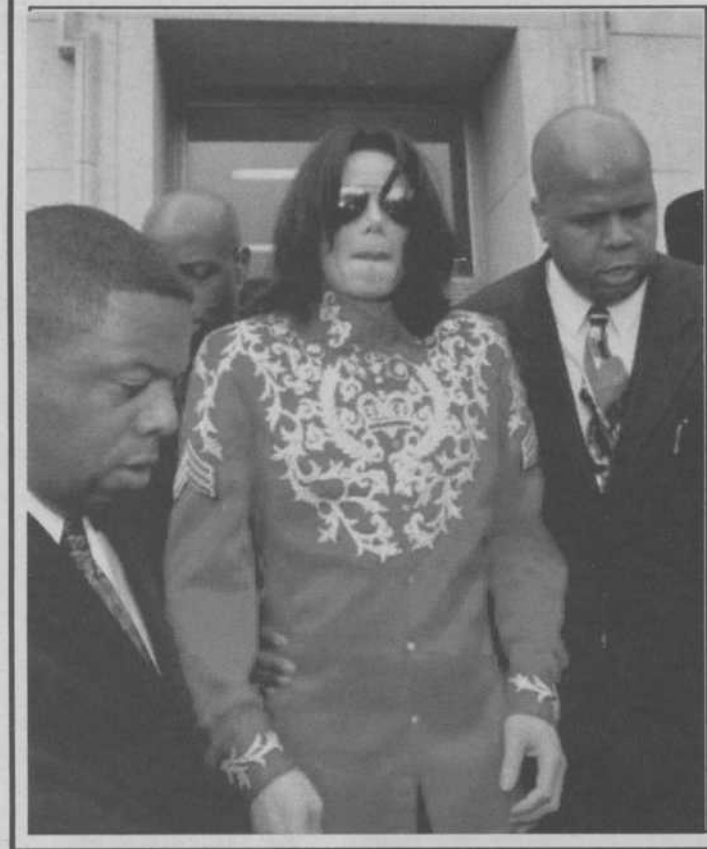
Although Jackson dedicates several interludes to the theme of how we (i.e. she) are a mixture of "so many different characters ... all looking for love," her search doesn't get much farther than the bedroom. This is where a "sexplosion" could jump off, a "tastation" might go down and she'd prefer you'd "just be an animal."

By the time we get to the song "Moist," even eunuchs would get the idea.

This sexual fixation is the only problem with "Damita Jo" - an especially glaring one considering that one of Jackson's private parts is responsible for what some are calling the biggest outbreak of cultural Puritanism in decades.

For creating pop confections that you can grind to on the dance floor or wherever else grooves are got on, Jackson remains up there with Madonna as one of the best ever. She's still relevant and compelling 22 years after her first album, and will probably remain so long after her right breast is forgotten.

But Jackson has forgotten that classic songs need classic lyrics. All we get on "Damita Jo" is verbal Viagra. And no matter how sweet the sensation, Jackson can't make it seem like love.



KING OF POP TARGETS AIDS

Pop star Michael Jackson is escorted from the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill after a meeting with Rep. Shelia Jackson-Lee (D-TX) on Wednesday. Jackson visited Washington to promote the fight against AIDS in Africa. Jackson announced he will visit Africa later this year.

'The End of Blackness' fails to end myth of homogeneity

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

"I am sick and tired, physically, of being spoken for by what passes for leadership in the Black community. Someone should tell these folks that there was a Civil Rights Movement and that it worked. We're free. Only public humiliation will make these malcontents either hush up or grow up, because attention is all that really motivates them. That, and a terrible secret: they believe the lie that Blacks really are stupid, ugly, incompetent and deserving of abuse."-Author on why she wrote "The End of Blackness."

The primary problem this reviewer had with "The End of Blackness" was with its premise that there is a monolithic Black way of thinking to begin with. I've never felt any pressure to promote O.J.'s innocence, to call a sister a "ho," to mate indiscriminately, to wear pantyhose on my head in public or to dumb myself down to sound cool. Nonetheless, ignoring the carte blanche Debra Dickerson has allowed ongoing institutional racism. Her enlightening opus might inform those sectors of the Black community already on a self-destructive path of alternate modes of behavior and thinking.

Debra Dickerson is a Black woman who is just about fed up with race. From her perspective, as a very successful journalist whose work has appeared in such leading publications as the New York Times, Washington Post and U.S. News & World Report, she believes that we have finally arrived at a juncture in history where people are honestly assessed based upon their qualifications and the content of their character. Thus, she con-

cludes that today African-Americans are far more oppressed by their own people than they are by Whites. In her controversial new book, "The End of Blackness, this Harvard-educated attorney argues that while Whites no longer limit Blacks' options, it is pressures from within its own community which severely limit African-American advancement. In an impassioned, heartfelt diatribe, Dickerson delineates the litany of problems she has with her own people: "It is Blacks who critique other Blacks' choices - from styles of dress to relationship partners to careers to political affiliations. It is Blacks who tell other Blacks what they must think about affirmative action and O.J. Simpson. It is Blacks who tell other Blacks that they have to belong to certain organizations and not others. It is Blacks who try to control the political, intellectual and social discourse of other Blacks. It is Blacks who ostracize and denounce their brethren for disagreeing with them and who can understand disagreement only as opportunism, self-hatred or insanity. It is other Blacks whom Blacks spend their lives trying to please, not Whites."

Reading between the lines of what seems to be a long overdue, emotional dump for an author who might have been mercilessly teased in childhood, is a rather resentful description of values which she identifies as representative of African-American culture. She doesn't like the way Black men mistreat Black women or the way Black women, in turn, treat their children.

She also dislikes the misogyny found in gangsta' rap videos and the cruelty of calling overachieving Black kids Oreos or Uncle Toms for "acting white."

VH1 plans to air Jackson movie

LOS ANGELES (AP) - VHI plans to run a movie that chronicles Michael Jackson's life from the height of his success to his current legal woes, the music channel said Friday.

A casting search is in progress for actors to play Jackson, family members and others who figured in his life. An air date was not announced for the unauthorized biography.

The film, with the working title "Family Values," is in preproduction in Calgary, Alberta, VH1 said.

Jackson was charged last year with seven counts of committing lewd or lascivious acts upon a child under age 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent to the child.

He has pleaded innocent.

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