

# Arts & Entertainment

# Album Reviews



## Haggard effort forgettable, bland

Going Where The Lonely Go  
Merle Haggard  
Epic

There's a song on Merle Haggard's new album, *Going Where The Lonely Go*, titled "You Take Me for Granted." This sentiment could very well sum up Merle Haggard's recording career. He's been around as long as George Jones or Johnny Cash, yet he's not been accorded "living legend" status as they have. His albums sell as well as Willie Nelson's or Waylon Jennings', yet he's not recognized as a country pop star, either.

There are two reasons for this phenomenon. One is the fact that Haggard alienated the rock music press (a highly influential force, even in country music) in the 1960s with his idiotic right wing musical diatribes like "Fighting Side of Me" and "Okie from Muskogee."

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Haggard has always just sort of been there. His music rarely reaches out and demands your attention like that of Ricky Skaggs or Rosanne Cash. His personal life, although interesting enough (including a stretch in San Quentin prison) has always been rather hush-hush, so he doesn't have the "survivor" aura of George Jones or Jerry Lee Lewis. Most significantly, his albums, while always well done and original enough, seem to lack any particular pizzazz.

Perhaps the most incredible thing about *Going Where The Lonely Go* is that, with the exception of three songs, none of the selections makes a particular impression. Seconds after a song has finished, you truly cannot remember what it was about.

What is frustrating is that Haggard obviously is capable of much more. There are tantalizing hints of greatness on this album. The title cut, a Haggard composition, is a brilliant mood piece, which painfully and honestly reflects the desperation of a fellow human being at the end of his rope. Conversely, "If I Left It Up To You" (a song Haggard first wrote and recorded a decade ago) is a bouncy, western-swing flavored number, which is quite enjoyable. "I Won't Give Up My Train" is another interesting piece, in which Haggard pays tribute to a wanderlust that will not die.

Yet, while these three songs are superb, they are still only three songs. That leaves seven more selections to plod through. Not that any of the other songs are bad per se (except for "Shopping for Dresses" which is so stupid, it seems intentional), it's just that they are bland and indistinguishable from one another except for their titles.

Haggard wrote all but three of the songs on *Going Where The Lonely Go*. On future efforts, Haggard might consider reaching out for different writers. Perhaps then he can leave the realm of mere recording artist and enter the world of legend. However, after nearly 20 years of trying, one begins to wonder if he can do it.

— Mike Frost

## Cher album 'musical refuse'

I PARALYZE  
Cher  
Columbia

Diarrhea, rotten eggs, baby vomit, fungus, moldy food and dead squirrels all belong in one place: the sewer. So does Cher's new album.

Sometimes very affluent people decide to drop an enormous amount of money on a worthless piece of garbage. It happened when The Knack made their second album, *But the Little Girls Understand*. It happened again when Chuck Barris made "The Gong Show Movie." Believe it or not, the unrelenting spirit of musical refuse has cast his magical spell again. This time it fell upon the seventh - album effort from a 37 - year - old glamourpuss by the name of Cher (the last name is anyone's guess.)

It was nine years ago that Cher was divorced from her personal and professional partner Sonny Bono. Since then, she has released a total of six albums on an even more impressive collection of four record labels. The latest attempt at trend-hopping by this fashionable singer-actress is a cute little assembly titled *I Paralyze*. It is not stated on the album whether or not



Cher is attempting to paralyze the consumer's eyes or ears.

My first impression was wonder at why an entire album could sound like a used car commercial jingle. As hard as it was, I delved even deeper into each jingle and attempted to make some sense out of the nine new wave a la Las Vegas ditties. To no avail, each cut provided me only with humor. It is apparent to me that Cher always has, and always will, rely on her Rod Stewart vocal tendencies to carry her through every song.

The big new wave attempt on *I Paralyze* is a harmless pop-rock tune The Babys once released called "Back On My Feet Again." It turns out to have the same guitar solo it had in 1979 and comes off as the silliest song on the album. The most revolting track in the collection is the title cut that one John Farrar admits to have written and produced. For almost four minutes you get to hear Cher moan and use her favorite word: honey. Didn't her old hit with Sonny, "All I Ever Need Is You," include that word about 50 times? Coincidence.

It's just too bad that such an excellent looking female would have so much success on television and Broadway, and then fall flat on her face on vinyl. It's also too bad that I just can't offer her any support on this effort. Let's face it; the album could warble the paint right off your walls. There's nothing here but haphazard instrumentation, fuzzy lyrics and the voice of a woman who did her best work with a guy named Sonny Bono. Aside from all this is the fact that the lady needs to dump the glasses and headband. Do yourself a favor and let Columbia Records realize its mistake on this one.

Todd R. Tystad



## Demento vinyl odd hit parade

Demento's Mementos  
Dr. Demento  
PVC Records

Dr. Demento first gained notoriety by having one of the most off-beat shows on radio. On it, he featured obscure novelty songs with an annotator's eye for recording history.

However, as time passed and Dr. Demento grew more and more famous, he became less interested in being a music historian and more attracted to the notion of becoming the Dick Clark of novelty artists. His radio show then became a springboard for new musical schticks, some clever and original (Wierd Al Yankovich, rock parodies most notably), but most silly and repetitive, relying heavily on cheap sex and drug humor.

*Demento's Mementos*, then, is a gathering of these new, unknown musicians (with one exception), playing their new tunes for the Doctor's approval. So, if he wants to be Dick Clark, he should be treated that way. What follows is a quick review of each of the album's songs, followed by a 1-100 rating. (Danceability is not a factor).

"Doctor of Dementia" (Dr. Demento and Barnes and Barnes): Self-indulgence at its worst. Manages to be both melodic and moronic. 19.

"I Get Weird" (John Christensen): Many of the Doctor's proteges are bad Frank Zappa imitators. This is one of the worst. 16.

"I Wanna Kiss Her" (Tim Cavanaugh): An embarrassing series of sexual puns. Embarrassing because no matter how immature this sort of thing is, it always holds a certain base fascination. 80.

"My Wife Left Town With a Banana" (Carlos Benzine, Sr.): See description above. 80.

"Smut" (Other Half): What starts out to be a satire of 1980s morality quickly deteriorates into a series of "naughty" words. If you're over 15, it's hard to see how this could be funny. 20.

"Space Invaders" (Uncle Vic): A guy complains that something is wrong with society because it prefers video games to disco. Occasionally manages to rise above its own triviality. 65.

"Rodeo Song" (Showdown): Effective parody of bad country music. Actually is funny, satirical and melodic at the same time! Definitely the album's high point. 95.

"Bodine Brown" (Purvis Pickett): Why? There are few things this world needs less than a Chipmunks rip-off. 40.

"The Alphabet Song" (The Three Stooges): Some of the cleverest material this comedy team ever did. 25.

"Swedish Western" (Steve Lisenby): Does for Swedes what Amos & Andy did for blacks. Of course, Amos and Andy did have their moments. 65.

"Harry's Jockstrap" (Dickie Goodman): Toilet humor. 6.

"My Name Is Not Merv Griffin" (Gary Muller): The title is funnier than the record. Still, though, a clever satire on the

trappings of stardom. 80.

"Mediocre Mama" (Doug Robinson): "You don't do nothing special, but you don't do nothing well." An effective tribute to blandness. 90.

"Don't Go to the Fallout Shelter With Anyone Else But Me" (Tom Fenton): Pithy. Not that amusing, but pithy nonetheless. 84.

"Rock and Roll Doctor" (Travesty Ltd.): Great novelty song except for one thing: it's not a novelty song, it's a skit. Doesn't belong on this album. 86.

"I Found the Brains of Santa Claus" (Jason and the Straptones): If you find the idea of discovering Kris Kringle's gray matter, resembling chunky tuna in a pickle jar amusing, then this is your kind of humor. I find that amusing. 89.

The average for the entire album is a dismal 58. And, friends, a comedy album that is funny only 58 percent of the time, ultimately is not an effective one. Pass me my Allan Sherman album, please.

— Mike Frost

## Without Boss still good stuff

Men Without Women  
Little Steven  
and the Disciples of Soul  
EMI America Records

This is the debut album for this group, but chances are you've run across Little Steven before, albeit under a different name. Faithful followers of Bruce Springsteen will know him as Miami Steve Van Zandt of the E Street Band.

Now Miami Steve/Little Steven has formed his own band and launched his bid to escape the shadow of the Boss. And, if this album is any indication, and we must assume it is, (otherwise why review it?) that bid will be successful.

Springsteen's influence is clear throughout the album. True, there aren't any songs about cars here but, as the title implies, there are plenty of songs about men and women and what they do to and for each other. And most of them are very good.

The album is made up of several little vignettes dealing with the "Never-Ending Quest For a Baby."

"I've Been Waiting" is the song that captures this idea best. It's about a guy who's been waiting for the right girl to come walkin' down the street and then she finally does and then they break up and then he wants to get her back—A "Book of Love" with sad overtones, in other words. If Tom Waits ever did this song, he'd have you crying rivers of tears.



Still, it's sad enough with Little Steven doing the mournful lyrics, sounding, at times, very much like his mentor, Bruce.

Not all the songs are ballads, of course. The Disciples aren't Peter, Paul and Mary after all.

"Lyn' In a Bed of Fire" will burn your socks off, but it does have a sense of despair about it:

*Had me a real bad dream last night  
This morning my bad dream was  
walking the streets of N. Y. C.*

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