

'Berries' tunes offer intergalactic cowboy themes

By Dave Whitaker
Staff Reporter

The Jet Black Berries have made a musical western set on Venus. All the Saturday morning cowboy themes are here, but set out in the galaxy. The songs are tongue-in-cheek and they keep the album interesting, especially after a few listens. *Sundown on Venus* is produced by the independent Enigma Records.

REVIEW **D.I.S.C.**

The first side has a rockabilly flavor, but sounds more like a local bar band than a commercial band. The album opens with "Bad Hombre," which sets the tone for most of the songs. It's a high-energy, but not fast-paced, rocker with the lyrics of a typical western story.

"Macumba Love," the second song, is a little stronger. The synthesizer plays a small part in most of side one, but is used mostly for background. The drums are heavy, and the guitar has a slightly "twangy" sound to it. A harmonica is heard throughout, which adds some richness to the sound.

The title song "Sundown on Venus" becomes more psychedelic, but retains the western theme. The lyrics, "Be off this planet by sundown. Sundown on Venus/It's a mean place to be now," adds some fresh humor.

The next to last song, "Masked Astronaut" also follows the theme, and is about an interstellar Lone Ranger. "With the devil as his sidekick/he sleeps on asteroids. With a crystal ball for guidance/and a spaceship for a horse."

The first side ends with "Bluebirds," a ditty with corny lyrics and a few "Baddala-Baddala-Baddalas" thrown in, which makes it hard to not laugh along with this song.

Side two is more subdued, and drags a little. It seems like the band began to take itself too seriously, thereby losing the humor of the first side. The best song is "Go Devil." It has an interesting, fast-paced drum beat. A whirling synthesizer whispers in the background.

"Noon In Cairo" also is notable. It is fairly psychedelic, and the song leads into an interesting synthesizer break, then returns to the original beat. "Ring Of Steel" and "Johnsonville" carry on the western themes.

Side two ends with "Shakin' All Over," which starts out sounding like the Cars. It then assumes a hard driving, bluesy beat. Kevin Patrick's voice, rough and smoky, gets powerful on this song and helps to pick up some of the dullness of side two.

In the first pressing is included a free six-track untitled bonus album. "Shadowdrive" starts it off as a medium-paced rocker. It's a little bland at first, but some guitar work three-quarters of the way through helps it along. The

second song is a big improvement — the lyrics are more interesting, and the instruments mesh well. The rest of the songs on this album make up for side two of the first disc.

Their sound seems more cohesive, and they gain some intensity. It has a Texas rock sound mixed with psychedelia. Some piano work in "The Restless Kind" and a strong bass in

"They Walk Among You" adds freshness to these songs. This six-track album shows that the band has a future beyond the western concept of *Sundown On Venus*.

Although *Sundown on Venus* has some flaws, it works fairly well. The faint garage-band sound, plus the theme of "B" westerns helps to keep this album slightly above mediocrity.

Madonna's pouting ruins slow-moving film odyssey

By Scott Harrah
Staff Reporter

Most movie-goers are seeing "Desperately Seeking Susan" because it stars disco diva Madonna. Those yearning to see the film for that reason should be warned that Madonna is truly a virgin as far as acting goes.

REVIEW **MOVIE**

She doesn't act in this complicated, dumb yawner — she merely recites lines, pouts and plays... Madonna. The disco glitz queen is just a presence throughout the flick, and she tries to spice up her paltry performance with such tawdry antics as undressing to reveal a transparent bra.

The plot is also a mess. It's a confusing combination of murder, false arrest, stolen Egyptian artifacts, mistaken identity and many other cliches the screenwriter threw into the film's predictable plot.

Rosanna ("Baby, It's You") Arquette plays Roberta, the neurotic suburban wife of a hot tub salesman (Mark Blum). While shopping in a seedy New York thrift shop, Roberta finds a pyramid-patterned jacket that Greenwich Village gadabout Susan (Madonna) has just sold.

Roberta buys the jacket and wears it around town, then falls and hits her head. Amnesia and a case of mistaken identity follows when Roberta wakes up and discovers that she's being pursued by bad guys who think she's Susan. The men are "seeking Susan" because she is purportedly carrying a

key to a locker in a bus station where she stashed some trashy clothes and ancient Egyptian earrings.

The rest of the film is a slow-moving, ludicrous odyssey filled with bad lines, insipid twists and Madonna's miserable acting. She is not the least bit convincing as the supposedly cool Susan; she is instead irritating. The only "excitement" she brings to the screen are the few scenes where she brandishes her breasts and shows us some skin. One would think that the writers and directors of this film — all women — would want to keep "Susan" free of such sexism.

The film does have some good points, despite a plot that takes an hour to get going. It contains some scathing satire on the contrasts between liberated city women and repressed suburban housewives. But Madonna ruins that satire with her incessant pouting and preening.

The rest of the cast, however, does a fine job. Rosanna Arquette's portrayal of Roberta is a bracing variation of Lucille Ball. Her performance almost makes up for Madonna's. Mark Blum is dazzling as Arquette's hubby, as well as blue-eyed Casanova Aidan Quinn — the new man in Roberta's life. And Laurie Metcalf, as Blum's sister, is a flamboyant scene stealer, delivering the film's wittiest lines with aplomb.

I have a feeling that the only thing viewers will be "desperately seeking" after watching this loser is the \$3.75 they wasted on a film that's better lost than found.

"Desperately Seeking Susan" currently is playing at the State Theatre and is rated PG-13 for violence, language and Madonna's unmentionables.

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