

Violent Femmes' fourth album, '3,' slides downhill with same sounds and words

By Mark Lage
Staff Reporter

Violent Femmes
"3"
Slash Records

The fourth album by the Violent Femmes is mysteriously entitled "3." Perhaps this is meant to emphasize the return to the pared-down, acoustic-power trio sound of their self-titled debut album, after slightly more ambitious efforts like "The Blind Leading the Naked."

listen to are the first four or five songs on side one. Of course, some of you may think it is strange to call any Violent Femmes' songs good to listen to. It is true, Gano's voice takes getting used to, but it can be done, and he is effective.

He is at his best when he is either scolding out simple little lines like "It hurts, it hurts, it hurts" in "Just Like My Father," or when he is making you laugh at his rather twisted sense of humor on "Fat" -- "I hope you got fat/I hope you got

really fat/Cause if you got really, really fat you just might want to see me come back/I hope you got fat."

Maybe it seems silly and childish for Gano to hope some girl from his past will get really fat, but then he reveals that it's only because she might want him back. Gano surprises his listeners with this song, and does it well. There are also a couple of good examples of what Gano doesn't do well on "Nothing Worth Living For," and "See My Ships," where he whines.

album REVIEW

The picture on the back cover shows an acoustic guitar, an acoustic bass, and a snare drum and that is all there is on this album to back up singer Gordon Gano's panic-stricken, off-key vocals.

The same three instruments were the basis of "Violent Femmes," probably the band's best-known album which plays the infamous "Add It Up" ("Why can't I get just one --?").

"3" is essentially a less exuberant, more traditional rock 'n' roll rehash of "Violent Femmes." Bassist Brian Ritchie chips in only a couple of his snappy, original acoustic bass lines and solos, mostly relying on standard, off-the-shelf rock 'n' roll and blues lines to augment Gano's simplistic acoustic guitar rhythms.

And lyrically, Gano, one of the undisputed kings of 1980s alternative angst, is still incredibly nervous about the same stuff -- girls, dating, his family and all the people in the world.

But despite the fact that there isn't much new to hear on "3," there are some songs and lyrics worth listening to.

"Nightmares" is pleasant sounding, simple acoustic pop and one of the few really interesting Ritchie bass parts with Gano singing about having bad dreams about some girl as he usually is.

Musically, the album starts off at its best and goes downhill. Except for "Mother of a Girl," the best songs to

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