

Albums get good grades, but Young M.C. is 'rap hell'

By Scott Harrah
Staff Reviewer

Malcom McLaren and the Bootzilla Orchestra, "WALTZ DARLING." (Epic): Malcom McLaren, former manager of the Sex Pistols, has based a musical career on schtick and gimmickry. Hype, outrageousness and art as commerce are his fortès. He discovered walking novelty item Boy George, and produced albums and images for two of Britain's most ridiculous bands ever, Bow Wow Wow and Adam and the Ants.

In the early 1980s, he became fascinated with American urban black culture -- an obsession that still saturates his hucksterism today. Ten years ago, American bands all wanted to look and sound British. Today, as McLaren here-with demonstrates on "Waltz Darling," the British desperately are seeking new identities as black Americans from Harlem and the Bronx.

On earlier efforts like "Duck Rock" and "Fans," McLaren fused black rap and hip hop with two dubiously hip genres, opera and square dance music. On "Waltz Darling," he takes classical and waltz music and blends the two with house, funk, rap, hip hop and soul.

As usual, McLaren is less a music maker than a creative presence. With help from Bootsy Collins, Jeff Beck and an endless chorus of backup singers, McLaren creates soulful, quirky harmonies with cartoonish, flip-pant hooks that border on the obnoxious.

"Deep in Vogue," the LP's first single, is a tribute to voguing, a faddish variation of breakdancing that involves striking campy fashion poses to the beat. Voguing evolved in black drag balls in Harlem years ago and slowly gained popularity in New York clubs. McLaren, who seems to have a pipeline to the American

avant-pulse, has designed an intriguing tribute to the trend, complete with the cheap Eurodisco and quasi-glamorous violin arias runway models pose to on "Style With Elsa Klensch."

Side one's "Algernon's Simply Awfully Good at Algebra" typifies McLaren's penchant for playful nonsense. As the song opens, McLaren sings about a nerdy algebra whiz named Algie while an orchestra plays in the background, then suddenly the tune segues into heavy funk complete with a choir of shimmying black women singing about a mathematical man as if algebraic formulas were something sexy.

The LP's passion for the unlikely and totally incoherent, complete with funk riffs that make McLaren's babble seem brilliant, add up to one of the year's most original, daring oddities. (Grade: A -)

The Red Hot Chili Peppers, "MOTHER'S MILK." (EMI):

L.A.'s Red Hot Chili Peppers seem just as famous for their on-stage exhibitionism as they are for hardcore, guitar-oriented funk. Known for coming onstage wearing nothing but socks over their unmentionables, the band members list ex-porn star Traci Lords as their biggest rock influence.

"Her orgasms are so incredibly musical," they told a SPIN magazine reporter.

Jokes aside, "Mother's Milk," the Peppers' fourth effort, is a bit disappointing. While early Peppers albums featured trenchant funk, "Mother's Milk" is cloyingly hardcore. Some of the tracks just seem to float off into some atonal orbit, while the Peppers screech over reverberating guitar noise.

But its trademark humor is still intact. There's "Magic Johnson," a hilarious tribute to the L.A. Lakers star, as well as the slapstick of "Subway to Venus." The best track is a spastic cover of Jimi



Courtesy of EMI

Red Hot Chili Peppers

Hendrix's "Fire".

By the time you reach side two's "Sexy Mexican Maid" and "Johnny, Kick a Hole in the Sky," it's easy to forget about the distorted guitars and radioactive vocals -- and become wrapped up in the Peppers' humorous maelstrom. (Grade: B).

Young M.C., "STONE COLD RHYMIN'." (Island): Rhymin' indeed. Young M.C. rhymes, rhymes and rhymes. Yo! He's bad. Yo! He's a sex god. Yo! He gets all the women. Yo! He never shuts up.

Despite the irresistible bassline of the single "Bust A Move" -- one of the year's best soul songs -- tracks like "Pick Up the Pace" and "My Name is Young" epitomize sexist, egotistical rap hell. (Grade: C).

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The Return's first release sets band apart from others

By Mark Lage
Senior Reporter and Reviewer

The Return
"Glossingtown"
Independently Produced Cassette

The Return entered the local tape foray earlier this year with its first release, "Glossingtown," a cassette which actually manages in places to set itself apart from many of the others.

album REVIEW

The band, whose members are Randy Watson, guitar and vocals; Dave Farrens, bass; and Greg Hill, drums, is usually grouped with Lincoln alternative bands like 13 Nightmares and Elysium Crossing, but the heavily produced sound of "Glossingtown" will remind listeners of more mainstream sources.

Watson's guitar style is filled with the clickings, scrapings and heavily affected style that has been predominant in 80s alternative rock. But the spacy, atmospheric production of "Glossingtown," makes the band sound more like the Police, A Flock of Seagulls and even Rush.

The tape's first song, "The Foreign Correspondant," opens with simple guitar clicking reminiscent of Andy Summers. In later verses the clickings are augmented by Summers-like overdubs.

When the song kicks into its faster parts, the instrumental wash actually recalls Rush from the "Signals" era. Of course, even at its most strained, Randy Watson's voice doesn't sound nearly as bad as Geddy Lee's.

After "Correspondant," the tape's best track is "Disheveled." It opens with sharp, catchy bursts of

deliciously layered electric and acoustic guitars, and an effective bass and drum accompaniment. The song switches into one of the band's typically flighty, atmospheric choruses. It is all broken up by a funky, occasionally discordant middle section.

"Get Lost" and "Chances Taken Have" are further evidences of The Return's ability to create clear, pop atmosphere momentum.

"Glossingtown" is the latest in a series of local band releases to be recorded at Black Sea Studio. The list includes 13 Nightmares, Trout Mystery, and For Against. The difference here is that Black Sea was started by Watson, and is run by him with help from his band mates.

"Glossingtown" is just the latest indication that the quality of recording one can expect from the studio is improving all the time.

On instrumentals like "Waking up From a Bad Dream," and "Incident 318," the band captures a variety of bizarre sounds and textures which would not have been conceivable in the days of the 13 Nightmares and Trout Mystery releases.

The acoustic guitar makes another appearance as "318" changes into "Her Majesty." Short, staggered acoustic bursts take over the music for a few moments, while an electric guitar emerges from the background to take control. Moments like these on the tape separate "Glossingtown" not only from other Lincoln releases, but from The Return's own live sound.

However, while certain moments on the tape add new aspects to The Return that don't appear in the live performances, the overall conclusion is still the same -- The Return is a talented band capable of clear, entertaining pop.

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