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The Sugarcubes' latest leans toward cuteness

By Scott Harrah
Staff Reporter

The Sugarcubes, "HERE TODAY, TOMORROW, NEXT WEEK!" (Elektra): The Sugarcubes, an obscure oddity from Iceland, achieved semi-superstardom last year with "Life's Too Good," possibly one of the most original efforts of the late 1980s.



Every track on "Life's Too Good" had a mystique and centered on a twisted topic -- from the eerie surrealism of "Birthday," a song about child molestation, to "Motorcrash," about a girl's perverse fascination with traffic accidents. On The Sugarcubes' second effort, however, much of the band's trademark mystique is still intact, but none of the songs have the bracing venom and perversity of "Life's Too Good."

Elfin lead vocalist Bjork still wails, shrieks and screeches, giving each track a nervous, spasmodic energy, but somehow "Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week!" comes off sounding sweet and bouncy in areas where it should sound bitter and pagan. "Life's Too Good" had a marvelous, dark tension in each song, beautifully complemented by Bjork's vocal eruptions -- while the 'Cubes' second waxing seems so... cute.

"Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week!" is a brighter work. The band apparently wants listeners to dance instead of recoiling in horror. The band experiments with acid house on the LP's first-released single, "Regina," and throws in a horn section on other songs. What saves the album from sheer bounciness is the band's gift for off-the-wall, nonsense lyrics -- like those of "Eat the Menu": The Waiter Came With the Menu and Said, 'Here You Go/I said, 'Thank You But the Choice is Too Great, Why Can't I Just Be a Cod in the Depths of the Ocean and Just Eat Small Fish?'/... Oh,

You Vague Customer." On "Eat the Menu," band member Einar impersonates the Lucky Charms cereal cartoon leprechaun, while on "Bee" everyone is in search of a sting. Everything about these songs is wonderfully off-center, but they lack the dark vision of songs like "Deus" on the first album. Even a track as apocalyptically titled as "A Day Called Zero" misses that ponderous sense of doom that won the 'Cubes an international following. However, there's nothing wrong with any band that wants to play musical chairs with its genre and style -- and "Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week!" does both without sacrificing the Cubes' integrity. (Grade: B)

Tracy Chapman, "Crossroads" (Elektra): Music critics have been quick to chide Chapman for straying from the almost stilted social consciousness of her 1988 debut LP. While last year Chapman was talkin' 'bout a revolution, this time she's just talkin' 'bout herself. "I'm trying to protect what I keep inside," she sings on "Crossroads," the title track and the LP's opener.

But Chapman's newfound introspection is less egotistical than refreshing. Surprisingly, Chapman sings a few generic love ballads here -- "Be Careful of My Heart" and "All That You Have Is Your Soul," both punctuated by her mellifluous voice and acoustic guitar strummings.

However, there are remnants of her debut, which was so chock full of mock socially responsible protest songs that it could have been written for a VH-1 promo.

There's the racial tension of "Born to Fight," in which Chapman sings that people are trying to "make me into a white man's drone." "Subcity" is typical Chapman, a whiny political plea full of rhetorical pap like: "Won't You Please Give the President/My Honest Regards/ For Disregarding Me."

It's difficult to lend credence to Chapman, 10,000 Maniacs and their ilk because their Department of Social Services vision of rock is often too heavy-handed to stomach. Like 10,000 Maniacs' Natalie Merchant, Tracy Chapman is at her best when she's NOT trying to save humanity. On portions of "Crossroads," Chapman takes that advice well. (Grade: C+)

G.M. ANNOUNCEMENT

GENERAL MOTORS RECRUITING ON U-N-L CAMPUS

GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE ON THE U-N-L CAMPUS DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 23, 1989. THESE REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE RECRUITING FOR SOON-TO-GRADUATE STUDENTS (SENIOR AND GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS) AS WELL AS POTENTIAL CO-OP AND SUMMER INTERN CANDIDATES* (AT LEAST POST-FRESHMAN YEAR STATUS) WHO ARE STUDYING IN THE FOLLOWING CURRICULA:

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- MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
- INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING
- BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
- SALES/MARKETING

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PLEASE CONSULT THE U-N-L PLACEMENT OFFICE FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO SIGN UP FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH A GENERAL MOTORS REPRESENTATIVE. GENERAL MOTORS IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.

* A CO-OP EMPLOYEE SHOULD ANTICIPATE WORK ASSIGNMENTS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR ON A ROTATING BASIS. A SUMMER INTERN WOULD WORK ONLY DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS.

top TEN

KFRX: TOP SINGLES

1. Tears for Fears, "Sowing The Seeds of Love"
2. New Kids on the Block, "Cover Girl"
3. Roxette, "Listen To Your Heart"
4. Bad English, "When I See You Smile"
5. Bobby Brown, "Rock Wit'cha"
6. Poco, "Call It Love"
7. Expose, "When I Looked At

- Him"
8. Tina Turner, "The Best"
9. Soul Sister, "Way To Your Heart"
10. Janet Jackson, "Miss You Much"

PICKLES: TOP ALBUMS

1. Motley Crue, "Dr. Feelgood"
2. Aerosmith, "Pump"
3. Janet Jackson, "Rhythm Nation 1814"
4. Metallica, "And Justice For All"
5. Tracy Chapman, "Crossroads"
6. Young M.C., "Stone Cold Rhymin'"
7. Meat Puppets, "Monsters"
8. New Kids on The Block, "Christmas"
9. Tears for Fears, "The Seeds Of Love"
10. H.R., "Singin in the Heart"

TWISTERS: TOP ALBUMS

1. Neil Young, "Freedom"
2. Billy Joel, "Stormfront"
3. Aerosmith, "Pump"
4. B-52s, "Cosmic Thing"
5. Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Mother's Milk"
6. Tracy Chapman, "Crossroads"
7. John Lee Hooker, "The Healer"
8. Rolling Stones, "Steel Wheels"
9. KISS, "Hot in the Shade"
10. Art of Noise, "Below the Waist"

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