



Royal Crescent Mob

Courtesy of Sire

Mob's talent fails to save boring release

By Carter Van Pelt
Staff Reporter

"Midnight Rose's" marks the fourth release from Columbus Ohio's Royal Crescent Mob, the first since 1989's well-received "Spin the World."

The group, which got its first studio time by rigging a battle-of-the-bands contest, has earned fame from intense live shows and a sound that can't quite be pinned down. Unfortunately, its latest release resembles a car's reaction to ethanol-blend gasoline. It basically just sputters along and doesn't really get going.

"Midnight Rose's" isn't a bad album, but it seems to lack any distinguishing characteristics. The album does have an almost unique sound, but this results from a contradictory combination of elements.

Royal Crescent Mob has a reputation for its rap/funk influences — it claims The Ohio Players as its spiritual leaders



— but on "Midnight Rose's," that sound is defeated by a sort of laid-back Texas/Jack Daniels attitude. Both rap and funk demand an intensity that just doesn't mix with lead singer David Ellison's southern drawl.

Not all of the songs are ruined by these good-old-boyish overtones. The band sobers up its sound enough by the end of

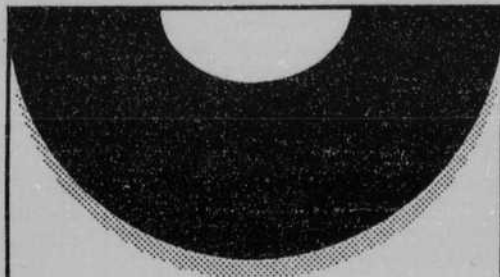
the album to produce the legitimately funky "Woodsnake" and movin'-n'-groovin' "Timebomb," both of which live up to the band's previous musical reputation.

Looking for intellectual inspiration? Don't look here. The Mob admittedly follows the age-old rule of writing about ever-enlightening subjects — drinking, cars and girls. The lack of profundity is eloquently demonstrated by the redundant "I'm sayin'," in which Ellison repeatedly bellows "I've got something to say/ But the words ain't coming my way/ I'm sayin'." It's convincing after about the second chorus of that kind of poetry.

The band can hold its own as far as pure musicianship. All the songs, though not musically complex, are tight and fairly well played.

However, good musicians and tight playing are common enough these days that they can't be seen as this album's saving grace. Other than two good songs, "Midnight Rose's" is basically a yawner.

Martial arts film fails miserably



"The Perfect Weapon"
Starring Jeff Speakman, John Dye
Rated R
Rating 1 1/2

Ratings are 1 (bad) to 5 (excellent).

By Jim Hanna
Senior Reporter

Perhaps there is an unwritten Hollywood maxim floating in the smog of Los Angeles that says a person who is good in the martial arts can't be a good actor.

If so, it's a damn sound maxim. There have been no exceptions to this rule in the recent history of American films. "Perfect Weapon" is the latest movie to challenge this fundamental law of nature and, like all attempts before it, it fails.

Jeff Speakman joins his high-kicking buddies, Chuck Norris, Jean Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal on the junk heap of miserable martial arts movies.

Speakman stiffly portrays Jeff Sanders, a character with the same first name (maybe he couldn't comprehend playing a person with a different name).

Sanders is a drifter who happens to be a master of kenpo karate. As the movie begins, he drifts back to his hometown, Los Angeles, and looks up his old mentor, Kim (Mako).

When Kim is killed by an organized crime thug, Sanders is naturally enraged and seeks to dispense his own brand of kenpo justice.

Jeff's little brother Adam (John Dye) is now a police officer in Los Angeles and his dad (Beau Starr) is a police chief. They tell Jeff to back off and let the law take care of Kim's murder. Oooh, that defiant Jeff will have none of that, and he pursues Kim's killers on his own.

Along the way, he gets into a few violent battles with people who have nothing to do with the story. Apparently, the movie's creators just wanted a few more fight scenes.

All of these unnecessary fights are but precursors to the mother of all kenpo duels that Jeff will have with Tanaka (Toru Tanaka), the enormous, unbeatable bodyguard of the man who ordered Kim's death.

Movies like "Perfect Weapon" are sort of like Mad-libs, those childhood puzzles where you fill in the blanks to get a different story. This movie fits every formula cliché, from the tough guy who is a renegade from the law to a final battle with the ultimate bad guy (complete with a major fireball explosion) to an unneeded love interest.

The film's creators probably just took the script from Jean Claude Van Demme's last movie, erased a few character names and changed

See PERFECT on 15

Brand spanking new Nova Mob

Ex-Hüsker vocalist resurfaces

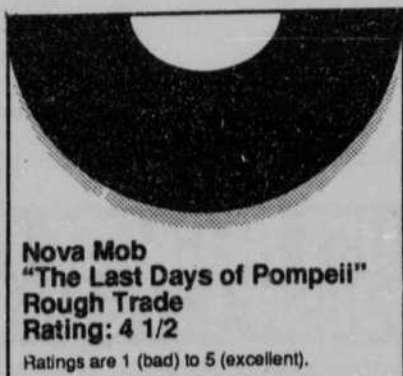
By Michael Stock
Staff Reporter

Hüsker Dü is back.
Sort of.

Sorry to get your hopes up — it's really Grant Hart's brand spanking new band, Nova Mob. It just sounds a hell of a lot like Hüsker Dü.

"The Last Days of Pompeii" finds ex-Hüsker drummer/vocalist Hart turning his talents to guitar and vocalizing. Nova Mob is a three-piece, as all great Minneapolis bands should be.

Hart's first solo album from last year, "Intolerance," met mixed reviews. "Intolerance" featured some great pieces of pop, but lacked the direction in lyric- and songwriting that Hart has found on "The Last Days of Pompeii," which is currently on the British Top Ten album chart.



Tracks on "Pompeii" vary from the folksy acoustic strum of one guitar on "Introduction" and "Admiral of the Sea (79 A.D.)," to the power chords of "Wernher Von Braun" and the title track.

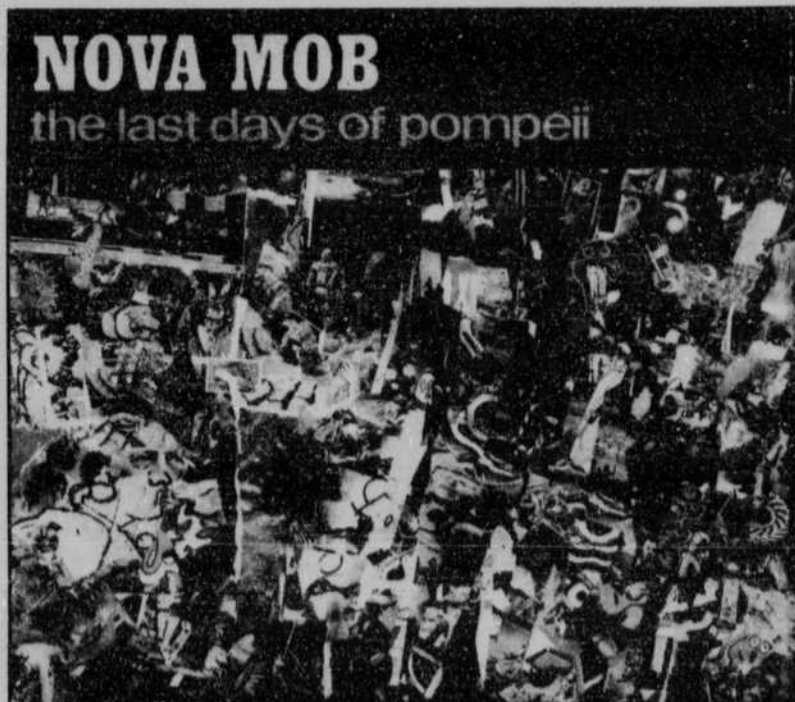
The entirety of "Pompeii" is organized like Hüsker Dü's landmark 1983 concept double-album "Zen Arcade." Hart weaves a tale of post-war Germany and the destruction of Pompeii to power his lyrics.

Songs like "Wernher Von Braun," "Where You Gonna Land (Next Time You Fall Off Of Your Mountain)," "Over My Head," "Admiral of the Sea" and "The Last Days of Pompeii" find Hart at his best as both a songwriter and guitarist/vocalist.

"Wernher Von Braun" opens with a Hüsker-esque barrage of guitar power chords. Michael Crego's drums are slammed and smacked in various ways as Tom Merkl's bass waltzes a fancy bass line.

Hart whips up a stirring, bitter-sweet love song in "Where You Gonna Land," conjuring images from "Back

See NOVA on 15



Courtesy of Rough Trade