

Album unites vocal power, variety of styles

Reviews

Milira
"Back Again!!!"
Motown Records

"Back Again!!!" fuses the voice of experienced 21-year-old black singer Milira with passionate love songs and great instrumental backups. "Back Again!!!" is Milira's second Motown album with Apollo Theatre Records. Although each of her 11 songs range from ballads to jazz to snappy blues such as "Love You Forever," occasionally Milira's quavering, quivering voice sounds monotonous throughout one or two songs, not necessarily the entire album. You can't help but be impressed by her husky vocals when she sings the blues track, "One Man Woman," with all the muscular passion of the late Janis Joplin. This woman's vocal range and depth is incredible.

Milira can make a magical transition from high soprano to bass in one breath, especially apparent on "Ready for Love." In this song, Roger Byam's saxophone accompaniment can't be ignored as he fades in and out, front to back, locking the listener in to a mellow mood.

On "Three's a Crowd," Milira again shows off her vocal range, but focuses on a lighter, sweet-as-molasses sound. The impressive backup bass and vocals further add dimension to this blues number — the type of song you could imagine, blues artist, Michael Bolton singing.

The last track, "Love Always, Milira," a song written by the singer to a far-away boyfriend, crosses hip-hop and reggae with dinner music. A song you have to hear to believe. At times, the background vocals possess an eerie electronic sound — a sound, however, not disconcerting.

Hearing the compassionate "Love You Forever," makes you want Milira

to succeed in love. You want to yell; you want to cheer, "Go for the man! Make him yours, honey!" Not all her songs are as emotionally intense, some are more subtle.

On the track, "All Night," the music combined with Milira's voice waltzes and whirls you slowly around the dance floor in your partner's arms.

To sum it up, "Back Again!!!" is a rich banquet of dinner and dance music, except for "Rocket Love," a catchy shoulder-shaking, slow-rocking remake of a Stevie Wonder classic. She would have done well to include another number or two, just like it, with the same driving beat.

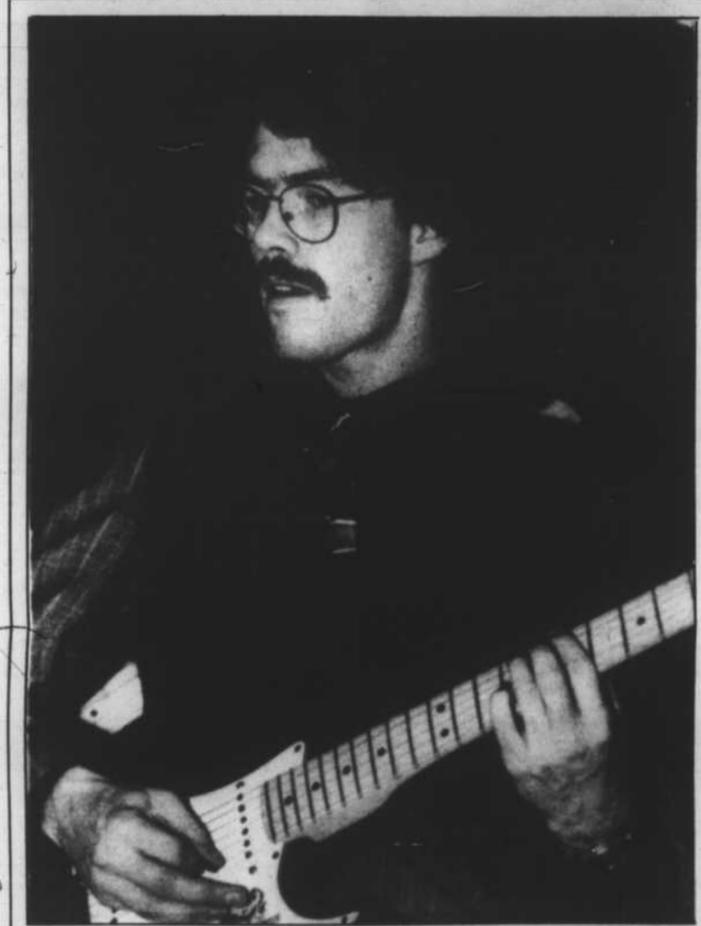
No parental guidance needed on any of her songs. The lyrics of her chosen covers are clean and straightforward, but as love songs go, full of clichés. But what can you expect?

"The album is all about love," Milira said, "the different things people experience in relationships."

— Jill O'Brien



Milira's second album, "Back Again!!!" features husky blues and jazz. Courtesy of Motown Records



William Lauer/DN

Aaron "Skinny" Logan, of Skinny and the Wingtips, performs during the Prairie Peace Park Benefit at the Zoo Bar Sunday. The Prairie Peace Park and Maze is a planned recreation and environmental area seven miles west of Lincoln.

Intricately woven story joins sci-fi, social trends



Judith Moffett
"The Ragged World"
Del Rey Books

By Sam Kepfield
Staff Reporter

Judith Moffett's second book (her first, "Pennterra," appeared to critical acclaim in 1988) is, the cover tells us, a New York Times Notable Book.

This ought to give you a clue. Science fiction that gets noticed by the mainstream is rare and is usually to the detriment of the science side of the equation.

Moffett's book is not a traditional hard science-fiction tale filled with gadgetry, à la Gregory Benford or David Brin. That aside, it is part of a noble science-fiction tradition, that of following current social trends into the future.

The alien Hefn arrive on an Earth on the brink of ecological disaster. They tell Earthlings to save themselves, on their own, in 10 years, or they'll destroy us. For their own good, no doubt.

The story is not mainly about humanity's efforts to stave off imminent destruction.

It is, rather, a person tale, focusing on a group of people swimming through the social currents of late 20th and early 21st century America.

One of them copes with having AIDS. Another is party to a time-travel accident by the Hefn that leaves him a crusader for nuclear power-plant safety (the time-travel loop becomes a major theme in the book). Another encounters the gnome-like aliens, is shown their technology and is mindwiped afterwards (while the aliens go into hibernation).

The book resolves itself happily, with humanity saved, and the time-travel loop is a prophecy fulfilled.

So it doesn't have rocket ships and lots of laser blasts, but it is a good, finely and intricately woven tale that deserves a look, and may garner a few awards next year.

Newest vampire flick bloodless, lacks direction, squanders talent



"Innocent Blood"



By Gerry Beltz
Staff Reporter

In John Landis' latest release, "Innocent Blood" (Cinema Twin, 13th and P Streets), he has his cinematic tongue planted firmly in cheek.

Unfortunately, he plants it so far off that he loses track of the movie.

Anne Parillaud plays Marie, a young woman with a taste for blood. In fact, she would kill for it: She's a vampire.

However, she is what one might call a "nice" vampire; she only kills those who "deserve" it — like gangsters. After she gets what she wants, she blows off the head of her "supper" to avoid any undead uprisings.

Enter Sal (Robert Loggia), a cold-hearted gangster who kills without a second thought. He meets up with Marie and gets drained, but Marie is forced to flee before she has a chance to finish the job.

Eventually, Sal comes back to life (much to the surprise of guest coroner Frank Oz) with a taste for blood, raw meat and revenge against Joe Gennaro (Anthony Lapaglia), the cop who infiltrated his organization.

Joe reluctantly teams up with Marie to get Sal, but is there a chance that Joe will fall in love with a vampire?

"Innocent Blood" had a lot of potential, but it never got any firm direction to go on. Some great talent in

LaPaglia and Parillaud goes to waste in the film — their characters are given all the depth of a puddle.

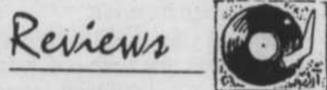
Loggia, however, is terrific as the foul-mouthed, cold-blooded Sal. His gradual realization of his newfound vampirism is quite amusing as well.

The movie is full of inside jokes and tongue-in-cheek humor. Watching movies such as "Dracula," and "King Kong," offering a vampire an Italian dish heavily seasoned with garlic and one gangster that adores Frank Sinatra provide several joyful moments for the audience.

Guest appearances in the movie include Don Rickles as Sal's lawyer and Linnea Quigley, the B-movie scream queen, as a screaming nurse.

Rated R for violence, language and nudity (LaPaglia and Parillaud get nasty with a pair of handcuffs), it would be advisable to leave the little ones at home for this one.

Album shows newcomer's depth with up-tempo tunes, soft ballads



CeCe Peniston
"Finally"
A&M Records

You might have heard her voice, but did not recognize who she was.

Twenty-three-year-old CeCe Peniston first debuted on the Overweight Pooches LP, "Female Preacher," and since then, it has been nothing but success for Peniston.

With three Top 20 singles to her credit, CeCe Peniston is well on her way to establishing herself as one of the best newcomers of 1992.

"Finally" is a well-crafted album that leaves the listener wanting more when it is over.

"Finally," the first single off this

disc, is an up-tempo, catchy song that gets the attention of the listener right away and sets the tone for this LP.

"We've Got A Love Thang" lets the listener feel the radiance and spirit that Peniston brings with her. This is one of the best songs on "Finally."

"Keep On Walkin'," Peniston's third hit, has a house swing to it, and the listener gets a good dose of the depth of Peniston's powerful voice.

While Peniston excels at singing up-tempo dance tunes, when she slows it down she is equally talented at singing ballads. Peniston is able to put the listener at ease with her soft melodies.

"Inside That I Cried" is a slow track that once again shows the range and depth of Peniston's voice.

"Crazy Love," is another ballad that provides Peniston another opportunity to show off her talents and

justify why her album should be bought and listened to.

"Virtue" is a great way to round out "Finally." This tune has a funky "New Jack" house swing to it, and it is a great song to end a great album.

The other four songs on this LP are equally as good as the above-mentioned ones.

The variety on the LP also is impressive for a debut artist. Peniston credits Shirley Murdock, Luther Vandross and Patti LaBelle as her influences.

"Finally" has put CeCe Peniston on the map to stay, and in the coming years, she will be one of the soul divas in the music industry to contend with.

Peniston will perform tunes from "Finally" in concert Oct. 15 at the Music Hall in Omaha.

— Anthony D. Speights

Cyberpunk novel predictable, tedious sci-fi



Don H. DeBrandt
"The Quicksilver Screen"
Del Rey Discovery Books

By Sam Kepfield
Staff Reporter

"Cyberpunk" is a relatively new sub-genre in science fiction.

The only problem with cyberpunk

is that it has become a predictable genre. "The Quicksilver Screen" is a perfect example.

If you believe the blurbs on the covers, it's about the discovery of Infinite Range Television, a video window into alternate realities, and the possibility of communicating across realities. It is, and it isn't.

The first 20 pages begin the book nicely. But after that, it sinks into every cyberpunk cliché one can imagine.

During the quest, DeBrandt throws in the standard cyberpunk vehicles — street gangs, senseless violence, high-tech man-machine interfaces, martial

arts, bizarre punk costumes and bizarre sex variations, with a ritual flogging thrown in. The plot becomes a thinly connected string of random incidents.

Not until the last 30 pages does the plot again fade into view. And the reader still is not told in any great detail why this artist has to be saved; we're in the dark about the corporate machinations behind IRTV.

"The Quicksilver Screen" could have been a decent 60-page novella, if it gave more background in places. Putting it in a 250-page book is too much of a stretch, and it doesn't hold up at all well.