

STATE ARTS with Greg Schick

Summer's hottest rap is explosive

School's back in session, and that means summer's about over. But for those of you who missed it or just plain got lost looking for the latest hip-hop albums, here's a rundown of this summer's hottest.

We started with a bunch of old friends like Naughty By Nature, 2Pac and King Tee. Three groups seemed to favor a mellow flow this summer. King Tee had the funk ("Dippin"), 2Pac was retrospective ("Dear Mama") and Treach was still Treach.

Masta Ace was a personal favorite with more of the laid-back groove and lyrical flow to match.

The Wu-Tang Clan is still represented with Ol' Dirty Bastard's "The Return of the 36 Chambers." He created quite a stir with his single "Shimmy, Shimmy Ya" that sported the chorus, "Oooh, baby I like it raw," which some said referred to sex. ODB says he was referring to hip-hop.

Following the success of the ODB came another of the year's fattest albums, Raekwon's "Only Built 4 Cuban Linx," which entered the Billboard album charts at No. 3. This is a must-have!

Speaking of must-haves, if you want the most real hip-hop since Nas, check out "The Infamous" Mobb Deep. These Queens teens come with track after track of dope cuts with a gritty New York edge.

Soundtracks abound! We started the summer with "New Jersey Drive" and the Dr. Dre-produced "Friday." The hottest new tunes are flying off Russell Simmons' "The Show," not to mention Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" from "Dangerous Minds."

The West Coast was well-represented in the summer of '95. Ice Cube protege Mack 10 finally dropped his album. The Luniz kept the Bay going strong. MC Breed came back as the "Big Baller" while AMG was "Ballin' Outta Control."

The biggest West Coast attack came just last week as the Twinz and the Dove Shack albums were released. Warren G productions strikes again!

Once again back in New York, Grand Puba will blow you away with his second album that includes a guest rap by Lord Jamar. Word has it that Brand Nubian is set to reunite and drop a new album.

On a quick dance hall tip, Shabba Ranks' "A Mi Shabba," Mad Lion's "Real Ting" and Shaggy's "Boombastic" were this summer's bombs. The queen of the pack, Patra, just released her new album last week. Expect it to be a good one.

The fall should bring out some fat albums. Rounding out August, we hope to see Souls of Mischief for the second time.

Anyone who's heard AZ's "Sugarhill" is eagerly awaiting his debut in late September, as well as Wu-Tang's "The Genius" about the same time. KRS-ONE and Onyx are also on the board for new albums.

October holds in store tentative DAS EFX, Erick Sermon, Ice T and the Pharcyde.

Although the buzz is still out on the Dr. Dre/Ice Cube album, the next Dre-produced album we'll probably see is The D.O.C. "No One Can Do It Better," finally back and sporting a gravelly voice after throat surgery.



Jay Calderon/DN

Lee Nickolite talks with one of his pit-crew members after competing in the demolition derby at the Nebraska State Fair Saturday night. It was Nickolite's seventh derby.

Playing in the mud

Demolition derby a 'smashing' success

By Jeff Randall
Senior Reporter

As the smoke rose over the grandstand at the Nebraska State Fair late Saturday night, it would have been hard for a passerby to fathom what exactly had transpired there.

The mud-covered wreckage of dozens of cars was heaped into shapeless piles. The wildly painted steel was twisted and burned, often beyond recognition.

But this wasn't a particularly ugly case of reckless driving. Angry drivers and lawyer-beckoning whiplash victims were nowhere to be found. In fact, most of the people present at the scene were smiling, and many were applauding wildly.

This was the at-first-glance chaos of the State Fair's annual demolition derby. Hundreds of eager audience members piled into the grandstand and clubhouse at the State Fair Park's race track to witness the systematic destruction of automobiles from every corner of the state.

At a little after 7, all eyes in that audience were directed to the rectangular mud pit that was dug out of the track's infield. Eight cars and drivers revved their engines and, with the wave of an official's flag, proceeded to ram into each other until only two cars were left in working order.

This process was repeated throughout the night, much to the satisfaction of the all-ages audience.

Each anticipated impact was greeted with smatterings of applause, the occasional laugh, and the ever-present "oohs" and "aahs" that tend to surface whenever a quarterback is sacked or a figure skater falls while attempting a triple axel.

The inexperienced members of the audience sat in wonder of the proceedings.

"What's going on? I can't even tell what they're supposed to be doing," one woman exclaimed as the first round of competition began.

Others sat with hands folded and eyes fixed on the mud pit, waiting for the kill.

"There, you see?" one man said as a car was put out of commission. "Must

have broke his axle. He's finished."

But by the time the first heat was finished and the two victorious cars rolled out of the pit, nearly everyone there knew what to do.

Applause filled the air, mingling with the gaseous plumes of smoke that hovered above the track.

Each heat followed with much the same results, until the victor was finally named and applauded as a hero.

The crowd gave him his accolades with shouts and whistles, and then audience members began their march to their own cars.

"Remember," said a security officer as the crowd walked up the stairs and out the gates. "Just don't drive like that on the highways."

'Rangoon' takes walk on Burmese wild side

Performances lacking, directing works in true story

By Emily Wray
Film Critic

Looking for a good first-date movie that doesn't require a lot of thought? Try another show. Looking for a challenging, "based-on-a-true-story" flick? Try "Beyond Rangoon."

Starring Patricia Arquette and U Aung Ko, "Beyond Rangoon" is a walk into the mysterious, sometimes-dangerous country of Burma. Political instability, brought on by two decades of repressive military rule, abounds in 1988 Rangoon, Burma's capital.

Arquette gives a convincing, yet

uninspiring, performance as Laura Bowman, a doctor who, by traveling to Burma, hopes to escape the pain of her husband's and son's violent deaths.

Haunted by those flashbacks, Laura one night breaks a military-imposed curfew and witnesses an illegal political demonstration led by Aung San Suu Kyi (Adelle Lutz), the rebel leader in the pro-democracy movement.

In the chaos of the demonstration, Laura loses her passport and must stay in Burma. She meets U Aung Ko (U Aung Ko), who offers to give her an "unofficial" tour of the Burmese countryside, going "Beyond Rangoon."

Laura's adventure grows and becomes more dangerous as the movie unfolds. Between numerous appearances by the military, U Aung Ko teaches Laura to deal with her grief.

Thankfully, Laura loses her glazed look long enough to save her tour guide and friend when shot by a soldier.

High-speed chases on dirt roads and many, many shots of dead bodies break the monotony of running through tropical jungles, fording rivers and watching sunsets.

These many "delights" do not assist the plot. The script is poorly written, making the film slow from the beginning.

Among the movie's brighter spots—U Aung Ko is excellent as a professor/political dissident-turned-tour-guide who doubles as the wise father figure.

And director John Boorman shows talent in the filming of the countryside. Beautiful shots of the landscape

The Facts

Film: "Beyond Rangoon"

Stars: Patricia Arquette, U Aung Ko

Director: John Boorman

Rating: R

Grade: C

Five words: Troubled country meets troubled doctor

and sunsets are oddly comforting as such destructive images continue to flash across the screen.