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French author charms with reading

By Patrick Hambrecht
Staff Reporter

Marie Redonnet charmed her audience with a reading at Andrews Hall on Monday evening, followed by a definitive French intellectual discussion of her five books, including her finale to end all finales, "Nevermore."

Redonnet, one of France's leading progressive writers, said she was sick of writing finales, and hoped that "Nevermore" would be her last.

She called Samuel Beckett, author of "Waiting for Godot," her literary "grandfather." But she said she had to abandon his literature of eternal death and never-quite-ending endings.

Like Beckett, Franz Kafka, or the present-day literature of magic realism, Redonnet's stories are extremely vague. There is no way to tell where or when they are happening, or if the plot has any sort of historical significance at all.

By slipping free of historical data, Redonnet's stories become parables, like Bible stories or Aesop's Fables.

But, Redonnet said, she's tired of writing parables, too, and hopes that "Nevermore" will be her last.

Instead, she said, she is interested in the beginnings that can result from endings. She said she hoped to find a way to escape the entire cycle of beginnings and endings and eventually discover a

more meaningful vision of truth.

Despite the heady, bleak territory of her novels, Redonnet captivated the audience, speaking only French. Translating for her was French professor Jordan Stump.

Stump, who has translated many of her novels, said he was bowled over by the extreme intelligence, "insistent, hallucinatory style and cruel playfulness of her work."

Currently, Stump is translating her new book, "Nevermore," which will be released next fall.

Today, Redonnet will lead a discussion in French and English at 4:30 p.m. in Oldfather Hall. Admission is free.

Music Reviews



Buju Banton
"Til Shiloh"
Loose Cannon
Grade: A

On his debut two years ago, Buju Banton was compared to superstar Shabba Ranks for his international appeal within the dance hall reggae genre, while managing to hold onto his bass gravel voice as his trademark.

With the release of "Til Shiloh," Buju is being compared to reggae great Bob Marley for the content of his songs. The newly Rastafarian Buju chats about the oppressed and his belief in the almighty.

That isn't to say that Buju has broken completely from the subjects that rocketed him to fame. To impress the ladies, Buju still manages "It's All Over" and the first release "Champion." The latter was even remixed to an Ice Cube hip-hop beat for its video version.

"Only Man" is more of a plea to be the only love in the life of this woman. The gravelly voice is in full effect on this one.

Other than the brief female distraction, Buju seems set on uplifting his people's spirits with songs of redemption.

"Til I'm Laid to Rest" starts off

the album talking about the hopelessness of African oppression. This theme could hold for many Third

World countries; in this case the subject is Ethiopia.

Following those lines is "How Could You," which actually confronts the oppressors who now must not only answer to man, but to God.

The religious theme continues in "Untold Stories" backed only by an acoustic guitar. Varied instruments make the album more original than the average dance hall album, with a saxophone even popping up on "Not an Easy Road."

Even stranger is the dub beat backing "Murderer." Over the big bass and echo, Buju condemns violence and killing in another confrontational track.

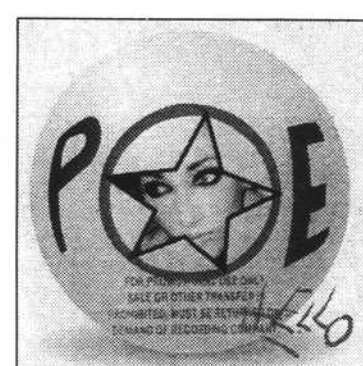
Rounding off the album is the classic two-man dance hall style, with a sung chorus or verse and chatting opposite verse. "Complaint" features Garnett Silk and "What Ya Gonna Do?" features Wayne Wonder and Buju with a thick patois accent.

Dance hall fans will find "Til Shiloh" the smoothest album of the year, while classic reggae fans will be able to appreciate Buju's singing and terrific backgrounds. Don't miss the best reggae album of the year.

— Greg Schick

Poe
"Hello"
Atlantic Records
Grade: D

Poe's "Hello" album is not quite trippy enough to be trip-hop, or funky enough to be hip-hop. She sounds vaguely British, but she's not.



At least half of her lyrics are hardly-metaphoric, thinly-coded feminist and Freudian-rhetoric blandly done.

There are a few great moments on "Hello," most notably the song "Fingertips." With a retro-Sinatra sound and smooth percussion, Poe croons about "that deep and primal yearning" for "those fingertips, those fingertips, those fingertips" in a very smart, sexy way.

Another song, "Fly Away" is pretty, in a clumsy and dorky sort of way.

But it is that clumsy dorkiness that screws up "Hello's" delivery so much. Poe's sound is essentially a percussion-based beatnik style, highlighting her lyrics. And her lyrics are pretty bad.

Not only are Poe's lyrics bad, her delivery is particularly awful. Mick Jagger's lyrics were also stupid, but he sang and hooted so well that no one really cared. Poe phrases her songs so badly, you'd think she were translating them from Russian.

It is remarkable how well these songs hold up, considering that the lyrics are so poor. But then, so what?

— Patrick Hambrecht

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