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Music Reviews

"KRS-One"
KRS-One
Jive
Grade: A-

For a rapper to make it to his seventh album is nothing short of phenomenal. For KRS-One, it's just another link in his hip hop chain.

Not since the Boogie Down Productions debut "Criminal Minded" in 1986 has KRS been as on point as of late. Although "By Any Means Necessary" got much respect, the years to follow came at KRS with harsh criticism.

It seemed the Blastmaster had fallen off, until 1993, when, with the help of Gang Starr's DJ Premier, and rid of the defunked BDP, KRS made his comeback with "Return of the Boom Bap".

The comeback is now complete with the self-titled "KRS-ONE". DJ Premier is still here along with the new BDP crew, KRS's pet projects Mad Lion and Channel Live.

Two sides of KRS are represented here, the Blastmaster, knocking out all other MCs, and the teacher, dropping knowledge to educate.



On the more raw, battle MC side begins "Rappaz R N Danja" that sets the record straight away. This is the first of the Premier produced tracks that feature big bass beats in the minimalist style the KRS loves.

The first single, "MCs Act Like They Don't Know," is another Premier joint along the same lines as "Rappa."

Changing styles, KRS drops "De Automatic," with fellow Bronx-native Fat Joe, that gets backed with a freaky outer space wah wah, the slow loping "Ah-Yeah," and "Represent the Real Hip Hop," a track done with Das EFX, and also appearing on their new album.

Side two to the KRS-One persona finds "R.E.A.L.I.T.Y." or "Rhymes Equal Actual Life In The Youth," a positive message about hip hop as part of the urban culture.

The preachiest part of the teacher spouts "The Truth," a track which may shock some Christians. "What if Jesus Christ were hung upon a tree?/Up on every church wall that's exactly what you'd see/ If Jesus Christ was shot with no respect/We would all have little guns hung around our neck."

The new BDP crew Mad Lion and Channel Live show up for guest spots, as do Busta Rhymes and Sadat X. There appear to be almost as many guest tracks as solos for KRS.

The biggest detracting point is the 38 (yes 38) shout outs from friends of KRS-One. From radio DJs to old school pioneers, these hellos are built into the tracks themselves so you can't even skip them.

Despite the distractions, "KRS-One" is full of the music you always hoped would come from the Blastmaster.

—Greg Schick

"plastic planet"
g/z/r
TVT Records
Grade: F+

Hell, they tried. If you like Black Sabbath and have been wondering what ever happened to the guitarist, wonder no more. Geezer Butler, the original guitarist of Black Sabbath, has formed his own band, g/z/r.

Yuck. This is metal at its worst. Its absolute worst.

Considering that Butler is a guitarist, one would think he could come up with more original guitar riffs than what the album contains. All three of them.

Maybe the first clue that this



was miserable was the fact that the vocalist was even worse than Rob Zombie, and that in itself is pretty bad.

Throw in the fact that these lyrics could have been written by a 7-

year-old with a large vocabulary and you start to wonder why anyone even bothered with this project. There's no depth here; everything is as superficial as it seems.

Butler needs Ozzy Osbourne if he wants to have talent. The fact of the matter is that Butler has no ability to form a song. Everything on "plastic planet" sounds exactly, and let's stress that, EXACTLY the same.

You might get a moment's worth of enjoyment from "plastic planet," but it's doubtful. Very doubtful.

The plus on the "F" was for the cool cover.

—Cliff A. Hicks

"Here's Where the Strings Come In"
Superchunk
Merge Records
Grade: A-

The problem with expectations is that once you have them, chances are they'll never be met. Such is the case with Superchunk. Ever since the opening drums to "Skip Steps 1 & 3," I've been waiting for another "No Pocky" album.

I'm still waiting. But that is not to say that the group's efforts since punk broke had not been substantial. "On the Mouth" and "Foolish" are definite triumphs. More emotionally charged and expansive, Superchunk's current power pop is the result of evolution. Most of the same stuff is still there.



Unfortunately, Mac McCaughn's voice is less hidden by the instruments as in the past. It seems the slack motherf—ers of college rock have grown up.

Maturation is not necessarily bad. A typical Superchunk album follows

just as much a formula as an episode of "Fantasy Island," which is not to suggest that it is therefore stale. Because when the ingredients are mixed properly, the potion is highly intoxicating. This is where "Strings" comes in.

Guitar hooks, stellar drums, punk wailing and pop choruses populate tracks like "Hyper Enough," "Detroit Has a Skyline," and "Certain Stars," which more or less sum up the inspiration that people like Eric Bachman explain to Spin interviewers.

Whatever the case, the record sounds dynamite, and, while it isn't circa 1991 stuff, at least we have something to tap our toes to while we wait.

—Matt Kudlacz

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