

New Releases



COURTESY PHOTO

Best known for 1990's "The Humpty Dance," The Digital Underground has recently resurfaced with the help of established rap artists KRS-One and Biz Markie.

Digital Underground
"Who Got the Gravy?"
Jake Records
Grade: B-

If Digital Underground has any one claim to fame, it's "The Humpty Dance," a song that tore through pop music and became an anthem of sorts - a song that nearly everyone could sing along with.

Unfortunately, "The Humpty Dance" also pigeonholed the Oakland-based hip-hop group's legacy into the embarrassing musical genre of one-hit wonders.

And as a result, the group's subsequent albums and singles have been virtually ignored by the pop music community at large.

"Who Got the Gravy?" tries to change that. The Underground's new album is full of short, to-the-point songs with hummable choruses and thick backing tracks. And to help the cause, the Underground recruited a host of guest stars, most notably Biz Markie and KRS-One, to lend their voices and production skills to the effort.

The result is a mixed bag, a collection of songs that sound as though they were designed to be singles, not a part of a full album. Whereas "Sex Packets" (the group's impressive debut) sounded like a cohesive and masterful blend of tracks, "Who Got the Gravy?" stutters from one song to the next, continuing no common themes, sounds or even styles.

That being said, the songs on

the album are often individually solid. The opening and closing tracks ("I Shall Return" and "Cyber Teeth Tigers," respectively) feature the stripped-down, hard-rhythmic technique of KRS-One, making for sonic exclamation points at both ends of the recording.

"Cyber Teeth Tigers" especially warrants mention, pulling its chorus and bass line from the Holland-Dozier-Holland classic "Smiling Faces Sometimes," which breaks up the Underground's typically unrepentant re-working of Parliament-Funkadelic sounds.

Other standout tracks include "The Odd Couple," an old-fashioned MC battle between Biz Markie and Humpty-Hump, and "The Mission," which features a guest rap from Big Pun.

"Blind Mice" stands as the Underground's lone up-front political statement on the album, lambasting the state of the nation and the apathy of the people who live in it. But in the context of both this album and the entire legacy of the Digital Underground, politics sound a little out of place.

Maybe the Shock-G/Humpty-Hump camp would be better off sticking with funk jams and silly rhymes.

In other words, maybe they should just shut up and dance. That's what made them famous in the first place.

—Jeff Randall

Madonna upsets world's Hindus

Her use of symbols at MTV awards angered many

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Madonna has offended Catholics and fundamentalist Christians with her provocative use of Christian symbols in her music videos. Now, the Material Girl has angered Hindus.

Wearing a see-through blouse and a Hindu facial marking, Madonna performed her song "Ray of Light" at the MTV Music Video Awards last week.

"Madonna's MTV stage performance, which combined Eastern mysticism with Western hedonism, did not sit well with sincere Hindus, Vaishnavas and yoga practitioners around the globe," the World Vaishnava Association said in a statement.

During her performance, Madonna wore a "Vaishnava tilak," a holy facial marking that "undermined the principles of purity the markings represent," said Tusta Krishnadas, spokesman for the association, an umbrella group for the Vaishnava branch of Hinduism.

"By wearing this sacred marking while wearing clothing through which her nipples were clearly visible and while gyrating in a sexually suggestive manner with her guitar player, Madonna offended Hindus and Vaishnavas throughout the world," Krishnadas said, demanding an apology from Madonna and MTV. Madonna received similar criticism from Christians several years ago over the use of religious symbolism in her "Like a Prayer" video.

Friends' star sacrificed favorite food to lose weight

NEW YORK (AP) - Before she was a big star, Jennifer Aniston was a little, uh, big. To lose weight she had to give up her favorite food: mayonnaise on white bread sandwiches.

"I didn't even know I was overweight until someone told me," the "Friends" co-star says in the October Redbook magazine. "I hate it that your self-worth is metered by how much you weigh."

Giving up her most cherished foods, getting on a diet plan and

exercise helped Aniston drop 30 pounds a few years ago. Now the 5-foot-5-inch tall actress is down to 112 pounds, a weight she maintains without cutting out all fun foods.

"I don't have a big diet plan anymore," Aniston said. "I watch what I eat, but I don't not eat a cheeseburger, because life is no fun living on salads and fruit."

Co-star says Tim Allen much improved after rehab

NEW YORK (AP) - Tim Allen is back on the set of "Home Improvement," clean and sober after a tough court-ordered alcohol rehabilitation program.

"It was a boot camp," Allen says in Sept. 19-25 TV Guide. "It was horrible. But (rehab) is the best thing I have ever done."

Allen was arrested last year in Michigan by police who clocked him doing 70 mph in his Ferrari in a 40-mph zone. He pleaded guilty to drunken driving, was fined \$500 and got a year's probation. Allen checked into the California rehab center in April as part of his sentence.

"Home Improvement" co-star Patricia Richardson has noticed a dramatic change in Allen's personality on the set. Before, "he would fume quietly, and it would come out in a mean streak of humor," Richardson said.

Now, he's "sober in more ways than not drinking. He's more grounded. He doesn't back off or go away and fume," she said. "The fact he could make such a major life change in the middle of all this is a miracle."

In 1978, Allen was convicted on drug dealing charges and served 28 months in a federal prison. He went on to become one of the richest entertainers in America, ranking sixth on Forbes magazine's latest list with \$77 million in 1998 earnings.

Shots fired outside nightclub where Shaq promoted album

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) - A gunfight erupted outside a nightclub where basketball star

Shaquille O'Neal was promoting his new rap album. There were no injuries.

The 26-year-old Los Angeles Lakers center was inside Aldo's Night Club on Friday night when gunfire broke out, police Lt. Archie Scott said Saturday. Seven men were taken into custody.

"Shaq was inside the nightclub doing whatever he does. ... Units in the area heard multiple shots being fired from the vicinity just west of the building," Scott said.

The men, who ranged in age from 19 to 32, were arrested for the investigation of various charges, including participating in a criminal street gang and assault with a firearm.

Two handguns were found at the scene, but the shots fired may have come from a passing car.

"I don't think it was related to the function. They just had a different agenda and showed up to cause problems," Scott said.

Spike Lee recalls days as struggling film maker

DANVILLE, Ky. (AP) - Spike Lee remembers the good old days when he was a struggling filmmaker.

"When we were making my first film, 'She's Gotta Have It,' we were all saving empty soda cans and bottles to turn in for nickels. That's how we got money to buy film," Lee said at Center College on Saturday night. "I can tell you about having my phone and electricity and gas cut off when I couldn't pay the bills. And that experience was good for me."

Lee credited his parents for encouraging him to follow his dream.

"Now I count my blessings every day because I'm making a living doing what makes me happy," he said. "Ninety-five percent of the people in this world go to their graves never getting to do what makes them happy."

Lee's films include "Do The Right Thing," "Malcolm X" and "He Got Game."

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