

WITCHBLADE

Musicians, comic artists compose soundtrack

BY CHRISTOPHER HEINE
Staff writer

Kat Bjelland, a punk rock singer since high school, sat on her bed after a party thrown by friends on her 32nd birthday.

She was enjoying one of the many gifts given to her that night: a collection of the popular comic books "Witchblade."

By the end of the reading that night, the lead singer of notorious female punk band Babes in Toyland had an idea.

"I wanted to blow people's minds with a soundtrack to my end-of-the-world dreams," Bjelland said in a formal press release.

From that brainchild a new marketing marriage was born: the comic book soundtrack.

Two years ago, Bjelland was commissioned by Dreamworks Records to produce the album. She quickly recruited several notable musicians (Lydia Lunch of Teenage Jesus and the Jerks) and a co-writer, David Wohl.

The result was the first official release of its kind — "Songs of the Witchblade: A Soundtrack to the Comic Books."

Bjelland said the creative experience for the album was more than just another project.

"It was scary because I didn't have the usual parameters (to work with)," she said. "I was venturing into uncharted territory."

Bjelland's work with Minneapolis-based Babes in Toyland helped her employ the noisy and spooky familiarities of modern punk rock to the soundtrack.

On the band's 1991 release "To Mother," Bjelland at times sings with a ghostly voice to punctuate her lyrical themes.

Her work on the soundtrack shows the vocalist has not lost interest in expressing her darker side.

"The music is ethereal and haunting," Bjelland said. "But it's not confined to one genre — it's too weird for that."

Chris Delay, assistant manager at Cosmic Comics, 200 N. 66th St., said the soundtrack works well with the comic book.

"The album has an appropriate gothic feel that fits well," he said. "It tells a story and sets a mood for the city."

"Witchblade" is set in New York City and its heroine, Sara Pezzini, is taken from the television series, "NYPD Blue."

On the recording, Bjelland plays the animated version of Sara Pezzini, who enjoys characteristics one would expect from a heroine.

She is a powerful, muscular force who deals with evil in an illuminated world divided between reality and mythology.

Bjelland said it was natural for her to emulate the Pezzini character on the soundtrack because they are both complex personas.

"My voice lent itself to her character pretty well," she said. "She goes through so many personality changes, and so do I."

"Besides, we both like screaming our heads

Duzz Osbourne, lead vocalist of hard-core act The Melvins...

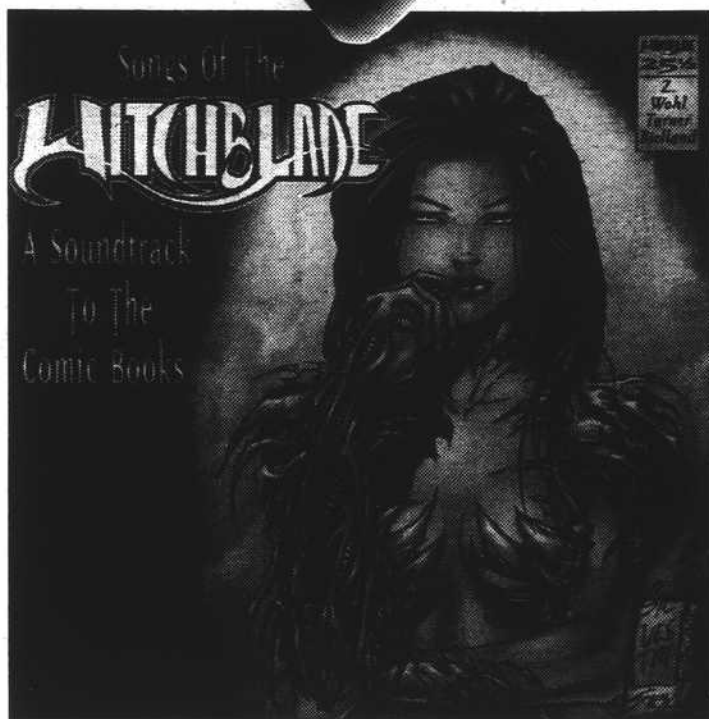


represents The Darkness as embodied in Jackie Estacado.

Dave Mustaine, front man and guitarist of metal act Megadeth as...



NYPD officer, Lt. Joe Siry, the commanding officer of Pezzini.



Kat Bjelland, lead vocalist of Babes in Toyland as...



NYPD detective Sara Pezzini. She was chosen to wear the ancient alien weapon known as The Witchblade.

off." Bjelland, in a phone interview from Minneapolis, said she enjoys the "realms of mythology in comics."

The history of rock 'n' roll is sprinkled sharing performers with similar inclinations to Bjelland.

One only has to think of David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" or

today's Marilyn Manson to understand the music's connection to mythology, fantasy and animation.

Could the comic book soundtrack become an industry trend for musicians?

Delay, who has worked at Cosmic Comics for more than three years, believes the answer is a resounding "yes" because of a growing market for comic book byproducts.

"Witchblade" (soundtrack) is a pretty good seller," he said. "It's selling right along with the toys and the T-shirts."

"People get into a certain character and believe they have to have everything associated with it."

Delay said musicians like Bjelland have always been fans of comics.

Performers such as Gary

Newman and Glenn Danzig, he said, have made unofficial attempts at producing comic book soundtracks but met little recognition for their efforts.

Delay agreed that rock 'n' roll musicians seem to be both attracted and inspired by the realm of comic fantasy, due to their similar natures.

"Both mediums tend to deal with darker themes," he said.

Bjelland, who worked on the project for 18 months, said her desire to do a project like "Witchblade" stems back to childhood.

"When I was young," she said, "I remember telling my dad while I was sitting at the piano that I wanted to do soundtracks to scary movies."

"This is pretty close."

"Witchblade" is now available in stores, and while you shouldn't expect another Babes album, it might be just interesting and certainly as ethereal.

Effects don't save drowsy 'What Dreams May Come'

BY JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

It is widely believed that when people die they go somewhere. It could be heaven, could be hell, could be somewhere else. Well, wherever I go, I sure hope this movie isn't showing there.

Polygram Films' latest release, "What Dreams May Come," offers a lot of exciting and creative imagery but little in the way of an interesting plot line. The story attempts to combine elements from a number of different religions but ultimately comes off very vague and confusing, requiring the viewer to say, "OK, I guess that could happen," quite often.

The film tells the story of Chris Nielsen (Robin Williams) who dies unexpectedly and goes to heaven, which is, for him, existing in one of his wife's paintings. However, nice as it is, he simply can't get over losing

his wife Annie (Annabella Sciorra), who is somewhat of a mental case to begin with, but even more so after Chris' death.

When he is told that Annie can never join him in heaven he decides he has to find her and embarks on a journey through heaven, hell and everything in between to save her from her own agony, just like he always did on Earth.

A major problem with this story is that the leading lady is quite unlikeable. Basically, she's just a mental wreck who is totally dependent on Chris for even the slightest of life's challenges, and it's hard to believe that their love for each other is strong enough for a connection between earth and the afterlife. Annie, a severely depressed painter, is such a weak person that it's hard to understand why Chris, the man with it all together, would care about her so much as to ultimately serve only as her crutch in the marriage.

The Facts

Title: "What Dreams May Come"
Stars: Robin Williams, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Annabella Sciorra
Director: Vincent Ward
Rating: PG-13
Grade: C-
Five Words: Wake up and stay home

The plot is too complicated and much of the film is spent building up to the climax, which is ultimately lacking. The ending is cheesy and angelically optimistic, and in the end, the notable special effects just aren't enough to make this film worthwhile.

The acting by Williams is impressive at times but his character is only explored superficially and we never really know what inspired or cultivated this intense love for his wife. Also,



COURTESY PHOTO CHRIS (ROBIN WILLIAMS) and Annie Nielsen (Annabella Sciorra) are reunited in the cinematic wet-paint dream "What Dreams May Come." Chris struggles throughout the film to regain his wife in the afterlife.

Cuba Gooding Jr. does a fine job in his portrayal of Albert, Chris' friend from Earth who is also in Heaven. Unfortunately, he isn't on the screen for much of the movie.

The plot limitations put on him and Williams greatly hinder this film and both heavenly characters could have been fleshed out much more.

While the images and ideas illus-

trated in "What Dreams May Come" are exciting, the overall effect is a shallow attempt at representing the afterlife and a dull portrayal of two people's love for one another. Rather than seeing this movie I recommend drinking a warm glass of milk and hitting the sack. Hopefully, you'll find something a little more interesting in your own dreams.