## 'The Night' brings a new dawn for Morphine

By Sean McCarthy

Staff Writer

Mark Sandman knew how to open a concert. For most shows, as the lights dimmed, he uttered one phrase that could electrify the crowd: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are Morphine, at your service.'

And, as for their brand of "low rock," there wasn't anyone who could do it better.

"Low rock" is a term defining Morphine's sound, but it hardly does the band justice. Defining "low rock" is about as easy as defining "alternative." It was just a term that stuck with the band.

Last summer, lead singer Mark Sandman died after he suffered a heart attack onstage in Italy. It was a terrible loss for an industry sorely lacking in mainstream originality.

Morphine had a truly original sound. A novice listener could listen to one or two tracks off of any of the group's albums and not mistake Morphine for another artist or band. The group could sing about reveling

Seven paintings by Pablo Picasso have

been recovered more than five years

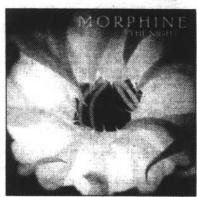
after they were stolen, Swiss authorities

thieves who burrowed into the base-

ment of a Zurich art gallery in October

The paintings were stolen by

said Tuesday.



in a barfly-type of existence one minute and sing about paying for the consequences of such a life in the next song

Though the band only had three members, the rhythm section was so tight, no other members were needed. Saxaphonist Dana Colley and drummer Billy Conway perfectly complimented Sandman's unique, twostring bass guitar. And "The Night," Morphine's last studio release, shows how far the band was willing to take its sound to another level.

Lyrically, Morphine was able to

Stolen Picasso works worth \$40 million found

of the paintings accounted for \$40 mil-

Other experts disputed the figure.

Picasso paintings had been recovered

with the help of an unnamed intermedi-

ary, who was rewarded by being

allowed to keep two of the paintings.

Police and prosecutors said the

many of its peers. "Automatic taxi stops," "a head with wings" and "french fries with pepper," were random phrases that could loom in your head long after the song ended.

"The Night" has many such memorable moments. On "So Many Ways," Sandman's delivery of the line, 'Is this what you had in mind/ When you called above to the angels/ For the six hundred and sixty-sixth time," manages to be both playful and menacing.

Morphine's lack of instrument variety was criticized. True, a band consisting of solely a two-string slide bass guitar, a baritone sax and drums may be a tad restrictive. However, each of its albums had a very distinct sound that varied from previous

female backup singers are some of extra degree of fullness to Morphine's patented sound.

The new additions also make

A Swiss man and two Italians were

The stolen paintings included

jailed in 1996 for the theft, but the paint-

Picasso's "Seated Woman," a gouache

on canvas painted in 1903, and "Christ

of Montmartre," a watercolor painted

shortly afterward. The two pictures had

been stolen from the gallery once

ings were not recovered at the time.

burn images into listeners unlike "The Night" Morphine's most challenging listen yet. "Cure for Pain" and "Yes" could hook you in one listen because the band's lethal rhythm arrangement lured you to nod your head just like a Parliament-Funkadelic jam.

But many of the rhythms are hidden in "The Night." Colley's typically dominant sax skills show far more restraint on this effort than any other Morphine album.

Sandman wanted to stretch Morphine's sound as far as it could go. And tragically, "The Night" was the beginning of a new sound for the band. This was supposed to be Morphine's "Achtung Baby," a definitive division between the old-school Morphine sound and the new-school sound.

"The Night" is an excellent coda "The Night" is Morphine's most to a stellar career. The remaining varied yet. A viola, tri-tar, organ and members have arranged to tour for this album, using all the musicians' the additional instruments adding an sitting in on "The Night" and using



DOOM(ARD@AOL(OM

## The Night"

**ARTIST:** Morphine LABEL: Dreamworks Records GRADE: A -FIVE WORDS: Fitting

tribute to Sandman's

legacy.

different vocalists for Sandman. Though the tour could never compare to seeing Morphine with Sandman, it keeps his memory alive. "The Night" is another great reminder of Sandman's desire to never be complacent, even if you had a damn-near perfect sound to be complacent with.



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# Gallery owner Max K. Bollag then The police did not elaborate.

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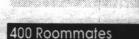
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