

Slow spring looms for CDs

■ Honeydogs' new release one of few bright spots in a early season full of bad pop artists and sophomore acts

BY ANDREW SHAW

Another season brings another slew of album releases by major artists including Dave Matthews and Run-D.M.C.

But the spring pickings seem awful slim. After a cascade of consumer-ready holiday releases, the early 2001 line-up is filled with sophomore albums from recent pop stars, which may exhibit newfound talents but will more likely prove that current pop music is quite one-dimensional.

The parenthetic rating following each album synopsis is what I would trade for the possession of the particular album. Like always, I'm just a writer, not a role-model. If you like a band that I abhor, buy the album and enjoy it at a low volume.

Jan. 9:
Traffic Soundtrack: Score by Flea, the Red Hot Chili Pepper, Cliff Martinez, an ex-Pepper, and Herbie Hancock, an electronica-jazz mastermind not associated with the Chili Peppers, until now, that is. (I would trade my overdue parking tickets for this album.)

Jan. 23:
Dracula 2000 Soundtrack: Another soundtrack courtesy Powerman 5000, Pantera, Static-X, and other bands that sound just like them. (My copy of the Godzilla 2000 Soundtrack)

Jennifer Lopez, "J. Lo.:" For those who hadn't seen enough of her at the 2000 Grammy Awards. (I'll only buy it if she apologizes for "Anaconda")

O-Town, "O-Town.:" The debut album from the band created on TV's "Making the Band." (A dime to each member so they can grab a warm cup of coffee and remember when their show was 276th on the Nielsen)

Jan. 30:
Honeydogs, "Here's Luck.:" The first album of 2001 worth waiting for. The Honeydogs' laid-back groove is orchestrated rock at its finest. (My album collection of bands who try too hard to sound like the Honeydogs do naturally)

Less Than Jake, "Greased.:" Punk versions of tunes from everyone's favorite musical, "Grease." (My limited edition can of Danny Zuko pomade)

Feb. 6:
BS 2000, "Simply Mortified.:" Second album from the side project of Beastie Boy Ad Rock. (My Body Count album, Ice-T's "Cop Killer" side project)

Feb. 13:
Run-D.M.C., "Crown Royal.:" Attempted comeback album featuring Kid Rock, Fred Durst, Everlast, and more. (Even trade for Santana's "Supernatural")

Michael Jackson, "Greatest Hits.:" Watered-down version of "History" expected to get all those Jackson fans excited for new material coming later in 2001. (My replica sequined glove)

Feb. 20:
Eve, "Scorpion.:" DMX's "little sister" comes out with her second solo album. (I'd trade all the awkward memories from my sophomore year of high school for her sophomore album)

Feb. 27:
Dave Matthews Band, "Everyday.:" The much delayed and anticipated album from the South African frat-rocker. (A case of Miller High Life)

A*Teens, "Teen Spirit.:" The "A" stands for ABBA. Even I can't make up something that dumb. (My blue polyester suit with the built-in sweaty chest hair)

March 6:
Semisonic, "All About Chemistry.:" Just when you thought you had "Closing Time's" three chords out of your head ... (The "repeat" button on my CD player)

March 13:
Train, "Drop of Jupiter.:" Rod Hotchkiss's high monotone yell in "Meet Virginia" drove me mad. What other subtle torture could they have up their sleeves? (A box of tissues minus two; one for each ear)

Ozzy Osborne: Everything he touches seems to turn to gold, except for that bat, of course. (A gift certificate for one free shower at the Flying J Truckstop)

March 20:
Aerosmith: Liv Tyler wasn't in enough movies lately, so the kings of cheesy soundtrack ballads are releasing another album. (My "Get A Grip"-inspired nipple ring)

Mandy Moore: More bubblegum pop to clog the pipes of the music industry. (My dimples)

Ghostface Killah: The Wu-Tang member releases his third solo album. (Whatever it takes to keep Aerosmith and Mandy Moore from debuting at number one)

March 27:
Buckcherry, "Time Bomb.:" "Come on. Yeah. I'm on a place with cocaine and, yes, I'm all lit up again." What poetry will they release this time? (I'll buy the album if the lead singer leaves his shirt on in the next video)

Burns' 'Jazz' heats up winter

Music fans look forward to 10-part series of Americana

BY SEAN MCCARTHY

The music that many believe only could have come out of America now has a sprawling documentary to call its own: Jazz.

Director Ken Burns, who turned both America's history ("The Civil War") and pastime ("Baseball") into acclaimed documentaries, now turns his attention to music.

The documentary, appearing in 10 installations, will air on Nebraska ETV Network and NETV2 throughout the month of January. It begins tonight on NETV at 8 p.m. The first installation, "Gumbo," features an overview of the series and the beginning of jazz in New Orleans.

To condense the history of jazz to a modest 18-hour-documentary, 75 interviews, 500 pieces of music, 2,400 still photographs and more than 2,000 film clips were used. Burns' series spans from the beginning of jazz in pre-Civil War New Orleans to current jazz hybrids.

Dara Troutman, associate general manager of communications at Nebraska ETV Network, has tried to incorporate the documentary with local venues. The series has been promoted heavily on Nebraska Public Radio, especially during the station's jazz programs. Troutman said she hoped the program would pull more people into the music of jazz as well as get people to further appreciate public radio and television.

"As with everything, our goal is education and enlightenment," Troutman said, "If we can ignite a flame of interest, maybe we accomplished our goal."

Nationally, the documentary has been heavily promoted. Starbucks Coffee has been playing the series soundtrack at its locations. PBS has also advertised in major television slots and most morning talk shows have done features on "Jazz."

Tom Larson, instructor of Jazz History, said he planned on following the "Jazz" series closely. Larson, who has written music for more than 50 documentaries, said this documentary may affect people differently than historic documentaries such as "The Civil War."

"(Music) strikes people so emotionally," Larson said, "That's what makes the history of jazz so fascinating."

Larson, who plays piano, said the history of jazz was also the history of American culture and history. One of the most important accomplishments of jazz was in area of race relations. Jazz

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Dana Troutman

associate general manager at NETV

clubs, in particular, played a pivotal role, he said.

"It was safe and acceptable for black people and white people to co-mingle," Larson said, "People could professionally work together."

Even if "Jazz" reaches a mass audience, it will still be difficult for the genre to shake some of the stigmas associated with it, Larson said. Common stigmas surrounding jazz include: the music is difficult to listen to, it is for an elitist audience and younger listeners cannot relate to it are all.

"My parents have a connection with jazz," Larson said, "When you play Benny Goodman, they're right there. That's their music."

Jazz has woven its way into contemporary music so subtly, many don't even know how significant the music is to other genres. Larson said there are many similarities between jazz and rap music.

"Rap music that came out of the black community was a means of expression for that community," Larson said, "It was later co-opted by the white community."

"Jazz" has received mostly positive reviews. However, some have criticized the documentary for not covering the later period of jazz more thoroughly.

"It's easier to talk about the earlier stuff," Larson said.

The scene in Kansas City in 1930 was a fascinating story that needed to be covered in depth. In contrast, the last 20 years of jazz have not been that interesting, he said.

"There hasn't been one true innovator in the last 20 years," Larson said.

Jim Williamson, who plays bass and drums and is on the board of directors for the Lincoln Musicians Association, said the origins of jazz needed to be covered more thoroughly than the other eras of jazz.

"People get confused today for what we hear as jazz," Williamson said

'Jazz' film complete, engrossing

BY SEAN MCCARTHY

Ken Burns wants his audience to groove to jazz. And after watching the entire documentary of "Jazz," it is likely your couch will inherit an even stronger groove.

Through its first three episodes, "Jazz" will have audiences glued to the television and will stand with Burns' other accomplishments of "Lewis and Clark," "The Civil War" and "Baseball."

The first three episodes, "Gumbo," "The Gift" and "Our Language," trace the origins of jazz to the late 1920s, when the popularity of jazz exploded. Like Burns' other documentaries, "Jazz" has a near-perfect mix of scholarly documentation and Trivial Pursuit-style fun facts.

Obviously, "Jazz" is meticulously researched. In the first episode, "Gumbo," which airs tonight at 8 p.m. on NETV Channel 13, the viewer gets a decent overview of the series and, in an effortless fashion, the documentary leads itself into the earliest periods of jazz. In a fuzzy, black and white cityscape overview, the first words the listener hears is, "Jazz music objectifies America."

Purists and jazz scholars should delight with the thorough coverage of the origins of jazz. The call and response motifs of gospel music and the embarrassing aspects of the minstrel shows of the mid 1800s is seen before the earliest jazz musicians sprout up in the second

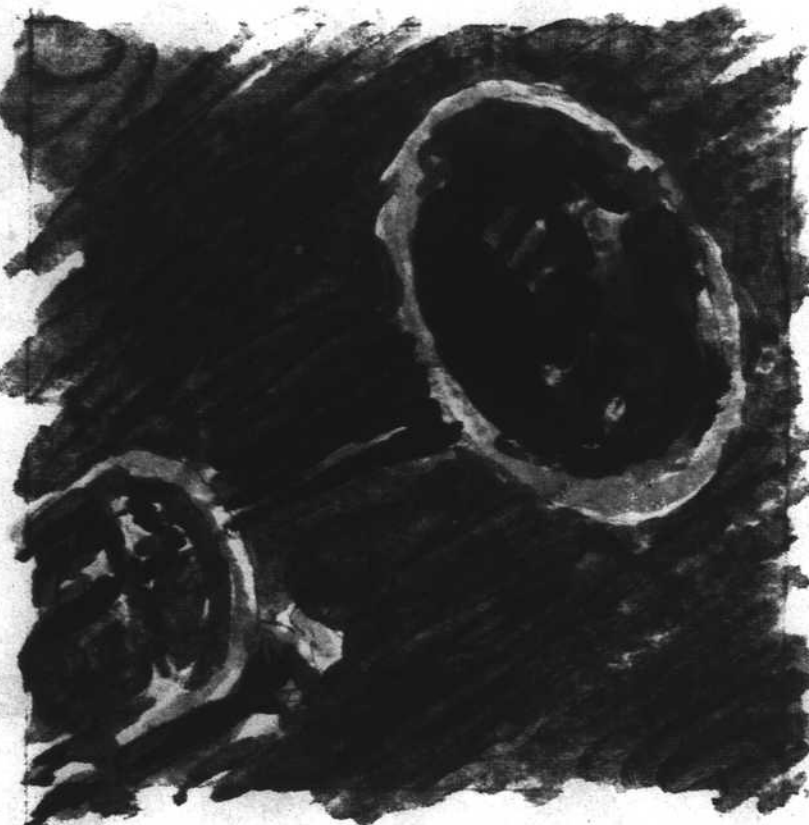
episode. Burns thoroughly focuses on ragtime and blues styles and how they were brought together by horns

Arts and entertainment enthusiasts will no doubt drool over the drama of the beginnings of jazz. Even the name of the music genre has its seedy origin. In "Gumbo," the origin of the term "jazz" is explained as the slang term of a popular jasmine perfume worn by prostitutes at the time.

Ragtime, a popular music style in the late 1800s, had a stigma surrounding it that would dwarf the criticisms of rap, heavy metal and rap metal combined. The documentary reads excerpts of comments by critics, suggesting fans of ragtime be treated the same way a doctor would treat a patient with leprosy.

The subject of race relations is a crucial element of "Jazz." And Burns wastes no time confronting the tensions between whites and blacks in the pre- and post-Civil War era. Ironically, the racism of the Jim Crow laws helped bring together non-white musicians and laid the foundation of what we know as jazz today. All of this is covered in a fluid, smooth-flowing format that can appeal to both people who watch "Masterpiece Theater" and those who watch "Survivor."

It is hard to imagine "Jazz" will be able to hold up the quality, interest and the smooth flow of the first three episodes when the music goes into the pre- and post-World War II era. But so far, the first three episodes rank up with some of the best documentaries ever filmed.



Louie Armstrong played a key role in the genesis of the jazz music form, as will be chronicled in the documentary 'Jazz' starting today on NETV at 8 p.m.

Delan Lonowski/DN

Uncommonly absorbing 'Traffic' weaves impressive tale of drug war

BY SAMUEL MCKEON

"The war on drugs has many enemies. Sometimes the enemy is your own family. And I don't know how you wage war against your family."

— A line from the movie "Traffic"

Which is why the war on drugs, like the war on violence or the war on obesity or any other social war, cannot be won. More than statistics and money, the war on drugs asks for an assault on desires of human consumption, which cannot be combated with any policy or criminal punishment.

The strongest part of "Traffic," the newest film from director Steven Soderbergh and quite possibly the best American movie in 2000, is how it lays bare the nuances of human nature that

Traffic ★★★★★

simply have no reasonable explanation. What leads good to bad? "Traffic" has no genuine answers, nor does it solutions, but it shows a wide canvas of what could sincerely be called protagonists, all connected to the word drugs in some way (whether it be enforcement, sales, or use) lost in the pursuit of some material or chemical

high. If it isn't drugs, it's money or a lifestyle one can't give up. Faced with hardship all her life, the beautiful, pregnant wife (Catherine Zeta-Jones) of a drug lord refuses to return, using her young son's golf putter as a sign of what she has to lose. When her husband is arrested, and faced with forfeiting his entire fortune, the wife is again faced with poverty. Just watch what she does to prevent it.

In another story, an Ohio judge (Michael Douglas) accepts a job as the nation's drug czar, and is immediately faced with his own domestic crisis; his

honor student daughter, Caroline (Erika Christensen) has fallen into drug addiction with free base cocaine.

While the most interesting segment involves a corrupt Mexican cop (Benicio Del Toro) trying to walk the fine line between death and profit, all while battling his conscience, the key, absorbing scenes occur with the father and daughter in Ohio.

The screenplay, written by Stephen Gaghan, is adapted from a British series by the same name, draws Caroline as a character who falls hard for drugs, in the way that few people, I suspect, do.

She cries, literally, tears of joy, at the thought of its use. She subjects herself to whatever demand is makes of her, sexually or financially. She represents the ecstasy end of the spectrum, and rarely has it been captured so well, the abject happiness crack makes her feel. The lingering images of the film mostly involve her character, and her boyfriend Seth (Topher Grace) who is just smart enough to justify the use of drugs as an escape from convention.

There's a scene at the end that stuns.

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