

review & entertainment

The Roots
Illadelph Halflife
(DGC/MCA)

Well, I am a white boy from Eastern Canada. So, me trying to review rap music is like someone from the hood trying to understand Rita MacNeil. Well, not that anyone else does either, but anyway. The Roots have certainly put out a good album here, and the excellent recognition that they are receiving because of it is far from undeserving.

First of all, the beats are all that, and they certainly have proved with this 20 track, 72 minute release, that with their laid back rhythms, they are leading the whole rap music industry into all new levels.

The lyrics are also fairly original, and thankfully, not too racist or woman degrading, of course. And it's certainly proven by their video for "What They Do" that they aren't ones to go along with the crowd, anyway.

Thus, personally, I think that The Roots could be the most original rap group to come on the scene in a number of years, and that they could be the hit group of the future. But what do I know? I have to go play hockey and listen to Ashley MacLissac now.

Rating: ****

- Todd MacLean

Fiona Apple
Tidal
(WORK/Sony)

There seemed to be a fair amount of hype surrounding this babyfaced 19 year old and her debut album, *Tidal*, so I decided to have a listen, to see what it was all about. And, fortunately, there seems to be legitimate reasons behind it all.

Upon observing the singer (her face is plastered all over the cover, case, and actual CD) one would think that such delicate features would possess a delicate voice as well. However, her voice is rather a deep and vibrant alto, that portrays a sorrowful, yet delightful tone to it, which incidentally goes perfect with the jazzy-type of feel that her songs have.

The album starts off with the catchy tune of "Sleep to Dream," whose intriguing lyrics coincide exquisitely with the rhythmic patterns displayed here. And my favourite song on the 10-track album is "Shadowboxer" that just has an all round angst-ridden, poetic theme to it: "You make me a shadowboxer, baby, and I don't know when you're gonna make your move."

With this quaint little initial release by Fiona Apple, she has made a name for herself on the music scene with her innovative piano and vocal renditions. But perhaps with her next release, this up and coming artist will get the proper recognition she deserves.

Rating:****

- Todd MacLean

Fugees
Bootleg Versions

This album really didn't appeal much to me, or any of my friends who listened to it. First of all, there were really annoying phone dialogues between the tracks. These were supposed to indicate that it was a relaxed, unofficial, "bootleg," style of album. However, there was at least one mention of "pot," and everyone sounded somewhat intoxicated during these interludes.

The songs themselves I found to be of poor quality. Even their recent hit "Killing Me Softly..." was severely messed up. This new live version was of really poor quality -- cracking vocals, flat notes, and an apparent inability to recall the lyrics to their song. The Song "Nappy Head" (need I say more?) can be summed up in one word, "quasi-reggae," a poor attempt at the Jamaican sound. Further, a song I must reluctantly deem "tolerable," "Ready or Not" had really poor rapping. In fact, the album's only saving grace was a remake of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry," with the help of guest Steve Marley. However, this song would have been better if the Fugees could just have sang along with Steve instead of "rapping" in the background. This "rapping" really detracted from the song's lyrics.

I'd have to say, the only suitable place for this album is at a party where lyrics aren't the issue. Or possibly as a *quiet* background music. My advice to the Fugees is this: Steer clear of remixes, they don't work guys. This CD, I give a 1/2 star out of a possible 5.

Az Yet
Az Yet
(LaFace Records)

This group is amazing! If you were to secretly play this and say it was Boyz to Men's new one, I would believe you - that's how good these guys really are. Songs one through twelve have the same lyrical style as the famous foursome, and beats comparable to groups like Jodeci and Dru Hill.

The writer for this group is none other than Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds, the writer for Toni Braxton and some Boyz to Men songs, as well as some Whitney Houston tunes. His songs are usually so good that I could sing them, and they would still be good.

Even though you have probably never heard of these guys (I never did), I think you will like their slow songs, like "Hard to say I'm sorry" and "I don't want to be lonely", as well as their fast songs ("Every little beat of my heart" and "Secrets", to name two). All in all, this CD is definitely a great buy!

- Greg Lucas

Funkmaster Flex
The Mix Tape Volume II
(Loud/RCA)

By the name of this CD, you are probably thinking that it is totally cheese, but if you heard some of the artists, you would think again.

This CD is not your everyday, ordinary CD; the format is 60 minutes of non-stop music, something like what you would hear at Myron's. The CD contains 44 different samples of songs, some longer than others, and they mix very well together. Some of the big name artists are Naughty by Nature, Cypress Hill, Redman, Mary J. Blige, Notorious B.I.G. and Run DMC, just to name a few.

Another reason why this CD is so good is that every song is solid, and if you don't like some of the songs, they're only about a minute or less anyway. Most CDs are bought only for one or two songs, but this one you can listen to all through without skipping any. I recommend this CD to everyone who likes a good mix.

- Greg Lucas

Rascalz
Cash Crop
(Figure IV/BMG)

For their first album, these guys didn't do a bad job. At first I thought that this was just another awful Canadian group trying to make it big, but after a while, it kind of grew on me.

As far as Canadian groups go, these guys are probably about as big as Maestro Fresh Wes (if you remember him...) or the Dream Warriors. Their first single "Blind wid the Science" is the best song on the album by far, but their second release "Dreaded Fist" is also not bad. Other songs to check out on this album are "Soul Obligation" and "Strange Brew" with the other songs on the album being so-so.

In comparison, these guys are kind of like the Dream Warriors, but more like the Fugees as far as their beats go. I really like this album, but it took a few listens. If you want something that you'll like right away, I don't recommend that you buy this.

thank you
reviewers