

STUDENT LIFE

The next British invasion

By Joshua Lane
student life editor

The British are coming...again. This time they've decided to leave their redcoats at home in exchange for some good tunes. It seems every year at about this time, our good friends from across the pond export all their musical goods into the U.S. Last year's biggest import The Arctic Monkeys album *Whatever People Say I Am That Is What I Am Not*, hit U.S. stores in late Feb. and blew up the college music charts with their hit, "I Bet You Look Good On The Dance Floor." It sold 300,000 copies within three months, a mere fraction of their 1,150,000 sold in the UK, making it the largest release in UK history.

This year's invasion comes with a little less hype but is not short on quality. The Kaiser Chiefs, Amy Winehouse and Mika are all British imports and their albums have all been released this month. They each bring a different style to the musical table and ultimately bring a breath of fresh air to a stagnant U.S. music industry during a time of year that record labels are known for releasing their mediocre-at-best stuff.

The headliners of this year's imports are the Kaiser Chiefs. Last March their album *Employment* went to number one in the UK and climbed into the top 10 here in the States thanks to large media coverage and the infectious hit "I Predict a Riot." This year's album *Yours Truly, Angry Mob*, has already climbed to number one in the UK and is awaiting decision here in the states.

The Chiefs bring back their catchy rock style once again, but this time a little more mature. The songs are definitely more layered and you get the feeling that the Chiefs are really trying to accomplish more this time around. Lead singer Ricky Wilson tones down his voice, going for musicality instead of raw energy, and he ends up with a sound that truly attempts to channel English superstar, Morrissey.

There is no shortage of catchy songs on the album. The first single, "Ruby," is incredibly infectious and the video is all over FUSE network and MTV (for that fifteen minutes at four in the morning when they actually show videos). Some songs seem to give off the classic rock vibe. "When the Heat Dies Down" is reminiscent of The Rolling Stones. "Paint it Black" and other songs like "The Angry Mob," with lyrics like "It's only cause you came here with your brothers too/ If you came here on your own you'd be dead," give off a



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Kaiser Chiefs lead the new British invasion

Thin Lizzy feel.

Amy Winehouse releases her second album *Back to Black* this month and hopes to get some good sales out of her U.S. release. She has been met with a lot of adoration from the media for her new-generation-Motown feel. She gets some help from super producer Mark Ronson, who has brought the old-new feel to artists like Christina Aguilera and another UK import, Lily Allen.

Winehouse really harkens back to old time greats Billy Holiday and Etta James, while bringing the Motown sway and horn section to the party. Her writing style holds nothing back as she feels free to confess everything from drinking too much to breaking guys' hearts, giving her the bad girl vibe. Her first single, "Rehab," is about just that. It opens with the line "They tried to make me go to rehab/ but I say no, no, no/They tried to make me go to rehab/ but I won't go, go, go." Winehouse has a deeper, raspier voice that seems to lie about her age, making her sound much older than she actually is.

The last of the imports, Mika is actually from Lebanon, but grew up in London. He brings straight pop with no apologies, and his first single "Grace Kelly," which is the first song on the album, sums up what is in store for the remaining 12 tracks. Mika has great song writing ability and can write a great piano pop song that sounds more like Elton John in his heyday than the ultra-generic "Daniel Power." Mika's best talent, perhaps even better than his song writing, may be the fact that his vocal style sounds like Queen's lead singer Freddy Mercury. You can close your eyes and the similarity is uncanny. The album is a toe tapper from track one and never lets up.

The UK has been good to us for almost fifty years. They seem to have found the perfect time to give us their best stuff.

The Beatles invaded and tore it up on the Ed Sullivan show almost 50 years ago. They've been trying for a repeat of the great invasion but have yet to do it. That doesn't mean that with the talent they have they shouldn't at least give it a try.

Kaiser Chiefs: A-
Amy Winehouse: B
Mika: B-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Winehouse channels old greats on new album



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Mika brings Elton John and Queen to new pop

90s indie-pop group stays eclectic

By Chris LaFuria
editor-in-chief

a heavily-distorted chorus.

As the band experiments, they take a trip back to the 60s with "Play Tough," which sounds as if it could fit into a repertoire with The Kinks and The Hollies. In addition to the simple melodies,

From giving a lecture in Physics to exploring a new style of robotic Queen anthemic rock, Bob Schneider and his adolescent-voice-led indie-pop supergroup, the Apples in Stereo, have hit the shelves once again with their latest installment of eclectic rock, *New Magnetic Wonder*. Schneider, who also produced and mixed the album, leads The Apples in the same trippy, psychedelic experience that got them through the mid-90s and into 2007. His vocals are backed by his own expertise on lead and rhythm guitars, piano, organ, bass and percussion.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Kinks lend sound to new Apples in Stereo

Joining Schneider on the album are his Colorado cohorts Hilarie Sidney, who plays the drums, rhythm guitar, and lends

her vocals to the reassuring "Sundal Song." Eric Allen on the bass and John Hill, who adds more rhythmic guitars. Keeping with the Apples' common theme, the quartet not only incorporates such classical instruments as the clarinet, violin and saxophone, but also such frequently underused instruments as the cowbell and plastic whistle.

On this album, the Apples take a psychedelic journey through many different varieties of sounds. After a brief melodic and robotic intro, the band breaks into the catchy, "Can You Feel It?" that can be heard blasting from a 17-year-old cheerleader's convertible with the top down.

The physics-influenced "Energy," in which Schneider rapidly repeats the phrase, "And the world is made of energy," portrays the band in their acoustic playpens, dabbling around, creating simplistic chord progressions and suddenly breaks into

Schneider and his band develop a Beach Boys-esque vocal harmony that allows the listener to lazily drift into an aesthetic daze.

Not only does the music have an eclectic feel to it, but also the presentation and packaging of the CD is intriguing. The cover of CD, designed by artist Andrew McLaughlin, looks similar to a pack of wild animals running through a floral arrangement in an antique shop. No kidding. McLaughlin holds nothing back on designing the artwork.

The CD also includes an enhanced CD that has additional music, films and other downloads. Along with the CD is a link to download additional songs and an Apples in Stereo ringtone.

The band uses every resource they can in the production of their latest album that, in their CD cover, they acknowledge the "London Audience" as an additional musician for their "anger due to Apples' overly-loud guitars."

Whether out of respect for the musician for his talent or his contribution to psychedelic music, the band has dedicated this album to Syd Barrett (1946-2006), one of the original members of Pink Floyd, who recently died due to complications from diabetes.

New Magnetic Wonder is further evidence as to why the Apples in Stereo survived the 90s indie-pop scene. Credit Bob Schneider with the musical mastery and his Colorado crew for complementing Schneider and making *New Magnetic Wonder* one of 2007's Must Buys.

300 conquers the box office

By Josh Booth
contributing writer

The stylish *300* is an amazing feat of 21st century cinema packed with stunning visuals, powerful characters, and beautifully-choreographed battle sequences. Based on Frank Miller's graphic novel of the same name, the film accurately translates Miller's unique vision onto the big screen. *300*, directed by Zack Snyder, is the ferocious retelling of the famous 480 B.C. Battle of Thermopylae, in which 300 Spartan soldiers defended Greece for three days against the massive 250,000-strong invading Persian army in a heroic last stand.

The film revolves around Sparta: the Grecian city-state that specialized in military training, where men were born to end lives. *300* depicts the training process of a Spartan soldier that begins at a very young age. At birth, Spartan boys are inspected for any signs of deformity or weakness. If so, they are cast off a cliff and left to die.

The film centers on King Leonidas, played by Gerard Butler, and his 300 Spartans who set off to defend Greece (and most importantly, Sparta) from the invading Persian armies under the command of the bejeweled god king, Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro). Scottish actor Butler does not disappoint in the role of King Leonidas. He has a commanding presence on screen, especially when rallying his men with a thunderous "SPARTANS!" call. Yet, he also successfully portrays Leonidas' sensitivity and genuine concern for the future of Sparta. Brazilian actor Santoro's brilliant portrayal of the effeminate, power-hungry, self-proclaimed deity Xerxes were easily some of the best scenes in the movie. One of my favorite scenes in the film is when King Leonidas first comes face to face with Xerxes, who "rides in" on a gigantic gold-encrusted throne.

Even the supporting cast delivers solid performances. Dominic West plays Theron, a corrupt senator who clashes with Queen Gorgo (Lena Headey) and disapproves of sending aid to King Leonidas. Vincent Regan plays the Captain, a valorous soldier loyal to King Leonidas and Sparta.

300 is a two hour thrill ride of testosterone-induced, adrenaline-pumping action. But, that's not to say this film is for guys only. King Leonidas' wife, the beautiful Queen Gorgo, plays a major role in the film and gives female moviegoers a powerful role model. Headey's Queen Gorgo excels at providing a strong parallel to Butler's King Leonidas.

In Miller's novel, Queen Gorgo only appeared very briefly and did not play a pivotal role in the story. Yet, in the film, her role was expanded as she lobbies before the skeptical Spartan Senate to send aid to King Leonidas and his men to help stop the advancing Persian forces. In fact, Spartan women had more freedom than any other groups of women during that period in history. They walked amongst men, held jobs and helped run Sparta while the men went off into battle. When a Persian messenger questions the reason for the Queen's outspokenness in front of men, she tells him it is "because only Spartan women give birth to real men."

The film heavily relies on brutal violence, gore and sex as its selling point... and there is nothing wrong with that. It rightfully earns its "R" rating. The emphasis is not on just the violence, gore, and sex, but on how Snyder artistically crafts the gore and violence. The battle sequences are pure poetry in motion. The expertly trained Spartans move as if



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Gerrard Butler (right) and Vincent Regan prepare for glory in 300

the battle were a ballet. Spear-chucking and sword thrusting, the Spartans smoothly flow through the Persian forces with effortless speed. Then, suddenly, some scenes are slowed down "Matrix-style" as severed limbs fly and blood spurts through the air. It feels

wrong to be so intrigued by so much violence and gore, but it can't be helped. It's not just the battle sequences. Every single frame is so beautifully portrayed, you feel as if you're watching a painting in motion. The Grecian sky never looked so colorful. Even the nudity is done tastefully. Never does it feel gratuitous.

The only flaw in *300* is its lack of emotional depth. There's a lot to see in the film, but it doesn't touch the heart. However, it does not hurt the film in any way. With this type of film, I wasn't expecting any emphasis on emotional depth. *300* is not supposed to touch the heart. If you want to be touched, go see something else. If you want eye-popping visuals and adrenaline-pumping action, then *300* is the film for you.

300 takes modern filmmaking into a new direction, which has only been explored by way of Miller's previous adaptation, *Sin City*. Snyder shot the entire picture using real actors and a blue screen. He was able to impressively bring to life Miller's graphic novel with a budget of only \$60 million. The public seemed to respond to this revolutionary style of filmmaking. *300* dominated the box office in its first two weeks since its release on March 2, and has grossed \$160 million so far.

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