

ALBUM REVIEW

'Fall Be Kind'

Reviewed by Alexandra Fletcher  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After producing one of the most highly praised albums of the year, experimental band Animal Collective decided to squeeze in another project before closing out its reign in 2009.

Animal Collective has become a household name since this year's early release of "Merriweather Post Pavilion." Remnants of the album are sprinkled throughout "Fall Be Kind," packing the tracks with both danceability and Avey Tare and Panda Bear's reverberated voices. The magic of this album is its ability to bring in a more ominous sound while still keeping the group's appeal.

"Graze," the highlight track of the EP starts out the record with an extraterrestrial sound centered around soft piano and an eerie backdrop. Tare sings, "Let me begin/ Feels good 'cause it's early/ Ease open my eyes And let light in," through brooding vocals. The tune then does a 180 and turns into a childlike sing-along, losing the somber mood in favor of a cheerful pan flute solo that lifts the song as Tare sings. The emotional range of the track could be tiresome, but AC does it with the right amount of shock and grace.

Going where no group has gone before, the song "What Would I Want? Sky," takes vocal excerpts from Grateful Dead, making Animal Collective the first to receive the psychedelic band's licensing rights. Taking the same formula from "Graze," this track starts in a dark haze and shifts into an accessible pop song.

Layered vocals echo throughout in "Bleeding," the EP's darkest addition that sounds like a bad dream. "On a Highway" is the weakest selection of "Fall Be Kind." The over-use of distortion and synthesizers make for a drab song that doesn't reach any climax. "Fall Be Kind" ends with "I Think I Can," a song of booming beats and upbeat keys closing the EP with just the right amount of melancholy.

AC got our feet moving with "Merriweather Post Pavilion," making indie rock danceable and molding a synthesized genre all on its own. "Fall Be Kind" is evidence that the guys aren't selling out anytime soon but are tuned into the perfect balance of what listeners want to hear and what the band wants to do.

Grade: B+  
Download: "Graze"

To e-mail reporter: alf5218@psu.edu

BOOK REVIEW

'Bad Poetry'

Reviewed by Stéfán Orzech  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Pamela August Russell's new poetry collection is abominable, awful and ultimately a waste of paper. Fortunately for Russell, that's exactly how she intended it.

The collection, "B is for Bad Poetry," conveys a humorously piteous impression from the start, with a promise of personal apology letters from the poet in her biography and counterfeit criticism on the back cover castigating the content as detrimental to literature.

The poems themselves incorporate diverse styles of humor in their portrayals of often piteous narrators, ranging from weebegone romantics to rancorous cynics; some employ more positive humor, while others rely upon a more negative nature.

Clearly, this book does not merit any serious literary honors and most likely will be located in the humor aisle of your local bookstore.

Russell's collection contains no veritable gravity and constitutes what one may denominate a coffee table book — but that should not deter readers from enjoying a laugh or two.

Especially for those who comprehend the convention of "good poetry," the manner in which Russell purposefully fails at constructing an aesthetic work will engender amusement.

For example, she uses nonsensical enjambment (the carrying over of a sentence between two or more lines) and execrable rhythmic structures, among other corrupted devices.

However, even if one rarely reads Frost or Tennyson, understanding why these Russell's work falls short of laudable is a facile task because of the evidence of the poems' maladies.

But in some ways, Russell's poems eventually seem to collapse into redundancy through the repetition of humorous themes or structures throughout the book. In addition, the brevity and sometimes carelessness of the poems imply that, through further adjustment, their humor could have been improved — although one could argue that this negligence only ameliorates that very effect.

Regardless, "B is for Bad Poetry" will interpose nonchalance into the stress of any reader, and, as intended because of its comedy, is an excellent piece of disappointment worthy of gathering dust on any coffee table.

Grade: B-

To e-mail reporter: spo130@psu.edu

TOTAL ECLIPSE

The newest film in teen-based 'Twilight' saga, 'New Moon' is an overly dramaticized take, but develops the story to hold fan's devotion

REVIEWED BY KRISTEN KARAS COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

**E**xtrême teen angst, sparkling skin and vampire/werewolf battles are making a return again this fall, in case you've been living under a rock and haven't noticed. It seems you can't read a magazine or surf the Internet without coming across some mention of "New Moon," the overly dramatic yet surprising improvement on its predecessor in the "Twilight Saga," based on the novels by Stephenie Meyer.

For those who haven't read Meyer's series and are wary of the hysteria its fans have surrounded it with, "New Moon" is at times an enjoyable tale of teenage lust that works best in the moments when it strays from the ridiculous melodrama of its source material.

In this installment, just as Bella (Kristen Stewart) begins to ease into her new life in the Pacific Northwest with vampire beau Edward (Robert Pattinson), she is crushed when he decides the only way to protect her from other vampires is by leaving.

Her depression launches her into a tirade of destructive behavior while she is simultaneously torn between an interest in her werewolf friend Jacob (the perpetually shirtless Taylor Lautner) and her

desire to save Edward from the belief that he can't live with her or without her.

"New Moon" is cheesy in the highest sense. At least five scenes, including a slow motion, wind-blown shot of Edward walking across the school parking lot and a moment where Jacob gratuitously takes off his shirt to clean a bleeding Bella will elicit unintentional giggling from any audience.

The silliest moment of the film comes directly after Edward's departure, when a 360-degree shot shows a dejected Bella in a deep depression, staring out the window for months. While the technique of showing the seasons rapidly change is overused (think Hugh Grant walking through the marketplace in "Notting Hill"), the names of the months are typed on the screen in case viewers don't understand the obvious effect.

Bella's doldrums also last entirely too long and are borderline sick. Viewers not as enamored with Edward Cullen as she is will quickly tire of her creepy nighttime screaming and reckless behavior.

But the story picks up in its middle portion, where Bella gets closer to Jacob and learns his secret. Stewart and Lautner share a surprising chemistry that lifts the film out of the dark. Unlike when she is with Edward, Bella comes alive with this new love interest. Bella is not a

girly-girl and he encourages that, fixing motorcycles with her and actually letting her drive her own car. He is a friendly, real alternative to her consuming, somewhat abusive ex.

The film begins to dip again when it focuses on Bella's relationship with Edward.

The plotline is contrived and takes the film's young-girl fanbase to dangerous locations, teaching them that its OK to tease the better boyfriend choice and drop him suddenly for the suicidal, dramatic one.

Ultimately, this is the major problem of the source material and the biggest hurdle for director Chris Weitz, who obviously can't change the story.

While the plot stays put, what the film is able to do is drop Meyer's appallingly-bad prose and replace it with lush cinematography, warm, earth-toned colors (as opposed to "Twilight's" blues and grays) and well-crafted ghostly images.

While "New Moon" is every bit as cheesy as you would expect it to be, it is also more intriguing.

It likely won't convert any resisters to "Twilight's" but can easily serve as a girly, guilty pleasure if one focuses on the intricacies of high school relationships it gets right.

Grade: C

To e-mail reporter: kgk5005@psu.edu



The following REVIEW has been approved for RESTRICTED AUDIENCES ONLY

REVIEWED BY JIM WARKULWIZ COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Go back to the first time the photo of Rihanna's beaten face surfaced earlier this year, when the celebrated personality was plunged into a darkened public spotlight. On her newest album, "Rated R," the "Disturbia" singer now embraces this disturbing visage, cutting deeper and seemingly scolding her former pop persona.

With her first work since these events, Rihanna tells her fans two messages: Love is hard, but she is harder.

Although Rihanna sings about lost love, none of the songs on "Rated R" convey that the artist wants any sympathy from her public. In fact, she scorns it.

"Hard," featuring Young Jeezy, shows Rihanna has not forgotten how to swagger. It's difficult not to think of the song as a blow to her now infamous ex-boyfriend, Chris Brown, as she sings, "I can't just let you run up on me like that / Yeah / I see you aiming at my pedestal / So I think I gotta let ya know."

Many of the writers for this album, which include R&B artist Ne-Yo, said they wanted to distance Rihanna from the altercation.

Even so, it is hard for listeners to accept such a claim when some of the songs translate so easily as a response to the beating.

On "Bitchslap 101," which features backing guitar from Slash, Rihanna takes another shot at those wanting to show her pity: "I never am the victim / I'd rather be the stalker."

This is not the same bubble gum coming from the artist who gave the world "S.O.S." This album defi-



nately requires a more mature ear, and one should not expect Top 10 radio to accept the songs from "Rated R" as it did from the hit machine "Good Girl Gone Bad."

Even so, the album isn't just about flipping the bird to an abusive boyfriend. Rihanna captures multiple aspects of a broken heart.

She can go from the listless and sentimental "Photographs," in which she reminisces over an old flame, to "G.M." for "gangsta 4 life," in which Rihanna hurls the tip of her smoking gun, solidifying her sweet revenge.

Rihanna can go from sweet-yet-dejected girl to the scariest woman you have ever met. That's what makes it so interesting — as soon as listeners think they know what's going to happen next, the following song is a complete 180.

The artist's immersion into her respective roles makes everything theatrical, giving the listener little choice but to play along.

On "Russian Roulette," listeners can hear the desperation and terror in her voice as Rihanna and her love play a round of the fatal game.

Besides the swearing and ominous lyrics on the more passionate tracks on the album, her music has also become more mature, making the work as a whole a lot more appealing musically.

Rihanna's album rewards the listener by combining hip-hop beats with guitars and drums reminiscent of '80s hits. One can hear familiar motifs from songs of this era like "Thriller," "In the Air Tonight," and "Purple Rain" throughout the work.

In short, "Rated R" is not just Rihanna's attempt to vent. It is more. It is full of charisma, emotion and various ways to deal with pain.

If there was some good that came out of her incident with Brown, it was that Rihanna had the drive to sing her best songs to date.

So keep your pity. Save it for the next diva.

Grade: B+  
Download: "Hard," "Russian Roulette"

To e-mail reporter: jhw5089@psu.edu