

'Custom Built'Reviewed by Paul Osolnick
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After receiving treatment for a brain hemorrhage in late April, Bret Michaels jumped back into the music scene with a new release this month.



Courtesy of Amazon.com

"Custom Built," a 12-track album, came out last week.

The album starts with new song "Riding Against the Wind." It's not a bad song, but it will probably soon become over-played and annoying, as it will be the opening song to his upcoming reality show — like the world hasn't seen enough of Bret Michaels' reality.

The next song "Lie to Me" is sure to be a hit with the ladies with classy lyrics like "it's just sex, so let's just f—k" and "I'll give it to you all night, even try to get your name right."

The only thing funnier than those lyrics is the fact that it's followed by the G-rated song "Nothing to Lose," featuring Miley Cyrus. Hopefully, her "Hannah Montana" fans remember to skip past the previous song. Though "Nothing to Lose" is tolerable, the combination of the unlikely duo reminds me of the Super Bowl halftime show a few years back featuring Aerosmith, 'N Sync and Britney Spears.

After the first four new songs comes a string of covers, remakes and remixes. The next song is a cover of "What I Got" by Sublime, and though his cover isn't bad, like most covers it doesn't hold a candle to the original.

Track six is a remake Michaels has every right to remake, even if it isn't as good as the original. "Every Rose," a remix of the 1988 Poison classic "Every Rose Has Its Thorn," offers yet another version of the song that has launched a thousand remixes. You can't blame Michaels for trying to beat a personal best, can you?

And what would any album be without a club remix? A club mix of "Go That Far" was thrown into the CD. At this point it's like spilling a glass of water on the deck of the Titanic — it won't tarnish the integrity of the album any further.

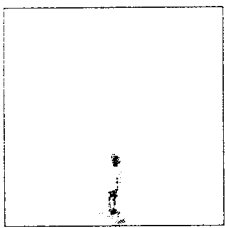
The album also features a solo version of "Nothing to Lose" — the same song from earlier in the album with Miley Cyrus. Apparently he felt he hadn't milked that cash cow enough.

The secret to this album is pick and choose. Don't get the whole CD — especially if you own any of his previous albums.

Download: "Wasted Time," "What I Got"
Rating: C-

To e-mail reporter: pro5004@psu.edu**'The Nobodies Album'**Reviewed by Megan Rogers
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Carolyn Parkhurst's latest novel "The Nobodies Album" contains two distinct plot lines — and neither of them is very intriguing.



Courtesy of Amazon.com

Octavia Frost, the narrator and a semi-famous novelist, is writing a novel in which she re-edits the endings to her previous books. Her son, a famous rock star, has been charged with the murder of his girlfriend.

The two have been estranged for years, and — surprise, surprise — the book focuses mostly on rebuilding their torn relationship.

At the surface, the book has the makings of a great story. There's a quirky character (Octavia) and a suspenseful story line (the murder). But author Carolyn Parkhurst never combines the two stories until the last chapter, making the reader feel as if they are reading two completely different novels.

The story line that is given is the most exciting — Octavia's literary endeavors — is also extremely boring. There are only so many pages a reader can stand to hear about the protagonist's hopes and dreams. Maybe with some more action, that part of the book could have been more bearable, but for a murder story, it lacks a healthy chunk of action.

Those who like writing will appreciate Parkhurst's analysis of the writing process, but others will be left unsatisfied. Even English-lovers will get sick of Octavia's musings and rants.

Your son is on trial for murder — isn't that more important to worry about?

The book has potential to be a great whodunit: a murder scene, suspects with motives and a suspense-building ending.

But for all the build-up of the novel's other plot, there is not enough time taken to develop the murder plot line, and when the mystery is finally solved, it's anticlimactic.

Spread in between the chapters are excerpts from Octavia's books and her revised ending. The stories are supposed to be analogies of her relationship with her son and the tragedy they endured (the death of her husband and daughter), but they are just really odd stories and are far too drawn out to compel the reader to search for the hidden meaning.

Neither of the characters is original, and neither stands out much.

Even the murder plot has no surprise twists or turns. Readers may think the plot is building up to something, but will be sorely disappointed with the lackluster ending.

The 300+ page book could have been summarized in a few sentences, and so can the review: Treat yourself to a better read than "The Nobodies Album."

Grade: DTo e-mail reporter: mer5200@psu.eduReviewed by Megan Rogers
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It's a "Gossip Girl" for "a new kind of family."

"Pretty Little Liars" debuted on ABC Family earlier this summer and has since become a hit among teenage girls.

Try as you might, within one episode you will get sucked into the mystery and hooked on the drama as well.

Each show begins with the creepiest theme sequence ever — putting makeup on a girl in a casket — and then delves into the wild world of high school drama.

The basic story line is this: Four girls are reunited on the one-year anniversary of their friend Ali's disappearance. Ali was the ringleader of their clique and the bearer of all of their most dramatic secrets. It's an unsolved murder, and the foursome is receiving ominous messages — through texts, radio and even lipstick scrawled on the mirror — from "A."

She (or he, who knows) is hinting about secrets only Ali could have

known. Has one glamour girl risen from the grave or was someone else in on all the girls' secrets?

There are already two suspects, but they are both way too obvious to be the blackmailers. The show takes bizarre plot twists, so the one thing that can be expected is the answer will surprise us all.

While the blackmailer is, a million other scandals are also swirling around.

Aria's coping with her dad's affair by hooking up with her English teacher. Hanna's been arrested for theft and is persistently trying to convince her boyfriend to sleep with her. Spencer broke up her sister's marriage. Emily is discovering she's attracted not only to bad boy and high school freak Toby, but also her new neighbor, Maya.

It has been a long couple of weeks for the girls of "Pretty Little Liars."

You can try to stay away, but something about it — maybe the suspense, or even just the killer

wardrobes — is too alluring to resist.

Half of the time, viewers will spend picking apart the characters and the outrageousness of their scandal-filled lives and general bad attitudes. And then, when you least expect it, you'll be on the edge of your seat, not wanting to admit your heart's beating fast over the suspenseful plot line.

The recipe for the show's success is two parts suspense and mystery and other parts glamour and glitter.

The Liars haven't revealed all of their secrets yet, and we'll keep returning to the show until we discover what really happened that night last summer — and of course, until all the drama is settled.

"Pretty Little Liars" won't be able to sustain its current plot line for long — and hopefully ABC Family will be able to end the show before it turns into the next drawn-out "Secret Life."

The one downside is that no viewer's life could ever be filled with this much glamour and intrigue. Instead, audiences can just continue watching it play out, every Tuesday night at 8 p.m. on ABC Family.

Grade: ATo e-mail reporter: mer5200@psu.edu**SMOKE 'N' MIRRORS****"Sorcerer's" fizzles, lacks magic**Reviewed by Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

This may come as a shock to many, but "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" isn't actually that horrible of a movie — but it's still pretty bad.

The Jerry Bruckheimer-produced film, starring Nicolas Cage as Master Sorcerer Balthazar and Jay Baruchel as Dave, actually had some clever jokes and intense fight scenes that other fantasy movies like the early "Harry Potter" films lacked. The special effects are really well done, and the choice to not shoot the film in 3D is one of the best decisions the production staff could have made.

That being said, it's one of the filmmakers' few good decisions. The movie is predictable and ultimately lacks the potential to stand out in this summer's crowded cinema scene.

In the film, Cage's character Balthazar must find the descendant of Merlin to defeat the evil sorcerer Morgana and a collection of other evil sorcerers all bent on (shocker) destroying the world. Balthazar has been searching the globe for centuries when he comes across the one he seeks in New York City, 10-year-old David, played by the young Jake Cherry.

Young David unwittingly releases Morgana's apprentice, Horvath (Alfred Molina), and an epic fight ensues. Ten years later, it's up to David to save the world.

This classic formula has been used hundreds of times before, but "Sorcerer's Apprentice" doesn't really mind that. The main character is socially awkward but somehow a hero, then neglects the wisdom of his or her

mentor, falls for the cute guy/girl, then makes the tough choice between a personal life or saving the world, and in the end saves the day. Roll credits.

At least "Sorcerer's Apprentice" isn't Cage's worst film. Cage's acting is on par and he tries to breathe life into the character of Balthazar, but the script limits Cage's ability.

In one moment Cage's character can lift the evil sorcerer, Horvath, into the air, in the next breathe life into a giant eagle statue atop the Chrysler Building and then sling bolts of plasma from his hands as easily as brushing his teeth.

Then he's stuck in a "Persian quick-rug," a spell with the properties of quick sand, and trapped against a wall by Horvath's evil apprentice, Drake Stone (Toby Kebbell), as if it's Balthazar's first day on the job.

If there has been a centuries-long search for the descendant of Merlin, one would think that Balthazar's had some spare time to brush up on his magic and get a leg up over the competition.

As for the rest of the film, I can honestly say I hate actor Jay Baruchel and producer Jerry Bruckheimer; the former for his whining voice and his slow transformation into a Michael Cera-esque character, and the latter for his ability to continually produce garbage and

still make more money than God.

The way Baruchel's character continually ignores Balthazar is annoying and childish. If the audience is supposed to sympathize with the socially awkward 20-year-old, Baruchel's constant whining makes the task nearly impossible.

As for Bruckheimer, I seriously hope there isn't a "Sorcerer's Apprentice: Dead Man's Chest" in the future.

At one point in the film, a desperate Balthazar gives Dave the option to return Merlin's magic ring and walk away from magic. I found myself really hoping that Dave would do just that.

Grade: CTo e-mail reporter: zjg5012@psu.edu