

ALBUM REVIEW

'The Dissent of Man'

Reviewed by Josh Bollinger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Known for being one of the most influential bands of its genre, Bad Religion makes it clear on its newest album, "The Dissent of Man," that the punk band is still a force to be reckoned with.



Courtesy of lamusicblog.com

An improvement from the lackluster 2007 album "New Maps of Hell," the mood of "The Dissent of Man" starts as a high-intensity anthem for punks everywhere with its opening song "The Day That The Earth Stalled."

Band co-founder and vocalist Greg Graffin kicks off this song with his velvety smooth voice, right before the band joins him in the fun with a high-energy chord progression.

After more than 30 years Graffin's voice still perfectly complements the melodic structure of Bad Religion's music.

The energy level is maintained through the first three songs until being brought down to a more chill level with some melodies and social commentary in "Won't Somebody," where Graffin encourages the audience to take initiative and fix the environmental injustices of our world.

My favorite section of the album is smack dab in the middle, with the two-song run of "Meeting of the Minds" into "Someone to Believe."

A big part of what makes this album so good is the fact that the musicians are actually talented, both in playing their instruments and in their songwriting.

Drummer Brooks Wackerman dominates the drum kit with a tight and creative authority and doesn't get stuck in a rut of playing the same typical punk beats over and over again.

Nearly every song is as likeable as the one before it. As the album progresses, it's apparent that these guys are experts when it comes to writing catchy songs that everybody can enjoy listening to.

Throughout the album, Bad Religion proves that it's more than your average punk band. The band's influences from other genres shine through while the building blocks of its songs keep it in touch with their punk roots.

If Bad Religion keeps turning out this good, I foresee a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nomination in the future for this punk powerhouse.

Grade: A-
Download: "Someone To Believe"

To e-mail reporter: tjb5267@psu.edu

COUNT ON BRUNO Mars CD near perfect

Reviewed by Joshua Glossner
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

I'm sure many of us thought Bruno Mars was just going to be a collaborative artist after two big summer jams under his belt — not to mention writing huge hits for big names from Brandy to Flo Rida.

But his solo album proved us wrong.

"Doo-Wop and Hooligans" is filled with phenomenal lyrics and catchy melodies. After a few listens, I found myself singing along.

Possibly the coolest thing about Mars' CD is that Mars draws from a variety of genres, including R&B ("The Other Side"), rock ("Runaway Baby"), reggae ("Liquor Store Blues") and piano acoustic ("Talking to the Moon") — he'll please most fans from any of these genres without breaking a sweat.

The album starts out with "Grenade," a song about a dysfunctional love. Mars sings about how he would do anything for his true love, but the girl won't return the favor. "The Lazy Song" is possibly the

coolest college men's anthem to date. The song has some of my favorite lyrics in any song I've ever listened to, because of its humorous depictions of men, like "Kick up my feet and stare at the fan, turn the TV on, throw my hand in my pants."

The song just basks in the glory of being a carefree man with no one to tell him what to do. As a minor downside, though, it sounds a lot like "Billionaire" by Mars and Travie McCoy.

One of the best songs on the album is "Count On Me."

This song is about best friends and how they will always be there for one another, no matter what. After hearing this song, I felt like I had to call up my best friend and sing this song to her. "Count On Me" channels a pop-alternative sound that resembles the Plain White T's "Hey There, Delilah."

Mars also sings about Vegas-like spontaneous weddings in "Marry You" and about the sorrow of losing a loved one in the tear-jerker "Talking to the Moon."

He also talks about skirt chasing and girls falling for him in the up-tempo "Runaway Baby."

You could probably guess what the song "Our First Time" is about if you think hard enough. But the lyrics

are not dirty or explicit, so it makes the song much classier than most of the sexual innuendos in similar songs on the radio today.

"Our First Time" also has a cool R&B flavor to it and is a nice change in pace from the rest of the album.

"The Other Side" features "Nothin' On You" rapper B.o.B. and Cee Lo Green.

I'm still having a hard time trying to figure out what the lyrics mean in the song — there are just so many options. They all sing about living forever and have a mysterious line about meeting someone on "the other side."

It could mean anything from becoming a vampire — "Twilight" much, anyone? — or taking drugs to escape the reality and the world, among other possibilities. I guess it's just one of those songs left open to interpretation of each listener.

But how could we forget Mars' No. 1 hit, "Just the Way You Are"? It's one of the most loved songs this year. Everybody's heard it by now, and even with all the play time it gets from radio stations and elsewhere, it's still good.

All of these songs have the potential to be hits on the radio and to top the Billboard charts.

The CD decade that Mars is in the ranks of the decade's best songwriters and R&B artists.

Grade: A
Download: "Count On Me" and "Runaway Baby"

To e-mail reporter: jdg5299@psu.edu



MOVIE REVIEW

'The Extra Man'

Reviewed by Lauren Ingno
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

From a cross-dressing ex-literature teacher to an eccentric failed playwright and a middle-aged dominatrix, "The Extra Man" seems to have all the ingredients of a quirky, yet enjoyable film.



Courtesy of imdb.com

Unfortunately, it wasn't. "The Extra Man" starts off as an unconventional tale that seems to have promise. Adapted from Jonathan Ames's 1998 novel, the story centers around Louis Ives (Paul Dano), a young prep school teacher who is fired from his job after he's caught trying on ladies' underwear in a classroom.

Louis, who imagines his life is being narrated as if he were the protagonist in an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, decides to move to Manhattan to become a serious writer.

Through a newspaper ad, Louis finds and moves into the apartment of Henry Harrison (Kevin Kline), a much older playwright offering his dating services as an "extra man" to wealthy, older women of New York.

Henry, though seen as rude and annoying in his circle of friends, develops a friendship with his young protégé. Henry teaches Louis how to sneak into operas, how to urinate in the streets without getting caught and how to win the hearts of the city's aristocrats.

The roommates exchange some witty banter and some more eccentric characters are introduced. Kline's acting is a little over the top, but his persona at the beginning of the film is at least believable.

When Dano is first introduced in the film, his shy nature and awkwardness calls for sympathy. It is endearing to watch him lust over his co-worker (Katie Holmes) at his magazine job.

But throughout the film, it becomes unclear why Louis had romantic feelings for her in the first place.

I felt uncomfortable as I watched the dreary character deal with his sexuality and try to make friendships with people who didn't like him.

"The Extra Man" which starts off as an amusing film about an unlikely friendship soon turns into a downfall of unbelievable and nonsensical events.

The plot and the tone of the film are never fully developed and it becomes hard to know whether to laugh, cry or cringe.

The characters, who start off interesting, soon become unlikable, and the film lasts about 30 minutes too long.

By the end of "The Extra Man" I was left confused, bored and found myself sighing, "Enough already."

Grade: C

To e-mail reporter: lm15018@psu.edu

A NEW STATE OF MUSIC

'Adz' turns from norm

Reviewed by David Strader
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Indie-pop aficionados rejoice — Sufjan is back with a number of surprises.

Sufjan Stevens' "The Age of Adz" was released today, and longtime fans will find that the multi-talented instrumentalist is stepping boldly into new territory.

While it would have been nice to see Sufjan continue his self-proclaimed goal of creating a concept album for each of the 50 states, I am more than happy with the direction he has taken on "The Age of Adz."

The album starts off on familiar ground, as the opening track "Futile Devices" is much akin to work on Sufjan's folk-heavy 2004 album "Seven Swans."

But as the second track begins, prepare to be properly derailed, as Sufjan gives something dangerously comparable to his electronic 2001 project, "Enjoy Your Rabbit."

Even the average Sufjan devotee may cringe at the mention of that album, but Sufjan takes "The Age of Adz" on a successfully electronic trip into glory.

If the electronic style doesn't turn you away, the epic album-titled third track will blow your mind.

The tried-and-true elements of

baroque pop are there, with horns and choir chants in all the right places.

After the brilliantly persuasive third track, you'll find yourself more than content lulling through the mediocre mid-album tracks.

By the time you reach excellently composed songs like "Vesuvius" and "I Want to be Well," you'll proudly support Sufjan's electronic venture.

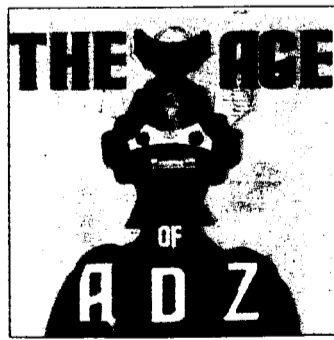
"I Want to be Well" presents another unexpected turn for Sufjan, as the artist rejects his normally passive lyrics with Christian undertones and drops the infamous F-bomb. A lot.

While the vulgarity is a shock for the artist's otherwise peaceful lyrics, the

intensity of "I Want to be Well" and it emphasizes that Sufjan is "not f—king around."

Though "I Want to be Well" could easily conclude "The Age of Adz," the ending is well-saved for an immense 25-minute song, "Impossible Soul."

The sight of an enormous song usually lends itself to those giant "hidden track" quiet gaps that everyone hates so much, but no such disappointment is to be found here — be prepared for a half-hour of supreme excellence. Amidst the soothing inner workings of



"Impossible Soul," Sufjan presents an unforeseen vocal surprise: Auto-Tune.

How could the beloved indie-idol cross into T-Pain's town?

Don't worry. By this point in the album, you'll already be convinced that Sufjan can pull it off.

After the Auto-Tune endeavor, the album concludes where it began — with a folk crescendo reminiscent of Sufjan's roots. This suggests that maybe this electronic undertaking was a one-time thing for our indie pop hero, but it's always hard to tell with him.

Overall, the album's underwhelming middle portion is overshadowed by two mountains of quality near the beginning and end.

Skeptics may shun Sufjan Stevens as another electric Judas, but if you are open-minded, pick up the album.

Grade: B
Download: "Age of Adz" and "I Want to be Well"

To e-mail reporter: das5461@psu.edu

