

ARTS IN REVIEW

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THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

ALBUM REVIEW

'Songs Joanna Likes'

Reviewed by Beth Ann Downey
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When all you want is some easy listening, it's not hard to reach for the music of Zak Sobel.

This local artist frequents downtown bars to serenade Happy Valley with his acoustic originals, but now fans can enjoy the take-home version of his performance with the release of his first LP, "Songs Joanna Likes."



Courtesy of facebook.com

Recorded with a full band behind him, Sobel's individual talent as an instrumentalist and songwriter still remains the focus of each track. Whether they have the twang and rhythm of "Better Days," the '90s pop undertones of "Sweet Anna," or the slow, soulful melody and lyrics of "Sweetheart, Do Not Fear," these songs are glimpses of Sobel's soul.

And as with most singer/songwriters, the true soul of the album is in the lyrics. This is where listeners can hear Sobel's boyish charm mixed in with the maturity of his musicianship. "Would you like to be my high school sweetheart again? / I would take you to the prom because I was so stupid back then." Sobel sings in "Better Days."

Other songs show more depth in both lyricism and arrangement, like his description of what it's like to be on the "Short End" of love or the story about a lost, lonely girl told in words and sad violin parts during "Aurora."

Though acoustic-based albums can sometimes carry a monotonous sound, Sobel's strength lies in making each song sound vastly different while keeping true to his folk-rock roots. Such songwriting is impressive from a musician who only first strapped on a guitar four years ago.

But in listening to this record, it is apparent that Sobel is, in fact, still an amateur. His warm voice, though soothing, is still lacking in definition and variance. The up-beat jams like "Sweet Anna" and "Clay Sun" could've benefited from some more vocal enthusiasm.

This Penn State senior has the natural talent, the time and the opportunity to grow and blossom into a bigger name.

There's no doubt that we could all see him manifest into the Matt Duke or Ryan Adams of tomorrow.

Until then, whether he's serenading you in a performance or lulling you to sleep on your iPod, Sobel is the choice for home-grown talent.

Grade: B-
Download: "Clay Sun," "Better Days" and "Sweet Anna."

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MOVIE REVIEW

'Burlesque'

Reviewed by Lauren Ingeno
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

"Burlesque" could have been one of those campy movies, like "Showgirls" or "Glitter" — so bad it was actually good — but it wasn't even fun enough for that.

The two-hour-long movie has sequins, bright lights and a little bit of sex without any sizzle.

Christina Aguilera makes her big screen debut playing Ali, the small town girl from Iowa who moves to Los Angeles to become a singer. She stumbles upon a burlesque club — imaginatively named Burlesque — run by proprietor Tess (Cher). Ali starts off as a waitress, then becomes a dancer and eventually the star of the show.

But don't think she doesn't have to deal with problems along the way.

Ali crashes at the apartment of burlesque bartender Jake (Cam Gigandet) who is completely in love with her even though he has a fiancée. Meanwhile a gorgeous millionaire (Eric Dane) who wants to buy the club from Tess is also in love with Ali and buys her presents and brings her to VIP parties.

Who will she choose? But who really cares?

Aguilera can sing. And when she finally opens her mouth mid way through "Burlesque," you're tricked into thinking the sinking movie could actually be saved.

She is also a performer. The dance numbers in the club are entertaining and appealing and Aguilera commands the stage.

Unfortunately, she doesn't sing and dance the whole time. She also acts. And it's bad. Hopefully the film has killed her acting career.

To go along with Aguilera's poor acting, Ali isn't a likeable character in the first place. She's supposed to be the underdog, but it's hard to cheer for her. She is whiny and self-absorbed, but every one still worships the ground she walks on. When staying with Jake, Ali demands that she gets the bedroom while he's forced to sleep on the couch.

First-time writer and director Steven Antin's script is atrocious. Even Cher, who tries to shine, is de-sparkled by lame lines and a pathetic story.

Nikki (Kristen Bell) is the boozed-up bitch who refuses to be upstaged by the new chick, and she provides an opportunity for some actual conflict in the sour film. But don't get your hopes up. Her character and interaction with Ali is just as yawn-worthy as Aguilera's acting.

Nikki gives her dirty looks in the dressing room, and Ali retaliates with comebacks, like telling Nikki she looks like a drag queen. Ouch.

If you want something hot and spicy, watch some Christina Aguilera YouTube videos, because "Burlesque" is bland as could be.

Grade: D

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Reporters rank pizzerias

Reviewed by Julie Mastrine
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Cheap pizza joints are abundant in Happy Valley, but it can be difficult to know which one not only tastes the best, but gives you the best value.

To solve this mystery, a panel of Daily Collegian reporters conducted a blind taste test of eight pizza places: Bell's Greek Pizza, 214 E. Calder Way

Brother's NY Style Pizzeria, 204 E. College Ave.

Canyon Pizza, 260 E. Beaver Ave.

College Pizza, 128 Locust Lane

Corrinado's Pizza, 114 Hetzel St.

Gumby's Pizza, 300 S. Pugh St.

Mamma Mia's, 128 E. College Ave.

Sarina's II, 220 W. College Ave.

Our panel of reviewers — which included myself and Collegian performing arts reporter Hannah Rishel — each tasted a slice of pizza from

each eatery and gave the piece an overall rating between one and five, five being the best. We also noted prices, took photos, recorded audio clips of our opinions and took measurements. We then compiled all of the information in an online interactive, which can be found at psucollegian.com.

Overall, Gumby's Pizza was the best. Our slice cost \$1.50, with an area of 40.14 square inches — a reasonable

price for a huge slice of pizza.

Not only is Gumby's a good deal, but it doesn't skimp on taste, either. The pizza had a great garlic taste that others lacked. Both Hannah and I thought the piece had a good balance of cheese and sauce.

Our only complaint was that Gumby's slice was incredibly greasy, but simply blotting it with a napkin solved that problem.

Our second favorite choice was Corrinado's Pizza. While Hannah and I rated Gumby's and Corrinado's the same, Corrinado's slice was almost half as large, with an area of 26.48 square inches.

But Corrinado's sauce impressed both of us, as it was just sweet enough. We also thought the crust was perfect — neither too thick nor too thin.

This slice was a little too greasy, gets the amount of cheese and sauce just right. A plain slice goes for \$1, making Corrinado's one of the best pizza options downtown.

Our third favorite was Canyon Pizza, perhaps Penn State students' favorite late-night pizza. Canyon's slices are priced at an even \$1, and with an area of 25.62 square inches, the piece was the perfect size.

It could have used more sauce, we agreed that it had an ample amount of cheese and just enough crust.

If the line for these three places is

too long, Bell's Greek Pizza and Sarina's II aren't bad options.

So which pizza joints should be avoided?

Three pizza places scored equally low — College Pizza, Mamma Mia's and Brother's NY Style Pizzeria.

Hannah and I thought College Pizza was the biggest disappointment, though it is also a late-night favorite in Happy Valley. Measuring in with an area of 30.94 square inches, the pizza was very wide but way too thin.

The sauce and cheese were almost nonexistent — definitely not worth the \$1.25 price tag.

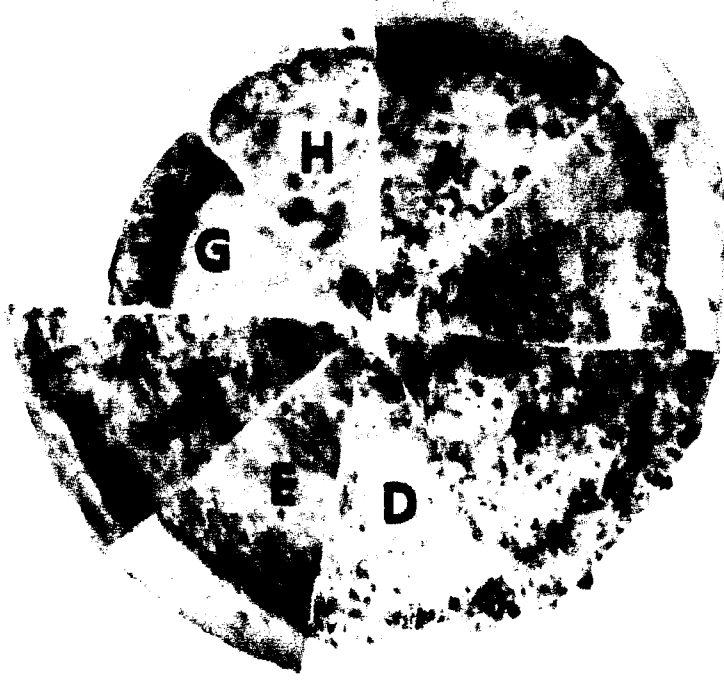
Brother's NY Style Pizzeria also doesn't have the best sauce, and the crust was a little too thin for \$1.50.

At a price of \$1.88, Mamma Mia's pizza was also unimpressive. Though it was the biggest slice we tested — with an area of 40.45 square inches — and the sauce tasted good, there wasn't enough of it or cheese.

To see the entire review, visit The Daily Collegian's website at psucollegian.com.

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For an interactive web graphic of this review: psucollegian.com



PIZZERIA RATINGS

Pizzeria	Mastrine	Rishel
A. Sarina's II	2.5	3
B. Mamma Mia	1.5	1.5
C. Gumby's Pizza	4	4.5
D. Corrinado's Pizza	4	4.5
E. College Mart Pizza	1.5	1.5
F. Brothers Pizzeria	1.5	1.5
G. Bell's Greek Pizza	3	2.5
H. Canyon Pizza	3.5	4

Graphic by Andrew Metcalf/Collegian

'Black Ops' steals

Reviewed by Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Destroying tanks and helicopters, blowing up entire squads of enemies and mowing down waves of zombies. Not much has changed in the "Call of Duty" series with the release of the latest installment, "Black Ops," but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Released in November, "Black Ops" shattered previous sales figures of the other games in Activision's star franchise.

It led as one of the biggest and best games of 2010. "Black Ops" combines an epic single player campaign with addictive multiplayer, and tons of new features.

The game takes place in the Cold War, with players assuming the role of Alex Mason, a CIA operative who's under interrogation by the government. The game is a mix of action, strategy, and suspense.

"Black Ops" is a return to the roots of the franchise, with a focus on the single player campaign. It's a great way to experience the game's story and characters.

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kills in a row unlocks an explosive I.C.C. car. Players are also able to customize their in-game appearance and even engrave their multiplayer names on guns.

All the standard playlists are back from "Modern Warfare 2," including Team Deathmatch and objective-based playlists.

New to the multiplayer arena is the theater. Players familiar with the "Halo Reach" theater menus will be right at home editing film clips and taking screenshots of their gameplay.

By connecting to an Xbox Live or PlayStation Network account and going to the "Call of Duty" website, those clips and screenshots can be uploaded directly to YouTube. It's a cool system and improves upon the replay value of the game with the ability to create and share.

But if multiplayer matches and editing video isn't your thing, there's always the fan favorite: Zombies.

Hordes of the undead are back, and it's up to the player and three friends to defend themselves from wave after wave. It's a fun, some and addictive experience that constantly challenges the player with an increasing difficulty.

"Black Ops" is a great way to experience the game's story and characters. It's a great way to experience the game's story and characters.

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