

Mark examines the effects of sampling, spandex and ice cream

The Missing Pieces

by Mark Owens

"Biblah wablah blah blah."

Um, no Todd, just because my writing has been weak the past couple of issues doesn't mean you can accuse me of being a crack smoker, let alone free-basing Tenactin foot powder.

"Blah blah blah, wubba wubba doink."

Yes, I do have my head screwed on straight and no, my mother doesn't dress me funny. I just take my clothes from your closet.

"Blah blaahhhh, unk snort!"

Hey, put that X-acto down or I'll tell people you've been borrowing Frederick's Shawn Cassidy records for mood music while Jello wrestl--

Oh hi! I was just having a mature conversation with my editor. We're two grown-up, responsible people who enjoy intellectually-stimulating conversations -- when we're not eating PlayDo, that is.

Anyway, I was fortunate enough last week to attend the

very press conference where it was revealed that Milli Vanilli (the "lost" 32nd Baskin-Robins flavor) did not sing a single note on their album, *Girl you know it's fake - I mean true*. The two were very calm during the question-and-answer period, only lashing out at reporters with their hair occasionally when a question got too personal -- such as, "Do you two have any talent at all?" or "Rumor has it you've been turned down to sing laxative commercials. Is this true?"

Even better, after the news conference I was able to get an exclusive interview with the dreadlocked duo. It went something like this:

Me: What exactly did you guys do on the album?

Rob: Ummmmm... Fab?

Fab: We, ahh... posed nice.

Me: Can you guys sing?

Fab: Damn straight. Check this out!

(A sound, comparable to that of a large cat being dropped into a garbage disposal operating at

high RPM's, filled the room. The reporter in question passed out from excessive noise pollution.)

While Milli Vanilli is an example of blatant record label greed, there have been other alarming trends in the music



business, such as sampling.

Many groups use bits and pieces of other musicians work to augment their own material. While this isn't necessarily bad (the Art of Noise does this, and does it well), some artists have taken it to an extreme.

M.C. Hammer, noted for his wild dance moves, Elton Johnesque glasses and bigger-than-your-car pants (you know those tarps they use to cover motorcycles? 'Nuff said), has sampled so many things for his album you'd think he was at a smorgasbord or something. So far, industry experts believe he's sampled work from Prince, Falco, Led Zeppelin, the Pope, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Billy Bob Dupree's 12-piece Armpit Orchestra.

I guess my biggest problem with sampling-from-hell is that it's difficult to find the original work. But don't get me wrong. Sampling isn't all that bad. If the industry allows it to continue and grow, eventually I'll be able to use it as an excuse:

Professor: Mr. Owens, I believe you've done a bit of plagiarizing on this term paper.

Me: Ummm... Plagiarizing? I didn't plagiarize. I visually sampled a lot, that's all.

Professor: Oh, well in that case...

Another dangerous element in music is the excessive use of spandex.

Frankly, it's a dangerous and addictive substance for musicians. Recently a singer from a prominent glam metal band confessed that "When I'm on stage, I feel strong and virile. I can't feel a damn thing from the waist down, but I feel virile."

In fact, there are rumors that the Surgeon General may issue a warning to be sewn into all future garments:

Warning: This garment may cause back problems, knee problems and the development of buck teeth. It may also cause you to look like an ugly sausage and suffer severe public humiliation, but hey -- what do we care?

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AΦΩ

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