

Edie Brickell comes back with a winner

Release expands New Bohemian's musical repertoire

by Robb Frederick
The Collegian

When Edie Brickell and New Bohemians burst onto the music scene with their 1988 debut *Shooting Rubberbands at the Stars*, the Texas-based group topped the charts with a unique blend of laid-back melodies and lighthearted vocals.

The band found commercial success as Brickell served up playful, airy vocals and searched for her identity on the candy-coated single "What I Am."

That whirlwind success obviously affected the New Bohemians as they prepared their next album, *Ghost of a Dog*. The release is a patchwork of fresh experimental styles, hinting that Brickell still isn't sure about her true identity.

Ghost of a Dog begins with "Mama Help Me" and "Black & Blue," two powerful songs written in the wake of *Shooting Rubberbands'* success. Both songs were previewed during the band's intensive touring as a solo

act and in opening slots for Bob Dylan, Don Henley and the Grateful Dead.

The first track races along with Brickell's pressure-cooker chorus, adding a soulful edge to the band's musical repertoire. "Black & Blue" maintains this rapid tempo as the band weaves through Brickell's childish but irresistible nursery rhyme lyrics.

The pace slows as the band returns to the subdued, mellow fare that formed the bulk of *Shooting Rubberbands*.

The band fades into the background and highlights Brickell's dreamy, carefree voice on "He Said," "10,000 Angels" and "Me By the Sea"

This style works extremely well on "Times Like This," as guitarist Kenny Withrow adds just the right amount of acoustic accompaniment to Brickell's soft lyrics.

These tracks expand the sound the inexperienced New Bohemians debuted in 1988 and demonstrate a new musical maturity within the band.

The group discards this seriousness on several tracks, however, adopting a humorous



approach to the music. On the title track, a two-

minute eulogy for a dead pet, Brickell proves that making records can still be fun. She furthers this theory on "Oak Cliff Bra," as her senseless lines practically break off into laughter.

Brickell accents the majority of her lyrics with an innocent playfulness, and the resulting work swells with personality. But Brickell is clearly a dreamer, and she often stretches too far to get the metaphor she wants. Most of the time her writing produces creative, effective wordplay, but at times the work lacks substance.

The Bohemians themselves recognize Brickell as the group's impetus, and they just sit back and provide a loose rhythm. Kenny Withrow occasionally spices up a track with his twangy, Grateful Dead-inspired guitar, and the influence of drummer Matt Chamberlain and percussionist John Bush often supplies an interesting backbone, but the band remains too anonymous throughout most of

the release.

Ghost of a Dog also benefits from a recording quality far superior to that on *Shooting Rubberbands*.

Several tracks were recorded on the porch of the Bearsville recording studio in upstate New York. The environment proved to be quite inspiring; on the songs "This Eye" and "Times Like This," a light rain accompanies Brickell's intimate vocals and brings a frightening realism to her lyrics.

This kind of spontaneity, combined with the band's less serious tracks, further establishes the New Bohemians as an experimental band that is not worried about dominating the pop charts. And Brickell, who allows her enthusiasm to flow freely throughout her music, continues to carry that enjoyment into the hearts of her listeners.

Edie Brickell and New Bohemians will appear Saturday, Dec. 1, at Niagara University, Niagara Falls, N.Y.

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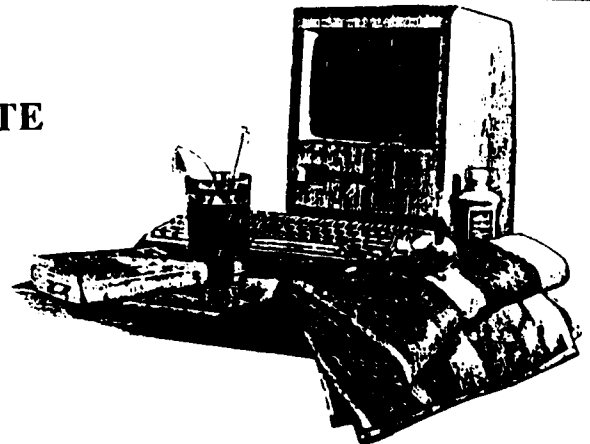
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EXSCI 170
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