

# Entertainment

## Is R.E.M. Out of Time?

*Restless change marks band's latest effort*

by Robb Frederick  
The Collegian

Finally, artistic creativity is again becoming vogue. Kevin Costner swept the Oscars Monday night, proving that films can succeed even if they deviate from a preestablished formula. If a virginal film director like Costner can make big with a western, what will it take to save the music industry, where sales potential dominates artistic experimentation?

The members of R.E.M. may not surpass the profit margins of Vanilla Ice or New Kids, but they do offer a fresh diversion from the "canned" musicians that have entrenched themselves in the *Billboard* charts. On *Out of Time*, the band's latest release, R.E.M. again breaks away from its past success and steps into uncharted territory. The release is more than a collection of inspired songs; it is a beacon guiding the way for future musical innovators.

With 1989's *Green*, R.E.M. broke into the land of commercial success, scoring big with hits like "Stand" and "Orange Crush." Most groups would follow success of that magnitude with a quick rehash of similar material, but not these guys.

For the members of R.E.M. (vocalist Michael Stipe, guitarist Peter Buck, bassist Mike Mills and drummer Bill Berry), the success of *Green* was not a big break, but a continuation of the band's progressive musical transition. A transition which is significantly furthered throughout the eleven tracks on *Out of*

*Time*.

The change is apparent from the opening notes of "Radio Song," the release's first cut. The song begins as a soothing lullaby, but soon evolves into a scathing criticism of the radio industry.

"It's the same sad song / DJ sucks / makes me sad," Stipe bitterly sings.

Stipe is accompanied on the track by rapper KRS-One, whose

*Out of Time is a beacon guiding the way for future musical innovators.*

restrained vocals delicately accentuate the track without overpowering Stipe's lyrics. The rapper's presence is one of several guest performances that also include Kate Peirson of the B-52's and Peter Holsapple of the dBs. These appearances, however slight, contribute to the flexibility of the tracks on *Out of Time*.

"Radio Song" is followed by the disc's first release, "Losing My Religion." This track introduces a complex string arrangement to the group's repertoire, an extension that continues throughout the disc. The single's upbeat, dancable tempo masks Stipe's despondent vocals:

"That's me in the corner /

That's me in the spotlight / losing my religion / Trying to keep a view / and I don't know if I can do it / oh now I've said too much / I haven't said enough."

Other highlights include the melancholy "Low," and the irresistible "Near Wild Heaven." The former reveals a doomsday-style sobriety, the latter a carefree euphoria in spite of somber subject matter.

On "Shiny Happy People," Stipe and guest Kate Peirson contemplate the concept of a peaceful, unblemished future. The track would be a ridiculous failure, if only the harmonies weren't so damn catchy.

Such harmonizing is uncharacteristic of Stipe, whose once-standard mutterings are now limited to the ballad "Half A World Away."

The experimental nature of *Out of Time* also leads to several unsuccessful efforts. The spoken passage on "Belong," for instance, weighs the poetic value of Stipe's lyrics too heavily. The track comes off more as an Orwellian satire than a sincere political commentary.

Such failure is inevitable when a band drastically alters its style, and in this case the mistakes are forgivable.

The restless experimentation throughout *Out of Time* may disgust some R.E.M. purists, but many more will recognize and appreciate the steps the band has taken to move ahead and explore its yet-unrealized artistic potential. Perhaps more performers should follow this lead before the music industry really does run out of time.

## Side two ruins JudyBats' debut

by Brad Kane  
The Collegian

Hopes were high a few weeks ago when I dug into my pocket in an effort to find enough money to finance my acquisition of the JudyBats' debut album *Native Son*.

Knowing of two songs on the record previously, and approving highly of both, I felt that adding *Son* to my collection would be a worthwhile endeavor.

But then, as I listened to the remaining ten songs on the album, my good feelings waned to those of ill repute. "Maybe this isn't as good as I felt it would be," I thought. Sigh... Just a simple case of the uneven debut album.

I've seen this problem before, especially in previous months. First issues from such artists as Daniel Ash, The Charlatans U.K., and the Inspiral Carpets had all failed to gain my full backing, so to speak. Highlights are present, true, but the lowlights shine just as brightly on said releases. *Native Son* is no exception.

The title track kicks off the album on a positive note. Right away the listener realizes that lead singer Jeff Heiskell does not possess the, shall we say, ordinary singing voice. It's of a timbre comparable by some with that of The Wall of Voodoo's (and now solo act) Stan Ridgway.

Heiskell's slight southern drawl (the band hails from Tennessee) blends in perfectly with the laid-back, lush atmosphere the title track creates. It is this voice that carries the band throughout the record, ranking as a voice that is a pure joy to listen to.

The remainder of the first side comes close to matching the high standards the first cut sets. "Convalescing in Spain" switches on and off between two totally different sets of rhythms

and melodies that give the listener the feeling that he or she is reading a book. The lyrics are witty enough too, to add an appreciable extra flavor to the track.

"Don't Rock the Baby" has a catchy, pop-resembling chorus hook that deals with caring for a newborn. This sort of topic doesn't always carry over well on record (Example: The 70's cult classic "She's Having My Baby" by Paul Anka), but the JudyBats do a surprisingly good job at pulling it off.

Then there's "She Lives (In a Time of Her Own)," which first appeared on last year's tribute compilation to Roky Erickson, *Where the Pyramid Meets the Eye*. It was through this song that this reviewer's ear was first hooked on the JudyBats, as the track is done perfectly.

Heiskell's vocals are in fine form as the full-throttle acoustic guitar of Johnny Sughrue and the farfisa organ of Peggy Hambricht add a special, extra dimension to the song, making it the standout track on *Native Son*.

But then we have that uneven feeling. It's that darned second side. It's just too laid back. Listening to the side practically put me to sleep. True, the band is supposed to have a more subtle sound and a Metallica-inspired rift here and there would not fit very well, but let's go for some moderation, guys.

Nothing off this side is worth mentioning. I mean, I don't even listen to the second side anymore.

But in all honesty, that shouldn't deter one from picking up *Native Son*. The first side is that good. The tracks on side one have the ability to make one forget how poor side two really is. So if you're looking for some gentle, southern influenced, slightly psychedelic, guitar induced music, the JudyBats could very well be for you.

### Dusckas Funeral Home

• MAIN OFFICE •  
2607 BUFFALO ROAD  
899-7656

• BRANCH OFFICE •  
536 WEST 10TH STREET  
452-2456

### FAST 1990 TAX REFUND

MBA Accountant  
will assist in your  
receiving faster 1990  
Federal 1040 refunds  
- ELECTRONIC FILING -  
also PA returns.  
- Call 864-4353 -  
10% off with ID



**Barbato's**  
Italian Restaurant  
3512 Buffalo Rd.  
Wesleyville  
899-3423

**\*\*WE DELIVER OUR ENTIRE MENU\*\***

Large Cheese and Pepperoni Pizza for  
Only \$6.99 plus tax

Expires 4/4/91

Spring Clothing Sale

\$ Tables \$

\$ Super Bargains  
at the  
**BEHREND BOOKSTORE**