

Back into the jungle

GN'R blasts back with a two-fisted Illusion combo

Throughout their scandal-ridden five-year career, the members of Guns N' Roses have taken their share of pot shots -- from frustrated police officials, panicked concert promoters, disgruntled fans, slighted producers, hostile neighbors, booted-out band members, and Tipper Gore and the other

members of the PMRC, who haven't gotten a good night's sleep since the band screamed onto the charts with their first single, "Welcome to the Jungle."

But one group in particular has remained faithful to the band -- record buyers.

On Monday, Sept. 16, thousands of salivating GN'R

fans swarmed the sidewalks, waiting in line for copies of the band's latest assault on the airwaves, *Use Your Illusion, Vol. I & II*.

The twin discs, which officially went on sale at midnight Tuesday, Sept. 17, mark a milestone in music history. Never before has a major

recording artist released two albums of different material on the same day.

Music industry insiders are banking on the *Use Your Illusion* albums -- a total of 30 tracks (Eight more than the band had previously collected since its debut in 1987) on two discs clocking in at more than 75

minutes each -- to bring some cash into a sluggish sales season.

And fans, after enduring more delays than a traveler passing through Heathrow airport during a holiday blizzard, are heading home to their disc players and cassette decks with one burning question in mind -- was it worth the wait?

by Greg Geibel
The Collegian

They're bad. They're rude. They're crude. They're arrogant. They're obnoxious. They're outspoken. They're impolite. They're disrespectful. They're temperamental. And they have every right to be...they're Guns n' Roses.

Their latest monster release, *Use Your Illusion I*, is like a good friend that you haven't talked to for four very long years.

After the embracing has stopped, that friend is immediately barraged with questions like, "What have you been up to?" "What do you have to say for yourself?" and most importantly, "Why haven't I heard from you?"

Use Your Illusion I, similar to that very good friend, answers all those questions.

It has a lot to say, some of it good, some of it bad, but you can't wait to hear all of it, and you don't want it to stop talking...all you want to do is listen. And when it's all finished, you want it to start all over from the beginning, repeating everything, just in case you missed something the first time.

Use Your Illusion I is a giant stepping stone for Guns n' Roses, their ultimate musical outlet so far. It provides an inner look at the band that was not seen on *Appetite for Destruction*, *Lies Lies Lies*, or in any of their reviews or police reports.

It is a culmination of four hard years of touring, fighting, and recording.

The album is full of songs containing the sounds that catapulted them into stardom, such as Axl's snake-like sinister whine and the heavy grunge of Slash's Les Paul.

The most intriguing aspect of *Use Your Illusion I* is the fact that for as many songs that sound like the "old" Guns n' Roses, there are just as many that are a departure for them. Songs that symbolize musical and technical development, talent, and maturity.

Use Your Illusion I begins with an in-your-face tune called "Right Next Door To Hell," a song sounding very reminiscent of *Appetite For Destruction*, featuring Axl's lightning-quick lyrics.

This song was actually written about Axl's next door neighbor, who filed a lawsuit against him when he allegedly bashed a bottle over her head, which he denied.

On the third track, Guns n' Roses attempt to cover Paul and Linda McCartney's "Live and Let Die," but the results are less than spectacular. Their intentions were good, but the song never reaches that ultimate climax like the original, making it a disappointment.

For that seemingly minute disappointment, however, Guns n' Roses make up for it with the recently released single "Don't Cry."

What makes this song work so well is Axl's low gravelly voice joined with a pure, clean voice over top his own one octave higher. This technique creates a parallel that Axl later closes when he assumes full vocal responsibility and the song reaches its climax.

A song of particular interest is the stripped down acoustic "You Ain't The First," written in a 3/4 time signature. Guns n' Roses have a little fun with this one, showing some humor.

"I tried so hard to get through to you / But your head's so far from the realness of truth / Was just a come on in the dark / Wasn't meant to last long / I think you've worn your welcome honey / I'll just see you along as I sing you this song."

Guns n' Roses show versatility by plowing through the honkytonk sounding tune

"Bad Obsession," while at the same time keeping that inner fire that drives each and every member of Guns n' Roses burning by blasting through cuts like "Back Off Bitch" and "Double Talkin' Jive."

One of the high points, if not the high point, off *Use Your Illusion I* is the ballad "November Rain." This song can send chills up the spine and the fondest memories through the head.

The Cathedral-esque keyboards of Dizzy Reed at the beginning of the song set the entire mood for the whole song.

Axl lays off the whining, and makes his vocals very straightforward, the lyrics clear, and the effect of the song strikes the center of the heart.

Use Your Illusion I ends with

the eerie, heartbeat pulsating, anti-suicide, ten minute plus song "Coma."

"Coma" gives a view from the inside, complete with doctors talking, the voice of death, and the sound of the electric paddles being used to shock the body back to life.

Guns n' Roses have proven themselves once again. Proven that they do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and how they want to do it. This album has been in the works for a long time, but the final results are proof that the wait was worth it.

And by the way, it was good to hear from you guys again, hope we hear from you again real soon...



by Robb Frederick
The Collegian

In the grungy realm of rock music, where hairspray, tattoos and arrest records often carry more weight than musical ability, many bands (and retailers) are picking up on one basic, bad-ass motto: attitude is everything.

The principle has been associated with rock music for some time now: since a frustrated Pete Townshend first trashed his guitar, a drugged Jim Morrison paraded his privates onstage in Miami, and a leering Ozzy Osbourne chomped the head off of a bat.

These acts may send priests and parents into conniptions, but

they also send hordes of record-buyers straight to the cash register.

And the cash registers were filling last week when *Use Your Illusion II*, the follow-through of Guns N' Roses' two-fisted return to the airwaves, introduced rock attitude for the 90's.

The disc, more than 75 minutes of scorching, obscenity-laced rock, launches attitude to a new level, and fans are reaching into their jean jacket pockets to buy tickets for the ride.

That ride peaks on the fifth track, "Get in the Ring." From the opening strains of Slash's soundtrack-anthem chords, the song evolves into a testosterone-pumped public challenge to all the band's detractors.

"Why do you look at me when you hate me / Why should I look at you when you make me hate you too," Rose snarls before racing into a stream-of-consciousness tirade that blasts critics from *Hit Parader*, *Spin*, *Kerrang*, and *Circus* magazine -- by name.

The fact that Rose is upset by poor reviews and inaccuracies is one thing, but by publicly lambasting these writers he has annihilated the limitations of retribution. Is this mature? Not even close, but when you're part of the world's most influential rock band, why worry about maturity?

This hostility subsides on the rest of the disc, however, as the band focuses its energy on the remaining 13 tracks and demonstrates why the public was willing to wait nearly four years for this new material.

The opening track, the monolithic protest song "Civil War," which first appeared on 1990's *Nobody's Child: Romanian Angel Appeal* compilation, sets the tone for the rest of *Use Your Illusion II*.

The tune, one of the best the band has ever recorded, starts slow, as a surprisingly calm Axl Rose drops subdued lyrics into Slash's soothing acoustic guitar riffs. The tranquility doesn't last long, however, as the song builds into an apocalyptic vision of political disillusionment in "the world we're killing."

The track reaches breakneck speed as it hits the seven-minute mark, only to wind down again and close as Rose asks "What's so civil about war anyway?"

This is followed by "14 Years," a bitter track that laments the waste of years gone by.

Accented by a honky-tonk keyboard line, this song reveals the influence of keyboardist Dizzy Reed, who formally joined the band earlier this year. The band continues to incorporate the keyboards throughout the disc (Rose himself supplies the piano track on "Breakdown"), expanding on the traditional four-chord rock song arrangement that too many other bands rely on.

On "Yesterdays," Rose takes a swig of mortality and lets go of his past. The lyrics are a bit redundant, but the chorus, beefed up by Rose's "pig-in-a-blender" vocals, overshadows the weakness.

An effects-drenched rendition of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" provides the disc's second recycled song. This one, culled from the *Days of Thunder* soundtrack, virtually abandons the Dylan original. The track's fatalist theme is in synch with the GN'R image, however, and succeeds on its own terms.

"You Could Be Mine," the single which has already sold more than two million copies since its debut on the *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* soundtrack, opens with the thundering drums of Matt Sorum, who replaced former drummer Steven Adler.

The song plows through a mediocre chorus and a blistering solo by Slash, climaxing with an agonizing wail from Rose that leaves listeners gasping for breath.

The final track, an abbreviated toss-off titled "My World," closes the disc with another serving of "in your face" attitude. Rose's demonic staccato vocals cross over into the field of rap...sort of.

The song is a sampling nightmare, complete with keyboard bursts and the obligatory moaning female in the background.

Most bands would have found this track left on the cutting room floor (which might not have been too bad of an idea), but here the song further demonstrates the weight Guns N' Roses carries.

True, they have the hairspray and the tattoos too, but when it comes to attitude, Guns N' Roses has an edge few rock bands can lean back on -- the muscle to match the mouth.