

That What is Not is not that bad

by Brad Kane
The Collegian

"...So when I picked it up and looked at it, I stared at the damn thing for about five minutes, trying to figure out what it was on the cover. Then I noticed the title - *That What Is Not* - and it hit me. Boy, oh boy, isn't John Lydon a sneaky little bastard? He gets better as he gets older I tell you..."

Oops, sorry, just describing Public Image Limited's new release to a friend, or at least describing the cover. In fact, it's quite a cover, worthy of some first rate, highly intellectual, deeply stimulating discussion.

But hey, John Lydon, PiL's frontman, has never been one to let anything controversial go untouched, and yes, the cover leans a bit to the controversial side. To sum it up, the artwork resembles, well, female genitalia actually - or is it? But hey, that what is not, remember? Ha, what a guy that Lydon.

Well, this review could go on a bit about the cover, considering it's a bit more interesting than the music located within, but in all fairness let's give it a try here, what do you say?

To begin, it should be noted that it took the band eleven releases to dig heartily into its roots - those cultured by Lydon from his Sex Pistol days. On *That What Is Not*'s opener, the driving, stinging "Acid Drops," Lydon samples his chant from the Pistols *God Save The Queen*,

"No Future," at the end of the song.

Some punk purists may groan, but actually the sample is used constructively. In a song dealing with unabashed censorship, the chant brings the song to a clever, intriguing close. Repetition of the phrase burns the song into one's memory, which is good, but that doesn't happen often on this release.

An example of this is the entire second half of the album. Aside from the rock-drenched

This review could go on about the cover, considering it's a bit more interesting than the music located within.

stomp of "Love Hate", Lydon and Co. (guitarist John McGeoch and bassist Allan Dias) have given the phrase "throwaway song" a new name.

"Terminal Boredom," Lydon intoned many moons ago on PiL's self-titled debut from 1978. It seems now that the phrase may work in 1991 just as well as "No Future" did. Well, even John Lydon isn't perfect.

However, there are a few decent tracks on the album. "Luck's Up" rides a persistent bass line to a catchy chorus, and "Covered," the album's first

single, utilizes both harmonica and "The Tower of Power" horn section to accentuate the quirky messages behind Lydon's songwriting: "Some unions are based on trust: some unions are a must; trussed up like a turkey; upside down on a turn key - you and me."

It is good to keep in mind with the release of *That What Is Not* that Lydon seems to be finally becoming influenced by others, rather than the other way around. Lydon's music has been inspiring creative musical minds everywhere for years.

Now, with what appears to be a resurgence in punk-influenced music, Lydon has taken notice, brought in producer Dave Jerden who is noted for his work with harder-edged bands and, voila - PiL has come as close to a modern-day punk album as can be. Not since the early 80's has PiL been this thrashy and metallic - which is both good and bad.

It's good because a return to one's roots always provides the potential for innovation and re-interpretation. It can also be bad because sometimes a band will end up doing little more than rehashing the same material over and over.

Sorry, Mr. Lydon, but I'm leaning toward the latter here. Punk's dead, at least flat out thrash punk is, but I get the feeling that PiL will be back in due time, creating and expanding once more - *That What Is Not* is just an intermission from it all.

The Cowboy Junkies throw some punches on *Black Eyed Man*

by Robb Frederick
The Collegian

"Black eyed man I'm warning you / the people around here will not be soothed by a simple line or two," Margo Timmins sighs on the title track of the latest by the Cowboy Junkies. She's somewhat of an authority on the subject -- soothing crowds, that is -- having built the Junkies' reputation on her silken, hypnotic voice, and having learned the lesson herself after the dud reception the band's 1990 disc *The Caution Horses* received.

That aptly-titled disc found the Junkies fighting to recapture the rich atmosphere of their brilliant major-label debut, *The Trinity Session*. And although *Horses* gave us a glimpse of guitarist Michael Timmins' songwriting potential, the music was not only cautious, but unnecessarily forced -- kind of like treading water in a kiddie pool.

On *Black Eyed Man*, the band ventures out a bit further...but not too far.

The Junkies' sound is still rooted in Margo's voice, which sweeps into each song like a

sleeping in." That's quite an agenda, but Michael artfully intertwines his subjects, punctuating the latter with a rousing horn section that digs deep into America's ragtime roots.

The Junkies adopt a shuffling honky-tonk sound for "A Horse in the Country" and on the title track, a disturbing number that documents the martyrdom of a local outcast who has jilted his lover.

Depressing as it may sound, Michael at least leaves his scapegoat with dignity intact:

"With a noose around his neck / cicadas trilling everywhere / he says to the people gathered round him / it ain't the water that's not right around here."

The sound -- and, unfortunately, the subject -- is pure Americana, but these Canadian natives revive it with a fresh exuberance that is tough to resist.

With "The Last Spike," Michael turns his narrative skills to the economic front, mapping out a recession-battered town that is all too believable for today's listeners.



Review



spectral whisper and floats along Alan Anton's heavy bass lines. She's loosened the belt a little this time around, however, reaching even higher up the scale and then dipping back down for an occasional stab at barroom blues.

The end result lies somewhere between the spiritual and the playful, an odd mix that nonetheless comes together on the disc's first track, "Southern Rain."

The song, based around an uncharacteristically strong guitar line, also charts the continued emergence of brother Michael Timmins as a poignant, witty songwriter. We get a string of intense images, quickly sketched and just as quickly left behind, that document the emotional yearning that dominates most of the record.

"I thought I'd never tire of a dollar / But this life has grown so hollow / Every night there's lipstick on his collar / Every morning I wash it away," Margo sings, cloaking the words with her trademarked soft resignation.

The clouds lift on "Oregon Hill," a sharp commentary that juggles the subjects of small town gossip, the stubborn memories of first loves, and the celebration of "the joy of

Other highlights include the Townes Van Zandt-penned "Cowboy Junkies Lament" and "If You Were the Woman and I was the Man," a gentle ballad that pairs Margo with guest vocalist John Prine.

The high point of *Black Eyed Man* comes with the next track, however, "Murder, Tonight in the Trailer Park."

The song frees the band from its usually subdued tone, drawing forth a surprisingly catchy groove that packs more energy than the entire *Caution Horses* disc.

Michael supplements the arrangement with his finest narrative to date, a dark depiction of a neighborhood trying to break away from a spiraling chain of events.

"I've been saving pennies / been looking forward to this day / No time for questions / are you coming or are you going to stay?" Margo wails.

Like most of *Black Eyed Man*, the song stems from the desire to get out, to be somewhere else, to be someone else.

It is a dilemma that the Cowboy Junkies still face. With *Black Eyed Man*, however, they've finally left the past behind and begun the search for the next stop.



The Matchbox Players



Present

The Two Gentlemen of Verona



A Comedy
by

William Shakespeare



Studio Theatre
Penn State ~ Behrend

March 27-28, April 2-4, 10-11 at 8 p.m.

March 29 and April 12 at 2:30 p.m.

\$4 general admission, \$3 students

\$2 "groundlings"

For reservations, call 898-6016

Springsteen wanted in Erie

Petitions are being circulated to persuade Bruce Springsteen to perform at the Erie Stadium on his upcoming tour. A goal of twenty thousand signatures has been set and petitions can be found at: Record County and Cruisers' on Buffalo Rd., and other reputable businesses.

The completed petitions will be sent to Bruce

Springsteen's manager and USA Today. For more information contact Pat Riazzi at 454-1266.

The best things in life can be found in *The Collegian*