

# Aerosmith good but 'commercial'

By BOB ASHFIELD

Aerosmith, like any other sledge-hammer-heavy-metal rock band, has been both heavenly praised and sternly denounced by anyone who casually listens to current radio airwaves. Critics either exalt them as an exciting, rip-snorting combination of no-holds-barred rock blues or denigrate them as a faulty garbage disposal, maintenance only by the youngest of rock advocates. Alas, to anyone so bewildered, the facts are that not only do they possess the most dazzling lead guitar player of the present in Joe Perry, and the premier rock vocalist in Steven Tyler, but that they are a band whose sound promotes a generation that doesn't give a damn who likes it.

"Draw the Line" is their fifth album, two discs after they pushed their way into the everyday life of the long-haired adolescent with "Toys in the Attic." The new album is very reminiscent of other works by the band, exposing their definiteness and somewhat repetitive sound, but also demonstrates the ever-increasing lengths they'll take to produce fresh, high-energy rock. Each cut is crammed with guitar riffs and base lines that cut against the grain of the song, not to mention the haunting lead and background vocals that somehow survive it all. The result however, is a concise meaty, but thoroughly digestible morsel of superb rock and roll.

The title cut is an example of a typical no-nonsense Aerosmith rocker, complete with lyrics that describe the never-ending frustrations of the male persona mingling with the forever distrustful female. ("Checkmate honey, I beat you at your own damn game.") Against the backdrop of a fiesty, rhythmic din (that only this band has the right to make), Tyler almost mocks the intense musical radicalism of the band as he virtually screams out the last verse in a barely intelligible ban-shaw-wail. "I Wanna Know Why" is a little more low key, still sounding

like a handful of previous songs. Stan Bronstein's sax warms the bulk of the tune while a quite reserved Joe Perry sneaks in a comparatively quiet, high-pitched guitar solo at the end.

Turn the volume up now. "Critical Mass" eases an onslaught of piercing harmonica (Dylan would be proud) and soaring vocals upon the unsuspecting listener. The band chants "Time and Space are taking me away," as they experiment with distortion as never before using disappearing guitar breaks, that can only remind psychedelia lovers of the sixties of the same in the Beatles' "Helter Skelter" and "Strawberry Fields Forever."

## Review

Turn the volume all the way up.

"Get it Up" follows with crashing guitar and thunderous drums as the familiar suggestive lyrics dance on an almost uninterpretable guitar line. After the first refrain the band embarks on an awesome display of screeching guitar and omnipotent base at its undefinable best, leaving the record owner longing for the concert.

There do appear on the album the regular, not quite as radical rockers such as "The Hand That Feeds" which really contains the best guitar solo of the record. "Bright Light Fright" is a solo contribution by Joe Perry that ends the first side, but upon consideration it would have been better to just end it without it. Then there is "Sight for Sore Eyes" which is the type of song that gave the band fame on "Toys in the Attic" as it combines heavy metal with

pure gutsy funk almost uncharacteristic of a white band. The tongue-in-cheek ludeness of the lyrics are extremely heightened by the raw emotion and orgasmic sincerity that Tyler pumps them out with, the evokes the highest of spirits that everyday rock bands have tried hard to reach.

Bassist Tom Hamilton's "King and Queens" is the real surprise and compliments the band greatly. The tempo is set majestically by a docile guitar riff that builds rapidly, over which Tyler laments of nightmares of a former life in medieval days. Everything compounds to a shuddering climax through which Perry emits precise rhythmic shrieks off his guitar that casts a chilly eeriness which drops to silence. Piano introduces a beautiful guitar solo and then builds to a powerful last verse that comes way too soon.

With their last album "Rocks" selling faster than any of their previous records, Aerosmith was catapulted to the top of the heap of contemporary rock. Fans, however, had to wait almost a year and a half for the next release to determine if their reign would continue. The unbelievable intensity of "Draw the Line" removes any further suspicion.

Still, there are the skeptics who love only "art" and push up their noses to any of this "unmotivated noise." Even Steven Tyler asks in song, "I wanna know why, everybody with good intentions has gotta make a fool out of me," and this is a very good question.

Why must everyone rip the top? Tyler answers, "They play rough, but can't get enough, so they try to make a fool out of me." Instead, Aerosmith evokes a happy-go-lucky attitude toward the commercial world. "Celebrate kids, we are Critical Mass." We are what we are and not what we're supposed to be. "Time and Space are taking me away" from all the confusion of exactness that art mongers create. It does not matter whether it is a Rem-

brandt or not. It's the emotion that can only be the final test and the band at its very least is exhilarating.

Aerosmith still strives to carry the message to what's left of the human world that if it feels good, do it. And they do it better than ever.

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