

**"The Lion and the Cobra"**  
Sinead O'Connor  
Chrysalis Records  
★★★½

In the past few months, Sinead O'Connor has become the latest rage in the alternative music press and the college radio market. This young Irish artist's combination of folk, rock and electronics has won her a large following in a short amount of time.

After listening to "The Lion and the Cobra," O'Connor's debut album, one can understand why O'Connor has been so highly touted as "the next big thing."

Well, to a certain extent anyway.

On the first listen, it is quite clear that O'Connor has dynamic vocal prowess. Her vocal range extends from whisper-like softness to high-pitched shrieks. O'Connor's vocals are often quite reminiscent of Siouxsie and the Banshees' vocalist, Siouxsie Sioux.

"The Lion and the Cobra" features lively pop-rock in songs such as "Mandinka," which also features a guest appearance on guitar by former Adam and the Ants' guitarist Marco Pirroni. Tracks like "Jerusalem" and "I Want Your (Hands on Me)" should find favor with the new wave dance audiences, while music fans who prefer raw, fuzz-toned guitar should enjoy "Just Call Me Joe."

One of the best songs on the record is the folk-oriented "Just Like U Said it Would B." Acoustic guitar and a synthesizer accompany O'Connor's vocals quite well here. Fans of new age music would appreciate this track, as well as fans of "new" music.

While many of the songs on "The Lion and the Cobra" are very good, several tracks suffer from a condition that seems to

plague so much of contemporary music: mediocrity. "Jackie," for instance features strong vocals by O'Connor and psychedelic-style guitar, but curiously enough, no percussion. The result is a droning piece of music that is only mildly interesting.

"Troy" is a beautifully orchestrated track that features a powerful string section, but at 6 minutes 28 seconds, it just gets old after a while. "Drink Before the War," another new age-oriented track, is just plain uninteresting.

"Never Get Old" is the low point of the record. The song is repetitious to the point of being monotonous, resulting in a lame, lifeless track.

What all of the songs, whether they be good, bad or mediocre, have in common is O'Connor's powerful voice. She is easily one of pop music's most talented vocalists. The musicianship on "The Lion and the Cobra" is also very good. Guitars, synthesizers, bass, strings and various types of percussion combine to create music that is sometimes danceable, sometimes raw, but unfortunately weak on a few tracks.

With this record, Sinead O'Connor has made a good debut. However, this very talented Irish vocalist may have to wait a short while before she can truly be called "the next big thing."

Review by Shane Hall

**"Julia and Julia"**  
Starring Kathleen Turner  
Directed By Peter Del Monte  
Rated  
★★★

"Julia and Julia" is a sombre, shifting film about Julia, a woman who has failed to accept the way her life has turned out. Kathleen Turner plays Julia who is at once both too weak to endure, and strong enough to fight against a fate that just isn't fair.

Tragedy strikes Julia and her husband Paolo, played by Gabriel Byrne, on their wedding day, and she never fully recovers. Julia is able to escape into a different life where things are happy for her until she gets ripped back into the real world. The movie does not try to explain this, but instead allows us, the audience, to see through Julia's eyes and get swept along in her maelstrom of confusion and emotion until we lie shattered, waiting for resolution.

This resolution does make the wait worthwhile, for the ending wraps things up and ratifies the themes of memory. In the end, the viewer remembers all the subtle and oblique hints which initially just added to the confusion.

Julia discovers she has shifted to a different life when she tries to go to her apartment, only to find someone else has lived there for six years. Walking through this house, which should be her own, she looks out a window to see an abandoned penthouse across the street. This penthouse was to have been Julia's

and Paolo's home after they were married. She goes there and faints after seeing her husband. When she wakes and meets her little boy, she begins to live the happiness which should have been hers.

Changing back and forth between these two lives, Julia becomes romantically involved with another man, played by Sting, who seems to exist in both worlds. His is a form of violent love which stimulates and repulses her, and he does her more harm than good.

Memory is a curse to Julia. She would much rather remember her charming, alert father-in-law than be faced with a withdrawn old man that sits in his room reading the same books again and again.

"I forget everything," the old man tells her. "Rereading a book is new each time."

When Julia cannot handle this emotional strain any longer

she breaks down and visits her in-laws again.

"I don't want to forget," Julia tells her mother-in-law. "It's not fair that I should have to."

The photography in this film shows great talent, and the use of light and haunting scenes to control the mood and emphasize the cloudiness of memory combine to create a slow-moving, surreal atmosphere which has an intense impact on the viewer.

Also of merit is Kathleen Turner, who gives a provocative and sensual performance, characteristic of her tremendous talent.

Although these successes may be wasted on an audience which is frustrated and alienated by the confusion of Julia's mind, this film is a refreshing change from the predictability of the "formula movie," and is worth seeing.

Review by Matthew Stewart

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