

# Rappers entertain with bold sets

(Continued from page 6)

onstage for cameo "Yeah boys." The only complaint I have against P.E.'s set is that D and Flav had a tendency to run long with their verbal baggage.

D took time out to catch his breath and condemn the U.S. military's involvement in the Middle East and the discriminatory policies of the federal and Texas governments. He also used the platform to speak out against rap censorship and to plug Louis Farrakhan's appearance in Houston next month.

Flav went way overboard hamming it up with the audience and then smarting off to D when D tried to hurry him along. Flav's comments on pursuing an education and loving your family were well-put and nice, but could have been said in half the time. The enjoyable part of Flav's thirty-minute stint were his solo jams of "Gold Lampin'" and "Can't Do Nuttin' For Ya Man," before returning for a camped version of "911 Is A Joke," complete with the Flavor Flav limbo.

The most interesting segment of P.E.'s set was the ending. Instead of creating mass chaos with a second performance of the previously shortened "Welcome To The Terrordome," the audience actually walked out with the finale's announcement. By the time P.E. finished "Terror," three-fourths of the crowd had departed. There was no blind faith here.

Buffeting P.E.'s electrifying set were a host of rap and hip hop performers that represented every segment of the modern African-American scene. The Afros, Kwame,

Young and Restless, Kid 'N Play, Ice Cube and Digital Underground added to the evening's excitement and diversity, moving the festival along between the five-minute set changes (five-minute set changes! — try that at a rock festival).

The surprise of the night was the acrobatic and infectious set of Kid 'N Play. Bolstering the pair's PG-rap style and fun-loving bravado was the night's best dancing. These guys can move.

Kid 'N Play's set blended well-chorographed dance steps with spontaneous jams and macho verbal wars. At one point the two rappers demonstrated to the audience how they would treat a Houston lady by simulating intercourse on the floor with a strobe light going. As embarrassed as I am to admit it, the childish romp and tongue lashings were hilarious (and yes, the female attendees laughed as hard as their male counterparts).

Even bolder than Kid 'N Play was the X-rated set of hip hoppers Digital Underground. Here's a group that brings well-built blow-up dolls onstage, turns them upside down and performs oral surgery on them. Now that's sexual revolution.

Unfortunately, Digital Underground's set was erratic, looking splendid on "Freaks Of The Industry" and "Packet Man," but unsteady with hits "The Humpty Dance" and "Doowutchyalike."

Ice Cube was distressing, at best. The ex-N.W.A.er strutted like a street thug, brandishing his gang mentality and overstrung chauvinism. Cube's ignorance and sexism did set the stage for the night's funniest and most humbling number, "It's A Man's World," with female rapper Yo-Yo. Ice Cube did his best to put Yo-Yo "in her place," but the unflappable Yo-Yo ate him up by

turning Cube and his chauvinism upside down.

It was nice to see throughout the night the solidarity and communion between the performers. The groups made cameos during each other's set, with the best cameo belonging to Flavor Flav. Flav wore a Mardi Gras-styled "freak" mask during Ice Cube's set, prancing around and fooling with the audience, only to discard the headgear in front of the surprised fans at set's end.

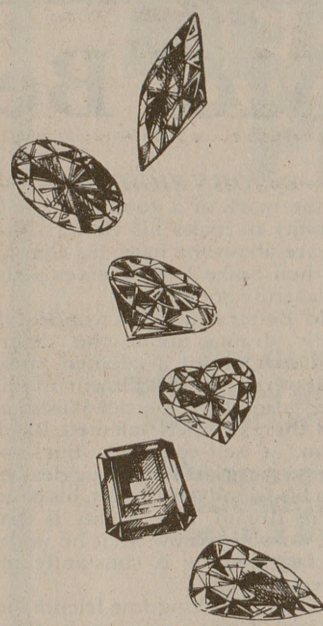
The groups also condemned rap censorship (blaming the problem on rap's crossover into white suburbia) and asked for support of Houston's Geto Boys, the rap group involved in a 2 Live Crew-type controversy with Geffen Records.

It was interesting that even though the audience rocked throughout most of the evening, it was never afraid to boo the performers and even literally tell a whiny Ice Cube to f--- off. Again, there was little blind faith within this crowd.

It was also a trip to see how under-produced the sets were, forcing the groups to make the most of gimmick props (blow-up dolls, cut-out caricatures, whipped cream), their rhymes and some amazing dancing. Luckily, there was no dearth of the above.

It's really hard to explain the feeling of a rap performance, but trust me, it's different. The whole mentality and direction is unique. Aside from Public Enemy, the emphasis was on entertainment, not the music. Music elitists have long complained about the lack of musical focus within the rap industry, but that's just musical snobbery. It's a different format, apples and oranges, and this orange must be tasted to be understood.

My advice to you for the year is to take a bite. If nothing else, you'll agree — it's a tangy trip.



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## Bossanova lacks sparkle of Pixies style

By JOHN RIGHTER

As strange as it may sound, some groups actually deteriorate as they mature as musicians. Unfortunately, I think the Pixies, one of the most exciting groups of the late '80s, falls into this paradoxical category.

*Bossanova*, the Pixies' third album (their first release, *Come On Pilgrim*, is really just an EP), is a good album, but the sense of adventure and eccentricities found on *Come On Pilgrim* and *Surfer Rosa* are not here.

To be upfront, *Bossanova* is too polished and overproduced. It sacrifices the group's adorable spontaneity. A Pixies album is not a Pixies album if Black Francis (singer and guitarist) doesn't hip, hep and holler at least a hundred times. And where are the Spanish ad-libs, sexual faux pas and sweltering groans of an inebriated Kim Deal (bass player and backup singer)?

Except for the absolutely insane "Rock Music," a torrent of screams and undecipherable adjectives, *Bossanova* is boring.

It does have its catchy moments. "Velouria" (its single package with two unreleased tracks is actually better than the album), "Dig For Fire" and "The Happening" are solid, safe singles that deserve their equal share of radio airplay.

The wispy "Havelina," the instrumental "Cecilia Ann" and Deal's "Blown Away" are also good tracks, but again, lack Pixies spunk.

The saving grace of *Bossanova* is still the Francis/Deal partnership, the best male/female tandem around. Francis' scaled harmonies mix wonderfully with Deal's sexy slurs (Kim Gordon with a voice). The very busy Deal, contributor to a hodge-podge of alternative releases, may be spreading herself too thin. If so, the group needs you, Kim.



Joey Santiago, David Lovering, Kim Deal and Black Francis make up the the Pixies.

All in all, *Bossanova* is not a bad album, and I even recommend it — but with a warning label (and we all love those warning labels). It simply reads — WARNING: This fine, over-polished release has no hope of causing cranial harm or sexual frustration within you. Sadly, there are no shredded eyeballs, Spanish paens or broken sexual taboos to report.

We apologize for such a gross display of normalcy.

If you've never heard the Pixies before, keep an ear peeled. *Bossanova* is safer and more accessible than their past work, which will appeal to the average listener, and I still feel the Pixies are one of the brightest young groups around. But for now, I'll wear my shades.

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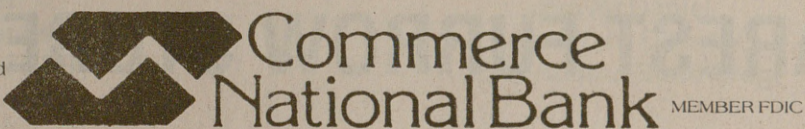
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