

Living Colour's second album slides past 'sophomore slump'

By JOHN RIGHTER
 In sports, the term "sophomore slump" is liberally used to describe the production tailoff of outstanding rookies.



While not as colloquialized as sports, sophomore slump is as apt a phrase in music for second-time underachievers.

It's often noted that rookie sensations spend their "amateur" career, sometimes many years, preparing for their first release. In contrast to the four or five years of preparation and build-up of light, original material, groups find the second release, pushed along by strict time tables, a much greater challenge.

Unfortunately, the second release is what really makes or breaks most bands, a stressing reality they are painfully aware of (just ask Guns 'N' Roses).

Living Colour was one of 1989's brightest new groups, scoring big with their album *Vivid* and singles "Cult Of Personality" and "Glamour Boys." Fortunately, *Time's Up*, their latest release for Epic, clears the sophomore slump hurdle, landing a stronger, deeper album than *Vivid*.

Time's Up is not as catchy as their debut, but guitarist and frontman Vernon Reid leads Living Colour beyond mainstream metal into a root-oriented collection that relies as strongly on jazz and rhythm and blues as the group's raw, grunge appeal.

The most pleasant part of *Time's Up* is the growth in Living Colour's musical itinerary. Despite *Vivid's* heavier critical acclaim last year, I really thought that 24-7 Spyz's *Harder Than You* was a gutsier, more collective piece of work.

The 15 tracks on *Time's Up* are a polished, experimental collection buoyed by several incredible instrumentals and the first single, "Type."

"Type," a stronger release than "Cult," works off its pattern changes that groove in and out of fast rips and mellow harmonies. The lyrics fit

nicely into topic deception, one of several themes strung throughout the album. Along with deception (sexual, historical, self), sexual decisions and consequences and racial pride compose the topical meat of *Time's*, a more outspoken release than their debut.

On "Pride," lead singer Corey Glover wails, "History's a lie that they teach you in school, A fraudulent view called the golden rule, A peaceful land that was born civilized, Was robbed of its freedom, its riches, its pride."

"Under Cover of Darkness," a dark, jazzy number (Reid destroys in a brief solo), features guest vocalist Queen Latifah following Glover's lines of sexual frustration in dealing with the possibility of AIDS.

"To do or not to do that is the question," raps Latifah, "Over and over you're thrown these sugges-

tions, I'm sympathetic but I can't condone. The fact that you want to make your bed my home."

"Let's say I take this man as my lover, And he swears that there will never be another, But really he tells me he could give a damn about safe sex, And with all these other girls he's had a taste test, But the thrill does not outweigh the consequences. Therefore I'm using my common senses, To let you know I adore you, But I'm afraid I'm not the one for you."

Breaking from "Under Cover" is Muzz Skillings' bass exploration on "Ology," the album's coolest track. Skillings proves that Reid holds nothing over his head as the group's instrumental spokesman.

Likewise, Reid's "History Lesson," an instrumental that layers sampling pieces over Reid's airy rhythms, and the mouth percussion of Corey Glover and guest contributor Doug E. Fresh on "Tag Team Partners," are intriguing tracks and perfect fillers.

Time's Up is everything that Living Colour did on *Vivid* and more. Reid, Skillings and drummer William Calhoun are sensational musicians who shine while performing *Time's* varied formats. Glover is normally solid on vocals, but is much more suited for the softer rhythm and blues, than the album's harder tracks.

In the past two years, Living Colour and 24-7 Spyz have taken the roots set by hardcore-starters Bad Brains and deepened the multi-influences of African-American music. Both are years ahead of popular white glam metal in guts and ability.

Fortunately, Reid and Colour seem determined to advance their sound and broaden their direction. Even though they'll move more away from the CBGB metal days, I can only expect this change to continue the improvement shown on *Time's Up*, an album that is anything but a sophomore slump.

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Tues. Sept. 11 **PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER** - Experience the professional side of Delta Sigma Pi with our speaker at 7:00p.m. in MSC 201. *professional attire requested*

Fri. Sept. 14 **RUSH PARTY** - Come to the Briarwood Apts. party room at 8:30p.m for our "Black and White" end-of-rush party! Dress completely in "black and white" from "head to toe" and be ready to have fun! (Join us for Midnight Yell after the party!)

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Music Spotlight: The Road Kings

Photo by Fredrick D. Joe

The Road Kings perform near the fountain in front of the Old Chemistry Building Friday afternoon. Brian Lux on bass, Eric Rucker on drums and Jesse Dayton on guitar and vocals make up the trio. Their rockabilly sound has pleased crowds in several local clubs since they formed last spring.

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