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Actor Landon Summer releases bring raw emotion back to rock'n'roll

dead at 54

By Rob Newberry

MALIBU, Calif. (AP) - Michael Landon, the boyishly handsome actor who battled cancer with the same affability he brought to roles in "Bonanza" and "Little House on the Prairie," died Monday. He was 54.

Landon, who also starred in the TV series "Highway to Heaven" and whose career was jammed with writing, producing and directing credits, died shortly after 1 p.m., said Ronne Schmidt, a receptionist for Landon's attorney and friend, Jay Eller.

Schmidt said details of Landon's death, including where he died, were not being released immediately.

Landon was set to start work on the new CBS series "US" when he was diagnosed with liver and pancreatic cancer on April 5.

"I think every little moment gets more important after something like this," a stoic but congenial Landon said after he learned he was terminally ill. "It's not like I've missed a hell of a lot. I've had a pretty good lick here."

He joked that he didn't want to lose his trademark curly locks during cancer treatments. "I certainly hope I don't lose my hair, since everybody has been reviewing my hair for 35 years."

Born Eugene Maurice Orowitz to show business parents Eli Orowitz and Peggy O'Neill in New York City, Landon spent much of his childhood coping with a suicidal mother and fighting in and being kicked out of school.

He graduated second from last in a high school class of 301 students.

A national high school champion javelin thrower, with a record toss of 211 feet, seven inches, Landon was offered several dozen collegiate scholarships, selecting the University of Southern California.

Forced to drop out of school after a ligament tear, Landon took a variety of odd jobs.

Violent Femmes
Why Do Birds Sing?
 Slash/Reprise

Gordon Gano and the Milwaukee coffeeshop trio return to the alternative scene with their latest *Why Do Birds Sing?* My reply: who cares why the birds are singing - I'm too busy laughing as I listen to Gano's vocals.

Gano is a master at mixing humor and deep thought into clever statements. His delivery always stresses the humor - his nasal whine always makes the funny parts stand out a little more. But there's no denying the intellect behind these songs.

First case in point: "Girl Trouble." Gano can write a heartbreak song like no one else - as I sit back and realize how right he is, I laugh at myself and him for making something so big out of relationship troubles. "Have mercy on me, I go girl trouble up the ass... Don't tell me no jokes, I'm not gonna laugh." I don't know anyone who can keep from chuckling when Gano chants that line.

The disc opens by poking fun at Gano's musical influences in "American Music." He satirizes the old fifties "Blue Moon" tunes and all their prom date connotations, and he also jibes all those artists (himself included) who've made an issue out of their own drug use.

It's hard to pick a favorite. I like both those tunes, but "He Likes Me" is a contender, too. Gano describes his all-too-typical feelings about his ex-lover's new boyfriend: "Your old true friend doesn't like your brand new friend... You're so free, and I am history."

And I've finally heard a band pull off a cover of a Culture Club song. Leave it to the Femmes - their acoustic rendition of "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?" hits the mark (of course, Gano had to improve a little on the lyrics, but he can do that).

The music behind the tunes is as raucous as ever. Brian Ritchie's driving acoustic bass and Victor DeLorenzo's jazzy snare licks provide the classic Femmes accompaniment - they're one of the few bands who can make a more or less acoustic mix sound as full as an orchestra.

No question about it, the new Femmes record is a treat, following in the footsteps of early works like *Violent Femmes* and 3. Any Femmes fan must have it, and anyone else who gets it will soon be one.

Music Review



Dots Will Echo
Dots Will Echo
 High Street Records

The more time I spend listening and playing - sometime living, it seems - music, the more I find that I appreciate the raw sounds of a new band. R.E.M.'s *Murmur* is perhaps the classic example, and while Dots Will Echo may not be another R.E.M. (not yet, at least), their self-titled debut puts them in some great company.

The disc opens with the six-minute jam "Everything in the World." Kicking off with very basic rhythm guitar riffs, the tunes add crisp drum parts and some of the nicest harmonies I've heard from new bands in a while. The vocals are slick; these guys sound incredibly professional. But the result is never too produced, and the tune grabs me and has me bouncing rhythmically before the first 30 seconds.

The songs just keep coming. "Sandra" and "Rain" are masterful songs - the first is an upbeat tune about a strange event with a female acquaintance, the last a soothing cry of rebirth set to an almost tribal drum beat.

On to "Someday," with opening harsh rimshots and acoustic guitar rhythms - the tune ends up sounding like the Police attempt fifties doo-wap. Next up is the band's title song (not usually a cool thing in my book), but "Dots Will Echo" is an upfront bash of honest questioning. And the harmonious chorus melts the distortion on the guitar into a pure emotional rush.

I can't really get over how young and raw this band sounds. The songs all have some overdubs and mixing, but you can hardly tell - when drummer Steve Meltzer and bassist Bob Albanese join guitarist-lead vocalist Nick Berry for a harmony, I could swear they're all jamming through the song in some garage studio. The band advocates the not-too-technical: from the liner notes, "Dots Will Echo uses whatever cheap junk they can get their hands on, exclusively."

Frankly, Dots Will Echo has got me excited that the rut in guitar-based, raw rock 'n' roll may be coming to a close. And if not, at least this one band knows how I'm feeling.

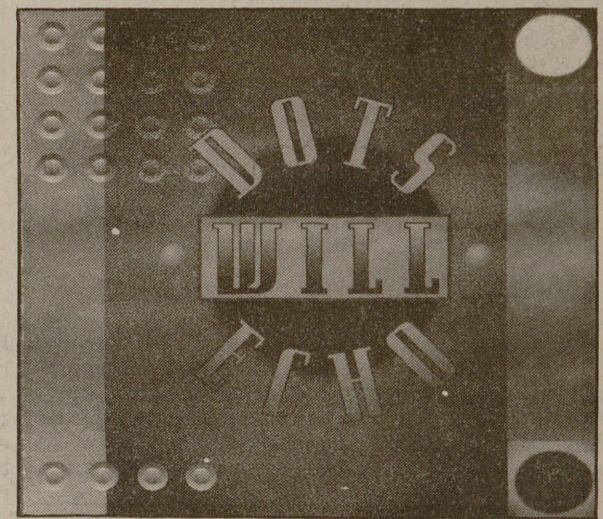
Authors rank rock'n'roll's worst spins

NEW YORK (AP) - Joey Bishop, country-western singer, is bad. John Travolta, pop crooner, is worse. And Joel Grey doing Cream's "White Room" ... well, life's not always a cabaret. But would you believe the Grateful Dead, Bob Dylan and Lou Reed all made worse albums?

That's what Jimmy Guterman and Owen O'Donnell say in their new book "The Worst Rock'n'Roll Records of All Time."

While Grey (No. 36), Bishop (No. 33) and Travolta (No. 18) did make three of the worst 50 albums ever, they had plenty of company, the authors say. Dylan, the Dead, Reed, the Doors and Elvis Presley are all in the pair's 10 worst album list.

The King, in fact, tops the list with 1974's "Having Fun With Elvis on Stage," a 40-minute collection of his stage banter. "Elvis Presley made some truly horrible records that stand today as vivid arguments against barbiturates," write the authors.

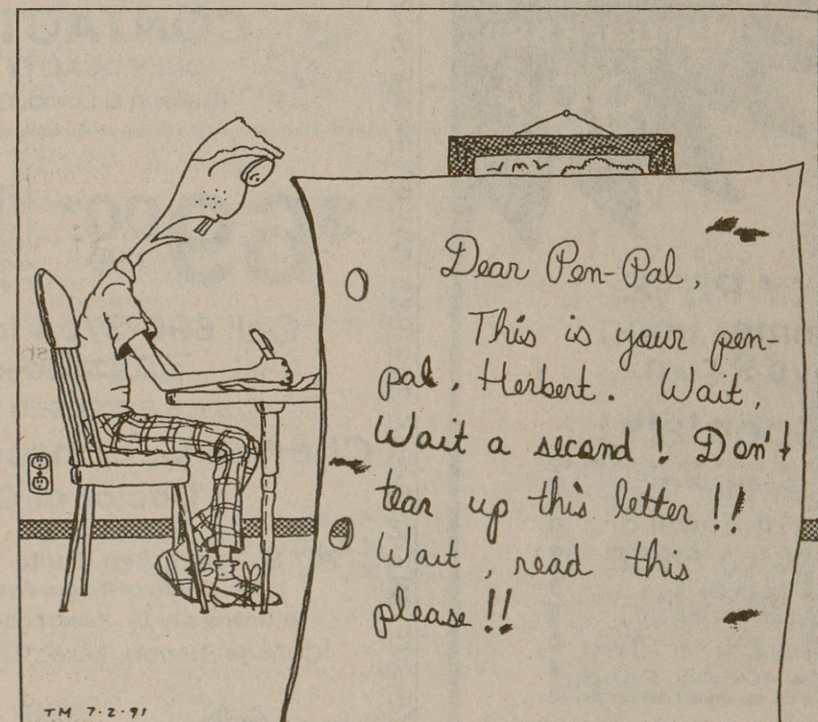


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