

Music

Reviews

Cranes bring back classic Goth rock

By Kevin Robinson
The Battalion

The Cranes
"Wings of Joy"
BMG

The last time I checked, Goth rock this good died when the Cure started to smile. I was wrong. It was only hiding out in a small English town.

"Wings of Joy," the second album by the Cranes, was recommended to me by several friends who know of my liking for early eighties gloom and doom music. Since Ian Curtis hung himself and bands like the Cure and the Banshees have become dance floor favorites, the only way to get a healthy dose of musical depression was from that old standby, 4AD. Even then, it just wasn't the same. As good as many of the 4AD bands are, overprocessed vocals and washes of instrumental noise can only progress so far. After that, it tends to grow stale pretty quick.

The Cranes, thank God, have come along at the perfect time to throw me back to when I first listened to those scratchy old Bauhaus or Joy Division LPs. The Cranes are not, however, just a nostalgia trip. The band is firmly set in the nineties.

The group takes their cue from the numerous other English rock groups with ethereal female vocals and runaway guitar noise. They're not, however, quite as rock n' roll as Lush, and the happiness of recent Cocteau Twins is not something the band's music will be expressing.

If any musical debts are owed, it's to American minimal groups like Hugo Largo and Hetch Hetchy. The Cranes, however, combine the style of their American cousins with some of the moodiness and atmosphere which the English seem to do best.

The Cranes construct most of their tunes around a piano melody or acoustic guitar riff. Siblings Jim and Allison Shaw provide the backbone of the band, with Jim writing most of the music and Allison providing striking, shrill vocals and a subtle bass. Allison's vocals are unusual enough that they take some getting used to, but once they do, it's hard to imagine this album without them.

The opening track on the album, "Watersong" let me know that I was really going to enjoy this album. The song starts with a quiet little piano melody, and Allison's voice slowly begins flowing over the tune about halfway through. It honestly sounds more like a film soundtrack than a pop song, and while good, I was afraid that this would be one more band attempting an "ambient" sound. Later songs proved me dead wrong.

"Adoration" and "Leaves of Summer" are two of the best songs on the album. They manage to be subtle, but have a quiet intensity about them. In the completely opposite vein is "Starblood," a harsh, distortion number from the band's first album.

If this was the style of the entire first album, the Cranes have progressed enormously from generic Lush rip-off to a distinct sound all their own.

No Doubt's debut takes goofy look at life

By Chris Eklof
The Battalion

No Doubt
"No Doubt"
Interscope

Sprouting from Orange County, California, home of Disneyland, No Doubt takes a cartoonish look at life and many of its problems, both major and meaningless. Fast food, famous models and the painful removal of wisdom teeth are all topics within the realm of No Doubt.

No Doubt's wacked out perspectives are laid out over music that is just as fun as the lyrics. No Doubt blends funk, ska and rock into songs that have terminally happy beats. A three man horn section backs up the band on several of the songs.

The horn section makes many of the songs sound like the introduction to the "Tonight Show" or a television game show. This sim-

ply adds to the weirdness of the album.

The breeding point for No Doubt's humor is inside the head of keyboardist Eric Stefani. Stefani's past work as an animator on "The Simpsons" and "Mighty Mouse" only adds to the band's cartoon image. Stefani is the main writer of the group and gets complete credit for the album's strangest songs, "Paulina" and "A Little Something Refreshing."

Stefani's sister, Gwen, does the majority of the singing on the album, handing over the microphone to her brother only on the lustful love song, "Paulina."

"Paulina" is Stefani's one-handed tribute to a famous model. He stares at her picture all day long, wishes she would take off all her clothes and then he "single-handedly turns the page."

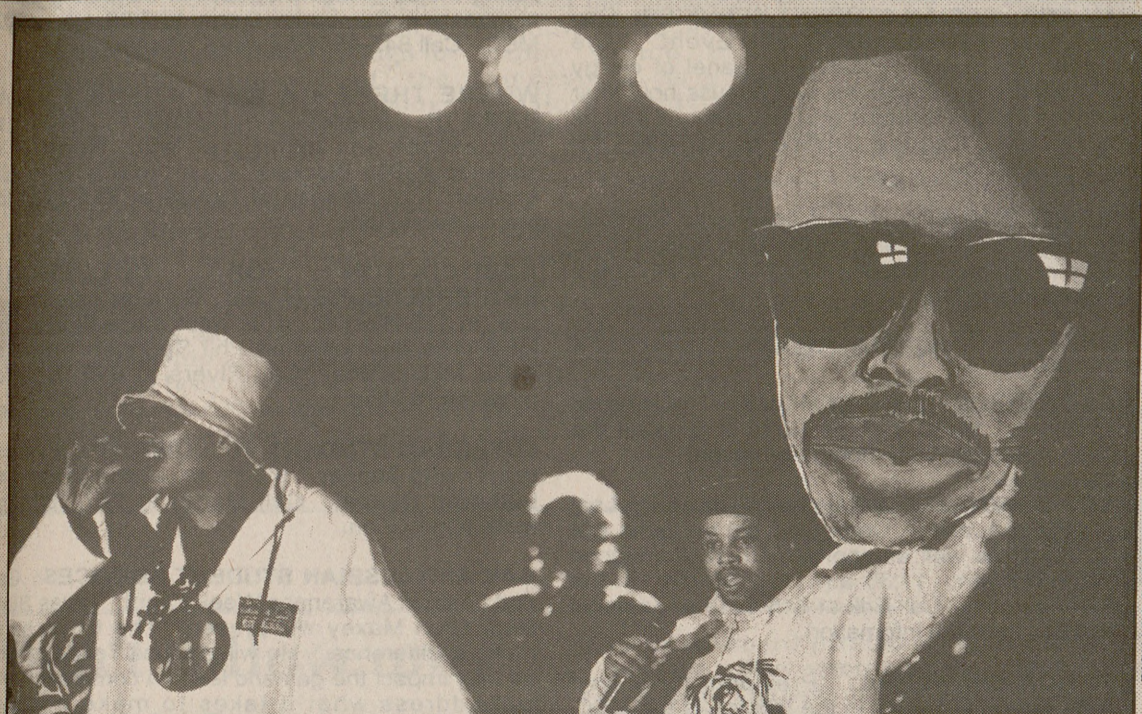
"A Little Something Refreshing" takes an absolutely essential element of life, food, and makes a song about it. It is meaningless,

non-important, but totally fun. It describes a mad eating frenzy then ends appropriately enough with a long, protracted burp.

No Doubt does occasionally attacks a more important song, but even the topic of addiction is treated with a happy feeling. "Sinking" is about alcohol addiction while "Trapped In A Box" exposes an addiction that is not too often thought of—the addiction to television.

More often than not, the subject matter of No Doubt stays on the light side. They will write a song about anything and everything. The song "Ache" goes on and on, telling the story of Stefani's wisdom teeth removal. It is basically about how much pain the guy was in. Certainly, nobody else cares about that, but it did not stop No Doubt from making another goofy song.

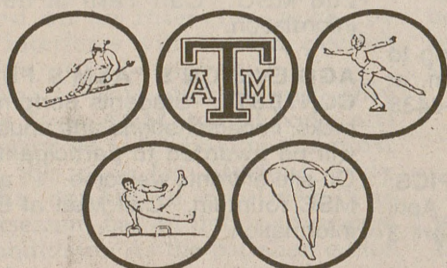
"Goofy" is what the group is all about. No Doubt looks to have fun first and make music second.



Guess who can't touch this?

Humpty-Hump (left) and Money-B, rappers for the hip-hop group Digital Underground, play "guess-the-artist" (here the popular Hammer) during an MSC Town Hall concert Friday night in Deware Field House.

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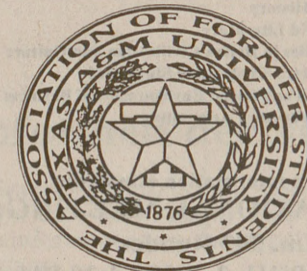
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