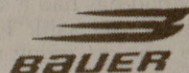
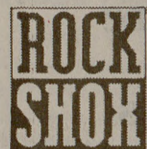


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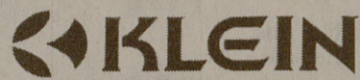


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 Wednesday • September 3, 1996

MUSIC REVIEWS



The lyrics "life is hard and so am I" are hard to forget.

So are the musicians who perform them, the Eels. The Los Angeles pop-soul band recently released its debut album, *Beautiful Freak*.

The Eels are not the mainstream rock that has polluted today's society. It has a different approach to everything, aside from the band's music.

The musicians said they use their first names to be on a more personal level with the listeners.

Lead vocalist/guitarist/songwriter E, drummer Butch, and bassist Tommy met at an open mike night at the Mint, a Los Angeles club.

In early 1996, the band signed with DreamWorks Records and produced *Beautiful Freak* with Michael Simpson, known for his work with Beck and the Beastie Boys.

Beautiful Freak is an excellent album because of the diversity of the music. Surprisingly, it can be angry, sad, upbeat and funky, all in the same song.

Most of the songs have a little bit of hip-hop and pop, but also bring

reminders of the depression in the world today, especially the depression young people face. The title track "Beautiful Freak" is a sweet, slow love song — a definite contrast to the rest of the album.

"Susan's House" talks about a 17-year-old girl who is walking down the street pushing a baby stroller. "I'm thinking it's her sister...right?" E sings.

E proves his talent as a songwriter with thoughtful and meaningful lyrics.

In "Flower," E sings, "When I came into this world they slapped me, and every day since then, I'm slapped again... Everyone is trying to bum me out."

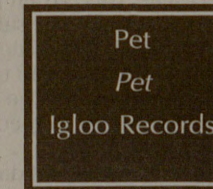
The popular song, "Novocaine for the Soul," is about someone wanting to be numb and not having to deal with depression and unhappiness. Unlike the protagonist in the song, E said he would rather confront pain directly.

"I'm trying to put something in the music that says it's okay to be sad today," he said.

The Eels album is an excellent display of talent and creativity. The songwriting is good, as well as the precision of the instruments and the overall flow of the band as a whole.

The music of the Eels involves several instruments, such as the French horn, a drum made from a heating duct and a fire alarm bell. With the variety of instruments, the Eels are able to create different sounds and styles. The Eels also use a considerable amount of sampling on the album. **B+**

- April Towery



Pet's self-titled, debut album is something die-hard Tori Amos fans would rush out and buy, but for the rest of the music-listening population, Pet will take an acquired taste to appreciate.

Pet plays mostly made-for-the-radio, dissonant pop music, adding drums and loud guitars to very Amos-like vocals from Pet lead singer, Lisa Papineau.

It comes as no surprise that Amos produced *Pet* through her pet project, Igloo Records.

In the better points of the album, it sounds like the red-headed goddess, Amos, took over the mike and sang the songs herself. Papineau manages to emulate Amos by using a wide range of vocals. Her voice will stay low and breathy and then, suddenly, will raise into a high pitch of anguish, before dropping down again.

Papineau's voice is a definite benefit to this album.

The lyrics carry a similar Amos-esque appeal.

Written on the inside the compact disc's cover, the lyrics look like free verse poetry taken directly from Papineau's personal journal. Many of the lyrics deal with self-realization, liberation and are surrounded with a strong air of sexuality.

Papineau seems to be asking for a way out of an anguished state in "Bed" where she screams, "I'm not here/I'm nothing/I'm not here."

Later, she counters her angst-ridden self-loathing with a more poetic tale about feminine identity in "I've Been a Gaylord." Papineau sings, "Or will you just zip into his empty skin? Plant up his lonely bones and be his puppet ghost?"

Sarah McLaughlin and Alanis Morissette would be proud.

The downside of the album is the band that backs Papineau.

Pet guitarist Tyler Bates and drummer Alex LoCasio are not terrible at their trade, but they fail to meet the musical ingenuity found in Papineau's vocals.

Pet has three mellow songs on the album that make the compact disc worth paying 25 cents at Hastings to preview the album. "Meat#e," "I've Been a Gaylord" and "Calmate!" emphasize the vocal strength in the band and leave the music in the background.

Too bad the band didn't do more of this on the album.

Bates and LoCasio sound like they hailed from a nearby garage band. The music is made up of loud, driving guitars, and Bates has a tendency to repeat the same note throughout the entire song.

It seems like Amos' talented ear should know a good band when it hears one, but the music of *Pet* could use some fine-tuning.

Perhaps the band is on its way.

Pet had an album track on the soundtrack to the movie, *The Crow: City of Angels*, along with Hole, PJ Harvey, Bush and a host of other well known bands.

Yesterday, the band's self-titled album was released to music stores.

Under the watchful eye of Amos, *Pet* has the potential to blossom into a band making people weep from its brilliance. But not yet. **B**

- Libe Good

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