

## MUSIC REVIEWS



Les Claypool and the Holy Mackerel  
*Highball with the Devil*  
Interscope Records

Ever have a craving for pizza so intense it hurts? So you run to your favorite pizza parlor and order a hot, greasy pie with the works. You stuff a slice into your mouth and realize ... as good as pizza may be, it's still just pizza.

Les Claypool's debut solo album, *Highball with the Devil*, is like pizza — it's yummy, but tastes similar to all the rest of the pizza you've ever eaten.

*Highball with the Devil* offers no surprises. The venerable bassist and singer for San Francisco's "audio acid" legend Primus sticks with a predictable 15-track serving of odd musical narratives, leaving behind his history of musical innovation.

Primus fans have heard this stuff before. Claypool doesn't push any boundaries here.

This doesn't mean *Highball with the Devil* is not good — it's just not very interesting.

The album sounds homemade, and a lot of the songs are probably live recordings. This low-budget effort suits Claypool's bass grind, and the result is a cool peek into garage band practice. Unfortunately, the "low-fi" also muddles the bass — the backbone of Claypool's music.

Claypool recruits fellow Bay-area musicians Jay Lane and Charlie Hunter for the live tracks. The Charlie Hunter Quartet drummer and guitarist

lend a refreshing, jazzy facet to the eccentric bass fiddlings on "Me and Chuck."

Most of the other songs could easily fit a Primus set. "Running the Gauntlet" features Claypool's trademark hick-a-billy music laid over his eerie whining, the approach used with commercial success in Primus' "My Name is Mud" and "Wynona's Big Brown Beaver."

The days of Primus' "audio acid," that lovable world of rambunctious bass lines and off-key guitar screeches, are gone. Claypool's only new approach on the album makes the listener wince. On several tracks, he plays all the instruments. Now, Claypool is a terrific bass player and a decent guitarist, but is not quite convincing as a drummer. He doesn't always seem to lock the instruments together on these tracks. It's as if he can't find his own groove.

Claypool's storytelling gifts haven't suffered with his creative stagnation. His tales of the weird and random perpetuate songs like "Cohibas Esplendidos."

"Saw Mr. Potato Man the other day / down at the wasteland / He's a happy boy, full of vim and vigor / since the day he left his wife."

Whatever, Les. This expected nonsense is Claypool's norm and not at all new.

One serious matter may keep some from considering *Highball with the Devil*, and make others rush out and buy it — a spoken-word track featuring Henry Rollins.

This waste of audio tape seems to be a cheap excuse to get Rollins on the album. Nice try, but Rollins is so damned irritating it doesn't help much.

But this is just one slice of Claypool's pizza. Drop it on the floor, and the rest of the pizza is still edible. The toppings are familiar and the crust not half bad, but don't expect a masterpiece. **B-**  
- John LeBas

## Sunny Days Ahead



Former student Sunny Nash has taken the world by storm as an artist. Her new book describes her pre-Civil-Rights childhood in Bryan.

By JOHN LEBAS  
THE BATTALION

When Sunny Nash was a girl growing up in Bryan in the '50s, Texas A&M seemed like another world to her.

The school was all-male, all-military and all-white. Everybody looked the same, Nash said. And, at the time, African-Americans could not attend A&M.

Yet in 1977, Nash received a journalism degree from A&M. She was the "second or third" African-American woman to graduate from the University.

Nash said she wasn't aware of this at the time. "I didn't know that until I did a speech for the Association of Former Students years later," she said.

Nash says she did not notice because she was not concerned with being a minority here. Overlooking her minority status as a woman and African-American, she said she worked through her college career with one goal — to get a degree.

Nash, who is a photographer and freelance writer living in California, is reading passages from her new book, *Big Mama Didn't Shop at Woolworth's*, at Friends Congregational Church in College Station on Sunday at 7 p.m.

The book is the journalist's latest writing effort, chronicling her childhood experiences in the Candy Hill neighborhood of Bryan.

In a world of Jim Crow laws and rampant discrimination, the future looked bleak for a young black girl. Nash, who was born in 1949, writes of the daily obstacles she and her family had to overcome in the pre-Civil-Rights-Movement era.

### From Singer to Aggie

Nash's road to A&M began following gigs as a musician. Nash, who said she had always wanted to be a writer, began singing commercial jingles immediately following graduation from Kemp High School in Bryan.

This led to jobs with musical luminaries such as her cousin, Johnny Nash, and Jackie Wilson. For a while, Nash toured with singing groups and lived and worked in New York and Chicago.

Nash said by the early 1970s, the traveling lifestyle of a performer had begun to wear thin. She had a daughter and didn't want to raise her on the road.

"I decided I needed to settle down and go to school," Nash said.

Nash returned to Bryan to live with her parents. She said A&M seemed an obvious choice for schooling. Recently demilitarized and integrated, the University was cheap and close to home.

"I think that then it cost \$4 a semester hour," she said. Time has stoked the growth of A&M's fees, and its diversity. But when Nash attended, A&M was mostly white and male.

"I would sometimes go for weeks without seeing other African-Americans," she said. "I could also go for several days without seeing another woman."

Nash said her race was not an issue, though. "I didn't experience overt racial prejudice at A&M," she said. "I wasn't looking for that kind of treatment — I was too busy. But I experienced isolation because I was a woman."

This isolation, Nash said, may have been further

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**Monday, October 7**  
**Tuesday, October 8**

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### MONDAY, October 7

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Elk Corporation  
Energy Operations  
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H.B. Zachry  
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Hoechst Celanese  
Honeywell  
Lockheed Martin Space Information  
Lyondell-Citigo  
Motorola, AMG  
NASA - JSC  
National Instruments  
Praxair, Inc.  
RTEC  
Sperry-Sun Drilling  
Texas Instruments  
Tranco  
UFE Incorporated  
Universal Computer Systems

CVEN, MEEN  
CHEM, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN, PHYS  
CHEM, CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
COSC, CVEN, GEOG (GIS)  
CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
CHEN, MEEN  
CVEN, ELEN, INEN, MEEN  
MEEN, INEN  
COSC, CVEN, ELEN, MEEN  
INEN  
CEEN, CEEN, CPSC, ELEN  
BANA, CHEM, CHEN, CPSC  
CHEN, CEEN, CEEN, CPSC, ELEN  
CPSC, ELEN  
CHEM, CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
CPSC, CEEN, ELEN  
ACCT, FINC MGMT, AERO, ELEN, MEEN  
CPSC, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN, MATH, PHYS  
CHEN, ENTC, MEEN  
INEN, CPSC, CEEN  
CPSC, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN, ENTC, MEEN, INEN  
CPSC, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN  
ELEN, ENTC, MEEN, CVEN  
MEEN  
ALL MAJORS

### TUESDAY, October 8

Central Intelligence Agency  
Champion International  
City of Houston/ Public Works & Eng.  
Cyrix Corporation  
Dow Chemical  
DSC Communications  
DuPont  
Eastman chemical  
Flowtronex Chemical  
Fluor Daniel  
Freese & Nichols  
General Cable  
General Homes  
IBM  
Ingersoll-Rand  
InterVoice  
Le Tourneau  
Lockheed Martin Vought Systems  
M&M Mars  
Marathon Oil  
Mobil  
Monsanto  
Nortel

LBAR, BUSI, ELEN, CPSC, CEEN, CEEN  
CHEN, ELEN  
BUSI, LBAR, CPSC, ENGR  
ELEN, CEEN, CEEN  
CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
CPSC, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN, TELE, MGMT  
CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
CHEN, MEEN  
CHEN, ELEN, ENTC, INEN, MEEN  
CHEN, COSC, CVEN, ELEN, MEEN, ACCT, FINC  
COSC, CVEN, ELEN  
CHEN, MEEN  
COSC  
ACCT, CHEN, CEEN, CEEN, CPSC, ELEN, MEEN  
MEEN  
CEEN, CEEN, CPSC, ELEN  
ELEN, OCEN, CVEN  
AERO, CPSC, CEEN, CEEN, ELEN, MEEN  
ELEN, MEEN  
MEEN, ELNE, CVEN, CHEN-Environmental, INEN-Safety, HR  
CHEN, MEEN  
CHEN, ELEN, MEEN  
ACCT, FINC, MGMT, CEEN, CEEN, CPSC,  
ELEN, MEEN, MATH, PHYS, ECON  
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AERO, CEEN, CEEN, CPSC, ELEN, MEEN  
CHEN, MEEN

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9:30pm *Eraser*  
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