

MUSIC REVIEWS



Descendents
Everything Sucks
 Epitaph

As comebacks go, this one tops 'em all. Pop punk legend Descendents has reformed, eight years after losing bespectacled nerd singer Milo Aukerman and becoming a new band, All. All singer Chad Smith has retreated to the sidelines for *Everything Sucks*, and Aukerman rejoins former Descendents members for a reunion album that makes the Sex Pistols look like a bunch of grandpas.

And in showing the new wave of pop punk rockers who's the boss, Descendents has produced its best effort ever, *Everything Sucks*.

At first, *Everything Sucks* sounds a little like the last All CD, *Pummel*, with a harder edge and more straightforward song structure. But as the new songs bring back memories of old Descendents tunes, the CD plays more like a career retrospective of both bands.

Descendents kept the love songs and general bitching about teenage concerns, like greedy girlfriends and the cops, but gone is the '80s pop punk influence that produced duds like "Days are Blood," from the *Enjoy!* album.

Most notably, the boys are getting a little older, and a little wiser. They are probably pushing 40, but haven't lost the spirit of 1985's "I Don't Want to Grow Up" — girls and coffee are good, suits and ties are bad. "When I Get Old" sums up their outlook on life:

"What will it be like when I get old / I don't want to be like other adults / Cause they've already died / Cool and condescending, fossilized."

There's a sense that they know something has changed, but the band isn't trying to fool anyone into thinking it is still a bunch of young, care free losers. The "old-is-still-cool" approach may fail with most listeners, who are likely to be the younger, second generation of Descendents and All fans, but respect for the band will probably keep it afloat.

Descendents obviously knew it had to bridge the simpler music of old with the more complex ideas of All. So as a special treat, Aukerman and Stevenson team up with Descendents' original guitarist and bassist, Frank Navetta and Tony Lombardo, on two new songs, "Doghouse" and "Eunuch Boy" are caffeine-powered bursts of energy reminiscent of Descendents' classics "Kids" and "Wienerschnitzel."

And remember "Theme," the goofy instrumental that was subjected to an even goofier reworking ("Gnutheme") on All's *Allroy's Revenge*? It's back, too, in another, unnamed version at the end of the disc, but sounds more like an All tune.

Regardless, *Everything Sucks* mostly stands out as a Descendents CD — and the boys are as fun as ever. A band that "they" said would never regroup has defied the naysayers and pounded out a sure classic in pop punk legend.

John LeBas

cially conscious than she was in her debut album *Tuesday Night Music Club*, and that's just her clothes.

This time around, Crow has opted for a more alternative look and sound with songs of prostitution, religion and the many facets of love. Her debut single "if it makes you Happy" is sure to be a lasting hit as it appeals to the public's new division of women rockers who scream poignant messages with catchy beats.

In the song, she sings "If it makes you happy/It can't be that bad/If it makes you happy/Then why the hell are you so sad."

It's nothing too thought-provoking, but good enough to sell a few million albums.

Besides, when music is being played, who really wants to have to think?

Well, for those who do, the track "redemption day" should fulfill any desire to uncover the social ills of today.

Crow's lyrics pine away "Fire rages in the streets/And swallows everything it meets/It's just an image often seen/On television."

The song continues through with talk of great leaders who fail the public and the train to heaven's gate, all of which leads to freedom.

Serving as producer of this album, Crow proves she can pull off an image transgression with little effort.

On this outing, her lyrics are filled with meaning, vocals are genuinely in tune as far as her range goes and the actual music is the remnant of a once polished surface, now scratched and bruised.

Only in "everyday is a winding road," Crow slips back into the happy-go-lucky singer she was on her previous album, but all other tracks remain in her updated persona.

With her vocals in gear and her image somewhat akin to the movie that shares her last name, this is the year of a dark bird by the name Sheryl Crow.

James Francis

Abstract Love

A Texas A&M professor offers a story of romance in an unconventional play he wrote and directed.

By JAMES FRANCIS
 THE BATTALION

No ships will set sail, and there will be no swash-buckling today.

Eye-patches will not turn men into cyclopes and there will be no peg-legs clunking across the starboard bow.

Instead, audiences will see *Fragments of a Pirate Trilogy*, the new play from Dr. Oscar Giner, showing at Rudder Forum this Wednesday through Saturday.

"It's a Caribbean legend of love between two figures," Giner said, "a woman and a man, a priest who became a pirate."

Giner, director of *Fragments of a Pirate Trilogy*, wrote the play in memory of his friend and first acting teacher, who died of AIDS at age 52.

He said it was challenging directing his own work, but found directing as a further step in finalizing the play.

"The director did alright," Giner said jokingly.

While writing and directing may have been an intriguing process, the inspiration for his writing came from something as simple as the grass students walk on.

"A lot of the inspiration came from nature," Giner said. "I think of all the characters as a personification of the natural setting."

Much like the workings of nature, the play does not follow a typical format. Instead of having a beginning, climax and denouement it is divided into bits and pieces.

"It's not a narrative sequence," Giner said. "It's a concert of music and poetry."

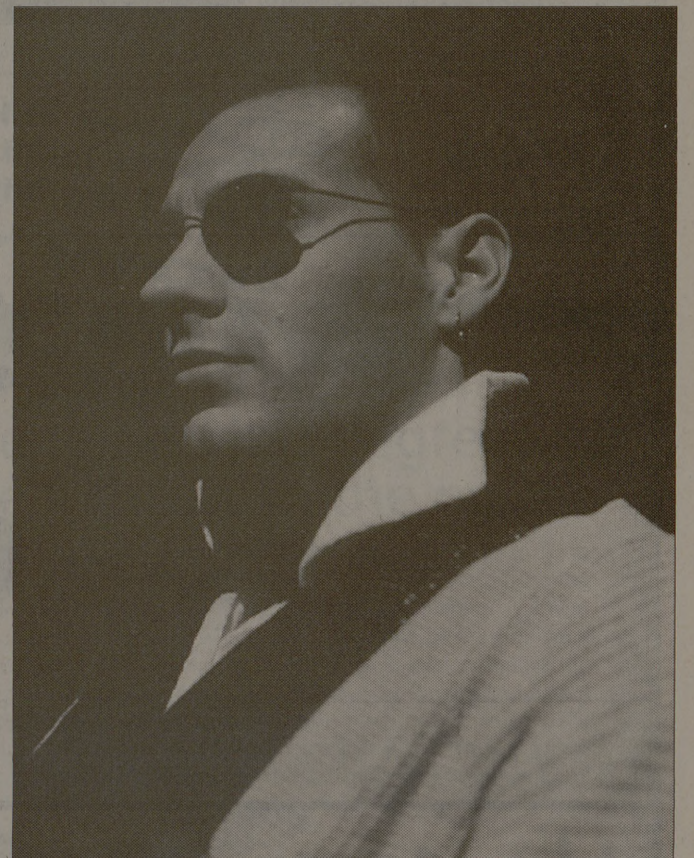
Giner said he wonders what Texas A&M students will think of the fragmented presentation.

"I wanted to see how an A&M audience would react to my kind of work," he said.

The work Giner speaks of is a three-part story about love. When the play opens, the audience is presented with the third part first.

Cody Bland, a senior theater arts major, said his character is an old blind man who has visions.

"I'm somewhat of a storyteller," Bland said. "I'm kind of angry at the modern world, the past."



Cody Bland, a senior theater arts major, plays a blind man an old blind man in *Fragments of Pirate Trilogy*.

As far as his interaction with the other characters, the play works in a unique way, he said.

Steven Dekorne, business manager for the theater arts program, said his character is another example of the varied personae of the play.

"I am the Greek chorus," he said. "I help the old man through his spiritual journey."

Dekorne said the actors find a certain unity off-stage, though the on-stage atmosphere is multi-characteristic.

"It's been peaceful and steady among the actors," he said. "It's an eclectic group but a cohesive one."

Bland said the on-stage performance also creates an unusual bond between the actors.

"It's very abstract the way we all fit into the story," he said.

He said one may find the thought process a bit confusing, since the play does not flow in a conventional structure.

"You don't have to understand the storyline," Bland said. "It's not going to affect everyone the same way."

Bland said the play affected his life, and although *Fragments of a Pirate Trilogy* represents his last acting project at A&M, "it's been absolutely incredible."

"This is certainly the best role I've had here," Bland said. "The writing is incredible. It's dramatic poetry."

Jessica King, a junior theater arts major, is another student influenced by the play and its characters.

"I play Mother Sofia," King said. "She's a flamboyant personality, which I suppose I sometimes lean towards."

In the play, Mother Sofia is the ghost of Paloma Blanca (the woman in love with the pirate) teacher.

"What I am is a comforter for Paloma Blanca," King said.

King said her portrayal of the character Mother Sophia has taught her not to take herself too seriously on stage.

On-stage or off, King said her state of mind stays the same, because she finds comfort in acting.

"I get a lot of pleasure doing what I do," King said. "There's no emotional roller coaster or seesaw — it's OK for me."

King said with the assurance of herself and the ability of the other actors to present the play well, people should go into the performance with an open mind.

"As long as [the audience] takes away something," she said, "we've done our job."

"It's not a narrative sequence. It's a concert of music and poetry."

Dr. Oscar Giner
 writer and director of
Fragments of a Pirate Trilogy

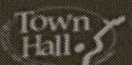


Sheryl Crow
 Sheryl Crow
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