



Various Artists
Soundtrack to the motion picture
The Next Best Thing
CD Courtesy of Maverick Recording Co.

The soundtrack to the new Madonna movie, *The Next Best Thing*, contains an eclectic choice of tracks.

The album was produced by "her greatness," Madonna, so there was a certain selectivity that accompanied the make-up of the album.

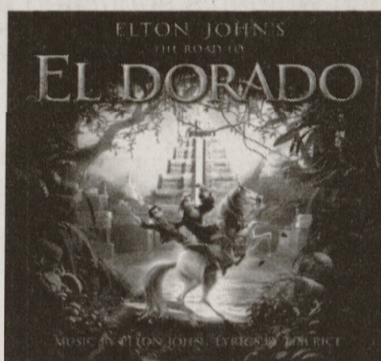
There is a mix of pop, dance and electronica artists who are mostly new to the music scene. One of the exceptions is Christina Aguilera, who contributed "Don't Make Me Love You," which could be a good contender as the second single to be released from the soundtrack.

The first single from the soundtrack is, of course, the remake of Don McLean's "American Pie." Madonna continues to be favorably original even in doing a cover. "American Pie" is reason enough to buy the entire soundtrack. Since the song is not going to be released as a single, this is the only chance at purchasing the song.

A second new Madonna song, "Time Stood Still" written specifically for the movie, is also on the soundtrack.

This soundtrack is definitely a good listen. Madonna apparently can do no wrong when it comes to successfully continuing her career (Grade: A).

—Jeff Wolfshohl



Elton John
The Road to El Dorado
CD Courtesy of DreamWorks Records

This man was knighted. Boggles the mind, doesn't it?

Elton John's soundtrack to the DreamWorks animated feature *The Road to El Dorado* never transcends what it is basically meant to be — filler material for a movie targeted at kids under the age of seven. What is it that makes companies like Disney and DreamWorks think that kids actually enjoy this tripe?

What's most insulting about this album isn't the fact that it sounds like every other animated soundtrack since *The Little Mermaid*, but that it doesn't even try to be anything else. There's the title song called "El Dorado," the theme song, "Someday Out of the Blue," a token duet with Randy Newman ("It's Tough to be a God"), and a miscellaneous instrumental titled... "Cheldorado." To say that these songs are hardly distinguishable from each other is a gross understatement.

In addition to the blandly composed music, the lyrics by Tim Rice defy logical analysis. In the song "16th Century Man" he offers such inspired couplets as "We are Spanish not Caribbean/We are human not amphibian" and "Just because we're Hispanic/Doesn't mean we're oceanic."

Huh? Couldn't DreamWorks have gotten

authentic Spanish music to accompany this film, instead of the watered-down offerings Sir Elton has lazily cooked up?

This album would have gotten a lower score, but the CD booklet unfolds into a cute little treasure map the kids might enjoy. Hey, it's something. (Grade: D)

— Juan Loya



Eels
daisies of the galaxy
CD Courtesy of DreamWorks Records

Each track on the Eels' new album *daisies of the galaxy* sounds as though it should begin with the

words "Once upon a time..."

Even the album cover, which resembles a preschool Dick and Jane reader, gives the impression that the album is meant more for those still wearing Osh Kosh B'Gosh, except for maybe the "explicit lyrics" disclaimer on the top right hand corner. Granted, songs such as "It's a Miserable Life" probably won't pass the time muster at pre-K.

The majority of the songs play in a slight, wispy manner that one would expect from a lullaby; the song "Flyswatter," if not for its driving drum beat, sounds like a song taken straight from a ballerina music box. Adding to the hushed nature of the music is singer Mark Oliver Everett's soft voice which barely rises above a mumble.

This is an album one could fall asleep to and dream peacefully of lullipops and hummingbirds (if one is into that sort of thing).

The album features contributions from such musicians as Grant Lee Phillips and Peter Buck of REM, though Buck's instrumental "Estate Sale" is largely forgettable. The bonus track, "Mr. E's Beautiful Blues," is the lone up-tempo song on the album, giving it a nice perky finish to an otherwise sleepy assortment of melodies. (Grade: B)

— Juan Loya

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