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# VOLUME Control

Music Review V 2.002

**Snoop Dogg**  
*Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Bo\$\$*  
Interscope Records

With a new MTV comedy show, "Doggy Fizzle Televizzle," to compliment his new album, Snoop Dogg looked primed to deliver some of his best work in years on *Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Bo\$\$*. Unfortunately for longtime fans, his efforts are mediocre at best. The 20-track album valiantly searches for an identity it never finds. Though sometimes a smooth rap album, more often than not it takes on R&B qualities, heavily substituting singing for rapping. This is occasionally successful, as in "Ballin'," in which The Dramatics and Lil' Half Dead combine with Snoop for an appropriately twisted love song. But most of Snoop's attempts at slow music fail due to subject matter totally foreign to him - monogamous love. This is Snoop's first attempt ever to seriously tackle the topic of love and it sounds out of character coming from him. His sentiments vary wildly from those on 1993's *Doggystyle*, a change most fans likely won't appreciate.

The album does have some high points, though most can be attributed to guest appearances. Jay-Z and Nate Dogg save "Lollipop" from mediocrity, and Pharrell of N.E.R.D. manages to make "From Tha Chuuch To Da Palace" and "Beautiful" exceptional songs. In a particular treat, Redman makes one of the few east coast appearances on "From Long Beach To Brick City," a song in which only he has a good verse. Disappointingly, Snoop's presence on these tracks is highly overshadowed. Only on "You Got What I Want" does Snoop not get outdone by a supporting rapper, as both he and Ludacris struggle through a song that shouldn't have made the album.

Snoop further distances himself from his Death Row days on the album's last two tracks, "A Message 2 Fat Cuzz" and "Pimp Slapp'd," in which he threatens and expresses contempt for Suge Knight, his former boss. Though Snoop continues to separate himself from Death Row Records, he has not had a hit album since he left, and *Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Bo\$\$* is certainly no exception.

★★★★☆  
-George Deutsch

Music Review V 2.002

**Christina Aguilera**  
*Stripped*  
RCA Records

Superb musicianship and excellent performances reign on this disc. For *Stripped*, Christina Aguilera and her collaborators moved away from techno backing music and have fused guitars and piano into the mix. Rock and R&B definitely strong influences on this work, and some surprisingly good performances give the album a ton of credibility.

Alicia Keys dropped some piano tracks and Lil' Kim on "Can't Hold Us Down," a hip-hop call to arms for oppressed females. Rapper Redman helped out on "Dirrty" and the producers is long and distinguished.

*Stripped* is anything but; it indulges in all things that makes some bold statements about the genie in a bottle's gone through since her last CD came out and went platinum. Christina soars through some acrobatic vocals and allows room for arguing her abilities.

The disc has some bright spots, but with twenty tracks a lot to wade through.

★★★★☆  
-Thomas...

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