

THE BATTALION

Thursday, February 5, 2004

Beat

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Music Review V 2.002

Outkast
"Speakerboxx/The Love Below"
Arista Records

Prince vibes. The track, "Love Hater" is a jazz arrangement laced with Hendrix-style guitar howls and "wahs."

Big Boi and Andre 3000's decision to diverge worked to widen the musical palette of this release. The two have made the most of their opportunity to exercise artistic freedom with an energy that defies convention. In other words, they've shaken up the rules like a Polaroid picture.



- David Shackelford

Music Review V 2.002

Evanescence
"Fallen"
Wind-Up Records

"Fallen," the second CD by Evanescence, continues in the vein of spiritual Goth, leading with the disc's radio hit single "Bring Me to Life," as well as a host of equally enjoyable songs. The band's unique blend of dark moodiness and spirituality is suffused throughout the songs. Once again, Amy Lee's voice is a powerful addition to the songs. The styles range from heavy, guitar-riff driven songs to softer songs driven mainly by Lee and a few instruments playing in the background. Each song is impressive and plays to a different feeling with little of the repetitiveness common to most current albums being released.

Of the 11 songs available, "My Immortal," "Bring Me to Life," "Tourniquet" and "Going Under" are the best tracks. Each of them is powerful and hard-hitting but still moving. "My Immortal" is Lee at her finest, and she grips the listener in a way that few songs have the ability to do. The rest of the tracks, though not as good as the previous four, are still good in their own right. They all have a unique feeling to them and can be listened to in nearly any setting. Evanescence has made yet another great album that continues to use its style of Goth and spirituality in a blend not often seen. This originality may pay off for their campaign to win "Best New Artist" on Grammy night. It will be interesting to see if they can keep their talent consistent in future records.



- Paul Cozby

Sales and audience reception of Outkast's newest album, "Speakerboxx/The Love Below," is at its peak just in time for the Grammy Awards. And oh, are they nominated. For a group that the Independent (London) called one of the most underrated hip-hop acts of the past 10 years, Outkast is now set to earn its stripes - six to be exact, including Album of the Year, Best Rap Album and Record of the Year for "Hey Ya!"

Double albums are seen as daunting for pop music consumers and customarily appear as compilations. When the Beatles' "White Album" was released, critics fussed that, aside from being too weird, the 30-track set was too much to take in. Whether Outkast's Big Boi and Andre 3000 planned it, they bypassed the double album dilemma by splitting their efforts. The end result was their fifth release, "Speakerboxx/The Love Below," two solo projects in one package.

Outkast has retained its sense of adventure. Its brand of blended southern soul, funk, rap and psychedelic genres has earned the duo a reputation as the avant-garde of the Dirty South movement.

The band's newest undertaking never dwells on one style for too long. Big Boi's "Speakerboxx" announces itself with a chorus that rides on satisfying bass volleys. Then the record rips into gear with "GhettoMuzik," a hardcore rave/shag-soul stop-and-go where whizzing synthesizers brake for slow swaying "ooohs" to pass. The hip-hop fusion carries through the bulk of the disc, which signs off with a funk snippet. Throughout "Speakerboxx," Big Boi hits upon social issues, metaphysical life-death questions and indulges in a little Bush-bashing. Conversely, Andre 3000 looks inward for inspiration, piecing together his own intimate and sexually graphic realities with every track.

He even contacts his version of God: "Damn, you a woman," he says. The cascading jazz piano on the intro track of "The Love Below" signals Andre 3000's departure from the hip-hop essence of "Speakerboxx." Thick with psychedelic funk and tango, "The Love Below" pulses with erotic



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