

style

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The number of times rapper T.I., who performed at the Patriot Center last Sunday, says "Whatever you like" in his hit song of the same name



Lewis Black joked about everything from losing his virginity to the Presidential Election at the Patriot Center during Family Weekend.

Comedian Delivers Laughs

Lewis Black Talks About Politics, Sex To Mason Crowd

KERRY SHEATS
Copy Chief

Saturday night, Lewis Black released a colossal tirade of criticism and anger on a more than willing audience at the Patriot Center. Performing to a packed house, Black ranted about politics, sex and anything else that struck his fancy. But before the audience could be entertained by the social satirist, John Bowman came on stage to get everything started.

Michigan native Bowman came on stage a few minutes before eight, ukulele in tow. Strumming a few chords, he discussed everything from George W. Bush to Las Vegas, saying that "Bush is his own bobble head," and "Why do parents take their children to Sin City?" Before introducing Black, he did a fantastic impression of him, angry finger-shaking included, and even said that Black and Colin Powell were the same person.

Then, Black came on the stage to thunderous applause. Due to this being an election year, the main topic of the evening was politics: "Anyone who has lived in the past 10 years, and isn't on antidepressants, needs to seek counseling," he said. Being a socialist, he criticized both the Republicans and the Democrats, saying, "For the past eight years, the Republicans have been

farting and the Democrats have been breathing it in."

Black also discussed his parents, saying that he gets his sense of humor, "if you can call it that," from his parents who are both 90 years old. When Black's book *Me of Little Faith* hit *The New York Times* best-seller list, his mother said, "Who knew there were that many idiots out there?"

Black himself is 60 years old. When a few audience members started to applaud that, he stopped them saying, "Aging is not an accomplishment. You don't applaud aging." He also mentioned that birthdays are merely celebrations of being one year closer to death. Black said that, every year, he wishes on the birthday candles to "live forever," because nobody knows what's out there, saying that "we could all be ticks."

One of his biggest hits of the night involved the story about Black losing his virginity. After explaining the hassles of record players to the mostly college-age audience, he divulged this tidbit of information: because of a scratch in a record, "I lost my virginity to the same line over and over and over . . . lay lady lay, lay lady lay, lay lady lay."

During his bit about the record player and record albums, Black mentioned the iPod and Apple, saying that "Apple is run by aliens, because if it was run by humans, we

could have solved world hunger by now."

A few times throughout the night, he would get caught up in his tirade and lose his train of thought, but he never failed to entertain. There were a couple of jokes that got minimal laughs, but he followed them by saying "I knew that wouldn't get laughs, but I wanted to say it anyway," which made the audience explode with laughter.

Black also sought an opportunity to talk about the financial crisis. He blamed it on the Christians, saying that "you people didn't buy enough shit last Christmas." Being Jewish, he said that it was the first time you can't blame it on the Jews. And because the Christians didn't buy enough stuff last year, Santa has a stronghold on the economy, according to Black.

He also encouraged others to follow in his path: "When you get to the polling booth, and you see Obama and McCain, and you're unsure, just vote for Santa—I'm doing it."

All in all, both Bowman and Black put on a hilarious show. Between ragging on Sarah Palin and their outrageous stage presence, there was something for everyone to enjoy—I myself was in tears within the first five minutes. Lewis Black may be 60 years old, but as long as he keeps screaming and shaking his finger, people will laugh.

the other boys said.

In July, Michael's good grades won him a scholarship to attend English classes at a private institution in La Ceiba. A week later, he asked me if I would teach him to play the piano using the small keyboard in the boys' home. We only got so far as the 12 major scales, but since then he has continued to study on his own and now accompanies a local children's choir. He is also learning how to play the violin thanks to a volunteer from Australia, and takes karate classes at the local Red Cross.

When Michael told me his bicycle had been stolen, I asked Resident Advisors from Liberty Square and Potomac Heights and members of Mason Ambassadors and Student Government if they would like to contribute at least \$1 per person to purchase Michael a new bicycle. The total reached \$94, more than enough to purchase the bicycle, a helmet and a lock. Those of you who gave a donation have helped restore Michael's faith in people and encouraged him to continue pursuing his dreams.

Michael has transformed into a confident young man with a future he is proud of. He will finish his last year of high school in December and begin taking classes at a teacher's college in the spring. Michael wants to become a science teacher.

I am starting a new student organization on campus called Students Helping Honduras. If you are interested in learning more about Honduras, the boys at *Casa del Niño*, and how you can help, contact me at cforman@gmu.edu.

OneRepublic for One Night Only at Mason

MARIA CIANFICHI
Broadside Correspondent

On Thursday, Oct. 23, OneRepublic, the Spill Canvas, and the Hush Sound will be playing at the Patriot Center.

The Hush Sound, an indie rock band from Illinois, will be one of the first bands to play. The Hush Sound's hit songs are "Honey" from the album titled *Goodbye Blues* and "Wine Red" from the album titled *Like Vines*. While all four of the band members, Bob Morris, Greta Salpeter, Darren Wilson and Chris Faller, sing vocals, Greta gives the band a unique sound as a female lead vocalist. More information on the Hush Sound can be found on their MySpace page at www.myspace.com/thehushsound.

The Spill Canvas, another indie/rock band featuring band members, Nick Thomas, Joe Beck, Dan Ludeman, and Landon Heil will also be performing before the night's main act. Spill Canvas has released four albums, including their most popular, *No Really, I'm Fine*, which made the Billboard top 200 chart. To learn more about Spill Canvas, visit www.thespillcanvas.com.

The main performance of the night will be OneRepublic, a rock band from Colorado featuring lead singer Ryan Tedder with fellow band members Zach Filkins, Drew Brown, Brent Kutzle and Eddie Fisher. OneRepublic first



appeared on the charts with their hit song, "Apologize" which aired as a remix with Timbaland. The song is also notably featured on Timbaland's album *Shock Value*. The original song version can be found on their hit debut album, *Dreaming Out Loud*, which also features the band's other radio hit "Stop and Stare." For more information on OneRepublic visit www.onerepublic.net/default.aspx.

Tickets cost \$10.00 with a Mason ID, \$20.00 for faculty and staff and \$30.00 for general admission. All tickets can be purchased at the Student Activities Office in Student Union Building I, Room 101, or at ticketmaster.com. Tickets went on sale on September 13; however there are still seats available. The concert starts at 8:00 p.m. Mark your calendars and stop by the Student Activities Office to purchase your ticket for what is guaranteed to be a great night.

Wahlberg Brings the Payne

New Movie Does Not Add up to the Success of Its Video Game Counterpart

JOSHUA HYLTON

Broadside Correspondent

Max Payne, the latest film to be adapted from a video game, suffers from the need to please fans of the game while trying to appeal to a larger audience. The problem is that it probably will not appeal to either.

The film follows the typical revenge movie set-up. Max's wife and newborn baby were both murdered at the hands of three men, two of which he killed. Unfortunately, the last man got away. Now he is surrounded by darkness and the thoughts of avenging his family. The only way to rid of the anger consuming him is to find that last man and make him pay for what he did.

If only Max were watching the movie. This film is so predictable that from the very first moment you meet one of the characters, it's clear that he is the person who killed Payne's wife and child. The clues are so plainly evident that it is staggering to think that Payne has spent years investigating the case. After all that time, he has gone nowhere and grabbed no new leads, but he solves the case in the film in a matter of days. One clue leads to the unraveling of the whole mystery behind his family's murder and it seems awfully convenient. It really makes you wonder what Max has been wasting his time on prior to this story.

The fact of the matter is that the stories told in the video games were more compelling than the one in this movie.

Max Payne had two options: it could have been a compelling film noir or a violent shoot-em-up. The video games used voiceover narration and still pictures reminiscent of graphic novels to tell the story, and it was fascinating.

Those important film noir aspects were all but absent in the movie and it didn't have enough action to be a fun shoot-em-up, especially given the watered down, kid friendly PG-13 rating.

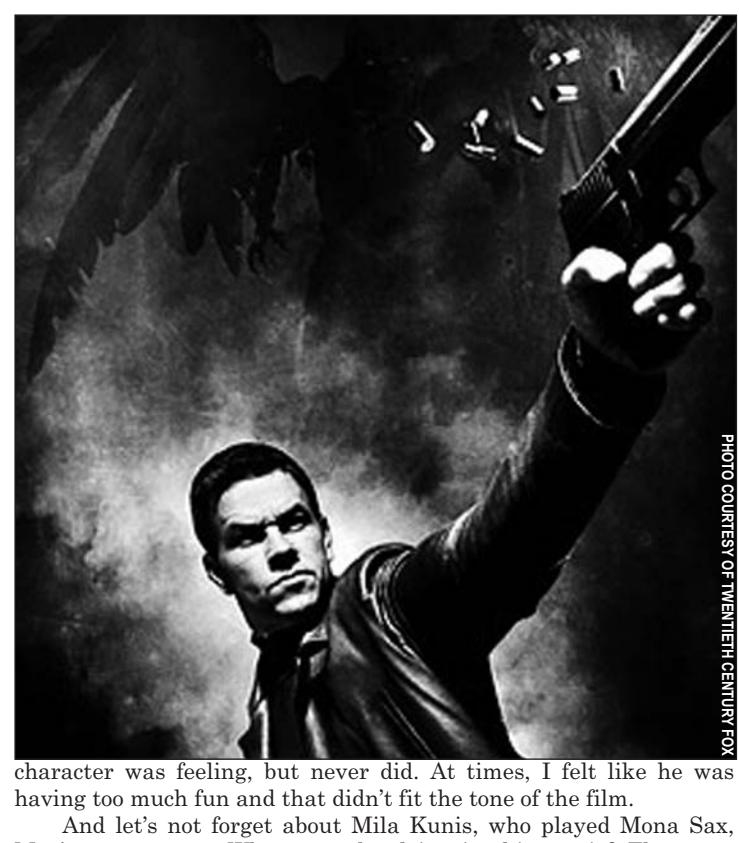
Still, the film stayed fairly true to the video games, at least aesthetically, but ultimately that was its biggest problem. It looked like *Max Payne*, but it didn't feel like *Max Payne*.

The story revolves around a desperate, depressed man hell-bent on avenging the death of his family, but it's too fluffy and not dark enough. This would have greatly benefited from a hard R rating.

After Mark Wahlberg's Academy Award nominated performance in *The Departed*, you would think he'd have the pick of the litter when it came to what movies to do, but that does not seem to be the case.

Max Payne takes his talent and all but wastes it. He's a stellar actor that can make even the most putrid movies seem watchable, but his performance here is surprisingly lackluster.

He needed to convey the depression and loneliness his



character was feeling, but never did. At times, I felt like he was having too much fun and that didn't fit the tone of the film.

And let's not forget about Mila Kunis, who played Mona Sax, Max's counterpart. What was she doing in this movie? There are plenty of actresses who can portray a tough, intimidating, gun-toting female. Mila Kunis is not one of them.

The one thing that saved this film from being a complete disaster was the direction. Given John Moore's track record, directing such poor films as *Behind Enemy Lines* and the uninspired remake of *The Omen*, he really pulled through in the visual department.

It looked slick and the stylistic touches were enough to satiate my visual appetite.

As far as video game based movies go, you could do a whole lot worse than this one, but the film as a whole is weak.

The potential for a gripping crime thriller was there, but the sloppy script and poor acting make *Max Payne* nothing more than a well directed, stylish disappointment.



Sally Hawkins, left, with Alexis Zegerman, plays a London schoolteacher in *Happy-Go-Lucky*.

Find it on ULoop

Networking Site for Student Housing

EMILY SHARRER
Style Editor

Uloop.com, an online classified Web site specifically for college students has become George Mason University's main source for finding off-campus housing, according to a recent Uloop press release. The site, which is a place for students to buy and sell textbooks, promote campus events and find jobs, reported that through September more than 210 Mason roommate, housing and sublet opportunities were posted to the site.

"We're super excited to serve the Mason community in this way," said Scott Lewis, director of campus management with Uloop in a press release. "Uloop is a safe and local way to find roommates, post sub-lets, and find housing with Mason classmates. We're seeing more and more Mason students find housing and roommates through Uloop.com every week."

The Web site began in 2007, and currently

serves as an online marketplace for more than 1,500 of the largest college campuses across the nation. Since it is a student-only environment, in order to sign-up, a ".edu" e-mail address is required, though all the services available are free.

"Once you log in, you're only going to see relevant content that is just for Mason students. It's a closed, protected area for Mason students to post anything you want for free," said Lewis.

According to the release, the site was originally launched in 2007, and by Fall that year was available at 20 campuses. This semester alone, the site has expanded to Mason and 30 other campuses across the United States.

In addition to housing, jobs and textbooks, the site also advertises over 15 other "for sale" categories as well as services like tutoring and computer help and carpools.

For more information, visit www.uloop.com.

British Film Makes Viewers *Happy-Go-Lucky*

Movie's Positive Message Attracts Movie-goers

JEN DRIGGERS
Broadside Correspondent

Looking for a movie to watch with that special someone on your first date? Possibly something not too emotionally deep, brainy, or a gore fest; but something interesting and light? Then the enticing plot, light humor, and cool British accents in the foreign film *Happy-Go-Lucky* might be perfect.

The film stars British actress Sally Hawkins as Poppy, an endlessly happy and optimistic 30-year-old teacher who tries to make the most of everything and to look at the bright side of every situation.

With a persistently positive and naturally humorous personality, it is hard to not like her flamboyant character. Countering serious situations with positive ideals and humor, she takes what would cause many a certain degree of stress and takes a load even off the audience's shoulders.

It is interesting to see how she reacts when situations like trampoline jumping, flamenco dancing, teaching, and learning

to drive cause some unpredictable situations.

Her driving instructor could be considered her antagonist, since he is all about seriousness and has extreme anger issues. Throughout the film the two will battle out a war pitting his seriousness about life against her faith and good nature.

However, not all of her attempts at happiness are rebuked. When she discovers that one of her students is being beaten by his mother's boyfriend, Poppy immediately takes the situation calmly in hand. Calling a social worker to the boy's aide Poppy and the social worker are able to work together to help the young boy.

The film was written and directed by Mark Leigh, a British director who brings his own creative intuitions to the table.

His style since 1971 has been to begin with an idea, hire actors and then to improvise with them for several months before putting a film together.

"The whole thing is grown organically and arrives in a complete way," said Leigh in a 2008 interview with the Los Angeles Times.

The film was released on Aug. 30 at the Telluride Film Festival. The film festival is hosted annually on Labor Day weekend in the small town of Telluride, Colo.

Hosted for four days each year, it features many films and gives the opportunity for film enthusiasts to converse amongst each other and to the directors who produced the movies themselves. The festival exists not for competition but for the enjoyment of the films themselves. This festival has been the first to witness such films as; *Juno*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Napoleon*, *Blue Velvet* and *The Crying Game*.

Though it has an entirely positive message, some of the film's attributes may not be so desirable to today's audience. The film has a slow pace, as it follows events in Poppy's life with slow, comprehensive detail. But, if you're looking for a funny movie with a good message and cool British accents, then *Happy-Go-Lucky* is a good bet.

Though it has an entirely positive message, some of the film's attributes may not be so desirable to today's audience. The film has a slow pace, as it follows events in Poppy's life with slow, comprehensive detail. But, if you're looking for a funny movie with a good message and cool British accents, then *Happy-Go-Lucky* is a good bet.



Ramy Zabarah sang and played a few acoustic sets this past week during Tuesday Jams at Jazzman's Cafe.

Texting Obsession

New Phones Make Texting Easier

EMILY SHARRER
Style Editor

Omg, wtf? It seems like texting lingo has nearly made constructing real sentences obsolete. More and more people are carrying out conversations completely over text message making the art of talking on the telephone a thing of the past. Between Jan. 1 and June 30, over 384 billion text messages were sent according to carriers, compared to only 295 billion voice calls. According to CTIA, the International Association for Wireless Telecommunications Industry, that is 22 billion more text messages than were reported for all of 2007.

In response to the massive number of texts being sent, AT&T has just announced the release of a new line of four new text-message centric phones that make the lives of college students that much easier. According to an AT&T press

release, all four of the company's new phones feature full QWERTY keypads to make sending text, picture, video and instant messages quick and easy.

Already available for \$79.99 is the Pantech Matrix, a phone with a dual-sliding, double-keypad design, similar to AT&T's Pantech Duo smartphone. In late October, the Samsung Propel, a square sliding phone available in blue, green, red and white, will be the next release in the new phone line. The Pantech Slate, the world's thinnest device with a full QWERTY keypad will also be available later this month for \$49.99. Finally, a touch screen slider called the AT&T Quickfire will round out the line when it becomes available in November for \$99.99. All four phones come with a two-year agreement.

"This new line of mobile phones will be a hit with both the text messaging generation

and users who want to more easily use other functions on their phone," said Carlton Hill, vice president of Devices and Product Development for AT&T's wireless operations in the release. "For a lot of reasons, more buttons are better."

According to the release, a new Nielsen study found that some U.S. consumers are using their cell phones for text messaging more than for normal calls. Also, AT&T reports that text messaging has tripled compared to the same period in 2007.

"These phones are perfect for our customers who want a full keypad to help their fingers fly faster when they send messages but don't need corporate e-mail access or other smartphone features," said Mark Collins, vice president of Consumer Products for AT&T's wireless unit.

Symphony Orchestra to Play Both Classical and Contemporary Pieces at This Week's Concert

SARAH BUCHANAN
Broadside Correspondent

For those interested in an evening of classical and contemporary music, the George Mason University Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra will be performing at 8 p.m. in the Concert Hall on Wednesday, Oct. 22.

Both the Symphony Orchestra and the smaller Chamber Orchestra are under the direction of Anthony Maiello, a music professor at Mason. The Chamber Orchestra will be playing *Serenade for Strings in E Major* by Antonin Dvorak led by graduate conductor Joe Van Riper.

The Symphony Orchestra, which is made of string, wind, and percussion instruments, will

perform a piano concerto titled *Emperor* by the legendary classical composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

They will also play *The Firebird Suite* by Igor Stravinsky, a Russian born musician who was arguably one of the most influential figures of the 20th century.

Mason faculty composer Mark Camphouse, and Mason graduate student Vincent J. Oppido also contributed to the evening's program. Tickets are free for students and are available at the Center for the Arts Box Office. For the general public, tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors.

HPV FACTS: #10

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Album Fails to Rise Above the Rest

DYLAN HARES

Staff Writer

Rise Against seems to want to rise against something—maybe conformity or "The Man" or something unoriginal like that. Even when reading about them, it is evident that they are really adamant about breaking the norm and being their own band with their own voice and sound.

However, they only come off as pompous and end up essentially sounding like everyone else. Supposedly, they used to be a very different hardcore punk band with really great and profound lyrics, but I did not detect any of that in their fifth studio album *Appeal to Reason*. I would say in this round, the band is more of an alternative rock that is only punk in the messages that their songs

are laboriously trying to send.

The first two songs, "Collapse" and "Long Forgotten Sons," sound great and are rhythmic and catchy, but seem to have no real meaning behind their abstract and convoluted lyrics. Track three, "Re-education (Through Labor)" is supposedly about human rights, Christian fascist conservative fundamentalism and capitalist labor violations occurring in modern day America, but I do not see it in the lyrics.

The song "Kotov Syndrome" is an existential light in the darkness of meaninglessness. The title refers to a situation where after spending a long time doing nothing and pondering options, a person notices that he or she is running out of time and makes a hasty, uneducated decision and fails at a task. Rise Against relates this to the mental state of the American people and the title itself makes a good point.



Unfortunately the thesis was great, but there was no support. The lyrics have nothing to do with this little revelation and so I have to deduct points for that as well. More ambiguity and sameness ensues until "Entertainer," which makes a powerful statement against Hollywood's rich and famous.

The next track, "Hero of War," is a strong anti-war and almost an equally strong anti-troop statement. The song talks about the deception of recruiters and seems to group all troops under the injustices at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. While a song like this was kind of expected from a band like Rise Against, and despite being incredibly contrived, it was still emotional and a welcome change of tempo and tone.

They threw me right back into the fray with the rest of the tracks being carbon copies of the album's first tracks and equally unoriginal making me walk away from the end of the CD

feeling kind of robbed and unsatisfied. So sure, the CD is worth a listen every now and then, but *Appeal to Reason* doesn't offer anything different other than a simply pleasant listening experience for the casual listener. Despite the overwhelming amount of criticism, I have and the conviction that this isn't more than a mediocre album at best, the guy has a great voice, and unlike actual punk bands, Rise Against shows hints of real studio time, actual vocal skill and complicated musical arrangements. The real problem here is that all the songs sound the same and don't say much to the audience. When ignoring my occasional bouts of musical ADD, I was glad when it was done because I feel like I had been listening

The Search for the Next Mason Idol

JIEOMA NWATU
Broadside Correspondent

While the FOX reality show *American Idol* continues its nationwide search for the next Kelly Clarkson or David Cook, George Mason University will be hosting its own talent contest. Appropriately titled *Mason Idol*, students have the opportunity to showcase their singing abilities in front of a panel of judges. The top prize is not a lucrative record deal or instant fame, but a chance at a \$400 book scholarship, which any college student can appreciate. The

event, including auditions, is sponsored by the Weekends Committee.

Damon's Restaurant will be hosting open auditions on Friday, Oct. 24 at 8 p.m. All levels of vocal abilities

are welcome, but you will have to perform a song a capella.

If you do not know what that means, then you

may what to think twice about participating. The big finale,

minus Ryan Seacrest, will take

place at a location that is yet to be determined on Nov. 22. For more details, visit the Weekends' Web site at

weekends.gmu.edu.



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ANDY MINOR, STYLE COLUMNIST

LIFE IN A. MINOR

ANDY SAYS GO TO MORE SHOWS

Last weekend came and went with its sublime three-day-ness, and I wasted just about as much time as anyone else gallivanting around Fairfax County like the proud Northern Virginia kid I am. I went to work, went to a bar, went home and saw my dog for a little bit—just generic weekend stuff. So why am I so angry about this past weekend? Because I forgot, yet again, to go to a show I really wanted to see.

DJ Mike Relm, a great DJ, was at the Rock n' Roll Hotel in Northeast Washington, a sweet venue. I even wrote this show down in my daily planner, and I still did not go. Lucky for me, the show was canceled and I didn't miss anything. But what if it had not? I'd be sitting here, writing, having passed-up my opportunity to see Mike Relm in a venue smaller than the Patriot Center.

So I have decided to make this week's article a sort of note to myself that I need to stop making excuses for going to shows, but naturally I want all you readers to take the advice I am trying to give myself.

For those of you who are not familiar with DJ Mike Relm, you all should do a quick YouTube search for his name and try and understand his project. He is your average DJ, pretty sick on the turntables, and has a fantastic ear for pulling different music genres together. But his act contains a visual element you rarely find with other DJs. He takes famous scenes or clips from movies, TV, music videos and pretty much anything else he

can find and mixes them within his beats. It is hard to write about, or even to explain to other people; it is easiest to understand if you just watch a video of his work. I recommend a search for "Mike Relm Live!"

Obviously my enthusiasm for Relm is far from feigned, which leads back into my utter frustration over the fact that I withered away my Saturday night drinking with my friends when I could have been at a visual-musical-dance-party experience. And while this time I simply forgot about the show, I find that, when it comes down to it, I make a lot of excuses for not going to shows.

It would be one thing if I did not live 15 miles from a bustling metropolis with a rich culture and active music scene, but I do. And it is not that hard to hop on the Metro and ride in for a few hours of entertainment and, if Metro is not an option, parking is never as bad as I think it is going to be. Money is hardly ever an excuse as shows at places like the Rock and Roll Hotel and the Black Cat rarely exceed \$15 or \$20, which is just as much as I would spend if I went to a Nationals game or out to eat with my friends.

So I hereby resolve that I am going to go to more shows, not just in Washington but in the entire metropolitan area. The previous paragraph proved that I do not have any excuses and, at the same time, I feel like through this artful dodging of live music I am missing something. I cannot discredit the show, the live performance,

or the cultural spectacle for how important it is in the making of a great band and the progression of good music. A good band is going to be able to perform such that that you experience something beyond just sitting at home and listening to their album twenty-five times.

Every show I have been to has brought me into a more wonderful musical world than the one I existed in previously, from my first concert—Steely Dan at Nissan Pavilion in 2002—to the house show I went to last month. There is simply no substitute for live music.

And do not even begin to think that I am only talking about the rock/indie/punk shows that take place in our nation's capital every week. Why, just two weekends ago I went and saw the New York Philharmonic play an incredible concert at the Kennedy Center and, even if the NYP is not in town, you can still hear very excellent music being played by our own National Symphony Orchestra.

Washington also enjoys a rich jazz scene in Northwest, where clubs like Bohemian Caverns and Blues Alley book great musicians just about every weekend.

So I obviously know where to go, when to go, how to go, why to go and how much it will cost—so why am I not going every weekend?

The past seven hundred words are my resolution, and I know it is not New Years yet, but I want to make this one a little early.

Artist Has Red Letter Year

Ani DiFranco Reveals New Attitude on Newest Album

KYLE RIDLEY

Staff Writer

When I spoke to folk-rocker Ani DiFranco earlier this year, she revealed that she had been a long time sufferer of the ill-fated "white person disease," a chronic ailment of always focusing on the dark and dreary.

Finally, after years battling the unfortunate case of melancholy melodies, the self-proclaimed "one-woman army" has found the perfect remedy: motherhood, a happy partnership and New Orleans.

Her new songwriting approach smiles bright on 20th album *Red Letter Year*, released last month.

On "Present/Infant," a tranquil ode to her daughter Petah, the Buffalo, N.Y. native takes steps toward an embracing a fresh take on life.

"I've got myself a new mantra, it says: don't forget to have a good time," DiFranco sings.

The track strongly details her self-analysis in the wake of

motherhood. DiFranco shares how she's made "insecurity into a full-time job" while looking into mirrors and picking herself apart.

"But now here's this tiny baby and they say she looks just like me...and I would defend to the ends of the earth her perfect right to be," she sings delicately.

As one of music's leading lyricists, DiFranco, 38, has often been labeled a political/feminist spokesperson with biting lyrics at the forefront. But on her new disc, several standout moments lie in simplistic verses and euphoric choruses.

On "Smiling Underneath," DiFranco lists a string of cons—gums peeling, hair thinning, bill paying—that cannot compete with the pro of being with someone you love.

The jubilance continues on

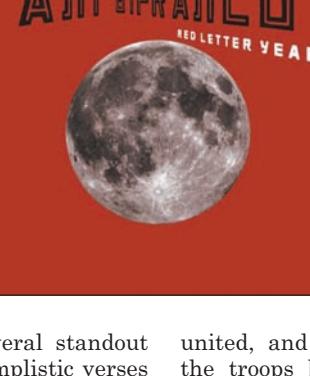
"Way Tight" and "Round a Pole," peaceful tunes addressing the obstacles of love while welcoming them with open arms.

However, *Red Letter Year* is not all happy-go-lucky; so fear not for those craving some infamous DiFranco politics.

"Alla This" is a fierce refusal to allow mainstream media to shape one's identity. DiFranco's powerful pipes soar as she rejects prayers to a male god, vows to not rest until women have

united, and refuses to support the troops because "every last one of them is being duped."

"The Atom" quietly glorifies the unit of matter encompassing the universe before a mid-song verse that relates humans to monkeys and ants that arrogantly melt polar ice caps. The lingering track builds to a



booming exclamation of "we've got ourselves a serious situation down here."

Red Letter Year's grand production is a welcomed change from DiFranco's more recent, stripped-down efforts. Most tracks contain broad instrumentation, including strings, tubular bells and ukuleles.

Final track "Red Letter Reprise" is a five-and-a-half minute musical joyfest featuring the Rebirth Brass Band. The celebratory tune exudes a sense of late night New Orleans bliss. Imagine yourself dancing with friends in the warm, sparkling streets in a parade of carefree grins.

After 20 years, 20 records and a canon stricken with "white person disease," DiFranco's elated *Red Letter Year* is a well deserved shift for the folk troubadour. It is refreshing dose of lighthearted fare encourages a "good for her" sentiment while delighting listeners with high spirited sounds.

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Perfect Symmetry Makes Peachy Keane Addition to Any Music Library

DYLAN HARES
Staff Writer

As a band, Keane has been defined by its use of intricate piano parts as the lead instrumentation of choice instead of guitar, breaking the mold of pop-rock bands everywhere.

Keane's debut mainstream album *Hopes and Fears* was very piano-oriented and somber and the sophomore album *Under the Iron Sea* was hypnotic, spacey and rhythmic. Both albums had an existential, lyrical quality and featured fantastic singles.

That being said, I fired up *Perfect Symmetry*, Keane's newest album, with high hopes. The album starts off with "Spiraling," an upbeat and perky song that is a dynamically different starter from most of Keane's past albums.

It is very rhythmic and reminds me a lot of Maroon 5. Vocalist Tom Chaplin shows off his big voice and the song has great lyrical quality that reminds me why I fell in love with Keane so long ago. Chaplin is good at writing things that people feel and paints a definite picture of love and love lost.

"Everything that I love cold, like some magnificent skyline out of my reach, but always in my eye line now," Chaplin sings on the first track.

The next gem, "The Lovers are Losing," is very reminiscent of old Keane with a lot of new elements mixed in. It has a familiar and wonderful sound – even if the background vocals are a little distracting.

The curveballs started flying on the third track with "Better Than This." It had familiar lyrical style, but the

vocals sounded almost like something The Darkness would do and the music itself was almost ridiculous. The song becomes better towards the end, but was still a little unnerving.

"You Haven't Told me Anything" makes me think of an old Keane song that just had the tempo ramped up—it is catchy, but lackluster.

The title track, "Perfect Symmetry" is a great song that is very lyric-oriented and has song dynamics that I think Keane does really well.

Some say that sticking with formula is bad and it leads to monotony between albums, but I think in some instances Keane tried hard to mess with the formula too much when it had

already established its niche.

After the title track, things began to look up. I would go as far as to say that the next three tracks were fantastic

because they took old musical styles, like piano-oriented songs and soft emotional vocals, and improved upon them to make the songs sound different and fit Keane's new experimental sound.

What Keane did in its sophomore album and what it did well in this one, is to keep the songs different and interesting, if not always enjoyable listening. With the release of this CD, it gave us multiple tracks that are different and unique.

Every track after the fifth is worth listening to.

Overall, I'm definitely not disappointed by *Perfect Symmetry* and it would be a good addition to any music library.



Band Creates Carbon Copy Pop Rock

Band's Album Fails to Create Any Standout Tracks

GRACE KENDALL
Connect Mason Director

When listening to the generic pop songs of *Come Around*, it is hard not to compare Sing It Loud to the myriad of bands they sound like.

To be fair, it is hard for new bands to have an entirely original sound these days, but Sing It Loud does not try very hard to carve out an identity. The band chooses instead to fit between the styles of Anberlin and Hawk Nelson and to occasionally borrow members from Motion City Soundtrack and All Time Low to help make up for their lack of appeal.

Most of their songs are simple clones of each other, three-minute formulas with bland lyrics pasted over elementary chord progressions and matched with a flat drum beat that rarely changes. When Sing It Loud remembers that music can have multiple levels and intensities, they do all right. Unfortunately, that only

happens a few times on the album, most notably during the quieter moments of "No One Can Touch Us" and album closer "Best Beating Heart."

The band is best in the brief moments when the instruments are stripped away. Like so many pop groups these days, they probably have some talent that you will not see until they get bored enough to release an acoustic EP.

Occasionally they manage to break their own monotony with moments like the nicely layered bridge of title track "Come Around," but most often they fall flat with forgettable melodies and instruments that boast the subtlety and variety of a brick wall.

It is possible to catch a glimpse of true potential in the light harmonies and vivid lyrics of "Marionettes," which is easily the best track on the album. Lead vocalist Pat Brown sings,

"When the filaments burst and there is no light to lead you to anywhere useful, you are severed there, all skin on skin. Left severed and sucking the wind," and the marriage of his vocals and guitarist Kieren

Smith's quiet harmony brings a bit of vulnerability and believability to the track. The balance of the song, which manages to jump from quiet verse to soaring chorus with only a few hiccups, is something

the rest of *Come Around* is conspicuously missing.

To say the album is bad would be inaccurate, but in a world where every neighborhood has its own boyish pop band, this does not even come close to standing out. Sing It Loud aims for sugar but lands closer to Splenda. For some, artificial sweetener is good enough, but those who are more discerning with their musical selections will likely pass on this debut effort.

The boys of Sing It Loud must have turned some heads on their way to major-level success. It is not every quintuplet of pastel-sporting boys with guitars who get signed to Epitaph Records, after all. But wherever they are hiding their charm, it is not inside the plastic casing of *Come Around*.

Sing It Loud is currently on tour with Cobra Starship, Forever The Sickest Kids and Hit The Lights.

New Album Far from *Hopeless*

GRACE KENDALL
Connect Mason Director

on Oct. 21.

Brett Dennen's singer-songwriter sound is as smooth as the coffee served in the California cafés where he got his start five years ago.

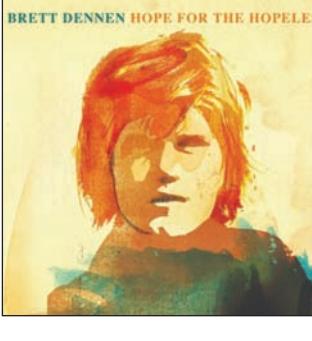
The high, raspy voice will stop you in your tracks first. Within seconds, his tender vocals are legitimized with understated lyrics like, "They will lock you up in prison, but they won't call it slavery. There are stolen children raised and trained in armies. It is enough to make you crazy." By the time you notice the jazz and folk influenced guitar effortlessly pulling the pieces together, you are already sold on Dennen's third album, *Hope For The Hopeless*, which will be released

both casually pensive and catchy.

Hope For The Hopeless is solid all the way through, with no songs that are out of place or

that outshine the rest. Dennen consistently shares thoughts and poses questions with a genuine delivery and a nice groove. "Heaven"

presents ideas that are simple and honest, and the ease with which Dennen delivers lines like, "What the hell is heaven?" is reassuring. These are questions he is really asking, not lyrics he thinks will



sell. It is refreshing to hear an artist who actually cares about what he is singing – maybe that is why John Mayer liked him so much that he invited Dennen on his summer tour.

Mayer's support, along with placement on several up-and-coming lists from media outlets like *Rolling Stone* and *Entertainment Weekly*, has helped Dennen gain a large, supportive fan base. If he's as down-to-Earth and approachable as his music and manages to stay that way despite growing popularity, he'll be a musician with a very long career ahead of him.

Dennen comes to the area on Nov. 14 to perform to a sold-out crowd at Ram's Head in Maryland.

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