



albumreview

DJ Jazzy Jeff
The Return of the Magnificent
BBE/Rapster

RENATO PAGNANI
Arts & Entertainment Staff

I bet recording with DJ Jazzy Jeff is a very organic experience—he's probably one of those low-pressure producers whom rappers love working with. If Jazzy Jeff—who made a name for himself alongside a young, rapping Will Smith—doesn't have an unending supply of buddha and video games to spark recording sessions, I wouldn't be surprised if his studio was on some new-age feng shui shit with yoga mats abound.

Either scenario seems equally plausible, and both would lead to the

relaxed kind of tracks that are found on *The Return of the Magnificent*.

Nothing on the album sounds forced: the rappers who make an appearance seem to be chosen more because they are friends of the veteran producer and DJ and less because they're marketable names. The biggest name is probably the half-out-of-his-element Method Man: "Hold It Down" floats above water thanks to his indelible charisma, even though we've heard these rhymes before in various shapes and sizes, bad fart jokes and all.

Usually on these kinds of albums, the bigger-name guest stars will phone in their verses because they know few fans will hear the songs. But all parties involved sound enthused to be a part of *The Return of the Magnificent*: Posdnuos (of De La Soul) continues his trend of consistent, workmanlike performances on "Let Me Hear U Clap." Big Daddy Kane lets his voice melt into the funk of "The Garden;" and CL Smooth hasn't sounded this good since the last time he worked with Pete Rock.

This applies to most of the songs on *The Return of the Magnificent*, besides a few missteps. Smartly, Jeff stays out of the way of the songs, appearing only in humorous skits about his own fame. With open, spacious sounds and Jeff's utilitarian beats, it's the type of music you'd only heard on the radio if you had an XM or Sirius subscription. But don't call it a comeback—Jazzy has been around for years.



albumreview

Bend Sinister
EP
Distort Inc./Storyboard Records

BRYAN SAUNDERS
Arts & Entertainment Staff

It seems like 365 days a year, an new EP is released by a some Vancouver-based band claiming to have a sound so original that it defies categorization. Often, on the back of their CD jacket, said band declares its own assumed awesomeness, using the "the next big thing" tag, or something to that effect.

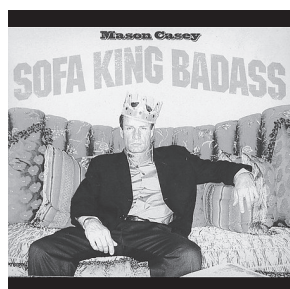
About 364 times a year, these declarations turn out to be very, very empty.

Once in a blue moon, however, there's actually merit in these claims, and a band like Bend Sinister come along and pleasantly surprises the jaded public. Blending prog, jazz, and eclectic rock, Bend Sinister lays down a remarkable five-track EP where each song melts seamlessly into the next. Furthermore, each and every track—especially "TV War," "Time Breaks Down," or "Julianna"—easily stands

on its own.

This five-person band is reminiscent of Queen, Chikinki, and The White Stripes, and shares a label with Alexisonfire, but is by no means a carbon copy of any of these acts.

Musically, the group dynamic of this band is solid, which is how it should be—four of the five band members grew up together, with the fifth being a seasoned veteran of the music scene. Due to this closeness, the band seems well past the young-band stage of searching for a sound to define them. Bend Sinister's songs are experienced and mature, and the vocalists, the guitarists, and the drummer all get their respective time in the spotlight. Giving Bend Sinister some time on your latest playlist wouldn't be a bad idea. This is one band that actually lives up to its own hype.



albumreview

Mason Casey
Sofa King Badass
Northern Blues Music

MARIA KOTOVYCH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Marvin Gaye and Barry White were rare soul singers who could easily melt female fans into puddles of desire. After Gaye died, only White possessed such skill; with his passing in 2003, it seemed like proper seduction through song would never again be possible. Even though White's songs will forever be associated with 1970s cheesiness like tight plaid pants, odd facial hair and red shag carpeting, the man knew how to croon. It's fortunate then that Mason Casey, with his fantastic

new album *Sofa King Badass*, promises to pick up where White left off, all while delivering some pretty sweet blues.

With that voice and that harmonica, what's not to like? Every song is carefully crafted to offer something unique: "Nine Times a Man" has some interesting call-and-response action going on, "Don't End our Love" will make you wanna say "bow chicka wow wow," and "Sofa King Badass" and "Taxi Love" have some funky

disco grooves going down. Casey, who also played harmonica on the late Wilson Pickett's last record, has clearly incorporated some of Pickett's soul, funk, and R&B influences into his own music, and it sounds awesome.

Sofa King Badass is not entirely a soul / funky blues compilation; some of the songs, such as "You Make it Hard" and "That's My Heart," swing to a toe-tapping jump beat. And if the album hasn't provided enough variety by that point, "My Prayer" is, well, a prayer.

Back to the seduction through song. In "Let Me In," Casey's begging an ex to take him back. "Don't End Our Love" runs along the same lines. He delivers his pleas in such a low, smooth and sexy voice that it would be impossible for this former lover not to consider his request, even if only for a second. More than likely, the person would reply with "bow chicka wow wow."



OH HOW THEY WIGGLE AND SQUIRM The Arrogant Worms were dressed to rehearse last Friday afternoon.

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