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featured album

Lenny Kravitz
Time for a Love Revolution
Virgin

SEAN STEELS
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Wailing fuzz distortion, the crackly thump of stereo drums, songs about the revolution of love: these things remind most people of their vintage vinyl. Not Lenny Kravitz. They remind Lenny that it's been a while since he put out an album.

It Is Time For A Love Revolution is Kravitz's eighth studio album, and it doesn't seem like he'll get tired of that old-school '70s sound anytime soon. In fact, that's the problem with the album: on *Love Revolution*, Kravitz shows that all he's managed to do in the four years since 2004's *Baptism* is buy a couple new earrings and a

snaazy leather jacket. If anything, his sound has become less organized and low-fi. The tracks sound hollow, like they might have been recorded live or with guitar parts missing, and the album is pervaded by the feeling that something crucial was left out of the final mix.

The album is further corroded by its lack of creative songwriting. Not only are the songs repetitive to the point that they're hard to get through, but all his guitar licks sound familiar. He loves classic rock so much that he can't help but rip it off, and resultingly, *Guitar Hero* fans will wonder why "If You Want

It" makes their fingers itch. "A Long And Sad Goodbye" is an apt name for Kravitz's five-minute groaner, if by "sad" he meant "mega-lame" and "goodbye" he meant "song by Lenny Kravitz." Its completely meek piano and vocals sound more pitiful than emotive.

The most puzzling lyrics are to be found on "Back In Vietnam." "We run like pirates, and we're comin' with the biggest ego / We're gonna bring it down and give it to you, that's how we go." Besides an immediate "what the hell are you talking about, Lenny?" reaction, the lyrics prompt the question, "Weren't you like four years old when that happened?"

By and large, *It Is Time For A Love Revolution* can be chalked up as a watered-down plagiarism of past successes. Kravitz is treading water in a sea of directionless love and vapid hippy rhetoric.

Listen to tracks from *Time for a Love Revolution* on the *Editor's Playlist* at www.thegatewayonline.ca

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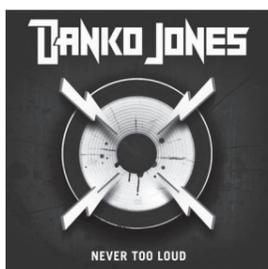
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albumreview

Danko Jones
Never Too Loud
Aquarius Records

BEN STANFORD
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Danko Jones has said that when it comes to penning new tunes, "we always get pegged for writing songs about girls, sex, and sex with girls." So in releasing *Never Too Loud*, they're set to shock some fans: it's an album that focuses on melody and lyrics. *Never Too Loud* is really a first for Danko Jones.

Danko Jones maintains the three-piece rock sound that got them famous and then combines it with

clever lyrics to make an album better than the group's previous work. Boosting up the album is producer Nick Raskulinecz, famous for working with both Foo Fighters and Rush, and having Raskulinecz on the team makes for a more upbeat Danko Jones, with his influence giving songs a catchy essence that other albums previously lacked.

Originally, this album was going to be themed: all of the songs were

going to be about being on the road (the band upholds an exhaustive touring schedule). Therefore, a large part of the album is travelling songs. The opener "Code Of The Road" has an intro normally saved for an emo song. But then, the familiar hard rock of Danko Jones kicks in and the track ends up great.

And even though Danko Jones seemingly wants to shake the one-dimensional image they previously upheld, they couldn't help but throw in a couple of tracks about sex and women. Jones himself justifies "Still in Highschool" by saying that "the idea of this song is, 'Well, this is what you think? Here you go.' It's thumbing your nose at that idea. We're very aware of what this song about." Sounds good, Danko Jones. Keep thumbing your nose—and writing about sex and girls.

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albumreview

Sierra Leone Refugee All-Stars
Living Like a Refugee
Anti-

MARIA KOTOVYCH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Music is a powerful art form and method of self-expression. While many people rely on it as a creative outlet, others find that music offers a healing balm for life's difficulties. This is the story behind Sierra Leone's Refugee All-Stars' *Living Like a Refugee*.

As the title suggests, the band members met at a refugee camp. The first track, also entitled "Living Like a Refugee," was recorded right at the camp, with an oil lamp providing the light source for their musical creation.

The most prominent feature of

this album is the feeling of spontaneity and community that often accompanies singing at family gatherings.

Occasionally, one of the singers bursts into laughter in the middle of a song. In today's era of computer-enhanced tracks, this kind of honest and real music-making is refreshing.

Many of the tracks, like "Refugee Rolling" have a political bent, with lyrics that describe refugee camp life; other songs are more general, containing political commentary about the country's situation in

general. But some of the songs, including "Smile," reflect much more positive themes: peace, unity, and love. Music's power to express and heal is quite clear in all of these tracks.

The occasionally heavy themes don't stop the music from being rhythmic and danceable, either. Traditional folk rhythms infuse each song, resulting in a crop of infectious catchy tunes. Often, the traditional beats are mixed with other styles, like reggae, to create an energy that could cheer up even the most despondent performer or audience member. It's nothing short of fantastic.

Listening to this CD is a reminder that many people worldwide live in difficult political and social situations. But as Sierra Leone's Refugee All-Stars show us, these people are also endowed with creativity and resiliency, along with an ability to funnel those traits into captivating musical works.

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