

## Letter from London



JEFF  
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Staff Writer

### Where's the beat, man?

"Do you like American music?" Violent Femmes singer Gordon Gano asks the sell-out audience at London's Hammersmith Palais.

"We like American music best!" the crowd responds. Do they?

The music scene here in London has had me stupefied ever since I arrived on this side of the Atlantic. Every time I think I've figured it out, something happens that makes me realize I haven't even begun to understand the English eccentricities.

Before I came here, I expected that techno and electronica music would become my soundtrack. Radio stations here play much more beat-oriented, hip-hop-less music than stations at home, and Norman Cook (a.k.a. Fatboy Slim) is as big a celebrity here as Madonna. Songs like Artful Dodger's garage hit "Re-rewind when the crowd say Bo Selecta," a song with probably the lamest title in the history of music, is as massive as singles get, and is also as catchy. When songs like this come in a club, crowds go nuts. People at clubs here dance like maniacs, with no humiliation about looking lame. They just let loose.

So, when I went to Los Angeles hipster Beck's sold-out show at the massive Wembley Arena a few weeks ago, I thought the man who recorded Rolling Stone's "Party Record of the Decade" would be able to convince people to kick out the jams and shake their butts. Instead, I was faced with the most sedate crowd I've ever seen at an arena show. The audience looked like they were watching Sarah McLaughlin depress them with another ballad all night, instead of seeing one of rock's greatest showmen gyrating on a bed while howling "I wanna get with you and your sister Deborah." The woman next to me looked at me funny and even asked me to stop moving around so much.

When Beck played "Loser" and "Where It's At," the crowd didn't react, prompting him to ask, "Did you expect me to come out here riding on a blimp?" They didn't smirk.

Last week I saw a French funk band called Les Negresses Vertes that had an entire club of people on their feet, dancing and singing along for two hours. Content, I left the venue even more perplexed.

A French couple started talking to me as I was leaving the club. "Did you like that?" they inquired. "Definitely," I replied. "But I like American music best. Baaybeee."

They looked at me funny. I wonder if they were at the Beck show too.

Junior Jeff Miller is in London during the spring semester.

## Sound Check

### Joni no phony at love

If we lived in a normal town, when you read this review you could look outside, admire shiny spring weather and imagine your most perfect lover waiting for you outside. However, we live in Ithaca, and here there are no April showers to bring May flowers; and the sharp cold air outside has frozen whatever love could be in the air.

So what are you lucky people who are in a relationship to do? How about going for something nice and easy and very romantic. A beautiful moment cuddling with your loved one listening to the most romantic album I have heard in years.

Yes, Joni Mitchell has a huge romantic side to her, and in this album she makes sure the public hears it. I have never been a fan of Mitchell; the fact that my mom listens to her has always turned me off to her. But I would have never thought that this folk/pop-rock legend and four-time Grammy winner would release such a beautiful album. "Both Sides Now" has definitely captured my attention.

In her 20th album, Joni Mitchell looks back and revisits classic love songs like "Stormy Weather," "Answer Me, My Love," "You're My Thrill" and "I Wish I Were In Love Again." Along the way, she also re-recorded two nuggets from her own oeuvre: "A Case of You" and the title track.

Together, the 12 songs form a merger that moves easily and places the listener in the middle of a timeless tale of modern love. Even a passer-by would see the importance of poetry in this album by just reading the song titles that at times seem to be placed strategically to form a poem.

But her love song selection or placement is not what keeps the listener's attention — that is captured by the strong union formed

**MUSIC REVIEW**

**Joni Mitchell**

**"Both Sides Now"**

*Gustavo Rivas*

Staff Writer

The Ithacan rates albums from  
1 (worst) to 4 (best)

by the combination of Mitchell's emotionally rich vocals and the musically rich orchestral maneuvers of the 71-piece London Symphony Orchestra. Together these music mobiles have created some of the most emotional jazz pieces in current music since Meshell N'degeocello released her last CD, "Bitter."

This is especially the case in the first song — "You're My Thrill." The song starts with a strong combination of bass guitar, violin and woodwinds that if her listeners were to close their eyes, they would immediately find themselves in the middle of a gloomy jazz café with a band playing up front.

Or the listeners can find themselves at a pub drinking and singing, "it's all over now, you don't have to tell me ... You've forgotten the words 'I love you' and the memories we shared ... no need to tell me, I know we're through," the aching words of "You've Changed."

Nevertheless, the listener does not have to place himself in another location. Mitchell and her co-producer Larry Klein made sure that the listeners could enjoy the album at

## "High Fidelity" Soundtrack



BY D.J. REITER  
Staff Writer

With boy bands and teen sensations ruling the pop charts, an album like the soundtrack to "High Fidelity," which features key music from the film, could easily slip through the cracks. If you are looking for anything teeny-bopper-esque, avert your ears; what you will find contained is some of the more beautiful lyrics written over the last four decades. While the regular listener may not appreciate this soundtrack as much as a music-phile, this is unequivocally a terrific album.

There are several gems on the soundtrack including Bob Dylan's gorgeous "Most of the Time," Love's "Always see Your Face" and Elvis Costello & the Attractions' "Shipbuilding."

Among the younger artists, John Wesley Harding, with the Elvis Costello-like "I'm Wrong About Everything," and Royal Trux, who contribute the aggressive rock-meets-hip-hop-meets-techno "Inside Game," are of note.

While many soundtracks contain songs "inspired" by the movie, that ultimately deteriorate the quality of the soundtrack, High Fidelity did not make that mistake when it selected its cuts, and there is eclecticism and beautiful lyrics seeping out from every track.

home.

"Both Sides Now" is an amazing album made up of breathtaking songs that could get the coldest days of Ithaca warm, and your romantic evenings nice and snugly. If nothing else, one of you will be reciting the lyrics of "Sometimes I'm Happy" which say, "I never mind the rain from the sky, just as the long as I have the sun in your eye."

## The Reel World

### 'Rules' is unengaging

To summarize, the rules of engagement for the U.S. Marine Corps are as follows: (A) You must warn those that threaten you of your impending attack, i.e. fire warning shots; (B) Deadly force is your last resort; (C) Evacuate all civilians before you attack.

Flashback — Vietnam, 1968. Marine Hayes Hodges' (Tommy Lee Jones) platoon is ambushed by Vietnamese soldiers and fellow Marine Terry Childers (Samuel Jackson) comes to his rescue.

Twenty-eight years later, Hodges, now a colonel and a self-deemed poor marine litigator, is set to retire. Meanwhile, Col. Childers is saving U.S. Ambassador Mourain (Ben Kingsley) from Yemen protestors in the Middle East. Believing these protestors have weapons, Childers orders his troops to open fire. When news gets back to Washington that 83 civilians are dead, Childers becomes the fall guy for the United States. Refusing court-appointed lawyers, Childers wants Hodges to come out of retirement in order to defend him, thus returning the favor from Vietnam.

"Rules of Engagement" starts off with a rush — a bloody and vicious battle scene places us deep in the jungles of Vietnam. Explosions of grenades and machine guns rupture throughout the harsh terrain, while sunlight seeps past the hanging branches. The only problem is that it is all too familiar.

Attempting to imitate the rocky camera movements while giving us a first-hand dosage of splattering blood and guts does not even come close to the breath-taking opening sequence from "Saving Private Ryan."

Another issue with this flashback is that Hodges and Childers are supposed to be in their early 20s. Why they are shown in close-ups, which reveal their facial wrinkles, remains a

**MOVIE REVIEW**

**"Rules of Engagement"**

**Directed by:** William Friedkin

**Starring:** Tommy Lee Jones, Samuel L. Jackson

*Josh Jacobs*

Staff Writer

The Ithacan rates movies from  
1 (worst) to 4 (best)

mystery. Cleverly, Jackson sports a bandana to hide his greying hair, and Jones dons a bucket camouflage hat to cover up his forehead creases. However, when we return to the present day, the two men look exactly the same.

Coming from director William Friedkin, the man who helmed such masterpieces as "The Exorcist" and "The French Connection," you would expect "Rules of Engagement" to be a high-caliber product. What results though, is a poorly executed tale of a wrongly-accused war hero.

The use of two cinematographers surely must have caused some debate, which in turn puzzled the editor, whose mixing and matching is an obvious faux faux, not to mention their lack of close-ups to convey the characters' emotions.

Speaking of emotions, Jones is as stiff as a frozen corpse. On his investigations to uncover the truth of the case, he breezes through his lines with a somber tone and sad eyes, like a wounded dog in search of a meal, while Samuel L. Jackson must have been feeling a little *deja vu* from a near-duplicate roll in "A Time To Kill." Guy Pearce is somewhat amusing, however, as a by-the-books Marine prosecutor.

## "Wonder Boys"



BY JOSH JACOBS  
Staff Writer

"Wonder Boys" is Curtis Hanson's wickedly amusing follow-up to his 1997 Oscar-nominated film "L.A. Confidential." It portrays the bizarre life of Grady Tripp (Michael Douglas), a college writing professor and one-time best-selling novelist. Grady's mundane existence suddenly acquires new meaning when he befriends James (Tobey Maguire), a reticent student. Discovering James' ingenious writing talent, avoiding his quirky agent (Robert Downey Jr.), sleeping with the college president's wife and aiding in her dog's murder are just small tastes of the bittersweet rollercoaster ride that incorporates Grady's experiences.

Hanson's depiction of the rainy atmosphere of Pittsburgh adds a masterful depth to the structure and narrative of the story. The bleakness of it plays right off of Grady's lack of contempt for anything that happens around him. The almost-trippy scenes are a parallel to the fair share of marijuana smoked by Grady and James.

Michael Douglas was born to play this role and without going over the top, Douglas carries an enlightening story to a wonderful crescendo of perfection.

"Rules of Engagement" is a long, overly-dramatic story which takes too long to reach its climax. The story tries to make Childers' sanity questionable, but to the viewer, it is obvious that he knew what he was doing when he gave out the order. The bonding between Childers and Hodges seems artificial — here we have two great actors wasting their talents on trashy dialogue and a pointless and redundant script that should never have been engaged from the start.