



Finally Getting Paid for Play

BY JOHN OCHOA

THE NAME WILL SLAP YOU IN the face without a second to react: !!! . On the surface, it means nothing. But the name itself is the essence of this Brooklyn-based, eight-piece dance machine.

Rocking the most creative name in all of modern music, !!! – pronounced by repeating any three identical monosyllabic sounds – is as unbelievable as the band's name suggests. Call them Chk Chk Chk, as they are most popularly known, call them Bang Bang Bang or Pow Pow Pow, this octuplet is an unstoppable force with one mission: Keep the party going.

No matter how rapidly the vast dance-, disco- or funk-punk genre has grown in recent years, !!! remains the most experimental pioneering outfit of the day, mixing an endless array of distinct, almost clashing, musical genres, bizarre polyrhythmic sounds and sporadically shifting tempos that could quite possibly mimic a disastrous train wreck, a cocaine-wrapped "Candy Land," a psychedelic carpet ride and a LCD-induced midnight romp through Winnie the Pooh's 100 Acre Wood, all crammed into one.

Sound like a trip? Damn skippy it does!

Besides its curiously peculiar moniker, !!! is infamous for its wild onstage antics and 100-miles-per-hour live shows. Often cited as the best

live act of today, the band is known to dance and rock harder than the dance floor fiends in the audience, equipped with numerous percussions, funky horns and spastic dance moves à la *Napoleon Dynamite*.



The life of any dance party: !!!.

"You pull everything that you are at that moment, and everything comes out," says vocalist Nic Offer of performing so erratically. "Whatever we are feeling at the time comes out. A lot more thought is put into the record as you're making it. Playing live is a lot more instinct."

With the release of its *Myth Takes* album, !!! has undoubtedly progressed in its songwriting abilities.

"Something different happened on this record," says Offer. "A lot of things happened that made an effect on this record. We made a conscious effort to communicate more. The

other record [*Louden Up Now*] was flawed because we didn't communicate as much."

Writing the majority of the album in a desolate rented house in Nashville, Tenn., the band took on a new

writing method to perfect the album.

"We used to write all the songs together," relays Offer. "We kind of split into smaller groups for this record."

With such a large band, the rehearsal logistics may seem impossible and unproductive, but the band practices a democratically open method.

"It's very free," says Offer of the band's songwriting jam sessions. "You got to kind of learn your place. Sometimes somebody's in charge, sometimes somebody else is in charge."

Though this new songwriting formula proved successful in the album's final outcome, the band had no clue where its new material would take them.

"We had no idea how this record would turn out," says Offer. "Music is a journey, and you don't know where you're going to end up. I don't like putting on albums and getting exactly what I expected to hear."

More sonically intact than their previous releases, *Myth Takes* sees !!! as the funky unit in an ongoing musical journey, living by one mantra: music for the sake of music.

"We didn't start getting paid as a band 'til just a couple of years ago," says Offer. "We didn't make money for the first seven or eight years. It's always about making the music. We just feel lucky to have gone this far."

Formed in 1995, !!!'s 12-year tenure has evolved throughout the years, its sound and onstage persona developing immensely.

"I would hope any band together that long would change. Your odds are better with change," says Offer.

With a recent relocation to New York, !!! now openly admits that being around their globally esteemed dance-punk peers, including LCD Soundsystem and the Rapture, has left a major impact.

"Moving to New York is a big step in how we grew. Being in a scene where everyone was good kind of makes us swim." ■

Myth Takes is currently available. !!! will perform Sept. 26 at the Avalon in Hollywood. For more information, visit www.chkchkchk.net.

music

the Ray Charles classic, "I Gotta Woman." Toots captures the playful spirit Charles infused into the original and adds the right blend of Jamaica sound.

Grade: B+

—Lori Bartlett

Light Your Light is currently available.

WILEY

Playtime Is Over

(Big Dada)

After Wiley, it's difficult to be impressed with other artists in the grime genre – the simultaneously dark and humorous field, steeped in drum 'n bass, in Wiley's words rejected by the British garage scene.

A founder of the Roll Deep crew based in Bow, East London, Wiley's teased that third album *Playtime is Over* will be the last in his allegedly dangerous scene, with the producer/emcee likely to focus



music dvd review | BY BRIEN OVERLY

VARIOUS ARTISTS

All My Loving

(MVD Visual)

Those who can, do. Those who can't ... well, criticize those who can. That is what makes Tony Palmer's *All My Loving* – a DVD collection of declarations about the Beatles – completely different than any of its peers.

Based on archival interview and performance footage from the young Beatles, it's constructed around their historically impacting contemporaries like Jimi Hendrix, the Who and Pink Floyd. Testimonies from those who knew the volatile musical climate best, these political rock 'n' roll superheroes gush personal

stories from the peak of global revolution.

While many distinguish between early and late Beatles, declaring allegiance to the formative years of soul and Motown covers and Paul's lovesick ballads, or to the psychedelic experimental rock phase of John's colored glasses, this film covers it all. Though a mere 52 minutes, *All My Loving* does not attempt to tell a story of the Beatles, but rather capture a collective emotional state of music at the time.

With skies of blue, and seas of green...

Grade: B

—Hayley Fox

All My Loving is currently available.

CRO-MAGS

The Final Quarrel: Live at CBGB

2001

(MVD Visual)

Other than the fact that this was the band's last show at New York's fabled (and now departed) rock dive CBGB there's nothing remarkable about the performance. Maybe that's to be expected as Cro-Mags rip through 16 songs and most of their early album *Age of Quarrel* in a set that lasts just a little over half an hour.

But don't tell the enthusiastic crowd that they needn't get excited over the 15-year-old hardcore of "By Myself," "Street Justice" and "Hard Times;" they're moshing and crowd surfing like there's no tomorrow. The real value of this package is a "bonus" performance by bassist Harley Flannigan's new band,



Harley's War.

Grade: C

—Kevin Wierzbicki

The Final Quarrel: Live at CBGB 2001 is currently available.

on production after nearly a decade in grime.

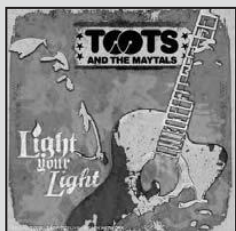
Like his solo debut, *Treddin' on Thin Ice*, *Playtime Is Over* is a collection of quick bursts with Wiley's sophisticated raps trampling his simple, repetitive rhythms in a battle for speed. Unlike *Treddin'*, though, there's no standout humor like that on "Pies," about his insatiable craving.

Instead there's an R&B-tinged tribute to his daughter ("Baby Girl") and "Letter 2 Dizze," which lets his former Roll Deep recruit and junior rival know that Wiley's still ahead. His light production job finds few decorative touches – the frantic string additions on "My Mistakes" and beat-synchronized gunshots on "Johnny Was a Bad Boy," for two. The record picks up momentum toward the end and concludes with hidden instrumental track "Where's Light?"

Grade: B+

—China Bialos

Playtime Is Over is currently available.



Your Light. The good vibes almost radiate off the disc from the reggae legends as *Light* is a mish-mash of original songs, covers and remakes.

Though most of the album is peppered with ska tones and an island sound, the first two tracks have a more roots rock sound. Opening track "Johnny Coolman"

features Derek Trucks and is a boot shuffling, southern rock laced ditty. Toots sings about his alter ego Coolman, and his avoidance of the police.

Toots gets another taste of the blues on "Premature," with the vocal backing of Bonnie Raitt. Possibly the strongest track on the

album, Toots' raspy howls play perfectly against Raitt's smooth, sultry sound.

The strength of the album dips as Toots goes into a few good, but standard reggae tunes. A turnaround starts with Toots' cover of

REVIEWS CONTINUED >>