



Liz Phair produces a sixth album, "Somebody's Miracle," full of average lyrics and bland music. Phair neglects to play up her vocal talent but creates several nice moments.

# Phair's recent album rates fair

Sara DeGonia

Assistant Features Editor

Guess her age.

Not that age has anything to do with music. Some of the greatest musicians of all time kept singing or playing right up until they died. Some continue to release albums posthumously.

But listening to Liz Phair's sixth album, "Somebody's Miracle," makes you wonder about her age.

The 38-year-old writes some of her lyrics as if she's a teenager. The words seem fluffy and rather meaningless. And her 24-year-old face doesn't clear the confusion. Every picture included with the Oct. 4 release and on her Web site proves that she has some good genes going for her.

The music seems a little amateur as well. Perhaps it is actually that she's found a sound that suits her, but it lacks substance.

Yet, here's where the age issue gets tricky. Several songs have a clear inspiration from other artists and even other decades. Track No. 3, "Stars and Planets," definitely gives off that hippie vibe. A close enough listen proves that the chorus of the tune comes straight from an after-school special.

Also, many of the album's lyrics (besides the fluffy and meaningless kind) illustrate a significant presence of pain in her past — thoughts and feelings most twenty-somethings couldn't have experienced.

But the album doesn't start out in anguish. Rather it's an extraordinarily simplistic beginning. Track No. 1's opening line is "I saw John." And the track remains on this pace, revealing itself as comparable to a Dick and Jane book set to music.

She does, however, have her specific nonconformist sound. It's nondescript, which is probably the essence of its individuality.

Phair rarely strays from her preferred one-octave range, so it's not as if she produces a whirlwind of vocal talent.

Again, though, she stays true to her own sound consistently throughout the album — even the particularly irritating rhythms.

Track No. 2 carries on the style of the preceding song with relatively short lines of lyrics. The delivery is noticeably less choppy, but some of the rhyming is forced and uncomfortable. Phair does tackle another octave of pitch, which proves pleasing in a nicely flawed way — as opposed to the often contrived-sounding vocal perfection of other female artists.

The title track, "Somebody's Miracle," provides Phair's most distinct sound on the album.

She uses her otherwise hidden vocal talent to produce a bouncily positive performance. It's a song that appeals to an undeniably large group of people: the hopeless romantics who revel in their hopelessness.

She sings: "There goes a modern fairy tale/I wish it could happen to me/But I look at myself/And I think what the hell/Maybe I'm just too naive."

Immediately following the hopeful tune, Phair supplies a confusingly upbeat tune with violent lyrics:

"Oooh boy/I'd love to help/Give you enough rope to hang yourself and/I hope you're swinging this way too."

Perhaps it's deeply metaphorical. Perhaps it's just strange.

From here the album provides several disappointingly similar songs. There are few highlights in either music or lyrics.

Phair expresses a pretty standard roller-coaster attitude toward life and relationships, switching between high highs and low lows almost at random.

## CD Review

### 'Somebody's Miracle'

Artist: Liz Phair  
Label: Capitol  
Release: Oct. 4



The big exception to the slight monotony of the second half of the album is titled "Table for One." It opens with somewhat of a European sound — something you might hear while sitting at a sidewalk café. The tune separates itself from most of Phair's creations with a soulful flow of action. The lyrics are fragile and depressed in a resigned way: Phair expresses a deep pain in the manner of a recklessly dangerous beauty.

The following tracks differ only slightly from one another in their general demeanor. Often

her clever lyrics are downplayed by a lack of vocal enthusiasm or attainable emotion in her performance.

One song has a tiny bit of a country vibe, another seems slightly Joan Jett-inspired, but most — especially "Everything (Between Us)" — merely drag with indifference.

"Giving It All To You," Phair's finale, is largely disappointing. It's a decent song with decent energy, decent lyrics and a decently positive outlook. But it's nothing special. Maybe it's just the stereotypical American in me that expects a happy ending or at least something memorable.

Bottom line: After all the hemming and hawing, ups and downs and seemingly random influences, the album is conclusively average. Phair's sixth is respectable in its strictly nonconformist personality, but her vocal talents and the quality of the music undoubtedly leave something to be desired.

himself all worked up about a problem that didn't exist — his imagination manufactured it. Hence, be sure of your information before acting to avoid unnecessary pain.

**LEO:** (July 23 to Aug. 22)  
As Mary Poppins said, "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." Your everyday chores are deflating your mood lately. Find something cheery and fun to add flavor to your unsavory tasks, and your days will have a sweeter taste to them.

**VIRGO:** (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)  
No way can there possibly be enough time for you to accomplish the level of perfection you seek. Envisioning yourself as a work in progress can often be a curse. Lighten up. You are doing the best you can.

# Latest release seduces fans

Sadye Scott-Hainchek  
Index Staff

In 2000, Bon Jovi burst back onto the music scene, producing "Crush," the album that headlined a defiant ode to satisfying the self before critics.

Five years later, the band's new album, "Have A Nice Day," follows the same recipe — a cowboy attitude combined with a sensitive soul that seduces die-hard and casual fans alike — and achieves similar success.

"Have A Nice Day" opens with the title track of the same name. Guitarist Richie Sambora might lead the melody, and drummer Tico Torres might provide the power, but it's Jon Bon Jovi's husky roar that saves this song from being "It's My Life" version 2.0. Simply put, no one can spit in his or her naysayer's face like Jon Bon Jovi can.

Sure, the message has been repackaged, but the lyrics remain strong.

The end of track No. 1 signals the end of "Crush" parallels. Where "Crush" could drag, "Have A Nice Day" never does.

Although the band tones down the 'tude for the next two songs, it doesn't descend into acoustic whinnies.

In "I Want To Be Loved," Bon Jovi sings about being wounded but keeps the same survivor outlook.

It's here that Sambora shows off his chops the most. He never overshadows Jon, but at the same time, listeners can't miss his gift.

The third song, "Welcome to Wherever You Are," walks a fine line between excessive sentimentality and reassurance. It doesn't drag. It doesn't wail. But it also doesn't exert much imaginative muscle when it comes to lyrics.

"Who Says You Can't Go Home" seems to channel pre-crossover country, possibly to reinforce the idea of "a hometown boy born a rolling stone." Surprisingly, the combination of reformed '80s rocker and bluegrass works.

And as a college student reconciling a desire to make my own way with hometown ties, I had no trouble connecting with this song.

"Last Man Standing" reinforces the fact that Bon Jovi still can rock. An ode to the disappearing rock icon, the band's exuberance keeps the song from coming off as bitter. Jon seems to back off in favor of Sambora's driving guitar, which truly makes the song.

Unfortunately, the insipid and forgettable "Bells of Freedom" follows "Last Man Standing," doing

itself a great disservice. This is the CD's weakest song, with a not-so-revolutionary main theme and not-so-creative lyrics. Still, "Bells" isn't awful. It just isn't great.

The band gets back on track with "Wildflower" and "Last Cigarette," both dedicated to elusive loves of Bon Jovi.

"Wildflower" sings of an utterly baffling woman, and with the backing strings and '70s-ballad tempo, it becomes oddly sweet even though the listener can't make much sense of this woman.

Bon Jovi has done songs like this before, most notably with "Crush," but this time, the band does it right.

"Last Cigarette" uses one of the album's most original ideas to create one of the better songs. Like nicotine, it seems to be addictive. You want to press repeat and listen to the intense, clever chorus forever.

Probably the winner of the most-unique-song-theme contest, however, would be "Novocaine,"

## CD Review

### 'Have A Nice Day'

Artist: Bon Jovi  
Label: Island  
Release: Sept. 20



track No. 9. One of the edgiest songs on the CD, this detailing of a breakup seems to borrow from some of today's pop-punk, at least in the beginning but doesn't whine.

Preceding "Novocaine" is a classic Bon Jovi tune.

"Complicated" is a crank-up-your-stereo, shout-it-at-your-

enemies anthem. It's easy to dismiss it as "Misunderstood" revved up at first glance, but the songs really aren't that similar.

"Complicated" isn't going to apologize. It's going to flip you off, which is exactly what Bon Jovi fans want to hear.

The final track of the CD is a remix of "Who Says You Can't Go Home," this time a duet featuring Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland, a bluegrass group. That added twang doesn't detract from the message. Rather, the country vocals and fiddle still suit the song.

Overall, it's a solid effort on Bon Jovi's part. The album minimizes the dreaded filler-song effect. And as with any CD, some songs rock, and some struggle.

With "Have A Nice Day," however, Bon Jovi members continue to mature as artists. Yes, many of the songs echo song ideas from previous albums, but the bottom line is that 2005's versions are better.

"Have A Nice Day" will disappoint only those who seek more hair ballads — no one will hate it, they just might not like it strongly.

When the worst aspect of a CD is the cover art, the band should congratulate itself on a job well done.

## Concert Connection

Oct. 20 to Oct. 26

### St. Louis

Oct. 21 Styx The Pageant  
Oct. 25 Nickel Creek The Pageant

### Kansas City

Oct. 21 Charlie Daniels Band Kemper Arena  
Oct. 23 Juliana Theory El Torreon

### Chicago

Oct. 21 Pat Green House of Blues  
Oct. 25 Liz Phair Vic Theatre

### Des Moines

Oct. 20 Finch House of Bricks



## Campus

### Marc Wooldridge

Multimedia artist Marc Wooldridge will present a percussion workshop at 12:30 p.m. today in Ophelia Parrish 2340, a film workshop at 3:30 p.m. today in the SUB Activities Room and a composition workshop at 9:30 a.m. Friday in OP 2119. He will perform a "Journeys: Multimedia Percussion" concert at 8 p.m. tonight in the OP Performance Hall.

### Branded a Bulldog

Homecoming 2005 activities continue today with the Skit Competition at 7 p.m. tonight in Baldwin Auditorium. Other events include the Lip Sync Competition at 6:30 p.m. Friday in Baldwin Auditorium, the parade at 9 a.m. Saturday on Franklin Street and SAB comedian John Wesley Austin at 6 p.m. Saturday in Baldwin Auditorium.

### Step Show

The National Pan-Hellenic Council will sponsor the Homecoming Step Show at 8 p.m. Saturday in Baldwin Auditorium. General admission is \$8, Greek discount (with paraphernalia) is \$5, kids 10 and younger are free, and kids 10 to 14 cost \$4.

### Homecoming Concert

Unique Ensemble Gospel Choir will present its 2005 Homecoming Concert at 1 p.m. Sunday in the SUB Activities Room.

### Jack-O-Lanterns

The SAB will sponsor pumpkin carving and painting from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday between Pickler Memorial Library and Baldwin Hall. Refreshments will be provided.

### Book Signing

The Social Science Division will sponsor Steven Watts, a professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the SUB Activities Room. He will speak about his biography, "The People's Tycoon," in a lecture titled "Henry Ford and the American Century."

### College Bowl

The Center for Student Involvement will sponsor a College Bowl tournament from 6 to 10 p.m. Wednesday on the upper level of the SUB.

## Local

### Pie Supper

The Bible Grove Historical Preservation Committee will sponsor its 84th annual Pie Supper at 7 p.m. Friday at Bible Grove Schools in Bible Grove, Mo.

## Concerts

### Green Lemon

Green Lemon will perform at 10 p.m. tonight at the Dukum Upp.

# Horoscopes

Oct. 23 to 29

By Madame Hughes

### ARIES:

(March 20 to April 18)  
Everyone around you seems to be offering advice. Most of them have years of experience and so speak with authority. A perfect mix would be to listen and learn from these "advisers," and then add your own ideas.

### TAURUS:

(April 19 to May 20)  
No one's love life is idyllic. Ken and Barbie's perfect world exists only in the minds of youngsters at play. Being human means, we all have flaws. You must accept this fact and then

zero in on your mate's wonderful attributes.

### GEMINI:

(May 21 to June 20)  
Your roles this week will include being the helpful boy or girl scout. It might be a parent, friend, child or stranger who is in need. They will be looking to you for aid, and assisting them should take precedence over other matters.

### CANCER:

(June 21 to July 22)  
Mother Goose's Chicken Little thought the sky was falling. He got

himself all worked up about a problem that didn't exist — his imagination manufactured it. Hence, be sure of your information before acting to avoid unnecessary pain.

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No way can there possibly be enough time for you to accomplish the level of perfection you seek. Envisioning yourself as a work in progress can often be a curse. Lighten up. You are doing the best you can.

### LIBRA:

(Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)  
Sometimes your even-tempered, sensible self needs to be stirred up a bit. As Einstein said, "Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." You will have good reason to forget logic this week and be driven instead by the powers of your right brain.

### SCORPIO:

(Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)  
A change in your routine offers new challenges and positive stimulation. Although this transition is not without responsibilities, they are more than outweighed by the lift you will receive to your spirit. It's all very exciting!

### SAGITTARIUS:

(Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)  
You are nothing if not optimistic.

This upbeat can-do approach to life is something you have finely tuned. That is a good thing because your positive "vibe" making will be called upon to go into hyperdrive.

### CAPRICORN:

(Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)  
Combine your ambitiousness with good planning, and you will go far. It often takes early sacrifice to reap a reward down the road, and many are not willing to exercise restraint and also put in the hard work. You are.

### AQUARIUS:

(Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)  
A co-worker/friend is considered by you to be a "diamond in the rough" — so much poten-

tial yet to be discovered. While you can see all the possibilities, others are blind. Be the one to open their eyes. Get the unveiling started.

### PISCES:

(Feb. 19 to March 19)  
No, you haven't won the lottery. And, yes, that means you still are one of us working stiffs. Keep those dreams alive, but be realistic as well — odds are pretty slim you'll be living like royalty anytime soon.

### IF YOUR BIRTHDAY IS OCT. 27:

You share your birthday with former president Theodore Roosevelt. You are forceful, dynamic and impulsive. Your moods can swing wildly.