

# Young artists pay tribute to old

BY HARRY BURSON  
Reviewer

War Child is an organization started by two British filmmakers in 1993 with a mission to raise money to support aid agencies operating in war-stricken areas.

The concept for the album is "placing faith in the next generation," in which old artists choose new artists to cover their best material. For example, Paul McCartney picked Duffy to sing "Live and Let Die." Get it? Good.

"Excellent cause, better music ... by the best artists."

So says "AeDaddy," the first person on iTunes to review the "Heroes" compilation album War Child put together.

The roster for the album is impressive — the disc actually was pushed back a few months to allow more artists to contribute. Beck does Bob Dylan. Hot Chip does Joy Division. TV on the Radio does David Bowie. Lily Allen does the Clash. Estelle does Stevie Wonder. And so on and so forth.

Not all are A-list artists. The Like and Elbow sneak onto the second half of the album, but overall the material is top-notch, disregarding the fact that Stevie Wonder is the only black songwriter represented and that no rap found its way onto this superstar disc.

Even so, there are some great performances on this disc. The best songs keep the spirit of the original while the band's unique identity stays intact (the Hold Steady covering Springsteen's "Atlantic City"). Not as good are listless would-be reinventions that just miss the mark (Beck covering Dylan's "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat"). The most boring, however, are the unimaginative straight-ahead covers (TV on the Radio do-



Photo courtesy of [www.itsmorriseysworld.com](http://www.itsmorriseysworld.com)  
College Music Roundup centers on an organization, War Child, which is introducing an album with a track-list full of popular artists.

ing Bowie's "Heroes" and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs doing the Ramones' "Sheena is a Punk Rocker").

Overall, this album is an enjoyable listen. It is well-sequenced with good, if sometimes obvious, pairings. It's for an excellent cause, the songs are good and the artists are top-notch, but not every

track lives up to AeDaddy's hype. I guess you can't believe everything you read on the Internet. Who knew?

Next in the College Music Roundup is "Years of Refusal": the ninth solo album by former Smiths front man Morrissey.

This is his third album since

his semi-comeback in 2004 with "You are the Quarry." Morrissey has grown from the witty, gloomy young man we knew and loved from his days in the Smiths to a witty, gloomy middle-aged man — mining the same angst he's best known for but now with a sort of content resignation. The worst

is over, but there's still plenty to complain about.

And so he does. On the lead single, "I'm Throwing My Arms around Paris," Morrissey cries that no one will love him, so he will retreat to the steel embrace of the cold city.

Elsewhere, on "That's How People Grow Up," Morrissey acknowledges he still hasn't found love, but, you know, there are worse things than being alone, like crashing and breaking your spine. That's what I meant by content resignation.

The lyrics are as good as they've ever been, but the sound is somewhat lacking, somewhere in the pop-punk/modern rock vein: heavy guitars and occasional synths that wouldn't sound out of place on a harder Miley Cyrus song.

Morrissey always sounded best backed by the knowing jangle of Johnny Marr in the Smiths. But since this reunion is about as likely as Axl and Slash making up, we'll have to make do with this. And make do we shall.

Morrissey is always a bit of an acquired taste — you should know what you're getting into. If you like Morrissey, you'll like this record. End of story.

Finally, a quick mention of My Chemical Romance covering "Desolation Row" for the "Watchmen" soundtrack.

The emo-pop band managed to condense Dylan's 12-minute epic into a 3-minute slice of pop punk featuring a guitar solo that interpolates a bit of the national anthem.

I was mildly impressed by the "Black Parade," particularly "Dead!" and "Teenagers," but this is a definite step backward from those intoxicating slices of glam rock. If this song is any indication of the quality of the "Watchmen" movie, I pray for Alan Moore.

# MTV show reaps negative criticism

BY JOHN HITZEL  
Reviewer

"Rob Dyrdek's Fantasy Factory" premiered on MTV in early February.

This sequel program to "Rob and Big" is one reason television should be eliminated. The show can be summed up as follows: a hell-a-rich boy blows his money on whatever stupid stuff he wants, set to a soundtrack of rock and rap that makes it all look a thousand times cooler but keeps the substance to a minimum.

Most cable-kids had MTV growing up, and we all watched it, whether or not we are proud to admit it. I got caught up in the war between fans of Korn and fans of Limp Bizkit, switching from the Korn camp to side with Limp Bizkit once their video beat out Korn's on TRL before I knew the flaccid innuendo behind their name. Now, I hope we all have grown up a bit and distanced ourselves from the marketing empire that is MTV, but its programming formula has stayed the same: make stuff look cool, and pimp it to the youth.

Dyrdek is a pretty inspiring guy despite all the crap I give him. He's a self-made millionaire who made his money through DC Shoes and skateboarding. He holds a number of world records. He sets goals on his show, and he beats them. I am reminded of the 311 lyrics from "Brodels." "I cannot think of a better way that we could celebrate freedom / than make up a set of goals and go beat 'em," from their self-titled album.

Dyrdek bought a factory and turned it into a funhouse. He has a foam pit at the end of a half-pipe ramp, a glass office, a three-wheeled two-seater called T-Rex that he uses to cruise around his compound, multiple Escalades, an indoor zip line, a blob for fun on lakes and an assortment of skate park equipment, to name a few of his toys. He has a cavalry of old-people power-scooters that he decked out with animal faces so they look more intimidating.

Dyrdek celebrates his freedom by making up goals, but the ones he picks are very MTV, very consumer-culture, just dumb stuff for the rich to waste money on, like buying a hotel complex so he can change it into a snowboarder's paradise or paying a shaman to help him find his power animal so he can customize his scooter accordingly or breaking the land speed world record in his T-Rex. He even makes his receptionist free-style her messages back to him sometimes — on camera, of course.

In one episode, he took corporate executives to see the new real estate purchase, and then asked them to jump on his lake blob with him.

They resisted, so he said he already had four hotties waiting at the lake. Did corporate want to look uncool? They agreed to go to a frigid lake to meet four impossibly skinny, bleach-blond, bug-eyed, giggly babes while Twisted Sister's and/or Quiet Riot's and/or Slade's "Come On Feel the Noise" played in the background (there really are three different bands who made this song their own, and each version is indistinguishable from the other).

Then, corporate told him the property he just bought was being auctioned the next week because it was condemned. Dyrdek's response to the realization that he just wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars? "Sometimes we get red flags ... and we shoo 'em away." Corporate told him he was unrealistic. They got heated on camera, looking like buzz kills. Dyrdek responded, "I want you guys to watch 'Legally Blonde.' It's very positive."

On Dyrdek's MySpace blog, most of the entries from other people are young women posting pictures of themselves displaying their cleavage and guys whose pictures show them flashing the peace sign.

The true purpose of this show is beyond delivering young, insecure, pimply grease balls to Axe by making them insecure about their non-girl-proof hair during commercial breaks, past giving MTV the opportunity to pimp its other shows in the lower-right-hand corner for half an hour, deeper than pushing shallow consumer-culture values. The show doesn't nearly document how fun it is to be insanely rich and how cool it is to be your own boss and have your own TV show and make your friends do stuff they don't want to do, stuff that often ends up hurting them.

Nay, once you peel back the veil of all the glamour and smiles and looking confident and cool on camera, you can see that this show exists to glorify self-absorbed idiots who have no better ideas about how to spend their money than to buy toys for themselves. Dyrdek is a walking male stereotype and great for TV, especially for a young audience who is figuring out who they are by watching lots of TV.

Does Dyrdek have any sense of community, or of altruism? Something to do with all his money that benefits society at large? Based on the episodes of his show that I have seen, I'd say no. He insults his bosses, hurts his close friends and looks unbelievably cool while doing it.

Thanks for bringing us one step closer to the enlightenment our country so desperately needs, MTV. You still suck. Please go away or at least start playing music videos (from beginning to end) again.



Image designed by Mayank Dhungana  
After twenty seasons, The Simpsons still retains its sense of humor, but lacks plot and character development.

# Simpsons turn twenty, still rely on teenage antics

BY FRANKLIN CLINE  
Reviewer

If "The Simpsons" ever really did lose it — which is questionable even to the most die-hard Comic Book Guy-like fan — then they've got it back, but in a weird, new and ultimately unsatisfying way. Even though each episode still made me laugh, chuckle, grin and guffaw, I can't shake the feeling that something is missing from the longest-running prime-time television show in history.

Any longtime fan has already noticed that the style of humor used on the show has wildly changed since it began. The show used to be deeply rooted in a story that was engaging and encouraged the viewer to open a sort of emotional dialogue with whichever characters were being focused on that particular week. Most of the charm of "The Simpsons" came from its intimacy — that and the fact that it was hilarious. It would leave you in a daze hours later, wondering what clever minds could possibly have put all these seemingly disparate acts of culture together into such a comprehensive and cohesive whole, all while crafting characters who ranged from absolutely absurd to wonderfully complex (from the Sea Captain to Lisa Simpson, let's say) and telling a concise story in less than 22 minutes. This description, while

overflowing with praise, accurately describes 99 percent of the episodes featured in seasons three to eight, the golden age of the show.

But that was then, this is now.

This year's season still is hilarious, but the comedy is coming from a more immediate, almost yearning place. It's weird to watch the jokes ratchet by without any real sense of plot or character development, and I realize that this has been a complaint about the show for the better part of a decade now, but it's a valid and legitimately frightening one. (I would like to note that the last non-HD episode and also the final one to feature the original opening sequence, "Lisa the Drama Queen," was one of the finest episodes to air in some time, one that really made you feel for and care about Lisa Simpson, who has been unfairly relegated to the background in recent years.)

Also, the show's move to HD is a jarring and bizarre one, especially because it comes with

a brand-new opening sequence, intentionally setting this era of "The Simpsons" apart from its beloved, flawed past. The first episode created and broadcasted in the high definition format — "Take My Life, Please,"

which is about the hundredth episode that imagines Homer and Marge in the past with altered circumstances that result in different futures — is telling in its stomping on the past and its inarticulate, distorted version of the future that retains the basic mechanics (i.e., the characters and the setting), but ultimately goes in a new and strange direction. Like the work of any great artist, "The Simpsons" has

had its ups and downs, its high periods and low periods, and it feels like the twentieth season is content to sit right in the middle. It's not quite phoned in — there are just enough laughs and clever asides for the show to avoid that trap — but at times it's damned close. You're not a teenager anymore, "Simpsons," so don't act like one!

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