

cd reviews



Incubus
Morning View
 Epic Records
 ★★ ★★ 1/2 (of five)
 rock

Incubus proved to be one of the top bands in heavy rock with the release of *Make Yourself* two years ago. Stepping beyond the typical rap-rock trend that has engulfed the popular market, the band has struck with its roots, mixing its unique blend of yin-yang ways of life and music.

Morning View, which was recorded in a house the band rented on the Florida coast, takes the next step of evolution for a band trying to break out of the metal

genre as we've come to know it. Starting off with "Nice to Know You," the band shows it's not afraid to slow things down, but the following track, "Circles," floors you with a gust of noise and clever circular lyrics.

"Wish You Were Here," a commentary from lead singer Brandon Boyd on the beach, combines the band's magnificent songwriting (listen to guitarist Mike Einzinger's floating melodies) and DJ Killmore's ability to add accent instead of altering the entire band's sound.

Adding to the Killmore props, "Just a Phase" has to be the best example of how a DJ can be used over an Alice-In-Chains-like and very melodic introduction. After hearing the extended intro, Boyd's vocal talents stick out more than ever, building up to the bantering "Who are you / and when will you be through?"

And of course with the yin must come the yang. "Blood on the Ground" brings the yang in full force with Boyd's chorus "I don't want to talk to you anymore / I'm afraid of what I might say / I bite my tongue every time you come around / cause blood in my mouth is better than blood on the ground." (Wonder if Boyd's a little upset over his breakup with his ex-girlfriend, who was featured in the "Stellar" video?)

As with the evolution Incubus has made in the past (*Fungus Amungus* to *SCIENCE* and so on), the band has combined the power of metal with the subtlety of melodic ballads. The combination puts the group above any other genre mixer on the 'heavy' circuit without betraying its longtime core of fans. Fortunately for Incubus, the album pulls in enough pop sensibility to reach an audience beyond the typical heavy rock listener.

—Dan Marek



Lenny Kravitz
Lenny
 Virgin Records
 ★★ ★★ 1/2 (of five)
 rock

In 1989 Lenny Kravitz began his peace, love and rock-n-roll career with one of the simplest messages pop rock has offered us since the 60s — "Let Love Rule."

People have been comparing Kravitz to Hendrix and Prince since day one, but what really caught people's attention was his ability to turn back the clock and make new songs sound old. His signature flying guitar work and party atmosphere at shows

and in videos brought Kravitz to the front of the public eye with *Air You Gonna Go My Way*, and suddenly people couldn't get enough of him.

Sadly, people forget his best album to date, *Mama Said* (which brought raw emotion to an album mixed with messages to win over ex-wife Lisa Bonet), and the bad 'eggs' like *Circus* (which was recorded right after the death of his mother). Both showed a completely different side of the pop-god's writing style.

After three years of waiting for a new full-length, Kravitz brings us *Lenny*, a disc full of mellow grooves and his standard 'God Save Us All' song line up.

As Kravitz has done in the past, he makes his music sound completely different

from anybody else, but unfortunately it sounds too much like every other song on the album to make you accept *Lenny* as the next *Mama Said* or *Go My Way*.

Now don't get me wrong, I've been a Kravitz fan from the beginning, but with the release of *Lenny* I've begun to see the light that was cast over Kravitz' shadow long before the pop culture thought he was perfect for Tommy Hilfinger or the new Nissan ads.

Lenny is full of the raw emotion that has preceded his long, illustrious career. But songs like "If I Could Fall In Love" (with blustery vocals and mundane guitar loops) and "Yesterday Is Gone (My Dear Kay)" (which sounds like it was taken directly from the *Circus* sessions) seem to miss the

mark.

On the bright side, *Lenny* gives us memorable tracks like "Dig In," which reminds me a bit of *Let Love Rule*'s "Cab Driver," which had such a raw and gritty sound but captured the essence of Kravitz' work.

As a longtime fan of Kravitz' music, it's hard for me to pick apart his work, but when I picked up this album I hoped I'd never put it down. Unfortunately that's not the case, and the album falls short of the expectations I have from the artist who gave us such a rush in the past — hopefully we'll see the next *Mama Said* on the next album — let's just hope it doesn't take another three years.

—Dan Marek