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Creepy stuff meets early Dylan and Aretha at brass band bash

This week's column includes two works from a modern monster-masher, a Bob Dylan performance from before his stardom, American Songbook highlights from Aretha and a rowdy new album from The Big Easy's premier Brass Band.

'The Rise of Creepersin,' (Creepersin Entertainment, HH1/2)

'Creep Creepersin's Frankenstein,' (MVDvisual, HH)

This March 8 CD is subtitled "The Band That Terrorized the World," and the March 22 DVD is also written/directed by the same guy who writes the music. The music is somewhat similar to the pre-hardcore Misfits with deeper-toned, spooky vocals delivered by Creep Creepersin (vocals, keyboards). The other musicians (Norman Mop: guitar/backing vocals/keyboards, El Hombre: drums, backing vocals and Rocky Horrornandez: bass/backing vocals) play fairly convincing pop-punk songs undermined by Creep's "whoa-oh-oh-ing" on many tunes.

The speedier numbers like "Dead by Dawn," "Bleed for Me" and "Last House on the Left on Mockingbird Lane" are all pretty cool. The stage show is probably the best thing about these guys. I'd probably attend if they came within driving distance.

The movie is a well-photographed low-budget number about a lonely misfit with a pet rat named Frankenstein who is detached from normal human contact. Thus, he decides to make himself a friend -- literally. This doesn't work out very well, since he isn't mentally or physically equipped to carry out his plan. Aficionados of low-budget horror may enjoy this movie, though.

'The Great American Songbook,' Aretha Franklin (Columbia/Legacy, HHHH 1/2)

This March 22 CD features highlights from the massive "Take A Look: Aretha Franklin Complete" on Columbia, which celebrates the Queen of Soul's groundbreaking 1961-1965 works in a 12-disc box set. It contains songs written by composers like Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, and others, and is drawn entirely from the bigger box set's repertoire.

Highlights are numerous, but her gospel-ish take on Hank Williams' "Cold Cold Heart" is probably my favorite. The sprightly "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" and unusual but cool versions of "Trouble in Mind," "Try a Little Tenderness" and "That Lucky Old Sun" are my other current favorites. Aretha fans need to snag the big box set, or grab this one to hear a different side to her talents.

'In Concert-Brandeis University 1963,' Bob Dylan (Columbia/Legacy, HHHH)

This April 12 CD uncovers a rare, professionally recorded early Dylan performance at Brandeis University's Folk Festival on May 10, 1963, two

weeks before the release of his second album, "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan." This is Dylan in folksinger mode, with no accompaniment to his distinctive voice but his acoustic guitar and harmonica. The ticket stub that appears here shows the admission price of \$4.40.

My favorite song here is the "Ballad of Hollis Brown," which I remember in a scary electric Nazareth version from my youth. The incomplete opener, "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance," is tunefully adapted from an obscure 1927 Henry Thomas blues, and it was a minor song on Bob's second album. Dylan would become a star soon, but this is an early glimpse into his songwriting and performing brilliance that fans will want to get.

'Rebirth of New Orleans,' Rebirth Brass Band (Basin Street Records, HHHH)

This April 12 CD by Rebirth Brass Band is a new chapter for the New Orleans institution of almost 30 years. It was produced by Grammy-winning Tracey Freeman, who has done albums for Kermit Ruffins and Harry Connick Jr. The band now sells out concerts around the world and was featured in David Simon's HBO hit "Treme'."

The big band (Phil Frazier/tuba, Keith Frazier/bass drum, Stafford Agee/trombone, Corey Henry/trombone, Derek Shezbie/trumpet, Glen Andrews/trumpet, Chadrick Honore/trumpet, Vincent Broussard/sax, Derrick Tabb/snare drum and percussionists Reed Watson and Solomon Doyle III) contains good players and prolific composers.

The hot Spanish-flavored "AP Touro," the Who-Dat flavored "Do It Again" and the parade-ready "Why Your Feet Hurt" are my favorites, but brass band lovers will love the way these guys make the music really rock. Grab a bowlful of "Shrimp and Gumbo" ASAP, and let's hope the NFL "labor dispute" ends in time for the Saints to get on track.

Ricky Flake, a former punk rocker and music fan who lives in Biloxi, can be reached at rickyflake@bellsouth.net.