



Yo Gotti

Back 2 Da Basics

TVT Records

www.yogottimusic.com

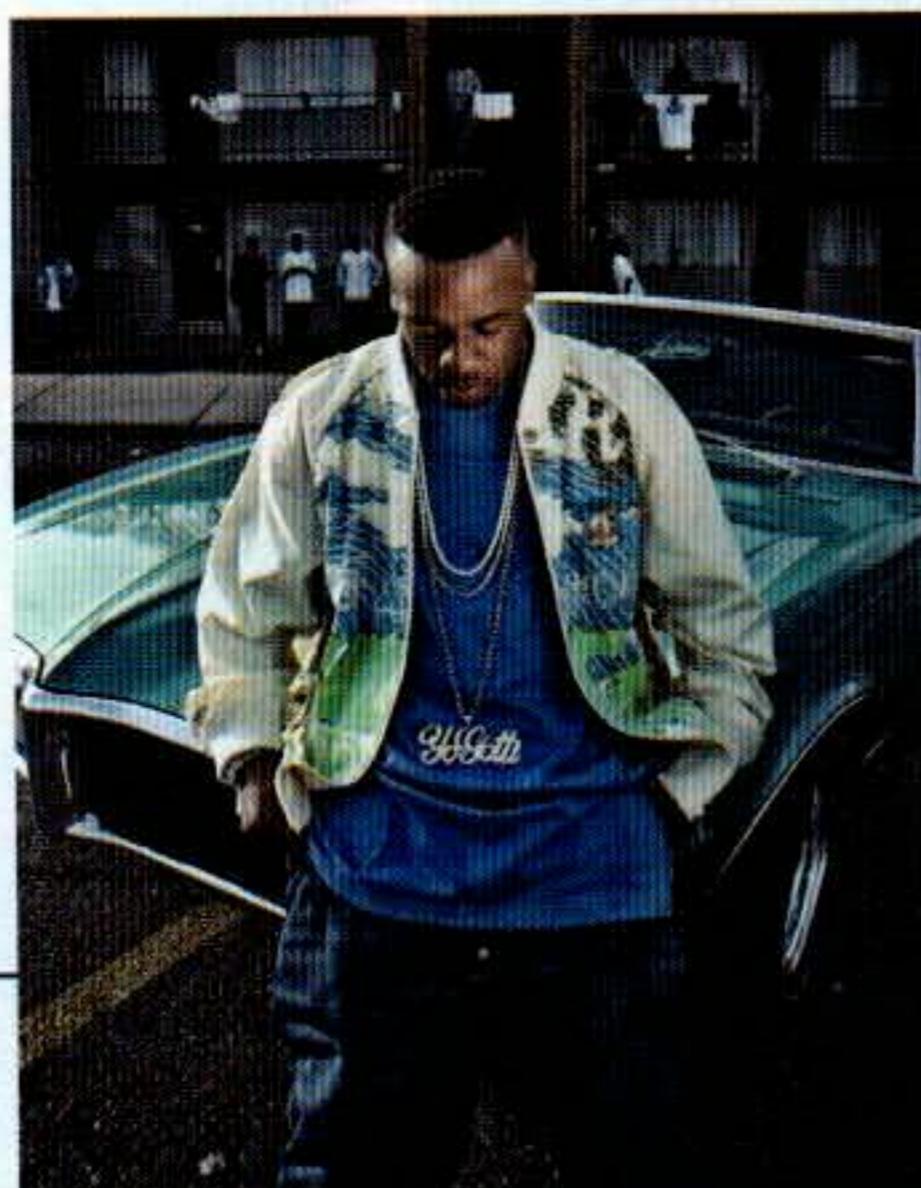


The term "Southern underground" appears to be a humorous euphemism for the subculture in the South defined by categorically mundane hip-hop. However, with the dramatic shift in popularity below the Mason-Dixon Line, the South is slowly differentiating itself stylistically from city to city. Memphis rapper Yo Gotti is the best example of that. Taking the old mid-90s Southern bounce to his rhymes, the TVT MC exemplifies his album title *Back 2 Da Basics*. Following along the vein of his local predecessors 8 Ball & MJG and 3-6 Mafia, Yo Gotti presents the Southern hip-hop we've forgotten since the advent of the "dance move" songs. This must be what is now considered "underground."

A little too long in length (over an hour, which is overkill), the album serves as ideal background music for any car ride. Yo Gotti's smoky vocals backed by bouncy beats are somewhat charming, but lack luster once reality sets in that no song is distinguishable. "I Got Them" features the always welcomed Lil' Wayne and Baby, but with lines like "they got us fucked up" shouted repeatedly, it serves as a dreadful opening track. "Gangsta Party" shines the brightest on the album with cameos by Bun B and 8 Ball, but loses momentum by the next track "That's What They Made it Foe," where Yo Gotti's name is cooed at least 15 times. The last time an artist abused their own moniker that severely was by Jay-Z, and well, Yo Gotti is no Jay-Z. The most disappointing moment on the album (all things considered) is with the Jazze Pha track "A Part of Thugs," where even Jazze loses his creative identity amidst the humdrum. Saved by cameos and mild

head-nods, *Back 2 Da Basics* salvages the now old-school rubber souled beats of the South. Whether anyone actually missed "bounce music" is an entirely different story.

- Kathy Iandoli



Snakes & Music

Isabelle

Universal Warning Records

www.universalwarningrecords.com



Snakes are everywhere nowadays. They're in the desert, they're on planes and they're in music. Honestly. Snakes and Music is a band who laces rock with a touch of bluegrass (what a combo, right?). Listening to their sophomore album *Isabelle* is like jumping into a time warp from Super Mario Bros. That isn't necessarily a bad thing however.

While many people are disappointed in today's music scene, Snakes and Music fits right into the alternative era of the early 90s, sounding reminiscent to groups like Stone Temple Pilots, Spin Doctors and R.E.M. In fact, the title track "Isabelle" sounds like "It's the End of the World (And I Feel Fine)." However, they don't completely rip off their style. The fast-paced "Sinking Ships" shows how raw Snakes can be and the easy-going "Please Explain" proves they can be sentimental. Those are their best offerings.

Unfortunately, their greatest strength is also their biggest weakness: their music is truly stuck in the past. They seem really dated and at times, pretty dull. "Burn the Bushes" is a plane crash and "Sleeping on the Couch" is so boring, it will encourage doing just that. Also, they have an abundance of one minute interludes they try passing off as full length songs such as the harmonica solo featured on "Take Me Down to the River" or the banjo-supported "Snake Bites."

Perhaps if Samuel L. Jackson had a guest spot on *Isabelle*, then the rating would've been higher. Maybe we should keep the snakes on the plane and out of the music.

- Bear Frazer



Gliss

Love The Virgins

Tough Cookie

www.gliss.tv



It's no surprise that part of Gliss' first full-length album, *Love The Virgins*, was written while on tour with Billy Corgan. There are plenty of sonic similarities to Corgan's instrumental film scores and more recent solo work present here, along with a strange vocal styling. And before anyone makes any assumptions about the album title, the band claims it's about "loving the innocent life"—though one shouldn't deny the obvious (especially with song titles like "I Want You" and "Off To Bed").

The fuzz guitar flux of Gliss' sound is actually well done on tracks like "Blue Sky" and the titular tune, but lead singer David Gleiss' vocals do take some getting used to. Apparently uncomfortable with singing in his own voice, the singer adopts a breathy, come-hither style home to most goth bands while the group's arrangements remain closer to indie rock.

It feels as though Gliss has condensed their sound to cultivate a specific formula, and each of the twelve songs on *Love The Virgins* follows that formula to a T. In nearly fifty minutes' worth of music, there are no deviations between songs at all—things don't slow down or pick up any differently from track to track—which makes for a mind-numbing listen. Many have praised Gliss as the best band out of Los Angeles in recent years, but if this is the best L.A. currently has to offer, it might be time to head back east and retune those eardrums.

- Len Sousa