

## Peter Gabriel's 'Up' Is Downer, But Indies Don't Disappoint

By ANDY GOLDENBERG  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

As fall arrives, the quantity of CD releases continues unabated. Beginning with his first album in about 30 (well, 10) years by Peter Gabriel, "Up" on Geffen Records is not as much a return to form as it is a continuation of form from his last album "Us."



Beck, "Sea Change"

The moody keyboard sounds abound, there is a lot of dark lyrical imagery. While the themes of the last album dealt with relationships, "Up" deals more with the finality and fragility of life. While I enjoyed "Up," it was a bit disappointed, considering it was a decade in the making.

Another Geffen artist, Beck, released his new album, "Sea Change," last week and it is also a melancholy, slow, almost country-tinged affair. While I enjoyed it, I found it hard to get through in some places. Yet, on repeated playing, it is really growing on me. His "Mutations" album, which I consider to be an underrated masterpiece both in content and sound quality, had the same effect.

While Beck is more widely known for his hip-hop beats ala "Odelay," "Mutations" and "Sea Change" really show off Beck's knack for melody and constructing pop hook.

Finally, Geffen also released the new album by Sonic Youth entitled "Murray Street," a seven-song collection of guitar anti-pop. It is an excellent offering by the New York City-based band, but I would have preferred more vocals by Kim Gordon.

Speaking of a pop hook, RCA Records released another gem by The Dave Matthews Band, "Busted Stuff." Almost every tune could be Top 40 radio fare but that is not an insult, as Matthews is definitely on a roll musically. I would love to see this band in intimate venue like the Beacon Theater but I don't see that

happening. Universal Music sent some good reissue material beginning with a two-disc Deluxe Edition of The Who's "My Generation" album complete with bonus material and the sound quality is extraordinary. Also from Universal come great compilations of "Kiss" and "T-Rex."

Some smaller labels have put out some great reissue and new material beginning with Cuneiform Records out of Maryland. Known for the devotion to Progressive Rock, Cuneiform has just released another in its excellent series of "Soft Machine" live material.

The latest, "Backwards," features songs from 1968-1970, recorded in the United States, France and England. "Soft Machine" played an interesting combination of jazz-rock, which was much different than the American fusion bands.

The quality of the material is excellent as is the other live offering from Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt's other band, "Matching Mole." "Smoke Signals" is real treat for Progressive Rock fans, as this band released only a few albums. The sound quality and performance is second to none.

Zoe/Rounder Records has just released a great new album for Grant-Lee Phillips, "Ladies Love Oracle (LLO)." While his last album tried too hard to meld hip-hop with pop songs, LLO is a superb set of simple piano and acoustic guitar numbers that all rock.

Finally, on the indie-label, Merge Records, come two totally diverse-sounding yet enjoyable albums from Spoon and Imperial Teen. Spoon's "Kill The Moonlight" is a strange post-modern batch of disturbing yet intriguing tunes.

Imperial Teen's "ON" is a full-on happy pop record.



Imperial Teen, "On"

## Ghouls, Gourds and Hayrides

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The frightening ride, which costs \$2, is the advanced version of a milder hayride that was held during the facility's Mum Fest in September.

Signs warning, "You'd Better Turn Back Now!" will add to the goose bumps, but Miller assures *The Leader/The Times* that none of the actors jump in the hay wagon or touch the participants.

Miller added that pumpkin painting and a straw fort with a hay slide have also been drawing children. Food is also offered at all of the Parker events.

"It's a ripping good time," he said. Future seasonal events detailed by Miller will be announced.

Union County's Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs has also planned haunted hayrides for October 25 and 26 at the Felville Deserted Village in the Watchung Reservation. Four dollars for county residents or \$8 for out-of-county

residents is a small price to pay for the hayride and campfire festivities on tap at Mountainside's Trailside Nature & Science Center. The next opportunity for these activities will be tomorrow, Friday, October 11, at 6:30 p.m.

Wherever the road takes Halloween revelers this season, prime chances for pumpkin picking are abound.

Alstede Farms, Route 513 in Chester, plans to hold its 10-acre Fall Fun Corn Maze, with all of its twists and turns, until Saturday, November 2, for an \$8 admission fee. It's only \$6 for the Evening Corn Maze on October 18 and 19, 6 to 10 p.m., but you should bring flashlights.

Weekday hay wagon rides and pick-your-own pumpkin activities cost \$7 per child, \$5 per adult, but are free during the weekend. For more information, please call Kurt and Barbara Alstede at (908) 879-7189.

## WSO's Blockbuster Concert

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ter in Rahway. David Wroe and the WSO were in their finest form with their performance of this Russian masterpiece.

Perfectly crafted, and beautifully balanced, the symphony, immense in scope, was written in 1907 and is widely recognized as being the epitome of Russian symphonic romanticism. A constant stream of unbridled melodies sweep past the listener with every passing bar, underscored by deep, rich orchestration.

"There is something in the Russian soul that corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land. The long introductory Largo surely evokes some vast, overcast Russian steppe. The climax of the development section resembles tremendous winter storm, while the great Adagio conjures a glowing vista of an endless, sunlit landscape," wrote Nicholas Berdayev.

The WSO is in fact, not hard to read. It tells of the archetypal Romantic journey from darkness to light, despair to triumph, as found in the symphonies of Rachmaninov's youthful idol Tchaikovsky. Conductor and orchestra summoned all of their powers to produce one of the finest products that the astounded and grateful

audience had seldom heard from any ensemble.

Firstly, the reading was seamless. The constant flow of music was uninterrupted and cohesive. Secondly, whole sections: the strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion, worked in perfect ensemble.

Thirdly, tempi and musical phrases were perfect — not rushed but not dragged. For example, treacherous waters in the opening writing at the end of the third movement contain many a snare for the conductor.

Maestro Wroe had obvious and complete control of this section and guided the orchestra through this — without a score.

Individual solos were impeccable. Principal clarinet, William Shadel, one of the great heroes of the evening offered a beautiful solo in the aforementioned and famed adagio which moved audience members to tears. The movement ended in profound tranquility.

The final movement bursts in with exuberant self-confidence. A pounding opening rhythm introduces a swaggering, march-like principal theme. The climax of the fourth movement was the crowning highlight of the evening and perhaps of the Romantic era. The overwhelming feeling was one of a triumphant and joyous homecoming. Magnificent.

## Dwight Hiscano

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painters of the Hudson River School. Hiscano is on the Board of Trustees for the New Jersey chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), an organization which has adopted a nonpolitical approach to conservation.

"TNC has been enormously successful at preserving land both her in New Jersey and elsewhere," he said.

"I think we Americans have a deep connection to the earth. The American landscape served as the backdrop for most of the events of our rich history. Here, in heavily urbanized Northern New Jersey, we are in danger of losing that connection. This is not a political issue, this is a patriotic issue."

Hiscano uses Pentax cameras for his photographs. His work can be found in the corporate collections of Merck & Co., Inc., Johnson and Johnson, AT&T and others. His photographs are also held in the private collections of former New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, and former Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco.

Hiscano's photographs will remain on display at Wisner House until Saturday, November 2. Admission is free to the public during office hours, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Pen & Ink

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and make trouble," encouraged Sarandon, who coincidentally has a movie coming out this month.

As inappropriate as the entertainment industry's desperate scramble to stage a 9/11 fundraiser (which I'm still convinced was done to keep the peace between their pocketbooks and their adoring fans), it is equally improper for celebrities to get involved in or attempt to influence political opinions.

Barbra must simply keep her famous nose out of where it doesn't belong.

**FOR THE RECORD:**  
Photos that accompanied the "Take the Stage" review of the UCIP's production should have been credited to Theater Reviewer Susan Dougherty, not Mark Spina.



## POPCORN™

### Sweet Home Alabama: Rebel Without A Clue

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER

#### 2 POPCORNS

It's not necessarily an indication of a good movie, just proof positive of how little I know when it comes to affairs of the heart.

Even in the 11th hour of director Andy Tennant's *Sweet Home Alabama*, a jaunty but inconsistent farce about a poor Southern lass (Reese Witherspoon) who makes it big in the rag trade, I couldn't deduce which of two suitors she would choose.

Nope...I couldn't guess if Melanie was going to pick wealthy and well-coifed Andrew (Patrick Dempsey), one of New York's most eligible bachelors, or whether she would reunite with Jake (Josh Lucas), the rakishly handsome country boy she left back in the bayou.

However, when I later relayed that specific quality about the film to an inquiring damsel, the immediate response was, "Ooh, O.K....don't tell me."

The thing is, I have heard that ooh before. It is an international expression of appraisal. By the lilt of the ooh, the trained ear can determine just how many karats of value are being attributed to the item in question.

Hence, this critic's decision to give *Sweet Home Alabama* an overall rating of 2 (out of 4) may not tell the whole story. Because to those who would luxuriate in the perplexity of Melanie's romantic quandary, the film's curiosity — piquing "ooh" value may make it worth a lot closer to a 3.

However, that's it in the suspense and surprise department. Otherwise, screenwriter C. Jay Cox's adaptation of Douglas Eboch's story is pretty standard stuff, and not orchestrated that well to boot. First of all, director Tennant is uncertain where to seat us.

At the outset, he has us viewing the tale from the point of the pretty protagonist. Pushed into one beauty pageant after the next by a mother (Mary Kay Place) hell-bent on carving out a better life for her daughter, Melanie has developed quite a superior attitude since wowing the Big Apple with her fashions.

And there is a case made for the highfalutin gal's snobbery and self-indulgence, as if these were the well-deserved spoils of her triumph over poverty. We even have a few laughs at the expense of those country folk Melanie has disavowed.

But then the filmmaker plays a dirty trick on us and changes the angle. His story doesn't really have any twists or turns to give it momentum. The aforementioned dilemma can energize the saga only so much. So when it serves his plot-moving purposes, Tennant has no compunction about fiddling with sociology and flip-flopping his opinions.

Suddenly, the denizens of Greenville, Ala., are not the backwater bumpkins he was making fun of, but the salt of the Earth, and Melanie is the intolerant sophisticate. We're confused. She was just the trailer park Cinderella. Now it looks like the insensitive snoot is in need of a lesson. A more competent



QUALITY HANDICRAFTS...Diane Smith, left, of The Center For Hope Hospice and Palliative Care in Linden, and Carole Schmitt of the Golden Goose Boutique show some of the new items which will appear at the upcoming show. The hospice will receive all admission fees from the benefit.

## Golden Goose Craft Boutique To Aid Center For Hope Hospice

WESTFIELD — The annual Golden Goose Craft & Gift Boutique will host a benefit raffle for The Center For Hope Hospice and Palliative Care in Linden, beginning on Wednesday, October 16, from noon to 9 p.m.

The event, which is also scheduled for Thursday, October 17, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday, October 18, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, October 19, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., will be presented at the Westfield Tennis Club, 139 North Chestnut Street in Westfield.

A \$1 donation will be collected at

the door to benefit The Center For Hope Hospice and Palliative Care. Customers will also have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets on baskets of crafts. These monies will also benefit the hospice.

Hand-painted Christmas ornaments, grinning jack-o'-lanterns, country bears, reindeer and trees will be vended, as well as tote items, affordable antique and "shabby chic" furniture.

No strollers are permitted on Wednesday, due to large numbers of shoppers. Ample parking is available.

## WYACT and WF Symphony To Reunite for New Year's Eve

WESTFIELD — Last New Year's Eve, the Westfield Young Artists' Cooperative Theatre, Inc. (WYACT) and the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) united to present "Richard Rodgers - A Cen-

"God Bless America." Reminiscent of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers, Judy Garland, Ethel Merman, Bing Crosby, and Rosemary Clooney, audiences will be treated to musical classics from such movies as



Cynthia Meryl



David Wroe

"Puttin' On The Hat," "Easter Parade," "Holiday Inn," "White Christmas," and shows such as "Annie Get Your Gun" and "Call Me Madam." "Puttin' On The Ritz" will take place on

Tuesday, December 31, at 7:30 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield, 140 Mountain Avenue. Tickets, which cost \$25 for adults and \$12 for students, are available as of October 15 at the WSO at 224 East Broad Street, The Town Book Store at 255 East Broad Street, Lancaster's, Ltd. at 76 Elm Street, and *The Westfield Leader* at 50 Elm Street.

Proceeds will benefit WYACT's free summer program and WSO's educational programs. For further information, please call WYACT at (908) 233-3200 or the WSO at (908) 232-9400.



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## What is UNICO ?

The largest Italian-American service organization in the world

## What does this organization do?

Develops and runs events which raise money for charities and scholarships

## Is it a new group?

Nationally, we are 80 years old, locally, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter is 29 years old

## Does it have any other purpose?

We promote Italian culture and heritage through events & programs

## Is UNICO successful?

We have 130 chapters nationwide, 6000 men & women members, have given millions to charities and scholarships nationwide, have been instrumental in promoting a quality national image for Italians and attended the Columbus Day ceremony at the White House last year

## Why should I join?

To become part of a team interested in doing something to improve the lives of someone less fortunate, provide an opportunity for a worthwhile student and promote our proud heritage

## Any limitations on membership?

An American citizen and you, or your spouse must be of Italian heritage

## How do I learn more?

Attend our "membership night", Wednesday, October 16th, 7 PM, Giovanni Restaurant (South Ave., just past Terrill Rd.). If you can't make this night, call us at (908) 889-2200 ext. 1 and leave a message.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO - WWW.SPUNICO.ORG

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