

## Midler, DeVito provide light comedy in 'Drowning Mona'



Peter Sorel / SMPSP

The less-than-likeable personality of Mona Dearly (Bette Midler) clashes with Bobby Calzone (Casey Affleck) as Chief Rash (Danny DeVito) looks in *Drowning Mona*.

**By Will Raiman**

*I Love Yugos*

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MPAA Rating: PG-13 Starring: Danny DeVito, Bette

Midler, Neve Campbell,

Jamie Lee Curtis Director: Nick Gomez Studio: Destination Films Star

Rating: yyy

In 1985, in the small town of Verplanck, New York, only three interesting things happened. First, Yugo selected the town to test market its new cars. Second, local kids Bobby Calzone and Ellen Rash decided to get married. And third, Mona Dearly, the most evil embodiment of white trash ever to live, died in a car accident.

Chief Wyatt Rash (Danny DeVito), head of the four-person Police Department, is now duty bound to investigate her death. And what he discovers is that her car was rigged to crash-extensively. Somebody wanted her dead very badly. The only question is who?

This movie is a fun combination of mystery and comedy. On the surface, we see Chief Rash investigating the murder of Mona (Bette Midler). The real comedy comes from the large number of available suspects, and their memories of Mona. It seems that everyone in the town had a good reason to kill Mona, except, perhaps, for Chief Rash himself.

As the Chief questions the local populace, we see their stories related in humorous flashbacks. The thing is, many of these "flashbacks" are no more accurate than the contrived stories that the people tell the Chief. The general theme, however, is that everyone had good reason to hate Mona.

The Dearly family, for instance, is a picture of dysfunction. Mona's son Jeff is as dumb as box of rocks, possesses no people skills, and is missing one hand.

Throughout the movie, we are left to wonder what, exactly, removed the hand (though some of the locals are happy to speculate, via continued hilarious "flashbacks"). Mona's husband Phil is a beaten man (literally), and while he is not faithful to her, he is very subservient in her presence.

Phil's mistress is the thirty-ish waitress at the local greasy spoon, Rona. Jamie Lee Curtis is so convincing as the trashy, downtrodden, leather-clad waitress that it may hurt her career. Rona, of course, would like Mona out of the way so she can have Phil for herself.

Next is Bobby Calzone, played by Ben Affleck's little brother Casey Affleck. Bobby is a hard-working kid, trying to get his landscaping company off the ground. Unfortunately, he made the mistake of partnering with Mona's son Jeff, who alternates between napping and scaring off clients, and still sucks up half the profits.

Mona won't let Bobby kick Jeff out of the company, and Bobby is afraid that he won't be able to provide for his wife to be, Ellen. So Bobby and Ellen would both stand to gain financially from Mona's passing.

Even though no one misses Mona, Chief Rash is a good man, and wants to figure out who killed her. Along the way we discover that everyone in the town has a few disturbing/revolting/hilarious secrets. This movie keeps you off balance as one delightful plot twist after another is revealed. Also look for a few fun, quick appearances by Saturday Night Live cast member Will Ferrell.

Still, there are weaknesses to the film as well. While it is quite funny, it never quite makes it to hilarious. There is no great acting, and the story won't inspire you to ponder the great mysteries of life. The convoluted plot is great, and will keep you guessing to the end, but there are some very slow moments scattered throughout that break the pace.

Overall, this is a light hearted and funny film. It's very enjoyable to watch, and will leave you with a smile. However, there are no massive special effects, so you might wish to put off seeing this one until it comes out on video.

# Memory Dean makes life just a little less complicated



Joe White / FIRST THREE PHOTOGRAPHY

A couple of familiar faces are gone, but Jay Memory (left) and Bubba Dean are pushing forward with new touring and recording projects. They play Eddie's Attic on March 10.

**By Alan Back**

*Black Death Iced Tea, anyone?*

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A lot can happen in 10 years. If you need proof, chase down either half of the newly revamped Memory Dean and start picking their brains about events past and present. The local music veterans have more than a few stories to tell about life on the road, on the stage, and in (and out of) the big leagues of the music industry.

And they might even knock back a few drinks with you to boot.

Singer/guitarists Jay Memory and Bubba Dean have put out five albums since they first met up at the University of Georgia a decade ago. They moved back down to Atlanta in 1994, after both had finished school ("I was on, like, the six-year college plan," joked Memory), to get serious about their work—which they did, and then some.

Memory Dean's 1997 disc *Shake It Up* was released on Capricorn Records, which had signed the band the year before. The ensuing tour found them on the road for nearly six months, playing gigs with Sister Hazel, Cowboy Mouth, and *Drivin' n' Cryin'*, as well as warming up crowds for label mates Widespread Panic. In the meantime, the single "So Complicated" was making a fair-sized dent in commercial radio airwaves all over the country.

The partnership with Capricorn was short-lived. When the label was bought by the Universal Music Group (Geffen, A&M, Interscope, etc.) in late 1998, they were one of many groups cut loose. Memory and company were far from crushed when they got the news, though.

"To be honest, we were heartbroken for about a week," he said. "Then we started looking at the big picture and what it meant...From our point of view, it's really comforting to know that you're working for yourself." The band did just that with 1999's independent release *Still Hungry Souls*, which finds them tossing out bits of rock, funk, blues, gospel, and even a little rap to make life interesting.

Drummer Larry Voss and bassist Bryan Gillett parted ways with Memory and Dean at the end of last year, a decision Memory described as a mutual understanding that all four would explore new musical avenues, rather than a summary dismissal. Voss and Mark Ross, the band's first bassist, signed on during the mid-'90s; when Ross left in 1998, Gillett was brought in to replace him.

The split generated concern among fans, which Memory and his partner are eager to dispel. "What Memory Dean is, is Jay Memory and Bubba Dean. Obviously, we've made some great music with a number of people, the main ones being Mark Ross, Larry Voss, and Bryan Gillett. We're very proud of the music we've made while they were part of the band, and we're all great friends." The two core members plan to keep working alone for the time being, an arrangement that allows greater flexibility in deciding where to play and dealing with fans.

"Now that we're back to playing as a duo, we can truly be ourselves, and the audience is a lot more apt to come up, say hey, and hang with us. That's the main difference; it's a lot more interactive," noted Memory. Playing at venues such as Eddie's Attic will give them a chance to get up close and personal with listeners-although owner Eddie Owen may not quite know what's in store for him when they roll in.

"We're in a unique position where we're not your typical singer/songwriter, acoustic guys that Eddie mainly has. We're a cross between inner-city rock, jumping around, and singer/songwriters. So I would think that we'd be probably one of the rowdier acts to come through." The full band certainly lived up to that description, as anyone who caught them at Smith's Olde Bar (one of their favorite local rooms) can readily testify.

Memory commented, "The personality of me and Bubba on stage is sort of positive, intimate, 'let's have a beer and enjoy life together for the next three hours.' Unfortunately, when we were a full band, lots of people were giving us advice that we needed to wear certain clothes and act like rock stars, which is everything we're not, personality-wise."

He continued, "I'm not saying we're not rock stars; I'm saying that if we ever started acting like them, I would hope that my wife or my friends would just beat my ass."

The list of those friends includes a few who put in guest appearances on *Still Hungry Souls*-former Arrested Development frontman Speech, Ken Block from Sister Hazel, and ex-Soul Miner's Daughter singer Jennifer Nettles. Choosing whom to bring in was about as easy as it could be, according to Memory, and motivated by something other than star power.

"I don't agree with someone paying \$100,000 to have Willie Nelson on their album," he stated. "These are all friends of ours, and they did it out of that friendship. They were the only people that we asked, and they all said yes." Nettles' vocals lend a powerful gospel tone to "Fix My Heart," a standout cut on the album. Memory and Dean try to pick up something useful from

everybody they work and play with, including performance tips from Cowboy Mouth, business advice courtesy of Sister Hazel, and plenty of ideas about what not to do thanks to more bands than either performer can count. (In past years, Memory Dean has played the 99X Big Day Out, Music Midtown, South by Southwest, and the Atlantis Music Conference, sharing stage time with bands of all calibers and styles.)

Material for a new album is in the works, Memory asserted, and the finished product should hit the streets by the end of the summer. In the meantime, he and Dean plan to start doing informal shows at campuses in and around Atlanta to fine-tune the new stuff. On the side, he enjoys working with local talent in his home studio whenever he has time.

What about another deal? "You need a record label if you want to be Ricky Martin," he reflected, emphasizing the tendency of big-name imprints to throw their weight behind acts that are already widely popular. "If we sign another deal, we'll probably want to sign with an independent label...We'd like to get another album out and then shop that new record because it's more representative of what we're doing now." Audiences should expect something a little more funky, danceable, and uplifting than Still Hungry Souls, he explained.

In other words, both longtime fans and newcomers may be in for a surprise—possibly one of the best measures of a band's success. Anybody want to lay odds on this? Memory Dean will be performing at Eddie's Attic on March 10. Call (404) 377-4976 for details. Musicians interested in working with Jay Memory or recording in his studio can e-mail him at [jay@memorydean.com](mailto:jay@memorydean.com).

# Madonna pulls double duty for 'The Next Best Thing'



Ron Batzdorff / PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Madonna (shown in *The Next Best Thing* with Rupert Everett) also produced the soundtrack album featuring her controversial remake of Don McLean's

**By Michael Epstein**

*He didn't give me a tagline?!?*

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Artist: Various Album: *The Next Best Thing* Studio: Maverick Records  
Genre: Soundtrack Tracks: 12 Running Time: 49:23 Rating: yyyy

There are many certainties in this world, and one of them is that if Madonna is in a movie, chances are she's also involved with the soundtrack in one way or another. For her latest film, *The Next Best Thing*, (also starring Rupert Everett), she is the producer of the soundtrack and her influences definitely show.

Madonna's most recent album, *Ray of Light*, showcased her first foray in a truly electronic experience, and with the help of techno artist William Orbit she pulled off a very good album. With *The Next Best Thing* soundtrack, she continues her adventures in electronica land. She teams with Orbit on one of her tracks, and the rest are all techno or electronic whether the artist signing is a techno/electronic artist or not.

Essentially, when all of this is put together, you get one fairly solid album. As usual, Madonna's songs just always seem to be very good, or if you'd like to put it another way, catchy. Whether or not you like Don McLean's "American Pie" may have some bearing on how much you like Madonna's version.

At times, it's quite odd to hear Madonna's voice paired with some of the song's lyrics, and though the song is fairly good, it may upset some McLean fans who think that this version "defiles" the original. On the other hand, the other song, "Time Stood Still", is a wonderful track. It's a slow and somewhat sad melody that seems an indication of maturity in Madonna's music.

"American Pie" is not the only remake to be heard on The Next Best Thing soundtrack. Olive does a marvelous remake of the 10cc song, "I'm Not In Love." The combination of the electronic music as well as lead singer, Ruth-Ann Boyle's, ear-caressing voice make the song an absolute must have.

Several other tracks of note on the disc are Beth Orton with her unique sound on "Stars All Seem to Weep", and the Solar Twins with "Swayambhu" which sounds like a religious chat of sorts. If you get your hands on the soundtrack, also be sure to check out Mandalay's "This Life", with its pseudo-jazzy sound. Of course, you can't count out Moby who always puts out a stellar effort.

Not all the tracks on The Next Best Thing are great or even somewhat good. "If Everybody Looked the Same" by Groove Armada sounds like a goofy "message" song from Sesame Street. Also, the tracks by Metisse and Manu Chao are actually quite annoying.

Overall, the best way to describe The Next Best Thing soundtrack is that it starts off slow and gets much better as you go along. There is enough good on this album to counteract the bad, and just two or three of the songs on the album make it at least worth listening to if you do not go out and purchase it. I definitely would recommend this album as a purchase.

# A taste of Afro-Peruvian culture

By Kiana Tennyson

*Her hallmates like the CD too!*

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Artist: Susana Baca Album: Eco de Sombras Genre: Latin Label: EMD/  
Narada Tracks: 10 Rating: yyyyy

Susana Baca is an artist that hails from Chorrillos, a black coastal suburb in Peru. Like most musicians, Baca grew up in a music oriented household, and the music her family played and listened to would play a big role in the music she creates today. Her father played the guitar, and her mother was a dancer, so you could imagine the jam sessions at the Baca house on a Saturday night.

It is rare to find an artist who's CD you can pop into a player and love every song instantly. It's not surprising, coming from Baca, though. She's had plenty of help with practice and training throughout her life-including being the personal assistant of Chabuca Grande, a prominent Latin American composer, singer, and songwriter. Baca also attended schools such as Peru's Institute of Modern Art, and the National Institute of Peruvian culture. She had even formed an experimental band that concentrated on poetry with music in high school.

Susana Baca has now dedicated her life to the preservation of the history and culture of the blacks of Peru. Many of her songs on this album, called Eco de Sombras (means Echo of Shadows), are traditional poetry and songs of black Peruvians. She transforms the work of poets like Carlos Oquendo de Amat, Arturo Corcuera Alfonso Camin, and Javier Lazo with remarkable skill, adding feeling and stress in the right places. At some point the listener feels as though Baca may have placed these words so close to her heart that they are her own. Her interpretation of these poems are absolutely impressive. When first listening to the album, one gets a feel of the apparent Latin flavor, but upon successive spins of this CD, the rhythm and blues, the jazz, and the soul manifests itself throughout the beats and measures.

The entanglement of genres that make up the Afro-Peruvian musical culture on Baca's album compels the listener to reflect on the colonization of the Americas, with works like "Xanahari", which obviously holds its roots in the savannahs of Africa.

"Valentin", "El Mayoral", and "Golpe E' Tierra" are some personal favorites, though these songs possess a Latin feel more than anything else. Each song is more captivating in its own right than the last. "Valentin" is a playful piece, with lots of percussion, and a tempo that is motivating enough to get up and dance, and a chorus that is simple enough to have you chanting for the rest of the day.

"El Mayoral" is has an almost impish guitar chord, but it hides within its light sounds a deeper message, and thus it is exquisitely constructed. "Golpe E' Tierra" translates to "Stomping the Ground". This piece is a chant by Juan Leiva, which could probably be regarded in the same light as an African-

American spiritual. During one pause in the song they succeed in transforming the instruments in to a mnemonic jungle.

Baca has definitely discovered an uncharted niche in the music industry with Eco de Sombras. This album is suggested to any person who loves salsa music, rhythm and blues, or jazz. Kiana says Susana Baca is awesome. She says lots of people came into her room and they thought it was awesome too. Want to get CDs that are awesome and that your friends think are awesome? Join Entertainment Staff!

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# A CD you'll love to hate

By **Matt Gray**

*Assistant News Editor*

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Artist: Hate Dies Hard Album: Further Label: Mirror Mortal Records Genre: Rock Tracks: 10 Rating: yyy

When a group has a name like Hate Dies Hard, one would expect their music to be pure heavy metal, loaded with lots of clanging and power chords.

Although the group's album Further is a strong full-length debut, they never quite reach the level they are aiming for, instead falling into the ranks of hard rock.

Sean Barringer and Steve Blankenship began guitar lessons with the same teacher in 7th grade, and while Sean quit after one month, Steve hasn't set the guitar down since. Twelve years later they met again to form Hate Dies Hard in 1994, with a shared vision of how guitar-driven rock should sound. They spent the next three years in northeast Ohio refining their tunes, and after releasing their 4-track self-produced CD, Denial, on Halloween in 1996, the duo enlisted bassist Steven Bailey and drummer Todd Thompson to begin work on a full-length album.

The easiest way to describe Hate Dies Hard is to envision Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins singing to guitars reminiscent of Megadeth and Iron Maiden, minus the flashy solos. Blankenship's dark, brooding guitar combined with the whiney voice of vocalist Barringer works well for them, making for a moody blend of rock.

A band press release tries to compare Further to Metallica's Kill 'Em All. Unfortunately, their debut doesn't match up; there isn't one fast song on the entire album. But despite the negatives, there are a number of rock n' roll gems thrown in.

Most notable is "Wretched," a pulsating song that is surprisingly good for a debut album and serves to get the adrenaline flowing. Don't be surprised if it starts to get airplay at some point in the future.

The depressed "Bleed" is the type of song that will never make it big on the radio, but will become a favorite for years among their fans. While of the same nature as "Nothing Else Matters," it is much heavier than it's predecessor. "Wanderlust" and "Them" also have the potential to become radio or cult favorites.

Further will effectively take you on a musical swing set—from the high adrenaline pumping and more methodical rock to more emotionally slower rhythms. Although a strong album, it probably won't find much success. As a debut, it shows a great deal of potential for the band. In the future, look for good things to come from their way. For more information, or to order an album, visit Hate Dies Hard's website at <http://www.hatedieshard.com>.

# Discount steers clear with 'Crash'

By Brent Baldwin

*Entertainment roped another one!*

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Artist: Discount Album: Crash Diagnostic Label: New American Dream  
Genre: Rock Tracks: 13 Rating: yyy

Discount formed in Vero Beach, Florida in early 1995-a time when many of its members were still in junior high. They caught on as an instant success and began to play shows all over the state. Led by the energetic voice of Allison Mosshurt and accompanied by Bill Nesper on drums, Ryan Seagrism on guitar, and Todd Rockhill on bass, Discount has risen from their first self-released cassette to their latest CD, Crash Diagnostic. After their first cassette landed in the hands of Tim Lyman, Discount continues to climb the charts.

While not in Gainesville, FL recording new tracks, Discount spends its time giving their fans exactly what they want-an amazing, energy-filled show. They have toured with the likes of Bis, Hot Water Music, Avail, The Get Up Kids, Snapcase, and more, and can be seen in Atlanta on March 10th at Tech's very own Under the Couch.

Crash Diagnostic follows huge success with Ataxia's Alright Tonight, which reached #4 on the Rolling Stone Alternative Albums chart. All of the songs clock in at less than three minutes, which lends perfectly to memorization. According to Seventeen, the album can be classified as lo-fi progressive-rock with bouncy, female-friendly songs and sounds like any early '90's indie girls-group weaned on their brothers' Rush albums.

Songs to check out include "Broken to Blue" and "Hit." After relaxing to these great tracks, I guarantee you'll be humming these two tunes all day long. For more info on Discount and a complete tour schedule visit <http://kickbright.com/discount> or <http://www.discounttheband.com>. Happy listening.

# Unknown

By **Jon Kaye**

*Entertainment Staff*

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Artist: Hipbone Album: The Brothers' Love and Movie Genre: Jazz-influenced Pop Tracks: 10 Length: 35:13 Rating: yyyyy

If you can imagine the fusion of Ben Folds Five, Santana, Chicago, and The Manhattan Transfer, then you have a pretty close idea of how Hipbone sounds. This four-piece out of Chapel Hill blends lively saxophone, confident guitar playing, and the jazzy twang of lead singer Brion Snyder to form an innovative sound that you'll want to play over and over again.

The band's first full length release, *The Brothers' Love and Movie* offers a musical experience that doesn't fall short of amazing. The ten tracks on this album explore sounds ranging from jazzy soul to Latin pop. Each song possesses a strong identity that powerfully differentiates it from the others; this is a wonderful change from a usual album with twelve virtually indistinguishable cuts.

Hipbone will grab you as soon as you press play. The infectious groove of their opening track, "Move," snares the listener, and calls for deeper listening. Using progressive guitar and inspired percussion, Hipbone creates a loose feeling that simultaneously calms the soul and makes your feet start tapping. This band definitely understands how to use the beat to their advantage.

The first three songs flow with the same fervor as "Move." Each track has Hipbone's unique brand of progressive jazz and modern pop. Then, an abrupt change happens on the fourth track-Hipbone slows their tempo as they perform the album's requisite ballad. Ballads seem gratuitous on so many fast-paced albums, yet Hipbone beautifully integrates "Rooftops" into this otherwise upbeat album.

Hipbone leaps back to their previous vigor with "Radius," only this time, they introduce Latin flavor into their already complex music. Marked by very fast guitar and characteristically South American percussion, "Radius" is one of the most incredible songs recorded in years.

The last half of the album remains as impressive as the first. Zigzagging between energetic jazz and peppy Latin beats, Hipbone maintains their amazing sound throughout. This album proves Hipbone as an incredible act. Out of ten tracks, not a single one failed to please. *The Brother's Love and Movie* is a phenomenal release that belongs in any music lover's CD collection.