



Savath & Savalas
Apropa't
Warp

With *Apropa't*, celebrated producer Prefuse 73 continues merging new forms with diverse musical genres on his third side project with Savath & Savalas. Written in the Catalan, Spain, of his bloodline with singer/songwriter Eva Puyelo Muns, the album predominantly features Spanish vocals.

Prefuse has become one of the darlings of the remix, a master at blending dissonant sounds into dense, coherent compositions. But too much of this sound-bombing wears thin, with too few standout organic musical moments to augment the rampant collaging — especially where Spanish music is supposedly the focus. *Apropa't* has few solos to speak of in its mélange of rambling melodies with no obvious destination. The vocals, courtesy of Prefuse and Muns, don't particularly inspire, either.

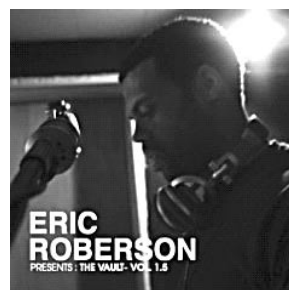
The most exciting moments on *Apropa't* reference Prefuse's unique ear for hip-hop, blending choppy constructed sampling with organic folk guitar and thick beats. In this context, the melancholic vocals — rendered in a disinterested, raw style — work. But by the fifth or sixth song, chances are you'll lose interest due to the lack of musical virtuosity and the humdrum delivery.

In the end, there's little of interest besides the mood — sensuality meets melancholy. You might want it for ambience, but little else. **C MINUS** — Daniel Gray-Kontar

Eric Roberson
Presents: The Vault — Vol. 1.5
Steel Petal

Lately, there's been somewhat of a disturbing trend in soul music where too many of the vocalists can't really sing too well — and that's putting it mildly. American pop culture being what it is, much of it is selling, nonetheless. And you can't really hate; you can only accept it for what it is.

That said, there are a few soul vocalists that can at least replace their relative lack of vocal dexterity with an above-average vocal style. Dwele is one example. Erykah



Badu is another. And you can add Eric Roberson to this list.

Roberson's voice isn't the most powerful, nor does he wow you with range. Instead, his lyricism is honest, mature and poetic, and this does wonders for this street poet turned singer and producer, who obviously means every single word he sings. The end result is Roberson's soulful sophomore full-length *The Vault 1.5*, an impressive collage of Roberson's life experiences, easily relatable to the existential angst of young men everywhere.

No doubt, Roberson's a lover, and for the most part, he walks the listener through a range of emotional travails as he struggles to guide himself through them. *The Vault 1.5* opens with the fantastic "Couldn't Hear Me," a highly personalized love song that comes across as more of an open letter, welcoming the listener into his world. Sings Roberson: "I may have a gift for these words, but I'm no more than a man."

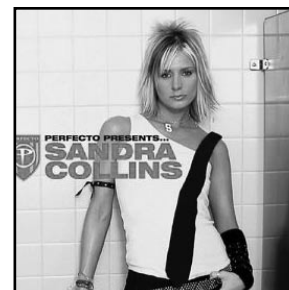
Straight up, Roberson's real enough to know he's no superman, and mature enough to tell potential mates not to expect one.

Then there's the standout track number two, "Right Back to You," featuring an innovative Isaac Hayes sample from *Hot Buttered Soul* (courtesy of the Touch of Jazz production crew). But Roberson's also savvy enough to show his perspective doesn't always remain introspective. The raw but funky "Lil Money" places Roberson in the role of storyteller again, and this time, the tale is about a young brother he calls by that name, whose aim is to get just that by any means.

The Vault Vol. 1.5 has many standout moments, in large part because of Roberson's talents as a capable singer and an extraordinary songwriter. This is a recording well worth your time and money. Don't sleep. **A** — Daniel Gray-Kontar

Bloom
Clouds Forming Crowns
Viva Recording Co.

The 13-song debut of Bloom — a new project from Gem and Guided by Voices alumnus Tim Tobias, and the third release for the local Viva Recording Co. — rings like a bleary-eyed mid-afternoon ramble. Unlike his former GBV cohorts, *Clouds* does not kick and shout through its tunes, but lopes along in



a laid-back stoner daze. Sharing some of the haphazard nature and bizarre song structures of the aforementioned supergroup, it sounds at times like a Stones rehearsal with Keith Richards singing, or some lost Alex Chilton demos. Tim and his brother Todd mostly keep it relaxed on tunes like "Sick & Free" and "Crept," but occasionally hit a bit harder, such as on "Cruel is the Time."

The straining vocals may throw some folks off, but they're appropriate for the disappointed, knocked-down nature of the lyrics ("You should've prayed a little harder that your bad dreams wouldn't come true, but instead you slept and it just crept away"). The guitar interplay can be quite pretty at times, especially during some of the set's slower numbers, but its wistful tone only cushions the blow. Like an old drinking buddy, it can't help you shake your depression, but it can empathize. **B** — *Stephe DK*

Sandra Collins
Perfecto Presents: Sandra Collins
Thrive

You might be tempted to buy *Perfecto Presents: Sandra Collins* because she was named the 2003 DanceStar DJ of the Year. Or you're tempted because Sandra is one of the few females to penetrate the boys' club of the DJ elite. Whatever your interest, you should check it for one reason and one reason only: it's a collection of good dance music.

Collins is not a classic trance set of dramatic peaks and valleys, as one might associate with the "Perfecto Presents" name. It crosses a fuller spectrum of depth and breadth, opening up the listener to subtlety. Tracks credited to the likes of Martin Accorsi, Layo & Bushwacka, Gabriel & Dresden, Infusion, Humate, Slacker, and Junkie XL let you know you're in deeper, darker territory. The careful studio editing and production effects enhance the good track selection of this compilation.

First and foremost, Collins is a student of the dancefloor vibe and of the music. She'll gladly sit for hours with her eyes closed, head bobbing, and getting up to dance when the bassline and the moment compel her. With this record, it's hard not to do the same. **B PLUS** — *Amy Dana*

Labelheads

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format, but I'm not buying the whole thing that 'I'm pirating your music because you don't have it in digital format,' she says. "You know what? Buy it on vinyl, pay your royalty and make a [digital] copy for yourself if that's how you want to transport it or play it."

"Sometimes I think our [raver] culture is too modeled after 'Hippieville' — 'Everything should be free,'" she iterates. "They don't want to pay five bucks to get into a party. They don't realize that it costs money to throw a party. That it costs money to feed a DJ and put him/her up in a hotel. And meanwhile, we're barely breaking even and they think we're raking in crazy dough or something."

"A lot of people don't understand that you have to have some business in all this," states Christopher. "It's not just about having fun and playing records."

"If people are upset about having to spend money, it's because they don't see value in what you're selling them," expresses Dana. "And our proposition with HeadRush Music and Toes in the Sand Recordings is that we want people to understand we're giving them some value."

Currently, Toes in the Sand is working with more underground, international artists like Kingkade, Thomas Penton, Jas, Naveen G, Michael Lanning, and Brahma. Later this year, they plan to work with Benz & MD and Austin Leeds (whom they recently brought to town). Audio samples of their first few releases are available on the label's site, toesinthesandrecordings.com.

"The people who've done our original tracks are people who've never put out material before," says Dana. "They're new; we discovered them. And the remixers who we've hired to remix the tracks have a track record of quality releases. So the value proposition is that it's both: It's meeting the old and the new together to form an new and evolved sound."

In her summation of their perceived ethos, Dana playfully states, "I think if you put all this pressure on it, to say that you're living according to these *ideals* ... whatever — bullshit! It's just a bunch of people making music, having a good time, doing their best and working their asses off."

Sounds like a successful recipe for the "peace, beats, and happiness" that the company's signature bids. Throw in the Master's in library sciences and the Bachelor's in economics between the two of them, and with a bit of luck, perhaps a little success will go a long way. **UD!**