

He makes some drool, some spit

By RICH SPICER
STAFF WRITER

I'll never forget the first time I heard "that voice".

It was five years ago, and as soon as the song was finished I dialed up the radio station.

"Who was that?" I asked excitedly.

"Isn't that good?" she replied. "It's called, 'That's What Love Is All About.'"

Wow. Whadda voice, I thought. Bet we'll hear a lot from this guy in the future.

Little did I know.

"That's What Love Is All About" was all over the radio airwaves during the holiday season of 1987, reaching number 19 on billboard's hot 100 and number three on the magazines' Adult Contemporary Chart.

The single was the beginning of something big for the one time lead singer of a hard rock band almost no one ever heard of (or, for that matter, heard). Within two years, Bolton had his first make of his own composition (Laura Branigan had a hit with it in '83), from his album Soul Provider.

One song from that album built on a trend started on his previous effort. First came his cover of Otis Redding's irreplaceable ("Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" and then the real kicker, "Georgia on my Mind", a song widely considered the property of the Great Ray Charles, with no trespassing allowed.

At this point, with Bolton's career resembling a snowball on a downhill grade, a fascinating split began to occur. As

his fans became increasingly rabid, he found that critics started to bite.

1991's Time, Love and Tenderness was slammed by critics, who, by and large, were turned off by his "overblown" and "soul-less" performances. Bolton's inclusion of a cover of Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" further infuriated music scribes. However, as the reviewers got worse, the sales got better.

So, Bolton found himself in the unenviable position of having to follow up an album with an unusual tag: critical flop but commercial sensation.

Then came the news that left his legions of fans drooling with anticipation and critics ready to spit. Bolton's next album would consist of all remakes.

Now, if there's anything in this world that honks off critics, it's when they see an artist giving the public exactly what it wants and taking no risks. Timeless (The Classics) is perceived as the safest possible route to another multi-million seller for Bolton and his label, Columbia.

A few weeks ago, on the strength of the debut single from Timeless, "To Love Somebody", (Bee Gees, 1967), I went out and bought the CD. Not just because I loved the song, but also out of sheer curiosity. I had to hear for myself why critics hated this album so much.

I think I've figured it out. I was astounded at how middle-of-the-road the arrangements were on most of these songs. If you like the orchestral mix on "To Love Somebody", there's plenty more where that came from. Gone are the simple keyboard arrangements that showcased that great voice on hits like "That's What Love

is all About". Now what you hear are syrupy strings and irritating guitars that clutter up what are supposed to be great songs.

Another thing that seems slightly awry on Timeless (The Classics) is the length of the songs. Most of these tunes were originally recorded in an era where three minute songs were the rule, not the exception. So, in an effort to boost the running time of some songs (Dobie Gray's "Drift Away", for instance), the choruses are repeated ad nauseum. (I heard "give me the beat boys and free my soul..." so many times I thought there was something wrong with the CD player.)

As for the rest of the release, it's no real surprise, (considering his success with last year's Motown-ish single "Time, Love and Tenderness") that Bolton covers one of that record labels all-time greats, "Reach Out I'll Be There". Sam Cooke gets the do-over twice, with "Bring It On Home To Me", the latter so much slower than the original that it sounds like the air was let out of it. Also found here is the 1,374th remake of "White Christmas".

Most stunning of all is his version of the Beatles, "Yesterday". In Paul McCartney's hands it was delicate and sweet, but Bolton turns it into a lounge song for manic-depressives.

Despite all this, I remain a Michael Bolton fan. I'll just wait patiently until he comes out with an album full of new material. That way, there won't be anything to compare it to. After all, what's left to remake. . . "Winchester Cathedral"?



Photo by Linda Simpson

Pat Yantomasi shows one of her miniature quilt designs.

A hobby smaller than life

By TINA L. JONES
STAFF WRITER

After averaging one quilt every week and a half, Pat Yantomasi finally managed to reach her goal - her own display at Jesse Besser Museum.

Until February 14, there will be 31 miniature quilts, ranging in size from 108 to 692 pieces, on display. Each quilt is approximately 8 1/2 x 11 inches in size and has been matted and framed. After leaving Alpena, the display will be shown at the Northwood Institute in Midland, and then in Petosky and Frankenmuth.

Amy Yantomasi, who attends ACC, commented on her mother's work. "She'd rather run home and work with her quilts than do her work [in public relations at Alpena General Hospital]. . . She makes most of the patterns herself, and people who are creative would enjoy [the display]."

The time limit, a large number of pieces, and intricate designs became a challenge for Yantomasi.

"Working in miniature gives you a chance to try all kinds of patterns, colors and ideas you never had time for before. I started with squares

and rectangles, then right triangles. In less than a year, I have been able to make over 30 miniature quilts using 45 and 60 degree diamonds, equilateral triangles, isosceles triangles, and even hexagons... and now that I've tried just about all the shapes, it's time to switch gears and explore color theory as it relates to fabric and quilts," she said. Yantomasi's color theory series will be about poster size.

Even though she has enjoyed working in miniature, Yantomasi plans to sew other full sized quilts in the future. She plans to use her miniatures as sketches of what the full sized quilts will look like.

Although she does all this creative work, Yantomasi does not feel she is an artist and plans on giving her works to her friends. "I'm a process person; I like the building. If they come out beautiful, I'm thrilled. I want them to look nice."

Yantomasi has taught regular quilting classes in the past, but for those people who feel they'd like to learn how to make mini quilts she said, "I'll probably do a class if there's enough interest, to show people how I did it."

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