

The Musical World

Women With Attitudes

by Miki Thomas

Two Nice Girls are actually four women from Austin, Texas, with an attitude as big as their native state. That attitude was evident in their self-titled 1989 debut with "I Spent My Last Ten Dollars (on Birth Control and Beer)," a not-so-reverent tribute to the "joys" of heterosexuality. That attitude has been refined in their recent release, "Chloe Liked Olivia."

"For the Inauguration" starts off as a madrigal portraying George Bush as "patronizing with an obnoxious voice" and delivering only a "kinder and gentler fuck." Its postscript features a Bush impersonator rapping "wiggle those hips, read those lips." The hysterically funny "The Queer Song" declares that "we're gonna have a happy life/Both of us are gonna be the wife/I'm gonna tell you how it's gonna be/It's queer, queer fun for you and me."

It is not all fun and games with Two Nice Girls, however. As adept as they are with a satirical song, they can show a sensitive side as well. "Noona's Revenge" is about the aftermath of a rape, where "Noona's revenge was to write this song." "Eleven" is a song portraying the life of a young girl on the edge of womanhood without the usual corny cliches that mark such songs about adolescence.

"Chloe liked Olivia" is an excellent effort by Two Nice Girls, displaying their talent and abilities in playing different styles of music and still keeping their insights and wild attitudes intact.

Phranc is another artist who strikes an attitude, for, as one friend of mine remarked, what she may lack musically she more than makes up for with attitude. She is an angry young woman; certainly not one to tangle with. If she were pissed, she'd let you know.

In Phranc's 1986 debut, "Folksinger," she vented her spleen on female mud-wrestling and Thomas Noguchi, medical examiner to the stars. 1989's "I Enjoy Being a Girl" had her taking on apartheid and skinheads.

"Positively Phranc," her latest album, does not entirely show the trademark Phranc anger. She seems to be a bit more even-tempered this time around. Her focus is more on the nature of relationships. "I Like You" is a gentle song of friendship that opens the album, while "I'm Not Romantic" immediately following appears to be its rebuttal. "Hitchcock" has Phranc comparing herself to the famous director in that she perceives certain women to be Kim Novak and other Hitchcock leading ladies.

Phranc does deal with the issues, again in a way that masks her anger and causes her to question the given situation. "Tipton," about the jazz musician Billy Tipton, has Phranc wondering what made Tipton pass herself off as a man for forty years. "Outa Here" is her tribute to those people living (and dying) with AIDS.

Each Phranc album must have its "novelty" songs. Such songs marred "I Enjoy Being a Girl;" "Rodeo Parakeet" and "Toy Time" were nearly unlistenable due to either a ridiculous premise or cheesy arrangements. "Positively Phranc" has a couple of "novelties." "Gertrude Stein" is a reworked version of Jonathan Richman's "Pablo Picasso" that is actually quite fun. However, Phranc's version of the Beach Boys' "Surfer Girl" is execrable.

One song does not destroy "Positively Phranc." It is different from her first two albums in that her attitude seems to have softened. She's no longer giving her listeners the bird, but she still has plenty to say.



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