



GINUWINE
a man's thoughts



ACE HOOD
Ruffness

ALBUM REVIEWS

Genuine emotions are in his 'Thoughts'

● R&B

GINUWINE
A Man's Thoughts
RCA/1015466103

★★★

Ginuwine, the incredibly well-toned singer known for mixing rhythm and ranch, seeks to show he's not all about the physical here: He can still wind it and grind it, but he has evolved into a man who isn't afraid to share his emotions.

The R&B singer's sixth album flows seamlessly between bumpin' dance grooves and seductive mid-tempo ballads, with some hip-hop flavor added. The 15 selections explore the complexities of love and commitment, avoiding overdone phrasing, vocal histrionics and bottle-and-babe posturing.

The singer, who broke out with the hit *Pony* from his multiplatinum 1996 debut *The Bachelor*, is less back-wild these days, but still keeping it funky. A bass undercurrent propels much of the music, even the love songs, yet the production is disciplined and cohesive.

The yearning on *Last Chance*, in which he declares he's "a different kind of man," comes across as convincing: "If I've only got one shot to win you, then call me Jordan fourth quarter in '92."

Synth piano licks gently trail Ginuwine's vocals in *One Time for Love*, a romantic appeal to move a casual relationship beyond the bed. The piano lends understated support to the anthem *Open the Door*, in which he begs a woman to share her emotions, and the hypnotic *Orchestra*.

For the dance floor, there is the bombastic *Show Off*, in which he encourages women to embrace their body shapes.

R&B singer Brandy is featured on a beautiful duet, *Bridge to Love*. He also gets big-name help on the rapid-fire *Get Involved*, featuring producer Timbaland and hip-hop legend Missy Elliott, who collaborated with him on his debut, and on *Trouble*, where Texas-based rapper Bun B, formerly of UGK, joins him.

After Ginuwine's four-year hiatus, fans surely will find *A Man's Thoughts* worth the wait.

— WILLIAM T. Mc GEE
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● HIP-HOP

ACE HOOD
Ruffness
Columbia

★★

On his sophomore release, Broward County rapper Ace Hood faces the task of striking it big in a hip-hop scene already flooded with Floridians. Coming less than eight months after his debut album, *Ruffness* does little to distinguish Hood from Rick Ross, Flo Rida, DJ Khaled and T-Pain.

With a raspy voice reminiscent of Pastor Troy, Hood manages to squeeze in a mattering of witty wordplay amid typical braggadocio rhymes about girls, guns and wealth.

With a chorus from Akon and guest verse by T-Pain, the first single, *Overtime*, posits the benefits of working hard (lots of money) over a generic club beat courtesy of The Runners, the Orlando-based production duo that usually makes much bigger backdrops.

Champion is a surprisingly soulful song, with Hood and Doa trading verses about finding love in and Jasmine Sullivan repr-

posing lyrics from Kanye West's *Cant Tell Me Nothing* for the hook.

Otherwise, *Ruffness* is a disconnected hodge-podge of what's popular (but not necessarily good) in hip-hop at the moment. And with an overabundance of guest spots (Ludacris, The-Dream, Lloyd, Birdman and Miami rapper Balgorey also appear), it's hard to make a connection with Hood.

— ADRIAN HUGH
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● ROCK

WILCO
Wilco (The Album)
Nonesuch

★★★

For Wilco, there are times when the music is the star, times when it's the lyrics, and, on the rare occasion of the classic *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, times when it's both.

In case the cutesy title doesn't tip you off, the emphasis is once again on words on *Wilco (The Album)*, but that doesn't mean Jeff Tweedy is going to be straightforward about it.

He goes for a clever bait-and-switch in *You New Know*, where the lyrics sound like a scolding — "Come on, children, you're acting like children, every generation thinks it's the end of the world" — but the sweet harmonicas and sun-kissed guitar riffs say otherwise.

In *Wilco (The Song)*, Tweedy offers up the band as constant support in tough times. "Is some one twisting a knife in your back? Are you being attacked?" he asks before promising, "We'll love you, baby," over a playful guitar riff. Is this serious or kidding around? Probably both.

And that's what makes this one of the best bands around. Though much of *Wilco (The Album)* seems geared to keeping Wilco (The Band) playing sparse, simple melodies, it offers enough twists and complexities to keep things interesting.

— GLENN GAMBOA
Newcity

● COUNTRY

BRAD PAISLEY
American Saturday Night
Arista Nashville

★★★

Perfectly timed for summer, this sunny showcase of 15 songs cowritten by the country superstar himself exudes clean-cut charm and crowd-pleasing songcraft, while reargued instrumental passages show off the West Virginia native's considerable guitar prowess.

If Paisley rolls a little too heavily on the clever and the cute, he shows again that he's capable of more, although *you'd still like to him dig a little deeper*. The first single, *Then*, is a run-of-the-mill love ballad, but *Everybody's Here* and *Oh Yeah, She's Gone* let some darkness in, and *No* offers a blast life lesson.

Then there's *Welcome to the Future*, a series of observations about how times change that seems to be Paisley at his most true — until he starts singing in the last verse about a burning cross on a lawn and Martin Luther King. Even with a black president in the White House, that's pretty gutsy for a country boy.

— NICK CRISTIANO
NashvilleTribune.com