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Hi Guys-

Here' the Britney Spears CD review. Tasty, tasty, tasty...  
Talk soon, yr pal, P

Britney Spears  
Circus CD Review  
January 21, 2009  
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Britney Spears: Lip-smackin' Good!

As I am one of the two rock music journalists in Athens, I was given the "deluxe" edition of Britney Spears's current CD, *Circus*, to review for you guys. Take my word for it, it's a mondo-spiffy package of cross-eyed fun and peroxide that simply leaks sanitized, good girl hormones throughout its 53-minute duration. Listen, it gets better than you can possibly imagine. Not only does the CD itself contain three bonus tracks, but wedged inside that little-tiny space between the front cover photo and the disc is a 16-page color booklet with lots of Britney-news and a two-sided poster of her as a deified trapeze artist and a gypsy-style birthday-party girl. If that's not enough for you, it also contains a DVD disc with interviews, still pictures and the lip-smackin' good director's cut of the "Womanizer" videoclip. You'll need a cigarette after you sit through all this high-gloss stuff, I guarantee it. And, as a side note, the music on the CD is pretty good, too.

La Britney is pretty much a pop institution at this point in time. Producers and songwriters are simply prostrating themselves to work on her projects to get a slice of the profits from sales, video, and radio airplay. Of the 15 songs on the disc there are numerous production teams and songsmiths who contributed to the work. Britney herself co-wrote three of the album's tracks and they're pretty tasty tunes considering that the whole thing is a monumental construct of plutonium-level, empty-calorie, girly-girlness. If you like that kind of fizzy, spun-sugar kind of stuff, you'll adore *Circus*.

Working with several producers on a CD is always a dicey proposition. Egos tend to be frail in the artistic world and competition for creative control of a product usually rears its head sometime during the recording process. Fortunately, all participants have similar popchart/dance styles and the entire CD is slick, danceable and listener-friendly to the highest degree without becoming samey or too diverse to lose its coherence and creative continuity. It is, undoubtedly, the slickest of the slick productions in all of radio pop-land. It even surpasses Motley Crue in their mid-late 80s metal-pop heyday with their CD recordings of *Girls, Girls, Girls* and *Dr. Feelgood*. Every note on the disc sizzles, throbs and crackles with state-of-the-art analog recording and digital mastering. As an exclusive audiophile experience, I can't think of another CD that comes close to its engineering excellence.

Artistically, Britney and her handlers appear to be listening to some of the current competition and borrowing a few moves from them. "Unusual You" smacks decidedly of Rhianna, while "Mmm Papi" could

be confused with Gabriella Cilmi. "Rock me in" sounds like something off of the current Miley Cyrus CD. However, culturally, Britney plays with the big names and holds a specific market niche among listeners. Among the big blonde mega-divas: Madonna, Christina Aguilera and Gwen Stefani, Britney holds a very enviable position among their rank. Media moguls and talent representatives work hard to give viewers and listeners identifiable psychological personas to connect with. If one is to look at the human psyche in four parts: Maternal, paternal, bright infant, rebellious infant, one can see the necessity and symmetry between these archetypal roles. We all take turns liking Madonna and not liking Madonna; liking Gwen, not liking Gwen. It's like any familial relationship that has its ups and downs. These women have become televised, extended family in our society and are mirrors and barometers of our own lives. Madonna is maternal now, Christina is the perpetual, sexy wild-child, Gwen has maculine themes in her videos and is almost always filmed in sunlight, or Apollonian, male settings. But Britney gets to be the bright child, or family favorite, whether we like it or not.

When she had her very public, personal crack-up, it was the subject of every talk show in the known world for many weeks. Whether it was genuine or media-generated makes no difference. Britney was wiggling-out and the world responded as a collective, over-concerned parent. Would we have cared so much if Gwen or Christina had temporarily snapped her twig? Probably not. When the good girl loses her grip, it's really bad news in society's mental health department and we all react accordingly.

All this theory aside, Britney makes pretty cool, super quality-controlled pop records that don't damage anybody and provides a clean-edged, mildly sexy soundtrack to our lives. She doesn't have the rauch of Aguilera, the in-your-face smarminess of Stefani, or the self-assured, half-baked sophistry of Madonna. *Circus* is a danceable, slick, fun super-package of media and music that will be partied to, and studied, in college humanity divisions for some little time. And, in the final analysis, she's cute as hell and can sing fairly well, so what more do you want from a pop star?