

Two Reasons to Turn the Radio On...Two Reasons to Turn It Off



> RIHANNA "Pon De Replay" The dancehall-reggae crossover hit of the summer, utilizing the same clap-happy beat as 2003's model (remember Lumidee?). This recycled reggae-pop rump shaker will almost certainly expire soon after Labor Day, but until then, its catchy plea to "Mr. DJ" is as welcome as a nice frosty daiquiri in August. **B**



> DAMIEN MARLEY "Welcome to Jamrock" Another warm-weather reggae single, though this surprise hit flips dancehall's jittery pulse for a dubbed-out roots groove that Damien's dad might dig. The lyrics are more "Burnin' and Lootin'" than "One Love," portraying a Jamaica (a.k.a. Jamrock) filled with guns, ganja, and gangs. **A**



|| BO BICE "Inside Your Heaven" *American Idol* winner Carrie Underwood fares a little better with her version of the same tune, but runner-up Bice's over-the-top version is a formless piece of schlock. *Idol* may be good TV, but its musical track record is still awfully spotty: Bice's anonymous vocal can't compensate for the song's lack of hooks. **D-**



|| D.H.T. "Listen to Your Heart" Splenda-sweetened Belgian trance that has somehow managed to cross over from sweaty nightclubs to the pop charts. It's not a big surprise that a Euro dance act sings lyrics that are trite and clichéd, but we would have expected some much cooler synth sounds from our Continental cousins. **C-** —ME



frontman Luke Steele is the leading name here, along with members of Gelbison and Old Man River). Think Wilburys-style, campfire-strummy ambiance, with occasionally arresting prettiness ("Would It Be Nice") and murk ("Heroin"). Then ponder whether or not we needed an alt-Wilburys to begin with. **B-** —David Browne

R&B/Rap

BABYFACE

Grown & Sexy (Arista/BMG)



If you can get past his incessant clichés ("sometimes the grass isn't greener...") and inexplicable compulsion to break into a strained falsetto, Babyface's music is as catchy as ever. Though none of these sexed-up love ballads and



Babyface is definitely *Grown*. *Sexy* is your call.

sickly sweet sentimental ditties has the classic sound of 1989's "Whip Appeal," smooth new sing-alongs like "Mad Sexy Cool" and the irresistibly groovy "Tonight It's Goin' Down" make *Grown & Sexy* perfect for grown folks who want to...well, get sexy. **B+** —Channing Joseph

TREY SONGZ

I Gotta Make It
(Songbook/Atlantic)



Virginia native Trey Songz (né Tremaine Neverson) is a romantic tenor with a distracting penchant for heavy slang. Still, his debut CD is a sexy collection of 11 slow jams and thumping grooves that pay homage to Motown's golden era. The disc not only bridges the stylistic gap between Marvin Gaye and R. Kelly, it warmly introduces hip-hop soul's finest new voice. **A-** —Margeaux Watson

BOYZ N DA HOOD

Boyz N Da Hood
(Bad Boy/Atlantic)

This Atlanta quartet's debut is as unoriginal as the fabricated foursome's lame name and the

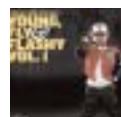


music video for "Dem Boyz," which remakes *The Wire*.

At best, group members Duke, Big Gee, Jeezy, and Jody Breeze convey hackneyed street-smart fiction ("Trap Nig**z") and inner-city blues ("Happy Jamz"). Mostly, though, they play up their Southern drawls and bank on the strength of beats by Jazze Pha, Erick Sermon, and Frank Nitti, among other collaborators. **C-** —Margeaux Watson

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Jermaine Dupri Presents...
Young, Fly & Flashy Vol. 1
(So So Def/Virgin)



In an effort to showcase rising hip-hop talent from the South, Dupri has compiled an assortment of mun-