

How could they be, with such surreal bits as the members mounting silver, red-eyed mechanical bulls after flying through the air during the sublimely ridiculous "Space Cowboy (Yippie-Yi-Yay)," dressing up like silent-movie actors for the new heart-break tune "Gone," or literally being raised up on pedestals during a snippet of "God Must Have Spent a Little More Time on You"?

Yet the nonstop activity also kept anyone not predisposed to love the group from seeing much personality. It would be hard for anyone to seem real at the core of so much machinery, but the members actually did manage genuine humanity during the close **harmozing** of such romantic moments as "This I Promise You."

This was a pleasant surprise, given the arrogance behind such new numbers as "Celebrity," but it didn't make the whole "We are pop" message any easier to swallow.

The more 'N Sync tried to make itself the epitome of what is, by nature, ephemeral, the clearer it became that the group was nothing more than the latest in a long line of good examples.



AL SEIB / Los Angeles Times
'N Sync members are raised on pedestals during a romantic tune.

Making His Voice Heard in Cambodia

By CHRIS DECHERD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia—Cambodians tend to treat the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime as a period to be forgotten: School textbooks barely mention it; popular literature glosses over it; parents are often reluctant to delve into their private horrors.

Now, a brash new rap album made in Southern California is breaking the taboos by telling young Cambodians about the darkest chapter of their country's history.

At parties, in bars and homes here, the album has teens buzzing about songs on death, forced labor and broken families.

"The End'n Is Jus the Beginnin"—written by a Cambodian American—reflects on the years in the 1970s when 1.7 million people died in the communist Khmer Rouge's attempt to turn Cambodia into a large agrarian commune.

The 17-song album was recorded in a garage in Long Beach by Prach Ly, a 21-year-old who has never returned to Cambodia since emigrating to the United States in 1983, at age 4.

He said he never envisioned the music having an impact in Cambodia. "I was very surprised at how big this got. When I did it, it was just a demo, to pass around to a few friends," Prach Ly said in a phone interview from Long Beach.

"The lyrics, the message had been inside me a long time, and I wanted to release it," he said, adding that he is hoping a record com-

pany will help him record the songs in a studio.

Three songs are in the Khmer language, and the rest are in English interspersed with Khmer.

"When I first heard this, it was, 'Wow! This is exciting,'" said Nguon Phan Sophea, 24, who owns the Galaxy CD shop in Phnom Penh. He said he heard the CD last year at the home of a friend who had bought it in Long Beach, where many Cambodian immigrants live.

He borrowed the CD, made 50

copies, designed a yellow-and-green CD cover, called it "Cambodian Rap" and put the discs up for sale for \$2 in his shop.

There are no laws protecting intellectual property rights in Cambodia, and virtually all of the music sold here is pirated.

Nguon said he has sold nearly 300 copies of the CD and let Cambodia's largest music store, CD World, burn copies from his. CD World has sold more than 400 copies, store manager Chy Sila said.

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Liz Smith

Berle Can Still Close a Show

Milton Berle was often accused of never knowing when to leave the stage, but the other night, when Hollywood saluted his 93rd birthday, it was Patti LaBelle who didn't know when to get off. Although she is indeed in a class by herself, LaBelle was following a lot of great acts as producer **Norby Walters** put on a whopper of a show.

Ed McMahon emceed the event at the Beverly Hills Hotel, which included comedic tributes from Whoopi Goldberg, Carl Reiner, Shecky Greene, Red Buttons, Jack Carter, John Byner and Robert Klein. Both Whoopi

and that other king of comedy, Sid Caesar, expressed appreciation for the consistent theme of the night—to wit, that Berle was TV's first drag queen and he made it possible for TV to become more than just an oddity of technology.

There were songs from Little Richard, who sent the Beverly Hills matrons dancing between the tables, and Andy Williams.

At evening's end, Berle had tears in his eyes as celebs sang with him "That's What Friends Are For." Then he waved and said, "God bless you—and I'll see you next year!"

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