

LIFE & LEISURE

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Spice Girls are back!

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Entertainment B1

Brad Pitt Plans 150 Homes for New Orleans

(Reuters)—Actor Brad Pitt said Monday he wants to build 150 environmentally friendly homes for families displaced by Hurricane Katrina in a hard-hit New Orleans neighborhood.

Pitt's "Make It Right" project aims to revive the Lower Ninth Ward, which was almost totally destroyed in the 2005 storm.

"A hundred and fifty homes is our goal," Pitt said near the spot where the Industrial Canal flood-wall broke during Katrina and sent a wall of water through the neighborhood.

"But there is no reason why we can't do 1,000 homes, why we can't do 10,000 homes, why we can't do 100,000 homes," he said against an art installation of bright pink rectangles and triangles meant to draw attention to the cause.

Pitt, who with actress Angelina Jolie owns a home in the city's historic French Quarter, said the new homes would incorporate energy efficient appliances and "green" materials and would be built for an average of \$150,000.

He has been a vocal critic of faltering government efforts to rebuild New Orleans and has worked with environmental



GREEN BUILDER: Brad Pitt speaks during a press conference to unveil his program that aims to create affordable, environmentally friendly housing. CHRIS GRAYTHEN/GETTY IMAGES

group Global Green USA on a separate project to construct environmentally friendly homes in the city.

Pitt has pledged to match up to \$5 million in donations for the "Make It Right" project, which he announced at a conference in

New York in September.

An international team of 13 architectural firms has submitted designs for the single-family homes, the first of which could be finished by May 2008. The new homes will be elevated to withstand future floods.

Tom Petty to Play Super Bowl Halftime Show

(Reuters)—Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers will play the coveted halftime slot at the Super Bowl in Arizona on Feb. 3, organizers of the year's No. 1 television event said Sunday.

This year, nearly 140 million Americans watched Prince play at the football extravaganza. Other recent acts have included the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, and U2.

The National Football League's annual championship game will be held at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, near Phoenix. It will be televised

by Fox.

Petty's performance will mark a rare occasion where the veteran rocker is closely aligned with a corporate sponsor, in this case the North American arm of Japanese tire firm Bridgestone Corp., which has lent its name to the halftime event.

Petty, 57, is an outspoken opponent of sponsorship of rock concerts, and his last album with the Heartbreakers, 2002's "The Last DJ," was a pointed assault on corporate greed. His spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment.



HEARTBREAKER: He's jammed with Bob Dylan and George Harrison. Next up for Tom Petty? A spot on the 50 year line to headline the National Football League's Super Bowl halftime show. STEPHEN LOVEKIN/GETTY IMAGES

'Cyrus Plays Elvis'

Music Review

By JOE BENDEL
Special to The Epoch Times

Elvis Presley might be the king of rock 'n' roll, but many consider him an imitator of the great African American R&B artists who preceded him, even appropriating some of their hits. Now Cyrus Chestnut returns the favor, reinterpreting the Presley songbook in a jazz context with his latest release, "Cyrus Plays Elvis."

While the Presley canon might seem like an odd choice for a jazz musician, Chestnut has long been attracted to crowd-pleasing music, regularly playing Christmas music during his holiday season engagements, for instance. Like Presley, Chestnut also has deep gospel roots. Though at times uneven, "Cyrus Plays Elvis" is largely unabashedly breezy, fun music that would go nicely with an afternoon at the local coffeehouse.

The disc opens with "Hound Dog," taken as an up-tempo rollicker that features some dazzling runs by Chestnut. There are perils in tackling an iconic artist's songbook, in that opinions will vary widely as to which are the true highlights and which are merely over-rated hits. Honestly, "Hound Dog" never really did it for me. However, Chestnut gives it an interesting twist, taking it at a slower tempo to get to its blues core, at times even throwing in some Monkish accents.

"Can't Help Falling in Love" gets a much more faithful reading that sticks largely to the original melody. The addition of Mark



THE KING: Jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut's latest album is devoted to interpretations of the late Elvis Presley. GABE PALACIO/IMAGEDIRECT

Gross's soprano is pretty, at the risk of sounding syrupy. As a delicate love song, "Love Me Tender" is more successful and showcases Chestnut's inventiveness yet maintains an intimate vibe. Gross returns on tenor for the sentimental "Don't," but one cannot help thinking that this would have been better as a strictly trio release, given that Chestnut is much more interesting as a soloist but plays primarily a supportive role on the horn tracks.

There is one "inspired by" original, titled "Graceland," which nicely demonstrates his trio's compatibility in swinging together. "Heartbreak Hotel" ranges fur-

thest afield from the original Presley version, with its a darker sound, slower tempo, and more elliptical melody statement by Chestnut, as well as more turbulent percussion by drummer Neal Smith. Chestnut also ratchets down "In the Ghetto" from a sweeping social-issue song (one of very few in the Presley songbook) to an introspective personal statement.

"How Great Thou Art" was probably the only tune here that was in Chestnut's repertoire before the Presley project. It is one of the many hymns Presley recorded. (According to his biographers, Presley's favorite pastimes included singing gospel songs with friends, and listening to the records of Sister Rosetta Tharpe.) Chestnut's spare but stirring solo performance is a fitting conclusion to his Presley program.

"Cyrus Plays Elvis" is at its best without a guest horn, and when the arrangements venture away from the familiar Presley recordings. Throughout, Chestnut is a consistently inventive soloist who often does put his personal stamp on these songs. Considering the proliferation of Beatles jazz projects, it seems strange that the home-grown king remains relatively untapped. "Cyrus Plays Elvis" takes a credible, if not groundbreaking, crack at his songs.

Joe Bendel blogs on jazz and cultural issues at www.jbspin.blogspot.com, and coordinated the Jazz Foundation of America's instrument donation campaign for musicians displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

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