

## MUSIC

## All grown up

Music for moving on

BRIAN MORTON

Miley Cyrus – *Endless Summer Vacation*

COLUMBIA

Raveis Kole, *In the Moment*

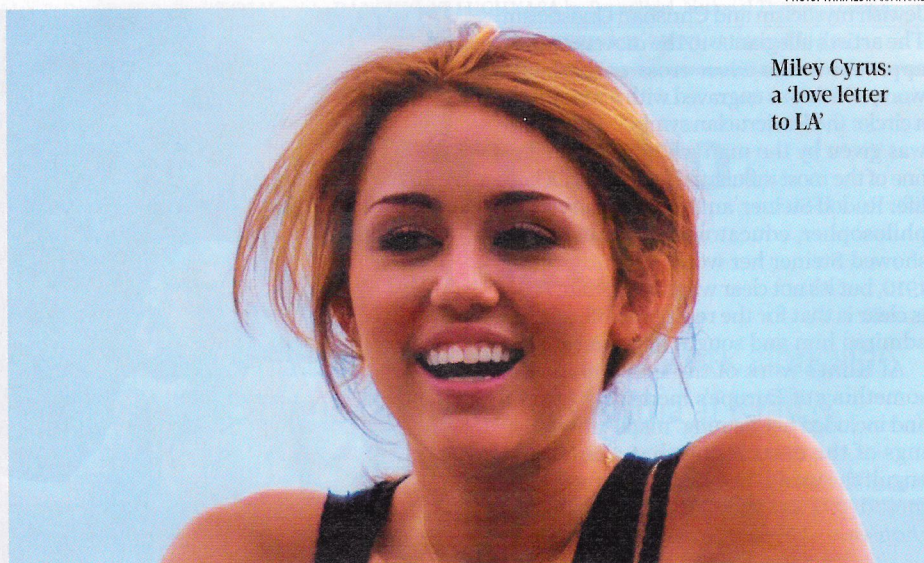
WWW.RAVEISKOLE.COM

Meet Me @ The Altar – *Past//Present//Future*

FUELED BY RAMEN

**I**F YOU STILL think of Miley Cyrus as Hannah Montana, you're way off the pace. Cyrus has grown up at the same rate as the kids you once plonked in front of the Disney Channel. Not since godmother Dolly Parton paid affectionate tribute to Cyrus' professionalism and maturity has it been possible to take her other than seriously. After all, when Dolly speaks ...

Cyrus turned 30 in November, with a two-year marriage behind her. *Endless Summer Vacation* (Columbia) is her eighth album since 2007's teen-pop *Meet Miley Cyrus* and the following year's recycled *Breakout*, which wasn't. Since then, Cyrus has emerged as a very serious and effective songwriter and a gifted collaborator. *Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz* was boldly experimental, a collaboration with the critically admired Flaming Lips. And the vein of experimentation has continued, through the new album, a paean to California (she calls it a "love letter to LA") which mixes rock, country and dance in a notionally two-half, morning and evening, structure. The big song and the inevitable lead single is "Flowers", one of those by-the-numbers pop songs that



Miley Cyrus:  
a 'love letter  
to LA'

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

could come from a *How to Write a Pop Song* manual, but which works perfectly – grown-up pop music that some have likened, a little oddly, to 1970s Fleetwood Mac.

Cyrus' divorce has led some – still possibly thinking about the Mac – to pitch this as a break-up album, but despite the husky vocal it's no *Blood on the Tracks*. Cyrus is more concerned with songcraft than with personal agenda, and the demo version which rounds out the album with just Fender Rhodes accompaniment confirms that impression. She's all growned up now.

You won't find Raveis Kole's *In the Moment* (self-released) piled high in your local record store (if you still have one) or nudging at you online. It's a more handmade production by the songwriting couple team of Laurie Raveis (who brings a Joni Mitchell vibe) and Dennis

Kole (whose guitar playing suggests a similar provenance). They write the kind of lyrics that on paper – "A seaside lullaby as we cocoon together" from "Sticky And Sweet" – sound gauche and unsingable, but which work just fine in the context of well-crafted songs, while on "Sun Eclipsed by the Moon" they may be doing what Cyrus hasn't and writing about deep things in a relationship via metaphor.

Meanwhile *Meet Me @ The Altar's Past//Present//Future* (Fueled By Ramen) is growing up music from an American female punk/pop trio that first started working on the internet during the pandemic, and have emerged with the perfect youth album of the spring. "Say It (To My Face)" is their defiant response to an industry that didn't initially seem interested. If you like Pink (and if you don't, book a medical), these girls are for you.

## TELEVISION

## Why did you do that?

An FBI man makes curious choices

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

The Night Agent

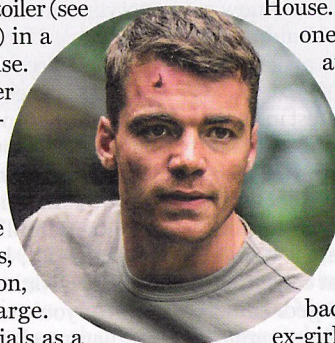
NETFLIX

**I**T MUST BE annoying for real FBI agents when armchair FBI agents see through the gig immediately. But a thriller series like *The Night Agent* really does make one wonder if the brainpower in American security is all it's cracked up to be. There seems a remarkable dearth of basic common sense: for example, it's all very well having a high-tech security system concealed beneath sliding panels in your luxurious penthouse apartment – but if you then leave a ring binder of clues to your psychological trauma simply lying around on the sofa, you're asking for trouble.

*The Night Agent* is full of anomalies. Though of course they aren't really anomalies in dramas like this, which depend on plot and dispense with even the most cursory

attempt at realism. The viewer is invited only to go with the flow – and that's very fast, sweeping any grit of doubt or disbelief rapidly downstream.

The night agent of the title is Peter (Gabriel Basso, pictured), a lowly FBI toiler (see unfeasible penthouse above) in a basement of the White House. He sits in the small hours over an old-fashioned Bakelite telephone waiting for calls from agents using his special number. "I'm as low level as it gets," he says. Though of course we suspect that this is not true, as, when jumpstarted into action, he seems very much in charge. Worryingly so. His credentials as a good guy have been established in the first minutes when he foils a plot to blow up an underground train and carries a child to safety. But when he spots the bomber, mingling with the crowd, instead of quietly notifying the policeman next to him, he leaps up yelling "It's him!" – and, though concussed, chases him into a menacing parking lot where he gets beaten up.



Back at work, Peter gets a call from Rose, seen earlier greeting her middle-aged aunt and uncle, back from a conference, with a welcome-home lasagne. Later she overhears them talking about a "mole" in the White

House. Another unwise conversation, one might have thought. Shortly afterwards they are shot by masked intruders having sent her to alert the night agent. It turns out that they were agents known as "Side-winder" and "Gazelle"; "I thought they were in acquisitions," cries Rose.

The night agent takes her back to his apartment where his ex-girlfriend has conveniently left a wardrobe of perfectly fitting clothes. According to Peter, "she's happier in Arizona"; and yes, we can believe it. By the end of the episode, Rose and the night agent appear to be on the run again, chased by unknown assassins who always know exactly where they are. Perhaps they have heard Netflix viewers across the globe shouting: "Why did you do that?"

PHOTO: NETFLIX