

MUSIC

**KEEP THE FAITH** *Faith Evans* If Sean ("Puffy") Combs makes music for Saturday nights, Faith Evans, a rising star on Combs' Bad Boy Records, sings songs for rainy Sunday afternoons. Evans, the widow of slain rapper the Notorious B.I.G., mostly steers clear of hip-hop on this album to focus on slow and mid-tempo R-and-B balladry. Some of



MICHAEL BENABIB—RETNA

Evans' sad-eyed love songs float away, like evaporated tears. But at her best, on such songs as *No Way* and *Keep the Faith*, she leaves us drained but curiously refreshed, as if we've had a good, well-deserved cry.

—By Christopher John Farley

TELEVISION

**EXILED** *NBC Sunday* Fans of *Law & Order* are likely to be disappointed by this presentation, which is billed as "A *Law & Order* Movie" and which stars Chris Noth, who left the show in 1995. For one thing, there's no "Order": the story concerns only a police investigation into a prostitute's murder, with no treatment of the prosecution. The detectives from the cur-



JESSICA BURSTEIN—NBC

rent show, meanwhile, appear only minimally. The viewer is left with a mediocre police drama, which features Noth in virtually every shot. Looking more than ever like Victor Mature, he does his cop-who-plays-by-his-own-rules routine adequately, but you can see most of his moves, and those of the plot, coming a mile away. Ice-T, as usual, provides some spark, here playing a pimp.

—By James Collins

BOOKS

**PURE DRIVEL** *By Steve Martin* He was once overheard boasting to a friend, "I've read *War and Peace*." So we know Steve Martin is intelligent. Now we know he is intelligent in print. In these comic essays

(most from the *New Yorker*), the voice is often that of the old stand-up Steve: a fellow less cool, less together—and thus funnier—than he thinks he is. Martin takes inspiration from prescription bottles, the Schrödinger's cat paradox and Marlon Brando on *Larry King Live*. The little gems come at a hefty price—87¢ each (\$1.17 in Canada!)—but are worth it for their expectation-defying musings on philosophers, paparazzi and the word underpants. This is high-wire humor, as pure as the drivell snow.

—By

*Richard Corliss*



EXHIBITIONS

**INTIMATE CITY** *International Center of Photography Uptown, New York* Thomas Wolfe once said that only the dead know Brooklyn. He never met photographer Thomas Roma, who doesn't just live in Brooklyn, he gets it. When Roma goes to a public pool—sunstruck guys in Speedos, women unfurling on the concrete—he understands that a municipal body of water is where the eternal elements meet the here and now. When he rides an elevated subway car, he sees a cramped rectangle that's a public square, where people sign the air every time they stretch. And in the simplest black churches he recognizes that rapture is democratic, that a scuffed room is sanctified by the supreme projection of human needs in God's general direction. What he's saying is that the city is a place requiring courage and cunning. And that it's graceland.

—By Richard Lacayo



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