

Know your 'Grammar'

BY NIKKI WOOD

When rap came into the main stream in the early nineties, the West Coast gangsta style ruled with an iron fist.

The East Coast decided to show its bad side, and at the close of the decade the Dirty South made some noise.

These three geographic regions began to look like they were always going to reign supreme, but then the unexpected came.

Eminem reared his blond head from Detroit to show that a white boy can rap. However, Slim Shady could not support the entire Midwest on his own.

Just when fans were craving more of that harsh, in your face, Middle America style, Nelly burst forth with his St. Louis *Country Grammar*.

Hip-hop has been made famous by sampling old songs and giving them new twists. Nelly laid the music industry on its ear when he used the tune from a children's rhyme to create "Country Grammar," the hot new single that's everywhere you go.

The old rhyme said, "Down down baby, down by the roller coaster..." and surely you remember the rest from third grade. *Grammar* uses a few of the old words, but just enough to recognize it.

The rest of the song is a typical gangsta style-cruising town-getting wild-surviving the ghetto track, but the catchy beat

rescues it from the rut that rap has seemed to be stuck in lately.

Although the single is the hottest item around right now, the rest of the CD is worth the money.

The disc opens with the expected sans-music intro, but is funnier than most because it is a short skit about Nelly's cousin who is trying to get in contact with him.

The cousin will do whatever it takes, including... "call my cousin Kieth, he's got my real pager number, and I'll call you from his cell phone."

The second track gets down to business right away with heavy lyrics about surviving the mean streets of St. Louis, Nelly's home town.

The CD continues with excellent songs to the end; the most notable of these being *E.I.*, which is racy but fun to listen to (Nelly is releasing this as his next video and single):

"There are positive messages on the *Grammar* disc. During the song, "Utha Side," he encourages a young boy to stay in school, another to stop dealing drugs, and finally a mother to stop prostituting and go back to school.

Country Grammar bears a well deserved parental lyric advisory, but clean versions of the CD are available in many stores. This disc is the best thing to hit the racks in a long time, and if you need something to groove to, Nelly will have you getting down down, baby.



'Ashes to Ashes' is real mind burner

BY HEATHER KIRBY

In Tami Hoag's 1999 novel *Ashes to Ashes* people are living everyday lives in Minneapolis until serial killer Smokey Joe takes the city by storm, kidnapping women, brutally torturing them, then burning their bodies in the city's parks.

Members of the Heppin County Police Department are successfully keeping Smokey Joe out of the public's eye. It is not until Smokey's third victim, millionaire Jillian Bondurant, is found in a city park, her body mutilated and burned beyond recognition, that Smokey gains fame.

As the deranged serial killer basks in the glory of his new found

fame, the police department finds itself clubbed with the fury and power of Jillian's father, Peter Bondurant.

The only hope is Angie Dimarco, a troubled, self-mutilating teen who witnessed the bloody scene. Kate Colan, a middle aged FBI agent turned victim/witness advocate, is assigned to the stubborn teen witness.

Kate is struggling to dig the story from her uncooperative witness while battling memories of a child lost in another life.

When FBI agent John Quinn, a former love, rolls into town to help crack the case, he leaves the Minneapolis Police Department in awe with his expertise. He also

steals Kate's heart.

As he begins the case he is met not only by the obstacles of his feelings for Kate, but also with Jillian's father breathing down his neck.

Working through the case, both Kate and John try to hold back their feelings. But, as the end draws near and suspense heats up so does their passion for each other.

During this novel Hoag grips the reader to the end, with the spine tingling details of a killer's thoughts and actions. As you read this novel you'll find yourself looking over your shoulder at the people behind you, wondering just what they are thinking.

'Goblet of Fire' sets imaginations ablaze

BY STEVEN WARD

J.K. Rowling's
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Price: \$25.99

Fourteen year olds deal with a variety of things: first love, jealousy, and never-

ending doubts about who they are.

Fourteen year old Harry Potter deals with all this and more in the newest installment of J.K. Rowling's series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, a book with great sensory detail, a stunningly kinetic plot, and a great setup by the other books.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets revealed that Harry's parents were killed in a battle with the evil Lord Voldemort, a master of the dark arts who is euphemistically referred to as you-know-who. The

then one year old Harry survived the encounter. As a teenager, he is well-known because of his power to resist the awesome power of Voldemort.

Goblet of Fire begins with Harry ready to start his fourth year at Hogwarts School of Wizardry. Before school begins, Harry decides to go with his friends to the Quidditch World Cup. After the first night of competition, Voldemort's Dark Mark appears in the sky. The mark has not been seen since Voldemort's fall thirteen years earlier and is an ominous sign of things to come.

Harry returns to Hogwarts School of Wizardry to the news of a surprise announcement. The



Triwizard Tournament, a competition between three schools of magic

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Clontz & Cox

Attorneys at Law

Carl R. Clontz
Jerry J. Cox
John E. Clontz
Jerry Fish
John D. Ford

P.O. Box 1350
115 Richmond St.
Mt. Vernon, KY 40456

Shari Proctor
Nancy Mullins
Nikki Shepard
Amy Tolle

PHONE: (606) 256-5111
1-800-572-1143
FAX: (606) 256-2036