

DISCS

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Pop

**ME'SHELL NDEGEOCELLO
PEACE BEYOND PASSION
Maverick/Reprise 9362 46033-2
1996**

Me'Shell Ndegeocello's first album, "Plantation Lullabies," was released with little record company fanfare, but the force of her musical vision quickly garnered critical raves as the debut of '93. Her sound was a new-style soul/funk, streetwise and smooth, and as the acclaim grew, she was asked to guest on high-profile records with John Cougar Mellencamp, among others. So the anticipation has been steadily building for her second album, but Ndegeocello has returned with a work that exceeds even those lofty expectations. "Peace Beyond Passion" is a deeply spiritual work that loses the nervy edge of her first album, in favor of a gliding trip through race, love, and faith. Second albums often trip up promising groups (see The Fugees, despite runaway sales for their new one), but Ndegeocello (pronounced Ndgndgndg ... your guess is as good as mine) seems to have no ceiling on her growth as a musician and searching lyricist. If you're looking for the new voice of soul, "Peace Beyond Passion" is a beautiful work that will not disappoint . . . 9

World of wonders

□ **'Dream Girls' takes a look beyond the illusion of the Takarazuka Revue**

The Takarazuka phenomenon is fairly well summed up by the traditional American blues composition whose opening lyrics are: "Women is loving each other/And they don't think about no man." An all-female theatrical troupe, its most popular members those who specialize in portraying men, attracts SRO audiences that are almost exclusively female. Obviously, the genius responsible for this enduring feature of the cultural landscape — over 8 decades old and still going strong — was someone who had shrewd

were what helped solidify Mr. Kobayashi's "whole concept." Furthermore, continues Shiraishi, audiences before the Second World War were almost evenly divided between men and women. It was only as racial alternatives sprang up in the postwar period that men began drifting away. "Dream Girls" co-directed by English-born Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams and originally released abroad in 1993, is a 50-minute documentary of the Takarazuka Revue that is short on the origins and history of the company (for th