



May 13, 2005

MUSIC

Paul Anka rocks with big-band style

Paul Anka did it his way through nearly five decades and 1,000 songs, starting with *Diana*, the 1957 chart-topper that made him a teen idol at 16. He's still at it on *Rock Swings*, a brazen concept album that retrofits such youth anthems as Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and Van Halen's *Jump* with his seasoned croon and big-band arrangements.

Unlike Pat Boone's metal makeovers, the disc is no novelty. Due June 7 on Verve, *Rock Swings* is already earning kudos from foreign critics.

"I wanted to do a swing album, but all the standards have been overdone," says Anka, who pored over charts to find '80s and '90s hits ripe for remodeling. He was no stranger to such finalists as The Cure's *Lovecats* and Soundgarden's *Black Hole Sun*. "When you're raising five girls, you know every band, and which guy is the sexy one."

Abetted by engineer Al Schmitt and an army of jazz instrumentalists, Anka experimented with various tempos. "We didn't just go with one vibe," he says. "We morphed (them) around." His way.

— **Edna Gundersen**