Despite the brilliance of individual tracks, 1999 isn't as strong a record as Dirty Mind, which still stands as Prince's best work. 1999's longer tracks don't always fare as well as the punchy, concise statements on Dirty Mind. Still, it's hard not to succumb, at least for a while, to Prince's ultimate message: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow's headlines may dictate that we die.

David Shaw

The Roches' lighter side shines through in "The Hallelujah Chorus" (finally committed to vinyl) and "Steady with the Maestro" ("She goes steady with the maestro/And she rosses his baton"), but they save their best one liner (or is it a general warning?) for the closing cut: "You work too hard to take this abuse/Be on your guard, Jerks on the loose." They ought to be careful, messages like that could give folk-rock a good name.

David Shaw

The lyrics themselves merit close attention. The pains of adolescence are humorously explored in "The Largest Elizabeth in the World" ("Didn't you ever feel like the largest Elizabeth in the world?/Usually at a time when the boy is oblivious to the girl"), while other tunes are concerned with relationships with society's undesirables: the biker in "I Fell in Love," the highwayman in "On the Road to Fairfax County" and the criminal in "The Scorpion Lament."