

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 1990

★ ★ ★ ½

**DESERT ROSE BAND**

*"Pages of Life"*

*Curb/MCA*

Is there a better country-rock band around today than Chris Hillman's? When you listen to the group's sure-footed third album, it's hard to think

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of any. As the title suggests, there is plenty of meaty material here.

Fortunately, it is pages of life, *not* the whole book, that the band addresses, and by keeping the focus tight, the album succeeds in tackling big issues in modest ways. Desert Rose supplies solace in both affirming word and uplifting music. Many of the songs spring from an understated foundation of Christian faith and underscore in various ways what may be the toughest problem facing the last decade of the 20th Century: hopelessness. "Darkness on the Playground," the album's gripping centerpiece, finds "There's trouble on the streets in this land" of the

free / Freedom has a price and you know it don't come cheap." The cure for such troubles, however, comes not from flight—whether to an otherworldly spiritual nirvana or into drugs or even fame—but by facing life's travails squarely and gaining the strength that comes only through such challenges.

—RANDY LEWIS