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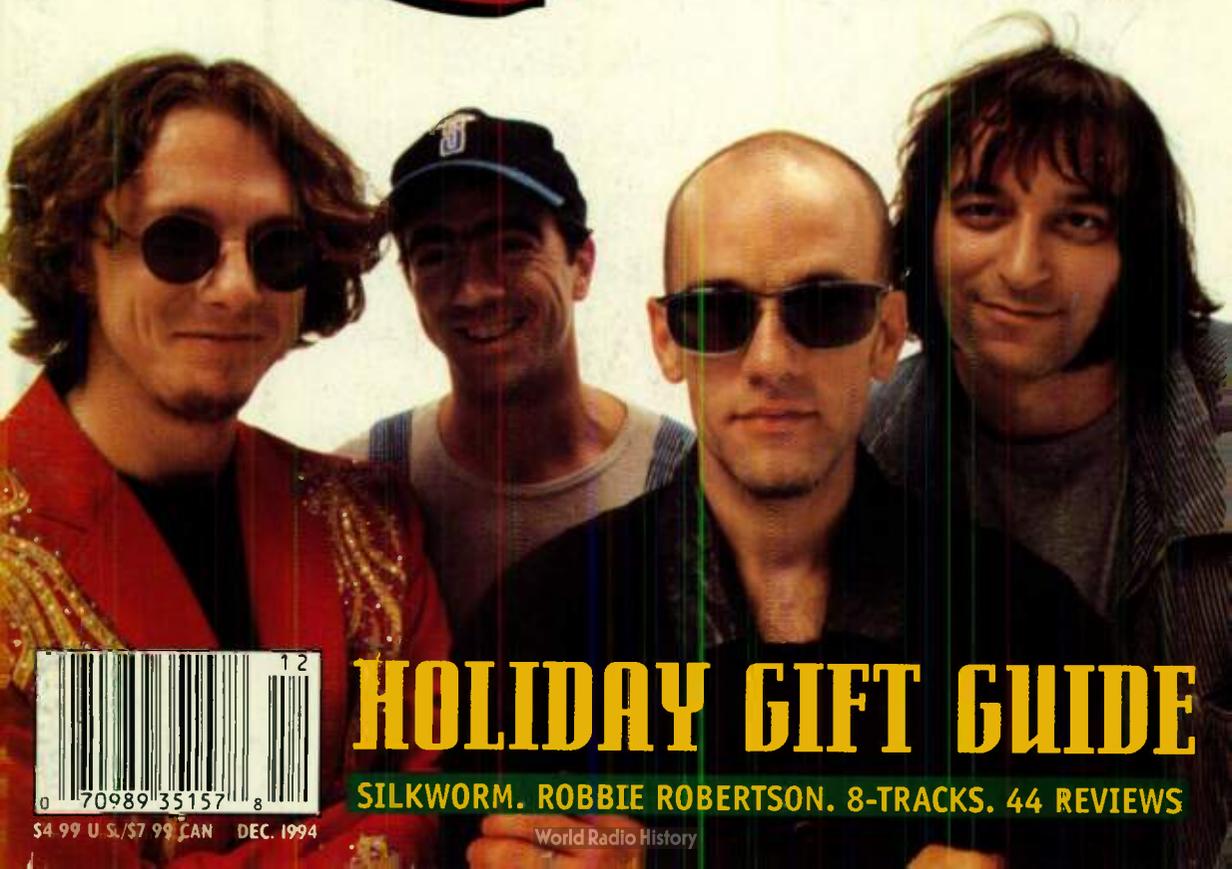
DOG FACED HERMANS

CATHERINE

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PORTISHEAD

REM.



HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

SILKWORM. ROBBIE ROBERTSON. 8-TRACKS. 44 REVIEWS



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World Radio History

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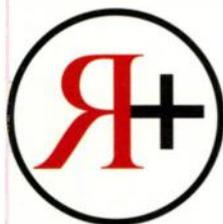
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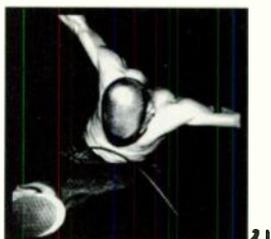
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December 1994



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In Jesse Sublette's novel *Rock Critic Murders* (Dell, 1989), a pair of doomed critics are described as "two gentlemen who never pay to get in anywhere, get all their records for free, sell the ones they don't like to the record stores, then take it on themselves to decide what's cool for the public and what isn't... two smug, self-inflated stooges."

While it isn't fair to lump every rock writer in with that description [*sure it is—managing ed.*], it does beg the question of just what most people think of rock critics. Are we dedicated fans who have made careers out of a love for music? Writers who lose their perspective seeing too many bands and listening to far too many records? Geeky, embittered self-imposed arbiters of taste who fear intimacy and don't own an unwrinkled shirt?

What do you think of rock critics? Here's your chance to tell the world, or at least those parts of North America that receive this magazine. Keep your responses brief and to the point, and send them to the CMJ address, or fax them to (516) 466-7159.

- As a regular Letters To The Editor feature, the CMJ editors will be posing questions to you, our esteemed readers—this is the "Q" part—as well as answering—there's that "A"—some of your questions directly.

r e s p o n s e

On his "Fax Me" questionnaire, Dennis DeSmeth of Mesquite, Texas asks, "Every review was so positive—do you guys love everything you hear?"

When we received Mr. DeSmeth's response to the September issue, I went back and re-read the reviews. Out of 32 reviews in the main review section, 3 were plainly negative. Clearly, this is a much higher percentage of positive reviews than appear in most music magazines. One of the reasons for this is that review space is always limited, and we would rather tell you about something that might be worth your while than use up precious space by singling out one of the tremendous amount of crappy records that stream into my office each week. Unless we feel that it is important, as a consumer guide, to steer our readers away from a new record, we will usually choose to omit a review of that record in favor of tipping our readers off to something we feel is worthwhile.

We also want to guide our readers toward albums they might like, so we try to make it clear just why a reader might like a particular record. That's why we have the R.I.Y.L. (Recommended If You Like) feature; that's also why we try to describe records we like in ways that will make it clear if they'll appeal to you—or if they'll leave you cold.

Another reason that the reviews seem so positive is that we work hard to find writers who will have an informed opinion of the records they review; that usually means they're more likely to enjoy them. It's possible to make a "statement" by having a writer who thinks music died with Sid Vicious review, say, a new Depeche Mode album, but why waste a tree? We'd rather be a useful consumer guide than cop an attitude.

As for the idea that we like everything we hear, I receive at least 80 tapes and CDs each week. Most of them make me wish I had another job. I could unleash my very subjective opinion on every single one, but that's not the purpose of this magazine (that's what fanzines are for, and we do our best to point you to those, too). At CMJ, we feel that the best way to help our readers navigate their way through the overstuffed CD racks is to remain as objective as possible.



Scott Frampton, Editor

Ass Ponys

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Produced by John Curley and Ass Ponys



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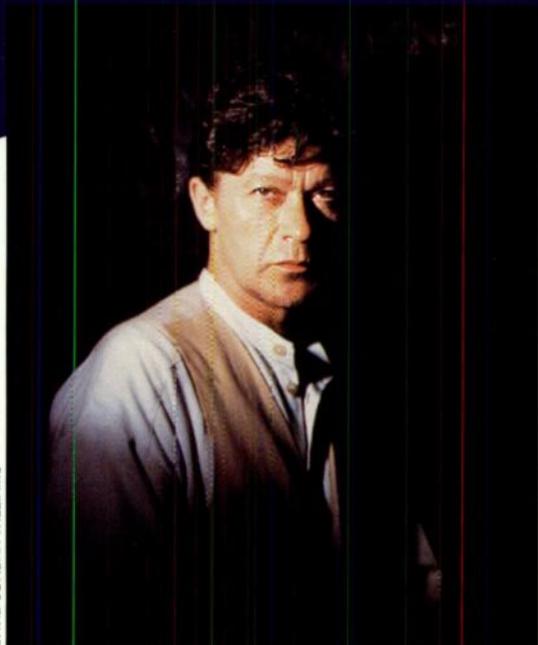
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DAVID JORDAN WILLIAMS



ARTISTS' **in my room** PERSONAL PICKS

JOHN CALE

Ace Of Base
The Sign

She TV

TV Nation

Goya Dress

Microtech microphones

Robbie Robertson: Brave Rituals

Although Robbie Robertson was recently inducted into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame via The Band, it is his most recent project, *The Native Americans* (Capitol), that he enthusiastically refers to as "a highlight in my entire life." The music, which finds Robertson joined by various Native American musicians, performers and storytellers, accompanies a documentary series on TNT that aired in October. Like the album, the documentary was produced, written and performed by men and women of Native American heritage. Robertson, who is half Mohawk, reveals that his respect for this culture came early. "These relatives of mine were the most impressive people I ever met—they could do things that nobody in the city could do. They knew all kinds of tricks and stuff and had a connection with nature," he says recalling summers spent as a child with his Native American cousins. "They drank water out of the ground and they knew how to pick little things and what you could eat. They would take out a root and peel it back and say 'eat this' and it was the best tasting thing I ever had. I was completely envious of these people, and it wasn't until later that I learned we were supposed to feel sorry for these people."

Surprisingly, *The Native Americans* is not about pity for a wronged race, nor is it a terribly political record. "I chose to take an attitude that is one I see in a lot of my Native American friends," he explains. "They're not about complaining. They're like 'I don't need you and pretty soon you'll be coming to me.' I like that, and I like it also that in the songs and stories that I tell they had a tough pride." Robertson notes the steely resolve of the words of Chief Joseph. "He said 'I have the right to live on my land and accord you the privilege to return to yours.' I mean, whoa!"

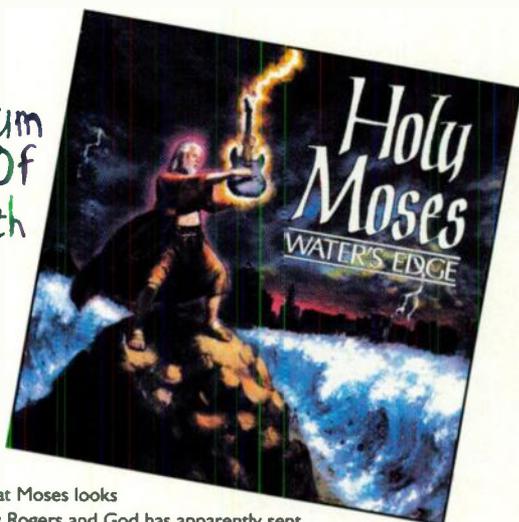
Humility is another kernel of Native American culture that Robertson expresses through *The Native Americans*. It's almost 10 minutes into the record before we ever hear Robertson's trademark voice. "I did that on purpose," he says, emphasizing that "a certain humbleness is called for."

Asked if this record's mixture of styles and various musicians and performers reminded him of the communal feeling captured on the Band's *The Last Waltz*, Robertson responded positively. "My subtitle for this whole project was 'In Unity.' One of the most amazing things I've ever heard was going to powwows years ago—and these were intertribal powwows—and one people's flavor of music would be doing something and then someone else's would join in with them and what would happen when they mixed them together was just... I mean, it gave me chills."

Robertson claims that the more he learned about the culture, the more personally fulfilled he was, and he believes our society has much to learn from it as well. "[Native Americans] have such a great relationship with nature and the whole balance of life, and we seem to have been zooming down the highway and not knowing what exit to get off."

—Steve Ciabattini

Bad Album Cover Of The Month



Aside from the fact that Moses looks suspiciously like Kenny Rogers and God has apparently sent down a cheap Strat copy (note the inverted headstock), this is just a bad idea.

QUICK FIX

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS **in my room**

JEFERY LEVY
DIRECTOR OF S.F.W.

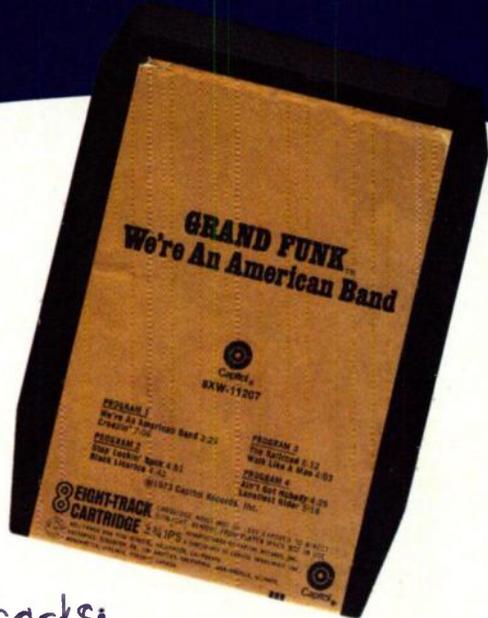
Soundgarden
Superunknown

Hole
Live Through This

Nine Inch Nails
Downward Spiral

Access magazine

Movie:
Tetsuo, The Iron Man
(Japan)



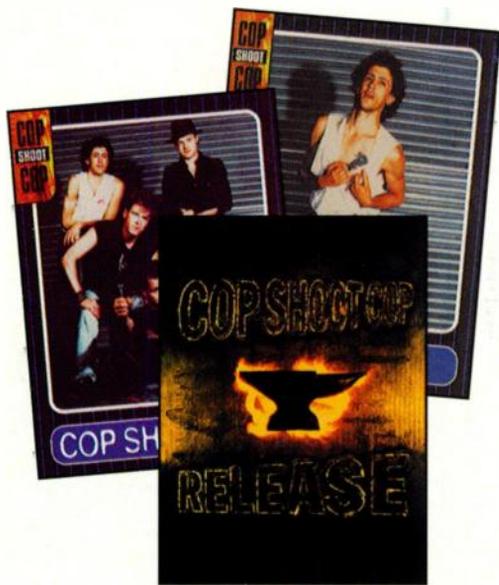
8-Tracks: So Wrong, They're Right

Those readers who aren't truckers may know 8-track cartridges as only a distant, and probably unpleasant memory—the province of that hard-drinking uncle who insisted on playing C.J. McCall and Slim Whitman in his mid-'70s gas guzzler. Handicapped by muddy fidelity, self-destructing mechanisms and loud track changes that often interrupted long songs, the 8-Track, which was space-age audio technology in the late '60s, was a quickly eradicated anachronism only ten years later. But a growing number of anti-CD Luddites are joining a loose coalition to bring the old format back, or at least celebrate its heyday. And, like any self-respecting subculture, they have a bible; *8-Track Mind* is a journal-sized magazine which collects not only the predictable want lists and rants against corporate hegemony, but also discoveries of rare titles, unusual stereo systems, and of course, credos (“‘New’ and ‘Improved’ doesn’t necessarily mean the same thing.”) Issue 80 (!!) also features detailed information on the developmental history and pre-history of the format (partly developed by John Lear, inventor of the Lear jet).

Even more enticing is *So Wrong They're Right*, a travelogue film by 8TM editor Russ Forster (due out in the spring) that examines the collections (from the *Brady Bunch* to Yoko Ono), viewpoints and quirky personalities of America's foremost 8-track collectors. “Probably the dumbest format,” admits one. “They sum up the beauty of obscurity,” says another. You can count Gumball, interviewed in the film, and Ween among the rock bands that couldn't agree more.

—Eric Gladstone

Promo Item Of The Month



Even better than the appropriately stale bubblegum that came with these Cop Shoot Cop trading cards is the spurious (and outright bullshit) information on the back. Bassist Jack Natz's card, for example, traces his history from Pennsylvania's Lacawanna coal mines (in 1875) to his discovery of diacetylmorphine and invention of the hot dog to his reappearance in 1989 “in the basement of a Lower East Side slum tenement where he met up with the rest of Cop Shoot Cop.”

ORBITAL

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ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS **in my room**

DAVE WENDORF
MONSTER MAGNET

Sam Phillips
Martinis And Bikinis

Velvet Underground
The Velvet Underground And Nico

Authentic Sound Effects
Vol. 4

Book:
Incredibly Strange Music, vols. I and II
(RE/Search)

Movie:
Bad Day At Black Rock

DEFINITION OF SOUND

Skronk (pron. the way it sounds, buddy), n.: A prime example

of critical onomatopoeia—part screech, part honk. It describes

sounds that are noisy, harsh and chaotic, but tightly controlled

and rapidly cut off (hence the two-consonant ending); the

uncontrolled equivalent is the closely related "skree." Of

uncertain provenance. Notable modern proponents of skronk

include Killdozer, Shellac, Sonic Youth and the Ex.



Fun-Da-Mental Beliefs

"People keep asking us to dilute the truth," says Aki Nawaz. "Why don't they dilute their ignorance?"

Nawaz, a k a Propa-Gandhi, a son of Pakistani emigrants, is shouting onstage at England's Reading Festival before tens of thousands of largely white faces. If the cheer that his pronouncement inspires (one of his loudest that afternoon) feels like a victory, he doesn't let it go to his head before launching into his group Fun-Da-Mental's latest single "Dog Tribe." The song, which promises revenge against fascist white supremacists on the rise in both England and Europe, kicks off Fun-Da-Mental's debut album *Seize The Time* (Beggars Banquet-Atlantic), named after Black Panther Bobby Seale's memoirs. Its most succinct line: "There comes a time when enough is enough/Afro-Caribbeans, Asians together is tuff."

"It's like on the new Public Enemy album," Impi D. (Dave Watts), Afro-Caribbean cohort of the Asian Nawaz, explains after their set. "The opening—'If you don't stand up for something, you'll fall for anything.' Everybody's got to make a stand."

Watts and Nawaz are conscious of the comparisons they've gotten to Public Enemy—both groups are social outsiders who are capturing and communicating the anger and frustration of millions. But while Nawaz conceived of Fun-Da-Mental on a 1991 trip to New York's worst ghettos, he saw the goal as "tackling things from a global view, because just talking to people in the streets, we'd draw connections about how [other] people perceive us. It's not a black thing, it's a human thing."

Finishing the PE comparison, Aki adds, "Musically, we're miles apart." True enough—while Public Enemy's sample beds are cross-generation Afro-American tributes, Fun-Da-Mental's irresistible mix of live and sampled sounds are cross-cultural, a blend of Asian, African and other indigenous musics as vital to the sound as the rappers. "It's taking that music and respecting the thought and the culture behind it as well. People are not aware that the majority of folk musics, tribal musics, come from political feelings." Nawaz, whose own career began with the politipunk Southern Death Cult, suggests an echo of the Clash in Fun-Da-Mental's approach. "Just opening people's minds a bit, letting music touch them in different parts."

Propa-Gandhi and Impi D. have no shortage of reasoning for their calls to arms: "You've got to take it in context of what's happening," says Aki, discussing the growing rash of racially motivated violence in England. "We say, 'people in the Asian community, you have every right to defend yourself.'"

"If I was to attack you in a violent manner, you might defend yourself in a violent manner," adds Impi.

"If I was going to rape someone's sister, and she fought back," Ali furthers, "is she violent? No violence is right, but when are politicians going to sort it out? Why do ghettos still exist when you can walk a few blocks and be in Rockefeller Plaza?" Nawaz's rhetorical questions also underscore that there's more to Fun-Da-Mental's lengthy debut than the incendiary parts: Notable tracks preach the positivity of Islam and equality for women in all cultures.

Moreover, though many of the group's lines of thought—both in lyrics and interviews—seem almost as vague as a gangsta rapper calling the term "bitches" constructive criticism, Impi D. and Propa-Gandhi are the first to admit they're imperfect.

"We haven't got all the answers," says Propa-Gandhi; "we're as confused as anybody."

"It's part of a learning process," Impi adds, "and it doesn't stop. It continues every day."

—Eric Gladstone

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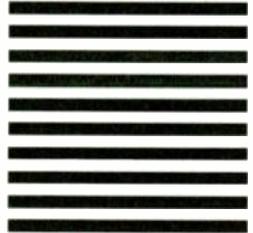
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crank

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CRANES
Loved
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Cranes have managed to come up with a sound that even in these eclectic times stands apart: strange, Angelo Badalamenti-like harmonies punctuated with Frank Black-like guitar blasts, and a singer whose little-girl voice makes Julee Cruise sound like Ozzy Osbourne. Listening to *Loved*, their third album, you get a feeling that siblings and band founders James and Alison Shaw are more than a little whacked out ("Where am I?" Alison cries/sings repeatedly on "Lilies," one of the best tracks.) But as allusive and eerie as Cranes may be, they still manage to avoid being merely pretentious, which is no mean feat, mainly because as distinctive as their sound is, they still manage to write songs in a variety of musical styles. *Loved* veers from the countryish "Beautiful Friend" to a nearly industrial sound on the confused "Lilies," while the dialogue between twanging guitars and Alison's crazed vocals carries songs like "Bewildered" and "In The Night." With "Paris And Rome" the Shaws venture a bit into U2 territory to explore contemporary Continental anxiety, but the mixture of driving rhythms and shifting harmonies is up to the task. How Gothic are Cranes? If they'd had tape decks in Gormenghast Castle, this is probably what they'd have listened to.

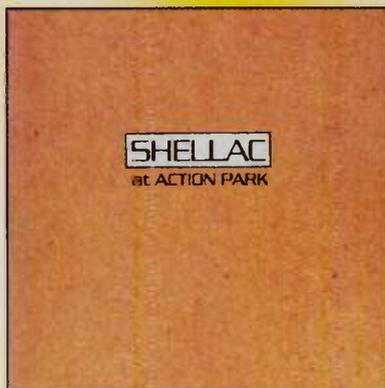
—Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11. Extensive tour in early '95.

FILE UNDER: Spooky pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Cocteau Twins, David Lynch, the Cure.

SHELLAC
At Action Park
Touch And Go



Steve Albini is the evil genius of rock. He's utterly brilliant at making guitars sound like metal sheering off of careening automobiles; he's even better at building whole records around that incomparable sound. Still, indie-rock coffee klatches are more concerned with what the engineer of Nirvana's *In Utero* and PJ Harvey's *Dry* has said this time. The funny thing—and the joke's on you if you consider yourself part of the roused rabble—is that this record is as artful as anything the underground has produced in years. From the packaging (a thick cardstock record sleeve printed on an antique press) to the disc itself (initially vinyl only, pressed by the classical division of London Records in England to ensure thick, high-quality records) to the uncompromising sound, the record looks, feels and sounds every bit a piece of art, so much so that the Albini's trademark antagonisms seem almost quaint. There are plenty of workman-like pretenses—a sense of tossed-off conviction—to quell the idea that this is or even should be art, but how else can you regard a record that steers so eerily close to perfection? Pristine in a gritty way, *At Action Park* is incredibly focused. Its half-hour or so of incredibly dense, compact noise is without a single extraneous element. To some, that may seem sterile, but to lovers of the internal jolt that this sort of violent clang brings, it's all sweet music. In fact, thanks to the ace rhythm section of drummer Todd Trainer (*Breaking Circus, Brick Layer Cake*) and bassist Bob Weston (*Volcano Suns*), the harsh sound achieves a definite, and completely individual, sense of melody and structure. *At Action Park* may not be everyone's idea of fun, but it's worthy of a devoted following.

—Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Release date: Aug. 29 (vinyl), Oct. 17 (CD).

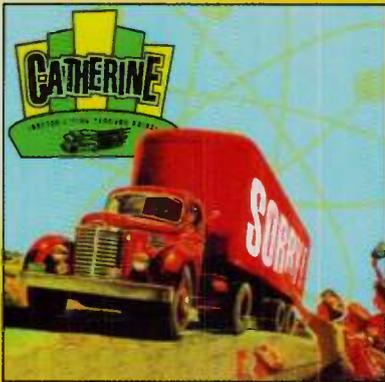
FILE UNDER: Screeching, scathing guitar noise.

R.I.Y.L.: Big Black, Rat At Rat R, Helmet.

CATHERINE

Sorry

TVT



Don't begrudge Catherine for having all the right connections to set record company tongues a-wagging when it was an unsigned band. It's friends with Smashing Pumpkins, Brad Wood (Liz Phair, Sunny Day Real Estate) produced its first single, and hey, it's from Chicago! All cool bands are from Chicago, right? Fortunately, Catherine also has the goods musically, as its 1992 debut EP *Sleepy*, released on neighborhood March Records, demonstrated. *Sorry* (co-produced by Dr. Grunge, Butch Vig) kicks off with the energetic soaring pep of "Songs About Girls" and the psychedelic whispery groove of "Funn Bunny." In the retro-cred department, check out the hazy melody of Catherine's version of the pre-*Saturday Night Fever* Bee Gees tune "Ever Christian Lionhearted Man," and the quote of the croony refrain from the Stones' "Fool To Cry" on "2 AM." Catherine is at its most infectious on upbeat tracks, especially the awesome stop/start chant of "Saint," yet the languor of "Inchworm" and "Waterfall" works too. If Chicago indie rock can be characterized by raw machinist rock on one side and shimmering glitter crunch on the other, Catherine has found its niche at the intersection of those two sonic motifs, and it's got nothing to be sorry about. —Robin Eisgrub

DATALOG: Release date: Nov. 1. "Songs About Girls" available on a 7" with B-side by Billy Corgan side-project, Starchildren. Video for "Songs About Girls."

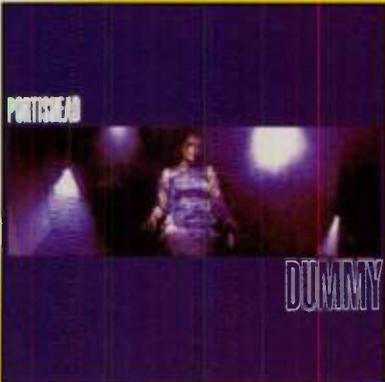
FILE UNDER: Lushly rendered expando-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Smashing Pumpkins, Medicine, Archers Of Loaf.

PORTISHEAD

Dummy

Go! Discs-London



Ever see that cheesy old B-film *Fade To Black*, the one where the typically misunderstood high school geek is so obsessed with film, he assumes famous screen roles to do in his enemies? The British duo Portishead is equally fascinated with cinema; its debut *Dummy* either appropriates or approximates eerie film scores and their silvery, flickering moods. So far, vampy cabaret crooner Beth Gibbons and her manic multi-instrumentalist partner Geoff Barrow haven't offended any neighboring neighbors, but the icy hint of threat that runs through their creepy music is enough to make you cross to the other side of the street when you see 'em coming. None of the band's sampling sources are clear, but it's easy to spot the suggestive Hitchcock-ism of the dirge "Sour Times," which slinks along on spy-film guitar work and smoky, *noirish* keyboards. Then there's "Roads," which vibrates with the jump-cut energy of Godard's New Wave classic *Breathless*, and the trick-or-treat Argento/*Suspria* atmosphere of "Mysterions," and the near-perfect monster-movie scenario of "Wandering Star," in which Gibbons emotes like a frightened little girl over imagery such as "The mask that the monster wears/To feed upon brains." When Portishead twists its glassy-eyed film influences into a weird new art form, *Dummy* can actually seem serene almost magical. Like a long, slow fade to *Das Kabinet* black. —Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 18.

FILE UNDER: Moody film school theses with beat-box backing.

R.I.Y.L.: Dead Can Dance, Cocteau Twins, This Mortal Coil.

DOG FACED HERMANS

Those Deep Buds

Alternative Tentacles



Calling the Dog Faced Hermans an indie-rock band is an insult. There's nothing shambling, amateur or coy in their music, nothing shy or awkward or knowing about their lyrics. Writing a generic pop song isn't in their nature. Instead, the Hermans craft what is perhaps the most *musically* effective political music in the history of rock, at once martial and delicate, tinged with multifarious sources from Captain Beefheart to Albert Ayler, from Big Flame to Brecht, *Those Deep Buds* is the first Hermans studio recording to come close to approximating their live performances. (*Bump And Swing*, a live record released earlier this year, is an invaluable companion piece.) You can hear how this music is going to soar in the live context, how each rhythm will give way to another, how the (quite long) songs pulse and build and fade without ever losing interest. "Virginia Fur" and "Keep Your Laws/Off My Body" are nearly perfect meditations on art, freedom and rhythm. Their intensity of musical imagination totally foreign to contemporary rock, steeped in world musics from jazz to dub to Eastern European folk but as driving and powerful as anything in the American canon. The Hermans' current U.S. tour may be their last ever; see them, by any means necessary. —Michael Vazquez

DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 30. Touring through November.

FILE UNDER: Next order no-wave world groove music.

R.I.Y.L.: Sonic Youth, Shellac, Ornette Coleman.

Silkworm

by David Spague

The story of Silkworm—like most of rock's better tales—begins with a whimper, not a bang. When Missoula, Montana (circa 1985) proved too boring for Tim Midgett, Andrew Cohen and Joel Phelps, they joined Einheit, that city's first (and possibly last) gloom-punk band. Several mutations later, the fog of Anglophilia that surrounded that band lifted—but just enough for Silkworm to emerge from the murk.

"Part of the motivation was boredom, and looking for something exotic. Now the whole Alternative Nation thing has infiltrated even the most remote corners of the country," chuckles bassist/singer Midgett. "On one hand, it's cool that kids don't have to search so hard for stimulus, but on the other, you have bands like the Red Hot Chili Peppers or Soundgarden, who have nothing new to offer, but they're marketed to make people feel cool for liking them."

By the time this decade dawned, Silkworm's three founding members had recorded a handful of self-released cassettes, but couldn't quite shake the ennui—so they loaded up the van and they moved to Seattle. Swimming pools. Rock stars. While they managed a goodly number of gigs—and a minimally distributed CD, *L'ajre*—the band (by then augmented by drummer Michael Dahlquist) didn't throw itself in the direction of any of the Pacific Northwest's numerous ready-made audiences.

"Most of the great bands to have come from around here haven't really fit in at all," he shrugs. "Anything you can point to immediately and tell they're from some specific place... they kind of suck."

With brittle sonic superstructures that emphasize snap and crackle over pop, and quizzical lyrics—like "There's A Party In Warsaw Tonight," the lead track off the new *Libertine*, which Midgett describes as "a World War II song with a Thomas Pynchon twist"—Silkworm gives off a decidedly dark aura. But Midgett doesn't think of the band as gloomy.

"I don't think gloom in itself is very attractive, but the music we all like has some emotional power to it," he says. "It's not considered cool in a lot of circles to be really into what you're doing—we really don't engage very much in irony."

None of Silkworm's readily available releases—1993's *...his absence is a blessing* and this year's pair of aces, *In The West* and the brand-new *Libertine*—contain much to smirk about. The angular sound, enhanced by the engineering of fellow Missoula expatriate Steve Albini, has a spartan edge, recalling bands like Wire and the Wedding Present. Live, on the other hand, the group stretches out, squeezing out guitar sparks like Television or the Dream Syndicate (both of whom Silkworm has been known to cover in concert).

That last aspect might change in the coming months, given the recent departure of co-founder Phelps, whose Telecaster runs were often spectacular. "When Joel decided he didn't want to do this any more, we weren't really shocked, since we knew he wasn't totally happy with being on the road all the time," says Midgett, who reckons the band spent about seven of the last twelve months in its van. "We talked about it and decided to see what happens as a trio. So far, it's been really easy to adapt. There's not as much give and take as there used to be, but I think it's really cool."

Libertine, which Midgett calls "a last chapter in one part of the band's career," also marks Silkworm's departure from *C/Z*, which released *In The West* but encountered a recent rash of financial difficulties. The new album, released on El Recordito, an label launched by three former *C/Z* employees, showcases the distinct writing styles of Midgett (off-kilter pop with a Euro sheen) and Cohen (jagged, scree-infused guitar-rock).

"That's probably the thing I'm proudest of," says Midgett. "I think Andy's songs [on *Libertine*] are probably the best thing we've ever done, and they're very different than anything I'd ever do. If we did it any other way, things would really get boring—and that's what we're always trying to avoid."



Standing, from left: Michael, Tim, Andrew.
Seated: the now-departed Joel Phelps.

DISCOGRAPHY:

- Advantage* (self-released cassette) 1988
- Girl Harbr* (self-released cassette) 1989
- Girl Harbr Out-takes* (self-released cassette) 1989
- "Slipstream" 7" (Punchdrunk) 1991
- L'ajre* (Temporary Freedom) 1992
- "The Chain" 7" (Temporary Freedom) 1992
- "Violet" 7" (Blatant) 1993
- ...his absence is a blessing* (12" EP; (Stampede) 1993
- "Into The Woods" 7" (Rockamundo) 1993
- split 7" with Engine Kid (C/Z) 1993
- In The West* (C/Z) 1994
- "Insider" on *You Got Lucky: A Tribute To Tom Petty* (Scotti Bros.) 1994
- Libertine* (El Recordito) 1994

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE HOFFMAN JR.

Sinead O'Connor

Universal mother

the new album featuring
Fire On Babylon
Thank You For Hearing Me
all apologies

EMI Records
Chrysalis

produced by: O'Connor / Roberts / Harrison artwork by: Steve Meyhall



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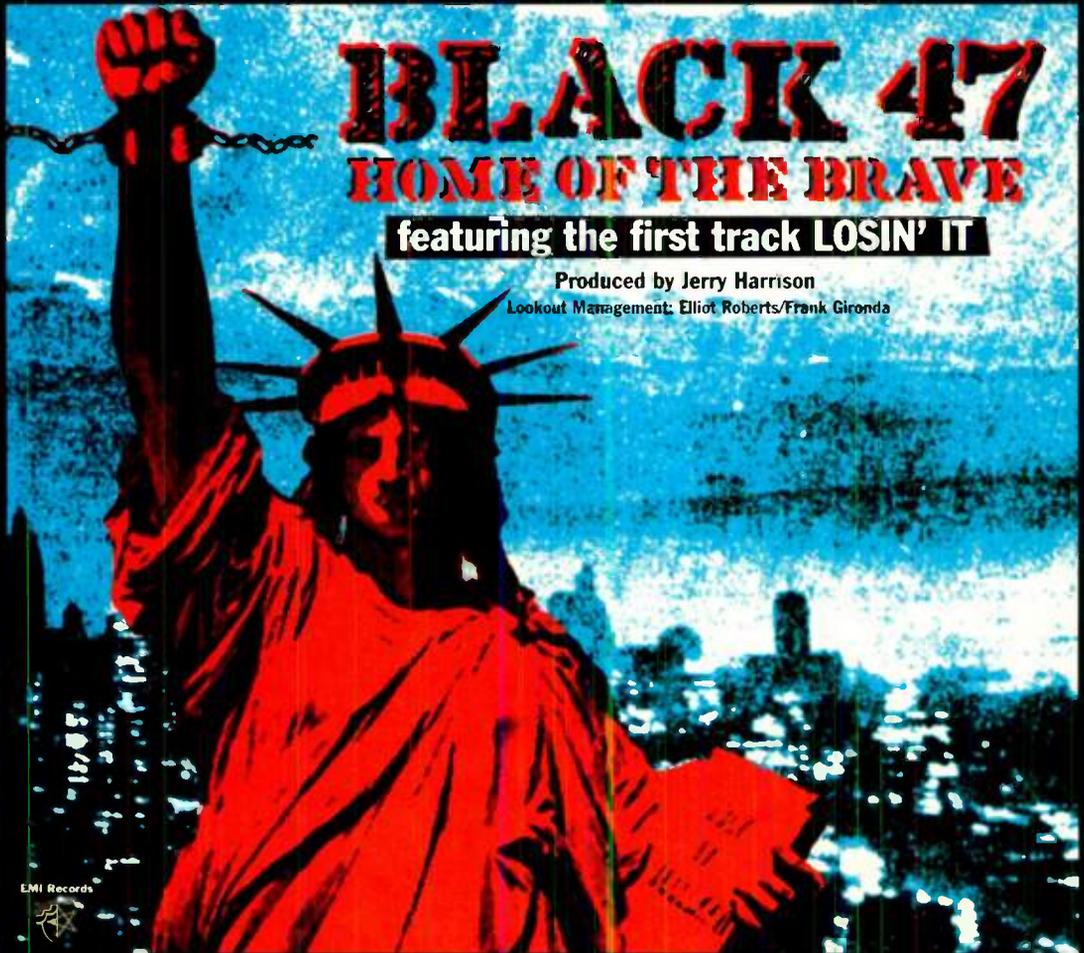
BLACK 47

HOME OF THE BRAVE

featuring the first track LOSIN' IT

Produced by Jerry Harrison

Lookout Management: Elliot Roberts/Frank Gironda



EMI Records



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World Radio History



r.e.m.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN MAZUR



by David Sprague

Whether you love the music or hate it, it's impossible to regard R.E.M. with anything other than respect. Yes, the modernized brand of folk-rock with which Berry, Buck, Mills and Stipe galvanized the generation before X spawned more dopily clueless imitators than anyone this side of David Bowie. And yes, they've gone through periods where didacticism threatened to inflate the band to stadium-sized proportions of self-importance. But while some of their peers have called a halt to artistic forward progress, R.E.M. has neither missed nor retraced a step in its ascent from little ol' art-rock band from Athens to the archetype by which all so-called non-commercial chart-toppers must, in a way, be judged.

Monster, the band's ninth album, marks a new dawn for R.E.M. With Peter Buck's incandescent guitar arcs—absent for several albums—serving as illumination, the band slips out of the self-imposed darkness of *Automatic For The People* to reinvent itself in full view of its audience. Given the innately introverted members' leap into celebrity,

it should come as no surprise that matters of identity and personality are at the fore of songs like "Crush With Eyeliner" (which boils rock image down succinctly into the couplet "I'm the real thing/How can I make myself faker to make her mine") and "I Don't Sleep I Dream."

"There's a lot of room for gross misinterpretation or exaggeration or simplification," says Michael Stipe, rolling a cigarette between fingers liberally tipped with orange nail polish. "To watch yourself become a cartoon and react to that in your normal daily activity, with people who aren't there to report on you... it's not really pleasant. I think Kurt Cobain said that if someone taught a class in Celebrity 101, he'd have been the first in line to take it. I can understand that.

"We live in a consumer society and music is bought and sold," he continues. "You're living in a fool's paradise to say you're not a commodity. To keep it in perspective is what ultimately divides the very successful—I mean the very good—from the hacks."

Commodification is but one of the issues addressed on *Monster's* most corrosive song, "The King Of Comedy" (initially conceived with a more, shall we say, expletive-laden title, according to guitarist Peter Buck), wherein Stipe sneers through a laundry-list of things he's not ("your magazine... your television...") as well as a list of things he is—or is rumored to be ("I'm straight/I'm queer/I'm bi"). But the band's actions over the years—from early videos which showed nary a member's face to the band's recent five-year sabbatical from touring—have spoken even louder than those words.

"I think disdain for massive compromise is inherent in us," he says. "If you can carry that into an arena where volumes of money, power and wealth, you'll be fine. A modicum of talent doesn't hurt either."

The last line, delivered deadpan, sheds some light on why R.E.M.—and not (to pick some not-entirely-random examples) the Replacements or Hüsker Dü—was able to segue from Econoline-driven Bohemia to nationally televised award shows so easily. While many singular-minded combos wore their fear of success like a badge, R.E.M. was always image-equipped, even if that image happened to include inscrutable lyrics delivered in an incomprehensible voice from an impenetrably dark stage.

"As cliché as it may sound, we really wanted the focus to be on the music," says nattily-goateed bassist Mike Mills. "We didn't put our faces on the records, we didn't want to be in the videos. We weren't doing this in order to become famous."

"And we strongly fought against the idea of the singer being the pop star face," adds Stipe. "As we've marched forward, I probably have taken on that role to an extent, but I think it's been done with some degree of intelligence and humor."

For all its conceptual heft, *Monster* is most notable for the amount of viscera left exposed throughout. While long stretches of *Automatic For The People* and *Out Of Time*—the two sets that vaulted the band into the hearts of the ledger-keepers in beautiful downtown Burbank—could've passed for kudzu-draped chamber music, there's an unfussy garage-rock feel throughout *Monster*.

"It's really the most spontaneous thing I can ever remember us doing," says guitarist Buck, whose newly-sprouted muttonchops make him look ever so slightly like a member of the Peanut Butter Conspiracy. "We rented this big old space to rehearse in, and when we started playing in it the vibe was so good that we just decided to bring some equipment in and record there."

Buck's contributions are the most palpably energized on the new disc—which has a little to do with artistic excitement, he says, and a little to do with decreased alcohol intake. But while he manages to come off both angular (on "What's The Frequency, Kenneth"—a title that Scott Miller's Game Theory first borrowed back in 1988 from the two men who assaulted Dan Rather) and glam-rock (on "Crush With Eyeliner"), he refrains from the pomp-pop excess that so often passes for alterna-axework in the '90s.

"I remember reading this review that praised some band or another for refuting the 'Athens no-guitar-solo mentality,'" Buck says. And they meant it as a dig at me, but I took it the other way. I hate fuckin' guitar solos as much now as I ever did—they're the most boring things in the world, except for [the one on] 'What Goes On.'"

He backed up those words in R.E.M.'s earliest days by wrapping Stipe's oblique lyrics in equally oblique sonic structures made up of chords that hung and drifted more often than they "progressed." But by the dawn of the first golden age of college radio, countless players had taken to mimicking Buck, right down to the unbuttoned sleeves flapping across those Rickenbacker strings.

Buck discarded the jangle motif years ago, but it's taken him this long to find something to replace it—namely, a jagged, bony strain of power-rock that draws as much inspiration from the Cro-Magnon

string-pawing of the Count Five as from the cerebro-core note bending of Mission Of Burma. So why did he take a break from his role as the guitar player that guitar wonks love to hate?

"I just got to a point where I became so bored with what I was doing that I didn't even feel like looking at a guitar," Buck says. "But then I picked up a mandolin and things looked completely different. I'm sure Mike would say the same thing happened to him when he started concentrating more on keyboards.

"When those songs started coming together, though, they didn't evolve in the same way—they kind of devolved," he laughs. "We found ourselves playing three-chord rock, just like the good old days. I can still take out the 12-string and come up with something on the spot that people will recognize as sounding like R.E.M., but then again, so can a lot of people. That's probably why I stopped."

Stipe cites similar reasons for the homebound half-decade that has accompanied the band's most "marketable" years. The unusually low profile, in tandem with the brooding, almost fatalistic tone of R.E.M.'s last album, led to speculation about the singer's own physical condition, which he insists is fine (although he bemoans his inability to grow hair "long enough to hide behind").

"It's obvious that [Automatic For The People] is all about death and mortality, but as a writer, I feel insulted when people can't remove me and my media figure celebrity-dom from my songs," Stipe says. "I go out of my way to write from points of view that aren't necessarily mine, about places I haven't necessarily been. I'm not so fascinating that I could write nine albums about myself."

Stipe admits that he has removed the opacity that isolated his own experience from his lyrics—and experienced a good deal of pain in the process.

"This record was very hard to do for a number of reasons," he says. "I don't want to get too far off the subject, but... I was very good friends with River Phoenix, and his death was a profound loss and shock. We'd started working on [*Monster*], and when River died, I couldn't write for five months. I was paralyzed... I didn't want to write any more about death, and that's all I could think about."

"But as time passed, I started getting into a place where I felt comfortable again and I wasn't obsessing, and then Kurt [Cobain, to whom "Let Me In" is addressed] died and I needed catharsis so badly."

The cathartic tone is certainly contagious, giving *Monster* the feel—if not the sound—of a field-recorded blues concert. It's natural, then, that the band should take it to the road on a tour which they're in the process of readying, and which all four members admit to approaching with enthusiasm and trepidation.

"I'm a little bit nervous about doing this for real again, although it's not like I get stage fright the way I used to," says Stipe with a rueful laugh. "People used to think I was being enigmatic onstage by wearing three pairs of pants and singing with my back to the audience, but that was just me not wanting to be there. These days, being there is... well, it's all right."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- "Radio Free Europe" 7" (Hib-Tone) 1981
- Chronic Town* (EP) (IRS) 1982
- Murmur* (IRS) 1983
- Reckoning* (IRS) 1984
- "Tighten Up" (flexi) (with *Bucketful Of Brains* magazine) 1985
- Fables Of The Reconstruction* (IRS) 1985
- Lifes Rich Pageant* (IRS) 1986
- Dead Letter Office* (IRS) 1987
- Document* (IRS) 1987
- Eponymous* (IRS) 1988
- Green* (Warner Bros.) 1988
- "Parade Of The Wooden Soldiers" (fan club 7") 1988
- "Dark Globe" (flexi) (with *Sassy* magazine) 1989
- "Academy Fight Song" (fan club 7") 1989
- "Ghost Reindeer In The Sky" (fan club 7") 1990
- "I Walked With A Zombie" on *Where The Pyramid Meets The Eye: A Tribute To Roky Erickson* (Sire) 1991
- "First We Take Manhattan" on *I'm Your Fan: The Songs Of Leonard Cohen* (Atlantic) 1991
- Out Of Time* (Warner Bros.) 1991
- "Tom's ? (Live)" (as Bingo Hand Job) on *Tom's Album* (A&M) 1991
- "Baby, Baby" (fan club 7") 1991
- Automatic For The People* (Warner Bros.) 1992
- "Where's Captain Kirk?" (fan club 7") 1992
- "Photograph" (with Natalie Merchant) on *Born To Choose* (Rykodisc) 1993
- "Silver Belts" (fan club 7") 1993
- "Wall Of Death" on *Beat The Retreat: Songs By Richard Thompson* (Capitol) 1994
- Monster* (Warner Bros.) 1994

"You're living in a fool's paradise to say you're not a commodity."

VIRGIN NATURE SERIES



#1

The Otter

Enhydra lutris

length: 5 ft.

• To an otter, the world is one big Kandinsky painting.

DAVID GRAY
Flesh

Featuring "What Are You?"
Nationwide tour with Shawn
Colvin October through
December.



• Make sure they don't borrow your nose plugs - they'll stretch out!

BRYAN FERRY
Mamouna
On tour now



• Otters are known for their short attention spans and long underwear.

SMASHING PUMPKINS
Pisces Iscariot

A collection of B-sides and previously unreleased songs.

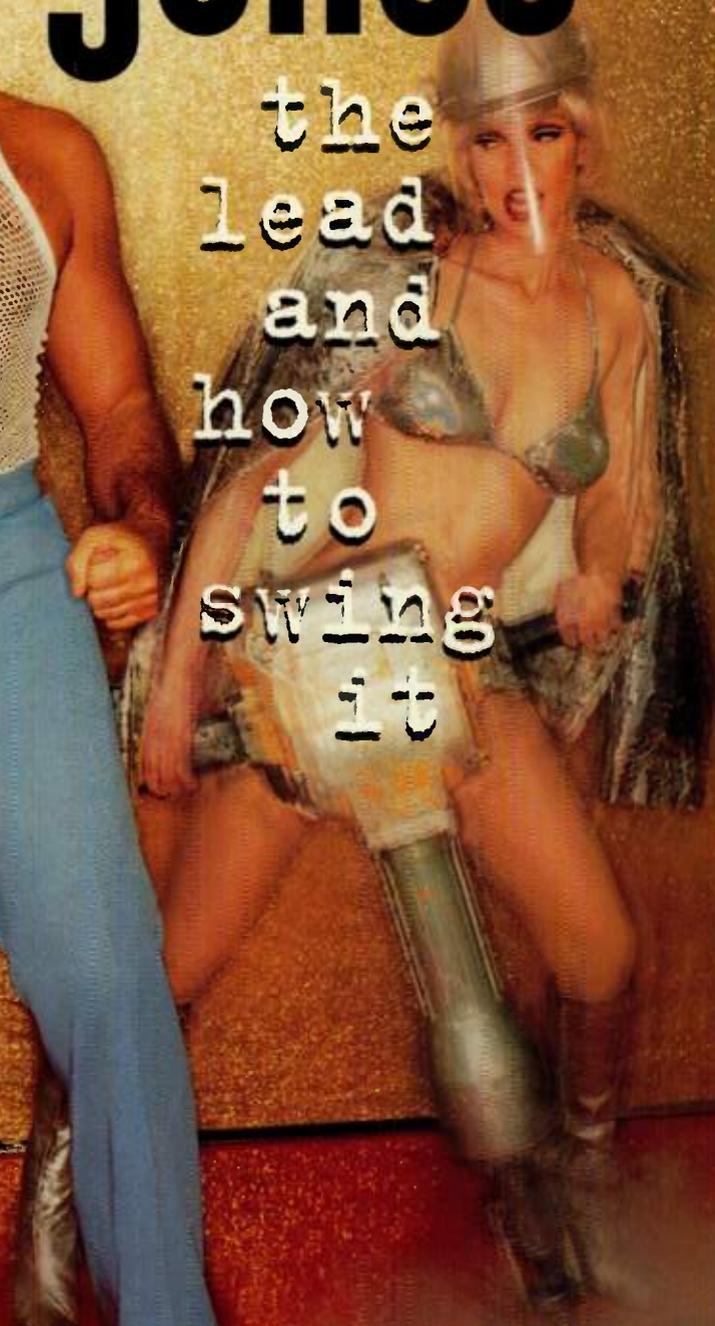
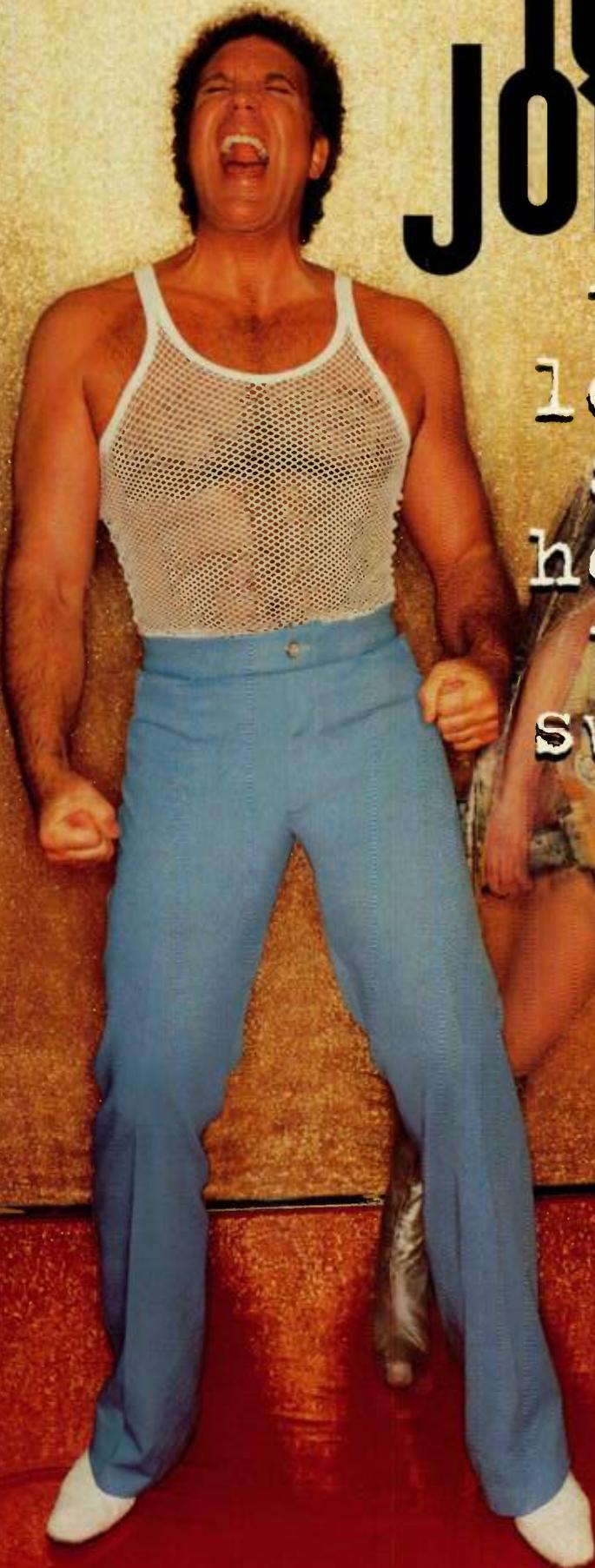
• If you live near a gym or a good pool, you can often see otters swimming in your very own neighborhood.

SMASHING PUMPKINS
Vieuphoria home video

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Tom Jones

the
lead
and
how
to
swing
it



World Pacific/Interscope



Holiday gift guide

There are a lot of great records out there, a lot of opportunities to make someone's holiday with an unexpected and thoughtful gift. If you want giving to be really better than receiving this year, look past the sale racks pushing the same half-dozen mega-records to find something that the music fans on your list didn't even know they were looking for. The next few pages contain our suggestions for the perfect albums to put under the tree, with special lists of records in each genre for the novice and the enthusiast.

Indie-Pop

Like most categories, indie-pop lacks specific boundaries and a distinct source, but a handful of British bands recording from 1979 through the mid-'80s mark an essential starting point for this still flourishing genre. In London around '79-'80, Rough Trade Records was championing bands like minimalists **YOUNG MARBLE GIANTS** and art-punk group the **RAINCOATS**, who would both go on to become underground cult heroes. Soon afterwards, Postcard Records set up shop in Scotland, releasing early singles by clean-cut pop outfit **ORANGE JUICE**; the label was recently reborn and has issued two CDs of the band's earliest, and best, recordings. In '84, Creation Records, which soon became an indie-pop stable yard, entered the fray with the first single from the **JESUS AND MARY CHAIN**, which singlehandedly introduced white noise to the genre. In 1986, indie-pop was officially inaugurated into the pop world with the release of the British music newspaper *N.M.E.*'s *C86* compilation, featuring several low-fi jangle rock bands, including the **WEDDING PRESENT**, which released its first two albums and a ton of singles on its own Reception label (the band is still around and recently released an excellent LP on Island), and the **PASTELS** (also still around), whose off-kilter



Small Factory

impressive batch of indie-poppers, including **VELOCITY GIRL**, **SMALL FACTORY** and the **MAGNETIC FIELDS**. We would be remiss not to also mention New Zealand and its prominent Flying Nun label, which has released some of the most inspiring indie-pop around, from bands such as the **CHILLS**, the **VERLAINES** and the **BATS**.



Beat Happening

Novice:

Velocity Girl: *Simpatia!* (Sub Pop)
 Wedding Present: *George Best*
 (soon to be reissued on Island)
 Spinanes: *Manos* (Sub Pop)
 Lois: *Strumpet* (K)
 Pastels: *Truckload Of Trouble* (Seed)

Enthusiast:

Magnetic Fields: *Holiday* (Feel Good All Over)
 Beat Happening: *Jamboree* (K)
 Chills: *Kaleidoscope World* (Homestead)
 Orange Juice: *Ostrich Churchyard* (Postcard)
 Young Marble Giants: *Colossal Youth* (Rough Trade)

Country

The best place to begin any country appreciation course is with **HANK WILLIAMS** (Senior! Senior!). If you're just lookin' to get your feet wet, start with *40 Greatest Hits*, but most likely, after that little taste you'll want to dig deeper. *The Singles Collection... Plus* boxed set is fantastic, and there's a nine-volume series by Polygram that is a godsend for hardcore fans. **GEORGE JONES** is the greatest singer country music has ever produced, and he's recorded a ton of material—some about as good as it gets, some embarrassing (be careful). The best Jones compilations are *Best Of (1955-1967)* (Rhino) and *Cup Of Loneliness* (Mercury). No country collection would be complete without **BUCK OWENS'** hardcore West Coast honky-tonk, and Rhino's two *Very Best Of* volumes are a great place to start (Sundazed will be reissuing almost all of his great Capitol albums in '95). People you read about in CMJ every month worship **GRAM PARSONS**, and his late '60s-early '70s work with the **BYRDS** (*Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*), the **FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS**, and as a solo performer has provided an introduction to country for more rock fans and artists than any other performer. The Flying Burrito Brothers' *Gilded Palace Of Sin* is probably the finest country-rock record ever released, and *Farther Along*, a best-of compilation, includes all of *Palace* (minus two cuts) plus a lot of other cool stuff. Parsons' two solo records (*GP* and *Grievous Angel*, available on a two-fer CD) are also highly recommended. For the insanely enthusiastic country fan, Germany's Bear Family label offers some wonderful (and expensive) boxed sets of country's greatest heroes.



George Jones



Iris Dement

Novice

Hank Williams: *40 Greatest Hits* (Polygram)
George Jones: *Cup Of Loneliness* (Mercury)
Johnny Cash: *The Sun Years* (Rhino)
Flying Burrito Brothers: *Farther Along: The Very Best Of (A&M)*
Buck Owens: *Very Best Of (Volumes 1 & 2)* (Rhino)

Enthusiast

Iris Dement: *My Life* (Warner Bros.)
Lefty Frizzell: *The Best Of* (Rhino)
Ray Price: *The Essential Ray Price* (Columbia)
Flatlanders: *More A Legend Than A Band* (Rounder)
The Louvin Brothers: *Capitol Country Classics* (Capitol-EMI)

Recommended Reading:

Chet Flippo, *Your Cheatin' Heart*
Peter Guralnick, *Lost Highway*

Funk

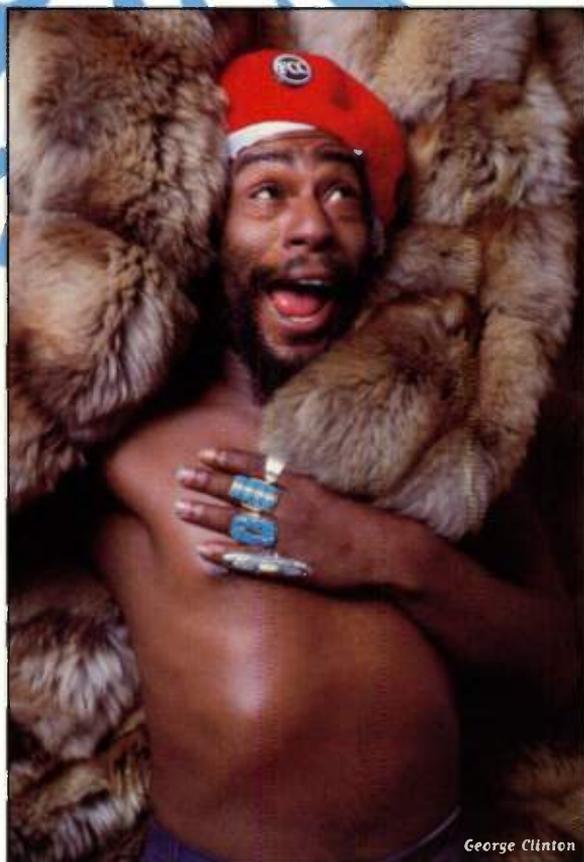
For the funk newcomer, there's no better beginning than **JAMES BROWN's** *Star Time* boxed set (Polydor)—probably the best boxed set ever made, it's almost five solid hours of unbelievably great music. If you don't want to ante up for the box (but you do! you do!), go for *Revolution Of The Mind*, a blistering '72 live album, or *James Brown's Funky People*, vol. 2, a compilation of amazing singles that the Godfather produced for members of his revue, put out on his label, and usually wrote, played, and sang on. For a more general funk sampler, there's Rhino's *In Yo' Face* series of compilations—while they all have good stuff on them, the introductory Volume 1/2 is the most listenable as a whole. You also don't want to miss out on **GEORGE CLINTON's** Parliafunkadelicament complex. *The Bomb*, a bargain-line greatest-hits (Casablanca), has all of Parliament's big touchstones. For more hardcore jollies, there's a 4-CD collection of P-Funk live stuff on Clinton's own label (sadly, there's no Funkadelic greatest-hits in print). The obvious introduction to **SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE** is the phenomenal *Greatest Hits* (Epic), but spend a dollar or two more and get *Anthology* (Epic), which has everything on *Greatest Hits* and a bunch more songs. And Rhino's *Phat Trax* series collects the best of late-'70s funk (as sampled by lots of mid-'90s rappers), while the Luv 'N' Haight label releases collections of primo rare sides from the early '70s.

Novice:

James Brown, *Star Time* (Polydor)
In Yo' Face, vol. 1/2 (Rhino)
Parliament, *The Bomb* (Casablanca)
Sly And The Family Stone, *Anthology* (Epic)
The Meters, *Good Ol' Funky Music* (Rounder)

Enthusiast:

Funkadelic, *Uncle Jam Wants You* (Priority)
Ohio Players, *Gold* (Mercury)
Dag, *Righteous* (Columbia)
Phat Trax, vol. 1 (Rhino)
The Disco Years, vol. 5: *Turn The Beat Around* (Rhino)

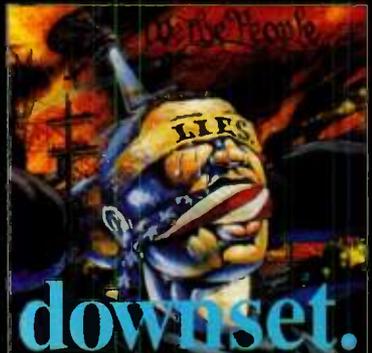
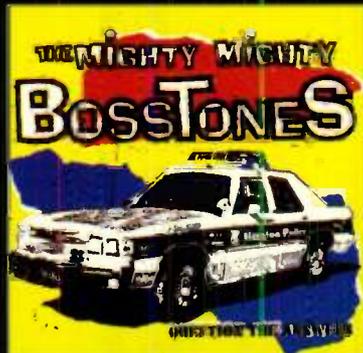
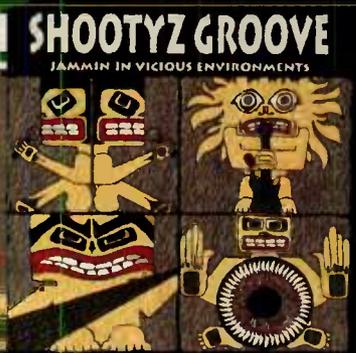


George Clinton

Sure, you're gonna lose 10 pounds.

Sure, you're gonna quit smoking.

Why not make a new year's resolution that will last?



Just a few suggestions.

MOEBA Berkeley, CA / ARON'S Los Angeles, CA / ATOMIC Milwaukee, WI / BACKSTREET Morgantown, WV / BENWAY-BOP Las Vegas, NV / BIZZY BEE Naperville, IL / BOW WOW Albuquerque, NM / CRIMINAL Atlanta, GA / CUTLER'S New Haven, CT / EAR X-FACY Louisville, KY / EASTSIDE DISCS / Milwaukee, WI / EVERYBODY'S Cincinnati, OH / FANTASY Newport News, VA / FLIPSIDE Pompton Lakes, NJ / GARAGE D'OR Minneapolis, MN / HOME OF THE HITS Buffalo, NY / HOMER'S Omaha, NE / KIM'S UNDERGROUND New York, NY / LAKESHORE RECORD EXCHANGE Rochester, NY / LOU'S Encinitas, CA / MANIFEST DISC Columbia, SC / MOBY DISC Reseda, CA / MUSIC MILLENNIUM Portland, OR / NORTHERN LIGHTS Minneapolis, MN / OFF THE RECORD San Diego, CA / OFF THE RECORD Royal Oaks, MI / OPEN BOOKS & RECORDS Miami, FL / ORPHEUM Seattle, WA / OZONE Portland, OR / PHANTASMAGORIA Wheaton, MD / PIER PLATTERS Hoboken, NJ / PLAN 9 Charlottesville, VA / PLAY IT AGAIN Royal Oak, MI / POINDEXTER Durham, NC / RECKLESS Chicago, IL / RECORD COLLECTOR Iowa City, IA / RECORD RACK Houston, TX / RED TOWER Orland Park, IL / RHINO Los Angeles, CA / ROCKIT Saugus, MA / ROUGH TRADE San Francisco, CA / SELECTER Hickory, NC / SOUND EXCHANGE Houston, TX / THE SOUND Lynnwood, WA / USED KIDS Columbus, OH / VINTAGE VINYL Fords, NJ / VINYL SOLUTION Grand Rapids, MI / WATERLOO Austin, TX / WAX IN FACTS Atlanta, GA / WAX TRAX Denver, CO

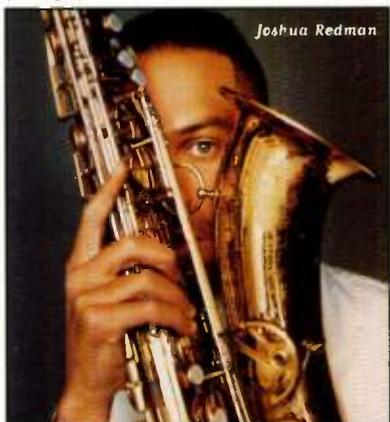


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World Radio History

Jazz

Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie are gone. Branford Marsalis has to laugh at Jay Leno's jokes. Cheesemaster Kenny G gets invited to the White House while Bill Clinton waffles painfully between notes. Is there hope for jazz in the '90s? In this decade, neo-traditionalists (guys who sound and dress like fifties hipsters) seem to indicate the answer may be a mighty "Yes!" In addition to Wynton Marsalis (whose *Standard Time* records are safe introductions) there are a slew of younger players (Roy Hargrove, Marlon Jordan, Joshua Redman) releasing terrific new jazz records, picking up on the acoustic jazz tradition that was shelved when Miles went electric and the planet followed.



Joshua Redman

Coltrane, Charles Mingus, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and more that dig deep and provide indispensable listening and reading for the expert or willing beginner. Just as you want to avoid buying those \$6.99 classical CDs, steer clear of budget jazz CDs. Getting the good stuff may require a little more investigative groundwork, but it will have been worth it.

We've recommended titles released in the past five years, in support of newer recordings and in an attempt to lessen the nightmare of picking ten jazz records from over 70 years of recordings.

If you don't have any jazz records, there are plenty of (if not too many) classics to choose from. From the dawn of jazz, look no further than **LOUIS ARMSTRONG's** *Hot Fives and Sevens*, vols. 1-3 (CBS). For a vision of the majesty of jazz, nobody beats the Duke. **DUKE ELLINGTON's** 3-CD collection, *The Blanton-Webster Band* (Bluebird-RCA) is a nice look at one of the century's best and most beloved composers and bandleaders with his prime sidemen. Post-Duke, it's hard to go wrong with ultra-cool landmarks like **MILES DAVIS' Kind Of Blue**, **CHARLIE PARKER's The Charlie Parker Story** (Savoy) (or live dangerously and pick up the entire, remarkable 4-CD set, *The Complete Dial Sessions*) or even familiar stuff like **DAVE BRUBECK's Take Five**. There are two camps as to the finest sax player after Parker. Some say **JOHN COLTRANE** (*A Love Supreme* (Impulse)); others stick with **SONNY ROLLINS** (*Saxophone Colossus* (OJC)).

Fusion got a bad name later in the '70s, but Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* remains impressive even today. If you're frightened of those 16-CD box sets, Rhino (via Atlantic Jazz) has issued 2-CD comps of

Novice:

- Marlon Jordan: *The Undaunted* (Columbia)
- Ginger Baker Trio: *Going Back Home* (Atlantic)
- Joshua Redman Quartet: *Moodswing* (Warner Bros.)
- Marcus Roberts: *Deep In The Shed* (Novus)
- Branford Marsalis: *I Heard You Twice The First Time* (Columbia)

Enthusiast:

- Bheki Mseleku: *Timelessness* (Verve)
- World Saxophone Quartet: *Metamorphosis* (Elektra Nonesuch)
- Randy Weston: *The Spirit Of Our Ancestors* (Antilles)
- Franklinter Kiermyer Quartet: *Solomon's Daughter* (Evidence)
- Zorn/Lewis/Frisell: *More News For Lulu* (hatArt)

Recommended Reading:

- Blue Note, The Album Cover Art*
- California Cool: West Coast Jazz Of The '50s & '60s, The Album Cover Art*
- All Music Guide-Jazz*

Indie-Rock

Once you get into indie rock, it's huge, labyrinthine and jammed full of minutiae. Fortunately, it's also friendly to newcomers; you just have to know where to start. We'll just steer you straight to a bunch of standard touchpoints, starting with the legendary trio **HÜSKER DÜ**, who had the bright idea of writing simple, excellent pop songs, playing them incredibly fast, and concealing them behind a wall of distortion-pedal noise. The double-length *Zen Arcade* (SST) is their masterpiece. These days **PAVEMENT** is on every rock writer's lips, which is kind of a funny image if you think about it—beginners should check out the pop-friendly and utterly original *Crooked Rain*, *Crooked Rain* (Matador). Even more name-dropped is Steve Albini; if you want to hear the bleak, sarcastic attitude and sheet-metal-being-ripped-apart guitar sound that made him famous, try his old band **BIG BLACK's** *The Rich Man's Eight-Track Tape* CD (Touch And Go). The most popular indie-rock band is **FUGAZI**, whose serious-minded *13 Songs*, collecting two early EPs, is the best starting point—the band's musicianship is crisp and startling, and its excellent politics extend to \$8 CD prices. It's very easy to learn to love the **JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION**, sort of a tougher hybrid of '56 Elvis, '70 James Brown and '78 Chic (start with *Orange* (Matador)); for much grittier thrills, check out *Corpse Love* (Caroline), a compilation of super-raucous, sometimes actually shocking stuff by Spencer's former band



Hüsker Dü

PUSSY GALORE. **SEBADOH's** following is way too big to call a cult any more; it just seems that way because the group's fans tend to get obsessively into its unforgettable, painfully self-revealing songs (*Bakesale* (Sub Pop) is the easiest to get into, *Ill* (Homestead) the most rewarding over time). And don't forget about **SUPERCHUNK**, who singlehandedly brought the pogo back into style; the best place to begin is *Tossing Seeds* (Merge), a singles compilation including the semi-legendary griping-about-work anthem "Slack Motherfucker."

Novice:

- Pavement: *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* (Matador)
- Hüsker Dü: *Zen Arcade* (SST)
- Superchunk: *Tossing Seeds* (Merge)
- Jon Spencer Blues Explosion: *Orange* (Matador)
- Big Black: *The Rich Man's Eight-Track Tape* (Touch And Go)

Enthusiast:

- Guided By Voices: *Vampire On Titus* (Scat)
- Pussy Galore: *Corpse Love* (Caroline)
- Slint: *Spiderland* (Touch And Go)
- Laughing Hyenas: *Life Of Crime* (Touch And Go)
- Sebadoh: *Bakesale* (Sub Pop)



Pavement

Soul



Des'ree

There's a reason why many rock critics will have you believe that it's absolutely essential that you own the nine-CD *Stax/Volt Box* (Atlantic): Soul music is, by and large, the richest and most heartfelt strain of American pop, and there's no better representation of the genre than this compilation of the first eight years of the *Stax* and *Volt* labels' soul singles catalog. If that box set's near-\$100 price tag proves too steep, however, there's plenty of modern soul and recent reissues to slake a thirst for true soul. First, avoid the stomach-turning Boomer nostalgia of the *Big Chill Soundtrack*, and turn toward Motown's excellent **MARVIN GAYE**, **STEVIE WONDER** and **TEMPTATIONS** reissues and box sets. Second, take some time to peruse the 15-volume *Didn't It Blow Your Mind* series of '70s soul from Rhino. While the rest of pop culture issues a collective giggle over the goofy clothes and life style excesses of the '70s, these compilation disks show where things were really at twenty years ago with some of the toughest, most uplifting songs to ever crash the pop charts. Take a look at the track listings, find a song or two that you've gotta have—like the Staple Singers' "I'll Take You There" (Vol. 8)—and let the rest of the disc surprise you.

Hip-hop's sampling of classic soul grooves and the emergence of acid jazz as a thriving night club scene has resulted in a resurgence of contemporary soul. **ME'SHELL NDEGÉOCELLO's** *Plantation Lullabies*, **D-INFLUENCE's** *Good 4 We* (Talkin' Loud-Mercury), **DIONNE FERRIS' Wild-Seed, Wild-Flower** (Columbia), the **YOUNG DISCIPLES' Road To Freedom**, the solo debut from Young Disciples singer **CARLEEN ANDERSON, True Spirit** (Virgin), the **SOLSONICS' Jazz In The Present Tense** and **DES'REE's** stunning *I Ain't Movin'* (550 Music) are all great examples of modern soul.

Novice:

Soul II Soul: *Keep On Movin'* (Virgin)
Curtis Mayfield: *Superfly Soundtrack* (Curton)
Prince: *Sign 'O' The Times* (Paisley Park-WB)
Marvin Gaye: *What's Goin' On* (Motown)
Stevie Wonder: *Innersivisions* (Motown)

Enthusiast:

Atlantic Rhythm & Blues, 1947-1974 (Atlantic)
Sweet Soul Music: Voices From The Shadows (Sire-WB)
Dramatics: *Whatcha See Is Whatcha Get* (Fantasy)
Chairmen Of The Board: *Salute To The General: Greatest Hits* (HDH-Fantasy)
Al Green: *Call Me* (Hi-MCA)

Recommended Reading:

Peter Guralnick, *Sweet Soul Music: Rhythm and Blues and the Southern Dream Of Freedom*

Punk Rock

18 years after punk started, it's finally become part of the pop landscape. For those who first caught on to the energy of punk with Green Day and Offspring, the **SEX PISTOLS' Never Mind The Bollocks** and the **CLASH's Give 'Em Enough Rope, The Clash** and *London Calling* and contemporaries like **BAD RELIGION** and **RANCID** are the obvious touchstones. But if you want to introduce the novice to the joys of punk rock, the best place to start them off might be **X-RAY SPEX's** dense, playful and completely accessible *Germ Free Adolescents* (Caroline)—the CD reissue has bonus tracks including the legendary "Oh Bondage Up Yours!" single. Likewise, you can't go wrong with the punk-pop of the **BUZZCOCKS' Singles Going Steady**. The **RAMONES' blooming, buzzing** first two albums, *Ramones* and *Leave Home*, are now on a single CD, *All The Stuff And More, vol. 1* (Sire). Look closely on the same CBGB stage that spawned the Ramones and you'll see the spot where Glen Danzig once fronted the **MISFITS** (it's kind of scary and sticky-looking). The "greatest hits" CD *Misfits* (Plan 9-Caroline) is one big blur of distorted guitar hooks, menacing shouts and horror movie clichés. Even if you hate what Danzig's doing these days, this is irresistible.

Another career-spanning disc in the must-own category is **MINOR THREAT's Complete Discography**, which spawned a zillion hardcore bands, almost none as tight, compelling and ravaging. For their roots, check out their D.C. compatriots **BAD BRAINS**, whose "Pay To Cum" was the first hardcore single; *The R.O.I.R. Tapes* (now available on CD) is the essential compilation. And while they were in action on the East Coast, out in California **BLACK FLAG** was carving out its own hardcore legend. The bands' initial recordings with new singer Henry Rollins are captured on *Damaged*, the CD of which includes the *Jealous Again* EP.

On the artier side, **WIRE's** debut *Pink Flag* (*Restless*) is one of the best and most influential punk records ever. Smart, arty, and driven by a single-minded click-and-buzz rush, it's got 22 songs in 35 minutes but it feels like a single flawless 3-minute song. The **MINUTEMEN**, true to their name, were miniaturists, whose masterpiece *Double Nickels On The Dime* (SST) has an awful lot of tiny, literate little songs that incorporated lots of punk, a little jazz, and a Steely Dan cover. The best in-print introduction to the incredibly prolific **FALL** is a recent 2-for-1 CD (Dojo) that contains

both *Slates*, a 1980 EP that still sounds like the music of the future, and *A Part Of America Therein*, an insane 1981 live album with declaimer Mark E. Smith in prime ranting form.

For the enthusiast, the *Lipstick Traces* compilation (Rough Trade (UK)) is the soundtrack to Greil Marcus's mindbending book of the same name, and it sounds like a compilation tape made by a friend with a broad mind and a huge record collection. Besides a handful of Situationist recordings, it's got half-lost punk classics by the Mekons, the Adverts, Essential Logic and **LILIPUT**—a phenomenal all-female Swiss art-punk band from the early '80s, whose double CD (on Off Course) has steadily built up a cult following in the US. Another compilation that's worth a bit of digging is *What Stuff?* (Iloki), which raids the archives of the early L.A. punk label What for sneering, two-minute classics by bands familiar (the Germs), semi-familiar (the Dils) and unfamiliar but great (the Controllers). And **MISSION OF BURMA's** importance and influence is as strong now as ever; there are a lot of dodgy reissues and repackages out there, but you'll want to start with *Mission Of Burma* (Rykodisc)—the one with the flowers on the cover—which has practically all the essential releases by the brittle, brutal Boston trio-plus-tape-loop-guy.

Novice:

The Clash: *The Clash* (Epic)
Ramones: *All The Stuff And More, vol. 1* (Sire)
X-Ray Spex: *Germ Free Adolescents* (Caroline)
Black Flag: *Damaged* (SST)
Bad Religion: *Stranger Than Fiction* (Epitaph-Atlantic)

Enthusiast:

Mission Of Burma: *Mission Of Burma* (Rykodisc)
Wire: *Chairs Missing* (Restless)
Swell Maps: *Jaee From Occupied Europe* (Mute)
Lipstick Traces (Rough Trade)
What Stuff? (Iloki)

Recommended Reading:

Henry Rollins, *Get In The Van*
Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*



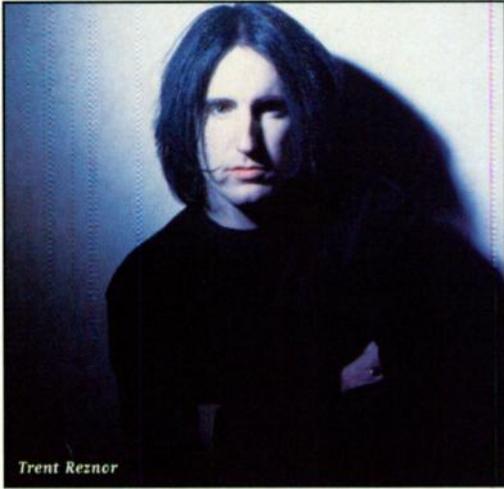
Bad Religion



Mission of Burma

Industrial

The "industrial music" tag has been attached to a huge variety of experimental and noisy groups, from bands who regarded power tools and scrap metal as instruments, to synthesizer tech heads creating noisy, avant-garde dance music, to groups like **NINE INCH NAILS** and **MINISTRY** who mix guitar-based song structures and melodies with visceral machine noise. With instrumentation including amplified auto springs, sheet metal and shopping carts, and a live show that occasionally resulted in the destruction of the stage, no band better defined the first incarnation of industrial than **EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN** (it translates as "Collapsing New Buildings"). *Strategies Against Architecture II* is a fine compilation of Neubauten's later period. Although its instrumentation was more traditional, the effect of the **SWANS'** music is no less jarring. *Cop* (Young God-Sky) is a stark, bleak test of listener endurance, and is highly recommended. The later *Children Of God* (Caroline) varies the attack with added keyboards and melody, but that only serves to make its internal violence all the more intense.



Trent Reznor

Novice:

Nine Inch Nails: *The Downward Spiral* (Nothing-Interscope)
Ministry: *Land Of Rape And Honey* (Sire-WB)
Skinny Puppy: *Too Dark Park* (Capitol)
My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult: *Confessions Of A Knife* (Wax Trax)
Meat Beat Manifesto: *Storm The Studio* (Play It Again Sam-Wax Trax)

Enthusiast:

Test Department: *The Unacceptable Face Of Freedom* (Some Bizarre UK)
Swans: *Cop/Young God* (Young God-Sky)
Throbbing Gristle: *20 Jazz Funk Greats* (Mute)
Einstürzende Neubauten: *Drawings Of Patient O.T.* (Homestead)
Coil: *Horse Rotovator* (Some Bizarre-Relativity)

The second stop on the way to Nine Inch Nails' gold-selling *Downward Spiral* (itself an excellent album) was the fusion of dance rhythms with harsh electronic noise that dominated alternative dance clubs in the mid-80s. While the sound has its beginnings in the minimalist synthesizer blips of tech lords Kraftwerk, the prolific (and as the group's recent output on Mute and the techno imprint Instinct attests, still inventive) **CABARET VOLTAIRE** shows a clearer path to the sound's most successful incarnation, **FRONT 242**. *Listen Up With Cabaret Voltaire* (Mute) is pretty much essential if *The Crack Down or Micro-phonies* (Some Bizarre-Virgin UK) prove hard to find. **FRONT 242's** *Front By Front* (Epic) and its signature single "Headhunter" will still amaze.

Jumping past, but not completely over, **SKINNY PUPPY** (*Mind: The Perpetual Intercourse* (Nettwerk-Capitol)) makes an excellently macabre gift brings us to Ministry. Before the tattoos and cowboy hats, Al Jourgenson and partner Paul Barker created one of the finest factory-floor records ever in *Twich* (Sire-WB). That statement made, the duo set about totally reconfiguring the genre with the equally brilliant guitar flourishes of *Land Of Rape And Honey* (Sire-WB). All of this brings us back to Nine Inch Nails and wonderkind Trent Reznor, whose *Pretty Hate Machine* (TVT) plied the distance between Depeche Mode and DAF for some of the most accessibly acerbic music (and the largest audience) the genre has ever seen.

Blues

Any exploration of the blues begins with its towering titans, **MUDDY WATERS**, **HOWLIN' WOLF** and **ROBERT JOHNSON**. The first two recorded for Chess records in the '50s, electrifying the rural Mississippi blues sound to create modern Chicago blues; both have excellent box sets on Chess-MCA that compile their seminal material. For a slimmer overview, try *The Best Of Muddy Waters*, or Flair-Virgin's *Howlin' Wolf Rides Again*. Robert Johnson gave the blues much of its imagery and power—he was the first bluesman on record to allegedly strike a deal with the devil at the crossroads. His guitar playing sounded simple enough, but his lyrics reveal ornately crafted detail and vivid imagery that are pure poetry, among the most haunting lyrics ever set to music. To check him out, it's even easier: Everything he ever recorded is compiled on the wonderful two-CD box set **The Complete Recordings** (Legacy). It's worth having it all. Three other blues legends, **JOHN LEE HOOKER**, **LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS** and **ALBERT KING**, are well-represented on bitchin' two-CD sets from Rhino; Lightnin' is called *Mojo Hand*, while Albert's and John Lee's are called simply *The Ultimate*.

In the '60s, many blues styles and artists were rediscovered by college kids bored with the folk boom of the early '60s. For instance, the Piedmont style, a particularly relaxed, loping and laid-back acoustic-based

Novice:

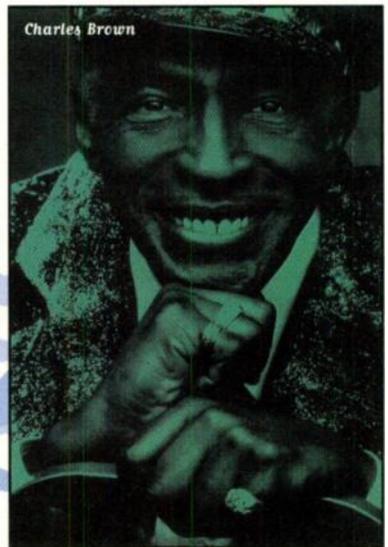
Big Daddy Kinsey: *I Am The Blues* (Gitanes Verve)
Charles Brown: *These Blues* (Verve)
Eric Clapton: *From The Cradle* (Reprise)
Various Artists: *Blues Originals* (Rhino)
Mississippi John Hurt: *Avalon Blues/Worried Blues* (Rounder)

Enthusiast:

Junior Kimbrough & The Soul Blues Boys: *Sad Days Lonely Nights* (Fat Possum)
H-Bomb Ferguson: *Wiggin' Out* (Earwig)
Cephas & Wiggins: *Bluesmen* (Chesky)
Dr. Isaiah Ross: *Call The Doctor* (Testament)
Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson: *Get Down To The Nitty Gritty* (Fan Club (France))

Recommended Reading:

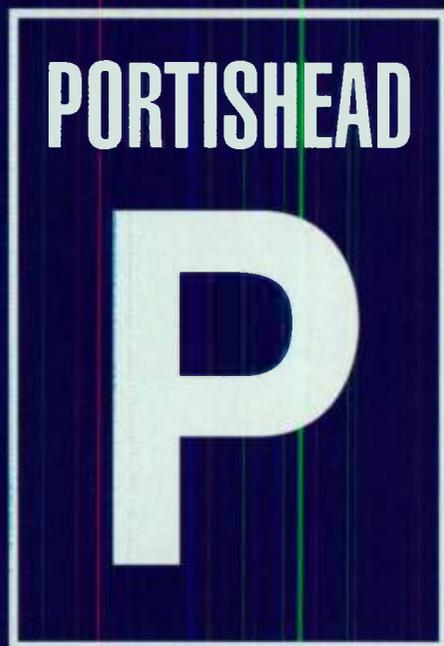
Sheldon Harris, *Blues Who's Who*
Gerard Herzhaft, *Encyclopedia Of The Blues*
Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues*
Leroi Jones, *Blues People*



Charles Brown

style of blues guitar picking, was personified by **MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT**, who made a comeback in the early '60s with two wonderful albums on Rounder, *Worried Blues 1963* and *Avalon Blues 1963*. Also essential—and so deep they're scary—are Blind Willie Johnson's complete recordings on Legacy. With their dark and foreboding themes of redemption and pain, they're like gospel gone wrong. For modern fans, **BUDDY GUY** was a big influence on **STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN**—check out Buddy's *Feels Like Rain* (Silvertone) or *The Very Best Of* (Rhino), and for Stevie Ray at his bluesiest, check out the early live-in-hometown-Austin recordings of *In The Beginning* (Epic). Also, come Grammy-time, folks will remember that Eric Clapton's latest album, *From The Cradle*, is actually pretty sharp for an English cat in his mid-forties, proving that the blues is alive and well. And on the mellow side, blues crooner **CHARLES BROWN** has for decades has one of the sweetest voices and piano styles around: *These Blues*, his newest (and first for Verve), is impressive. And for more hardcore fans who want to hear the real deal, anything on the Fat Possum, Earwig or Arhoolie labels will show the blues in its purest, rawest, most authentic form.

NOBODY LOVES ME



“Sour Times (Nobody Loves Me)”

The first track from the debut album

DUMMY

“Portishead’s music is moody and dark; soul wrenching torch songs set to low blood-pressure hip-hop grooves.” NME

“Makes Joy Division and the Smiths sound like prose from a Hallmark greeting card...Records like this are one in a million.” Billboard



Metal

Discovering heavy metal is a lot like skiing. You have to start on the beginner's slopes and work your way up, otherwise you're likely to find yourself tumbling down a mountain of noise, with ski poles poking painfully through your pants—which would give entirely new meaning to Metallica's infamous phrase "Metal Up Your Ass!" To gain a firm foundation in metal without accidentally hurtling into oblivion (all oblivion ventures in metal should be purposeful), start with heavy metal's progenitor of doom **BLACK SABBATH**. Just a couple of listens to the plodding rhythms and crunching power-chords of *Master Of Reality* and *Paranoid* (Warner Bros.), and you'll be ready for something a bit faster and more aggressive. Start with **JUDAS PRIEST**'s *Screaming For Vengeance* and *Hell Bent For Leather* (Columbia), then slide on over to **IRON MAIDEN**'s *Number Of The Beast* and *Piece Of Mind* (Capitol). If you find yourself in the mood for something flashier and more melodic, check out **SCORPIONS'** *Blackout* and *Love At First Sting* (Mercury); if not, you're ready for something really heavy. Start with **MOTORHEAD**'s *Best Of Motörhead* (Profile), which features lots of tasty noise morsels by the band that introduced punk rock to heavy metal. From there, thrust yourself into dementia with **METALLICA**'s *Master Of Puppets* and the speed metal fury of **SLAYER**, the definitive death metal band, whose albums *Reign In Blood* and the new *Divine Intervention* (American) feature enough ripping guitars and guttural howls to annoy the deaf. Want something even heavier? Okay, check out grindcore pioneers **NAPALM DEATH** (Earache-Columbia) and early **CARCASS** (Earache), who both sound roughly like Slayer at 78 r.p.m.



Novice:

Black Sabbath: *Paranoid*, *Master Of Reality* (Warner Bros.)
Judas Priest: *Hell Bent For Leather*, *British Steel* (CBS)
Metallica: *Master Of Puppets* (Elektra)
Slayer: *Reign In Blood*, *Show No Mercy* (American)
Kyuss: *Sky Valley* (Elektra)

Enthusiast:

Voivod: *War And Pain* (Metal Blade)
Venom: *Welcome To Hell* (Noise)
Entombed: *Wolverine Blues* (Earache-Columbia)
Carcass: *Symphonies Of Sickness* (Earache-Columbia)
Possessed: *Seven Churches* (featuring Primus guitarist Larry LaLonde) (Relativity)

Recommended Reading:

Dena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology*
Martin Papoff, *Riff Kills Man: 25 Years Of Recorded Hard Rock And Heavy Metal*
Chuck Eddy, *Stairway To Hell: The 500 Best Heavy Metal Albums In The Universe*

World Music

Those songwriters cranking out finales for Walt Disney Pictures were wrong. All those experts crowing about "global villages" were wrong, too. It's not a small world after all, it's a huge, big, tremendous, insanely large world—and there's tons of music happening all around. "World Music" is a woefully anemic term that people bandy about to nebulously describe music: a term used to sell products, promote dribbly New Age ideas, or revive the careers of songwriters and pop singers. In fact, many world-music artists who are only fringe names in this country sell hundreds of thousands of records and are worth millions of dollars in their homelands, making what's "popular" and what's "world" kind of a strange distinction anyway. But the meaning of "world music" that we like the best is the belief that it's simply music which has some trace of culture inherent in it, and music that carries specific cultural meaning and relevancy to the people that play and listen to it. So zydeco, reggae, and blues fall under the "world music" rubric as well as Indian music, Afropop, Brazilian, South American and Native American music. The best

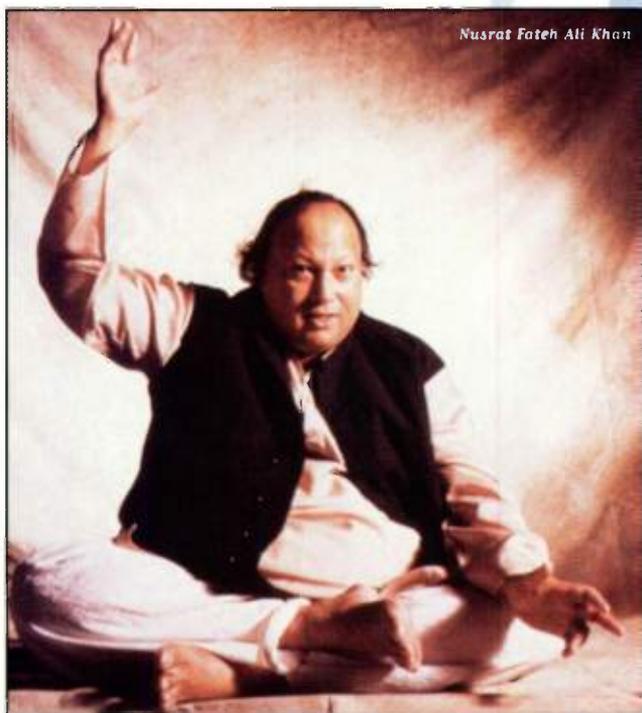
place for the beginner to start is with any of a number of excellent box sets to emerge in the recent year or two. *Global Celebration* (Ellipsis Arts) is perhaps the best overall. For an African overview, see *Africa Never Stand Still*, spotlighting most of the great major artists of that continent. *Music For Relaxation And Meditation* is an aptly-titled compilation of quiet music from many continents. Also, keep in mind that "world" music lends itself to small specialist record companies, who focus on quality releases of different kinds of ethnic music: RealWorld (founded by WOMAD, or World Of Music And Dance, with Peter Gabriel as spokesperson), Stern's Music (an English importer that has set up shop in the states), Original Music, and Luaka Bop (founded by ex-Talking Head David Byrne) all have quality releases from around the globe.

Novice:

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party: *The Last Prophet* (RealWorld-Caroline)
Gilberto Gil: *Acoustic* (Atlantic)
Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares: *Ritual* (Elektra Nonesuch)
Gnawa Music Of Marakesh: *Night Spirit Masters* (Axiom)
Ali Farka Toure with Ry Cooder: *Talking Timauktu* (Hannibal-Rykodisc)

Enthusiast:

Africando Vols. 1 & 2 (Sterri)
Duende: *The Passion And Dazzling Virtuosity Of Flamenco* (box set) (Ellipsis Arts)
Master Musicians Of Jajouka: *Apocalypse Across The Sky* (Axiom)
Fela Kuti: *Original Sufferhead* (Shanachie)
Africa Dances (Original Music)



Hip-Hop

With hip-hop, the best place to start is with early staples like **RUN-D.M.C.'s** *Raising Hell* (Profile). Before Run-D.M.C., rap was basically a singles-only genre. Two collections, *Street Beats* (Sugarhill) and *Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats* (Tommy Boy), which includes Afrika Bambaataa And The Soul Sonic Force's "Planet Rock," are wise decisions since the actual 12" singles are nearly impossible to locate. Early CDs by **SLICK RICK** (*The Great Adventures Of Slick Rick*), **ERIC B. & RAKIM** (*Paid In Full* is a hip-hop masterpiece), **L.L. COOL J** (*Radio*) and **BIG DADDY KANE'S** debut *Long Live The Kane* are also vital to any good collection.

In the late '80s hip-hop matured, with new-school groups experimenting with the creative process, as exemplified by **DE LA SOUL'S** 3 *Feet High And Rising* (Tommy Boy), the **JUNGLE BROTHERS' Straight Out The Jungle** (Warlock) or the **BEASTIE BOYS' Paul's Boutique** (Capitol). Hip-hop also grew up with a new emphasis on black nationalism and social awareness, with **PUBLIC ENEMY'S** 1988 epic, *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* (Def Jam-Columbia), leading the charge.

For the hardcore enthusiast, all the guns and gats found in many of rap's newer clans can't compete with landmark recordings by **KRS-One** and **BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS**, whose hard-to-find *Criminal Minded* (Sugarhill-B-Boy) was one of the first "gangsta" records ever made back in 1987. Releases like **N.W.A.'s Straight Outta Compton** (Priority), **ICE CUBE'S** solo debut, *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* (Priority), and **DR. DRE'S** *The Chronic* (Death Row-Interscope) continue to define the category.

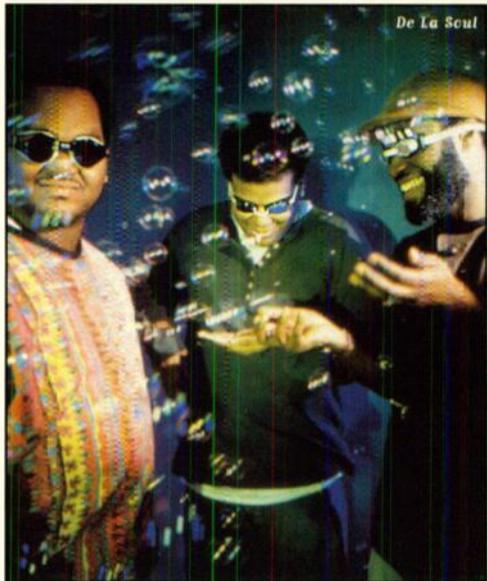
Today, jazz has become a popular ingredient in hip-hop. Start with **STETSASONIC'S** *In Full Gear* (Tommy Boy), **GANG STARR'S** 1990 gem, *Step In The Arena* (Chrysalis-EMI), **PETE ROCK & C.L. SMOOTH'S** *Mecca And The Soul Brother* (Elektra), **DREAM WARRIORS' And Now The Legacy Begins** (4th & B'way), and **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST'S** *The Low End Theory* (Jive). Recent worthwhile releases are **BUCKSHOT LeFONQUE** (Columbia), **GURU—JAZZMATAZZ** (Chrysalis-EMI) and Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth's *The Main Ingredient* (Elektra).

Novice:

Naughty By Nature: *Naughty By Nature* (Tommy Boy)
L.L. Cool J: *Mama Said Knock You Out* (Def Jam-Columbia)
Arrested Development: *3 Years, 5 Months And 2 Days In The Life Of...* (Chrysalis-EMI)
Wu-Tang Clan: *Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* (Loud-RCA)
Cypress Hill: *Cypress Hill* (Ruffhouse-Columbia)

Enthusiast:

Pharcyde: *Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde* (Delicious Vinyl-EastWest)
Grandmaster Flash And The Furious Five: *Message From Beat Street: The Best Of...* (Rhino)
Freestyle Fellowship: *Innervision Griots* (4th & B'way)
Run-D.M.C.: *Greatest Hits 1983-1991* (Profile)
Organized Konfusion: *Organized Konfusion* (Hollywood BASIC)



Reggae

If you're new to reggae music and want to sample some, I have three words for you: Bob, Bob and Bob. Though the reggae universe has grown and flourished since the death of the genre's first international star in 1981, **BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS** remain the greatest band in reggae history—it's no accident that most of the world's current aficionados cut their teeth on Bob's stunning body of work. The *Legend* compilation on Island is an adequate sampling of Marley's talent, but for a more comprehensive experience, check out Island's CD box set *Songs Of Freedom*, which contains virtually everything great Marley ever did. After getting the basics from the Wailers, you're equipped to move on to other artists and reggae subgenres. The *Tougher Than Tough* 4-CD set (Island) is a great historical overview of the big hits. For mellow reggae love songs, get **GREGORY ISAACS'** best-of compilation (Heartbeat) and listen to reggae's "Cool Ruler" put his distinctive nasal vocals about romance and rejection to smooth bass-heavy tracks. **DENNIS BROWN** and **FREDDIE MACGREGOR** provide similar vibes on the albums *Love And Hate* and *Big Ship* respectively. To taste some reggae with an African twist, check out the Cote d'Ivoire's **ALPHA BLONDY**, a high-voiced visionary who sings in Mandingo, French, Arabic, Hebrew and English, and has been called the heir to Marley's throne. He's best when backed up by the Wailers on *Jerusalem*, and the *Best Of Alpha Blondy* sampler (*Shanachie*) is also an excellent choice. For the grittier

reggae subcategories "deejay" and "dancehall," in which lyrics are "chatted" over standard reggae riddims, it's best to start with the scat-singing improvisation of **EEK-A-MOUSE**, who shines brightest on the album *Wa-Do-Dem*, then to move on to more recent deejays like **SHABBA RANKS** and especially **TONY REBEL**, who offers conscious lyrics and sing-song toasting. And no reggae collection would be complete without some dancehall singers; try the warbling of Barrington Levy on Profile's *Best Of* compilation for starters, then check out **JUNIOR REID'S** *One Blood*, a contemporary classic. And hardcore reggae enthusiasts should check out the best in instrumental dub reggae on the compilation *Towering Dub Inferno* (Heartbeat), and **LINTON KWESI JOHNSON'S** classic dub poetry on *Dread Beat an' Blood*.

Novice:

Bob Marley and the Wailers: *Songs Of Freedom* (Tuff Gong-Island)
Gregory Isaacs: *My Number One* (Heartbeat)
Tougher Than Tough: The Story Of Jamaican Music (Island)
Freddy MacGregor: *Big Ship* (Shanachie)
Alpha Blondy: *Jerusalem* (Shanachie)

Enthusiast:

EEK-A-Mouse: *Wa-Do-Dem* (Shanachie)
Barrington Levy: *Broader Than Broadway: Best Of* (Profile)
Junior Reid: *One Blood* (RAS)
Towering Dub Inferno (Heartbeat)
Linton Kwesi Johnson: *Dread Beat an' Blood* (Caroline)

STUFF THIS

IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR, IS A FAN OF ANY OF THE ARTISTS LISTED IN RED, MAY WE SUGGEST PUTTING SOME OF OUR RECOMMENDED RECORDS IN A STOCKING SOMEWHERE. SOME OF THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE DEAD-ON, SOME ADVENTUROUS, SOME FANCIFUL, AND SOME ARE JUST OUR FAVORITE RECORDS. REMEMBER, IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS—HERE'S 80 OF OURS.

R.E.M. (Automatic For The People)

Yo La Tengo *Painful* (Matador-Atlantic)
Vic Chesnutt *Drunk* (Texas Hotel)
Neil Young *Sleeps With Angels* (Reprise)
Grant Lee Buffalo *Mighty Joe Moon* (Slash)
George Harrison *All Things Must Pass* (Capitol)

NIRVANA

Wipers *Youth Of America* (Sub Pop)
Rocket From The Crypt *Circa: Now!* (Interscope)
Vaselines *The Way Of The Vaselines* (Sub Pop)
PJ Harvey *Dry* (Island)
The Stooges *Funhouse* (Elektra)

GREEN DAY

Buzzcocks *Singles Going Steady* (I.R.S.)
Rancid *Let's Go* (Epitaph)
Replacements *Let It Be* (Twin/Tone)
Descendants *Somery* (SST)
New Bomb Turks *Information Highway Revisited* (Crypt)

SMASHING PUMPKINS

Shudder To Think *Pony Express Record* (Epic)
My Bloody Valentine *Loveless* (Sire)
Walt Mink *Miss Happiness* (Caroline)
Nightblossoms *24 Days At Catastrophe Cafe* (Seed)
Boston *Boston* (Epic)

US3

Buckshot LeFonque *Buckshot LeFonque* (Columbia)
Jazz Dance Classics Vol. 3 (Luv-N-Haight)
Straight, No Chaser (Blue Note-Capitol)
Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth *The Main Ingredient* (Elektra)
Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool (GRP)

PEARL JAM

Mother Love Bone *Apple* (Stardog-Mercury)
Fugazi *In On The Kill Taker* (Dischord)
Soul Asylum *Made To Be Broken* (Twin/Tone)
Mark Lanegan *Winding Sheet* (Sub Pop)
John Lennon *Plastic Ono Band* (Capitol)

DR. DRE

Nas *Illmatic* (Columbia)
Dr. Dre *Concrete Roots* (Triple X)
Parliament *Tear The Roof Off* (Casablanca)
South Central soundtrack (Hollywood BASIC)
The Coup Genocide And Juice (Wild Pitch-EMI)

THE BEATLES (1967-1970)

Badfinger *Straight Up* (Rykodisc)
Big Star *#1 Record/Radio City* (Fantasy)
Aimee Mann *Whatever* (Imago)
Chills *Submarine Bells* (Slash-Warner Bros.)
Guided By Voices *Bee Thousand* (Scat-Matador)

METALLICA

Entombed *Wolverine Blues* (Earache-Columbia)
Sepultura *Chaos A.D.* (Epic)
Misfits *Earth A.D.* (Plan 9-Caroline)
Motorhead *Overkill* (Profile)
King Crimson *Red* (Editions EG-Caroline)

COUNTING CROWS

Freedy Johnston *This Perfect World* (Elektra)
Jeff Buckley *Grace* (Columbia)
Dave Matthews Band *Under The Table And Dreaming* (RCA)
Van Morrison *His Band And The Street Choir* (Warner Bros.)
Buffalo Tom *Let Me Come Over* (Beggars Banquet-RCA)

BEASTIE BOYS (If Communication)

Ween *Chocolate And Cheese* (Elektra)
Bad Brains *I Against I* (Caroline)
Funkadelic *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On* (Westbound)
Run-D.M.C. *Together Forever* (Profile)
Gyuto Monks *Tibetan Tantric Choir* (Windham Hill)

MORRISSEY

American Music Club *San Francisco* (Reprise)
Echobelly *Everybody's Got One* (Rhythm King US)
James Laid (Fontana)
Nick Drake *Way To Blue* (Rykodisc)
David Bowie *Hunky Dory* (Rykodisc)

DWIGHT YOAKAM

Jim Lauderdale *Pretty Close To The Truth* (Atlantic)
Bob Woodruff *Dreams And Saturday Nights* (Asylum)
Mike Henderson *Country Music Made Me Do It* (RCA)
Joe Henry *Kindness Of The World* (Mammoth)
Buck Owens *Best Of, Vols. 1 and 2* (Rhino)

NINE INCH NAILS

Marilyn Manson *Portrait Of An American Family* (nothing-Interscope)
Slayer *Divine Intervention* (American)
Swans *Greed/Holy Money* (Young God-Sky)
Drown *Hold On To The Hollow* (Elektra)
Coil *Horse Rotovator* (Some Bizarre-Relativity)

NEIL YOUNG

Giant Sand *Glum* (Imago)
Victoria Williams *Loose* (Mammoth-Atlantic)
Palace Brothers *Palace Brothers* (Drag City)
Jayhawks *Hollywood Town Hall* (American)
Dinosaur Jr. *Without A Sound* (Sire-Reprise)

THE BREEDERS

Veruca Salt *American Thighs* (Minty Fresh)
San Francisco Seals *Nowhere* (Matador)
The Spinanes *Manos* (Sub Pop)
Pixies *Surfer Rosa* (4AD-Elektra)
The Who *Sell Out* (MCA)

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but nothing can prepare you for
where they're going now



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ANIMAL BAG *Image Damage* Mercury

For many bands, securing a foothold in a pre-defined marketing niche is all they really need to guarantee those 15 minutes of rock fame. Unfortunately for Animal Bag, not fitting into any one easily identifiable categorization just may be the only thing between them and mass adoration. The band seems trapped in a netherworld of hype. Alternative fans tend to consign Animal Bag to the metal ranks, while metal fans think of the band as more of a barefoot rock band (think Blind Melon). Of course, they're both right. On one hand, Pantera producer Terry Date has cranked every guitar on *Image Damage* into overload, nearly engulfing the sweet melodies with harsh textures. On the other, the band's mix of an often befuddling, idiosyncratic array of influences with close, complex harmonies seems better suited for alternative's outer fringe. So the best thing to do is to consider the ideas that a) there is no reason why this shouldn't appeal to almost any fan of loud guitar rock and b) what does all this genre identification have to do with good music anyway? —Scott Burke

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14.

FILE UNDER: Multifarious hard rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Stone Temple Pilots, Blind Melon, I Mother Earth.



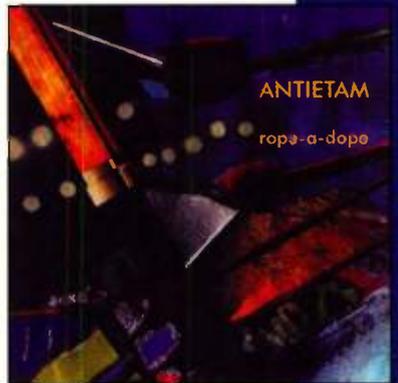
ANTIETAM *Rope-A-Dope* Homestead

Why the heck isn't Antietam famous yet? By all rights, singer/guitarist Tara Key should be internationally acclaimed as the world's greatest girl cock-rocker, and the band's skill at using guitars as power tools should have been rewarded by rock radio airplay and stadium tours years earlier in its almost decade-long career. Suffice it to say, it would be truly tragic if all the folks going nuts over the new feedback-driven R.E.M., excellent as it is, neglect this album. *Rope-A-Dope* is a concise survey of Antietam's strong points, from terse, fire-in-the-belly rants like "Graveyard" to the surprisingly pretty duet "Hardly Believe." Most tracks don't have quite the forward momentum of live Antietam, but they make up for it in intricacy, with long instrumental bridges that end no guitar lick before its time. The lumbering "Leave Home" might inspire comparisons to Slint and other warhorses of the "Louisville sound," but it's redeemed by a distinctive layer of primordial fuzz that keeps you awake. Certain mega-selling power-popsters ought to listen to *Rope-A-Dope*—they might learn a thing or two about country feedback. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 24.

FILE UNDER: Firewater rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Early U2, Scrawl, R.E.M.



"For those of you at home that don't know what we're talkin' about, 'Breakin' Combs' is self-explanatory, you know what I'm sayin'?" —WRKS *New York* air personality DJ Super Nat, on the title of guest Dread Scott's record.

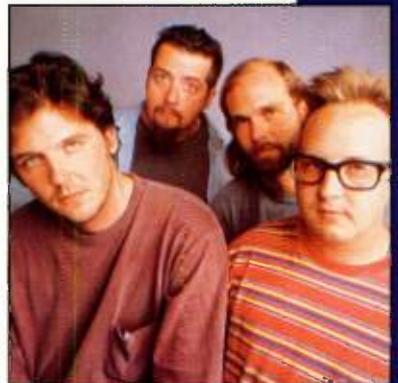
ASS PONYS *Electric Rock Music* A&M

Cincinnati, Ohio's Ass Ponys, long known as four of the handsomest gentlemen in rock music, do not seem unlikely candidates for a major label debut. If such business arrangements were based solely on talent and output, it would've happened a long time ago. Chuck Cleaver is a big man who's not afraid of his voice. His lyrics are simple, almost conversational at times, and spellbinding; the songs tell stories that are sad, funny, and you're sure they actually happened (which in turn makes them sadder and funnier), kinda like a mixed-up rural homebody version of Charles Willeford. The band is deft and thoughtful—your heart will break at the turns "Lake Brenda" takes. Guitarist John Erhardt really stands out, in a brutally subtle way, playing with aplomb and sting, as any Dave Schramm/Mickey Baker hybrid would. This record is easily as good as, if not better than, 1993's *Grim* (the previously absent title track from which opens *Electric Rock Music*), and sounds good loud or quiet in any room or automobile. —James McNew

DATALOG: Release date: Nov. 22. Touring Nov.-Dec.

FILE UNDER: Literate Midwestern rock 'n' roll.

R.I.Y.L.: Guided By Voices, Schramms, Chills.



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DANZIG Danzig 4 American

Danzig's records are always composed around a few essential elements: love, pain and death. With darkness again a trope, *Danzig 4* whips those elements and their basic combinations into histrionic extremes. It's a bonfire of the auguries, comic-book sentiments anointed with hound-dog bellows and overstated guitars. These aren't even rock songs anymore, but trials in some deranged myth—imagine Persephone sentenced to a month in hell for each Sabbath record she bought. When Danzig sings "I stay so arcane/in the shadows of your brain," he's right, but when every cornball heavy-metal flourish and cryptic S&M reference is raised to the level of sacrament, it's hard to know which way is up. Therein lies the power of *Danzig 4*. It successfully overloads your senses, and when a melody finally breezes in, you embrace that little bit of pleasure with everything you have. It's a purity—one De Sade would appreciate—that many will find hard to resist, but there's nothing in the record to ever suggest that this blocking out of the sun is entertainment. Substitute the word "record" for "love" when Danzig croons "My love is your hell, to suffer and cherish" in "Sadistikal," and you pretty much get the idea of *Danzig 4*: the record just isn't about a fascination with sado-masochism, its entire design is to put the listener in the owl mask from *The Story Of O*, each atrocity (like the braying of "I'm coming in your hole" in "Stalker") a sign of your devotion.

—Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 4. First single "Until You Call On The Dark."

Touring with Type O Negative and Godflesh.

FILE UNDER: S&Metal.**R.I.Y.L.:** Carcass, Nine Inch Nails, Wanda von Sacher-Masoch.**DENISON/KIMBALL TRIO Plays the music of "Walls In The City" Skin Graft**

In rock parlance, jazzy side projects are the stuff of eye-rolling groans, the sort of indulgence a Derek Smalls type is allowed only because no one has the nerve to tell him of its empty pretensions. Certainly, this is no less the case in the era of a semi-serious cocktail jazz revival and semi-creative acid jazz movement. So it is with great relief that we can tell you that this effort by Duane Denison of the Jesus Lizard and Jim Kimball, formerly of Laughing Hyenas and Mule, takes no pains to attach itself, either musically or in marketing, to either trend. Recorded for the soundtrack of a new Jim Sikora film, the first release by the Denison/Kimball Trio (maybe "duo" sounded dumb) is undeniably theme music, inspired by '50s/'60s soundtracks and TV incidental tunes, and is more about working out motifs and moods than exuding any kitschy image. (They've already recorded more for a play about Andy Warhol, and a second album.) Recalling Chico Hamilton among others, rather than the currently typical influence of Wes Montgomery, Denison and Kimball may surprise fans of their anarchic bands, if not promote greater appreciation, but could be even better appreciated by those who have never before come near them.

—Eric Gladstone

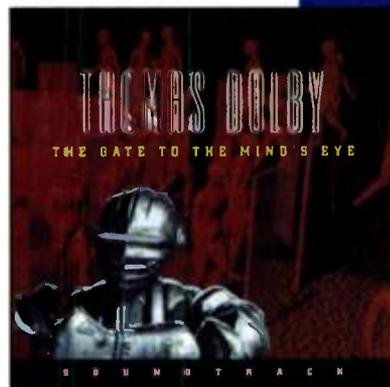
DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 3.**FILE UNDER:** Original soundtracks.**R.I.Y.L.:** Barry Adamson, Jerry Goldsmith.**THOMAS DOLBY The Gate To The Mind's Eye Giant**

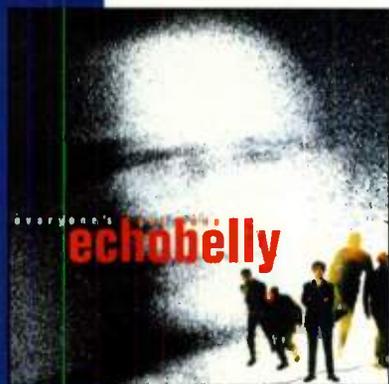
There exists in the modern pop pantheon a rare breed of musician unfettered by the demands of a *career per se*: Joe Jackson, for example, is about to release an album of neoclassical music, and that's fine, because no one really expects him to be an adorable punk any more. Likewise, now that MTV as we know it is no longer the "I want my MTV!" of yore, no one really expects Thomas Dolby to churn out the kind of "Hyperactive" singles that made him a fixture in the early '80s. But Dolby still knows his Science: *The Gate To The Mind's Eye*, a collection of airy instrumentals and imaginative meanderings, hums with synths when Dolby wants it to. The most danceable cuts, such as the almost-techno "Quantum Mechanic" and the kinetic "Big Bang Backwards" are crafty gems that pulse with the soul of the machine. Then again, this is an older, more ornery Dolby, who can digress into quirky bohemian jazz, complete with horns ("Nuvogue"), avant-noise ("Armageddon") or even worldbeat pop ("N.E.O.") if he chooses. He only sings on a couple of cuts, and never maintains a consistent style from one song to the next. It's neither especially noble nor entirely unexpected for Dolby to betray his gift for catchy synth-pop; but as if tossing us a bone, he closes *Gate* with the frothy "Moonbase," which features the kind of pleasant, dopey synth hook Mother used to make around the time of Genesis's *Abacab*. "I could do a whole album of that for you," it implies, "but you don't really need it." No, Tom, we don't need you to do anything. It's just nice you're still around.

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 18. Full-length video also available.**FILE UNDER:** Aging technogeeks.**R.I.Y.L.:** Mike Oldfield, The The, Peter Gabriel's RealWorld label.

R.I.Y.L. RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



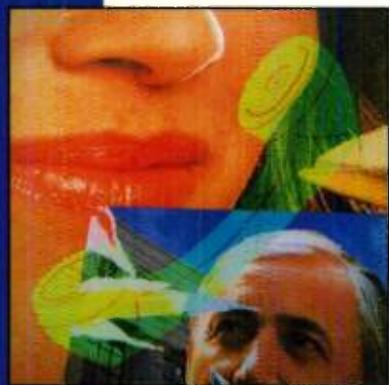

ECHOBELLY *Everybody's Got One* *Fauve-Rhythm King UK*

Morrissey was quoted recently as saying Echobelly, a pan-sexual/pan-cultural quintet, was "his favorite new band." And it's no damn wonder: *Everybody's Got One* is as close to a Smiths album as you're likely to get without the Groaner himself swooning into the mic. Singer Sonya Aurora-Madan's voice hugs the same plaintive contours as Morrissey does, right down to the baying "la da das" on "Cold Feet Warm Heart." To compound the similarities, guitarist Glenn Johansson, who doubles here with ex-Curve guitarist Debbie Smith, also has a warm spot for Johnny Marr, especially on the overtly Smiths-like chord changes in "Father, Ruler, King, Computer." The similarities would be easier to take if they didn't seem to gain momentum as the record progresses. After nearly a dozen songs, Aurora-Madan's Morrissey fixation becomes maddening, and, as talented as she is, I can't help but think how effective she'd be with another vehicle. In spite of this, a few moments shine. "I Can't Imagine The World Without Me" chugs along nicely with a power pop jolt and a candy-coated chorus, and "Bellyache" loses control as it fades out with some cool wah-wah and hammered-out rhythms. —Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 25. On tour through November.

FILE UNDER: Emotional UK pop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Sundays, the Smiths, Curve.


FASTBACKS *Answer The Phone, Dummy* *Sub Pop*

If you don't listen closely to the first five or so cuts on the new Fastbacks record, they'll pass you by faster than a flash of *deja vu*. Seattle's oldest living punk band plays so briskly and exudes such punky energy you'll wish the songs were a tad slower just so you could chew on 'em a bit, get the flavor. Since the early '80s, the band's formula has remained simple: three blistering chords, classic '60s girl-group vocal harmonies, and sweet, high-pitched guitar noise. Guitarist Kurt Bloch and singer/guitarists Kim Warnick and Lulu Gargiulo write some of the best punk-pop songs of our day, and on *Answer*, his production brings out a sizzling organic crispness ["sizzling organic crispness"? is this, like, tofu bacon?—ed.]. The action really starts with the less-than-a-minute long instrumental "brd 'COATED,'" Fastbacks' own abbreviated version of Focus' "Hocus Pocus." A platter full of frenzied fun follows, with nary a silent second for catching your breath. *Answer* recalls a strange but fabulously spastic horde of original punk rockers—the Buzzcocks, the Go-Go's, Cheap Trick, the Runaways—with a dash of the Shirelles tossed in to show their age. If you're waiting for the Fastbacks' first misstep, don't hold your breath. —Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 25.

FILE UNDER: Joyous punk rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Joan Jett, Buzzcocks, Cheap Trick.

R.I.Y.L. RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



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ISLAND

World Radio History

Artist: Misanthrope Management Inc.

FATIMA MANSIONS *Lost In The Former West* *Radioactive*

A few years ago, English rabble-rouser Fatima Mansions printed up t-shirts with the logo "Keep music evil" printed on them, a phrase that encapsulates the group's non-conformist ethic. In an attempt to outdo themselves, this year's poly-cotton blend features the Royal Family coat of arms along with the slogans "Suck our motherfucking jewels" and "The British ruling class are arms dealing, land stealing scum." *Lost In The Former West*, the band's second U.S. album, communicates this type of anti-establishment idealism with piercing wit. Songs like "Popemobile To Paraguay" rail against religion and corporate institutions, while "Loyaliser" takes aim at governmental leaders and economic oppression. But it's the surging, suffocating melodies, clashing, crashing guitars and squealing samples that make *Lost In The Former West* enjoyable. Frontman Cathal Coughlan honed his chops in Microdisney, and has been sculpting his creative vision with Fatima Mansions for the past five years. During that time, he's developed a firm grasp of pop, punk and dance styles, all of which circulate through the band's caustic creations. Songs like "Belong Nowhere" and "Brain Blister" manage to combine infectious hooks with turbulent guitar rhythms, while "Walk Yr Way," a paranoid ballad that sounds like a cross between American Music Club and Kurt Weill, reveals a more complex, introspective side of the band. —Jon Wiederhorn

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11. First single "Loyaliser." Touring through early December.

FILE UNDER: Evil music.

R.I.Y.L.: The Clash, Fugazi, Jane's Addiction.

FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY *Millenium* *Roadrunner*

Vancouver's Front Line Assembly has long been dismissed by many as a second-stringer behind aggro/electronic bands like Ministry and Skinny Puppy—a critique it might have deserved in the earlier, distinctly undistinctive, half of their eight year career. The duo-cum-trio nonetheless managed to build a respectable following within the less judgemental, increasingly insular post-industrial goth cult, which encouraged the group's late blooming. In the '90s, while former Wax Trax! labelmates Front 242 and KMFDM have to some extent stagnated, FLA's Bill Leeb and Rhys Fulber have not only diversified (recording respectable hardcore techno, trance and goth music under names like Intermix, Delirium, Will and Noise Unit), they've also quietly beat almost everyone at their own game. *Millenium*, like 1992's *Tactical Neural Implant*, combines the electronics of Cabaret Voltaire and the sci-fi sample-atmospherics of Clock DVA with the rhythmic control of Chem Lab, early NIN, Wax Trax's best, what-have-you. Sometimes they try too hard—the Consolidated-like rant of "Victim Of A Criminal" seems ill-placed—but it's a slight aberration in an otherwise well crafted package. —Eric Gladstone

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11. Video for "Millenium."

FILE UNDER: Good ol' industrial dance.

R.I.Y.L.: Chem Lab, Front 242, Killing Joke.

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS *Cruise Yourself* *Touch & Go*

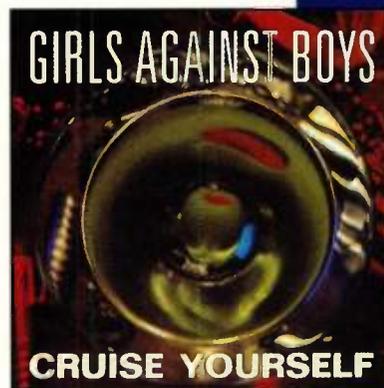
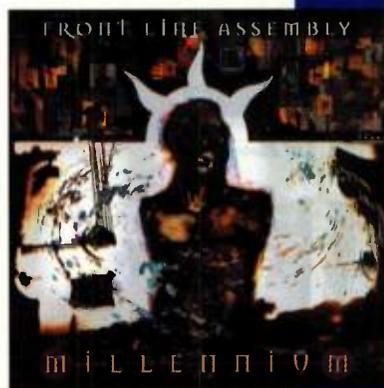
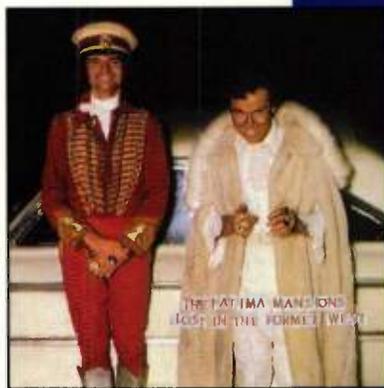
Though I'm trying to resist tying its name into this idea, Girls Against Boys is the rare group whose alienation is a true product of its creativity rather than self-imposed antisociality. A mutated product of Washington, D.C. uni-punk, willingly exiled to New York suffer-tude, GvsB crosses Ministry's love of rhythmic noise, the Fall's meditation/rants and Cop Shoot Cop's self-mocking melodrama without pledging allegiance to any of their respective camps. Cherubic Bukowskis all, they embrace concepts that might seem contradictory or gimmicky to others—two basses, sampler, gruff vocals and Bee Gees harmonies (and here, electric organ and vibes)—with a unexploitative directness echoing their own telegraphic sexuality. In *Cruise Yourself*, an album title loaded with probably more *entendres* than the band's reckoned, GvsB exhibits new levels of sound confidence and gnarliness (and that's saying something) from a ledge precariously overlooking all those promise-anything A&R types—a dangerous, hypnotic subtlety supposedly alien to '90s rockers. —Eric Gladstone

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 3.

FILE UNDER: Mean Streets rock 'n' roll.

R.I.Y.L.: Ministry, Pavement, Nation of Ulysses.

R.I.Y.L.: RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



GLOBAL COMMUNICATION 76:14 *Dedicated-Caroline*

"Ambient Techno"—the name is an oxymoron. The two genres are polar opposites. Good ambient music unwinds the listener; its dream-like state evokes mental images and emotional reactions. Techno kicks the listener into overdrive; its mechanical beats and bleeps hotwire the adrenaline. These schizophrenic aims explain why so much crappy ambient techno exists. Its purveyors, unsure of their intent, fuse watered-down versions of each genre. Global Communication's *76:14* is a case in point. When *76:14* sticks to one technique, it's excellent. "9:25" is a techno beat-box blowout; "Obselon Mi-Nos 14:31"—with its wash of whistles and rain pressed on by the hiccup of a record needle—is an ambient masterpiece. But marry these two genres and the results are ersatz copies. "4:02," "7:39," "12:18"—these straddle both styles, simulating sci-fi soundtracks. Metallic whirls bounce in and out; elegiac organ chords rise off the surface like steam while beats bubble from beneath. The ideas are good, but their combination's too sterile to succeed. If the identity crisis were solved, or the mix of genres more refined, Global Communication could be stunning. But for now, listen to its pure genre pieces and move on. Those are the Swiss chocolates; the rest are Hershey bars. —Julie Taraska

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11.

FILE UNDER: Star Trek: the Techno Generation.

R.I.Y.L.: Space-Time Continuum, Bill Laswell's recent ambient projects (Divination, Cypher 7).

SKIP GORMAN A Greener Prairie *Rounder*

Old-time cowboy music is closer to its roots, the traditional ballads of the British Isles, than to its fruit, country music as we know it. *A Greener Prairie* finds singer/multi-instrumentalist Skip Gorman digging deep into the cowboy songbook. Carefully annotated and beautifully played on guitars, fiddles and mandolins, almost every song on the album feels rugged and authentic (the exception is "Emigrant's Lament For Oregon," a longwinded Gorman original). Of course, authenticity is a confusing thing with cowboy music. By the first time it was first recorded in the '20s, it was a movement of nostalgia for the great cattle drives of the mid-19th century. A very popular movement: The first big cowboy record, Carl Sprague's "When The Work's All Done This Fall," sung by Gorman here, sold 900,000 copies in 1925. (Think how many people owned turntables then.) What Gorman has done here is a careful simulacrum of the singing cowboys of the '20s and '30s, who were in turn supposed to be a simulacrum of actual singing cowboys of 60 years earlier—who, it turns out, sang songs like "The Yellow Rose Of Texas," also covered here, which you may know from its incarnation as a cheesy pop hit. Convolutions aside, what comes through loud and clear is the simplicity and purity of these melodies and lyrics: The anonymous cowhand who wrote the line "I'm riding down the dusty trail a-looking for a range" meant it literally more than metaphorically. Listening to this collection, you'll feel like you're sitting in front of a radio in the '30s, feeling like you're on your horse out on the wide prairie. —Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 1.

FILE UNDER: Meticulously researched old-time cowboy music.

R.I.Y.L.: Alison Krauss, Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers.

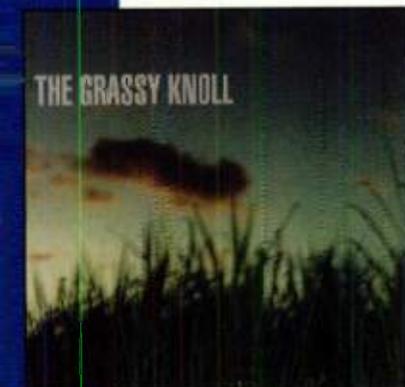
THE GRASSY KNOLL *The Grassy Knoll* *Nettwerk*

The Grassy Knoll is on the same label (the Vancouver-based Nettwerk) as Single Gun Theory. The fact that these two bands share a label *and* names drawn from the Kennedy assassination ordinarily should not be evidence that it's all one big conspiracy, man, but after listening to nearly an hour's worth of this twisted electro-acid-free jazz, who could blame a guy for being a little paranoid? The Grassy Knoll (speaking of single gun theories, the project is essentially one person, Bob Green) pastes together an utterly creative assortment of disparate elements and soaks them in buckets of dark atmosphere. (Atmosphere is definitely the word, here; it's far too menacing to be considered ambient.) Any description of its parts—hip-hop beats and scratches, *Bitches Brew* trumpet, film noir sax, disorienting samples, eerie electronic shit, odd miscellany like tablas, Hendrix samples and Duane Eddy guitar—doesn't begin to describe how the record grabs you by the shirt collar and whispers weird nothings in your ear. And furthermore, it doesn't really sound like anything you've ever heard before, so any further description is likely to throw you off track. Suffice it to say that the *Grassy Knoll* is made up of a passel of great grooves interspersed with creepy quiet parts, with no lyrics to get in the way. And you can dance to it. —Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Release date: Nov. 1.

FILE UNDER: Jazzy, psychedelic hip-hop grooves.

R.I.Y.L.: Keith LeBlanc, Nicky Skopelitis, the instrumental "Powersax mix" of Public Enemy's "Fight The Power," Ornette Coleman.



HOODOO GURUS Crank *Praxis-Zoo*

In the 11 years since "I Want You Back," we've all aged a decade or so. The Hoodoo Gurus haven't. On *Crank*, the Australian hook-slingers sound exactly like they did back then. *Exactly*. There's not a single acknowledgement of the missteps power-pop has taken since then, not a hint of funk or techno or metal or hip-hop seeping in to dilute the band's signature style—not even that too-loud '90s drum sound. "Less Than A Feeling" cunningly disguises that Boston/Nirvana riff in a sardonic glance at radio programming, "Hypocrite Blues" veers increasingly close to quoting "Louie Louie" as it goes along, and "Quo Vadis" turns out to be from the point of view of a guy who's just inadvertently broken up a party ("where did everybody go?"). The only audible change is that singer Dave Faulkner seems to have found religion: "Gospel Train" and "Judgement Day" present a self-questioning breed of apocalyptic Christianity, and Biblical allusions abound elsewhere. Guitarist Brad Shepherd's songs stay more secular, or seem to: the two-chord torpedo "Form A Circle" may be a celebration of hedonism, or a condemnation of it, or just a hook that sounded good. Final proof that the Gurus have found not just eternal life but eternal youth: "I See You," a two-minute Hüsker Dü-style exercise in flooring it that's way too energetic to have been played by anybody over 25. That would have made Faulkner at most 12 when he founded Le Hoodoo Gurus in 1981. If the band aged normally, that is. —*Martha Bagthorpe*

DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 13. Video for "The Right Time."

FILE UNDER: Brand-new mid-'80s power-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Romantics, Weezer, Soul Asylum.



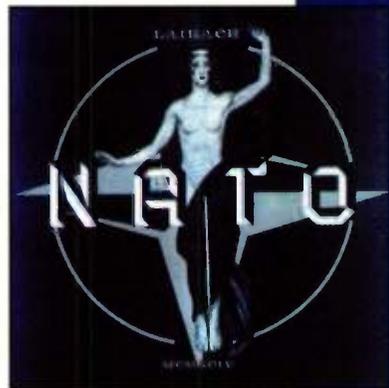
LAIBACH NATO *Mute*

Laibach was once an engaging and strangely ambitious dance band, a straight-man's Soft Cell (or a Yugoslavian Urge Overkill). Equal obsessions with avant-garde classical music and Stalinist pop culture drove an almost symphonic industrial sound, alternately brutal and reflective, almost always absurd. A string of bombastic cover versions in the mid-'80s (including a phenomenal rendition of Queen's "One Vision" in German) gave the band commercial viability and transnational notoriety. *NATO*, its 30th record in 15 years, is by far its least original, no mean feat for a band that once bundled six distinct covers of "Sympathy For The Devil" onto one CD and called it an album. Every track on *NATO* is a weak reading of a previous apocalypse-tinged song—Laibach offers two mediocre treatments of the Mars theme from Holst's *The Planets* suite; Pink Floyd's "Dogs Of War" pomposifies trite lyrics over a weary techno beat. Still, there are some juicy moments: a take on "The Final Countdown" is an inspired bit of postmodern buffoonery, while "Alle Gegen Alle," an old disco track by D.A.F., is almost charming as a techno show-tune. There's very little left to the imagination, however, a signal failing given the rich, hermetic density of the group's early recordings. The progression from art to kitsch has left Laibach in the lurch. As the '80s revival begins mining the odd rhythms of the first generation of industrial bands, it's too bad Laibach is still blinkered by techno madness. Maybe next time. —*Michael Vazquez*

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11. May tour next year.

FILE UNDER: Neo-industrial proto-pomo-fascist dancemusik.

R.I.Y.L.: Paul Hardcastle, Nitzer Ebb, Borghesia, Meco.



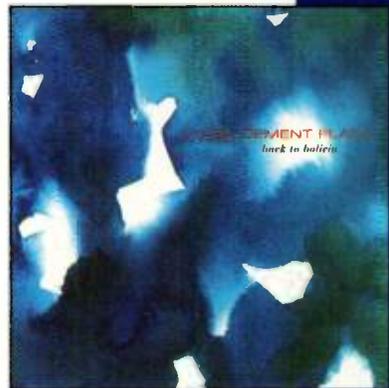
LHASA CEMENT PLANT *Back To Bolivia* *Warpdisc*

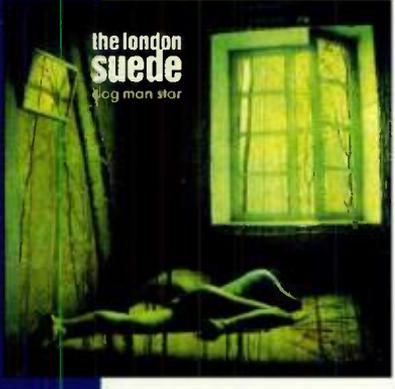
As a member of the art-skronk conspiracy Borbetomagus, guitarist Donald Miller has made a lot of godawful noise in his time, and that's what I eagerly expected from this band as well. The liner notes are a survey of LCP's experimental past, in which "Tristano configurations executed at one-sixteenth conventional velocity," "Skip To My Lou" subjected to "severe decompositional stresses," and several lineup changes ultimately yielded these recordings, made toward the end of LCP's existence in 1992. *Back To Bolivia* turns out to be a surprisingly varied album, with half of its genius in the sequencing. Cool, bass-driven jazz noodling frequently gives way to blasts of funky fusion that could raise the ghost of Sonny Sharrock and channel in James Blood Ulmer as well. Next, you might hear an arrhythmic scrapefest like "Typhoon," which features guitarist Brian Doherty on bowed zither. Acoustic and electronic instruments are often blended indiscriminately, as on "Pat's Pox Plant," in which Miller's folksy guitar duels with Doherty's Moog for a skittery song that creeps easily under the skin. I don't "get" this record by half, but not for lack of trying. When the traffic outside gets really bad, I can put it on and momentarily believe that no two or three or eight sounds in the world are truly incompatible. —*Andrea Moed*

DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 30.

FILE UNDER: Shape-changing art-noise.

R.I.Y.L.: Thinking Fellers Union Local 282, Jim O'Rourke, James Blood Ulmer.





THE LONDON SUEDE dog man star *Nude-Columbia*

Once touted by the fickle English press as the "best band in Britain," The London Suede's raving front-page headlines have yellowed, and a new wave of bands have taken its place as this week's saviors of rock. Yet the band has endured, despite a wall of adversity. Once named simply Suede, it was forced to change its moniker when an obscure Baltimore-based country/folk artist with that title filed a lawsuit. Soon after, the group made a vie for popularity in the States, and found itself ignored and ridiculed by fans that valued noisy hostility over lush drama and gender-bending androgyny. The recent departure of dexterous guitarist/songwriter Bernard Butler, replaced by 17-year-old Richard Oakes, who had to get legal permission from his parents to quit school and join, has only fanned the flames of xenophobic/homophobic rock critics who seek to level The London Suede. But as sensitive as foppy frontman Brett Anderson is, *dog man star* proves that he can take a hard punch to the jaw and still come out prancing. The new record features Butler's expressive guitar playing, which is reminiscent of both Johnny Marr and Mick Ronson; pompous, mewling vocals and self-important rhythms reveal the band's origins and influences with every melodramatic beat. Add in orchestral embellishments (horns, strings, keyboards) and quasi-profound lyrics, and *dog man star* becomes one of the most deliciously precious and pretentious records in recent memory. Even if you love it, you can bet Suede likes it more. —Jon Wiederhorn

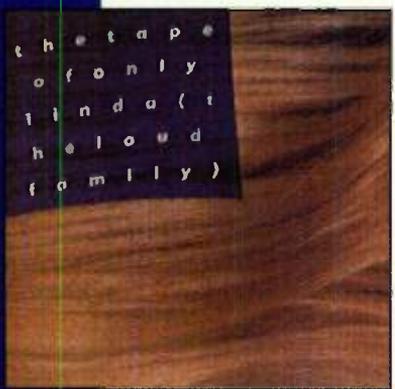
DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 26. First single "The Wild Ones." Touring in January.
FILE UNDER: Narcissistic Brit-rock.
R.I.Y.L.: David Bowie, Smiths, Pulp.

THE LOUD FAMILY The Tape Of Only Linda *Alias*

Witty by turns, wracked by others, and inspired by Alex Chilton, Scott Miller and his old band Game Theory played out the most brilliant American pop songs of the '80s for an audience that promised to grow bigger and brighter but never did. (Alias reissued most of their albums—start with *The Big Shot Chronicles*.) Miller's current band, The Loud Family, crammed three years of his accumulated songs into last year's *Plants And Birds And Rocks And Things*. Miller said the next album would be a "band" effort, and it is:

Compared to *Plants*, Linda's ten long-ish songs show almost no tape-loopery and little wry self-reference. Instead, loads of shiny 1981-style keyboards (remember the Shoes?) ride the crest of big dual-guitar waves; punchy, catchy, bowled-over songs like "Baby Hard-To-Be-Around" remind us that there are five Loud players, not one, and "Better Nature" reminds us that other band members can sing, too. (And "Marsha and Etrusca" reminds us that a few years ago there was a Manchester dance craze, which ruined perfectly good pop songs with eight-minute remixes and inappropriate backbeats.) But the high points are still Miller's high voice, his clever words and their accompanying, swerving multi-melodies. Try the "ballad" "Ballet Hetero," which revisits Game Theory's old "The Red Baron" and fits "shrinking violets" into a rhyme with "code of silence"; the big, video-friendly, rock-candy-tipped entitled "My Superior"; or "Still Its Own Reward," whose opening chimes and cheery swaying rhythm bely the fierce lament of the lyrics ("There are ways, if they'd ask/I'd have told the world to treat you..."). Mitch Easter's (Let's Active, dB's, Posies) glitter-bright production may annoy young 'uns used to darker '90s indie sounds, but by listen #209, you'll be glad Easter's choices let you notice each surprising-yet-appropriate chord change, and each reproachful, highly-strung, smarter-than-anyone-else's word. —Stephen Bert

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 17.
FILE UNDER: Clever, word-drunk guitar pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Game Theory, Big Star, Elvis Costello.



ANOTHER PRESS RELEASE WE NEVER FINISHED READING:
 "When expressionism and realism: clash in the representational world, sparks shoot from guitar strings, snares and mixrophones, cascading in long light trails into the new album from the Lance Carlos Quarter."

MELVINS *Stoner Witch* Atlantic

Without a doubt, the ferocious charm of a Melvins record has always been its pure adrenalin rush. The Melvins are much less a square peg in the visceral metal world than when they get stuffed under dubious "alternative" categories, and if *Stoner Witch* and last year's *Houdini* are any indication, from here on out they'll be embracing metal and all of its tenets in unblinking allegiance. The knotted, throbbing guitar riffs that make up the Melvins' sound have swung further away from the long dirges of records past (although the closing track, "Lividity," will satisfy the appetite of any *Lysol* fan), and closer to the more melodic and riff- and song-oriented sound of some of the band's '70s metal heroes, especially Kiss. If imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery, then Ace Frehley will be blushing at much of the guitar work on *Stoner Witch*. The Melvins have always possessed the secret to stealing from showy, silly metal bands with complete and utter sincerity, and where King Buzzo's vocals on *Houdini* sometimes showed too much of their tight-leather-pants metal influence (often recalling *British Steel* more than Black Sabbath), his throatier growl reemerges this time, making *Stoner Witch* as menacing a listen as a Melvins record should be. —Cheryl Botchick

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 18. Also see Snivlem, pg. 42.

FILE UNDER: Headbanging for the '90s.

R.I.Y.L.: Helmet, Slayer, Kiss *Alive!*

PARIS *Guerrilla Funk* Priority

Paris, the Oakland rapper who redefined hip-hop radicalism and attempted to revive the Black Panther Party in the late '80s, is the most recent of the politically-minded rappers to attempt to reinvent themselves for the '90s. How do politically radical rappers produce financially successful and popular records in the age of gangster rap? Public Enemy decided to make its latest album a little less abrasive, to court the interest of new fans more impressed by the elastically smooth tones of Snoop Doggy Dogg than the siren screech of early Bomb Squad productions. Paris decided to become Snoop. He used to sound so much like Rakim that hip-hop fans had trouble telling the two apart, with a deep and soulful flow that bubbled out over ominous synth-bass, managing to sound at once menacing and melancholy. This time out, his third, his voice is the same, but he's rediscovered his Oakland roots and California twang, pulled every George Clinton sample he could find out of his crate, and even employed some female vocalists to provide the obligatory background wailing that has accompanied so much of Long Beach and Compton's most recent offerings. But instead of crooning Snoop's name, these singers have a message: "Letting you knoooooww," they sing on the title track, "we want your mind to grooooww." Most of the album's rhymes are self-righteously political, especially on "Blacks & Blues," an insistent Oakland gangster groove about police brutality and racism, and on "One Time For Ya Mind," a laid-back but defiant funk track that offers a seeming synopsis of the album's philosophy: "As long as I'm living I'll keep giving you the facts, bumping as I'm smuggling the message in the rap." In the end, though, the overused Clinton samples, expletive-peppered gangster flow and Cali posturing are a smokescreen for Paris's impassioned political message. This time he's rocking the wrong Party. —Philippe Wamba

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 4. Video for "Guerrilla Funk."

FILE UNDER: Politicking to the funk.

R.I.Y.L.: Ice Cube, Snoop Doggy Dogg.

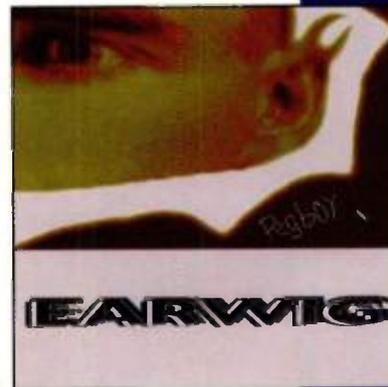
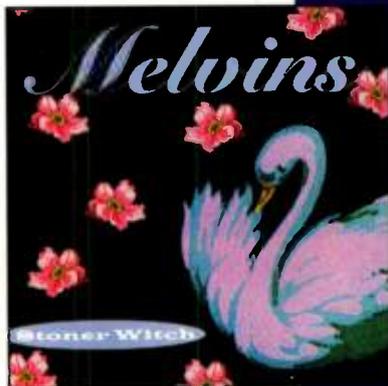
PEGBOY *Earwig* 1/4 Stick-Touch And Go

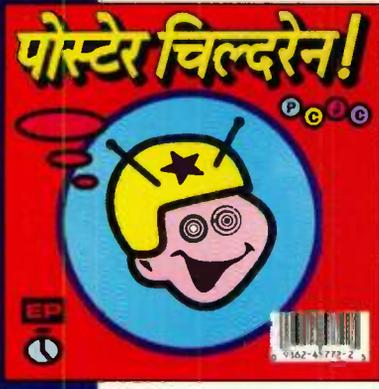
Old habits die hard, and some don't die at all. Have a listen to Pegboy's newest record and you'll hear all the old-school hardcore trademarks—powerful choruses, soul-baring lyrics, and relentless, angry guitars. Of course, it sounds a bit dated, a neo-hardcore/retro grunge that could have come out in 1984. But in the capable hands of post-punks like Naked Raygun alums John Haggerty and Pierre Kezdy, ex-Bhopal Stiff Larry Danmore, and ex-Effigy Joe Haggerty, Pegboy takes an old habit and, rather than letting it die, reconditions it, gives it a new set of wheels and a fresh coat of paint, and sends it right back out again. *Earwig*, the Chicago quartet's second record in four years, rides like an old Chevy Bel Aire, secure and comfortable. Pegboy's style—mid-tempo, ultra-melodic, and noisily intense—is exactly what Naked Raygun buttered its bread with in its heyday and what bands like Fugazi are constantly improving on. Take Pegboy for a ride. They'll bring you back. Points for the Mission of Burma cover, "That's When I Reach For My Revolver." —Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 17. Touring Nov.-Dec.

FILE UNDER: Post-old-school punk rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Naked Raygun, Rancid, The Jam.





POSTER CHILDREN Just Like You (EP) Reprise

The Poster Children are a college-rock wet dream, evoking both the ambivalent ethos of '90s rock and the passionate sound of the first new wave. All the while, they refuse to be pinned down. *Just Like You* condenses everything that makes them fun into five sharp gems (six if you count the closing reprise of the bratty title track). While some bands conceive EPs as would-be albums that just ran out of ideas before eight songs were in the can (kinda like Alice In Chains' latest felt), the Poster Children have wrought a well-bounded group of tunes that seem to be about nothing more complicated than youthful angst. None of it is especially overwrought either: "Uther" could be about Uther Pendragon, a key figure in *The Once And Future King* ("It's all for one/All for me") or just about the crumbling modern sense of morale. The P-Kids can work with funky grooves, as on the rollicking "Voight," or they can meld pretty melodies and snarling attitude, as on the centerpiece "Sick Of It All." It all fits, but none of it sounds alike, making this a repeat-worthy head of steam for Lost Boys everywhere. —Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11.
FILE UNDER: Enfants terribles with guitars.
R.I.Y.L.: Bad Religion, Nirvana, Pavement.



R.E.M. Monster Warner Bros.

"The Band You Grew Up With" was what a CD sticker called R.E.M.—and that was in 1987! This latest album may be downer-and-dirtier sounding than anything the band has done before, but you couldn't mistake these songs for anyone else's any more than you'd fail to recognize your mother in dark glasses. All the familiar elements are there: Buck fingers a guitar as effortlessly as other people wait for a table, Mills' backup tenor rings like a schoolbell, and Stipe's staccato phrasing and guttural "uh huh" recall a time before similar inflections started emanating from the White House. (Actually, you may not be familiar with the Carole King impersonation Stipe does on "Tongue," but you're probably better off that way.) As almost everyone has said by now, *Monster's* wah and squall feels mighty good after two albums of earnest bittersweetness. So does the band's return to power pop on "Star 69" and rediscovery of camp on "Crush With Eyeliner," which sounds like an attitudinal take on Lou Reed. Other '70s forays don't fare as well, particularly the Stones-ish "I Took Your Name," one of those completely hook-free songs that occasionally shows up on R.E.M.'s records, mired in big, heavy power chords that don't get them anywhere. A couple of tracks are undermined by production that seems intended to even out the album's sound with an overlay of guitar fuzz that fails to become part of the song. In short, R.E.M. sounds like a pop band remembering what it's like to rock. The results are mixed, but they include surprises too good to miss. After hearing how feedback can enhance the sentimentality of a ballad like "Strange Currencies," you'll never listen to Sonic Youth the same way again. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 27. First single "What's The Frequency, Kenneth?"
FILE UNDER: Distorted Southern comfort.
R.I.Y.L.: Velvet Underground, Sugar, Smithereens.



SEX POD Home Go-Kart

I remember the first Sex Pod show, in 1991—the encores, the shouting, the chanting ("Sex! Pod! Sex! Pod!"), Karyn Kuhl's striking Patti Smith-style vocals, her hard-edged, masculine guitar leads—meanwhile, there may be angels in heaven that look better playing bass than Alice Genese, but I doubt it. (I'll leave this to your imagination, but let's just say she plays and dances slow, and "Sex Pod" is a more appropriate name for this band than "Gutbank" was.) The memory of these captivating hipsters left me unprepared for this release. *Home* seems the work of red-eyed, headbanging mid-westerners with roach clips in their hair and Danzig t-shirts. (They're from Jersey, though—maybe it's true what New Yorkers say about the Midwest starting at the Hudson River.) The songs are lean, insistent paeans to female friendship (tears, scars on wrists, speeding down the open road, twisting knives in boyfriends, etc.) that suggest the '70s without actually referring to gypsies or butterflies by name. For example, the death-rock nonsense of "Circle Of Silver:" "Now I'm rolling like a skull to the grave/Love, blood, love is my middle name!—Circle [power chord] of Silver!" As they say, don't fear the reaper. Fans of '70s rock know who they are, and this album provides them a nicely updated version with post-punk guitar density. Fans of women may like it too, since the sound of powerful women playing power rock about powerful emotions is still all too rare. —Nell Zink

DATALOG: Release date: Aug. 16. Touring through November.
FILE UNDER: Fem metal anguish.
R.I.Y.L.: Heart, Urge Overkill, Ted Nugent, Scrawl.

"[Quiet Rivin's 'Little Angel' makes me drop my pants and listen with one hand!—Corey Draper. KBER, Salt Lake City, UT, as quoted on the back of a promotional CD single.

SMALL FACTORY *For If You Cannot Fly* Vernon Yard

Got a sweet tooth? Why not let Providence, Rhode Island's Small Factory satisfy it? The happily homespun trio crafts jangly kernels of candy-coated love pop without sacrificing power, credibility or a smidgen of integrity. *For If You Cannot Fly*, Small Factory's second album, packs a load of highlights. If it's spoonfuls of all-out lovin' you're after, try "Expiration Date" or "Versus Tape," and listen to drummer Phoebe Summersquash's heaven-sent voice singing halos around bassist Alex Kemp's decidedly more earthbound vocals. "Sun Goes Ahh" spins into an uncontrollable Feelies-ish romp, while "Sixteen Years" bites off a sizeable hunk of acoustic psychedelia. Like everything else you consume, moderation is the key and, thankfully, Small Factory leaves us just shy of a sugar buzz. The band knows when not to overdo Phoebe's schoolgirl harmonies and when to do aggressive, two-steppin' jams. There are times when the sweetness zings your teeth a bit, but the hope, charm and overwhelming good vibrations oozing off this disc more than make up for them.—*Bob Gulla*

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 18.

FILE UNDER: Blissfully spry happy-jangle.

R.I.Y.L.: Velocity Girl, Jonathan Richman, Aztec Camera.

**SNIVLEM** *Prick* Amphetamine Reptile

Prick is purportedly a live album by the Melvins' purported evil twins, Snivlem, who apparently got a strong dose of art-damage kryptonite while on tour in the U.K. Egged on by evidently confused crowds, Snivlem careens from free-form noise, to free-form blues, to... I guess it's free-form death metal. "Chief Ten Beers" starts with some of the most self-indulgent guitar wanking that's been heard since Spinal Tap asked a theme park audience of 20 to go with them on that regrettable journey to fusionland [*the re-birth of Spinal Tap Mark II*—*ed.*], and then adds cryptic chanting and banging. Other goofball highlights include the church bell-dominated "Punch The Lion" and yelping over a tape loop on "Chalk People" that sounds like Barney from *The Simpsons*. As some kind of Pythonesque conceit, there's a blank track preceded by a thick British accent announcing "for your listening pleasure, a few minutes of Pure Digital Silence." Silly as this record is, it's worth a listen or two, if only to shake you out of any complacency you might feel around the typical excesses of art-guitar. Never again will you be able to hear your favorite Japanese noise import or obscure Sonic Youth side project without wondering: Could the Melvins, granddaddies of grunge, have gotten away with this? —*Andrea Moed*

DATALOG: Release date: Aug. 11. Also see Melvins, pg. 40.

FILE UNDER: Free-form art guitar excess.

R.I.Y.L.: Soundgarden, Bevis Frond, Fushitsusha.

**SPELL** *Mississippi* Island

If you're looking for the cheesy Satanic record by industrial freak Boyd Rice, skip the next 25 or so lines, because Spell has about as much in common with the evil Mute band Spell (which has been legally forced to change its name despite the council of Beelzebub) as Jane Fonda has with Charlton Heston. Noisy garage-rock is Spell's specialty, and the band members play their songs with the enthusiasm of inmates who have just escaped from years of incarceration. This is at least partly due to founder Garrett Shavlik, who played drums for garage-punk outfit The Fluid for seven years before forming Spell as an side project to vent extra creative energy. Composed of Shavlik, guitarist/vocalist/former Fluid t-shirt salesman Tim Beckman (ex-Rope) and his wife, bassist/vocalist Chanin Floyd (ex-57 Lesbian), Spell creates rough, raging songs that swell with catchy, cathartic hooks. *Mississippi*, the band's debut, is filled with turbo-charged rhythms and somewhat unsettling melodies. Straightforward riff-rock rhythms are mixed with moments of angular guitar dissonance, and vocals are shared equally by all three band-members, who sometimes finish each other's sentences in the style of hip-hoppers such as Beastie Boys and Run-D.M.C. As a result, *Mississippi* is fast-paced and immediate, uncoiling like a long rope tossed from the deck of a ship. Spellbinding. —*Jon Wiederhorn*

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 4. Video for "Superstar." Touring in December.

FILE UNDER: Feverish garage pop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Fluid, Gas Huffer, Nirvana.




SWIRL *The Last Unicorn* *Half A Cow-Dirt*

As the Australian band's name suggests, Swirl's sound is a melange of musical styles, fuzzed-up guitars rippled with fragile moments of straightforward pop. The rich but anonymous surround-sound of *The Last Unicorn* places Swirl along the hundred crypto-4AD bands that bred rampantly in the mid-'80s. And, just like the Cocteau Twins, whose songs named for demi-goddesses transport listeners to a world of myth, Swirl's songs of fairy-tale creatures and faraway places are enhanced by the band's otherworldly affectations. See, for instance, "Night Of The Unicorn," with its sticky-sweet vocals, violin, and guitars strummed like harps. But, unlike the Twins, you can hear Swirl's lyrics, and the songs are none the worse for it. Often, Swirl's exotic flavor pulls in loud and distorted guitars, sort of like a New Age Sonic Youth. The vocals twang, but bear an occasional resemblance to the thin and metallic voice of Geddy Lee. In fact, "Chains" sounds more like a Rush song than anything else. But when female vocals take over on the second half of the record, it's a return to a more straightforward and pastoral prettiness. Though the outstanding quality of *The Last Unicorn* is its overall atmospheric effect, individual songs vary widely in tempo and style, and each holds up on its own as well. —Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 12. "Strangelands" available as limited-edition 7" single.

FILE UNDER: Mood music for manic-depressives.

R.I.Y.L.: Lush, Nightblossoms, Cocteau Twins.

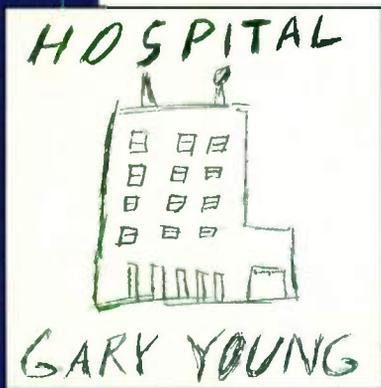

WEAPON OF CHOICE *Weapon Of Choice* *Epic*

Despite the name and the references to South Central L.A. on the album, *Weapon of Choice* isn't another bunch of gangsta rappers. Instead, this debut album mixes influences from funk's Holy Trinity of James Brown, Sly Stone and George Clinton with a few metal and jazz licks here and there to create a fresh, good-natured outing. Like several of Clinton's opuses, the album has a running theme, namely the Nut-Meg party, which is both a party and a philosophy, and the character Mega-Nut. Although this gets a bit confusing at times, it's all delivered with lots of great grooves, so who cares? There's a strong Fishbone influence here, which comes as no surprise since band leader Lonnie Marshall has appeared with several Fishbone offshoots, including Trulio Disgracias and Dr. Yakub. (He's also the brother of one-time Chili Peppers guitar player Arik Marshall.) Although several tracks deliver exhortations to action ("U Owe It To U" and "Slavedriver"), the beat never gets lost under the message, and the message is never heavy-handed. For instance, "Icy Cold" is a harsh warning against selling out, but it's delivered with allusions to "Sesame Street." Luckily for all, the *Weapon Of Choice* this time out is a bassline that can't be denied. —Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 11. Touring West Coast in December.

FILE UNDER: Groove rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Fishbone, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Prince.


GARY YOUNG *Hospital* *Big Cat*

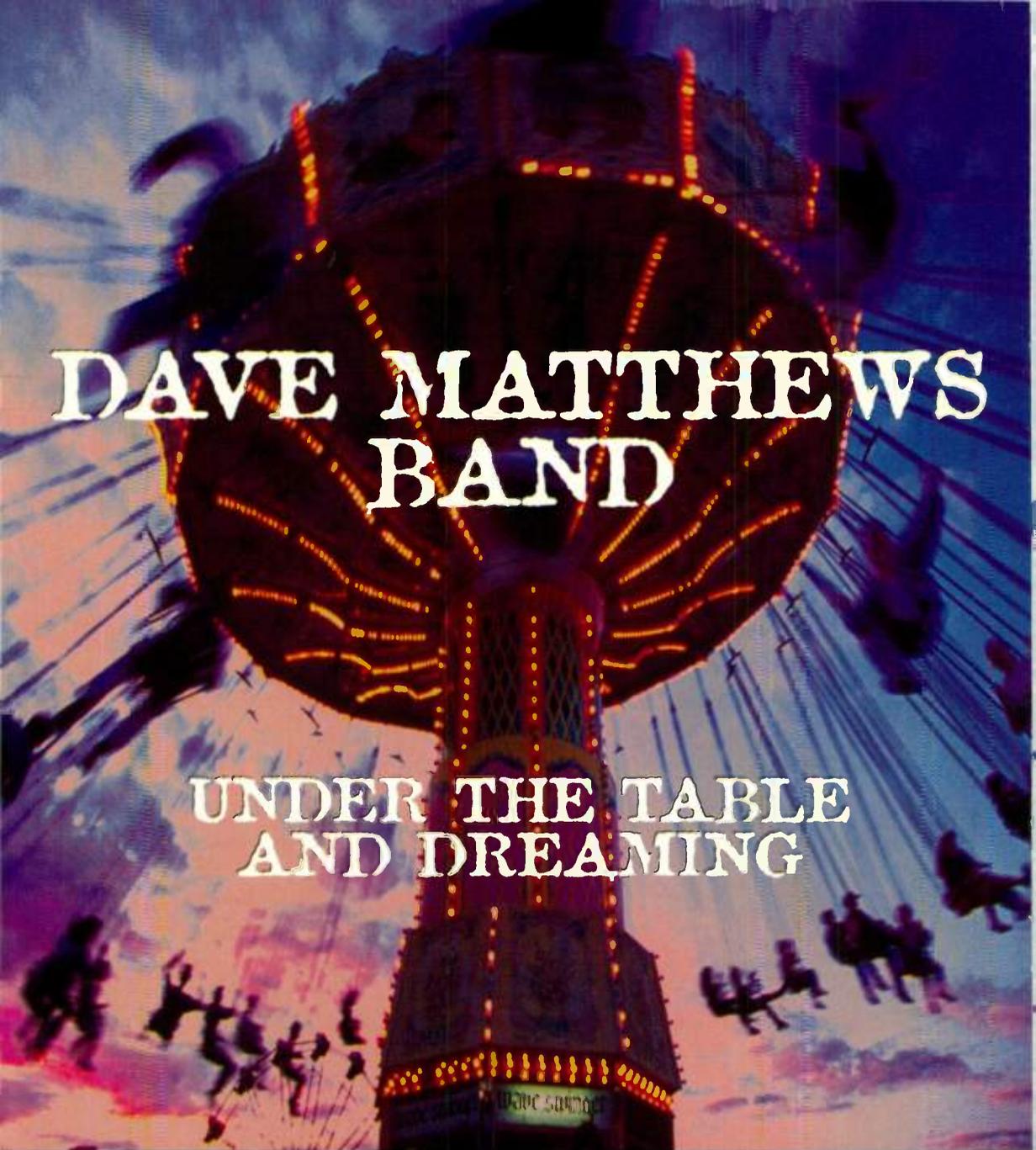
Gary Young was the original drummer for Pavement, known both as the guy who started every one of their songs at a climax and took it from there, and as the hopelessly smashed geezer who handed out celery stalks to the audience and stumbled away from his kit halfway through every song to cadge drinks. Young left Pavement last year, and now, like Ron Wood said, he's got his own album to do. Bad idea. In the context of Pavement's pop songs, his randomness was a wonderful thing. Young was a wild card, the thing that made the straightforward moments of their songs over-the-top and nuts, and smoothed out the twistier bits with classic-rock flourishes. On *Hospital*, he's a wild card with no context and delusions of '73 FM radio. That means we get a dozen or so chances to hear his painfully bad singing, plus some filler instrumentals and a point-free version of "Wipe Out." Everything is either self-consciously quirked to death, or the result of someone honestly under the impression that he's making the next *Close To The Edge*. In either case, it's very hard to listen to. When he actually plays the drums, especially on "Birds And Traffic," it's great—his playing is dramatic, inventive, fun, you name it. You just have to ignore the rank awfulness of the songs and the voice. —Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 25. Video for "Plantman." Touring mid-November.

FILE UNDER: Quirky pop of questionable stability.

R.I.Y.L.: Skip Spence, Coo Coo Rockin' Time, the drumming on *Slanted & Enchanted*.

"His ear was stimulated growing up in Detroit, but it must have gotten quite a boost when his father, working as a steward on an Ocean Liner, took the teenage boy to work and accidentally left him on the island of Crete for six months." — from the liner notes to Slim Gaillard's *Laughing In Rhythm*



DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

UNDER THE TABLE AND DREAMING

PRODUCED BY STEVE LILLYWHITE MIXED BY TOM LORD-ALGE
ON THE RCA RECORDS LABEL CASSETTES AND COMPACT DISCS

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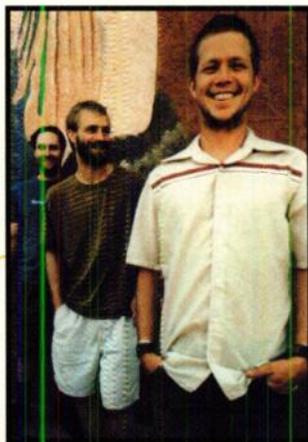
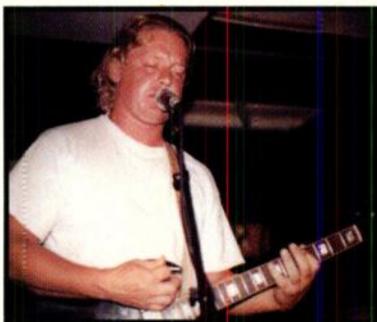
UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

compiled by lydia anderson

strapping fieldhands

The little gumdrop songs harvested by Philadelphia's Strapping Fieldhands are the strangest sort of sweet we've tasted in recent memory. The band's first album, *Discus* (Omphalos-Siltbreeze) (available on vinyl only!), lopes casually from goofy finger-snappers like "Boo Hoo Hoo" and "Mysterious Girl" to sprawling, rock-based tunes like "Red Dog The Deconstructor" to less focused ones like "Gored By Bull." The record's "live in the living room" sound and feel invites unusual instrumentation (melodica, accordion, cello) into the band's guitar/bass/drums lineup and welcomes the 'Hands' noggin full of British folk and psychedelia, most notably Syd Barrett, whose quizzical, expressive musing are an obvious Fieldhands precursor. Bob Malloy's vocals stand proud next to those of Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard for so acutely suggesting a deranged Englishman through the voice of a corn-fed American. It's anyone's guess what the Strapping Fieldhands are up to at the moment, but we expect great things.

(LA)



Martsch's collaboration with Beat Happening's Calvin Johnson, the Halo Benders. Last year Built To Spill was the biggest thing out of Boise; next year it'll be one of the biggest things out of your stereo.

(LA)



18th dye

18th Dye stylishly pulls off all sorts of familiar indie-rock tricks—making a song out of a single chord ("Whole Wide World"); playing breathy, almost-on-pitch vocals against furnace-blast guitars; letting pedal-assisted textural shifts provide the forward motion of songs, as on the superb four-chord single "Dive." Somehow, though, the German/Danish trio makes it sound like they came up with their ideas first. Their songs have the enveloping warmth of familiarity and the startling chill of invention. Following extensive touring in Western and Eastern Europe and a handful of records on the British label Che, 18th Dye recently toured in America with its friends and kindred spirits Yo La Tengo; the album *Done* will soon be released in the U.S. on Matador.

—Douglas Walk



teengenerate

Garage rock has become so formulaic over the years that it's rare that a band really grabs your attention. Leave it to the Japanese, though, to take an old American idea and perfect it, which is exactly what the three guys in Teengenerate have done. The band, which snagged its name from a Dictators song, produces some of the most incredible mono recordings around, bare-bones rock 'n' roll at its best. Teengenerate recently released two 10"s, one on Munster (Germany) and one on Sympathy For The Record Industry, featuring covers of tunes by the Devil Dogs and the Alarm Clocks. Look for a new Teengenerate album to be released on garage stable-yard Crypt.

—Dawn Sutter

ARTIST FEATURED ON THIS MONTH'S CD



METAL

by jon wiederhorn

slayer

divine intervention

American

How do we cope with a sick society where serial killers become celebrities, inner-city murders are so commonplace they no longer make headlines and hard drugs are as easy to buy as candy? For Slayer, creating fast, brutalizing music is the best way of coping with its sordid surroundings. And judging by the hostile aggression of *Divine Intervention*, life for Slayer these days is as much of a

struggle as ever. Noisier and far faster than the band's past two albums, the new disc

is a return to the skull-splitting heaviness Slayer exhibited early in its nefarious

career. *Divine Intervention* features few hooks and even fewer sing-along

melodies (unless you consider screaming "CASTRATE SOCIETY!" at

the top of your lungs a melody), yet it's so tight and impeccably

crafted that the songs hold together. Especially notable are the

screaming, epileptic guitar solos, which draw the listener into the

vortex of mayhem. "Circle Of Belief" is a full-throated,

double-barrelled leap into the abyss, and the bombastic

noise of "Dittohead" sounds like an insane military

commander ordering his troops to charge into a storm of

heavy explosives. INCOMING!

megadeth

youthanasia

Capitol

Being kicked out of Metallica a decade ago was the greatest thing that

could have happened to **MEGADETH** guitarist/vocalist Dave Mustaine.

Since that time, the yowling misanthrope and his band have released five

powerful albums, including *Countdown To Extinction* and *Rust In Peace*, which scored big

sales by toning down the guitars and adding a slew of melodic hooks. *Youthanasia* (Capitol),

Megadeth's sixth offering, continues in this tradition and improves slightly on the formula. Unlike the

many bands that are either violent and rebellious or catchy and image-oriented, Megadeth

encompasses both camps. Its songs bite and claw, but they do

"Miss Piggy is the Ultimate Rock Chick. I thought I'd done it all and seen it all until I met her." — Ozzy Osbourne, who sings "Born To Be Wild" with her on Kermit Unpigged (Jim Henson Records)

so in a way that's memorably pleasurable. From the opening guitar salvos of "Reckoning Day" to the closing riffs of "Victory,"

Youthanasia is as consistently engaging as a high-energy action

flick. Guitars chug and cleave an indelible path through

Mustaine's nicotine rasp, basslines throb along and pounding 4/4

drumming paces the entire assault. While nearly all of the numbers stick to mid-paced tempos, the

maturity of the songwriting keeps the material from sounding stale. The album displays lyrical growth

as well, addressing such issues as gun control ("Elysian Fields"), incest ("Family Tree") and

governmental corruption ("Youthanasia").

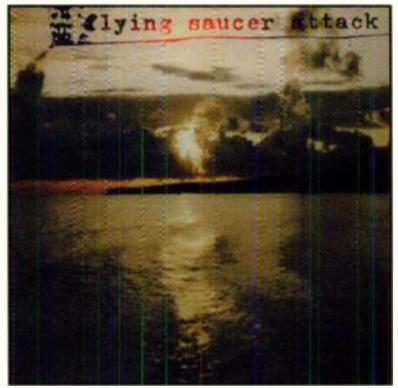


- 1 OBITUARY • World Demise (Roadrunner)
- 2 PRO-PAIN • The Truth Hurts (Energy)
- 3 MACHINE HEAD • Burn My Eyes (Roadrunner)
- 4 OVERKILL • W.F.O. (Atlantic)
- 5 SLAYER • Divine Intervention (American)
- 6 BIOHAZARD • State Of The World Address (Warner Bros.)
- 7 DOWNSET • downset. (Mercury)
- 8 KERBD OG • Kerbdog (Mercury)
- 9 BILE • Suckpump (Energy)
- 10 BODY COUNT • Born Dead (Virgin)
- 11 CORROSION OF CONFORMITY • Deliverance (Columbia)
- 12 NAPALM DEATH • Fear, Emptiness, Despair (Earache-Columbia)
- 13 BAD RELIGION • Stranger Than Fiction (Atlantic)
- 14 L7 • Hungry For Stink (Slash-Reprise)
- 15 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Nativity In Black: A Tribute To Black Sabbath (Columbia)
- 16 M.O.D. • D Evolution (Energy)
- 17 SAVATAGE • Handful Of Rain (Atlantic)
- 18 MARILYN MANSON • Portrait Of An American Family (Nothing-Interscope)
- 19 DANZIG • 4 (American)
- 20 KILLING JOKE • Pandemonium (Big Life-Zoo)
- 21 SOUNDTRACK • Airheads (Arista)
- 22 TESTAMENT • Low (Atlantic)
- 23 KYUSS • Sky Valley (Elektra)
- 24 MADBALL • Set It Off (Roadrunner)
- 25 HELMET • Betty (Interscope)

Compiled from the *CMJ* New Music Report's weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from *CMJ*'s pool of progressive radio reporters.

SINGLES

by douglas wolk



"land beyond the sun"

Drag City

flying saucer attack

The nicest single-as-aesthetic-object of the month is **TROLLIN WITHDRAWAL's** *Drumzema Drumpet*, vol. 2 (Chimp). The Bostonian band, it's rumored, are the people who were responsible for the strange, noisy bits on Swirlies records that weren't actually by the Swirlies. This second single has seven tracks of Ween-like tape manipulation, Tall Dwarfs-like tape manipulation and uncategorizable tape manipulation (a couple of them are also actually good, you know, songs).

Plus, it's got a beautiful full-color sleeve by cartoonist P. Shaw; my copy also came with a couple of random inserts, including a 1978 note from Senator Edward Kennedy's office in the original envelope...

SANDRA BELL has long been a presence on the New Zealand art-rock scene, and her new double-7", "Chord" (Turbulence (Belgium)), has guest appearances by local luminaries including Alastair Galbraith and Norma O'Malley. The main focus, though, is on Bell and her chaotic rock guitar playing and songwriting. The songs have that raw surface/solid interior dichotomy that people from Dunedin and environs seem to do better than anybody else, especially the flesh-ripping "Signal"...

KING KONG gets unfairly slagged a lot for not being a "good indie-rock band"—maybe they don't grimace on stage enough or something. The thing is, they don't want to be Sonic Youth, they want to be the B-52's (and sometimes Booker T. & the MG's), and singer Ethan Buckler specifically wants to be Fred Schneider. On the new "Red Hot Lovin'" (Drag City), for all intents and purposes, he is. And on the instrumental B-side, "Hot Dog Days," the band does a near-perfect MG's imitation—the ham-fisted drumming is the only way to tell the difference...

EGGS just keep getting stranger all the time (this is a good thing). Their new single, "Genetic Engineering" (TeenBeat) is a minimalist semi-acoustic cover of the old O.M.D. song, done up in a Kraftwerk-via-Six Finger Satellite micro-tuxedo. ("Somebody should do a medley of 'Genetic Engineering' and 'Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue'" —Franklin Bruno) It's a little too goofy to be enjoyable. The B-side, though, is a treasure: a complex and sort of melodramatic original by guitarist/trombonist Rob Christiansen called "Genetic Engineers," it never quite cracks a smirk, and it's got a sparse, spazzy and tremendously imaginative arrangement...

One side of a new split single on Chunk is credited to **SILVER JEWS AND NICO** (the other side's by New Radiant Storm King). Uh, right. She's not exactly audible on it (when it was recorded, she was halfway around the world and six feet underground), but it does have one inspired song. "Old New York" is a practically no-fi fake Rat Pack anthem for the city so nice they named it twice, with Pavement's Steve Malkmus and his SJ co-conspirator D.C. Berman trading off barely coherent tips o' the hat ("Theater in the round—hey! Stop by Howard Johnson's/Martinis on the house, you might even meet Mick Ronson"). Maybe they're pretending to be as plastered as Dino and Sammy. Maybe they're not pretending. Anyway, it's damn funny...

The other major split single out this month is from the **GRIFTERS** and **GUIDED BY VOICES** (The Now Sound). The Grifters' song, "I'm Drunk," is a ridiculous, really badly recorded (but kind of fun) throwaway. And GBV's four-song side is a bit disturbing. They're getting a little arrogant about how easily they can turn out great stuff—the first line of the first song is "Hey, Mr. Soundman, could you turn me up?/I don't know your name, but you don't know me either." It's not a very good song, and neither are the two tossed-off equipment-checks that follow it. But "Uncle Dave" is, in a big way: It's one of those Voices anthems that have to be ripped off from some '60s garage classic that there's only one copy of...

There's a second single out by St. Louis' adorable **BUNNYGRUNT**, the *Standing Hampton* EP (No Life). People who can't deal with adorableness should stay away. Actually, people who can't deal with adorableness should go jump off a cliff. Cute doesn't mean incompetent, it just means short, lovable and devoid of artificial menace. "Macho Beagle" and the cover of the Raspberries' "Cry" are both pretty silly (in a good way), but "Mississippi" and "Favorite Food" both suggest a nicer World Of Pooh or Vomit Launch—not quite at that level of songwriting power yet, but getting there fast, and pretty locked-in instrumentally.

DANCE

by tim haslett

romanthony featuring the trojan horse

"hold on" (12")

Black Male

the trojan horse featuring renee sims

"show and tell" (12")

Azuli

The recently prolific Romanthony is a dance artist whose talents are still mysteriously underrated. His singularly inspirational work has unfortunately passed by many in the dance music community in the flurry of new releases. And that's a shame, because Romanthony is a turntable visionary, updating the classic deep New Jersey garage sound championed by DJs such as Tony Humphries through fine-tuned electronics and a hardhouse sensibility. The recent "In The Mix," dedicated to Humphries, was an ecstatic disco celebration which sat atop the chart of many a deep house DJ this summer. What separates Romanthony from many blueprint-checking garage revivalists is that he brings to his work a determined electronic modernity while never losing the music's dancefloor affinities, forged during disco's untimely demise. Romanthony understands that the narrative of garage music is an ongoing one, one that only began with the closing of the legendary Paradise Garage in Manhattan. His finest moment to date is the exquisite "Tronic Dub" on the "Show And Tell" single. Here, he wraps Sims' vocal around a bassline that has the undulating momentum of a wave machine, while a scant, elusive minor-key melody makes its way to the surface of the mix. The "Tronic Dub" is not techno or garden-variety New Jersey house—it's a genre all by itself. The vocally rich "Hold On" has the roof-raising impact of a great gospel song and a slightly gritty production quality which accounts for the delightful lo-tech/hi-tech textures of the track. While dance aficionados in New York and beyond wait breathlessly for singles by Masters At Work, for example, Romanthony is quietly rethinking the entire practice of house.

INTO THE GROOVE

At the risk of overkill, let me inform you that the incomparable **DAJAE** has just released her first full-length record, *Higher Power* (Cajual), and a pressure cooker it is indeed. From the first moments of the "Brighter Days" and "U Got Me Up" singles, the combination of Cajmere's crisp, punchy production and Dajae's clean, defiant and emotive vocals won converts throughout the dance world. This long-awaited debut record has the sort of continuity that so many "track acts" seem incapable of sustaining. Aside from Dajae, only the esteemed Robert Owens has managed to release an entire album of beautiful deep vocal house. The songwriting skills of Dajae and Cajmere are every bit as commanding and powerful as they were with the first singles, which are included here for the new initiates among you... Another record eagerly anticipated by techno fanatics (to the extent that DJs have been charting the record well before its official release) is the *Loosing Control* EP by **DB-X** (Peacefrog (UK)). Produced by the ingenious Dan Bell, this is a slice of techno stripped of all accoutrements, the ceaseless rhythm laid bare sans accompaniment. The stark, elliptical nature of dance music such as this often belies its rhythmic complexity. Like acoustic guitar music, lack of imagination and invention in minimal house becomes apparent awfully fast. Aesthetic flaws in 170-beats-per-minute noisecore often pass the listener by in the tempest of sound, but with music this denuded, you'd better keep things interesting or the dancefloor will fall asleep. Bell certainly keeps the momentum going here, particularly on the careening "Beat Phreak" and the acid-filtered vocal tricks of the title track. These tracks represent electronic dance expeditions into the unknown.



- 1 ORBITAL • Snivilisation (frr-London)
- 2 FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON • Lifetimes (Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 3 SPACETIME CONTINUUM • Sea Biscuit (Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 4 PETER VRIENDS • Emotional Travelogue (sm:je-Profile)
- 5 SEEFEEEL • Polyfusia (Too Pure/Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 6 UNDERWORLD • Dubnobasswithmyheadman (Wax Trax!-TVT)
- 7 ORB • Pomme Fritz (Island Red)
- 8 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Psyco trance (Moonshine)
- 9 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Trance Europe Express 2 (Volume (UK))
- 10 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Urbmix: Flammable Liquid (Planet Earth)
- 11 CONSOLIDATED • Business Of Punishment (London)
- 12 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Excursions In Ambience - The Third Dimension (Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 13 DEEE-LITE • Dewdrops In The Garden (Elektra)
- 14 DRUM CLUB • Drums Are Dangerous (Big Life-Instinct)
- 15 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Trans Slovenia Express (Mute)
- 16 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Septic Cuts (frr-ILS)
- 17 FIERCE RULING DIVA • Revolt Of The Perverse (Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 18 BIGOD 20 • Supercute (Sire-WB)
- 19 MOBY • "Hymn" (12") (Elektra)
- 20 ESSA 3 • "Found" (12") (ZoeMagik-City Of Tribes)
- 21 FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY • Millenium (Roadrunner)
- 22 GLOBAL COMMUNICATION • 76:14 (Dedicated-Caroline)
- 23 VARIOUS ARTISTS • A Brief History Of Ambient Volume 2 (Virgin)
- 24 SINGLE GUN THEORY • Flow, River Of My Soul (Nettwerk-I.R.S.)
- 25 HARDFLOOR • "Funalogue" (12") (Planet Earth)

Compiled from the *CMJ* New Music Report's weekly RPM charts, collected from *CMJ*'s pool of progressive radio reporters.

HIP-HOP

by glen sansone



blowout comb

Pendulum-EMI

digable planets

Digable Planets are cool. Not B-boy cool or gangster cool, but a natural cool that's established when you blend music, self-expression and a love for artistry that comes free of pretense. Digable Planets' music is pure art, created to be a reflection of the world they see around them. Following the enormously successful *Rechin': A New Refutation Of Time And*

Space, *Butterfly*, *Lady Bug* and *Doodle Bug* were heralded with a Grammy for their elaborate

rap/jazz impressions (like "Rebirth Of Slick (Cool Like Dat)"). Their follow-up is a little wiser, more focused and more tangible for the listener. Tracks like "Borough Check"

(featuring Guru) and "Graffiti" (featuring Jeru The Damaja) clearly illustrate their homegrown style, while the retro-sounding "Agent 7 Creamy Spy Theme"

sounds like it belongs on the *Trouble Man* soundtrack. Like the work of

renegade jazz artists of the late '60s, *Blowout Comb* strives for the recognition of its community, tying together ingeniously worded bulletins about present-day street culture and appropriate social messages ("Black Ego"), backed with

a wider musical pastiche that ranges from subtle, smoky jazz to languid funk. Where the group's debut was bogged down in ambiguous, shadowy themes,

Blowout Comb—as heard on the first single, "9th Wonder (Blackitolism)"—makes unobstructed observations, pulling their love of art, culture and their people to the fore.

HIP-HOP



- 1 NOTORIOUS B.I.G. • Ready To Die (Bad Boy-Arista)
- 2 CRAIG MACK • Project: Funk Da World (Bad Boy-Arista)
- 3 GRAVEDIGGAZ • 6 Feet Deep (Gee Street-Island)
- 4 PETE ROCK & C.L. SMOOTH • The Main Ingredient (Elektra)
- 5 ORGANIZED KONFUSION • Stress (The Extinction Agenda) (Hollywood BASIC)
- 6 BLACK MOON • Enta Da Stage (Wreck-Nervous)
- 7 COMMON SENSE • Resurrection (Relativity)
- 8 NAS • Illmatic (Columbia)
- 9 BOOGIEMONSTERS • Riders Of The Storm: The Underwater Album (Pendulum-EMI)
- 10 PUBLIC ENEMY • Muse Sick-N-Hour Mess Age (Def Jam/REAL-Island)
- 11 ROOTS • Do You Want More!!! (DGC)
- 12 ILL AL SKRATCH • Creep Wit' Me (Mercury)
- 13 BEASTIE BOYS • Ill Communication (Grand Royal-Capitol)
- 14 DIGABLE PLANETS • Blowout Comb (Pendulum-EMI)
- 15 MAD LION • "Take It Easy" (12") (Weeded-Nervous)
- 16 JERU THE DAMAJA • The Sun Rises In The East (PayDay/frrr-ILS)
- 17 BEATNUTS • The Beatnuts (Violator-Relativity)
- 18 COOLIO • It Takes A Thief (Tommy Boy)
- 19 FUGEES (TRANZLATOR CREW) • Blunted On Reality (Ruffhouse-Columbia)
- 20 BIG DADDY KANE • Daddy's Home (MCA)
- 21 SOUNDTRACK • Fresh: Music Inspired By The Film (Loud-RA)
- 22 O.C. • Word...Life (Wild Pitch-EMI)
- 23 AALIYAH • Age Ain't Nothing But A Number (Jive)
- 24 DAS EFX • Straight Up Sewaside (EastWest America)
- 25 LORD FINESSE • "Shorties Kaught In The System" (12") (Motown)

BONUS BEATS

Houston's **SCARFACE** (who is also a member of the Geto Boys) is as much a fan of rock 'n' roll as he is of rap. But when you investigate the hardcore reality raps of his third solo album, *The Diary* (Noo Trybe/Rap-A-Lot-Virgin), you're not likely to find a trace of rock anywhere—except perhaps on the moody, anthemic "Intro" and "Outro." Scarface (a.k.a. Brad Jordan) has earned a reputation as one of the most profound orators in rap. On the surface, he sounds like any other self-proclaimed victim of the system or vengeful killing machine. But with deeper analysis (especially of "Hand Of The Dead Body," which features Ice Cube), Scarface reveals himself to be a street-schooled poet whose rhymes cut beneath the surface and delve deep within his fury, whether it's based on fact or fiction. Scarface can convince, enlighten, and give the listener something to ponder. The updated "Mind Playin' Tricks '94" is one of the most deftly penned Geto Boys tracks about the overwhelming stress and confusion of a hustler, while on "Goin' Down" testosterone poisons an otherwise catchy hook. The most riveting moment comes on the first single, "I Seen A Man Die," where Scarface's dark, lyrical genius casts its shadow on the story of someone who has to live (and later die) after killing a man. Its message and graphic discourse are some of the most potent statements being made now on black-on-black crime in America... From the same class as Nas, Jeru The Damaja, Kool G. Rap and Organized Konfusion (he performed on OK's "Fudge Pudge" in 1991), Brooklyn-bred O.C. has been one of the most talked about MCs in New York lately. His debut *Word... Life* (Wild Pitch-EMI) rings with deep poetic reality; his musings have that elusive realism that many other hip-hop artists claim, without the clichés and contrived rhetoric that deny them that honor. The album's impulsive street science boils over on the title track, "Point Of View" and "Ga Head With Self." O.C. is an artist New York can proudly claim as its own.

DIGABLE PLANETS' DOODLE BUG ON TODAY'S HIP-HOP:

"It's more industrialized now. It's consciously trying to be something else. Back then you just did it, it was natural. There are people who are still true to it, but the arms of the big industries are controlling it now to the point where you don't know who's real and who's not. Everybody now says 'Keep it real,' and they say it so much now, to the point where it sounds so corny. I don't like the fact that they have 'hip-hop gear.' Before it was clothes, and before you danced, now it's 'hip-hop dancing.' Now they have magazines where you can buy gold fronts because that's 'hip-hop.' I mean, what the fuck? That shit is corny. I wanna jump out that window... [laughing] Open that window!"

Compiled from the *CMJ New Music Report's* weekly Beat Box charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

FLASHBACK

ROOTS • REISSUES • RETRO

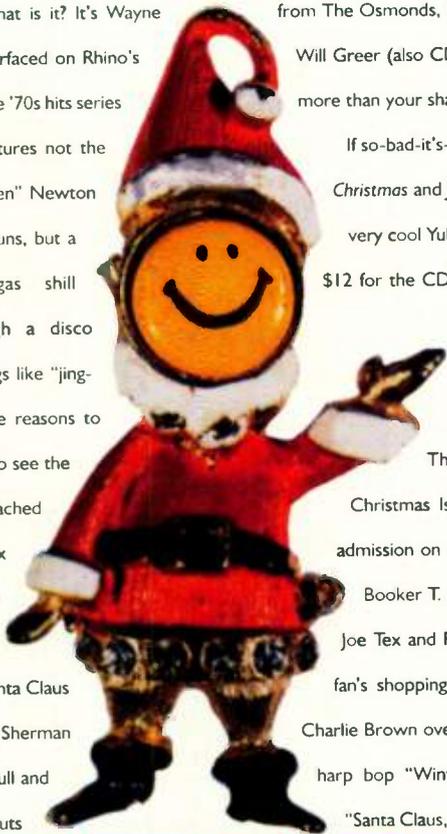
by Scott Frampton and James Lien



GEE WHIZ, IT'S CHRISTMAS



Atrocity. Abomination. Execration. What is it? It's Wayne Newton's "Jingle Bell Hustle," and it's resurfaced on Rhino's new *Have A Nice Christmas*, volume 23 of the '70s hits series *Have A Nice Day*. "Jingle Bell Hustle" captures not the plump, vaguely androgynous "Danke Schoen" Newton you see now and again on Lucy Show reruns, but a pencil-line-mustached, Elvis-aping Vegas shill attempting to charm his way through a disco arrangement of "Jingle Bells" with phrasings like "jing-jing-gle bells, jing-jing-gle bells." There are reasons to pick up *Have A Nice Christmas* other than to see the spot where disco's effect on pop music reached its nadir, however—namely a groovy sax version of "The Christmas Song" by the Jimmy Castor Bunch (of "Troglodyte" fame) and Cheech And Chong's classic "Santa Claus And His Old Lady." Selections from Bobby Sherman (the Joey Lawrence of the '70s), Martin Mull and Gary Glitter (CD-only) also help balance cuts



from The Osmonds, Glen Campbell and Grandpa Walton himself, Will Greer (also CD-only). For those of you still slurping down more than your share of '70s kitsch, here's your comeuppance.

If so-bad-it's-good doesn't work for you, then *Original Soul Christmas* and *Jingle Bell Jam* (both Rhino) will both ensure a very cool Yuletide. Considering its "mid-line" price (about \$12 for the CD), there's no real reason not to buy *Original Soul Christmas*. Clarence Carter's "Back Door Santa" ("I ain't like old Saint Nick/He don't come but once a year") and Carla Thomas' gorgeous lament "All I Want For Christmas Is You" are pretty much worth the price of admission on their own, but tracks from Otis Redding and Booker T. & The MG's put this disc (buy the CD for the Joe Tex and Ray Charles bonus tracks) tops on any music fan's shopping list. *Jingle Bell Jam* groups Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown overture "Christmas Is Here" with Chet Baker's harp bop "Winter Wonderland" and Louis Jordan's soulful "Santa Claus, Santa Claus" and is also highly recommended.

I N T H E B I N S

If you love life, you'll love **SLIM GAILLARD**. Celebrated on Verve's *Laughin' In Rhythm: The Best Of The Verve Years*, Gaillard was a Hall Of Fame raver along the lines of Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Lord Buckley and Peter Sellers. In the beatnik '50s, the Detroit-born, West Coast-based Gaillard recorded a string of nonsensical jazzbo records full of jive hepcat jargon and nonsense gobbledegook that are among the funniest, most delightful musical outings ever. There's an unforgettable jazzy homage to "Potato Chips" ("Crunch, crunch/I don't want no lunch!"), and the immortal "Chicken Rhythm," which features vaguely smutty lyrics about roosters and hens, and an entire chorus of people making chicken noises. Then there more sublime moments, such as the incomprehensible Gypsy/Japanese samba of "Yip Roc Heresy" (a Dr. Demento favorite), "Babalu (Orooney)" and "Mishugana Mambo." Most importantly, his music reflected an attitude that embraced life and lived it to the fullest. It's the kind of record that the more you listen to it, the more you find yourself thinking of people he's influenced, and making connections with things that are current today. From Biz Markie to the Beatles

(their infamous "You Know My Name (Look Up The Number)" is almost completely lifted from Gaillard's oeuvre) to Tom Waits' beatnik boho characters of the early '70s to Monty Python—all owe a tremendous debt to this godfather of hep. Gaillard died in 1991, at the age of 75, and even though every note of *Laughin' In Rhythm* is over 30 years old, it's still one of the coolest records released this year... While he's now spending four nights or so a week being broadcast on the Jumbotron TV screens in stadiums around the planet as a quarter of the Rolling Stones, **RON WOOD** has seen two of his '70s solo albums rereleased by Warner Archives, *Now Look* and *I've Got My Own Album To Do*. The latter is an interesting but sloppy LP from the great jet-set-rock nadir of the mid-'70s—check out the album cover's spread out photo of the various musicians sprawling in Woodie's mansion, including Keith Richard (he wasn't using the "s" then) noticeably lurking in the background (lurking is something he does almost as well as playing guitar). Of the two, *I've Got My Own Album...* is the better bet, with plenty to feed the fanatics: "I Can Feel The Fire," with the Lips himself on vocals; "Far East Man," featuring George Harrison;

"Act Together" and "Sure The One You Need," both Jagger/Richard songs featuring Keith on vocals—it's rumored they were slated to be Stones songs, and handed to Wood when they were deemed not up to snuff... The best kind of gifts are the kind that reflect the impeccable style and good taste of the giver. They are the gifts that say "you're cool for having this, but I'm also cool for giving it to you." Capitol has sensed the need, and rolled out an impeccable single CD, *Greatest Hits Of Nat King Cole*. He's an artist loved by millions, but obviously you would't want to give your relative a 16-CD Mosaic box set of everything he ever recorded. Thankfully, this collection skims the highlights into one packed disc that's an enjoyable listen. It begins with Nat's original 1951 version of "Unforgettable" and closes with, you guessed it, his 1992 beyond-the-grave digital duet with his daughter. Nat was hip, he was ahead of his time, he made great music, and he's still cool even today, making the perfect music gift for relatives and loved ones from neither the Woodstock nor the Lollapalooza generation—that difficult person on your list who just wouldn't appreciate a new belly-button ring.

World Radio History

a little DAB'll do ya: Digital Audio Broadcasting

by Wes Schuynera

Everyone has experienced the fading and interference of even the strongest radio signals, either in a car or at home. And maybe the voice of your favorite community radio station is a mere whisper on your FM or AM dial. With the advent of new digital audio broadcasting technologies, that could be a thing of the past.

Conventional audio broadcasting—what you hear on AM or FM—is the result of the transmission of electromagnetic energy (radio waves) through the atmosphere. These radio waves—which have been shaped into a pattern (analog modulation) that resembles the original sound waves of the words spoken or music being played at a radio station—are detected by radio receivers, which then transform the electromagnetic energy back into acoustic energy, or sound.

Digital audio broadcasting (DAB), conversely, uses the familiar binary code of 0s and 1s (or on/off) to sample sound waves. These encoded sound waves are then transmitted through the atmosphere, received, and decoded by special receivers into sound that is reputed to have CD-like clarity.

This clarity is, in part, the result of an improved technology that is able to break up the encoded digital signal (a bitstream) into various frequencies. Thus, when one slice of this broken-up digital information is damaged because of interference, another bit of code from an unaltered, adjacent frequency can fill in for it, and you are left with data that can be error-corrected by your digital receiver.

This compensatory technology, along with advanced digital coding, modulation and compression techniques, means that the familiar experiences of fading in and out or complete loss of a radio signal, the interference from static or the bleeding of another station into a particular frequency, will be eliminated.

Like your CD player, a digital radio receiver will only process the information that is needed (i.e. the sound) and eliminate all extraneous noise. Better yet, these receivers will be programmable, so as you move from one place to another by car, let's say, a transmitter-to-transmitter relay will enable you to listen to programming on a single station without having to re-tune that frequency. Want to listen to classical music as you move from one part of the country to another? Just punch in "classical" on your receiver and it will automatically scan signals from nearby transmitter nodes and change frequencies as needed, providing you with uninterrupted classical music throughout your trip.

But don't think you can go out and pick up one of these DAB contraptions tomorrow, because they just aren't around. And even if they were, there wouldn't be much to listen to, since most of the transmitting of DAB is being done on a limited basis. The reason for this lag is partly due to the ongoing debate over DAB standards.

At the 1992 World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC) in Spain, a bandwidth of 40 Megahertz (the frequency range between 1452 and 1492 MHz) was allocated in the L-Band for transmitter-based (terrestrial) and satellite DAB services. This allocation is important, since the FM spectrum (88 to 108 MHz) has become, especially around large urban centers, increasingly congested and prone to interference. With the allotted 40 MHz bandwidth, conceivably all existing FM and AM stations in a given area could broadcast on the one L-Band, and in most cases with room for expansion. AM and FM bands could then be used for other information services, such as cellular phone use.

But not everyone is happy with this L-Band spectrum use. In the United States, for example, the allocated frequency is near the range used for military communications. Moreover, many American broadcasters fear that existing FM and AM stations will suffer as a result of competition with a third, presumably better sounding, radio band.

And then there is the debate over which system to use. Currently there is only one system that has been tested and that is known to work: the European-developed Eureka-147. But this system, first demonstrated on the L-Band frequency last year in Canada, has not been embraced fully by the U.S. Currently, the U.S. Electronic Industries Association is testing out several types of DAB

standards, including the Eureka-147, as well as a system that works within the existing FM and AM bands (called "in-band on-channel" or IBOC).

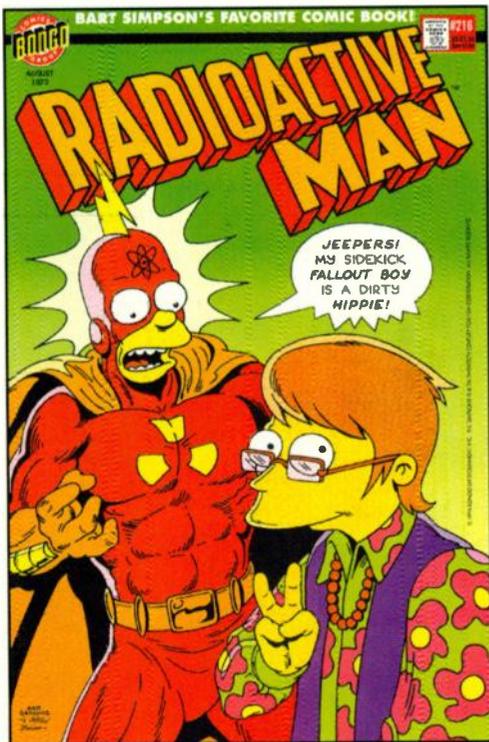
Finally, there is the question of how the new digital bandwidth will be allocated. Because of its technology, one DAB transmitter can be shared by five or six stations (estimates have gone as high as nine stations converging on one transmitter). This, coupled with the fact that digital modulation requires less power than conventional analog modulation (commercial broadcasters presently invest large amounts of capital into high-power transmitters in order to reach markets with minimal interference), means that smaller stations would be theoretically on par with larger ones in terms of signal strength and clarity.

For this reason, the National Association of Broadcasters endorsed the principles of the DAB Task Force in 1991, one of which emphasized the minimization of "competitive dislocations by treating all stations in accordance with their existing positions in the market." Essentially, the large radio broadcasters will want to ensure that the implementation of DAB maintains their already large share of the market pie.

So while the technology of DAB is here—it's been tested and it really works—the administration of it has just begun. Engineers and policy makers agree that a complete switchover to digital radio is still many years away. Even with the present-day introduction of digital receivers, and stations outside of the U.S. already simulcasting in both FM and L-Band, the initial costs for broadcasters and consumers alike will likely be high. Remember the price of those first CD players?

If you really can't wait to hear what transmitted digital audio will sound like, you can always purchase a pay-per-listen service that sends digitally encoded data via your cable. But if you want to cruise in your car, listening to CD-like radio reception without skipping a beat, you'll just have to be patient.

TEST



RADIOACTIVE MAN

by Steve Vance and others
(Bongo Comics)

Attentive viewers of *The Simpsons* know that *Radioactive Man* is Bart's favorite comic. Thanks to Matt Groening's minions at Bongo Comics, we finally have a chance to read it for ourselves. The six-issue *Radioactive Man* miniseries isn't numbered 1-6; instead, we get to read issues 1, 88, 216, 412, 679 and 1000, spanning the series' 40-year history (obviously, it went biweekly somewhere in there). Each issue is a graceful, knowing parody of the superhero comics of a particular era, from the unbearably square heroes of the '50s to the teeth-gritting "social relevance" of the early '70s to the protracted, incomprehensible crossover extravaganzas of the mid-'80s. It's all got *The Simpsons*' intrinsically funny cartoon style (with cunning visual parodies of a couple of famous comics worked into each issue); even better, it's got *The Simpsons*' knack for cramming in dozens of inside jokes that whizz harmlessly past if you don't know what they're referring to (for example, the Superior Squad's headquarters is the Mando Building, which is sidesplitting if you know about the early-'80s comics industry debates over paper stock). *Radioactive Man* is just finishing up its run now, but there are rumors of another miniseries to come next year. Let's hope so.

—Douglas Walk

mixed media

compiled by dawn sutter

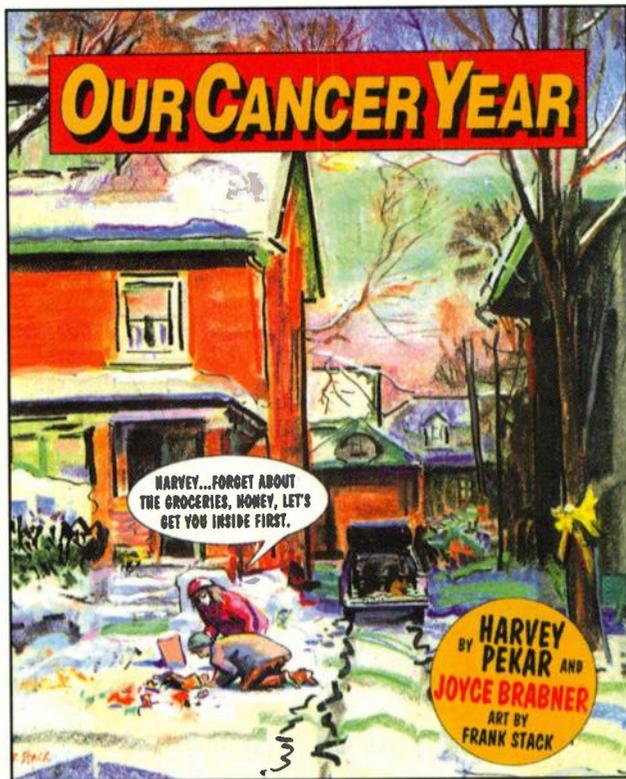
OUR CANCER YEAR

by Harvey Pekar, Joyce Brabner and Frank Stack
(Four Walls Eight Windows)

Harvey Pekar is a grouchy Cleveland file clerk who's published a comic book about his life, *American Splendor*, almost every year for two decades (you may have seen him talking about it on a celebrated series of appearances on David Letterman's show). He tends to focus less on big events in his life than on day-to-day occurrences and conversations that come out of routine. Joyce Brabner, his wife, writes and edits comics like *Real War Stories* as a form of political activism. A few years ago, Pekar found he had cancer. *Our Cancer Year* is the story of how the couple got through his (agonizing but successful) treatment, set in the context of events both personal (their new house) and global (the Gulf War). The book is drawn by Frank Stack (best known as underground comics artist Foolbert Sturgeon); his thick-lined, near-impressionistic style is a bit hard to get into at first, but eventually suits the story well, especially in the later sections when Pekar, racked with illness, is losing touch with reality. *Our Cancer Year* is both Pekar and Brabner's most successfully sustained long work to date, and among their best. Pekar has an unmatched eye for convincing detail—including unflattering details about himself—and Brabner knows how to bring out the salient points of a narrative. What you get when you put them together has the intimacy of autobiography and the dispassionate accuracy of a good documentary.

—Douglas Walk

funnies



FAT GREG DULLI

#6
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FAT GREG DULLI
PO Box 534

FAT GREG DULLI

P.O. Box 534
New York, NY 10156

'zines

This 'zine is everything that *Die*, *Evan Dando*, *Die* hoped to be but wasn't—biting and funny. The magazine is full of speculations on what magazines Greg Dulli (the Afghan Whigs' singer, for the uninitiated) subscribes to, what his pick-up lines are and what songs he sings in the shower ("I Feel Pretty" is a good one). But in this first issue, listed as #6 on the cover, the lampooning of Dulli is at its most brilliant in a "conversation" between Greg and Liz Phair—reprinted from a magazine called *Steve Albini Thinks We Suck*—composed of quotes from Dulli and Phair's lyrics. (Greg: "Let me in, I'm cold. All messed up but nowhere to go." Liz: "It's cold out there, and rough.") The 'zine is thoughtful ribbing of a cult figure/rock star who might have become a bit too big for his britches. (DS)

flicks

S.F.W.

(Gramercy Pictures)

Ever since the success of *Slacker*, Generation X film makers and book writers have been trying to capitalize on troubled twenty-something youth. *S.F.W.* (So Fucking What) is yet another attempt to do so, but at least has the decency to spoof the media hype at the same time.

As the film opens, Cliff Spab (played by Stephen Dorff) and two of his friends have been held hostage at a convenience store for 36 days. The terrorists' only demand was that the video footage they shot of Cliff and others was broadcast live on national television. When Cliff is released from the hospital, this good-for-nothing, directionless, confused teen has become a national hero. And his frustrated mutterings of "so fucking what" have become a national credo; it seems everyone can relate to the phrase.

But as a hero, Cliff is betrayed by everyone. His parents inform him they have sold his life story to all three television networks, his best friend (played by Jake Busey, lookalike brother of Gary Busey) tries to convince him to sue so that he can get a cut of the money, and his fast-food employer is using his face to sell the "Spab Burger."

Written and directed by Jeffery Levy (*Inside Monkey Zetterland*), *S.F.W.* jumps from being a complete spoof to a serious drama, making it a bit difficult to handle. Despite the respectable acting from bright newcomers (Dorff played Stu Sutcliffe in *Backbeat*), there is a token romance thrown into the plot, and at times the strong soundtrack makes the movie look like a Buzz Bin video. But complete reality is obviously not the point here. *S.F.W.* is a rollercoaster that pairs giddy comedy with sad reality, and it does a good job with both. (DS)



TOP 75

ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY



SEBADOH

ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	LABEL
1 SEBADOH	Bakesale	Sub Pop
2 SUGAR	File Under: Easy Listening	Rykodisc
3 DINOSAUR JR	Without A Sound	Sire-Reprise
4 LUSCIOUS JACKSON	Natural Ingredients	Grand Royal-Capitol
5 JESUS & MARY CHAIN	Stoned & Dethroned	American
6 BAD RELIGION	Stranger Than Fiction	Atlantic
7 LIZ PHAIR	Whip-Smart	Matador-Atlantic
8 STEREO LAB	Mars Audiac Quintet	Elektra
9 MAGNAPOP	Hot Boxing	Priority
10 REVEREND HORTON HEAT	Liquor In The Front	Sub Pop-Interscope
11 R.E.M.	Monster	Warner Bros.
12 VARIOUS ARTISTS	If I Were A Carpenter	A&M
13 THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS	John Henry	Elektra
14 SKY CRIES MARY	This Timeless Turning	World Domination
15 L7	Hungry For Stink	Slash-Reprise
16 LOVE SPIT LOVE	Love Spit Love	Imago
17 NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE	Sleeps With Angels	Reprise
18 BEASTIE BOYS	Ill Communication	Grand Royal-Capitol
19 TOADIES	Rubberneck	Interscope
20 JALE	Dreamcake	Sub Pop
21 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Jabberjaw: Good To The Last Drop	Mammoth
22 WEEZER	Weezer	DGC
23 KILLING JOKE	Pandemonium	Big Life-Zoo
24 SAMIAM	Clumsy	Atlantic
25 PALE SAINTS	Slow Buildings	4AD-Reprise
26 COP SHOOT COP	Release	Interscope
27 JESUS LIZARD	Down	Touch And Go
28 SINEAD O'CONNOR	Universal Mother	Chrysalis-EMI
29 POP WILL EAT ITSELF	Dos Dedos Mis Amigos	Nothing-Interscope
30 MOTOCASTER	Stay Loaded	Interscope
31 NOFX	Punk In Drublic	Epitaph
32 CONSOLIDATED	Business Of Punishment	London-PG
33 LUSH	Split	4AD-Reprise
34 VELOCITY GIRL	iSimpatico!	Sub Pop
35 DANIEL JOHNSTON	Fun	Atlantic
36 WEEN	Chocolate And Cheese	Elektra
37 MC 900 FT JESUS	One Step Ahead Of The Spider	American
38 FIGGS	Low-Fi At Society High	Imago
39 SOUNDTRACK	Natural Born Killers	Nothing-Interscope
40 HELMET	Betty	Interscope
41 JUDYBATS	Full-Empty	Sire-WB
42 GREEN DAY	Dookie	Reprise
43 BLUES TRAVELER	Four	A&M
44 SHUDDER TO THINK	Pony Express Record	Epic
45 STONE TEMPLE PILOTS	Purple	Atlantic
46 OASIS	Definitely Maybe	Epic
47 PALACE BROTHERS	Palace Brothers	Drag City
48 BARENAKED LADIES	Maybe You Should Drive	Sire-Reprise
49 COWS	Orphan's Tragedy	Amphetamine Reptile
50 SLOAN	Twice Removed	DGC
51 HOODOO GURUS	Crank	Zoo
52 SILKWORM	Libertine	El Recordo
53 WOOL	Box Set	London
54 SKANKIN' PICKLE	Sing Along With	Dill
55 LIVE	Throwing Copper	Radioactive
56 ZUZU'S PETALS	The Music Of Your Life	Twin Tone
57 GIANT SAND	Glum	Imago
58 SMOG	Burning Kingdom (EP)	Drag City
59 FREEDY JOHNSTON	This Perfect World	Elektra
60 SMALL	Chin Music	Alias
61 RANCID	Let's Go	Epitaph
62 WIDESPREAD PANIC	Ain't Life Grand	Capricorn
63 GRANT LEE BUFFALO	Mighty Joe Moon	Slash-Reprise
64 BUCKLEY	Grace	Columbia
65 GAS HUFFER	One Inch Masters	Epitaph
66 311	Grassroots	Capricorn
67 PIZZICATO FIVE	Five By Five (EP)	Matador
68 GUIDED BY VOICES	Bee Thousand	Scat-Matador
69 RUSTED ROOT	When I Woke	Mercury
70 VARIOUS ARTISTS	You Got Lucky: A Tribute To Tom Petty	Backyard-Scotti Bros.
71 SHAWN COLVIN	Cover Girl	Columbia
72 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Beat The Retreat: Songs By Richard Thompson	Capitol
73 OFFSPRING	Smash	Epitaph
74 FRANK BLACK	Teenager Of The Year	4AD-Elektra
75 SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE	Diary	Sub Pop

Chart data culled from the CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 150 radio chart, based on combined airplay by 500 commercial and college-run commercial radio stations reporting their top 35 most played releases that week.



NEW RELEASES
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

NOVEMBER

- PEARL JAM** *Vitalogy* (Epic Associated)
- ROBERT PLANT & JIMMY PAGE** *Unledded* (Atlantic)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Woodstock '94* (double CD) (A&M)
- BIG AUDIO** *Higher Power* (Columbia)
- AEROSMITH** *Box Of Fire* (13-CD box of all their Columbia Records)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Black Box: A 13 Year History of Wax Trax! Records* (Wax Trax!-TVT)
- GRIFFTERS** (7") (Sub Pop)
- STONE ROSES** (DGC)
- BLACK SHEEP** *Non Fiction* (Mercury)
- DA BUSH BABEES** *Ambushed* (Reprise)
- RESIDENTS** *Cube-E Live* (reissue) (Restless)
- JERRY LEE LEWIS** (Warner Bros.-Sire)
- STING** *Dogstar* Compilation: *Sting's Greatest (1984-1994)* (A&M)
- THREE MILE PILOT** *Chief Assassin To The Sinister* (DGC)
- PLASTIKMAN** *Musik* (Mute)

- STEVIE WONDER** *Conversation Piece* (Motown)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Tulane Dust: The Songs Of Merle Haggard* (Hightone)
- BLACK UHURU** (Mesa-Atlantic)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The R&B Box: 30 Years Of Rhythm & Blues (1943-1972)* (Rhino)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The Complete Stax/Volt Singles, Vol. Three: 1972-1975* (10 CD boxed set) (Stax-Fantasy)
- IKE TURNER** *I Like Ike: The Best Of Ike Turner* (Rhino)
- BOB DYLAN** *Greatest Hits Vol. Three* (Columbia)
- THE BAND** *Across The Great Divide* (3 CD box) (Capitol)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Hi Times: The Hi Records R&B Years 1967-1973* (The Right Stuff)
- TODAY IS THE DAY** *Willpower* (Amphetamine Reptile)
- PALACE SONGS** *Hope* (EP) (Drag City)
- GASTR DEL SOL** *Mirror Repair* (EP) (Drag City)

- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The Best Of Unplugged* (Warner Bros.)
- PRINCE** *The Black Album* (Paisley Park-Warner Bros.)
- LORDS OF ACID** *Voodoo-U* (American)
- GREEN JELLY** *333* (Video LP) (Zoo)
- ASS PONYS** *Electric Rock Music* (A&M)
- MICHAEL JACKSON** *History* (2 CD greatest hits with new tracks) (Epic)
- ICE CUBE** *Bootlegs And B-Sides* (remixes, B-sides, new tracks) (Priority)
- VAN HALEN** *Balance* (Warner Bros.)
- LAUNDRY** *Black Tongue* (Prawn Song-MDL)
- SLICK RICK** *Behind Bars* (Def Jam)
- BOREDOMS** *Onanie Bomb Meets The Sex Pistols* (reissue) (Reprise)
- HERBIE HANCOCK** *Mwandishi: The Complete Warner Brothers Recordings* (Warner Bros. Archives)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Punk-O-Rama* (Rancid, Bad Religion, Offspring, etc., features unreleased tracks) (Epitaph)
- DEAD MILKMEN** *Live Hits* (Restless)
- SHUDDER TO THINK** "X-French Tee Shirt" (7") (Sub Pop)
- STR8-G** *Shadow Of A G* (A&M)

- 6** **MILES DAVIS** (box set) (Columbia)
- NEW ORDER** *Best Of New Order* (Qwest-Warner Bros.)
- CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS** *Not A Perfect Man* (Giant)
- SHUG & DAP** (Giant)
- 13** **VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Totally Dazed And Confused* (Medicine)
- MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHY** *America's Horse* (Warner Western)
- 20** **VARIOUS ARTISTS** *It's Now Or Never* (Elvis Presley Tribute) (Island)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The First Ten Years: Def Jam Classics* (Def Jam)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Interview With A Vampire* Soundtrack (Geffen)

DECEMBER

THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS STUFF:

- DONNA SUMMER** *Christmas Spirit* (Mercury)
- ALEXANDER O'NEAL** *My Gift To You* (Motown)
- TONY BENNETT** *Snowfall* (Columbia)
- NEIL DIAMOND** *Christmas Album Volume Two* (Columbia)
- BEN KEITH & FRIENDS** *Seven Gates: A Christmas Album* (guests include Johnny Cash and Neil Young) (Warner Bros.)
- MARIAH CAREY** *Merry Christmas* (Columbia)
- FLAT DUO JETS** "I'll Have A Merry Christmas Without You" (7") (Norton)
- FRANK SINATRA** *Sinatra Christmas Album* (Warner Bros.)
- ELVIS PRESLEY** *If Every Day Was Like Christmas* (RCA)
- RICK BRAUN** *Christmas Present* (Mesa/Bluemoon)
- JERRY JEFF WALKER** *Christmas Gonzo Style* (Rykodisc)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *It's A Beautiful Christmas* (Rhino)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Christmas At Mountain Stage* (Blue Plate Music)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Billboard Rock 'N' Roll Christmas* (Rhino)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The Coolest Christmas* (Oglio)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Jingle Bell Jam: Jazz Christmas Classics* (Rhino)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *The Original Soul Christmas* (Rhino)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Have A Nice Christmas: Holiday Hits Of The '70s* (Rhino)

All dates are subject to change

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Spell

A bit of Rope, some Fluid and one of 57 Lesbians combine to make Denver's **SPELL** one of the sharpest new garage-rock bands. Although the group started as a side project for Fluid drummer Garrett Shavlik and Rope frontman/guitarist Tim Beckman, once Beckman's bass-playing wife Chanin Floyd (ex-57 Lesbian) hopped aboard, the group had too much chemistry and melodic punch not to be full-time. "Superstar," from the debut album *Mississippi* (Island), rages and flares with churning guitars, enticing vocals and clever hooks.

Listening to "Lay It Down," the second single from **MAGNAPOP's** *Hot Boxing* (Priority), is sort of like trying to sleep after downing a handful of NoDoz. Although the coolly assured vocals and natural melodies of Linda Hopper (formerly of Athens, GA hometown heroes Oh-OK) are infinitely soothing atop Ruthie Morris' tightly channeled riffing, it's really the furious, punkish flamboyance of Magnapop's rhythm section here that demands attention.



Magnapop

After the release of its second full-length album *In The West* last year, the attention **SILKWORM** had received from its early singles and EPs quickly swelled, turning these underground darlings into next-big-thing heroes. The Seattle band's followup proves that the strength of its debut was no fluke, and "Couldn't You Wait," taken from *Libertine* (El Recordado), demonstrates why this former quartet (see This Month's Model) deserves all the hoopla it has received.

Widely known (and occasionally joked about) as "the cutest band in existence," **BUNNYGRUNT** made some ripples in the indie-label community with its debut single earlier this year. The band's followed it up with an equally cute 7" EP *Standing Hampton* (No Life), from which "Favorite Food" is taken. It's simple but not simple-minded, and charming as all get out—100% free of unnecessary angst.

BUILT TO SPILL is the ideal showcase for the wry pop songwriting and schizophrenic guitar work of vocalist/guitarist (and occasional member of the Halo Benders) Doug Martsch. "In The Morning," the alternately bouncy and darkly introspective opening track of the band's sophomore effort *There's Nothing Wrong With Love* (Up), best leaves BTS's indelible indie-pop stamp after the several listens it demands and deserves.

BETTY PLEASE have a handful of sweet, restrained singles cut, of which "Song For Evelyn Hamburger" (released by 100% Breakfast!) was the first. Singer/guitarists Jake Kreilkamp and Oliver Strauch know when to sing plaintively and when to let the music carry things on its own (check out the prolonged, gorgeous bridge). The band has built up quite a following in its native Boston—the perpetually touring hardcore band Fat Day named itself after this song's chorus.



Silkworm

CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

DECEMBER 1994

VOLUME 16

After three albums and numerous EPs, Portsmouth, England's **CRANES** continue to make records as genuinely eerie as they are beautiful. Primarily based around the haunting, childlike voice of Alison Shaw, the band's sound has evolved somewhat on the band's latest album, *Loved* (Dedicated). "Shining Road," which appears here in a special mix by producer Michael Brauer (Belly, George Michael), builds upon Shaw's innocent melodies with a lush texturing of keyboards, acoustic guitar and xylophone, making what initially sounds like a simple, dark childhood song into a sweeping, gothic epic.



Cranes

OASIS is the latest English band to be surrounded by rock press hysteria that dwells more on the band's arrogance and occasional onstage sibling donnybrooks than on its music. Which is unfortunate, because "Live Forever" (Epic) and the rest of its debut LP *Definitely Maybe*, settles nicely in an area where Beatles-esque melodies, Stonesey swagger, glam-rock crassness and neo-psychedelia earnestly and unapologetically mix. Ignore the hype, cue "Live Forever" up on the hi-fi, and just try to get its hook out of your head.



Oasis

CATHERINE proves itself a heavyweight contender in the modern wall-of-guitar rock wars with the deceptively playful "Songs About Girls," from *Sorry* (TVT). As a bed for its sarcastic, somewhat cynical lyrics, "Songs About Girls" alternates immediate, scratchy passages of feedback and noise with thick, weighty drives, creating a mega-amplified surround-sound feast. Another version of the song is available on a split single with Starchildren—a k a members of Catherine with a certain pumpkin-smasher.

THE OILS

HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

1. Cut along dotted line.
2. Fold in half.
3. Slip into our CD holder or a jewel box.



Catherine



Animal Bag



Hoodoo Gurus

Straying from its earlier softer, alterna-metal stylings, **ANIMAL BAG** is frothing at the mouth and ready to lunge straight at the throat with its high-powered sophomore release *Image Damage* (Mercury). The album's first single, "Spirits Of Grass," stomps through heavily drenched slabs of thick, reverberating guitar grind and swirling, groove-laden rhythms, as lead singer Luke Edward's strong, melodic voice soars weightlessly above.

Anyone with a voice like Dave Matthews has a right to name a band after himself. Matthews, a South African expatriate transplanted to Virginia, and the rest of the **DAVE MATTHEWS BAND** have been selling tens of thousands of self-released CDs and packing clubs all over the country. The band's new RCA album *Under The Table And Dreaming* offers a dozen reasons—"Jimi Thing" chief among them—why the band has built up such a strong following.

Sydney, Australia's **HOODOO GURUS** may have discovered the secret to eternal youth, because they've been bashing out basic, no-frills guitar/bass/drums garage pop for over a decade and they still have the energy of teenagers. Their new (sixth) album, *Cranky* (Praxis-Zoo), is full of catchy, power-pop hooks and relentless guitar riffs, as well as a few (relatively) quieter moments like "Nobody" that cool the pace a little—of course, a cool pace for them is still pretty hot by anybody else's standards.

With a flair for drama and a knack for strong melodies, **THE LONDON SUEDE** took the British music world by storm a few years ago, quickly earning the title "England's best new band." The group's second full album, *dog man star* (Columbia), completed just before the departure of guitarist/songwriter Bernard Butler, is a strong follow-up full of lush arrangements, emotive vocals and dynamic guitar lines that bear comparison to David Bowie, Roxy Music and the Smiths. "The Wild Ones" is a brilliant example of The London Suede's luster.

And speaking of Roxy Music: Since his glam days as leader of that band, **BRYAN FERRY** hasn't budged from his position as the classiest man in rock 'n' roll. Although his latest, *Mamouna* (Virgin), of which this is the title track, features cameos by former Roxy bandmates Phil Manzanera, Andy Mackay, and even Brian Eno, Ferry isn't indulging in an easy move toward his past. *Mamouna* is an intricate, detailed collage of effortless R&B grooves, ethereal, textured production, and Ferry's unmistakable voice.

The two members of **PORTISHEAD**, singer Beth Gibbons and instrumentalist Geoff Barrow, are into movies—that's obvious, from the sonic references to films all over their debut album *Dummy* (Go! Discs-London). While you're busy figuring out where the strange sounds in "Sour Times" come from (we suspect a nod to *The Third Man*'s bouzouki score), don't neglect the larger musical ideas Portishead has taken from film music, like the way it builds tension and mood with minimal instrumentation.

Mick Jones' post-**Clash** outfit was Big Audio Dynamite first, then BAD II, and now it's just plain **BIG AUDIO**. "Looking For A Song" comes from the new *Higher Power* (Columbia), and it's a tongue-in-cheek rewrite of the Carpenters' "Sing" ("It ain't as easy as it looks/Coming up with endless hooks"). It's also got a trickier arrangement than it sounds like at first, throwing in all manner of sonic detail by the end, from piano to reggae toasting to acoustic guitars.

"Green Mind" kicks off with a brief patriotic speech by a TV car dealer from Ohio—**DINK**'s home state, where they sold tons of copies of two cassette EPs, released on their own label FYINS (yes, that stands for "Fuck You, I'm Not Sorry"). The band's self-titled debut full-lengther (Capitol) is full of driving industrial polyrhythms, bizarre soundbites and aggressive attacks on the wreckage that is civilization as we know it.

The mysterious techno collective known as **ORBITAL** is perpetually revising and re-creating its songs. "Are We Here" appears on its album *Sivilisation* (frrr-London) as a 15-and-a-half minute electronic workout; here, it's condensed into a pop song (well, a pop song of sorts) that's less than four minutes long. In any event, it's a digital soundscape of astonishing depth and complexity; wander into the middle of it and let yourself get lost.

Since the mid-'80s, **POP WILL EAT ITSELF** has been at the fore of industrial dance. The outfit creates a hard-driving assault of sound which welds together guitar-rock, dance and a few technological twists. From *Dos Dedos Mis Amigo* (Nothing-Interscope), "Ich Bin Ein Auslander" makes use of a grinding, fuzzy Spanish guitar riff mixed with apocalyptic messages. This black cloud of sound is menacing, but extremely simple to dance to.

Cincinnati's **ASS PONYS** (yes, that's how they spell it) play a back-porch twang. The homey, country-ish feel of "Little Bastard" (which has some pretty perverse lyrics—listen closely) is partly due to the banjo pluckings, and partly from singer Chuck Cleaver's down-home drawl. The Ass Ponys' hometown friends, the Afghan Whigs, have long been fans of the band, covering their song "Mr. Superlove." Following a handful of excellent indie albums, the Ass Ponys have just released their first album on A&M, *Electric Rock Music*.



The London Suede



Bryan Ferry



Orbital



Pop Will Eat Itself

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ON TOUR



ECHOBELLY

New York, NY

September 21, 1994

"Me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me!" sang Echobelly's Sonya Aurora-Madan in "I Can't Imagine The World Without Me," pointing at herself with every word. It's this kind of arrogance and narcissism that has made Echobelly one of England's greatest new exports. Like Suede, Pulp and Blur, Echobelly relies on self-belief and melodrama to deliver its grandiose pop vision. But the band is far from one-dimensional, in part because of its members' eclectic perspectives and origins. Guitarist Debbie Smith (ex-Curve) is a black lesbian with a propensity for rocking out (at one point in the show, she wiped her forehead with a bra someone threw onstage); co-guitarist Glenn Johansson is a tall, white expatriate Swede; and vocalist Aurora-Madan is a striking, petite Indian woman who skipped out on a pre-arranged marriage and has a black belt in karate, not to mention a beguiling stage presence and a mellifluous voice that owes more than a nod to Morrissey. Echobelly's music is crisp, uplifting and impeccably tight, merging dramatic pop aesthetics with punchy, loud guitars. Yet as buoyant as the songs are, they're born out of pain and frustration, echoing the experiences and frustrations of Aurora-Madan. The buoyant "Give Her A Gun," for example, addresses male chauvinism, and "Call Me Names" tackles racism. On an emotional level, Echobelly was at its best on the slow, eerie "Cold Feet Warm Heart" and the gripping ballad "Scream," which echoes with the line "There's no heaven in the sky/Have you ever cared to scream?" But the electrical charge of "Today, Tomorrow, Sometimes, Never," "Insomniac" and "Father, Ruler, King, Computer" was just as rewarding. Aurora-Madan may cry "what do I care now that it's over" in "Bellyache," but for Echobelly it's only just begun. —Jon Wiederhorn

DAVID GRAY

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 25-26 Seattle, WA
 27 Portland, OR
 29 San Francisco, CA
 Dec. 1 Sacramento, CA
 3 Los Angeles, CA
 4 Tempe, AZ
 5 Santa Fe, NM
 10 Austin, TX

LYLE LOVETT

- Nov. 19 Providence, RI
 23 Raleigh, NC
 25 Atlanta, GA
 26 Asheville, NC
 29 Charlotte, NC
 30 Norfolk, VA

DIAMANDA GALAS

WITH JOHN PAUL JONES

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 22 Columbus, OH
 24 Toronto, ONT
 26 Washington, DC
 30 Austin, TX
 Dec. 2 Tempe, AZ
 4 Los Angeles, CA
 6 San Francisco, CA
 8 Portland, OR
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GO-GO'S

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 24-27, 29-30 Las Vegas, NV
 Dec. 1-2 Los Angeles, CA
 7-8 New York, NY
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 19 Carrboro, NC
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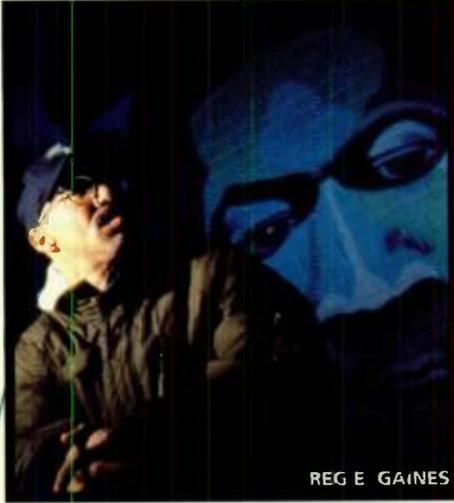
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Localzine

by Nicole Blackman

THE NYC SPOKEN WORD SCENE



REG E. GAINES

New Yorkers always think what they say is more important than what anyone else says, so it makes sense that the spoken word/poetry scene thrives in NYC.

After a few high-profile articles and news stories last year, the scene heated up quickly; many of the poets who were toiling in obscurity downtown soon found themselves with agents, recording deals and publishing offers. The debate over the MTV-ization of poetry continues, although many believe that it's not important if television corrupts poetry, but that poetry corrupts television.

Offering an outlet for young writers and rappers, the poetry scene is a tightly knit community that nonetheless embraces new talent. Poets study with other poets, buy each others' books and tapes, attend readings and perform for benefits regularly. In a city where it's hard to know your neighbors, poets regularly do "salon readings" in living rooms or over barbecues, and the vibrance of the work constantly revitalizes the scene. Many poets are organizing readings outside Manhattan in New Jersey, Staten

Island, Boston and other cities. A dozen of us performed at Lollapalooza, and a busload went up to spin magic at Woodstock. There may not be a lot of money in this, but if you ask poets to perform, chances are they will.

Some performance poets are doing great work by performing in pairs, trios, quartets and quintets. The late, great Pussy Poets invigorated the community with their sharp, funny, poignant readings, and some new groups, like Poet Nation, are trying to redefine poetry performances by densely layering and weaving words to often startling effect.

Some legends occasionally pop up, like Allen Ginsburg, Adrienne Rich and Chicago's grand dame, Gwendolyn Brooks. The Patti Smith reading in Central Park last summer was a dream come true for thousands of young poets who consider her work to be a watermark for performance poetry. The free Summerstage readings in Central Park continue to feature a wide variety of new and established poets and writers—if you've ever seen 6,000 New Yorkers silent and enraptured by a reading, you know the power great work can have over an audience.



MAGGIE ESTEP



ALLEY RUTZEL

It's difficult to categorize the poets, since some call themselves performance artists, slam poets, performance poets, or stand-up poets, but whatever you call them, if you rip out this guide and make a few stops on your next trip to NYC, you'll come away with some incredible experiences. Some events are "readings," some are "slams" and some are "open mikes," and many are a rollercoaster mix of all three.

Slams are wild evenings where the performers read their poems/pieces and random members of the audience are named judges and write a score on a card. How can you put a number on "art"? Well, I don't know, but it's guaranteed to make you yell, hoot and throw bottles (usually at the judges). Many of the NYC poets you've heard of or seen (Maggie Estep, Reg E. Gaines, Dana Bryant, Edwin Torres, Hal Sirowitz, Matthew Courtney, Emily XYZ) came from or have participated in the slams, and it's the quickest way to see a new poet make a stir. The annual heckler's slams at the Nuyorican are insane—poets read and judges score the hecklers' comments. I'm proud to say I came in second last year.

You'll find readings all over town and if you hang out at a reading or slam long enough, you're guaranteed to be surprised by a new voice or master poet who can suck the air out of a room and leave you wanting more. The quality of the readings varies, so if you're interested in seeing something great, scan the listings in *New York Press* or the *Village Voice* for someone you've heard of—or check out the well-known spots where the mix is fresh and fast. For an average admission of \$5 or a pass-the-hat contribution, you can't go wrong. Readings are also a great date-night idea. If he hates haikus and you love them, it should provide a good barometer for a potential relationship.

For the best listings on readings, workshops and benefits, pick up a free copy of the monthly *Poetry Calendar* at some of the downtown bookstores, or subscribe for \$15 (60 East 4th St. #21, New York, NY 10003). Many poets keep their Calendars as a chronicle of how the scene has exploded, and if they go up in value years from now, I'll kick myself for not keeping all of them.

PLACES

THE NUYORICAN POETS CAFE

(236 East 3rd St. between Ave. B & C, 505-8183)

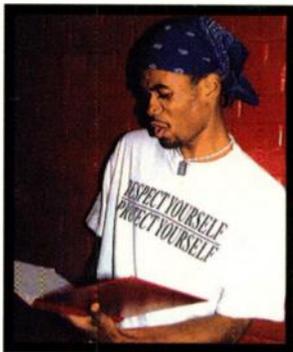
Hailed as the true center of the scene, the Nuyorican is celebrating its 30th year with *Aloud: Voices From The Nuyorican Cafe* (Henry Holt), an anthology that chronicles the cafe's rise. Wednesdays are open slams and Fridays are featured slams, with other poetry events going on throughout the week. The NYC Center For Poetry slams features the only regular heckler, Professor Steve Cannon. You are encouraged to heckle back, however.

FEZ (under Time Cafe, 380 Lafayette St., 533-2680)

Evert Eden's Tuesday Wordstock series usually features 12-20 poets reading on a theme, and the mix is a great sampler of different styles. The club is a neo-Vegas lounge with good food and sassy waitresses.

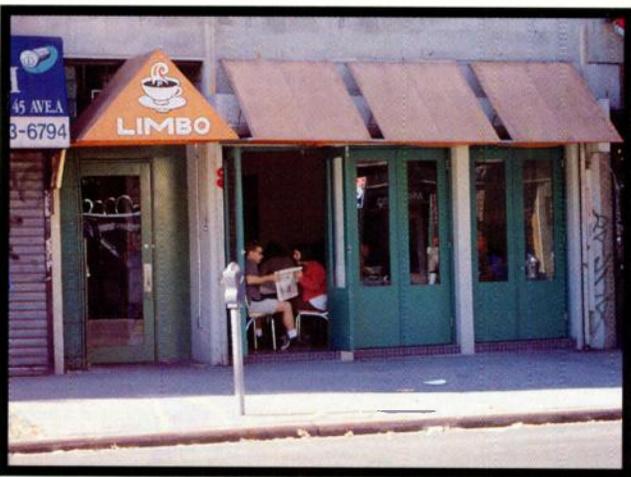
ST. MARK'S POETRY PROJECT (2nd Ave. at 10th St., 674-0910)

With great workshops, readings and special events (like the recent performance poetry weekend), the Poetry Project is a landmark which began in the '60s and continues to be a vital part of the spoken word community. It's the only time I go to a church.



NICOLE BLACKMAN

AZHADAY READING AT THE NUYORICAN



ALLEY RUTZEL

BIBLIO'S (317 Church St. at Lispenard, 334-6990)

The Friday evening series usually features two excellent, unusual poets, while the random readings are particularly fun, as Biblio's is a small, cool bookstore. A good coffee bar and a great place to pick up limited-edition chapbooks by scene regulars.

LIMBO (47 Ave. A between 3rd and 4th St., 477-5271)

Near the Nuyorican, Limbo is a regular poets' hang-out and a choice spot for editing sessions. The Thursday night reading series feature unknowns, regulars, and even George Plimpton. Free, with a great coffee/tea bar. Small chocolate chip cookies and a wide game selection (Candyland, Battleship, Life) are particularly recommended, although the staff can be surly.

ANSEO (126 St. Mark's Place, 982-0370)

Micki Siegel's *Burnt Words* series features some excellent experimental poets, and it's a great mix of established and emerging artists. Cool bartenders.

DEANNA'S (130 East 7th St.)

Regie Cabico hosts a wild impromptu jazz-spoken word Sunday night series that pairs poets with the Deanna's trio. Free, but drinks aren't cheap.

TONGUE 'N' GROOVE (at Eureka Joe's, 168 5th Ave. at 22nd St., 886-3775)

Ron Brewer's Saturday series began in the spring and features three or four featured poets and an open mike. Eureka Joe's is one of the nicer spots, with plush velvet couches and an excellent coffee bar. Über-cool staff.

POET'S HOUSE (72 Spring St., 431-7920)

A great place to read, look up work by favorite poets or hear thousands of audio recordings of readings and slams from New York. Their great lecture/debate forum between new poets and elbow-patch poets virtually ensures sparks will fly, so get on the mailing list of upcoming events.

CONNECTIONS

POEMPHONE (931-4234)

A new, free service that changes daily. You can call and hear work from some incredible people like Todd Colby and Emily XYZ. As they say, "Give us three minutes and we'll blow your mind."

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America On-Line features three areas where you can post information about slams, readings, and the state of spoken word. Try these three for advice on where to go in cities around the country or post a request for tips to a city you're visiting:

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Departments > Lifestyles > Writer's Club > Writer's Club Msg Center > More Poetry > Readings & Slams

AUDIO

With so many audio recordings available, if you can't make it to NYC you can still tap in. Current releases from Maggie Estep (*No More Mister Nice Girl* (NuYo-Imago)), Reg E. Gaines (*Please Don't Take My Air Jordans* (Mercury)), an upcoming album from Dana Bryant (Warner Bros.), a single by Emily XYZ (*Kill Rock Stars*), and self-released audio tapes from Anne Elliot and Regie Cabico (*Big Fat Talk*) are a quick taster. Umar Bin Hassan of the Last Poets has released some revised recordings of his old classics on Axiom, while The Last Poets' masterpieces are available on Restless. Spoken word labels to check out: Gang Of Seven, New Alliance, Axiom, Caedmon and Kill Rock Stars' imprint Wordcore. New compilation albums to look for: *Relationships From Hell* (Big Deal-Caroline) out this fall, *Myths* (Dove Audio) and *Man In The Moon* (Warner Bros.) this spring.

ADVICE

Bring a sweater, carry a notebook, don't mind the cigarette smoke and when they ask you to sign up for the open room, do it. All of the names listed above are among the best in the scene, and a calendar listing for them guarantees a great evening. And whatever you do, if you see a listing for Sapphire, Janice Erlbaum or Anne Elliot, go! You'll be astonished.

For questions or info e-mail me at:
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