

CMJ

NEW MUSIC
MONTHLY

CORNERSHOP ★ THE SOFTIES
16 HORSEPOWER ★ HUMBERS

43 REVIEWS
FEATURING:
FRANK BLACK
ENYA
VAN MORRISON
GIANT SAND
GAUNT
GAVIN FRIDAY
SPARE SNARE

THE PRESIDENTS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ OF THE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ UNITED STATES ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ OF ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ AMERICA

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BEST NEW MUSIC
CIBO MATTO ★ 3 LB. THRILL ★ HIGH LLAMAS
ONLY IN AMERICA ★ JONNY POLONSKY

World Radio History

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—ROLLING STONE

"...a near perfect triumph of buzz-saw songsmithery."

—SF WEEKLY

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COMMERCIAL CD5 COMING THIS SPRING**

**ON TOUR
THIS SPRING**

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Adrian

World Radio History



CMJ

NEW MUSIC
MONTHLY

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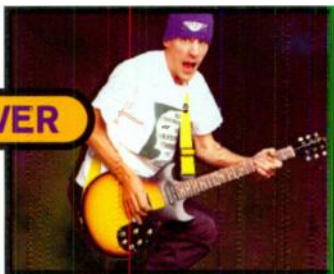
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COVER: "THE PRESIDENTS PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL WONG • NEW YORK, NY • NOVEMBER 1995"

LETTERS

Let us know what you're thinking, by mail, fax (516-466-7159) or email (cmj@cmjmusic.com).

Letters, We Get Letters

Gift Guide is great! I already bought 7 CDs and 8 books from it. (Half were gifts, half were not—merry Christmas to me, Mr. Grinch!)

Andrew Banks

I loved the Smashing Pumpkins article—finally, a writer who emphasizes the positive things about the Pumpkins, of which there are many.

Penny Rund
Brooklyn, NY

I am so sick and tired of Billy Corgan whining about his troubled life. Poor Billy, his album debuted at number one. A lot of people have the same problems he has but not near as much money. It just gets old to hear rock stars talking about their troubled lives [sic]. The band should really dump him and get a new lead singer. They would be better off.

Chris Garrison
Evansville, IN

Do the words "Mr. Derek Smalls... he wrote this" mean anything to you?—ed.

After reading the Letters in the Dec. 1995 issue, I just want to pass along my own thoughts re: the R.I.Y.L. categories used in your reviews. The rating, and the enclosed CD, are PERFECT for a guy like me: in my mid-30s with a family and a budget. I can't go around buying CDs because I like the cover, or because the guy at my favorite store says so, or because some lame-o in a pseudo-hip mag gives it lots of stars. Using these methods in the past let me be the first kid on my block to listen to R.E.M. and U2, but it also stuck me with a lot of crap. Your mag has rekindled my interest in music, and keeps my outlook and taste fresh.

Dan Weesner
via e-mail

There is a mistake on page 56 of the Holiday Gift Guide edition of the Mixed Media column. Dorothy Allison's new book is entitled *Two Or Three Things I Know For Sure*. Please give this talented writer the respect she deserves and check your facts before publishing them.

unsigned e-mail

How do you pronounce μ -ziq?

Charlie DeFarkus
Irvine, CA

μ is a Greek letter, pronounced "myoo," so the band's name is pronounced myoo-zeek. Oh, those techno eggheads.—ed.

I like Toad The Wet Sprocket. Is that a bad thing?

Barry St. Peter
Bangor, ME

If you need to ask, I think you have your answer.—ed.

When I originally subscribed to CMJ, I was pleased to see people dedicated to new music. However, when I saw your Dance section, I was crushed. Take a listen to four or five artists displayed in your August '95 issue. It isn't dance, it's repetitive techno. 80% of the songs are above 150 bpm, no vocals and no changes in orchestration or tempo.

I feel the Dance section needs to be revamped. Just Euro, German-style techno gets boring. What about adding house, freestyle, tribal, Europop or just regular poppy dance?

One more thing: A fellow DJ at the go-go bar I work at turned me on to your magazine. Many of the girls also read and listen to CMJ. If you would be interested in starting a go-go or strip club play list, I would be glad to help your magazine expand its horizons. Your magazine has a very large audience in the go-go bar field.

George Sokorai III
Mantua, NJ

I won't subscribe 'cause I know folks who have and you went out of biz, but I'll buy it at a store.
unsigned "Feedback" response

Since its inception in July of 1993, CMJ New Music Monthly has not ceased or suspended publication, entered into Chapter 7 or Chapter 11 bankruptcy, voluntarily dissolved or been subject to judicial dissolution, been the target of a hostile leveraged buy-out, or in any other way gone "out of biz," as I understand the term. —Alex Ellerson, Esq., General Counsel

What he said—ed.



All the rest of you lazy slobs just send letters; reader Doug Pearson sent us this lovely baby head sculpture. Any bands interested in retaining Paul's talents for a CD cover can contact him through CMJ. Trent?

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QUICK FIX

JACK LOGAN

BULKS UP

Jack Logan used to sit around his Athens, GA, kitchen with a loose group of friends, recording on a four-track whatever came into their heads. Mostly acoustic, slightly bluesy stuff: Everything was gothic and funny and strange—there were songs about women who kept dead lovers under their beds, and songs with promising titles like “Shit For Brains” and “Love, Not Lunch.” Medium Cool label-head Peter Jesperson (who signed the Replacements, among others) got wind of Logan and hounded him for a tape, though Logan was reluctant to hand one over. “It’s not like it was some big secret,” Logan says now. “I just figured, who would give a fuck? I didn’t see a future in it, really.” Logan finally surrendered 600 songs—his entire artistic life, almost—which Jesperson culled down to 42 and released as the double-CD *Bulk*. A 35-year-old swimming pool motor mechanic who has managed to keep his day job despite all the time he’s taken off to be on the *Today* show and in *People* magazine, Logan was simultaneously enthralled and horrified by his stint as Novelty Act Of The Month. “All my press was like, ‘Isn’t he cute? He’s the rock and roll Grandma Moses,’” Logan says now. “I can’t even believe I was on the *Today* show. It’s sort of sickening. But what was I gonna say, ‘I can’t do it, I’m too busy down at the mechanic shop?’”

Logan’s follow-up, the single-disc *Mood Elevator*, is more polished and less twisted than *Bulk*, but equally wondrous. For the first time, Logan and his side band Liquor Cabinet recorded in a real studio, with the actual intention of one day airing their songs in public. “I tried not to think about that too much,” says Logan. “We just tried to make the record the way we’ve always done it. Hang out, drink a few beers, see what happens. I think it’s pretty okay, although I guess that remains to be seen.” Logan is painfully modest: When he read his first positive reviews, he thought the writers were just being polite because they felt sorry for him. “I don’t know how to explain it,” Logan says of all the attention. “I think making a double record was such a stupid thing



to do, people admired us for it in a way.” Logan, whose live experience has been limited to serenading diners in Athens restaurants, still gets formidable stagefright. A recent appearance on *Conan O’Brien* left him paralyzed with fear (“I had that deer-in-the-headlights look,” he says. “It was pretty hard to miss”), but he still wants to tour behind *Mood Elevator* if he can get time off work. Despite its rapturous critical reception, *Bulk* wasn’t successful enough for Logan to quit his day job. Logan has yet to get any major label offers, and figures that the sprawl of *Bulk* may have scared mainstream labels away. “I’m a 35-year-old mechanic. I’m not big competition for Green Day or anything,” he says. If it weren’t for the critical attention, Logan doubts *Mood Elevator* could have been made. “I’m not saying I’ve discouraged all this attention, because that’s what keeps me making records,” he says. “But no matter what happens, I have to go to work tomorrow, as much as I hate it. I gotta go in there and work on the goddamn motors, try and make a living, you know?” —Allison Stewart

IN MY ROOM

ARTISTS’ PERSONAL PICKS

F.M. CORNOG EAST RIVER PIPE

Marvin Gaye
Let’s Get It On

Bjork
Post

Zip Code Rapists
“Happy Like Larry”

Eric Bogosian
Sex, Drugs And Rock & Roll

zine: Beer Frame



DR. KATZ

Dr. Katz, of *Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist*, is like a cartoon version of Bob Newhart, complete with deadpan delivery and cue-ball forehead. The half-hour animated sitcom airs on Comedy Central Sunday nights at 10 (and is repeated numerous times during the week). Katz is the alter-ego of series co-creator/stand-up comedian Jonathan Katz. His patients are played by a revolving cast of stand-ups and the “sessions” are completely improvised (audio first, drawings second). Co-creator Tom Snyder engineers the series’ animation process—Squigglevision—which gives the line drawings a sense of perpetual, fluid movement. If the Jello-effect doesn’t make you queasy, you just might laugh yourself sick. —Jenny Eliscu

PROMO ITEM OF THE MONTH

Never have childhood games and corporal punishment been so neatly combined as with this nifty paddle ball game sent by our friends in Garden Variety to remind us of their LP, *Knocking The Skill Level* (Headhunter-Cargo). Knocking the Editor’s eye out is more like it.



Mr.

Mitaiinga



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QUICK FIX

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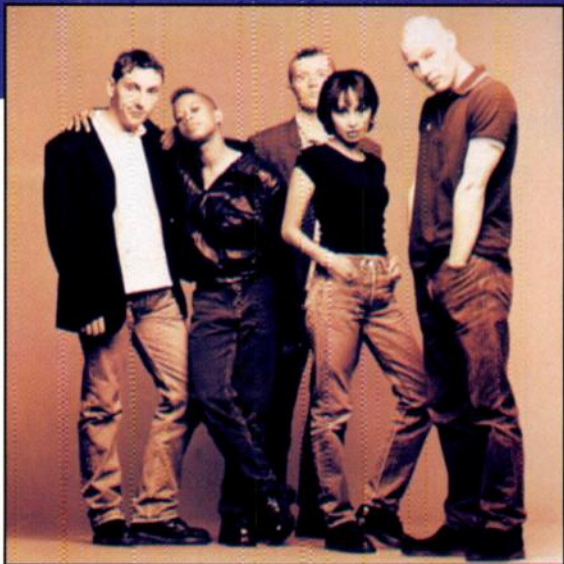
MOVING ON

"I was very much on a soapbox last time," says Echobelly singer Sonya Aurora-Madan, reflecting on the differences between her band's 1994 debut and the new *On* (both Rhythm King-Sony). "I don't apologize for my views. I stick to the same principles and I probably will for the rest of my life, but I've experienced a lot more. My naivete and excitement and anger, that gut feeling, it's all been very honest. But a year on, I can sit back and say 'I still feel strongly about the same issues, but I've moved on.'" Hence the album title.

On continues Echobelly's streak of potent pop, à la Blondie and The Smiths, with a politically charged slant. But whereas tracks on *Everyone's Got One* tackled issues including sexism ("Give Her A Gun") and racism ("Call Me Names") in a direct, personal fashion, the twelve new songs allow for broader interpretation. "It's much more subliminal and interactive, in the sense that I really want people to get what they want to get out of the lyrics," concurs Aurora-Madan. While "I Can't Imagine The World Without Me" was a celebration of Sonya's individuality, the new "Great Things" mates the same infectious enthusiasm with an anthemic quality, opening up the audiences for and to whom she's speaking.

Surprisingly, one of the most immediate cuts, "Go Away"—a tune you'll start singing when that moron with more than ten items cuts in front of you in the express check out—only made the record because producers Sean Slade and Paul Kolderie insisted. "That song was supposed to be a B-side, and is my least favorite on the album," says guitarist Glenn Johansson, who co-writes all the material. "They were going to release it as a single in England and we said no fucking way."

"It's a very catchy pop song," adds Madan, "but there's stuff that's much more meaningful." For instance, "Pantyhose And Roses," a catchy examination of the nature of sexual fantasy. "That



song was inspired by an MP in England who was found dead with a pair of pantyhose wrapped around his neck and an orange in his mouth," she explains. "Obviously he'd been indulging in kinky sex, something had gone wrong, and he'd been left. With an orange in his mouth! It was so bizarre and funny, like a bad joke. I just thought, everybody has sexual fantasies, the guy wasn't hurting anybody, yet he had to do it secretly because it's not acceptable to society. These things will never change... or will they?"

Even though Sonya's attitudes have mellowed with experience, much of the British music press remains at odds with her. "A lot of male journalists have got a problem with Sonya," says Johansson. "They're very scared of her."

"They have a problem with the fact that I have a mind and I have a body, and they can't put the two together," says Aurora-Madan. So they try and build her into the 50-foot castrating bitch? "What they try to do is make me smaller than I am by ridiculing me. I sometimes think I'm far too old and far too clever to people in this business, because there are certainly fools and children around." —Kurt B. Reighley

IN MY ROOM

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

JIM RUIZ THE LEGENDARY JIM RUIZ GROUP

John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman

John Coltrane And Johnny Hartman

Booker T. & The M.G.'s
Soul Dressing

Orange Juice
The Heather's On Fire

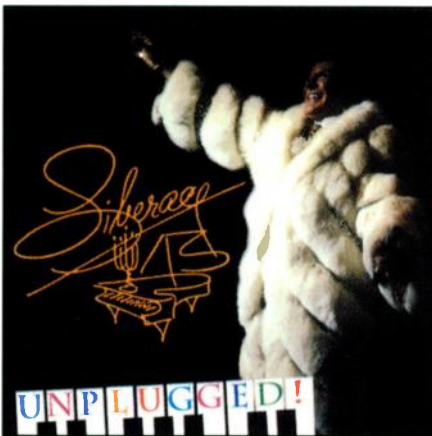
Jazz Butcher
Live In Hamburg

Wes Montgomery Trio
'Round Midnight

LINER NOTE OF THE MONTH

"To this day, those in the know insist that Lukas [Lollipop] was Solomon Burke. Asked about it, Burke is polite but firm. 'Sir, I am not Lukas Lollipop,' he says, mouthing this defense in the face of some suspiciously similar vocal stylings. 'I worked too hard to use any other name but my own, Dr. Burke, Reverend Burke, Bishop Burke, it's still Solomon Burke. I have 21 children, 38 grandchildren. I've been married four times. I know who I am.' Perhaps, King Solomon says, Lukas Lollipop was Julius Hyde of Atlanta. 'Went by the name of of Lotsa Poppa. He was 600 pounds and looked like me, except I was a little smaller, maybe 400 pounds. And he sounded like me, too. Knew all my songs, so I used to let him start my shows. He'd come off, then I'd come on, showing my new, trim figure. And I'd say to the girls, 'Don't I Look Fine?'"

—From The Best Of Loma Records: The Rise And Fall Of A 60s Soul Label (Warner Archives)



Random fact:

The liner notes to Lotion's new *Nobody's Cool* (spinArt/Giant) are written by Thomas Pynchon. Yes, that Thomas Pynchon.

WEIRD RECORD OF THE MONTH

In one of the more, er, creative packaging moves ever wrought upon a deceased artist, Foundation Records has rolled out *Liberace Unplugged!* The compilation isn't some newfangled hi-tech Tony Bennett-style extravaganza, but performances from the Libster's TV show, presented here in tinny, low-fi, pre-stereo, '50s TV quality. Inside, there's a coupon for a Liberace T-shirt and video offer, and an inspirational quote from Boy George: "Liberace was a human chandelier of palatial proportions. Plinkering through our lives with a swish of mink and a flash of diamond rings. He didn't wave a political pink flag but we forgive him for he was a true camp suffragette." Well said.

NEW DUB RISING

The long deep pulse of Jamaican dub is felt throughout dance music's history, and the pulse is strong right now, as a number of British collectives are expanding its musical vocabulary. The new dub movement, the generation after Mad Professor (whose excursions into reverb at London's Ariwa studios laid the foundation for the current resurgence), has been gaining momentum primarily as a result of Jah Shaka, whose one-person dub sessions in the Holloway Road in London have provided inspiration to numerous contemporary practitioners.

Several of the genre's new wave of producers can be found on the exemplary *Dub Revolution* compilation (ROIR), which features groups such as Jah Shaka proteges the Disciples (whose third album, *Resonations*, was released this fall) and the Bush Chemists. In addition, Alpha & Omega, whose tenth album has just been released, contribute two of their most bass-heavy exercises, "One Prayer" and the plaintive "Rastafari." The latter track can also be found on *Sound System Dub* (ROIR), a collection of pieces from the group's four-year history. This album marks Alpha & Omega's first domestic release; they're also featured on the expansive *Dubhead Vol. One* compilation (Shiver). Throughout *Dub Revolution* and *Dubhead*, melancholy minor-key piano is pushed even further into the echo chamber than it's been before, while digital and analog basslines provide a cavernous backdrop. On Conscious Sounds' debut album *Dub To Dub Break To Break* (Crispy), musical reference points confound easy definition: House samples collide with roots piano, while the electrofunk rhythms of the Roland 808 drum machine provide percussive force.

The new dub is also gaining a considerable audience in the U.S., particularly in Chicago, where members of the instrumental indie-rock band Tortoise regularly provide turntable support for a dub and drum-and-bass night. Johnny Machine and Casey Rice of the band host the night, along with the Dragon Sound System. Tortoise are also featured on the outstanding *Macro Dub Infection* compilation (Caroline), which charts dub's bloodline through jungle, techno, and outer space. The stylistic continuities between '70s Jamaican dub and the current revival are made even clearer on the wide-ranging *Time Warp Dub Clash* compilation (Island). The dub pulse seems only to be growing stronger. —Tim Haslett



PROMO ITEM OF THE MONTH

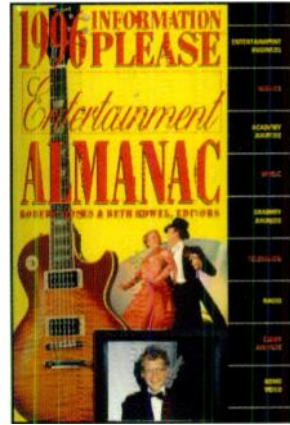
This bottle of dishwashing liquid, sent to promote Sons Of Elvis' song "Soaking In It" from their album *Glodean* (Priority), would've been featured a few months ago, but the dishes were piling up in the sink and....

Tours We'd Like To See

FRUIT SALAD: Nectarine #9, Tangerine Dream, Smashing Orange, Lemons, Lime Spiders, Black Grape, Bananarama, Apples In Stereo, Blueberry Spy, Strawberry Alarm Clock, Peach, Blind Melon, Smackmelon, Lemon Kittens, Orange 9MM, Peaches and Herb, Fig Dish, Eve's Plum, the Raspberries and the Cranberries.

DAY JOB OF THE MONTH

Bob Moses of Kustomized makes his living as co-editor of the *Information Please Entertainment Almanac*. Though there's no mention of Kustomized in the book, the "Significant Recordings of 1994-1995" section includes write-ups of albums by Band Of Susans, Combustible Edison, Shellac and Chris Knox among surprisingly venomous descriptions of Annie Lennox and Michael Jackson's most recent recordings. Also noteworthy: a great article, reprinted from *Worth* magazine, about how the Jayhawks' attempts to break through have gotten them deeply in debt to their label.



Random fact:

On the Rolling Stones' *Stripped*, the credits for the song "Love In Vain" read "Adaptation and new words M. Jagger/K. Richards." The number of new words that are actually different from Robert Johnson's original are three: "but," "true" and "baby."

QUICK FIX

TEENGENERATE

SAY GO!

In the middle of just about every song—right after the bridge, say—Teengenerate singer Fink stops playing guitar, stiffens his rock pose, thrusts a pointed finger at the audience and yells “GO!” And the crowd, caught up in the band’s way-beyond-hyper energy, goes nuts. One guy, at a recent show in Hoboken, NJ, proceeds to pick up Fink’s brother Fifi and carry the spindly guitarist, who never misses one of the band’s three chords, around the stage on his shoulders.

The distance between Hoboken and Teengenerate’s home town of Tokyo is a lot longer than the band’s influences suggest. The brothers’ fascination with American rock began with their parents’ collection of Elvis, Little Richard and most importantly, Eddie Cochran records. Then, Fink says, “As for me, I have my brother, and he started to buy rock ‘n’ roll records when I was 12. The child’s room of my house was only one, so we split it. So he was listening to punk rock or rock ‘n’ roll and I was there, so I started listening to those bands.”

At 16, he picked up the guitar, and a few years later, taught his older brother, which led to the pair forming American Soul Spiders, a band Fink describes as “MC5, Stooges, Detroit rock ‘n’ roll.” The American Soul Spiders’ singer wanted to them to play harder and heavier, but the brothers wanted to play “pure rock ‘n’ roll.” After saying “faster” about seven times in the course of trying to explain what they wanted to do, he finally says, “More punk rock, and uh, faster. Three chords,” and grins proudly.

They picked up bass player Sammy from another band, and after the band’s first drummer, a holdover from American Soul Spiders, quit because the band was getting too busy with too



PHOTO BY CAROLINE GREYSHOCK

many gigs, they picked up Shoe, who learned to play drums with Teengenerate. “Sammy often plays baseball, and Shoe was one of the team,” Fink says.

One explanation of how Fink and Fifi so perfectly absorbed American garage punk is that they got it from a pure source: Australia. “When I was a kid, me and my brother were very into MC5 and Stooges. Then I bought a band called New Race because on that cover it said that in the band was Ron Asheton (Stooges guitarist) and a guy from MC5. From this we learned of Australian band Radio Birdman. Then we started to check out Australian bands. I got to know about the Saints, and they are number one on my list of favorite bands,” Fink gushes.

Favorite Australian bands? He rattles ‘em off: “The Saints’ first album, Radio Birdman’s first album, Fun Things’ first EP.” When it comes to favorite American records, he hesitates on older bands like the Stooges, the Ramones and the Heartbreakers. “Everyone says those. I want to say more underground bands, because they are great but still underground. I should say Devil Dogs, the Rip-Offs, New Bomb Turks, and Humpers.”

—Scott Frampton and Cheryl Botchick

INSPIRATIONAL VERSE: “All you do is sit around and talk about nothing/You don’t know ‘bout Jimi Hendrix at all/The clothes you wear you know they went out with twisting/When I’m with you woman I feel ‘bout two feet tall” —Endless Pulse, “Nowhere Chick” (on the *Only In America* compilation)



IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME BY NOW...

“Forget Esquivel,” you think once the brandy is poured and the fire lit, “I know what the real bachelor pad music is,” as you drop *Slow Groove Love Jams Of The ‘70s* (K-Tel, of course) into the disc player. 30 seconds later, instead of the mellow strains of the Manhattans’ “Kiss And Say Goodbye,” you hear the earwax-producing screech of metal band Chastain’s “Sick Society” (singer Kim French is pictured above right)... This moment in the annals of failed romance is brought to you by a particularly inspired mistake at some CD manufacturing plant. It’s happened before—the Beatles’ *Hard Day’s Night* was found on copies of Kate Bush’s *The Whole Story* eight months before it was scheduled to be released on disc—but this time, if you listen closely, you can hear the sound of something being re-buttoned.

MIX TAPE

“It Keeps The Cool Side Cool And The Hot Side Hot” by Ace Brando

Note: Ace compiled this one entirely from songs on CMJ’s CDs. —ed.

Side A: FUNK

Me'Shell Ndege'Ocello: If That's Your Boyfriend (He Wasn't Last Night)
Buckshot LeFonque: Breakfast At Denny's
Yousou N'Dour: 7 Seconds
Grant Green: Sookie Sookie
Massive Attack: Protection
Laika: Marimba Song
Deep Forest: Marta's Song
Leftfield/Lydon: Open Up

Side B: PUNK

Killing Joke: Millenium
Ned's Atomic Dustbin: All I Ask Of Myself Is That I Hold Together
Everclear: Heroin Girl
Hum: Stars
Sonic Youth: Bull In The Heather
Air Miami: Airplane Rider
Jennifer Trynin: Better Than Nothing
Boingo: Hey
Spare Snare: As A Matter Of Fact
Superchunk: Ribbon
Superdrag: Senorita
Supergrass: Caught By The Fuzz
Pell Mell: Nothing Lies Still Long

Made a good mix tape lately? Tell us about it. In every issue, we will feature a mix tape made by one of us (the editors) or one of you (the readers). Just mail or fax us the track listing, and we'll pick out one we think is interesting for a future issue.



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...because I'm not like Mike!

BEST NEW MUSIC

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Viva! La Woman
 Warner Bros.



They've been touring the world, they've been collaborating with everyone from Yoko Ono to the Beastie Boys, they've been hyped all over the place, and now the two expatriate Japanese women of Cibo Matto finally have an album out. Why all the buzz? Well, they're great, first of all, and they also have a gimmick: the New York-based voice-and-sampler duo of Yuka Honda and Miho Hatori writes all its songs about food and love. Hatori's lyrics, though they take a little effort to decipher through her accent, are pungent and witty: "My heart is like an artichoke/I eat the petals myself, one by one." Her persona is cute in the Japanese sense of *kawaii*, and she knows it, but that's just to draw you in: she gets over on pure verbal dexterity. (M. Doughty of Soul Coughing has long been biting "Birthday Cake"'s bridge: "Extra sugar! Extra salt! Extra oil and MSGeeeee!") What gives Cibo Matto its staying power, though, is that keyboardist Honda is *amazing*—cutting and pasting bizarre sample loops like Public Enemy's Bomb Squad, frosting them with her own super-funky organ playing, and making it all work within the context of pop songs. Nobody's ever made an album that sounds like *Viva! La Woman* before, and it's about time somebody did. —Douglas Wolk

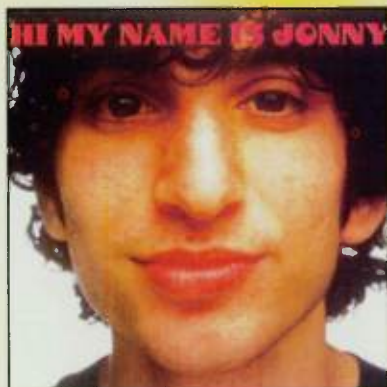
DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 17. First single "Know Your Chicken."

An EP of early singles has also been released on El Diablo.

FILE UNDER: Post-hip-hop pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Beastie Boys, early Deee-Lite, Soul Coughing.

JONNY POLONSKY
Hi, My Name Is Jonny
 American



Frank Black discovered him. American signed him after a brief bidding war. And the guy recorded this debut album in his mom's spare bedroom in Chicago. But that doesn't mean 22-year-old Jonny Polonsky is confident about life. Far from it. His disc is simmering with neurotic "woe is me" pop songs that practically define the word "loser," and—rather than fighting the image—he basks in it, coming up with some shiny, intelligent melodies in the process. Listen to the phalanx of change-jangling guitars bouncing through "Gone Away," over a tippity-tap pattern of cigar-box drumming. The hook hits you right in the gut, with a sappy good-time feeling that's cheesier than the *Happy Days* theme song—a great rock cut, by any standard. Then Polonsky's nasal-droned poetry surfaces: "I never thought I'd miss you as much as I already do/My heart says stay and kiss you but my mind knows what to do/Now I'm gone away from you." No matter how hard he tries, in track after lonesome track, he just can't seem to establish any kind of normal relationship. Thematically, things sink from bad to worse. "Evil Scurvy Love," "Truly Ugly And Dead Too," "I Don't Know What To Dream At Night"—optimistic arrangements at odds with disparaging, disappointed lyrics, and no girlfriend in sight. Despite all the hullabaloo surrounding him, the self-deprecating geek seems to be Polonsky's schtick, a bit he works like a Catskills comedian. And his true success here isn't that he's so believable at it, but that he never once lets on that he knows—deep in his Tin Pan Alley heart—that he's one helluva brilliant songwriter. That humility is Polonsky's trump card. —Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 16.

FILE UNDER: Self-deprecating geek pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Elvis Costello, Frank Black, Paul Westerberg.

3 LB. THRILL

Vulture

57-550



Although *Vulture* is 3 Lb. Thrill's debut release, the band has been in its current incarnation for over a decade; as Uncle Green, the four New Jersey natives (relocated to Atlanta since 1984) released several independent records before making the jump to a major label. A little disheartened, but not soured, the four (no line-up change) decided to start afresh as 3 Lb. Thrill, and have ended up on another major label through a new imprint run by Brendan O'Brien (producer for Pearl Jam and Neil Young, among others). "Fresh" is the operative word here, since the two songwriters (Matt Brown and Jeff Jensen) have kept their zest for snappy, complex songwriting. The songs share an earnest, passionate feeling that's reinforced (but not solely supported by) the lyrics, which usually tell heart-felt stories about people who have been hurt or used. "Diana," for example, is told from the viewpoint of an uncle sexually abusing his niece. The music is the other half of the earnest equation: The band's long time together results in confident traditional rock'n'roll. 3 Lb. Thrill's second home seems to have influenced it in its simple, down-home style, which can be a bad thing when applied to some of the songs—they can sound too earnest and winsome. All in all, however, *Vulture* is a solid package of hooks, deep sentiments and passionate playing.

—Megan McLaughlin

DATALOG: Released Nov. 28.

FILE UNDER: Sincere storytelling rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Soul Asylum, Tom Petty.

HIGH LLAMAS

Gideon Gayer

Alpaca Park-Epic



Depending on how much stock you place in the Ezra Pound mantra "make it new" and how (or if) it applies to rock 'n' roll, you will either be fascinated by the High Llamas or repulsed. The Llamas definitely call to mind a specific sound and era—late '60s/early '70s crafty, studio-savvy pop. Not the proto-power-pop of the Raspberries, Badfinger, or Big Star, but what you're gonna find on Beach Boys LPs from that period, and on all the stuff Brian Wilson inspired, namely, Todd Rundgren, the Zombies, and even a little Steely Dan. Yup, there are strings, harpsichords, flutes, lush vocal arrangements, and sometimes it's hard not to spot specific Wilson moments the Llamas had in mind. For example, "The Goat Looks On" sounds a helluva lot like "Let's Go Away For A While" with vocals. Whatever; good songs wrapped in beautiful arrangements are timeless. Besides, the Llamas are never as shameless as, say, Jellyfish or, for that matter, this "new" Beatles song. Lead Llama Sean O'Hagan (who's played with Stereolab and Microdisney) could stand a little editing here and there, but using his knack for hooks and craft (it's hard not to cheer the bridge to "Checking In, Checking Out"), he has his way with you repeatedly. A tad academic, perhaps; but to dismiss *Gideon Gayer* as merely retro cheapens a beautiful record and the music that inspired it.

—Steve McGuirl

DATALOG: Released Nov. 12. Originally released on Delmore in 1993.

FILE UNDER: Over-the-top pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Cardinal, Beach Boys, Teenage Fanclub, early Bee Gees.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Only In America

Arf!Arf!



One of the saddest results of vinyl's decline as a mass medium has been the disappearance of the totally weird shit that used to pop up on singles. The *Only In America* compilation salvages over 30 of the most peculiar things ever committed to records. The only familiar tracks are a live version of the Shaggs' legendary who-said-this-was-a-song "My Pal Foot Foot" and Tony Burrello's Dr. Demento staple "There's A New Sound" (a.k.a. "The Sound Of Worms"). Beyond that, we get a tapdancing rendition of Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth"; some well-meaning instructional records about the dangers of psychedelic drugs, notably Stu Mitchell's "Acid," which is itself pretty damn trippy; some acid-rock songs from the '60s that illustrate those dangers far more clearly ("hop on the circus cylinder/for a thirsty thrill/count up to four without losing your will"); a two-part crow-calling record that ends in gunfire; a variation on Les Baxter's "Quiet Village" with insane farm sound effects; a psych-pop song with a vacuum cleaner solo... you get the idea. There's also some songs whose unintentional hilarity comes from the band's sheer incompetence: "Mysterious Clown," by the artist of the same name, and Mr. Love's hopeless blues "Ease The Pain" hint that maybe it just isn't a good idea to give some people studio time. Amazing.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Released Nov. 18.

FILE UNDER: Incredibly strange music.

R.I.Y.L.: Shaggs, the *Incredibly Strange Music* compilations, weird things you find at garage sales.

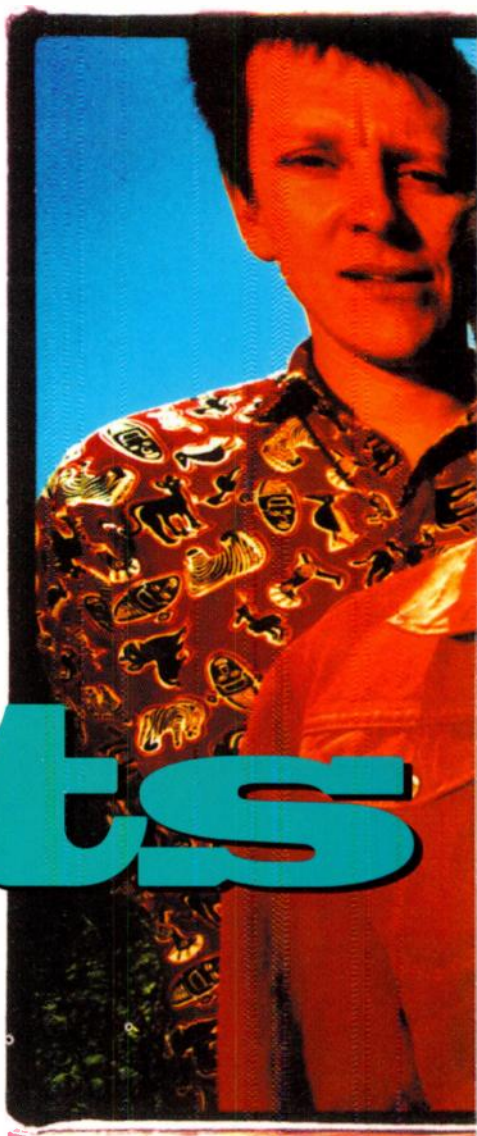
"There are a lot of overrated New Zealand musicians," says Paul Kean, bassist for the Bats, commenting on his peers and countrymen. "If you want to get to be big in New Zealand, you pick a '60s song and do a cover version and release it as a single, and overnight you're a sensation. All these programmers at the commercial stations are all of the age when the '60s were all of life was happening then. And they think 'ah, here's a song I know.'"

the bats

Kean may know the formula (which apparently works equally as well overseas—think of the Lemonheads), but the Bats don't want to conform to it. Thirteen years and five albums (and a handful of EPs) along, and the four of them, including singer/guitarist Robert Scott, drummer Malcolm Grant and guitarist Kaye Woodward, are still working day jobs back in Christchurch. (Woodward is also juggling working toward a law degree and a new baby.) While they've come a long way from their mid-'80s days of covering "Streets Of Baltimore" and the theme from *The Munsters*, the Bats admit they have gone as far as they can at home. But getting noticed outside of New Zealand is a long, arduous process: Distance multiplied by lack of funding means few bands are able to tour on their own, and once abroad, many find it difficult to make any significant dent in the music scene. Last time around, in 1993, the Bats found the funds to tour through their government, which paid to send them, the Straitjacket Fits and the Jean-Paul Sartre Experience overseas as musical emissaries. Scott remembers, "If it wasn't for our career in America and overseas, we probably wouldn't have gone. We have a limited career in New Zealand. It's strange that you can't achieve what you want in your own country—you have to prove yourselves overseas."

"There are quite a few bands who get famous in New Zealand but who don't get any response overseas at all," says Kean, "basically because the ones that make it big here are just copying the latest fad or fashion overseas, and by the time they get famous over here and try to sell it back overseas it's old hat. Although that whole indie-guitar-pop thing—it was happening here long before it became a big thing overseas."

The Bats, as part of "that whole indie-guitar-pop thing," eschew fuzziness and grinding noises to craft carefully sensitive, harmony-heavy, sparkling, introspective guitar tunes that manage to sound happy-go-lucky even when Scott sings about malevolent childhood



specters, lost loves or fear of flying. With *Couchmaster* (a Kiwi term for a couch potato), the band's latest album, however, the jangly cheeriness has more often than not been replaced by a brooding melancholy, with songs like "For The Ride" and the grim but catchy "Afternoon In Bed" serving up themes of paralyzed love. Says Scott, "I was going through a breakup with my partner at the time I was writing, so I made the lyrics pretty dark. Musically, I prefer minor keys, and there's a few different tunings as well, so that gives it an extra edge. We didn't go into the studio and think we were going to make a dour, dark album—that was just how it came out, the way we ended up playing them. It's an unconscious thing, almost."

It's also a far cry from the band's last full-length album, 1993's *Silverbeet*, a smoothly beautiful compilation of Scott's pop dramatics and vibrant hooks that added a slightly unfinished, rangy feel to the Bats' polished tunes. Says Kean, "With *Silverbeet*, for the first time we got a happy balance between good production and getting the songs down without too much



PHOTO BY SHERYL NIELDS

interference with trying fancy overdubs and stuff. *Silverbeet* sounds very much like the Bats, and if you heard us live it would be pretty accurate."

Couchmaster, on the other hand, is more deeply personal to the band, who decided to produce it themselves, and add snippets of noise and song between the main tracks—a train whistle, or a Smiths-like jangly instrumental ("Smorgasboard"). "We included tracks of ambient noise on this one, and the little minute-long songs are things a producer might have said no to, and we were quite happy to put on," recalls Scott. The result creates a dreamy, seamless effect between the longer songs, as if the album were on a trip somewhere.

And if they're lucky, the next trip for the Bats will be abroad, back to America for another shot at proving a New Zealand band can make it beyond the border. But it

shouldn't be counted on any time soon—thus far the government isn't offering the Bats any more tour support. Day jobs, law degrees, and progeny take precedence. Scott, who also records and tours with his other bands The Clean and the Magick Heads, keeps himself busy between Bats projects, but explains that in their world, musical success is a relative phrase. "In terms of people working, we all have things we're doing. In New Zealand, you can't play all that often, and you can get overexposed, so there's no big rush to get out and play. For us, the band's career doesn't dictate life, life dictates the band's career." **END**

by Rande Dawn

DISCOGRAPHY

...By Night EP (Flying Nun (NZ))
And Here Is... Music For The Fireside EP (Flying Nun (NZ))
Four Songs EP (Flying Nun (NZ))
Made Up In Blue EP (Flying Nun (UK))
Completely Bats (Flying Nun (NZ))
Daddy's Highway (Mammoth)
The Law Of Things (Mammoth)
Fear Of God (Mammoth)
Silverbeet (Mammoth)
Live At WFMU 7" EP (Merge)
Spill The Beans EP (Mammoth)
Couchmaster (Mammoth)

World Radio History

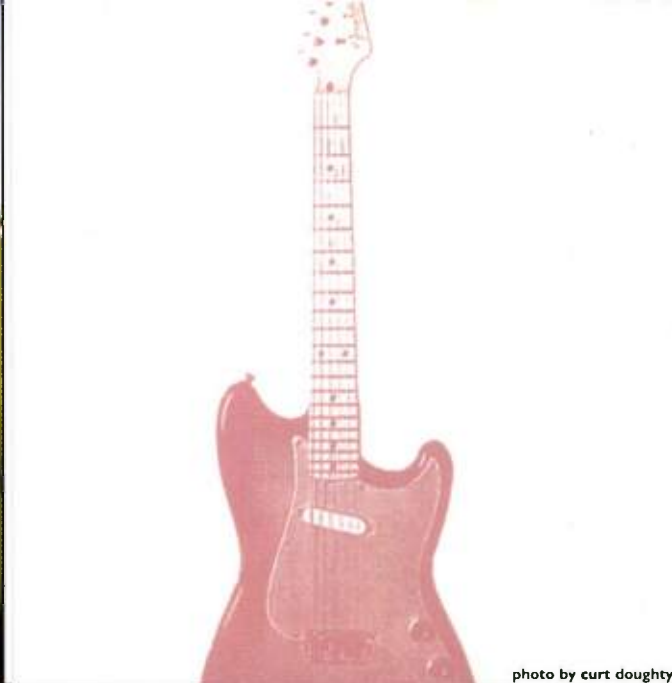


photo by curt doughy

softies

quiet pink guitars

"I can't love you the way that he does/I can only love you more"

BY FRANKLIN BRUNO

"After Tiger Trap, I decided I wanted a different guitar for whatever my next project was," says Rose Melberg, explaining a key event in the birth of the Softies. "I went to a pawn shop in San Francisco and asked if they had any [Fender] Mustangs. The guy showed me this and that, and then he said 'Well, I've got this one guitar, but I don't know... it's pink.' And I said 'Ooh, show me'—and that was it." In addition to being "small and sparkly," the pink Duo-Sonic has another important property: It matches the pink guitar wielded by Jen Sbragia, the drumless duo's other half. Jen: "I've had it forever. They were building it in the music store when I was taking lessons, and I would check up on it, and when it was done, I begged my mom to buy it."

The duo's records, the latest being their first full-length, *It's Love* (K), consist of Rose strumming and singing her delicately-crafted but substantial Crystals-via-Tallulah Gosh gems, with Jen picking out spindly countermelodies and adding airy harmonies. Jen writes a song or two per release, on which the roles are reversed—"I'm not too inspired, someone really has to hurt me before I'll write about it." The Softies aren't merely quiet, but *radically* so. Even the guitars' percussive edge is tempered by the warm reverb that covers the album like a monochrome Portland sky. Those pink guitars stand for something: a rejection of the notion that "punk" means "loud," and that "quiet" equals "compromise."

The Softies' disarming simplicity, especially live, can confuse crowds (and soundmen) expecting to rock. "The other night [at UCLA, with Poster Children] was miserable, and I thought, I hate this, I hate playing on rock stages, no one understands, and there's nowhere to do this the way that I want to. Then last night [at L.A.'s all-ages Jabberjaw] was so wonderful, it completely made up for it. It made me remember how great this can be." (On occasional trips to San Francisco, Rose still plays in Go Sailor, a more conventional three-piece.)

Befitting their intimacy on stage and on record, Softies' subject matter is resolutely personal. Rose explains, "That's the only way I can write. I can go through the record and say, 'that song's about that person, this song's about that...' Sometimes I wish I could be more abstract, but I have gotten better at singing about an idea or a situation when I'm really singing about a person." And if a song like "I Love You More," a poignant address to a female friend with a new boyfriend ("I can't love you the way that he does/I can only love you more") gets heard as a romantic lament, Rose doesn't mind. "That's completely fine. [Lesbian magazine] *Deneuve* reviewed the record, and they loved the ambiguity. That song's not sexual at all, it's about competing for someone's attention, but there are other songs that *are* about that where the gender isn't addressed."

"That's also why we chose the artwork," continues Jen. "We told Adrian [Tomine, of *Optic Nerve*] that we didn't want any gender-specific artwork. He usually draws cute couples kissing, and this doesn't have any people at all," she says of the cover, which depicts closed storefronts and an empty park bench, which some "cute couple" (straight—or not?) may have just vacated. Like the album's spare, spacious sound, the cover forms an apt mirror of key Melbergian themes of distance, dashed hopes, and deferred satisfaction. ("You were always a few days ahead of me/and there was always someone else instead of me.")

Whispering where Tiger Trap shouted, the Softies seem unlikely to inspire the kind of instant frenzy (a.k.a. "hype") her earlier band generated, but the format may be a better foil for the emotional nuances of Rose's songs. "'Charms Around Your Wrist' is about people's expectations after Tiger Trap—I did all these unpleasant interviews after we broke up. I'm so over wanting that kind of attention. Having people just a little too excited to meet you—I can never hold up my end of that. The Softies are getting a little more attention since the record, but it's still just here and there—I finally feel like I'm doing something where the people who like it are really listening. This band is exactly what I want; it's so perfect," says Rose, smiling across her chamomile tea at her bandmate. Jen's response?

"Oh, I wouldn't mind a *little* mania." **END**



the humpers

three cans of soup and the truth

LUCKY GAMES, INC.

"It's kinda disconcerting," muses Humpers leader Scott "Deluxe" Drake, "when you go on tour, and you've driven however many thousands of miles, making enough money to just barely survive, and you have people yelling at you, 'Go back to Hollywood, rock star!' And," he adds with a chuckle, "you're trying to figure out how to get enough gas money to get to the next town, y'know?"

It's amazing, in the post-Green Day punk rock world, the warped perceptions some have about the day-to-day economic realities of life in a punk band. Take, for example, these very Humpers. Formed maybe five years ago by Drake when he tired of the drug habits and slothfulness of his former bandmates in the Suicide Kings (not to mention the plastic surgery they'd put his songs through before performing them), the Humpers dumped countless singles and three LPs on the market, netted themselves quite a rep in street punk circles, and then signed earlier this year to the closest thing the punk world has to a major label, Epitaph. In some eyes, this makes the Humpers millionaire rock stars from Hollywood.

Check again. "We really didn't get like an advance or anything," says Drake. "Just, like, a recording budget, and we pretty much spent the whole thing on beer and pizza, with a little on the recording. But right now, I'm the only one in the band who's not working, and that's just because I just had a son. So, I'm at home, watching the kid, being Mr. Mom."

"Plus I won several thousand gambling in New Orleans, so that just kinda helped to buy some more chunky soup. Basically, you have three cans of chunky soup a day, and some Hawaiian bread to dip in it."

Another surefire way to get branded a "sellout," apparently, is to get your photo on the cover of *Flipside*. Peculiar, how in some people's eyes, a slick paper cover and decent production values elevates a mag produced out of a guy's apartment in Pasadena from a punk zine to competition for *Rolling Stone*. "All that basically means," Drake laughs, "is that some drunken friend took your picture and gave it to Al Flipside! It doesn't really mean anything, beyond that."

What should mean something is that whatever the Humpers (also including guitarists Billy Burke and Mark "Anarchy" Lee, bassist Mitch Cartwright, and drummer Jimi Silveroli) didn't spend on beer and pizza contributed to *Live Forever Or Die Trying* becoming the first album that accurately captures the rowdiness and snot that have made their live shows must-sees. Drake

agrees that's been a hard task in the past. "People before would buy our albums and stuff, and then six months later, they'd see us and go 'Oh, Gawd! You guys are so different live than your records. Had I known...'"

So what's the difference this time? "The fact that we had a good producer," Drake says without flinching. "The fact that we spent more than eight hours in the studio. Basically, the budget on our last two albums has been like three or four hundred dollars. So, everything was just, like, one take, do it and that's it, y'know? Spend a couple hours mixing, and there it is. When you keep that in mind, those earlier records came out pretty good, when you consider what we had to work with."

The results? Humpers oldies like "Rocket And The Retards" and "Space Station Love" given a new lease on life, a whole fistful of new screamers like "Wake Up and Lose," and even the Clash's early album filler "Protex Blue" given a new drag through the mung. And if the trad-punk influences the Humpers display set 'em apart from other Epitaph acts (five records Scott Drake dubs influential: *Ramones Leave Home*, *Black Flag's Nervous Breakdown EP*, *Kick Out The Jams*, *Raw Power* and *Never Mind The Bollocks*), their lyrics set 'em apart from other trad-punk outfits.

"We try not to do songs about cars and fishnet stockings," Drake laughs. "So many bands fall into that trap, and we have our share of songs about girls. But there's so many much cooler ways of going about it, without resorting to clichés. You wouldn't hear it in what we do, but I really like things like *Wire* and *Slates* by the Fall, and if that shows up anywhere, it's in my lyrics."

None of which phases the punk fundamentalists. They're too busy searching out things to fuel their tongue-clucking. Shortly before this interview's conduction, *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll's* head swami Tim Yohannon announced his discomfort with running reviews of Epitaph product in his mag, due to the label's distribution pact with Sony for Japan. He then added that it pained him to cut out all Epitaph-related editorial. "That's too bad," shrugs Drake, "'cause we make good records. Hey, if you don't wanna support our records being distributed by Sony in Japan, don't go to Japan to buy our records! It's as simple as that!"

by tim stegall

16

HORSEPOWER



ON A PALE HORSE

Talk about having 'Love' and 'Hate' tattooed across the knuckles of your hands. Like Robert Mitchum's malevolent preacher from *Night Of The Hunter*, David Eugene Edwards—no matter where he roams with his Goth-country combo 16 Horsepower—has his past indelibly stamped upon him. "Television is wicked, it's evil, and everything that comes out of it is perverted and twisted," testifies the devoutly religious singer, whose grandfather was a by-the-Good-Book Nazarene reverend. Another part-Cherokee relative taught him chants as a kid; another wrestled bears for a living.

"I had a lot of weird childhood experiences," admits Edwards. "My grandmother, who was married to the preacher, was really morbid. She'd always dress in black, and since they were the main religious figures around, she and the preacher would do all the funerals. And she was *always* showing me dead people. We'd go to the funeral home, and she'd be talking to the people there, and she'd tell me 'Go downstairs and see what you can see down there!' And I'd go down and there'd be some dead guy lying in his coffin! I ended up seeing quite a few dead people that way."

Maybe that's why Edwards—who plays nothing but traditional instruments like banjo, accordion, and vintage slide guitar—opens 16 Horsepower's new album *Sackcloth 'N' Ashes* (A&M) with the spooky "I Seen What I Saw," where his haunted vocals drift over a military drumtap until it feels like someone marching up the gallows steps. Even the band's name conjures up spectral imagery of 16 coal-black horses, leading a funeral train. "Harm's Way," "Horsehead," "Black Soul Choir," "Scrawled In Sap," the bury-me-deep anthem "Heel On The Shovel"—the disc is rife with tortured Faulkner vernacular, ink-dark Flannery O'Connor imagery, and more hillbilly twanging than a whole lonesome prairie of cowhands. In short, if you want to know what a ghost town feels like, this creepy Colorado outfit will shuttle you down the mine shaft.

Edwards, coincidentally, wishes he were alive back in the 1800s. He's even wearing horsehide shoes from the era, so long and narrow it's a wonder they fit his feet. He's also sporting a railroad engineer's hat, though he's quick to point out that "the

train ruined everything as far as I can tell, so I've never been into trains: they bother me, make me think of dead Indians and the price everyone paid to have this big hunk of steel go from one end of the country to the other." He leans back in his hotel chair, a far-off look in his eyes. "I mean, I'd love to go touring in a covered wagon, pulled by horses."

It stands to reason that some of this anachronism's favorite books are the grim pioneer drama *Wisconsin Death Trip* and *Sleeping Beauty*, a collection of early American funeral photography. And, of course, he was weaned on Jeffrey Lee Pierce's similarly rootsy Gun Club; rightfully, he cites that band's *Miami* as the definitive work. He believes in frontier justice ("Putting someone away to sit in a cell is *not* punishment," he growls), and "God and the devil and demons and angels—there are spiritual things going on around us all the time, things we don't know about." He can recall his grandfather's stern words to him when he'd crossed the line in his youth: "'Son, go get me a hickory switch!' So I'd go out and find the tiniest little wisp of a hickory switch I could, but he'd always go cut one that was bigger."

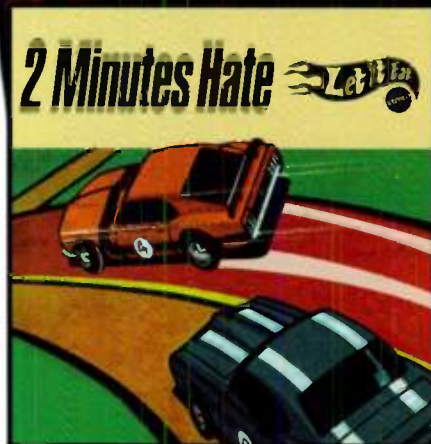
Sin and redemption, crime and punishment. These are the keys to appreciating this rustic trio (which features Jean Yves Tola on drums and Kevan Soll on flat-top acoustic bass, instruments Edwards hand-crafts himself). That and a good historical yarn. "Did you ever hear the Alfred Packer story?" Edwards asks, anxious to spill the beans. "There were these pioneers who got caught in a snowstorm up in the Rockies, and this guy Alfred Packer ended up eating all his friends, plus a couple of his own fingers. And when they found him, he got tried and convicted because they'd said he actually *killed* the people to eat them!" Edwards' eyes are gleaming eerily. Maybe a little too eerily.

No, no, he corrects. "Gravedigging, stuff like that, I use it more in terms of symbolism—I'm not really into death or all the physical aspects of it." Is it Edwards or his grandfather talking, the guy who never drank, smoked, cussed, or visited a movie theater his whole God-fearing life? "It's not physical death I'm singing about, but spiritual death, the gradual erosion of the spirit..." **END**

BY TOM LANHAM

2 Minutes Hate

RACE THE HOT OVAL...NOW STOP!



World Radio History



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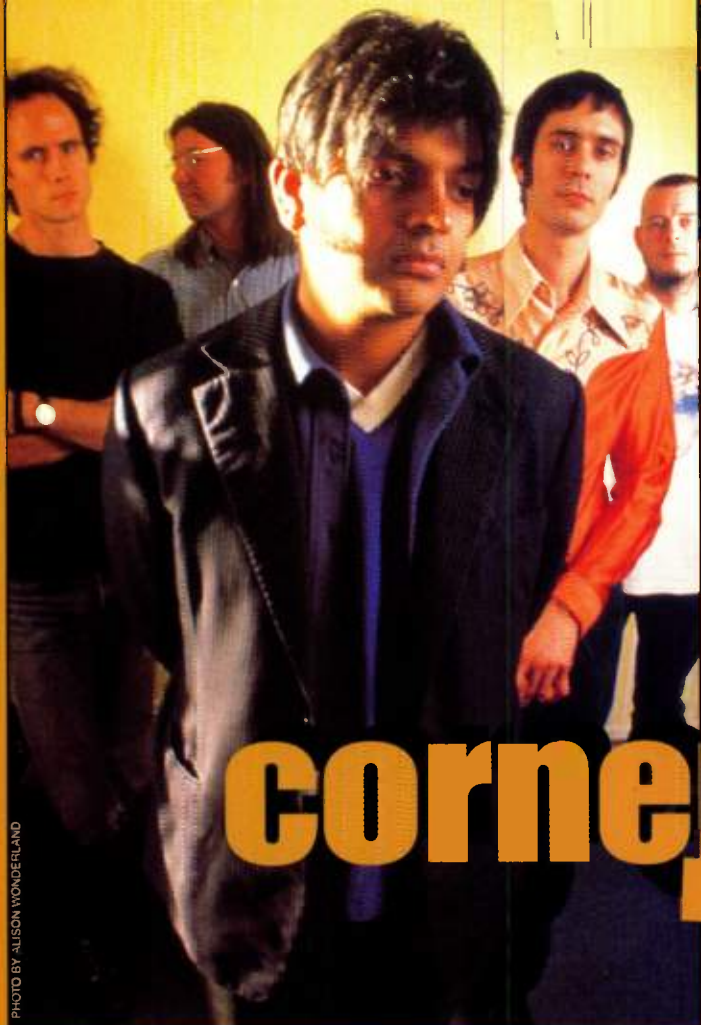


PHOTO BY ALISON WONDERLAND

cornershop

BHANGRA PUNK!

DISCOGRAPHY

In The Days Of Ford Cortina EP (Wiiiija (UK))
Lack Stock And Double-Barrel EP (Wiiiija (UK))
Elvis Sex-Change (Wake Up (UK))
Hold On It Hurts (Merge)
Born Disca: Died Heavy Metal EP (Wiiiija (UK))
Woman's Gotta Have It (Luaka Bop-WB)

Astute Anglophiles will probably remember the Anglo-Indian band Cornershop for two things only: its citizenship in the *Melody Maker*-hyped "Huggy Nation" several years ago, and the fact that the band burned a photo of Morrissey, during his suspected-racist period, in front of the EMI offices and some conveniently present journalists. Few, if any, have heard the band's music—often reviewed as "unlistenable"—and for the last year or so, Cornershop has made barely a sound Stateside. The group's last album, *Hold On It Hurts* (Merge), slipped quietly below the record-buying radar for most, and I'm sure I'm not the only person who'd more or less forgotten about them.

Then "Jullander Shere" came into my life. The song, released last year as a cheap, 99-pence single by Cornershop's British label Wiiiija, became a minor hit, and brought the band to the attention of David Byrne's Luaka Bop label, home mostly to "weird and wacky" world music. Now the Bhangra punks are distributed by Warner Bros., and their new album, *Woman's Gotta Have It*, could be one of the best things you'll buy all year. Bracketed by the "6:00 A.M." and "7:20 A.M." versions "Jullander Shere," the album is a rare case of a band getting, well, better.

"It was very much an artistic statement that we were making, rather than a musical one, when we were starting out," says Tjinder Singh, the band's vocalist and songwriter. "A lot of it was based on the principles of William Morris [19th-century English poet, author and socialist], in terms of trying to do everything ourselves. We used sitars, feedback, and Eastern, laid-back music. Only a few people got that, anyway."

So, all the elements in the band's new, lauded sound were there before?

"Yeah, there's samples, Punjabi lyrics, noise, there's all the ethics on that first EP [*In The Days Of Ford Cortina*]. I wanted to kick the asses of people who say that our new record is brilliant and that the stuff we did before was nothing"—your reporter begins to sweat—"because what we're doing now is exactly what we were doing before, we just do our own production now."

The album surfs well the boundaries of Eastern and Anglo pop on the squall-and-Fall of "Hong Kong Book Of Kung Fu," the slinky Franco-funk of "My Dancing Days Are Done" and the sample-driven "Camp Orange." It's truly the sound of a group finding its feet. Such tunefulness, however, belies Cornershop's past, when it was granted citizenship in

the "Huggy Nation" of two years ago, as bands like Huggy Bear and Blood Sausage briefly caught the attention of the fickle British media. This had everything to do with publicity stunts and very little to do with making interesting music. So, is the band still residing in said nation?

"We were never in touch with 'Huggy Nation,'" says Singh. "That name was for something that was never even there."

What about the lyrics (from *Ford Cortina*) saying "Try Huggy Bear if you want it funky?" "That was about *Starsky And Hutch*," says Ben Ayres, the band's tambourist.

"We'd never even heard of the band Huggy Bear when we wrote that song," adds Singh. "I liked their first few EPs, but they lost it musically and personality-wise. They were really nice to start with, but coming to America made them into blinkin' morons. They thought they were going to take it over."

Talking to Cornershop in a spiffy conference room high atop Rockefeller Plaza, it does appear that the only members of that now-forgotten movement, erstwhile though they may be, to have a chance at "taking over" America are sitting in front of me. And a few nights later, at the band's show opening for Superchunk and Seaweed, the twin peaks of "Jullander Shere," which open and close the show, floor even the most resolute Seaweed fans, several of whom are whistling the song in the restroom afterward. Now that's a pop hit, and with Ayres' promise that the next record will be "definitely more funky," Cornershop is the hot tip for '96. **END**

BY ANDREW BEAUJON



kip hanrahan jack bruce allen toussaint don pullen alfredo triff robbie ameen jt lewis leo nocentelli
milton cardona anthony carillo richie flores carmen lundy charles neville willie green andy gonzalez
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“I GOTTA ASK, I GOTTA ASK: WHAT IS ‘LUMP’?”

The band winces as road manager Craig Montgomery drops into a dopey voice to pose the one question The Presidents Of The United States Of America have heard like a refrain since they embarked on the tour six weeks ago. ★ ““So what’s it about... No, that’s funny, but what’s it about?”” drummer Jason Finn chimes in.



BY SCOTT FRAMPTON ★ PHOTOS BY MICHAEL WONG



"I TRIED TO WRITE THESE MEANINGFUL SONGS AND ALWAYS, THE WHOLE TIME, I WOULD COME BACK TO MONKEYS AND CHICKENS AND FROGS."

"Lump," and this goes for all the Presidents' songs, not to mention the band itself, is what it is. The song, the opening beats of which start tonight's Hofstra University crowd pogoing even before singer Chris Ballew can squawk the first lyric, has been the radio-friendly driving force behind the meteoric ("is that as in 'mediocre' or 'meteor'?" Ballew later asks) success of the band's debut album. Its lyrics—"Lump lingered last in line for brains/And the ones she got were sort of rotten and insane"—are clever, funny and filled with engaging wordplay, but don't have a "meaning" beyond that. There are no metaphors in this record's collection of bugs, kitties, birds, lizards, frogs, and... lumps, and Ballew, fearing he again might have to explicate his lyrics, stuffs some of the rider's wealth of cheap cookies into his mouth.

Where most bands, especially those who have just received their first gold record, beg to be taken at more than face value, the Presidents want nothing more. Although they are cooperative, talkative interview subjects, there are no depths of inspiration to plumb, no grand ideas to expound. The immediate goofy appeal of the record's sophisticated juvenilia seems the same for the band as for the audience: This music, more than anything, is a lot of fun. Pulling the lyrics apart to look at the stuffing is contrary to what makes the Presidents, and especially Ballew, tick.

"I've been making this kind of music my whole life. Never had a band that wanted to make a record or get signed or anything. I painted houses for a living, spent my money on recording equipment and guitars and stuff and hooked up with all kinds of weird musicians, in Boston, mostly." Like Morphine's Mark Sandman. "I call him 'good ol' Easter Island head.' 'Monolith head.' Hello if you're out there.

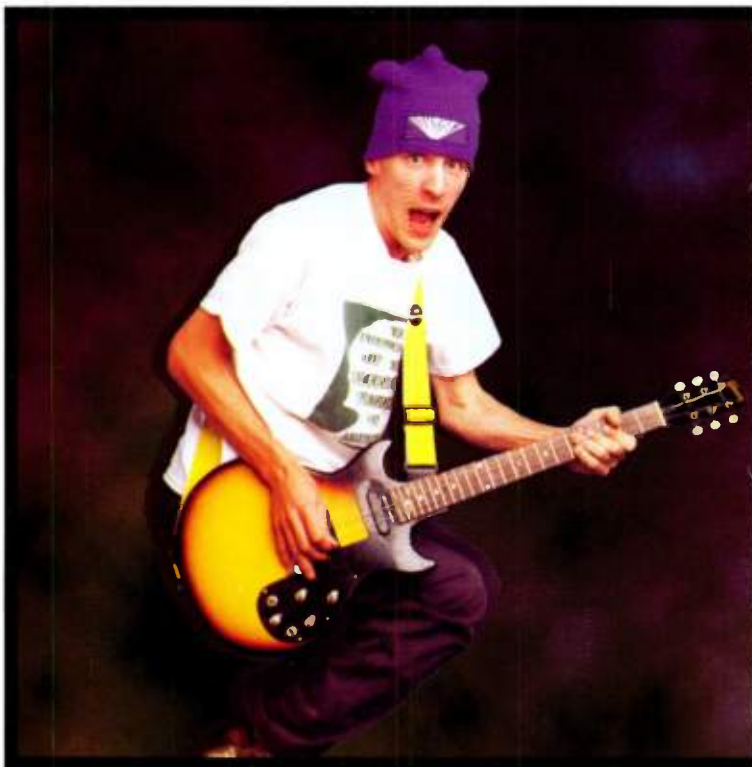
"I used to write songs that were trying to be meaningful, but I just came from a really simple background—stable family..."

"Simple peasants," Finn interjects.

"We made soup out of stones. It was a very simple life. Never wore any clothing ever... so I tried to write these meaningful songs and they all came up kinda short of the mark and always, the whole time, when I was searching for lyric ideas, I would come back to monkeys and chickens and frogs. When I used to make some music on a four-track and just kinda work something out by improvising over it, I was always coming back to animals.

And I would always be like, 'oh no no no, I can't do that, that's not real.' And then I had a drought of about two years with no songwriting. Mark Sandman handed me a two-string guitar and I just said fuck it, I'm gonna just exorcise this... and that's the Presidents. It's a result of releasing the floodgates or something, so it's not a [conscious thing]. No, it's a subconscious thing, actually."

If all Ballew's subconscious manifests is songs about dried-up salamanders, monkeys playing guitars and recalcitrant cats, then



he may be one of the healthiest men in rock. In fact, there's not a whit of angst in the band's whole repertoire. You might think this to be a reaction to an alterna-rock climate informed by the successfully marketed pain of Kurt Cobain and Trent Reznor, but as is the way of The Presidents, it's much simpler than that.

"We have very little [pain]," Ballew says.

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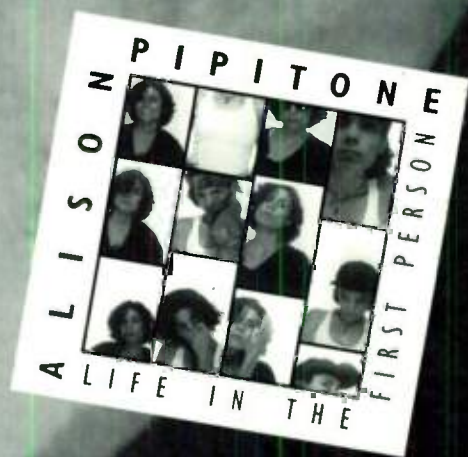
THE BECK CONNECTION

The short answer to how Chris Ballew came to collaborate with Beck as Caspar And Mollusk (see this issue's Singles column) is that Ballew was recording a song in Beck's house when the singer came home and started making all this noise with the tape running, so they decided to keep it and call it a band. But the long answer is a lot more fun:

"Mary Lou Lord, a friend of mine from Boston days, called me up and said 'you gotta check out this guy Beck.

This guy's gonna be huge and you gotta hook up with him,' and all this stuff. And I kinda ignored it for a little bit—I didn't have a band, I was just sitting around at home and doing this dumb phone job and kinda comfortable with my dopey little life. And then she called back like a month later and said, 'no, I'm serious, you really have to call this guy—it's gonna be huge,' and I just decided 'okay I'm just going to sell everything and go for it.' I called his manager and went to meet him, and [Lord] introduced me to him. I saw him play by himself and I was just amazed. It was great, and I joined the band. I actually had an audition. I went down to Olympia to play on his record [*One Foot In The Grave*] at Calvin Johnson of Beat Happening's house. And that was my audition, I guess. And then he called me up like three days later and said 'do you want to go on tour' and I said 'fine.' And I lived with him while we were rehearsing in L.A., and did some four-tracking, and hung out, and me and his roommates did music for porno movies. It was really fun. A fun time. But when we got out on tour, it became less improvisational and more like just a job, and I realized that I just needed to keep making stuff up and playing in a band where I was making up songs. And so I got back to the Presidents. The Beck thing, it was a good experience, as far as knowing what it's like to be on tour and all that stuff, but it was more like I was a hired gun and I did what I was told and did what I was told. Not that he was tyrannical or anything—it just wasn't really a band. And I just need to be in a band."

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"I CAN'T IMAGINE MAKING A CAREER OUT OF WALLOWING IN MY MISERY."

"And we keep it to ourselves." Finn offers. "Our problems are not your problems."

"I especially wouldn't want to make a profession out of airing my problems."

"It doesn't make me feel better singing about them. It makes me feel better doing something about them." (And it's true: The

how formidable his idiosyncrasies are. Creativity crackles behind every thought, quickly taking the idea of spiders driving tiny dune buggies and, with words like "bad-ass fat old abdomen stuck in the bucket seat" and "spider woman in the front seat screaming go go go/He's ridin' the accelerator down to the floor with his fuzzy little toe," assembling a fully realized little world. Mishearing a reference to "pastrami" as "astronomy," he seizes on a boyhood fascination as a subject for future songs.

"I think the planets might be a whole section of songwriting coming up. I've been fascinated by space since I was 14, when I watched Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*. I think I'm going to rent that and watch that entire thing again and write about 500 songs, because that blew my mind. When I was growing up, my parents tried to make me be a Catholic, like be an altar boy and go to church. And I never really thought about it, I just kinda went 'oh, that's what we do on Sundays.' And then I saw *Cosmos* and it was like 'there's no way that God stuff is true. There's no way. It's all so damn fucking huge that [religion] doesn't explain a damn thing.' So my brain exploded and changed my life."

Another striking thing about Ballew, and Finn and three-string guitbass-player Dave Derderer, who was mired to a phone interview throughout most of tonight's discussion, is how resolutely down-to-earth the band remains.

"When the whole idea of signing with a record label came up, it was like 'why are we going nationwide again?'," Ballew says. "I couldn't remember. Because it seems, in a really fundamental way, a crazy endeavor. It's impossible. It's insane. We're just a little goofy band. How are we going to go nationwide? But

here we are doing it. So who's crazy now?"

Going nationwide has also introduced the band to a audience, much of it younger than the band ever expected. "We started out playing bars in Seattle and built this huge following in Seattle, and we didn't think that kids would even like us. Because, I don't know," Finn says, cocking a thick eyebrow, "we're not cool."

"We draw upon all kinds of stuff, music we listened to growing up that kinda might not know about," Ballew adds. "When we bust into a Beatles song [in "Feather Pluckn"], I don't know if anyone knows what we're playing at some shows. It's mixed, though. You can see the crowd is mixed. You can see tall people in there. Normal size people sticking up." *continued on next page*



casually sardonic drummer's last big dilemma was whether or not to leave Love Battery after six months playing in both bands. "It was a heavy inner searching thing; for three days I was like..." he says, taking the pose of Rodin's "Thinker").

"I can't imagine making a career out of wallowing in my misery." "Especially if you sold any records."

"Then you'd be confined to your misery, because people would identify you with your misery and then you couldn't break out of your misery."

One of the things that strikes you about Ballew, along with the fact that he is never without his guitar ("I like to touch my guitar every day. Change my strings, check it out. Look at it. Feel it"), is

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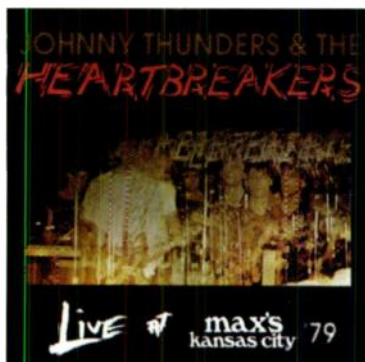


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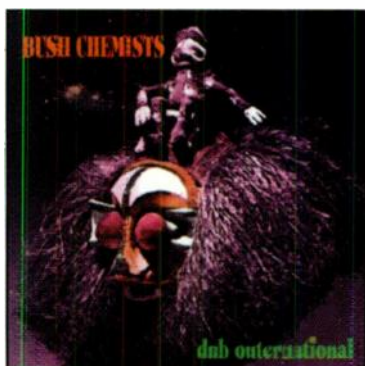
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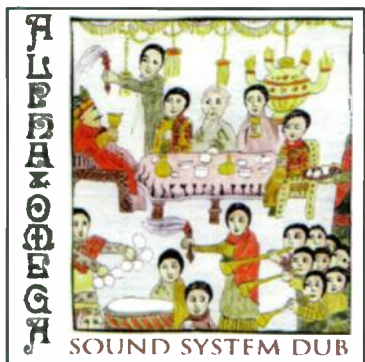


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"FAME IS NOT REAL. IT'S ONLY REAL IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IN IT FOR."

Still, the band's aims are the same. Pride in one's craft in the face of fame is as choice as rock clichés get, but Ballew is serious about why the Presidents do what they do—so serious he momentarily stops strumming the guitar to make his point.

"[Fame is] a completely invisible, ambiguous thing. It's not real. It's only real if that's what you're in it for. We're not in it for that, so it's probably never going to be real. We have the

"They're guilty," Ballew says, "because they think that musicians shouldn't be successful and if they are, they're not worth listening to. They're guilty when people say they're good, when people say they're bad. They're just stuck in this guilty universe."

"Because they're too stupid to figure out something else to do with their lives," Derderer, who is working toward a degree in urban planning, adds.

"Check this out," he says, his spasm of laughter jarring the tape recorder tucked into the tongue of his running shoes. "'Rock your asses 'til midnight' is 'to perform intensely.'"

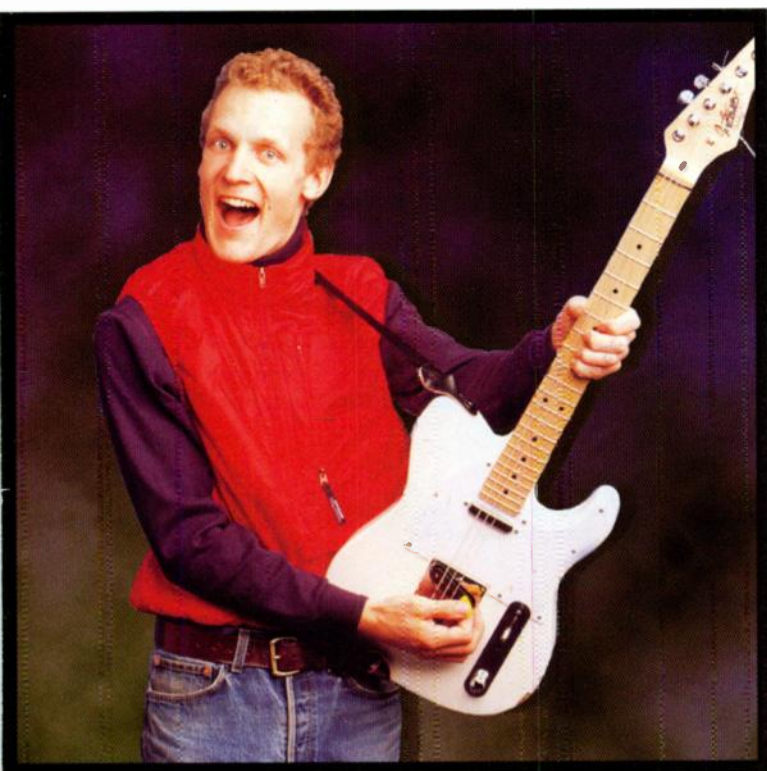
Derderer has been leafing through a copy of the *Entertainment Monitor*, a magazine that, because musicians like the Presidents are reluctant to disclose the exact meanings of their lyrics, interprets songs' lyrics and slang for concerned parents. Finally, no more explaining what "Lump" is all about—this book has the answers. For the second time, Ballew stops strumming as he and Finn demand that Derderer read through the "themes" the magazine has unearthed in the Presidents' record.

"Various songs: About birds playing in a band; a song about a woman named Lump who is possessing the singer's thoughts; a man falls for a woman who works as a stripper in a porn booth; desire to move to the country and eat peaches; driving a dune buggy on the beach; planning to fail as a band."

"What?" Ballew asks, laughing with disbelief.

"Wait," Derderer continues, trying to maintain his deadpan reading. "A song about playing rock 'n' roll enthusiastically—"Kick Out The Jams"—'admiring a body; sitting on the back porch; what it's like to be 'naked and famous.'"

"That's not it at all!" Finn chortles as Ballew reels with laughter, delightedly stamping his feet. It is what it is. **END**



consistent and constant challenge of entertaining the crowd of people that are standing in front of us every night, and that's the only gauge of success that is actual. Everything else is just your own ego and attitude, and if you want to be on the cover of *Rolling Stone* and that's your idea of being famous, then you're famous. For us it's entertaining people."

"Playing is fun. Waiting backstage to play... not so fun. Boring," Dederer says as the college stage crew erects the aluminum poles and black curtains that make up tonight's backstage around him. The playing is definitely the thing for the Presidents, and talk turns to bands that don't seem to have that much fun on stage.

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"Naked And Famous" b/w "Puffy Little Shoes" 7" (Che Orrore)

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"Devil In A Sleeping Bag" on *Twisted Willie* compilation (Justice)

"Supermodel" on *Live At The Crocodile Cafe* compilation (PopLlama)

"Christmas Piglet" on KROQ Christmas compilation

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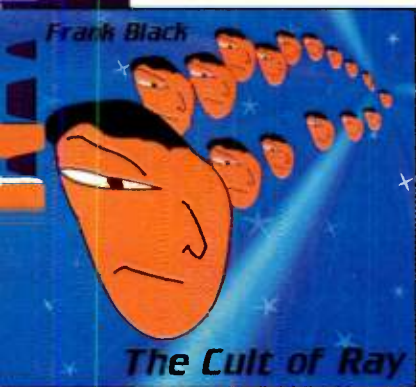
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FRANK BLACK *The Cult Of Ray* American

No one will be better prepared for the day the planet people come to get us than Charles Thompson, ne Frank Black. In the Pixies, Thompson went by the name Black Francis and spent the entire *Bossanova* album dropping clues about U.F.O.'s. The *Ray* in the title of Black's third solo album is Ray Bradbury, but the lyrics are pure Philip K. Dick: "Punk Rock City" is about a space colony for the genetically altered, while "Men In Black" is about a police force that locks up citizens who talk too much about alien encounters (the song could be the "Ohio" of the conspiracy theorists' movement). For all its weirdness, musically *The Cult Of Ray* contains Black's most conventional song styles, including "I Don't Want To Hurt You," his poppiest ditty since "Here Comes Your Man." As such, *Ray* is one step forward, two steps back for Black, who despite producing an accessible record (more diverse than 1994's thrashy *Teenager Of The Year*) seems lost in orbit around his little planet. Kim Deal found a way in the Breeders to rethink the Pixies' surf-pop as '90s folk music, but Black fancies himself a rock dilettante, writing songs he knows aren't meaningful, jokes that were funnier the first time. Does he know he's being smug? Maybe he's explaining himself when he says at the beginning of the album, "If you wanted to get somewhere, and it took you a long time to get there, would you want to rush back here? I didn't think so."

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 30. First single "Men In Black."

FILE UNDER: Ground control to Major Thompson.

R.I.Y.L.: Guided By Voices, Pixies, William S. Burroughs.



BLINKER THE STAR *Blinker The Star* Treat And Release

Jordan Zadorozny plays, sings, and writes almost everything on *Blinker The Star*. It's a formidable achievement for anyone, let alone someone like Zadorozny, a musician in his early 20s with no track record to speak of. The album is a messy, all-over-the-place pastiche of country jams, creaky acoustic ballads and proto-grunge numbers (and that's just for starters), stuffed with low-budget feedback and echo effects. Zadorozny lets things get vaguely cheesy, but never indulgent. Judging from "J-bird (Part 2)" (which could be called "In Bloom (Part 2)"), he has a fondness for Nirvana that would embarrass even Silverchair, though the rest of the album is lively and innovative. If Zadorozny doesn't find much new to say, he finds new ways to say the same old things, which is almost as good. ("Me/I'm gonna be a star," he sings on "2nd Black Opinion," and who would bet against him?) Little on *Blinker The Star* makes much sense, but it's to Zadorozny's credit that his ramblings, musings and outtakes are enough to fill an entire record and still be interesting, though "Kiss Me, I'm Alive"—played at warp speed so Zadorozny sounds like a particularly deranged member of the Chipmunks—may be pushing things a little.

—Allison Stewart

DATALOG: Released Sep. 28.

FILE UNDER: Quirky, hither-and-yon, one-man lo-fi.

R.I.Y.L.: Nirvana, Sparklehorse, Hüsker Dü.



BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE *Methodrone* Tangible/Asphodel-Bompl!

You don't put the name of a member of a famous band in the name of your own unless you're willing to have the older band used as a point of reference. In the case of the Brian Jonestown Massacre, that's actually a helpful pointer. The band sounds nothing like the Rolling Stones on its face—its sound owes more to the Ride/Moose/My Bloody Valentine school of sustained, blurry forward motion—but it couldn't have existed without the Stones' lazy gaze into the abyss. BJM's songs come from the amoral, stoned-out world that *Their Satanic Majesties Request* implied. Listen, and you can hear how "Wasted" is "In Another Land," distilled and recast 30 years later; how "Hyperventilation" applies Spacemen 3's smack-daze to Bo Diddley's beat and ends up with a distant cousin of "Midnight Rambler." Everything moves with the slowness and presence of a disgraced monarch in exile—Anton Newcombe's vocals are mostly submerged in the guitars' inexorable forward roll. At its best, *Methodrone* has the tormented grace of accepting doom, and especially when Paola Simmonds' even more fragile voice takes over (as on "Everyone Says"), it has a terrible beauty all its own.

—Brian Bannin

DATALOG: Released Nov. 5. A vinyl album, *Spacegirl And Other Favorites*, is also available on Candyfloss.

FILE UNDER: Goat's head consommé.

R.I.Y.L.: Majesty Crush, Ride, dissolute Rolling Stones.



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 - D BLINKER THE STAR Blinker The Star *Treat And Release*
 - I BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE Methodrone *Tangible/Asphodel-Bomp!*
 - E CHEATER SLICKS Don't Like You *In The Red*
 - J ANTHONY DAVIS Episteme *Gramavision*
 - C DOGMATICS 1981-86 *Vagrant-Shredder*
 - K ENYA The Memory of Trees *Reprise*
 - L ERIC'S TRIP Purple Blue *Sub Pop*
 - H FLYING SAUCER ATTACK Chorus *Drag City*
 - I GAVIN FRIDAY Shag Tobacco *Island*
 - H GAUNT Yeah, Me Too *Amphetamine Reptile*
 - J GEORGE GERSHWIN The Piano Rolls, Volume Two *Nonesuch*
 - K GIANT SAND Backyard Barbecue Broadcast *KOCH*
 - J AL GREEN Your Heart's In Good Hands *MCA*
 - I JEUNE Back To Reality *Shiro*
 - I DAVID KILGOUR First Steps And False Alarms *Ajax*
 - L JACK LOGAN & LIQUOR CABINET Mood Elevator *Medium Cool-Restless*
 - L LOVE AS LAUGHTER The Greks Bring Gifts *K*
 - L THE MAGIC PACER White Room *W.I.N.*
 - L MOJAVE 3 Ask Me Tomorrow *4AD*
 - I VAN MORRISON How Long Has This Been Going On *Verve*
 - E THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Sweden *Shrimper*
 - B THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Nine Black Poppies *Emperor Jones*
 - L MR. MIRAINGA Mr. Mirainga *Way Cool-MCA*
 - E NEW BOMB TURKS Pissing Out The Poison: Singles & Other Swill '90-'94 *Crypt*
 - L PALEFACE Raw *Shimmy-Disc*
 - G PASTELS Mobile Safari *Up*
 - L MARTIN REV See Me Ridin' *ROIR*
 - K SISTA MONICA Get Out Of My Way *Thunderbird*
 - L 16 HORSEPOWER Sackcloth 'N' Ashes *A&M*
 - F SOUL JUNK 1952 *Homestead*
 - H SPARE SNARE Spare Snare *Prospective*
 - J SPEED THE PLOUGH Marina *ESD*
 - J BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN The Ghost Of Tom Joad *Columbia*
 - L TOWNIES The Apologetic Sound *Little Voice*
 - E UI Unlike—Remixes Vol. 1 *Lunamoth*
 - J UNUN Super Shiny Dreams *Bad Taste*
 - E VICTORIA WILLIAMS This Moment In Toronto *Mammoth-Atlantic*
 - I MARVA WRIGHT Marva-lous *Mardi Gras*

On The CD

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- H BATS Couchmaster *Flying Nun-Mammoth*
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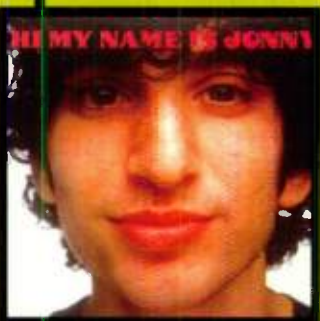
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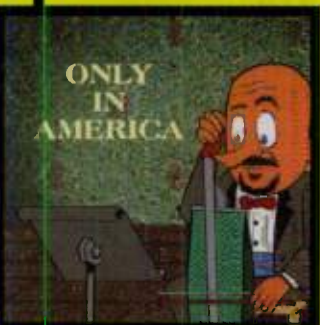
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- J GREEN DAY Insomniac Reprise
- E HELIUM Superball+ (EP) Matador
- I INTO ANOTHER Seamless Hollywood
- J JAWBREAKER Dear You DGC
- F MAGNETIC FIELDS Get Lost Merge
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- G RANCID ...And Out Come The Wolves Epitaph
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- J RED RED MEAT Bunny Gets Paid Sub Pop
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- G STEREO LAB Refried Ectoplasm (Switched On Volume 2) Drag City
- F STRATOTANKER Baby, Test The Sky Homestead
- J SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE Sunny Day Real Estate Sub Pop
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- A YO LA TENGO Camp Yo La Tengo (EP) Matador
- J ZEN COWBOYS Electric Mistress Moonshine

CHEATER SLICKS *Don't Like You* *In The Red*

The Cheater Slicks don't like you, and chances are, if they showed up at your house with a case of beer and a stack of their favorite sides, you and the wife probably wouldn't be all that crazy about them either. The Slicks spew forth a sick hybrid of dirt-ass R&B, psychotic garage and frantic rockabilly that is not so much for dancing as for choking on. Drum beats that don't aim to make the backbone slip, but rather snap it like a rotting Eberhard Faber. Vocals you don't sing along to, but are perfect for berating loved ones. And with snarling sentiment like "I want to destroy you, I want to bring you down/ I want to annoy you, and I can do it with my sound" ("Destroy You"), the Slicks continue to prove an already well-established fact: bad breeding = good rock 'n' roll. I'm talkin' primitive, Dad, prim-it-ive. It's hard to say how long this record can hold up (two or three cuts are clearly throwaways), but on Sunday afternoon, as I cleaned up my apartment hung over (boy, what a humdinger we had!), *Don't Like You* cleared my head right out, and was the only record laying around that made sense as I pulled wet cigarette butts and hunks of fondue outta the kitchen sink. Now how's that for a testimonial? —Steve McGuirl

DATALOG: Released Nov. 28. Produced by Jon Spencer.

FILE UNDER: Surly garage howl-n-holler.

R.I.Y.L.: Anything on *Crypt* (especially the *Back From The Grave* series), Cramps, Sonics, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion.

ANTHONY DAVIS *Episteme* *Gramavision*

Episteme means "knowledge of the underlying form of things," explains experimental composer and pianist Anthony Davis in the liner notes in this reissue of his renowned album. He goes on to delineate the rhythmic and instrumental elements he chose to work with and later drew upon in his operas *X: The Life & Times Of Malcolm X* and *Under The Double Moon*. Davis is a composer of tension-filled, complex, yet accessible music that seeks to evolve a new musical language: He's far too rhythmically oriented to be termed "neo-classical," and while he uses some improvisation, he's certainly set apart from what's still defined as "jazz." The first piece, "Wayang No. II (Shadowdance)," sets down irregular rhythmic shapes inspired by Balinese gamelan, using gongs, marimba, vibraphone and xylophone. A trombone and bass clarinet play a simple but subtly shaded melody on top, and violin and cello come in and out, cinching urgency into the piece. These are basically the elements on the whole record, but Davis's broad imagination sculpts several considerably different moods. Though he often employs jazz musicians, he's actually trying to push them harder by providing more text: sound "colors" or "shapes" from which they mustn't stray. Sometimes one instrument will improvise while others, equally loud, evolve different fixed patterns. Overall, it's quite vibrant, though impossible to put on as background: It demands attention to its ominous, lovely textures.

—Danny Housman

DATALOG: Released Nov. 27. Originally released in 1981.

FILE UNDER: Ellington meets Stravinsky.

R.I.Y.L.: Philip Glass, Kronos Quartet, Terry Riley.

DOGMATICS *1981-86* *Vagrant-Shredder*

Forgotten by now, the Dogmatics were nevertheless one of the finer things about Boston in the early '80s. Charting a course roughly parallel to the Replacements' (hot pursuit of an inebriation-is-all lifestyle, attempted reconciliation of a Johnny Thunders fixation with sensitive singer/songwriter instincts), the Dogmatics nevertheless got only as far as their *Dogmatics Stink-of-sorts* (entitled *Everybody Does It*) before the death of bassist Paul O'Halloran also led to the death of the band. Collecting their complete recordings, *1981-86* displays a brash, rowdy, drunken rock 'n' roll outfit with good garage-punk instincts and a keen line in snotty-yet-tuneful-and-tender songwriting, as well as an appropriately inappropriate sense of humor (such as converting Dion's teenage lament into "Why must I be-e-e-e a teenager on dru-u-ugssss..."). Rockers like "Shithouse" and "Everything Went Bad" still house all the wall-smashing power they held in the mid-'80s, and hopefully this'll build the same posthumous vogue for the Dogmatics that previous retrospectives have built for the Pagans and Avengers.

—Tim Stegall

DATALOG: Released Nov. 15.

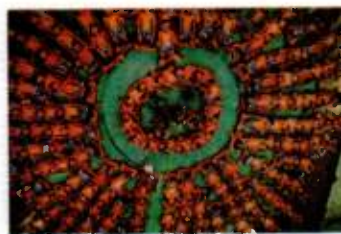
FILE UNDER: Great lost punk classics.

R.I.Y.L.: Early Replacements, Heartbreakers, Real Kids, Gas Huffer.

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



Anthony Davis/Episteme





ENYA *The Memory of Trees* Reprise

And one would almost need the memory of trees to remember when Enya last put out an album—her multi-platinum *Shepherd's Moon* came out in 1991. Sporadic though her releases may be, Enya is an enigma with a style hard to shake from memory. Her ethereal, orchestral new age music hypnotizes without being soporific, and makes no claims to hipness or trendiness. On *The Memory Of Trees*, her fourth album, Enya keeps right on track, with mellow, highly-produced choral tunes perfectly suited to her high, light, angelic voice. The Celtic flavor (and words) she lends to songs like "Athair Ar Neamh"—"Fatherless," translated loosely—comes naturally (she formerly sang with Clannad), and she saves her pretty, airy tunes from the electronics and vapidity of Windham Hill-type new age. Much of the album is the same stuff she's always done, from the moving, breathy instrumentals (title track and "Tea-House Moon") to the rousing, anthemic pounding of "Anywhere Is." Audible lyrics generally have to do with beauty, or love, or scenery, but who really hears her lyrics? The fascinating thing about nearly any Enya song is the ability it has to transport the listener into another dimension, no matter what language she's singing in.

—Rande Dawn

DATALOG: Released Dec. 5.

FILE UNDER: New-age orchestral pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Clannad, Bel Canto, Danny Elfman's film soundtracks.



ERIC'S TRIP *Purple Blue* Sub Pop

Eric's Trip comes from Moncton, in New Brunswick, Canada, where if this band is any indication, people have a lot of time on their hands—in the last 5 years, the band has appeared on 20 records and released 127 original songs. And that's not even counting the solo and side-projects by all four members of the band: guitarists Rick White and Chris Thompson, bassist Julie Doiron and drummer Mark Gaudet have records out credited to, respectively, Elevator To Hell, Moonsocket, Broken Girl and Purple Knight. As you may have guessed by now, they all spend lots of time in their bedrooms writing and recording songs. Those home recordings have showed up all over previous Eric's Trip records, though their only appearance here is the opening "Introduction Into The... (Parts 1-4)": one from each of them. But you can still hear the ambience of the bedroom on the rest of the album—not in the recording (which is fine and relatively clear), but in the fragility and personalness of the songs, the way the four of them keep their lyrics close to their chests when they sing, the way they crank their amps up all the way but still play gingerly, like they're not quite used to being able to let loose without annoying someone next door. The best song here is Doiron's "Eyes Shut," an early Dinosaur-style rocker where her straining vocal is almost completely overwhelmed by the band's full-bore charge. That tension between the lyric and the declamatory is where Eric's Trip generates its power.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 16.

FILE UNDER: Lo-fi songs gone mid-fi rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Early Sebadoh, Grifters, Sonic Youth.



FLYING SAUCER ATTACK *Chorus* Drag City

19th century Romantic painter Joseph Mallord William Turner was looking for a way to get a new perspective on the English countryside, so while on a train ride through a rainstorm, he repeatedly stuck his head out the window and painted what he saw, resulting in an impenetrable smear of clotted earth tones and blurry, billowing clouds; his colleague John Constable described his works as "airy visions, painted with tinted steam." Flying Saucer Attack paints with feedback and flange instead of oils, but the end result is still airy visions and tinted steam; they too engage in a euphorically foggy and oblique pastoralism. *Chorus* is a collection of wispy pop songs rendered even more vaporous through buried vocals, little if any drumming, and dense walls of guitar noise. The wall, however, isn't usually bracing and confrontational like, say, My Bloody Valentine at their prime; without any percussive underpinnings, it's soothing and comforting, verging on limp and amorphous. There are moments both jarring ("Always") and celestial ("Feedback Song"), but like 1995's *Further*, the focus on *Chorus* isn't on grating distortion and headspinning whooshes (as with FSA's earlier material), but more on gently sweeping drones and even a few passages of acoustic guitar. *Chorus* will not rock you, but it will certainly envelop and transport you.

—David Jarman

DATALOG: Released Dec. 5.

FILE UNDER: Ambient guitar hum.

R.I.Y.L.: Slowdive, Spiritualized, Loop.

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

GAVIN FRIDAY *Shag Tobacco* *Island*

If Gavin Friday's *Shag Tobacco* had come out last year, it would have been the best U2 or David Bowie album of 1995. As it is, it's still bound to be one of the most eccentric albums of 1996, a world-weary soundtrack for night owls that captures the eerie stillness of the hours between 2 and 6 a.m.—no daylight penetrates Friday's decadent world of transvestites and cabaret singers. Everything here has a dark side, in some cases very dark. "Shag Tobacco" is about a man who works odd hours and comes home when his lover is asleep. When he whispers "I want you," it's more of a threat than an invitation. The florid "Caruso" is about watching too much late-night TV. In the James Bondish "Little Black Dress," the garment in question becomes a menace. Friday's career has always been eclipsed by his relationship with U2, and he certainly doesn't help matters here by singing just like sometime collaborator Bono on several cuts. (Some think that Bono borrowed some of his latest, more theatrical stage persona from Friday, however, so just who influenced whom is still open to investigation.) All the references to Bono and Bowie shouldn't obscure the fact that Friday is a top-notch songwriter with his own irresistibly creepy persona.

—Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: Post-Weill creepy cabaret.

R.I.Y.L.: Early Bowie, late U2, Portishead.

GAUNT *Yeah, Me Too* *Amphetamine Reptile*

Okay, okay, so Gaunt's familiar brand of punk rock isn't brain surgery. It's pretty simple, really—three chords, some killer hooks, an unbelievable energy level: 10 great songs in 21 minutes. Watered-down bandwagoneers can't possibly duplicate Gaunt's airtight punk-pop: The Columbus, OH, trio is king of the hill when it comes to cranking out thick chords, pogo-inspiring tempos and quick, blasting tunes. The band takes these elements and assembles them into a flawless package that it carries to the finish line in a three-minute mile. And while the same could be said of any Gaunt's numerous recordings (including three other albums, a couple EPs and a whole bunch of 7"s), *Yeah, Me Too* is more emotionally charged than any of these. "Well, I love her now/...Now it's too late," guitarist Jerry Wick sings on "Now." Ouch. The girl-trouble stuff doesn't end there, and unless these songs are purely fictitious (hey, that's not punk!), some gal must have given Jerry the old heave-ho. "So sick of making up and breaking up," hollers Wick on "Breakin' Down"; delivered in a frenetic yelp, the choruses to "Justine" and "Just Leave" sound strangely similar. Hmmm... the plot thickens.

—Jenny Elisac

DATALOG: Released Nov. 14.

FILE UNDER: Brokenhearted punk-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Pagans, New Bomb Turks, Ramones.

GEORGE GERSHWIN *The Piano Rolls, Volume Two* *Nonesuch*

And you thought vinyl was quaint. Piano rolls, the turn-of-the-century devices that gave mechanical pianos ghostly powers, were once America's most popular sound carriers. But while music reproduction has become commonplace, the means to hear paper rolls has gotten complicated. For this compilation, the second in a series covering George Gershwin's repertoire, the Swiss cheese-like paper has been fed into a computer and the tunes outputted to compact discs. Actually, CDs and piano rolls have a lot in common: just as the CD's tiny pits reproduce music faithfully, the rolls' punched holes, if preserved, save decades-old performances with virtually no loss in fidelity. This CD captures historic (1916-20) recordings of Gershwin's takes on assorted ragtime and Tin Pan Alley standards. Predictably, many of its performances have an unnatural quality attributable to the limitations of the recording medium: At times, the breaks between notes feel short, as if the mechanical roll was moving faster than Gershwin. But that's carping—much of *Piano Rolls* makes him feel fully in the moment. You can hear how player piano was ideally suited for ragtime's hippity-hopping rhythms. There's limited capacity for *pianissimo* on piano rolls, where every punched hole produces a punchy note; but the recording captures Gershwin's thoughtful passages with impressive delicacy. For a music history lesson, *Piano Rolls* is great fun—like cranking up a pictureless kinescope and hearing the spirit of '16 go flickering by.

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Sep. 19.

FILE UNDER: Musical time machines.

R.I.Y.L.: Scott Joplin, PBS's *Civil War* and *Baseball* soundtracks.



Stream of unconsciousness. part 1:

"Ola Mola Coca Cola/Pass the doochie/Doe-see dola/If you find the hola hola/Put in the hola hola/Sit on the couch/Turn on the TV/Make some Jell-O/Smear it on me/Turn on the black light/Ler's see the strobe/She says caramba/When she sees Moby." —actual lyrics from Love/Hate's "Ola Mola"




GIANT SAND Backyard Barbecue Broadcast **KOCH**

Once upon a time there was a band called The Giant Sandworms. Then they sobered up. Howe Gelb's crack outfit now cranks out two albums a year and tours to exhaustion on a large repertoire of original songs and an infinite variety of ways to play them. If they chose, they could be very, very popular. But something always stops them—just when the whole crowd's dancing and the guitar solo threatens to pass from lyrical to saccharine, there's a burst of noise and the next song starts. Such versatile musicians can deconstruct any groove. The melodies sprawl and wriggle in ways that evoke complex subtlety rather than the saleability of pop. Similarly, the lyrics, written to be sung rather than understood, suggest a bruised, knowing, adult state of mind. This release consists of two (late '94 and early '95) sessions for WFMU, the legendary free-form radio station. Giant Sand's performances are known for casual spontaneity, but these live-to-broadcast sets take mellowness to new heights. Gentle slide guitar replaces distorted leads, and a shy piano anchors the rhythm section. Without the forced energy of the studio or the hooting hype of a club, the band relaxes more than you can imagine and lays down a sweet, simple red carpet for Gelb's tar-stained vocals.

—Nell Zink

DATALOG: Released Dec. 5.

FILE UNDER: Sophisticated back-porch music.

R.I.Y.L.: Neil Young, Friends Of Dean Martinez, Jackson Browne.


AL GREEN Your Heart's In Good Hands **MCA**

Your Heart's In Good Hands is as watertight as a duck's posterior. Considering what it could have been, that's a revelation. As '90s R&B merges with hip-hop and G-funk, it has lost its identity as a pop medium (only the soul ballad à la Vandross has survived, and that won't last much longer under R. Kelly's rule). Green's return to secular pop after a long gospel hiatus is a bold effort to fuse his soul with the sound of radio-ready '80s R&B—Michael Jackson, Prince, even Fine Young Cannibals. It's hard to remember the last time anyone produced mainstream music as relentlessly catchy as the percolating "Keep On Pushing Love" and "People In The World," in which chugging rhythms are framed by precise arrangements. If that seems like an ill-conceived backdrop for Green's famed tenor, remember that Al's gift on '70s masterworks like *Call Me* was the way he added soul to tightly wound rhythms, reshaping funk and prefiguring disco. Green is in fine voice here, as his now-quivering, now-soaring croon plays against the synthesized beats. On *Your Heart's* rare duds, such as the Muscle Shoals retread "Don't Look Back," you get an idea of how drab the album could have been. Finding a perfect midpoint between hopelessly outdated and needlessly modern, Al Green has produced a state-of-the-art record that reaffirms his impeccable taste.

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Nov. 7.

FILE UNDER: Smooth & sharp R&B.

R.I.Y.L.: George Benson, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye.


JEUNE Back To Reality **Shiro**

The romanticization of the black criminal underworld, while bad for the spread of urban violence, has resulted in two great, distinct styles in pop music that virtually defined their eras: Superfly soul and G-funk. The fact that *Back To Reality* so winningly combines the two is less of a surprise than the fact that Jeune (French for "young") is the first to really do it. Granted, there's a certain tautology to this aesthetic, as much of the G-funk sound—if none of the cautionary spirit—was cribbed from the sly funk of Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* soundtrack. Still, the subterranean bass lines and police-siren keyboard melodies of Dr. Dre and Warren G. fit nicely with Jeune's soulful falsetto. Much of the credit goes to Jeune's live band, whose sinewy take on modern funk relies equally on Mayfield's stinging guitar leads, congas, that zip-zip-zip sound that the guy who played the fish in Santana made, P-Funk keyboard basslines (think "Flashlight") and Prince's boudoir funk. If you're a fan of Mayfield's, the opening strains of "I'm Da Man" will sound like the prodigal son knocking on the door, but even if you've never thought that "Freddy's Dead" crossed with "Knee Deep" would be a good idea or bought into the current wave of blaxploitation chic, *Back To Reality* has a lot of sweet sounds to offer, and even lugs some of Mayfield's social consciousness into the G-funk era. —Frank Mansfield

DATALOG: Released Nov. 21.

FILE UNDER: The return of the return of Superfly.

R.I.Y.L.: Curtis Mayfield, Dr. Dre, Warren G.

DAVID KILGOUR *First Steps And False Alarms* *Ajax*

David Kilgour's songs are the haiku of pop: tight, succinct epigrams that convey a single mood. Take "I Wait At Your Door": the complete lyrics are "I wait/At your door/One more time." To appreciate his minimalist approach, you couldn't ask for a better format than this collection of Kilgour's demos and other self-recorded bits. It includes some lovely versions of songs from his album *Here Come The Cars*, and some subtle tape-loop pieces that recall his early days in the Clean and the Great Unwashed. ("Have you seen my new tape machine?" he sighs at one point in a characteristic deadpan. "Now my life is complete.") In the context of the basement-tape aesthetic in which Kilgour has worked, some of the tracks of *First Steps* seem too refined to be called demos. One example is "Dirty Hallway," in which a tape loop creates the occasion for an exchange of guitar and piano licks. Other, guitar-only tracks have a more haphazard feel, with an effect pedal or two supplying the atmosphere. The whole collection is marked by the spacious, laid-back approach that made *Cars* so affecting. Neither unschooled first steps nor fruitless false alarms, these songs are more like calculated feints, hinting at Kilgour's multiple agendas. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Nov. 14.

FILE UNDER: Stripped-down sentimentalism.

R.I.Y.L.: This Kind Of Punishment, Cakekitchen, Big Star.

JACK LOGAN & LIQUOR CABINET *Mood Elevator* *Medium Cool-Restless*

Jack Logan, who spent his whole life recording his last record (*Bulk*, a terrific two-CD mooseload of songs), worked at a slightly speedier pace with a band he calls Liquor Cabinet to create *Mood Elevator*. Using a fixed band and recording space (*Bulk* was recorded in assorted bedrooms, bathrooms and studios over three decades with a cast of dozens), Logan delivers an equally curious bag of songs, twisting guitar rock with folk, darkened song themes and a poker-faced delivery. Logan never likes to write the same song twice, so *Mood Elevator* zips up and down in tone, like, well, a mood elevator. The grittier electric tunes stand out best on the first listen—"Unscathed" certainly sounds like he got something off his chest in a hurry. The acoustic tracks have got heart, but they might not blow you away right off the bat; Logan seems keener on fronting a clunky little rock band than being scribbled about in the press as some unpolished singer/songwriter gem, anyway. Perhaps the best thing about Logan is that he hasn't quite found a style yet, and it's good to hear some rock molds get broken (and ignored) for an hour. —Steve Ciabattini

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 16.

FILE UNDER: American scrap rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Grant Lee Buffalo, Paul Westerberg, Beck.

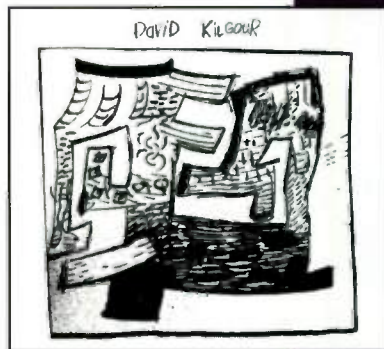
LOVE AS LAUGHTER *The Greks Bring Gifts* *K*

Love As Laughter isn't really a band, it's just a guy. Sam Jayne's last project, Lync, was an amazing post-core band with a small but fanatical following, and while those folks might think they know what to expect from Love As Laughter, dollars for doughnuts they don't. *The Greks Bring Gifts* runs the gamut from bizarre, feedback-laden sound-loops to catchy pop songs to synth-y new wave throwbacks to fuzzed-out ballads. Some songs are more well-developed than others, but what's most amazing about the record is that Jayne did it all by himself (save a few guest appearances on the live numbers). Because Jayne is a pop eccentric, his songs often run on pure peculiarity: The fish-eyed take-off of new wave and Wire, "Uninvited Trumpets," features Jayne repeatedly whining "Send them awa-ay" in a phony British accent, and on "Eeyore Crush It," his high-pitched "eeeeeeee-yawrrr, cr-cr-cr-cr-cr" chanting is supported by pounding chords. And, with their cryptic lyrics, even the accessible tunes are off-beat ("High noon and you're shootin' everybody/Yes, you certainly had it made with your microwave"). But eccentricity and genius are flip sides of the same coin, and Jayne's ability to get you caught up in his madcap world is brilliant. —Jenny Eliscu

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 19.

FILE UNDER: Weird, lo-fi, one-man pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Beck's *One Foot In The Grave*, Sentridoh, the weirder Folk Implosion stuff.



"We used to shoot [laser] cones into the crowd, but the government won't let you do that anymore." —Buck Dharma of Blue Oyster Cult, from an interview to promote *Workshop Of The Telescopes*, the group's retrospective compilation.



THE MAGIC PACER



White Room

THE MAGIC PACER *White Room* W.I.N.

Eventually, even guitars lose their power to shock and hurt. When that happens, it's time to find a new instrument, and Bobby Hecksher (formerly of cult fave Charles Brown Superstar) has turned to analog synthesizers, which are capable of some truly *nasty* intonations. Hecksher's keyboards slither from note to note, leaving a palpable slime trail behind them; their tendrils reach out for the resonant frequencies of the human body, then *buzz*. Listening to *White Room* is a physical experience: the keyboards' overtones and undertones make your skin and organs vibrate in weird ways, and that's not even mentioning the bits where they play *backwards*. The surprising part is that within all those creepy textures, there are some insanely perky, well-written new wave songs; whether Hecksher is chirping about lying on his deathbed or droning happily about somebody who "takes too much heroiiiiin," he knows that the way to make you come back for more is to get his tunes stuck in your head. "Queen Of Flames" goes so far as to recall "Tour De France"-era Kraftwerk and the filler instrumentals MTV used to play. There's a distinctly Californian intonation to some of this stuff, like the Beck parody "Downer Rock." More than that, though, there's the new wave spirit of pushing the sonic envelope—seeing just how many chemicals you can pour into a drink and still have it taste sweet and refreshing.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Released Dec. 4.

FILE UNDER: The sinister side of new wave.

R.I.Y.L.: Flying Lizards, Gary Numan, Six Finger Satellite.

MOJAVE 3 *Ask Me Tomorrow* 4AD

Leaders Rachel Goswell and Neil Halstead, formerly of the shoegazing, meandering band Slowdive, have not exactly taken radical steps with their latest band. *Ask Me Tomorrow* is a collection of nine mercurial, soporific guitar-pop tunes in a style less like what they used to do (fuzzy guitar, sleepy, vague lyrics) than what Drugstore and Mazzy Star have been doing these past few years. "Love Songs on the Radio" is a direct slice of pure Mazzy, from the countryish twang to Goswell's high, echoey vocals. Mojave 3 seem to labor under the impression that they're being innovative by trading in their effects pedal for a dobro, slide guitar, piano, and Halstead's sharply Americanized vocals. And certainly, while "After All" and "Pictures" evoke a sense of weary beauty, nearly all the songs feel belabored, dragging on far past any point of interest, and rarely contain anything to make them worthy of repeated listenings. Only on "Mercy," the album's final cut, does the trio break the pattern, with a relatively lively, psychedelic dirge that builds to a layered, desperate chant. It's a fine tune, but one most listeners will never hear, having fallen asleep a long time before.

—Rande Dawn

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 30.

FILE UNDER: Mopey sleep-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Mazzy Star, Drugstore, Pale Saints.

VAN MORRISON WITH GEORGIE FAME & FRIENDS *How Long Has This Been Going On* Verve

It's significant that the latest Van Morrison album bears not the name of his usual company, Polydor, but the imprint of Verve, the legendary jazz label of the '50s and '60s. Van the Man has made an album on the fly (less than a day of recording) of jazz and blues standards recorded "live" at Ronnie Scott's, London's preeminent jazz club. Hearing Van do a program of these songs, from big band-ish swing to piano jump blues, would be just about as good a night out as one could imagine. When he hit on *Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*, he was really bringing jazz vocalisms to rock ears, so now, in homage to his roots and influences, he's tipping his hat to the music that inspired him so long ago. We have "Early In The Morning" (originally a Louis Jordan tune), jumped up by a Pee Wee Ellis arrangement; Annie Ross (of Lambert Hendricks & Ross) lending guest vocals to "Centerpiece"; two songs demonstrating Morrison's debt to Mose Allison ("Don't Worry Bout A Thing" and "Your Mind Is On Vacation"); and Sinatra's "That's Life" and "The New Symphony Sid" (a tribute to the now-legendary MC at jazz shows on 57th St. during the Charlie Parker era) rounding out this swank and stylish program. How long has this been going on? Oh, since about the '40s or '50s. —James Lien

DATALOG: Released Jan. 9. Recorded May 3, 1995.

FILE UNDER: It's a beautiful night for a moondance.

R.I.Y.L.: Van Morrison, Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra.

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Sweden Shrimper

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Nine Black Poppies Emperor Jones

The Mountain Goats are not a band with instant star appeal. With eggshell vocals and choppy acoustic guitar, the typical Mountain Goats CD sounds more like a scratchy 78 played on the phonograph you found in your grandparents' attic. But each record is a volume of short stories. An *auteur* among songwriters, John Darnielle has quite a bit of the Classicist in him. From record to record, recurring themes and subjects emerge: Pastoral values, simple country life, watching the sky for omens, personal myth-making. Songs with titles like "Going To Utrecht," "Going To Queens" and "Going To Bolivia" reflect an Odysseus-like wanderlust that has become a staple of Mountain Goats records. Love songs are constructed like Catullus's poems, with Darnielle's witty lyrics maintaining an ironic distance from the glimpses of true feeling and passion. Always singing earnestly but never quite revealing himself, his work is best loved by those whose world-view is inextricably linked to their sense of humor. Unlike a Classic poet like Virgil, whose daily workload was to compose one line of his epic, the Mountain Goats are also tremendously prolific. The duo's two new records, while not churned out, both suffer from a second-hand feel. Chord progressions on a few tracks are recycled from previous songs; the lyrics are moving away from the humor of earlier records. Reaching from something new, the Mountain Goats stray from the path of conviction with frivolous songs like "I Know You've Come To Take My Toys Away" and lyrics that mention Bill Gates and Heaven 17 in the same line. Though time will be the true test of the distinction between genius and novelty, a few toss-aways appear to have been included in haste. New isn't always bad, however: born again as a bassist, Rachel Ware spoons Darnielle's simple guitar in an imprecise but comfortable fit. And there is plenty of old-style Mountain Goats to enjoy. On *Sweden*, "Deianara Crush" situates Darnielle as Hercules, literally burning for love, while "September 19 Triple X Love! Love!" has him chopping wood, singing "I will do as I am told/I will keep away the cold." Meanwhile, the title track of the *Nine Black Poppies* EP is heart-wrenchingly sad, with an emotional starkness rare on Mountain Goats records. More ambitious musically, the EP also offers Chris Knox-style keyboards on "Pure Money" and phoned-in (literally) vocals from Refrigerator singer Allan Callaci on "Lonesome Surprise." While the Mountain Goats don't win the blue ribbon this time around, both ventures are like bubblegum machines, dispensing a few nifty treats amidst the standard fare.

—Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: *Nine Black Poppies* released Nov. 1. *Sweden* released Nov. 15.

FILE UNDER: The Augustan Age unplugged.

R.I.Y.L.: Chris Knox, Lou Barlow, Phil Ochs.

MR. MIRAINGA Mr. Mirainga Way Cool-MCA

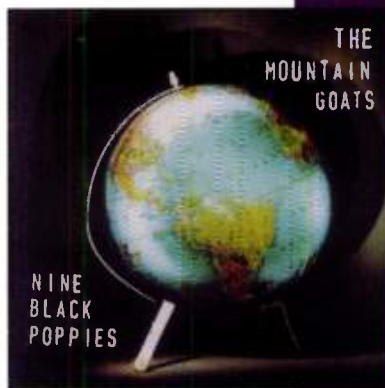
Aside from a brief lapse into flamenco, the only Latin influence you're likely to find in Mr. Mirainga is the case of tequila the band's label offered as a signing bonus. What you get on the band's self-titled debut is brash, sloppy, barfloor punk, played with who-gives-a-shit abandon. What proves that the spirit of rock 'n' roll festers—and there is some biographical evidence to warrant taking this literally—within this Arizona foursome is that these songs all seem as if they were composed in the twilight between hangover and inebriation, yet each is as catchy as other bands' versions of well-crafted pop. It's a neat trick, and what great bar bands, even obnoxious punk ones like this, are made of. "Baglady" (not the EBN-OZN song) suggests that the band could mount a successful career on the college rock circuit if only it weren't so enamored of its smug anti-hero stance. (The band's bio proudly proclaims "[Way Cool] made a big mistake by signing us.") That said, *Mr. Mirainga* is a ripe collection of big-guitar, fuck-you-for-caring anthems just hummable enough to really annoy you. And for Mr. Mirainga, this is the essence of punk rock.

—Frank Mansfield

DATALOG: Released Jan. 2.

FILE UNDER: Young, loud and snotty.

R.I.Y.L.: Superchunk, Clover, CIV.



Stream of unconsciousness,
part 2: "It's a sham sham cam
an' candy/Bought their melons
from Mandy/Hari cari bloody
mary/Sittin' next to the tooth
fairy/The pilot's a Rasta/He's
the anti-pasta/The weather's
good/Get ready for the
freak/You are about to go"

—from *Love/Hate's*
"Superfragilistic"



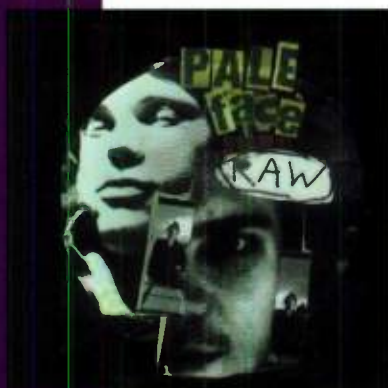

NEW BOMB TURKS *Pissing Out The Poison: Singles & Other Swill '90-'94* Crypt

If you're not yet in the NBT loop, we'd suggest getting yourself right quick to the record store to pick up a copy of the band's debut LP, *!!Destroy-Oh-Boy!!*—probably one of the best punk albums of the past decade. But *Pissing Out The Poison* is designed specifically for Turks fans on the graduate level, collecting the band's avalanche of sometimes hard-to-find singles and compilation appearances, plus "Spinnin' Clock," a track heretofore found only on the vinyl version of *Destroy*, which will convince you of their greatness after about 20 seconds, when vocalist Eric Davidson rockets into the chorus of "TICKTOCKTICKTOCKTICK TOCKTICKTAAAWK!" Here you'll also find the contents of seven 7" singles, four split 7"s, four compilation appearances, two demos and a Christmas song. And that's not all: The Turks have recorded with the likes of Billy Childish in his kitchen, and they've covered Modern Lovers, the Rolling Stones, Hawkwind and Radio Birdman. It's all as good as it sounds, and though *Poison* may not be an "album," it sure does keep everyone from being left out in the cold on rare releases—for now. Word is that the Turks just released a new single on Rave Records, featuring a cover of Death Of Samantha's "Sexual Dreaming." Back to the 7" racks...—Cheryl Botchick

DATALOG: Released Nov. 20.

FILE UNDER: Fuck Ritalin, let's rock!

R.I.Y.L.: The Pagans, Gaunt, early Ramones, not buying lots of 7" singles.


PALEFACE *Raw* Shimmy-Disc

Paleface was a seminal one-hit wonder of the anti-folk scene. His deadpan, hilarious 1990 single "Burn And Rob" foreshadowed the success of former buddy and much bigger one-hit wonder Beck. Now that the loser vogue has been pre-empted by the Cocktail Nation, Generation L, and seven other two-word phrases, Paleface's latest collection of embittered, sub-Dylan wailers bears no stigma of trendiness. Unfortunately, it bears no obvious hits either. Paleface has commented that he was sick of being asked to rewrite "Burn And Rob." But, like a good folk tune, that song worked because it was singable and quotable—qualities that the present songs lack. Because half the master tape for the album was lost, *Raw* is filled out with live audience tapes. These are filled with room noise, echo, and an air of desperate showmanship. Paleface makes kazoo noises, spews free verse about tabloid headlines, and dedicates an entire track to playing a "Butter Knife On Strings," to little positive effect. The balance of the record combines ham-handed songwriting and strumming with spastic harmonica, basically working the clichés. "I guess it's pretty pointless to ponder all this shit," he sings at one point. Talk about your foregone conclusions. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Nov. 22.

FILE UNDER: Anti-anti-folk.

R.I.Y.L.: Beck, John S. Hall, recent Daniel Johnston.

PASTELS *Mobile Safari* Up

They've been around since 1982, and they've influenced countless bands, both in and around Scotland. But the Pastels, whose low-key approach to their occasionally off-key garage pop is their calling card, are barely recognized across the Atlantic. They're the Anglo Sonic Youth, counting among their disciples the Jesus and Mary Chain and Galaxie 500, but they're even more obscure than the Vaselines (whom they also influenced). But thanks to *Mobile Safari*, fans of low-fi pop in America should start to take notice. Keeping their gee-whiz garage attitude intact, the Pastels have included songs like "Mandarin" and "Exploration Team," shifting, awkward tunes that place heavy emphasis on a Luna-esque guitar jangle, yet sound almost too clever. Getting a grasp on their vocal stylings can be a chore as well—drummer Katrina Mitchell tends to alternate between polished Juliana Hatfield crooning and falling completely out of tune ("Token Collection"), while Stephen Pastel's drone, melancholic gloom contrasts sharply with otherwise cheery, wandering songs like "Classic Line-Up." Much of *Safari* sounds like a vinyl record left out too long in the heat. Nonetheless, that the Pastels can write five albums and still sound like they just started playing together is either extremely contrived or hilariously admirable, and after listening to *Safari*, the tendency is to give them the benefit of the doubt. —Randee Dawn

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 16.

FILE UNDER: Seminal noisy Scot-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Velvet Underground, Vaselines, Nick Cave.



MARTIN REV See Me Ridin' ROIR

When he started out in Suicide, Martin Rev played a broken Farfisa that the group couldn't afford to fix. This is notable because Rev supplied, save for Alan Vega's bluesy keening, the group's every sound. Over the years, his choice of instruments, and their various states of repair, has improved—slightly. With *See Me Ridin'*, Rev gently layers a passel of classic pop melodies over his minimal, no-tech electronics. The songs—each as innocent as a communion dress—are as shockingly out-of-place in the context of his former band's scorching career as Suicide's hall-raking anthems were to the mid-'70s. Rev's bathroom crooner voice, the nursery rhyme melodies and very synthesized electronic noises are a strangely sweet (and sweetly strange) combination, like Rev is an eccentric uncle humming twisted lullabies. It is, I suspect, a very different listening experience for someone who isn't aware of Rev as an electronic music progenitor. (The seminal nature of any late, great band is always arguable, but suffice it to say that as Rev used electronic keyboards in a way that no one else had before, and that way eventually turned into the pop of Gary Numan, Soft Cell and others.) Without the lingering memory of Suicide's howls and shrieks, this music may seem much more strange than sweet; its odd tone, like Phillip Glass playing Frankie and Annette beach-blanket ballads, may register not as an unexpected pleasure, but simply unsettling. —Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Released Dec. 15.

FILE UNDER: Minimalist pop ditties.

R.I.Y.L.: Magnetic Fields, Suicide, Vince Clarke-era Depeche Mode.

SISTA MONICA Get Out Of My Way Thunderbird

MARVA WRIGHT Marva-lous Mardi Gras

When it comes to soul shouting sisters, Marva Wright and Monica Parker are peas in a pod—both are undeservedly unknown blues belters rooted in gospel tradition who can sing a can of paint off a ladder at a hundred yards. And almost simultaneously, both (Marva in New Orleans, Monica in California) have released jubilant, independent records long on classic covers, backed by crack blues and soul bands that make them both about as fun as a modern blues record can get. Monica's funky version of James Brown's "It's A New Day" (complete with monologue in the beginning—"Fellas! Things done got too far gone... You got to let the girls know what you want them to do for you! It's getting to be a drag! A woman can't do nothing no more! Got to do something! Can I tell 'em? I said, can I tell 'em?") shows that this Sista isn't about to let anything stand in her way, but it also shows that Monica and her band know their soul and blues from the inside out. Most importantly, for women in the world of blues, Monica and Marva present a picture of over-the-top strength and sass that is guaranteed to raise the roof. Until someone gets them on a stage together in a cutting contest, the battle for #2 Soul Sister after Aretha Franklin remains too close to call. —James Lien

DATALOG: Released Oct. 24 (Sista Monica), Sep. 12 (Wright).

FILE UNDER: Soulful blues funk.

R.I.Y.L.: Koko Taylor, Aretha Franklin, Buddy Guy.

16 HORSEPOWER Sackcloth 'N' Ashes A&M

The various incarnations of Palace made the world safe for literate college types to admit they liked hillbilly music, but they never figured on 16 Horsepower, a strange, wondrous Denver-based trio whose full-length debut *Sackcloth 'N' Ashes* sounds like a Depression band fronted by Robert Plant. Lead singer David Eugene Edwards has a keening, creepy voice, an impeccable sense of drama, and a lyrical bent for vaguely preachy campfire morality tales about sin and redemption. There seems something out of place about 16 Horsepower, which has a fondness for obscure instruments like the stand-up acoustic bass and the bandoneon, an early-20th-century accordion, and a drummer from France named Jean-Yves. With its chilling, desolate imagery and Edwards' almost atonal voice, the record ultimately plays out like a country homage to every self-flagellating singer-songwriter that ever lived, from Nick Drake to Ian Curtis. *Sackcloth 'N' Ashes* is an overtly grim and oppressive record: On tracks like "Red Neck Reel," the members of 16 Horsepower seem more like banjo-toting extras from the sequel to *Deliverance* than the mainstream success they could become, but the record is already a step up from the band's debut EP, and there's nothing wrong with it that experience won't fix. —Allison Stewart

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 6. First single "Black Soul Choir."

FILE UNDER: Creepy and exotic campfire folk.

R.I.Y.L.: Gun Club, Palace, Grant Lee Buffalo.



"If you see people start to slam into each other and wrestle while you're onstage, it's because you stink." —David Lee Roth, on moshing.



**SOUL-JUNK 1952 Homestead**

Soul-Junk is what happened when Glen from Trumans Water found God. Named after various postwar years and released on a mix of formats, its records consist of Biblical passages and other food for the soul arranged in an inimitable, shambling, rock-funk-folk idiom. With a CD docking in at over 70 minutes, plus a companion LP with the same title but entirely different contents, this latest release can fairly be called the Soul-Junk catechism. It is the band's most diverse and musically adventurous record yet, with each item of good news embodied in a brief song and given a bass-driven rhythm to match. "In Your Sanctuary" expresses the awesomeness of God's presence to a lead-heavy, Sabbath groove. The yodeling rap "Sweet To My Soul" is an extended shout-out to Jesus that would please the hearts of lapsed Run-DMC fans. Even jazz-flavored instrumentals like "In The Sea Through Raincoats" seem divinely inspired in their sheer flipped-outness. With the homemade feel of early Beastie Boys and the twisted instrumental ingenuity of Trumans Water, Soul-Junk has got to be the exact definition of a joyful noise. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Dec. 1.

FILE UNDER: Inspirational punk.

R.I.Y.L.: Trumans Water, Beastie Boys, Job's Daughters, Raincoats.

**SPARE SNARE Spare Snare Prospective**

Scots must project some sort of transcendent essence that breeds tolerance for cultural exports that would be ridiculous coming from any other country (kilts, bagpipes). Banking on this Scottish quotient, the Dundee quartet Spare Snare offers the rest of the world its first full-length album, which includes reworked versions of the band's earlier singles together with new material. The band shows itself in its hot-and-cold experimental phases, drastically changing the arrangements of the older songs. The opening version of "Thorns" (the third Spare Snare has released) is a country-blues number whose prairie dog twang falls flat, while the record-closing (fourth) version, sped up to a more engaging double-time, is more indicative of the band's true element. At its best, Spare Snare exudes the adolescent energy of the early Undertones, with off-key keyboards adding a twist of new wave. On "Shine On," singer Jan Burnett (who recorded the band's first few singles at home by himself) updates the Pavement drone with shards of emotion, while synth and wistful guitar vie for sovereignty. Keep a close eye on this band: So long as its penchant for experimentation doesn't lead too far from the pop conventions that it handles so well, Spare Snare promises great, and more importantly, Scottish things. —Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Released Dec. 4. Originally released in the U.K. as *Live At Home*.

FILE UNDER: Scottish invasion.

R.I.Y.L.: Undertones, Pavement, Half Japanese.

**SPEED THE PLOUGH Marina ESD**

Underneath the breathless rush of the Feelies was a taste for pastoral prettiness that's bloomed in Speed The Plough. Feelies bassist Brenda Sauter is the main singer in this nine-piece band (now on its fourth album), and her old bandmate Stanley Demeski helps out on percussion, as well. But you caught that number: nine. What that means isn't the pile-up racket it suggests, but a gentle accumulation of sounds: everyone in the group has the luxury of playing very small, lovely, precise parts, and letting each song's textures grow incrementally. Speed The Plough's main songwriter, the avuncular-looking John Baumgartner, is one of its two keyboardists, and the group's signature instrumentalist is Toni Paruta, who plays woodwinds—we're talking flute bridges between songs, clarinet accents, that kind of thing. The result is quiet and very pretty ("Written Each Day" and "Bayswater Lane" are exceptionally lovely), but it's also quick and deep, with layers upon layers of instrumental detail tinting the songs they flow over. Pretty doesn't mean simple: *Marina* rewards repeated listening with musical and lyrical density that unfolds like the petals of a rose. —Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Released Dec. 5. Sauter also plays in *Wild Carnation*.

FILE UNDER: Pastoral skitter-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Feelies, Indigo Girls, Wedding Present.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN *The Ghost Of Tom Joad* Columbia

First of all, let's recap the most important salient point in any discussion of Bruce Springsteen: "Born In The USA" was a *sarcastic* song, the lead character was a total loser, and most of the yahoos bellowing along in Giants Stadium on the *Live 1975-85* box set never got it at all. If you follow Springsteen's career pattern closely, you find that after every major commercial stride, even after career milestones like *Born To Run*, *The River* or *Born In The USA*, he turns around and does something "darker" and overtly less mainstream, like *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, *Nebraska* or *Tunnel Of Love*. It's either that every time he starts to get too big, he tries to turn and run the other way, or, more likely, he simply uses the freedom of success to flex his muscles and do what he wants to do, which means bypassing more commercial music to create a work of substance. The all-acoustic *Nebraska* is the album that's often cited as a favorite by people who don't consider themselves his fans, and *The Ghost Of Tom Joad* (coming after his immensely successful "Streets Of Philadelphia," remember) could well be a companion piece to that stark and desolate album of 1982. Since Springsteen moved to Los Angeles, his music has taken on a decidedly West Coast thematic sprawl: Almost half of the songs here deal with issues such as immigration, drug smuggling and hoboing; these are songs full of wars, murders, dead-end jobs, drifters, hard luck stories, and people who for whatever reason just can't seem to win, or even just keep it together. At its best it's brilliant, as in "Youngstown," where a steelworker decides he'd rather go to hell than heaven because, given his usual working conditions, he'd feel more at home amidst the fire, sparks and smoke. Portions of *Tom Joad* strive to reach the land of Woody Guthrie, where one man surveys the American wasteland and paints vivid and resonant pictures of its most down-and-out inhabitants. Back in high school, there were some conspiracy theorists who said that if you looked at where his hand was in the photo, you'd see that Bruce was actually *pissing* on the flag on the cover of *Born In The USA*; while that may be a flight of fancy, there's certainly a little bit of that attitude to be found in the forlorn, forsaken and immensely critical landscape that Springsteen paints on *The Ghost Of Tom Joad*. —James Lien

DATALOG: Released Nov. 27.

FILE UNDER: American icon surveys our decaying land.

R.I.Y.L.: *Nebraska*, Woody Guthrie.

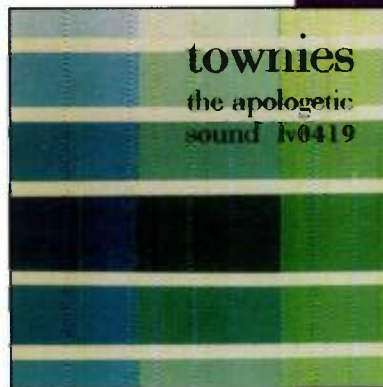

TOWNIES *The Apologetic Sound* Little Voice

Townies are not a band to get excited about. They will not make you jump out of your chair or make your pulse race. *Au contraire*; Townies are like pennies on your eyelids, or a stiff dose of lithium. *The Apologetic Sound*, the second long-player by this Washington, DC, trio, is so dreamy that you should definitely avoid listening to it while operating heavy machinery. These songs are beautiful because they lull you into an overwhelming state of calm; Townies' delivery is tender and soothing while communicating a sadness that hangs like a dark cloud. Dulcet guitar lines, supported by simple, even percussion, float through the songs like rings of smoke that never lose their shape. Michael Kentoff's twangy voice is *really* laid back; though his inflection isn't all that varied, his phrasing certainly is, and his style is surprisingly emotive. Maybe it's because the band operates in low gear so often that every bit of *umph* feels like an emotional deluge. The lyrics are damn depressing, and Kentoff's tone of resignation is slightly unsettling, but it's all part of the formula, and it comes together quite nicely. —Jenny Eliscu

DATALOG: Released Nov. 7.

FILE UNDER: Dream rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Seam, Rex, Idaho.



One Of These Things Is Not Like The Others: "(L-R) at the 'Motown Legends Luncheon' are Candice Bond (Motown Vice President of Catalog Development), Ed Townsend (Marvin Gaye's producer), Martha Reeves (Vandellas), Sidney Juston (Miracles), Claudette Robinson (Miracles), Ali Ollie Woodson (Temptations), Lois Reeves (Vandellas), Theo Peoples (Temptations), Delphine Reeves (Vandellas), Otis Williams (Temptations), Ron Tyson (Temptations) and O.J. Simpson defense attorney Carl Douglas." —caption from Motown publicity photo

UI Unlike—Remixes Vol. 1 *Lunamoth*

There are a handful of rock-based bands that have gotten the smart idea of using the ideas of dub—turning music inside-out in the mix to discover its hidden rhythms—without the genre constraints of the reggae forms in which those ideas were developed. To that short but trailblazing list (Tackhead, Tortoise, Dub Narcotic Sound System and probably not more than a half-dozen others), add the New York trio Ui. The band's first record, the mostly instrumental, vinyl-only *2-Sided EP*, tweaked rock's sonic conventions by mostly eschewing guitars in favor of a bass-bass-drum gut-punch, but *Unlike* takes two of those songs (and two new ones) into outer space. You have to do A/B comparisons of the remixes with the originals to determine that, in fact, they're based on the same recordings. One version of "Ring" takes its loping rhythm and builds on it with ticking overtones hidden somewhere in the band's recording; another removes the rhythm almost completely, but uses other elements to imply its presence; a third changes the tempo and preserves only timbres of sounds that were pretty deep in the mix to begin with. As a bonus, *Unlike* is great for testing the bass response of your speakers; here's hoping that the blown-out sound of the album's ultra-low intro is supposed to sound like that.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Released Dec. 1. A new album, *Sidelong*, will follow in February.

FILE UNDER: The new school of dub.

R.I.Y.L.: Tortoise, *Macro Dub Infection*, Gastr Del Sol, Orbital.

UNUN Super Shiny Dreams *Bad Taste*

If The Primitives' "Crash" gave you a taste of how perfect a pop song could be, and Ace Of Base put the taste back in your mouth, then the domestic debut of Icelandic combo Unun is what you have been waiting for all these desperate, Elastica-filled days. Just like your favorite sugared cereal, what it says on the box is exactly what's inside: 14 shiny, dreamy, electric, handclap-happy, hook-a-minute tunes. The opener, "First Aid," begins with a verse about mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and only gets cuter from there, peaking as singer Heida coos "No no no/YES! YES! YES!" "I See Red" crosshatches generic Britpop guitar lines with surprising flair, topped only by the cavalcade of vintage-'80s synth effects on "Kung Fu Blue"—a valentine to martial-arts TV tough guys. Even essentially dull tracks like "Far" and "Dead And Breakfast" become hummable as soon as the ooh-ooh choruses come along. So does the band's name actually mean something in Icelandic? Couldn't say, but judging by the song "Unun," it hardly seems to matter what; it's just a bit of nonsense that's fun to sing along with.

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Nov. 15.

FILE UNDER: Unsinkable bubblepop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Primitives, Blur, the Buggles.

VICTORIA WILLIAMS This Moment In Toronto *Mammoth-Atlantic*

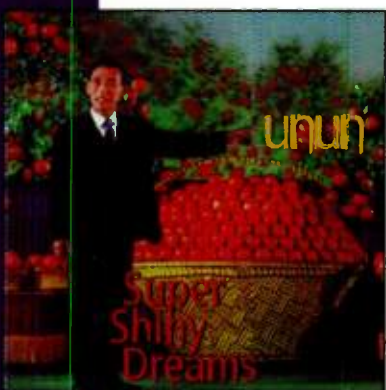
As producers and handlers place blow-dried pop stars in "intimate" settings for "stripped-down" performances, it's a joy to hear a show where audience and performer merge without cues. On this recording from Victoria Williams's first headlining tour, the audience applauds boisterously, chuckles warmly at Williams's self-deprecating patter, and even calls out a few requests. After several glowing albums of hard-to-pigeonhole country-pop, she has earned the appreciation. While 1993's *Sweet Relief* tribute album presented Williams as a songwriter of previously untapped depth, *This Moment In Toronto* serves as a compilation of her own performances and her impressive body of work; polished pop like "Frying Pan," Okie trifles like "Polish These Shoes," and dark backwater tales like the vivid "Crazy Mary." Williams's little-girl voice and Flannery O'Connor-esque lyrics might be an obstacle to attaining a wider following. But her wit, so underrated in most press accounts of the singer, comes through in every gesture—from the sharp lyrics of "Summer Of Drugs," a sly baby-bust commentary on baby-boomers, to the impromptu song she makes up when her dog Molly wanders on stage. In a closing suite of old standards like "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" and "Imagination," Williams is under no delusions that she'll erase the memory of Billie Holiday, but she hugs these songs with her plaintive croon and infectious grace.

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Nov. 7.

FILE UNDER: Curl up around the footlights.

R.I.Y.L.: Iris DeMent, Suzanne Vega, Lucinda Williams.



On the Verge

UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

compiled by Lydia Anderson

Continental Drifters

From New Orleans way come the Continental Drifters, a down-to-earth band full of soul. They've got no fewer than five significant songwriters, including Peter Holsapple (ex-dBs and fifth R.E.M. member on the *Green* tour), Vicki Peterson (formerly of the Bangles) and Suzy Cowsill, who at the age of seven was vocalist for the '70s bubblegum group the Cowsills. The group coalesced almost by accident, as five friendly musicians who all knew one another slowly realized they were right for each other: "We had played together in various different incarnations, but it took a long time for us to figure out that what we could do together was better than all our other bands we were in," Holsapple muses in his distinctly Southern accent. "But eventually it just became apparent what we had." The group has recently been sighted drifting nationally, touring the country more frequently, including opening shows for Hootie & The Blowfish.

—James Lien



PHOTO BY MARINA CHAVEZ

ruby

Lesley Rankine was the head-shaven screamer at the helm of Brit noise-mongers Silverfish (she coined the T-shirt slogan "LIPS TITS HIPS POWER"), but with her new band, ruby, she's left the stylistic trappings of razor-edged rock in favor of a trip-hop-informed, more pop-savvy palette. Grinding her teeth on the same grit, Rankine still makes music that writhes and screams with frustration and anger, but this time she threads her songs with swaggering melodies and assembles them over hip-hoppy rhythms. On the moody "Paraffin," the first single off ruby's debut album *Salt Peter* (due out in the U.S. in March on Creation-WORK), scratchy, Tricky-like rhythms are the backdrop for her sweet, confident vocals—lines like "To make him stay, trap him in my flower bed and/Then I'll feed him with my paraffin" come out with PJ Harvey-like authority. Other tracks are even poppier ("Tiny Meat") or more dense and atmospheric ("Pine"), but they all suck you in with their magnetic pull. (LA)



PHOTO BY JOSEPH GUTICE

Dirt Merchants

Strange but true—like Limblifter (see below), Dirt Merchants also began as a collaboration between two brothers. Coincidence? Well, yeah, but strange nonetheless. Mike and John Malone formed the band in March of 1992 and quickly rounded out the group with the addition of bassist Alex Kisch and singer Maria Christopher. While the Malone brothers deserve kudos for the solid foundation they provide, it's Christopher's presence that gives the songs their spice. Her style ranges from sweet chirping to angry growling, alternately sounding like Courtney Love, Kim Gordon, Kim Deal and Kristin Hersch. After winning WBCN's Rock 'N' Roll Rumble in the summer of '94, the band released its debut, *Scarified*, last year

on Zero Hour. The band's new label, Epic, reissued the record in January.

—Jenny Eliscu



PHOTO BY DETMAR

Limblifter

Every band should be as lucky as Limblifter. The Calgary band hasn't spent years toiling over its songs or plying its trade all over town or any of that blood, sweat and tears stuff. Ryan and Kurt Dahle, the two founding members, had played in bands together for years but, with Limblifter, they were just kind of messing around. With the help of bassist Ian Somers, the band recorded a 4-track demo that quickly became a hot item in its hometown, and when the band couldn't keep up with the demand for copies of its tape, it hit the studio to record its self-titled full-length (Mercury). But the band's overnight success is hardly surprising once you've heard its songs: They're built on solid, bouncy tempos, carried by simple, tuneful vocal melodies, and catchy as all hell. The Dahle brothers may not have been prepared for the warm reception they've received, but they should get used to the limelight, because it's not about to fade yet.

—Jenny Eliscu

FLASHBACK

ROOTS • REISSUES • RETRO

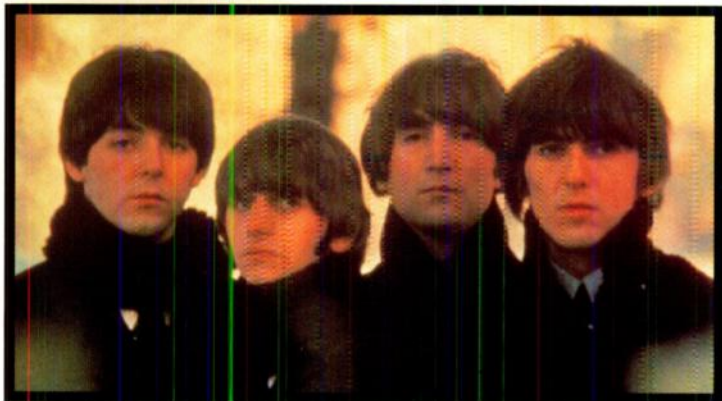
by James Lien

BEATLE JUICE

By now everybody's listening to *The Beatles Anthology*. Please don't think I'm being grouchy. The thought of all these previously unreleased tracks from the vaults is pretty breathtaking, and it's a lot of fun, but at some point you have to admit that your life isn't really all that changed after hearing Paul McCartney count in that extra intro, or hearing an electric guitar solo instead of a piano. Maybe the best way to celebrate and appreciate the Beatles now is to go back and examine what it was that inspired them to make such amazing music in the first place: American soul, rockabilly and early rock 'n' roll. Especially in their early days, the Fabs were astute scholars of rare and obscure R&B, soul and girl-group sounds from across the ocean. Interestingly enough, without any direct connection to the estimated \$30 million used to market the Beatles' return, a lot of this stuff is also just now coming out on CD; a lot of the truly influential stuff that inspired the Beatles still has yet to emerge, but there's some cool stuff that sounds a lot like what the Beatles were listening to.

Let's start with **RAY CHARLES**. Brother Ray was a huge influence on the savage young Beatles. They used to cover "What'd I Say" and "Hallelujah, I Love Her So" (though on the legendary *Live At The Star Club In Hamburg* LP, the latter was reputedly sung not by John or Paul but by a boisterous waiter named Horst Öber). Check out the box set of his complete Atlantic singles from a few years ago to hear some seminal R&B material. Another singer who influenced the Beatles (especially John) was the great **ARTHUR ALEXANDER** (who wrote "Anna" and "You Better Move On"). Razor & Tie did the world a service by putting out *The Ultimate Arthur Alexander* a couple of years ago—it's truly wonderful stuff that perfectly captures the innocent feeling of early Beatles songs that take two or three minutes to say "I love you" over and over.

Motown was the motherlode of most of the Beatles' early influences after Elvis, Buddy Holly, Little Richard and Ray. In particular, the Beatles were among the first to figure out the genius idea of recording cover versions of songs by girl groups (which had a predominantly female audience) and reversing the pronouns. It's possible that the innocence and sensitive, emotional nature of those songs (originally written by guys for girls to sing) were part of what made them seem so fabulous and dreamy to teenage girls at the time. Motown mostly just reissues the hits: While the Beatles most probably did spend many hours quarantined in their hotel rooms while besieged by fans, dancing around to "Dancing In The Street," it was likely the obscure



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tracks and B-sides that influenced them most. A compilation of singles and rare tracks would no doubt sell admirably well, but we're left with just *Best Of* from Martha & The Vandellas. The 1963 and 1964 volumes of their *The Sound Of Young America* compilation series are pretty insightful, too.

Some other labels that probably spun on Beatle hi-fis in Liverpool and London were home to some of the legendary New Orleans musicians. EMI has just released *Crecent City Soul*, a wonderful two-disc compilation of essential New Orleans R&B from the '50s to the early '70s, from labels like Specialty, Aladdin, Minit and Imperial. Loma Records, out in California, wasn't nearly as famous as Motown, but the small soul label released some really wonderful stuff in the mid- to late '60s. Warner Archives has just released *The Loma Records Story*—check the backbeat in Ike & Tina Turner's "Finger Poppin'" to hear what happened when the people who influenced the Beatles turned it around and were influenced by them. (Special note to James Brown watchers: check out the several cuts which feature the Famous Flames recording under different names.)

He's hopelessly obscure, but one of the greatest conduits from American rock and roll to Beatle music was Billings, Montana's **CHAN ROMERO**. How "Hippy Hippy Shake," a regional hit single by this part-Hispanic, part Native American rockabilly cat, made it into the hands of the Fab Four is anybody's guess, but the song became an essential anthem of the Liverpool Beat scene, covered numerous times by virtually every beat combo, including our Liverpool legends, who did it for the BBC. Romero's original and other examples of his Latino-flavored rock 'n' roll are available on *Hippy Hippy Shake* from the mighty indie Del Fi Records. Of course, the ultimate insight into the songs that influenced the Beatles is Rhino's *Beatle Originals* compilation from the mid-'80s, featuring the original versions of songs the Fabs covered, including "Twist & Shout," "Kansas City" and a host of others.

IN THE BINS

The Who's *Who's Next* reissue has finally come out, including bonus tracks from Pete Townshend's abandoned *Lifeforce* project, but the most awesome bonus track is a non-*Lifeforce* cover of the Holland-Dozier-Holland classic "Baby Don't Do It," with spectacular performances by Roger Daltrey and Keith Moon...If you want to hear the real roots of the Palace Brothers, Yazoo's two volumes of *The Music Of Kentucky: Early American Rural Classics 1927-37* are the perfect companions to any intensive Palace listening session. These grainy, depression-era recordings of sad little fiddle and banjo laments are full of more tales of woe and hard-times lamentations than even Will Oldham's imagination can conjure. They aren't country, blues or honky-tonk—we reckon that's why they just call 'em rural...In the '60s and '70s, the

American Folk Blues Festival was a traveling caravan of blues artists who toured each year around Europe, presented by German promoters and blues fans Fritz Rau and Horst Lippman. (Lippman, in particular, was an interesting case. He attempted to edit a fanzine about jazz aimed at German soldiers in WWII; when the Furher declared American jazz verboten, Lippman was imprisoned, released and spent the remaining months of the war hiding out in a friend's cellar.) The sometimes-brilliant-sometimes-not Evidence label has just released a whopping five-CD box set of tracks recorded at various Festivals from '62 to '65. These tracks, almost all with Willie Dixon on bass, present such huge names as Memphis Slim, T-Bone Walker, Buddy Guy, Mississippi Fred McDowell, John Lee Hooker and Lightnin' Hopkins in peak form.

METAL

BY JENNI GLENN

PARADISE LOST

Draconian Times

(Music For Nations-Relativity)



European goth-gloom-metal grinder Paradise Lost weaves an immense, multifarious tapestry of vibrant sound on its masterful sixth album, *Draconian Times*. After seven years of fine-tuning, Paradise Lost has successfully combined all of its core elements into a cohesive, powerful sound. After spearheading the European goth-doom movement with the billowing orchestral passages and haunting vocal torment of its first two releases—1990's *Lost Paradise* and 1991's *Gothic*—Paradise Lost ignited a fire under its predominantly slow, evil churn with the addition of sharp, fast-driving fretwork, mesmerizing grooves and a huge heavy-metal attitude. Although the band has enjoyed most of its success overseas, *Draconian Times* is sure to garner some long-overdue attention here in the States. A rippling, expansive musical masterpiece, *Draconian Times* sees Paradise Lost in top form, as each song breathes and thrives in a world all its own. "Enchantment" sparkles with fleeting instrumental passages, dark, brooding gothic overtones and groove-oriented, catchy choruses, while "Once Solemn" spirals down a much faster, chunkier, riff-laden route showered with fiery guitar licks, gritty vocal howls and throbbing bass rhythms. Whatever your pleasure—soft and glistening, or hard and feverish—you are destined to find your musical paradise within the hallowed passages of *Draconian Times*.



RIFFS

Sweden's **AT THE GATES** has released its fourth extreme music masterpiece, *Slaughter Of The Soul* (Earache). Exploding with scratchy, death-like growls and emblazoned with scorching grindcore riffs, *Slaughter Of Soul* will satisfy the raging beast within the soul of all extreme music lovers... Speaking of brutal, check out **NAPALM DEATH**'s newest releases: the *Greed Killing* mini-LP and *Diatribes* full-length album. This band certainly hasn't forgotten the meaning of the word "heavy"... Also noteworthy is futuristic grind-thrash rock outfit **VOIVOD**'s latest and seventh release, *Negatron* (Mausoleum), which sees technological wizardry pitted against aggressive, cosmic intensity and dense, chugging rhythms colliding head-on with complex melodies. An experience not to be missed, the enhanced *Negatron* CD also features a special bonus multi-media track (compatible with both Macintosh and Windows), which includes the video for "Insect," interview footage with the band, a special performance of the band in its rehearsal studio, hand-drawn panels, storyboards from the video and all the lyrics to every song on the CD... Although rumors were vehemently denied that **CANNIBAL CORPSE** vocalist Chris Barnes was leaving the band when he began recording with **OBITUARY** guitarist Allen West for his "side project" **SIX FEET UNDER**, it was recently announced that "due to musical differences between Chris and the rest of Cannibal Corpse," Barnes will no longer be fronting the blood-dripping band. Barnes will apparently make Six Feet Under his permanent new home, and the band will enter the studio this summer to record its sophomore album. In the meantime, Cannibal Corpse sans Barnes will forge on, and the remaining bandmembers are currently working on material for their next album, tentatively titled *Created To Kill*. Although at press time they were still seeking a replacement for Barnes, they are confident that the new album will be released by this April.

WE'RE NOT WORTHY: As regular readers may have noticed, Jenni Glenn and Ian Christe alternate months writing this column. December's column, written by Jenni, was accidentally credited to Ian. We apologize to both of our resident metalheads, and beg for mercy like the dogs we are. —eds.

World Radio History



- 1 **ANTHRAX**
Stomp 442
Elektra-EEG
- 2 **GWAR**
Rag Na Rok
Metal Blade
- 3 **LIFE OF AGONY**
Ugly
Roadrunner
- 4 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Ozzmosis
Epic
- 5 **G/I/Z/R**
Plastic Planet
TVT
- 6 **DEFTONES**
Adrenaline
Maverick-WB
- 7 **DOWN**
Nola
EastWest-EEG
- 8 **NAILBOMB**
Proud To Commit Commercial Suicide
Roadrunner
- 9 **ALICE IN CHAINS**
Alice In Chains
Columbia-CRG
- 10 **SLAYER**
Live Intrusion
American
- 11 **WICKER MAN**
Wicker Man
Hollywood
- 12 **MARILYN MANSON**
Smells Like Children (EP)
Nothing-Interscope
- 13 **SIX FEET UNDER**
Haunted
Metal Blade
- 14 **IRON MAIDEN**
The X Factor
CMC
- 15 **CATHEDRAL**
The Carnival Bizarre
Earache
- 16 **D.R.I.**
Full Speed Ahead
Rotten
- 17 **INTO ANOTHER**
Seamless
Hollywood
- 18 **SAVATAGE**
Dead Winter Dead
Atlantic
- 19 **SMASHING PUMPKINS**
Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness
Virgin
- 20 **SHELTER**
Mantra
Supersoul-Roadrunner
- 21 **DISMEMBER**
Massive Killing Capacity
Nuclear Blast
- 22 **SKUNK ANANSIE**
Paranoid & Sunburnt
Epic
- 23 **NATURE**
Nature
Zoo
- 24 **FEAR FACTORY**
Demanufacture
Roadrunner
- 25 **KORN**
Korn
Immortal-Epic

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



MELT-BANANA

"It's In The Pillcase"

Nux Organization-Skin Graft

The Japanese quartet Melt-Banana is about the most hyperactive, precise band anywhere. Singer Yasuko O. has a vocal range of about one and a half notes, pitched somewhere in the vicinity of "squeal"; she also writes phenomenal (English) lyrics, with phrasings that a native speaker of English would never think of ("Freeze Fake is melting down/Locked Lie is getting out of there"). Down at the other end of the sonic spectrum, bassist Rika tends to batter all four of her strings at one time. Add a guitarist who relies on shrieking slide effects more than notes and a drummer who can keep up with the other three (honestly, you wouldn't want him to do more), speed it all up to about a million beats per second, and you see why Mr. Bungle invited Melt-Banana to open for them on their recent American tour (and, subsequently, got blown away). "It's In The Pillcase" appears to concern some kind of spy story (it's always hard to tell with Yasuko: the words "tipoff" and "headless" keep turning up). The real treat on this single, though, is "Picnic In Panic," seemingly about a family outing gone astray. Built on a jittering rhythm screeched by Yasuko and echoed by randomly spattering high-end guitar, it twitches and slams like a seizure.

Whenever New Zealanders Shayne Carter (formerly of Straitjacket Fits) and Peter Jefferies record together—every three or four years, on the average—they make a particularly great single. This time, it's under the name of Carter's new "me and whoever else is around" band, **DIMMER**—a single co-released by Sub Pop and Flying Nun. "Crystalator" is a tremendous instrumental with a swooping, oscillating guitar part that plays against a rhythmic drone by drummer Jefferies and bassist Lou Allison. The other side is a vocal song, "Dawn's Coming In," whose melody is pure Carter but whose crisp, restrained sonics owe more to Jefferies.

Most of the people who buy the *Instress Vol. 2* split single (Road Cone) will probably be getting it for side 2, "Just Tell Her That I Really Like Her," an instrumental by **THURSTON MOORE** (with Tim Foljahn and Steve Shelley). That's fine—that's what Trojan horses are for. The other side is **LOREN MAZZACANE CONNORS'** extraordinary four-part electric guitar improvisation "Deirdre of the Sorrows," an especially small, especially beautiful piece in a long career of small, beautiful pieces. The *Instress* series is an ongoing project of split singles by solo artists; the other new one is by California (Aaron Day of Sone) and Capital Eye (Sean Byrne of Bugskull). They're all worth getting.

Finally, if your attention span is so short that even a 7" single is too much to handle, may we suggest the prolific, British band **BOYRACER's** "West Riding House" single (Zero Hour)—a five-inch vinyl record. They get points for getting where they're going by the shortest path: the charming, Wedding Present-ish A-side runs all of 43 seconds. And they get lots of points for covering "Boyfriends," by the unjustly obscure Bellingham, Washington band Six Cents And Natalie, on the flip (in another 99 seconds), even if they do prove that there can be such a thing as too much feedback.

SINGLES

BY DOUGLAS WOLK

The "what the hell was that?!" prize of the month goes to **LIL BUNNIES**, a Sacramento, California group whose brilliant self-titled debut EP (Moo-La-La) has six songs about, uh, being cute little bunnies—done in hyper-distorted, screaming old-school punk style (with the aid of a toy keyboard). Sample song titles: "Carrot Juice Stomp," "Hop, Fight & Fuck." Sample lyrics: "We're the Lil Bunnies!//And you think it's funny!//But it's not!//FUCK YOU!" Sample band member name: The Vulvateen Rabbit. Obvious influence: Cleveland proto-punk band The Electric Eels, whose "Bunnies" (of course) is covered here. Best rumor: Several other Sacramento bands are already covering "Carrot Belly Bunny Rock." You absolutely have to hear it to believe it.

The Swiss duo **SPORTSGUITAR** has returned with a new single, "He's So Funny" (Derivative). The band's specialty is mixing extremes: profundity and randomness, composition and what-the-hell experimentation. "He's So Funny" sputters into existence (and later out of it again), pits a super-clean acoustic guitar against a super-dirty electric one, has a lovely melody but no discernable chorus or repeated hook, and seems somehow to deliberately omit some important element of the song. It takes a few listenings to catch on to it at all, but it rewards attention with lots of details. The other side's "A Short Day" is a bit tossed off, but "Police Academy" has a great quasi-Hollies riff and the same bizarre, intriguing production as the A-side. A band to watch, for sure.

The "Twig" single by **CASPAR AND MOLLUSK** (Cosmic) isn't exactly the hottest-looking thing in the record store (the sleeve is a really ugly drawing photocopied on yellow Astrobrite cardstock), but don't ignore it automatically. "Caspar," you see, is Chris Ballew of the Presidents of the United States of America, and "Mollusk" is Beck; this single is some very bedroom-recorded-sounding bedroom recordings by the two of them, both in stoned-loner mode ("if you care to inhale/that's good for you"), but with a relatively high coolness to self-indulgence ratio. ("Twig" has actually been recorded by the Presidents as a B-side.)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Abstract Vibes

Quango-Island



The last year in dance music makes quite clear that the preeminence of the 4/4 bass drum is, at least for now, coming to an end. Any dance genre you care to mention has been drawing creative energy from jazz, roots dub, and breakbeats. Various movements have displaced the metronomic sound: Britain's growing drum-and-bass underground, the new dub sound of The Disciples and Alpha & Omega, as well as the jazzical headphone excursions going on in the music of Attica Blues, the Purple Penguin, La Funk Mob and a host of others. Thus, a compilation such as *Abstract Vibes* needed to emerge now, given the inaccessibility of downtempo dance music in the U.S. Assembled by longtime DJ at L.A.'s KRCW and *Urb* staffer Jason Bentley, this collection gathers such gems as "Baby Dream" by The Mighty Bop and DJ Cam's "Dieu Reconnaître Les Siens," both culled from the growing Paris headjazz movement (home to MC Solaar and La Funk Mob). Two tracks from the elusive, brilliant Hunch are found here ("Is This The Place?" and "Alone"), alongside Fila Brazillia's "Extract Of Pineal Gland," a paean to everyone's favorite hallucinogen, DMT.



SLOW AND LOW. THAT IS THE TEMPO

Even the watchful and censorious techno police are now witness to a deceleration of the drum machine. One need look no further than the arresting *Dark Hearts 2* compilation (Harthouse-Eye Q) for evidence. Assembled by the consistently innovative German label Harthouse, the expansive range of music here is admirable, given the racks of threadbare techno around right now. And there's not a 4/4 kick drum to be found here. Underrated Detroiter **CLAUDE YOUNG** offers the juddering, haunted "Chamber Of Dreams," immediately followed by **BRAINCELL**'s electro-funk-charged "Robot Jazz Brainbag Band," produced by Swedish expatriate Cari Lekebusch. From the fertile British techno world, Edinburgh's **NEIL LANDSTRUM** contributes the darting, jazzy "Black Whispers," a far cry from his former heavily kick-drummed Roland 909 outings. Tampa's **RABBIT IN THE MOON** and the lionized **HARDFLOOR** both offer snare-laden, minimalist drum tracks. *Dark Hearts 2*, with its refusal to follow techno's often reductive blueprints, is like a cold shock of mountain air... It will come as no surprise to many of you that **THE PURPLE PENGUIN**'s epiphanic, dimly lit "Pressure" single (Cup Of Tea) emerged from the southern English city of Bristol. The city has produced some of the most challenging and progressive downtempo dance since Jazzie B's Soul II Soul collective first made a global impact. Subsequently, such luminaries as Massive Attack, Smith & Mighty, Tricky and Portishead have established the town as a laboratory for off-kilter dance music. The Purple Penguin's second single is a wandering, mysterious piece with the *noir*-ish menace of Portishead, and a stunning array of mixes. The "Henry & Louis Mix" is a beautiful, upswept dub reading with minor-key piano ricocheting around the echo chamber like a superball. The hammering "Defstar Mix" buries the vocals of Andrea Blythe beneath thundering, staccato, old-school hip-hop drum patterns and industrial noise. This is one of the most unusual and demanding dance singles of the year... The experimental drum-and-bass movement emerging from British jungle culture has given rise to **T-POWER**'s debut album, *The Self Evident Truth Of An Intuitive Mind* (S.O.U.R.-Grey Ghost), a quizzical, contemplative collection of minimal drum-and-bass stormers. Each track bears the title of a color or geometric shape, and the textures are equally simple, though not at all simple-minded. Strings appear and then vanish in the mix, drum loops are slowed to a crawl and then sent speeding into the distance while the reggae bass pulse ties the music to earth's surface.



- 1 **CHEMICAL BROTHERS**
Exit Planet Dust
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 2 **LOOP GURU**
Duniya
Waveform
- 3 **μ-ZIQ**
In Pine Effect
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 4 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Trance Atlantic 2
Volume (UK)
- 5 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Trip Hop Test Part Two
Moonshine
- 6 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Excursions In Ambience-
The Fourth Frontier
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 7 **MOUSE ON MARS**
Iaora Tahiti
Too Pure-American
- 8 **CUBANATE**
Cyberia
Dynamica-CBM Inc.
- 9 **EBN**
Telecommunication Breakdown
TVT
- 10 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Swarm Of Drones
Sombient-Asphodel
- 11 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Dark Hearts 2
Harthouse-Eye Q
- 12 **CYBER-TECH**
Cyber-Tech
Fifth Colvmn
- 13 **AIR LIQUIDE**
Red
sm:je
- 14 **SCORN**
Gyral
Earache
- 15 **GOLDIE**
Timeless
ffrr-London
- 16 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Trance Europe Express 4
Volume (UK)
- 17 **LEFTFIELD**
Leftism
Columbia-CRG
- 18 **FREAKY CHAKRA**
Budded On Earth To Bloom In Heaven
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 19 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
The Real Trip:
Further Self Evident Truths
Rising High USA
- 20 **SISTER MACHINE GUN**
Burn
Wax Trax!-TVT
- 21 **PROTOTYPE 909**
Live '93-'95
Instinct
- 22 **ULTRAVIOLENCE**
Psycho Drama
Earache
- 23 **SKYLAB**
#1
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 24 **DEATHLINE INTL.**
Zarathoustr
COP
- 25 **A POSITIVE LIFE**
Synaesthetic
Waveform

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



HIP-HOP

BY GLEN SANSONE

GENIUS/GZA

Liquid Swords

Geffen

Genius/GZA (say "gizz-uh") is the fourth, and last, member of the mighty Wu-Tang Clan to demonstrate his talents in a solo format (not counting a poorly marketed pre-Wu-Tang album in the early '90s). But, like Method Man, Ol' Dirty Bastard and Raekwon's albums, these offshoots aren't typical solo records; Wu-Tang side projects never fly far from the nest.

Each one, including Genius' *Liquid Swords*, is created with the same ingredients: rock-solid, devastatingly sparse beats and dirty hooks that infect like slow poison on the brain. It's all part of the Wu-Tang empire, which contains everything from its own line of merchandise to an amazing World Wide Web site. With all of the familiar earmarks in place, like tales about head-hunting Ninja warriors, GZA shows us his well-disciplined flow: it's unlike the double-edged rhymes of Raekwon, but more akin to Method Man's lyrical precision. "Labels" may be the most creative, as it incorporates nearly every rap label into the lyrics, while "Duel Of The Iron Mic" is a lyrical showcase for Ol' Dirty Bastard, Inspector Deck, and others. Also be sure to hear Meth take over "Shadowboxin'."

BONUS BEATS



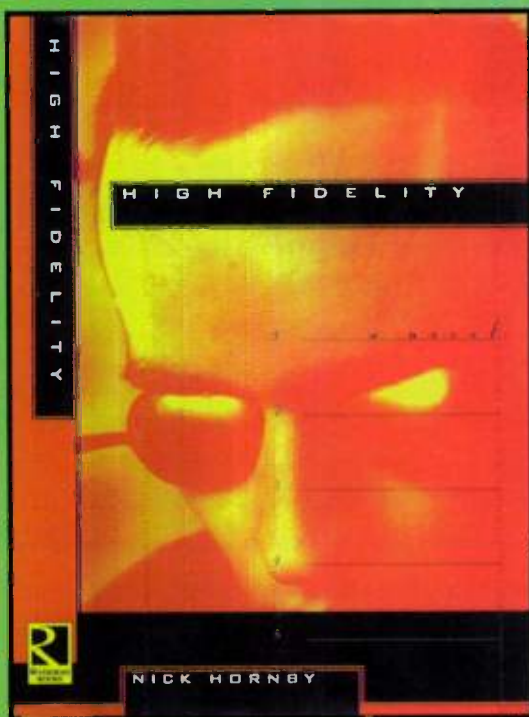
With such classic singles as "I'm Bad," "Rock The Bells" and "I Can't Live Without My Radio" establishing his immortal standing in the annals of B-boy history, **LL COOL J** (who's now managed by ex-Laker Norm Nixon) has never rested—until now. Over the past ten years, LL has gone from the baddest kid on the block to prime-time sit-com actor, making many wonder if this rapper/actor still has the fire in his belly to meet today's standards. The last time LL was written off, he retaliated with *Mama Said Knock You Out*, dropping the hip-hop nation to its knees. Now, after the unfocused *14 Shots To The Dome*, LL's guns are even quieter on *Mr. Smith* (Def Jam/RAL-Island). There's no denying that LL is a charismatic wizard of rhyme, but if you compared these rhymes to those on *Mama Said...*, *Mr. Smith* would be on his back faster than Peter McNeely. As on *Walking With A Panther*, LL leans too heavily on his sexual prowess and conquests ("Make It Hot," "Doin' It"), while leaving fans of his hard-hitting B-boy flow out in the cold... Though he's an original member of the street-wise WC & The Madd Circle, **COOLIO**'s suddenly a household name, and the success of "Fantastic Voyage" and "Gangsta's Paradise" (originally on the *Dangerous Minds* soundtrack) has made Coolio one of the most recognizable faces (and hairstyles) in pop music. His second solo album *Gangsta's Paradise* (Tommy Boy), is an entertaining hip-pop record that will completely satisfy those who turn to MTV for new music, but the average street punk may find its happy funk a little too sweet. Backed with an endless string of popular samples and neatly-packaged gangster toughness, Coolio should be riding high (or is that low?) for a long time... What's Bob Dole rockin' to these days? Our money's on the debut album by **THA DOGG POUND** (Death Row-Interscope), the record, you may recall, that was part of the Sen. Dole/C. Delores Tucker controversy last fall before Time Warner announced it would sell back its 50 percent stake in Interscope. While Death Row clearly knows how to hype its artists (and CEO), the hype doesn't always certify a great record. It's hard to say that *Dogg Food* is a bad record, but in just to put it in perspective, let's say it's a good record by Death Row standards. Woofing rhymes co-written by Snoopy Doggy Dogg, Kurupt and Dat Nigga Daz chomp on platinum-ready G-funk with the force of a pitbull, and roll through a bumpin' mix of mental mindtricks and slippery funk. Check out "New York, New York" and "I Don't Like To Dream About Gettin' Paid," but don't expect anything you haven't heard before... Also in the bins is the second solo album by EPMD's **ERICK SERMON**, entitled *Double Or Nothing* (Def Jam/RAL-Island). Though it's not nearly as potent as his work with Parrish Smith, Sermon, who has an unmistakable production style, drafts the help of the Hit Squad (Redman, Keith Murray and Roz) to give this release added lyrical dimension. Word out.

- 1 **GENIUS/GZA**
Liquid Swords
Geffen
- 2 **PHARCYDE**
Labcabin/california
Delicious Vinyl-Capitol
- 3 **KRS ONE**
KRS One
Jive
- 4 **CYPRESS HILL**
III (Temples Of Boom)
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 5 **GROUP HOME**
Livin' Proof
Payday/frr-Island
- 6 **SMIF-N-WESSUN**
Dah Shinin'
Wreck-Nervous
- 7 **MIC GERONIMO**
The Natural
Blunt-TYT
- 8 **RAEKWON**
Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...
Loud-RCA
- 9 **KOOL G RAP**
4,5,6
Cold Chillin'/Epic Street-CRG
- 10 **FAB 5**
"Blah" (12")
Duck Down-Priority
- 11 **LORD FINESSE**
"Hip To The Game" (12")
Penalty
- 12 **ERICK SERMON**
Double Or Nothing
Def Jam/RAL-Island
- 13 **BLAHZAY BLAHZAY**
"Danger" (12")
Mercury
- 14 **LL COOL J**
Mr. Smith
Def Jam/RAL-Island
- 15 **ACEYALONE**
All Balls Don't Bounce
Capitol
- 16 **DAS EFX**
Hold It Down
EastWest-EEG
- 17 **ONYX**
All We Got Iz Us
JMJ/RAL-Island
- 18 **JUNIOR M.A.E.I.A.**
Conspiracy
Big Beat-Atlantic
- 19 **MOBB DEEP**
The Infamous
Loud-RCA
- 20 **AZ**
Doe Or Die
EMI
- 21 **FUGEES (TRANZLATOR CREW)**
"Fu-Gee-La" (12")
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 22 **GROOVE THEORY**
Groove Theory
Epic
- 23 **METHOD MAN**
"The Riddler" (12")
Atlantic
- 24 **MAD SKILLZ**
"The Nod Factor" (12")
Big Beat
- 25 **THA DOGG POUND**
Dogg Food
Death Row-Interscope

*Compiled from the CNN New Music Report's weekly Best New Charts, collected from CTR's pool of progressive radio reports.

mixed media

compiled by Ana Marie Cox



READS

HIGH FIDELITY

by Nick Hornby (Riverhead Books)

There is a certain type of person who will find a certain type of fault with Nick Hornby's first novel, *High Fidelity*. They will claim that the details aren't accurate, or maybe just not *detailed* enough. When the protagonist, Rob, cites a "violently fashionable American independent label," they will want to know *which one*; when a record collector is said to be wearing a Lemonheads T-shirt, they will sigh with the knowledge that a Sebadoh shirt would be more in keeping with the character. These folks will be missing the record for the grooves, because *High Fidelity* is not, in the last analysis, about aging British indie rockers. It's about obsessive, insecure people whose emotional lives can be expressed only through the scrim of popular culture. It is, in short, about almost anyone who grew up middle-class in the last 30 years. To be sure, Hornby gets in quite a few knowing japes at the expense of graying hipsters. And, yes, the story of Rob's break-up will strike a particularly familiar chord with anyone whose idea of dealing with grief is to rearrange their record collection. But it will also get to anyone who's listened to the radio with a broken heart, wondering astonishedly, "How did Elton know?" (AMC)

READS

THE NEW AMERICAN CRISIS

(The New Press)

Some people say the first American 'zines predated *Forced Exposure* by at least 200 years. Fiercely opinionated, privately published and full of incendiary (as well as childish) wit, pamphlets of the American Revolution like Tom Paine's *Common Sense* were crucial in igniting popular resistance to British imperialism. But, as the essayists in *The New American Crisis* remind us, the struggle for democracy is an ongoing one. This collection of articles, culled from Greg Ruggiero and Stuart Sahulka's Open Pamphlet series, harkens back to Paine in both its title and its tone. Ruggiero and Sahulka have assembled a surprisingly diverse collection of pieces. Subjects range from the Internet to Chiapas to Malcolm X, and contributors include strange bedfellows like black feminist theorist bell hooks and *Baffler* editors Tom Frank and David Mulcahey. The one thing drawing these writers together is their commitment to exposing the increasing gulf between the haves and have-nots, whether what's to be had is money, information, or, more basically, justice. Most of the contributors have benefited from the restrictions of pamphlet form: Their essays are crisp, accessible and, in some cases, even stirring. While *The New American Crisis* may not start a war, it may yet help spark a revolution. (AMC)

THE NEW AMERICAN CRISIS

FEATURING:

NOAM CHOMSKY
BELL HOOKS
JULIET SCHOR
CORNEL WEST
HOWARD ZINN

RADICAL ANALYSES OF THE PROBLEMS
FACING AMERICA TODAY
EDITED BY GREG RUGGIERO
AND STUART SAHULKA

"What's happening does not fit easily into the narratives of progress, consumption, and corporate benevolence that make up the official version of what's happening in the late twentieth century."



THE LAST SUPPER

(Sony)

Guess who's coming to dinner? Right-wing assholes! In *The Last Supper*, the first full-length feature from director Stacy Title, five grad students (*The Mask's* Cameron Diaz, Annabeth Gish, Ron Eldard, Jonathan Penner and Courtney B. Vance) seek out ultra-conservatives for evenings of dinner, discussion and death. The guest's glass is refilled for a toast—and no matter what the meal, arsenic seems to go with everything. Soon the extremely fertilized back yard garden produces a bumper crop of tomatoes, and with Martha Stewart pluck, the kids make spaghetti sauce and dried-tomato garlands. Of course, it's all fun and games until the gang meets their most celebrated, and challenging, guest yet, Norman Arbuthnot (think Rush). Despite a good effort from the hip young cast, Title's meandering direction lets *Supper* get cold. She allows black comedy to be dragged down by in-your-face symbolism (like thunder and lightning at all the right times). The film doesn't provide easy answers about today's political climate, but that's not because it's impartial. It's just muddy. We walk out of the theater wondering: was it something I ate?

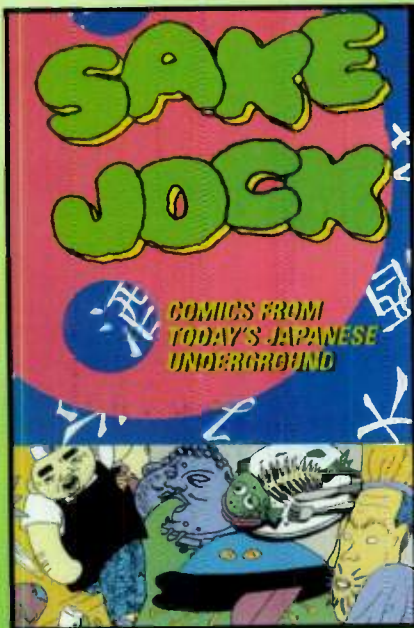
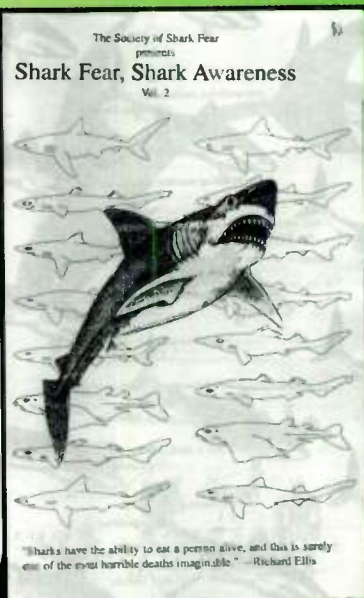
—Molly Confer

'ZINES

SHARK FEAR, SHARK AWARENESS

Sometimes, the saying goes, paranoia is just a heightened state of awareness. Following this dictum, Darin Johnson has taken on the task of increasing the public's shark knowledge. The fear, he claims, will follow. And Johnson, founder of the Society Of Shark Fear and editor of its newsletter, *Shark Fear, Shark Awareness*, is right. At first, you may find it difficult to take *SFSA* seriously. Johnson presents his case with serenely pleasant, yet surreal, detail—there are news clippings that attest to sharks' dangers, shark facts, even shark jokes (Q: Why did the shark cross the road? A: To eat its young). Johnson's zealotry is almost religious, always fascinating, and usually hilarious. A story in *SFSA* #2 documents Johnson's attempt to understand a car dealership's "Great White Sale": who, exactly, he asks, thought that would be a good idea? Laugh now. After reading *SFSA*, you will find his certainty works a strange alchemy on the popular culture you thought you knew. The sharks are out there. And they certainly know about you. To get a copy of *SFSA*, and to become a card-carrying member of the Society Of Shark Fear, send \$2 to Darin Johnson, 1420 NW Gilman Blvd., Suite 1414, Issaquah, WA 98027-7001.

(AMC)



SAKE JOCK:

Comics From Today's Japanese Underground

(Fantagraphics)

You can only really understand a culture—its obsessions, its repressed ideas, its secret sensibilities—by looking at its underground manifestations. If the *manga*—Japanese comics—that have made it over to America before (*Akira*, *Ranma 1/2*) represent Japan's public face, then the stories by the seven bizarre and berserk cartoonists in *Sake Jock* (from the Japanese comic *Giro*) represent its seedy underside in the same way that R. Crumb and S. Clay Wilson's comics represent the darker side of America's Garfield grin. Instead of the standardized big-eyes-and-speed-lines style of Japanese comics, we get a variety of weird, striking visual approaches—Imiri Sakabashira's detailed chaos recalls Julie Doucet's, and that's the closest any of them comes to a Western analogue. Best of the bunch is Nekojiro's "Kitty Court Drama," a brutally nasty and very funny dissection of victim mentality, closely followed by Kiroko Nananan's surreally drifting meditation "The Abalone Cat." Even when the stories don't quite make sense from a Western perspective, their peculiarly Japanese storytelling techniques and emphases are enlightening and intriguing.

—Douglas Wolk

FUNNIES



NET STUFF

BUNNYHOP <http://www.slip.net/~bunnyhop/>

The question that applies to the existence of most on-line magazines is particularly apt when it comes to Seth Robson's *Bunnyhop*: Why hit *Bunnyhop* on-line when its non-virtual, paper incarnation is so pleasingly tactile? The site is notable for many features—its slick graphics and witty links alone make it a cut above most 'zine sites—but as of last October, the real reason to check out the *Bunnyhop* web site is that it's now the only place to find issue #5, the "Jocks Vs. Geeks" issue. The 'zine literate may recall that the cover of #5 featured a slugfest between *Life In Hell*'s Binky and the Trix rabbit, and the legally literate probably sensed trouble. Surprisingly, it was the Groening troops and not General Mills that launched the legal volley, demanding that all existing copies of #5 be destroyed and that an apology be prominently placed in the next issue. As #6 was already at press (called "The Normal Issue," it hit the streets in November), the apology will be featured in #7, but the *Bunnyhop* folk did comply with the first demand. So if you still haven't read "A Girl's Guide To Geeks," the chat with indie-rock frat-brother Bob Nastanovich, or the profoundly hilarious Mr. Rogers interview, log in and read on. (AMC)

CD-ROM

THE GREAT KAT'S DIGITAL BEETHOVEN ON CYBERSPEED (Bureau of Electronic Publishing)

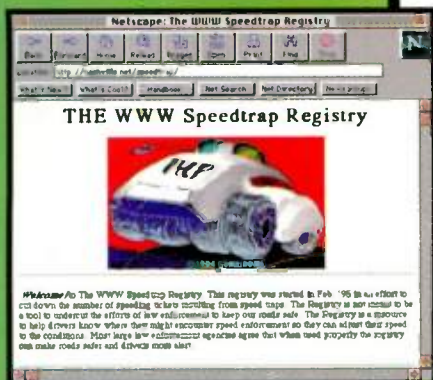
The Great Kat has a CD-ROM out. Tremble, world. For those of you unfortunate enough not to know, The Great Kat is a classically trained violinist who is now the world's fastest speed-metal guitarist (not "best" or "most accurate": "fastest"); she's made it her life's mission to crossbreed speed-metal and classical music, and to crush the world with her mighty fingers while she's at it. *Digital Beethoven On Cyberspeed* is a bizarre and often hilarious guided tour of classical music history, Kat's ego, and whatever else seemed like a good idea to put on there at the time—quizzes, a bunch of "Kat Cable Channels," an instrument gallery with demonstrations, fan letters to Kat, that kind of thing. There's lots of hidden stuff—anything involving Kat's commentary (picture your favorite metal chick on five espressos and some crystal meth) is worth digging up. Oddly, given the gnat's-attention-span appeal of most of Kat's music, *DBOC* is painfully slow and buggy (though one screen notes that if it's taking a long time to load, "GET A FASTER COMPUTER!!!!"). The disc also features five new Kat recordings, including a mindbending 1:26 speed-metal cover of "The Ride Of The Valkyries." Like we said, tremble. —Douglas Wolk



NET STUFF

THE WWW SPEEDTRAP REGISTRY <http://nashville.net/speedtrap/>

Started in February of last year, the Speedtrap Registry is "not meant to be a tool to undercut the efforts of law enforcement to keep our roads safe." Rather, the fine print assures the conscientious reader, "most large law enforcement agencies agree that when used properly the registry can make roads safer and drivers more alert." Still, these large law enforcement agencies, not to mention the small ones, can't be too happy about Andrew Warner's pet project, which lists speedtraps across the United States. From Berkeley to Boston, from Houston to Honolulu, Warner's minions are constantly updating the list—the public-service project has even become global. On your way to pick up the Nobel Prize? Watch out when heading north on the E-4 in Stockholm: "The bridge crossing just before takeoff KISTA... spells danger... Them boys in blue love it!" warns a far-flung correspondent. Those who make driving their business are already well-acquainted with the site—it's now partially sponsored by RoadKing Magazine—but it can't be long until printouts from the Registry are as de rigueur for touring bands as earplugs and Converse lowtops. (AMC)



TOP 75

ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY



AMPS

ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	LABEL
1 AMPS	Pacer	4AD/Elektra-EEG
2 BOSS HOG	Boss Hog	DGC
3 SMASHING PUMPKINS	Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness	Virgin
4 RENTALS	Return Of The Rentals	Maverick-Reprise
5 ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT	Scream, Dracula, Scream!	Interscope
6 STEREO LAB	Refried Ectoplasm (Switched On Volume 2)	Drag City
7 G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE	Coast To Coast Motel	OKeh-Epic
8 OASIS	(What's The Story) Morning Glory?	Epic
9 SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE	Sunny Day Real Estate	Sub Pop
10 CORNERSHOP	Woman's Gotta Have It	Luaka Bop-WB
11 SPACEHOG	Resident Alien	Hi Fi/Sire-EEG
12 SONIC YOUTH	Washing Machine	DGC
13 7 SECONDS	The Music, The Message	Immortal-Epic
14 PIZZICATO FIVE	The Sound Of Music By Pizzicato Five	Matador-Atlantic
15 GARDEN VARIETY	Knocking The Skill Level	Headhunter-Cargo
16 THIRTY OUGHT SIX	Hag Seed	Mute America
17 PAPAS FRITAS	Papas Fritas	Minty Fresh
18 BLONDE REDHEAD	La Mia Vita Violenta	Smells Like
19 SPARKLEHORSE	Vivadiexsubmarinetransmissionplot	Capitol
20 POLVO	This Eclipse (EP)	Merge
21 DEFTONES	Adrenaline	Maverick-WB
22 MAGNETIC FIELDS	Get Lost	Merge
23 AIR MIAMI	Me. Me. Me.	Teen Beat-4AD
24 BATS	Couchmaster	Mammoth
25 RED RED MEAT	Bunny Gets Paid	Sub Pop
26 MARILYN MANSON	Smells Like Children (EP)	Nothing-Interscope
27 PHARCYDE	LabcabinCalifornia	Delicious Vinyl-Capitol
28 NO DOUBT	Tragic Kingdom	Trauma-Interscope
29 HELIUM	Superball+ (EP)	Matador
30 FLAMING LIPS	Clouds Taste Metallic	Warner Bros.
31 MR. BUNGLE	Disco Volante	Warner Bros.
32 RANCID	...And Out Come The Wolves	Epitaph
33 PASSENGERS	Original Soundtracks I	Island
34 BUILT TO SPILL CAUSTIC RESIN	Built To Spill Caustic Resin (EP)	Up
35 VODOO GLOW SKULLS	Firme	Epitaph
36 ECHO BELLY	On	Fauve/Rhythm King-550
37 PAIN TEENS	Beast Of Dreams	Trance Syndicate
38 BLACK GRAPE	It's Great When You're Straight...Yeah	Radioactive
39 EDEL	Techniques Of Speed Hypnosis	Relativity
40 ALICE IN CHAINS	Alice In Chains	Columbia-CRG
41 SON VOLT	Trace	Warner Bros.
42 MERCURY REV	See You On The Other Side	WORK
43 SUPERCHUNK	Here's Where The Strings Come In	Merge
44 NOMEANSNO	The Worldhood Of The World (As Such)	Alternative Tentacles
45 ZEN COWBOYS	Electric Mistress	Moonshine
46 DEAD MILK MEN	Stoney's Extra Stout (Pig)	Restless
47 SF SEALS	Truth Walks In Sleepy Shadows	Matador
48 SISTER MACHINE GUN	Burn	Wax Trax!-TVT
49 SUPERNOVA	Ages 3 And Up	Amphetamine Reptile-Atlantic
50 CAPSIZE 7	Mephisto	Caroline
51 COCTEAU TWINS	Twinlights (EP)	Capitol
52 SOFTIES	It's Love	K
53 BRIAN ENO/JAH WOBBLE	Spinner	Gyroscope-Caroline
54 POE	Hello	Modern-Atlantic
55 INTO ANOTHER	Seemless	Hollywood
56 MEAT PUPPETS	No Joke	London
57 ANN MAGNUSON	The Luv Show	Geffen
58 MELTING HOPEFULS	Viva La Void (EP)	Big Pop
59 RIDE	Live Light	Mutiny-FLG
60 ALCOHOL FUNNYCAR	Weasels	C/Z
61 GARBAGE	Garbage	Almo Sounds
62 RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS	One Hot Minute	Warner Bros.
63 BLUR	The Great Escape	Food/Parlophone-Virgin
64 SEA AND CAKE	The Biz	Thrill Jockey
65 GREEN DAY	Insomniac	Reprise
66 JULIAN COPE	20 Mothers	American
67 GOD IS MY CO-PILOT	Puss 02	The Making Of Americans-Dark Beloved Cloud
68 JAWBREAKER	Dear You	DGC
69 STRATOTANKER	Baby, Test The Sky	Homestead
70 RADIOHEAD	Just (For College) (EP)	Parlophone-Capitol
71 MOUNTAIN GOATS	Nine Black Poppies	Emperor Jones-Trance Syndicate
72 YO LA TENGO	Camp Yo La Tengo (EP)	Matador
73 KEN NORDINE	Colors	Asphodel
74 P	P	Capitol
75 SIVE STYLE	Sive Style	Sub Pop

Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 200 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 50 most played releases that week.

A LISTING OF LABELS WHOSE ARTISTS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

4AD
8533 Melrose Ave., Ste. B
Los Angeles, CA 90069

550/Columbia/Epic/WORK
550 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022

A&M
1416 N. La Brea Ave.
Hollywood, CA 90028

Ajax
P.O. Box 805293
Chicago, IL 60680

American
3500 W. Olive Ave., #1550
Burbank, CA 91505

Amphetamine Reptile
2645 First Ave. South
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Anansi
330 Spaulding Dr., #104
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Ardent
2000 Madison
Memphis, TN 38104

Art!Art!
P.O. Box 465
Middlesborough, MA 02346-0465

Atlantic
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019

Bad Taste
P.O. Box 148428
Chicago, IL 60614

Bar/None
P.O. Box 1704
Hoboken, NJ 07030

Bomp!
P.O. Box 7112
Burbank, CA 91510

Candy Floss
130 Sutter St., 5th Fl.
San Francisco, CA 94104

Capitol
1750 N. Vine St.
Hollywood, CA 90028

Caroline
114 W. 26th St., 11th Fl.
New York, NY 10001

Compulsiv
P.O. Box 43542
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Cosmic
P.O. Box 382391
Cambridge, MA 02238

Crypt
P.O. Box 140528
Staten Island, NY 10314

Cup Of Tea
12a Cotham Rd.
Redland, Bristol, U.K.

Del-Fi
P.O. Box 69188
Los Angeles, CA 90069

Derivative
P.O. Box 42031
Montreal, PQ H2W 2T3, Canada

Drag City
P.O. Box 476867
Chicago, IL 60647

Earache
295 Lafayette St., Ste. 915
New York, NY 10012

East Side Digital
530 N. 3rd St.
Minneapolis, MN 55401

EMI
1290 Ave. Of The Americas, 42nd Fl.
New York, NY 10104

EyeQ
8756 Holloway Dr.
West Hollywood, CA 90069

Gramavision
Shetland Park
27 Congress St.
Salem, MA 01970

Homestead
P.O. Box 800
Rockville Centre, NY 11571

Hot Wings
429 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222

Island/I.L.S./London/Mango
825 Eighth Ave.
New York, NY 10019

Interscope
10900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1230
Los Angeles, CA 90024

In The Red
2627 E. Strong Pl.
Anaheim, CA 92806

K
P.O. Box 7154
Olympia, WA 98507

KOCH
2 Tri-Harbor Court
Port Washington, NY 11050

Little Voice
P.O. Box 57162
Washington, DC 20037

Lunamoth
174 Spadina Ave., Ste. 510
Toronto, Ontario M5T 2C2,
Canada

Mammoth
Carr Hill, 2nd Fl.
Carrboro, NC 27510

Mausoleum
18 E. 53rd St.
New York, NY 10022

MCA
70 Universal City Plaza
Universal City, CA 91608

Mercury
825 Eighth Ave.
New York, NY 10019

Monkey Hill
804 Spain St.
New Orleans, LA 70117

Moo-La-La
1114 21st St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

Nonesuch
590 Fifth Ave., 16th Fl.
New York, NY 10036

Prospective
P.O. Box 6425
Minneapolis, MN 55406

Relativity
79 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10003

Restless
1616 Vista Del Mar
Hollywood, CA 90028

Road Cone
P.O. Box 8732
Portland, OR 97207

ROIR
611 Broadway, Ste. 411
New York, NY 10012

Rounder
1 Camp St.
Cambridge, MA 02140

Shimmy-Disc
JAF Box 1187
New York, NY 10116

Shiro
8228 Sunset Blvd., 1st Fl.
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Shredder
75 Plum Tree Lane, Apt. 3
San Rafael, CA 94901

Shrimper
P.O. Box 1837
Upland, CA 91785-1837

Skin Graft
P.O. Box 257546
Chicago, IL 60625

Sub Pop
1932 First Ave.
Seattle, WA 98101

Thunderbird
345 F. Lake Ave.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Trance Syndicate
P.O. Box 49771
Austin, TX 78765

Treat And Release
1234 Mariposa St.
San Francisco, CA 94107

Warner Bros./Reprise
3300 Warner Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505

W.I.N.
P.O. Box 26811
Los Angeles, CA 90026-0811

Zero Hour
1600 Broadway, Ste. 701
New York, NY 10019



NEW RELEASES JANUARY-FEBRUARY

JANUARY 23

WALLFLOWERS Bringing Down The Horse (Interscope)
ERICK SERMON Insomnia (Interscope)
LIFTER Melinda (Interscope)
THE GYPSY 3 Going To The USA (Columbia)
STABBING WESTWARD Wither, Blister, Burn And Peel (Columbia)
DIRT MERCHANTS Scarified (Epic)
NICK HEYWARD (Epic)
TORI AMOS (Atlantic)
GAVIN FRIDAY Shag Tobacco (Island)

JANUARY 30

REMY ZERO Remy Zero (DGC)
TERANCE BLANCHARD The Heart Speaks (Columbia)
LEONARD PELTIER BENEFIT Exiled In The Land Of The Free (Columbia)
RUBY Salt Peter (WORK)
REEF Replenish (Epic)
STANLEY CLARK The Bass-Ic Collection (Epic)
MIND SCIENCE OF THE MIND (Epic)
REV DADDY LOVE (550)
XC-NN Lifted (550)
MILES DAVIS Ballads & Blues (Capitol)
VARIOUS ARTISTS Ultra Lounge Series (6-CD Series) (Capitol)
COCTEAU TWINS Milk & Kisses (Capitol)
THERAPY? Infernal Love (A&M)
MEKONS (W/ KATHY ACKER) Pussy, King Of The Pirates
 (1/4 Stick-Touch And Go)
DEAD VOICES ON AIR Shap (Invisible)
LAMBCHOP How I Quit Smoking (Merge)
TORTOISE Millions Now Living Will Never Die (Thrill Jockey)
BASS IS BASE Memories Of The Soulshack Survivors (Loose Cannon-I.L.S.)
NEW KINGDOM (Gee Street-I.L.S.)
ROLLERSKATE SKINNY Horse-Drawn Wishes (Warner Bros.)
GEGGY TAH (Warner Bros.)
MOJAVE 3 Ask Me Tomorrow (4AD)

FEBRUARY 6

MAD SKILLZ From Where??? (Big Beat-Atlantic)
PHILOSOPHER KINGS The Philosopher Kings (Columbia)
PULP Different Class (Island)
SOUNDTRACK Don't Be A Menace To South Central (Island)

FEBRUARY 13

SHEILA CHANDRA Out On My Own (Caroline)
STONE TEMPLE PILOTS (Atlantic)
BAD RELIGION (Atlantic)
MIKE JOHNSON (TAG-Atlantic)
BEL CANTO (Lava-Atlantic)
SOUNDTRACK Kids In The Hall (Matador-Atlantic)
SKIPLOADER From Can Through String (Geffen)

FEBRUARY 20

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS Surefire (Touch And Go)
MAN... OR ASTROMAN? Deluxe Men In Space (Touch And Go)
RACHEL'S Egon Schiele (1/4 Stick)
BUTTERGLORY Are You Building A Temple To Heaven? (Merge)
BEDHEAD The Dark Ages (Trance Syndicate)
NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN & MICHAEL BROOK Night Song
 (Real World-Caroline)
IDAHO Three Sheets To The Wind (Caroline)

FEBRUARY 27

SOUNDTRACK Schoolhouse Rock (Lava-Atlantic)
ODDS (Elektra-EEG)
DOUBLEPLUSGOOD (Sire-EEG)
TRIPMASTER MONKEY (Sire-EEG)
COWBOY JUNKIES (Geffen)
MEICES Dirty Bird (London)

All dates subject to change. so we can't blame us.

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- C) Paid circulation: Paid mail subscriptions: 15,905
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World Radio History

Localzine

BY HILLARY MEISTER & DAVID BARBE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

"This is a great place to live, but why would anyone want to visit? This is a medium-sized college town—we don't have Disney World, the Empire State Building, or anything like that," says David Barbe, bassist extraordinaire for Sugar, noise-maker in Buzz Hungry, and studio engineer/producer who also claims "dogs run Athens." He's not just referring to the Dawgs, the University of Georgia football team, but to the furry beasts that everyone in town seems to own. "Dogs, R.E.M., and Ort," David laughs. "They're great citizens of Athens," he says of R.E.M., "but there's more to here than them. You can't throw a CD in town without hitting a musician." There are at least 200 bands in Athens, and there are more studios per capita here than probably anywhere else.

Athens is a tiny place. The University of Georgia is the mainstay of the town, and the student population makes up one-third of the population, the total of which is roughly around 80,000. Therefore, just about every business in Athens, especially those downtown, attempts to cater to student desires. Those businesses also tend to run on the University clock, so beware if you travel to Athens during holiday times or the last part of summer, when many shops, restaurants, and bars shut down for a few days to a week.

(All quotes are from David, the rest from Hillary)

RESTAURANT HANG-OUTS

Taco Stand (670 N. Milledge Ave., 549-2894) "I've been going there three times a week for practically 14 years. I worked there... If I had one meal left in the world, I'd have the bean burrito deluxe, extra hot, no microwaving."

Grit/Guaranteed (199 Prince Ave., 543-6592 (Grit); 167 E. Broad St., 208-0962 (Guaranteed)) "I'm a fan of the Golden Bowl at the Grit." Guaranteed has great juices. These places cater strictly to the vegetarian and feature some pretty cool dishes.



Harry Bissette's (279 E. Broad St., 353-7065) "Laura Carter (Jack o Nuts) used to work there as a chef. They have fancy food—uptown New Orleans style. Stuffed fillet with blue cheese, rare, with a glass of bourbon, that's what I'd have!"

The Last Resort (174/184 W. Clayton St., 549-0810) Excellent stuff like praline chicken, fried green tomatoes and other sorts of gourmet-style dishes.

Cookies and Co./Chocolate Shoppe (198 College Ave., 353-2461 (Cookies); 216 E. Clayton St., 549-8473 (Chocolate)) "I'm a brown bagger—always liked the sandwich and apple shoved in a bag. I buy cookies for my kids on occasion at Cookies and Co."

Allan's (1294 Prince Ave., 353-9341) "Best hamburgers in town! Small, but remember, quality over quantity!"

RECORD STORES

Wuxtry (197 E. Clayton St., 369-9428) "Right downtown, perfect location. Where else would anyone want to go? You can get anything here, just about, and they have a separate store next to the main one with used CDs and tapes."

Big Shot Records (164 E. Clayton, 543-6666) Same as Wuxtry, almost, but they carry a lot more mainstream stuff, too. If you're looking for that new Michael Bolton album, you'll find it here.

BOOK STORES

Old Black Dog (1700 S. Lumpkin St., 549-2449) "I like books as much as I like records, and the Old Black Dog carries more hard-to-find things and cool books than anywhere else."

Jackson St. Books (260 N. Jackson St., 546-0245) Millions of used books. Well, maybe not millions, but an awful lot of every kind of book you can think of, all used.

CLUBS

40 Watt (285 W. Washington St., 549-7871) "Of course, there's the 40 Watt, which is already pretty legendary." The big daddy: it holds about 1,000 people. Loads of cool bands play here—everything from Luscious Jackson to Robyn Hitchcock.

Atomic Music Hall (140 E. Washington St., 369-7315) "This is where Buzz Hungry plays a lot. It holds about 500 people, and the history of the place is amazing. It began as the Paris Adult Theatre with X-rated movies, turned into the Uptown—a legendary place in Athens; then the Colorbox, purely disco; then the Chameleon Club, which everyone called the Ham Leon club because the 'C' and 'e' on the sign were wiped out; then the Shoebox, which was co-owned by the 40 Watt people; and now it's the Atomic. They bring in a lot of alternative type stuff, usually punkish in nature."

Georgia Theatre (Corner of Lumpkin & Clayton St., 549-9918) Also a big club with about a 1,000 capacity. Usually the more southern-fried bands play here, and they tend to cater more to the college frat crowd.

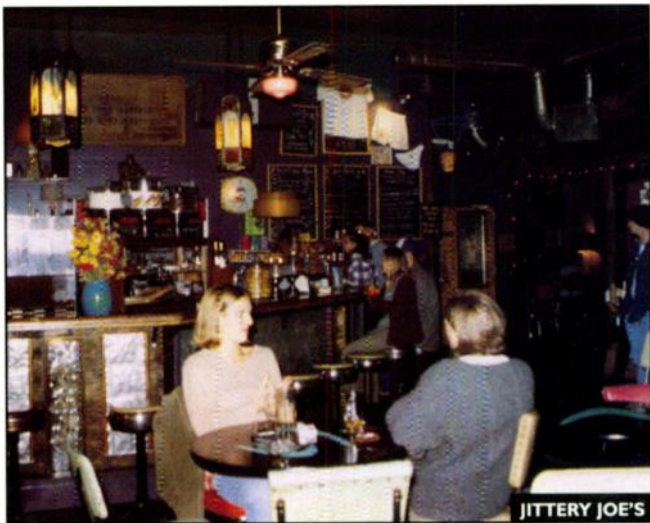
High Hat Club (321 E. Clayton St., 549-5508) "We play here sometimes too. They're mostly jazz and blues and sometimes do rock." A truly eclectic place that began as a blues club. Blues and R&B are still their mainstay, but they've brought in all kinds of other fantastic acts. On Tuesday nights, they feature the Hot Burritos, who bring in guest vocalists/musicians like Vic Chesnutt, Kelly Hogan and even, yes, Mike Mills.

BARS

Engine Room (245 W. Washington St., 454-3800) A cool place to hang, featuring microbrews and all sorts of other beers, full bar, and lots of booths to sit at.

Foxz Tavern (1294-1/2 Prince Ave., 546-8209) "An old neighborhood hang-out. I've lived close to it—it's a place to get a drink, and there's not too many people there."

The Globe (199 N. Lumpkin St., 353-4721) The academic hang-out bar with just beer, wine, and a killer selection of bourbons. Bring in the dissertation you're working on, read some Shakespeare, and down a few



bourbons. They sometimes show movies or have acoustic performances upstairs

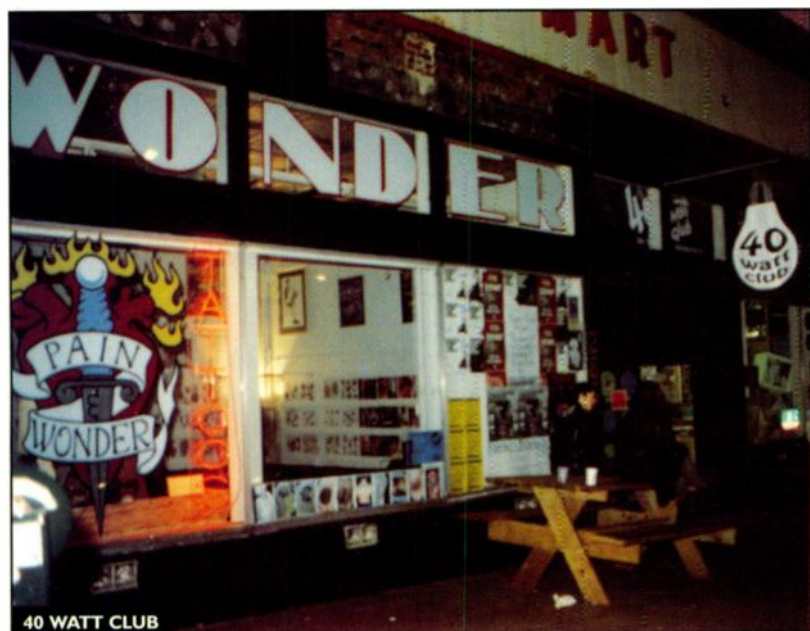
GA Bar/Roadhouse (159 W. Clayton St., 546-9884 (GA); 149 N. Lumpkin St., 613-2324 (Roadhouse)) If you wanna get smushed trying to get a drink, these are the places to head to. Cool bars, grungy in that bar kind of way, loud rock music, sometimes bands, and sometimes the GA Bar has rather interesting, uh, visuals on the television... closed-captioned, at that!

COFFEE HOUSE

Jittery Joe's (243A W. Washington St., 548-3116) "Minors go here, and not the ones with the little lights on their hats." The decor is that art-deco kind of Southern trashy look, and they built a little back room movie theatre/poetry reading place. Kids in Athens hang out here or at other coffee houses instead of at the clubs. Look for Jesus in the coffee cup on the ceiling.

"All travelers should feel welcome to come and visit Athens—just don't stay too long..." says David. Remember to tune your radios to WUOG 90.5 FM, the college radio station; WPUP 103.7 FM has become a commercial-alternative station. You can bring your dog, too...

All phone numbers are in area code 706.



The new album by David Barbe's band Buzz Hungry is *At The Hands Of Our Intercissors* (Compulsiv). Hillary Meister works for the Interactive Studios part of the Atlanta Journal Constitution (check out "Y'all!" on the web at <http://www.yall.com>) and was the music editor at Athens' Flagpole magazine (P.O. Box 1027, Athens, GA 30603) for four years. **END**

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12/95

by Douglas Wolk

A Short Cynical

Introduction To Music Multimedia

Pete Shelley's album *XLI* is best known as "the one with 'Telephone Operator' on it." When it was released ten years ago or so, though, it had another distinction: the British cassette edition may have been the first attempt at a computer-multimedia-enhanced music recording. At the end of Side 2, after a bunch of dub versions of Shelley hits, there's a high-pitched squealing noise: a program for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum computer. When you ran the program, you got a little light-show on the screen of the TV set you'd hooked the computer up to, supposedly synchronized with side 1 of *XLI* if you started them at the same time. By all reports, it didn't work too hot: it tended to crash, and even when it did load correctly, its speed was way off from the album's.

Five or six years later, there were a handful of multimedia-enhanced CDs, including Talking Heads' *Naked* and Lou Reed's *New York*; when you played them in a special enhanced player, you were supposed to get lyrics, liner notes and lots of other visual bonuses. But the format never even began to catch on.

Now a bunch of bands are putting out CD-ROMs—discs with music augmented by multimedia presentations. They range from small-timers like Techno-Squid Eats Parliament to big names like Bush, whose disc has some nice live footage and one absolute horror: an alleged on-line connection for Bush info that doesn't actually connect to anything. Mostly, though, these discs are little more than glorified press releases. As a random example, take the Cranberries' new CD-ROM, *Doors And Windows*. Put it in your CD player and forget to skip track 1, and you'll get a hideous noise that will fuck up your speakers something fierce. Put it in your CD-ROM drive, though, and you'll get to see the Cranberries on their famous couch, in front of a bunch of doors and windows, as "Zombie" plays in the background. Click on the members of the band, and they say stuff (whenever I clicked on the bass player, he muttered "I really like lager"). Click on the windows, and they rise on members of the band saying stuff, like "I really like lager."

Click on the doors, though, and you'll be transported into different rooms: three of them, to be exact. In each room, you'll get to see the Cranberries on their famous couch, in front of a bunch of doors and objects, as "Zombie" plays in the background. Click on the members of the band, and they say stuff (mercifully different in every room). Click on the objects, and you get various reactions. When you click on lights, they turn on and off (thrills!); when you click on a couple of spiral-bound books, you get the Cranberries' selective scrapbook of their career and a complete book of their songs' lyrics (with voice-over comments about each one by the band); when you click on a bottle of lager, you get the bass player saying how much he likes it. Among other features it shares with most music CD-ROMs, there's a jukebox, on which you can play the other four tracks on the CD, and a space-age video screen on which you can interview the band. Specifically, you can ask them six different questions, by clicking on them. As the package notes, you can find out how they "really feel about music [they love

it], fame [they love it], their fans [they love them] and each other [they love each other]."

Does this sound ghastly? It isn't, really: the lyric book and the scrapbook, especially, are both very nice to have — if they were more easily accessible, better indexed, and hidden unannounced on a Cranberries album, they'd be a lovely bonus. (Other bands have been sneaking multimedia extras onto their albums for a while: Sugar stuck a video for "Gee Angel" onto *Besides*, and Monster Magnet's *Dopes To Infinity* has a little PC presentation hidden on it.) As a selling point, though, the multimedia is a lot less attractive. Once you've seen it, you've seen it — there's no reason you'd want to use it twice — and there's no index to its contents. After a few minutes, playing with *Doors And Windows* (or virtually any other music CD-ROM) is less a matter of choosing a path through what it has to offer than of trying to ferret out whatever ten-second video clips you haven't stumbled onto yet.

The essential problem is that it's very hard to "interact" in any meaningful way with something that is, like a pop song, designed as a self-contained, observable piece of art. You can provide ancillary information (lyrics, liner notes, interviews with creators, images), and multimedia is good for that. But in order to get actual interaction with the information, you either have to hide it (you never know what's going to happen when you click!), which is ultimately damn irritating, or let the consumer become part of the creative process. A few musicians have tried that approach: there was a David Bowie CD-ROM from a few years ago that comes to mind, where consumers could (in a very limited way) remix "Jump They Say," and Todd Rundgren's *No World Order* was available in an interactive, reconfigurable form.

Virtually all of the time, though, when you listen to music, it's something you do with your ears only—its value as an art form comes, to a great extent, from the fact that while you listen to it, your eyes and body are free, so you can read or stretch out or do the dishes or dance quietly in your living room. Working with a computer to experience music demands your visual and physical attention as well as your aural attention: you have to have your eyes fixed on a screen a foot or two away, with your body confined to a chair. That's obviously fine sometimes, but having limited access to a handful of videotaped quotes from Dolores O'Riordan doesn't balance out what that access demands in return.

