

CMJ

NEW MUSIC®

BAD RELIGION
EVOLUTION OF A PUNK BAND

TORTOISE
COMING OUT OF ITS SHELL

WAYNE KRAMER
ROCK 'N' ROLL PAUL REVERE

BEST NEW MUSIC

SPINANES

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS

MARK EITZEL

STEREOLAB

JOE HENRY

ED OASIS

WHAT *IS* THE STORY?

OVER 40 REVIEWS

**INCLUDING: LUSH . MARIA MCKEE . AFGHAN WHIGS
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RADIOHEAD THE BENDS

THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING THE SINGLE
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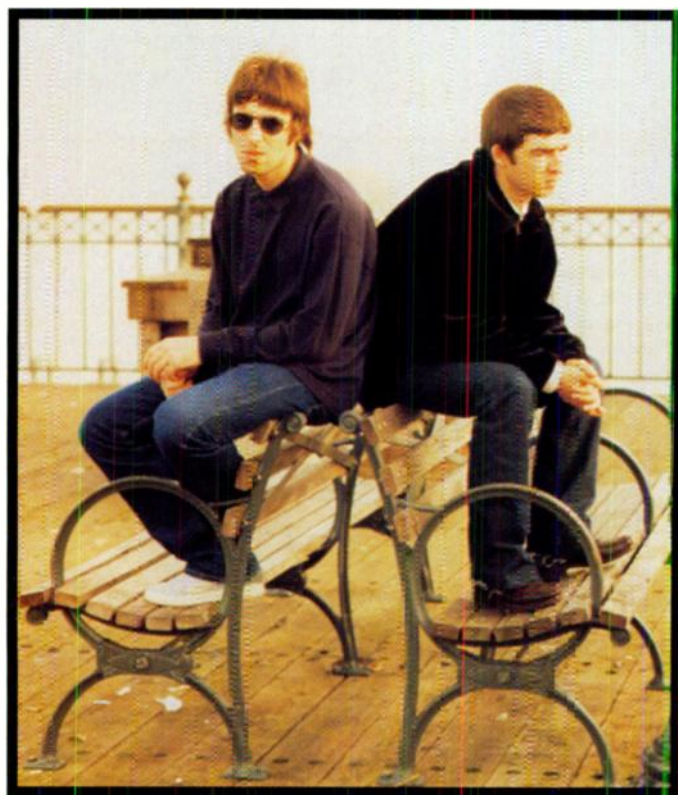
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CMJ

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

Here's where we juxtapose two diametrically opposed opinions to make everything seem relative

Damn, you guys just aren't trying with the CD this month [January]. It sucked worse than any other thus far.

John Bailey
Glendora, CA

Excellent CD [January], probably the most solid CD since I've been a subscriber. Lots of good new bands, no really bad tracks.

Bruce Filardia
Portland, OR

The best things in life are free, but you can give them to the birds and bees...

I have been a devoted subscriber of your magazine since January '94, when I first heard of you. I was and am still impressed with your magazine. I recently got a subscription renewal form in the mail and it provided an "inflation proof" deal—subscriptions getting cheaper as the length increased. Since I plan to subscribe to your magazine indefinitely, saving money on longer subscriptions would be fine. Then I looked at your prices. All you did was jack up the price by ten dollars and then offer a deal on this new, higher price, essentially forcing us to buy a three-year subscription just to pay the same amount per year we have been for one-year subscriptions. I know that your popularity and circulation has increased drastically. One would think that selling more magazines would allow you to lower or at least maintain present cost. What could possibly make the cost go up? Has the price of paper skyrocketed? Does mass manufacturing CDs increase the price per unit? Does printing more advertisements make it harder on the pocket book? Is the economic inflation rate this year 33%? Success must be hard on a magazine to force such a large price increase. You should either explain this new price increase or publicly acknowledge that you have become corporate money grubbing commercial whores out of touch with the very independent music you promote. Success is not evil. Success and greed is.

Hoa Huynh
Calgary, CA

"Has the cost of paper skyrocketed?" Why, yes, as a matter of fact. From a January 29 New York Times article on Omni ceasing publication in print form: "General Media had seen paper cost increases of 60 percent and postal-rate increases of 34 percent in the last year." (No, we're not part of General Media, which also publishes the gynecological journal Penthouse; I'm just citing this as an example so you don't think I'm making stuff up.) So while I'd love to admit to being a money-grubbing commercial whore, or at least have the paycheck to warrant it, I have to cite a dramatic

increase in paper costs (and to a lesser extent, postage) for our recent subscription price hike. Since a rise in sub prices was inevitable—these costs are not abated by our growing circulation—we thought that we'd offer our faithful a chance to guard against any further increases and "inflation proof" their subscriptions by locking in at the old rate for three years. Look, we're not happy about raising the price of subscriptions, but this magazine is a business. Success isn't evil, but neither is losing money a virtue.—ed.

16 Horse Puckey

I am writing to comment on the killer song and article you had in the last issue. 16 Horsepower, as far as I have heard, sounds like one of the better selections from your compilation CDs. I especially fancied hearing of the strong morals that the front man possesses. Lately, it seems that all I hear from some bands is 'f' this or that, and 's' this or that, and it gets obnoxious and monotonous. I am not saying that ALL bands are this way, but the majority holds fast to that particular lifestyle. Hopefully those that enjoyed "Black Soul Choir" will hear more from 16 Horsepower very soon.

Briannon Atkins
Via e-mail

We're sure you'll enjoy reading of those fine, upstanding young men in Oasis.—ed.

Hip-hop, ya don't say!

Maybe I don't know what hip-hop is, but it startled me to see Mariah Carey listed as #21 under the Hip-Hop 25 chart. There's a teeny tiny bit of hip-hop on that album.

Donna M. Roney
Hypoluxo, FL

What little hip-hop there is on Mariah Carey's new record went a long way with our pool of college radio hip-hop DJs. Especially when they picked up on the hip-hop remix of "Fantasy," featuring Ol' Dirty Bastard, which was pretty much single-handedly responsible for the record charting so high.—ed.

Man of few words

I think you are doing very well, and I mean that without irony.

Nathan Duin
Minneapolis, MN

Man of kind words

If you're having a particularly bad morning, just remember how much I love you, ok?

Anthony L. Childs
Gainesville, VA

Man of no words

I'm no words!

Ronnei P. Cordoso
Bela Horizonte, Brazil

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Virgin

PLANT SERIES

This month Virgin presents the

False Dragonhead

Color

The False Dragonhead is the color of square root signs.

Fragrance

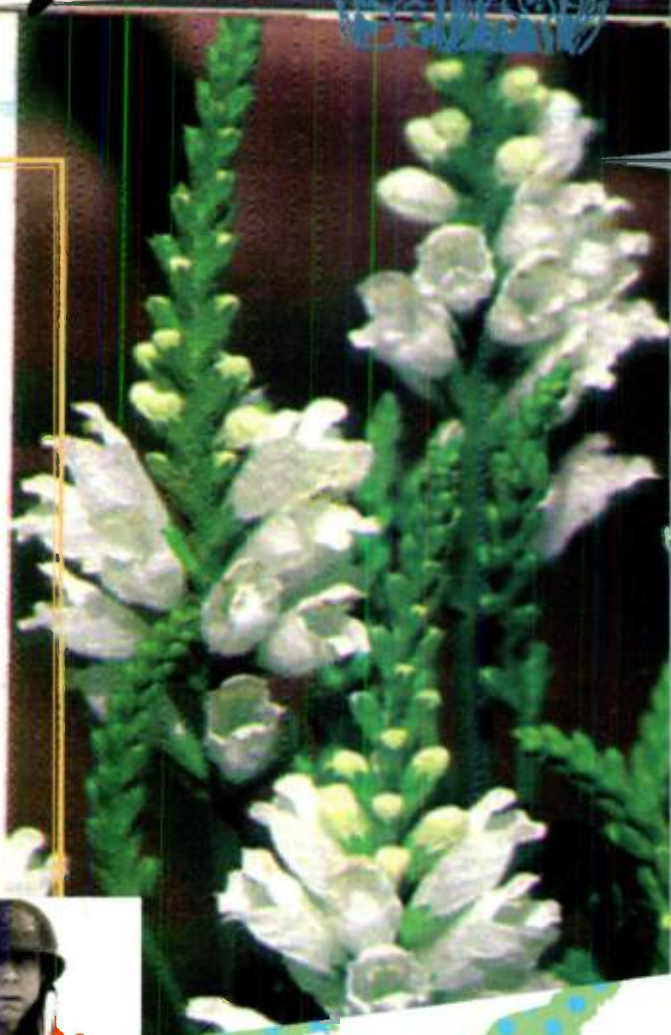
It smells like the tires of a high-occupancy vehicle.

Habitat

It is native to lanes 3-12 of most bowling alleys.

Uses

This plant is widely used to prevent the onset of prank phone calls.



Iggy Pop

Naughty

Little

Doggie

featuring
"Heart Is Saved"

naughty little doggie

On tour this Spring

Lost Somewhere Between The Earth And My Home

The Geraldine Fibbers

Now on tour

featuring
"House Is Falling"

Virgin

QUICK FIX

TORTOISE

MILLIONS AND MILLIONS

The Chicago-based instrumental jazz/rock/dub/trance outfit Tortoise began as an experimental haven for its members, who wanted a place to try out the exotic instruments and technology their day bands don't use. The members of Tortoise comprise a virtual who's who of indie-rock royalty, including members of (and this is the short list) Eleventh Dream Day, Gastr Del Sol, Stereolab, the Sea And Cake, Red Krayola, Sive Style, Slint, and Red Red Meat. The band has gradually evolved from occasional side gig to main event, but things still can get alarmingly complex: Even its members seem to get confused by who plays in what and, and since Tortoise plays frequently with Stereolab and the Sea And Cake, some of its members have actually opened for themselves. Though most of the band lives together, busy schedules mean they can go weeks without seeing each other.

Drummer/sequencer/organist/etc. John McEntire says that five different band members juggling almost 20 different bands isn't the rescheduling nightmare you would think ("We try not to prioritize things too much. Whatever we're doing at the time is the main thing"), but it's one reason that, seven years after its inception, Tortoise is only now gearing up for its first tour, in support of its second full-length CD, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. "We never felt like we had our stuff together enough to tour," McEntire says. "It was more that than anything else. I used to be real nervous about playing live, but I've made my peace with it, I guess."

Tortoise's dense, intricate instrumentals can make for rough going live. The band initially tried performing "Djed," the 21-minute epic that's the centerpiece of *Millions*, as a continuous piece; it's now splintered into sections and played throughout the set. Were they worried about short attention spans in the audience? "It's not the audience so much as [it's us]," says



McEntire. "Sometimes we try to learn faithful reproductions of what we've done in the studio; sometimes we ignore it completely, and use what we have as the basis for a more open-ended approach. It just depends on the day. We kind of use that whole ethos where we tend to view the studio process as something completely distinct from playing live, in that it's got a life of its own which should be exploited. We never mean for [playing live] to be merely a documentation of what's on the record."

A sprawling mixture of marimbas, melodicas, synthesizers, samples, and—for the first time—electric guitars, *Millions* was recorded in fits and starts over a four-month period, going through 15 different mixing and editing stages in the process, which only helped to underscore the band's long-held reputation as studio rats. Says McEntire: "We don't mind being called studio rats because, I mean, we are. There are worse things to be called, I guess."

—Allison Stewart

IN MY ROOM

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

KARL HENDRICKS

KARL HENDRICKS

TRIO

Silkworm
Firewater

John Coltrane
Sun Ship/Stellar Regions

Gaunt
Yeah, Me Too

Film: *Mighty Aphrodite*

Philip Roth
"As many books of his as I have time to read"

INSPIRATIONAL VERSE: "To live on this earth you need two hands/One to crush the weeds that steal your crops/And one to crush your fellow man/And a woman to tell you when to stop" —Simon Joyner, "Kerosene"

Random fact:

San Francisco radio station WILD107, in a publicity stunt, decided to "help" the hungry and homeless by gathering up Bay Area roadkill and barbecuing it outside of homeless shelters.



WEIRD RECORD OF THE MONTH

Jacques Dutronc was the most peculiar French pop star of the '60s, a sort of acid-pop cross between Jacques Brel and Johnny Rotten who went to the top of his country's charts with "Et Moi, Et Moi, Et Moi." Now, members of the British Invasion-revivalist bands Thee Headcoats and Thee Headcoatees have teamed up to record an album under the name Dutronc, called *Dutronc! Dutronc! Dutronc!* (Damaged Goods (UK)). Besides covers of Jacques' songs, it's got a couple of original tunes in mangled Franglais by Billy Childish (who has written several thousand songs, all of which sound like "All Day And All Of The Night") and a hysterical Serge Gainsbourg parody called "Je Ne T'aime Pas... Moi Aussi." Highly recommended to both Francophiles and Francophobes.

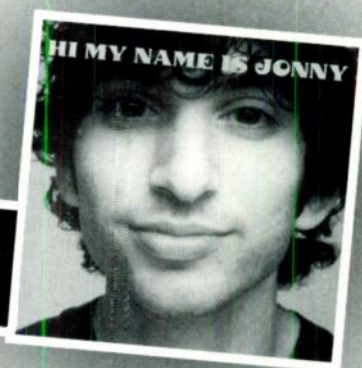
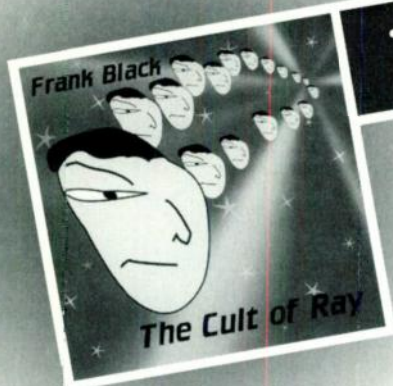


PROMO ITEM OF THE MONTH

As if NOFX's attitude toward the press wasn't clearly expressed by its "no interview" policy, the good folks at Epitaph sent this "Fuck Ewe" inflatable "party sheep" to herald the release of the band's *Heavy Petting Zoo*.

FRANK BLACK

The Cult of Ray



Hi My Name Is Jonny

JONNY POLONSKY

On tour together through May.

For the latest info about Frank Black and Jonny Polonsky and all other American Recordings artists, contact American Recordings on the Internet at <http://american.recordings.com> or e-mail us at american@american.recordings.com

March 1996 Tour Dates

date	city	date	city	date	city
Mar 01	Gainesville, FL	Mar 11	Charlottesville, VA	Mar 21	Boston, MA
Mar 02	Atlanta, GA	Mar 12	Baltimore, MD	Mar 22	Portland, ME
Mar 03	OFF	Mar 13	Washington, DC	Mar 23	Montreal, Que
Mar 04	Athens, GA	Mar 14	OFF	Mar 24	OFF
Mar 05	Nashville, TN	Mar 15	Philadelphia, PA	Mar 25	Toronto, Ont
Mar 06	Charleston, SC	Mar 16	New York, NY	Mar 26	London, Ont
Mar 07	Charlotte, NC	Mar 17	Lido Beach, LI	Mar 27	OFF
Mar 08	Chapel Hill, NC	Mar 18	New Haven, CT	Mar 28	Detroit, MI
Mar 09	OFF	Mar 19	OFF	Mar 29	Buffalo, NY
Mar 10	Virginia Beach VA	Mar 20	Providence, RI	Mar 30	Cleveland, OH
				Mar 31	Pittsburgh, PA

QUICK FIX

WAYNE KRAMER Y'KNOW, I GOTTS RIFFS LIKE PAUL REVERE!

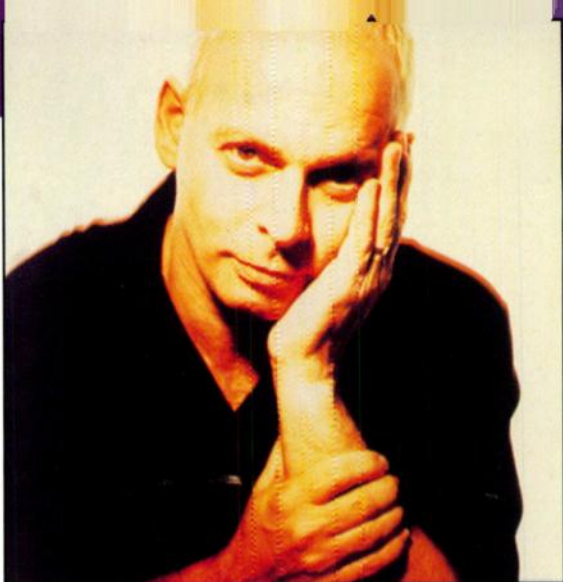
"Most bands, when they do interviews, it's shop talk!" sighed Wayne Kramer with little patience for such self-absorption. "Y'know, they wanna talk about their band and their label and their advance, and somebody else's advance, and what happened to them on tour," he chuckled, sadly. "Great, guys. Fabulous."

"There's a couple people out there I think are saying something. Michael Stipe says something. Bono, whether you like the guy or not, he has the courage of his convictions and he's willing to take a stance, he puts his ass on the line. But the rest of the rock world, they've got their heads up their asses."

Ten hours later, Wayne Kramer—and that's *Brother* Wayne Kramer to you, as in the half of the MCS's dangerous six-string frontline not named Fred "Sonic" Smith—was on a plane bound for Australia, opening dates for that country's reemergent protopunk legends Radio Birdman (a band as responsible for the Detroit-like flavor for that nation's punk scene as anyone). But he nearly didn't make it. The absurd governmental shutdown prevented Kramer's bassist from obtaining a passport, forcing Kramer to scramble for a replacement with passport already in hand. With the beautifully named Paul III taking his place beside stalwart Kramer drummer Brock Avery, Wayne can now relax enough to joke that this was the first time governmental stupidity has directly affected him since the Vietnam War.

Coming from the MCS's militant activism, Wayne Kramer still sees his role as a rock 'n' roll Paul Revere: "I'm on horseback, riding through the neighborhood, clanging my bell, saying, 'The fundamentalists are coming! The fundamentalists are coming!'"

It's hardly surprising that Wayne Kramer is still gripped by the revolutionary fervor of his youth. This is an artist still driven by many of the elements that fueled the MCS: the political values (although he now deems the 5's love affair with guns "a mistake: just ask Bushwick Bill"), the rhythmic voodoo of James Brown, the improvisational fury of bop jazz. In performance, this middle-aged man still attacks floors like a proper disciple of James Brown, yanking car-crash noises and trash compactor groans from his Stratocaster the whole way. He even sends potential bassists off to do homework with a book on the bass inventions of Motown's unsung hero, James Jamerson.



If the methodology seems old-fashioned, the context renders it utterly contemporary. Roots-conscious punk mogul Brett Gurewitz recognized the continuing value of Wayne Kramer and his music, and gave him a sympathetic home on Epitaph, a label Kramer calls "revolutionary." ("This is a guy with serious integrity, and he's putting his money where his mouth is. This is *punk!*") Beginning with last year's *The Hard Stuff* and continuing with the brand new *Dangerous Madness*, Kramer has been utilizing his brash but expressive power-chording to chronicle a landscape that's J.G. Ballard-like in its desolation: Dysfunction rules supreme, your next-door neighbor is stockpiling weapons in his garage, 12-year-olds use pregnancy for revenge and tickets onto Ricki Lake's show. This ain't the world he grew up in, and he reacts the only way he knows how: He writes songs about it.

"We managed to stop a war!" Kramer says of his generation. "But this shit is worse now than it was then. Part of the problem is that the Right is well-financed and well-organized, and there's few voices from the Left to fight back. Newt Gingrich and Phil Gramm and Dole, these guys scare the shit outta me! These are scary motherfuckers! Gingrich has co-opted the language of the counterculture. He's talking about the 'Revolution Of Ideas'? Wait a minute! He ain't talkin' about any fuckin' ideas! He's talkin' about business as usual!"

"What makes me do this is breathing air," Kramer laughs. "It's my belief that work and love equal life, that there's a political utility in work and in music. It's one of the few areas in which we can fight back."—Tim Stegall

IN MY ROOM ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

DEBBY VANDER WALL
BUTTERGLORY

THE CURE
Boys Don't Cry

WEDDING PRESENT
Watusi Out-takes 10"

EMBARRASSMENT
Heyday

NOMEANSNO
The Worldhood Of The World (As Such)

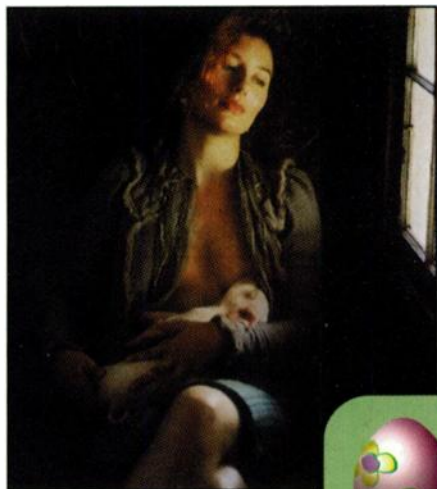
BLACK FLAG
The First Four Years

Random fact:

Hootie And The Blowfish's Cracked Rear View has, to date, sold over 12 million copies, which is more than *Pink Floyd's Dark Side Of The Moon* and near *Meat Loaf's Bat Out Of Hell*. Yikes.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

No Tori, that's not what "suckling pig" means. This photo from the CD booklet included with Tori Amos' *Boys For Pele* shows that it could be unwise to invite the high-pitched singer to a luau.

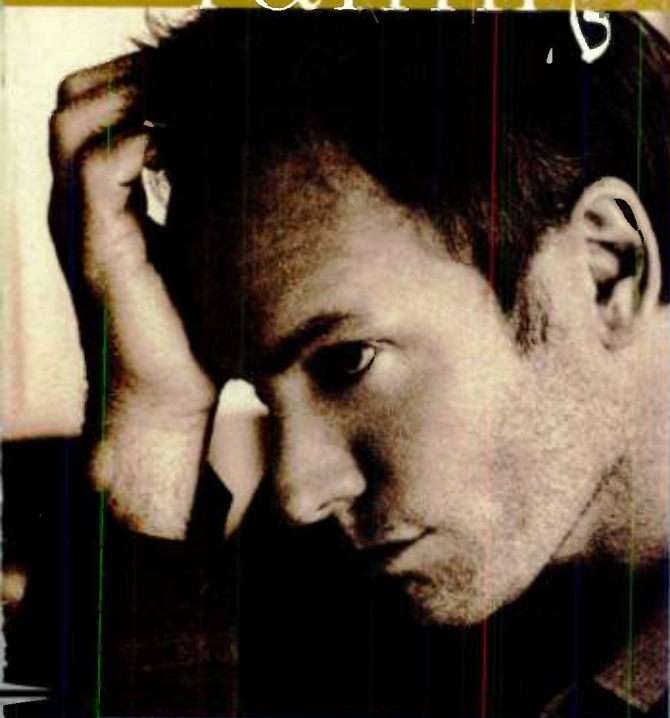


TOURS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Easter Parade: Bunny Brains, Lil Bunnies, Bunnygrunt, Bunny Wailer, Echo And The Bunnymen, Eggs, Red Dye No. 5, Egg Hunt and Easterhouse.

THE NEW ALBUM

mercury
falling



FEATURING
LET YOUR SOUL BE YOUR PILOT
PRODUCED BY HUGH PADGHAM AND STING
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IN STORES NOW

QUICK FIX

BANDIT QUEEN

MIND THE GAPS

"A lot of our songs are kind of about not being an average person. I suppose we write songs for alternative people, really... we don't write songs about marriage with 2.5 kids and a Volvo and a house-estate in Wilmford in England or something. We write songs about the people who to some extent are minorities, I suppose. Maybe I'm wrong—maybe they're not minorities!"

That's Tracy Godding, singer, guitarist and chief songwriter of the Manchester, England, trio Bandit Queen. What her songs are specifically about, bassist Janet Wolstenholme adds, are "the usual things: jealousy, disillusionment, being a kid, PMT, Frida Kahlo..."

Kahlo, the brilliant, iconoclastic painter pictured on the cover of the band's debut, *Hormone Hotel* (Mammoth), is a particular touchstone for the band, who are drawn to outsiders—witness the album's highlight, "Miss Dandys," a paean to women who cross-dress. Godding and Wolstenholme co-wrote four of the songs on the band's debut, *Hormone Hotel* (Mammoth). "There was actually one—they've taken it off the American edition—that David [drummer David Eric Galley] collaborated on," Godding mentions. Why'd they take it off? "Well, I think it *may* have something to do with having the word 'cunt' in it 32 times. We weren't quite sure—maybe it just wasn't as good as the rest of the record."

"Nobody can even tell what it says," Wolstenholme deadpans. "Most people think it's saying 'Kate' or something like that."

"But even without that, it's still a marvelous album, you know," Godding points out. "Spiffing, as they say in England."

All three members of Bandit Queen had played in an earlier band, the lush ensemble Swirl, which had put a few records out (their only American appearance was on the *One Last Kiss* compilation). "By the end, there were six people in the band,"

📀 "MISS DANDYS" BY BANDIT QUEEN APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

INSPIRATIONAL VERSE: "Yes yes, a blunt bear runs—okay. Oooh, yes: tripple trigger—lives. Toot wigger, shim shim shimmy—lives. It's alive, don't you deny—life. It's alive and lives a lick's lick. And you know it. Don't mistify, make a maxnix mix." —The Ex, "Hunt Hat"

COOL THING

As a basketball player, Walt "Clyde" Frazier was the mack, leading the New York Knicks to two championships in the early '70s and becoming the first player since Chuck Taylor to have a shoe named after him—those suede low-top Pumas that resurfaced



and became all but ubiquitous a while back. But it's his second career as the Knicks radio color commentator that's a cool thing indeed. Once famed for a sartorial flair that would shame Superfly, Clyde now draws attention with play-by-play commentary like "Harper is starting to

percolate from the perimeter," "Omnipotent, omnipresent: Ewing's doing" and "both players are pugnacious and loquacious." He's cut down on the rhymes—he says they distract from serious commentary like "look at him run to the bench—that illustrates how pathetic he is," about former Nets center Benoit Benjamin—but every game is good for at least a couple choice ones: "driving and thriving," "dishing and swishing," "swooping and hooping."



Godding says. "We had a violin—it was a bit more poppy, I think."

Bandit Queen, on the other hand, is a streamlined rock trio, with a dry, explosive sound that recalls *In Utero* or the first couple of PJ Harvey albums. "It complements our songs better. We're definitely a song-based band. There's not loads going on—you can hear the lyrics." (They're worth listening to for their intelligence and sly wit—a song called "Oestrogen" borrows Lou Reed's "It's my life/It's my wife.") "We like gaps—sometimes a gap can get more attention from people than a chord. That's one of our techniques. David calls it 'gap-rock'—'where shall we put the gaps?'" —Douglas Wolk

IN MY ROOM

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

BANDIT QUEEN

PATTI SMITH
Easter

STEVIE WONDER
Music Of My Mind

THE AMPS
Pacer

GRIFFERS
Ain't My Lookout

MORPHINE
Yes

MIX TAPE

"Questions and Answers" by Jason Sauls

Side One:

Mighty Mighty Bosstones: Where Did You Go?
Big Head Todd And The Monsters: Kensington Line
Van Morrison: Did Ya Get Healed?
Alice In Chains: I Can't Remember
The Who: Who Are You?
Weezer: My Name Is Jonah
David Gray: What Are You?
The Monkees: I'm A Believer

Side Two:

Dave Matthews Band: What Would You Say?
Jeff Buckley: Lover, You Should Have Come Over
Annie Lennox: Why?
Tom Jones: Somethin' 'Bout You Baby I Like
Nirvana: Where Did You Sleep Last Night?
R.E.M.: I Don't Sleep, I Dream
Dog's Eye View: Would You Be Willing?
James Brown: Get Up (I Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine

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.

The Mysteries of Life

featuring former members of the Blake Babies and Antenna



the first single and video "Going Through The Motions"

from the debut album Keep a Secret on

Management: Dennis Oppenheimer/Performance Group



THE RCA RECORDS LABEL



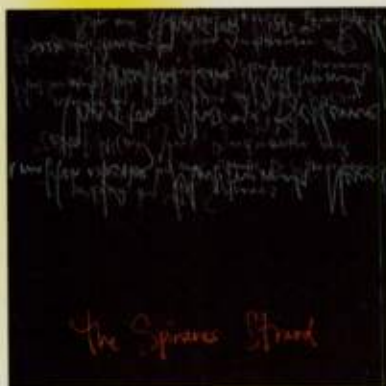
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BEST NEW MUSIC

SPINANES

Strand

Sub Pop



The phrase "not as immediate," applied to a second album by a quick-rising band, is usually code for "impossibly sucky." The second album by the duo of singer/guitarist Rebecca Gates and drummer Scott Plouf, following the CMJ-chart-topping debut *Manos*, is nowhere near as immediate—it has no songs as instantly powerful as "Spitfire" or "Noel, Jonah And Me"; most of its tracks meander along for up to six minutes, occasionally happening on something that looks like a catchy bit, kicking it aside, and continuing on their way. But *Strand* is also a better record than *Manos*. It's more musically accomplished: in particular, Gates has learned a lot about using her low, silky voice—you can hear her concentrating, and the concentration pays off. It's sonically richer: listen for the fragments of piano in "Meridian," and the peculiar low-level percussion all over. And it's subtle enough that once you take the time to follow the songs, they don't lose their flavor with repeated exposure—they creep under your skin rather than jump at you. Plouf has mostly traded his trick of hooking songs with the drums for providing languid grooves on other kinds of percussion (tympañil), though he still does it sometimes, most exquisitely with the handclaps that snatch at the chorus of "Oceanwide" and the dry funk rhythm that underpins the rest of his playing on "Winter On Ice." A couple of pop moments aside, you may not hear much of *Strand* on the radio, but you'll still be listening to it with pleasure in five years.

—Douglas Walk

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27. First single "Madding."

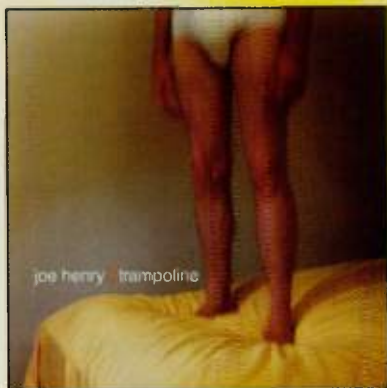
FILE UNDER: Understated, minimal rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Verlaines, Swell Maps, Lois.

JOE HENRY

Trampoline

Mammoth-Atlantic



Poetry is a fancy word for what Joe Henry does. But even when you know full well that *Trampoline's* narratives are better described in terms of the short stories they are, this record's collection of fading voices is so rich and evocative that "poetry" best measures their effect. Wringing poignancy out of prosaic scenes, however, is half of what makes Henry so brilliant; the other half is that his characters all spill their stories at a moment of possibility, so you're left wondering what direction these lives will hobble off in at song's end. On earlier records, like *Short Man's Room* and *Kindness Of This World*, Henry couched his vignettes in bare-boned country melodies, swathing them in little more ornamental than some pedal steel. *Trampoline*, fittingly, is something of a jumping-off point; Henry plays most everything himself (with some help from Helmet's Page Hamilton, Tim O'Reagan and Carla Azar of the Jayhawks, and Bob Dylan's lap steeler Bucky Baxter), and the songs are more elliptical and dream-like, taking on the wilting spirit of their subjects. The spare instrumentation ambles around "Go With God (Topless Shoeshine)" and "I Was A Playboy" like the ghosts the songs describe, while muted noise and shimmering guitars well up around Henry's light and creaky voice (kind of like Vince Gill shaking off a bender) on the title track and "Ohio Air Show Plane Crash." Expressive and boldly artistic, *Trampoline* is a breakthrough record.

—Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 26.

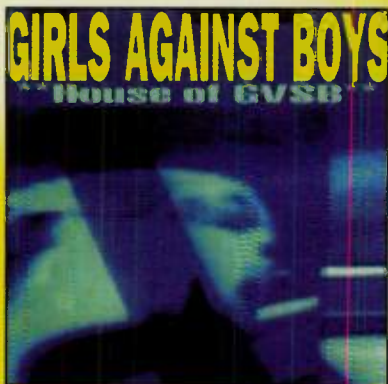
FILE UNDER: Cosmic American music.

R.I.Y.L.: Tom Waits, Latin Playboys, Alejandro Escovedo, R.E.M.'s *Automatic For The People*.

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS

House Of GvsB

Touch And Go



Through three stellar records, Girls Against Boys have earned a reputation for music that's spookily, delinquently sexy. On their fourth and final indie album, the group—looking about as unpretentious as rock gods get—might settle for being labeled just plain sexy. *House Of GvsB* is as cool as anything you'll hear all year, toeing a line between indie daring and an alluring, pure-rock vibe that's as accessible as it is singular. Dare one say it?—what you admire most about GvsB on *House* is their professionalism. With Johnny Temple's bass and Eli Janney's keyboards providing a fat bottom, Scott McCloud's wiry guitar lines are able to pivot and dive, or just hammer out a killer riff. And drummer Alexis Fleisig has been eating his Wheaties; never just a backdrop, he sounds on a few cuts like he thinks he's in a hip-hop band. The GvsB signifier remains McCloud's Mark Sandman-by-way-of-Alice Cooper vocals, which despite their scurrilousness never lurk in the sludge but ring out clear as day. On refrains like "White diamonds/Black pearls," McCloud knows his freak-show singing is a campy gag, and milks it for all it's worth. Picking a favorite song is tough. The booty-shaking "TheKindaMzkYouLike" and the true-to-its-name "Disco Six Six Six" are dance music for the meat-packing district, while "Super-Fire" and "Wilmington" rethink American rock as scorched-earth road music. Four guys, four instruments, buckets of cocksure attitude; if it's this easy, why can't they all do it?

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Mar. 5. First single "Super-Fire."

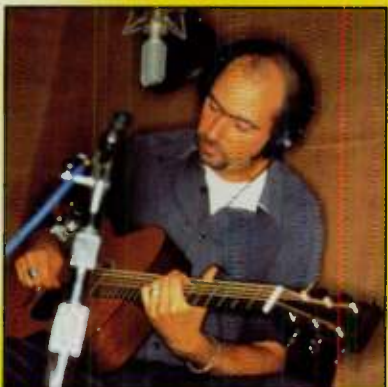
FILE UNDER: Ultra-cool dark rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Morphine, early Cure, the Velvet Underground.

MARK EITZEL

60 Watt Silver Lining

Warner Bros.



Go figure—after American Music Club made its most band-oriented record last year, frontman Mark Eitzel went and broke up the band. He's taken back the spotlight on *60 Watt Silver Lining*, with soaring, loungey tunes that he seems, like a '40s crooner, to be singing only to you. This intimacy is a little disconcerting when he's singing lines like "We're like whitefish beached all day on a hot parking lot," but that's his point; while the light piano and sax rub Vaseline on the lens, Eitzel reveals a little more than you'd like to hear. As usual in Eitzel's solo work, *Silver Lining*'s songs are more like compressed novels, with loose, swinging tempos to accommodate their surfeit of names, years, places, and verbal and emotional heft. All of them are about isolation in one way or another, whether it's the self-imposed isolation of "a head filled with shopping lists and politics and a hollow-eggshell kind of frailty," or the parting described in "When My Plane Finally...." As he sings on "Mission Rock," "There's always more ties you can sever," and for Eitzel, there's always more songs you can write about it.

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 19.

FILE UNDER: Hyperarticulate lounge music.

R.I.Y.L.: American Music Club, Richard & Linda Thompson, Barbara Manning (solo).

STEREOLAB

Emperor Tomato Ketchup

Elektra



It's frequently asserted that Stereolab owes an awful lot to a couple of earlier bands, and that all its songs sound the same. Both of these assertions are true: track down a copy of the reissue of *Neu 2* by the mid-'70s German band Neu, put on "Für Immer," and you'll hear the archetype of half the songs in Stereolab's repertoire. What's pointed out less often is that Stereolab is actually a better band than any of its sonic forbears—unlike any of them, this group has never made a bad record—and that it works so many variations on its basic formula of two guitar chords, two French-accented female voices, one analog keyboard drone and lots of neo-Marxist lyrics that you can't tell that all the songs sound the same unless you're not really listening very hard. *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* is the most stylistically varied Stereolab album to date, although that's a relative statement: The band has what it does down to such a science that even small variations signify. But with the production aid of Tortoise's John McEntire, the album plays up those variations in its rich, precise mix (turn it up and fractally curling instrumental details come into focus). This time, every song has some element that establishes its own identity: the retrofuturist funk of "Metronomic Underground," the conversational twin-guitar root of "Tomorrow Is Already Here," the Beach Boys/Serge Gainsbourg hybrid of "Cybele's Reverie." Stereolab still sounds like a group of technicians at the top of their profession, but now it sounds like it's having fun too. —Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Release date: Apr. 9. First single "The Noise Of Carpet."

FILE UNDER: Backwards into the future.

R.I.Y.L.: French film music, Krautrock, Tortoise.

"This is my first interview I've done in a year," apologizes Jeff Martin of Idaho, as he sweetly stumbles through yet another answer. No problem. Expressing emotion verbally can be difficult, and doing it through music isn't any easier. Yet over the course of the past couple years, on two albums and a handful of EPs, the California songwriter has done just that, wrenching more feeling out of his guitar than you'd think six strings could accommodate, and topping it with disconsolate vocals.



idaho

His new release, *Three Sheets To The Wind*, continues that pattern. But gorgeous songwriting aside, two other redeeming factors should silence naysayers who dismiss his miserablism as a folly of retarded adolescence: Idaho varies the musical tone throughout (the initial one-two punch of the quiet "If You Dare," followed by the rowdy "Catapult," is a fine example), and Martin sticks so doggedly to his narrow scope that the subtle nuances of despair take on a larger, poetic scale. By keeping his vocals mixed low, and enunciating only half of the time (usually dropping off mid-couplet), Martin ensures close listening. Lines like "I'll watch the sun go out" ("Shame") and "Late December is what I'm feeling" ("Alive Again") don't sound absurd, because it's phrases like this that make up the bulk of his lexicon—they make sense in the context of Idaho.

The musical part comes easily. "I've always been good at it," Martin claims. "I remember I was a very good improvisational pianist when I was young. At three or four, I could sit down and write songs at the piano." But that's only half of the story. "I dread writing lyrics," he admits. "I don't know who to get mad at that I have to do it." He puts the task off until late in the creative process. "I write them after the music. I'm starting to feel compelled to jot things down now. I'm so unorganized. I generally don't have a cassette deck, or even a pen, so I say 'oh, fuck it' and it's gone."

Regardless, Martin has been writing more songs of late, only a fraction of which made it to *Three Sheets* (four others surfaced on last year's EP *The Bayonet* (Fingerpaint)). When Martin rehearses with the rest of Idaho—additional guitarist Dan Seta, drummer Mark Lewis, and bassist Terry Borden—he records the whole session. "We come up with three or four song ideas, practically complete, per rehearsal. I've never had this happen before. We had a huge job this year, to go back and mine through all of this stuff."

Having the first steady line-up since Idaho's inception helped, too. "There really is a band now," Martin stresses. "In a perfect world, I wouldn't have to go out and tour and could do everything by myself. I think there's a real essence to that stuff I do on my own. But it was so aggravating to play it live that I was forced to seek people to play with—people who can write their own parts that I don't hate. The band has emerged from that, and now were really coming into our own."

And then there's Marty Brumbach, who's been producing Idaho since its debut EP, *The Palms*, back in 1993. "He really is a fifth band member," Martin confides. "He has these great organizational talents, and he's a great balance for me. He's really an adult, where I'm still groping around and figuring out

what the fuck I'm doing here. He's able to come in, and keep things anchored, yet he knows when to leave me alone.

"I don't think that the first record would have gotten finished if he hadn't been around," he adds a minute later, "because John and I really didn't know how to finish songs."

A flag goes up at the mention of Martin's former partner in Idaho, John Berry, who found himself without a band following *Year After Year* due to his heroin addiction. What became of him? "He's just still so messed up," says Martin, his volume dropping a notch. "I think he's in drug rehab again. It's too bad. Even up 'til a couple months ago, I'd call him, and he'd pick up the guitar and play something over the phone, and it would just be so good."

"I don't know what's going to happen to him," he continues. "I'm surprised he's alive, actually, and glad and grateful that's he's where he is, because he thrives in that environment. When he first went to rehab, he actually became a spokesman and traveled around, and became highly respected and helped a lot of people. And he really loved that. But then we started working together, and I think the music brought him back into that mind set."

The narcotic feeling of Idaho's music didn't leave with Berry, though, and as the title suggests, *Three Sheets* is drinking music. Not raise-a-glass-of-good-cheer drinking music, but God-I'm-so-lonely drinking music: Hank Williams on codeine. "I notice that, unfortunately, listening to Idaho makes me want to go into that spiritual, chemically-induced sort of escape," concurs Martin. "It angers me. I want to start writing some earthbound, boring music that I can listen to while making breakfast."

Fat chance. But while devoted fans might be hard-pressed to agree, surely there are songs in the band's catalog he finds at least moderately uplifting?



L-R: Mark Lewis, Dan Seta, Jeff Martin, Terrance Borden

PHOTO BY MARINA CHAVEZ

"They're all uplifting to me," he jokes, before confessing that he can't think of any that fit that adjective. "It's funny—the most uplifting in tone, but not necessarily the lyrics, is 'One Sunday' off of *Year After Year*—the chords and almost slightly swing/funk beat. It's definitely a love song, about a relationship that has just ended."

Martin is elusive about his own romantic side. He wrestles with the ugly adage that love only finds those who don't seek it. "I believe that's possibly true," he sighs. "I'm just very impatient, and I don't believe it's going to happen. But I know by looking for it, it never works. I've been trying since I had my last steady relationship, and all of my efforts to replace it have proved futile. They definitely come up sour every time."

"Personally, I don't think I could be with someone a lot, right now. I need to be by myself. But I'm feeling a definite void that is getting a little gnawing."

Admittedly shy, Martin forms few friendships, most of them through his music. That wasn't always the case. "In high school, I had a solid group of friends, and was pretty much a normal teenager." But after graduation, he relocated to England. "London, by nature, is gloomy and cold in the winter, and at that point I went into this transformation," he recalls. "I got very, very depressed, and spent hours alone, drinking gin and reading George Orwell and listening to a lot of Bowie and that gothic, dark shit, Red Lorry Yellow Lorry and Joy Division."

Fortunately, the friendship Martin has solidified with Idaho's bassist seems to be steering him towards a little more human contact. "He is just a wild man," he says of Borden. "It's been fun to get to know him, because I've never been able to go out and have wild nights and meet people, and he's

become a catalyst for me, for a lot of stuff I didn't get to live through."

And that worries him, when he thinks about the two of them touring together soon. "I find that I start to abuse myself too much on the road, because I'm still terrified to play live," he admits. "I drink too much and eat shitty food. I'm a pretty sensitive person physically. I have really bad back, I almost had an ulcer, all these weird problems with my body. I definitely need to take better care of myself next time we go out on the road."

In the meanwhile, Martin has been investing a lot of energy into fixing up the house he just bought in Laurel Canyon. "I love it. I was given some cookbooks for Christmas and I've been cooking. I bought old carpets and all the stuff for my bed." The enthusiasm is understandable; up until a couple years ago, the 31-year-old still lived with his parents. "The only times I've really lived on my own, and had a house and a girlfriend, it lasted for about a year and a half. I find it hard to keep a place out of chaos."

Amidst all this talk of relationships and setting up house, I break down and tell Martin why I've been a fan of his music since the first time I heard it: I was turned on to Idaho by someone who eventually broke my heart. *The Palms* is a landmark on the emotional highway of my life. "I get a few stories like that," he admits, offering little consolation, "about people listening to Idaho during relationships and having it be a really good touchstone." He chuckles. "Not to pat myself on the back." **END**

DISCOGRAPHY

"Skyscape" 7" (Ringers Lactate) 1993
The Palms EP (Caroline) 1993
Year After Year (Caroline) 1993
 "Fuel" 7" (Caroline) 1994
This Way Out (Caroline) 1994
The Bayonet EP (Fingerpaint) 1995
Three Sheets To The Wind (Caroline) 1996

by Kurt B. Reighley

bad religion

revolution as a

Forget all those stories about what's supposedly killing punk: the massive airplay, the indiscriminate fans, the tiresome rants in *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll*. On a cold January evening in midtown Manhattan, 11 floors above Sixth Avenue in one of those stale hotels that still pass for class in this aging city, what's killing punk might just be... the pizza.

"See, I told you Stage Deli sandwich, but you had to have the 'za!" Bad Religion bassist Jay Bentley chides guitarist Greg Hetson, who is glancing at a depressingly greasy pizza box that once housed a supper he may live to regret. "I hate the 'za!" Hetson yells back, as much to himself as to Bentley, as if he wasn't thinking straight when the box came around. Bentley, having eaten his sandwich, seems more at ease.

Actually, the whole place feels like kindergarten after snack time. Bentley, Hetson, drummer Bobby Schayer and guitarist Brian Baker sit in comfortable chairs around the room, but with a restless energy that could come from cabin fever, newly consumed calories, or both: They squirm in their seats, taking turns hopping in and out of their chairs for a Coke, a telephone break, an excuse to step out on the terrace. The members of Bad Religion are promoting their ninth album and their second for a major label, *The Gray Race*. Getting them to talk seriously about the album or anything is, at first, a challenge. Bentley jokes that they're all New Yorkers and that this musty hotel room is their home: "No fireplace—but it feels comfortable, right?"

To be fair, these guys may as well call this home—their rock 'n' roll family has survived 15 years of challenges, bigger than bad dinners and humdrum hotels. Punk was always supposed to be about destruction, about tearing down walls, physical and philosophical, about taking tradition out with the wash; but Bad Religion has been about creating, building, establishing. Launched in 1980, when the band members were about 15, Bad Religion rose up from Southern California's thriving hardcore scene with less fanfare than many of its more illustrious peers (Black Flag, Circle Jerks) but with a strange will to survive, even through a four-year hiatus in the mid-'80s that served as a temporary *de facto* breakup.

Now in their early 30s, these guys are riding a string of revered punk albums with a solid rhythmic attack and an attention to sonic detail, from 1982's exuberant *How Could Hell Be Any Worse?* to late-'80s classics *Suffer*, *No Control* and *Against The Grain*, standards against which many a young punk band are measured. The rock lifestyle, however modestly they've experienced it, is one they take in stride. "I'm in a band because that's what I know how to do," says Bentley offhandedly. "When I was 15, someone asked me to play a bass. I said, 'What's a bass?' 'It's the guitar-like thing with only four strings.' 'Oh, okay.' I mean, why not?"

Still, there's a key family member missing. That would be lead singer and songwriter Greg Graffin, clean-cut and dressed in a logo-free T-shirt and jeans. His lanky frame drifts in and out of the room, avoiding the pizza, making phone calls, and discussing plans with a frazzled publicist to fly home to his wife and two kids in Ithaca, New York after this junket.

Graffin is not only the band's leader; he is their psychic center and a chief source of their sound. The melodies he sings, which he says derive from the folk music he listened to as a kid, define Bad Religion not just as thrash-masters but as genuine songsmiths. And his wordy, challenging lyrics, with more syllables per verse than anything this side of Paul Simon, got Bad Religion dubbed as leaders of a new school of "thesaurus rock." When he finally joins his bandmates on the couch, the mood in the room changes palpably—kindergarten settles down just a bit.

by Chris Molanphy

survival strategy



L-R: Bentley, Heston, Schayer, Baker, Gaffin

Drummer Schayer, who joined five years ago, is a sort of semi-veteran of the band. Brian Baker, formerly of hardcore greats Minor Threat and Dag Nasty, joined the band on tour in 1994 to replace founding guitarist Brett Gurewitz. *The Gray Race*, produced by former Car Ric Ocasek of all people, is Baker's first album as a full member.

The three Bad Religion members who date back to the beginning, Gaffin, Bentley and (just a bit later) Heston, remember their early days as being marked by a camaraderie among the bands of the SoCal scene—and, unfortunately, a pecking order. "We were sort of on this second tier of bands," says Gaffin. "Greg [Heston] here was two-timing us in the Circle Jerks, and they had access to stuff we didn't have."

Heston smiles sheepishly. "Hey, I got you guys the use of the Circle Jerks' van," he recalls. "You used me for that."

The main thing other bands had that Bad Religion needed was a record deal. The band started its own label, Epitaph, at first just as a conduit for its own albums. From the beginning, though, Gurewitz took a passionate interest in the indie-rock biz, and by the late 1980s, he started signing other bands (NOFX, Pennywise, Rancid) and devoted more of his time to turning Epitaph into an indie heavyweight.

That finally paid off in 1994, when Epitaph sold five million albums by a little band called Offspring. "Mr. Brett" announced his departure from Bad Religion after the band recorded *Stranger Than Fiction*—its first major-label release. At the time, band members spoke in the press about a separation that was inevitable and seemingly amicable. But it's a subject that seems to bring out conflicting emotions.

"I was in L.A., and I actually bumped into him at this taco stand," Bentley says. "It was fine—you know, 'Hey, what's up.' But for whatever reason, I really don't see him much any more."

Neither does Gaffin, but he isn't around to hear Bentley's story or to give his own unhappy spin on Gurewitz's departure. Luckily, he is willing to take the time for a one-on-one chat after making that trip home to Ithaca.

A week later, Gaffin is enjoying a well-earned day off (from everything except a chat with an eager journalist) in his home studio, which is his private retreat. He lives in Ithaca in large part because he's getting his degree there—a Ph.D. in evolutionary biology at Cornell. Over the years, Gaffin's studies have had an impact on his lyrics and uneasy worldview. *The Gray Race* finds him more wary than ever, giving voice not only to the restless adolescent ("Empty Causes," "Nobody Listens") but also the cynical adult concerned about scary global trends ("Ten In 2010," about the possibility that the population might double in 15 years) and the increasing emphasis on hate in social discourse ("Them And Us").

Away from his bandmates and the promo whirlwind, Gaffin explains how 15 years on the intellectual outskirts of punk has given him a unique perspective on music, social commentary, and how he makes his living.

I understand the Ph.D. is on hold.

Yeah, it's something I can always go back to. At this point of my life, the time I have to devote to research is cut way back.

Is the band a major contributing factor?

The band is one thing, but also my family—the kids are two and four years old, so that's getting to the point where it takes time out of the career.

What music do you play around the house for your kids?

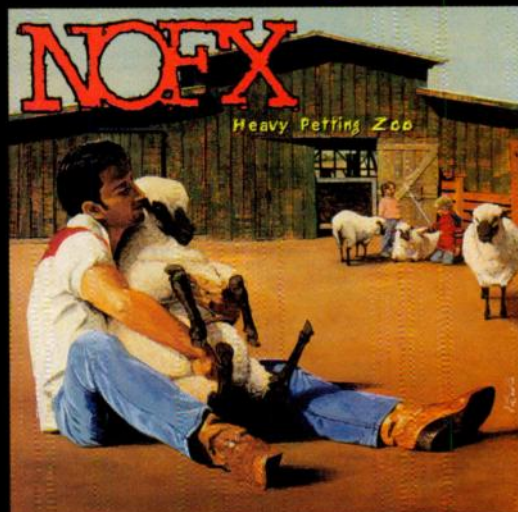
Bad Religion, of course. I mean, my son is always playing around in my studio, and there's always Bad Religion demos playing. You know. I think there's something really innate about our music and their desire to slam—this fast, galloping rhythm just drives the kids to distraction.

Tell me about the title of the album. The Gray Race is the human race?

Yeah, exactly. We as humans are given this compassion that allows us to see shades of gray. Animals don't have that conceptual reference point—they know either to run away or to fight, that it's time to eat or to sleep. The metaphor that would describe them is black-and-white. But the ironic thing is that man has this evolutionary gift, this ability to see the grays, but the framework of the world is set up in black and white. For instance, when we think of the most successful people—I'm not applauding this—they're the ones who think in terms of profit and loss... the

NOFX

Heavy Petting Zoo



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shades of gray—political, social—are nonexistent. To get along in society, compassion has to fall by the wayside, and that, I think, is man's big dilemma.

How does your music play into that? Does it exorcise fears?

I'm not afraid a lot, just disappointed. I guess the more I experience, the more I take comfort in knowing that everyone follows these same trends in life. You know, birth, maturity, some sort of mid-life crisis—well, before that, I guess you try to find something to do, a career...

Where are you in this whole cycle? I mean, you started the band so young, so you've just turned 30 recently...

Yeah, I'm 31 now. I guess I'm going through a sort of early mid-life crisis [laughs]. Which is kind of good, 'cause I'm getting it over with now.

What do you think the new generation of kids listening to punk is seeking?

Well, they're kids, and they wanna be rocked. Hopefully, they also want to see and hear something thought-provoking, something more meaningful than just the T-shirt expression.

Having Brian as a full band-member—how has that changed the dynamics?

You know, it didn't change the dynamics as much as Brett leaving did. To understand the dynamics, you have to understand what it was like before, with two songwriters in the band, but with different missions. Brett was more up on the marketing side of things, and that's what his strong point was... his great vision was marketing, and building Epitaph and making it an empire. My vision was furthering the idea of the band, of sharing and interacting with people, and that caused a lot of friction. And so, when he left and Brian came in, Brian wasn't really concerned about preserving this long-term image of Bad Religion. He has an image of his own. So we just focused on the album. That allowed me the freedom to accomplish my ideas, because that pressure was off.

What's your relationship with Brett now?

Well, I live 3,000 miles from the guy; when I'm in L.A., I might see him, but it's been a while since we've seen or talked with each other.

You said previously that he might contribute in some small way to the band.

That was what I thought at the time, but that hasn't proven to be the case.

Now that the band members live all over the country, the times you do see each other, is the relationship still going strong?

Actually, yeah, it's a lot better now—as I was saying, with that pressure gone, everybody knows what their role is, and that's so important.

Everybody agrees that you've been very influential on the current wave of punk bands. What's it like to hear your sound in other bands' music?

[laughs] I think I have to fight myself to acknowledge it. I'm always very populist in my philosophy, that music is for everybody—when I give something, I don't peg it as Bad Religion property. But then when other people tell me... then I start to concede the point: "Yeah, okay, I can hear our sound in that."

You've outlasted most of your contemporaries. How long do you think Bad Religion will go on?

Oh, man, that's like me asking you how long you're going to write. Probably the rest of your life. So, you know, I hope that we'll always be around. **END**

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Against The Grain (Epitaph) 1990

Generator (Epitaph) 1992

Recipe For Hate (Epitaph) 1993

Stranger Than Fiction (Epitaph-Atlantic) 1994

All Ages (Epitaph) 1995

The Gray Race (Atlantic) 1996



MARION

CHIPS, SALSA AND SCHOOLBOY TRAUMA

—
BY TOM LAPHAM

Jaime Harding says he's never had any real friends, no club-hopping or film-going pals to call his own. Other schoolkids would occasionally show some interest in him—let him hang around with them awhile. "But after a month or so, we'd just sort of lose interest in each other," he sighs, in between bites of salsa and chips at a hip San Francisco taqueria. And of course, there's a very good reason Jaime—who currently fronts the British Goth-pop combo Marion—was shunned as a teen: "I always had an overriding passion for just what I'm doing now and nothing else, and nobody else understood that but the band. My parents didn't understand either, at first—we came from a poor family, so it was hard to convince them that we wanted to lay in bed all day and then play rock 'n' roll music all night."

Harding's hardships have paid off. The proof is there in the grinding grooves of Marion's dark-textured debut, *This World And Body* (London)—only 20 years old, the lad has got all the star quality of a young Bono (plus some spooky vocal similarities). Even in his poochy Mod parka, minus a full night's sleep, he radiates a seasoned charisma, and he's got the chic haircut, skinny pants and pointy boots to match. In short, Harding's the next MTV Alternative Nation idol just waiting to happen. And if he's singing *this* stylishly already—in a dreamy nap-after-Sunday-dinner drone—it's downright scary to think how polished he's bound to become.

Harding's been noting some rapid improvement, as well. "My voice is coming along more and more, getting better all the time," he believes. "Honestly, it's like, I look back a week ago today and wish my voice then could've been as good as it is this week. It's changing all the time, and I'm fine-tuning it as I go along." His big secret? "Basically, I just sing how I feel—I just get it out." Old classmates, he adds, are "shocked when they see me on television, because I never told anyone I wanted to be a singer. So when they see this guy who never really spoke much there on the TV singing, it must seem totally bizarre."

School, naturally, isn't difficult for this artist to recall. It was only a couple of years ago. And mainly, it was a big thorn in his side. "School just got in the way of what we were doing all the

time," says Harding. "I'd sit there in class just thinking about lyrics, thinking about songs, thinking about playing gigs and making records. That's all I've thought about for as long as I can remember. And every time I'd get something I wanted, I didn't sit on that satisfaction for any length of time—I was right into the next thing, I just kept on going."

This World And Body is eager to please. Tracks like "Sleep," "Wait," and "Fallen Through" are steeped in sinister steeple-high chords (courtesy of Tony Grantham and Phil Cunningham) and Harding's anxious, subtly tortured lyrics. Inspirations are of an unexpectedly fine vintage: the spooky, visceral poetry of Leonard Cohen, whom Harding adores, and the primal, tomb-intoned wallop of Joy Division. "I like the fact that Ian Curtis wouldn't have opened his mouth unless he felt strongly about something," purrs Harding, who's frequently visited Curtis' grave to pay his respects. "He would not have sung those lyrics just for the sake of it—he was completely emotionally driven, which really held up with me."

And that's where Marion hopes to stand alone. According to its leader, it's not a big thrill being "lumped in with the whole Brit-pop thing, because I think our music is very different from all the other bands that are happening in the UK. We do wanna connect with people, we do want people to listen to the record, and if it's something they can relate to and think 'I feel a little bit like that,' then that's brilliant. But all the other bands are more interested in chart positions and clothes, to be honest. Whereas it matters to me to be singing and having people get something from it, because all through my life that's the only thing that's kept me going—music. Listening to bands, going to see bands play live and being blown away, and having it be the most special hour that I've spent that month."

Lately, this youth has been preoccupied with death, worrying that he'll kick the bucket before he completes Marion's half-finished sophomore disc. Sounds a lot older than 20, doesn't he? Harding rolls his eyes—he's heard that a million times before. "I'm sure I'm about 40, and everyone who knows me thinks I'm 40, too. I drive a Volvo, you know what I mean? And I actually bought it myself!"

**They're
arrogant,
they're
snotty,
they're
contentious,
and they
admit
to stealing
other
people's
songs.**

**What's not
to like?**



OASIS





WTS

BY TOM LANHAM

It's fast becoming one of modern rock's basic rules of safety: Mess with the brothers Gallagher—sneering singer Liam and songwriter/guitarist Noel—and you're most assuredly courting disaster. It's a lesson one hapless journalist recently discovered the hard way. Attempting to interview a less-than-charitable Liam backstage at the Berkeley Community Theatre—where Manchester's favorite sons were headlining the Live-105 Green Christmas festival—the writer ran headlong into a wall of acerbic sarcasm. "What th' fook is up wit' yoor hair?" growled the Gallagher, derisively. A minute later, the obstreperous Oasis mouthpiece (sporting a strange hairstyle himself, with Louise Brooks bangs and spicurls arcing over his ears like little ram's horns) raced from his dressing room to confront Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, who had innocently borrowed one of the band's bottles of whiskey. And that was it—end of interview.

At roughly the same time, guitarist Noel thunked down on some echoey stairwell steps for a more professionally handled chat. But it was clear from the start that he and Liam were cut from the same abrasive cloth. Discussing his participation in *Help*, a Bosnia-benefit album that also featured longtime Oasis idol Paul McCartney, Gallagher swore the only advice the ex-Beatle offered him was "Don't marry a Japanese woman." After a pause and a quick puff on his cigarette, he added "I'm jokin', of course!" But with Oasis, you're never too sure. The irascible outfit may have finally reached the Top 10 with (*What's The Story*) *Morning Glory?* (Epic) and its flagship hit single,

"Wonderwall," but how it got there is a story more suitable for the *National Enquirer* than a respectable rock mag.

Here's a quick broomful of Oasis dirt. In the space of three short years, the Gallaghers, either separately or together, have: a) Wished an AIDS-related death on Damon Albarn of chart foes Blur; b) Lusted in print after Albarn's girlfriend, Justine Frischmann of Elastica; c) Fistfought with each other, mid-tour, until Liam disappeared for days and Noel was forced to sing his own compositions himself; d) When not beating up on each other, quarrelled verbally to the point where one such argument, a 14-minute excerpt from a radio interview, has been released as a bootleg single in Britain; and e) Purloined so blatantly from pop's past that everyone from David Bowie to Coca-Cola has tried to sue them. But turnabout is fair play. As of this writing, the #1 single overseas is a lounge-act sendup of "Wonderwall," performed by the campy wide-lapelled crooner Mike Flowers Pops. And—lest we think the siblings totally callous—they did recant the Blur slam. It wasn't that they bore any ill will toward the gay population or people suffering from AIDS, went Noel's statement in a nutshell; he merely wanted to communicate how much he hated Albarn. And this year's winners for the "open mouth, insert foot" award are...

Just like in that hysterical-passenger scene from *Airplane*, right about now folks are probably forming a long line to smack the Gallaghers senseless. But don't start the pistol-whipping just yet. Sit down with *Morning Glory*, check out the music. Oasis may flaunt the edgy rock 'n' roll lifestyle, but they've got the sonic chops to back it up. And then some. As with a pint of Guinness, the songs kick up a thick, frothy head before sliding down your gullet in dark, viscous waves, creating, in the process, a Beatles-y buzz that swims in your system for hours. Sure, they nick and plunder—the opening piano line from "Don't Look Back In Anger," as well as lines such as "Gonna start a revolution from my bed," are prime John Lennon. The title and acoustic guitar strum of "Wonderwall" are more than a passing nod to George Harrison, while its verses—"And all the roads we have to walk are winding"; "Backbeat, the word is on the street that the fire in your heart is out"—



Stevie Wonder-borrowing "Step Out" (which Wonder's publishing initially refused to license for inclusion on *Morning Glory*). Forget all the outrageous behavior—this guy is easily one of our most important young songwriters, a true music fan who's in the biz for all the right reasons. No wonder seven—count 'em, seven—Oasis singles are lodged on the UK Top 75, at present.

The weasel-throated Liam provides a perfect foil for his behind-the-scenes sibling. It's his condescending, spittle-coated singing persona that puts these numbers across, the equivalent of a particularly pompous Hollywood star ordering his go-fers around on the set. Live, there's the added thrill of watching him throw occasional tantrums and stalk offstage, leaving Noel alone—but confident—at the mic. What is it about Oasis' music that makes it so special,

Just like in that hysterical-passenger scene from *Airplane*, right about now folks are probably forming a long line to smack the Gallaghers senseless.

are more blatant in their Fab Four allusions. And that's not all, says Noel. In case you missed it, "The end of 'She's Electric' is 'Get By With A Little Help From My Friends.' I just nicked off a bit of that—I don't care, I don't worry what people say about it. It's like 'Fucking sue me, see if I care!' And they do."

Gallagher lights up another smoke, shrugs like nothing gets to him. He sees musical history as sort of an endless buffet table, just waiting for him to dig in. "I mean, there are bits there to be used," he states. "And I can't wait until about four or five years from now, when I hear one of my songs on the radio, but it's by some other young band. I'd think 'Cheeky bastards!' but it's fuckin' fair play. It's what it's there for." If Gallagher were a mere revivalist, the story could end here. But—like many great composers before him—he assimilates his purist '60s influences, whips them through a stylistic centrifuge, then spoons out a fresh-tasting wall-of-guitars concoction that's like nothing you've ever imbibed before—an exotic cocktail in the malt-liquor '90s. And this is only the tip of the Oasis iceberg—four times a year, like clockwork, the band issues another overseas CD single with three bonus Gallagher originals. And none are throwaways, from the jangly "Rocking Chair" and TV-themish "Round Are Way," to the new

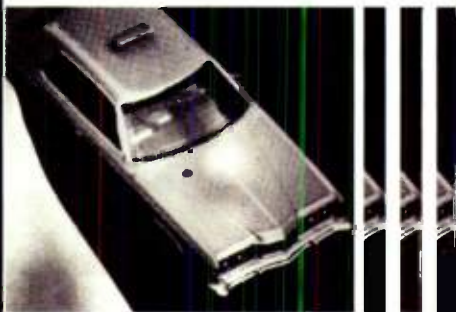
that has people falling over themselves to claim this as the beginning of another British Invasion? Noel doesn't hesitate to respond. "It's no-nonsense. You don't have to think about it. Well, you do have to think about the music, 'cause some of the songs are quite deep, but by the end of the day, we're probably the only band—especially right now, and definitely in England, if not in the world—where you can just go out and have a fucking good time at the gig and not worry about the artistic value."

"Bands like Sonic Youth—no disrespect to them, but it's art-rock, ya know what I mean? It's like, 'Let's make the biggest bunch of noise we can and fucking do people's heads in!' Whereas with us, it's like, we want people to have a good time, we want people to just sing the lyrics and not be worried about why they're singing them or what it means. Just to sing 'The sink is full of fishes and she's got dirty dishes on the brain' and not worry about it."

To look at the 28-year-old Gallager (Liam is a more unruly 23), in his bowl haircut, unassuming suede jacket, sweatshirt, black jeans and Hush Puppies, you'd never guess that this is one of the hardest-partying men in rock (the *Morning Glory* title track, in fact, glorifies a cocaine hangover). Why does Oasis act like they don't care? Simple, snaps their leader. "We don't care! At the end of the day,

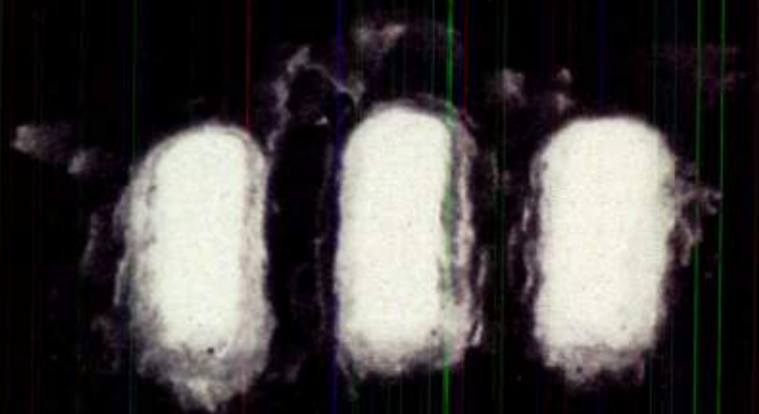


POSSUM DIXON



STAR MAPS

POSSUM DIXON STAR MAPS



new album
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the car stops... and the car stops... and the car stops...



it's about making good records. But in the meantime, you're supposed to be young and carefree and not give a shit about what people say and just go out and have a fucking good time." Puff, puff. His lips curl into a scowl. "As opposed to sitting around thinking about things and being all miserable and inward-looking like Eddie Vedder and all the fucking rest of 'em. You know what I mean? Fuck that shit. I'm beyond that. I'm free, I can do what I want, so fuck it! I'm gonna do what I want until I get arrested."

Things were even worse, he adds, when Oasis was just hitting the big time in Britain with *Definitely Maybe*. "We just went mental—we didn't give a fuck about anything. We used to fucking decimate hotels and kick the fucking shit out of each other." Worst incidents? "Oh, too many to mention," Gallagher smirks. "Encouraging [guitarist] Bonehead to wreck hotel rooms used to be one—watching him empty the belongings of his room out the window. He used to do it all the time. And I suppose getting deported from Sweden and getting deported from Holland, all in the same six months." Deported? For what? "Fighting. Just being drunk and getting involved in... Ah, just being young and pissed and falling over tables and then somebody calling the police and then someone would punch a cop on the nose."

Shortly after the Scandinavian scandal, the brothers G. wound up on a radio program, being quizzed about the deportation. Liam swore that their rowdiness was rock 'n' roll in the grand tradition; Noel disagreed. What about the Rolling Stones? piped up the interviewer. At which point Noel remembers interjecting "'The Stones were a great rock 'n' roll band because of 'Get Off My Cloud' and 'Ruby Tuesday'—that's what we remember 'em for, not because they were fucking drug addicts or fucking junkies.' Our Kid [his moniker for Liam] was saying it was different, you see, so we just ended up arguing about it for 14 minutes, and then we got into a fight." And then onto the fabled argument single. "It's on the charts right now in England," he snickers.

What, exactly, is the Gallaghers' relationship all about? "It's brothers," Noel explains. "If I wrote the music and he wrote the words—if it were a partnership of songwriters—then I would say, 'Make a big deal out of [our fighting],' because we'd actually have to come up with a compromise about songwriting. But brothers will always have this thing where one wants to be better than the other, and that's just a family thing. And then there's the relationship within the group, which is, lead singers and guitarists generally don't get on, and when your lead

singer's your brother, it makes it double-worse. But to us, it's no big deal—we can argue and fight and two minutes later be the best of friends, and then two minutes after that be fighting again."

In truth, the Gallaghers are more interested in scrapping with Blur than with each other. Last fall, Damon Albarn moved the release date of Blur's "Country House" single to coincide with Oasis' "Roll With It," thereby creating a working-class versus middle-class press frenzy and a sales-figure battle that Oasis lost. There's no warmth of forgiveness in Noel's voice as he stomps out a butt and snarls that Albarn will "never be able to say anything that will redeem himself in my eyes for why he done that. That, to me, is the lowest of the low. Why do you wanna fuck with my band's career, mate? Why do you wanna stop us going to #1, just so you could have a #1 single and say 'Well, we're the biggest band in England' when you're fucking not? If he wants to be childish about it, then be childish. But I'd never do that. I've got more morals than that. We're all working against The Man, we're all trying to make a living."

And you can feel it hanging in the stairwell air—another Oasis-ism is on its way. "The thing that gets me is, people will say [Blur's] the Beatles and we're the Stones. The fact of the matter is, we're the Beatles *and* the Stones, and they're the fucking Monkees." Outside the stair door, Liam stalks by, obviously pissed about something else. Later that night, he'll pout in the wings while his brother does his vocal duty on "Wonderwall" (as he's reportedly been doing for a few months) and, inexplicably, "Don't Look Back In Anger." Another sibling feud? Who knows? Who cares?

"We're just working-class guys, man," Gallagher nearly apologizes. "And we're quite happy with the position we're in—we realize how lucky we are. But if we don't have a good time *doing* it, then people aren't gonna have a good time *listening* to it. So every time we go into a recording studio, it's a fucking six-week party until it's finished, and the music never suffers, because we feel too strongly about the music to just go in there fucked up and not bother to do it right or be sloppy or stay up all night taking drugs or whatever. The music comes first."

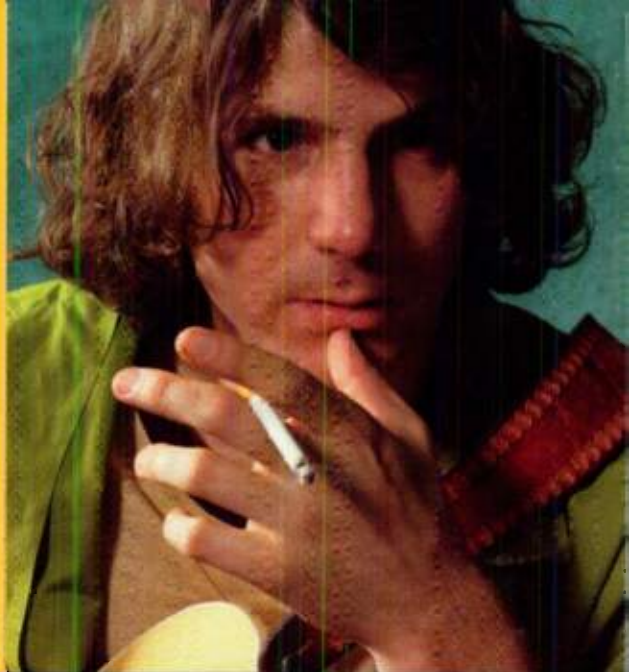
And afterwards? Another patented Gallagher smirk. "We get fucking fucked up beyond *all* recognition. We go mental, we go absolutely ballistic and we trash the studio." Does he ever worry that Oasis might self-destruct before his greatest work is accomplished? He shakes his head. "Nah. I've got too much self-discipline for that. I mean, we never, ever go on stage high or out of it. Ever. We're totally sober and clean when we go on stage. After the gig we always have a party. But it's for the fans, you see, because people have paid so much money—it's expensive to see a band, and you should get the best performance you can. And you can't do that if you're fucked up on drugs—I can't do it. I tried to do it, and I just forget what I'm playing and bugger off on some mental tangent about dinosaurs or something."

Wait a minute! Oasis being considerate of someone else's feelings? It's true, Gallagher concedes. "The fans are your lifeblood—they pay your wages. So you can't piss them off."

DISCOGRAPHY

"Columbia" (UK Creation)
 "Supersonic" (UK Creation)
 "Shakermaker" (UK Creation)
 "Live Forever" (UK Creation)
Definitely Maybe (Epic)
 "Cigarettes And Alcohol" (UK Creation)
 "Whatever" (UK Creation)
(What's The Story) Morning Glory? (Epic)
 "Some Might Say" (UK Creation)
 "Roll With It" (UK Creation)
 "Wonderwall" (UK Creation)
 "Don't Look Back In Anger" (UK Creation)

The new album



Acetone

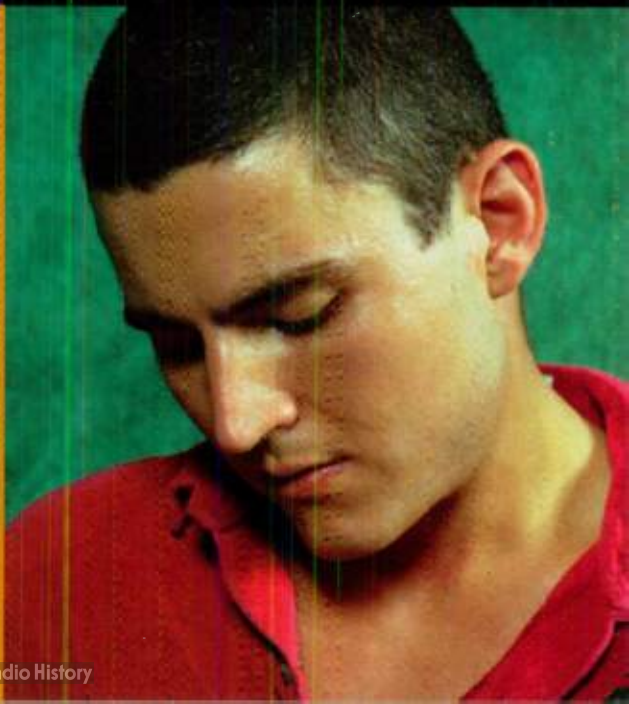
If You Only Knew

on Vernon Yard Recordings
CDs and Cassettes



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World Radio History



three sheets to the wind

the new album
from idaho

Fig. 3.

IDAHO

"I hate the way you won't sit back and love the ride"

<http://www.caroline.com>

Three's the charm...



PG © 1996 Caroline Records, Inc.



1000 MONA LISAS New Disease RCA

Along with acts like Possum Dixon, Campfire Girls and Lifter, 1000 Mona Lisas are part of Los Angeles' new rock royalty, such as it is. These acts, from the emerging Silverlake scene, share a fondness for thick guitars, reedy vocals, and a carefully cultivated aura of grubbiness. 1000 Mona Lisas don't really do anything differently, but merely find interesting ways to do the old same thing, which, on their major-label debut, *New Disease*, they do, and quite nicely. *New Disease* is a dense, tightly constructed record that falls somewhere in between mid-'70s glam and mid-'90s post-grunge. Numbers like the Christian Right-bashing record opener "Dog" show an admirable willingness to take on serious issues that escape most of the band's brethren, even if its evil-of-organized-religion theme has been done to death. And while numbers like "I'd Rather Die Than Have To Touch You" show that the Mona Lisas might want to work on their sense of subtlety a little bit, they at least demonstrate a sense of humor that's as welcome as it is rare. —Allison Stewart

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Trippy, grubby L.A. rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Tripping Daisy, Carnival Art, Jane's Addiction.



ACETONE If You Only Knew Vernon Yard

On *If You Only Knew*, Acetone pours out a cool stream of sleep-rock that will have antsy folks hollering "Come on, get the lead out!" The songs on the trio's second full-length are more crawly than a worm race but, with titles like "I Don't Really Care," "I've Enjoyed As Much Of This As I Can," "Nothing At All" and "Always Late," it seems that the band isn't concerned with reaching the finish line; the beauty lies in the journey itself. Along the way, Richie Lee's wispy vocals are the breeze at the back of Mark Lightcap's careful rhythm-guitar strides and sliding, echoey solos. Lee's mumbled melodies often sound like another guitar line, especially on "If You Only Knew," where, like moments of Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*, gauze-like harmonies nearly melt into the strumming that accompanies them. Elsewhere, on "Nothing At All," Lee and Lightcap's trippy "doo-oo"-ing is eerily similar to some Lennon/McCartney moments. Without getting swallowed up in a quicksand-trap of its influences, Acetone's blurry-eyed rock blends lethargic rhythms and lithe melodies: It doesn't plod itself into the ground or float off into the sky; it just strolls steadily on its course. —Jenny Eliscu

DATALOG: Released Jan. 24.

FILE UNDER: Decaffeinated rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Codeine, Low, Mazzy Star, early Pink Floyd.



AFGHAN WHIGS Black Love Elektra

His voice piercing, double-tracked so his gutbucket pain hits you like a shot, the Afghan Whigs' Greg Dulli sounds more and more like Def Leppard's Joe Elliott. And thank God: The Afghans are arena rock for the alternative age, and this generation desperately needs music by which to raise aloft a lighter. *Black Love* finds the Cincinnati foursome pulling out all the stops. In his lyrics as with his vocals, Dulli throws out subtlety with his ego, and the music crashes all around him like a testosterone symphony. By now the Whigs have a sound: first, guitar and piano ring out a backdrop for Dulli's menacing croon; but by the chorus, a cacophony erupts, with pianos slamming against squalls of feedback, and Dulli is howling. After an EP of soul covers and a live set featuring Barry White and Prince tunes, this follow-up to 1993's pumped-up *Gentlemen* was supposed to consummate the Afghans' soul jones, but what's cool about their R&B fascination is the way it informs their songs, rather than defining them: "Blame, Etc." and "Going To Town" build on disco grooves but remain rooted in heavy rock. *Black Love*'s bigger innovation is in the Whigs' ballads, in which even the strings are loud and lines like "Repeat these words after me, in all honesty," are mantras intoned to an ex-girlfriend who needs to know the hell she caused. After two superb albums of self-flagellating grandeur, the Afghans have forged an identity of post-adolescent empathy. —Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12.

FILE UNDER: Exile in guyville.

R.I.Y.L.: Smashing Pumpkins, Urge Overkill.

AISHA KANDISHA'S JARRING EFFECTS *Shabeesation* Rykodisc

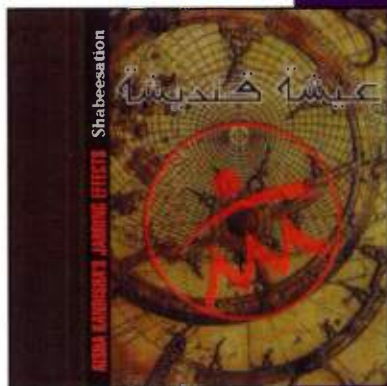
At certain times, in certain places in Morocco, men and women have been known to become possessed by a particularly mischievous and gleefully wicked thousand-year-old spirit named Aisha Kandisha. Some victims become paralyzed, others find their blood turned into ice, most are rendered insane—jarring effects, you see? There is one thing you can do to counter her ill effects. Get ye to a medicine man and give yourself a good solid dose of full-tilt trance-inducing Moroccan healing ceremonies: frenzied dancing, elaborate drumming, occasional self-flagellation, the works. Which brings us to the second album by Aisha Kandisha's Jarring Effects, a Swiss/Moroccan band that takes its name from this wicked spirit's playful/catastrophic ways. Led by Pat Jabbar, the band takes traditional and electric instruments and creates a truly incredible blend of Moroccan space funk, mendina electropop and dub trance rock, with garbled Arabic broadcasts and found sounds throughout. The tapes were flown over to Bill Laswell's studio in New York, where he remixed and overdubbed bass, drum programs and vocals from Umar Bin Hassan of the Last Poets. Generally, the parts of the album that are primarily AKJE are better than the couple of tracks where they're overtaken by Laswell's generic beats and basslines. But overall, the strength of AKJE is not just that it's music from somewhere different, but that it's music from another state of mind entirely.

—James Lien

DATALOG: Released Feb. 6. More info on AKJE available at <http://www.rykodisc.com>

FILE UNDER: Crazy Moroccan disco-funk.

R.I.Y.L.: Bill Laswell, dub reggae, rai music.

**TRACY BONHAM** *The Burdens Of Being Upright* Island

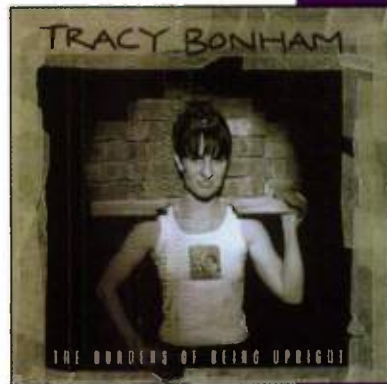
Tracy Bonham picks up her guitar and proves she knows exactly what it takes to be a solo singer/songwriter: you have to be subtle without sounding backboneless, kickass without proving you can't do much more than scream. Bonham has managed to straddle the two fields, taking whatever it is she's heard about guitar rock and making it her own. See, for instance, the opening track, "Mother, Mother," which begins as a tango and quickly accelerates into a cathartic, pulsing release of denial. "I'm hungry, I'm dirty, I'm losing my mind, everything's fine," Bonham screeches into the microphone—who hasn't felt that way at least once a week? Moving swiftly into the fat, '70s guitar riffs of "Navy Bean" and the Hole-like wall of guitar pop on "The One," Bonham spends a lot of time chewing on the duality of life with wry lyrics and the blasting force of her guitar. She can get predictable, however; nearly every song on this debut full-length is schizoid with dynamics. But much can be forgiven in the face of Bonham's relentlessly cynical, amusing lyrics, and the delicate touch she can give to even the dourest songs.

—Rande Dawn

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12.

FILE UNDER: Guitar rock that's smarter than you are.

R.I.Y.L.: Liz Phair, Foo Fighters, Aimee Mann.

**BUTTERGLORY** *Are You Building A Temple In Heaven?* Merge

In the midst of the four-track explosion a few years back, there emerged a humbly simple duo from Kansas. Their early singles showed deliberately amateurish promise, with slender guitar-drum melodies boosted by a moaning organ; 1994's full-length *Crumble* brought them to the studio, though their songs remained slight. Trying to resist the pigeonhole of "slacker band," Butterglory added manpower for live shows and sniffed around for new directions. *Are You Building A Temple In Heaven?* is their answer: a certifiable studio production with several new musicians, including a pianist and the horn section from Lambchop. While a few tracks still sound like standard four-track fare despite the added oomph, most of Butterglory's songwriting has ballooned to match the beef of the new lineup. The band's lyrics retain a small-town charm, but songs are longer and their structures more complex. A few numbers, with their resonant vocals and tender piano, deliver spine-shivering Chills-like beauty. Perhaps some fans will be disappointed at losing the Butterglory they knew, preferring that the band remain in a four-track time warp. But for those who enjoy watching a band mature and respond to developments in its own taste and competence, Butterglory wins the day.

—Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Aging gracefully.

R.I.Y.L.: Chills, Pastels, Lambchop.

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

Butterglory

are you building a temple in heaven?



NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS *Murder Ballads* Reprise

It's all too easy to joke that the world's most mordant saloon singer has been doing murder ballads from out of the womb. But things are never that simple, as anyone with any sort of wisdom knows, and the bald-faced title simply preps you for a collection of pieces Cave claims he's wanted to record for years. By now there's little that can surprise about Cave; when you pick up one of his records, you expect a certain Southern Gothic, highly dramatic, dark brand of music. Not that there's anything boring or predictable about what Cave does, but the only real shocks here are that it's taken Cave so long to record that mother of Southern kill-tunes, "Stagger Lee" (rendered in a thoroughly profane version bearing little melodic or rhythmic resemblance to the familiar one), and that he's duetting with Aussie disco queen Kylie Minogue on one tune ("Where The Wild Roses Grow"). Still, this has got to be some of the darkest, most Brecht-Weill blues Nick Cave's offered yet. And that version of "Build Me Up Buttercup" is hardly on its way. —Tim Stegall

DATALOG: Released Feb. 20.

FILE UNDER: Murder ballads.

R.I.Y.L.: Jim Thompson, Nick Cave, Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard To Find."



CHUNE *Big Hat, No Cattle* Cargo

Through the six lengthy songs on its third album, Chune leaves one grappling with the inevitable dilemma of bands trying to tweak indie-rock conventions: Sleeper or just sleepy? Despite the fact that *Big Hat, No Cattle* has more than its share of pedestrian moments, sleeper wins out. In the band's forays into extended song structures, dramatic volume shifts, and time signature-hopping, it's hampered by the samey-sounding disease and uninspired guitar playing. Andy Harris's vocals often strain for keening emotion, but are much more affecting when he isn't trying so hard; his frequent efforts to be anthemic never hit hard enough to leave a deep impression. And though Art Uilola III's drumming is more than adequate, Chune consistently lacks a few measures of heaviness, or the recklessness to go far enough out on a limb to put itself over the top. Still, "One Man Dream Machine" acquits Chune of the dullness that can plague its genre. The second half is way better than the first, and not just because the closer, "Playboys And Tourniquets," fades off into space so nicely. It's a pretty decent effort from these San Diegans, who seem like they're too smart to pen a facile and obvious anti-music-industry song like "Fishwrap." —Jon Fine

DATALOG: Released Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: Indie-prog.

R.I.Y.L.: Rodan, Seam, Hum, dis-, Hurl.



COMBUSTIBLE EDISON Schizophonic Sub Pop

Lounge lizards, cocktail swillers and those with a taste for bongos and vibraphones will welcome the news that there's a new Combustible Edison album. Let's just say right up front that the whole "lounge revival" is just an excuse for kids to wear cool second-hand smoking jackets and cocktail dresses. Just the same, it's pretty neat the way Combustible Edison brings the past right into your very own living room with an album of bachelor-pad instrumentals and *film noir* torch songs. Completely resisting the urge to throw in any contemporary touches, the band sticks entirely to the musical vocabulary invented by its inspirations, from the Henry Mancini piano breaks on "The Checkered Flag" to the Arthur Lyman vibes on "One-Eyed Monkey." The "schizo" part of the title is a reflection of the fact that each of the band's five members wrote two songs here, with five resulting styles. Keyboardist Peter Dixon's contributions are the most daring, with true "space age" synth sounds and memorably jangly melodies. The originals are rounded out with three covers, including Vic Mizzy's "Morticia" theme from *The Addams Family*, which gets a surprisingly bland treatment. In the end, *Schizophonic* is a musical pastiche, but just as suave and easy to listen to as its precursors.

—Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Retro-lounge and tiki.

R.I.Y.L.: Love Jones, Esquivel, martinis, elbow-length gloves.

RICHARD DAVIES *There's Never Been A Crowd Like This* Flydaddy

As a pop songwriter, Richard Davies stands head and shoulders above most every young chump out there. Back in 1994, Cardinal, Davies' collaboration with Eric Matthews, produced the record that *had* to be made in that grim year for new music. Davies' greatest talent is his knack for mercilessly referencing rock's past while never once making you scream "He can't get away with this!" at your hi-fi. *There's Never Been A Crowd Like This* checks Arthur Lee, Bee Gees, Beatles, Kinks, and Brian Wilson, but it's the early David Bowie comparison that makes the most sense and runs deeper than similarities in voice and style: Both men share a sense of humor and self-awareness that makes their natural pretensions far less annoying than they should be. *There's Never* places Davies' songwriting in a comparatively sparse setting that, while maybe not as immediately compelling as Matthews' arrangements, makes it apparent that Davies is becoming an even better songwriter. Tunes like "Chips Rafferty," "Sign Up Maybe For Being," and "Jubilee" top even the best Cardinal moments. If this record is ever heard by as many people as it deserves to be, Davies will probably be called "retro." But that's only because few write songs of this quality and make it all sound so effortless anymore.

—Steve McGuirl

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 26.

FILE UNDER: The pop songwriter's craft.

R.I.Y.L.: Pet Sounds, High Llamas, Bowie's *Hunky Dory*, Love.

EXPERIMENTAL AUDIO RESEARCH *Beyond The Pale* Big Cat

Once you put this record on, it's easy to ignore. There are no dramatic changes in mood, and drummer Eddie Provost, who could easily hammer out a blazing solo, here limits himself to petting the cymbals. Guitar feedback and low, moaning vocal treatments (by Sonic Boom of Spacemen 3, Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, and Kevin Martin of GOD—it's a supergroup of course; when tuneless guitar noise hits a CD and sticks, you can safely assume celebrities are involved) fill out the sound. Flanged hums, pulses of noise, floods of keyboard tones and the occasional electronic chirp help underpin a rhythmic drone much like very, very slow breathing. E.A.R. self-consciously understates its case, strutting its patience and hesitancy. Large doses of cough syrup might also be a factor—it's music for the intoxicated, or those who wish they were: specifically, those exhausted by too much TV. You know how fatiguing it can be watching four hours of sitcoms plus the news and *Nightline*? How the canned laughter and superficial mouthings start to sound like fingernails on a chalkboard? Music like this can drag you back down and inside, to your vast, empty interior, where sound is still a purely sensual experience—to the cathedrals of the mind, where Urkel fears to tread.

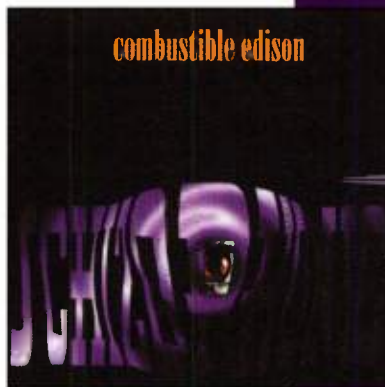
—Nell Zink

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Ambient drones.

R.I.Y.L.: Zoviet France, Thurston Moore, Spacemen 3.

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



"The one time I played in my boots, I fell off the stage."

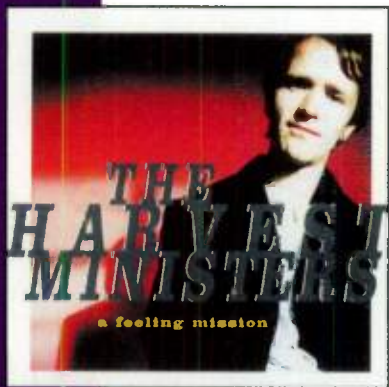
—Soul Aylum's Dave Pirner,

on why he always wears

Converse high-tops on stage,

from an interview in *Hits*.





HARVEST MINISTERS *A Feeling Mission* Setanta-Bar/None

One could be deceived into thinking that Ireland's Harvest Ministers are a fairly typical Celt-shaded folk-pop outfit: an accomplished sextet seamlessly weaving picked guitars, violin lines, and full-bodied female backing vocals at a generally mild pitch of intensity. But a closer listen reveals that all is not right with singer William Merriman's lopsided morality plays. The opening "That Won't Wash" and "I've A Mind" are both warnings to an inconstant lover, combining a fresh, colloquial ear for metaphor ("I've played your Christian soldier/For longer than was wise") and a funny way of breaking a lyric against a melodic line ("I've a mind to/Take away from you/All the love that/I pledged to you"). These devices, in addition to the realization, as the record gains steam, that the acoustic guitars are doing far more work than the usual background strum, makes for a subtly unsettling effect one normally associates with harder-rocking music. "She's Buried" is an almost-trad first-person ballad of a soldier returning to a lover, only to find that "all that stands between her/And me being together/Is the simple fact she's buried." By the time we get to the Slavic-tinged "Mental Charge" and the closing "A Secret Way," with Merriman's plaintive assertion that "the background is no place for our love/The foreground is where it belongs," nothing is what it seems, and all that's clear is that Merriman and company have the rare knack of leading the listener through seemingly familiar territory but somehow ending up in a place that maps haven't reached.

—Franklin Bruno

DATALOG: Released Mar. 26.

FILE UNDER: A plain-looking bouquet releasing exotic perfumes.

R.I.Y.L.: James, Prefab Sprout, Edwyn Collins.



HOLLOWBODIES *Lame* Atlas

Naming your debut album *Lame* is tempting fate. But so is ditching your cover-band town (in this case, Virginia Beach, VA) for New York to test that cruel if-you-can-make-it-there maxim, which is just what the lads in Hollowbodies did a couple years back. The happy ending is that the band was noticed busking in a subway station and, realizing that making it somewhere else would be just fine, went to L.A., and recorded *Lame*, which happiest of all, isn't. Playing for loose change tossed into a guitar case has taught the band the value of a good melody, and *Lame* has its share of crowd pleasers ("d Day," "Driver"). The record, originally released on the group's own Muna Tea label, also bears the stamp of the band's namesake instrument: the warmth and texture of hollow-body guitars predominates in the otherwise undistinguished production. The disc could lose a handful of its 16 songs—"Metamorphosis" proves that what might grab the attention of subway riders can sound a little melodramatic in the middle of a set of nicely written pop/rock songs—but in light of what seems to be some honest potential, it's a lot easier to let some of the debut's clinkers slide. Not everything on *Lame* is a perfect fit, but like back-to-school pants your folks appraised with a few fingers tugging at the space in the waistband, there's room to grow.

—Frank Mansfield

DATALOG: Release date: Apr. 16.

FILE UNDER: Emotional E-train rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Goo Goo Dolls, Fig Dish, Collective Soul.

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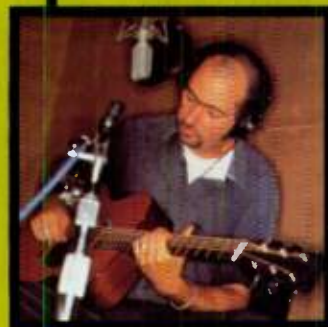
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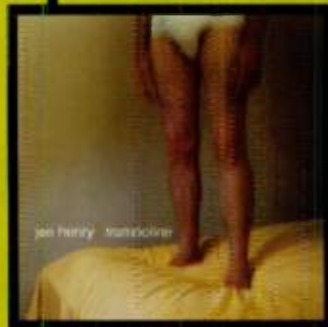
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VARIOUS ARTISTS *Home Alive: The Art Of Self Defense* Epic

Of all the multi-artist benefit albums in recent memory, none is as sprawling, urgent, and uncompromised as this epic (no record label pun intended) document. The Home Alive organization was started by women in Seattle's music community in response to the still-unsolved rape and murder of Mia Zapata in July, 1993. Lead singer for the Gits, Zapata was a dynamic performer whose loss continues to be deeply felt. Home Alive has become a resource for empowerment and education, offering women affordable self-defense classes and rides home from nightclubs. On these CDs, it enjoys a little help from its friends, including Pearl Jam, 7 Year Bitch, Nirvana, the Posies, Soundgarden, the Presidents of the U.S.A. While the result reflects Seattle's stardom, its 45 tracks also employ a grassroots scene—some of these bands won't mean much to those outside Seattle, but their presence displays an impressive solidarity. They're the folks who knew Mia, or loved her music, and played benefits whenever asked.

Mia herself is well represented by the live acoustic "Social Love," as well as the Gits's unflinching "Guilt Within Your Head," one of the band's best songs. The project is not without its clunkers, but has many great combinations of music and message, including Catfood's "Bruises," Gretta Harley's "Digging and Striking," Joan Jett's "Go Home" (with help from the Gits and Kathleen Hanna), and Ann & Nancy Wilson's "Mamma Why." Of special note are two reworkings of old tunes: Pearl Jam's "Leaving Here," a Holland-Dozier-Holland cover; and the Viva Project's "My Man," a harrowing recasting of the Billie Holiday song with beautiful vocals and realistic tears.

Disappointments include spoken-word tracks that strain for effect with unbearable detail. Few are so deluded or jaded that only undiluted rape stories (Martha Linehan) or egregious verbal bullying (Lydia Lunch at her worst) will awaken them. Those for whom frank accounts provide new information may make an important connection or realization through *The Art Of Self-Defense*, but about half of the spoken word tracks cover the same ground, numbingly. Luckily, there are imaginative—and no less "intense"—contributions from Tamara Paris, Wendy-O-Matik, and Andrew Horwitz to save the day for spoken word.

The Art Of Self Defense is a dark yet strategic look at the violence that strikes women the most but affects us all one way or another. It provides no easy answers, but reminds us of the importance of communicating about these issues. It's pretty goddamn in your face.

—Danny Housman

DATALOG: Released Feb. 20.

FILE UNDER: Confrontational hard rock and spoken word.

R.I.Y.L.: Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Joan Jett, spoken word.

PENELOPE HOUSTON *Cut You* Reprise

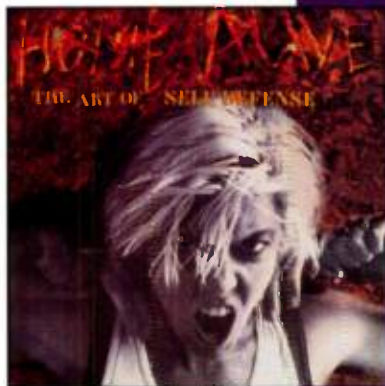
She's mostly committed to the collective memory of American rock as the gorgeous 19-year-old hellion who snarled at the front of Frisco's legendary punk heroes the Avengers. But few beyond a rabid stateside cult and the good people of Germany and Europe (where, her press claims, she is a star), know Penelope Houston's had a rich and productive solo career beyond "The American In Me" and "Paint It Black." Maybe the fact that this record will actually be generally available in the U.S. can correct that, maybe not. Whatever the case, despite the presence of a number of remakes of solo Houston material, spanning from her solo debut *Birdboys* to more recent times (including a more biting take on her tribute to Mr. Stanton, "Harry Dean"), *Cut You* still displays continued growth in Houston's art and methods. Electricity makes an appearance in her mostly acoustic world for the first time since the Avengers, with tasty results. Still, some of Houston's most vicious, cutting material is also her quietest. Give this more than a cursory listen; mature music does not have to mean boring music.

—Tim Stegall

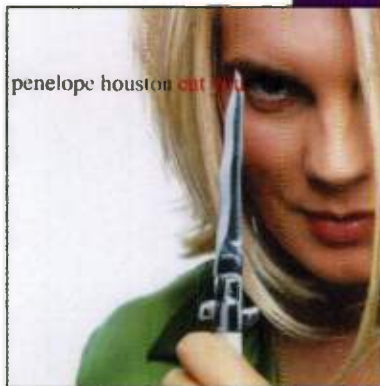
DATALOG: Released Mar. 5.

FILE UNDER: Folk music, my ass.

R.I.Y.L.: Alejandro Escovedo, Greg Sage solo, Paul Westerberg, Bob Mould solo.



"A Majoun eater has a strange relationship with a snake and achieves his own reincarnation into the reptile's body and is finally getting killed by the people of his village... The synthesis of a romantic Love/Death balance and a political Rai/Algeria/Death-related understanding is up to your ability of following Moroccan Dadaism." —Producer Pat Jabbar, from the press release for Amira Saqati, a side project of Aisha Kandisha's Jarring Effects





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HUSIKESQUE *Green Blue Fire* Astralwerks-Caroline

Lida Husik has recorded an impressive and chameleonic catalogue, from her collaborations with Shimmy-Disc impresario Kramer to completely solo work to this full-length release with British techno artist Beaumont Hannant. A versatile songwriter, Husik works in a broadly defined area of psychedelic folk. While her music is sometimes lush, she can also be jarring; either way, she's always exhibited a tendency to experiment (successfully) with texture. What started as an exploration with Hannant has evolved into an EP, some British-only tracks, and now *Green Blue Fire* by Husikesque, a true meeting of the pair's tastes. The result is chill-out ambient folk—groovy at times, dull at others. Husik's singing takes on a dreamy, sometimes drony, quality as the lines seem to separate into repeated mantras. Hannant and co-producer Richard Brown lay down easygoing, cerebral funk with touches of dub, while some tracks have no beats at all. Sometimes the music catches you in its hypnotic spin—Husik uses her high register for "Bad Head Day" and pleasingly evokes Earth, Wind & Fire. Still, too many tracks suffer from directionless repetition and feel half-baked. But while Husikesque has room for improvement, the project is bound to be influential: Watch for other experimental songwriters to hook up with an ambient producer and try their luck.

—Danny Housman

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Ambient trip-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Golden Palominos, Portishead, SF Seals.

IDAHO *Three Sheets To The Wind* Caroline



The past few years have seen a general lightening in Idaho's musical tone and lyrical sentiment, but *Three Sheets To The Wind* is still written in the most minor of keys; the dominant feel is still one of introspection and exhaustion. The principal change is that Idaho is back to being a full-sized band (the previous album, 1994's *This Way Out*, had seen the band dwindle down to just singer Jeff Martin). Martin's new players seem to give him a palpable jolt of energy; uptempo tracks like "Catapult" and "Pomegranate Bleeding" are probably the closest Idaho has ever come to rocking out. Martin, however, remains at the spotlight. Both his ragged, whispery voice and his feedback-soaked, equally hurt-sounding guitar lines (both of which owe a stylistic debt to Neil Young) are attention-grabbing, even on songs where the setting is spare and the rhythm section slows down to a melancholy shuffle. Idaho still seems to be experimenting with ways of striking a balance between the poles of obsessive gloom and of melody and dynamism (the band seems to be evolving towards longer songs that build to crescendos, like the quietly awe-inspiring "No One's Watching," instead of short and monotonous slabs), but this young band is already bridging that gap as well as anyone.

—David Jarman

DATALOG: Released Feb. 20.

FILE UNDER: Downbeat, downcast guitar pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Codeine, Yo La Tengo's slow songs, Neil Young.

SIMON JOYNER *Heaven's Gate* Sing, Eunuchs!-Brinkman

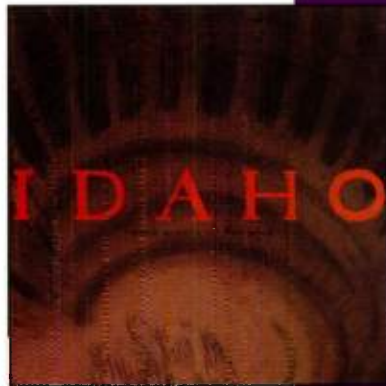
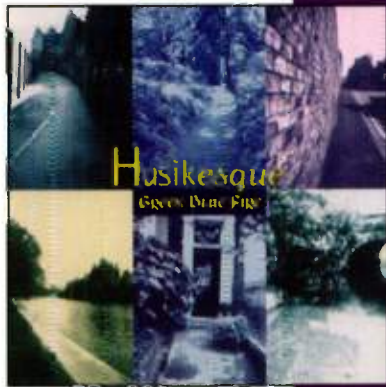
If there were nothing else special about Simon Joyner, he'd still stand out as the only singer-songwriter left from the cassette underground who doesn't feel the need to call himself a band. Maybe that's because he knows how implausible it would be to credit a band with his wordy, wildly ranging songs. Joyner's songs are castles built on clouds of a hundred strange premises. One minute, he's writing "an obituary to the tune of 'Goodnight Irene,'" then, with nary a pause for explanation, he's washing his "stone hands in the sink." Backed by Alex McManus's funereal fiddling and the sparest of snares from Chris Deden, Joyner's simple guitar lines carry emotional tension like furrowed brows. He dwells on each measured phrase of songs like "Kerosene," as if requiring concentration to sing what he really means. Other times, this concentration seems to defeat him as his phrasing breaks stride. *Heaven's Gate* (his fifth full-length recording and first CD) leaves your head full of striking images and just as full of puzzles. Though his poetic leanings may remind you of the guy called "Palace," Joyner's tales are harder to pin down. Wavering between personal confession and the detachment of a storyteller, he will admit only that "the person who once knew you is no longer me."

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Feb. 5.

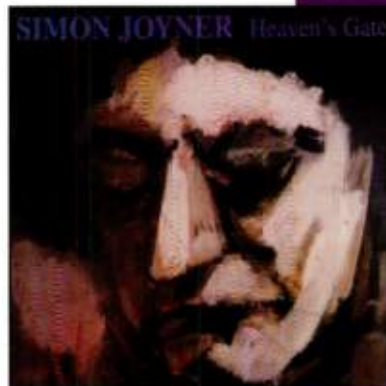
FILE UNDER: Itinerant folk.

R.I.Y.L.: Mountain Goats, Palace, Red House Painters.



"There are times, I'm sure
you knew/When I bit off
more than I could chew." —

Zaïtis opera tenor Luciano
Pavarotti, without irony,
from his "My Way" duet
with Frank Sinatra



GVSB



GIRLS AGAINST BOYS

****House of GVSB****

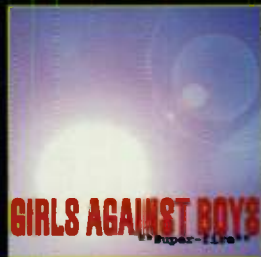
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World Radio History

LUSH *Lovelife* 4AD-Reprise

With its third full-length record, the two singers in Lush have (literally) found their voices. The British band's first releases were earmarked by washes of guitar burying the wispily sung female vocals. The guitars are finally given room to rock out here, which leaves plenty of production space for the split lead vocals of Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson, two women who have clearly been burned by (and burned out on) love. The lyrics concentrate on that topic almost exclusively; whether Berenyi is mocking men on "Ladykillers" ("He only had to have me because I put up a fight") or Anderson wailing "I don't wanna be a single girl" (which eventually changes to "I just want to be a single girl"), both share the naive cynicism of world-weary twenty-somethings, taking every nuance as seriously as a punch in the eye. The biting cattiness of "Ciao!" is *Lovelife*'s shining moment, the duet between Berenyi and Pulp's Jarvis Cocker cataloguing how delighted each is not to be with the other. Lush has never been a particularly challenging band; while they've always written nice melodies, their songs have never been quite as interesting as they could be, and the hype behind the music—the looks of Berenyi and Anderson, the 4AD tag—has usually overwhelmed the band's sound. With *Lovelife*, the band's sound is finally equal to the attention it commands.

—Megan Frampton

DATALOG: Released Mar. 5.

FILE UNDER: Post-relationship Britpop.

R.I.Y.L.: Garbage, Elastic.

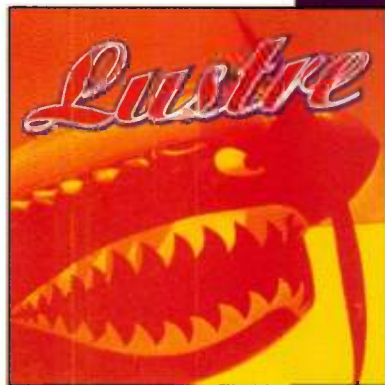
**LUSTRE** *Lustre* A&M

Cheap Trick built a legion of fans mining the vein where metal and pop intersect, providing a virtual road map of rock 'n' roll success for the countless Great Unwashed that would come after them. Lustre, at least, was paying attention: It flogs the Cheap Trick formula to within an inch of its life. The North Carolina trio's debut record has hooks, a reasonable amount of skill, and three-chord pop-punk aplenty. The incessantly distorted guitars and vague air of menace that hang over the record seem more like Lustre trying to turn '70s garage-pop into edgy '90s rock than anything else. What comes out is a goofy, if ultimately likeable, pop record that otherwise wouldn't have an alternative thought in its head. A fondness for admirably unfussy three-minute guitar-fests and (the sludgy, atypically thoughtful "Kalifornia" excepted) driving pop numbers make the band sound—at times uncannily—like Sugar Lite, but decent songwriting and an endearing lack of pretension make *Lustre* more appealing, and ultimately more relevant, than it would otherwise have a right to be.

DATALOG: Released Mar. 5. First single "Kalifornia."

FILE UNDER: Homegrown garage-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Sugar, Goo Goo Dolls, Seven Mary 3.

**MAVIS PIGGOTT** *You Can Be Low* Flydaddy

"T.R.," the cryptic opener on the debut full-length (and first recording since adding a third member) by this Seattle band, is par for the course, structurally: A dense modal riff, meaty with distortion, gives way to a major-key chorus. The two parts alternate again, and then, smooth as it is strange, the band turns to a swing-styled vamp, which fades the song out before the listener can regain equilibrium. Meghan Adkins' guitar stays chunky, Nicky Thomas's indispensable drums remain right up front for every gearshift, and new bassist John Wickhart grabs for footholds of melody in the space between, but succinctly executed shifts of mood and rhythm seem to be this band's stock-in-trade. The inevitable comparison is to Throwing Muses, specifically the more spacious power-trio Muses of *Red Heaven*. But there's more than a *soupçon* of Thomas and Adkins' D.C. pedigree (the former cut her teeth in Fire Party) evident in the taut realpolitik of "Theory," which reads at first like the flip-side of Fugazi's "Suggestion" ("Yeah, I was willing/And I didn't stop when I might have wanted to") before bursting out with a sardonic chorus of "It's so natural, so natural..." Adkins has an appealing voice, but it's a humane, "normal" one; often, her vocals are blurred by her own on-key but anti-pretty harmonies, laying yet more musical information onto a record already heavy with it. But too much content, effort and ambition are the last thing anyone should complain about, especially when Mavis Piggott seems more aware than most bands that the things worth saying can't always be said simply.

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 26.

FILE UNDER: Dense rock cubism, best after several listenings.

R.I.Y.L.: Scrawl, Fire Party, Get Smart, Throwing Muses.



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



MARIA MCKEE *Life Is Sweet* Geffen

Maria McKee's third solo outing moves the former Long Justice frontwoman farther away from the rootsy-rock genre she's almost always been associated with and more toward Ziggy Stardust-inspired melodies, moods and atmospheres. While the actual musical sounds on *Life Is Sweet* are as raw as McKee's earlier works, their application is more psychedelically tinted, with fat guitar leads winding sonically upward, lifted on a warm padding of orchestral strings. Often, in a context such as this, there's a temptation to overdo things—to build huge arrangements devoid of feeling and emotion. Fortunately, though, McKee has always had the good sense to work with musicians who call subtlety one of their best friends, and that hasn't changed on *Life Is Sweet*. The strings on "Carried" and the fabulous "Perfect Dress" are remarkably tasteful, while the intentional lack of slick pop polish lends an even more intimate timbre to McKee's amazingly powerful voice, particularly on the sparse title track, as well as the heavier, more untamed "I'm Not Listening." Thoroughly unsweetened, *Life Is Sweet* is still just about as musically delicious as it gets.

—Aaron Clow

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 26.

FILE UNDER: Tastfully orchestrated pop.

R.I.Y.L.: David Bowie, Lone Justice, Throwing Muses.

"I don't care if it is the First Amendment, this is a disgrace." —Johnson City, Tennessee Mayor Bob May on the music of White Zombie, after a City Commission vote cancelling the group's performance at the Freedom Hall Civic Center because of the band's "Satanic message," as quoted in the Johnson City Press.

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MENSCLUB *Coming To Take You Away* Bar/None

Mensclub is, of all things, a Grand Funk Railroad tribute band. No, they're not a cover band, but a Bay-area power-trio that writes songs that sound like Grand Funk tunes and espouse mass liberation by gettin' together, smokin' reefer and listening to Mark, Don & Mel with shirts off (see "Men's Club Day Off"). Get it? I don't think it's terribly funny either; in fact, Grand Funk records are far, far funnier to these ears. To be fair, *Coming To Take You Away* does sound a lot like Grand Funk inasmuch as it plods, the riffs are dumb and catchy, the drums sound like someone beating on a wet log, and they say "get down!" a lot, so I guess you could call it an artistic success of sorts. But rule number one of a good one-joke band is that you should never be able to tell if it's in on its own joke or not, and you just know that less than two years ago these guys were in college-town bands that sounded like Soundgarden or Jane's Addiction. Besides, cock-rock isn't at all compelling when you know the band will never play Shea Stadium or give an under-aged groupie a dose of the clap. Finally, keep in mind that you can still buy all of the Grand Funk LPs for a dollar at any suburban garage sale, so whether you want to lay down a sawbuck-plus for *Coming To Take You Away* is your call.

—Steve McGuire

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 26. Grand Funk is referred to 7 times in this review.

FILE UNDER: Comin' to your town, gonna party down.

R.I.Y.L.: Grand Funk, Grand Funk Railroad, Black Oak Arkansas, Foghat.

MR. T EXPERIENCE *Love Is Dead* Lookout!**NOFX** *Heavy Petting Zoo* Epitaph

Comedy may not be pretty, but it sure is punky. From the moment the Ramones first sang about beating on the brat, American punk has distinguished itself from UK punk in at least one way: an obvious sense of humor. Plenty of Southern California punk sports a wordy anger, but in an age of humorless, belligerent grunge, only a bunch of cartoonish outcasts from the suburbs appreciate how absurd misanthropy is. We're all losers, baby.

Calling NOFX cartoonish would be like calling the Pope Catholic; their albums feature graphics so preposterously offensive as to blunt any attempt to take the band seriously. *Heavy Petting Zoo* sports their nastiest cover yet, a pastoral illustration that happens to depict a cowpoke grabbing a sheep's holiest of holies. This winsomeness should be reflected in the tunes, but NOFX's idea of dumb fun is a little backward. The music is a gas—melodic as a Saturday morning theme on overdrive (that's a compliment) with whiny, sneering vocals (that's not). But only NOFX's "love" songs display the cheek that their tunes suggest: "Liza" is about an aspiring trollop who recreates herself *a la* Sandy in *Grease*, while "Hot Dog In The Hallway" echoes the Dead Milkmen's "Punk Rock Girl." Meanwhile, despite clever titles, songs like "Freedom Like A Shopping Cart" and "Hobophobia" lay on the cynicism too thick, making NOFX sound like a band of apparatchiks who are just too chicken to sing about their disillusionment with conviction.

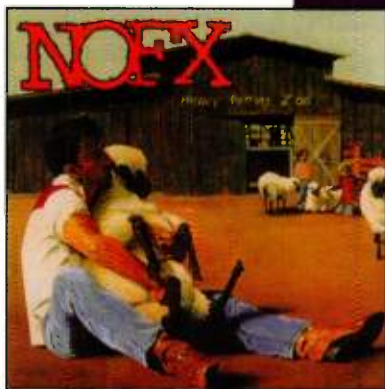
Like NOFX, San Francisco's Mr. T Experience plays songs of the sugary, hypermelodic variety. But Mr. T has joke-core down to an art form: lighthearted tunes and self-deprecating lyrics have made them the Barenaked Ladies of punk. On *Love Is Dead*, the band adds bassist Joel Reader, whose caffeinated fretwork gathers up a Green Day-esque head of steam. But singer Dr. Frank remains the cheeky ringmaster. On "Ba Ba Ba Ba Ba" (maybe that's what the sheep on NOFX's album cover is bleating), Frank yells the nonsense chorus like a preschooler testifying after too much *Sesame Street*. *Love Is Dead* saves its best lyrics for tales of romantic woe—insecure treatises such as "I Just Wanna Do It With You" and "I'm Like Yeah, But She's All No." Fact is, NOFX could never pull off Dr. Frank's acoustic-accompanied lyric "You're the only one I wanna get screwed over by." For them, it would be a barbed valentine, while for Mr. T Experience, it's just a dreamy ballad for suckers with low self-esteem.

—Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Mr. T. released Jan. 10. NOFX released Jan. 30.

FILE UNDER: Punk nation, under a goof.

R.I.Y.L.: Ramones, Green Day, Down By Law.





MONEY MARK

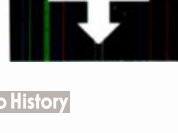
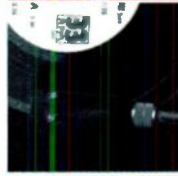
Mark's Keyboard Repair *Mo Wax-London*

As the Beastie Boys' main keyboard man, you'd expect that Keyboard Money Mark (Nishita) would have an awful lot to do with their reinvention of themselves as a live-instrument funk band. Well, you're right, but the only trouble is, he may add a lot of flava and funky sounds, but he's certainly not writing the songs. The tunes on Nishita's debut solo outing aren't anywhere near songs as much as they are riffs, fills, experiments and noodles, or most often, stuff that sounds cool on the keyboard but can't hold a listener's interest for long. That said, those vintage clavinetts, Fender Rhodes, and Hammond B-3 fills sound totally funky—Mark's no slouch—and if he got into soundtrack work, well, he could become bigger than Isaac Hayes. At their best, these 30 (!) mostly-instrumental snippets are almost like incidental music for an imaginary cartoon cross between *Fritz The Cat* and the *Shaft* movies. It's great if you go into it not expecting any songs or structures, if you just put it on the stereo and let it flow—while you'd throw *Check Your Head* or *III Communication* on at a party, this is music for *lounging*. For Beasties completists, it's no worse than Hurricane's solo album or some of their B-sides. The best part is Mark's "commercial" for his own 24-hour keyboard repair shop—he's buying, selling and repairing around the clock, and he even has those nine-volt adapters so you don't need to keep on buying batteries. —James Lien

DATALOG: Released on the U.K. Mo Wax label last year; domestic release date Mar. 12.

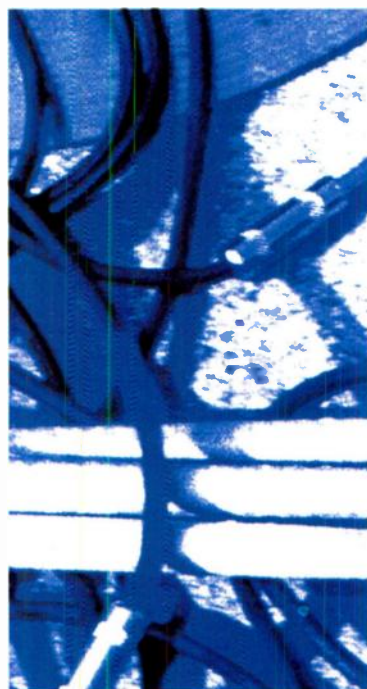
FILE UNDER: Vintage keyboard sounds.

R.I.Y.L.: Beastie Boys, the Fat Albert theme song, Groove Holmes, *Blue Break Beats*.



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ELLIOTT MURPHY *Selling The Gold* *DejaDisc*

Elliott Murphy has had some great musical epiphanies, no question about it, like '76's stunning "Just A Story From America," with its faux-Dylan wheeze, and delicate thinking-man's ballads like "Anastasia," a Czar's-daughter allegory that demanded careful listening. But his career has always been hit-and-miss, a handful of dazzling gems alongside a handful of coal. Sad to say, but this is a disc just oozing with glutinous also-rans, songs that come close to being memorable but somehow fall short at the last minute. There are a couple of pleasant enough moments—the Tom Petty-school title track, the country waltz of "A Whole New World," and a funky flamenco experiment, "Is Fellini Really Dead?" But when the music's working, as on the Violent Femmes-aided "King Of The Serpentine," along comes an awkward line to spoil it, like "He was the son of Niagara Falls/A true believer with a big set of balls." He even rhymes "acid rain" with "existential pain," and the effect is far from humorous. Springsteen even shows up to waw-waw through a cut ("Everything I Do"), but it doesn't help. Like D.L. Byron and Willie Nile, Murphy represents a dying breed of heartland rocker, a guy with more political ideals than he has guitar hooks. Maybe his kind disappeared for a reason. —Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Released Jan. 16.

FILE UNDER: Wheat Belt rock gone to seed.

R.I.Y.L.: John Cougar Mellencamp, Tom Petty, recent Bob Dylan.

PITCHBLENDE *Gygax!* *Cargo*

Like a horse straddling state lines at Four Corners, Pitchblende's sound parallels its name, grazing on a disparate array of musical styles. The band's songs are collages of contrasting moments, switching gears constantly like an abridged opera, going from space-tech wankery to gangly jazz-like experimentation to ponderous and pounding guitar lines. Few tracks are cohesive in their entirety, but the band never allows itself to slip into chaos: for all its speeding and skidding, Pitchblende maintains an overpowering sense of control. Anatomically, the music is flawless, but with the melodies caged within each song, the record lacks animus. "Romanesque Butto" should be haunting, with its joyless horns and gloomy rhythm; instead, it sounds as glossy as *Synchronicity*-era Police. As a result, *Gygax!* is pretty much devoid of distinguishing moments, and inter-track filler blends each piece into the next. Nonetheless, the band usually keeps one foot planted in recognizable territory, and several songs poach their intense guitar exploration from Sonic Youth. With solipsistic vocals, distant and soulless, a few tracks are Goo-quality material. Most of these songs feel like instrumentals, though, despite the eventual emergence of the lyrics. Better appreciated in small doses, Pitchblende falls victim to tedium over the course of a full album. —Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27. Gary Gygax created *Dungeons & Dragons*.

FILE UNDER: Post-sonic youth.

R.I.Y.L.: Rodan, Slint, Sonic Youth.

QUEERS *A Day Late And A Dollar Short* *Lookout!*

New England's snot-punk kings the Queers are a live outfit of such petulance and ferocity it's criminal they can rarely capture it in the studio. Although they've penned a clutch of absolutely delinquent three-chord neo-Ramones classics like "I Want Cunt," "Kicked Out Of The Webelos," and "This Place Sucks" (mostly released on singles in the early '80s, and all included on this loose-end-tying collection of stuff done with original vocalist Wimpy), the best place to hear 'em is in the thick of a frothing pit at the local slamatorium. There, all the grit and snot the tunes require is injected in nearly full quantities. Which is why, even though much of *A Day Late* comes close, it's a total joy to hear the live WFMU broadcast tacked onto the end (a 34th track that reprises roughly half of the first 33). All the trash-compactor rage and inhuman energy this stuff needs suddenly appear, and it's instantly apparent why this long-running bastion of punky waywardness owns the reputation it's rightfully earned. —Tim Stegall

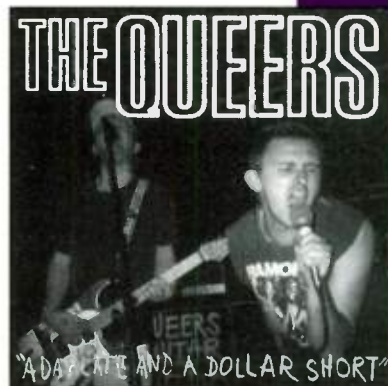
DATALOG: Released Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: Frothing, eternally teenage punk.

R.I.Y.L.: Angry Samoans, early Hard-Ons, New Bomb Turks, Ramones.



"This cop said 'Maybe if you were Michael Bolton, I'd have some sympathy for you.'" —Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, on being arrested in Milwaukee for an "onstage mooning incident," from an interview in BAM.





MICHAEL ROSE *Be Yourself* Heartbeat

Since the demise of Black Uhuru, former member Michael Rose has actively sought to enhance his reputation as one of reggae's finest vocalist and songwriters, and he's mostly succeeded on his recent solo projects. But on *Be Yourself*, Rose is clearly not being himself. Despite his familiar voice and his trademark warble, neither his phraseology nor his lyrics seem to be compatible with the driving techno-rhythms of modern dancehall music that he insists on employing. Two of these songs, "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner" and "I Love King Selassie" are remakes of old Uhuru favorites, hits that Rose wrote in the '80s. Recycling them is justifiable, but his attempt to give these reggae classics a dancehall flavor only makes them sound like mediocre imitations of dancehall tunes. Without the back-up vocals of Puma Jones and Ducky Simpson and the legendary Robbie Shakespeare/Sly Dunbar rhythm section, Rose is clearly still in search of a new musical identity. "Rude Boys (Back In Town)", "Black Maria," and "Agony" are the album's only fulfilling songs, with heavy basslines and incisive lyrics that remind listeners of Rose's Kingston Waterhouse district origins and of his days in Black Uhuru. Unlike Junior Reid, whose solo career as a dancehall roughneck has almost eclipsed his glory days in Uhuru, Rose's reinvention of himself as a dancehall rude boy seems forced, and on *Be Yourself* it falters disappointingly.

—Philippe Wamba

DATALOG: Released Jan. 30.

FILE UNDER: Here comes the misstepper.

R.I.Y.L.: Black Uhuru, Junior Reid, Barrington Levy



SALT *Ascultate* Island

If you didn't get the general idea from the *Bluster* EP, the full-length *Ascultate* makes it pretty clear: Stockholm's Salt is Bettie Serveert on steroids, another American-grunge-obsessed Scandinavian outfit that wears all its influences on its flannel sleeve. And theoretically, you could sit down and pick apart each one of these 13 numbers if you had the time, pinpoint exactly where this riff or that sludgy guitar line or those breathy vocals were nicked. But you'd have to be feeling mighty mean—Salt, and singer/songwriter Nina Ramsby in particular, is enjoyable on vibe alone, the kind of group that's more than the sum of its predictable parts. The offerings: seedy, pinging axework ("Honour Me"), tumbling free-form rhythms ("Beauty"), squeal-to-sandpaper melodies ("Flutter") and the old Seattle schick, slow/fast/slow/fast ("God Damn Carnival"). But Ramsby's personable, eager bleat kicks 'em all through the goalposts, sometimes degenerating into a feral-child scream that's even more inviting. And there are fun little surprises scattered throughout, like the bluesy "Obsession," the gentle, cradle-slow strumming of "So," and even some cheesy AC/DC-ish power-chords on "Lids." Bettie Serveert was the nice, friendly diplomat; Salt would rather drop a few bombs and see what blows up.

—Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Released Mar. 5.

FILE UNDER: Explosive Euro-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Bettie Serveert, Pearl Jam.

<http://www.cmjmusic.com>

SLEEPYHEAD *Communist Love Songs* Homestead

On its fancifully titled new album, the band that debuted with a single called "Play" slows down a bit as it gets older. *Communist Love Songs* features newly languid, sexy singing and playing, as well as the denser arrangements made possible by the addition of Chris Seeds on second guitar and keyboards. Lunging hoarsely through "The Coronation," guitarist Chris O'Rourke sounds more like Rod Stewart than ever, and when he and drummer Rachael McNally trade off vocals and harmonize on *Communist Love Song*, they're as trippy and flirtatious as Sonny and Cher. "I Love You The Rain" is a similarly simple pleasure, with its clever, hippie lyrics and Stones-like riffs. Best of all, *Love Songs* seamlessly mixes Sleepyhead's usual hooky choruses and detached cool with the heavier sound and emotions of the new songs. You know the band has come a long way when it can ask, in "Yer Excellence," "How could someone so innocent be so desperate/How could such a loser be so strong?" just as suggestively as they beg for a lick of your ice cream cone. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Jan. 28. First single "I Love You The Rain."

FILE UNDER: True love rock.

R.I.Y.L.: The Pooh Sticks, Love Child, early Who.



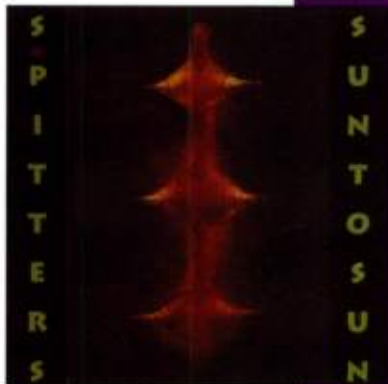
SPITTERS *Sun To Sun* PCP

Word is that the Spitters bear some geneological relation to Missing Foundation, a collective of Manhattan rockers/squatters more notorious for their graffiti and venue-destroying performances than for the intense but *de rigueur* late-'80s thud-skronk of their records. The Spitters, whatever the connection, are an altogether more musical endeavor, and while it wouldn't be fair to call *Sun To Sun* "generic," it falls squarely within a semi-regional genre which, as much as bluegrass or *nortena*, one is startled to find people mining in such an undiluted form. This is straight-up East Village art-rock: dark, bass-heavy and repetitive. The only new wrinkle the Spitters add to the long-established style is in the unusually cohesive and clearly recorded sound of the players themselves. Guitarist Tim Bradlee does a nice job of mixing controlled feedback, Andy Gill-ish muted passages, and Savage Republic-derived single-string almost-hooks; Louis Echavarria deftly adds enough metal-style syncopation to the requisite simple drum patterns to move things along effectively. At their best, on the mid-tempo "Feasty" or the unusually down-to-earth "Impasse," in which malaise trumps rage, you could almost peg the Spitters as a souped-up 100 Flowers. More often, their considerable skill is squandered on such predictable material as the silly, gothy "Living Things," or the sub-Swans "Throat," featuring frontman Mark Ashwill's risible chorus of "I feel the agony, I feel the ecstasy." Ashwill's pat grotesquerie and his overwrought croak are all too typical of the trappings that made this kind of music less than compelling the first time around. If you can listen past him (or if you have a taste for that sort of thing), *Sun To Sun* is a more-than-respectable band-centered effort. —Franklin Bruno

DATALOG: Released Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: The portable Lower East Side.

R.I.Y.L.: Rollins Band, Ritual Tension, Slug.



TOO MUCH JOY *Finally* Discovery-Warner Bros.



Raucous without going too far over the top, Too Much Joy consists of the basics: proto-punk bursts of vocals and anti-harmony, high-mixed drums, and punchy, insistently rough guitar riffs. Snotty without being smarmy, songs like the almost mellow, crooned "Poison Your Mind" and their Billy Bragg-on-speed version of "A New England" lend the band an air of eccentricity, though it still revels in rockabilly and whiplash guitar, as on the tongue-in-cheek pun of "Mrs. Now" ("that was then, you're Mrs. Now.") A little too much Joy goes a long way, however, when the band's knowing winks and nods to how clever it can be turn relentless ("I'm Your Wallet"), but the sweet, Luna-esque "How To Be Happy" is the perfect combination of buzzsaw guitars and toe-tapping, slightly hammy vocals. TMJ isn't out to alter your consciousness with its earnestness; it's just out to prove what a good time can be had by all. —Allison Stewart

DATALOG: Released Feb. 27.

FILE UNDER: Smart-alecky pop-punk.

R.I.Y.L.: Judybats, early Soul Asylum, Dillon Fence.



TRIPLE FAST ACTION *Broadcaster* Capitol

I'd be lying if I said that Triple Fast Action doesn't fit into the alterna-rock niche: its songs do have that Replacements/Nirvana sound that always seems to find a home on commercial radio. But to dismiss Triple Fast Action as merely part of an icky trend fails to recognize what distinguishes the band from its less inspired peers. At its core, this is angsty, guitar-heavy garage rock, tinged with just enough post-grunge distortion—in and of itself, nothing special—but *Broadcaster* works because these elements are applied to *really* good songs. The Chicago quartet builds its songs around solid, catchy hooks, and its keen sense of dynamics—songs (especially the 10-minute epic, "Superstar") sway from quiet, balladic moments to thunderous rock-outs without sounding cheesy or contrived—save them from verse-chorus-verse hell. Poppy elements make its songs even more refreshing, as on "Anna (Get Your Gun)" (check out the "ooh-ooh-ooh"s) or "Revved Up" (possibly the album's finest, and definitely its catchiest, four minutes), which features some chirpy female backing vocals. Consider TFA a *real* alternative.

—Jenny Eliscu

DATALOG: Release date: Apr. 2.

FILE UNDER: Catchy post-grunge.

R.I.Y.L.: Goo Goo Dolls, For Squirrels, Nirvana.



VIVA SATELLITE! *Nishma* TeenBeat

Settle down, kids, and let Viva Satellite! tell you a story. Or make that an album-length "experiment in modern narrative" that moves from fairytale to urban-rural encounter group to drama about the Middle East conflict to recreation of the book of Exodus, with detours into the war between men, women and information technology. At least one band member, Rob Christiansen, is an old veteran of pageants set to indiepop—with his former band Eggs, he even performed them in costume. But *Nishma* (which means "let us listen" in Arabic and Hebrew) is a more ambitious narrative project than even he has ever attempted. The trio collectively plays a cast of thousands, hopping genres and vocal characterizations with considerable showpersonship. "The Legend of How Salt Water Taffy Came to Be" kicks off the trip with the twisted tale of a thief apprehended for "stealing intellectual property from his neighbor's head." As in all good vaudeville, the punchlines flow freely: "He'd always been a criminal," intones Rob, "But the damage had been minimal." Even stranger characters step in as the album progresses, including Laurel as a cowgirl and Rob as an exploding bomb. After the interlude of a gorgeous ballad to Gene Roddenberry, the grand finale sends up the rock opera bombast of Ozzy and the Who, and makes Jews realize how much the kiddie Passover song "No! No! No! I will not let them go" sounds like that bit from "Bohemian Rhapsody."

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Feb. 2. Christiansen also records as the Sisterhood of Convoluted Thinkers.

FILE UNDER: Indie rock opera.

R.I.Y.L.: Eggs, Wckr Spgt, b.y.o.b.



CASSANDRA WILSON *New Moon Daughter* Blue Note

Versatile jazz artist Cassandra Wilson's latest is a melodic mosaic of jazz, folk, blues, country and pop songs, confirming that she's the present generation's queen of crossover jazz. *New Moon Daughter* takes up where her first mainstream success, *Blue Light 'Til Dawn*, left off: it's an enigmatic, evocative and expressive collection that takes the listener on a celestial voyage into a dreamlike jazz universe. The singer-songwriter describes the album as being "about the cycle of relationships... how it's up and down with the phases of the moon." Like the moon, Cassandra has re-emerged as a bright, heavenly body, and like a meteor she blazes her own brilliant trail. Only five of these twelve songs are originals, but her passionate renditions of songs by Billie Holiday, Neil Young, Hank Williams, Hoagy Carmichael and the Monkees are spellbinding, stirring and innovative interpretations. Her own songs are equally enticing, and reflect her jazz heritage as well as the multifaceted talents of her band. "Solomon Sang" has an old-school jazz feel; the drum-driven grooves, violin melodies and samba chants of "Little Warm Death" transports listeners to a romantic musical paradise. Wilson proclaims in "Until," "I want the sweetness of life," and that's exactly what she delivers.

—Philippe Wamba

DATALOG: Released Mar. 6.

FILE UNDER: Delectable cross-over jazz.

R.I.Y.L.: Nina Simone, Sade.

on the verge

UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

compiled by lydia anderson

Peechees

Sure, they've been in other bands (Bratmobile, Frumpies, Rice), sure, they've edited fanzines (*Girl Germs*, *Riot Grrrl*, *Puddle*), sure, they've got two smokin' producers for their debut album (Drive Like Jehu's Mark Trombino and Fluf's O), sure, some of 'em work at Lookout! Records, but what you really need to know about the Peechees is that they burn the motherfuckin' garage down with *Do The Math* (Kill Rock Stars). Channeling the twin furies of punk and garage like no band since Mudhoney, the Peechees rip through the LP's 13 songs with barely-restrained abandon, housing an incredible energy quotient within their tough, nugget-like songs. At the helm is vocalist/lyricist Christopher Appelgren, whose perfect (-ly annoying) snarl gives the group the distinctive stamp many of its punk and garage cousins would trade all their instruments for. Whatever you do, don't cast the Peechees aside as just another by-the-numbers Cali punk band: these kids know the math. (LA)

PHOTO BY JANINE MARTEL



among many others. And *Strictly Platinum*'s songs are just as chaotic—changing rhythms and production qualities mid-stream—but none of these distractions can take away from Princess Superstar's incredible charm.

—Megan Frampton



PHOTO BY CATHY BAUER

Karate

The fact that Karate takes its name from the Japanese martial art of disabling attackers with crippling kicks and punches speaks volumes about the band's musical style. The Boston band has released one single of its own and two split 7"s (with Lune and the Crownhate Ruin) since its formation in 1993, but the songs on its self-titled long-playing debut (*Southern*) take the band's charge-and-retreat approach to new heights. These four guys are emo black-belts, and their ability to manipulate their songs' dynamics is amazing: The shift from gentle guitar-strumming and mellow vocals to a typhoon of chords and frantic shouting are enough to sweep your legs out from under you and leave you panting in a heap on the floor. —Jenny Eliscu



Joel R.L. Phelps

Curling up by the fire with a romance novel and a cup of decaf probably isn't Joel Phelps' idea of a good time. Listening to his tension-filled solo album, *Warm Springs Night* (El Recordito), is like dusting off someone's dog-eared diary, each page crowded with chicken-scratched purgings, each word wrought with painfully intense emotion. The strain in Phelps' voice stretches over the slow, plodding course of each song, staining them all with despair, agony and sorrow, a little like Will Oldham's Palace Brothers, but without that soothing, Neil Young-esque tone. Even when he picks up the pace on the more straightforward rocker "God Bless The Little Pigs," he sounds like he's exorcising demons, only to a groovier beat. Less earthy than Mark Lanegan, but no less sincere, the ex-Silkworm guitarist has been fashioning just this sort of emo-rock for years, but his crafty hand at songwriting, arranging and just plain emoting flowers by the dull light of *Warm Springs Night*. (LA)



PHOTO BY SAMANTHA DRAKE

by James Lien

FLASHBACK



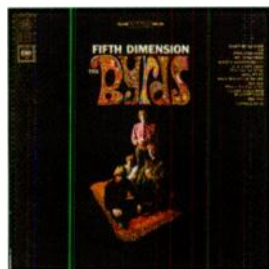
BYRDS

**Mr. Tambourine Man
Turn! Turn! Turn!
Fifth Dimension
Younger Than Yesterday**

Sony Legacy



Throughout their '60s history, from being folk rockers to Dylan-influenced folk rockers to psychedelic Dylan-influenced folk rockers to psychedelic Dylan-influenced country folk-rockers, the Byrds were one of the seminal American bands. As the music of the '60s evolved, the Byrds were always right there in the front of the pack, taking the two-guitar beat approach of the Beatles and adding California harmonies (David Crosby was particularly enamored of Brian Wilson) and folk elements, and later, with Gram Parsons on *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*, inventing what should have been the direction of country music in the '70s. Back in the '80s, writers buzzed comparing Peter Buck's ringing 12-string to Roger McGuinn's; nowadays, you could probably point to a hundred bands with some kind of Byrds influence. We hope you didn't buy any of these four CDs already, because the remastering is important here: *Younger Than Yesterday*, long considered one of the worst-sounding '80s CDs of music from the '60s, now sparkles, as the Byrds' classic combination of Rickenbacker 12-string and Vox amplifier creates a sound that has endured the ages. It's also kind of neat to hear their different harmonies clearly and figure out how they all fit together. Sometimes they went a little too far (that Crosby could write a song like "Mind Gardens" is as much a reason not to take LSD as it is an endorsement, while *5D's* "Learjet" sounds like it took less than its two minutes to write it). Most significantly, the original albums' roughly 30-minute running times are expanded by the addition of five or six previously unreleased cuts



and alternate takes per CD, a treasure trove for Byrdmaniacs. The expanded packaging is nice, too; much like the Beach Boys' catalog, we're treated to extra photos and memorabilia (they were one of the best-dressed bands of the era). The Byrds went on to release a live album featuring a side-long jam on "Eight Miles High," and went through enough lineup permutations to make one of Pete Frame's "rock family trees" run off the page. But in their '60s prime, they made some truly cool music.



☞ "THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'" BY THE BYRDS APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

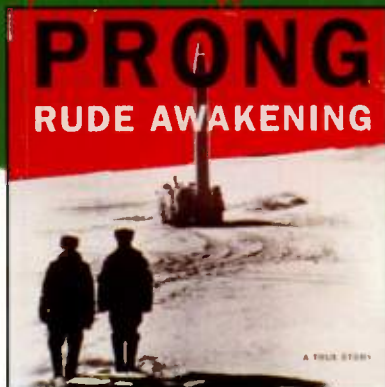
IN THE BINS

Sex and death, two popular favorites: For obscure late night listening, you can't get much better than Bar/None's recent compilation, *Vampyros Lesbos' Sexadelic Dance Party*. Culled from late '60s soundtracks to totally haywire Spanish vampire horror movies made by director Jess Franco, these soundtracks were composed by two cats named Manfred Hubler and Siegfried Schwab, and originally credited on LP to the Vampires Sound Corporation. Obviously, even by 1969 standards, with Kenneth Anger running around in California making *Lucifer Rising* and Michaelangelo Antonioni in the desert filming *Zabriskie Point*, Hubler, Schwab and Franco were still very heavy cats. This is music that may be intended to induce a freak-out—with its screaming fuzz guitars, thundering tympani, electric sitars and swirling Hammond organs, it's like the "Theme From Shaft" gone through the looking glass... Rykodisc has acquired the rights to the legendary Tradition Records imprint. The first batch of releases (with an absurdly large number of titles to follow) include releases by **LEADBELLY**, **BIG BILL BROONZY**, flamenco guitar god **CARLOS MONTOYA** and two sets from **LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS**. The Leadbelly set, which includes a version of "Where Did You Sleep Last Night" (covered by

Nirvana), is quite nice—just about any Leadbelly is—although some tracks are marred by someone sounding suspiciously like Sonny Terry, who keeps trying to sneak his way onto the record by butting in and shouting things or playing tuneless harmonica solos. Weird. The Big Bill set has some excellent solo acoustic blues, as he tackles "Baby Please Don't Go," "See See Rider," "In The Evenin' (When The Sun Goes Down)" and "Sixteen Tons." Carlos Montoya was a lightning-fingered maestro of ripping flamenco guitar. He didn't do things the way you're supposed to (for instance, he occasionally wrapped his thumb around the neck of the guitar like a rock 'n' roller might, the kind of thing that gives flamenco guitar instructors apoplexy) but he got away with it because he was so darn good. *Flamenco Guitar* is one of those things where every two or three minutes he'll do some amazing technical thing that seems impossible—strumming chords and playing lead at the same time, playing notes on opposite ends of the guitar neck within an instant of each other, or playing simultaneous melody and rhythm parts in totally different tempos from each other. When he starts playing notes so fast you can't hear them individually, you might want to take out a classified ad and sell your guitar.

PRONG Rude Awakening

Epic



Prong is as important a symbol to old-school NYC rockers as the Statue Of Liberty. The band played its first show way back in September 1986 at CBGB's; and while it's been a long and gritty road for these brutal industrial/power-metal/groove rockers, the band is still as powerful, aggressive and influential as ever. Although Prong's brutal hardcore/thrash sound has evolved over the years, becoming much more sophisticated, intriguing and complex, it still hasn't lost an ounce of its raw, brute force and raunchy, kick-ass style... and it never will, as long as wildman vocalist/guitarist Tommy Victor has anything to say about it. With its circular, chugga-chugga riffs, churning rhythms and intense, stomping grooves, Prong will *always* be a metal fave, but its intricate, industrial-based programming and groovy samples have also made the band a staple in the industrial dance community, mainly due to the influence of ex-Killing Joke bassist Paul Raven, who joined the band in 1993. Produced by Terry Date (Soundgarden, Pantera, White Zombie) and Tommy Victor and co-produced by Prong, *Rude Awakening* hearkens back to the band's *Prove You Wrong* days, and is much heavier and angrier than its last release (1993's *Cleansing*). Take a stroll down the steady, thumping "Avenue Of The Finest," where Victor's trademark NYC bad-boy 'tude blares adamantly through the song's bold and crunchy rhythms, dive straight into the fast, thrash-laden blast of "Man's Ruin," or if you prefer a more industrial feel, check out the distorted noise chaos of "Slicing." Prong is here to stay... get used to it.



RIFFS

Dwell Records recently released a malevolently delectable tribute album to the gods of dark metal, **CELTIC FROST**. *In Memory Of...* Celtic Frost features contributions from Morgion, Enslaved, Slaughter, Mayhem, Inner Thought, Sadistic Intent, Cianide, Devine Eve, Grave, Opeth, Closedown, Emperor and 13. Also participating in the collaboration, as well as making an appearance for the first time since Celtic Frost's disbandment, are Thomas Warrior, Stephen Priestly and their latest project, **APOLLYON'S SUN... HANDSOME**, comprised of ex-members of Quicksand, Helmet and Murphy's Law, is currently recording material for its next album, which will be released on Epic some time this summer or fall... **SEPULTURA** recently completed recording its sixth album, *Roots* (Roadrunner). The album was recorded at Indigo Ranch in Malibu, CA, with Ross Robinson and the band handling production, and was mixed at Soundtrack Studios in New York City by Andy Wallace. Included on the album is "Itsari," a song written and recorded by Sepultura with the Xavantes Indian tribe during a three-day visit to the tribe's isolated community in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. This historical recording was arranged through the Brazilian Nucleo de Cultura Indigena. Also, Faith No More's Mike Patton, Korn's Jonathan Davis and DJ Lethal from House Of Pain all appear with the band on a track called "Lookaway"... Speaking of **KORN**, thanks to all you faithful metal consumers, the band attained gold status in the first few weeks of '96 with its amazing, self-titled debut... **PRO-PAIN** is currently in the studio recording material for its third album, tentatively titled *Contents Under Pressure* (Energy). The release, which is scheduled to hit the streets some time this May, will see the return of lead guitarist Tom Klimchuck (from the band's debut *Foul Taste Of Freedom*), who is replacing Nick St. Denis.



- 1 **NAPALM DEATH**
Diatribes
Earache
- 2 **G/Z/R**
Plastic Planet
TVT
- 3 **VOIVOD**
Negatron
Mausoleum
- 4 **AT THE GATES**
Slaughter Of The Soul
Earache
- 5 **MINISTRY**
Filth Pig
Warner Bros.
- 6 **OZZY OSBOURNE**
Ozzmosis
Epic
- 7 **PARADISE LOST**
Draconian Times
Relativity
- 8 **LIFE OF AGONY**
Ugly
Roadrunner
- 9 **ANTHRAX**
Stomp 442
Elektra-EEG
- 10 **ALICE IN CHAINS**
Alice In Chains
Columbia-CRG
- 11 **GWAR**
Rag Na Rok
Metal Blade
- 12 **MERAUDER**
Master Killer
Century Media
- 13 **D.R.I.**
Full Speed Ahead
Rotten
- 14 **SIX FEET UNDER**
Haunted
Metal Blade
- 15 **TROUBLE**
Plastic Green Head
Century Media
- 16 **GALACTIC COWBOYS**
Machine Fish
Metal Blade
- 17 **DEADGUY**
Fixation On A Coworker
Victory
- 18 **THERAPY?**
Infernal Love
A&M
- 19 **IMMOLATION**
Here In After
Metal Blade
- 20 **DEFTONES**
Adrenaline
Maverick-WB
- 21 **WICKER MAN**
Wicker Man
Hollywood
- 22 **MARILYN MANSON**
Smells Like Children
Nothing-Interscope
- 23 **DISSECTION**
Storm Of The Light's Bane
Nuclear Blast
- 24 **IRON MAIDEN**
The X Factor
CMC
- 25 **REIGN**
Exit Clause
Mausoleum

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



SINGLES

BY DOUGLAS WOLK

ALEC BATHGATE

"Pet Hates"

Flying Nun (New Zealand)

Alec Bathgate is half of the Tall Dwarfs—he tends to only sing one or two songs on each of their records, but they're always among their best moments. Too often, though, he's been overshadowed by the band's other half, the equally talented and much more prolific Chris Knox.

"Pet Hates" is the first solo record he's released in his 15-plus years of recording, and it's a pity it's taken him so long: it's wonderful. The A-side is a deceptively simple-sounding organ-fueled rocker with fuzzy, immediate sonics worthy of a '60s garage-rock classic and a lyric with genuine psychological depth. On the other side, "Happy Hound" has a Dwarfs-ish tune that gives way after a few minutes to another Farfisa workout. An album is reportedly due in a few months, and it can't come soon enough.

New York's ridiculous **ASS BABOONS OF VENUS** have released no fewer than four 7" singles in the last few months, all of them on Stingy Banana (we don't know if that's their own label, but we wouldn't be a bit surprised). That's actually a kindness—the ABOVs are great for eight minutes or so, and unbearable if you have to hear more than that in one sitting. The basic sound of the group: low-budget Casio space-rock with a little noise guitar, topped by vocals by a young girl whose first language is definitely not English, and whose voice will set dogs a-yapping—your turntable isn't at the wrong speed, she just sounds like that (we know, we saw them live). Sometimes, there's a little singing by a man who can't quite figure out what silly voice he wants to use; sometimes, black clouds of electronic noise come in and sprinkle on everything. After extensive testing, we're pleased to report that the best of the singles is "No Chocolate For The Space Dog" (basically four minutes of the female singer chirping the band's name), and that we got a pleasant, Residents-y buzz off a less song-oriented 10-track, 7" EP that appears to be called *Nature Will Castigate Those Who Don't Masticate*.

There's a split single out by the **CHERUBS** and the **FUCKEMOS** (Trance Syndicate). Since it's on clear vinyl with no labels and a see-through sleeve, there's no telling what the title of the Fuckemos song is, but it's not that great anyway. What is great is the Cherubs' side: a cover of "I Want Candy" with every instrument turned up all the way and all the recording needles not just in the red but pinned. Its rhythms aren't as complicated as Bow Wow Wow's version, or even the Strangeloves' original. They don't have to be: This version is all about demanding lust, not coy coercion.

BLAST OFF COUNTRY STYLE has a vaguely disturbing new single, "Wild West Showdown" (White Devil-TeenBeat), to coincide with its *In My Arms* EP. The group has a harmless weedy little guitar sound and a general boppiness it seems to have borrowed from the B-52's, but it also gives the impression that something a little sick is going on. The B-side reinforces that impression—it's called "Eric Gafney" [sic], after the Sebadoh alumnus who wrote that band's creepier songs. The chords sound like they've been forced to fit together backwards, the melody is a three-note affair that tries to lift off but never quite makes it, and the instruments are dead on the groove but just short of being in tune with each other. And then there's the "shoo-be-doo" chorus, like vanilla icing on a pile of freshly steamed artichoke leaves. Not pleasant, but definitely compelling.

Once upon a time, there was a band called **MATH**. Then it broke up, and its two principals started new projects, which recently toured the country together. One of them is **QUINTRON**, whose mindboggling performances involve puppet shows, explosives, bubble machines, solos on electric guitars that aren't plugged in, strange noisemaking inventions, and Mr. Quintron himself playing demonic half-hour improvisations on a 600-pound organ. A bit of this last appears on the strangely named "M.C. Baby Kitty," Quintron's side of a new split single on Bulb; the other side is the helium-voiced characters from the puppet show, **FLOSSIE AND THE UNICORNS**, doing a brief rock opera (or something like that) called "Snow Machine."

DUOTRON, a guitar/drum duo whose drummer was the other main force in Math, has a new split single too (Coat-Tail)—the other side is by **XEROBOT**, who are similarly no-wave inspired but more traditionally rock-ish and less interesting. Duotron's basic trick is to come up with some convoluted, asymmetrical rhythmic pattern, then play it spastically for slightly less time than it would take to wear out its welcome (usually around 30 seconds). There are six of these little songlets here, not one of them with any discernible melodic content, or any vocals beyond the drummer's occasional inarticulate yelps into her mangled microphone, but if you're into this sort of thing you'll nod with pleasure and recognition the second or third time you hear every one of them.

Finally, the **SPINANES**' "Madding" single (a different version from the one on the album, though still a slow, slow pleasure—and isn't that one of the best kinds?) is backed with a non-album song, "Ten Metre Platform." Those who saw the band's post-*Manos* tour may remember it as the new original song Rebecca Gates usually played as an encore; it's a lovely, emotional song, and it's a pleasure to see it finally on a record.

DAVE CLARKE

Archive One

Deconstruction



A former soul DJ who shuns the over-eager British dance press, Dave Clarke began making techno records in the early '90s, and he remains one of the few producers in the world capable of making electronic dance records as hard as a battering ram yet suffused with enormous feeling. *Archive One* is Clarke's first full-length project and thankfully includes a number of hard-to-find singles, including "Storm" (recently remixed by U.K. analog wizard the Surgeon), the nail-biting "Wisdom To The Wise," "Thunder" and "Protective Custody" (lifted from Clarke's *Red 1* EP). Among the new pieces are the crackling, breakbeat-driven "No One's Driving" and the jackhammer disco loops of "Southside." A very few techno producers—Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Blake Baxter—understand that the music means little without soul. Add Dave Clarke to that list. *Archive One* is a model for aspiring techno artists. *This is how good the music can be.*



ON THE FLIP SIDE

Dance music crosses the Atlantic now with increasing speed. Small cults get built up around British independent dance labels the way American "alternative" youth once swapped stories about labels such as Factory, Mute and 4AD in the early to mid-'80s. The *Atomic Audio* compilation (Quango) represents the offering of a number of these imprints, such as Hard Hands and Soma, in one convenient package. If you were to go hunting for these tracks through the import racks at your local dance store, you'd be hard-pressed to find them all. The most chilling moment here is "Old Man River's Crying," by **FULL MOON SCIENTIST**, a techno/dub collective who came to maturity under the tutelage of British electro-dub pioneers Leftfield (whose latest, *Leftism*, is available domestically on Columbia). With faint blues riffs, five-and-drum sounds and a rubbery, swaying bassline, this is a slice of future dance to be sure. The Scottish Soma crew is represented by the electro-charged grandeur of "Subtle Indoctrination" by **REJUVINATION**, a deep analog track with an uncompromised rawness. Belfast DJ and dark, tempestuous trackmaker **DAVID HOLMES** offers the bleak, hesitatingly rhythmic "Coming Home To The Sun," which sounds far more like the descent into a long, lonely night. Both parts of "Permitive" by the underrated **VAN BASTEN** are full of angular electronic drums and panoramic production techniques. You'll be surprised to find 4AD stalwarts the **WOLFGANG PRESS** here with "Executioner," the group's nod towards the new electronica. This is an important manifesto for the new British electronic underground... Deep house is, at least at the moment, on a life-support system. However, a handful of records each year can still raise goosebumps on even the most jaded dancefloor acrobat. One of these is the *Springtime Groove* EP by the **VERY OL' DIRTY BASTARDS** (Stompin'), obviously taking their moniker from the Wu-Tang Clan member. The title track samples Loleatta Holloway's "Love Sensation" and Donna Summer's "Spring Affair" with such delicacy and power, there won't be a dry eye (or still body) in the house. The flip sports a staccato, heavily edited stormer which takes its inspiration from Heatwave's disco smash "Groove Line," scattering bits of that song everywhere. This record is damn near perfect... The team of Lem Springsteen and John Ciafone (a.k.a. **MOOD II SWING**) has been crafting house records for nigh on six years. Their latest outing, the *Move Me* EP (Music For Your Ears-Power Music), makes it clear they've been listening to music from Detroit and Germany of late. "Call Me" samples a woman's voice narrating her life story over a bass line stretched to the breaking point and cavernous keyboard jolts. The title track is a housier affair, with a tickling bass line and bouncing keys, while "Function" is a more minimal number. It's records like this that continue to do away with the increasingly meaningless distinction between "house" and "techno."

- 1 **μ-ZIQ**
In Pine Effect
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 2 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Trip Hop Test Part Two
Moonshine
- 3 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Psychotrance 3
Moonshine
- 4 **HARDFLOOR**
Da Damn Phreak Noize Phunk? (EP)
Harthouse-Eye Q
- 5 **FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY**
Hard Wired
Metropolis
- 6 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Excursions In Ambience—
The Fourth Frontier
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 7 **DJ FOOD**
A Recipe For Disaster
Ninja Tune-Shadow
- 8 **CHEMICAL BROTHERS**
Exit Planet Dust
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 9 **LEFTFIELD**
Leftism
Columbia-CRG
- 10 **KEOKI**
"Caterpillar" (5")
Moonshine
- 11 **ASTRAL PILOT**
Electro Acupuncture
Harthouse-Eye Q
- 12 **CYGNUS X**
Hypermetrical
Eye Q
- 13 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Acid Warfare
Adrenalin-C&S
- 14 **CUBANATE**
Cyberia
Dynamica-CBM Inc.
- 15 **UBER ZONE**
Botz (EP)
City Of Angels
- 16 **SISTER MACHINE GUN**
Burn
Wax Trax!-TVT
- 17 **PROTOTYPE 909**
Live '93-'95
Instinct
- 18 **GOLDIE**
Timeless
frr-London
- 19 **CYBER-TECH**
Cyber-Tech
Fifth Colvnn
- 20 **DEATHLINE INTL.**
Zarathoustr
COP
- 21 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
In House We Trust Vol. 1
Tribal America-I.R.S.
- 22 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Swarm Of Drones
Sombient-Asphodel
- 23 **LOOP GURU**
Duniya
Waveform
- 24 **FUNKI PORCINI**
Hed Phone Sex
Shadow-Instinct
- 25 **LEE PERRY**
Super Ape Inna Jungle
Ariwa-RAS

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



- 1 FUGEES (REFUGEE CAMP)
"Fu-Gee-La" (12")
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 2 GENIUS/GZA
Liquid Swords
Geffen
- 3 PHARCYDE
Labcabin/California
Delicious Vinyl-Capitol
- 4 MIC GERONIMO
The Natural
Blunt-TYT
- 5 BAHAMADIA
"Total Wreck" (12")
Chrysalis-EMI
- 6 REDMAN
"Funkorama" (12")
Interscope
- 7 FAB 5
"Blah" (12")
Duck Down-Priority
- 8 GROUP HOME
Livin' Proof
Payday/frr-Island
- 9 THA DOGG POUND
Dogg Food
Death Row-Interscope
- 10 LL COOL J
Mr. Smith
Def Jam/RAL-Island
- 11 MOBB DEEP
The Infamous
Loud-RCA
- 12 KRS ONE
KRS One
Jive
- 13 BLAHZAY BLAHZAY
"Danger Pt. II" (12")
Fader-ILS
- 14 BROADWAY
"Must Stay Paid" (12")
Wreck-Nervous
- 15 DAS EFX
Hold It Down
EastWest-EEG
- 16 AZ
Doe Or Die
EMI
- 17 BUSTA RHYMES
"WOO-HAH!! Got You All
In Check" (12")
Elektra-EEG
- 18 CYPRESS HILL
III (Temples Of Boom)
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 19 REAL LIVE
"Real Live Sh*t" (12")
Big Beat-Atlantic
- 20 BIG NOYD
"Recognize And Realize" (12")
Tommy Boy
- 21 RAEKWON
Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...
Loud-RCA
- 22 2PAC
"California Love" (12")
Death Row-Interscope
- 23 JUNIOR M.A.F.I.A.
Conspiracy
Big Beat-Atlantic
- 24 ERICK SERMON
Double Or Nothing
Def Jam/RAL-Island
- 25 SMIF-N-WESSUN
Dah Shinin'
Wreck-Nervous

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



HIP-HOP

BY GLEN SANSONE

FUGEES (Refugee Camp)

The Score

Ruffhouse-Columbia

Every once in a long while, hip-hop has a moment of greatness. One of those rare moments has come in the form of the Fugees' second album, *The Score*. Making a huge progression from *Blunted On Reality*, this part-Haitian coed trio (Clef, Pras and Lauryn) mixes consciousness-raising rap and reggae into an amazingly focused work that strikes at the heart of oppression with a Bob Marley-meets-Public Enemy brand of severity not heard in years. The Fugees aim to turn the trend in hip-hop from uninitiated and genocidal to intelligent and powerful, preaching power and hunting oppressors down like criminals. The crew sums up their feelings with dizzying craft ("I'm never gonna survive unless I get crazy like Seal"), while other times striking with unwavering determination ("The Beast" and "Manifest/Outro"). Including covers of "Killing Me Softly" (with new lyrics) and Marley's "No Woman, No Cry," *The Score* distills its wide range of influences (check the doo-wop classic on "Zealots") into a sound that others can't approach in either depth or street appeal.

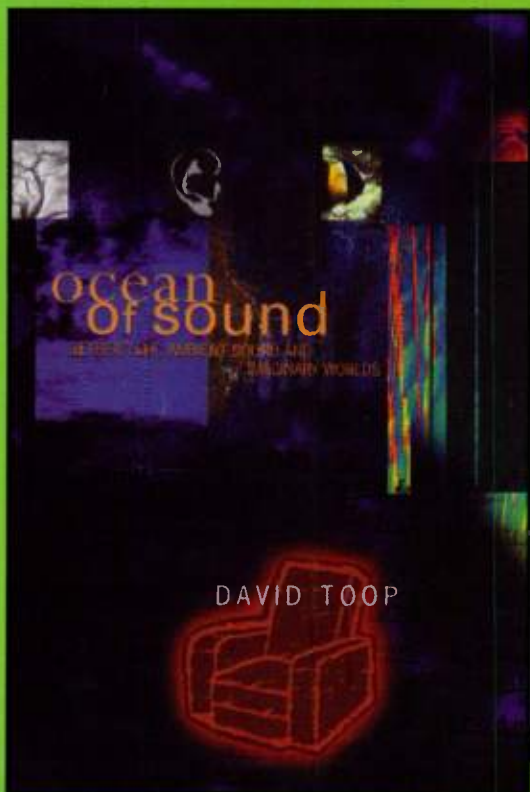
BONUS BEATS



After the members of Arrested Development went their separate ways following the lukewarm response to 1994's *Zingalamaduni*, hip-hop was in danger of losing one of its most important voices. Arrested Development debuted with the hit "Tennessee" in 1992, and singlehandedly refocused rap's attention away from the hordes of gangster wannabes and toward a more enlightened and determined mindset. Frontman **SPEECH** has resurfaced on a self-titled solo album (Chrysalis-EMI), and remains the headstrong auteur he was four years ago. Both celebratory and critical, Speech's words and patented Southern fried funk focus on love, self-pride and strength like no one since Chuck D. On cuts like "Ask Somebody Who Ain't," "Filled With Real" and "Why U Gotta Be Feelin' Like Dat?," Speech caters to open-minded B-boys and girls with a punchy mix of live-sounding, sing-songy choruses and beats that don't have the urgency they did years ago, but still release an earthy flavor. The beautiful "If You Was Me" boasts the most melody for your buck, while "Let's Be Hippies" sounds like it could have been written by Prince... If you're torn between running out to pick up the latest album by Atlanta's **KRIS KROSS**, *Young, Rich & Dangerous* (Ruffhouse-Columbia), and ordering some '80s rock compilation off the tube at 3 a.m., you'd probably be better off with the latter. We can't argue that the teen duo is young and rich (thanks to 1992's "Jump"), but dangerous they are not. Far removed from the youthful fun of *Totally Krossed Out* (the backward jeans look downright laughable today), Jermaine Dupri's luxurious, slow-bumpin' production has the pair rapping about subjects that are neither interesting nor believable: Sipping champagne, counting dead presidents (read: money) and sexing the same girl ("It's A Group Thang") prove that after four years, Mack Daddy and Daddy Mack are still not mature enough to be considered anything but one-hit-wonders... Despite his death last March 26 from AIDS, **EAZY-E**'s last release, *Str8 Off Tha Streetz Of Muthaphu**in Compton* (Ruthless), has finally been issued after years of anticipation. With some of the production completed after his death, this is still a vintage, crude Eazy-E joint. Consistently razor-sharp gangster grooves are constructed by Yella, Bobcat and even Naughty By Nature, while Eazy's words rain down like a hail of bullets, still administering his frightening, no mercy/I-don't-give-a-fuck attitude to everything and everyone he encounters. Without knowing the facts behind it, "My Baby's Mama" is hard to appreciate; it screams "Fuck my baby's mama!" at an ex-wife who is suing him for child support. Eazy comes off much better on cuts like the booming "Ole School Shit," featuring Gangsta Dresta, B.G. Knocc Out and Sylk, and "Sippin' On A 40" (check the sample of War's "Slippin' Into Darkness"), which will surely make C. Delores Tucker hot under the headdress. Word out.

mixed media

compiled by Douglas Wolk



READS

OCEAN OF SOUND: AETHER TALK, AMBIENT SOUND AND IMAGINARY WORLDS

by David Toop (*Serpent's Tail*)

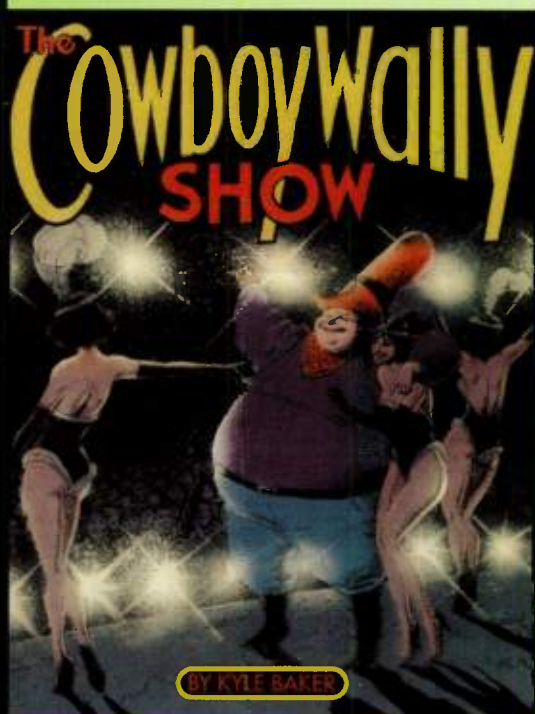
As far as David Toop is concerned, the present practice of making music that works as a sound-environment—from specifically “ambient” music on out—began when Claude Debussy heard Japanese music in 1889. From that starting point, he constructs an immersive history of related ideas. *Ocean Of Sound*, darting around in space and time to make connections between seemingly disparate practices of sound-creation. Toop has been a musician (check out his album *Deadly Weapons*) and musical theorist and scholar for over a quarter of a century, and he knows whereof he speaks. He interviews Scanner, Sun Ra, Brian Eno, Kraftwerk, Don Cherry and dozens of others; he discusses Erik Satie and contemporary techno with the same scrupulous factual accuracy and intellectual rigor, not to mention an obvious delight in the music itself. The point of both the book and the music it describes is not the destination but the trip—cumulative impressions rather than a linear argument—but there’s an eye-opening fact or observation on nearly every page. (DW)

FUNNIES

THE COWBOY WALLY SHOW

by Kyle Baker (*Marlowe & Company*)

Kyle Baker’s first graphic novel, *The Cowboy Wally Show*, was originally published in 1986. It went out of print instantly, and after his *Why I Hate Saturn* made him something of a star, *Cowboy Wally* started to command triple-digit figures among collectors (and to have its punchlines pop up as signature files all over Usenet). It’s finally available again, and it lives up to its rep. Ostensibly about a fat, obnoxious television personality who’s filming a career retrospective, the book is actually an excuse for Baker to do whatever he needs to do to make a joke. And there’s about a billion of them, almost all funny, from antiquated vaudeville one-liners and their modern descendants (“HOWOOOOOOO HOWOOOOOOO Dog Food. Dogs ask for it by name”) to merciless parodies of star-vehicle TV and Foreign Legion movies to the book’s centerpiece, an extended, breathtakingly funny routine involving a 20-minute vernacular adaptation of *Hamlet* filmed inside a prison cell without the guards noticing. What gives it its staying power, though, is Baker’s cartooning, which splits the difference between Ronald Searle’s caricatures and Neal Adams’ photorealism. Baker has recently been working on the “Bad Publicity” comic strip in *New York* magazine, and supposedly has another graphic novel coming sometime this year. (DW)



CEMETERY MAN

(October Films)

Cemetery Man is a bizarre piece of work—half by-the-numbers horror/sex comedy, half terrifying existentialist meditation. Based on a story from the Italian comics series *Dylan Dog*, it begins as a fairly straightforward story about Francesco Dellamorte (Rupert Everett), a watchman at a cemetery overrun by flesh-eating zombies. Accompanied by his faithful gravedigger Gnaghi (Tor Johnson lookalike Francois Hadji-Lazaro), Dellamorte dispatches the undead, freshly dead, and not-quite-dead-yet. By degrees, though, the film abandons that plot and mutates from a campy sex-and-gore farce (let's just say a lot of the jokes are probably funnier in Italian) into something much more disorienting and much harder to laugh off. That's the work of director Michele Soavi, a protégé of Dario Argento. He's also worked extensively with Terry Gilliam, whose visual style *Cemetery Man* recalls: elements within each frame are grossly mismatched in scale, motion and lighting work completely differently than they do in reality, and everything is slightly but horribly off. (That impression is aided by the fact that almost nobody's mouth is on camera when they speak—the better to dub into both Italian and English, most likely.) By the end, it's practically in low-budget Samuel Beckett territory. (DW)

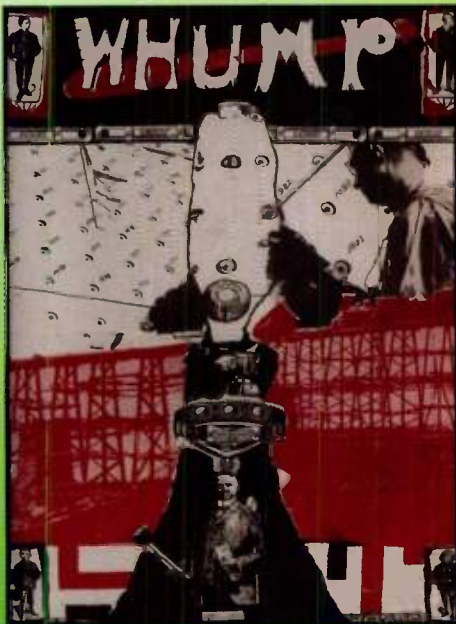
FUNNIES

ST. INK

(\$3-5, depending on the issue, from P. Shaw, Box 928, Boston, MA 02117-0928)

P. Shaw's semi-annual comics anthology *St. Ink* has some of the most adventurous experimental cartooning being done in America—and it's consistently fun, too. Shaw's one-eyed creatures are familiar to anyone who's seen show posters in Boston in the last few years. Besides a couple of pieces by him, the new fifth issue has mostly non-narrative work by other Boston scene luminaries (Ron Rege of the band Trollin Withdrawal collaborates with Erin O'Brien on the brilliant, scatological "It's Not True"), as well as more widely known cartoonists like Dame Darcy (of *Meatcake* fame) and relatively unknown artists—there's a particularly great woodcut adaptation of a Robert Graves poem by Linsey Herman. Send Shaw interesting things in the mail and you'll get his minicomics and other projects in trade. (DW)

THREE DOLLARS + NUMBER FIVE



WHUMP

(\$8 from Box #422, 504 W. 24th St., Austin, TX 78705)

The latest in the line of humongous 'zines with singles inside is *Whump*, whose hundred-page first issue comes with a first-rate double 7" featuring Soul-Junk, Caroliner, Harry Pussy, Noggin and the Screamin Mee-Mee's, among others. All of the musicians on the record appear in some form in the magazine; both tend toward the intersection of written songs and random noise. Paste's Dennis Callaci contributes *Whump*'s only page of reviews, which are handwritten, illustrated and non-sequitural (there's been a trend away from reviews in a lot of 'zines recently, which is a pity—better well-written reviews than crappy ones, but eliminating them altogether isn't a solution either). *Whump* is wildly inconsistent, but it's got a few strokes of genius, like sending Caroliner a standardized psychoanalytic personality inventory as a "list of interview questions" and interviewing fascinating unknowns the Memphis Goons (garage-rock/Zappa disciples who mostly recorded in the '60s) and Austin weirdos Five Starcle Men (whose representative spends nearly the entire interview talking about how drinking Robitussin every day for four years has let him talk to aliens). The comics are more hit-or-miss, though: Charles Irvin's "Emotional Opportunism" is pretty excellent. (DW)

'ZINES

multi-media



NET STUFF

THE MATADOR WEB SITE

<http://www.matador.recs.com>

Most record-label web sites have hype, huge image files, maybe short bios of the bands, a few hyper-links, and not much else. Not Matador's, the best indie-label site yet unveiled. Besides the usual album-cover reproductions, extensive bios and discographies, and an immense mail-order catalog, full of great stuff that's almost impossible to find elsewhere, there are a lot of things that are on the site just because they're neat ideas. Like the permanent, round-the-clock, live chat with Pavement (um... sort of). Or the link to the home page of Matador's friendly neighborhood policeman, who has some unusual ideas about law enforcement (like a program to trade in handguns for smaller handguns—there's a pictorial with great fake gun-magazine photos of several Matador musicians). Or the "Write-Your-Own-Record-Review" feature, which is actually a dead-on gibe at a rather well-known rock writer. There are also links to all the issues of the label's in-house magazine, *Escandalo!*, and a few other surprises. (DW)

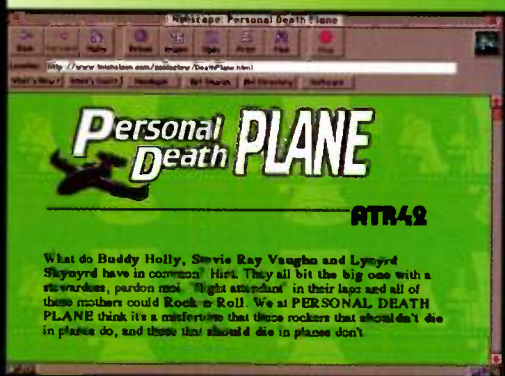
NET STUFF

PERSONAL DEATH PLANE

<http://www.tmlcholson.com/sonicstew/DeathPlane.html>

The staff of Personal Death Plane thinks it's a shame that those rockers who shouldn't die in planes do, while those who should, don't. As a public service of sorts, their site allows you to both seat and serve a last—tainted—supper to seven passengers of your choice on the next flight to the Great Beyond. Those who think serving poisoned fare to the already doomed is, well, overkill will be somewhat relieved to learn that each seat on the Death Plane carries slightly different odds on actually doing in its occupant. But should the statistically generated flight report reveal that anyone escaped unharmed, there's a list of comic-book character hit men and women available to help you finish the job. Net-surfers who find this site too morbid, but like the idea, should petition SonicSlam (the site's creators) for a companion page which would substitute for the fiery crash with a never-ending bus ride, preferably one in which the passengers' only available music is each other's.

—Ana Marie Cox



ALBERT BOIME VAN GOGH CD-ROM



STARRY NIGHT

STARRY NIGHT

(Voyager)

Starry Night, an extended explication of Van Gogh's painting, is, make no mistake, an educational CD-ROM. It's also one of the most focused, interesting discs of that type yet released, because it's actually got a point to make about its subject. The center of *Starry Night* is a two-hour lecture about the painting delivered by art historian Albert Boime, based on an article that got him some media attention a few years ago. The lecture is fascinating, and well-delivered. It's also copiously illustrated with paintings, drawings, photographs and all kinds of related images, which can fill the screen or appear next to the text of the lecture. There are hypertext links to explain terms that are unfamiliar to laymen, or that have particularly interesting explanations; there are more links to "sidebar" lectures, to Van Gogh's letters, and to details of the painting itself. The response time of the disc is fast, the interface is easy to use, and the whole thing is designed to give users what they want to know without distractions or hunts for information. (DW)

TOP 75

ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY



CIBO MATTO

	ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	LABEL
1	CIBO MATTO	Viva! La Woman	Warner Bros.
2	POSSUM DIXON	Star Maps	Interscope
3	NOISE ADDICT	Meet The Real You	Fellaheen-Grand Royal
4	RUBY	Salt Peter	Creation-WORK
5	ERIC'S TRIP	Purple Blue	Sub Pop
6	TORI AMOS	Boys For Pele	Atlantic
7	MOJAVE 3	Ask Me Tomorrow	4AD-WB
8	SMASHING PUMPKINS	Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness	Virgin
9	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Saturday Morning Cartoons Greatest Hits	MCA
10	HALO BENDERS	Don't Tell Me Now	K
11	NOFX	Heavy Petting Zoc	Epitaph
12	FRANK BLACK	The Cult Of Ray	American
13	AMPS	Pacer	4AD/Elektra-EEG
14	SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER	Sackcloth 'N' Ashes	A&M
15	GOLDEN SMOG	Down By The Old Mainstream	Rykodisc
16	SOUNDTRACK	Dead Man Walking	Columbia-CRG
17	SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE	Sunny Day Real Estate	Sub Pop
18	FOLK IMPLOSION	The Folk Implosion (EP)	Communion
19	SISTER MACHINE GUN	Burn	Wax Trax!-TVT
20	COCTAILS	Coctails	Carrot Top
21	PEECHES	Do The Math	Kill Rock Stars
22	MINISTRY	Filth Pig	Warner Bros.
23	MR. T EXPERIENCE	Love Is Dead	Lookout!
24	OASIS	(What's The Story) Morning Glory?	Epic
25	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Twisted Willie	Justice
26	LEVELLERS	Zeitgeist	Elektra-EEG
27	SPACEHOG	Resident Alien	Hi Fi/Sire-EEG
28	P	P	Capitol
29	PHARCYDE	LabcabinCalifornia	Delicious Vinyl-Capitol
30	NO DOUBT	Tragic Kingdom	Trauma-Interscope
31	WALT MINK	El Producto	Atlantic
32	FLYING SAUCER ATTACK	Chorus	Drag City
33	GAUNT	Yeah, Me Too	Amphetamine Reptile
34	VAN GOGH'S DAUGHTER	Shove	Hollywood
35	CORNERSHOP	Woman's Gotta Have It	Luaka Bop-WB
36	JONNY POLONSKY	Hi My Name Is Jonny	American
37	PASSENGERS	Original Soundtracks I	Island
38	BOSS HOG	Boss Hog	DGC
39	NEW BOMB TURKS	Pissing Out The Poison	Crypt
40	PASTELS	Mobile Safari	Up
41	THERAPY?	Infernal Love	A&M
42	ALICE IN CHAINS	Alice In Chains	Columbia-CRG
43	VOODOO GLOW SKULLS	Firme	Epitaph
44	COBRA VERDE	Vintage Crime (EP)	Scat
45	VARIOUS ARTISTS	KXLU, 88.9 FM, Los Angeles Live, Volume One	KXLU
46	CARDIGANS	Life	Minty Fresh
47	SUPPLE	Puppets' Night Out	Futurist-FLG
48	ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT	Scream, Dracula, Scream!	Interscope
49	RUBY FALLS	What She Does	Personal Favorite
50	POE	Hello	Modern-Atlantic
51	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Trip Hop Test Part Two	Moonshine
52	STUNTMAN	Stuntman	Link
53	RENTALS	Return Of The Rentals	Maverick-Reprise
54	LAGWAGON	Hoss	Fat Wreck Chords
55	LUSH	Lovelife	4AD-Reprise
56	DEAD MILKMEN	Stoney's Extra Stout (Pig)	Restless
57	BUILT TO SPILL CAUSTIC RESIN	Built To Spill Caustic Resin	Up
58	PULP	Different Class	Island
59	LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III	Grown Man	Virgin
60	TEL AVIV	Tel Aviv	TeenBeat
61	YAN MORRISON WITH GEORGIE FAME & FRIENDS	How Long Has This Been Going On	Verve
62	BLONDE REDHEAD	La Mia Vita Violenta	Smells Like
63	WEDDING PRESENT	MiniPlus (EP)	Cooking Vinyl America
64	SELF	Subliminal Plastic Motives	Spongebath-Zoo
65	SOUNDTRACK	Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead	A&M
66	TEXAS IS THE REASON	"Texas Is The Reason" (7")	Revelation
67	MARILYN MANSON	Smells Like Children	Nothing-Interscope
68	ALL ABOUT CHAD	Down In Front	Big Pop
69	TRACY CHAPMAN	New Beginning	Elektra-EEG
70	POEM ROCKET	Felix Culpa	PCP
71	PIZZICATO FIVE	The Sound Of Music By Pizzicato Five	Matador-Atlantic
72	RESOLVE	Jack	Artists Only!
73	DAR WILLIAMS	Mortal City	Razor & Tie
74	HI-STANDARD	Growing Up	Fat Wreck Chords
75	SHIFT	Spacesuit	Equal Vision

Chart data pulled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 30 most played releases that week.



NEW RELEASES MARCH-APRIL 1996

MARCH 19

MOUTH Hole In Your Head (Kinetic-Reprise)
MERZBOW Pulse Demon (Release)
FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON Accelerator (Cleopatra)
CLUSTER Sowiesoso (Gyroscope-Caroline)
RODELIUS Wenn Der Sudwind Weht (Gyroscope-Caroline)
JOHN BARRY The EMI Years, Vol. 1 (Scamp-Caroline)
VARIOUS ARTISTS Three A.D. (Waveform)
JAMES CHANCE Sax Maniac (Infinite Zero-American)
KWEST THA MADD LAD This Is My First Album (Infinite Zero-American)
GEORGE JONES Bartender's Blues (Razor & Tie)
SKIPLOADER From Can Through String (DGC)
SORT OF QUARTET Kiss Me Twice I'm Schizo (SST)
HUMBLE SOULS Thoughts (Hollywood)
DOUBLE VISION D. Vision (Hollywood)
NEW JERSEY KINGS Stratosphere (Hollywood)
SHALLOW CD Laser Lens Cleaner (Zero Hour)
JOSH CLAYTON-FELT Inarticulate Nature Boy (A&M)
DOMINO Physical Funk (Outburst-Island)
GROTUS Mass (London)
EAST 17 Steam (London)

MARCH 26

HIPPOPOTAMUS Hippopotamus (Grass)
LOOMIS You're No Tiger (Grass)
GRAVITY KILLS Gravity Kills (TVT)
HUSIKESQUE Green Blue Fire (Astralwerks-Caroline)
LOW ROAD The Low Road (Passenger-Caroline)
COWS Whorn (Amphetamine Reptile-Atlantic)
ME FIRST & THE GIMME GIMMES Denver (Fat Wreck Chords)
VERVE PIPE Villians (RCA)
VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE Sex & Misery (Discovery)
JUNE I Am Beautiful (Beggars Banquet)
AUNT BETTYS Skinny Bones Jones (Elektra-EEG)
NANCY BOY Deep Sleep Motel (Elektra-EEG)
SUPERDRAG Regretfully Yours (Elektra-EEG)
ABDEL ALI SLIMANI Myara (RealWorld-Caroline)
VARIOUS ARTISTS The Sound Gallery (Scamp-Caroline)
NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL Avery Island (Merge)
BEAT HAPPENING Beat Happening (reissue) (K)
ILL BISKITS Chronicle Of Two Losers (Atlantic)
SOUNDTRACK I Shot Andy Warhol (Atlantic)
MAVIS PIGGOTT You Can Be Low (Flydaddy)
BRAINIAC Hissing Prigs In Static Couture (Touch And Go)
SONORA PINE The Sonora Pine (Quarterstick-Touch And Go)
GUIDED BY VOICES Under The Bushes, Under The Stars (Matador)

APRIL 2

BOYRACER In Full Colour (Zero Hour)
NEUROSIS Through Silver In Blood (Relapse)
VARIOUS ARTISTS Sound Of The Underground (Sour/Columbia-CRG)
VARIOUS ARTISTS Bored Generation (CD-ROM) (Epitaph)

APRIL 9

PHIL KRAUTH Silver Eyes (TeenBeat)
FITZ OF DEPRESSION Swing (K)
GLO-WORM Glimmer (K)
SEADE Perf (Grass)
BARDO POND High Frequencies (Matador)
MECCA NORMAL The Eagle And The Poodle (Matador)

APRIL 16

STATE OF GRACE Jamboreebop (RCA)
MEKONS Untied (Quarterstick-Touch And Go)
SPACE STREAKINGS OVER MOUNT SHASTA Shakuachi Surprise (Skin Graft)
GAUNT Kryptonite (Thrill Jockey)

DIRECTORY

A LISTING OF LABELS WHOSE ARTISTS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

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

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

5th Beetle
 P.O. Box 7037
 Windsor, ONT N9C 3Y6
 Canada

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

Alias
 2815 W. Olive Ave.
 Burbank, CA 91595

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

Atlantic
 75 Rockefeller Plaza
 New York, NY 10019

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

Big Cat
 580 Broadway, Ste. 900
 New York, NY 10012

Blue Note
 810 Seventh Ave., 4th Fl.
 New York, NY 10019

Brinkman
 P.O. Box 441837
 Somerville, MA 02144

Bulb
 P.O. Box 8221
 Ann Arbor, MI 48107

Capitol
 1750 N. Vine St.
 Hollywood, CA 90028

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

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

Coat-Tail
 P.O. Box 1007
 Madison, WI 53701

Crosstalk
 1557 Honore
 Chicago, IL 60622

Deconstruction
 P.O. Box 18106
 Encino, CA 91416

DejaDisc
 537 Lindsey St.
 San Marcos, TX 78666

Discovery
 2034 Broadway
 Santa Monica, CA 90404

EEG
 75 Rockefeller Plaza
 New York, NY 10019

El Recordo
 1916 Pike Pl., #12-370
 Seattle, WA 98101

Energy
 545 Eighth Ave., 17th Fl.
 New York, NY 10018

Epitaph
 6201 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 111
 Hollywood, CA 90028

Flydaddy
 P.O. Box 4618
 Seattle, WA 98104

Flying Nun
 P.O. Box 677
 Auckland, New Zealand

Geffen/DGC
 9130 Sunset Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90069

Headhunter
 4901 Morena Blvd., Unit 906
 San Diego, CA 92117

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

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

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

Kill Rock Stars
 120 NE State, #418
 Olympia, WA 98501

Lookout!
 P.O. Box 11374
 Berkeley, CA 94712

Mammoth
 Carr Mill, 2nd Fl.
 Carboro, NC 27510

Merge
 P.O. Box 1235
 Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Motown
 6255 Sunset Blvd.
 Hollywood, CA 90028

Music For Your Ears
 d/o Power Music Distribution
 648 Broadway, Ste. 600
 New York, NY 10012

PCP
 P.O. Box 1689
 Grand Central Station
 New York, NY 10009

RCA
 Bertelsmann Bldg.
 1540 Broadway, Times Sq.
 New York, NY 10036

Roadrunner
 225 Lafayette St., Suite 407
 New York, NY 10012

Ruthless
 21860 Burbank Blvd., Ste. 100
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Rykodisc
 Shetland Park
 27 Congress St.
 Salem, MA 01970

Southern
 P.O. Box 25529
 Chicago, IL 60625

Stingy Banana
 335 East 10th St., #3E
 New York, NY 10009

Sub Pop
 1932 First Ave.
 Seattle, WA 98101

TeenBeat
 P.O. Box 3265
 Arlington, VA 22203

Tone Casualties
 11258 N. Highland
 Hollywood, CA 90038

Touch And Go
 P.O. Box 25520
 Chicago, IL 60625

Trance Syndicate
 P.O. Box 49771
 Austin, TX 78789

TVT
 23 E. 4th St.
 New York, NY 10003

Virgin
 338 N. Foothill Rd.
 Beverly Hills, CA 90210

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

Zoo
 8750 Wilshire Blvd.
 Beverly Hills, CA 90211

All dates subject to change, so don't blame us.

FEEDBACK

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- ☐ Feb '95 Veruca Salt/Elastica
- ☐ Mar '95 Belly
- ☐ Apr '95 Faith No More
- ☐ May '95 Juliana Hatfield
- ☐ June '95 Chris Isaak
- ☐ July '95 Soul Asylum
- ☐ Aug '95 Primus
- ☐ Sep '95 Urge Overkill
- ☐ Oct '95 Flaming Lips
- ☐ Nov '95 Sonic Youth
- ☐ Dec '95 Smashing Pumpkins
- ☐ Jan '96 Rocket From The Crypt
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Localzine

BY DOUGLAS P. MOSURAK

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh is a city of three rivers and dozens of bridges. It's usually too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. It's not a terribly large city, and therefore it's not consistently exciting to live here (after 19 years, I feel confident in this assumption). However, the town more than makes up for its various shortcomings with generally friendly people, some great bands, and a few really excellent things to do and places to go.

The city itself is divided up into a bunch of distinct neighborhoods, each distinguished by its own little flourishes. Pittsburgh in itself is very spread out, and a significant number of its people and attractions can be found in the tract homes and strip malls of the Greater Pittsburgh region. Sound like fun? No? I grew up there, and I can attest that if you like hot dogs, batting cages, and big hair, you couldn't hope to find a better environment. Just stay out of the suburbs and focus on the city. I do.

Pittsburgh's most interesting urban neighborhoods are Oakland, which houses five colleges (including Carnegie Mellon University, which I attend, and the University of Pittsburgh); Squirrel Hill, one of the largest Jewish communities on the Eastern Seaboard; the South Side, primarily a shopping district with some interesting places to hang; Bloomfield, a predominantly Italian area with some nice stores and great restaurants; and the Strip District, the warehouse-and-wholesaler locale. Any one of these offers plenty to the out-of-towner, and hopefully incentive enough for you to throw down this magazine, get in your car and come to Pittsburgh. Let's go!

RECORD STORES

The best record store in Pittsburgh (and possibly on the East Coast) is Jerry's Records, located at 2136 Murray Ave. in Squirrel Hill. An all-used record store, Jerry's was previously located on Forbes Ave. in Oakland, but the advent of CD technology made for extreme limitations on space, so Jerry Weber, the owner, opened an all-vinyl store in November 1994 in



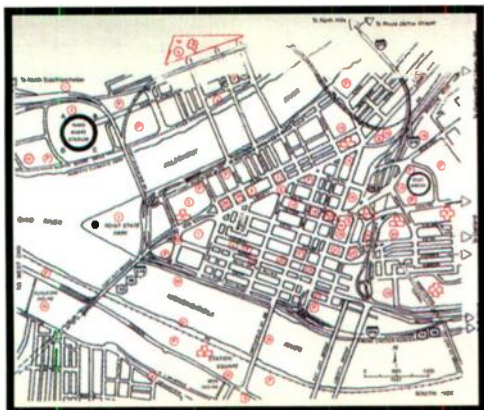
an old silkscreening factory. Jerry's doesn't worry about collectors' pricing like most record stores with the quality of merchandise you'll find here. Chances are you'll walk out with something you've been searching for your entire life. Over half of my record collection was purchased here.

The best new record store in Pittsburgh would have to be Paul's CDs (4526 Liberty Ave., Bloomfield). It used to be called Jim's Records, but it's still the same great shop, stocking all manner of indie, jazz, blues, and folk CD, LP, and 7" product. Local rock musicians Karl Hendricks (the Karl Hendricks Trio) and Matt Jencik (Hurl) work here, so if you drop by, tell 'em I said hi.

Eide's (1111 Penn Ave., right on the edge of the Strip) is a fairly cool record and comic book store that's been around forever. Despite the recent downsizing of their vinyl section (the remnants of which you can find at Jerry's) and the uneasy surliness of the clerks, Eide's has been quite good to me from high school on up. It's where I bought my first punk rock tapes, and continues to supply the youth of Pittsburgh with all kinds of subversive media, especially in garage, imports, bootlegs, gothic stuff, and metal. Check it out.

BANDS

Pittsburgh has had a happening underground music scene for longer than I can remember, and has produced many a fine band in its day. The following is a partial list of the many excellent bands currently living in Pittsburgh, in no particular order: the Karl Hendricks Trio, Blunderbuss, Thee Speaking Canaries, Hurl, Davenport, Watershed, the Mount McKinleys, Swob, the Cynics, Don Caballero, Thirty-one Deluxe, Shale, Anti-Flag, Submachine, Jumbo, Six Horse, the Steel Miners, Underflow, Storm & Stress, Vehicle Flips, Cattywampus, 40 Stories, Costanza!, Highway 13, Empire Builder, and the Crunch. I urge you to check out these



bands live and to buy their records; each time you do, Rusted Root comes one step closer to shriveling up and dying.

CLUBS

Clubs, you ask... hmmm. Well, I can tell you what we used to have, because right now there's no set place for a band to play an all-ages show. There are two large venues here in town—Metropol (1600 Smallman, the Strip), an 'industrial disco', and the rock club Graffiti (4615 Baum Blvd., Oakland)—which occasionally showcase national acts and local climbers, sometimes in an under-21 capacity. Pennsylvania's strict liquor laws make it a real hassle for any promoter to book shows and serve alcohol, but two over-21 establishments, the Electric Banana (3887 Bigelow Blvd., Oakland) and the Bloomfield Bridge Tavern (on Liberty Ave. in Bloomfield) manage to hold decent shows for the "adult" set.

For all-ages action, Carnegie Mellon University is pretty swingin'. Through the good graces of their Activities Board, the school provides the campus and the Pittsburgh community with a passel of quality rock and jazz showcases each semester; recent highlights have included Yo La Tengo, Shellac, Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments, and Gastr del Sol. In Oakland, the Beehive (3807 Forbes Ave., with a counterpart in the South Side) is a neat little coffeehouse/movie theater/arcade-type place that has started holding concerts again after a two-year hiatus. Luciano's Coffeehouse and Bistro (1023 Forbes Ave., Downtown) still holds a few all-ages shows now and again as well.

When it comes to indie bands playing in Pittsburgh, there's one name that shows up time and again in regards to booking—Manny Theiner. Manny's been running shit in no less than 15 venues since 1988, and is largely responsible for bringing the best bands to Pittsburgh. Look him up. I'm sure someone you'll run into here who knows him.

RADIO

Pittsburgh is blessed with two excellent radio stations that provide the city with consistently exciting and challenging sounds. WPTS-FM (92.1 FM) broadcasts at a whopping 10 watts from high atop the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning. Their format is mainly indie-rock oriented, with some cool jazz, rap and metal shows.

Carnegie Mellon's WRCT-FM (88.3 FM) blasts out 1750 watts of free-form radio, 24 hours a day. I've been a DJ there since high school and it's one of the reasons why I chose to stay here. Almost every show is worth listening to, with pretty much every genre you could imagine sharing air time, some within the same show. Live bands, compelling public affairs programming, and some truly amazing live mixing on rap and freestyle shows round out the WRCT experience. I can't imagine how my life might have turned out if it weren't for these two radio stations. Oh yeah—you can usually hear me on Sunday nights sometime between 6 p.m. and midnight, so if you're listening, give me a call and harass me or something. I love abuse.



RESTAURANTS

There's a slew of good places to dine in Pittsburgh, so I'm just going to go over my favorites. The Bloomfield Bridge Tavern (see above) is an excellent place to eat if you've got a few hours on your hands and need some homemade Polish food: their pierogies, kaluski, and other dishes are made fresh immediately following your order. Wash it down with one of their hundred or so microbrews and maybe catch a live band while you wait.

One eatery in particular has caught my eye over the last month or so. It's called Spice Island Tea House, and it's on Atwood St. in Oakland. They serve primarily Indonesian and Southeast Asian food, a niche previously unfilled this well in all of Western Pennsylvania. Prices are extremely reasonable, and the people who work there are quite hip too (last time I went my girlfriend and I ate dinner to James Brown instrumentals). Go early. Go often.

Finally, the best breakfast you're likely to find in Pittsburgh or anywhere else is at Deluca's (2015 Penn Ave., the Strip). Breakfast here is an orgasmic experience that will leave you floating on a cloud all day long and clawing at the door the next week like a junkie. Pardon my hyperbole, but it's more amazing than words can describe and you can't leave Pittsburgh without eating here. That settles it.

KENNYWOOD

If you're here in the summertime, you have no excuse for not checking out Kennywood (in Duquesne—okay, so I lied... the suburbs aren't *all* bad), one of the best amusement parks to ever exist anywhere. Nowhere else on earth can you ride totally excellent roller coasters (they've got the tallest and fastest in the world right now, and a bunch of amazing wooden coasters to boot), eat great food, and play classic video games dating as many as 20 years old all in the same place. The atmosphere of the park pretty much defines Pittsburgh, and you won't be able to begin to understand this town until you go there. I guarantee you'll have fun.

In closing, I'd like to point out that visiting Pittsburgh is only half the experience. Until you've sweated it out with Blunderbuss at a basement party, seen 4th of July fireworks by the rivers, checked out a Pirates game in the 700 level of Three Rivers Stadium, or drove around the parks on warm summer nights in a mid-'70s sedan, you've only partially experienced what this town has to offer in the spiritual sense. So give it a shot, and if you don't like what you see, well... go home.





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