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COCTEAU TWINS

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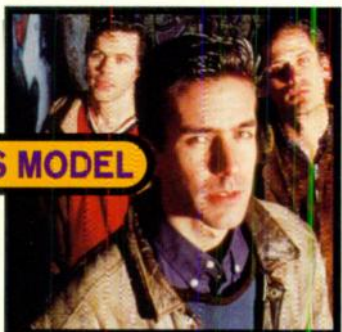
Tom Lanham works these Scottish aesthetes into a Dionysian frenzy. Okay, maybe not.



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CMJ

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You come down off that trampoline before you hurt yourself

Do you remember how you felt when you heard your favorite song? The power it seemed to hold over you, the way you could feel every word they singing (almost as if they went inside your head to write it), the way that no other song mattered the moment you heard it?

A couple of days ago, I heard my favorite song for the first time: Joe Henry's "Trampoline." I sat back, closed my eyes and smiled because I knew that I'd found "my song." So, CMJ, thank you for giving me my favorite song.

Missy Bissinger
Zionsville, PA

Letters like this one make me so happy, I don't even want to belittle anyone, except maybe this next guy.—ed.

Ever wonder what happened to that kid in the back of the class who made fart noises with his armpit?

Thank you for your wonderful politically correct magazine and collection of songs which you send out each month. Thank you for enlightening me; I never knew so much musical crap existed in the world today. You give my band hope each and every month. I especially love the way you go out of your way to avoid featuring anyone with talent and making that special effort to spotlight that up-and-coming band whose musical quality can be matched only by the sound of copulating farm animals. But hey, at least you're not MAINSTREAM.

Zach Manis

Hey Zach, who invented sarcasm? I did. [pause] Yeah, right. —ed.

Midnight at the oasis

I really enjoyed your interview with Oasis, but after reading what Noel Gallagher said at the end about being so sensitive to the feelings of their fans, I had to laugh out loud.

I attended their March 10 show in Providence, RI. Noel was alone doing an acoustic set when he was hit by a stray boot. I don't think it was purposely aimed at him, people were just really excited and having a good time. Still, this angered him enough to stop singing and walk off stage. Liam then came out and had quite a few nasty things to say about it. The band did one more song, then walked off, and told us we were lucky to get that last song. This brought the show time to a grand total of 45 minutes!

Obviously Noel must have forgotten what he said about bands giving the best performance they can for your money. All I know is I left feeling cheated and disappointed. Although I hate to say it, I still love them.

J. Woolley

Pittsburgher, with a side of fries

As a fellow Pittsburgher, I'd like to point a few other attractions that make Pittsburgh great (OK, better than mediocre).

1. Clubs: (for those of us who are over 21): Nick's Fat City is a nice showcase club for local bands, with an occasional appearance by a national act (unfortunately Hootie and the Blowfish were one of them). Ribbitz was formerly "The Decade"; it's not as good as before, but hey, they still have the ashes of that dead guy buried under the stage!

2. Food: The Original Hot Dot Shop (or the 'O') is famous for having some of the best fries anywhere (and real cheap, too!). I suggest getting them with cheese. A small order can feed a family of four! There's also Primanti Bros., where every sandwich is served on fresh Italian bread and topped with fries and cole slaw. Yum!

3. Bands: If you're looking for a band that doesn't want to be the 'next Green Day,' I suggest checking out the Clarks, MACE, Red Stone Mathis, or Brownie Mary.

4. Radio: Check out WYEP-FM (91.3). They play a wide variety (blues, indie, folk, etc.) and are big supporters of local music.

Tom Kenniston
Pittsburgh

Of peaches and impeachings

Music has always been an outlet to the heart and soul of the human race. Since the '60s, it has been on a rapid decline in terms of merit and meaning. A prime example would be the Presidents Of The United States Of America. This band most certainly exemplifies the state of the current music (Babylon) scene. They revel in boorish, adolescent lyrics and lackluster musical stylings. Don't get me wrong, music should be fun, both for those performing and listening. But the Presidents are dealing a painful blow to the pride of goo [sic, we think—ed.] music. Personally, I find that music should be based on emotion, experience and deep inner thought. Singing of peaches and dune buggies just doesn't cut it. Everybody in music today claims that they want to improve the music (Babylon) scene, but you can't improve something by breaking it more than it already was. So I say, impeach the Presidents, and let's get back into music.

Brian K. Skillin

Of Bad Religion and bad mistakes

Wow, you really messed up naming the band members in the photograph on page 17. Left to right, it's Bentley, Schayer, Baker, Graffin, Hetson. I'm sure you already know this, but I thought, just in case...

Otherwise, keep up the good work.

M. Carey

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QUICK FIX

FASTBALL

CHIN MUSIC

"When we first started, I didn't think we were ever going to fit in, or that people were going to like us. That's why that's so shocking," Fastball guitarist and sometime vocalist Miles Zuniga says of his band's first-place tie for best pop band in the Austin Music Awards. "I knew there'd be people that liked us, but I didn't think that we'd be embraced by the *Austin Chronicle* or things like that, just because we were playing music that seemed, to me, not real trendy. Sixteen Deluxe, I think they're great," he says of the band that took the alternative category, where Fastball also finished in the money, "but they're definitely playing music that's like 'Yeah! Buzz Bin!' They're right on the edge... I think they're great, but I'm just saying that I thought we'd seem a little too straightforward."

A fastball is supposed to be straightforward, of course, as well as fast and hard, and Fastball the band is all of the above. The best fastball pitchers, however, have something extra, a deceptive movement where the ball seems to "rise" as it nears the plate. It's an optical illusion—it's a physical impossibility for the ball to actually rise—but it makes the pitch something more than the batter has any right to expect. And it's this last allusion to its baseball namesake that's the most important with Fastball, and one that's borne out by the fact that its hometown music fans voted the band was near the top of both the alternative and pop categories. From the Kiss-like stomp of "Eater" to the alt-pop of "She Comes Round" to the punk/surf/pop of "Human Torch"—and that's just the first three songs on *Make Your Mama Proud*, the band's debut—Fastball is consistently more, and better, than you'd expect.

The band—Zuniga, singer-bassist Tony Scalzo and drummer Joey Sheffield—kicked off the South By Southwest conference with a keg of beer and private show held in their usual rehearsal space—the same thing they did last year when they were shut out of that conference's showcases. The crowd, however, was about five times the size of the 20 or so friends that came last year, and the PA freaked out about as often as did the rehearsal complex's management.

"Last night was pretty much what rock 'n' roll should be, because it was so unpredictable and it was so flying by the seat of your pants, and that's really what is exciting about the music anyway," Zuniga says. "It's like if everything went perfectly smooth, then it's kind of uneventful in a way... Sometimes when it's really chaotic like that, it's really fun. I thought, 'Wow, this PA keeps going out, that kinda sucks,' but at the same time it made for some unpredictable improvisation, so maybe we should go on the road with a faulty PA." —Scott Frampton

IN MY ROOM

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

MIKE JOHNSON

GENE CHANDLER

"Suicide" 7"

TOMMY HUNT

"Human" 7"

PERCY MAYFIELD

"Stranger In My Hometown" 7"

WALTER JACKSON

"Not You" 7"

NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS

Murder Ballads



MIX TAPE

"I'll Hate You If It'll Make You Happy"
by Larry M. Boone

Side One:

Black Tape For A Blue Girl: The Touch And The Darkness
Crow soundtrack: The Crow Descends
Usherhouse: November Rain
Switchblade Symphony: Gutter Glitter
Aurora: The Garden Of Temptation
Mephisto Walz: Mephisto Waltz
Sisters Of Mercy: This Corrosion
Peter Murphy: Disappearing
Concrete Blonde: Bloodletting
PJ Harvey: To Bring You My Love
Cranes: Shining Road

Side Two:

Concrete Blonde: Jonestown
Eva O Halo Experience: Children Of The Light
Rosetta Stone: The Witch
Community FK: We Will Not Fall
God Lives Underwater: All Wrong
Machines Of Loving Grace: Butterfly Wings
Machines Of Loving Grace: Ancestor Cult
Stabbing Westward: Can't Happen Here
Nine Inch Nails: Hurt (Quiet)
Cranes: In The Night
Peter Murphy: Huuvola
Crow Soundtrack: Believe In Angels

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.

COOL THING SPEED RACER

Liz Phair wrote a song about him. Big Black named an EP for Racer X (secretly Speed's brother, Rex). And now, here he comes, here comes Speed Racer, right into your living room every weeknight, courtesy of the Cartoon Network. Sure, anime is now a cult phenomenon, and pop culture is rife with Gen-X '70s TV nostalgia, but let's make a salient point in the case for Speed Racer transcending all that: people died. There was the episode where the leader of the Car Acrobatic Team held up the limp, lifeless body of "Snake" beside his burning car, vowing revenge on Speed; the one where dozens of racers were trapped in the treasure-laden volcano that opened once a year; that great one where Speed went cold turkey after getting hooked on the drug that enabled him to drive with the superfast engine that drove racers mad. And don't even get me started on how much of a role model Racer X was. —Scott Frampton



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BOB
BR549

RECORDED LIVE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.



QUICK FIX

THE MUSIC OF SESAME STREET BREAK BEATS AND ABCS

The kids of the last quarter-century are probably the most musically diverse and open-minded generation ever. They're just as likely to groove to bossa nova or rockabilly or vintage jazz as they are punk or hip-hop or new wave revival music. What gave these people such open minds? One answer lies in the music of *Sesame Street*. In truth, the show's multicultural music, incorporating jazz, funk, world music and rock 'n' roll, has had a phenomenal influence on the kids who grew up watching it.

To get to the bottom of this, we spoke to Danny Epstein, *Sesame Street*'s Musical Director. Danny helped coordinate the music for five pilot episodes in July of '69, and has stayed on board ever since. Even today, while he helps run the prodigious *Sesame Street* empire, he still find the time to play percussion on Muppet musical sessions. "Joe Raposo and I started here together in July of '69. My background was at NBC, CBS, in the orchestra... and I met Joe right around when Jim Henson had the Muppets on the Ed Sullivan show. Henson had a puppet playing the piano, and as this guy would go across the keyboard with his hands—'I've grown accustomed to your face...'—the keyboard would grrrowl! And finally, when the keyboard has had enough, it just opens up and eats the guy! Those were the kind of beginnings we came out of."

The musical vision for *Sesame Street*'s first five seasons (1969-74), and most of its great songs, came from the late Joe Raposo, one of the most brilliant, if underestimated, songwriters of our era. "Joe's music was very varied, very unique," recalls Epstein. "Joe used to say he didn't write for kids, he just wrote for a shorter audience." For one thing, the sophisticated, jazzy, tropical-tinged chords of "Bein' Green," a song first sung by Kermit the Frog in 1970, suggest Brazilian music and the work of Antonio Carlos Jobim. Epstein recalls, "Joe said, 'they want me to write a song for a frog,' and he went out to his house in the country. And then he called me up on the phone and said, 'I did this last night, what do you think?' He played me the song, and it was beautiful." Then, as an afterthought, realizing he was writing for the Muppets, where a frog could be red or purple or blue, Danny remembers Raposo telling him, "You better make sure it's



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for a green frog!"

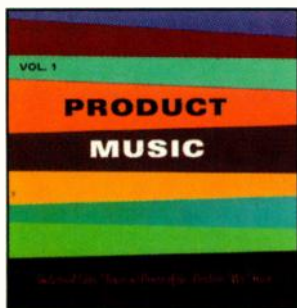
An astounding number of youthful Americans got their first taste of hip-hop at an early age, when break-beats and street culture began seeping into *Sesame Street* in the early '80s. "Absolutely. Hip-hop and rap influences the program today," Epstein affirms, noting that many of the show's musical innovations come from the writers. "For example, we just had a film piece with Big Bird, out in the country someplace, and [the writer] had a country band she had heard in her mind, the Red Clay Ramblers. So instead of having our band do it, we went out and got the Red Clay Ramblers to play with Big Bird!" Epstein laughs. "There was a film piece that just cried out for a zydeco band. And one night [the writer] stumbled into a zydeco band playing at a club in the village, and we used them! We do all of the Muppet band tracks, and they can get pretty far out. You're talking about instant lunacy with the Muppets!"

So what about "Mana Mana"? "I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that!" Epstein laughs. "We get a lot of requests on 'Mana Mana,' wondering what it is, who it is. That song—and I may have to double-check my sources on this one—but for 26 years, I've heard that that song was background music from a Swedish porno movie, from 1969. You know, porno was just kind of making its entrance in the world in the '70s, and Henson picked this song up." According to one other source, the song was an obscure European novelty hit prior to its ending up in both a blue movie and the most popular children's show in history. "That piece runs to this day, and it's an absolute gem." —James Lien

INSPIRATIONAL VERSE: "Now I'm back with more bionic like my name was Colt Seavers/Got you niggas open like a bunch of wide receivers/Time is on the meter/Go clean your act up in the cleaners/Chickenheads give me some of your chicken fajitas"—Busta Rhymes, "Abandon Ship"

WEIRD RECORD OF THE MONTH

Back in the '60s and '70s, when big corporations still thought that preserving workers' morale was a good idea, they used to commission full-length musicals that were written and performed specifically for their employees' benefit. No kidding. Sometimes they even released soundtrack albums, and some of those albums have fallen into the hands of people who don't necessarily take their messages of salesmanship and consumption completely seriously. Hence, the insane compilation *Product Music Vol. 1* (Honest-Abe Disc), subtitled "Industrial Show Tunes In Praise Of The Products We Trust." It collects songs from musicals put on by the likes of Clark Equipment ("Hooray For Human Engineering"), Mary Kay Cosmetics (a rewritten version of "Gentle On My Mind," about how saleswomen's consciences can be clear because they're sparing their friends from "the ravages of time") and Squibb Pharmaceuticals ("The New Generation," which the liner notes point out "tackles even bigger issues in an even more pandering and insincere way"). Of special note are "The Frito Twist," possibly the most anemic recording of all time, and American Standards' mammoth ballad "My Bathroom Is A Private Kind Of Place" ("where I can cream, and dream"). Two words, folks: "late capitalism." —Douglas Walk



IN MY ROOM ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

DEAN WAREHAM
LUNA

BOBBIE GENTRY
Touch 'Em With Love

PAPAS FRITAS
Papas Fritas

Book: *Lolita*
Vladimir Nabokov

Book: *American Tabloid*
James Ellroy

STEREOLAB
Emperor Tomato Ketchup

STEVE ROACH THE SOUND MAN WHO GETS AROUND

On his most recent solo records, prolific ambient/ethno-trance artist Steve Roach lists his credit as "all instruments," whereas in the past it might have gone into detail: didgeridu, voice, clay water pots, rainstick, rocks, Lakota flute, ocarinas. "I'm not a purist on any level," he says, "as far as whatever it takes to get the feeling and emotion out in the most direct and powerful way. Back then it was making the point that we were using all types of acoustic instruments—not just synthesizers and sequencers and drums machines."

We discuss some of the particular implements he uses, but I tell Roach I don't want to make this a techno-geek chat. He's relieved, and speaks more about some of his favorite acoustic instruments. Like rocks. "I more and more enjoy making sounds with stones that I scrape together," he says. "You hear the sounds as juxtaposition against the expansive landscapes, and sometimes the rocks are the grounding element that a piece needs."

From where he sits in his home/studio in Tucson, Roach estimates that he can see some 40 miles into the Arizona desert, but his coming-of-age in the early '70s in San Diego was much less serene. A motorcross aficionado when the sport was in its infancy, he rose to the professional level of racing, but the death of two friends in accidents made him rethink what he terms "the quality of life issue." At the same time, he was incredibly struck by bits and pieces of music that came across his radar: He'd hear the keyboard textures of Pink Floyd and wish he could isolate just that for an hour. He discovered early synthesizers (and the early music of Tangerine Dream, and the German prog-rockers), and the ability of electronics to help generate landscapes of sound.

From 1984's landmark *Structures From Silence* to 1988's *Dreamtime Return to The Magnificent Void*, Roach has evolved a sonic language—and a technique of achieving it—all his own. "It's gone beyond a simple definition between using this instrument and that: I may take something and loop it and slow it down and harmonize it and resample it and put it up on the ADAT, and... keeping feeding it into the bowels of the digital recording monster. But there's always a feeling I'm going for, it's a visual thing, a tactile thing. I feel myself shaping it and molding it into view."

Roach isn't bragging, either. I've been listening to *The Magnificent Void* every night for two weeks, and feeling pretty transported most of the time. His discography includes

astonishingly diverse collaborations, including the Spanish-themed *Suspended Memories*, the Native American-inspired *Kiva* album, and an abiding, deep connection to Australian Aboriginal music.

Still, for such a seeker of alternate perspectives, there's a little irony that Roach's current project is so stripped and austere, concerning itself with nothingness, "the primordial emptiness." And yet there's a ravishing beauty and raw power to *The Magnificent Void* that clearly is an achievement even for the veteran. "I don't think this record could have happened at any other time," he says. "It's the worlds of sound I glimpsed when I first discovered synthesizers and what they promised."



Wondering how many people will hear Roach's *Void*, I thought about what a private experience it is. I asked Roach if he had any use for the term "minimalism." "It seems like a really groping term," he says. "I know there's 16 tracks of material. It's like Indian food which is cooked with an incredible amount of seasoning. It's presented as straightforward, but you taste it and it explodes."

—Danny Housman

IN MY ROOM ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

ANDERS PARKER VARNALINE

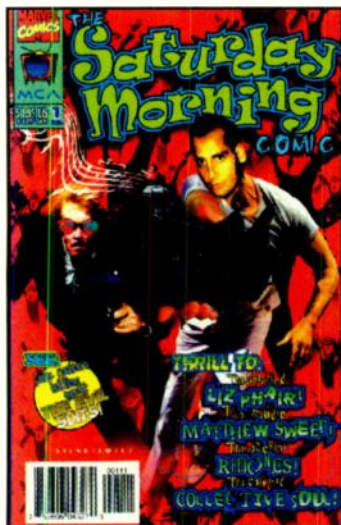
GENIUS/GZA
Liquid Swords

CHARLES MINGUS
Black Saint And The Sinner Lady

THE BAND
Songs From Big Pink

THE GRIFTERS
Eureka EP

JOHN PRINE
Great Days



Random fact: Tori Amos' real name is Myra Ellen Amos. Poe's is Annie Daniellowski.

DEPT. OF TERRIFYING CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

The *Saturday Morning Comic*, published by Marvel to accompany the *Saturday Morning Cartoons Greatest Hits* compilation of alterna-rock covers of cartoon themes, features the likes of Sponge, Collective Soul, the Toadies, Tripping Daisy and Face To Face saving the world from "the suits" and their "bland music" ("Arrgh!! Unprocessed music! Let us flee!!!"). The highlight, though, has to be a two-page scene set in the "hi-tech and way cool Chicago-based rehearsal studio of the ultra-hipsters known as Material Issue, with singer Liz Phair!" The latter gets deathless dialogue like "I don't know how this will save the world, but—one banana, two banana, three banana, four—!"

Random fact:
The former Hootie And The Blowfish headquarters in Columbia, SC has a new tenant: the re-election campaign for nonagenarian Senator Strom Thurmond.

QUICK FIX

THINKING FELLERS UNION LOCAL 282

ORGANIZED LABOR

Almost a decade after its ponderous name emerged as a typesetting challenge to clubs from coast to coast, Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 has another space problem. The polyglot collection of instruments the Fellers use to plink and plunk and wail and screech out their psychedelic campfire songs has outgrown the space of their tour van.

"We'd love to be able to take the Optigan," says guitarist/mandolinist Brian Hageman wistfully, referring to the desk-sized organ that lent its wheezing tones to the quintet's 1994 album *Strangers From The Universe*.

"And the Farfisa," adds bassist Anne Eickelberg. She's rather up on her Farfisa lately: She used it on her contribution to last year's *Porcelain Entertainments*, a German EP that features a song by each band member. "It has a rhythm box with different settings. I would set the rhythm as high as it would go, and push two different settings, like waltz and swing. You could almost say I was influenced by jungle, because it's so fast and so stripped-down." But alas, the Farfisa is heavy and fragile, plus "it's developed a short where you have to hit it really hard to get it to go sometimes. We can't have that on tour—we have enough technical problems as it is!"

Ultimately, the only thing they could add this year was a second mandolin. "Its tuning is so different" from the first one, insists Brian, who plays both of them. "It would have taken an hour to retune."

Recently, the Thinking Fellers have reined in their complexity. Take the bare songcraft of the new album, *I Hope It Lands* (Communion), a whole mess of tunes as hummable as 1993's cult hit "Hurricane." Or consider the newly uncluttered arrangements on the last two albums, which more often than not simplify to one lead instrument and a rhythm section. "We talk a lot about the structures of songs these days," says Anne. "We have always had those discussion, but it seems like... in the past couple of years, everyone has become more interested in getting the perfect arrangement of parts."

Soundtrack music has especially attracted them lately, resulting in a medley of *A Fistful Of Dollars* songs that appears on a recent B-side. "Those spaghetti-Western soundtracks were something all of us liked a long time ago," says Brian, "but the idea of us



[playing] that stuff came later. Then we did our own soundtrack for a seven-minute movie." The film, which the band also acted in, was called *Meet The Thinking Fellers*, and was made by the engineer on *Strangers From The Universe*. To create the soundtrack, the band improvised to videotape, then picked through and reworked pieces from the recordings. Later, the head of Communion, the band's new label, asked them to come up with a set of songs built around a theme, for a possible project involving TFUL and the Stuttgart Orchestra. Mark and Brian wrote "a synopsis of a really strange film... that wouldn't exist," says Brian, allowing them to write an imaginary soundtrack. Even the band's non-soundtrack music shares the sense of being propelled, like a film, by a story—narrative inferences seem to come with each erratic shift in mood or tempo.

RANDOM FACT: Bob Dylan was paid \$250,000 for a private concert in Phoenix sponsored by Nomura Securities Int'l.

Both soundtracks and traditional music appeal to the Fellers' shared belief that their music should be timeless. "Everybody is definitely more drawn toward... traditional types of music, whether it be Middle Eastern or Indian or Turkish or African, more than... whatever the flavor of the month is," says Anne.

On a personal level, Brian says, "you are always looking for things that aren't time-specific" as "ways of staying in music until you grow very old."

"...Without trotting around on stage being 45 and looking really..." Anne trails off, cringing. Eventually, she says, TFUL might shift away from being a rock band, as its members decide to spend more time in the studio. But for now, she maintains, "we love playing live," and the band is excited to begin touring again. "We're going to take this tiny, cheesy, cheap Casio with rudimentary sampling capabilities," she says, enthusing about another new instrument.

"It's got eccentricities built into it, I think," adds Brian, referring to the Casio, or maybe to the whole proposition. —Andrea Moed

IN MY ROOM ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS

JASON NESMITH
NANCY BOY

BLUR
The Great Escape

PULP
Common People

RADIOHEAD
The Bends

Entertainment Weekly's
Disco Collection

DEVO
Freedom Of Choice



DISTURBING SIGN OF THE TIMES OF THE MONTH

The fifth and final volume of Legacy-Columbia's series of the complete recordings of Bessie Smith—who died over 50 years ago—has a parental-advisory sticker.

TOURS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Yes, I know when they're playing, but what's the name of the band?:

June, Juned, June Of '44, Chune, June Tabor,
In June, Death In June and the June Brides

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World Radio History



BEST NEW MUSIC

CRACKER The Golden Age Virgin



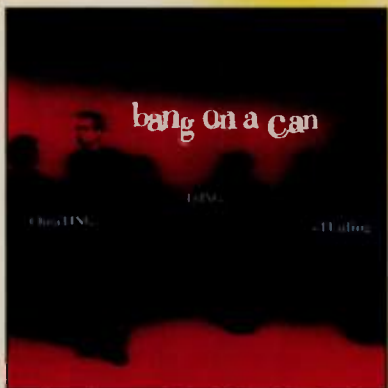
What the world needs now is another Gen-X anti-anthem like I need a hole in my head, to paraphrase an early Cracker lyric. That said, "I Hate My Generation," the opener to Cracker's *The Golden Age*, is a fine anti-anthem—all killer power chords and piercing disdain. This obvious sequel to "Low," Cracker's 1993 anti-anthem, could be a harbinger of yet more turgid songcraft from Cracker leader David Lowery. Remarkably, it isn't. On *Golden*, Lowery nudges Cracker toward its most accomplished record; the album's diversity comes closer than ever to meeting Lowery's oft-stated goal, that Cracker be as indefinable as '90s rock allows. Leading off with "Generation" and passing through the Frank Black-like "I'm A Little Rocket Ship," the band stakes out new terrain—like a Ginsu pitchman, Lowery is imploring you, wait, there's more: You also get the hayseed title track, country-rock the way Gram Parsons defined it, and without a hint more irony. You get *Sticky Fingers* redux in "Sweet Thistle Pie," a piping stew of harmonica and soulful backing vocals. You want moody, heavy-lidded ballads? *The Golden Age* has 'em. Cracker has gotten lots of mileage out of the languid elegy lately (see its cover of "Rainy Days And Mondays" on 1994's Carpenters tribute), but "Big Dipper" and "I Can't Forget You" are sung more movingly than one might expect from Lowery, whose voice usually has two settings—loud or asleep. "It's been a long time since I've been so very low," Lowery sings elsewhere, knowingly. Three years is a long time in rock, but it's been time well-spent. —Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Apr. 2.

FILE UNDER: Rock, prewashed for comfort and fit.

R.I.Y.L.: Mid-period Rolling Stones, Beck, Collective Soul.

BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS Cheating, Lying, Stealing Sony Classics



For nearly 10 years, the Bang On A Can Festival has served as an annual gathering of the post-minimalist tribes; in recent years, the Bang On A Can All-Stars, a sextet of young performers, have been organized to perform the music of many of the composers drawn together by the Festival. Some of the time *Cheating, Lying, Stealing*, the All-Stars' second recording, sounds pretty much like what you'd expect from this sort of new-music ensemble. Listen to festival organizer David Lang's single-minded title composition or the two solo performances included here, and you'll be hard-pressed to imagine yourself anywhere but a concert hall. But, surprisingly, other material may remind you at least a bit of your favorite dingy rock club. In the hands of the right composer, the All-Stars' lineup (guitar-bass-drums, fleshed out with keyboards, reeds, and cello) allows them to become a pretty convincing art-rock band, maybe Henry Cow on a diet richer in Cage and Reich than in Stravinsky and Bartok. This tendency to rock is perhaps most obvious in their performance of Nick Didkovsky's "Amalia's Secret" (no big surprise; when he's not writing commissions for the All-Stars, Didkovsky leads his own prog-rock band, Dr. Nerve), but it's also audible in their performances of compositions by Lois V. Vierk and Annie Gosfield. —Jay Smith

DATALOG: Released Apr. 2.

FILE UNDER: The other "new music."

R.I.Y.L.: Kronos Quartet, King Crimson.

IMPERIAL TEEN

Seasick

Slash-London



Imperial Teen frontman Roddy Bottum is the keyboardist for Faith No More, so it's only natural to associate one band with the other. But that parallel runs dry about five seconds into "Imperial Teen," which opens Teen's first album. You won't hear a trace of Faith No More in the song's slithering, smirking, minimalistic vibe—it's a lot closer to the Halo Benders than Bottum's fading funk/metal day job. (Nor does it mirror drummer/singer Lynn Perko's work with the already-faded Sister Double Happiness.) The remainder of *Seasick* is considerably more raucous than its opening moments, and Will Schwartz's voice more scabrous and worn than Bottum's, but the songs are no less revelatory: Both Bottum and Schwartz have a rare, admirable gift for matter-of-factly tossing off dark lyrics in the context of misleadingly fluffy-sounding punk-pop songs like "Butch" ("The gun was loaded, it never came/I pulled the trigger, ignored the stain"). It's diverse material: "Blaming The Baby" blusters, while "You're One" preens, seethes and doesn't bother tip-toeing around homosexuality. The lyrics turn your head at nearly every turn—like "I love the taste of anything I can spit at you," from "Luxury"—helping Imperial Teen emerge as a genuinely inventive new voice. —Stephen Thompson

DATALOG: Released May 7.

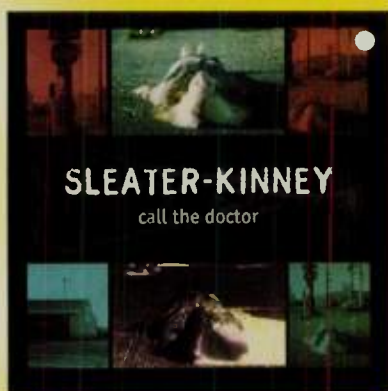
FILE UNDER: Candy-coated neuroses.

R.I.Y.L.: Foo Fighters, Unrest, Caustic Resin.

SLEATER-KINNEY

Call The Doctor

Chainsaw



At first it seemed like the premature breakup of Excuse 17 and Heavens To Betsy—two hugely promising bands from Olympia—was another example of rock's frustrating creative transience. But further challenges were awaiting singer-guitarists Corin Tucker (H2B) and Carrie Brownstein (E17), and, being no slackers, they set upon them quickly. Sleater-Kinney is a two-guitar/drums trio, with Tucker singing lead about 2/3 of the time. Both women have a frighteningly sharp musical palette, both vocally and on their guitars, full of cathartic dissonances and ecstatic rage. Their lyrics don't skimp on the personal pain their unconventional wisdom has cost. There are barbs aplenty at the jerks who've messed with their heads, but both women also use notions of the body as metaphor, strike out at internalized oppression, and bare their own needs. Their daring, outward-bound excitement (too often lacking in aggressive rock) needs very little "production," but John Goodmanson helps the songs shock and groove at once. *Call The Doctor* is the high point to which their previous work has led, and it also suggests more sonic avenues are open to these women if they want to keep pushing ahead. —Danny Housman

DATALOG: Released Mar. 18.

FILE UNDER: Adventurous indie-punk.

R.I.Y.L.: Heavens To Betsy, Bikini Kill, Scrawl, Tsunami.

SOUNDGARDEN

Down On The Upside

A&M



As soon as *Superunknown* was released, long-time Soundgarden fans could finally be proud of their band, knowing that the kings of the rock groove could also write an excellent song, as epitomized by the breakthrough hit "Black Hole Sun." And the idea holds on *Down On The Upside*: When the band accomplishes both groove and melody, as on "Zero Chance" or the rocking "Rhinosaur," there's nothing better. "Rhinosaur"'s groove is massive, with the stairstep guitar riffs and abrupt changes in rhythm that guitarist Kim Thayil adores. Chris Cornell's voice is in good form as well; he's been shrieking less and less since the band's debut EP, and concentrating lately on his lower register, opening up the breadth rather than the height of his vocal cords. So as Soundgarden continues to tantalize with its growing songwriting talent, there are, as usual, a few groove-only moments that go nowhere ("Applebite," "Never The Machine Forever" and "Never Named"). Thankfully, the musicianship is, also as usual, so superb as to go almost unnoticed; Matt Cameron's drumming is perfect, always powerful but never heavy-handed. Thayil's guitar is also more understated than usual, and judging by the number of good songs that bassist Ben Shepherd co-wrote with Cornell, the latest addition to the band is proving to be as essential as the three original members. *Down On The Upside* is neither an attempt to cash in on the band's past success, nor a return to older, less melodic efforts; rather, it's a satisfying continuation of the band's slow maturity without any fuss or hoopla. —Megan Frampton

DATALOG: Release date: May 21. First single "Pretty Noose."

FILE UNDER: Classic rock, the way it oughtta be.

R.I.Y.L.: Temple Of The Dog, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin.

Cocteau Twins

beauty & sadness

Like philosophy students, the members of the Cocteau Twins sit mulling over a hypothesis: Their records—like the delicate new *Milk And Kisses*—are a small island of tranquility in an increasingly violent, millennium-warped sea. They break off on tangents, of course, skewing the conversation towards the subject of aesthetic appreciation, and how society has been gradually numbed to the natural wonders

by Tom Lanham

of the world around it. "Okay, here's my theory about beauty," the atmospheric Scottish trio's slightly chubby producer/keyboardist Robin Guthrie proposes, after some brow-creasing rumination. "If I were thin, I wouldn't allow fat people on the beach. They don't fit with my ideal of beauty." He quickly amends the thought: "But you have to learn to see the beauty in everything, though. Accept things for the way they are."

Synth/percussion whiz Simon Raymonde posits that "the mundane things you have to fill your day up with don't give you a lot of time for all the loftier things that you should spend more time appreciating. I read somewhere that the simple things in life—home, hearth, food for the family—are the things that you can derive the most beauty from. Yet our life is so complex and so full of shite, we have to read a book and get our little fix just from that moment, from what somebody else may have written. There's so little time in the day to grasp those moments, so you have to find the time." Guthrie nods. The world is falling apart, he agrees, getting crazier and crazier. "Why do things have to be so fast? What are we rushing around for? And why is so much information available to everybody?" So the placid, ethereal *Milk And Kisses*, he says, "is definitely an alternative."

Liz Fraser—who for 14 years has thrilled fluttery, nonsensical phrases that always made perfect sonic sense—is, as the hippies say, off in another space. "I'm not interested in changing the world singlehandedly," she notes, her big Keane-painting eyes clouding with worry. "I know I have to start at home and improve myself. That's why I don't want a house of my own. I know that didn't connect with what I was trying to talk about. I'm sorry..." She suddenly folds her arms and slams back into the leather couch. "Oh fuck! I'm having a shit time here, everybody. I'm sorry—I'm really going down there and I've got to get out of it. I'm not taking anything personally and I'm not taking your feelings on board either. Sorry."

Guthrie claps his hands. "Wow! This is like a Sergio Leone film!" he gasps.

Beauty in the Cocteaus' work? "That's what you think," Fraser snaps. "And it's important to have your own opinion. Because for many years I didn't have any of mine, and I know what it's like to be led by other people and I've been in a huge amount of denial about that. But I know the quality of my life has improved greatly in working with them," and she points at her two stunned compatriots, "but I don't wanna sit here and mess my head up thinking whether it's important to anybody else or why that is or isn't. I don't wanna fuck myself up in my own head."

Did the simple topic of Cocteau Twins versus the world's ugliness spur Fraser's unexpected mood swing? "No, it didn't," offers Raymonde. "I think she got into that on her own."

Fraser looks petulant. "Well, I need some help to get out of it, because now I'm stuck."

"Call 911," Guthrie deadpans. And the outlook, ironically, begins to brighten.

Guthrie can get away with such ribbing. He and Fraser used to be an item. They had a child together. Then they split up, entered therapy, and emerged more determined than ever to keep their

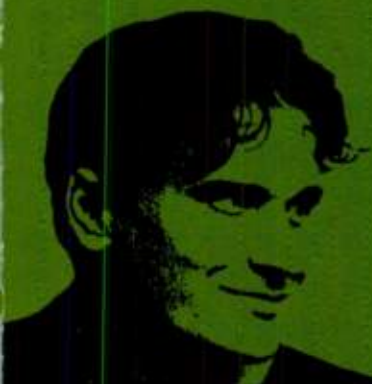
musical partnership alive. So the *Milk And Kisses* material was quite an emotional undertaking, with Fraser even occasionally resorting to discernible English wordplay to vent her bulging spleen. Listening to the ching-chinging keyboards and creeping tendrils of multi-tracked vocals, however, inspires nothing but feelings of peace. A crisp, Kirlian aura of overwhelming pulchritude. "And the MTV world doesn't allow for that kind of thing," Raymonde sighs. "It doesn't accept things of that nature because they require too much thought, so it's very difficult for a group like us in that arena."

"And I don't know if it sounds like that on record or not," Fraser says, "but there have certainly been times when it was very hard for us, from having various things going on in our personal lives." Guthrie picks up the thread: "But we've gone through so many things together, that now I feel like these are the people I turn 'round to in life. When you get so vulnerable that other people don't understand, you need someone who won't just walk away."

And beauty, concludes Raymonde, is exactly where you find it. "There is so much of ourselves in those brief fleeting moments when we do get together in the studio and write music," he smiles. "And to tell you the truth, it's those moments we probably treasure more than any other." **END**



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PLAY IT AGAIN SAM



"We've had some very strange interviews," warns Girls Against Boys' Eli Janney, joining his bandmates in a Downtown New York cafe.

"Some really bizarre interviews," Scott McCloud chimes in. "Like, they're not really there to do the interview. They show up like 'So, where's the beer?...' Then there's people who don't even want to do interviews so much as talk about themselves: 'Have you heard about what I do?' Or 'You should think about doing this...' Or 'Now, you guys have records out?' Yeah. We have records out, we tour..."

Obviously, Girls Against Boys have done their share of Q&A sessions, good and bad. And, though they seem well-known to those in the underground scene, obviously not everyone is aware that Girls Against Boys are now celebrating the release of their fourth full album, *House Of GVSb* (Touch And Go). Though the band has toured this country and Europe several times, even appearing on Lollapalooza's second stage, many music fans are only now starting to hear about GVSb, though the notoriety of a rather creatively managed bidding war which brought the band (from its next album onward) to major label Geffen.

"When we were being courted by labels," says Johnny Temple, telling a story too good not to repeat, "the first time that we were put up in a hotel by a label, we were in San Diego and it was a totally fancy hotel, amazing. I don't think we'd even put ourselves up in a motel at that point. And one of us invited this kid doing an interview to the hotel with us. He just wanted to hang out with us, and didn't leave until 3 a.m. So we didn't even get to enjoy this very plush hotel because we were spending hours trying to get this kid to leave!"

Thought that may have been the last time they invited an interviewer along, it was definitely not the last freebie hotel room GVSb has enjoyed. Knee-deep in the spirit of the late Alternative Rock era, GVSb is more aware than most just how quickly the term "sell-out" has gone from being an epithet to a punch line. For a band wanting to save face in 1996, the objective is not so much to avoid looking like you've "sold out," but to look

like you've turned the tables and sold out in a way that benefits you as much as the corporate monster. Girls Against Boys have done it in grand style.

Says Eli, "When you're a band that's looking for a label, they're using all their monetary powers to distract you from the real situation of what their label can do for you and what you're signing away. If they're going to try and distract you, you might as well take advantage of those distractions. If you want to buy us a hotel room, that's fine. We encourage that. But if you expect us to base our decision on that, you're a fool."

"If you want to talk, let's talk," says Johnny. "If you want to party, let's party."

"We tried to even it out," cracks Alexis Fleisig, "get every [label] to commit to the same amount of partying..."

"You're going to be exploited for the rest of your career," Johnny continues, "so you might as well do some exploiting yourself. The freebies are only going to last for about two months, so get as many as you can."

But if it seems like the Girls didn't take the concept of signing to a major label seriously, nothing could be farther from the truth.

"It took a lot of discussion," says Eli.

"Eight months ago," says Johnny, "when we went to practice, we'd spend ten minutes on music and three hours on talking about labels."

"We talked about it for so long," Scott recalls, "that the idea of whether we should or should not was threatening to take over the whole band. Finally, I said, 'if we don't sign with a major label, I'm going to murder you all.'"

And with that out of the way, GVSb could concentrate on more pressing issues. "Every interview asks us about sex now," says Johnny. Well, that wasn't exactly the pressing issue we had in mind. But...

"There's definitely a way to use that to your advantage," says Eli, the Paul McCartney of the group. "People who look at you because you're cute will hopefully then listen to your music."

"When you mention sex, everything gets reduced to that," Johnny—GVSb's George Harrison—cautions, "and we're not about that, we're about music. People coming to our shows expecting this sexy band, they're going to be let down..."

"Oh, I disagree," Scott (the Girls' Lennon) cuts in, to much laughter. After all, the band's concert rider includes requests for champagne ("the cheapest available") and spankings. Yes, spankings.

And more to the point, GVSb's apparent pin-up quotient for a certain sector of the alternative community does cross over into the irresistibly cute and irredeemably sinister qualities of their music. Take the new album track "Crash 17 (X-Rated Car)," for example. "I think the idea of it came from that book *Crash* by J.G. Ballard," says Scott, "in [which] the characters are viewing that fusion of flesh and technology in a kind of sexually orgasmic

Girls Against Boys

by Eric Gladstone

fashion. I like the idea of technology being sexy, the Internet and people messing around with their computers."

Not that McCloud's silk-and-sandpaper vocals need literary inspiration to exude sexuality. Inspired by trip-hop baads Portishead, Massive Attack and Tricky, as well as heavier dance music, McCloud found himself in the *House* sessions using even more catchphrases and slogans than ever before. "These kinda slogans that are always around you, I think are kind of cool to twist around—'The Kinda Music You Like'—I like to play around with themes and then pull out a line that means something a little more to me, in a subcontextual way. Singing dance lyrics, like 'freak your body, freak your body,' over and over again ['AnotherDronelnMyHead'], I find that kind of humorous, just being into dance culture even though I know nothing about it."

If Scott's lyrics seem more telegraphic than before, the music they accompany is ever more expansive. While McCloud hints that the recording sessions "got pretty chaotic for a while, on a personal level," and bemoans a stolen guitar, Janney, who as always handles engineering duties (when not at his keyboards or bass), raves about spending more money ("our own money") and time than ever before.

"We went in with the mindset that we were going to make everything right," Eli says, "everything 'in the pocket' as Ted [Nicely, their longtime producer] says. So it sort of lent a more relaxed state. We would just take the time to try new things... And it really paid off."

The jackpot is a cornucopia of new sounds: '60s organ on "Disco Six Six Six," drum machine on "Vera Cruz," spacey harmonies on "Cash Machine." "A lot of noises, too," McCloud amends, "like the end of 'Life In Pink' is just wash... bizarre." "Zodiac Love Team" (which recalls a band they recently covered in tribute, Joy Division) was even retained from their pre-production demoing sessions. "It ended up having such a cool sound, we couldn't even replicate it in the real studio," Eli claims. "We recorded it a few different ways and said this [demo still] sounds cooler, so we just sang over it." The band mentions Neubauten, Suicide, Wax Trax, Chemical Brothers, Tortoise, Esquivel, Beastie Boys instrumentals, Jimmy Smith, Blue Note...

"These things inform our music more than they influence it," Temple cautions. "We're not going to become a trip-hop band, but if you can take an element of something like Portishead or dub, and stick it in our music, if it doesn't work, it will be obvious, but if it does, it's cool."

This all may seem a significant departure from Girls Against Boys' origins in the crible of Washington, D.C.'s D.I.Y. punk scene. In GVSB's paleolithic age, it was a studio project of Eli and Brendan Cauty (of Fugazi), with Soulside guitarist Scott McCloud being wrangled in for one of his first shots at vocals. 90s Vs. 80s was the result. After that false start, Girls Against Boys regrouped, with McCloud bringing in his former Soulside bandmates Temple and Fleisig to form a live unit. The sultry *Tropic Of Scorpio* was thus the first "real" GVSB output. But the band's sexy-violent punk style didn't start to coalesce until their first Touch And Go album, *Venus Luxure No. 1 Baby*.

Having established their framework with *VenusLux* and the following *Cruise Yourself* (not to mention a few singles and EPs inbetween), the members of GVSB moved to New York City and spread themselves out to notable extracurricular activities. Eli has production projects including D.C. upstarts

Delta 72, and the band—Cake Like—and comedy troupe—MTV's *The State*—of his girlfriend Kerri Kenney.

Then there's New Wet Kojak, the side project of Temple and McCloud with D.C. stalwarts Charles Bennington, Geoff Turner and Nick Pellicciotto. The first album (yes, there's another one in the works), recorded like a travelogue in Amsterdam, Chicago and D.C., was a horn-laden extended mood piece that defied the context of lounge, ambient and theme musics with a vibe that might be called "neo-beatnik [irony optional]."

Soft-spoken Alexis has done some other playing too—with Moby, believe it or not, and on the new Sammy album. Oh, and he's also just finished his civic duty as a juror.

"For me, it has definitely been revitalizing," says Johnny of the side projects, "because so much of the music we've played has been together. Since I learned to play bass, Alexis is basically the only drummer I've played with, so it's good to play with other drummers, even if it's not necessarily comfortable."

By the same token, while Girls Against Boys still believe in the necessity of independent labels, and bemoan any band signing to a major without experience, "business-wise, we want to keep moving forward," says Eli. "Because if you sold the same amount of records and played to the same amount of people every year, it's going to affect your music negatively, you would lose excitement about it."

More to the point, says Johnny, a major label offers "health insurance, rent money, an opportunity to reach a larger audience. And by those things, a security to know that we can continue to be in this band for years to come."

On the contrary, Scott argues, "I feel like it puts it in jeopardy more than ever before."

"See," says Eli, "this is what we talked about for months."

"We might hate being on a major label," Scott continues, "so much that we make the best record of our lives." **END**

discography

90s Vs. 80s (EP) (Dischord) 1992
Tropic Of Scorpio (Dischord) 1992
"Bulletproof Cupid" 7" (Touch And Go) 1993
Venus Luxure No. 1 Baby (Touch And Go) 1993
Sexy Sam (EP) (Touch And Go) 1993
Cruise Yourself (Touch And Go) 1994
House Of GVSB (Touch And Go) 1996

MARK EITZEL

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

When you've fronted a band for several years, going solo can be liberating, and not only for aesthetic reasons. Despite a near-cultish fan base and all the raving press a band could ask for, the five-man American Music Club collapsed last year, under a combination of commercial expectations and over-organization. "I feel a lot less pressure, because I don't have to be financially responsible for two managers, two lawyers, and five band members," explains frontman Mark Eitzel. "I didn't put my foot down on a lot of things, as a member of a band, and when I did, it would be, 'Okay, Mark's being difficult, let's have a cooling-off period,' and the managers would try to pacify me."

Listening to *60 Watt Silver Lining*, Eitzel's solo debut (not counting a *Matador 7"*, and a live acoustic set released by Demon a few years back), next to just about anything by the band he used to lead, you'll notice two things. First, the guitars are missing. Where AMC arrangements were often pushed by guitarist Vudi's sweeping, pedal-fueled excursions, most of the guitar on *Lining* is acoustic—Eitzel's own modest strumming or picking. Second, you'll notice how much more room that leaves for the songs. Eitzel confirms, "Yeah, when I got to this record, I was tired of hearing guitar all the time. But when I'm writing, it's not a matter of timbre as much as it is notes. I don't hear a piano as opposed to a guitar when I write, I just hear the song."

Putting the piano where he hears it (and leaving out the guitar) is just the sort of freedom that makes Eitzel more comfortable with his new role as solo artist than with the old one of 'bandleader': "I don't have to play in time, I don't have to make sure every song gets arranged for five people, I don't have to worry that the band won't like the songs... On *San Francisco* [AMC's swansong], I was bringing in these songs that ran on and on, and the band would tell me, 'That's sounds like some indie band you'd see and stop watching halfway through.' But you've got to give vent to the crap. Venting crap, that's my specialty. It's a more bracing thing to have that kind of freedom. I don't know if it's a good thing—we'll see how many people hate this record."

Eitzel needn't worry, as it's hard to imagine AMC's dedicated following rejecting his latest sketchbook of strivers, lovers, survivors and non-survivors for being cast into crisp jazz-inflected pop (think pre-synth Everything But the Girl) rather than the wrecked country song-forms of vintage AMC, though the ubiquitous vistas of alcohol and ocean remain. Of the shift, Eitzel says, "Well, you change. I don't think I'd write country songs now. When AMC started, playing country was the best way to piss people off. The stuff people were listening to back then, Tones On Tail, Bauhaus, I hated all that shit. But before this record, I heard Shirley Horn's *Here's To Life*, which is a straight-ahead jazz-vocal record, and I knew I wanted to do something like that. And then I saw Streisand..."

Out of this exposure to La Barbara came the near-Bacharachian "Saved," a dramatic love-oath that reads like a more certain sequel to *San Francisco*'s "Can You Help Me?" The latter song was hopeful, but the obvious answer to the title's rhetorical question was, "Probably not." In "Saved," the singer still knows that nothing is certain, that "there's no safety in this world," but ultimately takes the leap of belief: "I know I'm saved, I know I'm saved in your arms." Eitzel, quite sincerely, would like to hear Streisand cover the song: "I think there should be a Barbara Streisand Christmas album called *Saved*. I can see the cover—she'd be in a shawl, looking ecumenical."

Although AMC might never have done anything as shamelessly romantic as "Saved," *Lining* also includes more concrete, controlled set pieces, like the ironically jaunty Ugly American narrative "Southend On Sea" and "Cleopatra Jones," a marvelous, compassionate ode to "a fag hag and a dope fiend," mocked by the singer's friends. "I'm always critical when I see people laughing too much. There are people who laugh at everything, and use it to diffuse situations rather than live them. Don't patronize and chat. It's as much advice to myself as anyone else."

Eitzel downplays any thematic difference between the new and old songs. "It's all of a piece, it's songs I sing about my life. The stylistic direction hasn't changed, but this album has songs where I'm trying things out, where I'm trying to grow as a songwriter. I'm trying to be a little more unconscious. I used to be so anal about the lyrics. Like, 'The Wild Sea,' that's something I could never have gotten AMC to play—it's just three chords. It's about someone drowning, which I didn't realize when I wrote it. There's a story in there, and someone had to point it out to me..."

"At one point I was going to call the record *The Drowned And The Saved*, after a book where Primo Levi writes about how, in the concentration camps, some people would just give up, let themselves go, let themselves die, and those are the drowned. And some people would keep trying to do the everyday things that they could,



World Radio History



JAY BLANESBERG

DISCOGRAPHY

American Music Club:

The Restless Stranger (Grifter) 1985
Engine (Grifter-Frontier) 1987
California (Grifter-Frontier) 1988
United Kingdom (UK Demon) 1990
Everclear (Alias) 1991
Rise (EP) (Alias) 1991
Mercury (Reprise) 1993
San Francisco (Reprise) 1994
Hello Amsterdam (EP) (Reprise) 1995

Mark Eitzel:

Songs Of Love—Live (UK Demon) 1991
"Take Courage" 7" (Matador) 1992
60 Watt Silver Lining (Warner Bros.) 1996

—[by Franklin Bruno]

keep themselves clean, clean their shoes, whatever. And those are the saved. It works for me as one definition of salvation... Not drowning, literally being pulled out, the difference between treading water and not treading water." The long lines and mixed metaphors ("His fear was just a 60 watt silver lining calling from the edges of his crying") of "The Wild Sea," not to mention its Joni Mitchell-derived vocal phrasing, are the outside limit of Eitzel's new generosity with himself. At a show in Los Angeles before it was recorded, it and other new songs seemed to sprawl, with Eitzel backed only by AMC holdovers Danny Pearson (bass) and Bruce Kaphan (pedal steel). But on *Lining*, reined in by Mark Needham's understated production assistance, its careening, descending lack of harbor becomes the inevitable opposite term of "Saved" and the rest of the album's atmosphere of (possibly useless) hope.

Eitzel plans to take his sparser version of the show out on the road "as soon as I get a band together. I've just found a trumpet player who also plays keyboards, so that might work out." Pearson and Kaphan appear on the album, but, Eitzel says, "The amount of money I would have to offer them, it's an insult. I can afford a certain level of session player for the time-frame of a recording, but I can't take them on tour. People say it's crass to talk about money, but it's true. I'd be better off financially if AMC had broken up a lot sooner, but I don't know, I loved AMC...." Even flying solo, it appears, has its downside, and as Eitzel sings on the Carole King cover that opens the album, "There is no easy way down." **END**



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THE HEART OF THE MATTER

FOR FOLKS WHO RARELY VENTURE BEYOND LISTENING TO TOP 40 RADIO IN THEIR CAR, EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL IS AN EXCITING NEW DISCOVERY. BUT FANS WHO'VE TRACKED THE GROUP ALONG THE COURSE OF ITS 14-YEAR CAREER KNOW THAT THE RUNAWAY SUCCESS OF "MISSING" SERVES AS A SINGLE LANDMARK IN A CAREER OF ZENITHS AND NADIRS, ONE THAT HAS RANGED FROM A #1 GLOBAL TRIUMPH TO HALF OF THE DUO LINGERING ON THE WELCOME MAT OF DEATH'S DOOR. WITH THE RELEASE OF EBTG'S LATEST ALBUM, WALKING WOUNDED (ATLANTIC), THE STORY CONTINUES, WITH SUBLIME NEW TWISTS AND TURNS.



BY KURT B. REIGHLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL LAVINE



Ask anyone who's worked in a record store during the past 18 months and they'll tell you: British duo Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn make their life a living hell. Day after day, customers walk in, looking for a single by Something About The Girl or Nothing For The Girl. You know, the ones who do "that desert song." The great unwashed continue to cry out for the hit that won't go away—yet somehow sustains seemingly infinite airplay—the one with the chorus "And I miss you/Like the deserts miss the rain." "Missing," by Everything But The Girl.

Originally released in November of 1994, the Todd Terry dance remix of the *Amplified Heart* track gradually grew in popularity at with a variety of station formats, eventually going gold and, 469 days after first being issued, becoming the #1 song at pop radio nationwide. "'Missing' broke

rules," admits a quietly confident Tracey Thorn. "People said to us 'You'll have this Todd Terry mix done, and it'll go down well in the clubs, but it won't cross over into radio.'" But when folks on dancefloors from Miami to Milan went crazy, programmers noticed. "And then it becomes a pop hit, and we went 'Well, what happened to your rulebook that said this won't work?'"

The success of "Missing," like many of EBTG's less triumphant but equally worthy previous efforts, owes much to the simplicity of the lyric. "The gaps in between the things you do say, that's where meaning lies," explains Thorn. It's certainly where a musician's work takes on larger dimensions, as fans incorporate songs into their own lives in their individual fashion. "The most important thing is that people see themselves in our songs, they think that it tells their story. To me, that's far more significant than whether it tells our story."

Although their ability to filter an experience or idea through their own aesthetic, then create a work that resonates with the larger public, is an essential talent Watt and Thorn share with such seminal songsmiths as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jimmy Webb, Tom Waits and Burt Bacharach (all of whom the duo have

covered at some point), EBTG tries not to be too conscious of songwriting formulae. "When we started out, there was a vogue for the idea of the classic song," recalls Thorn. "I can remember doing lots of interviews in the early '80s where we would all talk about Bacharach, and very reverentially. Later on we tried to shake that off a bit, and not be too aware of tradition. Sometimes you need to unlearn the rules. Make up your own."

The nine fluttering tracks of *Walking Wounded*—which reverberate with the influence of Thorn's work with trip-hop pioneers Massive Attack on 1995's *Protection*, and the increasing popularity of the drum-and-bass rhythms of jungle permeating Britain's pop charts—offer a perfect example of EBTG setting the same boat on a different tack to reach an uncharted destination. "The more recent stuff, which was very much

"IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE SUDDENLY WRITING HANDS-IN-THE-AIR ANTHEMS, TRYING DESPERATELY TO HAVE HITS IN OUR SAD MIDDLE AGE" CHUCKLES THORN.

influenced in its songwriting through working with people like Massive Attack, where you actually begin with

the mood and texture first, then worry about the song later, is the inverse of the way we've always worked," points out Ben Watt. "We learned a whole technique of just creating an atmosphere, perhaps kicked off by one sample, breakbeat or loop, and then building around that moment, then allowing that to influence the lyrics you write."

Since the release of their first albums in 1984—*Eden* in the U.K., and the modified *Everything But The Girl* in America—the couple haven't been uncomfortable appearing at cross-purposes with pop music trends. "In 1982 and '83, when we started talking about things like Tim Buckley, or Stan Getz and bossa nova, people were saying 'You can't put that into pop music,'" Watt remembers. "It was electropop and New Romantics; Depeche Mode and Spandau Ballet, and we said 'Well, it sounds cool to us.'" Within months, Sade, Swing Out Sister and a host of similarly styled, cool jazz-influenced acts had followed them into the limelight.

"You just go through circles of belief in how things should be, and what's influencing and affecting you," he adds. "In the same way, a

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jazz instrumentalist can move through a desire to make a standards album, and then into something much more free-form and modal."

That refusal to be swayed by a flavor-of-the-month mentality also accounts for EBTG's ability to slip in and out of popularity with fans and critics. "The lesson we have learned is that, whatever our private obsessions might be about music at any one point, they don't always coincide with public consciousness, and that can be to your detriment," admits Watt.

The pair's fifth studio album, from 1990, makes a great case in point. Rave culture had taken over the U.K. charts, and despite the emergence of such important acts of Primal Scream, Happy Mondays and Stone Roses, "a lot of groups were having rhythm tracks and breakbeats hitched up to their sound, and it was an unhappy marriage," Watt recalls. "And I didn't see a way that we could do that successfully. So at that point we decided to do something against that mainstream." Inspired by Donald Fagen's *The Nightfly*, they set out for California to record the pop/soul fusion of *The Language Of Life*.

Slickly produced by Tommy LiPuma, that album yielded the VH-1 hit "Driving," which set EBTG on a course into the realms of "Adult Contemporary," continued on the subsequent *Worldwide*. Whatever interesting lyrical and musical ideas the two offered seemed lost in the polish. "We cut ourselves adrift from the pop mainstream for so long that we were basically washed away by the tide for quite a while," Watt confesses. "I felt very lonely out there. Suddenly I thought 'Wow, we're miles away from things here. Let's get back in and make something that's really vibrant and part of the contemporary milieu.'"

But that wasn't the only factor contributing to their desire to revitalize their sound. For in 1992, Watt nearly died of Churg-Strauss syndrome, a rare autoimmune disease that ravaged his internal organs. At first, after emerging from the hospital 45 pounds lighter and missing a substantial portion of his intestines, Watt didn't want to discuss the experience. But that only exacerbated his depression and inability to write, so he decided to externalize the experience, and began writing down in prose whatever he could recall from the ordeal; this became the foundation for his forthcoming book *Patient*, to be published by Viking U.K. in September.

The floodgates open, the duo began composing the songs that became *Amplified Heart*, albeit with a transformed outlook. "It changed both of us in different ways," concurs Watt. "The certainties and roundness to our arguments that had started to appear in our lyrics were all blown out of the water, and a whole set of worries and angst replaced them. There are a lot more open-ended cries and questions since 1992 than in the work before."

Indeed, many of the cuts on *Walking Wounded*, from the swirling title cut (produced and programmed by U.K. junglists Spring Heel Jack; trip-hop titan Howie B. also contributes, on "Flipside"), through "Single" (which wouldn't sound out of place on Portishead's *Dummy*) and the thumping "Wrong," deal with abandonment, loss and the downside of relationships. Considering that Watt and Thorn have been romantically attached since meeting at university in 1981 (when both were already signed individually to U.K. indie Cherry Red, home of the first EBTG single, "Night And Day"), one wonders why these dark themes have not only persisted but proliferated in their repertoire as early as *Eden's* "Each And Every One."

"Relationships going right make for pretty boring songs," Thorn notes. "And any relationship, however good it is and however long it goes on, can't exist without experiencing any bad patches. Another point is that not all the songs are autobiographical, though people often assume we're singing absolutely about ourselves. Even though I'm perhaps singing 'I this or 'you' that, I might actually be singing about other people. Sometimes they're just fictitious stories."

"[There's] a contemporary obsession that biographical accuracy will lead to a greater understanding of the lyric, which I just don't think is very true at all," Watt comments. "I can understand the obsession with autobiographical details, and the cult of the celebrity, and the life behind the art, but I don't think it necessarily leads to a greater understanding of the art itself."

"Putting a record out, you're kind of abandoning it anyway,

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leaving it wide open to interpretation. Even the broad understanding of what 'Missing' is about is wide of the mark. The people in the main think it's a basic love song, but in Tracey's mind it's a sight more complicated, looking back on someone who was the leader of gang of teenagers. Misinterpretation and reinterpretation: it's all part of the audience/artist relationship."

Regardless of individual interpretations, the initial response to *Walking Wounded* has proven extremely favorable so far, with no accusations of opportunism. "We've been sitting here thinking 'is there going to be a backlash against us,' and as of yet there isn't," confides Thorn. "Everyone likes it, basically, so their grounds for criticizing us have been pulled out from under them."

"The things that we're actually borrowing from, in terms of mood and texture, they're similar to what we've always done," says Watt. "The dark, blunted, melancholy moods of *Massive Attack* are very much what our initial sound was all about. Drum and bass, and jungle, just sounds like futuristic bossa nova to me. It is like Latin music for the millennium."

"People are being quite respectful as well because, in the heart of all this new stuff, we haven't changed that drastically what we're actually doing. It's not like we're suddenly writing hands-in-the-air anthems, trying desperately to have hits in our sad middle age," chuckles Thorn.

However, if you don't find organic ways to elicit new fans, your crowd just grows old with you. "At that point, it can all just start to ossify," she admits. "Even touring becomes boring, if your

audience just keeps getting older and older. In the last year or two we have just started to regenerate a younger audience."

"It's just like crop rotation," observes Watt. "If you keep planting in the same ground over and over again, eventually it will be barren."

And though the two hardly intend to repeat themselves artistically, they have every intention of striving to achieve hit-making status in the future. "If you're going to carry on releasing things, then really you have to want them to be hits," says Thorn. "Because otherwise what's the point? If you're going to bother to make singles, and videos to go with them, the whole point is to get them played on the radio. When they're not, it feels like failure."

"We've had experience of making albums over singles, building up a contented, diehard audience, and in the end I found the experience stifling," says Watt, matter-of-factly. "I wanted to start doing gigs again where people had to stand up and weren't sure whether they liked us or not. Where they drift off to the bar halfway through because we've bored them for a couple of songs. Where people can smoke and drink and do all the things I like to do at concerts, and not be pinned down in rows of seats, politely applauding because you've managed to play a track off every album to please everybody."

That's the dilemma of the contemporary concert experience. The presence of the performer on stage takes listeners' attention away from whatever special meaning a song may have for them, and demands that their attention be on the artist. Watt would rather feel tension between performer and audience any day. "Because as we all know, if there's no grip or friction, it's not very pleasurable at all," he snickers. **END**

DISCOGRAPHY

Night And Day EP (UK Cherry Red) 1983
Eden (UK Blanco y Negro) 1984
Everything But The Girl (Blanco y Negro-Sire) 1984
Love Not Money (Blanco y Negro-Sire) 1985
Baby, The Stars Shine Bright (Blanco y Negro-Sire) 1986
Idlewild (Blanco y Negro-Sire) 1988
The Language Of Life (Atlantic) 1990
Worldwide (Atlantic) 1991
Amplified Heart (Atlantic) 1994
Walking Wounded (Atlantic) 1996


Tracey Thorn:

Beach Party (UK Whaam!) 1981 (with the Marine Girls)
A Distant Shore (UK Cherry Red) 1982
Lazy Ways (UK Cherry Red) 1983 (with the Marine Girls)

Ben Watt:

Summer Into Winter (EP) (UK Cherry Red) 1983 (with Robert Wyatt)
North Marine Drive (UK Cherry Red) 1983

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BEACH BOYS The Pet Sounds Sessions: A 30th Anniversary Collection Capitol

Pet Sounds is probably the most brilliant album anybody will ever make. In the words of Brian Wilson himself, "I was in a loving mood for a few months, and it found its way to recorded tape." That said, four discs' worth of outtakes, sessions, backing tracks, remixes, commercials and "Dog Barking Sessions" is not the sort of thing for the casual fan. But if you or someone you know is a musician or singer, or loves the Beach Boys, then it's more than valuable, it's wonderful. Conceived and composed at home by Brian while the rest of the Beach Boys were out on tour, it's something that will probably never happen again—these recordings were made by a bunch of musicians playing live in a room together in the last days before true multi-track recording. Knowing only self-taught music theory, Brian would simply translate the sounds he heard in his head to a small orchestra of up to 20 musicians, one instrument at a time. The box includes actual session recordings where you can hear Brian directing the musicians, orchestrating by ear. These are clearly Brian's pet sounds—his adventures trying to find sounds that make the listener feel loved.

—James Lien

DATALOG: Release date: May 14. Includes both the mono mix and the first ever true stereo mix of *Pet Sounds*.

FILE UNDER: Stack-O-Sessions.

R.I.Y.L.: Brian Wilson, Beach Boys bootlegs, the Beatles' *Anthologies*.

BIKINI KILL Reject All American Kill Rock Stars

For about four minutes, Bikini Kill's second legit album sounds like the best punk rock record of all time, with the band pogoing so hard it's about to hit orbital velocity—we're talking Pistols plus Misfits times X-Ray Spex to the power of Bikini Kill. With that kind of launch, you've got two choices: keep going in the same vein and hope the adrenalin doesn't wear off, or try to vary things a little and hope to make a richer listening experience. BK picked the wrong one. When Kathleen Hanna is rocking out, it's great: She's got a voice as powerful as, say, Glenn Danzig's, and the band plays like it's hungry and pissed. But then there are the other songs. Bassist Kathi Wilcox sings one; she's got a nice voice, the song's really pretty, it'd sound great as a single, and I guess it's punk to be democratic, but *damn* is it a buzz-killer here. Drummer Tobi Vail sings a couple; they're perfectly fine too (and she makes a virtue of her voice's deficiencies on "Distinct Complicity"), they're just not the main attraction either. And let's not get into Kathleen's *ballad*... yeee. Even the lesser tracks benefit from light-fuse-and-get-away production; it's just disappointing that *Reject All American* has lesser tracks at all. It's a really good 27-minute record that could have been a perfect 12-minute one.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

FILE UNDER: Riot grrrl rrrrock.

R.I.Y.L.: Team Dresch, X-Ray Spex, Sex Pistols.

BR5-49 Live At Robert's Arista Nashville

Whether on the road or as the house band at Robert's in Nashville, BR5-49 plays for tips. No haggling over guarantees or a cut of the door—the band simply sends a woman in a spangly top out into the crowd with a big jar. It fills up, and the band earns every penny. This six-song EP documents the dead-on country and hillbilly parodies, between-song banter and (with copious crowd noise) some of the fun, but it isn't quite the same without a watery macro-brew in one hand and a couple of crumpled dollars in the other. (This could be because for anyone with an upbringing sufficient to recall, like a recovered memory of satanic ritual abuse, that the band's name is Junior Samples' running gag from *Hee-Haw*, having this much fun with just you and a hi-fi seems somehow immoral.) Still, even with songs such as "18 Wheels And A Crowbar," "Bettie, Bettie," a paean to an ex-Nashville girl-turned porn queen, or the social-deviance-in-Mayberry silliness "Me 'N' Opie," this is *real* country, and the band's schtick is no more obtrusive than Palace's. And it's hard not to love a band that ends a disc with "Ladies and gentleman, we've just been informed that the fire marshal is going to shut us down if you don't start tipping us..."

—Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Released Apr. 30.

FILE UNDER: Hillbillies for hire.

R.I.Y.L.: Roy Acuff, Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, "Grandpa, what's for supper?"

"Caution: this section contains both false and true death metal. Get a life." — From a sign on the metal bin at Bleecker Bob's record store, New York City.



CAKEKITCHEN Bald Old Bear Merge

The Cakekitchen's fifth American release, the EP-length *Bald Old Bear*, doesn't look like much more than a homemade project. Listen to it, though, and you'll hear not only musical variety, but a unifying theme of growing up and assuming adulthood. Getting a handle on the New Zealand-based Cakekitchen is tough, at first: the record starts with "Bald Old Bear," a Ride-like swirl of fuzzy guitars and muted, '60s-psychedelia vocals from singer/guitarist Graeme Jefferies. "Wild Geeses" is a pretty, sensitive acoustic-guitar-based song, with a loud violin and indiscernible lyrics. Style takes a hard left turn on the Clash/early-R.E.M. guitar fusion of "Moving Forward," recorded live; the band reverts to form on "Down at the Cooler" and "You Turn Me Insideout," full of layered guitars alternating with spacious acoustic gentility. But the problems on *Bald Old Bear* derive from mostly from assuming too much with too little. Its production values are poor; the burying of vocals and overemphasis on secondary instrumentation makes it hard to identify with the band's loftier ideas. And none of the songs are terribly memorable, though their complexities imply that better work—the kind the band has produced before—may be on the way.

—Randee Dawn

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12.

FILE UNDER: Ambitious garage-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Bats, Lush, Balloon.

CANNANES The Cannanes Ajax

Australia's indie-pop veterans the Cannanes make skipping, lightsome pop in the vein of the Pastels or the Bats, but they can't help leaving a sardonic edge around it. Francis Gibson's inimitable voice gives even the catchiest of hooks an air of perturbation. "What are you doing here?" she drily inquires on the chorus of "Get On Down," as if you had knocked on her door at five in the morning. The harmonies of guitarist Stephen O'Neil act as a moderating influence on Gibson most of the time, but he rips into his own songs with the same backhanded ire. "3-Way Release" is a chatty re-hash of O'Neil's afternoon braced by fuzz and off-kilter drumming. Listening to it, you can imagine what it would be like to have The Fall's Mark E. Smith as a roommate. Fortunately, both Gibson and O'Neil both have more personality than anyone might reasonably expect from this genre. Even on the otherwise tedious "Pedagogy," Gibson's quavery twists at the end of each line keep you listening, and lines like "I've read my Shakespeare watching *Melrose Place*/I know how the story should take place" reward the attention. The Cannanes glorify the ordinary, even as they remind you how extraordinarily musical words like "ordinarily" can be.

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12. First single "Simple Question."

FILE UNDER: Sweetly sardonic pop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Bats, the Smiths, the Beautiful South.

GEGGY TAH Sacred Cow Luaka Bop

This just in: weird scenes of pandemonium in Beverly Hills. A millionaire takes his money and uses it to buy all the birds in the city. Priests are roving the streets, marrying happy couples; mailmen refuse to deliver bills; milkmen give all their milk to neighborhood strays; and shops are all sold out of a new record by a mysterious band called Geggy Tah. The group provides the soundtrack to a happy apocalypse, a rapture, where everybody goes zany all at once, and problems cease to exist, ushering in a perfect world. Well, maybe not yet, but Geggy Tah thinks of music as a playful, goopy substance. Sometimes they bend it into funny shapes, sometimes they let it ooze all over everything, and sometimes they stick it out of their nostrils and let it drip to the floor. The Los Angeles-based duo's two records have presented a wild mash of styles—everything from funk to hardcore to jazzy piano, even a bit of bad pseudo-operatic tenorizing—topped off by eclectic, almost goofy vocals. A lite R&B song about a century plant? A song whose central conceit says, "Thank you, whoever you are?" Lyrics like "Sacred chickens pecking cement"? Welcome to the world of the Tah. Geggy Tah simply delights in the crazy music that their heads create in their elaborate home-studio. *Sacred Cow* isn't an essential record, by any means; it's just that these days it's really hard to fault impeccably-played, truly groovy music that absolutely doesn't sound like anybody else.

—James Lien

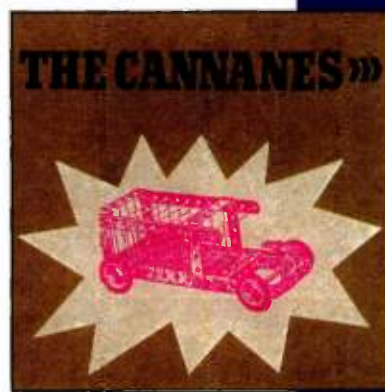
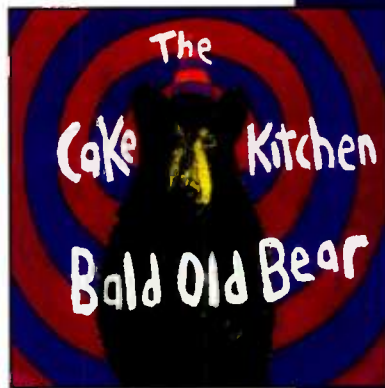
DATALOG: Released Apr. 23.

FILE UNDER: Joyous, enjoyable experimentation.

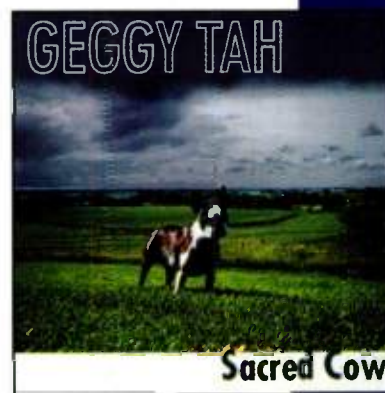
R.I.Y.L.: Talking Heads, '80s King Crimson.

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Except for Wayne/Jayne County And The Electric Chairs, we can't think of one either... "I don't think there's any other band out there that has a male and female vocalist like we do." — from a bio for the band Gravity's Pull



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GOLDEN LEMONS *Punk Rock Jet Set-Big Cat*

As Die Goldenen Zitronen, the Golden Lemons landed a standout song, "A Little Murder Won't Kill Us," on last year's *Sturm Und Twang* compilation of Hamburg bands. A fierce (and eloquently specific) protest against racism, it seemed lost amid the hopelessly hesitant, artsy, and aged studio bands that stud the Hamburger firmament. The Lemons seemed the one road-tested, working punk unit in a world of music majors. On this record you can almost taste the beer—bands don't develop this kind of loose energy and self-discipline without playing a lot of thankless sets to inattentive drunks. It's tight and simple, in the best punk rock tradition. But for most of it, the sound predates punk by a good 20 years. Only seldom do the Lemons break into the bubblegum-style melodic harmonies of punk, and the guitar solos, however sparing and cautious, definitely exist. (No self-respecting punk tolerates guitar solos.) Like the early Beatles, the only Hamburg band most of us have heard, the Lemons here borrow from black art forms to create music that doesn't have a soulful bone in its body. Youth, energy, anger, defiance, speed—not what you expect from the blues. Punk rock's insistence on three major chords (the blues only needs a single seventh) and its appeal to white racists are intrinsically linked... maybe that's why the "Antifa" (antifascist) Lemons reach back beyond the Sex Pistols to the sound of Chuck Berry. But there's little political content here, and it's not all pepped-up R&B, either. There's one song that even goes "la la la," complete with a tinkling glockenspiel. On the other hand, why fret about the political content of the lyrics? They're in German. Just learn to say "puh-soo-sho" for "Psycho," and you'll be singing along in no time. One tune's chorus could be charitably translated, "All hail the wiener, big fat king." Perhaps it's just as well you don't understand. —Nell Zink

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

FILE UNDER: Punk world music.

R.I.Y.L.: Backbeat soundtrack, Railroad Jerk, PiL.



Abbott And Costello down by the CMJ watercooler:

Scott: "So what's the Singles pick this month?"

Douglas: "My Favorite."

Scott: "Of course, but what's the Singles pick?"

CISSY HOUSTON *Face To Face House Of Blues*

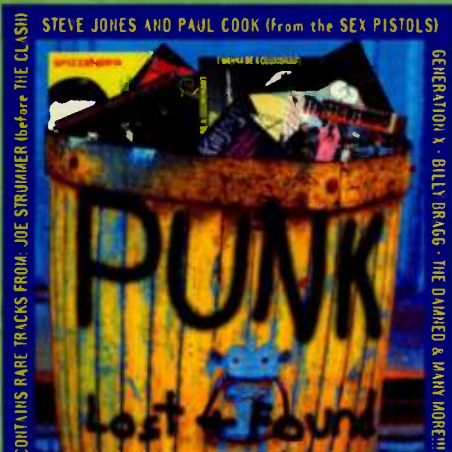
Too often in this game, we accept pallid substitutes. Face it, listening to Freakwater instead of the Carter Family and to Palace Whatever instead of Hank Williams, Sr., is like going to Disneyworld for a European experience. It's too bad that most of us are more comfortable with "updates" that draw on symbols instead of experience, on codewords instead of faith. That's not a long way of saying this gospel record is only for believers, rather than anyone searching for soul in these troubled times could do much worse than this record. Cissy Houston—yes, the genes behind Whitney—comfortably navigates the straits between gospel and the blues on the astonishing "God Don't Ever Change," which should cause you to glue your Jon Spencer CD cases shut forever. "How Sweet it Is" (the old Marvin Gaye song) gets religion, as does, strangely enough, "Amazing Grace," with a new chorus by Houston that brings meaning to what has become a cliché. This album is straight-up gospel—the song titles pretty much convey the idea of the songs, but there's not a whit of cynicism here. Maybe it's faith, maybe it's production, but this is music that's good to you.

—Andrew Beaujon

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

FILE UNDER: Gospel.

R.I.Y.L.: Al Green, Mahalia Jackson, Cissy's daughter Whitney.



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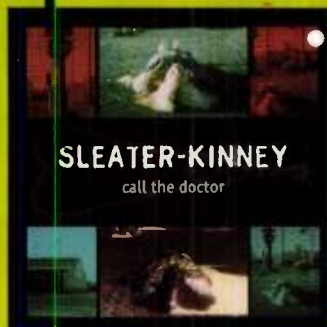
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IGUANAS *Super Ball* *Margaritaville-Island*

Hola! Though their influences come from all over the place, from Tex-Mex rockers to Latin lambada to swamp boogie to the Mardi Gras second-lines of their hometown New Orleans, the Iguanas' philosophy is like that behind a good jukebox: it's all good music, *muy buen*, no matter where it came from, and it's more important to have a good time listening and dancing to it than to dissect what it's all about. Through steady touring and its first two records, the band has developed an ardent cult following: Go to an Iguanas show, and it's guaranteed you'll be able to dance 'til the chairs are stacked on the tables. Their basic ingredients of accordion and boogaloo organ, soulful guitar strums, loping dance rhythms, and sensuous, snuggle-inducing saxophone combine to create a festive party atmosphere that just won't quit, except for the occasional slow dance. Sung half in Spanish, half in English (or is that sung in half-Spanish?), the Iguanas' songs percolate like Latin dancers fuelled by dark coffee—physically, you may be in Boise or New York, but in your mind, you're shimmying like you've got a bunch of bananas on your head. Like a good Los Lobos album, or those pepper-shaped Christmas lights, *Super Ball* will enrich your life just by being there: This is music to cook to, music to help you sort through that box of old photos, music to dance around your apartment while you wait for your friends to come over. And when they do...

—James Lien

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9. Not to be confused with the Iguanas for whom Iggy Pop played drums in Michigan in the '60s.

FILE UNDER: Soulful stew with a shot of Tabasco.

R.I.Y.L.: Los Lobos, Texas Tornados.

JESUS LIZARD *Shot* *Capitol*

On its first major-label studio album, the Jesus Lizard unsurprisingly keeps all of its well-honed and well-known elements firmly in place. There's the lurking presence of David Wm. Sims's bass, holding down the beat while giving many songs their melodic foundation; there's Duane Denison's spot-on chiming/grinding guitar lines; there's Mac McNeilly thrashing the kit; and there's David Yow being David Yow. The results are immediately recognizable (as if you were really expecting them to go techno), if not especially moving. As always, the kids in the pit won't notice some of the subtler new songs ("Trepination"), and those who get excited about such things will find funny song titles ("Too Bad About The Fire"). Neither, unfortunately, will notice that the rhythm section has essentially abandoned the specific, beat-dragging heavier feel of the early records that old-time fans rightly cherish. So while these songs chug along agreeably, they lack the impact and deep grooves of the Lizard's earlier work. And while the band is better than those that followed it that rely solely on crunch, that crunch is still sorely missed. Still, as with every Jesus Lizard record after its drum-machined debut, the individual parts and performers are unimpeachable (not least of which is Yow's astonishing and versatile vocals—those who assume that he just grunts and growls and spits miss half the point), but the whole is a little uninspiring. It's a solid, serviceable rock album, but since when were people excited about the Jesus Lizard for being serviceable?

—Jon Fine

DATALOG: Released Apr. 16.

FILE UNDER: A less thunderous Lizard.

R.I.Y.L.: Tar, the Jesus Lizard, Shellac.



ARISE THEREFORE

"This is the perfect crashing record after, say, the Mekons' *Fear and Whisky* has fueled a night of debauched revelry."
Jim Macnie, *The Providence Phoenix*

"Freaked with the ominous, Oldham's tunes are lovely and thorny, a bible-belt punk response to PJ Harvey's brimstone tangos. Harvey achieves a spooky wisdom by coring glamour's dark side, Oldham by exploring belief, inbreeding, and calm."
Bruce Hainley, *SPIN*

"You are a misunderstood soul, a loner, and therefore you have an intrinsic connection with Mr. Oldham."
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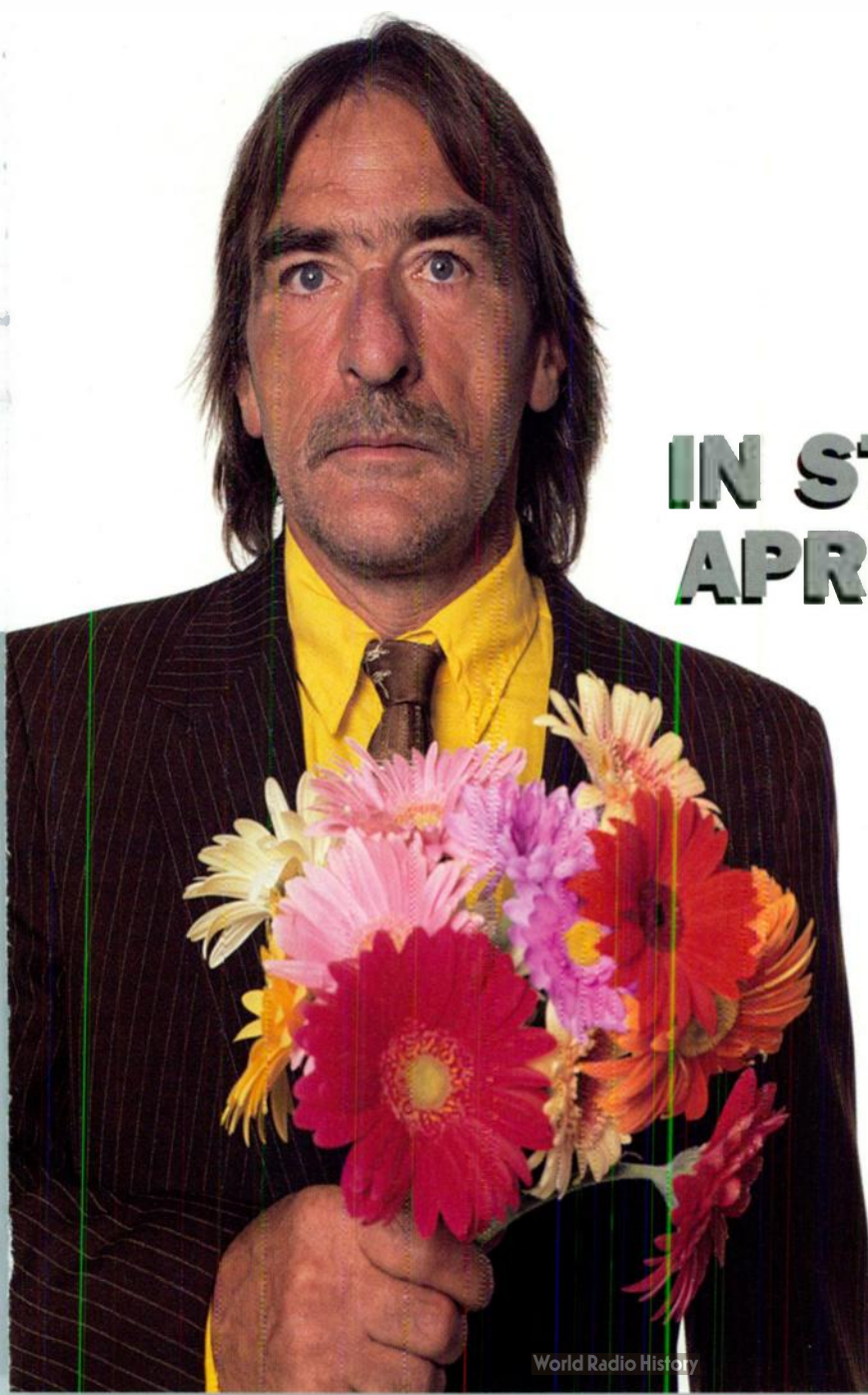


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ANGELIQUE KIDJO *Fifa* *Mango-Island*

A critic for the *New York Times* recently decried the use of world music as "found sounds" on what he called "small-world music"—Deep Forest and the like. If such issues bother you, perhaps you should spend an hour with Angélique Kidjo, who uses Brazilian berimbau, electric guitar, sampled drums, and musicians from her native Benin (Kidjo now lives in France) with no more sinister agenda than to mix it up and, presumably, to sell a few records along the way. Whether such an admixture is more authentic in the hands of someone from Western Africa than in those of a French producer is a question for more serious rock critics—we want to know if it makes us dance, right? Well, it does. Coming off 1993's big international hit single "Aglô," Kidjo offers "Wombo Lombo" and "The Sound Of The Drums," two tunes that should pack German disco floors for the foreseeable future. The only criticism one could make of this album is that it's not too emotionally engaging, but that's really a question of personal taste (besides, God gives us Sebadoh records for a reason). *Fifa*'s a lot of fun and it's groovy. What else matters? Plus, I'm sorry, but those Deep Forest records are pretty good.

—Andrew Beaujon

DATALOG: Released Mar. 19.

FILE UNDER: Unselfconscious worldbeat.

R.I.Y.L.: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Michael Brook, Byrne and Enos's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, Enya.

KING'S X *Ear Candy* *Atlantic*

The history of King's X is full of false starts, and from the sound of *Ear Candy*, it appears that 1994's spectacular *Dogman* was yet another. Now six albums old, the band still seems to be on a search for its identity, a creature residing somewhere between the psychedelia of mid-period Beatles and the driving, leaden power of Sabbath. While *Ear Candy* sports the same overall sound King's X debuted on 1988's *Out Of The Silent Planet*, with tightly-arranged three-part harmonies smoothed over Ty Tabor's coveted signature guitar tones (which reportedly emerge from amplifiers tweaked with a secret recipe of electronics), it also evidently deems this sonic texturing and arranging more important than good songwriting, a trap which seems to ensnare the band every other album or so. A few tracks here do an adequate job of capturing the inimitable King's X feel, but only "Father," "A Box," and "Mississippi Moon" recall the best the band has offered in the past. Once you get past these, there's not a whole lot of life to discover—no flat-out rocker like "The World Around Me," no chunky "Dogman," no trippy "Mr. Wilson," just slowly plodding, though well-arranged, sleepers.

—Aaron Clow

DATALOG: Release date: May 28.

FILE UNDER: Majestic, orchestrated rock.

R.I.Y.L.: King's X, Black Sabbath.

LIFTER *Melinda (Everything Was Beautiful And Nothing Hurt)* *Interscope*

Los Angeles-based Lifter has for years been called a baby Jane's Addiction, and it isn't hard to see why. The band's much-hyped, long-awaited major-label debut is loaded with the sort of sorta metallic, sorta psychedelic numbers that served Perry Farrell in good stead all those years, as well as a glorious sense of self-absorption that would do him proud. More than just blatant Jane's aping, *Melinda* is a punchy, ultimately credible rock 'n' roll record with a highly developed sense of angst. Most of the album concerns Lifter's overweening obsession with, well, itself. The band spends half of the record complaining about bands that think they're cooler than Lifter ("Big And Tall"), and the rest pining for the drug-befogged days of their misspent youth ("402"), all to considerable effect. Lyrically, Talking Heads' influence is, well, pretty evident—never more so than in "402"'s "Where is my honey-dipped life/And my beautiful wife?" couplet. But there are certainly worse bands to filch from, and the fact is that even apart from its endless influences, Lifter makes quite a rock 'n' roll outfit.

—Allison Stewart

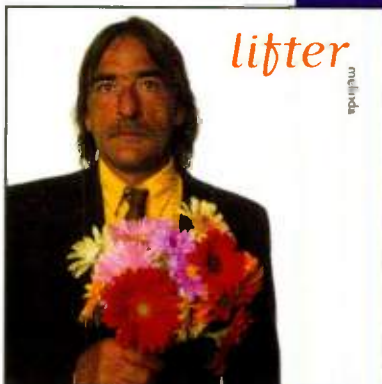
DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

FILE UNDER: What really happened to Baby Jane's.

R.I.Y.L.: Everclear, Possum Dixon, Jane's Addiction.



"Lennon twice argued savagely with McCartney, at one point taking a less-than-peaceful swing at his wife Linda. Another major schism flared when Ono took one of Harrison's chocolate digestives without asking him." — Ian McDonald, from his commentary on the Beatles' *Abbey Road* period in *Revolution In The Head*



PATTI ROTHBERG



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THE MAD SCENE Chinese Honey Merge

Chinese Honey has seven sparse, gritty, superbly-put-together and extremely melancholic pop songs, most co-written and sung by Hamish Kilgour of (still-extant) New Zealand pop giants The Clean; here he sometimes whispers, never shouts, and understates the sadness that alights and remains on every surface of these songs like a flock of ash-white moths settling on a burnt field. (It would have to be a burnt warehouse, really, since the band records in New York City and Hoboken.) Also present are guitarist Lisa Siegel, who's spiritually linked to the simple, pretty English underground pop of the late '80s, and Robert Vickers, former Go-Betweens bassist. Muffled drumming, one-chord drones the Velvet Underground would be proud to own, feathery undistorted guitar and a procession of commandingly mournful trumpet riffs complete the neatly faded picture: *Chinese Honey* is darker, rougher and more memorable than anything else the Mad Scene has done, and as if to point to who shared their new mood they cover Echo And The Bunnymen's "Pictures On My Wall" (it sounds great). The best song, "Cold Sun," is also the sparest, packing its minimal, cautious, resigned requests, its curious-about-yous, in almost nothing except a quiet piano line, a trumpet melody and a self-descriptive chorus. "Cold cold sun, it's a sad sad song," Hamish admits, and it is, and it shines. —Stephen Burt

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12.

FILE UNDER: Chastened, crafted guitar-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: The Clean, the Chills, the Feelies, *The Velvet Underground And Nico*.



MAGNAPOP Rubbing Doesn't Help Priority

Magnapop certainly isn't the first group of jaded musicians to find the world disenchanting. The Georgia quartet's second full-length release, *Rubbing Doesn't Help*, is a brisk, poppy, guitar-driven strut through a familiar field of disheveled dreams, lost hope, and life's other little annoyances. But rather than plummeting down the chasm of woe, vocalist Linda Hopper has developed a numbness to the pain, expressed through the nonchalant tone of her mostly speak-in-tune vocals. Even while she's swirling in the bouncy, energetic riffs of "This Family," "Hold You Down," and "Juicy Fruit," her voice adds an aftertaste of exhaustion to otherwise vivacious tunes. While the band's approach is initially successful—"Come On Inside" and the smoldering "Firebrand" are two of Magnapop's most inspired songs to date—you begin wishing for the emotional release that Hopper's lyrics so desperately crave. That need is only fulfilled with the album's secret, untitled track—a sluggish, somber tune of emphatic pleading, impacted by a hoarse weariness in Hopper's voice, the kind that only comes after crying or screaming too hard for too long. It may take a while to get there, but this cathartic imprint proves to be the band's most genuine and effective statement. —M. Tye Comer

DATALOG: Release date: May 21.

FILE UNDER: Energetic, emotionally challenged pop-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Veruca Salt, Belly, Juliana Hatfield.



MECCA NORMAL The Eagle And The Poodle Matador

What the hell could that title mean? Mecca Normal's Jean Smith has always wielded strange parables, but on this latest album (the band's eighth), they're harder to tease out than usual. Her voice has gotten quieter recently—not sweet, but more lyrical. The characters populating her songs have gotten quirkier, more the stuff of novels than the wayward poets we know: "He developed a passion for wood from mainland China," Smith relates on the poignant "Her Ambition," while "...her ambition... disappeared." Even a more typical topic like "The Revival of Cruelty" gets a question mark at the end with the line "Are we peering in or are we gazing out?" David Lester's guitar is minimal throughout, providing basic structural support for the songs rather than playing against her, which sets the words off all the more. New third member Peter Jefferies' drumming is equally subdued and precise. Then suddenly, on the second half of the album (the Poodle side?) the drums start thumping and they go into rock band mode, unfamiliar territory for all but Jefferies. But even then, Smith keeps things contemplative, with songs about isolation and futility. Two Foot Flame, Smith and Jefferies' band with Michael Morley, may have been taking up some of Mecca Normal's time, but MN remains the more convincing window on Smith's soul. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

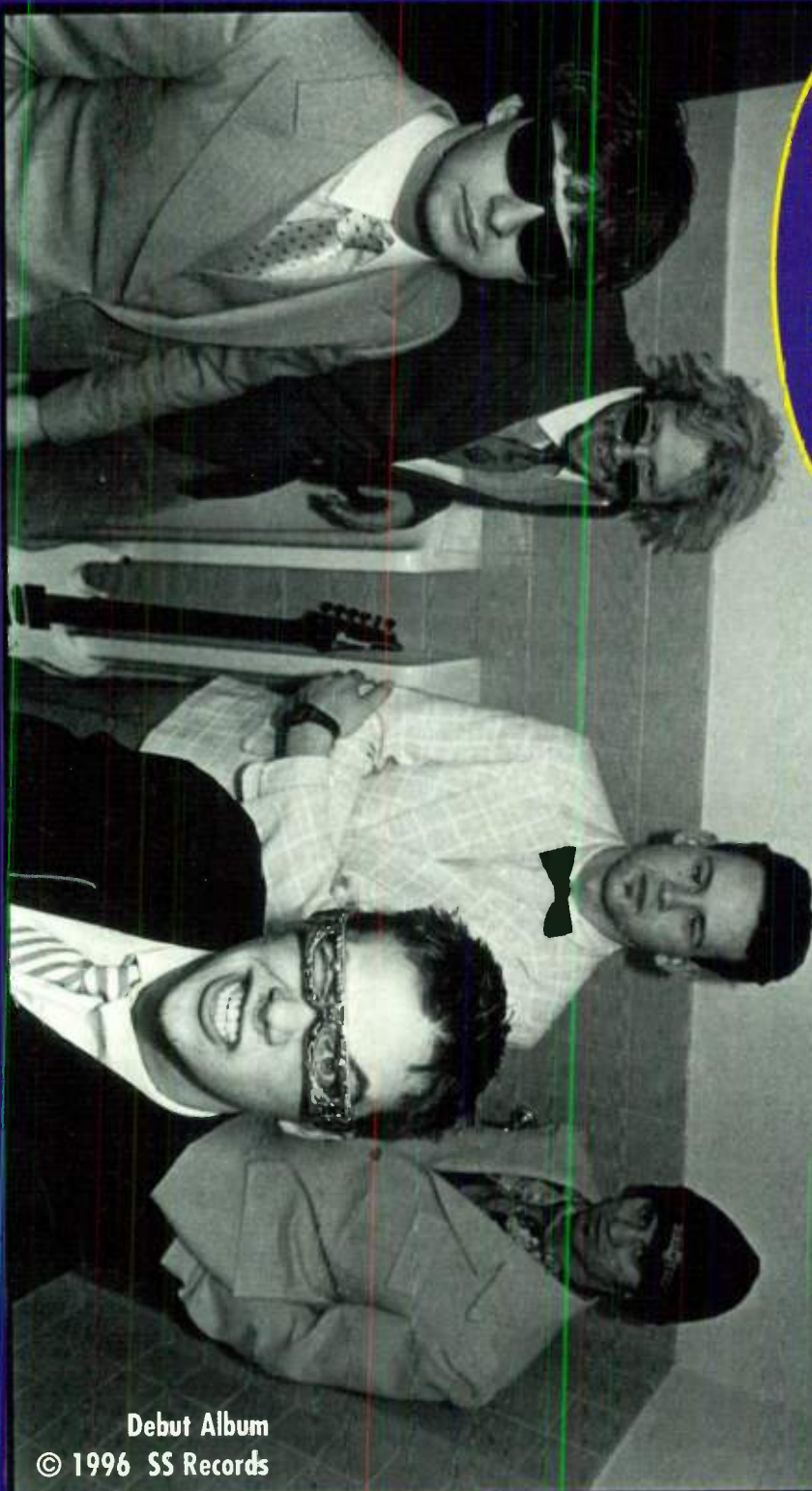
FILE UNDER: Feedback-fueled free verse.

R.I.Y.L.: Patti Smith, Peter Jefferies, Mark Eitzel.



ACME

CMJ May CD Sampler features the song "Decision"



Debut Album
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World Radio History

ODES Me And My Big Mouth Merge

Female vocalists traditionally ooze their allure through lyrics devoid of explicit sexual content. When Judy Garland begs, "Do it again," or Salt 'n' Pepa tell me that I make them want to "shoop," I don't have to dig deep to decide there's something exuberantly, ingeniously pornographic going on. Rebecca Odes, on the other hand, affects the voice of a peevish 13-year-old to sing, "I'm gonna wash my hands of fuckable you." Familiar as the F-word is, recording it still makes a political statement, especially if you sound 13 (I presume that having sported conspicuous breasts several years ago on the cover of her first solo 7", she's no more jailbait than Madonna). Her eight short, catchy tunes are buoyed by lightly plucked guitar and bass strings; a keyboard makes an occasional brief appearance, burbling and cheeping, more as punctuation than melody. When distorted guitar chords intrude, they do so quietly, as understated as her lyrics are overstated. The post-grunge era has rediscovered what the post-New Wave era never forgot: that it really takes very little sound to form a rock song. A single-note guitar line, a keyboard's lonely bleat, a 13-year-old complaining about bad sex—welcome to the hit parade. —Nell Zink

DATALOG: Released Mar. 12.

FILE UNDER: Indie-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Liz Phair, *Sassy* magazine, Free Kitten, Shams.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA Luna hEMisphere-I.R.S.

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) was the Igor Stravinsky, Duke Ellington, and John Coltrane of the Argentinian creation known as tango. Like American jazz, and evolving around the same time, tango's origins were among peasants, pimps, prostitutes, gamblers and ruffians. While violin and guitar contribute key textures, it is the bandoneon, Piazzolla's instrument, that's the soul of the music. The German-invented button accordion slithers, coils and leaps with astonishing seductiveness in the right hands. Piazzolla spent his life doing the impossible: making concert hall music that was influenced by his knowledge of classical music and jazz but also distinctively Latin American. This absolutely gorgeous live set (from Amsterdam, 1989) is the last recording by his New Tango Sex-Tet. The group achieves an uncanny evocation of hope and eroticism, and the melancholy and loss at the music's heart. Songs like "Milonga Del Angel" and "Camorra 3" are unbearably elegant, sensuous, and passionate; clusters of sound erupt and sometimes barely resolve. Piazzolla made some of his best recordings in his last decade: a collaboration with the Kronos Quartet and a recording by Kip Hanrahan (*Zero Hour*) are also highly recommended, as is anything live, like *Luna*. —Danny Housman

DATALOG: Released Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: Modern tango, sans Hollywood clichés.

R.I.Y.L.: Latin jazz, Gypsy Kings, Tom Waits.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Reggae Song Birds Heartbeat

Mrs. Sonia Pottinger ran the High Note label in Jamaica in the '60s and '70s, producing and releasing dozens of national hits that never quite made it to the U.S. Listening to *Reggae Song Birds*, a collection of 16 tracks by women singers on the label (plus one dub version), it's hard to figure out why they didn't. This is some of the most warm, tuneful, exquisitely produced reggae ever. Maybe it's just that it's also very lightweight, concerned less with the social consciousness the rest of the world wanted out of reggae than with I-o-v-e. Sharon Black's "Struggling" is the closest thing to a call to arms here; mostly, the lyrics these women sing are more like a call to bed. "Let's forget the stealing and the killing and the war/And talk love," Sonya Spence sings. (Spence, who actually lived in Florida, is a real find, with a sex-kitten whisper and a delicious way of understating a lyric; she appears on three tracks here.) A few of these tracks have the out-of-tune instruments and fucked-up sonics that reggae lovers know so well (was Patsy And Count Ossie's version of "Pata Pata" recorded underwater?). But Mrs. Potter was an ingenious producer, particularly of the post-ska rocksteady style, floating instruments weightlessly through the mix. And the singers here are amazing—Bob Marley's backing vocalist Marcia Griffiths is the only one familiar to the casual reggae fan, but *Reggae Song Birds* will make you want to hear more by all of them. —Douglas Walk

DATALOG: Released Mar. 26.

FILE UNDER: Great lost reggae.

R.I.Y.L.: Patra, *Tougher Than Tough: The Story Of Jamaican Music*, Sade.

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



Sex Pistols Reunion, part 1: "I instigated Glen's leaving the band. I definitely maneuvered that. It was down to, quite frankly, either he goes or I go. I couldn't put up with him any longer. This is the man who wouldn't have anything to do with 'God Save The Queen.' He wouldn't play it live, so we used to do it without him. He'd stand in the corner, off stage. Same with 'Anarchy in the U.K.' If he was to remain, I had to change some of the lyrics because he'd found them offensive. He'd say 'What do you mean? Do you want to hurt people?' Glen, you're missing the point. But never mind, yes." —John Lydon, on the subject of Glen Matlock, who will be playing bass on the upcoming Sex Pistols reunion tour and live album, from *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*.



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recreation

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World Radio History

BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA *Guitar Slinger* Interscope

Where Louis Jordan meets the Stray Cats, you'll currently find the Brian Setzer Orchestra: a 17-piece powerhouse, channeling Count Basie's swing and Jordan's jump blues through through Setzer's rockabilly cool. *Guitar Slinger*, his second album with the guys in matching suits behind him, is populated with broadly written characters full of tough-guy machismo, as on "Rumble In Brighton" (a cover of his old band's 1982 tune) and "(The Legend of) Johnny Kool," matched with their musical equivalent in stomping piano, blaring horns and speedy, steel guitar licks. And when it doesn't sound like something from your dad's early-rock collection, the album's full of songs from an unwritten Broadway musical, from the drawling cover of Gene Pitney's "Town Without Pity" to the Sinatra-esque "The Man With The Magic Touch." Setzer is no Blue Eyes; his undistinctive voice strains instead of croons, but he does know how to write a toe-tapping, evocative tune and then perform it as an all-out barn burner. And while that sheer, intense energy makes *Guitar Slinger* fun to hear, the near-complete absence of song variation can also make it predictable after seven or eight songs. In the meantime, though, songs like the menacing, "Peter Gunn"-like "Buzz Buzz" (co-written with Joe Strummer) are wild rides into a musical past that's beyond retro; it's almost forgotten. —Randee Dawn

DATALOG: Released Apr. 23.

FILE UNDER: Big-band rockabilly.

R.I.Y.L.: Jerry Lee Lewis, Duane Eddy, Louis Jordan.

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Shots In The Dark: Del-Fi Does Mancini* Del-Fi

The tendency to appropriate cultural objects that only a few years before would have been thought unbearably geeky (in this case, the lite instrumental music of the '50s and early '60s) is puzzling. Perhaps it has to do with what Todd Gitlin has called 'recombinant culture,' wherein creativity isn't so much a matter of building new signifiers as it is simply redeploying and reconfiguring old ones. *Shots In The Dark* is, in fact, an eloquent argument that in fact there's much to be gained from embracing our flight towards instant nostalgia. The album, courtesy of instrumental-oriented L.A. micro-indie Del-Fi, features 20 artists working over Henry Mancini's greatest moments. Many of the songs are indeed dressed up in full cocktail regalia, replete with vibes, gentle horns, and quiet jazz guitar, but we also have a number of surf instrumentals (including the Cramps' Poison Ivy tearing through "Peter Gunn"), the Friends Of Dean Martinez filtering "Lonesome" through their Ennio Morricone influences, and a few hazy torch songs, especially Nan Vernon's eerie, dreamy rendition of "Moon River." As with any tribute album, it's inconsistent, but unlike many recent tributes, it seems motivated less as a marketing ploy than out of the artists' love for the source material. —David Jarman

DATALOG: Released Apr. 2.

FILE UNDER: Lite instrumental.

R.I.Y.L.: *Four Rooms* soundtrack, Friends of Dean Martinez, Esquivel.

TODD SNIDER *Step Right Up* Margaritaville-MCA

Todd Snider says of *Step Right Up*, "This started out to be a concept album about two mountain guys named Elmo and Henry and their trip into town to join the circus. Somewhere along the line, it just turned into a loud rock record." That loud rock record never shook off Elmo and Henry, however, as touches of the concept album still remain, and it's those touches that make this record more than the usual singer-songwriter bar rock record. Snider's *Songs For The Daily Planet* already took a couple paces past that conceit, but *Step Right Up* goes further still into a twisted morass of what the gentry call "Americana." Supporting the expedition are the rock-solid Nervous Wrecks, who prove that Snider learned the best lesson possible from Dylan: The Band was really, really good at making compelling music out of acoustic storytelling. (The fact that a Southern bar band has come around to sounding like The Band is one of the record's more compelling ironies.) The Wrecks give Snider a chance to boogie, so you can sway or be swayed, dance in between the songs that serve up his eloquent cynicism neat. Elmo and Henry might not have made it to the circus, but *Step Right Up* is a sideshow in itself. —Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Released Apr. 23.

FILE UNDER: Honky-tonk verse.

R.I.Y.L.: Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan's *Basement Tapes*, John Prine.

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



Sex Pistols Reunion, part II: [Later, when Sid Vicious couldn't cut it in the studio] "It was desperation time, so I came Glen. We literally hired Glen Matlock. What a nice touch! Shame on him, he actually did it. Isn't that awful? That, more than anything tenfold, explains my contempt for him. I think I'd rather die than do something like that, wouldn't you? It's so cheesy and such a state of desperation." —Ibid.



ARTIST FEATURED ON THIS MONTH'S CD


SOUL COUGHING *Irresistible Bliss* Slash-WB

How much you'll like Soul Coughing will depend entirely on your tolerance for vocalist M. Doughty's highly affected delivery—just listen to how the words "white girl" become a snarl of rage and anxiety on the song of the same name. Unfortunately, that's his entire range. Like King Missile minus the removable organs and sense of humor, Soul Coughing's second album delivers Doughty's poetic ramblings over jazzy background music from the rest of the band. While the moody musical backing delivers plenty of good basslines and clever sampling, the gimmick wears thin pretty quick. As a rapper, Doughty is more of a chanter, and saying things like "I got the will to make myself sleepless" over and over again just gets repetitive. Other than many metaphors involving numbers and (believe it or not) supermarkets, it's almost impossible to tell what he's going on about half the time, and considering the format, that's a big liability. While Doughty and company manage to summon a certain sense of nameless dread and contemporary urban anxiety, it's not enough. The band can do better, as songs like "Screenwriter's Blues" from its debut *Ruby Vroom* made clear, but *Irresistible Bliss* is all too resistible. —Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: May 14.

FILE UNDER: Rambling trip-hop.

R.I.Y.L.: King Missile, Poemfone: New World Order.


SYD STRAW *War And Peace* Capricorn

Listening to a Syd Straw album is like hearing your best friend sing about her cares and worries, achievements and defeats, as opposed to talking your ear off on the phone about them. She's got a warm casualness to her country and blues-tinged tunes, singing not of the world's woes, but of the small things that have affected her, and by extension, you. Riddled with heartache, she reminisces about good times in the autobiographical "CBGB's," and wonders about the character of men in "Howl" ("if all men are dogs, what is a dog?"). Straw's endearingly off-key croon has an elemental appeal that comes across, whether she's lamenting in the twangy, tart "Love And The Lack of It" or singing of abusive relationships in "X-Ray." Though easily accessible, with a solid sense of her own production, Straw isn't out for the easy hook or instantly memorable catchphrase. While her personal philosophies shine through on songs like "All Things Change" ("all things change when we change ourself"), the second half of the album is full of murky, vaguely sad, more acoustic-based songs like the dobro-laced "Almost As Blue." Personable and sometimes willfully hard to get a handle on, Straw remains one of the more original songwriters today. —Rande Dawn

DATALOG: Released May 7. First single "Love And The Lack Of It."

FILE UNDER: Endearingly neurotic country-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: X, Grant Lee Buffalo, David Gray.


SUGARPLASTIC *The Sugarplastic* DGC

Although I've never seen a picture of the Sugarplastic, I'd be willing to bet the fat wad of greenbacks I'm sitting on right now that at least three members sport big plastic framed Curt Rambis-type eyewear. Yes, my friends, what we have here is pure, over-the-top geek-rock. With XTC as its primary inspiration—the band lifts Andy Partridge's melodies, sounds and arrangements repeatedly—Sugarplastic's thang is cleverer-than-thou, musicianly, smug, tongue-in-cheek guitar-pop. It's the antithesis of rock 'n' roll, really, and you're either gonna love 'em or they'll make you wanna spit and yell "Nerrrrds!" like Ogre in *Revenge Of The Nerds*. Even if you fall firmly in the camp of the latter, it's hard to deny that many of the melodies here are pretty crafty (even if they do owe a sizable debt to Mr. Partridge), and the hooks, delivered in the usual self-effacing, cracking, aw-shucks geek-rock voice, are often annoyingly catchy. In fact, after a few listens, the choruses of "Transworld Modal Operator," "Don't Sleep" and "Polly Brown" are hard to shake, coming back to you repeatedly like Weezer's "Buddy Holly" did, or the same way your tongue keeps touching that canker sore in your mouth just to remind you that it hurts. —Steve McGuirl

DATALOG: Released Apr. 23.

FILE UNDER: Geek power-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Weezer, XTC, that dog.

UI Sidelong Southern

As two bassists plus a drummer, some spacey effects, and a strikingly diffident attitude, UI has often done a surprising amount with a limited kit of parts. The band's first full-length album shows it more committed to minimalism than ever. On one song, the climatic moment happens when a single bass note modulates up. This means that songs often live or die by a single groove. When it's a good 'un, like the libidinal "Sexy Photograph" (remixed by Tortoise's John McIntire on the recent 'mini-LP' *Unlike*), you'll be willing to follow it anywhere. When it's not, as on "Top Requests," even the most antic time changes can't save it. UI follows prog-rock and techno in mixing twangy, organic textures and the sound of machines, but the surprises are too subdued and arrive too slowly to break the placid surface of most tracks. Blame the remix culture if you like: UI encourages others to use its songs as raw material, and perhaps that's why so many sound like unresolved iterations. The exceptions are shorter, weirder tracks that move beyond the backbeat, like "The Piano," with its improbable seagull noises and its wah-wahed sort-of-a-hook, and "Butterfly Who," whose disco vibe and "fuck and rollerskate" chorus would be hilarious even if it weren't groovy. *Sidelong* would sound great in a cavernous space, with the bass high enough to really set the intestines vibrating. Either find yourself such a room, or wait for—what else—the remixes.

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released March 25.

FILE UNDER: Sub-Kraut supergroove.

R.I.Y.L.: Tortoise, Aphex Twin, Kraftwerk.



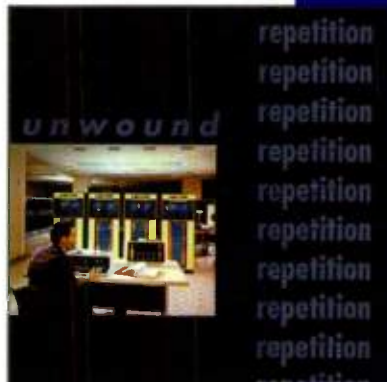
UNWOUND Repetition Kill Rock Stars

"Turned into something else/Risking my security/Losing my obscurity," sings Justin Trosper of Unwound. And it's true. With its fifth album in five years, Olympia's Unwound is one of the most established punk bands on the West Coast scene. With the self-assurance that comes from this veteran status, Unwound has filled its new record with a sound that is polished and paced, tethering its bass-driven ferocity to tingling melodies. With Trosper's moments of quiet passion barely discernible from his gut-splitting wails, the record has a surprising tone of restraint and emotional balance, even in the face of Unwound's natural intensity. Unfortunately for listeners, however, *Repetition* is all too accurate a title. Several of the songs stray well past the four-minute mark, and the mid-section of the record drones on and on. Most blatant an offense is "Fingernails On A Chalkboard," where the title is chanted far beyond the point of cleverness. However, when Unwound focuses on creating full songs, its hit ratio skyrockets. Occasional additions of keyboards and horns can't dim the bare-faced fervor as one of the few remaining power trios powers on. —Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Released Apr. 9.

FILE UNDER: Post-emo-core superstars.

R.I.Y.L.: Fugazi, godheadSilo, Shellac, Drive Like Jehu.



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airplanes
and
bot and ray

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trampoline

produced by patrick mccarthy & joe henry for fell and swade productions

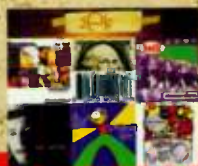
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Subliminal Plastic Motives

The debut album featuring "cannon" & "so low"



spongebath



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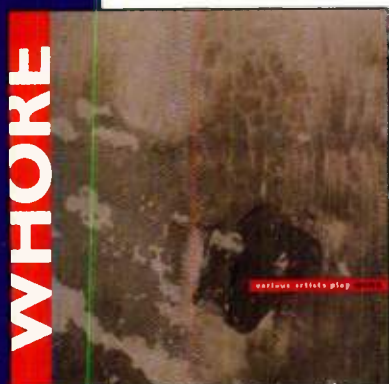


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WHORE

VARIOUS ARTISTS **Whore: Various Artists Play Wire** WMO

You never really know how far a band's scope of influence stretches until the tribute album comes out. After Wire's two decades' worth of aural experimentation, ranging from stripped down punk to high-gloss electro-pop (and just about everything in between), the broad diversity of artists who pay tribute to the band here comes as no huge surprise. Like the band itself, the compilation drifts dizzily from one style to the next. Kustomized's "A Question of Degree," Lee Ranaldo's "Fragile," and Mike Watt's "The 15th" bring to mind the group's early, more basic approach to recording while Spasm's "12XU," Bark Psychosis' "Three Girl Rhumba" and a number of other tracks go to great lengths to impress the honorees with more... um, *experimental* renditions. Overall, there are plenty of gems to be found here, Lush's note-for-note interpretation of the jangly "Mannequin" for one. Laika's "German Shepherds" will give chills to even the original songwriters. But above all, catch My Bloody Valentine's "Map Ref. 41°N 93°W," an indisputable highlight for a plethora of reasons—the main one being that it's just a damn fine tune to begin with.

—M. Tye Comer

DATALOG: Released Mar. 28.

FILE UNDER: The roots of alternative rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Wire, Laika, My Bloody Valentine.

"When it comes to artists, there is truly no justice in this world. Being creative and brilliant doesn't mean you will ever experience recognition for your artistic expression... I believe that imagination and adroitness should be lifted up and celebrated." —John Tesh, from the liner notes to The John Tesh Project



MARK EITZEL 60 WATT SILVER LINING

The New Yorker

"ONE OF THE FINEST POETS OF TENDERLOIN
PASSION AND DESPAIR SINCE TOM WAITS."

Interview

"ONE OF OUR FINEST CHRONICLERS OF DECAY
AND DESPAIR."

Mark Eitzel

"MAYBE I DO HAVE A MORBID BENT."



© 1996 Warner Bros. Records Inc. A dimly-lit room.

World Radio History

on the verge

UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

compiled by lydia anderson

Red Aunts

The four southern California punk chicks of Red Aunts will gladly beat your ass black and blue. From their rock 'n' roll pseudonyms (Angel, E.Z. Wider, Cougar & Sapphire) to their snazzy matching outfits and fancy hairdos (a female Rocket From The Crypt?) to their raucous stage persona (they sometimes kick off a song by shouting "1-2-fuck you"), Red Aunts are a blast to watch, and they've come a long way since their rough-and-tumble beginnings a few years back. Their angry-girl rock prefers snarling to whining, and while their most successful combination of choleric garage rock and punk can be heard on their fourth record, *#1 Chicken* (Epitaph), the late summer release of a new full-length promises even more bang for the buck.

—Jenny Eliscu



PAT GRAMAM

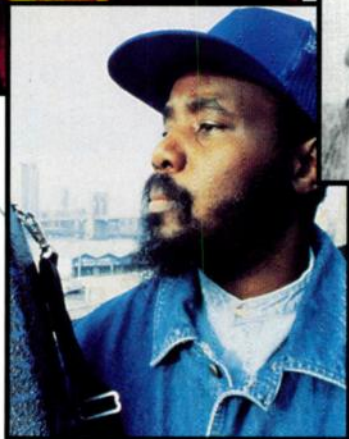


JIMMY POLE

David S. Ware

From most of what identifies itself as jazz these days, you'd think it's still 1962. Tenor saxophonist David S. Ware is a rarity: a totally modern innovator with unbelievable old-school chops, a jazz composer whose work is tremendously challenging but also very easy to like. His style owes little to anybody else, and his writing is as fast and jagged as a bolt of lightning. The other three members of his quartet—pianist Matthew Shipp, bassist William Parker and drummer Whit Dickey—are all phenomenal musicians in their own right (check out Shipp's *Zo*, reissued last year on Infinite Zero), and under Ware's leadership they make a dense, powerful, intensely complicated sound. Ware has been noticed less in the jazz community than in experimental rock circles (though his music is pure jazz), but the quartet's new *Dao* (Homestead) is turning heads in all musical quarters.

—Douglas Wolk



Delta 72

Delta 72's hometown of Washington, D.C. has long been a punk-rock hotbed, but this quartet has more in common with bands like the Music Explosion or the Rolling Stones than it does with Nation Of Ulysses or Fugazi. Its songs are a groovy amalgam of punk and garage-y rhythm and blues: The former can be heard in its aggressive rhythms, and the latter in its deft use of Farfisa and harmonica. Delta 72, which formed in June of 1994, has a totally suave stage presence. Known to leap off of the bass drum and

land on the stage in a split, singer/guitarist/harmonicaguy Gregg Foreman (check out his Johnny Thunders hairdo) really knows how to do the do, and his dexterous toe tapping/hand clapping is not to be missed. The band is touring this summer in support of its debut full-length, *The R&B Of Membership* (Touch And Go).

—Jenny Eliscu



Whiskeytown

Whiskeytown is a new contender in the country-rock wars, and after a couple of great singles the band finally has a full-length release, *Faithless Street* (Mood Food). Brimming with twangy pedal steel, heavy rock drums and some smoothly distorted guitars, the album cleverly blurs the line between country and pop, emerging with a sound halfway between Hank Williams and Son Volt. After a listen, you'd probably never guess that Whiskeytown's helmsman, 21-year-old Ryan Adams, originally began his career in a punk band. The only clue is Adams' laid-back, yet commanding voice, gruffly intoning songs about disappointment ("If He Can't Have You") and the aftereffects of failed relationships ("Drank Like A River"). All of Whiskeytown's songs are interesting, and some are nothing short of spectacular. Drink up.

—Aaron Clow

FLASH

ROOTS • REISSUES • RETRO

by James Lien

TAMPA RED AND HIS BUDDIES



TAMPA RED

**The Complete Bluebird Recordings, Vol. 1 & 2
Bluebird-RCA**

Prohibition got you down? Lose your shirt in the Big Crash? Can't get the crank on the old buggy to turn over? If any or all of these have set your flapper's flaps a-drooping and given you the blues, or if you just want to cut the rug and dance on a Saturday night, then Tampa Red's your man. Back in the '20s and '30s, Tampa Red played squawky, jittery, jazz-inflected

"hokum" blues—old-timey R. Crumb kinda stuff, but really charming if you can just get past the fact that even remastered for CD on a state-of-the-art stereo, it's still going to sound like it's blaring out of a paper cone from a scratchy Victrola.

Born in rural Georgia as Hudson Whittaker, Red was one of the first recording stars to make a name for himself as a virtuoso instrumentalist on guitar, one of the first "session musicians" to play on other people records (including Ma Rainey's), and one heckuva great bluesman. In his day, his stinging leads inspired many imitators ("the Tampa Kid," "Piano Red," etc.) and even at least one outright impersonator, but there was only one Tampa Red, a.k.a. the Guitar Wizard, a.k.a. "The Man With The Golden Guitar"—apparently, he had a National Steel made out of some kind of flashy custom alloy. Most of his songs concerned drinking, women and "stuff," which could be a reference to any of a number of other popular vices. During the '20s and '30s, the dapperly dressed Red lived in a brownstone in Chicago that was no doubt the site of numerous outrageous house parties, jam sessions, rent boogies and various other shenanigans, and recorded with an ad-hoc group of miscreants calling themselves the Chicago Five. When Georgia Tom, his longtime piano-linking partner, found religion and quit the band, Red's career shifted from raw blues to a delightful sort of sassy, risqué popular vocal jazz reminiscent of Cab Calloway. Many of Red's earlier '20s recordings, however, when he was billed as Tampa Red And His Hokum Jazz Band, paired him with the great Frankie "Half Pint" Jaxon, a diminutive vaudeville singer, buck dancer and female impersonator. (A photo of Jaxon dancing with a cane was briefly used by the Rykodisc label as a logo.)

Red came out of retirement in the '60s and recorded for Prestige, but his "comeback" albums are flawed, mainly because Tampa, who admitted having only fuzzy recollections of most of his peak years during the Roaring '20s, insisted upon foregoing his dazzling guitar work in favor of playing a homemade kazoo on a neck rack. But these Bluebird recordings from the '30s spotlight Tampa Red and his buddies in fine fettle. Jaxon's own solo work, with groups like Jaxon's Hot Shots, Prince Budda And His Boys, the Harlem Hamfats and Punch Miller's Delegates Of Pleasure (as well as a few gleefully bogus mock-gospel recordings made under the name of the Cotton Top Mountain Sanctified Singers) are collected on three delightful CDs on the Document label. Jaxon's oeuvre of risqué hokum is the sort of thing only an insane Austrian label would release on CD, but it's truly worth the extra effort to track them down. And if you want to hear the sound of those scratchy old 78s but don't want 10 CDs' worth, you might want to check out Tampa Red's party-friendly single-CD anthologies on Yazoo (*Bottleneck Guitar 1928-37*) or Columbia-Legacy (*Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard*) to hear even more wonderful highs of Tampa Red's work as a sideman and hokum specialist.

IN THE BINS

There's a moment on **Freddie King's** *Live At The Electric Ballroom, 1974* (Black Top) where, in the midst of one of the Texas guitarist's blazing extended solos, you can clearly hear a woman in the audience suddenly scream, and then the drummer and band all miss a beat, then Freddie screams "Ow!" Whatever it was that happened, I guess you had to be there... Blue Note continues its excellent Lost Grooves series of funk-jazz reissues with boss titles from barbeque B-3 organist **Big John Patton** (*Memphis To New York Spirit*), **Gene Harris And The Three Sounds** (*Live At The 'It' Club*), and a totally funky late-'60s collection of *Blue Note Rare Grooves*, featuring the funky jazz sounds of Reuben Wilson, Jack McDuff, Elvin Jones, Larry Young, and Jimmy McGriff. This is the real acid jazz... Also on the rare groove front, Ubiquity has just released a reissue of **Ivan "Boogaloo" Jones's** sizzling Sweetback album from 1975, originally released on Joka Records... **Frank Zappa's** catalog exhumation is nearly complete with the posthumous release of *The Lost Episodes* (Rykodisc), a collection of outtakes and rarities. Besides the incredible tracks with Captain Beefheart circa *Trout Mask Replica*, what's really amazing is how it gives evidence that even as early as 1964, Zappa seriously aspired to be a classical composer (he even hired a small orchestra and gave a concert to a bewildered audience in a California church hall) and was already spoofing everything in sight (witness his soundtrack work on the flagrantly bad pseudo-spaghetti western *Run Home Slow*).

BURZUM

Filosofem

Misanthropy-Red Stream



Listening to *Filosofem* is a charged experience. Burzum's previous albums are not classics by a long shot, but the band's name is virtually synonymous with Norwegian black metal by virtue of its history. At age 21, leader (and sole member) Varg "Count Grishnackh" Vikernes was sentenced to 21 years in prison for burning down ancient churches of Norway and knifing competitor Euronymous of the band Mayhem to death. Recorded in March 1993, after most of the arsons but four months before the killing, *Filosofem* is a dire suite of metal-derived, folk-inspired electronic sadness. Without a document of such profound emptiness, Vikernes would be a much more forgettable character. These six passionate and articulate songs reveal his life to be marked deeply by both beauty and horror. The album draws on powerful themes of youth, violence, imprisonment, and self-reflection. A glossy booklet expresses his feelings of extreme withdrawal with lonesome etchings of sea spirits, horn-blowing widows, and frightened woodcutters. Where vocals and guitars remain in this symphonic mix, they are heavily distorted, hysteric, and ominous. However, the forlorn "Rundgang um die Transzendente Säule der Singularität" is a nearly eternal four-note ambient psalm worthy of the Aphex Twin. Grishnackh has reputedly requested synthesizers while in prison, to continue recording in this vein.



RIFFS

Delusions of grandeur being what they are, it's rare to find a release of such suitably epic proportions as *In Memory Of Celtic Frost (Dwell)*, a 14-track tribute to the mind of notable Swiss eccentric Tom G. Warrior. No less a line-up of worshippers than Mayhem, Emperor, Grave, and Enslaved dredge their guts for versions of "Procreation Of The Wicked" and "Visual Aggression" that match the originals in their corrosiveness, weirdness, and ill temper. Celtic Frost's bizarre influence on metal is reflected in the ambient swim of Closedown's "Danse Macabre" as well as the dirge of 13's "Triumph Of Death," a song by the pre-Frost band Hellhammer. Dwell, a tiny metal subsidiary of a huge bluegrass distributor, has spared no expense in securing long-winded liner notes and opulent fantasy artwork. Warrior himself revisits "Babylon Fell" in an angular jazz-rock version with his new group Apollyon's Son. Both in inspiration and execution, this record is essential to understanding the metal underground... Bathed in serious green and yellow neon, **PAN-THY-MONIUM's** *III—Khaoohs & Kon-Fus-Ion (Relapse)* is a rollercoaster ride of Swedish death-grind in wonderland. Groove-oriented mountains of gore are layered with pan flute, sax squawk, and smarmy Euro-corn in the name of nebulosity and unpredictability... The corpse-paint-by-numbers black metal of Germany's **ABIGOR** is jazzed up with medieval sound effects and surprisingly spooky Iron Maiden-style melodic guitar flourishes on *Verwüstung/Invoke The Dark Age* (Napalm America). No great shakes, just metal music for metal folks... *Endemoniada's* seventh issue (611 W. 152 St., New York, NY 10031) lovingly cradles metal-romantic amateur art and poetry, as well as interviews with lascivious death metallers Fallen Christ and dark-ambient prince of prosthetics Mortii. Editors Lucifera and Xastur, a pair of witches from Spanish Harlem and the South Bronx, oversee 60 pages of highly personal explorations of the occult, gender issues, and somber unknown musics.



- 1 **SEPULTURA**
Roots
Roadrunner
- 2 **SACRED REICH**
Heal
Metal Blade
- 3 **MINISTRY**
Filth Pig
Warner Bros.
- 4 **OVERKILL**
The Killing Kind
CMC
- 5 **NAPALM DEATH**
Diatribes
Earache
- 6 **PARADISE LOST**
Draconian Times
Relativity
- 7 **DEADGUY**
Fixation On A Coworker
Victory
- 8 **TROUBLE**
Plastic Green Head
Century Media
- 9 **CRISIS**
Deathshead Extermination
Metal Blade
- 10 **BAD RELIGION**
The Gray Race
Atlantic
- 11 **ONLY LIVING WITNESS**
Innocents
Century Media
- 12 **MY DYING BRIDE**
The Angel And The Dark River
Fierce-FLG
- 13 **GRAVITY KILLS**
Gravity Kills
TVT
- 14 **HYPOCRISY**
Abducted
Nuclear Blast-Relapse
- 15 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
In Memory Of Celtic Frost
Dwell
- 16 **SKINNY PUPPY**
The Process
American
- 17 **KILGORE SMUDGE**
Blue Collar Solitude
Unsound-WB
- 18 **DISSECTION**
Storm Of The Light's Bane
Nuclear Blast
- 19 **INTEGRITY**
Humanity Is The Devil
Victory
- 20 **GALACTIC COWBOYS**
Machine Fish
Metal Blade
- 21 **MERAUDER**
Master Killer
Century Media
- 22 **POWERMAN 5000**
The Blood Splat Rating System
Conscience
- 23 **BRUCE DICKINSON**
Skunkworks
Castle
- 24 **L.U.N.G.S.**
Better Class Of Losers
Pavement
- 25 **SISTER MACHINE GUN**
Burn
Wax Trax!-TVT

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



SINGLES

BY DOUGLAS WOLK

MY FAVORITE

"The Informers"

Harriet

The first single by My Favorite was called "The Last New Wave Record," which was a lie: That's what *this* one is. Put it on and it's 1983 all over again—except that in 1983 nobody was making hit records about AIDS, which this one sort of is. "The Informers" would fit neatly between "Kids In America" and "Girls On Film," and you can practically hear J.J. Jackson back-announcing it.

It's not just a pastiche, though, because a) it never smirks at its roots—it just does them right, from

the production right down to the phrasing of lines

like "life is cheap and ea-saaaay"; b) it doesn't

actually quote from or suggest anybody in

particular—it just sounds, well, *totally new*

wave; and c) it's at least as good as anything

from that time. Seriously—it's unbelievably

catchy and sleek. Bonus points for having B-sides

that are B-side-like: a little song called "Detectives

Of Suburbia" (subtitled "all she left me was her

casio," if that gives you any idea) and "Informers Part

2," an interview with an HIV+ AIDS volunteer.

date, built around an awesomely unsettling rhythm, rock-solid but totally disorienting. Genius move: making Raymond Dickat's texture-heavy, note-light saxophone (with effects pedals) the band's lead instrument. Not-so-genius move: making the third track "Nighttripper II," an unthrilling dub version of "Cranes."

The most unlikely band of the month is **CHARMING HOSTESS**, whose *Nub City* EP (Vaccination) jams together rock and Eastern European women's choir-style singing; the lineup includes five singers, a violinist, and a guitarist and rhythm section who are fond of late-'70s wah-wah funk sounds. Amazingly, it pretty much works, especially on the side that has two songs in some Slavic language, "Dali Tzerni" and "Dilmano Dilbero." On the other side, they apply some of those vocal strategies to a peculiar, complicated rocker, "Forty Ouncers And Froot Loops." It's not quite as successful (too many ideas going on at once), but it's sure as hell interesting, and the lyrics are worth listening for too.

Anyone with fond memories of the Monochrome Set should hear the *Nauts Landing Vol. 1 7"* compilation (Pop Secret-No Depression) for Les Fleurs De Lis' "Quel Dommage!," an absolute soundalike for Bid and company, right down to the easy-listening guitar sound. While you're at it, check out the record's other tracks, all very good and very different from each other: a nicely constructed low-fi electronic piece by Between Friends, a silly nerd-with-guitar home recording by Mean Spirit'd Robots ("I knew that I wanted to date you madly," Mr. Robots croons) and a crisp, synth-accented rocker by the Feelings, a k a Ralf from Built To Spill and the Halo Benders.

For good old-fashioned raw attack, you can't do much better right now than Boston's **JANE NOEL**. The pore-openingly loud "Psycho" single (Oblivion) has three songs recorded live on the radio (including a cover of the Dogmatics' "You Say," for that Beantown punk roots touch), with the band charging ahead so fast and so hard that it's barely in control. It's totally visceral stuff—there are songs going on, but the impact of what the band's playing is more important than the specific notes—and there's a lot of candy-assed "punk rock" bands that should take a listen to this and realize it's time to give up. Also worth tracking down: the band's horribly titled but mostly great *Relax Your Penis* CD, where three songs recorded by Bob Weston refract the Jane Noel instrumental attack into a weird, blurry abstraction.

SIX FINGER SATELLITE's *Severe Exposure* album was such a massive Moogcore explosion that there was no telling where they'd go next. Unfortunately, "Massive Cocaine Seizure" (Sub Pop) is a step backwards, songwriting-wise—despite the awesome title and one great moment in the middle where the guitar suddenly sounds like it's being played a mile away, it could practically be a Big Black outtake from 10 years ago. The other side's "Human Operator" is a little more interesting on the strength of its synth/drums dynamic, but ultimately doesn't go anywhere either. By most similar bands' standards, this would be just fine, but 6FS has done better.

In 1979, **CIRCLE X** (originally from Louisville) relocated from New York City to France and released its first single, an untitled EP on an unnamed French label. It's become one of the rarest No Wave records, a raw, alien, dense set of four tuneless almost-not-even-songs made of spattered guitar, drums and Tony Pinotti's wrecked, howling voice: "the entire system is based on being able to create a formula and destroy it at the same time," guitarist Rik Letendre explains in its liner notes. Now it's been reissued as one of the first releases on Dexter's Cigar, an imprint of Drag City curated by Gastr Del Sol. The new CD is obviously mastered from a crackly copy of the original vinyl, but it actually sounds good that way.

Dave Callahan (or "Callahan," as he's now calling himself) is the only original member of **MOONSHAKE** still in the band, and it's unambiguously his baby now. The three-song *Cranes* CD (C/Z) is a little more together than last year's *The Sound Your Eyes Can Follow*—the band seems more assured of its dub bass/rock drums/weird samples grooves. The title track is one of Callahan's best songs to

DANCE

BY TIM HASLETT

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Totally Re-Wired, Vol. 1

Acid Jazz-Hollywood



London DJ and dancefloor jazz raconteur Gilles Peterson founded the Acid Jazz label in Britain in the mid-'80s in order to gain wider currency for a new harder, dancefloor jazz emerging from London and Manchester nightlife. Jazz dancing became popular, and the whiplash moves associated with this new wave of DJ jazz led to it being termed "acid jazz."

Nearly 10 years later, the label makes an auspicious debut in the Americas with the *Totally Re-Wired* compilation, which documents the label's historical progression with a clutch of killer tracks. Opening with "Mother's Tongue" by Brand New Heavies, this collection is essentially a travelogue of the the British acid jazz terrain of the late '80s and early '90s. The Emperor's New Clothes (whose full-length record has just been issued in the U.S.) contributes the sprightly but bass-heavy "Unsettled Life." It sounds terrific next to Snowboy's tastefully executed cover of "Anarchy In The U.K.," which inflects the Pistols' anthem with a forcefully percussive Latin undertow. The two surprises here are African Head Charge, now separated from Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound organization and offering the millenarian "To Fari Hail," and Gregory Isaacs, whose "Matey," from his new *Private Lesson* album, is sheer heartbreak on vinyl.



IN A DUBWISE FASHION

Of the recent collections of new British roots dub, *Dubhead Vol. II* (Shiver-Crosstalk) is the most challenging and exploratory. Following up the pathbreaking first volume, this set of tracks makes it clear that '70s Jamaican revivalism is the farthest thing from the minds of these producers. The Disciples, the Dub Specialists, Fish & Goat At The Controls and Bush Chemists, though they're quite distinctive, are all practitioners of a resolutely modern dub style that gathers influences from hip-hop, jazz, techno, and house. Dub has always been more about what is *not* heard, and this collection is animated by those sonic blind spots, where the bass disappears and is replaced by ringing minor-key piano and an even heavier bass pulse. *Dubhead Vol. II* is where dance music is going, and where it has been... The four-member **SUB DUB** collective is at the periphery of dub/ambient hybridity. The San Francisco group has clearly grown up under the tutelage of King Tubby and Augustus Pablo, but its affinity for ambient atmospherics makes its new self-titled EP (Instinct Ambient) a strange brew indeed. "Elastic Dub" has a bassline like a rubber band stretched nearly to the snapping point and then released, while "Deserted Dub" has a arid, panoramic texture. This record is mandatory listening for those who feel that all ambient music has gone the way of art-rock... The first record by **POSSESSION + AFRICAN DUB**, *Off World One* (Sub Meta-Caroline), features the skills of Mali's Fousseny Kouyate, Foday Musa Suso from Gambia, and Senegal's Aiyb Dieng, who bring their scattered dub sensibilities to these heart-stopping pieces. Produced and arranged by prolific New York studio fiend Bill Laswell, this haunting and highly rhythmic piece of work confounds easy categorization, and you can dance to it... All this trans-national dub activity has led to the emergence of a number of distinctive U.S. dub enclaves like the Wordsound organization, which has released nine records on its own label in the past two years. The debut of **I POWA**, *Live From The Planet Crooklyn* (Wordsound-ROIR), is a trans-Atlantic dub soundclash that features Canadian dub poet Lillian Allen, as well as Dougie Wardrop of Bush Chemists, Conscious Sounds, and the Dub Specialists. Wardrop offers a thundering echo and reverb to "Wordsound Meets Conscious Sounds At Stamford Hill," while Allen contributes her plaintive, challenging words to "Poetry." "6000 Dub Plates," which sounds as heavenly as the title suggests, is another of the standouts here.



- 1 **SPACETIME CONTINUUM**
Emit Escaps
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 2 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Hardhop & Trypno
Moonshine
- 3 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Three A.D.: A Waveform Compilation
Waveform
- 4 **SKINNY PUPPY**
The Process
American
- 5 **AUTECHRE**
Tri Repetae + +
Warp/Wax Trax!-TVT
- 6 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Suck-Taste-Spit
Dynamica-CBM Inc.
- 7 **HATE DEPT.**
Omnipresent
Neurotic
- 8 **GLOBAL COMMUNICATION**
Remotion
Dedicated-Hitle!
- 9 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
If Ya Can't Stand Da Beatx,
Git Outta Da Kitchen
Ninja Tune-Shadow
- 10 **FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY**
Hard Wired
Metropolis
- 11 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Offbeat: A Red Hot Sound Trip
Red Hot/Wax Trax!-TVT
- 12 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Trip Hop Acid Phunk Part 2
Adrenalin-C&S
- 13 **JOEY BELTRAM**
"Instant" (12")
Logic
- 14 **SVEN VÄTH**
Touch Themes Of...
Eye Q
- 15 **DJ FOOD**
"A Recipe For Disaster"
Ninja Tune-Shadow
- 16 **UNDER THE NOISE**
Of Generation And Corruption
COP
- 17 **HARDFLOOR**
Da Damn Phreak Noize Phunk? (EP)
Harthouse-Eye Q
- 18 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Psychotrance 3
Moonshine
- 19 **INDEX**
Sky Laced Silver
COP
- 20 **DIE KRUPPS**
Odyssey Of The Mind III
Cleopatra
- 21 **TERIL**
Egoism
21st Circuitry
- 22 **CHEMICAL BROTHERS**
Loops Of Fury (EP)
Astralwerks-Caroline
- 23 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Planet Dub
Planet Dog/Ultimate-Mammoth
- 24 **X-PRESS 2**
"The Sound" (12")
Logic
- 25 **SKYLAB**
"These Are The Blues" (12")
Astralwerks-Caroline

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



BAHAMADIA

Kollage

(EMI)

In recent years, finding strong, female voices in hip-hop has been like trying to find self-respect and dignity on daytime trash-talk shows. But with the emergence of rappers like the Fugees' Lauryn Hill and Philadelphia native Bahamadia, the tides are clearly changing. Bahamadia (formerly a DJ) honed her skills on Guru's *Jazzmatazz II* episode, and also appeared on his *Ill Kid* compilation, among other recordings. Now she has the whole hip-hop nation bobbing to her debut album, *Kollage* (and ass-kickin' afro), and feeling the effects of her earthy, monotone flow. With the simple and supremely funky production of DJ Premier, N.O. Joe and the Beatminerz, Bahamadia raps with a conversational style, relying on poetic, instinctive rhymes, as on the bass-jacked "Word Play" and "Spontaneity." "I Confess" plays off Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On" for one of the album's poppiest moments, while "Uknowhowedo" is a shapely tribute to Philly's hip-hop roots. Speaking of roots, fellow Philly natives the Roots add a dose of live funk on "Da Jawn," while Bahamadia dukes it out with MCs Black Thought and Malik. Packed with easily digestible rhymes and a peerless production, *Kollage* unquestionably chalks one up for the ladies.

BONUS BEATS



There once was a time when the **GETO BOYS** were the scariest group in rap. Their earlier albums featured more blood and guts than a low-budget slasher movie, but as the Houston-based crew matured, their music became more cerebral and analytical while remaining every bit as ferocious. The trio returns with *The Resurrection* (Rap-A-Lot/Nōō Trybe-Virgin), which touches on its famed hardcore escapades and also reaches for new fans by offering R&B-rooted, smooth-flowing tracks such as "The World Is A Ghetto." Like 2Pac, the Geto Boys use the despondency of the ghetto to haunt, provoke and challenge its people. Each member has his own distinct style, and together they create multi-dimensional lyrics, especially on songs like "Blind Leading The Blind" and "Timetaker," whose bleak and unsympathetic visions are not without a message... In just the first track of **CHINO XL's** debut *Here To Save You All* (American) you'll hear lines like "Packin' more handguns than Harry Connick" and "Avoid battling me like I'm Eazy-E's blood samples." With a delivery similar to EMPD's Parrish Smith, Chino XL is a total blast to listen to. Delivering a tireless parade of punchlines and sharp-witted similes, *Here To Save You All* is as much fun to listen to as, say, *Paul's Boutique*, though it lacks that record's deft production smarts... The only person we've heard get a longer introduction than the one **NONCHALANT** gets on her eponymous debut (MCA) may be James Brown. The build-up is followed by a bit of a let-down, as this Washington, D.C.-based MC offers only slightly more than disposable hard-line rhymes over her album's 10 tracks. The cut to savor, however, is the single "5 O'Clock," which inconspicuously meshes R&B vocal harmonies with a tight two-note bass line and a catchy chorus, while also revealing her similarities (though she's slightly harder) to Salt of Salt-N-Pepa... The Bay Area's **RAPPIN' 4-TAY** caught lightning in a bottle when he recorded an infectious take-off on the Spinners' "I'll Be Around" in 1995, making some believe Coolio had some competition. Well, Coolio can breathe a sigh of relief: 4-Tay's new album, *Off Parole* (Rag Top/Chrysalis-EMI), doesn't have any tracks nearly as hooky as "I'll Be Around," though it does feature enough guests to start a basketball team... The more I hear the name **ICE-T** and "new album," the more I'm reminded that his strong reputation and greatness as a mouthpiece has overshadowed the quality of his records, especially *Home Invasion*. Like Chuck D, he's been getting by for years on rep alone, while his records have been pretty weak. He needs to just take the gold Rolex and pursue other paths, like his budding acting career. Word out.

- 1 FUGEES (REFUGEE CAMP)
The Score
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 2 BUSTA RHYMES
The Coming
Elektra-EEG
- 3 GENIUS/GZA
Liquid Swords
Geffen
- 4 SOUNDTRACK
Don't Be A Menace...
Island
- 5 2PAC
All Eyez On Me
Death Row-Interscope
- 6 JAY-Z
"Dead Presidents" (12")
Roc-A-Fella-Priority
- 7 GHOSTFACE KILLER
"Motherless Child" (12")
Flavor Unit/EastWest-EEG
- 8 BAHAMADIA
Kollage
Chrysalis-EMI
- 9 PHARCYDE
Labcabin/california
Delicious Vinyl-Capitol
- 10 REDMAN
"Funkorama" (12")
Interscope
- 11 NONCHALANT
"5 O'Clock" (12")
MCA
- 12 GOODIE MOB
Soul Food
LaFace-Arista
- 13 THA DOGG POUND
Dogg Food
Death Row-Interscope
- 14 SPEECH
Speech
Chrysalis-ERG
- 15 LL COOL J
Mr. Smith
Def Jam/RAL-Island
- 16 CYPRESS HILL
III (Temples Of Boom)
Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 17 MIC GERONIMO
The Natural
Blunt-TVT
- 18 FAT JOE
Jealous One's Envy
Violator-Relativity
- 19 ROYAL FLUSH
"Movin' On Ya Weak Production" (12")
Blunt-TVT
- 20 MAD LION
Real Ting
Weeded-Nervous
- 21 KOOL KEITH
"Wanna Be A Star" (12")
Funky Ass
- 22 BROADWAY
"Must Stay Paid" (12")
Wreck-Nervous
- 23 D'ANGELO
Brown Sugar
EMI
- 24 CELLA DWELLAS
Realms N Reality
Loud-RCA
- 25 AZ
Doe Or Die
EMI

mixed media

compiled by Franklin Bruno



FLICKS

I SHOT ANDY WARHOL

(Samuel Goldwyn)

The title of *I Shot Andy Warhol* refers to Valerie Solanas, a Factory hanger-on and unsavory street feminist (she "founded" SCUM, the Society for Cutting Up Men, and wrote its manifesto, although it's sometimes hard to tell if she had a prescient sense of '90s irony in the '60s), who did just that in 1968. Lili Taylor's Solanas shows up in just about every scene, but first-time screenwriter-director Mary Harron unsurprisingly puts her in the picturesque context of the freakshow that revolved around Warhol. As Warhol himself, Jared Harris is a delight, so pale and spacey he's hardly there. Scenes with him are studded with long, dazed silences and lots of "uh"s—unless he's schmoozing with jetsetters or monied folk. Taylor plays Solanas as raging but sympathetic. In the inevitable Factory party scene, she wanders the periphery like an ugly duckling at the prom, and when Warhol finally casts her in one of his movies, you can see she's suppressing a smile in every scene—she's finally getting some attention. When her simmering fury explodes, it's so intense that Taylor literally looks like it's lifting her five feet off the ground. The soundtrack is predictably '90s Indie Film 101 (save for Blue Cheer's lead-in to Solanas's encounter with the revolutionary Motherfuckers), right down to the thoroughly redundant Bettie Serveert Dylan cover that's played over the credits, but keep an eye out for a cameo by Yo La Tengo and Antietam's Tara Key as the Factory party band (read: VU). And Stephen Dorff makes a pretty sweet-looking drag queen as Candy Darling, though his (and Valerie's) long monologues wear thin. Points deducted for excessive montages; but many points added for Solanas's surprisingly plaintive question: "Why should we care if there's another generation?" —Jon Fine

BOOKS

OEHLEN/WILLIAMS '95

(Wexler Center For The Arts)

I'll admit straight off that I might never have heard of either of these artists if not for the Red Krayola: German painter Albert Oehlen is an occasional member, and Los Angeles-based photo-conceptualist Christopher Williams took the incendiary cover shots of his sister Rachel (yes, the supermodel) on the band's last EP. This book documents a dual retrospective the two mounted at Columbus, Ohio's hypermodern Wexler Center. Oehlen's work uses the gestural "language" of abstraction (often computer-assisted) to explore that language's waning significance. Williams plays organizational games with photo-archives, assigning, for instance, glass botanical models arbitrarily to nations and photographing only the models corresponding to countries in which political prisoners have disappeared. Both artists' work is handsomely reproduced, especially Williams' re-photographings of Japanese fashion shoots, but the catalog essays are, for once, as worthwhile as the art. Thomas Crow connects Williams to the late Bas Jan Ader and Christopher D'Arcangelo, two artists whose work was so conceptual that it has all but left no trace, and Diedrich Diederichsen somehow manages to connect Oehlen, a Spanish mosque, John Ford, and the Melvins (!) in an exploration of "carnavalesque capitalism." Intellectually questing, but free of Francophile cant, this is an unusually well-thought-out catalog. (FJB)



LOCAL CODE

by Michael Sorkin (Princeton Architectural Press)

LOCAL CODE

The Constitution of a City at 42° N Latitude

Michael Sorkin

PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS

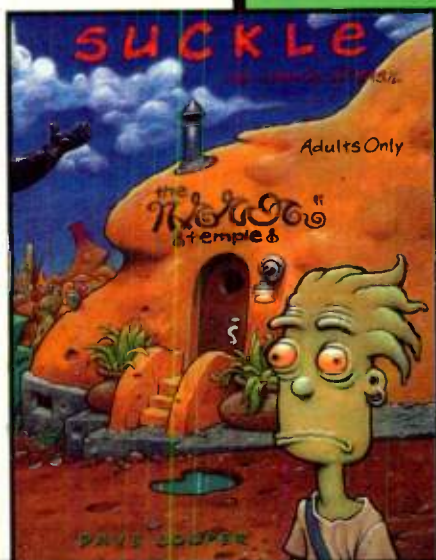
Local Code, subtitled "The Constitution Of A City At 42° N Latitude," is just what it purports to be: a set of instructions, free of illustrations, for the building of a hypothetical city. After a brief "Bill Of Rights" (which includes "the right to architecture"), the author/planner outlines his vision of urban possibility in one-sentence paragraphs, moving from the general ("Construction is the condition of non-homeostatic transformation of an area of the city") to plans for specific Nabes (neighborhoods) like "The Labyrinth" and "The Coil." The effect is at once utopian, ironically formal, and cryptic ("Clouds tend to belts"), like a cross between Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A heck of a lot more entertaining than a tome on contemporary architectural theory, *Local Code* makes many of the same points, revealing how a set of seemingly abstract "rules" ("A Gate shall be understood as a delineable and singular change in the character or circumstances of a Net that is particular to the site of its occurrence") might affect the social order of those who live within them. Simultaneously, Sorkin makes us wonder how strictures and structures underpin our own urban and suburban ways of occupying space. (FJB)

COMICS

SUCKLE: THE STATUS OF BASIL

by Dave Cooper (Fantagraphics)

Writer/artist Dave Cooper may be the last new member of the '60s generation of underground comix artists who, in kindred spirit R. Crumb's words, tore the lid off the id. *Suckle*, a 130-page one-shot, is an artistic breakthrough for him: an exquisitely rendered working-out of some pretty severe psychosexual weirdness. Cooper's hero, the innocent, cartoony Basil, wanders through a world of ancient-looking adobe buildings, futuristic-looking machinery and abundant weird, blatantly sexual symbols. The book rarely sustains the same tone for more than three pages in a row, and flies off at every opportunity into whatever tangent will let Cooper draw something peculiar. Sometimes the narrative gives way to straight-up pornographic sequences; sometimes it turns into grotesque, hallucinatory bits that call to mind Basil Wolverton's weirdest moments, or old psychedelic concert posters. Large chunks of *Suckle* probably make no sense to anybody but Cooper himself, and a few sequences are downright annoying, but as long as you don't try to understand it, you should be fine—it's meant to be a visual tour de force, not a straightforward story. —Douglas Wolk



Clove Aficionado #3



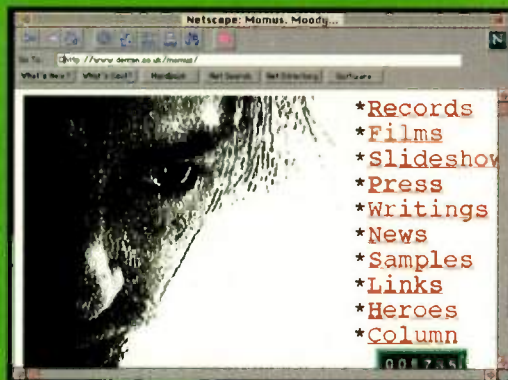
The Truth About Cloves and Your Health
Women and Records
Ask Mr. Tokit
Scene Court™
Label Profile: Baby Huey
Rock Ref Groff™
Reviews
Your Letters

CLOVE AFICIONADO #3

No, it doesn't have much to do with cloves, and no, there weren't two previous issues. This is spot-on satire, edited by the fictional Gene Troutman, of the whole 'zine scene, both in form ("continuing" features like a clove-cigarette Q&A column) and content (skewerings of just about every other 'zine on the planet; the "rock ref" who goes to shows in sports officiator's stripes and hands out yellow and red cards to performers). The main targets of the record reviews (all fake) are collector-style obscurantism, from Japanese noise worship (a Carlos Santana/Keiji Haino live record) to the relentless reclamation of ever-more-marginal foreign psychedelia (Y Colas *South American Heavy Sounds* 69-73). But the real prize is a cutting "Are You A Collector Scum?" quiz. Sample item: "Someone has offered you a mint copy of the Tarkus LP for \$1000, you: A) '\$1000! That's outrageous!' B) Get a job. C) Tell mom the car broke down. D) Bend a corner, offer \$500, screw him if he won't take it." *Clove Aficionado* is the best kind of satire, in that it cuts both ways: No one could get the details this right if they weren't immersed in precisely the activities being spoofed. New, thicker issue rumored soon. (No price, but try 2 bucks or a Traffic Sound bootleg to P.O. Box 209, Ripton, VT 05766-0209.) (FJB)

'ZINES

multi-media



NET STUFF

Momus

(<http://www.demon.co.uk/~momus/>)

For those who don't know (and why would you? not one of his ten records has been released in the U.S.), Momus is a dandyish, hyperliterate Scottish songwriter with a very young Bangladeshi wife, a Japanese cult following, a few English supporters (including Pulp's Jarvis Cocker), and now a rather elaborate World Wide Web site. For someone whose songs project a world-weary, polymorphously perverse persona, the site is surprisingly friendly and chatty, and sometimes even silly (as in the slideshow of intentionally mundane "holiday snaps"). There's a dauntingly huge lyric file, and illustrated essays on "How To Write A Momus Song" and Japanese niche marketing. And if, by this point, you want to hear what all this sounds like, there's a selection of easily downloadable (e.g. only 46K) audio samples, of which Momus, wry as ever, admits, "They sound like music played in a fishbowl being held upside down in a bucket. But so does Tricky, so that can't be bad." (FJB)

CD-ROM

THE LITTLE MAGAZINE #21

The Little Magazine, an annual literary journal, has produced its most recent issue as a CD-ROM with electronic or adapted-to-digital work by over 70 writers and artists, including Hakim Bey, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the Fugs' Tuli Kupferberg, as well as a whole lot of graduate students from SUNY-Albany (where the magazine is produced). Though few of these pieces are entirely successful as art, they're fascinating as a document of art adapting to a new medium. Most of them are simply multi-media in the strictest sense: text augmented by music, images or spoken words (often just the text of a piece itself read aloud), which is a nice addition but doesn't entirely compensate for the hassle of having to navigate laboriously to find what you're looking for. (And some really do belong on paper, like Situ@tion Critic@!'s detourned comic strips—they gain nothing and lose a lot in this form.) A few seem native to the digital world in conception. There's a story with dozens of sections hyperlinked to each other in a non-linear way, which would be really neat if it were a good story; there's a poem with words that, at the click of a mouse, become covered by other words; there's a striking film/sound/text piece by Linda Smukler. Curiously, almost all of these pieces are in the form of "pages"—an idea that, however alien new technology is to it, is very hard to get away from.

—Douglas Walk

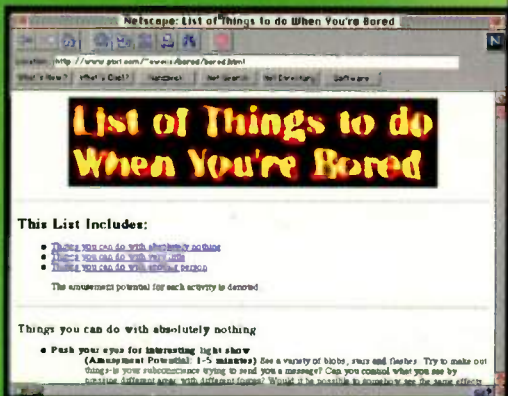


NET STUFF

List Of Things To Do When You're Bored Page

(<http://www.pixl.com/~owens/bored/bored.html>)

Exactly what it sounds like, this modest list is the brainchild of one Dylan Owens, an aggressively normal-seeming teen living in Hawaii. The list is divided into three sections: Things You Can Do With Absolutely Nothing ("Push your eyes for interesting light show"), Things You Can Do With Very Little ("Watch TV, repeat everything in Italian accent"), and Things You Can Do With Another Person ("Have a 'who is less competitive' competition"). Each item also tells you how long you can expect the activity to stave off the emptiness. Some ("Get yourself dizzy") have the added bonus of making boredom seem fairly attractive. It may not be intentional, but this also functions as deadpan Web-critique: With megabytes of cultural flahooey at our disposal, we're still bored. As a bonus, the page links back to Dylan's homepage, which also contains the story of how he figured out how to sightread UPC codes, with detailed instructions. Now, that's bored! (FJB)



TOP 75

ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY



LUSH

ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	LABEL
1 LUSH	Lovelife	4AD Reprise
2 AFGHAN WHIGS	Black Love	Elektra-EEG
3 GRIFTERS	Ain't My Lookout	Sub Pop
4 BAD RELIGION	The Gray Race	Atlantic
5 POSSUM DIXON	Star Maps	Interscope
6 NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS	Murder Ballads	Reprise
7 GIRLS AGAINST BOYS	House Of GVSB	Touch And Go
8 SPINANES	Strand	Sub Pop
9 CIBO MATTO	Viva! La Woman	Warner Bros.
10 MAN OR ASTRO-MAN?	Deluxe Men In Space (EP)	Touch And Go
11 GRAVITY KILLS	Gravity Kills	TVT
12 VELOCITY GIRL	Gilded Stars And Zealous Hearts	Sub Pop
13 SKINNY PUPPY	The Process	American
14 STEREO LAB	Emperor Tomato Ketchup	Elektra-EEG
15 ARCHERS OF LOAF	The Speed Of Cattle	Alias
16 FRANK BLACK	The Cult Of Ray	American
17 TORI AMOS	Boys For Pele	Atlantic
18 CARDIGANS	Life	Minty Fresh
19 SILKWORM	Firewater	Matador
20 LOU REED	Set The Twilight Reeling	Warner Bros.
21 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Offbeat: A Red Hot Sound Trip	Red Hot/Wax Trax!-TVT
22 MINISTRY	Filth Pig	Warner Bros.
23 LOVE AND ROCKETS	Sweet F.A.	Beggars Banquet/American-Reprise
24 WEDDING PRESENT	MiniPlus (EP)	Cooking Vinyl America
25 BUTTERGLORY	Are You Building A Temple In Heaven?	Merge
26 ROLLERSKATE SKINNY	Horsedrawn Wishes	Warner Bros.
27 MAGNAPOP	Fire All Your Guns At Once (EP)	Play It Again Sam-Priority
28 NOFX	Heavy Petting Zoo	Epitaph
29 VERSUS	Deep Rod (EP)	TeenBeat
30 RUBY	Salt Peter	Creation-WORK
31 CAST	All Change	Polydor-A&M
32 VARNALINE	Man Of Sin	Zero Hour
33 SALT	Auscultate	Island
34 STEVE EARLE	I Feel Alright	Warner Bros.
35 MIKE JOHNSON	Year O' Mondays	TAG
36 COWBOY JUNKIES	Lay It Down	Geffen
37 SUPERDRAG	Regretfully Yours	Elektra-EEG
38 FU MANCHU	In Search Of...	Mammoth
39 ZAMBONIS	100% Hockey... And Other Stuff	Dot Dot Dash
40 PULP	Different Class	Island
41 REFRESHMENTS	Fizzy Fuzzy Big & Buzzy	Mercury
42 MERMEN	Songs Of The Cows	Mesa/Bluemoon
43 ERIC'S TRIP	Purple Blue	Sub Pop
44 IGGY POP	Naughty Little Doggie	Virgin
45 MR. T EXPERIENCE	Love Is Dead	Lookout!
46 MINERAL	The Power Of Failing	Crank!
47 LIFTER	Melinda (Everything Was Beautiful And Nothing Hurt)	Interscope
48 TRANS AM	Trans Am	Thrill Jockey
49 JUNED	Every Night For You	Up
50 LOTION	Nobody's Cool	spinART/Giant-WB
51 COMBUSTIBLE EDISON	Schizophonic	Sub Pop
52 KILLING JOKE	Democracy	Big Life-Zoo
53 7 YEAR BITCH	Gato Negro	Atlantic
54 RIDE	Tarantula	Sire-EEG
55 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Home Alive: The Art Of Self Defense	Epic
56 SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER	Sackcloth 'N' Ashes	A&M
57 AIMEE MANN	I'm With Stupid	DGC
58 BOUNCING SOULS	Maniacal Laughter	BYO
59 PRINCESS SUPERSTAR	Strictly Platinum	5th Beetle (Canada)
60 SUBDUDES	Primitive Streak	High Street-Windham Hill
61 SEPULTURA	Roots	Roadrunner
62 LUNA	Luna (EP)	No. 6
63 TORTOISE	Millions Now Living Will Never Die	Thrill Jockey
64 MYSTERIES OF LIFE	Keep A Secret	Citizen X-RCA
65 MEICES	Dirty Bird	London
66 TRACY BONHAM	The Burdens Of Being Upright	Island
67 BALLOON GUY	The West Coast Shakes	Generator-WB
68 DRILL	Drill	DV8-A&M
69 TAJ MAHAL	Phantom Blues	Private Music
70 FUZZY	Electric Juices	TAG
71 UNTITLED	Untitled	Drag City
72 TRIPMASTER MONKEY	Practice Changes	Sire-EEG
73 IDAHO	Three Sheets To The Wind	Caroline
74 PEECHEES	Do The Math	Kill Rock Stars
75 GAS HUFFER	The Inhuman Ordeal Of Special Agent Gas Huffer	Epitaph

Chart data culled 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 MAY-JUNE 1996

MAY 21

BABE THE BLUE OX People (RCA)
TALLULAH GOSH Backwash (K)
DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM Boot Party (K)
SUNBRAIN Liquid (Grass)
GODPLOW Soft Formal Static (Grass)
N.W.A. Greatest Hits (Priority)
MY LITTLE FUNHOUSE Forward Came (Geffen)
KARL HENDRICKS TRIO For A While It Was Funny (Merge)
SPAHN RANCH In Parts Assembled Solely (Cleopatra)
HIGHER INTELLIGENCE AGENCY Freefloater (Waveform)
CUL DE SAC China Gate (Thirsty Ear)
COME Near Life Experience (Matador)
JOHNNY BRAVO Then Again, Maybe I Won't (Arista)
WALLFLOWERS Bringing Down The Horse (Interscope)
LOVE NUT Bastards Of Melody (Interscope)
STEVE WYNN Melting In The Dark (Zero Hour)
LYDIA LUNCH Stinkfest + The Crumb (reissue) (Atavistic)
SWANS Real Love (Atavistic)
MELT-BANANA Scratch Or Stitch (Skin Graft)
WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY Hades Float (Trance Syndicate)

MAY 28

GRANT LEE BUFFALO Copperopolis (Reprise)
ORANGE 9MM (Atlantic)
SOLUTION A.D. Happily Ever After (TAG)
FRENTE! (Mammoth-Atlantic)
YUM YUM Dan Loves Patti (TAG)
GOOD RIDDANCE A Comprehensive Guide To Moderne Rebellion
 (Fat Wreck Chords)
FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY State Of Mind (Cleopatra)
FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON Papua New Guinea (Hypnotic-Cleopatra)
SLAYER Undisputed Attitude (American)
LOS MARAUDERS Every Song We Fuckin' Know (TeenBeat)

JUNE 4

ICE-T VI-Return Of The Real (Priority)
JALE So Wound (Sub Pop)
WILD COLONIALS (DGC)
CARCASS Swansong (Earache)
LIQUOR GIANTS Liquor Giants (Matador)
YO LA TENGO (Matador)
PATTI SMITH (Arista)
BLUES TRAVELER Blues Traveler Live (A&M)
ETTA JAMES Deep In The Night (Bullseye Blues)
SISTER CAROL Lyrically Potent (Heartbeat)

JUNE 11

CHARLIE WATTS (Virgin)
ALTAN Blackwater (Virgin)
JAWBOX (TAG)
MELVINS (Atlantic)
BLACKEYED SUSAN Mouth To Mouth (American)
BARKMARKET L. Ron (American)
JACK Pioneer Soundtracks (Too Pure-American)
ABDEL ALI SLIMANI Mraya (RealWorld-Caroline)

JUNE 18

PERE UBU Datapanik In The Year Zero (DGC)
LARGE PROFESSOR The LP (Geffen)
DON BYRON Live At The Knitting Factory (Knitting Factory Works)
ALAN VEGA Dujang Prang (2.13.61-Thirsty Ear)
HENRY ROLLINS Everything (2.13.61-Thirsty Ear)
CAT POWER (Matador)
LEE HARVEY OSWALD BAND Blastronaut (Touch And Go)
JUNE OF 44 Tropics And Meridians (Quarterstick)
GLENN BRANCA Symphony #5 (Atavistic)
BEDHEAD Bedheaded (Trance Syndicate)
CHERUBS Short For Popular (Trance Syndicate)

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

DIRECTORY

A LISTING OF LABELS WHOSE ARTISTS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

550/Columbia/Epic/WORK 550 Madison Ave. New York, NY 10022	Kill Rock Stars 120 NE State #418 Olympia, WA 98501
A&M 1416 N. La Brea Ave. Hollywood, CA 90028	Matador 676 Broadway, 4th Fl. New York, NY 10012
Ajax P.O. Box 805293 Chicago, IL 60680	MCA 70 Universal City Plaza Universal City, CA 91608
American/Infinite Zero 3500 W. Olive Ave. #1550 Burbank, CA 91505	Merge P.O. Box 1235 Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Arista 6 W. 57th St. New York, NY 55408	Mood Food 1381 Kildaire Farms Rd. Ste. 246 Cary, NC 27511
Atlantic 75 Rockefeller Plaza New York, NY 10019	Napalm America P.O. Box 480141 Denver, CO 80248
Black Top P.O. Box 56691 New Orleans, LA 70156	No Depression P.O. Box 2203 Portland, OR 97208
Blue Note 810 Seventh Ave., 4th Fl. New York, NY 10019	Oblivion P.O. Box 348 Hadley, MA 01035
Capitol 1750 N. Vine St. Hollywood, CA 90028	Priority 6430 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 900 Hollywood, CA 90028
Caroline 114 W. 26th St., 11th Fl. New York, NY 10001	RCA Bertelsmann Bldg. 1540 Broadway, Times Sq. New York, NY 10036
Crosstalk 1557 Honore Chicago, IL 60622	Rawkus Entertainment 65 Reade #2B New York, NY 10007
C/Z 1407 E. Madison, #41 Seattle, WA 98122	Relapse P.O. Box 251 Millersville, PA 17551
Drag City/Dexter's Cigar P.O. Box 476867 Chicago, IL 60647	Revolution 8900 Wilshire Blvd. Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Dwell P.O. Box 39439 Los Angeles, CA 90039	ROIR 611 Broadway, Ste. 411 New York, NY 10012
EMI 1290 Ave. Of The Americas, 39th Fl. New York, NY 10104	Rykodisc Shetland Park 27 Congress St. Salem, MA 01970
Epitaph 6201 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 111 Hollywood, CA 90028	Southern 3900 N. Claremont Ave., 3rd Fl. Chicago, IL 60618
Geffen/DGC/Almo 9130 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90069	Sub Pop 1932 First Ave. Seattle, WA 98101
Harriet P.O. Box 649 Cambridge, MA 02238	Touch And Go P.O. Box 25520 Chicago, IL 60625
Heartbeat One Camp St. Cambridge, MA 02140	Up P.O. Box 21328 Seattle, WA 98111-3328
Hollywood 500 S. Buena Vista St. Burbank, CA 91521	Vaccination P.O. Box 3995 Long Beach, CA 90803
Homestead 150 W. 28 St., Ste. 501 New York, NY 10001	Virgin 338 N. Foothill Rd. Beverly Hills, CA 90210
Instinct 26 W. 17 St., Ste. 502 New York, NY 10011	Warner Bros./Reprise 3300 Warner Blvd. Burbank, CA 91505
Interscope 10900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1230 Los Angeles, CA 90024	Zoo 8750 Wilshire Blvd., 3rd Fl. Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Island/I.L.S./London/Mango 825 Eighth Ave. New York, NY 10019	
I.R.S. 3250 Hayden Ave. Culver City, CA 90232	

BACK

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Localzine

BY DOUG MARTSCH & KARENA YOUTZ

BOISE, IDAHO

If you were growing up in a small Idaho town, then Boise seemed really cool. If you're a normal person and you visit, then you can tell us what it's really like. It lacks both the sad tiny feeling of a little place and the snazziness of a real city. The local music and art scene is wide open and usually way amazing. Really, though, it's just another place that's too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer, with not enough spring in the middle.

Boise's scene is variously described as "intimate," "rotten" and "on the verge of getting national attention." People have fun here, but it's not that cool, hip fun some scenes have. It's grab-it-while-you-can, you're-the-last-ones-to-leave-the-party fun. The scene hasn't changed much since the '80s—it's just gotten bigger. Instead of three bands, there are at least 30; lots of them play their own songs, and some are compellingly original too. Opportunities abound for bands to become known: Riverfest (a giant weird family festival with parades and stuff), bars, one all-ages place, high school and junior high school dances. There's even a Boise Battle Of The Bands (yes!)—every band that plays gets one person on the guest list and a free critique of their music by local celebrities. Who usually wins our local talent war? Remember, judges, long hair and audience response are helpful indicators of talent. Well, you knew that.

It's actually pretty incredible here. On non-school nights, we still have "the Cruise," where kids drive their cars really slowly all around downtown. Some have speakers as big as coffins so their car stereos can deafen old people and drown out the sound of those pesky police sirens. Some cruisers are just plain folk, but there's also neo-Nazis, homophobes and anti-everyone



types just like some of the grown-ups here in Idaho. We actually had to vote down an anti-human rights initiative. Does that even seem possible? Oh yes. Idaho is full of evil.

But Boise is mostly a haven for goodness. We have all sorts of people who remain exquisitely human and seem to care about each other. Boiseans extend themselves for friends and strangers alike. It surprises people who aren't accustomed to niceness when they come here. Not that we're sweet-as-pie sticky nice, but if one of us finds a wallet, it'll be returned with extra money.

Don't come here looking for lots of intellectual stimulation, though. While there's an institute of higher learning in Boise, we call it a University, not a college. The distinction lies in the sorry fact that sports are its most prominent and political contribution to our community. It sucks for us. When most people get Bronco fever, they just buy tons of blue and orange clothes and have tailgate parties. For some reason, it affects us differently. We get headaches, stuffy noses and rattling coughs.

Actually, we're sickly types anyway and don't get out much. So the life of any Boise cruiser, butt-rocker, athlete, skin-head, or indie rocker would be more interesting than ours.

Hear:

Neurolux (111 N. 11th) 21 and up. Good local and out-of-town bands play here. Sunday night is cold beer night.

Crazy Horse (16th & Main) Idaho's punk Mecca; the Dead Kennedys played here in 1986. Nowadays, all kinds of crazy bands play for all ages of crazy kids.



PHOTOS BY KARENA YOUTZ

Buy:

Record Exchange (1105 W. Idaho); CD Merchant (580 Main St.)

These places had a Greenland/Iceland thing going for awhile, but that's all straightened out now. The Exchange is bigger and more established, with a wider selection. CD Merchant has collector's items like old singles and imports. Both buy bad used music and sell local releases. Alternatively, drive west half an hour to **Nampa's Yesteryear Shoppe** and get your hands dusty digging through boxes and boxes of records from the Wax Age to New Wave.

Musician's Pro Shop (1614 W. Jefferson) Strings, picks and tambo sticks. If you want it, they probably have it, and they'll special order what's not in the store. Both musicians and toddlers will have fun here.

Eat:

Atomic Trio (5th & Main) The best Mexican food, but it's only open for lunch. They don't fry or use lard, and some stuff is vegan. Long cafeteria-style lines lead to great service and truly delicious meals.

Bangkok House (624 W. Idaho) The first and best Thai restaurant in town, they'll substitute tofu in almost any dish and make it as spicy or wimpy as you wish.

Boise Consumer Co-Op (1674 Hill Rd.) We buy groceries and snacks here. Lots of organic, vegetarian, and ethnic food supplies help create edible-at-home meals. We buy all of our Dulse, Pomegranate Molasses, and vegan chocolate-covered raisins here.

Globus (1520 N. 13th) The food here costs twice as much as anything else worth eating. It may be worth it, because the experimental cross-cultural victuals make taste buds feel like they're on an exotic vacation.

Govinda's (500 W. Main) Our all-around favorite restaurant has lacto-veggie, Indian, all-you-can-eat, dedicated to the Godhead, family-made FOOD. Always good, but beware: overindulge and witness Krishna's Karma—Govindagestion.

Guido's (235 N. 5th) They have events where only transplants with those crazy R-dropping accents are allowed. The menu runs to slices, white pizza, and inventive specials. Call in advance if you want to bring your own soy cheese from the Co-op.

Idaho Spud Bars Available in grocery stores and gas station mini marts, these potato-shaped, coconut-covered marshmallowy candy bars are the one essential Boise experience.

Do:

Inkvision (1708 W. Main) This gallery shows local underground and outsider art. There's a tattoo shop in back where Eric creates tattoos beautiful enough to make us almost maybe someday want to risk the needle.

Rhodes Park (15th & Front) Skaters skate here and do other skate stuff.



(Obviously, we don't skate.) We think it's totally cool that our city helped the skate crowd build this cement park and fill it with curbs, ramps and half-pipes. If you break a skate thing, you can buy gear around the corner at Boise Board Company (BBC).

Parks, Museums and the Library are regular fun for us. We also walk around town or by the river. Sometimes there's a parade.

Drugs:

Hannifin's Cigar (1024 W. Main) Real old-timers sell cigarettes and gum. Their wood stove will warm you on chilly days.

Moxie Java (570 W. Main) Coffee, coffee drinks, fancy coffee, etc.

Flying M Espresso & Fine Crafts (500 W. Idaho) As above, but with food. The M also has arts and crafts for sale as well as exhibits like Art For AIDS, where local artists create Valentines to be auctioned and raise money for the Idaho AIDS Foundation.

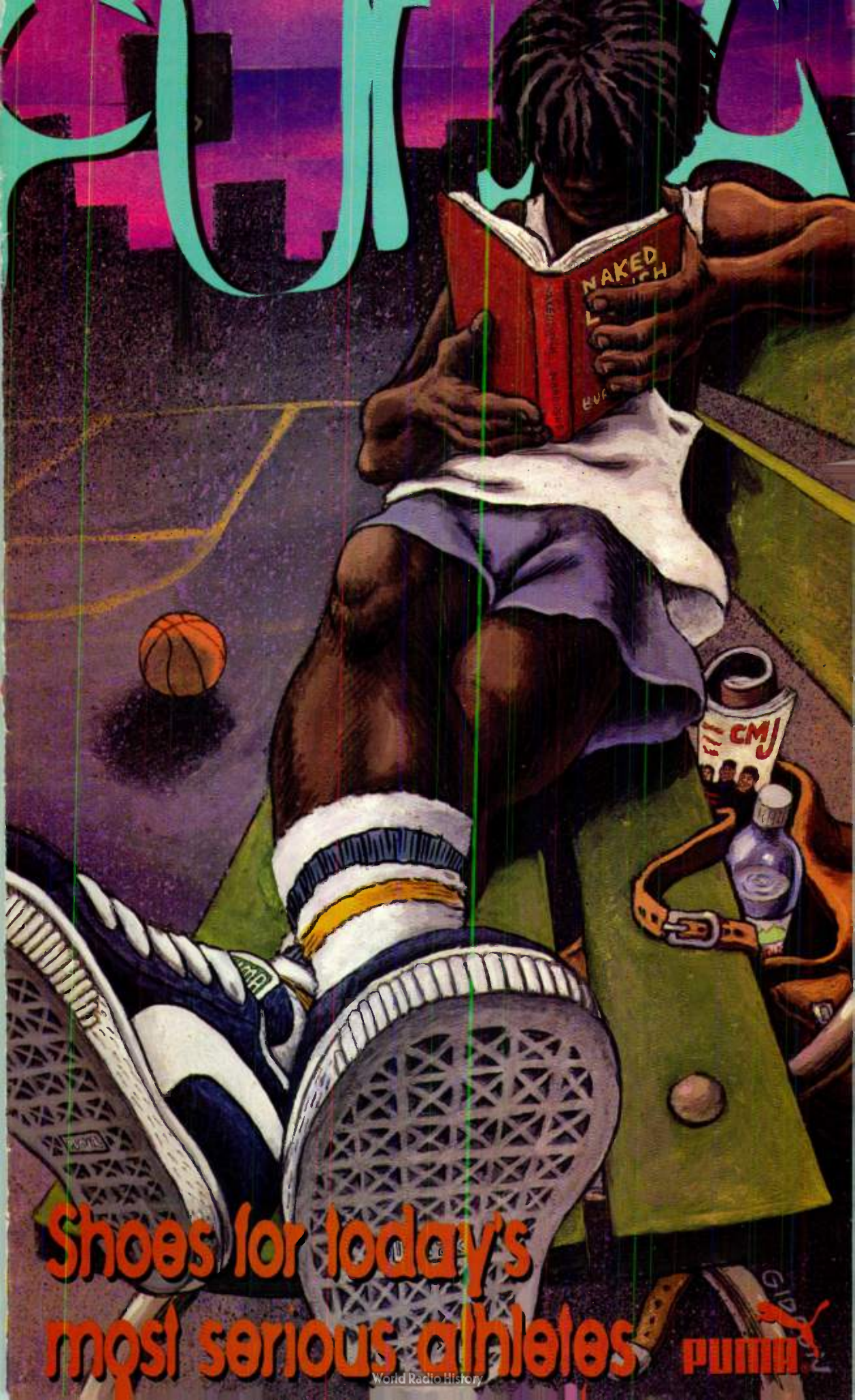
Lost River Ice Cream Co. (821 W. Idaho) Is sugar a drug? Decide whether or not this ice cream is addictive.

Duds:

Retrospect (113 N. 11th) Groovy new clothes, local designers, and resale Doc Marten's make this retailer a little too hip for our "Have you seen my other pair of pants?" wardrobes. The staff has lots of weird and wonderful ideas for those brave enough to look completely cool.

Idaho Youth Ranch (1417 W. Main) I.Y.R. has anything you need, plus it's well-organized. We actually shop here and at other downtown thrift shops whose names we hesitate to reveal because they are still cheap and full of finds. Most of them are just church basements, but you could also try the local YWCA.

Doug Martsch sings and plays guitar in Built To Spill and the Halo Benders.



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