

QUICK FIX: DANCE SENSATION BT, THE PALADINS, JAMES BROWN

# CMJ

NEW MUSIC

**SPACE GHOST**  
VS. THE PRESIDENTS OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**THE RETURN OF THE  
DESCENDENTS**

BEST NEW MUSIC: BUILT TO SPILL / SWANS  
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World Radio History

# September 67

Shannon Worrell & Kristin Asbury

## Lucky Shoe

produced by John Morand & David Lowery

featuring the track "Busy Building"

**O U T N O W**



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# LETTERS

## No fair having me pegged

My only complaint about the content of *CMJ* is that you print far too many idiotic diatribes about how bad the magazine is and then you deign to respond to them. Who cares? Accept that you will not be liked by all, but that the silent majority of your readers love you even if they find faults with your content on occasion. Be confident, young magazine!

Also, your Localzine section is great. Someday when I finally make the big roadtrip across 47 of the contiguous states of my mother country, I will refer to them for guidance as much as my atlas. If I'm lucky, you'll update them and make a book, so I can meet up with other *CMJ* travelers and drive all the locals out of their favorite bars and cafes.

Thanks for all the mental and aural stimulation. Now I need a nap.

Aaron  
somewhere in Japan, via email

Oh, let a man have a neurotic need to explain himself... Okay, so he's right. Aaron gets the gold star for this issue. And hence, I've decided to return to my *Letters To The Editor* roots, where as a lad, I learned all about confidence: the advice columns in *GQ* and *Playboy* (C'mon, of course I read the articles in *Playboy*. Would I write about underground rock for a living if I only looked at the pictures?). And henceforth, I'll attempt to answer letters in that confident, man-of-the-world style to which I've always aspired. —ed.

## That special time of the month

I have come to look on the first week of any month as a special time when I may open my mailbox and find, amidst bills and advertisements, an old friend waiting for me to bring me yet another crowning jewel of my vast CD collection (I have over 450 to date). Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for presenting me with another fine jewel, Fiona Apple. I picked it up last week thinking "Well, I liked that 'Shadowboxer' song, and it is cheap..." And now somehow I just can't bring myself to liberate *Tidal* from my CD player.

Tara Aiken  
via email

Luckily for you, this season's emphasis on uniforms and military-style fashions means you can liberate anything—a disc from your CD player, a small island nation occupied by some Cuban construction workers—in style. Of course, unless your office is as relaxed as the shoes-optional *CMJ* compound, you may want to keep that khaki ensemble for casual Friday or the weekend. —ed.

## Liquor-ish

Nothing's more frustrating than an interesting idea unexplored. Take, for example, Sally Norvell's mention of Pernod martinis (Nov. 1996). By her comments, it was clear that she thought them very important. But the interview wandered away. So we are left wondering—just what is a Pernod martini? Vodka or gin? An olive?

Frankie Bausch  
via email

*Pernod is a yellowish, licorice-flavored liqueur that tastes something like absinthe. It's usually mixed with water, which turns it whitish and cloudy. It's very Continental, which always lends an air of sophistication—a plus with the ladies, as we see here. I can't speak for the recipe favored by Sally's bartender, but one assumes that a Pernod martini would be Pernod and vermouth in the usual 5-to-1 ratio. And it's your choice, but I'd go for a twist over an olive. —ed.*

## Rap attention deficit

As I sit here, giving the December CD a first listen, I am delighted to see a little more attention being paid to the rap scene. After all, this is *CMJ New Music Monthly*, not *CMJ Alterna-Rock Flash-In-The-Pan Flavor Of The Month*. Not that I am some hard-core, rock-slangin', gangsta pimp. Actually, I am a white 17-year-old male from suburban Pittsburgh, with very diverse musical tastes and a very frustrated ear. (I don't know how much you know about Pittsburgh radio, but it pretty much sucks.)

Luke Donatelli  
Pittsburgh, PA

*Ear hygiene is often over-looked, and that could be why yours is frustrated. Who wants a tongue full of ear wax? Exactly. Use a warm wash cloth, and a slightly damp cotton swab to clean up the rest. Just don't go poking it too far, or rap music won't be only thing you won't hear. —ed.*

## Wonder twin powers, activate

Who decides what is the "Best New Music" and what is just new music? Do a bunch of your writers jump into a large, mud-wrestling pit and fight it out, or does one giant editor with superhuman power decide for him/herself?

Travis Erwin  
Chatsworth, CA

Travis, none of us are superhuman. Basically, all it takes is concentration and some simple muscle-tightening exercises. If that fails, there are several creams available over the counter. Go get 'em, killer. —ed.

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**Totally offensive, nasty and stupid.  
And that's just the cover.**



**The Album  
Featuring:**

**"Fire Water Burn"**



Produced by Jimmy Pop Ali. Management: Brett Albright. <http://www.geffen.com> ©1994 Capitol Records, Inc.



# QUICK FIX



## bt the home invasion

BT, a.k.a. Brian Transeau, is Britain's newest club-culture export to the States. But while his sound, a strong mix of sweeping melodies and trance/progressive house grooves, typifies the current soundtrack of European nightlife, many swept up in the craze may not realize that this 25-year-old U.K. wunderkind is about as mom, baseball and apple pie as they come.

"America is a funny place," muses Transeau, who lives in the backwoods of Maryland. "We don't have that much history of being a musically pioneering country. Jazz artists had to leave this country and go to Paris to find an audience that appreciated what they were doing. I think a lot of people that make electronic music have had to do a similar thing." After being wooed to the British dance scene by Perfecto Records head Paul Oakenfold, Transeau made a name for himself in the U.K. club circuit and landed a string of underground hits when the British press went ape-shit over his

debut album, *Ima* (Perfecto/Kinetic-Reprise). "It's really strange, because I had been making records for my dog and my friends and my girlfriend," remembers Transeau, "but [Oakenfold] took the sound of the records I had been making for a long time and *made* people understand them." A star across the sea, Transeau returned home to prepare for an American invasion.

Many within the U.S. dance community are also banking on *Ima* to be *the one*: the crossover success that sweeps intelligent, compelling dance music to the forefront of American music. With its funky, beautifully orchestrated melodies and a sure-shot superstar collaboration (Tori Amos adds a breathtaking vocal to "Blue Skies"), BT's wave is slowly lapping against the rock-addled shores of alternative radio. It's a breakthrough that Transeau owes to timing as well as talent. "We're in the midst of a musical revolution," he says. "People in America... are really pissed off by what's happened to the scene. They're looking for an alternative to alternative music and I think that's why people are expanding their listening palate... beyond three power chords and guys with goatees."

But Transeau hopes America will see *Ima* as more than another reason to label underground dance music as "the new grunge." He wants to trigger a creative process in music, and inspire the pioneering aesthetic long overdue in American dance culture. "Look at Miles Davis and how expansive his music was and all the people he collaborated with and all the things he pioneered," he says. "That's the shit I'm talking about. I'm trying to... break some new ground, pioneer some new techniques and new ideas. We have to remember why we're making the music and keep it on a very real level." **M. TYE COMER**

## label profile

### skin graft

Ten years ago, Mark Fischer and a friend started *Skin Graft* as a fanzine about music and comics. Then, in 1991, Fischer started a Chicago-based record label of the same name, which wraps its hard and heavy-sounding releases in lavishly designed packages, often including short comic books. (The vinyl version of Melt-Banana's *Scratch Or Stitch* album came packaged in an illustrated green plastic fold-over sleeve with extra goodies including a temporary tattoo, one of which wound up affixed to a *The Real World* roommate.) The label just held a two-day festival, featuring U.S. Maple, Melt-Banana, the Flying Luttenbachers, Big'n, You Fantastic!, and newcomers Lake Of Dracula and Chupacabra. Recent *Skin Graft* releases include *Shakuhachi Surprise*, a collaboration between Space Streakings and Mount Shasta, and a Dazzling Killmen retrospective. (P.O. Box 257546, Chicago, IL 60625)



## in my room artists' personal picks

### JOEY PETERS Grant Lee Buffalo

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan And  
Michael Brook  
Nightsong

Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
The General In His Labyrinth  
(Book)

Todd Solondz  
Welcome To The Dollhouse  
(Film)

Vic Chesnutt  
West Of Rome

John Coltrane  
A Love Supreme

< QUOTE >

"I partake in fuckin' what I  
would fuckin' consider  
fuckin' ceremonies."

—Deicide singer/bassist  
Glen Benton, on his practice  
of Satanism

< /QUOTE >

## tours we'd like to see

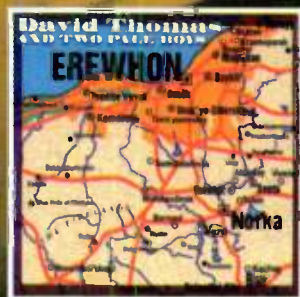
Say No More: Roger, Wilco,  
Oval and Owt.



David Thomas  
AND TWO PALE BOYS  
**EREWHON**

enhanced CD  
available now

"Nowheresville"  
featured on this  
month's CMJ CD  
compilation



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# QUICK FIX



ROBERT MAXWELL

## paladins

turning over the odometer

Singer/guitarist Dave Gonzalez is calling from a pay phone somewhere between Jackson, Mississippi, and New Orleans. Though the Paladins have been together nearly 17 years, the rootsy rock band still travels budget-style, which means in a van and stopping to use pay phones; no laptops or cell phones for this stripped-down trio. I call him back.

"Man, we make so many phone calls it's unbelievable," says Gonzalez. "It's unbelievable how in the red we are." When he talks about the business of this hard-working band—rounded out by bassist and co-founder Thomas Yearsley and drummer Jeff Donovan—and the music biz in general, Gonzalez has a bit of a begrudging tone. But when the conversation turns to the music he loved growing up and still worships—B.B. King, T-Bone Walker, George Jones, Carl Perkins—his voice is full of joy and enthusiasm.

Touring behind the aptly titled live album *Million Mile Club* (4AD), Gonzalez admits that any rock-star aspirations he had in 1980, when the seeds of the band were sown, have been shot down. "I'm kind of a realist," he proclaims. First, the band gigged around its San Diego homebase, but soon branched out. "We were touring Las Vegas, Bakersfield, even before we had a record out. We printed our own 45 ['Honky Tonk All Night'] and sold it at the shows ourselves. We would go into the local record stores, ask them to come to the show. Now people still come to our shows and ask us to sign that first single."

The Paladins have been compared to everybody from Cream to Hendrix to Zeppelin, and that's fine by Gonzalez. "Everybody hears it their own way," he explains. "They find parts of what we do to relate to what they know." Still, in the beginning, the Paladins were aligned with bands of their ilk, such as the Blasters and Los Lobos, but were also pigeonholed—not entirely accurately—as a rockabilly band. But Gonzalez says that the Paladins "liked the soul sound that came from Memphis, but also the West Coast blues that were jazzier. It's so overwhelming to go into used record stores; I'm still being influenced. I pick up records to study them for ideas for songs and production ideas: 'here's what's making this record rock.'"

He's thrilled that *Million Mile Club*—the band's fifth release—captures the trio's raw, honest, sweaty sound, the slap of Yearsley's stand-up bass and the rumble of Gonzalez' hollow-body guitar. The band taped every night of a West Coast tour, arduously culling the best for the record. "We were driving between three and seven hours a day, playing to 500 people, 50 people, so the record was super hard to mix. It's not the world's most hi-fi recording, but it's the real deal," he concludes. "It's a real good testament to what we are, who we are, what we do." KATHERINE TURMAN

## mix tape

by Tony Jost  
"Nothing special, just some great driving music"

### SIDE ONE:

The Germs  
We Must Bleed  
The Sonic Tonic  
Prowler  
De La Soul  
Jenifa (Taught Me)  
Man Or Astroman?  
Mystery Science Theatre 3000  
Basehead  
Not Over You  
Digable Planets  
Dog It  
The Frogs  
I've Got Drugs (Out Of The Mist)  
Jesus Lizard  
Bloody Mary  
Thurston Moore  
Pretty Bad  
Dead Milkmen  
Serrated Edge  
Trans Am  
Ballbados

### SIDE TWO:

Karp  
Rocky Mountain Rescue  
Unsane  
Blew  
Ween  
Flies On My Dick  
Pram  
Chrysalis  
Morphine  
Sharks  
Jesus And Mary Chain  
Head On  
The Amps  
Pacer  
Diesel Boy  
Titty Twister  
Pharcyde  
Otha Fish  
Flipper  
Sex Bomb  
Coil  
Love's Secret Domain



## experimental musical instruments

ding, thunk, whizzzzz

Bart Hopkin's magazine *Experimental Musical Instruments* is one of the coolest academic music journals around. As its title suggests, it focuses on people who invent and build their own instruments, and sometimes it comes with a cassette featuring recordings of some of those instruments. *Gravikords*, *Whirlies* & *Pyrophones* (Ellipsis Arts), put together by Hopkin, is a fascinating, attractive history of experimental instruments: a book has descriptions and pictures of them, and interviews with the living inventors, and an 18-track CD has samples of what they sound like. Some of the instrument-builders and performers are familiar (just-intonation pioneer Harry Partch, Leon Theremin, Clara Rockmore); many aren't, but they're all interesting. Oh, and the title? Robert Grawi's Gravikord is an electric variation on the African *kora*; whirlies are those corrugated plastic tubes that you twirl over your head, arranged into an orchestra by Sarah Hopkin; and pyrophones, built by Michel Moglia, are giant organ-like instruments played with flames. DOUGLAS WOLK





## godfather 101

The Amazing Mr. Please Please Himself, Soul Brother Number One, James Brown, just celebrated the 40th anniversary of his first record with an Afro-high stack of reissues. For a quick overview of his glory years, you can try the 40-songs-from-40-years *JB 40* set (actually the short single versions of 40 songs from the first 20 years, plus '79's "It's Too Funky In Here"). But three other reissues from the past year are more consistent and more fun. *Foundations Of Funk: A Brand New Bag, 1964-1969* is two discs of hits, near-misses and a couple of rarities, full of kinetic energy and relentlessly danceable experimentation. *Funk Power 1970: A*

*Brand New Thang* is the 70-minute Funk Bomb: all the hits the Godfather made with his greatest band, including then-teenage genius bassist Bootsy Collins and the impossibly dextrous drummer Clyde Stubblefield. The double-disc *Make It Funky: The Big Payback 1971-1975* presents stunning full-length takes of a lot of the slower, deeper grooves JB was coming up with in these years (including the first-ever un-mangled version of "Make It Funky"), and salvages some great tracks from his increasingly dodgy albums of the early disco age. Between those three, the pre-'65 compilation *Roots Of A Revolution*, the instrumental collection *Soul Pride* and the self-explanatory and surprisingly great *Messing With The Blues*, there are the makings of a decent 11-disc greatest-hits set. There are also recent reissues of a half-dozen original James Brown albums from the '60s and '70s; all of them are inconsistent at best, but they all have some hidden gems and insane oddities, from the feral screaming of *Say It Loud's* "Tell Me That You Love Me" to *Reality's* ridiculous disco cover of "Don't Fence Me In." Just steer clear of *Hooked On Brown* (Scotti Bros.), a newly recorded 40-minute medley of lots of hits and a few misses, unless you want to indulge in some giggling at how the mighty have fallen.

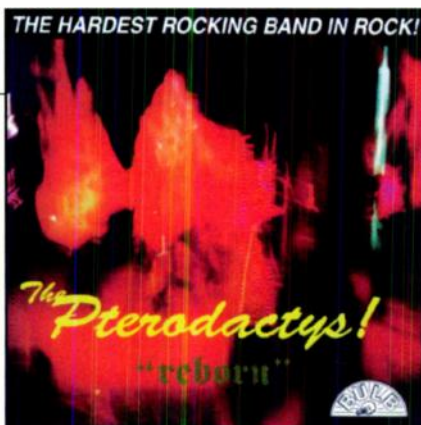
DOUGLAS WOLK

## pointless, yet amusing, promotional trick of the month

To promote Blinker The Star's *A Bourgeois Kitten*, A&M Records has bought naming rights to a star from the Mountain Skies Astronomical Society and called it, of course, Blinker. Blinker the star is located in the Cygnus constellation; it's directly above the band's hometown of Montreal each September 17, the record's release date.

## weird record of the month

The Pterodactyls are the hardest rocking band in rock! It says so right on the cover of their big debut album, *Reborn* (Bulb)! They have song titles like "Me For Hire (Rock For Hire)"! Anyone who's seen them on tour with His Name Is Alive knows that they rock so hard that no piece of furniture in the room is safe! Plus they're the only rock band in rock history to be fronted by an actual pterodactyl (okay, a guy with a white mask made out of a T-shirt and a really horrible orange jacket)! They have lyrics like "Seven for rock/Seven for roll/Put 'em together—14!" They rock so hard that they spelled their own band's name wrong on the cover of their album! Boy, do they rock.



## in my room

artists' personal picks

### BRIAN KEHEW

Moog Cookbook

Graham Central Station  
Earthquake

Maria McKee  
"Scarlover"

South Bay Surfers  
Wooly Bully

Nitro  
Machine Gun Eddie

King Crimson  
Starless And Bible Black

## THE BIZ

music industry  
parlance, explained

### "BDS"

Short for Broadcast Data Systems' Radio Track service, BDS electronically monitors radio stations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, tracking exactly what songs they play. Billboard uses the system as the basis of its radio charts, compiling verifiable "detections" of a song being played on monitored stations, rather than less reliable anecdotal reports from programmers.

## inspirational verse

"A robot walks into a bar/  
orders a drink/lays down a  
bill/The bartender says,  
hey we don't serve  
robots/and the robot says,  
oh but someday you will"  
—Silver Jews,  
"The Frontier Index"

## random five

Songs named after  
guitar effects

R.E.M., "E-Bow The Letter"  
Mission Of Burma, "Trem Two"  
The Lillys, "Tone Bender"  
Depeche Mode, "Big Muff"  
George Harrison, "Wah-Wah"



# best new music

[ the five best releases this month ]



## BUILT TO SPILL / *Perfect From Now On* / Warner Bros.

Given the two years and change since Built To Spill's last "real" album and the dismaying evidence of its between-record projects, one could be forgiven for supposing that the remarkable *There's Nothing Wrong With Love* (and the singles just preceding it) had been a bit of an extended fluke. Fortunately, one would be wrong. Though mastermind Doug Martsch isn't wholly above proving that he can "shred on his axe," he's more interested here in using his considerable guitar prowess to add color and momentum to an unusually ambitious collection of songs. There are only eight, nearly all clocking in past the five-minute mark, but several would be broken down into two or more distinct parts by any band less concerned with extended,

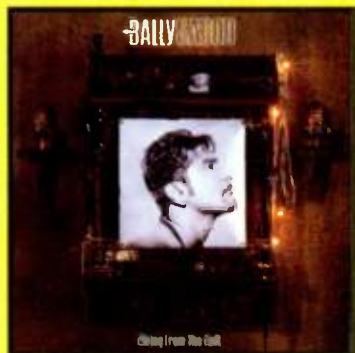
architectural structure. Martsch's usual method is to combine an almost orchestral use of distortion (sometimes supplemented by actual strings) with his trademark whammy-barred single-coil ringing and admirably restrained leads. The swirling combination of timbres is a perfect foil for his

central lyrical theme: the tension between everyday sadness, moral worries, and dreams, either in or of "a world that's not so bad." Though I miss their earlier pop compression, Martsch and company achieve on *Perfect* the rare feat of centering an album's effects on six-string virtuosity without falling into decorativeness or machismo. **FRANKLIN BRUNO**

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 28.

FILE UNDER: Pop with an eye on the heavens.

R.I.Y.L.: Television, Luna, Oasis.



## BALLY SAGOO / *Rising From The East* / TriStar

Indian-born mixmaster Bally Sagoo helped to create the East-meets-West hybrid he calls "bhangra beat," and got American attention two years ago with *Bollywood Flashbash*, a collection of Indian film music made club-friendly by his remixes. Now, dub and other influences drive Sagoo's beats, but the result is no less smooth and sexy. "Tum Bin Jiya" sets the tone, with the highflown vocals of Shabnam Majid wrapped around a flute track that sounds to American ears like something out of a cartoon snakecharming scene. Unlike some of the earlier bhangra that reached the U.S., tracks like this are driven less by tablas than by drum machines, using traditional percussion ornamentally and relying on the vocals to provide distinction, much as they do on Sagoo's film music project. However, complex instrumental arrangements come to the fore on the album's most distinctive track, "Nach Malanga," in which a single tambourine drives an undulating beat underneath multiple, chanting vocals, tabla, mandolin, and

more. *Rising* isn't so much a reinterpretation of Indian music as an infusion of Indian stylings and theatricality into club music. There are a few generic moments here, but even at his most banal, Sagoo is a master of mood, and his mixes are infectiously catchy. **ANDREA MOED**

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 15.

FILE UNDER: Club fusion.

R.I.Y.L.: Material, Massive Attack, *This Is Bhangra*.





## THE NOTWIST / 12 / Zero Hour ©

The crazy person who's just muttering to himself is much scarier than the crazy person who's freaking out. The hysterical guy is a squeaky wheel, the mutterer—like the Notwist—a time bomb. Even though its fuse is pretty long, the Bavarian trio's defining moment is its sudden, explosive shift from restraint to reckless abandon. Because the band is interested in the dynamic opposition between these two modes—control and chaos—its songs usually flip from plaintive vocals and guitar noodling into contorted, riff-heavy rock that approaches metal and, at times (like "Instrumental" and "M"), openly embraces it. All the while, Markus Acher's smooth, lilting voice is a creepy reminder that the real hysterics still lie ahead. The juxtaposition

**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 17.

**FILE UNDER:** Control and chaos, with melody.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Sonic Youth, Hum, Baiter Space.

of calm, gentle vocal melodies with out-and-out rock is extremely chilling, but ultimately very affecting. And where hard rock bands often falter by favoring rhythmic simplicity, the Notwist takes the high road by opting for frequent tempo changes and unconventional drum work. Meanwhile, the fact that there are actually a couple of really good pop songs on 12 ("My Faults" and "Torture Day") just goes to show that sometimes it's the lunatic who has the best ear for a hook. *JENNY ELISCU*



## STATUESQUE / Angleterre / Cassiel ©

This two-man, multiple-overdub studio project has the air of pop conceived in a test tube. But what's so wrong with artificial synthesis, particularly when the results are so likeable? The aptly named *Angleterre* consists of five little snowflakes of songs, each a perfect crystallization of a particular melodic idea, each lovely. "Ton Of Feathers, Ton Of Steel" is the most instantly appealing, and comes from the most straightforward kit of parts: three verses and a two-part chorus that repeats enough to install itself in the brain. Of all five, "Heavenly Bodies" is the track most reminiscent of Guided By Voices, and also the best example of the difference between the two bands. Pollard & Co. would have tossed this song off as if they were

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 12.

**FILE UNDER:** Britpop as a science.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Guided By Voices, The Dentists, Blur, Oasis.

composing it live-to-four-track in one take, wailing on the hooks and charming their way through the rest. Statuesque lets you hear and admire the meticulous process by which the bass, guitars, drums, lead vocal, and la-la backing vocal

were grafted on top of each other; how the original recordings were likely replaced by more exacting performances. Every nuance of every song is that polished, down to the grace note at the end of the line "ton of stee-eel." It's proof that the stoic heart of the post-British Invasion pop revival is still in Britain. *ANDREA MOED*



## SWANS / Soundtracks For The Blind / Atavistic

*Soundtracks For The Blind* is the final studio album from Swans, and though it's impossible to imagine a document that could provide a summing up to their 15 years of recorded output, this two-hour-plus double-CD (budget-priced and beautifully packaged) covers enough ground to serve as an apt final testament. The cast of characters here includes old-school Swans Norman Westberg and Al Kizys as well as Vudi, late of American Music Club. Like recent Swans shows, *Soundtracks For The Blind's* peaks approach a religious intensity. The orchestral sweep and lyrical bent of "Helpless Child" and "The Sound" (which cumulatively clock in at almost 30 minutes) best exemplify the approach, but, like few

**DATALOG:** Released Oct. 29.

**FILE UNDER:** Orchestral Swans.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Jean-Paul Sartre, Low, a band with a live album called *Public Castration Is A Good Idea*.

other multi-disc sets, the whole coheres better than its individual parts. Strewn throughout the album are lengthy instrumental passages, sundry soundscapes and drone pieces, some of which bubble under recorded monologues—children's chants, the ruminations of an old man losing his sight—in a clichéd-sounding combination that works much better than you'd expect. A tour will follow in early 1997, and it's hard to imagine anyone interested in the more adventurous aspects and history of the independent rock scene not wanting to be there. *JON FINE*



# ON THE VERGE

[ compiled by Lydia Anderson ]

## POLARA

Sick of always being the guy twisting the knobs, Minneapolis producer Ed Ackerson

(who worked with several local bands, including Balloon Guy) started recording his own songs

on a home four-track a few years ago under the name Polara. After he had enlisted the help of a few musician friends, the project quickly evolved from a series of bedroom demos into Polara's self-titled debut long-player, which was released nearly two years ago on Twin/Tone-Restless. The real meat of each Polara song is comprised of a sharp, shining hook, a bouncy rhythm and an immediately accessible vocal melody. But since Ackerson's looked at sound-boards from both sides now, there are always plenty of sound effects to act as the dressing on these tunes—a bit of Moog or Farfisa, some low-grade feedback or an unidentifiable drone. The *Pantomime* EP (Interscope), Polara's first release featuring its permanent line-up, was released in November and a full-length is due out soon. JENNY ELISCU



## SUKIA

The story goes something like this: One of Sukia's founding members, Ross Harris, finds a dimestore Colombian comic book about the bizarre sexual exploits of a modern-day vampire and her well-endowed gay cohort, Gary Supermacho, and starts making music to go along with his reading. Eventually a few friends armed with samplers, vintage organs and equally twisted imaginations join in, and the wacked-out electronic lounge-pop of Sukia is born. The first release from Nickelbag Records, run by the Dust Brothers (producers of Beck and the Beastie Boys), Sukia's *Contacto Espacial Con El Tercer Sexo* documents an equally swank and subversive blend of bubbling synths, tinny Casio drum tracks, porno-soundtrack brass and just-plain-weird found sound, resulting in one of the most underhandedly comic, sinister and kitschy albums you're likely to hear on this planet, this year or any. Look for the band to pack up its extraterrestrial, thrift-store electronics and hit the road in late winter. COLIN HELMS



## MXPX

When the kids in MxPx sing "My Mom Still Cleans My Room," they aren't being metaphorical. The Bremerton, Washington, band's members are barely out of their teens, and even though they may not do their own laundry, making records keeps these young punkers busy enough. Originally called Magnified Plaid, the trio has released three long-players (the second of which sold nearly 60,000 copies!) since it formed nearly five years ago. Each of those albums is brimming with energetic punk-pop (inspired almost exclusively by SoCal bands like the Descendents),

constructed according to a tried-and-true power-pop formula that includes breakneck tempos, ragged guitar chugging, and



vocal melodies that hover somewhere between singing and chanting. The subject matter is familiar—fear of rejection, feelings of insignificance, insecurity about the future—and MxPx's latest album, *Life In General* (Tooth And Nail), reminds us that sometimes the kids aren't alright. JENNY ELISCU

## BIS

"It's not synthetic/it's so pathetic/on every hour/you can't stand the power—teen-c power!" cries Bis. Indeed, the young Scottish trio's songs capture the hormones-outta-whack energy and anti-establishment spirit behind the best underage bands. Some of Bis's songs hurl that vim 'n' vigor right back at the British indie music community that's



been so quick to embrace it: "This is funding by a major in shadowy package to pretend that it's cool," they chant in high-pitched Scottish brogues on "This Is Fake D.I.Y." Fleshing out their scruffy but immediate hooks with a bare-bones rock lineup, a Roland drum machine and lots of cheap synths (disco is another popular lyrical theme), teenagers Manda Rin, Sci-Fi Steven and John Disco make their faux-propaganda chants surprisingly palatable; one of their many import EPs, *The Secret Vampire Soundtrack*, shipped over 30,000 copies, putting the band on British pop-hit TV show *Top Of The Pops* for the second time. America will get its first taste of Bis this spring, when the Beastie Boys' Grand Royal label releases the group's debut full-length, *This Is Teen-C Power*. (LA)

# FLUFFY

## black eye

Out Now

"as pure punk as  
the 90's get"

Robert Christgau - The Village Voice



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World Radio History



photograph by Jesse Fischer

## by Tim Stegall

"The other day, we played in Madison, Wisconsin," says drummer Bill Stevenson, a born-again Descendent after a decade pursuing the concept of ALL. "Me and Milo [Auckerman, the Descendents' vocalist] bailed like right after soundcheck to go to this Cajun place to eat and do a couple of phone interviews. So we didn't get back to the venue 'til right when it was time to go on. So we walk up on the ramp to get on stage, and look up, and there's fuckin' like 2000 people or something out there! I start checking my drums, make sure it's all right, get ready to start playing, and Milo turns around and looks at me and goes [whispering] 'Van Halen!' And I go [whispering again] 'I know! Fuck!'"

Stevenson laughs. "Milo, I think, went into shock. He said, 'Last time I played here, there was 50 people!'"

The point Stevenson's making is that the best career move the Descendents made was "not doing anything." "It's reverse psychology," he laughs. "We did all that hard touring in the Descendents and everyone pretty much hated us. It's like, 'Oh, we'll show them! We'll not tour! We'll not be the Descendents! Then they'll dig us!' he mocks, laughing the laugh of the vengeful high school geek. "You've gotta play hard to get."

"Hated"? The language may be a bit strong. After all, slice open virtually any major young punk band, and the buggers'll likely bleed some watered-down sonic variant of the primary Descendents musical motion, a formula refined across six classic '80s albums for New Alliance and SST, which can be broken down into three essential elements: 1) terminal geekiness; 2) coffee; and 3) guitar downstrokes. *Vicious* downstrokes.

"You've got us pegged," marvels Stevenson in his high-pitched, gravelly voice. "It's not like we know how to read music or anything like that. I mean, we just know how to drink coffee and go *duh-duh-duh-duh!*" he laughs. "What else is there in life, really? It's the musical parallel to intense fucking!"

"I can remember in 1981 or whatever," recalls Milo Auckerman, Ph.D. in biochemistry, from his lab at the University in Madison, Wisconsin. "When we would be practicing, it would be like, 'okay, everybody: downstrokes *only!*'" he laughs. "If anyone played an upstroke, it would be like, 'You suck! You're out of the band!'"

And don't think the Descendents' impact on the Downstroke Nation has been lost either on Dr. Auckerman or Stevenson. Bill, who's generally less phlegmatic than his old partner and has vocally criticized what he calls "mallpunk" in the past, will only offer a cautious chuckle. "I'm not really gonna comment on that proactively, because I don't want to seem arrogant. But I know what you're saying. I hear your point. I've thought that at times." Milo, meanwhile, is more flattered: "I think it's something to be expected.

For example, I was heavily influenced by the Buzzcocks, myself, and the Ramones. Each generation just kinda wears its influences on its sleeves. Whether or not it's watered-down, that's obviously for the listener to decide. I'm very gratified by the bands around that obviously display our influence very heavily."

The gratification was apparently enough for the Descendents to reemerge in 1996 in the form in which they'd left off in '87—Auckerman, Stevenson, guitarist Stephen Egerton, bassist Karl Alvarez—on Epitaph, a label which hosts many Descendents-influenced bands, some of whose singers (the Offspring's Dexter Holland and one-time label stars Bad Religion's Greg Graffin) also share Auckerman's yen for higher education. But like most tales, this one's hardly as simple as that.

You might recall that, when last we tuned in on our heroes, Milo went to grad school following the release of the band's final studio record, *ALL*. The Descendents' instrumental components went on to team with a string of vocalists (lately Chad Price) and assume that title as their name, releasing eight albums (including their sole major-label excursion, *Pummel*) and taking the concept of ALL-ness to many foreign lands. Auckerman, while in grad school, sang with a band called Milestone, which he acknowledges "should have been telling me something."

"It should've told me to not completely turn my back on music. Obviously, if I'm trying to get a Ph.D., and I can't seem to shake the music bug, then it's gotta be telling me to stick with it. Unfortunately, I wish I did, because getting a Ph.D. obviously isn't a piece of cake. I just kinda had to set everything else aside to get my Ph.D., at that point."

He got the degree. He settled into a life of biochemistry. He married. All was good. Maybe. Meanwhile, the house of ALL "bailed L.A. because it's L.A.," as Stevenson puts it: "Crime, pollution, racial tension, you name it, it's got it." After four years in a "too small" town in Missouri, they settled for the more medium-sized Fort Collins, Colorado (which Auckerman's working on moving to, himself). Then came the flirtation with the mainstream record business.

"At that time, that was at the height of the mallpunk deal," Stevenson says. "So, they thought, 'These guys are the real shit. We can give them XXX amount of money, they'll sell 50 million times more records than the mallpunk bands because they're the original.' But the thing they weren't accounting for—and I was—is that we're ugly and old, and the mallpunk bands are young and good-looking! So it worked out good for us, 'cause we built a recording studio [The Blasting Room, where Stevenson and Egerton have recorded bands like Hagfish and Zeke when not touring], then we left the label and got our album back and a ton of money. We own *Pummel!*"

# The RETURN Of The DESCENDENTS



Professor Auckerman, meantime, began feeling an old, familiar itch. "In January or February, it actually started out with me wanting to write my wife a Valentine's Day poem, then that turned into a song. I've stayed pretty associated with the guys over the past several years. I did backing vocals on *Breaking Things*, and I kinda played a sort of consulting role with ALL. Whenever they made a record, I'd listen to their new stuff and say, 'Okay, this is good, this is bad,' whatever. I kinda was still in the loop in that regard. And like I said, this past January or February, I got involved in writing music, and it's kinda hard to describe. All of a sudden, I thought, 'Wow! Why did I ever stop doing this?' Why now? I think because frustrations had kinda built up in my work environment to the point where I needed some kind of creative outlet that was going to keep me from going insane. Obviously, if I need an outlet, music has always

served that purpose quite well. So, I think somewhere inside of me, I was telling myself, 'start writing music again, because you need to do it—you need that outlet for your frustrations.'"

"He had songs, and we had a lot of songs, too," shrugs Stevenson. "He has always been very close with the band, like a fifth wheel, if you will, or fifth member. Also, Milo is my best buddy since when we were kids. So he wanted to do music again, and of course he wanted to do it with us. Meanwhile, here we are playing with Chad still as ALL. What we did, we figured the only way we could make room for Milo without kicking Chad out is to sorta mutate into two bands. So now we're Descendents on the one hand and ALL on the other hand, depending on who it is that's doing the singing at the time. So, we're kinda alternating kinda semi-seasonally. It's like a big-ass muscle car that you just swap out the carburetor or whatever." ★



# SPACE GHOST **VS.** THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES



PRESIDENTS USA PHOTO BY LISA JOHNSON

**Greetings, citizens. Welcome to the magazine.**

**Chris Ballew (singer, two-string basitar):** Thank you. Good to be here, Mr. Space Ghost, sir.

**Identify yourselves. Are you really the Presidents Of The United States Of America?**

**CB:** Sure, compared to who? Well... look at us. Well, sort of.

**Dave Dederer (sings, three string guitbass):** That's our strategy in this year's campaign. We figure that if we just stay presidential then people will recognize us as presidential and vote for us again.

**Hmm. If you were actual Presidents, what would be your platform?**

**CB:** It'd be about four feet by five feet, you could fit an amp or two.

**DD:** Just big enough to jump around a little bit without falling off.

**Do you live in White Houses for appearances' sake?**

**DD:** My house is gray.

**CB:** My house is kind of this awful pink and brick. I gotta paint it.

**DD:** I always wanted to know what Space Ghost's house looked like.

**CB:** Yeah, what's your house look like, Space Ghost?

**My house is a '70s ranch-style future shock explosion. Lots of glass and steel and... space age polymers.**

**DD:** Uh, that sounds like my house.

**As real Presidents, would you pardon Zorak and Moltar for their crimes against the universe?**

**CB:** That's the great thing about being President—we can pardon massive insects.

**Jason Finn (drums):** All is forgiven!

**Very clever releasing your latest album on Election Day. If you three somehow won on a landslide write-in campaign, what would be your first act of office?**

**JF:** Resignation.

**CB:** Yeah, I quit.

**DD:** Nobody should have that job. It looks way too hard and painful.

**CB:** I would actually do one thing. I would make teachers go to school for six or eight years and pay them like doctors.

**Quick. Who's more powerful, Sony or the FBI?**

**CB:** Well, for us in our lives it's Sony, although we don't really know.

**DD:** Yeah, we don't know yet. We could have an FBI dossier that thick.

**CB:** Yeah, some kind of commie organization. Hangin' out with guys named Space Ghost, too.

# RESIDENTS OF THE STATES OF AMERICA

***Do your Secret Service guys mind tuning your guitars?***

**CB:** No, they're totally tone-deaf.

**DD:** You ever hang out with those guys? They're not real personable.

**CB:** You should see them try and disco dance. They just don't get it.

***Explain these strange instruments you play. Do you find normal instrumentation to be too bourgeois?***

**JF:** We play space instruments.

**DD:** I play space guitar and Chris plays space bass, only otherwise played by Bootsy Collins.

**CB:** Of course, there's Ace the space...

**DD:** Ace "Space" Frehley, from Kiss, he plays guitar, as well. I took lessons from him as a three-year-old.

***Would you mind wearing capes on stage, in my honor?***

**DD:** You bring the capes, we'll wear them.

***So tell me. What would you guys do with millions of peaches, anyway?***

**CB:** Make wine.

**DD:** Peach wine. What would you do?

***I would consider using them as weaponry. But I'm... a superhero! Your new album is called II. Moltar, my director, owns both Led Zeppelin II and Van Halen II. How is yours different?***

**CB:** Different music on the actual record—we made it up.

**DD:** It takes songs from *Led Zeppelin II*, *Van Halen II* and *Chicago II* and just puts them all together. Actually, that's about what it sounds like.

**JF:** So, really it should be *VI*.

**DD:** Yeah, it should be *VI*. Because it's *II* and *II* and *II*.

**CB:** Right, can you follow that, Space Ghost? You might need your calculator.

***Do you have any super powers?***

**DD:** Super rock powers. Haven't you ever seen us?

**No.**

**CB:** Gosh, Space Ghost, it's like you don't care. Oh, that's totally you.

***For an Earth band, you guys have played some interesting places—Mt. Rushmore, Pink's Hot Dog Stand in L.A.—even on top of a flatbed truck in Minneapolis. What was your oddest gig ever?***

**CB:** I think the flatbed truck was pretty unique. I actually called the cops on us because it was a very bad scene.

**DD:** It was a very bad idea.

**CB:** And we didn't want to do it so I ran down the street and called the cops, pretending to be an old woman, "There's a band sitting up in the street, come help me!" And it took them forever. We had to play.

***How do you keep Lizard People out of your audience?***

**CB:** We have detectors when they come in.

**DD:** They're scale detectors and whenever scales come in they go off and they're out of there. If they can flake off the scales then we'll let them in, 'cause then they're not truly lizards.

***Who has the best road story?***

**DD:** We don't have very good stories. We've got a naked girl on the bus. Do we have any others that are good?

**CB:** No.

**DD:** That's the only one. Naked German girl on the bus in the middle of winter. She snuck on the bus, into a bunk, and she was naked.

**CB:** She had some superpowers, boy.

**DD:** She did.

***What's ahead for the Presidents Of The United States Of America in 1997?***

**JF:** Some rock shows and fun things, a little bit of skiing.

**DD:** Yeah, a little bit of time off and then a bunch of rock shows.

**CB:** We've got Carl Sagan opening up for us.

**DD:** You know, he knows billions and billions

**CB:** ...of songs. It's true. Billions of chords, too, you should see this guy.

***Any advice for the universe?***

**DD:** No advice to the universe, but thank you to everyone in the universe that's bought our record and come to see us play.

**CB:** Yes, thanks. And soon, hopefully, our record will be available in the complicated formats that you use up here in space.

***Well, you know, the official currency of the cartoon world is the smackeroo. Is that a problem?***

**DD:** With smackeroos, you can get the mini-disk. You can't get the regular disc with smackeroos. I think that's the format in a weightless environment, because they're smaller. ★





# radio music

It's the time of year when  
everybody is looking back over  
where music has been lately, so  
we decided to look another way:  
toward where it is now, and  
where it might be going next.

"Alternative is not as hot as it once was." Thus spoke MTV Executive Vice President of Programming Andy Schuon in a recent *Billboard* article on the channel's upcoming shift toward more "upbeat, mainstream" music programming. MTV is hugely powerful in the music business not only because of its massive audience, but also because it considers close association with youth culture the goal of its programming, and so any change in philosophy reflects both movements now occurring and those to come. It's both harbinger and catalyst, and so Schuon's minced words speak volumes about a conclusion that others in the music biz have already drawn: Alternative is dead.

What happened to this televised revolution? By the '80s, the steady filtering of the rock underground into the mainstream had been choked off by the cultural hegemony of the baby boomer generation, leaving very few punk rock or new wave artists (the Police, the Cars, Talking Heads, eventually R.E.M.) with any sort of commercial radio play. About this time, college radio's free-form style began to be recognized as a viable means for promoting music that was an *alternative* to what anyone could hear on commercial radio. Fast forward to the opening chords of "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and the bandwagons they were expected to tow. MTV jumped on board in a big way, not just playing the videos, but using the music in its own promotional spots; whole radio formats were eventually devised as this new Alternative music edged out the old "Commercial Alternative" staples like Siouxsie And The Banshees; top 40 stations forewent teenybopper dance-pop for, and in some cases commingled it with, Smashing Pumpkins, Beck, Pearl Jam and Nine Inch Nails; "classic rock" stations that once proclaimed that their frequency is "where rock lives" found their hold on the throne of "rock 'n' roll!" usurped.

Doing everything in their power to exploit the trend, record labels threw money at the problem of finding the new Nirvana or Pumpkins, and signed virtually every band with any sort of "indie cred" in a feeding frenzy that recalled the excesses of the disco era. Whole departments were created; indie labels were bought outright, as were the companies that distributed them. Some major labels started their own "indies" to develop artists without the bureaucracy (and the stigma) of the corporate machine. College radio promotion departments were beefed up from a few people cailing to see if a label's artists were getting played to full-on promo machines fighting for chart positions, sometimes above all else. The result? The fertile environment that bred all this great music was virtually clear-cut.

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"Alternative to what?" isn't just a smart-ass comeback: it's the essential question to ask if you want to determine the health of alternative music. You can answer it easily: an alternative to the glossy sterility that still dominates the pop world, to Kenny G and Celine Dion, to Keith Sweat and Clint Black, to necrophilic duets with dead singers and billions of interchangeable power ballads and the fucking Macarena. And that means that, for the first time in decades, there really is an alternative — vibrant, exciting new pop music that's easily available to everyone. The Butthole Surfers sold half a million copies of *Electriclarryland*, Everything But The Girl has one of the biggest hits ever, Sebadoh is on VH-1. The punk wars are over, and we won.

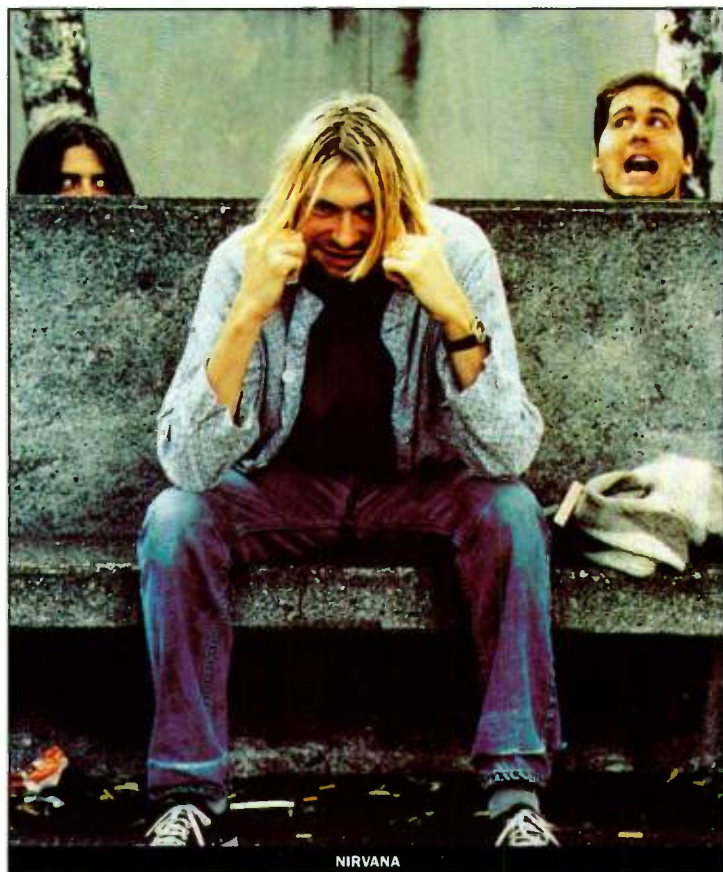
It's a victory on every level, from the biggest (a stake in the airwaves and CD shelves of the world) to the smallest (the grassroots scenes of every kind, everywhere). Alternative music originally arose from two things: the impulse to make something that sounded different from and more satisfying than anything else out there, and newly affordable means of production, distribution and promotion—the possibility of doing it yourself. The creative impulse hasn't gone away, and doesn't go away. And thanks to electronic technology and pressing-plant price wars, it's now cheaper and easier than ever to turn the creative impulse into recordings. Don't like the music you hear on the radio? Turn on your computer and make something you do!

The other essential question to ask is "what alternative?" The alt-dot-scene represented by Smashing Pumpkins, Beck, Pearl Jam and Nine Inch Nails doesn't seem to be in any trouble at all. There are bands that flame out quickly, too, but that's not cause for alarm—when the Pursuit Of Happiness started bombing, they didn't exactly drag college radio down with them. One-hit wonders aren't a sign of emerging bands being seduced and abandoned as much as a sign that there are a lot of bands that have exactly one good record in them. A recent *Rolling Stone* story found the music world's Cassandras getting their togas in a bunch because the Gin Blossoms' *Congratulations I'm Sorry* sold "only" half a million copies—despite the fact that their former main songwriter had killed himself. Please.

And below the gold-record level—the level of old-school alternative bands that haven't yet mushroomed—the well of good stuff is hardly tapped out; it's just that the good bands are generally the smart ones, the ones that know how to take their time developing a career, letting their audience come to them, and working, working, working. The mediocrities' only chance is to grab for the brass ring,

continued on page 20





NIRVANA



BECK

NIRVANA: VADOKUL

**It's essentially the Dr. Seuss story of the Lorax: The trees were gone and all**

*DEAD, continued from page 19*

It was about this time that Alternative entered into the first of its identity crises. Increasingly, the name became divorced from the multifaceted scene that spawned a few successful bands and came to refer to the angst-ridden lyrics and minor-chord, loud guitars favored by some of those bands. The race for labels and radio and video programmers increasingly became not to find bands as distinctive as Nirvana, Nine Inch Nails or Smashing Pumpkins, but bands that sounded like them. The success of the genre rendered the risk-taking necessitated by the dead-end that was "classic rock" no longer essential, because alterna-hits would just keep coming. Concurrently, bands remaining in the underground began to bear little resemblance to those that had even recently graduated out of it, and couldn't really be described by this new definition of Alternative because they were an alternative to that, as well.

Naturally, the hits didn't keep on coming, at least not as fast as the sound-alike radio singles did. That airplay fodder only served to make radio sound increasingly homogenous and it did nothing to make bands seem like they were worth anything more than a vaguely pleasant three minutes. And so this genre, breech-birthed into existence based on its reputation of being the newest and the most real to the defiantly heterogeneous Generation X, began to feel increasingly pre-fabricated and ersatz. It's essentially the Dr. Seuss story of the Lorax: The trees were gone—the Alternative bandwagon now a gurney for all the casualties of record company layoffs—and all that was left were the Bushes.

The problem is that Alternative was never really a genre or revolution so much as what Wall Street calls a

"market correction" for all the underground rock that never made it to the mainstream because rock radio was still in thrall to Led Zeppelin and Woodstock. This new world order did give a few bands franchise status and certainly produced more interesting music than what it supplanted, but the open-mindedness it inspired was felled by shrinking market shares. (Heaven help a new band that has to "hit" within three weeks of airplay, sometimes with only five "spins" a week, or be dropped from a playlist.) Radio formats are returning to their lowest-common-denominator center in correction of an earlier over-correction, and MTV, says its President, Judy McGrath, is looking for "other new forms of music emerging on the fringe." Waiting on that fringe is a bounty of alternatives (electronica, odd *mélanges* like Geggy Tah) that arrived late to the Alternative party and found the many doors it opened to mainstream audiences closed. Now, it's their turn, and while they'll be sharing space with some of the Alternative perennials, they'll have come from very different environments, because the old one is gone.

Alternative is dead. Long live alternatives.

SCOTT FRAMPTON

*NOT, continued from page 19*

so they put out a record on a big label that couldn't care less, usually flop, get dropped two months later, and disappear. Bye. Meanwhile, Stereolab, Palace, Tortoise, Ani DiFranco, Ui, Laika, the Grifters, Flying Saucer Attack, the Make-Up, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Oval, Thinking Fellers Union Local 282, Dub Narcotic Sound System, the Apples In Stereo and a few dozen others are winning the race, slow and steady, with more waves of new bands behind them.





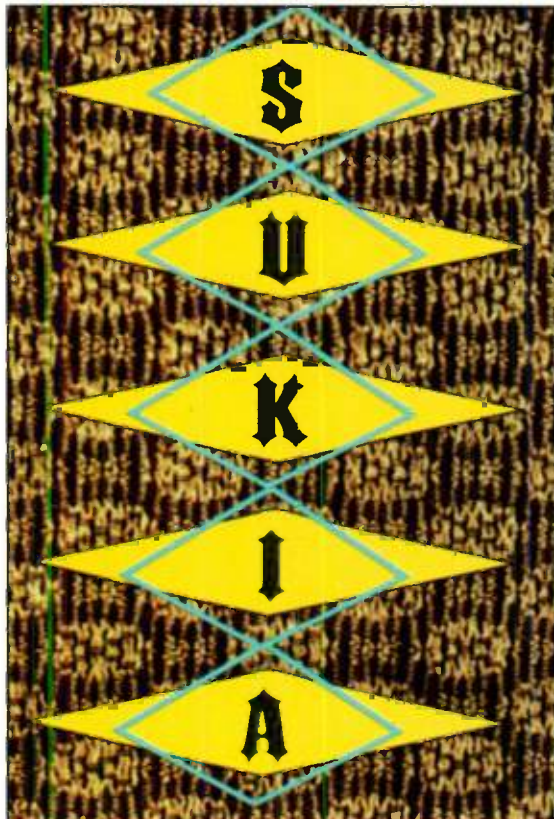
SMASHING PUMPKINS

that was left were the Bushes.

Of course, there's also a mindset that declares that "alternative is dead" because most of the alternative heroes of ten years ago are now indisputably a part of mass culture. But announcing the death of the music created by independent labels, hard-touring bands, college radio stations and involved listeners, at a time when it's selling millions of records, topping charts and filling stadiums, is kind of like looking at newborn triplets and sighing about the tragedy of infertility. In fact, the best part of old-style alternative music's ascendancy is that younger bands are starting to find it staid and boring. That means they're feeling the urge to develop new alternatives—and the music they're making isn't reactionary, but radical.

The fact is that there's never been as much exciting, original pop music being made as there is right now. Thousands of kids flock to raves to dance to records that baffle virtually everyone over 25. All-ages emo-core shows pack clubs all over the country. Any interesting record store will have a richer variety of sounds available now than it ever would have had before. A certain kind of minor-key guitar-rock with existentially traumatized lyrics—the Nirvana/Pumpkins school—has had just about all of its fertile ground staked out already. But anyone who thinks that school represented the only option other than "Can You Feel The Love Tonight" and "Tears In Heaven" that will ever be commercially viable is fooling himself. The way to pass on the torch of world-changing music is not to make the same kind of music that changed your world.

The future of music sounds like nothing in particular, least of all itself five minutes ago. Your next favorite band is having its first rehearsal right now. Listen carefully, and you'll hear it soon. DOUGLAS WOLK



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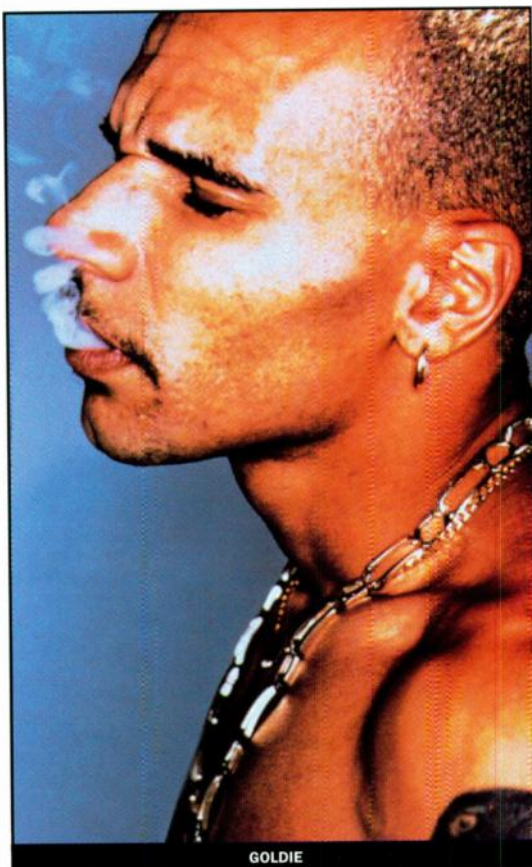


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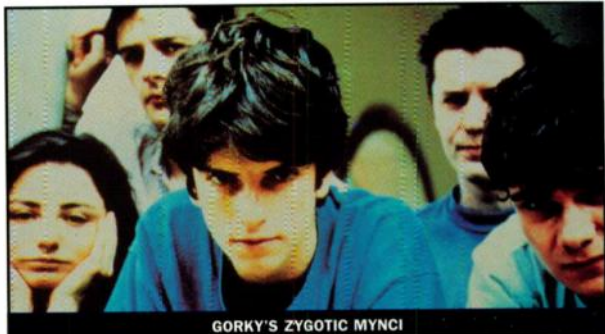
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OASIS

Collaboration is a survival instinct that keeps music fresh.

## clear-cutting the jungle

When the first jungle records started showing up a few years ago, they sounded exceptionally exciting—here was a brand new kind of rhythm for dance music. Since then, though, jungle hasn't really evolved; it's just worked a series of variations on its basic premise and revealed its essential limitations. The small problem is that all jungle records sound more or less the same, to the point where it's nearly impossible to identify a particular one when it's being played in a club beyond "oh—this is a jungle record." The big problem is that nobody's yet achieved any kind of pop crossover with it, which is essential if it's going to survive. (The closest anybody's come is Goldie's "Inner City Life," which wasn't much of a song, or much of a hit.) If dance-pop hits start building on the jungle beat, the style may have a few years before it runs its course altogether. But if not, it's going to sound as dated as disco by the middle of this year. (DW)

## tranquility base

The sex beat still sounds, but in ten years pop will be the equivalent of the post-coital cigarette: even-minded and subtle. For the past quarter-century, music has had a celebratory air to it; it's been loud and it's been raucous. There have been glimpses of tranquility, but on the whole it's reflected the restless anticipation of the oncoming millennium. After it passes, the passionate tension we all felt—what's going to happen? how will things change?—may be replaced with a sense of resolve, either sighs of relief or disappointment in the wake of lost hope.

This could create a different kind of tension, an internal, omnipresent static that coats quiet textures

with an undercurrent of reverberation. The co-opting of dub on the edges of pop is one example of this internal quivering, and throughout the most exciting music of the '90s, from trip-hop to ambient to pop, there seem to be more layers of whispers and murmurs. It's Tricky's secret weapon, PJ Harvey is proof of how far a subtle moan can carry a song, and Oval's digital confusion barely ekes out any volume at all. The instruments? Old and new have been making wonderful companions of late, and a sparse, warm instrument—a piano, a tenor saxophone, vibes, or pedal steel—has never sounded more tranquil than when mixed with chilly digital technology. The recording studio (as instrument) will come to capture every nuance of texture with pinpoint accuracy. Sshhhh. RANDY ROBERTS

## britpop? what britpop?

Despite Oasis's success, the Britpop scene isn't likely to be the source of the next wave of rock music. Why? It's not really a scene: it's a pretty good but very derivative mega-success (Oasis), plus a couple of pretty good but rather derivative potential contenders (Blur, Elastica), plus a bad idea or two (Suede, Supergrass), all wrapped up together by a media monolith—NME and *Melody Maker* are owned by the same company, and to survive, they need to generate not just flavors of the month but flavors of the week.

The biggest pop bands in England don't generally collaborate or hang out (Damon and Justine excepted) or tour together or collectively nurture younger bands. They just happened to mostly make pretty good, sort of similar records in the same geographic area around the same time. A few of them will certainly continue to have hits, but they're nothing like a movement. (One



potential source of synergy: collectively produced charity projects like the *Help* war-orphan-relief album.)

The British scene that has a future as a scene isn't English—it's the Welsh scene that includes the likes of Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, Super Furry Animals and 60 Ft. Dolls. All of its bands are still very young, but they've been working together and influencing each other, (most of them have recorded for Gorky's label Ankst), and they've already made a slew of entertaining and promising singles and EPs. Give them a few years, then stand back. (DW)

### traditional music: #264... with a bullet!

At a recent conference of ethnomusicologists, there was a lot of tongue-wagging and beard stroking about the future of traditional world music. While scholars bemoaned a loss of integrity in the way the industry presents the music they love (get in line), support for traditional music is actually on the rise. Five years ago, most people couldn't tell the difference between qawwali and quartz, but today we're hipper to Nusrat as well as Tibetan Monks, pygmies and Celtic folkies. In this new year, and in the next century, the interest in traditional music and indigenous cultures will continue to grow, partly because global rhythms and melodies have always been the inspiration for classical, rock, jazz and hip-hop. There's also a bit of '60s nostalgia at work here, too, as fans of ambient house are inhaling the trance aspect of traditional African, Haitian and Indian music as well. Next up may be the trance music of a young mbira player from Zimbabwe named Forward Kwenda.

Orchestrated jam sessions between divas, mixmasters and griots may make purists cringe, but collaboration is a survival instinct that keeps music fresh. If the scholars want traditions to survive, they'll have to suffer through some commercialized experiments that, at the very least, raise awareness of a genre. Kenny G's success will never end jazz, so it's unlikely that Deep Forest's World Music Grammy will kill pygmy music. That's the job of European logging companies. STEVE CIABATTONI

### analog dreams: the future of dance

The trinity of guitar, drum, and bass, played by live musicians, is fast being upset by electronic music's overwhelming subcultural power. The vulnerability of rock's sacrosanct triumvirate has come about not as a result of the sinister incursion of sterile machine music, but from the recognition of the flexibility of new musical equipment. The guitar isn't being swept away by the forces of technological progress: house, techno, drum-and-bass, and hip-hop spurn the cold precision of digital electronics for the dirtier sound of instruments like the Roland 909 and 303, both of which were commercial disasters, not the harbingers of a destructive computer revolution and mass unemployment (as the Musicians' Union once asserted).

It might be better to refuse the rock/electronic dialectic altogether, like such luminaries as Mo Wax's James Lavelle, whose remixes of everyone from the Butthole Surfers to Photek have discredited purists on both sides of the dialogue. Besides, hip-hop has had a profound effect on the trajectory of rock, and the glorious eruption of Mantronix samples in Beck's "Where It's At" would have been impossible even two years ago. Finally, the ascendancy of electronic dance music raises the specter of the disappearance of the live

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There are signs that pop music, like the electorate, is moving back toward the

performances that rock culture valorizes. The relatively low demand for live acts among fans of dance music comes from its emphasis on the aural and oral over the visual. That makes the discussion all the more interesting, given the preeminence of videos in contemporary music culture. In other words, the story is only beginning. *TIM HASLETT*

### pop goes the center

The mid-'80s were the last time you could tune in one radio station to hear all things pop: Duran Duran to Prince to Madonna to the Real Roxanne. But in the '90s most of us have taken a pass on pop. Alternative rock has served as our bastard singles medium since 1991, when Nirvana kicked off the grunge sweepstakes, while on Billboard's singles chart, slick ballads and slicker R&G (rhythm and gangsta) have ruled, sending older listeners fleeing to country. There are signs, however, that pop music, like the electorate, is moving back toward the center. As Pearl Jam tries on new guises and Nirvana releases its final album, Bush (ahem) is about the only major grunge group left on the radio. Look for more acts to take their cues from Alanis (confessional pop), Garbage (rock that sounds like synth-pop), and Beck (folk-hop stew), and fewer acts to cop Soundgarden. Moving up from the underground, Pest 5000, Olivia Tremor Control and the Cardigans are showing that indie and near-indie bands are, finally, veering away from Sonic Youth as their model. The success of Oasis hints that Britpop may yet cross the pond—Kula Shaker could be the next act to win Yanks' hearts, while Spice Girls inaugurate a new era of Stock/Aitken/Waterman-style girlpop. Meanwhile, hip-hop and R&B have already begun to meet the alt-

rockers in the middle: Look for more Fugee-like crossovers; for the endless trend of hip-hop-dance insta-hits (this year's Quad City DJ's will be next year's Wrecks-n-Effect); and for a new era of sample-heavy rap that reestablishes hip-hop's credentials as pop's music of innovation. All it will take is one Dr. Octagon hit...

*CHRIS MOLANPHY*

### play that unpremeditated music

Jazz, as we know it, is basically dead—it's sunk into a world of tiny sales figures (for anyone whose last name isn't G), endlessly reprised standards, tasteful reissues and stylistic affectations that haven't changed since Miles went electric, or usually before. Free improvisation, meanwhile, has been jazz's hot-looking little sibling that you wouldn't want to bring home to meet the parents: free-improv records tend to be daring, intellectually engaging, and rather difficult to listen to. That's changing now, though, as improvisers are turning their attentions from exploring the limits of their instruments to musicianship and individual modes of expression. Duets and trios between master free musicians can be powerful and delightful, comminglings of personalities expressed as pure sound. Some musicians are organizing improv festivals, like saxophonist Evan Parker's Synergetics (documented on a terrific double-CD on Leo) and guitarist Derek Bailey's Company events, where participants play solo and in small groups, introducing their voices separately and then combining them. Even the Dutch punk group The Ex recently made a superb and very listenable duo-and-trio improv record, *Instant*. Who needs a tune when you've got a good enough musician? *(DW)*



BUSTA RHYMES

center.

## vocal shredding

Back when the first Onyx single, "Slam," came out, I remember thinking as I watched these crazy bald rappers screaming rapid-fire in my face on MTV, changing cadence and volume at will: "these guys really shred." That is, to my AOR and free jazz-honed ears, they were doing with their voices what a sax player in Naked City or a guitarist in King Crimson would do with his instrument. Onyx had hinted at the potential of a move toward arrhythmia in hip-hop, and since then other rappers have picked up the hint, with Busta Rhymes the most bold and memorable. In the next few years, the instrumental parts of records—both in hip-hop and outside it—may follow suit. Some singles will take a cue from Outkast's "Elevators," playing with our minds and booties with beats that are just a shade off. The same audiences that have gotten increasingly tolerant of noisy, fuzzy sounds in hip-hop will be able to get used to rhythms that don't fit perfectly together and beats that sound all but arbitrary. Rhythms may go similarly haywire in the electronic and dance music worlds, with the erratic, broken-down-machine-made compositions of Aphex Twin as the prototype. *ANDREA MOED*

## wu world order: the future of hip-hop

In the last ten years, the most powerful force that has stricken the purity and creativity of hip-hop has been its insurmountable enemy: commercialism. Young rappers are now more willing than ever to compromise their art, if they believe (or are convinced) that they can become successful by imitating someone else. Although

there are plenty of platinum plaques going up on industry walls, there has been a significant, steady decline in the quality of the rap music that's being fed to the public—too many groups aren't even worthy of their recording contracts. Hip-Hop Armageddon is imminent. After pimping the artform for all it seems to be worth, major labels will abandon the sinking economic ship when they notice that the numbers just aren't good enough to warrant the headache of dealing with these troublesome groups. Like Michael J. Fox, hip-hop will be forced to go back to the future, and its culture will be re-born, with a new stable of independents emerging to bring back the essence of its appeal. My prediction: all current hit groups and popular rappers, even the seemingly eternal L.L. Cool J, will be destroyed, with only one group surviving to dominate the next millennium. Word to Nas and Kurtis Blow, but after the smoke is clear, the Wu-Tang Clan, led by The RZA, will rise above the ashes and rule the world. Bow down! *ELLIOTT WILSON*

## taking the hippie trip

Ever since the rave scene waded its way onto American shores, onlookers have attempted to make the connection between the burgeoning techno-nation and another sub-culture: Deadheads. Despite grimaces and denouncements from the rave camp, this over-wrought comparison truly isn't *that* far off base. After all, the two factions have often been defined/biased by many of the same characteristics: traveling insane distances for marathon-length musical gatherings, spiritual/recreational use of psychedelics, and the all-encompassing vibe of brotherly love. But with artists like Electric Skychurch, Dubtribe and Tranquillity Bass adding more earthy tones to their electronic frameworks, the two sides may soon meet on some common *musical* ground as well. While Electric Skychurch is fond of incorporating live tribal drums into its ambient-trance groove, Dubtribe's Sunshine and Moonbeam (the names say it all) create spiritual, almost organic techno, frequently highlighted by seas of candles and blankets of incense smoke covering the stage during their energetic live performances.

Enter Tranquillity Bass, the straw that could break the barrier. Who knows what kind of hybrid audience will be drawn to the insane, psychedelic swirls of Middle Eastern strings, flutes, and other traditional instruments arranged under the funky blanket of electronica? Already a phenomenon on the West Coast, where all-night desert raves and the Burning Man festival gather all sorts of crazed, diverse life-forms, the popularity of these musical acts will inevitably broaden the appeal and the audience of electronic-dance culture. Techno-hippies will emerge and conquer. They will lose themselves in the flash of the strobe light and the swirl of the fractal. They will find salvation in the rhythmic sounds of tribal house drum circles. Arm in arm, they and their brothers and sisters will traverse America in search of liberty, enlightenment, and a booming kick-drum, Vicks Vap-O-Rub and patchouli united in one powerful, permeating stench. *M. TYE COMER*

## music and politics

How long has it been since a singer of popular music was identified with an organized political movement? Lately there's been no shortage of music and musicians with an axe to grind somewhere in the realm of politics: Against the Machine, against the Pope, against the Christian Right or against non-vegans. At the same time and in a somewhat different place, we have the





WU-TANG CLAN

What's needed is someone to stand up and sing about what it is that people should

Beck tendency toward loose, stylish social commentary and satire, in which lyrics replete with catchphrases and .sig files cruise past the drive-by-bodypierce and risk the taking of Air Jordans without much real critique or coalition-building. Not to be obvious, but neither of these stances are gonna produce the soundtrack for any kind of revolution. What's needed is someone to stand up, pick up an instrument (and it need not be a guitar) and sing about what it is that people should do about the injustices pissing them off. And given the current disillusionment about our morbid Democan-Republicrat political system and the coming of age of commercial-alternative fans, it just might be possible that the alternative music scene could be a haven for proponents of *political* alternatives—third parties, as we call 'em. An artist like this might be rooted in an urban coffeehouse performance genre like anti-folk or hip-hop poetry; maybe s/he could be inspired by the stripped-down invective of Billy Bragg (might even cover "Help Save The Youth Of America"). But if s/he wants to storm the obsolete pedestrian malls and reach the disaffected soccer babies of Disney's Celebration, U.S.A., s/he'll have to mix in the wisecrass, service-industry lore of a lyricist like Franklin Bruno. This may sound naive, but such music could transcend consumerist poses, and be the "Everybody Get Together" that by all rights should precede the "Where It's At." (AM)

### beastie dynasty

When the dust settles, the Beastie Boys will probably come out of it as the most durable band of the rock era. Few groups have lasted as long as they have, and (arguably aside from U2) none have lasted that long

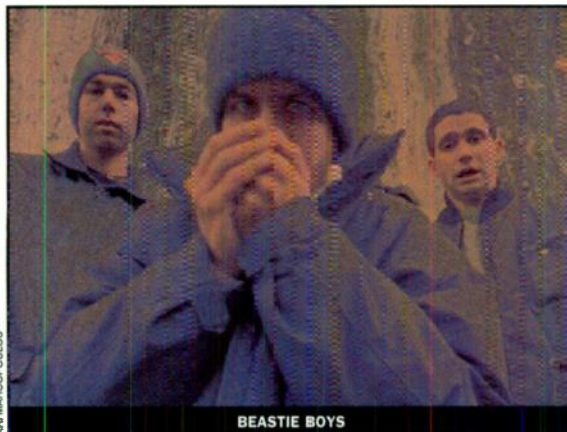
without being noticeably past their artistic peak—at the equivalent points in their careers, the Stones were making *Black And Blue* and The Who did *The Who By Numbers*. That alone would be a reason to keep an eye on the Beasties. But they've also become leaders of their own sect of alternative culture, through the Grand Royal magazine-and-label empire, and their choices of opening acts and label signings are consistently far-sighted. They're not just on top of things, they're ahead of the curve—they've got a grasp on where music is going. And if you'd told us that when *Licensed To Ill* came out, we'd never have believed you. (DW)

### what's a guitar good for?

Neither guitar music nor techno has particularly moved forward in the past few years, and both are speeding down a cul-de-sac towards redundancy unless they start learning from each other, in an effort to expand their potential arrays of sound. Of course, since forming power chords is about as hard as playing "Chopsticks," the guitar will always have a role as a melody-carrying instrument. But guitars are coming to be used less as devices for playing actual notes in a linear fashion, and more as primarily textural input devices that work in tandem with banks of samplers. Sampling looped feedback and whammy-barred riff snippets will allow a more abstract, mix-and-match sensibility to replace the dull sameness of the sonic arsenal of most of today's rock, while bringing a more organic feel to the analog regimentation of techno. Artists will be able to constantly mutate live walls of sound instead of being limited to the most recently cannibalized synth presets.



ELECTRIC SKYCHURCH



BEASTIE BOYS

do about the injustices pissing them off.

Bands are already approaching this loopy, fuzzy fusion from a number of directions: from metal (Scorn, Godflesh), from ambient (Seefeel, Beaumont Hannant), from 'post-rock' (Bowery Electric, Flying Saucer Attack and its offshoots). The benchmark album for this move, however, may well be My Bloody Valentine's long-overdue follow-up to *Loveless*. If the band's cut from last year's Wire tribute album is any indication, it's actively exploring the linkage of jungle beats and abstract guitar noise. And if Kevin Shields can overcome his crippling perfectionism and bring himself to release an album, MBV may well blaze yet another path in redefining how a guitar "should" sound. *DAVID JARMAN*

## crossover planet

People are suckers for novelty. Crossover hits work by introducing the masses to a familiarized rendition of a musical style that is new and exotic to them, but already well known in another place or time, like the famous remix of Eric B. & Rakim's "Paid In Full" that featured Ofra Haza, like *Chant*, and, like, well, "Macarena." The mega-success of an Americanized dance remix of this already international anthem demonstrates that the new and the once-foreign are increasingly being conflated.

Thanks to multinational corporations that celebrate and grant access to the diversity of "world music" in order to turn consumers on to more product categories, we end up in a paradox in which everything is exotic and at the same time, nothing is exotic anymore—only new, at least until the customers get restless. So hold onto your hats, because the crossover attempts are going to come fast and furious, from what to Americans are the farthest ends of the earth, and even from close

to home. Gamelans? Tuvan throat singers? With some big bass beats, people could be dancing to them in the clubs next week. A dance remake of "She Taught Me How To Yodel"? Throw it up against the Soundscan and see if it sticks. And some of it will; my money's on Latin rhythms, ululating Middle Eastern vocal stylings, and the bhangra-derived Indian beats exploited by seasoned remixers like Bally Sagoo. These styles will enter our musical lexicon for keeps, not because they are exotic, but because they are versatile, beguiling, and downright sexy. *(AM)*

## history gets its hands dirty: the future of metal

If browsing the hundreds of bands with difficult names extolled in the dozens of fanzines and mail order catalogs renders metal's vitality obvious, remember that there's been a fashionable idea this year that metal is dead and its fans are tragic figures in search of a cause. Separate but equally embarrassing articles in *Spin* and the *Village Voice* last year bemoaned the death of metal—as if either of those outlets ever had anything worthwhile to say about its health. The media has a problem with metal to the point that it wants desperately to forget that invisible acts like Deicide consistently outsell cover boys like Seadoh. It's hard to find evidence in print, but the peculiar and attractive sounds of death metal, grindcore, and black metal are having a far-ranging impact on the sound of modern music.

For my money, the best evidence of metal's health comes from the underground, where insiders are always creating interesting permutations of the form. Master's Hammer, from the former Czech Republic, have become witty *musique moderne* composers with *Slagry*, trading in distortion for traditional orchestral instrumentation while keeping oddball arrangements that make metal appealing. Prosthetic-nosed Norwegian electronic musician Mortiiis has developed the aggressive black metal he made in Emperor into 20-minute mini-masterpieces of medieval-influenced "dark ambient" theme music. Massachusetts' Nightstick, comprised of ex-members of Siege, may be the first dirge metal band to embrace conceptual art, incorporating a non-musical member in a clown suit and documenting solos that consist of the guitar player holding debris from a broken guitar up to a microphone. There's also a current influx of applicants from outside the main metal culture, from techno superstar Moby to the indie-rockers of A Minor Forest, looking to get their hands dirty.

Most importantly, at the ideological center, metal's sense of its own history is intransigent. Unlike popular music, metal never rewrites its canon to fit contemporary trends. Consequently, the past 25 years from Black Sabbath to Brutal Truth comprise a legitimate and oft-quoted musical tradition of easily recognized standards and innovations. As metal musicians mature and find their way into university musical departments, especially in Europe, it's possible that metal will become a neo-classical institution in the next few decades, complete with allusions to the schools of Swedish death metal and Greek black thrash.

For the foreseeable future, the tightly-knit global metal subculture will certainly continue to demand original, boundary-pushing new forms of metal, and bands of inspired amateurs will almost certainly continue surfacing to provide it. As long as that's true, metal will remain a source of wonder, and metal fans can consider themselves lucky. *IAN CHRISIE ★*



# ten essential records

It's easy enough to tell what the most influential records have been for CTUJ looks into its crystal ball to see what albums are going to be the biggest



## Various Artists, *No New York*

Used copies of this long-out-of-print compilation now command huge prices. Why? Because the four nervous, chaotic "no wave" bands on it—Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, D.N.A., the Contortions and Mars—were far ahead of their time. The last few years have seen reissues of music by all of them, as well as a wave of exciting new bands (especially in Chicago and, oddly, Scotland) that build on their innovations: quick, spastic songs that make their point and get out; guitars that play *noises*, not notes or chords; human voices that do everything but sing in the accepted sense of the word; in short, pieces that are catchy like pop but have nothing to do with melody.

## Silver Apples, *Silver Apples*

Almost 30 years old and virtually unknown for most of that time, the first record from this electronic duo is suddenly very important. Its influence can be heard on Stereolab's analog-synth gurgles, and on the space-rock bands coming out of Michigan and elsewhere; it's been sampled by the Folk Implosion; Jessamine's first single appeared on the Silver Apple label (with a sleeve modeled on *Silver Apples*); and a bunch of terrific emerging bands, from the Bristol guitar-and-drum-'n'-bass scene and elsewhere, covered the group's songs for a new tribute album, *Electronic Evocations*. And there's a new Silver Apples record due this year.

## Wu-Tang Clan, *36 Chambers (Enter The Wu-Tang)*

The most important hip-hop record in recent memory. It is to the next ten years of rap what Boogie Down Productions' *Criminal Minded* was to the last ten: RZA's production launched a thousand beats, and the group's lyrics bypassed played-out gangsta clichés for new possibilities that virtually every important new rapper is picking up on. And it doesn't hurt that Wu-Tang spin-offs (Ghostface Killah, Method Man, Raekwon and others) are all over the hip-hop charts all the time.



## Slayer, *Reign In Blood*

The source of the new generation of metal bands, as important to it as Metallica's *Ride The Lightning* was to the last generation—every death-/black-metal and grindcore band can trace its lineage to here. This is the sound of pure violence, of a cult devoted to murderers and bloodshed: no hippie guitar stuff, just raw unstoppable force. It's less than half an hour long, but gangland-style executions don't generally take long either. To quote CMJ's own Ian Christie, "is there a city in the world where the teenagers don't wear skull T-shirts?"



## Brian Eno/David Byrne, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*

A sleeper—when it came out in 1981, it sounded like a tossed-off side project, but now it sounds like it was made next year. You can hear the techno shortwave eavesdropper Scanner in its half-received radio transmissions, world music in its pan-cultural rhythms, any number of dance hits in its combination of unfamiliar vocal techniques and funk grooves, a paradigm shift in its rejection of linear song structure in favor of deep track construction, and history in the making in its nods to the sound of Islam.

# s for the millennium

the past five or ten years. But what about the next five or ten years? Influences on the music that emerges as the Big Odometer in The Sky turns over



## **Tortoise, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die***

Tortoise found a new (or only slightly used) direction in instrumental rock, foregoing lead guitars in front of "rhythms, resolutions and clusters" (as an early remix album title had it)—bass- and percussion-based grooves, harmonic development and sonic textures. With its remixed offshoots, *Millions Now Living* has already inspired studio-centric, groove-sprawling young instrumental bands all over the place. Directions In Music (including Tortoise alumnus Bundy Brown), Rome and Dianogah are only the beginning, and the band's John McEntire is becoming an in-demand producer.

## **Beck, *Mellow Gold***

When you create a scene around yourself, that's a good sign. When you inspire a slew of imitators, that's a better one. And when musicians considerably older than you—like Johnny Cash and Tom Petty—start covering your songs, that's a very, very good sign that your work is getting important. The Butthole Surfers' "Pepper" was the first wanna-Beck hit, and it won't be the last.



## **Team Dresch, *Personal Best***

Bikini Kill was the band that inspired a lot of teenage girls to start bands, but Team Dresch's passionate, startling, instrumentally spectacular debut is the record that's inspiring teenage girls to start *good* bands, from Champaign-Urbana's Sarge to the groups associated with the British label Slampt. Singer/guitarist Kaia has a solo career of her own, and Donna Dresch and Jody Bleyle's labels Chainsaw and Candy-Ass are nurturing bands like Sleater-Kinney and New Bad Things.

## **The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds***

For years, *Pet Sounds* was one of the poor relations of the Beach Boys discography, hitting its nadir when it was reissued as a twofer with spinoff project Carl And The Passions' *So Tough*. Now it's being honored with a comprehensive multi-CD box, and feted, whispered of and blatantly imitated by up-and-comers from the High Llamas to Eric Matthews to the Elephant 6 contingent of bands. Clearly, its time has come.



## **Chemical Brothers, *Exit Planet Dust***

This album, and the subsequent "Setting Sun" single, suggest that the Chemical Brothers could be the ones who hold the key of how to make electronic music cross over to the pop mainstream—using samples and keyboards in an exciting, kinetic way that does the things that people like about rock. And even if they don't, there are plenty of young whizzes with keyboards starting to follow their example anyway.

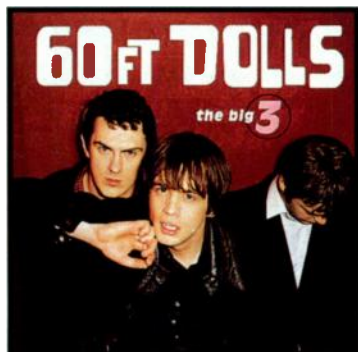


# reviews

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

"I grew my hair out long and I was just a farmer, I guess, a very bad one. I knew nothing about farming or anything like that, but I wanted to grow tomatoes. I love tomatoes." —*Corey Hart on what occupied his time while he "took a break from recording."*

60 FT DOLLS / *The Big 3* / DGC  
 APHEX TWIN / Richard D. James / Sire-EEG  
 APPLES IN STEREO / Science Faire / spinART  
 CAFE TACUBA / *Avalancha De Exitos* / Alterlatino-WEA  
 LORI CARSON / *Everything I Touch Runs Wild* / Restless  
 CRESCENT / *Now* / Atavistic  
 CROWN HEIGHTS / *More Pricks Than Kicks* / American  
 CHOYING DOLMA AND STEVE TIBBETTS / *Cho* / Hannibal-Rykodisc  
 ED'S REDEEMING QUALITIES / *At the Fish & Game Club* / Slow River  
 ENGINE 88 / *Snowman* / Caroline  
 VARIOUS ARTISTS / *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* / Margaritaville-Island  
 GELCAPS / *24 Hour Pythons* / Compulsiv  
 LOS ASS-DRAGGERS / *Abbey Roadkill* / Crypt  
 LUTEFISK / *Burn In Hell Fuckers* / Bong Load  
 VARIOUS ARTISTS / *Macro Dub Infection Volume 2* / Gyroscopic-Caroline  
 MOISTBOYZ / *Moistboyz II* / Grand Royal  
 M.O.T.O. / *Single File* / Mind Of A Child  
 NUMBER ONE CUP / *Wrecked By Lions* / Flydaddy  
 RONROCO / *Ronroco* / Soluna-Island  
 SARGE / *Charcoal* / Mud  
 SCREECHING WEASEL / *Bark Like A Dog* / Eat Wreck Chords  
 SEPTEMBER 67 / *Lucky Shoe* / The Enclave  
 SLOAN / *One Chord To Another* / The Enclave  
 SUKPATCH / *Haulin' Grass And Smokin' Ass* / Slabco  
 DAVID THOMAS AND TWO PALE BOYS / *Erewhon* / Tim/Kerr  
 THE TOWER RECORDINGS / *The Fraternity Of Moonwalkers* / Audible Hiss  
 TRANSGLOBAL UNDERGROUND / *Psychic Karaoke* / MCA  
 ZENI GEVA/SUPERUNIT / *Nai-Ha* / Skin Craft



## 60 FT DOLLS / *The Big 3* / DGC

It used to be that one had to wait several years for a really derivative band to become a reference point; now witness how many bands are compared to Pavement, Sebadoh, or, in the case of the 60 Ft Dolls, Oasis. The astonishing international success of the latter is not to be diminished; Oasis has singlehandedly brought British music back to the forefront of international pop, so love 'em or hate 'em, that they've spawned shouldn't be a surprise. Nor should any of the above be construed to say that 60 Ft Dolls aren't good, just nascent. "Loser" even finds the band stretching a bit and bringing a bit of (the completely *outré*) Elvis Costello to the table. Their next album might even find them with a sound of their own, and as

tight and crunchy as this band is, they may just become the most awesome rock combo to come from Wales since Man. Till then, just pop this in your CD changer right after *Morning Glory* and enjoy a seamless transition from parent to child: e.g. "Roll With It" becomes "Good Times,"

with its "Let the good times roll" chorus. If you're not hung up on originality—I mean *really* not hung up—then this is the beer-drinking or house-cleaning anthem album of the year. **ANDREW BEAUJON**

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 28.

FILE UNDER: Welsh Britpop.

R.I.Y.L.: Blur, Pulp, Noel Gallagher's eyebrows.



## APHEX TWIN / Richard D. James / Sire-EEG

The Aphex Twin has given his new album his real name, and he spends it shifting restlessly within the identity he has made for himself as the hermit genius of techno. His compositions are more stark and machine-made than ever, as if instead of performing them, he wound each of them up with a key and left it to run down. They also make less sense as songs than much of his previous work; instead, they are studies in textural contrast that may or may not lead anywhere. He especially favors the combination of synthetic strings and a high, crackling percussion that resembles the sound of an industrial staple gun. On "4," he reverses conventions by looping the melodic tracks while he fiddles elaborately with the drum machines, creating first simple patterns, then more complex, jungle-like beats, then finally letting the rhythm go haywire, as if the machine had blown a fuse. "Cornish Acid" features sounds that resemble DJ scratching, but are so repetitive as to be obviously non-human. The compositions become

increasingly baroque as the album plays on, so dense with ticking, scraping, sputtering, and clanging that it feels like being inside an overactive clock tower. Maybe this is what the onset of neurosis sounds like... or maybe it's the next frontier. **ANDREA MOED**

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 28.

FILE UNDER: Hyper electronica.

R.I.Y.L.: DJ Spooky, Ben Neill, Chemical Brothers, Brian Eno.

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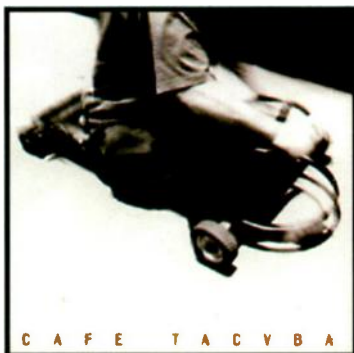
## APPLES IN STEREO / Science Faire / spinART

The Apples In Stereo's earliest singles are super-collectible for two reasons: they're wonderful, and they're nearly impossible to find. After 1995's *Fun Trick Noisemaker* was a surprise college-radio hit, the few copies of the singles hanging around stores vanished. *Science Faire*, originally released to satiate the band's Japanese fan base, collects those early singles, and even though a few songs from them ("Tidal Wave," "Glowworm") were re-recorded for *Noisemaker*, it's worth hearing. Apples leader Robert Schneider set out to re-create the dense, psychedelic textures of his favorite '60 pop on super-low-tech four-track machines, and the bridge between his big ideas and his nonexistent budget was his peculiar genius for arranging and mixing. His strongest impulse seems to be to cram everything full of as much stuff as he can, whether it's tapes (most of these tracks seem to have about five guitars, plus bass, drums, percussion, handclaps, chimes, keyboards and effects) or records—the first Apples 7" had six songs totaling 18 minutes. Consequently, these recordings are claustrophobically compressed, but that's formally appropriate to the material: it's like a peephole you have to look through to see a candy-colored landscape. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18. A new album will follow in 1997.

**FILE UNDER:** Psychedelic home-brew.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Olivia Tremor Control, Guided By Voices, Herman's Hermits.



## CAFE TACUBA / Avalancha De Exitos / Alterlatino-WEA

While listening to the latest from Mexico City's Cafe Tacuba, you will no doubt provide your own additional rhythm track as you scratch your head questioning the band's motives. It's quite simple: Cafe Tacuba is an arthouse, post-new wave, hip-hop, funk, pop, mariachi, soul, fusion-rock band... with a twist. The band's third LP, *Avalancha De Exitos* (Avalanche Of Hits), features its usual blend of traditional Mexican instruments and rhythms, funky horns, beat box percussion, hard-driving guitar riffs, lyrics in thick Mexican slang, new wave synth stylings and lush pop arrangements. This quartet has never had a restrained attitude when it comes to twisting, appropriating or creating a musical style, but for *Avalancha*, it's given itself some extra freedom, covering seven popular traditional and contemporary Latin "hits" (the street-lingo single "Chilanga Banda" is the only original). Imagine a compilation CD where Latino metal, pop, funk, rap and traditional bands covered hits from the '70s, and you're starting to get it—eight very different tracks, eight very different interpretations. The band is currently whittling away at a few dozen songs for its new disc of original tracks, but it's hard not to consider this handful of covers as original itself. **STEVE CIABATTONI**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 3.

**FILE UNDER:** Acute Mexican pop schizophrenia.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Tom Zé, Geggy Tah, Los Lobos.



## LORI CARSON / Everything I Touch Runs Wild / Restless

Lori Carson's lilting soprano delicately vacillates between doe-eyed idealism and pained resignation. Accompanied by a sprinkle of acoustic guitar, her voice sounds a bit like Joni Mitchell's. For *Everything I Touch Runs Wild*, Carson set up a home studio in her New York apartment and recorded the bulk of the album in her high-ceilinged bedroom. It's an appropriate setting for this set of songs, which deals mostly with tortured romance and unrequited love. "My first love beat me black and blue," she confides in "Whole Heart"; "I was fifteen years old/A couple others they were cheaters too/But I never had anybody half as mean as you." Later on, the former Golden Palominos singer realizes that she sounds like a talk-show loser, but can't stop her downward spiral. The instrumental mix is both intimate and sparse, with most of the numbers stripped of the sentimental strings and ethnic percussion that permeated Carson's last outing, *Where It Goes*. The backing tracks may not be memorable, but the vocal melodies are, and they seem to grow stronger with every listen. *Everything I Touch Runs Wild* isn't exactly an epiphany, but it's a nice cathartic sigh. **NEIL GLADSTONE**

**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 25.

**FILE UNDER:** Wistful bedroom folk.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Joni Mitchell, Lisa Germano, Rickie Lee Jones.

## CRESCENT / Now / Atavistic



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 10.

**FILE UNDER:** Basement dirge.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Flying Saucer Attack, the Stooges, the Cakekitchen.

It takes a certain magic to transform the simple and dirty into the special. *Now*, the first full-length from a branch of Bristol, England's Flying Saucer Attack/Movietone/Third Eye Foundation consortium, does just that. On its surface, this grime is intimidating and frustrating; it's an unpolished, underproduced, expansive mess of bass, drums, wiry free-roaming guitars, and a deep, guttural moan. The bass and drums provide an anchor, and the guitar fills in the empty spaces. But as more of the record is explored, a door opens and everything is seen with more clarity. *Now*, as its title indicates, is a snapshot, a glimpse at a moment in time in all its disheveled glory. Once that's understood, the muffled, monochromatic tone becomes more urgent; there's a

freedom inherent in its structure, an unspoken openness that forgives the shortcomings and miscues. And *Now* has both. A few of the songs could have used one or two more run-throughs before starting the recorder. Very seldom is a lyric comprehensible; more often it's a deep, warbling tone that is

more texture than anything. But that's where the mystery enters *Now*, rendering such concerns inconsequential. One listen to the opening track, the glorious "Sun," is enough to quell any doubts. **RANDY ROBERTS**

## CROWN HEIGHTS / More Pricks Than Kicks / American



**DATALOG:** Release date: Jan. 28.

**FILE UNDER:** Soul noise.

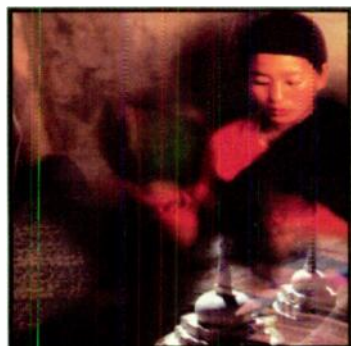
**R.I.Y.L.:** Afghan Whigs, Volcano Suns, Wedding Present, Sonic Youth.

It's scary to think of it this way, but Crown Heights is a nostalgia act. If further proof of nostalgia's alarming acceleration is necessary, *More Pricks Than Kicks* carries the listener whose teeth were cut on early Sonic Youth, Swans, Live Skull and the like back to the indie-noise salad days of the mid '80s/early '90s. Partly, it's because the band is named for a Brooklyn neighborhood that, in 1991, became page-one news when tensions between its Orthodox Jew and West Indian residents erupted into violence and riots. More of the connection is made through bassist Jason Asnes, who was something of an indie-noise pinup with his bands Nice Strong Arm and Sugartime. And then there's the record itself, which essentially sounds like

the best thing that didn't come out in 1991. Primarily driven by the friction between its pop melodies, a propensity toward noise and the tendency to err on the side of throwing too much in the mix, *More Pricks Than Kicks* features some surprisingly soulful toe-tappers. Chief among

these is "Foxy Loser," where the voice of singer Jon Easley (ex-Sorry) scrapes against serrated guitar and a persistently scratchy background rhythm. In no way does *More Pricks Than Kicks* seem out of place in early '97, but man, would I have *totally* loved this five years ago. **SCOTT FRAMPTON**

## CHOYING DROLMA AND STEVE TIBBETTS / Cho / Hannibal-Rykodisc



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 21. Proceeds of the sales will help Drolma's nunnery purchase a solar water heating system.

**FILE UNDER:** Sacred songs.

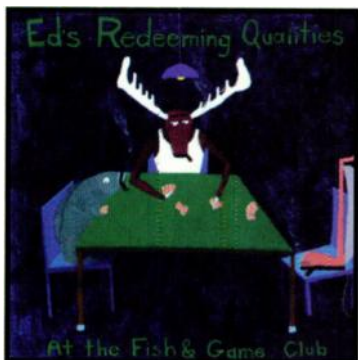
**R.I.Y.L.:** Sheila Chandra, Dead Can Dance, all things Zen.

The compositions on *Cho* are credited to the young Buddhist nun Choying Drolma and the American guitarist Steve Tibbetts, but the heart of many of these elegant and beautiful pieces can be traced back centuries to Padmasambhava, the guru/magician responsible for bringing Buddhism to Tibet. Literally, "cho" means "cutting," and these musical offerings are part of a practice which aims to bring enlightenment by severing the body from worldly distractions. Relax: you won't be tested on this, or need to know the Four Noble Truths to enjoy this passively profound recording. You can't just sing these pieces and become enlightened—it's how you feel it. For Buddhists, the "feel" could be described as a combination of selflessness,

compassion and generosity. Notable for its clarity and sweetness, the music of Drolma and her supporting nuns is closer to minimalist Chinese folk than it is to the better-known bombastic monks' chants. There's an irony in the fact that Buddhism frowns upon cravings and temptations,

but one can't help but be seduced by Drolma's poetic voice and the silences between her melodies. Tibbetts' contribution is deepening those silences and the ambience behind Drolma by orchestrating a canopy of high-pitched bells, guitars, strings and hand percussion. His efforts are both seamless and selfless. Old Padmasambhava would be proud. **STEVE CIABATTONI**





## ED'S REDEEMING QUALITIES / At the Fish & Game Club / Slow River

Musical minimalists often lie somewhere between Wild Man Fischer and Robert Johnson, which is to say, the genius of madness and the madness of genius. Previous albums from the Bay Area trio Ed's Redeeming Qualities have strayed towards the Wild Man end of the scale: simple, stripped down-tunes about guys named Bob, sung with more feeling than style. Until now, Ed's was best known for writing the memorable "Driving On 9," which the Breeders covered on *Last Splash*. *At The Fish & Game Club* should firmly establish Ed's Redeeming Qualities on their own, however. On their fourth album, they've adopted actual production values. And guess what? It's a real improvement. Carrie Bradley's wistful violin and Neno Perrotta's bittersweet

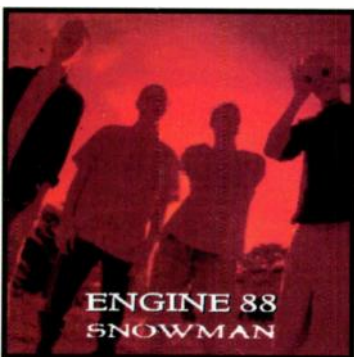
clarinet can be fully savored, while Dan Leone strums away on ukulele. The lyrics' subject matter covers familiar folk territory: moments of satori in diners, loves lost and misunderstood... and, uh, kids getting run over by a school bus. On "Mom" a guy sings "I wish I had the memory of

dropping you off at school..." and goes on to cover a comic list of parental duties through a romantic haze; "Spider" concerns a girl who's "got a big spider in her hair/But everything's okay." Throughout the album, strangeness and silliness mingle for a haunting effect. **HEIDI MACDONALD**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 12.

**FILE UNDER:** Folk eccentrics.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Beck's folkie side, Moxy Fruvous, Geraldine Fibbers.



## ENGINE 88 / Snowman / Caroline

It's hard not to have at least some respect for a band that lists a comprehensive tasting guide to beef jerky on its web site (<http://www.sirius.com/~eknight/>). Engine 88's sense of fun shines through over the Internet and in the music on *Snowman*. Upon first listen, this San Francisco four-piece's new collection of pop-punk tunes is neither wholeheartedly impressive nor hackneyed. But after a little while, these songs reveal an affection for the Sonic Youth/Bob Mould approach to guitar—mixing choppy chord progressions with gritty drones and snappy riffs. Tom Barnes' bubblegum crooning recalls new wave classics by the Vapors and Tears For Fears. When necessary, he summons up the

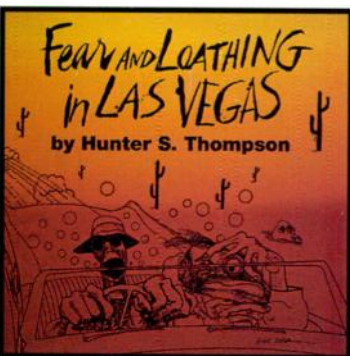
appropriate emotion to convincingly deliver these tales of romantic woe, ballerina dolls and Boutros Boutros-Ghali. David Hawkins' tom-tom-heavy drumming keeps the bottom-end booming. Recorded with Tim O'Heir at Boston's Fort Apache, the album's arrangements and sound

are much more cohesive than those on the band's previous effort, *Clean Your Room*. *Snowman* isn't an incredibly inventive pop-punk album, but it is one of the catchiest in a while. **NEIL GLADSTONE**

**DATALOG:** Release date: Jan. 28.

**FILE UNDER:** Punchy, chugging punk-pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Sugar, Buzzcocks, The Jam.



## VARIOUS ARTISTS / Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas / Margaritaville-Island

Stocking up for your cross-country cruise across America? Don't forget a dramatic reading of Hunter S. Thompson's dope-driven quest for the American Dream, *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*. The 25-year-old yarn is brought back to life with a cast that includes Harry Dean Stanton, Jim Jarmusch, Laraine Newman, Maury Chaykin and Harry Shearer. Jarmusch plays the gonzo journalist who gets an assignment to cover the Mint 400 off-road race being held in Las Vegas. Maury Chaykin is along for the ride as the frenzied sidekick, Duke, and Stanton narrates the twisted tale. At first, it sounds like there's a contest going on between Jarmusch and Stanton for who can be the most groggy and deadpan, but when the mescaline, cocaine and ether kick in, so does the wild abandon. Pterodactyls pop up in the hotel corridors and elevators turn into steel cages. While Duke is taking a bath and tripping on a head full of acid, he orders Thompson to crank a tape of "White Rabbit" and toss the player into the

tub when the song peaks. "I want to go higher!" wails Chaykin, sounding like a young and fanatical Zero Mostel. Tires screech, a country-blues guitar lumbers along and a tabla bubbles to create an overall soundscape often reminiscent of Martin Sheen's monologues in *Apocalypse Now*. Tune in, turn on and feed your head. **NEIL GLADSTONE**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 26.

**FILE UNDER:** Heavily dosed psychotic prose.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Jim Jarmusch, Tom Wolfe, William S. Burroughs.

# second thoughts

A look back at an album that came out a while ago, now that we've had some time to think about it.

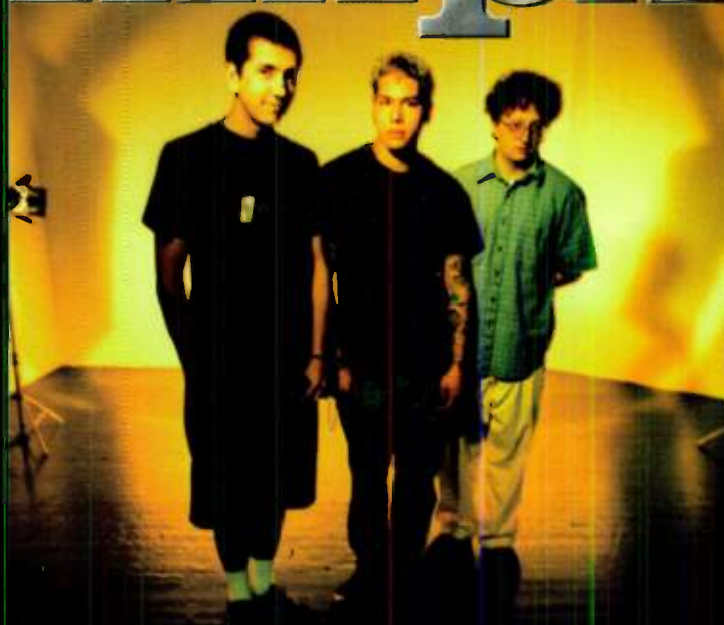


## SMOG / *The Doctor Came At Dawn* / Drag City

Bill (Smog) Callahan made the bleakest, saddest album of 1996, a record that takes its time sneaking up on you. At first, the barren spaciousness of *The Doctor Came At Dawn* seems like a way of filling out the emptiness between lines of the songs as unobtrusively as possible. Listen a few times, especially at a time and place that lets you hear it and nothing else, though, and it becomes something different: every softly plucked note becomes a thunderclap, every line sounds like it's from a crumpled attempt at a suicide note. The sound of the record is rich and lush—there are even strings in a few places—though it can be as blank as "Hangman

Blues," punctuated only with a single soft chord a few times a minute. But Callahan's voice cuts across the arrangements like a bleeding gash—it's right there, in your face, laughing with slow horror, and it feels like if you pulled away it would kill him. In these songs, love is an act of desperation and resignation ("You moved in/To my hotel/You could have done better/But oh well"), and its absence makes its specifics even more painful to think about ("How could I ignore/Your left breast/Your right breast"). There are broken hearts and scary drugs lurking everywhere in the lyrics, and at times it's too much to bear: when Callahan's voice leaps up crazily for a falsetto holler in "Whistling Teapot (Rag)" or Cynthia Dall joins in on "Lize" ("In the old days/You took pride in your lies/You used to pay more attention/To details"), it's genuinely terrifying. But this isn't just breakup music: it's music for the aftermath of a breakup with someone who's ruined your life. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

## max



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**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 1.  
**FILE UNDER:** Acid punk.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Pere Ubu, Brother J.T.

## GELCAPS / 24 Hour Pythons / Compulsiv

Break open the Gelcaps and you'll find gritty, basement punk laced with the sounds of the stratosphere. Big, badass riffs build and implode into space jams layered with tape loops, gurgling analog synths and plinking guitar. On "Little Coat," the four-piece churns over a simple melodic pattern as if it's playing a maniacal nursery rhyme. All of a sudden, the tense repetition gives way to a candy-apple-sweet chorus. "Citizens Band" is a warped ode to the days when CBs ruled the airwaves. A fuzzed-out blues lead cranks like the motor of a souped-up chopper, and Doug Anson spits out a ramble as cantankerous as a truck driver who's been behind the wheel for 18 hours straight. Just when you think you've got the Gelcaps' formula figured out,

they dose you with "Love Dude," which could be an excerpt from the *Exorcist* soundtrack: a reedy Middle Eastern tape loop hovers above a track of Afro-Cuban percussion. Coming in around 30 minutes, *24 Hour Pythons* is more of a mini-album than a full-length debut, but what's there

makes for a pretty wild convoy of rock, good buddy. **NEIL GLADSTONE**



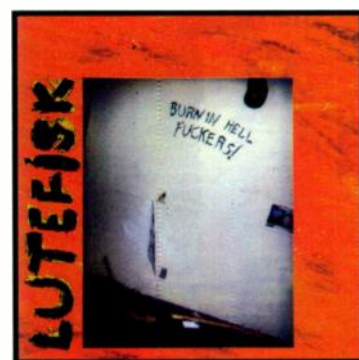
**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Dexedrine on disc.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Misfits, Oblivians, Dwarves.

## LOS ASS-DRAGGERS / Abbey Roadkill! / Crypt

If you look up at your CD player the first time *Abbey Roadkill!* pauses for a moment, you'll see the track counter turning from 2 to 3. You see, Los Ass-Draggers are four young Spanish men who are in one hell of a hurry—or maybe they just eat pure amphetamines for lunch—and they've got better things to do than stop between songs, especially when they're in the same key (as most of these are) and at the same everyone-faster-than-everyone-else tempo (as all of them are). It usually takes them a few seconds to get in synch ("clicking off is for pussies"), but when they do, they charge ahead like a blinded rhino, sloppy but unstoppable. It's a little regrettable that Los A-Ds felt the need to explain their lyrics in liner notes, given that sensitivity

and English are not among their strong points (song titles include "Makin' Shit Like A Bear," "Move Yer Ass Right Now Jerry Garcia" and "Make Me Rock"), and that you can't make out what singer Guss is snarling anyway. This isn't music to think about, it's music to spazz out to, to wake yourself up

or goad yourself into a testosterone frenzy. 21 songs, 23 minutes, take a deep breath and press play. **DOUGLAS WOLK**



**DATALOG:** Release date: Jan. 28.  
**FILE UNDER:** R-O-C-K.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Early Flaming Lips, Melvins.

## LUTEFISK / Burn In Hell Fuckers / Bong Load

Lutefisk's got the rock. It's all in place: truly amazing riffs and seamless songs. *Burn In Hell Fuckers* is true, reckless guy-rock from a group that that's got a monster inside of it. But the unfortunate truth is that one or two monstrous missteps can sometimes taint an entire record, and Lutefisk took one big leap when it decided to do a distorto dirge version of Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music." It makes one question the band's musical judgment from the first note to the last. Each half of *Burn In Hell Fuckers* (it's kinda satisfying writing that) has one of these errors; without them, the rest of the album could be nearly flawless *rock*, gushing with volume and guitars all over the place, reeling off great songs (including a decent cover of Paleface's "Burn And Rob"). But then the record stumbles, first with "Something In It," a halfway clever song that would have made good half-minute, between-song filler, but not five minutes' worth, and then "Funky Music." I suppose it's backhanded testament to the band that you can't ignore

these massive songs, but damn, I wish I could, because the rest of the album is pretty great. **RANDY ROBERTS**

# mixed signals



With the blunted grooves and slick, jazzy sounds that have flowed from its speakers over the last three years, San Francisco's Mushroom Jazz club has become a mecca for the West Coast acid jazz/trip hop scene. DJ **Mark Farina** guides your way through *Mushroom Jazz* (Om), a double-disc, enhanced-CD set that emits the same positive vibes and euphoric flow as its namesake. Both recent cuts and old faithfuls make up Farina's audio mix: a chilly, 11-track journey showcasing the jazz, hip-hop and house blend that's led to the scene's diverse and faithful following. Featuring standouts like Apollo Grooves' "Gibby Music" and Hydroponic Groove Sessions' "In Hale," Farina's set is a layering of hypnotizing sound that elevates your mind like

a slow-rising puff of smoke. The accompanying CD-ROM features interviews with influential figures within the scene (James Lavelle, Eddie Piller, Gilles Peterson), DJ profiles, articles on the club, and the Mushroom Jazz Mix Station, which allows you to remix tracks using a database of samples, beats and effects... British producer/DJ **Dave Clarke** leaves an extremely uncharacteristic imprint on *Dave Clarke Presents X-Mix—Electro Boogie* (K7). Usually known for pounding trance and hard techno, Clarke fires up an electro-breaks set of cosmic proportions here, fueled by old-school classics as well as modern Detroit electro-bass cuts. It's a funky, bumpy ride that may not be Clarke's usual course, but his familiar backspin, scratching, and quick-edit style of spinning leaves no question as to who's in control of this cruiser... The 1994 compilation *History Part 1* documented the first half of the drum and bass saga, pinpointing the emergence of jungle from its humble breakbeat origins. The **DJ DB**-mixed *History Part 2: The Rough And The Smooth* (Sm:)e picks up where its predecessor left off, highlighting landmark cuts of the last three years to not only show where the sound has been, but suggest where it's going. The arduous task of mixing the rough (The Bomber's "Aphrodite," Asylum's "Da Bass II Dark") with the smooth (Alex Reece's "Pulp Fiction," Photek's "Complex") is handled masterfully by DB, and the results make up one of the most diverse and, yes, historical drum and bass collections on the market. It's a new course requirement for all breakbeat scientists. **M. TYE COMER**

## The Notwist 12

"Torture Day" featured on this month's CD sampler.

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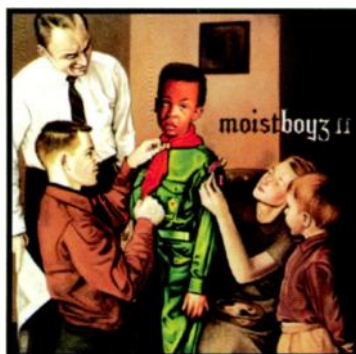


## VARIOUS ARTISTS / *Macro Dub Infection Volume 2* / Gyroscope-Caroline

Ambient techno, as the aggregate of many vital sub-genres, is still evolving so rapidly that one needn't worry about sequels as formulaic reread. As with producer Kevin Martin's first collection, what distinguishes the second *MDI* is a brazen diversity somehow matched by a hypnotic unity among its 24 tracks by "name" artists, underground DJs and youngbloods. As the title indicates, deep bass undercurrents rumble throughout, and heavily treated drums spin off into extended riffs and breakbeats. Tempos vary from jungle to crawl; some tracks keep instrumentation minimal, constructing interweaving patterns; others put guitar, keys, trumpet, and samples into their individual sonic deep-fry. While Berlin-based duo Maurizio starts matters off with the very Can-evoking "M6," another German duo, Mouse On Mars, actually works with Can drummer Jaki Leibzeit on the quietly wonderful "Sehn Sud." Chicago trio Rome does a delightfully creepy remix of its 12" "Beware Soul Snatchers"; soloist Tao's "Esoteric Red"

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 19.  
**FILE UNDER:** Dubadelic excursions.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Tortoise, Mouse On Mars, Axiom Dub.

suggests "Rock The Bells" with a modern-primitive Japanese aesthetic. The set's final track features the British squad Ice remixing the demigod of indie-twang, Will "Palace" Oldham, and it actually works quite nicely. While not every track here is a peak, *MDI II* is another rich source of artists with distinct but complementary visions. **DANNY HOUSMAN**

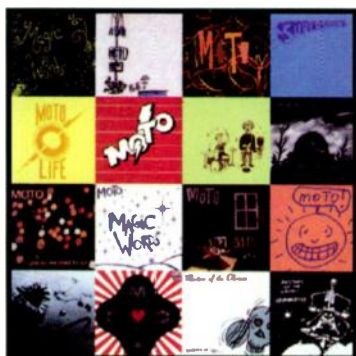


## MOISTBOYZ / *Moistboyz II* / Grand Royal

A side-project for Ween guitarist Dean, the Moistboyz are the '90s' lone purveyors of nit-wit cock-rock. No artsy-craftsy malarkey, no annoyingly "clever" time changes, no shirts, and no apologies. What they do seek to do is annoy and shock, which is a pretty tall order in 1996. (Hell, the last Frogs record elicited nary a blush from my own grandmother.) Over a minimal backing of harsh drum machine and simple metal riffs that delve deeper into the metal side of Ween (conspicuously absent from recent releases), Dickey Moist rants an agenda that's pro-smoking ("Second Hand Smoker"), pro-sexual experimentation ("It Ain't Rude"), pro-drugs ("Crank"), and against those damn uppity women's libbers ("American Made And Duty-Free"). The *tour de force* is probably "Lazy & Cool," which functions as the Moistboyz-as-way-of-life manifesto: "Let me try your Nova, let me break in your tires/Keep yer eye out for the pigs, cuz my license expired... Lazy and cool, I fuck all the rules, I'm drunk and I'm stupid and I dropped out of school." You get the

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Lo-fi and lowbrow.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Ween, the Frogs, Al Goldstein, Howard Stern.

picture. If this sounds painfully low-brow and stupid, well, it is; and the joke wears thin after a couple listens. In the meantime, though, you get to enjoy profound nuggets of wisdom like "Just because you smoke one dick doesn't mean you're gay," and you're probably the better for it. **LOWE STOKES**



## M.O.T.O. / *Single File* / *Mind Of A Child* ●

M.O.T.O. (short for Masters Of The Obvious, a duo of singer/guitarist Paul Caporino and drummer Beck Dudley) has been around for ten years, with exactly one previous (long-out-of-print) CD to show for its immense repertoire of instantly catchy tunes. Caporino is a genius melodist—halfway through any of his songs, you'll start convincing yourself that he's stolen the melody from your favorite classic-rock record (he hasn't). He's also got an utterly filthy mind and burning fury about just about everything, but his pissed-off scatology is so good-natured that it comes off as charming and sweet, somehow. He also plays and sings with a bullheaded confidence that suggests he's convinced that he's an AM-radio star and projects past the band's AM-radio sound, even when he's singing lines like "you better bring a mask and an aqualung lest you drown in my jizz." Result: songs like "Dick About It" and "It's So Big It's Fluorescent" are way, way better than they sound in theory. (To be fair, about half these songs aren't about Caporino's dick.) *Single File* collects 27 songs from M.O.T.O.'s first nine singles, plus the (honest-to-God) classic compilation track "Crystallize My Penis," and it'll serve as fodder for your mental jukebox for weeks. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 15.  
**FILE UNDER:** Crud-encrusted pop hits manqué.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Stooges, B.T.O., Buzzcocks, Guided By Voices.

# various artists



EERIE BAZAAR

The most forward-looking comp of the month is the British import **United Mutations** (Lo), an album where electro-heads meet rockers and everybody parties. Thurston Moore jams with Infrastructure, the British goofs Mike Flowers Pops get remixed by the Aphex Twin, Luke Vibert gives an old big-band record some new clothes, Ui does a live cover of Liquid Liquid's "Out," Tortoise's gamelan-tinged "Why We Fight" is reworked by D, and lots of other cool stuff happens... **Eerie Bazaar** collects tracks from the very, very weird San Francisco label Eerie Materials. Eerie's bands tend to have names like Gang Of Pork and Hemorrhoy Rogers, and on the rare occasions when they produce something recognizable as rock, it's usually intentionally lame. Most of the tracks here are tape cut-ups, experiments and indescribable creepy strangeness. Highlight: the Evolution Control Committee's "But I Don't Believe In Evolution," a creationist children's record rearranged into an unending nightmare... **The Resonance Found At The Core Of A Bubble** (Bubble Core) is a terrific collection of mostly drone- and ambiance-based musics—some "illbient" (there's a good DJ Spooky track here), some not—almost none of which are meant for dancing. Squelch's "Going For A Walk" is an actual recording of a walk along a busy city street, with dub effects added; Number One Dog's "Analog Freebase" is a tinny little beat hidden under white noise so dense you could cut it with a knife; the Dylan Group's "Time Displacement (Black Hole Version)" is a single-note, bell-like drone, gradually joined by a few others over the course of ten minutes, with a smidgen of percussion in the middle... Inspirational point of packaging: the track listing on the back cover of **Hey Mom! The Garage Is On My Foot** (Damaged Goods) looks normal, except for something scribbled over the Phantom Pregnancies' track: "ARE NOT ON HERE FUCK CDS." On the CD, their track is 58 seconds of silence. Too bad: they missed the party. The rest of the compilation is hopped-up '60s-style trash-rock from Thee Headcoats and their friends, notably Holly Golightly's fabulous "In You." **DOUGLAS WOLK**

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## NUMBER ONE CUP / *Wrecked By Lions* / Flydaddy

Chicago's Number One Cup is fascinated with the oblique, with the asymmetrical, with the song conceived as fragment. The mostly brief songs on its second album proceed by throwing together a couple of guitar tones (or a synth) and a canny riff or chord sequence, and exploring what can be squeezed out of these self-imposed limitations—variety is largely pursued *between* rather than *within* songs. This makes for an appealing sense of flow, as between the straight indie-rock of "Waiting For The Lions" and the adjacent, somber bass-and-organ throb of "Maybe There's A Thread." The band is also effective when it strips down even further, as on "Bright Orange Fireball Sun," where the combo of acoustic and distortion (minus rhythm section) frames

**DATALOG:** Release date: Jan. 18. Preceded by an EP, *Kim Chee Is Cabbage*.

**FILE UNDER:** Economy of means, obscurity of meanings.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Butterglory, Spent, Sportsguitar.

goofy lyrical details that would get lost in a longer or louder song. The Cup's approach isn't free of dangers, however—a few moves (the synth burbles of "Treesong," the muffled Mark E. Smith imitation that opens "Paris") have been overused in recent years, and Seth Cohen, though not a Malkmus-style mumbler, has an apparent unwillingness to emote or get excited. Overall, one would like to tell the band to let loose a little, though the closing "Three Miles From Talent," the only song on *Wrecked* that might be called overwrought, suggests that bombast and the sweeping gesture just aren't this band's strong suits, which is fine. **FRANKLIN BRUNO**



## RONROCO / *Ronroco* / Soluna-Island

*Ronroco* is a somewhat non-traditional recording of traditional instruments, led by Argentine musician/producer Gustavo Santaolalla. Ronroco is also the name of the instrument that dominates the disc. Related to the charango, another South American mandolin-like instrument, the ronroco produces bright, but deep notes, brisk percussive chords and dreamy melodies. While the sounds of *Ronroco* are undeniably South American, this record doesn't focus on preserving the traditional melodies and folksongs of the Andes. Santaolalla, along with Anybal Kerpel (vibes, melodica), has made a record of hypnotic spaciousness constructed from the echoing patterns of ronroco, charango and guitar, patterns that are as

**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 4. Santaolalla and Kerpel produced the new Cafe Tacuba album.

**FILE UNDER:** Andean ambient.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Jaime Torres, Will Ackerman, Kronos Quartet.

pretty as they are elusive. It's possible that record store clerks will keep moving this disk from the World Music section to the New Age section and back again, because where it really belongs is that grey area of instrumental music that's not really "world," but not tepid enough to be

New Age. Perhaps one day we'll live in a world where record stores are all alphabetical, and someone will happily run across this heady instrumental disc while looking for Linda Ronstadt or something. **STEVE CIABATTONI**



## SARGE / *Charcoal* / Mud

Punk rock groups led by female singer-songwriters are popping up a little more frequently these days, but where Sarge fits into that fray isn't really clear, as *Charcoal* really has more surprises than clichés. Sarge is from Champaign, IL; by all current standards of measurement, it's definitely a "Champaign band," or more accurately, a really good meshing of certain regional musical ideologies: like bassist Rachel Switzky's old band Corndolly, the band is predominantly woman-based, and the songwriting is thoroughly solid. And, like many other Champaign bands, Sarge simply rocks. "Dear Josie, Love Robyn" is pure Buzzcocks, and the whole record (up until the last few softer-but-not-soft tracks) is totally punk rock—underneath

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 12.

**FILE UNDER:** Pop-punk with integrity.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Poster Children, Tiger Trap, Buzzcocks.

Elizabeth Elmore's sometimes difficult to reconcile vocals. Elmore's singing, a little reminiscent of Velocity Girl's Sarah Shannon, is deceptively sweet, wrapped around nine songs which are almost all angry—lashing out at deception, betrayal, and physical abuse. "I Don't" is a reminder that

people should put pianos into rock songs way more than they do. Which is not to say Sarge is trying to cover huge amounts of ground—it's not—but it's doing what it does with quite a lot of depth, and for that matter, first-rate songs. **LIZ CLAYTON**



## SCREECHING WEASEL / Bark Like A Dog / Fat Wreck Chords

Screaching Weasel broke up two years ago after a handful of records filled with sugar-coated Ramones/Descendents-isms that made theirs the favored logo of the tent-sized T-shirt nation. Guitarist Johnny Jughead left to pursue theatrical ambitions, while the other three opted for pure Ramones reductionism as the Riverdales. Hopefully, punk rock's fave curmudgeon Ben Weasel's learned to never say never again, for here we are with a brand-new Screaching Weasel LP in hand. And y'know what? It's a doozy. That year-and-a-half off did the Weasels some good. Same la-la melodies, same frantic tempos, same snotty adenoidal vocals, encased within a meaner, more muscular sound. It matches a slightly more jaundiced lyrical viewpoint gracing certain songs: Ben Weasel's always been free with an opinion, but facing what he's admitted was the worst year of his life has resulted in hate bombs like "Cool Kids," which shreds the backstabbing in-crowd nature of punk scene politics. Then he turns around and crafts three-minute gems of perfect romantic achiness, like the closing "Your Name Is Tattooed On My Heart" and its flawless evocation of Tommy James and the Shondells had they owned Marshalls. Screaching Weasel has just delivered the LP of its career. **TIM STEGALL**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 5.

**FILE UNDER:** '60s-AM-radio-soaked punk rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:** The Queers, Ramones, Buddah Records, Undertones.



## SEPTEMBER 67 / Lucky Shoe / The Enclave ●

It takes a little while to get to know Shannon Worrell. Judging from *Lucky Shoe*, the September 67 singer and songwriter is not such a shy wallflower that she won't ask someone to shush in a theater, but she's not about to boast about blowing her ex-boyfriend in one, either. She reveals her truths slowly, taking her time to warm up to you, and in measured tones. Often, a whole song hinges on the one small, ordinary thing—the telling banality of "paint me pornographic underneath some palm trees" in "Fire Engine Red," for example—that makes it suddenly knowable and immediately real. Producers John Morand and Cracker's David Lowery basically stay out of the duo's way, adorning the record with some simple, warm sounds like mandolin picking or timorous electric guitar that allow Kristin Asbury's spare drumming or Worrell's Southern lilt—"naked" comes out "neckid," a syllable is added to "rose"—to carry a song. There's a gentle push-pull between what Worrell will let you know on the first listen and what she only hints at, and that subtle tension is ultimately what makes *Lucky Shoe* more than sweetly catchy. **SCOTT BURKE**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 5.

**FILE UNDER:** Singer-songwriters pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Patty Griffin, Iris DeMent, Shawn Colvin.

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## SLOAN / One Chord To Another / The Enclave

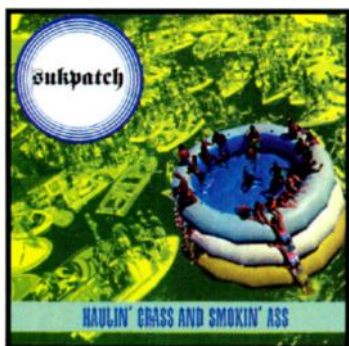
Riff-laden guitar pop is harder to pull off than it seems. To the layperson, it appears that all you have to do is find three or four good chords, slide your fingers from one to another in a stemless, fluid manner, and create a lead melody that glues the whole song together. That's all. How hard could it be? *One Chord To Another* provides the answer, and unfortunately, a majority of the time it's too much for Sloan. The failing lies in the songs' construction. They don't flow; riffs collide more often than they merge. Were Sloan's songs a bit *more* skewed, it could all be perceived as intentional, but these are too close to the center—they just miss. Which is troubling, because there's an intrinsic charisma at the heart of *One Chord*. Maybe it's the horn section, the well-placed piano, or the "spot a Beatle riff" game they play ("Eleanor Rigby" here, "Got To Get You Into My Life" there) that keeps listeners coming back. Or it could be the hope that all of these songs will magically click the way the better ones, "G Turns To D" and "A Side Wins," do, and it'll all make

perfect sense. But it hasn't, yet. **RANDY ROBERTS**

**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 25.

**FILE UNDER:** Power-pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Posies, Eric Matthews, Cheap Trick.



## SUKPATCH / Haulin' Grass And Smokin' Ass / Slabco

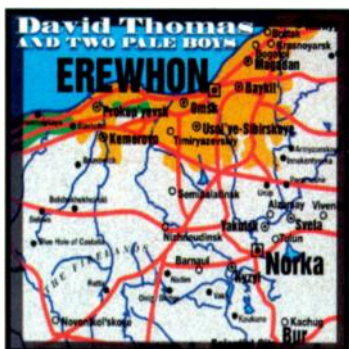
What do you do if you're in love with the sound of homemade bedroom pop and droning keyboards, but also with the rhythms and patterns of dance music? If you're Sukpatch, you bring them together and see if you can arrange a successful *ménage à trois*. Credited to "Escrow, Swiss Timing & Sanyo Courts," *Haulin' Grass* has 15 tuneful little pieces that could be straightforward indie-pop singles if their arrangements weren't built on samples and dizzily rich one-handed organ parts. "Hollow Tips" lifts its chords and mood from a Six Cents And Natalie single and its rhythm from what sounds like a scratched-up copy of *Ultimate Breaks And Beats*; "Smooth Guys" decries "the whiners and the clueless fucks" over Soul II Soul's favorite groove and an analog synth so old you can hear its individual vibrations. Other points of honor for Sukpatch: its rhythms are consistently interesting and kinetic (the beat on "C. King" should be on a Todd Terry record, if that's not where the band got it from); almost

every track makes the most of the singer's rather plain voice with nicely arranged multi-tracked harmonies; and there's nothing that sounds like it's very likely to be a guitar anywhere on the record. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 15.

**FILE UNDER:** Indie-pop co-opts the sound of the clubs.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Land Of The Loops, Stereolab, Pest 5000.



## DAVID THOMAS AND TWO PALE BOYS / Erewhon / Tim/Kerr

David Thomas is Pere Ubu's shambling, primal force. Andy Diagram, one of the Two Pale Boys, is Spaceheads' tape-looping, horn-playing soul of calculation. Both are idiosyncratic performers and cerebral songwriters who define the personalities of the bands they play with. It's not surprising, then, that their collaboration with guitarist Keith Moliné, the other Pale Boy, often feels like a tug of war. On "Planet of Fools," Diagram keeps leaving abrupt silences around Thomas, while Thomas constantly bolts ahead of Diagram's rhythms. Taking the ringmaster's role on "Weird Cornfields," Thomas sings part of the song, then pauses to rant at the listener ("Let me tell you about self-pity... It's a te-e-e-errible, te-e-e-errible thing!"), pumps the accordion, and sounds like he does on *Monster Walks The Winter Lake* and his other one-off solo projects. When Diagram gets his moment on "Lantern," he plays two simultaneous trumpet parts off Thomas's voice to create a hypnotic track that wouldn't be misplaced on one of his own albums.

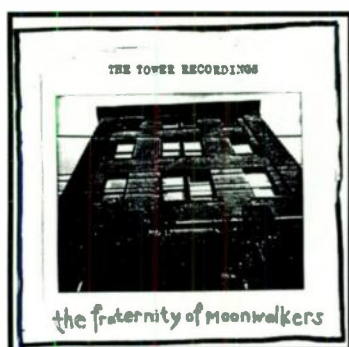
Nonetheless, the more you listen to *Erewhon*, the more compatible the two of them seem. Both are attracted to strange sonic textures, whether it's Thomas's wheezing and coughing as part of his delivery, or Diagram's mixing of Ubu-esque carnival organ, trumpet, and electronics. Most of all, both take a theatrical approach to their music, and together they have created one loopy show. **ANDREA MOED**

**DATALOG:** Released Oct. 21. Touring in March.

**FILE UNDER:** Absurdist art-rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Pere Ubu, Red Krayola, Henry Cow.

# THE TOWER RECORDINGS / The Fraternity Of Moonwalkers / Audible Hiss



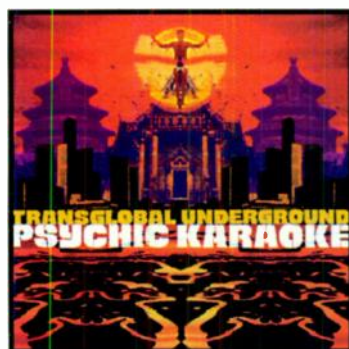
DATALOG: Released Nov. 10.

FILE UNDER: Lo-fi space soundtracks with a tribal feel.

R.I.Y.L.: Thinking Fellers Union Local 282, Alastair Galbraith.

If the "lo-fi" cover design doesn't tip you off, *The Fraternity Of Moonwalkers* is a sparse, patched-together album on the inside, too. The Tower Recordings work the atmospheric/flute playin'/tape-loop axis with ease and proficiency—this is the kind of record where "amp technique" is credited as an instrument. Overall, the effect is calming in its own delicate and slightly alienating way; gentle repetition is the pattern of most of the songs, complemented by Helen Rush's ethereal voice and the soft, Nick Drake-ish intonations of Mr. "PG Six." "Galaxy M100" is a six-minute-plus highlight, beautiful in the beginning and almost indecipherably distorted and rocking at the end. TTR's finest elements come together really nicely in some of the longer songs, but the shorter ones have their own real isolation-of-a-single-element beauty. That said, this hour-plus album can be a trying listen: not everything holds itself together with as much grace as the finer moments. It's small, careful sounds they're playing with, and even when they do blow them up big ("Holoscanners" sounds like some outer-worldly space-jazz played in a sheet metal factory) the tiniest details still stick out as boldly as the largest. It's possible that the Tower Recordings are being a bit more scientific than they sound. **LIZ CLAYTON**

# TRANSGLOBAL UNDERGROUND / Psychic Karaoke / MCA



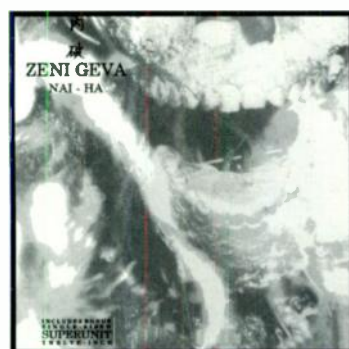
DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 11.

FILE UNDER: International dance.

R.I.Y.L.: Cipsy Kings, Laibach, Beats International.

When they say "transglobal," brother, they mean "transglobal"—Transglobal Underground's defining concept seems to be that world music should sound like all of the world's musics at once, not just pop-reggae or Eastern European disco, but folk-dub-qawwali-dancehall-flamenco-klezmer-techno-whatever. Almost every track on *Psychic Karaoke*, TGUG's fourth album (originally released in Europe last year), tries to cram in as many simultaneous international styles as it can, which sometimes results in overkill: "Psycho Karaoke" features somebody screaming over a faux-Russian string section and industrial beat, then throws in a vaguely Islamic-traditional reed solo and some muffled toasting. What this all-over-the-place DJ collective needs to hold together is a strong front-person, which it gets in the fabulous Natacha Atlas, a singer with a sure grasp of Middle Eastern vocal styles and a commanding stage presence. When Atlas is singing, which she is about half the time, everything else magically falls into place behind her: tablas sound like they belong in every disco drummer's kit, clarinets seem like a natural for dancehall rhythms. And even when she's not, TGUG is intermittently capable of pleasantly surprising combinations, like the juice-harp/handclaps/power-chord groove that powers "Mouth Wedding." **DOUGLAS WOLK**

# ZENI GEVA/SUPERUNIT / Nai-Ha / Skin Graft



DATALOG: Released Oct. 29.

FILE UNDER: Very, very loud rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Melvins, Gore, Caspar Brötzmann Massaker.

Zeni Geva's sonic assault has taken on surprising layers of subtlety throughout the decade, which gives the band greater capacity to astonish listeners who expect nothing more than unmitigated crunch. Unfortunately, certain monochromatic aspects of guitarist/leading light KK Null's most rock-oriented project—particularly his voice—have made Zeni Geva a much more satisfying prospect live than on disc. Except for this one. *Nai-Ha*, recorded back in 1992 and only now available in the U.S., doesn't demonstrate anything that the other ZG records don't. It just demonstrates it better, with nary a weak moment in sight. The apocalyptic title track, brilliantly set up by the restrained and haunting "Angel," is followed by something even better: "Terminal Hz," an orchestra of shrieking guitar feedback, multi-tracked with sundry bits of sonic mayhem buried subtly within. Its conclusion resembles bagpipes gone amok, with shrieking feedback layered, delayed, and processed to provide a wondrous tail-chasing effect. The bonus 12" of Superunit, a short-lived band in which ZG was joined by Steve Albini and Mas-P, mates Albini's distinctive minor-key progressions with compacted ZG noise, to middling effect. No sludge here, just pure crunch, roar, squall, and scream, presented with unusual elegance. **JON FINE**

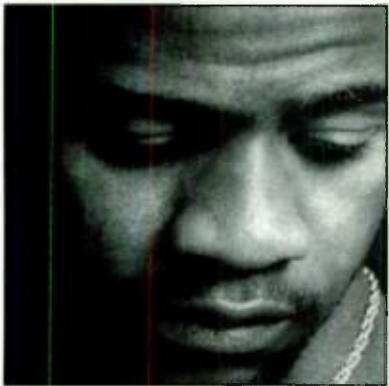


# TOP 75

[ Alternative Radio Airplay ]

| ARTIST                               | TITLE                                             | LABEL                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION        | Now I Got Worried                                 | Matador-Capitol       |
| 2 LUSCIOUS JACKSON                   | Fever In Fever Out                                | Grand Royal-Capitol   |
| 3 JOHNNY CASH                        | Unchained                                         | American              |
| 4 WILCO                              | Being There                                       | Reprise               |
| 5 KULA SHAKER                        | K                                                 | Columbia-CRG          |
| 6 TOOL                               | /Enima                                            | Zoo                   |
| 7 MAZZY STAR                         | Among My Swan                                     | Capitol               |
| 8 POLARA                             | Pantomime (EP)                                    | Interscope            |
| 9 SCREECHING WEASEL                  | Bark Like A Dog                                   | Fat Wreck Chords      |
| 10 LESS THAN JAKE                    | Losing Streak                                     | Capitol               |
| 11 MARILYN MANSON                    | Antichrist Superstar                              | Nothing-Interscope    |
| 12 764-HERO                          | Salt Sinks & Sugar Floats                         | Up                    |
| 13 CARDIGANS                         | First Band On The Moon                            | Mercury               |
| 14 FIREWATER                         | Get Off The Cross (We Need The Wood For The Fire) | Jetset                |
| 15 FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON            | Dead Cities                                       | Astralwerks-Caroline  |
| 16 CAKE                              | Fashion Nugget                                    | Capricorn-Mercury     |
| 17 VIC CHESNUTT                      | About To Choke                                    | Capitol               |
| 18 TRICKY                            | Pre-Millennium Tension                            | Island                |
| 19 MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD           | Shack-man                                         | Gramavision-Rykodisc  |
| 20 RUSTED ROOT                       | Remember                                          | Mercury               |
| 21 CATHERINE                         | Hot Saki & Bedtime Stories                        | TVT                   |
| 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Safe And Sound                                    | Mercury               |
| 23 KORN                              | Life Is Peachy                                    | Immortal-Epic         |
| 24 SEELY                             | Julie Only                                        | Too Pure-American     |
| 25 LEMONHEADS                        | Car Button Cloth                                  | TAG-Atlantic          |
| 26 JOSEPHINE WIGGS EXPERIENCE        | Bon Bon Lifestyle                                 | Grand Royal           |
| 27 RAILROAD JERK                     | The Third Rail                                    | Matador               |
| 28 SUKIA                             | Contacto Espacial Con El Tercer Sexo              | Nickelbag             |
| 29 BUSH                              | Razorblade Suitcase                               | Trauma-Interscope     |
| 30 SEBADOH                           | Harmacy                                           | Sub Pop               |
| 31 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Axiom Dub: Mysteries Of Creation                  | Axiom-Island          |
| 32 HEADS                             | No Talking Just Head                              | Radioactive-MCA       |
| 33 PHISH                             | Billy Breathes                                    | Elektra-EEG           |
| 34 SILVER JEWS                       | The Natural Bridge                                | Drag City             |
| 35 YO LA TENGO                       | Genius + Love = Yo La Tengo                       | Matador               |
| 36 HEATMISER                         | Mic City Sons                                     | Caroline              |
| 37 CHEMICAL BROTHERS                 | "Setting Sun" (5")                                | Astralwerks-Caroline  |
| 38 LOIS                              | Infinity Plus                                     | K                     |
| 39 ARCHERS OF LOAF                   | All The Nations Airports                          | Alias/Elektra-EEG     |
| 40 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Mortal Kombat: More Kombat                        | TVT                   |
| 41 JOHN PARISH AND POLLY JEAN HARVEY | Dance Hall At Louse Point                         | Island                |
| 42 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Pop American Style                                | March                 |
| 43 DESCENDENTS                       | Everything Sucks                                  | Epitaph               |
| 44 STEREO LAB                        | Laminations (EP)                                  | Elektra-EEG           |
| 45 TANYA DONELLY                     | Sliding And Diving (EP)                           | 4AD                   |
| 46 BAD BRAINS                        | Black Dots                                        | Caroline              |
| 47 BOYS LIFE                         | Departures And Landfalls                          | Headhunter-Cargo      |
| 48 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Red Hot + Rio                                     | Antilles-Verve        |
| 49 HEAVENLY                          | Operation Heavenly                                | K                     |
| 50 HUMBLE GODS                       | No Heroes                                         | Hollywood             |
| 51 ELYSIAN FIELDS                    | Bleed Your Cedar                                  | Radioactive           |
| 52 R.E.M.                            | New Adventures In Hi-Fi                           | Warner Bros.          |
| 53 SNEAKER PIMPS                     | "Tesko Suicide"/"Post-Modern Sleaze" (5")         | Clean Up-Virgin       |
| 54 RACHEL'S                          | The Sea And The Bells                             | Quarterstick          |
| 55 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | In Defense Of Animals 2                           | Caroline              |
| 56 CAT POWER                         | What Would The Community Think                    | Matador               |
| 57 MORCHEEBA                         | Who Can You Trust?                                | China-Discovery       |
| 58 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Oil/Skampilation Vol. 2 - Skalloween              | Radical               |
| 59 THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS              | Factory Showroom                                  | Elektra-EEG           |
| 60 HI FI AND THE ROADBURNERS         | Wine, Women And Sin                               | Victory               |
| 61 COUNTING CROWS                    | Recovering The Satellites                         | Geffen                |
| 62 GUIDED BY VOICES                  | Sunfish Holy Breakfast (EP)                       | Matador               |
| 63 WEEZER                            | Pinkerton                                         | DGC                   |
| 64 SATURNINE                         | Flags For The Unknown Territories                 | Dirt                  |
| 65 WEDDING PRESENT                   | Saturnalia                                        | Cooking Vinyl America |
| 66 DJ SHADOW                         | Entroducing                                       | Mo Wax/Jffr-London    |
| 67 SOUNDTRACK                        | Romeo + Juliet                                    | Capitol               |
| 68 FULFLEJ                           | Wack-ass Tuba Riff                                | Scratchie-Mercury     |
| 69 STAR PIMP                         | Docudrama                                         | Kill Rock Stars       |
| 70 SUZANNE VEGA                      | Nine Objects Of Desire                            | A&M                   |
| 71 VARIOUS ARTISTS                   | Wipeout XL                                        | Astralwerks-Caroline  |
| 72 ROOTS                             | Illadelph Halflife                                | DGC                   |
| 73 SHAWN COLVIN                      | A Few Small Repairs                               | Columbia-CRG          |
| 74 SOUNDTRACK                        | Beavis And Butt-Head Do America                   | Geffen                |
| 75 SISSY BAR                         | Statutory Grape                                   | Sugar Fix             |

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.



## AL GREEN

### Anthology

(The Right Stuff)

Al Green is a legendary performer who simply cannot be classified. Torn between the spiritual and the secular, between dual roles as the Love Man and the Preacher, he personifies the contradictions of life on earth and the dilemma of the Christian world in one man: same yearning, different lyrics. At his best, he puts the two together in a way that somehow unites the two seemingly conflicting dogmas of sensuality and spirituality into one beautiful, harmonious whole. (If I don't perform these secular songs, my audience will riot. Therefore, God wants me to sing these sensual songs, and make 'em really sexy!) *Anthology* includes all his major hits, some revelatory unreleased material, and several wonderful articles (including reminiscences from his band, and excerpts from an incredible interview where Green continuously refers to himself in the third person). The Hi musicians who backed Green, under the helm of Willie Mitchell, deserve kudos for their solid and sturdy instrumentalism, proof that playing funky and soulful music needn't involve wild, gyrating hips, wah-wah guitar cliches, or over-busy cracking snare drum beats. A couple of years in production, this lavish four-disc box set tells his story *right*. Recommended viewing: Robert Mugge's documentary *The Gospel According To Al Green*.

[ by James Lien ]

# flashback

IN THE BINS



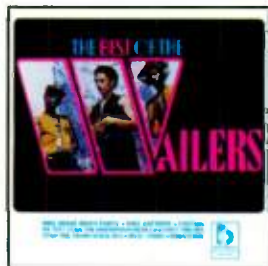
Rastaman skanking: the UK Blood And Fire label, run by Simply Red's management, has solidified its place in the reggae world as the pre-eminent independent reissue label for crucial '70s reggae and dub sounds. A recent update of its catalog includes reissues by **King Tubby**, **Jah Stitch**, **Tappa Zukie**, and **Prince Alla**. These are the simmering sounds of Jamaica in the '70s, a heady blend of pungent marijuana smoke, devout Rastafarianism, skull-throbbing bass and cheap plate echo. This advice might sound a bit pedestrian, but we really sincerely recommend that when listening you jam the bass controls of your stereo all the way to the right. Literally, all the way.

There'll never be another performer like Slim Gaillard. Speaking and singing a strange mixture of gobbledygook and hilarious hep jive, he was a '30s cross between Flip Wilson and Lord Buckley, famous for adding extra syllables like "o-rooney" and "-zzah" onto words. Although the Verve release *Laughing In Rhythm* remains my favorite Gaillard disc, a recent Legacy-Columbia CD shines the spotlight on Slim's earlier recordings as half the duo **Slim & Slam**. *The Groove Juice Special* collects 20 Slim & Slam recordings, but they're unfortunately a little more tame-arooney than the later Verve sides (a special note to *High Times* readers: check out Slim's outrageous "Dopey Joe," from 1942). Still, it's hard not to hear Slim extol the virtues of "matzoh balls with horseradish sauce" without cracking a grin.



Some reissue albums simply defy description. **The Pharoahs'** self-titled record, recently released on San Francisco's Luv N' Haight imprint, is one such cookie. Originally distributed in the Chicago area in 1970 in an absurdly small print run (complete with homemade silkscreened covers), this album is a sometimes brilliant, Sun Ra-styled mélange of African-influenced jazz, lean funk and an album "concept" centered vaguely on Egyptian philosophy. Some of the group's members were also involved in the earliest, jazziest incarnations of Maurice White's Earth, Wind & Fire.

Sometimes, a label will reissue so much good stuff that it's easy to take it for granted. That would have to be the case with France's stalwart reggae label Esoldun, distributed in the U.S. by ROIR. Esoldun has certainly been outshined of late by the British, but it's still the best place to get early blue-beat and ska reissues, and it has a real appreciation for those albums' original groovy '60s cover art. Up this month: releases by the **Gaylads** and *The Best Of The Wailers*, featuring a young Bob Marley in his little-known phase when he was the Otis Redding of ska. Beautiful stuff.





## RIFFS

The hardcore-doom-death metal band **Acid Bath** sure knows how to attract attention to itself. Both the front and back cover artwork for 1994's *When The Kite String Pops* were self-portraits by infamous serial killer John Wayne Gacy, while a contemporaneous EP featured sketches and lettering by the "Night Stalker," Richard Ramirez. This time around, Acid Bath uses an original custom drawing from the "Hillside Strangler," Kenneth Bianchi, for a limited-edition release of radio edits from the band's current release; the full-length record, *Paegan Terrorism Tactics*, boasts a painting entitled *For He Is Raised*, created by none other than



"Dr. Death" himself, Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Blatant sensationalism aside, Acid Bath's music—believe it or not—can stand on its own: this is a hard-rocking album, worth listening to... "Huh-huh-huh, huh-huh-huh, she said 'hard.'" Yup, that's right, Beavis and Butt-head have finally hit the big screen in *Beavis And Butt-head Do America*. Don't miss this movie, bee-otch! Too funny. The accompanying soundtrack is also worth checking out. It features a variety of tunes from an eclectic array of artists including **Red Hot Chili Peppers**, **L.L. Cool J**, **White Zombie**, **Rancid**, **Ozzy Osbourne**, **Butthole Surfers**, **Isaac Hayes**, **AC/DC** and—yes, you are reading this right—**Engelbert Humperdinck**, who performs the hysterical "Lesbian Seagull...." **Necrophobic**'s new self-produced album, *Darkside* (Black Mark), is scheduled for release on January 28. According to drummer Joakim Sterner, "The album was recorded between the eclipse of the moon and the eclipse of the sun 1996, which brought the right atmosphere during the recording sessions. The album will contain 10 tracks of atmospheric blackened death metal." **Dissection**'s Jon Nodtveidt lends his vocals to one of the album's tracks... **Ozzy Osbourne**'s *Greatest Hits* will be out sometime in the next few months. It will also contain brand new music that Ozzy is currently working on with guitarist Joe Holmes.

## METAL TOP 25

- 1 **KORN** Life Is Peachy *Immortal-Epic*
- 2 **TOOL** *Ænima* *Zoo*
- 3 **DOWNSET** do we speak a dead language? *Mercury*
- 4 **MARILYN MANSON** Antichrist Superstar *Nothing-Interscope*
- 5 **CORROSION OF CONFORMITY** Wiseblood *Columbia-CRG*
- 6 **STUCK MOJO** Pigwalk *Century Media*
- 7 **VISION OF DISORDER** Vision Of Disorder *Supersoul-Roadrunner*
- 8 **DANZIG** Blackacidevil *Hollywood*
- 9 **EARTH CRISIS** Gomorrah's Season Ends *Victory*
- 10 **MOTORHEAD** Overnight Sensation *CMC*
- 11 **TYPE O NEGATIVE** October Rust *Roadrunner*
- 12 **SAMAEAL** Passage *Century Media*
- 13 **PIST-ON** Number One *Fierce-FLG*
- 14 **OVERDOSE** Scars *Fierce-FLG*
- 15 **SOUNDTRACK** Mortal Kombat: More Combat *TVT*
- 16 **BRUTAL TRUTH** Kill Trend Suicide *Relapse*
- 17 **INNER THOUGHT** Perspectives *Dwell*
- 18 **SIX FEET UNDER** Alive And Dead (EP) *Metal Blade*
- 19 **FLOODGATE** Penalty *Roadrunner*
- 20 **ACID BATH** Paegan Terrorism Tactics *Rotten*
- 21 **DIO** Angry Machines *Mayhem-FLG*
- 22 **CATHEDRAL** Supernatural Birth Machine *Earache*
- 23 **NEFILIM** Zoon *Metal Blade*
- 24 **ORANGE 9MM** Tragic *Atlantic*
- 25 **SPEEDBALL** Drive Like Hell (EP) *Energy*

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



## SINISTER Bastard Saints EP

Nuclear Blast

The Dutch deathsters of Sinister pound out some of the most malevolent, uncompromising, devastating and bruising tunes this side of hell. Sinister produces spit-fire rhythms, vicious growls and ear-shattering riffs with such shredding force that it's sometimes difficult to tell where one song ends and the next begins. Last year's *Hate* was one big boom of chaotic sound with hardly any distinguishable song structure, but it was a great, brain-bashing high. Even though you had to strain through the band's wall of spastic intensity to detect its real musicianship, you could ultimately tell that these guys knew what they were doing—not just blindly banging on their instruments. On the crushing *Bastard Saints*, Sinister has finally found the perfect balance between heavy melody and break-neck speed. Containing two brand-new songs, "Bastard Saints" and "Rebels Dome," rife with sharp tempo shifts, distinct solid rhythms and rumbling grooves, and two re-recorded classics from Sinister's legendary debut, *Cross The Styx*, this EP makes it clear that Sinister has matured twofold over the years, without losing its trademark ferocious power. Look for a new full-length album in a few months.

# singles

HISS &amp; CRACKLE



## ROY MONTGOMERY

### "Just Melancholy"

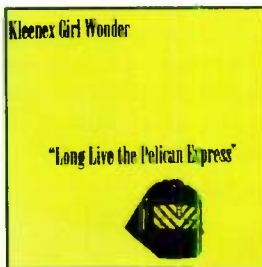
Ajax

Two years ago, the New Zealand-based guitarist and (sometimes) singer Roy Montgomery locked himself into a room in New York City with a guitar and a four-track, and recorded a series of seven singles. "Just Melancholy" is the best of them, and his career high point. The guitar sound is warm and gentle, a series of layers on top of each other; each note arrives unnoticed, lingers a moment, then quietly disappears; Montgomery never seems to start singing, or to stop. His voice is nestled deep in the mix, so the only phrases that can clearly be heard are "find a new form of expression/for those who can't say what they feel" and "there's no crime in melancholy." The B-side is a cover of one of the most melancholy songs ever written, Wire's "Used To," here effectively converted into Montgomery's musical style: its few, regretful chords are transformed into softly arpeggiated lines that hover around drones, with his resonant bass voice softly intoning the words. As a final note, this is one of the last few singles on the venerable independent label Ajax (the company's distribution arm will continue). It couldn't have gone out on a better note.

The first Dischord release was an EP by **Teen Idles**, featuring Jeff Nelson and Ian MacKaye a bit before they founded Minor Threat. Dischord #100 is another Teen Idles EP, with five demos from 1979 and 1980. The liner notes explain that they're mostly of historical interest, which they are, but they're very interesting. You can hear them gradually pulling away from their influences in British punk (singer Nathan Strejcek affects a ridiculous British accent), and heading toward what would become the roots of hardcore. You can also hear them moving away from specific objects of lyrical ridicule ("Sneakers," "Trans Am") and toward the more personal rants ("The things I see have different shapes/I can't remember what it takes") that would give Minor Threat some of its staying power.



The two new **Guided By Voices** EPs, *Sunfish Holy Breakfast* and *Plantations Of Pale Pink* (both Matador), are pretty tough going—the 7" *Plantations*, in particular, wobbles along the line between autopilot and self-parody. *Sunfish*, a 12"/CD EP, fares a little better, thanks to the inclusion of the fabulous "If We Wait," from a several-years-old split single, and a track with better-than-usual production by Kim Deal. For your GBV fix, though, turn your attention to **Kleenex Girl**



**Wonder's** *Long Live The Pelican Express* EP (Mind Of A Child), the second 7" by the Downers Grove, IL, band. It's more or less doctrinaire GBV-style—sub-amateur recording, lots of little off-key pop tunes (in this case untitled)—but with lots of extra shoestring production tricks. The one that goes "no time to find a cure/have I lost my allure?/I guess we'll never be sure" is awfully catchy, too.

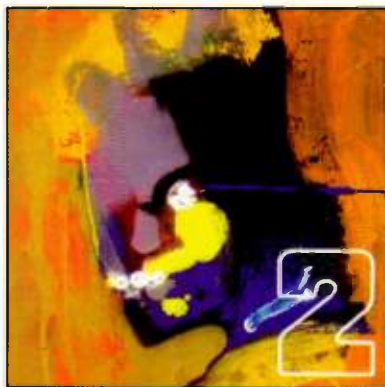
The British electronic artist **Scanner's** big trick is scanning the airwaves for cellular phone conversations and working any interesting bits he picks up into his recordings. It's fascinating stuff—it makes you think about the lines between listening and voyeurism—but it's only really entertaining for a few tracks at a time. Hence the 7" single "Seamless Data Generator" (Soul Static Sound), one of Scanner's best recordings to date, with a brew of drones, ringing noises, snatches of conversation and distorted beats so muddy that you feel like you're eavesdropping if you try to make all the parts out. The B-side, "Tape Junk," combines a fuzzed-up crunch with fragments of a tense, despairing dialogue and a bell-toned synthesizer slowly playing Bach's first Two-Part Invention.

A few quick notes: **Killdozer's** final recording—a souvenir of its "Fuck You, We Quit Tour '96"—is "Sonnet '96" (Ismist). It's not nearly as much fun as it ought to be, though the lyrics do in fact scan as a sonnet... "Get With It" (In The Red) is the latest installment in the **Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's** Jukebox Series. It isn't really a song, more like the 94-second climax of a song, but what a climax it is—the band's augmented with banging piano, electronic bleeps, and Spencer's sputtered, track-ending "Blues—explosion get with it!" **Rocket From The Crypt** has re-released its year-old 5" vinyl single of "Trouble" and "Masculine Intuition," two covers of the mid-'60s garage group the Music Machine, as a 7" (Sympathy For The Record Industry). It'll actually play on most turntables now, though Rocket itself often writes better songs than these.



## SLOW DOWN...

It's only a matter of time before the omnipotence of the breakbeat finds its way into every segment of the dance community. Two of the more exemplary instances of hip-hop's global circulation are the **Music With No Name** compilation (B+W-Giant Step) and **DJ Vadim's** debut long-player, *USSR Repertoire (The Theory Of Verticality)* (Ninjatune). *Music With No Name* is where "world music" meets the most inventive contemporary British and American producers. Outernational Meltdown's "Hungry On Arrival" is satiated by Spring Heel Jack's bounding breakbeats, always hiding beneath a melancholy exterior. Brazilian vocalist and songwriter Flora Purim's "What You See" is given the jazzheadz treatment by Attica Blues, while left coast hip-hop producer DJ X-Cel gives John Tchicai's "Love Is Touching" a once-over that alters the texture of the song forever. Bristolian dub chamber tricksters Smith & Mighty, New York's DJ Smash, and nimble drum-and-bassist Roni Size also make this collection an undeniably enjoyable one... DJ Vadim, like the Italian futurists he invokes in the liner notes, is not constrained by single, unbroken lines of influence. Having grown up in Russia before moving to Paris, Vadim is the quintessential nomad, and he turns his migrations into magical, ineffable music that national boundaries can't contain. The half-heard, muffled film dialogue and flanged, muted sirens that run throughout the 25 tracks on the album give it an almost tactile quality. "Suckas Wearing Tainted Sunglasses" and the devious "Knowledge Vs. Wisdom" are both extraordinary creations. The closing moment, "Melodies In Vertical Theory," is the record's title made real, a zig-zagging amalgam of oddly clashing breakbeats and bass lines wound down like a stopped watch.



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Headz 2

Mo Wax (UK)

No compilation has been more hotly anticipated than the magnificent, ambitious second installment in the *Headz* series from England's Mo Wax label. At the age of 24, the imprint's chief, James Lavelle, has built a community of post-hip-hop, cut-and-paste impresarios whose shenanigans have caught the attention of music listeners from an unusually broad spectrum. (You need only hear Lavelle's recent reworking of a couple of early Butthole Surfers tracks to understand that his vision remains difficult to categorize.) This rather audacious two-part compilation (each part is four albums or two CDs) moves in so many different directions that it threatens to fragment, but a keen sense of The Groove gives the project its wonderful coherence. And that primordial Groove is expressed in many ways, from the humming power-surge breakbeats of Wagon Christ to the intricate percussive tricks of Innerzone Orchestra. Photek introduces his most downtempo tracks to date, and British analog auteur Andrea Parker creates rainy, impressionistic scenes from stripped-down electronics. Davis, California's DJ Shadow and Tokyo's DJ Krush, two heavyweights of the West Coast post-hip-hop underground, move their music into regions where many mainstream rappers wouldn't dare venture. If you don't acquire *Headz 2*, you'll spend the next year listening to its imitators.

## DANCE TOP 25

- 1 FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON Dead Cities *Astralwerks-Caroline*
- 2 VARIOUS ARTISTS Digitized *Logic*
- 3 VARIOUS ARTISTS Wipeout XL *Astralwerks-Caroline*
- 4 BT Ima Perfecto/Kinetic-Reprise
- 5 CHEMICAL BROTHERS "Setting Sun"(5") *Astralwerks-Caroline*
- 6 VARIOUS ARTISTS Axiom Dub: Mysteries Of Creation *Axiom-Island*
- 7 VARIOUS ARTISTS Cup Of Tea Compilation *Quango-Island*
- 8 PAIN STATION Anxiety *Decibel*
- 9 DJ SHADOW Endtroducing... *MoWax/Jfrr-London*
- 10 PATRICK LINDSEY The Phat Jive *Harthouse-EyeQ*
- 11 ELECTRIC SKYCHURCH Together *Moonshine*
- 12 CHEMLAB East Side Milita *Fifth Colvmn-Metal Blade*
- 13 TRICKY Pre-Millennium Tension *Island*
- 14 ALEX REECE So Far *Quango-Island*
- 15 BANCO DE GAIA Live At Glastonbury *Planet Dog-Mammoth*
- 16 BEN NEILL Triptycal *Antilles-Verve*
- 17 THINK TANK Skullbuggery *Hakatak*
- 18 HACIENDA Sunday Afternoon *Harthouse-EyeQ*
- 19 EMMANUEL TOP Asteroid *NovaMute-Mute*
- 20 LAIBACH Jesus Christ Superstars *Mute*
- 21 VARIOUS ARTISTS Incursions In Illbient *Asphodel*
- 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS Shapeshifter: A Jazzstep Injection *S.O.U.R. USA*
- 23 VARIOUS ARTISTS Operation Beatbox *Re-Constriction-Cargo*
- 24 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Rebirth Of Cool Volume 4 4th & B'Way-Island
- 25 L.T.J BUKEM Logical Progression *Jfrr-London*

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



## KEITH MURRAY

### Enigma

Jive

"Get a bird's eye view and don't miss/The crispiest nigga in the nucleus with futuristic linguistics/Ballistics be twisted like physics/Niggas be like 'how you come up with this shit?'" Keith Murray is a lover and abuser of the English language, weaving together tongue-twisting lyrics enhanced by his bizarre wordplay. While his first album, *The Most Beautiful Thing In The World*, had its moments, it suffered from Erick Sermon's post EPMD break-up anxiety, as the E-Double failed to supply Murray with enough funk tracks. Thankfully, Murray's follow-up, *Enigma*, doesn't suffer the same fate. Realizing that there are more beats than those found in the George Clinton catalogue, Sermon has grown in his second career as a producer, while Murray continues to prove he's one of the oddest and illest lyricists in the rap world. When he's not attacking the competition, Murray provides us with some philosophical insight on the status quo of rap music: "Hip-hop's filled with backstabbers/Blunt grabbers/Cats with dirty claws/Dogs with filthy paws," and "We can all sing together but we can't talk together/That's why I pack the black gat up under the leather." With *Enigma*, Murray finally reaches his true potential.

[ by Elliott Wilson ]

# hip-hop

## BONUS BEATS

While C.E.O. Suge Knight sits cooped up in a prison cell, his post-Dr. Dre, "untouchable" Death Row Records era begins. First up is *The Doggfather*, the second album from **Snoop Doggy Dogg**, who seems to be a big fan of the Gap Band. The '70s funk group's leader, Charlie Wilson, appears on five of the album's songs, including the title track and Snoop's butchering of his group's hit "Ooops Upside Ya Head," entitled "Snoop's Upside Ya Head." Epitomizing all the generic West Coast rap style stereotypes, DJ Pooh loops the often-used and abused Zapp classic "More Bounce To The Ounce" for "Snoop Bounce." For those of you who wondered what Snoop Dogg would sound like without Dr. Dre, your worst nightmares are fully realized. Not only are the beats (created by Pooh, Dat Nigga Daz, Snoop and others) abominable, but the engineering is also amateurish—Snoop's vocals are way too low in the mix. Even a scene-stealing cameo from the always dependable Too Short on "You Thought" can't save Snoop from catching the infamous sophomore jinx. Is there a doctor in the house?... Before he was tragically gunned down a few months ago, Tupac Shakur was already planning to release an album under the name **Makaveli**, a tribute to one of his boyhood inspirations, Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli. Released with a striking cover illustration of Tupac being crucified, *Don Killuminati/The Seven Day Theory* is as bizarre and confusing as its title. Full of religious overtures ("Hail Mary" and "Blasphemy"), poorly structured R&B-style compositions ("Toss It Up" and "Just Like Daddy") and assaults of his East Coast constituents ("I'm a Bad Boy killer/jay-Z die, too/Lookin' out for Mobb Deep/Nigga when I find you"), Tupac's fifth and final album suffers from far too many sub-par appearances from his homies, the Outlawz, and—you guessed it—horrendous production from a conglomerate of nobodies. Once again Dre's services are sorely needed. God bless your life.



## HIP-HOP TOP 25

- 1 JERU THE DAMAJA *Wrath Of The Math* Payday/Jfr-London
- 2 GHOSTFACE KILLAH *Ironman* Razor Sharp-Epic Street
- 3 ROOTS *Illadelph Halflife* DGC
- 4 MOBB DEEP *Hell On Earth* Loud-RCR
- 5 REDMAN "That's How It Is" (12") Def Jam/RAL-Mercury
- 6 J-LIVE "Can I Get It"/"Hush The Crowd" (12") Raw Shack
- 7 ORIGINOO GUNN CLAPPAZ *Da Storm* Duck Down-Priority
- 8 KEITH MURRAY "The Rhyme" (12") Enigma Jive
- 9 XZIBIT *At The Speed Of Life* Loud-RCR
- 10 A TRIBE CALLED QUEST *Beats, Rhymes And Life* Jive
- 11 WESTSIDE CONNECTION *Bow Down* Priority
- 12 NAS *It Was Written* Columbia-CRG
- 13 LIL' KIM *Hard Core* Big Bear-Atlantic
- 14 OUTKAST *Atkins* LaFace-Arista
- 15 DR. DRE Presents... *The Aftermath* Aftermath-Interscope
- 16 DE LA SOUL *Stakes Is High* Tommy Boy
- 17 KRS ONE "Can't Stop, Won't Stop"/"The MC" (12") Jive
- 18 FOXY BROWN *Ill Na Na* Def Jam/RAL-Mercury
- 19 POOR RIGHTLEOUS TEACHERS *The New World Order* Profile
- 20 NATURAL RESOURCE "They Lied"/"Bum Deal" (12") Makin'
- 21 LARGE PROFESSOR "I Just wannachill" (12") Geffen
- 22 SNOOP DOGGY DOGG *The Doggfather* Death Row-Interscope
- 23 BOUNTY KILLER *My Xperience* Blunt-TVT
- 24 MAKAVELI *The 7 Day Theory* Death Row-Interscope
- 25 CAMP LO "Luchini (This Is It)" (12") Profile

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



# MIXED MEDIA

## SUDDEN MANHATTAN

(Phaedra Cinema)

FLICKS

Adrienne Shelly's wonderfully directed and brilliantly referential new film is marked both by the influence of her mentor, Hal Hartley, and by its bringing together of some unlikely sources. *Sudden Manhattan* is like the pastiche that Quentin Tarantino could make if he were a woman and an intellectual and a good actor and if he would stop watching Brian DePalma—something more like a hybrid of *Annie Hall* and *The Crying Of Lot 49*.

*Sudden Manhattan* is putatively about whether its protagonist, Donna (played by Shelly), is crazy because she is seeing murders that no one else can see. Unlike the implicitly referenced *Gaslight*, in which a hoax seriously questions the sanity of Ingrid Bergman's character, Shelly's film doesn't presume the possibility of sanity. Donna's point of view is never really in doubt, and defines the film's world, a surreal, semi-autistic millennial Zeitgeist. Donna constantly meets wacked-out friends, lovers and other pedestrians who speak to her in their own barely decipherable codes. She casually struggles against and largely accepts the failure of these relationships, epitomized by her grudging tolerance of what is to my knowledge cinema's only intentional representation of a male lead who can't get it up. In her world, dialogue is more like passive witnessing.

The performances here are excellent: Shelly makes Donna's depressive lassitude empathetic and charming, and the vaudevillesque exchanges between the codependent new-age men are absolutely inspired. If the serial-killer sequence is somewhat unconvincing, it's only because the film so successfully establishes its premise: that not much besides eventual death interrupts the humorous banality of life's slow, mild torture. LIZA JOHNSON



SEARCH & DESTROY #1-6 THE COMPLETE REPRINT V. VALE, EDITOR



## SEARCH & DESTROY: Volumes 1 & 2

(V/Search)

READS

Any 'zine compilation subtitled "The Authoritative Guide To Punk Culture" is asking for a bashing. Upon first glance, the pages of *Search & Destroy* look a lot like any punk 'zine, chock full of badly edited Q&A interviews and sweaty concert snapshots. But once you start reading the articles, written between 1977 and 1979, they transport you back to an era when punk bands were doing their best to be different from one another and to shake up pop culture. Devo explains how it used to jam with with a telephone busy signal, but abandoned that approach because it was "too artsy." Pere Ubu's Dave Thomas recalls one of the band's early gigs, a high school prom—"They kept coming up and making requests for Peter Frampton." Joey Ramone is grilled with probing questions like "what's your favorite food besides tacos?" ("I had to stop eatin 'em 'cause they was givin' me zits. I try to eat a lotta tuna fish.") Okay, so it's not exactly *Firing Line*, but it's a lot of fun to see what the Dead Kennedys, Blondie, Television, the Clash, the Dead Boys, the Cramps, Talking Heads, Subway Sect, and X had to say in their formative stages. Editor V. Vale has divided the complete reprint of *Search & Destroy* into two volumes, 1-6 and 7-11; survey them in chronological order for the full effect. NEIL GLADSTONE

THE AUTHORITATIVE GUIDE TO PUNK CULTURE





## MESSAGE TO LOVE

(Castle Music Pictures)

FLICKS

The Isle Of Wight Music Festival, in 1970, was one of the last big rock festivals of its era. Despite a couple of triumphant performances (Jimi Hendrix's, less than two weeks before his death, and The Who's, which appears on an excellent new double-CD), it was pretty much a disaster: almost nobody paid to get in, everybody seemed to be squabbling over money backstage, and the crowd was completely out of control. *Message To Love* includes a few dozen of the festival's performances, from the above as well as the Doors, Joni Mitchell, Miles Davis and some also-rans (Tiny Tim? Family? Taste? Who?). But it took 25 years to finish because director Murray Lerner wanted to concentrate more on the general horridness of what was happening offstage: venal performers and promoters, bitter, furious organizers, and endless muddy British hills covered with gruesomely stoned hippies. Those who were there probably don't want to relive the experience, but it's a bitingly hilarious cultural document for those who weren't. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

## PREACHER

(Vertigo)

COMICS

Jesse Custer is a traveling preacher with a foul mouth, a pistol-packing girlfriend, a vampire for a best friend, some awful secrets in his past, and the Word of God on his side, literally—when he speaks, anyone who hears him has to obey him. Oh, yes, and the ghost of John Wayne sometimes shows up to give him advice. Created by the British team of writer Garth Ennis and artist Steve Dillon, *Preacher* is so all-American it couldn't have come from these shores, and its hysterical nastiness has turned it into a huge cult hit, spinning off a handful of mini-series and one-shots (like the recent *The Story Of You-Know-Who*—that would be the supporting character Arseface, whose name couldn't exactly appear on a cover). *Preacher* is mean-spirited, drenched in blood, offensive on nearly every level (a recent letter-column contest challenged readers to come up with a story featuring necrophilia, coprophilia, incest, cannibalism and bestiality in under 100 words), flat-out hilarious a lot of the time, and strangely old-fashioned at its moral center: there's a just and loving God always lurking off-panel, though He's working in very mysterious ways. **DOUGLAS WOLK**



## science geek

## SCIENCE GEEK

(\$3 from Steven Spatucci, F.O. Box 8641, Trenton, NJ 08650)

'ZINES

"Conceived in Africa, compiled in New Jersey" reads a starburst on the color-laser front cover of *Science Geek*. The magazine's basic premise is not unusual in that it combines two of the editor's loves: science and underground pop (the Wedding Present and the Cannanes are both interviewed here). That in itself is a kick, but some self-effacing record reviews, cartoons and neat explanations of rotational inertia and "The Physics Of *The Land Of The Lost*" are only appetizers for Doug Larkin's essays on life in the Peace Corps (teaching Physics in Kenya), life in inner-city Trenton and life in general. His writing is plainspokenly evocative, examining human behavior (much of it his own) with both a scientist's reason and less objective qualities like insight and affection. If you've ever been on the fence about the value of zines, try *Science Geek*; fun and sweetly poignant, it's enough to knock you on the right side. **SCOTT FRAMPTON**



# MULTI-MEDIA

## UNDERWIRED

([www.covesoft.com/underwired/Contents.html](http://www.covesoft.com/underwired/Contents.html))

Web site creators and content editors seem to be experts at the fine art of sarcasm. In just the past six months, we've seen great parodies of presidential candidates and corporate Goliaths like Microsoft ([www.microsnot.com](http://www.microsnot.com)), as well as the many parody spinoffs of the Microsoft-owned ezine Slate. Now there's Underwired, a witty and wonderfully cutting parody of *Wired* magazine and its Hotwired site. It pokes fun at *Wired* features like the Tired/Wired list (called Overtired/Underwired), Fetish, and the Geek Page, but our favorite is the Luddite's Corner, where you're encouraged to send email to some guy named Ed Stevens, a certified Luddite who'd rather use a typewriter. Another well-conceived jab comes in a hilarious feature called "Type Design vs. Legibility: Who Really Gives A Sh\*#?," in which a mock roundtable discussion is created to examine the relevance of graphics and type design in '90s publishing. A double-click at the heart of on-line culture, Underwired pushes all the right buttons. *GLEN SANSONE*

## WEB SITE



## alt.adjective.noun.verb.verb.verb

## NEWSGROUP

First there was alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork. Then alt.ensign.wesley.die.die.die. Then alt.beneficent.demons.bless.curse.bless. Finally, somebody created one of the most brilliant and most pointless USENET newsgroups of all: alt.adjective.noun.verb.verb.verb. Even more amazingly, it's become a tradition for the group's contributors to post entirely in a.a.n.v.v.v.v format ("alt.sacred.format.use!.use!.use!"). People talk about their lives, chat with each other, and occasionally translate literary classics ("alt.87.year.decremented.decremented.decremented/alt.genderbent.fathers.delivered.gavebirth.parturited/alt.northamerican.continent.located.placed.established/alt.free.nation.conceived.designed.fertilized/alt.equality.proposition.dedicated.dedicated.dedicated"). And let's not even get started on the people who write a.a.n.v.v.v.v haiku (the "alt" doesn't count as a syllable), or in the artificial language Lojban and the "sacred.format." Remember, some of history's greatest innovations have come from people with too much time on their hands. *DOUGLAS WOLK*

## DEAD MEDIA

([griffn.multimedia.edu/~deadmedia/home1.htm](http://griffn.multimedia.edu/~deadmedia/home1.htm))

There's a lot of attention being paid to new media right now, but very little to media that have disappeared or are about to. At a lecture a year or so ago, science fiction writer Bruce Sterling suggested the creation of a Dead Media Handbook, and a group of students at the Vancouver Film School have taken him up on it with this site. The center of the Dead Media site is a timeline of now-vanished forms of communication—when each one was created, what it did, and what it looked like (there's an image of each one that can be blown up). From horn books to Intellivision, the Apple II to the five-needle Cooke-Wheatstone telegraph, there are dozens of media shown here that affected people's lives profoundly and don't any more. There's also a link to Sterling's original speech, and a page of "endangered species" (personal checks, floppy disks, that kind of thing). Bonus points to the Vancouver Film School students for the image on the background of the pages, as pale as a watermark on bond paper: a Victrola sitting next to the skeleton of a dog, suggesting a master's voice that it will never hear again. *DOUGLAS WOLK*

## WEB SITE



## A LISTING OF LABELS WHOSE ARTISTS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

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Chicago, IL 60680

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Universal City, CA 91608

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# JUST OUT

## JANUARY 14

**SOUNDTRACK** Mandela *Island*  
**LONGPIGS** The Sun Is Often Out *Island*  
**BRONSKI BEAT** Age Of Consent *London*  
**DELTA 9** Unibomber *Earache*  
**DOA** New York City Speedcore *Earache*  
**SCORN** Vae Solis *Earache*  
**JOI** Amoeba Cleansing Syndrome *EMI*  
**STRAY CATS** Runaway Boys: The Best Of... *EMI*  
**WAS (NOT WAS)** Forget Everything By Was (Not Was) *Chrysalis-EMI*  
**ARMCHAIR MARTIAN** Armchair Martian *Headhunter-Cargo*

## JANUARY 21

**3DS** Strange News From The Angels *Flying Nun*  
**SPACE NEEDLE** The Moray Eels Eat The Space Needle *Zero Hour*  
**SCREW 32** Under The Influence Of Bad People *Fat Wreck Chords*  
**PIGEONHED** The Full Sentence *Sub Pop*  
**DAMIEN JURADO** Waters Ave. S. *Sub Pop*  
**BILL JANOVITZ** Lonesome Billy *Beggars Banquet*  
**FUN-DA-MENTAL** Godevil! *Beggars Banquet*  
**SHELLAC/MULE** The Soul Sound Single (7") *Touch And Go*  
**JUNE OF 44** The Anatomy Of Sharks (EP) *Quarterstick*  
**TRANS AM** Surrender To The Night *Thrill Jockey*  
**FURRY THINGS** Hedfons *Trance Syndicate*  
**WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY** Metropolitan Then Poland *Trance Syndicate*  
**PAUL K & THE WEATHERMEN** Love Is A Gas *Alias*  
**PIZZICATO FIVE** Sister Freedom Tapes (EP) *Matador*  
**SPOON** Soft Effects (EP) *Matador*  
**ALFREDO RODRIGUEZ** Cuba Linda *Hannibal-Rykodisc*

## JANUARY 28

**BUILT TO SPILL** Perfect From Now On *Warner Bros.*  
**60 FT DOLLS** The Big Three *Geffen*  
**TEL AVIV** The Shape Of Fiction *TeenBeat*  
**ENGINE 88** Snowman *Caroline*  
**DAVID BOWIE** Earthling *Virgin*  
**SOLOMON BURKE** Definition Of Soul *Virgin*  
**COALESCE/NAPALM DEATH** We Speak In Tongues *Earache*  
**RAMONES** (box set) *MCA*  
**STAR 69** Eating February *MCA*  
**JOHN FAHEY** City Of Refuge *Tim/Kerr*  
**MISS RED FLOWERS** *Tim/Kerr*  
**SEVEN MARY THREE** Rock Crown *Mammoth-Atlantic*

## FEBRUARY 4

**HANDSOME** Handsome *Epic*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** NFL/Jock Jams *Lava-Atlantic*  
**UGLY BEAUTY** *Atlantic*  
**MAKE-UP** Sound Verite *K*  
**SILVERCHAIR** Freak Show *Epic*

## FEBRUARY 11

**KILLAH PRIEST** *Geffen*  
**RADAR BROS.** Radar Bros. *Restless*  
**SWELL** *Beggars Banquet*  
**CHROME CRANKS** Oily Cranks *Atavistic*  
**LADYBUG TRANSISTOR** Beverly Atonale *Merge*  
**SILVER JET** Pull Me Up, Drag Me Down *Virgin*  
**ROYAL TRUX** Sweet Sixteen *Virgin*  
**SPICE GIRLS** Spice *Virgin*  
**THUMBNAIL** Read! Dead! *Headhunter-Cargo*  
**CHEAP TRICK** "Downed" (7") *Sub Pop*  
**HOVERCRAFT** Akathisia *Mute*  
**PAVEMENT** Brighten The Corners *Matador*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** KCRW: Rare On Air Vol. 3 *Mammoth*

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- J CARDIGANS First Band On The Moon *Mercury*
- F CAT POWER What Would The Community Think *Matador*
- J CATHERINE Hot Saki & Bedtime Stories *TVT*
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- H DESCENDENTS Everything Sucks *Epitaph*
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- I FIREWATER Get Off The Cross (We Need The Wood For The Fire) *Jetset*
- F FULFLEJ Wack-ass Tuba Riff *Scratchie-Mercury*
- H FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON Dead Cities *Astralwerks-Caroline*
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- J HEADS No Talking Just Head *Radioactive-MCA*
- H HEATMISER Mic City Sons *Caroline*
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- H HI FI AND THE ROADBURNERS Wine, Women And Sin *Victory*
- F HUMBLE GODS No Heroes *Hollywood*
- J JOHN PARISH AND POLY JEAN HARVEY Dance Hall At Louse Point *Island*
- J JOHNNY CASH Unchained *American*
- I JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION Now I Got Worry *Matador-Capitol*
- E JOSEPHINE WIGGS EXPERIENCE Bon Bon Lifestyle *Grand Royal*
- J KORN Life Is Peachy *Immortal-Epic*
- J KULA SHAKER K *Columbia-CRG*
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- D LESS THAN JAKE Losing Streak *Capitol*
- G LOIS Infinity Plus *K*
- I LUSCIOUS JACKSON Fever In Fever Out *Grand Royal-Capitol*
- J MARILYN MANSON Antichrist Superstar *Nothing-Interscope*
- I MAZZY STAR Among My Swan *Capitol*
- I MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD Shack-man *Gramavision-Rykodisc*
- I MORCHEEBA Who Can You Trust? *China-Discovery*
- J PHISH Billy Breathes *Elektra-EEG*
- L POLARA Pantomime (EP) *Interscope*
- J R.E.M. New Adventures In Hi-Fi *Warner Bros.*
- G RACHEL'S The Sea And The Bells *Quarterstick*
- F RAILROAD JERK The Third Rail *Matador*
- J ROOTS Illadelph Halflife *DGC*
- J RUSTED ROOT Remember *Mercury*
- H SATURNINE Flags For The Unknown Territories *Dirt*
- H SCREECHING WEASEL Bark Like A Dog *Fat Wreck Chords*
- I SEBADOH Harmacy *Sub Pop*
- G SEELY Julie Only *Too Pure-American*
- J SHAWN COLVIN A Few Small Repairs *Columbia-CRG*
- F SILVER JEWS The Natural Bridge *Drag City*
- F SISSY BAR Statutory Grape *Sugar Fix*
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- L TANYA DONELLY Sliding And Diving (EP) *4AD*
- J THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS Factory Showroom *Elektra-EEG*
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- J TRICKY Pre-Millennium Tension *Island*
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- J WILCO Being There *Reprise*
- H YO LA TENGO Genius + Love = Yo La Tengo *Matador*



# FEEDBACK

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What do you think about the CMJ New Music February magazine and CD?

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What can we do to make the magazine and CD better?

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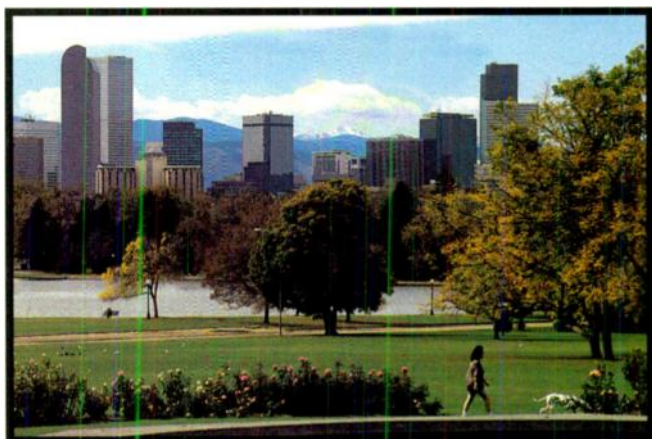


## ► DENVER, COLORADO

[ by Jim Nasi ]

**The Mile High City.** You know it for its mild climate and that great big playground, the Rocky Mountains. From the long-beleaguered Broncos to the well-purchased Avalanche, one thing is clear: Denver loves its sports. A major focal point these days is the two-year-old Coors Field—home of Rockies baseball in lower downtown—and the requisite sports bars and restaurants that have popped up around it. But we're going to talk about culture, which Denver has despite its obsession with sports and outdoor activity. So let's bypass the jarheads and head to the city's best music venues.

Thanks to Doug Kaufman's Nobody In Particular Presents and its home at the **Ogden Theater**—located several blocks east of the capitol building at Ogden and Colfax (the longest running commercial street in the country, ending somewhere in Kansas)—the last several years have seen the best in cutting-edge music showcased in a funky old movie house. Local bands occasionally open for these shows, but Denver bands have found a more consistent home a couple of miles up the street at the **Bluebird Theater** (3317 E. Colfax Ave., 322-2308). Smaller and more civilized than the Ogden, this renovated porn theater boasts an impressive selection of tap microbrews, an upscale decor, and plenty of seating leading down to the dancefloor and stage. It's risen to the top rank of the town's venues in little over a year, with a wide variety of national acts as well



as a steady lineup of local headliners, from the hillbilly swing of Slim Cessna's Auto Club to the sex-crazed disco metal of Foreskin 500. On Sunday night, the Bluebird hosts Cinema, Sips And Sounds, where you can get hammered while watching classic films of all genres. You'll head back west for more music, and on the way you can find great Ethiopian food at the appropriately named **Ethiopian Gourmet Restaurant** (2816 E. Colfax, 322-5939), or late-night diner fare further down at **Pete's Kitchen** (1962 E. Colfax, 321-3139).

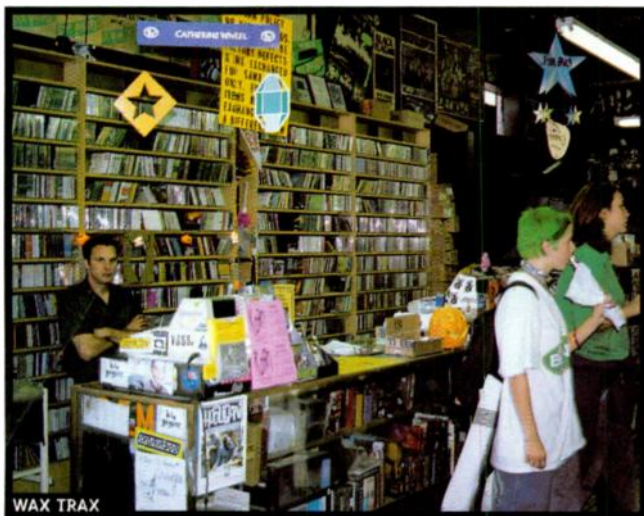
One block east of Pete's is the **Lion's Lair** (2202 E. Colfax, 320-9200). A longtime watering hole for the area's many musicians and scenesters, it's also become the best spot to see the city's most extreme bands. There's one row of booths in front of the padded bar, and the bands play on the raised section behind the bar—so the best seats in the house go to the most dedicated 20 drinkers. There are at least four shows a week, so on any given night you might catch an evening of hellish shock rock with Meanface, surrender yourself to the wacked world of Baldo Rex, or swoon to the heavy pop tunes of Abdomen. Tuesday nights feature genre-hopping DJing from Blue Lamp impresario John Meggitt and Foreskin 500's Fogboy Kerr. Red Hook drafts go for two bucks every night, there's a great jukebox, and you can watch Denver's coolest get historically wasted.

Two blocks south and several west brings you to the heart of Capitol Hill and the retail center of Denver's underground scene. At the corner of 13th and Washington Streets sits Wax



PHOTOS BY TAMMIE EALOM





**Trax** (638 E. 13th Ave, 831-7246), an independently owned, five-store empire where Denver has bought its records for almost 20 years. There are separate stores for vinyl, CDs/tapes, classical/jazz, and videos/accessories. Wax Trax Used is across the street, a frequent stop for traveling rock stars and ravenous collectors of all types of music. If you don't find what you're looking for there, check out the similarly impressive selection at **Twist And Shout** (300 E. Alameda Ave., 722-1943), which also boasts a used guitar selection and a video outlet next door.

Fashion bargains may be found at **Neptune's** (606 E. 13th), further east at **Five And Dime** (2037 E. 13th), or way south at the warehouse-sized **ARC** (1515 S. Broadway). Shoppers looking for a bite would do well to head back to Colfax, where the **Golden Tempura Bowl** (406 E. Colfax, 832.8440) serves great Japanese food dirt cheap. There's a wonderful barbecued tofu sandwich at **Wolf's BBQ** (333 E. Colfax, 831-1500), and inexpensive Italian fare next door at **AlexSandra's Real Italian** (329 E. Colfax, 860-7006).

For some classic Denver nightlife, come dancing to the heard of downtown. **City Spirit Café** (1434 Blake, 575-0022), open daily for swell food and drinks, plays host on Tuesday nights to *So What!*, a long-running acid jazz extravaganza. There's dancing downstairs, schmoozing and people-watching in the colorfully offbeat bar upstairs. On Thursday night, go to **Herb's Hideout** (2057 Larimer, 299-9555) for the two-years-running Kit-Kat Club, where martini-happy trendsters put on airs and tipsy romantics croon along at the piano bar. The **Key Club** (2040 Larimer) brings them out on Saturdays, where they spin acid jazz and R&B in a large, low-lit room with a magnificent bar. Sundays are great for hip-hop at **Rock Island** (1614 15th, 572-7625), whose darkened halls have seen some infamous partying in its ten-year existence. If you're looking for a rave-type thing, **Club Synergy** (3240 Larimer, 575-5680) gives it to you Friday through Sunday, 9 p.m.-5 a.m. British Mod culture is celebrated every Wednesday at the **Snake Pit** (608 E. 13th Ave.), playing Brit-pop past and present while everyone checks their creases.

Heading out of the Hill south, you can find Denver's premier meat market at **1082 Broadway** (831-1082) on Tuesdays—Femmes Night—with two levels of dancing, sweating, and scamming. Next door is the newly opened **Crash Art Gallery** (1090 Broadway, 861-9638), showcasing underground art and an occasional rock show. Further south is the city's premier art movie house, the **Mayan Theater** (110 Broadway, 744-6796), and next to that **The Hornet** (100 Broadway, 777-7676), a

recently opened martini bar and restaurant. Across the street sits another staple underground music venue, **7 South** (7 S. Broadway, 744-0513). It's a frequent stop for local favorites from Old Bull's Needle to the Apples In Stereo, who do their best to promote tinnitus while the bar serves inexpensive drinks fast and furious.

Back in lower downtown, a thriving underage punk scene has been gathering at **The Raven** (2217 Welton, 284-5858). A giant disco ball hovers over the dance floor where the kids get all squishy over bands like Crestfallen and Four. Just around the corner stands another Denver institution, the **Mercury Café** (2199 California, 934-9258). A must visit for seekers of quality health food and artsy ambiance, the two main floor dining rooms also feature poetry readings and acoustic performances from folks like Johnny Long (who's counted Muddy Waters among his fans). The large theater upstairs hosts plays and all types of national and local music.

Your ears are tired and your money's almost gone, but no visit to Denver would be complete without a stop at the legendary **El Chapultepec** (1962 Market, 295-9126) for a nightcap and the best live jazz in town. The bar and one row of booths lead to the tiny stage, where for 25 years touring jazz greats have sat in with the stellar house band. Across the street from the shiny new baseball stadium, it's a living monument to the musical spirit of the city.

*All phone numbers are in area code 303.*

*Jim Nasi writes for Denver's Pulp magazine and plays guitar for the Sleeping Brotherhood House Band.*





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