

CMJ NEW MUSIC

MONTHLY

Green Day

Baby Bird

Photek

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SCOTT WALKER | STEREO LAB | SWEET 75 | 36 REVIEWS

looks like the honeymoon is over

everclear so much for the afterglow

featuring the single "everything to everyone"



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LOVE SPIT LOVE

TRY SOME EAT ONE
THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING

4:18 SOMETIMES it never rains It can't rain all the time And if I seem to make no sense I make no sense
sometimes Sometimes it never shines It can't shine all the time And I can't speak through one more scene I can't talk all the
time There's a promise in your mouth Is that what this was all about

You've got to suck it in and shout It's been a **LONG LONG TIME** Sometimes I never talk I can't talk

all the time And I can't see to find my feet I can't sleep all the time I CAN'T RAIN ALL THE TIME
You've got to Stop before you talk Because it's all been said before You can't
stop knocking down my door It's been a long long long long time Sunday's child will fall from grace And heaven
the hands that pray There's nothing here for me to save With my name upon your face There's no one counting down these days There's
no one here to hear you say It's been a long long long long time Sometimes it never rains It can't rain all the time And if I seem to
make no sense I make no sense

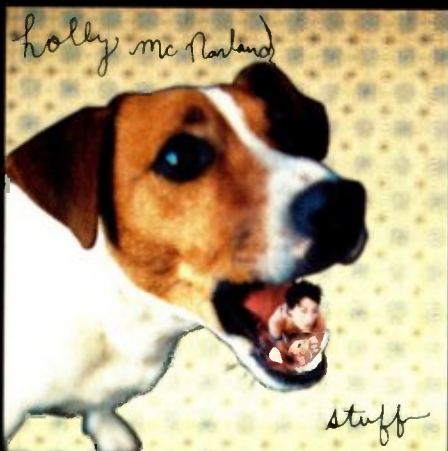
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a long long time You've got to stop before you talk Because it's all been said before You can't stop knocking down my door It's been a long
long long long time

Sometimes it never rains It can't rain all the time



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stuff

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World Radio History



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features

24 **BABY BIRD**

"I don't want to be confrontational. I want to be thought-provoking."
—Interview by Tom Lanham.

26 **PHOTEK**

"The more you hear it, the more the obvious and catchy parts become irritating. Or they lose their impact. So gradually they get eroded away."
—Interview by Kurt B. Reighley.

28 **SWEET 75**

"Nirvana is larger than life, larger than ever, so we're dealing with the power of myth... We've liberated ourselves, and I think that shows in the purity of the music." —Interview by Chris Nickson.

30 **GREEN DAY**

"We're always up to prove ourselves. And the day you don't have anything else to prove is kinda the day you're not hungry for anything any more."
—Interview by Tom Lanham.

32 **ON THE COVER: PORTISHEAD**

"The first record, it was forming for a long, long time. This one, it was literally a case of all the pressure went to me head and it was—gone."
—Interview by James Lien.

34 **STEREOLAB**

"Now I don't mind being called a Marxist. There's some flexibility to how human beings are. Which now I understand far better than a few years ago." —Interview by Douglas Wolk.



departments

6 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

9 **QUICK FIX**

Greg Garing, Helium, Olive, Geneva and more.

18 **ON THE VERGE**

Souls, Garageland and Royal Fingerbowl.

20 **THE SCENE IS NOW: The Sons Of Scott Walker**

57 **GEEK LOVE: Lou Reed**

66 **MIXED MEDIA**

The Tango Lesson, *Fight The Power*, Lip Balm Anonymous, and more.

69 **JUST OUT**

69 **DIRECTORY**

70 **TOP 75**

73 **ON THE CD**

77 **LOCALZINE: Burlington, Vermont**

reviews

16 **BEST NEW MUSIC**

The Apples In Stereo, Pietasters, Ivy, Chris Knox, Death In Vegas and Bill Fox.

38 **ALBUM REVIEWS**

56 **MIXED SIGNALS**

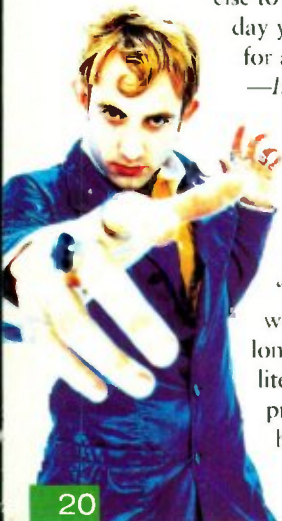
58 **FLASHBACK**

60 **SINGLES**

62 **DANCE**

63 **HIP-HOP**

64 **METAL**



■ If there's a rock 'n' roll heaven

I have been reading *CMJ* for some time now and have enjoyed it immensely. Your CD samplers are consistently adventurous and [have] often served as an introduction to my favorite musicians. One of those favorites is Jeff Buckley, who was featured on both the February and August '94 samplers. I was very surprised that Jeff's death last May did not merit *any* editorial mention in your publication. I realize that you are not a music "news" magazine per se; your primary editorial focus seems to be on profiling artists that have new releases on the market. Still, Jeff's passing was front-page news in the music press around the world. I suppose that the possible release of a posthumous Jeff Buckley record is the only circumstance that might warrant coverage of this incredibly gifted, critically acclaimed and well-loved musician in your publication. How tragic.

Patti Villegas

It's not a matter of Buckley's passing not being important enough to "merit" coverage—we didn't cover Kurt Cobain's death either. First, there's the matter of lead time—the six weeks or so between when we finish the magazine and when it finds its way to you faithful readers. And then there's the fact that we're aren't a "news magazine per se," which means that we don't report on things so much as offer analysis and opinion, two things woefully inappropriate in this case. Lastly, there's the fact that I've always felt magazines' memorializing of fallen rock heroes to be maudlin and self-serving. While sentiments are often in the right place, this eulogizing often suggests nothing so much as "isn't it a pity" and "we care." Hopefully, you'll all agree that the best tribute in this case is for us to continue doing what enabled us to honor that person in the first place. So if you'll excuse me, I have a wise-ass to go be. —ed.

■ Pap quiz

I was looking at the March '97 issue today and I noticed something that maybe you could help me with. On the table of contents page, there is a picture of Ani DiFranco (duh, she was on the cover); on her right breast there seems to be some kind of nip-

ple-like thing which is pressed up against her right knee. Study this and please inform me as to what this strange thing is.

Greydyn Gatti
Newmarket, ON

I believe that the "nipple" in question is actually a slight irregularity in the photo, but thanks go out to frequent Letters contributor Greydyn for a bit of inspiration: we've recently hired some out-of-work subliminal advertising executives fresh off the Joe Camel campaign to add nipples, tiny genitalia and a few hoary death-wish images to all our photos. Let it not be said that we're insensitive to the needs of the shut-in community. —ed.

■ He swears that's his real name

I don't know who started using the latest catchword "chanteuse," but it is really annoying. Used once every couple of issues, it is an interesting new word, but you people are really running it into the ground. Enough already!

Marshal Giggelman
Ft. Bragg, NC

My OED is at the cleaners, so I can't tell you who started this whole "chanteuse" thing, but like the "a" on the end of "electronic," it's something you get used to after a while, like commuting 45 minutes out of the media center of the world to produce a magazine in a suburban bedroom community where your life is in constant danger from trophy wives attempting to parallel-park oversized sport utility vehicles with nails still damp from the manicure salon... I'm sorry, what were we talking about? —ed.

■ Thirtysomethings

In response to needing to feel better about turning 30 [Letters, Sep.]: I mean, I turned 30 a few months ago and I'm just fine about it. Just ask my mother when she is doing my laundry, loaning me money, cleaning my room and driving me to work or rehab.

Chappy
Rochester, NY

Y'know, my Mom would think everything's cool with me, too, if only I were still living at home and she were still doing my laundry... —ed.

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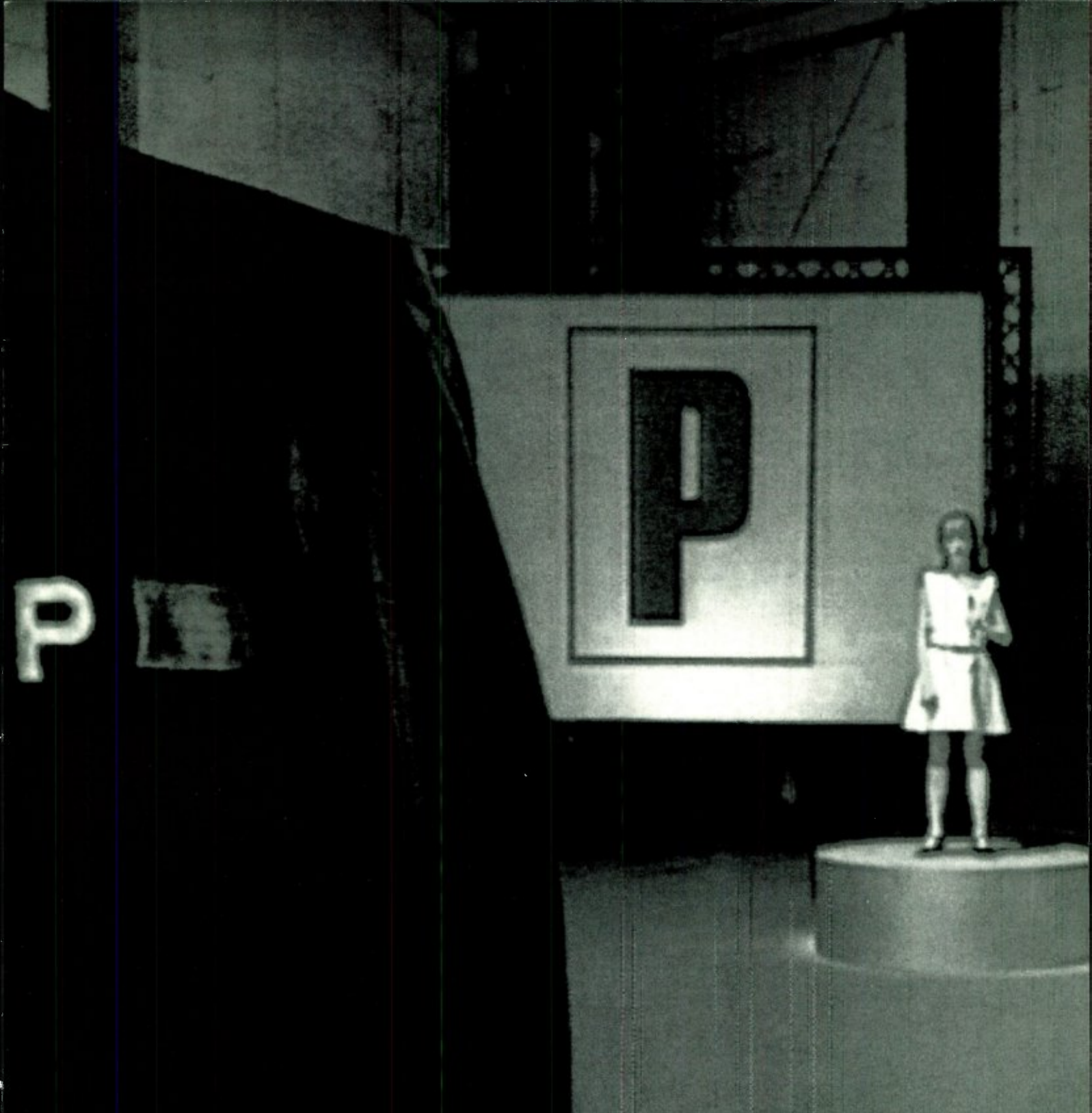
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IN STORES NOW



Listen to "All Mine" on the CD sampler enclosed in this issue

World Radio History





MARGARET LENG TAN

Avant Schroeder

The top floor of pianist Margaret Leng Tan's Brooklyn townhouse looks like the playroom of a very lucky child. Nine toy pianos of all sizes, shapes and colors are arrayed on the floor. Nearby is a table full of other toy instruments—rattles, tambourines, a pocket boom-box, even a toy accordion. On the fireplace mantel, however, is a more mature memento: a picture of Tan with her late mentor, the avant-garde composer John Cage.

It's the fifth anniversary of Cage's death, and Tan marks the date by reflecting on how his influence led her to bring together the worlds of toys and modern experimental music. It was a whimsical work of his, the 1948 "Suite For Toy Piano," that set Tan off on the obsessive journey that made her practice room into a place she calls "Lilliput Land."

"I was playing a lot of Cage" during the '80s and '90s, she says. "In 1993, I got around to [the suite], and in order to play that, I had to find myself a toy piano. I found my very first... at a thrift shop in the East Village. It cost me all of \$45, but it's a beautiful little thing." It's a wooden upright about a foot and a half high; the petite-framed Tan sits on a miniature piano bench to play it. She lifts the top to display a series of steel rods, which sound when they are hit by plastic hammers connected to the keys. She taps a few keys, yielding a slightly flat, muted bell-like tone.

"I was just so fascinated by the sound of it," she says. Many of her composer friends felt the same way. Prominent members of the experimental music scene such as David Lang and Guy Klucvsek have composed pieces for her pianos; her favorites appear on *The Art Of The Toy Piano* (Point). They range from streamlined compositions using a limited range of keys to involved works like Klucvsek's "Sweet Chinoiserie" which has Tan playing toy

piano with one hand and toy accordion with the other. "No overdubs!" she says proudly. With the release of the CD and several festival appearances, Tan's work has attracted notice from all sorts, including a composer who offered to write a piece for toy piano and singing guinea pigs.

While Tan speaks playfully about her collection, she approaches her performances with utmost seriousness, practicing five to six hours a day. She speaks of the control she has gained from learning to get nuance and dynamics from the stripped-down mechanism and foreshortened keys. "I recommend the toy piano to all Juilliard students," she says, only half-joking. But, I ask her, is it possible to achieve virtuosity on a toy instrument?

Perching on the bench, she poises herself and spreads her limber hands across the keyboard of the wooden upright to play "Eleanor Rigby," as arranged for toy piano by herself and composer Toby Twining. The miniature setting makes her

“I like heroin as much as the next guy, but I’m not gonna have a problem with it or anything.”

—The Dandy Warhols’ Courtney Taylor, on the band’s song *Not If You Were The Last Junkie On Earth*

in my room

ARTISTS’ PERSONAL PICKS



MOLOKO

- Miss Cunty Cunty (The Feeling)
- Roni Size The Fall
- Leopoldo “Skin” underwear
- Jimi Tenor Intersession
- “Our new lo-fi Peter Frampton talk-tube thingy.”

ATARI TEENAGE RIOT VS. ATARI 2600

“Deutschland Has Gotta Die!!”

DJ Alec Empire

Rare 12”s command collector prices

The Future Of War

“You Can’t Hold Us Back”

Demand collective memory

Could be comic-book characters

“Delete Yourself”

Frequently available for interviews

Made German translations of several titles

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back

Rare cartridges command collector prices

Combat

Super Breakout

128 bytes of random access memory (in VLSI)

Inspired Atari Force comic book

4K ROM chips could not be overwritten

CPU Avail less than 50%



L-R: Alec Empire, Hanin Elias, Carl Crack



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World Radio History

"TURNTABLISTS" In the old days, DJs were the people who accompanied rappers, or kept the dancefloor moving. Turntablists came out of the DJ art, but they concentrate less on keeping a beat or staying in the background than on virtuosic tricks with needles and records, solo or in groups (like DJ Clark Kent's Superman crew, the X-Ecutioners or DJ Shadow). There are international turntablist competitions, though their work is just starting to show up on record—check out the *Return Of The DJ* compilations, for starters.

BUZZ WORDS



movements appear magnified, each finger coming down with such precision on the key that it seems that the little instrument should shake with the impact. But the piano stays still, while the sound comes tinkling and crashing out. Single notes ring like chimes from a music box and chords shimmer in the air for seconds after they are played, making the familiar song strange and ethereal. The piece ends, and Tan looks up. "Does that answer your question?" —*Andrea Moed*

GREG GARING

That High Lonesome Beep

Sometime around Greg Garing's 19th birthday, he drifted down from Pennsylvania to Nashville to find the music of his dreams. But the slick and airbrushed late-'80s Nashville music industry wasn't quite ready for a lanky hardcore honky-tonk and bluegrass freak with black nail polish.

"Nashville was a skeleton of itself, there was nothing real left," Garing says. "I lived in a trailer, in the trailer park right across the parking lot from Bill Monroe's club." Garing supported himself by playing grueling honky-tonk cover-band gigs, sometimes spending 14 hours a day on the bandstand. "I would go out on my off night, and find these old guys. The old greats were still around, but see, the industry didn't want them anymore. A lot of 'em wouldn't play out; you'd have to just track 'em down at home."

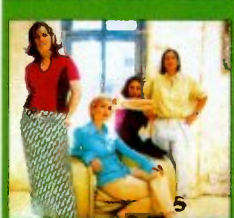
Garing's main claim to Nashville infamy, however, came slightly later. "The Lyman Theater, where the Grand Ole Opry used to be, was originally a church built in the 1860s. Out the back door, across the little alley in the back, it faced the back door of this bar, and that

became the dressing room for the Opry for 50 years." At Garing's instigation, his band was booked to play in the back room of the bar. "The roof had actually caved partway in, so we played in front of this wall of rubble," Greg chuckles. "It was really dark, with a lone blue light bulb hanging above the stage."

"I went to the same guy who made Hank Williams' suits back in the '50s, Ernest Tubb's nephew. He was also a great songwriter himself." Tubb's nephew made Garing's band a set of matching suits cut to exact 1949 specifications. "People would stumble through the door into this weird blue light and see us up there, playing this stuff! I knew all these songs that nobody my age knew; I found these kids and taught them what the old guys taught me."

Eventually, the Nashville bigwigs in their cowboy hats came a-calling, but Garing did a surprising about-face. To the astonishment of many of his friends, he shelved the retro band, moved to New York and began toying around with synthesizers and pre-programmed drumbeats. Journalist B.P. Fallon, who had previously been "vibemaster" for Led Zeppelin,

in my room



LUSCIOUS JACKSON Jill Cuniff

- Throwing Muses
Limbo
- Sheila Chandra
Silk
- Neneh Cherry
M-n
- Blis
This Is Teen-C Power (EP)
- anything by
Leonard Cohen

fours we'd like to see

SWEETNESS!

Sugar, Sugar Ray, Sugar Cane, Syrup USA, Honey Tongue, Harry "Sweets" Edison, The Sweet

random fact

The late comic book writer and editor Mark Gruenwald's ashes, in accordance with his wishes, were mixed into the ink used to print a paperback reprint of his series *Squadron Supreme*.

T. Rex and U2, turned Garing on to the sounds of Garbage, Tricky, Portishead and jungle. Garing set to work creating the new sound that would emerge on *Alone* (Paladin-Revolution), a mix of countryish twang and trip-hop intrigue.

On Garing's kitchen table is a picture his girlfriend took of him with Bill Monroe. In his closet are boxes full of old 78s, including some one-of-a-kind acetates that bluegrass legend Jimmy Martin gave him. But his home studio looks like something out of a recording technology magazine, sleek and digital. "I wanted to make records," Garing says simply. "The record is my thing. It's not like I was a country singer and I changed into this something else. It's me." —*James Lien*

HELIUM

Dragonflight

The first few records by Mary Timony's band Helium were the sound of slow-burning rage. But with the recent EP No Guitars and the new album The Magic City (Matador), Timony has turned her lyrical inspiration



L-R: Ash Bowie, Mary Timony, Shawn Devlin

JAMES SMOLKA

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from feminist linguist Mary Daly to fantasy novels. She explains:

"A lot of [earlier] lyrics came out of this anger that I felt. I still have the need to write lyrics about the same sort of anger, but now instead of imagining getting revenge, I'm imagining escaping from it." Hence the dragons and kingdoms on *No Guitars*, and the fantastic elements that show up everywhere on the new album, beginning with the song titles: "Ancient Cryme," "Queen Of The Fire," and bassist Ash Bowie's electronic instrumental "Medieval People."

"The new songs have these sort of imaginary landscapes. Most of them are me going to that world but not really getting there... Generally, they start off on the ground, and they go up into the sky. 'Ocean Of Wine' starts out being by this river, sort of in the backyard of my parents' house, and then somehow I get up above the situation and I'm looking down on it from the sky. And then at the end I'm in the ocean. That's right after 'Leon's Space Song,' which has the same situation on it. Most all of the songs do."

in my room

ARTISTS' PERSONAL PICKS



FIG DISH Blake Smith

- Verbenaz
Souls For Sale
- Fleetwood Mac
The Dance
- Game Theory
Big Shot Chronicles
- Triple Fast Action
unreleased album
- David Foster Wallace
Infinite Jest (book)

**inspirational
verse** "Albert
Gore has the guts/
To lead this nation
of goddamned nuts"
—Faxed Head, "Gore
And Guts"

Helium's songs are full of suggestions of places—mostly imaginary places—and hints of religious imagery. Is she trying to envision heaven? "Almost all the songs I write have a glimpse of that in them. A lot of them take place in the sky. It's really weird, but I imagine myself in the sky looking down at Earth a lot... I think I get close to imagining what it is, but I don't think I've ever, in a song, been positive enough to focus on it."

Timony has been busy over the last year or so; besides Helium, she's played with Mind Science Of The Mind, toured as a duo with Dam-builders violinist Joan Wasser, sung with Disque 9, recorded with Led Byrd (her side project with Bowie, who's also in Polvo), and sat in with the Magnetic Fields. Helium will be touring the U.S. in November, and Timony

also has plans with the like-minded Boston band Syrup USA. "We've decided we're going to start the mystical revolution. We want to tour together and have backdrops with rainbows and dragons and stuff." —*Douglas Wolk*

OLIVE

Dressing For Success?

These days, the interior of Block Hall is rather dismal. Situated on a tiny side street within the strict confines of Manhattan's Wall Street neighborhood, the five-story structure—with its dangling electrical wires, soot-matted crystal chandeliers and weathered velvet banquettes—has certainly seen better days. It's the perfect moody setting, though, for the British trio Olive, here filming a video for "You're Not Alone," the first U.S. single from their debut, Extra Virgin (RCA).



On the third floor, singer Ruth-Ann Boyle is leaning against a paint-peeled column. Attired in a black body-hugging Collette Dinnigan slip and strapless Manolo Blahnik heels (well, they had straps until the stylist snipped them off), Boyle is awaiting instruc-

■ **REVENANT** Launched by enigmatic, profound guitarist/composer John Fahey and his Nashville-based manager Dean Blackwood, and devoted to "raw music of all stripes," the Revenant label continues in the spirit of Fahey's influential Takoma label of the '60s and '70s. Revenant has already released an impressively packaged (in Spartan soft-packs) selection of sounds encompassing the far-out and the visceral: Derek Bailey's *Music And Dance*, which finds London's father of improv guitar in performance with butoh-inspired dancer Min Tanaka (providing "bodily percussion"); Jim O'Rourke's tranced out, refined, acoustic *Happy Days*; Cecil Taylor's *Nefertiti The Beautiful One Has Come*, a reissue of the avant-jazz pianist's French 1962 gig with extra tracks; the Stanley Brothers'

Earliest Recordings: Complete Rich-R-Tone 78s, a set of super-rare proto-bluegrass/mountain sounds from the late '40s and early '50s; and most recently, the Bassholes' *Blue Roots*, a bluesy lo-fi caterwaul by Don Gibson's primitivist ensemble. The label name comes from the French word, meaning "one who returns after a long absence." "Since we focus on what we consider potent but overlooked music and artists, that should make some sense," Blackwood explains. Upcoming releases include a disc by Sun City Girls guitarist Rick Bishop, a compilation of "raw pre-war gospel," Dock Boggs's complete early recordings, rare Fahey music, and archival material by Joe Maneri, Rev. Lonnie Farris and the Monks. —*Mike McGonigal*
(Revenant, P.O. Box 198732, Nashville, TN 37219)



label profile

“As much as man looks down upon apes as being a lesser-developed version of himself, that’s how I look down upon Christians in America—a sort of lesser form of intelligence.”
—Marilyn Manson, on his difficulties with the Christian right

tions from the director, while being doted on by a hair stylist, a fashion stylist, and a make-up artist. It takes work to remain glamorous throughout a 12-hour video shoot.

“Oh, please, this is not what I call everyday wear. It’s way too much work,” says Boyle between shoots. “I’m a bit of a plain Jane, really. I find it tiresome to put a lot of make-up on, to fasten up my hair... I mean, I love it when this stuff happens—when somebody else is doing it for me—but I’m more the jeans, trainers, and T-shirt type. For everyday life in Sheffield, I would be shot and killed if I wore such fashions. They’re just not practical.”

Boyle is definitely the pimiento of Olive, surrounded by the musical explorations of her band mates: keyboardist/lyricist Tim Kellett and programmer Robin Taylor-Firth, who in earlier times performed with Durutti Column and Nightmares On Wax, respectively. “Since forming three years ago, we have been an inseparable unit,” says Kellett. “We are a band in the truest sense of the word.” That said, why is Taylor-Firth not here? “Oh, he hates this part of the job”—doing interviews and videos.

Before Boyle and Kellett have time to finish their cigarettes, the director yells “Ready!” and Boyle, quickly assuming her new position, curls up in a fetal position on the tattered wooden floor, and looks forlornly at the camera, giving pouty lip service to the opening lines of “You’re Not Alone.” One can’t help but wonder what must be going through her mind. “I’ll tell you,” laughs Boyle. “I’m thinking, ‘Girl, what the fuck am I doing here? And how is this gonna sell a record?’” —Michael Paoletta

GENEVA CD

Metro Beat

Andrew Montgomery worked for four years as a reporter for the Sunday Post in his native Aberdeen, Scotland. But it wasn’t the glamorous career you might imagine, sighs



L-R: Steve Dora, Keith Graham, Andrew Montgomery, Douglas Laskie, Stuart Evans

The Maxell Mix Tape

We all **MAKE UP TAPES** of our favorite songs. They’re driving companions, records of ill-spent summers, letters to girlfriends or boyfriends, whatever. What’s your favorite mix? **Tell Us.** And if we pick your entry, the kind folks at Maxell will send you a bunch of goodies.

This Month’s Winner is
Mark Osborn !!

SIDE-1	SIDE-2
Pavement No Tan Lines	Public Enemy Incident at 66.6 FM / Welcome to the Terrordome
Marvin Gaye What’s Happening, Brother?	Goldie Kemistry
Robert Pollard Release The Sunbird	Gorky’s Zygotic Mynci If Fingers Were Xylophones
Massive Attack Unfinished Symphony	Frank Black I Wanna Live On (An Abstract Plain)
Ben Folds Five Philosophy	Guided By Voices If We Wait
Elvis Costello And The Attractions Party Girl	Danielle Howle Soft white China Patterns On His Teeth
Boo Radleys It’s Lulu	Everly Brothers All I Have To Do (Is Dream)
The Sea And Cake The Transaction	Palace The Brute Choir
Dirty Three Hope	Sparklehorse Heart of Darkness
Afghan Whigs Summer’s Kiss	Tindersticks Cherry Blossoms
R.E.M. New Orleans Instrumental No.1 / Find The River	P.M. Dawn I’d Die without You
	The Beatles It’s Only Love

Just send your mix (track listings only) to: CMJ New Music Monthly, 11 Middle Neck Rd., STE. 400, Great Neck, NY 11021; also fax us at 516.466.7159 or email at cmjmonthly@cmjmusic.com.

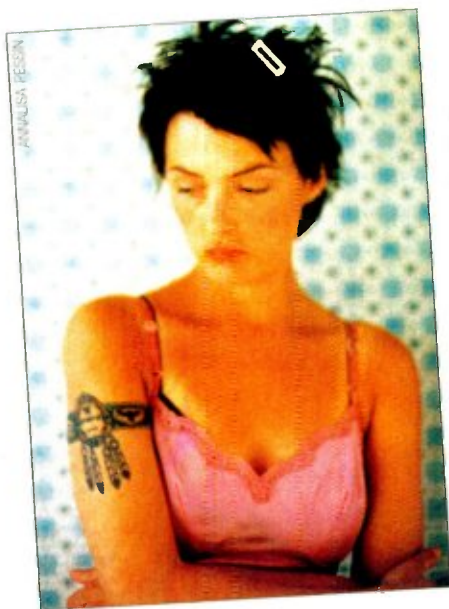
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■ **HOLLY McNARLAND** Holly McNarland is a big deal in her native Canada, on the strength of her EP *Sour Pie* and her new album *Stuff*. She spends more time on the road than at home; she's crisscrossed Canada more than a few times, and she'll be trying to do the same thing in the U.S. later this year. So what do she and her bandmates do to keep themselves amused in the tour bus? ■ "We had a crappy old Nintendo, and then I got a Sony Playstation. I've only got one game, *Crash Bandicoot*. It's a crazy game—it's so much fun! I'm on the fourth level. Except our generator [in the bus] was fucked up. You could get really far in the game, and then the air conditioning would come on and take all the power and shut your game off, and everybody would get really upset. ■ "The Nintendo's at home now. When I'm home, I'm home all the time—I go to the park and that's about it. I love spending time at home. I just hang out and watch TV."

“Biggie helps me. The other day I was writing and I said, ‘Yo, Big, I’m stuck.’ Five minutes later, I had the line. I talk to him. I come in. I kiss his urn. I know what he’s saying.”
—Lil’ Kim on her post-mortem relationship with the Notorious B.I.G.

Montgomery, who left the paper when his ice-cool combo *Geneva* signed with U.K. indie *Nude Records*.

Montgomery’s main beat was sports. “But you’d also do consumer things,” he scowls. “Like, some woman’s having trouble with a couch delivery and you’d go and investigate it. One of the worst jobs I ever had to do was this thing called ‘Can I Help.’ People would write into the office, letters from old people, basically, who either didn’t own a Yellow Pages or were too stupid to look things up. Things like ‘My husband’s looking for a pair of moleskin trousers—can you help?’ So you’d phone retailers up until you finally found a distributor of moleskin trousers.”

How did this tall, gangly ex-choirboy switch professions? Oddly enough, he has the paper to thank. Guitarist Steven Dora was dating a girl who also had a *Post* gig; she invited Montgomery over to Dora’s for dinner. “And after singing through a Beatles songbook that night, I just sorta casually said ‘Hey — you wanna start a band?’” recalls Dora. It was that simple, and it eventually resulted in the band’s chiming debut, *Further* (WORK). “There were no adverts, no auditions for *Geneva*—it was all just like... friends, really.”

“And I’d always sung,” Montgomery

continues. “But the great thing was, when Steven and I started writing songs, we were up for *anything*.” Even falsetto vocals, a brainstorm founded in his devout worship of Al Green and Tim Buckley. “When I first tried it out, I was a bit wary, but Steven encouraged me to keep going—it was all about serving the tunes, it was what was best for the songs.”

Does Montgomery have any fond recollections at all of his years spent toiling in the fourth estate? One assignment that truly stands out? He sips his tea and considers this for a minute.

weird record

■ Our brain hurts when we try to figure out Xper Xr’s *Lun Hsiao Shuai!!* (Ching Chang), more or less a fake Chinese karaoke album of Prince covers, pseudo-easy-listening music and indescribable horrors, executed and mixed as intentionally badly as possible, and often using the original songs playing in the background as accompaniment, all wrapped in a detoured Kraftwerk sleeve. You haven’t lived until you’ve heard what sounds like a confused old man attempting to hum along with EMF’s “Unbelievable.” Well, maybe you have.

in my room

ARTISTS

JASON FALKNER

- Blonde Redhead
- La Mia “Ita Violenta”
- Ash
- 1977
- Beatles
- Revolver
- Heatmiser
- Mic City “Uns”
- Lilys
- Better Won’t Make Your Life Better

inspirational verse

“Sneer on her face/Like the Mona Lisa/Hole in her nose/Like the Sphinx at Giza/Sheena’s in a goth gang./Sheena’s in a goth gang now.”
—Cramps, “Sheena’s in a Goth Gang”

“In some ways, the best story I ever did was the story that made me decide that journalism wasn’t for me,” Montgomery concludes. “And they were the ones where you’ve got to phone someone up because a relative died and say ‘How do you feel?’ I had to do that a couple of times, and I’m just not the kind of person who can close off their feelings and emotions about that kind of thing.” Ringing up a gentleman whose son had been shot to death, and hearing the father break down into tears, he decided that would be his last story for the *Post*. “I just felt like such an asshole after that. And it made me decide—made me think ‘This simply isn’t right for me. The band is!’” —Tom Lanham

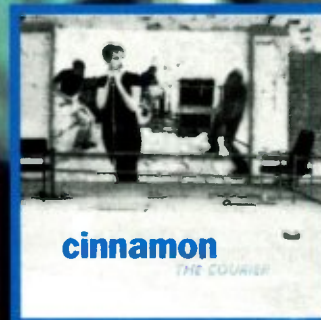
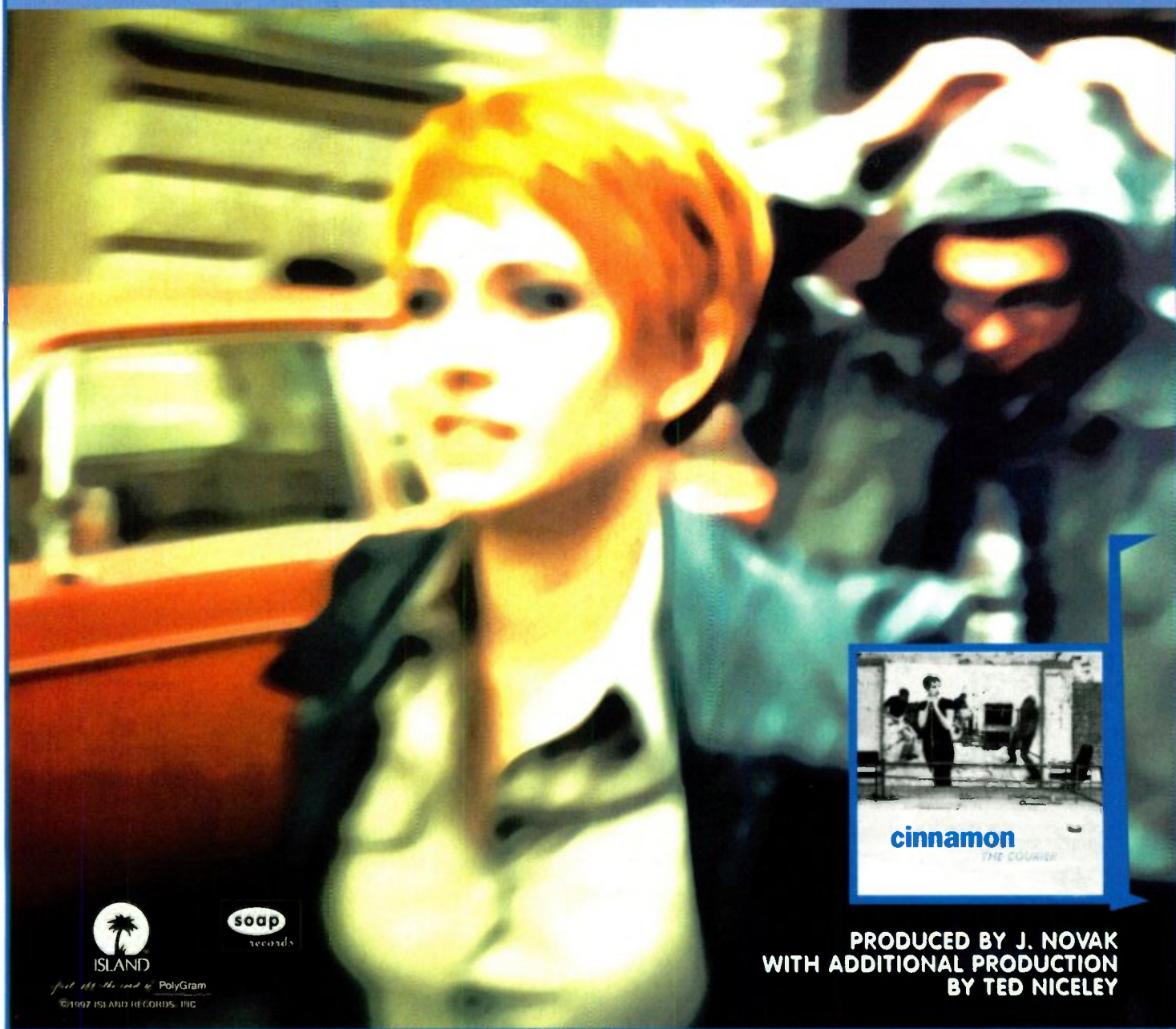


STEREO

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THE 6 BEST RELEASES THIS MONTH



APPLES IN STEREO

Tone Soul Evolution — spinART

The Apples In Stereo's early records made them one of the most promising bands college radio had heard in ages. They're not promising any more—they're *there*. *Tone Soul Evolution* is a joy, sweet and bounding and fun, with the best songs they've ever written and rich, homey production that suggests that their years of trying to pull off wall-of-sound arrangements on a four-track have served them well. The band has shed its more obvious Beach Boys emulations in favor

of the kinetic guitar lilt and rip of its live performances; what it's kept from its favorite band are full-tilt multi-part harmonies and the knack for getting every instrument's sound exactly *right*, from the tangy horns and guitar on down to the maracas and tambourine. And the disc is full of ecstatic moments: the indelible melody of "Seems So" turning inside-out and leaping up in its last verse, the layered "ba ba ba"s of "Silver Chain" intermingling with the guitar parts around them, the suspended moment at the end of "The Silvery Light Of A Dream" giving way to the sandpaper riff of "We'll Come To Be." The Apples have honored their heroes in the best possible way: by working in their spirit, rather than following their example. —Douglas Wolk

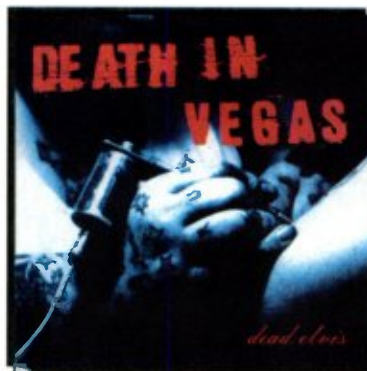
DATALOG: Release date: Sep. 23.

FILE UNDER: Teenage symphonies to God.
R.I.Y.L.: High Llamas, Neutral Milk Hotel, early Teenage Fanclub.

DEATH IN VEGAS CD

Dead Elvis — Concrete/Time Bomb

The name Death In Vegas conjures up some pretty standard images—desiccation and excess, the Reaper and Elvis impersonators—the juxtaposition of which is the sort of facile irony that mid-to-late-'90s clichés are made of. But that's before you hear it. *Dead Elvis* is even more effective if you ride in on your pop culture high horse; the more you think know, the deeper into that prized consciousness it sinks. It does this with a series of juxtapositions that—again—seem innocuous enough at first, but are layered, looped and manipulated into a genre-less electronic music that vacillates between background clatter and behavior modification. The record's centerpiece is the segue from an electro cover of the English Beat's "Twist And Crawl"—a genius idea that recalls the Beat's similarly inspired cover of "Tears Of A Clown"—to "Dirt," which finds fascistic elements in Woodstock and marries samples from the soundtrack LP to a hip-hop beat and jungle-speed rap. Along the way, and through to its more

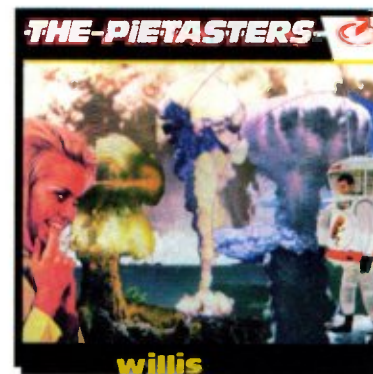


ambient, dub-like close, *Dead Elvis* steers clear of obvious electronica style cues with the distinct live-instrument feel of its samples, and seems, well, rather rock about it all. Whether or not you always *had* felt there was something sinister about Woodstock or can't tell an Aphex Twin from a Wagon Christ without a scorecard, Death In Vegas is an enticing night of uneasy dreams. —Scott Frampton

DATALOG: Released Sep. 16.

FILE UNDER: Cut-and-paste grooves.

R.I.Y.L.: Meak Beat Manifesto, the Crystal Method, Art Of Noise.



PIETASTERS CD

Willis — Hellcat

What the Pietasters are doing isn't so much ska-punk as ska-soul, with a heavy emphasis on the soul. The band has an R&B groove that just won't quit all the way through *Willis*—imagine a juke-joint band that's been exposed to some early Jamaican music and you'll be on the right track. It might not be pretty, but it's definitely gritty and danceable. Steven Jackson has a voice so raw that he makes Joe Strummer sound

DATALOG:

Released Oct. 7.

FILE UNDER: High-powered ska-soul.
R.I.Y.L.: Snuff, the Toasters, late Jam.

like a crooner; the man's throat must be gushing blood at the end of every show. The rhythm section digs into the beat like it's expecting a siege, and you can almost see the horn section going through its choreography. This is what The Jam was aiming for at the end of its life ("New Breed" even sounds like it could have been written by a younger Paul Weller), but where that band only came within hailing distance, the Pietasters have found the spot marked X. It's a veritable party in a 5" disc, the kind of album you didn't think anybody made any more. Now you know they do. —Chris Nickson

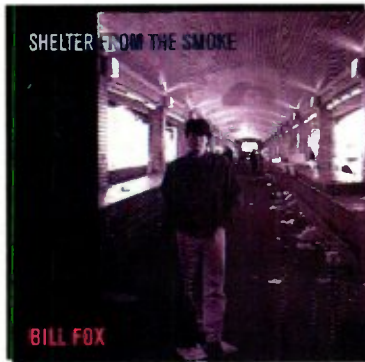
BILL FOX

Shelter From The Storm — Cherry Pop

Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard reportedly appropriated a portion of his approach to songwriting and singing from Bill Fox, then lead singer of the Mice. Listening to Fox's first solo album (after a pretty great single on Scat last year), it's not hard to believe. There's the early-Beatles Brit twang, a simple songwriting approach, arrangements that rest on the strength of a guitar's strings, and the obvious love of a jangly pop melody that's often sung rather than played. But these standing-on-the-shoulders comparisons do nothing to illustrate what's underneath the skin of *Shelter*, a little pea of an album that slowly grows. With each listen, its humbleness and under-produced quirkiness disappear and in their place arrives something larger, as Fox charms your socks off until the tiny unassuming pearl has been transformed into a boulder of a pop album.

DATALOG: Released Aug. 19.
FILE UNDER: Under-produced, perfect pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Guided By Voices, Beatles '62-'66, The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.

Those of you searching for the secret record of the year, the one to out-obscure your geek friends with, should look no further than this one. Hopefully, though, someone with the smarts and cash will bring it to the broader audience it deserves. *Shelter From The Storm* eclipses most high-profile pop records this year because of one simple fact: These are great songs. —Randall Roberts



CHRIS KNOX

Yes!! — Flying Nun

"There's love and there's lust," declaims Chris Knox on "The Joy Of Sex," the opening track of *Yes!!*, "And there's a fine line between them/And there's babybabybaby-babybabybabybaby." It's as if he's saying, "I've tossed off hundreds of razor-tongued, cracklingly brilliant couplets about how knotty and treacherous emotions can be, but language has its limits." It's a fitting way to lead off an album of unusual passion—and not just the amount of passion is unusual, but also the passions themselves. "The Ballad Of A Victim Of The Economic Recovery" is a hate letter from the dispossessed to a high-flying son of the bull market, but the warbled choruses inject a weird note of comfort. "Pibroch"'s discourse on truth and falsehood is typically sardonic, but Knox's anguished tone (and bagpipes) make it sound like a highlands lament. For all its sentimentality, though, *Yes!!* is wonderfully reductionist in theme and in composition. The tapes loop out simple disco rhythms, the hooks repeat insistently, and the lyrics get down to basics: "your need for air and your need for food/And your need to screw and your need to be screwed" ("Tantamount To Treasury"). Playing the sympathetic friend and the nasty little man at once, Knox continues to write songs that sneak sideways into the soul. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23.
FILE UNDER: Charming cynics and their tape decks.
R.I.Y.L.: Tall Dwarfs, Mountain Goats.



IVY

Apartment Life — Atlantic

Having previously created invigorating pop from very simple elements, the New York trio Ivy beefs up its winsome sound on its second album, without quashing its charm. In addition to augmenting the basics, the band has also thrown brass, strings and vintage keyboards into the soup. The 12 tunes bristle with a vitality that contrasts neatly with the album's recurring themes of departures and journeys of one stripe or another. Swinging horns and a punchy melody the Smiths overlooked propel the heroine's departure on "This Is The Day," while strings and solo trumpet neatly shade the lonely "Baker." The rollicking "Get Out Of The City" captures the omnipresent ennui that permeates humid metropolises in August. The band rocks harder than before, too: "You Don't Know Anything" could be an Oasis tune, if not for Dominique Durand's languid Parisian intonation. Even on sparser cuts such as "These Are The Things About You," the rhythmic activity and guitar interplay feels livelier. The band's essential strengths—Durand's singing, strong hooks—are never obscured, but now less of the songs' appeal depends solely on those qualities (an especially beneficial improvement for Durand's lazy pitch). Maintaining these central points of focus permits the additional color and activity of *Apartment Life* to fill out Ivy's dynamic to splendid and harmonious effect. —Kurt B. Reighley

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 14.
FILE UNDER: Simplicity and melody.
R.I.Y.L.: Semi-Gloss, poppler Stereolab, Fountains Of Wayne.





SOULS

Souls make the kind of music you listen to while trashing your room in a fit of hatred and jealousy. On the Swedish band's second album and major-label debut, *Bird Fish Or Inbetween* (Trauma), vocalist Cecilia Nordlund gives voice to the frustration and rage of a jilted lover and, in the process, comes across as a gal you definitely wouldn't want to cross—the lyrics find Nordlund making threats like "I will haunt you in your dreams 'til you stop denying me." At the same time, the brash, distorted guitar noise and pounding rhythms that support her mercurial vocals sound equally vicious, making the quarter's tooth-and-nail aggression sublimely unsettling. Last year, *Bird* attracted the attention of Bush's Gavin Rossdale, who helped the quarter to get signed to his band's label, Trauma. The band will be touring the U.S. again this fall. —Jenny Eliscu

ROYAL FINGERBOWL

There's no denying that Royal Fingerbowl's frontman Alex McMurray shares a thing or two with Tom Waits: a nicotine-warmed baritone and a penchant for songs about beautiful losers and other

disheveled characters. Together with trampsman Kevin O'Day and upright bassist Andrew Wolf, McMurray takes the timeless sensibilities of blues, jazz and Tin Pan Alley tradition to craft a sometimes swingin', sometimes downcast hodge-podge of charming junkyard soul on the band's debut, *Happy Birthday, Sabo!* (TVT). And like Waits' best hard-luck tales, Royal Fingerbowl's rickety tunes have a healthy dose of dark humor, lending even the most aching, booze-soaked lament or raucous tango a kind of knowing smirk. To catch the band in its natural environment, you'll have to travel to New Orleans, where it inhabits a dimly lit watering hole called Dragon's Den on most nights, or catch them on one of their frequent excursions across the states. Don't leave home without the bourbon or smokes, either. —Colin Helms

GARAGELAND

If you've been harboring an unmet craving for buzzsaw guitar lines couched in quirky melodies and songs suffused with spastic energy—you know, the kind churned out factory-style by Pixies in their day, or Pavement and the 3D's more recently—then step into Garageland. True to its name (taken from a Clash song), the New Zealand quartet packs all these essential ingredients into a style that's more garage-sounding than new wave-y,



giving its songs a loose, natural feel. Last year Garageland released its debut album, *Last Exit To Garageland*, on renowned NZ label Flying Nun, and it soared to #3 on the national sales chart. Since then, the group has moved to London, toured the U.S. over this past summer, and seen the domestic release of its album on Foodchain Records. After one rumble through *Last Exit*, you may have to strap yourself down if you don't want to be seen singing—and pogoing—along to songs like "Fingerpops," "Come Back" and "Fire Away." But you've been waiting to do that again for years... —LA

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The Sons of **Scott Walker**

by Chris Nickson

There's a very fine line separating cult heroism and total obscurity, but it makes all the difference in the world. Find yourself in the latter category, and no one beyond family and friends care. Get elevated to the former, and suddenly you find yourself announced as an influence on a whole new generation.

He didn't take the easy route, or make it easy for his audience. He offered ambitious and sophisticated orchestration, drama and real passion in his voice—then, as now, an uncommon virtue in popular music. The lyrics showed definite bends towards Angst and Art, moving beyond the standard form to something where the intellect and heart met in poetry.

He covered Jacques Brel, whose very *noir* depictions of life were hardly the stuff of chart fodder. His own songs, too, became more bizarre as his career progressed. "Plastic Palace People," on *Scott*

Take the example of Scott Walker. An American, he'd achieved British pop success in the mid-'60s with the Walker Brothers (who only managed two American hits, "Make It Easy On Yourself" and "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Any More"). He had it all going for him when he embarked on his solo career in 1967—name recognition, drop-dead good looks, and a gorgeous singing voice. Walker became a huge figure, with his own TV show, and his first four albums all hit the British Top Ten. But, by and large, he didn't



Scott Walker

2, was an experiment in sound and words. A year later, he was writing "Big Louise," a portrait of a transvestite. By *Scott 4* in late '69, he'd reverted to his real name, Noel Scott Engel, and moved beyond commercial success. He would never have another solo hit, and his releases became more and more sporadic and enigmatic as he became more and more reclusive.

But in his most fertile period, 1967-70, he created a body of work that was, in its own way, as revolutionary as the Beatles'. He took the ideas of Mancini and Bacharach to their logical conclusion, essentially redefining the concept of orchestral pop. He was, in short, a visionary.

"He was a maverick in the mainstream. He subverted the song form, the idea of the crooner," offers Andy Jenks of Alpha. At the time, though, not many people saw it. It took two decades for people to get to the heart of what he was doing, and understand the richness of his musical legacy. In 1991, Julian Cope put together a compilation of Scott's work from the late '60s under the title *Fire Escape In The Sky: The Godlike Genius Of Scott Walker*, and that was the turning point. What had been forgotten quickly became an influence on Pulp (whose "Live Bed Show" tries very hard to be a Scott Walker song), the Divine Comedy, Tindersticks, Marc Almond, My Life Story, Alpha, and others. But why?

In part it was the zeitgeist: It was time for strings, and in Britain, the apex of orchestral



Divine Comedy



Paul Rider

My Life Story
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Photography by Debra L. Rothenberg



pop had been Scott. The Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon readily admits that "all our albums to date have been influenced by him. I think I'm just now coming out of it. I was thinking I should stop listening to his records and try writing my own music for a change."

Others originally seemed to tap into the same spirit, like Jake

Shillingford of My Life Story, who started out "trying to redress the balance in pop music, trying to take away electric guitars and replace them with strings, which I think are just as dynamic. I didn't know Scott Walker at the time." Once he'd been introduced to the music, however, it offered a focus for what he was doing, and "Scott did become quite a big influence on me."

Andy Jenks says that Walker's influence has shown up in Alpha's songs as "having something that sounds happy, but if you listen it's actually very twisted and bitter. The way you can use it to drag someone through barbed wire and then through a field of daisies, using anger in subtle and understated ways."

Tindersticks have taken yet a different approach, looking to more fully explore the shadowy, dark areas Walker sketched out, but never completely ventured into. While the influence seems quite strong, and organist Dave Boulter says that his enthusiasm for Scott "has transmitted itself to the rest of the band," he also points out that "Dickon does all our string arrangements, and I'm not sure how big a fan he is. But I know he likes Henry Mancini, whose work has a similar feel."

Notably, all these artists stand well apart from the Brit-pop pack, out there taking some unexpected musical chances. That's only right: Walker chose to gradually distance himself from the mainstream as his work became more adventurous. And each one of these groups has picked up on something different: lyrics, the way an orchestra can be used, the shadings. But none of them have yet broken through the envelope that Walker pushed as far as he could.



In America, of course, it's a different matter altogether. Not only does Scott Walker's name have no cachet, it's barely known (although a compilation, *It's Raining Today: The Scott Walker Story*, was issued last year on Razor & Tie). But he's not totally unhonored in his homeland. Chicago's Gastr Del Sol acknowledges a debt to him, which comes through in some of its unusual orchestrations. Glyn Styler uses his voice in the same emotional way on *Live At The Mermaid Lounge*. And Walker's odd, complicated new album, *Tilt*, released in England two years ago, is now available on Drag City in the States. But he remains very much a British thing.

Even there, however, he's never likely to move beyond cult status. The scope of the music is still too ambitious for most people to swallow, and many can't even get past the sweep of the strings. But that's all right; Scott was always much more comfortable on the fringes, anyway. And the ones who need to understand, do. ■

BEBOP MEETS HIP-HOP.

COURTNEY PINE *Underground*

Saxophonist Courtney Pine blends and bends an ultra-modern mix of jazz, hip-hop, and funk.

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- jhelisa
- nicholas payton
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- reginald veal
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- mark whittfield



SECRET AGENT SWING.



UNITED FUTURE ORGANIZATION
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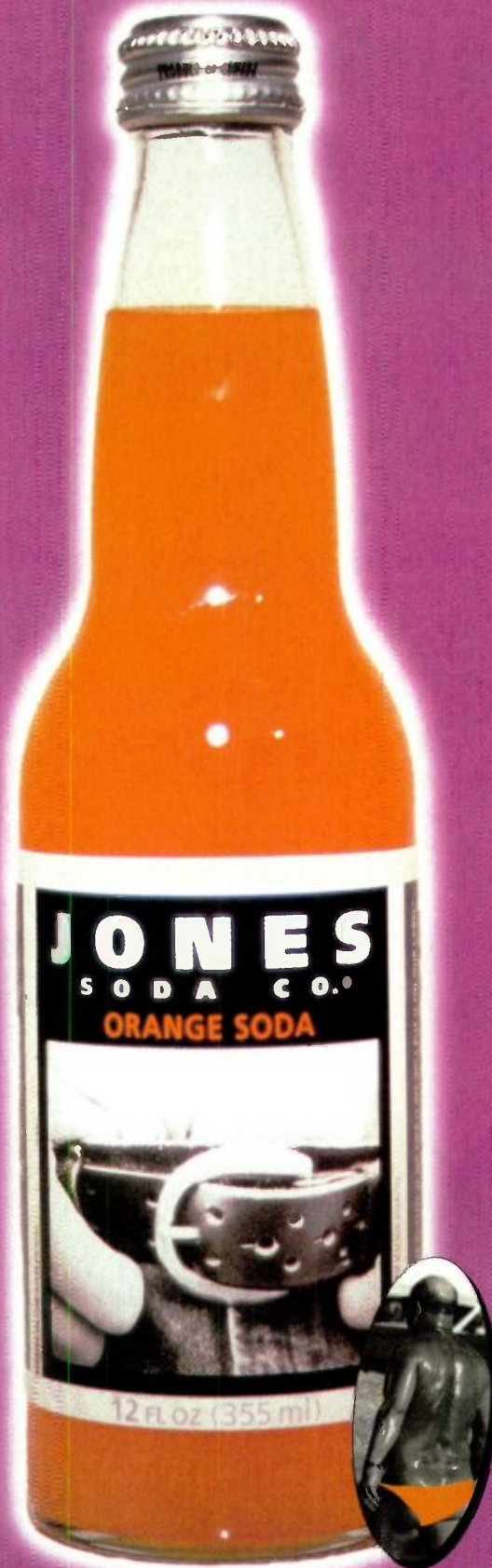
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Jones Soda





BABY BIRD

by Tom Lanham photographs by John Garbarini

Sunset over the New York skyline isn't a bad sight, if you're in the mood. Watching the last rays of daylight loosen their hold and disappear, visiting Brit Stephen Jones looks uncomfortable, almost edgy. He stares out the skyscraper window for a few minutes, then spins his swivel chair away from said cityscape, back to the issue at hand: trying to figure out how in the hell he got here, to America, discussing his curious musical achievements under the *nom de plume* of Baby Bird. "This is weird," Jones finally manages, shaking his jet-lagged head. "Just really *weird* for all this to be happening."

Thirty-four-year-old Jones, dressed all in rumpled black, with a crown of subtly spiked blond hair, sort of resembles an eccentric college professor. He's not sure why it happened. He only knows the facts: After writing over 450 songs and releasing five overlooked albums, Baby Bird fluttered to the top of the overseas charts last winter with "You're Gorgeous," a chiming piece of ear candy sung from the perspective of a submissive female model. And it's Jones's inky baritone murmur that gives the words a surreal kick: "You got me to hitch my knees up/ And pulled my legs apart/You took an Instamatic camera/And pulled my sleeves around my heart."

Why did the single go on to sell more than a half million copies in England alone, pushing its parent album, *Ugly Beautiful*, past the 200,000 mark? Jones scratches his two-day stubble and thinks about it. "People bought 'You're Gorgeous' for a certain reason, because of the message, the chorus," he reckons. The hum-along refrain of "You're gorgeous/ I'd do anything for you" made the disc "great to give to girlfriends or boyfriends, but this has caused problems. The song might be seen as a novelty hit in Britain." Any particular reason? Jones suddenly tumbles past 'uncomfortable' right into 'embarrassed.' "Have you ever heard of Pinky and Perky?" he asks, with a resigned sigh. "They're two little plastic pigs with helium voices—they've done a version of 'You're Gorgeous.' And those little blue things? The Smurfs? They *wanted* to cover it, but we vetoed it, said no way. But that other lot could cover it. If you do



to hear the pigs singing 'You're Gorgeous.' But I don't like those pigs. Not at all."

But facts are facts. Consider this: the Sheffield native—when he finally got the courage to release the cavalcade of homemade four-track recordings he'd been quietly producing—decided to issue *five* albums in a little over a year. Naturally, pitching the concept to major labels proved a tad frustrating. "We had two years of people telling us 'You can't do this—it's just not *done*. You've got to go away and form a band.'"

"Do you know Kajagoogoo? Remember them? Well, I got a letter from the bass player, Nick Beggs—he works with Polydor, I think—and he wrote back and said 'When you've written a middle eight and done these songs properly with a band, *then* we might be interested.' So I've still got that letter laying around—it's really funny. And I'd like to ring him up one day," Jones sneers, "just to say hello. People all had the tapes on their desks, and as soon as the first album came out [*I Was Born A Man*, on Baby Bird Records], they all rang up and said 'I *must* have a copy of this!' And Dave, my manager, could ring back to them and say 'Well, you had a copy sitting on your desk three months ago. Why don't you go and try to find it?'"

Falling somewhere between Syd Barrett self-immolation and Robyn Hitchcock self-deprecation, Jones studies humanity through smudged binoculars, and—on almost every one of those 400-plus tracks—steadfastly refuses to tune his guitar. (Which drove his other guitarist nuts when Baby Bird became an actual five-piece combo for the big-studio *Ugly Beautiful* last year.) For brevity's sake, the group

Pearls Before Swine

a faithful version of a song—even if it's two little pink pigs singing it—you can get away with it."

Pinky and Perky, eh? Jones folds his arms on his chest. "See, in the '50s and '60s, they were really big. You know, like Lambchop. And of course, the kids just love it, love

has released a *Greatest Hits* anthology in America (a quick prequel to the *Ugly Beautiful* re-release on Atlantic), featuring such Baby Bird quasi-classics as "Losing My Hair," "Failed Old Singer," "Razorblade Shower," "Goddamn It, You're A Kid" and the indelible *continued on page 65*

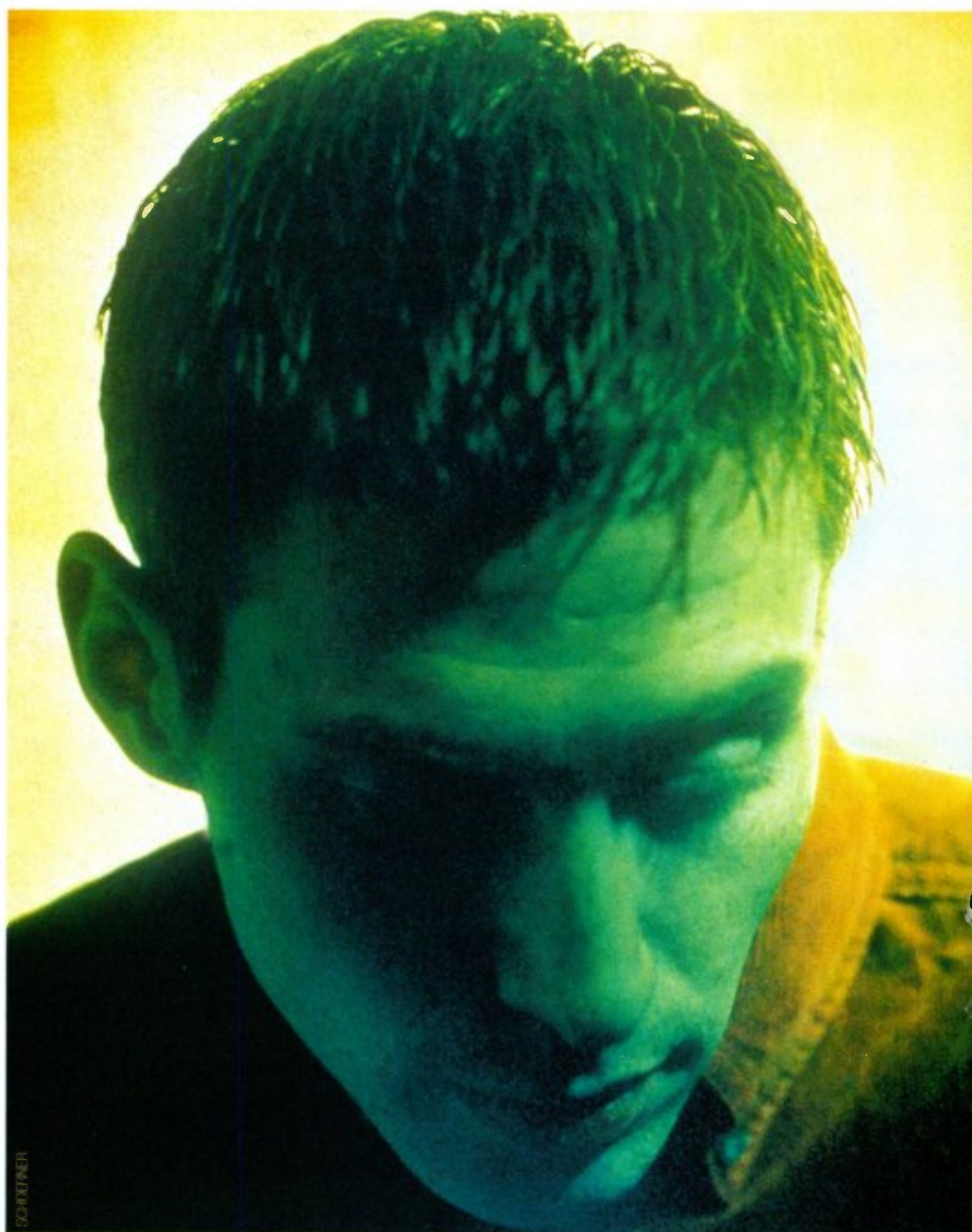
"When I'm making a track, I must listen to it over 500 times," explains British drum 'n' bass boy wonder **Rupert Parkes, alias **Phatek**. "If I spend three weeks on a track, most of that is listening and thinking 'What should happen next?' The more you hear it, the more the obvious and catchy parts become irritating. Or they lose their impact. So gradually they get eroded away." Why so fussy? "To avoid being able to look back on it in six months' time and go 'Oh yeah, that was summer of '97-sounding.' I've weeded out all the immediately appealing bits, stripped the tracks bare, so hopefully [the music] will hold over time a little better than the stuff that I was doing a couple years ago."**

CROSSING SWORDS WITH

In his various guises, including Studio Pressure, Sentinel, Aquarius, and Phaze 1, the carrot-topped Parkes has been responsible for such underground classics as "UFO" and "Seventh Samurai"; Phatek's tune "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu" cracked the U.K. pop charts. In America, there's nary a top-notch mainstream drum 'n' bass collection available that doesn't include a noteworthy Phatek cut—check out "Consciousness" on *Metalheads Presents Platinum Breakz* and "Pharaoh" on *L.T.J. Bukem Presents Logical Progression* (both frr).

Enthusiasts of Parkes's singles will be pleased to discover that his refined aesthetic translates neatly to the longer format of his first full-length record. Rather than approach *Modus Operandi* (Astralwerks) as a compilation of individual cuts, he took pains to build sonic links between the recordings; as on the earlier *The Hidden Camera* EP, "every track on the album has sounds from one of the other tracks." Ultimately, he doesn't feel there's as much thematic unity as he'd planned, but *c'est la guerre*. "I'm not disappointed at all. It's something completely different. Which is usually what happens whenever I start a bit of music," he adds with a chuckle.

Parkes has learned to let his muse lead him in the dance, rather than bossing her around. "I usually start by making a drum break from scratch. Whatever the character of the drum sounds are like, I'll take one route from there. I might go down three different routes at once, and have all of them on the computer screen, three completely different vibe tracks looped over the same drums. And then



depending on what sounds I come across next, that'll determine the choices that I make." In the case of "The Hidden Camera," he decided to follow two completely disparate versions to conclusion, putting both on the EP.

The best-known Photek cut to date, "The Hidden Camera" also appears on *Modus Operandi*. But surprisingly, Parkes elected to leave "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu"—which used two different drum breaks and bits of Japanese narration to capture the essence of a martial arts technique that deploys a short sword

PHOTEK

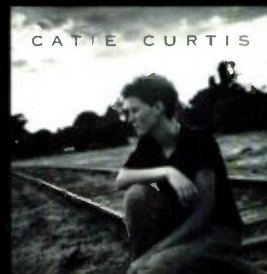
BY KURT B. REIGHLEY

and a long one simultaneously—off the album. "I decided that almost immediately after I'd made it, although it's one of my favorites. I knew as soon as I started thinking about the order of the album that that track shouldn't be on there. 'Ni Ten' was such an individual piece of music that I thought 'No, it can't fit.'"

Parkes's inspirations extend beyond the realms of sword fighting, as both the LP's jazzy title cut and his extensive collection of albums by innovators like Roy Ayers, John Coltrane and Miles Davis reveal. Appropriately, Parkes did make a more traditional stab at emulating his heroes in his teens, when he devoted a year to playing tenor saxophone. "But because I wasn't interested in reading music—I can't read music at all—it was quite difficult to learn. I just ended up copying solos off of jazz records. Then I realized that wasn't what I should be doing. I needed to be making records, not playing in a band." So he trotted off to a local shop, and traded in his brass for an effects unit. Literally. "I knew the bloke in the music shop. He needed a new sign on the front of his shop. The deal was that I'd give him the saxophone, and paint the sign for his shop—he wanted it done in graffiti style—and I got some money and the effects unit." **CMJ**



SOULFULLY Catie Curtis



CATIE CURTIS

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Produced by Roy Bittan



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It's been three and a half years since the end of Nirvana. Since then, the world has heard little of Krist Novoselic. He hasn't been inactive, by any means; it's just that he and his band, Sweet 75 (Novoselic on guitar and bass, the fabulously monikered Yva Las Vegas singing and playing guitar and bass, and Adam Wade drumming) have taken their time in getting an album out.

"Krist and I didn't know each other," Yva points out, "and that took some time. And we had to write all these songs. We took our time, practiced really hard, four or five hours a day."

"We built a band, basically," Krist explains. "We played some live shows a couple of years ago, then backed off. After Nirvana, I didn't know what I wanted to do. This just happened. I met Yva, I was really impressed by her, and we got together for something to do, not really to start a band. It was collaboration, the spirit of Seattle music, and it turned into a band."

"We're a rock band," Novoselic continues. "The only alternative music is music that doesn't get promoted. The whole definition has gotten skewed. Artistically, we're very satisfied with the way the record turned out, that we've cultivated an original sound that's not really derived from anything, and that's an accomplishment in itself. What we want to do is connect with people."

Nirvana, of course, connected in a way that very few bands have ever done, and inevitably their specter will loom over Sweet 75. "Musically, Nirvana didn't really break any new ground. It was that we connected with people at a time when people weren't connecting. And there was some good songwriting. Nirvana is larger than life, larger than ever, so we're dealing with the power of myth... but I think Dave [Grohl] and the Foo Fighters have really blazed a trail for us. We've liberated ourselves, and I think that shows in the purity of the music. I was the bass player in Nirvana. Now I'm the guitar player who plays some bass in Sweet 75; it's a collaboration with two other people. We're really committed to this. We know what it entails. We put a lot of integrity into this. We know the balance between art and commerce, and we understand commerce very well. We're going for it."

To a lot of people, Novoselic will be the band's focal point. But, as he's quick to emphasize, he's really only one-third of the story: not a frontman, but an equal member. It's Las Vegas who, as singer, is really in the spotlight. She and Krist met on May 16, 1994, and began playing together immediately. "I've been playing all my life,"



sweet 75 takes its time

by Chris Nickson

she recalls. "I can flip burgers, too, but I think I do this a little better. I played in all kinds of bands—rock, funk, salsa. I'm just another lucky Seattle musician." Her Venezuelan heritage adds another dimension to Sweet 75's sound, in the form of two Spanish songs.

After some sporadic initial shows in the Northwest and recording, Sweet 75 has been touring, opening for Dinosaur Jr. And Krist has been coming to grips with playing guitar onstage. "I'm getting more comfortable with it," he agrees. "I played guitar before I played bass, but I never jumped into it this deeply. And it's 12-string electric guitar. So I've brought my approach to bass to this instrument. Yva plays guitar on some songs, and I play bass then. It's whatever the song needs."

One thing they decided some of the songs needed—at least in the studio—was horns. "We were kicking around the idea of using a horn section," Novoselic remembers. "Paul [Fox, producer] knew Greg Adams, who arranged the Tower Of Power horns. We described what we wanted, and he came back with an arrangement, played trumpet and had people from the *Tonight Show* band come down."

"All we needed was Jay Leno," Yva laughs. **CMJ**

roots burningspear rock burningspear reggae

the living
reggae

"The powerfully melodic tunes here are full of strong Rastafarian messages that touch on Spear's hope for a better future and the joys of universal brotherhood, including "Play Jerry," a beautiful eulogy to the late Grateful Dead guitarist"
-- San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle

"...enough variety to be able to stand up to a summerfull of spins." -- New York Post

legend
continues to
burn



Appointment with His Majesty

featuring "Come in Peace" and "Play Jerry"

w w w . r o u n d e r . c o m / h e a r t b e a t

heart  beat

he's not really the worrying kind. But millionaire punk malcontent Billie Joe Armstrong does harbor a few concerns about *Nimrod* (Reprise), the new release from his multi-platinum—and quietly missing-in-action—trio Green Day. With the exception of a couple of private Bay Area parties last spring, the band hasn't played a concert in over a year, hasn't been making any of its moon-the-crowd tabloid headlines and hasn't been bouncing around the public consciousness much at all of late. No big surprise. *Insomniac*, the ill-fated, angst-fueled follow-up to Green Day's breakthrough *Dookie*, moved only three million units in the U.S., a full seven million less than its monster predecessor. Not exactly a sophomore success by music industry standards.

So Armstrong is treading softly this time around: backing *Nimrod* with a small theater tour and leaving the stadiums and Lolla-

laughter. So the antagonist was a rocker, then? "Obviously not!" Cool says. "He didn't like *us*!"

More machine-gun bursts of guffaws. And Armstrong circles back to his original theme. "See? We're always up to prove ourselves. And the day we didn't have anything else to prove is kinda the day you're not hungry for anything anymore. The day your music becomes kinda...." and he fishes around for an appropriate two-dollar word—"kinda *lackadaisical*."

Armstrong isn't kidding. With *Nimrod*, he explains, "I pushed myself to write the best I possibly could, and I busted my ass on this record like I've never done before, just to fully express myself and my surroundings." Ergo, stylistically-speaking, the hour-long, 18-track album pushes more strange new buttons than Homer Simpson scrambling to avoid nuclear meltdown.

You want a surf-rock instrumental? No problem. How about an acoustic folk/country toe-tapper? That's here too—"Good Riddance," which reaches its crescendo with the aid of—gulp!—a flowery string section. Even the familiar stomp of the leadoff single "Hitchin' A Ride" is laced with classical violin (courtesy of That Dog's Petra Haden). Just when your average punk will be twisting his own nose-ring in frustration, the band jumps back on the hardcore speedboat for a couple of how'd-they-play-so-fast? wild rides.

green day older, louder

palooza-size outdoor festivals far behind. "We don't want to bite off more than we can chew," he sighs, in an unusually humble moment. "We don't want to be cocky and go into these big arenas and have nobody show up, or maybe have it only half-filled. We'd rather go do a place like [San Francisco's intimate] Fillmore or the Warfield and know that it's actually going to sell out." Armstrong rests his chin in his hands and stares for a few solemn seconds at the recording studio carpet. Next to him on the couch sits drummer Tre Cool, equally hushed, equally reflective. Never fear. In roughly the same time it takes a floor-splattng stage diver to miss his mark in the mosh pit, Green Day's newfound humility is dashed to the rocks.

Green Day is, after all, a punk rock combo. "And we always have something to prove, we're *always* up for a good fight," Armstrong grins, eyes suddenly a-glitter. "Plus, I just *love* kicking people's asses!" He's 25 now, no longer the emaciated little green-haired teen he was when he started his group. He's several pounds healthier, dressed all in black, and sporting a more sedate black hairstyle that, combed properly, could probably pass 9-to-5 muster in the financial district. Only a wristful of silver bracelets and two tarnished earrings hint at any old demons lurking within—which don't require any exorcism to show themselves. "I almost got in a fight the other day, in fact, almost threw someone down the stairs," Armstrong notes. "I was at the Palace here in L.A.—I went to see Weezer. And this guy came up to me and said 'I despise your band!' So I threatened to throw him down the stairs if he didn't walk away." A frown. A sigh. "But he ended up walking away. And why not? Would *you* wanna get thrown down the stairs?"

Cool scratches his chin thoughtfully. "Walking down the stairs is a lot safer," he adds.

But Armstrong is on a roll, reliving the adrenaline moment. "I told him 'You have a choice—either walk down or be dragged down by your long fucking hair!'" He and Cool convulse with cackling

and snottier

by Tom Lanham

What the hell happened? Armstrong snickers contentedly. *Nimrod* may irritate some longtime fans, he admits, "but that's what punk rock's all about!" He's married. A father, even (and no, he says, no touring for baby Joey). Did Green Day grow up over the past year? Hit a new level of maturity? Nope. "I don't think we *have* really matured. I think our personal lives have, but our lives in the band are still the same as they've been since day one. We still have the same attitude, the same energy that goes along with what we do."

"And the same jokes," offers Cool, toying with the buttons on his tacky Hawaiian-print shirt. Then he takes a slug from his bottle of Newcastle brown ale and belches with satisfaction.

In retrospect, Armstrong continues, "*Insomniac* was so important, just because we created a foundation for ourselves to be able to branch out. It had a one-track mind, it was relentless, the record just had tunnel vision all the way through. And I think that it was appropriate at that time to put out something like that, because we could've easily written a record that had a bunch of 'When I Come Around' kinda songs on it. But as far as longevity of this band goes, it was important to kinda get introverted a bit [the band did relatively little press or promotion for *Insomniac*], put up a few walls around ourselves, keep our guard up and start hitting back like what people were giving us. And that's how I felt—I was really angry because I felt so misunderstood throughout the popularity of *Dookie*. Which I wouldn't have traded for the world, that was a great time in my life, but at the same time it was really hard, and that's what kinda came across."

How did the group hit this new creative peak? Simple, Cool and Armstrong agree. They disconnected from the music business, returned from a grueling world tour to their native Berkeley, and

stayed there, decompressing. They began practicing in the same rehearsal space they've occupied for years—a garage rented from a more-than-understanding schoolteacher—and, according to Armstrong, toyed with “all kinds of wild ideas.” Maybe a punk rock opera. Possibly a two-CD concept album. “We just loosened up a little bit. That’s really what we did: loosen up and not do anything. We were trying not to worry about anything, trying to just concentrate on writing songs. That was it.”

And what had the vocalist learned about himself after the end of *Nimrod*’s Rob Cavallo-produced sessions? Armstrong looks confused. “I guess I really don’t know. I really haven’t figured myself out, and I don’t think anybody knows who they are at any particular point in time. You sort of look back and figure it out, what you were a year ago. And that’s part of the process of writing songs, to figure out life and how to live it.” Ironically, around a year ago he was swearing that he’d had enough of the rock life, that he was ready to chuck it all in and move to

some desert island. “I think we’d gotten to that point where we’d lost touch with our own lives,” he says, thinking back on it.

Unless you’re insulting his group, Armstrong remains friendly, accessible, fairly approachable and accommodating. “If you need a mop, you go to Target, just like everybody else,” is his credo. But Cool has a few credos of his own. Reluctantly, he confesses that “I’ve grown up a *little* bit, after all. Because now, instead of just walking through a plate glass window, like ‘Oh yeah, a plate glass window!’ *Crash!* And it’s worth jumping through it. Well, now I’ve grown up at least enough to say ‘Wait a minute—if I jump through that plate glass window, it’s gonna cut me real bad and I’ll probably spend the rest of my night getting stitched up in the hospital. And that’s gonna put a real damper on the party situation!’”

“So now he uses a baseball bat!” chortles Armstrong, after prodding around in his nostril for an errant booger. He studies the ball of snot for a minute before flicking it behind him onto someone else’s carpet. So it’s up to Cool to draw a conclusion. “This is the thing—if you act like a fuckin’ dork, people are gonna treat you like a dork. But if you just do your thing, you can live a normal life. Just keep playing in the greatest rock ‘n’ roll band on the planet, and things’ll be all right!” **CMJ**



CHRIS BILMEYER

POR



TISHHEAD

by James Lien
photographs by
Jill Greenberg

Stranger things than Portishead had happened in the history of pop, but not for a long while. A mysterious group with ties to the Bristol scene that spawned Massive Attack and Tricky came out of nowhere—or, rather, a small town in Southwest England—and saw its debut record go gold. Behind the surface catchiness of “Glory Box” and “Sour Times,” some genuinely dark things were going on.

Mixing film *noir* with funk and dance music is pretty subversive for the pop charts, and Elizabeth Gibbons’s lyrics were certainly not of the moon-in-June variety. Most good pop records will wake you up if they come on the radio right at the moment when you’re falling asleep. Not so with this band: Portishead’s *Dummy* was a hit record that sounded in places like an invitation to a nightmare.

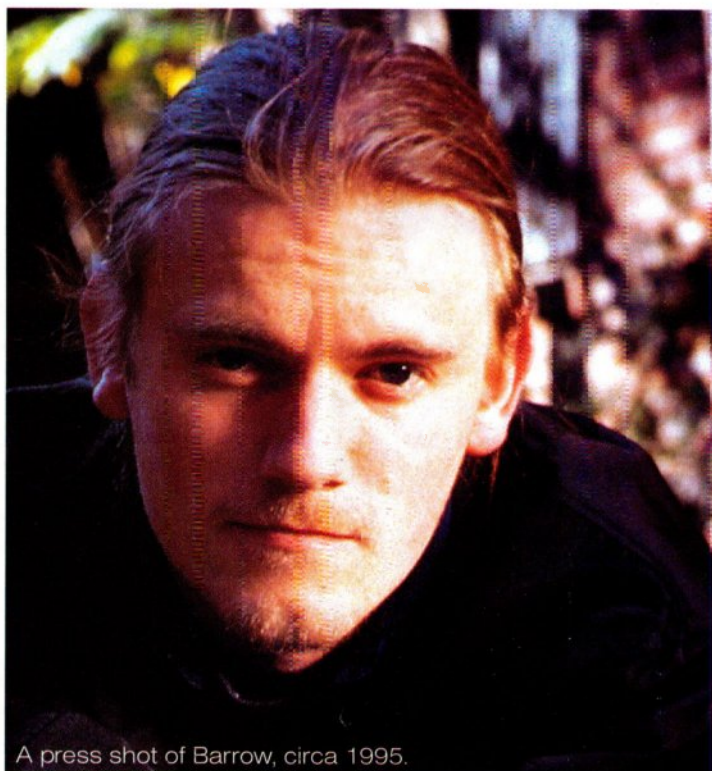
After all, rarely does something as dark as “Sour Times” stand a chance of going anywhere on the charts—performed live, in its darker and more unrestrained setting, the hook really does consist largely of just Gibbons moaning “Nobody loves me, it’s true,” over and over again. Something very painful from very deep within is being brought out into the light.

With its second album, simply called *Portishead*, on the way, the group rolled into New York this summer for a round of interviews and a live video taping. Portishead has only been around for a couple of years, but it already has all the trappings of a full-fledged rock ‘n’ roll legend, including a live orchestra performing with it in concert, a four-figure hotel-bar tab and a reclusive singer who won’t do interviews. The ambiance surrounding the Portishead machine was distinctly like that of groups ten times its size. No, we *can’t* mail your passes to you, you have to go to such-and-such an address on the day of the show, and maybe there’ll be an envelope there with your name on it. No, *that* laminate isn’t good for this door, but it gets you into the secret *after-after* party at a club across town. It was a lot of fun watching the machine run.

For a group that surrounds itself with such mystique, Portishead’s history has already taken on a codified, canonical version. To wit: Main sonic mastermind Geoff Barrow worked in Bristol studios with Massive Attack in the late ‘80s (“I was a fucking tea boy,” Barrow scoffs, swirling his index finger like he’s stirring in sugar). Given some studio time and the opportunity to score music for an underground film project, he jumped at the chance, naming his group after a small town outside of Bristol. He auditioned over a dozen singers before he discovered Gibbons singing Janis Joplin covers in a bar band.

The myth that best describes Barrow’s story is that of the sorcerer’s apprentice who quietly hones his skills in secret until he suddenly rises to overtake his master. Even as he was spooling tape for Massive Attack, answering the phone and making tea, Barrow was watching and listening, absorbing and learning, waiting to make his move. There were no rejected Portishead demos, no years slogging away in clubs. And now that everyone wants a sliver of what he does, Barrow seems, on the outside at least, to be relishing the attention. He didn’t sell his soul for his success, but a great deal of thought and planning went into it. The guy is thorough, whether he’s shaping the sound of a hi-hat cymbal to achieve just the right texture, or putting the pieces of his group together to blend business and music in the right combinations.

sweet & sour



A press shot of Barrow, circa 1995.

But it isn't always easy being an audio alchemist, as Barrow reveals when it's time to talk about *Portishead*. "It's a weird one for me, it's still really early to comment on it," he shrugs. "I feel like we just sat down and mixed it. To be quite honest, it's like it's a bit of an odd one, because we mixed the last track on a Sunday, we cut the album on a Monday, so in a way it's like I haven't left that cutting room yet, you know what I mean? I'm still kind of like, 'Right, right,'" and he leans back like he's listening at a mixing console. "You know, still thinking I can muck about with stuff. I've got to understand it's *gone*. I can't even bring myself to listen to it, you know what I mean?"

There was a rather cryptic missive to the effect that Gibbons would agree to be photographed, but not interviewed, while Barrow would be interviewed but not photographed.

Unsurprisingly, Barrow suffered from all the critical and record company pressure for a follow-up. "You get into a vibe. I went through a 13-month complete head fuck on this record. I just couldn't do anything. I blocked for 13 months. That's why it took so long to come out."

What happened? "Everything," Barrow murmurs. "A complete and utter panic. I tried to over-analyze. The first record, it was forming for a long, long time. 'You ain't got nothing to prove. You're just doing it for the music, for the joy of being able to do it.' This one, it was literally a case of all the pressure went to me head and it was—*gone*." For emphasis, he makes a fluttering hand gesture to indicate what might be a warbly theremin sample, or an atmospheric bass line exiting his head and floating away.

"We finished, you know, touring and promoting the last

album two years ago. From that point until last month, I was in the studio every day, except the weekends. I was convincing myself that everything sounded great, or would eventually come out great, but it never happened. And it was up to the rest of the band to give me a good kicking, and say, 'Let's just forget about all that industry bollocks and let's just write a record. If people like it, good.' I don't know why the first one sold what it did, so why should I worry about this one?"

The new album sounds, well, even more like Portishead than the debut. The early tracks we heard are largely similar to *Dummy*'s soundscapes, but longer, bigger, deeper, less claustrophobic, more vivid. Parts of them sound truly haunted. To reverse the old saw, there's even more *there* there. "In the beginning, I was influenced by other people, sounds and things that were going on around England," Barrow relates. "I feel kind of conscious about it. I worry a little too much about being a combination of your influences. You know, the grocery list of 'this has got that in it, that, that, and that.' But we always wanted to create something through the middle of that as well as the influences. There's a vibe going on, and that's purely what it's about. Me and Ade [Portishead multi-instrumentalist and co-producer Adrian Utley] are able to go into our own studio, and I'll play drums or something and Ade will play bass, or guitar or something. We'd all jam about and we'd *get there*, and this album is pretty much what we sound like playing tunes, in a room, you know."

Although Utley still remains in the shadows, it seems that he played a larger role in shaping the second Portishead record. Utley was the one who manipulated the theremin that gave "Mysterons" on *Dummy* its distinctive sci-fi feel, and it was his touch on the Hammond organ that made "Glory Box" shimmer. "A lot of the stuff on the first album, and everything on the new album, was co-written with Ade," Barrow acknowledges. "Basically, we're a band now. We're four pieces of band," he

quips. "Beth, me, Dave the engineer, and Ade."

As he lists the group's members, Barrow brings up another significant leap into the future that Portishead helped pioneer: It's one of the first major groups to incorporate its engineer as an equal member, giving him an equal share of the group's earnings. Dave MacDonald also owned the studio where much of the group's debut album was recorded. It's an up-front acknowledgment that how Portishead sounds is just as important as what it is.

"Dave, he's a live engineer, a studio engineer, he can do all that," Barrow relates. "You get into a situation where you haven't even got to nod at people, you just know what's gonna be next. If Dave is there running the vocal through this, that and the other, it's still part of the chain. He's been with me for six, seven years—a massive element within

continued on page 65



STEREOLAB



L-R: Mary Hansen, Laetitia Sadier, Morgane Lhote, Tim Gane, Andy Ramsey

"I'm really bored with guitars," says Stereolab's guitarist Tim Gane. "Obviously, there's loads of people still doing very interesting things, but being in England, you have to hear all the bloody guitars all the time. It's horrible."

"I think it's a natural phenomenon," opines singer Laetitia Sadier, who writes the lyrics to Gane's music. "We've used guitars for so long that we want to try something else. It's like—you wear a short skirt, and then you've had enough of your short skirt so you go for a long skirt, and then short hair, long hair, whatever. It's a totally natural process of getting sick of something."

Stereolab's new *Dots And Loops*, the sextet's ninth album in six years, finds it moving away from the sound of what Gane calls a "basic primitive rock lineup," and toward experiments with layered synthesizer textures, mutated breakbeat tracks, brass and string arrangements, and a multi-part suite—the 17-

minute "Refractions In The Plastic Pulse," at the album's center. What remains of the old Stereolab sound is the essence of Gane's songs, which still originate as guitar-and-voice demos (he calls them "raw globules"), 30 or 40 seconds long, recorded on his four-track.

The other constant of Stereolab's work is Sadier's deceptively lilting, French-accented voice and smart, politicized lyrics: humanist-utopian slogans, meditations on collective struggle and polysyllabic critiques of "this sick culture." She draws on the language of leftist thought and criticism, which has resulted in her being called a Marxist in print more than a few times. That's not exactly the case, though, the ordinarily laconic Sadier explains:

"I wish I *was* a Marxist, in a way. I went to a Marxist conference two weeks ago—it was absolutely great, in the sense that when I walked in, I was depressed, self-obsessed, not really seeing a way out of things, and I walked out with a sense that, yes, humanity can get itself out of its mediocrity and its destructiveness... It's sponsored by a magazine called *LM*—Living Marxism. I know it's a harsh title, and I'm fully aware that 'Marxism,'

REVOLUTION NOW!

by Douglas Wolk

'communism' and 'revolution' have such horrible connotations that I get judged just by saying that I've been to such a conference. But fuck it. I got so much more out of it than just looking up my own arse, being scared all the time...

"It's quite highbrow stuff. It was difficult for the first two days—they're all very well-read and very intense. If you're behind, they're not waiting for you, you have to catch up. Which I think is a very good attitude. It's not like saying 'it's not the winning that matters, it's the taking place,' which is exactly the type of thing that's so trendy to say at the moment. Well, *no*, actually—it's the winning, the overcoming yourself, the getting out of yourself and surprising yourself that matters, rather than doing your little shit somewhere and people saying 'oh, well, that's okay because you took part, and that's all that mattered, really.' There were a lot of very inspiring speakers, and also a big debate—if you disagree, you can make your point. Anyone can go up there and talk. Very democratic, in a way.

"So now I don't mind being called a Marxist, even though I've read some Marxists who are just so fucking *on the line* and so rigid-thinking. There's some flexibility to how human beings are. Which now I understand far better than a few years ago. What's most important is that everyone has something to eat, that everyone has a home or some kind of shelter, and that people don't exploit each other. Then, on top of that, you can become whatever—more spiritual or artistic. But I do understand now that the materialist approach to the world is absolutely basic and fundamental, and it's important to fight on those terms to better the human condition."

But where does Stereolab enter into that train of thought? "That's a good question, actually! I'm not fully content just doing Stereolab, which I love—there's a whole active part of me that's not engaged. I'd like to be more engaged in the world... doing things for real. Doing music is also for real, but—having a direct impact. There is a part of Stereolab that's very political, especially Tim's music... a music that dares to take risks. And there's also the fact that we started our own label, out of a real desire for independence."

The band's labels Duophonic Super 45s and Duophonic UHF Disks have released a slew of vinyl records by Stereolab, and more recently by other bands, including Broadcast, Pram, and Turn On (Gane's instrumental collaboration with the High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan). Duophonic has also been the source of instant-collector's-item split singles made to commemorate Stereolab's tours with Yo La Tengo, Tortoise, and others. And there are also records of the band's frequent collaborations with other groups. *Dots And Loops* was preceded by "Simple Headphone Mind," a 12" recorded by Stereolab and mixed and augmented by industrial/experimental legend Nurse With Wound. An upcoming EP—a cover of Brian Eno's "St. Elmo's Fire" and a few other tracks—was recorded in a few days with Gane, Sadier and Mary Hansen joined by Ui.

Dots And Loops, too, is very audibly the result of Stereolab's work with outsiders. Most of the album was recorded with Tor-

toise's John McEntire in Chicago, and three more songs were recorded with Mouse On Mars (Sadier returned the favor by singing on M.O.M.'s recent *Cache Coeur Naïf* EP). "There's no way the new album would have sounded like that had we not gone to Chicago and Dusseldorf," she says. "I think of it as a collaboration, rather than them just twiddling the knobs."

"You lose control of the whole thing," Gane adds, "but that's what we want to do—we want to lose control. If you're going to do music with people, you have to let their influence go on the record, because otherwise you're just using them as technicians."

The influence of McEntire and Mouse On Mars mostly comes out in the album's studio-centric, seemingly nearly guitar-free sound, using analog synthesizers and electronic percussion to drive the songs where they used to be propelled by Gane's chinging, motoric guitar. "There's actually electric guitars on all the tracks," he clarifies, "they're just not recognizable as guitars. Everything on the record is effected, through a mangling synthesizer or analog electronic device or Vocoder. And there are acoustic guitars on a few tracks."

So how does Stereolab go about playing the programmed, synthesized and processed songs on *Dots And Loops* live? "We haven't," says Gane. "Not these ones, we don't."

"We've practiced three," Sadier corrects him. "We've done part one of 'Refractions,' and we've done..."

"...number four and number two."

"Yeah, 'Miss Modular'—what's number four?"

"'Jazzy'—what's that called?"

Sadier sings a few bars of the fourth track on the album, "Diagonals," then gives up. "We can't remember."

The members of Stereolab refer to some of their songs by the band or style that inspired them, rather than the song titles that appear on the records, which are sometimes decided upon only when it comes time to design the sleeve. A few nicknames turn up a lot on set lists: "Take Five And A Half," "Canned Heat," "Faust..."

"We never had a 'Faust,' did we?" asks Gane. "Oh, yeah, 'Faustpop.' It's on the last album. It goes..."—and he hums the hook of "Motoroller Scalatron."

Sadier catches on, and starts singing it: "What's society built on..."

"We can go through the last album," Gane says. "The first track ['Metronomic Underground'] is 'Chrome Tubby,' because our old bass player Duncan said it sounded like a cross between King Tubby and Chrome. Then there's 'Glass Pop,' using the kind of Philip Glass/Steve Reich theory... we've got 'Brazilian Reich' on the album too."

"A lot of the new ones are named after experimental film," Gane continues, perking up. "The album is named after an experimental cartoon from the '30s, *Dots And Loops*. Nothing to do with looping music, it's film loops. The way these people made their films—I try to translate that musically." **CMJ**

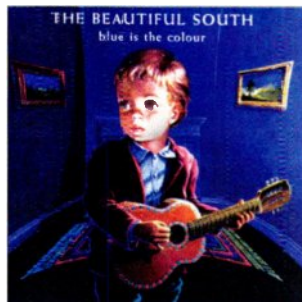
"If you're going to do music with people, you have to let their influence go on the record."

BEAUTIFUL SOUTH CD

Blue Is The Colour — Ark 21

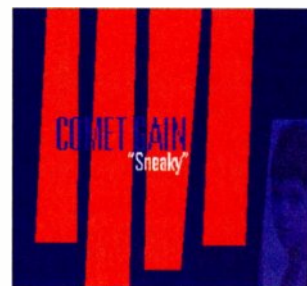
■ “There’s only one God,” two of the Beautiful South’s singers croon in VH-1 harmony. “There should be two or three.” That kind of joke explains why the Beautiful South and lyricist Paul Heaton’s old band the Housemartins, huge in their native England, have never quite caught on over here: They can sound as acceptably middle-of-the-road as anyone, but they can’t stand a pretty moment without a spike in it. Most of *Blue Is The Colour* sounds like another inoffensive record by another Sundays clone, until you bring the words into focus. The wan, catchy “Don’t Marry Her” turns out to have a hilariously nasty lyric, and “Have Fun,” which sounds like a love theme from a good date movie, systematically chews up and spits out love-duet clichés (“We should have a baby/And then I wouldn’t feel quite so sad,” Abbott emotes). Heaton can oversell or undersell his jokes: “Liar’s Bar,” apparently a Tom Waits parody, is pretty awkward, and a cover of the old weepie “Artificial Flowers” is too straight-faced to work as kitsch. When he’s on, though, you can tell he’s prepared to make happy shoppers hum along with lines like “A feminine receptacle, that’s just what I am/These things are above us whores.” —*Douglas Wolk*

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23. First single “Don’t Marry Her.”
FILE UNDER: Wolves in sheep’s clothing.
R.I.Y.L.: Elvis Costello, Housemartins, Cranberries.



wheels, windshields and trim around the motors of good songs. Calling *Sneaky* Brit-pop wouldn’t quite be *wrong*, but wouldn’t show why it excels. The frequent Motown borrowings, from handclaps and slogans down to whole bass lines, are an important new source of strength, as is the programmatic optimism: If the words shine most when they’re regretful (“He has a box with the names of all his friends on’t/In golden leaf—he misses them all too”), the explosive tunes, and the total-commitment vocals, inspire even when the lyrics disappoint. “Say yes to sisters of resistance/Say no to international apathy!” lead guy David exclaims before promising to give us “something real to sing.” What matters isn’t whether this means anything specific, or whether it’s original (it’s not), but whether he means it (yes, he does) and whether it’s catchy (yes, yes, a thousand times yes).

—*Steve Burt*



DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Enthusiastic English kids.
R.I.Y.L.: Pulp, The Jam, early Who, Blur, Jasmine Minks.

CORNERSHOP

When I Was Born The 7th Time — Luaka Bop/Warner Bros.

■ 1995’s *Woman’s Gotta Have It* marked Cornershop’s astonishing transformation from so-so indie-pop band to Indian hip-hop pioneers with the single “Jullander Shere.” The band’s other side has largely gone unnoticed, though: Frontman Tjinder Singh and co. are as influenced by Jacques Dutronc and Lee Hazelwood as they are by Bollywood. *When I Was Born The 7th Time* is a funky, sample-heavy record—indeed, “Funky Days Are Back Again” inhabits a fantasy world where “we’re back in vogue again/Before they call the Ghurkas up again.” There’s the now-requisite (and sadly

BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE

Bentley Rhythm Ace —

Astralwerks/Caroline

■ Richard March (who used to play bass for Pop Will Eat Itself) and Mike Stokes make up Bentley Rhythm Ace, a clearing house for super-slinky funk grooves, tacky, oddball samples and beefy breakbeats. So what else is new over there in the British Midlands? For one thing, Bentley’s debut has a refreshing hint of playfulness and lunacy. The disc (released in the U.K. last year on Skint) starts with a tickle and a giggle, throws in samples of belches and cuckoo clocks, and has fun with song titles like “Who Put The Bom In The Bom Bom Diddlee Bom.” The duo seems to have translated the astute goofiness of its live gigs (they once played in Iceland dressed as

Vikings) onto disc, with “Bentley’s Gonna Sort You Out!” serving well as its calling card. The track interrupts a slow mischievous groove and its bitter digital melody with boings, funky keyboard breaks and a smoky chanteuse breathing “I love it.” Even at their most sinister and speedy, Bentley’s grooves retain a kitschy spy-theme quality, letting you know that this music was meant mainly for ass-shaking, not genre-breaking.

—*Steve Ciabattini*

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7.
FILE UNDER: Fun with electronica.
R.I.Y.L.: Chemical Brothers, the KLF, *This Is Acid Jazz*.

COMET GAIN

Sneaky — Beggars Banquet/Wiiija

■ Comet Gain’s members are mods of a familiar English mode: melody-mad soul fans, prophets of excitement and coffee-bar cool kids, in love with 12-string guitars, five chords, life, London, and some perfect moment in June 1966. Its London-underground pedigree convinced the band to do what it believed in: if the new Comet Gain now believes in slicker mixing, trumpets, tambourines, slide-guitars and occasional sound-effects, it knows such things are only





average) Indian pop number, "We're In Your Corner," and some dholki and sitar action, but where this album shines is "Good To Be On The Road Back Home," a Lee-and-Nancy-style travelogue with rococo touches like Canned Heat-sounding flute and sampled percussion breaks. But there are also no fewer than five half-assed instrumentals. It seems that the constant fêting of Cornershop's dance side has made the band think that nothing would be better than a seven-minute exploration of indie-rock scratching techniques. That's too bad, because Singh's more-or-less straight rock chuggers like "Brimful Of Asha" show that he's a damn good songwriter. There's an amazing half-album here, and though this record boasts many hot and groovy moments, it's not the home run that "Jullander Shere" prepared us for. —Andrew Beaujon

DATALOG: Released Sep. 16.

FILE UNDER: Eclectic, internationally flavored pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Anokha: *Soundz Of The Asian Underground*, Pizzicato Five, Bally Sagoo.

DANCE HALL CRASHERS

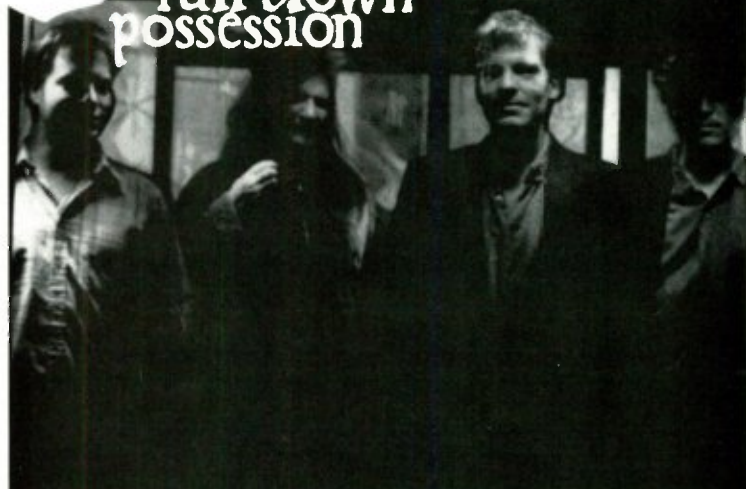
Honey, I'm Homely — MCA

■ Dance Hall Crashers have developed quite a bit over the past two years. While 1995's *Lockjaw* was full of competent but unremarkable ska, *Honey, I'm Homely* is two-tone power-pop brimming with infectious hooks. The specter of gritty punk seems to be a thing of the past, with all of the fuzzy edges smoothed out and shined up. Have no fear, rude boy: You can still skank to *Honey, I'm Homely*, but you might have to learn a few new steps. Along with several bouncy numbers that are bound to give your neck a workout, you also get a few that display the band's depth of influences. "Next To You" is a breezy, piano-thumping tune that struts along with the verve of the Monkees' "Daydream Believer." Take away the punchy arrangement of "Last Laugh," and you have an early-'60s Brill Building hit. The quintet now knows when to let up on the gas for dramatic flair. Drummer Gavin Hammon sneaks nuance into rhythm parts that could have easily fallen into the 1-2-3-4 mold; his brother Jason layers his brassy rhythm parts with acid rock leads. The harmonies of Elyse Rogers and Karina Deniké recall everything from Bananarama's sassy soul to the Andrews Sisters' saccharine swing. It



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—Neil Gladstone

DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Chummy ska-pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Bow Wow Wow, No Doubt,
General Public.

PAT DINIZIO

Pat Dinizio — **Velvet**

■ The Smithereens' *Green Thoughts* was a masterpiece when it appeared, and it remains one of the best things to come out of America during the '80s, welding Yankee rock to Brit sensibilities, all encased in glorious melodies. They might never have recaptured that glory as a band, but singer/guitarist Pat DiNizio had done the memory more than justice on his first solo record. Blessed with lots of songwriting smarts and a voice that's a ringer for prime-period Costello, he's crafted a disc that keeps its head in the here and now while its heart remains in the past. "Running Jumping



Standing Still," for example, takes its cues from the Who's "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" without ever feeling like a copy, and "A World Apart" borrows from Bowie's "Heroes" (right down to the solo); DiNizio just makes it more poppy and accessible. But he's more than a pastiche artist. He's absorbed more than enough in his life to create material with his own signature, and each song is well worth the price of admission. Put this disc up there next to your Marshall Crenshaw CDs. He's that good. —Chris Nickson

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7.
FILE UNDER: Pop with brains.
R.I.Y.L.: Smithereens, Elvis Costello,
Marshall Crenshaw.

JULIE DOIRON

Loneliest In The Morning — **Sub Pop**

■ After spending the first part of the decade playing bass and singing the occasional song



in the noisy little Nova Scotia band Eric's Trip, Julie Doiron had a couple of kids, started her own label (Sappy Records), and ventured out on her own last year as Broken Girl. Busy Girl would have worked just as well, but sweet-voiced, 25-year-old Doiron is back working instead under her own name, with tasteful instrumental help from Giant Sand-man Howe Gelb and Grifter Dave Shouse. The spare instrumentation (mostly Doiron's voice and electric or acoustic guitar), simple arrangements, and artlessly confessional tone of *Loneliest In The Morning* bring to mind Lou Barlow's Sentridoh home recordings, with much better quality control and higher production values. And when the drums and bass come in on the bittersweet, achingly lovely "Explain," there are strong, promising hints of the softer side of Sebadoh. "I'm on my own now/I play alone now/I like to say it loud I'm kind of sad," Doiron sings, revealing her mixed emotions about going solo. She shouldn't have to worry anymore: *Loneliest In The Morning* proves she can more than stand on her own. —Matt Ashare

DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.
FILE UNDER: Indie-folk pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Mary Lou Lord, Lou Barlow, Lois Maffeo.

EVERCLEAR

So Much For The Afterglow — **Capitol**

■ Success makes some bands grow introspective and sullen, but not Everclear. The Portland, Oregon, trio's third record is a



celebratory burst of hook-filled rock. Frontman Art Alexakis hasn't recovered from the pain that pervaded the lyrics on *Sparkle And Fade*, but this time he surrounds his angst-ridden guitar riffs in a halo of bright instrumentation, even picking out the melody to "Why I Don't Believe In God" on a banjo. The intro to the title track, which kicks off *So Much For The Afterglow*, lifts an a cappella harmony from the Beach Boys, then quickly moves Everclear back into familiar territory with a guitar-and-rhythm attack punctuated by Alexakis's signature snarl. This and other songs echo past hits, but the album boasts finer detail, and benefits from cameos by the Wallflowers' Rami Jaffee on organ and the Wild Colonial's Paul Cantelon on violin. Alexakis' lyrics retain their forthrightness, as he sings about a deadbeat dad ("Father Of Mine"), patching up relationships ("I Will Buy You A New Life") and fame ("One Hit Wonder"). But rather than painting his existentialist musings in deep, dark tones, Alexakis and Everclear play with a freshness and vibrancy that will keep the afterglow at bay for a long while. —Richard Martin

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7.
FILE UNDER: Surging, melodic punk.
R.I.Y.L.: Foo Fighters, pre-Mellon Collie Smashing Pumpkins, Cheap Trick.

FATBOY SLIM

Better Living Through Chemistry — **Astralwerks/Caroline**

■ If Norman Cook's p.r. is to be believed, his new disc, recorded under the name Fatboy Slim, is a "quintessential party album." The one-time bassist for the Housemartins and production whiz for a slew of U.K. mix-masters, including Beats International, goes so far as to title one track "The Weekend Starts Here." Must be one hell of a party scene on his block. Less a dance album with ambiance than an ambient album you can dance to, *Better Living Through Chemistry* finds Cook meeting techno at a club, escorting it to the chill-out room and leaving it there to question its identity. Groovy as this album is, nothing here hasn't been tried before: beats and samples warped and stretched à la the Chemical Brothers, echoey techno keyboards like Inner City, incongruous crowd noises like Utah Saints. Cook's achievement as Fatboy Slim is in execution rather than invention; he's captured the



essence of electronic party music without worrying if it's consistently danceable moment by moment. Each track builds a mood suitable for casual listening or conjugal bopping: "Song For Lindy" works up a jungle-speed funk rhythm, while the chanting "Give The Po' Man A Break" and "The Sound Of Milwaukee" invite listeners to throw their arms in the air, and, well, you know. — *Chris Molanphy*

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23.
FILE UNDER: Pre-programmed party.
R.I.Y.L.: Inner City, Chemical Brothers, *Only For The Headstrong*.

FORGIVENESS

Slichot — **Rawkus**

■ You've heard of acid jazz? Get ready for acid Jews, bube-lah. Oy, have we got some beats for you. A couple of Israeli drummers are about to get Biblical on your tuchus! Pygmies, Andean mountain tribes, Berbers—sooner or later it was the Jews' turn to get the techno treatment. On *Forgiveness*, drummers Rea Mochiach and Alon Cohen lay down a techno-trance base, and color it with melodies from High Holy Days services as sung by Sephardic cantors (Jews of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean origin, who have musical legacies and religious customs distinct from those of Europeans). While the result avoids being a *shande fur der goyim*, neither is it likely to stir the spirits of the faithful. What about the rest of us? Even those hip to Hebrew may detect only a vaguely Middle Eastern ring to the first few tracks, proving that at their least inspired, "ethno-techno" blends are interchangeable. Matters pick up with "L'maan'cha," where a tambourine shivers hypnotically between an echoey dub, a sample of desert pipes, guitar squall and voices which are tantalizing, but for the most part playing hide and seek. Cohen and Mochiach back off from putting the microtonal singing up-front. Voices waft in and out of atmospheric beats, but the sum doesn't quite coalesce into something greater than its parts. — *Danny Housman*



DATALOG: Released Sep. 23.
FILE UNDER: Judeo-trance-hop.
R.I.Y.L.: Peter Gabriel's *Passion*, Natacha Atlas, Nicky Skopelitis.

FU MANCHU

The Action Is Go — **Mammoth**

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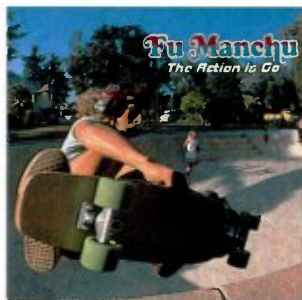
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Fu Manchu on your car stereo and see if the truancy officers don't come a-runnin'. A lot has changed for this California quartet since it released its last album, *In Search Of*. Former Kyuss drummer Brandt Bjork replaced Ruben Romano, and Bob Balch took over the lead guitar duties from Eddie Glass. Some things remain the same: The songs on *The Action Is Go* are almost all based on bluesy, chromatic riffs. But where the old lineup gave everything a classic, sludge-rock treatment, the new Fu Manchu is crisp and edgy. At first, it sounds like someone is try-



ing to get an '80s skate-punk band to play '70s metal. A couple of songs are unnecessarily rushed. After another listening, it's apparent the band has dropped its old, by-the-book reverence for Black Sabbath. Taken on its own terms, the new Fu Manchu does just fine. You won't find many musical surprises, but it's still plenty of headbanging fun. White Zombie's J. Yeunger has done an excellent job his first time in the producer's chair. He supposedly loaned the band several of the stomptboxes his band used on *Astro Creep 2000*, so the similarity in sound isn't accidental. *The Action Is Go* will make you want to roll up the windows, fire up the bong and blow off the rest of the day. —Neil Gladstone

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7.

FILE UNDER: Fuzzed-out retro metal.

R.I.Y.L.: Monster Magnet, Black Sabbath, Kyuss.

GRIFTERS

Full Blown Possession — Sub Pop

■ The field of sloppy country-rock-blues is



crowded these days, between category-killers like Pavement and genre-dedicated reformulations of other bands like Wilco and White Hassle. Veteran occupants the Grifters have had a hard time standing out, even on the strength of last year's extraordinary *Ain't My Lookout*. *Full Blown Possession* is a more stripped-down affair, proceeding less by orchestration and more by dead reckoning. The band will build a song like "Centuries" on nothing but a funky groove, and then let Scott Taylor yelp and moan over the top. At the other stylistic

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extreme, co-frontman Dave Shouse waltzes soulfully through "Spaced Out," a gently rocking song strangely reminiscent of David Bowie. Songwriting talent is spread a little thin here: The rhythmic kink that enlivens "Re-entry Blues" makes the middle sections look slack, and while "Blood Thirsty Lovers" packs the album's strongest dose of rock, it doesn't stick in the brain for long after the head stops nodding. But the Grifters have learned to do a lot with a clever riff, an almost-hook, and their inimitably down and dirty style. Not every pack of blues acolytes would have the theatrical flair to thump out "Cigarette," with its bass line like a ten-ton weight and its hustler-chic lyrics. Other rock bands may play the blues, but the Grifters really mess with it.

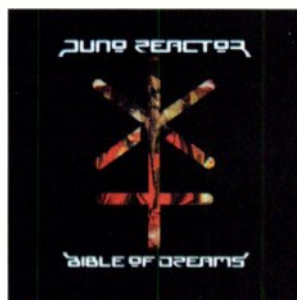
—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Unconstructed blues-rock.
R.I.Y.L.: Wilco, Blues Explosion,
 the Rolling Stones.

JUNO REACTOR ^{CD}

Bible Of Dreams — Wax Trax!/TVT

■ As the notion of popular music as "art" has supplanted its traditional role as "entertainment," the way we listen to records has changed. Fans of dance music recognize that cuts that ignite a club don't always deliver the same elation on your car stereo, and everyone has favorite tunes to clean house to. Likewise, the fourth album from U.K. ensemble Juno Reactor doesn't necessarily require your full attention to deliver the goods. *Bible Of Dreams* doesn't aspire to fully assimilate the



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cultural baggage that comes with borrowing musical elements from around the globe, but the producers appreciate how a little foreign flair can brighten up an otherwise formulaic track. As colorful titles like "Jardin De Cicile" and "Kaguya Kime" suggest, Juno Reactor weaves driving electronic grooves that mate the oomph of industrial with spiraling trance rhythms, then stitch in timbres and tonalities that fall outside the Western pop palette. These entertaining nuances (especially the percussive ones) keep your brain sufficiently tweaked to prevent whatever other activity you're potentially engaged in from becoming dull. And in the case of standout tracks like "Children Of The Night" and the slinky "God Is God" (featuring Natacha Atlas), you may set down the task at hand entirely and just dance frantically around the living room.

—Kurt B. Reighley

DATALOG: Released Aug. 19.
Web site at www.kabuk.co.uk/junoreactor.
FILE UNDER: Ethno-techno.
R.I.Y.L.: Transglobal Underground,
 Delirium, late Killing Joke.

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LOVE SPIT LOVE CD

Trysome Eatone — Maverick/Warner Bros.

■ The instant the vocals mix with the echoing, flanged guitar, *Love Spit Love* is intimate and familiar. It's the obvious feeling generated by Richard Butler, whose distinctive, melodic growl and sneer fronted the Psychedelic Furs for a decade. But while the days of the Furs are long gone, their spirit and urgency can certainly be found on *Trysome Eatone*, a revved-up romp through fresh pastures. The album is built on swirling guitar work set aloft with occasional orchestral accompaniment; the anthemic and edgy "Long Long Time"



opens it on an enthusiastic note, setting a level of vitality it upholds throughout. Butler attempts to make sense of his issues as one of modern rock's elder statesmen, writing more to-the-point lyrics now than at any time in his career. "7 Years" grapples with lost youth

against a backdrop of fluttering cellos. Exploring the dynamic between emotional and financial gain, "More Than Money" lurks in a haze of metallic guitar scrawl set against thunderous, overshadowing bass. It's creativity and originality that separate *Love Spit Love* from its contemporaries, the same ideals that a decade ago set the Psychedelic Furs above the rest. —*Carl Arnheiter*

DATALOG: Released Sep. 16.

FILE UNDER: Tastefully updated new wave pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Psychedelic Furs, the Church, Echo And The Bunnymen.

MAN OR ASTRO-MAN?

Made From Technetium — Touch And Go

■ *Made From Technetium* continues on a course first charted by Man or Astro-Man?'s last EP, *1000X*. The prime directive now accentuates brittle new wave over frenetic surf-rock, but that doesn't change the band's transmissions enough to disappoint longtime fans. You'll still hear plenty of twitchy, one-note leads, whistling analog synths and novelty sound effects. The album "introduces itself" with a goofy boast of quality assurance: "My overall sound output has been perfectly constructed at Astro Sound Laboratories for the highest attainable repeated listening, and, of course, repeated purchase." The gag is funny at first, but turns into an albatross during instrumental songs that seem like they've been churned out by a Man Or Astro-Man? machine. The most interesting thing about "Jonathan Winters Frankenstein" is its title. But the boys from Grid Sector 23-B61 redeem themselves nicely on "Breathing Iron Oxide," with



Greg Garing alone

"my love is real"

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"My Love Is Real" will grab you, especially over repeated listens, as the true timelessness of the songs becomes more and more apparent with time. It's rare that an artist's debut album offers up a wholly new and fresh sonic vista, but that's exactly what Greg Garing has done, making *Alone* one of the most evocative and compelling records of the year"

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its razor-sharp riffs and edgy vocal line. Some of the best moments here are when Man Or Astro-Man? delivers the unexpected. "Evert L. Pipkin"—a strummy tune awash in static and huni—is a fine break from the norm. Coming on the heels of the stellar *1000X*, *Made From Technetium* is a bit of a disappointment. The band has enough material here for another great EP, but only a satisfactory full-length.

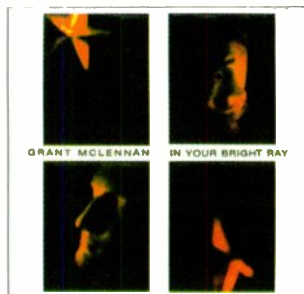
—Neil Gladstone

DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.
FILE UNDER: Interplanetary twang.
R.I.Y.L.: Early Devo, the Ventures, Dick Dale.

GRANT MCLENNAN

In Your Bright Ray — Beggars Banquet

■ "Another century slithers in/Blood on its breath with an innocent grin/Put a quill in your writing hand/Fill it with ink then you'll understand," sings Grant McLennan on "Down Here," capturing the disquiet that permeates his fourth solo release. Fans who arrive anticipating immediately



gratifying tidbits like "Easy Come, Easy Go" or "Lighting Fires" may find this new album troublesome. The former Go-Between remains capable of crafting subline tunes that suggest afternoon sunlight streaming in through dusty windows, and his memorable

choruses and writer's eye for the telling detail (the cotton sheets and candle smoke of "One Plus One") and eccentric characters (the quirky cast of "Sea Breeze") haven't vanished in a puff of snioke. But even the lighter moments here are seasoned with a sense of impending doom. Dark undercurrents have always run through McLennan's music, but this time around he strips away many of the elements that traditionally counterbalanced that temperament. By the time the harder "Malibu 69" and the disturbing "Room For Skin" kick in, it seems apparent this uneasy environment isn't a chance occurrence. Not entirely devoid of hope, *In Your Bright Ray* is McLennan's least immediate offering, but the whatever additional concentration is required to appreciate its charms is amply rewarded with a deepened appreciation of his artistry.

—Kurt B. Reighley

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23. Web site at
www.got.net/people/gareth/mclennan.
FILE UNDER: Dark singer-songwriters.
R.I.Y.L.: Edwyn Collins, Go-Betweens, John Hiatt.

MERZBOW

Scumtron — Mute

■ Masami Akita, who records as Merzbow, has released over 40 albums' worth of pure, raw noise—not noisy rock, but extreme *sound* that doesn't behave the way music is normally supposed to. On *Scumtron*, a half-dozen remixers take

kacy crowley

anchorless

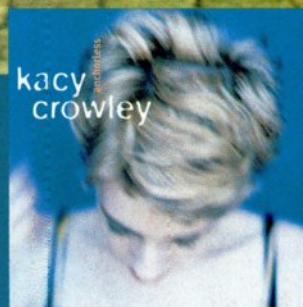
even on a
two-way street
you can always
go against
the traffic.



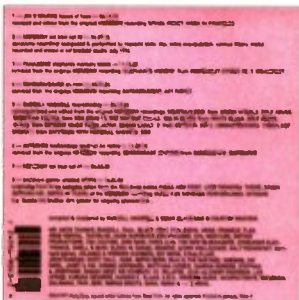
the remarkable debut
album featuring
Hand To Mouthville

"kacy crowley is one to watch...
anchorless is a confident debut"
— TIME

produced by: dave mcnair
mixed by bob clearmountain
and james barton
management: lookout management
frank gironda / elliot roberts



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on Akita's chaotic constructions, and try to impose order, and sometimes even meter, on the sound and its organization. (Merzbow also contributes two new full-bore blasts called "Eat Beat Eat" that only have as much rhythm as an involuntary muscle spasm). Autechre spins out "Ecobondage" into a fragile, skittering pattern; the ultra-clean Finnish minimalists Panasonic clip a mountain of needles called "Elephants Memory" into a long piece as neat and prickly as a hedge. Jim O'Rourke and Russell Haswell both use extensive tape-work to focus on momentary fragments of Merzbow pieces, stealing drops from a del-

uge and putting them under a microscope, and Rehberg & Bauer appear to simply speed up "Antimonument" to a dog-whistle pitch. Bernhard Gunter's mix is a puzzler, so quiet that it can only be heard at volumes that would be deafening for the rest of the disc: it's a challenge to turn it up. Play it at work and your co-workers will still demand that you turn it off immediately, but *Scumtron* is an extraordinary album of its kind, suggesting a spectrum of new directions for white noise. —Douglas Wolk

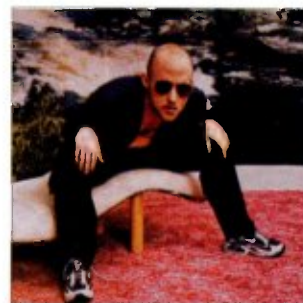
DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.
FILE UNDER: The art of noise.
R.I.Y.L.: Panasonic,
weirder Aphex Twin, grindcore.

MOBY

I Like To Score — Elektra

■ As the latest techno acts equip themselves with vocals and guitars in their attempt to win you over, let us consider Richard Hall, a.k.a. Moby. Since 1991, he's employed singing divas and thundering guitars, even recorded a whole album of so-called "hard-

core"—and yet, his electronic instrumentals have fared best commercially and artistically. *I Like To Score*, a collection of Moby songs written for, or appropriated by, film and television, may seem like a haphazard idea, but it's cohesive and very listenable. Moby proves here that Hollywood caught on to his sound long before MTV did (the pulsing junk-culture jam "Ah-Ah," for example, was in *Cool World* back in 1992), and *I Like To Score* works almost as well as a musical chronicle. You get the 1991 U.K. hit "Go," Moby's danceable rethink of the *Twin Peaks* theme; the two best hymns from his fine but overhyped 1995 album



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Everything Is Wrong, including "First Cool Hive," which played over the credits of *Scream*; and his kitschy '60s-esque theme to the next James Bond flick, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Mostly, *I Like To Score* is just good fun, with one caveat—program your CD player around the cover of Joy Division's "New Dawn Fades," Mr. Hall's dead-ly homage to Dio-era metal. It's a reminder that Moby needs to return to the style he does best. —Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7. Web site at www.humboldt1.com/halo/moby.html.

FILE UNDER: "In my day, we called it techno."

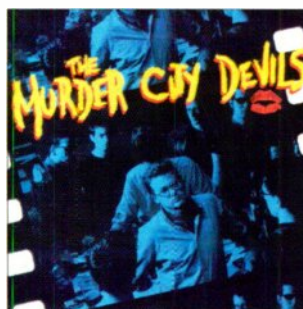
R.I.Y.L.: Daft Punk, Utah Saints, the old ffr compilations.

MURDER CITY DEVILS

Murder City Devils —

Die Young Stay Pretty/Sub Pop

■ Maybe you, too, have recently received the grief-stricken 2:00 a.m. phone call from a pal in Seattle, moaning that the town is "dead" because the flannel scene has given up the ghost. But for some of us, Seattle



rock meant something more drunken, sinister and deadly, equal parts Gerry Rosalie, Stiv Bators and Blag Jesus. Which is why the debut release on Sub Pop's new "rock" imprint posts a Martin Luther-style notice on rock 'n' roll's church door that Seattle's hardly in need of embalming. The Murder City Devils are a proper fifth-generation snarl-punk outfit, hurling huge chunks of high velocity misanthropy at your head like a reincarnation of the almighty Derelicts. (Of course, this is at least the sixth consecutive new band of its kind whose idea of "singing" is a one-note scream, which sug-

gests entirely too many kids have been weaned on more hardcore than is healthy.) The secret weapon, in the Devils' case, is employment of that wheezing workhorse of the ? And The Mysterians era, the Farfisa organ. Suddenly, these younguns' post-Dead Boys punk noise takes on a whole new textural dimension, lending an especially creepy/sleazy tone to their stripper-beat Iggy tribute, "Broken Glass." It's an instant classic, and a welcome return to form for the Seattle rock scene. —Tim Stegall

DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.

FILE UNDER: Fifth-generation punk hate-spew.

R.I.Y.L.: Dead Boys, Devil Dogs, Derelicts, Dwarves, and virtually any other punk band whose name begins with a "D."

MUZSIKAS AND MARTA SEBESTYEN

Morning Star — Hannibal-Rykodisc

■ In almost every genre that comes to this country as "world music," there's one group of musicians designated as emissaries, virtually equated with that music for a time.

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In Hungarian folk music, that group is Muzsikás. Though its musical community has been gaining attention since the defeat of communism in Hungary, they remain the most distinguished of its performers, playing traditional songs with extraordinary depth and spirit. The music is string-based with interludes sung by Márta Sebestyén, whose vocal stylings are droney yet nimble, like the band's fiddling (her voice enlivened Deep Forest's last record, too). There are jigs with the beat of a trotting horse, but also haunting ballads like "My Mother's Rosebush," in which Sebestyén's flattened notes become a counterpoint to the keening violin. "If I Were A Rose" adds throat singing to this mix, for an even more unusual sound. Despite a few titles like "Wedding In Fuzes Village" and "Farewell To Soldiers," most of these songs frustrate attempts to identify them as celebration or dirge. Even the jauntiest dance is played in a key that sounds slightly sad, and a song at restrained march tempo is still sung with a lilt. Muzsikás pulls off an unusual feat of diplomacy here, presenting its music accessibly while preserving its mysteries. —*Andrea Moed*

DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Old Country world music.
R.I.Y.L.: The Klezmatiks, Bulgarian Women's Choir, Steeleye Span.

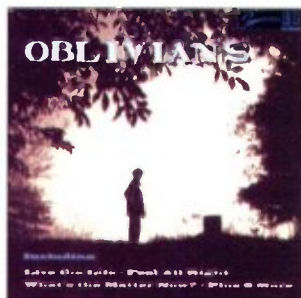
OBLIVIANS

...Play 9 Songs With
 Mr. Quintrón — *Crypt*

■ In Memphis, where both garage-punk deconstruction merchants the Oblivians and rock 'n' roll itself were born, music has continually arm-wrestled with itself over its dual nature: Post-war electric music from this town has had simultaneously sacred and profane sides, and the twain have never co-existed peacefully. Artists like Jerry Lee Lewis, James Carr, and Al Green have all

faced this scrapping philosophical divide, and after two LPs and countless singles' worth of garage-rock trash-'n'-smash, the Oblivians have taken on this discourse themselves, cutting this "gospel" record with avant-weirdo Mr. Quintrón draping lush carpets of Hammond B-3 over their considerably tighter attack. The results are no less snot-nosed and dangerous than any other Oblivians record, all of which are mandatory purchases in the first place. It's just that this disc sees Greg, Eric and Jack Oblivian paying the same highly listenable disrespect to the Swan Silvertones as they once did to Trio. Then, just as you may fear they may leave a Gideon atop your CD player, they rip into the old R&B standard "Mary Lou," and you realize all is well and right in Earth and Heaven. Amen.

—*Tim Stegall*



DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Tent-revival music for the garage generation.
R.I.Y.L.: The Gories, Panther Burns, Jimmy Smith.

PEECHEES

Games People Play — *Kill Rock Stars*

■ The success of a given punk rock record has as much to do with psychology as musicology, and as much to do with vocal tenacity as timbre. Which is to say, the whinier and more unstable the lead singer seems, the more convincing and passionate the music sounds. In the Peechees' case, they've got a pretty great singer in Christopher Appलगren, and that carries the entire album with an excitement that would be lacking if they had someone more, well, mature-sounding. When he sings "I fell in love," it seems more like a cry for help than a joyous declaration, and his vocal exclamation points pepper the album with an air of conviction. Granted, no singer can save a tired song, but despite the seemingly limited number of chord



recombinations available 20-odd years into the era of the three-chord mantra, the Peechees distinctively reconfigure theirs. The songs on *Games People Play* stick out most, though, when you listen to them individually—as singles, they glow with character. This is punk rock, no more, no less. Big deal? Well, for some peculiar reason it is a big deal when the Peechees play it.

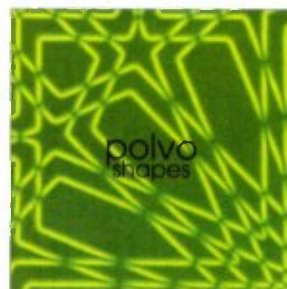
—*Randall Roberts*

DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.
FILE UNDER: Punk rock.
R.I.Y.L.: Sleater-Kinney, Buzzcocks, Germs.

POLVO

Shapes — *Touch And Go*

■ Polvo has saved '90s alt-punk by reconciling aggressive math-rock with the multiple textures of psychedelia and pan-ethnic drones. The eight-year-old Chapel Hill group explores the tension between melody and noise, imploding song structure along the way. That's a fancy way of saying their songs have a lot of parts—check "Rock Post Rock," which opens with choice acoustic slide, quickly segues into ballsy, superfuzzed assault, then changes so many times you lose count. On "The Golden Ladder," a delicate wail of woodwind and buzzing steel strings resonate in delicious half-tones recalling weird hillbilly tunings and Indian music, on top of sci-fi lyrics like "Scientists will soon find a way to clone your twin/And the march will begin anew."



"Downtown Dedication" is full-tilt space boogie, while the superb "Twenty White Tents" recalls Lee Ranaldo's more successful pop experiments. Whispery words speaking over constant strums of guitar line, loud and crunchy one second, plaintive and sinuous the next. And the way it melts into the delightfully sick, atonal pummel of "Everything In Flames!" just has to be heard. *Shapes* is Polvo's most accomplished work, a rockist tour of world sound and angular tunings, wrapped up in sharply shifting tempos and lightly covered in sugary, melodic hooks. —Mike McGonigal

DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.
FILE UNDER: Shape-shifting art-rock
with a world beat twist.
R.I.Y.L.: Savage Republic, King Crimson,
Thinking Fellers Union Local 282.

PROMISE RING CD

Nothing Feels Good — Jade Tree

■ Before the Promise Ring settled into working on its second album, *Nothing Feels*



Good, the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, band must have had a moment of epiphany: Catchy songs take your message a lot farther than whining and moaning. Now that it's shaken off the emo influences that weighed it down on its debut album, the Promise Ring is writing some fantastic punk-pop songs with just a touch of grit (by way of churning, dissonant guitars) and belting them out in a voice entirely its own. Singer/guitarist Davey Von Bohien's slightly gravelly, high-pitched voice isn't very dra-

matic or polished (he's even got a lisp), but whether he's stretching it threadbare or cheerfully bubbling over with ba-da-ba's, he comes off as delightfully fresh-faced and sincere. The Ring's best tunes are like a toy choo-choo train: They go 'round and 'round on the same track but, every time that damn engine comes out from under the toy hill, you're just as glad to see it. The songs are repetitive, but you'll bop your head and sing along every time the band baits you with that same sharp, shiny hook. And even when the band does revert to mushy emo-core mode, it sounds just fine, actually. —Jenny Eliscu

DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 14.
FILE UNDER: Feel-good emo-pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Jawbreaker, Superchunk, early Seam.

6 STRING DRAG

High Hat — E-Squared

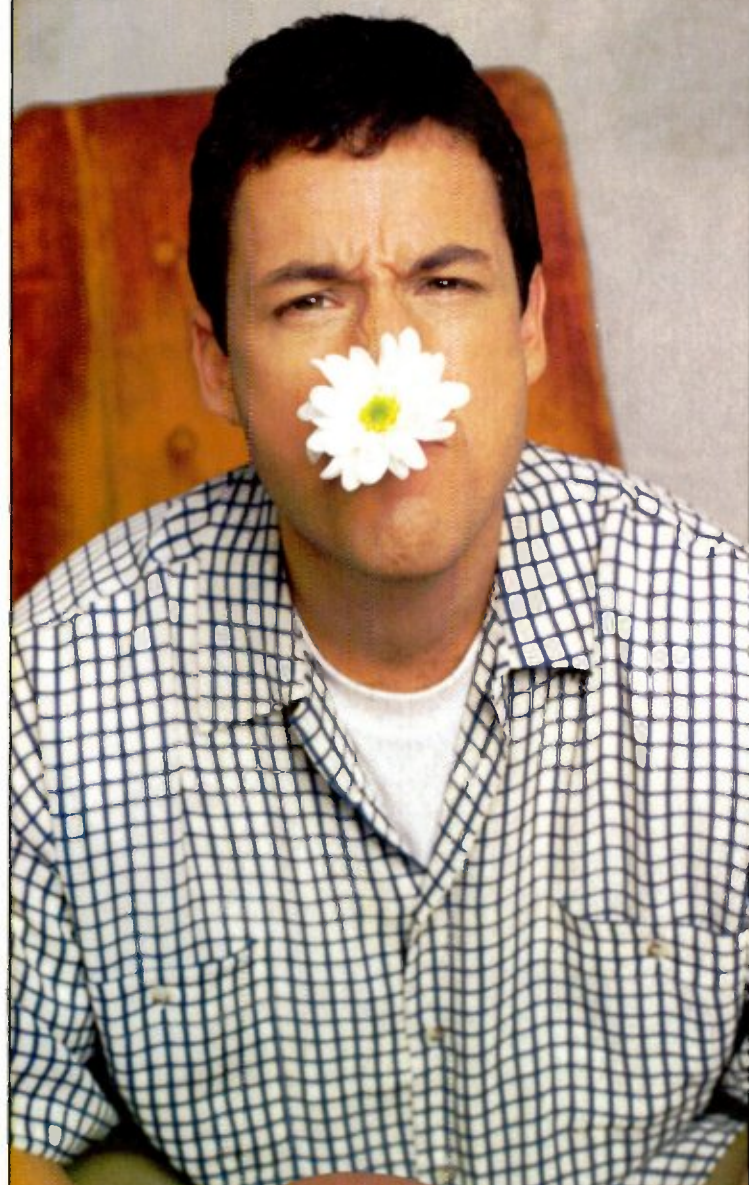
■ Without the undue earnestness of most alt-country bands, 6 String Drag makes the

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I heard about the stunts you pulled down on Gravier Street
Maurice been sittin' here sweatin' since you called
But the phone's been disconnected, and he's been sucking on the razor
It's hard enough to get you out of hock when you ain't handcuffed to the wall




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reviews

kind of music that you could slip into a jukebox at the rowdiest of roadhouses and satisfy diehard cowboys. The North Carolina band's second full-length (and its first for Steve Earle's upstart E-Squared label), *High Hat* covers the usual C&W bases, from liquor to women to unchangeable bad habits. Yet frontman Kenneth Roby's heartfelt songwriting and range of vocal inflections give 6 String Drag an organic edge over its twang-loving peers. Songs like the midtempo shuffle "Guilty" and the honky-tonk sing-along "I Can't Remember," could just as well be Hank Williams covers, while "Over And Over" is an authentic ragtime diversion. To avoid the serious retro vibe of fellow Tarheels the Squirrel Nut Zippers, Roby also exposes his rock leanings on many of these tracks. The rave-up "Bottle Of Blues" starts with a lick out of the Byrds' songbook, then takes off like a Ford pickup on a rural highway, and "Ghost" offers a blast of post-punk edginess. Roby and Scott Miller handle their six-strings with a nifty balance of expertise and irreverence throughout, making 6 String Drag one of the most convincing band of young country-rustling rockers yet. —Richard Martin



DATALOG: Released Sep. 9.

FILE UNDER: Titanic twang-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: The Band, Elvis Costello's *Almost Blue*, the Backsliders.

SPRING HEEL JACK

Busy Curious Thirsty — Island

■ Remove the beats from the previous Spring Heel Jack album, *68 Million Shades*, and what's left is an interesting new-age record. On *Busy Curious Thirsty*, what's left



minus the mathematical beats is a fascinating, subtle experimental noise album; it's as though they've moved from gobbling Ecstasy to amphetamines in the studio. But removing the rapid fire synthetic beats from their records is like removing yellow from a

lemon, and ultimately, the success of any electronic beat record rests solely on the creativity of said beats. So: Does it have a good beat? Can you dance to it? Well, yes and no. The beats on *Busy* work; in each song, there's a backbone rhythm that drives the pelvis and the feet, and messy subtextual bleeps and rumbles that orbit and occasionally sting the beat. But often it's difficult to distinguish one groove from the other—they, well, all sound the same. Aside from a few

standout rhythms ("Galapagos 3" and "Bells 2"), shuffling *Busy*'s song sequence yields no drastic changes in pace or flow. It's when you give up the notion of following songs and titles and allow *Busy Curious Thirsty* to exist as one hour-long piece that the record becomes more engaging.

—Randall Roberts

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23.

FILE UNDER: Flowing, intricate electronica.

R.I.Y.L.: Luke Vibert, Photek, Goldie.

SUMMER HITS

Beaches And Canyons: 1992-96 —
X-Mas

■ My sole encounter with Rex Kingsley Thompson, a.k.a. Tartarex, the bassist and singer for the Summer Hits, was during a visit to L.A. a couple years ago: I opened the door to the apartment I was staying in, and a cloud of marijuana smoke, à la *Fast Times*



At Ridgemont High, rolled out courtesy of a bunch of people who looked like they'd vaguely heard of sunlight. Thompson introduced himself to me as "Rex T.," looked like a cross between Z-Man Bartell and John Oates, and careened wildly between a half-assed English accent and a surfer's drawl. I was sold immediately. A few months later, the Summer Hits' singles started appearing in my mailbox. Some are unlistenable, some are great, all are collected here. Considering that there was probably never a moment

that anyone involved in making this record wasn't stoned, it's surprising that Thompson and co. (including Further's Darren Rademaker) manage to pull off such concise pop songs. Thompson lives in a world where the Squares are always trying to keep him down by preventing his favorite activities: surfing, sex, and recreational drug use. Which might be off-putting to some (especially with lyrics like "Drag! I've no more hash" and "She takes junk but she never abuses it"), as might be the band's sound, which attacks vaguely like a trebly drill-bit to the head. But Thompson's all about freedom, baby, and that summery vibe shines through all 16 tracks on *Beaches And Canyons*. If his short-term memory were up to the task, just think of the album he could make. —

Andrew Beaujon

DATALOG: Released Aug. 7.

FILE UNDER: Sea-water in the bong.

R.I.Y.L.: Early Pavement, Jesus And Mary Chain, the Pooh Sticks.

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SUNDAYS

Static And Silence — DGC

■ In the five years since their last Sundays album, fluttery-voiced Harriet Wheeler and folk-rock strummer David Gavurin watched the Cranberries swipe their sound and turn it into three obscenely popular albums. Harriet and David deserved much better; their misty-eyed but sly 1990 debut, ranks among the finest career-launchers this decade. The couple's third album, *Static And Silence*, nicely tops their tentative second, and shows that for the Gavurin-Wheelers, who married and had a child during their hiatus, time has stood still. The new album's sound, warm as down on a chilly day, recalls a time when Thatcher



was still Prime Minister, the Smiths were still the premier rock model, and nobody had heard the term Britpop. Many of *Static*'s lyrics reflect a calmer, if no less cynical, world-view. Wheeler, who seven years ago sang, "Hideous towns make me throw

up," now gently implores a friend, "Leave this city behind you." At the same time, the Sundays' songwriting has grown a bit more organic. The delicately funky "Another Flavour" and "Summertime" exhibit an unsuspected talent for rhythm. Anyone allergic to mannered British pretty-rock won't be won over; and arguably, the only new sounds on this self-produced, long-time-coming record are some poorly chosen digital horns. But three years after the Cranberries tried to go grunge, it's the Sundays' very unfashionability that makes them so winning. —Chris Molanphy

DATALOG: Released Sep. 23. Web site at www.huan.com/Sundays/sense/web.html.

FILE UNDER: Pretty U.K. rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Cranberries, Smiths, Cocteau Twins.

TSUNAMI

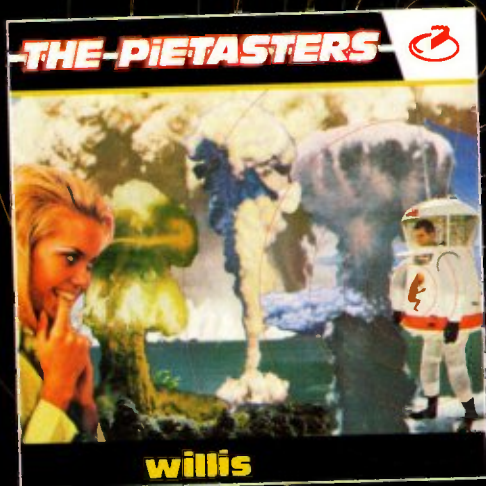
A Brilliant Mistake — Simple Machines

■ A *Brilliant Mistake* is record-industry target practice for Jenny Toomey and Kristin Thomson, Tsunami's singer/guitarists and the D.I.Y. exemplars who run Simple Machines. While the rest of the indie world continues to be siphoned off into the world of the majors, the pair endures, though the rest of the band's lineup is new. In the lush "Old Grey Mare," Toomey proffers an escape from the industry muck: "Don't go drown in a shallow pool/We've got so much work for you."



Often, her rich, liquid voice is also impatient and accusatory, as if she's caught you fondling the long arm of the Man. Thomson sounds more approachable, if stressed, like a socialist punk who still shares your less enlightened concerns. Tsunami doesn't ballpeen you to death with politics, though. "David Foster Wallace" is an amusing anecdote about a put-upon businesswoman, read while Toomey despairs, "If you fly away/I will die." "DMFH" (labelmate Danielle mother-fuckin' Howle?) is strummy, gorgeous and tender. Members of the Coctails, the Sea & Cake, Pulsars and Poi Dog Pondering help out, adding brass and heft to Tsunami's already complex instrumentations. "PBS" floats on the whimsy of vibes and melodic, and in "The Workers Are Punished," Dave Max Crawford's ristorante accordion contrasts nicely with Thomson's ranting. Tsunami's obsession with the record business can be off-putting, but even when

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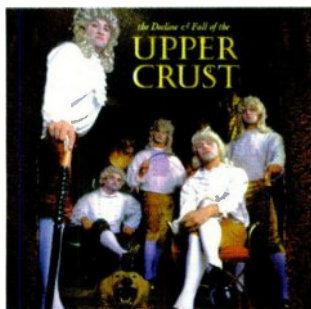
it errs, *A Brilliant Mistake* is heady and beautiful. —Anne Marie Cruz

DATALOG: Released Aug. 26.
FILE UNDER: Independent rock,
in form and content.
R.I.Y.L.: Scraw!, Bettie Serveert, Versus.

UPPER CRUST

The Decline And Fall Of The Upper Crust — **Emperor Norton**

■ Everything the Upper Crust does comes from a very simple joke: They look like 18th-century noblemen, their lyrics are all about being rich and upper-class, and they sound exactly like AC/DC. *The Decline And Fall* is the band's second (and reportedly final) album, and the joke, amazingly, is still funny. That's partly because it's deeper than it looks: Having dandies in powdered wigs playing cock-rock songs with titles like "Boudoir" and "Vulgar Tongue" is a clever disjunction, but it's also a commentary on how the rock 'n' roll dream is



linked to the kind of wealth and excess that's incompatible with the kind of normal life rock obsessively references. The joke also works because the Crusties actually *do* kick ass—if "Tell Mother I'm Home" and "Highfalutin'" were in, say, Serbo-Croatian, they could pass for poker-faced hard rock of the first order. *The Decline And Fall* is a lot less consistent than 1995's *Let Them Eat Rock*—it's got a couple of flat-out dogs—but its high spots are higher: the flawless Angus Young riffs of "Cream Of The Crust," the way "Rabble Rouser" neatly twists the idea of "revolution" in rock. If only they could have stuck around long enough to record their show-closing elitist manifesto, "Everyone's Equal." —Douglas Wolk

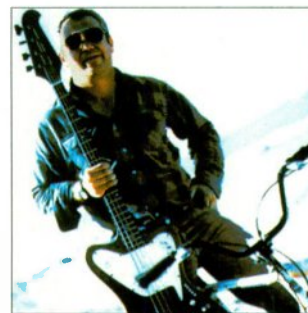
DATALOG: Release date: Oct. 14.
FILE UNDER: Dirty deeds—and if
you have to ask...

R.I.Y.L.: AC/DC, Urge Overkill, makeup-era Kiss.

MIKE WATT

Contemplating The Engine Room — **Columbia**

■ The ghost of D. Boon, Mike Watt's singing/guitar-playing ally in the great Minutemen, haunts *Contemplating The Engine Room*. And why shouldn't it? The Minutemen were a jewel in the dented crown of American punk, a band that made its own musical rules and was at the peak of its creative power at the time of its tragic end.



And Watt's certainly never found anyone to fill Boon's formidable work boots. But this time, in the wake of '95's star-studded *Ball-Hog Or Tugboat* and a stint in Porno For Pyros, he comes damn close by stripping things back down to a trio, leaving the guitar in the hands of gritty jazz-punk wizard Nels Cline, and handling the vocals himself. Watt can't sing a lick, but it doesn't matter: His no-nonsense croak only adds to the weight of his words, which recall, in his patented spiel (half sung/half spoken), his father ("the old man"), growing up in the blue-collar Southern California port town of San Pedro, and, of course, his old band. Watt may be living in the past, but it's an honest, rewarding, and inspiring past, one that, as far as he's concerned, didn't get lived in enough the first time around. —Matt Ashare

DATALOG: Released Oct. 7.
FILE UNDER: Improv-punk.
R.I.Y.L.: Minutemen, fireHOSE.

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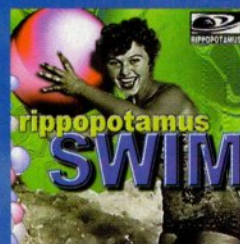


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mixedsignals

ROGER SANCHEZ is one of the most beloved sons of the New York house scene. Famed for his energetic mixing of garage, acid house and hip-hop, he's got a vibe that's always changing and the results are always hypnotizing. His recent installment in the **United DJ's Of America (DMC-Moonshine)** is a worthy addition to the series. On this eighth disc in the collection, Sanchez takes his place alongside other U.D.A. pioneers like Josh Wink, Frankie Bones and Kimball Collins with a 12-track excursion through floorfillers like Green Velvet's "The Stalker," Bones' "Studio 54," and Sanchez's own track, "Roger S. Presents The Deep 'Vibe.'" True to the live experience, this disc proves why Sanchez is one of the East Coast kings... New York City's **DAVE TRANCE** is widely respected for his mind-bending assortment of hard trance anthems with 303 lines that bring terms like "acid warfare" to mind. Fans



may be a little surprised, however, when they pop in his latest CD offering, **Very Superstitious (Superstition-Sm:)e**. Featuring a host of gorgeous breakbeat melodies, mesmerizing synthesizer loops and uplifting melodic flourishes, the 10-track mix highlights tracks from electronic dance trailblazers like Rabbit In The Moon, L.S.G. and Humate, exhibiting a style of progressive trance that soothes the spirit as much as it rocks the body. It's a gem well worth the journey... While this column is largely geared towards spotlighting the talent behind the decks, we can't overlook the use of the mixed CD as an influential marketing gadget. Many labels have recognized that the best way for audiences to be exposed to their releases is to present them the way they were intended to be heard: in a continuous mix with complementing tracks. **DJ BROWNIE** guides the course of **Planet Rampant III (Rampant-React)**, an acid-soaked breakbeat journey through the label's best, brightest, and most recent 12" singles, featuring home-base artists like Ascendance and Secret Knowledge. Released early this summer, **A Touché Of Class (Touché-Twisted America)** goes deep into the label's catalog of pulsing, hypnotic house. **ROB DI STEFANO** masterminds the continuous beatmix of classic cuts by 51 Days, Tata Box Inhibitors and R Factors. It's a smooth ride all around. —M. Tye Comer

Lou Reed

by Matt Ashare

Lester Bangs had all the right ideas (and a few rather choice wrong ones) when it came to Lou Reed: he loved him for changing the face of rock and roll with the Velvet Underground, hated him for willfully refusing to make good on that promise ("He's a liar, a wasted talent," Bangs wrote of Lou in '75), and loved him again for at least keeping rock 'n' roll interesting in the homogenized days of the pre-punk '70s. Not that I knew any of that when I discovered Reed in 1983, only 17 or 18 months, as it turned out, after Bangs passed away. Bangs was, in one sense, lucky: he didn't have to be around for Reed's relentlessly embarrassing attempts at new wave—1984's silly *New Sensations* and 1986's *Mistrial*—or for those damn "Walk On The Wild Side" Honda scooter commercials, though he probably would have been amused by both.

Lou appeared to me first in the summer of 1982, on the T-shirt of some guy who worked on the same crew as me painting dorm rooms at a Boston women's college. (He had just graduated from a small university in Ohio and was, as I've come to realize, deeply troubled by the employment prospects available to a sensitive liberal arts major with a taste for punk rock, a soul-crushing situation that I would have to wait four more years to confront.) So I suppose I was fortunate as well: I was given a whole year to delve into Reed's back catalogue before those damn Honda ads began airing, to prepare to spend the better part of the mid-'80s quietly cringing while friends ridiculed Reed's sorry attempt at a solo career, his lame-ass videos, and his dated hipster street-poet act. They just didn't get it.

I came at Reed and the Velvet Underground from the perspective of a relatively ignorant pseudo-punk with a strong belief that nothing good in rock had happened prior to 1976, the year the twin assault of the Ramones and the Sex Pistols cleared the way for everyone from R.E.M. and the Replacements to The Jam, Elvis Costello, and the Specials. Such was my blissfully simplistic personal history of rock, which was more or less exploded in 1983 by my exposure to Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, the Rolling Stones, and, most importantly, Lou Reed.

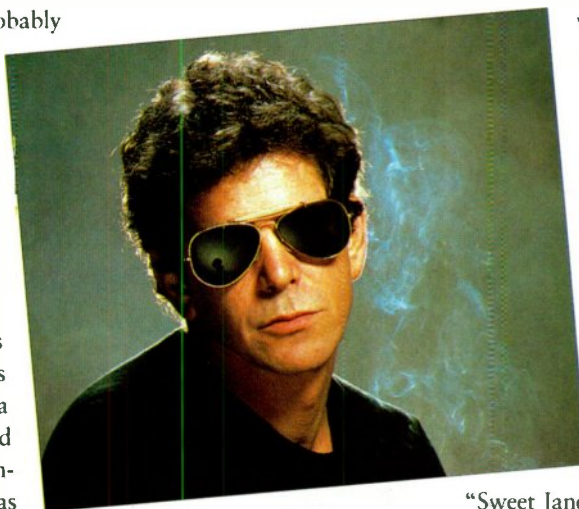
It was a good time to get into Reed—not only was 1982's *The Blue Mask* one of the more consistent releases of his then-decade-long solo career, but the band he put together around it and '83's *Legendary Hearts*, with ex-Voidoids guitarist Robert Quine, bassist Fernando Saunders, and drummer Fred Maher, was his best since

the Velvets. Starting with *The Blue Mask* meant hearing the allegorical "The Heroine" before I heard "Heroin." But it also allowed for increasing returns on my investment, as I indiscriminately worked back through Reed's solo output to the holy grail of the Velvet Underground, with long pauses along the way for *Street Hassle*, *Berlin*, and a *Blue Mask* radio-promo interview LP which featured a professorial Reed answering questions about every song on *The Blue Mask*, each cut preceded by 30 or 40 seconds of dead air so that DJs could record their own voice asking the questions. (That LP remains a prized possession.)

The album, however, that turned my academic interest into personal obsession wasn't *Loaded* or *White Light/White Heat*: It was *Take No Prisoners*, a double-LP live set recorded in May of 1978 at the Bottom Line, at the height, it would seem, of one of Reed's notorious methamphetamine binges. The disc is nothing short of an aural atrocity exhibit (as opposed to *Metal Machine Music*, which is simply an aural atrocity), with Reed as its featured attraction. From the outset—a rambling introduction to an 8-minute version of

"Sweet Jane"—he sounds like he's on the verge of full-blown amphetamine psychosis, talking a mile a minute, (mis)quoting Yeats's "The Second Coming," jumping from subject to subject in a dizzying display of free-associating that continues even after the band starts playing. It's a grotesquely disturbing display of untamed, unadulterated id, which brings to mind the drug-addled monologues of latter-day Lenny Bruce. It's comedy without punchlines, and I think it might be the best live album ever released, which may explain why, as far as I can tell, it remains out of print.

"Who else but Lou Reed could have survived making a public embarrassment of himself for so long that he actually managed to lasso a great rock 'n' roll band to back up his monkeyshines?" Bangs wrote in '75. I'm not sure which band he was talking about, but when I read that line in 1988, the year *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung* was posthumously published, I knew what Bangs was talking about—embarrassing displays and failures coupled with moments of brilliance, are what keep rock 'n' roll interesting, vital, and, well, worth being obsessed with. To quote Reed quoting Yeats, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are filled with a passionate intensity." Or, as Steve Martin once said, "Comedy is not pretty." ■



He sounds on the verge of full-blown amphetamine psychosis.

✧ High Water Records was founded by Memphis-based folklorist and blues fan Dr. David Evans in the early '80s. His original idea for founding the label was a pretty cool one: to record 7" 45 RPM singles of local Mississippi blues artists, with the idea of putting these 45s on the jukeboxes in rural bars and beer joints, and thereby helping to keep the blues from being totally obliterated by mass-market pop saturation. He wound up making albums by some pretty awesome people, including R.L. Burnside and Junior Kimbrough. These were only available as expensive European imports or in a few shops around Memphis, but now Hightone Records has reissued a whole slew of them. The best of the bunch by far is *Feelin' Good*, by female blues singer and guitarist **Jessie Mae Hemphill**. Hemphill comes off as sort of an amped-up version of Memphis Minnie, or a female Fred McDowell, using the same North Mississippi two-guitar and drums format as Burnside or the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. This is simply as cool as modern blues albums can get. Junior and R.L.'s albums from this batch aren't quite as good as their more recent work (some of R.L.'s numbers have a bizarre sort of disco feel to them), but if you like their Fat Possum records, you probably won't be disappointed with these.



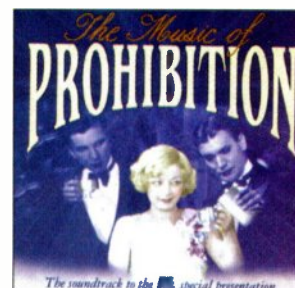
inthebins

✧ John Fahey's Revenant Records has reissued a collection of the **Stanley Brothers' Earliest Recordings**, a series of phenomenal early bluegrass 78s made in the late 1940s for the obscure Rich-R-Tone label. For more about the good works of Fahey's Revenant label, check out the profile of the label in Quick Fix.

✧ **Charles Wright** was about as idiosyncratic a soul man as you could possibly ask for. He did things his way, or no way at all. His "Express Yourself," in addition to being sampled by N.W.A. and a host of others, was a paean to individuality and self-expression hung on a jerky, joyful calypso beat that underscored the Caribbean connection to funk music. Wright was the topic of a lengthy article in *Grand Royal* magazine a couple of issues back, and Warner Archives' two-on-one-disc reissue of *Express Yourself/In The Jungle, Babe*, two of his best albums, is a welcome thing indeed.

✧ There have been a couple of truly remarkable little reissues that have gracefully crossed over from the folklore/ethnomusicology category right into my living room. Rounder has reissued a fantastic album of **Railroad Songs**, culled from the Library Of Congress archives. The premise of these recordings was simple:

Find a bunch of crusty railroad old-timers, sit them in front of a tape recorder, and tell them to sing the oldest songs they know, mostly bal-



lads about gory train wrecks. Ironically, just as these recordings were being made, the automobile and the airplane were rising up to take the place of the train, adding an extra level of poignancy to the old railroading songs. In a similar vein, Alan Lomax recorded two albums of **Prison Songs** which Rounder has also just released. Not only are these chain-gang songs and field hollers the real roots of the blues, but they're also precursors of rap.

✧ As part of its selection of choice material from the Prohibition era (including a great Cab Calloway cut), the soundtrack CD to the A&E documentary about **Prohibition** (Legacy) contains a remarkable little ditty, Bert Williams's "The Moon Shines On The Moonshine." Bert sings gleefully about how the bars are closed and the old distillery is dark, but up in the hills, oh my, how the moon shines on the moonshine. Behind him, a little orchestra swoons with sliding trombones and clip-clopping wood blocks, sounding as though they too may be imbibing. They simply don't make 'em like this anymore.

Phil Ochs

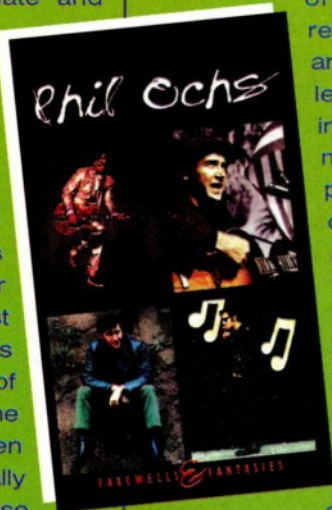
Farewells And Fantasies
Rhino

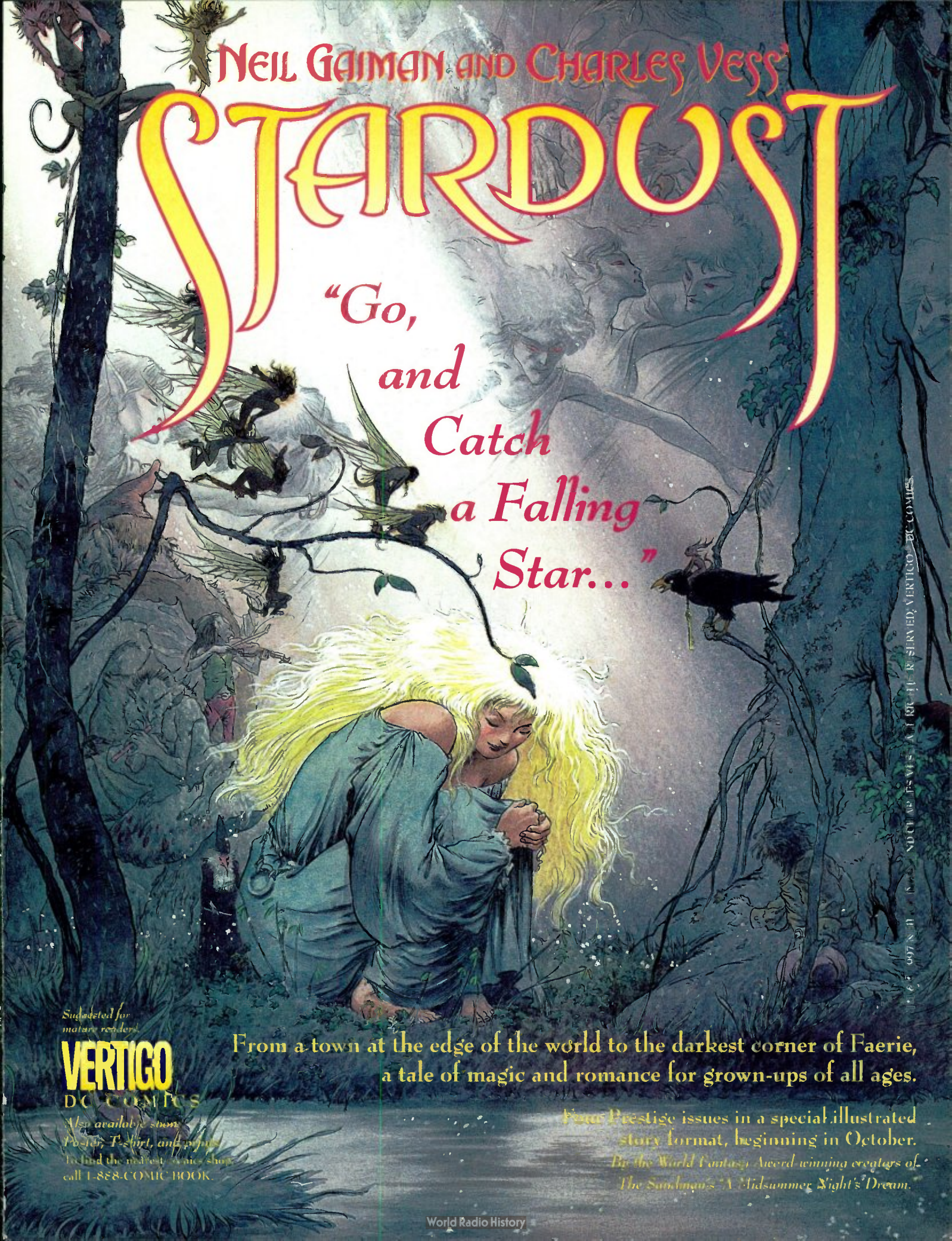
Folksinger Phil Ochs's songs weren't as immediate and popular as Bob Dylan's, but his music was just as potent. His recordings spanned 1964 to 1975, and you'd be hard-pressed to pick a more tumultuous 12 years in this century to spend your life writing topical protest songs. Actually, Ochs's rise in 1964 marks one of the turning points of the '60s, a marker for when things started to get really interesting, and his demise coincidentally occurred at almost the exact point where the '70s became their most tepid and

flatulent. Rhino, which has reissued some of Ochs's individual albums, now gives him the treatment he so richly deserves — three CDs including a handful

of previously unreleased tracks, and a dense booklet packed with insight and information. And the photos throughout the booklet are truly superb — the famed Michael Ochs Archives, the world-famous Los Angeles-based photo catalog of

everyone who's anyone in rock music, was started by Ochs's brother as a collection of photos of Phil. ✧





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and
Catch
a Falling
Star..."*

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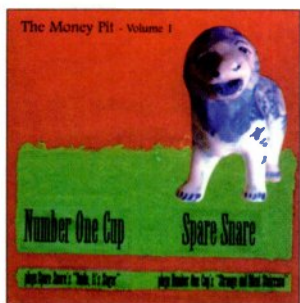
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✱ **Certy Farish** and the **Pissed-Officers** are both very tight, hot, silly hardcore bands from the Boston area, and they've just released an awesomely hyperkinetic 22-song split 10" called *Save The Ants* on their own nameless label (c/o 12 Wyatt Circle, Somerville, MA 02143). The Pissed-Officers are known for passing out lyric sheets at their shows, and with good reason: the words go by too fast to make out unless you know what they are, and they're great (from "Yellow #5": "If yellow I want things to be/I'll use a crayon or use my pee/Keep your dyes away from me/I hate you FD & C"). Gerty Farish gets by with a guitar, a synth, and a drum machine, for a bizarro-world twist on hardcore. And then there's the sleeve, which can be assembled into a "punk rocket"...

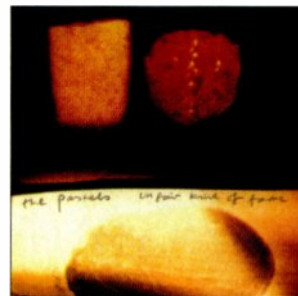


reduced to its two-chord essence (plus a bizarre lo-fi hardcore ending) and has some of its words altered to Spare Snare's idiom, and the Scottish band's "Smile, It's Sugar" gets a clean, bright and

✱ Two singles have just appeared from the **Spare Snare** camp. The first is a split single with **Number One Cup** (on Blue Rose-V2), with each band covering the other's song—#1C's "Strange And Silent Staircase" is

hiss&crackle

very American reading. The other single is a one-sided 7" with an electro instrumental credited to **Dubreq** (Chute)—there's no title on the sleeve, but the inner groove suggests it might be called "We Is Stylophone." Anyway, it applies the same brittle sonics and strange effects to dance music that Spare Snare applies to pop.

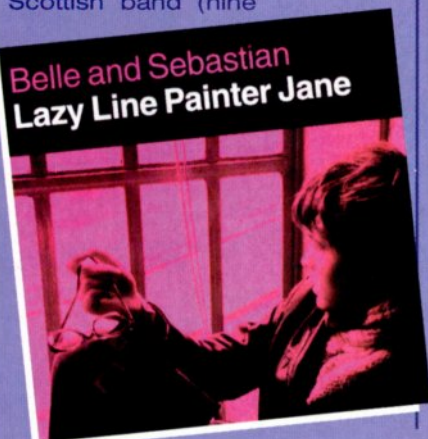


✱ Over more than 15 years as a band, the **Pastels** have gone from bouncy pop centered on Stephen Pastel's head-cold singing voice to low-key, gliding grooves that often feature the softer and gentler (though still sweetly untrained) voices of his bandmates Katrina and Aggi. The "Unfair Kind Of Love" double-7" (Up) is a preview of their forthcoming album, which also includes two gentle, percolating tracks that don't appear on the full-length. The real highlight, though, is a remix of "Cycle" by My Bloody Valentine, whose subtle integration of double-speed rhythms into half-speed guitar textures hints at the sort of thing we may hear on the long-promised MBV album.

Belle And Sebastian

"Lazy Line Painter Jane"
Jeepster (U.K.)

Yes, we know we picked Belle And Sebastian's last single as the best of the month too. When another band starts making singles this good this close together, we'll do the same thing. "Lazy Line Painter Jane" is a huge leap for this sprawling Scottish band (nine



members at last count). Recorded in some big, resonant space that lets all the instruments breathe, it starts as a lightweight, typically understated B&S number about a girl with a bad rep ("Tossing a coin to decide whether you should tell your mum/About a dose of thrush you got while you were licking railings"), takes off when guest singer Monica Queen jumps in for an appropriately over-emoted verse, and turns into an irresistibly cascading Velvets-y jam with a dramatic crescendo. "You Made Me Forget My Dreams" is a low-key weepie that gets devoured at the end by a fragment of a dance track, "A Century Of Elvis" is a tossed-off but amusing spoken-word-plus-music piece, and "Photo Jenny" has the best first line of recent memory: "I'm in a mess, I'm in a dress." ✱

✱ A few quick presses of the "play" button: It's only a single in the very loosest sense of the term, but **Sleep**'s major-label debut "Jerusalem" (London) is one 53-minute track of bludgeoning, ultra-slow, hyper-heavy Sabbathoid pounding on not much more than one chord. For people who'd like the Melvins and Earth better if they weren't so damn chipper... **New Order**'s "Video 5-8-6" (Touch-Dutch East India) is one 22-minute track, an instrumental done as a video soundtrack: the earliest demo of the song that became "5-8-6" on *Power, Corruption And Lies*, and later turned into "Blue Monday." It's not exactly essential New Order, but it's still held up amazingly well, with the creepy, dry textures of the band's earliest singles... Touch-Dutch East India has also just released *Vien*, another archival recording from a defunct band: this time, the final two tracks by **Wir**, from an Austrian radio session of a few years ago, which take the abstraction of *The First Letter* to new heights... And, also in the indie-rock archives department, Elefant has reissued **Damon & Naomi**'s first post-Galaxie 500 single on CD. Originally released under the name Pierre Étoile (the French words for "rock" and "star"), "In The Sun" has three slow, gentle, dreamy tracks with gorgeous brush drums.



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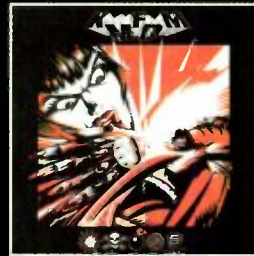
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NEW ALBUM



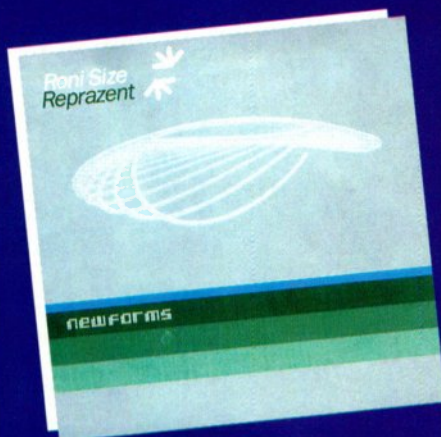
ON TOUR THIS FALL



Roni Size

New Forms

Mercury



A record with a title like **New Forms** is likely to be making bold claims that the music simply doesn't substantiate. Not so in the case of this disc by Bristol producer Roni Size, who fashions his new forms by re-shaping the contours of drum-and-bass. Size's distinct

sound is the result of the Bristolian proclivity for deep jazz and dub structures. On the album's title track, Philadelphia rapper Banamadia eloquently demolishes the myth that hip-hop and drum-and-bass make uneasy bedfellows. Her vocal delivery is synchronized perfectly to Size's rolling, paranoid bass lines, which trail you as closely as a private investigator. "Brown Paper Bag" is a radical retooling of d'n'b's simplest elements: The minor-key guitar figure at the center of the track slides in just under the skin of the bass line and the percussion rolls on like a train without brakes. "Beatbox" opens with late-'60s sitcom-theme horn blasts and A-Train announcements, before the center collapses to be replaced by a bass line so sinuous and insistent that escape becomes nearly impossible. **New Forms** is a truly epochal album whose repercussions will be felt for a long time to come. ♥

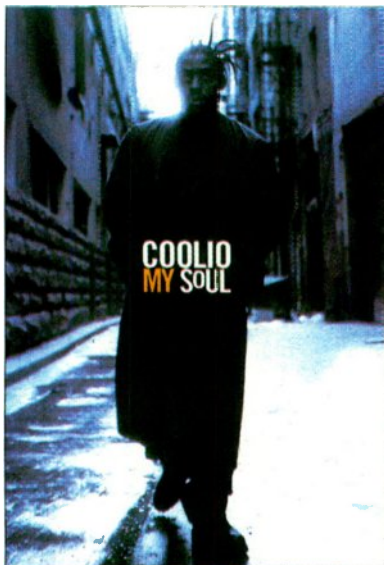
❖ **Coldcut's** "Beats & Pieces" single is the stuff of legend in underground electronic circles. Released eight years ago, this piece of audio subterfuge was taken to heart by both hip-hop and dance producers, and we've been hearing variations on it ever since. The re-release of the single (as "More Beats & Pieces") with mixes by Tortoise's John McEntire, Kid Koala, and Q-Bert is satisfying in itself, and the arrival of Coldcut's first full-length record in a long time, *Let Us Play* (Ninja Tune), is cause for celebration indeed. Matt Black and Jonathan More have thrown everything into the mix, and instead of creating some "post-modern" collage of confusion and dissonance, they've fashioned an electronic album with more twists, turns, and mood changes than most artists manage in a career. The beautifully rendered vocoder number "Rubaiyat" is followed by the contemplative, Samuel Barber-esque "Panopticon." New York's veteran cut-and-paste Steinski appears on "I'm Wild About That Thing." The oddest guest star here is Jello Biafra, who adds a characteristically satisfying leftist polemic to another version of "More Beats & Pieces." Like *New Forms*, this is going to change conceptions of what passes for electronica... Belfast miscreant **David Holmes** has been crawling around the edges of the electronic undergrowth for some time, working with Andrew Weatherall and other British techno ruffians. His last full-length, *This Film's Crap, Let's Slash The Seats*, was an underrated gem which saw Holmes's acerbic sense of humor and interest in film scores in its nascent stages. With the release of the brilliant, intoxicating *Let's Get Killed* (1200-A&M), he's really come into his own. The tempo here never gets above 80 beats per minute, and the dense, atmospheric teeter on the edge of malaise and late-afternoon stoner blues. Holmes is particularly adept at bringing simple, dubwise echo-and-reverb effects into the mix, making them collide with odd and unplaceable vocal samples. *Let's Get Killed* has all the fun and dis-ease of *Blue Velvet*, and the rhythmic undertow of Portishead.

dance top25

- 1 **μ-ZIQ**
Luratic Harness / Astralwerks-Caroline
- 2 **KEOKI**
Ego-Trip / Moonshine
- 3 **LUKE VIBERT**
Big Soup / Mo Wax/frr-London
- 4 **BANCO DE GAIA**
Big Men Cry / Planet-Dog-Mammoth
- 5 **CRYSTAL METHOD**
Vegas / Outpost-Geffen
- 6 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
A Journey Into Ambient Groove 4 / Quango-Island
- 7 **PIERRE HENRY/MICHAEL COLOMBIER**
Metamorphose / frr-London
- 8 **COLIN NEWMAN**
Bastard / Swim-
- 9 **ECBOR**
All Of Us Can Be Rich... / Digital Hardcore-Grand Royal
- 10 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Industrial Mix Machine / Cleopatra
- 11 **SISTER MACHINE GUN**
Metropolis / Wax Trax!-TVT
- 12 **KEN ISHII**
Jelly Tones / Medicine
- 13 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Talvin Singh Presents Anokha / Quango-Island
- 14 **DJ'S WALLY & SWINGSETT**
Dog Leg Left / Ubiquity
- 15 **UP BUSTLE & OUT**
Light 'Em Up, Blow 'Em Out / Ninja Tune
- 16 **UNIT: 187**
Loaded / 21st Circuitry
- 17 **DJ SOUL SLINGER**
Don't Believe / Jungle Sky-Liquid Sky
- 18 **VOODOO CHILD**
The End Of Everything / Elektra-EEG
- 19 **DIVE**
Snake Dressed / COP-International
- 20 **MEMBERS OF MAYDAY**
"Sonic Empire" (5") / Logic
- 21 **KALTE FARBEN**
Trust In Opium / Pendragon
- 22 **MENTALLO & THE FIXER**
Burnt Beyond Recognition / Metropolis
- 23 **C.J. BOLLAND**
The Analogue Theatre / frr-London
- 24 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Breakbeat Massive / Mutant Sound System
- 25 **PLASTIKMAN**
"Sickness" (5") / Plus 8/NovaMute

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





hip-hop top25

- 1 PUFF DADDY & THE FAMILY
No Way Out / Bad Boy-Arista
- 2 WU-TANG CLAN
Wu-Tang Forever / Wu-Tang/Loud-RCA
- 3 EPMD
"Never Seen Before" / Def Jam-Mercury
- 4 BEATNUTS
Stone Crazy / Violator-Relativity
- 5 KRS-ONE
I Got Next / Jive
- 6 ROYAL FLUSH
Blunt-TVT / "Iced Down: Medallions"
- 7 SOUNDTRACK/LIL' KIM
Nothing To Lose / Tommy Boy
- 8 SOUNDTRACK/MOBB DEEP
Hoodlum / Loud-Interscope
- 9 WYCLEF JEAN/REFUGEE ALL-STARS
Presents The Carnival / Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 10 BUSTA RHYMES
Elektra-EEG / "Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See"
- 11 MOS DEF
"Universal Magnetic" / Rawkus
- 12 CAPONE N' NOREAGA
"Capone Bone" / Penalty-Tommy Boy
- 13 COMMON
"Reminding Me (Of Set)" / Relativity
- 14 RAMPAGE
Scouts Honor...By Way Of Blood / Elektra-EEG
- 15 DIAMOND
"The Hyatt" / Mercury
- 16 GP WU
"Party People" / MCA
- 17 AZ (FEAT. SWV)
"Hey AZ" / EMI
- 18 THA ALKAHOLIKS
"Likwidation" / Loud-RCA
- 19 SOUNDTRACK/FOXY BROWN
How To Be A Player / Def Jam/RAL-Mercury
- 20 COMPANY FLOW
"The Fire In Which You Burn Slow" / Official-Rawkus
- 21 JUNGLE BROTHERS
Raw Deluxe / Gee Street-V2
- 22 O.C. FEAT. YVETTE MICHELE
"Far From Yours" / Payday
- 23 SOUNDTRACK/WILL SMITH
Men In Black / Columbia/Sony Music Soundtrax
- 24 NOTORIOUS B.I.G.
Life After Death / Bad-Boy-Arista
- 25 LOST BOYZ
Love, Peace & Nappiness / Universal

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

❖ In 1994 the **Gravediggaz** (producer extraordinaire Prince Paul, Wu-Tang patriarch the RZA, former Stetsasonic kingpin Fruitkwan and rapper [Too] Poetic) turned the ears of many jaded hip-hoppers with their over-the-top 6 *Feet Deep*, which amusingly goofed on gangsta rap, inventing new levels of (facetious) depravity. For those expecting more of the same twisted brilliance, *The Pick, The Sickie And The Shovel* (Gee Street) couldn't be more different. Considered as a "normal" hip-hop record, the album is certainly up-to-par (it's chiefly produced by RZA and selected Wu-Tang Productions disciples), but Prince Paul, the obvious creative spark behind the last record, has been all but excluded here. What's left is a Wu-Tang record without the Wu-Tang Clan, or rather a Gravediggaz record without much grave-digging... **Coolio's** *My Soul* (Tommy Boy) keeps his catchy West Coast stylings intact, but adds some raw edges to his multi-platinum *Gangsta's Paradise* sound, with tracks like "Ooh La La," "Hit 'Em" and "My Soul," the latter two featuring rapper Ras Kass. Don't worry, there's still plenty of shake-your-booty party funk ("Throwdown 2000," "Can I Get Down 1X," "One Mo") and even the gutwrenchingly syrupy pop (c)rap of "C U When U Get There" for good measure. Coolio fans of old aren't likely to be disappointed, and those who think he's a little too clean for the streets might even want to give this a spin... The New York duo of Pharaoh Monch and Prince Poetry, better known as **Organized Konfusion**, returns after a three-year sabbatical with *Equinox* (Priority), their strongest effort to date. They focus their intelligent lyrics into a concept album based on two characters (Life, a practical, peaceful brother, and Malice, his hard-rock friend and business partner), and production work by Buckwild, Diamond, Showbiz, Rasheed and Rockwilder brings out the underrated flows of both rappers. Tracks like "Questions," "Numbers" and "Somehow, Someway" will hopefully bring this group the attention they have deserved for many years.



Various Artists Eargasms (Crucial Poetics Volume One) Manic Records

The link between the communicative abilities of poetry and rap has always been obvious but unspoken. Rappers from all eras have been inspired by the poetic muse, but the converse relationship (poets influenced by rappers) has rarely been

brought to light. And that's where **Eargasms** comes in. Taking a mix of known and unknown spoken-word artists and putting their words down as rap tracks, the disc is an intriguing compilation of offbeat, brainy hip-hop or, if you prefer, funkified poetry. Either way you slice it, it's dope. Producer Native Sun does a great job putting some deeply funky hip-hop behind artists boasting drastically different styles, and it's his work that turns an interesting experiment into something that heads and poetry slam types can both get into. Artists ranging from lyrical sage Abiodun Oyewole of the Last Poets ("Invocation" and "Poet's Psalm") to wild and evocative new-jack bohemians Saul Williams ("Twice The First Time") and Mike Ladd ("Let's Discuss Disgusting"), and strong performances from rap groups the Vibe Chameleons ("Spook In The House") and Company Flow ("Company Flow Freestyle") make this an album that forward-thinking hip-hop listeners will not want to miss. ❖

Deceased

Fearless Undead Machines

Relapse

It's almost a knee-jerk reaction to make a fuss over a new Deceased release, as the Arlington, VA, quartet has practically become synonymous with U.S. underground metal. Drummer/vocalist King Fowley is a big-hearted and outspoken historian and cheerleader, helping to preserve camaraderie in the fractured, chaotic international metal community. Deceased is keeping the 20-foot-long thanks list alive, both literally and in the unified spirit it represents. Joined by bassist Les Snyder and guitarists Mark Adams and Mike Smith, Fowley parlays his heaviest obsession into the concept album Fearless Undead Machines.



Ostensibly an extended story about establishment-created zombies devouring the world, King's magnum opus is pretty easy to interpret as the parable of maintaining a pure metal mindset in a world of conformist consumers and charlatans. His pessimistic view of society is offset by persistent pleas for self-determination and freedom

of spirit. This will to individuality is, of course, demonstrated by the band's high-energy thrash assault. Forging the dissonance of Voivod, the melodicism of Mercyful Fate, and urgent Possessed-era Venom vocals into a fluid, marching stomp, Deceased makes

classic thrash sound newly hatched. The band has come a long way stylistically, demonstrating proficiency and thematic maturity without abandoning reverence for its roots. ✕

✕ Ex-Cannibal Corpse growler Chris Barnes earns his keep with Six Feet Under, a side project gone legit. The group's second CD, Warpath (Metal Blade), still sounds like the bouncy by-product of a Sunday afternoon studio session, especially with the recurrent good-natured borrowing of riffs from vintage Slayer and Exciter records. Barnes's lyrics are mostly self-pitying and uninspired, but Warpath is so well-produced that its dunderhead tendencies never overpower the flow. The music is mid-tempo rock played exclusively with sounds from the death metal palette, introducing mildly interesting twists like the heavy blues number "4:20."... With At The Gates dead and buried, it'll be interesting to see how Swedish grinders Dismember continue their imitative but satisfying career. The five-song Misanthropic EP (Nuclear Blast) stands strong with familiar sounds: crunchy detuned guitars, hoarse vocals, and agile guitar melodies slipping around in a wet stew of nicely engineered sonic gore... The latest release from Extreme Noise Terror, Damage 381 (Earache), documents the brief period when the band swapped one of its vocalists with Napalm Death. Though the crusty grindcore pioneers have little new to offer at this stage, their union with Barney Greenway seems to have injected some excitement into both arms. While retreading ground that Napalm Death has already left scorched behind it, Damage 381 demonstrates some of the urgency that is lacking in the Birmingham bashers these days... Since death metal and Christianity are strongest in the isolated backwaters of America, it makes sense that someone in this country would try and combine the two. Living Sacrifice, of Little Rock, Arkansas, has been attempting to fuse what seem like opposing ends for years now, most recently coughing up Reborn (Tooth & Nail). In praising Jesus, the band seems most facile at acting like sheep, as it's shed its long hair and metal trappings in favor of discordant metal-hardcore with barking vocals à la Korn or Helmet. Living Sacrifice needs to pray for some good ideas, because this derivative schlock comes across as devoid of sincerity.

metal top25

- 1 **PANTERA**
Official Live: 101 Proof / EastWest-EEG
- 2 **TESTAMENT**
Demoniac / Mayhem-Fierce
- 3 **GEEZER**
Black Science / TVT
- 4 **SOUNDTRACK**
Spawn / Immortal-Epic
- 5 **LIMP BIZKIT**
Three Dollar Bill, Y'all\$ / Flip-Interscope
- 6 **MEGADETH**
Cryptic Writings / Capitol
- 7 **SNOT**
Get Some / Geffen
- 8 **SEPULTURA**
Blood-Rooted / Roadrunner
- 9 **BRUCE DICKINSON**
Accident Of Birth / CMC International
- 10 **SEVENDUST**
Sevendust /TVT
- 11 **EXTREME NOISE TERROR**
Damage 381 / Earache
- 12 **OBITUARY**
Back From The Dead / Roadrunner
- 13 **MACHINE HEAD**
The More Things Change... / Roadrunner
- 14 **NAPALM DEATH**
Inside The Torn Apart / Earache
- 15 **DIMMU BORGR**
Enthrone Darkness Triumphant / Nuclear Blast America
- 16 **EMPEROR**
Anthems To The Weikins At Dusk / Century Media
- 17 **INTEGRITY**
Seasons In The Size Of Days / Victory
- 18 **SISTER MACHINE GUN**
Metropolis / Wax Trax!-TVT
- 19 **STRIFE**
In This Defiance / Victory
- 20 **FALL FROM GRACE**
Fall From Grace / Mayhem-Fierce
- 21 **BIOHAZARD**
No Holds Barred: Live In Europe / Roadrunner
- 22 **FEAR FACTORY**
Remanufacture (Cloning Technology) / Roadrunner
- 23 **DECEASED**
Fearless Undead Machines / Relapse
- 24 **20 DEAD FLOWER CHILDREN**
Candy Toy Guns And Television / Overcore
- 25 **FLOTSAM AND JETSAM**
High / Metal Blade

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



BABY BIRD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

"Grandma Began To Be 18 Again."

"And I'm *not* a tormented artist, I'm really not!" Jones bubbles, starting to come alive as it gets darker outside. "I think in Britain they have this image that I've gone away for 24 hours a day, locked myself away until I don't have a social life. But I like to go out and drink—socialize. So I try and work very, very quickly. You write one song, and that inspires another tune, then another tune, then another tune. Then I put the lyrics onto it and sing over all of it. A very, *very* fast process." The longest he's lollygagged? Jones chuckles. "Oh, I've probably taken a day over a song occasionally."

How does one wade through such an immense catalog? Jones wants to help. He offers a quick list of his personal favorites. "'I Was Never Here,' which is off my third album, *Fatherhood*; definitely 'Atomic Soda' from the new album—the vocals were put through a guitar pedal, so it was all mashed up on distortion. And my



first song ever written was 'Cornershop' off the first album. I can't remember what I was thinking. It sounds like a bit of a conveyor belt, that one. I get bored very quickly, so I can never remember what I was thinking at the time I write a song. And I don't like a lot of equipment, either. If you have a small amount of equipment, then

you'll be resourceful and try to squeeze every last drop out of it."

Jones swears his parents are "totally normal." In his early twenties, he formed an "anti-theatre" group called "Dog In Honey," where he first began tampering with societal norms. "I hate structures, in music or theatre," he growls. "So we'd use microphones so you weren't using voice projection—I could do a play in my normal voice. We also used huge video screens to blow up our facial movements. It was kind of like going to the cinema." And when an Art Council grant finally wafted down, Jones had it spent before the check arrived: he pounced on his precious four-track, and Baby Bird (so named because it was a "very simple, innocent, fragile kind of music... 'Baby Bird' just doesn't sound like a rock band") was hatched.

The first friend to whom Jones had given one of his private tapes became his manager. Jones's photographer girlfriend shot all of his startling album sleeves. Next thing he knew, a pair of high-pitched puppet porkers were oinking along to his song.

Jones is getting restless, though. He hasn't had the time to write a song in nine months. Later this evening, he'll attend a Mansun/Seahorses concert downtown, and, in his own refined, gentlemanly fashion, rock out with all the yowling Britpop kids. "I don't want to be confrontational," he avers. "I want to be thought-provoking." And he's pleased that Baby Bird didn't enter the alterna-kingdom through a red-carpeted front door. "We came up from the basement!" Jones jubilantly cackles. "All covered in goo! Just like in *Evil Dead*!" **CMJ**

PORTISHEAD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

the sound. Ade, you could say the same thing. He's studied jazz guitar for, like, 15 years. He's a serious producer of music in his own right." Like R.E.M., things are so secretive around the studios and Portishead's sound is so seamless that it's doubtful whether anyone will really know each of the silent members' roles and exact contributions until one of them leaves to go solo.

Barrow describes the arduous process of arriving at a finished track. "You keep chucking away, recording, and chucking away, recording, and you get to the point where it hasn't got any crisp around the edges, and it could be noisy, crusty, it could be spinning out in whatever direction, but the basic element of it is something pure, something that you're proud of, yourself. You're trying to get something out that is not just a copy of someone else's material. And as soon as Beth sings on it, then it's another whole element entirely."

So why isn't Beth here right now? The day before the interview, *CMJ New Music Monthly* had been given a rather cryptic missive from the band's publicists, to the effect that Gibbons would agree to be photographed, but not interviewed, while Barrow would be interviewed but not photographed. What's up with that? Barrow leans back, as if he's been asked that question before. "Because we want her to sing on the next one, right, mate? It's a weird one, that, because me and her, we're the ones who signed on the dotted line with the record company. You know, we're the ones who did the press on the first one. I'll tell you this, you don't want to go there, mate. The industry is a monster, it's a nasty fucking beast... We're in it purely for that bit of vinyl. And what sounds came out of that vinyl. And if people want to talk to us, informing people of what we feel once we wrote that piece of vinyl, well, all right, I'll do it. Anything else outside of that is bollocks. We might have this thing with the photos, like, I don't want to do this photo shoot or whatever, with a \$5,000 stylist and a sweater that's not mine and all that. If it means we don't sell 100,000 copies, then we don't sell 100,000 copies. Then we can go away and do some more music. We want her to *keep* making records, mate."

Portishead's presence in the charts is significant, and not just because it's the flagship trip-hop band. Other bands were earlier (notably Massive Attack) and some, such as Tricky, have equalled or even surpassed its success and visibility in the years since *Dummy*. But Portishead opened up the door and walked right through; it helped liberate '90s music from the hegemony of the rock guitar, and opened up the charts to new sonic potential. Trip-hop, schmip-hop: Portishead is the sound of what comes after the sampler and turntable become full-fledged musical instruments, the new world where people's record collections become the music that becomes part of someone else's record collection.

Barrow is struck by that idea. After politely revealing a tip on the origins of a particularly murky and atmospheric sample behind a Portishead remix ("I did that for 500 quid, something off a Gong record, I believe"), he warms to the idea of Portishead as more than just a band, but as a powerful sonic force. "Yeah, I'm really starting to see where this should go, what this record should have been," he says. "Not in a bad way, mind you, but it's like I'm still in there mucking about, you know? But after this record, I know where I'm going. I know where it needs to go." **CMJ**

BLISS ALLEY: ALCHEMY AT STREET LEVEL

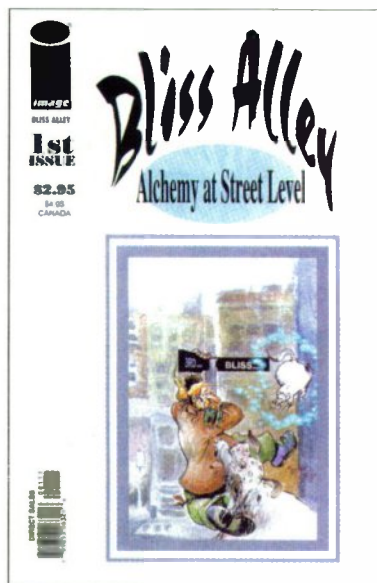
by Bill Messner-Loebs **Image**

Bill Messner-Loebs's *Journey*, a meticulously researched historical series about a trapper in early 19th-century Michigan, was one of the best independent comics of the '80s, but it staggered into nonexistence as the decade did.

Messner-Loebs has spent most of the '90s writing other comics (*Wonder Woman*, *The Maxx*) and not drawing much at all, but *Bliss Alley*—set in the present day, among homeless residents of a city founded by *Journey*'s Wolverine MacAlistaire—marks his return to the drawing board. He's got a sketchy, messy style that takes some getting used to, though it gibes nicely with his story of urban squalor, and the setup of the story looks like it'll allow him to explore his favorite themes of how mass historical movements affect individual people's lives. The first issue includes an incident with Loebs's hallucinating street wizard being chased by a stray dog that recalls *Journey*'s most famous scene, an extended pursuit by a black bear. Loebs has also put together a web site at ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/billmloebs/.

—Douglas Wolk

comics

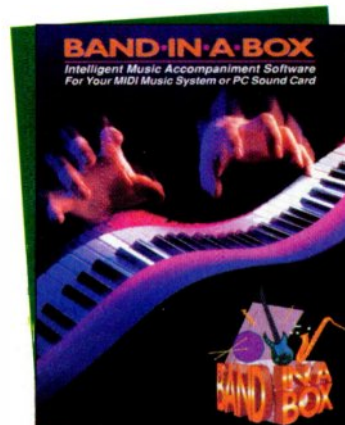


LIP-BALM ANONYMOUS

members.aol.com/LipBalmA/

Though the web has opened up a new medium for those who attempt to solve the world's problems with information (the Free Tibet movement, the Weather Channel homepage, etc.), few have made such a stab as the pioneers of the Lip Balm Anonymous page. While lip balm addiction is a problem seldom admitted to, the LBA page shows that not only are we sufferers not alone, we are being programmed, propagandized, and manipulated into our dependent states! The LBA page details the marketing and potentially addictive factors of 13 major brands of lip balm, and offers a way out by attempting to enlighten addicts as to exactly how much they are being played. While garnering lots of flak from the hard-core 12-step community, who think they are being satirized, and the manufacturers of Blistex, who are really, *really* pissed, LBA shows no signs of weakening along the slippery, kissable slopes of this hard fight. —Liz Clayton

webstuff



BAND-IN-A-BOX

7.0 PG Music

If you're playing with a drummer or a bass player who can't tell the difference between a 2x4 and 4/4 time, then you'll be happy to see the latest version of **Band-In-A-Box**. This is a nifty tool that enables average (and below-average) bedroom singer-songwriters to flesh out their songs with sturdy rhythm and backing tracks. Type in the chords to your song, and the program adds the appropriate bass, melody, drums and even a unique solo, if you like. You can fiddle with tempo, reverb and instruments for hours, but once you like what you hear, you can print the whole thing out as sheet music and hand it to actual musicians! To get the ball rolling, the CD-ROM includes hundreds of varieties of rhythms (from "Pop Ballad" to "Rhumba") and styles ("MilesD" is a waltz with brushes). Although there's still a digital cheesiness to the sound at times, the program has come a long way in mimicking a human feel. You'll need a high-end MIDI sound card (Roland, etc.) or a MIDI sound module to get the full effect, but even with your vanilla Sound Blaster card, you can have fun creating a tribute to Kraftwerk right on your PC. —Steve Ciabattoni

cd-rom

ROCKONTV www.RockOnTV.com

It would be easy to get the impression that MTV has a stranglehold on the field of, er, music television, but a few minutes browsing RockOnTV will prove otherwise. The site features a weekly list of every music-related event on TV, from the mundane (who's going to be on David Letterman's stage or Jay Leno's couch) to the must-see (like a TVLand re-run of *The Flip Wilson Show* where Wilson and his guest Louis Armstrong do a duet of "Hello Dolly," or the Jordanares' appearance on TNN's *Prime Time Country*). And it doesn't just cover musical performances: True remote-control jockeys will be most thrilled to read about stuff like Debbie Harry's appearance in the 1983 thriller *Videodrome*, or the fact that next season's theme song for *The Drew Carey Show* will be the Presidents Of The United States Of America's rendition of "Cleveland Rocks." —Jenny Eliscu

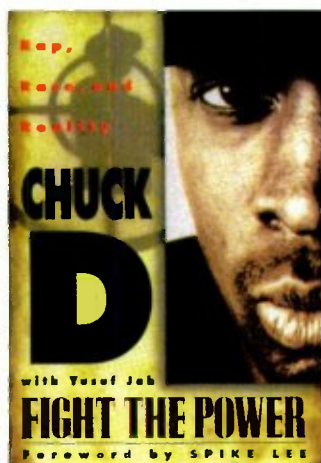
webstuff



FIGHT THE POWER

by Chuck D
Delacorte Press

Chuck D is plenty pissed. Pissed at Hollywood for stereotyping blacks, pissed at young rappers who don't respect Public Enemy and, most of all, pissed at the oppressive white power structure. *Fight The Power* is a mixture of memoir and diatribe that



books

dives into the rage behind PE's hits. The militant rapper offers several suggestions on how to improve the state of black America: The government should pay reparations for slavery, African-American magazines like *Jet* should not portray blacks in an unfavorable light, and black athletes should hire only black lawyers and accountants. The validity of these ideas is up for debate, but there's no question the author is at his best when recalling Public Enemy's glory years. You get to listen in on Bono giving Chuck a pep talk. Anthrax gets major props for influencing Chuck's attitude towards live performance. Then there's the Professor Griff controversy. Remember when the "Minister Of Information" fired off anti-Semitic remarks to a reporter and nearly ripped Public Enemy apart? Chuck gives his side of the story. If you can bear sifting through his master plan, you'll end up with a better appreciation of the hip-hop industry and one of its most thought-provoking artists.

—Neil Gladstone

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KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR...

A short documentary on rapper Rakim, scheduled to air at the end of October, that will preview his forthcoming album **The 18th Letter**. The program features tributes and discussions by Busta Rhymes, Nas, Run-DMC, Nelson George, Sonia Sanchez and Yo Yo.

GREAT GOD PAN

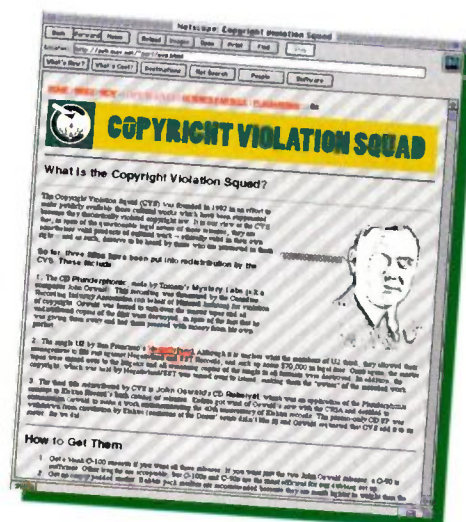
P.O. Box 491, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254-0491

If you're not a fan of California, don't go anywhere near *Great God Pan*, which concentrates almost solely on all things West Coast. Even East Coast subjects are viewed through the lenses of L.A.: A piece on the Misfits is a history of the band's visits to California. But it's not just a punk 'zine. Also within *GGP* are extensive discussions of the great L.A. writer John Fante (check out some of his stuff from Black Sparrow Press) and a discussion of artist Raymond Pettibon written by Slovenly/Red Krayola guitarist Tom Watson. Within the 'zine are a number of articles that wouldn't be out of place in a glossy mag, especially a discussion of prostitution and the gold rush, coupled with some standard small-press topics (like the secrets of slumber parties). The obligatory record-review section is snide and occasionally poetic, and hits the mark more often than most (on Spectrum: "Sounds like Sonic switched on a roomful of synths and strolled down to the local pub for a couple bangers"). —Randall Roberts



SSSSHHH...

You may have heard here or there about a few pieces of copyright-violating music—like Negativland's "U2" and John Oswald's "Plunderphonics"—that have appeared and disappeared in short order, the victims of their intrinsic legal problems. A samizdat organization called the Copyright Violation Squad has emerged to make these pieces of illegal art available to those who really want them. Check out soli.inav.net/~psrf/cvs.html, and don't say we sent you...

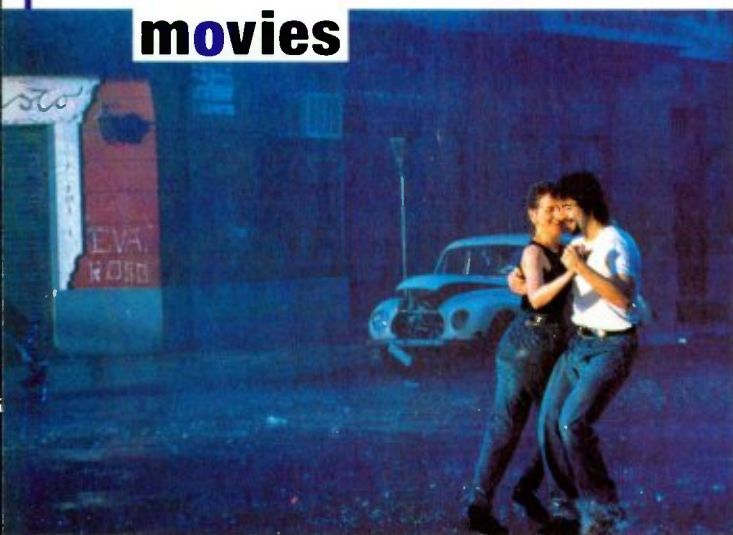


THE TANGO LESSON

Sony Pictures Classics

Straight out of the libidinal life of the

movies



woman who brought you the masterpiece of feminist avant-garde cinema *The Gold Diggers*, as well as the dull but Oscar-nominated *Orlando*, comes a new feature. Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson* is based on her real-life love of tango—and of her dance teacher. Potter plays herself, a film director who begins taking tango lessons. Her teacher, Pablo, instructs her zealously, partly out of his own ambition to be a film star. Sally learns to dance and Pablo learns to act, and they both learn to let go and stop leading all the time. Potter's decision to work with such personal material is laudable, particularly after the attention and expectation generated by *Orlando*. But this story hinges on the protagonists' bad traits, and Potter can't quite bring herself to articulate them. While "Sally" supposedly has a controlling, director's personality, she never behaves badly, and if she's a bit of a Latin-boy fetishist, nobody seems to get hurt by that. And if Pablo is supposed to be a celebrity-seeking narcissist, he comes off as a nice guy. Still, the numerous dancing scenes are great, and they really do reflect an honest version of one woman's desire. The intro-

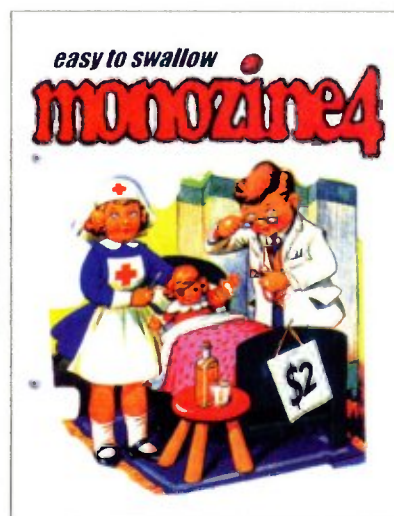
ductory lessons are sweet, and the later dances are spectacular erotic fantasies. Particularly when Sally sits back and directs Pablo dancing with two other men, and later when she joins their threesome, the film is dreamy and magical. —Liza Johnson

MONOZINE

\$2 from P.O. Box 598, Reisterstown, MD 21136

Among the scariest reading experiences I've had lately, Todd Lesser's *Monozine* is devoted to its contributors' reminiscences about awful things that have happened to their bodies: serious illnesses, vomiting, diarrhea and reconstructive surgery, among others. The fourth issue includes Blanks 77's manager recalling how their tour bus gave the band and all its associates scabies, the horrifying "Chronic Prostatitis: Journey Into Fear," and tales of allergy to spermicide, cellulitis, and Nepalese toilets. It takes a strong stomach to enjoy fully, but there's something weirdly hilarious about it. (DW)

'zines



labels of artists who appear in this issue

550 Music
550 Madison Ave., 21st Fl.
New York, NY 10022
www.epiccenter.com/EpicCenter/550

A&M
825 Eighth Ave.
New York, NY 10019
www.amrecords.com

Ark 21
14724 Ventura Blvd.
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
www.ark21.com

Astralwerks
104 W. 29th St., 4th Fl.
New York, NY 10001
www.caroline.com/Astralwerks

Atlantic
1290 Ave. Of The Americas
New York, NY 10104
www.atlantic-records.com

Beggars Banquet
580 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
www.beggars.com

Capitol
1750 N. Vine St.
Hollywood, CA 90028
www.hollywoodandvine.com

Chute
P.O. Box 211
Dundee DD1 9PH, U.K.

Cleopatra
8726 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Ste. D82
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Columbia
550 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022
www.columbiarec.com

Crypt
1250 Long Beach Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90021

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

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

Elefant
P.O. Box 331
Las Rozas 28230, Madrid, Spain

Elektra
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019
www.elektra.com

Emperor Norton
200 E. 24th St.
New York, NY 10010

E-Squared
1815 Division St., Ste. 101
Nashville, TN 37203

Flying Nun
P.O. Box 3470
Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3470
www.flyingnun.com/nz

Foodchain
100 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1830
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Gee Street
14 E. Fourth St.
New York, NY 10003

Geffen
9130 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90069
www.geffen.com

Helicat
2789 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Hightone
220 Fourth St., Ste. 101
Oakland, CA 94607

Island
825 Eighth Ave., 24th Fl.
New York, NY 10019
www.polygram.com/polygram/island

Jade Tree
2310 Kennwynn Rd.
Wilmington, DE 19810
www.jadetree.com

Jeepster
Unit 60, Canalot Prod. Studios
222 Kensal Rd.
London W10 5BN, U.K.

Kill Rock Stars
120 N.E. State, #418
Olympia, WA 98507

Legacy
550 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022

London
825 Eighth Ave.
New York, NY 10019

Mammoth
101 B Street
Carlsboro, NC 27510
www.mammoth.com

Matador
625 Broadway, 12th Fl.
New York, NY 10012
www.matador.recs.com

MCA
70 Universal City Plaza
Universal City, CA 91608
www.mca.com

Mercury
825 Eighth Ave.
New York, NY 10019
www.mercuryrecords.com/mercury

Merge
P.O. Box 1235
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
www.mrg2000.com

Metal Blade
2345 Erringer Rd., Ste. 108
Simi Valley, CA 93065
www.luma.com/Metal_Blade

Mute
140 W. 22nd St., Ste. 10A
New York, NY 10011
www.muteiltech.com/mute/

Ninja Tune
P.O. Box 373, Westmount, Stn.
Montreal, QUE H3Z 2T5
Canada
www.ninjatune.com

Nuclear Blast
P.O. Box 251
Millersville, PA 17551
www.nuclearblast-usa.com

Priority
6430 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 900
Hollywood, CA 90028

Rawkus
676 Broadway, 4th Fl.
New York, NY 10012

Relapse
P.O. Box 251
Millersville, PA 17551
www.relapse.com

Reprise
3300 Warner Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
www.repriseec.com

Revenant
P.O. Box 198732
Nashville, TN 37219-8732

Revolution
8900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 200
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
www.revolution-online.com

Rhino
10635 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
www.rhino.com

Risk
7080 Hollywood Blvd., Ste. 302
Hollywood, CA 90028

Rounder
1 Camp St.
Cambridge, MA 02140
www.rounder.com

Rykodisc
Shetland Park
27 Congress St.
Salem, MA 01970
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Simple Machines
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TEL AVIV
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Buster's Spanish Rocketship
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Kingdom Of Kong
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DREAM CITY FILM CLUB
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Pink Elephants
Live
Death To The Pixies
When The Funk Hits The Fan
All Over The Land
The Telling Takes Me Home
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Setanta
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London
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Warner Bros.
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Mute
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Flydaddy
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HI-TOWN DJS
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VARIOUS ARTISTS
WANNADIES

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Forgive Thee
We Came To Groove
Reload
New Forms
Word Gets Around
Suncatcher
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D.L.T.B.G.Y.D.
Beats & Rhymes: Hip Hop Of The '90s, Parts 1, 2, & 3
Women Like Us: Lesbian Favorites
The Wannadies

Rhino
In The Red
Restless
Elektra-EEG
Restless
Mercury
V2
Restless
Elektra-EEG
Moon Ska
Rhino
Rhino
RCA

november 4

ATTICA BLUES
DEAD MOON
HALF JAPANESE
HARMONY ROCKETS
ISOTOPE217
JONATHA BROOKE
MANGU
QUICKSPACE
SHELLAC
SOUNDGARDEN
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Absolutes
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Minnie Gruetzelfeldt

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Empty
Trance Syndicate
Big Cat
Thrill Jockey
MCA
Island
London
Touch And Go
A&M
Tooth & Nail
London
Trance Syndicate

november 11

DEAD MILKMEN
DUSTER
MIDNIGHT OIL
NOFX
WILL SMITH

Best Of...
Stratosphere
40,000 Watts RSL
So Long, And Thanks For All The Shoes

Restless
Up
Columbia
Epitaph
Columbia

TOP 75 ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY

artist	title	label
1 TEENAGE FANCLUB	Songs From Northern Britain	Creation/Columbia-CRG
2 RADIOHEAD	OK Computer	Capitol
3 LUNA	Pup Tent	Elektra-EEG
4 NEGATIVLAND	Ipsdesip	Seeland
5 GERALDINE FIBBERS	Butch	Virgin
6 PINK NOISE TEST	Plasticized	Boy's Life-Interscope
7 SISTER MACHINE GUN	Metropolis	Wax Trax!-TVT
8 CATHERINE WHEEL	Adam And Eve	Mercury
9 TOENUT	Two In The Piñata	Mute
10 HIGH LLAMAS	Hawaii	V2
11 SOUNDTRACK	Spawn	Immortal-Epic
12 DELTA 72	The Soul Of A New Machine	Touch And Go
13 SPIRITUALIZED	Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space	Dedicated-Arista
14 MORRISSEY	Maladjusted	Mercury
15 PRODIGY	The Fat Of The Land	XL/Mute/Maverick-WB
16 MADDER ROSE	Tragic Magic	Atlantic
17 MR. T EXPERIENCE	Revenge Is Sweet, And So Are You	Lookout!
18 TANYA DONELLY	"Pretty Deep" (5")	Reprise
19 SARAH MCLACHLAN	Surfacing	Nettwerk-Arista
20 VARIOUS ARTISTS	What's Up Matador	Matador
21 BROADCAST	Work Non Work	Drag City
22 WHISKEYTOWN	Strangers Almanac	MoodFood-Outpost
23 LOVE SPIT LOVE	Trysome Eatone	Maverick-WB
24 JAMES TAYLOR QUARTET	Creation	Acid Jazz-Hollywood
25 DAMBUILDERS	Against The Stars	EastWest-EEG
26 LEE SCRATCH PERRY	Arkology	Island Jamaica
27 KEOKI	Ego-Trip	Moonshine
28 WEEN	The Mollusk	Elektra-EEG
29 EC8OR	All Of Us Can Be Rich...	DHR-Grand Royal
30 CHERRY POPPIN' DADDIES	Zoot Suit Riot	Space Age Bachelor Pad-Mojo
31 µ-ZIQ	Lunatic Harness	Astralwerks Caroline
32 DANDY WARHOLS	...The Dandy Warhols Come Down	Tim/Kerr-Capitol
33 BEN HARPER	The Will To Live	Virgin
34 DAR WILLIAMS	End Of Summer	Razor & Tie
35 STRICTLY BALLROOM	Hide Here Forever	Waxploitation
36 PRIMAL SCREAM	Vanishing Point	Reprise

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stations,
reporting their
top 30
most played
releases
that week.

37 SONORA PINE
38 LUKE VIBERT
39 FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ
40 RESERVOIR
41 PRIMUS
42 MANSUN
43 WANNADIES
44 SPECTRUM
45 LITTLE RED ROCKET
46 OLD 97'S
47 KINCAID
48 SUPERCHUNK
49 AMERICAN ANALOG SET
50 GUIDED BY VOICES
51 311
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53 CRYSTAL METHOD
54 ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
55 DAVID BYRNE
56 VIOLENT GREEN
57 JOAN OF ARC
58 ME FIRST & THE GIMME GIMMES
59 BLUE MEANIES
60 BUFFALO DAUGHTER
61 MONACO
62 RULE 62
63 GENEVA
64 SMOKING POPES
65 VARIOUS ARTISTS
66 CALEXICO
67 BARRY BLACK
68 KARA'S FLOWERS
69 DK3
70 KEMURI
71 KING LOSER
72 SUGAR RAY
73 BLUE MOUNTAIN
74 LIMP BIZKIT
75 PERMA FROST

II
Big Soup
Retrograde
Pink Machine
Brown Album
Attack Of The Grey Lantern
The Wannadies
Forever Alien
Who Did You Pay
Too Far To Care
Good Citizen Of The Month
Indoor Living
From Our Living Room To Yours
Mag Earwhig!
Transistor
Jelly Tones
Vegas
Evergreen
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From Cycles Of Heat
A Portable Model Of
Have A Ball
Full Throttle
Socks, Drugs, And Rock And Roll
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Rule 62
Further
Destination Failure
Random: A Tribute To Gary Numan
Spoke
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RCA
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Merge
Emperor Jones-Trance Syndicate
Matador
Capricorn-Mercury
Medicine
Outpost
London
Luaka Bop-WB
Up
Jade Tree
Fat Wreck Chords
Thick
Grand Royal
Polydor-A&M
Maverick-WB
Nude-WORK
Capitol
Beggars Banquet
Quarterstick
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THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

blue is the colour

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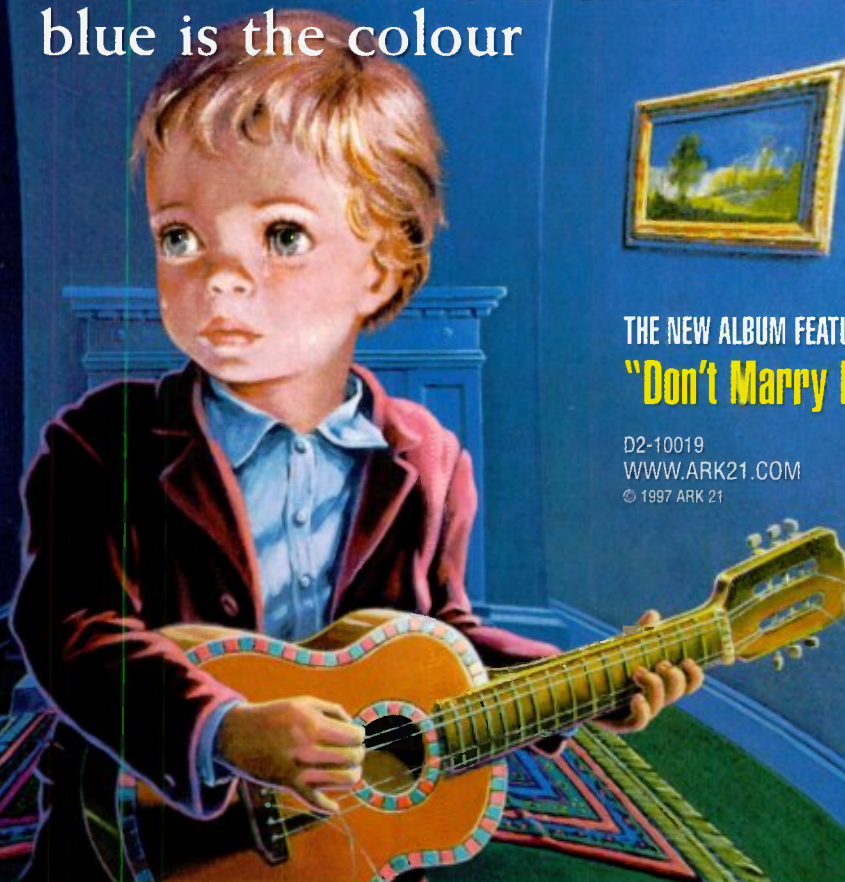
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Each deceptively lightweight tune is a Trojan Horse carrying wit, bittersweet odes to life's complexities.

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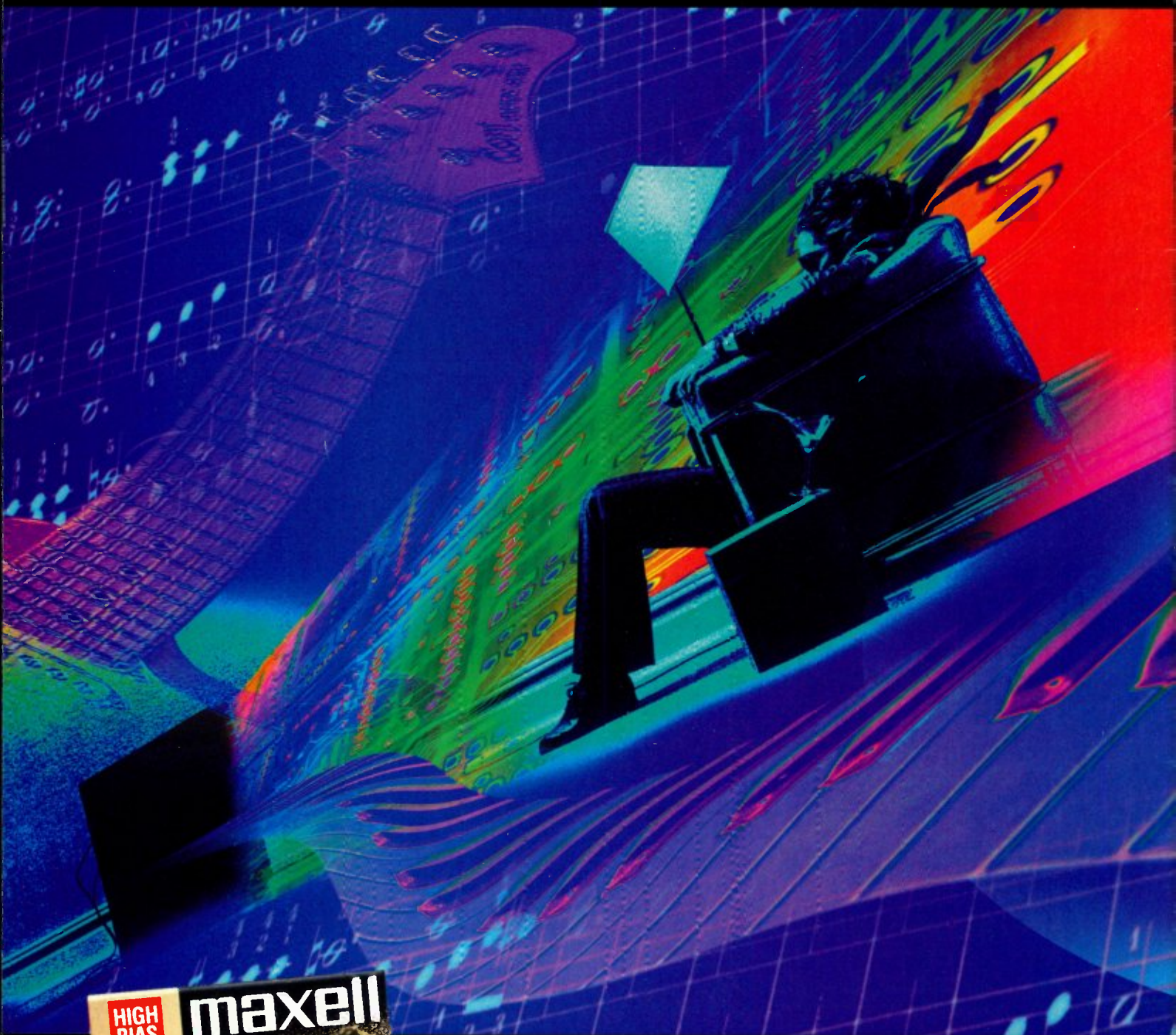
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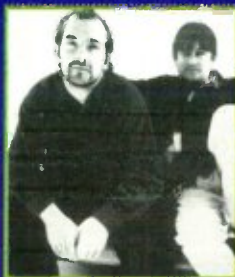
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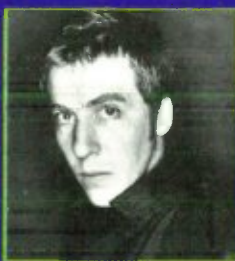
World Radio History



Pat Dinizio



The Beautiful South



Death In Vegas

16 "The Smithereens have a specific way of working, a specific formula that works in the context of the Smithereens," says **PAT DINIZIO** about his old band. "So in a sense it was refreshing to break out of that mold. Perhaps I'll go back to the next Smithereens album feeling refreshed." Until that time, DINIZIO will be touring in support of his solo debut, *Sounds And Songs* (Vevel), from which "124 MPH" is taken. (See review, pg. 42.)

17 There's a copy of the **BEAUTIFUL SOUTH's** greatest-hits package, *Carry On Up The Charts*, in one out of seven households in the U.K. The band's follow-up, *Blue Is The Colour* (Ark 21), gives its three vocalists—Dave Hemingway, Jacqueline Abbott, and Paul Heaton—unusually downbeat lyrics, though they've still got the band's satirical sting. "Don't Marry Her" is the album's first single, and (in a censored form) the band's 17th consecutive British hit. (See review, pg. 42.)

18 "I'm tired of seeing women get bands together and their second album is a solo record," says singer/songwriter **KACY CROWLEY**. "The reason I always kept the bands together was that I didn't have the strength to tell everybody, 'Let's not pretend. It's not about you guys and it's never going to be.'... There was always so much resentment because I was the center of attention. So now I'm done pretending that I'm something that I'm not." "Hand To Mouthville" is taken from Crowley's debut album, *Anchorless* (Atlantic).

19 Even before its first nationally distributed single saw the light of day, **JACK OFF JILL** had already put out an independent release produced by Marilyn Manson. Later, the quartet opened for Manson and his band in its native Florida (both groups are said to have had a run-in with the Dade County Corrections Department), where it made a name for itself as a wildly dynamic live act. "American Made" appears on the band's debut album, *Sexless Demons And Scars* (Risk).

20 "It may seem like sort of a vague title," says **JUNO REACTOR's** frontman Ben Watkins of the group's new *Bible Of Dreams* (Wax Trax!-TVT), "but to be truthful, the entire record is sort of centered around different types of dreams." The band itself is named after a 70-foot-long concrete structure made by Watkins' girlfriend. The single "God Is God" appears here in its "God Zilla Mix" and features vocals by Natarsha Atlas. (See review, pg. 45.)

21 "Right now, there are only three perfect records that I know of: Slayer's *Reign In Blood*, Prince's *Purple Rain* and Bruce Springsteen's *Born In The U.S.A.*," **THE PROMISE RING** vocalist/guitarist Davey Von Bohien said in an interview. "Those records are completely perfect in tone, you know? Each one can describe one color, just like everything on *Purple Rain* is purple. *Reign In Blood*, that record is fucking red." And songs like the title track of *Nothing Feels Good* (Jade Tree) could well have you feeling a little blue. (See review, p. 51)

CMJ NEW MUSIC

VOLUME 51 | NOVEMBER 97

1 **PORTISHEAD** is named for the sleepy town built on the site of a 17th-century village 15 miles outside of Bristol where Geoff Barrow moved with his mother after her divorce. It's not the sort of place one would imagine when listening to the band's trippy, tense, *film noir*-influenced sound. But that's part of the idea. "We wanted to be the first band that's not based on image. Just based on music," Barrow says. Currently speaking for them is "All Mine," from *Portishead* (London), the long-awaited follow-up to the group's hit debut, *Dummy*. (See cover story, pg. 32.)

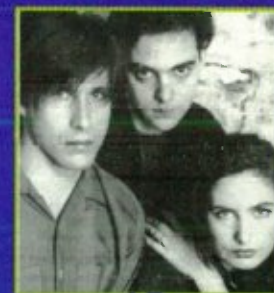
2 "A lot of people make the mistake of thinking my songs are all autobiographical," says **EVERCLEAR's** Art Alexakis. "There's a song on *Sparkle And Fade* called 'Queen Of The Air,' and I've been getting all these letters about how sad they are that my mom died. My mom's like 'Huh? I'm in central California, but I'm not dead.'" So when you're listening to "So Much For The Afterglow," the title track from the band's third album (Capitol), don't take it too literally. (See review, pg. 42.)

3 When the **PIETASTERS** began playing together in 1990, their aspirations weren't very high. "We realized how much fun ska was to play," says vocalist Steve Jackson. "We didn't really see much future in it other than getting beer." Little did the Washington, D.C., band (which has grown into a septet) know that it would spend the next several years touring with bands like the Toasters, Scofflaws and Mighty Mighty Bosstones. "Out All Night" is from its debut album, *Willis* (Helical-Epithaph). (See Best New Music, pg. 16.)

4 **IVY's** Dominique Durand didn't plan on joining a band when she moved from Paris to New York to learn English. "I thought I would stay one year," she says. But then she met Andy Chase, who upon discovering their mutual musical sensibilities convinced her to record a song. The pair eventually enlisted the help of Adam Schlosinger—now known for his exploits in his other band, Fountains Of Wayne—to help finish the track, and Ivy was born. "The Best Thing" comes from the band's second full length, *Apartment Life* (Atlantic). (See Best New Music, pg. 17.)



Portishead



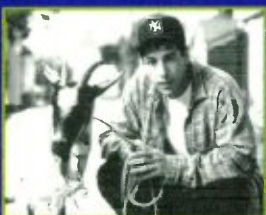
Ivy

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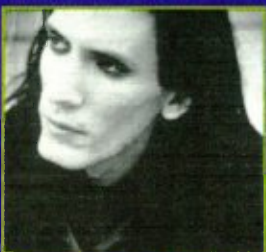
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Adam Sandler



Greg Garing



Love Spit Love

5 Dead Elvis (Time Bomb-Concrete) isn't just the title of **DEATH IN VEGAS**'s debut full-length: It's also the U.K. duo's old moniker. But you won't find covers of "Heartbreak Hotel" or "Don't Be Cruel" on DJ Richard Fearless and producer Steve Hellier's set list. Look instead for songs like "Dirt," which is filled with a pulsing beat, deep grooves, and an unsettling sample from the soundtrack to *Woodstock*. (See Best New Music, pg. 16.)

6 "I was just planning to go over and sing 'Happy Birthday' and split, but I ended up playing Venezuelan folk songs all night," says **SWEET 75**'s Yva Las Vegas, commenting on how she met her bandmate, Krist Novoselic. "Believe me, I had no intention of starting a band when I walked into [his] birthday party—it was just another gig, you know!" A few years later, the former street musician and the former Nirvana bass-player are releasing their self-titled debut album (DGC), from which "Lay Me Down" is taken. (See feature, pg. 28.)

7 Even though **ROYAL FINGERBOWL** has been playing no-cover gigs at a New Orleans lounge every Monday night for nearly two years, the trio has no interest in the Cocktail Nation. "We like to be in a lounge," says frontman Alex McMurray. "But the people today that listen to lounge music, I'd want to go in their bathroom and piss on their towels. Their shoes are too shiny, their hair is too shiny, their martinis are too shiny." "Nothing But Time" appears on the band's debut album, *Happy Birthday, Sabo!* (TVT). (See On The Verge, pg. 18.)

8 Most songwriters wouldn't even think of rhyming "Chanukah" with "marijuanika," but then again, most songwriters aren't, thank heavens, **ADAM SANDLER**. Since his tenure as a *Saturday Night Live* cast member, Sandler has starred in a handful of movies and released two albums, both of which went platinum and received Grammy nominations. "The Lonesome Kicker"—taken from *What's Your Name?* (Warner Bros.), which focuses on his songs rather than comedy routines—finds him macking like Bruce Springsteen in a sports bar.

9 Just because he's Tricky's uncle, don't expect to hear trip-hop from 23-year-old **FINLEY QUAYE**. The young musician's debut album, *Maverick A Strike* (550 Music) is full of smooth-groove reggae tunes like "Sunday Shining." "I encompass a lot of stuff," says the half-Ghananian, half-Scottish Quaye. "Brian Eno to reggae. I do check a bit of retro. I check for the old days. I don't just check for reggae. And neither does the rest of the band. Rasta they may be, but Rasta's broad. A Rasta at its height is coverage. Total coverage."

10 As a teenager, **GREG GARING** was so deeply affected by seeing Bill Monroe play that he moved from his home in Erie, Pennsylvania to Nashville. There, he bought a Winnebago and parked it at a campground 50 feet from the club where Monroe performed nightly. "Bill Monroe makes me feel beautiful and sad all in one moment," Garing explains. "His music pierces my heart from the first note." "My Love Is Real" can be heard on Garing's debut album, *Alone* (Revolution). (See Quick Fix, pg. 10.)

11 "I've been writing a little bit less seriously," says **HOLLY MCNARLAND**, explaining how her creative process has changed since the release of her debut EP, *Sour Pie*. "I think it's a growth thing: you just write and you venture into the next stage." McNarland's been singing since she was a very young child and began writing songs and playing guitar as a teenager. The young Canadian singer will be touring the States this fall, in support of *Stuff* (Universal). "Numb" is the album's first single. (See Quick Fix, pg. 12.)

12 "The Psychedelic Furs are long gone," says **LOVE SPIT LOVE**'s Richard Butler of his former band. "I've always thought of Love Spit Love as a long term thing: it was never a side project." "Fall On Tears" comes from *Tyrosine Eatone*, the band's second album by the newly minted New Yorker's current group, and first for new label Maverick. (See review, pg. 46.)

13 Even though Stephen Jones has put out five albums as **BABY BIRD** since 1988, *Ugly Beautiful* (Atlantic) is the first release from Baby Bird—the band. Two years ago, Jones recruited four other musicians and, together, the band re-recorded some of the most popular songs (including "You're Gorgeous") from Jones's other albums. Check out the official Baby Bird site, at www.breakfast.demon.co.uk/feathers_who.html. (See feature, pg. 24.)

14 A band in Aberdeen, Scotland got together in 1992 under the name Sunfish. By the end of '95, the quintet had abandoned that name and not yet picked a new one, though it had already attracted the attention of Suede's label Nude. At the show that proved to be one of their breakthroughs, the group didn't have a name at all—it was referred to in the British press as "the Scottish band." Fortunately, it settled on **GENEVA**, and just released its debut album, *Further* (WORK), on which "Into The Blue" appears. (See Quick Fix, pg. 13.)

15 "Success came quickly in the context of New Zealand, but that's a very small context," says **GARAGELAND** singer/guitarist Jeremy Eade. "We've always been about moving forward, never looking back." Perhaps that explains why a band that recently relocated from Auckland to England is already talking about how the U.S. is "the best place a band could possibly be." "Fingerpops" is from *Last Exit To Garageland* (Foodchain). (See On The Verge, pg. 18.)



Geneva



Holly McNarland



Garageland

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<input type="checkbox"/> 3. PIETASTERS	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. IVY	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. DEATH IN VEGAS	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. SWEET 75	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. ROYAL FINGERBOWL	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. ADAM SANDLER	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. FINLEY QUAYE	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. GREG GARING	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. HOLLY MCNARLAND	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. LOVE SPT LOVE	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. BABY BIRD	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 14. GENEVA	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. GARAGELAND	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. PAT DINIZIO	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 17. BEAUTIFUL SOUTH	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 18. KACY CROWLEY	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 19. JACK OFF JILL	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 20. JUNO REACTOR	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Burlington, Vermont

Vermont's Queen City, on the eastern banks of Lake Champlain, four hours north of Boston and about an hour south of Montreal, is home to approximately 60,000 residents and five major colleges. Every Vermont mountain has a ski area and every Vermont Volvo has a ski rack. While we haven't legalized the real number-one cash crop up here yet, we boast the only independent congressman, our Republican votes Democrat and our Democrat had a role in the last Batman movie. It ain't business as usual up here, folks: Burlington, Vermont, didn't spawn counter-culture icons Phish by accident. We're weird and we like it that way.



live music is better

There are way too many bands in the Burlington area, from the huge (Phish) to the not so huge (my bands Chin Ho! and (sic)), and they come in all shapes and sizes, singing all kinds of songs. While the modern-rock scene dominates the city, there are week-long jazz and blues festivals here, and the former movie house **Flynn Theatre** (153 Main Street, 836-5966) plays host to a wide variety

of musical and theatrical productions from all over the world. The **Memorial Auditorium** (250 Main Street, 864-6044) is a big square box with notoriously bad sound, but a lot of national acts pass through. The club scene is dominated by **Nectar's** (188 Main Street, 658-4771), featuring live music 365 nights a year.

Phish used to play here (and named an album *A Picture Of Nectar* in the owner's honor), and the french fries smothered in turkey gravy are almost as famous. Upstairs from Nectar's is a larger venue called **Club Metronome** (188 Main Street, 865-4563),

which has a great PA, a Russian soundman named Sergei and a non-stop stream of national acts mixed with local favorites.

Within spitting distance is the other big club in town, **Club Toast** (165 Church Street, 660-2088). Brothers Dennis and Justin Wygmans have been bringing great bands to Toast for almost five years, with an emphasis on new, edgy nationals and a lot of hippie rock. There's a club in the basement of Memorial Auditorium called **242 Main** (242 Main Street, 862-2244) that was originally a project of the Mayor's Youth Office. The venue has all-ages hardcore shows once or twice a week, and it's supported a cool scene for a long time. Band members tend to hang out at **The Other Place** (4 North Winooski Avenue, 863-5803)—locals call it "the O.P."—where the tacos are cheap and the Pabst Blue Ribbon just keeps on flowing. If you're searching for a more quality brew, just about any bar in town stocks plenty of local faves Magic Hat and Otter Creek.

recorded music is okay, too

Pure Pop Records (115 South Winooski Avenue, 658-2652) is the underground music store in town, and they've been in the same basement since 1980. It's got the best local music section, by far, and Mia and Joshe will take good care of you. Also worth checking, especially for vinyl, is **Yesterday And Today Records** (200 Main Street, 862-5363) and **Flex Records** (161 Main Street, 862-9055). Even though it's a bit of a drive, the best vinyl collection in the whole state is without a doubt in Johnson at **Tones Music** (Main Street, 635-2223), a big old house that's just filled with great old records. It's worth a drive to Vermont just to check out his jazz and funk collections.



upstairs is club metronome

and if it's made in vermont, it's even better

There are a bunch of local record labels that pretty much concentrate on Vermont-made music, including my own **Good Citizen** (P.O. Box 5373, Burlington, VT 05402) label. We've put out three compilation discs featuring over seventy Burlington bands. Jeff Howlett, who sings with local alt-metallurgists **Five Seconds Expired**, has started his own **Pressure Point Records** (P.O. Box 907, Colchester, VT 05446), and Colin Clary has put out quite a few releases on **Sudden Shame Records** (2 Cypress Lane, Essex Jct., VT 05452). Jim Lockridge has recently put together **Big Heavy World** (P.O. Box 248, Burlington, VT 05402) as a record label, starting with compilations and now moving into band signings.

do they play it on the radio?

Local radio sucks, mostly, with very few exceptions. College stalwart **WRUV** (90.1 FM) is the only place to get really "alternative" music, although sometimes the music gets overshadowed by the attitude and they talk about supporting local music more than they actually do. The local show is kind of stuck in the '80s, but it's on at 6 p.m. Thursday. **WBTZ** (99.9 FM) calls itself "alternative," but it's basically Top 40, and it's segregated local music to a "special" slot once a day at 10 p.m. The St. Michael's College station **WWPV** (88.7 FM) is the most unpretentious in town, and it's starting a local music show this fall, so it should be worth checking out.

and if you need help playing it

Most local bands in these parts have some sort of a debt to the fine folks down at **Advance Music** (75 Maple Street, 863-8652). Featuring the best selection of band equipment in the state hands-down, Advance is owned by a musician named Mike, and his staff will bend over backwards for you. There are a whole bunch of recording studios in the area, but the best is **Eclipse Recording** (RR1 Hinesburg, 482-4371). Eclipse does a

lot of work with the alt-rock scene, and just added a two-inch 24-track. **Low Tech Studio** (1 Main Street, 862-0149) is the cheapest place in town, and Gus the owner just got a cool 16-track tape machine. Unfortunately, you can't record until after 5 p.m. because he's in an office building.

good food and where to find it

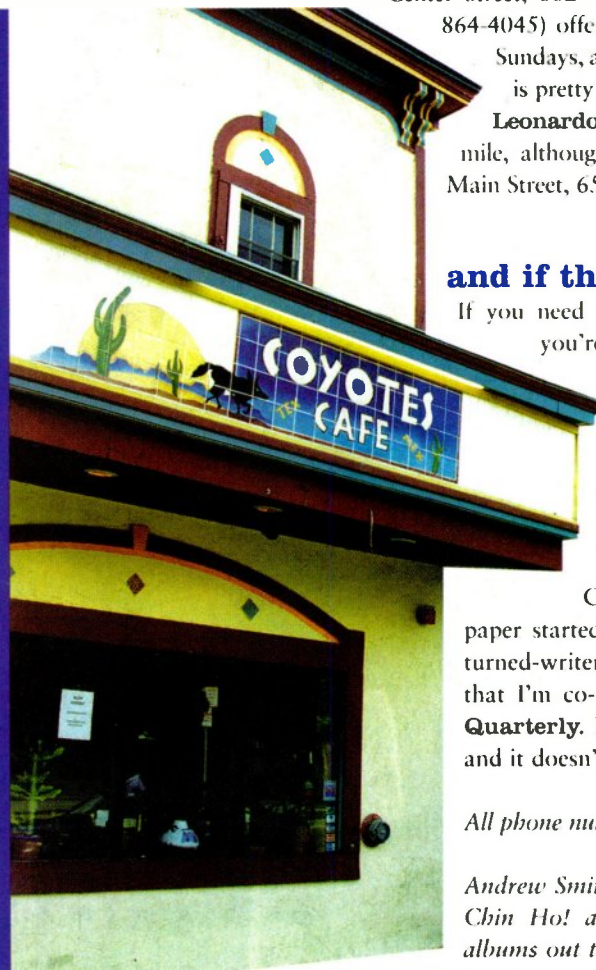
There are more restaurants than people in Burlington, and if you're looking for cool food on a budget, there are plenty of places to try. **Ahli Baba's** (163 Main Street, 862-5752) has great falafel; **Al's French Fries** (1251 Williston Road, 862-9203) has great, well, french fries. **Henry's Diner** (155 Band Street, 862-9010) wins the diner wars because the waitresses call you "honey," but the **Oasis** (189 Bank Street, 864-5308) runs a close second. I tend to eat at **Coyote's** (161 Church Street, 865-3632) for the Tex-Mex flavors, and **Kountry Kart Deli** (155 Main Street, 864-4408) gets all the late-night business because it's open until 3 a.m. If you can afford a higher meal ticket, **Daily Planet** is a good bet (15 Center Street, 862-9647), **Five Spice** (175 Church Street, 864-4045) offers great Thai and Dim Sum Brunch on Sundays, and **Sakura** (2 Church Street, 863-1988) is pretty much the only sushi in town. For pizza, **Leonardo's** (83 Pearl Street, 862-7700) wins by a mile, although the pies at **Manhattan Pizza** (167 Main Street, 658-6776) keep getting better all the time.

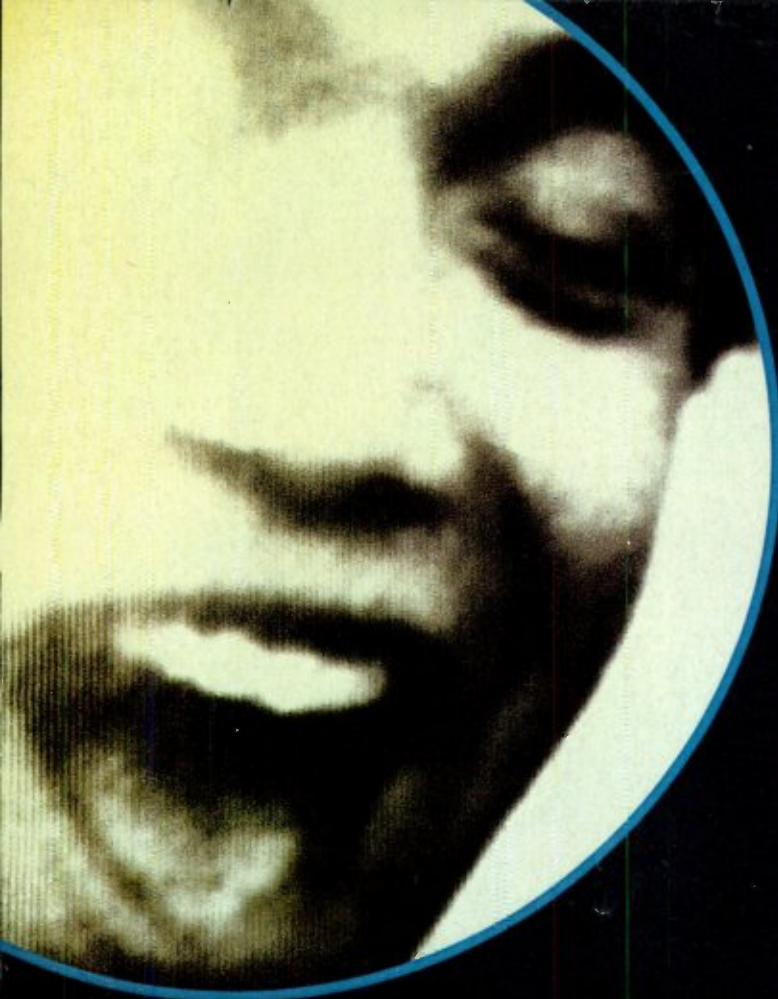
and if that ain't enough

If you need to know more about what do when you're in our fair city, the **Big Heavy World** web site (www.bigheavyworld.com) has it all: club listings, free web pages for any Vermont band, and even the weather report. And if you're print-bound, there are four newspapers in town, but by far the best for arts coverage is **Seven Days** (255 South Champlain, 864-5684), a fat weekly paper started a few years ago by two area artists-turned-writers. For music coverage, I should add that I'm co-editor of **4/4**, **The Vermont Music Quarterly**. It's available free throughout the state, and it doesn't suck.

All phone numbers are in the area code 802.

Andrew Smith is vocalist and lyricist for the bands Chin Ho! and (sic), and both bands have new albums out this fall. He's also the founder of Good Citizen Magazine, co-editor and co-publisher of 4/4, The Vermont Music Quarterly, and he runs the little label that could, Good Citizen Records.





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