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ROCKPILE



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FLAMING LIPS

speak in tongues

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has a posse

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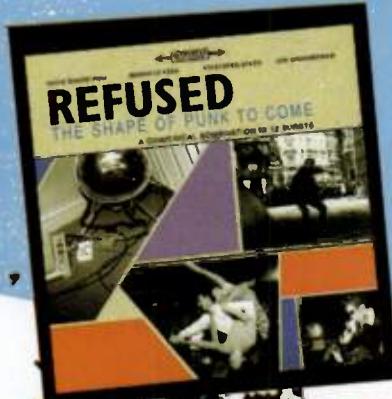
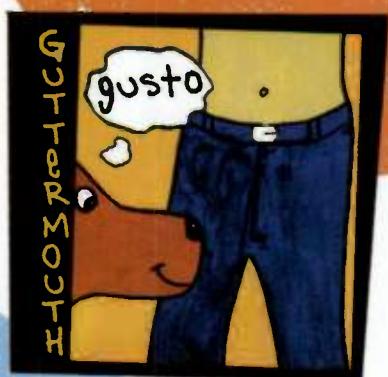
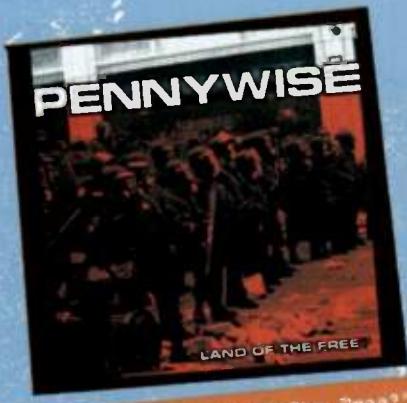
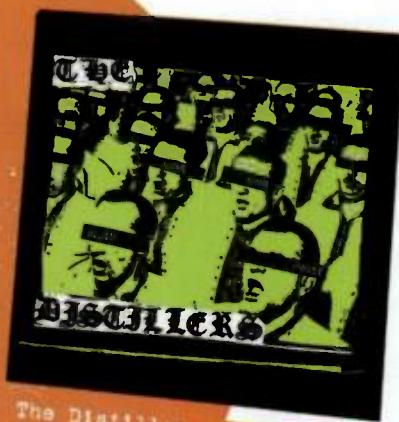
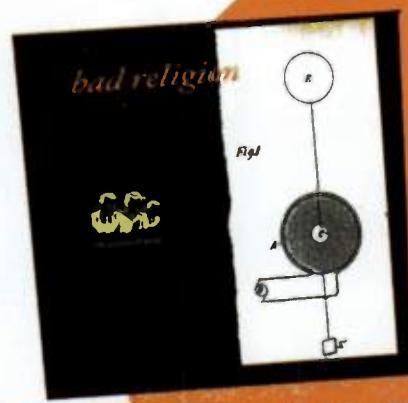


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WRH



Sonic Youth Story A Kool Thing

I'm sure you know it can be difficult to keep things interesting, writing about so many bands each month. I know as a reader, sometimes it can be a little overwhelming, so it's nice whenever people try a new approach. I really enjoyed the way you presented your recent story on Sonic Youth. I'm a bit of a Sonic Youth fanatic and tend to pour over any press on the band. I'm often disappointed about how so many of the articles are written the same way and say the same things. It was a real pleasure to see someone take a totally unique approach the way Allan Kemler did in your Beth Orton issue (August 2002, #83). I don't know if the band liked it or not, but I know I, for one, did.

Maria Wells
Westfield, NJ

In Praise of Westerberg

Much respect for the cover story on Paul Westerberg! I was surprised more music magazines didn't follow your example, as PW's latest is a pretty deserving release. Mono /Stereo marks a return to the urgency of Replacement classics like *Pleased to Meet Me* and Westerberg's first solo outing. What's more, from Lauren Viera's article it seems Westerberg has still got the down-to-earth attitude and sense of humor that made him so endearing in the first place. I thoroughly enjoyed your story and wanted to say so. Thanks.

Mitchell Warren
Warwick, RI

Sevenfold Avenged!

This might seem like no big deal, but I wanted to send my thanks for including the story on Avenged Sevenfold last month. Aside from playing the Warped Tour this summer, this band is one of the most original and fun bands to come along in a while. As you can tell, they're also one of my favorites. I think it's cool you all support new bands and I hope you continue. I'm sure a lot of people would be psyched to read more about them.

Jeff DeFino
Venice Beach, CA

For The Kids

I read in your hardcore news column [Straight From the Edge] a few months back that Snapcase had a new album coming out. Is there any new information about that? Does *Rockpile* have a story coming up on the band?

Ryan Gray
Elgin, IL

Hey Ryan,

Snapcase finished recording a new album this June with producer Brian McTernan (Salad Days Studios). The new record will be released on Victory Records in late August or early fall. It's tentatively titled *Pariahs*, and yes, you can expect a feature on the group's return in *Rockpile*.

—Mike McKee
Music Editor

A Chill Shot To Some Hot Snakes

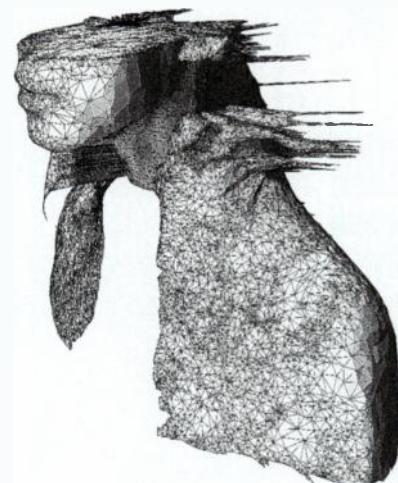
Hot Snakes get so much hype. The last album certainly landed a top spot on everyone's playlists, and with good reason. I, myself, was a dedicated fan. That's why I was so excited to read about them having a new album in your August issue. I figured, 'how could they do wrong?' With Rocket and Jehu credentials, the rock is nearly guaranteed, right? Well, I don't think *Suicide Invoice* could be more boring. Aside from a few really intense moments, the record is a let down. I'm not putting this on *Rockpile*, but I have to say, I don't think the band has raised the bar.

Jeremy McGlynn
Woodbridge, VA



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The band that forgot *Time* returns with a commanding new album proving there's no shortage of "rock 'n roll fun" for those who survive the hype.

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Photos by Robin Taananen

Flaming Lips

A little older, a little more mellow, we're just glad to have them in our ma-ah-ah-a-gazine.
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You might not know his name, but you're sure to know his work: Guerilla artist Sheppard Fairey wants you to OBEY.
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By Anna Goldfarb

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By Joe Sweeney

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HEAVY METAL HAND JIVE:

Black Sabbath's Ronnie James Dio Defends a Metal Tradition

Dio frontman/former Black Sabbath vocalist Ronnie James Dio, the man widely credited for pioneering the devilish goat horns hand sign, is fed up with the improper use of heavy metal gesticulation. In a recent interview with the legendary *Kerrang!*, Dio shared his disdain for poppy, mainstream folks who flash the sign out of context, divorced from the heart of metal. Citing various contemporary pop and R&B celebs who had abused the horns, Dio says the phenomenon needs to stop faster than a metal guitar solo.

"It was a more serious thing when I was with Sabbath," Dio told



the magazine. "It was a symbol of the darkness of that band, and not something to be passed on to Britney Spears!"

Dio says he is concerned his metallic hand jive will become diluted, eventually passing into the annals of trend history along with the hula hoop and the pet rock.

In response to the dangerous tide of metal apathy, Dio suggested horns flashers keep in mind it's important to develop a convincing metal face to go along with the hand gesture. For added effect, he recommends a bent-knee, battle-like stance. It's these little variations, Dio believes, that can ultimately make the difference between the sign language translation of "I Love You" and the sinister salute towards those about to rock.

"It puts you in the Sumo position," Dio emphasized. "Now you're ready to charge."

WILCO'S FUTURE EXTINCT WITH MAMMOTH, WOOLY OR OTHERWISE

Despite the success of its most recent album, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, alt-country pioneer group Wilco has found its next record shelved by the Mammoth Records label.

The as-yet-untitled album, a collaboration with Seattle supergroup The Minus 5, had previously been scheduled for a late summer release before the label was shutdown by the Walt Disney Company as its operations were brought under the tender guidance of sister label Hollywood Records. In mid-July, *Entertainment Weekly* reported Mammoth had given the official word it would dump the album. A related quote to the press from former Mammoth executive Rob Seidenberg characterized the album as "not the sort of album that's going to chart high" and requiring extensive publicity and marketing.

Seidenberg's assessment seems out of whack with the numbers, where Wilco's last album debuted at No. 13 on the Billboard charts and scored some 55,000 sales in the first week of its release. Wilco and The Minus 5, not to be dissuaded by some label trouble, hit the road shortly after the label's announcement, touring with Wayman Shaman and Cedell Davis, previewing some of the collaborative material and searching for a good home.



FATBOY SLIM BEACH PARTY ENDS IN TRAGEDY

Fatboy Slim's free Big Beach Boutique concert took a turn for the worst when 250,000 fans showed up for the event, overwhelming the event designed to accommodate only 65,000. The overwhelming throng created a hazardous situation resulting in a multitude of casualties when fans were crushed by a collapsing platform. Because of the immense crowd, Sussex ambulance and Brighton lifeboat crews found they were more efficient operating from boats than attempting to drive ambulances through the masses. Authorities claim both physical and drug-related injuries brought many to Sussex's hospitals. There were two fatalities, including one man who suffered a heart attack and a young woman who fell from the top of the esplanade to the ground.

Hours after the concert had been scheduled to end, the chaos continued as thousands of people were stuck in traffic and overflowed into Brighton's railroad station. The

Royal Sussex County Hospital described the event as "a nightmare," although many Brighton residents say they would still support future concerts under safer, more manageable conditions.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, Fatboy Slim contributed funds towards the costs of the cleanup efforts. The magnitude of Slim's contributions were no doubt muted by the fact the artist had already shelled out £100,000 on the event following the last minute cancellation of one of his largest sponsors.



B-SHARPS TO OPEN FOR SONIC YOUTH?

Changes and Surprises for All Tomorrow's Parties Fest

Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, *Futurama* and the "Life in Hell" comic strips, has been named as the curator of the U.S. edition of next year's All Tomorrow's Parties festival. Groening's curator role marks the first time a non-musical artist has filled the position. Not a complete outsider, however, Groening previously worked as a rock critic prior to his career as a cartoonist and producer. Lest one should forget, numerous left-of-center musicians have been featured as guests on *The Simpsons*, including R.E.M., Sonic Youth, Smashing Pumpkins, Cypress Hill and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Rumor has it the *Simpsons* godfather sports some eclectic and experimental tastes including an appreciation

for Captain Beefheart, Pere Ubu, The Minutemen and The Residents.

Groening's precedent-setting status as curator won't be the only new policy at this year's American wing of ATP, however. In response to numerous complaints and requests, tickets



will now be sold to individual events instead of passes covering an entire day's events. ATP organizers say this change was made to better accommodate large turnouts for high-profile acts such as Sleater-Kinney and to allow more choice in instances of simultaneous performances.

The festival is scheduled for next June, while its European counterpart will run in late March or early April, with the ambient noisemakers of Autechre acting as curators.

5 QUESTIONS

seana carmody and victory at sea's mona elliot

The Boston indie scene is hard to the core with collaboration and teamwork for all. No one knows this better than the good people at Kimchee Records who recently dropped two new releases from two Boston legends—Victory at Sea and Seana Carmody. Carmody is perhaps best known for having fronted The Swirlies in the early-'90s' shoegaze, indie-pop renaissance. Along with celebrated names like Lush, Luna, The Spinannes and My Bloody Valentine, The Swirlies helped redefine indie pop with a new sense of grassroots urgency and artistic vision. After several impressive albums and touching down on the influential Taang! label, The Swirlies quietly dissolved. After the short-lived Syrup USA (her follow-up project in the months after The Swirlies' demise), not much was heard from the former frontwoman. A new, 10-song album titled *Struts & Shocks* marks Carmody's return as a solo artist and demonstrates the massive ground she's covered since those wild days of Twin Reverbs and Fender Strats (when Luna ruled supreme and *Option* magazine held court). Too bad she gives really boring answers to Q&A's. To help her out, we enlisted Victory at Sea guitarist/vocalist Mona Elliot. Elliot and her group have been mainstays of the Boston scene for years, popping up on releases from Kimchee, Villa Villa Kula and Slowdime Records. Both musicians contribute to each others' records, recorded by Boston mainstay Andy Hong. V at Sea's new album, *The Good Night*, also sports cameos

from Karate's Jeff Goddard and songwriters Thalia Zedek and Heidi Saperstein. While Elliot and Carmody for now are keeping their musical bonding to the occasional cameo, the two prove to be quite a pair when challenged with our witty questions this month.

Describe the time and place where you encountered your most unexpected visitor.

Carmody: I was having lunch in Beverly Hills, and in walked Ringo Starr to have lunch at the table next to ours. I know this is more a brush with fame, but damn—it was definitely unexpected.

Elliot: Eight years ago, in the holiday season... I had never had egg nog and figured it was the perfect occasion to try it for the first time as some friends were passing it around. I had a few sips, not many, and decided I did not like the taste, or the texture, and did not finish my cup. About 45 minutes later, I started feeling a little funny and a tad psychedelic. I had been paid a visit by Mr. LSD. Luckily, I had not had much eggnog, so he was in mellow form and did not stay long.

What movie has the best soundtrack?

Carmody: I really like David Lynch soundtracks and the music composed for them by Angelo Badalamenti.

Elliot: *Harold and Maude?* *Magnolia?* *The Nightmare Before Christmas?*

Describe the most embarrassing gift you've ever received.

Carmody: This really shouldn't be embarrassing, but when I was 11, my

mother gave me a box full of "feminine products" as an introduction to my monthly cycle.

Elliot: An X-Large New Kids on the Block t-shirt from a relative who really thought I'd like it.

Describe a practical joke in which you were either the performer or the victim.

Carmody: I practically joke.

Elliot: On our last tour a good friend

of mine made t-shirts for us that said "Carousel" (the name of our record) on the front and "Reach for the Brass Ring" on the back. When I got home he told me that one of them said "Reach for the Ass Ring."

What unnecessary object do you refuse to travel without?

Carmody: Cassette tapes.

Elliot: A fan.



Seana Carmody

John Garcia's first release in almost three years...



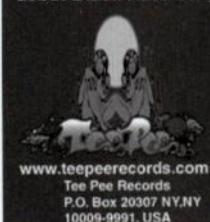
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FEELING GOOD ABOUT MUSIC:

THE STEREO returns with
its first "real" record

For a while, The Stereo felt more like mono to its founder and sole consistent member, Jamie Woolford.

Woolford, who previously fronted the seminal Animal Chin, has weathered a taxing succession of changes to his group's lineup and style since its inception in 1999.

The group formed originally as a side project between Woolford and Impossibles guitarist Rory Phillips. Shortly after touring behind the poppy punk, J Robbins-produced bliss of its *Three Hundred* album, Phillips left to reform The Impossibles. Then, the lineup responsible for last year's *No Traffic* departed before the album's release, once again leaving Woolford as The Stereo's creative and lyrical anchor.

For this year's *Rewind + Record*, The Stereo's fourth Fueled by Ramen release, Woolford recruited fellow former Animal Chin rocker B.J. Wullet for drums and ex-Pollen bassist Chris Serafini as the group's solid rhythm section. A variety of guests—including brother Ben Woolford and recently hired Tom Laufenberg on guitar—flesh out the sound. Although *Rewind + Record* hearkens back to *Three Hundred*'s status as a definite studio album, Woolford notes the process made it completely unique.

"I see this as the first real Stereo record," says Woolford, who describes *Three Hundred*, *No Traffic* and the band's recent EP as mere experiments.

Although the former Animal Chin frontman isn't jaded enough to dismiss the group's previous efforts, his excitement and confidence in regards to *Rewind* is overwhelming.

"Before, the band at the time wanted to play on everything. They didn't like the idea of an acoustic song because, 'I don't get to play drums on it.' These new guys were like, 'Let's have a good record.' That was the criteria for everything. Everybody set their egos aside. If you want to make the record you've always wanted to make, you have to forget yourself. The material is what's important."

Recorded primarily in his apartment utilizing ProTools, Woolford's material on *Rewind + Record* references the muscular pop chops of contemporaries like Superdrag and the best elements of classic rock from the past three decades. With a stable and supportive lineup, he senses a bright future.

"I have never felt this good about music, and it comes from the people I'm with," says Woolford. "They share my attitude. We've totally given up on worrying whether people understand The Stereo. Everybody's like, 'Is it a solo project or a band?' And we say, 'We play music.' What you should be concerned about is on that CD."

—Brian Baker



**"IF YOU WANT TO MAKE THE RECORD
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE,
YOU HAVE TO FORGET YOURSELF.
THE MATERIAL IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT."**

Skeleton Key benefit from a rabies shot

In most cases, getting nominated for the ever-prestigious Grammy—even if it is only a nod for the best artwork category—garners a band some sort of recognition from its label. This is not the case for Skeleton Key.

The band's Capitol Records debut, 1997's exceptional *Fantastic Spikes Through Balloon*, quickly became an undiscovered gem as it fell through the cogs of the major label machine. In the end, Capitol dropped Skeleton Key just as quickly as it signed them, and after years of litigation and legal battles, the band finally decided to pursue different avenues of employment.

Today, Erik Sanko—bassist/singer for the recently rejuvenated Skeleton Key—is in a much better place. With some new talent, a freshly inked deal with Mike Patton's Ipecac Records and legalities far behind, he feels blessed by a stroke of luck and a penchant for good timing. Percussionist Rick Lee was fresh from the art rock outfit Enon, and Sanko quickly scooped him up along with an assortment of old friends.

"Getting the band back together could not have gone more smoothly," Sanko explains from his New York home. "All the timing was very serendipitous. I'd wanted to do it the whole time, and suddenly, when Rick was available, I couldn't deny it."

The end result of Skeleton Key's five-year hiatus is *Obtanium*, an 11-track, synth-fueled ramshackle assault strikingly similar yet strangely different from its predecessor. While many of the elements of the band's cata-

logue remain intact—the jangly guitar lines, off-kilter sound effects and Sanko's J. Robbins-ish yelp are all present—the group's sound has slowed down and feels a bit more glossy than in the past. Sanko says better production was a major facet of *Obtanium*, as the goal was to make a sleek and ultimately more listenable album.

"We were trying to make an effort not to have the music so difficult to listen to, at least on a sonic level," Sanko says. "And even though we love our first record, it really sounds like a rabid dog tied to a chain link fence in your insane neighbor's back yard. I wanted it to be a little less harsh—at least make it sound like the dog had a rabies shot."

Drawing from a host of diverse influences while retaining its obtuse edge, Skeleton Key's sound remains a unique aesthetic while treading closer than ever to accessible ground. Sanko is pleased with the final output and thinks if the band is blessed with a more mainstream audience, *Obtanium*'s sound will translate better than any of the its previous output.

"I remember actually hearing one of our songs on the radio on one of those big modern rock radio stations," he laughs. "It sounded like a garbage tornado between two marble busts. It was the crappiest, Tasmanian devil-sounding thing. We did our best, and hopefully we've accomplished something."

—Dan Pastorius



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metamorphosis:

Sparta rises from the ashes of former alt-rock behemoth At The Drive In.

It's about three hours before the doors at Philadelphia's Theatre of the Living Arts are scheduled to open, and already a line is forming around the building. Although the band is touring behind what is only a four-song EP, it's apparent a huge buzz has risen for what is yet to come. The kids are ready for rock, and they are assuming (on good faith) Sparta will give it to them.

Judging from soundcheck, it's apparent the kids were right. Sparta—comprising At the Drive In ex-members Tony Hajar, Paul Hinojos, Jim Ward and fresh bassist Matt Miller—dish out song after song of tight, intense rhythms full of pop-fueled power. Playing with smiles on their faces, it's obvious they are enjoying themselves, perhaps more than with any musical experience thus far.

A few months back, however, this was most definitely not the case. Three-fourths of Sparta's lineup was poised to take over the planet with ATDI, and while things couldn't have been going better for the band, each member was getting burned out on constant expectations, touring and eventually each other. Side projects were started, the band's focus began to sway. On the verge of super stardom, the outfit garnering a reputation as "the rock band with afros" called an indefinite hiatus because, as drummer Hajar simply points out, "It wasn't fun anymore."

After ATDI's demise, the members took a few months to collect themselves, start new bands and write new music. Defacto and Mars Volta, headed by Cedric Bixler and Omar Rodriguez, were first, but Sparta is the latest of those splinter projects. Instead of looking for other people with whom to make music, Hajar explains, why not go with something that feels right and is familiar?

"It had started around April or May of last year, and Paul (Hinojos) came up to L.A. and we had a quick meeting," he said. "We were in my car in the parking lot of the hotel he was staying in, and we just started talking about it. Right then we decided we were sure that we wanted to play together. So we made that decision, and we didn't know when anything was going to start, but at least we had gotten that far."

Hinojos went back to the band's hometown of El Paso and contacted Ward, who initially was apprehensive about getting involved in another project. After some deliberation, he decided it was a good idea, and the band convened to start rehearsing. Immediately the old chemistry kicked in, resulting in eight completed songs in one week.

"Since we had so many months off we had all written songs, and by the time we started rehearsing it just all came together," said Hajar. "We just got together and played. We all had music, and before we even got together Paul and I were passing each other a lot of stuff through minidisk. There was a lot of interaction that way. And there we were—all of a sudden we had songs, we had millions of ideas, we had a canvas and we were finally starting to paint it. Right now our record is being mixed as we speak."

While some may perceive Sparta's evolution as happening rather quickly (after all, it did secure an album deal with Dreamworks in a matter of months following the end of ATDI), Hajar says the entire Sparta project came together at a rather natural, leisurely pace. The side project was never in the works while ATDI was active, and upon regrouping the members were just excited to get their ideas out and start playing music again.

"It has gone by pretty quickly, but at the same time, at a rate that we were all very comfortable with," notes Hajar. "People were like, 'whoa, how quick was this?' But what they fail to understand is that this is everything we know, this is the only thing we know. This is our life, it was quick but this is what we do, we're not people doing a nine-to-five-type job."

Hajar hints the full-length contains more of the same presented initially on the EP. However, the band has been tinkering with various electronic elements to



throw into its rock 'n roll concoction. He says the album encapsulates everything each member wanted to accomplish in terms of melody and structure while staying true to its hard rock roots. Judging from the band's new full-length, it is apparent Sparta still favors traditional, hard-hitting music; however the band is looking forward to evolving and experimenting with different sounds and textures.

"There are real rock songs and real electronic songs, and then there are songs right in the middle," he says. "A lot of electronic music is very straight and narrow—there are only a few kinds of electronic music that really move me, like Bjork, Roni Size and stuff like that. They incorporate electronics in a way that is compelling and interesting, and we really tried to accomplish that kind of feel with the record and the EP. I think

"All of a sudden we had songs, we had millions of ideas, we had a canvas and we were finally starting to paint it."

that since we wrote separately for a few months, it was like 'oh, you have a drum fill, you have a sequence, you have a piano piece,' and we had a lot of time to really structure the songs in our heads as to how we felt the songs should be."

Although writing separately and bringing diverse elements to the plate added an interesting twist to Sparta's sound, comparisons to ATDI are inevitable. The fast-paced, loud guitars, tight drumming and even Ward's vocals are all reminiscent of the group's past endeavors. While Hajar does admit the sound is somewhat similar, he explains Sparta is moving on with its sound, changing up instruments and looking forward to growing together as a band.

"We're three-fifths of our old band, and when we write a rock song it is obviously going to come out like that at least for now, or maybe forever—we don't know but we just can't hide it," he concedes. "We didn't try to pull songs completely apart just because they sounded a little bit like what we were, because this is what we sound like, this is what we write. Jim was a big focus in ATDI. He sang a lot of backups and you heard his voice on a lot of those songs. I'm sure Cedric and Omar are going to get the same thing with Mars Volta. We are all going to get that, but at the same time it's music, and we are all looking past that."

According to Hajar, moving forward is the most exciting part of Sparta. "With Sparta, Paul went from bass to guitar, Jim went from backing vocals to lead vocals, and especially for them, as a friend, it is a sense of absolute pride. Those are big moves—especially for Jim. He went from singing five or six words on a record to singing an entire record. Paul is playing these crazy guitar parts; it's like, 'whoa, where did this come from?' It was always in my head that I knew they could do it—there was never a problem—but to actually hear it and see it—I was super proud. They are doing an amazing job. I'm lucky to play with them, and we're having a great time together.

"I think Jim puts it the best way every night when he says, 'This feels like our first date.' And that's a really good point because we've seen people that come to our shows in the old band that are curious to check out what we are doing now. Sometimes they don't know what to do because they don't know the songs, but we have to remember to show them what we are. The most we can give them is our heart, and we do that every single night, everything we possibly have inside of us we give to them."

—Dan Pastorius

Dame Fate luck be a lady ►

Dame Fate's vocalist and bassist Yalan Papillons claims her goal with music is to write songs to affect young girls the same way music affected and sustained her while she was growing up in Ohio. Papillons wants to write a song for the girl who comes home from a rough day, goes into her room, turns on the stereo and wants to feel OK. In Papillons' utopia, this would be the girl's favorite song in the world, assuring her everything was going to be all right.

This is exactly the sentiment Papillons conveys by the D.C.-based all-female trio's powerful debut, *Time and Tide Wait for No Man*, available now on Lovitt Records. Most memorable on the CD is "Crisp Winter," featuring Papillons' dreamy, foreboding vocals set against insistent percussion from drummer Speck. Over this foundation pours plaintive guitar work from former Tuscadero ax-wielder Melissa Farris.

The album offers the familiarity of an advisory talk with an older sister and its lyrics stick well ("I had a dream last night/that all the letters in my room flew around me/Like butterflies you know they only live for a year.")

Produced by Phil Manley of Trans Am and Jerry Busher of French Toast/Fugazi and mastered by D.C. music mastermind Chad Clark (Dismemberment Plan, Fugazi, Del Cielo), this collection is clean and slow—a good listen for contemplating heartbreak and love on a rainy afternoon.

Dame Fate has established itself as a creative, emotive force in the recently male-dominated indie rock canon. The members have been active agents behind the idea and implementation of a five-day summer festival, Ladyfest D.C.

"We've each taken on the same roles in Ladyfest organizing that we have with the band," Papillons remarks, reflecting on her role of booking shows, Ferris' artistic talent and Speck's money skills.

While stylistically different from much of the current Lovitt roster (Engine Down, Fing Fang Foom),

Papillons is proud to be a member of the family.

"We were so embraced by all the other bands on the label," drummer Speck adds. "From playing the showcase at MacRock (an annual music conference held in western Virginia) to hanging out with the other bands on the road, we really feel at home and are thrilled to be on Lovitt."

The label has reason to be just as pleased. This coming fall, the band plans to embark on a U.S. tour, including a stint with fellow D.C. rockers Q and Not U.

—Katy Otto



KICK IT UP a notch:

Major label interest and an international following have **THE BELLRAYS** poised to take over the world.

"When we originally formed the band we had a keyboard player, too," explains frontman Bob Vennum about The Bellrays' rotating lineup. Personnel changes have struck the band yet again at a most inopportune time. Despite national acclaim for its recent album, and a rabid following of loyal fans, The Bellrays are on the market for a new drummer.

With numerous member changes since the loss of the keyboardist and the permanent installation of Tony Bramel in 1995, it seems the band's ever-changing cast of players has become a permanent fixture as well.

"Me, Tony and Lisa are like the core members of the band now" deadpans Vennum.

The other consistent element to The Bellrays is pure, unadulterated, blues-influenced rock. While garage minimalists The White Stripes and media darlings The Strokes helped usher in a much ballyhooed revival of the sound, The Bellrays have been committed to these sorts of riffs, rhythms and bare-knuckled, belted vocals since their inception.

Formed in Riverside, Calif., by Vennum and his wife/vocalist Lisa Kekaula, The Bellrays have been in a constant state of transformation since their formation in early 1991. From lineup changes to short stints with various record labels, The Bellrays' versatility can be attributed to their hardcore rock 'n roll roots. With a voice comparable to Aretha Franklin-meets-The-Bride-of-Frankenstein, Kekaula is a defining force in the band. Her soulful, raw voice imbues each Bellrays tune with an indelible mark of personality, grit and real, pre-Jodeci soul. Fused with the band's extreme rhythm and blues approach (think Make Up meets Turbonegro), the synergy of voice and rock leaves little room for criticism.

While comparisons to The MC5 and The Stooges have peppered many a Bellrays review, the band clearly draws from a deeper well than many similarly volumed charlatans of the scene. When prompted, Vennum will elaborate on the music of his youth, as if speaking about a religion, citing McCartney, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, Montross and Zeppelin all as powerful influences.

Like a modern day Ike and Tina (sans the spousal abuse), Vennum and Kekaula have been creating some of the most groovable tunes in rock today from their home-crafted studio hidden in the lofty hills of Riverside. Embarking independently and following a true, DIY aesthetic, the two started their own record label (Vital Gesture Records) and have been releasing albums by various artists since the early '90s.

"Tony had started (the label) around '91 to put out his band The Grey Spikes," Vennum explains. "He asked us if we wanted to put out our release, and we said, 'sure.' After that it was just kind of let's keep this going."

Keeping it going is certainly what they have done, releasing multiple records by other artists in the realm of independent rock 'n roll. When asked what other bands call Vital Gesture Records home, Vennum is quick to respond, naming The Black Widows, The

Condors and The Beef as some stars of the current roster.

Coming off their most successful European tour to date, The Bellrays have landed in a dilemma of sorts, trying to balance the many elements of a busy, in-demand, self-managed band.

Keeping old songs and releases available alone can prove a hefty task. With their first album, *In the Light of the Sun* (originally released on cassette), currently being re-released by In Music We Trust, as well as their two most recent albums, *Let it Blast* (Vital Gesture) and *Grand Fury* (Upper Cut), both picked up for reissue by European indie giant Poptones, it clearly seems Bob and Lisa have found themselves in a situation most independent musicians don't have the luxury of experiencing these days.

With a healthy catalogue of singles published through various labels throughout the years, The Bellrays have logged a vast amount of records in little time, with distribution of their music reaching much of the world.

Vennum ponders on the band's recent global success, but seems confident he and his cohorts can keep it together.

"HE ASKED US IF WE WANTED TO PUT OUT OUR RELEASE, AND WE SAID, 'SURE.' AFTER THAT IT WAS JUST KIND OF LET'S KEEP THIS GOING."

With such sudden success, one might expect The Bellrays to take some time off to relax and enjoy the fruits of their labor. The demands of a full-time rock band, however, keep everyone pretty much on their toes.

"We're actually going back to Europe to play five shows in England," Vennum begins, clearly ambitious, determined not to become overwhelmed. "We're playing one with The Hives and then other headlining gigs around England. When we come back, that's when we'll be gearing up for our Japan outing."

Major label interest from Sony (already licensed to distribute some of the band's releases in Japan) and a favorable following in Europe prove The Bellrays have found their niche in contemporary music.

Without much downtime for themselves, the members have pledged their full allegiance to the band and are committed to making The Bellrays a full-time project.

"Pretty much this is Lisa's and my job," Vennum confides. "Tony has a day job right now. Lisa does some bookkeeping part-time, and I just started going out and recording other bands to generate some income while we're here. We're resigned to the fact that if we're gonna make this a full-time thing, we have to step it up."

—Gordon Downs



My Morning Jacket Chocolate & Ice and Everything Nice ►

The first thing most rock journalists want to do when confronted with a new band is to categorize. Readers need a frame of reference, and scribes need vocab—thus the labels are born. Tricky bands like My Morning Jacket require a little new maneuvering, prompting some slightly more innovative terminology, like “haunting Americana.”

Guitarist Jim James, however, still isn't satisfied. “I don't like the word 'Americana,'” quips James. “I just like to say rock 'n roll.”

Pausing for a moment, he adds, with a laugh, “I like the word 'haunting' though.”

It's this selective sense of taste and influence molding My Morning Jacket into the unique amalgam found on its recently released *Chocolate and Ice* EP.

Although one gets the sense James is probably not too fond of labels in general, it's hard to ignore the country and early-'60s rock influences in his band's music.

“We try to explore lots of different territories,” explains James. “Some of my favorite bands like Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones would be called rock 'n roll, but I think they explored a lot of different territories.”

So in terms of originality and experimentation, the Led Zeppelin and Stones influences are right on point. However, if My Morning Jacket is indeed a rock 'n roll band, its dreamy pop has drastically blurred the lines. James himself even

admits MMJ would make the perfect companion to most David Lynch movies. In fact, the guitarist says he even takes the analysis as a compliment.

By most accounts, the band completely stole the spotlight at its show at this year's South by Southwest Music Conference. Even a brief peak at one of the group's live shows explains why, as James and his cohorts work the quintet into a full-blown orchestra, echoing Flaming Lips, Allman Brothers and My Bloody Valentine into a massive row.

My Morning Jacket is just starting to make inroads here in the states, however, they seem to have generated quite a significant following in The Netherlands, where the band found itself the subject of an independent documentary.

James, for one, remains reserved about the new attention the band has been getting, especially in the video documentation depart-

ment. When asked if he and his bandmates have any plans for the MTV superstar route, James is emphatic, offering a resounding “no.”

“I have no desire to do that,” he says. “If someone says we can make a cool video on our own terms, we might do it. It is not a concern right now. I am not worried about MTV in the least.”

—Jonathan Cholewa

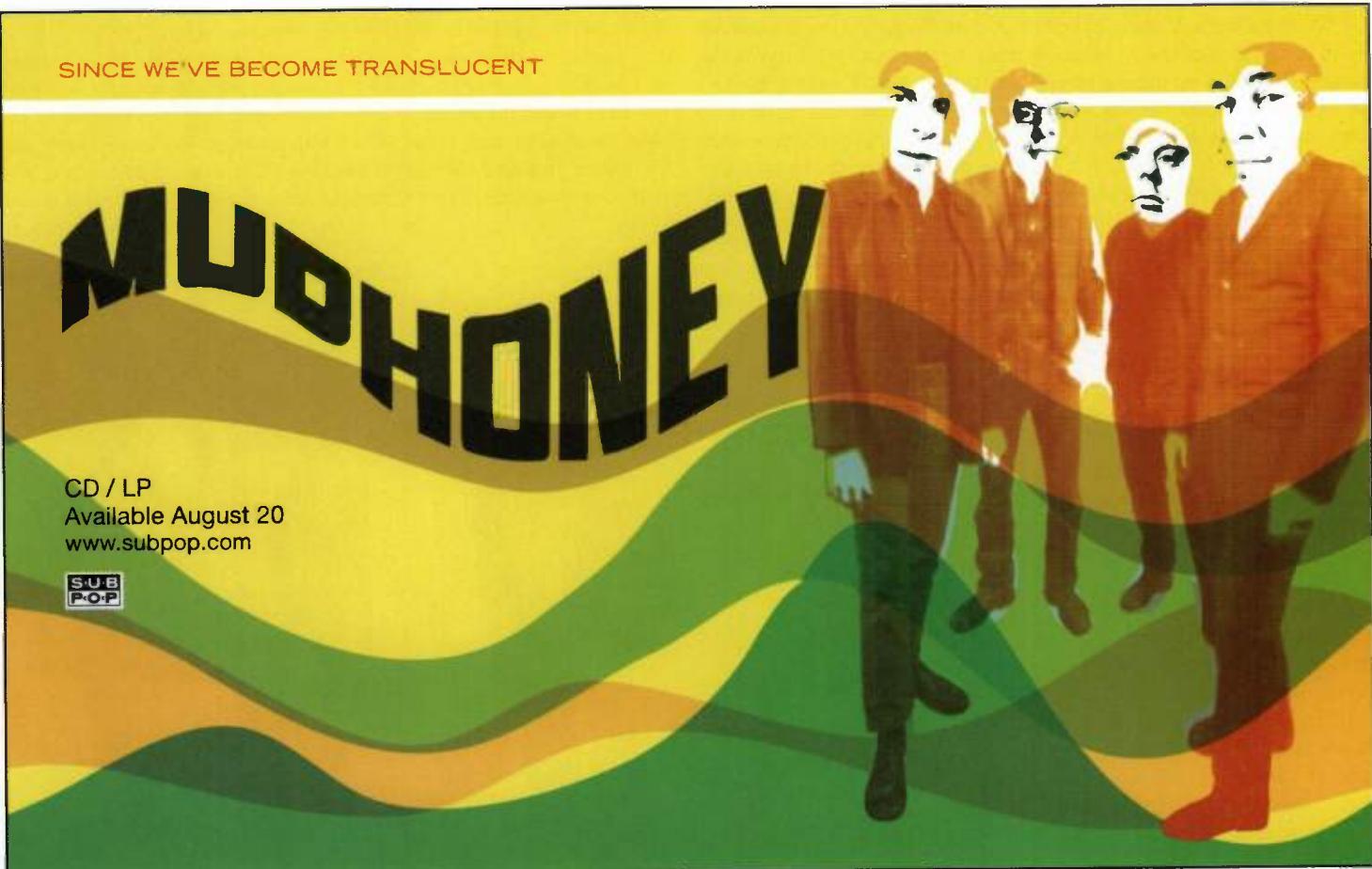


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SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND:

Live and direct from Wales—**THE SUPER FURRY ANIMALS**, Macca and you.

The Super Furry Animals are not related to the Teletubbies. They aren't a spin-off of Pokemon, and you won't find them in the candy aisle next to the root beer barrels and Gummi Bears.

However, they could be any or all of these things, and in the future they may well be. The Furries, for now, are in fact five Welshmen from Cardiff who sublimely juxtapose just about every hyphenated genre of pop music known to mankind with effortless style and charming grace.

From the Beach Boys harmonies of "(Drawing) Rings Around the World" and the Gamble & Huff string parts found on "Juxtapozed With U" to the electronic, head-thwapping Aphex Twin-style outros and interludes, *Rings Around the World*, the latest release in a string of art-pop gems manages to boldly go where no other band has thought to (or ever could) go before.

But where most bands these days seem to spend lifetimes prefiguring their future stardom, image and niche, the Furries appear more like time travelers from the fourth dimension of pop culture, bent on tickling us all out of our deadly serious and careerist image consciousness with a musical juggling act equal parts Brian Wilson and Groucho Marx. And the best part is it all comes naturally.

"It's not a method," explains Gruff Rhys from the band's 30-quid-a-month room turned state-of-the-art recording studio located in a Cardiff community center. "I suppose we became friends first. I mean, there's a set of brothers in the band and they know each other because they're brothers, not because they stuck an advert in a window somewhere advertising for someone who's got the same taste in music, you know. We didn't form with one particular musical vision in mind—we've never been into the same clothes or necessarily the same records—but for me that makes it more exciting to be in a band like that."

As well it should be. But the Furries aren't all hugs and rainbows. Since their inception in 1993, the band has had a penchant for surrealist-anarcho-leftist politics, manifesting itself in such straight-to-the-point songs as "The Man Don't Give a Fuck" and "The International Language of Screaming," with its fantastic couplet, "Every time I look around me everything seems so stationary/It just sends me the impulse to become reactionary."

But perhaps the most compelling aspect of the band's sweet 'n sour pop confection is its Situationist-style ability to subvert the meaning of traditional pop music structures by infusing them with dead-on piss takes at the politics of global warming, homelessness and gentrification, to name a few. Add new friends and icons like the non-conformist Cardiff City football star Robin Friday and Welsh drug smuggler Howard Marks, and you've got

the makings of the ultimate band—fun, cool, rockin', politically astute and so whip-smart they continuously confound expectations. And it's exactly this blend of qualities balancing the Furries' creative yin and yang.

"If we're sounding incredibly tortured that's when we laugh the loudest," reveals the Furries singer/guitarist. "Usually it's in a \$1,000-a-day studio and you're singing this silly, mourning song, and that's when we laugh. But we never try to achieve comedy. The exception is 'Receptacle for Respectable,' you know, where we completely went with our silly streak."

Silly indeed. Surely pissing off Beatles purists everywhere, the Welsh quintet tapped Sir Macca himself (Paul McCartney to you cave dwellers) to reprise his carrot and celery chomping role on the Beach Boys' classic, "Vegetables," rather than asking him for more a pedestrian contribution like actually singing or playing the old Hofner. For his part, though, Rhys said he loved the idea of people carefully trying to discern The Cute One's rabbity crunching.

But, really, with five full-length albums worth of deliciously surreal tunes, who has the time for it? A better question might be how the hell this band of brothers' music has largely escaped the attention of the American indie rock 'n pop-loving public? If tunes like "She's Got Spies" or "Tradewinds" aren't the archetypal blueprint for bucolic summertime road-trip soundtracks, nothing is. The fact is, they're not going to be on the radio anytime soon and they probably never will be. Go buy the albums and find out for yourself. Rhys, however, hasn't even considered the question in any depth.

"I don't see it as a trouble," he reasons. "I think it just takes time for the music to travel. I mean, it's as much to do with distribution as anything. Sometimes it's just that you can't get your records distributed. It's just mundane things like that. It's got nothing to do with the music. And occasionally records make more sense at a certain time than others. On a basic level we are very happy to just make the records. There's so many coming out every week, I think you're lucky if you get one record heard."

As for being heard, while the Furries certainly don't get the airplay they deserve Stateside, they have more than enough material available. Presently the band is working on yet another album—this time they're steering the ship. Where in the past it has worked with producers like Gorwel Owens and Chris Shaw, this time the band is handling all its own production. And why not? Sony threw enough cash at them for the recording of *RATW* for the Furries

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So, are you going for the pretty boy look?

Going for the pretty boy look? I define the pretty boy look! Elvis needed a lifetime to find a look that truly suited him. I figured it out by age five.

What's your favorite kind of cake and why?

It doesn't technically count as cake, but I do so love the cheesecake. That or any cake that has ice cream in it. This makes it a lot easier than having to purchase ice cream and cake separately.

Have you ever gotten in trouble with club owners over your nakedness?

No. Once I was wearing nothing but a skirt and blue body paint, and this girl jumped on my back. I started to give her a piggy-back ride and thought nothing of it until she started bucking, pinching my nipples and biting my shoulder. Needless to say, I had to put her down after my arms got tired. She patted my rear and said thanks. Afterwards, people swore she had an orgasm while riding my back, but the club didn't say anything. I also danced in a gold lamé cod piece once for an All You Can Eat show.

Name five things a band should never ever do at a live performance?

1. Ask the crowd to buy them a beer if they haven't rocked yet. I want to see you sweat before I buy you a refreshing adult beverage.

2. Tell me to come closer to the stage or that it's OK to dance. I am an adult and I can make my own decisions, thank you.

3. Wear your own band's t-shirts. This is null and void if it is the final night of a five-week tour and you have no clean laundry.

4. Take forever to breakdown. I used to think bands who took forever to set up were bad, but bands that play the middle slot and then take 30 minutes to break down are the worst. These people will usually classify themselves as musicians.

5. Finally, never take yourself too seriously. At the end of the day, the kids will hock all your records on Ebay the first time they can make a little cash off of them. Luckily for most bands, that day will never come.

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Jim & Jennie and the Pinetops better bluegrass ►

With the possible exception of the steel pedal guitar, the banjo is the one instrument most identified with bluegrass music.

Jennie Benford, one half of the songwriting duo Jim and Jennie and the Pinetops, knows this better than anyone. Forming her band, however, the young Pennsylvanian decided to focus on something else entirely.

Armed with their guitars, Benford and her partner Jim initially both agreed it would take a virtuoso banjo player to truly bring their bluegrass-inspired sound to reality. After some tinkering, the duo adjusted its approach.

"If you listen to the older bluegrass bands, which we really like, each of those bands is built around a vocal sound," Benford discloses. "You can always tell who the singer is and you can really tell the bands apart from each other. We found that we're more interested in the personality of the voice that comes through."

Singer/guitarist Benford explains how focusing more on singing than an isolated instrument sets the Pinetops apart from other bluegrass-inspired bands. She is quick to point out, however, the band's sound is indicative of the down-home, old-time bluegrass from yore. Blending a hard-edged style of country, vocal harmonies and a fast, driving tempo, the Pinetops favor a traditional, earthy sound.

When asked if the current *O Brother* phenomenon has helped the band gain notoriety or a wider, new audience, Benford chuckles and says she's not sure.

"We've just been building over the years and we've been playing for people for a while now who don't know bluegrass that well," she explains. "I

think those people now know a little better what we are doing and what we are going for.

"It is nice for us, because some of our best fans are people who have at least some idea of what we are doing, and now they can see some of the nuances of what we are doing."

—Dan Pastorius



take it or leave it:

Neil Michael Hagerty trades mind games for good old rock 'n roll.

Neil Hagerty, guitar terrorist, ex-heroin addict and one-half of the Royal Trux's sonic deconstructionist duo, now wishes to be called Neil Michael Hagerty. Anyone who's ever relied on the addition of a middle name to lend an air of significance knows it's a loaded proposition: People who knew you before will make fun of you. People who didn't know you before will get you confused with your former self. Some people will tell you adults who use middle names are pompous, but those, like C. Everett Koop (not C. Thomas Howe), using a first initial are all right. And some people will tell you the opposite. Regardless of where you stand on the middle name issue, Neil Michael Hagerty's new album is just O.K.

Perhaps that's why he's decided to start using his middle name in the first place. Maybe it's some kind of cover—like no one will notice it's the same guy playing the sideways, Burroughsian booze. But unfortunately, like Burroughs, Hagerty only had a few good stories in him and they are in his past.

Where once he was capable of conjuring up the raunchiest, opiated rock 'n roll on this side of a Detroit-area N.A. convention, now Hagerty just churns out choogling bar-band riffs sputtering like a '69 Camaro with a faulty carburetor. Right out of the gate, *Plays That Good Old Rock 'n Roll* falls flat on its face, but for Hagerty it doesn't seem to matter much because he's finally free to do his own thing and he's free of all Royal Trux's baggage too.

"Yeah, well, with my own thing, I just write songs and I try to work with the musicians without any overweening concept in mind," explains Hagerty. "That's the thing that makes the difference. With Royal Trux, we would actually have to have some sort of plan, because a lot of it had to do with working things or working the system with the record companies and the people who buy records and the press."

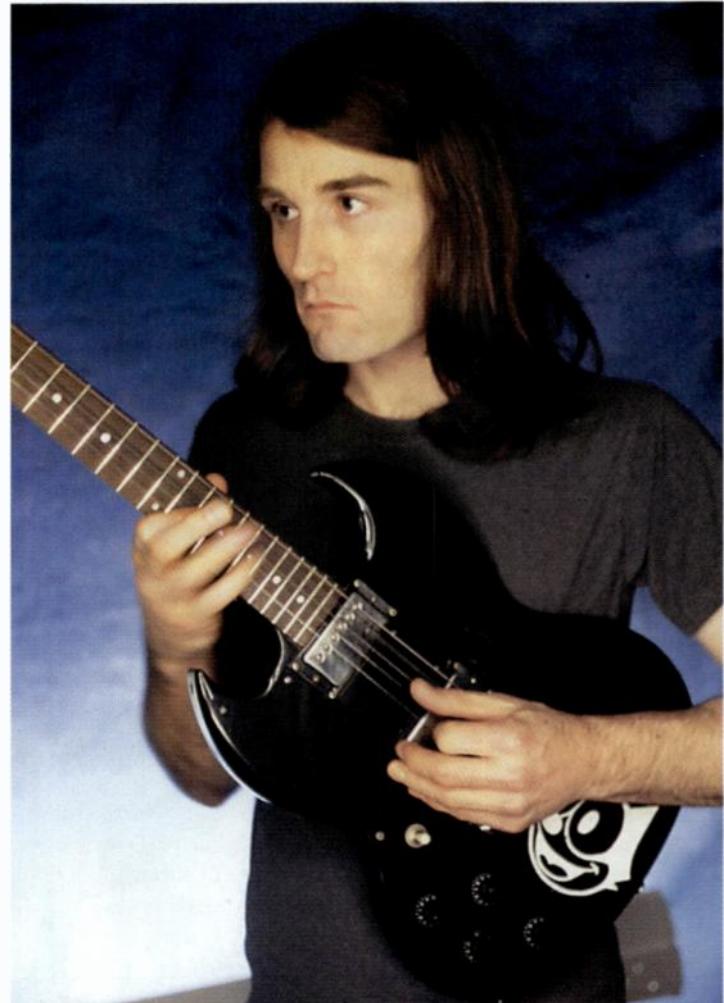
After a failed final tour in 1999, Hagerty jettisoned his Barbie-meets-Barbarella-on-Demerol sidekick, Jennifer Herrema, in 2000 for her inability to stay straight, and quickly went back to doing what he does best, turning out 2001's self-titled solo release *Neil Michael Hagerty* on Drag City.

The album was successful enough for Drag City to let him do it again in 2002, but it's questionable if the label putting out seven of Royal Trux's nine full-length releases can effectively judge Hagerty's output. Of course, that's the crux of the biscuit—Can anybody effectively judge Hagerty's music? Widely known for his ambivalent blend of outsider musical influences, lo-fi aesthetics and old-school bombast, the thing about Hagerty's music is it's always been hard to tell whether it's a put-on or pure genius.

"In Royal Trux we would do things like, 'Okay, every song is going to be four minutes long,'" Hagerty explains. "Or, we would try to say, 'Okay we're going to write too many songs,' or, 'we're going to make an album where there's way too many songs to listen to,' or, 'people will hate the following songs,' or we'd write something really stupid that we knew people would like."

While Hagerty deserves a big pat on the back for having the balls, creativity and who-gives-a-fuck attitude to produce such works, most people, aside from a few hipsters, don't care about the nuances of process on Royal Trux records.

Of course, Hagerty did say he's left all that behind. Nevertheless, *Plays That Good Old Rock 'n' Roll* still manages to unfold like a secret message with-



"ROYAL TRUX WAS JUST A BUNCH OF SHIT. BUT WITH MY BAND, I'M NOT INDULGING ANY OF THOSE TRICKS AT ALL. IT'S TOTALLY TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT. IT'S FOR REAL."

out the decoder ring. The album's first track, "Storm Song," for instance, is based on one long, repetitive riff, droning on endlessly while Hagerty delivers his best/worst impression of Dr. John, repeating the daft couplet "Only God can rescue me/Only God can make a tree."

Despite the title's implications, "Shaved C*nt" is kind of boring too, until Hagerty busts it up with one of his trademark freakout solos around the two-minute mark. The only problem is the solo becomes the song and then devolves into an obtuse guitar noodling session only to eventually turn into an even more obtuse blues refrain.

"Oklahoma Township" isn't much of an improvement. Though it gets a few points for sounding like some little-known Buddy Miles record from the '70s, with Leon Russell on vocals, the whole song is driven by a slightly hackneyed vamp.

The album's most redeeming quality comes in the form of "Sayonara"—featuring a dirty solo sounding like a brain achieving virtual satori after a huge bong hit. Both "Gratitude" and "Louisa La Ray" have an old-school Royal Trux dirty-boogie sound, where guitars cook and shimmer with filthy innuendo—like the sound of some drunken husband leering at his wife's 15-year-old niece. Still, it seems the melodies are never quite taken the exciting places Hagerty promises.

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FIVE QUESTIONS

BLACK DICE

From the hip straits of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, Black Dice is known up and down the East Coast for its rowdy live shows, equal parts performance art and chaotic, snotty post-punk. The band's early shows, which averaged about 15 minutes long with high-energy bursts of noise and commotion, often left both musician and audience alike out of breath—and sometimes injured. Mixing noise, electronica, rock and attitude, the New York-based band has released records through Troubleman Unlimited and a split EP with California's Erase Errata. DFA Records recently released Black Dice's first full-length album, *Beaches and Canyons*. With nods to The Locust, BXRX and a bunch of spoiled rich kids, Black Dice proves, finally, at least some people know how to make more of a ruckus and break more stuff than Andrew WK.

Answers by Hirsham Bharoocha, drums/vocals.

Describe the time and place where you encountered your

most unexpected visitor.

On the street in London, I ran into some Australian twins I knew from Japan while I was visiting there. Very weird.

In your opinion, what movie has the best soundtrack?

I like the soundtrack to *Over the Edge*, *Rushmore*, *Dancer in the Dark* and all the *Cremaster* films by Matthew Barney.

Describe the most embarrassing gift you've ever received.

It was a box of glue sticks from someone at my work. They knew I stole them all the time on the job.

Describe a practical joke in which you were either the performer or the victim.

My friends always call me at work pretending to want to talk to my boss. That always gets me.

What unnecessary object do you refuse to travel without?

All my cameras. I usually have at least two—sometimes three or four—with me.



Bon Voyage
"The Right Amount"

Featuring Jason from Starflyer 59 and his lovely wife Julie on vocals, Bon Voyage delivers their second album of heavenly DFA hit classics. Cotton candy vocals combined with the best elements of DFA are sure to please the nerves and tickle those major cravings.

Available 10.8.02



Starflyer 59
"Can't Stop Eating EP"

SF59 leader Jason Martin saves some of his most ardent songs for the EPs they've released between their normal instant full-lengths, and this new one features the brilliant lead-off single "Composting" as well as "Happy Birthday Jason" and "Theme from Drapery."

Available 10.8.02



Element 101
"More Than Motion"

Turning over a new leaf to try something bold and refreshing, Element 101 brings forth a dynamic confidence and mantle it with their sophomore release *More Than Motion*. Driving guitar progressions, jazzy drums, and vocal experiments all emphasize a more raw and energetic feeling. Element 101 has embraced the challenge of pushing outside of their own mold to create a new sound of their own.

Available 9.10.02



Poor Old Lu
"The Waiting Room"

On the 10th anniversary of their major terrorist-funk groundbreaking Seattle alternative band Poor Old Lu have reformed, played all the major festivals this summer, and have recorded an extraordinary reunion album for Tooth & Nail. All of the original members of the seminal group—Aaron Sprinkle, Jason Spornak, Nick Bamber, and Scott Hunter—are all back together performing their mysterious, powerful rock music as old.

Available 9.24.02



Morta
"Nu-En-Jin"

After a near eight year hiatus, Southern California's Morta are back giving fans across the nation a reason to dance again. Do not miss this release if you are a fan of early 80's Post-Punk or EBM.

Available 9.24.02



Two Thirty Eight
"You Should Be Living"

A well-crafted addition to any rock fan's collection especially for those who love the beauty of guitar work and the self-referential quality that musical pop culture has a habit of portraying. *You Should Be Living* takes a "told 'em both" approach with certain jazzy-like chords, fluid song structure and certain sharpness of melody. The outcome is an honest, heartfelt and hopeful assessment of a generation gearing themselves up for mediocrity or junk culture.

Available 10.8.02

DRIVEN AND DETERMINED

why ROCKING HORSE WINNER stays on top

When one hears the phrase Rocking Horse Winner, there are countless images sure to flash into consciousness—a child standing proudly in front of an audience as the winner of a cherished prize, someone flailing about wildly on top of a mechanical bull, D.H. Lawrence's tribute to masturbation and sexual deviancy, just to name a few. As rich in imagery as these words sound together, the band sporting the phrase as a name came to it simply enough.

"Basically, we needed a name," laughs vocalist Jolie Lindholm. "We looked through a high school literature book for some interesting names. That one popped out at us, and we all liked it. Some of us have read the story and others haven't, but we all like the name."

Rocking Horse Winner has been touring in support of its new record on Equal Vision called *Horizon*. The album is an unashamed rock record recalling the tenderness of The Sundays mixed with the ambiance of The Cure. A smidgen of modern emo rock is just the icing on the cake. Although cohesive as a whole, the record shifts back and forth in moods, alternating from sweet to sour, happy to sad, hopeful to hopeless. This newfound range reflects the growth of the band from its debut, a more straightforward rock record molded from contemporary commercial emo formulas.

"We feel that this record is a lot stronger than our first one and shows a bit more growth," Lindholm says confidently. "We wanted to use a lot more instrumentation. We also wanted to take a bit more time with this one. Our first record was rushed due to time and money constraints. This one took us a couple of months."

Usually when bands talk about the rushed versus expansive recording clichés, it's a safe bet the non-rushed record will be more boring than the last. For Rocking Horse Winner, however, the extra time in the studio

allowed some breathing room for the newly added pop elements. Where previously the guitar-bass-drums-vocals combo was left to do all the work, *Horizon* features a bevy of new instrumentation creating a subdued background for the group's new sense of range and melody.

The album received its first major test this summer as the band plowed through a sizable tour of the East Coast, Midwest, dirty South and back up the Right-hand Coast. A grassroots campaign for one's freshly created art can give its creators a fair sense of how well the material has translated from blueprint to building. According to Lindholm, the band did just fine.

"There were some really good turnouts at the shows," she shares. "The new album is selling very well, too. We even had a bunch of kids come up on stage and sing along."

While the majority of the shows were excursions on the happy-go-lucky side, Lindholm admits the tour was not free of complications, or a few sticky moments here and there.

"PEOPLE ARE USUALLY VERY RESPECTFUL, THOUGH THERE WAS ONE SHOW WE PLAYED WHERE A GUY TOLD ME TO TAKE MY SHIRT OFF. I SAID I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD BE ASKING ME TO DO THAT IF I WERE A GUY."

"People are usually very respectful, though there was one show we played where a guy told me to take my shirt off," the 20-something singer scowls. "I said I didn't think he would be asking me to do that if I were a guy. Then, the other guys in the band took off their shirts instead. Most of the people watching us cheered, and we had a good laugh."

The fact there is such a shortage of nationally recognized female-fronted bands in the rock scene is something Lindholm says deserves more than a quick, lighthearted response. A lifelong fan of female singers ranging from Pat Benatar to Joan Jett, she not only sees an audience for female-led bands, but also a prescient need for more examples of visible female singers.

"I think we do have a lot more girls who come out to the shows," says Lindholm. "They come up and say that they're glad to see a female singer. They say that that's something that they'd like to do, and they are inspired to see someone else doing it."

Taking on the challenge of being in the minority is not the only goal Lindholm and the group have set out to conquer. After releasing two solid records, constantly touring and gaining a core group of fans to support them wholeheartedly, one would think the group would be drained. Instead, the members seem to be even more energetic than ever, with a world domination attitude to boot.

"Our main goal is that we want to be able to live off of our music," says Lindholm. "None of us are working right now, and we are booked playing shows through July."

Most importantly to its fans, Rocking Horse Winner is driven by a desire to not only consistently improve its art, but also to give something back to its supporters.

"We want this to be our career, however far it goes," adds Lindholm, with a real sense of excitement. "Whatever happens, happens."

—Brian Peterson



FIVE QUESTIONS

gina young

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., and currently residing in New York's Lower East Side, Gina Young has been making her mark on the East Coast folk/punk/poetry scene and the college circuit for several years now. Despite a penchant for a twisted, cut-and-paste lyrical style full of inverted, radicalized nursery rhymes and an acoustic-guitar-meets-combat-boots approach, Young deftly transcends the obvious Ani DiFranco comparisons levied by the unimaginative. Her new album, *Intractable*, appears courtesy of 28 Days Records and was recorded by renowned New York engineer Hillary Johnson (Ramones, Misfits, Bonfire Madigan, Vitapup).

How important is the recording process in the grand scheme of your band? (Functional by any means necessary a la Bikini Kill, or integral and inseparable from the songwriting a la Radiohead?)
Recording is functional for me in the sense I am very committed to live performance. I frequently feel like technology is a barrier between myself and the listener. The engineer on *Intractable* (Johnson) is kick-ass on the technical end, but even she was down for scamming space and recording on the fly—in rehearsal studios, at a college and even in the bedroom of a girl she knew who has ProTools.

Is it possible in the 21st Century to be enthusiastic about sports or rock without being a caricature? Absolutely—just steer clear of the macho, "I'm a drunken, meathead jock" mentality.

Share your best private slang used by you or your friends. (For instance, Elizabeth from Boston calls weird fans who show up to shows with weird, random gifts for their favorite bands "Funny Valentines.")

I call those guys who obsessively collect vinyl and feel the need to lord their knowledge over everyone else "Train-spotters." If you have balls, you've "got moxy." I spell hot with two Ts.

Do you feel like you're part of a musical community, based on your region, or your aesthetic and sound?

I'm on the periphery of a lot of communities. Aesthetically, I'm all over the map. I'm a stylistic descendant of the folk and anti-folk movements, but you're far more likely to see me at a hardcore show or listening to riot grrrl, punk and hip hop. I'm definitely part of a feminist music community, but it's very elastic and spans multiple genres.

Do you feel you cater to a niche audience? If so, what's the most difficult thing about being in a band with such a dynamic?

What pisses me off is when people think being associated with a feminist audience is a *bad* thing. I know so many artists that are scared to death it would limit their music to communities that I am so proud to be a part of. I say, "bring on the ladyfests!"



The Stryder beyond high school ►

While the majority of high schoolers were trying to figure out who they are going to ask to the prom, the members of Long Island's The Stryder had different priorities this spring—namely, putting the finishing touches on their first full-length album.

The band's new Equal Vision release, *Jungle City Twitch*, demonstrates the band's growth since the release of its first record. This is no surprise considering the age of the members when their debut, *Masquerade in the Key of Crime* EP, was released in 2000.

"We wrote the songs on our first record when we were 16 years old, and the record didn't come out until we were about 18," says the driving force behind The Stryder, guitarist Peter Toh. "Even though it was great that the record did come out, it took so long, and we had grown so much in those years that the songs felt old to us when we played them. We feel differently about music now. At first we were too concerned with what people would think of our sound. Now we don't really care what people want to hear. We are going to play what we want to play."

The Stryder has firmly planted itself in this new philosophy, and the results are an improved version of a promising band. *Jungle City Twitch* is an amped and more defined ver-

sion of the band's already popular sound. The group's emo rock tradition is still present, just in a refreshing, more technically sound form.

Although this newest release shows Toh and company tapping deeper into their creativity, the music has not become slow and stiff in the process—a common mistake made by other bands of the genre.

"A lot of lyrics on the record were written out of anxiety and despair," admits Toh sincerely. "It's not a drowsy, down record though. It has as much energy and power as our last record, just on a different note."

The band's experiences between its first release and *Jungle City Twitch* have allowed the group to expand its horizons not only musically, but personally.

These days, Toh says, he and his bandmates have matured and prefer to be judged by their art, rather than scenester rules

or trendy mindsets.

"If you're going to judge us, judge us on our music," Toh says firmly to the band's naysayers. "Our philosophy is to shut off all the extra stuff and just give the music to those who want to hear."

—Brian Peterson





PUCKER UP

The Flaming Lips Kiss Expectations Goodbye

By Michael Coyne

Stephen Drozd, drummer and head tunesmith for the latest incarnation of The Flaming Lips, is leafing through the CDs in his carrying case. As he rattles off albums by The Police, Miles Davis, Black Sabbath, Merle Haggard, Marvin Gaye and Aphex Twin, you can start to piece together what inspired his own band's latest fascinating and confounding album, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*.

"This album, it's a lot like what we listen to," Drozd even confesses. "I've got a mix tape that has George Jones and then Squarepusher on it."

Such stark juxtaposition would be very odd coming from most people, but this is the drummer for the band known for trying just about anything. Once you've created an orchestra of car stereos and an album of four CDs meant to be played simultaneously, mixing genuine straight-no-chaser country with avant-garde electronic psychedelia doesn't sound any more dangerous than mixing mac and cheese.

The Flaming Lips have always been like the kid in pre-school who tried to pound the square peg in the round hole. Only, unlike their soon-to-be-medicated youthful counterpart, the members of the Lips consistently seem to make it fit.

Just don't ask them how they do it.

The Oklahoma City band readily confesses to having made its 18-year career rather accidentally. *Yoshimi* is just another one of those fascinating wrecks for fans to sift through, according to Drozd. The

wirey-haired drummer doesn't try to put up any fronts—he'll tell you plainly the music on *Yoshimi* wasn't premeditated.

Despite the title, it's by no means a concept album. Whatever was planned, he says, certainly had to be changed often. The band was recording an instrumental country and western soundtrack for a friend's documentary as well as dark, spacey, atmospheric pieces for singer Wayne Coyne's self-starring sci-fi flick, *Christmas on Mars*.

In the midst of this flurry of behind-the-scenes activity, the band began assembling some entirely computer-generated tracks with its long-time producer Dave Fridmann. Many of these tunes would evolve into the tracks found on *Yoshimi*.

"We had those extremes, which I thought was awesome," Drozd explains, referring to the fruits of the band's eclectic contract work. "It was really like the way we listen to music—just different things. But we did want to keep those things separate. We were just working away on all of them without knowing what the end result would be."

Vocalist Coyne describes the album as three separate piles of music forced together by sheer proximity and the daring, impulsive nature of the band.

Drozd seems less sure in trying to explain the process after the fact, though he says he is completely confident the various styles blend together well, forming a solid Lips album. ▶



"We've always had the weird tastes, the extreme range of what we like."

It's just that over the last couple of years we've been more comfortable with trying to actually put all those different types of things into our music."



"It probably just worked out because we weren't thinking about it," the drummer laughs. In the seven years it's taken The Flaming Lips to put out their last three albums they've undergone a mellowing in sheer force, but not in creativity.

Since guitarist Ronald Jones packed up his purple-hazed Jimmy Paige riffs, the band has been, for better or worse, trying to replace his huge sound with some gargantuan experimentation.

There was the parking lot orchestra involving a few dozen cars playing different music through their tape decks. Then there was 1997's *Zaireeka*, a four-CD album meant to be played all at once on four different stereos.

Perhaps the most successful of these edgy endeavors came in the form of *The Soft Bulletin*. This was The Flaming Lips reinvented to the delight of critics everywhere (and fans in Europe).

A synth and string-infused album sharing a few sad stories like a patchwork musical stitched together with melodies keeping listeners whistling all week, *The Soft Bulletin* was so good fans didn't care if it wasn't the Lips record they expected or the type of album suitable for a spontaneous road trip to Vegas.

Shortly after *The Soft Bulletin* was released, bassist Michael Ivins told music writers he believed the Lips had gone as far as they could go with the rock 'n roll format.

Yoshimi only backs up his words. The musical concoction is warm, comfortable and low-decibel. There's no urge to crank it on this latest Flaming Lips show. It's soft like Yo La Tengo but not nearly as airy because of all the electro squiggles and chirps. Ivins' bass playing is a great groove, meandering through the styles with a tuneful soft funk. Drozd, meanwhile, is a whiz whether he's playing (as a fan—especially when he's playing) or programming the beat. Coyne's lyrics, as on *The Soft Bulletin*, struggle to be more direct, tangible responses to life than "She uses Va-a-a-seline."

On *Yoshimi*, he pens dirges about robots learning to feel, robots who need to be killed, how death makes life so precious and how gosh-darn super summer makes him feel—weighty topics pondered with a childlike simplicity.

As Drozd explains, he and Coyne have good reason to turn out a more reflective, demure album. Whereas *The Soft Bulletin* was created in the midst of a slew of personal and professional struggles, *Yoshimi* came together under the shadow of the loss of a fan and a close friend.

"All the stuff of life creeps into what you're making," the 33-year-old explains. "We've all had rough times recently. Maybe it mellows things. But I think there's parts on *Yoshimi*, and some of the drums on *The Soft Bulletin*, that are pretty bombastic."

Drozd is quite fond of this new electronic music wonderland, citing an urge of his to blend Led Zep and Aphex Twin. His split-personality mix tape would be proud.

"What an exciting musical time when I have the ability to do something like that," he beams, noting he programmed most of the beats and sounds on the new record himself.

Ironically, Drozd is most enamored of his Roland drum machine—a tool he finds as versatile as his own arms and legs.

The Flaming Lips' interest in modern electronic music is a natural extension of listening to bands like Yes, Pink Floyd, a lot of kraut-Rock and a steady diet of weird shit. When pressed about the country and Americana influences, Drozd can't help but chuckle, unashamed at his band's wide range of tastes.

The fusion of country influences is representative of The Flaming Lips' position today—drawing from all wells, balancing reserve with free flow.

"I probably like every country record put out before 1976," he grins. "We've always had the weird tastes, the extreme range of what we like. It's just that over the last couple of years we've been more comfortable with trying to actually put all those different types of things into our music."



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art for art's sake

Forget fame and fortune—alt-country chanteuse Neko Case's devotion to her music is simply a labor of love.

"pou can't get ahead of yourself and let yourself think that being in a band is super hard," Neko Case warns aspiring musicians. "Do not pressure yourself right off the bat. Focus on enjoying what you are practicing and it will come to you and it will feel really good."

Against a soundtrack of thunderstorms outside in her newly adopted hometown of Chicago, the Tacoma-born redhead sounds like she's in good spirits. With her latest record, *Blacklisted*, set for release this summer on Bloodshot Records, Case is a hot commodity these days. "I'll have those nights where I am feeling really cruddy, and then I will go onstage and the audience will totally cheer me up," she shares. "It is not like I am surprised that would ever happen, but it's always such a pleasant surprise. Being in a band is the coolest thing ever."

For one thing, she has a respectable rock resumé. From the tender age of 18, Case has played drums in several Northwest punk bands including Cub and the Vancouver trio Maow. She also currently moonlights in the of-the-moment hot rocker band The New Pornographers.

Like a caterpillar blossoming into a butterfly, she left her place behind the skins in 1997 with the release of her solo debut, *The Virginian*. Emerging into the spotlight in the role of singer/songwriter, Case drew from the growing, tight-knit alt-country scene. She followed with 2000's critically acclaimed *Furnace Room Lullaby*—an intoxicating blend of Patsy Cline, Alex Chilton and X, touring non-stop on her own and opening for folks like Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, pricking the ears of a whole new fanbase.

"We have a mixed audience," Case reports delightedly. "We get young people, old people, people in the middle, people who are into punk rock, people who normally don't go to shows. Sometimes we get grandparents who show up—that's always a highlight. We love seeing grandparents at our shows."

There is just something about her voice, tinged with a wisdom uncommon for her youthful nature, appealing to people across all musical spectrums. *Blacklisted* is a stunning album, even if some *Furnace Room* loyalists still can't decide which album deserves the crown. Case sounds at home in between the watery guitar pickings and tumbling tumbleweed tremolo, a dusty-booted heroine from another time where life was simpler if not less devastating.

Despite this, Case herself is nebulous about how to categorize her sound. ("It's kind of country, it's kind of rock... It's weird," she offers.) Going the solo route can be an intimidating venture, even for veterans of full bands, but her resolution remains intact. Of garnering criticism as a solo artist, she seems ambivalent.

"It doesn't really bother me," she says, biting her lip. "In the beginning I was a little bit thin-skinned, but then I figured out how things worked."

Case lights up anytime she talks about her chosen path. A true artist focused on her art rather than its ripple effects of fame and fortune, the singer is steadfast in her belief the joy of music is its own reward—"even if you just end up playing in your bedroom."

"If you find that you're being catty about other people in bands, it is probably a good indicator that

By Anna Goldfarb

you are supposed to be in a band," she advises to those thinking about a career in music. "You can take that negative energy and just throw it into being in a band, and you will be way more accepting of other people, and you won't feel that cruddy jealousy."

On *Blacklisted*, Case battled the negative energy by enlisting the help of an impressive roster of friends. Joining her in the studio are longtime collaborators Jon Rauhouse and Tom V. Ray. She also called in Dallas Good (The Sadies), Joey Burns and John Convertino (Calexico), Howe Gelb (Giant Sand), Brian Connolly (Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet, Atomic 7), Kelly Hogan and Mary Margaret O'Hara. While these collaborations and a full touring schedule undoubtedly helped expedite Case's growth as a songwriter, she doesn't forget to credit her surroundings as well. Although her roots in the Pacific Northwest still serve as song fodder and points of nostalgia, she has since set up camp in Chicago—a lightening rod for the *No Depression* alt-country scene.

"Living in Chicago is great because everyone here plays music, and it feels good to be in a community," says Case. "When I moved to Canada, the government supports the arts. If you are in a band or are an artist you would get a grant to play music. Here in America,

"If you find that you're being catty about other people in bands, it is probably a good indicator that you are supposed to be in a band."

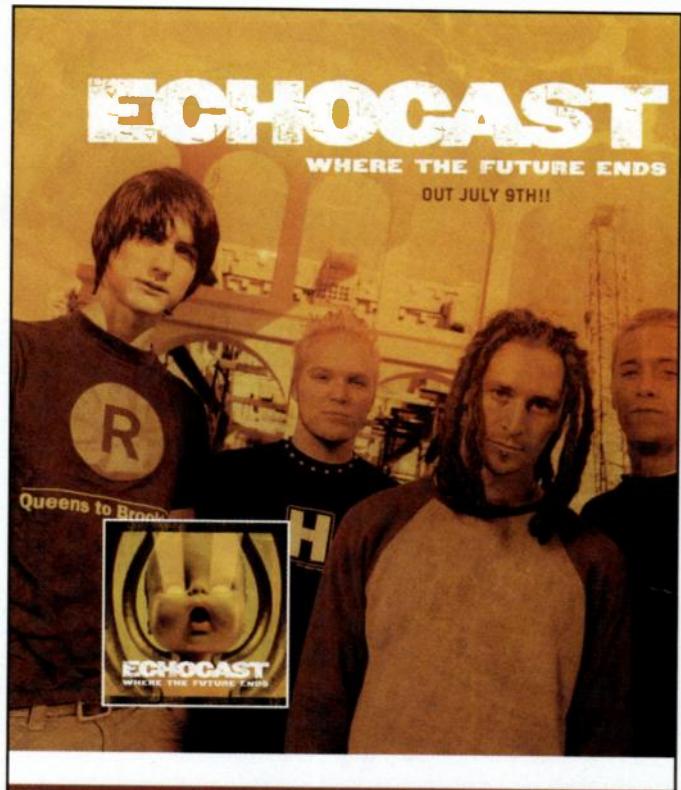


since we don't have that, I feel like, 'is my profession valid or not?' However, living here in Chicago, I do not feel like I am on the outside because many people here are doing it. And, everybody knows each other. It is incredibly nurturing."

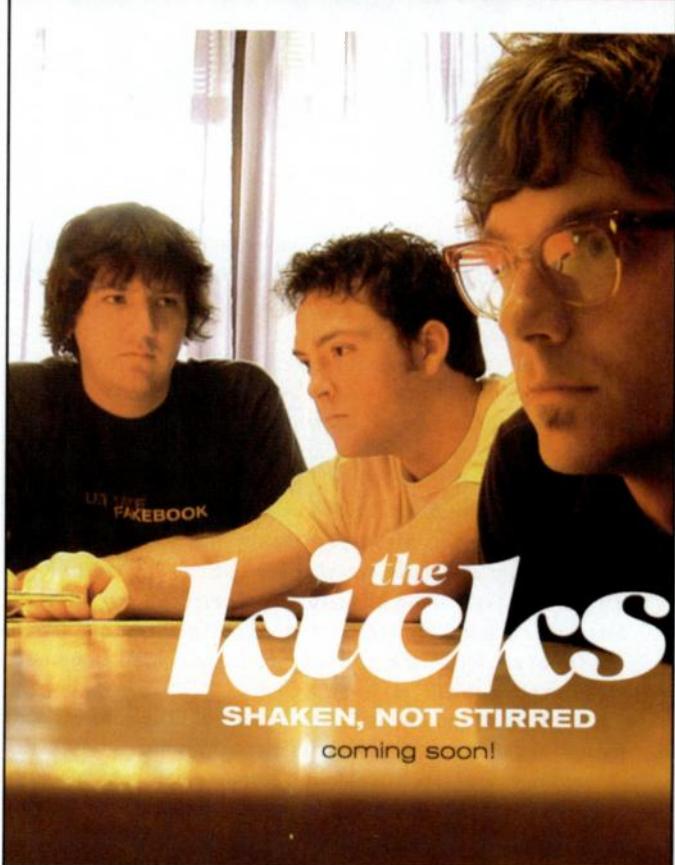
Besides the nurturing environment, the key to Case's drive is an unwavering commitment to her craft. While her music career hasn't quite turned her into a millionaire, Case says her tenacity has paid off, leaving her confident and happy with her choices. As she jokes, there are perks to being your own boss.

"Being a musician gives me a sense of freedom that is always talked about," she shares. "But, any kind of creative endeavor you do will give you that feeling. People only have one life—well, some people maybe have more than one life—but since I don't really know, I have to make the most out of this one life."

Smiling, Case concludes dutifully, "I want to make sure that I am not cheating myself." ■



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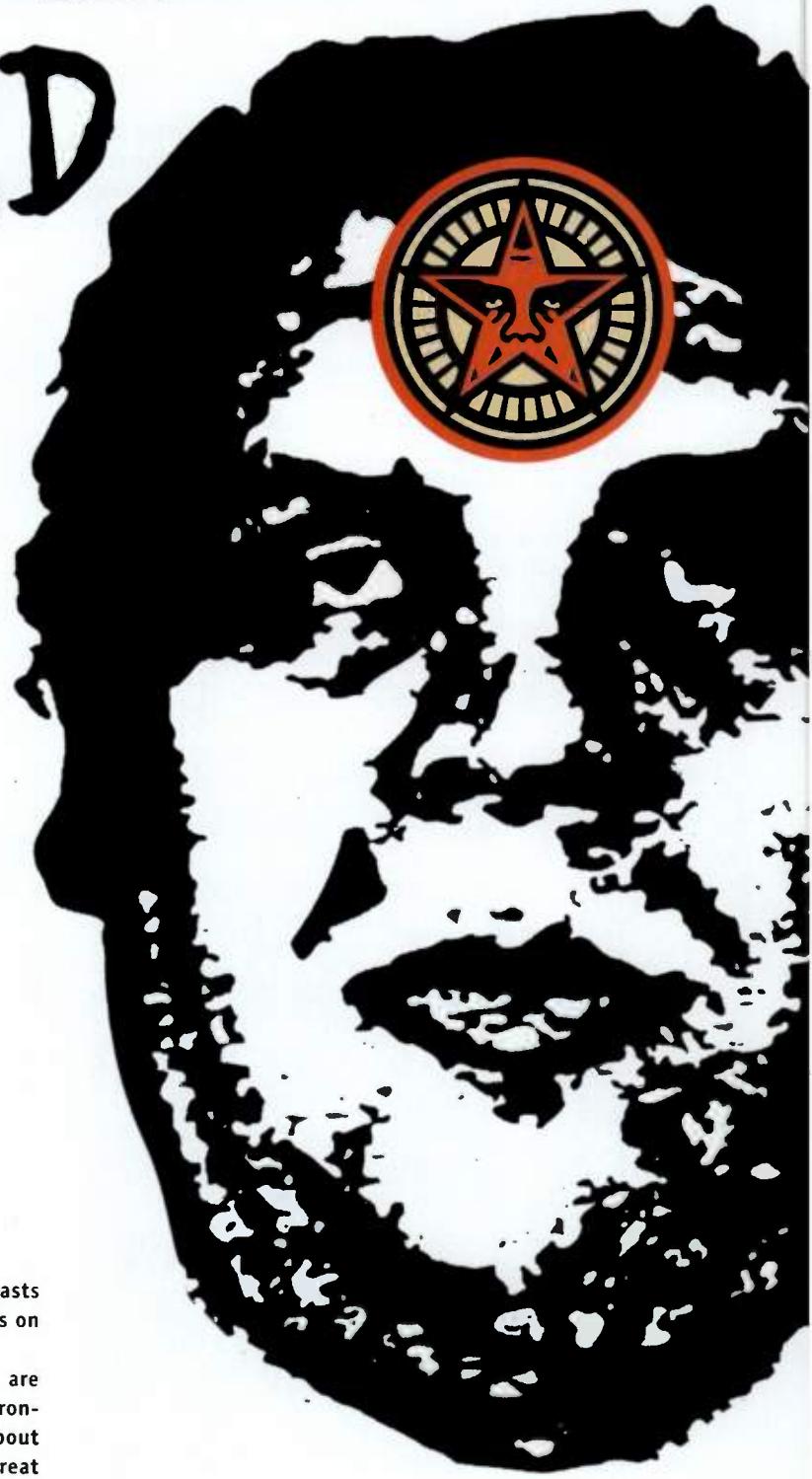


SHEPARD FAIREY HAS A POSSE

I met Dave Grohl at Coachella, which was cool," boasts Shepard Fairey. "He told me he had one of my stickers on his bong back, like, in 1990."

The sticker he speaks of is a familiar one to those who are inclined to pay attention to detail and their surrounding environment. Trust me, you've seen it before. It's black and white, about 2.5 inches square in size, bearing the upper torso of the late great wrestler Andre the Giant. In one corner it reads, "Andre the Giant has a posse." In the other side corner, his weight and height are listed. Since the first lighthearted sticker was printed in 1989, this novel creation of Shepard Fairey has exploded into a global phenomenon: a website (www.obeygiant.com), a clothing company, a store in Tokyo and a soon-to-be-released CD compilation. It has also helped bring unprecedented acceptance and mainstream popularity to art forms and styles typically relegated to graf spots and wheatpasted walls.

Studying at the Rhode Island School of Design in the early '90s, Fairey began honing his skills as a graphic artist well before attending the university. Coming from a small community in South Carolina, he first discovered his knack for design making bootleg t-shirts of his favorite punk bands.



FROM GUERRILLA GRAF ART TO CD-ROM— ONE MAN'S TAKE ON CASH FROM CHAOS
BY GORDON DOWNS

"When I got into punk rock I started making paper cut stencils of different album covers to make my own t-shirts," recalls Fairey.

"Because growing up in South Carolina I couldn't find any of the t-shirts I wanted. I was so into that stuff that I really wanted to represent the culture. So that was how I started doing all the high-contrast one color stuff that my style has kinda developed into. It's like my trademark now."

Running his own design/PR firm out of Los Angeles (Black Market Visual Communications) with his partner in crime David Kinsey, Fairey finds himself extremely busy these days, dividing his workload between the commercial artists he works with through Black Market and his own personal endeavor, the OBEY GIANT sticker/poster campaign.

As Black Market continues to grow, so does its overhead. This dynamic keeps Fairey pretty involved with the company. To hear him describe it, however, one quickly gets the sense the artist has found a symbiotic balance between his design firm, his clothing line and his fine art career. Currently he's been contributing articles to *Tokion* magazine, and is working on an overview of the history of stickers as a medium for graffiti, which will appear in *Graphatism* magazine.

"It's like a small book," says Fairey. "It's like a \$10 magazine, and it's probably the best graffiti magazine on the planet. So, I gotta write something dope for it!"

With his Obey Giant campaign stretching around the globe, it's easy for Shepard to find himself with offers from acts here Stateside, as well as relevant bands from overseas. Recently, the artist was approached by Warner Brothers to design a box set of seven-inch singles for Swedish hell-yes-we-like-The-Stooges sensation The Hives.

Although his taste in music these days tends to be more eclectic, leaning a bit more towards politically charged music, his upbringing from the get-go was wrought with manipulating the system—a sentiment Fairey attributes to his formative years in the punk and skateboarding scene.

"When I was 14 and I got into skateboarding and punk rock, it was like 'Bam,'" recalls Fairey. "All at once I just couldn't get enough of punk rock. I bought every record I could possibly get! They had this thing called 'the no-risk guarantee' at the record store near my house. So every week I would take my allowance and go buy a cassette, go home and tape it, and then take it back the next week and say, 'I really didn't like this. It was a little too heavy and weird for me.' Eventually, they'd be like, 'Well, why are you getting the Circle Jerks if you didn't like the Dead Kennedys?'"

After his initial exploratory phase, Fairey says he soon became engrossed in the political messages of bands like the aforementioned Dead Kennedys, known for attacking the government and the moral majority. As much as social politics entered the young Fairey's agenda, this commitment to the idea of the alternative, of new, off-center perspectives, continues to inform all of the artist's work, whether it's designing a tour poster for Modest Mouse or a new storefront for Urban Outfitters.

When pressed for one of his personal favorite examples, Fairey recalls his work spearheading promo street art for Radiohead's *Amnesiac*.

"I came up with this idea for this campaign with a sticker that was in the same typeface as album cover that just said 'Remembering' with the Radiohead crying minotaur character next to it—a red sticker with white lettering," he explains excitedly. ▶





WHEN I WAS 14
AND I GOT INTO
SKATEBOARDING AND
PUNK ROCK,
IT WAS LIKE
'BAM'
ALL AT ONCE
I JUST COULDN'T
GET ENOUGH !!!



"That sticker would go on stop signs, underneath the word 'stop.' Since red, black and white were the primary colors on the album, it made perfect sense. It didn't say Radiohead—it didn't even say *Amnesiac*. But if you were a Radiohead fan, as soon as you saw the name of the album, then you were like, 'oh, fuck yeah!'"

Later this summer, Fairey will be promoting a release closer to home, as his Obey Giant campaign and work in the rock world will soon serve as the catalyst for a compilation CD, featuring bands down with the Giant and current members of the posse.

"My *Giant Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* compilation contains a bunch of bands that are into Obey Giant—like The Hives, The (International) Noise Conspiracy, Bouncing Souls, Modest Mouse, Jello Biafra and the Icarus Line among others," Fairey shares. "It'll be an enhanced CD-ROM with video of me putting up posters, a poster gallery with all my different posters and commentary on each of the different styles and subject matter I use. It'll also include a link straight to my site, instructions on how to make your own stencils and downloadable illustrator files for stencils. So it's pretty cool, and it's really comprehensive."

Comprehensive indeed, with just about everything a guerrilla artist would need to start his own campaign. There are those who are concerned, however, this sort of packaging of traditionally fringe and underground art forms—to say nothing of Fairey's burgeoning mainstream appeal—runs the risk of soiling a good thing. The concern isn't without reason, as even Fairey can admit. Mainstream popularity and sudden marketability have a way of decontextualizing art and running integrity into the depressing parade from Nirvana to Stone Temple Pilots, from Che Guevara to the "Yo Quiero Taco Bell" dog.

Fairey reasons he is anything but a sell-out. Rather, he argues, he has looked towards himself for guidance, avoiding any sort of predisposed Puritanism. The California-based designer contends despite whatever criticism the biters and haters might wing his way, his work and DIY ethos have remained true to the game and will continue to do so in years to come.

Despite his immense portfolio of album covers, concert posters and album packaging, Fairey says he is still in search of his finest moment—a sticker or poster or album cover remembered forever in the annals of rock art.

"I'm still waiting for my band that's analogous to the way the Velvet Underground was for Warhol," pines Fairey. "Where, it's like, you get to do a great album cover that is synonymous with a band, and it's a groundbreaking band."

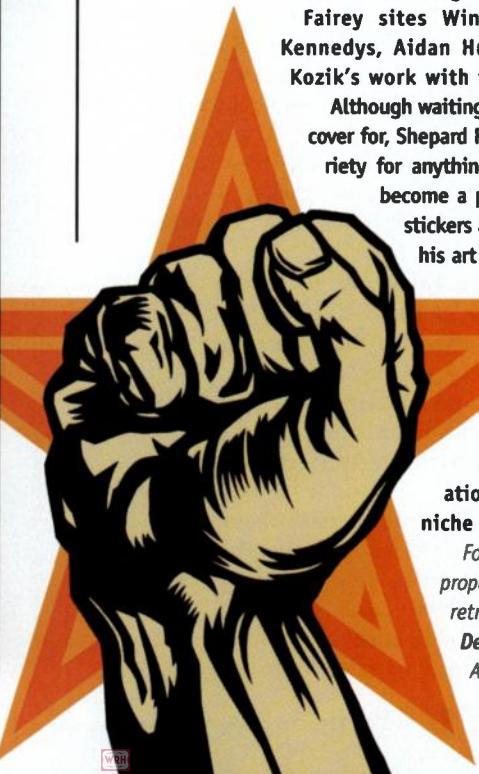
Fairey sites Winston Smith's work with the Dead Kennedys, Aidan Hughes' work with KMFDM and Frank Kozik's work with the Melvins as close examples.

Although waiting for a great band to design a great album cover for, Shepard Fairey does not need nor want such notoriety for anything but personal reasons. He has already become a pop culture icon through his Obey Giant stickers and posters. Stretching around the globe, his art can be seen in just about every country,

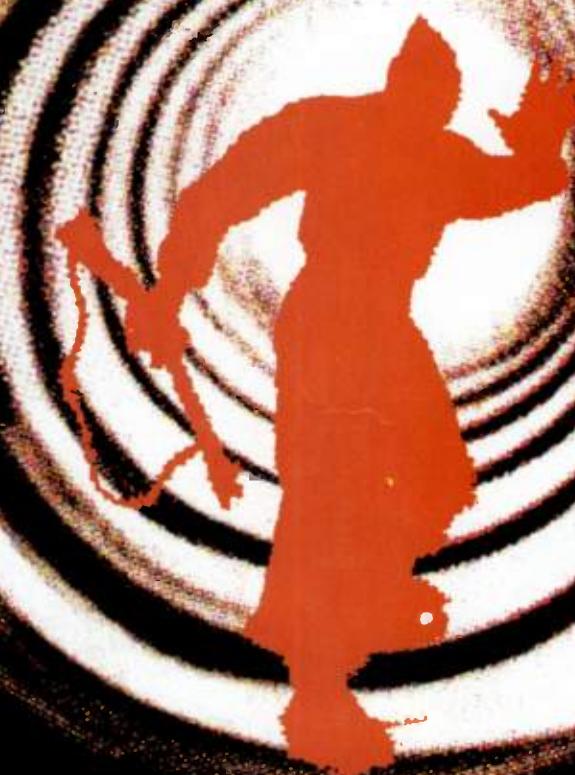
on every continent—and almost on every phone booth or newspaper street box.

In a pristine gallery or posted somewhere on the urban streets of the city, his stenciled creations are steadily carving out a large niche in pop culture.

For you mobile types, Shepard Fairey's Obey propaganda 1989-2002 will be celebrated in a retrospective exhibit entitled *Overnight Delivery* at the BLKMRKT Gallery in Los Angeles from August 8 to September 11.



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THE BEAT HAPPENING

olympia's own
SLEATER KINNEY
Exound on surviving
the Media Blitz

Story by Reed Jackson
Photos by Robin Laananen

Let's face it, once *Time* magazine gets a hold of you, it's pretty much over.

Think about it.

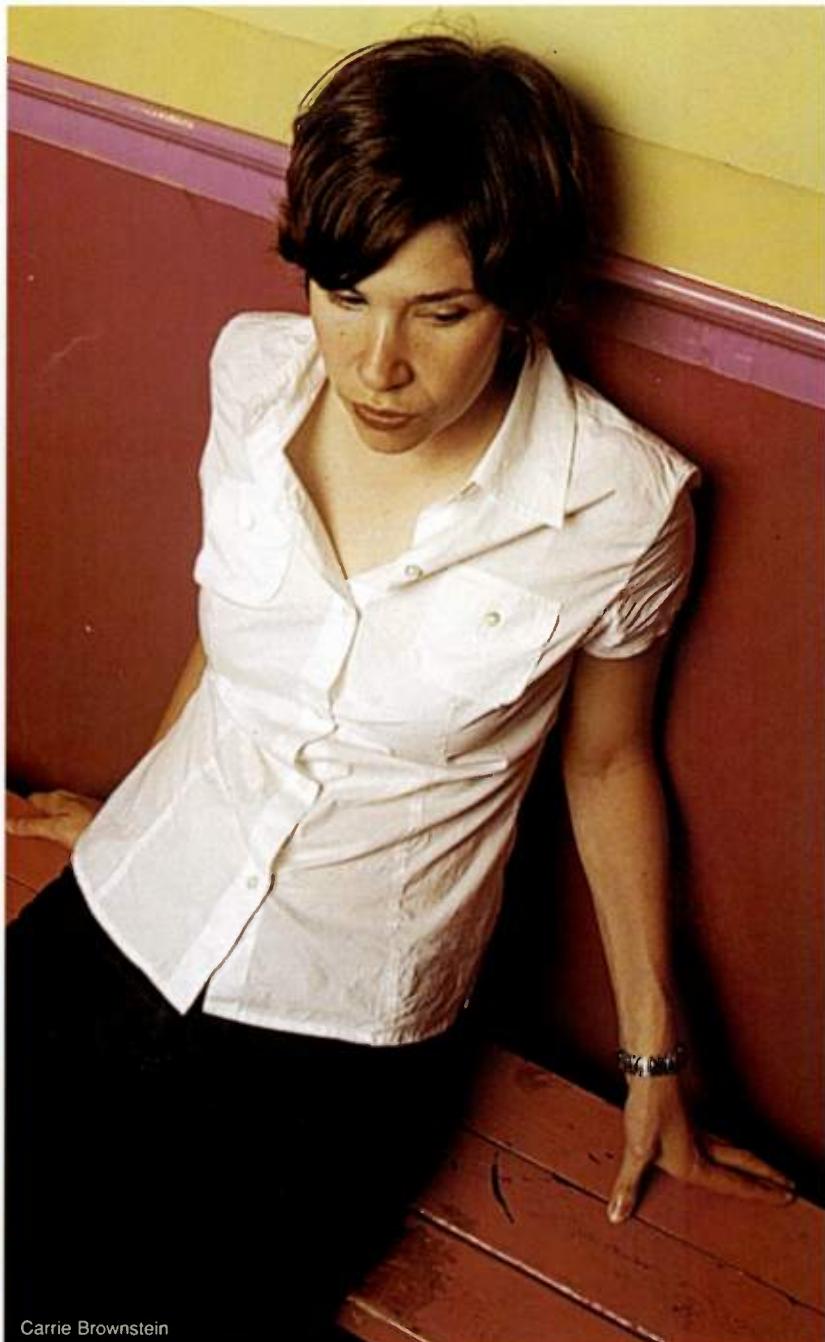
Eddie Vedder and grunge, Timothy MacVeigh, Al Gore. They've all fallen target to *Time*'s tardy gaze and quickly lost any relevance they were lucky enough to have left.

"The only people I know who read *Time* do so in their dentists' offices," laughs Sleater-Kinney guitarist Corin Tucker. "My parents aren't square enough to read it."

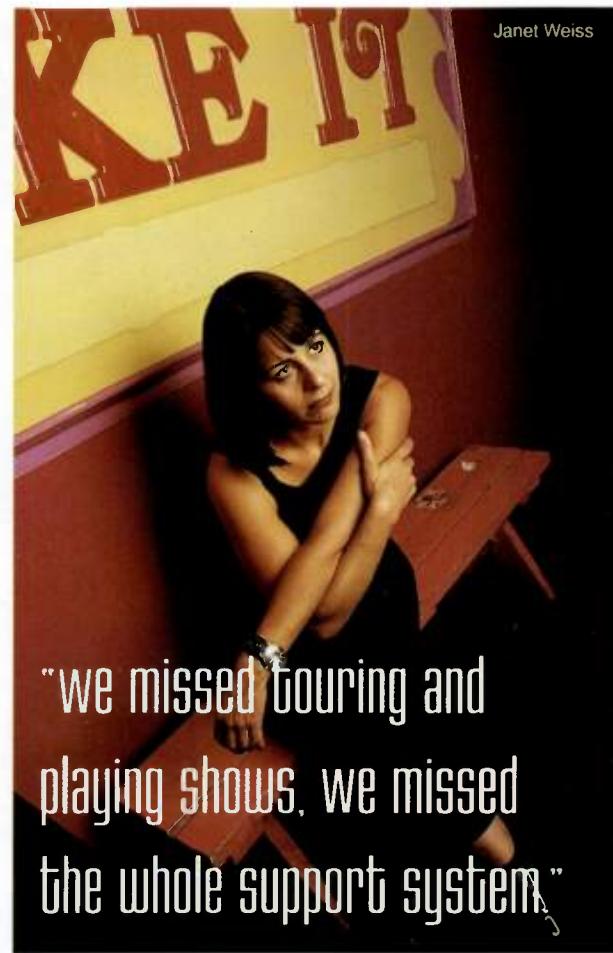
So what the hell are Tucker, guitarist Carrie Brownstein and drummer Janet Weiss doing back on the scene, armed with a demanding and dangerous new record?

For those of you who missed it (this should cover just about everyone) the Pacific Northwest's three most celebrated ladies found themselves under *Time*'s scrutiny sometime last year, in a piece assigning them the august title of "America's Best Rock Band." »

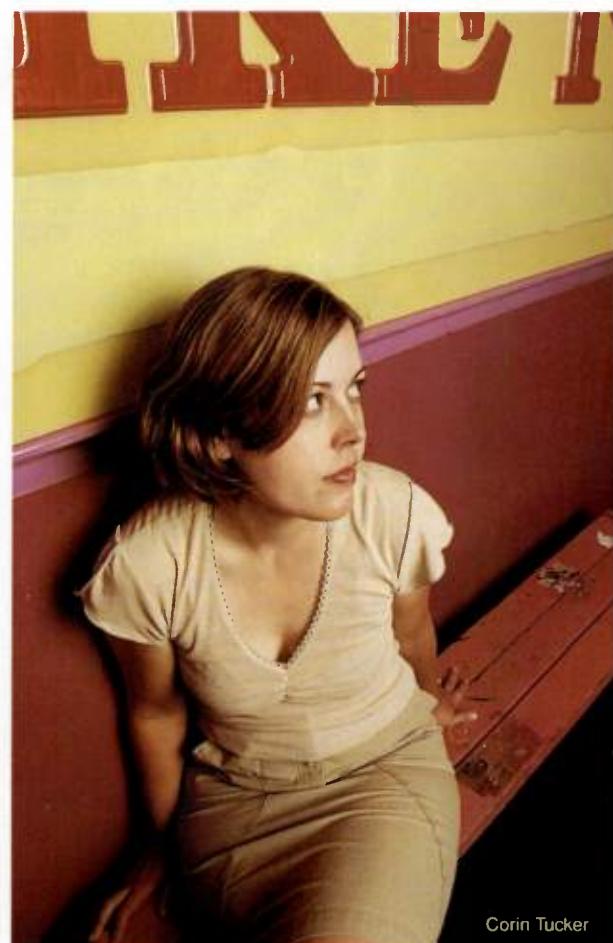
"we just missed everything. The writing, the playing together—the time off just really made us appreciate being in a band. The break was not planned or spelled out in any way, so we just began again."



Carrie Brownstein



Janet Weiss



Corin Tucker

Though this event did have fringe benefits such as freaking out arch-square Bryant Gumbel on camera, it, by all appearances, put the last nail in the coffin on one of the nation's flagship Riot Grrrl bands. Everything seemed arranged for a comfortable parting of ways. There were the massive life changes and relocation—Janet and Corin both moved to Portland, leaving Carrie in Olympia.

And, oh yeah, Corin got married and had a kid. This brought on the tell-tale hiatus from touring. Finally, there was 2000's *All Hands on the Bad One*, marked by much of the band's distinctive flair, but marred by an aesthetic dead end of self-referential, excessively distanced pop fluff.

Even the Grrrl movement seemed to have deserted them—Kathleen Hanna is busy with the dance-dance revolution of Le Tigre, while the only other all-female band in the national spotlight is the shallower-than-a-wading pool Donnas.

So again, what in the wide world of sports is Sleater-Kinney doing in Seattle today, posing for photo shoots and kicking off a series of shows in support of its fierce and uncompromising latest opus, *One Beat*?

From the refreshingly shadowed confines of Seattle's opulent Chop Suey bar amid much bulky photo equipment and complicated lighting devices, Sleater-Kinney attempts to account for its recent doings.

"We just missed everything," shrugs Tucker with a slight twinkle in her eyes and a demure lilt to her voice. "The writing, the playing together—the time off just really made us appreciate being in a band. The break was not planned or spelled out in any way. So we just began again."

Brownstein agrees, as Tucker cites the old adage of how the absence makes the heart grow fonder.

"We missed touring and playing shows," says Brownstein. "We missed the whole support system."

Talk then turns to the band's upcoming itinerary; shows in New York, Europe and Japan. As the women become excited about the prospect of foreign travel and audiences, the chemistry between the three and the enthusiasm binding them together becomes so apparent, one might expect the cameras' light meters to start twitching wildly.

The three members of Sleater-Kinney have worked hard to achieve this place they are standing in right now, laughing amongst themselves while flashbulbs pop, on the verge of playing a sunny outdoor festival in Seattle's gay/hipster Capitol Hill neighborhood.

With the hyper-intense media spotlight surrounding the release of 1997's vaunted *Dig Me Out*, the band found itself in an unenviable situation, one reminiscent of a similar Northwest dilemma known for trans-

forming the area not a half decade before. Sleater-Kinney suddenly found itself in the role of the regional, insular band thrust into the harsh arena of public view. Even now, with five years and three more records under the bridge, the band still seems somewhat bewildered by the whole circus show.

"I'm still not sure why we were singled out," muses Tucker. "There were so many other great bands that were part of the Olympia rock scene. When we first got some press for *Call the Doctor*, we were like, 'We've made it!' We never expected the amount of attention we got from *Dig Me Out*, and it was very difficult to deal with, honestly."

The trio's reaction to these thorny problems played out over the course of its following two records, 1999's difficult and brooding *The Hot*

Rock and the following year's aforementioned self-aware pop outing, *All Hands on the Bad One*. Both records amply represent the drastic steps Sleater-Kinney took in dealing with its identity.

The Hot Rock captures a band at odds with itself and with its image. The fragmented melodies and opaque chords therein speak of a confused band trying to escape from the rapacious signature sound for which it is famous. An awkward sense of poetry and an inherent feel of sealed darkness won as many fans as it alienated.

"*Hot Rock* was an incredibly hard album for us to write because of all the stuff that had gone on with the previous one," Tucker recounts. "There was a lot of pressure and tension, and that made us really labor over and analyze the songs. We almost didn't make it through as a band."

JACKPOT
» SHINY THINGS

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Les Rock Magazine/France

"JACKPOT MAY JUST END UP BEING
HUGE IF THEY DON'T WATCH IT."
LA Weekly

"ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S
GREATEST UNKNOWN BANDS."
New York Times

NEW ALBUM IN STORES AUGUST 27th

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This explains a lot about *All Hands on the Bad One*, a record where breezy, off-the-cuff tone and sunny harmonies serve as a complete about-face in style, delivery and mood from its preceding work. Featuring transparent—yet politically charged—lyrics about the experience of being in a heavily loaded female rock band such as Sleater-Kinney coupled with bubbly—yet sharp—backing vocals, the album overtly recalled 80s corrosive pop outfits such as The Go-Go's.

"In order to keep it together as a band, we decided we just had to completely relax," Tucker shares, shedding some light on the process behind *Bad One*. "We really just had to go into the studio and try to recapture how to make a song that was natural, that was fun and that wasn't thought about too much."

Many hailed it as a return to form for the band, while others were disappointed with what they perceived as a total retreat from deeper waters. For the members of Sleater-Kinney, the strong and contradictory opinions levied towards their work stand as a positive sign.

"Talking to people and reading different reviews, it seems that some people really like *The Hot Rock* and some people really like *All Hands*, which is a good thing, I think," Tucker reflects. "Something that everyone agrees upon is usually not very cool, is it?"

If the band does indeed relish discussion and disagreements, then it will truly appreciate the rhetoric, hyperbole and invective sure to eddy up around its latest record, *One Beat*.

Sleater-Kinney makes sure we know it from song one—the title track of the album—this is a band out for blood.

A stumbling, impossibly off-kilter drumbeat declares hunting season open, quickly aligning itself with a stop-and-gulp guitar line sounding perfectly at home seething through Gang of Four's predatory nervous system. It's sheer jugular tension being constructed here, and it's absolutely unlike anything the band has done before.

"We planned to take a lot of risks with this record and really branch out," Tucker offers plainly—a painfully obvious utterance to anyone who has heard the record.

Following the first track, *One Beat* veers off to tackle a multitude of forms and themes, some hinted at previously, others completely unexpected. *Hot Rock* acolytes will find solace in the cloistered, hermetic shadings of such tracks as "Combat Rock" and "The Remainder," while *Bad One* fans will thrill to the new-wave shorthand of "Combat Rock," "Oh!" and "Prisstina." What makes the more familiar explorations surpass previous forays is the headlong rush the women make into each song, embracing its inner logic and requirements. Though the results are occasionally uneven and seldom free from mishap, never before has a Sleater-Kinney record sounded so cocksure and free of all restraint.

Much of this can be explained through the band's decision to utilize outside voices to augment certain songs, most tellingly the kabuki-like sensibility of Stephen Trask, the man responsible for the torchy, transsexual rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

"Stephen and we are mutual admirers of each other, and he wanted us to write songs for a movie he was working on, but our schedules didn't work out," Tucker explains. "But we wanted to work with him, so we sent him the tape of 'Prisstina,' and he did the keyboards and backup vocals. It added this whole weird disco dimension to the song that's really inspiring."

This incident may have been the impetus behind the other embellishments found lurking in *One Beat*—the vampy keyboards of Pigeonhed's Steve Fisk peppered throughout, the brash trumpets of Russ Scott and the woozy theremin of Weiss's bandmate in Quasi, Sam Coomes. Tucker feels the extra instruments served a definite purpose.

"We needed to develop different textures on this record, to really draw out unexpected elements from each song," she says with remarkable vision. "This far down the line, we really couldn't be doing the same old Sleater-Kinney record.."

Though many fans will be shocked by Sleater-Kinney's newfound eclecticism, Tucker insists such facets were there from the beginning. According to her, *One Beat* serves more as an expansion and testing of limits for the band, not an all-out bid for reinvention.



"We've always sort of had a hyperactive sense of melodrama and an adventurous spirit," Tucker grins. "But I don't think we would have been able to collaborate with others to such a degree earlier in our career. We are fortunate enough to be more relaxed and have more fun as a band now."

The ultimate evidence of Sleater-Kinney's current place is supplied by the most striking and surprising songs on *One Beat*, the rockers. Notice this term is not preceded by "punk" or "pop" tags.

Blistering firestorms such as "Light Rail Coyote," "Step Aside" and "Sympathy" carry themselves as unabashedly full-bore classic rawk, in the swaggeringly testosterone-laden vein of The Stones and The Doors. On these songs, Tucker transforms her usually high-pitched quaver into a deep, come-hither bellow, while Brownstein's guitar and Weiss's drums pound the bejeezus out of each other, along with listeners' stereos. Without spoiling too much, it can be said the slide guitar does make an appearance.

As for the newly found conventional rock chops, the band chalks it up to referencing latent influences present since day one. Tucker dismisses the oddity of a defiantly gender-conscious and punkishly ethical band appropriating a stridently masculine, hedonistic genre.

"We've been jamming together a long time now, and I guess childhood memories are starting to manifest themselves, that's all," she laughs.

Whatever the reasons, this move towards acknowledgment of the music's roots signals the best hope for Sleater-Kinney as a continuing, functional and important band. Though the bluesy "Sympathy" and "Light Rail Coyote" ably address traditional preoccupations such as loss and redemption and sex and geography, respectively, "Step Aside" grapples with more pertinent political issues such as feminine empowerment and political violence. Though these may be familiar themes for the band, they seem capable of really taking flight for the first time here.

The unaffected stomp of Brownstein and Weiss seems to make Tucker's artless lyrics become less self-conscious and more demanding. "Step Aside" impeccably captures the incendiary marriage of cheap, boneheaded riffs and blatant agitprop so well exemplified by The MC5.

Tucker attributes the loose potential stored in the song to an ambivalent maturity.

"I'm not naive enough anymore to think that music can actually incite change," she confides bluntly, but without cynicism. "I think there still is value to a protest song, even if it only creates a discussion or some sort of cultural activism down the line."

Later the same night, a large crowd of older fans, young girls, drag queens and drunk indie-rockers are more than willing to activate for Sleater-Kinney.

As the smiling women kick into a howling version of The Doors' "Hello, I love You," people cheer, dance and jump. Perched 10 feet in the air on a baseball backstop adjoining the concert fence, a black, transgendered fan screams, "I want to have your baby!"

Luckily for this sister and for the ladies of Sleater-Kinney, the *Time* magazine article didn't turn out to be an obituary piece afterall.

A breezy, electric summer night has taken over the outside festival roughly a half hour before Tucker, Brownstein and Weiss take the stage. The crowd has swelled to some type of thousand, though it's difficult to make any accurate estimate as the throngs in attendance have oozed formlessly onto chairs, newspaper boxes, benches, sports field fixtures and various curves and nooks. Minutes before set time, the band is informed the sound system will need enough power to push the music nearly 10 blocks to accommodate the festival.

An excitable stage tech scurries across the makeshift platform, flashing some sort of signal to one of the sound people. The gear can meet the demand, it's decided.

The members of Sleater-Kinney seem devilishly pleased to try out their new tunes under such a cranked-up-up-and-around conditions.

"Words and Guitars?"

They've got it.

"In order to keep it together as a band, we decided we just had to completely relax,

we really just had to go into the studio and try to recapture how to make a song that was natural, that was fun and that wasn't thought about too much."

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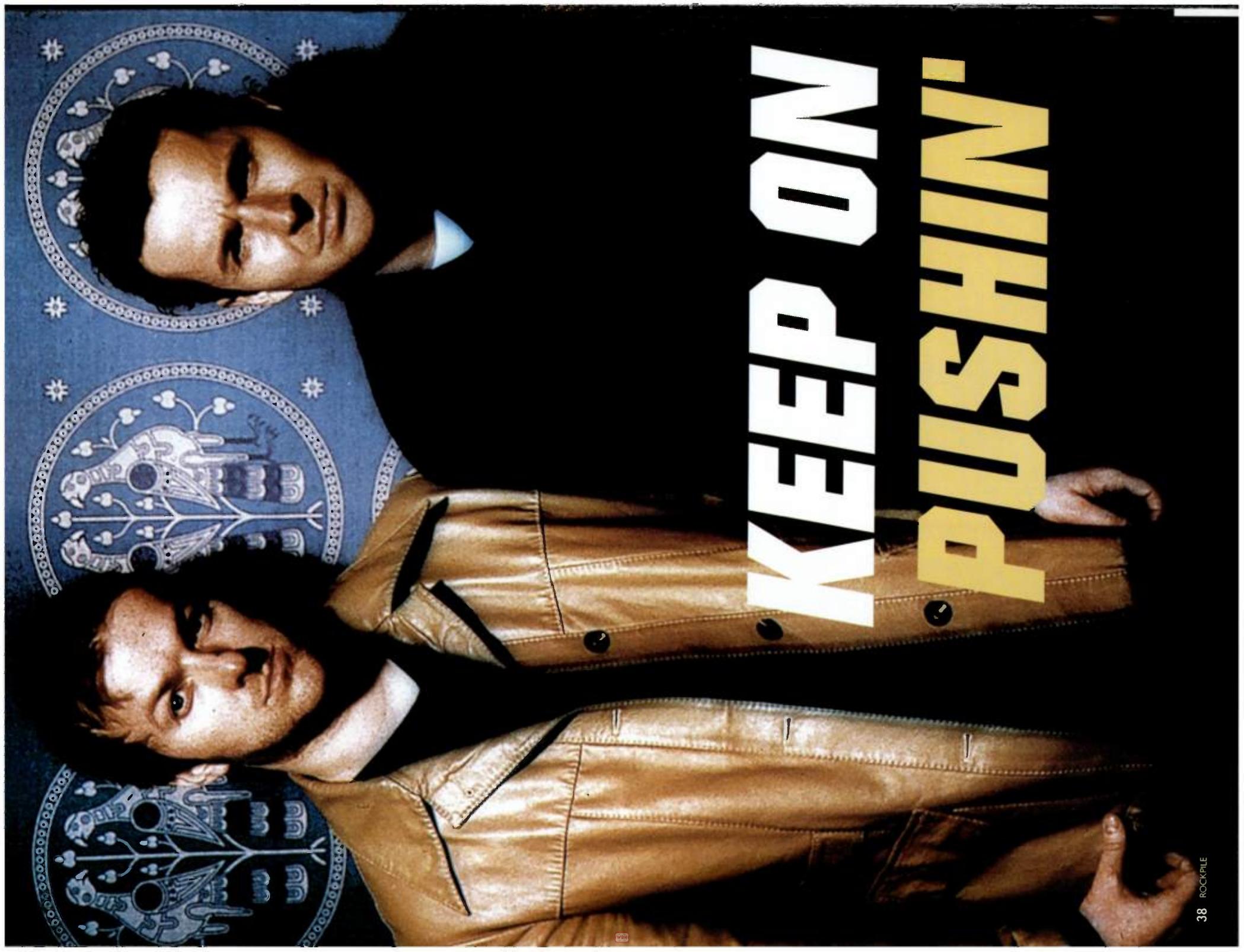


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A photograph of two men in shiny gold leather jackets. The man on the left is looking directly at the camera, while the man on the right is looking slightly away. They are positioned against a dark blue background featuring a repeating circular pattern of stylized trees and flowers.

KEEP ON
PUSHIN'



THE U.K.'s DOVES OFFER A SURVIVOR'S BROADCAST OF NORTHERN SOUL

BY JOE SWEENEY

**"DAY AFTER DAY
AND THE LIFE GOES ON/
AND I TRY AND SEE
THE GOOD IN EVERYONE/
IF I EVER FIND
MYSELF HERE AGAIN/
I'LL GIVE EVERYTHING"**

THE haunting closing statement of Doves' wondrous debut record, *Lost Souls*, reflects the album as a whole—a strong, life-affirming mantra of faith. In fact, the song proved to be a grand indicator of things to come from the Manchester, England, trio.

An aerial shot of a dark, brooding landscape graces the cover of *The Last Broadcast*, the latest epic recording from the band. At first glance, the blackened photo seems lifeless, a symbol of an unending, directionless sadness. Upon closer inspection you'll find the sun, struggling to break free from the shadow of a charcoal cloud. It's the perfect visualization of the trio's often misinterpreted sound—spacey, introspective, orchestral rock covering some of life's most dour offerings.

What separates Doves from its mopey compatriots is the tendency to write shimmering messages of hope, shamelessly uncloaked at some point in every song, without fail.

"People were always telling us we were downbeat," says Jez Williams, who formed Doves in 1998 with twin brother Andy and Jimi Goodwin after the deterioration of their electronica-influenced band Sub Sub in 1997. "It isn't like that at all. It's all about fighting and getting out of your situation. It's got so much hope to it. I think we had the same problem that The Smiths had. People tagged them as miserable, but they needed to look deeper. There was so much joy there. The music was just Northern soul."

If *Lost Souls* had been unbearably miserable, nobody would have blamed Doves. The second half of the '90s was the stage for a staggering, seemingly insurmountable time of tragedy for the trio. First, while still recording as Sub Sub in 1996, the band's studio burned down—hours of work and hundreds of dollars of equipment perished in the blaze. This led to the eventual demise of Sub Sub the following year. Amidst the turmoil, the band forged ahead as Doves, only to be faced by the death of their friend and mentor, Rob Gretton, in 1999.

Instead of drowning in their tears, Williams and company took the opposite approach on *Souls*. It put an emboldened image of a backlit boxer on the cover, acting as a metaphor for the album's ultimate message.

"The last thing *Lost Souls* was about was wallowing in your own self pity," Andy explains. "If you check out our live show, the ideas of the record are more apparent. Our shows are joyful, upbeat and fun." ➤



**"THE FIRST RECORD WAS
SORT OF MISUNDERSTOOD
BY THE MEDIA BUT WE DON'T TEND TO
WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT WHAT OTHER
PEOPLE THINK. OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE
MUSIC THAT MAKES US HAPPY."**

The proverbial light at the end of the tunnel surfaces countless times on *Souls*. The boxer on the cover symbolizes the group's traumatic past and the emotional battle resulting from the decision to stick together and maintain a positive outlook. While subjects of hopelessness, misery, death and lost love abound on *Lost Souls*, the moral of the story is clear—life can sure beat the living shit out of you, but if you fight through it, you will inevitably cross paths with happiness. These sentiments were nowhere to be found on the *Kid As* and *Parachutes* of the music world, but then neither were the sounds of *Lost Souls*.

A stratospheric, haunting mosaic of reverb-heavy pop songs frequently catapulted into harmonic hyperspace. The record captured the sincere drama of The Cure and the sharper edges of the Velvet Underground, all delivered with graceful, Floydian grandeur.

When the long-awaited debut was finally released in 2000, it struck a huge chord with the British press. *NME* called *Lost Souls* "the first great album of the millennium." It sold 160,000 copies in Britain alone. Critics were practically trampling over themselves to label Doves the next Radiohead. Suddenly, Doves was the next big thing.

In the band's opinion, practically everybody was missing the point.

"In all honesty, that really pissed us off," recalls drummer/vocalist Andy Williams. "It's just lazy journalism, really. We got that label just because it's rock music written with thought and intelligence. If you actually listen to it, it sounds nothing like Radiohead. Not that we have anything against Radiohead—they're a great band. We'd just like to think that we have our own, distinct sound."

"The first record was sort of misunderstood by the media but we don't tend to worry too much about what other people think. Our goal is to make music that makes us happy. If it makes others happy in the process, then that's a wonderful bonus."

If *Lost Souls* was the band's upbeat sonic exorcism, then *The Last Broadcast* is the celebration of recently conquered demons. When going into the studio to record its sophomore album, the trio filed away its over-publicized past, focusing wholeheartedly on the comfortable fluidity of the present. The result is a glorious, effervescent masterpiece, an album raising the bar for intelligent rock. It's a document of symphonic majesty, a world populated by shivering strings, mournful woodwinds, delicate guitar strumming and exquisite vocal arrangements that are unflinchingly optimistic.

A huge reason for the towering, more expansive atmospheres of *Broadcast* was the commercial success of *Lost Souls*.

"We could afford to pay the players this time," Andy confides, with a chuckle. "We could invite a group of Brazilian percussionists into the studio, and we didn't have to think twice about it."

The band took full advantage of its artistic and financial freedoms for its second full-length. The use of those aforementioned percussionists on the first single, "There Goes the Fear," is one of many shining experimental moments on *Broadcast*. The bulk of the track is trademark Doves—a moody, guitar-washed tableau about defeating pain and weakness. The conclusion of the piece segues into a group of percussionists taking a syncopated Afro-pop groove to bombastic heights. Other standout tracks reflect the band's love for legendary film composer Ennio Morricone. "Friday's Dust" and "The Sulphur Man" have supernatural, cinematic production strokes, accentuated by High Llama Sean O'Hagan's deliciously spooky string, brass and woodwind arrangements.

Broadcast is not a record to pick singles from, to skip through or listen to in a random order, however. It's an emotional, organic beast of an album where each song loses a bit of its gleam when removed from the others. This is where the music critics start talking about *Pet Sounds*. It feels and sounds like the product of musicians who have lassoed in their respective muses, writing some damn good songs in the process.

As the alphabetically first Williams brother explains, however, the writing and creation of this new album felt like a cakewalk compared to the band's debut. Sessions for *Lost Souls* went on for some 10 months, with *Broadcast* realized in less than three and a half months, thanks in no small part to the magic of ProTools.

A crash course in home recording technology only marks the tip of the band's penchant for experimentation on the new album. "M62 Song" was recorded outside, under a flyover just outside of Manchester, giving the song a heart-wrenching, otherworldly beauty. "We'd just been holed up so much, we figured we'd have a bit of fun with it and see how it turned out," Andy Williams shares with a smile. "You can hear the traffic in the background. We got a bit of a laugh from the whole thing."

And when asked about the band's fresh outlook, newfound fecundity and recently molted past, he is all too eager to respond.

"We really got all of that out of our system on *Lost Souls*. We really kept it fresh on *The Last Broadcast*. There are a lot of traveling themes on the record, and that reflects our tendency to get a bit bored staying in one place."

Broadcast is the defining example of everything it took for Jez and Andy Williams and Jimi Goodwin to overcome hardship and despair. It is a statement of their triumphant arrival at the pesky light at the end of the tunnel. And while the album has more than its share of heavy-handed moments (because after all, life isn't perfect), the resounding ideas are those of confidence, self-worth and, above all, hope for the coming days. Take the chorus of the album's opening song, "Words," which picks up where *Lost Souls*' closer, "A House," left listeners last year.

"WORDS, THEY MEAN NOTHING/ SO YOU CAN'T HURT ME."

It's one of the most simplistic, self-esteem-building ideas, repeated by bullied kids on playgrounds everywhere—a concept stated more eloquently only by Rappaport or Popeye. What's more, it's further proof, not only of Doves' exceptional musical abilities, but of the uplifting, reverberating echo of its message.

Sticks and stones may break bones, but be damned if Doves are mopey. ■



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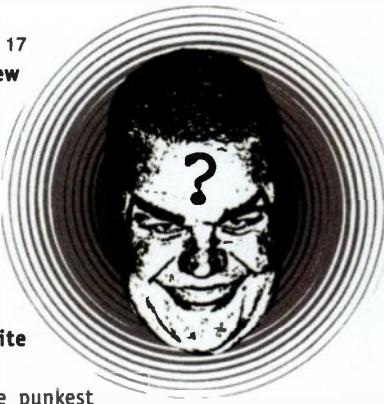
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ASK FLOYD continued from page 17
**So, what's wrong with the new
Bad Religion album?**

Three guitarists but still no fat guy. You rock once you have fat guys. See, The Hives, they have two fat guys (one with a mustache) and they are huge.



**What is your all time favorite
movie featuring a primate?**

Babe: Pig in the City. It's the punkest movie ever, and the primates are the mob. So awesome.

Give us some tips on hair care and presentation.

All good punks only need a pair of electric clippers and the proper attachments. Of course, every punk has three or four friends who are hairstylists, but it just isn't the same.

**You look great on the cover of the Fat Wreck Chords sampler,
Squawk Among Us, dressed up as Jerry Only. Have you ever
considered wearing a devil lock?**

Been there, done that. I looked funny. Then I adopted the biker on speed look.

**What kind of sweatshirts are more comfy to sleep on when you're
goofing off at work, Good Riddance or Strung Out?**

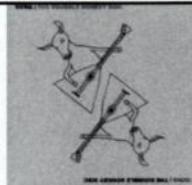
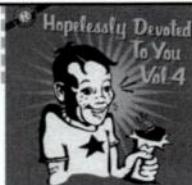
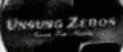
I drink too much coffee to sleep. But if I want to truly relax, I go straight for the NOFX shirts. We seem to always sell a lot more of them.

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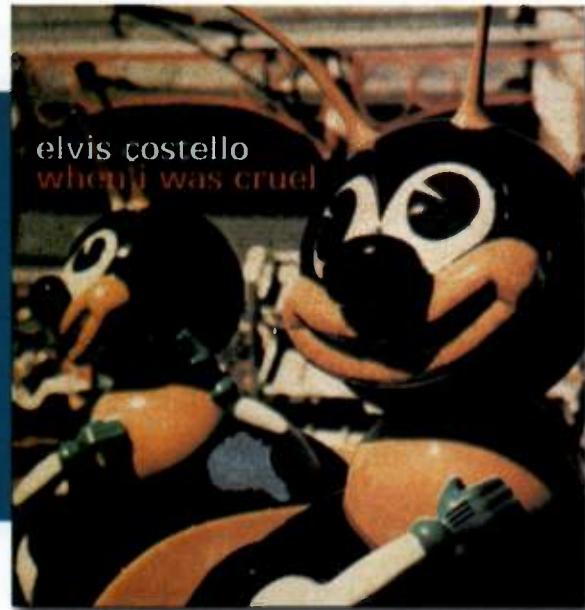
Elvis Costello

WHEN I WAS CRUEL



At 47, it's emphatically reassuring to hear Elvis Costello still has a rock album in him, as many gave up hope he might ever deliver another one. With the advent of *When I Was Cruel*, fans of his long-lost, guitar-based formula can breathe a collective sigh of relief. Following years experimenting with film scores, jazz and string ensembles and old-time pop purveyors like Burt Bacharach, the man born Declan Patrick MacManus revisits his classic, often bitter songwriting and execution. And if Costello's latest isn't likely to spread out past the loyalists—like the pop-tinged Spike once did—it gives disciples his most consistent work since '86's *Blood & Chocolate*. With drummer Pete Thomas and keyboardist Steve Nieve—two-thirds of his long-time backing band the Attractions—and one-time Cracker bassist Davey Faragher in tow, Costello burns through rockers like the irate "Daddy Can I Turn This?" and the melodically punchy "45" with vigor and skill. If the latter sees our songwriting hero red-eyed about middle age ("It creeps up on you without a warning, 45!"), an explosive "Tear Off Your Own Head (It's a Doll Revolution)" counters it with a brilliant lyrical lash-out (You could make somebody a pretty little wife/ But don't let anybody tell you how to live your life/Broken pieces). When love breaks down on "Spooky Girlfriend"—and when hasn't it on a Costello album?—Elvis croons his way through the tune with remarkable finesse, almost validating his efforts with Bacharach. Still, when Napoleon Dynamite utters biting lines like "I love you just as much as I hate your guts," it's difficult as a loyalist not to want to jump up and down with glee. And if this long-awaited hybrid of delightfully wry prose and rock affirms anything, it proves Elvis isn't dead, he's just less regular than he used to be. (Island, 825 8th Ave., New York 10019)

—John D. Luerssen



Track Listing:

01. 45
02. Spooky Girlfriend
03. Tear Off Your Own Head (It's a Doll Revolution)
04. When I Was Cruel
05. Soul for Hire
06. 15 Petals
07. Tart
08. Dust 2...
09. Dissolve
10. Alibi
11. ...Dust
12. Daddy Can I Turn This?
13. My little Blue Window
14. Episode of Blonde
15. Radio Silence

For Fans of: XTC, Style Council, Portishead

Ratings: The Bomb Highly Recommended It Doesn't Suck Better Than Silence Don't Bother

31 KNOTS

A Word is Also a Picture of a Word



Portland, Ore.'s 31 Knots is the latest band to translate its love of King Crimson-like jazz prog and spiky Gang of Four acrobatics into the contemporary post-rock standard. Because it plays stunningly precise and rhythmically challenging music, 31 Knots gets pranked with the dreaded math rock "kick me" sign an awful lot, but the sheer power of Joe Haeger's concussive and oxygen-burning guitar bursts should offer proof positive of the band's sincerity and accomplishment as well as its skills of the musical language. (54°40' or Fight, P.O. Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601)

—Brian Baker

ADEN

TopSiders



TopSiders is a strangely mellow indie pop album with wistful vocals and gentle guitar melodies. Although Jeff Gramm's melting vocals would fit well beside the Kings of Convenience, Nick Drake or Belle and Sebastian, Aden elevates itself with intricately picked

guitar and banjo parts ("Mango Tree," "River's Rising"). *TopSiders* is not for anyone with a short attention span, however—songs like "Rapt Attention" make Death Cab for Cutie sound like Kiss. Aden provides the soundtrack for lazy summer days lying in the hammock, sipping lemonade and looking at faded, old photographs. It's a great feeling, just don't be surprised if you doze off to sleep. (Teenbeat, P.O. Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203)

—Charles Spano

ANATHEMA

Resonance 2



The second installment of greatest hits from the long-standing British doom chameleons contains a dozen songs gathered from all facets of its career—from sludgy, post-Black Sabbath quagmires, to trippy, Pink Floyd-inspired psychedelia. The primordial stomp of death metal vocal-delivered "Forlorn Rhapsody" opens the disc, but even within the plodding construction, elements of what came later are evident. "Sleepless '96" sees backing female vocals added to the now eclectic mix, where "Cries in the Wind" plays with

dynamic extremes. Unfortunately, there's really not anything exclusive, so why fans (who undoubtedly own most, if not all the music already) would want to shell out for either part of *Resonance* remains a mystery. The CD also includes the video for "Mine is Yours," which is part of the newly released *A Vision Of My Dying Embrace* DVD. (Peaceville, P.O. Box 41084, Philadelphia 19127)

—Mark Gromen

ANGEL DUST

Of Human Bondage



Having originally formed during the '80s, Angel Dust retired in the later part of the decade only to appear back on the scene in 1998. Time has not diminished the potency of this heavy metal icon, as can be evidenced on tracks like "Inhuman" and "The Human Bondage," introducing *Of Human Bondage*. Alas, heaviness is but one aspect of this band's sound, and there are several tracks demonstrating the band's diversity. "Disbeliever" and "The Cultman," for example, are melodic power-metal ballads with subtle acoustics and tasteful vocal hooks. Other tracks like "Freedom" and "Forever" feature lush keyboard landscapes amidst powerful guitar riffing. These diverse elements are what make *Of Human Bondage* such an interesting and unpredictable album. (Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

AS I LAY DYING/ AMERICAN TRAGEDY

Split EP



Split EPs are always an economical way of giving fans more bang for their buck and exposure to more than one artist's work. While sometimes it doesn't translate, at other times it's a double pleasure. In this case, with As I Lay Dying and American Tragedy sharing space on one platter, it's two times the fun for metalcore freaks. This is the perfect soundtrack to a brawl—11 tracks of scream-your-head-off hardcore. As I Lay Dying fuels its fire with the appropriate squalling feedback and bulging-vein vocals, while American Tragedy follows upstate New York hardcore-style with singalongs and quirky guitars. You can undoubtedly expect to see either of these bands signed to Victory or Century Media in the near future. (Pluto, P.O. Box 1201, McKinney, TX 75070)

—Amy Sciarretto

ASPECTS OF PHYSICS

Systems of Social Recalibration



On the Aspects of Physics website, the band declares in the future it intends to release all of its music for free via a compressed format. This is definitely not something to win you any music industry popularity contests, but then again, it seems being unconventional is Aspects Of Physics' modus operandi. Along with bands like The Spacewurm and The Locust, AOP is part of a group of avant-garde, experimental San Diego bands preferring to push the envelope rather than go with the norm. On its new album, *Systems of Social Recalibration*, AOP takes listeners on a spaced-out ride through 21st century circuitry, with subtle detours through kraut rock, ambiance and the works of Brian Eno. Post-post rock for the spaced-out headphone set. (Imputor, P.O. Box 17489, Seattle 98107)

—Jonathan Cholewa

ATREYU

Suicide Notes and Butterfly Kisses



From a musical standpoint, Atreyu employs many elements of heavy yet tasteful styles of metal. The band knows how to blend the powerful with the subtle to create driving, purposeful music. Now for the downside—the vocals. Singer Alex Varkatzas delivers many a verse with abrasive screaming in the vein of countless death metal bands. There are other times, however, when Varkatzas demonstrates real singing, and when he does his voice really shines. Why waste such vocal talent on a coarse, rough style, when the songs sound so much better with more palatable vocals? If Atreyu ever considers this, the band could probably gain a much wider audience in the process. Nonetheless, the musical talent is definitely there. (Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago 60607)

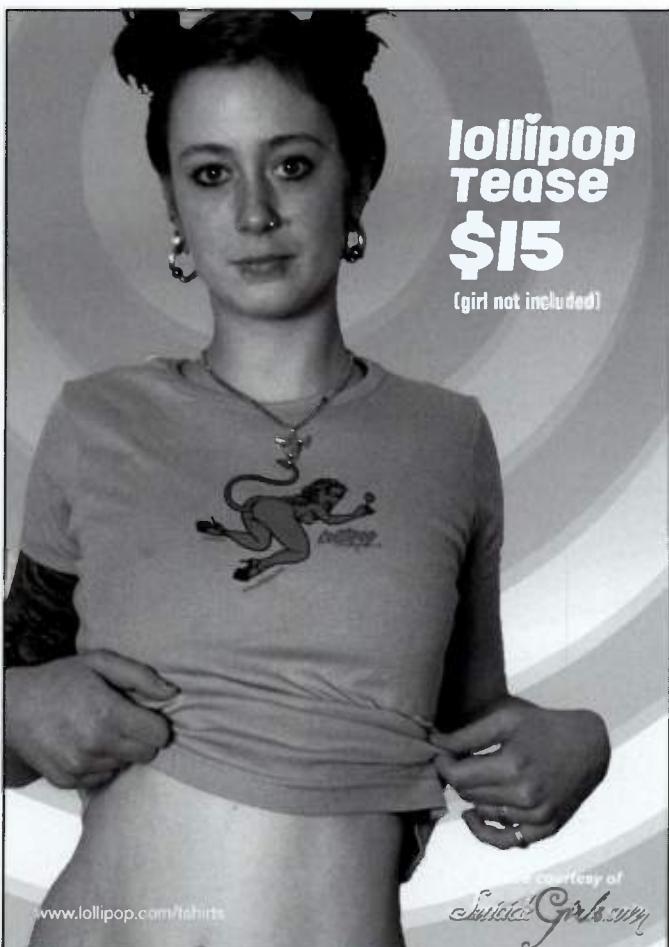
—Domenic DiSpaldo

AUDIO KARATE

Space Camp



Combining speed, hooks and simplicity, Audio Karate pushes the pop-punk barrier to its limits with *Space Camp*. While the songs on this 40-plus-minute opus tread very closely with the overdone antics of mainstream punks, the band develops its own identity as each song progresses, ironically making it more enjoyable as



a result. Tunes like "Drama Club Romance," "Nintendo 89" and "Monster in Disguise" blare out of speakers in a ferocious yet fun-filled way, creating a sound sure to please both moshers and pit pogoers in unison. Although *Space Camp* contains something for just about everyone, Audio Karate's tried-and-true formula wears a bit thin by album's end. But so what? Like the film of the same name, the album is sure to please kids with its amusing antics. (Kung Fu, P.O. Box 38009, Hollywood 90038)

—Dan Pastorius

BIFFY CLYRO

Blackened Sky



The grunge explosion of the early '90s provided some much-needed defibrillation to a wilting music scene. But it also led to mainstream success for countless inferior lookalikes. File Scotland's Biffy Clyro under this list of tepid, processed rock bands. *Blackened Sky* is not as wretched-inducing as Bush or Nickelback, however, and aspires for a little more artistic credibility and a bit less polish. Songs like "Kill the Old, Torture Their Young" exhibit signs of life—the track

is rife with primal screaming and low-end riffing. But it's still an obvious pretender to the flannel-clad throne. It's a direct parallel to the timeline of '70s rock, when boundary-breaking acts like Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones paved the road for Boston and Foreigner. So, if Biffy Clyro resorts to writing power ballads at some point down the road, don't be surprised. (Beggars Banquet, 580 Broadway, Suite 1004, New York 10012)

—Joe Sweeney

BRANT BJORK AND THE OPERATORS

Brant Bjork and The Operators



Some folks might remember Brant Bjork as the caveman drummer of the seminal desert rock act Kyuss. Others who are relative newcomers will think of Bjork as the wild-haired, animated drummer of Fu Manchu. Get ready to meet another version of Brant Bjork—the solo artist. Two years ago, Bjork decided to get in touch with his softer side and release a solo album (*Jalamanta*) on San Francisco's Man's Ruin label. *Jalamanta* was something of a departure from Bjork's work with Fu Manchu or Kyuss. It was funky,

groovy and kind of mellow—a really nice treat. Sadly, the trend did not continue with *Brant Bjork and The Operators*. While this disc is a continued attempt to showcase his diversity, Bjork seems to only have a real handle on laid-back, War-styled mellowness. Where *Jalamanta*'s straight grooves hinted at a P-Funkified version of stoner rock, Bjork's new material with The Operators offers only a few such charming gems. This is a mish-mosh of Bjork on guitar, bass, drums and vocals, and when the formula is not working, this disc is not pretty at all. Bjork supposedly turned down a shot in (former Kyuss guitarist) Josh Homme's Queens of the Stone Age for this. If anyone sees Bjork on the street please smack him in the head and make him join Fu Manchu or Queens. (The Music Cartel, P.O. Box 629, Port Washington, NY 11050)

—Erik Caplan

BLEEDING THROUGH

Portrait of the Goddess



Bleeding Through, featuring members of the fine Orange County moshcore band Eighteen Visions, is somewhat

of a metalcore anomaly. *Portrait of the Goddess* contains all the requisite elements—spastic breakdowns designed expressly for moshpit beat downs, deep, harsh vocals and super-fast guitar riffing. However, the presence of haunting, eerie keyboards—normally reserved for only the most frightening black metal bands—helps Bleeding Through stand out among its peers. *Portrait of the Goddess* is a true fusion of hardcore and metal. Recommended for fans of Red Roses For a Blue Lady, Eighteen Visions and Soilwork. (*Indecision*)

—Amy Sciarretto

BLOOD BROTHERS

March on Electric Children



The Midwestern-based Blood Brothers caught the attention of uber producer Ross Robinson (who has manned the boards for everyone from Korn to At the Drive In to Glassjaw) and he promptly got them a deal with Artist Direct Records. In the interim, the bros have released *March on Electric Children*, a chaffing chunk of screechy, electronically enhanced punk rock. If Coalesce engaged in fisticuffs with Mr. Bungle, the result would surely be

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March on Electric Children. The record is really dissonant, so please, take in administered doses or risk heart failure. (Three One G, P.O. Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177)

—Amy Sciarretto

BOULDER
Reaped In Half

Boulder is stuck in the period of rock evolution somewhere between Deep Purple's *Machine Head* and every '80s hair-farming band to ever play the Sunset Strip—lost forever in a time when the almighty guitar solo was king and Winger was playing to sold-out arenas. Come on now. I must admit, about 30 seconds into "Krank it Up," the album's first track, I was a little impressed. But it was all downhill from there. Like a lot of rock and metal from the aforementioned era, it is very formulaic and oftentimes uninspired. Boulder is the type of band welcomed heartily after a few too many in a dingy bar. Outside of inebriation, the band's reach is limited. (Tee Pee, P.O. Box 20307, New York 10009-9991)

—Jonathan Cholewa

BRACKET
Live in a Dive



This year has seen some promising releases from the Fat label, with some talented folks actually pushing the envelope quite a bit. Now the label drops another installment in its *Live in a Dive* series, documenting Fat bands in their varyingly interesting live performances. Bracket shouts out, "I want the world to shut up," in a rather forced bratty yell. It's more likely the world will not only not shut up, but maybe want to shut Bracket out. Despite applause from the crowd, the live element does little to excite with this band, at least on these recordings. Truly committed fans of Bracket, or the label's live series, will want to pick this up for their library. The band fails, however, to deliver an album with much worth when left standing on its own. (Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco 94119-3690)

—Gerald K. Garner

THE BREAK
The Break



Quick, distorted guitars compose the bulk of The Break's punk-influenced

sound, creating a noisy fury both catchy and melodic in tone. While the band bases its music around the typical three-chord progression similar to its peers, its limitations as technical songwriters create an endearing sound with overextended riffs and minimum focus. The Break is all about energy—put the album's 13 tracks side by side and they are barely distinguishable from each other. Still, the garage tone of the band's self-titled debut manages to keep pulses racing throughout the album's progression. Standout tracks like "While We Breathe," "Strength to Search Some More" and "Wait for the Wheel" prove positively galvanizing, making some of the album's minor inconsistencies bearable. *The Break* is most definitely good, making it something for fans of fast-paced punk to watch for in the future. (Doghouse, P.O. Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623)

—Dan Pastorius

CAPITOL K
Island Row



Perhaps a milder climate, southern counterpart to Leeds' Hood, Capitol K creates electronic music chiming and gurgling with layers of synthesizers.

Island Row is a moody and textured record, but where Hood's *Cold House* is distant and ominous, London's Kristian Craig Robinson (Capitol K) mines samples and far-out textures for all their warmth and inviting melodies. From the cacophonous, yip-ping vocals carrying "Capitol Beat Sticky" to the more reserved guitar grooves, forest sounds and spoken words of "Darussalam," what Capitol K accomplishes on *Island Row*, like Boards of Canada, is nothing short of imagining the world as a place where synthetic technology has redefined our concept of nature. (XL, One Codington Mews, London, W11 2EH)

—Charles Spano

CAVE 76
Arizona



John Brink is working pretty hard to beat out the songs on Cave 76's new album, *Arizona*. If it were salsa, *Arizona* would be mild—it doesn't burn too much, but still has flavor. Cave 76's collection is likely to grow on listeners even after a less gripping initial listen. Its pulsing energy takes form where the strain of Adam Perry's and Bobby Wheeler's vocals combine with

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Brink's crafty sound. The tracks blend a little too well, rendering them practically indistinguishable from one another, allowing this album to be somewhat forgettable. Aside from the overall repetition and the draining lyrics of "All in a Line" and "Tornado City," *Arizona* has potential. Keep it playing in the background, and don't think too hard about it. Eventually, the beat may carry you through your day. (Sonic Boom, P.O. Box 31443, Seattle, 98103)

—Jessica Stein

CERBERUS SHOAL

Mr. Boy Dog



Avant-jazz sure can be frightening. The stylistic hybrid Cerberus Shoal dispenses on *Mr. Boy Dog* is roughly as elusive as *Need New Body* on a good day. After the intimidating free-form clamor of the opener "Round Valley," the double EP steps things back to a blend of dirty horns, choppy guitars, esoteric sounds and Middle Eastern percussion. "Camel Bell" tiptoes through two minutes of chimes and whistles before leaping into a pensive death march replete with oddball vocal grunts. The long-winded "Tongue Drongue" follows in similar fashion. Turkish beats and a gentle guitar hook in "Un-marked Boxes" set a friendlier, more accessible tone for the second disc... but who cares about accessibility when two song titles are unpronounceable symbols? While passionate and technically proficient, *Mr. Boy Dog* suffers from a double set-back—if you don't pay close attention, it quickly fades into the forgettable background. If you do, you'll be sleeping with the lights on. (Temporary Residence Ltd., P.O. Box 22910, Baltimore 21203)

—John Vettese

CLEM SNIDE

Moment in the Sun



Clem Snide's Eef Barzelay would have been well contented with nothing more than the great acclaim afforded the band's third and newest album, last summer's *The Ghost of Fashion*. But fate intervened when the producers of NBC's quirky semi-hit dramedy *Ed* were unable to retain the rights to the Foo Fighters' "Learn to Fly" as the show's theme. In one of the boldest moves on television, Clem Snide's down-cast "Moment in the Sun" took its place for *Ed*'s second season. This EP documents two versions of the new theme, a remix of "Your Favorite Music" and a trio of unreleased demos. (Spin-ART, P.O. Box 1798, New York 10156)

—Brian Baker

COAL CHAMBER

Dark Days



"Toxicity" raised the heavy metal bar so high, any attempt to play something loud and fast since has been met with relative indifference. Falling outside System of a Down's sociopolitical circle and just left of hardcore death metal's extremes is Coal Chamber. Rising to popularity in the nu metal craze of the past five years, Coal Chamber borrows liberally from equal parts Rob Zombie and Korn, going so far as outright mimicry of the latter. Musically speaking, the dropped D riffing is of little passing interest as no songs congeal beyond four chords of melody. The brooding vocals are equally sketchy, falling somewhere in the vicinity of The Mighty Mighty Bosstones' Dicky Barrett and Philly 76er Dikembe Mutombo doing metal karaoke. (Roadrunner, 902 Broadway, New York 10010)

—Chris Fritz

CONVICTION

Kill It



Living up to its name, this hardcore band has stuck to its guns long enough to see an album worth of material—all dating back at least nine years—finally get issued on CD. Given the age of the material, most are brooding slices of early metalcore, relying on the shorthairs' less complicated structures/riffs. It contains 19 vintage tracks, the sound quality changing considerably between a trio of recording sessions, especially the hollow live bootleg material on the latter half of the disc. Since eight of the tunes are presented twice (in studio and live incarnations) *Kill It* is perhaps directed more at completists only. While packaged with cool visuals, neither the CD nor booklet sport any fan-friendly info. (Thorp, P.O. Box 2007, Upper Darby, PA 19082)

—Mark Gromen

THE CROWN

Crowned in Terror



Enlisting former At the Gates vocalist Tomas Lindberg was the smartest move The Crown ever made, causing it to instantly leap-frog contemporaries. The two platters with Lindberg are brutal slices of thrashing death, but what makes the Swedes stand apart are the subtleties—different guitar tones, switching channels, drum fills and solos within the somehow melodic insanity. The guitar break in the title cut would be easy to translate

into other bands, but most ignore it. The infectious rhythm on "Speed of Darkness" owes a debt to the NWOBHM. On the finale, "Death Metal Holocaust," Lindberg pulls off his best Glen Benton (Deicide) growl. (Metal Blade, 2828 Cochran St., PMB 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065-2793)

—Mark Gromen

DEAD SEXY

And Now You Know



This whole retro garage rock thing is getting out of hand. It was OK when the New Yorkers and Detroit rockers starting getting in on the act, but now even the Texans are doing it! With Austin's musical notoriety, it was only a matter of time before one of the town's gazillion rock bands finally took a stand. So then, should we consider Dead Sexy the torchbearer of the Austin garage rock sound? Probably not, but it sure does plead its case well on *And Now You Know*. For the most part your basic cookie-cutter rock 'n' roll record, *And Now You Know* still manages, however, to inspire with great energy and intensity on tracks like "About It" and "Wrong Song." This is simple rock for simple minds. (End, P.O. Box 101013, Fort Worth, TX 76185)

—Jonathan Cholewa

Bloodlet

Three Humid Nights in the Cypress Trees



After a four-year hiatus, Florida's Bloodlet has returned with *Three Humid Nights in the Cypress Trees*, an album thriving on uncensored human emotions, born with a musical ferocity few bands ever manage to unearth. Produced by the band with Steve Albini (Nirvana, Breeders), this platter is a fine

exhibit of traditional metalcore. *Three Humid Nights* is eclectic and melodic, yet bottom heavy with gristly drums, de-tuned guitars, throbbing bass lines and shrieking vocal parts. Yet, even with Albini aboard, one can't help but wish this album sounded a little cleaner. Bloodlet can be intricate and detailed with its craft, but sometimes the muddy sound of this album doesn't complement the work. Luckily, the album is bolstered by solid musicianship and brilliant lyrics. On "The Way of the Leeches," vocalist Scott Angelacos howls, "His visions ride on angels' wings/his words are like a summer's breeze/heaven sent and mostly bent/restraint and compassion are already spent." This is clearly not the work of a mindless lyricist. Bloodlet is a band undoubtedly still way ahead of the curve. (Victory, 346 Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago 60607)

—Kevin Boyce

A DEATH FOR EVERY SIN
In a Time Where Hope is Lost

A Death For Every Sin's *In a Time Where Hope is Lost* is nothing short of a poor man's Hatebreed. From the hardcore vocals, machine-gun timing and moshpit-inducing breakdowns, to the song titles ("Born to Lose," "Suffer the Loss," "For My Sins") and lyrics ("no one makes it alone in this world of shit/so build a place to exist and call it home"), this album is almost a perfect forgery of the Breed. Sadly, it sounds like it was recorded in a crawlspace. While it would be hard for anyone to deny A Death For Every Sin is a group consisting of fine enough musicians and it possesses an intensity from a genuine place (read: within), its sound is not its own. Do yourself a favor and pick up Hatebreed's *Perseverance* or *Satisfaction is the Death of Desire* instead. (Alveran, P.O. Box 10 01 52, D-44701 Bochum, Germany)

—Kevin Boyce

DIO
Killing the Dragon



Ronnie James Dio is back doing what he does best, delivering his

own brand of medieval-themed dirges to legions of metalheads everywhere. Dio's previous release, the concept album *Magica* (2000), was an ambitious work telling tales of bravery and heroism in a far-off, mystical world. With *Killing the Dragon*, Dio is once again focusing on straight-ahead solid heavy metal tunes. The songs feature driving rhythms, prominent riffs and those distinct vocals only Dio can deliver. Simply put, *Killing the Dragon* is one of the best Dio albums in quite a long time. The strength of its material will not only satisfy older fans, but could also make some new converts along the way. (Spitfire, 101 Bay Ave., Hicksville, NY 11801)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

ELECTRIC WIZARD

Let Us Prey



Technically, this band shouldn't exist right now. Jus Osborn, Electric Wizard's guitarist/vocalist has managed to cut off a fingertip, undergo ear surgery for tinnitus and suffer liver failure—all within the past three years. He's lucky to be alive.

We're pretty lucky as well, because he's still making music. Something of a departure from the girth of 1999's *Dopethrone, Let Us Prey* (get it?) is more of a tripped-out, riffy homage to the band's 1998's effort, *Come My Fanatics*. Electric Wizard never fails to conjure images of smoldering incense, lava lamps and black lights. This time the band adds slices of sound straight out of '70s horror movies. Electric Wizard, for better or worse, is the essential stoner's stoner rock band, always reliable for a heavy, heavy head trip. (The Music Cartel)

—Erik Caplan

ENON

High Society



The cover of *High Society* includes a billboard with the slogan "Better Now! Better Now! Better Now!" appropriately summing up Enon's evolution. The band members have taken the noise pop developed on *Believo!* and honed it to a fresh, new essence. Rick Lee still provides the skewed, space-age bachelor pad sounds defining the band. Now, however, processed noises complement the

crunchy pop, making Enon a closer relative to the Pixies, Imperial Teen and Pavement than Olivia Tremor Control or early Beck tapes. The album starts with "Old Dominion," a great, grinding rock tune evoking Pavement circa *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* covering the Pixies and Sonic Youth. By track three, the galactic "In This City," Enon secures its position among the great boy-girl bands by switching to Toko Yasuda's dream pop vocals and synthesizer grooves. On "Leave it to Rust," vocalist and guitarist John Schmersal sounds like Malkmus again, while "Pleasure and Privilege" is a definition garage punk rave-up of a tune. The title track proves to be the perfect anti-single—a lapsing, sleepy, sardonic yet emotional tune. Enon will make listeners obsessed again with their favorite albums from a decade ago, but despite this it's anything but derivative. Like Pavement on *Slanted and Enchanted*, Enon has crystallized a full-blown sound including hat-tips to familiar references as well as a gift for an undaunted penchant for experimentation. (Touch and Go, P.O. Box 25520, Chicago 60625)

—Charles Spano



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EPOXIES

Epoxies



Forget a long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away—The Clone Wars are raging right now on a torn up stage in Portland, Ore. The Epoxies' debut is the new-wave hit album of the summer for punk robots everywhere—at least it should be. The Epoxies deliver up a confident, out-of-this-world, duct-taped and black-and-white checkered set of crunchy droid pop. Roxy Epoxy's sexy vocals and Fritz Static's zipping keyboards shine throughout, from the new world Blondie "Need More Time" to the Devo-with-a-libido "Walk the Streets." The one-minute long "You" could be the X-Ray Spex, while "Stop Looking at Me" echoes the attitude Belinda Carlisle might have had if she went by Dottie Danger, drumming for The Germs. Like Manda and the Marbles with a serious sci-fi obsession, these germ-free adolescents do it with more verve, energy and splash than [D.A.R.Y.L.] or Chomsky, playing the music of the future as it was imagined in 1980. (Dirtnap, P.O. Box 21249, Seattle 98111)

—Charles Spano

GRAND MAGUS

Grand Magus



Cut from the cloth of Black Sabbath, Blue Cheer and Deep Purple, current fuzz-guitar junkies like Monster Magnet, Corrosion of Conformity, Down, Fu Manchu and Queens of the Stone Age (to name just a few) are noteworthy planets floating through the universe of stoner rock. While the aforementioned bands are heavenly bodies in their THC-fueled cosmos, Stockholm, Sweden's Grand Magus acts more like a satellite, picking up and sending transmissions we've already heard. Sadly, the band rarely yields anything musically it can truly call all its own. Despite its resistance towards innovation, Grand Magus' self-titled debut does have a few noteworthy moments. "Coat of Arms" and "Never Learned" are sure to please Soundgarden/Chris Cornell fans, while "Gauntlet" is a full-throttle rocker and this album's best track. Ultimately, those looking for groove rock will find this a healthy breather before returning to *Welcome to Sky Valley* by Kyuss or *Dopes to Infinity* by Monster Magnet. (The Music Cartel)

—Kevin Boyce

continued on page 51

I Am the World Trade Center**The Tight Connection**

I Am the World Trade Center recalls a simpler day in dance music—back before it became an ecstasy-fueled mess, back when Casiotone was considered cutting-edge technology, back when song was as important as sound. On its sophomore album, *I Am the World Trade Center* (get over the name already) gets its '80s on with delightful

results. Program-mer Dan Gellar does his best New Order on "Believe in Me," while vocalist Amy Dykes shows just how much she sounds like Debbie Harry on a cover of Blondie's "Call Me." The album's appeal transcends mere retro charm, however. Throughout the set, IATWTC keeps the electronics modest—a by-product of using a Gateway laptop for a studio. All the same, "Pretty Baby" and "The Postcard" are pure body movers without being bombastic. At the same time, "Soiree" and the majestic "California Dreaming Again" show songwriting dexterity as Gellar skillfully complements Dykes' contemplative lyrics with subtle beats and beeps, drawing true potency out of simplicity.

(Kindercore, P.O. Box 461, Athens, GA 30603)

—John Vettese

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MUST



MUST Mercy

It seems like a billion years since rock 'n' roll ruled the airwaves and every band had its own unique sound and identity. Sigh. There's been a slow bubbling in the underground for a few years as real rock attempts to make a comeback. While no one should be holding her breath for its much-prayed-for return, signs indicate the faithful might finally be on the verge of deliverance. Recently submitted for your approval is *Androgenous Jesus*, the debut by the London-based trio Must on Wind Up Records. Must creates mind-blowing guitar rock like nothing else right now. Drummer Rueben Alexander is simply off the hook. In vocalist Dave Ireland, however,

Must has a truly gifted rock avatar. On the delicious "Bubblegum Sleaze," Ireland flawlessly captures the sleaze factor of classic blues-based metal with a delivery we've not seen since Axl Rose at the height of his once considerable powers. Alternately, Ireland also pulls off a mean homage to U2's Bono on the arena-ready anthem "Rust" or the dark, urgently beautiful "No Way Out." The cool factor gets bumped up on the best cuts—the transcendent "Free Child" or "Hey Baby" (an epic rock love song in the vein of "Sweet Child O' Mine")—where he blends the best of both his heroes. *Androgenous Jesus* is simply a phenomenal record.

BUTCH WALKER Left Of Self-Centered

Butch Walker used to sing and play guitar in a cool bubblegum rock band called Marvelous 3. Signed to Elektra for a few years, this criminally underrated band released two great albums, but were terribly mishandled and finally dropped from that label. Blessings come in strange disguises. Between penning hits for SR-71 and producing rock upstarts (and fellow Atlantians) Injected, former Marvelous 3 frontman Butch Walker has crafted a splendidly hard-rocking solo effort on Arista Records cheekily entitled *Left of Self-Centered*. While Walker's never afraid to rock out with both barrels blazing, his songwriting strength is grounded in a whip-smart sense of humor, as

evidenced all over this disc—from the hilarious lampoon of modern-rock radio programming ("Rock Vocal Power") to a drunken R Kelly-style spoof on really cheesy R&B ("Get Stupid With You") and the sharply-barbed "Alicia Amnesia," on which he bemoans the frustration of chasing after a woman who would rather fake a lapse in memory than have anything to do with him. For extra rock action, Motley Crue bassist Nikki Sixx makes an appearance on the '80s-influenced "Into the Black." Butch Walker's debut should appeal to fans of Cheap Trick, The Raspberries and Def Leppard while keeping disenfranchised Marvelous 3 fans from slipping into Insulin shock.

MUDHONEY Since We've Become Translucent

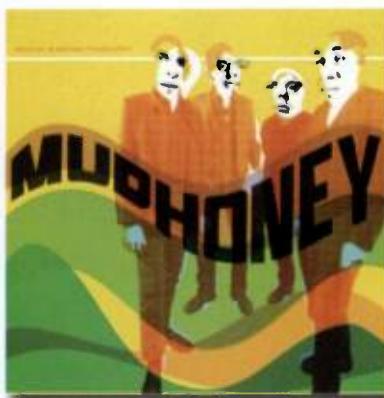
"Some say we don't exist since we've become translucent," wails Mudhoney singer/guitarist Mark Arm on "Sonic Infusion," the closing track from his band's eighth full-length album, *Since We've Become Translucent* now out on Sub Pop records. In an abstract way, with these lyrics, Arm could be telling Mudhoney's own story. Spawning at ground zero of the grunge movement—one of the most revolutionary and commercially viable rock trends of the last two decades—and having recorded an impressive catalog of highly influential rock albums, his band has never really flown above radar level. "Influence" is probably a dirty word for Arm at this

point. It doesn't pay the bills. Luckily Mudhoney hasn't stopped recording though, because this record will kick your ass into the next calendar year. "The Straight Life" represents Arm's best Iggy-worshipping since 1995's *My Brother the Cow*, and "Inside Job" explodes with the garage rock sound The Hives are currently taking to the bank. Just one listen to the brilliant lyrics of "Take it Like a Man," and listeners will know Mark Arm has a feel for the overwrought and complex without burrowing too far into the self-indulgent. Very meta indeed. You'll never hear this album on the radio in a million years. The beautiful thing is you can own it forever.

LA GUNS Waking The Dead

Looking much worse for wear (Kids: stay away from drugs and alcohol!), but having sacrificed little of their blues-metal mojo from when they were at the top of their game in the Sunset Strip's battle of the Big Hair, LA Guns offer up album number nine, *Waking the Dead* on Spitfire Records. Core Gunners guitarist Tracii Guns, singer Phil Lewis and drummer Steve Riley enlist the bass guitar talents of Adam Hamilton for this 10-song romp in the glam rock gutter with "guilty pleasure" written all over it. Just what are LA Guns singing about this time out? Titles like "Psychotic

Eyes," "Hellraiser's Ball" and "City of Angels" tell you all you need to know. While the appeal of LA Guns has always been more visceral than cerebral, there's some hook action going on as well. "Revolution" is a solid pop song, comparable to what the Beatles might have recorded in 1982 if they'd been reincarnated as Motley Crue. "Ballad"—while it's no "Ballad of Jayne"—most likely gets the Bics flicking during live shows. Guns, who has always had a bit more of a musical vocabulary than many of his peers, is the star of every song. I know it's only rock 'n' roll, but I like it.



RECORDS *continued from page 49*

HOT HOT HEAT

Scenes One Through Thirteen



Originality in music is a rare commodity these days. So what makes Canada's Hot Hot Heat so special? Nothing really. Like many bands before it, the Hot Hot Heat sound is a regurgitation of punk, '60s mod and kitschy '70s new wave mixed into a sometimes volatile cocktail. Much the same way Morphine did with the saxophone, HHH forgoes the standard rock formula by replacing guitars with keyboards. The result? A very engaging and visceral collection of post punk. While musically the band may draw comparisons to another synth-obsessed band, fellow Canadians Grim Skunk, the mixture of singer Matthew Marnick's off-kilter vocals and hammering keys easily puts those comparisons to rest. (Ohev, P.O. Box 772121, Coral Springs, FL 33077)

—*Jonathan Cholewa*

HOWARD HELLO

Howard Hello



Kenseth Thibideau doesn't suffer from musical attention deficit disorder, he

revels in it. Skipping from Tarentel to Rumah Sakit to the Pinback project *Thingy*, Thibideau is now simultaneously exploring his gentler pulse with Dilute's Marty Anderson and Court and Spark's Wendy Allen in a detour called Howard Hello. Informed by the boho folk of John Fahey, the Bunsen burner electronica of Steve Reich, the variation-on-a-scream of Philip Glass and the oblique pop of Brian Eno, Thibideau focuses on creating soundscapes diametrically opposed to the ambient quietude of his influences while using their tools in a satisfying and slightly unsettling manner. (*Temporary Residence*)

—*Brian Baker*

I DEFY

The First Strike

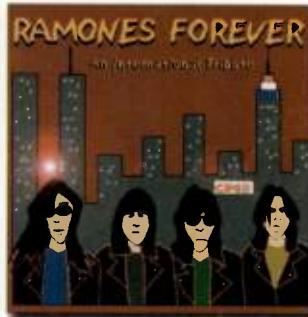


Introspective lyrics and a super heavy sound make for a fair record, if not miraculous. There is a head swinging, fist pumping appeal to these tracks, despite a lack of musical innovation. "I Don't Need Society" probably comes closest to a stand out tune, but ends much too fast. Another verse and chorus could have made it a true barn

continued on page 54

Various Artists

Ramones Forever: An International Tribute



When Joey Ramone passed away Apr. 15, the last chapter was written in the life of one of the most prolific and revered bands ever, The Ramones. While many tribute albums are feeble attempts at cashing in, *Ramones Forever: A Tribute* is the exception. A portion of the pro-

ceeds from the compilation will benefit the In The Memory of Jeff Hyman fund at New York Medical Center. For those confused, Jeff Hyman was the less rock-sounding name of the late punker. Billed as an international tribute, bands from Belgium, Greece, Peru, Hungary and the great, lumbering United States cover such Ramones classics as "I Wanna be Sedated," "Blitzkrieg Bahn" and "Little Ramona." While some Ramones diehards may pine for the originals, they should view *Ramones Forever: An International Tribute* for what it is, a tribute with a purpose other than just profit. (Radical, 77 Bleeker St., New York 10012)

—*Jonathan Cholewa*



DJ SHADOW'S follow-up to his groundbreaking *Endtroducing* has been a long time coming. The year was 1996 when Shadow (born Josh Davis) blew the doors open on a somewhat underground scene of sample-crazy turntablists and producers previously unknown outside the American hardcore electronica scene. Despite drastically different styles, it would be hard to argue DJ Shadow had not left some mark on the work of fellow cutmasters such as EL-P, Jurassic 5's Cut Chemist, Rob R. Rock and even the heavyweight champ, The Automator. Maybe this is why DJ Shadow deserves such thunderous applause for his latest feat, **THE PRIVATE PRESS** (MCA). Rather than doling out an anti-climactic remix of his debut or falling completely into electronic obscurity or commercial pop muck, Davis has succeeded in maintaining his balance along this razor's edge while still managing to take his music somewhere completely new. One can't help but grin at the simple strategy—Davis doesn't even try to out do *Endtroducing*. He knows better. Considering all the heavily dark and eclectic work Davis has been doing since *Endtroducing* (UNKLE with Thom Yorke, the soundtrack to the award-winning documentary *Dark Days* and his collaborative work with Cut Chemist, to name a few milestones), it's surprising how upbeat and uptempo much of *Private Press* sounds. Listeners will probably feel inclined to bust a more conventional, party-centric groove listening to "Right Thing," "Mashin' on the Motorway" or "Six Days." Track three's "Un Autre Introduction" recalls the urgency of the poppers, stoppers, writers and excitors of hip hop's fatter shoelaced past, while the tight drive of "You Can't Go Home Again" emotes from a woody, organic guitar arrangement akin to Red Medicine-era Fugazi. Plenty of DJs can list diverse influences. What makes DJ Shadow's work so impressive is his ability to consistently find new avenues in which to direct his harvested sounds.

—Mike McKee

HIP HOP NEWS

The whole underground has been buzzing for months about the alleged financial problems over at **Rawkus Records**. Rumors of an impending demise are nothing new or much of a surprise to anyone. What does come as a surprise is the astonishing rate at which the label continues to release records. Coming with the recent **Kool G Rap** release, the long awaited **Skillz** (formerly **Madd Skillz**) album, *I Ain't Mad Anymore* in September, **Talib Kweli's** *Kweli* even sooner and allegedly forthcoming efforts from **Mos Def**, **Hi-Tek** and a second installment of **Blackstar**, Rawkus is still in the game for now... **Lady May's** *May Day* is in stores and burning up clubs across the states... **Wu-Tang's** head man, **The GZA** (aka **The Genius**), brings it back with *The Legend of a Liquid Sword*. Look for an October release... Glam pom rapper **Lil' Kim** follows close behind with her third solo record in November (I know you can't wait)...



For anyone who thinks mouth music ends with Tuvin monks or Bobby McFerrin, **SCRATCH** is your wake up call. Beatboxing didn't end with Dougie Fresh or Biz Markie (lest we should forget "Me Versus Me" from *The Diabolical...*). Scratch has played a key role in indie-minded

hip hop for years since his mainstream debut spot with The Roots. Since then, Scratch has wowed crowds on the OK Player tour and with collaborations with some of indie hip hop's finest. Now the undisputed beatbox champion drops an album of his own, completely simulating record scratches, vinyl noise, the boom, the bip and all things in between with an ear for mimicry to make Police Academy's Jones blush. *The Embodiment of Instrumentation* is Scratch's debut album, appearing courtesy of Rope-A-Dope Records.

How did you get started in the music biz?

Beatboxing. I started imitating songs from the radio that I couldn't record. I was doing house parties, and friends started telling me to pursue a career.

How did you get involved with Schoolz of Thought and The Roots?

I met Schoolz performing at a local club and The Roots at a talent show where me and Schoolz of Thought beat The Roots in the competition. They approached me, and we both were interested in each other. From there I appeared on the *Illadelph Halflife* album, and from there it was history.

Your album features a lot of Philly artists. Was this intentional?

At first no, but as time went on, the Philly artists were the ones to show and prove. I've always wanted to do an album showcasing little-known artists with big talent.

What does this album tell the world about Scratch?

This is a chance for the fans to get to know me better as an artist rather than just a guy beatboxing on Roots tracks. I want to show that beatboxing is an art and it has its place in hip hop just like DJing and rhyming.

What's next for Scratch?

The Roots' next album, *Phrenology*, as well as collaborations with Pink, Musiq Soulchild, Bootcamp, Mos Def, Busta Rhymes and Talib Kweli—pretty much whoever wants to do work.

What's your opinion on the current state of hip hop?

In short, fucked up. Not only am I tired of hearing the same rappers say the same things, but even the new cats are saying the same thing that the other dudes are. The repetitive thugism is boring, we need more creativity and more originality, less microwave hip hop.

—Ahmad Lawton

Freeway's debut album, *Philadelphia Freeway*, is set for release any day now on **Roc-A-Fella Records**... Speaking of... **Nas**, who's currently in the middle of a serious beef with an New York radio station over last month's summer jam dilemma is still going at it with Roc-a-Fella mainstreamer **Cam'ron**. Amidst all the bad vibes, Nas has found some time to release a compilation of his best hits last month called *Illmatic to Stillmatic*. Now the New York MC is gearing up for the release of his fifth album, *God's Son*.... The **Sprite Liquid Mix Tour** kicks off this month with headliners about as commercial as the soft drink sponsoring the whole shebang. Under the auspices of the platinum **Jay-Z** and **311**, however, are some heavy hitting forward thinkers such as Kweli and The Neptunes' illustrious **N.E.R.D.** The tour stretches into September in the hopes mad heads will obey their thirst... Philly's reigning hip hop queen, **Eve**, drops her third album, *Eve-olution*... **Xzibit** returns with *Man vs. Machine*, featuring executive producer **Dr. Dre**... If you hadn't noticed, **The Roots' sixth album, *Phrenology***, never came out with its mid-June release date. The album

has been pushed back until October and features cameos from **Jill Scott**, **Nelly Furtado**, **D'Angelo** and activist **Amiri Baraka**. Fellow Philadelphian **Floetry** continues to light up college music charts with her **Dreamworks** debut, *Floetic*. More next month...

—Ahmad Lawton



Skillz



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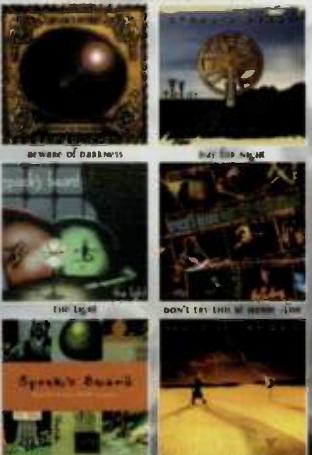
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S N Y O

W

RECORDS *continued from page 51*
burner. Like many bands today, I Defy represents talent going to waste, used to pump out familiar product. (Reflections, Spoorwegstraat 117, 6828 AP Arnhem, The Netherlands)

—Mark Ginsburg

JACK KILLED JILL Hello Neighbor



A cover of the girl group classic "You Don't Own Me" is the only highlight here. Vocalist Revik Delfin spits out the lyrics defiantly, echoing the tone of the original, while breathing in new life and attitude. Delfin actually has a pretty powerful voice, slightly hampered by the occasional note of a fake British accent. Her sneering delivery would be great in front of a band with as much talent as The Blackhearts. She is pretty much wasted here, on the usual set of reverent, old school punk numbers. (Geykido Comet, P.O. Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654)

—Mark Ginsburg

KAAMOS Kaamos



Quite surprising for a young outfit's debut, Kaamos is old-school Swedish

death metal. While many are focused on the more melodic, Gothenburg sound, Kaamos opts for the variety perfected by the likes of Entombed back at the start of the '90s. This doesn't mean the nine tracks are devoid of musicianship. The initial minute of "Blood of Chaos" is nothing more than a cappella, spoken psychotic ramblings in the native tongue. Unrelenting, "Curses of Aeons" and "The Chasm" are exemplary slices of what Kaamos does best. (Candlelight, P.O. Box 29459, Kensington Station, Philadelphia, PA 19125)

—Mark Gromen

KILOWATTHOURS The Bright Side



Coming down from the high of its last critically acclaimed album of piano pop must've been tough on Kilowatthours. Gone are the familiar crescendoing power chords and rumbling drum fills. Having stripped its sound down to the bare minimum and built it back up again, Kilowatthours has created a new kind of rock record with an equal amount of intensity. In large part Smashing Pumpkins theatrics, the initial slo-core feel of *The Bright Side* burns off as the subtle

melodies ebb and flow with Radiohead-quality grace. Shades of genre hopping from prog to emo shine through in spots, but not enough to divert attention away from what's really important here—the beauty of these songs and the way they masterfully unfold. (Temporary Residence)

—Chris Fritz

—Dan Pastorius

LAGWAGON

Let's Talk About Leftovers



With *Let's Talk About Leftovers*, Santa Barbara, Calif.'s Lagwagon blends old with new by compiling early demos, outtakes, rare comp tracks and new songs together in fresh new packaging. In line with the face lift motif, the material comes courtesy of a new label, as well. Sounding more like a retrospective than a best of, the band chronologically flows songs from its latest work (originally intended as an EP) with some of its oldest material, spanning Lagwagon's decade-plus career. In doing this, the band's evolution from post-hardcore leanings to its current melodic approach becomes apparent, displaying how much maturation has occurred in recent years. *Leftovers* also features a diverse array of covers, including "Drag the River"

THE MELVINS

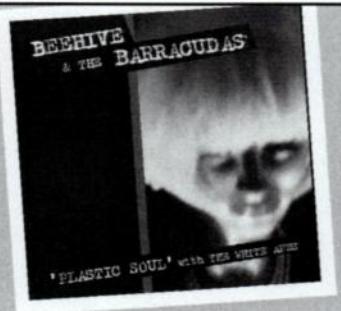
Hostile Ambient Takeover



Without a doubt the heaviest band on the planet, the Melvins has also made its mark for consistently being strange. These theorems hold true with the band's latest release, *Hostile Ambient Takeover*—eight tracks of the hardest yet quirkiest tunes in the band's catalogue. Rest assured, all of the trademark Melvins characteristics are all intact—King Buzzo's guttural vocals and inane riffing, "Big Daddy" Dale Crover's lightning-fast drumming and Kevin Rutmanis' low end are all in full force. The band manages to stay on top of its game, sounding fresher and more poignant than ever. Between the experimental electricity of "Black Stooges" to the honky-tonk of "Dr. Geek" to the

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sludgy riffage of "Foam-ing," this is still the Melvins we know and love. A guest appearance from a former member of Tool helps entice the uninitiated. (Ipecac, P.O. Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501)

—Dan Pastorius

THE MIRACLE OF '86

Kevin Kolankowski



With the commercial success of Jimmy Eat World and Saves the Day, the incessant whining of emo becomes more insistent every day. But more recently, one-man band Dashboard Confessional found success by ditching the tired power riffing in lieu of an entirely acoustic setup. Same cry-baby theme, different, less-nauseating approach. Enter N.Y. four-piece The Miracle of '86 with its newest acoustic emo record *Kevin Kolankowski*. Named for a drummer friend who appears on the album, *Kevin Kolankowski* features the same snotty tendency of emo to over analyze strained relationships, but the promise here is in the execution. Songs like "When it's on My Mind" and "One Too Many Mornings" offer honest-to-God guitar chops and some consummate musicianship. Perhaps it's not too late

for the rest of the skin-tight T-shirt scene. (Immigrant Sun, P.O. Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215)

—Chris Fritz

NOISE RATCHET

Till We Have Faces



Intermingling quick, punchy melodies between chunky, thick guitar parts, Noise Ratchet creates a post-alternative sound both expansive and complex. The band's debut release through The Militia Group, *Till We Have Faces*, wraps distorted, cascading chords around singer Joel Hosler's piquant vocal presence, delivering a quick one-two punch. Songs like the album opener, "Permanent Solution," "For You I'll Be Forgetting Me" and "Away From You" offer strong hooks and tight guitar leads, while other tracks like "Wardrobe" and "A Way to the Heart" display Noise Ratchet's vulnerable, softer side. Although the band's sound remains somewhat constant with little deviation from the norm, *Till We Have Faces* provides a fresh introduction to a band with unlimited future potential. (The Militia Group, 16662 Goldenwest St., #1, Huntington Beach, CA 92647)

—Dan Pastorius

—Mark Ginsburg

ONE NATION UNDER

One Nation Under



This disc is guaranteed to blow away anyone who has never heard music before. The rest of the populace will no doubt be lulled into a coma by 10 tracks of formula grindcore. Once Nation Under sticks closely to the rules, slamming and growling, then slowing down for the inevitable chunky mosh part. Those not already familiar and friendly with this style will probably find the lengthy period of silence in the middle of track 10 to be the album's finest moment. (Alveran)

—Mark Ginsburg

OTEP

Sevas Tra



The four-piece known as Otep can be summed up in one word—disturbing. Everything about this band, from its album cover art to its music, is so eerie and ominous it makes Type O Negative seem uplifting and optimistic. *Sevas Tra* contains assorted, unnerving audio elements—including distorted, noisy guitar riffs, haunting piano passages, exasperated half-spo-

ken dialog and other abrasive elements common to extreme metal. While surely not for the faint-hearted, this album might not be for the more experienced metal fan either, as early feedback from critics has been fairly negative. Still, those interested in exploring some extremely heavy music tackling a slightly new slant will find *Sevas Tra* worth at least a listen or two. (Capitol, 1750 N. Vine St., Hollywood, CA 90028)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

OXBOW

An Evil Heat



Folks who enjoy Neurosis' ambient metal stylings probably know what to expect from its label—similarly oddball, abrasive projects. Guitarist Niko Wenner says the basic source for all Oxbow's music and lyrics is love gone bad, noting the cathartic release of the band's live shows often bring on an uncontrollable crying jag. This is basically the effect *An Evil Heat* will have on its listeners as well. The members of Oxbow hail from such hallowed indie institutions as The Jesus Lizard, Lydia Lunch, Zeni Geva and The Rova Sax Quartet, so it's safe to

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With **SOULFLY III**, the band's aptly named third effort on Roadrunner Records, Max Cavalera makes it apparent he still has a burning desire to make passionate, skull-shattering music after almost 20 years in the biz. *Soulfly III* is the band's heaviest album yet, hearkening back to the thrash days of



Sepultura. It's evident from the opening notes of the first track, "Downstroy," that this CD is going to kick ass and leave a footprint. The band goes on to pound out other mosh-inducing numbers like "L.O.T.M." and "Seek and Strike." **SOULFLY** still incorporates its signature formula, mixing tribal percussion rhythms with metal, though this CD is more focused on the heavy side than the South American side. A female R&B vocalist adds a little diversity to the album as she croons the intro to

"Tree of Pain," but the song then explodes into a top-speed number about the painful loss of Cavalera's murdered stepson, a topic he has addressed on all of the *Soulfly* albums to date. Furthermore, original drummer Roy Mayorga is back in the fold, blessing the band with some extra flare in the rhythm section. Those who liked the first *Soulfly* album will find this one delightful as well. While Cavalera and company got a little soft and experimental on the second effort, the new album stays true to the band's "roots, bloody roots."

ROLLINS BAND purists certainly have good reason to worry—Hank has a lot to live up to without his original lineup of Sim Cain, Chris Haskett and Andrew Weiss. In fact, the new trio backing Rollins has totally revitalized the aging rocker, giving him new life and a classic rock 'n roll sound. Listening to tracks like "Hotter and Hotter" and "Get Some Go Again," it sounds like Rollins is actually having fun singing again, like in the Black Flag days. Instead of just complaining about his

bleak, mechanical life, Rollins displays his unique sense of humor, singing fun, straightforward rock songs. On the new live Rollins Band two-CD set **ONLY WAY TO KNOW FOR SURE** (Sanctuary Records), it is evident just how much these musicians feed off each other while rocking the stage. The band rips through a



few older tracks like "Disconnect" and "Tearing," but favors newer tunes from its two most recent albums. The three musicians who

make up the Rollins Band are actually blues/rock trio Mother Superior, which Rollins produced an album for a few years ago. These three rockers are full of live energy and bluesy chops no matter what moniker they are playing under, and this live set has the juice to prove it. *Only Way to Know* is definitely worth picking up, that is, if you haven't downloaded it from the internet already.



Most high school kids spend their summer vacations washing dishes at a restaurant, working at a summer camp or, perhaps, if they're lucky, as a lifeguard at the pool. Seattle's teenaged **DAMNAGED**, however, decided to spend the summer between 11th and 12th grade touring with Danzig. Maybe this isn't an option for everyone, but for most kids jamming in their garages, it's a dream come true. Most summer jobs are not easy, and this one is no exception.

"Glenn (Danzig) has said we've gotten some of the best response that his opening bands get, but there's always those people who give you the middle finger through the whole set," says singer/guitarist Nick Woodward. Damaged got a particularly chilly reception in a few short-fused East Coast towns, but the guys are not discouraged. After all, they have accomplished a lot since forming four years ago while in junior high school. At first the four childhood friends just started jamming together for something to do, but when the band's popularity grew in the Seattle area, it became obvious they had something special going.

Damaged began playing to large audiences at all-ages clubs and were soon signed to Very Juicy Records. Danzig chose the band to fill the opening slot on his summer tour based on the strength of its debut album, *Aggression Therapy*.

Since then, the band has also released a new EP, *The Bear Creek Sessions*, to add to an already impressive catalog. Because the members of Damaged are so young, one might expect them to be influenced mostly by nu metal bands like Slipknot and Korn. Instead, the music is rooted in '80s metal, recalling the sounds of early Metallica and Megadeth. Woodward and his bandmates—guitarist Jeff Roderick and bassist Trevor Fox—actually bang their heads while performing,

while Woodward can deliver snarling vocals on par with a pre-shiny shirt James Hetfield. In addition, drummer Chris Johnson can kick the double bass like a seasoned professional. Woodward possesses a surprising perspective on popular music in general.

"I think nu metal is at the point where hair metal was," says Woodward. "It's no longer really enjoyable. I think at the time it was cool to have some heavy music out again. Some of the original bands—like Korn and Godsmack—they're talented, amazing bands. And there's still some good ones coming out. But for the most part, it has hit its peak."

At 18, Woodward says plenty of critics expect his limited life experiences to yield little promise lyrically. In fact, the young Washington rocker is extremely well-spoken and articulate, documenting his observations with plenty of poetry.

"One of the songs was written about my grandmother's experience with Alzheimer's and watching her just completely fade away," Woodward shares. "'Comatose' is about how some people go through life living on drugs. They don't even see the world through their own eyes—they see it through blinders. 'Wicked Throne' is about people I knew who were self-centered and thought the world was out to please them, but at the end of the day, they were the ones who got screwed over."

When the summer was over and tour completed, the members of Damaged returned to Seattle to finish high school. While college is on everyone's mind, Woodward says most of the band is prepared to put it off another year in favor of some exciting opportunities with the band.

"After this year of high school, we're all gonna sit down, take a look at where we're at and decide what the move is," explains Woodward. "I want to go to college at some point to study music, but right now probably isn't the best time for me because I can better myself by following in this career path."

It sure beats caddying.

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 say *An Evil Heat* will be the kind of disc for die-hard fans only. (Neurot, P.O. Box 410209, San Francisco 94141)

—Erik Caplan

PALOMAR

Palomar II



It's no mere coincidence NYC's Palomar thanks a couple of The Strokes on the band's classic rock album titled *Palomar II*. With an uptown garage ethic and a jittery '80s punk undercurrent, Palomar has enough in common with Manhattan's media darlings to have shared a number of stages with them. Palomar differentiates with its three-girls-and-a-guy membership, leading to a sonic subtext playing out like the Roches with a *White Music*-era XTC fixation. Look for the trash-bratted version of Eno's "I'll Come Running." (The Self-Starter Foundation, P.O. 1562, New York 10276)

—Brian Baker

PLACE OF SKULLS

Nailed



Given the label pedigree, it comes as no surprise the slightly off-center

monikered Place of Skulls demonstrate a proficiency for doom metal. Slightly more metallic than its stoner cousin, *Nailed* amounts to nine tracks heavy on distorted guitars, wah pedals and bass rumble, almost as if the world stopped at 1974. It has little to offer in the way of diversity, although a cover of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" takes on a plodding, exaggerated military march cadence. Halfway through, "Feeling of Dread" revs, but too soon things return to normal—competent, if uninspiring, murk. (Southern Lord, P.O. 291967, Los Angeles 90029)

—Mark Gromen

PRIMAL FEAR

Black Sun



Hailing from Denmark, Primal Fear is one of Hamlet's country's more prominent metal bands on the scene. The band's latest release, *Black Sun*, is a 13-song collection showcasing Primal Fear's distinctly European metal sound. Twin guitar harmonies, high-speed riffing and strong, melodic vocals are all part of the band's charm. Lyrically, *Black Sun* is a thematic album dealing

continued on page 60

Young and Sexy

Stand Up for Your Mother



Since the New Pornographer's 2001 masterpiece *Mass Romantic* took permanent residence in the heads of all within earshot, Vancouver, B.C., shot up the pop scenera charts. With a stable full of eager pop talents, local indie Mint Records asserted itself as the chief shareholder in the growing scene. Bent on tightening the stranglehold, Mint's newest product, *Young and Sexy*, has the goods necessary to keep the top spot. With polished harmonies and whip-smart lyrical cynicism akin to some of the best Costello, *Young and Sexy* develops a strong base for its sometimes cloyingly twee song structures and melodies. *Stand Up for Your Mother* is an impressive milemarker in the most significant underground pop movement since Elephant 6 made the music world safe for lo-fi. (Mint, P.O. Box 3613, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6)

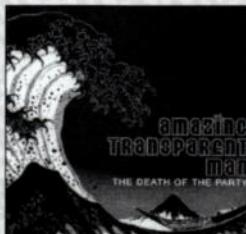
—Chris Fritz

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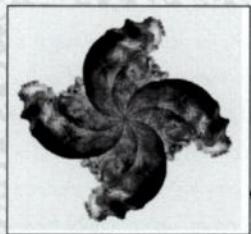
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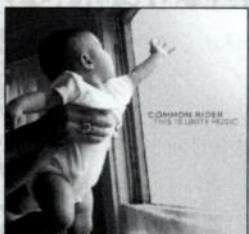
Amazing Transparent Man
The Death of the Party
 Proof that Pop-Punk can still be new, great and exciting! Springman Records (via Hopeless Distribution) / HD8609 Out 9/3/02!



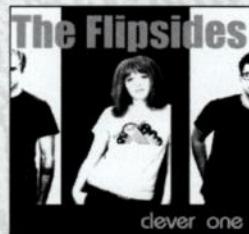
As Hope Dies
Birth Place and Burial Site
 Soul Searching Metallic Hardcore debut from these Southern Cali Crustcore legends in the making. Undecked Records (REV HQ) / UDR20 Out 9/3/02!



The Beautiful Mistake
Light A Match, For I Deserve To Burn
 TIMM combines elements of rock, hardcore, emo and creates a brilliant debut. Militia Group / TMG008 Out 9/24/02!



Common Rider
This Is Unity Music
 The long awaited full length from Operation Ivy singer Jesse Michaels. 12 new aggressive socially philosophical tracks. Hopeless Records / HTR663 Out 9/3/02!



The Flipsides

Clever One
 Twelve songs of hook-infused, guitar-driven Pop Punk Rock! Pink & Black Records / PNK 404 Out Now!



Lost City Angels

Self Titled
 The Lost City Angels have developed an innovative sound that blends. NITRO / LSA9-2 Out 9/17/02!



New Bomb Turks

The Mighty Beanz The Day The Earth Stood Still
 The perfect mix of punk rock fury and Stones-like twang! Gearhead Records / RPM936 Out 9/3/02!



Off the Record

Mulligan
 Finally... California's most popular fast-melodic Punk quintet return with a new album! New School Records! / NSR-106-CD Out Now!



RevHQ

Sibling rock can be a dangerous thing. Ask Marie and Donny Osmond. Ask the Deals. Ask Jack and Meg White (pretend they're brother and sister). One of the finest exceptions west of the Leo family (thanks for Van Pelt, Chisel, The Lapse, Holy Childhood, to name a few) can surely be found in the Vancouver duo of

TEGAN AND SARA.

Having cut their teeth in various high school punk bands, the two sisters grew tired of flaky drummers and coordinating cumbersome practices, electing instead to go at it alone as an acoustic singer/ songwriter duo. The sisters' unconventional approach and sensitive, bittersweet style set the pace for their 2000 debut, *This Business of Art*, landing them on national tours with Neil Young, The Pretenders, Rufus Wainwright and Jonathan Richman. The duo's sophomore release, *IF IT WAS YOU* (Vapor), arrives baring its teeth, showcasing a more aggressive side. From the garage bang of "Time Running" and the Phil Spector-meets-T. Rex tantrum of "You Went Away" to the '80s-influenced "Monday Monday Monday" and the bluegrass-tinged "Living Room," Tegan and Sara demonstrate stunning diversity on their second full-length. Production from John Collins and Dave Carswell (New Pornographers/The Smugglers) helps to add an almost tangible punch to an already impressive album worthy of the highest recommendation. (Vapor, 1460 4th St., Suite 208, Santa Monica, CA 90401)

—Mike McKee



Aside from being funny and just a little bit disturbing, *Being John Malkovich* could have gone a lot of different ways. Had it centered around

stepping inside the mind of Lungfish frontman Daniel Higgs, for instance, the box office smash might well have come with a '50s-style disclaimer warning expectant mothers and the weak of heart to stay away. For years, Higgs has dazzled and scared the bejeezus out of listeners with his tortured

lyrics and hallucinogenic imagery, backed as always by the signature guitar playing of Asa Osborne. **THE PUPILS** is a project of the two artists—in many ways a pared down version of the Lungfish we already know and love. While live the band performs as an acoustic duo, this self-titled debut incorporates some percussion on "All the People," "Lamb With Human Hands" and "I Will Remain Human for Another Day." Still, some of the album's sparest moments are also its most strong, such as "Jesus Christ" and "It's Good to Have Met You." Osborne's droning, haunting style combined with Higgs' anthemic, unrock timbre have always enjoyed a special chemistry. In synergy, the music they create is as powerful here as with a full band behind them. (Dischord, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007)

—Mike McKee

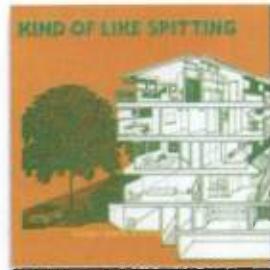


Boston's **27** is a dark indie pop trio and known as the black sheep of most scenes with which it's been involved. Having worked with a

division of Relapse Records (known more for producing lamb-eviscerating extreme power metal), the group creates lush landscapes of sound with hushed vocals, harmonious guitar work and electronic touches. Yet while much of its music is personal, inside its **ANIMAL LIFE**'s liner notes, the band encourages listeners to explore the informative websites of animal rights groups such as Farm Sanctuary and PETA. Composed of Neil Coulon, Maria Christopher and Ayal Naor, 27 challenges the idea of electronic music, with guitars and drum kits on equal footing with looped effects, clarinets, sampled strings and clips of Charles Mingus. Clean and lively production from Andy Hong (Karate) rounds out the experience. At times reminiscent of Portishead or The Swirlies, 27 is as rewarding as it is daring. (Kimchee, 6 Sagamore Rd., Ipswich, MA 01938)

—Mike McKee

KIND OF LIKE SPITTING's most recent offering starts out remarkably aggressive for the group best known for its quiet noodlings. "Passionate," the album's



opener, calls to mind some of Burning Airlines' cleaner material, with Ben Barnett crowing in a strong tenor, "I want to relive little minutes/try to keep the dream awake/let's be passionate/it's not like we'll get another chance to do this." The band then switches to the uptempo swing of "We Are Both Writers," setting an ir-resistible momentum for **BRIDGES WORTH BURNING**. When the band returns to its quieter, more subdued approach on "I Want Out," it's with a solid, rocking basis behind it, adding new depth and heart to the sentiment "we gots to chill." The album turns again to rock with cameos from Death Cab For Cutie's Chris Walla and Hey Mercedes/Braid's Bob Nanna. Complete strangers to the band are likely to find *Bridges Worth Burning* the most inviting and accessible of *Kind of Like Spitting*'s fare thus far, while old fans will enjoy the adrenaline conjured up by the tense, kinetic numbers like "Crossover Potential" and "This Lemonade is Terrible." (Barsuk, P.O. Box 22546, Seattle 98122)

—Mike McKee

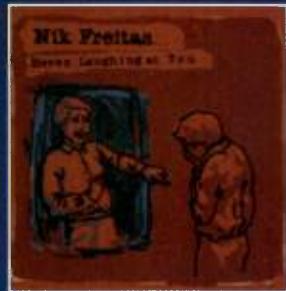
Modest Mouse mouthpiece Isaac Brock keeps his indie rock fellowship smiling with his one-shot side project for Sub Pop, **UGLY CASSANOVA**. Galvanized by Red Red Meat and Black Heart Procession members, **SHARPEN YOUR TEETH** has its share of odd, affable melodies ("Barn-acles") and blues-derived moments ("Spilled Milk Factory"). It's a peculiar but endearing album, mostly because of



its carefree, laid back tact, but when Teeth bites down on "Things I Don't Remember" like a big piece of grape Bubble Yum, it garners a

sweet, immediate result. "Diamonds on the Face of Evil" is a bona fide cavity, but the Flaming Lips nod "So Long to the Holidays" effortlessly balances sadness and beauty. (Sub Pop, P.O. Box 20645, Seattle 98102)

—John D. Luerssen



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MEDUSA CYCLONE
Tangier
(SMALL STONE)



ARSON
Lacerate The Sky
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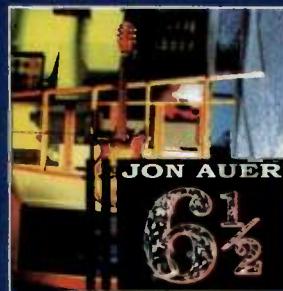
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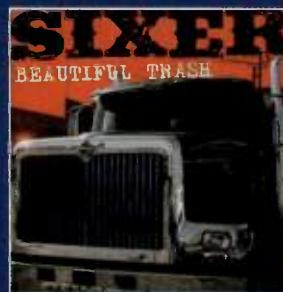
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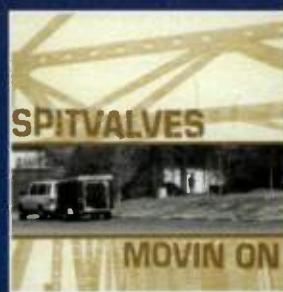
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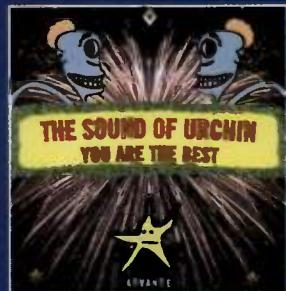
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6 1/2
(PATTERN)



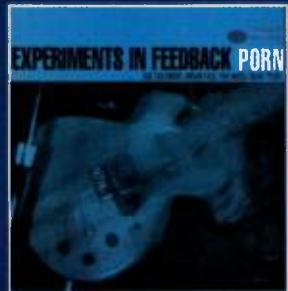
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Beautiful Trash
(BYO)



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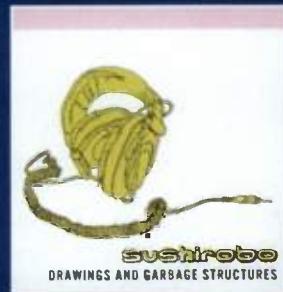
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(PATTERN 25)

RECORDS *continued from page 57*
 with mystical, otherworldly adventures. Song titles like "Light Years from Home," "Magic Eye," "Armageddon" and the title track all demonstrate Primal Fear's ambitious songwriting aspirations. Overall, the real strengths of *Black Sun* result from tight musicianship and well-crafted songwriting abilities. (Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

PUFFY AMIYUMI

An Illustrated History of Puffy AmiYumi



So Rick Nielsen and Jeff Lynne were visiting Budokan, checking out a Who documentary on a wristwatch TV, when they noticed Belinda Carlisle on the lobby phone trying to talk Brian Wilson into lending her the Wondermints, but she couldn't hear him over the disco dance contest in the lounge so she stormed off through the loitering Beatles conventioneers while Andy Partridge gave cupcakes to the Madonna Scouts. Suddenly Professor Andy Sturmer discovered the Power-pop Girls and called them Puffy. Puff Daddy sued so they lengthened their name and sold 14 million records in

Japan. They should sell more here because they pop like the Archies and rock like every decade since Woodstock. Not the end. (Bar None, P.O. Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030)

—Brian Baker

REMEMBERING NEVER

She Looks So Good in Red



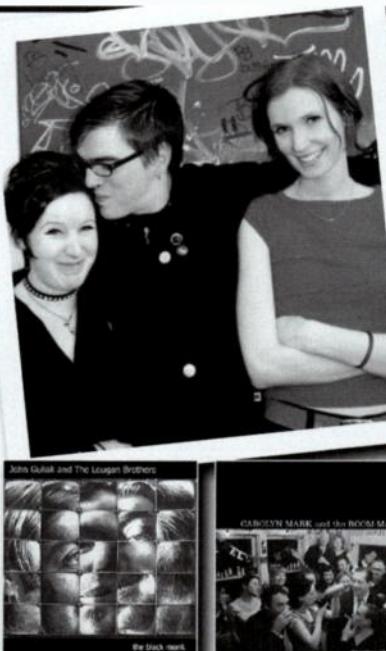
Remembering Never seems like it may be suffering from musical schizophrenia. The band's style seems to fluctuate between full-throttle death metal and a softer modern rock sound. Diversity is one thing, but can fans of one of these styles really appreciate the other? Perhaps there may exist a few aficionados of extreme metal who can appreciate this unlikely musical juxtaposition, but non-fans of extreme music might find *She Looks So Good in Red* a little bit hard to digest. If the band focused more energy on refining its melodic, softer side, Remembering Never might be able to cultivate a wider appeal with a more mainstream audience, although one quickly gets the impression this might not be what the band is striving for. (Ferret, 47 Wayne St. #3, Jersey City, NJ 07302)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

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THE RISE

Signal to Noise



Ferret Music has made its name by putting out music by only the finest hardcore and metalcore bands—*Sky Came Falling*, *Every Time I Die*, *From Autumn to Ashes* and *For the Love Of*, to name a few. The Rise is a bit left of center for the Ferret roster, but this certainly doesn't mean it's not of the same high caliber as all the label's other acts. In fact, The Rise raises the hardcore stakes for the label. The nonlinear, distorted *Signal to Noise* is flecked by programming, pianos and electronic bits woven through the songs. It might be hard to reconcile thumping drum and bass amongst harmonic distortion in a hardcore song, but like *Snapcase* and *Refused*, The Rise is forward-thinking enough to accomplish the feat with precision and skill. *Signal to Noise* is ambitious and subversive, driven by a pulsing desire to redefine hardcore. It's ultimately the first of many of The Rise's blueprints of hardcore's future. (Ferret)

—Amy Sciarretto

THE SABIANS

Beauty for Ashes



First, a little history. The Sabians consists of former members of stoner rock's holy grail act, *Sleep*. Singer/guitarist Justin Marler hooked up with drummer Chris Hakius after the band's demise, gathering two more San Francisco-area musicians to fill out The Sabians. However, where former *Sleep* guitarist/vocalist Matt Pike took his muse to the dark side of a Motorhead-influenced storm with the mighty *High on Fire*, Marler and Hakius have ventured into something else entirely. According to the band's press, *Beauty for Ashes* supposedly combines elements of punk, folk, metal and chanting, but the actual sound on this release falls far from the ideals of these disparate influences. At times this sounds like bottom-of-the-barrel emo. In other moments, the band manages a semi-stoner squeak. It's just not very appealing at all. Looks like the best part of *Sleep* wound up in *High on Fire*. (The Music Cartel)

—Erik Caplan

SPACEHEADS

Low Pressure



Since this experimental U.K. duo builds its songs largely around trumpet and percussion parts, there is the distinct feel of avant garde jazz found on these electronic grooves. Working with noir-ish trip hop beats ("Low

Pressure"), sputtering Aphex Twin loops ("On a Clear Day") and grandiose, mind-expanding space bop ("The Lugano Affair"), Andy Diagram and Richard Harrison create consistent, remarkably danceable music positioned at the nexus of Matthew Shipp and Boards of Canada. "Astro Temple" redefines exotica, taking Martin Denny rhythms and playing them like Spaceheads are the number one house band for the swankiest joints in the cosmos. (Merge, P.O. Box 1245, Chapel Hill, NC 27514)

—Charles Spano

STRUNG OUT

An American Paradox



An American Paradox hints at elements of a seriously intense band at work here. Melodic guitar lines and the familiar galloping drumming represent an energy hard to ignore and harder still to resist. Unfortunately, whatever oomph *Strung Out* brought with its songs, the production sabotages, replacing moxy with muted, inoffensive formula. The tones, EQ and production on this album are too similar to the nearly patented SoCal sound associated so closely with *Fat Wreck Chords*. While the label serves as a flagship for an entire genre, often times it seems a too common aesthetic dilutes the impact, leaving the impression of a differently packaged studio band. Releases such as *Dillinger Four's Situationist Comedy* demonstrate how a powerfully branded label such as *Fat* can bring new, exciting music to a huge, expansive crowd. *Strung Out's* latest album, however, illustrates the disadvantages of formulaic production and influence. (Fat Wreck Chords)

—Gerald K. Gamar

THE STRYDER

Jungle City Twitch



With a stripped-down, lean sense of production, *The Stryder* revels in tight, melodic hard rock structures reminiscent of an early unpolished *Weezer*. Its debut album, *Jungle City Twitch*, offers straightforward, pleasurable pop songs with relentlessly catchy melodies, all while spicing things up with a decidedly fuzzed-out undertone. Songs like "Summer Coat," "This is the Time," "Missing Without You" and "Down and Dirty" all brim with feel-good melodies both provocative and consistently engaging, warranting repeat listens. However, while *Jungle City Twitch* is amazingly coherent, it is at times heavy on the syrup, making it a wary purchase for

hard rock fans without a latent sweet tooth. (Equal Vision, P.O. Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534)

—Dan Pastorius

SUICIDE NOTE

You're Not Looking so Good



Suicide Note's *You're Not Looking So Good* sounds like the product of kids who were weaned on early-'80s punk rock (like Black Flag) but currently listen to indie rock for personal enjoyment while playing exhausting, front-loaded hardcore for a physical outlet and release. The infinitely stylish, deliciously smart *You're Not Looking So Good* operates with fierce sonic bloodlust. Suicide Note refines the vitriol of Kiss it Goodbye, douses it with rhythmic patterns similar to Snapcase and infuses it with the dynamics of Poison the Well. Clearly, this Chicago four-piece thinks before it speaks and carefully arranges the pieces in its musical puzzle. If *You're Not Looking So Good* is a sign of hardcore's future, then sticking around looks like one helluva good idea. (Ferret)

—Amy Sciarretto

SUNDAY'S BEST

The Californian



With its sophomore record Sunday's Best strips its music down to simple, catchy melodies and jangly rock. Gone are any genre expectations or pretensions—this is simply a great summer driving album summing up the laid-back, sunshine daydreams of Southern California with all of its happiness, bittersweet aspirations and ennui. From the smog and mixed emotions of the title track to the pain of "The Salt Mines of Santa Monica" and Holly-woodisms of "Our Left Coast Am-bitions," Sunday's Best acutely characterizes Los Angeles. On "If We Had it Made" Edward Reyes sings, "this could be our great escape from what we are and what we want." The title of Sun-day's Best's first album, *Poised to Break*, had it right—the band may have been on the edge, but it wasn't ready. If anything, *The Californian* is an escape from the confines and conformity of its past and of its genre roots. Along the way, the musicians might have even discovered a whole new niché. (Polyvinyl, P.O. Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140)

—Charles Spano

SUPER CHINCHILLA RESCUE MISSION & THE TIM VERSION

Go Halves On a Bastard Split EP



If pop punk artists like Jawbreaker or Dillinger Four make the hairs on

the back of your neck get prickly with delight, then this nine-song split CD from Super Chinchilla Rescue Mission and The Tim Version is definitely worth your attention. This is not your MTV-friendly stuff (like Green Day and The Offspring)—this is abrasive, raw and delightfully energetic music created by two bands dripping with plenty of street cred. Of the four SCRM tracks, "Storied Faces, Bad Tattoos" is easily the pick of the litter, complete with finger-blistering guitar work and a throat-blazing lead vocal from Seth Swale. This Virginia-based band could easily win over fans of kindred spirits Avail and Strike Anywhere, so long as it continues to push forward and tour a plenty. While it's not as impressive as SCRM, The Tim Version offers five lively cuts. The most dynamic of the five is the acoustic sing-a-long "Another Beer in the Fridge Pt. III," boasting a memorable chorus. (ADD, 270 Central St., Hingham, MA 02043)

—Kevin Boyce

THE SUPERSUCKERS/ ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN

Splitsville



Anyone who says they love rock but doesn't know The Supersuckers or Electric Frankenstein is simply an asshole. *Splitsville* is an interesting concept—four original tracks from each band with each covering one of the other's songs as a finale. This is rock with all the right stuff in place. What else could you want? The Supersuckers' tracks are a shot of high-powered pepper spray into the mugs of slumped-shouldered nu-metal heads and whining emo nerds everywhere. We're talking high-powered guitars, classic arrangements and a metric ton of swagger. Track two, "Shit Fire," is an absolute standout, with Eddie Spaghetti's trademark yowl in full effect. The band chose to cover Electric Frankenstein's "Teenage Shutdown," and suffice it to say justice is served on this one. Electric Frankenstein tears out of the gate with "Sweet Baby Ignorance" and never lets up with its brand of old-school punky rock, ending its selections with The Supersuckers' sing-along, "She's My Bitch." (The Music Cartel)

—Erik Caplan

TAD MOROSE

Matters of the Dark



After nearly a decade together, power metal outfit Tad Morose is finally starting to reach an audience beyond its

native land of Sweden. As the songs on *Matters of the Dark* can attest, Tad Morose incorporates elements of many classic metal styles into its overall sound. Depending on the track, the listener might hear traces of Black Sabbath, Queensryche, Judas Priest, older Metal Church or various others. As a result, the songs are powerful, memorable and even catchy at times, thanks to the effective use of vocal hooks in many of the songs. Tad Morose may be a new name on this side of the Atlantic, but it can deliver the goods as well as any other seasoned, talented outfit. (Century Media)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

TEETH OF THE LIONS

RULE OF DIVINE

Rampton



This band is something of a superstar collaboration between various long-standing players in the doom metal field, none more than Lee Dorrian from Cathedral. Even though it contains only three songs, the disc lasts more than 54 minutes, thanks in large part to the opening "He Who Accepts All That is Offered (Feel Bad Hit of The Winter)"—a half an hour by itself! A

hair before the nine-minute mark, Dorrian finally opens his mouth, breaking the monotony of a gradually increasing level of activity. "New Pants & Shirt," another sludgefest, follows with modulated vocals buried so deep it might as well be an umpteenth generation bootleg. The 16-minute, mostly instrumental finale, "The Smiler," is more of the same. Stereo lobotomy. Enter at your own risk! (Southern Lord)

—Mark Gromen

THE TENNESSEE TWIN

Free To Do What?



While devoting most of its dollars to establish a veritable pop outpost in Vancouver, Mint Records can't be blamed for covering all of its bases. The Tennessee Twin's *Free to do What?* should do well to diversify its catalog. Spearheaded by songwriter/singer/bandleader Cindy Wolfe (sister of Bratmobile yapper Allison Wolfe), The Tennessee Twin's brand of Grand Ole Opry-style country may seem a tad anachronistic, but the subject matter—ranging from depression to globalization—is remarkably sharp, especially for a handful of country songs.

continued on page 63



SELDOM

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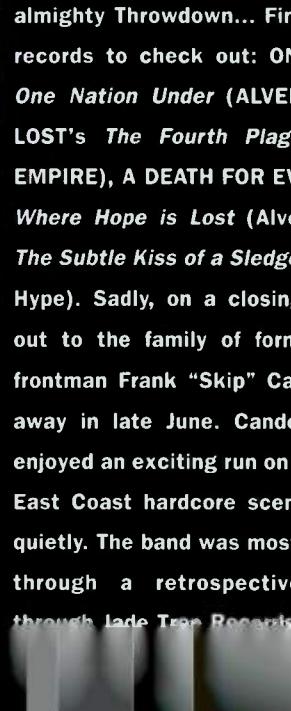
By Amy Sciarretto

CROWNINGMAN has parted ways with vocalist Simon Brody citing personal differences. The remaining members will be forming a new band under a different name but emphasize they will continue... KILLSWITCH ENGAGE has replaced lead singer Jesse Leach with the singer of Connecticut's BLOOD HAS BEEN SHED... TRIPLE CROWN has licensed ARKANGEL's latest album, *Dead Man Walking*—a hulking chunk of European metalcore... Former BURIED ALIVE/DESPAIR frontman Scott Vogel has started a new band. The new project is ominously named ERROR. If Vogel stays true to form, this project will be purely brutal hardcore... Former BOTCH members' quieter band, MINUS THE BEAR, has released *This is What I Know About Being Gigantic* through SUICIDE SQUEEZE RECORDS... Former NO FOR AN ANSWER frontman and lo-fi author DAN O'MAHONEY has formed a new band called 411. Replacing NFAA's breakneck speed with some more contemporary melody, the band's forthcoming EP promises big things... TOO DAMN HYPE has just released BEHIND THE SUN's *Broken Hearts and Shattered Bones*... BOY SETS FIRE is calling its new album *Tomorrow Come Today*. It will be released through WIND UP RECORDS sometime next year. To tide fans over, a live EP recorded in New Jersey will be issued this fall... THROWDOWN has performed a switcheroo. Former guitarist Dave is now singing, and former lead singer Keith Barney has taken over guitar duties. It's not big change, considering Barney does double duty and plays guitar for EIGHTEEN VISIONS as well... Hardcore legend PORCELL (formerly of SHELTER, JUDGE and YOUTH OF TODAY, to name a few) has formed a new band called LAST OF THE FAMOUS. Early reports suggest it's a better listen than the ill-fated RAY AND PORCELL DRUM MACHINE EP... FAT WRECK CHORDS' newest installment in its live album series (*Live in A Dive*) is a high-quality SICK OF IT ALL record culled from live performances spanning the band's entire career. Classics like "Maladjusted," "Clobberin' Time,"



SICK OF IT ALL

"Injustice System" and "Friends Like You" sound terrific. Listeners will feel as though they are in the middle of a circle pit about to embark on a "GI Joe Headstomp" with this one... Former HATED guitarist Dan Littleton has joined IDA, bringing a fresh, Moss Icony flavor to the traditional punk outfit... HASTE has recorded a cache of new demos that could find the Alabama hardcore band on its way to a major label... The new songs, especially "Evidence of Wasted Ink" and "With All the Pride and Dignity of a Drowning Swimmer" are as promising as any of the group's work to date... INDECISION RECORDS has issued *Indecision Video Vault, Volume One*, an action-packed DVD loaded with live footage from the label's roster (COUNT ME OUT, BLEEDING THROUGH, DEATH BY STEREO and UNBROKEN, among others). The vid also features ADAMANTIUM's last show and exclusive studio outtakes from the almighty Throwdown... Finally, some high cool records to check out: ONE NATION UNDER's *One Nation Under* (ALVERAN), A LIFE ONCE LOST's *The Fourth Plague: Flies* (ROBOTIC EMPIRE), A DEATH FOR EVERY SIN's *In a Time Where Hope is Lost* (Alveran) and MISURA's *The Subtle Kiss of a Sledge Hammer* (Too Damn Hype). Sadly, on a closing note, thoughts go out to the family of former TURNING POINT frontman Frank "Skip" Candelori, who passed away in late June. Candelori's Turning Point enjoyed an exciting run on the early-to-mid-'90s East Coast hardcore scene before disbanding quietly. The band was most recently celebrated through a retrospective discography CD through Jade Tree Records.



RECORDS *continued from page 61*

Fitting in pedal and lap steel, accordion, mandolin and fiddle, The Tennessee Twin might seem like an outdated idea, but looking at the mullet-headed fools of contemporary country, it might not be such a bad one. (Mint, P.O. Box 3613, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6)

—Christopher Fritz

THIS DAY FORWARD

Kairos



Like Poison the Well, Atreyu and Eighteen Visions, This Day Forward is another poignant addition to the budding stable of hard rock groups incorporating the anguished singing approach of contemporary emo music. This five-song EP, titled *Kairos* (Greek for "the time is ripe for change"), is a fitting follow-up to TDF's brilliant 2000 release, *Transient Effects of Light on Water*. In the two years since the group's debut release, this band has matured on multiple levels—its songwriting has strengthened and vocalist Mike Shaw is developing into the type of frontman most bands of this ilk require. On "Geocentric," he ushers screams up from his belly with the

gust of a gale-force wind without moving the spotlight away from melody. Effectively, there's nothing musically or vocally out of place on *Kairos*. This Day Forward remains refreshingly unpretentious. The EP's closing track, "Sunfalls and Watershine," boasts a guest appearance from Thursday's Geoff Rickley. (Eulogy, P.O. Box 8692, Coral Springs, FL 33075)

—Kevin Boyce

TIAMAT Judas Christ



Artists like Christian Death, Type O Negative and My Dying Bride are proof gothic metal can be executed well, but Tiamat's *Judas Christ* is a perfect example of how to do it wrong. This Swedish quartet began as a death metal act in 1990 and actually has some good albums under its belt, namely 1994's *Wildhoney* and 1992's *Clouds*. As the band evolved from its sturdy metal roots into the synthesizer-driven gothic mess it is now, Tiamat has lost focus, fans and any comprehension of how to pen a decent song. In addition to housing some of the most inexcusably bad lyrics of its career (try "Silly cartoon creatures on cotton boulevard/

—Brian Baker

playing dead just like a retard") *Judas Christ* is as memorable as Magic Johnson's late-night talk show. Avoid it and buy Type O Negative's *Bloody Kisses* instead. (Century Media)

—Kevin Boyce

VARIOUS ARTISTS A Tribute to Nashville



Tribute records have become odd animals over the past few years, with high-profile honorees attracting inappropriate but higher-profile (read "cash magnet") tributors. When there is an exception to the rule, it's generally off the chart. *A Tribute to Nashville* is just such a scale-breaking exception. Born from Dave Lang and Carolyn Mark's *Rocky Horror*-like live recreation of Robert Altman's 1975 film *Nashville*, the disc features snippets of film dialogue and amazing guests like Neko Case (doing Karen Black's "Rolling Stone") and Kelly Hogan on Ronee Blakely's "Dues." Tolan O'Neil does Keith Carradine's "I'm Easy" better than Keith did it himself. High concept doesn't always mean big reward, but this time the result is actually truly special. (Mint)

—Brian Baker

VIRGIN BLACK

Sombre Romantic



Virgin Black is a five-piece Australian outfit with a female guitarist. A heavy dose of classical music mixes with more contemporary sounds on *Sombre Romantic*. "Opera De Romance" opens with Gregorian chants, segueing to a small string quartet featuring acoustic guitar. The sparse vocal lines are presented by a lone tenor. Tolling bells add a liturgical feel to "Embrace," until the electrified instruments eventually kick in a rout. "Walk Without Limbs" is the first cut with proper lyrics within a repetitive, danceable black metal/goth beat. Piano begins "Of Your Beauty" and "Museum of Iscariot," which subdivides itself into three distinct movements. "Drink the Midnight Hymn" and "I Sleep With the Emperor" are the only semblance of conventionally constructed metal. (The End, 556 S. Fair Oaks Ave., #101-111, Pasadena, CA 91105)

—Mark Gromen

THE VIRUS

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NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY *continued from page 18*

What listeners are left with is an album interested in neither beckoning nor rebuffing—mostly it just lies there waiting for you to dig it. Of course, maybe listeners aren't meant to get it. Pussy Galore, Hagerty's first band, made a name for itself playing some of the trashiest rock 'n' roll ever committed. In fact, one reviewer even remarked, "the only difference between good Pussy Galore music and bad is that the latter is boring and the former is not."

Maybe it is all a joke. Talking to Hagerty, one quickly gets the feeling it's not.

"The thing is, you can't cheat an honest man," Hagerty explains. "I really believe that. We like to get involved in really weird stuff and get people tangled up in their own greed and egos and then their personalities or stupidity will take over."

Since releasing the record in February, Hagerty has toured twice—once as a headliner and once opening up for Wilco. Reactions to the tours, both by critics' and his own accounts have been positive. At long last, he seems to be offering listeners something they can take at face value.

"Royal Trux was just a bunch of shit," Hagerty confesses. "I mean, I know what we were thinking, but I think the benefits of Royal Trux come with the person who listens to it. But with my band, I'm not indulging any of those tricks at all. It's totally take it or leave it. It's for real."

It's a bit like the boy who cried wolf. Hagerty has jumped on the wagon and finally decided to get straight with his audience—however, it might be too late. After so many self-indulgent years of pushing the heroin-chic blues, Hagerty's brand of doped-out noodlephonics has kind of lost the plot.

"We played in Columbus one night, and it was bizarre because it was a little tense," Hagerty recalls, as if searching for the lesson in a parable. "Then we did a cover of 'Sweet Jane' in the middle of the set, and that went over really well, because it was, like, all kids. But I got the feeling they could have turned on us pretty soon."

Well, now you know how it feels, Neil.

—Allan Martin Kemler



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fans will swear by the endearing writing of the criminally prolific band, many a critic finds this sort of release schedule eventually nothing but exhausting—exhausting of patience and good material. Philadelphia's The Virus seems to still be holding it down for now—no one's walking away yet, and mohawked street punks show no signs of desertion. Some will argue this bondage-panted genre is free from the burden of innovation—a totally legitimate point of view. Eventually, however, tradition wears thin. This band possesses a wealth of musical ability, though the direction it's put towards is fairly predictable. By riding the ears and belts of the past, The Virus takes street punk down a blind alley toward a brick wall. While the days of Sid and Darby may have represented an intense era for punk, full of piss, vinegar and more piss, there is no substitute for the impact of originality. (Punkcore, P.O. Box 916, Middle Island, NY 11953)

—Gerald K. Garner

VNV NATION

Futureperfect



In developing a terrifying new form of dance music, VNV Nation combines synthesizers, tape effects and orchestral pieces into a highly propulsive, beat-based formula. With a mechanic sound hinging more on the side of goth rather than new wave, the duo of Ronan Harris and Mark Jackson creates detached soundscapes rooted in moderate dance tempos, strongly upping the ante on its 1998 effort, *Praise the Fallen*. While this type of synth-pop generally becomes bland by mid-album, VNV Nation keeps things exciting with lots of variation and a grinding cadence. At once sounding like post-industrial disco music and the soundtrack to one's own personal horror film, VNV keeps listeners' ears throbbing all the way to the dance floor. (Metropolis, P.O. Box 54307, Philadelphia 19105)

—Dan Pastorius

VOMITORY

Blood Rapture



Vomitory is musically talented, but run-of-the-mill death metallers from Sweden. Seems Metal Blade has placed little faith in the band as

well, investing almost nothing in the CD packaging: horribly cheesy cover art, no individual member photos—just white print on black lyrical text and a less-than-stellar group shot on the back of the eight-page CD booklet. The twin guitar work occasionally eclipses the belched vocals, as on "Redeemed in Flames." Unfortunately, it's all too rarely. (Metal Blade)

—Mark Gromen

WAXWING

Intervention + Remix



Those who are more familiar with Rocky Votolato's moody, sullen work as a solo artist may be a bit surprised to find he also fronts a rock band like Waxwing. Moreover, it's surprisingly good. While fellow Seattle bands Death Cab for Cutie and Pedro the Lion have shared the indie spotlight, Waxwing has remained in the shadows, slowly plugging away and turning heads with its own brand of indie rock. Overall, an intriguing and eclectic offering from a band on the rise, *Intervention* is a compilation of tracks from seven releases, other previously unreleased material and a few live tracks, including a cover of U2's "New Years Day." (Second Nature, P.O. Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138)

—Jonathan Cholewa

WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY

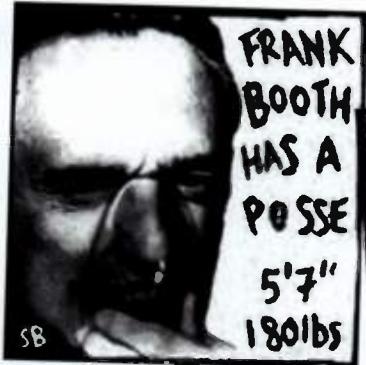
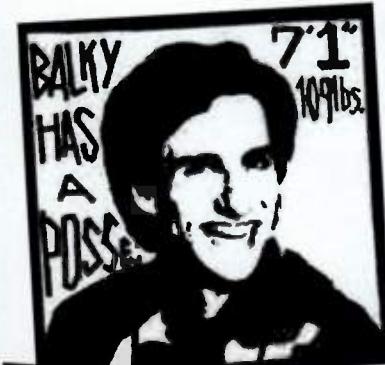
The Emotional Rescue



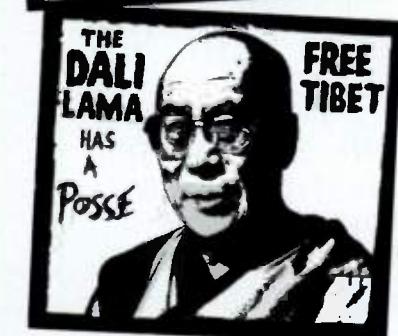
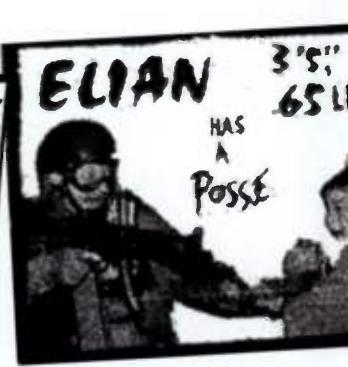
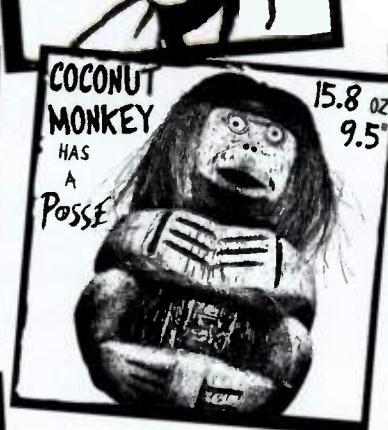
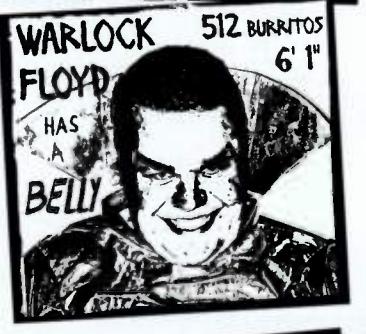
With an engagingly quirky sound equal parts Pavement and Modest Mouse, Windsor for the Derby's *The Emotional Rescue* is sure to pitch listeners into hammocks, ankles crossed with a cool drink in hand and a warm breeze over head. Like the refreshing feeling after a nice long nap, *The Emotional Rescue* relaxes and rejuvenates with slow, melodic percussion accompanied by soothing vocals and tastefully twangy guitar work. Listeners will be drawn in by "Indonesian Guitars," featuring casual acoustic rhythms free from any unnecessary lyrics. "Awkwardness" picks it up a bit, without jolting the listener, keeping the album's flow while making it more interesting. Those in search of recreation and relaxation need look no further. Kick up your feet. (Aesthetics, P.O. Box 577286, Chicago 60657)

—Jessica Stein

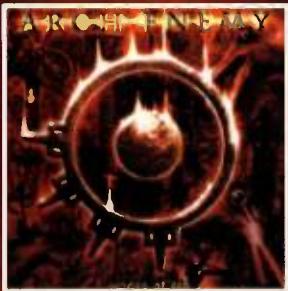
Perhaps no visual is as synonymous with California-based artist Shepard Fairey than his ominous two-tone André the Giant Has A Posse Stickers. They say imitation is the highest form of flattery (now that Napster is gone). Here are some of our favorite GIANT bootlegs, along with a few additions of our own...



DA O.G.



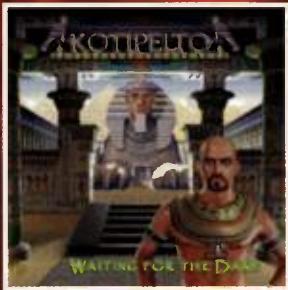
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ARCH ENEMY

Wages Of Sin

On Tour Now with Nile! *Wages Of Sin* boldly captures Arch Enemy's ravenous temperament for stunning brutality in sound and speaks to their unparalleled ability to embrace new paradigms that exemplify their defiant leadership! See Arch Enemy playing with Nile at The Trocadero in Phila 8/4!



KOTIPELTO

Waiting For The Dawn

Stratovarius vocalist Timo Kotipelto's debut solo project, *Waiting For The Dawn*, is a must for every serious Heavy Metal CD collection! Kotipelto's style is a brilliant blend of Stratovarius, vintage Sabbath and early '80s Maiden combined with lyrics that weave ancient Egyption fact with fiction throughout. Guest appearances from members of Stratovarius, Symphony X, Helloween, Children Of Bodom and more!



AT THE GATES

Slaughter Of The Soul

Re-issue of their 1995 classic album *Slaughter Of The Soul* with 6 rare, additional tracks. Includes new liner notes by Tomas Lindberg and repackaged with photos and artwork from the archives.



CARCASS

Reek of Putrefaction

Resurrected from the Earache archives and re-issued with original banned, "meat-collage" cover. The Earache debut album by the purveyors of gore-grind, only 1,000 copies issued on colored vinyl.



NAPALM DEATH

Scum

The album that started it all...this UK grindcore classic from 1987 is issued for the first time in the US on colored vinyl. Only 1,000 copies pressed, with all-original cover artwork and insert.



MESHUGGAH

Nothing

Catch Meshuggah on Ozzfest 2002 all summer long performing on the second stage with Down, Hatebreed, Apex Theory and more! Also playing selected off dates with System Of A Down, P.O.D., Down & Mushroomhead! Look out for Meshuggah's new release, *Nothing*, in stores on August 6th! You will get *Nothing* and like it!



IN FLAMES

Clayman

Catch In Flames on tour with Slayer and Soulfly in August and September! On September 3rd, In Flames will rage once more with the release of the band's most superior and accessible album yet, *Reroute To Remain*. Gothenburg, Sweden, is known as one of the most fertile breeding grounds for innovative, melodic thrash metal and there can be no doubt In Flames are one of the hottest premiere acts to emerge from this scene. See In Flames on tour with Slayer & Soulfly at The Electric Factory on August 15!



THUNDERSTONE

Thunderstone

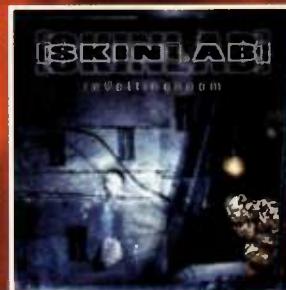
Thunderstone is a superb mixture of powerful melodies, hard rocking vocals and progressive song structures and boasts a guest appearance by Stratovarius guitarist Timo Tolkki. Fans of Blind Guardian, Stratovarius and Rhapsody will surely appreciate the thoughtful intensity and mind-boggling guitar virtuosity of Thunderstone's debut. Feel the power and experience the triumphant majesty that is *Thunderstone*!



UNLEASHED

Hell's Unleashed

At a time when most Death Metal bands are changing their sound to adhere to the modern trends, Unleashed continue to carry the torch of true old school Swedish Death Metal! *Hell's Unleashed* is the band's seventh release to date and is sure to leave any Death Metal warrior impressed.



SKINLAB

reVoltingRoom

The culmination of three years worth of writing, recording and touring, *reVoltingRoom* is not only Skinlab's most accessible record to date, but also their most mature and focused offering yet. On Tour Now! Check out all the latest on Skinlab, including upcoming tour dates @ www.skinlab1.com!



SHADOWS FALL

Of One Blood

Taking off on tour in August with Kittie and Poison The Well, and joining Hatebreed and Six Feet Under on tour in September to support their new release *The Art Of Balance* (Available September 17th), the future is bright yet hectic for metal's most promising and punishing act, Shadows Fall! Check out www.shadowsfall.com for a full tour date listing!



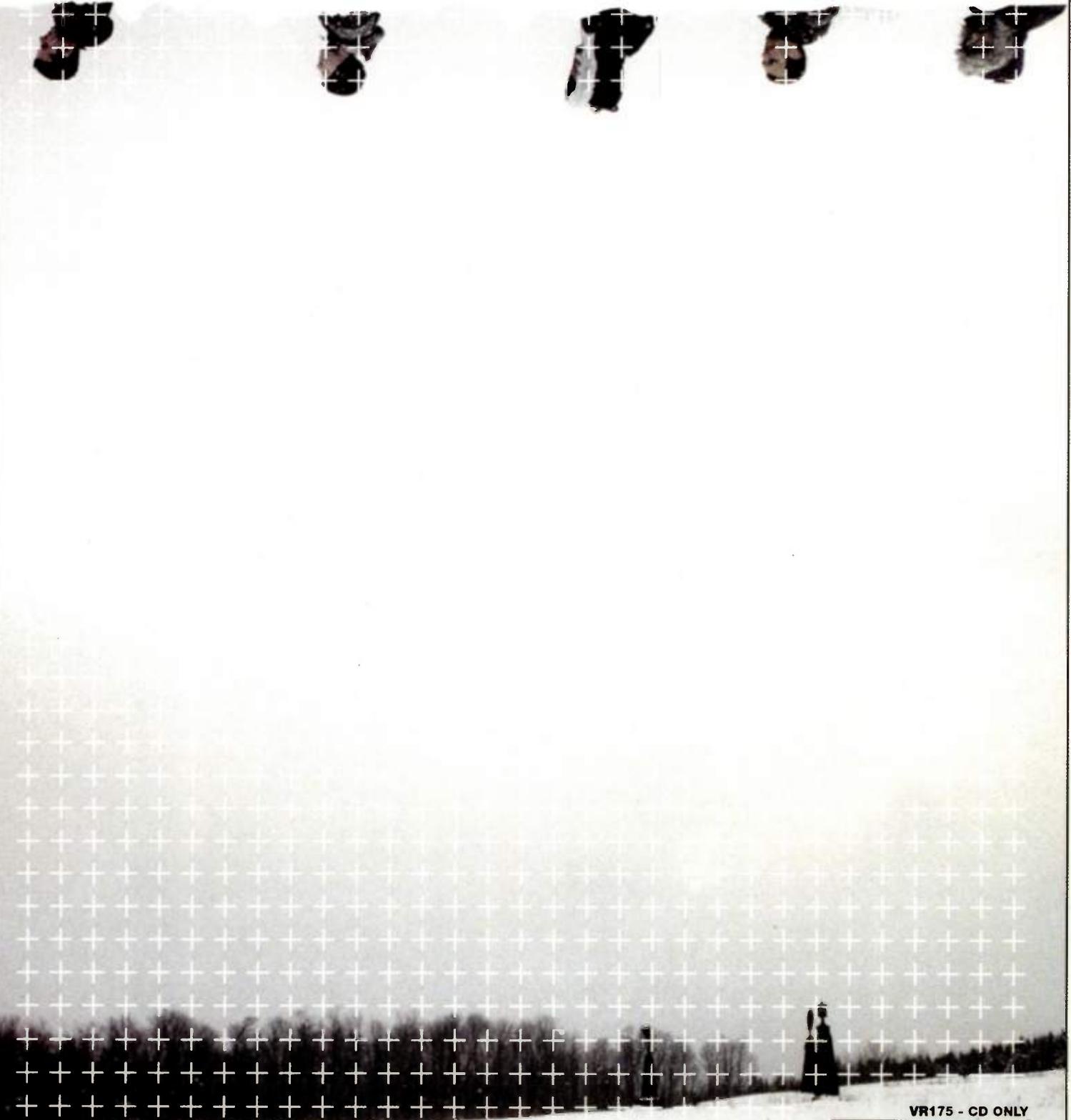
VARIOUS ARTISTS

10th Anniversary Party—Live DVD

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