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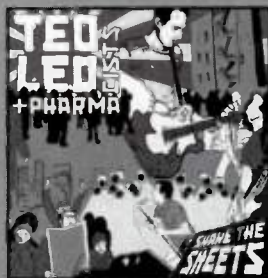
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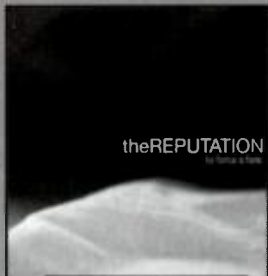
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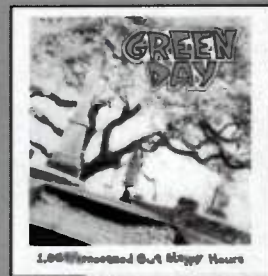
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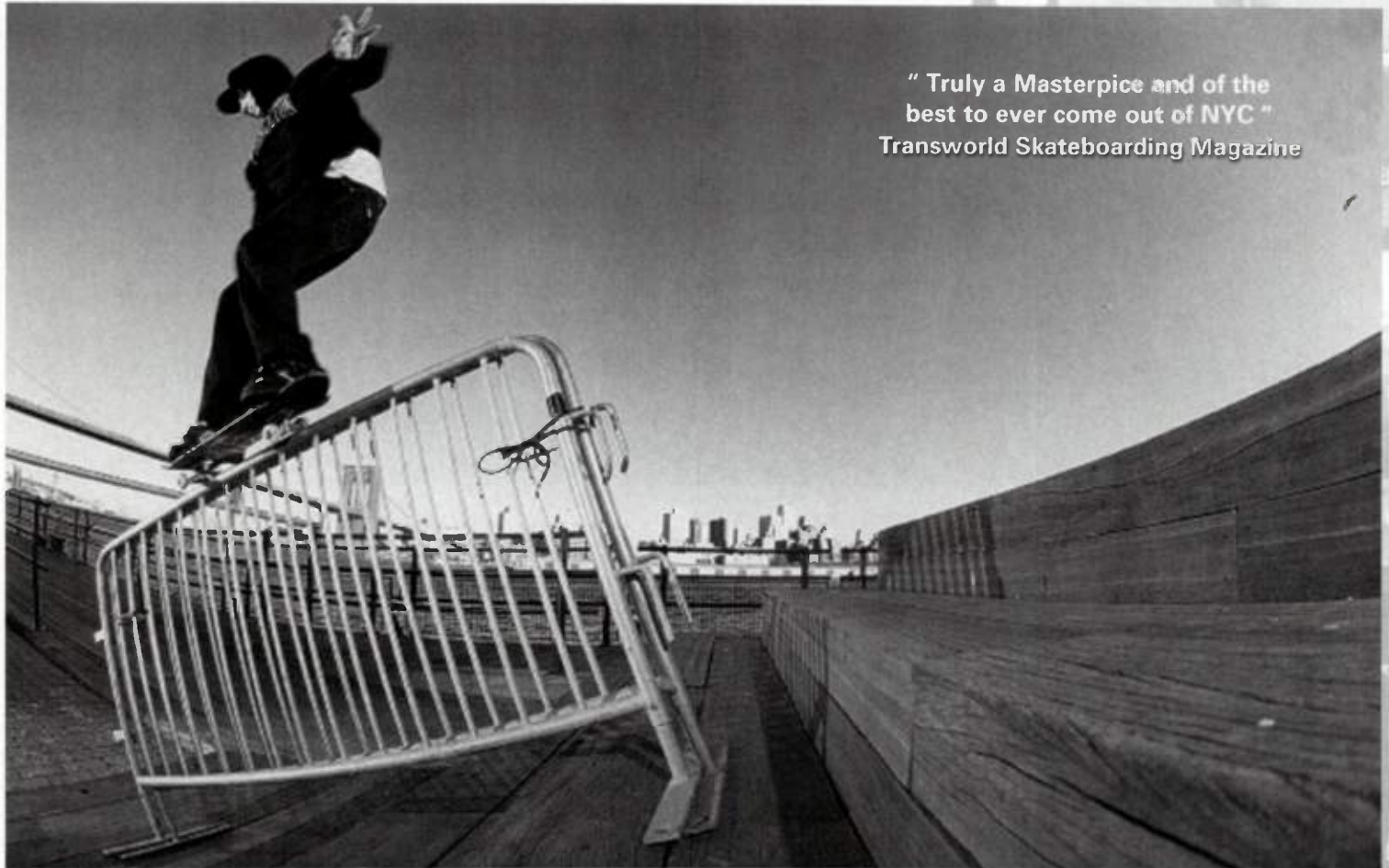
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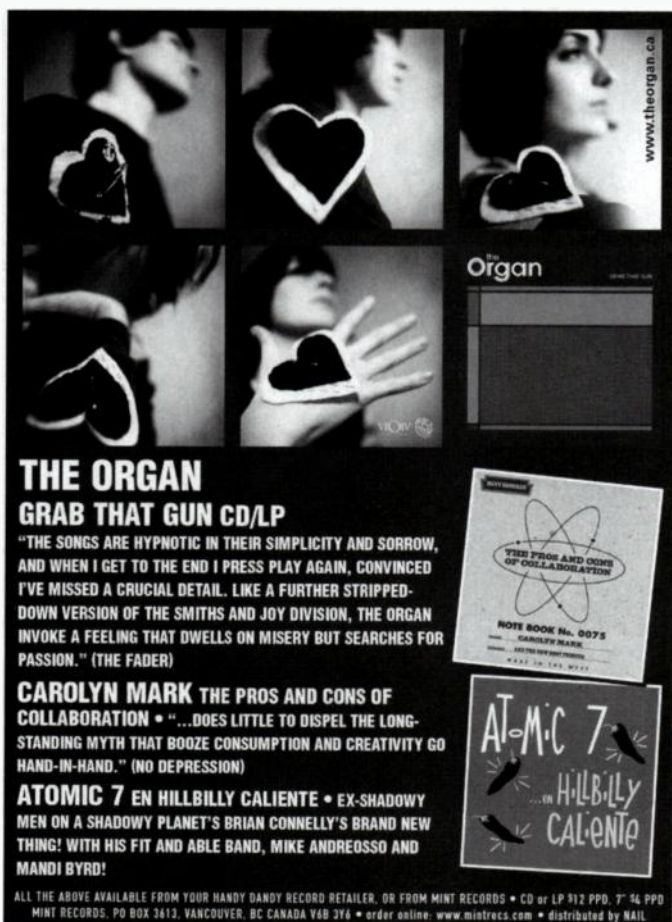
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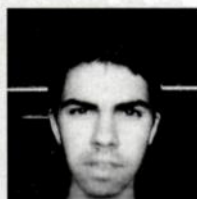


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### DREW HEFFRON ▶

Drew Heffron is a 20-year-old graphic design major at Winthrop University, located outside Charlotte, N.C. He is interested in drawing, bird-watching, BCO and selling cardboard deer heads on FitForUse.com.

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### TIM GOUGH ▶

Tim Gough is a very tired screen printer, designer and sometime illustrator. He has had the pleasure to work with Jade Tree Records, Roca Wear and the Philadelphia ICA.

**TimGough.org.**

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### JULIE WEST ▶

Julie West is a freelance illustrator currently residing in Southeastern United States.

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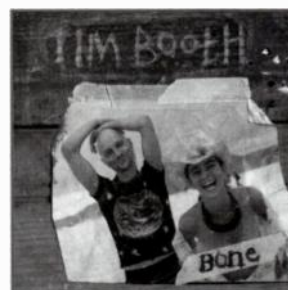
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On the radio: Modest Mouse, The Constantines, Rascal, Beta Band, Interpol, The Faint, Nirvana, Mastodon, The Moxies, KJD2, Blonde, Redhead !!!, M... Black Star, El Guapo, Animal Collective, Ted Leo, ... Born, Dinosaur, Mirah, The Fall, Le Tigre, Lieke Martens, Harvey, The Streets, Q And Not U, The Decemberists, Franz Ferdinand, Savendra, Banha, Shins, The Blow, Bloc Party, Drive-By Truckers, Cl... Colder, Electrelane, Mouse on Mars, Arcade Fire, ... Wiley, Guided By Voices, The Thermals, Tom Wa... Miss Kittin, Morrissey, Wilco, The Black Keys, Nu... Jean Grae, Polyphonic Spree, Mum, Calexico, Bean... Savy Fav, Burning Bridges, De La Soul, Four Tet, M...

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The youth vote was supposed to be the key to this year's election. So what happened?

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This New Year's Eve indie rock's leading Anglophiles will hang up their guitars. So we asked a bunch of their acquaintances to guess the last song of their career.

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With Jeff Tweedy coming out of rehab fresh and clean, the question on everyone's lips is, will happiness put him out of touch with his muse.

#### PIXIES |46

They're back. And it didn't suck.

On the Cover  
Artwork by Thom Lessner  
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## ■ FORUM

READERS, CONTRIBUTORS AND MUSICIANS SPEAK UP

For our end of the year wrap up, we decided to pit our readers against some of the musicians we've written about. The number of responses from both camps was overwhelming. It seems the only difficulty people had was with trying to limit their choices to a handful of favorites.

So, here's what we got when we asked...

# What's your personal Top 5 for 2004?

### Andy Maddox

**ALBUM** Xiu Xiu *Fabulous Muscles*, The Thermals *Fuckin' A*, Fugazi live series

**DJ** Mr. Dibbs, Joe Beats

**GUILTY PLEASURE** 50 Cent, Alkaline Trio

**PRODUCER** Steve Roche, Sole, John Goodmanson.

**FILM** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Garden State*.



### Top 5 Live Acts From Torry Castellano of The Donnas

The Distillers

Green Day

Sloan

Velvet Revolver

Le Tigre

### D.J. Short

Elkton, Md.

**ALBUM** TV on the Radio *Desperate Youth...*

**DJ** RJD2

**PRODUCER** Ethan Johns

**GUILTY PLEASURE** Rilo Kiley

**FILM** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*



### Top 5 Albums From Ben Kutil

Madvillain *Madvillainy* (Stones Throw)

Animal Collective *Sung Tongs* (Fat Cat)

Kanye West *College Dropout* (Roc-A-Fella)

Boredoms *Seadrum/House of Sun* (Warner Bros.)

Joanna Newsom *The Milk-Eyed Mender* (Drag City)



### Vivian Sarratt

New York, N.Y.

Fiery Furnaces *Blueberry Boot* (Rough Trade)

On! Air! Library *On! Air! Library!* (Arena Rock)

Blonde Redhead *Misery is a Butterfly* (4AD)

Death From Above 1979 *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine* (Vice)

Dizzee Rascal *Showtime* (XL Recordings)

### Corby Goade

Boise, Idaho

Pavement *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* reissue (Matador)

Wilco *A Ghost is Born* (Nonesuch)

Dizzee Rascal *Showtime* (XL Recordings)

Menomena *I Am The Fun Blame Monster* (Film Guerrero)

The Juggers *Solid Guild* (Star Time International)



### John Vanderslice

Arcade Fire *Funeral* (Merge)

The Books *The Lemon of Pink* (Tomlab)

Ghostface *Pretty Toney Album* (Def Jam)

The Mountain Goats *We Shall All Be Healed* (WB)

Spoon *The Beast and the Dragon are Adored* (Merge)

Viktor Vaughn *Venomous Villian* (Insomniac)

### Jon Solomon

Princeton, N.J.

**Top 5 Compilations**

*Maybe Chicago* (Criminal IQ)

*Hits and Misses* (Trikont)

*Fort Worth Teen Scene, Vol. 1-3* (Norton)

*The Third Unheard: Connecticut Hip Hop 1979-1983* (Stones Throw)

*The Relay Project* (The Relay Project)



### Zack Ham

Austin, Texas

Nick Cave *Abattoir Blues/Lyre of Orpheus* (Anti)

Blood Brothers *Crimes* (V2)

New Year *End is Now* (Touch and Go)

Animal Collective *Sung Tongs* (Fat Cat)

The Faint *Wet From Birth* (Saddle Creek)

### Ben Kutil

Baltimore, Md.

Junior Boys *Last Exit* (Domino)

Sufjan Stevens *Seven Swans* (Sounds Familyre)

Handsome Boy Modeling School *White People* (Atlantic)

Ratatat *Ratatat* (XL Recordings)

Diplo *Florida* (Ninja Tune)





### Top 5 Live Acts From **Tilly & The Wall**

The Faint  
Jason Anderson  
The Black Lips  
Rilo Kiley  
Postal Service

### **Nick Pergakes**

Huntersville, N.C.

ALBUM Guided By Voices

Half Smiles of the Decomposed (Matador)

DJ Jarvis Cocker

PRODUCER Chris Walla

GUILTY PLEASURE Interpol Antics (Matador)

FILM I Heart Huckabees



### Top Five Albums From **Ulrich Schnauss**

Clear Horizon Clear Horizon (Kranky)

Helios Unomia (Merck)

Auburn Lull Cast from the Platform (Darla)

Deathprod Morals and Dogma (Rune Grammofon)

Thirteen Senses The Invitation (Vertigo)

### **Matt Grosik**

Philadelphia, Pa.

ALBUM Wilco A Ghost is Born (Nonesuch)

ARTIST Madlib

PRODUCER Kanye West

GUILTY PLEASURE i Pods

FILM The Motorcycle Diaries



### Top 5 Live Acts from **Jacob Thiele** of **The Faint**

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Rocket From The Tombs, Vacancies, Rubber City Rebels, The Buzz Clc Adventure, Dissidents, H.G. Lewis, New Christs, Les Black and the Amazing Pink Holes, New Creatures, Amoeba (raft boy), Step Sister, California Speedbag

**SMOG VEIL RECORDS ARE DISTRIBUTED BY:** DISGRUNTLED, REVOLVER, UNDERGROUND MEDICINE, SOUTHERN, SUBTERRANEAN, CARROT TOP, CHOKE, SUREFIRE, GET HIP, NOT LAME, SMORPHUS, FORCED EXPOSURE, SCRATCH (CANADA), FUSE (AUSTRALIA) & WIZZARD IN VINYL (JAPAN)



## ■ TRAINSPOTTING

### 1. BRAZILIAN GIRLS

**REPRESENTING** Brooklyn, N.Y.

**SOUNDS LIKE** The soundtrack to Morcheeba and Stereolab's European vacation

**HYPE** Despite what their band name suggests, no members are actually Brazilian

**LABEL** VerveMusicGroup.com

### 2. MAROONS

**REPRESENTING** Oakland, Calif.

**SOUNDS LIKE** Politically minded soul that offers "hard music for hard times"

**HYPE** The Maroons include Chief Xcel of Blackalicious and Lateef the Truth Speaker of Latyrx

**LABEL** Epitaph.com

### 3. ZYKOS

**REPRESENTING** Austin, Texas

**SOUNDS LIKE** Archers of Loaf, The Gloria Record

**HYPE** Opened for such heavyweights as Cursive, Spoon and Interpol

**LABEL** PostParlo.com

### 4. SMOKE AND SMOKE

**REPRESENTING** Port Angeles, Wash.

**SOUNDS LIKE** The Hold Steady, The Jesus Lizard

**HYPE** Features members of godheadSilo, Enemymine and The Murder City Devils

**LABEL** FrenchkissRecords.com

### 5. PIT ER PAT

**REPRESENTING** Chicago

**SOUNDS LIKE** Genre shifting, Sonic Youth, Tortoise, Blonde Redhead

**HYPE** Includes a member of the Alkaline Trio and a Neutral Milk Hotel collaborator

**LABEL** ThrillJockey.com

### 6. VON IVA

**REPRESENTING** San Francisco

**SOUNDS LIKE** A tour de force of sex, punk and rock 'n roll

**HYPE** Features members of 7 Year Bitch and Clone

**LABEL** CochonRecords.com

### 7. R.A. THE RUGGED MAN

**REPRESENTING** Long Island, N.Y.

**SOUNDS LIKE** A witty mix of metaphors resembling Bubba Sparxxx and Ludacris

**HYPE** New album features contributions from Masta Killa, Killah Priest and J-Zone

**LABEL** Nature-Sounds.net

### 8. BLACK MOUNTAIN

**REPRESENTING** Vancouver, British Columbia

**SOUNDS LIKE** Black Sabbath, The Velvet Underground

**HYPE** Features former and present members of The Black Halos and The Pink Mountaintops

**LABEL** Jagjaguwar.com

### 9. FORT ANCIENT

**REPRESENTING** Brooklyn, N.Y.

**SOUNDS LIKE** Bono bossing around Robert Smith and The Cure

**HYPE** Currently being spun on Seattle's KEXP and Los Angeles' Indie 103

**LABEL** FortAncient.com





## ■ LABEL LEVEL PLANE RECORDS



**As** the drummer of Hot Cross and the owner of the modern hardcore label Level Plane Records, Greg Drudy is in a unique position to comment on the inner workings of the band/label arrangement. Since its inception in 1997, Level Plane has helped to define the screamo aesthetic. Through a combination of relentless touring and Internet marketing (but in a good way), the Charlottesville, Va.-based label is one of the pre-eminent names in the genre, and has released records by everyone from Neil Perry and Melt Banana to The One AM Radio and MuslimGauze. *Rockpile* caught up with Drudy and asked him how he got started in the record business, why labels release vinyl versions of each other's records and to describe his idea of the perfect creative arrangement between bands and labels.

**First off, how did you get involved in music in the first place?**

► When I moved to New York, I met some of the local hardcore kids and we spent most of our time between ABC No Rio and CBGB's hitting up the weekly shows. Most of my friends played instruments, so I decided to buy a drum set and about one or two months later I was practicing with various guys that would eventually form Saetia and Interpol.

**What was your first musical performance experience?**

► My first real band performance was with Saetia at ABC No Rio. The show was with Ethel Meserve. Cave In was also supposed to play, but they canceled.

**What led you to starting the Level Plane label?**

► The label was initially started to release a debut seven-inch by my first band, Saetia. We had agreed to release an LP/CD with Mountain Records, but they thought it would be a good idea to get an initial release out there. We decided to take two tracks from our demo and release a seven-inch. It was also done to have a record to sell on our first tour. I believe that was the winter of 1997-98.

**Where does the name come from?**

► I had no idea what to name the label and saw the phrase "level plane" mentioned in an old issue of *National Geographic*. I liked the ring of it and it stuck.

**What, if anything, unifies all the bands on Level Plane?**

► Probably friendship and a strong work ethic. I almost exclusively work with bands I am friends with... with few exceptions. I like the idea of helping good people release good music they are passionate about. I guess in some ways the label is a reflection of the meaningful relationships I have cultivated over the years with fellow music lovers.

**I see you have the vinyl version of the new Breather Resist record available on Jade Tree. Why do labels do that, and how, in this particular instance, did it come about?**

► Vinyl manufacturing is very expensive. And most labels just don't have the money to put out vinyl and the release format is not a priority for them. This particular situation worked out because I had been talking to Breather for a while prior to them signing. Hot Cross had toured for a bit with Black Cross last winter and Evan Patterson is in both bands. He really wanted a vinyl release, and I wanted to work with Breather on a record so it happened to come about that I would do the vinyl version of their Jade Tree debut.

**What's the ideal band/label arrangement?**

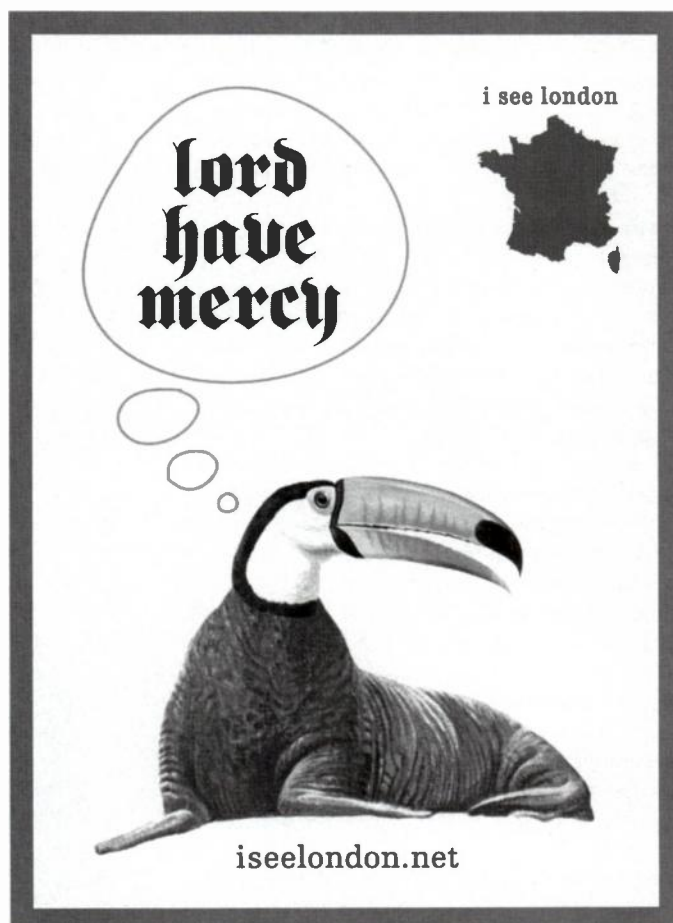
► A band that allows a 95/5 split with royalties, pays for everything and never asks for anything. (Laughs.) I hope people don't think that was serious. Seriously, though, if the band is hardworking, friendly and honest you cannot really ask for more.



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# EARLY DAY MINERS

Environment has a way of influencing art. How many cultural hot spots were considered—or not considered at all—as dead zones before someone or something bold transfixed attention to a certain place on the map? Olympia, Wash., is essentially a sleepy, wooded suburb. Seattle, a coffee-driven rain magnet. Washington, D.C., a playground for rich old people that go to bed before 11. Bloomington, Ind., is another such environmental anomaly. In the heart of the flat, conservative expanse of the Midwest, this little town enjoys a vibrant and consistently active arts and music scene that would make plenty of big cities jealous. Former Indiana University students Daniel Burton and Rory Leitch (both members of Ativin) formed the group less than five years ago and named it after a tourism brochure. In short order, a record on Western Vinyl followed. The proud parents of a new full-length, *Let Us Garlands Bring*, on Secretly Canadian, Leitch and Burton now reflect on the town they love so well.

**Do you think it's unique for a town as secluded as yours to put so much effort into arts?**

► The communities immediately surrounding Bloomington are really radical, right. It conflicts heavily with Bloomington, which is home of the Kinsey Institute, an excellent music school and a lot of people making art and music in their basements. The state of Indiana doesn't know what to do with Bloomington. Sometimes I think the more conservative a state is, the more interesting that state's art center is. Bloomington's not much different from Austin or New Orleans, except that it's smaller, so we all share equipment and play on each others' records. I find you don't have that rock star thing here, which is a plus.

**You've been described as slowcore. How do you feel about adding a prefix to "core" as a way of labeling music?**

► It's lazy journalism. I remember when post-rock was used to describe everything from Tortoise to Palace Bros. How can those bands be categorized together? If you played them a Cluster or Silver Apples record, they would have said it was post-rock.

**The word "cinematic" also comes up a lot in describing your music. Have you noticed a trend in modern music towards more composed, score-like pop?**

► Well, we like film scores a lot. For us it's always been about ambience and atmosphere, the idea being that a song takes you somewhere through lyric and sound. A lot of bands or projects are trying to push the envelope through the use of instrumentation. We're sort of on the minimalist side of that coin, always trying to strip the idea down to its raw form. I love it when a band blows you away with a new take on the simplest ideas.

**Do you think there are particular formulas for a good recording?**

► We just completed our new record in what was formerly an old church just outside of town. It was a creepy place, and I think that came through on the album. I think a good mix between professional gear and natural environments is the best policy.

**Do you think the "natural environment" of indie music has an effect on what artists are yielding?**

► I'm always surprised how good the arts scene is in this country considering it receives no support from the government and very little from its citizens. Maybe that's why it's so good. Everyone's broke and angry enough to have something to write about.

ANSWERS → DANIEL BURTON | INTERVIEW → JOHN VOGEL

# THE GOLDEN REPUBLIC

Maybe it's the end of history or something—someone check with Karl Marx—but bands are getting pretty desperate for names. So, when you find one that works, you want to hold on to that shit. Ask Manitoba, Dios or Death From Above, and they'll tell you: copyrights, like corporate rock, still suck. Foreseeing trouble, this Kansas City, Mo.-based band, once known as The People, has rechristened itself The Golden Republic. Now, relatively safe from lawyers, the group is one of the latest signings to the ever-expanding Astralwerks roster. With a sound revolving around Thin Lizzy and T. Rex, glam rock and touches of soul, the quartet's eponymous full-length offers something for everybody.

**What made you want to put out an EP a few months before your full-length?**

► The EP kind of satisfied our desire to do some things we couldn't on the full-length. It consists of one new song, two totally reworked older songs and a nice space-country version of an album track. We wanted something a bit edgier than what we did for the album, and at times rather sexual, which we'd never tried before.

**What has been your worst experience when playing a gig?**

► I think that the entire first two years of our early, ever-changing incarnations when we were called The People could be best described as strange, awkward and bad. We played in Milwaukee opening for a band two years ago, and after we finished our set, they went up, played two songs, got in a fist fight in the middle of the third, and 15 minutes later the band was no more. The green room was a strange, awkward, and bad place to be that night.

**You're from the heartland. How do you guys spend your down time?**

► Oh, cow tipping, drinking, X-Box, looking like members of The Ramones with handguns. Nothing your readers would ever be interested in.

ANSWERS → BEN WEBER | INTERVIEW → DAN PASTORIUS





# DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979

Toronto natives Jesse F. Keeler and Sebastian Grainger released their first album as Death From Above in 2003. The equivalent of a random throat-punch from an amiable speed freak, *Heads Up* gathered favorable reviews and little notice. That is, until the New York label and production team DFA (short for Death From Above) entreated the band to change its name. Reluctantly adding 1979 ("The last cool year of the last cool decade," according to Grainger) to its name, the newly christened duo set about recording its follow-up. Released in October on Vice Records, *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine* installs lamps and stairways into Death From Above 1979's dark, rickety sound. Using only drums, bass, vocals and the sporadic Moog, the duo crafts danceable, razor-edged post-punk that flits around like an epileptic on crack. Songs like "Romantic Rights" and "Sexy Results" take instrumental cues from Lightning Bolt and Brainiac, with vocals that alternate between '80s hair-metal homage and glass-chewing whispers.

**Your songs seem intended to rock as much as make us dance. Did you listen to dance music while making your new album?**

► Yeah, we listened to lots of house music when making the album. That being said, we listen to house music all the time. We listened to Akufen, Thomas Bangalter, Cassius, Alan Braxe and lots of other stuff. Did it influence the record? More production-wise with the drum sounds than anything else. House music kick drums are usually perfect.

**You're bucking rock's rich tradition with just a bass and no guitar, aren't you?**

► We do use a guitar, it just has four strings. They happen to be quite thick strings and the guitar is a little larger than usual, but it's still a guitar. We just think of it as an instrument and that's about it.

**Mavericks usually have friction with authority figures. Any stories?**

► There was one show where a bouncer knocked out one of our fans, and we almost stabbed the bouncer afterwards. That was ugly. When we see kids getting hurt by asshole bouncers, we can't stand back and not fight for them. I love our fans, and they deserve to be respected when they've paid to have a good time, not get beat up.

ANSWERS → JESSE F. KEELER | INTERVIEW → JOHN WENZEL

## BLOC PARTY

Well, it's official: *NME* has named London's Bloc Party the "Next Most Important Band in Rock." While the grandiose hyperbole got lost somewhere over the Atlantic, we're in full agreement that the band's debut EP on Dim Mak is a clear tour de force and a definitive step forward in that let's-get-back-to-post-punk wash. Packed with, yes, angular guitars, football-stadium choruses and dark, syncopated rhythms, Bloc Party gives listeners a hint of what is to come on *Silent Alarm*, its upcoming full-length on Vice Records. A definite candidate for a few "End of the Year" lists, Bloc Party's killin' it, so here's a chat with the bassist.

**Do you find it at all odd to have such a crazy buzz with just an EP out?**

► It's not weird. There's nothing weird about people wanting you to come and play, because that's what we do and what we love. I guess the perception is that it's hard to live up to people's expectations. But again, I think the expectation is just about seeing us, not expecting wonders but just seeing what we do. Now it's just a question of fulfilling the demand, because now everyone wants us to play, everywhere.

**So, it's just encouraging to get some recognition for what you do?**

► We kind of range from two different extremes. On the one hand, we sometimes cannot divorce the music fan from what we do, and it's just such a thrill to be ranked alongside bands we've listened to and enjoyed from the perspective of fans for years and years. On the other hand, I think there is a sense that we're getting some of the recognition that we always hoped we were worthy of, because we love what we do and you always hope that everyone else will too.

**What are some of the differences you've picked up on between U.S. and U.K. crowds?**

► I think the only discernible difference is that in the U.S. there's a kind of real, wide-eyed enthusiasm for music coming out of the U.K., whereas back home it's obviously not a cultural novelty. We're playing to some really enthusiastic audiences everywhere we go now, though. I certainly think that we're trying our best to give value for money regardless of where we are.

**There's an obvious currency of fashion involved with a lot of the bands some people would lump you in with, but I feel like there's a balance of political overtones in your lyrics.**

► In a way, everything we do is political, with a small "p," the way that everything you do has some political consideration. But what we sing about is just the world around us—internal and external. We've never aligned ourselves either way, we just sing from the eye of the individual, and sometimes the subject matter is the wider picture and sometimes it's not. Our only rule really is that we don't rule things out.

**I can think of a few things people here in America and around the world would probably like to "rule out."**

► I don't think it would be front-page news to hear that we are anti-Bush, anti-right wing. We're not interested in name-calling or partisan sloganeering, but just encouraging people to think for themselves. We want to live in an inclusive world where multiculturalism can thrive. If you look at the multiracial make-up of our band you'll understand why.

ANSWERS → GORDON MOAKES | INTERVIEW → DAN PASTORIUS





## God Bless Graffiti

Formed in 2000 by a young assemblage of crestfallen Chicago street artists, the God Bless Graffiti Coalition has graffiti writers' backs. "We felt that in Chicago—and across the world—hard working young artists were being attacked, criminalized and having their art destroyed by corrupt and misdirected anti-vandal squads and graffiti abatement programs," says co-founder Josh MacPhee. "It was time that someone stuck up for graffiti writers and asked real questions of city governments, such as why there are millions of dollars available in the budget to arrest young artists and buff their work, but no money for textbooks in their schools or health care for their families." So far, the coalition has participated in street art events everywhere from Columbus, Ohio, to Munich, Germany, producing works on all scales, from redesigning newspaper boxes to building a 40-foot high, 75-foot long wall of street art at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. A comprehensive website is in the works for the God Bless crusaders along with billboards and public service announcements in an effort to convert skeptics and uptight, property-obsessed Philistines. —Abigail Bruley  
CounterProductiveIndustries.com



## Stamp of Approval

The U.S. Postal Service has long enjoyed a reputation for reliability, loyal service and saving Christmas in *Miracle on 34th Street*. Superhero cool as that may be, the Feds get touchy when you encroach on their territory. After learning about Sub Pop's similarly titled semi-electronic pop outfit, the government agency served the rockers cease-and-desist papers. Luckily, rather than following down this unfortunate litigious path, someone scotched an opportunity. Representatives from Sub Pop explained to the nation's mailcarriers how the band had arrived at that name (Ben Gibbard of Death Cab For Cutie and Jimmy Tamborello of Dntel sent tracks back and forth through the mail for their trans-state band). The U.S. Postal Service switched tactics, dropping the potential lawsuit and enlisting the band in a marketing campaign to wrangle in that lucrative hipster mail market. Some of the avenues being discussed include soundtracking future TV ads with the band's music and selling the band's debut CD, *Give Up*, at post offices. Best of all, the band was booked to perform in front of 800 senior U.S.P.S. executives at the Postmaster General's National Executive Conference in Washington, D.C., this November. Read more next month about U.S. Postmaster General John Potter's rumored electroclash side project with Karen O, and the unveiling of The Golden Age of Grunge Commemorative Stamp Series, featuring Mark Arm, Tad and Kurt Cobain. —Mike McKee



## Blatant Localism

One of many casualties of the purportedly failsafe global village is the flavor of regionalism. Homogenization might be OK for milk [Editor's Note: fucking go vegan!], but it's best avoided in art and culture. The *Burn to Shine* film series knows this and is out to document some of the talented musicians unique to various American cities.

Produced by Fugazi drummer Brendan Canty, *Burn to Shine* searches for locations and experiences that cannot be duplicated, employing houses and spaces marked for demolition in the near future. Once a location has been selected, the chosen artists are filmed performing on irreducibly natural terms—no audiences, no rehearsals—and edited into a 45 minute package.

The first installment was filmed last January in the sub-

urbs of Washington, D.C., and features performances from Q and Not U, Medications, French Toast, Weird War, Ted Leo, Bob Mould (acoustic version of "Hoover Dam?" Yes!) and Ian MacKaye's new band with Warmers/Pharmacists drummer Amy Farina, The Evens. The now defunct Black Eyes were invited as well, but had to decline (they would've only destroyed the house sooner, one can guess).

The second *Burn to Shine* has already been filmed in Chicago, featuring Wilco, Shellac, Tortoise, Peter Dinklage and others. Canty and director Chris Green say Portland, San Diego and New York are already in the works.

The series' first installment (D.C.) comes out Jan. 11 and is available through Touch and Go Records. —Mike McKee  
TGRec.com



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## THE FUTUREHEADS

### A Revolution In Four-Part Harmony

As a fully consummated rock band, Sunderland, England's Futureheads do a fine take on XTC, Wire, The Jam and whomever you'd care to reverentially name drop. The echoey guitars, the tinny ambience, the vocal vibrato and the driving beats are delivered in a persuasive, trip in the time-machine format, but the reluctance of new bands to try something, well, new is getting a bit wearisome. The 'Heads, however, have something relatively unique right in their grasp that they're currently just using as an accompaniment.

So, here's a modest proposal:

The Futureheads need to be the first band from this seemingly eternal post-punk throwback to record an a cappella album.

Scan the group's self-titled debut (released on 679, the same U.K. label to bring you The Streets) and listen to the amount of vocal blending taking place. The vocal tracks are sometimes covered up by loud riffs and noise, but impressive four-part harmonies help drive and color speedy jams like "A to B" and the jaunty "Stupid and Shallow." Guitarist Barry Hyde says the vocal aesthetic came about because The Futureheads, in their embryonic stages after forming as teens through Sunderland's Detached Youth Project, used to rehearse in a garage without a vocal PA. Consequently, instrumental practice would come first, followed by vocal practice with just one guitar.

"Whilst we were doing that, I would be singing and everyone else would be standing around, not really doing anything," he recalls. "So they kind of congregated harmonies. When we liked how it sounded, we realized we should probably use it to its full potential and started writing proper four-part harmonies."

You might argue the best thing The Futureheads have going is a little track called "The Danger of the Water," quite possibly one of the most intriguing pieces of music committed to tape this year.

It starts out with staccato vocal calls, chiming "Do, do, dos" doubled and tripled. Less doo-wop than solitary, Phillip Glass-style minimalism. When Hyde comes in, the song defies expectations. It doesn't pick up at all, instead easing in to describe a disastrous deluge with such serenity that one almost wishes they were there. The only eventual accompaniment is a slight syncopated keyboard, glooming up the background while the harmonies carry the song—the exact opposite of the band's standard M.O.

So, Futureheads, would you take the dare and go a cappella?

"Oh yeah, I would love to release one," says Hyde. "Redo the album as it stands, all of the songs in that same order, except done a cappella. Recently, we've actually been doing four-part, a cappella versions of them for B-sides."

After pondering for a moment, Hyde seems to start getting cold feet, paring back on his original bravado.

"That would be more kind of a small release," he reasons. "Just for people who are really into it." ■

TEXT → JOHN VETTESE | PHOTO → CLAIRE SHILLAND

## AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB

### Returns with Rhythm & Blue States

It's probably a good thing for singer-songwriter Mark Eitzel, known as much for his solo work as for fronting early '90s cult favorites American Music Club, that he inadvertently screens his calls. Known for its down-beat tunes and sensitive musings on love and politics, American Music Club was the stuff of legend. Lauded for its beatific mix of Americana and rich orchestration, AMC achieved an almost iconic status due in large part to Eitzel's shrewd lyrics and heartfelt delivery.

But he's quick to point out that such emblematic standing doesn't help with the bills.

"Cult status doesn't buy me a cup of coffee," he says. So the band eventually parted ways in the mid-'90s and Eitzel embarked on his solo career.

Recently, for him and lucky American Music Clubs fans, the promise of entirely free studio access paved the way for a reunion. Drummer Tim Mooney, who runs his own Closer Recording Studios in San Francisco, informed Eitzel that the band had no excuse not to play together again.

A biting and astute commentary on contemporary politics as well as the American Music Club's first album of new material in a decade, *Love Songs for Patriots* is ample testament to why the enigmatic lead singer might want to hide out—particularly from the government.

"The album title is meant to be ironic," he says, just to be safe. "I despise the government right now. I even wanted to change the name to Anti-American Music Club. No one in the band wanted to change it though. They told me I had to answer that question if we did."

Such strong words account for the album's haunting and singular lambasting of current affairs. In fact, according to Eitzel, "Song of the Rats Leaving the Sinking Ship" was originally titled more overtly as "Song for Celebrating the Inauguration of George Bush."

"It is my vision for the future of America, but maybe I am negatively projecting," he says, shrugging his shoulders towards his tightly trimmed, and now signature, goatee.

Despite the overall searing lyrics and sometimes scathing titles, Eitzel shows marked restraint this time around. Songs like "Another Morning" and "Only Love Can Set You Free" offer lovely musings and high spirits to counter some of the quiet vehemence. For every "America Loves the Minstrel Show," a title that says it all, there are equally strong shades of redemption. The album's opener, "Ladies and Gentlemen," has Eitzel softly sighing with perhaps his boldest political statement on *Love Songs*. To his credit, it's a real show of optimism.

"It is time for all the hate that is in you to fade." ■

TEXT → KIM NEWMAN | PHOTO → MATT PENCE







## CHANNELS

### J. Robbins Has Got a New Bag

J Robbins ain't no scrub. After spending years in the genre-leading jaw-box he went on to destroy much of the '90s with Desoto bad boys Burning Airlines. This is all before adopting his role as producer extraordinaire, twisting dials for everyone from The Promise Ring to Jimmy Eat World. So it's a bit surprising that with the release of Channels' stunning debut EP, *Open*, Robbins is feeling so bewildered by the warm reception the record has received.

"I love what we're doing and feel more sure of it than I ever did with Jawbox, at the time, or Burning Airlines, so I perversely assumed that *nobody* else would be into it," he says.

Robbins first sprung onto the scene as the bass player for D.C. legends Government Issue in 1985. A band filled to the brim with progressive ideas, Government Issue did as much for the personal-political depths of the punk world in the '80s as any of their one-time, Dischord labelmates. When G.I. called it quits, Robbins immediately sprung into action forming Jawbox, which seemingly took the ideology of D.C. punk and seamlessly merged it with the jittery and literate underground world of Chicago's Big Black and Naked Raygun. The results were electrifying, but after two records the band jumped ship from the beloved Dischord to major-label land. The fan backlash was inevitable. Much back room bitching followed, but to everyone's surprise Jawbox dropped *For Your Own Special Sweet-heart*, perhaps its most notable and eloquent disc to date.

"We had a great run on Atlantic, particularly for a band that had very little in the way of commercial appeal or ambition," says Robbins. "I think the change of venue helped the band to stay together and make the best music of its career."

Channels comes almost four years after the breakup of Robbins' nervy post-punk pop vehicle, Burning Airlines, and in many ways the band is birthed into a world not that different from the political environment that spawned much of the early '80s punk Robbins knows so well. The *Open* EP shows a marked growth in terms of songwriting, but still maintains Robbins' now trademark mix of guitar-based angularity and passion. After years of setting trends and forging fires, Robbins' concerns have little to do with scene politicking. Then again, maybe that's always been the case.

"I can't speak for anyone's scene at this stage," he admits. "In 2004 it's all sort of blurred together, and as a fan and listener I tend to relate to things on a very individual level. I'd personally rather work with my friends and make something together that we're all into, enjoy the process and the result together, and share it with anyone who wants to seek it out. Period." ■

TEXT → DAVID LEWIS | PHOTO → CHANNELS

## ABERFELDY

### Soft Boys and Lonely Hearts

Riley Briggs needs to show a little more confidence.

Sure, we expect our North Sea indie pop troubadours to display the requisite melancholy, but Briggs' Aberfeldy is so self-conscious, fey, affected and packed with insecure lyrical musings like, "How I miss the love she gave me/I need her to come and save me from myself," we wonder how he gets up in the morning. But the group's debut, *Young Forever*, released on Rough Trade this fall, is more than charming in its gentle, choral arrangements and general shy-boy endearment.

A sparse instrumental incorporation of rootsy Americana somehow seems oddly fitting for the Scottish troupe. In particular, the bobbing "Slow Me Down," the bashful anthem of "Vegetarian Restaurant" and the delightful "Out of Love" are outstanding.

There's undeniable promise for positive progression here, but you'd never guess that from talking to Briggs, who cops to his perceived faults copiously.

On the phone from a Perthshire coffee shop blaring the Gorillaz album, Briggs sulks about Aberfeldy from the get-go, starting with why his outfit was named after a Scottish coastal town.

"It's a place we went on holiday two years ago," he says, barely rising above a whisper. "I guess it follows a good tradition of naming yourself after a place you're lost in, but all these people think we're Welsh because of it, because of the 'feldy' suffix. We named ourselves early in the band, and it's too late to change it now."

He's got a similar take on the band's album sleeve, which adopts a children's book-style illustration of two lions doing the nasty.

"The opinion is wildly divided on the merits of it," Briggs admits, jokingly referencing *This Is Spinal Tap* to say both Sears and K-Mart refused to carry it. "I think everybody sort of slightly regrets it since we realized we have to show it to our families."

Talk about standing behind one's banner. The only problem we can find with Aberfeldy, really, has to do with its callow tendencies. The moments that don't work on *Young Forever* have the common, underwhelming sound of a band fumbling to find a sound. It'd be easy enough to retreat squarely to the band's obvious influences (in this case Belle and Sebastian and The Vespines), but Briggs and company seem intent on stretching their wings.

Briggs' mopey attitude makes sense when you consider he began writing Aberfeldy's songs after being kicked out of his previous band (an atrociously named prog-rock combo called Firestone: The Legend of the Hawk) and dumped by his girlfriend in the same month. Given his disposition, one wonders what his bandmates think when they hear Briggs' assessment of his own work.

Take "Vegetarian Restaurant," a cautiously playful march, that weighs in as one of the album's catchiest tunes, but Briggs cringes when we mention it. It started out as a joke, he says, until producer Jim Sutherland heard it, dug it and asked the band to take it seriously.

"I try, but it's still such wretched lyrics," he pines. "Like, 'You got the touch when you're makin' tea, I only wish you were taking me.' That's really pathetic wordplay there."

Maybe Briggs' constant self-criticism is just him looking at his music objectively, a trait we'd love to see plenty of artists adopt. In that case, it could prove beneficial down the road, giving the members of Aberfeldy a refined sense of who they are and where they want to go.

So, toughen up, Briggs, even if your heart is breaking. ■

TEXT → JOHN VETTESE | PHOTO → LOUIS DECARLO





**W**hen was the last time you heard an album that truly blew your mind? I'm not talking about an album that hits you right away with its incredible guitar licks or its catchy choruses. I'm speaking of an album that at first listen is soothing, melodic and yet manages to be chaotic and raw all in one listen. Myriad feelings ooze from this little plastic disc. With each listen you find something else to love or hate. By the time you have reached the end you aren't sure how you feel any more, but you know that the person behind it all is a true artist. Anthony Gonzales is M83, and his latest creation, *Before the Dawn Heals Us*, is such an album.

M83 first gained attention in the fall of 2003 when the then duo of Anthony Gonzales and Nicholas Fromageau released its second album in Europe, *Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts*. The album's combination of futuristic, electronic ambiance and lush, synth-heavy melody seemed a true blend of the modern mind and heart.

Often the first thing that comes to mind when speaking of electronic music is a certain detached sense of frigidity, an inhuman element devoid of soul. M83 abruptly kicks that notion to the curb.

*Dead Cities* put M83 on the map as a band to watch, and when Mute released the album stateside in the summer of 2004, it received the acclaim it deserved from both critics and fans alike.

When Gonzales decided to take the project on the road this fall, his partnership with Fromageau had already ended. Those expecting a faithful recreation of the album would be in for a shock as Gonzales took M83 to the stage as a four-piece.

Live, M83 is far from the sweet melodies and the hushing sighs of its recorded output, instead exuding a raw, animal energy marked by thundering drums and a heavy wall of bass and guitar.

"I like to create something different for the live shows," says Gonzales. "I don't like to recreate exactly the record onstage. I like when people are surprised, even if they don't like it."

That said, it comes as no surprise that Gonzales' newest endeavor (due out in early 2005), expands beyond the sounds M83 has shared thus far, both live and on record.

While it would be misleading to call it a departure from M83's cohesive body of work so far, it shows clear growth from Gonzales as a musician.

Gonzales has been known to cite German electronic music from the '70s (think Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Tempel) and cinema as some of his inspirations. When he works on an album he takes both of these inspirations into his own idea of how to create an album.

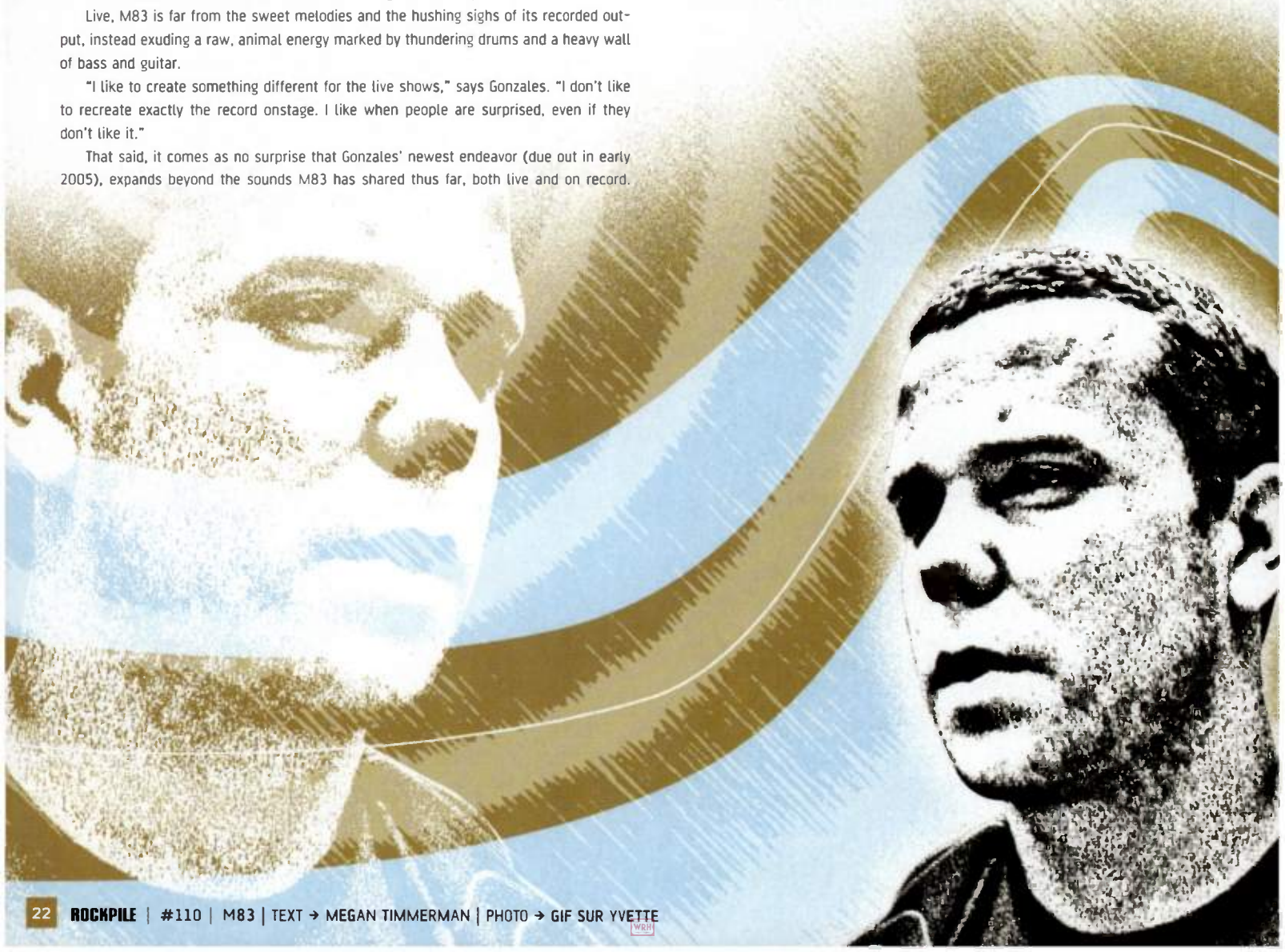
"I like the way in which albums of the '70s are built," he says. "I like when people can listen to an album from the beginning until the end without stopping on a particular song. Like the way in which we look at a movie."

Each song on *Before the Dawn Heals Us* is, in and of itself, a complete body of work, possessing a cinematic, film-score feel. The opening "Moonchild" starts us on our journey with the steady cadence of a drum rolling under a monologue delivered by a little

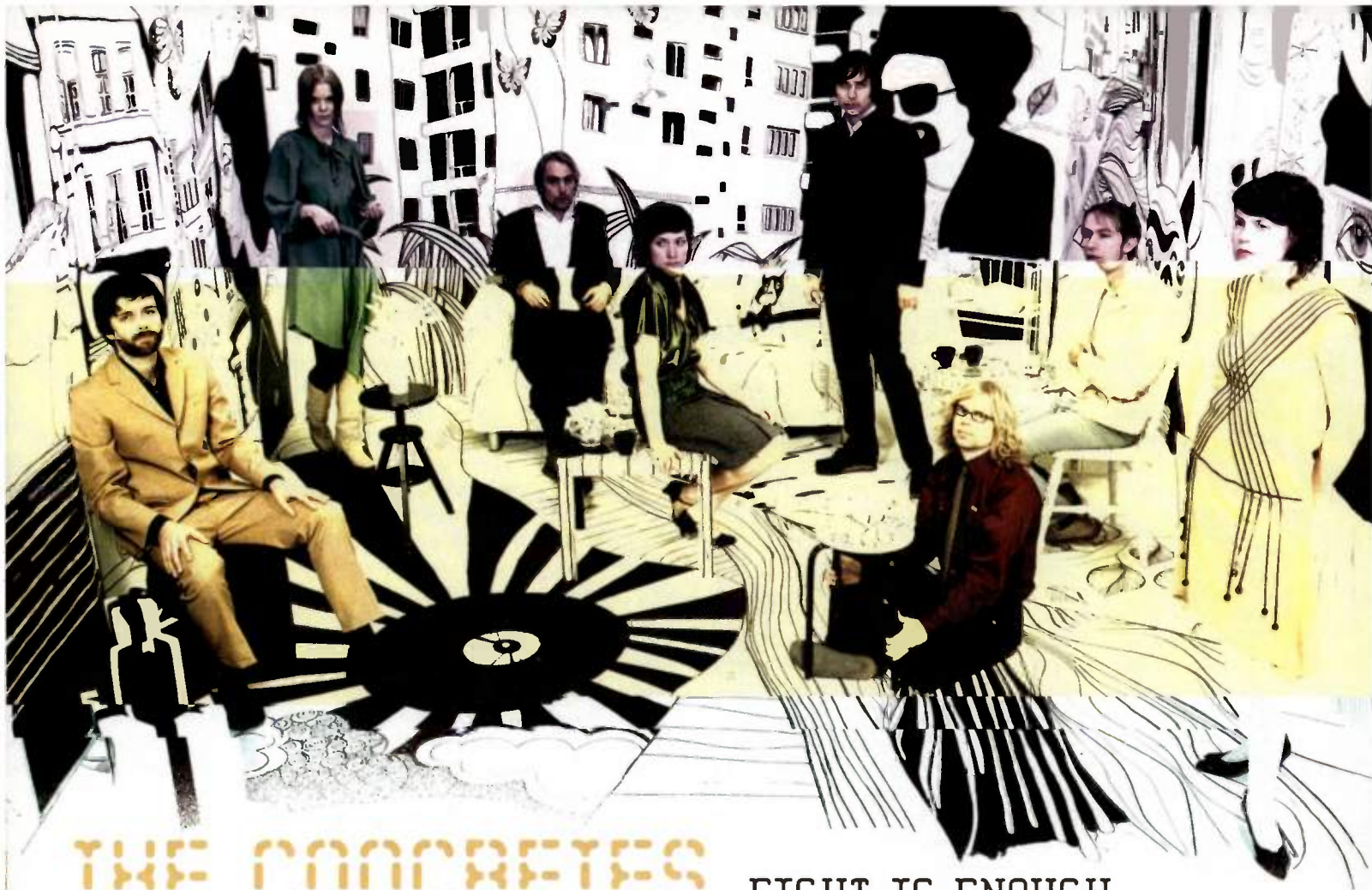
boy. This soon slides into a mix of synth sounds and psychedelic guitars. "Don't Save Us From the Flames" follows, continuing with a batch of heavy synth, guitar and drum work. Later, the momentum is traded in for the downtempo "Teen Angst," featuring memorable, computer-generated vocals in which Gonzales states, "The sooner we learn, the sooner we cry."

Like many albums that initially seem almost too much to take in, *Before the Dawn* is epic in its delivery. Channeling everything from psych-rock and film scores to ambient electronica, M83's new record is an overflowing well of ideas that somehow fits together in its own cohesive way, even if it is, at first listen, a little maddening. ■

**REPRESENTING** Antibes, France  
**SOUNDS LIKE** Air, Mogwai, My Bloody Valentine  
**CONNECTIONS** Critically acclaimed by everyone from *Filter* and *Pitchfork* to *All Music Guide* and *Urb*  
**LABEL** Mute.com







# THE CONCRETES

## EIGHT IS ENOUGH

**I**t's mid-October. The Concretes are taking it easy at a restaurant in Boston. Drummer Lisa Milberg decides to step outside because the deafening sounds of music, early drinkers and other assorted noise makes it difficult to conduct an interview. It's also a few hours away from the band's first ever U.S. performance, to be played at a small venue called TT's later in the evening. Though Milberg claims the band is a bit nervous, you wouldn't know it. There are other pressing issues. For instance, the pain in her back.

"I got a massage today, because the tour bus isn't doing my back any favors," she says with a laugh. "We've been on the road a few days and I'm already exhausted."

Although it might sound like she complaining, it's quickly apparent Milberg loves what she does. She ought to, she's been doing it for close to 10 years now. As one of the three founding members of the Swedish octet, Milberg remembers the days when putting out an album wasn't even a consideration.

"Maria and I have known each other since we were seven," she says, referring to the group's guitarist. "We grew up listening to her older brother's records all the time. Then Maria went to art school, which is where she met Victoria. Everyone around us were all in different bands. We just knew we sort of had to have a band, whether we wanted to or not."

Of course, forming a band and forming a band-anyone-cares-about are two different things. Judging by the two primitive EPs the band released in 1998 and 1999, later compiled into *Boy, You Better Run* (2000), it could have gone either way.

"I really, really like the first EP, but it sounds awful," Milberg confesses. "We didn't even rehearse the songs prior to recording them. We also produced it ourselves, which basically meant all eight of us were in a tiny studio shouting about how we wanted our instruments higher in the mix."

The band's newer album, meanwhile, belies a decidedly more composed approach. Songs like "Say Something New" and its cover of "You Can't Hurry Love," glisten in a

pristine and self-assured light. The horns echo a Motownish sense of majesty, the reverb-heavy guitars are dusted with sentimental warmth, while melancholy torch songs like "Chico" and "Lonely as Can Be" hint at the heavy-hearted sighs of those famous, chain-smoking Gauls—from Francois Hardy to Serge Gainsbourg. Still, for a band that's been around since '95, it took a while to come together. Such a wait could leave fans wondering if they ought to keep their eyes peeled for a 2010 follow-up.

Milberg laughs and says, with luck, it shouldn't be so long before her group's next album. She says the writing process is so time consuming because songs are tossed if even one member gives the thumbs down.

"It may take a bit longer than bands with two members, but it also means that eight people have approved the songs," she offers.

While eight people weighing in on decisions sounds unwieldy, it does seem to make for solid quality control. Unfortunately, the band members also agree as a group that there are some irritating things that continually come up in the press about them. Foremost among them is the girl-group tag.

"Anytime someone is writing about a band that has females in it, there's those ridiculous terms like "girl rock," "femme pop" or the other, estrogen-themed classifications.

"You know, before we started doing loads of interviews, I never even thought of the fact that there were boys and girls in the band," the drummer fumes. "I don't understand why people treat it as a new phenomenon. There have always been girls making music."

Milberg and her fellow Concretes are sick of people looking at their music one-dimensionally. It's easy to write off a band with a great sense of melody as just another pop group, but if you look below the surface, you will find there is a lot more to this group to talk about besides geography, gender and hooks.

"The one thing I really don't like hearing about the music is that it's really sweet and nice and soft," Milberg says. "I don't want it to be something sugary like a topping. I would describe it as romantic with a dark twist."

**REPRESENTING** Stockholm, Sweden  
**SOUNDS LIKE** Velvet Underground,  
 Mazzy Star, The Ronettes  
**CONNECTIONS** Celebrating New  
 Year's with Saint Etienne in London  
**LABEL** Astralwerks.com



# DE LA SOUL IS NOT DEAD

## DAISY AGE SURVIVORS INVITE YOU TO GRIND

**W**hat keeps the biggest bands together? Bands that are half institution, half legend like the Beastie Boys, Radiohead, Sonic Youth? Is it the money? The fame? Plenty of acts have had both at their disposal and still couldn't keep it together. That's part of the reason it's so amazing that after 15 years, De La Soul is still writing and recording albums, often with pretty commendable results. Want to dis the group for the tail end of that *Art Official Intelligence* series? Be our guest. But, make sure you listen to "Rock Co. Kane Flow" with MF Doom first. That is, if you're interested in hearing one of the best hip hop songs recorded in the past few years. "I truly love this music," says Pos, a.k.a. Posdnous, a.k.a. the inverse of Sound-Sop, his old DJ name.

"It's who we are as people," he says. "It's not hard to allow the levels of ourselves to be shown. The party side, the father side, the side of the father that doesn't always want to be a father." That was their lives and that was what we got.

As the '90s broke, De La Soul was truly carving a spot in the golden days of hip hop, along with groups like A Tribe Called Quest, Monie Love and The Pharcyde. More success came for the trio with its follow-up album, 1991's creative U-turn, *De La Soul is Dead*, followed by the criminally underrated *Buhloone Mind State*. By 1996, De La was hardly something new to get excited about, although singles like "Itzsoweezee" on that year's *Stakes is High* reminded listeners the group was not only relevant, but innovative.

Flagship label Tommy Boy Records documented more than a few chapters of hip hop history, snatching De La from the get-go. The two parties maintained a working relationship throughout the '90s, nearly continuing throughout the early half of the first decade of the new millennium. As De La Soul's name got older and less commercially exciting, however, the band became less of a priority for the label.

Pos says this is when the relationship began to sour.

"They weren't willing to put the marketing behind the record that was needed," he says. "Times just change and you have to be more hands on."

Pos says he doesn't hold a grudge. "It's nothing to be upset or mad about. We're just looking to the future."

At the moment the future looks good, as De La just released its seventh album, *The Grind Date*, on Matthew Knowles' (Beyonce's father) Sanctuary Urban Records Group (SURG). After leaving Tommy Boy, the trio boldly released two records on its own Art Official Intelligence label, picking up a Grammy nomination along the way. *The Grind Date*, then, marks De La's return to the world of record labels.

"We have something to prove, he has something to prove, so it's a good match," reasons Pos.

With this in mind, the boys have brought in a good crew to get the job done. Stones Throw mainstays Madlib and Jay Dee pop up alongside Jay-Z magic maker 9th Wonder for impressive results. Not surprisingly, the record's been enjoying a warm reception. We're with *Pitchfork*, who called it the group's "strongest payoff in ages."

Like other De La records, *Grind Date* reads like a photo album, stuffed with audio collages, lovingly lacing together snapshots of jazz, R&B, spoken word, comedy skits and samples galore. Again, we find De La lending its own portrait of urban America. One less grim, morbid, hypersexualized (maybe) and audacious than the rest of pop culture might suggest.

No stranger to bucking trends, even those of its own genre, De La doesn't seem like it's losing any faith in its vision. Pos, for one, is surprised he and his partners are still in the minority.

"A lot of the great groups that were considered to be positive, they broke up," he says. "We have a lot of great groups that can help add a lot of flavor, but they leave. That's a problem."

It's safe to say De La Soul won't be going anywhere for a while. Along with AOI Records, the group recently started its new,

Okayplayer-styled Spitkicker project, a branded collective of artists including Common, Talib Kweli, Biz Markie and others.

While De La's Spitkicker project explores the group's attempt at branding, 2004 has kept the trio busy with plenty of other endeavors, from a limited edition Nike shoe (the "De La Dunk") to an Apple computer ad campaign and an NYU lecturing series. Pos says he and his partners approach each arena with the same optimism and open mind.

"I don't separate the music industry from life," he says. "You're always going to find people that you can learn something from. Regardless of whatever part of the earth, you can find there are certain things that remain the same. People are still dealing with economics or love or their love of music, or for themselves. Or, lack of love for themselves."

With such a holistic approach to living, it follows that De La Soul should maintain tight control over its career. By now, the trio knows how the industry works—it also knows how it wants to work within it.

"The competition part comes after you fill up the canvas," he says. "The rest is marketing. But you can't front on talent." ■

**REPRESENTING** Long Island, N.Y.  
**SOUNDS LIKE** Uptbeat, some-  
times-serious, hip hop  
**CONNECTIONS** Legendary debut  
produced by Prince Paul  
**LABEL** SanctuaryRecords.com





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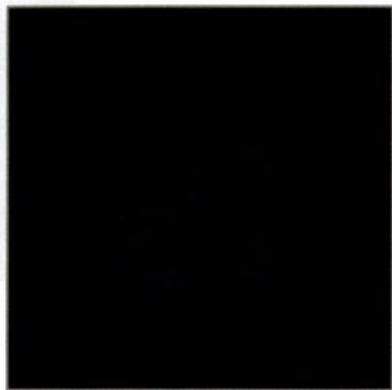


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# BRIGHT EYES

2 NEW ALBUMS JANUARY 25



*Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*



*I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*



Containing what are undeniably his finest songs to date, *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn* and *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* provide unequivocal proof that 24 year-old Oberst belongs to the lineage of great American songwriters. These albums are a soundly articulated slice of modern American life rolled into two very different records. The new songs are bursting with all of the rough edges and heartfelt poetry for which Bright Eyes records have earned their acclaim, while exposing a glorious new level of depth and texture to the writing and delivery. Recorded back-to-back and scheduled to be released simultaneously, the albums work in tandem to elucidate both sides of Conor's recent creative output. *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* is a country-tinged mélange of Conor's finest acoustic songs, featuring guest vocal appearances from Emmylou Harris and Jim James (My Morning Jacket), whereas *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn* is a more produced, band-centric album featuring cameo appearances by Nick Zinner of Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

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# ELISSA STEAMER

AGE Twentysomething

PROVENANCE San Francisco, Calif.

ACHIEVEMENTS First woman to have legitimate street footage (Toy Machine's *Welcome to Hell* video, 1996); first female street skater to become a pro with her own model board (also on Toy Machine); first and only woman to be awarded with a pro-model shoe from Etnies footwear; sponsored by Skaterade, Etnies Footwear, Thunder Trucks.



**E**lissa Steamer is a seasoned skateboarding professional. Still in her 20s, Steamer has shown no sign of slowing down. In 2004, she dominated the women's contest circuit gaining first place rankings in the Vans Triple Crown, the Gravity Games and the X Games, just to name a few. Despite all of this, she remains a mellow person. When *Rockpile* caught up with Elissa, she was working, which entails spending the weekend in Hawaii to participate in an all-girl skate jam and contest. What a thankless job.

**What initially drew you to skateboarding?**

► I just liked it. It was fun. The people around my neighborhood were doing it so I wanted to do it.

**How did you get noticed by the industry and start getting sponsorships?**

► Just by skating at the right place at the right time. Lance Mountain hooked me up first. I used to get boards from him a long time ago.

**As one of the first, if not the first, female street skaters to be respected and recognized for her talent, some people would expect there to have been a lot of resistance. Was that your experience?**

► No, I was accepted. It was like a dream come true. It was what I wanted to do with my life.

**I know you were a central figure in the Warner Avenue Mob (a notorious crew of skateboarders all living in Huntington Beach, Calif., around 2000) and the Six Newell Crew (another crew living together in San Francisco). Does living in and around other skateboarders 24-7 push you to progress or does it just add to the partying and hijinx?**

► Both, I mean it's chaos all the time, but also everybody is skating. It makes you want to skate, because if you live with a bunch of skaters someone is always going skating, you know?

**For a female pro, what plays a bigger role, getting video footage and magazine coverage or entering and placing in contests?**

► Magazines photos and footage are definitely the most important. I just go to the contests for a free vacation. Like right now I'm in Hawaii. I just go wherever the sponsors want to send me. The best place I've been was Australia.

**Have you seen the bar getting raised as far as what's expected of women in skateboarding?**

► It's maybe more accepted, but they have to still come with it. They have to still be able to skate. A lot of people get away with just standing on a board and have sponsors just because they are girls, which is pretty much bullshit. Now, that girl, Alexis Sablone, sponsored by The Firm, she rips.

**Who have been your biggest influences in skateboarding?**

► Fuck? Everybody that rips, man. Guy Mariano rips. He's always been my favorite.

**When you aren't skating, what are some of your other interests?**

► Golf. I love golfing.

**I understand that your former board sponsor, Bootleg, recently disbanded. Are there other board sponsors you are looking at?**

► I'm kind of playing it by ear. I have a few companies in mind, but I think we—the Bootleg team—are going to try to start another Bootleg. It will be called something different but it will still be Bootleg.

**What else is going on in your near future?**

► Everything. Whatever I can do, I want to do it.



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**The** T-shirt has long been a fashion staple amongst teenagers worldwide, functioning as the medium of choice for subcultural communication for nearly 40 years. While many corporate brands still treat the common T-shirt as a mere billboard to propel their oversized logos into posterity, the trend has been to adopt a more creative, artistic approach in the temple

of the tee. These canvases carry the silk screened and ironed-on legacies of countless anonymous artists. When Yoshi Kawasaki recognized the possibility of harnessing this network of potential "wall space", his current T-shirt line, 2K by Gingham, was born.

Kawasaki has always been fond of spending leisure time in the gift and book shops of museums and galleries, noticing his fellow shoppers tendency to purchase T-shirts featuring the work of their favorite artists. He realized that by wearing these T-shirts, the fans of the featured artists were helping to promote their idols' work, and to further educate others of its existence through a kind of travelling exhibit. The merger between street art and fashion has been evident for some time, but Kawasaki takes it a step further. His vision is to blend in fine art, as well.

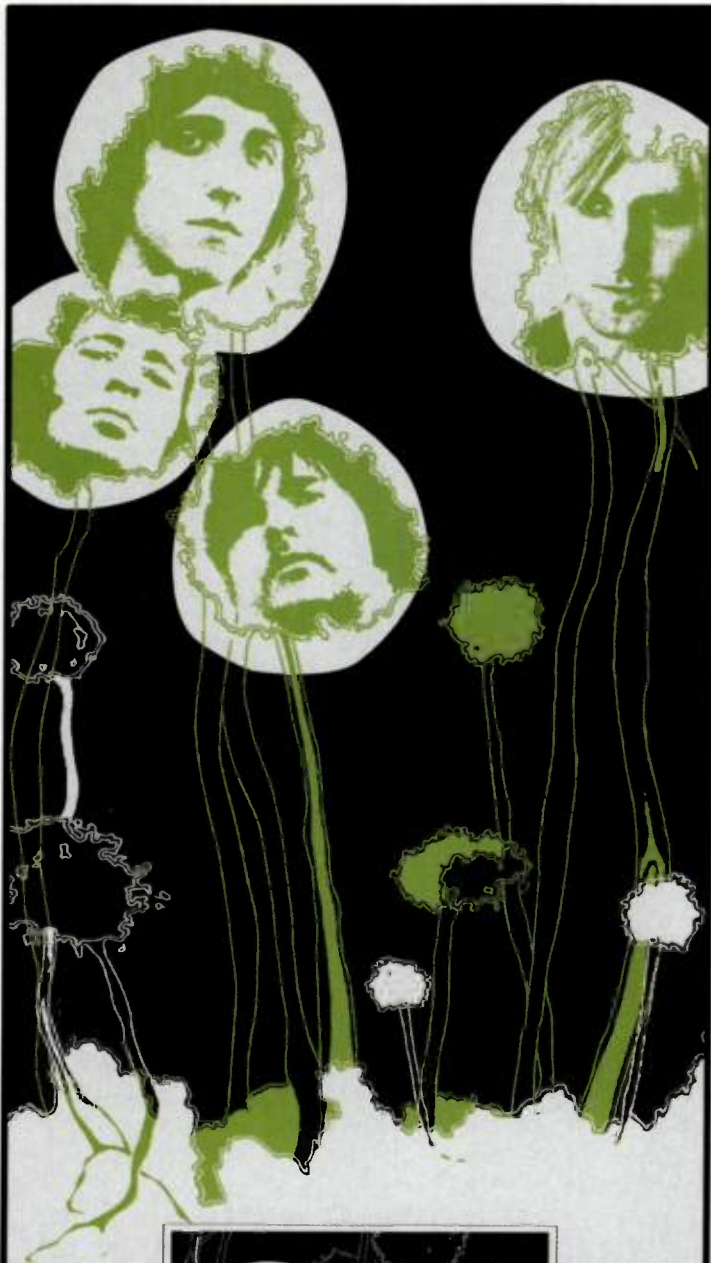
Kawasaki started 2K in Japan out of a frustration with the art scene there. In his words, the youth have been turned off to learning about art because of an overly academic curriculum. His goal is to show that art is not a simply a mountain of cumbersome facts, but rather an omnipresent force that permeates everything they admire—from music to film and, of course, fashion.

While the defining line between street art and fine art is yet to be clearly drawn, Kawasaki is helping to keep it blurred. 2K features contemporary graffiti artists like Sam Flores as equally as icons of pop art past such as Andy Warhol. They aren't just selling shirts, though, the emphasis is on the art itself. Kawasaki hopes that the images his company mass produces act as catalysts to spur people to complete the circle, by searching out an artist they may have never known, and actually come face to face with the original piece of art instead of the reproduction on fabric.

"We need to remember that all these products, including our T-shirts, are to be consumed and true art will never be consumed." ■

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## BEST OF 2004

Hindsight has a reputation for lending clarity, but its track record shows a tendency to scramble the facts. History, it is said, is written by the winners, and while that may not be entirely fair, we're all far better off than if the job fell to music writers.

Emo? Electroclash? Post-rock? Slowcore? We all ought to be strung up for this jargon alone. The biggest crime of the profession, however—as any offender worth his salt will tell you—is that timeless mistake of glorifying the past. Mystification of glory years, hey days and golden ages obfuscates the one really redeemable element to the whole affair: there's always great music happening.

Dizzee Rascal, The Shins, MF Doom, TV on the Radio, PJ Harvey, Ted Leo, Tragedy, El Guapo, Camera Obscura, Le Tigre, Modest Mouse, the Beautiful Losers traveling art show, Glen E. Friedman's Liberty Street Project, documentaries like Jehane Noujaim's *Control Room*—no need to reach for a revolver, culture's doing fine.

We're firm believers of the five-percent rule—there's a sliver of truly beautiful art in every genre—and this year was no exception. So, while we get the impression 2004 is being written off by some jaded peers as an uneventful year, we're hoping history comes through for us, even if just this once. ►►



## The Best of 2004 That Wasn't

Some of my favorite vegetables are actually fruits, my favorite actors are people in documentaries and my favorite vegetarian food is meat I eat by mistake when drunk. Definition-bending contradictions make the world go 'round, so it makes perfect sense that some of the most memorable music in 2004 was actually released in 2003.

### The Darkness

Although a gazillion-times-platinum act in England, the big hair, falsetto howls and tight trousers really only sank in stateside once folks had a chance to digest and ponder the nostalgia-heavy *Permission to Land*, officially released in October 2003. The novelty seemed to wear off before the sustain died down from guitarist Dan Hawkins' prize axe... and, yes, it just holds it, "ahhhh," long enough for you to go get a bite to eat, and you could come back and it would still, "ahhhh." Don't touch it. No, don't point at it....

### Postal Service

Surely, you'd think everyone who would bother to want a copy of some side project of a guy from Dntel would have bought it a few months after it came out. Ah-ha, not true. Even though they're hardly a real band, according to Sub Pop publicists, the Postal Service's album continues to ship something absurd like six million copies per month. You can't buy an overpriced pair of designer jeans made in a sweatshop without hearing "The District Sleeps Alone Tonight."

### The Rapture

This band is like a drug that makes you lose track of time. I feel like we've been hearing different mixes of "House of Jealous Lovers" since shortly after "Seinfeld" went off the air. The full-length, *Echoes*, finally came out on Strummer/Universal in October 2003.

### !!! (Chk Chk Chk)

It's true, *Louden Up Now* came out squarely in the summer of 2004, but let's face it, the real driving force that had people so amped had already been sitting pretty on the *Me and Giuliani Down by the School Yard* EP for a year. While the full-length had a few choice moments, most fueled by frontman Nic Offer's idiot-savant lyrics ("Hey, Mr. President, suck my fucking dick. Does that sounds intelligent? Like I give a shit"), the tight, rumpshaking core can all be distilled down to the bass-heavy, intensified funk of the 2003 EP's title track... and its weird, Bob and Doug McKenzie-style moose call chorus ("coo-too-too-too-carooo...").

### Outkast

I know, it's hard to believe, and all your friends with DJ nights still aren't ready to admit it, but "Hey Ya" already had a birthday. In fact, it should be ready to walk by now, or else its mom and dad should stop loving it, or at least stop trying to convince everyone else at family functions that their little guy is the brightest genius in the litter. *Speakerboxx/The Love Below* = '03, my friend.

TEXT → MIKE MCKEE | IMAGE → NOPATTERN.COM



## BJÖRK

Living in New York, I see celebrities all the time. It's no big deal for an urban sophisticate like me. So what if Russell Simmons is eating dinner next to me—he's not picking up my tab. Matt Dillon's at my favorite record store? Big deal, he barely acknowledged my classic *Rumble Fish* reference. But Björk, now she's an entirely different animal (or should I say swan?) Meeting Björk on the streets of New York would be a dream come true.

I have to admit, I'd be kind of scared. Hell, I saw the airport footage of her freaking out on a reporter, and who knows, maybe that scary guy Goldie might still be lurking around somewhere. Plus, she's a big star and we all know big stars get bothered all the time by tourists and people that are less, shall we say, well-bred than I. But still, would it be so wrong to just say, "hello?"

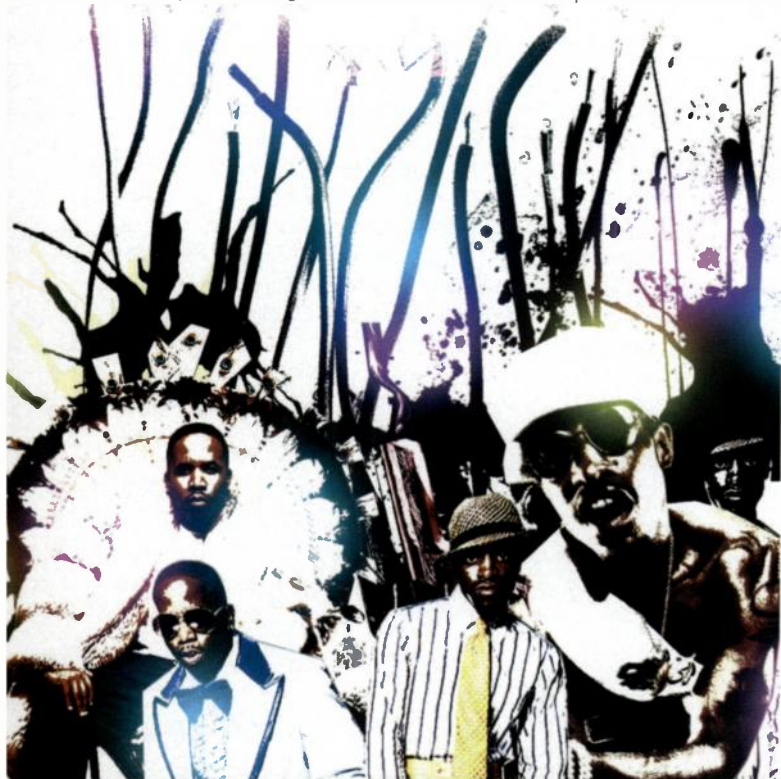
Perhaps being a mom has softened her up a bit, and hey, performing at the Olympics is a pretty peaceful thing to do, right? But still, based on her new album, *Medulla*, Björk doesn't even seem to like instruments very much anymore. If she hates instruments, do I even stand a chance?

Regardless of the risks, I'd boldly speak to Björk with the confidence befitting the urbane New Yorker that I am. I'd tell her *Medulla* is a disappointment, but that I don't care, she's still a genius. I'd make sure she understood that I'd still buy each and every one of her monthly singles and box sets. I think this year there were, like, 12. Certainly, she would be smitten with me!

So, I'm resolved. When I catch Björk strolling around Park Slope, I'm going to approach her. I'll walk straight up and say, "Um... hi, uhm... er,... Björk, yeah, uhm, you're um..."

Then, I'll turn and run like hell. ■

TEXT → ERIC WEISS | IMAGE → ALLWORKANDALLPLAY.COM





# ELECTRELANE

The girls from Brighton, England's Electrelane aren't afraid to have a grandiose vision, or, to put it in slightly more vernacular terms, to "get arty." Publicity photos of the all-female quartet seem better suited for the cast of a play set in medieval times than for a band who recently released a highly original and dynamic album of literate pop.

Displaying an obvious affinity for Krautrock and all of its playful severity, as well as its endless capacity for jamming and melodic contemplation, Electrelane isn't afraid to take a chance. Take, for instance, one track off the new album, *The Power Out*, where the band fearlessly employs a 12-person chorus. It would seem Electrelane decides to use a 12-person chorus with the same ease that other bands decide to use distorted guitars.

Experiencing *The Power Out* (produced by Steve Albini) for the first time is more like listening to performance art than a straight-forward indie rock record. The band is such an amusement park of audio attractions that if you were able to ride just one, it would either be disappointingly out of place or just plain silly. Taken en masse in its full carnival glory, it's a massive thrill.

The group—guitarist Mia Clark, bassist Rachel Dalley, drummer Emma Gaze and keyboardist-guitarist Verity Susman—already had a full-length to its credit, courtesy of the now retired Mr. Lady label (Le Tigre, Sarah Dougher), although it pales in comparison and scope with the Beggar's Banquet record that dropped this year. While a bevy of the band's contemporaries seemed to limit themselves to a '70s, dance-punk revival, Electrelane was using a whole new vocabulary, incorporating French, German, Spanish, English vocals and sweeping crashes of sound actually deserving of clichéd music rag terms like "expansive," "cinematic" and "massive." Want a visual without the buzzwords? Picture a cello fighting a dumpster, picture Kevin Shields conducting an orchestra of Broken Social Scene dropouts.

An impressive confidence in its own musical vision and a cautiously inching shift toward a very new idea of pop are among Electrelane's more magnetic qualities, sure to continue to attract fans even with only a passing familiarity with Nietzsche or Renoir.

TEXT → SHANE MILLER | IMAGE → DEDASS.COM



# MARTINA TOPLEY-BIRD

Even more than a picture, a voice is worth a thousand words. When British chanteuse Martina Topley-Bird unfurls her dusky purr, it evokes all of the forces that have shaped her life and musical career, from the childlike wonder of the 15-year-old girl discovered by trip-hop innovator Tricky, to the world-weary sensuality of the young woman who broke free to create *Quixotic*, her potent debut album, released as *Anything* in the States earlier this year.

Along with her independence, Bird has gained a sharp, knowing sense of humor, and she laughs when she recalls her reaction to press that defined her as no more than Tricky's baby's mother.

"I know, I was whining a bit, wasn't I?" she says. "It was the manifestation of my worst nightmare. I think maybe it happened for that reason, because I had a problem with it. Ideally, I shouldn't care."

And Bird has since ceased to care to the point that she collaborated with Tricky on the dense, sultry groove of "Ragga," from her debut. Elsewhere, the album reveals an eclectic and powerful range of moods, mostly by way of Bird's otherworldly voice, from the stripped, vulnerable romance of "Anything," to the commanding, edgy intensity of "Too Tough to Die."

When asked how it feels to possess an inborn instrument that has opened so many doors for her, Bird trounces any suggestion that a voice is merely its timbre.

"I reckon it is all about personality more than anything," she says. "I think it's weird when people go, 'Oh, I wish I could sing,' because it's really not that. It's just deciding to have an identity." ■

TEXT → SARAH TOMLINSON | IMAGE → DEDASS.COM





## FOUND MAGAZINE

### Confessions of a Trash Picker

Even in elementary school, *Found Magazine* mastermind Davy Rothbart knew a good find when he saw one. After picking up a stray scrap of paper during a field trip, Rothbart discovered a page nearly blacked out with scribbled question marks. Convinced the page expressed the many deep questions plaguing his boyish mind, Rothbart hung the paper in his bedroom.

Flash forward many years to the accidental discovery of a furious but ardent love letter directed to a philandering "Mario," penned by a scorned "Amber," and Rothbart realizes that he has to create a way to collect all of the weird and lovely ephemera he and his friends have gathered for years.

Since the initial paste-up and photocopy version Rothbart first crafted with his brother, *Found Magazine* has grown into an eccentric and lovingly tended empire fed by contributors who send in an average of one hundred items a week. In addition to appearing in the magazine, Rothbart's scavenged letters, photos and oddities have been displayed on the magazine's website, FoundMagazine.com, and in the *Found* book published earlier this year. There's even a *Dirty Found*, which features found porn.

Rothbart, who is also a contributor to NPR's "This American Life," has obviously been at this a long time. All the same, he figures into our favorites for 2004 as it's been a busy year for him, with the new book and all the publicity it generated.

Busy as Rothbart is, he's allergic to celebrity, consistently down to earth and always ready to chat about his favorite subject. We caught up with him during his national book tour to have him answer a few questions, including a couple we "found" among letters featured in his book.

**I originally planned to only ask you questions from items that I found myself, but I didn't find anything. What did I do wrong?**

► I think the main thing is just sort of having an awareness of the stuff, really keeping your eyes open instead of being tuned to this inner monologue that's always churning. Just being in tune to the world around you. It sounds a little grandiose, but I have discovered at these *Found* events there are a lot of people who come who have been collecting stuff for a long

time, and there are a lot of people who come and they're like, 'My friend dragged me to this, and it was really interesting, but I've just never found anything.' And I'm just like, 'If you start being aware, suddenly it's everywhere.' And I've had people email a week later and be like, 'Dude, I was on my way home from the show and I found like three things.' It is there.

**Like reality TV programs, found items spotlight the loves and losses of regular folks. While reality TV often feels exploitative, your collections don't. What's the difference?**

► One of my friends said that: *Found* is like reality TV, but real, which I thought totally made sense. The critical distinction between *Found* and that reality TV stuff is that the shows are so managed and manipulated, from what I've seen of them, and the people are aware that the cameras are there. So they're acting for the cameras, or there's producers saying, 'Why don't you two maybe fall in love?' Whereas, with the *Found* stuff, it's so unselfconscious. They're writing with no audience in mind. They would never dream that anyone would see it, except for the one person they're writing it too, or maybe nobody.

**Here's some questions that happened to appear in the book.**

**"You said you had to work, then why's your car here at her place?"**

► Well, I *am* working. We're at a rest stop in Waco, Texas, on our way to Dallas for a *Found* show. And there are no girls here at all, just three guys with construction helmets. I swear to God.

**"Ever cut your skin for fun?"**

► No, but I did nick myself shaving this morning.

**"Sell your ass?"**

► Figuratively, but never literally.

**"Do you like pain?"**

► Not very much, but that still doesn't stop me from courting it sometimes.

TEXT → SARAH TOMLINSON



## BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

Perhaps it's time for a documentary: *The Year Graffiti-Skateboarding-Punk-Hip Hop-Related Art Broke*. You probably know what I'm talking about, but I'll admit, it makes a crummy title. Those looking for clarification got it this year with the Beautiful Losers traveling art show. Organized by Alleged Gallery founder Aaron Rose and former *Strength Magazine* publisher Christian Strike, Beautiful Losers gathers artists like Barry McGee, Ed Templeton, Tobin Yelland, Clare Rojas and Glen E. Friedman. As underground street art continues to diffuse into the mainstream (and the mainstream market), Beautiful Losers aggressively defines the movement with its own voices and on its own terms. The tutorial began this past fall in Cincinnati, launching an impressive, two-year tour. Divided into five segments, this multidisciplinary exhibition includes Basquiat and Warhol, a collection of the work of over 50 artists, a sound installation from pro skater-cum-musician Tommy Guerrero, archived ephemera and artifacts of underground street culture and films from people like Spike Jonze and Harmony Korine. ■

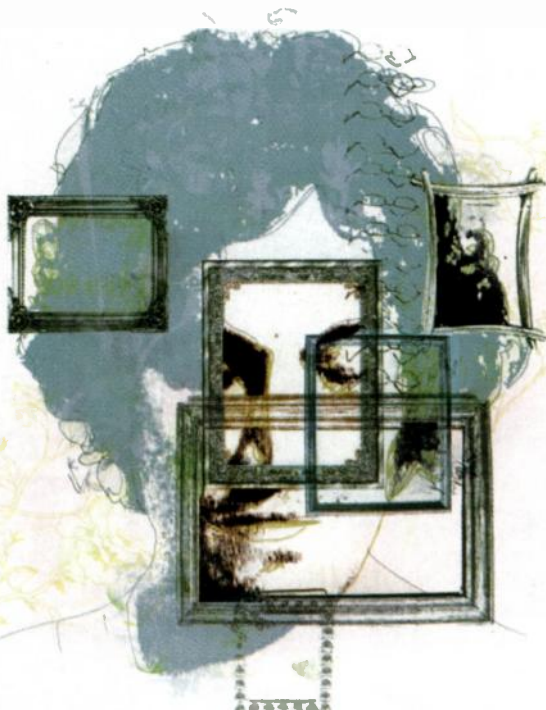
TEXT → MIKE MCKEE





## GALLO'S POLE

### A Doctoral Student Defends *The Brown Bunny*



Reading reviews of *The Brown Bunny*, the comparison that is completely overlooked is, perhaps, the most poignant. Vincent Gallo's latest eye-roller is reminiscent of Michael Cimino's 1981 cinematic disaster, *Heaven's Gate*, the notorious artistic and financial catastrophe which nearly bankrupted United Artists and definitively ended Hollywood's decade-long love affair with the director. Of course, narratively, Gallo's *Brown Bunny* has little to do with Cimino's epic Western, which used the historic Johnson County War as a vehicle to deliver his well-intentioned, albeit flimsy, anti-imperialist statement. As we all know, though, the story is not everything.

Both films, were too long, too slow and too pretentious. Both films, were "cut down" shortly after the first screenings (Mr. Gallo, of course, contends that his was "unfinished" when first shown at Cannes). Most significant of all, both were slain by the media before the public could form its own assessment.

That said, *New York Times* reviewer Manohla Dargis provides the most eye-opening observation when she wrote, "Mr. Gallo seems to have discovered someone else's visual style and applied it to his narrative. He comes across less like an original than a very smart art student with a jones for cinema's

past." Perhaps, Gallo, whose *Brown Bunny* is both sensitive and condescending, all while having nothing to say, has arrived, like Cimino, at a film with "considerable curiosity value." It seems, Vincent has inadvertently created an important piece of film history as what the *Kalamazoo Gazette* found in *Heaven's Gate*: "An example of how a filmmaker got it so wrong by trying so hard to get it right."

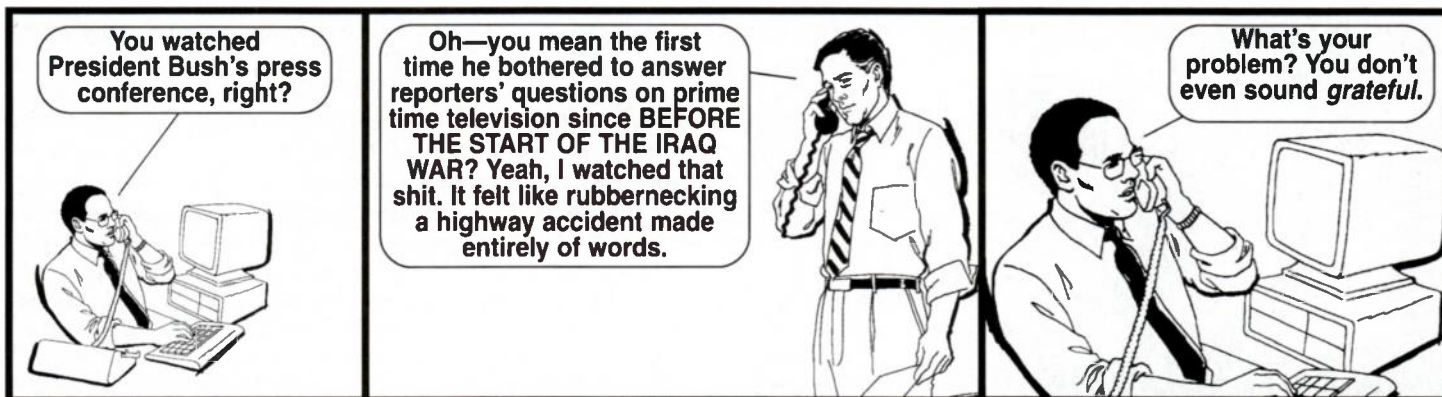
*The Brown Bunny*, although beautifully shot, is tedious and boring and excruciatingly (here I'm thinking about Violet, Rose, Lilly, Daisy—vom-iron!) heavy-handed, not to mention that the ending can be boiled down to that favorite device of third grade creative writing exercises: "And it was all a dream!"

But, Vincent Gallo is not Kris Kristofferson (lead actor of *Heaven's Gate*), and in this, *The Brown Bunny* is redeemed. Super-sexy Gallo can film himself on a four-hour walking tour of his living room, and I would watch fully enraptured, carefully studying every furrowed brow and facial twitch. *Bunny* does just a slightly bit more than this and, in full masturbatory glory (that's his and my own), it wholly delivers.

Oh, and I saw his dick! I wish this movie was filmed in taste-a-vision. ■

TEXT → PAULINA POBOCHA | IMAGE → DREW HEFFRON

## DRAWING DISSENT David Rees Gets His War On



We're certainly living in strange times when some of the most popular political commentary is found in the profane musings of a comic book. The comic in question is David Rees' *Get Your War On*, an acerbic indictment of the so-called War on Terror, the war in Iraq and the Bush Administration as a whole. In four panels, *Get Your War On* packs the journalistic impact of a Seymour Hersh article while dropping enough F-bombs to make an armada of sailors blush. Although the strip started out as a humble feature on Rees' website, its wild, buzz-spiked, word-of-mouth notoriety generated an onslaught of media attention and regular appearances everywhere from *Punk Planet* to *Rolling Stone*.

Rees, however, never thought he'd find himself playing the role of pundit.

"On the scale of political commentators, I must be pretty damn near the bottom," he says with his signature dry wit. "Maybe two steps up from Kato Kaelin."

After graduating from Oberlin College in 1994 with a degree in philosophy, Rees and his wife moved to Boston where he found himself working a series of boring temp jobs. To occupy himself during work, Rees began making comic strips using public domain clip art of martial artists and the infirm. During a stint working at Harvard University, Rees created "My New Filing Technique is Unstoppable," composed entirely of clip-art office workers struggling desperately with the inherent absurdity of corporate culture. Think Dilbert working blue, assuming the little ass clown was actually, you know, funny.

"I thought the media wasn't very skeptical of the idea of a War on Terrorism," says Rees. "Also, the media didn't seem to care much about the risk of massive civilian casualties in Afghanistan when we started bombing. Those things made me a little uncomfortable. I think those were the two big issues that led me to make *GYWO*."

As Rees became increasingly appalled by the Bush administration's actions, the comic became more and more caustic. Throughout its run, Rees remained optimistic that the majority of Americans would indeed oppose the injustice. Rees says he planned to retire the strip if Kerry had won the election. Unfortunately, that's not how things worked out. The outcome of the election marks a period of disappointment as well as uncertainty.

"Maybe I can help Colin Powell look for his dignity," Rees says when asked about his future.

Whatever Rees chooses to do next, it is clear that he hasn't given up fighting the good fight. With the recent collection of published *GYWO* comics, he continues to donate all his royalties to Mine Detection and Dog Center Team No. 5, a humanitarian relief effort working to remove land mines in Afghanistan. ■

TEXT → MAGGIE SEROTA | IMAGE → DAVID REES



## AIR

## Universal Transmission

Question: What's one of the few albums of this year, or any year for that matter, that is just as palatable for sniveling indie kids as it is for television commercials and your mom?

Answer: Air's *Talkie Walkie*.

Three years after the less-than-warmly received *10,000 Hz Legend*, the French duo follows up with an album so mellow it should be used for putting people under. The fact that it doesn't is a testament to the quality of the material. Try listening to "Alpha Beta Gaga," for instance, without whistling along to the main hook of the song. Meanwhile, the adorably accented (no guest vocalists this time around, thank you) chorus of "Surfing on a Rocket" and the sweeping strings provided by former Serge Gainsbourg partner Michael Colombier demonstrate a newfound sense of focus for the traditionally fickle futuristic duo. If you haven't thrown it on recently, now would be a good time to revisit it. Listen to it with your friends, a stranger on the street, or even your own mother. You probably owe her a phone call anyway. ■

TEXT → AUSTIN RAY | IMAGE → INFIDELPHIA.COM



## THE SHINS

## The Healing Power of Pop

I was introduced to the Shins way back in 2001 by a friend who liked to drive around the city, endlessly blaring "Know Your Onion" in his minivan.

"This is the best thing Pete Townshend's done in 30 years," I joked at the time. I picked up the Albuquerque foursome's debut album expecting to hear more of the fun-but-somewhat-shallow nostalgic rock The Strokes had made popular at the time. A quick listen convinced me I had discovered something much deeper and more timeless.

If the title of that record, *Oh, Inverted World*, now seems prophetic in light of the last few years of fear mongering, jingoism and theocracy, the album itself has the overall feel of a hazy summer afternoon just before a storm breaks. Even the sunniest, most anachronistic ditties ("Girl Inform Me") or the aforementioned "Onion" are sung with a brooding unease, while the spiraling minor-key refrain of "Caring is Creepy" sounds ominous and menacing.

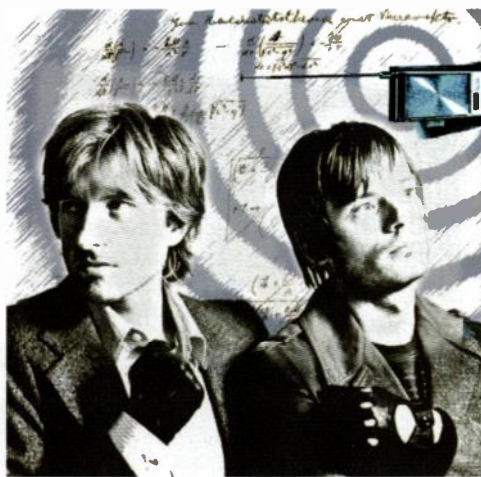
*Oh, Inverted World* remained in my heavy rotation through all the depressing absurdity, as paranoid suburbanites duct-taped themselves inside their homes at the government's behest and pop culture conspired only to bring us spectacular distractions—songs about sex and fashion, pretty boy rockers and '80s throwbacks. Here was one of a handful of discs to be counted on for earnest lyrics and simple, affecting songs.

Although this past year has seen dozens of bands making statements against the state of the world, The Shins' *Chutes Too Narrow* is a subtler and more philosophical favorite. Rather than strut their feathers at the regime, The Shins target the darker side of human nature itself on "So Says I," borrowing imagery from Orwell and referencing Sir Thomas More, an enigmatic 15th century humanist author. The sense of temporal displacement is gone and the music is darker, angrier and more urgent. Layers of phased guitar and organ whirl around Mercer's vocals, now squarely at the front of the mix. The band sounds equally at home playing chargers like "Kissing the Lipless" or pretty, baroque ballads such as "Saint Simon."

In only four years, and with just two exceptional albums, The Shins have already earned their place as one of the most important indie bands of this decade.

Assuming we all survive the next four years, The Shins are sure to be relevant for many years to come. ■

TEXT → NICK CUCE | IMAGE → 80PERCENT.COM



## The Most Interesting Labels of 2004



## SUICIDE SQUEEZE

A true renaissance label, Suicide Squeeze covered all the bases this year, releasing quality albums from We Ragazzi, Hint Hint, the Unicorns, a stand-up comedy CD from Eugene Mirman, a joint book-and-CD release by Hella drummer Zach Hill and a four-star collection of newly vocal-ed remixes from Six Parts Seven and friends.



## VICE

With its sights set on world domination, the Montreal-cum-global brand launched its record label with the Streets. Subsequent offerings have been varied (we say "Eh" to Vietnam, "OK" to Panthers, and we'll scream "Yes!" from the rooftops for Death From Above 1979), but interesting and persuasively presented.



## WARP

Squarepusher, Savath and Savalas, Prefuse 73, Gravenhurst and former Anti-Pop Consortium MC Beans all in one year. And this is the year that started just a few months after they dropped the LFO album? Yes, Warp, we will.



## DIM MAK

Cult of personality Steve Aoki (a.k.a., Kid Millionaire) and his label warrant mention for sheer quantity, if nothing else. Over the course of the last year, the label's productivity spiked so high, it's been difficult to keep track of all the releases. To recall just a few: The Gossip, Die Monitrs Batss, Libretto, Bloc Party.



## The Most Memorable Moments of Indie Rock Commerce

### The Postal Service vs. the U.S. Postal Service

It turns out copyright infringement just be might be a blessing in disguise for the U.S.P.S. after all. You got ultra-sensitive mail, baby!

### The Walkmen and Sufjan Stevens on "The O.C."

Unfortunately, their songs were drowned out by all the bitch-slapping.

### The Raveonettes, Low and Ben Kweller on the "O.C." *Chrismukkah Album*

C'mon, you guys. You don't need publicity that bad. Oops, turns out it's not half bad.

### Levis ad featuring Mogwai's "Summer" airs during Super Bowl

Scottish band + Myth of the American West = Who's that for?

### The Garden State soundtrack

Thousands of pining young men throw down their in-progress mix tapes in despair.

### Wilco's "Just a Kid" in *Spongebob Squarepants Movie*

Better than the movie itself, and almost as good as the Apples in Stereo *Powerpuff Girls* match up.

### The Shins on "The Gilmore Girls"

Embarrassing for everyone, including the viewers. Sort of like The Standells on "The Munsters."

### Jack White in *People*

A certifiable guilty pleasure

### Kmart, Martha Stewart and John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things."

Even more evil than Nico and Kmart. In her defense, Alice Coltrane said she turned down a Gap ad because she "didn't like it."



## BEYOND THE NUMBERS

### Why Kanye West is a Blessing for Commercial Rap

Your short-sighted guidance counselor may have told you a college dropout can't become a real renaissance man, but for Kanye West, it was all about running shit in the Oh-Four. From producer to beat maker, turntablist and rhyme crafter, there was nothing the man couldn't do, including winning 10 Grammy nominations.

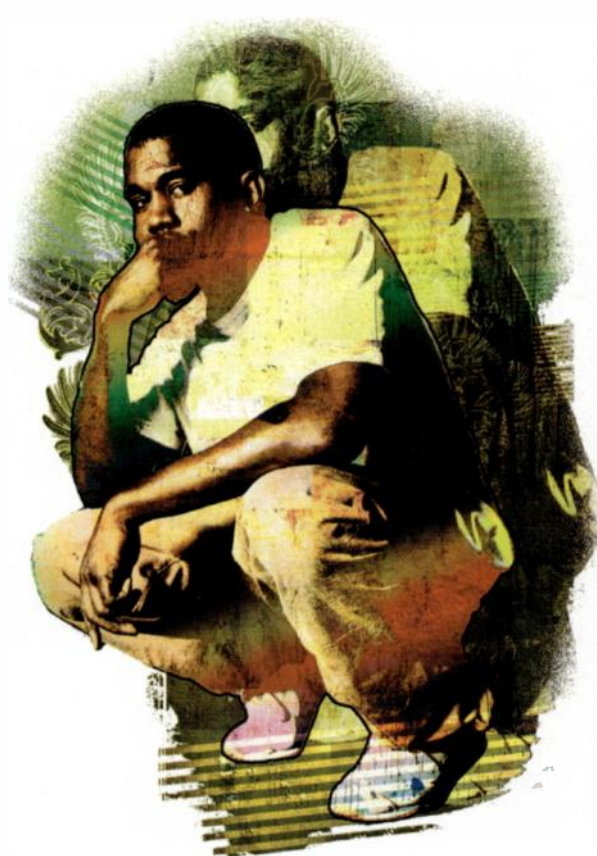
And to think, Kanye's rocket to fame was almost tragically grounded back in 2002 when a car accident in Los Angeles left him with numerous injuries. West turned the potential black eye into a feather in his proverbial cap. While others might have used the experience as an excuse for sympathy and a liquid diet, the recent Roc-A-Fella signee recorded the aggressive "Through the Wire," according to lore, with his jaw still wired shut. Early 2004 saw the young protégé's smash remix of Twista and Jamie Foxx's "Slow Jams." The song got so much play, people could almost understand what the fuck Twista was saying.

Still, like Jay-Z, such accomplishments amounted to little more than a novelty—an entertaining spark in the unchallenging world of Top 40 rap. But no one, including his peers and label, seemed to expect what West would do next as he released a bold, commercially successful album questioning the decadence and bravado upon which the Roc-A-Fella empire was built.

*College Dropout's* upset single "Jesus Walks" shows the Windy City wunderkind diving overtly into religion, risking fame and acceptance by announcing his faith and calling into question the material aspirations of himself and the rap community at large. The lyrics were eloquent with poignant reflections like, "If this take away from my spins/Which will probably take away from my ends/Then I hope it take away from my sins." Later, West reasserts his willingness to question hip hop's status quo. Many critics would refer to the wandering and expansive nature of the album, but few could knock it. What other rapper in 2004 was willing to address his quest for fame and fortune with a line like, "I'm so self-conscious?"

Definitive proof of the man's influence—for better or worse—can be found on the streets, where young bucks are rocking Kanyesque pink Polos with the collars popped. It's as though there were casting calls for John Hughes' '80s movies in every major city in the country. Now that's running shit. ■

TEXT → ADAM SALO | IMAGE → THEOUTERONE.COM



#### XL RECORDINGS

This U.K. label clocks releases on several people's year-end lists with records from Dizzee Rascal, M.I.A. and Ratatat, squeezing in with The White Stripes just in time for the winter. Factor in a partnership with the charming Too Pure label, and respect is due.



#### SUB POP

More of an elder statesmen than a bold young turk, the Seattle-based label enjoyed a refreshing revitalization this year as people caught on to bands like Postal Service, the Thermals and the Shins. The trend looks like it's going to continue as the label just signed Sleater-Kinney.



#### STONES THROW

Regarded for its groundbreaking hip hop artists (Mad Villain, Wildchild, Dudley Perkins, Madlib), Stones Throw is piloted by Peanut Butter Wolf and his partner, Egon. The label's Now Again imprint will concentrate on from-the-vault collections of obscure vintage soul and funk (LA Carnival, Stark Reality, Ebony Rhythm Band).

#### OUTPUT



#### OUTPUT

England's Output label is run by Playgroup DJ Trevor Jackson, and has released singularly daring records and remixes of Colder, MU, Four Tet, Fridge, Rapture and more. As electronic, organic downtempo or frenetic as it sees fit. Look for an MU full-length in January.



## SQUAREPUSHER

A lot of people are probably pretty mad at Tom Jenkinson, the man behind Squarepusher. Pulling out of his headlining spot on not one but two legendary music festivals—Reading and Leeds—with less than a month's notice is sure to ruin some moods. But, then, moods are something Jenkinson should be able to spare in flagrant surplus. As with other electronic artists, words in print only go so far in Jenkinson's favor, usually jumbling together some combination of "ambient," "layered" and "sound collage." When focusing on structure, you'd be safe to put Jenkinson in the company of Autechre, Aphex Twin or LFO. Where Squarepusher truly excels, however, is when Jenkinson opens things up, follows his jazzy, futuristic or cinematic whims and aims at completely reinventing the vocabulary of music. This year's *Ultravisitor* delivers on the promise critics were oozing about over *Go Plastic*, and—to Jenkinson's credit—by wholly confounding expectations of how he'd do it. Along with artists like Hood, Four Tet and Ulrich Schnauss, Squarepusher continues to redefine what we'll consider to have been true folk music in the next century. ■

TEXT → MIKE MCKEE | IMAGE → UPSO.ORG



## DFA

When I think about Death From Above, I remember the skit on *De La Soul Is Dead* where some cocksure school children are dumbfounded to meet real rappers, their expectations shattered. Similarly, you have to wonder how the term "production team," in relation to say The Neptunes or The Matrix, can be reconciled against the partnership of Tim Goldsworthy and James Murphy. Upon meeting the men behind DFA, De La's kids would be left wondering about the conspicuous lack of limos, Lear Jets and red-carpeted awards ceremonies. While the hype surrounding this production duo and record label could cripple a horse (they released the indie rock "Hey Ya" with Rapture's "House of Jealous Lovers"), Goldsworthy, Murphy and label manager Jonathan Galkin are essentially music lovers, raised on punk and trip-hop and addicted to the immediate, physical feedback yielded by a well-produced dance song. "This year had a strange but effective rhythm," says Galkin, citing singles from LCD Soundsystem, Pixeltan and Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom as landmarks. This year also saw the release of Black Dice's *Creature Comforts*, a bold, love-it-or-hate-it album miles (of smiles) away from their early, screamo days. "I know people seemed really split about this record," Galkin says, admirably confident about his and his partners' releases. "I would defend this record to my dying day." ■

TEXT → MIKE MCKEE

### Farewells To...

**Guided By Voices**  
**Luna**  
**The Beta Band**  
**Beulah**  
**Orbital**  
**The Anniversary**  
**Black Eyes**  
**Denali**  
**The Microphones**  
**All Night Radio**  
**Small Brown Bike**  
**Lollapalooza (again)**  
**The Libertines? Maybe?**

## 6 Bands To Watch in 2005

### Bright Eyes

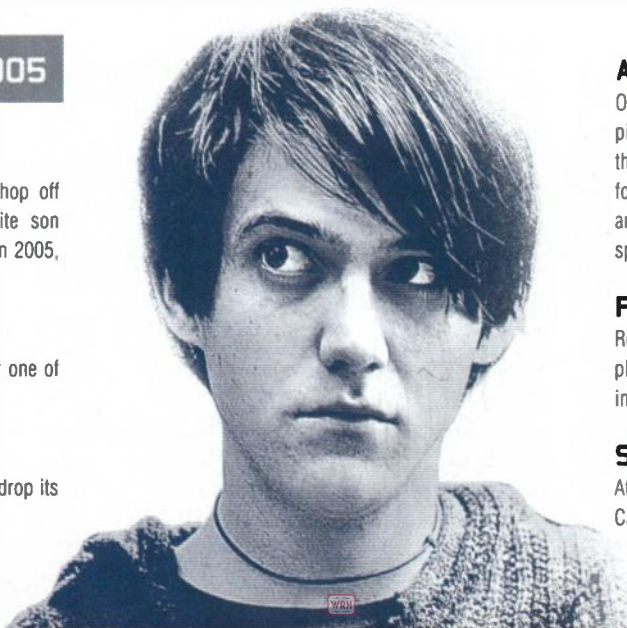
After knocking chartbusting monsters of hip hop off some coveted Top 10 spots, Omaha's favorite son admits that with the release of his new album in 2005, he will, indeed, be "way bigger than Jesus."

### The Perceptionists

Mr. Lif and company from Def Jux combine for one of the label's best releases in years!

### Hot Hot Heat

Now signed to Warner Bros., the band plans to drop its fourth full-length, *Elevator*, this April!



### Arcade Fire

OK, it started as an experiment in my A&R class. We picked one, pretty unknown band to see if we could make them the most popular group at Indie Rock High, at least for a whole semester. Only, now it's totally out of control, and I think Jamie's falling in love with them. After-school special airs this spring.

### Fiery Furnaces

Rough Trade's Ben Folds-inflected pop group has plenty of plans—many of them pretty weird—for the upcoming year, including a singles collection and at least one full-length.

### Sleater-Kinney

At long last, now with a new home on Sub Pop, Corin, Carrie and Janet return with a new full-length this spring!





## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

2004 Voter registration campaigns delivered the highest youth turnout in decades... So what went wrong?

**T**hose hoping for a change in America are likely still reeling from the bitter pill we were all asked to swallow this November. It was a rough couple of days watching the news coverage as the GOP collected its winnings in Congress and the White House. The only thing missing was the Empire's theme from *Star Wars*. But the very real value of increased youth engagement may have a lasting effect we can count as a silver lining....

### The Youth Were Getting Restless

Mainstream media seemed content to write Bush's re-election off as the product of a narrow majority voting its conscience (a conscience evidently based largely on religious and moral judgments). Most coverage played out like a shrug, "Sorry, kids, maybe next time," vastly trivializing the genuinely impressive organizing behind the largest youth voter movement in 30 years.

Immediately after the election, many news organizations quoted an Associated Press exit poll that showed voters aged 18-29 represented a scant nine percent of the electorate. Since these young voters were also nine percent of the electorate in 2000, some pundits saw this

as proof of zero growth, suggesting registration efforts failed. The *San Francisco Chronicle* blasted "Young Voters Preferred Kerry, but Turnout Wasn't High," while *USA Today* reported "Not a Breakout Day for Youth, After All."

Such blustery headlines fail to account for the overwhelming difference between the two elections—more of *everyone* voted this year. In fact, the numbers suggest groups like Music for America, Downtown Democracy, Choose Or Lose and Declare Yourself really did complete their mission of engaging young people in the political process, registering some 1.5 million along the way.

Twenty-one million people between the ages of 18 and 29 went to the polls this year—about five million more than in 2000. This demographic made up 63 percent of all first-time voters, climbing from a 42 percent turn-out in 2000 to 51 percent this time around. Only twice in 30 years have young voters broken the 50 percent mark (it's not surprising, the two other instances also occurred with wartime presidents in the office).

Nevertheless, while the efforts of young voters in this past election are commendable, when it comes to making them a significant voting bloc, there's obviously more than enough work left to be done.

### Alt.Rock the Vote: The New Face of the Young Voter Movement

Mike Connery is one of the co-founders of Music For America, a nonpartisan vote empowerment group that helped define this election's youth vote. After partnering with everyone from *McSweeney's*, *MoveOn.org*, NYC's Knitting Factory, Barsuk Records, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Bright Eyes, David Eggers, Kurt Vonnegut, Joyce Carol Oates and The Flaming Lips in a bid to persuade young people to register and vote, Connery remains understandably optimistic.

"Politics doesn't begin and end with the Presidential elections," he says.

Local, regional and statewide politics are still in desperate need of youth involvement, according to Connery, whose MFA, like other groups vying for that young vote, is now urging its converts to stay involved in the political process. Part of this, says Connery, means working to clean up the media's mess.

continued on page 65 »



## A SALTY SALUTE

Insiders Prognosticate  
Guided By Voices' Final Song

**Y**ou would have to go back in time to the 1970s and the era of the Grateful Dead to find a band whose New Year's shows and setlists are as hotly anticipated as Guided By Voices'. Dayton, Ohio's godfathers of indie rock already enjoy a solid reputation for their marathon, age- and gravity-defying concerts, but their shambolic New Year's Eve shows usually one-up the staggeringly besotted norm of their average performances. Between that and the fact that the British Invasion-inflected band is one of the most consistently celebrated and influential American bands of the past decade, it's reasonable to imagine that some of you already have plans to attend this year's career-ending New Year's gala.

On any given night, if he's feeling really juiced, singer Robert Pollard and his merry band of pranksters can turn out a peerless 60-song set. But what makes GBV's 2004 New Year's show at Chicago's Metro so damn special is this: Not only is it the band's last concert ever, it's the last appearance of a band that has recorded and released close to 1,000 songs in less than 20 years.

So the question is, what the hell is GBV gonna play on New Year's Eve this year?

With that in mind, *Rockpile* polled critics, musicians, record industry insiders and GBV fans alike for their predictions on what lo-fi rock's flagship band will choose to play as its definitive last song.

The general consensus of our rather unscientific poll was "Echoes Myron," that anthemic, infectious sing-a-long from 1994's breakthrough, *Bee Thousand*. Its closing lines would seem especially appropriate: "And we're finally here/And shit yeah it's cool/And shouldn't it be/Or something like that."

"What a way to end," muses Swearing at Motorists' guitarist, Dave Doughman. "I hope I can get into the show."

Some respondents, however, were less revealing about their knowledge.

"As acting tour manager and friend of the band who has heard discussions of what the final song might be, I think I will disqualify myself," admitted GBV.com webmaster Rich Turiel.

Others prognosticated with abandon. Jim Greer, GBV's official biographer and bassist of two years, picked "Motor Away," though reluctantly.

"The answer will probably be whatever song whoever's left standing is sober enough to play," he said. "I have a feeling it's gonna be the first two bars of 'Let the Good Times Roll,' then a collapse into a drunken heap, but we'll just have to see."

Knowing and loving GBV's colossal back catalog, Jeff Warren had a few predictions of his own. As webmaster of the massive GBVdb.com database, Warren employed his statistical wiles to predict the last song. "'Huffman Prairie Flying Field,' because it's the last song on the last GBV album," he noted. "Or, maybe, 'Game of Pricks,' another GBV classic and the most-played live song, at 240 times."

Dave Heaton, editor of the online culture journal *Erasing Clouds*, was hesitant to assume the band would even stick to a setlist. "Another option would be that they get drunk enough to take requests, and end the set with a bunch of rare songs that they don't really know how to play, like they did at that close-to-four hour show in Lawrence, Kan., a few years ago," he said.

Charlie Meyer, who photographed the covers of two Pollard solo albums, had a novel idea. "Closing with an eleveny-twelve minute rendition of 'Don't Stop Now' would be nice and ironic," he said.

Other Ohio natives looked towards more grandiose exits for the legend in their backyard. Kevin Neudecker, owner of the Music Saves record store in Cleveland, imagined an unlikely but thrilling scenario. "Bob brings out Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend for a 15-minute version of 'Baba O'Reilly.' During a cataclysmic finale, Daltrey and Pollard entrance

the crowd in a mic-swinging battle royale and one of them breaks a hip. GBV's Nate Farley punches out Townshend inexplicably. Fade out. The end."

We caught up with Pollard himself in the middle of his final, hectic tour with the group to ask what he thought his legions of friends and fans would choose as the final GBV song. Not surprisingly, the Captain was cleverly enigmatic, a showman to the end.

"I would guess 'A Salty Salute,'" he said. "The final song will be 'The Ballad of Guided By Voices.'"

A new song? Some surprise, unreleased track? A spontaneous smoke screen to let the suspense steep? He wouldn't say.

Whether it's a bang or a combination of stumbles, slurs and drunken bon mots, the note Guided By Voices chooses to go out on will likely be reflective of its career: long, sloppy and undeniably legendary. ■





# AUTOPSY OF DESIRE

## PJ Harvey's Five Step Program

**L**ove hard-won, love wasted, love scorned, love abandoned, love betrayed and love mourned. Classifying each of these variants like an autopsy of desire, PJ Harvey has long ventured deep into the trenches of the human heart, prospecting for the excesses and eccentricities that abound there.

Harvey seems most at home lingering in the nether regions of lust boiled over and romance gone to seed. Who can more succinctly evoke, after all, the intense vengefulness of spurned love, the tearing torment of longing denied?

In short, Harvey is master, not of the love song, but of the lost-love song. And after the relatively bucolic romance served up on 2000's *Stories From the City, Stories From the Sea*, she's back with one of the best breakup albums of 2004, *Uh Huh Her*. It's a raw, ragged lament that torches the last vestiges of a love affair gone bad, while tending the bloody heart left in its wake.

Like the five stages of grief encapsulated in a musical missive, Harvey gives us a handbook for getting morose, getting even and getting over.

### Denial...

This step includes a repudiation of all infidelities, lies, betrayals and simple incompatibilities. We blame ourselves for our loss but remain unable to let go, as in Harvey's gorgeously understated "Shame."

Just when our friends think we're healed, and they'll receive no more incoherent, grief-choked phone calls, we dive back into the morass. More than halfway through the album, Harvey indulges in the churlish vibe of "Cat on the Wall," which jumps back into the fire, as she listens to old voicemails and picks at the almost healed scabs of her breakup.

### Anger...

While rage may be the second step in the healing process, according to the head-shrinkers, Harvey isn't much for propriety. Her album opens with the menacing guitar of "The Life and Death of Mr. Badmouth," where she dismantles one of the oldest excuses in the book, singing, "You were an unhappy child, but that doesn't make it all right." Later, "The Pocket Knife" is all hypnotic tambourine and modern medieval melody, as Harvey defies traditional marriage fantasies and gets herself free.

### Bargaining...

There's definitely a conciliatory aspect to writing a missive like *Uh Huh*'s "The Letter." Just listen to those epic moans and cat-in-heat high notes. Even couched in images cribbed from the Bronte sisters, what we've got here is a high-minded booty call.

### Depression...

Oh, the long nights, when booze and angst have diffused us to a mere shadow of our former selves. Harvey's vocals are pretty but vacant over the pensive melody of "The Slow Drug." This stage usually involves passing out while clutching an object that belonged to the beloved. The brief, despondent fragment, "No Child of Mine," seems to find Harvey working towards



acceptance, but not happily. The final wave of breakup depression is the cruelest. We've surveyed the alternatives and determined that no one, and we mean *no one*, will ever, and we mean ever, replace what we've lost. The tear-stained, cigarette-burned photos resurface for "It's You," as Harvey sums it up with her usual no-bullshit approach, "When I'm not with you, everything comes apart."

### Acceptance...

As we emerge, wasted and blinking into the daylight again, it still seems impossible to admit that the wailing and waiting is over, and we're really moving on. The mournful tone of the instrumental "The End" suggests the inadequacy of words in the face of this fact. The hushed tone of "The Desperate Kingdom of Love," finds

Harvey's voice gentle and conspiratorial over a faint trickle of guitar, but possessed of a dignity that suggests she's come to accept the futility of her former love.

After the album's stark mood—all violently strummed guitar, shaking tambourine and provocative vocal outbursts, or whispers so hushed they spread heartbreak like the germs passed in a kiss—the boisterous seagulls that open "The Darker Days of Me & Him" let in the salt air and gusting winds of freedom. This sense of escape opens a song that's more weary than celebratory, but Harvey still closes with worn but elegant poise. We have come through, chewed up and changed, but cognizant of new truths. As Harvey puts it, "Promises, promises, I'm feeling burned. You taught me a lesson, I didn't want to learn."

But learn we did. ■



## A GHOST IS GONE

Wilco's Jeff Tweedy Finds a New Drug

**W**e love to cast Jeff Tweedy as our tragic hero. So extraordinarily gifted, so tortured by creative genius, so uncomfortable with sudden success, so vulnerable to addiction and so easily canonized, we can't help but cast him so. Tweedy is an enigma, and because of this his fate is sealed. He's a grown man with the face of a child and the voice of a sage; he's an anxious visionary dressed in blue jeans, wielding a guitar and singing sad songs through quivering lips. His persona is immutable. Or so it seems. And just when we think we know the alt.crooner, he throws us a curveball by experimenting with the one drug sure to ruin everything: happiness.

Maybe it was inevitable.

Maybe Wilco's 2002 album, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, created an abyss Tweedy could do nothing but work to escape. When the band postponed this year's tour supporting the *Yankee* follow-up, *A Ghost Is Born*, to give Tweedy a chance to kick his painkiller addiction and work through his paralyzing anxiety attacks, we were surprised but not shocked. After all, how can one honor an epic, soul-purging masterpiece with intentional personal meaning and eerie 9-11 premonitions relevance if not with a respectable rehab stay?

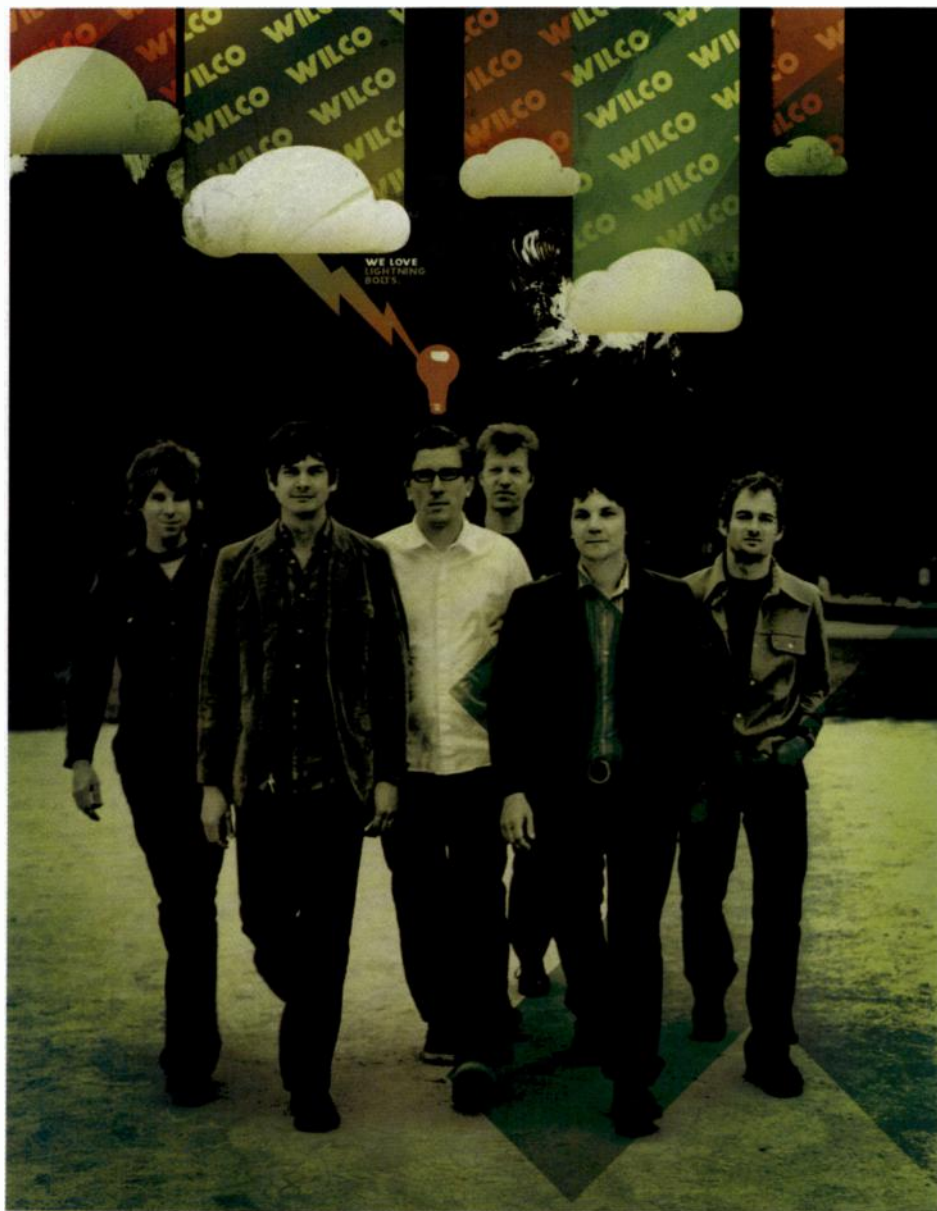
We observed a passing concern when we heard the news, but there was that undeniable *schadenfreude* lurking just below the surface that teaches every fan worth his salt the power of personal demons. Misery harvests creativity—a complete nervous breakdown might inspire another five great Wilco albums.

When he emerged from treatment and embarked on tour, we expected our drama-addicted hero to be edgy and brooding—frozen on stage like a deer in the headlights. What we got instead was the white boy shuffle. When Wilco performed the Beatlesque "Hummingbird" at Radio City Music Hall in October, the quintessential wallflower goofily skipped in place, dancing center stage as if his street-cred depended on it.

Somewhere between breakdown and breakthrough, Mr. Serious went silly. Tweedy chirps a pretty cheerful tune these days. His once devastating, self-deprecating lyrics now narrate love letters to tragic times survived. Sparse arrangements are now liberated by carefree guitar solos, once-muted tones overshadowed by his newfound smile. His vocal chords are made of gold, remedied and thick. He sounds younger and wiser all at once.

Before performing the bittersweet symphony "Jesus Etc." Tweedy explained to the crowd that it was too difficult to play when Wilco's tour came through the Big Apple in September of 2001—a few weeks after the World Trade Center tragedy. Three years later the healed frontman performed the song where "tall buildings shake" and "skyscrapers scrape" to an audience also well on the road to recovery.

When I spoke with Tweedy after a show this fall, I asked him about the inspiration behind the song's uncanny prophesy. He told me that he's always been



fascinated with decaying buildings and with the idea that everything eventually crumbles and fades away. Met with silence, he grabbed my shoulders and joked, "Well, now I've gone and depressed you." When I asked him if it's a bit morbid to fall in love with a depressing song about destruction and loss, he explained, "But ultimately, it's hopeful. Love is all we have. We don't have to rely on the stability of physical objects."

Now Jeff Tweedy is the silver lining guy, a man worried about bumming us out. Maybe he's always been. Maybe we never noticed when he locked eyes with his bandmates on stage and grinned. Maybe we overlooked the spring in his step. Maybe we never asked him until now to contribute to the *Spongebob Squarepants* soundtrack.

It is difficult to listen to *Ghost's* "Handshake Drugs" and not feel the sting of its autobiographical

implications. When Tweedy asks, "What exactly do you want me to be?" after scoring "handshake drugs (he) bought downtown," he's certainly not querying his dealer.

So what exactly do we want him to be? A tragic hero bemused by the spotlight? A musical genius as possessed by demons as he is by talent? A grown man always on the verge of tears? An anxious visionary who mirrors the mood of the albums he creates?

If we're expecting Jeff Tweedy to go the tragic, self-destructive route, the joke's on us. If everything fades like Tweedy suggests, we've got to leave room for exorcisms. Once we give up the ghost, we're left with a guy from Chicago, who loves his wife and two kids and happens to write songs for a living.

Come to think of it, maybe there's nothing more heroic. ■



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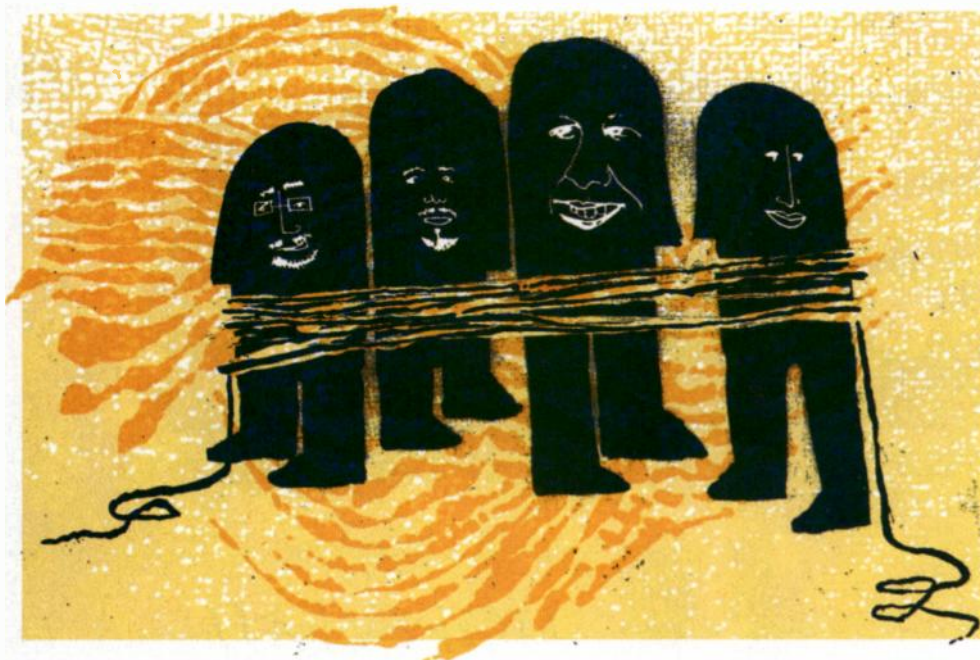
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# DEATH TO THE PIXIES, LONG LIVE THE PIXIES

PULLING OFF THE IMPOSSIBLE REUNION



**S**ure, a lot of us thought about a Pixies reunion in a vague, "wouldn't it be great" sort of way. Nevertheless, the idea of the Pixies getting back together to play such brilliant classics as "Velouria," "Here Comes Your Man" and "Monkey Gone to Heaven" seemed a pipe dream, like the quickly scrawled "Porsche" or "pony" at the bottom of a Christmas list, rather than anything that might happen in reality.

But, in reality, the chances were about as good as getting The Replacements back together. So, who would have thought the fearsome foursome of Frank Black, Kim Deal, David Lovering and Joey Santiago would put aside their personal animosity in order to reform one of the most influential and original bands of a generation?

And, even if it did happen, would we want to watch? Who really wants to see their christened rock gods performing their anthems with gray, or, in Frank's case, no hair?

The whole prospect was just too risky. Deciding to revisit a vintage, alt.rock legend isn't exactly the same as duplicating a "favorite cake recipe or something."

The split between the four rebel eccentrics, who formed the band in Boston in 1986, was anything but civil. Between egomania, struggles with drink and drugs and romantic and creative strains between Deal and Black throughout their seven years as a band, the Pixies' downfall was pretty much inevitable.

When rumors of a reunion started in late 2003, word on the street was that the Pixies were going to come together to play the annual Coachella Valley

Music and Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., the following May. Obsessed music fans already witnessed Iggy Pop reuniting there with his Stooges for the festival's fourth year in 2003, while the always charming Morrissey had resurrected himself there in 1999. So, even for the skeptic, Coachella was positioning itself to be the ultimate in "cool," and its specialty was fast becoming the reunion show.

Would the Pixies follow in Iggy and the Moz's shoes? Well, by April 2004, the band's name was amid a swirl of whispers. Within a month, the rumors proved true as Pixies mania quickly caught fans and the band members themselves off guard. Warm-up dates on the West Coast sold out in minutes. In May, the band played in front of 50,000 fans on the opening night of Coachella. It seemed a good bet that Black and Deal would duke it out before the end of their set, but well into June these iconoclasts who'd sworn never to play together again just 11 years before were having the time of their lives. They were touring Europe, playing to over 18 countries by the end of the summer.

No bitching or moaning? No punch-ups or knock-down drag-outs? What gives?

Basically, the reunion happened so quickly there wasn't time for any brawling. This couldn't possibly be happening. The Pixies played Coachella and now they were touring the world? What was most puzzling was exactly what made this beloved band, a band where each member is pushing 40 (except Deal who's already a graceful 43), want to come out and play its cult classics now.

Pixies loyalists might have wondered if this new, updated edition could compete with memories of the band from back in its '80s and '90s heyday. Witnessing a trainwreck where the chemistry was missing was a traumatic thought. But by the time the band reached Detroit, it had already left a string of sold-out shows stretching from New York to Los Angeles to Vancouver and back to Toronto in its wake, and all this with hardly any negative feedback. The Pixies November dates in Chicago turned into a four-night affair, with 18,000 fans gathering each night at the Aragon Ballroom.

The one thing that must be said is this: Congratulations! Congratulations to the Pixies and everyone surrounding them and this reunion for not fucking it up. The Pixies performance at the Fox Theatre in the Motor City not only brought fans back to a time that comprised innocence and passion, but a unique, emotional might was reclaimed, as well.

The Pixies reclaimed it, too. Whether they care or not, this reunion did something great. It collected two generations of fans to hear an amazingly innovative and unique band play its songs for adoring fans, and their music wasn't tarnished in the process. In fact, it was preserved. The Pixies appeared to genuinely enjoy themselves on stage. A hint of playfulness matched their punk-influenced overtones as they ran through a string of hits such as "Vamos," "Subbacultcha," "Caribou," and "Where Is My Mind?" Swooning was widely in effect when Frank and the gang cranked out a cover of the Jesus and Mary Chain's "Head On"—cranky, direct and delivered wholly as The Pixies.

Lovering is still a machine behind the drum kit. This self-proclaimed "scientific phenomenalist" looked to be having the most fun. Meanwhile, Deal's classic, earthy peculiarity blended nicely with Santiago's signature quirky cool. Black's cranky, nasally vocals were as sharp as ever, especially on "Nimrod's Son," "Broken Face" and "Gouge Away."

The thing about The Pixies' sound is that it's abrasive but ethereal, feminine but masculine. The line between the two may be thin (as Bowie illustrated), but so few bands seem capable of hopscotching back and forth with such rewarding results. The Pixies pulled it off 11 years ago, but, truthfully, it's more impressive that they were able to do it again now.

There's a spirit that won't fade, regardless of what trauma or trends you throw their way. Contradicting Black's "You're so pretty when you're unfaithful to me" line in "Bone Machine," high fidelity is sexy as hell in emotional relationships.

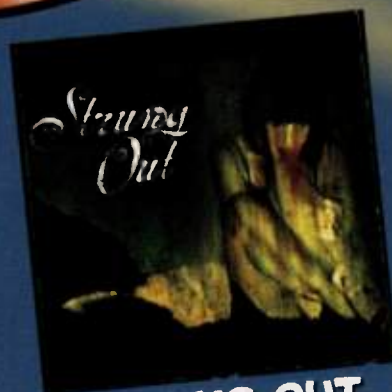
Thank God for The Pixies. Death to the Pixies. ■



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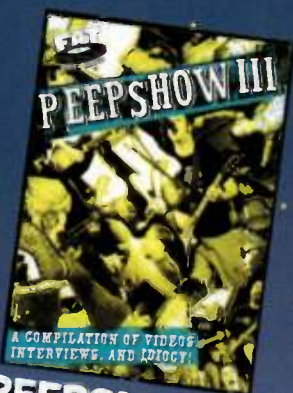
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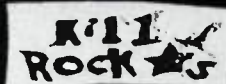
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# MEDICATIONS



## 2 TONE RECORDS 1980



Alongside the black-and-white, "Filth and Fury" headlines of late-'70s England, another duochrome movement was busy sweeping the U.K. One with a decidedly sharper take on style and fashion. Marrying New Orleans style R&B and Jamaican mento, ska was first brought to England via colonial Jamaicans in the 1950s. During the late-'60s, young Jamaican immigrants to Britain often adopted the style of so-called "rude boys." These rude boys, or thugs, joined the London working class youth as dock workers, and it was there that the two cultures mixed and provided a nucleus around which the original, non-racist, skinhead subculture would later coalesce.

During this period in England, where "No Future" seemed an entirely probable forecast, unemployment, teen desperation and racial tension made for a hectic scene. Sensing the need for some unity, in 1979 Jerry Dammers, *The Specials'* mastermind and toothless organist extraordinaire, started the 2 Tone label to release *The Specials'* music to what had been deemed an indifferent market by record companies looking to fill the void left by the quick attack and decay of punk, already viewed as exhausted by 1979.

Legend has it that the label's first single, *The Specials'* "Gangsters," was written on Joe Strummer's guitar. One of many 2 Tone anthems, this first single represented the birth of a band that would bring the British working class' obsession with working class Jamaican music to its logical end. Bookended by toaster and nutter Neville Staple, with shout-outs to *Clash* manager Bernie Rhodes, "Gangsters" firmly secured itself in the British ska hall of fame.

Bankrupted by the recording costs of "Gangsters," *The Specials* tacked an instrumental from drummer John Bradbury onto the B-side of the single, attributing the tune to *The Selecter*. The seven-inch was titled *The Specials AKA Vs The Selecter*, and hand-somely packaged in black and white checkerboard, graced by the presence of a cartoonesque rude boy based on an old photo of Waller Peter Tosh.

The label's second single was provided by seven blokes from North London named after a Prince Buster song. The group, of course, is *Madness*. The Jamaican ska legend also figured in the topic of the only song the group ever released on 2 Tone, "The Prince." However, the track would be the group's first and last single with the label, as it soon moved on to greener, major-label pastures.

Meanwhile, 2 Tone continued to release records by *The Specials* and *The Selecter*, adding to their roster Birmingham's *English Beat*, who, like *Madness* would also move onto bigger labels as *The Beat*, and its offshoots *General Public* and *Fine Young Cannibals*. An early *Elvis Costello* record was even scheduled and then shelved due to contractual problems. When time came for *The Specials* to record their first LP, Jamaica's legendary ska trombonist Rico Rodriguez (Skatalites, Laurel Aitken, Prince Buster) would join the band's ranks, with the young Costello sitting in the producer's chair.

Although plenty of major labels offered to sign the band, few would accommodate Dammers' demand that 2 Tone remain intact. Chrysalis released the band's self-titled full-length, striking a deal with Dammers that allowed him to continue his imprint with the label's backing.

In October 1979, *Madness*, *The Selecter* and *The Specials* teamed up for a 40-city, European tour. Although by all accounts a huge success, the press chose to focus on the instances of violence that marred the tour. Despite most ska band's multiracial make up, Britain's white supremacist National Front party made ska and Oi shows regular recruiting grounds. After *Specials'* guitarist Lynval Golding was assaulted, stabbed and left for dead by bigots, the group responded with the incendiary, anti-racist anthems "Doesn't Make it Alright," "Why?" and "Racist Friend."

As the decade prepared for turnover, 2 Tone signed its only all-female act, *The Bodysnatchers*, and later Rico Rodriguez himself. On the radio, in England at least, 2 Tone acts routinely seized chart positions in the Top 10, while the film *Dance Craze* documented live footage of the label's roster. Despite the enormous following in the U.K. and mainland Europe, popularity of *The Specials* and 2 Tone remained muted in America, due in part to varying tastes, concert violence and Dammers' insistence upon promoting politics and his sense of the label's integrity.

By the mid-'80s, *The Specials* had split into factions. Singers Terry Hall, Neville Staple and Golding left to form *The Fun Boy Three*. Dammers soldiered on, reverting to *The Special AKA*, and releasing an album, *In the Studio*, and the "Free Nelson Mandela" single. Without the original momentum of its flagship bands, 2 Tone rapidly lost steam, while its popularity was soon usurped by new wave acts like *Thompson Twins*, *Talking Heads* and *The Go Go's*. ■

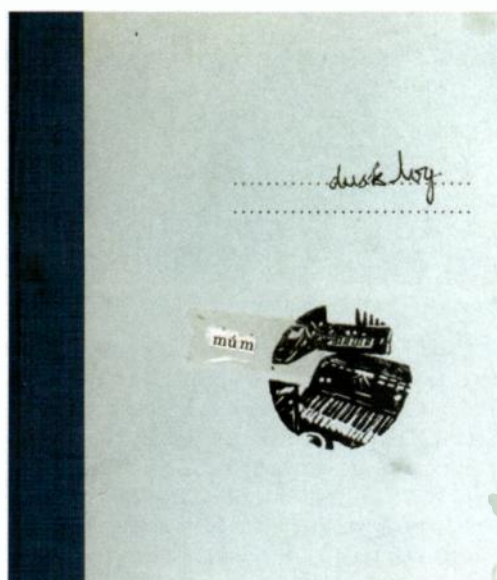




## VARIOUS ARTISTS DFA COMPILATION #2

It'd be reductive—and typical of a music magazine—to bill DFA as the Neptunes of indie hipsters, but let's face it: James Murphy, Jonathan Galkin and Tim Goldsworthy are killin' it. If these were different times, there'd be a campy movie chronicling, and hopefully embellishing, their underdog-to-mogul ascendancy. Bill the Fat Boys as the Rapture and hilarity ensues. Building on their first collection, the production team and label now releases this three-CD compilation including remixes and singles from mainstays like The Juan MacLean, LCD Soundsystem, Black Dice and Rapture as well as newer faces like J.O.Y. and Pixeltan. I was a little disappointed there wasn't more LCD Soundsystem, but with two versions of "Yeah," a dub mix of "On Repeat" and "Beat Connection," there's still enough to go around. Pixeltan's "Get Up/Say What" and the new remix of Rapture's "Sister Savior" are just a few of the reasons this comp is worth checking out. Naturally there's several tracks that quickly blend into background noise, but across the three discs, DFA delivers convincing gospel sure to win a few new converts in time for that great, tinny, PIL-meets-Mo' Wax Armageddon. —Mike McKee

DFARecords.com



## MÚM DUSK LOG EP

This is really just a continuation of the *Summer Make Good* sessions, with songs that cover the same hypnotic, nautical ground of organic, glitch slices threaded over clanking buoys, lapping ocean, boundless grandeur and the occasional click of a needle at the end of an LP. Múm is the quiet, some would say more interesting, cousin of Sigur Rós, sharing a geographical link, far more detailed and playfully electronic, and full of comfy spaces that feel like they've been kneaded out by a cat looking for a place to nap. Kristin Anna Valtysdottir's voice provides a chilling, tiny scratch on "Books of Fog." Only "Kustrin" breaks out a bit from the group's ambient mariner soundscapes, though, with a bigger beat, and a tempo that's more head-nodding than most of its melting, vaporous instrumentals. —Terry Sawyer

Fat-Cat.co.uk

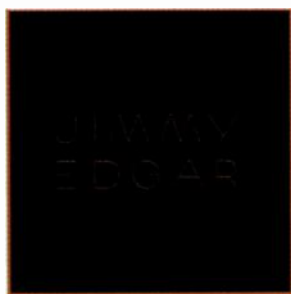


## MARIANNE FAITHFULL BEFORE THE POISON

Marianne Faithfull's CV is impressive, to say the least: collaborator with the stars, onetime Mick Jagger plaything, gravel-throated chanteuse, first person to say "fuck" on-screen. There are 57 years of unadulterated passion, tumultuous life lessons and unforgettable consequences within her pale frame. While 2002's *Kissin' Time* featured collabs with Beck, Billy Corgan, Blur and Eurythmic Dave Stewart, *Before the Poison* targets Faithfull's brooding side, as she teams with Bad Seed Nick Cave, Blur prodigy Damon Albarn, film composer Jon Brion and five tracks with contemporary introspective songstress PJ Harvey. Cave's lush arrangements brilliantly complement Faithfull's deep lyrics and voice, while she adds knowing depth as she expands Harvey's one-minute *Uh Huh Her* ditty "No Child of Mine" to just over six minutes. While the title track's lyrics could easily trade places with Faithfull's epitaph, *Before the Poison* would at least have done her some justice. —James Blackwood

Anti.com

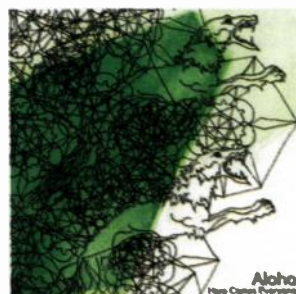




## JIMMY EDGAR BOUNCE, MAKE, MODEL EP

If you can imagine Usher skeletally distilled through Ritchie Hawtin, you'll understand the nekkid neck-rolling appeal of Jimmy Edgar's latest EP. *Bounce, Make, Model* clacks and pings like a dusty Atari set, infectiously practicing a light-touch minimalism where the beats barely make water-strider dents in the tracks. The hip hop influence is subtle to the point of evaporation, but it certainly pulls through in spidery scratches and mix stitching that's alternately more laid back and pimp-rolled than anything churned out by the regular fleet of house music automatons. Joyfully complicated and under-your-skin, *Bounce, Make and Model* is the thinking man's booty jams. —Terry Sawyer

WarpRecords.com



## ALOHA HERE COMES EVERYONE

Aloha's *Here Comes Everyone* is rock 'n roll perfection. It's about time some indie rockers have moved into a new direction and expanded the genre from this moment's most en vogue sounds. Moving beyond garage rock and new-wave clichés, Aloha mixes elegant guitars and prog-rock bass lines with jazz keyboards and vibes. Perhaps this rock quartet listened to a lot of Steely Dan? Such an admission might be considered geeky for anyone other than Karate, but who cares when it results in such sleek, yet almost improvisational, musicianship. True, melodic rock infused with jazz elements almost always reeks of a swelled bloating; however, as handled by Aloha there is beautiful restraint and a simple loveliness for all of its synthesizers and electronic textures. Tracks like "Summer Away" and "Water Your Hands" sound like the best tunes Yes never performed. This is a good thing, because Jon Anderson's whiny falsetto is thankfully replaced by Tony Cavallario's delicate and soft delivery. Imagine a vocal delivery reminiscent of Ben Gibbard over sophisticated melodies and complex time signatures. —Kim Newman

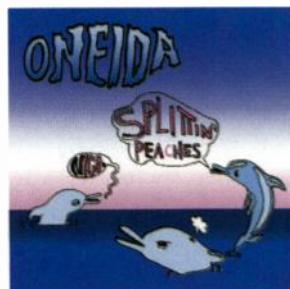
PolyvinylRecords.com



## MISS TK & THE REVENGE XOXO

More or less a new incarnation of Jade Tree's Zero Zero, Miss TK And The Revenge are all about having fun. The band's upbeat, slightly retro, drum machine pop, combined with the rainbows and unicorns that adorn the album's artwork, will have listeners envisioning Miss TK as a child of the '80s, singing along in her bedroom with new wavers Cyndi Lauper and Belinda Carlisle. Miss TK takes a page vocally from both Lauper and Carlisle, while the band keeps *XOXO* devoid of retro clichés by incorporating elements from bands like Enon and Le Tigre, heard in the more guitar-driven tracks such as "Fake Italians Ain't No Stallions," giving the album an updated appeal. —Caroline Borolla

GernBlandsten.com



## ONEIDA NICE/SPLITTIN' PEACHES

Hailing from Brooklyn and employing everything from giant gongs to blurring vintage synths, Oneida excels at the art of repetition. There are two basic Oneida song structures: build a giant riff from the primordial ooze of swirling, psychedelic drones and repeat ad infinitum, or simply create a swirling, psychedelic drone and ride that mother-fucker for all it's worth. Either way, it's enthralling. So, with this in mind, we find *Nice/Splittin' Peaches*. While not as hooky as 2003's *Secret Wars* (if skullfucking, psychotropic sludgery can be called hooky), and not as brutal as 2002's *Each One Teach One*, *Splittin' Peaches* is an EP, and it feels like one. Of the four tracks on this disc, "Summerland" is the best, taking a choppy, on-the-beat guitar riff to its logical conclusion and morphing into a bleating sax, free-jazz workout. Nevertheless, like The Grateful Dead, whom the Brooklyn trio often cover, the fury and majesty of Oneida is best experienced live. —Allan Martin Kemler

AceFu.com



## TWO LONE SWORDSMEN BIG SILVER SHINING MOTOR OF SIN EP

Like opening a time capsule of lo-fi beats and digital effects from the '80s, the heavy spurts of synth and slight beats that open the Two Lone Swordsman's new EP instantly evoke bands like Public Image Ltd. and My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult. Luckily, the British duo doesn't only favor retro, sleek sounds. Founding member Andrew Weatherall previously showcased his penchant for dub as producer of Primal Scream's epic *Screamadelic* album and as a premiere DJ in England, and here reveals it in the sneaky groove of "Feast." A passion for new wave dance music resurfaces in a cover of Gun Club's "Sex Beat," which features aloof vocals over a spy beat. The EP's three remixes don't drastically reinvent the originals, but maintain the album's coolly dark vibe. —Sarah Tomlinson

WarpRecords.com



## JASON ANDERSEN THE WREATH

An ongoing brain freeze involving this artist's name nearly resulted in *Rockpile* crediting him as George from "Seinfeld." Thankfully, there's editing. Speaking of editing, there's maybe a little more of it happening behind the scenes with K Records' Jason Andersen (a.k.a. Wolf Colonel). Whereas his years operating under the enigmatic W.C. tag could be characterized with a loose, oft collage-inspired approach (think Microphones), Andersen's eponymous output seems more focused. The Wreath continues this streamlining trend, highlighting the increasingly direct and emotive songwriting. Casual reference points might be Ida, Microphones or Cat Stevens, but Andersen has more than adequately developed his own self-made sound. Moops not Moors, Jerry. —Mike McKee

KRecs.com



## Camera Obscura

Biggest Bluest Hi-Fi



MERGE

## CAMERA OBSCURA

### BIGGEST BLUEST HI-FI

With production from Belle and Sebastian's Stuart Murdoch, it's no surprise that Camera Obscura's debut (a predecessor to *Underachievers Please Try Harder* recently released stateside), *Biggest Bluest Hi-Fi*, is a fine collection of gentle pop music, softly highlighted by washed-out horns and delicately spun strings. But that assertion is not to dismiss the talent of the members of Camera Obscura: together they create easy melodies and catchy hooks, reminiscent of Belle and Sebastian, Trembling Blue Stars, and, yes, Nick Drake. With lines like, "I'm softer than my face might suggest" and "My teenage years were wasted all on me," main singer Tracyanne Campbell aligns herself with Ida's Elizabeth Mitchell, Sundays' Harriet Wheeler or any other honey-voiced vocalist us ladies have empathized with, singing along alone in our cars or on a late-night F train when we think no one else is listening. —Janelle Smarella

MergeRecords.com

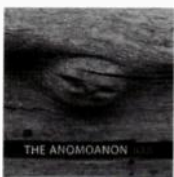


## ANLEUCHTATISTS

### THE SAME AND THE OTHER

The sophomore release from this Asheville, N.C.-based, vocal-less guitar, bass and drums trio will surely delight those who crave prog-rock with bite. Occasionally, these guys sound exactly like Yes. I'm not kidding. Except you don't have to sit through Jon Anderson chirping his god-awful gnome-poetry before you get to the good parts. Mainly, this resemblance is attributable to the crunchy bass of Derek Poteat, who clearly has spent time kneeling at the Chris Squire Altar of Tone and Attack. And like almost everything *Rockpile* sends me, the whole enterprise is filtered through the wheezing, '90s Chicago math-rock machine, this time with the Don Cab and Flying Luttenbachers buttons set to stun. One of the best releases from this "ladies-hate-it" genre I've heard in some time. —Joe Paone

NFLLabel.com



## THE ANOMOANON

### JOJI

Forget secession. In this post-11/2 world, what we really need is a scathing, Red State dream-folk record to bridge the urban/flyover zone gap. On the Anomoanon's latest album, *Joji*, the Oldham brothers and Co. cover familiar territory. When Oldham asks "Am I a sucker for a summertime girl? Are you a seeker for a golden pearl?" on the pop pleasant "Green Sea," it's as if he's stealing musings from Young's play-book. And the layered high harmonies that punctuate the danceable folk of "Mr. Train" ominously evoke a famed Grateful locomotive. But unlike the cocaine-fueled "Casey Jones," this "Train"—like the rest of *Joji*—is high on propane. Classic rock guitars give the album an element that every hemp-wearin', shroom-eatin', miracle needer sorely misses: direction. With tales of the country set to the beat of the city, *Joji* offers Blue Staters an attractive glimpse into Southern living in a balanced dose they can swallow. —Molly Knight

TemporaryResidence.com



## THE ATARI STAR

### PRAYER + PRETEND

What does Atari Star sound like? Well, suffice it to say Shellac figures heavily into the band's roots and influences, so they have the mathy, brooding, texture thing covered. But then there's "Asphalt Everest," which betrays a fondness for Brian Eno's late-'70s and early '80s ambient work. So, it's not so easy to write them off as just a third-generation copy of the lords of tinny guitars and boxy drums. Ultimately, *Prayer + Pretend* offers just enough of a blend of post-hardcore and electronic music flecked with bits of jazz and singer-songwriter earnestness to create an engaging record that refuses to reveal all its charms on the first listen. —Allan Martin Kemler

JohannsFace.com



## BIG BUSINESS

### HEAD FOR THE SHALLOW

If small upstarts like Jucifer, Lightning Bolt and Ruins hadn't analyzed drum-and-bass noise-rock's commercial viability, Big Business might not have encroached on their turf. Nevertheless, ex-Murder City Devil drummer Coady Willis and ex-Karp bassist Jared Warren have resurfaced with the sludgy bastard child of Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman and the Melvins' Buzz Osborne amidst Warren's sporadic Lemmyisms. The duo surfs a fuzzy tide of low-end distortion and cymbal crashes on *Head for the Shallow*, which will appeal to Sunn 0))) fans as much as Jucifer's. Expect Big Business's product to swell steadily, as it begins to drive its market even further into the red. —Kory Grow

HydraHead.com

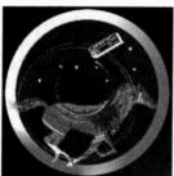


## BOOKS ON TAPE

### THE BUSINESS END

Can something be both frightening and slightly zany too? Books On Tape is Todd Drootin, who makes it known that he will not use a computer in his creations, relying solely on samplers, synths, guitar pedals and other doo-dads that apparently inch him right up to the brink of acceptable technology. Frankly, I don't see the logic there, or the aural advantage, but it's hard not to take a shining to Drootin's accessible cacophony laced with a campy bedlam you might expect more from someone like Topsy or Chris Joss. But there's also a foreboding edge, a gothic, old-movie feel that skulks in the periphery. As with most experimental electronic music, it's a shame that the beat usually gets mangled just as you had dug to the bottom of the scraps and started to nod along. —Terry Sawyer

GreydayProductions.com



## CARO

### MY LITTLE PONY

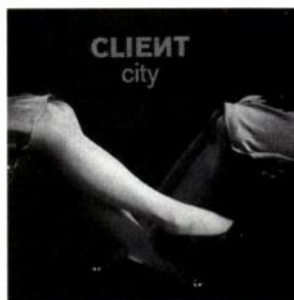
Indie electro innovator, Caro (a.k.a. Randy Jones) developed a passion for techno in his native Madison, Wis., which meant he caught glimpses of the dance-music revolution in larger cities, but had to improvise his own sounds and influences. Fast forward several years and used synths later, and Jones now pushes the dance envelope as the co-founder of Orac Records, on which he has released several dance singles. The latest of which, *My Little Pony*, pulses with dialed-down vocals served up over a clip-clopping beat and flavored with flare-ups of electro intrigue, which get manipulated by guest DJs on three remixes. Sparse but hooky, Caro makes dance music for those who prefer a subtle groove. —Sarah Tomlinson

Orac.vu





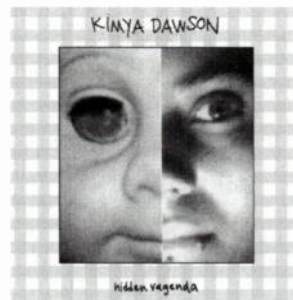
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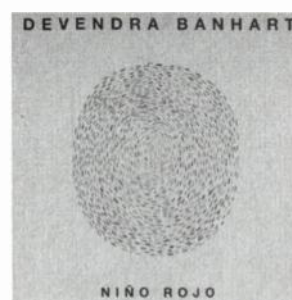
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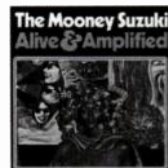
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# DOGS DIE IN HOT CARS

Please Describe Yourself



## DOGS DIE IN HOT CARS PLEASE DESCRIBE YOURSELF

There's always a subtle charm to the wiry, acne-scarred kids picked last for teams. Not that there's any lack of poetry to the first stringers and their rippling synergy of tendon, muscle, prowess and drive, but the resourcefulness and creative twists of the bench warmers always elicits special rewards. With indie music having effectively mined first-string greats like Gang of Four, The Clash, Joy Division and New Order, it only makes sense that the ongoing revival should now start digging towards groups like XTC, Split Enz and Squeeze. *Please Describe Yourself* channels Andy Partridge and Dexy's Kevin Rowland with at least as much success as other contemporary groups have had pirating their own muses. After a bold start with "I Love You Cause I Have To," Dogs Die in Hot Cars soon erects its best pop moments with back to back anthems, "Apples & Oranges," "Godhopping" and "Lounge," covering that near New Romantic territory—beyond The Jam, just shy of Talking Heads. It should be interesting to see if that which was radio friendly the first time around will enjoy the same reception given its current, shiny redux. Calculated? Derivative? Certainly, but *Please Describe* is a record that so far seems to only win me over more with every listen. And that's with six senses working over time. —Mike McKee

V2Records.com



## CONVERGE YOU FAIL ME

*You Fail Me* stands as testament to the lengths to which the Boston-based Converge has gone to ensure its survival. Demonstrating that it hasn't slowed or aged a bit, Converge continues to maneuver between pointless aggression and semi-creative intellect with raw self-destructive experimentalism, inventive time signatures and a rare ability to turn the basic formulation of metalcore into a controlled chaos of precise guitar riffage and crafted song structure. Jacob Bannon's throat-ripping vocals, along with the fiery adrenaline of rhythmic angst, relentlessly grab at the collar and shake you mercilessly until your ears bleed. That said, *You Fail Me* succeeds big time. —Don Sill

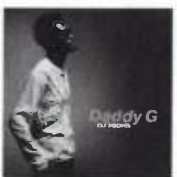
Epitaph.com



## THE CRIBS THE CRIBS

Three brothers from the U.K. who get along well enough to play in a band together? Blood is thicker than water, and probably ale, on the self-titled debut from The Cribs. Singer Ryan Jarman exercises a flagrant disregard for effort, sounding at times as if he might be checking his watch when the chorus comes around. On most of these tracks, The Cribs are reminiscent of Supergrass on its first outing, shelling out messy guitar licks and making like they're all hopped up on pills. The pills may fog their judgment as far as album length goes, though. Head-spinning tempo changes and handclaps on "Baby Don't Sweat" push the track into competition for "This Year's Best But Slop-py Rock Song." Sassy vocals from the corner of their dad's well-kept garage; this is clearly drinking music. —Dominic Umile

Wichita-Recordings.com



## DADDY G DJ-KICKS

The *DJ Kicks* series continues with its unspotted reputation for mixes readymade for gluttonous consumption. With all the plush disorientation of your all-time favorite drug experience, Daddy G of Massive Attack drops a mix full of grooves as thick and taut as pythons, with fat bass lines so ripe they sound ready to split open and spill. Foxy Brown, the sound of Tricky's unreleased remixes, The Meters and an adrenaline-fueled take on Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady" all touch down and thread together by virtue of Daddy G's flawless sense of atmosphere and ability to make disparate beats get down each other's pants. True, there are several Massive Attack songs, which smacks of shameless self-promotion on a mix that's supposed to be a collection of favorites, but when you're hot, you're hot. So, why not? —Terry Sawyer

K7.com



## DJ DNA IMPRESSIONISM

DJ DNA's album could stand a deeper production aesthetic. It takes awhile to get over the muffle of the sounds, and some songs whose beat stitching sounds done with Holly Hobby yarn. But that's just the surface skin. "Daily Grind" recalls the best of DJ Shadow—a guitar lick, a skidding siren and a bottomless breakbeat all come together for a sound that's huge enough to drive a rig through. Similarly, "Electrocution Behind a Feeling" drops a bass line that travels through the ambient darkness like a swallowed lozenge, a claustrophobic song uneasy with the beat, which periodically emerges like the head of a drowning victim. DJ DNA works best under the cover of sonic night, like Alias, but is less averse to songs that actually spool out with a structure, repeated refrains and samples designed purely for speaker blowout. —Terry Sawyer

BombHipHop.com



## DAVID-IVAR HERMAN DÜNE YA-YA

The person depicted on the cover of this record looks like a) all of my uncles, b) every dude I ever bought shrooms off at a Grateful Dead concert or c) he's trying too hard for authenticity? I have a feeling, judging by the music on this disc, that the truth of the matter is closest to answer b. Sure, the guy's a little unhinged and looks a little dirty. And maybe he does have the blackest fingernails you've ever seen, and a bit of a bad habit concerning the words "brah" and "fer sure." The point is, this guy's shrooms are the best, and he'll hang out with you for a while until you start to get off, and then you can give him the money. And besides, while you're waiting, he's gonna play a couple of songs on his ukulele, and it'll be cool. And then, while he's singing about couch surfing or dumpster diving, you start seeing the most incredible trails, and then you wake up the next day with no shirt on and your feet are all bloody and there's some strange melody in your head. It's like that. —Allan Martin Kemler

MidHeaven.com



## GIANT DRAG LEMONA

The only drag here is that *Lemona* isn't longer. It's an EP and singer-guitarist Annie Hardy carefully cribs Belinda Butcher's stoned and jaded persona with great care, not excluding the My Bloody Valentine wall of noise ingredients, either. Giant Drag's other half is Micah Calabrese, calculating synth and drum arrangements in such a way that only a thorough investigation would reveal that this is only two people, not four or five. Hardy squeezes spaced melodies and sometimes rather coarse language into this highly demanded EP, which had to be re-released by Wichita after Leftwing Recordings couldn't keep California's shelves stocked with it over the summer. —Dominic Umile

Wichita-Recordings.com



"London calling, speak the slang now, boys say what, girls say what-what." It's not Tennyson, it's not even KRS-One, but, much like M.I.A.'s music, it's a commanding hook, delivered on stage or on wax. Born Maya Arul, the Sri Lanka-London transplanted M.I.A. is the product of a globetrotting childhood, a history reflected clearly in her music's international palette. And while she drops a dizzying amount of slang on the catchy, grime/garage-influenced "Galang," her other songs, such as the dancehall banger "Sunshowers," include messages at least as deep as the track's clipping bass. "London calling?" Indeed. M.I.A.'s one of the first artists to pepper a dancefloor anthem with politics so convincingly since The Clash. Makes sense considering Arul's refugee status—her family fled during the Sri Lankan civil war where her father was a member of the Asian country's guerrilla Liberation Tigers. Her forthcoming full-length is due out in February, and it'll be interesting to see how tight Arul can keep things should she venture towards more down-tempo songs. Some expect a slightly less VH-1Nelly Furtado. Arul, for one, seems bent on avoiding the drift towards what she calls "coffee table music." In most interviews (maybe you caught her in *Fader?*), M.I.A. is quick to drop knowledge, channeling her years of poverty, London housing projects and racial prejudice into a down-to-earth righteousness infused in her toasting style delivery and lyrics. Off stage, she's a bit of a documentarian as well, with footage completed towards oversexed electronic artist Peaches and a scathing depiction of her war-torn homeland. Each of the four mixes of "Galang" on this 12" exude a slightly varied charm, and come highly recommended. —Mike KcKee

XLRecordings.com



**THIS MOMENT IN  
BLACK HISTORY/  
FATAL FLYING  
GUILLOTEENS  
SPLIT 12"**

Make sure you wear an extra pair of socks while listening to this bristling, 15-minute hunk of garage punk, because your first set will most certainly get rocked off. Furthermore, if you've been lying in a gutter all night looking for a fix of punishing rock 'n', roll with the scent of Hot Snakes and the Jesus Lizard wafting off it, stick this EP in your vein and lie back: We'll let you have this one for free, but remember where it came from. Sure, each band doesn't do much to distinguish itself from track to track, but by the time you think to take issue with it, you have to press play again, since it's ended. Resistance is futile. —Austin Ray

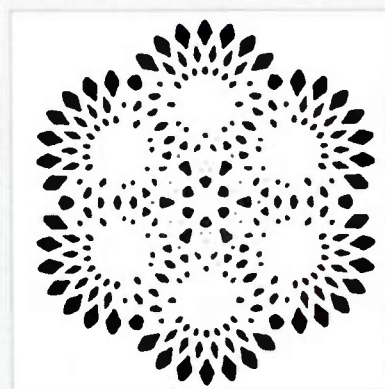
GoldStandardLabs.com



**AN ALBATROSS/  
XBXR  
SPLIT 7"**

Labeling people is way overrated. Liberal, conservative, it's all way too limiting. I can think of only one classification that I don't mind being associated with, one that truly encompasses who I am as a human being. That, of course, is the Lazer Viking. Now, there's an ethos I can hang my hat on. Since forming in 2001, An Albatross has brought its futuristic, Nordic antics to the clamoring masses, in all of its vaudevillian, orgasm-staging glory. The band's latest split with Oakland noisemakers XBXR sees them offering "I Will Swim Into the Lazer Eye," a more sonically diverse offering, managing to almost branch out into real-song territory (gasp!) while still delivering the familiar Albatross freakout. Lead singer Edward Gieda III's piercing vocals are more subdued this time around, having recorded his vocals through what sounds like a space gun rather than a microphone. XBXR's contributions, which can hardly be considered songs per se, can only be described as sounding like a herd of middle-school brats trying to make as much noise as possible in the band room. Hey man, whatever you're into. —Matthew Siblo

GoldStandardLabs.com



**LEMON JELLY  
STAY WITH YOU 12"**

After a long and dormant year, the boys of Lemon Jelly resurface with their first hit since 2003's "Nice Weather for Ducks." The single, "Stay With You," is certainly not enough to rekindle your year's lost romance with house music, but it will give you just enough hypno-beats to sedate yourself in the meantime. Referencing the 1975 song, "I Wanna Stay With You," by Glasgow soft-rock folk duo Gallagher & Lyle, the single is a quirky take on what could easily become a monotonous, ball-bearing hum that slithers around the dance floor and crawls up the legs of the crowd. "Stay With You" will join the rest on *LJ 64-95*, an album so-named because it showcases the boys sampling songs from every year between 1964 and 1995. Judging from the 1975 slot, it is difficult to tell if the long journey between the respective years will be a nostalgic yearbook or an endless wander in the wrong club after someone slipped something in your drink. —Abigail Bruley

XLRecordings.com





## MOS DEF THE NEW DANGER

With a debut as impressive and universally embraced as 1999's *Black on Both Sides*, Mighty Mos has big shoes to fill here. It's easy to nitpick on its failures, such as the weak riff on Jay-Z's "The Takeover" (titled, semi-offensively, "The Rape Over") that bores itself into the pavement with a monotonous taxonomy of outside influences diluting the hip hop genre. More frustrating are the blasting guitars in "Freaky Black Greetings" and "Zimzallabim"—care of the frequently namechecked backing players Black Jack Johnson—who sound like a rap-rock cash-in. When Mos quits picking at the scabs of Fishbone, there are the redemptive moments. The soulful strains of the nine-minute "Modern Marvel," the beat-driven blues jam "Blue Black Jack" and the fantastic centerpiece "Bedstuy Parade & Funeral March" harnesses a jazz backing and speak-sing slam poetry to strong effect. In short: burn it, don't buy it. —John Vertese

Geffen.com



## THE GOLDEN VIRGINS SONGS OF PRAISE

The Golden Virgins' debut album leaps all over the place, from the light and airy, minute-long opening track, "Waltz of Praise," to the melancholy, country-tinged "Shadows of Your Love," to the upbeat and synthy power pop of the album's most immediately accessible, Cars-influenced track, "I Am a Camera." The song, which features strong sexual undertones, showcases a band completely solid in its instrumentation. The track's lyrics, such as, "Only you can make my shutter click, click, click," however, leave a little more to be desired. "The Thought of Her" is another one of the album's standout pop diversions, with soaring guitar riffs and chug along bass lines, and once again shows off lead vocalist Lucas Renney as a hopeless romantic. Repeated listens find *Songs of Praise* a mixed bag of treats, but the highlights are worth taking the time to seek out. —Caroline Borolla

XIRecordings.com



## THE GUNSHY NO MAN'S BLUES

Gunshy main man Matt Arbogast obviously takes Tom Waits as some kind of surrogate father figure, because there is minimal ground between their vocal stylings. However, much is to be said for Arbogast's relentless explorations of disappointment. He counters life's lousily dealt hand with an extended middle finger, his weathered guitar and a sharp back-up band. When the songs on *No Man's Blues* aren't just him, they're a big, dramatic production awash with descending chords and loads of cymbals. Arbogast discusses his impending death on nearly every song, though. Someone talk this guy back off the ledge, he's got a lot to offer. —Dominic Umile

LatestFlame.com



## HUMAN TELEVISION ALL SONGS WRITTEN BY

Although this four-piece hails from Gainesville, Fla., and formed only a few years ago, it's easy to see them bundled up for some rainy autumn in the U.K. or the Pacific Northwest where they opened on some could-be Superchunk/Velocity Girl/Softies tour that never happened. Produced Chris Zane (Calla, Les Savy Fav), *All Songs Written By* is near perfectly calibrated, jangly indie pop. While lacking in the transcendent grand scope of a contemporary classic machine like The Shins, Human Television does a great job setting the mood and then delivering hook-filled, pleasant tunes begging for videos shot on 8mm, where you can picture the band huddling into a woody station wagon and driving through some suburban or rural road, gazing out of their passenger windows, dreamy and disaffected with thoughts of Vaselines, Field Mice and Flatmates dancing in their heads. When your high-strung roommate forbids you to play that Boyracer or Portastatic record one more time, reach for Human Television. —Mike McKee

GiganticMusic.com



## ISIS PANOPTICON

Terrific easy listening for the aging hardcore kid. Named after a prison with constant surveillance that watches its prisoners at all times, *Panopticon* touches on angst and rage with growling vocals, but mostly this album builds and breaks with a wise rock soundscape that captures a tone and mood that is both somber and uplifting. Matt Bayles' (Minus the Bear) production helps give Isis' music a very consistent and seamless dynamic as song after song is lengthy, interesting and multidimensional. Although each intricate track easily surpasses the six-minute mark, Isis still captivate the ears with smart progression and a hypnotic ambience. In short, this is a very challenging record and Isis' best yet. —Don Sill

lpecac.com



## KUTMASTA KURT REDNECK GAMES

Fresh off his latest collaboration with Kool Keith, California DJ/producer Kutmasta Kurt gets the remix, rarities and unreleased track treatment, but not without an interesting backstory. Originally titled *Redneck Olympics*, the compilation somehow drew the attention of the United States Olympic Committee, which pursued a cease and desist order. Back on earth, *Redneck Games* features usual underground hip hop comp suspects like Del tha Funky Homosapien, Planet Asia, Mr. Lif and Mos Def plus Kool Keith, Beastie Boys, Parrish Smith of EPMD and an entirely obtrusive yet entirely necessary (it's his biggest hit) remix of Linkin Park's ubiquitous 2002 mega-hit "In The End." Despite the controversy over its title, it's a rather nondescript collection of tracks primarily, but not entirely, in the vein of scratch-heavy, golden-era hip hop. —Jesse Serwer

Waxploitaton.com



## LAZARUS LIKE TREES WE GROW UP TO BE SATELLITES (THE BACKWARDS AMERICA)

If ever there were an album during this fall season that underscores the increasingly dramatic battleground between the elements—the gray windy days versus the brisk sunny ones—it's the new Lazarus record. As William Trevor Montgomery followed his leave from Tarentel with an album of his own last year, he again wanders wearily through his insides with an acoustic guitar and a sullen disposition. Most of the memorable melodies on *Like Trees* are picked out with miserable precision while the faltering vocals, even though tastefully double-tracked and accompanied by bandmate Wendy Allen on occasion, sound as if he's calling from someone's funeral. The pace picks up sometimes with glowing production values, but Montgomery is still rained-on and puddle-bound, watching the speeding school bus blow by his stop yet again. —Dominic Umile

TemporaryResidence.com



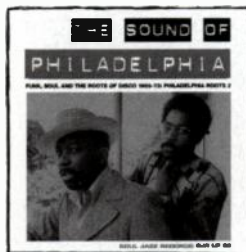
## CRIPPLED PILGRIMS DOWN HERE: COLLECTED RECORDINGS (1983-1985)



It would be easy to write off Washington, D.C.'s contributions to independent music as beginning and ending with Dischord Records, but you'd be mistaken. Back in 1984 and '85, amidst Rites of Spring, Marginal Man and Government Issue, the Crippled Pilgrims also dwelled, earning a slot on Fountain of Youth Records' *Bouncing Babies* comp with Void, Scream and Black Market Baby. Featuring Scott Wingo, formerly of D.C.'s Trenchmouth, on lead guitar and Mitch Parker, from G.I., on bass, the Pilgrims spun the sort of baroque, jangly, garage-punk college-rock that only existed in the '80s. Imagine a blend of Television, Mission of Burma, Meat Puppets, The Chameleons and The Feelies, and you'll have some idea of what this guitar-solo-friendly band does. While drummer problems, a mildly uncool reputation and internal confusion wracked the band, the Pilgrims did manage to release two excellent neo-psychedelic punk records before disbanding, and in some small way they serve as a sort of missing link between Minor Threat and Gray Matter. Pas mal. Now about that name. —Allan Martin Kemler

Parasol.com

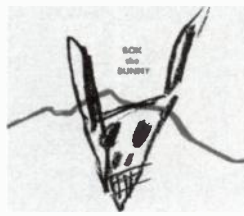
## THE SOUND OF PHILADELPHIA PHILADELPHIA ROOTS VOL.2



From the most coveted funk, soul and R&B vaults of Soul Jazz Records comes *Philadelphia Roots Vol. 2*, an impeccable compilation of the great Philadelphia soul sound from the '60s and early '70s, tracing the momentous hybrid period where lustrous soul progressed into disco funk. The collection of absolutely essential golden classics naturally includes luminaries like Gamble and Huff, coupled alongside names like Vince Montana, MFSB, Ronnie Baker and Thom Bell with interviews and photos documenting every fat cat in the scene. Also included with the classic hits are ultra-rare recordings like early tracks from MFSB and the Salsoul Orchestra under their initial aliases of Promised Land and The Family. There's also a few almost-hits from Vince Montana, Howard Tate and the Panic Buttons. Along the way, driven foot-stompers slowly give way to sweeping, string-laden orchestrals in the march from Soul Survivors to The O'Jays. *Philadelphia Roots Vol. 2* is a flawless sequel to the first Roots album, and quite possibly one of the most criminally smooth and satisfying compilations to be released this year. —Mike McKee  
SoulJazzRecords.co.uk

## ■ REDUX

## THE BUNNY BRAINS BOX THE BUNNY

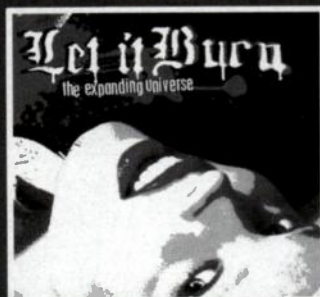


Back in the late-'80s and early '90s, before independent rock 'n roll became overwhelmed by derivative and fashionable prerequisites, ruggedly individualistic bands like the Bunny Brains existed.

Freaky, drug-addled, outsider music was everywhere back then—King Missile, Butthole Surfers, Bongwater, Pussy Galore. Owing to the fact that most of those bands released material via small batches of vinyl seven-inches, a lot of it is extremely rare or all together impossible to find. Enter Narnack Records. Comprising numerous vinyl-only seven and 10" releases and one DVD, *Box the Bunny* is every bit the howling, shambolic, depraved mess of sprawling, psychedelic art-punk noise that the Bunny Brains was in its heyday. How to describe the exquisite joy of hearing Connecticut's finest sons lurch, plod and stumble through their terrifying canon of dain-bramaged, room-clearing rock? Best to check it out for yourself. —Allan Martin Kemler

NarnackRecords.com

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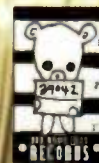
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"Mardo: Louder, Faster, Harder..." Judith Oden, LA Splash Magazine

"...this trio revives rock ..." Meijin Bruttomesso, Muzik Reviewz.com

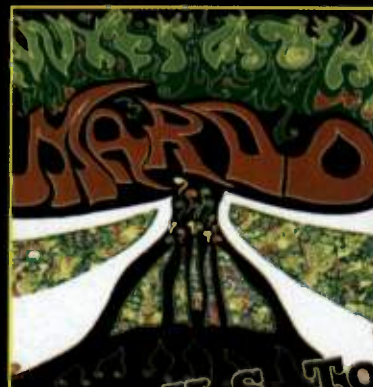
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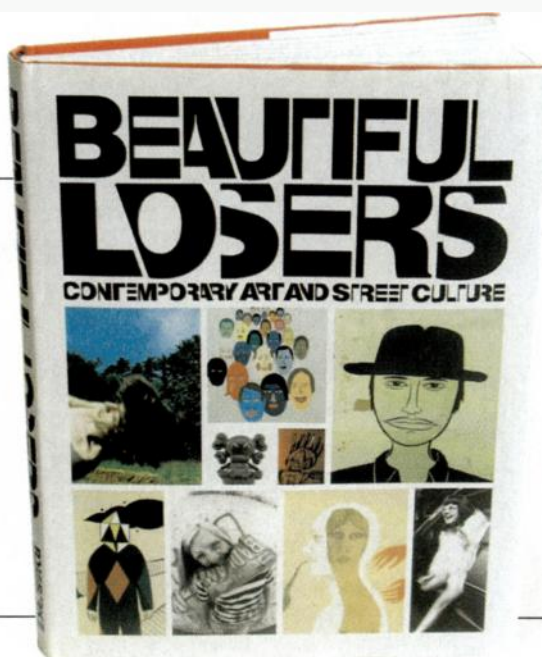
2004 www.dawnbreaker.com



## BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

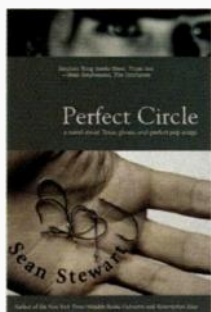
### CONTEMPORARY ART AND STREET CULTURE

An eclectic group of artists involved in videos, photography, film, commercial design and painting, the Beautiful Losers extend an influence and effect deep into select pockets of pop culture. Christian Strike, an organizer of the group's recent touring collection, called them "The most important artists working in America right now. Period." While it's impossible to peg an entire group of people in a blanket description, almost all of them come from either graffiti, skateboarding or punk rock culture. All three are traditionally fuck all, do-it-yourself activities where the participants re-imagine the world by their own design. There's plenty of people who see the world as a static object, you know, "the normals," who vehem-



mentally object to the reappropriation of their world by skateboarders and artists. Only, now we see pop culture embracing and marketing these historically shunned activities, as well as the peripheral art and culture they've generated throughout the last decade or two. In what seems a brilliant response to all this, the Beautiful Losers traveling art show toured America this year, highlighting the work of luminaries like Mark Gonzales, Barry McGee, Ed Templeton, Cynthia Connolly and ESPO. Much of the work on exhibition is documented in this beautiful, plus-250-page coffee-table-style book, justifying Strike's rather bold claim. —Jay Yarow

## PERFECT CIRCLE BY SEAN STEWART



William "Dead" Kennedy is as much of an exile as the dead who won't leave him be. While DK tries hard not to be the unpurposed adult with a messy apartment that everyone believes him to be, his 12-year-old daughter Megan is growing up from a distance and his ex-wife Jose has decided to move on without him. Still, he sees ghosts and ghost roads, alleyways dissolved of color just like those who live there. "Sometimes a guy is haunted for a real good reason," says Kennedy. Right. Strap-hangers on the local bus. That crabby, middle-aged waiter at the Thai place. They remain for a reason, be it to

remind, avenge or awaken. And Kennedy really wants to get it right this time. Just which is the biggest Texas marker in this cool, redemptive tale is fun to divine: a sister named Fonteyne or her food court meet-up with Richard Linklater. *Perfect Circle* is thoughtful and southern gothic in a Gun Club way. —Jennifer Przybylski LCRW.net

## DOs AND DONTs

### 10 YEARS OF VICE MAGAZINE'S STREET FASHION CRITIQUES



How do you review a decade's worth of blisteringly funny, conscienceless ego smashing that is half pontificating, half fart joke and half simple, comic genius? How do you respond to three halves? If you were *Vice*, maybe you'd try, "Learn to count, fag." But, then, the bravado-driven publication is never as easily distilled to the unidimensional shock vehicle as its detractors sometimes suggest. At turns laugh-out-loud hilarious, callous and pretentious, every page of *Dos and Donts* has at least one or two moments worth wishing you came up with first. Few publications can boast so consistent a tone

and voice, and, for better or worse, these ostensible "fashion critiques" put *Vice* on the map long before its all-out, branding explosion. While Gavin McInnes and company seem to reserve a special, refined hatred for the dregs of their hometown, Montreal, their acerbic observations target sweat pants, sock-and-sandal combos, plaid matchers, performance artists, fashion models, the homeless, anarchists, business men, children, fannies, jocks, foreigners, dreadlocks, hippies, leg warmers and, naturally, headbands, chain mail armor, Inuits and people who just don't know how to puke properly. Picking it up just for a second can quickly turn into an easy way to waste your whole day before you know it. —Mike McKee

TWBookmark.com

## UNKEMPT BY COURTNEY ELDRIDGE



*Unkempt* is a rather startling, baring debut. Rarely do you see what you think is inside someone else's head: The watery dissolve of daily lists and friends with irrational, yet riotous, but also obstructive, fears (like sharks in public swimming pools). Most appealing is the ease in which it's delivered. The whole is conversational, but told exceptionally well: This happened and then this happened. That sort of ease belies a hold that is an unerring measure of frailty, reconnection and choice.

Courtney Eldridge has a thing about first sentences and her stories arise from some unlikely places—a photo of an adult film star who has just finished with a couple hundred men, for instance. Eldridge instead opens door number two, imagining her later with a mild, bowler boyfriend, an unsatisfying real estate job and some grafting disassociation. And again, it follows. If it suddenly turned out OK, you wouldn't trust it. Same goes for the ignobling life of retail within a joke. *Unkempt* splits it all so honestly, you never doubt the life inside. —Jennifer Przybylski

HarcourtBooks.com

## ESCAPE VELOCITY BY DAVID BRESKIN

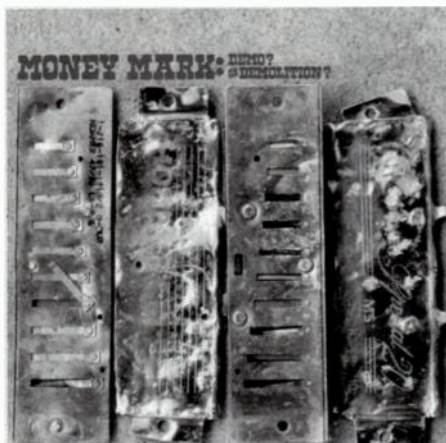


Let me start off by saying that when I think of coffee shop, Beat-style poetry, I can't help but think of cappuccino clichés and Mike Myers in *So I Married an Axe Murderer* ("Wo-man! Whoa, Man!... She took my dog and my cat!"). David Breskin, on the other hand, not only resonates with feeling and keen observation, but his background in the artistic community gives his writing a feeling of authenticity. Originally an investigative journalist, Breskin made his way into the film and music scene through interviewing directors (*Inner Views: Filmmakers in Conversation, 1997*) and producing

albums (Bill Frisell, Bobby Previte, John Zorn). His writing incorporates all of these different ventures with intelligence and sentiment. So cast aside the berets and Djarums. —John Vogel

SoftSkull.com





## MONEY MARK DEMO OR DEMOLITION?

Back in 1992, Mark Ramos-Nishita nearly stole the show on the Beastie Boys' career-reviving magnum opus, *Check Your Head*. In addition to his fuzzy Hammond hooks on tracks like "Funky Boss" and "Live at PJs," he contributed a slice of subtle genius in the understated hum-drum anthem "Mark on the Bus." Three solo albums later, his hookup with up-and-coming Chicago label Chocolate Industries is considerably less impressive. Nishita seems more interested in getting sensitive on some folky pop than dropping his patented fuzz-funk; odd, since Chocolate Industries is more of a hip hop-oriented label than his previous outlets. "Three O'Clock," meanwhile is at best a bedroom production Cody Chestnutt, or at worst lame-duck blues rock from a college open mic session. —Jesse Serwer

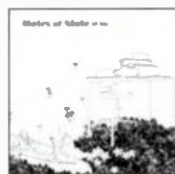
ChocolateIndustries.com



## TH' LEGENDARY SHACK SHAKERS BELIEVE

Not exactly on par with The Cramps' *Songs the Lord Taught Us* (but close enough to the spectral fire), you can imagine the bedeviled twitching and falling and frenzied gyrating in the dim midway light *Believe* might engender. These songs could do that. They have the power. Th' Legendary Shack Shakers are from Nashville. *Believe* is the Shakers' second full-length and the instrumental credits are as straightfaced as you please: dog-house bass, fiddle, squeezebox and six-string among them. No willing suspension of disbelief guardrail here. Th' Legendary Shack Shakers are living it, rapping you upside the head with holies like the Gun Club, Hank Williams III and, yes, The Cramps. Singer Col. J.D. Wilkes is hopping trains and cussin' in tongues. *Believe* is a gothic, pulpy switchback where punk, roots-blues and rock 'n roll grace is the able tonic. —Jennifer Przybylski

YepRoc.com



## MATES OF STATE ALL DAY

The cutest indie rock couple in San Francisco has essentially one trick, and it's starting to wear thin. On its *All Day* EP, Mates of State still come off as charming and lively, but it becomes easy to predict each all-too-familiar organ line, drum fill and harmonized "Woah-oh-woah" between hubby-and-wife team Kori Gardner and Jason Hammil. The one exception, a lovely piano ballad called "Down and Anchor," expertly develops two simple ideas first explored on a 2003 split seven-inch with Dear Nora: The Mates can rock downtempo tunes just as convincingly as sunny, twee pop, and Hammil is fully capable of singing lead. —John Vettese

Polyvinyl.com



## MEDICATIONS MEDICATIONS

Medications is the latest project of guitarist and vocalist Devin Ocampo from Faraquet and Smart Went Crazy. Consequently, Medications sounds remarkably similar to those stellar bands from the not-so-distant past. Intense, complex drumming is prominent throughout this new, self-titled EP, giving listeners a chance to truly appreciate Becker's powerful chops. "Safe And Sorry," one of the EP's finest moments, showcases the group's intricate guitar lines, acrobatic bass lines and Ocampo's instantly recognizable, soaring vocals. The five songs featured here show the members of Medications continuing to create music in a mixture of tempos and styles that will no doubt amaze listeners. The main difference, however, between past efforts and this debut is how polished and refined the group's sound is, making all of the tracks immediately accessible and memorable, and leaving listeners with high hopes for future recordings. —Caroline Borolla

Dischord.com



## THE MINUS 5 AT THE ORGAN EP

One person steering a malleable, eclectic ensemble over the course of several albums is an interesting proposition. And it helps when the lead men arrive with pockets full. Drummer Anton Fier went from being the stealth element in the perfect Crazy Rhythms to a Pere Ubu recruit before assembling The Golden Palominos. Likewise Scott McCaughey brings an approved resume (Young Fresh Fellows, REM, Tuatara) and considerable influences (Ray Davies, The Beatles, Jonathan Richman) to the fore with his Minus 5 collective. It follows that if you front an influential pop-rock band that is both clever and tight, people will usually take your call (including Paul Westerberg, Robert Pollard, Ken Stringfellow and Peter Buck). *At the Organ* revisits the previous Wilco collaboration, *Down With Wilco*, adding alternate versions to some new material. Whereas the Beach Boys and *Summerteeth* floated blithely on the first run, here the organ is more rollicking, and so is the solid lyrical stance (yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah). —Jennifer Przybylski

YepRoc.com



## THE POISON ARROWS TRAILER PARK EP

In films and literature, trailer parks stereotypically conjure up thoughts of poverty and entrapping isolation. The Poison Arrow's debut EP *Trailer Park* actually manages to live up to at least that latter conceit—a sense of being stuck in a black noisy void via ear-piercingly destructive white noise. That's no compliment. An amalgam of electronica and post-punk mixed with excessive distortion and other effects, listeners are lucky The Poison Arrows have just produced an EP, albeit one that clocks in at almost a half hour. If it were any longer, blood would flow from the eardrums. —Kim Newman

File-13.com



## THE TRANSMISSIONARY SIX GET DOWN

What is it with all this "freaky folk" that's been coming out lately? Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom, Faun Fables? It's a bona fide trend. Maybe it's some depraved offshoot of the alt.country family tree. Treading the line between creepy and a little sad, The Transmission Six are the latest to join this addled chorus of the high and lonesome. Blending sagebrush melodies, acoustic guitars and wintry feedback with salt-of-the-earth lyrics and flaming Lips-style digital foppiness, *Get Down* appears to represent a pop group using folk and country instrumentation and song structures as a means to writing the perfect pop song, not the other way around. Though The Transmission Six borders on the narcoleptic at times, they are in good company with the Cowboy Junkies and New York City's transplanted desert dreamers, The Occasion. Soft and spacey is the new loud, apparently. Get it here first. —Allan Martin Kemler

FilmGuerrero.com





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HORN OF PLENTY

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Blur, My Bloody Valentine, the Pixies



**MOMMY AND DADDY**  
FIGHTING STYLE KILLER PANDA

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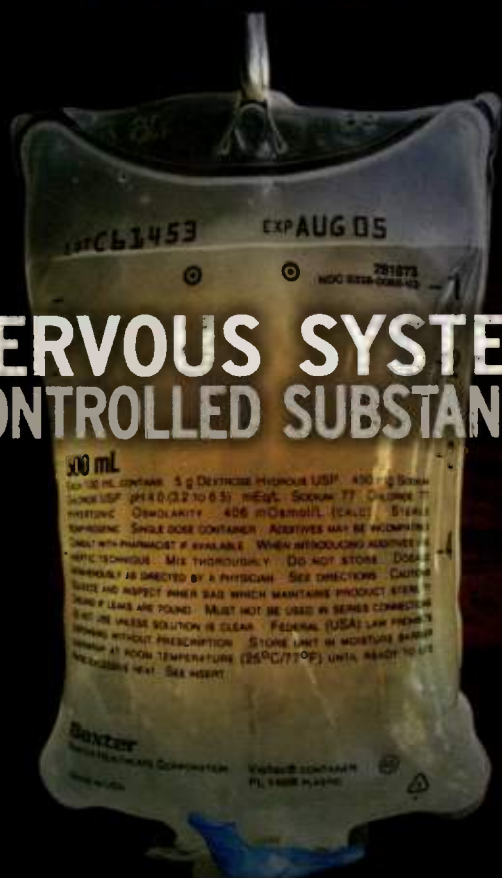
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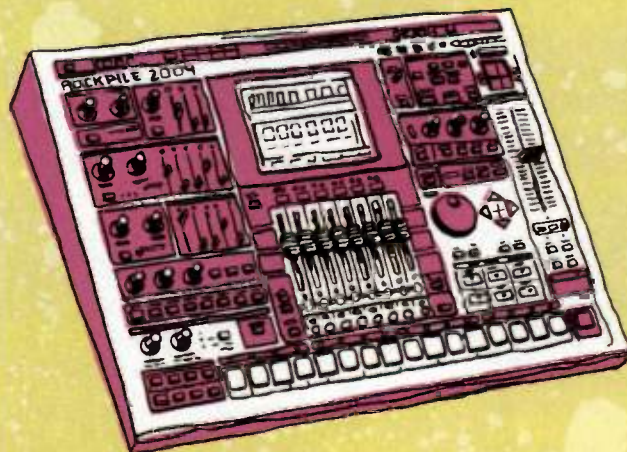
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I'm sure there are plenty of people who were hoping when a Cat Power DVD finally came around it'd be chock full of bloopers, bleepers and onstage meltdowns from the oft fickle Chan Marshall. What we're provided on *Speaking for Trees* is a lot less disposable. Instead of the monotonous gloom of a concert hall, or a parade of histrionics (and, besides, isn't that so the *old* Cat Power), this is a portrait of the songwriter in her commanding, not fragile, irreducible beauty. Filmed in Upstate New York in the summer of 2002, *Trees* is charmingly, although perhaps a bit too monotonously, shot, spotlighting Marshall in absolute minimalism: she entertains, seduces, rallies, transcends, bores, alienates and uplifts viewers with only herself, her voice and her guitar. Aside from her own songs, Marshall serenades the shrubs, grass and sky of rural New York with some tunes from Duke Ellington ("Sophisticated Lady"), Bob Dylan ("Knocking on Heaven's Door"), Alex Chilton ("Night Time") and M. Ward ("Sad Song"). If you're looking for criticism, *Speaking for Trees* is also basically a woman playing guitar and singing while standing pretty far away from a camera that films the same exact fucking spot in a meadow for what seems like days. So, plan accordingly. —Mike McKee

MatadorRecords.com



## CABARET VOLTAIRE DOUBLE VISION PRESENT



Named for the club started in Zurich by the founders of the Dada art movement during the First World War, Cabaret Voltaire borrowed the manic nausea of Throbbing Gristle and married it to the hypnotic, rocksteady pulse of Can and James Brown. Working in Sheffield, England, in 1973, Richard H. Kirk, Stephen Mallinder and Chris Watson were among the first musicians to create dance music from industrial noises built up on tape loops. Beyond the band's sepulchritudinous din of clever beats, trilling keyboards and bleating sax, though, the trio also proved

adept at the art of multimedia manipulation. The videos here consist of grainy, reversed-out black-and-white images and primitive digital effects applied to all manner of Nazi imagery, medical and anthropological films, '50s-era stock footage, artsy stills and band shots. Though the video isn't as shocking as it intends, the true gift of Cabaret Voltaire was the pioneering, synergistic whole of its presentations, and *Double Vision Present* delivers 85 minutes worth in all its industrial-strength glory. —Allan Martin Kemler

Mute.com

## MATES OF STATE TWO OF US



They say when there's no room left in hell, the dead will walk the earth. They should also probably mention that when there's no material left for really interesting, deep documentaries on visionary bands, there'll be kind of superfluous documentaries on obscure to marginally popular ones. None of this is to disparage Mates of State (you'd have to be pretty grumpy to really hate them, I mean, have you seen them live?), but do we need a documentary? Innocuous, keyboard pop, rest stops, merch tables and recording studios hardly make for cliffhanger drama. This DVD was made by a fan,

and that's basically who's going to enjoy it, other fans. If you're sweating MoS, you'll probably get a kick of seeing them on and off-stage, varying charged and drained during recording sessions for *Team Boo*, sharing stories and driving around on tour. If you're indifferent towards the husband-and-wife duo, chances are you'll find this about as interesting as security camera footage. It's not an artsy film, it's not a challenging film, it's straight content for those who need more. Didn't these two just have a baby? That's a much cooler release for them this year. —Mike McKee

PolyvinylRecords.com

## BEHOLD CONSOLIDATED VIDEO



Consolidated Skateboards has been the bad kid in skateboarding since it entered the industry over a decade ago. They've commendably done things their own way through a signature form of humor and a hardcore, fuck-the-world-let's-skate mentality. The Consolidated Video *Behold* follows the blueprint: No fancy editing, no super-tech graphic additives, just skateboarding at its best with an underground, all-star team (Seth McCallum, Alan Peterson, Karma, Jesse and Richard Paez). In between skaters' parts are skits done by company head Birdo and graphic artist Todd Bratrud. Some are silly and some are just bizarre. In addition to the full-length video is a tight "friends" section and an abnormally loaded extras section, complete with slams, alternate edits and much more. Skating is fun and underground again. At least for the Consolidated crew it is. And they've packed their entire ideology into their newest DVD. —Jay Riggio

ConsolidatedSkateboard.com

## 411 VIDEO MAGAZINE ISSUE #66

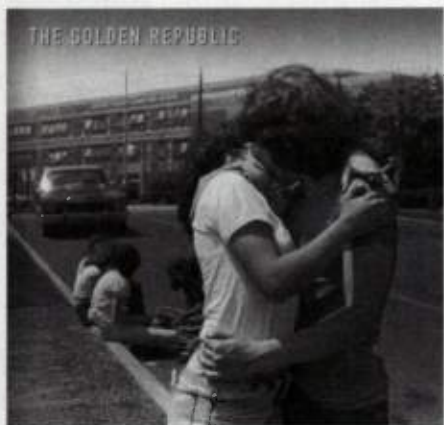


Well it's time for another installment of 411. They keep cranking 'em out and kids keep buying them. The past few issues showed an upswing of footage and quality returning to 411. The "Brazil" issue and "Stereo" issue both had great skateboarding, clean editing and very little filler footage. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for "Issue 66." While this issue does contain some highlights, it is mired in footage that is less than top-notch. A day-in-the-life article with Jeremy Klein shows viewers just how annoying he can be and how much he is not skating these

days. A Toy Machine skateboards tour section has good footage, but it's all skate parks and demos, basically the throw away stuff from their recent video. The high point of the video is the rookies profile of new Birdhouse professional Steve Nesser. Nesser has been an underground ripper for some time now, quietly killing it on smaller companies like Consolidated and Iota. With his addition to Tony Hawk's nest at Birdhouse, Steve is sure to come up fast. This video part showcases Nesser's all around talent as he skates parks, rails, banks and gaps with true determination under his feet. —Adam Salo

411VM.com





## THE GOLDEN REPUBLIC THE GOLDEN REPUBLIC

This Kansas City, Mo., quartet led by cousins Ben Grimes and Ryan Shank laid a golden egg with more slam-bam-chorus, rock substance than most contemporaries can muster. Armed with menacing keyboards and dueling guitars, these boys sculpt the ashes of Thin Lizzy and the palatable periphery of '90s grunge into incandescent pillars of neu-alt. It's too bad the Golden Republic weren't around in 1992, because lead-off track "You Almost Had It" could have been a choice cut off Cameron Crowe's *Singles* soundtrack. With its frenzied kiss-off verses resolving into super-catchy, cathartic choruses, "Almost" is an instant hit that begs to be replayed after the first listen. "She's So Cold" follows with a commendable tribute to Marc Bolan and Phil Lynot's ineluctable cool. Joy Division-style synths appears here and there, while "Rows of People," offers the obligatory love-sick ballad. Somehow, the band's songwriting knack surprisingly transcends categorical clichés. Certainly should be a band to watch in '05. —Molly Knight

Astralwerks.com



## UTD MANIFEST DESTINY

UTD (Urban Thermo Dynamics) is a family affair. More specifically, Mos Def, brother DCQ and little sister, Ces. *Manifest Destiny* has been kicking around gathering dust in some label vault for almost a decade, released just in time to critically helix with Mos Def's latest LP. The real shame in this record getting shoved for release is Ces, whose belting flow could easily best Rah Digga, Eve, Miss Jade and countless others who have appeared since. *Manifest* hits the ear smooth, like Pete Rock, with beats that seem to float in on a smoke trail and high, lumbering bass lines that blow your speakers softly. Even if the production is a bit threadbare in places, *Manifest Destiny* is the record Kanye West almost made and Mos Def should have remade. —Terry Sawyer

StudioDistribution.com



## VANISHING STILL LIVES ARE FAILING

Goth-electronica trio Vanishing, once hailing from San Francisco (now Berlin), follows its Bauhaus cum This Heat roots on *Still Lives Are Failing*. Jesse EVA (a.k.a. Jessy Panic) once fronted the influential Bay Area goth-punk-with-a-sax quartet Subtonix, and sounds more driven to expand Vanishing's sonic textures (skating washes of noise, Dario Argento horror soundtrack-like synths) since last year's *Songs for Psychotic Children*. As previous Vanishing member Sadie Shaw eloped permanently with '60s retro-rawkers the Husbands, her previous band sounds colder and harsher without her. But any band sharing its name with George Sluizer's classic Dutch horror film should leave you both frightened and intrigued. —James Blackwood

GoldStandardLabs.com



## VORDUL MEGA THE REVOLUTION OF YOUNG HAVOKS

After earning his MC chops alongside Can Ox's Vast Aire, Vordul Mega now steps out on his own as an earnest master of heartfelt, deftly delivered rhymes about avoiding the quicksand of thug life and maneuvering through the ghetto as a sensitive poet, rather than a tough punk. Without flash or posturing, Mega delivers an intense, densely woven barrage of rhymes over simple beats with catchy soul flourishes adding melodic flash and sonic variation. Plus, there are guest appearances by El P, Jean Grae and C Ray Walz. *The Revolution* is another uniquely rendered communication from the streets, carried forth by an emerging talent. —Sarah Tomlinson

Nature-Sounds.net



## WASTELAND OCTOBER

"When You Spill Coke on Your Atari" might have been a better title. *October* is full of spare, glitch-scarred instrumental numbers in the vein of Aphex Twin or Autechre, moody, difficult, and occasionally like dragging a pipe across a pane of glass. Songs on *October* are so free form that they would barely hold your attention if it wasn't for the sharpness of metallic noises, vacuum suction and clanking silverware that periodically drop in like something knocked off the mantle. On the listless closer, "In Your Sleep," Wasteland chucks the harsh interruptions for a song that's one, long, lulling glide. For fans of experimental electronic music, I'm sure there's an entire layer of intellectual pleasure that I miss by viscerally loathing nearly every moment of this fractured, fitful yawl. Although, if you're already a fan of the more frantic jumbles of Kid606 or Soft Pink Truth, you might hone in on the jarring beauty of *October*, after all. —T-Saw & Nan

TransparentRecords.com



## YOUR CODENAME IS MILO ALL ROADS TO FAULT EP

Newest up-and-coming sensation from the U.K., indeed! Horrible name, derivatively aggressive music. Is it any wonder that *NME* is devouring this tripe? Quick, put this band on the cover of every British music rag before someone else comes along and recycles At the Drive-In even more embarrassingly. Such one-sided, heavy handed criticism is likely to stump or turn off some timid readers, so I'll expand. Your Code Name is Milo, does have an awful name—there's little more to say about that. The music is derivative and seems to suffer no shortage of budget, leaving the onus squarely on the creative department. "Post-punk" to a fault, with all the stops: varying melodic and dissonant, appropriately distorted guitars in pedestrian, midtempo, self-assured groove. —Austin Ray

Beggars.com



## THE ZUTONS WHO KILLED THE ZUTONS

Just like a cheesy comic book or a B-movie, *Who Killed The Zutons* is filled with the occasional cheap thrill and moments of action-packed excitement, but ultimately disappoints. "You Will You Won't" combines harmonized, group-vocal pump-ups with swingin', guitar riffs, and could easily qualify as one of the party anthems of the year. Along the same lines and despite its rather silly namechecking, "Zuton Fever" is an absurdly catchy number rife with squeaky saxophone and relentless bass. Outside of these tracks and a couple others that aspire to the same raucous party level, this album doesn't prove to be much more than disposable. —Austin Ray

Deltasonic.co.uk



« GREAT EXPECTATIONS continued from page 41

"We spent the two weeks after the election spreading the message to our members and the press that our generation turned out in record numbers," he says. "A lot of the press stories around the election said that the 'youth vote' didn't turn out. That's bullshit."

Regardless of who won the election, the synergy between the activist and artistic communities leading up to election day—snarkily appropriated ever after as "11/2"—merits some praise.

One of the busiest organizations this year, surely one that will confound historians a century from now, is the bombastic Punk Voter, founded by musician Fat Mike of NOFX. One of the first campaigns to spring from the ashes of the 2000 election, Punk Voter didn't do much to hide its partisan views, favoring instead a blatant and clear message: No more Bush. In true protest-punk fashion, the group helped release the *Rock Against Bush* compilation on Fat Mike's Fat Wreck Chords label, selling more than half a million copies. Like Music For America, Punk Voter organized concerts, offered information for first-time voters and launched a marketing campaign highlighting the differences between the two major-party candidates.

"We felt that if we banded together there just might be enough of us to change the outcome of the election," says key Punk Voter organizer, Toby Jeg. "We saw in Florida that it came down to a mere 500 votes, and certainly there are 500 punk rockers in Florida that we could mobilize against Bush Jr."

Naturally, everyone at the PV office felt pretty despondent when the results came in, though Jeg says it was tremendously encouraging to receive feedback from members saying they were anxious to "carry on the fight."

Other organizations' work ended with the election. Air Traffic Control formed as a liaison between the many activists and artists who would hit the road this past electoral season. Musicians ranging from Bruce Springsteen and Jackson Brown to Pearl Jam, Death Cab for Cutie and The Dixie Chicks were in demand to lend their support to voter registration drives, and Air Traffic Control organizers, like longtime activist and

Future of Music Coalition founder Jenny Toomey, sought to coordinate the efforts of both camps. Toomey says the group was helping the artistic community better understand the activists and vice versa. The 2000 Presidential election, scandals and all, served as a hearty wake up call.

"Artists began to think if they didn't use their freedom of speech, they were going to lose it," says Toomey. "We did everything from putting together fact sheets to, a lot of times, working with the expectations of the activists and the musicians."

## Organize! It's the Rest of Your Life: The Next Four Years

While the momentum stirred up by activists and artists such as MoveOn, MFA and the Jade Tree-Fat Wreck Chords "Rock Against Bush" tours played a strong role in the 2004 election, many experts also credit the young voter movement with achieving a higher level of sophistication.

Jane Eisner is a reporter and columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a teacher of political science at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of a new book called *Taking Back the Vote: Getting American Youth Involved in our Democracy*. She cites clearer, more consistent messages and more effective delivery and presentation as some of the victories the young Left scored in preparation for the 2004 Presidential election. According to her, the marketing is savvy, and she sees a community that will continue to flourish.

"There's a maturity in the youth vote movement that hasn't been seen before," she says. "There are people out there very interested in developing a youth agenda."

And why not a youth agenda? It is the younger voter, after all, who is expected to reconcile the debts our representatives incur, clean up the environment, deal with a critical lack of health care, arrest the rising cost of education and manage the politics of non-replenishable fuels.

Eisner agrees the media coverage in the days following the election was flat-out misleading.

"It was one of those moments when I was embarrassed of my profession," she says. "If Kerry would've won, everybody would've credited the youth vote. We still have a tendency in this society to denigrate young people."

Back at the Punk Voter office, Jeg says his organization, like so many others, is pressing on, and is doing its part to counter the media hype about what happened in 2004.

"The fact is, young people came out and voted in record numbers," he says. "But so did their dumbass homophobic parents."

Some would say the problem wasn't developing a well of new, young, concerned voters, but rather, providing them with a viable option for significant change they could support. Dozens of polls point to a trend of voting against an opponent rather than for a candidate. Bush, although a self-proclaimed "uniter," proved to be anything but, galvanizing many to pick up a ballot for the first time.

The Democratic party will have to battle its own demons if it wants to be taken seriously as an agent of reform in 2008. Mike Connery, for one, doesn't feel like waiting for that to happen. He says MFA's schedule for 2005 is already jam packed.

"We're looking to build tightly knit communities that can support MFA's national projects but also make a serious impact in the local politics," he says. "Politics doesn't begin and end with the Presidential elections."

Eisner agrees the future will bring a need for localization.

"The state level is where a lot of the action will be," she says, suggesting local politics are less dominated by money and more accessible to young voters.

For her part, Toomey hopes that first-timers won't be disillusioned by the process.

"You've got to feel the pain of losing, of course," she says. "But move on and keep connected. Look at what your opportunities are. You have an opportunity to become cynical and disengaged, and allow a group of people to control the field because they're willing to do the work. Or, you're going to find a way to dust yourself off and get back into the struggle." ■

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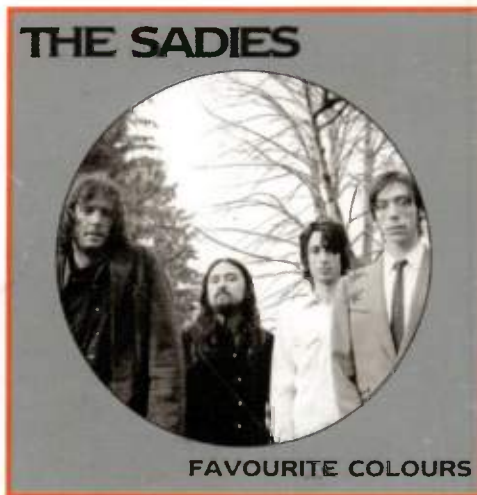
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