

totallyadult

Issue 44

February 8, 2002

{ Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise }

ALSO INSIDE:

Station Owner Bob Sinclair Loves Adult Rock

According To Our Records

How I Wrote That Song: Five For Fighting's "Superman"

Kasey Chambers, Billy Bragg, Big Head Todd and more!

Zero :destiny 7



**Featured In This Week's Episode Of
The West Wing!!!**

**"By far, the BIGGEST record at KCRW
in the last six months. Huge spins, huge phones
and huge sales—over 11,000 copies sold in L.A.
in only two months!"**

—Nic Harcourt, MD/host of KCRW Los Angeles's *Morning Becomes Eclectic* and PRI's *Sounds Eclectic*

**"Zero 7 has risen to the top of 'XPN listeners'
most requested albums for the new year—a lush, beautifully produced mix of
laid-back pop songs. Simply put, *Simple Things* is simply beautiful."**

—Bruce Warren, PD WXPB Philadelphia

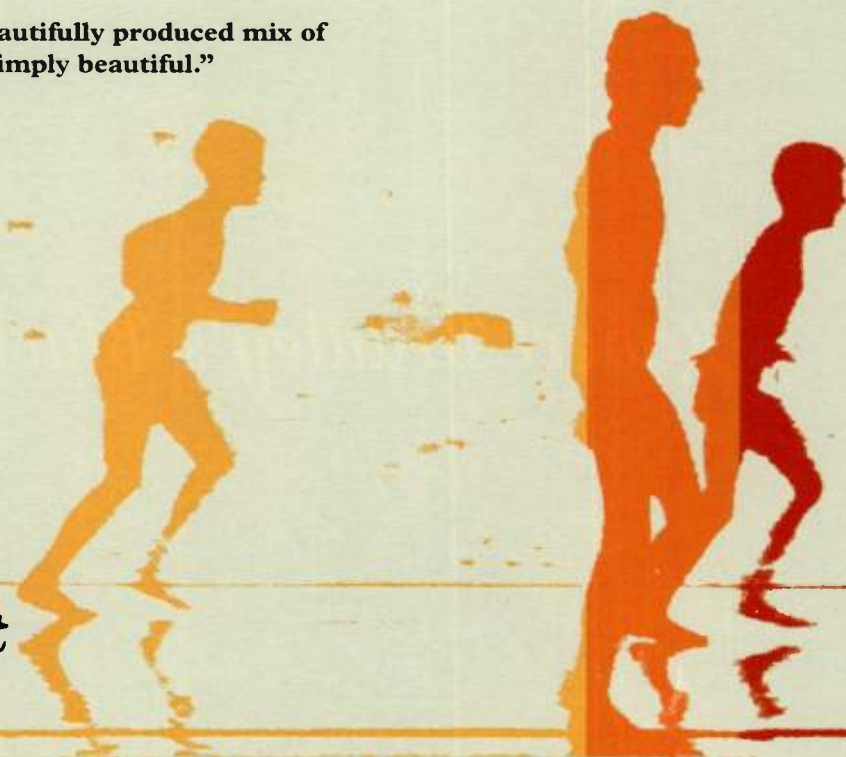
"The babymaker LP of the year—9 out of 10."

—SPIN

"★★★★ 1/2"

—Rolling Stone

impacting at *totallyadult*
radio on february 11th



the first single from the critically-acclaimed bestseller
:simple things



WRH



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SPECIAL FEATURES



Kasey Chambers

Americana's latest sweetheart is from the Wild, Wild, West—farther west than California and as wild as West Texas. Sully Roddy lassoed Kasey Chambers, whose "Not Pretty Enough" (from her new *Barricades And Brickwalls*) was No.1 Most Added at Adult Rock last week.



How I Wrote That Song: Five For Fighting

"I can't stand to fly/I'm not that naïve"—so begins the tale of Five For Fighting's "Superman (It's Not Easy)," which was well on its way to being a hit before September 11, and after which, it took on a whole new meaning. Jim Nelson recently sat with FFF's John Ondrasik and discovered that even heroes have the right to dream.



According To Our Records

To be able to wake up every morning excited about going to work and passionate about your job is a blessing that both Michael McDonald and Chris Tetzeli of independent label *According To Our Records* share. Kat Campbell investigates this artist-friendly label, which is home to David Gray, Chris Whitley and more.



Big Head Todd And The Monsters

Big Head Todd And The Monsters' sound is a blend of rootsy Midwestern soul, rock & roll and funk, with a lead vocalist whose voice pulls you deep into the song. Jennifer Edelston played 20 questions with Todd Park Mohr about his band's new disc, *Riviera*.



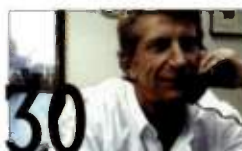
Matt Cheplic

Singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Matt Cheplic's music brings to mind artists like Elvis Costello, Marshall Crenshaw and The Rembrandts. Sharp-dressed Jim Nelson tracked down Cheplic to discuss perfect pop numbers and Cheplic's new release, *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*.



Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise

A chance meeting between a Detroit street singer and a couple of long-hairs from a rock group evolved into the unique and inspired Robert Bradley's *Blackwater Surprise*. Matthew Lawton recently checked in with Bradley to discuss their latest disc, *New Ground*, which blends the rawness of The Rolling Stones, the passion of Otis Redding and the groove of The Black Crowes.



Bob Sinclair's Independent Radio Empire

Owning radio stations in this corporate world is not easy if you're still a family-run independent entity. Bob Sinclair and his family have been running stations since the late '60s, and in last 10 years, Sinclair Telecable has made the transition to Adult Rock by purchasing KGSR Austin, WKOC Norfolk and KRSH Santa Rosa. Casey Alfaro embraced independent freedom and spoke with Sinclair and the program directors of these three outlets.



Billy Bragg & The Blokes

For almost two decades now, Billy Bragg has cultivated a discography filled with politically inspired songs that speak for everyday people. While tattooing his knuckles with "N-P-W-A," Matthew Lawton spoke with Bragg about his best album ever, *England, Half English*.



A&R Network

The A&R Network is an enhancement tool for record companies and publishers who want to be proactive in discovering new, credible talent. Mark Chu Cheong checks in with the A&R Network's Sat Bisla and Dylan Filkow.

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music call times are based on the station's own time zone

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www.wutc.org
www.wvux.com

WXPN Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Bruce Warren Program Director
brucew@xpnonline.net
Helen Leicht Asst PD/Mus Dir
215.898.6677 fax 215.898.0707
T 1-4pm
www.xpn.org

WYCE Grand Rapids, Michigan
Michael Packer Station Manager
Matt Jarrells Music Director
616.459.4788 fax 616.742.0599
W 10am-2pm
www.wyce.org

WYEP Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Chris Griffin Asst PD/Mus Dir
chrisg@wyep.org
Rosemary Welsch Program Director
rwelsch@wyep.org
412.381.9131 fax 412.381.9126
T 3-6pm
www.wyep.org

XM SATELLITE Washington, DC
Bill Evans Program Director
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M-F 9-5pm
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Rob Reinhart Program Director
rob@acafe.com
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W 9am-noon
www.acafe.com

KBCS Bellevue, Washington
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clinde@bcc.ctc.edu
Kirsten Walsh Program Director
425.564.2427 fax 425.564.5697
Th 12:30-4:30pm
www.kbcs-fm.org

KBLK Horseshoe Bay, Texas
Rick Star Program Director
rick@kbay.net
830.598.9479 fax 830.598.6534
MTWThF 3-5pm
www.kbay.net

KDNK Carbondale, Colorado
Skip Naft Music Director
skip@kdnk.org
Wick Moses Marketing Director
970.963.0139 fax 970.963.0810
Th Noon-6pm
www.kdnk.org

KEXP Seattle, Washington
Don Yates Program Director
Tom Mara General Manager
206.520.5833 fax 206.520.5899
MW 10-noon
www.kexp.org

KFJC San Jose, California
Mike Miyake Music Director
Steve Taiclet General Manager
650.949.7260 fax 650.948.1085
W 2-5pm
www.kfjc.org/netcast.html

KFJM Grand Forks, North Dakota
Michael Olson Program Director
michael_olson@und.nodak.edu
Michelle Walters Marketing Director
701.777.2577 fax 701.777.4263
WThF 2-5pm

KGLT Bozeman, Montana
Rik James Assistant MD
rikjames@mcn.net
Phil Charles General Manager
406.994.3001 fax 208.723.2124
M 12:30-3:30pm
www.kglt.net

KGSR Austin, Texas
Jody Denberg Program Director
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Susan Castle Music Director
scastle@kgssr.com
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M 3:15-6:15pm
www.kgssr.com

KHYI Plano, Texas
Bruce Kidder Prog/Music Dir
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www.khyi.com

KNBT New Braunfels, Texas
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Fred Stockwell General Manager
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www.knbtm.com

KPIG Watsonville, California
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MTW 8-10am
www.kpig.com

KRCL Salt Lake City, Utah
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T noon-5pm
www.krcl.org

KRXS Tempe, Arizona
Stu D. Baker Music Director
John Libynski General Manager
520.402.9222 fax 480.413.2114
ThF 1-3pm
www.jukeboxcantina.com

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Stasia Lanier Station Manager
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Steve Rauworth Program Director
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970.563.0255 fax 970.563.0399
Th 9am-noon
www.ksut.org

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Jeremy Halliburton Music Director
Rick Shaw Program Director
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Th Noon-2pm
www.texasmix.com

KULP El Campo, Texas
Clinton Robinson Program Director
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979.543.3303 fax 979.543.1546
M-F 9am-noon
www.kulpradio.com

KUT Austin, Texas
Hawk Mendenhall Program Director
hawk@mail.utexas.edu
Jeff McCord Music Director
512.471.1631 fax 512.441.3700
M-F 12-3pm
www.kut.org

KVMR Nevada City, California
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Steve Baker Program Director
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www.kvmr.org

KWMR Pt. Reyes Station, California
Kay Clements Music Director
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TTh noon-5pm

KXCI Tucson, Arizona
Michael Hyatt Music Director
Mike Landwehr Program Director
520.623.1000 fax 520.623.0758
TTh 2-6pm

MUSIC CHOICE West Orange, New Jersey
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Adam Neiman Program Director
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T 2-5pm
www.musicchoice.com

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Th 4-6pm
www.wcbe.org

WDBM East Lansing, Michigan
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517.353.4414 fax 517.355.6552
MW 2-5:30pm
www.impact89fm.org

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M-F 10am-8pm

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Tony Lawson Program Director
Mary DeSchamps Marketing Director
865.494.2020 fax 865.494.3299
MF 9am-Noon
www.wdvx.com

WEIU Charleston, Illinois
Clayton Jackson Music Director
Kane Click Music Director
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MW noon-2pm

WELY Ely, Minnesota
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M-F 1-5pm
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T 11am-2pm
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M 9-Noon & 1-4pm

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A CLOSER LOOK



JACK JOHNSON *BRUSHFIRE FAIRYTALES*

BY JIM NELSON

ORIGIN: Hawaii, but he lives in Santa Barbara now **PRODUCED BY:** J.P. Plunier
LABEL: Enjoy

There must've been a bit of hesitation the first time jocks surveyed their logs and saw a song called "Bubble Toes" on the horizon. It's a silly title for a song with a laid-back feel and a splash of island life spilling out of every one of its delightful three minutes and 56 seconds. Eight months after its release, "Bubble Toes" has transcended its title to become an unlikely Adult Rock hit.

Jack Johnson is the creator and performer of "Bubble Toes" and an album of similarly styled soft rock numbers with folky, bluesy underpinnings. Knowing that tidbit tells you next to nothing about this singer/songwriter/guitarist, though, because Johnson's has been a multifaceted life.

Born and reared in Hawaii, Jack Johnson was already surfing with the big boys on the world-renowned and seriously dangerous Pipeline by the time he was 10. Yes, 10. Before he was out of high school, Jack was the youngest finalist ever at international surfing's biggest event. As surf heroes go, Johnson was as big as they get—but he had other ambitions, so he moved to the mainland and studied film at UC Santa Barbara. With degree in hand, Johnson made a couple of films and then hightailed it off to Europe for a look-see before returning to Hawaii to reunite with a couple of buddies to make a surf film called *Thicker Than Water*. Hailed by *Surfer* magazine as the Video Of The Year, *Thicker Than Water* was followed by *The September Sessions*, which won an award at the ESPN Film Festival. Johnson was on his way to another promising career, but music was now calling loudly. He'd always played guitar in one band or another, and scoring *Thicker Than Water* was the impetus he needed to give it a go for real.

Brushfire Fairytales is a grand introduction to Jack Johnson's relaxed songwriting. Whether he's surfing, making movies or creating music, Johnson doesn't do it halfway—which is why it's a safe bet that those same jocks who may have felt initial awkwardness at back-announcing "Bubble Toes" will have no problem now opening the mic and telling their listeners about Johnson's latest single, "Flake."

- ▶ "Bubble Toes" has spawned sales of over 100,000 copies of *Brushfire Fairytales*.
- ▶ Johnson's hero, Ben Harper, plays slide guitar on "Flake."
- ▶ *Brushfire Fairytales* is one of three releases on Enjoy Records, which was started by A&R veteran Andy Factor and producer/manager J.P. Plunier.
- ▶ "Bubble Toes" caused such a commotion that Universal signed him to a P&D deal for the duration of *Brushfire Fairytales* and as Johnson's label for future CDs.



NINA STOREY *NINA STOREY*

BY KAT CAMPBELL

ORIGIN: Los Angeles, but she lives in Boulder now **PRODUCED BY:** Kirby Orrick, Jeremy Lawton & Nina Storey **LABEL:** Nina Storey Music

Growing up in a musical household—her parents have both been in the biz for years—and listening to a wide variety of genres played a large part in molding the eclectic stylings of singer/songwriter Nina Storey. "I consider myself a blues singer," she says, "but my writing contains the culmination of soul, funk, jazz, rock and other just fun and wacky elements that don't fall into any particular genre." In her formative years, Storey was fed a steady diet of such musical icons as The Beatles, Billy Joel, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Billie Holiday, Annie Lennox and "virtually any other rock, blues, soul and jazz legend you can name."

Her first CD, *Guilt And Honey*, was a reflection of her acoustic rock, folk and blues sides, while the follow-up, *Bootleg*, demonstrated Storey's powerful live abilities. In 1997, *Shades* was her first CD to get national distribution, capturing the attention of the media. Storey capitalized on that attention by performing at a number of major festivals, including Lilith Fair, Woodstock '99, Santa Cruz Blues Festival, Montreal International Jazz Festival and The New Orleans Jazz Festival. She has also opened for such notables as Etta James, Earth Wind & Fire, Keb' Mo', The Allman Brothers Band, Los Lobos, Joan Osborne and John Lee Hooker.

Now, Nina's new eponymous CD showcases her growth as a songwriter, vocalist, musician and producer. The music is a blend of sultry, soulful rock melodies and thoughtful, introspective lyrics that are both touching and humorous.

- ▶ Storey, who's never had a non-entertainment job, got her start at 15 doing commercials, including spots for McDonald's and Toyota.
- ▶ Nina has performed the National Anthem at numerous sporting events nationwide, including *Monday Night Football*, the AFC Championship Game and the Super Bowl Celebration. One of her first breaks was singing her own composition, a Denver Broncos-inspired tune called "Hero," at a Broncos game.
- ▶ Four of Storey's tracks from *Shades* were featured in *Broken Hearts Club* (Sony Pictures) and *Public/Private* (North Sea Films).
- ▶ Klipsch Audio has selected Storey to endorse their products in their international promotional campaign.

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WRH



Even With An Australian Accent, Kasey Chambers' Music Still Goes *Twang*

Americana's latest sweetheart is from the Wild, Wild, West—farther west than California and as wild as West Texas. She's from the land where the sheep and the wallaby play. "We never thought anyone in the U.S. would be interested in hearing Australians play country music," laughs Kasey Chambers. "We thought that was kind of weird!"

Kasey Chambers is on the phone from Australia, reminiscing about a childhood spent listening to the songs of Hank Williams drift across the empty Nullarbor plains (pronounced NULL-uh-bor, it means *no trees*). Despite her solemn "noir" publicity photos, Kasey is cheerful, friendly, smart and funny. As I edit this piece I find myself humming "Sweet Betsy From Pike," that old tune about the indomitable pioneer who crossed the desert with a musket on her shoulder.

In fact, Kasey did spend much of her youth in the outback, rifle in hand. When she reached her teens, her family returned to civilization and formed The Dead Ringer Band. The band caught the imagination of American manager John Lomax III (grandson and nephew of ethnomusicologists John Lomax and Alan Lomax, respectively) who pitched Kasey to Warner Bros. Now Kasey is one of the rising stars of the Americana and Adult Rock scenes, preparing for a short stateside tour to promote her second album, *Barricades And Brickwalls*.

In May, Kasey embarks on a new adventure as she and her longtime sweetheart, actor Cori Happer, are expecting their first baby. Look for Cori in the video of "Not Pretty Enough."

As our conversation began, Kasey paused to turn down the new Jay Farrar album. "I'm a big Son Volt fan," she mentions.

By Sully Roddy

You had an unusual childhood.

I spent the first 10 years of my life living on the Nullarbor plains, which is a big desert that runs across the middle of Australia. It's really outback, very remote. We lived in our car. We just traveled around to a different place every night. My dad was a fox hunter, and we traveled like that for about 10 years, my mom and dad, me and my brother Nash. The only time we would see people is when we would get supplies. There's a train that runs from one side of Australia to another, from Perth to Sydney, called the Indian Pacific, and it runs right across the middle of the Nullarbor. We would get all our supplies from the train. It was pretty much the only time we got to see people.

Your family entertained itself by singing?

Yeah, we didn't have any television or radio. We had a tape player and my dad would play lots of tapes all the time, but he would also have a guitar with him and sit around the campfire and play songs, that sort of thing, which is I guess where it all started, really. He and my Mom were in bands together before Nash and I were born.

What kinds of bands were they in?

A bit of everything. My dad's main music was, like, Hank Williams, Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris...that sort of thing, but he was also in some local rock & roll bands that played a lot of Creedence Clearwater Revival, Eagles and stuff like that. He was in cover bands for bread and butter money, but when we moved out to the Nullarbor he would sit around and play the songs he really loved.

Did you and your brother actually hunt?

Nash would take me out during the day sometimes and we would hunt for food—get some rabbits or birds or whatever to have for dinner that night. We were hired by farmers to come hunt the foxes because they were killing the sheep, so it wasn't like we were going out hunting koala bears!

You all moved into town when it was time for you to go to high school, and that was when your family put together *The Dead Ringer Band*?

Yeah. We started playing locally at first, and then later on began touring around Australia.

I wanted to ask you about the Australian music scene. I read somewhere about bush balladeers. Is that like cowboy poets?

Sort of like the Australian version of cowboy poets (laughing). It's got a very Australian feel. I don't know if you've heard of Slim Dusty? He's one of the pioneers in bush ballad music, but then he was sort of influenced by The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, so it all sort of dates back to America anyway. It's a style on its own, and it's got a very Australian feel about it.

We're very influenced by old English music, the Irish roots music and stuff like that. The bush balladeers are very much influenced by that sort of thing, but also by the American style of country music. That's also been a big influence on us here.

People we think of as roots country music.

Yes, exactly.

Speaking of Australian musicians, who do you think Americana programmers in America should be aware of?

“I listen to a lot of different music now than I did when I made *The Captain*. Not necessarily different styles, but getting into different artists. I listened to a lot of Matthew Ryan and Fred Eaglesmith, people like that.”



Well, Paul Kelly. I reckon he's one of the best singer/songwriters here in Australia. We're very lucky to have him. He's got a really country influence. He's a big Gram Parsons and Hank Williams fan, and Willie Nelson and people like that. He's had a career for, like, 30 years; he's made a lot of albums and he's gone through a lot of different stages. He's got a very big folk influence, a very big Bob Dylan influence with his songwriting and his singing as well.

We have a great roots band here who are actually kind of a punk-roots band, called The Living End. They play on my album. They're just starting to do things in America—they have a deal with Warner Bros., which I didn't even know! I saw their poster up in Warners in L.A. and I'm like, “Why do you have their poster up? They're friends of mine!” And they're like, “We just signed them.” They're a really good roots band, but not country at all.

You're already famous in Australia. What made you decide to tackle the U.S.? Was it John Lomax III?

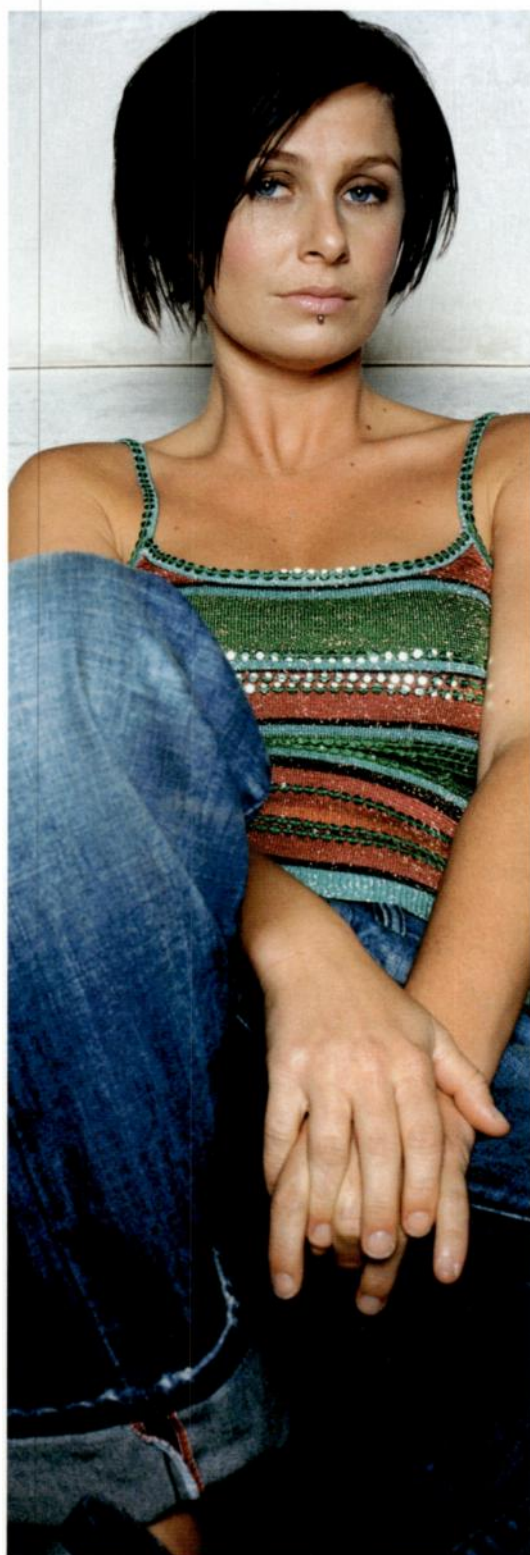
Yeah, he started the whole thing. We started trying to get a deal in America about seven years ago with The Dead Ringer Band. The guy who owns Massive Records, our record label here at the time, happened to know John Lomax and sent him a CD. John got really interested and decided he wanted to manage us over there, and try to get us a record deal. That was amazing because we just never thought anyone over there would be interested in hearing Australians play country music (laughs).

We were in a lucky position because we were able to just sit back and wait for the deal that we really wanted. We didn't take the first deal that was offered to us (laughs)—not that we were offered that many, mind you! I'm making it sound like we had offers from everyone!

Eventually, I ended up getting the deal with Warners, which was fantastic. They wanted to take [*The Captain*] just the way it was. They didn't want to remix anything, or rewrite any of the songs. They let us be as creative as we can be, which is just the way I wanted it. Even now I think, “That's fantastic, but if it doesn't work I'm not going to be heartbroken. I've had a hell of a time getting to go over and visit America. I've met some of my idols and gotten to work with some of my favorite artists of all time, and it's just been fantastic. So because it's sort of a bonus there's no way I can get disappointed (laughs).”

continued

“We never thought anyone in the U.S. would be interested in hearing Australians play country music.”



Your latest album, *Barricades And Brickwalls*, seems a lot more wide-ranging than *The Captain* was.

Absolutely. I think this album goes to a lot more extremes than the first one. A lot of my influences are coming out. I listen to a lot of different music now than I did five years ago when I made *The Captain*. Not necessarily different styles, but getting into different artists. I listened to a lot of Matthew Ryan and Fred Eaglesmith, and people like that, where I wasn't listening to that before. I'm still listening to a lot of Emmylou, Buddy And Julie [Miller], Lucinda Williams and people like that. So it's a bit of influence coming from everywhere.

Also, we recorded this album in a lot of different stages. I went through a lot of different mood changes through that time. Being a female helps that, of course.

Were you pregnant when you were recording this?

No, I wasn't. So the next album's going to be even more different mood swings! (laughs) Oh yeah, that's going to come out on the next album!

On *Barricades*, because we were touring so much, we had to record whenever we could. We went into the studio for a week and recorded four, maybe five songs, and a month later we went back in and recorded another couple of songs. Then the album was finished and I wrote another song, and we went back in and recorded it. So it's really different times. Also I was going through a lot of different things in my life in that year when I recorded *Barricades*. I was traveling a lot, going to a lot of new places, hearing a lot of new artists. There were a lot of different influences coming from everywhere, and that came out on the album.

The first single from *Barricades* is "Not Pretty Enough."

It's got a whole lot of different levels, that song. There's the obvious love story level which I think is the easiest for most people to relate to. But I actually wrote the song a bit more on a professional level, like, to radio stations and things like that. It's sort of saying, "If these are the reasons you don't like my music and don't support it, then I don't care, because this is me. And bad luck!" (laughs)

Who sings on the album with you?

Lucinda is on "On A Bad Day"; Buddy Miller is on "Still Feeling Blue" and "Runaway Train"; and Paul Kelly is on "I Still Pray"; The Living End is on "Crossfire"; Matthew Ryan is on "Million Tears"; my dad is on "Barricades And Brickwalls."

Are you very involved in the marketing of the album in the U.S., or are you pretty much saying to Warner Bros., "You know what you're doing"?

I can only be involved to a certain extent because I really don't know the industry in the U.S. like I know the one here in Australia. Here I am totally hands-on about what magazines I'm going to go in, or what radio stations we're going to push for, whereas in America they say all these names to me and I'm like, "What? I have no idea, I'm just going to trust your judgment."

You could end up in some trashy tabloid, like, say, *Totallyadult*.

Right! (laughing)

"Space Alien Dating Kasey Chambers!"

I do have faith in Warner Bros. The fact that they understand the music and they let me go off and be as creative as I can instills a lot of faith from my point

of view. Because I feel like if they "get" the music then they "get" where it should be over there, and they "get" where we should be spending our money. And so far I haven't been proved wrong.

You can get played on the radio, or you can get press, but the bottom line is the people who come out and see the shows. That's where I get the personal satisfaction from all this. So just judging by that—the sort of venues I was playing, the sort of people who were coming along supporting the shows, and the sort of artists I was touring with just showed that Warners had me [pointed] in the right direction, the direction that I really want to go in. Touring five weeks with Lucinda Williams...that's a dream come true for me.

When you go to Nashville, how are you received?

We have great fun, and everybody's been really, really good to us out there.

Are you going to buy a Manuel jacket?

I wore one of the jackets that Gram [Parsons] wore, because John Lomax's wife actually owns it. She bought it years and years ago for like \$200. It's the bone-colored one with the leaf on it.

Gram Parsons' famous marijuana jacket? Wow!

Yeah, I was so excited it was unreal (laughs). It was a huge thrill getting to wear that.

There's a very Hank Williamsy song on this album....

"A Little Bit Lonesome"?

Yeah. Who plays steel on that?

That's my dad! Hank Williams is his hero; he's played in Hank Williams cover bands, he listens to Hank Williams once a day. He's Hank mad! And he loves playing lap steel, and I guess that's why it comes out sounding a bit like that.

Hank used lap steel, but it's unusual to hear it anymore.

Well, dad can't play pedal steel to save himself.

What a horrible thing to say about your own father.

I think he's figured lap steel is easier because he doesn't have to think about his feet.

What do you think the American music and American broadcast scenes could learn from the Australian scene?

That's a hard question! I think they take a few more chances in Australia sometimes than they do in America. Of course, there's a lot more to lose in America. It doesn't take a million dollars to launch a new artist here in Australia, but every now and then the industry does take a chance on an artist and it really pays off. They're usually the sort of artist that stays there for the next 20 years, rather than the next two weeks. ✱

KASEY CHAMBERS

Barricades And Brickwalls

ORIGIN: Australia

PRODUCED BY: Nash Chambers

LABEL: Warner Bros.

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Performing live on the *Rosie O'Donnell Show*, Feb. 14

Performing live on the *CBS Early Show*, Feb. 15

Feature in *Rolling Stone* magazine

Video for "She's On Fire" added @



HOW I WROTE THAT SONG

FIVE FOR FIGHTING'S "Superman" Not Only Became An Unlikely Hit, It Helped To Inspire An Embattled Nation

By Jim Nelson

“When I wrote ‘Superman,’” John Ondrasik recounts on a recent January afternoon, “I thought, ‘This is a really cool song, but I can never sing it.’ The songs I was writing were rock songs, so at that point it didn’t fit what I was doing.”

Ondrasik came up with “Superman (It’s Not Easy)” ’round midnight one night in late 1997 as he sat at his Kurzweil electric piano, looking out into the darkness of L.A.’s San Fernando Valley. John and his wife Carla shared a small house in those days, with one of the bedrooms acting as a makeshift studio. Though he had no record label at the time, Ondrasik would hole up in this small room night after night, writing what he hoped would one day become the second Five For Fighting album. “I’d go in the studio, light a couple of candles, roll tape and sit at the piano. I remember [playing] the first few chords and the first couple of words came to me, this whole Superman angle: What if Superman wasn’t impervious to pain, what if he wanted to feel, to be human?”

“Looking back on it, it made sense in my life because I was very frustrated with music. I was kind of numb to the world because that was the only way I could not break down, or cry, or scream and drive my car off a cliff from all of my frustration. The song is about a guy that just wants to feel something. I couldn’t feel joy; I really couldn’t feel anger because I was so in this space of frustration.”

Once Ondrasik had the basic premise for “Superman” it took him less than an hour to get most of it on tape. Generally speaking he works much slower than this, sometimes playing the same verse repeatedly for an hour or more as he meanders through whatever lyrics pop up. When he listened back to “Superman” he heard a delicate, melancholy melody that built into something bold and uplifting. Never once did he sing the word “Superman,” relying instead on metaphor to convey an idea of the man of steel. On the surface, the song was about Superman struggling with his superhuman obligations, but get past that and it’s a song about the difficulties of making each day something more than simply going through the motions. “The song has nothing to do with Superman. It has everything to do with our own humanity.”

or downsized the few people who were actually interested in his demos. Finally, he did what any of us might do: He quietly gave up on his dream and got a job. “Every label had passed on ‘Easy Tonight,’” he admits now, “they passed on ‘Superman,’ they passed on ‘America Town.’ I had a wife and we were gonna have kids, and I was making no money.” Carla Ondrasik, herself a music-industry vet who’d signed John to a deal at EMI Publishing years earlier, was outwardly supportive of her husband’s decision, but she was also not convinced it was final. So she secretly shopped John’s songs. One of the demos that Carla sent out went to Chicago-based indie Aware Records, and immediately caught the attention of CEO Gregg Latterman and VP A&R Steve Smith. “It was a very simple demo,” Latterman recalls, “and the lyrics moved me right away. We all thought that if we could get Five For Fighting started, ‘Superman’ would come through.” After giving up on the idea of ever making another Five For Fighting CD, Ondrasik suddenly found himself in business again, albeit with reservations.



“In basically two years, I went from being a guy who was out of the music business to a guy sitting in Madison Square Garden, singing a song and having 20,000 people singing it back to me—loud.”

The point was moot as to whether or not Five For Fighting would record “Superman.” There really was no Five For Fighting at the time...just John Ondrasik staying up late every night writing songs. Only a year earlier Ondrasik had been the protégé of EMI Records President Davitt Sigerson, who’d produced ...*Message For Albert...*, Five For Fighting’s first album. The CD was in stores, Five For Fighting was on the road, and everyone was enthusiastic about the band’s potential. But the week the first single was due to hit radio, EMI closed its doors.

For the next year and a half, Ondrasik tread water as one record company after another either said no,

“Even when Aware came along, I didn’t get my guitar out until I got the contract back in the mail and we were actually going to make a record,” he explains. “When the day came, I took my guitar out in the backyard and wrote ‘Something About You.’ Then I went to listen to my songs and there was this little piano ballad, real rough, of ‘Superman.’” He still wasn’t sure if “Superman” was right for the record. His mentor Sigerson was one of many people who told him he should do it. Another was Gregg Wattenberg, who’d been brought in to produce the album.

“Wattenberg listened to tons of songs,” says Ondrasik, “and he kept going, ‘This is such a good song, but how do we do it and not make it sound

really cheesy?' At the end of the day we realized we should at least take a shot at it because it was a good song.

"We spent more time on pre-production on 'Superman' than probably all of the other songs combined—we listened to U2, Sarah McLachlan and Sheryl Crow, [to figure out] how you make hip, cool pop ballads. We tried it on guitar, tried it on electric guitar...we spent all of this time trying to make it not only stay true to what it was, which is a song that a guy should sit at a piano and play, but also a Five For Fighting song."

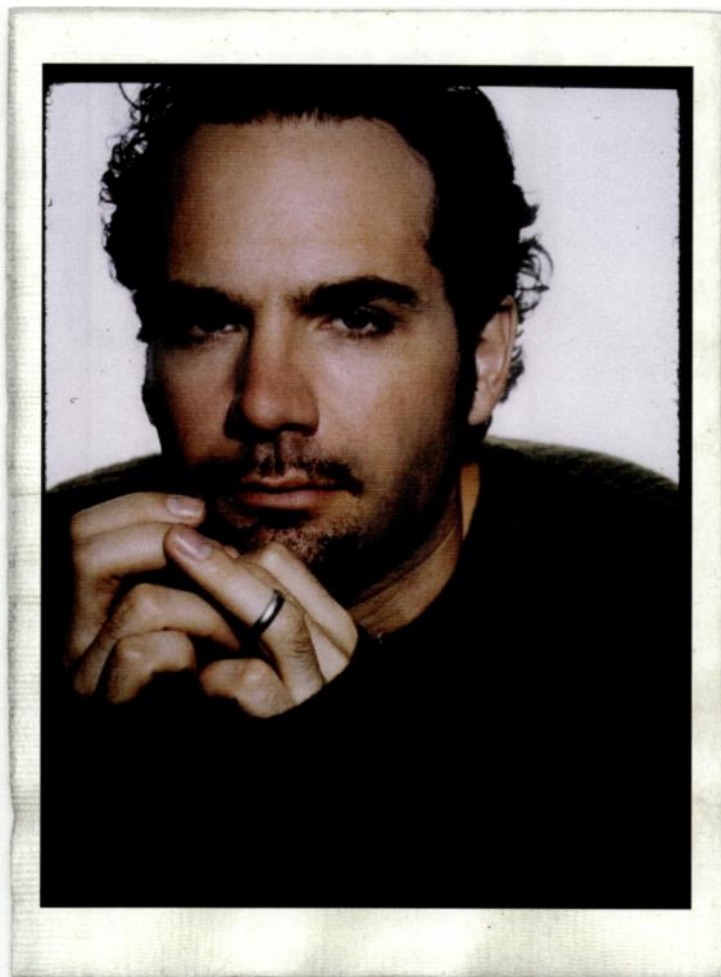
"John and I took a lot of time deciding the tempos," notes Wattenberg. "We wanted it to feel like he was playing the piano and singing without a band, but still have some structure. We literally had the tempo changing every two bars just to feel very expressive and freestyle. The drummer went insane, but the end result sounds completely natural and you never hear the tempo changes." Five For Fighting began recording *America Town* on July 4, 1999, and took their time as John continued to work by day and help out with their firstborn, who was nearly one. They spent several weeks during the winter of 1999/2000 working on "Superman" at EMI Studios in Santa Monica. "I recorded the vocal at midnight with just me, [engineer] Brian Scheuble, Gregg and a couple candles.

"I did four or five takes," Ondrasik remembers, "and they were like, 'That's really good.'" Says Wattenberg, "John came into the control room and said to me, 'This is the best vocal I have ever done.' I think he was right. We didn't even mess with background vocals because the vocal was so emotional we thought they would only screw it up."

"When it was done I was like, 'I think this song could be something special,'" acknowledges Ondrasik, "but I'd been through so much that I never expected to hear it on the radio. I thought it had what it takes to be a song that transcends, to be more than just a song on the radio, but never in my wildest dreams would I have thought it would obtain the meaning for people in so many contexts, pre-September 11/post-September 11, that it has for so many different ages, sexes, nationalities, countries. The fact that it did is still something that I'm trying to reconcile."

"Superman" was well on its way to being a hit before September 11, because John Ondrasik's words were relatable on so many levels. From the universality of trying to find something special inside of ourselves to the it's-not-easy-to-be-me sub-theme, listeners thought of the song as speaking directly to them. Ondrasik gets E-mails daily from people telling him how "Superman" has inspired, comforted and helped them. From fathers who try to be heroes to their families to teenage girls who feel lonely to single mothers who listen to the song to help them get through their difficult lives, it's struck a chord with so many. "Then comes September 11," says Ondrasik, "and all of a sudden the song becomes a tribute to these people who performed superhuman feats."

Five For Fighting was in London on September 11, and by the time they could get a flight home, a week had passed and CNN had already started using "Superman" during their post-attack coverage. Over the ensuing weeks, it became something so much bigger than it had been. Picking up steam at radio and record stores (*America Town* was certified Gold on November 1), "Superman" was becoming a part of our culture. And yet, judging by the response from fans, Ondrasik thinks that September 11 may not have played as big a part in all this as some people seem to think.



"Eighty percent of my E-mails have nothing to do with September 11," he maintains, "but the press and a lot of people found 'Superman' after September 11 and are assuming it basically came out of that." Still, even Ondrasik has a difficult time separating "Superman" from the events of September 11. "Now when I play the song, I'm thinking about firemen, passengers on that plane that went down near Pittsburgh, the leadership of our country, guys who were jumping out of planes in Afghanistan."

The zenith of the song's position as an anthem for the heroes of September 11 may have come on October 20, when Ondrasik performed it at The Concert For New York. He was introduced that night by paramedic Earl Holland, who had been driving home from a memorial service for some of his lost coworkers when he heard "Superman" on the radio and realized that it spoke to the supermen to whom he'd just said good-bye. Holland had been so moved that he E-mailed John to ask him if one day, as he performed it in concert, he would dedicate it to the fallen heroes. VH1's Executive VP, Talent & Music Programming, Rick Krim, was instrumental in setting up the performers for The Concert For New York. Having been a longtime friend of the Ondrasiks, he realized he had the perfect stage for Holland's wish to

come true: John would sing it to 6,000 policemen, firefighters and other public servants at the show. "I had seen the E-mail," explains Krim, "and knowing that the song had taken on a whole new meaning after September 11, the more I thought about it, [I realized] it could be an amazing moment."

John Ondrasik has been playing music his whole life, and always dreamed of making it his career. That dream died a few years ago, but it's been rekindled thanks to a song he never intended to sing. Today, "Superman" no longer belongs to John or to Five For Fighting, but to all the people who have gained strength from it. He has performed it on Leno, Letterman and Larry King. He's played it to open the *Sports Illustrated Awards* show in front of many of his favorite sports stars and at the NHL All-Star game in his hometown of Los Angeles, and it's been nominated for a coveted GRAMMY award. This is truly one of the feel-good stories of our lifetime, a fact that is not lost on John Ondrasik.

"In basically two years, I went from being a guy who was out of the music business to a guy sitting in Madison Square Garden, singing a song and having 20,000 people singing it back to me—loud. Talk about a story made only in America."

Ondrasik is humbled by everything that's happened the past few months, and appreciative of Aware and Columbia Records, who not only gave him the chance to do a record, but who stuck with it even after *America Town* had been out for nearly a year. "Not many labels would do that, and it's to their credit that 'Superman' even got a shot." Two-and-a-half years after he entered the studio to record *America Town*, Ondrasik can admit that he expected it to be nothing more than a final hurrah, a memento of his time as a musician.

"I thought it would be something I could listen to with my kids 10 years down the line. I was convinced that it would be kind of a hobby, my last time in a studio." ✱

To be able to wake up every morning excited about going to work and passionate about your job is a blessing that both **Michael McDonald** (President) and **Chris Tetzeli** (Vice President) of According To Our Records (ATO) share. Perhaps that is one of the secrets that has made this relatively new independent label such a success. Of course, it also doesn't hurt that the other two partners in this venture are **Dave Matthews** and his manager, **Coran Capshaw**. Together, this quartet had a vision for an artist-friendly label, which first took shape in the fall of 1999 and saw its initial release, **David Gray's *White Ladder***, in March 2000.

BY **KAT CAMPBELL**

ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS, ATO IS ARTIST-FRIENDLY AND PRIMED FOR SUCCESS



MICHAEL McDONALD

"From the outset we wanted to find musicians that in some way were in tune with the Dave Matthews Band philosophy," says McDonald when asked what the vision was in starting ATO. "It's always been about quality music, a grassroots growth, a very active touring band and things that may not immediately jump out at you. Our primary goal is to maintain focus on projects from start to finish and really work them and do whatever you have to do to get them rolling. One of the keys is to be able to have the time and ability to focus on music that probably wouldn't get the time and energy it really deserves at the majors."

Tetzeli adds, "Our goal is working with music that blows us away and that we're 100% impassioned by, and trying to get it out to as many people as possible. We're working for the artists. They deliver us an album and it's up to us to get it out there and visible."

Currently there are five artists signed to ATO: David Gray, Chris Whitley, Gov't Mule, Ben Kweller and Patty Griffin, each coming through different channels and connections. For example, Gray came to ATO's attention via their old publicist. When Patty Griffin was dropped from her prior label, McDonald says they began pursuing her immediately. It was a similar case with Ben Kweller. Tetzeli had been working with Chris Whitley on a management level for a few years and had always held his music in high esteem. The teaming of Whitley and ATO was a natural evolution of that relationship.

The one thing all the artists have in common is that they fit within the overall standard of quality music that the partners agreed on. "We rarely find ourselves concerned with financial motivation," explains Tetzeli. "It's just that sense that we get to be a part of promoting amazing music. It makes it really easy to go to work when you feel that way."

That kind of homespun approach was exactly what appealed to Gray, who had no inclination to look toward the majors when he was seeking signage. When told by a mutual friend that Matthews was putting together his own label, Gray was quick to put all his eggs in the basket, believing the opportunity was too right to pass by. "They didn't spin us a line on what they were going to do. They were basically going to put us out on the road and grind us to a pulp," laughs Gray, adding that they were "good to their word."

After meeting Matthews, Gray felt that he came off as a genuine sort of person. "Obviously, he's forged a massive kind of lead for himself," Gray says of Matthews. "He's not exactly the most likely candidate to be a megastar, given the current musical trend. Yet, he's managed it and there's obviously more to him than meets the eye."

Gray sensed a real know-how and confidence from ATO's personnel right from the outset. "We were a little concerned going in because often you get artists who set up their own label and invariably it doesn't work all that well because you need a business sense to succeed. It wasn't like that with Dave. It seemed they were going to do things properly and that it was all being set up. You could feel confident that it was a workable situation you were going into and that it seemed like they all had their heads screwed on properly. There was no reason why this couldn't work."

The tie-in to RCA was another factor that appealed greatly to Gray. "The signs were starting to appear that we had a lot of interest in the U.K. at the time. With all the records being sold, it was begin-

"Our goal is working with music that blows us away and that we're 100% impassioned by, and trying to get it out to as many people as possible. We're working for the artists. They deliver us an album and it's up to us to get it out there and visible."

—CHRIS TETZELI



ning to feel as though things were moving our way and we wanted to make sure that there was room for the situation to expand. We basically wanted people who were going to work from the ground up and enjoy it, but we didn't want to tie it up, either. It was an adventure for us, from making the record to putting it out ourselves. It felt special because it would be a first experience for all the people who were going to be involved as well."

Quite obviously, all the work has paid off in the success of *White Ladder*, in particular with the way radio embraced the hit single "Babylon," and most recently with Gray's Best New Artist GRAMMY nomination for 2001. Gray, who is beginning work on his next, yet-untitled project, was surprised by the nomination, adding that he was having "an extra cup of tea to celebrate."

RCA also looks favorably on their liaison with ATO. "It's the ideal pairing of operating philosophies and musical mindsets," says Cheryl Khaner, VP Adult Formats at RCA. "ATO's roots lie within the musical sensibilities of Dave Matthews, with which RCA is intimately aware from our years of working Dave Matthews Band to radio, to retail and to the street. We respect and appreciate Dave's artistry as no other label can, and have had the pleasure of working hand in hand with his team to cultivate what has become one of the preeminent superstar careers in the industry. His commitment through ATO in finding and gaining exposure for highly talented artists that may otherwise go unnoticed matches RCA's own goals of dedicated artist development. Our existing relationship with all the key players on the ATO team has made the partnership aspect simple and seamless. ATO and Dave are unmatched at discovering talent, building the buzz and establishing a base on a record, while RCA has the proven track record of doing whatever it takes to bring artists to the next level. The RCA/ATO partnership is truly a relationship founded on mutual respect, admiration and dedication."



It seems to be the perfect situation from everyone's point of view. Tetzeli explains, "We've got a mechanism in place where, if a project was to grow to a point where we felt bringing in a major label marketing and promotion team would make sense, we have that capability. We can sign acts and work together as a team with RCA from the get-go. We've formalized that relationship now to the point where that would be a fluid transition."

Another advantage that ATO has is the prior experiences of its partners and their ability to see a complete picture of an artist's experience as a result. McDonald was a tour manager for the Dave Matthews Band for about seven years and Tetzeli has worked with Capshaw in Dave's management's office since pretty much the band's inception. Producer John Alagia was instrumental in hooking McDonald up by introducing him to the Dave Matthews Band. When the person who was selling their tour merchandise left, McDonald begged his way into the position that ultimately jump-started his music career. After being on the road for so long, McDonald was ready for something else and through conversations with Tetzeli, Matthews and Capshaw, the idea of starting a label was formed.

"Michael and I love working together," expounds Tetzeli, "and I think our experiences leading up to this point complemented each other well. I had experience on the management side and even, to a certain degree, a lot of jobs that related to running a label because Dave Matthews Band independently released their own first record. We did our own tour press, our own distribution and all of the associated things. Michael was out there getting an appreciation for the realities of what happens day in and day out on the road, and interacting with label people, as well as

CHERYL KHANER



"We were a little concerned going in because often you get artists who set up their own label and invariably it doesn't work because you need a business sense to succeed. It wasn't like that with Dave Matthews. It seemed they were going to do things properly. There was no reason why this couldn't work."

—DAVID GRAY

ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS ROSTER:

David GRAY
Chris WHITLEY
Patty GRIFFIN
Ben KWELLER
Gov't MULE

CONTACT:

MICHAEL McDonald
212.353.1841 &

CHRIS Tetzeli
540.456.4919

doing all the promotional work that goes into working a record from the band's point of view. It's certainly been great for us to be able to draw on all that."

"What's important," Tetzeli continues, "is that we're crazy about everything we're working on and that we follow through with every project that we're on—that we do everything we say we're going to do when we make an arrangement to work with an artist. We need to also maintain a size to the label that we can manage, so as to never compromise the commitment we make to our bands."


McDonald adds, "That's exactly it. Our goal is to maintain what we consider the quality standard of music that we've set. We're not stuck on a plan to fill any other gap than to get the best music that we can find out there. That's what I think is the most fun part of what we're doing. We're not stuck on a genre. I just feel really lucky to be doing what I'm doing. I haven't worked a day in my life."

"Hopefully, we'll continue to have a level of success for our bands," says Tetzeli in conclusion. "I think that's what it's all about."

McDonald continues with that thought: "If we can establish something where people are excited about another ATO record and begin to trust our judgment, that would be a really great place to finally be in. I think we've done that with a lot of the acts that we've worked with so far."

With David Gray's GRAMMY nomination on the horizon, one would tend to agree. "We love that," Tetzeli comments.

"How about the fact that you can strum a guitar for 12 years and end up in a GRAMMY category with Nelly Furtado, Alicia Keys and Linkin Park. I like that. I can't wait for the group picture." ✨



THE MIDWEST IS A GREAT PLACE TO GROW THINGS. The people are nice. The market is steady. And if you're a band like Big Head Todd And The Monsters—one that tours constantly and is able to build a solid and devoted fan base—the Midwest is as good a place as any to do it. Sure, they hail from Colorado, but next to that state, Minneapolis and Chicago are their biggest markets.

Big Head Todd
& the
monsters

BY JENNIFER EDELSTON

BIG HEAD TODD'S SOUND

is a blend of rootsy Midwestern soul, rock & roll and funk, with a lead vocalist whose voice pulls you deep into the song and won't let you go 'til he's good and ready. With the upcoming release of *Riviera*, Big Head Todd And The Monsters are poised to break out from the college circuit and introduce masses of new fans to their music with their strongest album to date.

The three men of Big Head Todd And The Monsters, Todd Park Mohr (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Rob Squires (bass) and Brian Nelson (drums) have been playing together since they

were in high school, and their music has only gotten better with time. *Sister Sweetly*, released in 1993, is their best-known album. It featured "Bittersweet" and "Broken Hearted Savior," mainstays on college campuses everywhere through the '90s and destined to reside in the epic rock ballad hall of fame. Subsequent releases such as *Strategem* (in '94) and *Beautiful World* (in '97), were embraced by their fans. After *Live Monsters*, a veritable greatest hits recorded live over several tours between '95 and '98, Big Head Todd decided to take a break from recording to enjoy the success they had worked so long and hard to achieve.

It would be four years before the next Big Head Todd release. In today's market of be-here-be-now-be-hip that seems like an eternity, but for a band like Big Head Todd it's as if no time has passed at all. The songs are solid. The voice is true. The guitar rocks. The music is just damn good. *Riviera* is a complete listening experience made up of 11 tracks sure to meet the expectations of diehard fans and excite new ones, which is what it's all about, according to lead singer Todd Park Mohr, whom we played 20 questions with recently.

What were you doing right before you sat down at your computer to answer these questions?

I was playing *Halo*, an Xbox video game. Creepy.

Now that *Riviera* is completed—and set for release on March 26—what do you think of it?

I think *Riviera* is my best record. *Riviera* is a very solid record to me as a set of songs. I'm very pleased with every song, and have spent a lot of time with them, more time than any other recording. I wrote about 35 songs to arrive at these 11. It took these songs about four years of head bashing and hard life to end up on a disc.

Do you have a favorite track on it?

"Universal Mom" is probably my favorite. No, wait, "Secret Mission."

It's been four years since your last studio recording. What did you do with all that time in between?

I spent all of that time working on *Riviera*, and playing shows to make money so we could keep working on *Riviera*.

You've been touring for 16 years and in that time you've converted thousands through your live show. What does that feel like?

It's nice to have people who want to see the band. I'm amazed to still be out playing for so many people. Our live show is the most important aspect of our being a band. After 16 years I know we are a better band now. I enjoy every aspect of presenting live shows and am looking forward to getting out again for *Riviera*.

What is it about Colorado, Chicago and Minneapolis that makes them such consistently strong markets for the band?

We've played them the most frequently over the longest period of time. Chicago and Minneapolis were the first cities we trekked out to in the van. Colorado has always been our home—even musically. Chicago and Minneapolis have been our second home.

Do you plan on touring to promote the new album?

Touring will begin around April 3. We are a three-piece again and we are really enjoying ourselves. The band has been playing material from *Riviera* for over two years now, so it will be really fun to finally get the music into people's hands and heads! We have so much material, we play very different shows from night to night. Since much of *Riviera* is hard rockin', we have a more energetic show than in the past.

What does "relationship with the audience" mean to you as a singer, songwriter and guitarist?

The nice thing about being an artist is that the main part of the job is about communicating. I think the better the art, the more intimate that communication becomes. A lot of music these days wants to forget about the idea of a relationship—it's a financial relationship. A song or a performance should be more than that. A good artist needs to go out on a limb to say what needs to be said. I think that's what we crave from pop stars but we rarely see it anymore.

Do you still encourage fans to tape your shows?

All the time.

Who do you consider your influences?

Peter Sellers, Walt Disney, Albert King, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles.

On *Riviera* there's more of a '70s rock sound to some of the songs—I hear hints of Fleetwood Mac (particularly on "Riviera") and some Rolling Stones (on "Runaway Train")—how did this shift come about?

I love the attitude of Fleetwood Mac and The Rolling Stones in their '70s recordings. The songs just seem to take over everything when you hear them. There is a groove sub-floor that is very solid, but the story of the song ends up ruling over everything. Even though everything rocks as hard as it can, there is a tenderness to the instruments and a live-band quality to the recordings. It is fragile because it's human. That's what I wanted *Riviera* to sound like and I think we came damned close. It was even mixed on the same recording console that was used on The Rolling Stones' *Exile On Main Street*!

You guys started in a van—Jewel started in a van—any other similarities you want to share?

Jewel writes poetry. I write poetry. My poetry is better.

When you wrote "Bittersweet," did you know it would be an epic ballad?

I like "Bittersweet" because it is a proper tragedy. There aren't really very many of those, but I think they end up being the most beautiful type of song. When I wrote that it seemed like a pretty ordinary song to me, but I know it has impressed itself on quite a few people and I'm glad about that.

Tell me about the Big Head Todd Street Team.

Big Head Todd Street Team is a fan program, where fans can help spread the news and receive special accommodations.

Big Head Todd And The Monsters is a three-piece band. How do you write songs that sound almost symphonic?

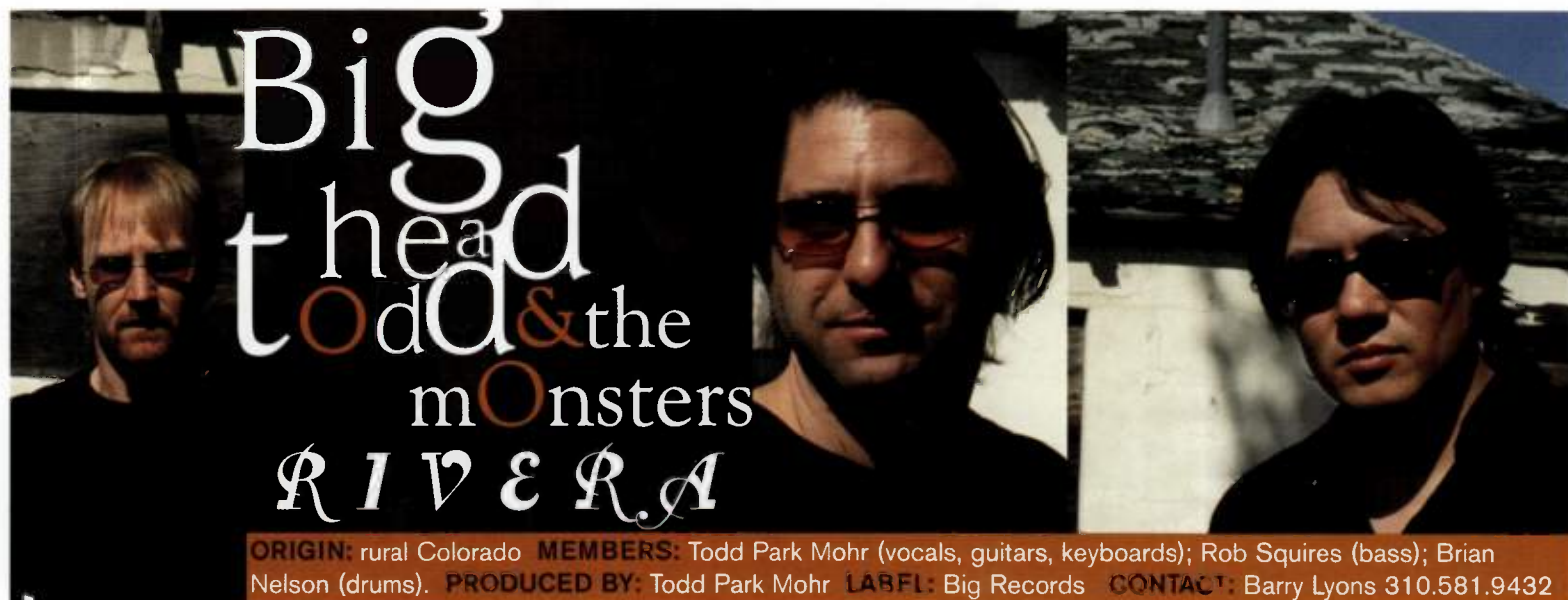
My compositions for Big Head Todd are guitar-based. The guitar is a very versatile instrument. It has such a broad range tonally and can accommodate a lot of notes being played at the same time. I'm still fascinated by the instrument and enjoy discovering new things that can be done.

A lot has been written about Big Head Todd floating just below the mainstream. What does that mean to you? Do you want to be mainstream?

I've enjoyed the fact that my mug is nowhere to be seen on *Entertainment Tonight* or *Rolling Stone* magazine. Still, we have a very valid career in terms of live show attendance and album sales. I'm very proud of that. It just shows that there is more to America than what is in the media. I've always looked on Big Head Todd as kind of an alternative band, because we don't have any relationship to what's going on in TV or mainstream media. Some of our music is straightforward pop, so I think our appeal to people has a little irony. "Broken Hearted Savior," and even a fair amount of "Riviera," is very accessible and almost well-worn familiar. We really do want to reach everybody on the planet, but only if it can be done secretly. Or rather discreetly. The song and a band playing the song are the most important thing. That's how I want to be loved or hated.

Is critical acclaim important?

Sure it is. But critics are individuals and music is an individual sort of thing. I think pretty much anything would find its enemies and its fans, depending on who the individual is. Sometimes though, something is really good and everybody knows it. Creating something like that is what we are in business for. ✎



ORIGIN: rural Colorado MEMBERS: Todd Park Mohr (vocals, guitars, keyboards); Rob Squires (bass); Brian Nelson (drums). PRODUCED BY: Todd Park Mohr LABEL: Big Records CONTACT: Barry Lyons 310.581.9432

A CLOSER LOOK



CLEM SNIDE *THE GHOST OF FASHION*

BY JIM NELSON

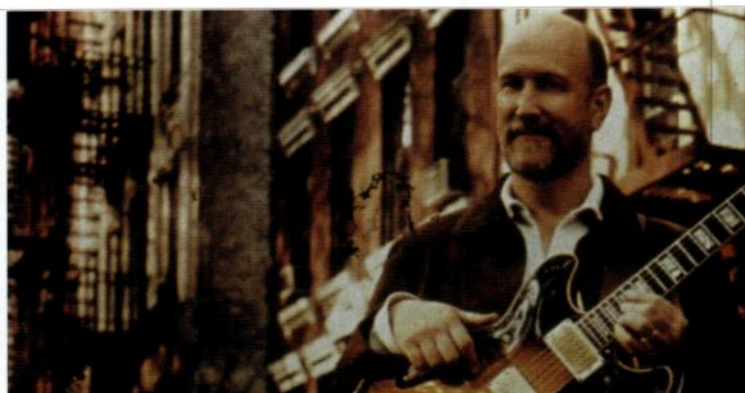
ORIGIN: Boston, but they've since moved to New York **PRODUCED BY:** Jason Glasser **LABEL:** spinART

If it seems like you've already read about Clem Snide somewhere, maybe it's because *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Playboy*, *Alternative Press* and many others have already been writing some really nice things about the band. Take *Rolling Stone*, for instance, which picked *The Ghost Of Fashion* as one of their 50 favorite albums of 2001. *Details* gave this splendid assessment of Clem Snide and its front man: "By day, Eef Barzelay is a New York City tour guide; by night, he's the most miserable wretch this side of Tom Waits."

Clem Snide was formed in Boston more than 10 years ago, with the sometimes-quirky, sometimes-thought-provoking, always-clever *The Ghost Of Fashion* being their third full-length album. Initially a three-piece that rode along on the incoherent screams of Israeli-born, New Jersey-bred singer/songwriter/guitarist Barzelay, Clem Snide now fits nicely into the same musical landscape as bands like Counting Crows (but with a David Loweryish sardonic wit). Barzelay's words can be so off-the-wall that they often extract a "what did he say?" reaction. Like the strangely titled "Joan Jett Of Arc," or during "Ancient Chinese Secret Blues," when he sings—with no hint of irony—"Calgon, take me away."

The Ghost Of Fashion is a mostly quiet album, with cello, upright bass and understated drums providing an atmosphere for Eef Barzelay's not-always joyously expressive voice and left-handed musings. From the CD's opener, a charming country-rocker called "Let's Explode," to the slow, Johnny Cash-like shuffle of "Long Lost Twin" ("Tonight I feel like Elvis longing for his long-lost twin") to an Elvis Costello-infected power pop ditty called "Ice Cube," *The Ghost Of Fashion* is a top-shelf collection of songs longing for their moment in the sun.

- The current single, "Moment In The Sun," was chosen by the producers of the hit TV show *Ed* to be its theme song.
- The quartet played *Late Night With Conan O'Brien* a month ago, and next month they'll be on *The Late Late Show With Craig Kilborn*.
- Ben Folds handpicked Clem Snide to tour with him last year. Folds invited them out again this year, but they decided to do their own headlining tour instead. See them beginning in March.
- Clem Snide is a character in a William S. Burroughs novel.



THE JOHN SCOFIELD BAND *ÜBERJAM*

BY CASEY ALFARO

ORIGIN: John was born in Ohio and his band is based out of New York **PRODUCED BY:** John Scofield and Jason Olaine **LABEL:** Verve

Does a guitar have to sound like a guitar? Can it resemble, for instance, a saxophone or some other kind of horn? This was the idea that ran through John Scofield's mind some 30-odd years ago, and it has shaped the way he's played ever since. He's accompanied so many other artists in the studio that to mention them all would take up this whole profile. Scofield's already played with most of the musicians that he looked up to and grew up with; now he's featuring the next generation of hotshots on his latest release, *Überjam*. It's an eclectic mix that shows off Scofield's masterful playing, combining his years of experience with some of the best players in jazz.

In the early '70s, Scofield found himself jamming with the likes of George Duke, Charles Mingus and Chet Baker. He hooked up with Miles Davis in 1982 and played with him for the next three years. In 1985 Scofield continued his solo career, exploring fusions of soul and jazz, and working with up-and-coming greats Medeski, Martin & Wood on his 1997 release *A Go Go*. In 2000, he released *Bump*; 2001 gave us *Works For Me*; and now comes *Überjam*.

Scofield takes us on a journey to many different parts of the musical spectrum on *Überjam*, helped in no small part by the talents of each member of the group. Whatever nuance they add to the song, this guitar virtuoso uses it to create his own style in the process. Avi Bortnick's Indian samples, Jesse Murphy's bass lines and John Medeski's Mellotron give "Acidhead" a very free-spirited and transcendental feel. "Ideofunk" has a simple, yet funky, vibe, while "Jungle Fiction" includes drummer Adam Deitch's incredibly complicated rhythms. Why settle for one style when Scofield takes you to a different place on each song?

- In the 1980s, Scofield did some instructional videos on improvisation and jazz-funk guitar.
- He received an honorary Doctorate from the Berklee College of Music, where he had studied before dropping out to concentrate on performing.
- Scofield performed "Cars Trucks Buses" on last year's *Sharin' In The Groove: Celebrating The Music Of Phish*, a tribute CD which raised money to educate children in music.

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Matt Cheplic

By Jim Nelson

"It just dawned on me that I can't get obsessive about distancing myself from the sources," says 28-year-old singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Matt Cheplic. "If I write 10 songs, and two of them sound a lot like Elvis Costello and three sound a little bit like him, then that's just the way the chips are gonna fall. I'm gonna put the best songs out and hopefully people won't be too cynical about it."



Cheplic, who usually performs dressed to the nines (local club owners get calls about "the guy who wears the suit"), delivers perfect pop numbers on *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*. They weave their way through the CD, bringing to mind artists like Marshall Crenshaw, The Beau Brummels and The Rembrandts—pop songwriters who used pre-*Sgt. Pepper's* Beatles as their compass. And yes, Cheplic does sound a skosh like Costello, most notably on the ironic "Looking Forward To Senility," but he also manages to emulate The Beach Boys quite nicely on the same song, so he's adept at spreading most—but not *all*—of his influences around. Absent from the CD are references to jazz and hard rock, which would seem out of place together in the same sentence if not for the role that each played in Cheplic's musical development. An accomplished saxophonist, Matt was in the high school jazz band while he was still in junior high and he spent a few years worshiping the gods of metal, thanks to his older brother Tom.

"My brother brought home the Judas Priest *Screaming For Vengeance* record, the 1982 release. My first reaction to it was, 'What is this crap?' But I shared a room with my brother, and his record collection steadily became nothing but Judas Priest and Black Sabbath, and I developed a taste for it." Enamored of the look and sound of his new favorite bands, Cheplic immersed himself in learning to play guitar and grew, by his own estimation, the "worst excuse for long hair that you can imagine." By the time he was 17 he'd gone through a pair of musical-morphoses,

spending a time obsessed with Rush and prog rock before finding The Beatles and ultimately, Elvis.

"I was in high school dating a girl who was a couple of years older than I was and she was a big Beatles fan and big Elvis Costello fan. She would play the records, and at first I really wasn't into it. When I was 15 or 16, The Beatles were my parents' music." A year later The Beatles became his music too. "I had a very hip teacher when I was a senior in high school," Cheplic remembers. "He was my baseball coach, an English teacher and the newspaper adviser—I was the editor of my high school newspaper. He was an older teacher and we all looked up to him. He played in a cover band on the weekends and he would espouse the virtues of The Beatles, and for some reason I just got obsessed with it when I was about 17, the *Help* record especially. I caught Paul McCartney doing an *Unplugged* right around that time and it just broke through finally after enough people tried to get me to see the light."

If you take the Lincoln Tunnel west out of Manhattan, you'll wind up in Weehawken, a New Jersey township of about 12,000. It's Matt's hometown, but if you ask him he's just as likely to tell you he's from nearby Hoboken. And why not? Even though Weehawken was the site of the infamous Alexander Hamilton/Aaron Burr duel 200 years ago, Hoboken is much better known and it's home to the





game of baseball and Frank Sinatra. That's a big deal to Cheplic, a Polish/Italian/Irishman with a first-rate sense of humor. So much so that his CD, *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*, is dedicated to Sinatra—another one of Cheplic's acquired tastes.

"I was sitting in my first day of college and this guy in my class said, 'My favorite singer is Frank Sinatra.' I remember thinking at the time—when I was 17 and dumb—that that was a strange thing to say. People whose favorite singer is Frank Sinatra are my grandparents. From then 'til now, I have become quite aware that it's a good thing to have your favorite singer be Frank Sinatra."

Hoboken is also appealing to Matt because he's a huge baseball fan, and though Yankee Stadium is barely 15 miles from Weehawken, Cheplic's a diehard Boston Red Sox fan. "Every year I live and die with them," he groans.

Loving the long-suffering Sox rather than the Goliath-like Yankees is, in some ways, a microcosm of Cheplic's music, where he also eschews the obvious in favor of choosing his own course. If he had stuck with hard rock he'd be in the mainstream these days, but it's difficult to imagine that he could've made an album as inspired as *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*. Bubbling over with easygoing melodies, tasty, unforced lyrics and Cheplic's velvety baritone, it's not instantly reminiscent of anything on the radio today, but it's oh so familiar. It's also his second go-round at his first album. In late 1999 he made *Single White Male* after the homemade video for a song called "Deliver Me" gave Matt Cheplic his first national exposure.

"We had the video before we had a CD, if you can believe that," he chuckles. "At the end of '98 I just wanted to make a video—I don't even remember what motivated me so strongly about it. I didn't have any product to push, I just had a lot of friends who were skilled indie filmmakers and former film students. So for one weekend in December of '98 we did it. A couple of months later, Gene Foley [Matt's manager and CEO of upstart Bodyguard Records] saw an ad that MTV was looking for independent videos, sent mine in, and forgot about it. Lo and behold, they contacted us and said, 'We love the video and we want to air it as part of a special that we're doing in June.' The paradox was that the video was played on MTV as a part of that *Under The Radar* special and subsequently on *120 Minutes*, and we had nothing to really capitalize on it. We wouldn't have CDs until months later."

With Foley, an entertainment lawyer, and his partner, GRAMMY-winning producer John Rollo (Jimmy Cliff, Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes), backing him, Cheplic made *Single White Male* and sold a few hundred copies at shows. That CD contained early recordings of some of the jewels from *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*, like "Running Out Of Rainbows," "Still Look Cool," "It's A Wonderful Life" and "Deliver Me."

"The difference between the first record and this one is that we remastered and recut some things; "Don't Let Me Lose My Mind" is new, a song called "Just Like

A Grown-Up" was not on the first record and the hidden track, "Because I Am"—I just recorded that here in my apartment and tagged it on the end."

"Don't Let Me Lose My Mind," which is just getting to radio now, is a hauntingly beautiful cry for help that features the masterful interplay of a flugelhorn and the sultry vocals of Matt's fiancée, Melanie Haubert. A slight departure from the pop fare on the rest of the CD, "Don't Let Me Lose My Mind" could easily be a sleeper hit if given the chance. Cheplic had the music for "Don't Let Me Lose My Mind" for quite a while, but he couldn't come up with any suitable lyrics. Then, a stroke of bad luck turned the song into the shining moment on a very strong collection of tunes.

"About a year and a half ago I grew pretty dissatisfied with life," he recounts. "I'd left my job, but music wasn't proving remotely profitable, so I was always broke. I had this little basement apartment with no windows. It was dark and dusty, yet I stayed home all the time because I had no money and all my friends worked every day. I would get so psyched if something decent came on TV, but that's pretty rare on weekdays. Anyway, this song sprung from that, although it's simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic. At first, it says, 'Stop me from going crazy from this monotony.' Then it evolves into, 'My career will gain steam one day, and then I'll have a whole new set of problems; save me from going crazy when that day comes.' So there's an element of optimism in it, holding out that hope." ✪



ARTIST: Matt Cheplic (vocals, guitar, keys)

ORIGIN: Weehawken, NJ

CURRENT RELEASE: *Don't Let Me Lose My Mind*

PRODUCED BY: John Rollo

LABEL: BodyguardRecords.com

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877.636.2739, Shana 888.852.2739
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WEB SITE: www.mattcheplic.com



Breaking New Ground

With

ROBERT BRADLEY'S *Blackwater* SURPRISE

Robert Bradley has lived a pretty incredible life. He was born blind and grew up in Alabama with his 13 other brothers and sisters. He went to school for the blind up until his teens when his parents moved the family to Detroit and he attended a regular high school. Inspired by The Four Tops, The Impressions, The Temptations and other soulful vocal groups, Bradley began playing piano in churches before joining an assortment of singing groups.

By Matthew Lawton

He eventually got married and settled down, taking on a job in the early '70s running a concession stand for the state of Alabama. But the music bug continued snapping at his heels, so in search of a new career, Bradley hit the streets—literally. “I just went downtown one day and started singing on the street with a guy and he told me I could make some money at it,” recalls Bradley. “So I went and found me a guitar and learned a few chords and just started doing it in the mid-'70s and that's how I pretty much supported myself all the way up to '92.”

At which point a random chance meeting with a couple of long-hairs from a young rock group evolved into the unique and inspired Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise. These five guys blend the rawness of The Rolling Stones, the passion of Otis Redding, the groove of The Black Crowes and the warmth of The Band to create their modern mix of roadhouse rock & soul. We recently caught up with Robert Bradley to discuss life on the streets, life on the road and life on the *New Ground*.

For years you made your living just playing music on the streets and that's where you eventually met your fellow bandmates. What was it like playing on the streets, and how did you end up joining the band?

Well, I never made less than \$20 an hour so I would just work a few days a week sometimes. See, in Detroit I used to market, man, I used to make \$600 or \$700 every Saturday and that's all I really did. But the only reason that I got with this band was because across the country the cities were beginning to make ordinances to clean up the streets because of the homeless. So when Detroit started making all of these new laws, I had to move from my regular spot and that's how I met these guys. I would never have gone to that corner where I met them unless the city hadn't made the rule that I couldn't go to my regular place anymore. I met them the first day I relocated. The drummer was late and he heard me on the street and went up and told the band to come down and check me out. They came down, checked it out and I've been hanging out with them since '92. When they met me, we weren't gonna even be a band. They said, “Hey there's a studio and we'll play and record some stuff and see what we can do.” It came together so quick that they stopped what they were doing to just become the band.

How did you guys come up with the name Blackwater Surprise?

Well, it was something that we saw on the Discovery Channel about a black water river somewhere in Brazil or someplace down there. And it was a surprise being together like this, with me being as old as I am and y'all being as young as you are, and the fact that I'm black and y'all white, I said, “Damn, Blackwater Surprise,” and they just put Robert Bradley before it. But it was a surprise to me, I'll tell you that.

So you went on to record three records with RCA, and now you've just released your latest disc, *New Ground*, on one of the coolest and well-respected labels ever, Vanguard Records. How do you like dealing with Art Phillips and your new label?

See, Art got it at the beginning. Art is just a great guy. You know he's not into all this façade that people got going on. He saw it right there from ice cream and all of that. You need steak and potatoes sometime, you know? You need the real deal. That fast food will keep you going for only about a minute, but then you're gonna get tired and it's gonna make you sick, so you got to get some real home cookin' and that's what this is about.

Who does the driving, the band members or do you have specific drivers?

The band members and a couple of the crew guys. You know everybody helps out but me. They don't allow it. They joke around and go, “Hey man, we're crossing Nebraska and it ain't nothin' but a straight shot.” But I don't drive in the daytime...it's got to be at night (laughs).

Do you like being out there on the road and meeting everybody or do you miss being at home?

Well, I like to be home, but if I'm home too long, I gotta go play. I've got to get out there because that's what I enjoy and that's why I'm here on this earth to sing and do music and entertain people. That's what I was put on this earth for, you know what I mean?

So tell me about the band lineup now—it's changed a little since you guys first started.

Well, Tom Wilber, he's the bass player. He was the sound guy when we started years ago, and he hung out at the studio and has been around all the time, so when one person got sick or something he could jump in and play, and when the bass player left, he fit



“I listen to baseball games on the radio and I have my acoustic guitar right there. The way the baseball game moves, you can listen to your game and do your music, too. So I always have me a radio for the baseball games to listen to.”

You guys do a lot of that home cookin' live onstage. You've opened for folks like Dave Matthews, Sonic Youth, Brian Setzer and Beck, and you've even played the H.O.R.D.E. tour. Describe your shows.

They're fun, 'cause I like to crack jokes, I like to talk to the crowd and they talk to me. Everybody in this band just loves music and they love to play and people get it. They see it and see that people are having a good time, and it's easy for them to have a good time.

Do you guys travel around on a bus?

No, we don't need that façade, we're not rock stars. Buses cost too much money. We have a big 15-passenger thing, one of those Tahoe cars. When we go out on a short tour we call it the Tupperware Tour because we don't carry a lot of stuff. But when we go out behind the record, we'll probably take our equipment truck or whatever so everybody will be more comfortable. We like to move kind of fast and sometimes we drive all night.

right in. I used to go and sing with Matt Ruffino, the guitar player, sometimes when I was off the road, so I knew him. And Randy Sly, our keyboard player, he knew Jeff Fowlkes our drummer—so it's just like everybody knew everybody.

How did you guys write the songs on the new album? Did you write them all by yourself or does the band write them together?

I wrote “Born In America” back in '79, I wrote “Willie Lee,” like, in '72 and the rest of them I wrote last year. I mostly come up with the songs and I check them out with the band and say, “Give me a change,” or, “Can you find a bridge?” So we worked on them together like that.

“Train” came together in a funny way. I had been looking for an old upright piano, but every time I wanted to buy one the people wanted too much money. So one day the guys called me and said, “Man, you won't believe what we got for you.” They had found one that needed to be restored, and it was the right price: Free if you move it. It took all seven of them to

get it on the trailer and it took seven or eight of 'em to get it on the porch of my house. You know those pianos way back then, they were heavy. I'm telling you, I was wondering whether my porch could take it. So it was the spur of the moment, but we got it in and then it wouldn't play anything except C, F and G. So that's how I came up with "Train" because I couldn't go to any other note.

I eventually got one of these old guys from Poland over to the house to fix it up and he goes, "It's really gonna cost more than it's worth." But I was like, "Listen, this is what I want. It was the same kind of piano that my grandmother had in the house when I was a kid." It did end up costing \$400, but now I can

just rather take it real slow and easy. Back in the day my first wife, she just worked. I would keep the kids and she'd say, "You can work on your music and keep the kids." I didn't like it much, I don't like changing Pampers. No, it did not work out so I thought I better go get the money so she can just stay here and help me spend it.

"Born In America" is a real important song right now, yet you wrote it about 20 years ago. It seems like maybe the song was just waiting around for its time. What moved you to write that one?

When the hostages was in Iran, President Carter planned a rescue and tried to get those people out. Even though they didn't get them that time, those

being blind, 'cause that's some shit I don't want to see. You know I don't want to see nothing like that. I'm telling you, it was just totally beyond any imagination. But you can't go out of the house and be scared all the time. You've got to continue to try to be careful. That's why I put on my seatbelt because I'm trying to live as long as I can. You know, there's a lot of good stuff coming up down the road, too. It's not all gonna be bad, but if you go out and don't be careful and something happens, look what you might wind up missing. If I wasn't careful a long time ago, I might be dead, because back then the drugs took a lot of people. They're still doing it, but it's not as prevalent as it was back in the day. So I just figured that I was young then and I was wild and I tried a few things, but thank God I didn't try or do anything that took me out.

Do you still smoke or drink a little?

Yeah, I still smoke a little marijuana, but see it's good for the little sight that I've got. I like to have a couple of drinks at the bar and then just go home. I mean, you're already blind and then you drink, then you're really gonna be in a big fog, man, you know what I'm talkin' about? You guys that can see you know exactly what I'm talking about. When I'm out, I have to learn the place and then being out on the road, it makes it harder, so I come back to the hotel and I'll just have me some beer. I'll have a drink of Jack every once in a while with the fellas, but I can't have liquor. Liquor is the only time I went to jail. I got drunk and I was going into Detroit and I was crossing these four lanes going each way and I missed the island. I mean, I'm out there and people are blowing their horns and the police came and they grabbed me and I just automatically started fighting. So they took me on in, but it was more for my safety. The police have always been nice to me. I used to get lost, call them up and tell them I was lost and they'd come and get me, especially when I was in the streets of Detroit because everybody knew me. So I've never had any problems with the police.

Once you start swinging at the cops, they *should* just take you in.

Yeah, I'll tell you it was time to go, man. I could have gotten myself killed back then with four lanes going each way and the island. That's what gets you if you're blind, those islands, man, you've got to make sure you don't miss them. If you miss them, you're in trouble.

Do you get around with a cane or a seeing-eye dog?

I just have a cane because I'm not that neat to have one of those seeing-eye dogs. I always like to be moving here and there, plus I have light perception so it's like I'm not in total darkness. Therefore a cane is pretty easy for me—I have no problem with it.

And speaking of moving around, you guys headed down to Nashville to record *New Ground* with Jay Joyce. What was that like?

We recorded down at his place because we wanted to try something new, be a little different and it was a little cheaper, too. He lives like out in the suburbs and we stayed in a hotel just a couple of miles from his place. There are these woods and stuff out around his house. We had a bunch of barbecues and everything like that. We'd go in and play a while, eat a while, drink a while and go back and play some more music. It was us and we used some background singers from Nashville and a couple of local players and the guy that blows harmonica for Willie Nelson, he plays on "America." We did that for 14 days and then it was all done after that. So when you hear people talking about how it takes a year and a half to make a record—they're bullshitting. They're just getting into a deeper hole with those conglomerates because that's really all they want you to do in the first place. Then it'll take forever paying them back.

continued



"I'm trying to live as long as I can. You know, there's a lot of good stuff coming up down the road, too. It's not all gonna be bad, but if you go out and don't be careful and something happens, look what you might wind up missing."

go outside and play that on the porch—it's like one of those porches that has those sliding glass windows all around. I love going out there to play it—it's just a beautiful sounding piano.

Tell us about the second track on the record, "See Her."

Well that came in from my wife because I just wanted to see her and let her know. You know, in the morning and the afternoon, I want to see her. "Make sure you're here in the morning and make sure you're home in the evening." You know what I mean?

What does she do?

She doesn't do anything now, she just sits around looking pretty, that's about the size of it. That's what they like. These women don't like that career stuff—well some of them do. The majority of women would

guys put their lives on the line and I thought it was a great thing. I wrote the song right there on the street that day when I heard about it and I've been singing it ever since. I never could get anyone interested in it because they thought it was too corny though. But this time when we were recording, I said, "This song is on the record and I don't care whether you like it or not, it's gonna be on there." So I made sure of it and to be honest, I didn't know this was gonna come to be, but I think it's a really good song for the times right now.

What are your thoughts on how America has dealt with the terrorist attacks and the war?

I really feel the attacks were horrible and I still feel the pain. I think of the people who were right there looking at it, and I'll tell you, there's some goodness in

don't forget the music



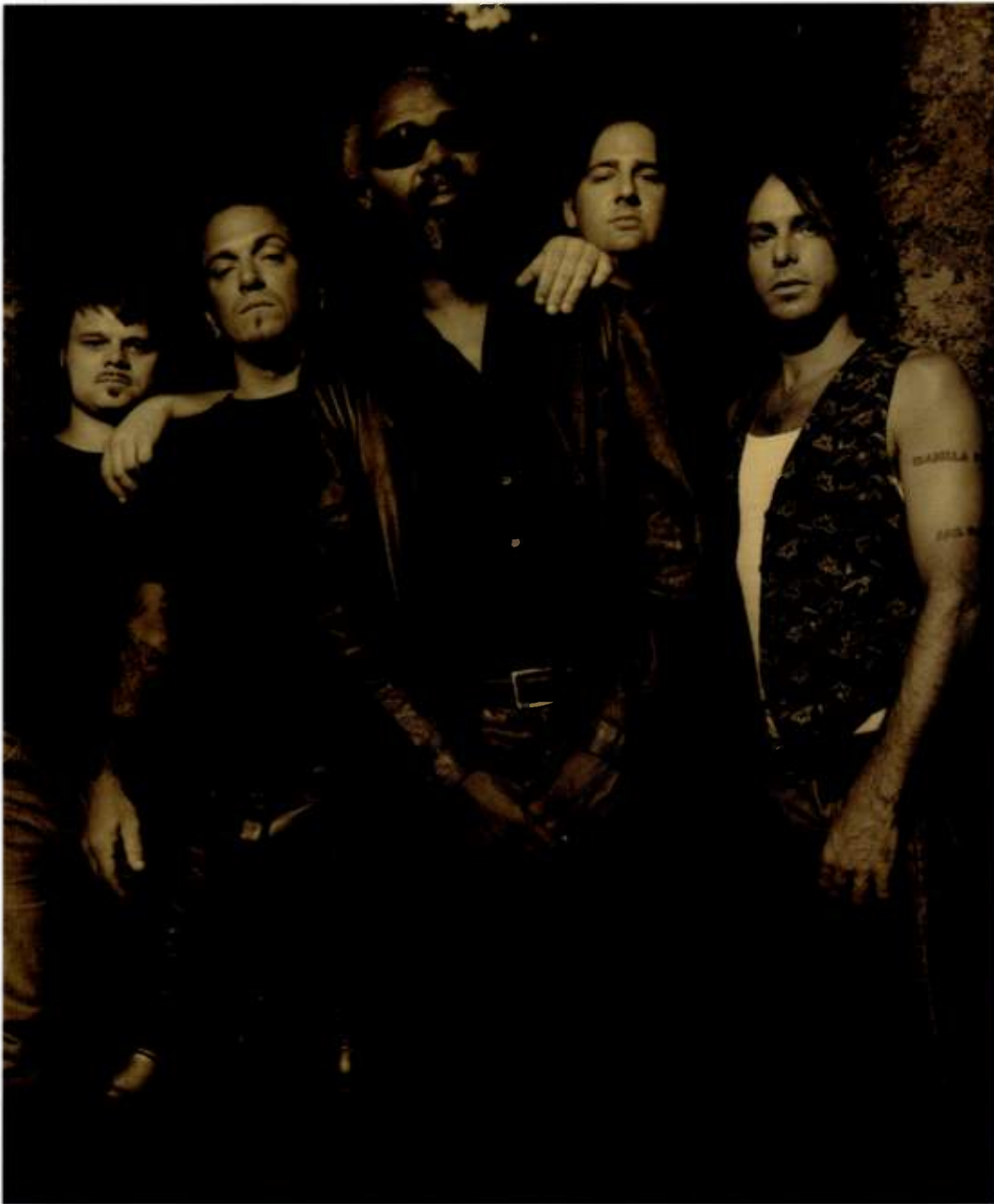
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"You need steak and potatoes sometime, you know? That fast food will keep you going for only about a minute, but then you're gonna get tired and it's gonna make you sick, so you got to get some real home cookin' and that's what this is about."

How do you compare *New Ground* to your earlier albums?

Well, this one might be a little more soulful with more of a rocking-type sound on a couple of tracks. It's more contemporary and it's got a little bit of new school hip-hop flavor in some ways. We use a couple of loops here and there and we tried to make it more youthful sounding. I like it a lot.

Me, too. It's a really cool album and you guys did a great job. Now let me ask you one other thing: we talked about what you do with music and the band, but what do you do when you're *not* doing anything revolving around music?

I do go out in the woods and go up to the lake and sit by the water, and I like to go in the mountains. I just like to be outside. I listen to baseball games on the radio and I have my acoustic guitar right there. The way the baseball game moves, you can listen to your game and do your music, too. So I always have me a radio for the baseball games to listen to.

What's your favorite team?

Well it's the Tigers, but back in the day I was a Yankee fan. I liked Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris and Elston Howard and Whitey Ford, and all of that. I liked the Cincinnati Reds when they had the Big Red Machine with Joe Morgan, Tony Perez and all of those guys. I've always listened to the Dodgers and Vin Scully because he could really call the game. He has that magic voice, you know; it's pleasant to listen to. ✪

ROBERT BRADLEY'S BLACKWATER SURPRISE *New Ground*

ORIGIN: Detroit

MEMBERS: Robert Bradley (vocals, guitar, piano); Jeff Fowlkes (drums); Matt Ruffino (guitar); Randall Sly (keys); Tommy Wilber (bass).

PRODUCED BY: Jay Joyce

LABEL: Vanguard

CONTACT: Art Phillips 310.829.9355



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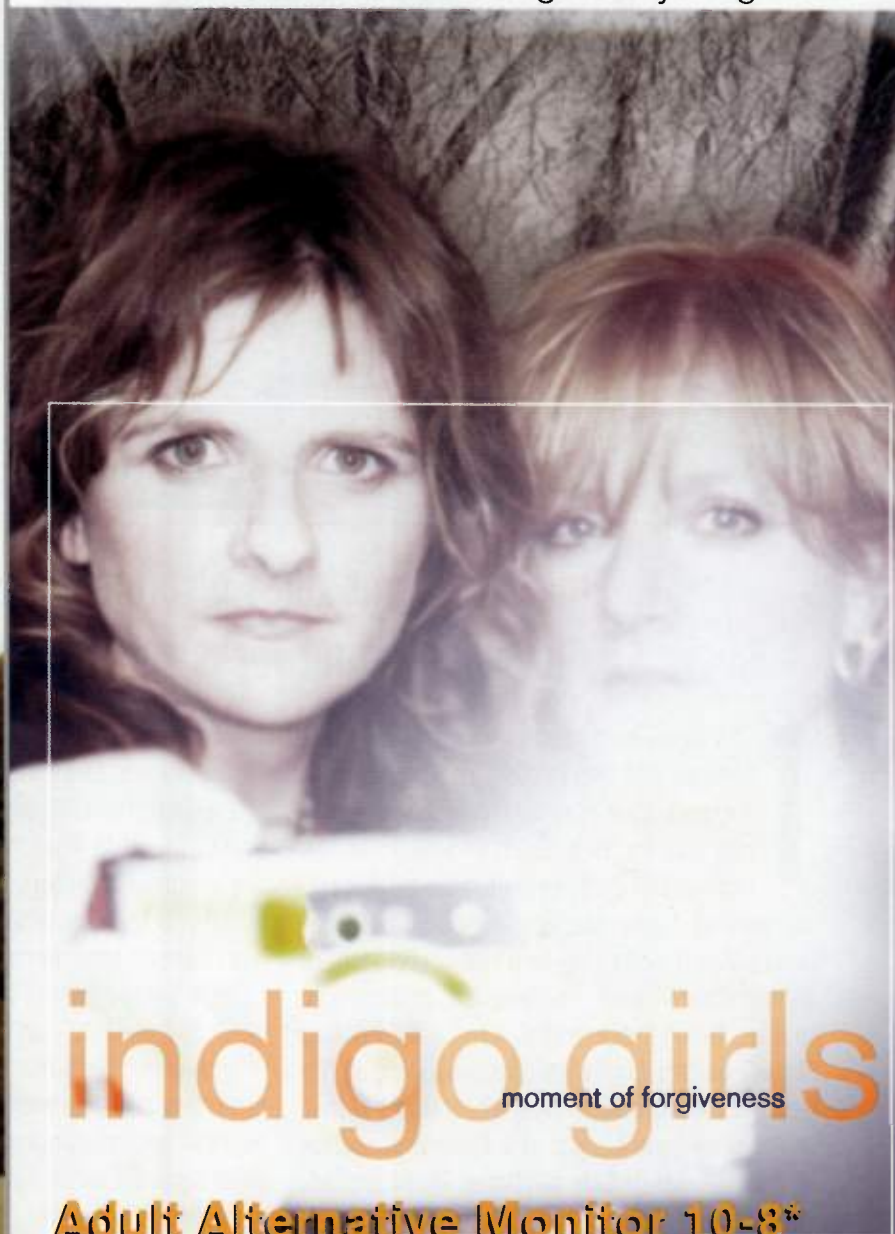
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BOBSINCLAIR

One Man Stays Afloat On The Ocean Of Radio Mergers

By Casey Alfaro

"One of the mistakes often made in this format and in a lot of other formats is that jocks tend to get off big records too quickly."

It's been said that one is the loneliest number and two is company, but three is a crowd. That may be true for some people, but for Bob Sinclair—who is in the business of independent radio broadcasting—owning three successful Adult Rock stations has not been easy in a radio world where independents have become an endangered species. Being independent is the only way Bob Sinclair and his family have known, going all the way back to the late '60s when Bob's father took a leap from his job at a television station to buy an AM Urban daytimer in Richmond, Virginia. Then came a Top 40 outlet in Michigan and a News/Farm station in Indiana. The family ended up with a total of eight stations nationwide, plus a partnership interest in a six-station cluster in Austin. Bob has run them all for the last 25 years. In the last 10 years, Sinclair

Telecable has made the transition to Adult Rock by purchasing KGSR in Austin, then WKOC (The Coast) in Norfolk, Virginia and finally KRSH (The Crush) in Santa Rosa, California. We talked to the program directors at each of these three outlets to learn how being joined with Sinclair has changed their perspective.

"Bob Sinclair helped us become a bigger player in the market," says KGSR's Jody Denberg. "We then got the tools we'd never had as far as marketing and research, and we have risen to become second in our demo in the last book. I don't think we would have ever risen without his persistence. Bob loves Triple-A radio and the format is lucky to have him. He is a smart, impulsive, honest man—and he is a man, not a corporation. Working with Bob Sinclair and the Johnson family as LBJS—an independent company—is a blessing for their employees and the

radio listeners of Austin, Texas."

WKOC's Paul Shugrue mentions that "Bob does exactly what I would be doing if I were in his place; maybe that's why we get along so well. He wants the songs to be played that he thinks are right for the station. I'm just glad to be able to make it happen for him."

At KRSH, the latest addition to Sinclair Telecable, Bill Bowker notes that "prior to Sinclair purchasing KRSH, we were a rather average Triple-A station. Bob really let us open up and program to the market needs and become involved with the community. The response has been terrific."

Sinclair loves to travel, and as he was making his way across the United States to Norfolk, we talked about Sinclair Telecable's three Adult Rock stations and what makes them stand out in each of their respective markets.

What got you interested in Adult Rock?

We first bought KGSR in Austin, and at the same time we bought a construction permit, for what is now 101X, KROX. I think it was back in '93 and that was my first venture into Triple-A. At that time there was a Triple-A station in Norfolk already, The Coast, although we didn't own it. I was pretty familiar with the station and the many different nuances of Triple-A.

KGSR is owned by LBJS; can you explain what LBJ is and your affiliation with them?

Our partner in Austin is the LBJ Holding Co. Luci Johnson is the President at LBJS, her husband Ian Turpin is the CEO and I am the Chief Operating Officer. The LBJ Company owned stations in Austin, as did Sinclair Telecable, and we had a meeting about four years ago, after the last round of

deregulation. Neither of us had any interest in selling so we decided to merge our companies. My manager, Scott Gillmore, the guy who basically put KGSR on the air, is now the Market Manager of the entire operation. I might add that today LBJS a higher combined Arbitron share in Austin than any independently owned company in any of the Top 50 markets in the United States. We're pretty proud of that.

What has really impressed you about KGSR?

With the exception of morning man Kevin Connor and the woman who did evenings, the on-air lineup is the same as when we bought it. The midday and P.M. drive lineup has consisted of Bryan Beck, Susan Castle and Jody Denberg. The station has tremendous loyalty and it really shows in the ratings. The really amazing thing about it is that in terms of

25-54 share, the last two or three years I can't think of one time that we've been out of the top 4. That is an amazing statistic for a station that is as eclectic as KGSR. Even more impressive to me is that twice in the last year KGSR has been No. 1! Before, I had urged Jody to mainstream the format just a little bit and try to bring in more cross-cuming listeners, but it was a mistake. The Operations Manager of our whole FM Rock group, Jeff Carroll, told me, "You know Jody's right. Keep the roots influence and concentrate on super-serving the core." It has been fantastic. The station is very successful.

Do you credit the success of KGSR in the Arbitron ratings to the music or the management, or a combination of both?

I credit our success there to Jody Denberg and

Scott Gillmore. I also credit Music Director Susan Castle, Sales Manager Dave Sonefeld and promotions person Jyl Hershman-Ross. We've got great jocks and sales people, which makes it a total team effort. Two years ago we started doing music testing. We do library testing twice a year, and also a weekly call-out. One of the mistakes often made in this format and in a lot of other formats is that jocks tend to get off big records too quickly. Particularly in Triple-A, you can see that records do not burn as fast because other formats are not playing them. If the songs that we play are picked up by other formats that put them in much higher rotations, they burn out more quickly. We have great records that are come-exclusive and they don't burn out as quickly. Before we started doing testing, we got off the big records too soon. So that's one thing that research has helped us with.

Just for KGSR or will you do that with the other stations as well?

We've been doing that with The Coast for a year now and we started at the first of the year with The Crush. I've become a big believer in research; however, you have to understand that a lot of your image songs will not test well and you can't run this format successfully with a very tight library. You've got to have image categories, and all stations do, but not all songs are created equal.

How does WKOC compare to KGSR or KRSH?

It's a completely different market. It's younger than Santa Rosa, for example. Austin is a young market, but you don't have as much live music and as much awareness of new music in Norfolk as you do in Austin. WKOC is slanted slightly more Alternative than our other stations, but here again, we're playing probably a 50% bigger library now than we were a year ago through the addition of more image songs.

Would you say that your experience with KGSR and The Coast influenced you to buy another Adult Rock station?

I became a huge believer in the format. For example, when we bought The Crush in Santa Rosa, in my first staff meeting there I was talking about the changes we would make to the three stations. One A/C-type station would change to KXTS, which is a Mexican regional format. We didn't change the format of the Top 40 station, but we tuned it up a little bit. When it came to The Crush, my first words of advice were to just say no to Matchbox Twenty.

Pam Long and Bill Bowker were very happy. I personally love Matchbox Twenty, but for Santa Rosa, and in Austin too, it's just the wrong band. I think that radio stations have become boring to a lot of people. To a great degree, that's one of the reasons that KGSR and The Crush have been so successful.

Are you hands-on with these stations?

I'm not hands-on at all with KGSR. In Norfolk and Santa Rosa, I'm not as hands-on now as I was six months ago, because I've got total confidence in my PDs, Paul Shugrue and Bill Bowker.

How often do you visit the stations?

I go to Austin about once a month and to Santa Rosa once every two months.

What's does the cable in Sinclair Telecable stand for?

We used to have cable systems, although we don't have them anymore. We just never bothered to change the name of our company. It's all Sinclair Telecable and LBJS.

What other types of stations do you own?

In Norfolk, we have two News/Talk stations and we have 96X, WROX, which is Alternative. In Austin, we have News/Talk KLBJ-AM, heritage Rock KLBJ-FM, Alternative KROX, Oldies KEYI, and KXMG, Mega, a Dance station. And in Santa Rosa, we have Top 40/Rhythmic KSXY, and we have KXTS, Regional Mexican. We pretty much cover the gamut in all three markets. I might add that each market is a very desirable place to live. I've tried to shy away from markets that are located where I don't want to go.

"I think that radio stations have become boring to a lot of people."

If a song breaks at Triple-A, and then it also breaks at the other formats, do you think Triple-A should cut back on playing it?

That is one of the things that just drives me nuts. The record companies use the Triple-A format as a testing ground. They just throw all of their stuff out there and whatever sticks they move over to Hot



A/C. David Gray is a perfect example. Once Hot A/C and Top 40 pick the records up, should the Triple-A get off of it? No, absolutely not. You can tell when you're testing it when the song burns out, but songs don't burn equally with the same number of spins. "Babylon" is a perfect example. It was a really huge record. That song has had about 1,000 spins in Norfolk and the listeners still liked it. They may get tired of other songs after only a couple of hundred spins. You just don't know, and research is the only way to tell for sure.

What do you do to unwind from the radio business?

I play golf, fairly well, I might add, and I love the beach. Right now my favorite destinations are in South America. I was traveling through Venezuela and Colombia when the September 11 thing happened. People thought I was crazy going to Colombia because it's supposed to be a dangerous country, but it turned out to be a lot safer than being in the United States.

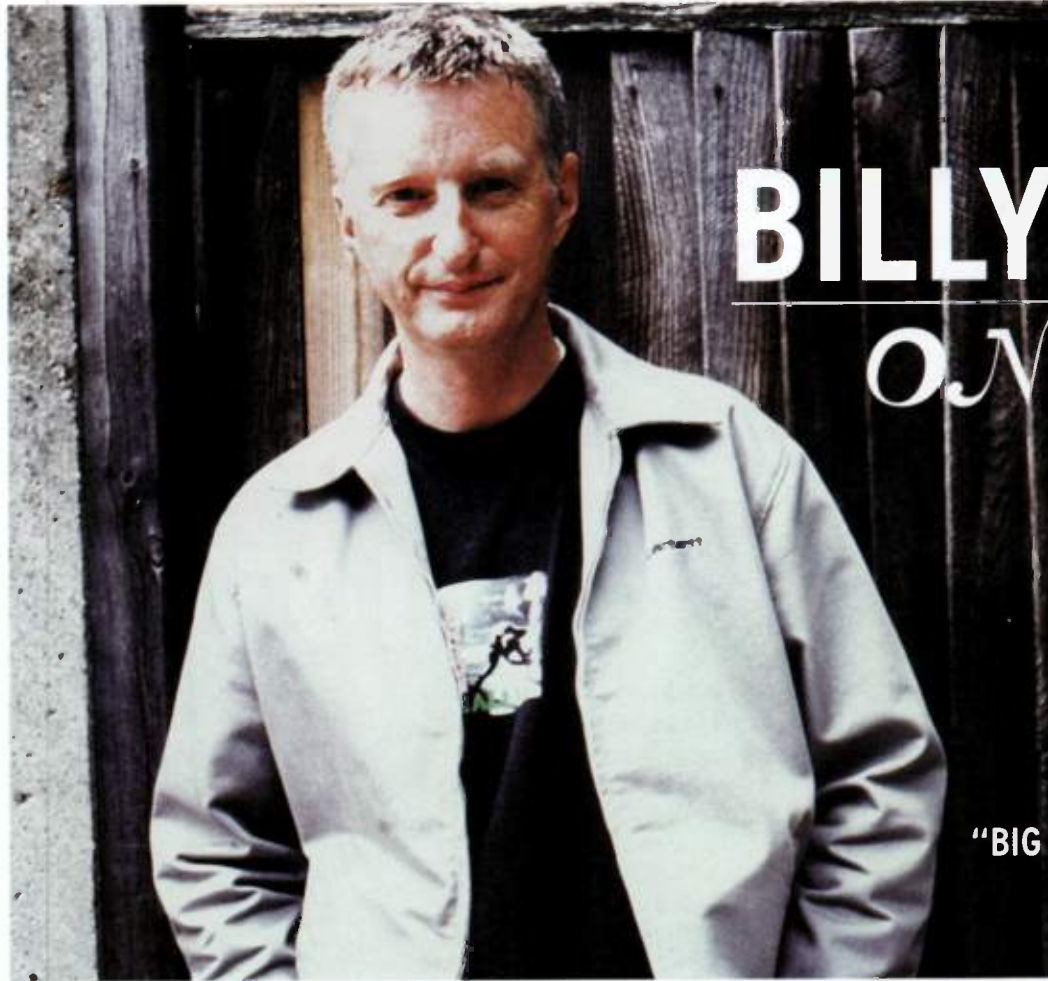
How did the tragedies of 9.11 affect your company?

In terms of revenue, September was a very bad month. Fourth quarter was pretty good. First quarter pacings are up in all three of my markets.

Are you looking at buying more stations in the future considering this current climate in radio with so many consolidations and mergers?

Who knows? I'm a very strong believer in the format. The listeners are very up-scale, loyal and the advertisers get a response to the radio stations. I mean, their power ratios are high, and almost 90% of your audience is in the 25-54 demographics. I really love the format. ✪





BILLY BRAGG

On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move.

"BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU,"

the caption beneath it ran.

So wrote George Orwell in his triumphant novel setting forth his fears of an intrusively bureaucratized state of the future, "Nineteen Eighty-Four."

Meanwhile, back in the future of 1984, America bought and sold a cowboy's trickle-down theory, Britain was under the throws of the Iron Lady and the poets were screaming that the emperor had no clothes. On the home front, Bruce Springsteen was filling arenas with warnings of governmental blindness and rock & roll redemption while on the other side of the pond, newcomer Billy Bragg grabbed his stinging guitar and politically pointed pen and took his songs to the people. "If we came home and didn't do anything for a month, I'd just go out to other people's gigs and get up and play," recalls Bragg. "I would come back home and boil my underwear and write songs and then be off doing more stuff. I had what we call a bed-sit, a one-room place with a bed that flipped out of the wall. Sometimes I wouldn't even unpack my bag, I'd just do my laundry and whew! It would be straight back out on the road once again."

Almost two decades later, Bragg has cultivated a discography filled with politically inspired songs that speak for the everyday people, including his collaboration with Wilco on the *Mermaid Avenue* discs which featured unrecorded lyrics of Woody Guthrie. Now the bard

from Barking is back with his best album ever. On *England, Half English* Bragg is backed by his diverse Blokes which includes former Faces mate, Ian McLagan. With strong earthy instruments and Bragg's righteous pen, *England, Half English* addresses the universal joys of parenthood, our ever-growing multi-cultural society, the power of great soul music, and the simple fact that you cannot run away from politics. Now more than ever is the time to grab your political spray can and tag big brother corporations across the land: "N.P.W.A!" Billy Bragg is back, folks...and he's got something to say.

by matt lawton

The term *England, Half English* was coined by an English author in the early '60s. What inspired you to take that phrase and write a song around it?

The title of the book comes from a guy called Colin MacInnes and he was the first person to articulate the beginnings of our multi-cultural society. You know Bob Marley was listening to The Impressions and Curtis Mayfield and dressing sharp and then he came to London dressed like that and British kids were picking it up off of him. They never got to see The Impressions, they never got to see black American kids walking around or black Jamaican kids, so they got it second-hand. This whole hybrid thing of mod and two-tone and so many important things in British Pop culture rose out of that. MacInnes' book, "English, Half

English" is a series of essays, but with the actual essay, "English, Half English," he realized that young English people would no longer only hear English music. They would be able to get their music from wherever they wanted to, unlike their parents who got their music from their own parents.

They wouldn't have to wear English clothes, they wouldn't have to eat English food, they wouldn't have to listen to English music. In fact, their whole cultural experience would be not as English as their parents. They would have access to all of these things because of pop culture. In recognizing that, MacInnes realized that there would be a change in English culture and that change is now reaching, not a saturation point,

but a point where it's broadly accepted that we live in a multi-cultural society.

The reason why this is important is that there are still people in this country who will try to tell you that we are a purely white people and you can only be English if you are white. And at the last election, there were racist, fascist parties, who stood on their issue. We, on the more progressive side of politics, don't really want to deal with the idea of who we are. So there's a vacuum, which is left to football hooligans, to go out there and represent England and do bad things.

I'm not comfortable with them representing me. So we need to sort of have a debate in this country about what or who we think we are. Are we an inclusive people, are we a people of many different

diverse experiences? Well, I think we are. Or are we a very narrow little group who are just afraid of foreigners and afraid of foreign food and afraid of foreign music? Well, there are people like that in every country, unfortunately. Most people are xenophobic and their patriotism is not really patriotism, at all—it's about hating other people's countries. That's not patriotism, that's actually chauvinism. You know, that is a phobia. I want to talk to you about your country and I'm interested to learn the things about your country that are different from my country. I'm also interested in celebrating the things that we have in common.

Who is the greatest half-Englishman who ever lived?

Um...you?

No, Winston Churchill, whose mother was American. Now many people in this country would see Churchill as the absolute epitome, perhaps even above Shakespeare, of the English spirit. Yet his mother was a foreigner...not just a foreigner, a bloody American!

So you know this is my point—there are so many of these symbols and that's what I'm getting at in this song. I'm talking about these symbols. Actually, the more you look at them, the more diverse they are. That diversity is to be celebrated and needs to be encouraged because, had it not been for Churchill's mom coming over here, the Second World War may have been totally different.

Have you ever run as a political candidate or anything?

No, not really—the precedents aren't great are they—Sonny Bono? But I think that we have a right as citizens to express political views and use whatever platform we have to put these ideas across. I'm interested in politics, but I have a life and I love this job

and I would hate to get into the grind and the mock.

I didn't get this job to wear a suit. But I think that there are many, many, many lessons from September 11th that are obvious and there are others that are slowly coming to the floor. One of the things that I think is important is that you cannot run away from politics. You may not want to watch CNN, you may not want to read about it, you may just want to watch MTV, but eventually politics comes and finds you whether you like it or not, unfortunately.

I wouldn't like to make an album now because I would have to be addressing that and it's very, very complex. It's beyond the magnitude of any terrorist attack ever. It's not like you started with the experience of the British with the IRA or even what hap-

pened in Oklahoma, which is bad enough. Yeah, this is Oklahoma to the power 10, you know?

Yeah. Speaking of albums, I thought we'd move on to your album. *On England, Half English* you're backed by The Blokes. Who are these Blokes that are backing you this time?

This is a band that I put together when it became impossible for Wilco to come and promote the *Mermaid Avenue* stuff with me. So I put myself together a band of guys that I wanted to work with for a long while and they stuck together and they really sounded great on those songs. When it came to making the album, I went into the studio with them.

Ian McLagan lives in Austin, Texas, and the fact that he wants to come over and commute, I really love. I don't know if you've seen him play, but he's totally on top of his game. We're not carrying him and we're certainly not carrying his bloody organ because it weighs a ton. But he's contributing as much as anybody else. Martyn Barker's on drums, our bassist is Simon Edwards and Ben Madelson and Lu Edmonds are playing things with strings. These guys have played in bands that have played what we could very loosely refer to as World Music, although they are mostly Londoners. They play Turkish instruments, African instruments, South American instruments. In fact, anything with strings that they find in the seediest junk shops, on the grimmest street, in the darkest district in whatever town we happen to be in. They'll buy it and bring it back and play a tune on it. This is great for me because I just play the guitar and I barely do that. So adding all these other colors to my palate has been really, really great. They can take a song, which is straightforward like "Jane Allen," and cook up this gumbo of different sounds. Then you've got McLagan coming in on top with his B3 and surrounding it all.

“YOU
cannot run away from
politics. You may not want to
watch CNN, you may not
want to read about it, you
may just want to watch
MTV, BUT EVENTUALLY POLI-
TICS COMES AND FINDS YOU
whether you like it or not,
unfortunately.”



Did you write all of the songs?

No, I wrote all of the lyrics and I think I wrote about five of the songs completely, but the other seven they came up with the music and I just made a few arrangement points. They gave me the building blocks and I kind of set it up the way that I wanted it. They came up with the music on the majority of the songs.

And where did you record it?

I actually recorded the majority of it in Wales, in Monmouth. There's a studio there called Monnow, which is the name of the river that runs through London. It really is beautiful and out in the back there's a huge hill that you could walk up. I really enjoy walking and since I've moved to the countryside I got a big shaggy dog. When I'm not at home, for instance if I'm in New York, I try to make sure I walk at least an hour a day with my imaginary dog. Walking up the hill there and looking out at the valley, I wrote quite a few of the lyrics. If I was stuck for a lyric, I would leave them working on the song, walk up the hill at the back of the studio and come back down with the lyrics, hopefully.

The first single to radio is "N.P.W.A." What inspired that one?

The whole idea of these multi-national corporations and also these organizations like the World Bank, The INF and the WTO—we don't have any control over them at all. They spend all of this money from our tax dollars, but how do we control them, who puts them there, who makes their decisions and who backs up their decisions? They're not accountable to us. I'm a great believer in democratic accountability. But "Accountability" doesn't sound like a very snappy song title. So I thought I'd go with "N.P.W.A." So if people wrote it on a wall, people would know what it means, hence "N.P.W.A." I think that's a much better way and makes a much better T-shirt.

How about the track that the album opens up with, "St. Monday?"

"St. Monday" is a song I wrote just knocking around really. The loss of the two-day weekend is a terrible thing because our ancestors worked really hard to get two days a week off of work and we just chucked it away so we can go shopping. People are working on Saturday. I don't know what it's like in L.A., but Saturday in London is like any other day of the week. There's as much traffic on the road, there are people in the shops. So I think we've lost Saturday, we're never gonna get that back and we have to have at least one day to play soccer. Do you know what I'm saying? The weekend will be Sunday and Monday. They can have Saturday, but we're gonna take Monday. You should hear the audience cheer when I say that. We could definitely do a presidential run on that. I think I could get elected on that.

Now, for "Baby Farouk," I'm assuming that the band came up with the music for that one?

Yeah, that's right, they came up with that. The character, the Farouk Baby, clearly is a baby coming from a member of the immigrant community. But that really doesn't matter because the message is that the joy of parenthood is universal joy and children bring joy wherever they come. They must be cherished and they must be cared for and nothing must be done that puts them or their futures in any jeopardy. That's really what the song is about. It's about a universal thing. It's not about an English thing, an American thing or Arabic thing or any shit thing, it's about the joy of seeing a kid walking for the first time.

Alright, this is probably an impossible question, but what is one of your favorite joys of being a father, if you had to pick one?

If I had to pick one—well that's a real tough one, that's a real tough one...you know, playing a so-called new sport with your son. We got a ping-pong table for Christmas and I'm working on that with him at the

*"Now
many people in this
country would see
Churchill as the absolute
epitome, perhaps even
above Shakespeare, of the
English spirit. Yet his mother
was a foreigner...not just
a foreigner,
A BLOODY AMERICAN!"*



moment. He's getting good at that. There are so many things, though. It's also a great trial as well. It does say in "Baby Farouk," before I get all misty-eyed, "Bringer of joy and tribulation," so you've got to clear the shit up as well. It's not all pretty.

Okay, there's one song on the record that is so sad, I can barely even say the name of the song. It's so sad I don't even know if we should discuss it. It'll make all the DJs reading this cry. I'm obviously talking about the album's closer, "Tears Of My Tracks," and I must ask: did you sell your LPs?

Yes, I sold some of my LPs, but it's worse than that. Do you know what boot sale is?

No.

It's a trunk sale, when someone goes and opens the trunk of their car and they sell things from their home. Most towns have what we call a boot sale. Some people make things to bring along. Some of it is quite organized, but very often it's just people's belongings that they're selling. They're mostly ordinary working class people, they're not fancy things. So there's a huge one at a town about an hour from where I live in the countryside. Me and Ben Mandelson went up there and we found a Billy Bragg

record for like 10 pence, which just made us laugh. But we found these singles from like the 1970s and they were such great singles. They were in a singles rack, on a table just being sold from the back of a car. We went through them one after the other like, "Oh, look at that—what a great single. Do you remember that?" The woman was standing there looking at us and they were all like 10 pence each, you know, like nothing. They were 45s and they all had a name written on them. I eventually looked at this woman and let's say her name was Janet Smith, I said, "You're Janet Smith, aren't you?" And she said, "Yeah." And I said, "These are all the records of yours?" And she said, "Yes," and we just couldn't buy them. It was like we were buying her childhood, her adolescence. We had to walk away and no offense to her, I'm sure she would have sold them to somebody else because they were such good records. But really we just had to walk away. It was almost like we were looking through her backpages. You know, messing around with her soul or something. So I came away and I wrote "Tears Of My Tracks" around that. You know, "I'm at the end of my thither, I'm having to sell my vinyl, but I'm not giving up. I'm down, I'm not out and I'm gonna come back." I'm gonna come back. In some ways, this is redemption available from vinyl, if you know what I mean.

On my second album I had a song called "Levi Stubbs' Tears," which is about finding in the Four Tops the solace and courage to carry on. I would argue that vinyl, or any kind of music, is capable of doing that to you. Particularly the power of great soul music to offer you redemption. I think of Smokey Robinson, Sam & Dave, Otis Redding, Carla Thomas, Aretha Franklin; I think of the redeemed power of listening to those songs. They're down, but they're not finished, they're coming back. But having to part with that music is actually having to part with part of your soul. Even though you may buy them again on CD, these are the original ones that you bought and cherished and took to your friend's house and listened to and changed your God-damn world.

So those kinds of things came together for me in that moment with that woman at that boot sale. She was clearly desperate, not in the literal sense desperate, but she clearly needed money and she was selling all of this stuff and she was moving on. I like to think that she moved on, that she sold all of that shit and she got on with her life. She tidied up and she never, ever regretted the fact that she tried to sell me "Life On Mars" by David Bowie in a picture sleeve for 10 P. I find that hard to believe, but I like to think that she never, never looked back and thought, "Damn, I wish I would have kept that copy of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars, or whatever it was."

Well, Billy, here it is 2002. You've come a long way from the young rebel with a beat-up guitar in a one-room apartment, yet you've remained true to your musical and political vision, as has your record label, Elektra. What are your thoughts on them?

I have to say that Elektra's been really good to me over the years. I've been with them for maybe 18 years now. They've never once told me off for making political records. They've never once told me off for singing in a terrible English accent. They've happily put my records out and promoted them and come back for more. They take difficult subjects, difficult songwriters and give them as much of a push as they can. I don't think that all music should be political, I don't think it should all be hardcore, but I think there has to be a place for it alongside everything else. There has to be some feathers in the wind that actually are trying to press the world as it is. Just as there has to be music that takes you away from the world, that's just as important, too. I feel that at Elektra I'm working with kindred spirits.

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By Mark Chu Cheong

Since the inception of the A&R Network last fall, the service has seen a startling amount of success. Thanks to the hard work of VP A&R Sat Bisla and Director A&R Dylan Filkow, the A&R Network has played an integral role in the recent signings of Bonnie McKee (Warner Bros.), Soul Kid #1 (DreamWorks), Pay The Girl (TVT) and Orco (Epic)

The A&R Network is a multifaceted service with a global scope that provides valuable information about unsigned artists, including biographies and music samples. The site (www.anrnetwork.com) also contains pertinent retail chart and radio airplay information, both domestically and internationally. Bisla describes the service as "the only resource of its kind that provides key data on unsigned, unlicensed talent from a radio, retail and passion standpoint anywhere in the world." The feedback from the music community has been overwhelmingly positive, thus far.

The inspiration for the A&R Network can be directly traced through Sat Bisla's extensive experience in the music industry. Bisla has a history of promoting new music since his days in radio at KRZR and KKDJ Fresno and KCRW Santa Monica. He's also done local club booking, including shows with Moby, The Cranberries and the Prodigy. After moving to Los Angeles to join *VIRTUALLYALTERNATIVE*, Bisla started writing an international music column, as well as *Essential Beats*, which covered the dance/electronic scene. This opportunity opened several doors for Bisla. "The magazine allowed me to work closely with radio programmers across the country and share my passion for music with them." Because of Bisla's influence, *VA* was the first to write about Dido (1995) and unveiled artists such as Faithless, Fatboy Slim, The Crystal Method, Coldplay and Chumbawamba. "My agenda was passion for music and the creative process and creative radio programming, I was also helping A&R people discover and sign new talent." Bisla ultimately capitalized on this by creating an online global resource. Aided by Webmaster Rick Tyburski, the schematics for the site were developed and formulated. The endeavor required an outside investor and with the help of Clear Channel Entertainment President Gerry Cagle and Executive VP, Music And Media Tommy Nast, the A&R Network became a reality. Bisla and Nast quickly hired Dylan Filkow, a onetime label A&R assistant and scout. Several years ago, Filkow and his father, Colin

Filkow—a former GM of Priority Records—decided to construct a management company around singer/songwriter Bonnie McKee. She was one of the first featured artists on the A&R Network and shortly thereafter McKee became the first signing for Tom Whalley in his new role as Chairman/CEO of Warner Bros.

From its inception, Bisla has been conscious to offer a unique, genuine service. "The A&R Network is an enhancement tool for record companies and publishers who want to be proactive in discovering credible talent. It is a service for artist development and discovery in the truest sense of the word.

"So far everyone who has signed up with our service says that A&R Network has exceeded their expectations...that is the greatest compliment anyone could give us. In addition, we provide the human element to our online service. We're easily accessible and make every effort to help build relationships for our clients with radio, artists, managers, producers and others in the business of music." This sentiment is shared by Atlantic Co-President Craig Kallman. "The A&R Network has become an invaluable tool for discovering new, unsigned talent. The service has also been outstanding in identifying hits from all over the globe on small labels. A&R Network is simply a fantastic



Director A&R Dylan Filkow & VP A&R Sat Bisla

resource that every independent label and management company must be plugged into."

The A&R Network is like a living organism in that it must be updated and tinkered with on a constant basis, in order to keep the information relevant and useful. Bisla typically starts out the day by returning and making calls to Europe and other parts of the world, and by answering every single E-mail he receives, a policy he strictly adheres to. From this point a flurry of varied activity ensues. "The rest of the day is spent searching out and monitoring radio air-play on unsigned and unlicensed talent, monitoring domestic and global retail sales, meeting with unsigned talent and managers, talking to radio programmers who are passionate about radio and music, and sharing key information with A&R executives and label presidents who are members of the Network," he shares. And that's only the half of it. "We also meet and correspond with potential new clients, read key domestic and international information on new talent, both in print and online, and interact with our various national and international bookers and promoters about prospective new talent. A lot of time is also spent putting together key data for the site, which is updated daily." Bisla and Filkow also send consistent E-mail updates to subscribers on new leads on undiscovered talent. Of course, part of the workday is dedicated to listening to new music, the part that Bisla finds most gratifying and exciting.

Many in the music community have applauded the utility and dynamics of the A&R Network. The reasons for this response are many and varied, such as the high quality and volume of the acts posted on the site, access to information on artists that have not shown up on the label subscribers' radar yet, the timely data provided and the ease with which the site and its different properties can be navigated.

"We've been able to help members build relationships with radio and others in the music business that they otherwise would not have met," says Bisla. "Also, we have personal relationships with almost all of the artists on our site—and if the situation is right we can help encourage artists to sign up with a member label versus a label that jumps on the bandwagon after the fact!" Andrew Feigenbaum, Manager A&R at Atlantic Records, lists the New Additions as his favorite domain of the A&R Network. "We consistently check the A&R Network Web site," he enthuses, "to see if they have come upon any talent that we may not know about and to look at the playlists. We also speak with the staff on a regular basis to find out if they have any further information on an act that we have come across that may not be on their site just yet."

The A&R Network selects its featured artists very carefully. Filkow explains that he and Bisla choose from among "artists that are building a story at radio/retail, artists that we are turned onto from Clear



Craig Kallman

"The A&R Network has become an invaluable tool for discovering new, unsigned talent. The service has also been outstanding in identifying hits from all over the globe on small labels. A&R Network is simply a fantastic resource that every independent label and management company must be plugged into."

—Craig Kallman,
Atlantic Records



Andrew Feigenbaum

Channel bookers/promoters or artists that we find by going to shows, tips on the street or through the Internet. A usual stay on the A&R Network is about two to four weeks, but artists are then placed into the archive section where they can be viewed at all times." As for the Local Spotlight section, Filkow says, "The local acts that are featured come from our Retail department here at the Network Magazine Group. These are acts that have been creating a story at retail, either selling an impressive amount of albums on consignment or who have built a strong fan base in their region." Sometimes, however, rather than relying on research, both Bisla and Filkow will include an artist that strikes a chord in them on a more personal level. "I've always believed that research is a valuable tool, but you have to trust your gut instinct," says Bisla.

The future is wide open for the A&R Network and Bisla expects the site to remain fiscally viable in changing economic times. "A&R Network is not something that is going to take away existing jobs in A&R departments. We filter through our information to make sure clients are getting solid leads that save them time. Time is money! A&R Network costs a label much less than it does to hire a full-time regional or local scout."

Bisla cites a number of reasons why A&R Network stands above the competition: "The main difference between us and other A&R services is that we're domestically *and* globally focused, we don't charge artists money to be featured on our site and we are mining great talent.

"There is no other A&R service in the world that has the kind of information we do or the relationships that we have. In just four months, four acts have gotten signed thanks to our direct involvement. These are quality artists that were not on the radar screen of any A&R executive until we got involved."

Bisla, Filkow, and Webmaster Tyburski are in this venture for the long haul. A number of suggestions have been submitted by subscribers on how to improve the A&R Network, some of which have already been implemented. It is this open line of communication that Bisla wishes to maintain between the A&R Network and its subscribers.

"I would like people who deal with the A&R Network to say what they honestly feel about us. Honesty is always the best policy.

"Any business, be it radio, retail or the A&R Network, needs to address its customers and employee concerns in a proactive manner," Bisla concludes. "Dylan, Rick and I are easily accessible and are passionate about what we do. Honesty, integrity and passion are three words that describe us and what we do best." ✦

A&R NETWORK

CONTACT: Sat Bisla & Dylan Filkow 818.955.4000

WEB SITE: www.anrnetwork.com

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CHRIS ISAAK *ALWAYS GOT TONIGHT*

LABEL: Reprise

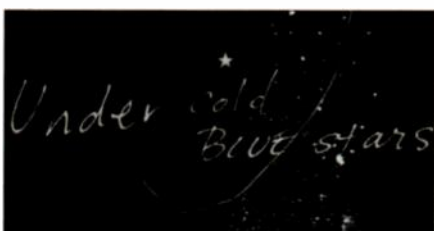
ORIGIN: Stockton

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: When *The Chris Isaak Show* debuted on Showtime last spring, most of America figured out what we've all known since the mid-'80s: Chris Isaak has a magical Orbison-like voice, he's funny as hell and chicks dig him. His eighth release, *Always Got Tonight*, is filled with plenty of classic rockabilly licks and crunchy rock elements along with lush strings, soft croons and some down-and-out heartbreak. Check out *The Chris Isaak Show* Sunday nights at 10:45 and listen to *Always Got Tonight*, tonight and every night.

SUGGESTED SONGS: "Let Me Down Easy"; "One Day"; "Notice The Ring."

CONTACT: Alex Coronfly 818.953.3744

WEB SITE: www.chrisisaak.com



JOSH ROUSE "FEELING NO PAIN"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Under Cold Blue Stars*

LABEL: Slow River/Rykodisc

ORIGIN: Nebraska

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: With *Under Cold Blue Stars*, and more specifically with "Feeling No Pain," Josh Rouse catapults himself right into the "automatic" category at Adult Rock radio. The hook in "Feeling No Pain" is so instant and so obvious that we doubt you'll need two listens—but if you do listen twice you may wind up listening repeatedly for hours on end because this song has that effect. Rouse has really raised the bar with *Under Cold Blue Stars*.

CONTACT: Sean O'Connell 978.282.7444

WEB SITE: www.joshrouse.com



ZERO 7 "DESTINY"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Simple Things*

LABEL: Quango/Palm Pictures

ORIGIN: U.K.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: When you're hot, it doesn't take long for the word to get around. Things began to happen for Zero 7 when their remix of Radiohead's "Climbing Up The Walls" got them noticed. Now, their debut album, *Simple Things*, features laid-back soul, acid jazz and funk tracks, while "Destiny" shows off a smooth feel and the completely seductive vocals of Sia Fuller and Sophie Barker. *Simple Things* is selling very well where it's played—and even in some cases where it's not played!

CONTACT: Paul Langton 212.320.3672, Greg Seese 323.802.0117 & Dan Connelly 212.320.3630

WEB SITE: www.zero7.co.uk



MARK INSLEY *TUCSON*

LABEL: Rustic

ORIGIN: Los Angeles

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Mark Insley's Americana music shows the versatility of a confidently mature, yet questioning artist. *Tucson* is an amazingly strong and compelling disc featuring special guests Dave Alvin, Albert Lee, Rick Shea and Clare Muldaur. From the crunchy country of "Middle Of Nowhere" to the Wayne Carson cover "She's Actin' Single (I'm Drinkin' Doubles)" to the rock & rollin' "Bus To Bakersfield," *Tucson* shows us the depth of one of the most exciting singer/songwriters working in Americana today. Need further evidence? *Tucson* is top 10 at the format, so clearly, it's working.

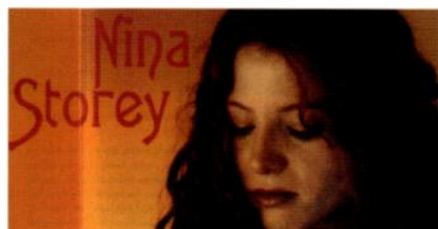
SUGGESTED SONGS: "Tucson"; "The Ice Machine"; "She's Actin' Single (I'm Drinkin' Doubles)."

CONTACT: Dave Insley 602.216.0316

WEB SITE: www.rusticrecords.com

TOTALLYMUSIC

www.ta.albumnetwork.com



NINA STOREY "BE WITH YOU TONIGHT"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Nina Storey*

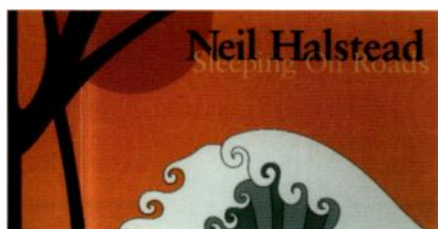
LABEL: Nina Storey Music

ORIGIN: Los Angeles, but Nina lives in Boulder now

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Nina Storey has an amazing voice that can virtually push you back in astonishment. That voice got her the chance to sing the National Anthem at a Denver Broncos game last fall. Her self-titled release contains the wickedly cool "Be With You Tonight," which has an incredible groove. Listen and you'll see.

CONTACT: Dick "Deke" Merkle 303.779.5511 & Jan Storey 303.282.7515

WEB SITE: www.ninastorey.com



NEIL HALSTEAD "SEE YOU ON ROOFTOPS"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Sleeping On Roads*

LABEL: 4AD/Beggars Group

ORIGIN: England

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: British magazine *NME* says that Mojave 3's Neil Halstead writes "the kind of honest, heartfelt love songs men are too scared or too cool to write these days." With that in mind, check out Halstead's solo debut, *Sleeping On Roads*. "See You On Rooftops" begins with Halstead's sweet, soft sound and builds into a distorted climax—like a late-night road trip that ends with the blinding sun ripping through your windshield.

CONTACT: Jenn Lanchart 212.343.7010

WEB SITE: www.beggars.com



AMY FAIRCHILD "BEAUTIFUL SECRET"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Mr. Heart*

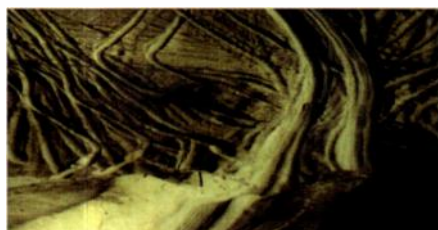
LABEL: So Fair Music

ORIGIN: New York

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Reminiscent of Sheryl Crow, Amy Fairchild effortlessly delivers natural lyrics and organic vocals while her band keeps it rocking. Fairchild sashays through the hook-laden riffs of "Beautiful Secret" and belts out crafty lines such as, "It's like a dog that just won't give up the chase/He puts the ball at your feet looks in your face/And I know that I should let it go 'cause it's killing me." This stuff is really cool. Kim Fowley, the man behind The Runaways, says of Fairchild, "If Tom Petty and Sarah McLachlan had a baby, she'd be it."

CONTACT: David Avery 800.356.1155

WEB SITE: www.amyfairchild.com



JANAH "LEAVENED HEART (I TUMBLE DOWN)"

FROM THE RELEASE: *World That Surrounds*

LABEL: Rattlesby

ORIGIN: Atlanta

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Janah is a band...a band like no other. Featuring crazy-ass instruments like the sitar, bamboo flute, mizmar, bodhran and tons of percussion, Janah mixes these worldly instruments with crunchy electric guitars and English-singing rock & roll. It's a trip, it really is. Check out "Leavened Heart (I Tumble Down)" for starters. It mixes up a wicked guitar riff wrapped around a cloak of Celtic flutes while an entire village sings along! Pour a pint, spark one up and embrace the *World That Surrounds*.

CONTACT: Barney Kilpatrick 770.518.6434 & Paul Brown 212.987.7477

WEB SITE: www.janah.org

TOTALLYMUSIC

www.ta.albumnetwork.com



PHANTOM PLANET "CALIFORNIA"

FROM THE RELEASE: *The Guest*

LABEL: Epic

ORIGIN: Los Angeles

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Produced by Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake, *The Guest* is a well-rounded pairing of these veteran producers and the youthful energy of Phantom Planet. *The Guest* spins into rotation with the fist-pounding, contagious opening track, "California." If you like your rock with a little pop and a lot of fun, jump on any nearby spaceship and point it in the direction of "California" on the Phantom Planet.

CONTACT: Jo Hodge 310.449.2816

WEB SITE: www.phantomplanet.com



MARTHA REDBONE "VINEYARD"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Home Of The Brave*

LABEL: Blackfeet Productions

ORIGIN: New York City

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Man, is life a blast, or what? Check this out: Martha Redbone moved from New York to London in search of love. We don't know if she found that, but she *did* find soon-to-be writing partner Aaron Whitby—through a vampire—and she hooked up with The P-Funk Allstars and sang backup on their reunion album with George Clinton. Redbone eventually moved back to New York, where she wrote and produced her debut album, *Home Of The Brave*. "Vineyard" is laced with sweet-sounding soul blended with harmonica licks and Redbone's funky delivery.

CONTACT: Aaron Whitby 718.596.8847 WEB SITE: www.martharedbone.com



PAGING RAYMOND "ALIBI"

FROM THE RELEASE: *Please. Quiet. Recording.*

LABEL: Bulbous Melon

ORIGIN: Indiana

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Paging Raymond is a band that has not only listened to *The Band*, but they've also been inspired by the vocals of The Jayhawks, the groove of Counting Crows and the immense musicianship of themselves. "Alibi" starts off with a simple acoustic guitar and a straight-forward honest vocal, then evolves into a full-on showcase of Paging Raymond's sound. With a cool mandolin and piano duel, along with the band's vocal swaps, "Alibi" becomes a heart-on-your-sleeve moment of friendship and loyalty.

CONTACT: Joe Estrada 562.692.1931

WEB SITE: www.pagingraymond.com



TANYA SAVORY "WHERE WE LIVE"

LABEL: Philo/Rounder

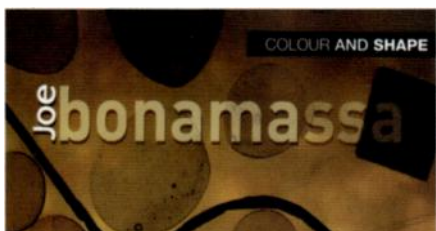
ORIGIN: South Carolina

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: In 1994, after winning the Emerging Songwriter Competition at the annual Napa Valley Music Festival, Tanya Savory took her songs to the people, playing small clubs and folk festivals everywhere. *Where We Live* is Savory's third release and is filled with a thoughtful, simple style of writing that her fans have come to love. With her straightforward delivery, Savory blends the styles between country, folk and bluegrass, and paints a beautiful, aural landscape of small-town America.

SUGGESTED SONGS: "Bluer"; "This Old Tree"; "The Road Was New."

CONTACT: Brad San Martin 617.218.4422

WEB SITE: www.tanyasavory.com



JOE BONAMASSA "COLOUR AND SHAPE"

FROM THE RELEASE: *A New Day Yesterday*

LABEL: Medalist Entertainment

ORIGIN: Utica

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Joe Bonamassa has emerged from the American blues scene with an international reputation as a supremely gifted guitarist. The 24-year-old Bonamassa has developed into a compelling singer, an expressive songwriter and a charismatic bandleader. *A New Day Yesterday* is filled with the classic blues-rock sound of Cream, Jeff Beck Group and The Allman Brothers Band. If you like your rock with a little soul and plenty of roll, check out "Colour And Shape."

CONTACT: Diane Gentile 718.626.6623

WEB SITE: www.jbonamassa.com

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Gorgeous songs like 'Save Me' are better than some bands' entire albums." - CMJ Weekly

★★★★ - Blender

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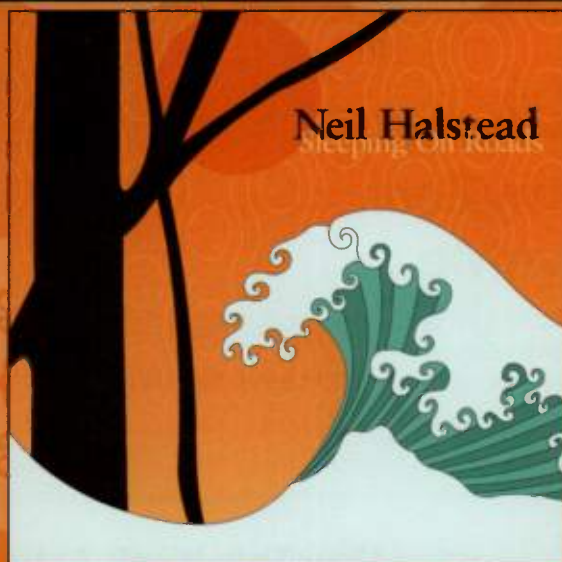
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A CLOSER LOOK



JOSH ROUSE *UNDER COLD BLUE STARS*

BY MARK CHU CHEONG

ORIGIN: Nebraska, but he's lived all over the U.S.

PRODUCED BY: Roger Moutenot **LABEL:** Slow River/Rykodisc

Singer/songwriter Josh Rouse has developed a sterling reputation thanks to a remarkable ability to properly convey the human experience through his art. *Under Cold Blue Stars*, Rouse's fourth outing, is somewhat of a concept album, considering most of the songs revolve around a small-town Midwestern couple in the 1950s. Loosely based on his parents, the songs don't follow a linear structure on the album, but deal with love, heartbreak, religion and the other major trials and tribulations of life. The result is an album which plays out like a well-written collection of short stories, providing mature insight and sincere emotion.

Rouse has crafted a different sound on *Under Cold Blue Stars*, utilizing a plethora of instruments including keyboards, cellos and horns to complement the standard guitar, bass and drums structure of his songs. The addition of these sounds provides a greater breadth and gravity to Rouse's work and enhances the honest nature of his lyrics and music.

The best example of Rouse's newfound optimistic outlook is the wonderful "Feeling No Pain." The song wastes no time jumping into an extremely infectious hook that immediately captivates as Rouse declares himself ready for life and love in a defiant, strong manner. The artist has clearly reached a place in life where he isn't afraid to be hurt and is ready to face life's toughest challenges. "Feeling No Pain" has a great tempo, a richly layered sound and superior production that focuses on the brazenly honest, heartfelt intonation of Rouse's voice and delivery.

Other standout tracks include the equally genial and romantic "Nothing Gives Me Pleasure" and the more somber and morose "Under Cold Blue Stars." *Under Cold Blue Stars* was produced by Roger Moutenot (Yo La Tengo, Freedy Johnston, Lou Reed, Beulah), and his collaboration with Rouse results in an album with a warm texture and inviting sound.

- ▶ Rouse was first attracted to music because of his intense interest in groups like The Smiths and The Cure.
- ▶ His uncle taught him to play guitar and he penned his first song at 18.
- ▶ He's about to tour Europe and plans to return home for a U.S. tour in mid-March.
- ▶ An edit of "Feeling No Pain" is available on *Totallyadult* TuneUp 58.



TANYA DONELLY *BEAUTYSLEEP*

BY BEEJ

ORIGIN: NEWPORT, RI **PRODUCED BY:** Tanya Donnelly, Matthew Ellard & Dean Fisher **LABEL:** 4AD/Beggars Group

It was 1983, and Jewel was still over a decade away from hitting the scene. Sarah McLachlan hadn't even begun thinking of a clever name for an all-female nationwide tour. A year later, Alanis Morissette would become a child actress on Nickelodeon's *You Can't Do That On Television*. Tanya Donnelly, on the other hand, at age 16, was already penning music and playing guitar along with her half-sister Kristin Hersh and a couple of high school friends in their band Throwing Muses.

The infectious, dark pop that Tanya became well known for on the college music scene continued to develop through the early '90s as she teamed up with Kim Deal to launch The Breeders, and a few years later Donnelly went on to form her own outfit by the name of Belly. On February 19, followers of Tanya's work will be treated to her continuing emergence as a solo artist with her second album, *Beautysleep*.

It's striking how Ms. Donnelly can branch into such diverse paths on this highly anticipated CD, and yet remain true to her distinctive sound. She manages to range from a gritty alt/urban sound with "The Storm" (her voice taking on an almost Macy Gray tone), to a chillingly introspective ambience with tracks like "So Much Song." Donnelly has evolved and matured with her new creation, but not to the point where her loyal fans will be left undecided after one listen. She remains true to her haunting pop sounds with tunes like "Moonbeam Monkey," which has a sharp Iggy Pop headiness to it. Longtime Donnelly devotees longing for her deep, melancholy trademark sound won't be disappointed either. Dark, raw undertones weave their way through a catchy hook on the first radio release, "The Night You Saved My Life." Fans will also recognize the influence from Tanya's longtime friend and collaborator David Narcizo (ex-Throwing Muses, Lakuna), Bill Janovitz (Buffalo Tom), Dean Fisher (Juliana Hatfield 3) and Rich Gilbert (Frank Black And The Catholics).

- ▶ Tanya's first solo effort, *Lovesongs For Underdogs*, was released in 1997.
- ▶ She formed Throwing Muses with her half-sister Kristin Hersh, who has been releasing her own solo works since 1994.
- ▶ Her most successful foray into the pop world was in 1993 with the single "Feed The Tree." She was fronting the band Belly at the time.



BAD MOON RISING

Peter Garrett of Midnight Oil
photographed on October 15, 2001.



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JOSH ROUSE

The first single: **FEELING NO PAIN**

"FEELING NO PAIN
is an irresistible
summertime sprint..."

8 (out of 10)

- SPIN



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*Under cold
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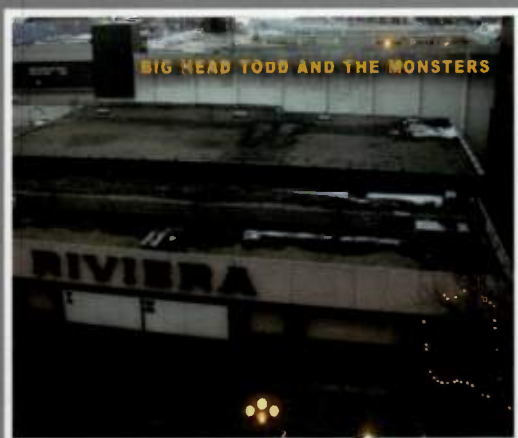
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