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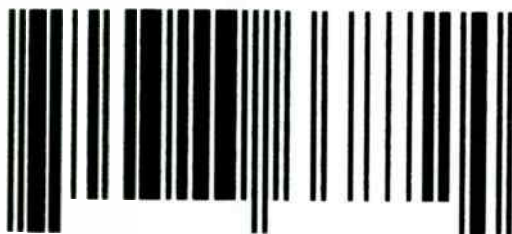
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TOWER

Rolling Stone





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# LETTERS

"How do I get my letter published in CMJ?" they ask, lonely days spilling into lonely nights. Or so we thought. Lately, it seems to be of concern to more than the dozen or so house-bound agoraphobes who regularly correspond with your fair editor. Please note the following examples:

## Point out our factual errors

As a resident of the infamous East Village, there's great umbrage I could take about your magazine's assessment of my neighborhood. However, I'll just point out the most egregious mistake, as I munch on a pierogi: Veselka serves the best damn Ukrainian food in town, not Polish.

I recommend the borscht too.

Chris Weber,  
right around the corner from Veselka  
New York

Did I ever tell you that the night I broke up with the Ukrainian girl I dated in college, a hammer "fell" off a ledge while I was sleeping and hit me in the head? Probably why I didn't catch the "mistake."—ed.

## These boots were made for licking: get to it!

Once again, I come home and find another issue of CMJ and immediately turn to my favorite part, the letters to the editor! They are by far the most entertaining and amusing letters of any music publication. The funny thing is, I never hear anyone requesting their money back or returning the free CD that comes with each issue. I guess people also assume you tie artists up and interview them!

Bill Emery  
Arlington, VA

You leave that Liz Phair interview out of this... —ed.

## Be a nut-job

Do mountain gorillas see in color or mate in the jungle highlands of Rwanda with a war going on? Who shot Garfield? Does it matter? And are we speaking about the president or the cat? Don't be afraid of some classic rock! Rolling Stones, Roky Erickson, P.J. Proby, et al. It wasn't all Velvets, Iggy and MC5!

Dump the whole alternarock vs. Mainstream dialectic... I've hated bushwah [sic] hipper-than-thou sentimentality. This is the info age: inform!! Be a proud teacher to a million lame-as-fuck students... What is really underground? Is it just some terra firma or what?... Love your "Localzine"—the whole magazine should be the same thrust. Don't go soft—women hate premises.

Robert W. Mitchell  
Las Cruces, NM

But the ladies go WILD for incoherent babbling. —ed.

## Convince our boss to give us Columbus Day off

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time, a European man, called Christobal Columbus, discovered America thinking that the people there had a lot to learn from European culture... A year ago, I took a plane from the same place that he had left in 1492. And look what I found: a great city called Los Angeles, great people like the part of my family that live there, great places like the Whiskey A Go Go on the Sunset Strip, and so much more.

Frankly, I was rediscovered by the Americans, who have nothing to learn and a lot to teach. And yes, I found my American Dream, the music and the best magazine in the world: CMJ.

Jorge Juan Milla Ibanez  
Valencia, Spain

Thanks for the letter. That bottle of absinthe is in the mail. —ed.

## Expect us to fill out your dance card

Greetings and all of that other introductory bullshit... The real reason I am writing this is because I would somehow like to get in contact with Larry M. Boone. You know, the guy who did the mix tape "I'll hate you if it'll make you happy." I simply must find him. And if you decide to print this, this is to Larry: It has taken me a lifetime to find someone like you and now we are separated by only pages and a disgruntled postal worker. Please contact me. I'll be dying slowly before your "hello." Do not let me live my life in vain.

Jessica  
Talihina, OK

Larry, if you're out there and want to make that love connection, drop us a line, and we'll forward Jessica's address to you. And as much as we don't want to make a practice of this sort of thing, we are considering a "CMJ Singles Cruise." We'll let you know as soon as we can find a boat of Liberian registry that will accept a bunch of old promo CDs in trade. —ed.

## Be my Mom

Looking forward to seeing you both real soon (at the beach). Call me!

Love,  
Mom

Correction: D Generation is steamed that we put a hyphen in the band's name and has asked that we print a "retraction." Hey, it was an honest mistake, not like we got their ages wrong or anything, but here it goes: we withdraw, recant, disavow and by all means retract the hyphen between the "D" and the "G."

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World Radio History

# QUICK FIX

in my room  
artists' personal picks



## moonshake

plugs in

"I have this theory that if you play too well you should change instruments," says Moonshake's English *auteur* Dave Callahan. "That's what happened with me and guitar—it became so that I could play almost anything I wanted by ear... You run out of ideas and you get caught up your own arse. When I master the sampler I'll stop using samples and do something else."

In fact, Callahan played guitar in his old band the Wolfhounds, and in the first incarnation of Moonshake (named after a Can song, the one thing that he says he regrets most about the band). When the band's other songwriter Margaret Fiedler and a couple of other members left to form Laika, though, he reinvented Moonshake with a new slogan, "guaranteed guitar-free," and a more sample-heavy approach. He notes, though, that when he uses a sample, "it won't be like the original record, it'll be fucked with... sped up, slowed down, one side running backwards and one forwards or something."

On stage, the bulk of Moonshake's sound comes straight out of a pre-

programmed sampler, with a click track running through drummer Kevin Bass's headphones to keep him in time with the machine's rhythmically bewildering barrage of clinks and honks. Beyond that, they've got Matt Brewer playing dubbed-out bass lines, Ray Dickaty playing saxophone through a variety of delay and pitch-shifter effects, and singing by Callahan and a young woman known only as Tor; that's it. Using the sampler so intensively gives the band a tremendous range of sound, but it also creates some problems of its own. "We've had some trouble with different voltages in different countries," Callahan says. "When we were in Italy, we'd start a song and it'd just keep looping on one sample. The good thing was that the audience were all fans of ours, and they knew it was going wrong but they carried on dancing anyway."

With this year's *Dirty & Divine* (C/Z), Moonshake has moved closer than ever before to the rhythms of dance music—so much so that there will be a remix collection or two coming out later this year. What brings them alive on stage is Callahan's stage presence: he sneers into his microphone, strolling the floor with a hand in his pocket like Mephistopheles about to close a deal. His lyrics, if you listen for them, are smart and sharp-witted, and tend towards narratives: one of his requirements for a Moonshake song is that "it must have a lyric that's *about* something, even if it's in an abstract sense." And that abstraction is important to him; he'd rather his listeners focus less on the individuals behind the music ("people who meet me will only be disappointed") and more on their own interpretations of what Moonshake does. "I'm selling a product; people buy it for their own reasons. I like it that way. That's the best way that capitalistic democracy comes out, isn't it?" **DOUGLAS WOLK**

## cristina martinez boss hog

Book: *Stop Time*  
Frank Conroy  
"A Penguin Book:  
ISBN 0-14-004446-9  
Books are cool, fool!"

Book: *Memories Of A Catholic Girlhood*  
Mary McCarthy  
"Out of print. Try the Strand rare books annex in NYC. Watch out for snotty service."

Make-Up  
"Blue Is Beautiful"  
"Best song maybe ever.  
Okay, this year."

Bar-Kays  
The Best Of The Bar-Kays  
"Not their best in my book but pretty funk-kay!"

Koko Taylor  
"I Love My Baby And I Don't Care Who Knows"  
"Written and produced by Willie Dixon, original Chess master on some crazy Italian comp I own. Also features Koko and Willie singing 'Wang Dang Doodle.' If I named my daughter Koko, I would spell it this way."

## inspirational verse

"Don't forget to make a wish, when you lose your eyelashes. I will do the same thing, too. I'd pull all mine out to make wishes for you. One by one, to be sure. This is not a love song. Then again, it's not a cure."—The Secret Stars, "Eyelashes"

# THE KISS INDEX

Number of minutes in which KISS shows in Cleveland and Chicago sold out: 6

KISS records sold, total: 70,000,000

Weight of the *Kisstory* book, in pounds: 9

Weight of one of Gene Simmons' dragon boots, in *Kisstory* books: 2

Speed at which Simmons flies through the air during "God Of Thunder," in feet/second: 10

Number of exact replicas of KISS' original suits, per band member: 2

Number of people who clean the suits' leather, spandex and studs, full time: 2

Issues published to date of the Siberian KISS fan club's journal: 3

Rank of the Beatles among KISS' favorite bands: 1

Number of Polaroids Simmons has of groupies he's slept with: 3400

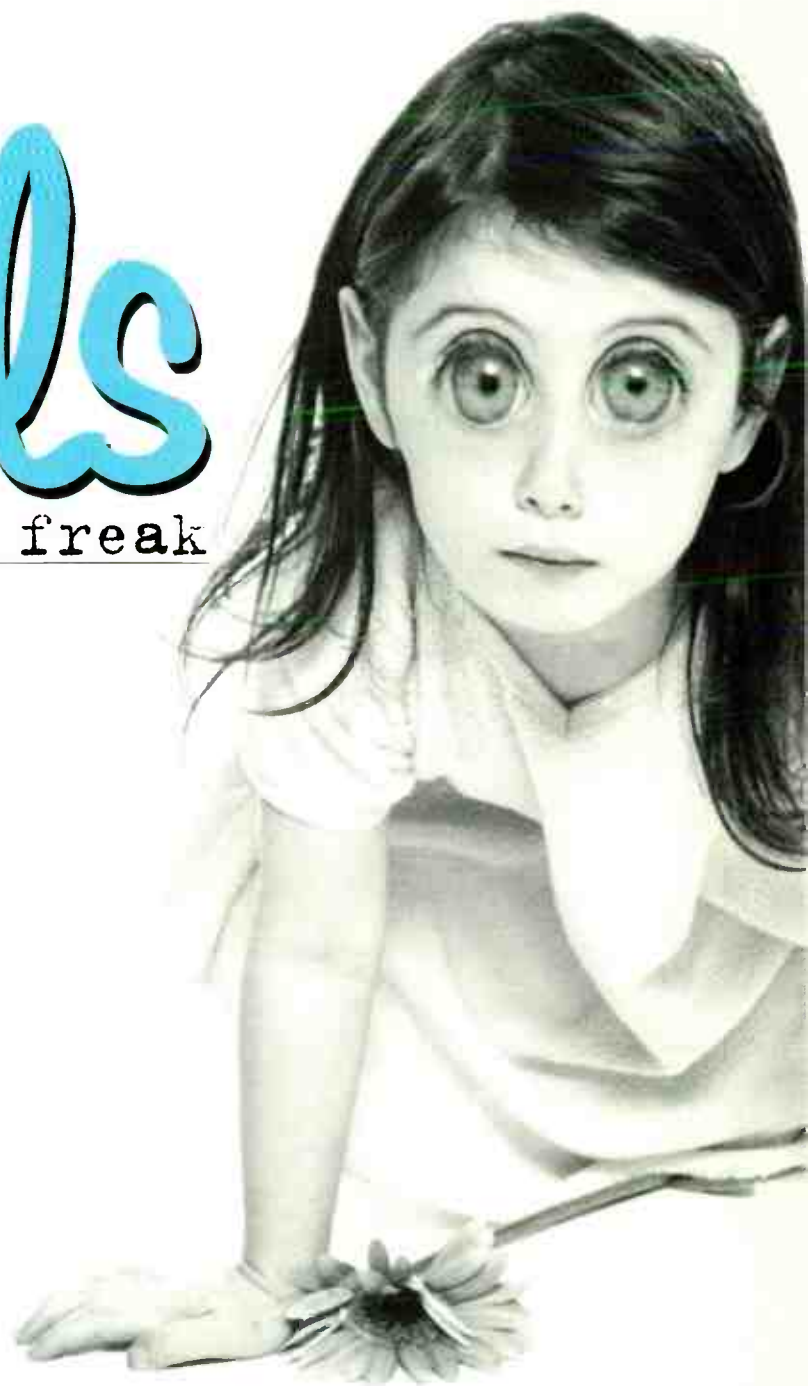
Planned length of the KISS reunion, in years: 2 to 5

Ratio of the validity of rock critics to "gas that comes out of my asshole," according to Simmons: 1:1

i bet you're flying inside

eels

beautiful freak



the debut album featuring  
"novocaine for the soul"

produced by E co-produced & mixed by michael simpson



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# QUICK FIX

## mix tape

by Michael Carter

"Here's a mix tape I recently made and gave to all of my friends. It's all Japanese music or Japanese-influenced music. I call it 'Turning Japanese.'"

### SIDE ONE

Ryuichi Sakamoto  
Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence  
Pizzicato Five  
Magical Connection  
Virginia Astley  
Charm  
Towa Tei  
La Douce Vie (Amai Seikatsu)  
Cibo Matto  
Apple  
Yoko Ono  
Talking To The Universe (Cibo Matto Remix)  
Pizzicato Five  
Twiggy Twiggy/Twiggy Vs. James Bond  
United Future Organization  
Upa Nequinho  
Ryuichi Sakamoto  
Thatness And Thereness  
Yellow Magic Orchestra  
Behind The Mask  
Plastics  
Delicious  
Cibo Matto  
The Candy Man

### SIDE TWO

5.6.7.8's  
I Walk Like Jayne Mansfield  
Shonen Knife  
Twist Barbie  
Yoko Ono  
Extension 33  
Supernazz  
Papa Oom Mow Mow  
Fifi And The Mach III  
I Wanna Kiss  
Shonen Knife  
(Love Is Like A) Heatwave  
Santiago Tamura  
Ultra Man Ska  
Golden Balls  
Nut Rocker  
Jap Kat  
Spider Stomp  
5.6.7.8's  
Ah So!  
Shonen Knife  
Cycling Is Fun  
Cibo Matto  
Black Hole Sun  
Yoko Ono  
Ask The Dragon  
Plastics  
Copy  
Yellow Magic Orchestra  
1000 Knives  
Pizzicato Five  
Party Joke/I Confess

Made a good mix tape lately? Tell us about it. Just mail, email or fax us the track listing.

## inspirational verse

"Neighborhoods are now hoods 'cause nobody's neighbors." —De La Soul, "Stakes Is High"



## ash

spirit of '77

They certainly look mature enough as they dine in a Burbank steak house. They place their napkins properly on their laps, they slice their food into delicately small bites, and they wash it all down with tame swigs of Coca-Cola. And they speak like adults as well, discussing the politics of their violence-plagued homeland of Northern Ireland with seasoned insight and candor. But Tim Wheeler, Mark Hamilton and Rick McMurray suddenly start giggling like schoolkids when asked about 1977, their second recorded outing as Ash. The album isn't titled in some half-hearted attempt to recall a bygone era in rock. No, it's the year Wheeler and Hamilton were born.

Dramatic pause.

"1977! It's not fair, is it?" hoots Wheeler, revelling in his much-publicized youth. As a gag, the trio tacked this pledge onto their Reprise debut last year: "Guaranteed real teenagers!" But now they have to amend that a little. "Two of us are still 19," singer/guitarist Wheeler confesses, "but Rick's just gone 20." "I haven't just gone 20,"

drummer McMurray corrects, sheepishly. "I'll be 21 soon. I'm no longer a guaranteed real teenager." At the tail-end of the new disc, however, you can hear these little spastics acting like real teenagers, in a lengthy "bonus" track: a men's-room-taped escapade in which Hamilton repeatedly barfs up Budweiser while his pals praise his projectile technique. As hidden CD moments go, this probably goes down as one of the most disgusting ever.

You can listen to the rest of this exuberant, testosterone-pumping set—big guitar anthems like "Goldfinger," "Girl From Mars," "Angel Interceptor" and the Hong Kong action-er "Kung Fu"—and believe these guys to be, as they appeared on first inspection, grown-up musicians with keen ears for a hook. Then you arrive at that final chunk-fest and... "think that we're five years old!" Wheeler snickers. "You can hear piss and vomit and spit, and that was me congratulating him. But we're into extremes that no one else would do. Like, nobody else would put that on the end of their record. But we thought it was an incredibly funny thing."

Uh-huh. Okay. Now how long before a food fight breaks out? Actually, the Ash whippersnappers comport themselves professionally for the rest of the meal. So don't lump them in with all that swaggering U.K. "lad rock," warns the fresh-faced, tousle-topped Wheeler. "We're not really lads at all. We're quite sensitive and intelligent compared to, say, Northern Uproar. They've got some good tunes, but their whole attitude's a bit thick." Perhaps the Uproar should lighten up a bit, like Wheeler and Hamilton, who started playing Iron Maiden-influenced metal at age 12. Why? "Because Santa Claus left us some guitars!" grins Hamilton. "You should have seen us then," says Wheeler. "We were dead serious, and it was quite funny." TOM LANHAM

## random five

Halloween's coming, but maybe you don't want to go door-to-door this year. If you feel like seeing a band that will be as outrageously dressed-up as you are, here are five suggestions:



1. The Voluptuous Horror Of Karen Black
2. Upper Crust
3. Gwar
4. Supernova
5. Los Straightjackets





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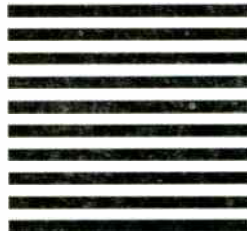


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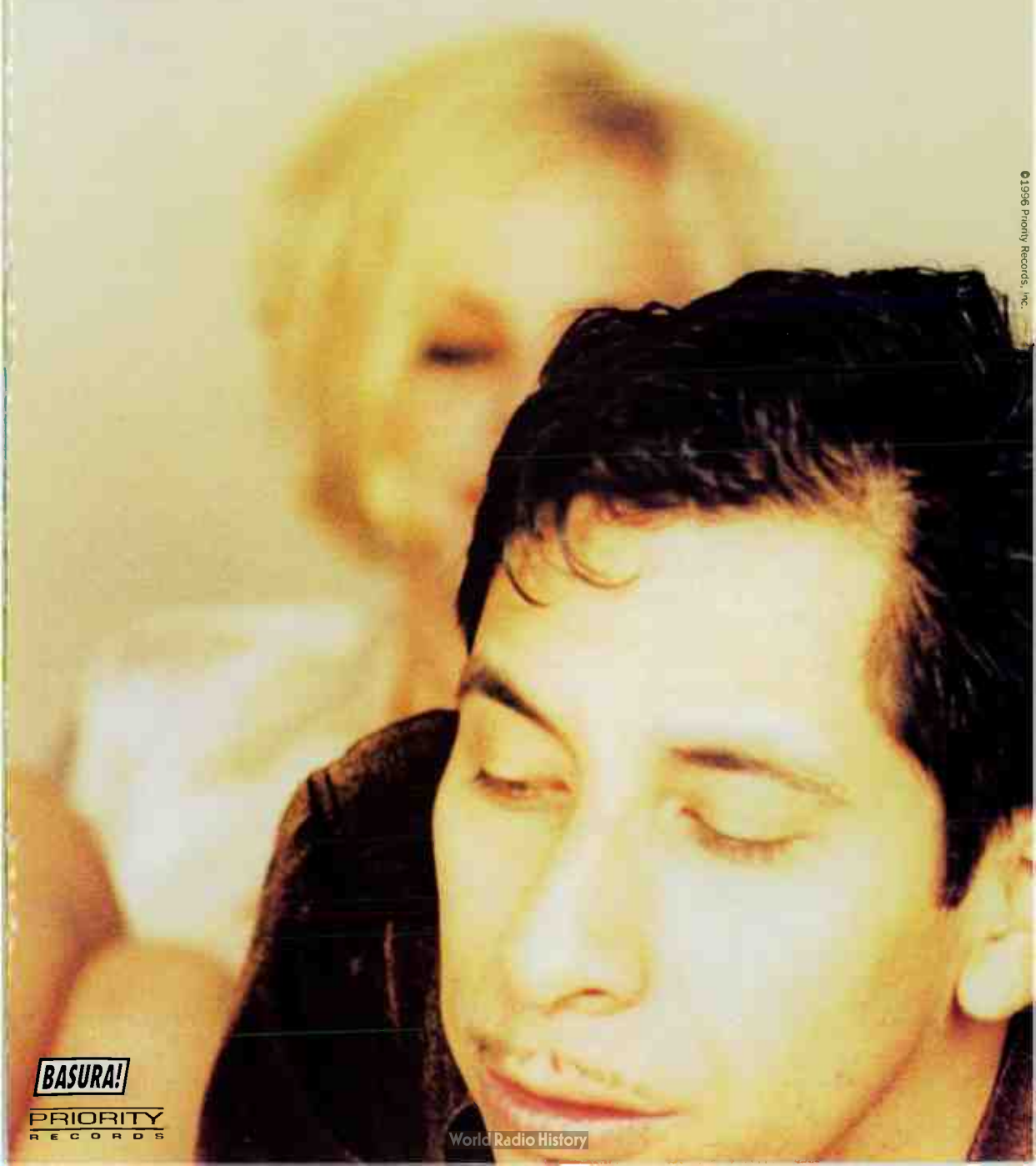
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# CONGO NORVELL

**The Dope, The Lies, The Vaseline**

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World Radio History

# QUICK FIX



RAY LEGO

## orange 9mm

aim is true

His band has played so many hardcore shows, before so many jaded mosh-pit denizens, you'd think Orange 9mm's Chaka Malik wouldn't care what the world at large thought of his music. But he is surprisingly eager to please. How many lead singers of bands named after a gun would call their music "something everyone can appreciate?" And how many veterans of the infamous New York scene would be ingratiating enough to ask an interviewer, "So what do you think of the new record?"

But he does, and the only suitable response is that, well, it rocks. Malik is asking because he's exceedingly proud of his band's latest, *Tragic* (Atlantic), and wants every hard rock fan to love it as much as he does. That shouldn't be too difficult. "There's metal, there's hip-hop," he says, ticking off the genres that the album touches on. "We love the Chili Peppers, and we still love hardcore, and all the old metal bands. We're kids, you know? If it rocks, we'll listen to it, and it'll come out in our music."

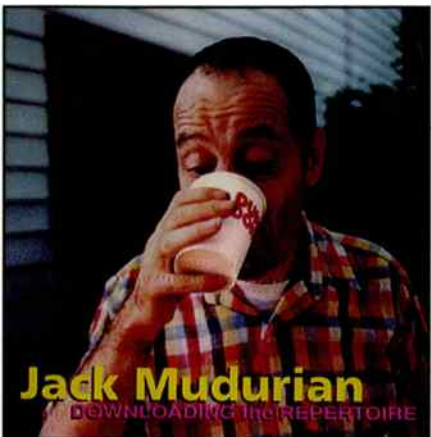
Orange 9mm formed about three years ago "from the ashes of old hardcore

bands," says Malik, who grew up in Queens and was attending shows in Manhattan by the time he was 13. He met Chris Traynor, the Oranges' guitarist, in the early '90s, while Chris was playing with Fountainhead and Malik was singing with Burn. They formed Orange 9mm with the intent of melding Traynor's minimalist style with Malik's flat-out thrash into "a different kind of music"—fast and tough, but with attention to sonics and aesthetics. "We ended up kind of giving in to each other, so the sound ends up being someplace else," Malik says.

While the music is a collaborative effort among the entire band—which includes drummer Matthew Cross and new bassist Taylor McLam—the lyrics remain solely Chaka's domain. He has aggression to spare. But hardcore is about release for all within earshot, not just for one, and Malik insists that whatever he feels when writing lyrics, he writes them without too many personal details for a reason. "There's a time and a place to be personal, but I want to share, and this is music, so it's not just for me," he says. "I can write myself a fuckin' poem, and read that shit every night, and cry myself to sleep. Or laugh myself to sleep. But when it comes to a song, where I'm trying to give a kid a reason not to fucking slit his throat—which is what music did for me when I was growing up—I want that kid to have something he can identify with."

It won't be worth it for him if the kids don't like the live show, too. "You can't see me spitting on the record, jumping up and down, breaking shit," says Malik, his mouth obviously watering at the mere thought of the upcoming tour. "You can't see Chris buggin' out, can't see Matt practically destroying his fucking drum kit... People come and see us live, and say, 'Dude, I had no idea you guys were that sick!'"

"I don't like going to a show where people are playing guitars and not getting rocked." CHRIS MOLANPHY



Jack Mudurian  
DOWNLOADING THE REPERTOIRE

## weird record of the month

When *Duplex Planet* editor David Greenberger heard nursing home resident Jack Mudurian singing a free-associative medley of his favorite old standards at a talent show, he issued him a challenge. Could Mudurian sing for 45 minutes straight into Greenberger's tape recorder? The resulting 129-song medley, circulated for 15 years on underground cassettes and now finally issued as *Downloading The Repertoire* (Arf! Arf!), is a hysterical, bizarre tour through the history of American popular song. From "The Halls Of Montezuma" to "Rock Around The Clock," all the classics are here, for as long as Mudurian could remember of their choruses.

## in my room

artists' personal picks

### fred schneider

Book: *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography Of Kenneth Anger*  
Bill Landis

Various Artists  
Re/Search: *Incredibly Strange Music, Volume II*

Auteurs  
After Murder Park

Chocolate Watchband  
Best Of...

"Two bands I like are Wuhling (from Germany) and Butter."

## THE BIZ

music industry parlance, explained

Adds

New or current songs added to a radio station's weekly playlist. Adds are often a gauge not only of a record's potential success, but also of the effectiveness of a record company's radio promotion staff. "Paper adds" happen when a station reports to a trade magazine (like our sister magazine, *CMJ New Music Report*) that it has added a record in order to curry favor with a record label, but doesn't actually play the song.

## tours we'd like to see

One Lump Or Two?:  
Sugar, Sugarloaf, Sugar Minott, Sugar Plant, Sugar Ray, Sugar Shack, Sugarcubes, the Sugarplastic, Sugarspoon, Sugartooth and Big Sugar.

# RED HOUSE PAINTERS

SONGS FOR A BLUE GUITAR

**"Red House Painters achieve a beauty rare,  
disturbing and resonant."**

*-Rolling Stone*

**"Mark Kozelek is still obsessed with loss, and  
his songs are populated with the most  
stubbornly broken hearts in indie rock  
(including perhaps, his own)."**

*-Time Out New York*

**Produced by Mark Kozelek**

**Available on CD & cassette**



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World Radio History



# best new music

[ the five best releases this month ]



## CAT POWER / What Would The Community Think / Matador

Cat Power is essentially Chan Marshall, a guitar player who writes exquisite and piercing songs, and sings them in a disarmingly straightforward, exposed and emotional way. Her writing is so personal that it manages to be, at the same time, both idiosyncratically headstrong and deeply, widely touching. *What Would The Community Think*, her third album, miraculously combines the drive and scope of Sonic Youth's *Daydream Nation* with the intimacy of Neil Young whispering a fragile secret in your ear. It is as folksy, ragged and darkly dysfunctional, and as gracefully aristocratic, as the South in which Marshall spent her erratic youth. Tim Foljahn on guitar and Steve Shelley on drums provide a sensitive and careful environment for Marshall's effortless charisma to shine through in all its tremulous, painful force. The record feels like when you wake up early in the morning, not having eaten for days because your heart is too full, and you are afraid to breathe in the tense

blue light, because if you let your agitated nerves go, you might burst apart with emotion. At such chilling moments, you may think that the heart-breakingly beautiful "King Rides By" is the best song in the whole world. Because by that time, you will be very likely to have fallen hopelessly in love with Marshall's extraordinary power. *MICHAL SAPIR*

**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 20.

**FILE UNDER:** Quietly shattering songwriting.

**R.I.Y.L.:** The Cure's *Seventeen Seconds*, Neil Young, *Yo La Tengo*, John Cale's *Music For A New Society*.



## SAM PHILLIPS / Omnipop (It's Only A Flesh Wound, Lambchop) / Virgin

Years of being called "smart pop" have done nothing for Sam Phillips' career. Her voice, an evocative but indelicate instrument, shares with Elvis Costello's a sneering bravado ideally suited to withering cynicism. *Omnipop*—subtitled *It's Only A Flesh Wound, Lambchop*, as if nothing we call Phillips hurts her—contains great songs that embrace both sides of pop, as idea jukebox and freak show. She covers a lot of musical territory: By the third song, she's surveyed throbbing rockabilly on "Entertainmen" (not a misspelling—it's an ode to the cult of beauty), slithering cabaret on "Plastic Is Forever," and a circus waltz, "Animals On Wheels." As the titles indicate, *Omnipop* finds Phillips obsessed with commodification. Rarely since Gang Of Four's *Entertainment!* has an album so unblinkingly observed the pop wasteland. On "Power World," Phillips portrays '90s humanity as a culture of e-bots: "Look at how they've washed your

brain/Down the Info-TV drain/You're back before you ever came/To find out what you need." So what if we took back our brains, refined our debased notion of pop, and there was still no room in it for Sam Phillips? She'd like you to think she doesn't care, but for trying this hard, she earns her place in the pop pantheon. *CHRIS MOLANPHY*

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 20.

**FILE UNDER:** Smart pop. Yes, again.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Elvis Costello, Tom Waits, Gang Of Four.



"Creative differences"—that's the phrase offered when a group breaks up and the band members are feeling too spiteful to reveal the truth. It's such a silly phrase—as if the spat itself were fraught with art. But listening to the sumptuous debut by Neil and Tim Finn may prompt a reassessment, because from their differences springs some real creativity. To be sure, they know from breakups: Once partners in Split Enz, the Aussie new wave tune machine, the Finns split the Enz in the mid-'80s; Neil went on to greater success in Crowded House, and Tim tried a solo career. Tim even joined Neil's House briefly in 1991, only to get disillusioned on tour and desert.

With Crowded House finally kaput, Neil and Tim reveal what pure Finness sounds like on *Finn Brothers*, but it's anything but homogenized—it's a heady brew concocted by two distinct personalities. Neil's gift for a tune is supplemented by Tim's darker influence: His spooky falsetto hovers over his younger brother's

choirboy croon like the dark side Neil only occasionally lets out. The Finns play all the instruments and produced the album with old pal Tchad Blake, and they'll try anything: ukuleles, tea-chest bass, even aboriginal chants crop up. If pop's your pleasure, you'll not find a richer confection in 1996 than the Finns' meeting of the minds. CHRIS MOLANPHY

### PET SHOP BOYS / Bilingual / Atlantic

The Pet Shop Boys' sound—lush-to-the-point-of-campy production, with a barely modified disco throb—is so immediately recognizable and so easy to associate with some really vacuous records that it's easy not to notice what incredible songwriters they are. But they're songwriters who sugarcoat their meticulously crafted tunes in the most mindlessly likeable style around, and their great theme is what love means when hearts and bodies are as fragile as they are. The title of *Bilingual* refers to its peculiar affectation: the first six songs have Latin-dance accents, the other six don't. Neil Tennant's voice is as weedy as they come, but he uses that to his advantage, surrounding it with choirs and orchestras and drum corps so that you *listen to the words*

while you dance. And when he turns on the heat, it's incredibly powerful, as with the disco tearjerker "Red Letter Day" ("admit you love me and you always did, baby I'm hoping for that red letter day") and the forbidden-love slow one "It Always Comes As A Surprise." The PSB's don't use disco to make people happy: they use it to recall a time of happiness, from the vantage point of a world of shattered pleasure. That's never been more clear than on *Bilingual's* closer, "Saturday Night Forever," a kaddish for a rainbow-lit dancefloor, celebratory, groovy and unbelievably sad. DOUGLAS WOLK

### CONGO NORVELL / The Dope, The Lies, The Vaseline / Basura!-Priority

Through an EP and one earlier full-length, this namesake collaboration between Kid Congo Powers (Cramps, Gun Club, Nick Cave's Bad Seeds) and Sally Norvell (Prohibition) has plied torch song melodrama and cabaret kitsch into a willfully eccentric, tastefully bathetic acquired taste. This new disc doesn't change all that so much as cast it in a different light. What was once oddly affecting is now honestly so; where the band seemed absorbed in its own schtick, it now draws you into its world of the spiteful and unrequited. *The Dope* also features the band's first honest-to-goodness alternarock song: the soaring "The Girl Who Would Be King." Nestled in amongst teetering *Valley Of The Dolls* ballads, it's something of a centerpiece to the album's guiding theme of loving someone who loves you back—to a point. As pop music tropes go, getting fucked over in romantic endeavors is a pretty basic one, but in Norvell's wailing, there is the impression of what it's like to

be a willing co-conspirator. That's both the difference between Congo Norvell then and now, and what makes the record's descent into the ending quartet of "Cruel," "Murder," "L'Amour," and "Lullaby" believable—and, by extension, poignant. Congo Norvell was always as alluring, and frilly, as its singer's feather boas and traffic-stopping *décolletage*, but with *The Dope, The Lies, The Vaseline*, it's also as darkly seductive. SCOTT FRAMPTON

**DATALOG:** Released Jun. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Rich, moody pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Crowded House, anything recently produced by Blake and/or Mitchell Froom (Suzanne Vega, Los Lobos).



**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 10. First single "Before."  
**FILE UNDER:** Disco auteurs.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Chic, East River Pipe, Todd Rundgren.



**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Torch song pathology.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Nick Cave's Elvis covers, Anita Lane, Helen Merrill.

# ON THE VERGE

[ compiled by Lydia Anderson ]

## HAYNES BOYS

Ohio's Haynes Boys may not be as notorious as their namesake—a family of infamous Columbus hooligans—but armed with a supply of radio-ready country-rock numbers and surrounded by a growing industry buzz, they might actually earn the name some real respect. The quartet, which claims to be as heavily influenced by garage rock as by traditional folk, blues and country, formed in 1994 and has since been touring extensively both at home and throughout Europe, opening for artists like Wilco, Freedy Johnston, Mark Eitzel and the Jayhawks. The Haynes Boys' lead singer/songwriter/ guitarist Timothy Easton's warm, raspy twang and slice-of-life narratives are among the group's greatest strengths. The Boys' rollicking roots style and solid, hook-heavy numbers can be heard on their self-titled debut (*Slab*), which was released over the summer. *JENNY ELISCU*



## BEDHEAD

Dallas quintet Bedhead has been making rock at a restrained pace for a few years now, but the group has taken its original "slow rock" recipe and refined it over two albums and two EPs. The latest, *Beheaded* (Trance Syndicate), reveals the band's mastery of its technique: Matt and Bubba Kadane's whispered, spoken or half-sung vocals trickle through the plodding, strangely dynamic songs, which are bolstered by the band's three-guitar approach, though not in a predictable strength-in-numbers fashion. Rather than building the tension in its songs solely from sluggish tempos, Bedhead gathers the escalating strain into songs whose structures echo the buildup, and that's where those three guitars really shine, thickening and beautifying the tunes as they ripple through them. As heated as the buildup sometimes gets, Bedhead never lets loose and just rocks out; instead, it makes its point, skillfully and powerfully, with confidence rather than might. Bedhead's been honing its skills through a rigorous touring schedule, travelling across Europe and America, paving the way for more great things in the band's future. *(LA)*



## YUM-YUM

Songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Chris Holmes brings the power of pop music to the people with his album *Dan Loves Patti* (TAG), recorded under the moniker Yum-Yum.

The disc's booklet includes chord charts and lyrics, so that fans can strum along in their bedrooms, reveling in the sweet melancholy of Holmes' songs of love and loneliness. The part they'll have trouble replicating is Yum-Yum's deft arrangements, including lush strings, all manner of organs, an occasional horn section and lovely backing vocals from Barbara Gretsch, revealing Holmes' kinship to other contemporary retro-sounding groups such as Cardinal and the High Llamas. Holmes has been making music with his other groups Sabalon Glitz and Ashtar Command, writing about music in local journals and spinning discs on local radio stations for several years now, but with Yum-Yum, he asserts his skill as a musical craftsman capable of writing and delivering songs with an immediate and familiar appeal. Look for Yum-Yum on a *Seventeen* magazine-sponsored tour of universities and malls nationwide during September and October. *(LA)*



BRAD MILLER

## MINERAL

Mineral wears its heart on its sleeve, and even if blood drips everywhere, this band will defiantly force you to stare at the mass of veins and muscle until you want to rip out your own. The Austin, Texas, band's songs are overwhelmingly emotional, and listening to its debut long-player, *The Power Of Falling* (Crank!), is like riding a roller-coaster that seems like it might fly off the tracks straight into the sky. The album has a feeling of unebbing crescendo: Just when you think the band can't push itself any farther, the tide of its dissonant punk rock comes crashing down harder than before, guitars flailing more furiously, rhythms driving with greater intensity. Even so,



Chris Simpson's vocals are the band's most powerful tool. He belts out the same word or syllable for so long and with such fervor, his delivery so cathartic, that it's almost exhausting to listen to him sing. Mineral recently released a single on Caulfield and is due to appear on a couple of compilations this fall. *JENNY ELISCU*



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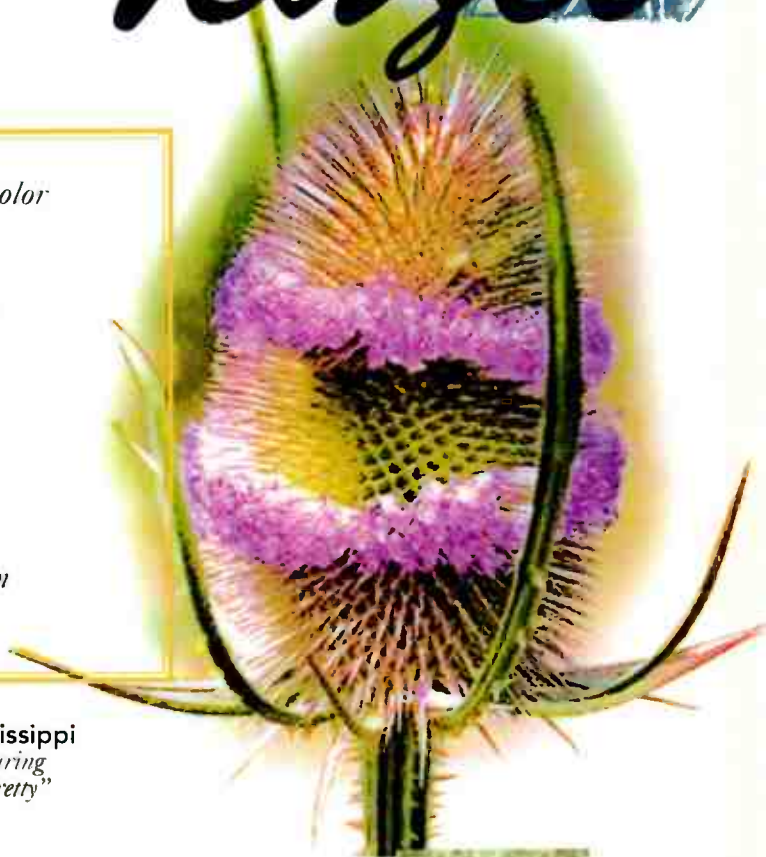
It smells like doggy breath.

## Habitat

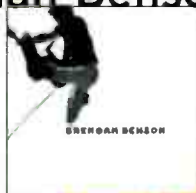
Flower pots.

## Uses

To simulate doggy breath in dogless households.



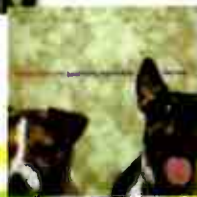
## Brendan Benson



One Mississippi  
featuring  
"Sittin' Pretty"

## Sam Phillips

Omnipop (It's Only A Flesh Wound, Lambchop)  
featuring  
"Zero Zero Zero!"



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# 8 Labels [ small consistent interesting ] you can trust

## dallas blues society

◆ Last year, when hardcore blues fan Chuck Nevitt's first project for the Dallas Blues Society, a no-overdubs session with totally unknown Texas bluesman named Henry Qualls, started receiving rave reviews in mainstream music mags as well as European and American blues magazines, he knew he was onto something. Chuck records things live and spontaneous, often utilizing the talents of a mystery man named Hash Brown as DBS "utility" guitarist (Brown has his own independent releases out, and hosts a Tuesday night blues jam at a local club in Dallas). The results are pure blues power that can't be found in a slick and clean, overdub-driven studio or in a million faxed-in Eric Clapton solos. With three records out and not a bad one in sight, DBS is the label to watch for fans of real, authentic blues. Says Nevitt of his label's less-lucrative practice of recording such underdocumented but absolutely authentic bluesmen, "50 years from now, I want people to think, 'Damn, good thing somebody recorded them.'" P.O. Box 190406, Dallas, TX 75219



## mo' wax

◆ When Londoner James Lavelle put out his first 12" on Mo' Wax in 1992, it was a small start, but right off the bat he'd founded a label based on a fusionary, all-inclusive aesthetic that blurred the lines between hip-hop, jazz, funk, house and psychedelia. Then, when the media began inventing buzzwords like "trip hop" and "acid jazz," it just so happened that Lavelle found the terms stuck to many a Mo' Wax release. Once the buzz on hard, hazy funk records like Blackalicious and 12"s from outrageous Japanese DJs like DJ Krush and DJ Takemura spread among American cognescent, the demand far outstripped the supply of records that were brought into the States, making Mo' Wax titles some of the most elusive items around, only found in the most discriminating of DJ crates, leaving regular consumers out in the cold. Now that Lavelle's label has a Stateside distribution deal with London Records, look for more records with the spray-can psychedelic graffiti art of Mo' Wax in the bins in the near future. c/o London, 825 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10019

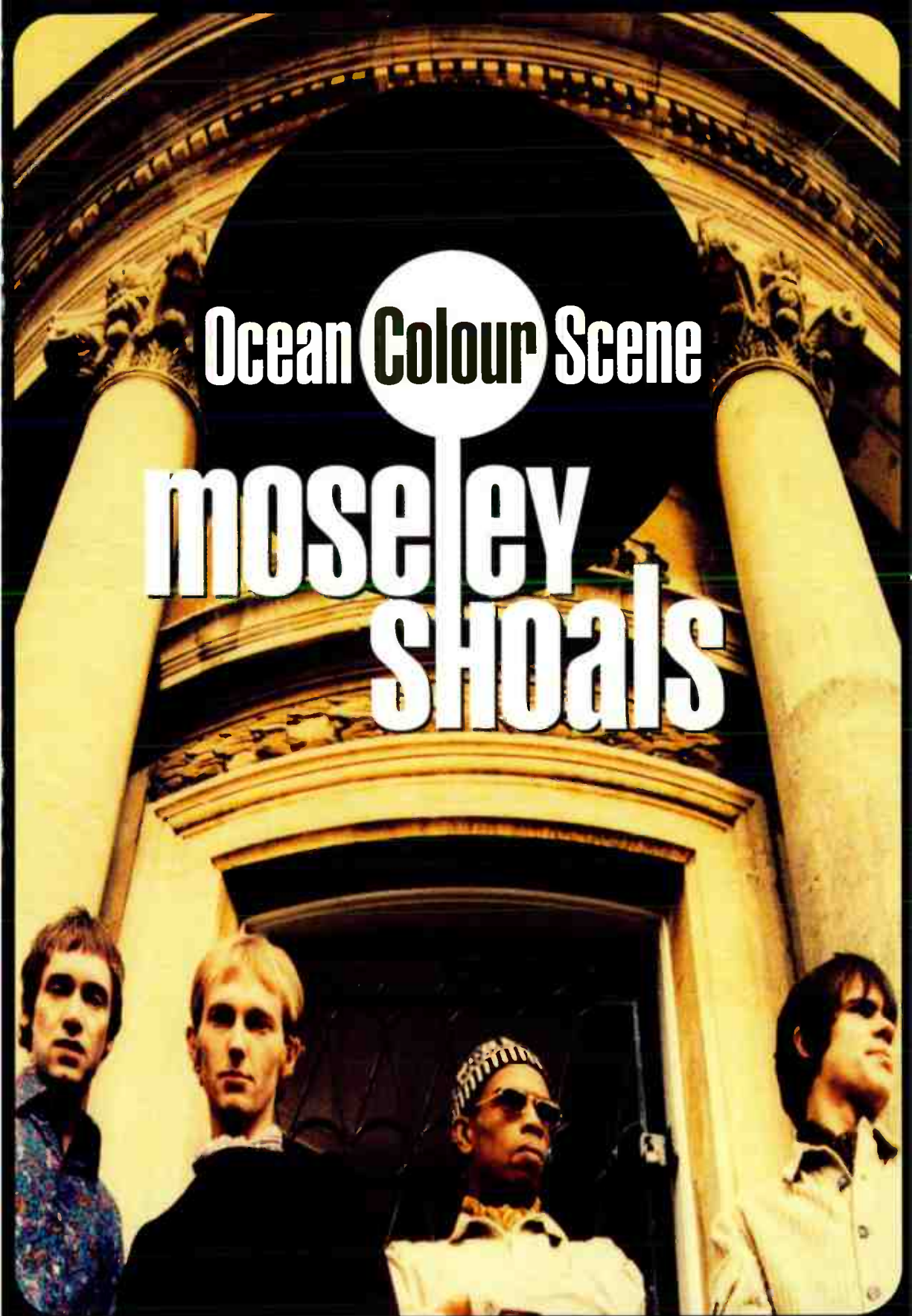
## thrill jockey

◆ There is no way to pigeonhole Thrill Jockey. Started in 1992 by Bettina Richards, the label has released an eclectic mix of albums, including country, pop, garage, punk and instrumental rock. Thrill Jockey has recently gotten a higher profile from the success of "post-rock" darlings Tortoise, Trans Am and The Sea & Cake. Richards explains that the most important aspect of the label is the band-label interaction: "It's a needful partnership. We split everything 50-50." The artists have a say in everything from how the artwork looks (many are elaborate, decorative packages) to how the release will be promoted. The label's records encompass many different genres, from the furious punk of Gaunt to Freakwater's plaintive acoustic country to the electronic expanse of Rome, but they're all of high caliber. P.O. Box 476794, Chicago, IL 60647



## nuf sed

◆ Brandan Kearney's label Nuf Sed (variously known as Nuf Sed Anodyne Liniment, Nuf Sed Distillers' Representatives, Nuf Sed Toy Cupboard Theatre, etc.), started in the late '80s, is about as low-key as you can get. Its releases are usually from unknown artists, often on vinyl, and sometimes in limited editions or hand-screened sleeves. They're also completely unpredictable in everything but their avoidance of straightforward rock—some draw on country music and pre-'70s pop, others on noise and Krautrock, but no two bands on the label sound anything alike. You never know what you're going to get when you buy something on Nuf Sed, except that it's probably going to be very good. Kearney also plays in a handful of bands and puts out a sporadic but mercilessly funny 'zine, *Nothing Doing*, available from the same address. P.O. Box 591075, San Francisco, CA 94159



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◆ In The Red guy Larry Hardy's in it for the love of raunchy rock 'n' roll and nothing else. The label's roster speaks to his well-defined and exquisite taste, and it's a likely and appropriate extension of In The Red's first release (and Hardy's inspiration for starting the label), the Gories' "Telepathic" 7". If you've got a weak spot for revivalist/purist house rockin', make sure you pick up In The Red's album by Blacktop from last year, *I Got A Baaad Feelin' About This*, featuring head Gorie Mick Collins backed by two members of Fireworks. And Jon Spencer fanatics take note: a couple of years back, In The Red released a series of three Blues Explosion "jukebox" singles—"Shirt Jac," "Son Of Sam" and "Train #3"—replete with plain white paper sleeves, traditionally designed, richly colored labels, and paper cards with the band's name and song titles for insertion into your very own home jukebox. 2627 E. Strong Pl., Anaheim, CA 92806



**Current Roster:** *Cheater Slicks, Bassholes, Demolition Doll Rods, the Necessary Evils, Blacktop, and occasional releases from the Workdogs and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion.* **Notable Alumni:** Gories, Free Kitten, '68 Comeback, Fireworks, Oblivians, Doo Rag, *Where To Start*, *Cheater Slicks' Don't Like You*. **On The Horizon:** Vinyl-only albums by the Workdogs, Gibson Bros. and Fireworks; singles by the Hairy Pat Band, the Strip Kings and Dirt Bombs; and new albums by Demolition Doll Rods and the Bassholes, plus live albums from Pussy Galore and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and a Kim Salmon & The Surrealists reissue.



**Current Roster:** not applicable. **Notable Alumni:** Scanner, Charles Hayward, David Shea. **Where To Start:** *Folds And Rhizomes For Gilles Deleuze compilation.* **On The Horizon:** A historical album of Inuit music, a Bill Laswell drum-and-bass album, and a collaboration between Scanner's Robin Rimbaud and the late film director Derek Jarman.

## sub rosa

◆ "We work independently of all structures," says Guy-Marc Hinant, co-founder (with Frédéric Walheer) of the Belgian label Sub Rosa. "We conceive of a project, try to realize it (with the collaboration of musicians, writers, and artists), create the cover and design... and sell these curious emotional machines." Sub Rosa releases are, as Hinant puts it, "portable sound architecture," a complete environment on a single CD, often combining music of different kinds, spoken words, and other things to illustrate an idea. The Bowles disc mentioned above, for example, has the author reading his stories and poems, a classical piece he composed in his youth, street sounds recorded near his residence and field recordings of Moroccan music that he taped in the '70s. Recently, the label has started a series of releases called "Utopian Diaries," with three or four artists on each; a typical one, *Chaos In Expansion*, has an adaptation of a Gyorgi Ligeti composition, new music by Coil and by This Heat's Charles Hayward, and a speech (in French) by Ilya Prigogine. c/o Dutch East India Trading, 150 W. 28th St., Ste. 501, New York, NY 10001

## slumberland

◆ "We are dedicated to bringing you quality bands and great songs," Slumberland's Mike Schulman explains in the liner notes to his 1994 compilation *Why Popstars Can't Dance*, and it's his insistence on top quality that's made Slumberland one of the best indie-pop labels going. From the masses of noise shrouding early releases by Whorl and Powderburns to the peg-legged mod-punk of Jane Pow to the gleeful energy of Sleepyhead and Small Factory to the sweet-centered pop candies of the Softies and Glo-Worm, Slumberland has consistently defied and exceeded expectations, while remaining resolutely independent. Throughout its six years of existence, the label has worn its musical heart on its sleeve: an equally reverent love for '80s British indie-pop and for the soul and mod tunes of the '60s, as well as a penchant for noise, all of which turns up on Velocity Girl's early singles, recent records by Boyracer and Rocketship, and everywhere in between. P.O. Box 14731, Berkeley, CA 94712



**Current Roster:** *Beantik Filmstars, Henry's Dress, Hood, Lorelei, Nord Express, Rocketship, Boyracer, Ropers Softies.* **Notable Alumni:** Jane Pow, Lilies, Sleepyhead, Small Factory, Stereolab, Velocity Girl. **Where To Start:** *Why Popstars Can't Dance: A Slumberland Compilation.* **On The Horizon:** Softies self-titled 10"/CD EP, Steinbecks 7", Hood album, Carmine album, KG album (not to be confused with K's Kicking Giant).



**Current Roster:** *Palace, Smog, Red Krayola, Gastr Del Sol, Neil Hamburger.* **Notable Alumni:** Pavement, Royal Trux. **Where To Start:** *Hey Drag City compilation.* **On The Horizon:** Full-length albums by Silver Jews and Red Krayola, and books by Bruce Russell and Royal Trux's Neil Hagerty.

## drag city

◆ Dan Koretzky started Drag City at the beginning of the '90s to release early singles by Royal Trux and Pavement. Since then, it's become one of the most successful, iconoclastic and unfailingly terrific independent rock labels in America. Besides releases by a small family of bands that it's nurtured over time, Drag City has put out some notable reissues (including albums by the Red Krayola's Mayo Thompson and British skronkmeisters Big Flame) and a few bizarre one-shot items, like a single by the Japanese Styx/Boredoms hybrid Hot Toasters. DC also has three sub-labels: Dexter's Cigar, a reissue imprint run by Gastr Del Sol; Palace Records, curated by Palace's Will Oldham; and Sea Note, whose star attraction is the Sundowners, supposedly an unknown band from Alberta—their first record sounds suspiciously like Palace, and their second record sounds even more suspiciously unlike Palace and like Smog. "We anxiously await another Sundowners single to see who they are next time," Koretzky notes. P.O. Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647-6857 dragcity@mcs.com

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# SOCI

by tom lanham

**I**T'S A HOT, SWEATY DAY IN ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF ROLLING-HILLED NOWHERE. THE SUN'S BAKING DOWN; THE SMALLEST LIZARDS SCURRY FOR THE LAST FEW REMNANTS OF SHADE. WALK ROUGHLY A MILE DOWN A GRITTY GRAVEL ROAD—FROM A FIELD OF FLATTENED WEEDS THAT'S DOING ITS DAMNEDEST TO PASS FOR A PARKING LOT—AND THE SCENERY CHANGES DRAMATICALLY. SO MUCH SO THAT YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE JUST STUMBLED INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION. OR AT LEAST MAYBE AN OLD ELVIS FLICK.

Rockabilly cats 'n' kittens are everywhere, ambling around this dry valley like a tribe of lost extras from *Streets Of Fire*. Tattooed guys with greasy pompadours, cuffed jeans and bowling shirts try to outstare each other while their high-heeled, poodle-skirted girlfriends cattily eye each other's retro fashion statements. Yes, it's Hootenanny '96, just what all the young James Deans and Betty Pages have been waiting for, with a killer all-day lineup of Los Infernos, the Blasters, the Supersuckers, Southern Culture On The Skids and finally—as headliner—the Killer himself, Jerry Lee Lewis. Ironically, the one outfit that elicits the most rowdy response (we're talking thrash pit, stage diving, bodies swimming salmon-style over fans' heads) doesn't have a twangy bone in its collective body. But there's Mike Ness and his band of 13 years, Social Distortion, not only warming up the stage for Lewis, but practically burning it down.

Remember that ear-deafening noise the Tyrannosaurus made in *Jurassic Park*? Forget you ever heard it. Social Distortion is louder, meaner and more carnivorous this afternoon. And some changes are noticeable. They've got the infamous Chuck Biscuits flailing away, barefoot, on drums. They've got a slew of new rapid-fire gut-pummelers that are almost as bratty and urgent as their early punker, *Mommy's Little Monster*. And, of course, they've got Ness himself, who—thanks to a recent workout program and some boxing training—looms larger than life, biceps bulging through his tank top and bib overalls, neck sinews straining as he snarls into each angry number. He

# AL DISTORTION

claws at his guitar as if his life depended on it. Which, in a way, it does.

Ness didn't dub the latest Social D salvo *White Light, White Heat, White Trash* just for yuks. Where would he be without the saving grace of rock 'n' roll? "Dead," he flatly replies, lighting up a cigarette in his trailer dressing room. He reaches into his overalls' chest pocket, pulls out a tattered photograph, and holds it up to the light; you see the tattoos on his knuckles first (one hand reads "L-O-V-E," the other "P-A-I-N") and then the picture of an emaciated, disco-shirted ne'er-do-well with makeup on his face and a fuck-if-I-care sneer. An old friend had given it to him as a joke a few minutes earlier, but Ness wasn't laughing. "Here's a picture of me, 12 years ago, 120 pounds. I was destined to die in a motel room or go to prison—no sensationalism there. That's a stark fact."

Booze. Drugs. Burglary. Ness did it all, and still remembers his worst moment, when he realized it was time to change. "It was probably walking the streets of Santa Ana late at night with nowhere to go," he rasps in a speaking voice that's just as gruff as his singing delivery. "The connection didn't even want me around because I was such a scene—wherever I went, trouble was soon to follow, whether I brought it with me or started it there, ya know? If you had something I needed, I'd steal it to get right or to find a drink. But that was just the later stage—it starts way before that."

"I come from an alcoholic, broken home, and lunch tickets? Me and my friends kidded each other—we were the lunch ticket kids, on welfare and food stamps and all that shit. I don't like to dwell on that stuff, but that's a part of me. That's me, the *real* me. So what I try to do is write about that stuff because it *is* me—I don't know how to write about growing up in Irvine. I don't

## I feel like a lot of music has lost its soul—it's all marketed, alternative, cutesy.

know what it's like to be given a car at 16."

Ergo, Ness continues, "I took this record as a personal responsibility to show people that before there was this [he points to the spiderwebbing tattoos covering his neck and arms], there was *this* [and he taps lightly over his heart]. I feel like a lot of music has lost its soul—it's all marketed, alternative, cutesy. We live in a period right now where image is everything, okay? Lifestyles now, you can just buy your way into, whereas when I was growing up, lifestyles were a respect you had to earn. You had to pay dues. When I was 17, if you wanted to walk down the street with a leather jacket, jeans, black shoes, white socks, maybe just a buzz cut, maybe you had it colored red—you were pretty much deciding that you might just go get in a fight. Because there was gonna be some threatened angry father driving by who had to yell something, and at 17, you yelled back. And they turned around and you guys fought."

Ah, but haven't we heard Ness's thoughts on this subject before?, you're probably thinking. Didn't he moan about the tough Nelson Algren life in countless Social Distortion ditties before, like "Sick Boy," "Ball And Chain," "It Coulda Been Me," and "Bad, Bad Luck"?

## something to believe in

True enough. But *White Light*, guaranteed, doesn't resemble any Ness you've heard before; he's no longer baying "Why me?" at an unforgiving adolescent moon. In psalm after speedy psalm, he's giving thanks to the Lord above, simply for keeping him alive through those trying times. "Untitled" even finds him communing with his higher power, in a touching prayer few bad-boy rockers would dare attempt for fear of losing their hip factor. And it's easy to grasp what this artist is feeling in the more telltale lyrics to "Angels Sing": "When the angel of Death come a-lookin' for me/I hope I was everything I was supposed to be/There's gotta be a Heaven, 'cause I've already done my time in Hell."

At a wise 34, Ness isn't afraid to name his maker as God. "I think the first time I did that was in 'Bad Luck,' which talked about how 'Some people go to church on Sunday, others they pray at home.' I think even in the early songs, there was one where I at least refer to some sort of possibility. But that was when I was still drinking and using. I always believed in something, but I try and make it not sound religious. But I'm willing to do that because I look at it like, 'I already know what you might someday know.' And what does God mean to me? Everything. He's the total reason for my being, and the reason I'm still here, and it's also the reason I went through all the stuff I went through. When you look back and you've made it to the other side of the pain, it's hopefully made you stronger. So I believe that there are lessons in life that He gives us to learn to be the best people we can be.

"So many of the ideals that I had when I started the band, I've held on to," Ness confesses. "But so many of

them, I've had to let go. For a 34-year-old man to get in a fight in a drugstore or wherever, it's like, c'mon, man! Especially if you've got a kid—I've got a four-year-old kid who I have to be a role model to. And he sees me getting into a fistfight? What does that do to the kid?"

Still, the perennial street punk can't *always* do the saintly thing. "I walk into a room and this guy thinks he's a badass, and my initial reaction is 'Well, how bad *are* you? Where are you *from*, anyways? I bet four years ago you were wearing Izod shirts, but now you're cool, man, *instant* cool..." And it's like, "You know what, man? Fuck you!" ★

### DISCOGRAPHY

- "Mainliner" 7" (Posh Boy) 1981
- "1945" 7" (13th Floor) 1982
- Mommy's Little Monster* (13th Floor) 1983
- (Triple X) 1990
- Prison Bound* (Restless) 1988
- Social Distortion* (Epic) 1990
- Story Of My Life... And Other Stories EP* (Epic) 1990
- Between Heaven And Hell* (Epic) 1992
- White Light, White Heat, White Trash* (Epic) 1996

# Sebadoh

Willing To Wait



by Franklin Bruno

Lou Barlow, just off the phone with wife/muse/Sebadoh chat-list coordinator Kath Billus ("She was mad. Some guy in *The New Yorker* gave *Welcome To The Dollhouse* a bad review, and we really like it"), is poking through the welter of hotel-room debris one might

expect of a young, respected, but not rich band with New England hardcore roots in town for interviews and the like—pizza boxes, drummer Bob Fay's paperback biography of Kraftwerk, and a boom box surrounded by CDs of such current Sebadoh favorites as Harry Partch, Sepultura, and French pop singer Jacques Dutronc. He picks up a minimally packaged advance CD of an upcoming record by a "signed" band. "These guys are staying in the hotel too, and one of them was hanging out in our room. He brought over his CD to give us, and he just put it in and started playing it."

Bassist Jason Loewenstein, coming from his room down the hall, joins the conversation: "Yeah, and he was playing along with it, like he was really getting into

it." Jason closes his eyes and plays exaggerated air drums, miming a would-be teen idol, oblivious to his surroundings.

Lou shakes his head. "Man, I can't even imagine being that guy." Anyone giving *Harmacy* (Sub Pop), Sebadoh's seventh and latest

full-length, even a cursory listen would have an equally hard time picturing Lou (or the rest of the band) displaying that brand of arrogance. As ever, a kind of rigorous self-consciousness is key to the Sebadoh aesthetic, an unwillingness to be satisfied with easy explanations of one's own motivations or actions. It was there in Barlow and departed founding member Eric Gaffney's painstakingly original assembly of four-and-fewer-track fragments into the first two Sebadoh records; it was there in the surgical dissections of Lou's departure from Dinosaur Jr. that fueled "Gimme Indie Rock" and the album *III*, the band's first electric recordings, and in the public airing of the ups and downs of Barlow and Billus' romance from *Bubble And*



**As Lou points out, “Sub Pop is at this crossroads in their labelness. They can’t really figure out where they fit in—they want to be movers and shakers of mass culture, and have their bands be big, and have an impact. They’re not in the position of Touch And Go, where they just do what they want to do for the people who want that. We’re really the next thing in line for Sub Pop, the next hopeful things. None of the Sub Pop bands have really caught on in a big way while they’re on Sub Pop.”**

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Scrape onward, as well as in the band’s continued use of open tunings as a means toward avoiding guitar clichés.

And it’s there, in spades, in both sound and song on *Harmacy*. In many ways, the record is a consolidation of the gains of 1994’s *Bakesale*, rather than any great departure—producer Tim O’Heir (largely known for work with such commercial-alternative bands as Superdrag and Possum Dixon) is again at the helm, though the record is assembled, says Lou, “from a bunch of different sessions. I can’t even begin to list them.” This aside, *Harmacy*, even more than *Bakesale*, was conceived and recorded with a consistent line-up; on the latter, Gaffney was still in the picture, sporadically, and a few of Loewenstein’s songs featured fellow Louisvillian Tara Jane O’Neill (Retsin, Rodan, Sonora Pine). “[*Harmacy* is] the first time that Bob’s played on every song, so that’s a first—it’s all three of us on the whole record, and that’s a big first,” says Lou. Downplaying any radical shift in production or approach, Bob simply says, “Some things were more fussed over,” and it’s true that the rich combinations of guitar tones on “Willing To Wait” and “Too Pure,” not to mention what Bob calls “the classic ’70s FM soft-rock drum sound—like Bread!” of the opening “On Fire” would be nearly unimaginable on previous records. But for all the tightly arranged Barlow offerings, there are also off-kilter instrumentals (all three members write one apiece), and an exuberant closing cover (sung by Bob) of “I Smell A Rat,” by latter-day Boston punks the Bags.

Loewenstein, asked how this record proceeds from the last, jokes, “they let me put too many songs on it—they didn’t fight with me enough.” But the truth is that he’s moved on from his role as rocker/pothead id to Barlow’s pop star/pothead superego as on *Ill* (making Gaffney the Whitmanesque auteur/pothead ego) to being Lou’s match in melodic songwriting. There’s still a lingering sense, in change-ups like the minute-long “Love To Fight” (“confusion, illusion, bullshit!”), that the Sebadoh division of song-labor is good-cop/bad-cop: Jason screams so that Lou, equally dissatisfied, won’t have to. But Jason’s first two salvos, “Prince-S.” and “Nothing Like You,” are undisguised love songs; in the first, he capitulates to sincerity (“I guess there’s no use, really... ‘cause there’s nothing like the real thing”), while in the second, he twists the old many-fish-in-the-sea line (“There’s a lot of girls in the world [pause] that are nothing like you”).

“Nothing Like You” wafts by on a “Heart-Shaped Box”-ish feel, minus Kurt Cobain’s angst. The resemblance hasn’t gone unnoticed: “I must have heard that a lot on the radio when it came out, but I’ve had a four-track version of it for a long time. But you know, it’s one of those ancient dirges, it’s one of those chord progressions people eat up, I just happen to be white in 1996.” Lou adds, “People hear certain things, and they don’t go [suspicious voice] ‘Hey, I’ve heard that before,’ they go [yells] ‘Awright! There it is! Like that pop thing in ‘Brand

New Love,’ that’s in every song on the radio right now.”

*Harmacy* is a consolidation in another way—one of Jason’s songs had an early incarnation on a 7” by Sparkalepsy (his four-track side project), Lou’s “On Fire” and “Perfect Way” showed up as acoustic B-sides, and “Willing To Wait,” though never before released, dates from the earliest shows by the pre-Kids Folk Implosion, “when it was called the John Davis Folk Implosion,” Lou adds. He’s commented in other interviews that one impetus behind his use of four-track recording has been the ability to take a certain kind of care in the assembly of guitar parts that isn’t always possible when a rock band is in a studio. (The aforementioned presence of open tunings is more obvious on a simple acoustic recording, for example.) One key achievement of *Harmacy* is the transference of some of that ethic to a studio situation that could easily have become cluttered, especially given the presence of a certain degree of commercial expectation.

As Lou points out, “Sub Pop is at this crossroads in their labelness. They can’t really figure out where they fit in—they want to be movers and shakers of mass culture, and have their bands be big, and have an impact. They’re not in the position of Touch And Go, where they just do what they want to do for the people who want that. We’re really the next thing in line for Sub Pop, the next hopeful things. None of the Sub Pop bands have really caught on in a big way while they’re on Sub Pop.”

Hence the presence among the leftovers, baggies and compilations of Ghanaese guitar music on the hotel room table of a just-delivered cassette of post-album remixes of “Ocean,” a recent live favorite with an unusually straightforward structure; it’s the song

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**“Of course, the more we’re perceived as getting more mainstream, the more some of our original audience will hate us—there’s no one less tolerant than a 17-year-old kid.”**

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tagged by the label as the most likely single for ‘modern rock’ radio. “If they don’t think there’s a song like that on the radio, then the radio people don’t have anything to do... Sub Pop really wanted another mix, because that’s what you have to do for ‘radio’—the original is never good enough. But it’s not actually deductible from our royalties, so we had Tim do more mixes, even though we’d already done two. Sub Pop chose the song partly because it has no instrumental introduction—‘Oh my God, if you don’t start singing right away, no one’s going to listen.”

“If the vocal hook isn’t in the first 10 seconds, they get really jumpy,” Bob confirms.

Lou adds, lightly mocking his own song, “And they like

the sing-songiness of it." There's not a whisper of doubt that "Ocean" belongs on the radio—it's got a sprightly, major-scale melody that contrasts with more angular guitar undercurrents, in the fashion of an earlier generation of Boston bands (Christmas, Big Dipper) that never got within spitting distance of commercial radio, but it conceals a vintage dose of Barlow's colloquial venom. "I wish I had a way to make it better/to rearrange the truth and make you smile/but it's dumb to think I even have that power/and we haven't been that close for a while," he sings, capturing that moment when one realizes that one's trust has been mistakenly placed in those who "didn't care to lose or keep it." Admitting to a friend or lover that "we never quite connected from the first," Barlow makes the bitter message that much icier through sheer tunefulness (and his usual sweet, intimate vocal tone).

It's hardly the only song on *Harmacy* with hit-in-a-better-world written all over it; in addition to the Jason songs mentioned above, Lou's "Willing To Wait" ("No one knows if we should be together") could be the climactic slow-dance at an alterna-prom, and "Perfect Way" has the record's best lyric: "If you're holding, I'll shake you down/share that perfect way to make me happy." The reversal of cliché here is so subtle it needs spelling out: think "if you're shaking, I'll hold you down," recast into a demand for recreational drugs.

Deservedness (and record-company push) aside, faceless radio hit-making à la Dishwalla or Ammonia isn't a major Sebadoh ambition, says Lou: "It seems pretty unrealistic. I think the texture is pretty different from what people want on the radio—my complaint about the radio now is that the textures are all the same, and you really have to fit with that to get on. I mean, I think our songs are great and all that, and if we had made a record with that kick-ass punk/Nirvana sound, maybe we'd have a chance.

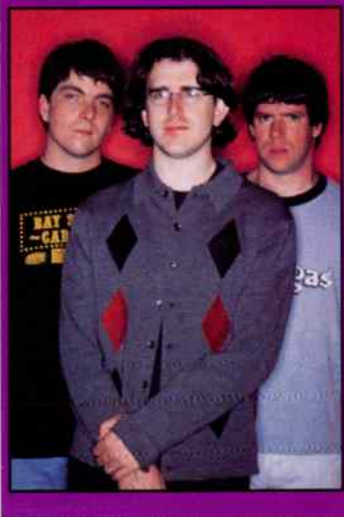
"That's part of what we struggle with Tim O'Heir about—he spent the year since he did *Bakesale* coming out to L.A. and firing drummers, and he's really gotten to the point as a producer where he won't accept anything less than that texture, because that's what brings the music to the most people, and it's what brings the producer's name into prominence. If you're going to play rock music now, it generally seems like it has to sound like that, and it has to fit in with whatever amount of Smashing Pumpkins they have to play."

Bob jumps in: "It's ridiculous, this idea that a drum sound should always be as tight as that last big Tom Petty single. I love certain electronic stuff, like Kraftwerk, but that thinking can ruin a song; it's the disco beat of the '90s—I think it'll sound ridiculous a couple years from now."

Lou adopts the incredulous tone of a future listener to '90s radio: "Why did everyone put that crazy bass-and-snare beat on every song back then? Who can imagine?

## DISCOGRAPHY

*Weed Forestin* LP (Homestead)  
*The Freed Man* LP (Homestead)  
*Asshole* 7" EP (Vertical)  
 "Gimme Indie Rock!" 7" (Homestead)  
*Sebadoh III* (Homestead)  
*The Freed Weed* (Homestead)  
*Oven Is My Friend* 7" EP (Siltbreeze)  
*Rocking The Forest* EP (UK 20/20)  
*Sebadoh Vs. Helmet* EP (UK 20/20)  
*Smash Your Head On The Punk Rock* (Sub Pop)  
 "Soul And Fire" 7" (Sub Pop)  
 "Soul And Fire" 12"/CD EP  
 (different tracks than 7") (UK Domino)  
*Bubble And Scrape* (Sub Pop)  
*4 Song CD EP* (UK Domino)  
 "Skull" 7" (Sub Pop)  
*Bakesale* (Sub Pop)  
*Local Band Feel* (X-Mas)  
*Rebound* EP (Sub Pop)  
*...In Tokyo* (Bolidé)  
 "Not Too Amused" 7" (UK Domino)  
*Magnet's Coil* EP (Aus. Cortex-Sub Pop)  
*Beauty Of The Ride* EP (UK Domino)  
 "Prince-S" 7" (Sub Pop)  
*Harmacy* (Sub Pop)



Why the hell did they do that?"

"But even when we were doing the first Dinosaur record, the snare hits would trigger this static signal, like there had to be this element of white noise to the drum sound, and it was never right, ever. We were just obsessing over this snare sound, and it didn't sound natural at all—a lot of records from that time just sound bizarre."

Nowadays, Barlow's no longer a commercial radio virgin, since the Folk Implosion's "Natural One" became a left-field hit. Even if "Ocean" isn't it, he says, "There'll probably be another one. That song wasn't much of a stretch for me stylistically, so I think there's a possibility that, before my time playing music is through, I might hit on that magic formula again. John [Davis, the taller half of the Folk Implosion] gets really mad when people say that it's a one-hit wonder—we could do it again if we wanted to."

"When it happened, I thought it was the end of my career, like it was really going to complicate things. But people think that if you have a song on the radio, you're seeing a lot of money, and that's not always true. We're going back to [small San Francisco indie] Communion for the record we just finished, so I think it'll be okay. The last time we played, we did 'Natural One' by actually singing to the real karaoke version.

"Sebadoh's in a pretty unique position, because we have a pretty large audience for just how little we fit in. Of course, the more we're perceived as getting more mainstream, the more some of our original audience will hate us—there's no one less tolerant than a 17-year-old kid. I know how much I hated everything then. At this point, I wouldn't know how to stop the backlash if I tried, so I don't worry about it."

Hit or no hit, post-*Harmacy* plans include a good bit of road work—"go to Europe, play some festivals—tour the States, tour Europe, go to Australia and Japan again," and, as always, keeping everything in perspective. Before the band goes off to a lengthy photo session, involving hairstyling—a Sebadoh first—and Todd Oldham jackets, Jason offers a final anecdote:

"I went to Lollapalooza last year to check out Stereolab and get out of Louisville for a day, and I was standing in a huge pasture in Atlanta, surrounded by people who like that sort of thing, and the Breeders came on. They said, 'We're going to do a cover now, by this band called Sebadoh, maybe you've heard of them,' and I'm standing there with 50,000 people who don't know me or the band, for that matter. I looked around and no one cheered, no one said anything. Then they played it and it sounded like they didn't remember the words, or how it really went."

Bob asks, "Did you say anything?"

"Nah—I played air drums." ★

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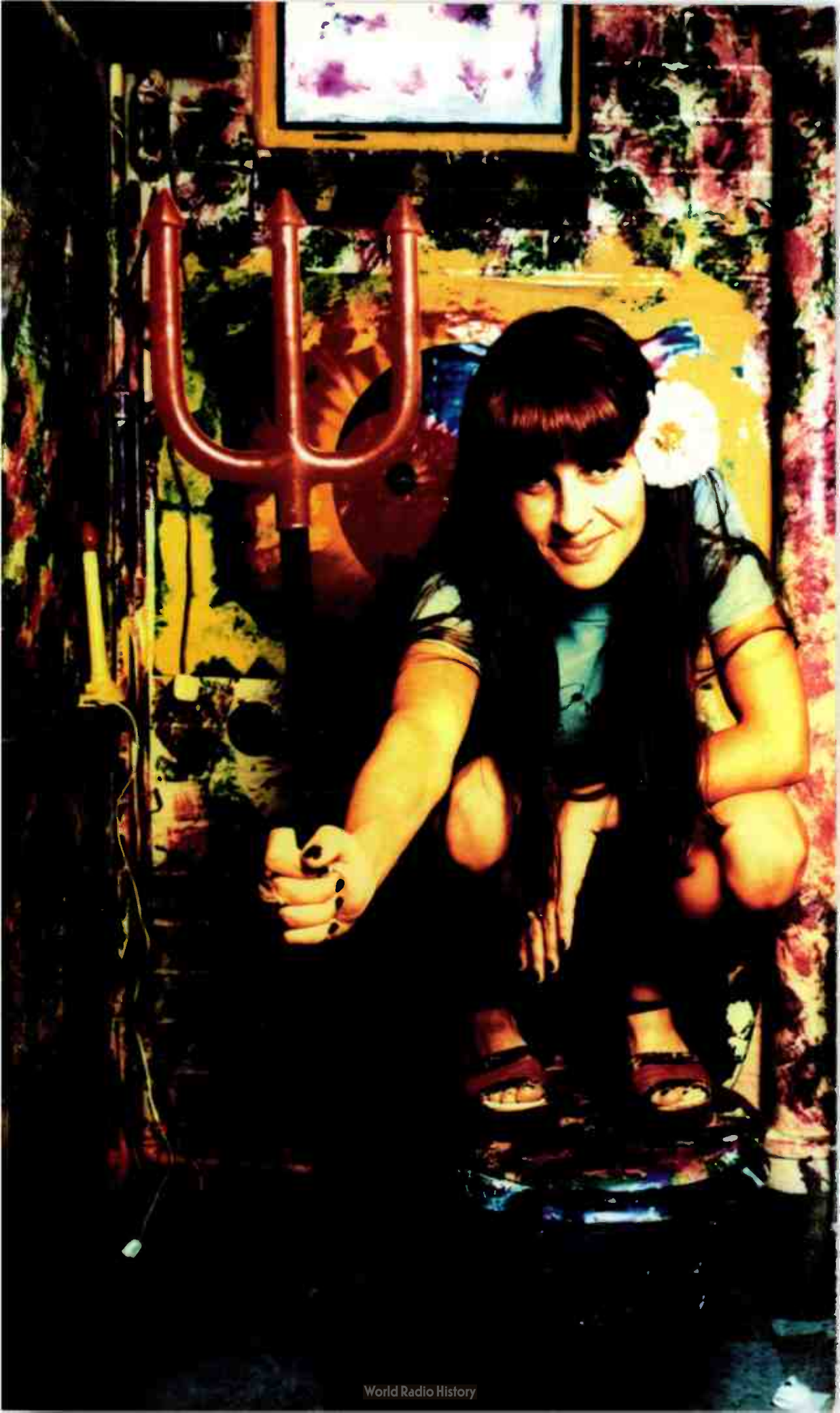
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# Tracy Bonham



**Devil Child**

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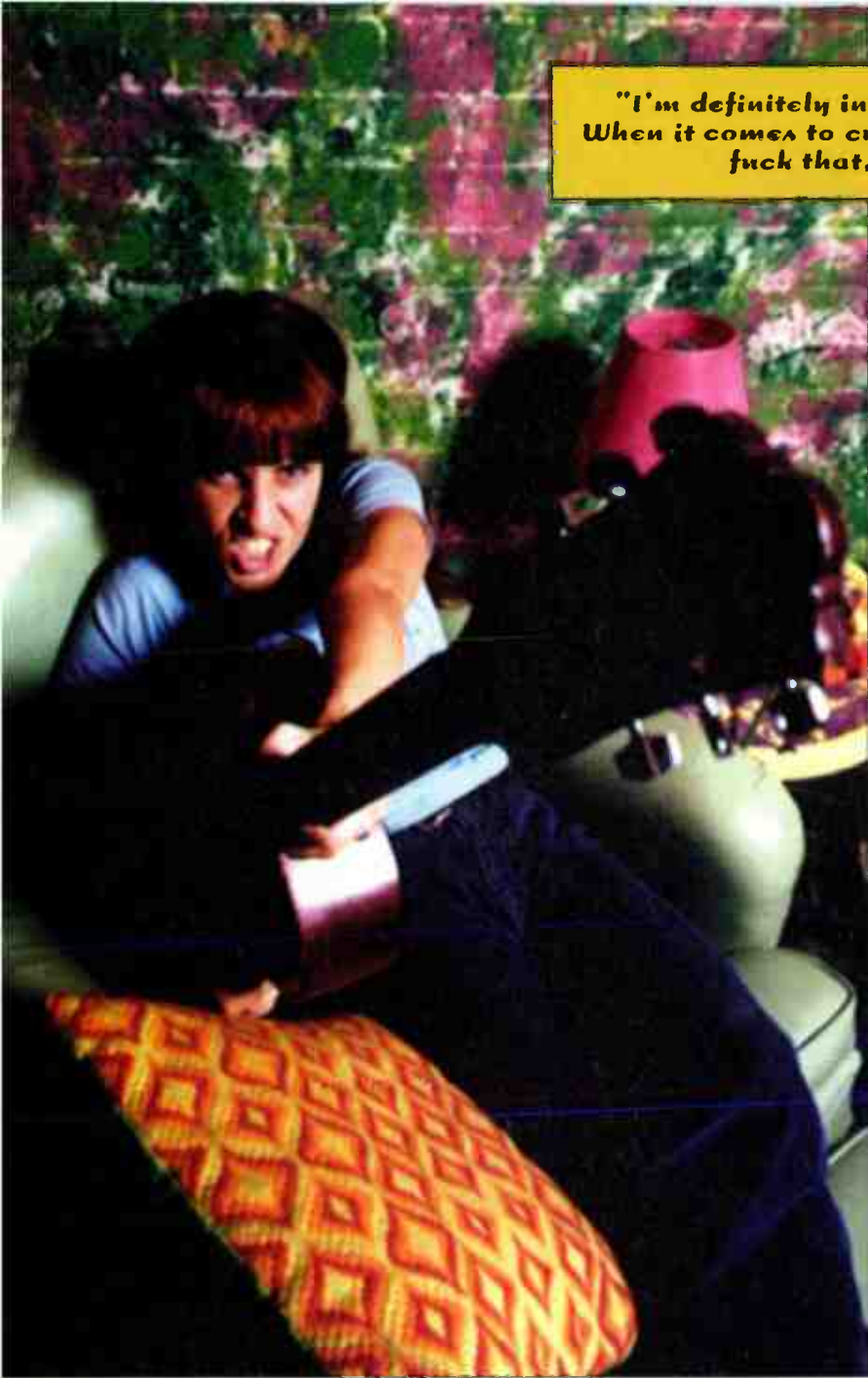
**The Alt-Rock**

**Throne**

by Katherine Turman

photographs by Michael Lavine

**"I'm definitely into moderation. When it comes to cutting out all fun, fuck that, man!"**



**I arrived in humid Winston-Salem, North Carolina, a day prior to my scheduled interview with Tracy Bonham, the eminently likable, fast-rising singer-songwriter-violinist who was, at that particular moment, in Manhattan making a video for "The One," during a momentary respite from the Summerland Tour '96 with Everclear, Spacehog and 7 Year Bitch.**

Checking out the Sunday nightlife in downtown W-S takes a grand total of 15 minutes: There is none. The only logical course of action is to repair to the Radisson, order room service, and watch a program on greyhound dog-racing. Too depressing. I switch channels: nada. But wait, here's a brochure from the National Sword of the Lord conference: The confab is in my very hotel!

It's definitely time to blast Bonham's powerful and impressive album, *The Burdens Of Being Upright* (Island), and wonder if the younger citizens of Winston-Salem—or youthful Lord Sworders—will appreciate the lyrics to songs like the pointed "One Hit Wonder" or the veiled meaning behind "Navy Bean." Or will they just dig the singer-songwriter's potent first hit, "Mother Mother," having committed to memory the MTV video of Tracy's face in black and white, eyes luminescent, beaming into her parent's sterile green "home" via video, her voice rising on the screaming chorus "everything's fine"? (And yes, the robo-mom cleaning the house, oblivious to the emoting from the TV, is Bonham's real mom, who still resides in Tracy's hometown of Eugene, Oregon.) Now, everything is really, truly fine.

The next day, Bonham's tour manager phones; the singer and her band—guitarist Phil Hurley (ex-Gigolo Aunts), bassist Drew Parsons and drummer Shane Phillips—are driving from the Big Apple in the group's first-ever tour bus, and our interview is scheduled for 3 p.m. We should be able to hang out until the show that

night at the Millennium. At 3 p.m., the deceptively petite and youthful-seeming Ms. Bonham is lying facedown on a bed in the Adams Mark Hotel. Her head jerks up, long dark hair and bangs flying, and a big smile spreads over her looks-19-is-actually-29-year-old face. "I'm soooo tired," she moans, though her strong, gamine-like features are clean and serene.

While waiting for her chicken caesar salad and tea to arrive from room service, Bonham willingly subjects herself to another conversation on a topic a lot of people are interested in these days: Tracy Bonham. The self-confidence she exudes is born of a lifetime of serious playing, performing and practicing, though she's only been writing "rock" songs for about four years and playing in the rock clubs for about three.

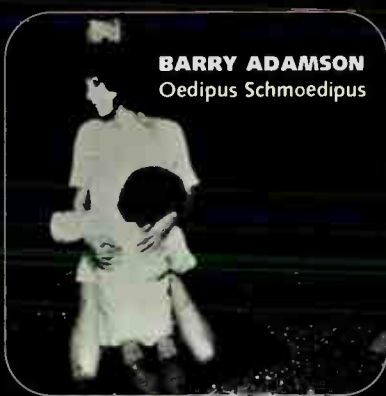
Her shift from classical music to the gutsy rock 'n' roll she currently plays was gradual. "I did have that thing where I was trapped into only being able to play what was written, and if anyone said, 'okay, Trace, bring your violin, come on, sit in,' I'd be, 'no fucking way am I going to do that!'" she recalls of her earlier, less improvisational days. "And I still have that a little bit, but luckily, what happened was that when I put the violin down for a few years, I was able to pick it up with a fresh attitude. Now I'm not as afraid to make mistakes or sound crappy. I have this new way of thinking about it."

While she has nine half-brothers and -sisters (and to answer her most-asked question, she's not related to late Led Zeppelin drummer John), as the youngest by seven years, she grew up essentially an only child, which may partly explain her drive to succeed. ("Or maybe I'm just a ham," Bonham jokes.)

"Back in Oregon, like in high school, I did strings with the symphony, and in choir. Actually, it's such a small town, my parents and myself and my friends and their parents were kinda well known around the town, 'cause we were kinda 'the arts.' I started musical theater as early as age 7, with my mom—she was in *The Pajama Game*. Me and my 7-year-old friend would run around in pajamas, singing songs; we thought that was the shit!" recalls Bonham, chuckling. "Our family was really into the community theater. I did *Oklahoma!* and shit like that. It was so funny. I've really gotten out of the whole theater thing and that crowd," she adds, "and sometimes when I hang out with theater people I'm like, 'God, they're talking about *Hello, Dolly!* I think I lost interest."

If her interest in theater waned, music remained a constant source of inspiration—even though her folks wouldn't let a teenage Tracy attend a Police concert in big, bad Portland, Oregon. "Nothing comes to Eugene: the [Grateful] Dead comes to Eugene. I wanted to go to the Police so badly when I was in high school, but I think I remember [my parents] saying they thought there would be drugs there and, of course, I think I'd already gone through that, and I didn't want them to know! And at that point, I was getting into trouble right and left, grounded all the time, staying out late, getting caught drunk off my head, or lying about where I was or being with a guy when I shouldn't have been. So I knew if I went to that show I would have been grounded for life. So instead, my first concert was, like, the Manhattan Transfer when they came to the fairgrounds!"

A knock on the door announces Bonham's room service, and she bounds across the room to admit her meal. As she tucks into her salad, the reminiscence continues. Trouble of a minor but annoying sort continued to dog the pre-20s Tracy, before she set out on her own to attend USC in Los Angeles on a music scholarship, and then the prestigious but "very disappointing" Berklee School of Music in Boston, the



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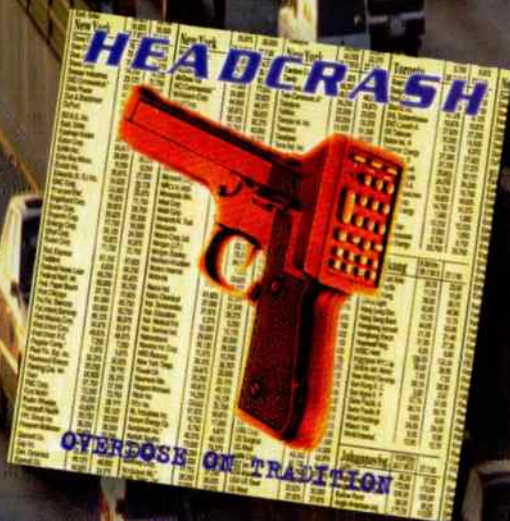
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city she now calls home.

Her virtuosity was evident at a young age, as she concentrated on violin and voice, and dabbled with piano and guitar. At 17, Bonham was accepted to a prestigious summer music program. "I got kicked out of music camp—fucking bastards at Interlochen, Michigan," rants Bonham, clearly still angered at the more-than-decade-old memory. "Whoop de doo, prestigious, paid all this money to go to this eight-week camp. It was soooo innocent, so stupid, that's why I'm so pissed, that's why I bring it up," she continues, munching intensely on her salad.

"We paid like \$3,000 to go to this camp in Michigan, way prestigious, and the third week I got kicked out for smoking cigarettes. I was 17! Their rules were so strict. We all had to sign contracts. They sent me home, no refunds, and then said, 'make sure you come back next year!' But they couldn't find me a flight out for two days, so they grounded me to the girls' camp for two days. My friends had also been smoking, but I was the only one who got caught. It was such a terrible two days," she says, now laughing. "I hate them."

Then, of course, on her return home, being a typical teen, Tracy lied about the incident, telling her parents she'd been simply putting the cigarette out for an older counselor. Her parents saw through the lie that their precocious daughter tenaciously held onto for the entire summer, leading to rather strained home relations. And perhaps that incident inspired some lyrics in "Mother Mother"? It was one of her first-ever songs, written a decade later, where Bonham, in a sort of "letter home," talk-sings "would I try a little tobacco/Would I keep on hiking up my skirt"? Bonham considers whether the Interlochen incident inspired it. "I never consciously thought of that," she finally concludes, "though tobacco was a big deal with me and my folks. I was smoking cloves even before that, so my purse would reek, and I'd walk in thinking that I didn't smell, and my dad would take my purse and go, 'what are you doing with this!'"

Now she never smokes, though she does sometimes drink, despite a doctor's warning that it would dry out her voice. "Of course, there are rumors going on that I can't sing, which is funny," says Bonham, whose trained voice ranges from vulnerable and delicate to raging, both in concert and on her records. "When I started touring, the second week I started losing my voice. So I went to this doctor in New York—it was just that I wasn't pacing myself, and he gave me some warm-up tapes. He told me to stay out of air conditioning, which is impossible. Drink lukewarm water, don't talk. How am I going to do that? No alcohol. Slowly I got back into that! It's really difficult to just not drink on tour. I've never been one to go full into anything like that [total abstinence]. I'm definitely into moderation. When it comes to cutting out all fun, fuck that, man!"

It's nearly time for the day's fun—or work, depending on how it goes. It's soundcheck time a few blocks away, and as Tracy passes through the hotel lobby, three boys in their early teens squirm on a sofa. "Hi..." they call out tentatively. At first, Bonham doesn't realize they're speaking to her; then she replies, "hey, guys, how ya doing?" They're pleased. She doesn't know if she's been recognized, or "if they just thought we were cute."

Walking into the semi-darkness of the Millennium, past sweaty bare-chested guys and equipment trucks, the diminutive singer is at ease, clearly liked. She gazes with pride at her band jamming onstage. Soon, she's up with them, and despite her wedgie heels and pinstriped short skirt, she's rocking like one of the boys, kneeling, playing her violin violently into her amp. Joking with various crew



and other bands' members offstage, she regally points her bow at one of them, and accidentally drops it offstage with an embarrassed laugh. It is gallantly retrieved for her, and Tracy & co. dive into "Mother Mother"—except for the "everything's fine" part, sparing her voice for the show a several hours hence. A few minutes later, Bonham hops onstage with 7 Year Bitch and plays violin on one of their songs during soundcheck.

**"I try to shed light on something funny when it's actually really fucked up."**

With the check complete, it's off to a radio interview upstairs in the venue, which is, if various slots marked "deposit here for local delivery" and rooms labeled "county recorder" mean anything, a former federal office building. Indeed, the broadcast interview for 94.5, "the Rock Alternative," takes place in a U.S. tax court. Radio contest winners shuffle in and sit in the jury box and wooden benches to watch the interview and meet Tracy and members of Everclear. The latter are standing in front of Bonham with white tape over their mouths, eyes and ears, representing "speak, see and hear no evil," as she tries not to laugh too hard during her on-air interview.

By 8 p.m., the ever-busy Bonham is back on stage with opening act 7 Year Bitch, closing the latter's set with the song they worked up at soundcheck. In the meantime, befuddled parents wander the venue, keeping track of the numerous young teens at the energetic but safe-seeming all-ages gig. A heavy-set magenta-haired girl cons money from her mom for bottled water, underage kids light up cigarettes and mill around, checking each other out, and by 8:20 Tracy Bonham, flame-painted violin in hand, takes the stage with her crackerjack band.

All the material from *The Burdens Of Being Upright* gets a strong response, especially the coyly sung "The One," "Navy Bean" and "Sharks Can't Sleep." Bonham switches from guitar to violin with ease, confidently commanding the youthful crowd pressed up against the barrier with her aggressive but very approachable persona. She even tries out a new song to good effect.

"Funny and depressing; that's kind of how I like to write songs," Tracy says. "I like the opposites: loud/soft, happy/sad, dark/light—I think I use that a lot. I'm starting to notice that in everything I do, and I try to shed light on something funny when it's actually really fucked up," says Bonham, who's kept a journal on and off since the age of 14.

"'Sharks Can't Sleep' is about a few things: life and death, how I'm not really able to accept that people are here one day, then gone," she says, snapping her fingers. "Non-existent. That's what's not okay for me. It's also about people who hurt each other. Like I'd be going out with a guy for a week—this is when I was younger—and I'd be so in love, and then turn, *bam*, ice cold, you're gone. And go on with life as if nothing ever happened. That's not okay. But I've done it. We all do it. We step on each other. That, I'm just having a hard time accepting, even though it happens *every day*... I used the shark as a kind of a metaphor. A shark would be somebody who goes around hurting people, then can't sleep with themselves."

But Tracy can sleep with herself (or with her musician-boyfriend of two years back in Boston). "I think I'm pretty well-balanced," she says with some surprise and pride evident in her voice. "I don't think I have any sort of weird things... I'm pretty amazed." Yep, everything's fine... and getting better. ★

TRACY BONHAM'S "THE ONE" APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



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- L NY LOOSE *Year Of The Rat* Hollywood
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- I SAM PHILLIPS *Omnipop (It's Only A Flesh Wound, Lambchop)*  
*Virgin*
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# Best New Music

# October Top 75

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F CAT POWER What Would the Community Think *Matador*



I SAM PHILLIPS Omnipop (It's Only A Flesh Wound, Lambchop) *Virgin*



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- K ANI DIFRANCO Dilate *Righteous Babe*
- I ASH 1977 *Reprise*
- G BARKMARKET L Ron *American*
- F BEDHEAD Beheaded *Trance Syndicate*
- C BIKINI KILL Reject All American *Kill Rock Stars*
- I BUTTHOLE SURFERS Electric Larryland *Capitol*
- L CALLIOPE I Can See You With My Eyes Closed *Thick*
- F CHAINSOCK Angelscore *Wax Trax!-TVT*
- D CUB Box Of Hair *Mint-Lookout!*
- J DE LA SOUL Stakes Is High *Tommy Boy*
- B DELTA 72 The R&B Of Membership *Touch And Go*
- I DICK DALE Calling Up Spirits *Beggars Banquet*
- G DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM Boot Party *K*
- J ELECTRONIC Raise The Pressure *Warner Bros.*
- F ENORMOUS Busman's Holiday *A&M*
- I FASTBACKS New Mansions In Sound *Sub Pop*
- H FASTBALL Make Your Mama Proud *Hollywood*
- F FIGGS Banda Macho *Capitol*
- I FINN BROTHERS Finn Brothers *Discovery*
- I FLUFFER Ask Me What It Feels Like. *Link*
- H GASTR DEL SOL Upgrade & Afterlife *Drag City*
- J GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALLSTARS T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M. *550-Epic*
- H GODRAYS Songs For T.V. Stars *Vernon Yard-Caroline*
- I GRANT LEE BUFFALO Copperopolis *Slash-Reprise*
- H HIS NAME IS ALIVE Stars On E.S.P. *4AD*
- H HOLIDAY "Ready, Steady, Go!" *March*
- H HURL A Place Called Today *Third Gear*
- E JALE So Wound *Sub Pop*
- I JAWBOX Jawbox *TAG*
- G JUNE OF 44 Tropics And Meridians *Quarterstick*
- J KEB' MO' Just Like You *OKeh-Epic*
- H KELLEY DEAL 6000 Go To The Sugar Altar *Nice*
- J KMFDM Xtort *Wax Trax!-TVT*
- I KRONOS QUARTET Howl USA *Nonesuch*
- K LAND OF THE LOOPS Bundle Of Joy *Up*
- G LONG FIN KILLIE Valentino *Too Pure-American*
- I LOS STRAITJACKETS ¡Vival Los Straitjackets *Upstart*
- J LYLE LOVETT The Road To Ensenada *Curb-MCA*
- J MAGNAPOP Rubbing Doesn't Help *Play It Again Sam-Priority*
- J ME'SHELL NDEGE'OCHELLO Peace Beyond Passion *Maverick-Reprise*
- L MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO Subliminal Sandwich *Nothing-Interscope*
- K MELVINS Stag *Mammoth-Atlantic*
- E MUZZLE Betty Pickup *Kinetic-Reprise*
- I NADA SURF High/Low *Elektra-EEG*
- J NEIL YOUNG WITH CRAZY HORSE Broken Arrow *Reprise*
- I ORBITAL In Sides *ffrr-London*
- I PALEFACE Get Off *Sire-EEG*
- J PATTI SMITH Gone Again *Arista*
- G PLACEBO Placebo *Elevator Music-Caroline*
- J PORNO FOR PYROS Good God's Urge *Warner Bros.*
- F R.L. BURNSIDE A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey *Matador*
- J RAMONES Greatest Hits Live *Radioactive*
- B RED FIVE Flash *Interscope*
- I RED HOUSE PAINTERS Songs For A Blue Guitar *Supreme-Island*
- I ROYAL CROWN REVUE Mugzy's Move *Warner Bros.*
- J SCREAMING TREES Dust *Epic*
- G SENSE FIELD Building *Revelation*
- I SLEEPER The It Girl *Arista*
- J SOUNDGARDEN Down On The Upside *A&M*
- J SOUNDTRACK Trainspotting *Capitol*
- J SOUNDTRACK The Crow: City Of Angels *Miramax/Hollywood*
- H SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS Hot *Mammoth*
- F SUICIDE MACHINES Destruction By Definition *Hollywood*
- E TEAM DRESCH Captain My Captain *Chainsaw-Candy-Ass*
- H TRAMPOLINE I Want One Of Everything *spinART*
- I TUSCADERO The Pink Album *Elektra-EEG*
- L URUSEI YATSURA Kewpies Like Watermelon (EP) *Ché-Primary*
- L VARIOUS ARTISTS Mom: Music For Our Mother Ocean *Surfaog-Interscope*
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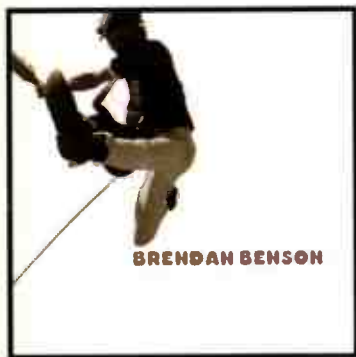
# reviews

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

"My special thanks to the entirety of the universe, through which we are all connected to this recording." — an acknowledgment found in the CD booklet of Duncan's Placid Jilts & Mysticine (*Monolith*)

## In This Issue:

- BRENDAN BENSON / *One Mississippi* / Virgin
- DON BYRON / *No-Vibe Zone: Live At The Knitting Factory* / Knitting Factory Works
- CATHERINE WHEEL / *Like Cats And Dogs* / Mercury
- LES CLAYPOOL AND THE HOLY MACKEREL / *Highball With The Devil* / Interscope
- CUB / *Box Of Hair* / Mint-Lookout!
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- AMY RIGBY / *Diary Of A Mod Housewife* / Koch
- SIX FINGER SATELLITE / *Paranormalized* / Sub Pop
- SPEEDBALL BABY / *Cinéma* / Fort Apache-MCA



BRENDAN BENSON

DATALOG: Released Sep. 3. Benson appeared on the August CD.

FILE UNDER: Sick pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Joe Jackson, Robyn Hitchcock, Nick Lowe.

## BRENDAN BENSON / *One Mississippi* / Virgin

Sick pop has a long and distinguished history, from early blues' encoded obscenities to the explicit misogyny of Alanis Morissette. But if you ask today's angry young fans how they became regular consumers of hostility, they'll just tell you love songs are for wussies. Only vulgarity and peevishness can redeem us from the risk of bathos. A truly classic pop song like "Strangers In The Night" will conceal its essentially schlocky nature ("lovers at first sight, in love forever") in a light coating of impatient filthiness ("sharing love before the night was through"). The indispensable anger/vulgarity principle has been followed dutifully by post-punk popsters. Sickness levels must be high to balance music so melodious and cheery, and

Brendan Benson answers the call. Gaily he cries, "My baby's tied to a chair/don't she look pretty just sitting there." As a Wurlitzer organ swirls, he catalogues personal secrets and ugly lusts. By the time he gets to his pretty tune about Emma J., the "girl whose kiss is all I dream of," you can see why she keeps turning him down. But the pop-rock arrangements, copped from Elton John or Elvis Costello and punctuated with bursts of grunge-style guitar and drums, are undeniably tuneful and life-affirming. *NELL ZINK*



Don Byron Quintet

NO-VIBE ZONE

LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY

DATALOG: Released Aug. 1.

FILE UNDER: Cerebral jazz with a wide stylistic vocabulary.

R.I.Y.L.: John Carter, Steve Lacy, Ornette Coleman.

## DON BYRON / *No-Vibe Zone: Live At The Knitting Factory* / Knitting Factory Works

Current loft-jazz contender Don Byron and his quintet warm up on this loose, fairly workaday live set with Ornette Coleman's "W.R.U.," which sees the band moving from standard freer-than-bop-but-not-quite-"out" to something less controlled, largely on account of guitarist David Gilmore's Frippishly piercing solo, which spurs the rhythm sections (Uri Caine, Kenny Davis and Marvin Smith) to some surprising accompanying strategies. Byron's own clarinet solos are prodding and exploratory, determining the structure rather than following it. Sometimes the intellectual content of his compositions is murky—if the spare, vaguely Latin "Sex/Work (Clarence/Anita)" is attempting some kind of musical mimesis of gender/power relations, it's lost in the sheer length of Davis' bass solo. The band swings Johnny Mercer's cloying "Tangerine" about 80 percent straight and 90 percent prettily. Byron's inclusion of sour timbres and new-fangled reed techniques the only real sign that this couldn't be a small-band Benny Goodman date. The

closing "Tuskegee Strutter's Ball" is the closest the band gets to *de rigueur* swing-for-the-fences free-blowing, but even here, the density turns into an Ornettish unison between Byron and Gilmore. *No-Vibe Zone* is a well-above-average live document, with more stretching out than Byron's Nonesuch studio dates, but one imagines that most of the tricks employed would have been the same the next night, or the next. *FRANKLIN BRUNO*

# various artists

soundtracks, compilations, etc.

The soundtrack to *Basquiat* (Island) has the best segue of the month: P.J. Harvey's brilliant version of "Is That All There Is?" into Grandmaster Flash's "White Lines." Unfortunately, it's also got the worst cover of the month: Tripping Daisy ruining Public Image Limited's "Rise." Its presence is especially weird, considering that the album also has P.I.L.'s own still-great version of "Public Image."... More weird covers action: *Jabberjaw*:

*Pure Sweet Hell #6* (Mammoth) features Everclear's bludgeoning of "How Soon Is Now" and Mary Lou Lord's sensitive, pretty rendition of Ween's "Birthday Boy," of all things. It also dips into slightly more underground territory than earlier Jabberjaw comps, with the hardcore likes of Clickitat Ikatowi and Fitz Of Depression, plus yet another new track by the gone-but-not-forgotten Coctails... Rhino has had one of those why-didn't-somebody-think-of-this-sooner ideas: a series of

*Masters Of Jazz* discs, each compiling the best and most influential (rather than necessarily the most famous) recordings from a specific style and era. The first four are all wonderful,



but the best is the second, *Bebop's Greatest Hits*, which really is exactly that: one monumental performance after another, kicking off with Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts" and Charlie Parker's "Ko Ko."... The two-disc set *Pipeline!* (Slow River) collects live performances from WMBR's program of the same name; the 40 bands appearing on it include virtually every important Boston group of the last seven years.

There's lots of great stuff, but highlights include a new Upper Crust song, "Ne'er-do-well," appearances by the up-and-coming bands Twig and Cordelia's Dad, and a nine-minute rendition of Television's "Marquee Moon" by the pre-Scarce band Anastasia Screamed.... *Lullabies And Children's Songs*, released jointly by Auvidis and UNESCO (c/o Harmonia Mundi), is the most unusual delight of the month. No Brahms here: it's traditional songs sung by children and their parents in Cameroon, Mongolia, Canada, Yemen and elsewhere. A lot of the disc is really beautiful, and it's totally unlike anything else you'll hear.



# FINN BROTHERS

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**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 19.  
**FILE UNDER:** Mod-prog rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Spiritualized, Lush, Tripping Daisy.

**CATHERINE WHEEL / Like Cats And Dogs / Mercury ●**

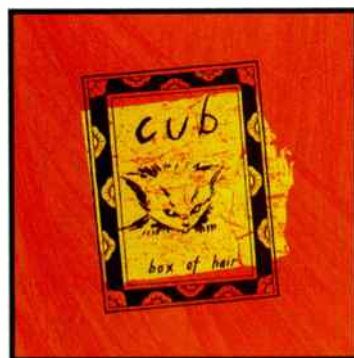
One band's trash is another fan's treasure, right? At least the Catherine Wheel hopes so. While you wait for its fourth album, says the band, listen to this, a collection of 12 songs that didn't quite make it to its first three records. That's a good thing, as it turns out, if you're into muzzy, occasionally overbearing, sometimes beautifully progressive guitar rock. At the band's worst, it's tough to listen to singer Rob Dickinson's cottony, hushed intensity drowned out by yet more high-mixed guitar feedback for upwards of five minutes at a time—the noisy indulgence of “Girl Stand Still” is clever, but still twice as long as it should be. But when the Catherine Wheel tones it down and places its melodies slightly higher than its effects pedals, the rough gems shine through—“Harder Than I Am” and “La La La La La” have a Britpop sheen, appropriately beefed up by the whine of an overzealous guitar solo. Over its past releases, the Catherine Wheel has gone from dreampop to occasionally nightmarish aural soundscapes, full of dark and occasionally humorous imagery (the delicate, vaguely funky “Mouthful Of Air”), but even on an album of outtakes, only some stuff was better left on the floor. *RANDEE DAWN*



**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** Eccentric ramblings.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Primus, the Residents, Moby Grape.

**LES CLAYPOOL AND THE HOLY MACKEREL / Highball With The Devil / Interscope ●**

If you're surprised when Arnold Schwarzenegger makes an action movie, you'll also be surprised to find out that Les Claypool's first solo album is a smorgasbord of brilliant goofiness. On *Highball With The Devil*, his bass does astounding things. It chugs and buzzes. It whoops and swoops. It galumphs and chortles. Jay Lane of Sausage and the original Primus plays the drums, while members of MIRV, eight-string guitar whiz Charlie Hunter and Tom Waits sideman Joe Gore variously fill the third slot. Henry Rollins even steps in to sound a dire warning or two. Claypool and his pals pay tribute to their Bay Area roots by romping through nearly every kind of music that California has ever produced, from surf guitar to acid rock to Primus' own thrash-jazz-funk. But, don't forget, though he's a monster of rock, Claypool is also the nerd king of rock, obsessed with simple pleasures: fishing, cars, cartoons, masturbation. And he also has an uncanny ability to empathize with the most bizarre subjects. In “Granny's Little Lawn Gnome” we learn why standing on the lawn all day is no picnic: “Wish I had some eyelids so I could get some sleep.” Compare his spoken word on “El Sobrante Fortnight” with Rollins' on “Delicate Tendrils,” and you tell me who's more self-aware. Bottom line: Les Claypool rules. *HEIDI MACDONALD*



**DATALOG:** Released Jul. 23. Video for “Freaky.”  
**FILE UNDER:** Winningly cute rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Ramones, Beat Happening, Josie & The Pussycats.

**CUB / Box Of Hair / Mint-Lookout!**

Cub is basically the same thing as prime-era Ramones, if you're willing to overlook a few surface dissimilarities. For one thing, Cub is made up of three Canadian women with three different haircuts. For another, they substitute big-eyed cuteness for the early Ramones' crypto-Nazi menace, essentially inverting the relative importance of “Blitzkrieg Bop” and “Today Your Love, Tomorrow The World,” so they aim for the slower, prettier ones more than the flat-out rockers. (Though they rock flat-out just fine—check out the mileage that guitarist Robynn Iwata gets out of two snarling chords on “Freaky.”) For a third, the two band's songs don't sound much alike, though they share a knack for simplicity that isn't stupidity, and for lyrics whose straightforwardness belies their cleverness. But listen to Cub's gleeful instrumental attack—Iwata's power-tool barre chords, Lisa G.'s raw drum thwap, and especially the way everything fits together like a single lurching machine—and you'll see what I mean. Bassist Lisa Marr is a rock 'n' roll vocal stylist in the straight-up Joey tradition, wrapping her mouth around lines like “bay-bay, let's play *haouse*” and spitting them out with cartoonish contempt. Cub is adorable and knows it; if that pisses you off, then the band's doing its job right. *DOUGLAS WOLK*

# second thoughts

Sometimes it takes a while to figure out what a record really means. In *Second Thoughts*, we look back at albums that came out a while ago, now that we've had some time to think about them.



## JAMES HALL / *Pleasure Club* / Geffen

If they were casting for a remake of *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, there'd be no better person to play the part of the alien than James Hall. Hall fronted Mary My Hope, which released a handful of small-label records in the late '80s and is fondly remembered by those who heard the Atlanta band. Mary My Hope happened too late in the '80s to be taken seriously by the original standards of its Goth and gloom influences (the Cure, Joy Division, etc.), and too early for people to appreciate it in the post-everything '90s. So where does that leave James Hall now? Well, happily, not only have the times become more sympathetic to his retro-modern approach, but in the

interim he's gotten better at doing it, too. On stage, he's a little reminiscent of Julian Cope, in that at some point or other, he's been known to pull every outrageous, confrontational trick in the book—for instance, in the middle of the big finale during an over-the-top encore, Hall will bust out a battered trumpet and let loose a wretched solo. So he sometimes tries a little too hard to get an audience going, but alone behind the glass in the recording studio, he's made his second solo album, which finds him infusing a soulful, bluesy wail into a pastiche of '70s and '80s influences—sort of like what would have come after *Raw Power* if Iggy had followed Bowie into his Philadelphia soul phase. Sometimes he flies too close to the sun and crashes, but sometimes—as on songs like “Pleasure Club,” “Morninglust,” “Back Stabbing” and “Need My Man”—Hall soars beyond the realm of imitation into something truly original. *JAMES LIEN*



Singer.

Musician.

Composer.

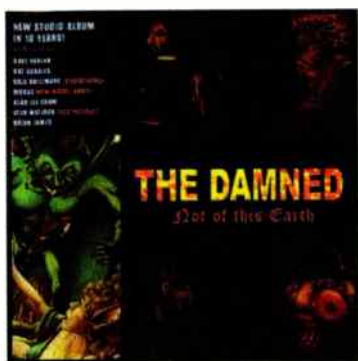
Producer.

## holly palmer

### holly palmer

Her debut album introduces listeners to a rare talent grappling with the big issues: lonely gardeners, long-distance relationships, coin-op laundromats, etc.

Featuring “Scandinavian Ladies.”



**THE DAMNED / Not Of This Earth / Cleopatra ●**

As the Sex Pistols' "Filthy Lucre" reunion tour spits, sneers and wheezes across the U.S., it may come as a surprise to some that it was the Damned who released the first U.K. punk single ("New Rose") and the first punk album (*Damned, Damned, Damned*), and who were the first English punk band to, yes, tour the States. A bigger surprise to almost everyone, I'm sure, is how fine a record *Not Of This Earth* is. It's neither a grab at punk's mainstream viability through past glory, nor "updated" beyond what made the Damned good in the first place. The best songs ("I Need A Life," "Shut It") take the short, melodic blasts of the band's *Machine Gun Etiquette* past the Dr. Feelgood pub rock of the same era. Even when the slower songs drag,

**DATALOG:** Released: Aug. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** An old rose.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Godfathers, Ramones, Iggy Pop.

Dave Vanian's familiar casket-satin croon—he's still the best enunciator in punk—casts a radiant pall over the proceedings. The record's collection of punk rock vets also features Vanian's fellow Damned stalwart, Rat Scabies, as well as Kris Dollmore (Godfathers), Moose (New Model

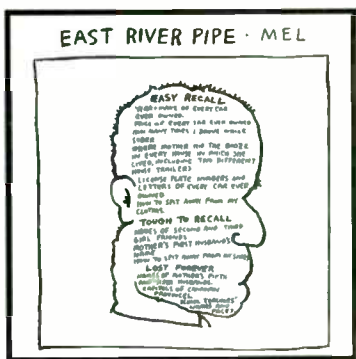
Army) and even once-and-future Pistol Glen Matlock. Even when the performances on *Not Of This Earth* are workmanlike, they're unimpeachably so, and something's pleasantly reassuring in that. *SCOTT FRAMPTON*



**DIE KNÖDEL / Die Noodle! / Koch**

Austria's Die Knödel performs a brilliantly vivid hybrid of (largely) instrumental musics that can't be accurately summed up as contemporary classical (too self-mocking), jazz (there's little improvisation), experimental (too much melodic pleasure, no electronics), or, God forbid, "lounge" (too much energy). The group's signature sound, as composed by bassoon/dulcimer player Christof Dienz, involves lively, tuneful horn-lines, repeated and extended over a bed of acoustic guitar, harp, and up to three dulcimers which act as a sort of seat-of-the-pants string section. "Roll & Rockkragen," despite its title, opens with a lopsided guitar figure, strongly reminiscent of Gastr Del Sol, before exploding into "Slaughter On 10th Avenue"-style theatre-jazz. Later on, "Muischka" (written by violinist Cathi Aglibut) takes the form of a gentle, unabashedly Romantic duet for clarinet and bassoon, while the closing "A Little Encore" whips dizzily through all previous styles in irreverent, crowd-pleasing fashion. Even the harmonically complex art-song "Chinese Lanterns," sweetly sung by Aglibut, hides odd timbral shifts in seamless transitions from guitar to dulcimer; here, as elsewhere, Die Knödel makes music in immediate, almost-recognizable genres without sacrificing detail, humor or substance. *FRANKLIN BRUNO*

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 1.  
**FILE UNDER:** Serious musicians irreverently Teuton their own horns.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Carl Stalling Project, Scott Walker, Verlaines.



**EAST RIVER PIPE / Mel / Merge**

To describe *Mel*, it would almost do to run through the song titles: "The Club Isn't Open," "I Am A Small Mistake," "Beautiful Worn-Out Love," "Lonely Line Away," "Guilty As Charged." F.M. Cornog plays, sings and records every note himself, which may be one of the reasons his songs sound so consistently, smokily lonely: for him, there's a happy, devoutly active world of people who not only dance or rock out all night but really enjoy their lives—a world Cornog knows, or believes, he can't enter, which is why he hangs with self-proclaimed losers, pines for distant girls, and writes these songs. At worst, his minimal lyrical mantras are pulpy and politically dodgy ("I know you're a whore/But you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen"); at best, their insistent simplicity makes them moving or cryptically disturbing ("Kill the action for me/We don't even know our names"). The home production lets you pick out every muffled drum-machine hit, every keyboard drone and every under-the-melody, under-the-weather two-note guitar repetition: hearing all those thin, sad layers below the sad, thin words, and noticing how easy it is to pick apart the songs track by track, you might notice how all these half-melodies that can't go anywhere on their own work sadly and starkly alongside one another—each song's a community of sounds derived from loneliness. *STEPHEN BURT*

**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 10. First single "Kill The Action."  
**FILE UNDER:** Desperate, scared, anti-social one-man pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Red House Painters, Galaxie 500, American Music Club.



EELS / *Beautiful Freak* / DreamWorks-Geffen ●



**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 13.

**FILE UNDER:** Lithium rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:** R.E.M., The Feelies, Dinosaur Jr.

Eels are sensitive—maybe a little too sensitive. Led by a singer-songwriter who made an album a few years back as A Man Called E, this Los Angeles trio delivers an album of quirky, hook-filled songs that are introspective but not painfully self-absorbed. E sings like a more listless version of Tom Petty, and his outlook on life is best summed up by the chorus of “Not Ready Yet”: “I don’t think I’m ready yet... just not that steady yet.” A trip to the supermarket, relationships, life: something upsetting seems to happen to him every time he sets foot outside. But E has a few satirical moments, as well: On “Guest List,” he wishes he was “one of the beautiful people,” but then he segues into a wistful “I’m never on your list.” Pensive as the lyrics are, the music never mopes. Producer Michael Simpson (half of the Dust Brothers) has an impeccable ability to layer disparate sounds, and the album borrows charmingly from here, there and everywhere: samples and observation from Soul Coughing; *Monster*-era big fuzz guitars from R.E.M.; drums from “Golden Slumbers”; squealing Moogs from the ’70s. At its best (which is most of the time), *Beautiful Freak* really sounds like nothing else, as when “Flower” blends a slide guitar with a sample of a woman’s chorus, and the melody drifts like incense on a summer night. *HEIDI MACDONALD*

FROSTED



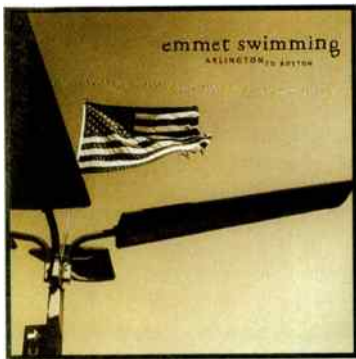
jane wiedlin

frosted is:  
sean demott lance porter  
featuring “call me crazy”

brian waters



produced by maro waterman and frosted  
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**EMMET SWIMMING / Arlington To Boston / Epic ●**

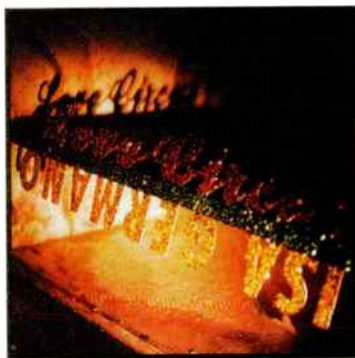
Here's to the Uncool, that *other* underground scene in every city. These bands are typically ignored by their host cities' media but chug along undaunted, selling ten times more records than their hipster peers. The members of Emmet Swimming, who reside in the ultra-indie Northern Virginia area, are here to tell you that they've been taking names. "It's the suburb of the week/There's beautiful people at the bar," goes the opener "Arlington," a blast of vitriol directed at the suburb that houses most of what people think of as the D.C. scene. It's a dicey strategy, especially since, strictly speaking, there are no beautiful people in Arlington. But that's kind of beside the point. The members of Emmet revel in their Uncoolness,

**DATALOG:** Released Jul. 23.  
**FILE UNDER:** Hip to be square.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Dog's Eye View, Hootie And The Blowfish, God Street Wine.

content to sign to a major label and take their message to more people than Tsunami will ever reach. Musically, they're hardly adventurous, happy with pleasantness and simplicity; the lyrics to "Long Way Down"—"Maybe she'd slept with poets/There's no clever line here"—sum up Todd

Watt's poetic reach rather succinctly. But there's nothing to blame Emmet Swimming for: they have no aspirations to anything greater than Hootie status, they know they're simply an above-average rock band, and they don't care how Uncool they are. See you on the golf course, boys. *ANDREW BEAUJON*



**LISA GERMANO / excerpts from a Love Circus / 4AD**

Lisa Germano's songs permeate a room like a fine mist of anxiety. Her smoky, Kewpie-doll voice whispers melodies that borrow equally from back-porch country and east-Indian drone. "You're a snot and I adore you," she coos in one tune; "I liked it when you hurt me," in the next. She's a melodramatic and incisive kind of gal, who understands her masochistic tendencies just a tad too well to settle for a healthy relationship. An acoustic guitar strums languidly, drums are treated with a heavy dose of effects, and gentle hooks hang in the upper register. Violin, tin whistle, keyboard and purring cats wander in and out of the mix. Though all of the hushed and unpredictable arrangements create a distinctive landscape, it's

**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Ethereal folk-rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Throwing Muses, Mary Margaret O'Hara, Cocteau Twins.

the mysterious and distraught lyrics that make these songs spark. "He's happy 'cause he knows he got away with it," she sighs in "We Suck." Even though you're never sure what "he" did, the sincerity of the performance is enough to make you wispy. Not sure what to get the depressed coquette in

your life? Give the gift of Germano. *NEIL GLADSTONE*



**HEADCRAH / Overdose On Tradition / Discovery ●**

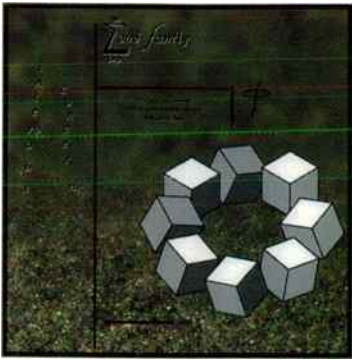
Headcrash's debut features on its cover a hybrid between a handgun and a remote control, two potent symbols of American empty-headedness. It makes for great packaging, suggesting the disc's blunt political ideals, as well as its level of subtlety. The music throughout is loud, blaring funk-metal laced with samples and turntable scratches, and the two sore-throated vocalists take turns rapping/shouting about The Man and his evil profit-hungry ways. That's not necessarily a bad idea: Prong has been quite successful lately at piling gigantic riffage on top of electronic underpinnings, and Consolidated has always been good at dropping articulate, left-wing polemics, but no one yet has really managed to do both well at the same time.

**DATALOG:** Released Jun. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Sound and fury.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Rage Against The Machine, Biohazard, Judgment Night soundtrack.

Headcrash certainly does it better than Rage Against The Machine, though the riffs aren't quite as meaty, and only occasionally does the screed go much beyond run-of-the-mill anti-authoritarianism. There are some humorous moments ("King Of The Chrome," in the voice of a corporate

lackey trying to rationalize his life) and even some thoughtful moments ("The Sell-Out Daze," which proposes that anyone participating in mass culture, i.e. everyone, is "on a major label too"), but most of the album is brash, fist-pumping, middle-finger-wielding anthems pitching revolution to the usual demographic of teenage rebels. *DAVID JARMAN*

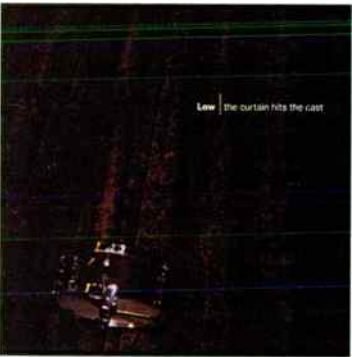


**LOUD FAMILY / Interbabe Concern / Alias**

The first time I popped *Interbabe Concern* into my stereo system, it played perfectly fine. The second time, the CD player refused to read it. The third time, it played as if nothing had ever been wrong. It wouldn't be surprising if Loud Family patriarch Scott Miller intentionally had the CD manufactured just so it would do exactly that. The root of his music, as with his old band Game Theory, is the baroque pop invented and perfected in the mid-'60s, but Miller and band hardly play it straight. There's always some jarring detail added or subtracted, some unsettling minor component that takes these tunes out of the realm of the normal. Gently plucked acoustic guitars will suddenly be ripped apart by a mutinous fuzzbox, seemingly at random. Synth player Paul Wieneke seems to delight in dialing up the most abusive, sick, or annoying programs he can find. Song titles and lyrics alike have a thoroughly Beefheartian logic (sample song titles: "Sodium Laureth Sulfate," "The Softest Tip Of Her Baby Tongue," "Rise Of The Chokehold Princess"). If pop's purpose is to soothe and

**DATALOG:** Release date: Aug. 20.  
**FILE UNDER:** Pop of the most depraved variety.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Left Banke, Van Dyke Parks, Captain Beefheart, Syd Barrett.

delight, then this is either half-pop or fullblooded mutation/mutilation, as there's nothing soothing about this in the least. It's disturbing, but the sort of disturbance you'll be whistling at work. *TIM STEGALL*



**LOW / The Curtain Hits The Cast / Vernon Yard-Caroline**

Way too much has been made of Low's sluggish song tempos. The band's rhythms barely measure above an EKG flat-line, but that's hardly the only thing going for it (or against it, depending on your daily caffeine intake). *The Curtain Hits The Cast*, the trio's third full-length record, may be its most plodding, but it's also its most successful and conceptually adventurous. Low is no longer just a slow, moody, barely-there rock band—its aesthetic involves re-thinking the idea of sonic space and time as it applies to guitar, bass and voice. Structurally, Low songs are about as minimal as you can get while still holding onto the pretext of melody and rhythm: Many of them are constructed around nothing more than two chords, played deliberately, hypnotically, over and over again for close to 10 minutes. Vocals are stretched across this wide, open space with gorgeous fluidity. A few minutes of this and you forget that you're listening to an actual guitar or human voice, instead focusing on the soft, seismic

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Slower than slow-core.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Idaho, Joy Division, Brian Eno.

shifts in tone and dynamics. Once you've slipped into this pillowy consciousness, things like melody and rhythm lose all meaning. The effort behind this restraint has got to be killing them, but given a little patience on the listener's part, it pays off in spades. *COLIN HELMS*



**Someone has to be in charge.**

Although he was closer to the daily lives of his citizenry than perhaps any other national leader of the modern era, Emperor Norton held very firm ideas concerning the respect to which his office was due. When he came across a painting by famed cartoonist Edward E. Jump entitled "The Three Friends," depicting Norton surveying a lunch counter with his dogs at his side, he studied it quietly for a few moments and then declared it "an insult to the dignity of an Emperor," with which words he took up his cane, smashed the glass behind which the painting stood, and put his boot squarely through its middle—the only overtly destructive act of Emperor Norton's reign.

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**BRIAN MCMAHON / 17 Volts / Crab Pot ●**

Twenty years ago, Brian McMahon was in the Electric Eels, one of the most in-your-face punk rock bands ever (check used record stores for their anthology *God Says Fuck You*). The only things that *17 Volts* really has in common with the Eels, though, are the title's allusion, fittingly cheap production, some garagey keyboard sounds, and general excellence. McMahon has become a singer-songwriter very much in the vein of Lou Reed—they share a sentimentality thinly veiled by toughness, a gift for making recordings that sound like \$10 demos of Brill Building tunes, and a singing voice that's halfway to a reading voice. But the student has caught up with his teacher—these songs are as sharp and tight as Unca Lou's, and much less pretentious. Though seven other musicians are listed, including the members of terror-noise group To Live And Shave In LA, almost all you hear is McMahon's casual voice pacing through his deceptively complex lyrics and a plugged-in guitar played with the wrist-flick of decades of experience. Beyond that, there are a few bits

**DATALOG:** Released Jul. 15. McMahon's home page is <http://users.aol.com/cleels/>

**FILE UNDER:** Singer-songwriters with a knack for white noise.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Lou Reed, Pere Ubu, early Dylan.

played by cheap keyboards and Cale-ish violin (as on the fabulous "NYDNY," which stands for "New York don't need you"), and flashes of static and shortwave squeals that keep the sound as interesting as the songs. It's time the world caught up with McMahon. *DOUGLAS WOLK*



**HOLLY MCNARLAND / Sour Pie / Universal ●**

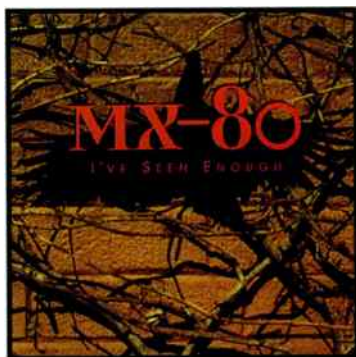
Like the *Sour Pie* on the cover of Holly McNarland's debut EP, the young Canadian artist's songs are both sweet and tart. McNarland's subject matter is much more provocative than her dulcet voice would imply, and her six-song disc (which includes tunes like "Cry Or Cum," "Sick Boy" and "Mr. 5 Minutes") is surprisingly sexually charged. She may sing "Does my nude blush you," but, to be honest, McNarland is driven by a desire to ruffle, redden and thoroughly discompose her listeners. What's really confounding is that while her subject matter tends to be salacious, McNarland's vocal style could hardly be characterized as lustful. There is a subdued sensuality to her tender crooning, but for the most part, she sounds fairly ingenuous, her calmness cutting the songs' lyrical bite. Even so, the dynamic opposition between the mellifluous melodies and the contextual sexiness reinforces the allure of McNarland's songs: She doesn't have to wail, Morissette-style, about movie theater escapades because it's the dark corners of McNarland's voice—the

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 13.

**FILE UNDER:** Canadian coquette.

**R.I.Y.L.:** Alanis Morissette, Sinead O'Connor, Sarah McLachlan.

whispers veiled in a shadow of acoustic guitar strumming, the gentle warble supported only by an echoey bass line, the ethereal strain that only turns guttural for a fraction of a second—that will seduce you. *JENNY ELISCU*



**MX-80 / I've Seen Enough / Atavistic**

The first evidence of MX-80's art-rock-of-the-absurd surfaced in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1975, placing them in the rarefied company of Pere Ubu as one of those American bands mining something like post-punk before there was punk to be post-. Though the band has never vanished completely, this is its first full-length since founding members Rich Stim, Bruce Anderson and Dale Sophiea relocated to the Bay Area. Anderson's guitar has mellowed from the days of the aptly named *Hard Attack* into painterly, chorused-out riffing, which acts as a foil to Stim's very new wave horn-lines and deadpan vocals—he makes Steven Wright sound like Sam Kinison. Though the band is, by now, highly accomplished and admirably understated, the combination of a reverb-soup mixing job and current drummer Marc Weinstein, who often sounds as if he's trying to move his sticks through some viscous substance, can make a straight-through listen heavy going. Many songs, taken alone, get over on Stim's (and sometimes Sophiea's) sardonic lyrical conceits, but this level of archness can wear over fifty minutes: Today's MX-80 is like an acquaintance who's not too obnoxious to invite to a big party, but not pleasant enough to spend an evening alone with. *FRANKLIN BRUNO*

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 1.

**FILE UNDER:** Well-seasoned "Alternative Standup" rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:** King Missile, Shellac, goofier Frank Zappa.

**PEARL JAM / No Code / Epic**



**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** A thinking, feeling monolith.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Led Zeppelin, Pearl Jam, Neil Young.

Whether one takes a cynical or celebratory view of its rise to fame and the course it's navigated for itself, Pearl Jam is not so much a band as it is this big, monstrous thing that's a million miles away and yet intimately connected to an awful lot of people's daily lives. On *No Code*, Eddie Vedder's lyrics are still annoying, but hey, *somebody's* got to write the lyrics for kids' senior yearbook quotes. The most interesting thing here is seeing how hanging around with Neil Young has rubbed off on the band: "Smile" has a wheezy harmonica, Eddie's voice warbles into a high falsetto a couple of times, and the twin-guitar crash of "I'm Open" sounds very Crazy Horse-ish. In the wake of its first album's success and its post-grunge longevity, it

looked like this band was the closest thing this generation would get to a Led Zeppelin. But now it sounds like they're just doin' their own thing their own way, à la even longer-lived legends like Neil Young or Iggy Pop. And *No Code's* last song, "Around The Bend," is an outright lullaby that's

wonderful, and impossible to imagine in the framework of Pearl Jam's first album. So it may be that the group is worrying less about the stresses of being a monolithic media force or an incarnation of the zeitgeist, and is instead concentrating on becoming a better band. *JAMES LIEN*

**ROBERT POLLARD / Not In My Airforce / Matador**



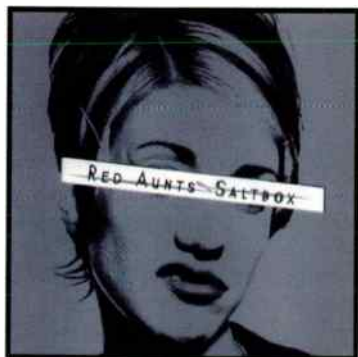
**DATALOG:** Release date: Sep. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Indie-rock *crème de la crème*.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Guided By Voices, the Velvet Underground, T. Rex.

If the solo debut by Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard sounds like his band, that's because for all intents and purposes, it *is*. The only things that are tangibly different on Pollard's solo debut are a couple more microphones and a little bit more *whump* in the drum sounds on a few of the tunes. For the last year or two, the GBV formula of deliberate low-fi elitism and hipster anti-posing was beginning to smack of diletantism, and not only that, it was also getting stale really quick. What Bob Pollard's done is the opposite of an aging rocker stripping down his sound and "going back to the roots"—he's actually made an album that's a tentative move towards selling out. And so, the most eagerly-awaited solo album in all of indie

rockdom is also the best GBV-related project since *Bee Thousand*. Songs like "Girl Named Captain," "Parakeet Troopers" and "The Ash Gray Proclamation" are beautiful reminders of exactly what everybody liked about GBV in the first place. And, as with GBV, the greatest thing about

Robert Pollard on *Not In My Airforce* is that he hasn't read his own reviews. He just keeps playing air guitar in front of the mirror as if that's all that really matters. *JAMES LIEN*

**RED AUNTS / Saltbox / Epitaph**



**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Tough-girl punk.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Bikini Kill, Oblivians, Avengers.

Over the course of five years and four albums, Southern California's Red Aunts have stirred up a sassy mixture of noisy rock and whatever other elements strike their collective fancy. *Saltbox*, as with earlier efforts, is strewn with unlikely flavors that somehow work well together: a flourish of vintage of '50s pop in the intro to "All Red Inside"; vaguely jazzy piano interjections in "Ruby (What I Won't)"; a touch of revved up R&B à la the early Who in "\$5." Though the Aunts don't make any radical departures here, both their playing and their songwriting have continued to mature, and while none of these songs actually have heavyweight pop hooks, every track is built around a solid, tuneful idea. The sprawling "Goin' Downtown"

sounds like the kind of tragic tune a modern day Marlene Dietrich would sing in some kind of post-punk saloon, full of twangy, weepy slide guitar. "Eldritch Sauce" evolves out of a pulsing guitar line and one-note drone, which eventually give way to a zig-zag course of staggering

stretches and rough and tumble straightaways. An abundance of punk rock attitude has served the Red Aunts well, as they've learned how to make their music work, but they have enough personality to carry them wherever they want to go from here. *SANDY MASUO*



**VARIOUS ARTISTS / A Small Circle Of Friends / Grass**

The only excuse for doing a tribute album is to bring out things in a band's songs that the band didn't bring out itself, so the Germs were ripe for one: as important and great as the late-'70s L.A. punk band's records were, few bands have ever steamrolled over their own songs' possibilities as efficiently. (The late singer Darby Crash may have had the highest ratio ever of quality of lyrics to comprehensibility of vocals.) So it's a disappointment that so many of the bands on the all-star Germs tribute, *A Small Circle Of Friends*, content themselves with simply playing the songs exactly as they were recorded the first time. A few do different things that demonstrate that different isn't necessarily better (note to the Meat Puppets: making "Not All Right" even sloppier and more garbled was not a good idea). But there are a few great ideas here. The best is the Posies' genius reinterpretation of "Richie Dagger's Crime," which discovers a gleefully poppy bass line hidden in the original and grafts on the arrangement of the Beatles' "You Won't See Me." Other highlights include Matthew Sweet's electro-drone take on "Dragon Lady" and That Dog turning "We Must Bleed" into, basically, a That Dog song. This could have been a great EP, but for the most part, it's not nearly the re-envisioning of the Germs that Darby would have wanted. *DOUGLAS WOLK*

**DATALOG:** Released Aug. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** Near-miss tributes.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Germs, SoCal punk compilations, *The Bridge*.



**SPEEDBALL BABY / Cinéma / Fort Apache-MCA ●**

If you think that there are no hillbillies in New York City, Speedball Baby would have you think again. With *Cinéma*, the band can count itself among the Big Apple's growing roster of roots music deconstructionists like the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and the Chrome Cranks. Speedball Baby's specialty is deranged hillbilly rock with a vicious garage-rock snarl and fiercely urban flavor that will make you howl. Speaking of howling, singer Ron Ward's Elvis-with-Tourette's singing is one of *Cinéma's* most striking elements. On "Black Cat Moan" and "Drug Owl," he shrieks and hollers like a rooster being swung in the air by its comb; on the latter, the affect is heightened by Ward's shift from mellow, spoken verse to the chorus' psycho-billy howling. Many of the songs take unexpected twists, adding bits of spy-movie theme song, evangelical gospel, or eerie circus music. At times, like the accent over the "e" in its album's title, Speedball Baby's theatrics have an off-putting air of pretension—the album's strongest tracks are the ones where the band sounds least self-consciously referential. When the band tears down the velvet curtain of its influences, when it makes no bones about being a solid (if slightly left-of-center) rockabilly band, that's when the real show begins. *JENNY ELISCU*

**DATALOG:** Released Sep. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Theatrical psycho-billy.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Cramps, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion.



**TOBIN SPROUT / Carnival Boy / Matador**

Guided By Voices' slow, then meteoric rise to the top of the indie-rock heap has now spawned solo albums from both the Ohio band's songwriters. While Robert Pollard's collection will probably draw more attention, Tobin Sprout's *Carnival Boy* is not to be ignored. Save for the spare instrumental "The Bone Yard," Sprout's fuzzy guitars and minor-key melodies create hazy soundscapes for emotions to lurk. Sprout's lyrics evoke more than they emote, though. With the lonely accompaniment of his guitar, Sprout opens "Gas Daddy Gas" by singing, "Such a fuss about such a story/Standing in the punchline/Scratch the back of some strange emotions." Keeping with the minimal setting, he cautiously invokes images of a lost childhood to create one of the album's most haunting songs. Creating another world is what Sprout does best, as on "Hermit Stew" where he equates modern city life with hermetic living: "Come to my city of dull surroundings/Population barely four/Watch me come and go/I'm everyone I know." Unfortunately, Sprout's unguided tour is far too short; the 14 songs here zoom by in half an hour. *TOM ROE*

**DATALOG:** Released Sep. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Sincere, straightforward rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Guided By Voices, The Kinks.

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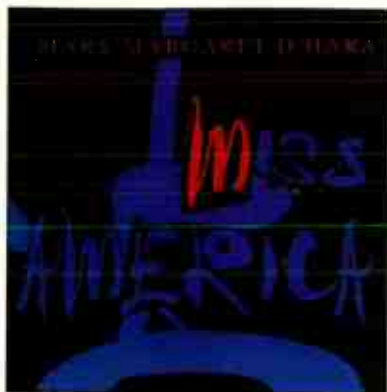
# TOP 75

[ Alternative Radio Airplay ]

ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL
1	REVEREND HORTON HEAT	It's Martin Time <i>Interscope</i>
2	BECK	Odelay <i>DGC</i>
3	SOUL COUGHING	Irresistible Bliss <i>Slash-WB</i>
4	DEAD CAN DANCE	Spiritchaser <i>4AD-WB</i>
5	JAWBOX	Jawbox <i>TAG</i>
6	KMFDM	Xtort <i>Wax Trax!-TVT</i>
7	MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO	Subliminal Sandwich <i>Nothing-Interscope</i>
8	ASH	1977 <i>Reprise</i>
9	SUICIDE MACHINES	Destruction By Definition <i>Hollywood</i>
10	ME'SHELL NDEGOFCELLO	Peace Beyond Passion <i>Maverick-Reprise</i>
11	BUTTHOLE SURFERS	Electric Larryland <i>Capitol</i>
12	RED FIVE	Flash <i>Interscope</i>
13	LONG FIN KILLIE	Valentino <i>Too Pure-American</i>
14	TUSCADERO	The Pink Album <i>Elektra-EEG</i>
15	DELTA 72	The R&B Of Membership <i>Touch And Go</i>
16	SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS	Hot <i>Mammoth</i>
17	FIGGS	Banda Macho <i>Capitol</i>
18	WEN	12 Golden Country Greats <i>Elektra-EEG</i>
19	SCREAMING TREES	Dust <i>Epic</i>
20	MELVINS	Stag <i>Mammoth-Atlantic</i>
21	HOLIDAY	Ready, Steady, Go! <i>March</i>
22	CHAINSUCK	Angelscore <i>Wax Trax!-TVT</i>
23	CUB	Box Of Hair <i>Mint-Lookout!</i>
24	LAND OF THE LOOPS	Bundle Of Joy <i>Up</i>
25	R.L. BURNSIDE	A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey <i>Matador</i>
26	JUNE OF 44	Tropics And Meridians <i>Quarterstick</i>
27	BEDHEAD	Beheaded <i>Trance Syndicate</i>
28	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Mom: Music For Our Mother Ocean <i>Surfdog-Interscope</i>
29	HIS NAME IS ALIVE	Stars On E.S.P. <i>4AD</i>
30	GASTR DEL SOL	Upgrade & Afterlife <i>Drag City</i>
31	TEAM DRESCH	Captain My Captain <i>Chainsaw-Candy-Ass</i>
32	NADA SURF	High/Low <i>Elektra-EEG</i>
33	FASTBACKS	New Mansions In Sound <i>Sub Pop</i>
34	DE LA SOUL	Stakes Is High <i>Tommy Boy</i>
35	GODRAYS	Songs For T.V. Stars <i>Vernon Yard-Caroline</i>
36	JALE	So Wound <i>Sub Pop</i>
37	SOUNDTRACK	Trainspotting <i>Capitol</i>
38	PATTI SMITH	Gone Again <i>Arista</i>
39	ANI DI FRANCO	Dilate <i>Righteous Babe</i>
40	PORNO FOR PYROS	Good God's Urge <i>Warner Bros.</i>
41	ORBITAL	In Sides <i>Jfrr-London</i>
42	SLEEPER	The It Girl <i>Arista</i>
43	SOUNDTRACK	The Crow: City Of Angels <i>Miramax Hollywood</i>
44	CALLIOPE	I Can See You With My Eyes Closed <i>Thick</i>
45	LYLE LOVETT	The Road To Ensenada <i>Curb-MCA</i>
46	HURL	A Place Called Today <i>Third Gear</i>
47	BIKINI KILL	Reject All American <i>Kill Rock Stars</i>
48	TRAMPOLINE	I Want One Of Everything <i>spinART</i>
49	FASTBALL	Make Your Mama Proud <i>Hollywood</i>
50	NEIL YOUNG WITH CRAZY HORSE	Broken Arrow <i>Reprise</i>
51	MUZZLE	Betty Pickup <i>Kinetic-Reprise</i>
52	RED HOUSE PAINTERS	Songs For A Blue Guitar <i>Supreme-Island</i>
53	WESTON	Got Beat Up <i>Go Kart</i>
54	KELLEY DEAL 6000	Go To The Sugar Altar <i>Nice</i>
55	ELECTRONIC	Raise The Pressure <i>Warner Bros.</i>
56	ROYAL CROWN REVUE	Mugzy's Move <i>Warner Bros.</i>
57	BARKMARKET	I, Ron <i>American</i>
58	MAGNAPOP	Rubbing Doesn't Help <i>Play It Again Sam-Priority</i>
59	FLUFFER	Ask Me What It Feels Like. <i>Link</i>
60	RAMONES	Greatest Hits Live <i>Radioactive</i>
61	ENORMOUS	Busman's Holiday <i>A&amp;M</i>
62	SENSE FIELD	Building <i>Revelation</i>
63	WALLFLOWERS	Bringing Down The Horse <i>Interscope</i>
64	PLACEBO	Placebo <i>Elevator Music-Caroline</i>
65	URU'SEI YATSURA	Kevpies Like Watermelon (EP) <i>Che-Primary</i>
66	KEB' MO'	Just Like You <i>OKeh-Epic</i>
67	GRANT LEE BUFFALO	Copperopolis <i>Slash-Reprise</i>
68	PALEFACE	Get Off <i>Sire-EEG</i>
69	SOUNDGARDEN	Down On The Upside <i>A&amp;M</i>
70	FINN BROTHERS	Finn Brothers <i>Discovery</i>
71	KRONOS QUARTET	Howl USA <i>Nonesuch</i>
72	GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALLSTARS	T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M. <i>550-Epic</i>
73	DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM	Boot Party <i>K</i>
74	LOS STRAITJACKETS	¡Viva! Los Straitjackets <i>Upstart</i>
75	DICK DALE	Calling Up Spirits <i>Beggars Banquet</i>

Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 30 most-played releases that week.





## MARY MARGARET O'HARA

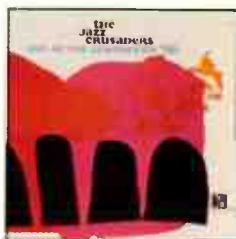
Miss America

Koch

Before there were "women in rock" features all over the news, there was the enigmatic Canadian singer Mary Margaret O'Hara. Koch has just re-released *Miss America*, her only LP to date. Originally released on Virgin into the alternative wilderness of 1988, it's a stunning, wonderful, mysterious record that's the missing link between say, Patti Smith in the '70s and the Cranberries, Mazzy Stars and Joan Osbornes of today. The only recordings *Miss America* can be accurately compared to are maybe Gram Parsons' solo albums or Skip Spence's *Oar*—and even then, not so much because of the music but because of the fact that it's a single great album by somebody whose music really stands alone. Featuring occasional atmospheric guitar work from Peter Gabriel-collaborator Michael Brook, and songs written over a nine-year span, *Miss America* is a stunning album of great depth whose time has finally come. O'Hara's voice is simply riveting—popular comparisons run the gamut from early Patti Smith to a female Jeff Buckley to Van Morrison's soul mate, but none of the descriptions ever quite capture the mesmerizing quality of her haunting songs and stammering, scating, mad-dervish vocal style. O'Hara also recently resurfaced on a couple of tracks by a band called the Henrys, and maybe she'll have a new record out sometime soon.

The space-age rotunda of the Capitol tower in Hollywood was home to some of the swingin'-est sounds of the '50s and '60s. With the current "lounge" music revival, Capitol has rolled out some mighty swank reissues, including a 12-volume series of *Ultra Lounge* compilations. A personal favorite is the one with a track from the Hollywood Studio Orchestra, a very suave group of professional musicians who turn Henry Mancini's usually subdued *Pink Panther* theme into a simmering samba-funk boogaloo. Equally memorable is the newer volume *Organs In Orbit*, featuring various easy-listening instrumental outings spotlighting the mid-20th century innovation, the electronic organ, ranging from cabaret sambas from hell to ice-rink dementia. Capitol's also put out **Les Baxter's** *Exotic Moods*, a two-disc collection of some of the weirdest and wildest moments from the bandleader/arranger/composer best known for "Quiet Village."

From the cocktail nation it's just a hop, skip and jump over to swinging '60s soul-jazz. Witness World Pacific-Capitol's snazzy reissue of the **Jazz Crusaders' Live At The Lighthouse '66** (why doesn't anybody name albums after years anymore?). It's a sizzling platter of lounge-jazz tempered with percolating Latin rhythms. Aside from being really great music, the real reason to add it to your collection is the liner notes, written in glorious, swinging, gadfly-about-town style. The Hollywood-based writer and *bon vivant* begins his evening by taking his lady friend to "a Latin joint just off Alvarado," then cruises down the Strip and discovers the Jazz Crusaders playing at a local club. Of course, the Crusaders are old friends of his, and he and his lady breeze past the doorman to one of the best tables in the house, and during the break the band members come over to his table, introducing themselves to his date. Impressive. Of the group's superbly swinging tenor player, he writes, "If Wilton Felder gets any looser, he will come apart and have to be taken home." Naturally, the writer doesn't say what ended up happening between him and his lady friend, but somehow you just *know*...



On a more serious jazz front, Rhino-Atlantic has just released for the first time a recording of **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** live at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in the early '70s. It's a fabulous live set of jazz with the underlying African tinge that was prevalent in his period. The label has also reissued **Les McCann & Eddie Harris' Swiss Movement**, featuring the original hit recording of "Compared To What," one of the signature tunes of the early '70s. It went on to become that rarest of rare birds, a gold jazz record. As Les himself says today, "It's the only one I have hanging on the wall of my house."

In reggae news, Island has just released two-CD anthologies by two classic '70s reggae artists. *Chant Down Babylon* celebrates **Burning Spear's** essential work, and there's also a great set from **Toots & The Maytals, Time Tough: The Anthology**. Toots Hibbert, author of hits like "Pressure Drop," "Funky Kingston" and "Reggae Got Soul," is one of the true architects of classic reggae, and probably the one who best acknowledges its roots as a version of the American soul music of Memphis and New Orleans slowed down by heat and humidity. With great photos and artwork, it's a nice start, but Island should realize that vintage reggae, like jazz or blues, is a market with deeply-immersed fans: collectors of deep reggae want to hear *all* the old stuff, and would just as likely purchase compilations brimming with obscure and unreleased material as they would a greatest-hits collection.

## RIFFS

Last time Joe Preston was heard, he was bassist of the Melvins, brandishing a 20-minute dirge loop on his own Kiss-style solo album. Those same intentions have developed into his recordings as the **Thrones**, crunching cut-ups of low seeping bass, laser blasts, and unpredictable impossibility on a par with the Ruins. The debut, *Alraune* (Communion), could be the most exciting parts of classic Judas Priest, slowed down and re-sequenced to form the ultimate state-of-the-art slam. Though computer-assisted, this doesn't sound synthetic, just like a superhuman version of the Melvins at their heaviest... Besides new ugliness from **Impaled Nazarene** and **Marduk**, France's Osmose Recordings has a trio of titles that exemplify idiosyncrasy in extra-eccentric evil. The torturously-titled **Tsarthoggua** was formed three years ago, when members of juicy death metal act Dissection reoriented to black metal. The new group's debut, *Hosanna Bizarre*, is a twisted vision of speed and sickness, starting off like sadistic noise disco but eventually becoming less memorable. On the other hand, **Bewitched's** *Encyclopedia*



*Of Evil* breathes new life into covers of black metal anthems by Venom, Bathory, Mercyful Fate, and Celtic Frost, showing that Bewitched's old school qualities can be pretty intense.

**Raism**, however, wants as little to do with tradition as possible, as these former members of Diablos Rising pour out sinister death metal techno on *The Very Best Of Pain*. Slayer riffs meet Rotterdam's finest beats in something resembling the Mortal Kombat arena, while the singer belches malicious indecipherables and the odd 220 b.p.m. chorus of "Die!/Die!/Die!/Die!/Die!/Die!/Die!/Die!". This month's excellent answer to Emperor is *The Cainian Chronicle* (Metal Blade), a surprisingly ambitious epic from **Ancient**. Elevated by sweeping symphonic arrangements and alternating male-to-female vocals, this album barely misses moving black metal to the lavish next level. With a new trans-Atlantic line-up, the band certainly has a distinct dynamism, and the bonus advantage of being a potent live act.

## METAL TOP 25

- 1 PRONG *Rude Awakening* Epic
- 2 SLAYER *Undisputed Attitude* American
- 3 PANTERA *The Great Southern Trendkill* EastWest-EEG
- 4 BIOHAZARD *Mata Leao* Warner Bros.
- 5 PRO-PAIN *Contents Under Pressure* Energy
- 6 KMFDM *Xtort* Wax Trax!/TVT
- 7 CANNIBAL CORPSE *Mle* Metal Blade
- 8 MELVINS *Stag* Mammoth-Atlantic
- 9 MADBALL *Demonstrating My Style* Roadrunner
- 10 ORANGE 9MM *Tragic* Atlantic
- 11 RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE *Evil Empire* Epic
- 12 CARCASS *Swansong* Farache
- 13 SEPULCRA *Roots* Roadrunner
- 14 CORE *Revival* Atlantic
- 15 SUICIDE MACHINES *Destruction By Definition* Hollywood
- 16 SOUNDTRACK *Escape From L.A.* Lava-Atlantic
- 17 METALLICA *Load* Elektra-EEG
- 18 BARKMARKET *L Ron* American
- 19 BILE *Teknowhore* Energy
- 20 HEADCRASH *Overdose On Tradition* Discovery
- 21 SOUNDTRACK *The Crow: City Of Angels* Miramax-Hollywood
- 22 AMORPHIS *Elegy* Relapse
- 23 SOUNDGARDEN *Down On The Upside* A&M
- 24 KISS *You Wanted The Best, You Got The Best!* Mercury
- 25 ANCIENT *The Cainian Chronicle* Metal Blade



## BETHLEHEM

### Dictius Te Necare

Red Stream

It's the right of an extreme metal band to rant and rave like mad lunatics, and Landfermann, the singer of Germany's Bethlehem, jumps on his license to ill. Conventional wisdom says metal is a cold, unfeeling fish, but there is a hysteric emotional quality to classic recordings by Hellhammer, Death, and Mayhem that argues otherwise. What made an impression on the shrieking of faceless black metal, after all, was the heart-stopping hysteria of Bathory's Quorthon, wailing like he'd dropped a sword through his foot. Landfermann howls crazily with his every ounce of true-believer dark metal gusto, and his unwell comrades back him up solidly. Quiet song parts are exceedingly gentle, and fast bits are utterly manic, but the band masters the transitions with well-rehearsed smoothness. Tracks like "Schatten Aus Der Alexander Welt" and "Die Anarchische Befreiung Der Augenzeugenreligion" are unusual enough on their own, with hyper-dramatic pauses and gurgling water sound effects thrown in with theatrical flair. Musically, *Dictius Te Necare* is a tasteful juggernaut of melodic doom and riffing, with a steady groove and evil breakbeats. In the way that you'll know pornography when you see it, Bethlehem is easily identified as an undiluted deliverer of the truest kind of metal.

HISS &amp; CRACKLE



BRAD MILLER

## TORTOISE

### Music For Work Groups

Thrill Jockey

Throughout the year, Tortoise will be releasing a series of remixes from its deep, head-disrupting *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* album, of which the two-song 12" *Music For Work Groups* is the second. This time out, the mixes are by Markus Popp, the sound-manipulator behind the German abstract-electronica groups Oval and Microstoria. When Popp remixes something, it's usually just about impossible to discern his source material—it all gets turned into his thing. (It doesn't help that neither "Bubble Economy" nor its B-side "Learning Curve" is a song title on *Millions*.) Everything gets turned into a thick electronic blur, hollow and soft and very pretty. The only beats present are "beats" in the AM-radio sense, the result of two overlapping phase-patterns; occasionally, there's a frisson of noise from malfunctioning circuits, or a "breath" in the piece that comes from a sudden tape-edit. The sound around which "Learning Curve" is built is identifiable as a bit of the deep dub bass that's central to Tortoise, but you can't quite tell what it's playing—it's more like what you're hearing is aspects of the bass's sound, a sort of sonic Cubism with a moment in a piece heard from lots of different frequency perspectives sequentially. Breathe in deep, close your eyes, and let it fold itself over you.

The second single by Seattle's **Sukpatch**, a four-song EP called *Koop* (Slabco), is a real delight, a hybrid of indie-pop songs and sample-packed grooves in the vein of *Land Of The Loops*. "Carving Counties" takes a country-folk melody and a little slowed-down James Brown loop, and pastes them together with some thick, resonant organ playing. Sukpatch's melodies are low-key but awfully sinuous, and the vocals seem shy somehow, like the singer doesn't think his voice is as important as the "uh! yeah!" samples around it, or maybe he's just trying not to wake up his roommates. That's actually kind of sweet, though.

There's a collective of very odd people in England, led by Alan Jenkins, that's been putting out very odd records for 15 years or so under a variety of names: the Deep Freeze Mice, Ruth's Refrigerator and the Chrysanthemums, among others. The group's latest identity is the **Creams**, and they've got a new three-song 7" out (Little Teddy) that's not just very odd but deeply schizophrenic. "These Magic Beans (Are Brown)" is a rewrite of the Velvet Underground's "I Can't Stand It" with what sounds like an Oxford don tremulously vocalizing; "Sub Sub" has a Motown-ish arrangement, two women singing and a peculiar horn break. The record is rounded off with a six-minute-plus disco/easy-listening/guitar-noise instrumental version of Cole Porter's "Anything Goes." If nothing else, you can't fault the Creams for obviousness. Liner note of the month: "Timings are approximate (because I just made them up—do you like the way they all end in 4?)"



John Huss, leader of the **John Huss Moderate Combo**, has one of the most non-singerly singing voices on the planet—on the band's *Braving Mantis* 7" (It Won't Go Flat), he sounds like he should be badgering the teller at the booth next to yours instead of fronting a rock band. As a songwriter, though, he puts the words first—his lyrics are always at least mildly witty, and sometimes more so (as when he's dissing Delaware: "I come from New Jersey/Our Newark is better than yours"). So he sticks his voice right smack on top of the mix, and guess what? It works perfectly fine. Best joke: "National Anthem," a hit-and-run ditty about hating people produced to sound like it's being sung to start a ball game.

The **Spare Snare** discography sometimes seems specifically designed to challenge the band's fans—there's a new record on a different label almost every month. The latest is a split single—the first in a new series—on the excellent Japanese label 100 Guitar Mania. Spare Snare's song is "Boom Boom Boom (One)," actually a solo by frontguy Jan Burnett, and the most minimal thing he's done to date: five notes on an out-of-tune guitar, three keys on a warbly organ, a gently hissing drum machine and Burnett's voice are the only ingredients in the mix. The other side is "Away From The City," a quickie by the **Summer Hits** that would be a nice piece of Dinosaur-y rock if its painfully sibilant vocals weren't eight times as loud as everything else.

Boredoms' vocalist Eye and legendary turntable operator Otomo Yoshihide did a couple of performances early this year at the London experimental-music club Disobey; 18 minutes' worth of them have been preserved on a delightful CD single, *Live!* (Blast First), credited to **MC Hellshit & DJ Carhouse**. They mostly consist of Yoshihide coming up with settings in which Eye can work his microphone-destroying vocal improvisations—skipping a needle across the surface of a heavy metal record, or feeding Eye gentle loops of surface noise and easy-listening strings to whoop along with. They're both so good at what they're doing that it's easy to forget that they're almost cartoonishly out of the orbit of what's normally thought of as music, or even listenable.

## ENJOY YOUR SYMPTOM!

Once again, at the margins of hip-hop reside the new electronica's most bizarre and lyrically surreal images and sounds. **Prince Paul**, formerly of Brooklyn's Stetsasonic, has long had a penchant for the macabre and perverse in both his cerebral rhymes and mock-horror, Grand Guignol production techniques (check last year's disturbing *Gravediggaz* album). His first full-length record ponders the question that has been gnawing away at the West since Freud and Lacan first made their way

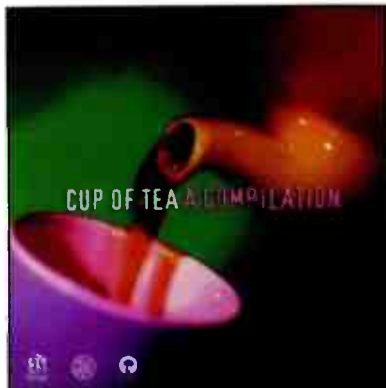


onto the stage: *What Is Psychoanalysis?* (Wordsound). Prince Paul pulls back from contemporary hip-hop and turns his satirical eye to Miami bass on the hilarious "Booty Clap," and attempts a hilarious re-reading of Schoolly D's infamous "P.S.K." on "J.O.B.—Das What Dey Is." The record picks apart the absurdity of psychoanalytic approaches to ingrained social malaise, while providing a barrage of kick-started drum loops and crazed, de-tuned string blasts... Mo Wax guru **James Lavelle** has achieved a cult status as a label owner with a passion for music and a knack for clever marketing, but few on this side of the Atlantic have witnessed Lavelle's turntable tricknology. Thus, the *Cream Live, Vol. 2* collection (*Deconstruction*) arrives at a fortuitous moment, when Mo Wax artists DJ Krush, Money Mark, and others are gaining notoriety stateside. The fruits of Lavelle's eclectic tastes are apparent throughout his set, as he moves from the stentorian hip-hop of Paris' "Break The Grip of Shame" to the eye-bleeding bass thunder of Innerzone Orchestra's "Bug In The Bassbin." Photek makes a welcome appearance, squeezed between two tracks from Dr. Octagon, and the mix slams to a conclusion with Peshay's roaring "Piano Tune." Lavelle's set was recorded at Cream, a corporate behemoth of a club in Liverpool. Both this collection and the club are odd settings for Lavelle's slo-mo-to-apopleptic mixes, but the tracks here are worth every second.

## DANCE TOP 25

- 1 ORBITAL In Sides *Jfrr-London*
- 2 MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO Subliminal Sandwich *Nothing-Interscope*
- 3 BATTERY Distance *COP International*
- 4 KMFDM Xtori *Wax Trax!-TVT*
- 5 LOOP GURU Amrita All These And The Japanese Soup Warriors *World Domination*
- 6 HARDFLOOR Home Run *Harthouse-Eye Q*
- 7 SINGLE CELL ORCHESTRA Single Cell Orchestra *Asphodel*
- 8 PLANET JAZZ Flying New World *Harthouse-Eye Q*
- 9 ELECTRIC SKYCHURCH Together *Moonshine*
- 10 HIGHER INTELLIGENCE AGENCY Freefloater *Waveform*
- 11 MIKE & RICH Expert Knob Twiddlers *Rephlex (UK)*
- 12 VARIOUS ARTISTS Arterio 2: The Art Of Drum & Bass *React*
- 13 UNDERWORLD Second Toughest In The Infants *Wax Trax!-TVT*
- 14 PHOTEK The Hidden Camera (EP) *Astralwerks-Caroline*
- 15 VARIOUS ARTISTS Behind The Eye: Eye Q Compilation *Eye Q*
- 16 DJ SPOOKY Songs Of A Dead Dreamer *Asphodel*
- 17 TIME SHARD Hunab Ku *Planet Dog-Mammoth*
- 18 SKINNY PUPPY Brap *Nettwerk*
- 19 ALTERED BEATS Assassin Knowledges Of The Remanipulated *Axiom-Island*
- 20 EARTH NATION Live *Eye Q*
- 21 VARIOUS ARTISTS Detroit: Beyond The Third Wave *Astralwerks-Caroline*
- 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS Trip Hop Test Part 3 *Moonshine*
- 23 VARIOUS ARTISTS Industrial F\*cking Strength *Industrial Strength-Earache*
- 24 DOWNLOAD The Eyes Of Stanley Pain *Nettwerk*
- 25 VARIOUS ARTISTS Texturas *Volume (UK)*

Prepared from the L.A. New Music Report, weekly DJM shows collected from DJM part of the magazine, and the Internet



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Cup Of Tea

Quango-Island

The English city of Bristol has emerged, over the last five years, as the most concentrated center of musical innovation in the British isles. Jazzie B and the Soul II Soul posse brought global attention to Bristol (though Mark Stewart and his maverick Pop Group certainly offered a compelling wall of noise to the unsuspecting in the early '80s). Subsequently, Massive Attack, Portishead, Smith & Mighty, and Tricky found their way into international channels, confirming once more that if you wanted to know where dance music was going, you were going to have to investigate Bristol's nightlife. Of central influence is the the Purple Penguin club, which gave rise to the Cup Of Tea label, run by the club's 25-year-old owner. The requirement for entry onto the label is that you spend one night on the decks at the Purple Penguin club. Though the label's sound has been linked to the vague "trip hop" movement, the range here is remarkable. The streaked pastels and rainy English ambiance of Monk & Canatella's "I Can Water My Plants," lyrically reminiscent of Momus or late Durutti Column, make up a fully-formed song rather than a track, and the arid, edgy breakbeat loops of Statik Sound System suggest an unforgiving club life without hedonism.



## RAS KASS

*Soul On Ice*

Patchwerk-Priority

Until the day comes when West Coast hip-hop isn't commercially defined by gangbangers, bitch-slappers and Roger Troutman-flavored beats, vocalists like Ras Kass will remain the kings of the underground. This time, the hype surrounding this 5'5" lyrical bombardier from Carson, California is believable. Since the release of his first single "Remain Anonymous," Ras Kass has shown a competitive verbal dexterity that's rare among West Coast MCs ("I never saw Bam[baataa] rock the parks in the Bronx, but I still snap skulls"). On his long-awaited debut, *Soul On Ice*, Kass's occasional baiting of East Coast MCs is done in a spirit that both shatters stereotypes and defiantly places Kass on an equal playing surface with hip-hop's elite ("The West Coast was resurrected by me!"). On "Reelishymn," Ras rips rapid-fire rhymes over a steady, funky click with delicate jazzy overlays, while on "Nature Of The Threat" he sounds like a younger KRS-One (circa *Edutainment*) as he gives us an oral history lesson over a rough snare crack and church-bell chimes. With lyrical juice to spare and cerebral, unobtrusive backdrops, Ras Kass is a true MC who unearths the roots of hip-hop.

As hip-hop and R&B have coalesced into indistinguishable and rather drab forms here in the States, Bristol, England's **Tricky** can make even the most hackneyed trends seem fresh and, as his reputation dictates, awfully strange. The five-song EP *Tricky Presents Grassroots* (Payday/ffrr-London) sees Tricky working with rappers and R&B vocalists in what seems like a bid to make a deep, smooth vibe record you can toss on and slowly absorb. But Tricky, who doesn't have a pop bone in his body, has made a record that will haunt and infect you, as rap artists like the Hillfiguzes ("Heaven, Youth Hell") drop steel-strong verses over his sparse, bass-drenched arrangements... When Compton's **N.W.A** rolled off the streets in 1988 shouting "F\*\*\* Tha Police," they single-handedly pushed hardcore rap to the most frightening, profane and violent limit. N.W.A lashed out against authority more aggressively and defiantly than anyone in pop music ever had before. With a career that seems longer (mostly due to never-ending controversy) than the three LPs (*N.W.A And The Posse*, *Straight Outta Compton*, *Efil4zaggin*) and one EP (*100 Miles And Runnin*) it released, the group personified the gangster mentality better than anyone. Its former label has just issued *Greatest Hits* (Ruthless-Priority), documenting the group's career with cuts like "Gangsta Gangsta," "Real Niggaz" and "100 Miles And Runnin'"... Hip-hop deconstructionists Sebastian and Nosaj, the guiding forces behind **New Kingdom**, have created the sonic equivalent of a 15-car pile-up on the eve of the apocalypse. The group's bizarre and twisted sophomore release, *Paradise Don't Come Cheap* (Gee Street), may be one of the toughest hip-hop records to listen to straight through: It's loud, gritty and obnoxiously disassembled, but it does have its charms, like the manic, self-possessed raps and hodgepodge compositions. New Kingdom's music is as much a personal statement as a challenge to the status quo. If you've ever tried to imagine what hip-hop might sound like ground up in a blender, then this is the right place to go. Word out.

## HIP-HOP TOP 25

- 1 **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST** *Beats, Rhymes And Life* *Jive*
- 2 **DE LA SOUL** *Stakes Is High* *Tommy Boy*
- 3 **NAS** *It Was Written* *Columbia-CRG*
- 4 **SOUNDTRACK** *America Is Dying Slowly* *Red Hot EastWest-EEG*
- 5 **ROOTS** "Clones / Section (12)" *DiG*
- 6 **RAS KASS** "Anything Goes"/"On Earth As It Is" (12") *PatchWerk-Priority*
- 7 **SOUNDTRACK** *High School High* *Big Beat-Atlantic*
- 8 **OUTKAST** "Elevators" (12") *LaFace-Arista*
- 9 **HELLTAH SKELTAH** *Nocturnal* *Duck Down-Priority*
- 10 **BAHAMADIA** *Kollage* *Chrysalis-EMI*
- 11 **HEATHER B** *Takin' Mine* *Pendulum-EMI*
- 12 **SOUNDTRACK** *The Nutty Professor* *Def Jam/RAI-Mercury*
- 13 **BIG SHUG** "Crush" (12") *Payday/ffrr-London*
- 14 **DJ HONDA** *DJ Honda* *Relativity*
- 15 **DIGITAL UNDERGROUND** *Future Rhythms* *Critique-Radikal*
- 16 **SADAT X** *Wild Cowboys* *Loud-RCA*
- 17 **AI TARIQ** "Do Yo' Thang"/"Spectacular" (12") *Correct*
- 18 **LOST BOYZ** *Legal Drug Money* *Universal*
- 19 **BUSTA RHYMES** *The Coming* *Elektra-EEG*
- 20 **XZIBIT** "Paparazzi" (12") *Loud-RCA*
- 21 **FUGEES (REFUGEE CAMP)** *The Score* *Ruffhouse Columbia-CRG*
- 22 **CHINO XL** *Huro Te Suve You All* *American*
- 23 **GOODIE MOB** *Soul Food* *LaFace-Arista*
- 24 **SHYHEIM** *The Lost Generation* *Juna/Noo Trybe-Virgin*
- 25 **SOUNDTRACK** *Great White Hype* *Hudlin Bros.-Epic Soundtrax*

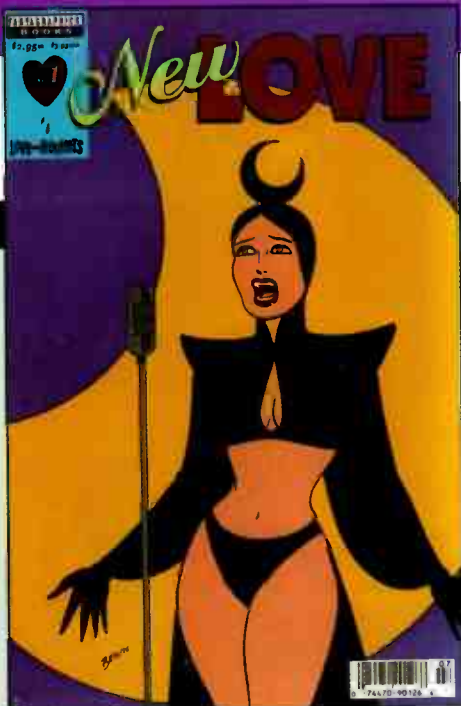
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## COMICS

### NEW LOVE

by Gilbert Hernandez (Fantagraphics)

Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez's pathbreaking *Love And Rockets* series ended a few months ago with #50; the brothers are each working on their own projects now. For the last few years, as he worked on a few long stories, Gilbert's work had become much more directed and less all-over-the-place than it had been initially. Sometimes that approach works for him, as with the recent three-issue lark *Girl Crazy*; sometimes it doesn't, as with the interminable "Poison River," which bogged down the last few years of *L&R*. With his new mini-series *New Love*, though, he's ripped the lid off his id and let all his sparkling ideas run loose, experimenting with drawing styles, non-standard narratives and little gag cartoons. Settings and characters from his earlier comics appear, but mostly the way familiar people and places appear in dreams, looking similar but totally different in substance. Hernandez has won accolades for his writing, but now it's much riskier and usually even better: Where, a few years ago, he might have written "Spirit Of The Thing" (in which a poor man consults a sort of oracle about how to save a glamorous stranger he loves) as straight-up magic realism, now he gives it a more ambiguous, mysterious meaning. He's stepped back out onto the edge, where he belongs. *DOUGLAS WOLK*



## READS

### THE THRONE OF THE THIRD HEAVEN OF THE NATION'S MILLENNIUM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

by Denis Johnson (Harper Collins)

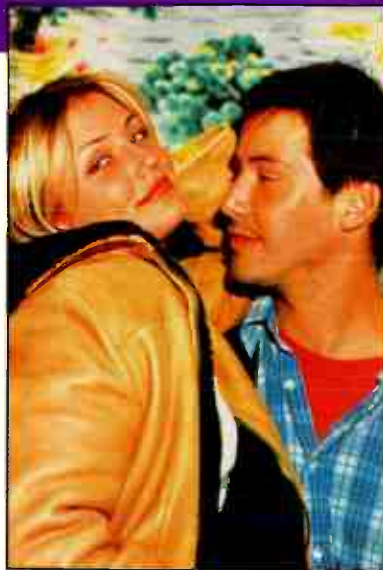
Denis Johnson's first book of poetry came out in 1969. He was 20. Seven years passed between that and his next work. Since 1976 he's published four novels, two books of poetry, one short-story collection, and several new poems which are collected, with all of his other poetry, in *Throne*. Given the subject matter of much of his work, it's not much of a leap to surmise that his twenties were scarred, nearly fatally, by drugs, drink and addiction. It's testimony to his gifts as a writer that while these experiences of bottoming out inform his work, he's able to use the lenses of drugs and drink to illuminate great truths and questions rather than simply wallow in squalor. But that's all secondary to Johnson's skill with rhythm, narrative, language, and humor. There's a down tone to much of *Throne*, but its beauty and precision is so heart-stopping that it uplifts in spite of itself. "Proposal," for example, explicitly ties the fates of the earliest American tribes to modern-day doom, in the context of a marriage proposal. Its scope epitomizes that of Johnson's best work, and the beauty and calm, even love, with which one may face the terror and violence that surrounds and fills us. By its nature as a collection, *Throne* is less consistent than Johnson's last published volume, 1992's epochal short-story collection *Jesus' Son*, but its breadth shows off his development and the depth of his best work better than anything else he's published. *JON FINE*

POEMS  
COLLECTED AND NEW

THE THRONE  
OF THE THIRD HEAVEN  
OF THE NATIONS  
MILLENNIUM  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DENIS JOHNSON





## FEELING MINNESOTA

(Fine Line)

FLICKS

The musical links to first-time director Steven Baigelman's *Feeling Minnesota* are numerous: the title is nicked from a Soundgarden song, Hole's Courtney Love and The Band's Levon Helm both play minor roles, and a virtual music video for Johnny Cash's "Ring Of Fire" opens the film. And then there's Keanu Reeves, a major movie star and minor rocker. Reeves plays troubled protagonist Jjaks, who comes home to the state of 10,000 lakes for his ne'er-do-well brother's wedding—a mob-orchestrated affair, with the embezzling groom Sam (Vincent D'Onofrio) rewarded with Freddie (Cameron Diaz) on the strip joint where he works. About an hour into Sam and Freddie's union, she's mounting Jjaks on the bathroom floor, with the reception just outside the window. At this point, *Feeling Minnesota* turns *Raising Arizona*, as Freddie virtually orders Jjaks to steal the money that Sam's been stealing from the mob boss who runs the club. Jjaks first knocks out Sam, then takes out an on-the-take cop played deliciously by Dan Ackroyd. Bent on revenge, Sam does anything he can to get back the money or the woman, and hijinks ensue. Baigelman, a former actor and painter, directs with the fluidity of a rock song, and incorporates music by Minnesota homeboys like the Replacements and Bob Dylan to tell his fast-paced, often funny tale. **TOM ROE**

## THE AGE OF WIRE AND STRING

by Ben Marcus (Knopf)

READS

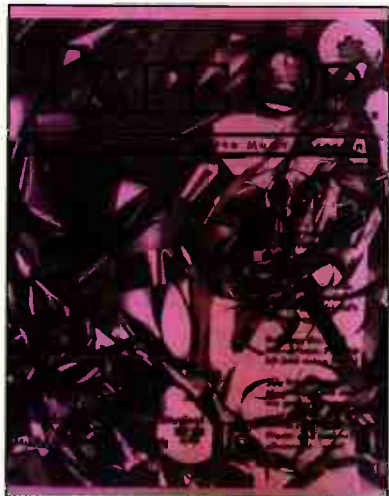
This book, mad with the implacable consistency of a true paranoid, is the rare work of fiction that makes "surreal" (that is, 'beyond real,' not merely 'weird') seem too weak a word. Under such deceptively everyday headings as "The House," "Food," and "Persons," Marcus details a false anthropology of something *resembling* American suburban society in a calm, shattered language that is half instruction manual, half summoning: "The confession of father is instituted by a low, glass-covered frame structure for starting speeches. It differs from a LISTENING FRAME only in that the soil is heated by day—either artificially by underground electric wiring or graveyard pipes, or naturally with women's manure." Each section is followed by a glossary, which offers, of course, no help at all. Tracings emerge of a deeply sublimated autobiographical narrative involving the death of the author's brother. But the real story is in the voice of Marcus' writing, an affectless tone that suggests psychic damage buried too deep to be written about conventionally. Who is writing? How did he get this way? **FRANKLIN BRUNO**

the age of  
w i r e

s t r i n g

stories

by ben marcus



## TAPE OP

(\$2 to P.O. Box 15189, Portland, OR 97293; fboa@teleport.com)

ZINES

One problem with making music that veers stylistically from the commercial "center" is that you've either got to find someone to record it, or learn to do it yourself. The first solution can be frustrating, as many inexpensive studios are run by the same sorts of smug musos who staff guitar stores. Doing it yourself, though, is hard and expensive. Given this, *Tape Op* (subtitled "A Journal of Sound Recording for the Creative, Independently Minded Musician, Engineer and Producer") is a true boon. Edited by Lawrence Crane (formerly of indie pathbreakers Vomit Launch), this debut issue contains informative, nuts-and-bolts interviews with producer Greg Freeman and East River Pipe auteur F.M. Cornog, tips on getting the most out of cheap Radio Shack contact mikes, and loads of short recording horror stories by the likes of Rebecca Gates and Mark Robinson. Since most magazines on production and recording equipment are hopelessly high-end, and rarely written from an aesthetic point of view sympathetic to independent music, this 'zine fills a genuine void. **FRANKLIN BRUNO**

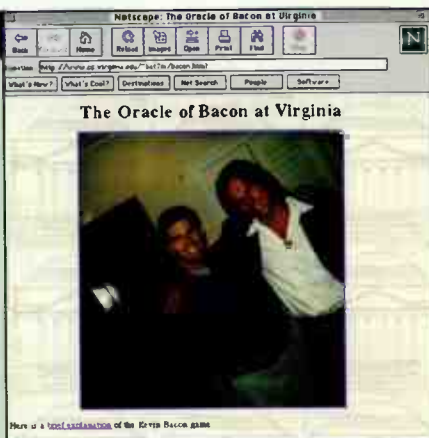
# MULTI-MEDIA

## THE ORACLE OF BACON AT VIRGINIA

(<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~bct7m/bacon.html>)

You've heard of "six degrees of separation"? This is "four degrees of Kevin Bacon." Every actor who's ever appeared in a mainstream American movie has a "Bacon number": how many co-appearances away he or she is from having been in a movie with Kevin Bacon. Bea Arthur, for instance, has a Bacon number of 2: she was in *Mame* with John Wheeler, who was in *Apollo 13* with Kevin Bacon. The really disturbing part is that no actor we've been able to think of has a Bacon number higher than 4. The Oracle Of Bacon will tap into a database and, within seconds, find the shortest possible path from your choice to Mr. Center Of The Universe (actually, it also includes a version which centers the universe on Arnold Schwarzenegger). It's kind of mindboggling that somebody actually devised an interface to figure this out, but the *CMJ* staff can attest that it's very easy to waste hours and hours playing with it. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

ONLINE



## LAUNCH

(2Way Media)

At first glance, *Launch*, a tellingly undated "bi-monthly entertainment CD-ROM," is every horror you might expect from a magazine-on-disc: There are screaming ads and product placements everywhere you look, lots of "advertorial" stuff (are the game demos supposed to be what we're paying for, or what the game companies are paying for?), and some awfully chintzy "original content." The overall design is intensely cool-looking, but often inconvenient. But *Launch's* music coverage, in an area called "The Hang," is pretty solidly worthwhile—perhaps because it's put together by a handful of the people who were responsible for *Creem* magazine's glory days. The features are light on text, which doesn't work too well on screen, and heavy on things that could only be pulled off on new media. An interview with Iggy Pop in the sixth issue, for instance, features a couple of live videos and Iggy's extensive, tape-recorded and very funny commentary on every record he's ever made; elsewhere, B.B. King chats at length about his history and his guitar technique, and then demonstrates it a little. There's also a frequently updated tie-in web site at <http://www.2launch.com>. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

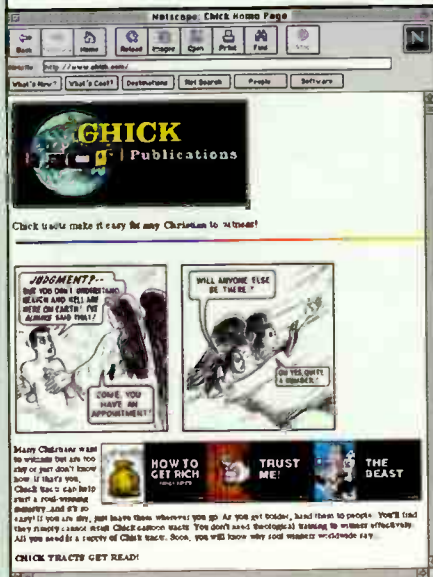
CD-ROM

## CHICK PUBLICATIONS HOME PAGE

(<http://www.chick.com>)

Just about everyone has encountered the handiwork of Jack Chick and associates at one time or another, whether in telephone booths, on bus benches, or simply lying on the street. Chick Publications are the makers of those little walletsize cartoon tracts in which various prideful mortals disdain Jesus in word or deed, only to be told at Heaven's door that their names are not in the Book of Life, and that they must be cast into the lake of fire for eternity. There's something disorienting about seeing each familiar panel of "This Was Your Life" (Chick's first and most popular tract) come into full resolution on one's browser in succession, but it's worth the trip, at least once. One can also get messages from bossman Jack on the inspiration for "Where's Rabbi Waxman" (a tract especially intended to convert Jews), brief descriptions of such tracts as the anti-Christian-rock "Angels?" and the anti-Catholic-ritual "The Death Cookie," and, of course, order forms. In many tracts, the rough charm of Chick's drawing style and narrative sensibility is more than offset by his often bizarre interpretations of Scripture and intolerance of other faiths, but relatively little of that comes through on this website. **FRANKLIN BRUNO**

ONLINE





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

**100 Guitar Mania**  
1-4-4-201 Sasazuka  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan

**4AD**  
8533 Melrose Ave., Suite B  
Los Angeles, CA 90069

**Alias**  
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Burbank, CA 91595

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Los Angeles, CA 90048

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New York, NY 10019

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**Capitol**  
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**Cleopatra**  
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**Columbia/Epic**  
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New York, NY 10022

**Communion**  
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**Crab Pot**  
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Chicago, IL 60622

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Seattle, WA 98122

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Encino, CA 91416

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New York, NY 10013

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**Lookout!**  
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# JUST OUT

## SEPTEMBER 10

**LINDA PERRY** In Flight *Interscope*  
**PIG** Sinsation *Nothing-Interscope*  
**JACK LOGAN** *Medium Cool-Restless*  
**LORI CARSON** Everything I Touch Runs Wild *Restless*  
**N.Y. LOOSE** Year Of The Rat *Hollywood*  
**CATHERINE** Hot Saki And Bedtime Stories *TVT*  
**LOVE 666** Please Kill Yourself So I Can Rock *Amphetamine Reptile*  
**HEIDI BERRY** Miracle *4AD*  
**ROBERT FORSTER** Warm Nights *Beggars Banquet*  
**BUSH TETRAS** Tetrafiad *2.13.61*  
**SWINGIN' UTTERS** A Juvenile Product Of The Working Class *Fat Wreck Chords*  
**EMMYLOU HARRIS** Portraits *Reprise*  
**ARCHERS OF LOAF** All The Nations Airports *Alias*  
**DIRTY THREE** Horse Stories *Touch And Go*

## SEPTEMBER 17

**LISA SANDERS** Isn't Life Fine *Earth Music-Cargo*  
**MULTIPLE CAT** Territory Shall Mean The Universe *Zero Hour*  
**JOHN FAHEY** Oregon Capitol Inn *Tim Kerr*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** What Is Jazz? *Knitting Factory Works*  
**STEVE VAI** Fire Garden *Epic*

## SEPTEMBER 23

**LEGENDARY PINK DOTS** Greetings 9 *Soleilmoon*  
**TEN FOOT POLE** *Epitaph*  
**RUTH RUTH** The Little Death *Epitaph*  
**DESCENDANTS** Everything Sucks *Epitaph*  
**FULFLEJ** Work In The Universe *Mercury*

## SEPTEMBER 24

**HEAVENLY** Operation Heavenly *K*  
**GODFLESH** Songs Of Love And Hate *Earache*  
**MAIDS OF GRAVITY** First-Second *Vernon Yard-Caroline*  
**ADRIAN BELEW** On *Passenger-Caroline*  
**AFRO CELT SOUND SYSTEM** *Real World-Caroline*  
**SMEGMA & MERZBOW** *Tim Kerr*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Jabberjaw 2: Pure Sweet Hell *Mammoth*  
**PALADINS** Million Mile Club *4AD*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** The Goth Box *Cleopatra*  
**DITCH CROAKER** Secrets Of The Mule *In Bloom-Reprise*  
**GUZZARD** The Alienation Index Survey *Amphetamine Reptile*  
**SERVOTRON** No Room For Humans *Amphetamine Reptile*  
**ROGER ENO** Swimmer *Gyroscope-Caroline*  
**SLOAN** One Chord To Another *DGC*  
**WEEZER** Pinkerton *DGC*  
**ROOTS** Illadelph Halflife *DGC*

## OCTOBER 1

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**JASON & THE SCORCHERS** Clear Impetuous Morning *Mammoth-Atlantic*  
**SPENT** A Seat Beneath The Chairs *Merge*  
**CAKEKITCHEN** The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea *Merge*  
**ENGINE 88** Snowman *Caroline*  
**BAD BRAINS** Black Dot *Caroline*  
**COUNTING CROWS** Recovering The Satellites *DGC*

## OCTOBER 8

**SLIM DUNLAP** Times Like This *Medium Cool-Restless*  
**ANTON FIER & NICOLE BLACKMAN** Foal *Restless*  
**HANG UPS** So We Go *Clean-Restless*  
**RAILROAD JERK** Get It On *Matador*  
**LOIS** Infinity Plus *K*  
**SUPER FURRY ANIMALS** Fuzzy Logic *Epic*  
**WILCO** *Reprise*  
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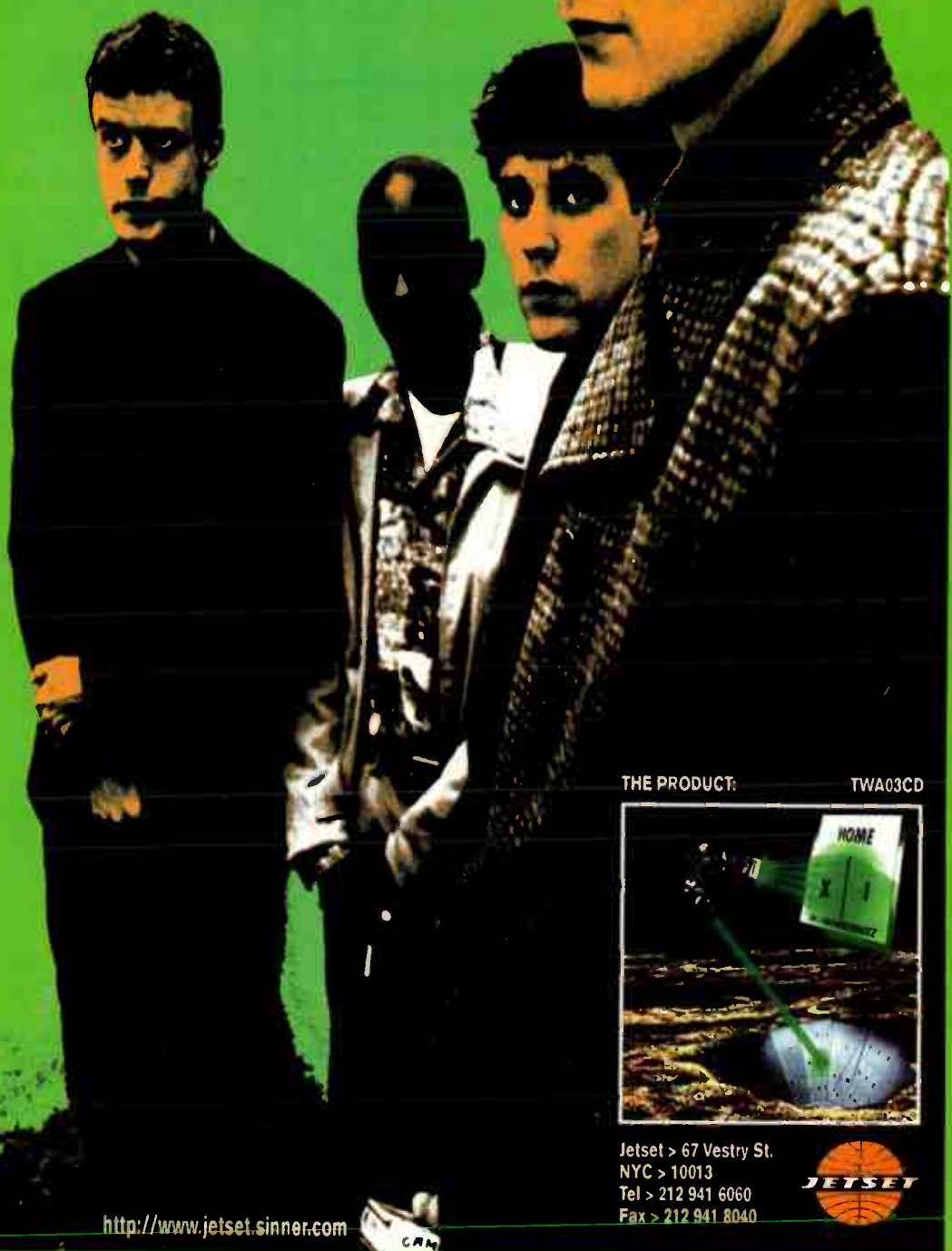
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- H) Total distribution 43,967
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World Radio History



## ► ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

[ by Randall Roberts ]

The other day, a friend and I were talking about living here. "God, I love St. Louis," she said. "I hope nobody finds out about it." That's the way many locals feel. Dirt-cheap rent (the average is \$300 a month for a huge one-bedroom), a lazy, small-town feel, and a nice mix of high- and lowbrow entertainment all add to the St. Louis experience.

St. Louis is the hub of a huge midwestern wheel; from here, one can hop into a car after work and be in Memphis, Chicago, Louisville, Nashville, Iowa City, or Kansas City by the time an opening band starts. Which is to say that while some of the bigger bands may forego stopping here, St. Louisians have long ago developed the legs and the constitution to take it in stride, hop in a car, and hit the road. We're used to it.

Since the blues first started migrating north, St. Louis has been more a pit stop than a destination. In the '30s and '40s, blues artists from the Mississippi Delta got a bite to eat here on their way north to Chicago. People think of St. Louis as that town with the big arch that they drove through on the way to somewhere else: "I've been through St. Louis" is heard more from travelers than "I've been to St. Louis."



**Uncle Tupelo.** There, I've said it. It was here that they first gigged and became huge. And it's here that Uncle Tupelo offshoots **Wilco** and **Son Volt**, and fellow Missourians the **Bottlerockets**, have cast the biggest shadow. Country rock reigns supreme these days, although the locals have renamed it "Grain Belt."

To be fair, there are many in the Grain Belt community who were playing country before them. **Bob Reuter** has been working his ass off playing the style forever, and bands like **One Fell Swoop**, the **Highway Matrons**, **Wagon** (whose debut CD is out now on Hightone), and **Belle Star** are constantly playing out; all are featured on the new Grain Belt compilation disc, *Out Of The Gate Again*. It's the sequel to a seminal cassette compilation released in 1990, *Out Of The Gate*, which contained the first recorded performances by both Uncle Tupelo and

### MUSIC

St. Louis has a rich musical history. **Henry Townsend**, one of the last surviving original country blues artists (he actually played with Robert Johnson), still gigs around here from time to time, and saxophonist **Oliver Sain**, who played with Howlin' Wolf, is a mainstay on the blues circuit. **Johnnie Johnson** (the real life "Johnnie B. Goode") plays around all the time (when he's not touring with the Furthur Festival). There's a feast of blues in St. Louis.



Tower Grove Park

Chicken Truck, who went on to become the **Bottlerockets**.

There are a number of other notable bands: **Prisonshake** (who moved themselves and their record label, Scat, from Cleveland last year), **Bunnygrunt**, **Johnny Magnet**, **Vega Basin**, **You Fantastic!**, **Birmingham Squadron**, **Sheila Three**, **Half Mute**, the **Volatiles**, **Swing Set**, and the **Civiltones** (who just released a wonderful record on Pravda). The remarkable fact is that, in stark contrast to even two years ago, there are dozens more that are worthy of mention.

If you feel like taking in some culture, there are two world-renowned institutions: The St. Louis Symphony, which has been under the guidance of Han Vonk since Leonard Slatkin left last season to head the National Symphony, and the Opera Theater of St. Louis, considered one of the finest small opera companies in the nation. Both are relatively inexpensive and are a nice alternative to that loud rock 'n' roll music.

## CLUBS

The abundance of live music is one of the best signs of a solid musical future for St. Louis. Clubs are popping up all over the place. If you're downtown, there's a thriving club scene along Washington Ave.; the **Galaxy** (1227 Washington) and **Tangerine** (1405 Washington) are the two best. If you drive (which is what you do in St. Louis: the public transportation sucks and you can't really walk anywhere) south, you can hit both South Grand, where there are bars, stores and restaurants galore, and **The Way Out Club** (3159 Cherokee St.). If you drive west, you will hit first the **Side Door Club** (2005 Locust), where both local and out-of-town bands gig, and, ultimately, the Delmar Loop, which is at the center of youth culture these days. It's the part of the city that has that buzz to it all the time. On the Loop, you can catch an independent film at the newly refurbished **Tivoli Theater** and get a beer at the world famous **Blueberry Hill**. Just next door is the best rock club in St. Louis, **Cicero's** (6501 Delmar). It's where you'll see any national indie band that comes through town and some of the best local bands.

## RECORD STORES

There are three decent record stores in St. Louis. **Euclid Records** ([www.jpcom.euclid](http://www.jpcom.euclid)) (4906 Laclede Ave.) has a formidable jazz selection within its tiny space. **Vintage Vinyl** ([www.vintagevinyl.com](http://www.vintagevinyl.com)) (6610 Delmar), on the Delmar Loop, is a huge mom-and-pop that sells tons of new and used CDs and LPs (it's where I work). And, for some of the best bargains in town, **The Record Exchange** (5840 Hampton Ave.) is all used LPs and has thousands of old soundtrack and easy listening



Vintage Vinyl



Tivoli

records (and, most importantly, I don't think they realize what they've got!).

## EXTRANEIOUS ACTIVITIES

If, God forbid, you're not in the mood for music, there are many options. You can take the obligatory tour of the Arch, which, when it comes down to it, is an amazing and at times overwhelming sculpture, massive and sensual at the same time. It may not be worth going to the top, but it is definitely worth standing underneath. St. Louis is also the home of **Circus Flora**, one of the most beautiful and inspiring independent circuses running in the country today. You should also check out **Tower Grove Park** and, right next door, the **Missouri Botanical Garden**. And you can always hit **Anheuser Busch** for the tour, which offers 20 minutes at the end to drink as much of their product as you can.

## RESTAURANTS

Another indication of a renaissance in St. Louis is the presence of all the new restaurants. If you have a craving for salmon or some amazing pasta, check out **Frazer's Brown Bag** (1811 Pestalozzi), located just next to Anheuser Busch Brewery. In midtown, you can hit **Duff's** (392 N. Euclid) for the best Saturday and Sunday brunch. For Mexican, there is no better place than **Arcelia's** (2001 Park Ave.), outside of Soulard, or, for Baja-style Mexican, **Flaco's Tacos** (3852 Lindell Blvd.). There are also some great Thai, Vietnamese, and Indian restaurants.

The most frustrating thing I hear about St. Louis from outsiders is that they drove through it, maybe even stayed the night at some hotel outside the city, but never thought to go exploring. St. Louis is amazing; the architecture is beautiful, the weather moves from one extreme to the other (you get all four seasons here), and the thrift shopping is some of the best anywhere. If nothing else, when you're driving through, at least tune the radio to **KDHF**, 88.1 FM, community radio. It's a great station, and maybe it will provoke you into slowing down and considering taking a long pit stop. ★

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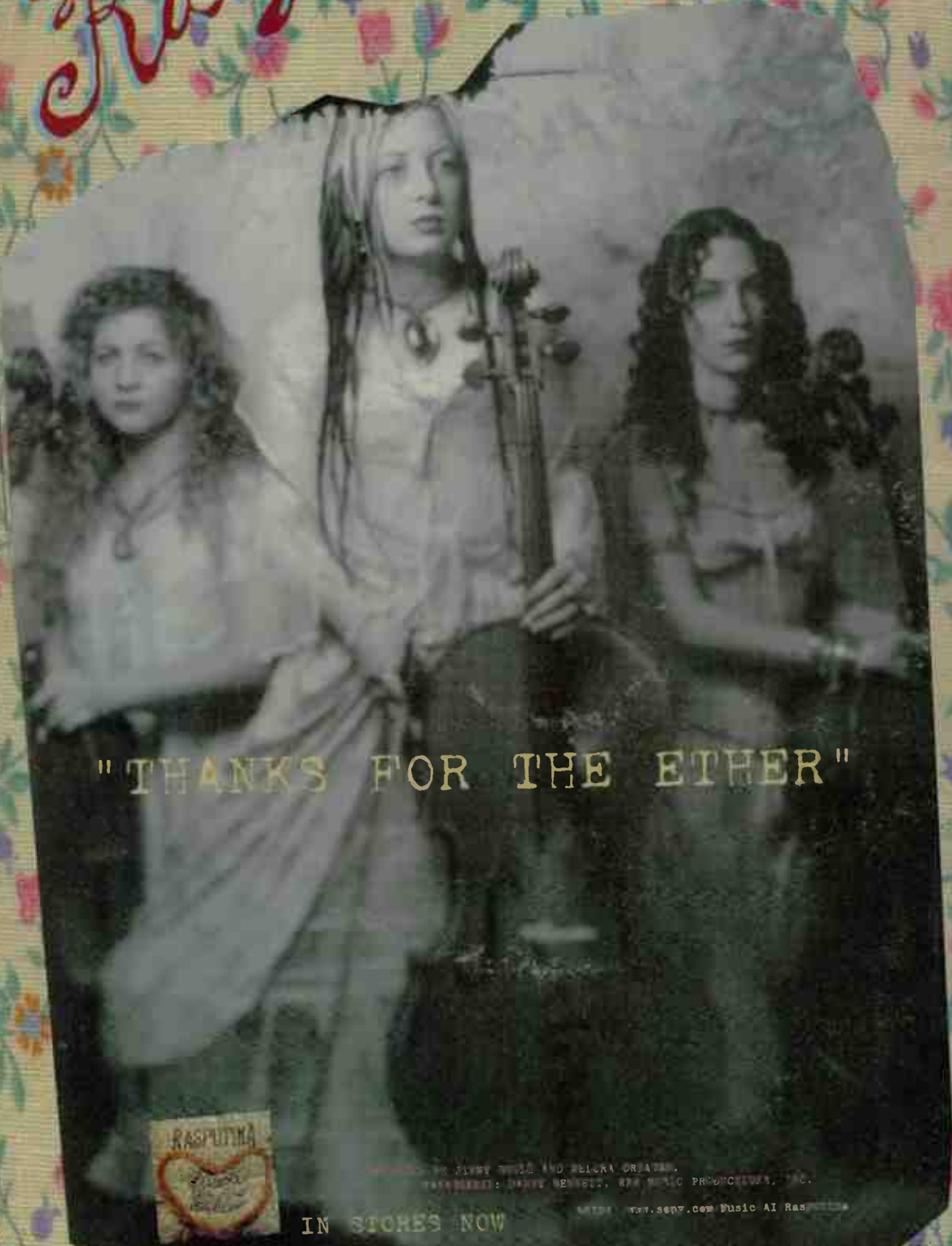
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