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two

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STARSAILOR

## STARSAILOR 26

James Walsh straddles the line between delicate balladry and sweeping, grandiose pop; he's not afraid of his emotions and he's finding out America's not either. Richard A. Martin steeps the tea.



ED HARCOURT

## MUSE 29

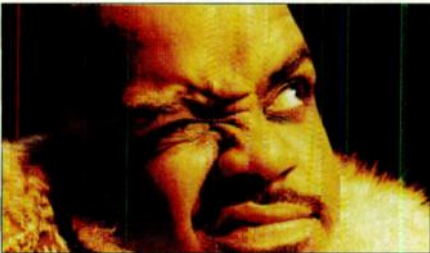
Quiet reflection be damned: Muse's feelings won't stop them from rocking you with Queen-defying bombast. Tom Mallon feels the classical thunder.

## ED HARCOURT 31

This bright new voice from the U.K. writes where the wilds things are. Specifically, they're in the walls of his house. Steve Ciabattini calls pest control.

## THE ANNIVERSARY 20

The Anniversary are full-time members of the Vagrant army, but with *Your Majesty*, they've broken the emo rank and delivered a set of revved-up rockers that bow more to the Kinks than to the Promise Ring. Nicole Keiper watches them go AWOL.



CEE-LO

## TIMO MAAS 22

Timo Maas is not just a remixer, dammit. He's reworked everyone from Madonna to Fatboy Slim, but the creator of "the Timo sound" wants to change your perceptions with his pounding German engineering. Heath K. Hignight feels the Fahrvegrugen.

## MATT POND PA 24

Matt Pond PA have always been critics' darlings. With the backing of new label Polyvinyl Records and the string-laden indie chamber-pop of *The Green Fury*, they're poised to become consumer darlings as well. Mike Conklin stops the presses.



NEIL HANNON

## DOWN 32

Seven years of waiting, 28 days of recording, one Louisiana barn and many, many pounds of dope later, the five members of metal's premiere side project have delivered a record that smokes not only all of nu metal but even their full-time bands in the process. Dylan P. Gadino finds deliverance.

## CEE-LO 38

After Goodie Mob got spanked for going mainstream, Cee-Lo found he needed some time alone. All alone. The results find him playing both gospel preacher and raunchy pimp. Aliya S. King reveals his closet freak.

## ON THE VERGE 16

Little, yellow, different: Moth, the Detachment Kit, Ben Kweller, the Baldwin Bros.



LOCALZINE: HAVANA

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N.E.R.D., Moth, Soul Coughing, Eels, John Scofield, Medeski Martin And Wood, Norah Jones, Playgroup, Takkyo Ishimo, Super Furry Animals, the Herbaliser, Cee-Lo, Taking Back Sunday, Flogging Molly, Hayden, the Detachment Kit, 3rd Degree, Dum

## QUICK FIX 10

The Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon strips down, Eels rock with Ray Charles, Hayden shows you around his room, Kyle Fischer wants to love you, Mike D plays with himself, and Fu Manchu is so transparent. And, um, frolic with Hobbits.

## LOCALZINE 40

Embargo-jumping in sunny Havana.

## GEEK LOVE 66

A miniature Scott Frampton takes a surfin' safari with the Beach Boys.

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GEEK LOVE: THE BEACH BOYS

STARSAILOR: CHRISTOPHE RIHET; ED HARCOURT: STEVE GULLUCK; CEE-LO: DEAN KARR; NEIL HANNON: BOB GREEN; HAVANA: DREW GOREN; ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY (ISSN 1074-6978) is published monthly by The CMJ Network with offices at 151 W. 25th St., 12th Fl., New York, NY 10001. Subscription rates are \$39.95 per year. Subscription offices: P.O. Box 57414, Boulder, CO 80322-7414 / Phone (800) 444-4CMJ. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Ride Along Enclosed. Postmaster: Send address changes to CMJ New Music Monthly, Membership Office, P.O. Box 57414, Boulder, CO 80328-7414. CMJ New Music Monthly is copyright 2001 by College Media Inc. All rights reserved; nothing may be reproduced without consent of publisher. Unless indicated otherwise, all letters sent to CMJ are eligible for publication and copyright purposes, and are subject to CMJ's right to edit and comment editorially. Rip... rip... rip and destroy!

## The weird turn pro

Do you only pick the weirdo letters to print, or are they all just that weird?

Jessica  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

After 100 issues of this, we've determined that we get what we deserve. —ed.

## Guided by 1994

If it isn't bad enough seeing nü-metal numbskulls Sevendust on the cover, my November/December issue arrived in the middle of January. While this admittedly gives me 11 months to utilize the Holiday Gift Guide, it otherwise represents piss-poor service by CMJ. And who is it exactly that represents your target demographic nowadays? *New Music Monthly* used to feature Pavement and Pollard/Sprout era Guided By Voices. (By the way, didn't Bob Pollard learn anything from the Uncle Tupelo split? But I digress.) I could be wrong here, but Modest Mouse fans probably don't want to read about Ozzfest bands and rap-rock douchebags. (Ryan Adams may be a bad Paul Westerberg clone imitating Steve Earle, but he is, relatively speaking, a step in the right direction.) Personally, I listen to bands like Joy Division and Belle And Sebastian to escape from the commercialized, over-exposed crap on playlist radio. Is it too much to ask that CMJ uphold the same high standards?

Jason C. Reeher  
Stoneboro, Pa.

Now entering its seventh year, it's the "You don't write about Guided By Voices and Pavement anymore" letter! We thought we'd celebrate our 100th issue with this letter, which rehashes some of our more common complaints. There's the recent, "You guys suck at getting the magazine to us on time," which is indefensible. And there's the just plain hoary, "You guys suck," which may or may not be true, depending on who you ask. Truth is, we covered both the most recent GBV record and the Steve Malkmus solo disc with features, and we've also covered the hard-rock douchebag genre for some time as well—Sevendust and Modest Mouse have appeared in CMJ *New Music Monthly* in almost equal measure. Sure, there are plenty of folks that would be happy if we

never ventured from where alt-rock was when we started this mag 99 issues ago, and plenty who'll be upset if we put an artist on the cover more than once. It's the way the more vocal part of our audience seems to react—we understand that and welcome the playful ribbing. Being told we suck plays right into our social anxiety disorders, anyway. But to nip the absolutist argument in the bud, at least: We won't put Britney on the cover anytime soon. (Unless of course that fabled Bob Pollard duet comes to pass.) We chose Sevendust thinking that they're the class of their scene, hoping that we'd please enough of our current readers while also attracting some new ones—and, well, I actually like that record.

The whole "high standards" thing is relative, anyway. What if everyone listened to Joy Division and Belle And Sebastian? I'll tell you, it was like that around here a few years ago and it about drove me to jazz. —ed.

## Show me the... oh, never mind

I just received issue #98. A couple of thoughts: 1) Thanks for the update regarding the problems you have encountered over the past few months. No need to apologize, though. It's entirely understandable. I hope everything goes well for you in the future. 2) Happy 100! I've been a reader since issue 30-something, so I guess I've received CMJ *New Music Monthly* for five years. Thanks for being a prime source of locating new music. I've discovered lots of bands and artists that I never would have heard about without your magazine/CD. Keep the music coming!

Jerry McGuire  
JryMG1118@aol.com

So concludes our gala 100th issue celebration. Thank you, Jerry. —ed.

CMJ *New Music Monthly* wishes to apologize for a printing error that led to the unfortunate mistakes in the Chemical Brothers advertisement on the back page of the February '02 issue.

CMJ  
**NEW MUSIC** MONTHLY  
ISSUE 100 MARCH/APRIL 2002

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Rider: Michelle Donnelly  
Snowboarder: Zach Leach



## RYE COALITION

If you couldn't tell from their brash new LP, *On Top (Tiger Style)*, you'll get a clear idea from these recent live shots: New Jersey's Rye Coalition will rock your face off, and they won't even feel guilty about it.

**Photo: Drew Goren**





**THE FAINT** : Though they're at the forefront of digital doom 'n' gloom, the Faint's frowns might not last long. Here, they're captured shortly before launching a tour with No Doubt and amid rumors that they're moving to DreamWorks Records.

**Photo: Keri-Ann Laurito**



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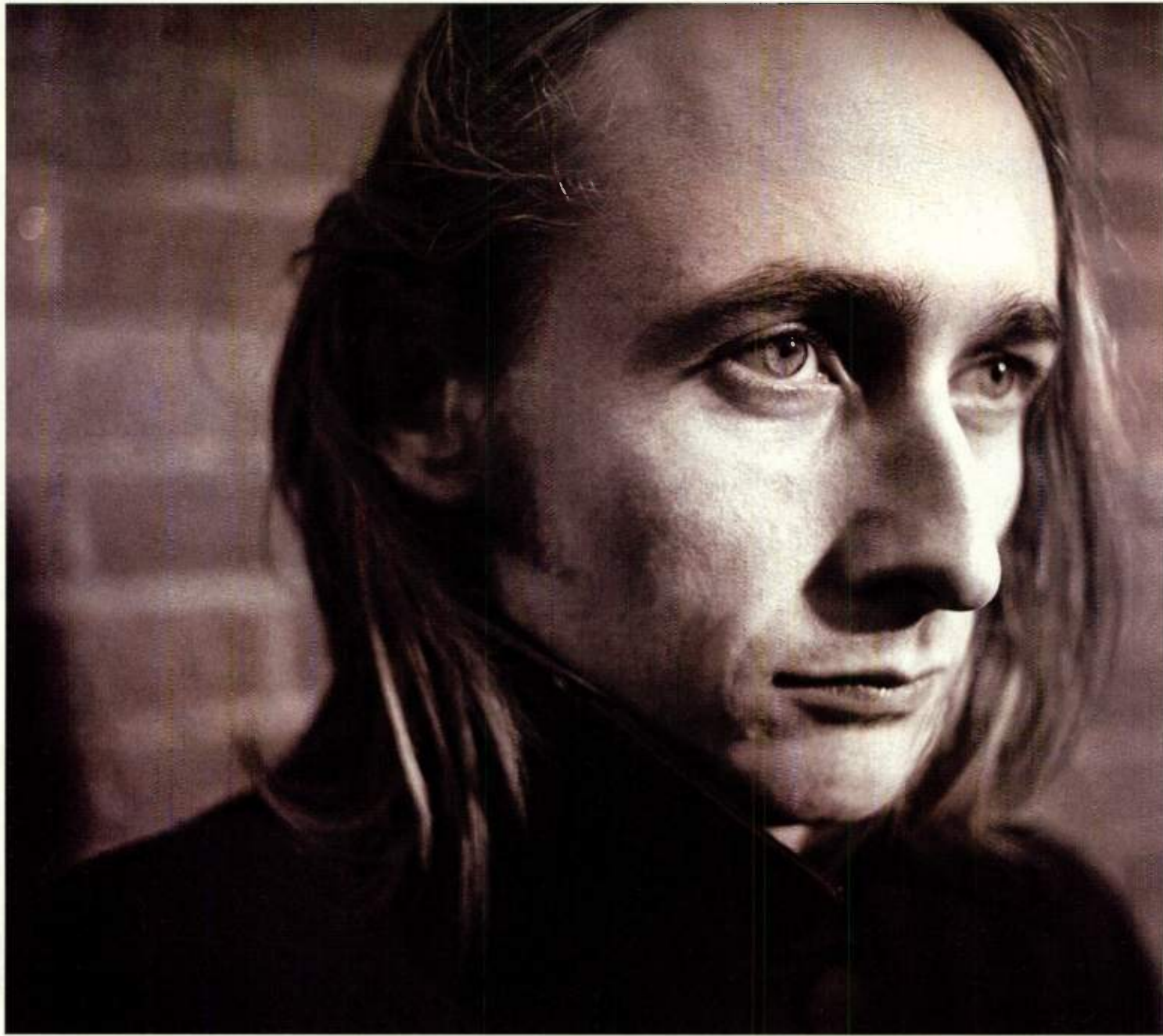
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BOB GREEN

"I was right. But he's Lou Reed." Bravo's *Misfits* host David Wilt, on arguing with Reed over the release date of his *Blue Mask* (1982 vs. 1994, as Lou asserted)



## WEIRD RECORD

Lord Of The String Samples

Comic Book Guys everywhere sweating for the release of the second *Lord Of The Rings* movie, take heart. Until it hits theaters this fall, you can spend endless hours venturing through Tolkien's fantasy world with David Arkenstone's surprisingly well-done *Music Inspired By Middle Earth*, infused with all the bombast and glory of a high-school D&D meeting. Bounce gaily arm-in-arm with hobbits along the sprightly "Road To Rivendell," swoon to the Enya-esque love theme of the blissfully Liv Tyler-free "Aragorn And Arwen," and tremble before the ominous strings of Mordor on "In The Land Of Shadow." *Best... musical adaptation... ever!* >>>IAN SIMS

## WORD OF MOUSE - NURTURING YOUR INNER GEEK

*Star Wars* geeks are, as a species, to be feared. For every otherwise normal pal with a framed *Revenge Of The Jedi* poster (sent to the fan club before the title change, he'll note), there are the A/V Club dregs whose first and most recent sexual experiences involved Princess Leia in the slave-girl bikini. Toshystation.com treads the line between: While unapologetic in its love for all things Lucas, the site's classy collision of vintage pop-culture cool—Bruce Lee, Atari, *Happy Days*, blaxploitation—takes its appeal past those who keep action figures in their original packaging. Start with its opening pages, changed monthly and featuring the likes of Admiral Ackbar plowing the back 40, Lando joining the Sweathogs for *Welcome Back, Calrissian* or an animated Fonzie dance. Then steal time from the boss with its Periodic Table Of Funk and a consistently solid collection of links including "What Pre-1985 Video Game Character Am I?" ([blog.ravenblack.net/quiz/videogame.pl](http://blog.ravenblack.net/quiz/videogame.pl)) and [www.cheeseracing.org](http://www.cheeseracing.org).

# Answer Me

The Divine Comedy's **Neil Hannon** loses his band, his suits and his foppish dandyism, that incorrigible popinjay.

**D**apper, witty and self-effacing, Neil Hannon is—and always has been—the Divine Comedy. But now that he's cut loose his band, released a new record (*Regeneration*, on Nettwerk), and tossed his finely tailored suits in the back of the closet, Hannon truly is the Divine Comedy's man behind the curtain. As the new owner of a people-carrier (to accommodate new baby Willow), the man who mocks shiny German car-driving yuppies on his latest release comes to terms with his place in the pop-music canon. >>>KRISTY MARTIN

**You're going out on a month-long tour with Ben Folds. How do you think you'll do on the road together?**

I met him once, a while back, when he played Royal Albert Hall, and he was nice. We've e-mailed each other since; he lives in Australia now. I listen to his stuff and think 'If you'd been born 30 years earlier, you would have been a superstar. If I'd been born a hundred years earlier, I'd have been a superstar.' [Giggles] So we kind of go well together; we're men out of time.

**Being out of time, what do you think of today's musical climate?**

I've got like 13 music channels on my cable now... But it's all just nū-metal. You listen to it and think, "Maybe if I was 16, I'd love this." Then you're not so sure... Do you know the program *Stars In Their Eyes*? It's a show on British television where game-show

people come on and they're [imitating] Shirley Bassey or Elton John. I was done by someone, you know, "Hi, tonight I'm Neil Hannon from the Divine Comedy." You could almost hear a million people in early-evening TV land going, "Who?" I was never so embarrassed in my entire life.

**Do people bother you a lot about why you don't wear the suits anymore, or why your entire style evolved?**

Yeah, we got a lot of that. I basically was bored. You get this sort of self-destructive urge to show people you're not just this one-dimensional character. In a way, that's such an immature attitude, because if you know who you are, it doesn't matter what other people think. And that's the way I feel now. I can still wear a suit if I'm inclined to—I'm just not as hung up on the whole clothing issue. I would like to think the general public didn't really believe that I lived on Regis Park and walked two cocker spaniels, wore a top hat, used a cane and wore a dressing gown while laying on a chaise lounge.

**What will you call your next album, since your band was sacked?**

I'd imagine it would be called the Divine Comedy; it seems like a good umbrella term. Neil Hannon... I've never been comfortable with that being a pop-star name. There's nothing really firm about it. "Trent Reznor" works. My name doesn't.

# Goodbye Nasty

GAME

**Jet Set Radio Future (Sega for Xbox)**

Beastie Boys fans lamenting the loss of the late, great Grand Royal Records should pay special attention to Sega's *Jet Set Radio Future*. Behind its comic-book graphics and its kitschy vision of 2024 Tokyo lie the final beats issued from the GR camp. The bulk is handled by the Latch Bros., a trio featuring Mike D, who provide

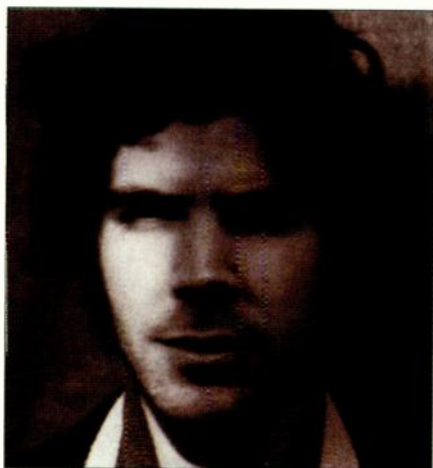
five original tracks and remixes of GR acts like Bran Van 3000 and BS2000. Some of the remixes will not appear on the retail version of the soundtrack, so they will be Xbox exclusives (until they appear on Audiogalaxy, anyway). >>>TOM MALLON



LATCH BROS.



Yael Staab



# Tough Love

## KYLE FISCHER OF RAINER MARIA

With *Rainer Maria*, Kyle Fischer sings about the deepest matters of the heart. Further emotional journeys can be taken with the plaintive songs of his first solo record, *Open Ground* (Polyvinyl). Bare your soul to him.

Your therapist knows nothing. Try a musician instead: [lovelorn@cmj.com](mailto:lovelorn@cmj.com).

### IN MY ROOM

**Who:** Hayden

**Where:** The music room of his Toronto home

**Why:** After three years of a self-imposed hiatus, the singer/songwriter is back with a new record of low-key folk anthems and tales of the mildly macabre.

#### Wild wild west

There's a lamp I bought at a pawnshop that's made out of driftwood. There's an Indian sitting on the bottom of it, and coming out of the lampshade trying to get to the Indian is a cowboy. It's kinda creepy. He's sorta reaching out for the Indian but he can't catch him.

#### The heat is on?

I have one of those fake logs with fake fire burning that spins.

#### Pure guava

There's a monkey statue holding a guava with a little baby monkey climbing the mother monkey. I got it at a Jamaican store in the market.

#### Portrait of the artist as an old man

I have two drawings that my friend Howie Beck and I got done on Young St. in Toronto. There are these guys that sketch tourists. We got both of our portraits done by two separate guys at the same time. They're the funniest ever! They *so* do not look like us. They do them really quick and not very accurately. I look like a 38-year-old Italian construction worker and Howie looks like some kind of Nordic skier.

For a more convincing portrait of Hayden check out his stunning new disc, *Skyscraper National Park* (Badman).

INTERVIEW BY PETE D'ANGELO.

 ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

**I met this girl, and we've been hanging out a lot lately. I think she's really cool, but my friend went out with her a few years ago, and said she starts out really nice and then goes totally insane a few months in. He keeps telling me to break things off before I have to deal with her Sybil shit. But it's been years, maybe she's changed. What should I do?**  
—Christian, Stanhope, N.J.

Your "bud" is a jealous bastard and he's trying to put you off the trail of probably the sweetest girl he ever dated. Everyone knows women have it way more together than men—if anyone was duplicitous and schizoid, I guarantee it was him. And then, in true male fashion, he projected it all over her, and told her it was her fault. Drop the bud and hold on to that woman for dear life.

**I'm obsessed with music, and that has an effect on the people I fall for: Someone's musical taste plays a huge part in whether or not I like them. I recently met a girl who's nice and cute and overall pretty cool, but she has the worst taste in music ever. I'm talking Dave Matthews Band and Creed. It's making me lose respect for her, and that's making me lose interest. Am I crazy?**  
—Jim A., Acworth, Ga.

You've never been more right on. Music is the basis of every variant of youth culture. It's the heart of everything that's important to you, as it should be. If she listens to different music than you, guaranteed she's going to say "po-tah-to" when you say "tomato," and "gute Nacht" to your "bon nuit." She's gonna vote for *TRL* over *M2*—you can forget about turning off the TV and listening to vinyl!—and that just ain't right. I do have to say that "Crash" song is pretty good though.

**My band's singer started dating an incredibly irritating girl: She's as dumb as a box of hair and is always staring at him all dreamy-eyed. She also spends all of her time hanging around our practice space, Yoko-style. The few times I've brought it up he gets really defensive about it. I want to get rid of her but I don't want it to break up the band. Should I just suck it up?**  
—Phil, Santa Fe, N.M.

Let me guess—you're the drummer. Only the drummer can be threatened by the singer's string of good-looking, dewey-eyed girlfriends, because only the drummer's got no chance of taking home anything but a consolation prize after a gig. My advice to you: Cough up the 30 bucks a week for guitar lessons. They'll pay off in no time.

Love,  
Kyle

Dave Grohl • Manic Street Preachers singer Richey James Edwards, now missing for seven years, has been declared legally dead • Moby's *18* is scheduled to drop in May, car ads to follow • Pop punkers the Donnas have left Lookout for



How do you know what sounds like a friendly, warm greeting and what sounds like a declaration of war? But I think Marisa Bertera one Britpop.—Blair drummer Dave Rowntree, on British space authorities including the band's music along with their new Marslander

# 5 SPOT

Five records that Jack the soul of Eels malnman E

1. *The Langley Schools Music Project*

These versions of these songs are much better than any other versions I've ever heard, because they're so real. In the version of "Desperado" that they do, the girl singing it, it's as if she's really lived it. And she's probably like nine years old.

2. Margo Guryan, *25 Demos*

She was a publishing company songwriter in the '60s and she did one album. She's just starting to get recognized. They're just nice simple tunes and she's got a really pretty voice. It's kind of tragic that they're only being discovered now.

3. *The Man Who Wasn't There* soundtrack

It's mostly Beethoven, but it's Beethoven as interpreted by a 14-year-old girl, a piano student, which is a pretty genius idea. The rest of the music is by Carter Burwell... You know you're doing something right if it sounds good next to Beethoven.

4. Sammy Davis Jr. & Buddy Rich, *The Sounds Of '66*

It was a live album that was recorded at five a.m. in Las Vegas. It really, truly rocks, in the best way. They do amazing versions of "Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead" and "What The World Needs Now Is Love." They're completely fresh interpretations of the songs, and it just puts you in a great mood.

5. Ray Charles, *Rock And Roll*

For anyone who thinks they know what rock is, they need to check this out. There's not even a single Marshall amp on the entire album. It just sounds amazing... you put it on and it just jumps off the needle.

Throw it all in a blender and you've got the twisted, fuzz-packed rock of Eels' *Souljacker* (DreamWorks). Interview by Tom Mallon.



ROCKY SCHENCK



ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

the larger pastures of Atlantic Records • IN THE STUDIO: Coldplay, Richard Ashcroft, Beck (with omnipresent producer of the moment Dan The Automator), former Hole/Smashing Pumpkins bassist Melissa Auf Der Maur and U2. <<<



ALICE ARNOLD

# THE BALDWIN BROTHERS

It started in junior high. Jason Hinkle, whose musician dad had some recording equipment in the basement, started "goofing off and making recordings" with pal T.J. Widner when the two were 13. Nineteen years later, and they're still mucking around in the studio—the sample-rific *Cooking With Lasers* (TVT) was three years in the making. The earlier tracks were largely inspired by the New York lounge scene of the late '90s and the '60s artists who influenced it. ("Esquivel, Martin Denny, Berry Lipman—this obscure German composer known as the 'Father of the Now Sound.'") "But as we kept going," Hinkle says, "we started to get more funky."

*Cooking's* track with Cibo Matto's Miho Hatori, "Dream Girl," is a bit of both, with Hatori trilling over muted breakbeats and hypnotic samples. Although Hinkle expresses pride at how the bassline in "Are You There Margaret? It's Me, God" seamlessly combines three different basses recorded at three different studios, he makes a point to note that the group also includes Jimmy Deer (guitar and bass) and JB Royal (turntables) and that, "We really we do perform out as a band. It's not like we hit play on the DAT and stand behind our workstations." But what about the name? Hinkle sighs. "It came from the warped mind of junior-high boys." >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON

ALYSSA SCHEINSON



## BEN KWELLER

**B**en Kweller's brand of sing-along pop could literally be referred to as rock 'n' roll wizardry. The Texas-raised, Brooklyn-based 20-year-old rides swells of fuzzy guitars and sinks into twinkling pop harmonies on his sophomore LP, *Sha Sha* (ATO), with songs that are, arguably, rife with subliminal messages. In "Harriet's Got A Song," he chirps, "Memorized your scent/ Everywhere you went/ Join our Wiccan church..." Is this a little black magic, or what? "Actually, I've studied Wicca and Earth religions," Kweller explains. "I just find it really fascinating, but it is no way related to Satanism. The main rule of Wicca is 'harm none.'" The slight, messy-haired songster looks as innocent as the Wiccan rule, but there must be something super-

natural fueling his impressive rock résumé. He started playing drums at age four and by the time he was nine, he'd picked up keyboards and guitar and won honorable mention in a national *Billboard* magazine songwriting contest. His high-school band, Radish, signed with Mercury, went on a world tour and sold to the tune of 30,000 records. During his solo career he's already opened for the likes of Evan Dando, Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, Eels and Dashboard Confessional. He denies that his good fortune is the result of Wiccan enchantment, but wonders whether he might be reaping the benefits of a well-served past life. "I totally believe in karma and everything," he muses, "but you know I'm still searching, reading." >>KARA ZUARO



NICOLE RODJA FOR SNAPCULT

# THE DETACHMENT KIT

**B**ands with rowdy stage shows bash up their fingers all the time, sure. The Detachment Kit? They injure organs. "I was climbing in a ceiling and I didn't [remember falling] off or anything," singer/guitarist Ian Menard explains, an impish pride in his laugh. "I must've fell hard enough to bruise my appendix, which threw me into a weeklong whirl of hospitals and doctors." Once you've seen TDK play, the story won't surprise a bit: Menard struts across the stage, a maniacal gleam in his eyes, divebombing into his guitar, while bassist Josh Hight screams as though he were being filleted and drummer Toddrick Spalding urges his entire body into his cymbals. It's a wonder every show doesn't end

with an ambulance. But thankfully, the Detachment Kit isn't all bloody wails—the songs on the band's debut, *The Raging. Quiet Army* (The Self-Starter Foundation), are born of a brainy-rock mind similar to Les Savy Fav's or Fugazi's, angular guitars swaggering behind a mix of shouts and croons. That engaging mash of aggression and intelligence has made them attention magnets, in ways both good (an upcoming tour with Thursday, press accolades and widespread college radio play) and, well, just weird. "We just rake it in," Menard boasts. "The crowds are manic. I've had people grab my crotch, threaten to beat me up... We just sort of bring out that 'Errrrr, rock!' feeling. That's good." >>>NICOLE KEIPER

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 





JEN LOWERY

## MOTH

To have so many people working together for the same goal after doing it ourselves for 10 years is just really rad," Moth singer/songwriter and guitarist Brad Stenz says of efforts behind the release of *Provisions, Fiction And Gear* (Virgin), the band's major-label debut (their third overall). The L.A.-by-way-of-Cincinnati quartet's sound is a mélange of styles—power-pop giddiness, hard-rocking attitude and new-wave angularity—sewn together with catchy, melodic songwriting. But having noteworthy pedigrees involved with *Provisions* has helped propel Moth's notoriety, too: Powerhouse drummer/ex-Rocket From The Crypt member Atom Willard drives the songs

live, and in the studio, Josh Freese (A Perfect Circle) laid down rhythms and some bass tracks were handled by ex-Replacement Tommy Stinson. Working with Stinson was, says Stenz, "a trip in itself. A hero kind of thing. Really cool!" (Full-time bass duties are now the job of Ted Liscinski, formerly of New Jersey loud-rockers Mars Needs Women.) Stenz's songs weave tales of drunken nights and fractured emotions that are sure to enrapture any attentive, post-adolescent Weezer fan, but he admits to not being that calculated with his songwriting. "I'm not too goal-oriented," shrugs the singer. "The only thing we want to accomplish is just that as many people get to hear [our music] as possible." >>>PETE D'ANGELO

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

march/april 2002 19

# Greener Pastures

Indie-rock underdogs **Matt Pond PA** scored the adoration of critics a long time ago. *The Green Fury* finally takes them from the page to the stage.

STORY: MIKE CONKLIN • PHOTO: CHRIS MECK

I hate this fucking bandname. I hate it," grimaces Matt Pond, the singer, guitarist and namesake of Matt Pond PA. Despite the somewhat misleading moniker—or perhaps because of it—the 29-year-old songwriter is quick to distribute credit to the five bandmembers who bring his acoustic lullabies to life. This is a band, not a solo persona, he asserts. Initially, he singles out cellist Jim Hostetter, beaming that "he's pretty much the reason why I do this." But he quickly changes his mind: "Actually, every new person to join the band has kind of helped to put off my doubts about it."

Pond's fronted a band that didn't bear his name before—the ill-fated big-rock band Mel's Rockpile—but out of a desire to have final say on all things concerning his songs, he birthed MPPA as a side project back in 1997. Before long, the band began to shape into a more cohesive unit. It's obvious that he's in love with every aspect of his current band, save the lousy name.

Doubts still plague Pond, however. While Matt Pond PA have always had the backing of a record label—Philadelphia's small but reliable File 13 Records released the *Deer Apartments* and *Measure* full-lengths and the *I Thought You Were Sleeping* EP—the nature of the band creates unique complications. Without the aid of a deep-pocketed label, taking a six-piece band that includes two cellos, electric and acoustic guitars, drums and

bass on the road isn't exactly the easiest financial juggle. "With this kind of mess of people," reasons Pond, "touring just for the sake of playing to nobody, I don't think is a good idea."

Pond's point is hard to contest, but new backing by Polyvinyl Records (home to successful indie-pop acts like Rainer Maria and Mates Of State), has already begun to clear up some logistical problems. Their new full-length, *The Green Fury*—a lushly orchestrated blend of slouchy indie-rock strumming, soaring string arrangements and endearingly off-kilter vocals—finally hit shelves after being completed for nearly two years. And he's now getting the chance to play for national audiences: The band's first legitimate tour started this past February, a month-long trip where they shared the stage with the New Pornographers, the Frames, Clem Snide and Call And Response.

Reactions to *The Green Fury* have been typical of the band's usual overwhelmingly positive press response, but Pond seems a little embarrassed to express, even, that with some financial support, their hard work's finally started to pay off. "I never thought this was cool, except it happened to us last week," Pond timidly offers, "[but] people were singing along to our songs. I always thought that was totally lame, but I was like 'You know, that's kind of nice.' I wish I had stopped playing the song and just clapped my hands." **NMM**



JIM HOSTETTER, MIKE KENNEDY, EVE MILLER, JIM KEHOE, MATT POND, MATT RAISCH

 ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

# Golden Anniversary

Anyone who wrote **the Anniversary** off as just another cutie-pie emo-pop band: Prepare to meet *Your Majesty*.

STORY: NICOLE KEIPER • PHOTO: KEVIN KUSATSU

**D**on't you agree, though, that there's no outrageous characters in rock anymore?" the Anniversary's Josh Berwanger urges, a cynic's lobe in his voice. "Everybody thinks there's all these rules you have to follow; when you see people getting interviewed, it's like they're reading cue cards. Everyone's just a forgettable face." He huffs in disgust. He's not claiming to be such a character himself, though—just warning that someday, he might be.

There's a youthful rebelliousness in Berwanger and fellow singer/guitarist Justin Roelofs that likely makes them both a publicist's nightmare and dream. The two are, as Berwanger asserts, "the most confident people you'll ever talk to," and unafraid of speaking their mind, even if it bashes the pedestal they sit upon. Their band's debut, *Designing A Nervous Breakdown*, was the first release on pals the Get Up Kids' label, Heroes & Villains, and it provided them instant acceptance within the emo-pop community. Two years later, with H&V's parent label Vagrant playing pied piper to the sweater sect, the Anniversary are quite open about their discomfort within that clique, releasing a sophomore disc that hip-checks the Kinks and Elvis Costello, with nary an emo-whimper to speak of. *Your Majesty* is swaggering pop with '80s new-wave sensibilities and classic-rock grit, with tracks like "Crooked Crown" urging you to "move your lips" and "shake your hips." The Anniversary are not minions of the Vagrant army, they'll explain, though they do appreciate what that association's offered them.

"Vagrant is the hottest label to be on right now; you're guaranteed record sales, but at the same time there's connotations," Roelofs explains. "It's a brand name—that can be great or can really fuck things up. It's kind of a double-edged sword. We wouldn't have sold as many records or reached as many people, but at the same time I know if I wasn't on Vagrant I'd probably stay away from [its bands]."

At the beginning, bearing the Vagrant brand wasn't so much of a stretch—*Breakdown* is unapologetically emo. The members of the Anniversary have made a point of maturing, though, something that shows on *Majesty*. "Everything is a phase," Berwanger offers. "We were really into old rock [for this record]; and Justin and I are almost out of that phase completely now. All we've been listening to is folk and blues." (Clarifies Roelofs: Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie, Willie Nelson, Gram Parsons.) Their process speaks to their continued growth as songwriters; they strive to derive influence from the original source, urging fans to do the same.

"I always say what I'm listening to, hoping that kids will look beyond what's going on now," beams Roelofs. "I'd rather people discover the classics; it'll help define their tastes and open them up to so much more." They note hesitation in their fanbase to branch out from emo-punk, however—a definite source of irritation. But they're hoping that having their take on rock classics packaged by a label kids support might mature some of them.

"Music is about just being open to everything," asserts Berwanger. "And trying to get into as much as possible." **MMM**



CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI, JAMES DAVID, ADRIANNE POPE, JOSH BERWANGER, JUSTIN ROELOFS

# Seriously Loud

Everyone from Madonna to Fatboy Slim jocks Timo Maas's remix skills. But he ain't just a hyped remixer, damn you, and he's ready to get *Loud* about that.

STORY: HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

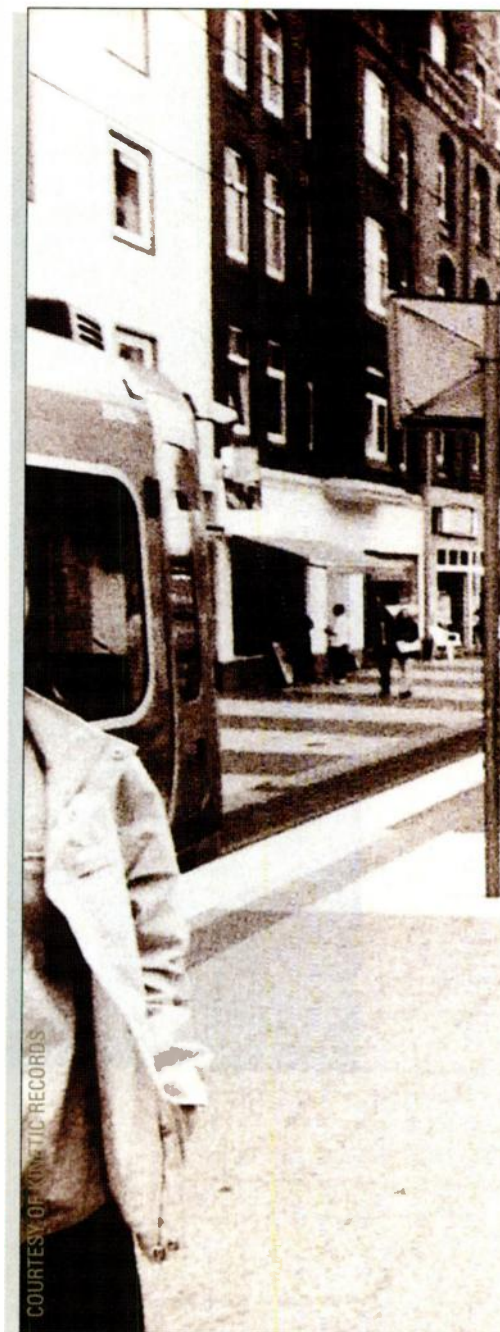
**T**imo Maas is serious. Serious pounding techno with a heap of house flair and a dash of funk. Serious remix work for Madonna, Kelis and Fatboy Slim. Serious vacation, even: "No traveling, no stress and no telephone line," says Maas, stern of eye with just a touch of Deutsch in his English. "I'd been on a desert island in the Caribbean, and I booked a house, not on the beach, so that I don't have to see any fat American or German tourists."

And now Maas wants us to take him seriously in regards to his debut album of original music, *Loud*. Like his well-received mix discs *Music For The Maases* (2000) and last year's *Connected*, *Loud* is the sound of the moment, what serious people like Madonna call the "Timo sound." It's an amalgam of funk-laden bass rhythms born of Chicago's roaring house scene, and punching, almost martial drum loops that harken back through Germany's long history with angular dance beats—particularly Mike Ink, Sven Vath and even Kraftwerk. As odd as that mixture sounds, *Loud* pulls on Maas's nearly 20 years of DJing experience, which began at age 13 and included everything from running his own mobile DJ setup playing radio-friendly party favorites (and the occasional *Stiff Little Fingers*), to working the R&B, hip-hop and funk-centric decks at a G.I. club near his village outside of Hanover, Germany.

That "Timo sound," which has become a staple in the record bins of world-class DJs like Paul Oakenfold and Pete Tong, began turning heads in 1999 with Maas's remix of Azzido Da Bass's "Doom's Night." Now, the Timo sound is in widespread demand, and the originator finds himself trying to conceptualize his latest product. Serious as ever, Maas addresses the issue of whether *Loud*, which contains numerous tracks from previous club-focused singles, is a true album. For while the sci-fi techno epic "Help Me"—featuring Kelis cooing into the stratosphere—and Finley Quaye funkfest "Caravan" are both as young, fresh and new as they come, there's more than a couple Timo Maas standards, including last year's U.K. chart-climbing "Ubik."

"No, we didn't have the big master plan," he relays, explaining the process he and his producer of six years Martin Buttrick went through when crafting the remainder of *Loud*. In fact, Maas and Buttrick feel that the true gems on *Loud* may not be the instant chart-toppers like "To Get Down," a big-beat vocal extravaganza with Phil Barnes handling the mic. Some of the tracks, like "Hard Life," stress something outside Maas's normally punishing dance esthetic—verging on prosaic guitar melodies with nary a beat in sight.

"We knew we wanted to do something that identifies Timo Maas as a proper album artist, and not just as a hyped remixer or trance producer or whatever people call me," he says. And if his fans take *Loud* as seriously as he does, Maas might also remain in a position to keep the fat tourists at bay as well. **MMM**







U.K. rock: It's not just for anglophiles anymore. In part two of our series, we take a look at Starsailor, a band set to carry the momentum created by Coldplay and Travis, as well as the gently skewed singer/songwriter Ed Harcourt and a band that rocks up the sound, Muse. Plus, U.K. journalist Angus Batey clues us in on what's new and what's next.







# Love Is In The Air



Starsailor loves America,  
and with *Love Is Here*,  
finds the feeling mutual.

STORY: RICHARD A. MARTIN • PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE RIHET

**J**ames Walsh stands center stage in a plain white T-shirt and blue jeans, curls of his black hair obscuring his forehead and eyes. He strums solemnly on his fire-red and gold Gibson, then steps to the mic and unleashes his surprisingly expressive voice as the band picks up on the energy and bites into the melody. The song, "Fever," from the English band's debut, *Love Is Here* (Capitol), is performed with precision and passion, but when it ends, an eerie silence descends over New York City's Bowery Ballroom.

JAMES WALSH, BEN BYRNE, BARRY WESTHEAD, JAMES STELFOX



**“What’s so good about America is that it’s unashamed of emotion. Americans aren’t as interested in being cool and ironic.”**



PHOTOS BY DREW GOREN

That’s because it’s soundcheck, and the crowd of 1,000 that will later fill the room has yet to arrive. Walsh bounds off the stage and disappears, literally, for five minutes. His road manager searches for him backstage, behind the bar, up in the balcony—he’s nowhere to be found. Then, suddenly, the six-foot-tall frontman emerges, looking drained and bewildered. His voice is nearly shot; constant touring could deprive Starsailor of its greatest asset. Gingerly sipping tea in the club’s basement bar, Walsh responds to a compliment about his singing with a whisper.

“It is unusual in this climate for someone to have a voice that’s sort of, not trained, but worked-on,” he reasons. “Jeff Buckley and Tim Buckley always inspired me to go further than that, and use the voice as an actual instrument.”

It’s hardly shocking that Walsh would cop to the Buckley’s influence. Starsailor takes its name from one of Tim’s best-known albums, and when U.K. audiences greeted the band’s debut with outright love, it released a B-side of “The Way Young Lovers Do,” a Van Morrison song that was a staple of Jeff’s cover-strewn sets.

A prolific songwriter, Walsh rarely leads Starsailor into any covers, though during the band’s actual Bowery set, he teases Ryan Adams’s “New York, New York,” and dedicates it to Adams. It’s a telling statement coming from a guy whose soft-edged British accent and emotive songs betray a love of the States—where the band has toured at least three times since late 2001—and American music. Of course, like many a U.K. musician, Walsh realizes the fiscal importance of succeeding on this side of the Atlantic, but he’s sincere about really wanting to as well.

“What’s so good about America is that it’s unashamed of emotion. Bands like U2 and Radiohead have always been able to find an audience in America, even when they’ve been out of favor in Europe, because Americans aren’t as interested in being cool and ironic. I find it really funny that the British have thrown the Americans [Starsailor] and Coldplay, these emotive bands that are maybe naive and deal in simple emotions,” he riffs, then sips from his tea. “In return, we’ve got the Strokes and the White Stripes, who are almost English in the way that they look at life, and more cynical.”

Walsh adds that he admires the Strokes’ brash sound, noting that it’s the “antithesis” of his own music. That’s an accurate portrayal of *Love Is Here*, a sweeping, highly reflective album of

songs that veer between balladry and finely chiseled pop. Acoustic guitar and twinkling keyboards dominate tracks like the singsong “Alcoholic”—with its rousing chorus of “Don’t you know you’ve got your daddy’s eyes/ Daddy was an alcoholic”—and the dramatic “Lullaby.” The band—drummer Ben Byrne, bassist James Stelfox and keyboardist Barry Westhead—rarely get to rock out, and Walsh only occasionally uses his range to reflect bitterness. Even when he does, on the toothsome “Talk Her Down,” he sounds more or less content.

“That song came about from going to the same club every week and seeing this girl all the time, and I’d made up these fantastical images in my head about who this girl was and what she was up to,” he explains, smiling mischievously. “It’s got a lot to do with the whole concept that the excitement of the chase is much better than when it comes together, because when I met her, we didn’t have much in common. When she started to talk to me, it was a bit of a disappointment.”

Giving things a try and moving on is something of a motif on *Love Is Here*, and coincidentally, it’s how Starsailor rose from a struggling bunch of wannabe British rock heroes into actual British rock heroes. “When we started out, we didn’t have any success,” Walsh says. “It’s a strange thing: When we were trying to write songs that would get out there, it didn’t work, because it would seem formulaic. But when we would sit down and convey feeling, it did a lot better—that thing about not being afraid whether there’s an audience for it.”

There’s an audience—Starsailor’s is growing on both sides of the Atlantic. But will it match the thrill of the chase? **NMM**



DOMINIC HOWARD, MATTHEW BELLAMY, CHRIS WOJSTENHOLME

# MUSE

STORY: TOM MALLON • PHOTO: E PARINDER

**D**elicate melodies, plaintive reflections, shoes gazed lovingly at... all the things that make English music great. Well, Muse wants none of it. "England seems to be co-opting the acoustic sound and the mellow, melancholic side of things, and I've always been into the extravagant big rock show," says frontman Matt Bellamy. "I know the [American] perception is that we're all these miserable, self-conscious type people. That's why I want to go over there and show them what we're about." To that end, the trio has devised the over-the-top *Origin Of Symmetry* (Maverick), a night at the opera that melds the classical theatrics of Queen with raucous rock riffs and comes up with something approximating Rachmaninoff Against The Machine—a far cry

from the wounded mewlings that have become England's stock-in-trade. "I'm interested in extremes in sound," Bellamy says, "and if it's possible to mix real hard-edged rock with something the complete opposite, like classical piano." *Origin* packs classical thunder that would do Wagner proud, with Bellamy leaping from fleet-fingered piano runs to dive-bombing guitars. With a whopping six months of touring planned, American audiences can expect to see that brought to the stage in a decidedly un-English fashion this summer. "Onstage we give as much as we possibly can," Bellamy says. "One minute I'm jumping on top of the piano and the next minute I'm throwing guitars out into the crowd. We like to make the performance as big and grandiose as possible." **NMM**

# The John Scofield Band überjam



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**Avi Bortnick** rhythm, acoustic guitar, samples  
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**Adam Deitch** drums

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“Almost every interviewer asks me about my past experience with Miles Davis. Out of all the albums I’ve made, I think this is the one that Miles would have enjoyed the most. He was always looking to take jazz to a new place.”

— John Scofield

Check out tour dates at [vervemusicgroup.com](http://vervemusicgroup.com)



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## THE VIEW FROM HERE

A handy guide to some promising, yet still-under-the-radar U.K. exports.

STORY: ANGUS BATEY

Looking to Britain for new music has always been a fraught endeavour, but never more so than now. The certainties of previous decades are evaporating, and the future still seems out of reach.

If you believe the whimperings of record business executives, the industry is in terminal decline, probably because of the Internet. The fact is, though, the warning signs have been there for those who would see them. When the U.K.’s publicly funded radio station, Radio One, picked up on Britpop, the alternative became mainstream, leaving the magazines that had championed Blur, Oasis and Pulp with an “us against the world” attitude looking desperately irrelevant. *Melody Maker* and *Select* closed last year, while *NME*’s sales are at their lowest ever. Former *MM* writer Everett True and photographer Steve Gullick have been so disheartened by the decline that they’ve started their own magazine. *Careless Talk Costs Lives* debuted with issue 12 late last year; they’re counting down to issue zero, by which time they are convinced they will have replaced the music press.

These days, you’ll just as likely find out about new bands from sources that only four or five years ago would never touch anyone outside the Top 20. **Saso**, lo-fi musical atmosphericists from Dublin, found their debut, *Big Group Hug* (Melted Snow), ignored by the music press but reviewed in *The Sunday Times*. (To contextualise: Imagine Godspeed You Black Emperor! getting its only U.S. review in *The Washington Post*.) **Little Barrie**, a London-based three-piece that sounds like the Meters playing the Stone Roses’ second album, earned its first press coverage with a live review in *The Independent*, the country’s fourth-biggest broadsheet newspaper. **Radio Two**—synonymous to anyone over 30 in Britain with the sounds of Sinatra and Bennett—has become more of a force in new music than Radio One, playing the likes of Super Furry Animals and the Strokes more than the supposedly “younger” and hipper station.

Little Barrie has emerged from the “new funk” milieu—bands writing new material in a conscious attempt to recreate a style and an attitude consistent with the late-’60s American 45s their members have spent lifetimes collecting. Leeds’s **New Mastersounds** has released this 7-inch-centric genre’s first album, while Londoners **the Soul Destroyers**, which has unearthed a superstar-in-waiting in vocalist Sharon Jackson (think Tina Turner in 1964), is probably the best of the bunch. Little Barrie, though, will be the first to break through. The band already has some heavyweight connections: Singer/guitarist Barrie Cadogan has been roped in to play on Johnny Marr’s new project, and both Oasis and Paul Weller are among fans of the group’s pared-down sound.

The U.K. straight-edge scene has been growing in importance recently, as well. While the numbers involved are still small, the mainstream media have picked up on the movement, and at least one band with straight-edge members, Welsh melodic-hardcore outfit **Lostprophets**, has found itself in the album charts. Another powerful groundswell is developing around what’s been dubbed “the new rock ‘n’ roll.” Inspired, at least in part, by an influx of foreigners like Sweden’s the Hives and Americans the White Stripes and the Strokes, a slew of new bands are getting back to the trashy, amphetamine-fueled spirit of Rock As Tribal Gathering. Look out for snottosed 45s and attitude-laden albums from the likes of **the Speed Killers**, **the Hotwires**, the fabulously named **80s Matchbox B-Line Disaster** and the riotous **Parkinsons**, whose members run the place to immerse yourself in this new world, the Friday night Club For Losers in London.

It’s a time for mavericks and independent spirits, and there are few who can lay more claim to either title than Terry Bickers. The former House Of Love and Levitation guitarist’s latest band is so out-there it’s received no attention at all. **Monkey 7**’s only release, *Snowy Peaks*, is a mind-mangling mélange of glockenspiel chimes, Earth Wind & Fire basslines, a “Norwegian Wood” quote and a singer who sounds disarmingly like the Divine Comedy’s Neil Hannon. It was also one of 2001’s finest singles. Another pioneer is former Carter USM guitarist **Les “Fruitbat” Carter**. He has inaugurated his own online record label, Spinach Records (named after his cat), and offers music as “shareware”—visitors to the site can download for free, but if they send their shareware fee, Carter mails them a finished CD. The numbers are small, but the system is working and is putting more money back into artists’ pockets than any of the more corporate alternatives.

In this environment, where the established order is falling apart, there are some fantastic opportunities for those with spirit, vision and a decent record to sell. There’s some fantastic new music coming out of the U.K.; you just have to dig a bit deeper to find it.

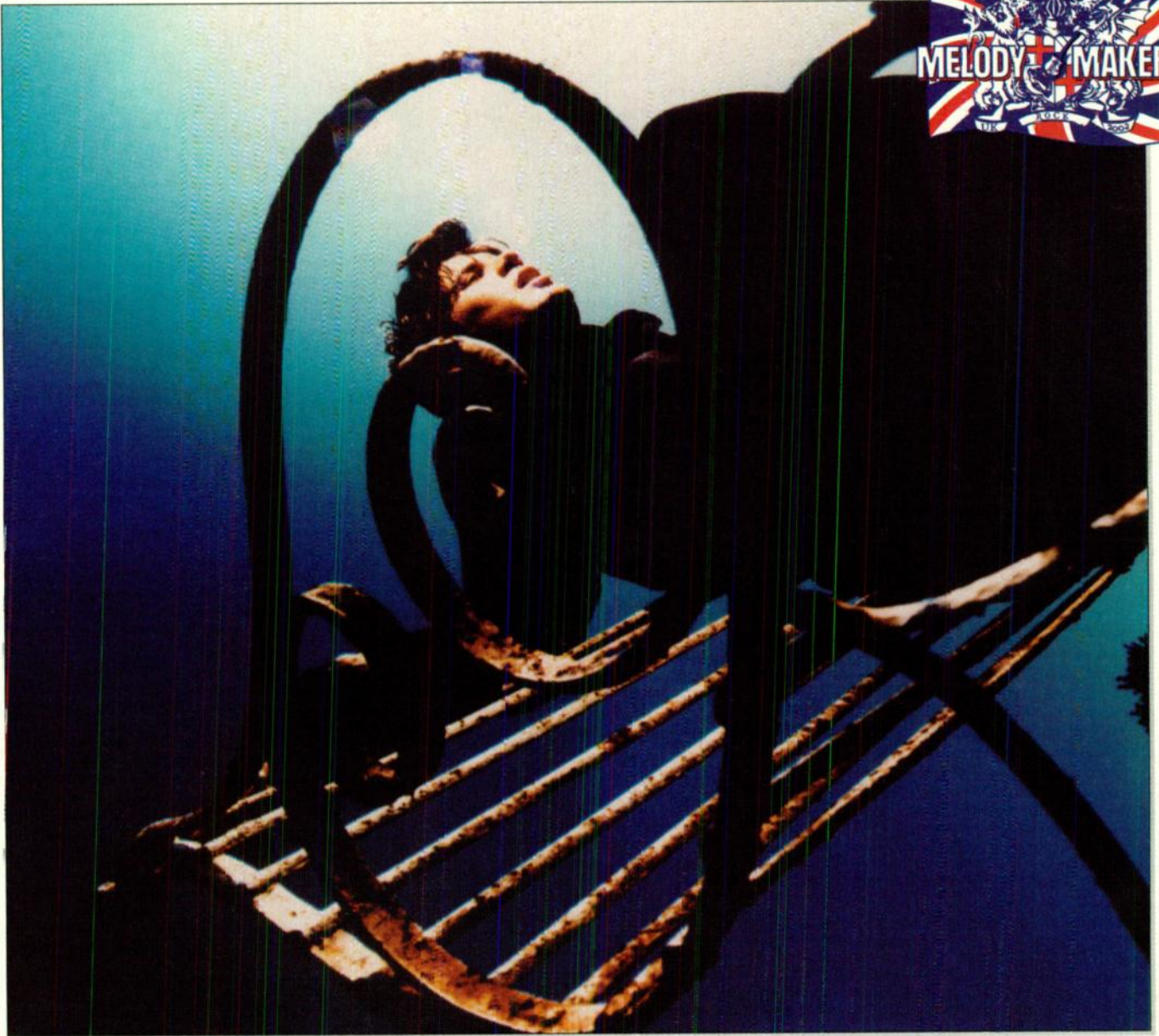
### WHERE TO GET YOUR ANGLOPHILE FIX:

Les Carter’s label: [www.spinach-records.co.uk](http://www.spinach-records.co.uk)

Home of the Soul Destroyers and Little Barrie: [www.jazzmanrecords.co.uk/starkreality7.html](http://www.jazzmanrecords.co.uk/starkreality7.html)

Monkey: [www.monkey7.fsbusiness.co.uk](http://www.monkey7.fsbusiness.co.uk)

Everett True’s new mag: [www.carelesstalkcostslives.com](http://www.carelesstalkcostslives.com)

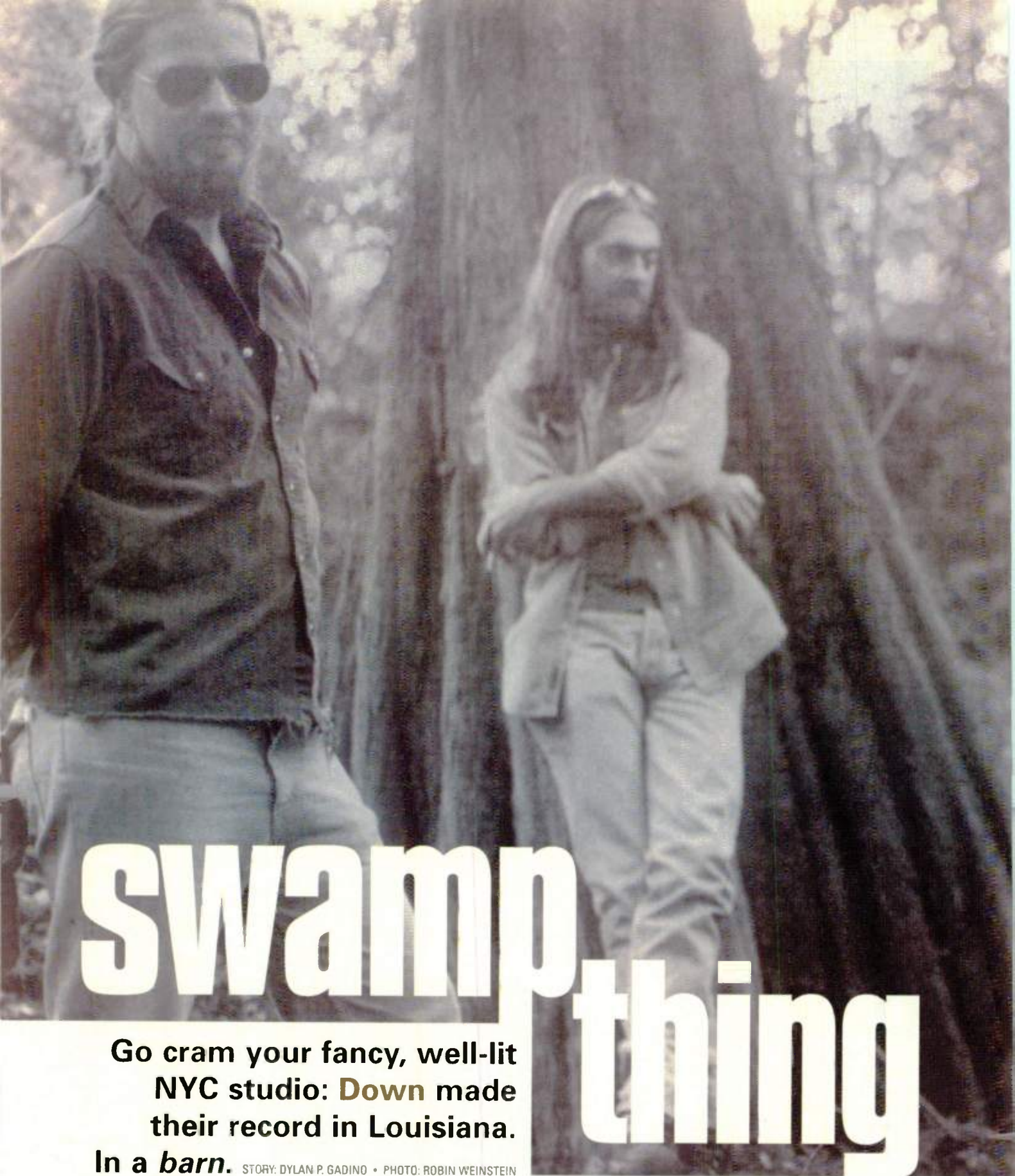


# ED HARCOURT

STORY: STEVE CIABBATONI • PHOTO: STEVE GULLICK

**D**on't fence Ed Harcourt in with the herd of tender U.K. tunesmiths like Starsailor. His ambitious full-length debut, *Here Be Monsters* (Heavenly-Capitol), argues that he's closer to that left-of-center pop phylum inhabited by Eels and Badly Drawn Boy. "I don't really feel part of any particular movement," he offers from Real World studios, where he's hard at work weeding through ideas for the hundreds of songs he's penned for a follow-up. "If you get pigeonholed that you do romantically induced folkie music, then you can't do garage rock or something with a Timbaland beat. People will say you're contrived." Amid the nuanced and moody flair of *Here Be Monsters*, there's always something hummable. "I do write some things that are really mad

and far out," he says, "but I can't help writing pop songs." Masters like Wilson and Waits spark his imagination, but not every muse is musical. "Where I live and write is in the deep, deep country. Outside my window I see a weathervane and a barn and I'm completely inspired by the beautiful fields of corn and rape. The room I record in, all the floors creak and you can hear little animals scurrying in between the walls." Like Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous, Harcourt's a bit of a zoophile. "Yeah, I like animals, cats, dogs...especially ducks. I think it's the bills." And then there's his short film, *Raccoon Boy*. "I get taken over by a raccoon," he explains. "It's like a devil on my shoulder, who manipulates me, ruins my life and I end up killing myself." Pause. "It's funny." **NMM**



# swamp thing

Go cram your fancy, well-lit NYC studio: **Down** made their record in Louisiana. In a *barn*. STORY: DYLAN P. GADINO • PHOTO: ROBIN WEINSTEIN



**M**oments from a moss-packed swamp, cryptic chalk-white scrawls bleed down newly painted black walls. Dope, booze and miscellaneous foodstuffs line the floors; tractors have been displaced by a pile of analog recording gear, the kind you might have found at a Led Zeppelin session 30 years ago.

At the center of it all stand five dudes from the Big Easy, friends since their early teens, who throw Sabbath-worthy dirgey jams in the face of today's weak metal. They have taken a break from their respective "real" bands (Pantera, Corrosion Of Conformity, Crowbar) and have joined for the second coming of Down, a disc simply titled *II*. And this barn on singer Philip Anselmo's 30-acre property across the lake from New Orleans is where they did the deed—everything from writing to the final mix unfolded right here within 28 days. (Continued on p. 37)

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# CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

# eels

## MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD

## Super Furry Animals

## N.E.R.D.

## Hayden • The Detachment Kit

MARCH/APRIL 2002 • ISSUE 100

**13. TAKING BACK SUNDAY** "Great Romances Of The 20th Century" *Tell All Your Friends* (Victory)

Purveyors of the tried-and-true emo formula, Long Island's Taking Back Sunday craft sing-along chants about youthful woes, cold Decembers and just generally being bummed about girls. Think: The bastard child of Thursday and the Get Up Kids.

**14. FLOGGING MOLLY** "Drunken Lullabies" *Drunken Lullabies* (Side One Dummy)  
Irish punk-rockers Flogging Molly offer tastes of Warped Tour-fare drenched in lots and lots of Guinness. Meant for those who like a little fiddle and tin-whistle with their power chords.

**15. HAYDEN** "Dynamite Walls" *Skyscraper National Park* (Badman)  
Toronto's one-man folk implosion returns with a mix of quiet confessions and slow-burning rockers like "Dynamite Walls." (See *In My Room*, p. 14, *Best New Music*, p. 41)

**16. THE DETACHMENT KIT** "Never Hear Your Words" *They Raging. Quiet Army* (The Self-Starter Foundation)  
Careening from the stop-start psychotics of Les Savy Fav to the mature melodicism of Built To Spill and back, Chicago's the Detachment Kit are a gorgeous musical and emotional yo-yo. (See *On The Verge*, p. 18)

**17. 3RD DEGREE** "Don't Walk Away" *Radio 7* (Trashbox)  
Says Adam Blake, the drummer of this Denver power-pop quartet, "Nix the chicks with vocals bigger than their chests." So goes the overall attitude of 3rd Degree's brand of party-rock.

**18. DUM** "Let's Have Another Beer" (Bctz)  
Their name might be tongue-in-cheek, it might not be—but the Schlitz-soaked bellowing on Dum's single could still masterfully soundtrack many a fraternity beer-bong binge.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case



1. **H.E.R.O.** "Rock Star" *In Search Of...* (Virgin)

The quirky minds behind recent hits by pop tarts like Britney Spears and N\*SYNC step out on their own with the leftfield hip-hop of their oft-delayed debut.

2. **MOTH** "I See Sound" *Provisions, Fiction And Gear* (Virgin)

With the help of folks like ex-Replacement Tommy Stinson and former Rocket From The Crypt drummer Atom Willard, Moth makes power-pop without rapid-fire palm-muted chords or put-on punk-rock attitudes. Imagine that! (See On The Verge, p. 19)

3. **SOUL COUGHING** "Super Bon Bon (Propellerheads Radio Edit)" *Lust In Phaze: The Best Of Soul Coughing* (Rhino)

Previously unreleased Propellerheads remix from the forthcoming best of from the now-defunct kings of NYC quirk.

4. **EELS** "Rotten World Blues" *Souljacker* (DreamWorks)

Eels' fourth album is a batch of twisted sample-rock as only E could make it; "Rotten World Blues" is from a bonus EP included with American pressings of *Souljacker*. (Take that, rest of the world.) (See Five Spot, p. 15)

5. **THE JOHN SCOFIELD BAND** "Ideofunk" *Überjam* (Verve)

The godfather of new experimental jazz once again blurs the lines between jazz and funk, this time taking on elements of drum 'n' bass, hip-hop and dub.

6. **MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD** "I Wanna Ride You" *Uninvisible* (Blue Note)

The latest chapter in the MMW saga delivers another steamy set of hip-hop-inflected saul-jazz. (See Reviews, p. 55)

7. **NORAH JONES** "Don't Know Why" *Come Away With Me* (Blue Note)

Norah Jones is a rock singer whose voice works well with low-key jazz. Or vice versa. Just 22, her voice is as soft and captivating as her liquid brown eyes.

8. **PLAYGROUP** "Number One" *Playgroup* (Astralwerks)

Ass-quaking electronica that runs the gamut from new-wave to hip-hop to '70s funk to reggae. (See Reviews, p. 57)

9. **TAKKYU ISHINO** "Stereo Nights" *Japan For Sale Vol. Two* (Sony Music Japan)

"J-pop" is the going shorthand for the Japanese take on Western pop found on Japan For Sale Vol. Two. It's an idea more than a sound, incorporating Takkyu Ishino's synth-pop, as well hip-hop (DJ Krush) heavy techno-rock (Boom Boom Satellites) and airy confections (Puffy Amiymu).

10. **SUPER FURRY ANIMALS** "(Drawing) Rings Around The World" *Rings Around The World* (XL Recordings-Beggars Group)

The Super Furrries' stock-in-trade is brilliant, visionary pop music, sometimes sung in their native, consonant-loving Welsh. This song is in English, for your convenience.

11. **THE HERBALISER** "Verbal Animé (Feat. Iriscience)" *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Ninja Tune)

Live hip-hop innovators the Herbaliser (whose lineup has been known to swell to as many as 10 members) craft another set of genre-blurring grooves, blending live drums, samples, orchestras and even a horn section into their mix. (See Reviews, p. 52)

12. **CEE-LO** "Closet Freak" *Cee-Lo Green & His Perfect Imperfections* (Arista)

Former Goodie MOB-er Cee-Lo breaks out his own blend of MCing, jazz scatting and singing on his solo debut.

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EDDIE MALLUK

KIRK WINDSTEIN, PEPPER KEENAN, PHILIP ANSELMO, JIMMY BOWER, REX BROWN

**“Down is not going to some fucking track-lit studio with leather couches. That’s not how it works.”**

“Our main thing was to write a damn record the way people used to and not over-think the shit,” says 34-year-old guitarist Pepper Keenan, better known as frontman of Corrosion Of Conformity. Atmosphere was key: “Down is not going to some fucking track-lit studio with leather couches and a producer sitting there,” Keenan says. “That’s not how it works. We painted the walls fucking black... And [while] we were [recording] we were three sheets to the wind, forgetting what tape’s got what riff on it, so we started writing everything on the walls... by the time we were done it looked like some disgruntled postal worker’s fucking house.”

“It looked like the fucking Manson family had written a record,” says drummer Jimmy Bower, 33.

With interior decorating in place, the band—rounded out by newly acquired Pantera bassist Rex Brown (original bass player, Crowbar’s Todd Strange, is now happily married and not touring), Crowbar guitarist Kirk Windstein and Eye Hate God/Corrosion Of Conformity drummer Bower—set about creating the sequel to 1995’s nearly gold-selling *Nola*, a follow-up six years in the making.

But less than a month is all they needed to create *It*, the sludgy lo-fi antithesis to every Pro Tools-wielding nü-metal band. Without the clown makeup and scary masks, these “dirtbag Americans who just like to jam” created an album more seedy and powerful than any recent baggy-panted posterchild for disenfranchised youth. “Beautifully Depressed” is about quietly accepting the negatives; “New Orleans Is A Dying Whore” lambasts the band’s deteriorating hometown. “Stained Glass Cross,” which finds Anselmo trading in his phlegm-ridden Pantera pipes for a slightly silkier croon, is an enigmatic up-tempo turn about a father and son ruminating on how to make their deaths symbolically special.

While *Nola* only led to 13 live shows (“The last time we even played together was one jam session in 1998,” Bower laughs”), it spawned years of demand from rabid fans, which *Down* will meet with a series of month-long tours.

“When we’re on the road with our other bands, people ask us more about *Down* than about our real bands,” says Bower. “We want to become more of a regular touring band instead of playing like once every 10 years.”

For now, all are claiming that their primary responsibilities remain with their full-time groups, but rumors about Anselmo’s future in Pantera—rumors he has soundly denied—are still rampant. Could *Down* logistically become each member’s real band?

“It could happen,” says Keenan. “*Down* is such a powerful thing that it kind of gives us the creeps sometimes. We can easily become a big thing.” **MMM**

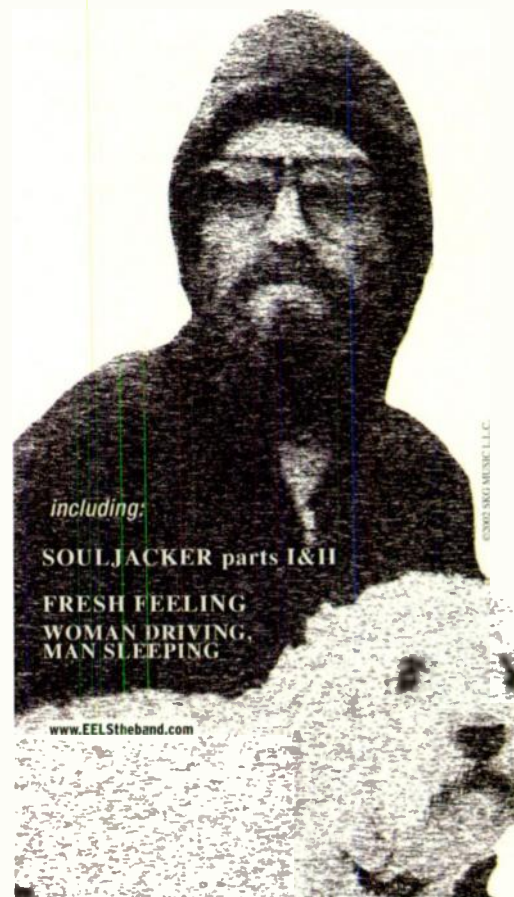
# EELS

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KEVIN MAZUR/RETNA



# Sweet AND LO DOWN

Cee-Lo said goodbye to Goodie Mob to hang with the devil and angels on his shoulders.

STORY: ALIYA S. KING • PHOTO: DEAN KARR

It was inevitable, really; it always is. A groundbreaking group puts out several well-received albums. And then—somewhere between the solo guest appearances with Mary J. Blige and Carlos Santana—it becomes obvious that one member is the leader, the frontman... the star. Every rap group's got a badass. And it's usually just a matter of time before the natural-born leader decides to have the whole stage to his badass self.

Cee-Lo, the rotund, silver-tongued lyricist from Atlanta-based rap quartet Goodie Mob, says his debut solo album, *Cee-Lo Green & His Perfect Imperfections*, has been in the works "since the day I was born." And although he's been a member of Goodie Mob since its inception in the early nineties, Cee-Lo says he was always "a solo artist by nature and in a group by profession."

Cee-Lo began working on his own music in earnest after the disappointing sales and reviews of Goodie Mob's third album, *World Party*. The group had ventured away from the eclectic vibe of their first two albums and the plan to go mainstream failed miserably. Cee-Lo was ready to take the music back to the basics—even if that meant he had to break away from the group.

"It was empowering, liberating and exciting," says Cee-Lo, on being in the studio alone. "There were things I wanted to say that I could not have done with the group."

That desire to cross boundaries is evident on *Cee-Lo Green*. While it's *de rigueur* for hip-hop artists to promise edgy experimentation with different genres, Cee-Lo may be the first to actually deliver. And the raucous energy, filled with both raunchy lyrics and preacher's sermons, are indeed a coming-out party for Cee-Lo.

"I couldn't do a song like 'Closet Freak' in Goodie Mob," says Cee-Lo. "We had a certain image and a certain agenda. And I was the person who spoke for the group. After a while, I wanted to just speak for myself and the things that go on in my mind."

Those wildly divergent topics include snobby Northeast lyricists who think Southern rappers can't rip. On "Big Ole Words," Cee-Lo screams on them with a lyrical prowess usually reserved for rappers who like to say "na'mean" between every verse. Then there are the people in Cee-Lo's life who don't want to set him free—the kinetic spoken-word drama on "El Dorado Sunrise" seems like a thinly veiled plea to his Goodie Mob bandmates. He then seamlessly morphs into a Sam Cooke-era vocalist with a serious love jones on "Country Love" (featuring Blues Traveler's John Popper on harmonica).

Everything about Cee-Lo sways back and forth, like a pendulum. *Cee-Lo Green* goes from jazz to country to hardcore hip-hop and classic R&B and back again. He is both a lover and a fighter—a sinner and a saint. And his debut album gives him a platform to fully examine his duality. "I once wanted to be a martyr and live and die like a civil-rights leader," he says. "Then again, I also wanted to live the life of a rock star. I think on this album—and in my life—I am a little bit of each." **NMM**

# HAVANA, Cuba



STORY : BRIAN LONG • PHOTOS : DREW GOREN

For over 40 years, the U.S. embargo with Cuba has fostered images of mystery, danger and the forbidden. All most Americans know of this island 90 miles off the coast of Florida is baseball prowess, spectacular cigars and great music—which is, incidentally, literally everywhere in Havana. There are less romantic but equally important aspects of the country, too: Cuba has a nearly 100 percent literacy rate and expert medical schooling, and Havana's ubiquitous military police presence results in a relatively safe vacation spot. But I still went for the music.

I was invited to Cuba to view the state-owned and operated **Abdalla Studios** situated in the neighborhood of Miramar. Walking through the town, I was struck by the fact that, other than a Chicago Bulls T-shirt on a child or a Yankees hat on an old man here and there, there was almost a total lack of the West's commercial influence. The absence of advertisements and the clutter of Western commercial culture (save for one Benetton store) was oddly refreshing. The state-of-the-art Abdalla complex had live rooms and recording desks and even a Pro-Tools mastering rig—but by necessity, not everything was so high-tech: The studio has its own generator because electrical blackouts are a part of daily life in Havana. United States-based record companies are forbidden to do business directly with state-owned companies, but Abdalla is frequented by European and African producers, labels and musicians, including Cesaria Evora, looking for that special

Cuban blend of rhythm, melody and spontaneity.

Where better, though, to experience Cuban music than at any one of a handful of Havana nightclubs, where you could witness groups mixing traditional music with contemporary concepts. *Esperanza (Hope)*, a blind six-piece band, plays vintage Cuban son as if interpreted by the Talking Heads, and could easily be a cult hit if given the opportunity to play in the States. At the state-sponsored venue **Casa de la Música**, I took in the slick, techno-dance act Klimaxx, a large group directed by one of the country's best drummers, Geraldo Piloto. Supporting them that evening was the singing, dancing trio *Azucar (Sugar)*, Cuba's answer to Destiny's Child. Casa de la Música's CD store mostly stocks selections culled from Egrem, the state label, with discs priced competitively with U.S. mom and pop retailers. The least tourist-y show of my visit was at **Salon Rosada en Jardines Tropicales**, an outdoor venue where the popular timba group Bambaleo was onstage. (Shortly after our arrival, unfortunately, scuffles broke out in the heaving throng, the house lights flashed and the police stopped the music.) On Sunday afternoons Clave y Guanco perform a "muy típica" rumba in an alley painted by the internationally known artist Salvadore. This rumba is simply a classic drum-and-vocal workout that was born decades ago from dockworkers, who, to get around a ban on drums, pounded on boxes they took from work.

**THERE AND BACK****Getting To Cuba:**

One can officially visit Cuba by getting permission from the U.S. Government—or you could enter illegally by hopping over via a neighboring country. Only, you might want to try the former and avoid being nabbed by U.S. Customs. The simplest way to plan your trip and get U.S. Government approval is to go for a Cultural Event. Arrangements can be made through a company like **Marazul Tours** (201-840-6717/201-319-3900). They arrange details for the many U.S. artists and tourists who visit Cuba each year for the festivals.

**Customs Tips:**

Don't arrive in Cuba with brand new luxury goods as gifts, or you'll have to pay duty. Absolutely no VCRs or satellite dishes, but you can bring cameras, laptops, DAT machines, etc., as long as they look used. If you've purchased any paintings, be sure to have the paperwork when leaving Cuba or they'll be quickly confiscated. If you're stopped when entering the U.S., don't even think about lying—especially about how much rum and tobacco you're carrying. Have your receipts handy to show how much you spent on both Cuban goods and daily travel costs, along with a letter of invitation or other paperwork for the event you officially visited. The daily limit on traveling expenses/purchased goods was \$158 when I traveled there, but you're also allowed to purchase \$100 worth of Cuban goods like rum, tobacco and shampoo (they have amazing collagen shampoo)—but this excludes cultural materials such as books, CDs and paintings, which you can purchase without limit. (Unfortunately, rum and tobacco are not considered cultural material.) For more info and other helpful Cuba-related links, visit: [www.travel.state.gov/cuba.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/cuba.html).

**LOCAL LOGIC: HAVANA'S BEST****Eats/drinks:**

Great dinners can be found at local homes, called Paladors, who've gained licenses from the government to serve the public. The powerful rum mojitos will explain why Ernest Hemingway was so attracted to the island. You can even sit next to the barstool Papa regularly warmed at the Floridita located in Old Havana.

**Way to experience local culture:**

Cuba loves to celebrate sport, culture and academics with hundreds of championships, festivals and conferences. **The Havana Film Festival** takes place annually every December, and the walls of Cuba's most prestigious hotel, the National, flood with pictures of Hollywood stars visiting for the festival. Other festivals to consider are: the semiannual **Havana Plaza Jazz Festival** (beginning shortly after the Film Festival); **The Bolero Festival** of singing and dancing in May; **The Festival of Son** (song) in Santiago de Cuba; The Cuban Institute of Music-sponsored **Festival of Coros** (choirs) in September; **The Electronic Music Festival** (also in September); and the most expansive Institute Of Music-sponsored event, **Cubadisco**, in May (people come from all over the world to license Cuban music and check out talent there).

For a full listing of festivals and events, check out:  
[www.buroconv.cubaweb.cu/calendario/selectivos/icalendario.asp](http://www.buroconv.cubaweb.cu/calendario/selectivos/icalendario.asp)

# 1 GIANT LEAP

1 Giant Leap

Palm



**W**hile not exactly on scope with landing a man on the moon, the music and video project *1 Giant Leap* is a remarkably ambitious endeavor, both musically and logistically. The brainchild of Faithless founder Jamie Catto and multi-instrumentalist Duncan Bridgeman, the leap spanned 25 countries, enlisting dozens of contributors in order to document the unifying vocabulary among artists of all trades. The guest list reads like a backstage confab at an Amnesty International concert—Baaba Maal, Michael Stipe, Speech, Neneh Cherry, Michael Franti, Brian Eno, authors Kurt Vonnegut and Tom Robbins and many others. Traveling with PowerBook in tow, Catto and Bridgeman supplied the bulk of the backing tapestry, weaving synth textures and beats with a host of ethnic instruments, but it is the guest vocalists who leave the deepest impression on the listener. “The Way You Dream,” a duet with Michael Stipe and Bollywood belter Ashla Bohsle, is a haunting journey through breakbeats and tender, blissful vocal lines. The thumping “Ma’ Africa,” featuring South Africa’s Mahotella Queens and Native American trio Ulali, is emblematic of the producers’ ability to reflect both ancient funk and futuristic groove. On paper, the album would seem terribly formulaic, if not doomed to collapse under the weight of its own ambition, but damned if it isn’t disarmingly beautiful from start to finish. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI

Link

[www.1giantleap.tv](http://www.1giantleap.tv)

File Under

Artists without borders

R.I.Y.L.

Peter Gabriel's *Passion*, Faithless,  
Zap Mama, Afro Celt Sound System

# BOARDS OF CANADA

Geogaddi

Warp

**B**oards Of Canada don't want to hurt you. You'll find no wince-inducing drill 'n' bass here, no rhythm-defying drum programming to scramble your brains, no jagged noises to pierce your delicate ears. Instead, the Boards deliver atmosphere, and tons of it. Each of the 23 tracks on *Geogaddi* is a self-contained universe of sound, containing only the elements needed to get the point across. Some are outfitted with squishy beats that would do Björk proud, some get simple, rusty trip-hop, some get none at all. As for the sounds themselves, the “geo” part of *Geogaddi* is quite fitting: This is some of the warmest, earthiest “electronica” (or “IDM,” or “ambient techno,” or whatever you feel like calling it) ever created. The smooth, ringing keys of “Music Is Math” flow like ice melting at the foot of a glacier; the merry-go-round sounds of “Julie And Candy” swirl around your stereo space like wisps of cloud; and the ethereal breaths of “The Beach At Redpoint” inch along like the lava at the bottom of the sea mentioned in the sampled voiceovers of “Dandelion.” *Geogaddi* rides smack dab in the middle of electronica's often hard-to-find sweet spot: It's electronic without being skittery, tense or overblown; it's ambient without being sparse or boring. Somewhere, Brian Eno sheds a tear. >>>TOM MALLON



Link

[www.boardsofcanada.com](http://www.boardsofcanada.com)

File Under

Electronic ambience done right  
(finally)

R.I.Y.L.

Mellow ApeX Twin, Autechre,  
recent Björk



# DOWN

## Down II

Elektra

**B**ands are all about interpersonal chemistry, which is why it's so interesting to take people from the confines of their usual bands and place them in a "supergroup." However, "interesting" doesn't always equal "good"—Oysterhead anyone? This factor is what makes the rock combination Down so special: *Down II* actually exceeds the sum of its parts (Corrosion Of Conformity, Pantera, Crowbar and Eyehategod) and plants a firm boot in the ass of all of those bands' recent efforts. Written and recorded in 28 days in a barn in Louisiana, every track crackles with raw energy: Pepper Keenan's riffs crash with a power they haven't wielded since Corrosion's 1996 effort *Wiseblood*, and Phil Anselmo delivers a more refined version of the gravel-throated swamp croon he developed on Pantera's *Reinventing The Steel*. "There's Something On My Side" alternates between rapid-fire riffs and crushing slowness; "Man That Follows Hell" ends with a Sabbath-descended stomp that's like a concrete block to the head. Even the slower and quieter numbers are infused with a dark, sludgy power: "Learn From This Mistake" is like wandering through a whiskey-induced mental molasses, and you can almost see them sitting on a bayou dock, alligators at their feet, on the finger-picked "Where I'm Going." With all four bands in between records, it's good to their members keeping their weapons sharp. In fact, sharper than usual. >>>TOM MALLON



Link

[www.elektra.com](http://www.elektra.com)

File Under

Midnight in the garden of  
Osbourne and Iommi

R.I.Y.L.

Black Sabbath, Clutch,  
Corrosion Of Conformity

# HAYDEN

## Skyscraper National Park

Hardwood-Badman



**H**ayden Desser's music is possessed of a quality that few records achieve: It's so insular, so personal and intimate, that you almost feel guilty for listening to it, as if you're eavesdropping outside his bedroom window while he thinks no one is around. His debut, 1995's *Everything I Long For*, was almost uncomfortable to listen to, recorded in his room at his parents' house and delivering lo-fi folk melancholy in a Tom Waits-ish rasp. He's been steadily polishing his sound ever since, and *Skyscraper National Park* is his third and most refined effort. Hayden's still recording at home (his own now), but with an actual studio setup and a voice that's finally found sure footing. Songs like "Steps Into Miles" and "Long Way Down" find him reaching into the upper parts of his vocal range, where he previously dared not tread, revealing a charmingly cracked falsetto. Like 1998's *The Closer I Get*, *Skyscraper* also finds him stepping out into fuller band arrangements with tracks like "Dynamite Walls," which builds from a few quiet intertwined guitars to a tense, grungey rocker. *Skyscraper's* sweet, unassuming songs, tasteful string and horn arrangements ("Bass Song," "Lullaby") and texture experimentation ("Street Car," "Tea Pod") demonstrate that Hayden continually manages to improve his music without ever losing what made it so charming in the first place. >>>TOM MALLON

Link

[www.hardwoodrecords.com](http://www.hardwoodrecords.com)

File Under

Rock folk at home

R.I.Y.L.

Elliott Smith, acoustic Beck,  
Sebadoh

## THE PINE VALLEY COSMONAUTS

### The Executioner's Last Songs

Bloodshot



What better way to protest capitol punishment than a disc of death songs? By emphasizing the “death” in “death penalty,” the Pine Valley Cosmonauts, another splinter group led by Mekons/Waco Brothers provocateur Jon Langford, humanize the issue: This isn’t about peace, or criminal justice, it’s a human life taken by the state in the name of the people. So this disc doesn’t feel overtly political; there’s nary a soapbox, save for Tony Fitzpatrick’s folksy “Idiot Whistle,” which characterizes governmental policy with “politicians love the death penalty because it makes a bunch of candyasses look like tough guys.” Steve Earle’s rough, rocked-up treatment of the folk standard “Tom Dooley” is a highlight, as is “Knoxville Girl” as handled by Handsome Family’s Brett Sparks, and a country cover of the Adverts’ punk classic “Gary Gilmore’s Eyes” featuring Kelly Hogan, Sally Timms and the Waco Brothers’ Deano. But the all-star lineup doesn’t stop there: Also featured are the talents of Janet Beverage Bean (Freakwater), Rosie Flores, Neko Case, the Aluminum Group and Jenny Toomey, among others. These songs retain a rootsy feel, but aren’t handled with such reverence that all the fun gets sucked out. Rather, these songs feel alive, which given the theme of *The Executioner’s Last Songs*, makes for a pretty fine protest. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON

Link

[www.bloodshotrecords.com](http://www.bloodshotrecords.com)

File Under

Insurgent country agit-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Waco Brothers, Steve Earle,  
Mermaid Avenue

## THE PROMISE RING

### Wood/Water

Anti

Despite gracing the pages of *Teen People* and *The New York Times*, the Promise Ring are often pinned as a quintessential indie-rock band, defined by their guitar-driven pop and vocalist/guitarist Dave vonBohlen’s trademark lisp. With 1999’s *Very Emergency*, the Midwestern quartet finally shed the emo tag that had been stapled to them since their raw, impressive debut (1995’s *30 Degrees Everywhere*) by crafting an album of pure pop songs. Packed with “yeah-yeah” choruses and head-bobbing hooks, *Emergency* expanded TPR’s songwriting chops without sacrificing the energy and enthusiasm that endeared them to their growing fanbase. Last year, however, vonBohlen suffered from a benign brain tumor, and the band was forced to refocus their lives—and their sound. “I’m suspicious that the doctor stole all my fast songs,” quipped vonBohlen on the website of their new label, Anti Records. He wasn’t kidding: Only four of the 12 songs on *Wood/Water* clock in under four minutes. Aided by producer Stephen Street (the Smiths, Blur), TPR have once again refined their pop sound, adding synthesizers, drum machines and layers of piano into the mix. *Wood/Water* has a warm, acoustic feel, and tracks like the piano ballad “Bread & Coffee” and the six-minute pseudo-soul of “Say Goodbye Good” show that the Ring deserve their reign at the top of the indie-pop kingdom. >>>ALEX NAIDUS



Link

[www.tpr-online.com](http://www.tpr-online.com)

File Under

Growing out of their sweaters

R.I.Y.L.

Damien Jurado, Vermont,  
Superchunk



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# REVIEWS



+/-

## Self-titled Long-playing Debut Album

Teenbeat

Versus made their names as purveyors of NYC indie jangle-pop, but it's obvious from the first moments of the dreamy "All I Do" that guitarist James Baluyut has been staying up nights dreaming of something else. He's found that something else in the hobbled drum machines, ringing electric pianos and subtle washes of sound that pulse throughout +/-'s *Self-titled Long-playing Debut Album*. "All I Do" opens the record in a sea of swirling synth and Baluyut offering up a reverb-swamped falsetto plea; "The Declaration Of Independence" alternates between

bubbling Casio beats and My Bloody Valentine-inspired explosions of noise, all draped in slippery sequences. All of the tracks are shot through with a distinct Beatles-esque approach, all lilting background vocals and slightly psychedelic keyboard treatments. Baluyut also uses +/- to explore guitar styles he doesn't normally exercise in Versus: The delicate arpeggios of songs like "The Industrial Revolution" and "All I Have To Do Is Make You" (the latter in prog-standard 5/4 time) show him to be quite the accomplished picker. The amount of styles he visits in the course of 39 minutes is almost dizzying, stopping at everything from drum 'n' bass ("Ill Advised") to man-and-his-guitar confessionals ("The Separation Of Church And State"), but he holds it all together to make a compelling debut. Versus Versus, +/- might just win. >>>TOM MALLON



## ...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD

Source Tags & Codes Interscope

A lesson learned from splitting the atom is that it's sometimes easier to create power than to contain it. It was big news in indieland when Austin miscreants ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead signed to a major label: Would they sell out? Could they if they tried? Would they just bust up really nice gear? If you're looking for where the major-label dollars went, it's in how this record keeps the sounds separated and lovely in their rough and drastic ways. The songs typically keep a hair's breadth away from mayhem, but still

manage a strange, dramatic elegance. The vocals range from tuneful to tortured, and the rest of the band follows that line, building suspense over which way a song will go. "Baudelaire" has a rumbling, big-rock sense of melody, and the keyboards at the end of "Monsoon" swear-to-God recall "Computer Blue" in *Purple Rain*, angry, shirtless Prince and all. Then there are songs like "Homage" and "Days Of Being Wild" that pin the needle at both ends, beginning with a scream, then boiling down to a pensive tom tom buildup before making another mad climb up a dissonant peak. This is brainy hard rock too fractured to hold together for long, a sexy idea Trail Of Dead builds into methodology. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON

Link

[www.trailofdead.com](http://www.trailofdead.com)

File Under

Crash palace

R.I.Y.L.

Unwound, Live Skull,  
harsher Mercury Rev



**CRAIG ARMSTRONG**

**As If To Nothing** Melankolic-Virgin

Were it not for his incredible pedigree from trip-hop and pop days of yore (i.e. the mid-'90s), Craig Armstrong might have been another Enya. Instead, his working with popsters Texas, assisting on Massive Attack's genre-defining *Protection*, and subsequent employment on Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* soundtrack, for which Armstrong won a Golden Globe, have all placed his sentimental orchestrations smack-dab in the middle of a pop-culture ivory tower. We can't fault the faux world-music angst of "Miracle," because Swati Natekar's haunting ghazal cries and Mogwai's mystical electronic guitar undertones

Link

[www.craigarmstrong.com](http://www.craigarmstrong.com)

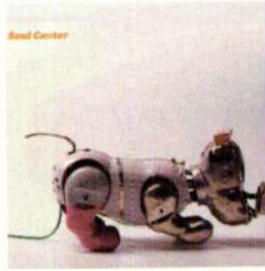
File Under

Electronic pop with classical ambitions

R.I.Y.L.

Air, Snooze, Sigur Rós

add multicultural flair. We can't raise our brows at the Enigma-esque mixture of contemporary baroque vocals and downtempo breaks in "Hymn 2" because they're contributed by highly regarded soprano Catherine Bott and drum 'n' bass luminary Photek. We can't poke fun at the smarm of "Wake Up In New York"—not just because of its touchy subject matter, but because lo and behold, Evan Dando's chocolate moaning warms its folk melancholy. On his 1996 debut album, *The Space Between Us*, Armstrong's Royal Music College credentials projected an anonymous quality that allowed Cocteau Twins' Liz Fraser to bloom into a brilliant intimacy; *As If To Nothing* so bears the stamp of nowness that to point out its saccharine romanticism would be akin to telling the Pope that he wears a funny hat. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT



**THOMAS BRINKMANN**

**Soul Center III** Novamute

If *Soul Center* was B.B. King and *Soul Center II* was James Brown, then this third installment of Thomas Brinkmann's electro-funk series would be Herbie Hancock suffering through lounge-singer tryouts. *Soul Center III* could have been the sparkling center jewel in what heretofore was an exhilarating minimal techno-jazz experiment by Brinkmann. But instead of building on the sweaty sampled cat-calls and hands-in-the-air, crowd-pleasing techno anthems in *Soul Center II*, Brinkmann substitutes the visceral immediacy of '60s jazz samples for '70s material best left to chin-stroking. Brinkmann's renown dry bass beats are still there; the single "A Good One" makes pretty decent use of fusion's frantic rhythm tendencies by kicking up its tempo, while "Easy Goin'" shines under rubberband bass and a noodly *Headhunters*-esque piano riff that warms like a fine cognac. But to its detriment, "Time" fronts said beats with a sappy sax solo that whines on for endless minutes, and "How Far Do You Wanna Go?" feels forced by the scattering of bongos, overly dramatic guitar, and someone mimicking B.B. King's scotched-up rasp. *Soul Center III* may become an important step in Brinkmann's experiments to marry the sultriness of jazz to cold, Teutonic beats, but on its own merit the album pales beside its predecessors. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

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File Under

Funky cold muddling

R.I.Y.L.

Thomas Heckmann, Love Inc.

add multicultural flair. We can't raise our brows at the Enigma-esque mixture of contemporary baroque vocals and downtempo breaks in "Hymn 2" because they're contributed by highly regarded soprano Catherine Bott and drum 'n' bass luminary Photek. We can't poke fun at the smarm of "Wake Up In New York"—not just because of its touchy subject matter, but because lo and behold, Evan Dando's chocolate moaning warms its folk melancholy. On his 1996 debut album, *The Space Between Us*, Armstrong's Royal Music College credentials projected an anonymous quality that allowed Cocteau Twins' Liz Fraser to bloom into a brilliant intimacy; *As If To Nothing* so bears the stamp of nowness that to point out its saccharine romanticism would be akin to telling the Pope that he wears a funny hat. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT



**MICHEL CAMILO**

**Triangulo** Telarc

Folks cheered at last year's Miami Film Festival after witnessing pianist Michel Camilo's muscular trio onscreen in the documentary/concert flick *Calle 54*. Little wonder: Camilo, a native of the Dominican Republic, Cuban-born drumming dynamo Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez (also of Los Hombres Calientes) and American six-string contrabass master Anthony Jackson constitute a veritable Latin-jazz power trio. That identity is reaffirmed with *Triangulo*, the group's first full-length disc together: The three again prove themselves virtuosos deeply rooted in Afro-Caribbean rhythms, ripping on the intricate uptempo pieces and demonstrating the greatest

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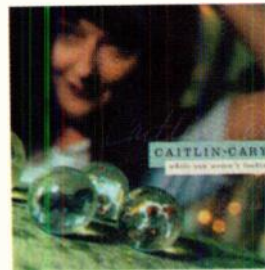
File Under

Afro-Caribbean jazz: beauty and the brawn

R.I.Y.L.

Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Danilo Perez, *Calle 54* soundtrack

sensitivity on lush romantic ballads. "Anthony's Blues," one of six tunes here penned by Camilo, is a prime example of the former, with the pianist and bassist locking together on sleek unison lines and then chilling out for Hernandez's polyrhythmic sizzle before burrowing deep into the funk-edged groove. Camilo finds inspiration in more traditional Cuban rhythms on "Descarga For Tito [Puentes]," a bright, high-energy track that embodies the spirit of the late percussionist and bandleader. Another Latin-jazz great, Dizzy Gillespie, is saluted with a rolling, subtly shifting version of the trumpeter's oft-recorded "Con Alma." Camilo also takes on "La Comparsa," giving new life to the familiar Cuban standard, topping its sticky rhythms with Technicolor piano chords and opening it up for some bracing improvisations. *Muy contagioso*. >>>PHILIP BOOTH



**CAITLIN CARY**

**While You Weren't Looking** Yep Roc

It must've required a coroner's constitution to put up with Ryan Adams's self-absorbed flawed-genius shtick for eight years, yet Caitlin Cary managed just that as *Whiskeytown's* singer/violinist, and did so with grace and class. She flaunts those same attributes on her first full-length solo effort. Moody and difficult in all the right ways, absorbing *While You Weren't Looking* from start to finish is an experience akin to coming in at the mellow front end of an afternoon beer binge that's bound to involve tears by dusk and some serious make-up sex come midnight. Cary's opportunistic lyrics blur the happy-sad dynamic ("I ain't found nobody yet, honey/ You know that you do just fine"), and her singing, relegated to little more than girlie window-dressing with *Whiskeytown*, has room to roam here—even if, at times, she sounds uncomfortably like Natalie Merchant. But the spacious, spunky full-band setting (including guest spots from Mitch Easter, the Jayhawks' Jen Gundersman and others) and the earthy, precise production of ex-dB Chris Stamey counter the overt preciousness of the Merchant-like "Shallow Heart, Shallow Water" and "The Fair." Elsewhere, Cary shows an unassuming command of urbane folk-rock ("Thick Walls Down," "Please Don't Hurry Your Heart," co-written with Adams), horn-splashed redneck soul ("Too Many Keys") and shimmering Phil Spector-ish pop ("Pony"), all while steering clear of the pesky alt-country stigma that helped sink her last band. >>>HOBART ROWLAND

Link

[www.caitlincary.com](http://www.caitlincary.com)

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Checking the alt-country baggage

R.I.Y.L.

Kelly Hogan, 10,000 Maniacs, Neko Case

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File Under

Another trip to Clinic

R.I.Y.L.

Radiohead's *Kid A*,  
Velvet Underground, Can

## CLINIC

Walking With Thee Domino

It's easy to see why Radiohead's been so supportive of fellow Brits Clinic from the opening track of *Walking With Thee*, "Harmony." The alluring tension induced by its spooky Rhodes-y drone, melodica wails and pleading vocals would fit comfortably on *Kid A*. But dig a little deeper into the album, draw the band's last release, *Internal Wrangler*, into your memory, and you'll find that Clinic's unfortunately making itself a bit of a one-trick pony—even if it is a good trick. The staccato vocal delivery of the second track, "The Equaliser," sounds almost directly lifted from

*Wrangler*, and the broken beats and gritty strums of the next song, "Welcome," keep that trend moving. That's not to say that *Thee* isn't an enjoyable walk; Clinic have an engaging esthetic mix of Britrock moods, Krautrock textures and punk-rock attitudes, and there's certainly a lot more edge to their output than most of the U.K.'s cuddlier recent exports. But the band would do well to take some tips about progression from Radiohead. While Clinic's far from outworn their welcome yet, delivering a third record shaped from the same cookie-cutter could certainly dull the outpouring of love they've gotten Stateside so far. On its own, however, Clinic's second LP is still a pleasant stroll worth taking. >>>NICOLE KEIPER



Link

www.cornershop.com

File Under

The tablas have turned

R.I.Y.L.

Clinton, Chemical Brothers,  
Talvin Singh

## CORNERSHOP

Handcream For A Generation

Wiiija-Warner Bros.

Four tracks into Cornershop's *Handcream For A Generation* is the Bachman-Turner Overdrive-esque rave-up "Lessons Learned From *Rocky I* to *Rocky III*." One lesson learned from the *Rocky* franchise: Sequels are rarely better than their predecessors. Acting accordingly, Tjinder Singh and company return, not with the long-awaited sequel to 1997's acclaimed curry-funk odyssey *When I Was Born For The 7th Time*, but with a startlingly different modus operandi. Cornershop just wants to make you dance, multicultural universe be damned. Tired of

being poster boys for indie-rock cross-culturalism, Singh's Punjabi predilections are largely absent from *Handcream*, and the insular *Remain In Light*-isms of his Brit bandmates have been disposed of in favor of dancefloor rapture. This newfound ecstasy can be good (the Rob Swift-scratchified "Wogs Will Walk," the bona fide disco smash "People Power"), it can be bad (the irritating pseudo-dub of "Motion The 11," the Chemical Brothers-y failed house experiment "The London Radar") or it can be simply overbearing (despite sizzling sitars and transcendent Noel Gallagher guitar, "Spectral Mornings" is a patience-trying 14 minutes long). Although tracks like "Rocky" embrace the band's frazzled rockist roots, big beats, airy house and disco sheen make it obvious Cornershop ain't itching to be *Born For The 8th Time*. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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CORNERSHOP



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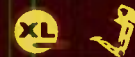
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## CUB COUNTRY

High Uinta High Jade Tree

Post-hardcore boys seem to love the country music these days—Mike Fellows of Rites Of Spring turns slouchy lo-fi meanderings out as the Mighty Flashlight, Rival Schools' Cache Tolman dishes solo country explorations as Utah Slim, and now, Jets To Brazil/Handsome man Jeremy Chatelain sets forth his own bit of twang as Cub Country. Country music's always been good for letting off emotional steam, so it does make some sense; but then, there's the fear that these could all go the way of Garth Brooks's Chris Gaines, where you wish they'd just stick with what they know.

Chatelain doesn't sound like he's posing with Cub Country, thankfully, but he doesn't ever sound quite at home, either. His singing voice is smooth and clean, his guitar playing precise and competent, which gives *High Uinta High* both an impressive air of professionalism and a slight lack of charm. "O Great Telephone" boasts a gorgeous chorus, and some of the best vocal moments on the record come when he reaches for a falsetto note and cracks a bit under the strain. It's nice to hear Chatelain stepping out from behind Blake Schwarzenbach's songwriting shadow (as he wrote a handful of great vocal hooks with Handsome), and much of *High* is solid, catchy country rock. But Cub Country's admittedly most charming as an idea, with the results being only slightly endearing. >>>RENEE FALK

Link

[www.jadetre.com](http://www.jadetre.com)

File Under

Post-hardcore takes a walk in the country R.I.Y.L.

Wilco, Whiskeytown, the Mighty Flashlight



## DEPARTURE LOUNGE

Too Late To Die Young Nettwerk America

Briton Tim Keegan performed under a morphing series of monikers before settling in with his Departure Lounge quartet. Through the name changes, Keegan remained typecast as a less whimsical, more fully orchestrated permutation of his onetime employer, Robyn Hitchcock, thanks to similar laconic vocal deliveries and melodic sensibilities. Perhaps the need to outrun Hitchcock's shadow drove Keegan to enlist French DJ Kid Loco to produce and heavily flavor *Too Late To Die Young*. It's a bold gambit that for the most part works. The most successful moments emerge when Kid Loco's electronica washes subtly embellish

Link

[www.departureloungemusic.com](http://www.departureloungemusic.com)

File Under

Guitar pop/electronica shotgun wedding R.I.Y.L.

James, the Beta Band, Robyn Hitchcock, Soup Dragons

Keegan's shimmering, melancholy tunes. Like Brian Eno's collaboration with U.K. band James on *Laid*, these highlights realize a stunning reinvention without discarding the past. Kid Loco occasionally dominates the soundscape and still hits paydirt so long as songwriting remains the centerpiece, as on the gorgeous "I Love You," which plays like a John Lennon piano ballad received through a ham radio. On a pair of instrumentals (the ambient chill-out "Tubular Belgians In My Goldfield"—say it quickly—and the psych jam "Coke & Flakes," featuring a guest spot by Hitchcock) Departure Lounge strays too far from the hooky elegance that remains its stock-in-trade. These missteps notwithstanding, *Too Late To Die Young* is a departure that won't leave you homesick for Keegan's earlier work. >>>GLEN SARVADY

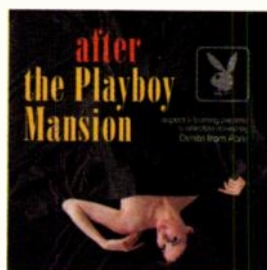
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## DIMITRI FROM PARIS

After The Playboy Mansion Astralwerks

The only way Dimitri From Paris's new release would be more opulent is if it were packaged with an actual issue of *Playboy*. His third DJ mix in two years (fourth, actually, if you count Razor & Tie's reissue of his 1997 *Mixmag* set) exudes the *Barbarella*-sized cheese-cake indulgence expected from the Parisian. Only now, there's more of it. Spread over two CDs, Dimitri organized the 25 tracks as though he were using Alice's mushroom as a blueprint: On one side, the "laidback" mix of midtempo R&B makes you chill, and on the other side, soulful house makes

Link

[www.astralwerks.com/dimitri](http://www.astralwerks.com/dimitri)

File Under

A Parisian in Bel Air

R.I.Y.L.

Ian Pooley, Fantastic Plastic Machine, Roy Davis Jr.

your ass quake with euphoria. Self-imposed constraints notwithstanding, *Mansion* sports amazing variety as Dimitri scrapes his crates for tunes from the past three decades. Though some familiar clubland luminaries show up (Lil Louis, Grace Jones, Blaze and Chaka Kahn), Dim's greatest strength is his hound's nose that sniffs out forgotten gems like TS Monk's ecstatic "Candidate For Love." At times, his enthusiasm comes at the cost of fluidity; he'll let a song ride through its duration before starting up another track. Still, his refined taste and infatuation with decadent funk are all the two discs need for cohesion. *After The Playboy Mansion* is 140 minutes calculated to elicit another round of "ooh la la"s for dance music's premier kitschmeister. >>>RICH JUZWIAK



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## EELSSOULJACKER



## EELS

Souljacker DreamWorks

With each passing Eels record, it's becoming more apparent that frontman E (a.k.a. Mark Oliver Everett) is going to do whatever he damn well pleases. The bent, fragile pop of *Beautiful Freak* gave way to the creaking, noisy despair of *Electro-Shock Blues*, which in turn morphed into the delicate acoustics of *Daisies Of The Galaxy*. With expectations fully confused, he delivers *Souljacker*, and this time he just wants to rock. A fresh sense of groove runs throughout, perhaps due to contributions of multi-instrumentalist and "funky Englishman" John Parish (Sparklehorse, PJ Harvey), who plays on

nearly every track. "Dog Faced Boy" announces Eels' intentions with growling baritone guitars, filthy beats and E hollering, "You little punks think you own this town!" "That's Not Really Funny" takes their standard samples-vs.-live percussion formula and detonates it with blasts of overdriven riffs and cartoony horns; with its chugging percussion and thundering fuzz, "What Is This Note?" is easily the loudest thing he's ever written. Those looking for a taste of the old Eels won't be disappointed, however: "Fresh Feeling"'s easygoing and extra-hummable chorus invokes the clean pop of *Daisies*, and the creepy atmospheres of "Bus Stop Boxer" and "World Of Shit" recall the wrist-slitting sentiments of *Electro-Shock*. We'll be expecting the salsa-funk record in 2004. >>>TOM MALLON

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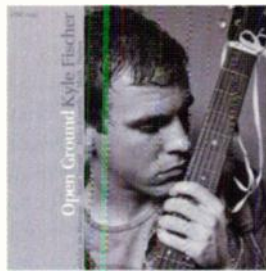
[www.eelstheband.com](http://www.eelstheband.com)

File Under

Gettin' down (in the mouth, that is)

R.I.Y.L.

Sparklehorse, Beck, Cake



## KYLE FISCHER

Open Ground Polyvinyl

Kyle Fischer is a founding member of Rainer Maria, a band whose poetic bent is reflected in its name's allusion to *Letters To A Young Poet* author Rainer Maria Rilke. Although it's Fischer's name on the cover, the presence of Rainer Maria collaborator Caithlin De Marrais suggests that this project is simply Rainer Maria by another name—a suspicion confirmed by the nature of the material inside. Here as with his band, Fischer's epigrammatic tunes are generally less precious and irrelevant than your average emocore lamentations. Fischer is, no doubt, a

sensitive boy, but his songwriting is a bit more shrewd and keenly perceptive than one might expect. "Kissing Cabernet," "Christopher Isherwood" and "The Slow Drag" are all examples of lyrics that quietly turn in on themselves, finding expanses of emotional terrain in a moment's reflection. De Marrais's main contribution to the event is her vocal work on "Too Soon To Know" and "Just One More Day." Her voice has a plaintive quality that adds to the emotional content of Fischer's lyrics, whereas his vocals often sound like he's struggling to stay in key. Neither of them have memorable voices, but then, their vocals fit so well with the overall D.I.Y. vibe of the album. In the midst of all this imperfection, there's something very right about *Open Ground*. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link

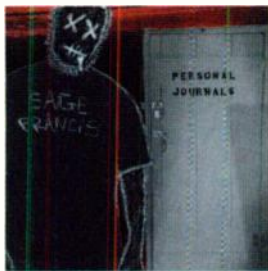
[www.rainermaria.com](http://www.rainermaria.com)

File Under

Rainer man

R.I.Y.L.

Paris, Texas, Braid, the Promise Ring



## SAGE FRANCIS

Personal Journals Anticon

In "Different," Providence's Sage Francis claims that by the end of *Personal Journals*, the listener will understand why he is unlike any other MC. For the most part, he achieves this, but whether that's a mark of distinction or just difference for difference's sake is sometimes debatable on this new record. Francis is drunk with language, his intoxicated stream of consciousness simply spilling out of his mouth. He claims that the writing here is a product of a "personal journalist 1968-2001," and like most jottings in journals, there's some revelation, some irrelevance. At

his best, Francis can be self-lacerating and darkly humorous; unlike most MC's, whose macho braggadocio is always part of the agenda, he's particularly vulnerable in his relations with women ("Specialist"). There are songs—some of the 19 tracks here are nothing more than concepts for a song or throwaways—that really do sound like random journal entries documenting Francis's quest for coherence and meaning in a world that often offers neither. Musically, the production focuses on live instrumentation augmented by tape loops and doses of dissonance. This makes for a vital backdrop for Francis's raw, revealing poetry on this challenging and, yes, different record. >>>KEN CAPOBIANCO

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[www.sagefrancis.com](http://www.sagefrancis.com)

File Under

Avant hip-hop

R.I.Y.L.

Aesop Rock, Kool Keith

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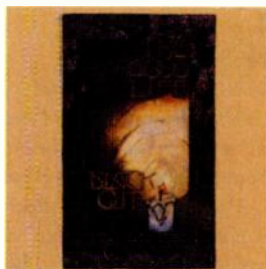
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**THE GOOD LIFE**

**Black Out** Saddle Creek

Tim Kasher is a busy man. Besides fronting the emphatically solid post-hardcore outfit Cursive, the singer/guitarist's second and more intimate project, the Good Life, has now come into its own as an equally important, yet stylistically divergent supergroup. On the follow-up to 2000's stripped-down pain-fest *Novena On A Nocturn*, Kasher and his band, which has links to Desaparecidos, Bright Eyes and the Faint, weave a sordid tale of a drunken night punctuated by numerous black-outs, giving a "concept record" feel to the disc. Amid instrumentation that shifts from solo guitar to lush full-

band workouts and even to electronic beat experiments, Kasher's breathy tenor is in fine form, and his lyrics are almost frightfully realistic and confessional. *Black Out* sees the narrator stumble through joy and pain, give up on just about everything, and eventually find himself laying face down on a bar motioning silently for a final drink without even the recollection of what started his problems in the first place. It seems like a bleak ride, but the music often manages to smile through the pain, making for an enjoyable experience that becomes more deeply affecting upon closer listens. It's safe to say that the Good Life has vaulted past side project status, and with material this strong, the group really has nowhere to go but up. >>>PETE D'ANGELO

Link

[www.saddle-creek.com](http://www.saddle-creek.com)

File Under

Moody introspection that still knows how to rock

R.I.Y.L.

Cursive, the Cure, Bright Eyes, Matt Pond PA



**THE HERBALISER**

**Something Wicked This Way Comes**

Ninja Tune

According to Blade, a guest rapper on their fourth release, the Herbaliser is "a band with will as the advisor." Certainly, this is simplifying matters as '70s soul and '80s hip-hop serve as obvious guides throughout *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. The record bumps and glides its way through 13 tracks masterminded by the Herbaliser's mainstays, DJ Ollie Teeba and bassist/beatmaker Jake Wherry. As on previous releases, Teeba and Wherry surround themselves with a host of skilled rappers and musicians, including an orchestra and a horn section. When all of these resources merge, like on the record's first track, "Something Wicked," which features a wailing vocal by Seaming To, the results are grandiose enough to make Ghostface Killah cower. The album, however, is far from being uniformly over-the-top; Teeba and Wherry have enough tact (and respect for old school hip-hop) to strip down their exceed tracks to leave plenty of space for the rhymes. The instrumental tunes fare just as well—the laidback groove of "Mr. Holmes" would be just another *Shaft* theme retreat if it weren't for the frenetic scratching and live, skittery drums. Clearly, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is the work of people who truly love and respect "urban" American music. Though British, the members of the Herbaliser understand that it's all about representin', and givin' it back. >>>RICH JUZWIAK

Link

[www.herbaliser.com](http://www.herbaliser.com)

File Under

Blunted on retro reverence

R.I.Y.L.

Nightmares On Wax, Portishead, Dan The Automator

ing an orchestra and a horn section. When all of these resources merge, like on the record's first track, "Something Wicked," which features a wailing vocal by Seaming To, the results are grandiose enough to make Ghostface Killah cower. The album, however, is far from being uniformly over-the-top; Teeba and Wherry have enough tact (and respect for old school hip-hop) to strip down their exceed tracks to leave plenty of space for the rhymes. The instrumental tunes fare just as well—the laidback groove of "Mr. Holmes" would be just another *Shaft* theme retreat if it weren't for the frenetic scratching and live, skittery drums. Clearly, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is the work of people who truly love and respect "urban" American music. Though British, the members of the Herbaliser understand that it's all about representin', and givin' it back. >>>RICH JUZWIAK

**THE COMP PILE** (OUR GUIDE TO COMPILATION CDS) BY CAM'RON DAVIS

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|                           |   |   |  |   |  |
| <b>TITLE</b>              | Rock Music—A Tribute To Weezer (Dead Droid)   | No Categories 5 (Ubiquity)  | A Tribute To Big Star (LunaSea)  | Barbeque Beets: Sunrise On A Rooftop In Brooklyn (theAgriculture) | The Amos House Collection, Volume II (Wishing Tree)                                  |
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| <b>SUMS IT UP</b>         | "Say It Ain't So" (Further Seems Forever)   | "Another Revolution" (As One)   | "Give Me Another Chance" (Susan & Brandy w/ Giftshop)                  | "SunRise" (Under The Sun)   | "Pretty Things" (the Gentle Waves)   |
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**DANIELLE HOWLE AND THE TANTRUMS**

*Skorborealis* Daemon

On the idiosyncratic "Swamp Song," Danielle Howle laments, "I wanna tell you but I just can't find the voice." Fortunately, that's never really been a problem for her. Although her notoriety stems from her starker acoustic solo work, she turns to hometown Columbia, S.C. cronies the Tantrums whenever she feels the urge to plug in. On *Skorborealis*, her third record with the trio, they remain a versatile if unremarkable backing band, but it doesn't much matter since the focus remains squarely on Howle's considerable vocal talents. Howle has a gift for inventive phrasing and a wonderful voice with a

dollop of Southern drawl, evoking images of a more down-home k.d. lang. Musical styles ricochet wildly across these 16 songs and 58 minutes. The opening tracks are easily the slickest Howle has recorded, and could comfortably coexist alongside contemporary country pop. The handful of compositions co-written with guitarist John Furr are barroom rockers that veer dangerously close to .38 Special territory. But the disc's most successful moments dispense with adornments, allowing Howle's voice and lyrics to dominate the folk-tinged proceedings. In less capable hands, such variety could smack of desperate fishing for a market niche, but on *Skorborealis* it's clear Howle and her band simply love a wealth of genres and refuse to be reined in. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link  
[www.daniellehowle.com](http://www.daniellehowle.com)  
 File Under  
 Unpretentious Southern  
 roots excursions  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 k.d. lang, Lone Justice,  
 the Reivers, Rebecca Gates



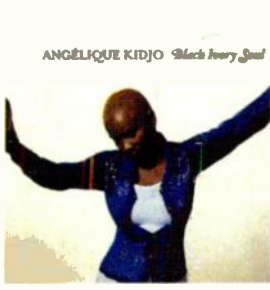
**IMPERIAL TEEN**

*On Merge*

If only the '80s had lasted 12 years longer, the keyboard-rich, hormone-high, decadent sound that has carried Imperial Teen into the new century wouldn't seem so kitschy. On their third record, *On*, the male/female vocals are breathy as Blondie, panting becomes percussion and clapping keeps the rhythm à la "Hey Mickey!" but it still feels as timeless as high-schoolers in lust. From the opening track, "Ivanka," the sound is streamlined and steamy, and layers of frenzied repetitions replace harmonies. Former Faith No More keyboardist Roddy

Link  
[www.imperialteen.com](http://www.imperialteen.com)  
 File Under  
 Teen love  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Blondie, the Faint, Redd Kross

Bottum founded the band in 1994 with former Sister Double Happiness/Dicks drummer Lynn Perko, and completed the current quartet with ex-Wrecks bassist Jone Stebbings and vocalist Will Schwartz. The andro-pop or bubble-grunge sound that they continue to brew preserves the edge of their past projects. Imperial Teen produced the new album themselves, with help from Steve McDonald of Redd Kross and that dog, veteran Anna Waronker. The band's history has equipped them with the elements to make a glammed-up and densely layered record. While lyrics like, "My hair used to be black/ It's white as a bone," may show their age, the grown-up Teens are still having a good time. >>>KARA ZUARO



**ANGELIQUE KIDJO**

*Black Ivory Soul* Columbia

Benin's Angelique Kidjo has been a force on the world music scene for over a decade now, mixing up the global rhythms and styles to generally great press. The problem, however, is that her albums have commonly seemed like products of calculation, not passion—especially 1998's *Oremi*, which took her deep into R&B territory. *Black Ivory Soul* fares better, connecting the black cultures of her native country with Brazil's north-eastern Bahia region. And in collaborating with Bahian songwriter/percussionist Carlinhos Brown on several tracks—like "Tumba," with its crisp, driving *axé*

rhythm—she really closes the distances between the continents. (Same too, "Ominira," co-composed with guitarist Vinicius Cantuaria.) "Afrika" proves to be a sophisticated samba hybrid powered by Kidjo's lush overdubbed harmonies, while the closer, a version of Serge Gainsbourg's "Ces Petits Riens," is a leftfield choice that works because of its sparse arrangement. The highlights, though, have to be her rootsy cover of Gilberto Gil's "Refavela," which transports the Rio ghetto to West Africa, and the reflective "Okambale," with its rippling kora lines. However, it's not all perfect: "Iwoya," a duet with the ubiquitous Dave Matthews, is musically anonymous, aimed quite squarely at a mainstream audience; and the title cut continues her flirtation with glossy R&B. But overall, the highs are higher, and the lows fewer and further between, making it the most complete and satisfying album of her career. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link  
[www.angeliquekidjo.com](http://www.angeliquekidjo.com)  
 File Under  
 Benin to Brazil and back  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Gigi, Marisa Monte,  
 Miriam Makeba

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**KLEENEX GIRL WONDER**

**After Mathematics** March

Sporting what might be the first-ever Parental Advisory label on an indie-pop release, *After Mathematics* literally wears its mastermind's sense of humor on its sleeve. The black and white warning is a sign of Kleenex Girl Wonder's (a.k.a. Graham Smith) taste for pushing boundaries, including a newfound affinity for hip-hop, made apparent on cuts like "The Intentional Fallacy," where he raps like Ice-T with a lisp. Rap, though, is but one genre that Smith simultaneously lampoons and celebrates on his fifth album. Many of his guitar-based pop tunes are accompanied by abstract

beats that sound like the work of a toddler Timbaland. While these ventures into electronic territory aren't misguided, their sophistication is questionable until the album's showstopper, "Everything Is Easy." The heartfelt tune bounces along tentatively before dissolving into a gorgeously authentic, Plone-esque IDM track. It's a rock/electronic combo that's as perfectly executed as any previous attempt (by anyone) to morph the genres. The more straightforward "If You Only Knew" is a power ballad that would have been power-pop schlock in less tactful hands. Smith's songwriting is consistently first-rate, though the production is sometimes so ragged that you'd think he considered low fidelity a virtue. No matter, *After Mathematics* isn't merely an enjoyable album—it is, track for vital track, a deliriously clever mix of silliness and skill. >>>RICH JUZWIAK

Link

www.marchrecords.com

File Under

An ingenious recess

R.I.Y.L.

Ween, Guided By Voices,

Princess Superstar



**KMFDM**

**Attak** Metropolis

Forget industrial music's often adolescent sturm und drang: Many who produce this aggressive, anti-corporate-rock music—Bill Leeb (Front Line Assembly), cEvin Key (Skinny Puppy) and Al Jourgenson (Ministry)—consistently push cutting-edge production into new places. KMFDM's remaining founder, Sascha Konietzko, has also ensconced himself in that category after 16 years of ball-busting rock riffs and rigid German drum programming, a fact evident on this 12th KMFDM album. After iconic frontman En Esch split the group in 1999, Konietzko and guitarist Tim Skold formed MDFMK with Drill warbler Lucia

Cifarelli, only to fold that project back into KMFDM. It's from these changes that *Attak* emerges, wherein Konietzko's facile studio techniques enable KMFDM's signature blaring guitars to command complete attention while creating ample room for Konietzko and Cifarelli's acidic vocal rants. Whether you enjoy Amen breaks and 303 acid squiggles married to vocals, "Superhero" is remarkable in how Cifarelli's voice goes from a wispy Jewel-like demeanor to Hanin Elias's feral screaming without muddying said breaks and squiggles. And while taking such a tack won't please older KMFDM fans looking for a return to the band's heavy-beat rock past (though the visceral guitars of "Dirty" and "Risen" feel ripped from 1993's *Naive*), Konietzko's continued attempts to express intense, dark human emotion through the industrial paradigm set KMFDM above much of the criticism aimed at the genre. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

Link

www.kmfdm.com

File Under

Unadulterated industrial rock

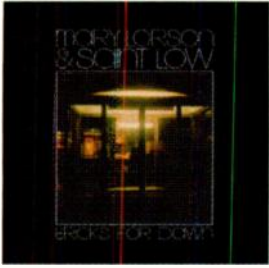
R.I.Y.L.

Front 242, Frontline Assembly,

Ministry



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**MARY LORSON AND SAINT LOW**

**Tricks For Dawn** SpinArt

Mary Lorson was the dulcet voice behind Madder Rose, her plaintive tone imbuing that band's early jangle pop, and later more shoegazey and electronic moments, with the tug of emotion. *Tricks For Dawn* is her second record as Saint Low, and here, that sense of emotion settles in for a long stay. Lorson sings just above a whisper over her own piano, light strings, acoustic guitar and other languorously played, warm-sounding instruments. It's affecting and a bit sexy, giving a plainspoken grace to lyrics that often address a mysterious and universal "you," the perfect blank

Link  
[www.spinartrecords.com/bands\\_marylorsan.html](http://www.spinartrecords.com/bands_marylorsan.html)  
 File Under  
 Sweet melancholy  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Walkabouts, Juliana Hatfield,  
 Judy Collins

onto which you can project your own angsty mess of a life. "The burning sugar smell of you in love with someone else," she sings on "Long Way Down," which features unobtrusive backing vocals from Evan Dando, with a confidently heartbroken tone that suggests she'd understand your shit, or better, would be amenable to listening to you recount it over a couple of drinks. It's a very alluring combination. It all ends with the spare dissonance of the title track, its filmic sense of narrative left hanging unresolved in the organic symbolism of some gentle, hissing rain. The melodies are lovely, and the production allows for outstandingly expressive performances all around, but sometimes records are best measured less by what they sound like than what they inspire. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON



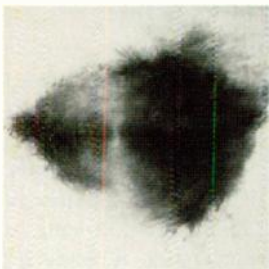
**MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD**

**Invisible** Blue Note

The baddest organ trio in the land again rockets along the space-funk continuum with *Invisible*, a blend of dirty soul-jazz, samples, loops and assorted oddities that elevate the music beyond the grooves. For this disc, the trio hit its Shacklyn Studio in Brooklyn for some good old-fashioned jamming, and then with producer Scotty Hard (Wu-Tang Clan, Cypress Hill), shaped things into more than a dozen song-sized snippets. Guests who help warp the sounds into a coherent and adventuresome mix include Afro-Cuban percussion player

Link  
[www.mmw.net](http://www.mmw.net)  
 File Under  
 Vital organ grooves  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Sex Mob, DJ Logic, Galactic,  
 Larry Young

Eddie Bobe and gearologist Danny Blume; the title track makes use of Antibalas's Afrobeat horn section, and then leaves the horns alone in an echo chamber as MMW disappears. Even when the trio is deep in the Hammond B-3 bag of Jimmys Smith and McGriff (as on the mostly straight-ahead "I Wanna Ride You"), MMW turns on a dime to move things into the ambient or hip-hop side, as with the loopy "Off The Table." Once again, John Medeski's organ moves are the dominant force, but on tracks like "Smoke," when Chris Wood's burbling bassline kicks things off and drummer Billy Martin (a.k.a. Illy B on his own DJ-driven projects) lays down the law, the extraordinary musical benefits of more than a decade playing together really shine. >>>BILL KISLIUK



**MIRAH**

**Advisory Committee** K

Mirah sings in a girlish voice that bespeaks her songs' bedroom roots but belies her fearlessness. Following her acclaimed 2000 debut, the Washington-based songwriter offers a second album with the same assortment of styles—folkie confessionals, jazzy cabaret pop, experimental digital rock. But *Advisory Committee* exhibits the growing boldness of her production; again assisted by longtime collaborator Phil Evrum from the Microphones, Mirah reaches for a sonic palette that's downright ambitious, given her songs' intimate, clearly lo-fi roots. She trusts them to

Link  
[www.kreccs.com/mirah](http://www.kreccs.com/mirah)  
 File Under  
 Ornate bedroom indie-pop  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Lisa Germano, early Liz Phair,  
 Cat Power

stand up to bold instrumentation, as on the rich, cinematic opener "Cold, Cold Water," which sports a panoramic Old West sound—galloping sound effects, timpani, strings—that suits the song's dramatic lyrics ("I saddled up my pony right/ And rode into the ghostly night"). One song later she's singing over echoey electronica, and the track after that sporting a close-miked acoustic guitar. Listening to Mirah, one imagines someone who despises categorization; it's hard to even call her songs folk-based, since the great, anthemic "Apples In The Trees" is rock to its core, all electric guitar and thudding beats. While it may take a listen or two to "get" Mirah, she definitely has her own sound, one that broadens the definition of lo-fi indie pop and proves gradually addicting. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY

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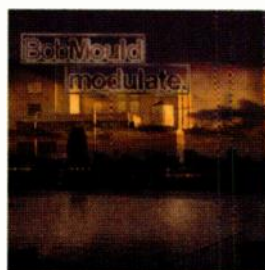
**THE MOONEY SUZUKI**

**Electric Sweat** Gammon

These days garage rock is less about practicing in the garage than it is about shopping for records at garage sales. Hidden behind Carole King's *Tapestry* and Billy Joel's *Piano Man* sits an old Small Faces album, and a young kid's life is forever changed. There's something in the primal thump and urgency of an under-produced record with tons of shocking reverb that immediately excites young minds and compels them to form bands. The New York City-bred Mooney Suzuki—named after two Can singers, Malcolm Mooney and Damo Suzuki—recorded

Link  
[www.themooneysuzuki.com](http://www.themooneysuzuki.com)  
 File Under  
 Garage days revisited  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 The Strokes, the Pretty Things,  
 the Who

their second album in Detroit, where they tapped the spirits of the MC5 and the Stooges (that's "TV Eye" spotted on the title track), and were crawling out of their cribs back when the Chesterfield Kings first reproduced the Rolling Stones' *Now!* Playing music nearly four decades removed usually means surviving on some bizarre revival circuit, but the Mooneys have enough real energy sparking their recordings to transcend the traditions they're upholding. "In A Young Man's Mind" packs the thunder of the early Who with its preening swagger, while "The Broken Heart" tackles the R&B ballad just as urban young punks like Them did back in their day. Must be a fluke of chemistry, but this bubblegum ain't losing its flavor on the bedpost overnight. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



**BOB MOULD**

**Modulate** Granary

After 19 years making some of the loudest, most melodic rock to ever not grace commercial airwaves, Bob Mould has decided to take his sound in a direction that's every bit as surprising as his second career writing pro-wrestling storylines: He's gone techno. Well, sort of. *Modulate*, the former Hüsker Dü and Sugar frontman's first new album since 1998's *The Last Dog And Pony Show*, is split between conventional power pop and bubbly electronic music. Unfortunately, Mould doesn't seem entirely comfortable with or committed to this world of loops and samples, and lightweight electronic tracks like

Link  
[www.bobmould.com](http://www.bobmould.com)  
 File Under  
 Bastard child of punk  
 and Eurodisco  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Sugar's *Copper Blue*,  
 Erasure's *Innocents*

"Rain" and "Lost Zoloff" lack the surefootedness of the album's more impassioned uptempo rockers. Mould's trademark torrent of guitar noise kicks off with "Slay/Sway," and "Soundonsound" scores with a chorus straight off his 1992 disc with Sugar, *Copper Blue*, while "The Receipt" proves that he still has a way with a surly kiss-off ("I took the highroad for too long and I still hate your favorite song/ So let there be no doubt what this one's all about"). Later this year, Mould plans to release an all-electronic album and an acoustic disc in the same vein as 1989's *Workbook*. He's mastered the latter with *Workbook*; it'll be interesting to see what he does with the former. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

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**THE ORIGINAL INSTRUMENT**

**The Original Instrument** Kracfive

Here's an exercise: Imagine a record made entirely of miniscule vocal samples (coughing, half-words, random vowels) strung together into sequences. Then imagine that it's good—you'd have *The Original Instrument*. Despite a formula that sounds like a recipe for IDM disaster, the four members of TOI (Christoph Graves, Noah Sasso, Joseph Miragliuolo and Reimer Eising, all regulars of the New Hampshire-based Kracfive collective) have created an album that challenges the notions of what electronic music should sound like and still remains listenable. The tracks

Link  
[www.kracfive.com](http://www.kracfive.com)  
 File Under  
 Short attention span theater  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Matmos, Aphex Twin, Autechre

on their debut swirl around the head like a half-formed dream one minute and pulse and splutter like Matmos at their best the next. Opener "Bop Me" sequences several women's voices into a tense, circular melody, while "Birds For Beginners" strings some scandalous samples of possibly pornographic origin into a bizarrely funky dance track (without beats, of course). The deliciously twisted "Heavens To Betsy" delivers the sound of Destiny's Child forced through an IDM strainer. Other experiments bend the human voice to previously unheard extremes: "Rosetta" and "Conversong" stretch single notes into four-minute drone pieces that would do Stars Of The Lid proud. The disc even includes a painstakingly transcribed "lyrics" sheet for the masochists out there. Sample lyric: "Dih doe I did doh I dihih/ Ih ih ih bwww." Deep. >>>TOM MALLON

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**PHANTOM PLANET**

**The Guest** Epic

It's easy to want to hate Phantom Planet—five Hollywood boys with movie/modeling money (drummer Jason Schwartzman acting in *Rushmore* and *Slackers*, singer Alex Greenwald strutting in Gap Commercials and the recent *Donnie Darko*) and fancy pedigrees (Schwartzman is Talia Shire's son and Francis Ford Coppola's nephew, bassist Sam Farrar is the son of John Farrar). But the truth of the matter? Phantom Planet is not a Hollywood vanity band. Sure, the bandmembers can't boast the trademark rock 'n' roll struggles, but Phantom Planet's second LP, *The Guest*,

doesn't come off at all like the poodle-rock you might imagine it to be. Schwartzman beats the living shit out of his drums, and his playing is inventive and precise; Greenwald's voice bounds like a pubescent Jeff Buckley with a little less torment; and overall the band's songs are strong, well-arranged modern-rock tracks. Producer Tchad Blake (Pearl Jam, Crowded House) polished the young men to a perfectly shiny gleam, and the hooks on *The Guest* are unavoidable. Sure, it gets a little derivative sometimes, and here and there they veer into cheese territory; but there's promise inherent in Phantom Planet that you can't deny—even if it'd be a lot more psychologically rewarding to cast aspersions. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

Link

[www.phantomplanet.com](http://www.phantomplanet.com)

File Under

Purebred pop

R.I.Y.L.

Weezer, Elvis Costello, Crowded House, the Outfield



**PIEBALD**

**We Are The Only Friends We Have**

Big Wheel Recreation

Piebald's sense of humor has always set them apart from their guitar-driven pop-rock peers—take the anthemic chorus of "The Monkey Versus The Robot," off the band's third longplayer, *We Are The Only Friends We Have*: "We have the best job ever/ Yeah we really got lucky/ We're nobody's robots/ We're nobody's monkey." The Boston quartet's not just one-liners and rock guitars, however: There's an underlying seriousness to frontman Travis Shettel's lyrics that leaves you obliged to sympathize and understand, the same way you'd listen

Link

[www.piebald.com](http://www.piebald.com)

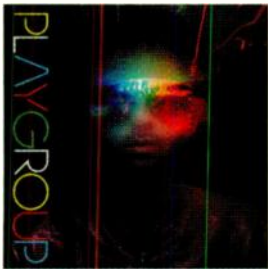
File Under

Revenge of the nerds

R.I.Y.L.

Ben Folds, the Promise Ring, Weezer, Hey Mercedes

to a child's lament about a bully at school. That undercurrent has only grown stronger here, with some tracks altogether free of gags, dealing instead with issues of desperation and longing. This time around, Piebald's playing and songwriting are tighter than ever, too. Producer Paul Kolderie (Radiohead, Pixies, Morphine) whips a slick, defined and dynamic performance out of the band, with noticeable additions to their standard guitar/bass/drums instrumentation: layered effects, bongos, piano, Moog, trumpets, synthesizers, hand claps, organs and even a chorus of children. Choruses that won't leave your head, driving basslines and almost mathematical beats that still leave you clapping and snapping your fingers—this is wuss-rock at its finest, only with a quirky side. >>>CHRIS ENRIQUEZ



**PLAYGROUP**

**Playgroup** Source-Astralwerks

Trevor Jackson wears his Rolodex on his sleeve. *Playgroup*, his upbeat collection of nuevo-retro club tracks, features collaborations with some of the contacts he's made as a producer/remixer for U2, U.N.K.L.E. and Massive Attack, among a host of others. So we get to hear Bikini Kill/Le Tigre's Kathleen Hanna's turn as a dancefloor diva, plus other unlikely and seamless contributions from Edwyn Collins (Orange Juice), Roddy Frame (Aztec Camera), Joi (Lucy Pearl) and acid house abstract rapper KC Flightt. The styles vary, as is often the case with these producer-led projects, but the feel

of these tracks is consistent: Whether it's a dancehall version of Paul Simon's "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" or the Tom Tom Club and Grandmaster Flash rhythm collision in "Fatal," all work as part of a protracted dancefloor seduction. Adding to this randy vibe are tracks—like disc-opener "Number One" and the mid-disc interlude "Surface To Air"—that are essentially inventive reworkings of gold-chain-and-chest-hair funk. Hanna's "Bring It On" ventures further into the '80s, starting with an off-kilter reggae sample, then boiling down its rhythm into propulsive new wave-y thump that drops out entirely to accentuate the adorable break in her yelp. There's nothing to be ashamed of here, but the disc does leave you feeling a little dirty, which for many, is the essence of pleasure. >>>MEL CARNEY

Link

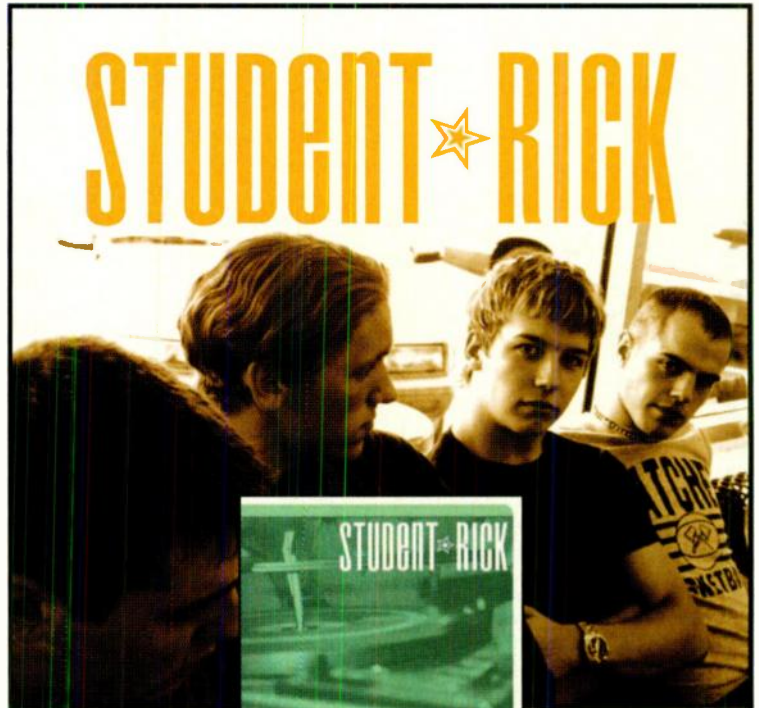
[www.astralwerks.com](http://www.astralwerks.com)

File Under

I see you baby

R.I.Y.L.

Groove Armada, Basement Jaxx, Jimi Tenor



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Gritty hip-hop

R.I.Y.L.

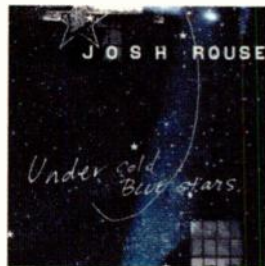
Gang Starr, Afu-Ra, Mr. Lif

## REKS

**Along Came The Chosen** Brick

Boston hip-hop artists have struggled to break out nationally and get beyond underground notoriety. While MC's like EDO.G, Mr. Lif and Akrobatik have opened doors, REKS may be the rapper to kick it wide open, as his *Along Came The Chosen* heralds a fresh, fervent new voice. REKS delivers the whole package: Throughout the 17-song set, he blends external and internal rhymes with clever wordplay, his flow is tight, his observations keen and his versifying as crisp as a Halloween morning. With the Soul Searchers producing most of the tracks, REKS

doesn't stray far from boilerplate hip-hop content, strutting about his skills and reflecting on life in urban America. But "Final Four" (featuring Boston MC Esoteric and Shabaam Sahdeeq among others) is inventive and free of playa-hating, "Skills 101" boasts superior scratching from DJ Faks One and some of the disc's fleetest rhymes, and the language on "Fearless" is coiled, smart and free of excess verbiage. The best cut is the introspective and almost mournful "Science Of Life II," where REKS and Alias from the OVM posse take a look in the mirror while trying to find their place in the world—it's an extraordinary song and the pinnacle of this often-startling debut. >>>KEN CAPOBIANCO



## JOSH ROUSE

**Under Cold Blue Stars** Rykodisc-Slow River

Josh Rouse has, from the very start, been a very accessible songwriter. He favors clarity over obscurity, and flashes a bit of groove while he's at it. The thing that's so appealing about *Under Cold Blue Stars*, Rouse's third record for Rykodisc, is the way producer Roger Moutenot has taken a hand in bringing out the melodicism that's always been a key facet of Rouse's sound. Nick Drake's songs had that same quality, though his innate melodic foundation was frequently overlooked as critics contemplated the weight of his lyrical statements. Here, the sheer musicality

of Rouse's work is in full bloom. On "Nothing Gives Me Pleasure," Moutenot surrounds Rouse's catchy chorus with a subtle array of instrumental voices, adding tremendous sonic breadth to the tune. "Christmas With Jesus" is a cool lyric couched in an equally engaging arrangement that provides the real hook for the song. The title track glides along on a lilting melody (underwritten by a nicely syncopated bit of drumming from Darren Jessee, late of Ben Folds Five) and layered sounds brushed on like an oil painting. The dealbreaker here, however, is in Rouse's songcraft—it's never been better, and a well-chosen match with Moutenot's production hipness results in the best record Rouse has ever tracked. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link

[www.joshrouse.com](http://www.joshrouse.com)

File Under

Singer-songwriter musicality

R.I.Y.L.

Matthew Sweet, Elliott Smith,

Doug Hoekstra





**RYE COALITION**

**On Top** Tiger Style

For their first release on NYC's Tiger Style Records, Rye Coalition have scaled down their jerky rock attack for a more straight-ahead, but no less abrasive, guitar-driven approach. The disc is similar to their first two Gern Blandsten releases, *He Saw Duh Kaht* and *The Lipstick Game*, but instead of the stop-and-start pyrotechnics that propelled those records, the Steve Albini-produced *On Top* goes for a more direct path that shows off the band's classic-rock influences. It's still a sleazy rock 'n' roll misadventure, and from the over-distorted Zeppelin-esque riffs to the

bizarre Tom Waits vocal style on "Freshly Frankness," the Jersey City quintet rarely even stops to catch its breath. The dissonant guitar work that has distinguished their previous efforts is still there, and this time around they also squeeze some bluesy grooves into their massive wall of sound. Vocalist Ralph Cuseglio screams his way through every number like a man pushed too far over the edge, and his twistedly humorous lyrics paint a picture of hard-rocking thugs who could punch a nun and find it completely laughable. Rye Coalition are still making completely original-sounding and outrageously heavy music, and while they may not like you all that much, their unrepentant approach will still leave you grateful for the whoopin' they deliver. >>>PETE D'ANGELO

Link  
[www.tigerstylerrecords.com](http://www.tigerstylerrecords.com)  
 File Under  
 Straight-up crazed rock 'n' roll  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Hot Snakes, AC/DC,  
 the Jesus Lizard



**SCHATZI**

**Fifty Reasons To Explode** Mammoth

Now that the Fat Wreck Chords-led pop-punk revolution of the early '90s has all but died, ample space has been cleared for an entirely new brand of teenage rebel music. Chain wallets and cheap hair dye have given way to tight jeans and T-shirts, and kids these days seem to be taking themselves far more seriously. That's right, people, we're talking about emo. Love it or hate it, it's the musical choice of many a troubled adolescent, and as evidenced by the recent success of bands like Jimmy Eat World and Saves The Day, music-industry big wigs have started to take notice.

That said, the time is just right for Austin's Schatzi to be releasing its sophomore full-length, *Fifty Reasons To Explode*. The 13-track disc is full of well-produced pop-punk that has just as much in common with NOFX and Lagwagon as it does with Jimmy Eat World and Braid. The heavily syncopated guitar parts and tight, intricate drumming provide sufficiently interesting groundwork for what the kids will really latch on to: catchy-as-hell vocal melodies and harmonies courtesy of Schatzi's team of singer/guitarists, Monte Williams and Chris Kyle. By combining lively, almost danceable beats with lyrics that don't insult the intelligence of potential listeners ("Gladys," "Death Of The Alphabet"), Schatzi should be able to stand its ground among the genre's heavy hitters. >>>MIKE CONKLIN

Link  
[www.schatzi.net](http://www.schatzi.net)  
 File Under  
 Emo's just a club in Austin  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Jimmy Eat World, Hey Mercedes,  
 Saves The Day



**SEAWORTHY**

**The Ride** Jetset

It's rare that a band's name directly corresponds to the content of the music that they produce, but such is the case with Athens, Georgia's Seaworthy. Consisting of Macha frontman Josh McKay and a few guest vocalists (including Haco of Japanese art-rockers After Dinner), Seaworthy creates the aural equivalent of an underwater dream, complete with samples of waves crashing and sonar-like cymbal pings. *The Ride* is missing the Eastern influences and textures that sent Macha's *See It Another Way* to the top of the college-radio charts in 1999, opting to exchange exotic for more

forcefully hypnotic sounds. With the exception of Haco's velvety falsetto on "The Day," the sparse, whispered vocals on *The Ride* simply add another sonic layer to the ominous journey. Swirling, atmospheric effects and heady keyboards dominate the album as each song leaks into the next, the rhythms pulsating insistently with various clicks and clacks. The album ends with a two-part opus ("The Ride") that features the album's only discernable vocals, surrounded by rolling waves and pounding, gloomy piano. Drawing on the sounds of the ocean for a band you call Seaworthy verges on shtick, but *The Ride* comes beguilingly close to representing the power and stunning beauty of the sea. >>>ALEX NAIDUS

Link  
[www.jetsetrecords.com/bands/seaworthy](http://www.jetsetrecords.com/bands/seaworthy)  
 File Under  
 Yar!  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Mogwai, Macha, Sigur Rós

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skating club

## SKATING CLUB

**Skating Club** *Wishing Tree*

Calling a sailboat in Boston Harbor home had quite the tangible effect on Skating Club mainman Aubrey Anderson—listening to SK's self-titled debut, you can't help but paint an image of sitting on the edge of a dock, haphazardly flicking your toes over the tops of the water and staring off at an end-of-summer sky. A florid comparison, yes, but Skating Club is all about mood—from the gallons of reverb on Anderson's guitars to the miles of echo on the drums—so a picture of the album's atmosphere is altogether more accurate than a simple breakdown of influences

and instrumentation. At its core, Skating Club does fish in the same pool as moody bands like Low and Ida, all slow and gentle melodies with breathy vocals floated on top, but Anderson never gets lost in melodrama or overly weepy. And while the album does have a cohesive mood, Anderson's tendency to experiment with different timbres—say, lacing a syrupy guitar with a light digital squall, or casting some Rhodes piano plinks between his phrases—keeps things hypnotizing, rather than snooze-inducing. Skating Club is surprisingly comfortable with brevity, too—most songs clock in at around three minutes—something not generally part of the slowcore canon. But SK has a tighter grasp on pop than most in that club, too, which makes them miserable in an irresistible way. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

Link

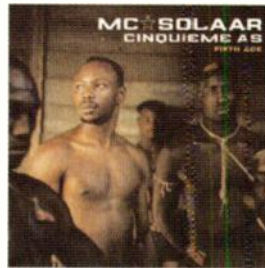
[www.skatingclub.com](http://www.skatingclub.com)

File Under

Hypno-slowmo-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Red House Painters, Low, Ida,  
Simon & Garfunkel



Link

[www.solaarsystem.net](http://www.solaarsystem.net)

File Under

Le hip, le hop, tu don't stop

R.I.Y.L.

Guru, Le Flow 2, Akhenaton

## MC SOLAAR

**Cinquieme As** *Elektra*

For over a decade, MC Solaar has been the de facto ambassador of hip-hop en français, a Gallic godsend among acid-jazz connoisseurs and a patron saint among relatively hip college French teachers who love to rock his 1994 Serge Gainsbourg-sampling hit "Nouveau Western" on the last day of class. Although known mainly for relaxed jazz-rap and some late '90s trip-hop experiments, Solaar's fifth album, *Cinquieme As* (translated: *Fifth Ace*), is a decidedly brasher outing, building his always luminous and percolating flow over an orchestral platform influenced

by the economical beats of DJ Premier and DJ Muggs. The updated production can be heavy-handed, but Solaar expands his musical palette into some scintillating creative detours. In "Hasta La Vista Mi Amor," Solaar rocks another language completely incomprehensible to American listeners over some sputtery electronic castanets. "Baby Love" is a steamy love jam (made all the sexier by being in *le langage de l'amour*) simmering with Zapp-y vocoders and an oh-so-2001 two-step breakdown. But most brazen is the lush "Solaar Pluere" ("Solaar Weeps"), which should prove to be a pretty acrimonious number to anyone who understands French. If not, then a handful of English words like "Satan," "apocalypse" and "fuck" should get the point across nicely. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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<http://cdbaby.com/etikemic>

<http://etikemic.com>



Link

[www.omarsosa.com](http://www.omarsosa.com)

File Under

Mad, mad world music

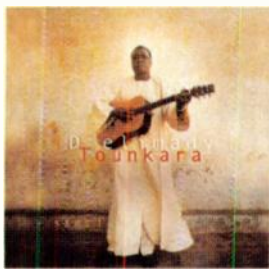
R.I.Y.L.

John Santos, Airto Moreira,  
Pancho Quinto

## OMAR SOSA

**Sentir** *Otá*

Omar Sosa brings the world together without really throwing a party. On his eighth disc, the Cuban-born pianist and composer taps the rhythms of North Africa and Latin America, and tosses in a few rushes of spiritually driven beat poetry to get North America in his world-jazz mix. It is an exotic but familiar blend for Sosa, who pulled a similar feat on the livelier *Prietos* last go 'round. But this time Sosa doesn't add any horns to infuse his world-jazz stew with melody. Built on the urgent and earthy bata drums, maracas, the three-stringed guembri played by the Gnawa people of Morocco, and Sosa's own extremely percussive, splintered Cubop piano stylings, there is too little to leaven the tribal rhythms. Cuban-born Yoruba singer Martha Gallaraga's voice is powerful if not terribly warm, though she and Sosa weave quiet beauty into the stirring ballad "Tres Notas En Amarillo." Other tracks that offer highlights are the dancing "Rojo y Negro" and "Monte Blanco." But even there, Sosa's rap tends to explore mildly evocative alliterations and rhymes without throwing down fresh insights. *Sentir* means to touch or feel, and Sosa, who has lived in Ecuador and Northern California before decamping to Spain, touches all corners of the globe with his sounds. He just doesn't quite bring them together. >>>BILL KISLUK



## DJELIMADY TOUNKARA

**Siguei** Indigo

One of the most powerful guitar players alive, Djelimady Tounkara steps out from his role as lead guitarist of Mali's venerable Super Rail Band with his first solo disc. This acoustic project showcases Tounkara's mastery of the traditional trilling, blustery music associated with the griots—musicians and praise singers who have been a fixture of West Africa's Manding culture for centuries. There are vocalists and African instruments in the session, but Tounkara's crisp, eloquent guitar riffing gets free reign, evoking the sounds of the kora (21-string harp), ngoni (banjo-

like spike lute) and wooden-slatted balafon. Deep Manding tracks like "Mandé Djeliou," "Sigui," "Amary Ndaou" and "Yemaryo" explore Tounkara's personal take on the august classical repertoire, full of dark tonalities and dramatic flourishes. "Gnima Diala" delivers the more lilting, Latin-tinged sound of Guinean music, while "Samakoun" ventures boldly into flamenco territory. There is no hint of calculated, producer-driven crossover gimmickry here. Listeners familiar with the bluesy Ali Farka Toure will find Tounkara's playing more stately and deliberate, but also more technically dazzling. Long one of the best kept secrets in African music, Tounkara's rippling, passionate guitar approach is ripe for discovery with *Siguei*. >>>BANNING EYRE

Link

[www.label-bleu.com](http://www.label-bleu.com)

File Under

Mali bumbaye

R.I.Y.L.

Ali Farka Toure,

Super Rail Band, S.E. Roge



## JOHN TRUDELL

**Bone Days** Daemon

Native American activist and spoken-word artist John Trudell is never going to make another album like his debut, *AKA Grafitti Man*. The sheer fury that drove that release—his belief that the U.S. government killed his wife and child—has dissipated, and his world vision isn't as blinkered. While he still states the plight of his people clearly on "Hanging From The Cross" ("Indians are Jesus/ Hanging from the cross") and "Crazy Horse," he's moved on from hatred, focusing on love and sensuality ("Undercurrent" and "Takes My Breath") and broken women ("Nothing In Her Eyes" and "Lucky Motel"). He's a man

who's finally come to terms with the suffering in his life: "My heart doesn't hurt anymore/ But my soul does, maybe/ That's what souls are for, to/ Take the hurt the heart can't take" (from "Doesn't Hurt Anymore"). Musically, Trudell's palette remains much as it's been for a decade—the Native singing of Quiltman and the atmospheric electric guitars of Mark Shark and Billy Watts powering the tracks, with Trudell's intonations so even and controlled they're sometimes chilling. Now that his rage has been tempered by time, and he can look with clarity outside his own corner of the world, John Trudell's great role, perhaps, is to use his words and wisdom to help others bear the weight of the world. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

[www.johntrudell.com](http://www.johntrudell.com)

File Under

Native American words

of wisdom

R.I.Y.L.

Robbie Robertson, Floyd Red

Crow Westerman, Joy Harjo



## THE WALKMEN

**Everyone Who Pretended To Like Me Is Gone**

Star Time International

The Walkmen are risen from the ashes of Jonathan Fire\*Eater, a New York buzz band that briefly epitomized New York cool when the Strokes were still in private school. The Walkmen team JF\*E's guitarist, drummer and keyboard player (Walter Martin, who forgoes his former passion for "96 Tears"-style organ in favor of lighter sounds) with two friends from the Recoys, and they're as art-damaged as they are song-happy. "They're Winning" is a droning two-minute vamp with enigmatic vocals and barely any chord changes; the song's

single dimension is typical of about half of *Everyone Who Pretended To Like Me Is Gone*. "The Blizzard Of '96" and "French Vacation" also stay in one place, but it's a pretty cool place, full of eliding vocals, tinkling keyboards, and ringing, repetitive guitars. Better yet are the more structured and energetic songs that dominate the disc's second half. "We've Been Had," "That's The Punch Line," and especially "Rue The Day" and "I'm Never Bored" sound like classic post-punk singles, with memorable melodies rooted in 154-era Wire and Brecht-Weill cabaret ballads. For better or worse, Hamilton Leithauser's vocals have an edgy detachment that's not far from the knowing sneer of the Strokes' Julian Casablancas, but all involved insist any similarities are coincidence, not a scene. Think of the two bands as kissing cousins of the new New York cool. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

[www.thewalkmen.com](http://www.thewalkmen.com)

File Under

The new New York

R.I.Y.L.

Jonathan Fire\*Eater,

the Strokes, B.R.M.C., Magazine

"Their five man cacophony will rip your heart out"

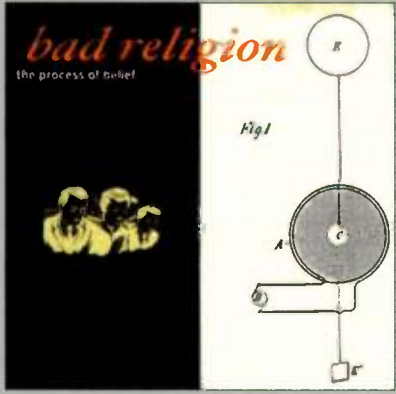
- Aquarian

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# TOP 75



**BAD RELIGION**  
THE PROCESS OF BELIEF  
(EPITAPH)

**#1**

## 5 YEARS AGO

### PAVEMENT

Brighten The Corners (Matador-Capitol)

### BUILT TO SPILL

Perfect From Now On (Warner Bros.)

### BJÖRK

Telegram (Elektra)

### HELMET

Aftertaste (Interscope)

### LOST HIGHWAY

Soundtrack (Nothing-Interscope)

## 10 YEARS AGO

### LUSH

Spooky (4AD-Reprise)

### SOCIAL DISTORTION

Somewhere Between Heaven And Hell (Epic)

### ROLLINS BAND

The End Of Silence (Imago)

### LIVE

Mental Jewelry (Radioactive)

### TEENAGE FANCLUB

Bandwagonesque (DGC)

| ARTIST                                | ALBUM                            | LABEL                     |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 BAD RELIGION                        | The Process Of Belief            | Epitaph                   |
| 2 ELBOW                               | Asleep In The Back               | V2                        |
| 3 ZERO 7                              | Simple Things                    | Quango-Palm               |
| 4 THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS               | Come With Us                     | Astralwerks               |
| 5 JOEY RAMONE                         | Don't Worry About Me             | Sanctuary                 |
| 6 TANYA DONELLY                       | Beauty Sleep                     | 4AD                       |
| 7 UNWRITTEN LAW                       | Eiva                             | Interscope                |
| 8 EELS                                | Souljacker                       | DreamWorks                |
| 9 CLINIC                              | Walking With Friends             | Domino                    |
| 10 MATES OF STATE                     | Our Constant Concern             | Polyvinyl                 |
| 11 JOSH ROUSE                         | Under Cold Blue Stars            | Slow River                |
| 12 THE SUNSHINE FIX                   | Age Of The Sun                   | Emperor Norton-Kindercore |
| 13 ALKALINE TRIO/HOT WATER MUSIC      | Split EP                         | Jade Tree                 |
| 14 BILLY BRAGG AND THE BLOKES         | England, Half English            | Elektra                   |
| 15 DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE                | The Stability EP                 | Barsuk                    |
| 16 SOUNDTRACK                         | The Royal Tenenbaums             | Hollywood                 |
| 17 CORNELIUS                          | Point                            | Matador                   |
| 18 DRESSY BESSY                       | Sound Go Round                   | Kindercore                |
| 19 LAMBCHOP                           | Is A Woman                       | Merge                     |
| 20 NEIL HALSTEAD                      | Sleeping On Roads                | 4AD-Beggars Group         |
| 21 THE ANNIVERSARY                    | Your Majesty                     | Vagrant                   |
| 22 PHANTOM PLANET                     | The Guest                        | Epic                      |
| 23 CRACKER                            | Forever                          | Back Porch-Virgin         |
| 24 SOUNDTRACK                         | I Am Sam                         | V2                        |
| 25 THRICE                             | The Illusion Of Safety           | Sub City                  |
| 26 LIARS ACADEMY                      | No News Is Good News             | Equal Vision              |
| 27 SOUTH                              | From Here On In                  | Kinetic                   |
| 28 JOHN SCOFIELD                      | Uberjam                          | Verve                     |
| 29 DAMIEN JURADO AND GATHERED IN SONG | I Break Chairs                   | Sub Pop                   |
| 30 REVEREND HORTON HEAT               | Lucky 7                          | Artemis                   |
| 31 SNEAKER PIMPS                      | Blood Sport                      | Tommy Boy                 |
| 32 HEFNER                             | Dead Media                       | Too Pure-Beggars Group    |
| 33 VARIOUS ARTISTS                    | Rock Music: A Tribute To Weezer  | Dead Droid                |
| 34 NINE INCH NAILS                    | And All That Could Have Been     | Nothing                   |
| 35 HANK WILLIAMS III                  | Lovesick, Broke & Driftin        | Curb                      |
| 36 PIEBALD                            | We Are The Only Friends We Have  | Big Wheel Recreation      |
| 37 THE MENDOZA LINE                   | Lost In Revelry                  | Misra                     |
| 38 STEREO TOTAL                       | Musique Automatique              | Bobsled                   |
| 39 X-ECUTIONERS                       | Built From Scratch               | Loud                      |
| 40 DE LA SOUL                         | AD! Bignia                       | Tommy Boy                 |
| 41 KASEY CHAMBERS                     | Barbicides And Brickwalls        | Warner Bros.              |
| 42 CUB COUNTRY                        | High Unto High                   | Jade Tree                 |
| 43 SEAN NA NA                         | My Majesty                       | French Kiss               |
| 44 VARIOUS ARTISTS                    | Funky 16 Corners                 | Stones Throw              |
| 45 LAWRENCE ARMS                      | Apathy And Exhaustion            | Fat Wreck Chords          |
| 46 90 DAY MEN                         | To Everybody                     | Southern                  |
| 47 BRENDAN BENSON                     | Lapalon                          | Startime International    |
| 48 SOUNDTRACK                         | Six Feet Under (I.S.T.)          | Universal                 |
| 49 GET UP KIDS                        | Eudora                           | Vagrant                   |
| 50 DISTILLERS                         | Sing Sing Death House            | Hellcat-Epitaph           |
| 51 ANDREW W.K.                        | I Get Wet                        | Island                    |
| 52 THE MIGHTY FLASHLIGHT              | The Mighty Flashlight            | Jade Tree                 |
| 53 BREAKING PANGAEA                   | Canon To A Whisper               | Undecided                 |
| 54 DAVID KILGOUR                      | A Feather In The Engine          | Merge                     |
| 55 DESAPARECIDOS                      | Read Music, Speak Spanish        | Saddle Creek              |
| 56 FELIX DA HOUSECAT                  | Kittent And Their Glitz          | Emperor Norton            |
| 57 AZURE RAY                          | November                         | Saddle Creek              |
| 58 STEPHIN MERRITT                    | Ebon & Charley                   | Merge                     |
| 59 MOUNTAIN GOATS                     | All Hail West Texas              | Emperor Jones             |
| 60 NITIN SAWHNEY                      | Prophecy                         | V2                        |
| 61 WILLIE NELSON                      | The Great Divide                 | Lost Highway              |
| 62 CHUCK E. WEISS                     | Old Souls & Wolf Tickets         | Rykodisc                  |
| 63 ELECTRELANE                        | Rock It To The Moon              | Mr. Lady                  |
| 64 CANCER CONSPIRACY                  | The Audio Medium                 | Big Wheel                 |
| 65 THE SCOOTERS                       | I Can See Your House From Here   | Aer-O-Naut                |
| 66 MIRAH                              | Cold, Cold Water                 | K                         |
| 67 ROSIE THOMAS                       | When We Were Small               | Sub Pop                   |
| 68 THE SOUND OF URCHIN                | You Are The Best                 | RCA                       |
| 69 ED HARCOURT                        | Maplewood                        | Heavenly                  |
| 70 SLOAN                              | Pretty Together                  | Murder (Canada)           |
| 71 THE DETACHMENT KIT                 | They Raging, Quiet Army          | Self-Starter              |
| 72 STARSAILOR                         | Love Is Here                     | Capitol                   |
| 73 VERMONT                            | Calling Albany                   | Kindercore                |
| 74 CRANES                             | Future Songs                     | Instinct                  |
| 75 ATARI STAR                         | And Other Smaller Brighter Words | Johann's Face             |

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. This rotten world's gonna chew you up, la la...

# LOUD ROCK TOP 25



|    |  |                |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1  | <b>BURNT BY THE SUN</b><br>Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution | Relapse        |
| 2  | <b>HATEBREED</b><br>Perseverance                                 | Universal      |
| 3  | <b>ENTOMBED</b><br>Morning Star                                  | Koch           |
| 4  | <b>POISON THE WELL</b><br>Tear From The Red                      | Trustkill      |
| 5  | <b>BORKNAGAR</b><br>Empiricism                                   | Century Media  |
| 6  | <b>KING DIAMOND</b><br>Abigail II: The Revenge                   | Metal Blade    |
| 7  | <b>BOLT THROWER</b><br>Honour, Valour, Pride                     | Metal Blade    |
| 8  | <b>MEGADETH</b><br>Killing Is My Business                        | Loud           |
| 9  | <b>CARNAL FORGE</b><br>Please...Die!                             | Century Media  |
| 10 | <b>LOST PROPHETS</b><br>Thefake:soundofprogress                  | Columbia       |
| 11 | <b>BENUMB/PIG DESTROYER</b><br>Split EP                          | Robodog        |
| 12 | <b>CANNIBAL CORPSE</b><br>Gore Obsessed                          | Metal Blade    |
| 13 | <b>BLACK LABEL SOCIETY</b><br>1919 Eternal                       | Spitfire       |
| 14 | <b>HEAVEN SHALL BURN</b><br>Whatever It May Take                 | Lifeforce      |
| 15 | <b>HEADSTRONG</b><br>Headstrong                                  | RCA            |
| 16 | <b>FIVE POINTE O</b><br>Untitled                                 | Roadrunner     |
| 17 | <b>DREAM THEATER</b><br>Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence          | Elektra        |
| 18 | <b>GWAR</b><br>Violence Has Arrived                              | Metal Blade    |
| 19 | <b>SEVENDUST</b><br>Animosity                                    | TVT            |
| 20 | <b>BAD RELIGION</b><br>The Process Of Belief                     | Epitaph        |
| 21 | <b>ROB ZOMBIE</b><br>The Sinister Urge                           | Geffen         |
| 22 | <b>LOCK UP</b><br>Hate Breeds Suffering                          | Nuclear Blast  |
| 23 | <b>NINE INCH NAILS</b><br>And All That Could Have Been           | Nothing        |
| 24 | <b>REMEMBERING NEVER</b><br>Suffocates My Words To You           | One Day Savior |
| 25 | <b>PEACH GB</b><br>Giving Birth To A Stone                       | Volcano        |

# RPM TOP 10



|    |  |                |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1  | <b>CHEMICAL BROTHERS</b><br>Come With Us       | Astralwerks    |
| 2  | <b>KOSHEEN</b><br>Resist                       | Kinetic        |
| 3  | <b>DEEPSKY</b><br>In Silico                    | Kinetic        |
| 4  | <b>NITIN SAWHNEY</b><br>Prophecy               | V2             |
| 5  | <b>FREESTYLERS</b><br>Pressure Point           | Freskanova     |
| 6  | <b>ZERO 7</b><br>Simple Things                 | Quango-Palm    |
| 7  | <b>PARKS AND WILSON</b><br>Painting On Silence | Bliss          |
| 8  | <b>FREDDY FRESH</b><br>Music For Swingers      | Brooklyn Music |
| 9  | <b>D:FUSE</b><br>People                        | V2             |
| 10 | <b>APOPTYGMA BERZERK</b><br>Harmonizer         | Metropolis     |



# JAZZ TOP 10

|    |  |              |
|----|--|--------------|
| 1  | <b>JOHN SCOFIELD</b><br>Uberjam                            | Verve        |
| 2  | <b>MATTHEW SHIPP</b><br>Nu Bop                             | Thirsty Ear  |
| 3  | <b>DAVID BERKMAN</b><br>Leaving Home                       | Palmetto     |
| 4  | <b>RENEE ROSNES</b><br>Life On Earth                       | Blue Note    |
| 5  | <b>MOSE ALLISON</b><br>The Mose Chronicles, Volume Two     | Blue Note    |
| 6  | <b>BOBBY PREVITE</b><br>Just Add Water                     | Palmetto     |
| 7  | <b>LYNNE ARRIALE TRIO</b><br>Inspiration                   | TCB          |
| 8  | <b>PAT METHENY</b><br>Speaking Of Now                      | Warner Bros. |
| 9  | <b>NORAH JONES</b><br>Come Away With Me                    | Blue Note    |
| 10 | <b>THIEVERY CORPORATION</b><br>Sounds From The Verve Hi-Fi | Verve        |

# HIP-HOP TOP 25



|    |   |                       |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| 1  | <b>X-ECUTIONERS</b><br>Built From Scratch         | Loud                  |
| 2  | <b>ONRY OZZBORN</b><br>Alone                      | BSI                   |
| 3  | <b>WU-TANG CLAN</b><br>Iron Flag                  | Wu-Tang-Epic          |
| 4  | <b>NAS</b><br>Stilmatic                           | Columbia              |
| 5  | <b>DE LA SOUL</b><br>AOL Bionix                   | Tommy Boy             |
| 6  | <b>TONY TOUCH</b><br>"Capicu"                     | Tommy Boy             |
| 7  | <b>DILATED PEOPLES</b><br>Expansion Team          | ABB-Capitol           |
| 8  | <b>BLACKALICIOUS</b><br>"Paragraph President"     | Quannum-MCA           |
| 9  | <b>ASHERJ AND BLUE BLACK</b><br>Soon Come         | 7 Heads               |
| 10 | <b>OUTKAST</b><br>Big Boi & Dre Present Outkast   | Arista                |
| 11 | <b>THE COUP</b><br>Party Music                    | 75Ark                 |
| 12 | <b>DUNGEON FAMILY</b><br>Even In Darkness         | Arista                |
| 13 | <b>PRINCESS SUPERSTAR</b><br>Is                   | Rapster-K7            |
| 14 | <b>LUDACRIS</b><br>Word Of Mouf                   | Def Jam               |
| 15 | <b>SOUNDTRACK</b><br>State Property               | Roc-A-Fella-Def Jam   |
| 16 | <b>CYPRESS HILL</b><br>Stoned Raiders             | Columbia              |
| 17 | <b>CORNEL WEST</b><br>Sketches Of My Culture      | Artemis               |
| 18 | <b>MAJOR</b><br>Concrete Miggas                   | ABB                   |
| 19 | <b>DEPT. OF REC.</b><br>Raising Illatropolis (EP) | Arrakis               |
| 20 | <b>JAY-Z</b><br>The Blueprint                     | Roc-A-Fella           |
| 21 | <b>JOYO</b><br>Sweet Angels                       | Quannum               |
| 22 | <b>JAY-Z</b><br>MTV Unplugged                     | Arista                |
| 23 | <b>AESOP ROCK</b><br>Daylight EP                  | Def Jux               |
| 24 | <b>FAT JOE</b><br>Jealous Ones Still Envy         | Terror Squad-Atlantic |
| 25 | <b>PHAR CITY</b><br>"Skilz Part 2"                | Dolo Mic              |

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters. No trackin' Slayer this time. Damn.

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

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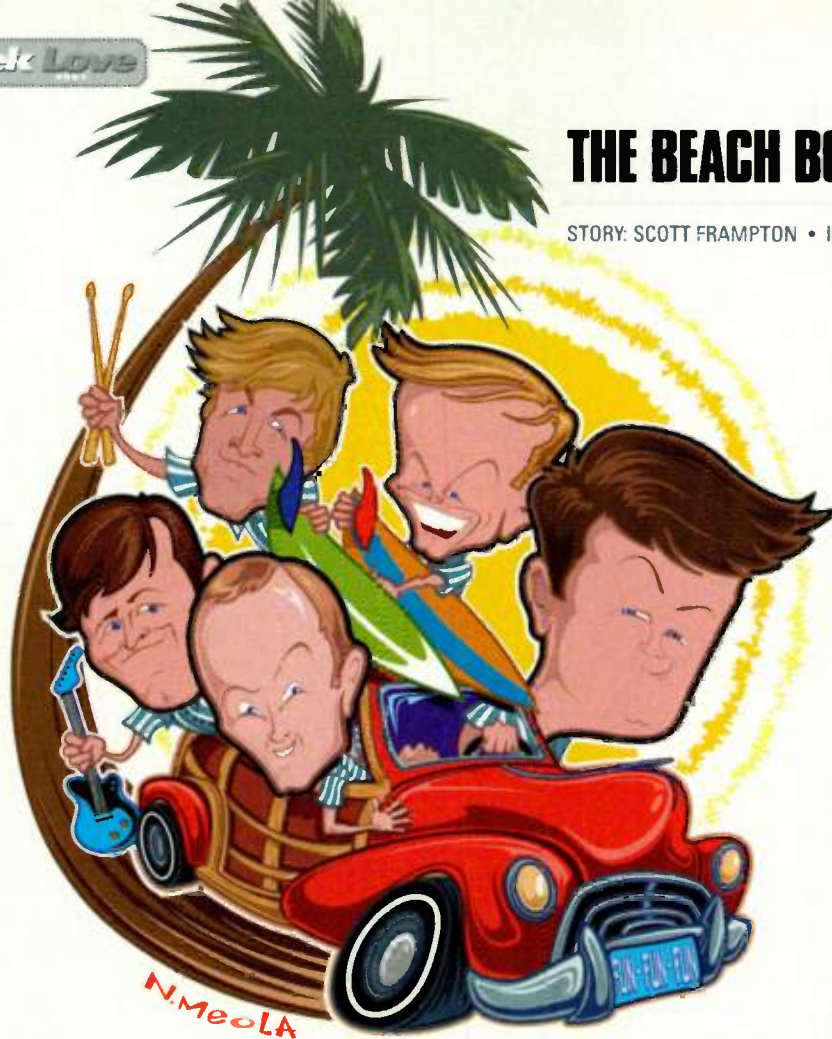
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# THE BEACH BOYS

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA



**B**each Boys inspire future rock writer. Stay tuned for more blockbusters like “Emo Kid To Wear Chunky Glasses And Sweater” or “Rapper Boasts Of Wealth, Prowess.”

Certainly, the Beach Boys’ influence on rock artists and those who write about them has been well documented. But that’s the Beach Boys of *Pet Sounds*, a record deserving of its rep as brilliant, visionary popcraft. But there’s also the Beach Boys of the matching candy-stripe shirts singing in tight harmonies about cars and surfing, which is still quality pop music, if a bit corny. And then there’s towheaded me, early in my grade-school career, creating stage sets and pantomime instruments from my set of Giant Tinkertoys to lip-synch to the Beach Boys’ *Wow! Great Concert*.

The guitars—medium-length red tube into the side of single-hole gray disc for acoustic, five-hole disc for electric—looked more like banjos, I knew. The mic stands were more successful: long green tubes inserted into the center of a gray disc, with a gray coupling piece a decent approximation of a Letterman mic on top. My backline was made up of the box the Tinkertoys came in, leftover pieces and sofa cushions. This is how I spent Saturday afternoons, miming what was coming out of the hi-fi to my left, facing an audience made up of the marks left in the carpet by my mother’s industrial-sized vacuum cleaner.

The songs included early Beach Boys hits like “Fun, Fun, Fun,” “Little Deuce Coupe,” and “I Get Around,” as well as covers of Jan And Dean’s “Little Old Lady (From Pasadena),” which certainly made sense, and of “Monster Mash” and the Rivington’s “Papa-Oom-Mow-Mow,” which didn’t. (The album was a part of a two-record set called *High Water*, by the way, joining *Wow!* with *Good Vibrations* in a gatefold sleeve with generic photos of waves and sand, making the whole thing even more tawdry.) If my taste is foretold in any of this, it’s in the way that the melodies sawed against

the screech of the crowd and the hiss of an old stylus weighted with a nickel taped to the top—15 years later, and that’s *My Bloody Valentine*. Musically, though, I was as affected by my dad’s power tools and the sound of race cars circling a dirt track as by these classic American pop tunes. Lyrically, it’s a different story.

I never separated the tales of driving around in your hot rod with the idea of going onstage to sing about it. For all I knew, the Beach Boys were a *Buckaroo Banzai*-like all-star team of car racers, surfers and singers. From our little South Jersey house bordered in front by a busy two-lane and in back by a dusty farm, “I’m getting bugged driving up and down the same old strip/ I gotta find a new place where the kids are hip” may as well have been Luke Skywalker whining about going into Toshi Station to pick up some power converters. My pretending to play those songs was less a desire to be onstage or make music, but to join in the fantasy of that world. Music had just started to be my way out of a life I already wasn’t so comfortable in.

I didn’t really listen to the Beach Boys again until my senior year of college, when a friend who counted it among his favorite records gave me *Pet Sounds* (a used copy of a Dutch pressing, continuing the theme of low-rent introductions to the band). I loved it, but that’s far from the point here; I can’t say that the memories came flooding back or that I felt some grand connection to weekend afternoons spent without outsized plastic building toys and an imagined life with a band of hard-driving, surfing musicians. By then, my escape into music was permanent. Listening to *Pet Sounds* in my squalid apartment near the Rutgers campus, I sunk into the record’s sweet melancholy, and for a while I was home.

Scott Frampton gets around, indeed, as the supreme overlord Editor-In-Chief of CMJ New Music Monthly.



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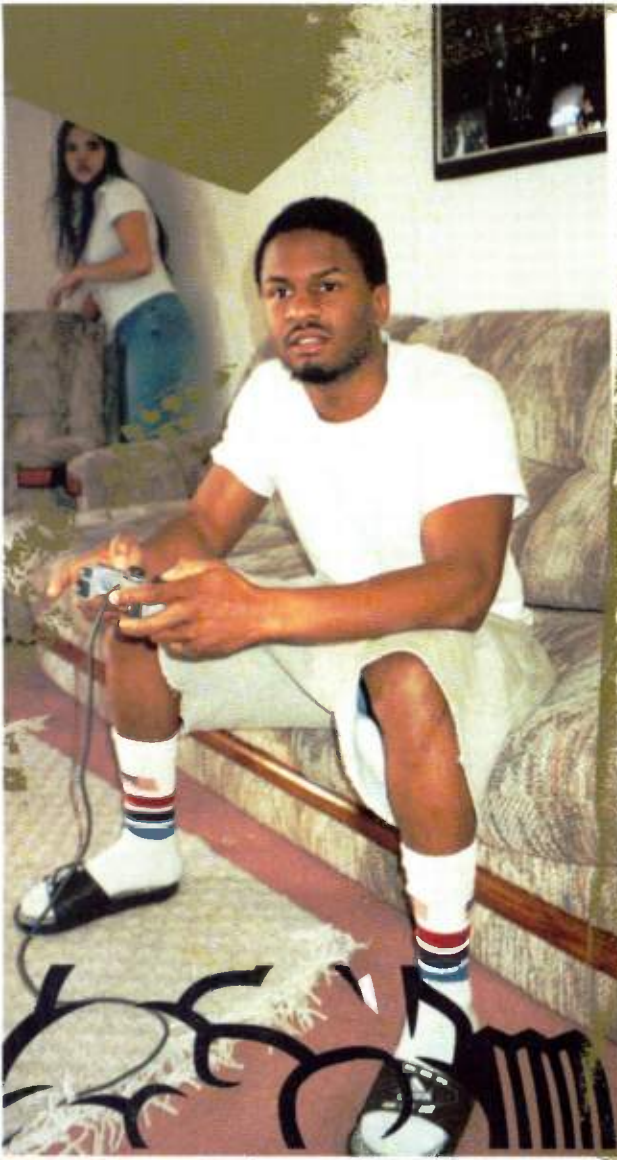
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