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 BALDWIN

Super Furry Animals

Buzzo: "My First Baboon Bone" **48 REVIEWS**

The Promise Ring

May 2002
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ISSUE NO. 101
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BREEDERS. JAZZANOVA. JSBX. JACK DANCERS' SPEAK & SPELL FROM HELL. LOCALZINE DOWN UNDER.



S L A S H



Preston Strout,
Snowboard Team Rider



WILCO



JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION



SIR MIX-A-LOT



NINA NASTASIA

WILCO 30

Jeff Tweedy hemorrhages bandmembers and was publicly flogged by his former record label for the supposedly anti-commercial direction of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, but he's learned that outgrowing your friends and associates isn't always such a bad thing. Scott Frampton finds out that breaking up is easy to do.

JAZZANOVA 24

They've been pigeonholed as "Nu Jazz," but the six members of Jazzanova would really rather be known as a hip-hop act. Bill Werde resists pointing out the obvious flaws in their band-naming logic.

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS 26

Calling the Super Furry Animals "cinematic" is no longer just rock-writer bullshit: For *Rings Around The World* they've gone Technicolor, creating a DVD with a Surround-Sound mix of the album and videos for every single song. Richard M. Juzwiak watches them teeter on the edge of bankruptcy.

JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION 28

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion have made another great record. So, what's your point? Scott Frampton tries to get them to bare the *Fang*.

THE PROMISE RING 38

The Promise Ring were everyone's favorite emo whipping boys until a brain tumor and a desire to grow led them to everything from symphonic pop to dancehall. Dylan Siegler waits for the rest of emo to stick its head in the microwave.

ON THE VERGE 18

It's ladies' night (well, mostly): Denali, Nina Nastasia, Mirah, Soul Hooligan.

ON THE CD 35

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QUICK FIX 12

The Breeders's Kim Deal spends a whole decade buying socks, Bitforms help you see sound, the Melvins' King Buzzo lives in a house of horror, Mark Eitzel puts you on the couch, Jack Dangers plays with toys and Luther Wright rebuilds *The Wall*. Out of hay.

LOCALZINE 22

Contrary to popular belief, Sydney, Australia is not overrun with kangaroos. There's egg on our faces!

GEEK LOVE 66

Nick Marino says "F The BS" with Sir Mix-A-Lot. Amen, brother.

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Expressway to numskull

I feel compelled to write after having read Mr. Schupbach's letter regarding Ryan Adams [Feb '02 issue]. Who cares if Ryan Adams is a conceited numskull? Unless Mr. Shupbach lives or works with him, what's the issue? In my opinion Mr. Shupbach is obviously a numskull himself, which is why I won't waste my time trying to explain the value of Ryan Adams's material and songwriting ability. Adams's work is a welcome and refreshing change from the norm! Perhaps Mr. Shupbach's money would be better spent on a subscription to *Teen People* and the latest from Mandy Moore or Britney Spears. Certainly their "music" will be easier for him to understand. Mr. Shupbach, you need to get over it!

William R. Meyer Jr.
wilray2@webtv.net

I've said it before: Some of my favorite musicians are lousy people, and vice versa. Sometimes, a personality becomes so objectionable that it distracts from the music, but anyone looking for friends in their record collection is doomed for heartbreak. —ed.

A Ryan shame

A reader wrote in trashing Ryan Adams, calling him "boring, derivative [and] cliché-ridden," and you replied that he might get an argument on that. Well, there's no eye-of-the-beholder with this. A cliché is a cliché, and derivative art isn't hard to spot. Is this Adams fellow cliché-ridden or not? Which one of you do I trust? I haven't heard his music, but based on his bland name, bland look and bland style, I'm going to assume it's your magazine that's misleading us, and not your more observant readers.

Peter Etc
thetapedeck.com

Like Jello, there's always room for argument. Like this: Is making a point of the immutability of a cliché a cliché in itself? I mean, is the firebrand who vociferously declaims all that in music doesn't pass muster on a self-defined originality meter any less a stock character than Ryan Adams? There are folks who like Adams's take on what could be considered classic song forms, and find what he does with those songs to be entertaining and creative. There are others for whom such references instantly taint the music as tired or cliché. Just like changing your birthname into something more transgressive and less "bland"—not exactly a new idea, etc., etc. —ed.

The following are responses to a letter printed in the February '02 issue from Celeste A. C. Gaver, who took exception to the service the magazine provided at the end of last year. —ed.

Why so impatient? *CMJ New Music Monthly* is a magazine, for fuck's sake. If you don't like their schedule delay, don't buy it. Go out and try and find another magazine that does what *CMJ* does so well. You'll be searching a long time. *CMJ* has never been about what show is coming up. *CMJ* is still a year to five years ahead of the industry and the public anyway. And if this is your only source for hearing about music, you don't work hard enough on your own, or you've got too many expectations for *CMJ*. There is no way they should have to defend themselves or take your petty, insipid insults. Sometimes, businesses have to take certain measures to stay in business. I, for one, would rather have them cut back or delay issues temporarily so that they stay in business for the long run. And if you can't understand how the events of 9/11 would interrupt their business and give *CMJ* a valid reason for having a disruption, you are as myopic as the clan running our government. You want to complain about something, complain about our open-ended war against "terrorism," as selective as it may be. Complain about drilling for oil in Alaska, when conservation and alterations by corporate automobile companies would do better, go farther and save more. Complain that Morris the Cat is being genetically reproduced. You want to complain about *New Music Monthly*, take it somewhere else. And do a little maturing when you go.

Andrew Rogers
Chicago, Ill.

Tell Celeste A. C. Gaver to put down the "fucking coffee!" It's music, not *The New York Times*. One of the great things about music is that if it's good, it's timeless. It's not when it happened, but how it made you feel when it did happen. See what MTV has done! Don't beer-bong a good Cabernet... take your time, enjoy it, share it, think about it, savor it. Fans like her are the demise of rock music today. Instant gratification—if you don't like it in two riffs, it's no good, move onto the next band. *CMJ* for me is the first date of a relationship. If there is any hint of chemistry, I buy the album and explore the music. There is no way you can do all of that in a month... sometimes even two months. Hey Celeste, have you ever heard of foreplay? Thanks *CMJ*, for challenging me every month to find a great new band/artist.

Bobbie James
james_bobbie@hotmail.com

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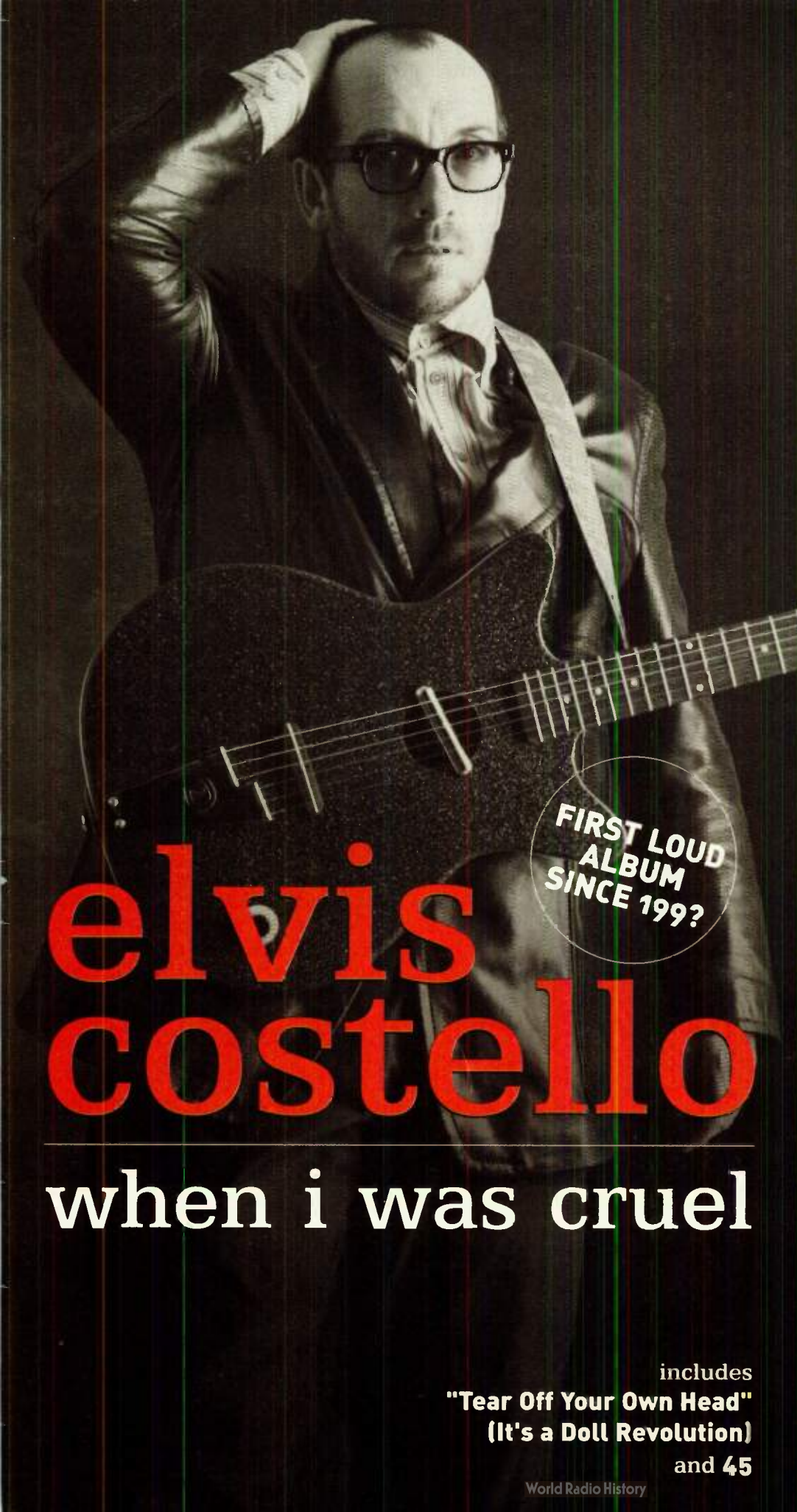
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Morris the Cat and foreplay both brought up in our defense? I know this mag is reaching the right people. —ed.



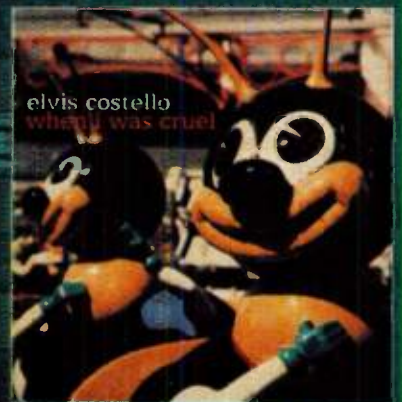
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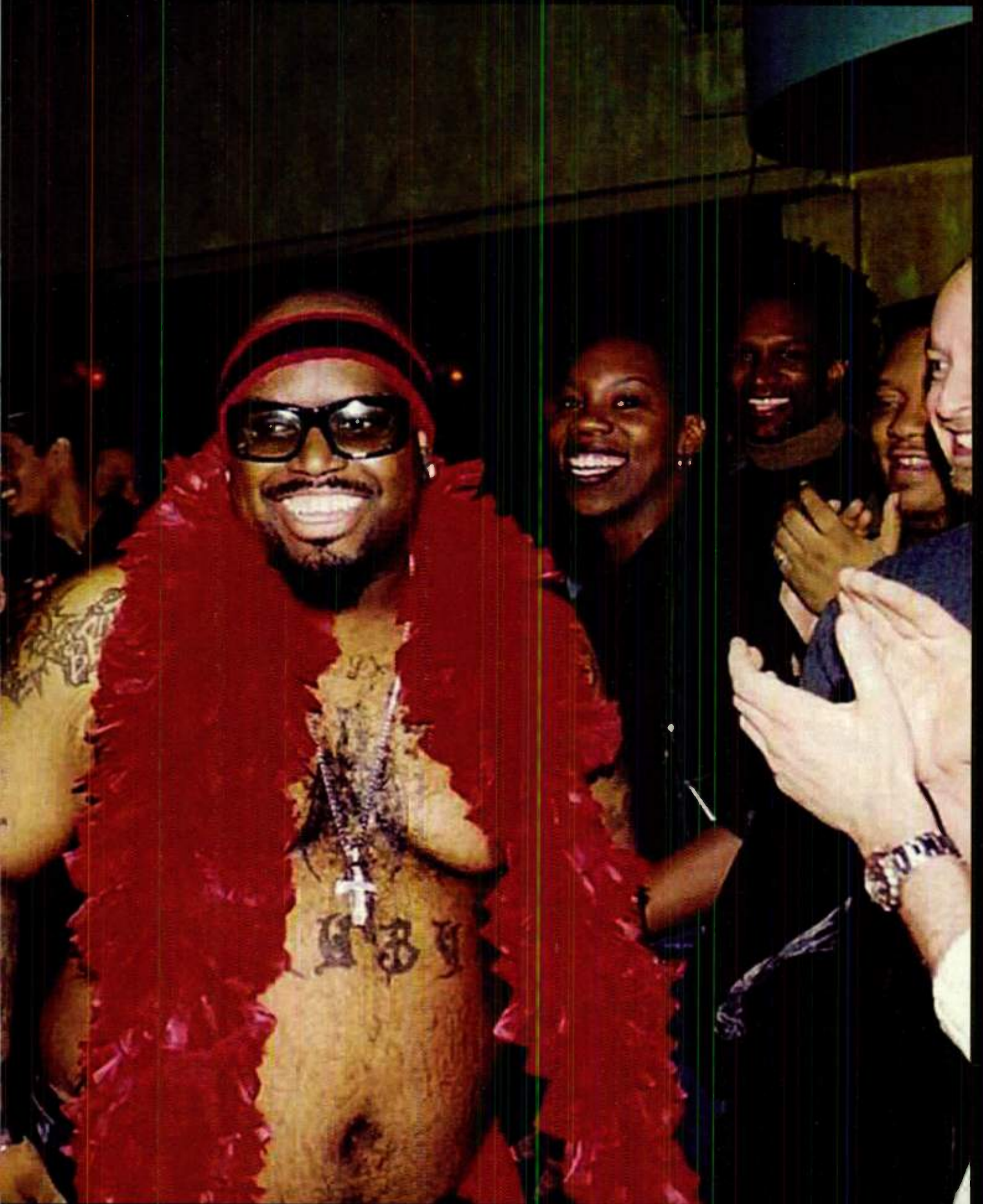
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Cee-Lo

Hey, it's not every recently solo MC who can pull off black taffeta pants and a feather boa. Cee-Lo (ex-Goodie Mob) is seen here living large at a coming out party for his *Cee-Lo Green And His Perfect Imperfections* (Arista).

Photo: Johnny Nunez





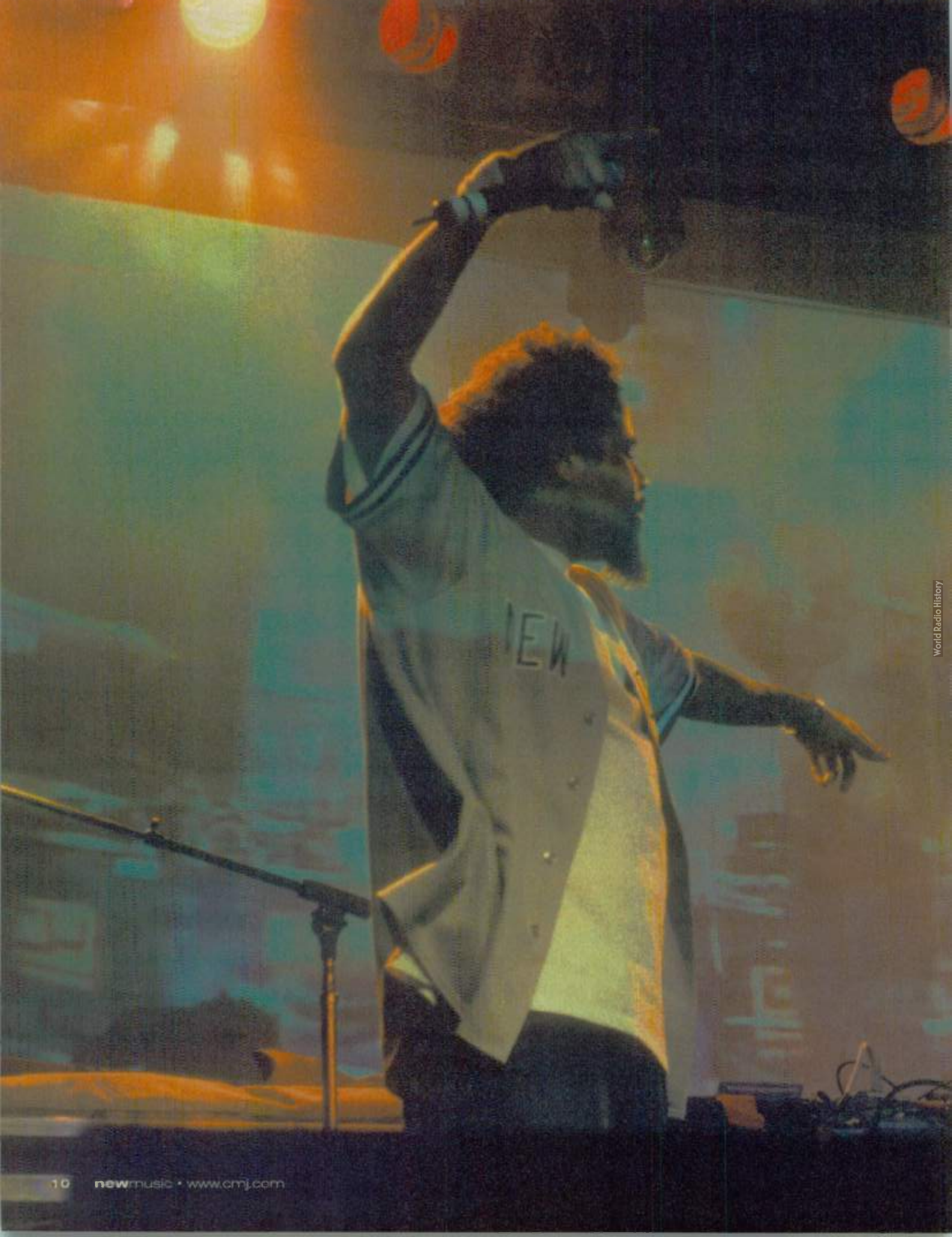
Mudhoney: Here we present photographic proof that Mudhoney is back in the studio—and back on Sub Pop. (Actually, just trust us on the Sub Pop part.) Look for a record on store shelves in late summer.

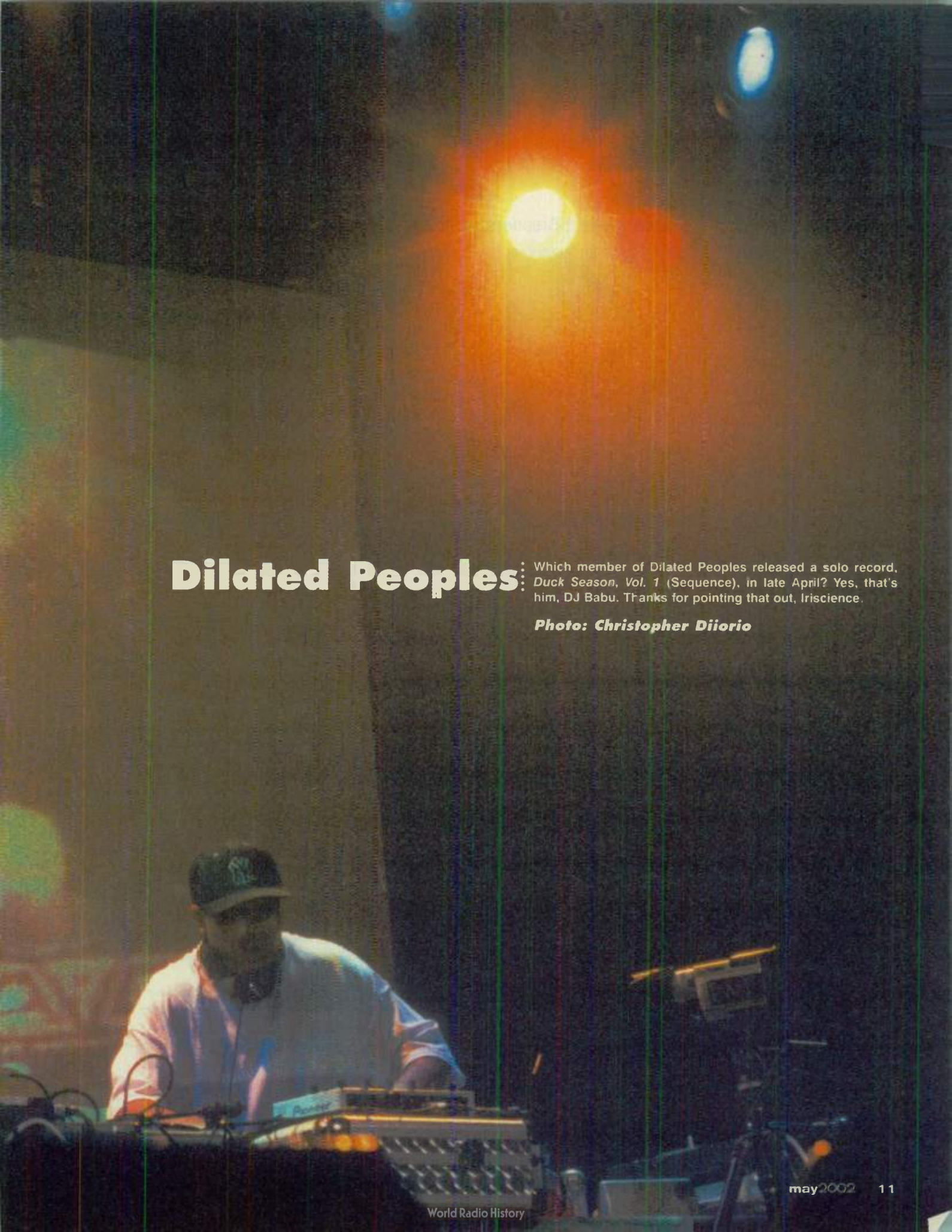
Photo: Lance Hammond





World Radio History



A photograph of a DJ performing at a turntable. The DJ is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a dark baseball cap. The scene is dimly lit, with a prominent warm orange light source in the upper center and a blue light source in the upper right. The DJ is looking down at the turntable, which has a glowing blue light on it. The background is dark with some faint patterns.

Dilated Peoples : Which member of Dilated Peoples released a solo record, *Duck Season, Vol. 1* (Sequence), in late April? Yes, that's him, DJ Babu. Thanks for pointing that out, Iriscience.

Photo: Christopher Diiorio

Answer Me

So it's been nine years since the last Breeders record. Kim Deal has been busy. Buying socks.



PIETER M. VAN HATTAM

You've been sampled by the Prodigy and Mirwais.

I have to OK everything, so that was fine. And I like what Mirwais did with that song ["Disco Science"] on the *Snatch* soundtrack. I let him sample the "Ah woo ooo" from "Cannonball."

Do you own a computer?

No, but I know people who do. I'd rather just get a new sound thing and mess around with that than get a computer and learn how to use that. I'm really into the audio thing. I love getting new gear and fucking with it.

So tell me about *Title TK*. How would you describe it?

It's not a party record. It's, like, a headphones record—kind of quiet and steady. And I'm cool with that. A lot of regular people like party records—not people who love music—but you know, the ones who crank up P. Diddy.

What's with the "Has anyone see the iguana?" line in "Sinister Foxx"?

Have you ever bought a bag of weed? You walk in, buy a bag of weed from the pot dealer, and he's got an empty terrarium or tank. Stoners think it's cool that they've got this pet that changes colors, but every time I go to a pot dealer's house, there's no iguana! They lose it!

What's the dynamic between you and Kelley like these days?

We're sisters—imagine. Some days it's like, "Oh Kelley, you're so great. I love you so much." And then it's like, "I want her to die." It gets pretty raw sometimes.

Will there ever be a Pixies reunion?

Oh God, no one's asked me that—and the answer is "I dunno." David Lovering just opened up for us. He has a science show—with a pickle and electricity and smoke. He wears a lab coat. Haven't seen Charles [Thompson, a.k.a. Black Francis] in years, but Joey [Santiago] and David are doing good.

Do you feel pressure about how this album will do because of the success of *Last Splash*?

No because I've already failed. Nobody bought the *Amps* record; nobody knows it. I didn't try, but I didn't try with *Last Splash* either. I think it's actually weird that "Cannonball" got on the radio. Why would you want to try? Why would you want to be like P. Diddy? Oh my God!

Nine years after releasing *Last Splash*—the album that put them on the map and on the radio—the Breeders are back. Well, sort of. Aside of twin sisters Kim and Kelley Deal, the band's lineup is all-new. And with the exception of Kelley, they all live in East Los Angeles—far from the Breeders birthplace of Dayton, Ohio. Still, the group's Steve Albini-produced new album, called, rather cheekily, *Title TK* (Elektra), sounds very, well, Breeders. So what took them so long and what else are they up to? We sat down with Kim Deal and unquoted guitarist Richard Presley to get some answers. >>>FIONA GIBB

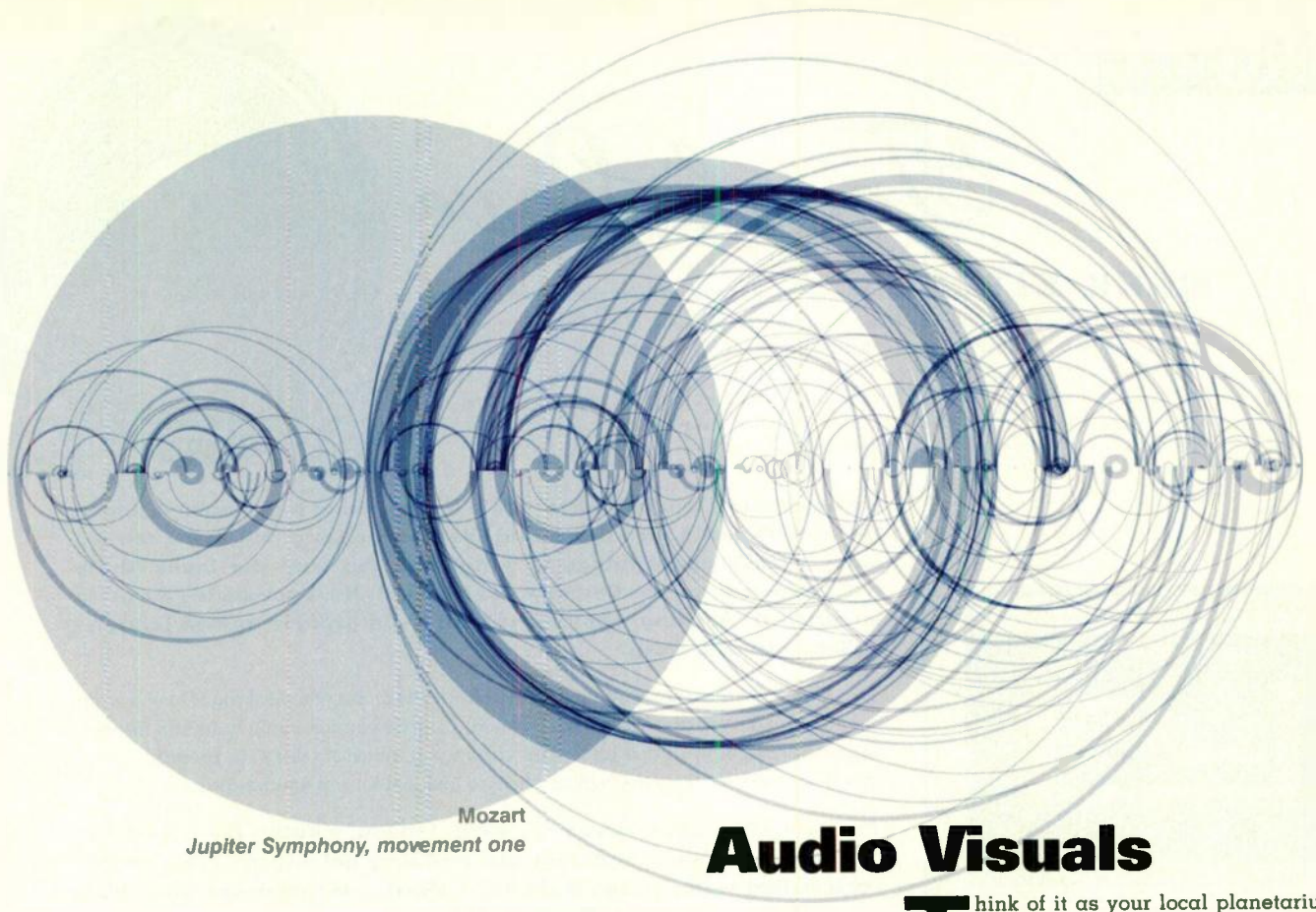
It's been nine years—what have you been doing?

People say [that] to me, and it's like, what the fuck! The *Amps* record was out in '95, and I toured that until '97. I started looking for a band the end of '97 and into '98. I never found one, so I quit looking, learned how to play drums, went to Chicago and recorded three songs by myself. Then I ran into these guys in March of 2000. I've been busy! I buy socks. There's the Crayola crayon factory and museum in Pennsylvania, and these [rolls up pant leg] are from the gift shop!

Why was it so difficult to find the right lineup for the band?

It's so hard to find normal people in New York, and it was a weird time. Nobody would play—they wouldn't come out to practice. They were all in front of fricking computers! The attitude was, why bother having four people in a room together playing, when you could just take your girlfriend's mom's record collection and sample every little bit of real music and just jack it. Back then, Pro Tools was new, fresh out of the box, and everyone was doing that. It was so hard to get anybody out of the house.

NEWSFEED: Damn you, Europe: **Radiohead** will play a series of intimate shows in Portugal and Spain in July and August to road-test material for



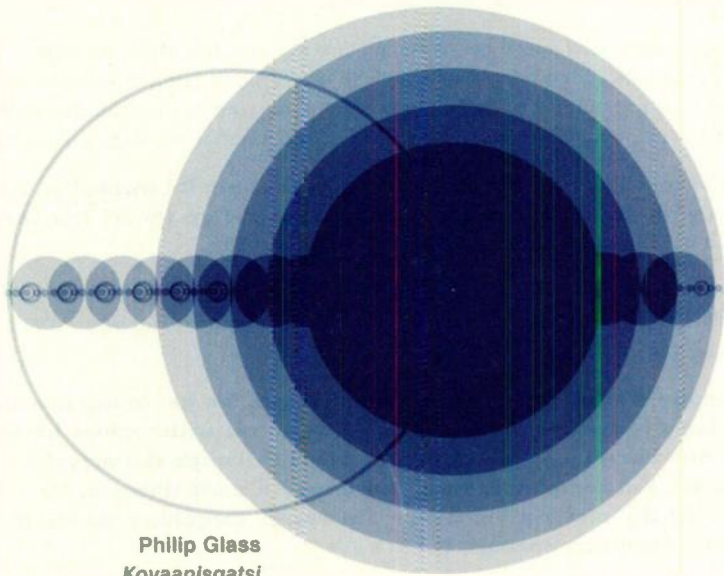
Mozart
Jupiter Symphony, movement one

Audio Visuals

Think of it as your local planetarium's "Laser Floyd" show gone highbrow. Artist Martin Wattenberg's bitforms, or "visualizations of music," craft diagrams out of songs from Mozart to Madonna and Bach to Buffett (Jimmy).

"I wanted some way to bring out the beautiful, intricate, large-scale structure and small-scale structure that's present in every kind of music," Wattenberg explains. To do this, former mathematician Wattenberg "wrote a computer program that goes through and looks at all the notes in the song, for passages that are identical. And it uses a simple pattern-matching algorithm to find big intervals of repeated notes and just connects those with these arcs."

"It's really interesting to see how different each genre is," he says. "All the jazz pieces I've done have come out looking like little rain clouds." One genre Wattenberg hasn't diagrammed much is hip-hop. "I've looked at one or two things, it's funny, because what it looks most similar to is Philip Glass. It's almost mathematical, well-engineered in some sense." >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON

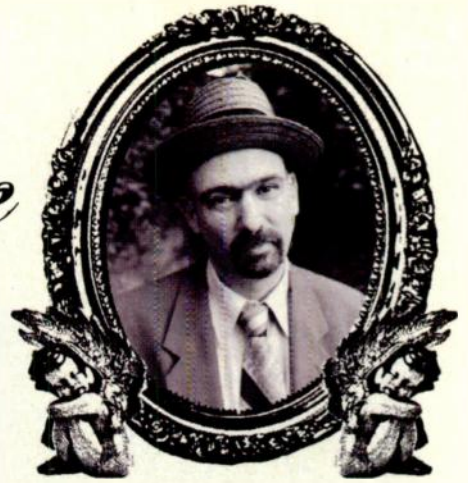


Philip Glass
Koyaanisqatsi

Large prints are available for \$1,000, unframed, smaller prints for \$750, at www.bitforms.com. All are editions of 15.

their sixth LP, which they started work on in April • **Chris Cornell** abruptly quit his still-untitled project with the former members of **Rage Against The Machine**, days >>>

Tough Love



MARK EITZEL Now in a solo relationship after breaking ties with longtime band American Music Club in the mid-'90s, Mark Eitzel continues to pen songs of significant emotional and musical weight. His latest album, *Music For Courage & Confidence* (New West), features covers of songs from Billie Holiday to Curtis Mayfield to Culture Club. Conveniently, Mark was willing to help some lovelorn souls find their own courage and confidence here. *Psychiatrists are expensive, rock personalities are free: lovelorn@cmj.com.*



WORD OF MOUSE

>>STILL LIFE WITH MUSICIANS<<

It's like MTV's *The Real World*, only without the bitching, commercials or entertainment. TheGuestHouseLive.com offers a half dozen live webcams focused on different areas of the Guest House recording studio outside of Atlanta. Thrill to the sight of a drumkit sitting unused in front of a fireplace, or a pasty producer sliding a control lever on a control board. The most instructive thing for musicians and those who love them? How boring and tied up in minutiae this proves the whole recording process to be.

My boyfriend's in a band and wrote a song about a girl named Jenny. He says it's just a nice name and fits into the song, but there are too many details about things they did and the way she looks (those frickin square glasses that everyone wears). Am I paranoid? About to be dumped? Sharing a boyfriend with a slut groupie named Jenny?
—Elisa, Auburn, Wash.

Of course he wrote a song about a slut groupie. What are you thinking? Do you want him to write a song about you? Just wait and see how much you'll hate him for that. Believe me, I know. I hope he doesn't dump you, but if he does it's probably more over this pettiness than the fact that you're too cool for the square glasses.

I'm going through a fierce dry spell. I mean, months. My friend met this guy on an Internet dating site, and they got engaged last month. I'm terrified of things like that but I'm starting to feel desperate. Think I should try one? —Kim, Medford, N.J.

I say try it. Just don't post a ridiculous picture of yourself and put something in the description like, "I really hate people," the way I did. It might seem meaningless and a little sad, but it's a first step towards getting out of your rut. Hopefully you won't end up going on a blind date with your dad, brother or cosmetic surgeon.

I'm not sure it'll ever happen, but I'm pretty sure if I wanted to, I could sleep with an artist I really admire. Should I go for it? His career's kinda on the slide now. —Leslie, Pensacola, Fla.

Leslie, I would love to sleep with you. I'm so flattered. Afterwards I hope we'll be friends. We'll go to a great brunch spot and talk and laugh about how we've had no sleep for the last five years.

I recently started hanging out with this girl. We get along amazingly and have tons in common, but she just hit me with serious baggage. She's still hung up on her ex-boyfriend, even though she says she really likes me. I'm completely torn and totally a mess about it. Do I walk away or try and convince her I'm worth forgetting that guy for?
—Dave, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Well, you never know until you try. Although from the tone of the letter it sounds like you already know she doesn't want you. You can only do two things: 1) Risk acting like a complete fool or 2) walk away and see if she follows. Personally I'd tell her that you're a mess and then walk away and see if she follows—and then if she doesn't follow spend several years in agony over what was the right choice.

Love,
Mark

after they announced they'd be on **Ozzfest 2002**; Epic Records still plans to release their recording sessions this summer • **Doves'** sophomore record, *The Last Broadcast*,

“In closing I would like to depart with the beautiful French words I wrote on the record *Youthanasia*: ‘A tout le monde, a tous mes amis, Je vous aime, Je dois partir.’”

-DAVE MUSTAINE, HUMBLE UNTIL THE END, ON MEGADETH'S DISBANDING

IN MY ROOM

Who: King Buzzo of the Melvins

Where: His home in Hollywood, Calif.

Why: For 18 years, the Melvins have filled the hole left by Black Sabbath as the heaviest band on the planet. *Hostile Ambient Takeover* (Ipecac), their 18th (!) record, is no exception.

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

Call of the wild

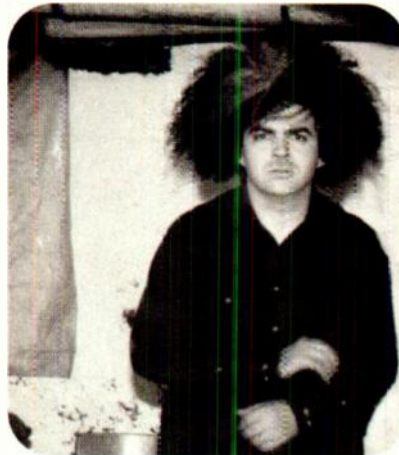
I have an animal-trap collection, various things for trapping fur-bearing creatures. The best one I have is a coyote trap. I have it wired open, so it looks like it's set. But it won't actually go. That's nice if you accidentally step in it.

Faces of death

I have a wax head of one of Jack the Ripper's victims. It's a post-mortem. She's got this crazy looking face—like she's just been chopped to pieces!

Crippled patch kids

I have a doll in my living room that's about the size of a Cabbage Patch doll except it looks Victorian. It has little leg braces and arm crutches on her, all crippled up. She's been busted up. I

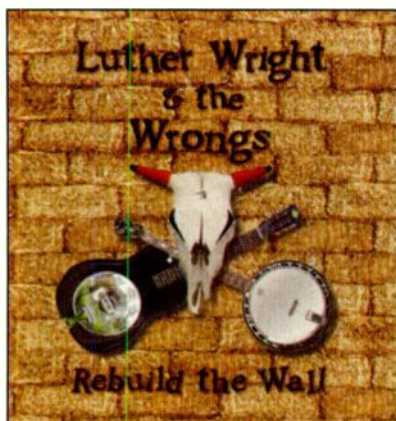


KEVIN WILLIS

actually found the leg braces and then had to find the doll for it. I had to find the perfect doll to cripple up, I wanted her to have a nice angelic face.

Monkey bone

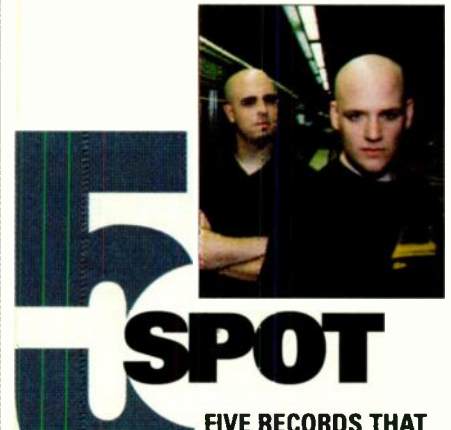
Yesterday I bought a baboon jaw. First piece of baboon bone I've ever owned. A lot of people might think it was a dog's jaw, but then you look and say, "No, that's not a dog..." I inquired about it and it's a baboon, so I had to have it. Couldn't pass it up, no way. INTERVIEW BY TOM MALLON.



WEIRD RECORD

A Floyd-ian slip

Art-school existential pain and bluegrass music make strange bedfellows. That didn't stop Luther Wright & The Wrongs from forcing the most unholy of shotgun weddings: Recasting Pink Floyd's angst-rock epic *The Wall*—all 26 tracks—as an *O Brother* stomp. In Wright's world, Roger Waters's fascist rock rally becomes a county-fair square dance: Each brick is a bale of hay and the worms are actually nightcrawlers. The subtle melancholy of "Goodbye Blue Sky" becomes a downright hootenanny, the classical guitar of "Is There Anybody Out There?" is traded for classical, um, banjo, and "Comfortably Numb" is blessed with four-part hillbilly harmony. Can't wait for a live-from-the-barnyard tackling of *Animals*... >>>CAM'RON DAVIS



FIVE RECORDS THAT PUT DEEPSKY'S JASON BLUM IN A TRANCE

1. Future Sound Of London, *Dead Cities*
They had a lot of influence on us when we were coming up. They do that soundscape thing better than anyone else, and this was their best record.
2. BT, *Movement In Still Life*
That was his best record and one of the cleanest productions that's come out in a while. It was also one of the first things in that genre to really branch out sound-wise.
3. Art Of Noise, *The Seduction Of Claude Debussy*
If I was stuck on a desert island, this would be the disc I'd take. Everything on that record sounds like it's there for a reason. I don't know why it fell through the cracks. It's really bizarre, but not so bizarre that everyone couldn't like it.
4. D:fuse, *People*
It's the only mixed CD I'm listing, because it has a great mix of music and great programming.
5. Chemical Bros., *Come With Us*
It's a really great blend of electronic and organic sounds, and it doesn't sound as contrived as their last one.

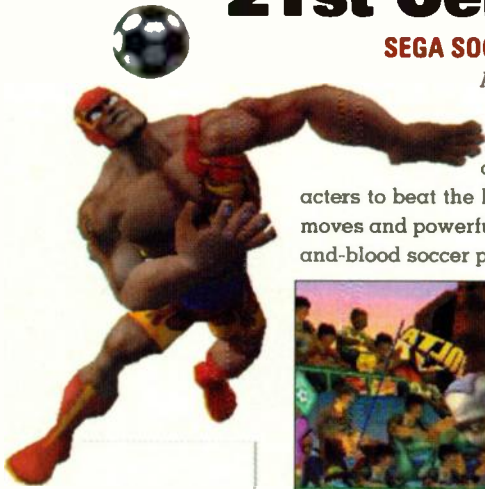
Deepsky once made the theme music to MTV's AMP; get amped again with the progressive trance grooves of *In Silico* (Kinetic).

will hit stores June 4 on their new home, Capitol Records • Simons Jones and Tong, formerly of the Verve, have reunited in a new group, the **Shining** • **Nikka** >>>

21st Century Hooligans

SEGA SOCCER SLAM (SEGA SPORTS FOR GAMECUBE)

As card-carrying members of the indie sissy brigade, we don't hold much truck with sports games. Imagine our glee when Sega Sports got it right by tearing up the rulebook and combining plain old soccer with over-the-top graphics and ruthless, wanton violence. *Sega Soccer Slam* gives you 18 outlandish characters to beat the living shit out of, replete with shark-tooth shinpads, *Matrix*-style slow motion moves and powerful kicks that blast the armor (yes, armor) off of ironclad goalies. Memo to flesh-and-blood soccer players: Sucker punches increase the fun for everyone! »TOM MALLON



"If he'd have known about the way they burnt witches and that, Jesus would have been mad. But if Jesus had seen U2 he would have been very mad indeed. Jesus would throw bottles at U2."

—THE FALL'S MARK E. SMITH (1993)



This and lots more biting social commentary can be found in John D. Luerksen's new collection of rock star-spewed musings, *Mouthing Off: A Book Of Rock And Roll Quotes* (The Telegraph Company).

How much does my head weigh?

We've all lamented the untimely death of comedy masterteam the Kids In The Hall; anyone who hasn't couldn't possibly have a soul. But, like the Fleetwood Mac of sketch comedy, the Kids' brilliance was only matched by their ability to bicker. Eclectic DVD's new documentary, *Same Kids, New Dresses* (directed by Dave Foley) follows the troupe's 2000 live tour with painful intimacy: Watch Scott Thompson lapse into fits of melodrama when his robotic dog misbehaves, experience Kevin McDonald's frustrated attempts at peacekeeping and witness a Bruce McCullough as bitingly snide as one of his monologues. »NICOLE KEIPER



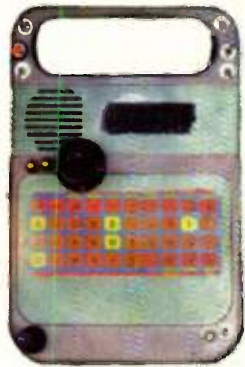
Costa's butt crack vs. Britney Spears's cleavage—only this summer's tour together can decide! • **JB vs. DKs, Round Three: Jello Biafra** has sued the remaining three



my favorite gear

Jack Dangers of Meat Beat Manifesto is guided by voices

Jack Dangers has made a career of predicting the future: As Meat Beat Manifesto, he planted the seeds for most of modern electronica, delivering the earliest forms of drum 'n' bass and trip-hop. Now he's looking to the past for inspiration—all the way back to the Speak & Spell. The centerpiece of his latest solo record, *Variaciones Espectrales* (Instinct), is a supercharged Speak & Spell, custom-made by Dave Wright of industrial trancers Not Breathing. "It's got all of the things a small synthesizer would have, but on this esthetically pleasing instrument," Dangers says. This is far beyond reciting ABCs: Wright outfitted it with the same accoutrements as a vintage synth, so that it can be controlled via MIDI, as well as various triggers and switches that scramble its circuitry to create out-of-this-world lo-fi squelches. "It's got a couple of brass knobs on it, which are basic pitch controls... if you wet your fingers, it increases the speed of it. It's run from batteries, so it won't shock you," Dangers says. "And the whole thing glows in the dark." Wright has made similar devices for electronic heavyweights like Nine Inch Nails' Charlie Clouser, and Dangers expects to see more of his work in the future. "There's a whole underground out there, 'circuit-bending' it's called, turning these toys into something else. I can see that becoming more popular. And the end result is definitely fun." >>>TOM MALLON



Who's The Next... Elliott Smith

With our wool-hatted King Troubadour currently hiding out, crafting the follow-up to 2000's *Figure 8* (DreamWorks), fans needing a fix of passionate strums and breathy, sensitive musings might want to look toward these up-and-comers in the solo boy-with-guitar world.



Rocky Votolato

Denison Witmer

Joe Davis

Just how mopey is he?	Picture how miserable Ryan Adams was on <i>Heartbreaker</i> , and add more quiver.	Witmer hints at uplifting turns (as the title <i>Of Joy & Sorrow</i> (Burnt Toast Vinyl) infers) but even when the words grin, the accompaniment frowns.	On tracks like "Ready Freddy," Davis bounces more than Elliott ever would, but tracks like "Dancer" are chock-full of hushed misery.
Speaking Elliott's language:	"The same nervousness that makes me good at what I do/ Is my enemy today and will be my whole life through."	"In a room with just a wall to where you slept/ If you only heard the secrets that I kept."	"I've got needles in my arms/ Pinball in room/ And they still can't tell me why/ I am so small."
Resembles which Smith record?	The lo-fi bedroom confessionals on <i>Burning My Travels Clean</i> (Second Nature) nod to <i>either/or</i> .	A little too polished to remind of <i>either/or</i> and too unassuming for <i>Figure 8</i> , Witmer's second LP smacks most of <i>XO</i> .	The mix of full instrumentation and shaky pop choruses on <i>Hope Chest</i> (In Music We Trust) call most to <i>Figure 8</i> .
His Heatmiser?	He still does time with Seattle's Waxwing, where most of his rock leanings are housed.	N/A	Davis currently fronts emo-pop outfit the Pinehurst Kids.
Distinguishing characteristic:	A settled-down husband and father of two with no apparent deadly vices, Rocky's got little chance of being a rock casualty.	Denison's troubadour turns veer from folk-pop like Smith or Nick Drake to slow dirges that hint more at Red House Painters.	Davis has a cultivated projected whisper, but he lets it grow to a meaty whine; a more emo-fied Smith.

Dead Kennedys for touring with singer Brandon Cruz (*Courtship Of Eddie's Father*) and billing it as the DKs, calling them "the world's greediest karaoke band" * * * * *



SHANE MCCAULEY

DENALI

What with Denali singer/songwriter Maura Davis, and you'll meet what seems like timidity, as she peppers her sentences with a baby voice and finishes with a nervous giggle. She talks about her music briefly and with hesitance, only settling into comfort when gushing about her brother Keeley, who plays bass and synths in Denali when not fronting Engine Down. "I'd go to shows and watch him play in bands," she remembers, grinningly, "and I just admired it so much. I think seeing him do that, I just immediately was like, 'This is what I wanna do too.'" At 21, Maura's finally arranged her first band, teaming up with Keeley and two other Virginia hardcore veterans, ex-Lazycoast guitarist Cam DiNunzio and

fellow Engine Down-er, drummer Jonathan Fuller. Listening to Denali's self-titled Jade Tree debut, you won't find a hint of that timidity—or many nods to the boys' past. Swaying from silken Portishead-y dirges to lush but reckless dream-pop turns, Maura's voice insists and coos at the same time. The 10 tracks on *Denali* belie her youth, managing to sound shoegazey without becoming forgettable, aggressive without grating, gentle but never dull. This has all fared well for Denali, landing them onstage with the likes of Clinic and in the studio with Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous. "I'd always daydreamed about doing that stuff, and now I am," Maura says. "And I'm very thankful." >>>NICOLE KEIPER



NINA NASTASIA

Nina Nastasia's 1999 debut *Dogs* made many critics' best-of lists, and the *Chicago Reader* called it one of the "most shamefully underappreciated" records of the year. Too bad you'll never find it. Anywhere. "I'd like to say that I'm trying to be mysterious," Nastasia says, "but we're broke. We ran out." She's fit to see wider release with the alternately delicate and menacing *The Blackened Air* (Touch & Go), whose spare, country-inflected arrangements turn understatement into an art, accompanying her with baroque strings, accordion and even bowed saw. To capture the subtleties of her sound, Nastasia enlisted the services of notorious producer Steve Albini (who also produced *Dogs*). "He records live perfor-

mances so well, and that's what we wanted," Nastasia says. "It was a great experience. But he has a terrible diet; it makes me nervous. He'll go a whole day eating Nutter Butters and coffee." Dietary habits notwithstanding, Albini's approach suits Nastasia perfectly: Each spin of the record is like witnessing an intimate performance with her seven-piece band. That band is proving hard to keep together—Nastasia keeps losing her bandmembers to higher-profile gigs. "It's been a little nuts," she admits. "At the last minute we're losing [guitarist] Gerry [Leonard] to David Bowie and [drummer] Jay [Bellerose] to Paula Cole." And don't even mention *Cirque Du Soleil*. "My saw player," she deadpans, "left to join the circus." >>>TOM MALLON



JOANNE KIM

MIRAH

I don't really know what being a 'female singer/songwriter' means," says Mirah. "I think that the way I would be called a singer/songwriter is the same way that I would be called bisexual. I don't relate to either of those identities, though technically to some people, they're what I am." Indeed, her sophomore release for K, *Advisory Committee*, mostly recorded with buddy Phil Elvrum (the Microphones) at Olympia's Dub Narcotic studio, is as difficult to categorize as 27-year old herself. The narrative tune "Cold Cold Water" took almost a month of studio time to complete, and is bolstered by a driving string sec-

tion, ominous tympanis and Mirah's shifting melodies. "It's kind of show-offy," she offers. Capricious and complex, the song sounds like something Björk might produce if she were to dabble in lo-fi indie rock. Performing onstage, however, is another matter. Mirah strips down to just a guitar and encourages audience participation. She used to worry about listeners' reaction to the discord between her sparse live sound and heavily produced records. "But I realize that life's an adventure and people can roll with the punches," she says, smiling. "The audience will get over it and they'll probably like it." >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



MARIO GODLEWSKI

SOUL HOOLIGAN

The members of Soul Hooligan look distinctly out of place at New York's ritzy Hudson Hotel, downing pints while other guests delicately quaff fruity martinis. Jim Sumner, the band's main vocalist, admits that before Maverick picked up *Music Like Dirt* from a U.K. indie, he spent his days pounding nails. "Hey, Jesus was a carpenter you know," he laughs. "And now, I'm just a musician who's handy with a saw." He met programmer/guitarist Austin Reynolds and keyboardist/vocalist Dave Jay in junior school in Essex, all jamming and then partying together as London's club scene exploded in the early '90s. Reynolds started Soul Hooligan as a

solo project, creating musical pastiches out of old northern soul records, but he soon brought the others on board for verity's sake. "I decided to swap samples for our own stuff," he explains. *Music Like Dirt*, their debut full-length release, is far from a club record; it boasts an upbeat mix of soul, hip-hop, rock and melodica-driven dub that somehow finds common ground between SoCal punk and northern soul. "There's a lot of nudging each other to get our ideas in, but at the end, it's all about compromise," says Jay. Adds Reynolds, "I wouldn't say our music is timeless or anything, but I think we've at least got some longevity." >>>ADRIENNE DAY

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

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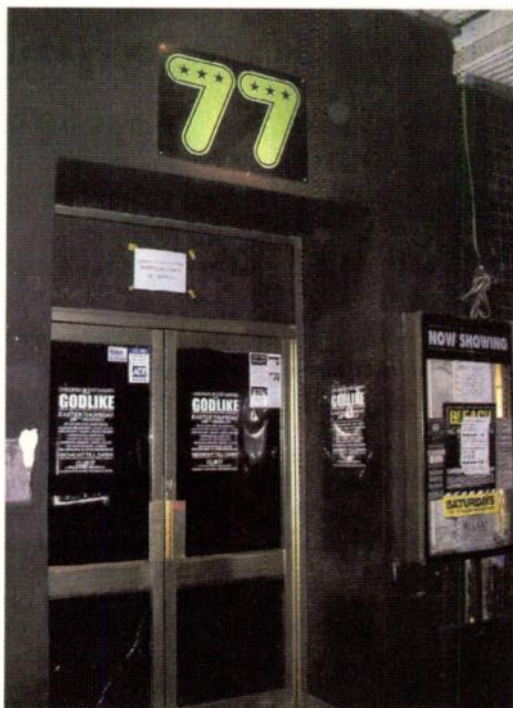


SYDNEY, Australia

PHOTOS : TERI HAID



EXCHANGE HOTEL



CLUB 77



IDES OF SPACE

Tips from insiders Ides Of Space

Thinking of going to Australia? Intrigued by informational documentaries such as *The Crocodile Hunter*? Wondering if they really do need to share their main thoroughfares with wild kangaroos? Who better to turn to than locals-in-the-know Ides Of Space. The band's guide to Sydney will give you the lowdown on some of the places you might not necessarily stumble across with your average tour guide.

The clubs, the pubs and the weird of Sydney, as brought to you proudly by Ides Of Space.

If Ides Of Space had a home it would be the **Hopetoun Hotel** (Bourke St., Surry Hills). A smallish bar in Sydney—it's about two minutes' walk from the heart of the city—the Hopetoun is the center of local underground music. It's where Ides Of Space played our first show, and where we've seen everyone from High Dependency Unit to June Of 44 to You Am I. At about 300 capacity, it's not a huge space, but one that exudes cool. Wooden floorboards, a good PA, groovy lights and, on an average night, half of Sydney's musicians and writers-in-residence propping up the bar all add to this general feeling of hip. But it's more a dingy, easy hip than an intimidating one, which makes it highly recommended.

Just on the outskirts of the CBD (Central Business District), the more adventurous traveller will find **Kings Cross**, the city's underbelly—find your sex and drugs out here. Sadly, the rock 'n' roll all but disappeared a while ago, but for neon lights, strip joints, hucksters, leather, PVC and a host of seedy bars, the Cross is your place. **Darlinghurst Road** is the main road in the Cross (this is where most of the "action" in the area can be found), and close by is another hotspot, **Oxford St.** Just across the road from the dubiously named sex shop (aren't they all?) **the Tool Shed**, is a very camp bar



HOPETOUn HOTEL

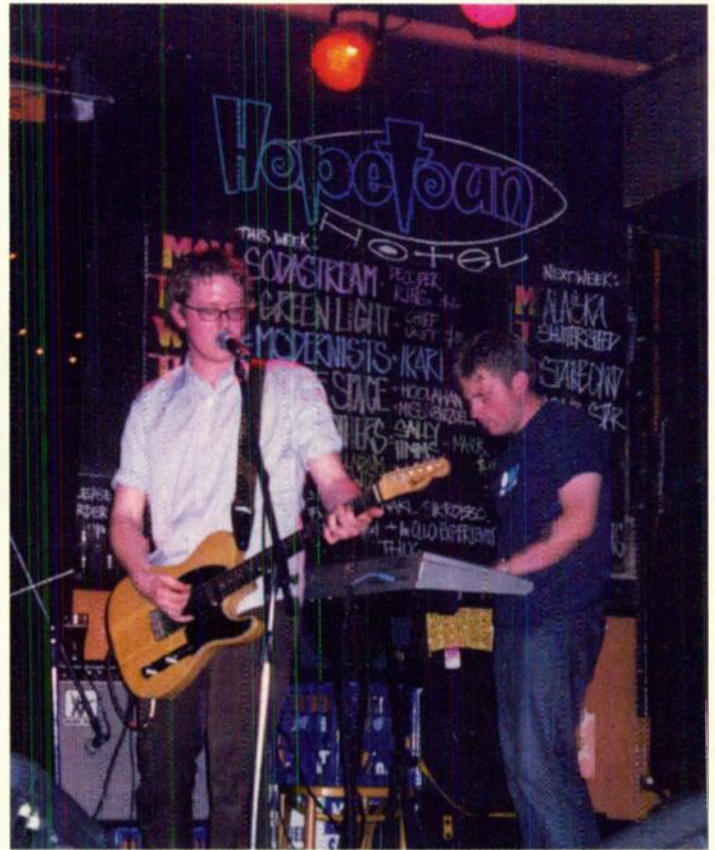
called the **Exchange Hotel**, also on Oxford Street. Its upstairs section sports about 60 mirror balls of all different shapes and sizes—an awesome sight that has to be seen to be believed. Downstairs, the **Phoenix Bar** is just as rocking: A fledgling live music venue and sometime movie set, you could be forgiven for thinking that you wandered onto the set of an '80s Brat Pack film when you walk into the *Goonies*-esque basement covered in coloured graffiti with a few ragtag chairs and big smoke machines. Stick around after Thursday night bands and you'll be able to jump around to poppy tunes that make for way too much fun for a school night.

Just across from Oxford St. is William St., and at number 77 you'll find **Club 77** hosting dub, trip-hop, hip-hop and trance nights, and on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, pop music nights. This is where the kids with good clothes and funky haircuts (and occasionally Ides Of Space) jump around to the Pixies, Weezer, Ride and Pavement until the early hours of the morning, only to emerge all bleary-eyed minutes before dawn, seeking the ever-elusive nightride buses to take them to showers and tomorrow.

Back towards the CBD, you won't find anything more central than the **Century Tavern** (George Street, Town Hall). Whether people are in there for a pre-show drink before the Dirty Three gig at the **Metro Theatre** (three doors up), eating late night munchies at McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, KFC or great tofu burgers from **Dean's Burger Bar** (near the corner of Liverpool and George Streets, Town Hall), or having a post-film drink (a Hoyts/Village/Greater Union conglomerate is just across the street), there's always a buzzing crowd there. A good jukebox and pool tables over two levels make for heaps of fun. Be sure to skip the stairs to the second floor and treat yourself a ride in the archaic lift.

Sydney's live music scene is built around the Hopetoun Hotel, the **Annandale Hotel** (Parramatta Rd., Stanmore), the **Vic On The Park** (Enmore Rd., Enmore) and the Metro Theatre. The scene has taken a bit of a battering these past couple of years, with a series of closures due mainly to noise restrictions and complaints and questions of viability. Little known fact: New South Wales has 11 percent of the world's poker/slot machines. And unfortunately, the government is far more interested in promoting gambling and collecting the revenue dollars than supporting the arts. So live music venues have been a little overrun by poker machines—but they're making a comeback of late.

Newtown is Sydney's bohemia: With a café on every corner and some guy with big dreadlocks doing something "artistic" on



IDES LIVE AT THE HOPETOUn HOTEL

every other, Newtown has an air of creativity and eclecticism. Two doors down from Newtown train station is the **Town Hall Hotel**, a 24-hour pub that has the good fortune of being equidistant from the Hopetoun, the Annandale and the Vic. The Town Hall is where the people who have been at all the night's shows converge for debriefings and weird late-night conversations.

LOCAL LOGIC: SYDNEY'S BEST

Film house that offers more than Tom and Nicole: Moonlight Cinema, Botanical Gardens. Picnic on the lawn and catch Audrey Hepburn under the stars on a big screen overlooking the harbour. Doubles as Best Place For A Lazy First Date.

Corner shop most resembling a treasure chest of obscure items: Diagonally across from then Hopetoun Hotel (Bourke St., Surry Hills) is a tiny hideaway with no name—and that's half the beauty of it. You need fishing wire covered in jellybeans at 2 a.m.? They've got it.

Sunday afternoon beers with a view of the Harbour: The Glenmore Hotel (Cumberland Street, the Rocks). Follow beers with wood-fired pizza at the Australian Hotel around the corner.

Top uni where firehosereel (now Ides) played their first comp: University of New South Wales (Anzac Parade, Kensington). Also best uni library to get lost in, and best library lawn to sleep on. Also home to a structure that, despite all logic and argument to the contrary by past and present students, claims to be a clock.

Best markets: Haymarket (Hay St.), for cheap trashy useless items; Paddington (Oxford St.) for really expensive useless items.

Leb food that makes no secret of its love affair with garlic: Abdul's (corner of Chalmers and Elizabeth Streets, Surry Hills). Keep those vampires (and second dates!) at bay.

Ides Of Space's new full-length slab of noise-pop grace, There Are No New Clouds, is available on Better Looking Records.



super nova

If **Jazzanova** really wanted to be grouped more with hip-hop than jazzy house, maybe those German punks should've thought twice about the name.

STORY: BILL WERDE • PHOTO: ARENS

Last we heard from Berlin-based Jazzanova, the six-member electroni-troupe (three DJs, three producers) released *The Remixes 1997-2000*. Music fans got to know and love them for their ultra-smooth, jazzy house grooves. As re-envisioned by a Jazzanova remix, the breakbeats of innovators 4 Hero, the two-step bass thrusts of MJ Cole and the Brazilian rhythms of Truby Trio all wound up in the same mellifluous spot. The mixes boasted the sort of accessible, mid-tempo rhythms that work equally well in both a laidback dancefloor and a pleasantly pulsing living room. The double album went on to sell 150,000 copies worldwide.

Musically, it was the worst thing that could have happened to them. Jazzanova's dirty little secret is that the producers all love hip-hop—beats, rhymes and graffiti have been brewing in Berlin since the mid-'80s, when movies like *Beat Street* provided a primer. But, "With our remixes, people just want the 'club thing,'" says producer Roskoe Kretschmann, sitting in the lounge of the plush SoHo Grand. So while Jazzanova took full advantage of the cash flow and studio time the steady work offered, they found themselves lumped in with a talented—but not necessarily like-minded—group of artists such as Kruder & Dorfmeister and Thievery Corporation. DJ Alex Barck, who spun a four-hour set the previous night at a downtown club, sips his orange juice and reflects on the pigeonhole the success of *The Remixes* created: "It was hard for us to be on the shelf with so many others under this name, 'Nu Jazz.' Even with other artists we don't like!" The six decided to go back to their origins to create their new album, *In Between* (Ropeadope). As Barck says, this one has "much more B-boy attitude than jazz."

It's true that *In Between* boasts a few hip-hop numbers. In particular, fans of Bay Area hip-hop like Blackalicious will appreciate San Fran rapper and house DJ Capital A's rhymes on "The One-Tet." But for the most part, *In Between* blurs genre lines, offering a mélange of urban sounds. The group makes good use of some Philadelphia exports: Viktor Duplaix lends his silky vocals to a couple of ultra-minimal R&B-sounding tracks, and poet and songstress Ursula Rucker works her lyrical magic over a simple rolling bassline, her phrasing hopping and skipping in ways that would make Miles proud. "I'll fuck you up with my nimble knowledge numbchucks," she flows, all fluid venom, as insistent strings underscore the urgency of her anti-mass media message. It's a powerful tribute to Jazzanova's genre-defying approach. Definitely not house music, not quite jazz, neither straight spoken-word or hip-hop, the track—like the rest of *In Between*—is challenging, beat-driven music that's tough to pigeonhole.

That's just how the J6 like it. The previous night, Barck played to a packed house. He started with drum 'n' bass and worked his way through funk, soul, house, spoken word, hip-hop and all the gray areas between. At one point he played an over-the-top remix of Destiny Child's "Bootylicious," and it cleared the dancefloor—absolutely cleared it. The sleek and sexy women who had been dancing and swaying in front of the tables slowed and then split; the crowd just wasn't ready for that jelly. But when Barck dropped a different mix of the same track, and took it to a new, sultry, deep-bass place, hips started grinding anew.

"We are not so caught up in what you label a certain kind of music," says Barck. "We're always just looking for that certain groove. And if it works? It works. People shouldn't be so caught up in their expectations." **MMM**

lords OF THE RINGS

Super Furry Animals may have declared war on mainstream music, but *Rings Around The World* makes a case for a velvet revolution.

STORY: RICHARD M. JUZWIAK • PHOTO: FREDERIKE HELWIG



They brought a techno-blasting tank, emblazoned with "A OES HEDDWCH?" ("Is there peace?") to U.K. summer festivals. They turned down £60,000 to play a benefit sponsored by European oil company E.L.F. They even declared "war on mainstream music" with the release of their 1999 album, *Guerilla*. Still, members of the Welsh five-piece Super Furry Animals, whose visit to New York just happens to coincide with protests of the World Economic Forum, beg off questions about their politics.

"Labeling us a political band is missing the point," says singer/guitarist Gruff Rhys. "You could get a political taxi driver who might share his views with you, but his function is to drive. We are musicians, that's our function."

And as a band, the Super Furies function quite well, thank you—so well that bassist Guto Pryce claims the band is always working on three albums at once.

The ever-prolific group has just released their fifth album in the U.S., *Rings Around The World* (XL-Eggars Group). The record is SFA's most exuberant outing yet; it's the compulsively layered, densely orchestrated definition of the band's Technicolor pop.

"For *Rings*, we chose quiet songs that we could treat in a lush way," says Rhys. "We were going for an expansive, widescreen sound." This is more than a metaphor: Accompanying the CD's release is a first-of-its-kind DVD companion that sports a 5.1 Surround-Sound mix of the album. Taking full advantage of the technology at hand, the Super Furies have included videos for each of the album's songs, 16 remixes and a handful of bonus films. The DVD ended up costing around \$100,000 to produce and took 14 months to finish.

"Usually when you make an album, it's fairly simple," explains Rhys. "This was endless, but it was exciting because we didn't know what we were doing. We didn't have a blueprint."

Not that they would have used one, anyway. Super Furry Animals have made a career out of unending musical variation which, according to Pryce, comes from the input that each member contributes. "We haven't got one emotion," he says. "There are five of us in the band. It's exponential, really, the maths of making our records."

The set of equations reaches a complex peak on *Rings*. The pointed acoustic folk/IDM hybrid of "No Sympathy" features the line, "You deserve to die," and is, well, juxtaposed with the Marvin Gaye-inspired love fest of "Juxtaposed With U" in which Rhys sermonizes, "You've got to tolerate all those people that you hate."

But by now, variation is the one thing we can expect from SFA. The band is (of course) working on their sixth LP. Though quiet about its direction, Rhys offers an aspiration for future releases. Take it with the same grain of salt that you would the band's typically cryptic lyrics.

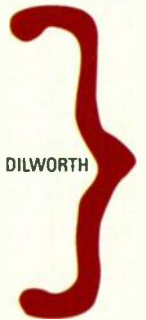
"Every time [we record], we think we're going to nail it and make a coherent record," he says. "It always comes out diverse and sprawling. I think eventually we'll make a really coherent album. I'm looking forward to it" **MMM**



FANG

With *Plastic Fang*, the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion puts all their affairs where they want them. STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTO: JOE DILWORTH

SHUI



They're not bad guys, the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. They just don't like doing this.

The band has blasted through 10 years and seven albums, counting this one, *Plastic Fang* (Matador). On those records, but even more so live, their music is all energy, style and bravado. It's the sort of thing that leaves you soaked with sweat or disaffected, pretty much the antithesis of sitting around a conference room table answering obvious questions on a sunny day. For them, as soft-spoken guitarist Judah Bauer says leaving the previous interview, it feels like detention.

The Matador conference room is an appropriate venue, then. Dark and stale-smelling, lined with videos and posters from the label's brighter days, it has the fading-institution atmosphere of a place you'd be sent for cutting science class. The Blues Explosion is camped out here for the day, with a new interviewer shuffled in every 45 minutes. Most interviews are like blind dates; this was like meeting your date's dad—you may like the music, but it ain't your baby.

Take the sound of the record. For the first time, the band worked under the close direction of a producer, in this case Steve Jordan, known for his work with Keith Richards, Robert Cray and the Neville Brothers.

"We wanted to do something different," Spencer explains. "We never had really done that before. We're also interested in growing. Keep moving forward."

Jordan was able to rein things in without sapping any of the band's energy, giving the songs the kind of ragged swagger that

made the Rolling Stones, well, Stonsey. Drummer Russell Simins says of the observation, "You're losing us now." He might be joking—Simins is pretty jocular—but the message is clear either way.

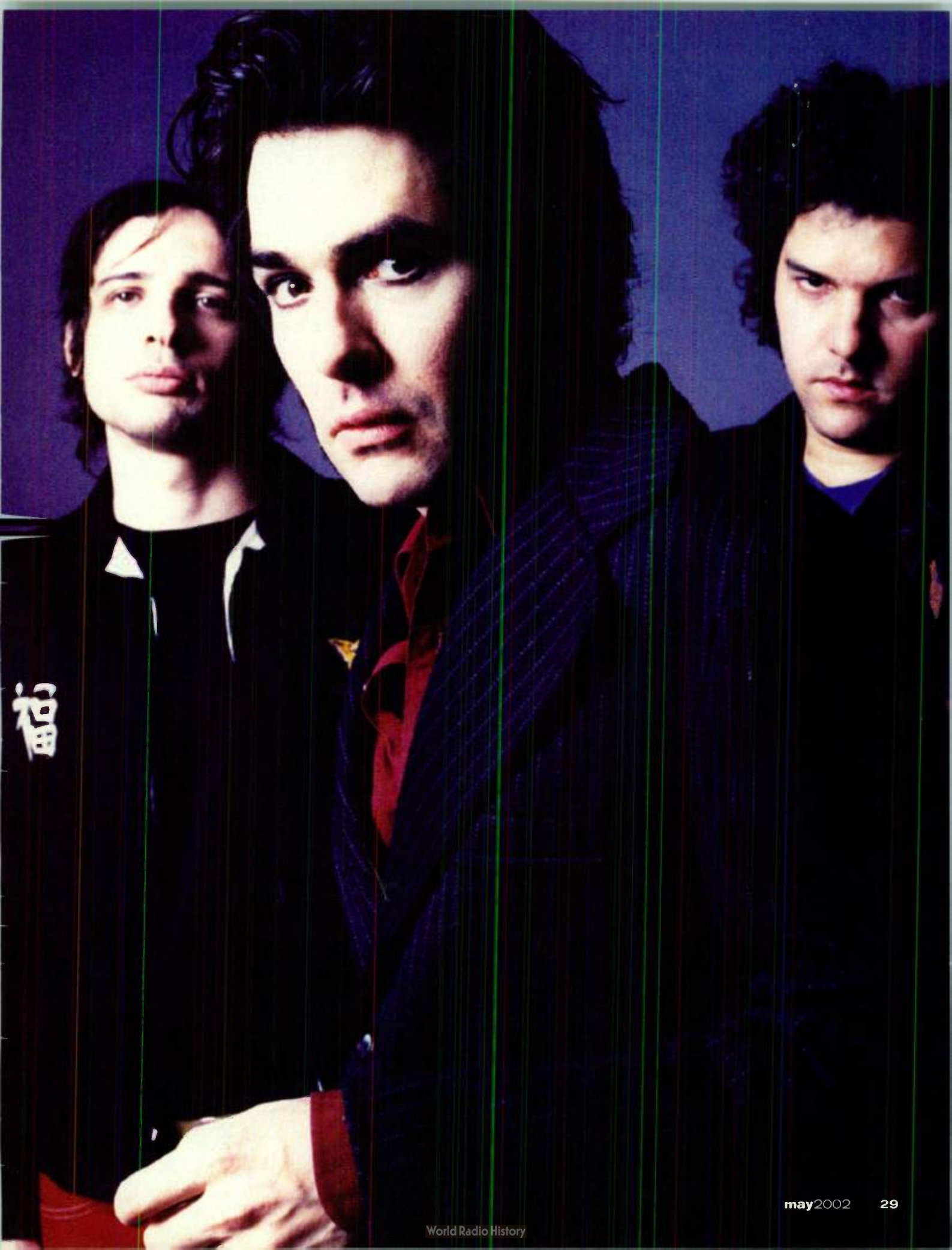
"I think one thing that's kind of nice," Spencer says later, in a speaking voice that's less Hill Country bluesman than claims adjuster, "is that now it seems to be that—and this is something I've noticed in just the past month or so doing press—there seems to be kind of a higher regard or greater respect for the Blues Explosion. There's not so much that we really gotta prove ourselves, and I think that there's less kind of questions about 'What is it that you do?' and 'What does it mean?' and 'What is it all about?' because we have been doing it and doing it well for so long."

They all perk up when talking about the live show, comparing notes on playing a great show in Barcelona for 150 people, and in Japan, in front of 100,000.

"We don't have set lists. Ever," Simins says. "The idea of having a setlist would be so foreign to the way this band does things onstage."

Actually, that kind of thing is foreign to the way the Blues Explosion is. They never consciously decided not to have a set list, just that there's no point in doing anything but what feels right. And it's not really something they presume outsiders will understand. Think about it—how well could you describe to a stranger something so meaningful to you that you've devoted roughly a third of your life to it?

"The fact that we can write together and play together," Spencer says. "Yeah, it's really special." **NMM**



福



YANKEE COME HOME

Wilco's been dropped, picked up and held up as a triumph of art over commerce. Now, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* is finally ready to break your heart.

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTO: CHRIS GORMAN

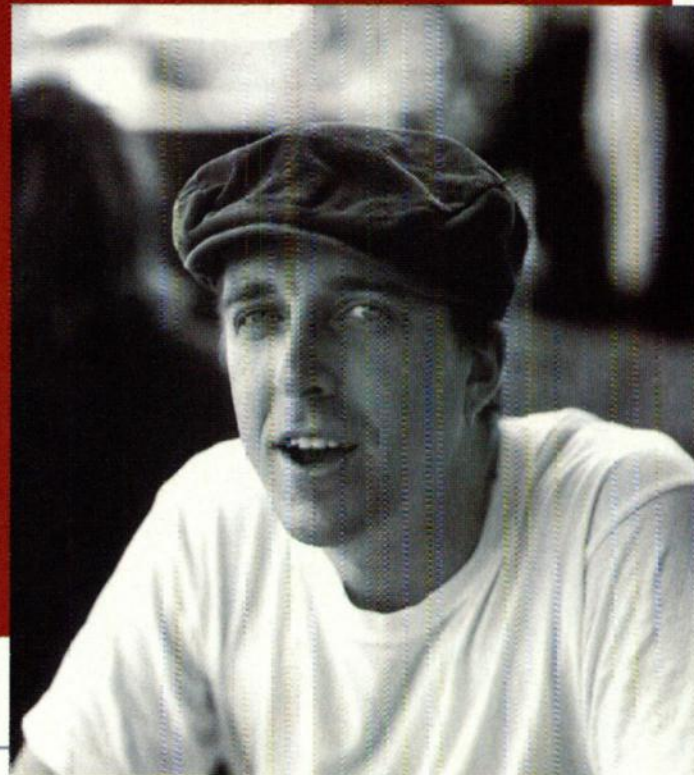
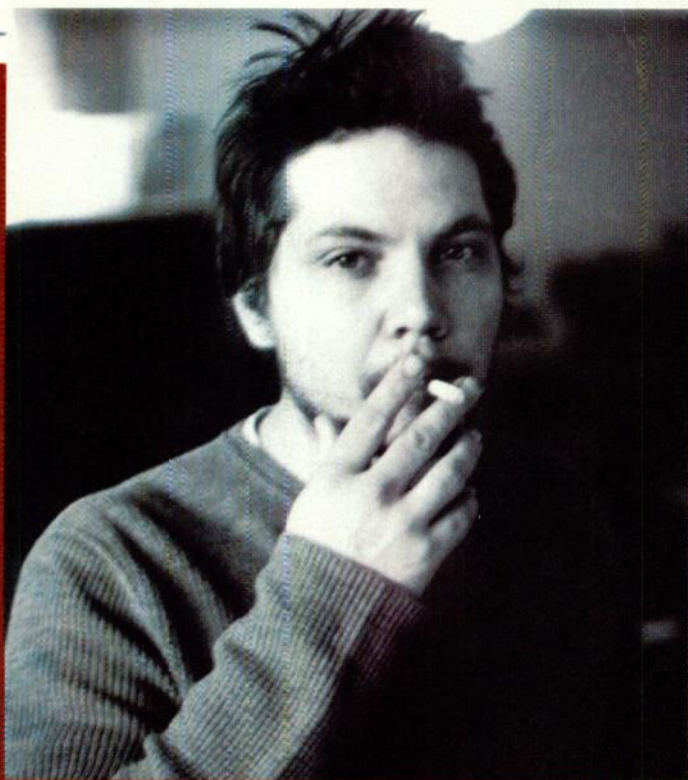
Jeff Tweedy is out of cigarettes. Jacket pockets, under a small pile of papers—he's coming up empty. Any rock star worth his egotism would just call down to the publicist waiting in the hotel lobby and ask for a pack to be brought up. The thought's crossed his mind, he's sheepish to admit. But, "I hate doing—can't do that," he winces, hand buried in hair a few days removed from its last washing. He stands there a few moments, like a guy cluelessly peering under the raised hood of a car broken down on the highway. Then Wilco's Jeff Tweedy lights up one of this morning's butts from the ash-tray, hobo-style.

It's a slate gray Valentine's afternoon, and *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* is still a few months from seeing store shelves. This after having the record refused by Wilco's former label Warner Bros. for what's been described as a lack of commercial appeal, then shopping it around to 30-some labels who were keen to prove otherwise. In the meantime, the

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S **CD**



GLENN KOTCHE, LEROY BACH, JOHN STIRRATT, JEFF TWEEDY



band put the record up on its website for people to hear, and played packed shows where people sang along to tracks that, in a record company sense, didn't exist. That didn't matter to the people coming out to see the shows and enjoy the music, which made something simple and profound clear to the band: It didn't matter to them, either.

"It's hard for me to feel bitter at all because I certainly feel that I landed in a better place," Tweedy says of the record's homelessness before being picked up by Nonesuch. "I could argue that it's probably the coolest thing that's ever happened to me. We were a band and our reason to exist was not to make a piece of plastic every year and a half anymore. We went out on tour and our music was being downloaded and heard through our website, and we were like, 'Well, this is why we exist. We don't exist to make records. And we don't play music to sell records.' And it was really satisfying.

"I don't want to get all idealistic about it, but... it was a good experiment that allowed us to be really patient, and confident that if it all went away, that's still what we feel like doing with our lives."

Those who've followed Wilco closely have been wondering just how much "our" is really left to the group. The band originally formed from the remnants of Uncle Tupelo, whose song "No Depression" gave name to the alt-country magazine, and for a time, the whole damn subgenre. When singer/guitarist Jay Farrar—considered by many the driving force behind the band—quit in 1994, he made it plain that his problems were with Tweedy. Nonetheless, drummer Ken Coomer, bassist John Stirratt and multi-instrumentalist Max Johnston stayed on, and together with Tweedy, they made the first Wilco record, *A.M.*, in 1995. Guitarist Jay Bennett came on board for the *A.M.* tour, and solidified himself as a major part of the band with group's second album, the 1996 double-disc *Being There*. And that was the Wilco that went to work on the two *Mermaid Avenue* collections of

recovered Woody Guthrie lyrics set to new music, and the group's own stellar *Summerteeth*. Then, early last year, drummer Coomer was asked to leave in favor of Glenn Kotche, who'd been working with Tweedy on some solo projects. Bennett then left following the recording of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, raising questions of Tweedy's willingness to collaborate.

For his part, Tweedy is either sensitive to the allegations or savvy enough to know the question is coming, addressing the issue in the course of talking about how the new record's songs came to fruition.

"I depend upon [having a band]. I always wanted a band. And that's the reason why a lot of changes have happened this year," he says, the natural quaver in his voice growing steady, "because I've become more and more determined to have a band where a lot of ideas were embraced by everyone. Where there was a collective spirit, and I could just write songs and not have to contend with another layer of self-consciousness when I go to play them for the people I'm the most intimate with, supposedly, making music. Or we can work together as a band, and do free-writing together—just jam and improvise and get better at playing together with one mind. Loosen up our inhibitions, be more open with each other and feel more and more secure with just the dumbest ideas and stupidest shit. And that's kind of what happened, and that's where other people have been just kind of closed out, or kind of drifted out, of that circle."

There's a twinge of guilt, maybe, but no regrets. Devotion does that. Any true follower of a discipline, even something as undisciplined as rock music, has that clarity of purpose. Still, Tweedy notes that this doesn't just happen in bands, that people do this sort of thing all the time in their lives—or not, and pay a certain price. The idea that you might outgrow and hurt those around you, he says, is "a thing that really diminishes a lot of people's enjoyment of their lives.

"There's a comfort in loyalty and security in friendships, and



change is really frightening to yourself and even more frightening to the people around you, sometimes, when they're not changing in the same way," he says, words flowing in the elliptical arcs as he thinks out loud. "It's an arrogant thing to express—nobody wants to talk about it—but it's a fact that people just grow. I always try to rationalize it for myself, that 'change' is more accurate. People change at different speeds. I just think for everybody in their relationships, it's a tough thing to walk that line, subverting their needs and passions to keep the security of what they have around them. And also, I just think that in the end, the more I have been able to not tolerate indifference, the happier I've ended up being. I think that's why people look like they're walking around dead all the time. Those are the kind of things that kill you. You can't live in the present if you're really attached to the security that is really only about the past. And tomorrow, the person you're being so loyal to might turn around and say, 'You know what, I've gained the courage to say that I'm not here anymore. So why don't we just acknowledge that I'm way over here now?'"

Yankee Hotel Foxtrot is a beautiful record, in no small part because of its flaws. It's not always an easy sell—a scrim of static and random noise is often stretched over melodies that otherwise might win Wilco a few more fans, and airplay-chasing dissonance swoops in on about a third of the songs. But even as "Radio Cure" echoes with the drone of a plucked piano string and "Ashes Of American Flags" throbs with found sound, there's the lovely acoustic strum of "Kamera," "Heavy Metal Drummer" making an idyll out of an outdoor '80s metal show and the fractured solo in "I'm The Man Who Loves You" finding truth in the messiness of affection. There's the idea that many people favor music with dissonant elements because we find the beauty

more believable. This is where the disc succeeds. There's no hidden messages in the shortwave radio samples and Morse Code that encroach on the songs, just a randomness of live and love. How else to make sense of songs titled as directly as "I Am Trying To Break Your Heart"?

"I get some musical satisfaction listening to shortwave radio stations," Tweedy says about the record's sonic detritus. "Just in how it makes you feel like there's all this information that seems to parallel my experience in the world. And that's kind of the way I feel about writing songs and putting lyrics and words to them and singing them and putting them on pieces of plastic and scattering them around the world. And hoping people find them, and when they do, not really knowing what their experience of it will be, but hope that it makes them feel human, you know?"

"I could argue that getting dropped is the coolest thing that's ever happened to me."

For Tweedy, music can't be separated from the experience of listening to it. It's a singular connection between the music and the person hearing it, making for an endless set of variables with every song.

"The most important thing about music is the finished circuit," he explains. "The collaboration between the music and the mind of the listener doesn't exist otherwise. Once it's a finished, complete circuit, then it can be beautiful.

"I think there's an argument to be made that stuff like N'Sync and Britney Spears, those things all communicate something.



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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

wilco

THE PROMISE RING

Elvis Costello

Gomez

Melvins • 764-Hero

MAY 2002 • ISSUE 101

14. **THE DROP** "Last One In Line" *The Drop* (Loveless)
These Seattleites do their label's namesake well, swirling atmospheric and lush guitar textures over their version of droning indie-pop.
15. **MARK EITZEL** "Move On Up" *Music For Courage & Confidence* (New West)
When he was fronting American Music Club, Mark Eitzel had a reputation for being a bit unpredictable. Fitting, then, that his latest solo jaunt has him covering songs from Billie Holiday to Culture Club. (See Tough Love p. 14, Review p. 49.)
16. **RADIO 4** "Save Your City" *Gotham!* (Gern Blandsten)
NYC art-punks update the legacy of the Clash and Gang Of Four: genre-blurring punk packed with skewed hooks, drum machines and a garage full of junk percussion. (See Best New Music p. 43.)
17. **PANTHERS** "Sex Ed" *Are You Down??* (Troubleman Unlimited)
Panthers stick it to the Man with a fervor inspired by James Brown and a fury that calls to classic D.C. punk. (See Review p. 56.)
18. **JULIE DOIRON** "Oh These Walls" *Heart And Crime* (Jagjaguwar)
Julie Doiron was known for filling bass and vocal duties for noise-poppers Eric's Trip; her solo work, however, traffics in somber acoustic lullabies that lean heavy on the pop, ignoring noise completely. (See Review p. 49.)
19. **SONGS: OHIA** "Two Blue Lights" *Didn't It Rain* (Secretly Canadian)
Jason Molina likely won't ever hit you with a drastic departure from Songs:Ohia; he always crafts somber, plaintive indie-folk. But as evidenced by *Didn't It Rain*, he hits his mark squarely every damn time. (See Best New Music p. 44.)
20. **R.E.M.** "The Paper Campaign"
A public service announcement from Michael Stipe and pals reminding us that if we want our trees and paper too, recycling is the way.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case

1. **WILCO** "I Am Trying To Break Your Heart" *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (Nonesuch)
The pastoral American genius that is Wilco, finally available for all to hear. (see Cover Story p. 30.)

2. **CASSANDRA WILSON** "You Gotta Move" *Belly Of The Sun* (Blue Note)
A funny thing happened to Cassandra Wilson on her way to becoming this generation's Betty Carter: she became too restless even for jazz. This Mississippi Fred McDowell cover comes from her eclectic *Belly Of The Sun*.

3. **THE PROMISE RING** "Stop Playing Guitar" *Wood/Water* (Anti-Epiphany)
The former kings of emo have set the jangle aside in favor of contemplative, strummy and symphonic pop—which just might woo dissidents and turn devotees against them. (See Feature p. 38.)

4. **GOMEZ** "Shot Shot" *In Our Gun* (Virgin)
British five-piece Gomez are sometimes folksy, sometimes beat-laden, often laced with power-pop hooks. Our review (p. 51) calls them the Dave Matthews Beta Band, and it's hard to contest that logic.

5. **ELVIS COSTELLO** "Tear Off Your Own Head (It's A Doll Revolution)" *When I Was Cruel* (Island)
After a decade of academic pursuits, Elvis Costello is once again spitting bile and breathing fire. Just pray that this song isn't about you. (See Best New Music p. 43)

6. **KINKY** "Cornman" *Kinky* (Nettwerk)
Hailing from Monterrey, Mexico, this former winner of the Latin Alternative Music Conference battle of the bands fuses electronic with Latin rock. Yeah, you heard me: accordion.

7. **SOUL HOOLIGAN** "Algebra (Dan The Automator Remix)" *Music Like Dirt* (Maverick)
This Essex, England band synthesizes soul, hip-hop and garage rock, here tickled and tweaked by the inimitable Dan The Automator. (See On The Verge p. 21.)

8. **SOULIVE** "Clap! (featuring Black Thought)" *Next* (Capitol)
Groove jazz that doesn't reek of patchouli or hollandaise, ably assisted by the Roots' Black Thought.

9. **CRAIG ARMSTRONG** "Wake Up In New York (featuring Evan Dando)" *As If To Nothing* (Astralwerks)
Producer Armstrong has graced the soundtracks of visual freakouts like *Moulin Rouge* and *Romeo + Juliet*; here, he offers a much more subdued track, mixing lush strings with a certain ex-Lemonhead's plaintive croon.

10. **NINA NASTASIA** "This Is What It Is" *The Blackened Air* (Touch & Go)
The diminutive Ms. Nastasia's dark Americana can easily hold its own against the likes of Nick Cave or Tom Waits; check this sinister, pulsing track for proof. (See On The Verge p. 19.)

11. **WAYNE** "Whisper" *Music On Plastic* (TVT)
Not to be confused with the band fronted by the ex-Metal Church singer, this Birmingham, Alabama group brings big hooks and sweet melodies.

12. **764-HERO** "You Were A Party" *Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere* (Tiger Style)
Seattle-ites make the jump to NYC's Tiger Style Records and deliver another solid set of rocking indie-pop. (See Review p. 46.)

13. **MELVINS** "The Brain Center At Whipples" *Hostile Ambient Takeover* (Ipecac)
With this slab of pounding sludge-metal, the Colossus of Buzz proves once again that the Melvins are, and always will be, heavier than you. (See In My Room p. 15, Review p. 56.)

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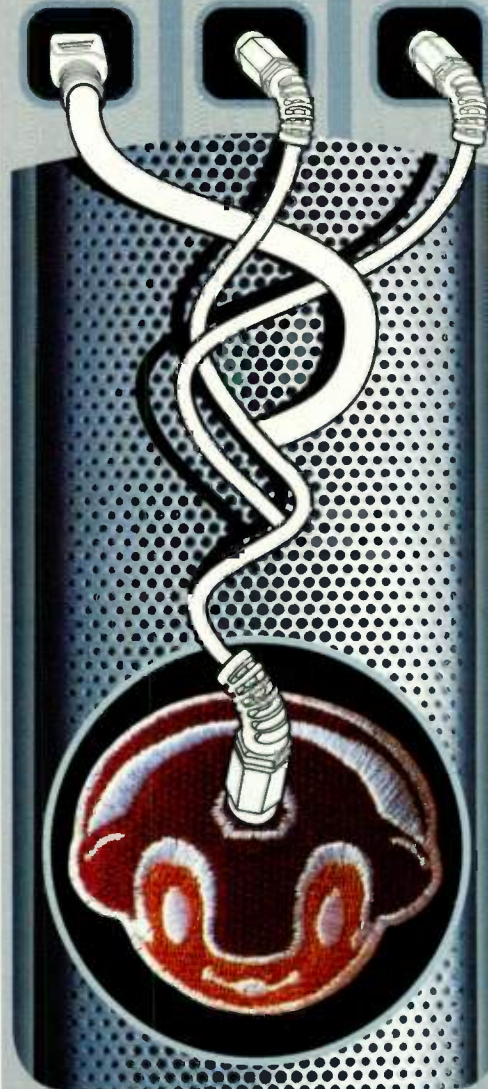
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"I've become more and more determined to have a band where ideas were embraced by everyone."

First of all, there's that communication between Britney Spears and a 14-year-old girl. That circuit, that one thing, is a lot more beautiful than the communication between the Strokes and a 50-year-old rock critic who's afraid to dance. There's a more pure connection there that is kind of awesome. There's no awesomeness to the connection between the Strokes and a rock critic."

How music makes that connection is all in the manipulation of that circuitry. "Whoever creates the music or the environment of teen pop, they do it in what's understood as being as this direct and motivated way, aimed right at this 14-year-old girl's heart. They go somehow, whether it's through marketing, or all the peripheral stuff, but somehow the intent is pretty much a straight line. And I don't have that ability; I'm not comfortable with it if I do.

it doesn't happen—it's what I love to do, and have done my whole life—but putting music on at home, I don't know if I've had the same experiences that felt like the randomness of hearing the song on the radio, or walking into some bar when I was growing up in Belleville and hearing country songs on the jukebox. Having that distance between, being drawn to it, mesmerized by it. The attention it forces you to have to filter stuff out and work to collaborate with [the music]. [At home] you get distracted by yourself. You get distracted by the act of deciding what you want to play and picking out a piece of plastic, putting it in a machine, turning it on, deciding how loud it should be, where you want to sit. You're thinking that you have so much control over this listening experience, and the thing you should be most concerned about controlling is your attention."

Tweedy worships the randomness. If his ideas on listening to music read like quantum mechanics, then his thoughts on writing are almost spiritual. Even as Tweedy fumbles with wrapping the uneaten half of the outsized corned-beef sandwich from the famous, tourist-trap deli across the street, looking like a grade-school kid with the errant collars of his shirt poking out of the neck of his worn sweater, he's trying to convey that creating music is a gift, and bands are how people work to be worthy of it.

"Real writing happens without being aware of it. You're dependant upon not knowing where stuff comes from. I don't know how you get excited about stuff without some element of 'How did I do that? Was that really me?' That's just surrendering that authoritative approach to writing, like this idea that your ego is so much in charge of it that you possess it or own it. That it's really coming from you. It's an illusion. I think artists get really good at arranging things and creating a vision esthetically for things that are given to them—framing the stuff that they get and displaying it with good lighting. But other than that, the source material doesn't belong to anybody."

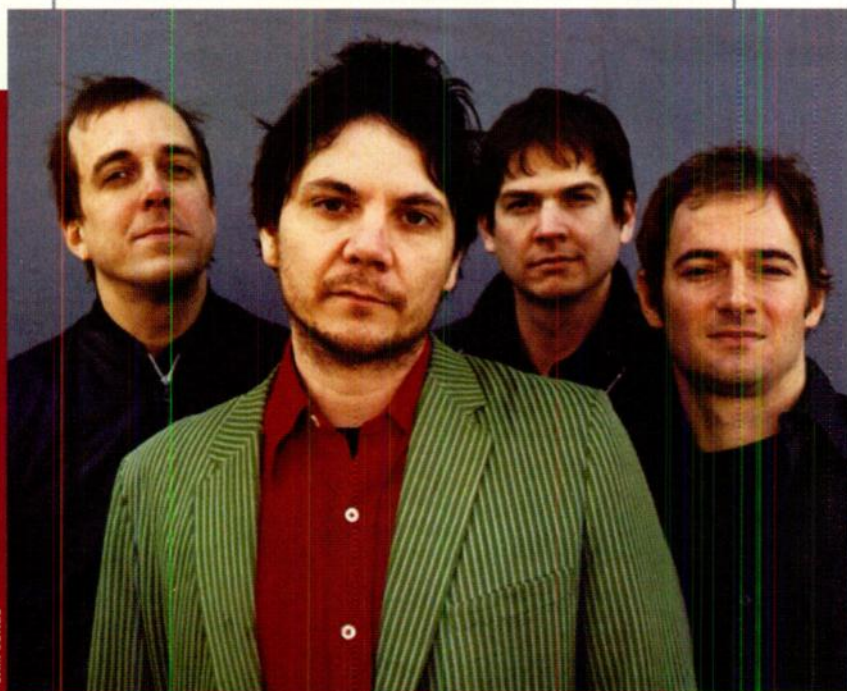
Tweedy's sentences, the ones that don't tumble over one another, end with a brittle laugh. It's a rasping chuckle bashful at his own insight and seriousness—a barroom "but what the fuck do I know" tic. He doesn't seem like a frontman for what's becoming an iconic American band. "I shake like a toothache when I hear myself sing," he sings on "Ashes Of American Flags." But then, after the months of being shunted through the bowels of the music business, of not really knowing how to say goodbye to longtime collaborators, he knows what works for him.

"I don't think that I've consciously made not commercial records. I think I made records that I really thought I'd like to hear. I've never made some distinction that I'm so superior or so different from everybody that they wouldn't want to hear it. I actually kind of admire people that can do that. Like aim for a target and hit it. That's a weird thing for me. I've only been able to hit any targets I've set for myself by not aiming at them." **NMM**

I'm more comfortable with hoping, trusting in the more random approach. That's why I'm kind of interested in like, putting Morse Code on records. It's kind of like the same thing, or feels the same."

That added bit of noise that collects in the corners of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*—the name itself coming from a shortwave radio sample, a disembodied voice reading off coordinates at the end of the second-to-last track, "Poor Places"—provides perspective on the music. It's the human figure in the photograph of the landscape that shows you how huge the mountain is. It's also a way of making people hear music in a new way, in hopes of communicating something deeper.

"People get in their own way most of the time," Tweedy says. "Put on a piece of music at home, and you're probably less likely to make the same kind of impact on yourself. I'm not saying that



SAM JONES




WILLIAM SEIDEL, RYAN WEBBER, DAVEY VONBODHLEN, DAM O'DIER, JASON GREWIKOW

Promises, promises

The Promise Ring was the emo band, to both fans and detractors, until they figured out the more they stayed the same, the more things changed.

STORY: DYLAN SIEGLER • PHOTO: STEVEN CARTY

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

News traveled fast in Austin the night Davey vonBohlen collapsed onstage at the Acoustic Cafe. Somebody saw him grasp his head in his hands, somebody heard that the paramedics showed up. That is, maybe it happened that way. Because someone else said he stumbled over an amp during a song, or he might just have had a headache, forgotten the lyrics to a verse and ended the show. It had only been 18 months since vonBohlen underwent multiple surgeries to eradicate a base-ballish (yet somehow harmless) brain tumor, so whatever it was, no one wanted to be part of the rock show that finished him off. A morbid curiosity fueled the rumor mill—fans and friends were genuinely worried, and the others, well, who wants to be reminded of mortality on their seventh can of Shiner Bock? Nothing brings back your inhibitions like a potentially fatal disease. The Promise Ring, a usual target of choice when dissing all things emo, was suddenly, reverently, off-limits.

That was a change, because in Austin, at the annual rock industry Mardi Gras that is the South By Southwest festival (where Davey's collapse stumble-headache went down), most had already heard advance CDs of the Promise Ring's fourth full-length, *Wood/Water*. Sure, the joke had gone, Davey's tumor hadn't succeeded in ending the Promise Ring, so the band went and made a record that would seal the deal, a slow, strummy, soulful record devoid of power-pop hooks—as the press release proclaimed, "more emo, less core."

Attendees at the first of the Milwaukee band's two appearances in Austin had started out skeptical, arms crossed, and then had actually heckled; vonBohlen looked discouraged. It seemed like a no-win juncture for the band: They could have



“Maybe the fact that I was always in a bad mood, grumpy and in pain didn’t help the situation.”

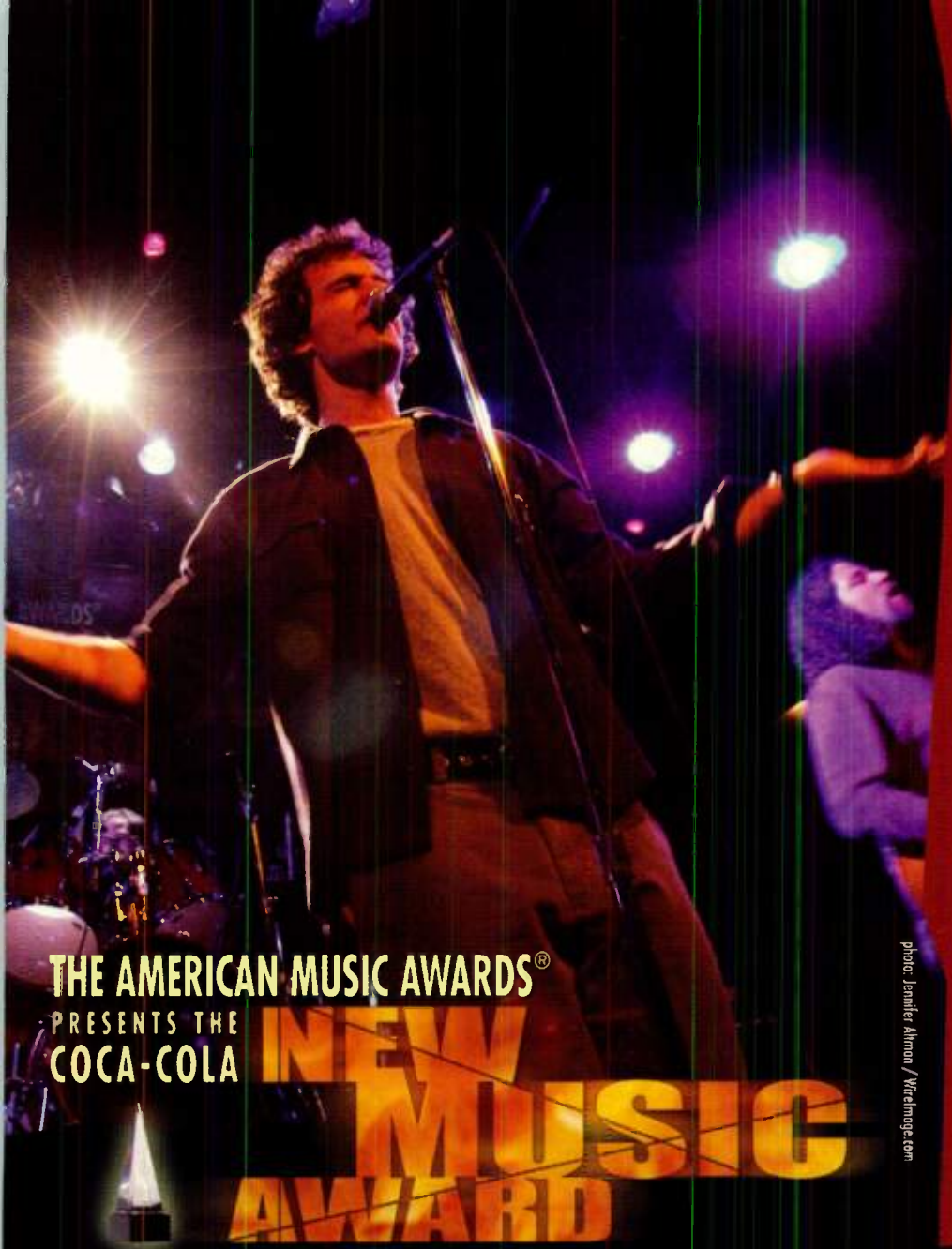
made another emo-defining record of fast changes and pogoable choruses (the type where “no matter how well we would have done [it], Matthew Sweet would still be kicking our ass,” as vonBohlen puts it), and people would have hated them for stagnating. Instead, they wrote grown-up, risky songs that mined everything from Mercury Rev to dancehall and R&B—and fans as well as critics seemed to hate them for evolving. For the band, though, evolving was the only option after record number three, 1999’s *Very Emergency*. “We wanted [that album] to be simple and catchy, but it turned out annoyingly simple and catchy,” says vonBohlen. And that’s tumor or no tumor. He swears that his April 2000 brush with death by meningioma did not induce any mature, anti-pop revelations, nor did it prompt the migration from emo haven Jade Tree to the genreless Anti/Epitaph, home of Tom Waits and Merle Haggard. “We ran into the wall long before I was ill, and maybe the fact that I was always in a bad mood, grumpy and in pain didn’t help the situation at all. But we started writing [*Wood/Water*] thinking it’s either be adventurous or break up,” he explains. “Me and [guitarist] Jason [Gnewikow] talked about it a lot: How do you know when you’re washed up? We weren’t really into playing, writing or anything about being in this band. Having a little time to breathe during my time off”—in the two and a half years before that, the band had averaged one show about every three days—“we thought, why don’t we try and kinda distance ourselves from ourselves and do something else.”

On Anti’s dime, the band ditched longtime producer J. Robbins of Jawbox/Burning Airlines and shackled up in England with Stephen Street, who worked with the Smiths in the ‘80s and whose arrangements are directly responsible for the lo-fi U2 sweep of “Size Of Your Life” and the homestyle Oasis pulse of “Stop Playing Guitar,” among other curveballs. “It’s a luxury that’s never been afforded to us—somebody who has a completely outside opinion forcing their ideas onto your record. J.

Robbins is almost too close to the band; we really felt like we needed someone who didn’t know who we were.” No matter how “Say Goodbye Good” hits you—and the Winans-style gospel guest-crooner has raised some eyebrows—you won’t doubt that Street was in the dark about what the Promise Ring’s known for Stateside. That could be behind the excess crowd aggression at the band’s recent shows, up to and including the heckling in Austin. “The last four or five shows have seen disarray of some sort, and the last two I’ve jumped into the crowd and escorted someone out,” says vonBohlen. “Like, ‘What’s the matter, did they charge you five bucks for a beer? Someone bump into your girlfriend?’” Maybe, but more likely, those malcontents came for the aforementioned core and ended up with the you-know-what.

Which brings us to that night at the Acoustic Café—what actually happened? “It was disorienting, I kinda lost it, I kinda blacked out,” remembers vonBohlen after a couple of weeks of reflection and healthy shows, back at home with his wife and his pug puppy. “It was one of those slow-motion things where people are going, ‘He’s not singing...’ and I couldn’t make words anymore, or I couldn’t get the words out of my mouth. I got one or two words out, but I felt like my head was going to explode—maybe from embarrassment. So I thought, I’ll take this verse off, take a breath. So I stepped back, took a few more breaths, but then I kept going backwards and fell into my amp. I put my head down and that was it.” That was it? He was alright? “Everyone’s really protective of me, so the next thing I knew the ambulance was there, and I’m like, ‘I’m okay now.’ I had a cold, it was four in the morning. We’d played a late show the night before, too, so the tank was empty, sort of.

“And hey,” vonBohlen pauses, mischievously, “we went to South By Southwest to promote the record, right? Drama promotes records. Why not fall on your face? This brain tumor thing is running a little thin, though,” he reflects. “We might have to go back to just playing shows.” **NMM**



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SUSANA BACA

Espirituivo

Luaka Bop



Recorded live in New York in the wake of 9/11, Peruvian singer Baca's third album stands as both an intimate meditation on life's fragilities and a celebration of existence. There's a greater depth and grace to her voice, bringing a breathless vulnerability to disc openers "La Noche Y El Día" and "Si Me Quitaran Totalmente Todo," before stepping with verve into the Afro-Peruvian tradition with the rhythmic "Caracunde." Yankee guests John Medeski (keyboards) and Marc Ribot (guitar) add some downtown atmosphere to the proceedings, sliding into the spaces around Baca's band, and imparting texture to "Les Feuilles Mortes" and dirty jazz-funk to "Se Me Van Los Pies." Baca's vocals are a regal understatement throughout, allowing the sadness of "Aparacion" to hang in the air, or flowing through Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue" like rippling water. Even when she's far outside her usual comfort zone, as on her cover of Björk's "Anchor Song," she brings a presence and melody that translates the song into something universal. Maybe it was the circumstance of the session, but with *Espirituivo*, Susana Baca has reached the stage where the diva's crown fits naturally on her head. It might have been made in uncertain times, but this is a record that firmly believes in the future. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.luakabop.com/susana_baca

File Under

Perfect Peruvian magic

R.I.Y.L.

Virginia Rodrigues, Bebel

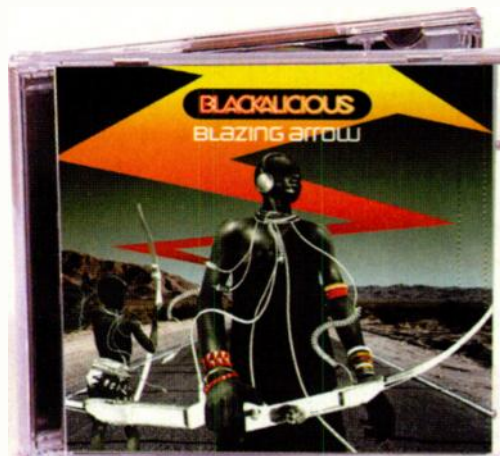
Gilberto, Cesaria Evora

BLACKALICIOUS

Blazing Arrow

MCA

With ever-mutating cadences, humanist dogma, reflective poetics, über-syncopated battle raps, tricky word games and even trickier beats, the latest record by Bay Area hip-hop revisionists Blackalicious is indeed a *Blazing Arrow*—and an indie-hop masterstroke. ("Indie," of course, refers to an esthetic choice, and certainly not their fancy new MCA digs.) Interestingly, the two members of Blackalicious manage to sculpt a distinct vision amidst a diverse sonic palette, even though it's impossible to ignore the overwhelming guest-star laundry list: Saul Williams, Zach De La Rocha, 66 percent of Dilated Peoples, Ben Harper, cup-of-instant-cred Gil Scott-Heron, the increasingly ubiquitous Miho Hatori, Sean Lennon, Chali 2na and ?uestlove—was Macy Gray busy? The internal-power-obsessed, mos deft lyricist Gift Of Gab treats art, therapy, criticism and entertainment as equals in his complex mindframe; so songs that examine physical, literal and metaphorical manifestations of spiritual freedom can seamlessly saddle up to classic Cali cipher-ready combat rhymes. Chief Xcel's production follows Gab's derailed trains of thought accordingly, from lush Pete Rock-isms and bubbly Automator erraticism to scratchy unearthed funk and neo-soul workouts. Whether rapping an anti-"Breaks" list of feel-good stuff, boasting about being the "Paragraph President," introspectively examining old flames for self-improvement or free-forming about the periodic table, Blackalicious is conflicted in the most harmonic way possible. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Link

www.blackalicious.com

File Under

Indie-hop introspection

R.I.Y.L.

Latyrx, Souls Of Mischief,

Dilated Peoples

ELVIS COSTELLO

When I Was Cruel

Island

Fair-weather Elvis Costello fans haven't exactly been pumped up about his more sophisticated artistic endeavors in the last few years. Well, boo hoo, Elvis doesn't give two fucks what you think, and the barking, biting *When I Was Cruel* says as much. Note: If the slow-burning "Alibi" is about you, might we suggest leaving the country, any country. *When I Was Cruel* is EC's rowdiest, if not best, effort in nearly a decade. Blunt and unvarnished, the album was written chiefly on a cheap electric guitar and an even cheaper drum machine, a device that challenged Costello's voice to explode with more spit than polish. On record, the sampler and beatbox get help from the Attractions (except *bassist non grata* Bruce Thomas) as Elvis unloads a fierce brew of spite and skill ("Dissolve" and "Tear Off Your Own Head (It's A Doll Revolution)") that's sure to shame a younger crowd of pallid British rockers. Not that there aren't loftier artistic itches being scratched here as well. The horn charts on "15 Petals" reveal his thorny genius and the lengthy title track lifts a sample from an Italian film soundtrack, providing a sultry noir backdrop for a series of brutal confessions and accusations. To be this wise and wicked is a dangerous thing. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



Link

www.elviscostello.info

File Under

Caution: filling is vitriolic

R.I.Y.L.

Elvis' *Blood And Chocolate*,
Latin Playboys, Joe Strummer

RADIO 4

Gotham!

Gern Blandster.



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Gang Of Four, the Clash,
Primal Scream, !!!

Listeners have waited a long time for someone to fill the hole left by the fall of the Clash. Most bands who've tried, like Primal Scream or (International) Noise Conspiracy, come close with their messages but never quite made the leap on the songs side—now, finally, we have Radio 4's *Gotham!* This is the record that *Combat Rock* almost was: an amalgam of Gang Of Four's hack-and-slash funk, Mission Of Burma's herky-jerky rhythms and the Clash's knack for infusing incendiary rhetoric with classically hummable hooks, all tied together with a bow of Lower East Side grit. Need convincing? "Eyes Wide Open" achieves the perfect balance of lo-fi disco grooves and tales of seedy NYC club life; "Save Our City" casts singer/bassist Anthony Roman's sing/shouting over an infectious bassline and pounding drum-machine beats; on "The Movies," he channels the spirit of Strummer so well that it sounds like Joe is guesting on the track. Just like their forebears, Radio 4's experiments outside their regular genre are among their most compelling, especially on tracks like the dub-inflected "Pipe Bombs," where Roman's reggae basslines meld seamlessly with Tommy Williams's swimming guitar textures. While their influences are easily traced, Radio 4 gives them their own distinct stamp, without any of the posturing or the calculated air of many contemporaries plumbng the past for inspiration. Thanks, we needed that. >>>TOM MALLON



SARAH SHANNON

Sarah Shannon

Casa



Sarah Shannon's operatic training got her nowhere with '90s indie-pop underachievers Velocity Girl. The singer often seemed to be struggling mightily to permeate the D.C. band's dense canopy of grainy, fuzzed-out guitars. But on her self-titled solo debut, Shannon finds her voice amid a cushiony patchwork of austere string and horn accompaniment, confessional piano balladry (think Carole King, not Tori Amos), jazzy introspection and the occasional college-rock digression. Clocking in at under 45 minutes, *Sarah Shannon* is a remarkably lean ride, especially given the sheer amount of stylistic ground it covers. Shannon has considerable help from her producer and writing partner, former Pedro The Lion drummer Blake Wescott, whose tasteful keyboards punctuate the coolly impressionistic "Down," "Anyone" and "When You Live Life Alone." The tunes' airy, restrained arrangements and coaxing horns lure the singer down sultry, swinging side streets, leaving her exposed and vulnerable—and all the better for it. "I'll Run Away" is restrained piano accompaniment and plaintive flugelhorn solo jibe perfectly with the lyrics' ruminative rainy-day setting. "Heaven Got Wider" defies gravity with its billowy Wurlitzer and toothsome "doo-doo-doo-eee-ooo" backing vocals. "Are You Far Enough" is the catchiest of the 10 tracks, even if its standard guitar-pop format may be more representative of Shannon's past than her future—a future that's sounding more interesting by the minute. >>>HOBART ROWLAND

Link

www.sarahshannon.com

File Under

Slower Velocity

R.I.Y.L.

Mary Lorson And Saint Low,
Tanya Donnelly, Carole King

SONGS: OHIA

Didn't It Rain

Secretly Canadian

Sometimes it takes more than 12 bars to express the blues—just because Songs: Ohia's central character, Jason Molina, discards the traditional form doesn't mean he isn't playing a beautiful bastard version of it. Much like Neil Young's *On The Beach*, an album that serves as the blueprint for much of today's two- and three-chord sadcore mopers, *Didn't It Rain* obsesses and loiters on certain chords and tones that make the blues a very personal thing. Recorded live in a room in South Philadelphia without overdubs, the album is arguably a concept piece about the band's hometown of Chicago (as a nod to the city's enfant terrible recording engineer "Steve Albini's Blues" might indicate). The atmosphere is casual: Downcast words are spoken and sung conversationally as if the band were sitting in a circle around a comforting fire. Occasionally, the exchanges catch a spark and phrases are repeated in frustration over the apparent communication breakdown. Small arrangement shifts throughout act as sudden bursts of light enlivening the monochromatic grays: the ominous sawing of the cello throughout "Ring The Bell," the subtle, graceful harmonies of Jennie Benford and Jim Krewson (of Jim & Jenny And The Pinetops) during the title track. It's music taken to the existential edge where excitement is just a whisper away. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



Link

www.secretlycanadian.com

File Under

Haunted houses

R.I.Y.L.

Bonnie Prince Billy, Neil Young,
Mark Lanegan

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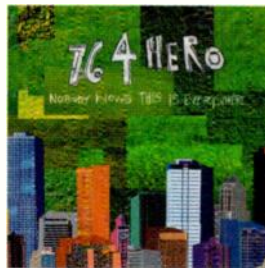
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- PAUL WESTERBERG/GRANDPABOY
- NEIL YOUNG



Link

www.tigerstylerecords.com

File Under

Secrets made for sharing

R.I.Y.L.

Magic Magicians, Superchunk, latter-day Flaming Lips

764-HERO

Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere Tiger Style
If slow and steady does indeed win the race, these Seattle-bred indie rockers best clear some space in their trophy rooms. After six years of development, the reconfigured three-piece (bass player Robin P, touring partner in Modest Mouse, takes the place of ex-Beck member James Bertram) has managed to place their fourth full-length smack in the sweet spot between their dynamic, lo-fi 1996 debut and 2000's immediately accessible *Weekends Of Sound*. The album title, a play on Neil Young And Crazy Horse's *Everyone Knows This Is Nowhere*, makes the

most sense on "The Long Arm Of The Law," where the dust clouds created by twangy Southern guitar lines and swirling Wurlitzer notes practically cause your eyes to water. The bluesy, atonal electric piano keys and shuffling hi-hat pacing of "Satellites" is like revisiting the Rolling Stones while the White Stripes smoke dope and take note. Frontman John Atkins's love of language has never been so present; clever turns of phrase like "tongues tied in bows for effect" spot all 10 tracks. But beware, the songs do take some time; these are not overly eager fast friends, but rather reserved acquaintances who only reveal themselves when they're sure that you're worth their time. >>>LAURA CASSIDY LEARMONTH



ANTIPOP CONSORTIUM

Arrhythmia Warp

Hip-hop's essence is in the boom, the bip, the proverbial boom-bap and occasionally a little wicki-wicki-wicki. But (if their appellation isn't indication enough), Antipop Consortium feels more comfortable with the skzzzzzz and the click-ick-ick-ick-ick. Comparing *Arrhythmia*'s bloop, blips, gurgles and gargles to APC's IDM-heavy Warp labelmates wouldn't do their erratic hullabaloo justice. APC prefer lush tweaks and more expansive squall, redolent of the classic electro-acoustic compositions of Edgard Varèse looped and funk-ed-up as the soundtrack to stream-of-consciousness

Link

www.warprecords.com

File Under

%*-0-=%#**%^** ,y'all!

R.I.Y.L.

Cannibal Ox, Analog Brothers, Prefuse 73

hip-hop abstractions like "I'm keeping pressures swollen/ Heightened pressure in the hemoglobin/ Swallow the nitrate." "Dead In Motion" pans microscopic glitches as APC "slash a rapper with a protractor," while the cartoony proto-Atari sputters of "Mega" inexplicably devolve into comic opera. In a more minimalist vein, "We Kill Soap Scum" sounds like rapping inside a washing machine, distortion and gapping suppressing all hope of escape. Although certainly anti-pop, APC are also anti-expectation: Kindly sneaking in some approachable numbers between the sputterfunk (the bongo-break-driven "Eveelz" could be a Neptunes-esque banger, if it weren't for the vocal distortion and rhymes about cosines, back muscles and Jupiter's lakes). Stockhausen is in the house, and APC's rockin' *musique concrète* for the concrete jungle. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



THE APEX THEORY

Topsy-Turvy *DreamWorks*

The Apex Theory are trying their damndest to inject some life into the contemporary metal scene. The Los Angeles four-piece have conceived an ambitious debut full-length filled with mature ruminations on the daily grind ("Mucus Shifters"), self-empowerment ("Right Foot"), inner conflict ("In Books") and every other emotion in between. Like fellow Armenian-Americans System Of A Down, the Apex Theory thrives on forming what seems like jam material into deftly orchestrated tech-rock. Their already overplayed single "Shhh...(Hope Diggy)" which appears on both *Topsy-Turvy*

and their 2001 EP, is representative of the basic Apex sound: Vocalist Andy Khachaturian riddles machine-gun spoken-word verses with alliterative blurbs that condemn a stifling society while bassist David Hakopyan floats a fluid bass over Sammy J. Watson's hyper, snare-saturated drumline. At other turns, their jagged prog tendencies give way to head-bobbing grooves, as on the ethnic-flavored high point "Apossibly," which is bolstered by guitarist Art Karamian's sweet single-note melody line. More times than not on *Topsy-Turvy*, this is how it goes—finesse prevails over raw heaviness. With the success of like-minded metallers Incubus and Linkin Park before them, the Apex Theory just might be given the chance to put out another decent record in a year's time. >>>DYLAN P. GADINO

[Link](#)

www.theapextheory.com

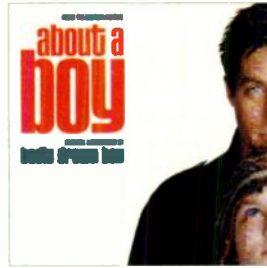
[File Under](#)

[Not nü metal—nice metal](#)

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

[Incubus, Linkin Park,](#)

[System Of A Down](#)



BADLY DRAWN BOY

About A Boy Soundtrack

Artist Direct-Twisted Nerve-XI

With just one full-length album to his credit—the Mercury Music Prize-winning *The Hour Of Bewilderbeast*—Damon Gough (a.k.a. Badly Drawn Boy) was enlisted by writer Nick Hornby (*High Fidelity*) to score the soundtrack to his latest novel-turned-film *About A Boy*. How Hugh Grant will fit alongside Gough's melancholy shuffles should be surreal. But as standalone compositions—nine lyrical songs and seven instrumentals—the elements flow effortlessly. Like Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous, Gough works best in the quiet corners

[Link](#)

www.badlydrawnboy.co.uk

[File Under](#)

[Jack of all trades](#)

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

[Sparklehorse, Nick Drake,](#)

[Elliott Smith, Eric Matthews](#)

where sounds emerge from under a heavy shroud, leaking out in whispers and measured, often sonically manipulated tongues. The several short instrumental passages, quick bursts of piano-tinkered notes, are playful, the acoustic-based tunes ("A Minor Incident") are inspired and the orchestration by producer Tom Rothrock (Beck, Elliott Smith) adds a cinematic dimension throughout. However, Rothrock's influence is also problematic. Gough already has a chameleon-like ability to adapt to his surroundings: Nick Drake one minute, Michael Stipe and *Automatic*-era REM another, and the whiny psychedelia of the Flaming Lips the next ("Silent Sigh"). Here, blindfold tests show Gough sounding a little too much like Elliott Smith for "Something To Talk About." Let Badly Drawn Boy keep his autonomy, or else he's in danger of becoming nothing more than An Incredible Simulation. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



PRECIOUS BRYANT

Fool Me Good *Terminus*

Precious Bryant was born 60 years ago in Talbot County, Georgia, and she learned the guitar and the blues from her remarkably musical family. Folklorist George Mitchell caught up with her in 1969, did some field recordings and coaxed her into playing some gigs, but this is her first album release. She's supposedly a living example of something called the "lower Chattahoochee River Valley" blues style; listen to her guitar playing and it's clear that she's a Piedmont blues stylist. There's not an ounce of Delta blues influence in her playing, either.

Her guitar chops are a dead match for North Carolinian Etta Baker, but unlike Ms. Baker, Precious is also a fine singer. She's the real deal—a natural-born country blues artist. Her voice is clear and buoyant, her guitar playing is fluid and detailed, and her material is a mix of originals and standards such as Blind Willie McTell's "Broke And Ain't Got A Dime," "Black Rat Swing" and "Don't Let The Devil Ride." Originals such as the title track and "Wadn't I Scared" are so thoroughly conceived in the style of her traditional material that it's impossible to tell them apart. Precious was well named by her parents; listening to her country blues is like finding a hidden treasure. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

[Link](#)

www.terminusrecords.com

[File Under](#)

[Precious blues](#)

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

[John Jackson, Elizabeth Cotton,](#)

[Rev. Gary Davis](#)



BUFFALO DAUGHTER

Emperor Norton

Buffalo Daughter begin *I*, their first new album since 1998's *New Rock*, as though they were staging a game of rock trivia: "Ivory" quotes the bassline from Talking Heads' "Once In A Lifetime," "I Know" pays homage to Laurie Anderson's tape-looped vocals, "Earth Punk Rockers" lifts the guitar riff from, of all things, Led Zeppelin's very un-punk "Kashmir." But after those fun, if all-too-obvious, references, the Japanese trio settles in for a glorious hopscotch through synth-pop, club beats, lounge grooves and pure pop pleasure. While the anything-goes sense of appropriation typical of Japanese pop remains, the borrowings become less overt, less obtrusive. "Volcanic Girl" features a careening guitar hook worthy of the Eurythmics; "Five Minutes" ticks to a minimalist groove reminiscent of Prince's "Kiss"; the ecstatic "Discotheque Du Paradis" could be a forgotten Saint Etienne club anthem. There's a quartet of very Stereolabish space-age bachelor (uh, bachelorette?) pad tracks, including "A Completely Identical Dream," which gets wrapped in a Tortoise shell courtesy of John McEntire's assistance. *I* would suffer from an identity crisis if it weren't for the unifying soprano vocals. The three women harmonize throughout, sometimes in ethereal melodies, sometimes in clipped, staccato syllables (the album credits include "supervisors for English grammar and expression"), and, ultimately, *I*'s multi-faceted personality coalesces into something borrowed, something new. >>>STEVE KLINGE

[Link](#)

www.buffalodaughter.com

[File Under](#)

[Kitsch-free kitchen-sink J-pop](#)

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

[Cornelius, Stereolab,](#)

[At Home With The Groovebox](#)



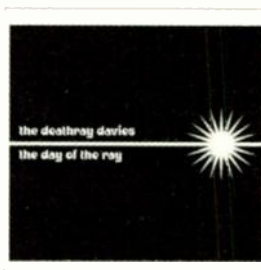
CAURAL

Stars On My Ceiling *Chocolate Industries*

Zachary Mastoon, the 24-year-old sound collagist who records as Caural, claims a childhood love of rap. But it's less a lifelong immersion for him than a wistful memory: When breakbeats appear in his music, they emerge from the ether and then recede. This blurry relationship to hip-hop makes the Chicago-area-based Caural hard to define and his second album a small treasure. Mastoon works with samples, but he's neither low-tech spontaneous like a turntablist, mixing sounds on the fly, nor high-tech crafty like a rap producer, looping hooks on PCs. Built only

with a sampler-sequencer, the music of Caural can be called mid-tech, which may explain its warmth. Mastoon finds a burst of sound and then discovers the melody and counterpoint by restating it in different contexts. The result is dreamlike and more effective than if he'd just dropped fat beats over it. The wandering "Lilac" contrasts piano chords over so many sounds, it's like Mastoon can't decide which juxtaposition sounds best. The danger with creating this kind of album is where it ends up—most electronic acts don't set out to make unobtrusive background music, but sometimes that's how they're remembered; just ask St. Germain. But Mastoon seems to want to create rich background music, and there's no shame in his modest success. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY

Link
N/A
File Under
Mid-tech sound collages
R.I.Y.L.
Cornelius, the Avalanches,
Ryuichi Sakamoto, Moby



DEATHRAY DAVIES

The Day Of The Ray *Idol*

There will always be something inherently endearing about bands that rely not on gimmicky song structures, far-out instrumentation or an image-conscious shtick, but on—pardon the cliché—three chords, catchy melodies and an uncontrollable energy. Coming straight from the heart of Texas (Dallas, actually) the Deathray Davies do just that. Their third full-length, *The Day Of The Ray*, is the rare type of record that reminds listeners that there's no reason rock 'n' roll can't kick a little ass and be a lot of fun at the same time, calling to mind the glory days of guitar-driven pop bands

fronted by the likes of this group's namesake, or even Hüsker Dü. The harder side of these 13 tracks is brought on primarily by the far-from-polished production, which thankfully does nothing to clean up the fuzzed-out guitar riffs, growling basslines and bottom-heavy drumming that will win over fans of mid-'90s indie rockers like Archers Of Loaf. What truly distances *The Day Of The Ray* from the enormous field of garage-rock bands currently strutting their stuff, though, is their admirable ability to juxtapose that grittiness with bouncy keyboard sounds, lighthearted yet slyly intelligent lyrics and vocal melodies that will stay with you for days and days. >>>MIKE CONKLIN

Link
www.deathraydavies.com
File Under
Danceable garage rock
R.I.Y.L.
The Kinks, the Strokes,
the Beach Boys



DIANOGAH

Millions Of Brazilians *Southern*

On their third LP, Chicago's Dianogah have augmented their dual bass-plus-drums setup to include guitars, synthesizer and most notably the spacious recording techniques of Tortoise mastermind John McEntire. A far cry from 2000's Steve Albini-recorded *Battle Champions*, the new disc is a less claustrophobic song cycle that allows the two bassists to weave loose circles of thick counterpoint melodies while drummer Kip McCabe unleashes constantly shifting and unyieldingly propulsive beats. Contributions from McEntire, Rachel Grimes (the Rachels)

and John Upchurch (the Coctails) add some texture to the record, but the trio has also become increasingly adept at creating captivating instrumental music with nothing but their own mildly unorthodox setup. Eschewing the vocals that peppered some of their last disc, *Millions Of Brazilians* takes a more uncompromising and non-verbal approach. But Dianogah's penchant for deep rock grooves, funky mid-tempo workouts and slinky chilled-out wanderings is enough to keep listeners guessing, and the ever-changing landscape is able to tell its own engaging story without a single word. It's a noteworthy feat to be soothing and challenging on the same record, but Dianogah pull it off without a backwards glance and in the process prove that post-rock doesn't actually have to be boring. >>>PETE D'ANGELO

Link
www.southern.com
File Under
Night of the living bassheads
R.I.Y.L.
Don Caballero, Tortoise,
Trans Am



DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND

Medicated Magic *Ropeadope*

Mardi Gras is a state of mind for the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, the New Orleans street-bred octet celebrating 25 years of earthy, horn-heavy celebrations of the hometown sound. Their Crescent City groove thang, no matter how familiar, remains infectious and viable, as demonstrated on the Craig Street-produced "Medicated Magic," a sticky salute to Big Easy musical traditions. "Ain't Nothin' But A Party," built on Julius McKee's rubbery tuba incantation and a boys-in-the-band chorus, is a funky, syncopated showcase for in-house talent, particularly tenor saxophonist Kevin Harris and trumpet

Efram Towns, and two relative newcomers, keyboardist Frederick Sanders and trombonist Sammie Williams. That track makes an apropos opener, as the party proper begins next, kicking off with Widespread Panic singer John Bell's raw-throated take on Dr. John's classic hoodoo-rock riff, "Walk On Gilded Splinters." Olu Dara's irresistibly tangy down-home vocals liven John's "Junko Partner," while the Good Doctor himself slips into the festivities with a rambling, chunky version of his "Everything I Do Gon' Be Funky" and the feel-good rumba boogie of Professor Longhair's "Big Chief." The Meters are toasted, too: Robert Randolph's taffy-pulling pedal steel lines top a hyper workout on "Cissy Strut," and DJ Logic tricks up "Africa." Call it the New Orleans music sampler of the year, the perfect appetizer or chaser for Jazz Fest revelry. >>>PHILIP BOOTH

Link
www.rosebudus.com/dozen
File Under
Crescent City brass sass
R.I.Y.L.
Dr. John, the Meters,
Rebirth Brass Band



JULIE DOIRON 

Heart And Crime Jagjaguwar

If frugality is a virtue, Canada's Julie Doiron is among the most righteous singer/songwriters in contemporary music. Her fifth post-Eric's Trip solo LP, *Heart And Crime*, is arranged so lightly and delicately that calling it "sparse" seems like a gross overstatement. Doiron's electric guitar slowly circulates bathwater-warm tones around her misty, sometimes deadpan voice, her slightly folksy tunes sporting plain-Jane lyrics about (lost) love and social inadequacy so laconic that the mid-album cameo of drumbeats on "Sending The Photographs" is a revelation. This and

the intermittent inclusion of additional instruments (including mournful, punctuating horns) all add up to a rather humorless, decidedly unpretentious album of beauty that is, in turn, understated and under-stimulating. Like a highway strip at 3 a.m., Doiron has the power to hypnotize—so much so that anyone with less than a supremely attentive ear may have a hard time differentiating between the record's 12 tracks. More-than-cursory listens, though, reveal highlights, like the ultimately uplifting ode to loss, "The One That You Love," and the heartbreaking, molasses-slow piano ballad "Oh These Walls." While unquestionably dour, Doiron thankfully never comes off as whiney. Her music's too quiet to be obtrusive, but perhaps too unobtrusive to truly challenge. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.jagjaguwar.com

File Under

I could live and mope

R.I.Y.L.

Low, Ida, Cat Power



MARK EITZEL 

Music For Courage & Confidence New West

Can you make a logical progression from the American Music Club to Anne Murray's "Snowbird"? Mark Eitzel means to on *Music For Courage & Confidence*. A poster-boy for indie-rock cred, one wouldn't expect Eitzel to cut a cover album filled with pop tunes like Glen Campbell's "Gentle On My Mind" and Kris Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through The Night." It's a heavy endeavor he's taken on: Nobody could really salvage the syrupy, precious lyrics of "Snowbird." Eitzel cracks under that pressure a fair bit—"Help Me Make It..." suffers from a painfully lethargic delivery. But he succeeds, too: His

Link

www.newwestrecords.com

File Under

Eitzel's latest fling

R.I.Y.L.

American Music Club, Kelly Hogan's *Because It Feel Good*, real slow Las Vegas lounge music

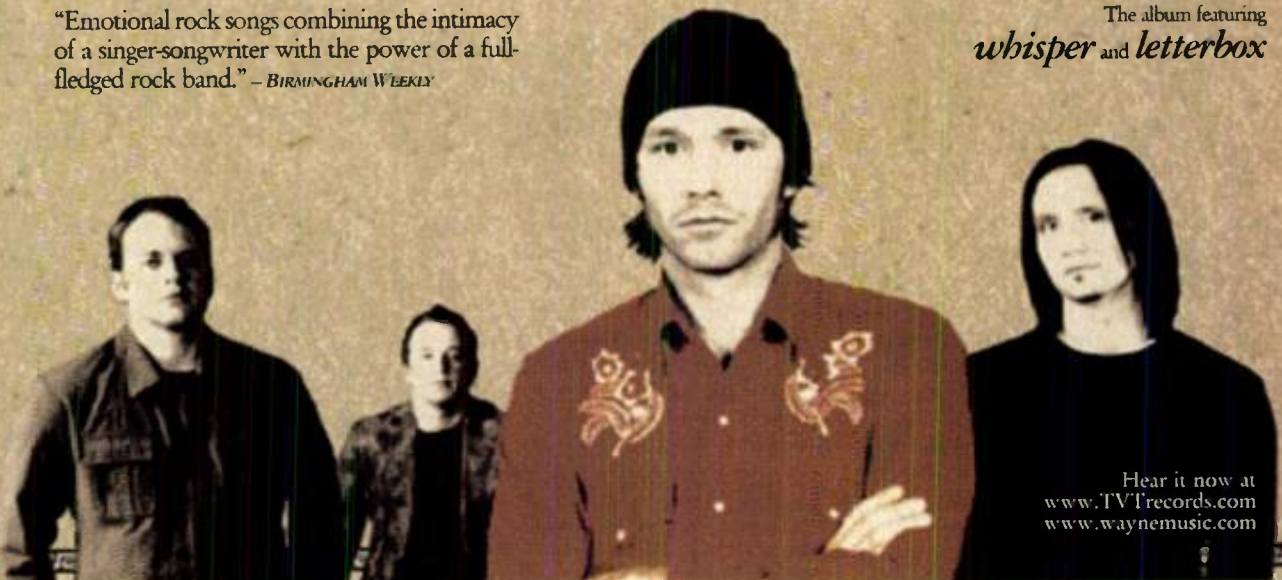
arrangement of Culture Club's "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" has a busy, percussive edge that creates a palpable tension against his lazy, whispered vocal, and he brings an easy feel and a well-phrased sensibility to Campbell's "Gentle On My Mind." Eitzel's also hip enough to abandon his laid-back approach on Curtis Mayfield's "Move On Up"; but it's odd that he invests that song with such emotional energy yet fails to do the same for Bill Withers's "Ain't No Sunshine" or Billie Holiday's "I'll Be Seeing You." The urge to do a collection of atypical songs seems to possess many vocalists at one time or another during their careers. Eitzel's attempt has yielded a mixed result. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

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EL-P

Fantastic Damage *Definitive Jux*

If the streetwise avant-gardisms of RZA production ushered in hip-hop's post-punk phase, then the corrosive, jumbled, distinctively clamorous work of El-P is its very own "no wave." *Fantastic Damage*, the first solo outing by the ex-Company Flow wordsmasher, Cannibal Ox sonic mastermind and Definitive Jux label kingpin, is noisy, gothic, Wagnerian glitch-hop where nothing seems dense enough for its creator. No beat is too layered with prog-scuzz, no couplet has too many incomprehensible abstractions meticulously jammed into a tiny space.

Link
www.defjux.net
 File Under
Mr. Po-mo Co-Flow goes solo
 R.I.Y.L.
Company Flow, Cannibal Ox,
RZA As Bobby Digital

Philip Glassy atmospheric ebbs and flows provide immediate visceral gratification, while ponderous lines like "Get ingested without prejudice/ Daddy's revenge on Oedipus" struggle to be heard under horrific noise. What one can make out from the havoc sounds like Kool G Rap on an LSD binge—allusions to NYC grit ("Deep Space 9mm"), austere extended metaphors for familial corruption ("Stepfather Factory") and confounding love-life insecurities ("Dr. Hell No And The Praying Mantis")—making El-P's trademark squall an apt analogy for his inner turmoil and outer disenchantment. In this glorious muddle, El-P emerges as hip-hop's most po-mo progressivist, finding the intellectual common ground between William S. Burroughs, My Bloody Valentine, Run-D.M.C. and *Metal Machine Music*. It ain't just highly evolved pop-culture referencing when he declares, "I'm the walrus, sitting on my cornflake trying to throw down to the chorus." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



ELF POWER

Creatures *spinART*

Orcs, goblins and Uruks, oh my. High Elf Andrew Rieger isn't kidding around when he says that his lyrics are influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien. His latest batch of hazy dream-pop melodies, *Creatures*, conjures images of demons, sirens, serpents and unnamed beasts that will defeat you in your sleep. The rest of his Athens-based quintet backs up his wispy vocals with intricate instrumentation and cheerful tambourines that veil the foreboding quality of his lyrics. The toe-tapping pop sound comes straight out of the Elephant 6 catalog, but unlike the

Link
www.elfpower.com
 File Under
Hobbit rock
 R.I.Y.L.
Minders, the Sunshine Fix,
Olivia Tremor Control

similar work of the *Minders* or Bill Doss's new band, the *Sunshine Fix*, Elf Power's trademark mythical references make *Creatures* more interesting as a soundtrack to a fairy-tale film, or a companion to the blockbuster *The Lord Of The Rings*. The fuzzy guitars and uncharacteristically tough drums on "Everlasting Scream" could have made a perfect backdrop for some head-to-head wizard vs. Ringwraith wrassling matches, and the sing-song folk of "Visions Of The Sea" could have set the mood for a scenic interlude or some quiet Hobbit bonding. On its own, though, the record doesn't seem to tell a story—it just leaves listeners with a series of cryptic messages backed by eerie carnival music, like Rieger's ominous warning, "Only the creature can you trust." >>>KARA ZUARO



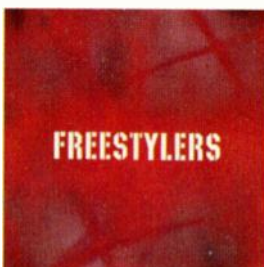
JOHN FORTE

I, John *Transparent*

A former Fugee associate, John Forté is currently serving time in federal prison while he appeals a steep 14-year sentence for drug possession. *I, John*, the follow-up to his 1996 debut, *Poly Sci*, was largely written and recorded in the time between his arrest and the trial, and a sense of despair has necessarily seeped into the music. Take the smooth, acoustic guitar-hooked "Harmonize," which sets its description of the dissolution of a relationship in the past tense. But the best tracks here have a fitfully eclectic spirit, reflecting a certain determination in the face of challenge. With

Link
www.transparentmusic.com
 File Under
Refugee Camp refugee
 R.I.Y.L.
Fugees, Wyclef Jean,
Chocolate Genius

help from a seamlessly integrated, sumptuous Dinah Washington sample, "What A Difference" could jumpstart your day better than a cup of coffee. And the swampy wah-wah of "Trouble Again," featuring a typically comatose cameo from Tricky, continues Forté's project of stretching hip-hop's generic boundaries with almost as much exuberance as Wyclef Jean. Unfortunately, only R&B hardliners will want to acquaint themselves with the lugubrious, pro forma love songs which comprise most of the disc. Even an ace loverman like Babyface would have trouble saving the likes of "Lady" or "How Could I," and the embattled Forté clearly wasn't up to that particular musical challenge. >>>KEVIN JOHN



FREESTYLERS

Pressure Point *Mammoth*

Freestylers don't do anything to further the cause of electronic music, unless you count pushing it into the mainstream. Take "Weekend Song," which takes a hoary pop theme (Easybeats' "Friday On My Mind") and throws Tenor Fly's dancehall-lite rap over a bouncy organ groove that's as sure to stick in your head as it will in the craw of electronic music purists. *Pressure Point* is a populist head-nodder, far from the internecine struggles of the IDM crowd, but still pretty smart. At their best, Freestylers rework b- and rude-boy style points into a very contemporary radio-friendly pastiche. At its worst, it's

Link
www.freestylersonline.com
 File Under
DJ easy rock
 R.I.Y.L.
Lo Fidelity Allstars, Fatboy Slim, Newcleus, Mitsubishi commercials

not terribly distinctive music; at a too-long 72 minutes, some of the ideas, like the vocoder on "Broadcast Channels," grow threadbare. Much depends on the vocalist employed for a particular track. Tenor Fly is used to great advantage on four tracks, and "Calling" profits from Valerie M's vocals, which lie somewhere between Fontella Bass and JC Lodge. On "Told You So," the frappé button is pushed on dancehall star Petra and some old-school wicki-wicki, making for some sassy R&B. Elsewhere, "Blowin Ya Brainz" doesn't really go anywhere, but is that creepy keyboard wash in the beginning sample from *The Warriors*? The pleasures of *Pressure Point* are perfect for a summer afternoon, and as ephemeral. >>>FRANK MANSFIELD



FRENCH KICKS

One Time Bells Startime International

A pop band usually relies on unmistakable hooks, big choruses and a palpable energy to capture an audience's attention. But clearly, Brooklyn's French Kicks have found some effective alternate routes to the same destination. On *One Time Bells*, the quartet's debut full-length, pop-rock conventions are swapped with deftly played mopeisms usually reserved for albums that focus on abstract aerial views rather than hook-laden minutiae. But even when the Kicks are trafficking in seemingly static melodies, they still somehow make their songs come off as

catchy pop ditties. Even their most upbeat turns ("Right In Time," "Where We Went Off") clearly maintain a mod attitude that seems to say, "We're too talented to play mindless pop for the masses." That's how the Kicks thrive—by subtly sandpapering their pop to match the grittiness of life. "Wrong Side" is one such mock pop song, replete with the band's customary sleepy vocals wrapped around dual guitars that trade between throbbing and bleeding throughout. The set closer, "Sunday Night Is Fair," is a beautifully constant melodrama driven by sonic scarcity. And it's the perfect ending to this enigmatic album, quietly pummeling clean pop into an irresistibly deep depression. >>>DYLAN P. GADINO

Link

www.frenchkicks.com

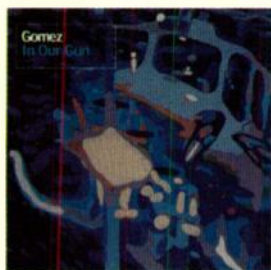
File Under

Frowning pop guys

R.I.Y.L.

Ben Folds Five, Failure,

Centro-Matic



GOMEZ

In Our Gun Virgin

Does Gomez know what they're doing? And if not, is that a bad thing? *In Our Gun* continues the band's folksy kind of experimentation, a sound that puts them in between melodic jam bands and tasty alternative prog types—a Dave Matthews Beta Band. So you get something as slight and lovely as the meditative "Sounds Of Sounds" sidling up against "Army Dub," which sounds like Tricky taking on Traffic. "Shot Shot" throws in everything at once: It's a pop song whose hearty acoustic guitar chug drives to a sweet, big-payoff chorus, but along the way is

overlaid with dirty sax, Theremin, electronic drum boings and chopped up dub squiggles. The vagaries of a band figuring things out as they go are many, however. The title track, with its rough harmonies and distant Hammond echoing in the background, would be a perfect acoustic downer, if only it didn't explode into dissonant raver nonsense at the end. And too often, the noises don't advance the song, appearing seemingly only for their own sake, like the goofy textures drowning the wah-wah on "Drench." *In Our Gun* is a joy when it works, which for those of us who are admitted suckers for Ben Otterwell's sandpappy vocals, is often enough to keep listening to them figure things out. >>>STEVE THOMAS

Link

www.freegomez.com

File Under

Dave Matthews Beta Band

R.I.Y.L.

The Beta Band, Super Furry

Animals, Widespread Panic

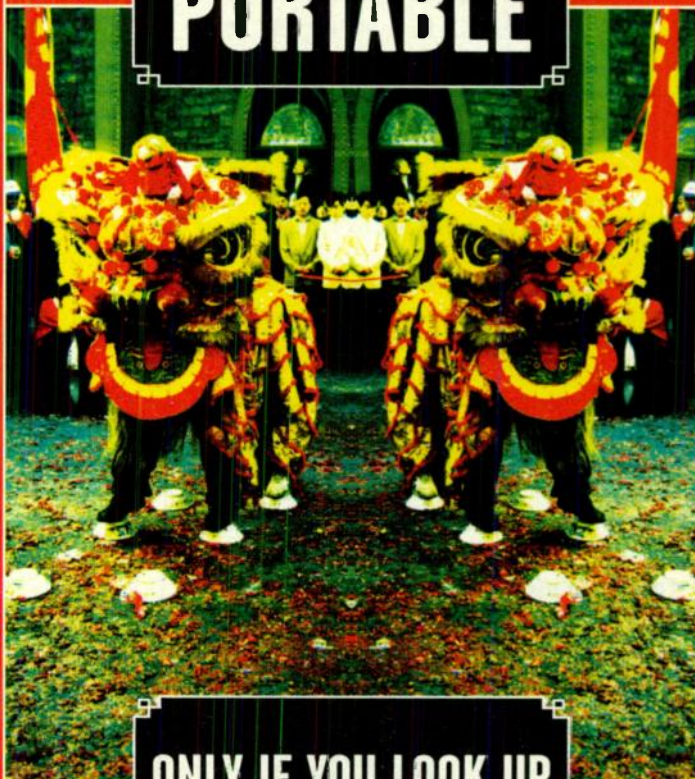
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THE HOLY GHOST

Broken Record Clearly-Cargo

It's cheeky how the Holy Ghost opens their debut LP, *Broken Record*, with a 37-second long snippet that skips and skips at the end. You'd think the Brooklyn quartet were silly, and that you might be settling back for 36 minutes of goofing. Then "Mary Was A Maker" kicks in, scolding you with gritty yawps and explosive snare smashes for underestimating the mature, swaggering rock the Holy Ghost dishes out. Vocalist Christopher Dean Heine alternates between wooing you with soulful wails, a rare non-annoying vibrato weaving its way under your flesh, and squalling like he means to strip the

paint from your walls using his throat alone. But the band's songs aren't as simple as that seesaw might infer; where a lot of post-punk relies on ricocheting dynamic shifts to keep things interesting, every jump and every drop here sounds calculated yet unexpected, perfectly designed to coax you into their mindset. They won't rock out just to wake you or soothe just to comfort your ears—these are rock epics with intentions of their own, studies in moody minor-key guitar strides and inventive beats, clearly influenced by art-rockers like Les Savy Fav but schooled on soul and wrapped in punk-rock grit. Every word and note on *Broken Record* sounds as though it's quivering with energy it can't contain—an energy they'll generously drill into you. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

Link

www.deathtrapbaby.com/

theholyghost

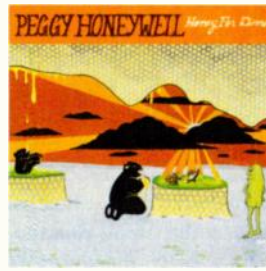
File Under

Art-punk with soul swagger

R.I.Y.L.

Cursive, Les Savy Fav,

Talking Heads, the Clash



PEGGY HONEYWELL

Honey For Dinner Galaxia

Peggy Honeywell has a pretty voice with surprising flashes of depth and an alluring, natural style of delivery. So why does it seem like she should have a thundering rock band pounding her tunes into your brain rather than gently floating them up in this nearly naked, lo-fi country-folk setting? "Red Light Runnin' Baby" and "Darlin' Man," with Honeywell chanting catchy and memorable lines about "Red means faster, faster, faster" or letting a friend know he's "my tropical mango" seem to call for more emphasis, or at least a drummer. But that's not Honeywell's

Link

www.galaxia-platform.com

File Under

Folk arts and crafts

R.I.Y.L.

Lucinda Williams,

Erin McKeown, Sonya Hunter

deal. A visual artist by training, Honeywell performed with her paintings as a backdrop at art exhibitions in Philadelphia before she relocated to Chicago and started focusing more on music. She didn't pick up a guitar until 1999, and she hasn't exactly become Hendrix since. But despite her ambivalence about audio vs. visual on "Puppy Love," she consistently sketches interesting and original pictures with her lyrics. The one cover on the disc is an amusing fracturing of "All Shook Up," the Otis Blackwell cut made famous by Elvis and reduced almost to a children's song by Honeywell. In the end, though, the disc still feels a little too close to the demo it was based on. >>>BILL KISLUK

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

					
TITLE	Blade II: The Soundtrack (Virgin)	The Electronic Tribute To Pink Floyd, Vol. 2 (Vitamin)	Rewind! (Ubiquity)	Chronic Jointz: Da Hitz Vol. One (In The Paint-Koch)	More Dub Infusions (Best Seven-Sonar Kollektiv)
CONCEPT	A <i>Judgment Night</i> -style pairing of rappers and electronic artists	Digital up-and-comers draw a mustache on the Mona Lisa	Old classics retreaded with deep grooves	Blazin hip-hop from hip-hoppers who blaze	In case the title didn't give it away, lots and lots of swampy dub
TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	You bought the <i>Spawn</i> soundtrack and never looked back	Masochists	Those searching for covers that actually don't suck	You think Cypress Hill are philosophers	You like to mellow out and hear people say "brother" a lot
NAMES TO DROP	Eve & Fatboy Slim, Redman & Gorillaz, Ice Cube & Paul Oakenfold	Echocell, Motor Industries, Kinetika (who?)	Yesterdays New Quintet, Beatless, Jack Costanzo	The Pharcyde, Kurupt, KRS-ONE	Reclouse, Roots Manuva, Gus Van Sant & William S. Burroughs
SUMS IT UP	"I Against I" (Mos Def & Massive Attack)	"Brain Damage" (Bug Funny Foundation)	"Golden Brown" (Better Daze)	"Buddah Lovaz" (Bone Thugs-N-Harmony)	"Rainbow Dub" (Williams Traffic feat. James Earl Jones)
VERDICT	Nice try, but phoned-in performances from both sides cripple this comp just like they did <i>Judgment Night</i> .	Tuneless singing, shitty programming, cheesy MIDI strings... In essence, the total opposite of Pink Floyd.	Ubiquity once again demonstrates infinite good taste, updating classics with dusty electric piano and hip-hop beats.	The liner notes say it best: "No music is better to appreciate with a big blunt blazin' than hip-hop."	Of course it's good—it has James Earl mother-fucking Jones on it.



INSIGHT

Updated Software V. 2.5 *Brick*

Up until now, Boston-based hip-hop artist Insight has been best known as a producer for the likes of Mr. Lif, Edan and Jedi Mind Tricks. That should change with the release of *Updated Software V. 2.5*, an ambitious double CD. The MC/producer breaks down the set thematically: The first disc features his fleet MC skills and tricky, inventive musical tracks; the second drops 27 instrumental cuts featuring his sick scratching, tape manipulation, sound effects, samples and tight beats. As an MC, Insight is about empowerment and positivity—there's no hating here. His

language is straightforward, sometimes simply relating a story, as in "Drama," which describes trying to find private peace in an often insane, violent world. And songs like "Voice Of Reason," "Words Of Encouragement" and "Humanity" are an attempt at elevating hip-hop discourse. Half the tracks on the first disc, including the hooky "Mind Shocker" or the defiant "True To The Game," are dedicated to raising hip-hop to another level through constant lyrical and musical invention. Disc two, however, is often nothing more than variations of a groove, and while there's a general sense of playfulness (he often comments on his own beats), some of it is mere filler. Still, Insight creates a strong musical identity and is an artist to take very seriously. >>>KEN CAPOBIANCO

Link

www.brickrecords.com

File Under

Heady mainstream hip-hop

R.I.Y.L.

DJ Premier, Dilated Peoples



RENÉ LACAILLE & BOB BROZMAN

Digdig *World Music Network*

Bob Brozman has made a career of taking his Hawaiian and National steel slide guitars around the world—especially to island nations—and creating spontaneous, genre-bending world-music collaborations. His latest adventure delves into the already genre-bent musical reality of Reunion, an Indian Ocean island that has incorporated people and culture from Africa, Southeast Asia, China, the Arab world and Europe ever since the French colonized it years ago. Animated triplet rhythms—sega, and the older, more African maloya—are the mainstays

here. "Place D'Youville" is typical, with Brozman's high-pitched melodic swoops and pings riding jauntily over a choppy sea of rhythm grounded by deep accordion ostinato, chugging charango, and gently thumping hand drums. The best of these 15 economical tracks are instrumental, loose and lively, scrambling at the brink of chaos with a mood of abandon and melancholy. The challenge becomes how to introduce variety into this frenetic environment. "Fraka," a lilting song that unfolds into something close to an Afro-Cuban montuno, works well in this regard, in part because of a rich choral sound in the final section. Lacaille's solo vocals, delivered in a gravelly, near-tuneless voice, are more jarring. They undermine the magically amorphous sense of place in this music, replacing it with the more familiar ambiance of an offbeat Paris café. >>>BANNING EYRE

Link

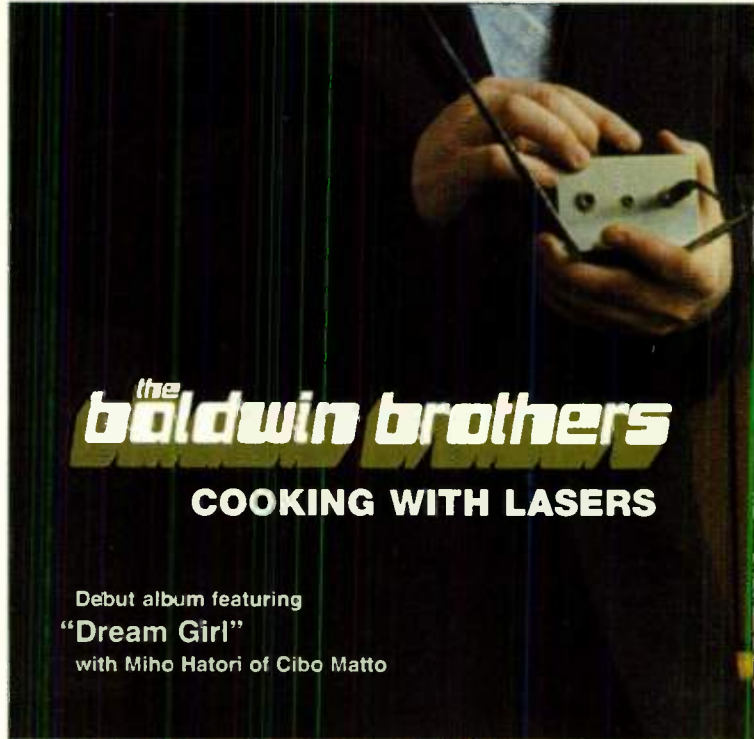
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File Under

Frenchy island music

R.I.Y.L.

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LOCAL H

Here Comes The Zoo Palm Pictures

Before scoring a few alt-radio hits in the late '90s, Local H ringleader Scott Lucas mused about the burgeoning hipster community he wasn't part of, poking playful fun at riot grrrls and Liz Phair. Now, despite the label bloodletting that gave Local H an ego wedgie following 1998's stellar movin'-on-up concept album *Pack Up The Cats*, Lucas is pretty much an insider, definitely tour bus-worthy. You wouldn't know he's made it from "Rock And Roll Professionals," the blistering schmoozer indictment that kick-starts Zoo's second half; his synco-pated spit, "Press the flesh and maybe

they'll make nice" leads to the monster payoff, "Rockin' for lawyers, baby!" Yup, little has changed, except the replacement of buff, kick-ass drummer Joe Daniels with TripleFastAction refugee Brian St. Clair. Zoo conjures more of the Sabbath thunderclaps introduced in *Cats*. Opener "Hands On The Bible" is an atypical Lucas arrangement: His meaty guitar lead is toughened by an eruptive, tribal beat, then feathered by an epic, cock-rock orchestral wash. Continuity fans will delight in "Son Of Cha" and "Baby Wants To Tame Me," ostensibly sequels to previous barnstormers "Cha! Said The Kitty" and "She Hates My Job." Cool, but today's rock universe most deserves a follow-up to H's anti-jock anthem "High Fivin' MF." >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI

[Link](#)

www.localh.com

[File Under](#)

Brainy grunge-metal revival

R.I.Y.L.

Queens Of The Stone Age,

Nirvana, AC/DC



THE LONG WINTERS

The Worst You Can Do Is Harm Barsuk

The Long Winters is essentially a solo vehicle for songwriter/guitarist John Roderick, who sequestered a cadre of Pacific Northwest indie-pop scene stalwarts to create his debut disc. Death Cab For Cutie fans could easily find themselves at the Winters' doorstep: The bands are labelmates, and DCFC mainstays Chris Walla and Ben Gibbard make appearances here. Multi-instrumentalist Walla's production gives both groups the same bare-bones drum foundation, and his melody-carrying Hammond organ on opener "Give Me A Moment" only further rein-

[Link](#)

www.barsuk.com

[File Under](#)

Scruffy Pacific Northwest indie pop

R.I.Y.L.

Death Cab For Cutie,

Sparklehorse, Built To Spill

forces the bands' surface similarities. Roderick's penchant for cryptic-yet-personal lyrics ("Don't give any cake to the blonde one," he instructs on "Government Loans") is undercut by his delivery, an everyman voice that's perhaps a bit too pedestrian. As the disc progresses, however, Roderick creates some space between himself and the Cuties. Several tunes sport a winsome country twang, and he's more willing to loosen up and rock out, as on the standout "Carparts," which chugs a bit like early Built To Spill. Unlike these exacting role models, though, Roderick's performances occasionally sound slapdash, and a few of his compositions tend to meander. *The Worst You Can Do Is Harm* has a familiar if not terribly distinctive sound that slots comfortably within its regional D.I.Y. scene. >>>GLEN SARVADY


CRAIG ARMSTRONG


AS IF TO NOTHING

The new album from Golden Globe award winning composer **Craig Armstrong** (*Moulin Rouge*).

Features "Wake Up In New York" sung by **Evan Dando**, "Stay (Faraway, So Close)" with a new vocal by **Bono** and guest appearances by **David McAlmont**, **Photek** and **Wendy Stubbs** (Alpha).

www.craigarmstrong.com







LUNA

Romantica Jetset

Over 10 years, Luna has never really made a bad album; some just tend to grab your attention a bit more than others. *Romantica*, its sixth studio album and first for new home Jetset, is definitely one of the keepers. The record offers more evidence that Wareham's really a pop songwriter at heart, no matter how bleary-eyed or aloof the presentation of the songs get. You can hear it in the increased focus and purpose of the sing-a-long "Black Postcards," a song that defines Luna's moody and mellow jangle. Even in moments where the band cuts loose, like the jam at the

Link
www.fuzzywuzzy.com
File Under
When indie rock applies itself
R.I.Y.L.
Yo La Tengo, the Go-Betweens,
Tom Verlaine

end of "Weird And Woozy," it's more than just to make some noise; there's meaty chunks of melody in all of that guitar overdrive. "Black Champagne" (note Dean continuing the bleak color scheme) is the most accomplished song here, as producer Dave Fridmann (Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev) pours a soaring string section over Wareham's frail choruses and the brief, tangy guitar solo that fades away. Sure, *Romantica* still has that laid-back, indie-rock-meets-VU-meets-Television sound like every other Luna record. But grand, stylistic innovation isn't how Dean Wareham made his mark with Luna or with Galaxie 500 in the years before. Consistently crafting elegant indie rock is. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



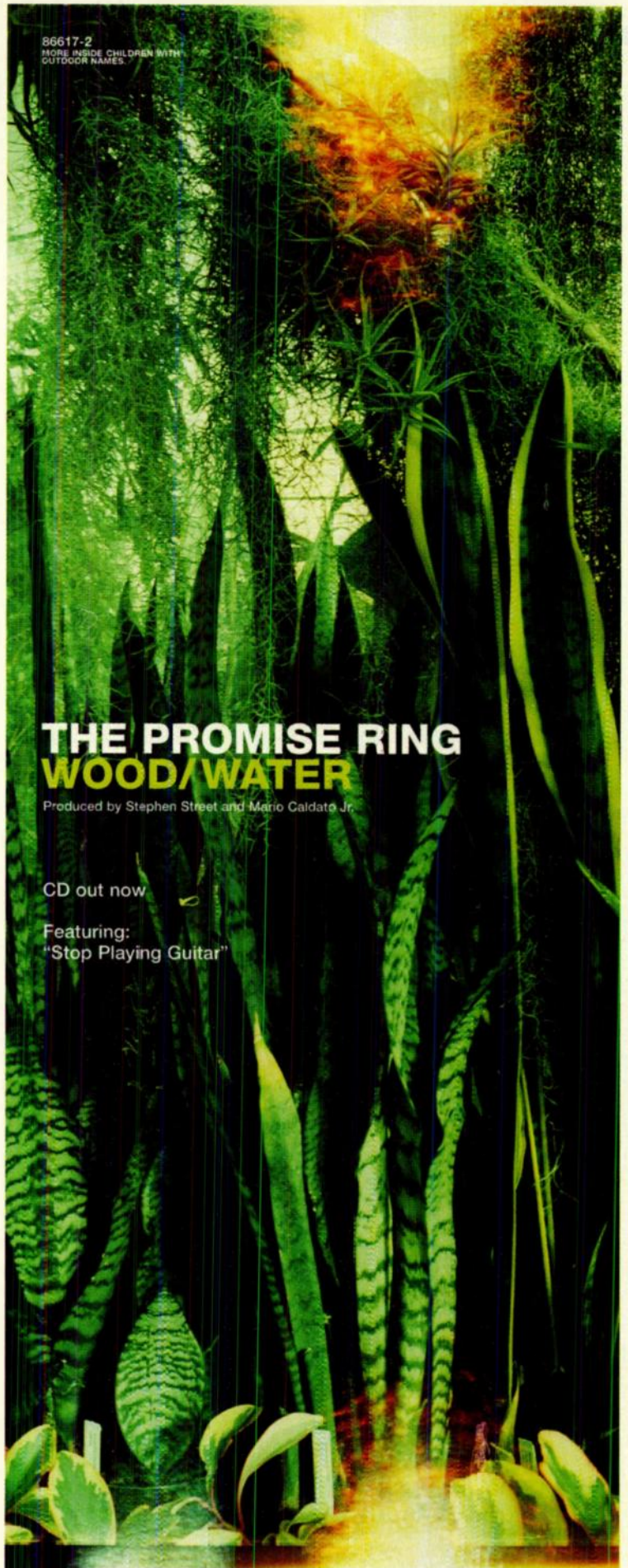
MARSHMALLOW COAST

Ride The Lightning Misra

Will litigious Metallica bully Lars Ulrich sic his lawyers on Marshmallow Coast for swiping the title of his band's 1984 thrash epic? For the sake of singer Andy Gonzales, who's also a member of the Music Tapes and Of Montreal, and bandmate/sound engineer Derek Almstead, let's hope that Lars will be willing to share. Packed with off-key Elephant 6 glee, Marshmallow Coast's latest release plays around with a number of classic rock references. Their loungey "Darkside Of The Moon," for instance, shares little with Pink Floyd other than the title. In this postmodern ode to love, Gonzales croons about being "on the darkside of the moon over

Link
www.angelfire.com/myband/marshmallowcoast
File Under
Rock revisited in the Elephant
6 lounge
R.I.Y.L.
Of Montreal, Neutral Milk
Hotel, Ladybug Transistor

you." The Beatles' "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" gets a nod as he sings of "So-and-so's with emeralds in the sky," and the elevator jazz intro to "Ghost With Wisdom" sounds quite a bit like the guitar riff in McCartney's "Live And Let Die" Bond theme. Lest all these references get a bit gimmicky, songs like the "Guitar Suite For Little Debbie," a pared-down and nearly instrumental album highlight, prove that Marshmallow Coast can still offer up heartfelt guitar parts and song-writing sincerity amid deliberately silly rock references. A Metallica title never sounded so sweet. >>>KARA ZUARO



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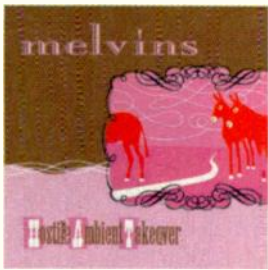
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MELVINS

Hostile Ambient Takeover Ipecac

It's not easy being a Melvins fan. It's an almost abusive relationship: On some records (*Stoner Witch*, *Stag*, *The Maggot*) they reward you with batches of sludge-metal greatness, on some (*Prick*, *Honky*) they punish you for blindly buying anything with their name on it with seas of sonic vomit. Luckily for the loyal Melvins Army, *Hostile Ambient Takeover* (their 18th album in 18 years) is one of the former. Not much has changed in the formula—the Melvins have their own style and they're sticking to it. Colossal riffs, colossal vocals and colossal drums are the order of the day, alternating

between slow plodding sludge ("The Fool") and rave-ups of ZZ Top proportions ("Dr. Geek"). The notable difference in *H.A.T.* is the production: After the relatively lo-fi production values of the "Trilogy" (*The Maggot*, *The Bootlicker* and *The Crybaby*), *H.A.T.* sounds positively crisp. In fact, it's the best sound they've gotten since their later major-label years: King Buzzo's voice once again sounds 40 stories tall, every off-kilter musical phrase is captured with crystal-clear accuracy, and when Dale Crover manhandles his kit, it's as if he's inside your head instead of in the next room. If you're a fairweather Melvins fan, get this one before they start whipping you again. Thank you Buzz, may I have another? >>>TOM MALLON

Link

www.melvins.com

File Under

Another dip in the primordial ooze

R.I.Y.L.

Black Sabbath, Helmet, Queens Of The Stone Age, Fantômas



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Multicast Presents Further Obliq Perspectives K20

Although technically a compilation, *Further Obliq Perspectives* presents a romantic, historically informed view of the electronic music existing outside the realms of the nightclub or the rave tent. It's a vision built upon the principles that warm synthesizers are superior to glitchy, laptop-jock effects, and long yet repetitive melodies built around electro rhythms are sonic manna. *Further Obliq Perspectives* is the best and brightest of Boulder, Colorado-based Obliq Recordings, who stylistically reference everything from

the early ambient electronic music of Vangelis and Eno, to Aphex Twin, Autechre, Speedy-J and, at times, guitarist Vini Reilly. Multicast's "Spitfire" in particular makes wonderful use of a legato guitar plucking out a languid melody over ambient washes, sounding like a commentary fill for a sci-fi soundtrack or, if you like, a Cocteau Twins instrumental. Crix Madine continues this esthetic on "Nectarine Sun (Part 2)" and "The Defection," introducing breakbeat sample compression à la Aphex Twin's *Windowlicker* together with plenty of vocodered lyrics. Freqmotif and Ted Sturgeon round out the contributions, both of which veer toward electro-pop. But for all their differences, the 12 tracks on *Further Obliq Perspectives* reflect a cool, smooth and relaxing vision for electronic music. >>>HEATH K. HIGHLIGHT

Link

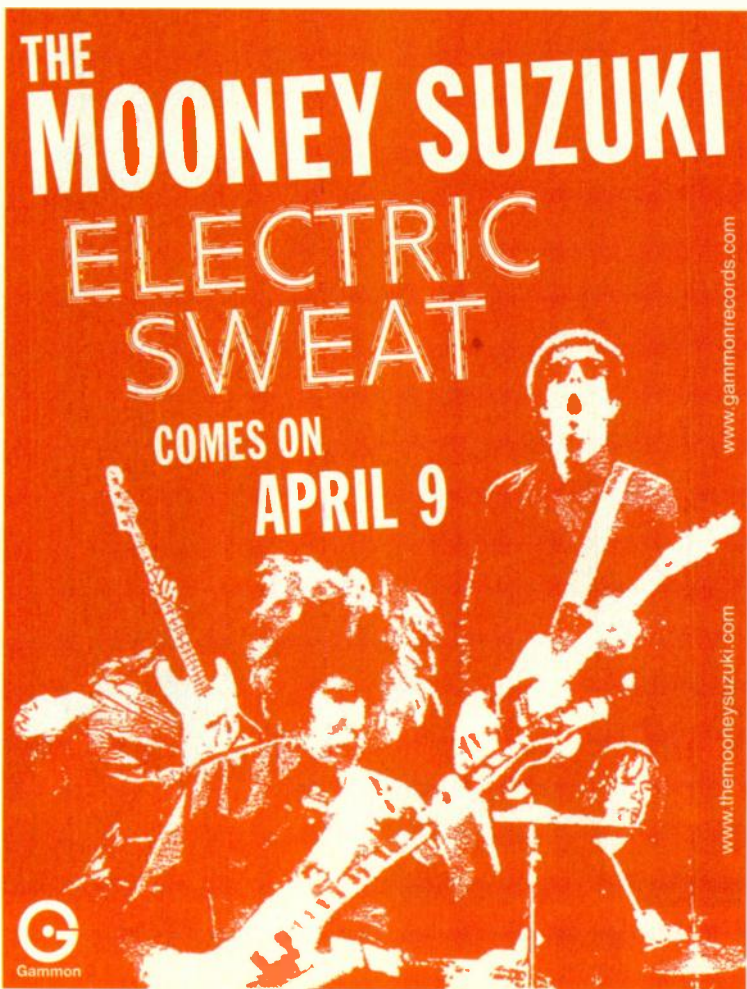
www.obliq.net

File Under

Classical IDM

R.I.Y.L.

Speedy-J, Aphex Twin, Sun Electric, Crunch



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PANTHERS

Are You Down?? Troubleman Unlimited

Restrained, non-confrontational and politically aloof are all pejoratives in the Panthers' lexicon. The Brooklyn-based quintet, featuring past and current members of Turing Machine, Pitchblende and Orchid come out fighting on their debut LP, and with lyrics including "We aren't a band, we're a vandal committee with stenciled faces and bloody lips/ Align or die," their revolutionary agenda isn't exactly understated. Over the course of 10 rapid-fire tracks, singer Jayson Green rails against art, the system, "pigs" and "squares" while paying tribute to underground politics, Dadaism and of course, James Brown. Propelling the intensity are jerky guitar lines and dissonant fuzzed-out explosions that seamlessly meld old-school punk with D.C.-styled art-rock. Of course, this is far from an artsy endeavor, and at the heart of it all is the restless energy that also fueled the movement from which the band draws its name. Smashing the system is certainly in vogue these days, but Panthers' dirty approach and uncompromising style, both musically and lyrically, is arguably more believable than most of their contemporaries. *Are You Down??* ignores traditional hooks and revels in solid but far from glossy production, leaving a record that pounces on you with an agenda that has all the subtlety of a burning flag. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

Link

www.troublemanunlimited.com

File Under

Spastic rant rock vs. The Man

R.I.Y.L.

Rye Coalition, MC5, the Explosion



PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES

Good Health Lookout!

So much of today's art-punk comes off like a Scrabble tournament conducted by the WWF. The axemen undergo self-imposed seizures while the vocalist screeches \$50 soliloquies that would confound Oxford scholars. No fun is had or acknowledged. Seattle's latest incestuous indie supergroup, Pretty Girls Make Graves (featuring refugees from Murder City Devils, Kill Sadie, et al), is a glorious exception to that trend. In the full-throttle album opener "Speakers Push The Air," the all-dude gang calls of "Do you remember what the music meant?" are answered by Andrea

Link
www.prettygirlsmakegraves.com

File Under

Bed-head punk with passion

R.I.Y.L.

At The Drive-In,

Murder City Devils, the Go-Gos

Zollo's earnest dashboard confession, "I heard a record and it opened my eyes!" The notion that hard rock should be not only intellectually stimulating and structurally imaginative, but just plain fucking enjoyable, doubles as *Good Health's* theme and m.o. This is not to suggest that PGMG don't adhere to formula. Bassist Derek Fudesco confidently propels most verses, letting guitarists Jason Clark and Nathen Johnson fence one another with esoteric, shrieking counter-melodies. Everything usually falls into perfect pop lockstep by the chorus; the "don't try to tell me what I already know" mantra that fuels "More Sweet Soul" mandates equal parts hip-swaying and head-banging. One gripe: Eight songs at just over 27 minutes = EP. If PGMG could extend their dominance to, say, 45 minutes, even name-sake inspiration Morrissey might take notice. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI



THE REPUTATION

The Reputation Initial

The Reputation blazes out of the gate with four crunchy tracks burning with melodic punk fervor while flaunting an unrepentant love of '70s arena rock. It's a formula, sealed with a turbocharged 4/4 thump and Elizabeth Elmore's coyly sweet vocals, that worked wonders for Elmore on Sarge's *The Glass Intact*, and still hits the mark four years later with this new band. (Sarge withstood enough revolving-door personnel to render a change in monikers superfluous, but so be it.) When Elmore dials down the amps, subtle departures from her back catalog emerge. "Alaskan," which

Link
www.reputationmusic.com

File Under

Chicks with chops

R.I.Y.L.

Sarge, Liz Phair's *Exile In Guyville*, Juliana Hatfield

resembles a saltier Juliana Hatfield, sounds more polished and radio-ready than the band's previous low-key excursions. Although Elmore excels at Liz Phair-style confessionals, *The Reputation* progresses from those rolls in the hay to the more complex emotions of betrayal and disintegrated relationships, with no loss of venom. "Just a little skin/ Keeps them coming back for just a little sin," Elmore sneers in "The Stars Of Amateur Hour" with a blend of coquettishness and disgust that simultaneously channels Chrissie Hynde and Nancy Sinatra. A smoky closing-time cover of Elvis Costello's "Almost Blue" affirms Elmore's vocal dexterity, but also makes clear her punchy melodic sense and acerbic lyrics are the main attraction. Elmore can put whatever name on her records she likes, as long as she makes them this good. >>>GLEN SARVADY



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THE SUCKA MCs

Da Album *Ace Fu*

Toss a dart at a map of the continental United States and point to the nearest college town. Chances are that community is home to a group of profoundly irritating white kids who compose "funny" booze/drug-addled rap songs on their dorm-room laptops. And chances are they're much, much better than the Sucka MCs. Hailing from Iowa City, Iowa, lyrical pranksters the Sucka MCs fire a rapid succession of shit-piss-dick-fart-AIDS-related juvenilia on 11 tunes culled from justifiably ignored underground tapes. The ever-puerile Suckas will poop in your soup, wipe boogers on their erections

Link
www.acefu.com/bands/suckas
File Under
Party for your right to fart
R.I.Y.L.
Hawd Gankstuh Rappuhs MC's
Wid Ghatz, Bloodhound Gang,
Bad Ronald

before receiving fellatio and engage in 20-something pop-culture referencing so transparent and banal, they make an "Ate My Balls" website seem as esoteric as a Dennis Miller routine (sample inanity: "Bustin' my nut on the Olsen Twins/ Sorry Saget... I'm sorry you a faggot"). The album's saving grace is its calculatedly lo-fi production, apparently taking cues from Golden Era breakbeat science, Beck-ian genre-fuck-noise and Sebadoh III. "My Cell Phone" buzzes and pulses like classic Native Tongues with a piano-freak bridge, while "Highway 61 Revisited Again" is Ween-worthy basement psychedelia. Unfortunately, the unpolished esthetic is almost always the groundwork for stilted raps, pee-pee-doo-doo jokes and inexplicable references to Parker Lewis Can't Lose. While their lo-fi Beats are indeed Happening, these Iowan Suckas are truly Sucky MCs. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



TAKING BACK SUNDAY

Tell All Your Friends *Victory*

Here's a solid bet for the future of rock radio, and this suggestion is in no way meant to conjure that most dreaded incantation, "next Nirvana": Should pimp-metal eventually go the way of the grunge or glam-rock dodo, the masses' ears just might be taken back by Taking Back Sunday. This new-school emo/hard-core collision operates under similar structural conceits as its increasingly popular labelmate Thursday. In a series of double teams, two guitars butt heads, twisting clean-channel pop melodies and chugging metal progressions into cathartic, schizophrenic anthems. Same

Link
www.takingbacksunday.com
File Under
Nü emo
R.I.Y.L.
Jimmy Eat World, Thursday,
the Get Up Kids

theory applies to the mic—one gravel-throated vocalist spazzes in the backdrop, smudging up the blackboard for frontman Adam Lazzara to chalk his relationship diatribes upon. The resulting experiments in bombast are occasionally dazzling, always familiar. Cute titles like "Ghost Man On Third" and "Timberwolves At New Jersey" indicate a youthful passion for nostalgia and the home turf. "There's No T In Team" unintentionally plagiarizes Van Halen's "Panama" before developing into *Tell All Your Friends*'s most gripping track. Unlike many of their contemporaries, TBS has a healthy sense of humor, as evidenced by almost subliminal parenthetical references in the liner notes that never quite make it to songs, such as "starts with a 'j' and ends with a 'ustified'" in "Timberwolves" epilogue. Better work is on the horizon, but mass acceptance could come first. >>>ANDREW BOMAZELLI

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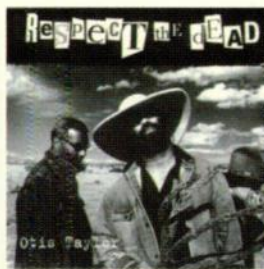
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OTIS TAYLOR

Respect The Dead *Northernblues*

Otis Taylor has been nominated for four W.C. Handy Awards for his stellar album *White African*, but rather than basking in the reflected glory of his multiple nominations, he's released another CD that's every bit as powerful. Taylor is an acoustic player who shows a vivid affinity for traditional blues forms that mainly plays out in his style, rather than in his choice of material. All the tunes on *Respect The Dead* are originals, and Taylor's arrangements are essentially rootsy, mixing electric and acoustic instruments, freely borrowing from rock and

Link
www.otistaylor.com
File Under
White African returns
R.I.Y.L.
Corey Harris, Kelly Joe Phelps,
Son House

folk when it suits his purpose. He's a captivating storyteller; "Black Witch" is the most striking tale on the album, where he recounts an obsessive, tragic relationship amidst a swirling, shadowy arrangement so rich in atmosphere that the music alone invokes a sense of dread. In a less dark musical mood, "Ten Million Slaves" is a propulsive banjo tune that embodies the country blues sensibility so important to Taylor's sound, while still demonstrating how his unique musical feel modifies traditional forms. "Hands On Your Stomach" is built on the same infectious rhythmic base as "Ten Million Slaves," while "Baby So" is elemental, call-and-response Delta blues, assayed by Taylor and his harmonica. Already, this is one of the great blues albums of the year. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

CD ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD • R.I.Y.L. - RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

A Tribute To Nashville Mint

In the wake of the music-industry anomaly birthed by the multi-platinum, Grammy-winning *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack, there's a heightened awareness of traditional American music, an awareness that apparently has spread to our friendly neighbors to the north. The most recent manifestation of this awareness comes courtesy of Vancouver's Mint Records, who, in conjunction with Carolyn Mark of the Corn Sisters, have put together a tribute to Robert Altman's brilliant 1975 film, *Nashville*.

Part satire, part musical documentary, the film presents a somewhat controversial look at the commercialization of country music, and almost seems to question the sincerity of the songs themselves. Driven by a long-running infatuation with the film, however, Mark assembled a group of artists to perform the songs from the film with a striking sincerity and complete lack of irony. The most outstanding moments on the disc come during Neko Case's dead-on reproduction of "Rolling Stone," and Case's fellow New Pornographer Carl Newman's rendition of "Memphis." Contributing to the impressive authenticity of the tribute, Mark even had the artists recite snippets of dialogue from the film. There's nothing kitschy about this project. With *A Tribute To Nashville*, Mark fulfills a longtime goal; we should all be so successful at turning people on to our obsessions. >>>MIKE CONKLIN

Link

www.mint-records.com

File Under

Good old-fashioned country music

R.I.Y.L.

Robert Altman's *Nashville*,

Neko Case, the Corn Sisters



ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK

Open Up And Say Awesome Initial

When pure rock fury—to borrow a term from the mighty Clutch—is intelligently injected into an already well-established set of power-pop songs, amazing things can, and in the case of Ultimate Fakebook's *Open Up And Say Awesome*, will happen. The six-year-old Kansas trio have followed up their stellar major-label debut *This Will Be Laughing Week* with an exciting collection of pop gems, 12 songs written especially for the maturing wise-ass punk. With a healthy respect for irony, charismatic frontman Bill McShane leads a light-hearted revolt against broken hearts and the girls that do the

Link

www.ultimatefakebook.com

File Under

Songs for the maturing

wise-ass punk

R.I.Y.L.

Weezer, Gob, Jimmy Eat

World, the Oneders

breaking. But he aims to turn love's clichés on their side, like on the radio-ready "Valentines," when he, in a moment of weakness, confesses, "When I see you my heart moves my mouth/ But I kinda lose my words out loud." "Inside Me, Inside You"—a song that would serve well as the Oneders' follow up to "That Thing You Do!" if that band was more than just a figment of Tom Hanks's imagination—is clearly the high point of *Open Up*. The song's chorus, with its simple driving chord progression, meandering bassline and crushing snare cracks, succinctly epitomizes Ultimate Fakebook's hard-rocking ideology. >>>DYLAN P. GADINO

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

Verve Remixed *Verve*

DJs and remix artists have long poached samples from the Blue Note catalog (most notably Us 3's *Hand On The Torch*). This disc marks something of a coming-out party for the Verve vaults, that other great repository for classic jazz. Verve could not have picked a much better crew of sympathetic and cutting-edge producers, with Thievery Corporation and Masters At Work among those remixing it up. Jazz purists will find their world turned upside down, and not just because soft-focus talents Shirley Horn and Sarah Vaughan now have drum 'n' bass or

trip-hop sounds subbing for trios and strings. It also seems that the lesser the legend, the better the remix. The incomparable Billie Holiday is represented by two tracks and bluesy dynamo Dinah Washington by another, but other material fares better on a disc that goes from insistent Latin to ethereal electronics. British garage technician M.J. Cole's revamp of Carmen McRae's "How Long Has This Been Going On?" is a thinking person's powerhouse, and Willie Bobo's "Spanish Grease" is reworked into a buzzing dance track by Richard Dorfmeister, half of the propulsive Austrian duo Kruder And Dorfmeister that has worked for Madonna and Roni Size. Perhaps most astonishingly, every cut retains some essential quality from the original, especially UFO's chopped up "Summertime," by Sarah Vaughan. >>>BILL KISLUK

Link

www.vervecor.com

File Under

The remix of cool

R.I.Y.L.

Fatboy Slim, Lo Fidelity All-Stars, *Rebirth Of The Cool*



GARY WILSON

You Think You Really Know Me *Motel*

Twenty-five years ago, Gary Wilson captured the sounds of male post-adolescence on record. Then 24 and living in his parents' basement in Endicott, New York, Wilson made *You Think You Really Know Me* and self-released a limited amount of the 12-song collection. Over '70s-style soul grooves that sound sort of like a retarded Steely Dan, Wilson sang about girls he had crushes on ("Cindy") and those who wished he were dead ("Loneliness"), pondered alienation ("You Think You Really Know Me"), fantasized about girls as pieces of shiny, reflective metal ("Chromium Bitch") and used numeric values to approximate kissing ("6.4 = Make Out"). Cut to the present: Wilson is having his record re-released, and according to press materials, now lives in San Diego with the "girl of his dreams," plays in a lounge act in an Italian restaurant and works the graveyard shift at an adult bookstore. More than novel kitsch, and transcending so-bad-it's-good status, *You Think You Really Know Me* is a bit of a marvel, achieving what so many artists strive to create: a timeless record that taps into universal emotions and experiences. Weird, humorous, unsettling, dreamy, raw and irresistible, *You Think You Really Know Me* is a genuine portrait of the artist as a young, albeit it very odd, man. >>>DANA BUONICONTI

Link

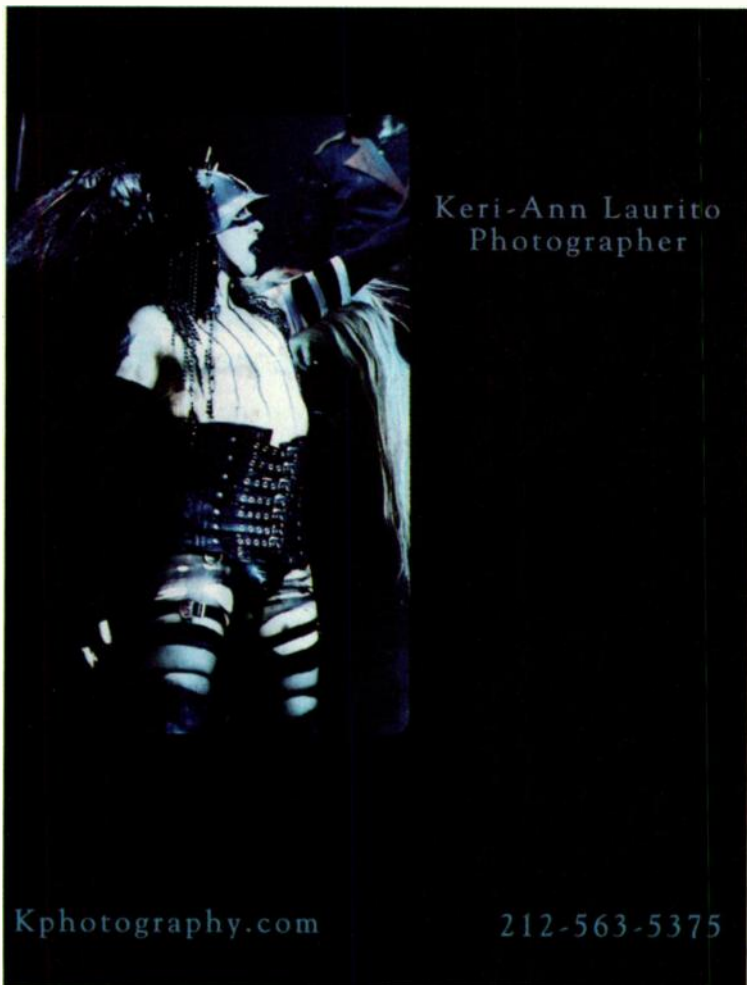
www.motelrecords.com

File Under

The window to a soul

R.I.Y.L.

Steely Dan, *Fast Times At Ridgmont High*, early Prince



Keri-Ann Laurito
Photographer

kphotography.com

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THE WORLD/INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

Just The Best Party *Gern Blandsten*

When a band needs to cull its herd to get down to a nine-piece, chances are it's bursting at the seams with ideas the same way it strains to shoehorn onto tiny rock-club stages. The chaos of Brooklyn's World/Inferno Friendship Society is driven by a hyperactive three-piece horn section that recalls recent ska and swing revivals, but is at most a stepcousin to either. The troupe's closest antecedent may be '80s zanies Oingo Boingo, down to vocalist Jack Terricloth's theatric, Danny Elfman-like delivery that's somewhere between sideshow barker and 1940s Broadway crooner. Peter Hess's clarinet offers a whiff of klezmer, but the prevailing vibe is one of hearty barroom sing-alongs heard in Irish pubs or among drunken Cossacks in Brighton Beach. There's a nod to the macabre waltzes of Brecht/Weill, though this influence is unfortunately isolated to a few slow-tempo respites rather than sprinkled across the frenetic whole. "Secret Service Freedom Fighting USA," the disc's most straightforward track, burns with a young soul rebel fire akin to Dexy's Midnight Runners. In the end, the Friendship Society's heart is firmly ensconced in punk, as evidenced by its double-time tempos, crashing drums and titles like "Zen And The Art Of Breaking Everything In This Room." *Just The Best Party* can be faulted for overreaching, but earns bonus points for verve. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.worldinferno.com

File Under

Too hoot riot

R.I.Y.L.

Oingo Boingo, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Klezmatics



ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD • R.I.Y.L. • RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



PAUL WESTERBERG

Stereo *Vagrant*

GRANDPABOY

Mono *Vagrant*

"There's a world in between being everything to everyone and being nothing to no one," Paul Westerberg sings on his fourth post-Replacements solo disc, *Stereo*. He knows that in-between world well. Westerberg has existed in a strange musical limbo for more than a decade now: His solo work has been accused of being too slight by zealous Replacements fans, yet it's never been mainstream enough to earn him the VH1 recognition enjoyed by several of his imitators. Now signed to emo-punk label Vagrant after more than 15 years spent recording for various majors, Westerberg still isn't likely to crack the top 40, but with this pair of outstanding albums he might finally quell talk that he's lost some of his conviction.

Stereo finds the aging post-punk still evolving as a serious songwriter. Westerberg's latest solo effort is much mellower than 1999's *Suicaine Gratification*, which mixed catchy mid-tempo rockers with a few disappointing, dirge-y ballads. Westerberg's learned from the missteps of those piano-based experiments, which were arguably that album's only downfall. Here, he favors quiet, heartfelt, mostly acoustic pop (though he does rock out on a cover of Flesh For Lulu's "Postcards From Paradise"). The songwriting is hook-laden, self-lacerating and often sentimental and romantic—in other words, standard-issue Westerberg. He's still rasping about messed-up relationships, but he also has some fine moments reflecting on fatherhood ("Baby Learns To Crawl") and aging ("Dirt To Mud," "No Place For You"). Let's face it: The man who wrote "Bastards Of Young" is pushing 40, so it's no surprise the majority of songs on *Stereo* are about getting older. But as evidenced on the country-tinged "We May Be The Ones" ("We may well be the ones/ To set this world on its ear") there still might be some fight left in those aging bones.

If *Stereo* represents Westerberg's creeping maturity, then his work with Grandpaboy is an excuse to embrace his inner hellraiser. *Mono* succeeds in rekindling the rowdy spark of the Replacements (no one will confirm or deny rumors that ex-members of that beloved Minneapolis-based band are indeed playing on this album). Whether or not it's any kind of reunion, *Mono* has moments that genuinely sound like latter-day 'Mats, recalling the way *Don't Tell A Soul* captured Westerberg in peak songwriting form while affording the band glossier production. *Mono* has a similar feel, especially on rousing, bittersweet tracks such as "Let's Not Belong," "2 Days 'Til Tomorrow" and "Eyes Like Sparks." This may not be the best news for old-school Replacements fans who are still waiting for Westerberg to make another *Let It Be*, but the chances of that are about the same as Marlon Brando doing another *Godfather* movie. While Westerberg may not have another shambolic masterpiece in him, *Mono* is still the closest thing to a return to form in a decade. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

Link

members.aol.com/paulspage

File Under

Surprisingly sober acoustic pop

R.I.Y.L.

Wilco, Ryan Adams,
Alex Chilton



Link

www.vagrant.com/grandpaboy

File Under

Latter-period Replacements redux

R.I.Y.L.

The Replacements,

Soul Asylum, Bash & Pop



NEIL YOUNG

Are You Passionate? *Reprise*

Add this album to the list of things changed by September 11th. Young was apparently working on a casual, easy-listening album with musicians from Booker T And The MGs when all hell broke loose. Young the Chronicler, best known for "Ohio," "Hey, Hey, My My" and "Sleeps With Angels," was compelled to offer immediate commentary with a rush-released tribute. Inspired by Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer's final words before diverting his plane into the Pennsylvania ground, "Let's Roll" seriously alters the chemistry of *Are You Passionate?*

Link

www.neilyoung.com

File Under

An uneasy walk in the park

R.I.Y.L.

Neil Young

Suddenly, an album content with pleasant middle-of-the-road shuffles ("You're My Girl," "Don't Say You Love Me") takes on life or death consequences and Young's sublimely mournful guitar notes rejuvenate with resilient anger and defiance. In perfect reaction, a nearly nine-minute Crazy Horse composition ("Goin' Home") rocks the rest of the free world soon after, with Young's wrenching guitar tone expressing more than words could say. But while anger and action are acute responses to the tragedy, Young also allows for sadness and reflection. "Two Old Friends" remembers the hippie dream of peace and music drowning out the sounds of gunfire. It's a page from Young's nostalgia notebooks that he's been known to crib from on occasion; considering the circumstances, you can understand why. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

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INTERSCOPE

#1

5 YEARS AGO

MORPHINE

Like Swimming (Rykodisc-DreamWorks)

PAVEMENT

Brighten The Corners (Matador-Capitol)

BLUR

Blur (Virgin)

MIGHTY MIGHTY BOSSTONES

Let's Face It (Mercury)

ATARI TEENAGE RIOT

Burn, Berlin, Burn! (Digital Hardcore)

10 YEARS AGO

ROLLINS BAND

The End Of Silence (Imago)

CURVE

Doppelgänger (Charisma)

RIDE

Going Blank Again (Sire-Reprise)

SUGARCUBES

Stick Around For Joy (Elektra)

BUFFALO TOM

Let Me Come Over (Beggars Banquet-RCA)

ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
1 AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD	Source Tags And Codes	Interscope
2 BADLY DRAWN BOY	About A Boy	XL-ARTISTDirect
3 THE PROMISE RING	Wood/Water	Anti-Epiphany
4 THE WHITE STRIPES	White Blood Cells	V2
5 SUPER FURRY ANIMALS	Rings Around The World	XL-Beggars Group
6 EELS	Souljacker	DreamWorks
7 BEN KWELLER	Sha Sha	ATO
8 REVEREND HORTON HEAT	Lucky 7	Artemis
9 ANDREW W.K.	I Get Wet	Island
10 BOARDS OF CANADA	Geogaddi	Warp
11 VARIOUS ARTISTS	This Is Where I Belong: The Songs Of Ray Davies And The Kinks	Rykodisc
12 CLINIC	Walking With Thee	Domino
13 GOMEZ	In Our Gun	Virgin
14 JOEY RAMONE	Don't Worry About Me	Sanctuary
15 ED HARCOURT	Here Be Monsters	Heavenly
16 MIRAH	Advisory Committee	K
17 LOCAL H	Here Comes The Zoo	Palm
18 BUFFALO DAUGHTER	I	Emperor Norton
19 SONGS: OHIA	Didn't It Rain	Secretly Canadian
20 764-HERO	Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere	Tiger Style
21 IMPERIAL TEEN	On	Merge
22 MILLENCOLIN	Home From Home	Epitaph
23 HAYDEN	Skyscraper National Park	Badman
24 SEAFOOD	When Do We Start Fighting	Netzwerk
25 GORILLAZ	G-Sides	Virgin
26 FLOGGING MOLLY	Drunken Lullabies	Side One Dummy
27 SCHATZI	Fifty Reasons To Explode	Mammoth
28 BOB MOULD	Modulate	Granary
29 JIMMY EAT WORLD	Live At La Scala	DreamWorks
30 BALDWIN BROTHERS	Cooking With Lidars	TVT
31 THE MOONEY SUZUKI	Electric Sweat	Gammon
32 DRESSY BESSY	Sound Go Round	Kindercore
33 TULLYCRAFT	Beat Surf Fun	Magic Marker
34 MIDTOWN	Living Well Is The Best Revenge	Drive Thru-MCA
35 PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES	Good Health	Lookout!
36 LO FIDELITY ALLSTARS	Don't Be Afraid Of Love	Columbia
37 WEEZER	Maladroit Sampler	Weezer
38 JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION	Plastic Fang	Matador
39 PHANTOM PLANET	The Guest	Epic
40 SPARTA	Austere (EP)	DreamWorks
41 ST. GERMAIN	Boulevard	F Communication-PIAS America
42 HOT ROD CIRCUIT	Sorry About Tomorrow	Vagrant
43 BOGGS	We Are The Boggs We Are	Arena Rock Recording Company
44 SHEILA NICHOLLS	Wake	Hollywood
45 NORA H JONES	Come Away With Me	Blue Note
46 FINCH	What It Is To Burn	Drive-Thru
47 JOSH ROUSE	Under Cold Blue Stars	Rykodisc-Slow River
48 UNWRITTEN LAW	Elva	Interscope
49 SOUNDTRACK	Blade II	Virgin
50 ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND	All Girl Summer Fun Band	K
51 PREVENT FALLS	A Newer More Shattered You	Equal Vision
52 PIEBALD	We Are The Only Friends We Have	Big Wheel Recreation
53 TRAM	A Kind Of Closer	Jetset
54 SOULIVE	Next	Blue Note
55 BAD RELIGION	The Process Of Belief	Epitaph
56 KASEY CHAMBERS	Bertracaden And Brickwalls	Warner Bros.
57 BILLY BRAGG AND THE BLOKES	England, Half-English	Elektra
58 RADIO 4	Gotham!	Gern Blandsten
59 ANTIBALAS AFROBEAT ORCHESTRA	Takasi	Ninja Tune
60 COMET GAIN	Realisms	Kill Rock Stars
61 ENGINE DOWN	Derrire	Lovitt
62 CUB COUNTRY	High Uinta High	Jade Tree
63 ELVIS COSTELLO	Tear Off Your Own Head (It's A Dick Revolution) (CD5)	Island
64 THE CATHETERS	Static Delusions And Stone-Snail Days	Sub Pop
65 THE ANNIVERSARY	Your Majesty	Vagrant
66 ELENI MANDELL	Snakes	Space Baby
67 ZERO 7	Simple Things	Quango-Palm
68 MY MORNING JACKET/SONGS: OHIA	Split EP	Jade Tree
69 RYE COALITION	On Rig	Tiger Style
70 THE WALKMEN	Everyone Who Pretended To Like Me Is Gone	Startime International
71 CASSANDRA WILSON	Belly Of The Sun	Blue Note
72 DEPARTURE LOUNGE	Too Late To Die Young	Netzwerk
73 TRIAL BY FIRE	Ringin' In The Dawn	Jade Tree
74 GIANT SAND	Cover Magazine	Thrill Jockey
75 COHEED AND CAMBRIA	Second Stage Turbine Blade	Equal Vision

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. I'm happy to be moving to a town so associated with evil.

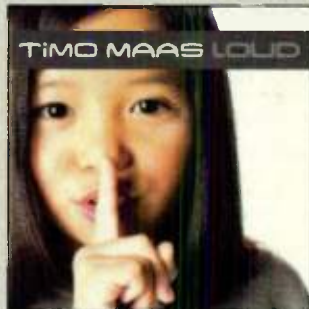
LOUD ROCK TOP 25



1	HATEBREED Perseverance	Universal
2	ARCH ENEMY Wages Of Sin	Century Media
3	DOWN Down II	Elektra
4	CANNIBAL CORPSE Gore Obsessed	Metal Blade
5	SOILWORK Natural Born Chaos	Nuclear Blast
6	MEGADETH Rude Awakening	Sanctuary
7	BLIND GUARDIAN A Night At The Opera <i>Timo Tolkki-Century Media</i>	
8	POISON THE WELL Tear From The Red	Trustkill
9	MOTORHEAD Hammered	Sanctuary
10	BLACK LABEL SOCIETY 1919 Eternal	Spitfire
11	ALL THAT REMAINS Behind Silence And Solitude	Metal Blade
12	BURNT BY THE SUN Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution	Relapse
13	THIS DAY FORWARD Kairos	Eulogy
14	SOUNDTRACK Scorpion King	Universal
15	MINISTRY Sphinctour	Sanctuary
16	COAL CHAMBER Dark Days	Roadrunner-IDJMG
17	HYPOCRISY Catch 22	Nuclear Blast
18	HEAVEN SHALL BURN Whatever It May Take	Lifeforce
19	BENUMB/PIG DESTROYER Split EP	Robodog
20	36 CRAZYFISTS Bitterness The Star	Roadrunner-IDJMG
21	SOUNDTRACK Resident Evil	Roadrunner-IDJMG
22	ARSON Lacerate The Sky	Resurrection A.D.
23	SOUNDTRACK Queen Of The Damned	Warner Sunset
24	THE CROWN Crowned In Terror	Metal Blade
25	IMMORTAL Sons Of Northern Darkness	Nuclear Blast

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

RPM TOP 10



1	TIMO MAAS Loud	Kinetic
2	BOARDS OF CANADA Geogaddi	Warp
3	RINOCEROSE Music Kills Me	V2
4	BALDWIN BROTHERS Cooking With Lasers	TVT
5	JOHN SELWAY Journeys By DJ: Lightwave	Journeys By DJ
6	VARIOUS ARTISTS Phuturesole	Sole
7	DESMOND WILLIAMS Delights Of The Garden	ESL Music
8	VNV NATION Future Perfect	Metropolis
9	KINKY Kinky	Nettwerk
10	HAWKE Heatstroke	Six Degrees



JAZZ TOP 10

1	CASSANDRA WILSON Belly Of The Sun	Blue Note
2	KENNY GARRETT Happy People	Warner Bros.
3	DAVE DOUGLAS Infinite	RCA
4	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me	Blue Note
5	CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO Axis...	Thrill Jockey
6	DAVID BERKMAN Leaving Home	Palmetto
7	JOHN SCOFIELD Uberjam	Verve
8	SOULIVE Next	Blue Note
9	MATTHEW SHIPP Nu Bop	Thirsty Ear
10	BOBBY PREVITE Just Add Water	Palmetto

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

HIP-HOP TOP 25



1	X-ECUTIONERS Built From Scratch	Loud
2	NAS Stillmatic	Columbia
3	DE LA SOUL AOI: Bionix	Tommy Boy
4	WU-TANG CLAN Iron Flag	Wu-Tang-Epic
5	DILATED PEOPLES Expansion Team	ABB-Capitol
6	NAPPY ROOTS Watermelon, Chicken & Grits	Atlantic
7	BEATNUTS Classic Nuts Vol. 1	Loud
8	ONRY OZZBORN Alone	BSI
9	LUDACRIS Word Of Mouf	Def Jam
10	SOUNDTRACK Blade II	Virgin
11	N.E.R.D. In Search Of...	Virgin
12	HIGH & MIGHTY Air Force 1	Landspeed
13	J-LIVE All Of The Above	Coup d'Etat
14	PRINCESS SUPERSTAR Is	Rapster-1K7
15	DAN THE AUTOMATOR Wanna Buy A Monkey?	Sequence
16	SOULIVE Next	Blue Note
17	OUTKAST Big Boi & Dre Present Outkast	Arista
18	MOBB DEEP Infamy	Loud
19	JAY-Z AND R. KELLY The Best Of Both Worlds	Jive-Universal
20	SOUNDTRACK State Property	Roc-A-Fella
21	AESOP ROCK Daylight EP	Def Jux
22	DARKLEAF Fuck The People	Ubiquity
23	VARIOUS ARTISTS Definitive Jux Presents II	Def Jux
24	TUNNEL RATS Tunnelvision	Uprok
25	INFAMOUS MOBB Special Edition	Landspeed

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Hip-Hop charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters. "If Cee-Lo had a knife and fork, and you fell down in front of him, you'd better scramble quick to get away." - His Frampress

APRIL 23

27 Animal Life *Kimchee*
 ALFIE Word In Your Ear *Twisted Nerve-XL-Beggars Group*
 SUSANA BACA Espiritu Vivo *Luaka Bop*
 BADLY DRAWN BOY About A Boy Soundtrack *ARTISTdirect*
 WILLIE BOBO A New Dimension (Reissue) *Verve*
 FREDDIE BRUNO Ball Point Composer *Uprok*
 CALLA Custom: The Remix Project *Quartermass-Bubblecore*
 W.C. CLARK From Austin With Soul *Alligator*
 CORNERSHOP Handcream For A Generation *Wijja-V2-Beggars Group*
 EARTH, WIND & FIRE That's The Way Of The World: Alive In '75 *Columbia Legacy*
 ROGER ESPINOZA Café Fuego *New World Music*
 FALL SILENT Drunken Violence *Revelation*
 FURTHERMORE She And I *Tooth And Nail*
 WAYNE GRATZ A Place Without Noise *Narada*
 —That would be sweet. I swear to you, someone in this office is rocking mad Jovi, no shit.
 ASTRUD GILBERTO The Shadow Of Your Smile (Reissue) *Verve*
 KEV HOPPER Saurus *Drag City*
 KING KONG Big Bang *Drag City*
 KNIFE IN THE WATER Crosscross Bells (EP) *Peek-A-Boo*
 KODO Mondo Head *Sony*
 LUNA Romantica *Jet Set*
 LUPINE HOWL Vaporizer EP *Beggars Group*
 WES MONTGOMERY Willow Weep For Me (Reissue) *Verve*
 MESHELL NDEGECELLO Cookie: The Anthropological Mix Tape *Maverick*
 HEATHER NOVA South *V2*
 OCTOPOUS PROJECT Identification Parade *Peek-A-Boo*
 OF MONTREAL Aldhill Arboretum *Kindercore*
 OTOPHOBIA Malignant *Slap-A-Ham*
 RIBEYE BROTHERS If I Had A Horse... *Meteor City*
 SHAKEYFACE Puddle Jumping In A Monsoon (EP) *Quartermass-Bubblecore*
 CHRISTIAN SIMEON Barm *Torn*
 MORDEEB SIZZLA The Story Unfolds (Best Of) *VP*
 SO KALMERY Bendera *Tinder*
 SOUL HOOLIGAN Music Like Dirt *Warner Bros.*
 STILL BREATHING *Semptember*
 Solid State
 STRUNG OUT American Paradox *Fat Wreck*
 TAKE 6 Beautiful World *Warner Bros.*
 TALIESIN ORCHESTRA Thread Of Time *Compendia Music*
 TALL PAUL Back And Forth *Moonshine*
 PHIL THORNTON Dreamscape *New World Music*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Exposure *4 Foot 11*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Massmen Records Label Sampler *Massmen*
 SARAH VAUGHAN It's A Man's World (Reissue) *Verve*
 MARGARET WHITING The Jerome Kern Songbook (Reissue) *Verve*
 LUTHER WRIGHT AND THE WRONGS Rebuild The Wall *Back Porch*

APRIL 30

ALABAMA THUNDER PUSSY Staring At The Divine *Relapse*
 TREY ANASTASIO Trey Anastasio *Elektra*
 BABU THE DILATED JUNKIE Duck Season *Sequence*
 BJORK, BRANT & THE OPERATORS Brant Bjork & The Operators *Music Cartel*
 DAEDELUS Invention *Plug Research-EFA*
 CHARLIE DANIELS The Ultimate Charlie Daniels *Epic Legacy*
 DISSECTION Storm Of The Light's Bane-Where Dead Angels Lie *Nuclear Blast*
 ELECTRIC UNIVERSE Unify *Spirit Zone-EFA*
 ELECTRIC WIZARD Let Us Prey *Music Cartel*
 FPU Crockett's Theme *Turbo*
 GONZALES Presidential Suite *Kitty-Yo-EFA*
 MIGUEL GRACA Monkey Mass *Bombay*
 INIQUITY Grime *Candlelight*
 IN PIECES Learning To Accept Silence *Escape Artist*
 INSOMNIUM In The Halls Of Awaiting *Candlelight*
 JOSHUA Singing To Your Subconscious *Immigrant Sun-Lumberjack*
 KAIA Oregon *Mr. Lady*
 KALMAH They Will Return *Century Media*
 KEPLER Missionless Days *Troubleman Unltd.*
 KNIVES OUT Heartburn (EP) *Deathwish*
 MARTINETS Your Avid Output *Scotch Pooch*
 MATTHEW MONTFORT Planet Passion *Ancient-Future.com*

MY LIFE WITH THE THRILL KILL KULT Golden Piltz: Luna Remixes *Underground Inc.-Invisible*
 NUSPIRIT HELSINKI Nuspiritt Helsinki *Guidance*
 OVERPROOF SOUNDSYSTEM Watch What You Put Inna *Different Drummer-EFA*
 JOHNNY PAYCHECK The Soul & The Edge: The Best Of Johnny Paycheck *Epic Legacy*
 ANDREW PECKLER Station To Station *Scape-EFA*
 RAM-ZET Escape *Century Media*
 REPRISAL Mail Order Knife Set *Good Life-Lumberjack*
 ROCKING HORSE WINNER Horizon *Equal Vision*
 SAGE FRANCIS Personal Journals *Anticon*
 ABE SCHWARTZ The Klezmer King *Columbia Legacy*
 SENTRYRIDOH Free Sentryridoh Songs From Loobiecore *Loobiecore*
 SMP Terminal *Underground Inc.-Invisible*
 SOLAR DAWN Equinoctium *Candlelight*
 SONIC SUM Plaster Man *Ozone*
 SOUNDTRACK CQ Emperor Norton
 SUFFOCATION Despise The Sun *Relapse*
 DAVE TARRAS & SAM MUSIKER Tanz! *Columbia Legacy*
 TIAMAT Judas Priest *Century Media*
 TINO Tino's Breaks Vol. 1 & 2 *Tino Corp.*
 TRI-STATE KILLING SPREE Some Words On The Subject Of Being Alive *Six Weeks*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS America's Hardcore *Good Life-Lumberjack*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Battle Axe Warriors 2 *Battle Axe*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Between Or Beyond The Northern Lights *Crippled Dick Hot Wax-EFA*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS From Avenue A To The Great White Way (2CD) *Columbia Legacy*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Further Electronics Vol. 1 *E: Motion-EFA*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Notes From The Real Underground 3 *Underground Inc.-Invisible*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Queen Tribute: Dynamite With A Laser Beam *Three One G*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Ralph Ellison: Living With Music *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Solebeats *Sole Music*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS THC (The Hip Hop Collection) *High Times*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Tribute To The Beast *Nuclear Blast*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Tucson Sound 1960-1968: Think Of The Good Times *Bacchus Archives*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Ultra Chilled 02 *Ultra*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Verve Remixed *Verve*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Verve Unmixed (Reissue) *Verve*
 WALKMEN Blizzard Of 1966 (Limited LP) *Troubleman Unltd.*
 WONDERLICK Wonderlick *Future Farmer*

MAY 7

ALIEN CRIME SYNDICATE XL From Coast To Coast *V2*
 GREGG ALLMAN I'm No Angel: The Best Of Gregg Allman *Epic Legacy*
 THE BLAMED Give Us Barrabas *Tooth And Nail*
 BK & ASSOCIATES BK & Associates *Uprok*
 BOUNTY KILLER Ghetto Dictionary "The Mystery" *VP*
 BOUNTY KILLER Ghetto Dictionary "The Art Of War" *VP*
 NORMAN BROWN Just Chillin' *Warner Bros.*
 BYRDS Byrds Sing Dylan *Columbia Legacy*
 ALICE COLTRANE Eternity *Sepia Tone*
 ALICE COLTRANE Transcendence *Sepia Tone*
 COUNTRY TEASERS Science Hat Artistic Cube Moral Nosebleed Empire *In The Red*
 CROOKED FINGERS Reservoir Songs EP *Merge*
 CURL UP AND DIE Unfortunately We're Not Robots *Revelation*
 WILL DOWNING Sensual Journey *GRP*
 ENON High Society *Touch and Go*
 DIZZY GILLESPIE Afro (Reissue) *Verve*
 GOLDFINGER Open Your Eyes *Jive-Mojo*
 GOSSIP Arkansas Heat (EP) *Kill Rock Stars*
 HOME TOWN HERO Home Town Hero *Maverick*
 MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT Frankie & Albert *Tomato*
 STAN KENTON The Formative Years (Reissue) *Verve*
 SHARON KRAUS Beautiful Twisted *Camera Obscura*
 LANDING Seasons *Ba Da Bing*
 JACK LOGAN & BOB KIMBELL Woodshedding *Parasol*
 LORD HIGH FIXERS Beginning Of The End-End Of The Beginning *In The Red*
 LOUDERMILK The Red Record *DreamWorks*
 FREDDIE MCGREGOR For You *VP*
 MULL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Loss *XL-Beggars*
 GERRY MULLIGAN Concert Jazz Band Live At The Village Vanguard (Reissue) *Verve*

NAUGHTY BY NATURE Icons *TVT*
 NAYSAYER Heaven, Hell, Or Houston *Carrot Top*
 NIKKOS Angels Flying *Nikkos Music*
 PATRICK PORTER Reverb Saved My Life *Camera Obscura*
 RADAR BROTHERS And The Surrounding Mountains *Merge*
 PAUL RUDERMAN Sunshine *ADA-Atlantic*
 JOE SAMPLE The Pecan Tree *GRP*
 CHRIS SMITHER Don't It Drag On (Reissue) *Tomato*
 CHRIS SMITHER I'm A Stranger Too (Reissue) *Tomato*
 ST. THOMAS I'm Coming Home *MISRA*
 STEPHEN STILLS Turn Back The Pages: The Best Of Stephen Stills *Columbia Legacy*
 KEVIN THISTA'S RED TERROR Don't Breathe A Word (Reissue) *Parasol*
 KEVIN THISTA'S RED TERROR Judo (Reissue) *Parasol*
 TIME SPENT DRIVING Just Enough Bright Sessions
 TRANS AM TA Thrill Jockey
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Fields and Streams (2CD) *Kill Rock Stars*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS A Woman's Voice *New World Music*
 WAYNE Music on Plastic *TVT*

MAY 14

ALPHA Sugar *Polyvinyl*
 AUDIO KARATE Space Camp *Kung Fu*
 BACULUM My Friends Became Junkies 3 Beads Of Sweat
 BLACK KEYS Big Come Up *Alive*
 CHINKEES Searching For A Brighter Future *Asian Man*
 CHUBBIES New Wave Boyfriends *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 EE Tiny Spot (EP) *Asian Man*
 GIRLS AGAINST BOYS You Can't Fight What You Can't See *Jade Tree*
 SKIP HELLER Career Suicide: Skip Heller Anthology *Dionysus*
 I AM THE WORLD Track = Song *Kindercore*
 JFA-BLUE COLLAR SPECIAL-WORTHLESS
 Concrete Waves *Disaster*
 LE TIGRE Remixes *Mr. Lady*
 MC5 Human Being Lawnmower (Best Of) *Total Energy*
 MOBY 18 *V2*
 ONLINEDRAWING Visitor *Jade Tree*
 DOUG POWELL The Lost Chord *Parasol*
 RUTABEGA Cobus Green *Johann's Face*
 SOUNDTRACK Frida Kahlo *Verve*
 SPEEDEALER Second Sight *Palm*
 SUNDAY'S BEST Californian *Polyvinyl*
 TOASTERS Enemy Of The System *Asian Man*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Rip Off Records Singles: Second Strike *Rip Off*

MAY 21

ASWAD Not Satisfied *Columbia Legacy*
 ASWAD New Chapter *Columbia Legacy*
 BABY ANNE I'm About To Break *Moonshine*
 BEYOND THE EMBRACE Against The Elements *Metal Blade*
 BUFFALO TOM Besides *Beggars Group*
 CAPITOL K Island Row *XL-Beggars*
 JIMMY CLIFF The Best Of Jimmy Cliff *Columbia Legacy*
 ALICE COLTRANE Universal Consciousness (Reissue) *Verve*
 CORDELIA'S DAD What It Is *Kimchee*
 DANZIG Danzig 777: I Luciferi *Spitfire*
 —Danzig was so much better on his first 777-inch.
 DEADSY Commencement *DreamWorks*
 DJ DARA Further *Moonshine*
 DOWN TO THE BONE Crazy Vibes And Things *GRP*
 ENGINE Superholio *Metal Blade*
 HAVALINA Space, Love & Bullfighting *Tooth And Nail*
 JERZEE MONET Love And War *DreamWorks*
 CARMEN MCRAE Birds Of A Feather (Reissue) *Verve*
 SERGIO MENDES Equinox (Reissue) *Verve*
 LAURA NYRO Eil and the Thirteenth Confession *Columbia Legacy*
 LAURA NYRO New York Tendaberry *Columbia Legacy*
 LAURA NYRO Gonna Take a Miracle *Columbia Legacy*
 ANITA O'DAY Incomparable (Reissue) *Verve*
 SAM RIVERS Waves (Reissue) *Tomato*
 STEROID MAXIMUS Ecotopia *Ipecac*
 TELEPOPUSIK Genetic World *Capitol*
 TOO BAD EUGENE Multigan *Tooth And Nail*
 MEL TORME Olé Tormé (Reissue) *Verve*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Exposure II *4 Foot 11*

VARIOUS ARTISTS The Great Tomato Blues Package (Reissue) *Tomato*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS No-Stop Cuisine: Introduction To The French Nouvelle Generation *Luaka Bop*
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 VOMITORY Blood Rapture *Metal Blade*
 ERIC VON SCHMIDT Living On The Trail *Tomato*
 HUKWE ZAWOSE & MICHAEL BROOK Assembly *Real World*

MAY 28

AS FRIENDS RUST A Young Trophy Band *EVR*
 NIK FREITAS Here's Laughing At Your Future *Farmer*
 SKINLAB ReVoltingRoom *Century Media*
 WOMBATS "Lose The Creep" (Single) *Digging*

JUNE 4

DEERHOOF Reveille *Kill Rock Stars-SAC*
 DOVES The Last Broadcast *Capitol*
 BILL EVANS Alone (Reissue) *Verve*
 ELLA FITZGERALD Ella At Juan-Les-Pins (Reissue) *Verve*
 FLOETRY Floetic *DreamWorks*
 EUGE GROOVE Warner Bros.
 CHRIS HILLMAN & HERB PETERSON Way Out West *Back Porch*
 IN EXTREMO Sunder Ohne Zugel *Metal Blade*
 KING OF WOOLWORTHS Ming Star *Mantra*
 LPG It's Still Me & My Cuzzin *Uprok*
 ARCHER PREWITT Three *Thrill Jockey*
 FLORA PURIM Sings Milton Nascimento *Narada*
 JAZZ *O*TIC Mortal Mirror *Kill Rock Stars*
 RED DELICIOUS *Extasy*
 SPACEHEADS Low Pressure *Merge*
 SPOON Series Of Sneaks (Reissue) *Merge*
 VADER Revelations *Metal Blade*
 WEATHER REPORT Tale Spinnin' *Columbia Legacy*
 WEATHER REPORT Black Market *Columbia Legacy*
 WEATHER REPORT Mysterious Traveller *Columbia Legacy*

JUNE 11

WARD CHURCHILL In A Pig's Eye (2CD) *Alternative Tentacles*
 CIRRIUS Counterfeit *Moonshine*
 FARTZ Injustice *Alternative Tentacles*
 HERBIE HANCOCK, MICHAEL BRECKER, ROY HARGROVE *Verve*
 STRYDER Jungle City Twitch *EVR*
 SWISS BEATZ Ghetto Stories *DreamWorks*

JUNE 18

GERALD ALBRIGHT *GRP*
 CHARLATANS UK Songs From The Other Side *Beggars Group*
 JULIA FORDHAM Concrete Love *Vanguard*
 JOY ELECTRIC Art & Craft Of Popular Music *BEC*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Exposure III *4 Foot 11*
 VEHEMENCE God Was Created *Metal Blade*

JUNE 25

BOY GEORGE Night Out *Moonshine*
 ARTO LINDSAY invoke *Righteous Babe*
 PAPA ROACH Lovehatetragedy *DreamWorks*

JULY 2

JAHEIM *Warner Bros.*
 RAPHI Cali Quake *Uprok*
 VEX RED Start With A Strong and Persistent Desire *Virgin*

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Oct '01 RYAN ADAMS

Sir Mix-A-Lot

STORY: NICK MARINO • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

Like most 11-year-olds, I identified with the life of the rapping pimp. So after hearing enough of the saccharine pop harmonies on the *Dirty Dancing* soundtrack at a 1989 family reunion, I commandeered the stereo and inserted the tape I related to most: Sir Mix-A-Lot's *Swass*.

I thought it would help my family understand me. Without *Swass*, they couldn't know that I, like Mix-A-Lot, was crushing, killing—never beat-stealing. They couldn't know that I, like Mix-A-Lot, busted my knuckles in junkyard scuffles and whipped my adversaries with a brass belt buckle. They couldn't know that I, like Mix-A-Lot sidekick Kid Sensation, could beat-box.

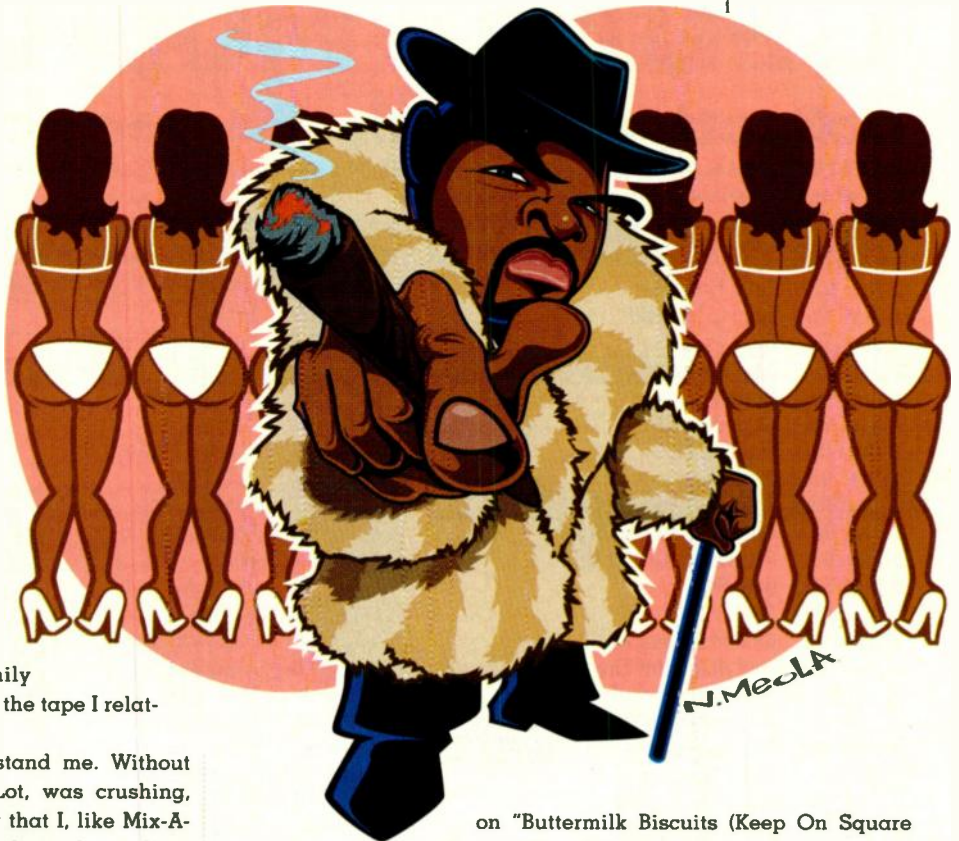
Back in my homebase of Orlando, *Swass* gave me street cred, especially on streets ending in cul-de-sacs. But somehow my poolside uncles didn't care. They gave me one song—"Posse On Broadway"—then revoked my stereo privileges.

Maybe I just chose the wrong track as their introduction. The frank narrative of class struggles and abusive relationships in "Posse" wasn't for everyone, especially since Mix-A-Lot cast it in the Hopperesque setting of Dick's Drive In restaurant. In one harrowing scene, when the posse stopped for a bite, Kid Sensation dropped a 20 and didn't even miss it. A woman from another crew then picked it up and kissed it. Her boyfriend started yelling, he went to slap her face—Mix-A-Lot homey PLB then sprayed that boy with mace.

Difficult listening, I know. But grim street tales like these provided my adolescent soundtrack, and thus begged to be shared. Once, I tried to ingratiate myself to a guy who was not only old enough to drive but possessed a Buick with a CD player. By this time, I'd acquired Kid Sensation's long-awaited solo debut, *Rollin' With Number One*. I figured the driver would appreciate a break from the Lemonheads, so I passed my CD from the back seat to the front. Kid Sensation lasted about as long in the car as Mix-A-Lot did at the reunion.

I didn't get it. I mean, I'm willing to be objective and say that Kid Sensation's second album, *The Power Of Rhyme*, was pretty wack except for the duet with Ken Griffey Jr. But *Rollin'* was a classic, yet another shot fired in the Seattle rap revolution.

Swass started it all, of course, and it remained my favorite even though I resigned myself to playing it alone. Between headphones I pondered nuances like Mix-A-Lot's fascination with square dancing



on "Buttermilk Biscuits (Keep On Square Dancin')" and "Square Dance Rap." "Biscuits" even featured a high-pitched caller who gave baking instructions: "Now grab that can and wrap it in your hand/ Bang that sucker 'til the dough expands/ Put them suckers off in your oven/ Grab your girlie and get a little lovin'."

Women in Sir Mix-A-Lot songs were almost always known as either "girlies" or "freaks," terms comparing rather favorably to the epithets rappers choose today. *Swass*'s misogyny and bravado sounded old-fashioned even then. Rhymes like "In an 18-wheeler, lookin' real swass/ All the girls smile 'cause I'm the big boss" and "I gotta eat now, can't eat later/ Made a lot of noise to attract my waiter/ The boy walked up and what did he say?/ Said 'Buttermilk Biscuits free today'" were an audio cartoon, sanitized for my pre-gangsta ears. During *Swass*'s raciest song, "F The BS," Mix-A-Lot adhered to the abbreviated title, never uttering the profanities in full. For the hook of "Rippin'," a superfast overture of self-promotion, he used a Casio playing "Frere Jacques." Hip-hop more perfect for 11-year-old ears was never made.

One day I unfolded the liner notes to discover Mix-A-Lot's signed letter to fans, in which he defined the *Swass* sound as "hard, complex and extremely bold, never conservative but sometimes very romantic." This description became the blueprint for my manhood.

Today, although I work a steady, non-pimping job with health insurance and everything, I like to think I've attained the *Swass* ideal. I do still live in Florida, but every so often I'll get nostalgic, put in *Swass* and daydream about cruising the streets of Seattle, my home away from home, in the black Benz limo with the cellular phone.

Nick Marino, music critic at The Florida Times-Union, is hard, complex and extremely bold, never conservative but sometimes very romantic.



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