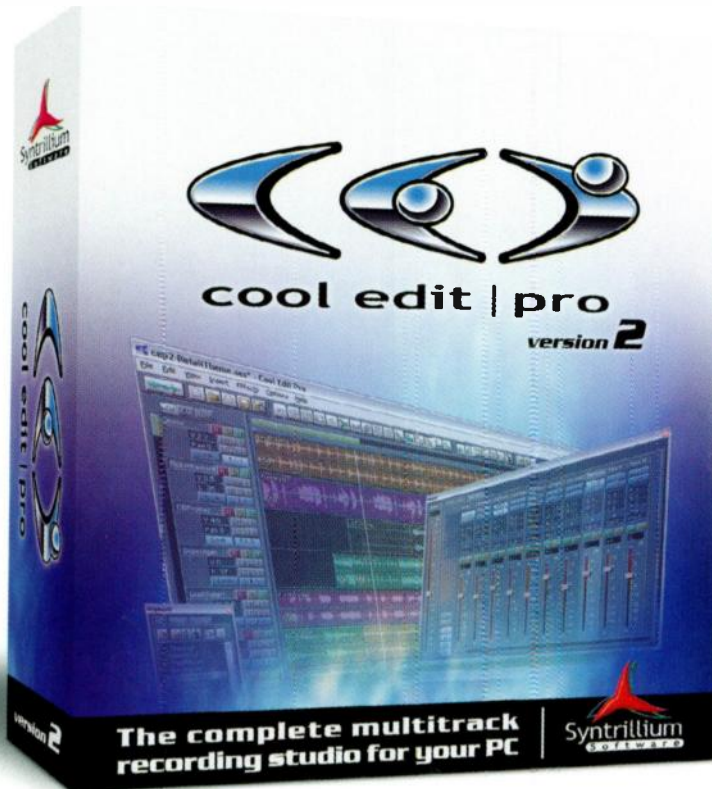




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## 2002 Holiday Gift Guide



PEARL JAM

### PEARL JAM 38

Seven records, 73 live albums and tens of millions of discs sold later, the band known as Pearl Jam is about to become a free agent for the first time in 12 years. Coincidentally, they've just released one of their best records yet in *Riot Act*. Nicole Keiper watches the beginning of phase two.

### SIMIAN 24

Simian's arsenal of homemade synths actually contains a device that sucks music out of plants. That's crazy! Tom Lanham takes up botany.

### AMON TOBIN 26

Sample-torturer Amon Tobin makes basslines out of kick drums and darkness out of light, and on *Out From Out Where* he's ditched the jazz leanings for dark, super-processed futurism. Doug Levy witnesses the rebirth of alchemy.

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We here at *CMJ New Music Monthly* have our very own Santa clause: Thou shalt not buy shitty gifts. With that in mind, take a stroll through our winter wonderland and find some goodies to clutter up your loved ones' lives.

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Pumping it up with Laura Cantrell, inside Chris Walla's Death Cab For Donkeys, the United States doesn't want you to hear the Electric Soft Parade, the Black Heart Procession toys with their organ, Matt Pond pays his credit card bills and Rocket From The Crypt gets some fresh air *Live From Camp X-Ray*.

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There's more to North Carolina than the set of *Dawson's Creek*. You can start with Charlotte.

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PEARL JAM: DANNY CLINCH; AMON TOBIN: SHANE WARD; JASON MRAZ: ALLISON DYER



AMON TOBIN



JASON MRAZ

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## The Turner diaries

I am not the type of reader who would threaten to cancel their subscription to a magazine due to an error of judgment on the part of an editorial staff. People are entitled to make mistakes and besides, mistakes often make for a robust debate in the more general marketplace of ideas. That said, I found the publication of Andrea Bakley's letter to Nicole Keiper in issue 105 to be most insensitive and mean-spirited. Ms. Blakely is a person with apparent developmental challenges, but she is a person nonetheless. To publish her letter in facsimile form—as if to say, "You won't believe this"—singles her out and attaches stigma to her processes of both expression and cognition. I am well aware that the Letters page is a forum for mockery, but this is the first facsimile reproduction of a letter I have seen in CMJ and the effect is particularly brutal, as though the mere display of this letter is sufficiently humiliating to require no further comment. Further, I am curious how or why the letter was published at all. It is clearly not a "Letter to the Editor" as it offers no editorial comment or critique. This was a personal request made to a member of the CMJ staff and consequently, does not invite your abuse and disdain. My letter, on the other hand, does. Have at it.

Peter Marston

*For those who missed it, we printed a scan of a letter to Associate Editor Nicole Keiper asking for Tina Turner photos. The letter was written in pencil on blue-lined notebook paper and used Nicole's name in every sentence. We ran it that way, with no wise-ass comments or snarky titles, to leave interpretation open. Some thought it was funny; some contacted Nicole saying that they felt bad for her for receiving that kind of correspondence. Peter's feelings are well-described above. Sure, we could've taken a higher road and not run it at all, but you never know where the line is unless you cross it now and again. This page has had the conceit, along with its wisenheimer tone, of running any letter to us as a letter to the editor, which has resulted in pitch let-*

*ters for Killer Loop sunglasses inspiring haiku, a long letter about a cab ride in Chicago and sincere responses to e-mail spam. I can see where the wisenheimer tone would lead one to think that we're mocking everything, but really the intent here, beyond some simple yuks, is to lift the curtain on the whole forced civility of communication between staff and readers in music mags' Letters pages. Sure, it would be classier to not be so sarcastic, but there's only so many letters about why a writer's opinion was wrong that the world can take. At least here you're getting something a lot closer to what we (or in most cases, I) are really like. And really, everyone it just a little too attached to their opinions. We're genuinely sorry if anyone was offended by the letter running the way it did, or that it ran at all, but actually, that it inspired the cogent letter it did makes me kinda proud. —ed.*

## War! Good God, y'all

That you disarm or destroy Earth in part or in whole, you are yet but the wet dreams of ghosts looking at Earth's would-be paradise through the war-goading maw of hell; the evil shells of hatred, pride and surfeit indifference from the broken spirits and soul of peace. Declining white teenage sex rates mean that after centuries of being bullshitted by capitalist and religious cranks YOUR CHILDREN ARE NOW CLEARLY TOO DUMB TO FUCK. The basic truth is that no matter what ungodly, fraudulent religious murdering lie is perpetrated against you, NO SEX MEANS NO MORE PEOPLE LIKE YOU. If the drunk lesbian children of politicians all immediately volunteer for active war duty, it will only mean that a greater goading collection of evil morons will be murdering intimidated goat herds...until some harassed group gives that superlative helping terrorist push to where you are headed anyway...UTTER HELL. Blessed are the peacekeepers, thou shalt not kill. Blow job Mr. President, Dick in the Bush, no more war and get fucking!

devolution20032002@yahoo.com

*Man, we can't win this month. —ed.*

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ISSUE 108 DECEMBER 2002

## EDITORIAL

Editor-In-Chief: SCOTT FRAMPTON  
Associate Editor: NICOLE KEIPER  
Assistant Editor: TOM MALLON  
Contributing Editors: STEVE CIABATTONI,  
DOUG LEVY, CHRISTOPHER R.  
WEINGARTEN  
Interns: ROBBIE CHAPLICK, MATT OSHINSKY

## ART/PRODUCTION

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CD Production: SEAN CAESAR

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

E-mail: [cmjmonthly@cmj.com](mailto:cmjmonthly@cmj.com)

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# LISTEN UP

50

MADE THE FIRST CUT

10

COMPETED IN NYC

3

GO HEAD-TO-HEAD IN L.A.

1

DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

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FINALISTS

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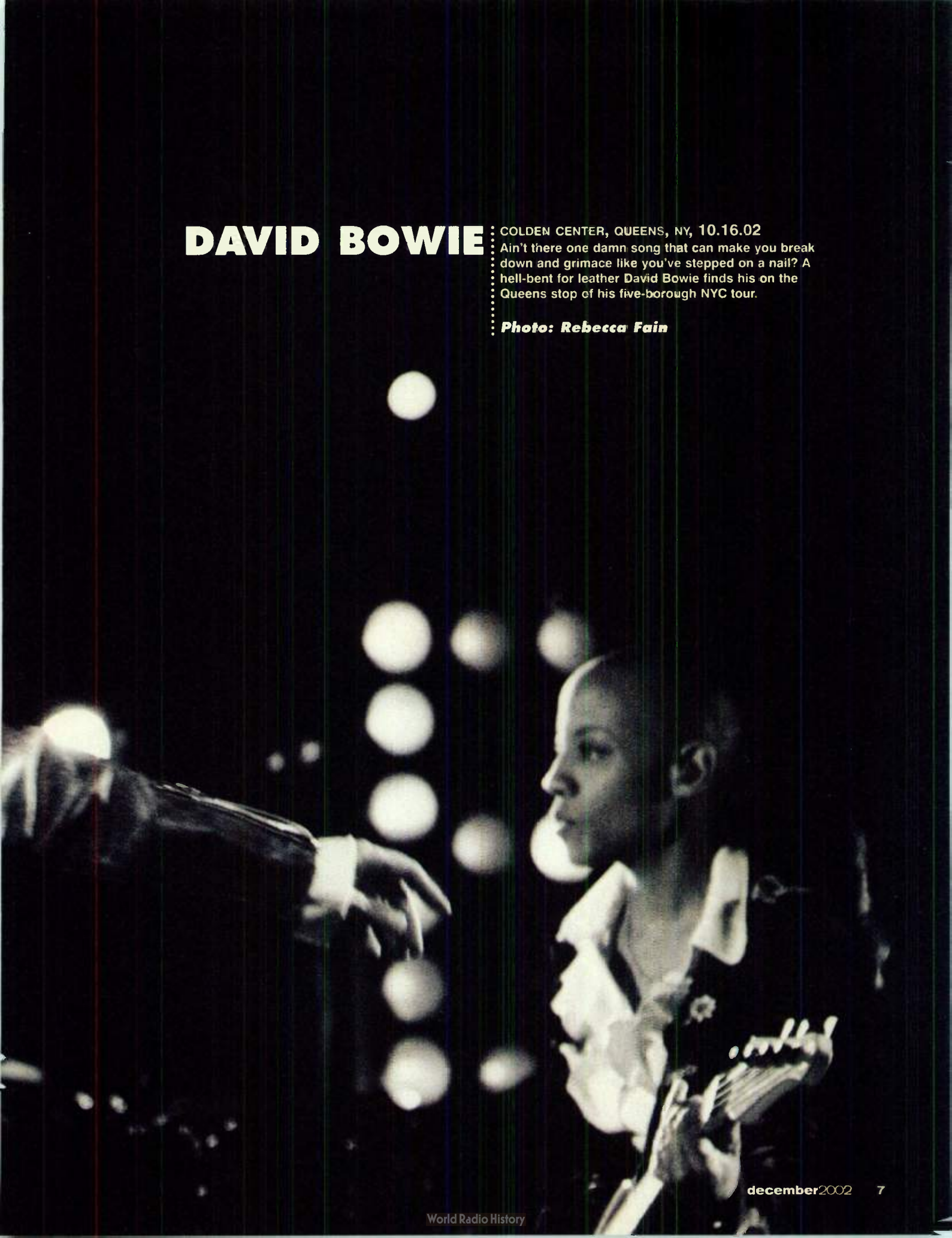
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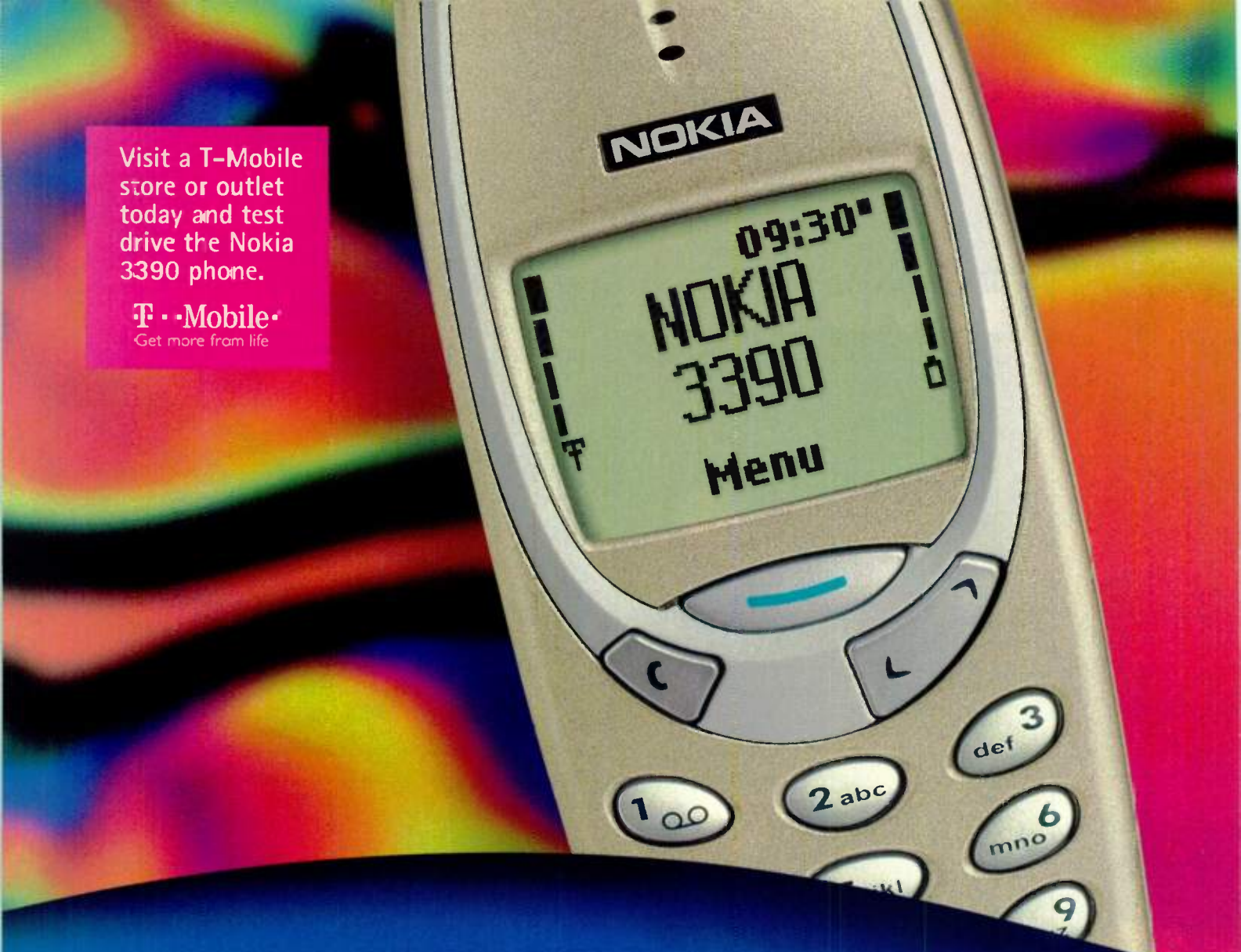


# DAVID BOWIE

: GOLDEN CENTER, QUEENS, NY, 10.16.02

: Ain't there one damn song that can make you break  
: down and grimace like you've stepped on a nail? A  
: hell-bent for leather David Bowie finds his on the  
: Queens stop of his five-borough NYC tour.

: **Photo: Rebecca Fain**



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## One From The Road: Laura Cantrell



Out supporting Elvis Costello, citified country charmer **Laura Cantrell** checks in from the road—literally.

Nashville. It's the former home of the Grand Ole Opry, and we had an after-show party across the alley in the back-room of Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, where all the Opry stars used to hang out between shows. Besides a ton of family, members of Lambchop and Yo La Tengo were there, I met John Prine and Trisha Yearwood, saw Steve Earle running to move his car before they towed it and got to hear Elvis sing country classics like "Wondering," "Sweet Dreams" and "A Good Year For The Roses" for the first time on this tour. What a surreally beautiful night!

### Where are you right now?

I-75 North from Miami to Clearwater, Fla. for the 14th of 17 dates opening for Elvis Costello And The Imposters.

### What were last night's accommodations?

The Loews on Miami's South Beach. Much classier digs than the Motel 6 in Valdosta, Ga. the night before. My brother-in-law has a friend who is a bellhop there and got us a rate we couldn't refuse.

### How are you traveling?

Black passenger van and a Lincoln Town Car we rented in Nashville.

### Who in the band has the most annoying sleeping habits?

I make a point of not sleeping with my bandmembers!

### What's currently being played on the tour vehicle soundsystem?

A Richard and Linda Thompson bootleg from the early '70s.

### What rituals do you have, if any, that are part of every tour?

Finding good local barbeque. If that fails, keep the Cracker Barrel map handy!

### What's been the best show of the tour thus far?

The Ryman Auditorium in my hometown,

### What song request are you most tired of hearing?

"Pump It Up."

### What do you miss most about being away from home?

I just moved about a month before the tour started and haven't even unpacked yet.

### What do you do during the day to occupy your time?

Read trashy magazines and stare out the car window.

### What question should be asked of a touring band but never is?

What is your personal "code of the road"?

## WEIRD RECORD

### Throwin' Them (Merz) 'Bows

Some people are suckers for a good melody; some people are suckers for the sound a giant carnivorous bug would make as it burrowed into your ear canal and started its own entomological computer camp for maladjusted arthropods. Horrible noisemaker newbie Russell Haswell and horrible noisemaker legend Masami Akita (a.k.a. Merzbow) join forces on *Satanstornado* (Warp) like a malfunctioning, hideously screeching Voltron... that gets eaten by a



malfunctioning, hideously screeching Go-Bot. Akita and Haswell (two art-school educated guys, go figure) make a totally new racket (like a *Spalding factory*, ba-dum-bum)—mixing electro-acoustic shrieks, death-metal terror and newfangled glitch—resulting in one of the most difficult listens since Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*, Neil Young's *Arc* or Deion Sanders's *Prime Time*. Mama, don't let your babies go to art school.>>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

LAURA CANTRELL: JOHN ANGELINI, PHILLYWOOD.COM 2002 ©

**NEWSFEED:** • Rumor has it that **Phish** recorded 20 new songs during rehearsals for their upcoming tour  
• **Robbie Fulks** offers to reward any fan who disrupts a **Ryan Adams** show with Bryan



## IN MY ROOM

**Who:** Chris Walla of Death Cab For Cutie  
**Where:** His house in Seattle, Wash.  
**Why:** Death Cab helped bring homemade Northwestern indie rock back into the spotlight, so let's see what's in the home they're making fit in. Oh—donkeys.

### Playing chicken

I have a fascination with ceramic chickens. I inherited a little bit of a collection from my grandmother, and it's growing. My birthday was a couple days ago and I got some ceramic chicken salt and pepper shakers. That was very exciting.

### Ass-ketball

I recently found some pictures of donkey basketball at a thrift store and had those framed. It's people on donkeys in what appears to be a high-school gym. There's four pictures. And it appears to be about 1952, and they're all on donkeys playing basketball. It's kind of terrifying. It looks like the referee is on a donkey as well.

### Out of Africa

The house came with a bunch of tribal, sort of African bush artifacts from the 40s, I think. There's a big headdress, and a necklace thing made out of claws. And there's these huge spears. Big ones. I don't know quite what to do with spears; I don't really feel like I should display them in living room. And no spear throwing. It'd be like having a lawn-dart party with indie rockers—bad news.

*Death Cab For Cutie's You Can Play These Songs With Chords (Barsuk) collects their rare, early songs in the same way that seemingly every musician we cover collects weird animal memorabilia.*



### BY VINCENT G. CURRY

The holiday season is the perfect time for a theological question: **What language do they speak in hell? My money's on either English or German, based on this month's fact-based films.** The first and most obvious are the Nazis, whose horror is once more visited in Roman Polanski's winner at Cannes, *The Pianist*. It's the true story of pianist, Wladyslaw Szpilman (played by one of my faves, Adrien Brody) who spent WWII hiding from Nazis in Poland, and was eventually protected by a Nazi officer. Polanski barely escaped Poland himself (crawling through a wire fence is all that saved him—his mother was not as fortunate), so I can understand his need to show what happened in all its brutal reality. For the viewer, however, its two-hour-plus running time is an exercise in endurance. You go quickly from "Oh, God, this is horrible," to "Oh, God, when will this movie end?" ♦ ♦ ♦ While the Germans targeted one race, the British have seemingly tried to wipe out every race at one time or another. *Rabbit Proof Fence* is an account of their policies in Australia, where **half-breed Aboriginal children would be taken from their parents to "help them become more white."** Of course becoming "more white" involved being domestic help for white people. The scary part about this policy is that it only stopped 20 years ago. This film accounts one girl's refusal to stay in one of the training camps, and how she walked 1500 miles along the rabbit-proof fence back to her mother, successfully avoiding constant attempts to recapture her. In this case, the film succeeds because the emphasis is on the triumph of her accomplishment and not the brutality she escapes. And it helps that it's only 90 minutes.

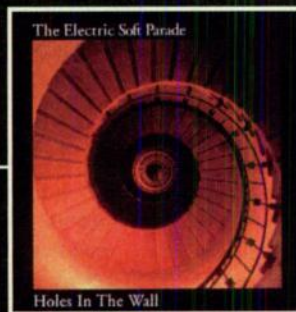
For more rants, go to [www.angrygeek.com](http://www.angrygeek.com).

## OF GREAT IMPORT

Get it from over there,  
'cause you can't buy it here.

### THE ELECTRIC SOFT PARADE

*Holes In The Wall*  
db (U.K.)



**What it is:** Startlingly mature debut from youthful British brothers Alex and Tom White, who changed their name from the Soft Parade after receiving legal threats from a Doors cover band.

**Why you want it:** Taking rock music's sibling tradition one step further, the White brothers are the sole members of ESP, producing one of 2002's most inspired albums despite the fact that at 20, vocalist/guitarist Alex is the senior of the pair. Not to mention that drummer Tom, 18, wrote most of the songs, which incorporate everything from classic pop harmonies to fuzzed-up rock or French-Jeaning electronica. Single "Silent To The Dark" had to be edited

down quite a bit from its full nine minutes for radio play, but that didn't stop it from taking over the U.K. airwaves with its unforgettable singalong chorus and irresistibly unassuming charm. And after offering up soothing acoustic wonders ("It's Wasting Me Away"), bile-infused scorchers ("Why Do You Try So Hard To Hate Me") and even layered '70s psych-fests ("Red Balloon For Me"), it's fitting that the disc's instant-grab of a first track is titled: "Start Again"—because with this one, hitting repeat is unavoidable. >>>DOUG LEVY

**LINK:** [www.electricsoftparade.com](http://www.electricsoftparade.com)  
**R.I.Y.L:** Supergrass, Blur, Teenage Fanclub

# Tough Love

**DICKY BARRETT** Above all else, love's supposed to be fun. And the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, now coming up on their 20-year anniversary, have built a legacy on chasing a good time—which they find, again, on *A Jackknife To A Swan* (Side One Dummy). Leaving your lovelife in the hands of gravel-throated frontman Dicky Barrett may help you stop being so morose all the damn time. *When people stop responding to your Livejournal, you can always just ask a rock personality: lovelorn@cmj.com.*

**When Britney Spears or Avril Lavigne (or any teen pop diva, for that matter) comes on television, I absolutely have to watch. I try telling my girlfriend that I do it because I make a living as a music writer, and I have to stay in touch with pop culture, but I don't think she's buying it anymore.**  
—Mike, New York, N.Y.

For every Britney or Avril video you watch, you must sit through an 'NSYNC or Enrique Iglesias video to even things out. That's the only way she may believe you're not the pervert you truly are.

**I'm not ugly, dumb or a social moron, but I have the worst luck meeting girls. Give me some ideas of how to meet new people, please. I'm almost ready to join Makeoutclub, and that's just sad.**  
—Christian, Corvallis, Ore.

Start or join a band. If you have no musical talent whatsoever, become a tour manager or a roadie.

**I've been lusting after my friend Jeff's sister for a few months. Me and Jeff are really good friends—and it's his sister. He'd cut my nuts**

**off and keep them in a jar if I ever touched her. But I kind of really really want to touch her. Should I risk death and just go after her, tell him about it and ask if he's cool with it, move to Peru and forget I ever met her?**

—Brian, State College, Penn.

First off... how attached are you to your nuts? You have two choices: stay friends with Jeff, or kidnap her and take her to Peru with you.

**How do I get my girlfriend to stop talking dirty in bed? Maybe some guys are into that but she talks like a porno and it freaks me out. When I'm with the girl I love I don't really want her telling me to... wait is this a family magazine? Help me, please.**  
—Anthony, DeKalb, Il.

Every time she says something dirty, tell her she reminds you of your mom. If that doesn't work, wear earplugs.

**After dating a bunch of assholes I decided I wanted a nice sensitive guy. I found one, and we've been dating for almost two months. But I'm starting to get afraid that everything's not what it seems—we still haven't had sex, he hasn't once talked about an ex-girlfriend and he dresses better than I do. How can I find out if I'm a beard?**  
—Tracy, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ask him to go see a musical with you. If he's already seen it, you're a beard.

**This is probably stupid, but I have kind of a self-confidence issue that comes from something that bothers me about myself. I have kind of a hairy back. Which would be fine if I was 55 and married, but I'm 25 and**



**single. Do girls actually get as bothered by that kind of thing as I think they do?**

—Jeremy, Lawrence, Ks.

If it's between you and a guy with a back as soft as a baby's bottom, who do you think's gonna win? Wax that back or hang out with Bigfoot 24/7 so you look normal by comparison.

Love, Dicky



teriously Captain Beefheartless **Magic Band** • **Sparklehorse's** Mark Linkous, having completed a side project with **Daniel Johnston**, to return to the studio this winter to follow-up *It's A Wonderful Life* • Holy fucking shit,

“Thom Yorke ignored me at a hotel in Los Angeles. I was secretly a bit gutted. I’m sure he recognized me. I always look at it like we’re in a big musical high school and Radiohead is in the year above us and they still haven’t come and sat with us at lunch.”

—Coldplay’s Chris Martin tells *Entertainment Weekly* the perils of rock ‘n’ roll high school.



## MY FAVORITE GEAR:

It was the *Black Heart Procession*, in the studio, with the toy organ.

Who knows what lies in the heart of a murderer? For the Black Heart Procession, it’s a big, ugly brown toy organ. Behind the intrigue and betrayal that fuels their new *Amore Del Tropico* (Touch And Go) lurks the Optigan, Mattel’s notoriously unreliable optical organ, which plays loops and sounds off clear, vinyl-like discs. The Optigan provided the basis for one of *Amore’s* standout tracks, “Broken World,” but like any murder plot, things quickly fell apart at the seams. “It was completely ready to [record], and the second Toby [Nathaniel, keys] starts playing it, you could see smoke coming out of the back,” says head Heart Pall Jenkins. “We turned the thing off and the realized the motor’s completely burnt.” Luckily Jenkins was able to borrow a replacement from Optigan expert Pea Hix, frontman of Optiganally Yours, for recording, but live the Optigan will be handled by a sampler; a band can only handle so much death onstage. >>>TOM MALLON

Tupac Shakur is putting out a new double-disc set, his fifth posthumous album • Grandaddy in the studio working on their third record • >>>

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## Auto Destruct

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY  
(ROCKSTAR FOR PS2)

Nothing says "immoral excess" quite like the white-suited wonders of *Miami Vice*. It's fitting, then, that the sequel to the most violent and amazing game ever warps all the mayhem of the series to the most immoral time ever: the 1980s. Palm trees, blue skies and new (or, technically, old) cars and weapons perfectly recreate the Sonny Crockett-approved feel, and *Vice City* one-ups *GTA3* by adding usable (read: crashable) motorcycles and helicopters. Some of the smoothest graphics ever to hit the PS2 make a head-on motorcycle vs. bus collision as graceful as a ballet. (A ballet performed by hookers where each pirouette ends in a heap of crumpled metal, of course.) >>>TOM MALLON



## voyager one

monster zero

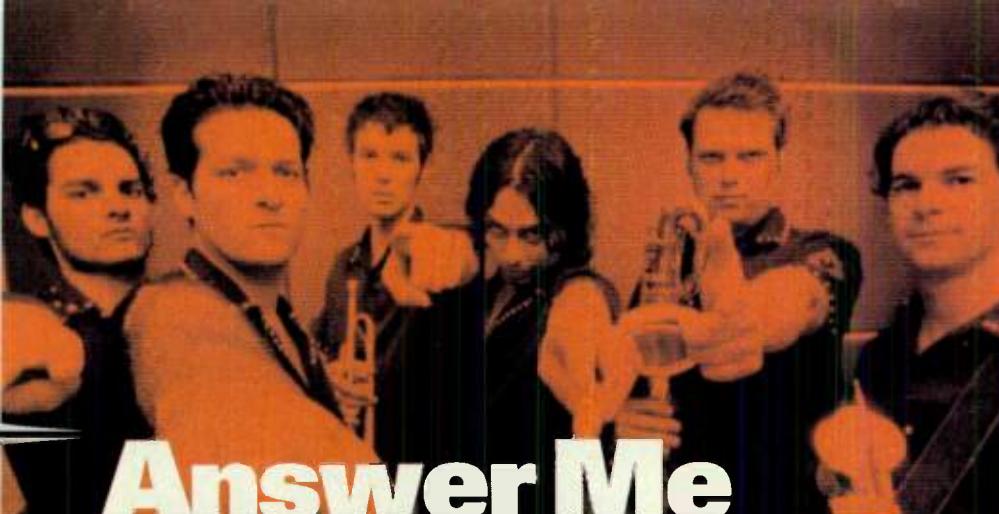
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(tom scanlon, seattle times)

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(hear "wires" on this month's sampler cd)



# Answer Me

**Rocket From The Crypt's John Reis on doing it yourself, doing it often and polishing turds. (None for him, thanks.)**

**S**omewhere, the Energizer Bunny is lying by the side of the road with its ass kicked. *Live From Camp X-Ray* (Vagrant) is proof that nothing stops the rock 'n' roll machine that is Rocket From The Crypt's John "Speedo" Reis. This band has released, what, over 100 singles, a baker's dozen discs? In which time, they shot curiously sky-high up the alt-rock charts in the mid-'90s, did major-label boot camp (Interscope), active duty and discharge, lost a powerhouse drummer (to *Moth*), then swam back to indie shores, missing scarcely a beat along the way. What were they gonna do, retire? Give Speedo a break, because he doesn't have time for one. \*\*\*PATRICK KENNEDY

**You've just gotten back from Australia. How'd that go?**

Pretty good, we've been there three times, and you know, our records aren't widely distributed down there, so the people who come out are hardcore fans who've been into it from the beginning. The weird part about it was staying in five-star hotels every day, and sharing the festival stage with bands like Sum 41. It was pretty much like, "What the fuck?" Everywhere we went it was like we didn't belong.

**Last time you recorded (2001's *Group Sounds*), you were down in Memphis with Jim Dickinson. How did you guys do this one?**

With this record, we wrote and recorded and mixed the record down in two weeks. We put together a recording studio in our

practice space, and did it ourselves.

**What were you going for?**

We were inspired by '70s punk, as far as sonically, we really wanted it to sound different than anyone else. We were like, "We like these drum sounds that are totally dead, and don't have some bombastic room sound going on." And with the guitars, we just put a mic up. We didn't spend much time getting sounds. There is no right way. You spend a month trying to get a guitar sound? Give me a break.

**You gonna keep recording yourselves?**

Yeah. Usually people get into making records because they're like, "Oh, I really want to be able to spend more time, and get all these great sounds," and for us, it's not like that. No one in this band is an enthusiast for tone; no one really cares. We just do it this way because it's easier, and we don't have to leave home. And it's a lot cheaper. For our band, it doesn't make sense to polish a turd. I think this record we just did sounds as good as anything else we've ever done.

**I like this one better. It's like you open the door, and bam, then 25 minutes later, the door's closed.**

Yeah, I've got a short attention span, and a lot of the people I come in contact with—generally people younger than me—seem to have this amazing sense of patience, and attention to detail. I've got a short attention span, and it's just getting shorter.

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

# FIVE SPOT



**FIVE RECORDS THAT MATT POND LIKES TO LISTEN TO WHILE PAYING HIS CREDIT CARD BILLS. (NO, REALLY.)**

**1. Brian Eno, *Here Come The Warm Jets***  
Because I want to rock and I want that rock to be good. (Also: the best combination of an innovative sound and driving rock 'n' roll.)

**2. Rachel's, *Selenography***  
Because sometimes you have to turn off that damn rock 'n' roll music. Thoughtful to the point of arresting—some of the most beautiful music ever made. (Now I'm having trouble concentrating on the damned bills.)

**3. Iron And Wine, *The Creek Drank The Cradle***  
This is my most recent credit card purchase. Most things bought with fake money are regretted later—this is not. Entirely the opposite. Soothing without being sterile, kickass and quiet.

**4. Ted Leo/Pharmacists, *The Tyranny Of Distance***  
"Dear Mr. Leo, I have listened to your last CD so much I have literally worn it out. It fell apart in my hands last week. So now I am overeagerly waiting to buy your follow-up. Thank you, Matt Pond."

**5. The Glands, *The Glands***  
"Dear Mr. Shapiro, I have listened to your last CD so much I have literally worn it out. It fell apart in my hands last week. So now I am overeagerly waiting to buy your follow-up. Do not worry—I have a credit card. Thank you, Matt Pond."

*Matt Pond PA's *The Nature Of Maps* (Polyvinyl) can be purchased via either cash or credit.*

RYAN JOSEPH SHAUGHNESSY

**Godsmack**, tentatively titling their next record *Faceless*, completely miss the irony • James Lavelle is gearing up to record the next **UNKLE** record, which may include contributions from **Queens Of The Stone Age's** Josh Homme \*\*\*



## THE REUNION SHOW

**A** swampy stretch of tarmac in southern Georgia isn't exactly *terra familiaris* for four guys from Long Island, N.Y., yet that's where the Reunion Show find themselves this very minute: hungry, tired and mired in a tour of America's finest holes-in-the-wall. "It's been rough. Last week we crashed our trailer in Nashville at four in the morning," moans vocalist/bassist Brian Diaz. Adding to the frustrations, the band has found themselves rocking cuts from their debut record, the snazzy, spazzy *Kill Your Television* (Victory), in towns where the music seems to come in only two varieties: country and Western. Most of *Television's* message still translates, luckily: The anti-celebrity sentiments deep within the record, with songs like "Star Training" and "Character

Assasination" spitting bile at society's fascination with all things glitter, ring just as true in L.A. as they do in Lumpkin County. "Everyone wants to be famous or known for something," Diaz explains. "People don't want to go through life anonymous. I think TV feeds into that. I know girls who want to be models... so they fucking starve themselves to death... We want to be famous too, but sometimes the whole thing just seems so silly." All the more universal is the esthetic those ideas are couched in: good-timey punk chugs and synth freakouts. "We're not playing anything too deep, it's fun music," Diaz says. "We don't want anybody to over-think it. We just want people to come to the show and bounce around." >>>JAMES MONTGOMERY



# PHILIPS


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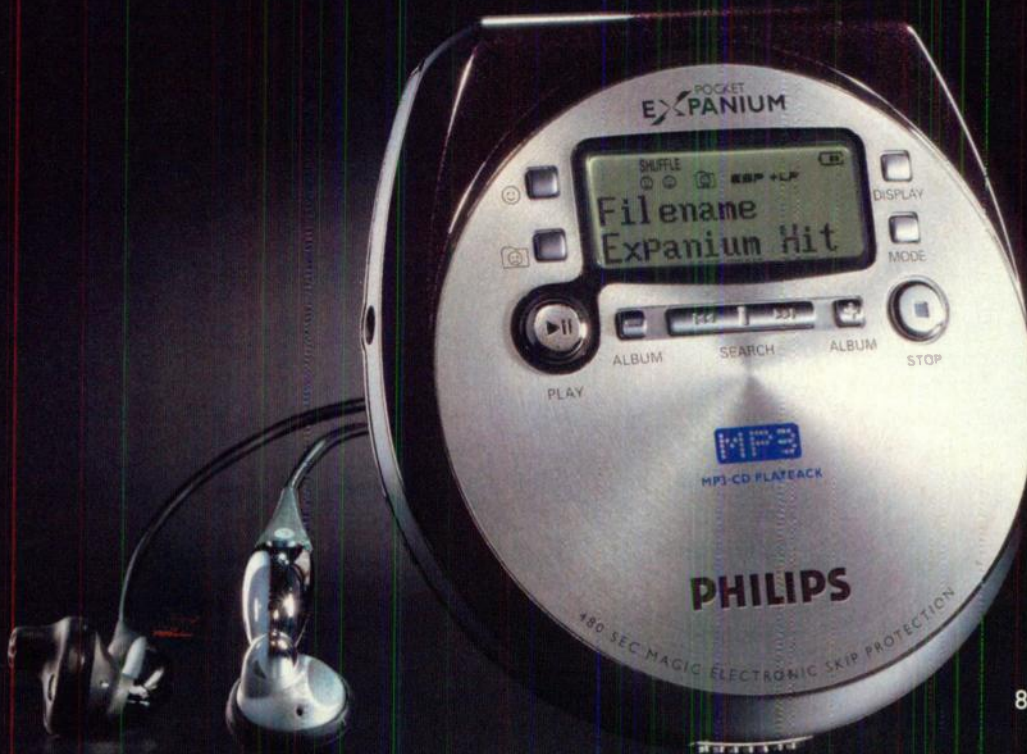
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# JASON MRAZ

It's 9 a.m. and Jason Mraz won't admit to being woken up for this interview. "No, no, I've been up for about 10 minutes before you called," he yawns. This from a guy whose new record features a song called "Sleep All Day." The 20-something singer-songwriter should take the sleep when he can get it, as off days are coming fewer and farther between with his debut, *Waiting For My Rocket* (Elektra), um, taking off. Plucked from beside the espresso counter at a San Diego coffeehouse where he nurtured a weekly gig into standing room only events, Mraz hasn't gotten used to recent experiences like jamming with Dave Matthews and opening for Gomez, saying, "It's already blown my expectations." *Rocket* expands the minimalist sound Mraz developed with percussionist Toca Rivera into a genre-bending jaunt buoyed by a voice that mirrors Jamiroquai's blue-eyed soul here, and G. Love's acrobatic wordplay there. At the hands of producer John Alagia (Dave Matthews Band, John Mayer) Mraz's is a wholly accessible sound made more pleasant by the surprising and subtle accompaniment of banjo, lap steel, clavinet and the Agents Of Good Roots' horns. Touring is an entirely different animal, however. "I'm still learning how to do sit-ups in the van," he laughs. >>>MAT HALL



ALLISON DYER



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World Radio History



## CAVE IN

**B**oston metalcore band Cave In grew up—discovering an ethereal post-hardcore planetarium teeming with Rush riffs and Floyd-ian atmospheric—and the underground backlash hit like a rescinded Milli Vanilli Grammy. Now, alongside Christina Aguilera, they're cozying into RCA digs. "We were bigger sell-outs in the independent world when we put out a record that didn't sound anything like heavy metal," says Cave In guitarist/vocalist Stephen Brodsky, "which is hilarious." Taking advantage of deep major-label pockets, the space-rockers have produced their "most sonically sizzling" record, using virtually all analog echoes and delays to procure maximum warmth in hitting a radio sea of ultra-compressed sheen. "I wanted to take the

biggest advantage of the time and the money," says Brodsky, "and try to resurrect the ghost of [My Bloody Valentine auteur] Kevin Shields as much as possible." A production hound, Brodsky (with guitarist Adam McGrath and producer Rich Costey) spent weeks poring over sounds—something that would have been ludicrous on an indie label budget. "We could take 30 minutes just trying different amp-and-cabinet combinations. For just maybe a 30-second part of a song. For me that's sort of a dream come true, because I've only been able to do that in my bedroom with two crappy amplifiers using three crappy guitars," says Brodsky. "The only thing that really got on my nerves was making sure everything was in tune." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



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## BLEU

It's no big secret how one Boston-based popster named William James McAuley III came to be known by the single moniker Bleu. "I had blue hair for a long time, and in your freshman dorm-room days, everybody has a nickname, so mine was Bleu," the 26-year-old reveals. "Blue hair was the thing everybody knew me by, and I still had it, even when I started playing out in Boston." But Bleu, whose hair has since reverted to its natural auburn, is more than just a colorful coif. His *Redhead* (Aware-Columbia) is a veritable power-pop explosion awash in '70s sonic kitsch. Puffy Ami Yumi aids in the ABBA flair of "Sayonara," and the mixes have that trademark ELO compression. "Production-wise," he notes, "I definitely said, 'What would Jeff Lynne do?' a lot while we were recording." Bleu comes from a strong academic heritage; his mother is a librarian, his father a gerontologist. But after cracking the music-theory books at Berklee, he "had to unlearn a lot of that stuff in order to get back to the basics of songwriting." Now it's the simple things that intrigue him, be it a time-tested power chord or his collection of vintage Smurfs, Care Bears and Strawberry Shortcake dolls. "I don't wanna make crazy, outrageous, off-the-wall music," Bleu declares, in his favorite Night Ranger "7 Wishes" jersey. "I wanna make pop music that a lot of people are gonna like." >>>TOM LANHAM

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

# THE CORAL

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EP in stores Tuesday, November 12. Look for The Coral's debut album in early 2003.

World Radio History

In a pile of primitive  
handmade synths, Simian  
found their monolith.

# SHOCK THE MONKEY

STORY: TOM LANHAM • PHOTO: DONALD MILNE





Listening to *We Are Your Friends*, you can't help but wonder where in the hell Simian came up with the surreal synth noises gurgling through its psychedelic pop songs: Like the oompah arrangement for "La Breeze," the squiggly melody line of "Sunshine," the wonk-wonky marches of "Helpless" or the cheesy mom 'n' pop organ of "The Swarm." No big trade secret, confesses rodent-voiced frontman Simon Lord—it runs in the eccentric family.

The Manchester band uses several analog synthesizer models that Lord's father hand-constructed back in the '70s, including a curious contraption that, he swears, "you actually stick onto a plant, and it translates the plant's natural energy into synth music—it's pretty cool." That's just one of Simian's many oddball devices. "My Dad also designed a synth that would make womb noises, swooshy sounds using white noise and pink noise," continues Lord. "I asked him the other day what happened to it, but we don't know where it's gone—it might've disappeared forever. And we also employ a weird Theremin—it doesn't change tones when you move your hands over it, you play it with a cigarette lighter. The closer you put the flame to the Theremin, the lower the sound."

Since Lord had been "messing about with electronic noises from an early age," it's unsurprising that the college philosophy major drifted into D.I.Y. home recording, revolving around said synth arsenal. One of his self-produced CDs reached a trio of hungry musicians—James Ford, Jas Shaw, Alex Macnaghten—which led to the launching of The Church Of Simian, an early incarnation that was more improv than alterna-pop. They sought new means of artistic expression, such as blindfolding the Source A&R chap when he arrived at the Manchester train station, then "kidnapping" him for a secret-location showcase. "And

it must've stuck with him, because he signed us a couple of weeks later," Lord snickers. "But we didn't wanna be some faceless normal band. We wanted to try and do something different involving visuals and art and stuff, and did a few other things where we kidnapped some journalists in a van and took them to a warehouse or an art gallery. And our mythology built up from little incidents like that. But it was basically just us trying to have fun and make sure everything we did was unique."

Last year's debut, *Chemistry Is What We Are*, featured a tamer, more tentative Simian, noodling with soft textures and dreamy vocals. But *Friends* (Source-Astralwerks) is a whole new aggressive animal. Reasons Lord, "We've always been into '60s psychedelic. But recently we've been into a lot of modern electronic music, as well as R&B and hip-hop, because we've been DJing a lot, playing a lot of dance music. And that's really influenced this album—it's still the '60s psychedelic sound that we love, but coming from a more modern dance-music-production angle. And we've learned how to do it in a much more focused way. We've learned what we're good at."

Like knowing exactly which retro keyboards to employ. But why did Dad have all that gear on hand? He was in a few bands, Lord elaborates. "Quite experimental groups in the '70s, although I don't think they ever had any records out. My father was way beyond that—he was off into experimental art, and really obsessed with similar outfits like the Nice." Which brings up an interesting point, says Lord. "Simian is actually supporting the Nice! The Nice have reformed after 30 years, and they're doing this gig at the Royal Festival Hall with Keith Emerson, and we're opening for 'em. My Dad couldn't believe it when he heard about it—two of his favorite bands of all time, together in one place!" **NHM**





# mister twister

Amon Tobin can do things with a sample you never dreamed of—heading *Out From Out Where*, he pushes the boundary even further into the unknown.

STORY DOUG LEVY • PHOTO SHANE WARD

**W**hat I'm interested in is the energy in the sample," Amon Tobin offers from his Canadian studio, his thoughtful, measured tone belying the insistence of his songs, "not really the way it happens or the order of events."

This approach makes Tobin a delightfully mad sample scientist, bending sounds to the point where it's a wonder they don't simply break, creating an eclectic and idiosyncratic new form of life in the dance world.

Some musicians may find the prospect of using only samples to create music limiting, but for Tobin, it's downright liberating. By focusing on one medium, he finds himself challenged to constantly come up with new ways of thinking and approaches that haven't been used before.

"There are a few experiments I've done with changing the roles of some sounds," says Tobin of creating his latest offering, *Out From Out Where*—his fourth full-length for Ninja Tune. "Like in 'Searchers,' I tried to make kind of a woodwind out of a vocal. And on 'Proper Hoodidge' I've got a bass note that I made out of a kick drum; I made this kind of harmonic kick drum at first, and then I kept processing it until it turned into an actual note. Then I was able to interlock the notes and the rhythms really well, because they were made of the same thing. There were lots of things that happened like that, which throughout this album just kept me really interested. Hopefully it comes across in the music for the listeners too."

For a man who first caught people's attention by solely employing samples to create a clever fusion of breakbeats, Latin rhythms and jazz, Amon Tobin certainly hasn't been content to stick to one concept for long. Then again, Tobin was born in Brazil, raised in the U.K. and currently resides in Montreal, so it shouldn't be surprising that he consistently changes pace as he absorbs new influences and evolves.

"I think it's important to keep on moving," Tobin says. "The interesting thing for me is that people talk about my 'departure' from jazz, and also Brazilian rhythms, and to some extent, it's true. I haven't dwelled too much on the jazz influences and Brazilian influences in my music, because I didn't want to really be contained by them. But also, all that's happened is

that my samples, even though they still come from jazz and Brazilian music a lot, have just been a lot more processed now."

With that heavy processing, it's hardly surprising that the source material isn't always easy to identify.

"Tracks like 'Chronic Tronic' are made almost entirely out of Brazilian percussion, but it's been completely reordered and modified, so it doesn't sound like Brazilian percussion anymore," reveals Tobin. "But I'm hoping that the energy is still there."

Focusing on maintaining that energy, with a constantly expanding collection of vinyl and access to the latest in musical technology, Tobin met the one goal he set for himself when making *Out From Out Where*: "I wanted to make this record a much more dense and involved experience than the sort of instant gratification that you get with some tracks," he explains.

And the record is both dense and involved, in addition to being, at times, extraordinarily ominous. With songs called "Back From Space," "Searchers" and "El Wraith," the album possesses a sense of foreboding futurism, an unflinching widescreen exploration into the unknown. But on the other hand, some of it is also quite pretty.

"I'm not really that interested in making the darkest record, or making a scary piece of music, as much as I'm interested in the direct kind of dramatic effect that you get from putting something very dark and dense next to something very melodic and non-threatening," Tobin acknowledges. "I really like the contrast that you get between light, fluffy things and dark, hard music."

*Out From Out Where* is a mix of contrasts: the light and the dark, the organic and the processed—even in the obvious disparity it bears to Tobin's earlier work. But if you follow the threads, it's clear that it's all been a natural progression, too.

"I don't see how it could be anything else, really," Tobin confirms. "I'm still feeling my way around this music business, and I guess I'm just having a lot of fun experimenting along the way." **NHM**

# All through the house...

Holiday  
Gift Guide

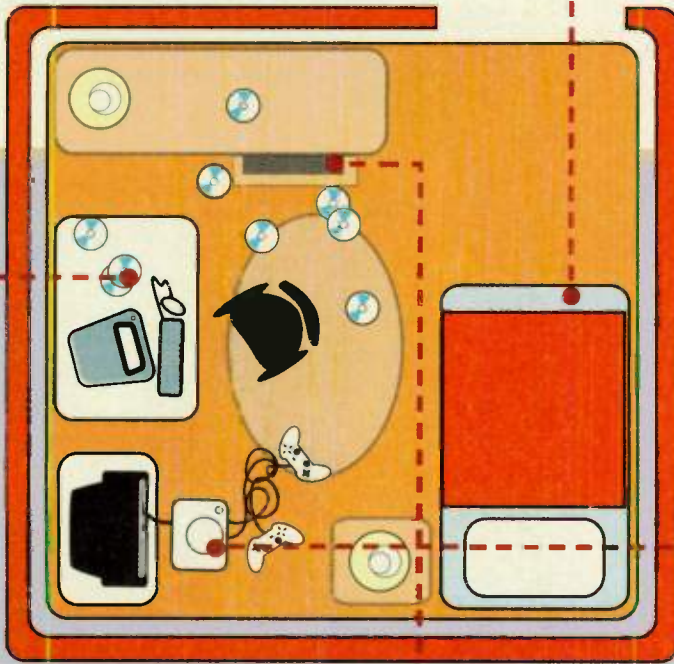
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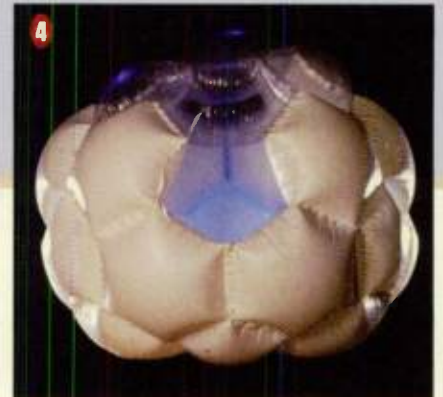
A room by room expedition to get rock in your stocking.



# the bedroom



Tom Clancy may make for Ben Affleck-driven torture these days, but he redeems himself with **Splinter Cell** (\$49.99, Xbox, [www.splintercell.com](http://www.splintercell.com)). The most visually impressive spy game of the season updates the "one-guy-kills-thousands" formula with black-ops gear (thermal vision! fiber optic cameras!); there's all sorts of political intrigue too, but you'll be too busy snooping around to notice.



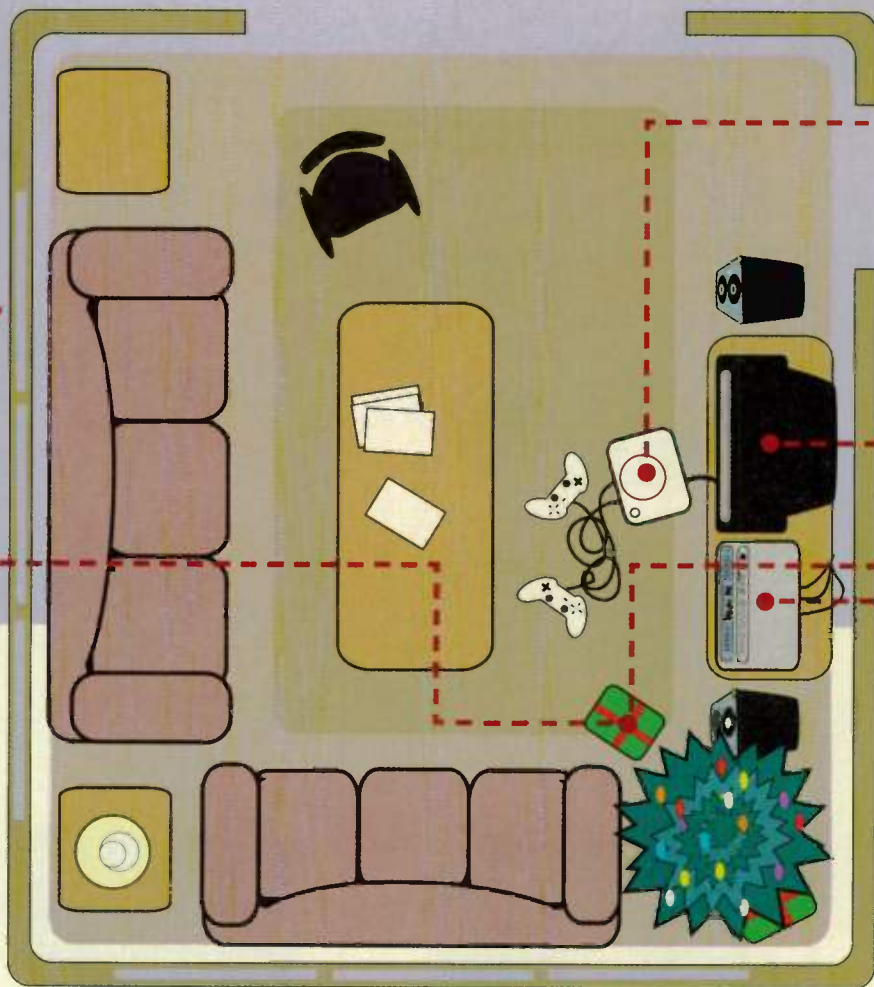
Three discs of live Prince, including one of his legendary after-show sets make **1. Prince - One Night Alone...Live!** (\$TBA, [www.npgmusicclub.com](http://www.npgmusicclub.com)) a must for any aspiring boudoir bandit... Get your irony on with the Strokes-backlash **2. Socialites T Shirt**, featuring stops like East Hampton, St. Moritz and Gstaad on the Who's Your Daddy World Tour... Put your ass in a sling with the **Dorm Hammock** (\$79.95, [www.hammocks.com](http://www.hammocks.com)), which attaches between two beds to indulge your weekend guests in their Skipper/Little Buddy fantasies... Well Hell-ooo Kitty! This cute little personal satisfaction toy is perfect for your favorite San Rio aficionado, especially if she doesn't mind that the business end of the **3. Hello Kitty Vibrator** (\$24 plus S+H, [www.weirdca.com](http://www.weirdca.com)) is the cartoon cat's face. Rough tongue not included... More frightening than Sanrio's cartoon-character-as-sex-toy product line is their new personality, the **Tare Panda** ([www.dreamkitty.com](http://www.dreamkitty.com), \$20 for small, \$100 for large), which makes an endangered species look suspiciously like roadkill. But, like, in a cute way... Step into the shoes of a pro killer as **Hitman 2: Silent Assassin** (\$49.99,

Xbox/PS2/PC, [www.hitman2.com](http://www.hitman2.com))'s sly, disturbingly hairless Agent 47. You even get to strangle people with a cord! Bald people are scary... What better way to suggest that your roommate rid him or herself of a tired neo-ska collection than a gift that will turn it into harmless wall art (design side in, of course, lest anyone know they owned every Skankin' Pickle record): **CD Wallpaper** (\$10 for 24 CDs, [www.cdwallet.com](http://www.cdwallet.com))... Memo: candy-raver gear is so passé that it's chic again. And the **Bubble Bag** (\$20/\$22/\$38, [www.mybubblebag.com](http://www.mybubblebag.com)) is weird and shiny... Those tired of the same old hack 'n' slash can thank the makers of **Shenmue II** (\$49.99, Xbox, [www.xbox.com/shenmue2](http://www.xbox.com/shenmue2)), a martial-arts adventure that plays more like an Ang Lee film than a *Street Fighter* brawl... Privacy is a rare gift in dorm- and apartment share-life, which makes the **4. Chillout Room** (\$350 for 52", \$500 for 72", [www.urbanpeel.com](http://www.urbanpeel.com)) a valuable bit of holiday cheer: portable, cushiony, private and completely effing weird. And don't worry, Mom, junior totally won't be getting stoned in there... While you're "relaxing" in there, try **Zero 7's Simple Things** (\$12, Rykodisc): was there a better nookie disc this year?...

# the livingroom



Go out, right now, and pick up the **1. 20 Years Of Dischord** box set (\$25, [www.dischord.com](http://www.dischord.com))—in fact, pick up several. Its holiday uses are many: Remind your bitter self that punk used to mean something, teach your New Found Glory-loving little brother that punk used to mean something, and so forth... Go-Go never really broke out of Washington, D.C. because really, you had to be there. The DVD release of the documentary **2. The Pocket** (\$19.99, [www.thedcpocket.com](http://www.thedcpocket.com)) is the next best thing to being there, though, capturing the nonstop, drummer-exhausting groove and the roots of D.C.'s other D.I.Y. scene... The discs that make up Jeff Buckley's **3. The Grace EPs** (\$34.98, [www.jeffbuckley.com](http://www.jeffbuckley.com)) has technically existed, in parts, since around 1994—but unless they've scoured eBay or gotten lucky at the local record store's import section, your Buckley fan ain't got em'. Shower said loved one with falsetto-ed misery this holiday season and offer the new five-disc box set collection... Shortly before venturing into the *Hellraiser*-style world up Billy Corgan's ass, Smashing Pumpkins released the live-and-outtakes video **4. Vieuphoria**, now reissued on DVD (\$20, [www.smashingpumpkins.com](http://www.smashingpumpkins.com)) with extra footage. See D'Arcy, pre-crack! See Billy smile!... If you're going to go for it, go all the way: Guaranteed to get geeks' hearts all aflutter is the **5. Lord Of The Rings Platinum Series Extended Edition Collector's Gift Set DVD** (\$80, [www.newline.com](http://www.newline.com)), featuring four discs loaded with 30 minutes of



extra footage, multiple documentaries and—brace yourself—Argonath book-ends... Forget Christmas in Hollis; spend it in South Central with N.W.A.'s freshly reissued *Straight Outta Compton* and *Efil4zaggin* and the new *The N.W.A. Legacy—The Video Collection DVD* (\$13.98, \$14.97, [www.nwalegacy.com](http://www.nwalegacy.com)). And when Aunt Agnes takes too long passing the peas, take it from Ren and “call her a bitch or a dirty-ass ho.”... The 47-track *Best Of Bowie* DVD (\$34.98, [store.davidbowie.com](http://store.davidbowie.com)) collects every single one of David Bowie's looks, from his finest dresses to tailored suits, skintight jumpers to clown costumes, protomullets to pompadours. The outfits are almost as amazing as the music... A coffee-table book worth buying the coffee table for, *Yes Yes Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History Of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (\$25, [www.dacapopress.com](http://www.dacapopress.com)) is a beautiful, absorbing look at early graffiti, breaking, scratching and MCs... Even though Jellyfish only put out two CDs, you can relive it all with the four-CD *Jellyfish*:

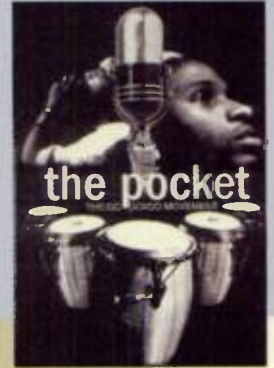
*Fan Club* box set (\$60, [www.notlame.com](http://www.notlame.com)). It must be the magic of Christmas!... *Timesplitters 2* (\$49.99, Xbox/PS2/GC, [www.eidos.com](http://www.eidos.com)) picks up where *Perfect Dark* left off with some of the best multiplayer deathmatches yet. Its time-travel plot admits everything from the crossbow to the plasma rifle, and a bizarre cast of robot players keeps things fresh from match to match. (You just got fragged by a duck. A duck!)... *Africa: Music From The Nonesuch Explorer Series* (\$14.99, [www.nonesuch.com](http://www.nonesuch.com)) offers a single-CD overview of 13 recently released discs from Nonesuch's legendary vaults of African music. And the stockings of lovers of vintage reggae or Caribbean music are just crying to be stuffed with the jubilant CD featuring Ghanaian High-Life... Take the skinheads Christmas shopping with Camper Van Beethoven's five-CD **6. Cigarettes & Carrot Juice: The Santa Cruz Years** (\$34.98, [www.spinart.com](http://www.spinart.com)). Beware of irony overload... With *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* (\$49.99, Xbox/PS2/Gamecube/PC, [www.activision2.com](http://www.activision2.com)), the



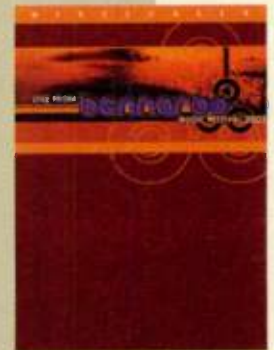
Become a virtual Red Auerbach and build your team into a dynasty over 25 consecutive seasons, or just whoop your friend's ass with visuals so sharp you'll recognize individual faces. The realism of **NBA Inside Drive 2003** (\$49.99, Xbox, [www.xbox.com/nbainsidedrive2003](http://www.xbox.com/nbainsidedrive2003)) is shocking: The box even shows the Knicks standing around doing nothing...



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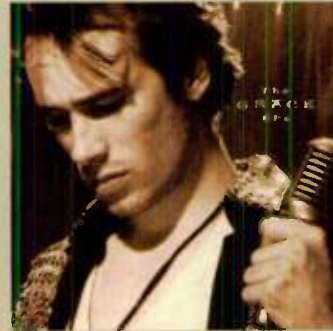
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series soldiers on to ridiculous new heights, dropping time limits and ramping up the realism of the graphics, all while still giving the finger to both common sense and Sir Isaac Newton... **The Monterey Pop Festival Box Set** (\$80, Criterion) features a whopping three discs of performances, including the original D.A. Pennebaker documentary, a disc with the full *Jimi Plays Monterey* set (the Jimi Hendrix Experience's U.S. debut, by the way), Otis Redding schooling those dirty hippies in the power of soul, and a third disc of never-before-seen outtakes... Enjoy hours of expansive jams without the hassle of transporting your stash across state lines with the **7. Live From The Bonnaroo Music**

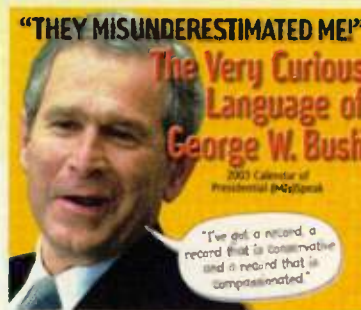
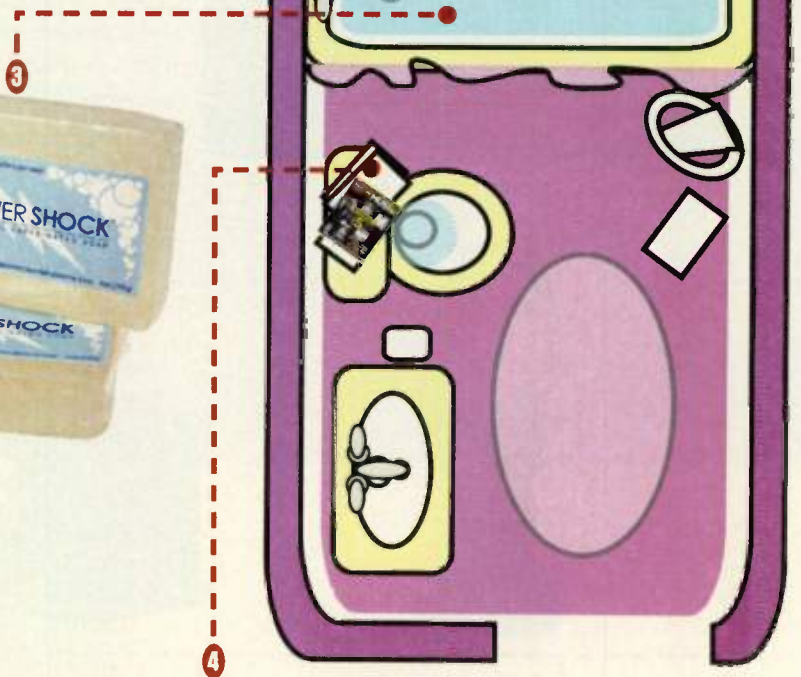
**Festival DVD** (\$30, [stores.musictoday.com](http://stores.musictoday.com))... It's the 40th century, and you're still smoking fools over the Internet. **Tribes: Aerial Assault** (\$49.99, PS2, [tribes.sierra.com](http://tribes.sierra.com)) uses PS2's broadband capabilities to let 16 players blast each other at a time, hurled by jetpacks across multi-story levels while totting the requisite impossibly large guns... I see a little silhouette of a man. Scaramouche, scaramouche! Oh wait, that's George Michael on the **Queen Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert DVD** (\$25, [www.queenonline.com](http://www.queenonline.com))... Activision takes to the water with **Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer** (\$49.99, Xbox/PS2/GC/PC, [www.activisiono2.com](http://www.activisiono2.com)) and manages to be the first company to do a surfing game right. The game's custom

wave engine boasts that, just like the real thing, you'll never surf the same wave twice... Should you be shopping for a *Kids In The Hall* fanatic, someone with a pig fetish or Nicole Keiper, nothing says "Hey hey hey! Look at me!" like their own **8. Flying Pig** (small: \$15/large: \$45, [www.natashascafe.com](http://www.natashascafe.com))... On the one hand, 29 tracks of pure, distilled evil: **The Original Black Sabbath—Symptom Of The Universe 1970-1978** (\$31.98, [www.rhino.com](http://www.rhino.com)). On the other, **9. Osbourne Family Bobble-Head Dolls** (\$10 for one Osbourne, \$20 for all four, [www.bobbleheadworld.com](http://www.bobbleheadworld.com)). Experience the full Ozzy spectrum, from the rise to the fall—once upon a time, he would have bitten the head off of *anything* that bobbed.

# the bathroom

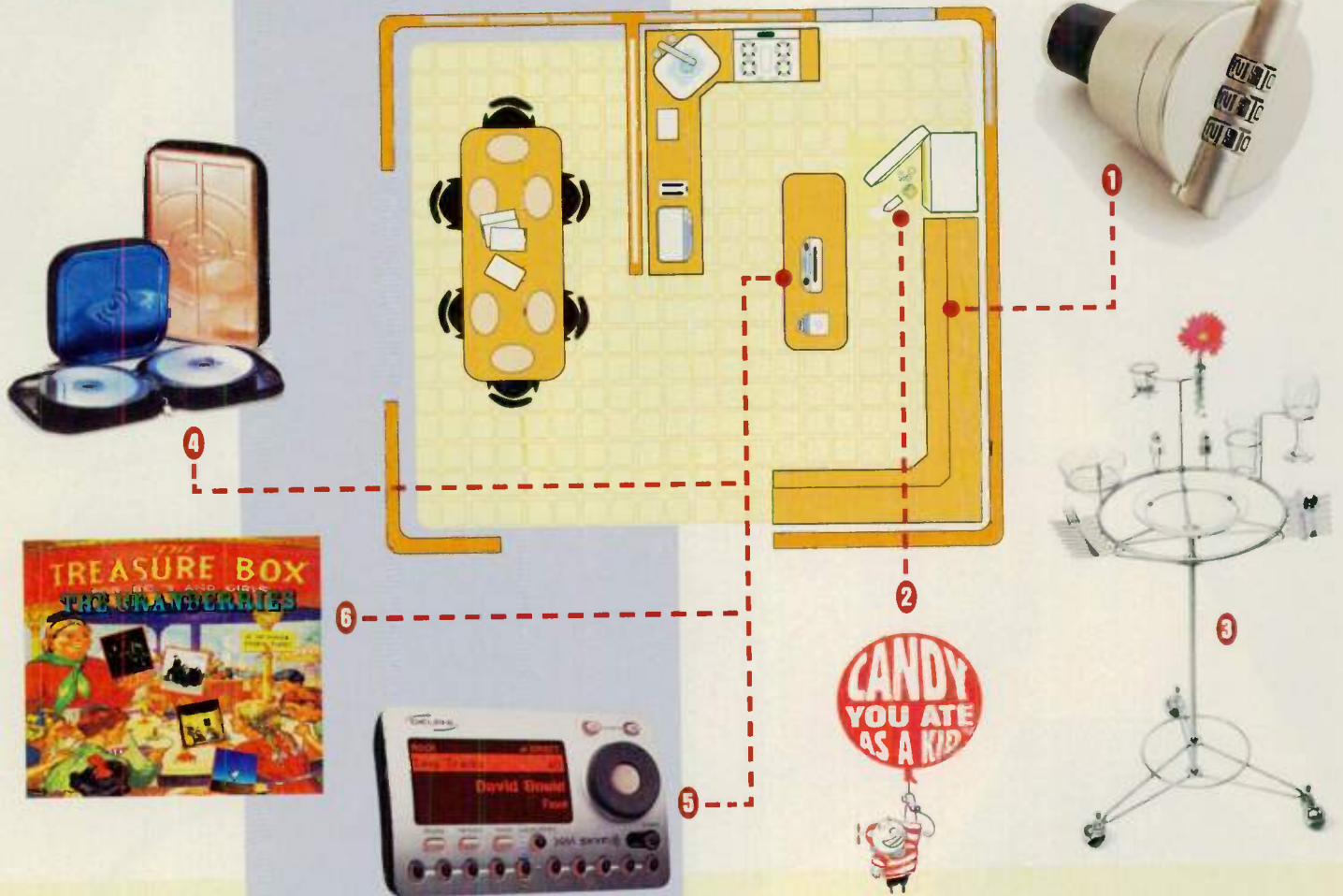


Spend your morning quality time with Malapropisms and other manglings of the mother tongue from the most powerful man in the free world. No, not Dick Cheney, the one we can find: **1. They Misunderestimated Me: The Very Curious Language Of George Bush** (\$12.95, [www.bushcalendar.com](http://www.bushcalendar.com))... Gonna be in here for a while? **The Complete Miles Davis At Montreux** (\$249.98, [www.miles-davis.com](http://www.miles-davis.com)) has 20 CDs of every Davis Montreux performance from 1973-1991. While you're "getting some thinking done," ponder the differences between the nine different versions of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time"... Unleashed on MTV back when a half-hour series amid the music videos were a novelty, **2. The Young Ones—Every Stupid Episode** (\$60, [www.bbcproducts.com](http://www.bbcproducts.com)) is still riotously funny, and features the best-ever Motörhead sitcom cameo and a potty more foul than the bathroom at CB's... Double espressos still not waking your lazy-ass roommate up? Bring out the big guns: **3. Shower Shock** (\$7 for one bar, \$15 for three, [www.thinkgeek.com](http://www.thinkgeek.com)) soap is infused with 200 milligrams of caffeine per "serving." It has a hair more buzz than a cup of coffee, four times more than a soda—and somehow, it still smells good... The D.I.Y. lifestyle shouldn't just be basement shows and poor grooming habits: **4. Ready Made Magazine** (\$14/year, [www.readymademag.com](http://www.readymademag.com)) makes like an indie-rock Martha Stewart and offers project ideas from making a duct tape wallet to fashioning candlesticks out of old shower knobs... After the turkey, try **5. In A Word: Yes (1969-)** (\$69.98, [www.rhino.com](http://www.rhino.com)). Five CDs of Yes... long, ponderous moments, each punctuated by deep, existential thoughts and broken into several different movements. You figure it out.





# the kitchen



"If it's messy, eat it over the sink" pretty much describes the first four Replacements records. **Sorry Ma, Forgot To Take Out the Trash** (\$11.98, [www.restless.com](http://www.restless.com)), **Hootenany** (\$11.98), **Stink** (\$7.98) and **Let It Be** (\$16.98)... With the end of the world working toward an early second quarter release date, the **Apocalypse Gift Set** (\$79, [www.natashascave.com](http://www.natashascave.com)) will prepare a great cup of Turkish coffee fueled by nothing more than the smoldering fires of civilization... Give the gift that says that your cheap bastard roommates should get their own damn booze with the **1. Liquor Locker** (\$20, [www.chefs.catalog.com](http://www.chefs.catalog.com))... No messenger bag or briefcase is complete without a writing implement that, in a pinch, can be rubbed against the clitoris to produce orgasm. **The Vibra Pen** (\$23, [www.sensual.productsandtoys.com](http://www.sensual.productsandtoys.com)) is something that James Bond's Q would give to the wife: a working ink pen that, with a subtle twist, is a variable-speed vibrator... Like indie-rock bands, candy had more character early in its career; hence the need for **2. Candy You Ate As A Kid** assortments (three-pounds of 50-plus types of candy for \$21.99, [www.oldtimecandy.com](http://www.oldtimecandy.com))... Since that *So You Wanna Be A Bartender?* book you got your dad last year got about as much attention as Dave Navarro's solo record, nudge him again: Twist the outer collar on the **Dial A Drink Cocktail Shaker** (\$29.99, [www.kitchenetc.com](http://www.kitchenetc.com)), and get the ingredients and measurements

of 15 different drinks... It's easier to resist Starbucks' evil sirenish beckoning when you can get a fix of yuppie coffee-dom on your way out the door: the **Cuisinart Two To Go Coffeemaker** (\$49.99, [www.kitchenemporium.com](http://www.kitchenemporium.com))... For the poor city-dweller to whom the term "eat-in-kitchen" means "room for stool and TV tray in corner," there's the **3. Virtual Diner** (\$329, [www.urbanpeel.com](http://www.urbanpeel.com)), a high tech-looking contraption that crams the amenities of a dining room for one into a studio apartment-friendly space... Stop scratching those precious discs to shit in a flimsy cloth CD wallet with the metal-shell **4. Audiopod CD Wallet** (24 CDs/\$10, 64 CDs/\$16, [www.cdwallet.com](http://www.cdwallet.com))... You can escape commercial radio anywhere with the now-portable **5. Delphi XM SKYFi Radio** (\$199.99 for unit, \$9.99/month for service, [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com)). Its 101 channels include everything from an all-unsigned format to a "Playboy Channel"... For the big family dinner, don't forget **6. Cranberries' Treasure Box: The Complete Sessions, 1991-1999** (\$59.98, [www.islandrecords.com](http://www.islandrecords.com)). After all, what would Christmas be without cranberries and some shrew carping on you for hours?... Enough melody to make the morning painless, but with enough attitude to send you off to work prepared to deal with the tool in the corner office, everyone needs **Rilo Kiley's The Execution Of All Things** (\$15, [www.saddlecreek.com](http://www.saddlecreek.com)) in the kitchen.

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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY



# PEARL JAM

Rocket From The Crypt  
**NEW BOMB TURKS**

**IRON & WINE**  
Brendan Gamble • We Ragazzi

DECEMBER 2002 • ISSUE 108

11. **NEW BOMB TURKS** "Rat Feelings" *The Night Before The Day The Earth Stood Still* (Gearhead)

Incorporating the best of the new rock revival with their punker roots, these veterans of the punk scene smack you in the chin with blistering guitar and fierce pop hooks. (See Review p. 56.)

12. **IRON AND WINE** "Upward Over The Mountain" *The Creek Drank The Cradle* (Sub Pop)  
Hopelessly moody and effortlessly beautiful, Iron & Wine's somber folk-Americana comes courtesy of the work of just one fellow, Floridian lo-fi star Samuel Beam. (See Best New Music p. 47.)

13. **BRENDAN GAMBLE** "Heartless Moon" *Heartless Moon* (Mud)  
As you might expect, a song and album called "Heartless Moon" are weepy as all hell: ex-Moon Seven Times member Brendan Gamble pours heaps of post-divorce heartbreak into his acoustic folk. (See Best New Music p. 46.)

14. **DEMONS** "Devil In Me" *Stockholm Slump* (Gearhead)  
Pouncing with testosterone and waving their Swedish passports proudly, Demons crank out the rawk on their sophomore full-length and steamroll right over you. (See Review p. 51.)

15. **DOWNCIRCLEBACK** "Facade" *Downcircleback* (DownCircleBack)  
"You're just a quiet soul who lives in me," says a line in Downcircleback's "Facade." Funny, since the singalong chorus and infectious rock hooks the Philly quartet's infused into the track hint nothing at a quiet soul.

16. **WE RAGAZZI** "Forever Surrender 2 U" *The Ache* (The Self-Starter Foundation)  
All great albums have a deeper purpose, and what's deeper than lust? After a short breakup, these Chicago no-wavers pumped up the organ (a Farfisa, you pervert) and created a simmering sexual vibe that'd make Jon Spencer proud. (See Best New Music p. 48.)

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cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case



 **TDK**

**1. PEARL JAM** "I Am Mine" *Riot Act* (Epic)

Over the past decade, quite a few trendhoppers have crept away from Pearl Jam's consistently solid, honest rock music. On their seventh studio album—the band's strongest to date—the quintet proves the lot of them all-out fools. Delicious. (See Cover Story p. 38.)

**2. BLEU** "I Won't Go Hollywood" *Redhead* (Aware)

Don't let the name fool you. Bostonian William James McAuley III, a.k.a. Bleu, isn't French, or veined with tasty mold. His sunny, kitschy power-pop, though, is a bit cheesy, in a good way. (See On The Verge p. 22.)

**3. ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT** "I'm Not Invisible" *Live From Camp X-Ray* (Vagrant)

While not actually a live album, *Live From Camp X-Ray* bursts with all the energy, attitude and cocksure certainty of a RFTC live performance—brash rock 'n' roll, no apologies. (See Answer Me p. 15.)

**4. SNOWDOGS** "Drive" *Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies* (Victory)

Quit giggling about that Cuba Gooding Jr. film when you hear their name—this London-based pop-punk trio came first, swear. And the bite on *Deep Cuts* is a lot fiercer, too, we bet. We didn't see that movie. Honest!

**5. KENNA** "Freetime" *New Sacred Cow* (Columbia)

Not what you'd expect from an act "discovered" by Fred Durst (Red Hat's Flawless label was originally slated to release *Sacred Cow*), Kenna's electronic-kissed synth-pop is filled with Basement Jaxx blips and beats and vocals that surf the crest of '80s new wave.

**6. CAPITOL AIR** "Phony" *Desperate Hour Extinguisher* (Overreactive)

Much like fellow Northeasterners Ours, Pennsylvania's Capitol Air mix trad pop songwriting with vaulting vocals and a heavy dose of drama.

**7. GRAZE** "Watership Down" *Luxe* (Overreactive)

A band called Graze, and a song named after a book that follows bunnies in their search for a safe haven: Does the animal theme mean they're snuggly? If you consider heavily affected, brooding pop snuggly, then yeah, sure.

**8. CROC SHOP** "World" *World* (Metropolis)

Croc Shop's gone through quite a few phases since forming in Berlin nearly 15 years ago: art-pop, goth-rock, pummeling industrial. But the overriding sentiment here? Pain. A feeling they embrace heavily on the new wave/synth-pop/dance hybrid *World*.

**9. OVERSEER** "Bass Trap" *Wreckage* (Columbia)

If you've seen *Snatch*, played *Grand Turismo 3* or checked out an episode of *CSI*, you may already be a fan of the sample-heavy vibe Overseer calls "electronic noise for public consumption."

**10. VOYAGER ONE** "Wires" *Monster Zero* (Loveless)

Voyager One's space-psychedelia, complete with melodic, pulsing guitars and trip-worthy ambience, is perfect to spin on random with Spacemen 3 and Spiritualized. (See Review p. 61.)

\* Go to Club Nokia, [www.nokia.com/us](http://www.nokia.com/us), to register to get the latest music, games and graphics available online for your Nokia wireless phone!

Did you purchase or receive *CMJ New Music Monthly* with a broken cd? Here's what to do: Within two months of the cover date on the issue with the damaged cd, please return the damaged CD to: CMJ, Attention: "CD Replacement," 151 West 25th Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10001. A new CD will be sent out to you upon receipt of your returned CD. Thanks for your continued support!



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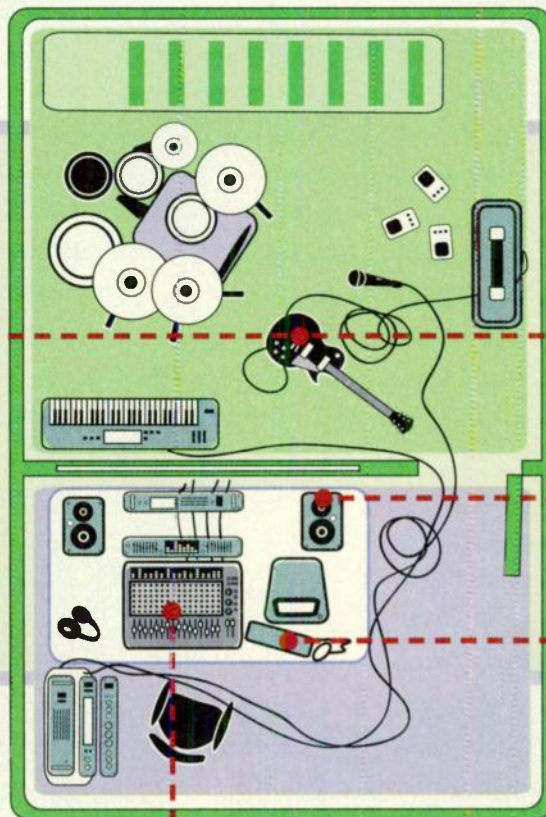
# the basement/home studio



The guitar strap section of your average music store makes vegetarians feel like they're at Sizzler: Either get with some cow, or you're stuck with salad. Surprise your bovine-friendly guitarist with a **Vegan Guitar Strap** (\$30, [www.sparklecraft.com](http://www.sparklecraft.com))—no animals harmed, but still tasty.



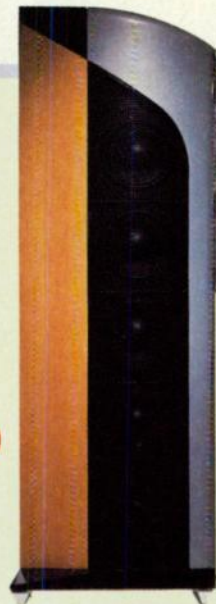
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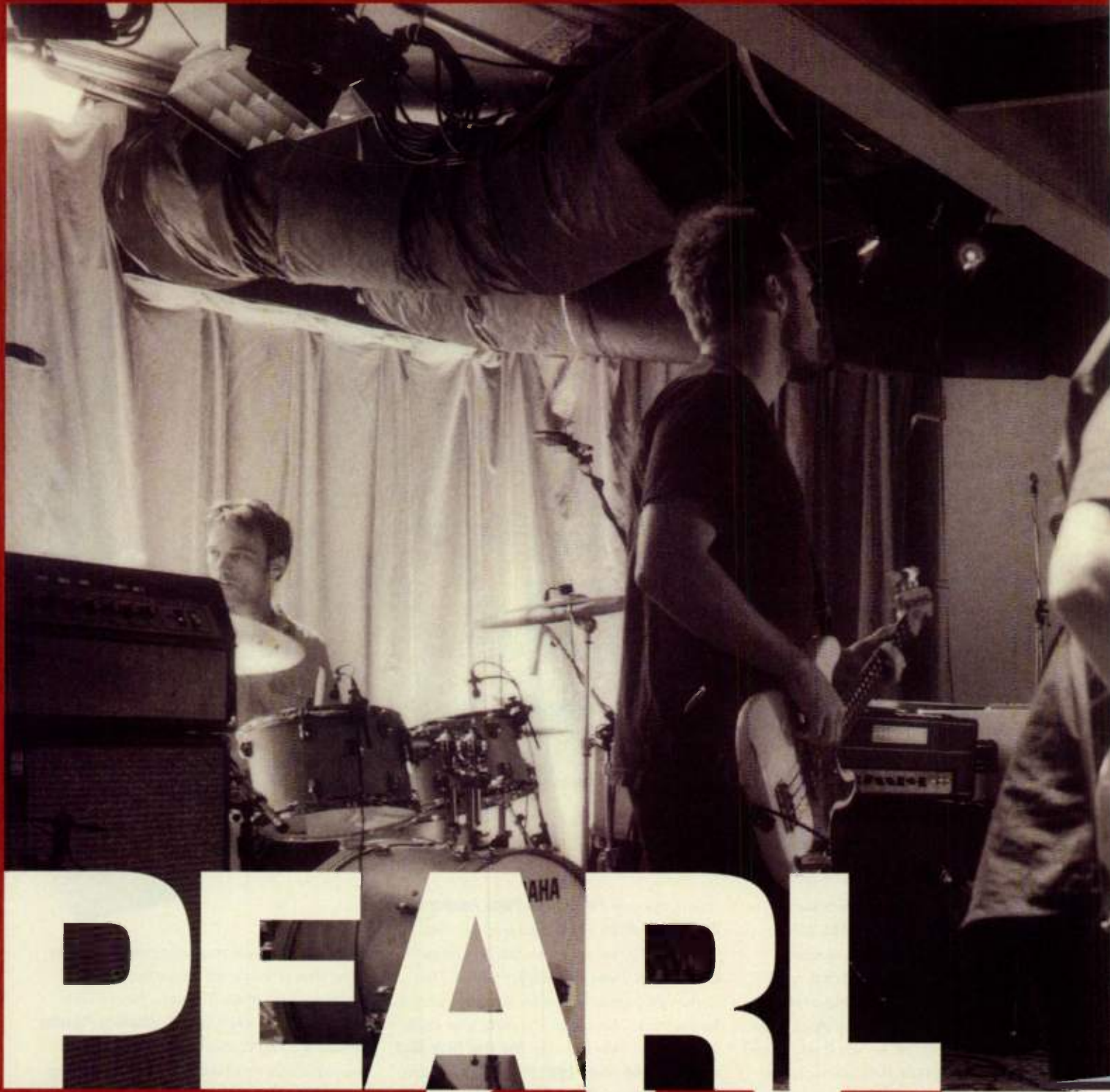
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The choice is yours, young Skywalker: **1. Skull Knobs** or **Star Wars Knobs** (\$10 for skull, \$17 for *Star Wars*, [www.fernandesguitars.com](http://www.fernandesguitars.com)), tough guy or total and complete toolshed. (Hint: It's probably advisable to choose the Dark Side here, Skippy)... The **DD-6 Digital Delay** (\$150, [www.rolandus.com](http://www.rolandus.com)) and **Hofier Grail Reverb** (\$298, [www.electroharmonix.com](http://www.electroharmonix.com)) are everything you need for that Sigur Rós tribute band you're planning. Better start brushing up on your "eep opp ork ah ahs..." Make your studio ergonomically sound with the **2. Kinesis Maxim ergonomic keyboard** (\$125, [www.askergoworks.com](http://www.askergoworks.com)) and keep those wrists in shape for other things. Like learning those Geddy Lee bass parts, you pervert... Before *Yoshimi*, *The Soft Bulletin* or boombox experiments, the Flaming Lips were a rock-your-face-off guitar band—a decidedly cracked rock-your-face-off guitar band best described by the

title of the new *Finally The Punk Rockers Are Taking Acid* (\$35, [www.rykodisc.com](http://www.rykodisc.com)). The three-CD set compiles the first three full-lengths (*Hear It Is*, *Oh My Gawd*, *The Flaming Lips and Telepathic Surgery*), plus 16 bonus tracks. Also newly available for stocking stuffing is the two-disc *The Day They Shot A Hole In The Jesus Egg* (\$20) set, which combines *In A Priest Driven Ambulance* with compilation appearances and the "Mushroom Tapes" demos... Bass! How low can you go? Go subharmonic with the **Buttkicker** (\$400, [www.thebuttkicker.com](http://www.thebuttkicker.com)), which translates bass into low frequency rumbings and injects them directly into your seat, floor or whatever you can stick it to. Have theater-quality assquakes right at home!... If the November issue's noise-rock exposé left stars in your eyes, it's **Total Sonic Annihilation** (\$150, [www.killerrockandroll.com/deathbyaudio](http://www.killerrockandroll.com/deathbyaudio)) for you: This pedal creates an endless feed-

back loop through your other pedals, generating everything from atmos hums to ear-splitting dins. Make Thurston Moore look like a sucker... We'd buy **3. Mission Pilastro Speakers** (\$35,000, [www.mission.co.uk](http://www.mission.co.uk)), only we can't figure out where they're stashing the two bedrooms and the one-and-a-half baths... The **4. Digi 002** (\$2,200, [www.digidesign.com](http://www.digidesign.com)) does double duty as a console interface and a standalone mixer for all those punk shows you throw in your basement. Just be careful no one sees the price tag, you big sellout... The **microKORG** (\$500, [www.korg.com](http://www.korg.com)) has everything you need for electroclash stardom: Computer voices, beeps galore and tiny keys to help you pine for your long-lost Casio. Feather boas and ironic T-shirts sold separately.




# PEARL

# Riot Goin' On

# JAM

STORY: NICOLE KEIPER • PHOTO: DANNY CLINCH

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



If you forgot about Pearl Jam while it wasn't fashionable to wear your heart on your sleeve, consider that one of the biggest career bands in the U.S. maintains its fervent following and anti-corporate leanings and oh, just completed its contract. At a time when honesty counts, who do you think is going to change the game?

# E

ddie Vedder carries a marble composition notebook with him everywhere. Your standard three-for-a-dollar deal—nothing fancy, but it holds the thoughts and ideas that will eventually become Pearl Jam lyrics, Pearl Jam songs. Words that, in time, millions of people will sing along to. He cradles it in his left hand just a few inches away on the table of a Manhattan hotel balcony, having learned, when his notebook was stolen backstage in Sweden 10 years ago, not to let it out of his sight.

He's fidgeting, almost nervously, fingertips tapping over the your-name-here white space on the notebook, where, scrawled in the sloping caps-lock handwriting you see in most of his band's liner notes, is the phrase, "NOT YOURS." They say a lot, those two words. Vedder's notebook, ideas, songs he and his band write, the life of a man who struggles to be the things he respects: not yours.

It's a message he's maintained all along, in interviews, lyrics, songs called things like "Not For You." That much hasn't changed. Which is a welcome thing, right now: The timing couldn't be better, for a musician who is his own man, a group who is their own band, for music that is pure. In a world in upheaval, we could use a little honesty.

But everywhere else, Vedder is different. His now close-cropped hair is trained forward—the wild mane is gone, the mohawk's grown out, too. He'll be 40 soon, and he's able to selectively lower his guard, answering questions with grace and directness. He's grown.

**PEARL JAM ARE ABOUT TO RELEASE *RIOT ACT*, THEIR SEVENTH ALBUM**, or 80th if you count live recordings. Things for Pearl Jam, too, have changed. The band's agreeing to "a third more, maybe half more," interviews, according to guitarist Stone Gossard. They've made a video, though it likely won't be released in America: a live performance of "I Am Mine," using live audio, like "Alive" or "Evenflow" sans audience. And with this album, 12 years into their career, Pearl Jam are about to close out the contract they signed with Sony back before *Ten*. It's a benchmark: They have reached the end of a long commitment that's taken them from hopeful 20-somethings, to reluctant poster boys, to idealistic Ticketmaster combatants, to a seasoned career band. Most important of all that, though, is that they're excited about the new music.

"I love it," grins guitarist Mike McCready, sinking back into a sofa. "It's one of the best, if not the best record that we've done... Even the fact that we're kind of psyched about doing interviews and talking about it is huge. It's a huge deal. And it's showing how much we like it."

McCready, the band's most affable member, is the only one to gush that openly. Despite a crowd of tattoos on his upper body, he's as regular-guy as they come; he'd be that guy working at your local guitar shop who actually knows his shit and isn't just looking to wank in front of passersby were he not in one of the world's biggest rock bands. He's attached to this record, likely in part because he's more prominent than he has been since *Ten*: "I'd just feel a look from Ed, and it was like,

"OK, I'm doing a lead," he enthuses. "I think that's my strength in the band, so anytime I can do a lead, especially with us... in this band it always means something to me, spiritually..."

Stone Gossard, too, is psyched about *Riot Act*, if a bit aloof at first. Ambling around the hotel room like he's antsy to get all this over with, colored glasses on, he sits at sharp angles, nodding half-sarcastically through apple bites to McCready, "That sounds like a great answer."

Bassist Jeff Ament, tall and with a thick baller's build, is the most intimidating of the five. Curled in a tangle of limbs on an easy chair, he glares just enough to let you sense that he's figuring you out, trying to decide if you're full of shit before he'll open up. Conversation flows easiest with Ament and drummer Matt Cameron when you talk about other people's music: Both sing the praises of Neko Case, Ament showing love for Doves and Interpol, Cameron gushing about Neu! and Can. Both are also proud of *Riot Act*. Ament feels "more chemistry" in this record, it "came together very easily and pretty quickly." Even just on the recording side, they glow: "The low end that we got this time around was just killer," Cameron says, Ament nodding. And it is—big, meaty and echoing, like they recorded the bass and drums in a cathedral.

Then, there's Vedder.

"Um... well, I'm glad it's done," he offers, slow to make eye contact at first, head tilted down, thumb and forefinger fidgeting with the tuft of hair under his lower lip. It's not that he isn't proud of *Riot Act*, too; you sense that when he references lyrics to punctuate a point he's making. It's just that his mind's on bigger things.

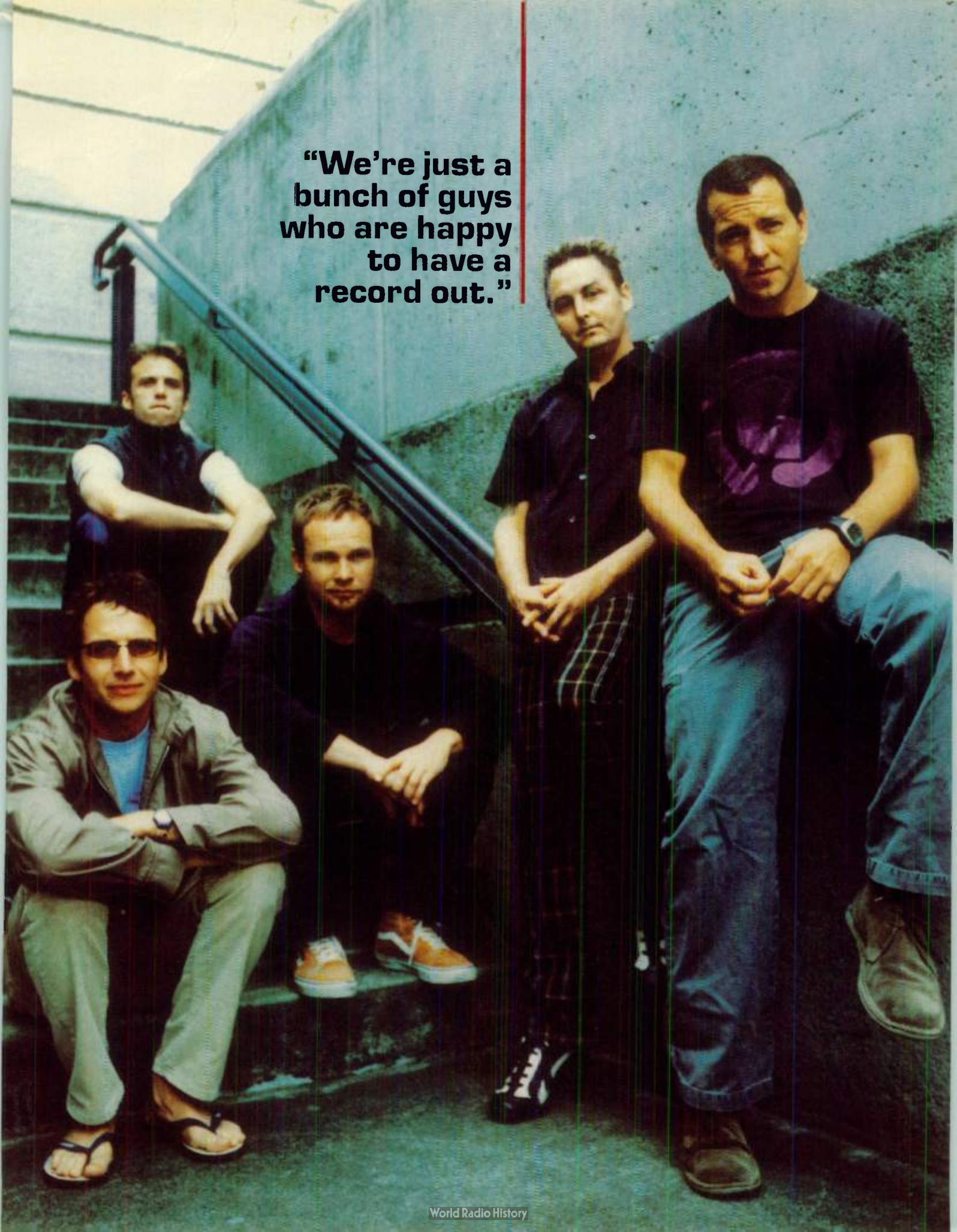
Since they last recorded, the man that Vedder derisively refers to as Bush Junior was elected, Ralph Nader was spurned and the Twin Towers fell. "It's a crazy time to be writing," Vedder offers, eyes fixed on the table. "Which is good... it felt like you wanted to put everything that you were wrestling with in your head, you wanted to put it somewhere. Most of it was just talking to friends about whatever was going on in the world, but it was nice to put it in a space, organize it. It wasn't easy to do that, just because you wanted to talk about some things that you were feelin', but they weren't necessarily the most poetic subject matter—you know, greed... there's not too many romantic flowery words that deal with that subject. I think right now I'm just feeling relief... happy that it's done and [ready to] move on to other songs and thoughts.

"I'm having a hard time lately," he sighs. "This kind of predilection with war that this administration seems to have, this whole thing with Iraq—having done a bit of research it's just confusing me more. I'm kind of really freaked out. Pissed off and freaked out."

You may have formed a few assumptions about Eddie Vedder over the last decade. He seems painfully serious; he's been accused of having no sense of humor, being too angry. Which makes it all the more surprising, greeting him close-up. He's a regular-sized guy, maybe 5'6", thin in baggy cargo pants, sneakers and a beat-up T-shirt. He waffles between tics: burying his hand in his hair, tapping his pack of American Spirits or his Seattle tourist-shop lighter, fidgeting



**“We’re just a bunch of guys who are happy to have a record out.”**



**“There’s a bunch of songs about greed on it. I can’t be saying ‘buy the record.’”**

with his notebook. Still, he’s infused with a surfer calm, and has a gentle laugh and an infectious toothy grin that bubble up from a little awkward aw-shucks politeness. Vedder’s only physically imposing feature surfaces when he makes eye contact—once they latch on, his eyes never seem to divert. He’ll even ask, as the midday September sun’s focused directly at him, if it’s cool that he puts on sunglasses—he’ll take them off as soon as the rays pass.

The steady focus of those eyes is what lets you know he’s listening, intently. He pays attention, takes in details—you know, as he references offhand comments from 45 minutes ago, that he doesn’t just wait for his turn to speak. He makes you feel important—rare, in his line of work. That sensitivity is both a blessing and a curse; it’s what’s drawn people to him, that honesty, and what, much to his chagrin, has made him an icon. But it’s also what’s made him unable to digest turmoil and go back to business as usual.

**McCREADY, GOSSARD, AMENT AND CAMERON**, who may well harbor some of that same inner turmoil, are embracing the business as usual in chatting about *Riot Act*. Which is important to talk about—it represents an important step in Pearl Jam’s musical growth, independent of its ties to Eddie Vedder’s emotions. If it’s Vedder’s passion that gives the music its soul, the band’s skill is its backbone.

*Riot Act*, too, is different. It’s less direct than *Binaural*, not as loose-limbed as *Yield* or *No Code*. Its closest reference point could be *Vitalogy*’s mix of urgency and precise songwriting. But these songs feel more like complete thoughts, riffs turning on perfect angles, pre-choruses launching into lush chorus harmonies and guitar delays weaving through elegant and pounding basslines. The Cameron-penned “You Are” could be the most effortlessly gorgeous spaced-out pop song the band has ever written, “Save You” their most confident rock song. It’s a grown-up album, a solid, honest rock record, with a live sonic aesthetic—always Pearl Jam’s strength.

One could argue that it’s the perfect time for rock music that’s shtick-free, filled with pure, mature melody and message, as the pendulum is just starting to swing from party music toward the cerebral again, much like it was when Pearl Jam broke. Ament’s not so sure a Renaissance is upon us, really, but he’s hopeful.

“The Hives and Vines and Strokes and all that stuff, they’re pop bands, and play the pop-publicity thing. They’ve got a shtick,” he says. “I’d love to see Joseph Arthur be huge, somebody who’s a real artist. Music like that is cerebral, but it’s so



musical and so deep and rich...that doesn’t really work in the radio planet... But if a band like Queens Of The Stone Age can get on the radio, that would be a move in the right direction.”

It seems a sort of cosmic justice that Pearl Jam would craft their best record while rumbles of rock resurgence are bubbling in the mainstream, while the music industry is in disarray—while they’re closing out the contract that binds them to a major label. There’s a lot of potential power there, should the band choose to go indie, go entrepreneurial. But there’s no talk of that just yet.

“Whatever we do next, whether we go with somebody else or stay with Sony or whatever, it’ll be a new start in terms of being able to release stuff however we want, having the freedom,” Ament explains. “I’m psyched about, if I go record six or seven songs and I’m really excited about four of them, I can just put it out and not have it be a big deal, just put out music.”

“I think we’re proud that we got through our whole contract, and that we stuck to our guns, in terms of focusing on doing our business deal and actually making it to the end,” says Gossard, who’s tried his hand at label impresario with the now-shuttered Loosegroove. “Being a band after seven albums, making a record that we’re all really proud of... I think we all really feel good about that. It feels like a new beginning in terms of that... We’re really fortunate to have all been in a band together, to have continued our relationships, to get through all the struggles that you inevitably go through in creative collaborations—especially ones that are successful, ones that have a lot at stake, that a lot of people have opinions about. There’s just so much energy that focuses on your collaboration and that energy can easily rip it apart, when somebody focuses on the negative. So we’re psyched; we’re just a bunch of guys who are happy to have a record out.”

**LATER ON, VEDDER IS SMILING.** He’s thinking about a surfing trip he took with a friend not too long ago, floating out in the middle of nowhere, the waves breaking a good long ways out, in every direction there’s nothing but nature. Maybe he owns a bit of that land and a little shack on it somewhere, he mentions in a hush, like he’s kind of uncomfortable with the fact that should he find something beauti-

ful, he can afford to own it. He feels at peace here.

"I thought to myself," he says, blue eyes and smile widening, "music brought me here. Music."

He feels a great debt to music in that sense, for what his own music's brought him, for what other people's music and messages have given him. A debt he's spent his career trying to repay. In the 1996 documentary *Hype!*, amongst griping from Seattle bands about their scene's over-exposure, Vedder opines that, "if all this influence that this...musical scene has, if it doesn't do anything with it, *that* would be the tragedy. If it doesn't...make some kind of change or make some kind of difference...if they finally get to the forefront and nothing comes of it, *that* would be the tragedy."

As a younger guy, Vedder turned to musicians' messages to help him make sense of his confusion, like how so many young people turn to him now. At 38, he turns to friends like Ralph Nader and historian/writer Howard Zinn.

"I feel like I've had pretty good influences or input in order to come up with [my opinions]," he says. "Speaking with [Zinn] and searching outside the normal media output, in order to really find out what the truth is, what's really motivating these reactions from our government.

"You start feeling like the more you dig in deep, the more it seems like it's a golf ball that you just can't pull the string off of, it's so raveled up. I think it's good to remember not to be overwhelmed by that. Howard's really good at being hopeful. He's been through so much, he's been through the Civil Rights movement in the '60s, he was teaching at an all-black women's college in Atlanta at the time... He was there through Vietnam protests... He has this really positive view that people can have an effect, simply by showing their support, speaking their mind, even just standing in the street. There's 50,000 people out protesting something, it does make a difference."

Vedder is passionate about awareness, and he's been very forward about that. He's very vocal about it on *Riot Act*—even the album's title, sharing a name with the 1715 bill passed by the British government to keep groups from assembling in protest, makes a bold statement. Fans have contemplated whether the band is making a play on the U.S. government's Patriot Act by evoking that name, or if they're issuing a plea, to riot, to act. If nothing else, Vedder's proselytizing has opened up many of Pearl Jam's fans to "open, honest debate," a phrase the singer uses often. This materializes on the official Pearl Jam website's message board ([www.pearljam.com](http://www.pearljam.com)) in a myriad ways, from lengthy and intelligent discourse about war, to "Senator Daschle Is An Ass Clown," to pleas for Vedder to just shut the eff up and sing.

"I've been asked over the past week, 'Well, how do you think you can change things?' And I was kinda feelin' guilty, like, well OK, I can't change things and I'm certainly not a voice for anybody but myself. But it's empowering to feel like you can. I don't want to apologize for feeling like I might be able to change something, even just if it's putting the thoughts out there for open, honest debate. I think it's important that everybody feels that way, that they can make a difference, even if it's in small ways or just as an individual."

He realizes that people perceive him as too preachy. But should you discuss his politics with him, it's clear that preaching isn't really his intention. His goal, more, is just to suggest that you take some time to think.

About greed: "We hear these stories about these CEOs getting away with \$200 million in their bank account and

20,000 people were fired from their \$30,000 jobs and left with nothing. If you think about it, it's like violent crime, to take away someone's livelihood who's raising kids."

Nature: "They're changing our food, turning it into this Frankenfood stuff that's genetically modified and [we're] not really having a say in it... How could they get away with not labeling milk that came from a genetically engineered cow? Tomatoes that were made that same way? And actually tampering with the very essence of natural organic life?"

Leadership: "There was an intense energy right after [September 11th], and again it's wishful thinkin', but you wonder what a leader who had more empathy, or at least saw an opportunity [would've done]... I think Bush Junior missed a real opportunity to ask people to come together... It got focused on revenge, 'We're gonna get this guy,' and 'Wanted Dead Or Alive.' It's like, 'Bush Junior Quotes Bon Jovi In State Of The Union Address.' It felt like he could've said, 'We just took a huge hit. We were all there, we all saw it. We'll find out who did it...let's come together as a community, really make this country as great as it can be. Let's take the empty lot at the end of the road and turn it into a ballfield for the kids, really come together and make each community stronger with this emotion that we have of coming together. Let's put it into practice on a small level..."

Consumerism: "Don't buy a record on November 29th, *Adbusters*' [Buy Nothing Day]. I think [our] record comes out [a little before that]... I mean, don't buy it at all, download it, it really doesn't matter—there's a bunch of songs about greed on it, I can't be saying 'buy the record.' But whatever you do, don't buy it on the 29th."

**THE PEARL JAM FANS WHO EAGERLY ABSORB HIS KNOWLEDGE** have a lot to chew on, those wishing he'd come down off the soapbox, much to gripe about. The former group will have better luck with *Riot Act*.

"I feel like we have a responsibility to our audience," he says, "that we wouldn't lead 'em down the wrong path. [People] might just think, you know, 'Fuck him,' but hopefully they'll do some research before they form that opinion, and might just find out that I kinda knew what I was talking about. And only, again, because I've done some of the footwork.

"It's an important time to be active. And if [you haven't] done it before, just try it and see how it feels. I guarantee you there's some empowerment there—you start being able to read things and feel less like, 'Oh, I can't do anything about it. And you realize, 'Wow, I'm not the only one who's concerned about this stuff, or I'm not just on the fringe and I'm not a fucking hippie,'" he frames this with a laugh, as it's something he's called often.

Vedder's very focused on change and empowerment; they're themes he evokes repeatedly. And they're themes that, in the end, come back to music, and what it brings people. What it's brought him.

"It's a real powerful thing, the act of plugging in and playing with other people," he says. "Again I think we're talking about empowerment, and that's a good word to think about, especially in these times... It's really just a great feeling. And it still feels like that. It's like surfing: I know a lot of guys who're 55, 60, who are out there just really loving it, and it gives you a sense that this is something that really is fulfilling, and just keeps giving you more and more.

"Music is that way." **NMM**



## Charlotte, NORTH CAROLINA

In the growing, multi-cultural atmosphere of Charlotte—the largest city in North Carolina—opportunities for nightlife and enjoyment are plenty. Citizens and residents of the Queen City got some bragging rights recently, their town popping up on the wide screen in feature films like *Shallow Hal* and *The Original Kings Of Comedy*. But no one really needed the Hollywood stamp of approval to create hometown pride: With such a wide variety and constantly growing roster of nightclubs, restaurants and places to lounge, Charlotte's residents already had plenty to crow about.

**North Carolina native and hip-hop impresario SUPASTITION moved to Charlotte from the small town of Greenville four years ago, and the city's been "a breath of fresh air since day one." Settle back and let the man show you around the place.**

Being an active participant in the Queen City music scene, you'll find no shortage of places to enjoy quality live music. One of the most respected and praised venues for DJ-free performances is **Tremont Music Hall** (400 W. Tremont Ave., 343-9494), which hosts all types of shows, from hip-hop and rock to local organized events. Owner Penny Craver tries her very best to keep her supporters satisfied, providing great sound and incredible hospitality. Some smaller but equally appealing attractions for showcasing Charlotte's most noteworthy rock or soul bands, such as **Blakrayn** and **Baleen**, are the laid-back **Tonic** (1427 E. Fourth St., 347-2582), **Evening Muse** (3327 N. Davidson St., 376-3737) and its neighbor a block away, **Fat City** (3127 N. Davidson St., 343-0240). Fat City has a solid foundation on Monday nights with DJ D.R. (KatSkillz Project, Disorientalists) spinnin' the original hip-hop with a fistful of dancehall and R&B. For the mellow atmosphere, the **Double Door Inn** (218 E. Independence Blvd., 376-1446) was voted the best quarters in the city for some good ol' blues. **The Hungry Duck** (607 W. 5th St., 358-0322) is one of many clubs on the rise within the indie Charlotte music circuit, and **Mytho's** (300 N. College St., 375-8765) offers a damn good time of dancing and well-mixed drinks. **Club 2000** (5300 Old Pineville Rd., 525-4444) caters to the adult party crowd, and **H20** (4445 E. Independence St., 535-6420), **Liquid Lounge** (127 W. Trade St., 374-0111), **Have A Nice Day Café** ('70-'80s music



SUPASTITION

and fishbowl of beer with a complimentary smile on the side, 314 N. College St., 373-2233) and **Salamandra's** (one of the hottest clubs for Latin music, 300 E. Morehead St., 334-2655) rank among the more enjoyable spots to expand your nightlife and little black book.

Any major A&R rep's job would be a lot easier if they spent a few weeks examining Charlotte's eclectic shipload of talented musicians and artists. No metropolis is completely free of dreadful bands, but the Queen City offers a lot of particularly outstanding music for those who appreciate the underappreciated. Ranging from Dirty South to more traditional hip-hop, local stations **Power 98 WPEG** and **Hot 92.7** lend hearty support to local acts **Free Agentz** (Bustback Records), **Blo-Out Records' Big Jillz** (who holds down a weekend 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. slot on Charlotte's Hot 92.7) and myself. Power 98's award-winning **Breakfast Brothers Morning Show**, featuring BJ, Fly Ty, Jeanine Davis, and comedian Tone X, boasts status as the "only live and local morning show." The Station also delivers crowd favorites in the urban scene like **Mr. Incognito** (who's been nominated three times for "Best Mixshow DJ" at the Mixshow Power Summit), **Boney B**, **Stretch-O-Matic** (Blo-Out), **DJ Polo**, **K-Nice** and **DJ Easy Ice**. Rock fanatics release their frustrations with **106.5 FM** to the sounds of **Status Flow** and **Memphis Quick 50**, or the harder-edged **Machine Seven**, who stir up crowds on any given night.

But Charlotte's indie hip-hop champions have to be the live

bands: Katskillz Project, X-periment and Baleen (a remarkable extension of X-periment; dig up more information at [www.liquilab.com](http://www.liquilab.com)). I've had the honor of witnessing them all pack clubs as if they've had national releases. Neo-soul/funk-based group **Blakrayn** drops a few jaws with their live performances as well—nothing competes with live instrumentation and improvisation.

All of the QC's delicious restaurants have put about 15-20 pounds on my one-time frail frame within the past four years. So be warned: Charlotte packs enough appetizing setups to put that "I'm getting too comfortable" look into your marriage. Of course franchises run rampant throughout the city, but there are plenty of "inexpensive" restaurants that have established an identity in this often-overpopulated business.

**The Penguin** (1921 Commonwealth Ave., 375-6959) offers delicious hot dogs, N.C.-style barbecue, black bean veggie burgers and the unexpected delight of fried pickles (my personal favorite)—though the late-night crowd is an acquired taste. The "never judge a book by its cover" restaurant **Lupie's** (2718



Monroe Rd., 374-1232) boasts mouth-watering chili, side dishes and humongous burgers—don't be fooled by the rogue outside look of the place, on the inside hides a clean environment, wonderful food and friendly faces. For some greasy-bagged, deep-fried Southern chicken and fish, **Price's Chicken Coop** (opened around 1962; 1614 Camden Rd., 333-9866) will keep you running back for more, possessed with a craving for some "yard bird." The lunch line reminds you of a costume party, everyone from lawyers to po' folks piling up to get a taste. **Ciro's Italian Restaurant** (8927 J. M. Keynes Drive, 510-0012) is another of many great local stops—there are likely quite a few places that rank higher on some locals' lists, but these are a few from the mind and pockets of a starvin' artist.

Whether you wish to rekindle a flame, impress your new mate or drain the kids of all their uncontrollable energy, you'll easily find the ideal place in Charlotte. Next to **Charlotte Motor Speedway** and the **Carolina Panthers**, the main attraction here remains **Paramount's Carowinds** (14523 Carowinds Blvd., 588-2600), which runs directly across the borders of North and South Carolina. This beloved amusement park is loaded with neck-erkin' roller coasters (**Top Gun**, **Vortex** and **Cyclone**) and a drenching **Water Works** area for the kids to let loose. On occasion, the park holds concerts by national artists, and during the Halloween season, the park switches to the "better than trick or

treating" **S'carowinds**, complete with a haunted house, games and **Elvira's** own intelligently named ride, **Superstition** (sorry, shameless self-promotion).

Shopping enthusiasts should head over to **Concord Mills Outlet Mall** (8111 Concord Mills Blvd., 979-3000) to catch the latest sales. The facility is very **NASCAR**-influenced—likely due to the fact that it sits only a few miles away from the very popular **Lowe's Motor Speedway** in Concord, N.C. The more financially established or preppy crowd tend to visit **Southpark Mall** (4400 Sharon Rd., 364-4411)—there's a serious lack of urban stores, but plenty for the **J. Crew** crowd.

To set the musical mood, head by **Manifest Discs & Tapes** (6239 South Blvd., 552-8448), which holds the crown as the largest and most in-depth music resource center in Charlotte. Anything from hip-hop, rock, R&B, techno, jazz, country, to a healthy cache of imports can be found with ease by simply asking the staff. Browse the shelves' new and old vinyl, new and old CDs, and even **Eminem**, **Metallica**, **Ozzy**, **Tupac** and **Jesus dolls**. Vinyl-hungry DJs won't want to skip **Central Records** (1514 Central Ave., 334-1788), owned by DJ **Lin Benfield**—definitely some gems hidden between those one-hit wonders, so browse slowly and carefully. The shop is small, but it's one of the few places in town that lets you preview your vinyl purchases. (**Drum 'n' bass** scene icon DJ **Fuzz** can be seen putting in a few hours behind the counter also.) **Repo Records** (2516 Central Ave., 334-7376) keeps impressive stacks of vinyl, CDs and other goodies within their limited space, and **Soul NYC** (3633 E. Independence Blvd., 537-9650) carries a nice selection of urban vinyl and the latest hip-hop/reggae/R&B mixtapes.

As much as I miss my hometown of Greenville at times, I consider Charlotte my second home—and a city certainly worth visiting. Just don't marinate in one place and take advantage of the many things that Charlotte has to showcase.

## LOCAL LOGIC: CHARLOTTE'S BEST

**Place to re-enact a Hollywood moment:** Establishing loyal customers long before **Gwyneth** demolished one of their poor chairs in *Shallow Hal*, **FUEL PIZZA** (four locations including the classic 1501 Central Ave. eatery) stands as somewhat of a landmark in Charlotte. Great NYC-style pizza, too.

**Way to casually run into a linebacker:** **Soul Food** in Charlotte gets no better than the "just like Grandma's" menu conjured up at **SIMMONS FOURTH WARD RESTAURANT** (516 N. Graham St., 334-6640). Anyone from various NFL stars to **Gerald Levert** may pop up to sample their baked and fried chicken, cabbage or macaroni and cheese, and experience the wonderful (but seldom quiet) atmosphere.

**Non-boring educational trip for the young ones:** Impress the kids while stimulating their minds at **DISCOVERY PLACE** (301 N. Tryon St., 372-6261); it has a creative selection of science displays, movies and just plain fun for the young mind.

**Funny farm:** Catch local comedian **Tone X's** routine from time to time at **THE COMEDY ZONE** (516 N. College St., 348-4242), along with well-knowns like **Tommy Davidson**.

**Non-Southern-fried food:** **Undersized hot spot LANG VAN** (3019 Shamrock Dr., 531-9525), dishes out delectable Vietnamese food, from **banh xeo** (yellow pancakes), to **pho** and roasted quail.

All phone numbers are in the 704 area code. *Supastition's 7 Years Of Bad Luck (Freshchest)* is out now. Stop by [www.supastition.com](http://www.supastition.com) for more information.



**BRENDAN GAMBLE**

**Heartless Moon**

Mud



**B**rendan Gamble's stunning solo acoustic debut album begs the question: What's he been waiting for? Gamble's decade-plus music career thus far has been as a supporting cast member—drummer for Poster Children, utility man for the Moon Seven Times, engineer for bands passing through Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. But it's clear from the anguished opening chords of *Heartless Moon* that Gamble is a top-shelf singer-songwriter. The 14 songs included here (one is hidden) were shaved down from the 27 (!) Gamble wrote following his divorce from former collaborator Lynn Canfield. The lyrics tell us things haven't gone well for Gamble. ("I'd rather take what I'm given than be on my own"; "Tricky just to live when you take back what you give.") Each song resonates with the immediacy of a fresh wound, written as self-exorcism that's most disturbing in its heart-wrenching futility. Only time can dull this pain. Stylistically, Gamble recalls the musical melodicism of Eric Andersen and Duncan Sheik, the plaintive sincerity of James Taylor and the lyrical autobiography of Mark Kozelek, Marianne Faithfull and Ian Curtis. Heady company, but Gamble pulls no punches. "I Don't Need December"'s cheery piano accent disguises the dour outlook underneath. But for the most part, Gamble's not interested in obscuring the blood on these tracks. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link

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

File Under

Acoustic exorcism

R.I.Y.L.

Mark Kozelek, Josh Rouse,  
Duncan Sheik, depressed  
divorced guys

**THE HEROINE SHEIKS**

**Siamese Pipe**

Rubric

**F**amiliarity with the respective back catalogs of the Heroine Sheiks' principle members—vocalist Shannon Selberg (Cows) and guitarist Norman Westberg (Swans)—isn't necessary, but it provides some solid footing in the Heroine Sheiks' otherwise marshy funhouse of noise-rock: *Siamese Pipe* weds the tripped-out dementia of the former with the scuzzy NYC noise of the latter. Anchored by tasteful, dexterous and steamboat-solid drumming, the Sheiks can follow the vaudevillian whims of Selberg—and his characters—and remain certain that at the very least, the rhythm structure will not tip over. In fact, the Heroine Sheiks possess a rhythmic swing and swagger the Swans never cared about, and the Cows never quite pulled off. That's a good thing, and it makes the material that much more engaging, whether it's the noir-styled blues of "Grab The Wheel," or the punked-up "My Boss." Westberg's guitar is alternately rootsy, off-kilter, restrained and menacing, while Selberg's note-by-note cheapo keyboard work adds textural support, punctuating musical phrasing in childlike drips and drabs. Ultimately, the Heroine Sheiks cough up a peculiar twist of Flipper- and Stooges-esque punk and Chrome-d out weirdness, leavened with a much greater sense of musicality and songcraft than any member's previous work. And the production is almost flawless. But hearing the Heroine Sheiks is one thing; watching Selberg's unpredictable showmanship live—imagine a more threatening Crispin Glover, and you're close—is another altogether. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY



Link

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

File Under

Noise rock

R.I.Y.L.

Cows, Queens Of The Stone Age,  
Ween

# IRON & WINE

## The Creek Drank The Cradle

Sub Pop

If you were to hand someone this album as an old cassette you'd found in the back of the closet, the recipient could be easily convinced that these songs were recorded decades ago by a family of Southern folkies caught up in whisky, sin and salvation. The truth, however, is less poetic and more absurd. It's the work of one man, Sam Beam, who teaches cinematography at a college in southern Florida. Obviously at odds with the neon and pastels of Miami, the home taper sits in his room inventing and overdubbing alternate worlds all by his lonesome. His voice is mostly a whisper, a low-humming ruminator of tales barely discernible to the naked ear. The lyric sheet reveals a prisoner speaking to his mother, broken rosaries and the potential of dead bodies uncovered. But mostly the ear catches raw, rustic fingerpicking accompanied by cold, spearing slide-guitar lines and prickly banjos that obscure the plaintive harmonies. "Southern Anthem" tips towards the warm, early-'70s vibe of Bread with its soothing harmonies. But the spartan production of the 11 songs here—reportedly culled from two CDs of potential candidates—aims for an age when electricity was the novelty, not pet rocks. This might seem like the indie-rock world's version of Civil War re-enactors, but the results are too sublime to be a mere exercise. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



Link

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

File Under

Post-grad lo-fi country

R.I.Y.L.

Palace Brothers, Smog,  
Bert Jansch

## TALIB KWELI

Quality

Rawkus



Link

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

File Under

Lyrics of fury

R.I.Y.L.

Mos Def, the Roots, Common

Digest these ear-catching rhymes from "The Proud": "The President's a Bush and the Vice President's a Dick/ So a whole lot of fuckin' is what we gon' get"; "Using my Ham Solo and I don't need Chewie/ I'm over your head like yarmulkes and kufis." From Black Star to *Reflection Eternal* and every song he's hit, we've always known Talib could spit, and on his first solo CD, Kweli pens hip-hop quotables too numerous to name. As he boasts bluntly on "Rush," he's "unfuck-witable." To that end, comedian Dave Chappelle appears in the CD's intro, claiming, among the other things, that Kweli made up the Nike swoosh. *Quality* features the usual and expected sonic suspects: Black Thought and Pharoahe Monch on "Guerilla Monsoon," Mos Def on "Joy" and Vania Mojica and new Rawkus soul artist Novel singing pretty, catchy hooks on Kweli's sweet love songs. And there's the unusual and unexpected: Savion Glover taps into "Stand To The Side"; the lead single, "Waiting For The DJ," is a party joint with Parliament Funkadelic-like backing vocals; and the Kanye West-produced "Good To You" grinds to a phat beat and funky Al Green feel. If, as Kweli states on "The Proud," "It's just the beginning, first inning/ Battle for America's soul and the devil's winning," then Kweli is positioning himself as rap's savior. >>>JESSICA KOSLOW



## PIANO MAGIC

### Writers Without Homes

4AD-Beggars Banquet



**W**riters Without Homes's intentions are quickly made clear when, between Banshees-like blasts of piercing, shrill guitars and ominous Burundi drumming, a ghostly voice intones, "Music won't save you from anything but silence, not from heartbreak, not from violence." Not surprisingly, this is one of the most disturbingly lovely and frighteningly personal records you'll likely ever hear. Piano Magic is four British, French and Spanish gents, with a rotating collection of guests (including here, Simon Raymonde of the Cocteau Twins). It's a very 4AD affair, in that spooky-esthete sort of way, and comparisons to This Mortal Coil are unavoidable. While Piano Magic also heave open the historical floodgates of European musical influence, from classical to British folk to Teutonic avant-garde, where TMC were a well-designed curiosity, Piano Magic are urgently bizarre. Their morose, gothic grandiosity is punctuated by toy pianos and xylophones, and the arrangements are often jarring, but in an astonishing way. Most captivating are Glen Johnson's deeply unsettling lyrics, which obsess on themes of seasons, romantic disillusionment and death, and are channeled through various vocal dispatchers, male and female. It's all achingly beautiful, but not beautiful like a sunset or like Switzerland—beautiful like a child trying to save a wounded bird that is nevertheless doomed to die. Enjoy the violence. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

[www.piano-magic.co.uk](http://www.piano-magic.co.uk)

File Under

Don't be afraid of the dark

R.I.Y.L.

This Mortal Coil, Cranes, early Cabaret Voltaire

## WE RAGAZZI

### The Ache

The Self-Starter Foundation

**P**lenty of great vocalists can't actually sing. Hell, many can't hit the right note with a major-label contract and a studio full of equipment, but natural-born vocal talent could never supplant character, attitude or a lifetime of dysfunctional behavior. Just ask Billy Corgan or Gordon Gano, rock stars with permanently rusty pipes and a few issues who've built illustrious careers behind the mic. On *The Ache*, We Ragazzi vocalist Anthony Rolando caterwauls from note to note, making his own case for greatness. The Chicago trio splatters his nasally and sometimes irritating vocals all over shrieking guitars, disquieting organs and bounding no-frills percussion. Imbued with sexiness and angst, the resulting tunes straight-up kick ass. More raucous numbers ("Sickest Thoughts I Ever Had" and "A Lonesome 2Nite") come off like the Makers without the glam-rock aspirations. Quieter moments ("Forever In The First Stages Of Love") could have been lifted from some long-forgotten Rolling Stones demo that's been stripped of its self-awareness. Much of the other material wavers between Corgan molesting the Doors and Modest Mouse having a cathartic breakdown. With these disparate touchstones, tags like "no wave" and "retro" are woefully inadequate. We Ragazzi's *The Ache* isn't much like anything you've ever heard. And that's saying a lot. >>>NORM ELROD



Link

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

File Under

Hurts so good

R.I.Y.L.

Billy Corgan, the Makers, Modest Mouse



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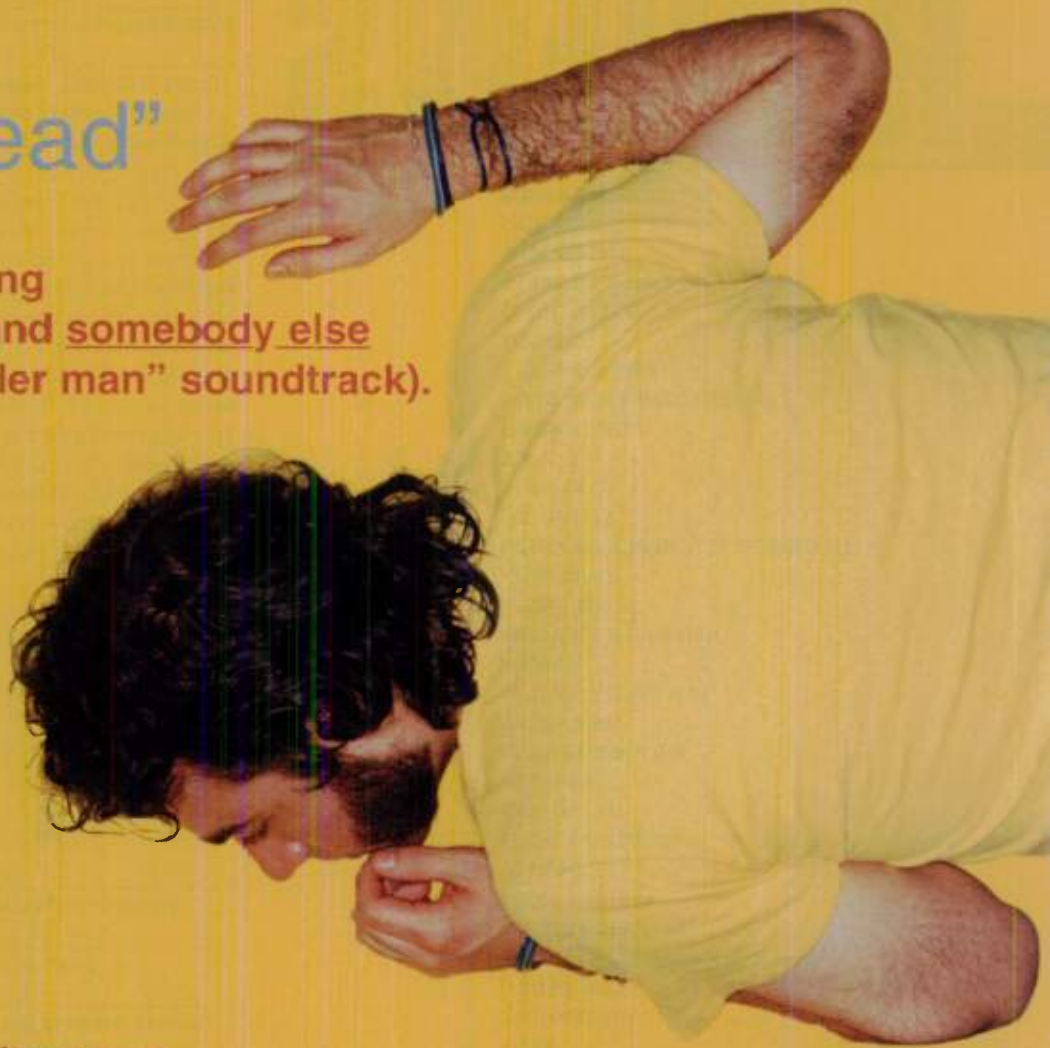
- *boston globe*

"he's shown enough quirks to endear him to the alternative crowd; he can turn out a novelty song one minute and write an emotive ballad the next."

- *billboard*

## bleu "redhead"

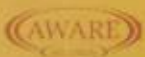
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# REVIEWS

BOARDS OF CANADA  
 BOAS  
 THE BRUCES  
 CAMPFIRE GIRLS  
 DAVID CROSS  
 DEMONS  
 KIMYA DAWSON  
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 THE DONNAS  
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 BEN FOLDS  
 GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR  
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 HAYDEN  
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 BILL HICKS  
 HIS NAME IS ALIVE  
 KENNEDY  
 MR. SCRUFF  
 YOUSOU N'DOUR  
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 RUINS  
 SCHNEIDER TM  
 EMILY SPARKS  
 SPEEDBALL BABY  
 THE STREETS  
 SYBARITE  
 MAX TUNDRA  
 VELVET CRUSH  
 VOYAGER ONE



## BOARDS OF CANADA

**Twoism** Warp

An original pressing of this nine-track first outing by Boards Of Canada recently auctioned on eBay for over \$1000—more than the eBaying of an original white label test pressing of the Beatles' "Hey Jude." Why should non-rich, non-freak, non-collectors obtain *Twoism*, originally limited to only 100 copies in 1995 on Marcus Eoin and Mike Sandison's own Music70 imprint, now? Because Eoin and Sandison have had a lock on creating a rarified kind of soothing electronic music—call it mythical dream-hop for toddlers. And *Twoism*, along with the nearly-as-rare *Hi Scores* EP, is their best example. Beginning

Link  
[www.warprecords.com](http://www.warprecords.com)  
 File Under  
 Mythical dream-hop for toddlers  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Boards Of Canada's *Geogaddi*,  
*Freescha*, *Casino Vs. Japan*:  
*Whole Numbers Play The Basics*

with "Sixtyniner," you're at once grabbed by your ankles and pulled slowly into a sonic slumber state, where dulcet synth tones seem to emanate from your floor, your ceiling, your hair, even your belly, and twirl like little pixies singing "Ring Around The Rosies." Even in the haunted, echoed chord progressions of "Oirectine" and the riotous, martial breakbeats of "Basefree," there's an ebullience in *Twoism* that Eoin and Sandison somehow lost by the time they released their debut album, 1998's *Music Has The Right To Children*. Although the duo recovered a strong measure of that dark sunshine sound in their most recent album, *Geogaddi*, *Twoism* stands toe-to-toe with *Hi Scores* as the most important BoC release. And now that it's reissued, you don't have to outbid fanatics to get it. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT



## BOAS

**Mansion** Overcoat

Chicago may not be a hotbed for arty pop that places atmosphere ahead of thudding energy, blues-rawk guitar or an avant-jazz edge. But Boas' debut recalls such contemplative, changeable Brit rockers as Pink Floyd or Traffic as much as it does the Windy City's own musical traditions. Evocative but elusive lyrics and a set of slowish, deeply textured tunes mark a strong maiden voyage for a band that came together just last year. John Klos' high-strung, dynamic voice brings a thoughtful intensity to gently crunching high-water mark "Ghetto Pond" and other

Link  
[overcoatrecordings.com](http://overcoatrecordings.com)  
 File Under  
 Smart art rock  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Califone, Guided by Voices,  
 Red Red Meat

tracks. After about a dozen listens it's still not entirely clear what he's singing about, but each couplet sounds deep. The band's promo hype alludes to Neil Young and the Allmans, yet the only traces of those inspirations are incidental, like the slide guitar on "Get That Gem" or the kindergarten-simple distorted lead on "Witchhat On." Instead, the quintet knits a heavy, colorful fabric that features insistent pounding from keyboard player Jacob Smith on "The Last Zoo House Band," Gabe McDonough's big buzzing bass on the Sgt. Pepper-esque "Celebration," and guitarists Klos and Jonathan van Herik tangling to good effect throughout. >>>BILL KISLUK





## THE BRUCES

**The War Of The Bruces** Misra

There's no Bruce in the Bruces, in fact there's only an Alex, one Alex McManus. McManus is a busy guy: He's a member of Lambchop, a co-leader of Empire State, and a collaborator with Vic Chesnutt. Left to his own devices in the Bruces, he's a little bit alt-country, a little bit indie rock. On sparse numbers, his reedy voice and uncertain pitch recall Will Oldham (and "Haint Blue"'s chorus—"just find your fears then make them lonely"—could be a parody of the Bonnie Prince), and on the ringing "Invisible Ceiling," McManus nods to Jay Farrar,

another froggy-throated crooner. But most often, McManus just sounds like himself, and *The War Of The Bruces* blends tasty, fluid electric-guitar picking with quiet layers of atmosphere. Horns decorate the lively "Sunken City" and whistling enlivens "The Cold War" even as McManus tosses out self-recriminating zingers ("I despise my lack of taste when it comes to my fate"). "After Hours" is a hallucinatory tale of a late, lonely night when "all the burners on the stove are winking" that leads to a delicious pun: "There's another home on the range that's out of range." It took seven years for McManus to get around to making this, the second Bruces album; here's hoping the next one comes sooner. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

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

File Under

Solemn men of uncertain pitch

R.I.Y.L.

Vic Chesnutt, Will Oldham,  
Jay Farrar, Richard Buckner



## CAMPFIRE GIRLS

**Delongpre** Mootron

In late 1995, a Los Angeles rock band called the Campfire Girls released a seven-song EP that would cause quite a stir among the lucky few who actually heard it. Combining the era's requisite amount of grunge with a hefty helping of sincerity and melody, the *Mood Enhancer E.P.* was scraggly, beautiful and unfortunately the last we'd hear from them. Seven years later, after a suitable amount of drug abuse and infighting, the band is back, with a new record on the way, and this, music from the sessions that spurred their first offering. The tracks on *Delongpre* still

sound as fresh as they did in the mid-'90s, and the inclusion of gut-wrenching rockers "Motorola Casanova" and "Little Wolverine," both of which first saw daylight on the original EP, may just debunk the myth of 1990s post-Nirvana rock as an industry-manipulated repackaging of fleeting trends. The 14-track disc exhibits its pop sensibility in the upbeat and off-key warbling of "Dang, That Smarts!" but tends more often to surge through guitar riffs and smart understated vocals. Who knows where a new record is going to find the Campfire Girls, but regardless of their future, this look at their past proves that for at least a fleeting moment, they were making some of the most interesting music in a tiring movement. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

Link

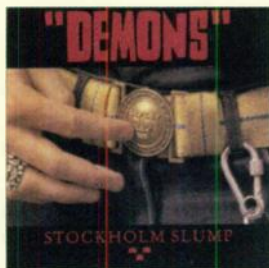
[www.campfiregirlsmusic.com](http://www.campfiregirlsmusic.com)

File Under

Grunge: back from the dead

R.I.Y.L.

Nirvana, Sloan,  
early Pavement



## DEMONS

**Stockholm Slump** Gearhead

Sometime last summer, stylized garage-rock bands somehow overtook IKEA and safe automobiles as Sweden's most notable exports. ("Garage" is euphemistic take on a 30-some-year-old American sound—no Volvos and SAABs were harmed in the making of this trend.) But the ministry of trade forgot to forward the memo on to the Demons, whose *Stockholm Slump* contains nary a hint of Mitch Ryder or Nuggets and instead sounds like a sped-up take on the rawk riffing fellow Swedes the Hellcopters cranked out years before anyone realized

matching suits and irony equal big-time cash. But one important page the Demons keep from their peers' playbook is an affinity for huge, rusty hooks that swagger along with singer/guitarist Mathias Carlsson's winning snarl. Carlsson changes persona and inflection constantly and even manages to channel Geddy Lee, Grandmaster Flash and Mike Ness in the same song on "...Come A Day." If there's a downside to *Stockholm Slump*, it's that influences are worn a little too low on the sleeve and most songs fall under two settings: fast and loud and really fast and loud. But that's the idea here, and it's hard to nitpick when the sizzling guitar of "Gang Green Eyes" could make the most earnest neo-mod ditch his suit for a tin of pomade. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

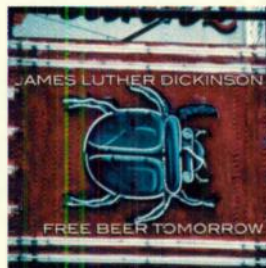
[www.gearheadrecords.com](http://www.gearheadrecords.com)

File Under

Back-alley punk

R.I.Y.L.

Gluecifer, Social Distortion,  
Nashville Pussy



## JAMES LUTHER DICKINSON

**Free Beer Tomorrow** Artemis

He's a walking history of American music. He's played piano with everyone from the Stones to Dylan and Aretha Franklin, produced the Replacements, been part of the almost-legendary Memphis band Mud Boy And The Neutrons, and literally fathered the North Mississippi Allstars. Now Jim Dickinson's finally released his second solo album, only 30 years after his debut. The result is a dark, stalking walkabout through American roots music—even initially humorous songs like "Asshole" and "Last Night I Gave Up Smoking" barely conceal shadowy undertones. The soul

classic "It's Rainin'" prowls restlessly, waiting in vain for blue skies to raise its mood, while the epic "Ballad Of Billy And Oscar" offers a trip through the troubled psyche of modern America, a kind of anti-Billy Joel that unwinds over midnight jazz. Throughout, Dickinson's voice drags the songs out and works them over, sometimes gently ("If Only I Could Fly") or roughly (his take on Eddie Hinton's "Well Of Love"), and his take on "Home Sweet Home" sounds like Tom Waits cruising around Mississippi in a car with busted springs. Still, Dickinson's love of American music shines like a headlight on a lonely road at night. It's his saving grace, his hope for tomorrow, his chance to come back fighting in the next round. And on this, he's punching his weight. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

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

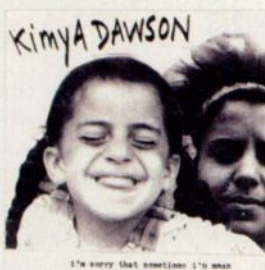
File Under

American music, not

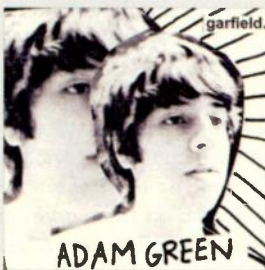
American dreams

R.I.Y.L.

Tom Waits, North Mississippi  
Allstars, Dan Penn



**KIMYA DAWSON**  
**I'm Sorry That Sometimes I'm Mean**  
 Rough Trade



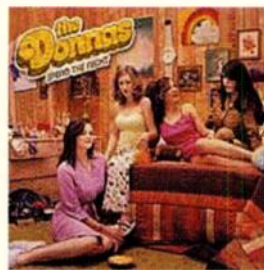
**ADAM GREEN**  
**Garfield** Rough Trade

What made the Moldy Peaches' eponymous debut the bedroom-folk record of dreams is how it epitomized kiddie lyricism like no one since Jonathan Richman. Largely through their palimpsest style of singing, Kimya Dawson and Adam Green (the pits in the Peaches, though the band has subsequently embraced four more members) fingerpainted a picture of toddlers climbing over everything and each other because they cannot imagine themselves as somehow separate. So the impulse with their solo records is to split them into some sort of Martin/Lewis, superego/id halves. Or "strictly mother and daughter" as Green, eight years Dawson's junior, would have it. Indeed, Dawson's album

has a more nurturing spirit right down to the calm, hushed tone of her voice. Her best songs, rooted in nursery rhymes and Saturday-morning television, sound like attempts to break up a fight or lessons in sharing, fitting for someone who has worked so extensively in daycare. She manages to turn Little Miss Muffett and the spider into friends if not lovers. She gets Talking Pee Wee talking to Talking Ernest about the death of Jim Varney. And lest one starts to suspect a terminal case of the cutes, on the gut-wrenching "Hold My Hand" she implores Oprah Winfrey to help with the abused children who cross her path. Not once do the embarrassingly intimate close micing and \$9.99 production values give off the stale stench of preserving some imagined indie insularity; quite to the contrary, they represent a precious effort to minimize cultural gaps before the end of the world.

While Dawson tries to hang on to her heart, however, Green cannot let go of his penis. Clearly, he was the one responsible for all the naughty words strewn across the debut; we're literally five seconds into the first song on *Garfield* and already Green wants to "grab a fuck." Practically every cut here offers up some horny detail as he chases tail into a computer show or peeks at her flower in the tower. His lyrical concerns are best summed up early on by the groin-warming couplet "Why is once never enough?/ Why do I have to cum sticky stuff?" with said substance winding up on a cracker two tracks later. And yet, his disc gets a slight edge over Dawson's because the music is as fleshy as the words, augmenting the trademark lo-fi sound and elemental acoustic guitar tunelets with computer voices, mouth harp, clarinet and vocal accompaniment courtesy of Green's actual mother on "Bartholemew." With a little more flesh grafted on, "Dance With Me" and the remarkably Stones-ish "Baby's Gonna Die Tonight" might even be hit-parade contenders. Droolingly catchy as both discs are, however, there's something vaguely wrong about these two budding geniuses recording apart from one another. The Moldy Peaches have burdened themselves with a generous model of collaborative singer-songwriting that transcends the very notion of self, a beautiful, fragile illusion weakened somewhat by their nevertheless terrific attempts to go it alone. >>>KEVIN JOHN

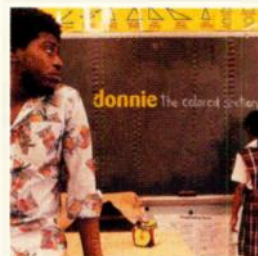
Link  
[www.moldypeaches.com](http://www.moldypeaches.com)  
 File Under  
 All ages anti-folk  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Suckdog, early acoustic Beck,  
 Beat Happening



**THE DONNAS**  
**Spend The Night** Atlantic

Link  
[www.thedonnas.com](http://www.thedonnas.com)  
 File Under  
 Runaways on the road to ruin  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 The Pattern, Kittie,  
 Motley Crüe's *Girls Girls Girls*

The Donnas' first pop-punk album won them all sorts of comparisons to the Ramones, but their subsequent efforts have driven them further and further away from Rockaway Beach. Now on their fifth release (their first for a major label), the California girls have turned their backs completely on the deceptively simplistic sound of '70s West Coast punk in favor of '80s West Coast hair metal. What the world needs now is surely *not* another cock rock band, but with *Spend The Night*, that's exactly what we're getting. Lyrically, every song subsists on sentiments as painfully tired as "Now I just can't get you outta my head/ Why don't you just get in my bed," and the formulaic guitar solos don't do a damn thing to differentiate the Donnas' tunes from the ones they're ripping off. In fact, it's the lame, slowed-down speed-metal guitar work that damages the songs the most; were these clichéd pleas for parties put to more original instrumentation, the Donnas' thematic redundancy might have a fighting chance, but the coupling of elementary ideas with rudimentary riffs is really too much to stomach. And although hooks are fastened as tightly as ever to each and every single track, the result is not infectious but maddening. Really, really maddening. >>>LAURA CASSIDY



**DONNIE**  
**The Colored Section** Giant Step

Link  
[www.giantstep.net](http://www.giantstep.net)  
 File Under  
 Wonderkind  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions*  
 or *Talking Book*, Maxwell,  
 D'Angelo

And you thought *Jamiroquai* sounded like Stevie Wonder. The Kentucky-born, Atlanta-based Donnie is uncanny; he's a master of Stevie's phrasings and similar in tone, making him something of a ringer in neo-soul's efforts to set the clocks back to civil rights savings time. This cuts both ways on *The Colored Section*, however, with the emphasis on Stevie-ness somewhat obliterating all else. The pleasure of hearing rich *Innervisions*-like conscious soul is undeniable—is there anyone who doesn't wish Stevie Wonder would make another record like this? But close listens reveal that Donnie has lots more to offer. In fact, to these ears, his voice is actually closer to the greatest male soul voice of the '70s, Donnie Hathaway. Ultimately, songs like "Masterplan," which lets Donnie freestyle over a cushy bed of down-tempo electronics, or the digital gospel of "Our New National Anthem," are more satisfying than "Wildlife" and its all-too-familiar chromatic harmonica. The thing is, if you're cool with how much this recalls the best period of one of the most fertile pop-music minds of the last century, then *The Colored Section* is a fantastic listen. It's cohesive and conscious, with strong, memorable melodies and spot-on performances all the way around. Sometimes, the reproduction is just as satisfying as the vintage item. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON



FC/KAHUNA

### FC KAHUNA

Machine Says Yes Network America

In the mid-'90s, Daniel Ormondroyd and Jon Nowell's Big Kahuna Burger Company club nights capitalized on the emergence of big beat, putting them in the company of such luminaries as the Chemical Brothers and Fatboy Slim. However, by waiting until now to release their debut album, the Kahunas put themselves in the enviable position of being able to incorporate not only the remnants of that once powerful scene, but also everything that followed its fall. Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys guests on opener "Fear Of Guitars,"

Link

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

File Under

All in the mix

R.I.Y.L.

Chemical Brothers, Zero 7, Basement Jaxx

which could pass for a loopy ambient excursion by his own band, with other vocal contributions coming courtesy of former Gus Gus member Hafdis Huld and Eileen Rose. And then there's someone called Betty Butterfly-Barbido, who provides the voice for the album's one spotty moment, the electroclash "Nothing Is Wrong." The instrumental "Growler" echoes the Chems' own "Music: Response" and the dreamy lull of "Hayling" (featuring Huld) recalls the best of Zero 7. Come to think of it, one could find a musical analogy for just about every track here; which is only to say that, while you may not hear anything stunningly new, you will be won over by the way the disparate styles are so finely juxtaposed. Not to mention the fact that the construction of a whole is often well more than the sum of its parts. Case in point. >>>DOUG LEVY



### GOSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR

Yanqui U.X.O. Constellation

Montreal-based instrumental troupe Godspeed You! Black Emperor is consistent, if anything. So much so that finding synonyms for anguished ambience, atmospheric orchestration, cinematic crescendos and abstract soundscapes seems too redundant. In spite of critical acclaim, this purposefully cryptic nonet (three guitarists, two bassists, two drummers, a cellist and a violinist) maintains a mysterious collective persona driven by an anti-corporate/anti-government politic. By sticking to what's worked so far, GY!BE (yes, the exclamation point has moved) have yet to fall victim to the hypocrisy their agenda leaves them

Link

[www.brainwashed.com/godspeed](http://www.brainwashed.com/godspeed)

File Under

New movements for the

uncomfortably numb

R.I.Y.L.

Mogwai, My Bloody Valentine, Spiritualized

vulnerable to—even if, as they point out, their albums are sold by "predatory retailers and superstores." While following the same tried-and-true format as the group's last three albums, taking long quiet climbs to intense rock climax, then retreating and repeating structures, *Yanqui U.X.O.* does differ: Godspeed has stripped the samples and monologues they previously explored. The result is a voiceless 74-minute, five-suite sonic excursion that's even less aggressive, even less loud, leaving listeners even less certain of intended meanings. Let us not be so presumptuous as to attempt translation of such liner-note insights as "stubborntiny lights vs. clustering darkness foreverok?" Godspeed's brand of composition isn't for everyone. And that's the way they like it. >>>ROBIN A. ROTHMAN

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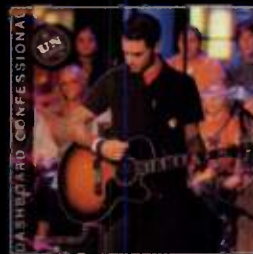
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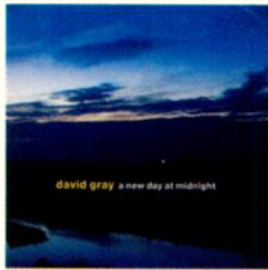
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**DAVID GRAY**

**A New Day At Midnight** ATO

David Gray has a big problem. *White Ladder*, which sold over five million records worldwide, put him a slung stone away from popular music's Goliaths. But status brings expectations: To a certain extent, Gray has to remake his previous album to keep the legions happy, yet creative laziness is not his modus operandi. What's a burgeoning rock star to do? *A New Day At Midnight* is the proper follow-up to his breakthrough release (last year's *Lost Songs 95-98* and *The EP's 92-94* are both collections of older material). Little has changed; as Gray describes it, "We just took up where

we left off." His latest is another sparkling collection of lo-fi technology-driven folk tunes, this time without the novelty. Artists like Beth Orton have long since cornered the market on organic electronic beats, and many singer/songwriters can lay down a good melody. But few have an instrument as powerful and distinctive as Gray's emotively raspy voice or the material to showcase it. The startling "Dead In The Water," the delicate "Freedom" and the persistent "Last Boat To America" are all moving examples. *A New Day At Midnight* may not be a step in a new direction for Gray, but it is another step in the right direction. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

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

File Under

Drum machines and guitar strings

R.I.Y.L.

Pete Krebs, Pete Yorn, Grant McLennan



**HAR MAR SUPERSTAR**

**You Can Feel Me** Record Collection

Color Me Badd was obviously hilarious. Chris Farley's *SNL* Chippendales skit was obviously hilarious. Sean Tillman, a.k.a. cheeky acoustic singer-songwriter Sean Na Na, has combined those two pop relics into a scantily clad alter ego, Harold Martin Tillman, that's occasionally hilarious, more often just obvious. Extenuating circumstances of the Har Mar phenomenon—live shows reveal his butterballs shoehorned into briefs; he's inexplicably rising to legitimate stardom, opening assorted Strokes dates and club-hopping with Kelly Osbourne—are far more fascinating (nay, dumbfounding)

Link

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

File Under

New Kids skewered... in 2002?!

R.I.Y.L.

Morris Day And The Time, Digital Underground, Peaches

than the novelty tunes. This second full-length plays on a familiar premise: white men—aside from Marshall Mathers—can't rap. So Har Mar "flows" over obnoxious Hammer-time beats, focusing mostly on weed, Cristal, dry humping and how good he looks sampling all of the above. We're treated to unforgettable, vibrato-laden bon mots like "Any mess I made, I licked it up" and "Save the drama for your mama." Dirty Preston takes the reins on the white-bread "One Dirty Minute," giving props to (good Christ) "the youth in Asia," and always-entertaining Gossip frontlady Beth Ditto provides a sultry female counterpoint in "Power Lunch" and "H.A.R.M.A.R." If you want a truly pee-your-pants-funny version of this shtick, find Korn bassist Reggie "Fieldy Snuts" Arvizu's epic solo LP, *Rock N' Roll Gangster*—funny because it's not a schtick. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI



**HER SPACE HOLIDAY**

**Audio Astronomy** Tiger Style

Originally released on 12-inch vinyl in 1997, *Audio Astronomy* was Marc Bianchi's first foray into the world of lush minimalist dream-pop after the demise of his seminal hardcore acts Indian Summer and Mohinder. When put up against his work in those bands, it's hard to imagine where he got the patience to masterfully arrange the subtle textures and washes of spacey noise found on this reissue. Bianchi and girlfriend/sometime collaborator Keely obviously studied the electronic bedroom popcraft of Slowdive's Brian Eno-produced *Souvlaki* very hard

before making *Astronomy*. The lo-fi production and Bianchi's lazy, distant vocals, along with Keely's sing-song harmonies, create a sincere charm against the chiming guitar and throbs of distorted reverb. While "Through The Eyes Of A Child" is seven minutes of chirping crickets and swelling synths that never really go anywhere, tracks like "Pictures Of Music" and "One Million Galaxies" favorably recall the pioneers of the shoegaze scene, My Bloody Valentine, and more recent outfits like Austin's 7% Solution. And while none of the songs on *Audio Astronomy* are particularly charismatic, the record flows together naturally with Bianchi laying the roots for what would become their 2001 opus, *Manic Expressive*. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

Link

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

File Under

Holiday revisited

R.I.Y.L.

Slowdive, 7% Solution, the Mercury Program



**HIS NAME IS ALIVE**

**Last Night** 4AD

The project of Warren Defever and a rotating cast of accomplices, Livonia, Michigan's His Name Is Alive appeared in 1990 with *Livonia*. One of the first Stateside recordings to appear on 4AD, the album—an affecting mixture of musique concrete, weathered Americana, and gothic folk—set the tone for a decade of experimentation, culminating in last year's *Someday My Blues Will Cover The Earth*. *Someday* showed the band at a crossroads: Leaving their indie trappings behind, it was a pure R&B record, fronted by the powerful vocals of Lovetta Pippen, a gospel singer Defever

Link

[www.4ad.com/artists/hnia](http://www.4ad.com/artists/hnia)

File Under

Country-fried R&B

R.I.Y.L.

Ryan Adams, Nicole Willis, Marvin Gaye

had met while recording 1996's *Stars On ESP*. On *Last Night*, the band is still puttering around the same intersection of urban and rural sounds. Once again, Pippen fronts every track with husky, soulful lyrics of love and loss. But the R&B elements are more muted, reconfigured through acoustic guitars and ruffled drum breaks. The blue-as-a-bruise "Crawlin'" recalls the last record's stark, electric melancholy, but others, like the piano and guitar "Devil's Night," offer soul unplugged. Whether these sidesteps are missteps depends upon the listener—the Equals' "Teardrops" reimagines gospel through the lens of country rock, while "Someday My Prince Will Come" is a rollicking Afrobeat jam bursting with tenor saxophone. As moodbreakers, they're disconcerting, but as showpieces for Defever's restlessness ear, they're fascinating harbingers of roads still to be explored. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE



## KENNEDY

Kennedy *Sea Level*

It's clear from the outset that the long hours as a radio station studio tech did two things to Kennedy, the namesake bass player/songwriter/vocalist for this Thousand Oaks, Calif. trio. First, it gave him the know-how to produce a great-sounding album full of accessory instruments (keys, harmonica, banjo) and studio effects that give the band's jangly pop the bump and drive it needs. Second, and most importantly, the time in isolation with the machines seems to have rewired Kennedy's brain enough to spew out some seriously fractured imagery, enough to give these 10 songs an

unsettling distinctiveness. Some ("A Brain In A Room," "The Scott Sterling Extreme Sports Challenge") subscribe to the Wayne Coyne school of the abstract and surreal, even borrowing the universe-as-a-lonely-vacuum vibe the Flaming Lips pull off so well. But where the trio really carves out a niche is when it leans for the irreverent on "Goatfuck," "Cold pussy" and "Turkey Pot Pie," where "I'm depleting brain cells every day/ Eating turkey pot pie off of TV trays" comes off as a boast instead of a shamed admission. If the other end of *Alice In Wonderland's* rabbit hole needed a house band, Kennedy could plug in and play right now. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

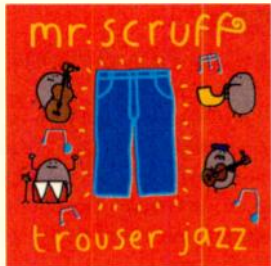
[www.kisforkennedy.com](http://www.kisforkennedy.com)

File Under

Skewed, skewered and screwed-with indie pop

R.I.Y.L.

Pixies, Eels, Frogs, the Flaming Lips



## MR. SCRUFF

Trouser Jazz *Ninja Tune*

Some artists have a flair for picking names. Just take Mr. Scruff, whose moniker is strangely perfect for his music—not to mention the endearing, hand-drawn caricatures that grace his album covers. Once you've seen Scruff play records, mashing up vintage soul, disco, reggae and all manner of ragged-edged jams, you'll forever conflate the synonym for "stubble" with Scruff's fuzzy funk. His recordings are more polished, but they still have that worn-groove warmth, mixing up shimmering Rhodes chords, tube-amped wah-wah guitar and sprightly horn licks.

Ahistorical in the best way, Scruff mixes epochs with aplomb: The opening "Here We Go" is a sax-and-standup groover that might've been taken from a '60s soul session, and "Sweet Smoke," which follows it, begins with muted horns and keyboards straight from disco's most uptempo era. But as soon as the beat kicks in, you know this is some purely contemporary dancefloor bidness. It's the colors, aged and new alike, that distinguish *Trouser Jazz*: a thousand shades of thrum and squelch, sax and squeal, bleats and sweet, sultry vocals. Behind the canvas, though, Scruff knows how to turn a rhythm inside out: The rollicking "Shrimp" rolls along at house tempo, but its off-kilter breakbeats keep things limber and lithe. So get your hands out of your pockets and shake a leg, already. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

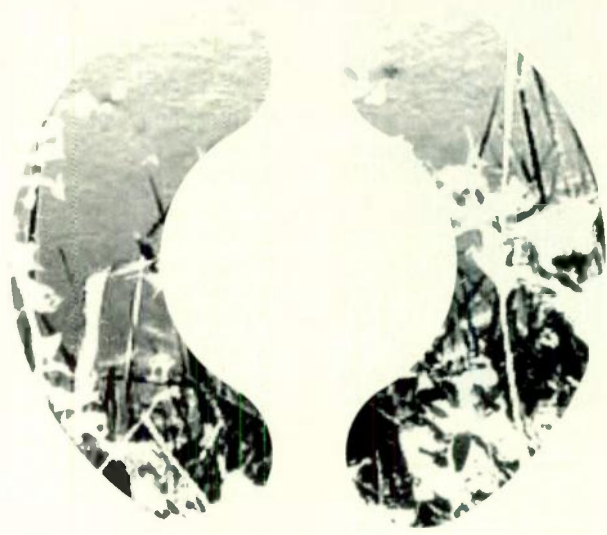
[www.mrscruff.com](http://www.mrscruff.com)

File Under

Stubble funk

R.I.Y.L.

Nightmares On Wax, Rae & Christian, RJD2



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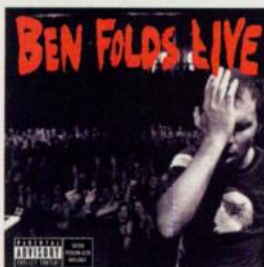
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**HAYDEN**  
Live At Convocation Hall *Badman-Hardwood*



**BEN FOLDS**  
Ben Folds Live *Epic*

In rock, the live album has undergone two distinct phases: the virtuoso '70s, when sprawling, noodly live LPs defined classic and art rock; and the "unplugged" '90s, when MTV's back-to-basics concept quickly became ornate and slick. With both approaches exhausted, two new live albums—from Tin Pan slacker Ben Folds and low-fi folkster Hayden—make the genre viable again by blending virtuosity with fan-embracing intimacy.

Hayden's *Live At Convocation Hall* is a throwback—it's a double album. Also charmingly traditional, it documents one performance, in Toronto last March, with little apparent editing; even the goofiest audience shout-outs remain (including a marriage proposal from a guy). You'd call it *Hayden Comes Alive!*, but Hayden live is hardly flashy; the Canadian sleepy-

head plays mostly unaccompanied and sticks to the languid indie folk that has become his trademark. The show may well be too stylistically consistent—though Hayden's songs draw on the arch rock of Sebadoh or Pavement, a newbie approaching this recording might call him the saddest bastard ever to bum out a crowd. Contrarily, that's the very thing that enraptures fans: As he straps on guitar and harmonica Dylan-style, or settles quietly behind his piano, Hayden's career is refracted through a tenderly intimate prism. The show perks up at the encores, which include Hayden's panoramic theme to the movie *Trees Lounge* and an eerily perfect cover of Neil Young's "Tell Me Why" that only underscores his resemblance to Canada's greatest rocker. Hayden may seem level-headed and wry in his onstage patter—topics include bad vacation photography and his carousing cat—but this is a gig-as-therapy verbal outpouring coupled with performance restraint.

For Folds, the last two years have been about stripping down—breaking up Ben Folds Five, recording solo, and embarking on two gradually more intimate tours. The second, the sideman-less "Ben Folds and a piano" tour, is documented on *Ben Folds Live*, which is already more labored than Hayden's album because it compiles cuts from a dozen gigs. Remarkably, the result is seamless and natural, a credit to Folds's unforced virtuosity on the ivories and easy rapport with a crowd—on "Army," he makes up for his lack of a brass section by conducting the audience to *sing* sax and trumpets. Only a crowd of Folds-heads could pull that off, but as much as *Live* is an homage to the devoted, the album—unlike Hayden's—might actually be better appreciated by the uninitiated, as it collects a mixtape's worth of Folds's best songs: BFF's greatest hits are included (Folds finally explains the back-story of the hit "Brick"), and the best tracks are rescued from Folds's two spottiest albums, the broody *The Unauthorized Biography Of Reinhold Messner* and the intermittently great *Rockin' The Suburbs*. Highlights include a guest vocal from Cake's John McCrea and an effortless cover of Elton John's "Tiny Dancer." It's ironic that both Folds and Hayden, unplugging themselves '90s-style, throw in covers that nod to the '70s, a time when earnestness, not sardonic wit, made a rock show great. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY

Link

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

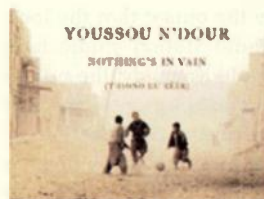
[www.benfolds.com](http://www.benfolds.com)

File Under

Onstage, stripped-down

R.I.Y.L.

*Live Rust, the Royal Albert Hall concert*



**YOUSSEU N'DOUR**  
Nothing's In Vain (*Coono Du Réér*) *Nonesuch*

N'Dour was dubbed African Artist of the (20th) Century by the U.K.'s *Folk Roots* magazine, and if the standard is an ability to translate ancient tradition into polished, contemporary pop music, he probably deserves it. This, N'Dour's most acoustic recording ever, incorporates a rich array of traditional West African stringed and struck instruments and flutes into his band's signature grooves. The result, however, is classic N'Dour pop, full of cute vocal hooks, nifty arranging twists, multilingual crooning in that golden, instantly recognizable tenor/baritone voice, and a good measure of sentimentality. On the best songs, like "Moor Ndaje (Mr. Everywhere)," the chatter of acoustic African roots music merges with the universal pulse of funk and the simmering intensity that has made N'Dour's Super Etoile band a concert-hall favorite for decades. "Mbèggéél Noonu La (Because Love's Like That)" puts a gentle, acoustic veneer on the band's signature fast and polyrhythmic "mbalax" groove, and "Sagal Ko (Honor Her)," a song in defense of women, delivers percussion-driven foreboding to great effect. But many of the songs here are as light as the sound palette, and when N'Dour sings in French, as on the pop ditty "C'est L'Amour (It's Love)," or English as on "Africa, Dream Again," the swelling anthem that closes the album, he sounds more like West Africa's Julio Iglesias than the genre-busting musical innovator he truly is. >>>BANNING EYRE

Link

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

File Under

Afropop crooner

R.I.Y.L.

Salif Keita, Baaba Maal, Papa Wemba

On the best songs, like "Moor Ndaje (Mr. Everywhere)," the chatter of acoustic African roots music merges with the universal pulse of funk and the simmering intensity that has made N'Dour's Super Etoile band a concert-hall favorite for decades. "Mbèggéél Noonu La (Because Love's Like That)" puts a gentle, acoustic veneer on the band's signature fast and polyrhythmic "mbalax" groove, and "Sagal Ko (Honor Her)," a song in defense of women, delivers percussion-driven foreboding to great effect. But many of the songs here are as light as the sound palette, and when N'Dour sings in French, as on the pop ditty "C'est L'Amour (It's Love)," or English as on "Africa, Dream Again," the swelling anthem that closes the album, he sounds more like West Africa's Julio Iglesias than the genre-busting musical innovator he truly is. >>>BANNING EYRE



**NEW BOMB TURKS**   
The Night Before The Day The Earth Stood Still *Gearhead*

You'll never hear a song as grim or disturbing as "Leaving Town" on anything associated with the garage-rock revival currently underway. There are plenty that sound like it—the Hives, et al would kill for the Godzilla-sized racket of the Turks' Sam Brown (drums) and Jim Weber (guitar)—but none of them have the stones to cast a woman on the run knifing her way out of a bad relationship as their protagonist. It's ballsy and points to why the Turks always stand a little left-of-center from their punk peers. Lead singer Eric Davidson puts his English degree to good use on *The Night Before The Day The Earth Stood Still*, but he's smart enough to know the difference between a know-it-all and a wiseass and sticks with the latter. Musically, Weber, Brown and bassist Matt Reber have finally (!) found a balance between their gritty and glossier works, where the horns on "Constance Keane" and others don't fight the band's buzzsaw attack for attention. The New Bomb Turks might not get the credit they should for shaping the new garage movement with their debut *!!Destroy Oh Boy!!* nine years ago, but records like this show why being smarter than the "in" kids isn't a bad thing at all. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

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

File Under

Garage Godzillas

R.I.Y.L.

The Mooney Suzuki, the Stooges, the Hives

Davidson puts his English degree to good use on *The Night Before The Day The Earth Stood Still*, but he's smart enough to know the difference between a know-it-all and a wiseass and sticks with the latter. Musically, Weber, Brown and bassist Matt Reber have finally (!) found a balance between their gritty and glossier works, where the horns on "Constance Keane" and others don't fight the band's buzzsaw attack for attention. The New Bomb Turks might not get the credit they should for shaping the new garage movement with their debut *!!Destroy Oh Boy!!* nine years ago, but records like this show why being smarter than the "in" kids isn't a bad thing at all. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI





## ORWELL

**Following Days** *Hidden Agenda*

On the heels of *Air* and *Tahiti 80*, Orwell is another taste of the new wave of French new wave. Their debut disc, *Following Days*, (released in Japan, France and the U.S.—in that order) lacks the discothèque cool of Daft Punk and the *Paris Is Burning* scene, but Orwell makes up for it with a melody-heavy pop orchestrated song cycle that plays like a pleasantly meandering soundtrack to a groovy retro LP collection. "Live On," one of three songs sung in English, weaves its melody through a sophisticated electronic soundscape—a prime

example of Orwell's ability to meld the classic song form with modern music. Further proof of that is the deftly covered Gilbert O'Sullivan tune, "Clair," cast here as one damn catchy song. The Attic String Quartet is partly responsible for their distinct sound; from the classic staccato cadences that introduce "Sans Cesse" to the lush arrangements in "L'Arriere-boutique," the strings' presence is the perfect counterbalance to the occasional loops and electronic manipulations. The final tracks of the album, including the title track, "Les Lendemains" and the lilting "Seulement La Foule," feature sad and sweet melodies sung over blithely hypnotic arrangements. *Following Days* can easily occupy a treasured slot on the CD shelf of any self-respecting Franco-pop fan. >>>KARL WACHTER

Link

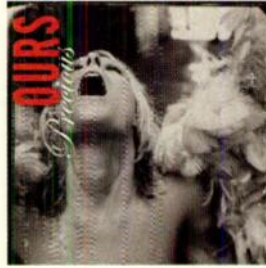
[www.parasol.com/hiddenagenda](http://www.parasol.com/hiddenagenda)

File Under

Beatles baroque

R.I.Y.L.

*Air's Moon Safari*, *Tahiti 80*,  
High Llamas



## OURS

**Precious** *DreamWorks*

Ours's last offering, *Distorted Lullabies*, found frontman Jimmy Gnecco's fragile wail oft-described, with good reason, as little more than an impression of the late Jeff Buckley. With *Precious*, Gnecco shrugs off any such criticisms and continues to invoke the spirit of Buckley as he lets his emotions bleed throughout 12 tracks. It's Gnecco's voice that forms the crux of Ours, a point of difference among the band's post-alt peers. From the skronk-rock dissonance of "Kill The Band" to the doped-up waltz of "Places," the band plays off his

Link

[www.ours2.net](http://www.ours2.net)

File Under

Bleak glam-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Jeff Buckley, Shudder To  
Think, Coldplay

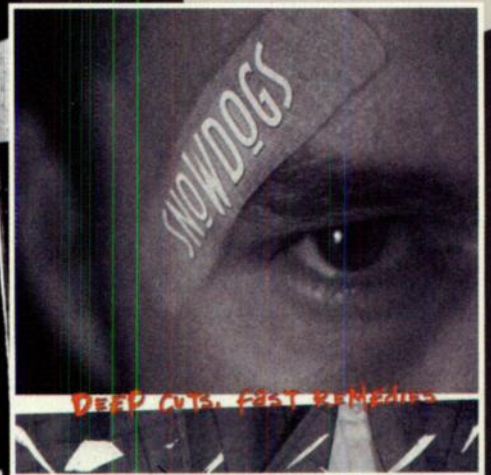
otherworldly falsetto, tightly weaving their stark guitars and dense rhythms around Gnecco's breathy, existentialist lyrics. While the talent here is obvious, the first half of the record is spotty at best. Not until Gnecco decides to add the shimmer of a cover of the Velvet Underground's "Femme Fatale" do things really start to pick up. *Precious* really lives up to its potential on the latter half of the record, culminating with the tense swell of "Chapter 2 (Money)," then giving way to the more subdued pop of "If Flowers Turn." Unfortunately the payoff comes way too late in the going for most, but as a whole, *Precious* is an exceptional piece of music. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

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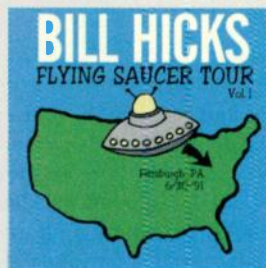
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**BILL HICKS**  
Love Laughter And Truth Rykodisc  
Flying Saucer Tour Vol. 1 Rykodisc

**DAVID CROSS**  
Shut Up You Fucking Baby! Sub Pop

If hitting a baseball is the hardest thing to do in sports, then making a stand-up comedy album that doesn't suck is the toughest thing to do in show business. What places the new double CD by Mr. Show's chic-geek David Cross and a pair of CDs from the late great Bill Hicks firmly in the "non-sucking" category, is that their material is more rock than schlock. This isn't the didjaevernotice comedy that's conveniently sliced into seven-minute chunks and served cold on the *Tonight Show*.

Bill Hicks, who died in 1994 at age 32 of pancreatic cancer, was the most wizened, scathing, unapologetic and brave performer since Lenny Bruce. Even after his death he's bold, considering the unedited set that's featured on *Flying Saucer Tour Vol. 1*. There are big laughs amid this performance recorded in Pittsburgh in 1991, but it wasn't his best night by a mile. Still, Hicks would have wanted you to hear him suffer as he dished out rants on sex, drugs and religion to a crowd that was generally unmoved. You can hear the tension between performer and audience in the sneering silences. "There are dick jokes on the way," Hicks blasts as he promises and mocks the audience at the same time; he knew the American comedy diet was generally a notch below the lowest common denominator. Too bad for them and their \$8 watered-down drinks, because Hicks goes nearly 80 First Amendment-pushing minutes, determined to win them over even after calling them the worst audience ever. The guy had stones. *Love Laughter And Truth* edits together material not on his previously issued CDs and should be picked up only after getting his astonishing *Best Of* CD and the *Flying Saucer* disc. Ryko promises more *Flying Saucer* releases of one-night stands in the future.

David Cross isn't the voice of his generation—he's more like the voice snickering in the back of the room to his friend about how lame his generation, the generation before and the generation after him, is. Cross also knows that his profession is riddled with lameness as well. His roasting of the abhorrent suckfest that is morning-zoo radio is dead-on. He even spans the concept of the comedy album itself, as *Shut Up's* fake track titles (e.g. "Shaving The Pope's Pussy") have absolutely no relation to the material contained within. Cross is bubblier and goofier than Hicks ever was and it enables him to get away a bit easier with "controversial" material. Jokes about September 11th, if any, tend to skewer Islamic fundamentalists, but Cross swims upstream instead to confront the emptiness and crass commercialism of flag waving. His infomercial riff hawking the "Freedom Kit" and "Patriot Pack" of flags sends jingoistic hypocrites running. "Twenty-seven different flags. Stick 'em on your car... Stick 'em in your office... Shove 'em up your ass... If you don't have a flag sticking out of your ass, the terrorists win. Have flag pills to eat then you shit out a flag. All flags made by Chinese prison labor. Guaranteed!" Cross's true gift is that he's pointed and side-splitting at the same time while never sounding like he's doing a "bit." And that's very rock indeed. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI

Link

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

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

File Under

You might be a relevant comedian if...

R.I.Y.L.

Denis Leary, George Carlin, Richard Pryor



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Peanut Butter Wolf's Jukebox 45s

Stones Throw

Link

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

File Under

Crate-digging, California style

R.I.Y.L.

Jurassic 5, rare groove, DJ Shadow

Most compilations work as populist introductions, historical overviews or microscopic examinations of an artist, genre or musical trend. *Peanut Butter Wolf's Jukebox 45s*, the latest comp from the West Coast indie-rap label Stones Throw, manages to be all three, and then some. At face value, the album simply collects the one-off 7-inches that Stones Throw honcho Peanut Butter Wolf has been releasing since 1999, including tracks from label stalwarts like Madlib, Lootpack and the Breakestra. True obsessives will drool over out-of-print rarities like Captain Funkaho's "My 2600" and Dudley Perkins's "Flowers," yet another pseudonym from eccentric rapper/producer Madlib. But, taken together, it's a perfect introduction to the Stones Throw aesthetic—a quirky mix of blustery hip-hop, goofy experiments and vinyl archaeology that made the California label a leader in the '90s indie-rap revolution. More importantly, *Jukebox 45s* manages to cram 30 years of Golden State musical history into a single disc, from crate-digging culture (plenty of obscure '60s funk), to skill-flexing turntablism (wunderkind A-Trak), to gritty battle raps (Medaphoar, Lootpack), to Sly Stone-esque acid-damaged soul (Dudley Perkins, Quasimoto). Even San Francisco's original counterculture pranksters, the Grateful Dead, get a shout out on the Stark Reality's "Rocket Ship," which sounds like an outtake from the *Blues For Allah* sessions. Call it California dreaming, with a hip-hop thump. >>>MICHAEL ENDELMAN



**POOR OLD LU**  
The Waiting Room Tooth And Nail

Let's face facts: If a contemporary Christian rock band wants to expand its audience beyond the churchyard and into the mainstream, it has to work harder than the average secular act. Considering the resistance they'll undoubtedly face for wearing God's love on their sleeves, they must come roaring out of the gate with exceptional songs and an exceptional sound that simply commands attention. After a five-year hiatus, Seattle's Poor Old Lu seemingly accomplish this goal in the first few moments of their latest album, *The Waiting Room*. "Revolve" explodes

Link

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

File Under

Competent alt-rock joyous noise

R.I.Y.L.

Jars Of Clay, Toad The Wet Sprocket, Josh Rouse

with a vibrant guitar riff and kinetic rhythm that grabs you by the throat. But as soon as this track subsides, the remaining songs take a sharp dip into tepid waters, suggesting that the waiting room in question may have been a bit too comfortable for Poor Old Lu. With the exceptions of "A Month Of Moments," which features an irresistibly sultry guitar hook, and "Crowded," an expertly arranged, ultra-melodic plea for simplicity in a complicated world, *The Waiting Room* is full of refined sounds without the refined songs to match. Most tracks lack a discernable hook and few offer any memorable dynamic shifts. While the resulting album is full of competent alt-rock, it's unlikely that *The Waiting Room* is going to win Poor Old Lu or JC any new followers. >>>JASON KUNDRATH



## PRETENDERS

Loose Screw *Artemis*

Turns out there's nothing loose about Loose Screw. The Pretenders' first album in three years is a tightly rendered mixed bag of style and substance that fattens up the band's graying rock-pop formula with reggae-lite rim-shots ("Time, "Complex Person"), subtle splashes of brass ("Kinda Nice, I Like It") and even the fading strains of a string quartet ("I Should Of"). As always, the one constant is bandleader Chrissie Hynde, whose prominence as a rock-diva touchstone is unquestioned, even if she stubbornly insists on taking the

[Link](#)

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

[File Under](#)

The old girl's still got it

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

Annie Lennox, Leah Andreone,

Liz Phair

Pretenders name to her grave. About the only remnant of the Pretenders vaunted punk/pop/new-wave beginnings (other than guitarist Adam Seymour's boffo James Honeyman-Scott imitation on "Fools Must Die") is Hynde's vocals, which maneuver stealthily from sex-kitten purrs and coos to a snarl that still carries some attitudinal weight. The sappy, insincere ballad, "Nothing Breaks Like A Heart" notwithstanding, *Loose Screw* reconciles the refined adult-contemporary sensibilities Hynde has embraced here and there over the last decade, while avoiding most of the gloss-and-dross pitfalls. Crisp, classy and slightly ill at ease, *Loose Screw* is a worthy exercise in middle-age crisis management. >>>HOBART ROWLAND



## RUINS

Tzomborgha *Ipecac*

Before godheadSilo dominated Olympia's rainy shores, before Lighting Bolt melted hipster brain under ironic hat, Japan's Ruins were the original noizefuck bass-and-drums duo. Often duplicated, never imitated (mainly because their post-King Crimson, pre-Naked City prog-rock pyrotechnics are goddamn impossible to comprehend), the Ruins have recorded, like, a million albums for noisy weirdo labels (Shimmy-Disc, Tzadik, Skingraft) and get their biggest exposure yet on noisy weirdo label *du jour* Ipecac. Most of *Tzomborgha* is prime Ruins—

[Link](#)

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

[File Under](#)

Drum and bass (no, not that kind)

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

Lightning Bolt,

Touchdown, Hella

Sasaki Hisashi's fuzzy bass telepathically matching the hectic drumming and nonsensical shrieking of Yoshida Tatsuya in irregular Henry Cow/Zappa time signatures—but much of their caustic scuzz has been chipped away like the sculpted rocks on the cover, drawing the feeling of mid-'80s hardcore punk seen through a prog prism. Despite entire sections of scattershot gibberish, elements of Bad Brains's "I Against I" permeate "Skhandraviza" down to its skittery ending and staccato accents. "Chittam Irangaayo" sounds like Minuteman Mike Watt's lyrical basswork distorted through an Eastern scale and "Muoljimbog" sounds like an entire Dead Kennedys cassette cribbed to two-and-a-half minutes. Ruins even indulge their Black Sabbath obsession by running a handful of Sab classics through the ol' meat grinder, then meticulously playing the entire composition backwards... by hand! When you look beyond the surface, most Ruins are just rock. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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## SCHNEIDER TM

**Zoomer** *Mute*

Ever since squelchy German *beatmeister* Schneider TM (a.k.a. Dirk Dresselhaus) unveiled his pipes on last year's glitch-heavy Kpt. Mich.gan-assisted Smiths cover "The Light 3000," the guy just refuses to shut up. Luckily, the frazzled IDM-er has the hooks-intensive heart of an indie-rocker, and his second full-length, *Zoomer*, swells with both the quirky melodies and the ADD-addled beats of a Modest Mouse on Mars. Dresselhaus goes for big hooks (although most of them are consistently trampled upon by all kinds of glitch and Euro bleepbloop) and he has the Lou

Barlow/J. Mascis Indie Rock Mumble™ down to a science (although he often squishes it with a layer of vocoder). If Kraftwerk liked to pretend they were robots, then Mr. TM is a non-paranoid android, peeling away metal layers to discover warm grooves and lush indie-pop melodies that you can shake your *Kid Ass* to. *Zoomer* is decidedly personal for a sputter-fest, sharing an introspective look at frog/turtle-splicin' dreams, some requisite technophobia and romance-gone-awry. The production is just as private—made merely by Dresselhaus, his trusty laptop and some instruments laying around his living room. Some buddies do stop by (Lambchop's Paul Niehaus drops some lovely pedal steel), but *Zoomer* is mostly an expressway from one-man's skull straight to your booty—with plenty of disorienting Teutonic 'tronics crashin' cars in the fast lane. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

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

File Under

Laptop-turned-popster

R.I.Y.L.

Safety Scissors, Mouse On Mars, Four Tet, Add N To (X)



## EMILY SPARKS

**What Could Not Be Buried** *Wishing Tree*

About seven years ago we experienced the girl-with-guitar phenomenon, spear-headed by Jewel, Lisa Loeb and Alanis in the vanguard. Which, for good or ill, paved the way for a steady stream of female singer/songwriters blending folk and rock sensibilities and enjoying wildly varying degrees of success or failure. A new blip on the radar comes in the form of Emily Sparks and her debut collection of tunes, *What Could Not Be Buried*. Her material is short on pretense, her arrangements playing out in a narrow range between precious and minimal. As a lyricist she tends

Link

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

File Under

Lightweight contender

R.I.Y.L.

Lisa Loeb, Lisa Cerbone, Tanya Donnelly's solo albums

toward a sort of elliptical sentimentality that can be either intriguing or simply naïve; her musical and literary sensibilities yield both "Spring Is Here," marrying a compelling instrumental arrangement and a high-school girl's overwrought romanticism, and "Cry For Her," which approaches art-rock with a sonorous arrangement and lyrics that are more a suggestion than a story. This all comes at us via Sparks' voice—a waif-like and clearly untrained instrument, which places her diametrically opposite singer/songwriters like Tracy Chapman, Dayna Kurtz and Tift Merritt as a vocalist. Ultimately, *What Could Not Be Buried* is a simple, D.I.Y. songwriting project that exudes a radiant charm, but doesn't carry much weight. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK



## SPEEDBALL BABY

**The Blackout** *In The Red*

Speedball Baby live somewhere in early-'90s New York, in the interim between Pussy Galore and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, where scuzzblues abounds, but the kids still haven't outgrown the joys of horrific noisemaking. Like the Explosion, they unapologetically wrap their artfuck/dirtrock tentacles around whatever genre they feel like reconstructing, but Speedball mainly stays rooted in a demented rockabilly/pigfuck barfight. Although their Birthday Party-cum-Cramps screechfests are an amalgam all their own, they obviously owe debt to the mightiest noise-rockers—but

manage to get away with it 'cause they got friends in high places. The Rufus Thomas-meets-Stooges rave-up "Do The Blackout" is a dead ringer for JSBX's "Dang," but Bxer Judah Bauer supplies guitar and harmonica. The free verse-laden "Pimp Hand Strong" is straight soul from the no-wave gutter, with a layer of skronk from legendary sax mutilator James Chance. Elsewhere, they make Chet Atkins's "Blackjack" even more demented, tackle bovine lounge-jazz on "Cash Cow," do a little soul-funk on "The Termite Speaks" and sneak a little Italian cinema-inflected moodiness in all the spots where they're not dropping pots and breaking glasses. Jon Spencer even makes his (*I'm beeyootiful!*) presence known, but even he can't obstruct vocalist Ron Ward's Bukowski/Burroughs/revivalist-preacher ramblings. Even with heroes in tow, Speedball refuses to steer off course. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

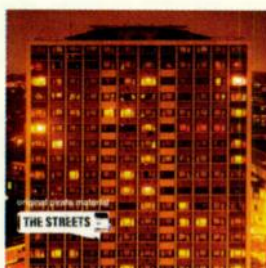
[www.speedballbaby.com](http://www.speedballbaby.com)

File Under

Skronkability Boogie

R.I.Y.L.

Pussy Galore, the Birthday Party, Shockabilly



## THE STREETS

**Original Pirate Material** *Vice-Atlantic*

To begin with, a warning: *Original Pirate Material* is the most English album you're likely to hear all year, if not in your entire life. *The Streets* is the alter ego of Mike Skinner, a young man who has, in admirable fashion, managed to become the voice for disaffected U.K. youth in much the same way Eminem did in the States. Only, Skinner trumps Mr. Mathers in a number of ways. For one thing, he paints a universal picture of young urban life with his insightful lyrics, as opposed to dwelling on his own personal problems. For another, rather than sticking

to one musical genre, Skinner backs his heavily accented lyrical flow with brilliant takes on everything from funk to house to soul to hip-hop to drum 'n' bass, and, of course, U.K. garage, a genre that, on top of everything else, he is receiving credit for singlehandedly redefining and reinvigorating. The best example of the latter is breakthrough single "Has It Come To This?" but even more fun is the hilariously creative social commentary of "The Irony Of It All" and the just plain addictive "Don't Mug Yourself." The lighter aspects are well balanced, meanwhile, by grim reflections such as the heroin-addled "Stay Positive" and hooligan exploration "Geezers Need Excitement." For all those times you've been told to keep your ear to the ground, this is what you've been waiting for. *The Streets* have spoken. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

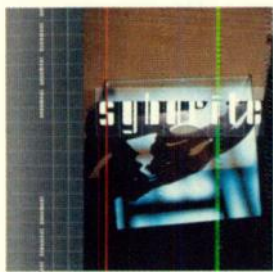
[www.the-streets.co.uk](http://www.the-streets.co.uk)

File Under

Never mind the rap gap

R.I.Y.L.

Artful Dodger, Eminem, Roots Manuva



## SYBARITE

Nonument 4AD

Sybarite's *Nonument* is a headtrip, music for a drive down a dark, rainy road with brief illuminations flashing past in sharp focus, a soundtrack for a film that your mind is left to create. The bedroom project of Brooklyn's Xian Hawkins, who joined electronic-music pioneers the Silver Apples when they reformed in the mid-'90s, Sybarite mixes downtempo electronica with orchestral sounds—strings, trumpets, tympanis—some live, some sampled (and it's often hard to tell which is which). "Homegrown Cultures" fades through the sounds of acoustic guitars, marimbas, syncopated snare drums

and humming organs, all overlaid with squelching synth bumbles that make the whole thing seem like a radio transmission from outer space. Almost every track journeys through layers of textures, gradually accruing and abandoning sounds. Occasionally, vocals break the spell cast by the wave-like, cinematic instrumentals. On "The Fourth Day" and "Leap Year," Brooke Williams's wispy voice is at once remote and alluring, a bit like Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier, and the lovely "Water," *Nonument's* most conventionally structured song, features Gregory Kenney's melancholy tenor. At a distance, *Nonument* can seem gauzy and indistinct, music that melts into the background. Up close though—played loudly or listened to with headphones—it's a trip worth taking. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

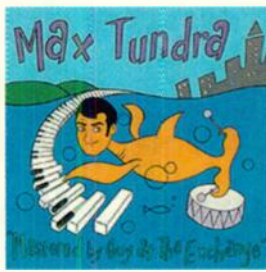
[www.4AD.com](http://www.4AD.com)

File Under

Cinematic soundscapes,  
electronica division

R.I.Y.L.

Eno, early His Name Is Alive,  
Röyksopp



## MAX TUNDRA

Mastered By Guy At The Exchange

Domino-Tigerbeat6

Compared to his last, almost-impene- trable LP, 2000's *Some Best Friend You Turned Out To Be*, the newest Max Tundra record is confessional pop. A two-word description of *Mastered By Guy At The Exchange* is a disservice, though; things aren't so simple in Tundra-land. This time around, Max (née Ben Jacobs) introduces vocals to his mix and concentrates on forming cohesive songs, yet his colossal sonic palette remains impossible to contain. Opener "Merman" is a bitch-slap, burst- ing with incoherent vocals over a chunk

of horns, synths and live bass, all set to a bustling beat with a wily time signature. While Jacobs plays it straight sometimes, most notably on the guitar pop of "Hilted," he's best at doling out spastic gorgeousness. On "Lights," his voice is so compressed it sounds like he's removed every other second from the original vocal track. As the pitter-beat frantically percolates, he rhapsodizes, "Only last week, I noticed that the colors of the lights in my studio/ Are the same as the ones you conjure in my mind," and creates the definitive hyper- ballad. Here and throughout *Exchange*, what could merely appear to breathe, like the walls during an acid trip, is utterly alive, thanks to Jacobs's undying love for music. Between the synthetic and the organic, the lysergic and the psilocybic, lies Max Tundra, and he's laughing his ass off. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

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

File Under

Dilated-pupil soul

R.I.Y.L.

Cornelius, Solex, 'shrooms



## VELVET CRUSH

Soft Sounds Action Musik

Velvet Crush spent the 1990s flying the banner of rough-hewn power pop, often backing the likeminded Matthew Sweet. *Soft Sounds*, as its title implies, constitutes a change in course, trading the band's noisier touchstones for more delicate '60s reference points. Punchy, infectious tracks like "Don't Take Me Down" prove the Crush can still deliver the old-line goods, and the pedal steel on "Rollin' In My Sleep" reprises the country-rock excursions of 1994's *Teenage Symphonies To God*. However, Paul Chastain's choirboy voice serves as the centerpiece for

these mostly piano and acoustic guitar-based songs, delving into the regret of paths not taken—"Time may heal what it can't kill," he laments. In an impressive three-song stretch, the duo pays homage to Burt Bachrach ("She Goes On"), Simon & Garfunkel ("Vanishing Point") and Bob Dylan ("Duchess," a Scott Walker cover resembling "Lay Lady Lay"). Velvet Crush have always been historians—check the cover art's nod to the Velvet Underground's third, another album where garage kings dialed down the amps. Still, the high- est points emerge when reverence takes a back seat to reinvention, as on the finale "Late In The Day," where subdued guitar feedback reconfigures a somber piano ballad to haunting effect. Reportedly a batch of louder material is already in the pipe, but *Soft Sounds* nicely stakes out expanded turf. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

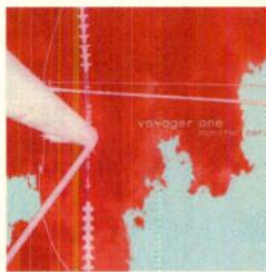
[www.parasol.com/actionmusik](http://www.parasol.com/actionmusik)

File Under

The softer side of power pop

R.I.Y.L.

Matthew Sweet, Elliott Smith,  
Big Star, Teenage Fanclub,  
the Byrds



## VOYAGER ONE

Monster Zero Loveless

It figures that Voyager One record for Loveless, a label named after a My Bloody Valentine classic. While the Seattle quintet is hardly an MBV knock- off, one listen to their album is enough to suggest where their gaze is pointed: straight down at their shoes. And what lush, lovingly woven laces wrap every- thing up on *Monster Zero*. Perhaps "lush" is too warm a word: Voyager One specialize in the kind of steely-skied space rock for which Chicago's Kranky label and Seattle neo-psych bands like Jessamine were once known. Arching clouds of clang and feedback stretch

from horizon to horizon, woven with vocals that sound broadcast from a thousand miles away. The album opens with "Out In The Marketplace," a sprawl of martial snare tattoos, ringing chords and the kind of looming bass that anchored early Cure albums in fath- oms of ache, and quickly hammers out a broad, horizontal plane of sound, colored with minor-key harmonies. The aggressive, metallic "Wires" is even darker, but the album isn't afraid of light: "Gun" echoes the ringing guitar leads from dreampop classics like Dif Juz and Durutti Column, opening up a kind of reflective pool in the midst of the shadows. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

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

File Under

Lava rock

R.I.Y.L.

Labradford, Spiritualized,  
My Bloody Valentine

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# CMJ

NEW MUSIC REPORT



# TOP 75

#1  
**BECK**  
SEA CHANGE  
DGC-INTERSCOPE

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4 <b>JETS TO BRAZIL</b> <i>Perfecting Loneliness</i> Mordam-Jade Tree	29 <b>RIL0 KILEY</b> <i>The Execution Of All Things</i> Saddle Creek	54 <b>LURA</b> <i>Close Caves Before Striking</i> Jetset
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## 5 YEARS AGO

**FOLK IMPLOSION** *One Part Lullaby* (Interscope)  
**LUNA** *The Days Of Our Nights* (Jericho-Sire)  
**HANDSOME BOY MODELING SCHOOL** *So... How's Your Girl?* (Tommy Boy)  
**STEREOLAB** *Cobra And Phases Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night* (Elektra)  
**GET UP KIDS** *Something To...* (Vagrant)

## 10 YEARS AGO

**MUDHONEY** *Piece Of Cake* (Reprise)  
**SUGAR** *Copper Blue* (Rykodisc)  
**R.E.M.** *Automatic For The People* (Warner Bros.)  
**SOUL ASYLUM** *Grave Dancers Union* (Columbia)  
**SCREAMING TREES** *Sweet Oblivion* (Epic)

## JAZZ TOP 10

1	<b>BEN ALLISON</b> Peace Pipe <b>Palmetto</b>
2	<b>PATRICIA BARBER</b> Verse <b>Capitol-Blue Note</b>
3	<b>ORRIN EVANS</b> Meant To Shine <b>Palmetto</b>
4	<b>DIANA KRALL</b> Live In Paris <b>Verve</b>
5	<b>DAVE HOLLAND BIG BAND</b> What Goes Around <b>ECM</b>
6	<b>BRAD MEHLDAU</b> Largo <b>Warner Bros.</b>
7	<b>JOHN COLTRANE</b> Selections From Legacy And A Love Supreme... <b>Verve</b>
8	<b>DAVID S. WARE QUARTET</b> Freedom Suite <b>AUM Fidelity</b>
9	<b>CHARLES LLOYD</b> Lift Every Voice <b>ECM</b>
10	<b>VON FREEMAN</b> The Improvisor <b>Premonition</b>



**#1 LOUD ROCK**  
**SHADOWS FALL**  
THE ART OF BALANCE CENTURY MEDIA

## RPM TOP 10

1	<b>MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO</b> R.U.O.K.? <b>Run Recordings</b>
2	<b>THIEVERY CORPORATION</b> The Richest... <b>Eighteenth Street Lounge</b>
3	<b>SQUAREPUSHER</b> Do You Know Squarepusher <b>Warp</b>
4	<b>UNDERWORLD</b> A Hundred Days Off <b>JBO-V2</b>
5	<b>JOHN BELTRAN</b> Sun Gypsy <b>Ubiquity</b>
6	<b>ROYKSOPP</b> Melody A.M. <b>Astralwerks</b>
7	<b>DARREN EMERSON AND TIM DELUXE</b> Underwater Episode 1 <b>Thrive</b>
8	<b>DZIHAN AND KAMIEN</b> Gran Reserva <b>Six Degrees</b>
9	<b>JAMES LAVELLE</b> Global Underground Barcelona <b>Global Underground</b>
10	<b>AMON TOBIN</b> Out From Out Where <b>Ninja Tune</b>

## RETAIL TOP 10

1	<b>SOUNDTRACK</b> 8 Mile <b>Shady-Aftermath-Interscope</b>
2	<b>TORI AMOS</b> Scarlet's Walk <b>Epic</b>
3	<b>NIRVANA</b> Nirvana <b>Geffen</b>
4	<b>CHRISTINA AGUILERA</b> Stripped <b>RCA</b>
5	<b>SIGUR ROS</b> ( ) <b>MCA-PIAS America</b>
6	<b>SANTANA</b> Shaman <b>Arista</b>
7	<b>FOO FIGHTERS</b> One By One <b>RCA-Roswell</b>
8	<b>BECK</b> Sea Change <b>DGC-Interscope</b>
9	<b>LIL JON AND THE EASTSIDE BOYZ</b> Kings Of Crunk <b>TVT</b>
10	<b>NORAH JONES</b> Come Away With Me <b>Blue Note</b>
11	<b>EMINEM</b> The Eminem Show <b>Shady-Aftermath-Interscope</b>
12	<b>THE ROLLING STONES</b> Forty Licks <b>Virgin</b>
13	<b>BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY</b> Thug World Order <b>Epic</b>
14	<b>COLDPLAY</b> A Rush Of Blood To The Head <b>Capitol</b>
15	<b>JURASSIC 5</b> Power In Numbers <b>Interscope</b>
16	<b>TOO SHORT</b> What's My Favorite Word? <b>Jive</b>
17	<b>ROD STEWART</b> It Had To Be You: The Great American Songbook J
18	<b>TRACY CHAPMAN</b> Let It Rain <b>Elektra</b>
19	<b>LL COOL J</b> 10 <b>Def Jam</b>
20	<b>ELVIS PRESLEY</b> 30 #1 Hits <b>RCA</b>
21	<b>DAVID BOWIE</b> Best Of Bowie <b>Virgin</b>
22	<b>CHEVELLE</b> Wonder What's Next <b>Epic</b>
23	<b>PAVEMENT</b> Slanted And Enchanted, Luxe And Reduxe <b>Matador</b>
24	<b>QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE</b> Songs For The Deaf <b>Interscope</b>
25	<b>JOHN MAYER</b> Room For Squares <b>Aware</b>

## LOUD ROCK TOP 25

1	<b>SHADOWS FALL</b> The Art Of Balance <b>Century Media</b>
2	<b>THE HOPE CONSPIRACY</b> Endnote <b>Equal Vision</b>
3	<b>SNAPCASE</b> End Transmission <b>Victory</b>
4	<b>PROJECT 86</b> Truthless Heroes <b>Atlantic</b>
5	<b>DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN</b> Irony Is A Dead Scene EP <b>Epitaph</b>
6	<b>IN FLAMES</b> Reroute To Remain <b>Nuclear Blast</b>
7	<b>LACUNA COIL</b> Comalies <b>Century Media</b>
8	<b>NILE</b> In Their Darkened Shrines <b>Relapse</b>
9	<b>LIVING SACRIFICE</b> Conceived In Fire <b>Solid State</b>
10	<b>TAPROOT</b> Welcome <b>Velvet Hammer-Atlantic</b>
11	<b>NAPALM DEATH</b> Order Of The Leech <b>Spitfire</b>
12	<b>KATAKLYSM</b> Shadows And Dust <b>Nuclear Blast</b>
13	<b>HOPESFALL</b> The Satellite Years <b>Trustkill</b>
14	<b>VARIOUS ARTISTS</b> Rise Above: 24 Black Flag... <b>2.13.61 Records-Sanctuary</b>
15	<b>DEAD TO FALL</b> Everything I Touch Falls To Pieces <b>Victory</b>
16	<b>BOY SETS FIRE</b> Live For Today EP <b>Wind-Up</b>
17	<b>SEPULTURA</b> Under A Pale Grey Sky <b>Roadrunner</b>
18	<b>TODAY IS THE DAY</b> Sadness Will Prevail <b>Relapse</b>
19	<b>DOWNTHE SUN</b> downthesun <b>Roadrunner</b>
20	<b>CEPHALIC CARNAGE</b> Lucid Interval <b>Relapse</b>
21	<b>CKY</b> Infiltrate, Destroy, Rebuild <b>Island Def Jam</b>
22	<b>CHEVELLE</b> Wonder What's Next <b>Epic</b>
23	<b>DARKANE</b> Expanding Senses <b>Nuclear Blast</b>
24	<b>DEMON HUNTER</b> Demon Hunter <b>Solid State</b>
25	<b>BONGZILLA</b> Gateway <b>Relapse</b>



# JUST OUT

## NOVEMBER 19

**BLACKSTREET** Level II *DreamWorks*  
**CHAINSAW** Believe *Six Weeks*  
**CHANNEL THREE** Channel Three *Dr. Strange*  
**NOAM CHOMSKY** New War On Terrorism  
*Alternative Tentacles*  
**JOHN CUNNINGHAM** Happy Go-Unlucky *Parasol*  
**DRIVE LIKE JEHU** Yank Crime *Swami*  
**GRIMPLE** Up Your Ass *Prank*  
**GEORGE HARRISON** Brainwashed *Dark Horse-Capitol*  
**JIGSAW SEEN** Songs Mama Used To Sing *Vibro-Phonic*  
**MINUS THE BEAR** Highly Refined Pirates *Suicide Squeeze*  
**CHRIS MURRAY** Raw *Asian Man*  
**BOB OSTERTAG** DJ Of The Month *Seeland*  
**OWEN** No Good For No One Now *Polyvinyl*  
**PIANO MAGIC** Writers Without Homes *4AD*  
**GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS** Mobilize *Zoe*  
**DAN POTTHAST** Sweets And Meats *Asian Man*  
**PREACHERS** Preachers *Bacchus Archives*  
**RAINER MARIA** Earrings EP *Polyvinyl*  
**RATOS DE PORAO** Onisciente Coletivo *Alternative Tentacles*  
**SKULLS** Therapy For The Shy *Dr. Strange*  
**SUBINCISION** Jingo *Substandard-New Red Archives*  
**SYBARITE** Monument *4AD*  
**TRAMPS** Tramps *Broken Rekids*  
**TOADIES** Best Of Toadies: Live In Paradise *Aezra*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Barricaded Suspects *Dr. Strange*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Composed On Bicycles—  
 Holiday Matinee Compilation 3 *Second Nature*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** D'Soca Zone-Third Wave *VP*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Fat Comp VI: Uncontrollable  
 Fatulence *Fat Wreck Chords*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Four Old Toxic Shock 7"s Dr.  
 Strange *Fat Wreck Chords*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Hardcore Breakout 1, 2, 3  
*New Red Archives*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Mob Action: Bay Area Anarchis  
 Book Fair *Alternative Tentacles*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Sympathetic Sound Of London  
*Sympathy For The Record Industry*  
**VITESSE** You Win Again, Gravity! *Hidden Agenda-Parasol*  
**VOLTA SOUND** Fast Light With Radio Signal  
*Orange Sky*  
**WOLF EYES** Dead Hills *Troubleman Unlimited*  
**HOWARD ZINN** Artists In A Time Of War  
*Alternative Tentacles*

## NOVEMBER 26

**STEVEN R. BROOKS** Like The Moon *Urban Cheese*  
**JEFF BUCKLEY** Grace EPs *Columbia*  
**CRACK: W.A.R.** Silent Fantasy *Tigerbeat 6*  
**DC TO DAYLIGHT** Xmas Murder '74 *Urban Cheese*  
**BOB DYLAN** Bootleg Series Volume 5 *Columbia-Legacy*  
**GUIDED BY VOICES** Box Set *Scat*  
**HEART** The Essential Heart *Epic-Capitol-Legacy*  
**IRON MAIDEN** Eddie's Archive: Edward The Great  
*Columbia-Sanctuary-Metal-Is*  
**LADDIO BOLOCKO** The Life And Times Of Laddio  
 Bollocko *No Quarter*  
**OMNI** FunkDaFiedFreddy *B9000*  
**PRIMAL SCREAM** Evil Heat *Epic*  
**SNOOP DOGG** Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Boss *Priority*  
**TONY TOUCH** Last of the Pro Ricans *Sequence*  
**MAX TUNDRA** Mastered By The Guy At The  
 Exchange *Tigerbeat 6*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Diesel *VP*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Freedom: A History Of US  
*Columbia-Legacy*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Golden Bathub *VP*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Paws Across America  
*Tigerbeat 6*

## DECEMBER 3

**3 Half Life** *Planet Noise*  
**DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL** Unplugged *Vagrant*  
**MARK DWINELL** Nonloc *Ba Da Bing!*  
**JOEY EPPARD** Been To The Future *Planet Noise*  
**EVERGREEN TERRACE** Burned Alive By Time *Eulogy*  
**HEARTSCARVED** Epilogue *Tribunal*  
**KID BROTHER COLLECTIVE** Highway Miles *One Day Savior*  
**PENNY LANG** Gather Honey *Borealis*  
**MANTLER** Sadsatisfaction *Tomlab*  
**MOCK ORANGE** First EP *Dead Droid*  
**NAKATOMI PLAZA** Private Property *Immigrant Sun*  
**PROMISE** Believer *Indecision*  
**SAMPLE THE MARTIAN** Bootlegs: The First Wave  
*Galactic Dust*  
**UNTIL THE END** Let The World Burn *Eulogy*  
**MIKE V AND THE RATS** Mike V and The Rats  
*Indecision*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Share WareZ *Galactic Dust*

## DECEMBER 10

**ANTISEEN** Honour Among Thieves *TKO*  
**BOOKS ON TAPE** Throw Down Your Laptops  
*Death Bomb Arc*  
**GARY NUMAN** I, Assassin *Beggars Group*  
**GARY NUMAN** Warriors *Beggars Group*  
**SOUNDTRACK** Catch Me If You Can *DreamWorks*  
**SOUNDTRACK** La Boheme: Broadway Cast  
*Recording DreamWorks*  
**STEREOLAB** Switched On *Too Pure*  
**SWIZZ BEATZ** Swizz Beatz Presents G.H.E.T.T.O.  
*Stories DreamWorks*  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Sweet Love Volume 6 *VP*

## DECEMBER 17

**THE BLOOD GROUP** Volunteers *Le Grand Magistry*  
**CHAINSAW** No Since 1991 *Six Weeks*  
**CIGARBOX PLANETARIUM** Cigarbox Planetarium  
*Oh Tonito!*  
**JAGA JAZZIST** Animal Chin *GSL*  
**LITTLE JEANS** Little Jeans *Asian Man*  
**PHENOMENOLOGICAL BOYS** Phenomenological  
 Boys *Tomlab*  
**RIFFS** Underground Kicks *TKO*  
**STITCHES** 12 Imaginary Inches *TKO*  
**DENISON WITMER** Philadelphia Songs *Burnt  
 Toast Vinyl*

## DECEMBER 24

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** We're A Happy Family: A Tribute  
 To The Ramones *DVB-Columbia*

## JANUARY 7

**MUSIC LOVERS** Cheap Songs Tell The Truth EP  
*Marriage*  
**PAS/CAL** The Handbag Memoirs EP *Le Grand  
 Magistry*

## JANUARY 14

**BELLRAYS** Raw Collection *Uppercut*  
**DJ ME DJ YOU** Can You See The Music? *Eerie Meerie*  
**KATHLEEN EDWARDS** Failer *Zo8-Rounder*  
**FREED UNIT** Straightjacket *Ecstatic*  
**RATOS DE PORAO** Onisciente Coletivo *Alternative  
 Tentacles*  
**SOUNDTRACK** Biker Boyz *DreamWorks*  
**GARY WILSON** Forgotten Lovers *Motel*

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## Young MC

STORY: CHAD SWIATECKI • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

**"Is that a hickey?"** I was flooded with two contrary emotions on the drive home from summer camp as my mother peered at the quarter-sized, gnawed-on mess of purple, blue and red on my neck. First was the fear of what torture I would have to endure for indulging in the carnal pleasures of five minutes alone with a girl in an isolated cabin. But the second feeling, and the one that proved stronger when Mom flashed an approving-but-not grin when we got home, was pride.

Damn right that was a hickey. And I had Young MC to thank for it.

True, it was Rynita McGuire who decided to play equal parts Hoover vacuum and *Bride of Dracula* on my neck in the summer of 1990, but (Marvin) Young MC and his debut *Stone Cold Rhymin'* at least get the assist, since it was Young's sly charm and cool knowledge of how the world—and especially the ladies—worked that turned my screechy-voiced 13-year-old ass into a fly Casanova.

Young MC had a firm hold on me before I went to camp, but when I packed my Walkman and extra batteries for the 10 days away, I threw in a handful of similarly inclined happy rap cassettes (Fresh Prince, Tone-Loc, Biz Markie) to mix things up in case *Stone Cold* started to wear on me. But how could it? There was nothing there that didn't gleam like Oz, or, to borrow from "Bust A Move," the city where ladies looked pretty.

That summer, I'd filled a wastebasket full of dead batteries memorizing every beat and syllable like a Rosetta Stone of suburban cool, and I was ready to spread the gospel to a whole new crowd when I left for camp. One of those was Rynita, a cute blonde from the west side of the state who honed in on me as soon as I dropped my suitcase on the cabin floor. It freaked me out at first, since back home I couldn't catch a disease, but Rynita listened to Young MC along with me, making it even more apparent that Young was more than the "stone cold rhymers," he was a stone-cold mack.

It culminated a few days before we left for home. While my cabinmates were out hiking or running the obstacle course, and

while "My Name Is Young" played on my cabin stereo, a tug on my neck marked my first small step into manhood. It was scary and thrilling at first, but Young's guidance got me through.

The tryst ended badly, as long-distance adolescent romances do, and I discovered harder rap by Public Enemy that fall. The next summer my friend Stephanie took me to my first local rock show, and that was all it took for me to erase Young MC from my history and my tape collection, as I dubbed over the happy rap with Helmet, Metallica and in an ultimate betrayal, Ugly Kid Joe.

I still cranked "Bust A Move" during chance plays on the radio years later, rapping along to every syllable. But before I could completely jump back to a time before jobs and college, before I knew how damn long it takes broken blood vessels to heal, the realization of how silly it was for a 23-year-old to be rapping about junior high always set in.

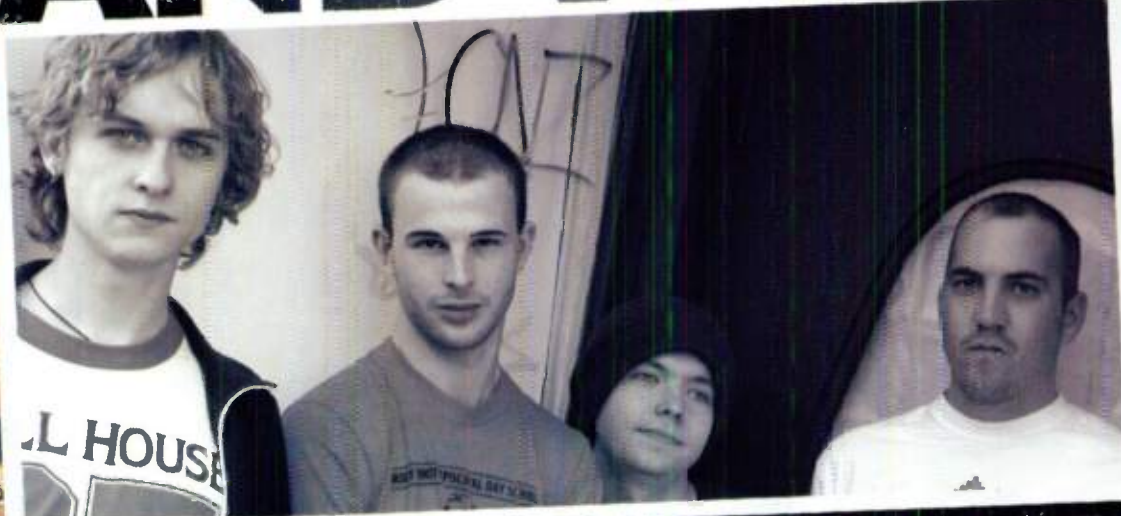
A few weeks ago during a talk with a co-worker about old-school rap faves, I let my once-fervent devotion to *Stone Cold Rhymin'* slip.

"Man, Young MC's about as authentic as Velveeta," he scoffed, sending me into a frenzy to defend not only my taste, but an entire pillar of my adolescence. After all, dissing Young disses Rynita by proxy, and no one gets away with putting down your first girl.

*Chad Swiatecki works as a newspaper and freelance music writer in Flint, Mich., where he hasn't busted a move in quite a while.*



# ARMY OF ME BATTLED THE BANDS AND WON!



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