

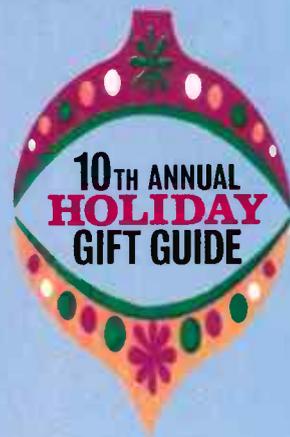
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BLUR • ROBERT RANDOLPH

ROBERT RANDOLPH 32

Pedal steel guitar phenomenon Robert Randolph has something more powerful than the adoration of a growing audience and his fellow musicians behind him as he releases his studio debut, *Unclassified*. He's got faith and family. Oh, and a record that obliterates genre lines.

Steve Ciabattani brings the good news.

GRANDADDY 26

You really should have listened to your granddaddy more, but you knew everything, didn't you, whippersnapper? Granddaddy's Jason Lytle's got some wisdom to impart, so try paying attention this time.

Tom Lanham respects the elders.

BLUR 28

In making *Think Tank*, Blur lost a guitarist and gained a worldly perspective and a renewed political conscience. Damon talks about kiddie porn and the war, Dave gets bent, Alex mediates, Graham quits and Tom Lanham tries to keep up.

ON THE VERGE 20

This month with 50 percent more newness: Easley, the Kills, Minus The Bear, Lifesavas, Brand New, Dysrhythmia.

ON THE CD 35

Robert Randolph And The Family Band, Liz Phair, Spymob, Elliott, Paloalto, Madlib, Drive-By Truckers, Bleu, Switchfoot, Michael Baynes, Memento, Audio Bullys, Karsh Kale, Chris Lee, Wildchild, Broken Social Scene, Minus The Bear.

QUICK FIX 10

Vince Hatfield tells the Dixie Chicks to love it or leave it; Eels' E feels unqualified to give you personal advice, while Luna's Britta Phillips feels quite qualified, thanks; five records that make American Analog Set's Andrew Kenny explore feelings he's not comfortable with; Martina Topley Bird takes a solo flight from across the Atlantic; Lisa Germano talks to herself in public; and Dave Gahan's got fuck-all in his room.

LOCALZINE 42

Megan Reilly shows you around Memphis, Tennessee.

GEEK LOVE 66

Tom Beaujour wants somebody to shove into Soul Asylum.

REVIEWS, CHARTS SERVICES

BEST NEW MUSIC 44

REVIEWS 48

JUST OUT 65

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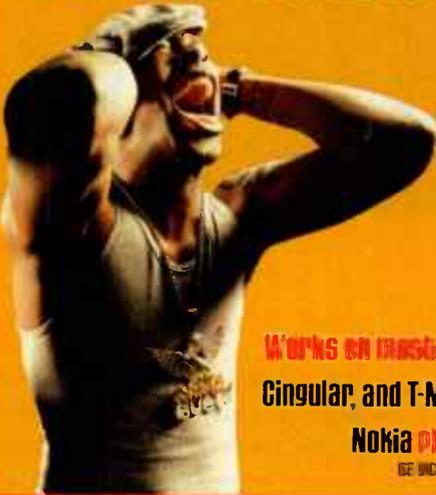


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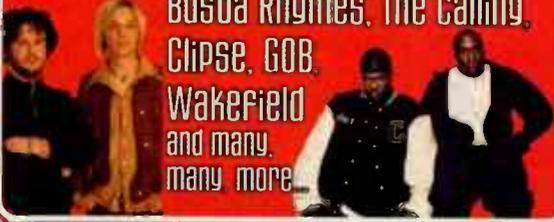
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Good Question

Cmjmonthly, do you suffer from a small penis?

Troy Nixon
bgcai0ev@kali.com.cn

Good Dad

I can still vividly remember that night in 1979 when, after putting the boys to bed, I cued up "Eruption" and turned it up to 11. There was an eruption of pounding feet coming down the stairs and cries of "Daaaad, what's that?" Shock, then fascination. Things were never the same again. Their mother tells of the time in 1984 when she heard this horrible thump on the floor, repeated several times. She ran in to Joe's room to find him jumping off the bed flailing a tennis racket, mimicking David Lee and Eddie rolled into one! When they were older we did "Monsters Of Rock," Metallica, Jonny Lang and others together, and talked endlessly about how much we enjoyed metal and other music of all kinds. I'm so grateful to my father and mother for setting an example of acceptance 40 years ago when my new music, the Beatles, came out and they actually liked it! I, in turn, have always loved Sinatra, Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, et al, and collect them as fervently as I still collect everything, including Coldplay, Queens Of The Stone Age, Radiohead (I really like them) and the godfathers of all that is hard and nasty, Motörhead (if Lemmy moves in next door, your lawn dies!).

Ken T. Kern, Joe's proud Dad (2 years younger than Lemmy!)
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Good God

I just received the April issue of *CMJ New Music Monthly*, and it was worth the wait just to see Party Of Helicopters on the CD. I've been waiting a long time to see the great Ohio rock bands get their due, desperately hoping that someone outside of the very small lo-fi noisecore scene would notice how wildly inventive the music coming from it was. That said, I feel, reading the review printed here, that you might have missed the context of the new Party Of Helicopters release. *Please Believe It* is the band's third full-length release; prior to their debut LP, they released several singles on vinyl which rank among the best and most forward-looking songs of

the '90s. Like Rye Coalition, their current (while limited, still far greater than in the past) acclaim is most likely due to the fact that they have toned down the experimental aspect of their sound, opting instead for more polished production values and repetitive rock-riffage. Not that both bands don't still rock much better and harder than the majority of bands out there; it's just sad that both bands had to seriously restrain themselves and their talent in order to gain any sort of notice. The Kent, Ohio scene did not recently evolve into the eclectic petri dish Andrew Bonazelli speaks of. It hit its stride and high point around 1995-1996, mostly thanks to Party Of Helicopters' guitarist Jamie Stillman, who in addition to being a member of the scene's two greatest bands (the other being the vastly more complex and ultimately more influential Harriet The Spy), ran the scene's independent record label, Donut Friends' Records. Unfortunately, at the time very few people noticed that Harriet The Spy and Party Of Helicopters were putting out albums which pointed to the creative future of rock 'n' roll. Only a handful of similarly minded musicians really paid attention to them, being enthralled by the instrumental virtuosity and cutting-edge songwriting. Party Of Helicopters' original lineup had one of the best drummers I have ever seen or heard; while their new drummer's playing can be "staggering at times," it's light years removed from the constantly inventive rhythms of the original. Their shows were amazing, in those days—the drummer jumping up and down during the entire set while Jamie wailed on guitar and singer Joe Dennis did his best rock-star poses, all the while looking exactly like Val Kilmer's surfer-blond character in *Real Genius* with a hockey player's smile.

I'm very glad to see that Party Of Helicopters is getting noticed now, don't get me wrong... better late than never. I can only hope that their new album becomes super popular and people take a look at the band's earlier releases. Maybe they will even look to the releases of Harriet The Spy, and be treated to the greatest rock band the lo-fi underground of the '90s produced. I can only hope.

Ben Coe
Gainesville, Florida

Correction: In the May issue's Of Great Import, the correct title of the record is *The Sleepy Jackson*, on Virgin (U.K.).

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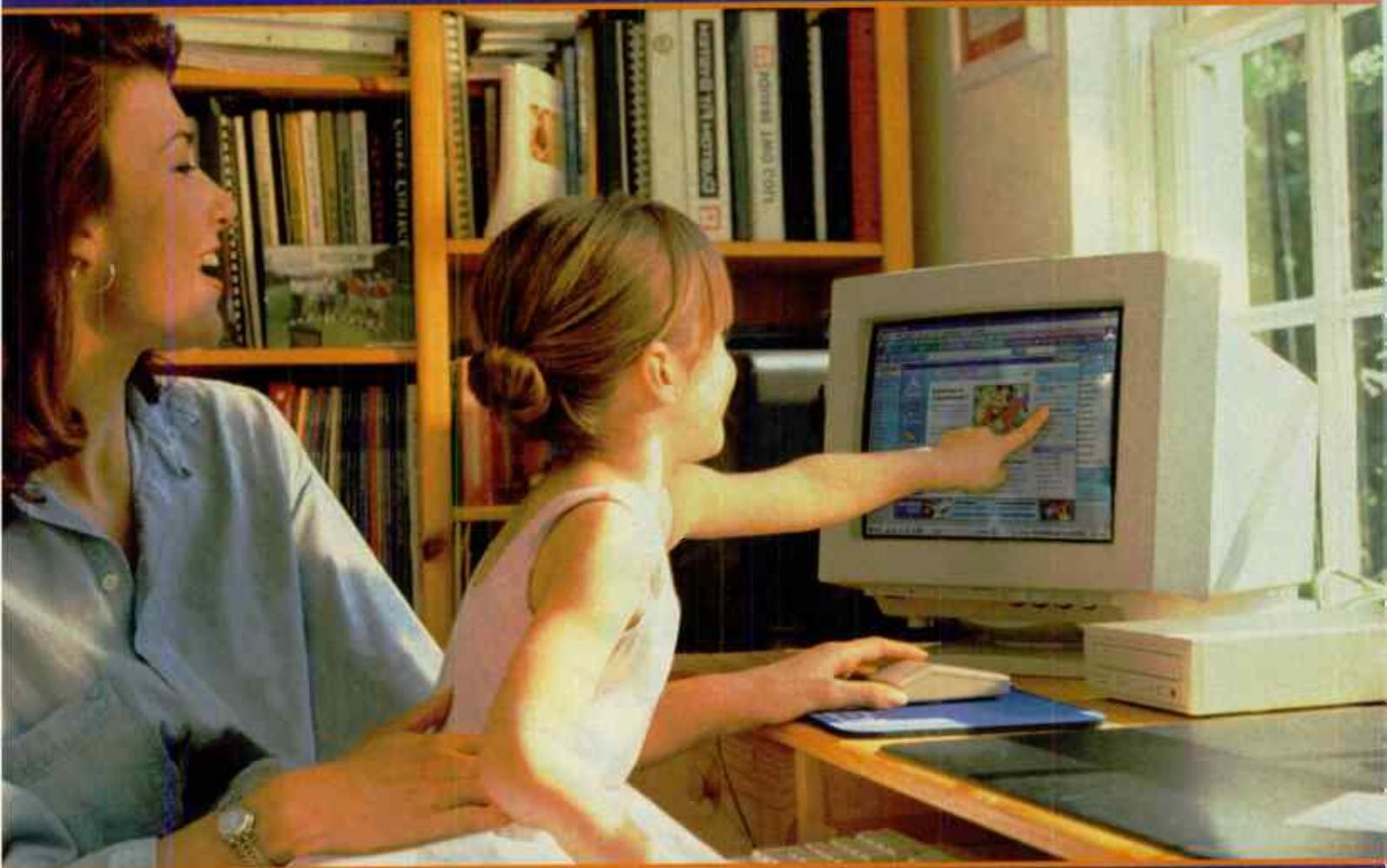
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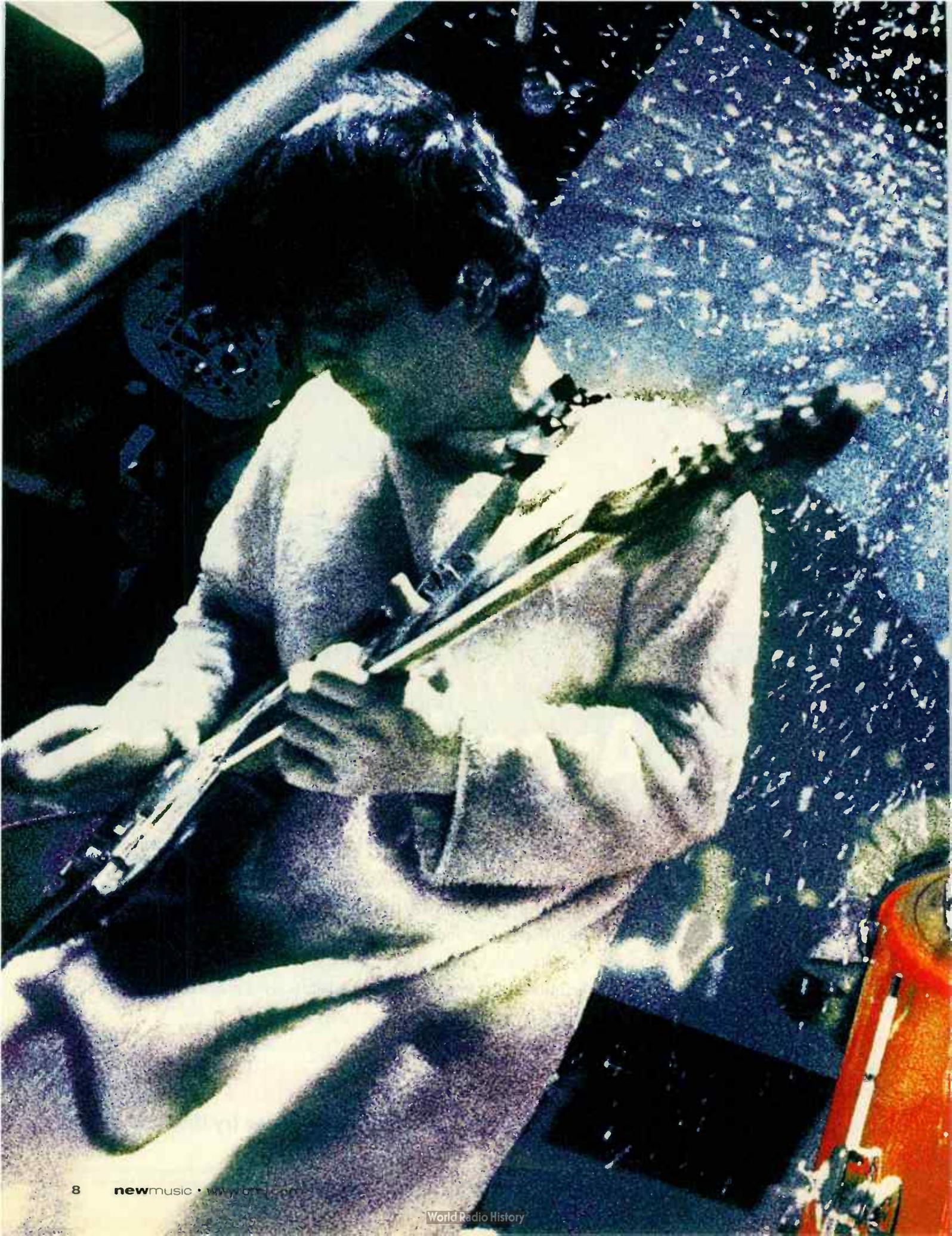


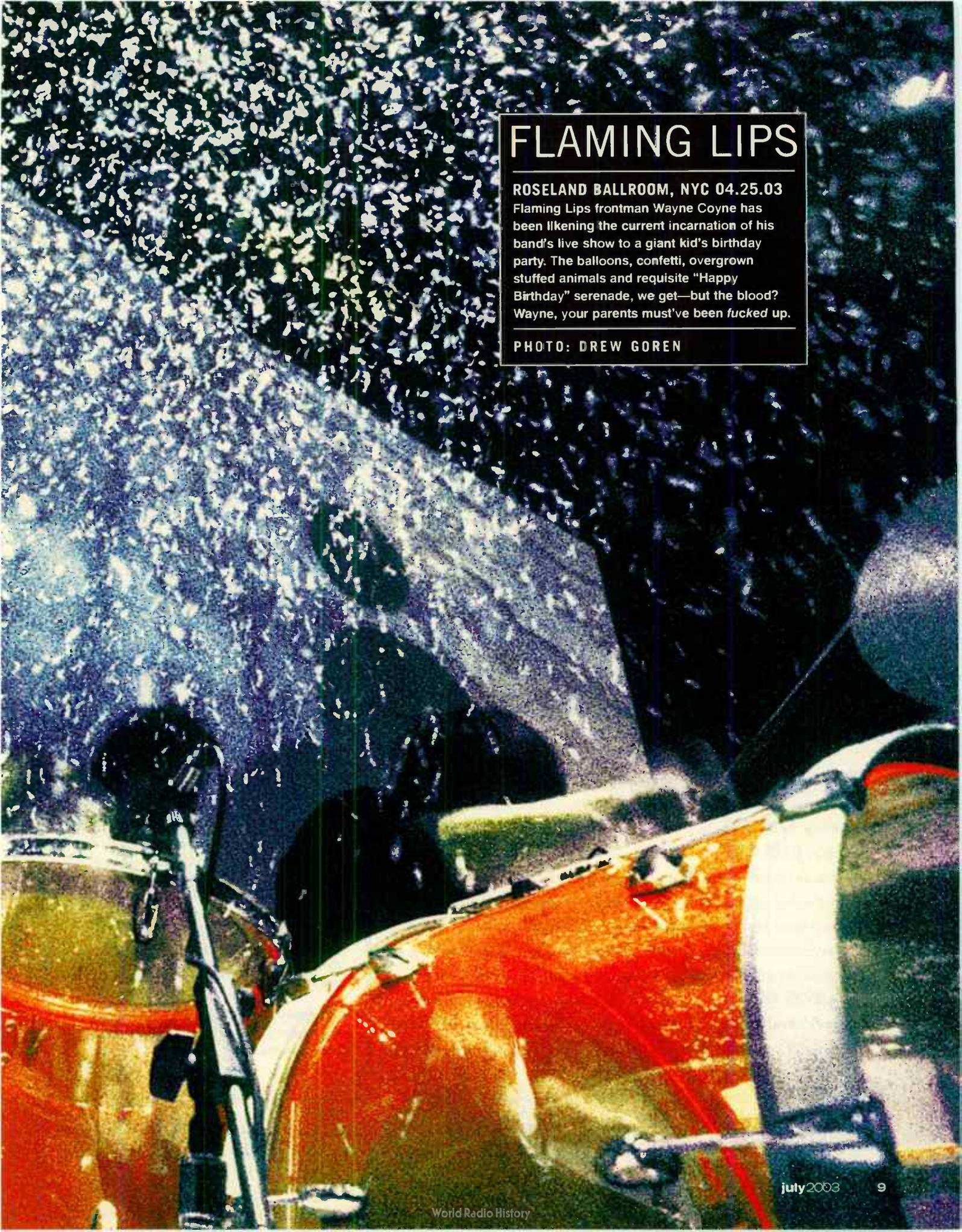
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World Radio History





FLAMING LIPS

ROSELAND BALLROOM, NYC 04.25.03

Flaming Lips frontman Wayne Coyne has been likening the current incarnation of his band's live show to a giant kid's birthday party. The balloons, confetti, overgrown stuffed animals and requisite "Happy Birthday" serenade, we get—but the blood? Wayne, your parents must've been *fucked up*.

PHOTO: DREW GOREN



WEIRD RECORD

People Should Get Beat Up For Stating Their Beliefs

Troubled times often bring out the best in musicians: CSNY's "Ohio," Country Joe & The Fish's "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag," Edwin Starr's "War" and so on. Well, forget it. Home studios are getting to be like opinions and assholes: Everyone's got one, and all these assholes are using them to voice their opinions. Over canned beats that make Wesley Willis look like Timbaland, Vince Hatfield takes the Dixie Chicks' Natalie Maines to task with 2003's premiere passive-aggressive country dis song, "Real Texans Are With You To Stay." "It sure would be nice if a certain someone would move far away," he muses, "to maybe London or way down under where stars said to move one day." The song, a rewrite of his 2000 single "George Bush For Our USA," encourages our Connecticut-born President that's everything's gonna be alright, while lauding the same freedom and liberty that he's attacking "the Dixie one" for exercising. Maines, taking a break from counting her riches and answering hate mail, is in the studio putting down an answer record: a scathing battle rap with Hatfield's longtime rival, MC Sheb McCoy. >>>TOM MALLON

07.02.1991 Axl Rose quits attempting to gain fans when he attacks one in St. Louis, starting a riot. **07.03.1971 Jim Morrison** quits this mortal coil in Paris. **07.04.1982 Ozzy Osbourne** marries Sharon and quits being a free man. **07.05.1980 Bauhaus** quits trying to make despair and desolation sexy; Peter Murphy quits being good. **07.09.1977 Elvis Costello** quits his day job (cosmetic factory computer operator). **07.12.1954 Elvis Presley** quits his day job (truck driver). **07.12.1996 Smashing Pumpkins** keyboardist Jonathan Melvoin ODs on heroin in New York City; the Pumpkins quit also-addicted drummer Jimmy Chamberlin one week later. **07.25.1965 Bob Dylan** quits being solely acoustic at the Newport Jazz Festival. Angry audience members quit liking Dylan. **07.28.1998 Toad The Wet Sprocket** calls it quits. A few years later, they quit quitting.

FAKEBOOK

Because it's not what you know, it's what people think you know.

Brian from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs:

Bringing "accountant chic" to the masses.

Nick from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs:

Someone bring the man a sandwich.

Afroman finds God

Getting high, and mighty, has harshed the mel-low of the label hoping to again sell a copy or two of his future releases.

Burning Brides on Lollapalooza

They've now been on tour longer than Odysseus.

Independence Day

Let's celebrate the courage and vision of the founding fathers by declaring anyone who disagrees with us traitors.

The Golden Age Of Grotesque

Sex, drugs and drum machines: Marilyn Manson becomes the goth-metal Missy Elliott.

!!!, "Me And Giuliani Down By The Schoolyard (A True Story)"

Nine minutes of grunting, stomping funk fighting for your right to shake ass. Power-mad balding midget not included.

Skye Sweetnam's "Billy S."

You people are sick. Sick!

Jack Osbourne in rehab

Crazy, but that's how it goes.

Snow's Two Hands Clapping

Well, licky boom-boom down. White Canadian dancehall rapper back in the hizzy.

Jane's Addiction, Hypersonic

There's an old-man bar in Brooklyn called Farrell's that sells foam pint containers of Bud (and only Bud) for \$3.75. That sounds better than this record.

Puretunes.com selling downloads

Spanish site says it found a loophole in the copyright laws; RIAA finding loopholes in nation sovereignty.

U.S. Army using Metallica on prisoners

Metal makes captured Iraqis talk. But what makes Lars shut up?

NEWSFEED: Bassist Zak Sally leaves **Low**, weeks before the band was asked to open for Radiohead on its July European tour; **Ida**

EELS' E on...

Dragging your friends into it

I like to keep those around me on ice, on their best behavior, by dropping hints that some song might be about them. People often think that a certain song is about them when they're completely wrong, and a song with maybe the opposite sentiment is really the one. It's a fun little game to play.

Going Hollywood

[The *Levity* soundtrack] was an experiment, to have a real grown-up job like that. I had to do the bidding of others. I really liked making music for moving pictures, but I'm not so good with people skills and the politics of making other people happy. It's everything you'd imagine. You do something and then they say, "OK, try four or five other things." And then I play them the first thing the sixth time and they go, "That's it!"

His future as an advice columnist

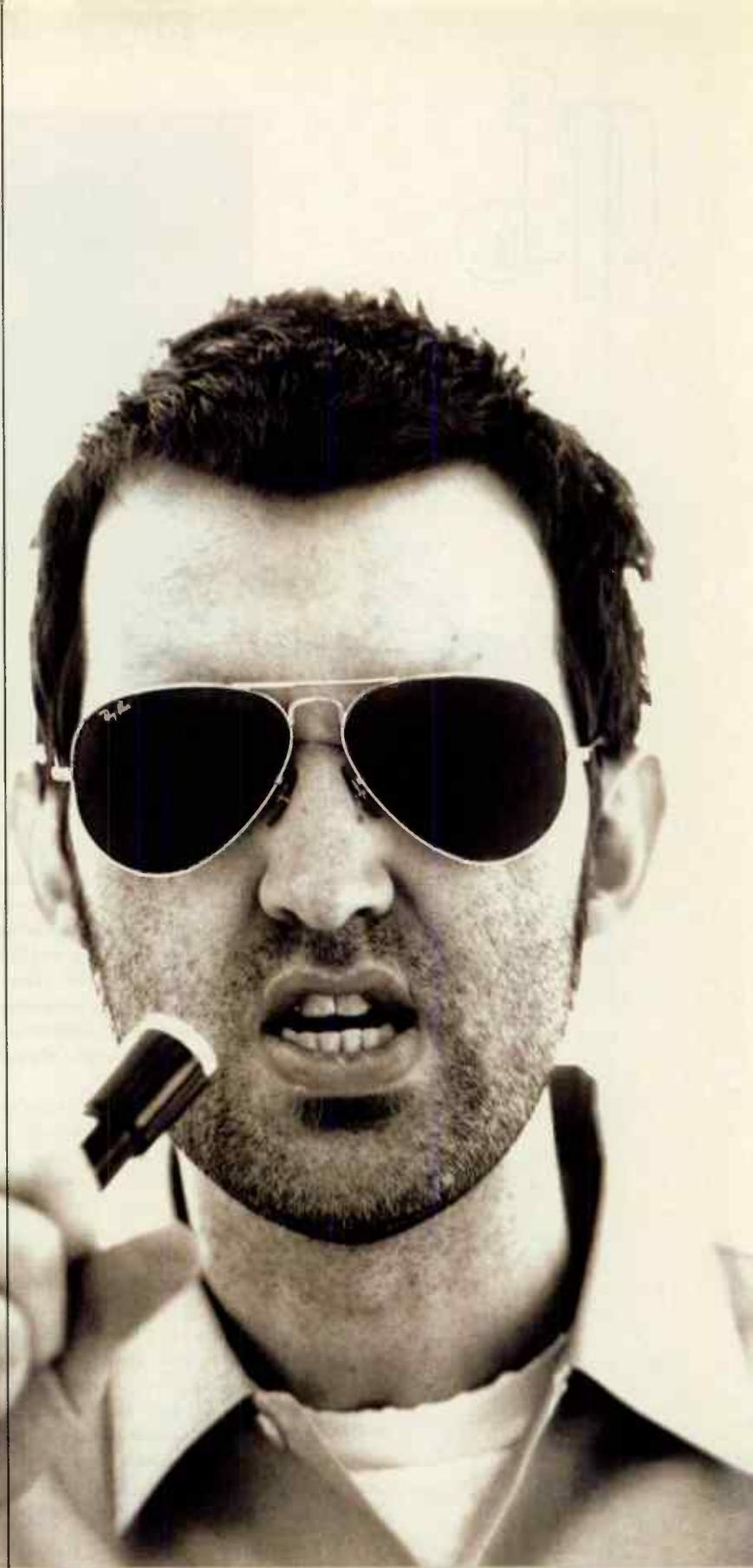
[The questions on the "Ask Uncle E" section of eelstheband.com] are all real. It clearly says, "This is for entertainment purposes, if you're taking advice from this guy of all people, then you're in worse shape than you think." Still, we get these really horrible, tragic letters. I don't feel qualified to give advice to people with a gun to their head. Cause, I'd probably say like, "Yeah, you're right." [Laughs] "Life is terrible." We have a form letter they get that says, "Please get some help from a professional, not from this guy."

Hairy situations

I miss [the beard] and I'm thinking about bringing it back. The ladies aren't digging me like they were with the beard. I shaved it because we were touring through the whole September 11th thing, and I had a short haircut with a big beard and the word "jacker" in my album title, [so] I was always getting singled out at the airport security line. And after so many strip searches, I just got tired of it. But now I'm traveling without the beard, and they *still* pull me out of line. I don't know why I'm always a suspect.

Swallow a double dose of E (born Mark Oliver Everett) with his soundtrack to Billy Bob Thornton's *Levity* (Pleximusic) and the Eels' new *Sleepenanny!* (DreamWorks).

Interview by Tom Mallon.



bassist Karla Schickele to fill in • Moby plans to release a new record as his alter ego, **Voodoo Child**, this winter • New **Pixies** best-of and a DVD mixing >>>



Tough Love

Britta Phillips As a

smoky, sultry counter to Dean

Wareham's laid-back cool in

Luna, Britta Phillips has estab-

lished herself as one of indie-

rock's loveliest ladies. The duo's

new project, *L'Avventura* (Jetset),

takes Luna's indie-pop aesthetic

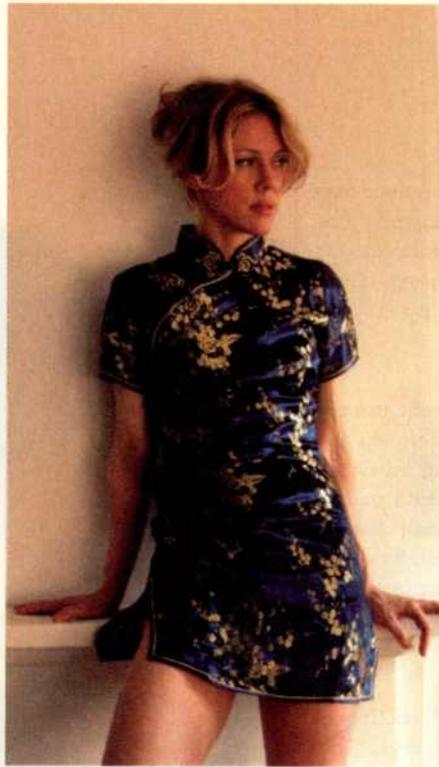
and turns up the sexy. Made us

feel it natural to ask that Britta

filter your love questions. *If you*

keep scratching it'll only get

worse: lovelorn@cmj.com



My girlfriend has a cat. Big deal, I know. But she's way too obsessed with this cat, like it's her child. I really like her and could see settling down with her down the line—but I don't really want to end up living in some crazy cat-lady home for the rest of my life. How can I tell if she has cat-lady potential or if this is just misplaced mothering instinct?

—Alan S., Towson, Maryland

My sister used to have the same obsession with her Shitzus until she had kids. Now she's obsessed with them. Generally, people don't change. My shrink tells me that everyone has at least 10 flaws. Learn to love hers...and hope that she loves yours.

I've been with my boyfriend nearly four years, we've been living together for about three months now. The first few years we were dating, we went out all the time, hung out with friends, went to shows, went drinking. Now all of a sudden he's gotten a domestic streak, he wants to sit around the house all the time sipping pinot gri-

gio and polishing his espresso maker. I'm so not ready to be a lameass yet. Are we not right for each other, or will I eventually just catch up with his lameness? Thanks for any advice.

—Chrissy, Brooklyn, New York

Usually people go out all the time and get drunk so that they can meet that special someone. Now that you've found each other, why not get drunk at home together and get freaky? Study the *Kama Sutra* instead of the IKEA catalog...buy naughty undies instead of Williams-Sonoma potholders.

Before I ask this I have to put a disclaimer. I am not a groupie and this is the only time I did anything like this. But, about two months ago I went with my friends to see a show, and after the show one of the bands stayed at my friend Joey's house. Me and the drummer hit it off, and we ended up in bed. Whatever, drunken hookups happen. But it turns out the asshole gave me a certain unpleasant STD. I'm so mad, a lot at myself but even more at him. I'm really tempted to spill my guts on his band's website messageboard. Do you think I'm justified?

—Kristy, Chicago, Illinois

While that might make you feel better the moment you push "send," I think that you'll regret calling attention to your new little friend down below. And if you're at all concerned with people labeling you a groupie, going public with your escapade is certainly not in your best interests. Mistakes can be a blessing if you learn from them. Don't leave home without condoms. You might avoid something even worse in the future.

Love,
Britta

STEFANO GIOVANNINI

videos and concert footage scheduled for September • **Cheap Trick's *Special One***, featuring production from Dan The Automator and Steve Albini, slated for

ANGRY GEEK AT THE MOVIES



BY VINCENT G. CURRY

If you think seeing movies isn't work, imagine these two films on your agenda: a love story of a rabbinical student and a Russian hooker in Israel and the struggle of illegal immigrants working service jobs in London. Oh, *yeah*. Suddenly *Bad Boys 2* looks pretty damn good. Lucky for me, both films came through. **The Holy Land** tells the old story of an innocent boy who falls for a girl who isn't so innocent. Set in an Israel we rarely see, filled with drunks (usually armed), hookers and pimps, we watch the somewhat engaging story of said rabbinical student as he goes to Jerusalem under the pretense of study, but actually to follow a Russian hooker (not a "Blue Angel" but a "Red" one) he met in a club in Tel Aviv. He wants her love and she wants his American passport to get her out. You can see the end coming from a mile away, but it proves affecting nonetheless... ♦♦♦ **Dirty Pretty Things**, from director Stephen Frears (*My Beautiful Landrette*, *High Fidelity*), tells the story of an African in London who works as a cab driver and hotel clerk, and may be a doctor, but no one really knows, and he's not saying. **One night he goes to fix a clogged toilet—and finds a human heart**. This sends him even deeper into the dark side of the immigrant experience, where people will do anything to stay in London or get a passport to the mythical America. Audrey Tatou stars as a Turkish girl he's smitten with and struggles to protect. Again, you know where the story's going, but the journey doesn't suffer for it. The grim circumstances are offset by nice performances and unexpected humor from people not entirely defeated by their lot in life. A very rich portrait of a London Bridget Jones knows nothing about.

For more rants, go to www.angrygeek.com.

ILLUSTRATION: GRAHAM BRICE



Whacking it quietly...with sticks.

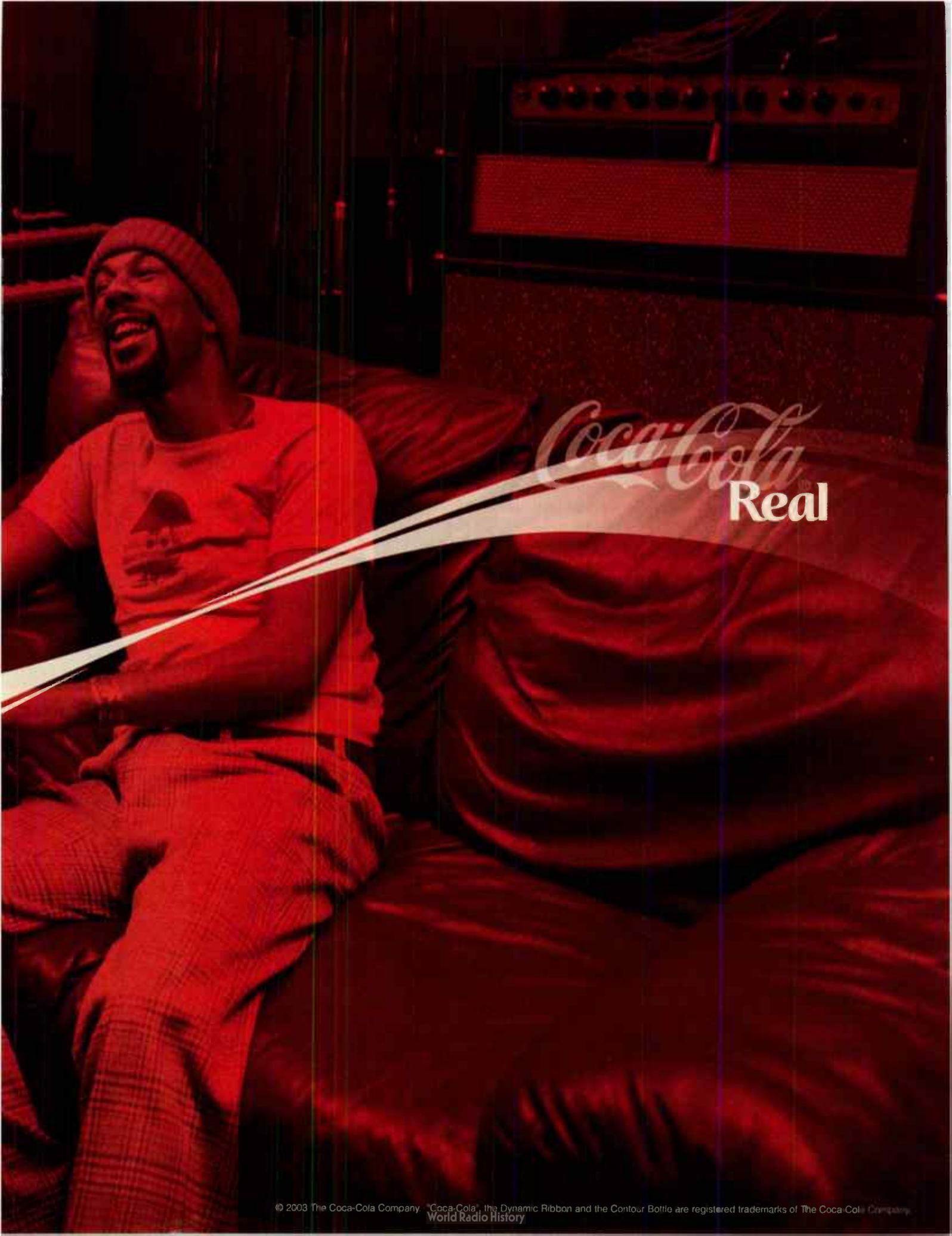
Sure, singers and guitarists get more ass, but that's only half the reason there's so many "drummer wanted" ads in your local music classifieds. Further forestalling careers behind the kit is that a) drums are expensive and b) drums are *loud*. Pacific Digital's DrumXtreme (www.pacificdigital.com) is to electronic drum kits what Ikea is to furniture—easy to assemble, affordable (\$299), and while not exactly fancy, functional. Oh, and quiet. Whether you're intending to learn or practice in your closet-like metropolitan apartment, the DrumXtreme (and your home PC) will admirably do the job. Sure, they ain't Roland V-Drums. But they ain't \$3,000, either.

“‘Bling bling’ will never be forgotten. So it’s like I will never be forgotten. I just wish that I’d trademarked it, so I’d never have to work again.”

—Cash Money’s BG, upon learning that the term he’s credited with popularizing has been entered into the Oxford English Dictionary.

July 8 • A Florida man has been arrested for impersonating **Creed** guitarist Mark Tremonti; Jim Morrison impersonator Scott Stapp remains at large • >>>>

chilled



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RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR
(ACTIVISION FOR XBOX)

Castle Wolfenstein has come a long way, both as a game and as an antisocial rage alleviator. What began as a 2D, black-and-white 1983 stealth game with pixelated block characters has evolved into a slick, perfect looking capfest, inventing the entire first-person-shooter genre along the way. (Now your mom knows who to thank.) Luckily, liquidating Nazis never gets old, and *Tides Of War* finally brings all the fun of revisionist history to the Xbox. This update to the 2001 PC hit adds extra levels packed with Teutonic terrors both living and undead, and brand new multiplayer modes through Xbox's Live service. Twenty years of development haven't changed the fact that your character's name is B.J. Blazkowicz, but we suggest you just keep hitting "reload" and not think about it. >>>TOM MALLON



5 SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT PROMISE LOVE
TO AMERICAN ANALOG SET'S ANDREW KENNY

1. Ikara Colt, *Chat And Business*

Am I not jaded? Shouldn't I be immune to the cocky, two-minute quick in-and-out hit engineered to open an album and hook dopey listeners by the lip? Maybe I am. Then, I suppose it could be the 10 outstanding songs that follow that make *Chat And Business* a great record.

2. Cat Power, *You Are Free*

C'mon, admit it. This is a great record. This is the most diverse, best-sounding and best-written Cat Power record to date. Plus, what are you going to do? You want Chan to starve? I buy a copy every trip to the record shop.

3. The Kills,

Keep On Your Mean Side

The Kills are filthy. The Kills are blusey. The Kills are extremely sexy. The Kills are the standard. Get this record. Don't be a hater.

4. The Postal Service, *Give Up*

Ben Gibbard has got the touch. Am I the only person that thinks "electronic pop" and "good songwriting" are mutually exclusive concepts? I am listening to this and eating my words.

5. The Hidden Cameras,

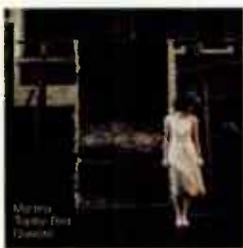
The Smell Of Our Own

My friend Sean and I saw four movies together last year, each with an unexpected gay love scene. [It] really had us thinking about why the two of us always ended up at these movies... together. I really like this Hidden Cameras record, but make no mistake... it's gay. I'd like to buy Sean a copy, but I'm afraid he'll like it and we'll have too much to talk about.

We assume Kenny isn't talking about Sean on American Analog Set's Promise Of Love (*Tiger Style*).

OF GREAT IMPORT

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



MARTINA TOPLEY BIRD *Quixotic* (Independiente)

What it is: Solo debut from the silken-voiced soulstress who helped invent and reinvent trip-hop over the course of four albums with Tricky.

Why you want it: Martina Topley Bird's distinctive and seductive vocals brought life to the defining moment that was Tricky's 1995 album, *Maxinquaye*. Talk of a solo album began almost immediately after she jumped the Tricky ship in 1998, and while it may have taken a little longer than expected, *Quixotic* proves worth the wait. Both David Holmes and David Arnold contributed to its production, and lead single "Need One" is a brilliantly soulful rock 'n' roll divergence, featuring appearances by Queens Of The Stone Age's Josh Homme and Mark Lanegan. Meanwhile, in contrast to that track's newness, "Ragga" sees Tricky himself step in for a collaboration that could have come straight from the duo's early days. It's exactly that kind of diversity that works so well here to showcase the many facets of Topley Bird's ability—some of which we haven't been lucky enough to hear until now. >>>DOUG LEVY

LINK: www.martinatopleybird.com

R.I.Y.L.: Tricky, Portishead, Norah Jones

ANDREW KENNY: DANA LOIA

Ol' Dirty Bastard, now inexplicably Dirt McGirt, will be the subject of the most amazing reality show ever for VH-1 • **QOTSA** has compiled almost 25 new

Lisa Germano on...

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

I always figure my music relates best when you listen to it alone in your room. *Lullaby For Liquid Pig* travels pretty directly from my room to your room.

ROOM TO BREATHE

Thinking of myself as only in my room, existing only around this small space of my soul, the place I belong, has helped me to deal with panic attacks, when the world gets too big. On planes to playing in arenas, to heights wherever I am, I pretend I only have this room to deal with, that I fit in. And whether I die up in the air, on the way down or have a heart attack in front of 20,000 people or just sitting in my room, I would always remain in this room while this stuff happened around me. It's weird, but sometimes you just have to do what works... Except it does get a bit scary when you catch yourself talking to yourself in your room, but you're not in your room, you're walking down the street or at work and people are looking at you funny. I do this, and have noticed that it's getting worse and am concerned with how bad it's going to get. So when I catch myself doing it, I tell myself to stop. *Don't talk to yourself anymore in public!* And realize that I've done it again by telling myself not to...and rather loudly. Oh well, at least I'm not talking to aliens yet.

Lisa Germano is the only artist who went from touring in John Mellencamp's band to recording solo albums for 4AD—which, even though she was born in a small town, sound nothing like Mellencamp. Her most recent disc, Lullaby For Liquid Pig (Ineffable-ARTISTdirect), muses on her stormy romance with wine.



songs and are heading back to the studio this fall • **The Von Bondies** are recording their sophomore record with former Talking Head Jerry Harrison >>>



IN MY ROOM

Who: Dave Gahan of Depeche Mode

Where: His apartment in the West Village, NYC

Why: After almost 25 years as lead singer of Depeche Mode, Dave's stepping out solo on *Paper Monsters* (Reprise). (Plus, the notion of someone who had a hit with "In Your Room" doing "In My Room" was too delicious to resist. You're next, Wilson.)

A world full of nothing

I used to be a collector of a lot of stuff when I lived in Los Angeles. When I moved to New York, I literally came here with a suitcase. And the wreckage of two failed marriages. I actually enjoy not having stuff. I mean, I don't even own a car.

Family portraits by world-famous photographers

We have some really cool prints of Billie Holiday, and also Anton Corbijn prints, originals that he did. And also some stuff he did of me and my elder son Jack when he was a baby, from the Rose Bowl in '88 [the *101* concert]. When they were setting up the place, Jack and I were up on the stairs and Anton took some really cool pictures.

Teen-year-olds with better taste than you

There's guitars and amps all over the place. [My son] Jimmy plays guitar as well, so he's got his little amp and stuff in his room. It's very kid-friendly. There's toys everywhere, some of which are actually used on the album, a toy piano and a little toy glockenspiel I borrowed from [my daughter] Stella Rose. [Jimmy and I] jam together a little bit. His favorite bands now are the Clash and old Rolling Stones. When I come home, I hear either "London Calling" or "Brown Sugar" blasting out of his room.

Interview by Tom Mallon.

THE MIX

TITLE: Antegrunge: Traipsing Through The 7-inch Library

MADE BY: Billzebul (a.k.a. Bill Smith of Cary, Illinois)

SIDE 1

1. **Adam Ant** Car Trouble
2. **The Jam** Carnaby Street
3. **The Yachts** Box 202
4. **Nine Below Zero** Three Times Enough
5. **Radio Birdman** Aloha Steve And Danno
6. **The Adverts** One Chord Wonders
7. **Magazne** My Mind Ain't So Open
8. **Squeeze** Cat On A Wall
9. **Wreckless Eric** Take The Cash (K.A.S.H.)
10. **Stiff Little Fingers** Alternative Ulster
11. **Killer Pussy** Teenage Enema Nurses In Bondage
12. **B-52's** 52 Girls
13. **The Meteors** Wreckin' Crew
14. **The Randoms** Let's Get Rid Of New York
15. **Classic Ruins** 1 + 1 < 2

SIDE 2

1. **Marquis De Sade** Air Tight Cell
2. **The Neighborhoods** Prettiest Girl
3. **Snips** Smash Your TV
4. **Larry Wallis** Police Car
5. **Johnny And The Self-Abusers** Dead Vandalls
6. **Kursaal Flyers** Television Generation
7. **999** Homocide
8. **Leyton Buzzards** I Don't Want To Go To Art School
9. **X-Ray Spex** The Day The World Turned Day-glo
10. **The Passions** Needles And Pills
11. **Percy Pavillion** You're An Extra Baby
12. **The Weirdos** We Got The Neutron Bomb
13. **Splodgenessabounds** Two Pints Of Lager And A Packet Of Crisps Please
14. **The Dickies** Bowling With Bedrock Barney

They're all such fools. Fools, I say! Show them one last time at the Mix forum on cmj.com.

ANTON CORBIJN

Amen signs with System Of A Down's Daron Malakian's new label; front-man Casey Chaos does side-project with QOTSA's Josh Homme * * * * *

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EISLEY

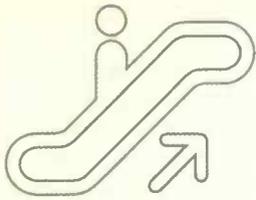
Boyd DuPree sounds exhausted—he's preparing for his family's first trip out of the country while his wife takes the kids for vaccinations. Normal frustration for a small-town Texas dad on the eve of a big trip. Only this dad is designing T-shirts, updating a website, coordinating label meetings, fielding phone calls from music writers: The trip is a massive arena tour, where his kids (Chauntelle, 21, Sherri, 19, Weston, 17 and Stacy, 14) and boy-next-door Jonathan Wilson, 20, b.k.a. EISLEY, open for Coldplay. "We have a lot of stuff to do," admits singer/guitarist Sherri. "I don't really know what it all is yet. The longest we've been gone was like two weeks; this

will be six." She's excited, and overwhelmed—Coldplay's one of their favorite bands, and this is a hell of an opportunity. But coups like this are coming fast for EISLEY, whose *Laughing City* EP just surfaced via Warner Bros. It's a stunning debut that smacks of their tourmates, or Radiohead, the Sundays, even the Beatles—heavy stuff for such young folks. But the bandmembers' skill belies their age, Weston and Jonathan providing brilliantly tasteful rhythms, the girls building angelic Rhodes piano, guitar and vocal melodies. The mature aesthetic and songwriting sense comes from smart influences, many courtesy of their music-loving parents. "We listened to the Beatles growing up for sure, and started getting into [a lot of] bands," Sherri explains. "We were always around music—my dad plays drums and my mom sings. We picked up guitars one day, my dad showed us some chords... We just went from there." *****NICOLE KEIPER**

THE KILLS



Izzit here yet? Izzit here yet? Izzit here yet?" Like Bart Simpson waiting slaver-jowled for his spy camera, Alison Mosshart—a.k.a. the Kills' scarlet-voiced blues banshee VV—recalls bombarding her mailman with a similar barrage of queries a few years ago. And every few weeks: Paydirt, another puffy package from her London-based guitar-slinging bud, Jamie "Hotel" Hince, containing the latest four-track demo tape on which the duo was collaborating, long distance. Sound difficult? It was, growls VV. "Waiting for the mail to come became so irritating that finally, I'd just had it. So I just moved—it really seemed like the most logical thing to do." Sick of the four-piece band concept (VV had just left Discount; Hotel checked out of Scarfo), slowed the tempo to a sexy lurch, taped their own rhythm section and tracked a chilling debut EP, *Black Rooster*, at Britain's notoriously low-tech Toe Rag Studios. The full-length follow-up, *Keep On Your Mean Side* (Rough Trade), is even creepier, with hoodoo-haunted howlers like "Superstition," "Cat Claw" and "Fried My Little Brains." Is VV pleased she rolled the trans-Atlantic dice? Yes, she nods. "I just woke up one morning and was really sure of my instincts, so I phoned [Hotel] up and said, 'What do you think if I just move and we really do this music thing?' And I think he thought I was kidding at first, but I'll tell you, the very next day I bought my plane ticket. I meant business when I said 'Fuck this! I'm going to Britain!'" >>>TOM LANHAM



MINUS THE BEAR



We listen to that Justin Timberlake *Justified* record a lot," admits Minus The Bear's Jake Snider, "and Kylie Minogue and 50 Cent." You may laugh, but it's this commitment to pop paired with the polar-opposite pummel of their previous bands—the metal-core Botch, jazzy Sharks Keep Moving and post-punk Kill Sadie—that so tightly winds the hypnotic art-rock of this Seattle combo. With finger-tapped guitars, vintage synths and just enough Northwestern grit, Minus The Bear's first album, *Highly Refined Pirates* (Better Looking), buzzes like Modest Mouse blinded by a rare sunny day. The shimmering collection pulls off the trick of sounding both structurally more complex and lyrically less complex than it actually is. "I'm not being very abstract with my lyrics," considers Snider, "and a lot of people think I'm not putting any depth into them. They can't read past what's right there in front of their face." But Snider's smirky vocals lend the group a charming innocence. "When I joined the band," he explains, "they were like, 'Yeah, write songs about girls and drinking and stuff,' so I did. The inspiration comes from dealing with guys meeting girls in that bar environment." But, Minus The Bear is no watering-hole house band. "We want to see if there are other directions we can go. We're a really young band so we have a lot of exploring to do." >>>CHARLES SPANO

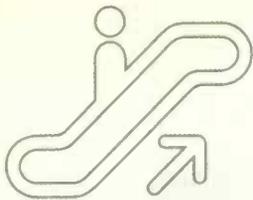
ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



In Portland, the weather is real Gotham City-ish," says Lifesavas MC and staggered beatcrafter Jumbo The Garbage Man. "It could be raining one day and then the sun will bust through the next, so you get a variety of moods." Equally temperamental is *Spirit In Stone*, the De La Soulful and deliciously Blackalicious debut from Portland's triumphant Lifesavas, the first new artists signed to the cerebral Quannum label since the mid-'90s. The 'Savas use their perpetually shifting flows and tottering beats to produce a darkly hued celebration of life—garnering love from every Harry, Dick and Tom with a demo in his palm. "I don't want my ego to get out of control," says rhymespitter Vursatyl, who battle-raps said ego after confronting an over-eager demo-toter in the "therapeutic," Brazilian-inflected "Hellohihey." "That's why, when we're on the road, we listen to every demo tape that we get." Accumulating roughly 65 tapes on their two-week jaunt with Del Tha Funkee Homosapien, the under-underground

LIFESAVAS

tapes run the gamut from the repeatedly spinnable group faves (Athletic Mic League from Ann Arbor, Michigan) to the totally shitty... *literally*. "One CD we got, the dude's whole CD seemed to be about different episodes of him taking a crap," says Vursatyl. "He seemed to be obsessed with taking a crap. He would just describe his feces, smearing it on things." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Brand New singer Jesse Lacey cried real tears when he saw Sigur Rós live. He's also not ashamed to admit that the worst part of touring is that he sometimes really misses his folks. And, there's a song on the new *Deja Entendu* (Triple Crown/Razor & Tie) named after Audrey Tautou, actress in "the most beautiful film of last year," *Amelie*. But despite these blatant displays of emotion, Lacey repeats for the last time that Brand New is not emo. "Look, we do sing a lot about girls. Is that what makes us emo? Aren't all the greatest songs in rock about girls?" he says. While not a revolutionary concept, Brand New is indeed an honest-to-God pop/rock group whose lyrics stab the heart of apathy. "If you want to accuse of us of something, then say our songs are simple," Lacey humbly says. "We're writing pop songs; verse, chorus, verse, chorus. We're not reinventing music, we're making records that people can easily digest and take in as their own." And "the kids," as Lacey affectionately calls them, have opened their minds and ears to Brand New's self-proclaimed not-so-brand new sound. With the cult-like success of their first album, *Your Favorite Weapon*, the Long Island collective's



been playing energetic, sold-out shows for two years straight. "When you're categorized by the judgmental media as being something you're not, you have to keep going to prove yourself," Lacey reveals. "And if that means playing 250 shows without stop, then we'll do it. Being in a rock band is demanding like that." >>>ARVE DWORREN

BRAND NEW



DYSRHYTHMIA

Soul-shredding death metal and angular, instrumental avant-prog: Two great tastes that, well, have nothing to do with each other. The opening slot of a Cephalic Carnage bill is the last place you'd expect to find the sound of Don Caballero shaking down King Crimson while Frank Zappa holds their arms, but that's exactly where you'll find Dysrhythmia. Over four years and eight U.S. tours, the Philly trio's held their own with the heaviest bands in the land, with a minimal number of bottles thrown. "I actually expected more heckling from the crowd on this tour," guitarist Kevin Hufnagel says of the Contamination tour, a three-week jaunt with Cephalic and Mastodon put together by their new label, Philly death-metal stronghold Relapse Records. "Like, 'Where's the screaming?' [But] it's been cool, people are little bit more open-minded than they get credit for. I'm really amazed when some huge, scary-looking dude

in an Emperor shirt will come up to me after a show and be totally into it." The band combines sounds like the aforementioned bands into a digestible package, a strength they've sharpened even further on their third record, *Pretest*. Impossible time signatures, complex changes, rumbling six-string bass and the sickest chops since Bruford and Fripp are all here, but they back up riffs that you'll actually remember in the morning. A word of warning: Don't see the words "six-string bass" and go using the P-word. "We get [Primus comparisons] a lot," Hufnagel sighs when it comes up. "We hate that." >>>TOM MALLON

Granddaddy's hypnotic chiming is influenced by everything Jason Lytle hears—and doesn't.

STORY: TOM LANHAM • PHOTO: CHGRAD MACANDREWS

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

"Aren't these guys amazing?" he bubbles in the stage-right wings.

There's Pete Yorn talking to no one and everyone—the soundmen, members of show-openers Rooney, even backstage visitor Tom Waits—about his hand-picked supporting act for the tour, Granddaddy. "I can't think of a better group to be on tour with!"

Earlier that same evening, Jason Lytle—a sinewy 33-year-old sporting all the hoodie/baggy-pants regalia of his old profession, skateboarding—was stunned to learn of Yorn's personal involvement in his booking. For such a tough-looking guy, he's the model of aw-shucks humility when it comes to Granddaddy, which has been paving its curious less-traveled road for over a decade now. In a soft, mouse-hushed voice—a few degrees quieter than his breathy singing style—Lytle swears that he'd only heard rumors about his benefactor, that he wasn't really sure why he was there. Not that he was grouching. "I'll take a compliment anywhere I can get it," he smiled, nursing a backstage Budweiser.

The hypnotic, chimey splendor of the Modesto, California band's new *Sumday* (V2) is the product, Lytle reveals, of some very simple lessons.

Produce everything yourself.

"*Sumday* is the first album we did on two-inch, 24-track analog, on this massive console that I got from some guy in a package deal. And when you decide to do things the way we do—the hands-on approach—it always takes a bit longer, but we probably save a bit more money, and it ends up being a lot more personalized that way, I think."

Develop your own method.

"No matter what, writing for me requires silence, and a clear head. So I like creating situations like that for myself, like riding a bike or finding lots of open space. And it's often early morning or late at night when the stuff starts to flood in, and the repetitive monotony of riding a bike or any sort of activity like that is really good for me. And one of the good things about where we live is, we're on the edge of suburbia, but within five minutes I can be out in the farmland country."

Don't deny your influences.

"Sometimes I think we sound more Swedish than British. But I've always been a fan of rich, melodic music. And I'm a big fan of

finding balances, too—like, just enough dirt, just enough flowers. Just enough blue water, just enough crappy sewer water. And all these elements combine to create this big picture of the little world within our world—that's my goal. And I used to listen to the Beatles with headphones as a kid, so it was like it was being drilled into my subconscious—I was soaking up the production while I was hearing the music. And I'm completely in tune with E.L.O. and Jeff Lynne—I know that guy like the back of my hand."

Don't be afraid of things that sound pretty.

"I'll be sitting in a restaurant or a bar, just hearing these layers and layers of environmental noise all around me, and there's this mix that's always happening. And I have a hard time turning that off, so I always think it's neat if I can attempt to create a similar environment in song. And because I live in an area where I can have absolute silence for long periods of time, when I get in these situations where noise is everywhere, my ears aren't so jaded and I'm that much more in tune with all the sounds I'm hearing. So I get off on creating that kinda backdrop in my music, as well."

Write from unusual perspectives.

"For some reason, I find it easier dealing with certain things by living through inanimate objects. Like our new song 'I'm On Standby.' I was spending so much time learning the art of turning off, while still being 'on,' it was just like a cell phone. It's on, but it's not really on—literally, it's on standby. I felt like I'd spent so much time just storing and preserving energy, as a self-preservationist thing, that I just got really intrigued with that idea. And I had an easier time relating that to a phone than I did me."

The simplest image is often the best.

"I've found that the most profound and moving moments in my life have had nothing to do with being bombarded with words or being rattled. There are just these moments of clarity that really sweep you up, and they can be addictive. Like, one of my favorite sounds in the whole world is the sound of really dense leaves being rustled in a good, strong wind. And if you read into that, there are so many other sounds that you can hear within that sound. And don't get me wrong—I can whoop it up with the best of 'em, and I still do that on a regular basis. But maybe that's why I appreciate the downtime as much as I do these days." **NMM**

TIM DRYDEN
{keyboards}

KEVIN GARCIA
{bass}

JASON LYTLE
{vocals, guitar}

AARON BURTCH
{drums}

JIM FAIRCHILD
{guitar}





Blur's *Think Tank* is a collection of "political love songs" but the most important peace Damon Albarn's keeping is within his own hand.

STORY: TOM IANNAM • PHOTO: MARLOW

A CIVIL WAR

IF YOU DON'T GET THE CONCEPT FROM THE COVER ART, YOU'RE JUST NOT PAYING ATTENTION.

Several stark sketches from anti-war graffiti artist Banksy set the political pace for *Think Tank* (Virgin), the seventh sonically adventurous CD from Britain's feisty Blur. A stick-figure man painting a gasoline nozzle to his head, Enslin-moulette style; a melting couple locked in a lust embrace, their faces obscured by diver's helmets; another open-helmeted melter looking upward, preparing to devour the last bit of ice it falls from the sky; and this codu stenciled across the credits: "Nuture will win."

A recent Blur 7-inch bore the pro-peeps title "Don't Bomb When You Are The Bomb," and their latest U.K. single "Out Of Time" warns listeners that,

"This is not a Blur position, it's just Damon's thing. I don't want to talk about it, so if you want to carry on, you can do it without me."

"You've been so busy lately that you haven't found the time/ To open up your mind/ And watch the world spinning gently out of time...we're out of time." Add to this bandleader Damon Albarn's protests against coalition-force aggression in Iraq—organized marches, TV, radio and newspaper ads, plus three determined trips to Parliament—and *Think Tank* becomes a very serious proposition indeed. An album totally in step with these strange times, and almost too damned smart for radio play.

Cut, then, to CBS Studios in Los Angeles a few weeks back. Killing some afternoon downtime before taping *The Late, Late Show With Craig Kilborn*, the three members of Blur—minus guitarist Graham Coxon, who left the group during the *Think Tank* sessions—are reclining at a shaded patio table and discussing, quite logically, the war in Iraq and its confusing aftermath. Blur, however, is far from a united front.

The 35-year-old Albarn, who's wearing a CND (Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament) peace-sign badge on the lapel of his rumpled blue dress suit, first heats up the conversation. *Think Tank*, he notes, is a collection of "political love songs, and everything on it can be interpreted in that way. Especially in songs where the only lyric is 'We got a file on you' (a minute-and-a-half blast of punk-rock abandon called, unsurprisingly, "We've Got A File On You," which Blur will pogo/play for Kilborn—twice). Is it subversive? "Well, that depends on how much you want to engage it. I know what was going on in my head, and there's a lump of it on the record—there are opinions all over the place."

Albarn goes on to mention his CND alliance (his father and grandfather were both conscientious objectors), the U.S.-subordinate actions of the British Prime Minister (whom he's dubbed "President Blair") and the curiously coincidental arrest of Massive Attack's 3D on child pornography charges (later dismissed) just as he spoke out against war in Iraq. In a secretive whisper, Albarn relates what Norman "Fatboy Slim" Cook told him when he was producing two *Tank* tracks (the genomics-wary "Gene By Gene" and "Disco Duck"-ish "Crazy Beat," the first U.S. single): "He's put armed guards on his house, he said, because there's a group of people who make money by breaking into people's houses and filling their computers with shit, and when the police come and find it, the people get paid. There's a level of corruption in the police, supposedly, a very dark element to it all, so it's difficult to know what's real and what isn't. Photographs of celebrities are digitally enhanced, dialogue is edited and highlighted out of context, until it's almost impossible to get a message across in a clear way—it's the nature of our media.

"And my thing in being part of the whole anti-war movement was really more of a philosophical thing," continues the singer, who's also kept busy with side projects like his *Mali Music* experiment, the soundtrack to *101 Reykjavik* (he owns a summer home in Iceland), and the platinum breakthrough of his "cartoon" band Gorillaz. "Like, what are we doing? And what is it going to facilitate? Those kinds of questions. And that's what needs to be asked now, really. We've already blown up a few hundred thousand more people, and we need to find out why we're doing it. Why?"

Right about now, drummer Dave Rowntree, 38, has had enough. "This is not a Blur position—it's just Damon's thing," he declares from behind his wraparound shades. Referring to the

recent Dixie Chicks debacle, which Albarn sees as a "very extreme, extraordinary reaction," the percussionist continues to percolate: "It's easy to ignite the flames of passion when there are big divisive things going on, isn't it? So if you're gonna talk about that kinda shit, you'd better know what the fuck you're talking about. It's so easy, so why wind people up? Why do it? If we've learned anything from this war, it's about taking sides. The worst thing to do is to take a side, like, 'You're wrong, and we're right!' That's the thing that divides us—it's schoolboy politics, just fucking schoolboy stuff, really."

Albarn looks aghast. "Hey! What's wrong with being a schoolboy?" he smirks, tugging on his boarding school-skinny tie. Rowntree is unmoved. "I'd like to talk about Blur stuff, not the war. I just don't wanna talk about it, so if you wanna carry on, you can do it without me." And he grabs the armrests of his chair, ready to leave. Bassist Alex James, whose interrupting hand had been waving in the air, slowly lowers his arm and murmurs, "I forgot what I was gonna say—I'm just enjoying listening to Dave so much."

Albarn busts out laughing, defusing the situation. "I think the point is, we've found a way of co-existing together in a positive way. And that's certainly been helped in many ways by it being three instead of four." Imagine if Coxon were at the table, too, Albarn suggests. "Then there would've been another random card flying in, another totally different angle which was determined, really, by wherever he was and what frame of mind he happened to be in."

"It would've been just too many egos, quite frankly," sighs James, 34. (It would be reported in the *NME* a week later, however, that Coxon dropped in on his old bassist's wedding, DJed a bit, and initiated talks with Albarn; the singer later hinted onstage that Graham's absence may not be permanent.)

Ultimately, there are only two facts on which the Blur combatants seem to agree: 1) John Dower's new documentary *Live Forever*, which attempts to link the Blur-vs.-Oasis Britpop movement with Tony Blair's rise to power, is a "moronically named fucking joke" (Rowntree) that focuses on Noel Gallagher's "Tourette's Syndrome—he must have Tourette's, because every



LEFT TO RIGHT: DAMON ALBARN, DAVE ROWNTREE, ALEX JAMES

time my name is mentioned, he can't help but blurt 'cunt' (Albarn); and 2) by forgoing their London studio for the disparate recording locales of Morocco and the Devon countryside, Blur made their most peaceful, altogether optimistic record to date. Co-produced with Ben Hillier, *Think Tank* was mainly tracked outdoors, Albarn says, "because we really got into the idea of making elemental music—I sang in the sunshine and under the stars, sang virtually everything that way."

The tribal-rhythmed "Jets" was inspired by 747 vapor trails across the Marrakesh skies, Albarn elaborates. The processional "Caravan" was recorded during a perfect Moroccan sunset, when locals would ritually trek to the hilltops each day, just to watch evening descend. An ensemble of Moroccan musicians adds extra flavor to the sleepy ballad "Out Of Time." "It really gets you back to the essence of who you are, and you've really got to be in touch with how you feel to make music out there," avers

Rowntree, who's decided to remain seated.

And *Tank* continues along Blur's curious perambulating path; whereas old adversaries Oasis have stayed the powerchord course over the years, Albarn and co. have always pushed the creative envelope, creating art out of what often appears to be Edward Lear-ish musical nonsense (remember the "Woo-hoo!" chorus of "Song 2"?). Now, swears Albarn, "It feels like we're in our own space, us and Radiohead. We exist in our own Blur space."

A space where all opinions are welcome, Rowntree finally surrenders. "And it's more important than ever that we make music in this era," he concludes, letting a smile break through. "The time for being apolitical and not having opinions and sitting back on your laurels is well and truly over, and what we can do, as a band, is make music. That's our contribution. And you just have to make music that extends a friendly hand now—the time for ignoring our neighbors is over." **NMM**

STORY: STEVE CIABATTONI • PHOTO: DANNY CLINCH

ROBERT RANDOLPH BRING THE FAMILY

The garages have been emptied—now pedal steel in the tradition of the House Of God Church is as rock 'n' roll as it gets. Robert Randolph and The Family Band have mowed down the divisions between race, genre and attitude on their way from the altar to moving your ass.

ROBERT RANDOLPH IS DOWN. FLAT ON HIS ASS. SCREAMING.

He's not crying out in pain after crashing backwards hard over the chair he plays from. He's shouting at the top of his voice, bouncing up and down on his backside, still keeping the beat, still trying to light a fire in the crowd. "We're gonna have a good time," he hollers once more before returning to his seat behind the pedal steel guitar. Let it do the shouting for a while. As he busts out astonishing thunder-and-lightning riffs on the steel's 13 strings, the crowd is officially his.

For all the comparisons to Stevie Ray Vaughan or Jimi Hendrix that 25-year-old Robert Randolph gets for his instrumental virtuosity, his greatest skill actually lies in the power to transform audiences. Turning a hands-in-pockets crowd into hands-in-the-air believers.

Before Randolph took the stage that night with his Family Band, the crowd was half dead. This collection of yawning hipsters and music-biz types were mostly there to hear other acts on the packed record industry bill. Unless they were suf-

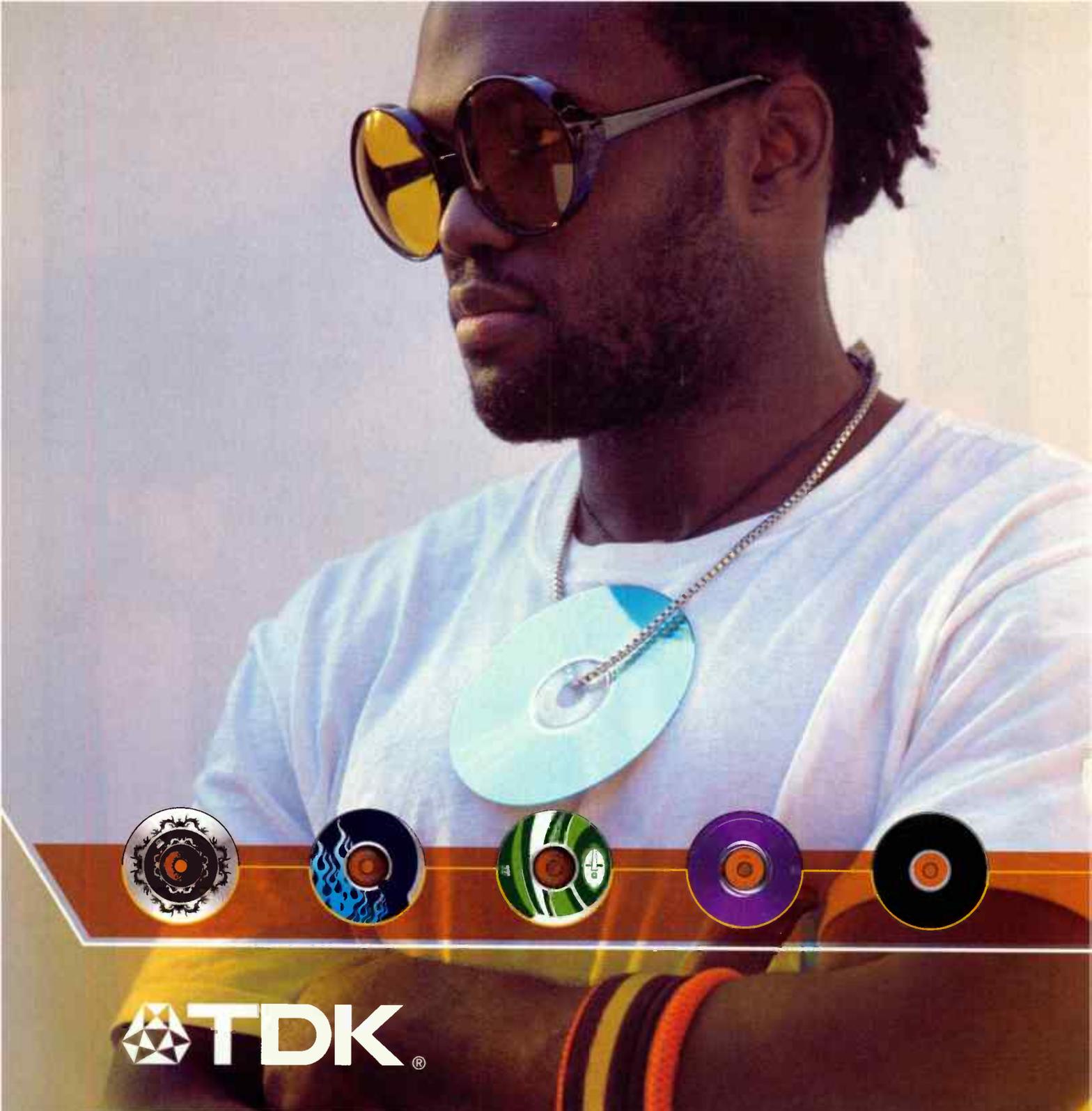
ficiently interested in the jam-band scene to know Randolph had just been crowned its new prince at the Jammy Awards, few had any idea what to expect from this black kid in cornrows and a Buffalo Sabres jersey who quotes "Amazing Grace" and "Voodoo Chile" in the same set.

"It happens all the time, every show," says Randolph, now sporting a #34 Ricky Williams Miami Dolphins jersey and a satisfied smile that reveals even more of his welcoming, boyish face. As he looks back on that particular performance—and dozens like it since then—he's fully aware of what's on the audience's mind. "Because we're a new band and we've got on these jerseys, people look at us and think we're going to start rapping or that we're about to get political or something. But once the music starts and the people start dancing, they sorta remain in shock until the show is half over. Then at the end, they're wanting you to play more. That's how it should be with music. Everybody coming together."

That's Randolph's philosophy, and it'd be total cornball if his performances weren't so elec-

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 





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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

**ROBERT
RANDOLPH
LIZ PHAIR
ELLIOTT
MADLIB**

Chris Lee • Broken Social Scene • Paloalto

JULY 2003 • ISSUE 114

13. **KARSH KALE**

"Liberation" *Liberation*

www.karshkale.com

Karsh Kale appears courtesy of Six Degrees

See Review p. 55.

14. **CHRIS LEE**

"Sail On" *Cool Rock*

www.chrislee.org

Chris Lee appears courtesy of Misra.

15. **WILDCHILD**

"Party Up (Feat. Vinia Mojica)" *Secondary Protocol*

www.stonesthrow.com/wildchild

Wildchild appears courtesy of Stones Throw.

See Review p. 62.

16. **BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE**

"Anthems For A Seventeen Year-Old Girl" *You Forgot It In People*

www.arts-crafts.ca/bss/index.html

Broken Social Scene appears courtesy of Arts & Crafts.

See Review p. 45.

17. **MINUS THE BEAR**

"Monkey!!! Knife!!! Fight!!!" *Highly Refined Pirates*

www.minusthebear.com

Minus The Bear appears courtesy of Suicide Squeeze.

See On The Verge p. 22.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case

1. ROBERT RANDOLPH AND THE FAMILY BAND

"I Need More Love" *Unclassified*

www.robertrandolph.net

Robert Randolph And The Family Band appear courtesy of Warner Bros.

See Cover Story p. 32

2. LIZ PHAIR

"Extraordinary" *Liz Phair*

www.lizphair.com

Liz Phair appears courtesy of Capitol.

See Review p. 58.

3. SPYMOB

"It Gets Me Going" *Sitting Around Keeping Score*

www.spymob.com

Spymob appears courtesy of Star Trak.

See Review p. 60.

4. ELLIOTT

"Land And Water" *Song In The Air*

www.elliottintransit.com

Elliott appears courtesy of Revelation.

See Review p. 52.

5. PALOALTO

"Breathe In" *Heroes And Villains*

www.americanrecordings.com/paloalto

Paloalto appears courtesy of Island/American.

6. MADLIB

"Slim's Return" *Shades Of Blue: Madlib Invades Blue Note*

www.bluenote.com

Madlib appears courtesy of Blue Note.

See Best New Music p. 46.

7. DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

"Sinkhole" *Decoration Day*

www.drivebytruckers.com

Drive-By Truckers appear courtesy of New West.

See Review p. 51.

8. BLEU

"Get Up" *Redhead*

www.bleutopia.com

Bleu appears courtesy of Columbia/Aware

9. SWITCHFOOT

"Meant To Live" *The Beautiful Letdown*

www.switchfoot.com

Switchfoot appears courtesy of Columbia/Red Ink

10. MICHAEL BAYNES

"The Move" *All Twenty Four EP*

www.mbaynes.com

Michael Baynes appears courtesy of Subluna

11. MEMENTO

"Blister" *Beginnings*

www.sonymusic.com/artists/Memento/music.html

Memento appears courtesy of Columbia.

12. AUDIO BULLYS

"We Don't Care" *Ego War*

www.audiobullys.com

Audio Bullys appears courtesy of Astralwerks.

See Review p. 49.

* Load disc into your PC or Mac for more information about the artists and labels featured on this CMJ New Music Monthly CD.

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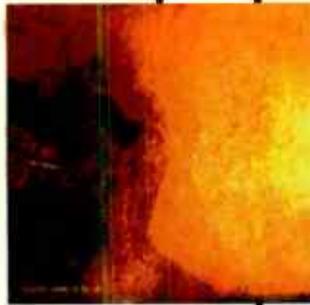
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WELL HUNG ARTISTS

THE VOTES ARE IN*



LIZ PHAIR
Liz Phair (Capitol)



ELLIOTT
Song In The Air (Revelation)



PALOALTO
Heroes And Villains (American-IDJMG)



MADLIB
Shades Of Blue (Blue Note)

JULY NEW MUSIC MOBILE

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as well as **NEW RELEASES** from:

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DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS • BLEU
SWITCHFOOT • MICHAEL BAYNES
MEMENTO • AUDIO BULLYS
KARSH KALE • CHRIS LEE
WILDCHILD • BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE
MINUS THE BEAR**

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CD Central
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Long Beach, CA 90803

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Ogden, UT 84403

3843 West 5400 South
Suite D
Kearns, UT 84118

1010 North Main
Logan, UT 84341

1763 West 4700 South
Taylorsville, UT 84118

852 West Hillfield Rd. Suite C
Layton, UT 84041

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Nashville, TN 37204

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530 North Saddle Creek Rd.
Omaha, NE 68132

2457 South 132 St.
Omaha, NE 68144

Homer's Music And Gifts
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Bellevue, NE 68005

126 North 14th St.
Lincoln, NE 68508

1228 North 27th
Lincoln, NE 68502

6105 O St.
Lincoln, NE 68510

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Pueblo, CO 81003

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Colorado Springs, CO 80903

5680 Hwy 85/87
Fountain, CO 80906

3040 W. Colorado
Colorado Springs, CO 80904

937 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80218

Jackpot Records
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Portland, OR 97205

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Looney Tunes
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Indianapolis, IN 46260

Music Millennium
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Portland, OR 97210

My Generation
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Park Avenue CDs
528 Park Avenue South
Winter Park, FL 32789

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Orlando, FL 32816

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Shake It!
4156 Hamilton Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45223

Sonic Boom Records
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Seattle, WA 98103

2209 NW Market St.
Seattle, WA 98107

514 15th Ave. East
Seattle, WA 98112

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300 East Alameda Ave.
Denver, CO 80209

**Waterloo Records
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600-A North Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78703

trifling. "You know, you may have things on your mind that you doubt about, so you go to a show and think, 'Maybe I'll get my mind off this problem,'" he says. "And if there's something that's positive at that show that'll get you through your next day or your next problem, hey that's great!"

Lifting the spirits of a crowd is something Randolph learned long before he ever played his first club gig. First, he had to win over the congregation at the House Of God Church in Orange, New Jersey where his mother and father were key figures.

In the House Of God Church, a Pentecostal branch which has taken root up and down the East Coast, the pedal and lap steel players drive the jubilant, music-filled services. Randolph has become the most notable in a line of "Sacred Steel" players that stretches back to the late 1930s. As is the tradition, Randolph learned the craft primarily from church veterans, in his case Calvin Cooke and Ted Beard, two master guitarists who didn't listen to rock or any other secular music for cues. Ever. Randolph himself only heard the Allman Brothers two years ago. "I take a little bit of it in at a time because I'm still new to so much music," Randolph explains. "You know, I just started listening to Zeppelin like two months ago," he adds bashfully.

After appearing on a few Sacred Steel compilations by the roots label Arhoolie starting back in 1999, Randolph truly emerged with an inspired collaboration called the Word in 2001, delivering powerful versions of spirituals with John Medeski and the North Mississippi Allstars. Word spread, but in this case, the word was about Randolph. Even before his own band had put out a live CD called *Live At The Wetlands*, Robert Randolph And The Family Band were packing them in, and tapes of their live performances were being traded like Garcia had come back from the grave.

Guitarist/producer Eric Ambel, once a member of Joan Jett And The Blackhearts and now a sideman for Steve Earle, recorded Randolph's first demo and booked his first non-church gig at New York's Lakeside Lounge. "He's kind of a mind-blower. He really gets people off the ground," says Ambel, who likens Randolph's exquisite technique, taste and ability to Jeff Beck's. "With Robert, it sounds like he's quoting from the pantheon of rock guitar. But really, he came upon it in a parallel way. He somehow just found all those touchstones." Ambel was also the one who hooked up Randolph with Luther Dickinson of the Allstars for the Word project. "What excites me is that whole tradition of church music going secular," says Dickinson. "Robert, just like Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles, is taking church grooves and harmonies and making sexy R&B songs out of them. Plus, he's such a great showman, and the jam-band scene really doesn't have that. In many ways, Robert reminds me of Bob Marley, with the religion and the lifestyle and the fact that his music actually stands for something."

Take a look at the legendary names that Randolph is frequently compared to and you'll see a pattern. From Ray Charles to Jimi Hendrix to Bob Marley, all of them obliterated race and genre lines with their music. Randolph has done so by bringing his soulful, hard-driving jams to a primarily white crowd at giant music

festivals like Bonnaroo and through high-profile opening slots for Dave Matthews and John Mayer.

"The music doesn't fall into a category," he stresses. "It's just good music and you know it sounds fun and it makes you move. I feel like it breaks down any racial barriers or anybody's music style. Those John Mayer shows were great because the audience was like 90 percent white girls saying, 'Whoa! Where did these guys come from?'" he says grinning, too kind to admit that he and his band blew the tender Mayer off the stage.

As the band (cousins Danyel Morgan and Marcus Randolph on bass and drums alongside keyboard player John Ginty) prepares to release its first studio album, *Unclassified* (Warner Bros.), Randolph knows he has the spotlight. And he's confident he knows what to do with it. "I talk to a lot of musicians about music, and cer-

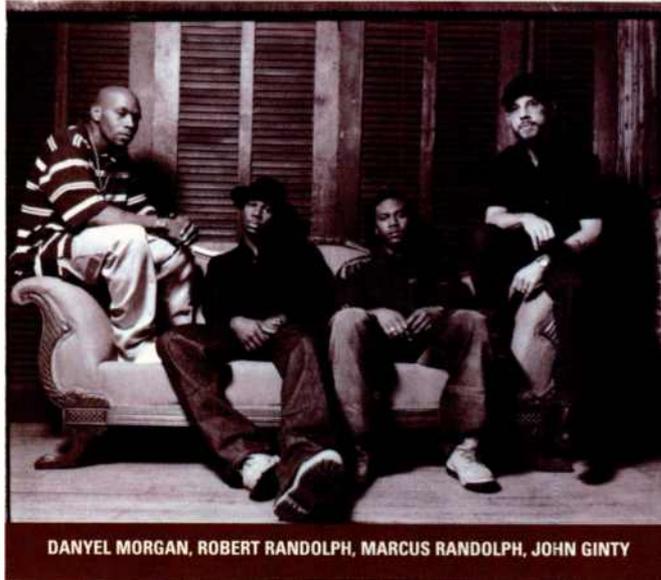
tain people—I'm not going to name names—they've got the concept of being a musician all wrong," he says flatly. "They think it's all about being an 'artist' or a 'star' when instead it's about coming out and making a great song and singing it from your heart and soul and giving it all you got. And hopefully it will connect with somebody and lift them up because that's what we're about," he says driving home a message he'll come back to again and again in conversation. It's the same way with the preachers—and steel players—at the House Of God Church. They'll repeat themselves to make a point, delivering the lines with more

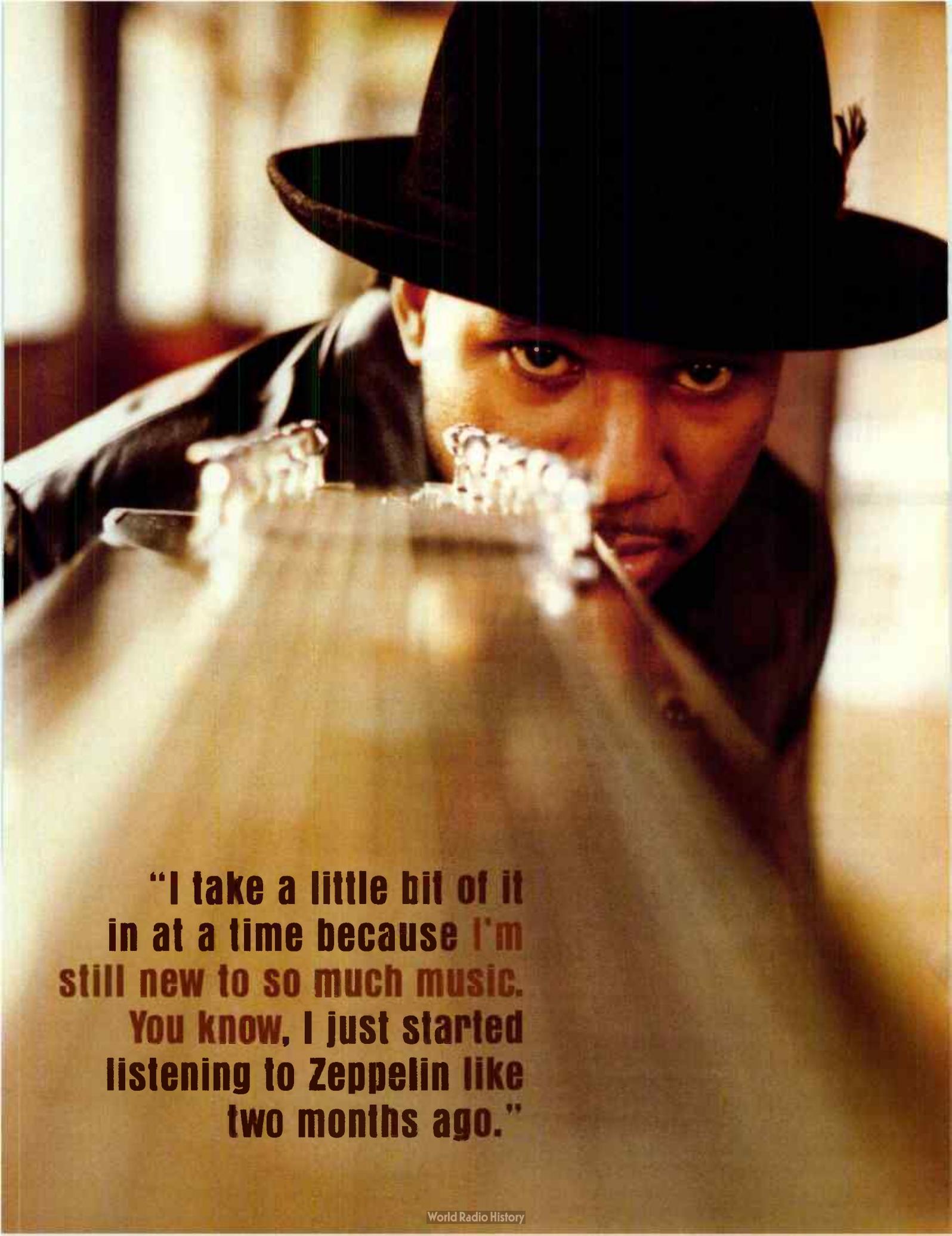
fire with every repetition. It's an approach fueling many of the songs Randolph performs live and on the new record. One new song, "I Need More Love," has a Sly Stone groove with a side of P-Funk provided by Morgan's bass and falsetto, but its roots are pure gospel. The title is brought home again and again while Randolph slices in call-and-response melody lines.

"We're basically like missionaries and the message that we can bring forth should be a good one," says Randolph of both the songs' style and inspirational (but never sugar-coated) message. "Especially in times today where we're put on magazine covers and on TV. We should at least have something good to say in a world where there's so much bad going on. Especially for kids, high school kids, college kids. There's not enough role models for people to look at and say, 'Man, I should do this, this is more towards the positive way of life.'"

When Randolph was a kid, that positive way of life wasn't easy, even with the steady guidance of church and family.

"My whole message in songs like 'Going In The Right Direction,' or any of these songs are about coming up as kind of confused kid," Randolph explains, doing a little confessing and a little reassuring at the same time. "You know, I did some dumb things growing up. I was in street gangs. I sold drugs. I was always getting suspended from school. But I still had that other outlook on life, because I came from the church. I knew what I was supposed to be doing and what I wasn't supposed to be doing. But a lot of kids today they don't know what the positive things they could be doing are. I hear kids say that all the time, 'Oh, I'm just a piece of crap and that's why I'm out here partying and doing





**“I take a little bit of it
in at a time because I’m
still new to so much music.
You know, I just started
listening to Zeppelin like
two months ago.”**

drugs at this festival and my parents don't care.' It's not true," he says. "These kids have a lot to live for and I tell them that."

These are the people Randolph is trying to inspire with *Unclassified*, but in a short span of time, he's figured out the way the music business works and how it limits what the public is exposed to. He's a little bit jaded and a little naïve, which is probably why he's pretty much got it right. He's hoping his music can bust through the industry nonsense the way Stevie Wonder's or Sly Stone's or James Brown's did.

"There's people in the music business that shouldn't be there," he says. "I'm not just talking about those artists that just want to be stars. I'm talking about some of these people that work at record labels and radio stations," he says. "Take an artist like Ben Harper, who probably got signed because somebody saw him in a bar and because he was so unique and so genuine and had

"There may be things that I do on the road ain't exactly church-like."

so much soul. And then when it's time to make a record you might have somebody in the studio saying, 'Try this because this is what so and so tried years ago.' And I'm like, 'If you want what so and so did, why don't you just go get them?'

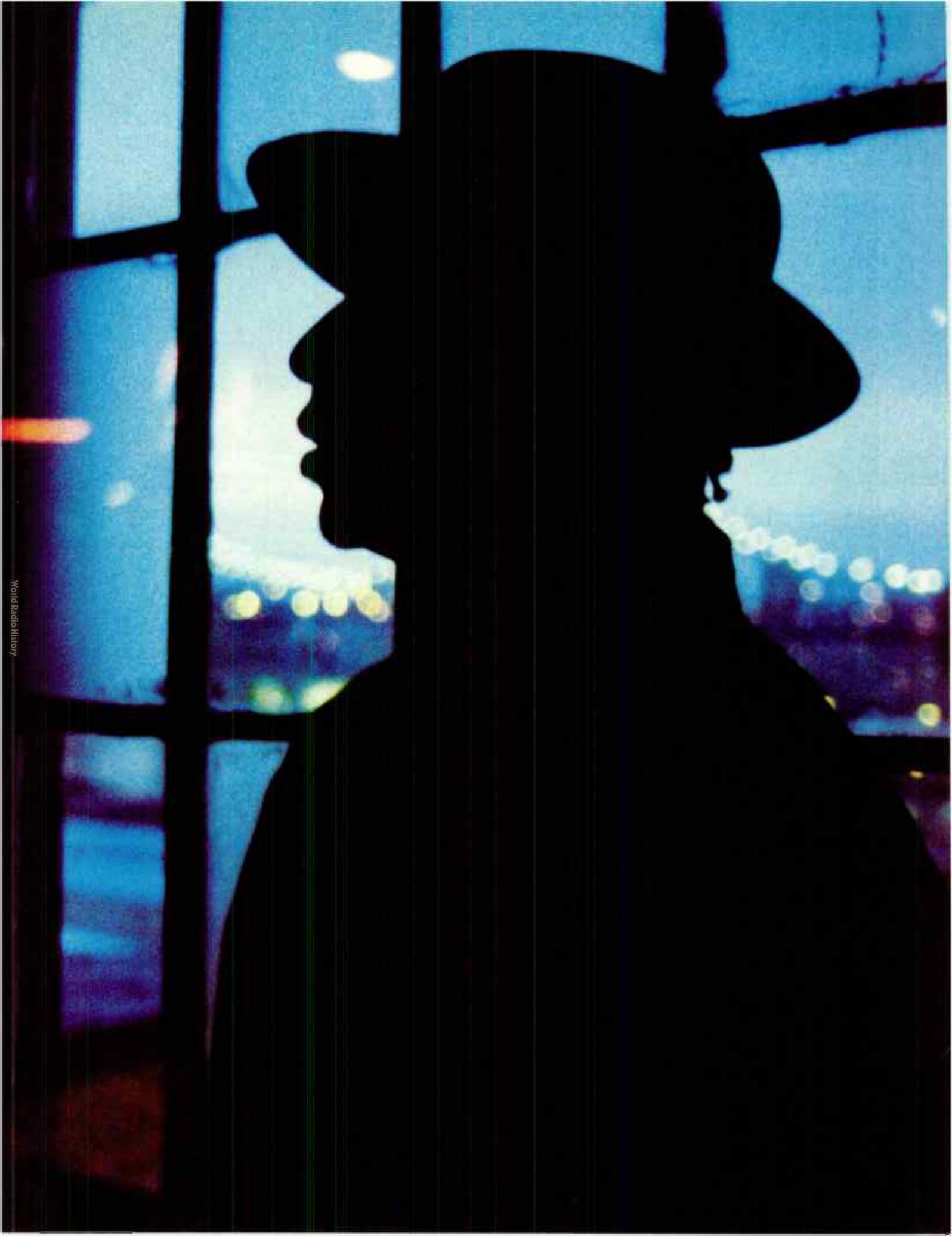
"It's just that [Harper's] so different. They don't know how to market him," Randolph says, fully aware the problem isn't Harper's alone. "Here's a black guy doing this kind of music, and they don't know if black people will like it or they don't know if it's cool enough and the industry is afraid to take a chance. But here's a guy who's got a good record. It's soulful," Randolph argues. "Push it like you push all the other R&B."

Initially there was some industry pressure to present *Unclassified* as an all-star affair with everyone from Al Green to Dave Matthews sitting in, but Randolph stood firm. He wanted this to be about the Family Band and that's why the only guests are his sister Leneshia and another cousin, Ricky Fowler, who sing on one track. "You don't want every review of your record to say, it's cool because Al Green sang on it," he offers. "Later on, that's when you get on to doing other things and having people guest and things like that, and I'm going to continue to make so many more records."

In addition to his own records, Randolph's future will include albums by friends and family, as his deal with Warner Bros. allows him to put out records on his own imprint. First up is *Heaven*, a record with mentor Calvin Cooke and a recording with the a cappella group the Pettigrew Brothers. "There's plenty of people I want to make records with," he says. "My cousin Ricky, anybody. Whoever wants to come, c'mon down," he says. "There's room for everybody."

As he takes his own music out on the road to more festivals and to more diverse crowds this summer, he'll just keep driving the message home. "I come from the church—and while there may be things that I do on the road ain't exactly church-like—I'm here to give people good word," he says in his softest most comforting voice. "When I get the chance to go up in front of people, I just want to be remembered as a guy who always had something good to say about life and people." **NMM**







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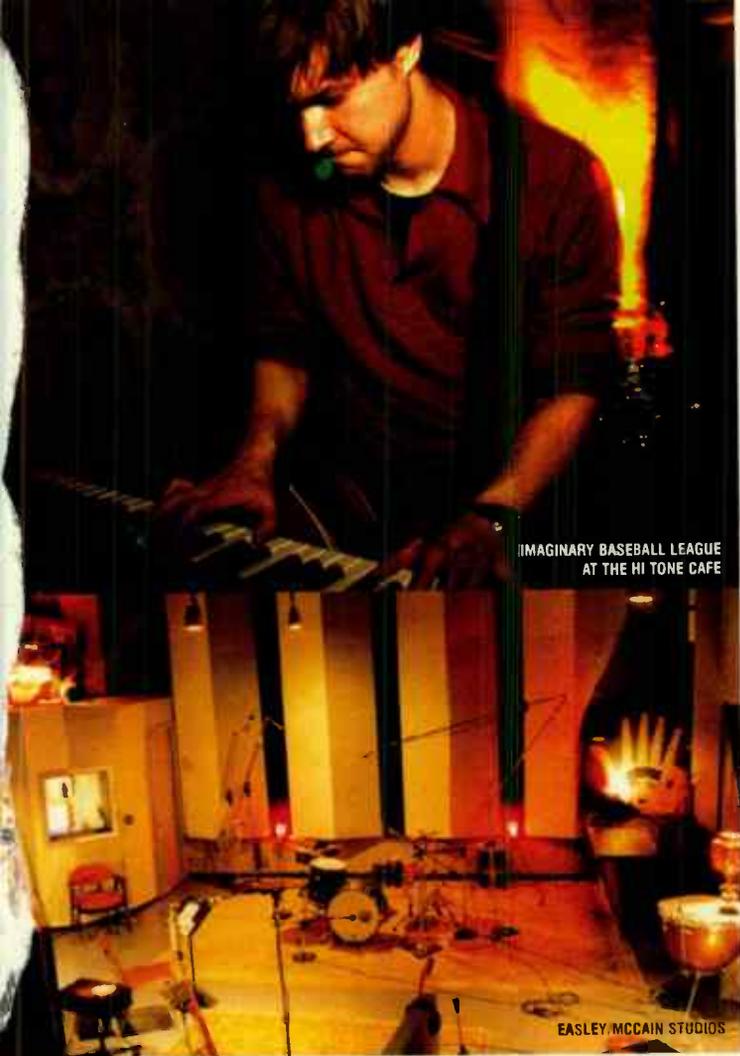
STORY: MEGAN REILLY

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder and mine's proof. My hometown of Memphis, Tennessee is a beautiful and mysterious city full of greenery, history and small-town charms. Its community of current musicians and collection of legendary blues players make it a bright, shining diamond amongst other Southern towns. I used to live down the road from where Big Star recorded *Radio City*. I slowdanced with the last living bluesman, Wilroy Sanders. And now that I'm miles away in one of the biggest cities in the world, I'm ever anxious to visit the people and places that make Memphis the best city to call "home."

As soon as I arrive, I head for the **Cupboard Restaurant** (1400 Union Ave., 276-8015) to indulge in some of the best Southern cooking. Suitable for vegetarians, they specialize in side dishes like fried okra, sweet potatoes and corn pudding. The chicken and dumplings and sweet tea are my personal favorites. **Anderton's Seafood Restaurant** (1901 Madison Ave., 726-4010) is a great place to go for cocktails. The dinners there are pricey, but the nautical décor in the bar makes you feel as though you're sipping your fruity drinks on a pirate's ship. The **Hi Tone Cafe** (1913 Poplar Ave., 278-8663) is the best place to

see favorite local acts, like the **Lost Sounds** and **Lucero**.

Some of my favorite Memphis outings have been to the **Tunica Casinos**, only an hour's drive south into Mississippi. There is always fun to be had there. My last trip consisted of seeing the **Little River Band** (for FREE!) playing on an elevated stage above the bar in the main gambling room. You fill in the rest! Memphis also has by far some of the best thrift and pawn shops around—and they're everywhere. Find amazing vintage clothing and vintage guitars for reasonable prices. I still get complements on my \$200 Fender Bullet every time I play.



OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD:

JARED MCSTAY (co-owner of Shangri-La Records)

"One of the best things about living here is seeing Al Green preach and sing on Sundays." The Full Gospel Tabernacle (787 Hale Rd., 794-6220) is where you can often find head pastor Green celebrating Sunday mass. Be prepared to share where you're from if a first-timer!

MELISSA DUNN (singer/songwriter and former Lorette Velvette Band guitarist)

"My favorite place to see a show is the P&H Café (1532 Madison Ave., 726-0906), because you can still find old men sitting at the bar." It's also a great place to congregate on a quiet weeknight, where you'll find locals nestled in a row of old booths and a decent jukebox by the pool tables in the back. Also, if you're tired of Southern cooking, Melissa recommends Vietnamese restaurant Saigon Le (51 N. Cleveland, 276-5326). Its fake-meat entrees are a favorite.

STEVE SHELLEY (drummer for Sonic Youth, who regularly records at Easley/McCain Studios)

Steve requested a day to answer about a subject he takes seriously there: food. "There's something very special about the spices they use at Ellen's Soul Food (601 S. Parkway East, 942-4888). And at Buntyn's (4972 Park Ave., 458-8776), their traditional-tasting fried chicken tastes like something your grandmother would make. My favorite places to have BBQ are the Rendezvous (52 S. 2nd St., 523-2746) and Interstate Barbecue (2265 S. 3rd St., 775-2304)."

TIM FOLJAHN (my guitarist and another frequent guest at Easley, recording for Two Dollar Guitar, Cat Power and Townes Van Zandt) "I like the garlic chicken and ho cakes (flat corn cakes) at Ellen's. But the dessert is my favorite! The 'Red Velvet' and 'Sock It To Me' cakes are best!"

LOCAL LOGIC: MEMPHIS' BEST

Blues bar

Wild Bill's (1580 Vollintine Ave., 726-5473) is really the last authentic blues club in the city. Leave Beale St. to the other tourists who don't know better. Their house band will keep you dancing the night away, as you take breaks on catfish and quarts of beer.

Charbroiled ribs

I've been going to the Rendezvous for ribs since I was a small child, and the same waiters are still there! It's also in a great location of downtown, so you can do some sight-seeing as you wait for a table, which is especially likely on a weekend.

Place to make a record

Another personal favorite, Easley/McCain Studios (2272 Deadrick, 323-5407) is known for its long list of clientele (Sonic Youth, Cat Power, the Spinanes and of course, the Grifters). Doug Easley and Davis McCain decorated their studio in a '60s décor that, along with the use of analog, makes recording there a heavenly experience.

Haven for soul music lovers

Finally they opened the much-anticipated Stax Museum Of American Soul Music (870 E. McLemore, 946-2535) on May 2nd of this year! Definitely the best place to learn about the late and great Rufus Thomas, Otis Redding and other Stax musicians like Booker T. and Isaac Hayes.

Record score

Run by my friends Sherman and Jared, Shangri-La (1916 Madison Ave., 274-1916) is a little house turned record store with a root beer vending machine on the front porch, and is the best place to find soul and rock records, as well as find out where the best shows are. Pick up the local zine, *Creature Comfort*, for all the skinny on Memphis happenings while you're in town.

Pyramid (third-largest in the world!)

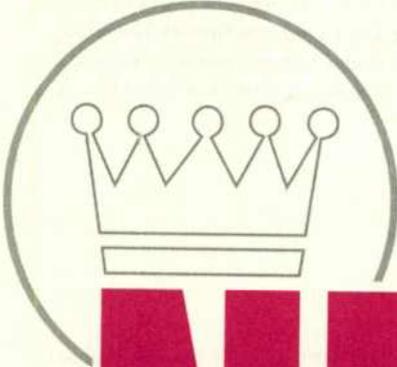
Why our mayor had this bright idea, I'll never know. But the Pyramid Arena (1 Auction Ave., 521-7909) was built as an entertainment center and enjoyed its few seconds of fame, being one of very few in the world to allow Mike Tyson through its doors. You can't miss it. It's right by the river and bluntly obstructs our pretty city's skyline.

Date itinerary

Go to Wiles-Smith Drug Store (1635 Union, 278-6416) for the best chocolate malt of your life, then head downtown for a beautiful sunset on the Mississippi River, while night falls.

All phone numbers are in the 901 area code.

Megan Reilly's new Arc Of Tessa—a mix of gauzy depth and alt-country charm—is out on Carrot Top Records. Visit www.carrotoprecords.com.



BEST NEW MUSIC

BLACK CROSS

BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE

CAESARS

JAMES WILLIAM HINDLE

MADLIB

NINA NASTASIA

TINDERSTICKS

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



BLACK CROSS

Art Offensive Equal Vision

Much like its brother punk and its bratty kid sister emo, hardcore isn't exactly brimming with variety lately. There are a lot of bands out there doing it well, but most are cranking out the same record at the half-time-picking-up-change-breakdown factory. Black Cross must've missed the memo: Instead of recycling Murphy's Law and Madball riffs, *Art Offensive* is brimming with outside influences that give hardcore a much-needed shot in the arm. The blessings of the Jesus Lizard and Drive Like Jehu are the most obvious, as guitarist Ryan Patterson laces his playing with the kind of abrasive, angular riffs that Duane Denison and John Reis brought to the fore. Rob Pennington skips the cookie-cutter Cookie Monster vocal patterns, opting instead for a half-screamed/half-sung yowl that recalls the best and noisiest moments of ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead. Throughout, the band reminds you that they're still a hardcore band with touches like the gang vocals on the 39-second "V.K.H.C.," or the brutal, throat-tearing "Lifelong Cell." But it's when they step outside the genre's confines that they really shine, like the savage, whiplash-inducing "Bitta's Walk" or the restrained, downright melodic breaks of "Screaming From The Top Of The Stairs." In 26 minutes, *Art Offensive* updates hardcore by years. >>>TOM MALLON

Link

www.black-cross.com

File Under

Dragging hardcore forward,
kicking and screaming

R.I.Y.L.

The Jesus Lizard, Drive Like Jehu,
...Trail Of Dead



BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE

You Forgot It In People Arts & Crafts

Sometimes the best albums are the hardest to pigeonhole. Broken Social Scene's *You Forgot It In People* drifts from shoegazing grandeur ("KC Accidental") to easy-listening reveries (the instrumental "Pacific Theme") to stately ballads ("Lover's Spit")—and that's not the half of it. Originally a basement project of Kevin Drew and former hHeadman Brendan Canning, Toronto's BSS now includes upwards of 10 moonlighters and refugees from bands such as Do Make Say Think and Stars. Although the recurring blippy beats, filtered vocals and shifting soundscapes belie the collective's post-rock proclivities, *You Forgot It In People* is full of grand, hook-ridden pop songs. "Stars And Sons" rolls to a New Order-ly bassline and handclaps; "Anthems For A Seventeen Year-Old Girl" supports a chirpy girl-group melody with a gently plucked banjo and strings; "Almost Crimes" blends propulsive drums, chiming guitars, a few crashing, My Bloody Valentine-ish chords and a dissonant sax solo in support of a catchy male-female duet. Threading through it all are Drew's at once casual and impassioned vocals, which are reminiscent, variously, of Jason Pierce, Bernard Sumner, and, on the acoustic ballad "I'm Still Your Fag," Jeff Buckley. Broken Social Scene's *You Forgot It In People* is full of surprises, not the least of which is that something so splintered can cohere into such an engrossing, exciting whole. >>>STEVE KLUNGE



CAESARS

39 Minutes Of Bliss... Astralwerks

Swedish garages must be amazing places to hang out, if only to witness the infestation of American A&R types. The Caesars' first American release, *39 Minutes Of Bliss (In An Otherwise Meaningless World)*, is a 12-song collection of material selected from their three previous Scandinavia-only LPs. This quartet of retro-rockers (known as Caesars Palace in their homeland) meld gritty guitar tones with a lush power-pop sensibility; the result is toe-tapping music guaranteed to get the feel-good grooves going. Whether it's a jangly ode to carting l'amour to the curb ("(I'm Gonna) Kick You Out"), a snappy hand-clapper about an emotional touchstone ("Crackin' Up") or a boppin' ballad about an object of affection ("Only You"), Caesars specialize in a repertoire of song subjects ranging from girls to girls—to more girls. The lyrics are a no-blink, sharp-shooter bull's-eye to the heart; there's no second-guessing what lead vocalist César Vidal is expressing when he wails, "You don't mean a thing to me/ No matter what I might say/ You don't mean a thing to me." For the majority of the tracks, the broad, hollow sound of Vidal's voice creates a constant howl—sparking comparisons to Liam Gallagher—but curveballs like "Fun And Games," which borders on Bob Dylan-esque song-stylings, or the haunting "Suzy Creamcheese" keep your ears guessing and your body swaying. >>>LAURA YOUNG



JAMES WILLIAM HINDLE

Prospect Park Badman

It's weird that James William Hindle originally hails from England—not only is he seemingly accent-free, but his second LP, *Prospect Park*, exudes enough Park Slope neighborhood pride to fool you into thinking he's a born-and-bred Brooklynite. He's assimilated with the help of Ladybug Transistor frontman Gary Olson, who lent his production talents and Brooklyn studio, Marlborough Farms, to *Park*. Olson complements by merely peppering the tracks with guest sounds provided by his bandmates and members of the Essex Green, the Sunshine Fix and Aden. The delicate melody of "Come Down Slowly" hovers with the help of just-detectable oohs and ahs that fill-in for an absent organ. Hindle & Co. quickly bypass maudlin, bland balladry by putting the weakest track, "You Will Be Safe," up front. Everywhere else, Hindle's voice is sweet without sounding affected and honest without approaching surliness. The banjo, finger-picked acoustic and harmonica confirm what nation the title of "Country Song" refers to. Hindle's roots aren't Brit-folk or pseudo-anything, and any comparison to Nick Drake will arise only because of being cut from the same sensitive-guy-with-a-guitar felt. Like a rascal, Hindle often sounds on the verge of darting out into the middle of the road. He's not gutless or fit for the Hot AC format, though. It's just that in *Prospect Park*, he's right at home. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link
www.arts-crafts.ca

File Under
Post-pop for now people
R.I.Y.L.

Spiritualized, the Netwist, Jeff Buckley, Mercury Rev, New Order

Link
www.caesarsweb.com

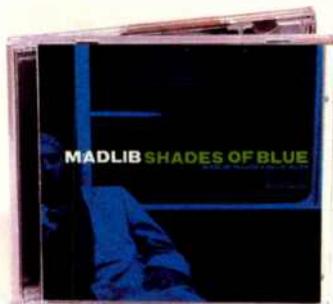
File Under
Big Swedish fish
R.I.Y.L.

The Libertines, Oasis, early Rolling Stones

Link
www.badmanrecordingco.com

File Under
Brooklyn's Brit
R.I.Y.L.

Mark Kozelek, Elliott Smith, the Shins



MADLIB 

Shades Of Blue: Madlib Invades Blue Note Blue Note

Outside the cluttered confines of his Oxnard, California, recording studio, Lootpack/Quasimoto mastermind Madlib is known as Otis Jackson, Jr., the son of West Coast sideman Otis Jackson and the nephew of jazz trumpeter Jon Faddis. So given his family ties and the soul-jazz crackle of much of his production work, it's no surprise that for his latest project Madlib raided the dustier corners of Blue Note's catalog, remixing old tracks and recording cover versions of others in an attempt to connect his modern style back to its historical antecedent. Well, a more explicit attempt, anyway: *Angles Without Edges*, the smoked-out 2001 album Madlib made as his one-man fusion outfit Yesterday's New Quintet, sounded like it could have been made at the same time as any of the stuff interpreted here, which means that the pleasures of *Shades Of Blue* are less about aesthetic fidelity than pure sound. Like his peer and occasional collaborator Jay Dee, Madlib sees a world of possibility in a single snare hit; the joints here are built around individual elements like that, elaborating on a juicy Rhodes riff or vibraphone lick rather than showing off any compositional chops 'Lib may or may not possess. When he lays into the groove, he proves that's enough. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

Link
www.bluenote.com
 File Under
 Funked-up fusion
 R.I.Y.L.
 Jay Dee, the Roots, Jazzanova



NINA NASTASIA

Run To Ruin Touch And Go

Nina Nastasia hearkens back to a time when chamber music was a performed as a pastime for the players, rather than a spectator sport for the blue-blooded. When an audience applauds her live performances, she and her congenial New York City-based orchestra, minus the singing saw player who left to join the circus, turn to smile at each other. On *Run To Ruin*, their devoted fan and three-time sound engineer Steve Albini captured their latest slice of *ars gratia artis* (that is, "art for art's sake") in Iain Burgess' Black Box studio, tucked away in France's wine country. Nastasia's carefully restrained vocals still manage to set a lump in your throat without marring her own, but her once up-front voice now feels distanced, weaving through the viola, hammer dulcimer, accordion and electric bass like another instrument. Opting for an almost classical sound, the band has turned away from the gothic folk of 2002's spooky masterpiece *The Blackened Air*, where ghosts peered out through mirrors and rustled cemetery shrubs. Dense orchestration overrides mild lyrical creepiness on "The Body" and "On Teasing," as the band swells like thunder and swoons like spring rain. Nastasia breathes just enough world-weary air into each piece to sustain this melancholy affair. >>>KARA ZUARO

Link
www.southern.com/southern/band/NASTA
 File Under
 Parlor music meets restless urban folk
 R.I.Y.L.
 Kristin Hersh, Edith Frost,
 Carson McCullers' *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter*



TINDERSTICKS

Waiting For The Moon Beggars Banquet

The wheels of evolution turn very slowly in Tindersticks time. *Waiting For The Moon* is a more polished affair than the sextet's jaw-dropping eponymous 1993 debut, but it's unmistakably the work of the same band with a remarkably similar mission. To a backdrop of Spanish guitar and sweet strings, Stuart Staples opens by crooning, "My hands around your throat/ If I kill you now they'll never know" in his Nick Cave-meets-Bryan Ferry baritone, setting the trademark cinematic, eerie mood that's fueled three soundtracks in addition to six proper releases. "Say Goodbye To The City" layers swelling trumpet crescendos atop the strings, demonstrating the band's ability to excel with both sparse and dense dynamics. Recent discs have found the group subtly infusing aspects of classic soul, to the point where Tindersticks are now as much Curtis Mayfield as Weimar-era Berlin. This trend doesn't preclude an excursion like "4:48 Psychosis," where Staples' John Cale-styled spoken-word ramblings merge with a fuzzy VU guitar drone to produce the most abrasive sound Tindersticks has churned out in years. A female guest-driven vocal duet has become a Tindersticks album staple, and multi-culti up-and-comer Lhasa de Sela turns in one of the series' best on "Sometimes It Hurts." Despite the somewhat looser groove and smoother tone of recent efforts, it's difficult to differentiate Tindersticks releases on style or quality—and fans aren't complaining. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link
www.tindersticks.co.uk
 File Under
 Serenades from the seedy cabaret
 R.I.Y.L.
 Nick Cave, later Roxy Music,
 Angelo Badalamenti, Tom Waits



Underage prostitutes in Mumbai, India. Virtually all were sold into the sex trade in very early adolescence. Photo: Dayanita Singh

imagine

(you may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one)



Imagine a worldwide movement working to protect the dignity and rights of all people. And imagine it works. For 40 years, Amnesty International members have saved countless lives - people persecuted, imprisoned, or tortured simply for who they are or what they believe. Many more need your help. Take action. Log on. Join us.

REVIEWS

AQUALUNG
 AUDIO BULLYS
 MADISON SMARTT BELL & WYN COOPER
 BLUEBOTTLE KISS
 THE CHILDREN'S HOUR
 CIBELLE
 CLEM SNIDE
 CODEC & FLEXOR
 DARKEST HOUR
 DEFTONES
 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
 DROPKICK MURPHYS
 EELS
 ELLIOTT
 MARK OLIVER EVERETT
 JAY FARRAR
 FEEDER
 FIREWATER
 FLESHTONES
 FRANCINE
 GRAND DRIVE
 THE JUNIOR PANTHERS
 KARSH KALE
 LEFTY'S DECEIVER
 LILLIX
 ASHLEY MACISAAC
 JAMES MATHUS KNOCKDOWN SOCIETY
 MINK LUNGS
 MONO
 MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK
 OUTRAGEOUS CHERRY
 LIZ PHAIR
 PRINCE PAUL
 RIGHTEOUS BOY
 S.A. SMASH
 SINGAPORE SLING
 THE SPECIAL GOODNESS
 SPYMOB
 STARFLYER 59
 SUMMER HYMNS
 OTIS TAYLOR
 TRICKY
 TURBONEGRO
 WILDCHILD
 WOVEN HAND



AQUALUNG

Strange And Beautiful B-Unique

Having a song featured in a Volkswagen commercial always stirs up a little interest. It happened for Spiritualized, ditto for Fluke. And everyone knows the classic Nick Drake "Pink Moon" spot. The title track to Aqualung's *Strange And Beautiful* was used to hock Beetles in the U.K., drawing folks into the record stores (if not the car dealerships) with the question, "What's that song from that commercial, you know, the one with the car?" It's easy to hear why this simple yet timeless melody cast over a metronomic beat drew so much attention. While the

name immediately calls to mind the frightening prospect of Aqualung as a Jethro Tull tribute band, Matt Hales, with brother Ben in tow, actually churns out affable and oh-so-earnest tunes that Travis and Coldplay would be happy to claim. *Strange And Beautiful* could easily be the four-track home recordings for *The Man Who* or *Parachutes*. Accompanied by little more than a tinkling piano and some light guitar, Hales reminisces about falling in and out of love. Much of it feels like the soundtrack to those quiet moments in bed, the ones with someone else beside you. Which is nice, except that ultimately, not much here distinguishes Aqualung's reflective musings from those of the above-mentioned bands. So while pleasant enough, it's not that special someone. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

www.aqualung.net

File Under

U.K. cuddle-core

R.I.Y.L.

Travis, Coldplay, Justin Clayton

AUDIO BULLYS

Ego War Source/Astralwerks



Link

www.audiobulllys.co.uk

File Under

Where the Streets have no game

R.I.Y.L.

Armand Van Helden, the Streets, Todd Edwards

What hath Mike Skinner wrought? It has yet to be determined how well the ever-contagious PlayStation- and weed-soaked geezer-hop of the Streets will hold up, and they're already sending in the clones faster than you can say Silverchair. Audio Bulllys claim they are from West London, but apparently they are from some alternate universe where there is a high demand for warmed-over sub-Freestylers beats and Brit braggarts boasting about ennui. The Audio Bulllys have a track called "Real Life," something they talk about often... which they shouldn't because real life is boring! Like come cockney Kottonmouth Kings, MC Simon Franks opens "100 Million" with "It was early, I woke up/ Still had a joint so I puffed/ Shouldn't 'ave, 'cause it got me stoooooooned!" You know, hearing weed-obsessed dudes kvetching about living at home with their moms is as easy as calling your old college buddies—with the added bonus of no artless dodger algebra (beat + squelchy synth + sample = song). Actually, the aforementioned "Real Life" is the album's saving grace, a lively two-step like Van Helden-meets-Felix Da Housecat bump with the vocals thankfully vocoded to the point of unintelligibility. But otherwise, for last year's reactionary critical response to the Streets ("Ooooh, he said 'mates!' Four stars!"), these rave-addled brats are what America deserves. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN





MADISON SMARTT BELL & WYN COOPER

Forty Words For Fear *Gaff Music*

You may not have read any of Madison Smartt Bell's 11 novels, but you've heard one of Wyn Cooper's poems: His "Fun" became the core of Sheryl Crow's once-inescapable "All I Wanna Do." Perhaps as atonement, *Forty Words For Fear* finds Cooper in the tunesmith-guitarist seat, setting lyrics originally written for a fictional band in Bell's latest opus (*Anything Goes*) to time-tested blues-rock riffs, topped in turn by Bell's gravelly, obviously uncomfortable vocals. Bell's songs are less 'literary' than one might expect; he often sounds more like a road-weary

journeyman rocker rather than a National Book Award finalist. The best, though, torque bar-band conventions effectively, as on the woozy "Blue Nun": "People were all dressed up like trolls/ Their suits were so tight I could see their souls." The production, by Don Dixon (R.E.M., Marti Jones) and drummer Jim Brock, is oddly undisciplined, cloaking serviceable melodies in aimless barrelhouse piano ("Horses Run Fast") or cluttered, Santana-does-Rain Dogs grooves ("The Girl In The Black Raincoat"). (Dixon's old partner Mitch Easter contributes well-executed but highly generic lead guitar throughout.) *Forty Words* doesn't entirely escape the fantasy-camp feel common to non-performers' forays into music, but as such projects go, it's less embarrassing than Dave Barry and Amy Tan's *Rock Bottom Reminders*. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

faculty.goucher.edu/mbell

File Under

Those mid-list, mid-life blues

R.I.Y.L.

James McMurtry, Townes Van Zandt, Tom Waits



BLUEBOTTLE KISS

Revenge Is Slow *In Music We Trust/Nonzero*

Initially, it seems that *Revenge Is Slow* is not just the title of Australian four-piece Bluebottle Kiss's American debut (and fourth LP overall), but frontman Jamie Hutchings' overarching gripe. On the record's second track, "Ounce Of Your Cruelty," the singer/songwriter aches and slips into falsetto as he begs, "Could you just have a heart/ Give me an ounce of your cruelty." The dirge rolls along with his pain, thanks to shifty, excitable drums, until a guitar in static's clothing wipes the song clean with noise. At this point, it's clear that if the album's title means that

Hutchings is suffering, he and his bandmates are going to inflict the pain, ten-fold. Fittingly, *Revenge* is more meticulously pieced together than average lovelorn guitar pop. Tunes that would sound like the work of Coldplay on a bad day go from yellow to brown, as they're dirtied up via crashing, assaulting arrangements and plenty of feedback. The lyrics of "Hasten The Blows" are as dense as the volatile music, which sharply employs strings that are just tucked in to provide intensity, not over-the-top theatrics. Bluebottle Kiss are rarely this reserved, and Hutchings is a histrionic match for the opera singers he wails with on the record's prettiest track, "Hello Stranger." But with a concept as big as *Revenge*, dramatic is the only way to go. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.bluebottlekiss.com

File Under

Kissing is slower

R.I.Y.L.

Jeff Buckley, Coldplay, Dinosaur Jr.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

SOS JFK *Minty Fresh*

The Children's Hour are Josephine Foster and Andy Bar, two weird Chicago folkies who marry *O Brother*-style sonic asceticism to the primitive, imagistic lyricism of Cat Power and Red House Painters. Both of them find a remarkable amount of depth in their instruments: Foster sings in a pinched alto that recalls Joan Baez, but her relationship with pitch is fluid enough that she can let loose with the occasional yodel or swoop into falsetto; when she describes being "lost in the woods" in "Lost Love," she does a little trill that makes her sound like a wood nymph.

Bar handles guitar and bass, but he rarely sticks to the straightforward strumming often found in this kind of stuff; his spidery lead lines twirl around Foster's voice as in vintage bossa nova, and though his playing is as light as a feather, the complexity of his chordings suggests math-rock heavies like Slint and Rodan. None of this explains why Billy Corgan handpicked the duo to open a recent U.S. tour by his powerhouse Zwan—*SOS JFK* is as ill-suited to large concert halls as affordable drinks. But invite the Children's Hour into your home at the right time and they'll quietly convince you to let them stay. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

Link

www.thechildrenshourmusic.com

File Under

Far-out folk-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Fairport Convention, João Gilberto, Cat Power



CIBELLE

Cibelle *Six Degrees*



Link

www.crammed.be

File Under

Future Brazil

R.I.Y.L.

Bebel Gilberto, Massive Attack, Marisa Monte

There's a gentle, bubbly effusiveness to Cibelle's debut. Unlike many recent purveyors of Brazilian electronica, the São Paulo native breaks out of the straitjacket of bossa and samba—her music has more in common with Faithless than João Gilberto. She obviously learned a lot working (on *São Paulo Confessions*) with the late Suba, for whom Brazilian popular music was a springboard to the 21st century: Now paired with young producer Apollo 9, she offers a very fresh, individual vision—like the off-kilter bassline of "Waiting," inspired by refrigerators and supermarket cash registers, or unusual percussive details on the downbeat "Deixa." Her heritage is obvious in her phrasings and smiling, seductive voice, but the several tracks in English can only help her international appeal. And when she does look back on Brazil's musical past, which she does on a cover of Jobim's "Inutil Paisagem," dueting with bossa great Johnny Alf, she's puts reverence aside and treats the song like one of her own compositions, splashing about gleefully in a palette of sounds. For a first album, there's nothing tentative about Cibelle. She's come to this confident and musically fully formed, with an astonishingly developed vision as both a writer and a singer. Oh, and she's an actress/model-turned musician—one of those usually pertinent details review-wise, but one that *Cibelle* renders a mere afterthought. >>>CHRIS NICKSON



CLEM SNIDE

Soft Spot spinART

Link
www.clemsnide.com
 File Under
 Arty, happy alt-country
 R.I.Y.L.
 Sparklehorse, M. Ward, Wilco's
 Summerteeth

You couldn't help but smile when "Moment In The Sun"—the jubilant and starry-eyed centerpiece to Clem Snide's 2001 album *The Ghost Of Fashion*—became the theme song for NBC television show *Ed*. It was one of those rare occasions where good art gets recognized as such and gave Clem Snide leader Eef Barzelay entrée into America's living rooms. Hollywood conquered, Barzelay purposefully dodges returning to the tube with *Soft Spot* and aims instead for the hushed intimacy of a turn-of-the-century nickelodeon. Where *The Ghost Of Fashion* was a boisterous and sometimes acidic collection of warts-and-all character studies, *Soft Spot* is an only occasionally rollicking affair where Barzelay's vocals remain composed on all but a few songs ("Action," "Happy Birthday"). The tone fits the subject matter of love's flaws and grandeur, but never dampens Barzelay's colorful wordplay or instrumentation from bandmates Brendan and Pete Fitzpatrick, whether playing it straight ("May God hold you in the palm of his hand," on "Every Moment") or turning sweetly macabre ("I buried our love in the backyard/ Until it thaws, we could play cards," on "All Green"). Barzelay's characters always fit snugly in their musical environs here, and while one album hardly justifies a trend toward the optimistic, these 11 tunes suggest Barzelay and Clem Snide's glasses might be the same color as the rose that adorns *Soft Spot's* cover. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

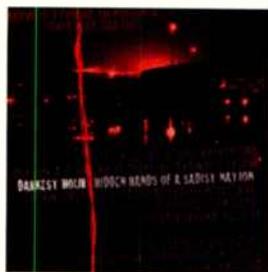


CODEC & FLEXOR

Tubed Emperor Norton/Forte

Link
www.emperornorton.com
 File Under
 Your retro career pounded
 R.I.Y.L.
 Juan Atkins, Nitzer Ebb,
 DJ Hell

Electroclash's industrial revision won't be a revolution—it'll just make things a little harder, faster and sillier. Germans Codec & Flexor hit the (domestic) scene in the wake of DJ Hell's 2002, quasi-important *Electronicbody-Housemusic*, which allowed electronic body music classics by the likes of Nitzer Ebb and Front 242 into the mix. Similarly, occasional old-school electro, bobbing basslines and guitar squeals infiltrate the frantic techno beats of C&F's debut, *Tubed*. Codec wields his drum machine like a jackhammer while Flexor adopts a pseudo-basso 'clash brogue that wants so badly to rock. In the sparse but stadium-filling opener, "Black Diamonds," Flexor is as affected as Jim Morrison when he announces that he and Codec have "come to set the night on fire." He screams through "Alert," vying with a dizzying electric guitar solo as the track's most irritating component. But ultimately, Codec's a big softy. His pseudo-soulful croon sometimes mimics that of ABC's Martin Fry, and on "Let It All Out," he's as joyous as the organ riff that would have filled Chicago's Warehouse in the early '90s. Like the poetry of a pubescent Marilyn Manson addict, *Tubed* is often too straight-faced for its own good ("The bitter taste of your placebo blood/ Burns on your tongue/ Like the candy cancer's French kiss," according to Flexor). But that only adds to the dumb, pounding fun. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



DARKEST HOUR

Hidden Hands Of A Sadist Nation Victory

Link
www.darkesthour.cc
 File Under
 Non-Swedish Swedish-style
 metalcore
 R.I.Y.L.
 The Haunted, Arch Enemy,
 Soilwork

When a band has Swedish death-metal svengali Fredrik Nordström produce their album in his Studio Fredman, they're bound to come out with something that sounds indigenous to Gothenburg, even if they're from D.C. Melding Nordic death metal with American hardcore is nothing new for Darkest Hour, but here they up the ante: *Hidden Hands Of A Sadist Nation* is more musically intense and melodic than anything they've ever done, complete with chugging metal riffs, double-bass drum action and vocal snarling so fierce it makes strep throat seem like a tickle. The album also includes a cast of death-metal all-stars such as Tomas Lindberg (At The Gates, the Crown), Anders Björler (At The Gates, the Haunted), Peter Wichers (Soilwork) and Marcus Sunesson (the Crown). Swedish underpinnings aside, Darkest Hour maintain a hardcore attitude with vocalist John Henry's lyrical condemnations of American culture: "A culture of violence is what you are feeding/ Fear is an heirloom/ And hate is contagious/ A nation of sadists is what you are breeding." Yet *Hidden* is not entirely laden with abrasive, politicized growling—it ends with "Veritas, Aequitas," a 13-minute instrumental metalcore ballad featuring the shredding talents of some of the aforementioned Scandinavian superstars. With *Hidden*, Darkest Hour has taken chaos and crafted it into intricate, spine-crushing, death-metal masterpieces—not for the squeamish. >>>TRACEY JOHN



DEFTONES

White Pony Maverick/Warner Bros.

Link
www.deftones.com
 File Under
 Off-white pony
 R.I.Y.L.
 Tool, Failure, later
 Faith No More

Artistic breakthroughs have a habit of becoming an albatross around a band's neck, and it seems that Deftones have a *White Pony* hanging around theirs. By forcing Chino Moreno's Cure obsession to coexist with guitarist Stephen Carpenter's must-be-heavy-at-all-times leanings, their 2000 album demonstrated what the genre would be capable of if it were stripped of posturing and injected with sincerity (and original riffs). That uneasy mix of influences created a tension that elevated *Pony* to the nu-metal equivalent of *OK Computer*, and that tension is sadly absent on its follow-up. That's not to say that *Deftones* is a bad record—in fact, it's pretty damned solid—but it lacks the adventurous spirit that made *Pony* such an eye-opener. Rather than duke it out, their influences take to their own corners—tracks like "When Girls Telephone Boys" and "Battleaxe" are all concrete screamp-fests, while "Lucky You" and "Anniversary Of An Uninteresting Event" are all trip-hoppy bleeps and sensitive pianos that sound like leftovers from Moreno's oft-delayed Team Sleep side project. Elsewhere, they stick to tried-and-true methods: First single "Minerva" rebuilds "Be Quiet And Drive"'s wall of sound at half-speed, and "Hexagram" and "Needles And Pins" nail the same whimper-to-a-scream dynamics that fueled "My Own Summer." This makes for a solid but frustrating effort that would have been a logical progression from *Around The Fur*. But coming after *White Pony*, it feels like a step back. >>>TOM MALLON



DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Decoration Day New West

Drive-By Truckers' Southern Rock Opera was an audacious tour de force, a double-disc exploration of what it means to be Southern—the stereotypes, realities and other dichotomies—and what it means to love Lynyrd Skynyrd. Wisely, the DBTs haven't tried to create a *Quadrophenia*-like follow up in *Decoration Day*. Instead, they've retained their penchant for storytelling and their rousing, rootsy, triple-guitar bar-band grit for an album of smart, insightful Southern rock. The DBTs are

blessed with three gifted songwriters: Patterson Hood (the primary writer; character sketches and history-minded narratives), Mike Cooley (gun-toting rebel anthems) and Jason Isbell (one seemingly autobiographical sketch and the feud-story title track). *Decoration Day* dwells on tales of troubled relationships—the incest story "The Deeper In," the rousing "Hell No, I Ain't Happy," the divorce recriminations of "Your Daddy Hates Me," the abandoned bride of "My Sweet Annette"—but it's by no means somber and maudlin. The DBTs channel their anger and frustration into song, and although the string of mostly acoustic numbers in the middle saps some of the momentum, *Decoration Day* is both a knowing critique of Southern rock in all its glory ("Rock 'n' roll means well/ But it can't help tellin' young boys lies," sings Cooley on "Marry Me") and a celebration of the timeless power of three loud electric guitars. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.drivebytruckers.com

File Under

Triple-guitar roots rock

R.I.Y.L.

Lynyrd Skynyrd, Steve Earle,

Marah, Jack Daniels



DROPKICK MURPHYS

Blackout Hellcat

Boston's Dropkick Murphys aren't the first band to give punk's sneer an Irish accent, or the first punks to connect with the protest folk that was the early- to mid-20th century soundtrack to America's workers' rebellions. But after seven years of practice, they've mastered the art of translating traditional Celtic-American idioms into the surging shorthand of the mosh pit, incorporating bagpipes as more than just a novelty accessory in the process. *Blackout*, the band's fourth studio album, takes its name from "Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight," a raw-throated

Link

www.dropkickmurphys.com

File Under

Erin go brawl

R.I.Y.L.

Stiff Little Fingers, Rancid,

Shane McGowan

punk anthem that puts a punk twist on some of Woody Guthrie's previously unpublished lyrics. A folkier atmosphere prevails when Al Barr comes out from behind the wall of Marshalls on the acoustic "Bastards On Parade," and the Pogues come to mind when he trades verses with Stephanie Dougherty on the amusing "The Dirty Glass." Mainly, though, the band sticks to the moves that have kept them in business since '96: big, bold, buzzsaw guitar hooks, earnest shout-along vocals and a salt-of-the-Earth mix of working-class bluster and hometown pride, punctuated by a punked-up arrangement of a trad Irish bar tune ("Black Velvet Band"). A bonus DVD offers a raucous live rendition of "Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight." >>>MATT ASHARE

PARASOL RECORDS



The Soundtrack of Our Lives Gimme Five

These 5 exclusive tracks make an excellent companion piece to the band's critically acclaimed, Grammy nominated album *Behind the Music*. "Forget about The Stripes and The White Stripes. The Soundtrack of Our Lives will save rock and roll!" -*Webby*



Club 8 Strangely Beautiful

A beautifully warm album with a surprisingly focused sound from this melancholic Swedish duo. Johan Angergård (Acid House Kings) and Carolina Komstedt have outdone themselves yet again on this, their 5th full-length recording and best album to date!



Bettie Serveert Log 22

Fifth studio album from this beloved Dutch band. *Log 22* pairs the elegant and accomplished beauty of its predecessor *Private Suit*, with the energy and reckless abandon of their classic debut *Palomine*. "...one of the finest rock record records of the new decade." -*Washington Post*



Folksongs For the Afterlife Put Danger Back In Your Life

Glorious debut album by these New Yorkers! Engaging, cerebral pop shifting between dramatic and driving with tender lyrics and female vocals. Like some otherworldly combination of Mazzy Star and vintage My Bloody Valentine, they employ wan female vocals and layers of moody guitar in a mind-bending manner whereby even the uptempo songs feel like ballads... conjures a rich sound capable of carrying you off into the daydream of your choice." -*Uncut Magazine*



Walt Kelly & Norman Monath Songs Of the Pogo

Reissue of 1956 album by Pogo Possum creator Walt Kelly teamed with composer Norman Monath. An olde timey, big bandy, folkly, children's songy thingy straight from the groundbreaking comic strip.



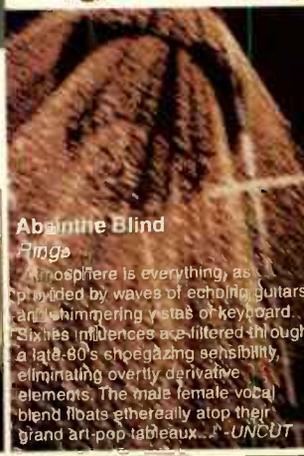
Vic Conrad & the First Third self-titled

Exciting, melodic and decidedly strange pop music from Australia. Highly recommended to fans of The Beach Boys, Syd Barrett, The Olivia Tremor Control, John Cunningham, Guided By Voices, XTC and The Green Pajamas. Guests include The Bevis Frond's Nick Saloman



Neilson Hubbard Sing Into Me

Neilson examines the power of love and devotion on his third album highlighted by his pure, inimitable vocals that are as expressive and individual as any you'll ever come across. An intimate, reflective outing including a cover of "Jesus" by The Velvet Underground. "At this early date it feels like Hubbard may turn out to be one of the most unique and intriguing southern pop/rock artists to come along since Big Star and REM." -*Pop Culture Press*



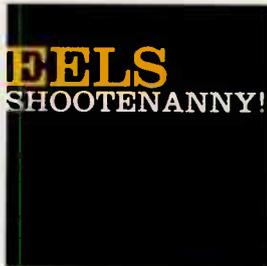
Abanite Blind Rings

Atmosphere is everything, as provided by waves of echoing guitars and shimmering ystas of keyboard. Sixties influences are filtered through a late-80's shoegazing sensibility, eliminating overtly derivative elements. The male/female vocal blend floats ethereally atop their grand art-pop tableaux." -*UNCUT*



The Like Young Art Contest

Debut album by Joe & Amanda Ziemba (both formerly of Wolfie & Busybody). Driving, upbeat pop where Joe slings the six-string & bass, Amanda pounds the drums, and both sing. For fans of Weezer, Sloan & the poppiest Nirvana.



EELS
Shootenanny! DreamWorks
MARK OLIVER EVERETT
Music From The Film *Levity*
Sony Pictures Classics

Over the course of eight or nine albums in 10 years, Mark Oliver Everett, L.A. studio savant who goes by the name of "E" and leads an ever-changing ensemble known as Eels, has never managed to define a comfortable space for himself in the modern rock pantheon. He's not quirky or funky enough to be a Beck, but his moves are far too unpredictable for top 40. He'll aptly title an album *Electro-Shock Blues*, but he's no rootsy testifier like Jon Spencer or Jonny-Spencer-come-lately like Jack White. He's a geek, but not geeky enough for the Weezer revenge-of-the-nerds niche. What he's got is a powerfully skewed rock outfit in bassist Koolha G Murder, drummer Butch, violinist Lisa Germano and guitarist Joe Gore, one that allows E, in his typically self-deprecating fashion, to take

stock of his perpetually troubled life. "I know I'm not too much of a bargain/ And you know that's not what you bargained for," he nearly whispers at the start of "The Good Old Days," a spare, acoustic-driven track that seems haunted by too many missed opportunities and might-have-beens. Elsewhere, E reaches to the blues for soul salvation, as distorted vocals, overdriven harmonica, and some mention of a fortune teller give "All In A Day's Work" the veneer of swampiness, and "Agony," with its electronically treated backbeat shuffle and spare electric piano chords that lead up to a dark, soul-rending rave-up filled with lines like, "Friends tellin' me that maybe I need some psychedelic help." E may be on to something with this wry suburban-white-boy blues, but it's going to take a lot more focus, in terms of music and lyrics, to try to sell another Stephen Malkmus routine.

There are five or six tracks on *Shootenanny!* that could serve as intro or outro music for troubled teen movies, from the relatively upbeat and jangly "Saturday Morning," with lyrics like, "The parents are sleeping soundly/ The neighbors are dead as wood/ I'm getting up and coming over/ We gotta rock the neighborhood," or the stomping "All In A Day's Work," with its pronouncements that "When I was born the doctor said/ There's something wrong with that baby's head." Unfortunately, Everett's *Music From The Motion Picture Levity* is mostly a collection of disconnected textural instrumentals that lead nowhere (which hopefully will complement the action of the film). There are also a few E tunes to be had, including the stripped-down acoustic number "Skywriting," with its "Don't worry about me/ I'm already where I should be" assurances and light guitar strums. Still, it's too bad the *Levity* folks couldn't have scavenged *Shootenanny!* for material—they may have found just the match to set E's career on fire. >>>MATT ASHARE

Link

www.eelstheband.com

www.sonyclassics.com/levity

File Under

Pomo suburban self-deprecating blues

R.I.Y.L.

Beck, Hanson, Stephen Malkmus



ELLIOTT 
Song In The Air Revelation

Elliott was the name of the sickly kid in elementary school who always got beat up at recess, right? Well, imagine that that kid is all grown up, scars and all, and he's learned his way around a guitar and a few effects pedals; he's still kind of sensitive and feels the need to cry or rage about it on occasion. Viewed in this light, Elliott is the perfect moniker for the Louisville four-piece that's just dropped their third full-length. *Song In The Air*, also appropriately titled, uses soaring, atmospheric guitars to lift emo above its earthbound expositions. The deep thoughts can be heavy and cumbersome at times, as

Elliott takes itself a little too seriously (then again, what emo band doesn't?). And the heartwrenching yet ultimately pompous strings on tracks like "Believe" and "Song In The Air" are a bit much. However, the aural maelstrom of "Drag Like Pull," and the sprawling beauty of "Blue Storm" will scramble your brain too much to really care. Elliott has strung together some choice moments seemingly inspired by such classics as U2's *The Unforgettable Fire* and the Verve's *A Storm In Heaven*, then turned up the wattage. Ultimately, the band, like the kid, wants to channel its pain into kicking your ass. And ultimately, Elliott does. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

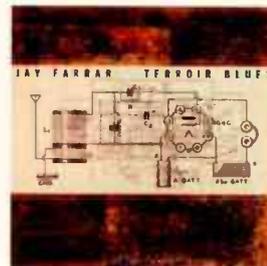
www.elliottintransit.com

File Under

Emosphere

R.I.Y.L.

Voyager One, Sunny Day Real Estate, U2's *The Unforgettable Fire*, early Catherine Wheel



JAY FARRAR
Terroir Blues Act/Resist

Unfair as comparisons between Jay Farrar's post-Uncle Tupelo output and that of more celebrated ex-bandmate Jeff Tweedy may be, they're also inevitable. Farrar's second outing since disbanding Son Volt may not occupy the fitfully experimental territory that's made Tweedy's Wilco into post-alt-country golden boys, but it definitely stakes out an adjoining plot. Both are bent on fragmenting—sometimes even ruining—their rootsy songcraft, but Farrar's approach is far more cautious. Except for brief sound-collages ("Space Junk I-IV")

that punctuate the disc, nearly every track is built on a foundation of earthy acoustic strumming and bearish, melismatic vocals (a dead ringer for Richard Buckner's). The abstract touches and historical references ("11th and 12th century ceremonial sinners") in Farrar's lyrics pull intriguingly against the music's rustic feel, but they're often buried in dirgelike performances and murky production ideas. Some additions work wonderfully: Jon Wurster's drumming and Eric Heywood's pedal steel make the nearly rocking "All Of Your Might" a standout. Others, like the tuneless recorder accompanying "Out On The Road," seem merely indulgent. The oddest moment comes early: "Hard Is The Fall," which superimposes two unsynchronized takes to blurry, headache-inducing effect. Farrar, to his credit, knows this is a lot to swallow: *Terroir Blues* ends with straighter, more effective alternate versions of this song and three others. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.jayfarrar.net

File Under

Deconstructed Americana

R.I.Y.L.

Son Volt, Richard Buckner, quieter R.E.M.



FEEDER

COMFORT IN SOUND



Link

www.feederweb.com

File Under

Smart big, dumb rock

R.I.Y.L.

Remy Zero, Foo Fighters,
Longwave, Stereophonics

FEEDER

Comfort In Sound Universal

Big dumb rock doesn't have to be big or dumb. As one of the latest British acts to touch down on American soil, Feeder manages slick, radio-ready rock without the schlock. And God bless 'em, that's pretty uncommon these days. *Comfort In Sound* is the band's first release following the suicide of founding drummer Jon Lee. And while the loss of a friend and band-mate is life-changing, in this case it hasn't been career-destroying. (Quite the opposite, actually: This introspective though not introverted rock record with a heart is pushing Gold in the

U.K.) *Comfort In Sound* comes out of the box loud and strong, channeling early Foo Fighters on rockers like "Come Back Around" and "Helium." The former actually veers dangerously close to Tsar's glam-lite "Calling All Destroyers" as well. The guitars are soon peeled away to reveal aching vocals draped over smart hooks, and Feeder settles into the more melodic, pensive vibe mined by the Candy Skins and more recently Longwave. The wondrous "Quick Fade" and "Love Pollution" are prime examples of their more poignant side. To preserve the album's flow (and your ears), the distorted mess that is "Godzilla" should be programmed out of the album's sequence. Otherwise, Feeder has put together one of the smarter rock records to find store shelves in awhile. >>>NORM ELROD



Link

www.jetsetrecords.com

File Under

Drunken carnival punk

R.I.Y.L.

Tom Waits' *Rain Dogs*,
Morphine, Squirrel Nut
Zippers, Kurt Weill

FIREWATER

The Man On The Burning Tightrope Jetset

Few bands have embraced the Kurt Weill-on-acid-at-a-carnival sound of Tom Waits' mid-'80s work as wholeheartedly as New York-based Firewater. Of course, the band's influences don't stop there—they incorporate bits of Klezmer, no-wave and gypsy music, as well as borrowing the drunken-wedding-band template of the Pogues—but Waits remains inescapably front-and-center. Like Waits, frontman Tod A.'s voice is full of cigarette smoke and whisky, his melodies can turn on a dime from aggressive to wistful and his songs are highly theatrical fables of the surreal. He even chooses to surround his voice

with the same marimbas, saxophones and spiky guitars that inhabit Waits' *Swordfishtrombones* and *Rain Dogs*. Some of the songs, particularly "Too Many Angels" and "The Man On The Burning Tightrope," are memorable, if derivative, compositions, but by following so closely in Waits' footsteps, Tod A. is setting himself up for direct comparison. He inevitably suffers as a result, lacking the gravitas and pathos that marks Waits' music work. The best track here, "Anything At All," is actually free of Waits' influence, sounding a good deal more like an artier version of Smashmouth. As for the rest, there's a reason that this review mentions Tom Waits seven times, and Tod A. only twice: Ain't nothing like the real thing, baby. >>>THOMAS BARTLETT

ILYA

Poise Is The Greater Architect

"Like a never-ceasing drizzle chilling your skin, it is impossible to ignore the unyielding power behind the tender-but-insistent energy of ILYA."
-CMJ NewMusicMonthly

"An alluring mix of trip hop, ambient jazz and electronica, all supported by breathy female vocals."
-Alternative Press



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World Radio History



FLESHTONES

Do You Swing? Yep Roc

Formed in Queens, New York in 1976, the Fleshtones have attended every garage-rock revival the past quarter century has offered. They're still revered by those who understand the music's peculiar synergy of sloppy, hyperkinetic rhythms, Farfisa organ and adolescent chutzpah. Sadly, however, they seem predestined for 'journeyman' status no matter how profoundly authoritative the attack. The Hives co-opted the band's "power stance" stage moves and countless groups currently traverse the same elementary rock 'n' roll terrain. Few do

it with the same verve and conviction, however. Singer Peter Zarella, coming off like Iggy Pop's incorrigible kid brother, leads the group from the manic hysteria range, speeding up Led Zep's "Communication Breakdown," (with a final celebratory pit stop into "Whole Lotta Love"), cheerleading with strategically placed punctual grunts and interjections of crazed harmonica throughout. The band's secret weapon remains their R&B roots ("Hard Lovin' Man," "Right On Woman"). Southern Culture's Rick Miller recorded the album with as much vintage equipment that's survived at his North Carolina studio and the band showed up to settle old scores. There's an extra chip on their shoulder. The question "Do You Swing?" at the album's open, is less sexual come-on than direct challenge to any band thinking of usurping the Fleshtones' thunder. In the barely 30 minutes of music here (no filler), the band make quick work of the new competition. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link

www.fleshtones.org

File Under

Garage rock for the ages

R.I.Y.L.

The Hives, the Lyres, Thee Headcoats



FRANCINE

28 Plastic Blue Versions Of Endings Without You QDivision

Labeling a band's output as "brainy pop" can be something of a backhanded compliment, but the Boston quartet Francine seems to actively court such distinction. Ringleader Clayton Scoble shares Stephen Malkmus' droll mid-register vocal delivery and skewed pop sensibility, absent Pavement's hipper-than-thou aura. Francine's letter-perfect hooks and clever wordplay also recall Fountains Of Wayne—"Silver Plated 606" opens with the line, "You're like a tracer fired from a certain undiscovered Yes record cover-esque landscape," which somehow winds up rhymed with "stocking up on Beta tape." A mellow, jazzy feel separates Francine from these reference points, however. "Inside Joke" sports an airy "Girl From Ipanema" lilt, and the generally sparse arrangements leave plenty of roaming room for Sean Connelly's basslines. Classy and impressive as it sounds, Francine's sophomore effort would benefit from a few more up-tempo tracks to prevent its laconic pacing from fading into pleasant aural wallpaper. The punchier "This Sunday's Revival" immediately stands out, its chorus so catchy that it takes a while to realize the song is about rehabbing a neglected bicycle. Not until the dumbed-down "Ratmobile" does the quartet succumb to the joys of crunchy guitars and straight-ahead fun. For those willing to invest the time, *28 Plastic Blue Versions* is a grower, a disc with depth to spare to reward repeated listenings. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

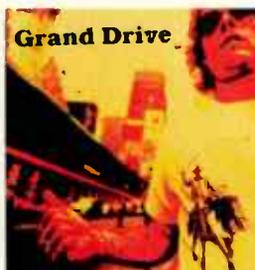
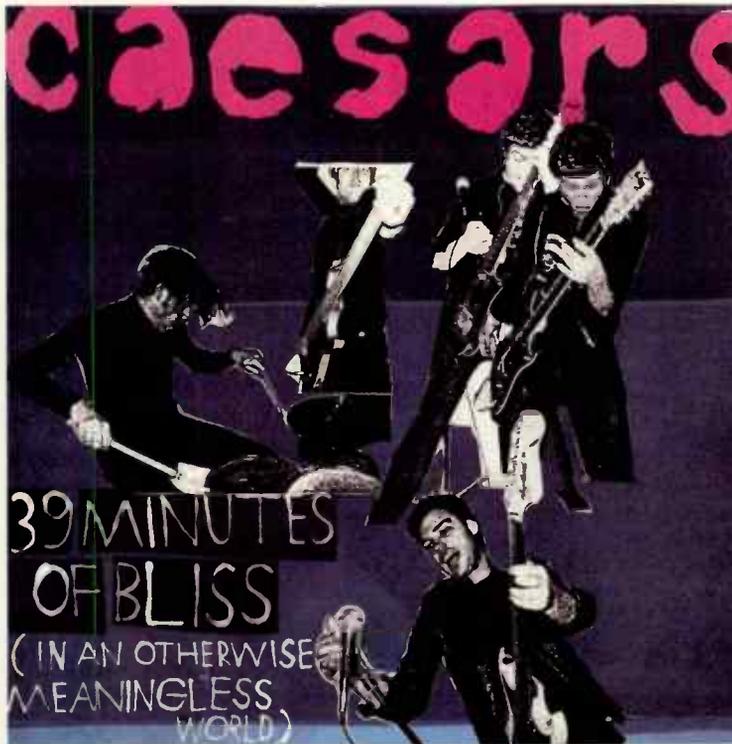
www.qdivision.com/francine

File Under

Subdued yet hooky indie pop

R.I.Y.L.

Death Cab For Cutie, later Pavement, Fountains Of Wayne, recent XTC



Grand Drive

GRAND DRIVE

Grand Drive Private Music/RCA

That nerdy guy in every '80s movie—immaculately pressed tucked-in shirt, greased-down center-part, accountant slacks—who gets scruffed- and hotted-up by the cool girl who saw something underneath that stuffy exterior? British quartet Grand Drive feels a lot like that guy, and listening to their self-titled debut, you wish that ladyfriend would come by, mess up their hair and tear the sleeves off their shirts. There's a nice melodic sense to the disc's 13 songs—Simon & Garfunkel-esque harmonies (especially effective on "Wheels"), impossibly sweet chorus melodies ("Sleepy")—but the production is so staid and stuffy that the record errs on the side of being too nice. The songwriting is impeccable, the playing flawless, and in a John Mayer kind of world that'd work just fine. But while Grand Drive's steering the band directly into MOR territory, they're nowhere near dumb enough to belong there. Aesthetically, the album is secretary rock, but somewhere deep down—in the graceful vocal turns, in the confident and intelligent arrangements—there's something cooler than what was put to wax, and you'll wish you could sand the gaudy varnish off to get a look at the beautiful naked wood. They're an interesting anomaly, in that they interpret Americana through a British atmospheric lens, evoking both rainy London evenings and dry Tennessee afternoons. If they'd just stop evoking Lite FM, they'd be that much grander. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

Link

www.grand-drive.com

File Under

Atmosphericana

R.I.Y.L.

Simon & Garfunkel, Bread, Whiskeytown's *Pneumonia*

One of "THE TOP 10 ACTS FOR 2003." - Q Magazine

"Driving Farfisa-powered garage rock, New York Dolls glam, psychedelic pop and candy-punk heartbreakers...the perfect synthesis of the Ramones and Psychedelic Furs. Marvelous" - NME

Features "Jerk It Out" & "(I'm Gonna) Kick You Out".

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THE JUNIOR PANTHERS

The Junior Panthers *The First Time*

San Francisco's Junior Panthers provide the perfect soundtrack for getting through the dog days of summer: 13 well-crafted, energetic, feel-good pop songs. The band (formerly the Damsels) has clearly done its music-history homework, drawing on a wide range of influences from '60s standards like the Beach Boys all the way to indie-rockers like Sloan. (They cite the latter's *One Chord To Another* as a source of both inspiration and their bandname.) The sweet vocal harmonies of the opener "MG/Sec" perfectly set the scene and get toes tap-

ping and heads bobbing in no time flat; "California"'s dirty guitar licks and infectious lyrics create a pure pop gem that testifies to the band's ability to combine elements of Beach Boys rock, shoegazey swirl and power pop. "Midway" brings to mind the sugarcoated indie-pop of Imperial Teen, with sporadic handclaps, rumbling basslines and a chorus that will stick in your head like bubblegum in the tread of a pair of Chuck Taylors. "Astray Holiday," one of two strummy acoustic tracks, features the most reflective lyrics on the album, while the ironically titled "Damsels Getaway" presents a band embracing its potential and chance at a fresh start. These panthers are pretty tame, but their purr is rather pleasing. >>>CAROLINE BOROLLA

Link

www.juniorpanthers.com

File Under

Sweet sounds of summer

R.I.Y.L.

Saturday Looks Good To Me,

Sloan, Imperial Teen



KARSH KALE

Liberation *Six Degrees*

Karsh Kale (pronounced *Kursh Kuh-lay*) has learned how to make a solo album, it seems. His debut *Realize* was a patchy affair (curiously, *Redesign: Realize Remixed* was more satisfying), but this time around he's nailed it perfectly. At times, as on the title cut and "GK2," the textures are so thick you can almost cut them; elsewhere, there's a gorgeous lyricism when he employs the strings of the Madras Chamber Orchestra—the perfectly titled "Epic" is a prime example. For most of the record, the thread holding everything together is its Indian inflection, be it in instru-

ments, voices or rhythms. That only breaks in "Dirty Fellow," which aims directly at the dancefloor in its muddy analog squelches. Throughout the disc, pieces change and develop, flowing like rivers of sound, such as "Milan," which travels across several different terrains before its lyrical end. The album is heavier on programming than in live instrumentation. This is especially true of its beats, which is perhaps odd for a man who makes his living as a drummer with *Tabla Beat Science* and Talvin Singh's band; there is some inspired tabla playing, though. With *Liberation*, Kale has become an alchemist, turning cultures East and West and sounds analog and digital into musical magic. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.karshkale.com

File Under

Digital India

R.I.Y.L.

Talvin Singh, Bollywood music,

State of Bengal

One of "10 Bands On The Brink" — ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

DRIVE BY TRUCKERS

DECORATION DAY



"SHE AIN'T REVVED
TIL THE RODS ARE
THROWN"

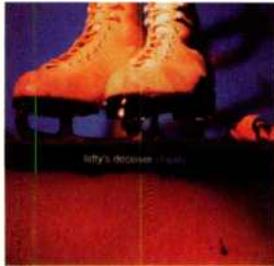


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LEFTY'S DECEIVER

Cheats My Pal God

The audible influences on the Philly trio's fourth album form a cherry-picked checklist of mid- to late-'90 indie-rock. Their intricate musicianship, sudden dynamic shifts, and Mike Kennedy's slipped-disc drumming all indicate close study of the tangled sophistication of Joan Of Arc and Rodan (or their extended families). But they're also no strangers to the economical song-structures of Superchunk and the jittery momentum of late-vintage Unrest. Though the roots of their sound are easy to trace, *Cheats* makes it their own, largely thanks to new recruit

Kristine Muller's inventive bass playing and guitarist Andy Williams' slow-developing vocal lines, which act on the songs' hyperactive arrangements like so much melodic Ritalin. Williams' lyrics can be awkward ("We make decisions that equate like long division"), but he seems incapable of empty posturing, and the September 11th-themed "Cincinnati On Replay" is a bravely small-scale response to huge events. The high point is the title track, a stew of phrases about personal debt and love of music-making which mimes Williams' verbal confusion by setting the disc's sweetest vocal hook ("We can practice/ We can play our songs") smack between its harshest distortion and trickiest "Chicago Sound" rhythms. It's a little like a set by a particularly good college radio DJ: You might guess which bands she's going to play, but not their order. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.leftysdeceiver.com

File Under

Dated but undaunted

R.I.Y.L.

Poivo, June Of '44, Lungfish, Honor Role



LILLIX

Falling Uphill Maverick

If Avril is Alanis all over again (or Green Day for girls?), then Lillix are a hipper Hanson, with attitude. And, if the Evin sisters—guitarist Tasha-Ray and keyboardist Lacey-Lee—aren't pissed enough to be punk, well, they've got enough angst to be an alternative to Britney's boobs and Christina's curves. More importantly, they're young (only recent recruit, drummer Kim Urhahn, is over 20), they're pretty and not only do they play their own instruments, but the singing trio of the sisters Evin and bassist Louise Burns even sorta write their own songs. They do get help from

Link

www.lillix.com

File Under

Good girls gone bad

R.I.Y.L.

Avril Lavigne, t.A.T.u., Alanis Morissette

alterna-experts, including the ubiquitous Matrix, Glen Ballard and Linda Perry, and from the Romantics, whose "What I Like About You" gets girl-punked up. Accessorizing with Sex Pistols T-shirts is bound to bother punk purists, especially since the salient sugary harmonies of "Invisible" (as in "I don't want to be...") would be pure kiddie corn if it weren't for the bristling guitars that lend the chorus its serrated edge. But what would you prefer for a teen role model: cheerleader Britney falling for another dashing quarterback or a foursome fierce enough to write about the realities of their messy world, even if that means bitching about that "time of the month"? >>>MATT ASHARE

FRANCINE

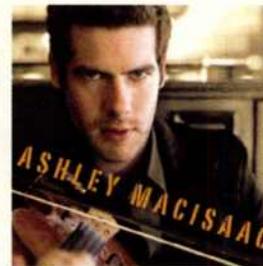
28 PLASTIC BLUE VERSIONS OF ENDINGS WITHOUT YOU

"The album reestablishes Scoble as one of this city's most imaginative songwriters, and Francine—a band bent on subverting the ordinary—as one of its most fetchingly idiosyncratic."

Jonathan Perry
-The Boston Globe

Producer John Dragonetti (Jack Drag) brings out 28's textured, mod stylings on this follow-up to the band's successful 40 on a Fall Day. The new album is Francine at their most innovative, moody, and addictive.

Available at your local record store and www.qdivision.com



ASHLEY MACISAAC

Ashley MacIsaac Decca

Lift your kilt on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, as Cape Breton fiddler Ashley MacIsaac did in 1997, grab even more controversy with tales of crack addiction, onstage antics and financial ruin, and it's nearly impossible to refocus public attention on your music. MacIsaac nevertheless attempts just that on his self-titled fifth disc, produced by Roger Greenwald (No Doubt, Nils Lofgren) and Kevin Killen (U2, Elvis Costello). While the disc is clearly a bid for greater mainstream appeal for a musician best known for his work with Philip Glass, Paul Simon

Link

www.ashleymacisaac.com

File Under

Fiddlas with attitude

R.I.Y.L.

Black 47, Natalie MacMaster

and the Chieftains, its cheerful eclecticism avoids patronizing any one audience. MacIsaac puts his vocals out front on tracks like a U2-esque version of Nick Drake's "Cello Song," the catchy acoustic-electric ballad "Lay Me Down," the hard-driving rocker "I Don't Need This" and the twangy, sarcastic "Captain America." His singing is intriguing, if not quite distinctive. Wings hit "Mull Of Kintyre," as sung by Dallas Smith, is as stately and majestic as ever, and MacIsaac and vocalist Terry Radigan douse the dirge-speed "The Wedding Funeral" with appealing atmospheric effects; the latter tune comes off as a lost Sundays track. Fans of rootsier music, though, may be most taken by the disc's instrumentals, "Chorus Jig/The King's Reel" and the unaccompanied "Bog An Login." MacIsaac is nothing if not an original. >>>PHILIP BOOTH



JAMES MATHUS KNOCKDOWN SOCIETY

Stop And Let The Devil Ride Fast Horse

Jimbo Mathus, ex-Metal Flake Mother and founder of the Squirrel Nut Zippers, has turned to something a good deal more elemental with his Knockdown Society. A native of Clarksdale, Mississippi, Mathus has long been keen on Mississippi hill country blues. In 2001, he put together a trio with Stu Cole and Nate Stalfa and tracked the rowdy collection of juke-joint blues tunes *National Antiseptic*; *Stop And Let The Devil Ride* takes up where *Antiseptic* left off and improves on the formula. Mathus' feel for the gutbucket vibe of hill country blues is very real;

[Link](#)

www.jamesmathus.com

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[Juke joint Jimbo](#)

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

[North Mississippi AllStars, R.L](#)

[Burnside, Junior Kimbrough](#)

he's comfortable enough with the style that his nine originals sidle up nicely to the disc's three covers. The visceral punch of songs such as "Mean Old Line," "Dope Sniffing Dog" and their cover of "How Long" invoke the bucket-of-blood ambiance of backwoods Mississippi dance joints. The slow drag tunes "Love I Miss Loving" and "Get Back To You" are beautifully done and these provide soulful moments (largely absent from *Antiseptic*) are welcome. Mathus, who assisted ably with Buddy Guy's return to form on his last two records, and his bandmates are deep in these blues. *Stop And Let The Devil Ride* is earthy, uncompromising blues, in the best tradition of legends like Junior Kimbrough. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK



MINK LUNGS

I'll Take It Arena Rock Recording Co.

Brooklyn's Mink Lungs take their silliness very seriously. *I'll Take It*, like 2001's *The Better Button*, trips from style to style, from vocalist to vocalist, from ironic scenario to comic detail, in two- and three-minute bursts so quick that the jokes don't outstay their welcome. But the Lungs' bag of tricks also contains hooks galore: Like Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard, brothers Gian Carlo and Tim Feleppa love exhuming big riffs, from the psychedelic '60s and the glam-rock '70s especially, that are fun in and of themselves. "Men In Belted Sweaters," a tribute to just that,

[Link](#)

www.minklungs.com

[File Under](#)

[Psychedelic silliness](#)

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

["Vaseline"-era Flaming Lips, Pixies, Camper Van Beethoven](#)

is a terse, fist-pumping anthem; "The Man Downstairs," sung by bassist Jennifer "Miss Frosty" Hoopes, features a great note-bending guitar line; "Catch Me" is a bubbly summer song with wah-wah pedal effects. *I'll Take It* contains enough references to flying saucers and x-ray guns, enough gratuitous sexual details (glimpses of "underwear with little red hearts" and of "Bunny's tits" are nothing more than adolescent titillation), and enough exaggerated voices (especially the Cookie Monster vocals of "Black Balloon") to fill a B-movie marathon. Not everything works: The answering machine message that begins "Pugnose Apt." is an annoyance, but even that introduces one of the album's best garage-psych workouts. *I'll Take It* is a jibe- and riff-riddled blast. >>>STEVE KLINGE



MONO

One Step More And You Die

Arena Rock Recording Co.

This shaggy-haired Japanese instrumental quartet isn't scaling any uncharted mountaintops, but their sophomore release does make a valiant journey from a trickling river of sound to a bold plateau of eardrum-busting guitar rock. *One Step More And You Die* begins with a gentle soundscape, as lovely as a loose-limbed Tristeza tune. In the course of a sprawling 16-minute anthem called "Com (?)" (yeah, somebody's having fun with English grammar), the sound builds up and then falls nearly silent before exploding into a thrashing blaze. The meaning behind

[Link](#)

www.arenarockrecordingco.com/

[mono](#)

[File Under](#)

[Apocalyptic Japanese post-rock](#)

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

[Mogwai, Maserati, the films of](#)

[Akira Kurosawa](#)

this guitar carnage and seething white noise is cloaked in nonsensical song titles like "Mopish Morning, Halation Wiper" and the single line of text on the CD casing, which reads like a poorly translated haiku, "Walking cloud and deep red sky, flag fluttered and the sun shined!" Though they come across like a more earthbound version of Mogwai or less sexy take on Maserati's climatic rock, some sources say that the volatile doom of the record is an avant-garde rehashing of Japan's nuclear devastation at the end of World War II. The passive-aggressive guitars may never tell, but coming from the anguished youth of a culture that survived two nuclear bombs and then went on to invent karaoke, it could just be a form of backlash against sing-along pop ballads. >>>KARA ZUARO



Clem Snide SOFT SPOT



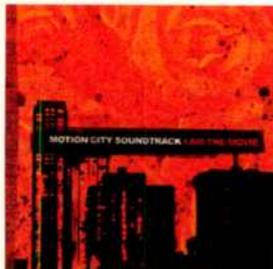
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MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK

I Am The Movie Epitaph

Software engineers call them updates, the successive tweaks and modifications made to a program when a problem is discovered somewhere in the computer code. Not a big deal, really. Problem comes up, you figure out a fix, throw a patch up on a website and the compuniverse rolls on after a few thousand downloads with barely a hiccup. Music's different, though. Once the album's mastered, pressed and shipped there's almost no hitting the reset button. Be grateful, then, that Minneapolis' Motion City Soundtrack got a chance to overhaul and add four

tracks to *I Am The Movie* when Epitaph signed them last year. What had been a promising but otherwise unremarkable emo-punk album now sounds like a pop-rock knockout thanks to the album's second half, where most of the new tracks were added. The topper is "Perfect Teeth," a charging, keyboard-bolstered anthem of late '80s suburban memories and "getting drunk on your parents' favorite wine." The only knock on that song and a few others ("Modern Chemistry," "Capital H"), is that they teeter on the cusp of an endorphin-releasing sense of pop euphoria before backing away and trotting to a close. But anticipation for the big payoff is a hallmark of good showmanship, and all 14 tracks showcase a knack for quirky hooks set atop soaring guitars that makes the wait for MCS's sophomore effort almost unbearable. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link
www.motioncitysoundtrack.com
File Under
Perfect punk V2.0
R.I.Y.L.
Jimmy Eat World, Weezer,
Blink-182



OUTRAGEOUS CHERRY

Supernatural Equinox Rainbow Quartz

Every once in a while a band comes along with a disc that so blithely ignores the last three decades of popular music, and does so with such panache, that you might as well give up tracing their obscure lineage and just embrace them for the phenomenon they are. Case in point: Detroit's Outrageous Cherry releases *Supernatural Equinox* and, as far as they're concerned, Syd Barrett has still not given up Pink Floyd for merry-scary-land. Frontman, songwriter and producer Matthew Smith certainly mines a wide pool of influences, including (among many others)

psych-rock, garage and Monkees B-Sides, but the album's overriding pop sensibility makes all-knowing eclecticism unnecessary for enjoyment of its robust offering of memorable tunes. "If You Want Me" is a fiendishly catchy little rocker with neatly poised harmonies winding through the tight yet inventive arrangement, and the perfectly psych-tinged "Saturday Afternoon" (the name alone recalls London's trip-rock of the late '60s) betrays Smith's anachronistic tendencies with the lyrics, "It's 1970 now, flower power is dead," and a refrain that would fit comfortably into many a Kinks record. But don't be put off by these forays into yesterday's sounds—this time-traveling album visits the future as well as the past, and Outrageous Cherry has created a unique song cycle that does much more than just rehash the sound it memorializes. >>>KARL WACHTER

Link
www.rainbowquartz.com
File Under
Syd Anansi
R.I.Y.L.
Early Pink Floyd, the Stone
Roses, the White Stripes

The Contrast
"Wireless Days"
"A refreshing blast of guitar pop reminiscent of the Smithereens and Sugar. A regular spin on Little Steven's Underground Garage"

Sidonie
"Let it Flow"
"Gorgeous harmonies, psychedelic jangle with elements of Traffic, early Stone Roses and the Divine Comedy."

The Telepathic Butterflies
"Introducing"
"...equal parts jangle, psychedelia, melody and harmony, the Butterflies are pure Rainbow Quartz."

Outrageous Cherry
"Supernatural Equinox"
"Detroit's avante psychedelic garage practitioners meld spaced-out rockers, bubblegum ballads, extra-terrestrial acid folk and deep fissures of the heaviest, way-out psychedelia ever digitized. This could well be Matt Smith's strongest composition to date."

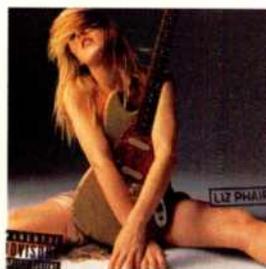
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LIZ PHAIR 

Exile In Guyville Capitol

If you're among the minority who think *Exile In Guyville* was more intriguing novelty than cultural revelation, then you'll be neither excited nor disappointed by Phair's first non-Matador release. Sure, four albums in 12 years is a Paul Simon-defying rate of output, five songs share co-writing credits and hooking up with the Matrix for production to emulate Avril Lavigne's pop-punk strategy isn't artistic progression. But if you can get past Phair's breaking with the indie-rock ranks, many of the tunes ("Extraordinary," "Firewalker") are catchier than much of *Whipsmart* or *Whitechocolatespaceegg*. Granted, "Rock Me" doesn't rock (though it sets her on the path of Jerry Lee Lewis, dropping her own name into the song: nice.). "H.W.C." ("Hot White Cum," folks), however, is a logical follow-up love-song from the self-anointed "blow-job queen." "Little Digger" channels her motherhood mode. And if she wants to compare her lover to her favorite underwear, well, isn't everyone's body a wonderland of weird and poor comparisons these days? If her *Exile* really was a song-by-song response to the Rolling Stones' *Exile On Main Street* and not Matador Records' marketing department working overtime, then this self-titled release is her answer to the Stones' *Black & Blue*—a professional, uneven collection that ranges from very good to mildly uninspired. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link
www.lizphair.com
File Under
Professional pop music
R.I.Y.L.
Mary Lou Lord, Avril Lavigne



PRINCE PAUL

Politics Of The Business *Razor & Tie*

Prince Paul is a genius. Among his other accomplishments, he is credited with creating the rap skit (see De La Soul's *Three Feet High And Rising* and *De La Soul Is Dead* for excellent examples). So it's no surprise that for his latest disc, he gets comedians Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock in on the jokes. But these jokes have a point—*Politics Of The Business* is a music-industry concept album, the theme of which is best summed up on "Controversial Headlines": "It's not about your ad, record sales or commercial/ It's more about what the people find controversial." Chuck D, Ice-T and

Link

www.princepaulonline.com

File Under

Beat-driven hip-hop industry tales

R.I.Y.L.

De La Soul, Gang Starr, MF Doom

DJ Premier dish industry advice, as do Tony Touch, Jean Grae and MF Doom. Paul's beats lay perfectly under vets like De La's Trugoy, GURU, Biz Markie and Chubb Rock. Several songs feature rock-like hooks ("So What," "Drama Queen," "My Life"), and Paul really throws a curve with W. Ellington Felton's "Beautifully Absurd," which is more Cody Chestnut than Kardinal Offishall. "Make Room," with its video-game-inspired beat, and "What I Need" are the most radio-ready, while "People, Places And Things" brings back the good ol' De La days, resurrecting the sound of "Peas Porridge." Be clear: This is mature rap music with a message. >>>JESSICA KOSLOW



RIGHTEOUS BOY

I Sing Because Of You *Stockholm/Future Farmer*

Don't expect sweet, infectious la-la pop from this solo project from Cardigans bassist Magnus Sveningsson. While *I Sing Because Of You* begins on an up note ("Loved Among Friends"), the good vibes rapidly devolve into a mood of introspective space-age isolation emphasized by gruff, drowsy vocals and far-out orchestral lounge-pop. One thing's for sure: Whoever the "you" refers to in the title of this album really must have done a number on Sveningsson. With songs like "No More Love," "I Made It Hard For You To Love Me," "I Feel Apart" and "Lone Among

Link

www.righteousboy.com

File Under

Destroy your sweater

R.I.Y.L.

Leonard Cohen, Beck's Sea Change, Badly Drawn Boy

Friends," you get the feeling Sveningsson is gunning for a modern take on *Frank Sinatra Sings For Only The Lonely*. Shifting from a self-flagellating "I did you wrong" to a self-acquitting "I did no wrong" on the standout "View From A Satellite," he puts a poetic spin on the way perspective changes with time. After a while, the limitations of his sleepy singing style and the moody, background-music melodies show—the songs morph into one big narcotic downer (with the exception of the My Bloody Valentine-inspired "Elephant Man"). While it's not the kind of disc you'd want to, say, play at your engagement party, it's the perfect spin for wallowing in the wee small hours. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK



S.A. SMASH

Smashy Trashy *Definitive Jux*

Why should Nelly have all the fun? Sure Columbus, Ohio's duo du debauchery S.A. Smash would probably rather pop a Budweiser than pop Cris, but these rowdy tear-the-club-up lugs certainly know how to have a good time, even if the literary Def Jux cats they run with are usually in the back of the bar fondling their Phillip K. Dicks. S.A. Smash can't take a shit without smoking a blunt, or chill around your chick without poking her once. Shit, only 11 minutes into the album and they've already misplaced their car keys (no worries, by track 13, Camotau is crashing

Link

www.definitivejux.net

File Under

A.A. MCs

R.I.Y.L.

Tha Alkaholiks, Cage, Copywrite

the car after 12 shots of Cuervo). Although Camo and Metro have pussy and booze on their weed-clouded cerebellum like a hipster-friendly Alkaholiks, their flow is just as thick as their bookish Def Jux brethren. On "I Love To Fuck," they even get the usually introspective and impenetrable Aesop Rock to talk about leaping into the passenger seat and steaming up the car windows over a shivery thump (punctuated with St. Lunatics "Oh!"s, no less) that Lil' Kim could easily spread rhymes over. Pissing on the walls, waving guns, punching the DJ, sticking their dicks in your "What?!", S.A. Smash is the buck-wild-in-the-streets soundtrack to upchuck up all over that Trick Daddy major-label-list-price guilt trip. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



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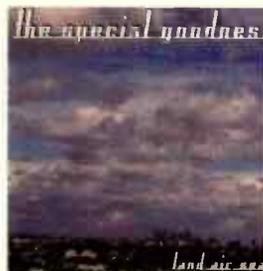


SINGAPORE SLING

The Curse Of Singapore Sling *Stinky*

While it's tempting to conjure up snow-topped glaciers and barren tundra when discussing the music of a so-called Icelandic indie-rock "super-group," Singapore Sling's tunes seem to hail from somewhere deep in the Bermuda Triangle. On "Overdriver," the first track from this quartet's debut, the driving-rain verse gives way to a fuzzy, tidal-wave chorus. Fans of '80s post-punk take heed: this meteorological system often bears a striking resemblance to the minimalist arrangements and reverb-washed productions of the Jesus And Mary Chain. As the voyage continues, twangy guitar lines surf over a throbbing bass and bottomless snare, while singer-songwriter-guitarist Henrik Bjornsson's molar-grinding mumble just barely slips through the claustrophobic storm. Many of the quartet's tracks, such as "Summer Garden," ride the simple beauty of a stark ballad, and give Bjornsson's limited melodic range just enough room to be sweet and endearing. Like images from a camera obscura, the harsh contrast of elements is mesmerizing. But other tunes are just lost in an echo of gratuitous dive-bomb squeal and howling wind, and while the textures are impressive, the overall mission just doesn't hold together. Although Singapore Sling hardly deserves the supergroup moniker (and you probably haven't heard of the bands that the members also belong to anyway), it ably navigates the choppy screeches more often than not. >>>NEIL GLADSTONE

Link
www.stinkyrecords.com
 File Under
 Post-punk noir
 R.I.Y.L.
 Velvet Underground, Luna,
 Jesus And Mary Chain



THE SPECIAL GOODNESS

Land Air Sea *The Control Group*

How many members of Weezer does it take to make a record that could fit comfortably into their existing catalogue? Apparently only one. Coming from the unlikely source of drummer Pat Wilson, the Special Goodness is a fully realized side project that is nearly on par with some of Weezer's more recent stripped-down material. Chock full of chunky riffs, arresting hooks and the straight-shooting beats of former Rocket From The Crypt drummer Atom Willard, *Land Air Sea* is a pleasant surprise with no hype and plenty of heart. Wilson has put in time on back-

Link
www.thespecialgoodness.com
 File Under
 Drummers have feelings too
 R.I.Y.L.
 Weezer, the Space Twins,
 Ben Kweller

ing vocals in the past, but in stepping up to the front, he proves to be a solid rock singer who on a number of occasions bears a striking melodic similarity to his crony Rivers Cuomo. Tunes like "N.F.A." and "Oops" are rooted in pure sing-along pop and then dusted with ample amounts of hard rocking guitars, while more emotional tunes like "Whatever's Going On," successfully merge subdued songwriting and melodious vocals without totally wimping out. Wilson manages to take the Special Goodness in a slightly more interesting musical direction than the straight pop of his full time act's recent work, and though it lacks the former's unflinching knack for unforgettable refrains, it comes pretty damn close. >>>PETER O'ANGELO

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SPYMOB

Sitting Around Keeping Score *Star Trek-Arista*

Toughness in rock is usually measured in decibels and distortion. But imagine the gut-check when you first pop your bald little head up from behind your Fender Rhodes to sing lyrics that don't rhyme in your songs redolent of Todd Rundgren and Steely Dan. Tough, right? It would help, certainly, to carry the imprimatur of the Neptunes, as Spymob does, signed to the production uber-duo's imprint and serving as the backing band for N.E.R.D. on record and on tour. Still, for all its overt catchiness, *Sitting Around Keeping Score* may take a couple of

Link
www.spymob.com
 File Under
 High-protein smoothie
 R.I.Y.L.
 Ben Folds, Todd Rundgren,
 Steely Dan

listens, if only to retrain your ears. (Enjoyment goes up in a big way if you're a word nerd.) The songs have that Steely Dan way of couching desperation and weirdness with smoothness and complexity, like the loser ballad "I Still Live At Home," or lyrics like, "Sometimes when we're walking down the sidewalk/ I wish I was fixed up so I didn't have all of these feelings/ That keep me in a permanent frustrated state" ("It Gets Me Going"). Some of the irony and observations can be a bit arch, and pretty doesn't always equal memorable, as with the melody to the otherwise poignant shared-custody song, "National Holidays." But more often, the narratives and melodies make for a big payoff. Maybe Spymob isn't your idea of hip, but, you know, tough. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON



STARFLYER 59

Old Tooth & Nail

Look at the title of Californians Starflyer 59's latest offering: Are they referring to the sound, or the band itself? With more than a decade together, in rock band-years SF59 is a bona fide geezer. And the sonic esthetic of *Old*? Pretty, well, not modern—even more so than the band's previous releases. Whatever they're referring to, it should be looked at as a positive thing. The band's longevity has built them into seasoned musicians and songcrafters, and the personality the record reflects feels old as in familiar, comfortable, wise—not outdated.

Starflyer's version of recalling the sounds of the past dips into miserabilist pop: Tastes of the Cure and the The run rampant, and the shoegazery flavors of their past work still play prominently. But everything on *Old* feels more planned, thought-out, mature. An unexpected rhythmic break in opener "Underneath" almost smacks of the break in "My Sharona," and it's a testament to their growth that they can shift something like that seamlessly and beautifully. Starflyer main man Jason Martin has always had the sound right—he's been crafting albums painted with tasteful atmospheres all along—but with *Old*, he's really found the songs to drive those sounds home. While it's arguably their strongest effort, it still has that cerebral quality that's locked them to a niche—but it's a niche that, deservedly, they'll continue to be heroes in. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

Link

www.starflyer59.net

File Under

Keep the old

R.I.Y.L.

Swervedriver, the Cure, the Catherine Wheel, the The



SUMMER HYMNS

Clemency Misra

When we last left Summer Hymns, the Athens-based psych-folk collective was sending us off with an IDM lullaby, "The Daybreak," the gorgeously odd goodbye of 2001's *A Celebratory Arm Gesture*. The Hymns' third LP, *Clemency*, never follows up that promising departure, and that's just the start of the disc's disappointments. Between albums, the band lost three members, including Of Montreal's Derek Almsted and Dottie Alexander, effectively cutting any ties to the Elephant Six collective. Singer/songwriter Zachary Gresham's gentle vocals are still heartbreaking and far from twee, but

many of the tunes contently fall into sonnambulist alt-country territory. Here the Hymns are consistent to a fault, rarely hitting the delirious heights they did when mixing genres on their first two records. Now, that's only occasional, like when they're marrying crunchy analog keys with a Credence riff in "Upon Your Face," and for letting a ballsy lead guitar and bumbling banjo coexist peacefully in "Couleta County." The record peaks during "Eye's," in which Gresham rhapsodizes things seen and unseen while the ambient track's organ moans without pause. The beauty of that agnostic gospel is foiled when "Pete Rose Affinity," bombastically charges in. The shoddy transition, though, is one of the record's few moments that doesn't seem entirely safe. It's as appropriate as it is unfortunate that in striving for clemency, Summer Hymns turn out results that are just fair. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

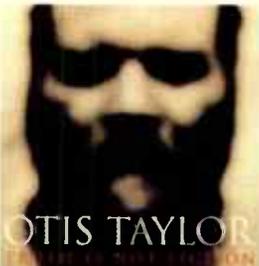
www.summerhymns.com

File Under

Dog days of psychedelia

R.I.Y.L.

Mercury Rev, Smog, Wilco, Grandaddy



OTIS TAYLOR

Truth Is Not Fiction Telarc

To start with an assertion: Otis Taylor is the best, most original bluesman around today. In a world all too often characterized by 12-bar shuffles, blaring Chicago-style guitar, or the gut-bucket sounds of the Delta, he's an iconoclast. His last two albums established him as a major figure in blues; *Truth Is Not Fiction* vaults him to the top. Accompanied by electric guitar and bass (no drums), Taylor's songs tell dark stories through naked images, whether it's the Native American family choosing suicide in "Kitchen Towel," or a guard in "House Of The Crosses" who

tries to bathe away the evil every day. Like Nick Cave, Taylor is intense and unsparing in his portrayals of emotion—and like Cave, he dives deep into the heart, resurfacing with the kernels of truth that lie within. His music and words can be almost primal at times—"Shakie's Gone," for example, about a slave family mourning their father's death is little more than a wail—but the feeling is always eloquent. In Taylor's world, life is a run down a dead-end alley. Even when he's goofing around, as on the standard "Baby Please Don't Go," there's an urgent edge of desperation to his delivery that makes it more than just another cover. The blues isn't dying. With Taylor, it's been reborn for the 21st century. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.otistaylor.com

File Under

The real folk blues

R.I.Y.L.

Nick Cave, Robert Johnson, John Lee Hooker

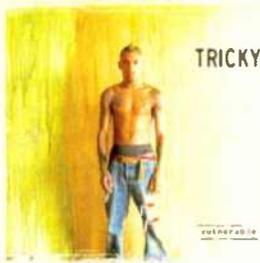


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★★★★ - Blender



TRICKY

Vulnerable Anti-

Tricky probably never foresaw how appropriate his name would become, back when he was a dress-wearing tripp-hopper turning out some of the most desolate tunage ever to emerge from Britain's post-rave diaspora. What happened? Somewhere along the line, his pre-millennium tension turned into post-millennium twaddle: Witness 2001's execrable *Blowback*, an ill-considered embrace of pop stardom complete with cameos from Live, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Cyndi Lauper. *Vulnerable* seems to be Tricky's attempt to come to terms with his

descent into irrelevance, wrapping a distinct pop appeal—Costanza Francavilla's breathy, come-hither intimations on "Stay," for instance—inside the old, familiar paranoia. The good news is that he goes a long way toward redeeming himself. Reining in his collaborative ambitions works wonders, paring back the vocals to just Francavilla's sultry whisper and his own gravelly growl; the two voices almost always shadow each other like wary, hungry lovers. Tricky's production could benefit from such restraint; too often the mish-mash of guitars, drum machines, '80s synths and swirling dub delay just confuse. On "How High," metal guitars obliterate an intriguing backwards flutter that, left alone, could have made something majestically spooky out of the song. Elsewhere, though, the eclecticism ain't all bad: A petulant harmonica on "Ice Pick" erupts like a bolt from the subconscious, suggesting that the inside of Tricky's head is a strange place to be indeed. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

www.trickyonline.com

File Under

Befuddled Tricky noisemaker

R.I.Y.L.

Morcheeba, Lamb,

Massive Attack



TURBONEGRO

Scandinavian Leather Burning Heart/Epitaph

Inventory time. We've got black cover art featuring what can best be surmised as a rodent skeleton fellating itself, an album title that more than winkingly suggests kinky Euro-bondage and songs called "Blizzard Of Flames" and "Drenched In Blood (D.I.B.)." "Oh man," you think, "this is gonna be some evil stuff. Some real fuckin' call-the-Pope-and-bring-the-holy-water type of shit." So you press "play" and get... corny death punk?! That swerve is expected given Turbonegro's pedigree for dirty, fast rock, but *Scandinavian Leather* disappoints more for how it delivers than

Link

www.turbonegro.com

File Under

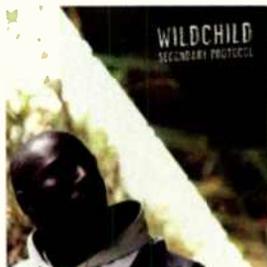
A lame rock 'n' roll swindle

R.I.Y.L.

The Misfits, D Generation,

A.F.I.

what it delivers. The lyrics here are full of the rogue depravity you'd expect, but the music is all Butch Vig-shiny—not at all befitting Hank Von Helvete's declarations of "All aboard// I need a fucking orgasm!" on "Train Of Flesh." It's like getting Dream Theater pomp when a Motörhead kick to the skull is really all that will do. Norway, where Turbonegro call home, has been overshadowed by scads of garage bands from neighboring Sweden for the last year and, fair or not, that zeitgeist has changed our expectations for punk bands from northern Europe for the foreseeable future. And while it'd be folly to fault them purely for staying off the bandwagon, a little of that ride's grease and grime wouldn't hurt the next time out either. >>>CHAO SWIATECKI



WILDCHILD

Secondary Protocol Stones Throw

As a quintessential West Coast underground MC, audacious ex-Lootpacker Wildchild naturally stuffs his solo debut with all the most endearing quintessential West Coast underground MC trappings: a high-velocity delivery dangerously close to the point of incoherence, an unhealthy obsession with true-school ethics, and a perpetual stream of guest spots (Percee P, Planet Asia, Aceyalone, LMNO). But choosing the ever-deranged Madlib and the pragmatic Oh No to split production duties provides an ill juxtaposition, elevating Wildchild's dense verbiage high above brazenly modest beats that are no Boom and all Bap.

Link

www.stonesthrow.com/wildchild

File Under

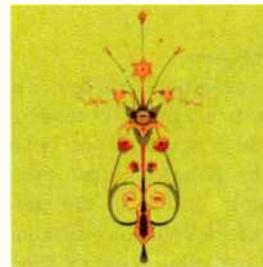
Def Juxtapositions

R.I.Y.L.

Lootpack, Cali Agents,

Aceyalone

Madlib (the Andre 3000 to Wildchild's Big Boi) erects beats so amorphous that they often sound merely implied. On "Hands Up," Wildchild's bustling waterfall flow is unchained over an occasional thump, a lo-fi snap and a dusty shaker, with some horn line bleating off in the back like a cigarette left burning in the Blue Note bathroom (meanwhile, Wildchild just wants you to put your hands in the air). Oh No laces "The Come Off" with a bongo's skeleton, some utilitarian bass and a coy shaker while Wildchild, Phil Da Agony and Tha Liks burn mics with arena conviction. Wildchild's boast raps, four-elements screeds and anti-radio tirades may not shift the plate tectonics of Cali's underground, but at least they sound pretty fucking deadly over vibraphones. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



WOVEN HAND

Woven Hand Soundfamilyre

As frontman for 16 Horsepower, David Eugene Edwards reveals himself through desperate alt-country tunes. Woven Hand, his soul-seeking side project, continues to dabble in Americana, but conveys a darker and mystical side of his personality. Their self-titled second record blends together minimal acoustic guitars with mandolins, banjos and organs, resulting in an album full of passionate, rustic songs. Lyrics like "I am nothing without the ghost within" (in the opener "The Good Hand") make the recurring theme of religious introspection obvious from the get-go, while simultaneously somehow invoking memories of Neil Diamond's "Solitary Man"; meanwhile, '70s influences surface on the Bowie-meets-Fever-Tree vocals of "Woven Brother." Edwards and his cohorts deliver an unsurprisingly dark rendition of Bill Withers' oft-covered "Ain't No Sunshine," but then throw the curtains open with "Glass Eye," the album's ray of light—this all-too-short three-minute upbeat folksy jangle will make you believe Edwards has a glimmer of hope in his life after all. *Woven Hand* may be a little impenetrable at first, but its dark bluegrass, folk and Celtic melodies reveal themselves over repeated listens. Those looking for a 16 Horsepower record maybe slightly disappointed, but this semi-solo project is an excellent outlet for Edwards to pour out his soul. >>>CAROLINE BOROLLA

Link

www.16horsepower.com/wovenhand.html

File Under

Deliriously introspective

alt-bluegrass

R.I.Y.L.

Calexico, Mark Knopfler, Nick

Cave, Crooked Fingers

Since 1978, the *CMJ New Music Report* has been the primary source for information and chart data on college, non-commercial and commercial alternative radio airplay.

CMJ

NEW MUSIC REPORT

TOP 75

#1
WHITE STRIPES
ELEPHANT
THIRD MAN/V2



1 THE WHITE STRIPES Elephant <i>Third Man/V2</i>	26 CURSIVE The Ugly Organ <i>Saddle Creek</i>	51 PDRTASTATIC The Summer Of The Shark <i>Merge</i>
2 YD LA TENGDO Summer Sun <i>Matador</i>	27 PLACEBO Sleeping With Ghosts <i>Astralwerks</i>	52 EVAN DANDD Bully In The Bar <i>None</i>
3 THE NEW PDRNDGRAPHERS Electric Version <i>Mint/Matador</i>	28 ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND 2 K-Secretly <i>Canadian</i>	53 THE HIDDEN CAMERAS The Smell Of Our Own Rough Trade/Sanctuary
4 ...TRAIL OF DEAD The Secrets Of Elena's Tomb [EP] <i>Interscope</i>	29 ELECTRIC SIX Fire <i>XL/Beggars Group</i>	54 TURBONEGRO Scandinavian Leather <i>Burning Heart/Epitaph</i>
5 THE STARLIGHT MINTS Built On Squares <i>PIAS America</i>	30 EARLIMART Everyone Down Here <i>Palm Pictures</i>	55 VARIOUS ARTISTS Saddle Creek 50 <i>Saddle Creek</i>
6 STEPHEN MALKMUS Pig Lib <i>Matador</i>	31 RJD2 The Horror <i>Definitive Jux</i>	56 CAT POWER You Are Free <i>Matador</i>
7 GRANDDADDY Sunday Sampler <i>Will/V2</i>	32 LAGWAGON Blaze <i>Fat Wreck Chords</i>	57 AFI Sing The Sorrow <i>Nitro/DreamWorks</i>
8 BLUR Think Tank <i>Virgin</i>	33 THE PDSTAL SERVICE Give Up <i>Sub Pop</i>	58 APHEX TWIN 26 Vixes For Cash <i>Warp</i>
9 THE GOSSIP Movement <i>Kill Rock Stars</i>	34 WHIRLWIND HEAT Do Rabbits Wonder? <i>Third Man/V2</i>	59 THE DEATHRAY DAVIES Midnight At The Black Nail Polish Factory <i>Glurp</i>
10 PREFUSE 73 Omni Word Extinguisher <i>Warp</i>	35 BROADCAST Pendulum <i>Warp</i>	60 DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM Hand Clapper <i>K</i>
11 ARAB STRAP Monday At The Hug And Pint <i>Matador</i>	36 THE ESSEX GREEN The Long Goodbye <i>Merge</i>	61 JACK JOHNSON On And On <i>Moonshine Conspiracy/Universal</i>
12 THE BLACK KEYS Dick Greenleaf <i>Fat Possum/Epitaph</i>	37 TOMAHAWK Mit Gas <i>Ipecac</i>	62 SILVERSTEIN When Broken Is Easily Fixed <i>Victory</i>
13 LUCINDA WILLIAMS World Without Tears <i>Lost Highway</i>	38 THE FAINT Danse Macabre Remixes <i>Saddle Creek/Astralwerks</i>	63 EELS Shotzenanny! <i>DreamWorks</i>
14 PLEASURE FOREVER Alter <i>Sub Pop</i>	39 RISE AGAINST Revolutions Per Minute <i>Fat Wreck Chords</i>	64 MC HONKY I Am The Messiah <i>spinART</i>
15 BEN HARPER Diamonds On The Inside <i>Virgin</i>	40 DEERHODD Apple D <i>5RC/Kill Rock Stars</i>	65 SALTEENS Let Go Of Your Bad Days <i>Drive-In</i>
16 GOLDFRAPP Black Cherry <i>Mute</i>	41 PALOALTO Heroes And Villains <i>American</i>	66 ELLIOTT Song In The Air <i>Revelation</i>
17 PETE YDRN Day I Forgot <i>Columbia</i>	42 BLACK EYES Black Eyes <i>Dischord</i>	67 JAGA JAZZIST Animal Chin [EP] <i>GSL</i>
18 JAYHAWKS Rainy Day Music <i>Lost Highway/American</i>	43 ADULT Anxiety Always <i>Ersatz Audio</i>	68 THE ATARIS So Long <i>Astoria Columbia</i>
19 THE FLAMING LIPS Fight Test [EP] <i>Warner Bros.</i>	44 EL GUAPD Fake French <i>Dischord</i>	69 THE STRATDRD 4 Love And Distortion <i>Jetset</i>
20 MANITOBA Up In Flames <i>Leaf Label/Domino</i>	45 RADIOHEAD "There There" [CD5] <i>Capitol</i>	70 THE DECEMBERISTS Casinways And Cigaretts <i>Hush/Kill Rock Stars</i>
21 THE KILLS Keep On Your Mean Side <i>Rough Trade/Sanctuary</i>	46 ANI DIFRANCO Evolve <i>Righteous Babe</i>	71 IAN MCCULLDCH Slideling <i>spinART</i>
22 IDLEWILD The Remote Part <i>Capitol</i>	47 BLUE MAN GROUP The Complex <i>Lava</i>	72 DANIEL LANDIS Shine <i>Anti-/Epitaph</i>
23 EVDLUTION CDNTRDL CDMMITTEE Plagiarism Nation <i>Seeland</i>	48 BRDKEN SOCIAL SCENE You Forgot It In People <i>Arts And Crafts/Paper Bag</i>	73 SDULIVE Snowlive <i>Blue Note</i>
24 THE LIBERTINES Up The Bracket <i>Rough Trade/Sanctuary</i>	49 THE SUPERSUCKERS Motherfuckers Be Trippin' <i>Mid-Fi</i>	74 LAPTOP Don't Try This At Home <i>Gammon</i>
25 YEAH YEAH YEAHS Fever To Tell <i>Interscope</i>	50 ELEFANT Sunlight Makes Me Paranoid <i>Kemado</i>	75 PARTY OF HELICOPTERS Please Believe It <i>Velocette</i>

5 YEARS AGO

SONIC YOUTH *A Thousand Leaves* (DGC)
FIREWATER *The Ponzi Scheme* (Jetset)
THE SUICIDE MACHINES *Battle Hymns* (Hollywood)
THE JESUS LIZARD *Blue* (Capitol)
PULP *This Is Hardcore* (Island)

10 YEARS AGO

PRIMUS *Porc Soda* (Interscope/Atlantic)
PORNO FOR PYROS *Porno For Pyros* (Warner Bros.)
PJ HARVEY *Rid Of Me* (Island)
SEBADOH *Bubble And Scrape* (Sub Pop)
FRANK BLACK *Frank Black* (4AD/Elektra)

HIP-HOP TOP 10

1	MURS The End Of The Beginning Definitive Jux
2	RJD2 The Horror Definitive Jux
3	NORMAN Polarity Under The Needle
4	JAYLIB "The Red" b/w "The Official" (12-inch) Stones Throw
5	VARIOUS ARTISTS A Blow To The State Coup d'Etat
6	MR. DIBBS 30th Song Rhymesayers
7	VARIOUS ARTISTS Under The Influence Mixed By Rob Swift Six Degrees
8	AKROBATIK Balance Coup d'Etat
9	OMID Distant Drummer Beneath The Surface
10	TALIB KWELI Quality Rawkus



#1 HIP-HOP
MURS
THE END OF THE BEGINNING
DEFINITIVE JUX



#1 RPM
PREFUSE 73
ONE WORD EXTINGUISHER WARP



#1 RETAIL
JACK JOHNSON
ON AND ON
MOONSHINE CONSPIRACY/UNIVERSAL

LOUD ROCK TOP 10

1	LAMB OF GOD As The Palaces Burn Prosthetic
2	SOILWORK Figure Number Five Nuclear Blast
3	ANTHRAX We Have Come For You All Sanctuary
4	CRADLE OF FILTH Damnation And A Day Red Ink/Epic
5	CHIMAIRA The Impossibility Of Reason Roadrunner
6	BLACK LABEL SOCIETY The Blessed Hellride Spiritfire
7	NOTHINGFACE Skeletons TVT
8	TERROR Lowest Of The Low Bridge 9
9	OPETH Damnation Music For Nations/Koch
10	DARKEST HOUR Hidden Hands Of A Sadist Nation Victory

RETAIL TOP 25

1	JACK JOHNSON On And On Moonshine Conspiracy/Universal
2	THE WHITE STRIPES Elephant Third Man/V2
3	BLUR Think Tank Virgin
4	THE ISLEY BROTHERS Body Kiss DreamWorks
5	NOFX The War On Errorism Fat Wreck Chords
6	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me Blue Note
7	50 CENT Get Rich Or Die Trying
8	SOUNDTRACK Matrix Reloaded: The Album Warner Sunset/Maverick
9	EVANESCENCE Fallen Wind-Up
10	MADONNA American Life Warner Bros.
11	TOMAHAWK Mit Gas Ipecac
12	COLDPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol
13	YEAH YEAH YEAHS Fever To Tell Interscope
14	RICHARD THOMPSON Old Kit Bag spinART
15	LUCINDA WILLIAMS World Without Tears Lost Highway
16	PETE YORN Day I Forgot Columbia
17	FLEETWOOD MAC Say You Will Reprise
18	LINKIN PARK Metemora Warner Bros.
19	JOHN HIATT AND THE GONERS Beneath This Gruff Exterior New West
20	SEAN PAUL Dutty Rock VP/Atlantic
21	AUDIOSLAVE Audioslave Epic
22	THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS Electric Version Mint/Matador
23	BEN HARPER Diamonds On The Inside Virgin
24	BONE CRUSHER AttenCHUN! Arista
25	CHER The Very Best Of Cher Rhino

RPM TOP 10

1	PREFUSE 73 One Word Extinguisher Warp
2	ZERO DB Reconstruction Ubiquity
3	APHEX TWIN 26 Mixes For Cash Warp
4	JAGA JAZZIST Animal Chin [EP] GSL
5	SWAG No Such Thing Version Music
6	JORI HULKONEN Different PIAS America/F-Communications
7	GHOST CAULDRON Invent Modest Fires !K7
8	VARIOUS ARTISTS END(S) End Recordings 1995-2002 End Recordings
9	SPACEK Vintage Hi-Tech !K7
10	DEADLY AVENGER Deep Red Shadow

JAZZ TOP 10

1	SOULIVE Soulive Blue Note
2	CHICK COREA Rendezvous In New York Stretch
3	BILL FRISELL The Intercontinentals Nonesuch
4	JOHN SCOFIELD BAND Up All Night Verve
5	RH FACTOR Hard Groove Verve
6	DAVE DOUGLAS Freak In Bluebird/RCA Victor
7	CHARLIE HUNTER QUINTET Right Now Move Ropeadope
8	WAYNE SHORTER Alegria Verve
9	MATT WILSON QUARTET Humidity Palmetto
10	KENNY GARRETT Standard Of Language Warner Bros.

JUST OUT

JUNE 3

ACEYALONE Love And Hate *Rumm*
 JOHN ARCH A Twist Of Fate *Metal Blade*
 ARMOR FOR SLEEP Dream To Make Believe
Equal Vision
 BRIDE OF NO NO Bride Of No No *Atavistic*
 CANNED HEAT Friends In The Can *Fuel 2000*
 DJ JACKIE CHRISTIE Hot And Tasty Beats
Nervous
 DAMON Heart Of Our Time *Dead Ringer*
 DEAD MEADOW Shivering Kings And Others
Matador
 ROB DOUGAN Furious Angels *Reprise*
 GORDON DOWNIE Battle Of The Nudes *Zoe*
 EELS Shootenanny! *DreamWorks*
 ESSENTIAL LOGIC Fanfare In The Garden *Kill*
Rock Stars
 THE FALL It's The New Thing: The Step Forward
 Years *Sanctuary*
 ADAM C. FORKNER (((Version))) *K*
 FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE Welcome Interstate
 Managers *S-Curve*
 FREDDIE FOXXX The Konexion *BBE/Rapster*
 DAVE GAHAN Paper Monsters *Reprise*
 JUDY GARLAND A Star Is Born *Columbia/Legacy*
 GARRISON The Silhouette *Revelation*
 GIVE UP THE GHOST Background Music *Equal*
Vision
 GRAVE DIGGER Rheingold *Nuclear Blast*
 BUDDY GUY Blues Singer *Jive*
 RAY HEINOORF AND ORCHESTRA A Tribute To
 James Dean *Columbia/Legacy*
 HOODS Pray For Death *Victory*
 HOUSE OF FIX 21st Century Fix *Tresor*
 JEWEL '0304 *Atlantic*
 JOSH KELLY For The Ride Home *Hollywood*
 JAMES KIRK You Can Make It, If You Boogie *Marina*
 LAST DAYS OF APRIL Ascend To The Stars *Crank!*
 CHRIS LEE Cool Rock *Misra*
 LONDON ELECTRICITY Billion Dollar Gravy
Breakbeat Science
 MINK LUNGS I'll Take It *Arena Rock*
 MARIAN MCPARTLAND All My Life *Savoy*
 JOHN MELLENCAMP Trouble No More *Columbia*
 MARYLYN MONROE Let's Make Love
Columbia/Legacy
 NONE MORE BLACK File Under Black *Fat Wreck*
Chords
 LOUIS OSBOURNE Motion Audio *Bluechip*
 OUTRAGEOUS CHERRY Supernatural Equinox
Rainbow Quartz
 PARADISE ISLAND Paradise Island *Dim Mak*
 RATED R Da Ghetto Psychic *Universal*
 LOU REED NYC Man: The Collection *BMG Heritage*
 RIP OFF ARTIST In Through The Out Door
Tigerbeat 6
 ROXY MUSIC Live *Eagle*
 DAVID SANBORN Timeagain *Verve*
 SAXON SHORE Four Months Of Darkness *Broken*
Factory
 BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA Jump, Jive, An' Wait:
 The Very Best Of *Interscope*
 SINISTER Savage Or Grace *Nuclear Blast*
 STEPHAN SMITH New World Worder *Universal*
Hobo/Synchronic
 SOULS SHE SAID Rub The Sleep Out *Lookout*
 SOUNDTRACK Beer: The Movie *Triple Crown*
 SOUNDTRACK Bruce Almighty *Varese Sarabande*
 SPACEGIRL Alone *Topaz*
 COREY STEVENS Bring On The Blues *Fuel 2000*
 STRUNG OUT Live In A Dive *Fat Wreck Chords*

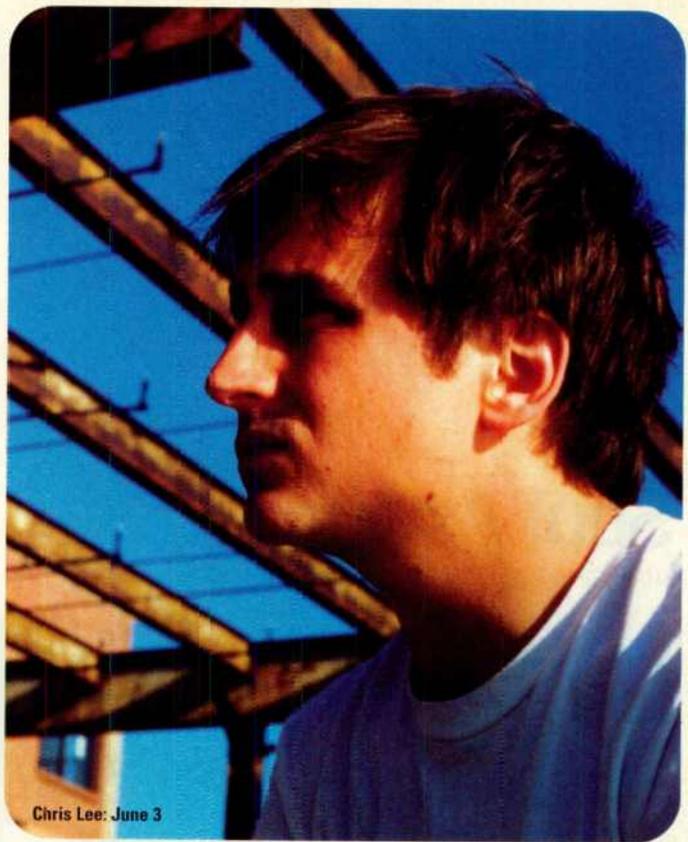
SUGAR RAY In The Pursuit Of Leisure *Atlantic*
 THROW RAG Desert Shores *BYO*
 TRAIN My Private Nation *Columbia*
 UNSEEN Explode *BYO*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Golden Gate Breaks *DM*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Liberation Songs To Benefit
 PETA *Fat Wreck Chords*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS sNOISSES: The Skateboarder
 Sessions *Sessions*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS sNOISSES Vol. 2 *Sessions*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Terminal Sales *Sub Pop*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Warped Tour 2003 *Side One*
Dummy
 VARIOUS ARTISTS YES New York *Wolfgang*
Morden/Vice
 WHITE LIGHT MOTORCADE Thank You,
 Goodnight! *Octone*

JUNE 10

FRED ASTAIRE Essential Fred Astaire
Columbia/Legacy
 ATOMSMASHERS Drop The Bomb *Rip Off*
 BABYFACE Essential Babyface *Columbia/Legacy*
 BANGLES Essential Bangles *Columbia/Legacy*
 BING CROSBY Essential Bing Crosby
Columbia/Legacy
 DAELIUS Rethinking The Weather *Mush*
 CHARLIE DANIELS Essential Charlie Daniels
Columbia/Legacy
 MILES DAVIS Love Songs 2 *Columbia Legacy*
Jazz
 OR. HOOK Essential Dr. Hook *Columbia/Legacy*
 DAN FOGELBERG Essential Dan Fogelberg
Columbia/Legacy
 GRANDDADDY Sumday V2
 SOPHIE B. HAWKINS Best Of Sophie B. Hawkins
Columbia/Legacy
 HEART Alive In Seattle *Epic/Legacy*
 CYNDI LAUPER Essential Cyndi Lauper *Columbia/Legacy*
 LPG The GadFly *Uprok*
 PHAROAH OVERLORD II No Quarter
 SUSHEELA RAMAN Love Trap *Narada World*
 REDBONE Essential Redbone *Columbia/Legacy*
 SIEDAH Siedah *Ortown*
 FRANK SINATRA Essential Frank Sinatra
Columbia/Legacy
 JIMMIE VAUGHAN Essential Jimmie Vaughan
Columbia/Legacy

JUNE 17

AMBULANCE LTD. Ambulance Ltd. *TVT*
 JOHN ARCH A Twist Of Fate *Metal Blade*
 BLACK DAHLIA MURDER Unhallowed *Metal Blade*
 BORN/DEAD Born/Dead *Prank*
 BRAND NEW Deja Entendu *Razor and Tie*
 CAPTURE THE FLAG Start From Scratch *Go Kart*
 CLUB 8 Strangely Beautiful *Hidden Agenda*
 COMETS ON FIRE Comets On Fire *Alternative*
Tentacles
 CRITERIA En Garde *Initial*
 DEAO OR ALIVE Evolution - The Hits *Epic/Legacy*
 DEBASHISH BHATTACHARYA AND BOB BROZMAN
 Mahima *World Music Network*
 DUVALL Racine *Asian Man*
 EASTMOUNTAINSOUTH Eastmountainsouth
DreamWorks
 FASTS FastS *Sound Pollution*
 FROM MONUMENT TO MASSES From Monument
 To Masses *Dim Mak*



Chris Lee: June 3

GITS Franching The Bully *Broken Records*
 HELLA Bitches Ain't Shit But Good People *Suicide*
Squeeze
 ILYA Poise Is The Greater Architect *Second Nature*
 KAOSPILOT Cryonics *Level Plane*
 MAD PARADE Bombs And The Bible *Dr. Strange*
 MAGIC MAGICIANS Magic Magicians *Suicide*
Squeeze
 MINUS Halldor Laxness *Victory*
 MONEEN Are We Really Happy With Who We Are
 Right Now? *Vagrant*
 MR. DAVID VINER Mr. David Viner *Dim Mak*
 WILLIE NELSON Honeysuckle Rose; To Lefty From
 Willie; Willie Nelson And Family Live (reissues)
Columbia/Legacy
 WILLIE NELSON WITH RAY PRICE San Antonio
 Rose *Columbia/Legacy*
 OIL Electric Tongue *Level Plane*
 PAINT IT BLACK CVA *Jade Tree*
 WILLIAM PARKER Scrapbook *Thirsty Ear*
 PELE Elephant *Polyvinyl*
 PINBACK Offcill *Absolutely Kosher*
 QUINTRON Are You Ready For An Organ Solo?
Three One G
 SIGHTINGS Absolutes *Load*
 SOUTH With The Tides *Kinetic*
 SPITALFIELD Remember Right Now *Victory*
 STATISTICS Statistics *Jade Tree*
 TELESCOPES As Approved By The The Committee
Committee To Keep Music Evil
 THIS DAY FORWARD In Response *Equal Vision*
 TORAI TORAI TORRANCE! Cynics 'Nightmare *Militia*
 TOYS THAT KILL Control The Sub *Recess*
 VACANCY Vacancy *A-F*
 VIRUS NINE Blastin' Away *A-F*
 VON BONDIES Take A Heart *Dim Mak*
 WEIROBS We Got The Neutron Bomb *Frontier*

JUNE 24

BEEHIVE AND THE BARRACUDAS In Dark Love *Swami*
 CRUCIAL UNIT These Colors Get The Run *Six Weeks*
 BRIAN CULBERTSON Come On Up *Warner Bros.*
 DENGUE FEVER Dengue Fever *Mimicry*
 EXTOL Idiosyncratic Synergy *Solid State*
 FIGURE FOUR Suffering The Loss *Solid State*
 GRAND INCREDIBLE Gil-Ganic *Tooth And Nail*
 HIGH STRING A-Jult Situations *Tee Pee*
 HOSPITALS Hospitals *In The Red*
 HUSBANDS Introducing The Sounds Of The ... *Swami*
 JS Ice Cream *DreamWorks*

RAMSEY LEWIS/NANCY WILSON Simple Pleasures
Narada Jazz
 LOCUST Plague Soundscapes *Anti*
 MELT-BANANA Cell-Scape *A-Zap*
 MOWETT A Goodfella's Life *DreamWorks*
 NUDGE Elaborate Devices For Filtering Crisis
Tigerbeat 6
 LIZ PHAIR Liz Phair *Capitol*
 RECOYS Recoys *Troubleman Unltd.*
 OTIS TAYLOR Truth Is Not Fiction *Telarc*
 TUSSELL Eye Contact *Troubleman Unltd.*
 ULL Answers *Southern*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Good Night *Tigerbeat 6*
 WATASHI WA The Love Of Life *Tooth And Nail*
 JIMMY WAYNE Jimmy Wayne *DreamWorks*
 JOSH WHITE Empty Bed Blues *Sepiatone*

JULY 1

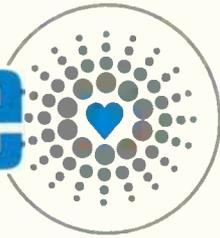
ARRINGTON DE DIONYSO AND OLD TIME RELJUN
 Varieties Of Religious Experience *K*
 AS I LAY DYING Frail Words Collapse *Metal Blade*
 FAIRWEATHER Lusitania *Equal Vision*
 OLD TIME RELJUN Witchcraft Rebellion *K*
 SELF TBA *DreamWorks*

JULY 8

CYRUSS CHESTNUT It's All Right With Me
Warner Bros.
 FAITH AND THE MUSE The Burning Session
Metropolis
 FICTIONAL FICTION *Metropolis*
 HALJOB Vertical Theory *Metropolis*
 JULIANA THEORY Live *Tooth And Nail*
 CEVIN KEY/KEN MARSHALL Dragon Experience
Metropolis
 MGI THE VISIONARY Looking Back *Uprok*
 SOUNDTRACK How To Deal *Capitol*

JULY 15

BEAR VS. SHARK Right Now, You're In The Best Of
 Hands *Equal Vision*
 DAVE BROCKIE EXPERIENCE Songs For The Wrong
Metal Blade
 JOE ELY Streets Of Sin *Rounder*
 HEAVENLY STATES Heavenly States *Future Farmer*
 JESSY MOSS Street Knuckles *DreamWorks*



Soul Asylum

STORY: TOM BEAUJOUR • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

In the fall of my senior year of high school, I took a first period English elective called something like Post Modernism. I can't remember what grade I got, what books we read, or whether there were any girls in the class who I had a crush on, but I do recall that in class the morning after me and my best buddy, Ethan, saw our heroes Soul Asylum play at CBGB's, I could not hear shit. The show had been brutally loud, and while I had thought that the nauseating sound-pressure levels were pretty cool while I was rocking out in the pit, eight hours later I failed to find joy in the prospect that the oceanic hiss rushing from my damaged auditory nerves was the only noise that I would ever "hear" again. The only thing that made this situation bearable was that Ethan, who was sitting on the other side of the classroom, might be in the same boat as me. There was only one way to find out, so I raised my hand and waited.

"Yes, Mr. Beaujour."

"Mr. Willey," I said, grinning stupidly at our recently-graduated-from-college, R.E.M.-loving teacher. "I'm sorry to interrupt the class, but I have to ask Ethan something. Ethan, can you hear anything?"

From the puzzled look on his face, I could tell the answer was definitely no. At least I wouldn't have to schlep to lip-reading class alone.

After a few days our ears recovered, and Soul Asylum singer/guitarist Dave Pirner, who would soon be stricken by a severe case of tinnitus, was my idol. I was not fazed that the few rock mags who even bothered to cover Soul Asylum dismissed the group as totally B-list Johnny-come-latelys in a Minneapolis scene that had already delivered the one-two punch of Hüsker Dü and the Replacements. To me, though, Hüsker's Bob Mould—and yes, you cranky letter-writing geek motherfucker, I know that Mould produced a Soul Asylum record—and Grant Hart, while obviously punk-rock geniuses, were far too angry, fat and ugly for me to feel a palpable bond with. The Replacements' Paul Westerberg, while also clearly a genius, seemed to possess the soul of a 70-year-old drunk, and while his music rocked me, I could hardly empathize with such a prematurely grizzled aura.

Dave Pirner on the other hand, was not a genius. And since I knew even then that I was not a genius either, that was fine by me.

Pirner was great only because he worked his ass off at it, and his lyrics, while angsty enough to pass the alt muster, were underpinned by an innocent optimism that kept anything he said from getting too heavy and uncool. I used Pirner's lyrics to fill half of the available space on my yearbook page, and even when I spoke to an all-high school Wednesday assembly, I pulled a few lines from *Hang Time's* "Sometime To Return," exhorting my classmates to "Saddle up you salamander, ride into town and look around/ Get up and do something, your time to chose it/ Do it! Do it! Do it!

Do it!" Needless to say, the crowd went wild.

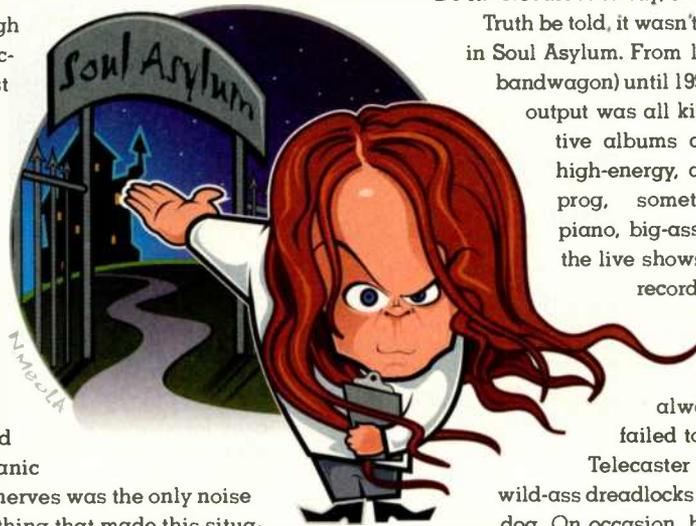
Truth be told, it wasn't hard to believe so fervently in Soul Asylum. From 1986 (when I climbed on the bandwagon) until 1991, Pirner and Co.'s recorded output was all killer, no filler. Four consecutive albums and one EP of straight-up, high-energy, almost-metal, kinda-a-little-prog, sometimes-there-might-even-be-piano, big-ass American indie-rock. And the live shows were even better than the records. On the dozen or so occasions that I saw the band during that period, Soul Asylum were always on, and Pirner never failed to sweat like freak, wear his Telecaster really low and whip his wild-ass dreadlocks around like a palsied sheep dog. On occasion, he and the band also did a wicked version of "Rhinestone Cowboy."

Unfortunately, this was likely a better time for the band's fans, who were for the most part living in bong-smoke-scented dorm rooms, than for Pirner, guitarist/vocalist Dan Murphy, bassist Karl Mueller and drummer Grant Young. Even after graduating to A&M records in 1988, Soul Asylum remained perpetual commercial underachievers who shifted laughably few units and subsisted mainly on baloney, merch money and a perpetual van-exhaust buzz. By the time 1990's *And The Horse They Rode In* on tanked, they were broken men, and dead broke, too.

I won't ever forgive him, but I almost can't blame Dave Pirner for what happened next. He signed a new record deal with Columbia Records, hired the guy who now produces Korn albums, made 1992's *Grave Dancer's Union* and reinvented himself as a pus-sified (if still scrappy) folk-rock troubadour singing about black gold, runaway trains and as my friend Alex so eloquently put it, "fucking gimps in wheelchairs—what kind of after-school special shit is that?"

Apparently, it was the kind of shit that got you hit singles and a platinum-plus album. Oh, and lest I forget, the honor of Winona Ryder breaking up your longtime relationship, which, as we all know, is the last stop before oblivion on any successful songwriter's runaway train.

Tom Beaujour is the Editor in Chief of Revolver magazine and a French citizen.



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