

NEW MUSIC **CD**

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MONTHLY

yeah yeah yeahs

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Idlewild

Your Poetry Man

...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead

want to get in your face

Prefuse 73

One better than Prefuse 72



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MUGGS GOES DOWNTempo. TOBIN SPROUT'S MACHINE GUNS. THE HAND UP SIFL & OLLY. 52 REVIEWS.

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...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD • **YEAH YEAH YEAHS** • PREFUSE 73

YEAH YEAH YEAHS 30

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs were crowned kings and queen of indieland based on two EPs and a tornado of a live show. On the eve of their first full-length, *Fever To Tell*, they've climbed to the top of the world and found it to be dangerously tipsy. Bill Werde holds steady.

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Idlewild are growing up: They started off as punkers, took a stop off at the school of R.E.M., and now they're off reading poetry and talking politics in *The Remote Part*. Tom Lanham still has their baby pictures.

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Trail Of Dead is the first band to ever admit to being "emo" in the pages of our magazine. But like most things they say, they don't mean it the way you think. Scott Frampton decodes.

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Muggs goes solo but brings a busload of kids, Tobin Sprout brings his machine gun, five records that make Liam Lynch take his hands out of his socks, get a skin graf with *Style Wars*, and after *Midnight Club II*, we're gonna let it all hang out. And Gravy Train!!!! talks life, love and gastrointestinal distress.

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The Advance

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03 April – Tempe, AZ Arizona State University

04 April – Long Beach, CA California State University Long Beach
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06 April – Santa Clara, CA Santa Clara University



World Radio History



IMMORTAL ENTERTAINMENT

Harper valley MP3

I love *CMJ New Music Monthly* and have been a subscriber now for years. Are you aware that the new Ben Harper release will not play in a number of players (auto, portable, home and computer)? I am in the process of posting this on as many message boards and sending as much e-mail to Virgin Records (the label doing this album) as I have the time to do. I love music and I think the artist should be protected. This is not only causing people to pirate and download this release but they can't contribute to the artist by purchasing the album. This not only does not solve the problem with copyright infringement but also creates a whole new argument against the already unpopular industry. They (the music industry) really like being public enemy number one don't they?

starvine@yahoo.com

Weller marred

Enjoy your mag/CD but still trying to figure out what you define as New Music? I'll forgive the Elvis Costello and Pearl Jam but I'll illustrate my question by your differing treatment of Johnny Marr and Paul Weller's new CDs (both of which I own). Marr—the cool former Smith—you put in the main pages of the mag as a new artist (?) while Weller is reviewed poorly (“perfect indication of how far out of step”—seems to be based solely on U.S. sales numbers). Weller is a strong singer/songwriter with an album of differing styles—rousing and political (“Bullet For Everyone”), folk (“Leafy”) and ballad (“Who Brings Joy”). Marr’s effort while interesting is much weaker and he’s still not a very assured singer or songwriter!

K. Mookerjee
redno52001@yahoo.com

Thank You For The Music

Thank you for your long-standing love of music. You seek out the new as well as the lone uncharted artist/groups. Each issue has a welcome space in my home library. When your fine work was introduced to me, (as a new-to-alternative DJ) the phrase “never a disappointment” was used... a decade later I still agree.

Mjk
E-mail withheld by request

From the sea, to a brook, to a puddle of mudd

I must ask, “What’s going on with you guys lately?” The magazine’s still alright if not a bit lighter, but the disc?! I feel patronized to over the last six months or so. Let’s look at Vol. 110/March 2003 for reference...track #17 *Vendetta Red*, “Shatterday”....hmmm, I seem to have already heard that...could it be that I heard it the *first time* you put it on a compilation in November 2001? *New Music indeed*, and don’t get me started on Faith No More’s “Epic” being present here. This isn’t what your subscribers pay for. In previous years you guys were turning people on to BRMC, Acetone, Burning Brides, etc. The last six months to a year have been a joke. Chevelle’s “The Red” made it onto a recent comp about three months after it had been killed at radio, you put the same (old) Violent Femmes track on two comps two months apart...did some focus group tell you that your listeners were mouthbreathing cretins? Think of some of the good music of the last year (Interpol, Trail Of Dead, Jurassic 5, Q And Not U to name a small few), and though it may grace your pages, it almost never hits the CD. Instead we get old Faith No More, Pearl Jam and Audioslave. I could throw a brick outside and find that stuff on the local “cutting edge” station. I don’t think I’m alone in the fact that I subscribe to your magazine to find out about cool new music ahead of the curve, or bands that I just otherwise wouldn’t hear about unless I spent 20 hours a week digging at the local indie record shop. You once were a sea of exciting new music, and now are but a trickling brook. I eagerly await my next issue, I can’t wait to hear that new Puddle Of Mudd song.

Justin Norvell
Phoenix, Arizona

EDITORIAL

Editor-In-Chief: SCOTT FRAMPTON
Associate Editor: NICOLE KEIPER
Assistant Editor: TOM MALLON
Contributing Editors: STEVE CIABATTONI,
DOUG LEVY, CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN
Interns: CAROLINE BOROLLA, TRACEY JOHN

ART/PRODUCTION

Art Director/Designer: DARCY DOYLE
CD Production: SEAN CAESAR

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TURIN BRAKES

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"...a bewitching brew of triumphant introspection..." - URB



PLACEBO

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Includes the single "The Bitter End" and "This Picture".

"Spikily brilliant." ★★★★★ - Q



THE FAINT

Danse Macabre Remixes

The Faint 'Danse Macabre' remixed by: Paul Oakenfold, Tommie Sunshine, Thin White Duke, Junior Sanchez, Photek, Medicine, Ursula 1000, Jagz Kooner, Mojolators and The Calculators.



K-OS

Exit

On his debut album Exit, k-os offers a unique blend of acoustic hip hop and soul, combining roots-reggae inspired consciousness and hypnotic beats.

Features "Heaven Only Knows" and bonus tracks "Superstar Pt. Zero" and "Neutroniks"



A BAND OF BEES

Sunshine Hit Me

Blissed-out Beach Boys harmonies meet Jamaican-infused vibrations, all mixed up in a kitchen sink of summer love.

Featuring "Punchbag", "A Minha Menina" and the exclusive bonus track "You Got To Leave."

"...the debut album from U.K. knob twiddlers A Band Of Bees is a showcase for inventiveness and versatility." - ROLLING STONE



T-LOVE

Long Way Back

"With beats from Jay Dee, Herboliser, Frankenstein and A Kid Named Miles, you know this is an album to reach for.

Don't even blink." - DJ Magazine

"Equal parts Jill Scott's jazzy soul, Lauryn Hill's rootsy attitude and Nina Simone's beguiling smolder..." - Q Magazine

Features guest appearance from Chali 2na and Dwele.



AIR ♦ BARICCO

City Reading (Tre Storie Western)

New music from Air set to short stories by acclaimed Italian author Alessandro Baricco.

One hour of music mixed by Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, over which Baricco delivers evocative, sexually charged passages from his novel "City" in his native Italian.

* English translations included in CD booklet



GEMMA HAYES

Night On My Side

Exclusive U.S. edition of Gemma Hayes' acclaimed U.K. album. Enhanced features include video, photo gallery and lyrics.

Includes "Back Of My Hand", "Hanging Around" and "Let A Good Thing Go". "Classy and classic" - NME "Bristling with imagination..." - The Guardian (UK)



ERLEND ØYE

Unrest

The first solo album from Erlend Øye of Kings Of Convenience, and the voice behind the Röyksopp hits "Poor Leno" and "Remind Me".

A truly remarkable modern electro-pop album made in collaboration with Prefuse 73, Morgan Geist (Metro Area), Schneider TM and others.



ROYKSOPP

Melody A.M.

The record the whole world is talking about. Includes *Poor Leno* and *Remind Me*. US Limited Edition features an additional CD with 3 videos and bonus mixes.

"Band To Watch" - SPIN
One of the "Ten Best CDs of the Year" - GQ
One of the "50 Records of the Year" - ROLLING STONE



ALPINESTARS

White Noise

Their brand-new album delivers a hybrid of soaring synth-pop, rapturous dancefloor beats and poignant elegies.

Includes "Carbon Kid" with vocals by Brian Molko of Placebo plus a bonus remix and videos.



SONDRE LERCHE

Faces Down

Evocative pop music at once modern and classic, Sondre is one of Norway's most exciting exports.

"One of the year's sunniest, loveliest, poppiest albums. Fantastic." - Rolling Stone (#6 Debut of 2002)

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ELECTRIC 6

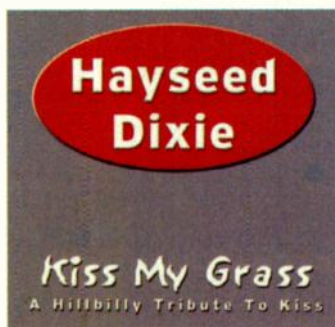
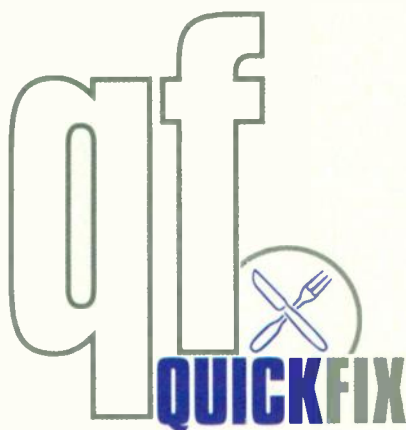
MAGIC STICK, DETROIT 03.07.03

Oh so hot to take all they got, not a dry seat in the house... Somehow, Spinal Tap references are just so right when talking about Electric 6, whose what-if-Tenacious-D-were-electroclash stylings have established the first Taco Bell-derived catchphrase (see the chorus of "Danger! High Voltage" rhyming "Taco Bell" with "gates of Hell") since that shit-talking chihuahua.

PHOTO: RUVAN







WEIRD RECORD

A Farewell To Barns

Saturday Night Hay Fever (Skipping Discs)
Kiss My Grass: A Hillbilly Tribute To Kiss (Dulaton)

OK, we get it. It's really hilarious when musicians lampoon the rich history of country and bluegrass by breaking out the banjo on some contemporary favorites and throwing in the word "hay."

Now knock it the fuck off, Christ. >>>TOM MALLON

FAKEBOOK

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

Liz Phair's "H.W.C."

a.k.a. "Hot White Cum." Apparently those five years between discs were spent reading the subjects lines to a lot of porn spam.

Boy bands on Broadway

First Joey from *NSync in *Rent*, then that guy from Backstreet joined the cast of *Chicago*. Bets start here on which member of O-Town joins *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. (But Aguilera in *Nunsense*, that's a ticket.)

The Mars Volta

If you ever wondered about the King Crimson roots of At The Drive-In, now you don't have to.

Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin, still going strong

She, Drew Barrymore and Winona must read *Spin* like a mailorder catalog.

New Puddle Of Mudd due in August

They had so much success rewriting "Pretend We're Dead," it'll be loads of fun to see what L7 songs they'll chomp on next.

Eisley

Kinda like Hanson without the doofy songs. Oh, and there's *real* girls this time.

Tupac vs. Jeff Buckley

At this point, they've both released more discs from beyond the grave than NRBQ has in its tenacious refusal to die.

Third Eye Blind "Within Arm's Reach" tour

The band's playing "intimate" venues. Or in booking parlance, ones they can fill.

Howlin' Pelle's psychokinetic powers

The Hives singer can kill tape recorders with his mind, starchild. (Pelle to interviewer: "Is that a good [tape recorder]? Mine always break; the motors burn out... Look, it's stopped moving.")

05.03.69 Jimi Hendrix arrested in Toronto for heroin possession; he claims it was planted and is later acquitted. **05.06.73 Paul Simon** begins his first Art-less tour; three decades of artless music follow. **05.08.90 Tom Waits** wins \$2.5 million in a soundalike lawsuit against Frito-Lay. **05.14.82 The Clash** release *Combat Rock*. Any further development on their part is arrested. **05.15.95 Scott Weiland** arrested for trying to buy drugs in a motel parking lot. **05.21.68 Brian Jones** arrested for marijuana possession. **05.21.80 Joe Strummer** arrested in Germany for wacking someone over the head with his guitar. **05.28.96 Dave Gahan** OD's on a speedball and is, unsurprisingly, arrested.

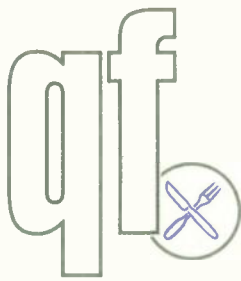
NEWSFEED: The 2003 edition of Bonnaroo promises more than just jam, with **Sonic Youth, the Flaming Lips, My Morning**

“I spent most of my life putting on an American accent trying to sound like the RZA. I even sent stuff to Loud. They were saying ‘Why the hell would we listen to you, when we can get what you wanna be around the corner?’”

MIKE SKINNER, A.K.A. THE STREETS
PHOTO: RUVAN



Jacket, DJ Spooky, RJD2, the Polyphonic Spree and more alongside usual suspects like the Dead and Widespread Panic • After 20 years, Blixa >>>



Tough Love

Gravy Train!!!! Oakland, California quartet Gravy Train!!!! refers to their group as a "raging homosexual dance machine," and you'll find track titles like "Titties Bounce" and "You Made Me Gay" on their genre-humping debut, *Hello Doctor* (Kill Rock Stars)—think a mix of Gary Glitter and Peaches. In our book, that screams "suitable love advice candidate." Allow a friendly rock personality to mock your romantic tribulations publicly: lovelorn@cmj.com

I have this friend, she's awesome but constantly talks about her bodily functions at inappropriate times. We'll be hanging out in public with people we've just met (sometimes girls I want to hook up with), and she'll come out with, "I was at work this morning, and I totally farted really loudly and I think everyone heard!" I mean it's funny, but Christ woman, know when to censor yourself! Should I just not take her out with me anymore?

—Geoff, Champaign, Illinois

CHUNX: As a lady who also moonlights as an obnoxious gasbag, I have to say that my comments have never stopped my friends from getting laid. They've never even stopped *me* from getting laid. A girl comfortable talking about formerly taboo topics such as sex and flatulence has become refreshing in this day and age. If, however, you feel that your friend is seriously hindering your ability to score less-charismatic poon, tell her to save *all* her turdy tales for when the two of you are



alone together. That way, she can regale you and you alone for hours with all her latest gascapades.

There's a girl in my psych class...she's not "conventionally attractive," but there's something about her, she's funny and clever, not self-conscious or obsessed with pointless things like cars or money. I like her, even though at first I didn't think she was cute at all. My problem is my friends make fun of her, and it makes me uncomfortable. I'm scared to ask her out for so many different reasons... They'd mock me, if she turns me down they'll mock me worse, and do I really like her or is it some weird Freudian psychosis? I'm so confused.

—Aaron, New Brunswick, N.J.

CHUNX: First of all, you'd probably be surprised at how many "un-cute" skeletons are most likely in your friends' closets. That said, the girls that your lameass dudebros may dub bowzers and/or brainers are actually the best in bed. You're missing out on a wild lay from a rockin' girl who will leave your back bloody *and* your brain reeling...and knows better than to care if your smarmy pals laugh at her for doing so.

Follow her lead and stop giving two shits what lines your friends are going to steal from *Varsity Blues* in order to try desperately to make you bummed that you're getting hot ass and they're not. (Yeah, what?!?)

Is it true that every guy in a band cheats when they go on tour? My friends have been saying that to me, and my boyfriend's in a band, and their first tour is this spring.

—Jayme, Bethpage, New York

HUNX: Sometimes it's refreshing to taste fresh cuts of meat while on the road. See how sirloins taste in other regions and nether regions. But I'm as faithful as McDonald's fries so I've only heard about this stuff.

Say your girlfriend and your sister are fighting. They're both being complete assholes, and are both wrong, in your opinion. And it's over something really dumb. Whose side are you obligated to take, since they're of course forcing you to take sides? Blood or love, which is it?

—Jeffrey D., Hartford, Connecticut

HUNX: Let's just say your girlfriend gives you pussy.

Bargeld has exited Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds to focus more on Einsturzende Neubauten and his other projects • Anthony Kiedis to release

ANGRY GEEK AT THE MOVIES



BY VINCENT G. CURRY

The Shape Of Things continues writer/director Neil LaBute's chronicles of people who are just plain evil, but in this one I discovered his subtext: *especially if they're good looking*. Here, Rachel Weisz is obviously up to no good as she convinces her boyfriend (Paul Rudd) to lose weight, dress better and get a nose job. The film suffers horribly from its origins as a play, and **if you can't see the ending coming you're just not paying attention**. It's essentially a female companion piece to his first misanthropic work, *In The Company Of Men* (which is seen by stupid people as just being misogynist). Call it *In The Company Of Coeds*... ♦ ♦ ♦ Just as *Stax*, even in its prime, was eclipsed by Motown, *Only The Strong Survive*, a documentary about still-performing soul singers of the '60s, many of whom were on the Stax label, stands in the shadow of *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*. While it does spare us lame renditions of classic tunes by inappropriate performers (I still can't believe how much Ben Harper sucked), it lacks the polish and cohesiveness of *SITSOM*—but adds the nausea-inducing effect of handheld digital video. This is not to say it's totally without merit, as no film that features Sam Moore (of Sam & Dave) showing his former drug route in New York City could be. Not to mention Jerry "The Iceman" Butler, former lead singer of the Impressions and now city comptroller of Chicago, here in full politician mode, even while performing. Or Wilson Pickett, revealing that **time hasn't calmed him down a bit as he describes how ugly Diana Ross was when he first met her**. Also along are the late Rufus Thomas and his daughter Carla (who would have been the queen of soul, had it not been for someone called Aretha), Isaac Hayes, Ann Peebles, the Chi-Lites and oddly enough, Motown's Mary Wilson.

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

“Brazil is cocoa complexion women with thick, beautiful, silky hair. Asses like they’re straight from Africa. And I love it because you’ve never seen something like this, and I don’t mean disgusting with the cottage cheese, and all that, a big huge house on her back, I’m talking about, it’s small but incredibly round. It’s two volleyballs back there.”

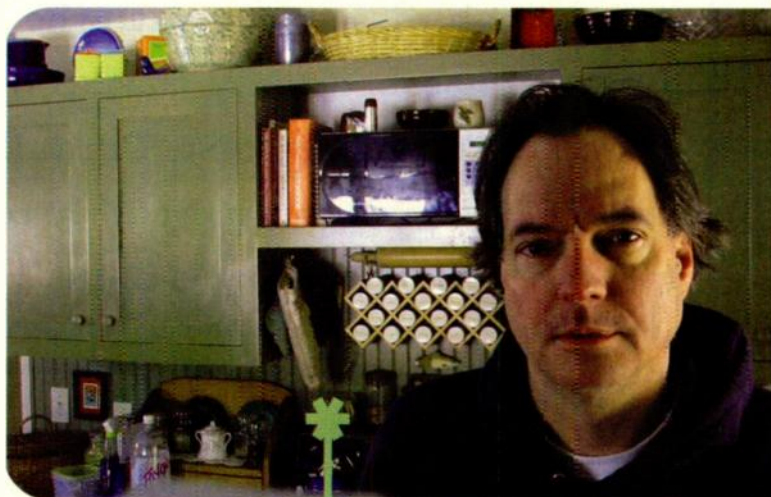
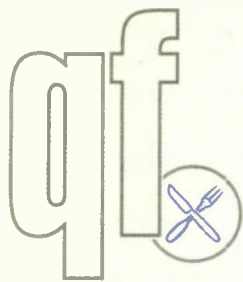
—M.E.R.D.'s PHARRELL WILLIAMS REPS FOR THE BRAZILIAN TOURISM BOARD TO THE BBC.



Writers On The Storm

Both cultural historians and your creepy friend with the Krylon-stained fingers agree: *Style Wars* (Plexifilm), the 1983 documentary that detailed the conflict between NYC's subway-bombing graffiti writers and the razor-wire-fence-erecting Metropolitan Transit Authority, is more fundamentally hip-hop than a warehouse full of *Scarface* outtakes. Reissued on two DVDs, the flick looks fresher than a six-foot-high burner (peep the vintage anti-graff propaganda starring Irene Cara!) and the bonuses are plentiful (almost two hours of new interviews featuring practically every *artiste du spray* that safely crossed the third rail). Plus a 30-minute loop of over 200 freshly bombed train cars, so you can safely pretend you're a mid-'80s art-gallery sleazeball or a disgruntled transit worker. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

his autobiography, *Scar Tissue*, in fall 2004 • The double-disc *Led Zeppelin DVD* will deliver five-and-a-half hours of tasty live folklore action on May>>>



IN MY ROOM

Who: Tobin Sprout

Where: His home in Leland, Michigan

Why: As Robert Pollard's right-hand man in Guided By Voices, Tobin Sprout helped craft a truckload of indie-pop classics; his new *Lost Planets & Phantom Voices* (Recordhead) delivers a fresh batch.

The juice is loose

I collect old juicers. And I also paint them. A lot of my paintings are of juicers and toasters and that kind of stuff. I collect a lot of deco, like '50s stuff. It's pretty eclectic. I've got diner stuff too, just whatever strikes us. Like old clocks, I used to collect a lot of old clocks, kitchen clocks.

Learning to fly

I'm into vintage aircraft; I got my pilot's license quite a few years ago. I've got some WWII helmets and goggles. I've got a set of headphones out of a B-17; it was sort of a prototype for the B-17 that they tested at Wright Patterson Airbase.

(Neuter) dogs of war

I'm pretty interested in World War II. I've got a demilitarized machine gun—it doesn't fire. It was a movie prop. It's a Thompson M1A1, like from *Saving Private Ryan*. I don't know if you remember the one Tom Hanks had. I came across it and it hadn't been torn apart too much. [It was] something that I always wanted but I didn't want it to fire—[that] being illegal and all.

Interview by Tom Mallon.

5 SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT ROCK LIAM LYNCH'S SOCKS OFF



1. Lou Reed, *Transformer*

It's the perfect amount of loose and tight at the same time. It's like a matured Velvet Underground. I don't like even *one* other album he's ever done. Just that one.

2. Brian Eno, *Here Come The Warm Jets*

I specifically remember the first time hearing Brian Eno and that shock of never hearing anything like that before. I hadn't heard rhythms like those. I've never felt shocked by music since then.

3. Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*

The stereo in my car didn't work. I was in Nashville, stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. I turned the knob just fucking around, my stereo came on and it hadn't come on in three years. It was right at the very beginning of a song of theirs, which was on a college station. The song was so incredible that I actually started crying in my car. And a song has *never* made me actually cry.

4. Tenacious D, *Tenacious D*

They're my best friends. I toured with them for three months, just hanging out. I hear the songs every single night over and over again, and I still get in my car and listen to them.

5. Bob Dylan, *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*

I worked with Paul McCartney for years, me and him in a room jamming together. Ringo plays drums on my album and I see him every other day. I worked in the studio with George Martin. I met Bob Dylan for maybe 15 minutes and that outweighed everything.

When not giving life to existential socks on MTV's defunct Sifl And Oilly or directing the highly anticipated Tenacious D movie, Liam Lynch does mean impersonations of both Björk and a rapping robot, as evidenced by Fake Songs (S-Curve). >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

TOBIN SPROUT: COURTESY OF WIGWAM RECORDS; LIAM LYNCH: ALLEN SCOTT; MUGGS: COURTESY OF ANTI

27 • The new **Staind** record, *14 Shades Of Grey*, will contain a tribute to **Alice In Chains'** Layne Staley; weren't the last two Staind records Staley



Ever-dusted beatmeister **MUGGS** on...

Workin' on his night moves

I like nighttime. It's just a beautiful time, just peaceful, man. It's just like the phones ain't ringing no more and [no] fucking washing machine, your dogs ain't barking, you ain't getting phone calls and pages. That's the state of mind this record comes from. Chill out at night, put it on, relax, light some candles, have a smoke and be with your girl.

Kids incorporated

I had a choir come in. I had like nine boys come in and sing, and then their nine moms, and everyone had two or

three brothers and sisters. So that was a day in the studio, boy. I bought cookies and stuff for the kids and sodas, and I was like, "Go buy two more boxes of cookies, man." We just had kids everywhere on a sugar rush, just running circles all over the place, going crazy. But the kids were great. They came in and they banged it out in like two takes. And then we just doubled it and tripled it and made it sound like 50 kids.

Rockin' a new deal like FDR

Anti gave me a record deal off an idea. I didn't have a demo. I sat and talked to [label prez] Andy Kaulkin and I

explained to him, "This is the record I wanna do." And he believed in it so much, and he had the same vision as me, that he signed me with not a demo done. Which doesn't happen in this business. There's enough places I gotta bring demos, and when I bring demos they still don't get it.

After a decade as producer for the ever-green Cypress Hill, Muggs is grabbing a fistful of Morricone and going oops upside your Portishead with the trip-hop/rock hybrid Dust (Anti).

Interview by Christopher R. Weingarten.

tributes too? • Joaquin Phoenix to portray **Johnny Cash** in the biopic *Walk The Line*, with Reese Witherspoon playing his wife June • **Billy Corgan** >>>



Velocity Boys **MIDNIGHT CLUB II (ROCKSTAR FOR PS2, XBOX)**

Since *The Fast And The Furious* dragged it into the spotlight, a new generation of enthusiasts, wannabes and hangers-on have flocked to the illegal street racing scene. For those who want no truck with being arrested or watching Vin Diesel movies, *Midnight Club II* delivers all the speed and the fury without the smarmy catch phrases. *Club* busts the racing-game mold by doing away with lame, preset courses—there's checkpoints, but you can reach them however you damn well please, be it

tearing ass down a populated sidewalk or smashing through a mall lobby. Rockstar's attention to detail is staggering again: In addition to dooring accurate damage, they spent two and a half years getting the physics of the game just right. Of course, they let you blow off those physics with treats like putting your car up on two wheels to squeeze through a tight space or launching rocket boosters to get ahead. Practice here before taking on the po-po in your tricked-out Civic. >>>TOM MALLON

THEMIX

TITLE: Somewhat Noisy Mix

MADE BY: Discostu (also known as Stu Walker), Murfreesboro, TN

1. **Mclusky**, "To Hell With Good Intentions"
2. **Melt Banana**, "Neck on B1"
3. **Ruins**, "Out Burn"
4. **Onelda**, "Give Up... And Move On"
5. **Wolf Eyes**, "Dead Hills"
6. **Pop Group**, "We Are Time"
7. **Cat Power**, "He War"
8. **The Rapture**, Dumb Waiters
9. **Onelda**, "Each One Teach One"
10. **Lightning Bolt**, "Waiting For The Snake Assassin"
11. **Liars**, "Tumbling Walls Buried Me In The Debris"
12. **Hint Hint**, "Rung By Rung"
13. **The Rapture**, "House Of Jealous Lovers"
14. **Out Hud**, "Dad, There's A Phrase Called Too Much Information"
15. **Death From Above**, "Dead Womb"
16. **Lightning Bolt**, "Dracula Mountain"
17. **Charlene**, "Ripoff"
18. **LCD Soundsystem**, "Losing My Edge"

You have better taste than everybody else. Show those bastards once and for all in The Mix forum on CMJ.com.

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The Sleepy Jackson *If You've Never Been Hut (U.K.)*

What it is: Eight-song European debut from twisted Aussie psych-pop outfit, culling tracks from the band's first two EMI Australia EPs.

Why you want it: The Sleepy Jackson are the anti-Vines. Frontman Luke Steele may have one of the hardest names in rock, but his skewed, swirling pop is as fragile as it comes. From the symphonic choral composition "Good Dancers" to the lifting all-country ballad "Miniskirt," *The Sleepy Jackson* reveals Steele as a songwriter of enviable invention—albeit one who may be operating in a slightly

different plane of reality. The former track will have Wayne Coyne struggling to remember when he led a children's choir on an acid trip. Meanwhile, the brief, nitrous-dosed "Lung" recalls Ween's early days, while closer "Let Your Love Be Love" is the Polyphonic Spree at 4 a.m.—after a fifth of whiskey. Craig Nicholls may have a lock on the scarecrow role for now, but the Sleepy Jackson are the new wizards of Oz. >>>DOUG LEVY

LINK: www.thesleepyjackson.com

R.I.Y.L: The Flaming Lips, the Polyphonic Spree, Ween

announces a new project—Djali Zwan, with the same members as **Zwan**, only acoustic; band to make record and DVD this fall * * * * *



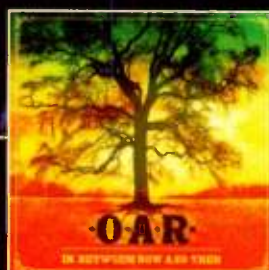
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THE DECEMBERISTS

With songs about French legionnaires, Spanish puppeteers, Canadian bootleggers and dockside prostitutes, the songs on the Decemberists' debut *Castaways And Cutouts* (reissued on *Kill Rock Stars*) don't lack for imagination. Echoing the jangly narratives of the Go-Betweens, the weird poetry of Robyn Hitchcock and the worldly humor of Camper Van Beethoven, the band's Old World aesthetic grew from Colin Meloy's experiences playing open mic nights to inattentive audiences in Portland. "If nobody's listening, I figured I might as well entertain myself," he laughs. "So I started pushing into these weirder realms and trying to write songs with stories that would be not only more interesting to write but also to perform. It got to the point where I thought some of it wasn't even playable for people, it was so silly. But I got addicted to it, I couldn't write another love song all of a sudden; it all had to involve dead babies and chimney sweeps and things like that." The band, which colors the songs with accordion, upright bass and pedal steel for a Gothic folk lilt, adapted its name from the 19th century Russian proto-Communists, the Decembrists. "I like the idea of having a group of people whose token month is December," Meloy says. "It's not such a political namecheck. But then again, we have this fascination with 19th century—especially Slavic—things, so it seemed fitting, even though they spell their name without the 'e'... Now I get a lot of Russian history majors and journalists tut-tutting me, and I have to go, 'No, that's not what we mean!'" >>>STEVE KLINGE

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



Alicia Rose

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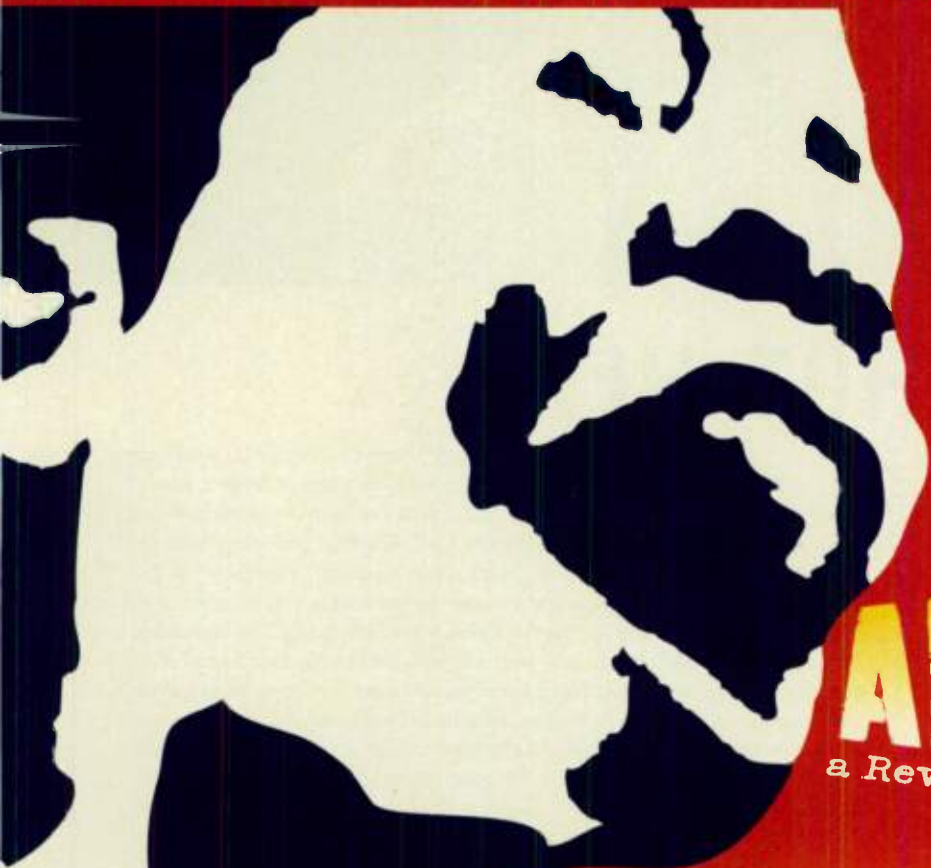
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HOT HOT HEAT

Last year, the members of Hot Hot Heat threw caution to the wind and left their hometown of Victoria, British Columbia without a clue if they'd have jobs to come back to. "It was really sketchy because we left on a big tour," remembers drummer Paul Hawley, "and we all kind of quit. We were like, 'Yeah, we're going on a vacation,' and then we just stayed on the road and never came home. By the end of that tour we were signed." The gamble paid off for the band, whose confident Sub Pop debut, *Make Up The Breakdown*, is now being re-released by Warner Bros. Full of contagious, new-wave keyboards and punctuated by Steve Bays' caterwauling vocals, *Breakdown* shows a technical prowess normally reserved for less punk-oriented groups. "We're kind of like a metal band in a pop band's body," Hawley considers. "We pay really close attention to detail." But with neurotic wit and nervy guitars, the album is hardly death metal dressed up in skinny ties. According to Hawley, "All we really think about is, 'Do we like it, first off, and can somebody, hypothetically, dance to this?'" That focus resulted in a sound that's both body-moving and raucously risky—and for Hot Hot Heat, it's all about taking risks. "You get used to the water once you're in; jumping off is the tough part." >>>CHARLES SPANO

BRIAN TAMBORELLO



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the trail of dead

The merry pranksters of ...And Will You Know Us By The Trail Of Dead just want to reach out and touch someone.

"NO, ...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD WAS THE ONLY NAME AVAILABLE TO US AT THE TIME."

Arranged in a corner of an Austin hotel room like bachelors #1 through 4, the band is being asked questions they've heard many times before for some action sports TV show, and the bullshit's flying.

"We were originally just You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead," Jason Reece, one of the band's pair of guitarist/drummer/vocalists, interjects, forestalling another question about the meaning or origin of the name with something that appears to be true.

"Then we added the 'And,' and then the dot-dot-dot, because that means we're always listed first," Conrad Keely, who also plays, and breaks, multiple instruments, adds. "It's like when you see AAA Plumbing in the phone book. Whenever bands are listed in alphabetical order, we're always first."

But then Keely—the one who earlier responded that his favorite Austin bands were his own, plus the dubious Pee-Pee And The Doo-Doos, the 8-Year-Old Friends Of Michael Jackson, etc. and shouted over his bandmates' pained chuckling at his 9/11 joke with, "Can I make one more off-color comment?"—turns earnest at the question of fan e-mail.

"We always respond. Because when you're a kid, writing to ask what a song's about and getting a response is really cool."

For all their apparent glee at exacerbating the absurdity surrounding it, Trail Of Dead are in fact quite serious about

what they do. It's hinted at in the way they use "composition" instead of "songwriting." It's in how inalienable they consider the connection they make with their music to be.

"For me, the joy of playing, half the time, is meeting our fans. I love going out into the audience after shows and talking to people," Keely says, voicing their chief complaint as an opening act on the Queens Of The Stone Age tour. "That's not the experience that we are trying to give people. We much prefer the intimate surroundings and meeting the people and going out into the crowd and a lot of exchange. You just don't get that if the stage is 10 feet high and there's a five-foot barrier and a line of security guards. It kind of ruins the vibe. The music is fun. We're having fun and we're there to make other people have fun. I think that kind of ruins the whole experience."

The band's decision to release a five-song EP, *The Secret Of Elena's Tomb* (Interscope), a little more than a year after their *Source Tags And Codes* LP has less to do with the business of being in a band than being the band they want to be in spite of the business.

"It's amazing when you look back at older rock bands," Reece explains, once the camera crew has packed up their shit and the band has gathered around a faltering tape recorder, "they put out like a record every year, some of them even two a year, but now with the need to tour con-

stantly and play shows, bands just can't have that kind of output. I mean, I think the Doors put out like six records in four years. That's amazing. Now you only get a record every two or three years."

The EP is a collection of old stuff and new, with "Mach Chau," one of the earliest they wrote but had never recorded, an honestly pretty song written while Keely had a 104° fever in "Counting The Days," and a U.K. B-side, "Intelligence," whose dabbling in electronics has made them a hit with the German press.

"They were all like, 'I really like this song "Intelligence." I think it's the best song you have ever done,'" Keely says, bearing the canines that dominate his grin. "So we've made a new market in Germany, our electroclash."

"Kids, we've gone electroclash on you," Reece riffs. "Sorry. We sold out. We saw the trend. We've hopped on. We'll be wearing tight leather pants soon."

It's all pretty eclectic for a band who got tagged as emo early on. Keely straightens in his chair talking about the bands flying that flag and their disregard for dynamics.

"If you don't have the shade, how do you know what the light is? If you don't experience the bad, the good doesn't feel as good. To stay at that level of intensity and that climax is sort of counterproductive. You need to bring people up to it and bring them back. You see we're the true emo, because emo means emotional. You've got more than one emotion. There's happiness and there's joy. It's not just about whining or about feeling sorry for yourself." **NMM**

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTO: MARINA CHAVEZ

any trails
any trails
any trails

YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD





All Twurk And No Play

On *One Word Extinguisher*, Prefuse 73 multitasks on wax.

After the stammering static and anxious beats of Prefuse 73's "90% Of My Mind Is With You" reaches its denouement, an array of lovelorn samples collide and struggle for air. Seventies Memphis soulsters the Temprees croon, "Love between a boy and girl can be so wonderful," Ghostface Killah intones, "I wish we never broke up, girrrr!" and the entire Jetsons jalopy sputters to a halt with "It's such a lonely feeliiiiin'."

Is Mr. 73 trying to tell us something?

"Yo, this is a break-up record," admits the 27-year-old Prefuse, born Scott Herren. "It's just a long break-up... I'm still going through it, man. The past year's been kind of turbulent in that sense. It's been sort of just bummed-out steez."

Upon casual listen, *One Word Extinguisher* (Warp), Herren's second album as Prefuse 73, doesn't exactly present itself as the *Sea Change* of needle-destroying sound-shards: Def Jux-esque pummel succumbs to minidisc skipper; glitchy scuzz spraypaints its tag on the Boards Of Canada; true-school beats click and squelch like MatMos Def. Melancholy moments are few and far between.

"It's cool because it doesn't really project itself that way. People will just think of it as any record, any random

thing... but, you know," says Herren, looking like an affable version of Incubus Brandon Boyd in his knit cap, baggy shirt and Timberlands. Lounging in the barren warehouse/art studio of Warp's American office, Herren ponders the bald-faced titles to his cryptic skip-hop instrumentals—"90% Of My Mind Is With You," "Female Demands," "Why I Love You." He laughs embarrassedly, pulls his scarf around his head and buries his face in Warp's bright red couch. "Maybe those songs just got lumped too close together."

Adding to *One Word's* girl-centric motif, the album cover (courtesy of Graphic Havoc) is a mélange of six silk-screened, posterized, pastel women—as art-damaged, lady-minded and cryptic as the knotty beats tucked inside.

"All's I said was, 'Yo, I want a photo of two girls talking. A real photo. Two fine-ass girls just on the street talking on a payphone.' A week later, I started getting shit like this," says Herren, holding the soft-hued collage and laughing. "I'm like, 'You know what, I'm so fucking busy right now, just do whatever the fuck you want.'"

Indeed, his discography makes him appear to be the hardest-working man in avant-electro. There's Prefuse on Warp, the post-rockin' of his Savath + Savalas

guise on Hefty, the ethereal clicks of the Delarosa And Asora alias on Schematic, the remixes on Chocolate Industries and Counterflow—he makes Aphex Twin look as productive as My Bloody Valentine.


"It's an illusion. It's certainly not me," laughs Herren. "There was a time when the first record came out, when a bunch of shit just dropped out of nowhere and it made me look like I was fucking crazy. But it was actually a backlog of mad shit, from '97 until the Prefuse was released. I wasn't on labels and shit. I just went to a job and made music."

Adding to his workload is his burgeoning label, Eastern Developments, which he runs with six friends, releasing records by Detroit's funkdefied minimalist Dabrye and Cali noise-hop producer Daedulus. Again, something that gives Herren the illusion of work. "I don't do shit, man," says Herren. "I make phone calls. I have to spend maybe an hour, an hour and a half, every day. And usually it's just getting in-between an argument."

But even his self-effacing attitude can't conceal that he's currently in New York, far from his Barcelona home or Atlanta playground, and doing 20 interviews a day, with plans for similar press jaunts in Europe and Japan. "It's all good. If this is the worst part of a job, then I'm lucky. I could be behind a... a... deeeesk," says Herren coyly peering at the two Warp dudes in sweatshirts plugging away at the office's two computers.

His music, which even in its most downtempo moments is a disorienting spray of fidgeting blips and jagged samples, is actually simpler than it sounds, too. "I don't create sounds on the computer for 10 hours and put them in my songs, it's just stuff that I record and make rhythmic. That's usually what sounds like glitches, but it's all atmospheric, environmental sounds. So I think it just adds another dimension to the music," says Herren. "It's not Autechre." **NHH**





yeah yeah yeahs

STORY: BILL WERDE • PHOTO: PEROU

WAITING FOR THE FEVER TO BREAK
There are times when hype is so deafening you refuse to believe it just on principle. But then sometimes, just sometimes, like with the sexy swagger of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the trans-Atlantic roar surrounding their debut, *Fever To Tell*, a band lives up to their reputation.



Look at Karen.

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs are pounding out a song called "Rich." Their debut album, *Fever To Tell*, won't be released for a couple of months, but seemingly all 800 people in the sold-out dank basement of a rock club they're headlining in Oxford, the Zodiac, know the words. Nick's guitar sounds like an orchestra of feedback and Brian's drums, sometimes rolling smoothly, all jazz finesse, now pound out booming bass thuds and snare blasts.

When the song started, Karen's leg was tapping up and down. Then it was stomping. Then her back was to her fans, skin peeking through ripped T-shirt. Her hips are swiveling now, then grinding. "So stuck uuup!" Her fingers go to her mouth in a V, and her tongue snakes out. "I wish you'd stick it to me!"

Look at her! She's untethered, unhinged, maybe even completely unaware, certainly in that special place that Iggy'd visit when he'd slice himself, or Morrison went when he'd reach a convulsion. Journos and photos in the pit up front have already been covered in Karen-ness. Her bottle caps. Her water. Her beer. Her spit. Her sweat, 10, 15 feet of airborne Karen Ohm pheromones, launched with a snap of her head.

"So unloved," she wrenches. "I took him standing up!"

I came across the Atlantic to cut through the hype. *Rolling Stone* crowned the Yeah Yeah Yeahs rock's next big thing based on a few self-recorded songs and a notorious live show few outside of New York had seen. Already, in the English music press, singer Karen O is simply "Karen." No need for a last name, or even an initial, when people dress like you at concerts and you're in the *NME* on a weekly basis.

But it's so good, *Fever To Tell*, these 12 intense, perfect rock songs, the stuff of booze and cigarettes, swear words, sweaty leathers and fucking and love. And the show, Jesus, the show! No one should see a Yeah Yeah Yeahs show from farther than 20 feet because you really do have to see Karen's eyes, unfocused and crazy, see her lips, pouting then spitting then taut in a scream, to believe it, to believe, in these dark days of Clear Channel playlist imperialism and contrived, teeny-bopper sexuality, to believe that it was ever this good and that it's this good again. And—how do I write about this band without sounding like a total shill, another doe-eyed cog in the hype machine? But then sometimes when it's love, you don't care who knows, and then there's this tear in my eye, a real fucking tear, because I just can't handle it. Because to know the Yeah Yeah Yeahs is to know that just as suddenly as this band spun and swaggered into our lives, they might just as quickly disappear.

London—the epicenter of European rock hype—is positively chafing for the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. The band played sold-out shows in Glasgow ("Kahren OOOH," they yelled), Nottingham, Manchester and Bristol. In two nights, at the Astoria in the West End of London, they will play for 2000 people. Tonight in Oxford, the folks up front at the Zodiac are going positively apeshit.

The music is tearing through the crowd like shockwaves, now. Karen's microphone is in her mouth, the steel mesh cap resting on molars and uvula, the grip protruding obscenely from her tilted-back head. "Rawwwwrrrrraaaawwwwrrrawww raaaaw!" Her arms raise, her eyes roll back in her head, and she collapses to the stage, a pile of splayed limbs and damp, disheveled black hair.

Look at Karen. Two nights ago, she threatened to quit the band.

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs are on a seemingly unstoppable roll, elevated on a cross-platform of hype—part next-wave New York, part garage-rock renaissance—yet perfectly equipped to deliver the goods. This is a band that launched a media frenzy based on two EPs. Unlike so many critics' darlings, this band actually has a legitimate radio hit to their credit. In the U.K., "Bangl," a raunchy bit of funk

lick and genius, made the cut with BBC censors when the Yeah Yeah Yeah's manager, Asif Ahmed, explained that the lyrics—actually "As a fuck, son, you suck"—decreed "as a funk song you suck." To hear Karen screaming the chorus on radio stations announced with the clipped accents of the Queen's English is to begin to grasp the *joie de vivre* of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

The band's story begins in Oberlin, a liberal arts school in Ohio, where Brian Chase was the hotshot drummer who played for all the best bands and Karen Ohm was a closet singer-songwriter who would hold little concerts in her dorm. Karen transferred to New York University to study film, met Nick Zinner in a bar, and the pair wrote a few songs one drunken night. When in the fall of 2000 a friend got them an opening slot for a two-person band that was beginning to develop a buzz—the White Stripes—Karen called her old friend Chase.

Their first EP sounded great, the way a four-track held together with tape and string can perfectly document raw rock 'n' roll. Their second EP, three songs excerpted from the recording process for *Fever To Tell*, sounded kind of shitty, the way a four-track, when the tape and string comes undone, can make a passable song sound like garbage. *Fever To Tell* is an immeasurable leap forward. The band proves it can sustain itself for 12 songs, full of the kind of energy most bands can only deliver live. "We're all gonna burn in hell," Karen sings on "Man." "Because we do what we gotta do real well, and we got the fever to tell!" "Tick" is Karen's artsy (read: completely insane) rumination on time. She sings, rapid-fire up and down and up and down scales, "tickticKTicktICKticktICKticktICK TICKtickticktick."

The album's pinnacle is the ninth track, "Maps." "They don't love you like I love you," sings Karen again and again above a melodic trill from Nick's guitar. The song builds and builds, picking up tempo and bass from Brian, eventually working its way to a crunchy rock climax it probably doesn't need. But before it does, the band—and especially Karen—lets you in on a precious vulnerability. Karen's voice, so effective at conveying crazy with a rasp or a squeal, sounds pretty—and pretty never sounds prettier than after getting your ass kicked.

And so the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are



BRIAN CHASE, KAREN O, NICK ZINNER

about to release an album that Miranda Lange, a publicist with Touch & Go, the label the band spurned for Interscope, says she was "devastated" to lose because she thinks it may well be the best of the year. The band, by rights, should be on top of the world. Instead, sitting in their hotel on the eve of their biggest, most important gig to date, the band seems intent on finding a way to grind that unstoppable roll to a halt. They've declined their invitation to play *Top Of The Pops*; they've cancelled the last two dates of their European tour—they were supposed to play Paris and Berlin after London—and their American dates, already announced and booked, are entirely in question.

Two nights before the Zodiac show, the band was in the dressing room in Bristol, minutes before the show, and suddenly pent-up issues and frustrations and Karen's road-weariness were spilling out. Patrick Daughters is a young filmmaker—a former classmate of Karen's from NYU—touring with the band to shoot their first video, perpetually, literally perpetually,

filming them with one of two video cameras. When the tensions boil over, he's unsure of whether he should be rolling tape. "I'm supposed to get what's real," he tells me later, "and that was real." Karen O gave an ultimatum, though the band won't go into specifics. "A lot of it is extremely personal," says Brian. "Let's just say, maybe people need to listen when other people say they've had enough," says Karen. As for her quitting, at first it was entirely serious, as in cancel-all-remaining-dates-and-head-the-hell-home serious. Cooler (or at least persistent) heads prevailed. Karen agreed to play through the Astoria. The fight ended in a group hug, a great show, and some decisions to be made, chiefly by Karen.

It turns out Karen O, sex-goddess rock star, is not quite a road dog. More of a pussy cat, really, when she's away from the stage.

"It's in question," says Karen of the U.S. tour. "It depends on me. I'm at a point right now where I feel like my juice is kind of at an all-time low. I'd rather do nothing at all than do something I wasn't feeling." Nick reclines on one bed, and

Brian sits on the other bunk. Karen sits cross-legged on the edge of the bed in front of Nick, her bangs pulled down over her eyes. Brian says the breakdown isn't unexpected: "She burned out in a week and a half on our first tour." Karen acknowledges her habit. "There is definitely a point where a fuse blows and I start running on empty. That happens within the first two weeks."

This chaos wasn't what Karen really signed on for; when she got started with the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, she just wanted to rule the New York bar scene. "That was my highest aspiration," she says. "I wanted to start this band with complete irreverence to seriousness. I just wanted to fuck shit up. I was 21 in New York City and going out all the time. I just wanted to have a good time and give other people a good time cause that's what I was into. So I can front and have a lot of confidence about not taking shit seriously. But the conflict is, I'm actually a really sensitive person."

She's also a woman, and history bares out that there haven't been a whole lot of those who played the kind of rock Karen plays, who put on the kind of show Karen puts on, who stuck around with much longevity. "It's a little more threatening being a woman, especially in a rock band," says Karen. "In Sweden last summer, there was an after-party in our dressing rooms and everyone got really sleazy and drunk. When the girls get drunk, they have no inhibitions about coming on to the rock guys. But when some fucking drunk guy starts bullying himself or coming on to me, it's a totally different energy." Karen incites crowds with a giddy, sexually charged energy when she's onstage. But when she steps off, she's Karen Ohm, left to contend with the frenzied crowd that Karen O begat. At the Manchester gig, it nearly proved disastrous: After the show, Karen got mobbed heading to the merch table to sign some autographs. Twenty young men were shoving and shouting around her. "I'm sure all those kids who engulfed me were harmless," she says. "But it really freaked me out." She had to shove her way from the throng.

Those closest to Karen—Ahmed, her friend Christiane Joy, who designs her stage outfits, Dave Sivek, who lives with Karen (and Karen's boyfriend Angus Andrew, lead singer of the Liars) and has produced all of the Yeahs recorded material—say they

CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

TOMAHAWK
TURIN BRAKES
PLACEBO
NORAH JONES
Prefuse 73 • Starlight Mints • Serart

MAY 2003 • ISSUE 112

13. **SERART** "Facing The Plastic" *Serart*

www.serart.net

Serart appears courtesy of Serjical Strike/Columbia.

14. **PLACEBO** "The Bitter End" *Sleeping With Ghosts*

www.placeboworld.co.uk

Placebo appears courtesy of Astralwerks.

15. **STAGGER STAGGER CRAWL** "Déjà Vu Ultraman" *Déjà Vu Ultraman*

www.staggerstaggercrawl.com

Stagger Stagger Crawl appears courtesy of Potatoeater Music Ltd.

16. **ANDREW BIRD** "Lull" *Weather Systems*

www.bowloffire.com

Andrew Bird appears courtesy of Grimsey Records.

17. **THE DECEMBERISTS** "I Dreamt I Was An Architect" *Castaways + Cutouts*

www.decemberists.com

The Decemberists appear courtesy of Kill Rock Stars.

18. **PREFUSE 73** "Storm Returns a Prefuse/Tommy Guerrero Production"

One Word Extinguisher

www.warprecords.com

Prefuse 73 appears courtesy of Warp Records.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into Jewel case



1. **TURIN BRAKES** "Pain Killer (Summer Rain)" *Ether Song*

www.turinbrakes.com

Turin Brakes appears courtesy of Astralwerks.

2. **NORAH JONES** "Bessie Smith" *Norah Jones: Live In New Orleans (DVD)*

www.norahjones.com

Norah Jones appears courtesy of Blue Note Recordings.

3. **GRAND DRIVE** "Wheels" *Grand Drive*

www.grand-drive.com

Grand Drive appears courtesy of Private Music.

4. **STARLIGHT MINTS** "Brass Digger" *Built On Squares*

www.starlightmints.com

Starlight Mints appears courtesy of PIAS [America].

5. **GOB** "Give Up The Grudge" *Foot In Mouth Disease*

www.gob.com

Gob appears courtesy of Arista Records.

6. **TOMAHAWK** "Rape This Day" *Mit Gas*

www.ipecac.com

Tomahawk appears courtesy of Ipecac Recordings.

7. **GANG STARR** "Skills" *The Ownerz*

www.gangstarronline.com

Gang Starr appears courtesy of Virgin Records.

8. **GARAGE A TROIS** "A-Frame" *Emphasizer*

www.tonecool.com

Garage A Trois appears courtesy of Tone-Cool Records.

9. **MAKTUB** "You Can't Hide" *Khronos*

www.maktub.com

Maktub appears courtesy of Velour Music Group.

10. **WAYNE SHORTER** "Sacajawea" *Alegria*

www.vervemusicgroup.com

Wayne Shorter appears courtesy of Verve Music Group.

11. **VENUS HUM** "Soul Sloshing" *Big Beautiful Sky*

www.venushum.com

Venus Hum appears courtesy of MCA Records.

12. **KAKI KING** "Kewpie Station" *Everybody Loves You*

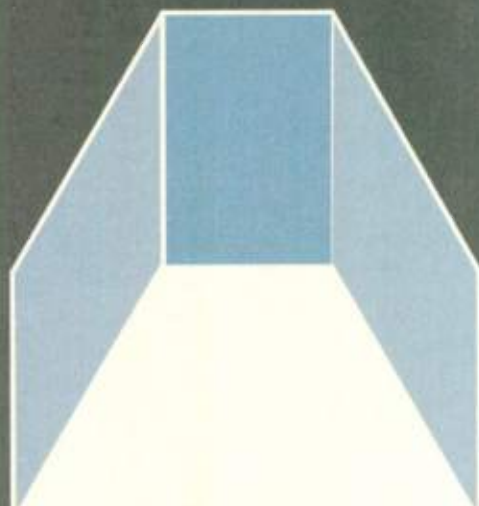
www.kakiking.com

Kaki King appears courtesy of Velour Music Group.

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78703

would be surprised if Karen was a rock star all her life, or even, necessarily, for very long. She has a lot of other talents, they say, filmmaking and painting. (There is a film she made as a student at NYU, *Nice Mice In A Cruel World*, that those who've seen it still talk about. Three mice—friends wearing rubber mouse noses—sit at a table playing cutesy kiddie games, talking in squeaky cartoon-mouse voices. The production value is super low—the suspension of disbelief is the whole success of the piece. In a heartbeat, two cats show up, the mice scatter and the music is dark. Each mouse is hunted down and, in some cases, eviscerated by the cats. "It was legitimately disturbing," says Daughters.) Truth be told, our rock goddess is a little of a homebody, happiest hanging with Angus. "Karen told me from the get-go that she hated to tour," says Ahmed. "Would I be shocked if they didn't make another record? I don't think that will be the case. But I wouldn't be shocked."

While Nick moved to Manhattan from Brooklyn as the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' star



"I'm not made of the same material as a lot of other lead singers. That's always the issue with me. Maybe I should just not do it."

ascended, Karen moved to decidedly unhip New Jersey. She lives in a house with Angus ("suburbia," says Sivek), with a jacuzzi on the porch and deer in the backyard and recording equipment all over the basement and Karen's art supplies upstairs.

"I just want to do everything on my own terms," says Karen, "I never really asked for this, so it gives me license to do what I want. I don't really play by the rules—music industry rules, record label rules, rules in being in a band that don't really make sense to me."

Brian and Nick have been quiet. "I just want to play," says Nick, softly. "And at the same time I want to do what's right for Karen." Brian shrugs off questions about the future. "It's not really the nature of this band to chart a career path," he says.

"It's an exceptional circumstance that people like what we do enough that maybe I don't have to be made of the same material as a lot of other lead singers," says Karen. "'Cause I'm not. That's always the issue with me. Maybe I should just not do it."

London, the Astoria. Here are streets packed every which way with scalpers for the show. Here are 2000 people and palpable anticipation packed into a warehouse space. Here is the opener, the chubby, balding Har Mar Superstar, a Ron Jeremy look-alike singing a tantric cover of Cher's "Believe" as he gyrates in his tighty-whites, getting his loudest cheers when he mentions the headliner. Here is Karen, minutes removed from her pre-stage ritual of quaffing booze, staggering onstage, drunk with the night, drunk with anticipation and, likely, drunk. Here she is deliberately spilling champagne on top of the writers and photographers in front of the stage. Here is the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, a maturing rock band, not the kids who opened for Jon Spencer Blues Explosion a few months ago, playing their two EPs for venues half this size, but a band that tears through their 18-song-set with a purpose and a presence. Here are supercharged blues riffs and funk licks echoing from the cavernous walls, and here are 2000 people—a decent portion of the girls up front dressed like Karen—going mad. Here is the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, obliterating the Astoria, just absolutely killing it.

Here is a band that is... burned out?
Here is a... last show?

After the gig, and after a crowded after-party at the club, the party moves to the Columbia Hotel, a site infamous for raucous late nights. Later, Karen will sit on a couch in the lobby of the Columbia, gushing drunken idealism to British rock critic and author Everett True. Later, with his gut barely concealed by his blue oxford shirt, his bald pate barely concealed by his thinning gray and his drunken near-unconsciousness barely concealed by eyes that seem propped open, True will put his arm around Karen and stroke her forearm and—fuck if I know, maybe Karen is having a beautiful moment, but it sure skeeves out two of her publicists. Karen will not seem to pay attention to the fact that this sad-looking old man, with his heavy lids and slurred speech is pawing at her. "It doesn't matter

who knows what you do," I will hear her explaining in earnest to True. "It only matters that you do it."

Later, someone will bump over a pint near Karen, and apologize, and Karen will have a rock star moment, hurling the pint to the floor and stomping it—giggle, stomp, giggle, stomp—with her black boots, smashing it to shards. "Don't fuckin' apologize, man! If you're going to dump a pint, just fuckin' do it all the way."

Later still, Dave, the Yeahs tour manager with armfuls of tattoos and a heart of gold (and a teasing—I think—reputation for liking women with penises, but that's another essay for another time) will come back and get Karen into a taxi, and True will slump over and sit, disheveled and alone and even, occasionally, unconscious, on the couch for an hour. Even later still, Wednesday will come, and instead of going to Paris and Berlin as the best rock band going, Karen will relax and recover before she flies back to her home in New Jersey, to her deer and Angus. Nick will travel on to Paris and Berlin—as a tourist now, instead of as a guitarist—and Brian will head to Rome where he'll meet his sister, who's studying abroad, and his girlfriend, who is flying over. Even later than that, the band will come together and work out a compromise, deciding to play the East Coast and West Coast dates, canning seven shows of the 22-date tour.

And even later still, back in the States, Lange—again, no longer affiliated with the Yeah Yeah Yeahs—will tell me of the first time she saw the band, and I'll feel a little better about all the hype I didn't debunk. "I was in shock," she will say, explaining why she couldn't dance. "I had to just stand there and take it all in."


Later, later, later, futures to resolve and issues to untangle.

For now, though, it's just Karen and Nick and Brian, surrounded by a few friends and a lot of industry folks and some that are a bit of both. A drunken Har Mar Superstar lays prone on the carpeted floor, booze flows and cigarettes smoke and dwindling, slowly dwindling is this celebration of... what?

Karen walks by with a drink.

Are you happier you just rocked the Astoria, or that you're finally going home?

She stops and thinks a sec, and chooses her words carefully through the alcohol. "Right now," she says, "I'm just happy this ended on a good note." **MM**



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San Diego, CALIFORNIA

STORY: CHRIS NIXON • PHOTOS: JONATHON TRIEST

San Diego has been in love with Tammy Faye eye shadow for quite some time now—sure, thick makeup is never flattering, but underneath all the cell phones, plastic surgery and beach-bunny glamour, there boils an artistic community of substance, spurred by the flash-point of merging Mexican and American cultures.

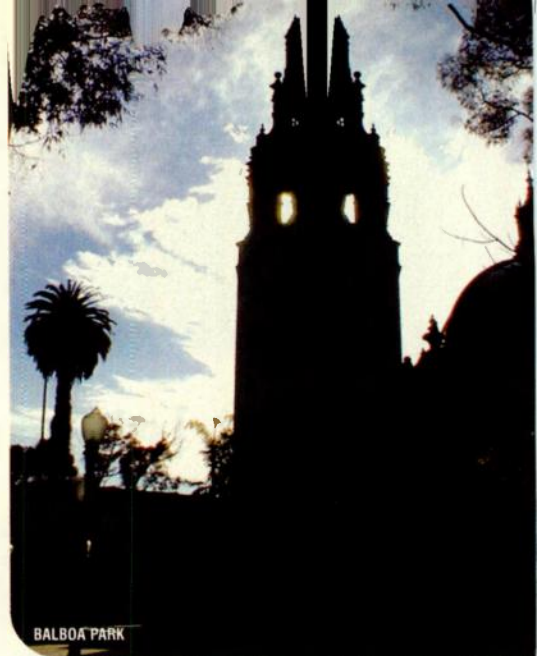
The city gets shunned by some national touring acts in favor of the music industry metropolis of Los Angeles looming to the north, but it has fostered an enviable scene of its own. A host of big-time bands call San Diego their hometown, like the **Greyboy Allstars**, **Blink-182**, **Rocket From The Crypt** and **P.O.D.**, with acts like **Pinback**, the **Black Heart Procession** and **No Knife** creating waves on the indie scene, and relative newcomers like **Congress Of The Cow** (www.congressofthecow.com), **Ilya** (www.ilyamusic.com) and **Rochelle, Rochelle** (www.rochelle-rochelle.com) leading the next crop of San Diego bands working to make their mark.

The Casbah (2501 Kettner Blvd., 232-4355) hosts a wide variety of bands, focusing on punk and indie rock with a smattering of Afrobeat, DJs and experimental music. **Canes Bar & Grill** (3105 Ocean Front Walk, 488-1780), right on the boardwalk in Mission Beach, reflects the town's easygoing seaside mentality. With a huge dancefloor, the downtown club **4th & B** (345 B St., 231-4343) hosts an eclectic amalgam of musical styles, and Solana Beach landmark **Belly Up Tavern** (143 S. Cedros Ave., 858-481-9022) attracts a diverse crowd with hip-hop, soul, reggae and DJ acts. Local all-ages venues **SOMA** (3350 Sports Arena Blvd., 226-7662), **The Scene** (7514 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., 858-505-9111) and **The Epicentre** (8450 Mira Mesa Blvd., 858-271-4000) help

expose kids to the latest in punk rock and reggae in a safe, positive environment.

Offering the best in vinyl and CDs, longtime music shops **Lou's Records** (434 N. Highway 101, 760-753-1382) and **Off The Record** (3849 5th Ave., 298-4755) have super-knowledgeable staffs and a wide variety of hard-to-find discs. Both record stores feature free in-store performances to help promote local artists, as well.

From the seedy, Wyatt Earp days to the present-day glittering jewel on the bay, San Diego's downtown has lived many lives. Each one is represented in that neighborhood's current face: crowded Gaslamp streets and velvet ropes on a Saturday night, historic houses and museums, aged sailing vessels and aircraft carriers in the bay, street musicians and panhandlers, martini-sipping spots and neighborhood dive bars. Mexican taquerias abound, but the best places to take in huge burritos for under \$5 include **Cotijas** (2295 Market St., 238-7169) and **Valentine's** (844 Market St., 234-8256). For more traditional Mexican fare, check out the carne asada tacos at **Los Cuatros Milpas** (1857 Logan Ave., 234-4460) or the delicious mole at **Super Cocina** (3627 University Ave., 584-6244). A mouth-watering vegetarian Mexican menu has made downtown landmark **Pokez** (947 E St., 702-7160) a favorite of local hipsters. Pokez's owner, Rafael "Rafa" Reyes, can also be found behind



the bar at the **Roseary Room** (947 E St., 702-7160), a chill little cantina with Virgin Mary art adorning the walls.

The retro martini scene is huge in San Diego these days, and you can sample specialty martinis at **The Bitter End** (770 Fifth Ave., 338-9300) or **The Martini Ranch** (528 F St., 235-6100)—but both have a meet-market, velvet-rope vibe, like many other Gaslamp bars and restaurants. For the real deal in retro feel, check out the **Red Fox Room** (2223 El Cajon Blvd., 297-1313); cushy booths and the best in piano-bar atmosphere. If you like a little steak to go along with your martini, the **Turf Supper Club** (1116 25th St., 234-6363) gives you an opportunity to grill meat on a communal grill and hang with San Diego's hip flesh-eating crowd.

With an average not-so-mean temperature of 70 degrees, you'll want to spend some time outdoors. A good place to start any San Diegan outside excursion is the city's recreational centerpiece, **Balboa Park**, host to miles of trails and a handful of interesting museums, including the **Museum of Photographic Art** (1649 El Prado, 238-7559), the **San Diego Museum of Art** (1450 El Prado, 232-7931) and the **Reuben S. Fleet Science Center** (1875 El Prado, 238-1233). Reflecting the Latino pride inherent in San Diego, **Chicano Park** (National and Logan Avenues, 563-4661) provides a prime illustration of local public art and the initiative to take back our public spaces. As Interstate 5 and the Coronado Bridge threatened to tear the barrio apart at the seams, citizens and activists rose up to demand a park for the neighbor-



CHICANO PARK



hood. The activists won out, and today Chicano Park consists of a couple of acres of beautiful, large-scale murals and grassy fields close to downtown San Diego.

Mexican culture plays a prime role in the arts community in San Diego—the city's shoulder-to-shoulder with Tijuana. Spoken-word collective the Taco Shops Poets (tacoshoppoets.org) and Tijuana's audio/visual electronica group the Nortec Collective (www.nor-tec.org) mix modern and traditional art forms. On the San Diego side of the border, experimental electronic music is being created by the artists on Imputor? Records (www.imputor.com) and the Trummerflora Collective (www.trummerflora.com).

LOCAL LOGIC: SAN DIEGO'S BEST

Theater to soak in Kurosawa: Tucked in the sleepy little burb of Kensington, The Ken Cinema (4061 Adams Ave., 283-5909) is part of the Landmark Theatres chain and features the best in foreign and indie film.

Place to score some booty: On any given night, you can hear downtempo, reggae, Afrobeat or old school funk at The Pirate's Den (2812 Kettner Blvd., 574-6833), just a block north of The Casbah.

Chorizo Tonguefire: The Taco Shop Poets and other poets, artists and musicians shew their work and perform at Voz Alta (917

E St., 230-1869), a small but worthy downtown arts venue promoting multicultural art.

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD:

Tim Mays, co-owner of
THE CASBAH and **THE TURF CLUB**

"Whenever bands at the Casbah want to go have some great Mexican food we send them to El Zarape (4642 Park Blvd., 692-1652) in University Heights—great fresh food at low prices. Try the \$1 fish tacos or the lobster burrito. Amazing. If you want a drink with a great view, try the bar at the Top Of The Hyatt (One Market Pl., 232-1234) downtown; it's on the 42nd story and you can see from Mexico to La Jolla... really great martinis with a little beaker to keep your drink chilled, too."

Ryan Brombley and Zach Smith,
PINBACK

"Fry's Electronics (9825 Stonecrest Blvd., 514-4500): You just feel good entering the parking lot here. If you have a headache or are just having a bad day, Fry's will clear it right up. Pete's Quality Meats (1742 1/2 India St., 234-1684): greasy treats. Ranchos Cocina (3910 30th St., 574-1288): I'll have the #14 tempeh burrito."

Annamaria Stephens,
ANTI-COMPLACENCY.ORG and
SIGNONSANDIEGO.COM

"With its gorgeous mid-century decor, Influx Cafe (1948 Broadway Ave., 255-9470) in Golden Hill is a great place to start your day. If you have some cash to drop, check out South Park's M-Theory Records (3004 Juniper St., 269-2963) for tunes, North Park's The Muse (2911 University Ave., 296-8539) for surprisingly affordable original art and downtown's Un-Un Boutique (560 6th Ave., 233-8686) for stylish threads. Get your nightlife fix at Bar Dynamite (1808 W. Washington St., 295-8743), where DJs spin cutting-edge hip-hop, or watch cute boys and girls get down to Britpop at The Whistle Stop (2236 Fern St., 284-6784). After hours, pretty much everybody heads to La Posta (3980 Third Ave., 295-8982), a 24-hour taco stand in Hillcrest—nothing goes down better after a few drinks than a greasy quesadilla."

All phone numbers are in the 619 area code unless noted.

Chris Nixon is online music editor for city guide SignOnSanDiego.com.



BEST NEW MUSIC

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HAWKSLEY WORKMAN

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THE BLACK KEYS

Thickfreakness Fat Possum

As a white Midwestern guitar/drum duo playing electric blues with a healthy dose of garage-band abandon, the Black Keys could be Akron's answer to the White Stripes. But, especially given the former's second album, *Thickfreakness*, things aren't that black and white. Whereas Jack and Meg White took the country blues of Son House and Blind Willie McTell and injected it with high-spirited enthusiasm, Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney build on the jukejoint styles of labelmates Junior Kimbrough and T-Model Ford for something altogether heavier, darker and, truth be told, bluesier. Although Auerbach is in his early 20s, he shouts and moans and hollers in a voice that's deep beyond his years but with no trace of affectation or mimicry. And he's a monster guitar player, whether working the slow stomp of the title track, the soulful groove of "Midnight," the heavy distortion of the garage-band nugget "Have Love Will Travel" or the funky backbeat of "Hurt Like Mine." Produced by Carney in his basement studio, *Thickfreakness* makes no concessions to pop, nothing akin to the cover of the Beatles' "She Said, She Said" that graced last year's *The Big Come Up*. *Thickfreakness* does, however, rock—like John Lee Hooker rocked, like Howlin' Wolf rocked. Exciting stuff. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.theblackkeys.com

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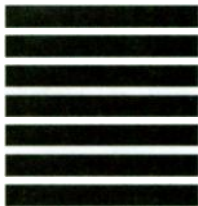
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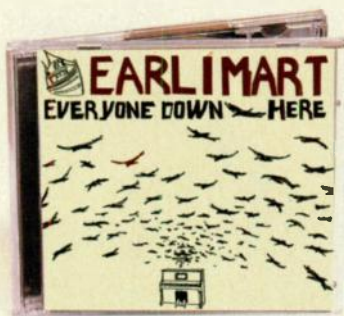
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EARLIMART

Everyone Down Here Palm

Despite an apparent nautical fixation and a propensity to give songs names like "Burning The Cow" and "We're So Happy We Left The Piano In The Truck," the only thing that's actually the slightest bit odd about Earlimart's music is how incredibly earnest it is. Tracks like "Hospital" and "Dreaming Of..." may sound like Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous had more than a hand in them, but he didn't; "We Drink On The Job" and "Big Ol' Black" may sound like Granddaddy's Jason Lytle spent quite some time instilling his vision in them—and he did. Lytle co-produced both songs with Earlimart mainman Aaron Espinoza, whose plaintive vocals and emotive songwriting color the entire disc in gentle tones (splashed liberally with the occasional burst of crackling black-light when it's called for). "Lost At Sea," appropriately, is the stormiest of the bunch, a fuzz-cocooned minute-and-a-half rocker that doubtlessly relates to the fact that the group named its recording studio "The Ship." In fact, it raises the question of whether the album's title simply refers to those of us trapped here on Earth, or more mysteriously, those who live (ahem) under the sea. With its watery overtones, bubbling touches of subtle electronica, and often far-away vocals, *Everyone Down Here* indeed sounds at times as if it could have risen from quiet, beckoning ocean depths. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link
www.earlimartmusic.com

File Under
Sunken treasure

R.I.Y.L.

Granddaddy, Elliott Smith,
Sparklehorse



HINT

Portakabin Fever Hombré/Ninja Tune

Hint's Jonathan James got his start doing the mixtape and DJ rounds in Leicester, England before landing on Bristol's small-but-respectable little hip-hop imprint Hombré—at which point he came into Ninja Tune's crosshairs. The Ninjas pulled the trigger and landed this beautiful (if quiet) little album. *Portakabin Fever* contains all the elements requisite for a Ninja Tune release: easy hip- and trip-hop beats, a modicum of pop-culture sampling (in Hint's case, it's soft-pop conventions), and a decidedly cool funk aesthetic. But Hint brings a touch of proper country & western flair to the Ninja sound, complimenting the naturally relaxed gait of downtempo hip-hop rhythms with the swing step feel of classic Bob Wills. Of course, it has to be acknowledged that this vibe most likely arises through C&W's ties to rural Scotch/Irish jig themes, but it's all there. Just check the loping beat and snazzy woodblock on the lead-off track, "Actory," the Ennio Morricone-inspired southwestern guitar flair of "The Look Up" and "Quite Spectacular," the latter being as at home around a campfire as in a mix. It's not all like that, though; "Re: Percussions" toys with Amon Tobin's orchestral darkness, and "Why The Top Ten Sucks In 2002" is jazzed-up disco piano for pop radio. Still, the C&W touch is significant enough to carve *Portakabin Fever* a special place in the world. >>>HEATH K. MIGNIGHT

Link
www.ninjatune.net

File Under

West-hop

R.I.Y.L.

Mr. Scruff, Dead Hollywood Stars,
Morricone RMX



PETE MISER

Radio Free Brooklyn Ho-Made Media

Early on *Radio Free Brooklyn*, former Five Fingers Of Funk head Pete Miser announces his goal: "I'm trying to change the world before I change my mind." If in the process, he's one of indie hip-hop's most quotable, it's a fortunate byproduct—Miser's aim is affecting and uplifting the (relative) masses via an identity exploration. A bedwetting back-packer alienated by values glamorized in the mainstream, Miser creates a litany of his hip-hop haves (love, style and pride) and have-nots (floor-length minks, golf carts on rims and Versace gear) on "Got That." The shiny-happy vibe is tempered by space-filled, tentative beats too busy being smooth to cloy. He builds himself a musical gymnasium for his verbal somersaults and low-key floor exercises, delivered by a voice that could belong to the husky athlete brother of Black Sheep's Dres. Indeed, black sheep-ism is in Miser's blood—an oft-examined aspect of himself in his lyrics is his multiracial make-up. "Anglicized my name to 'Miser' some say a self-conscious attempt to exempt myself from bigotry sent my way/ But I say they read too much into it," explains the half-Chinese Miser (whose real last name is Ho), in "Ho-Made." *Brooklyn's* sole weakness is its length—no matter how consistently witty and inspired, an hour is just too much time to listen to someone talk about himself. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link
www.petemiser.com

File Under

Positive identification

R.I.Y.L.

A Tribe Called Quest, Digable
Planets, Talib Kweli, Gang Starr



TOMAHAWK

Mit Gas Ipecac

This space would normally contain sentences like “You’re never going to get another Faith No More record, so...” or “Ever since the Jesus Lizard broke up...” Well, forget it: On their second record, Tomahawk sounds less like four individual robots fighting evil and more like one gigantic Voltron. Where *Tomahawk* (excellent as it was) sometimes felt like a Duane Denison solo project with Mike Patton singing, *Mit Gas* finds the quartet jelling into an honest-to-God band and stepping out of the long shadows cast by their old bands (fine: Faith No More, the Jesus Lizard, Helmet and Cows). Patton uses every trick in his vocal book for the most diverse performance he’s given since Mr. Bungle’s *California*, but the band meets the challenge every time, effortlessly flowing from one style to the next. Case in point is “Capt. Midnight,” which starts off with an insistent drum ‘n’ bass beat and a clean, ringing guitar only to break your back with a tidal wave of distortion, or the opening “Birdsong,” which builds to a rabid roar out of an ooze of bass and slide guitar. Producer/engineer Joe Barresi (Melvins, Kyuss) injects the record with a dose of hard-rock muscle the likes of which only QOTSA is throwing around these days. While everyone else is off saving rock, just be happy that Tomahawk is still playing it. >>>TOM MALLON



THE TROUBLE WITH SWEENEY

I Know You Destroy Burrrt Toast Vinyl

Let’s get basic: Indie rock’s strength comes from personality—a few out-of-place hairs, a scuff on the shoes, an endearingly crooked smile. There’s a wonderful character to sounds delivered a little unvarnished. While Joey Sweeney, headmaster of Philadelphia troupe the Trouble With Sweeney, isn’t exactly yelping into Malkmus keys, his major strength is in that distinct sense of personality; you’ve heard rootsy, jangly pop-rock before, but Sweeney delivers a flavor that, while familiar, is one all his own. Take “The Break Up,” the opener of his second full-length: bouncy piano, sparkly guitar arpeggios, a solid pop blueprint, but then Sweeney’s half-breathy half-pleading voice layers in, and you’re left with that same feeling you got the first time “Summer Babe” came on your local college radio station. While Sweeney’s voice works the frayed edge, the instrumental backdrop is Aguilera-pants taut, thanks to new drummer Richard Stuverud (Pete Yorn, Nash Kato) and bassist Mike Conklin, and the lush production of Brian McTear. Those two personalities complement each other brilliantly, the music laying a granite-solid foundation for Sweeney to float additively wavering melodies over. Sweeney’s other obvious strength is his knack for stringing words together—he moonlights as a writer, and it shows in clever turns of phrase and gripping lyrical storytelling. But wordsmithing isn’t what makes a record stick, songwriting is. And Sweeney’s had no trouble there. >>>NICOLE KEIPER



HAWKSLEY WORKMAN

(Last Night We Were) The Delicious Wolves Ba Da Bing

As the ‘70s have been steadily pillaged in revival after revival, no one’s really had the stones—outside the realm of parody, anyway—to try an update of the bombastic pop of bands like Queen. On his split-personality second record, Toronto’s Hawksley Workman proves he’s the man for the job, tackling both over-the-top pop and understated ballads with ease. (*Last Night We Were*) *The Delicious Wolves* is an exercise in Jekyll-and-Hyde songcraft. Songs like “Striptease” and “Jealous Of Your Cigarette” are bursting at the seams, every spare corner crammed with a harmony or hook. “Striptease’s” descending verse is the best hook Jeff Lynne never wrote, and “Cigarette”’s operatic vocals (and sexual innuendos) would do Freddie Mercury proud. Then Workman somehow manages to turn 180 degrees and make it work, with “What A Woman” and “Old Bloody Orange” approximating the lonesome-guy-and-an-ancient-piano-with-occasional-horn-accompaniment shtick more convincingly than Ed Harcourt’s recent work. “Lethal And Young” even closes the album with a taste of Bowie’s pre-Ziggy piano ballads. Workman’s relatively unknown in the States—overseas, *Wolves* was released through Island Records; here, through tiny indie Ba Da Bing. Let’s hope that this record can grow his profile to match his imagination. >>>TOM MALLON

Link
www.ipecac.com
 File Under
 Kings of the rock rage
 R.I.Y.L.
 Faith No More’s *King For A Day*,
Fool For A Lifetime, the Jesus
 Lizard, Cows

Link
www.thetroublewithsweeney.com
 File Under
 We love Trouble
 R.I.Y.L.
 Elvis Costello, the Go-Betweens,
 Joe Jackson

Link
www.hawksleyworkman.com
 File Under
 Mercury rising
 R.I.Y.L.
 Ed Harcourt, Queen, Sparks

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September 2002

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June/July 2002

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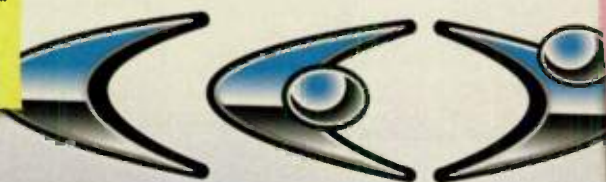
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World Radio History



REVIEWS

ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND
 ARAB STRAP
 AUTECHRE
 ANDREW BIRD
 BLUR
 BUZZCOCKS
 CAITLIN CARY
 COLD
 DEERHOOF
 ESTER DRANG
 FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ
 FRUIT BATS
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 HOMESICK FOR SPACE
 THE LONG WINTERS
 MANITOBA
 MARIA MCKEE
 MEANEST MAN CONTEST
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 THE NATURAL HISTORY
 NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS
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 PALE HORSE AND RIDER
 PILOT TO GUNNER
 PORTASTATIC
 AMY RIGBY
 SERART
 (SMOG)
 SPIRITUALIZED
 STARLIGHT MINTS
 THE STRATFORD 4
 THROWING MUSES
 TIPPER
 TRIPLE THREAT
 TRÜBY TRIO
 VAUX
 VITESSE
 EAMONN VITT
 OTTO VON SCHIRACH
 WHIRLWIND HEAT
 M. WARD
 CHRIS WHITLEY
 WIRE
 YO LA TENGO



ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND

2 K

This is music for anyone who adds sugar to their pre-sweetened lemonade. The second full-length album—14 songs, 29 minutes!—from this appropriately named Portland, Oregon quartet (every word in their name is to be taken literally) continues in the tradition of their debut. They don't take themselves too seriously and they only slow down for the occasional breather—just so they can race back to a breakneck speed. All four members contribute vocals, making things sound like a glee club high on Nik-L-Nips. And no one sings in anything less than full-on

Chipmunk, guaranteeing that even if they're asking to borrow another's boyfriend (just check in on "Becky") it sounds completely innocuous and innocent. This is Shangri-La girl-group pop twisted through the K records twee-punk academy, of which all four members have graduated, serving time in bands such as the Softies, Young Astronauts and Def Leopard. But just as the novelty of Chipmunk Punk was fun the first time, subsequent plays can wear. To rectify this inevitable dead-end, the band adds subtle textures throughout. There's the wordless, overtunefulness of "Inarticulation," the Wire-meets-Chills slowdown of "Daydreaming" and the distorted organ of "Samantha Secret Agent" to alter this glycemetic attack. Check your blood sugar upon exiting. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



ARAB STRAP

Monday At The Hug & Pint *Matador*

On the face of it, Arab Strap's fifth studio album isn't up to much that Glasgow's champion glum-bums haven't dejected us with before. Typically woebegone, *Monday At The Hug & Pint* also hews to the four-on-the-floor beats familiar since *Philophobia*, and marks a natural advance on the band's established trajectory of kitting out Aidan Moffat's pathologically mopey 3 a.m. ballads with ever more lavish instrumentation. What is new—and welcome—however, is the primacy of the music on this record. Always the most gorgeous and durable thing about Arab Strap's songs, Malcolm Middleton's arrangements nevertheless heretofore seemed like an afterthought, the soundtrack to an unrelenting piece of kitchen-sink drama. The precise reasons why the accompaniment now takes center stage are hard to isolate; it's not merely that Moffat's Bukowskian monologues are generally mixed lower than usual, or that the songs are more expansive and lushly string- and synth-drenched than ever. Tracks such as "Loch Leven" and "Flirt" and "Serenade" simply feel organic—Mogwai-esque, even—and their very resistance to explication is symptomatic of the fact that *Monday At The Hug & Pint* is Arab Strap's most purely musical album yet. Moffat's black ramblings are just another color in the crayon box—a little sting in the atmosphere—and for once, the songs bypass the brain and hit first on an instinctive level. And there, it's the music's beauty that registers. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

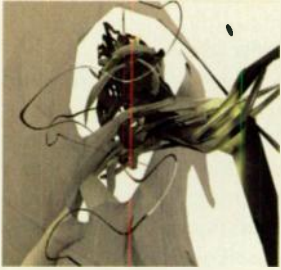
www.arabstrap.co.uk

File Under

Disco beats, strings and stinging tales of booze and heartache

R.I.Y.L.

The Fall, the For Carnation, Tindersticks



AUTECHRE

Draft 7.30 Warp

Some 36 years ago, Jim Morrison beckoned everyone to "break on through to the other side." Now it seems that Autechre have done the Lizard King one better. Sean Booth and Rob Brown began their genre-defining career in 1993 with a melodic concoction of piercing hip-hop-influenced metal beats and alien synth sounds, but since their debut, 1993's *Incunabula*, Autechre has turned inward, focusing more on the "feel" of their rhythmic inventions. Later albums like 1998's *LP5* and 2001's *Confield*, as intriguing and sonically innovative as they were, came across

primarily as academic experiments. That's why *Draft 7.30* is worth something; Autechre have finally begun to create music worth listening to again. The hip-hop rhythmic element, which until now manifested itself exclusively through Booth and Brown's alter ego project Gescom, has begun to peek through the abstract yet smooth digital surface of Autechre's sound. At times it's thunderous bass and quippy metal melodic threads ("Tapr"), at others it's broken breaks and aquatic harmonics ("Surripere") or minimal downtempo dirge vibes ("Theme Of Sudden Roundabout"). Yet it would be inaccurate to suggest Booth and Brown have, on any substantive or procedural level, backtracked in their seemingly unending foray into electronic music's uncharted territories. Instead, they've ridden their stylistic moebius strip to the starting point; they've broken through to their first side. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

Link

www.warprecords.com

File Under

The other other side of
electronic music

R.I.Y.L.

Autechre's *Amber*; *Freeform*,
Funkarma



ANDREW BIRD

Weather Systems Grimsey

Geographically and chronologically, songwriter/fiddler Andrew Bird records just outside of Chicago in the 21st century, but the ever-changing moods of *Weather Systems* strongly suggest that this is music from another place and another time. Over four solo albums, Bird has increasingly broadened his violin's vocabulary beyond the literal quotes from folk, blues and swing, styles that made him a welcome sideman for the Squirrel Nut Zippers in their early days. There is still a love of those song forms and an "old-timey" atmosphere at play on

Weather Systems, most notably amid the lonely cowboy waltz "First Song," which is punctuated by one of the album's many whistling solos—yes, whistling. But chiefly, Bird concentrates on using his violin as a character actor able to serve many roles and supply many moods. The album's boldest instrumental, "Skin," lets Bird brood a bit, slashing out amplified plucks and riffs on violin and mandolin over a swampy, minor-key blues vamp. On the title track, Bird relies more on elegance, from delicate pizzicato to layers of velvet harmonies, built up as a result of Bird cloning himself into a string quartet. *Weather Systems* may only last barely a half hour, but as it passes over, it showers you with ample evidence of Bird's expanding skill. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI

Link

www.bowlofire.com

File Under

Gothic Americana

R.I.Y.L.

Lambchop, Hem,
Handsome Family



BLUR

Think Tank Virgin

A lot has happened since Blur released their last album, *13*, in 1999. Bandleader Damon Albarn's side projects (Gorillaz and Mali Music) took on a life of their own. Then, founding guitarist Graham Coxon left the band after more than a decade; his departure came so early in the recording process of *Think Tank* that he appears on only one track, the majestic closer, "Battery In Your Leg." Next was an excursion to Morocco to continue work on the album, and production work from Norman "Fatboy Slim" Cook on two songs (the instant hit "Crazy Beat" and "Gene By Gene").

Given all that, guitars unsurprisingly take more of a back seat here, in favor of electronics, beats and exotic instrumentation (including a veritable Moroccan orchestra on "Out Of Time"). Bassist Alex James, meanwhile, is able to step forward in a way he never could before, laying down massive grooves on tracks like the Bowie-esque "On The Way To The Club" and the Gorillaz-strike-back jungle jam of "Moroccan Peoples Revolutionary Bowls Club." The closest any of it comes to classic Blur is in the dreamy piano lull of "Sweet Song" and the late-night city street dirge of "Ambulance," but even then, it isn't harking back much further than *13*. Point being, this is Blur reconfigured and evolved for the 21st Century—maybe modern life isn't rubbish. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.blur.co.uk

File Under

Multiple personality disc order

R.I.Y.L.

Gorillaz, Mali Music,
when the Clash experimented



BUZZCOCKS

Merge

The most endearing moment on the Manchester pop-punk pioneers' first record since 1999's *Modern* comes in "Friends," when Pete Shelley mewls, "Wouldn't be at all surprised if a song I liked won the next Eurovision." It's so endearing because we know that's probably already happened, that once practice is over and the boys are long gone, Shelley pines over his Abba and Celine Dion records. We can hear him straining for a reluctant, "aw shucks" admission. He just doesn't feel comfortable coming out about it quite yet, just as all those monumental singles going

steady from the late '70s were fueled by an inarticulate queer rage. Of course, that means there's a lot less at stake on this solid-plus, blank-titled (not self-titled) effort. Moreover, every song here, including five from original guitarist Steve Diggle, leaves the impression that they can get over any size obstacle in their way, be it a depression-freak love object ("Keep On") or a particularly nasty hangover ("Morning After"). The music certainly bears out this impression—the band speeds through the disc's 35 minutes-flat with more heft than anything they've previously recorded (check out the obstinate, one-chord guitar solo from "Jerk"). But as with so many punks in the future of their no future, they simply cannot make well-adjustedness sound as compelling as the temper tantrums of yore. >>>KEVIN JOHN

Link

www.buzzcocks.com

File Under

Serious but not desperate

R.I.Y.L.

Sex Pistols, Green Day,
Hüsker Dü



CAITLIN CARY

I'm Staying Out **Yep Roc**

Caitlin Cary just wants to relax, dammit. After careening around the country as a founding member of Whiskeytown, the singer and fiddle player is living in North Carolina with her man, former Whiskeytown drummer Skillet Gilmore, and filling her second solo CD with tunes about chilling out, country style. Cary applies her lush, slightly haunted vocals to some truly fine and mostly mellow tracks alongside her traveling band and guests including Mary Chapin Carpenter, Black Crowes guitarist Audley Freed, cellist Jane Scarpantoni and Hobex founder and

guitarist Greg Humphreys. "Please Break My Heart," co-written with fellow North Carolinian Thad Cockrell, is a sly take on straight country, with tinkling Floyd Cramer-like piano and a loping pace reminiscent of the sound Owen Bradley created for Patsy Cline. "Cello Girl" is the big rocker of the set and one of several tunes where Cary executes some smart and thoughtful lyrical moves. The final track, "I Want To Learn To Waltz," seems to show where Cary's head was at when she sat down with Whiskeytown keyboardist Mike Daly to write the bulk of these tunes: "What were we doing that brought us both here? Maybe 3/4 time will help things to clear." >>>BILL KISLUK

Link

www.caitlincary.com

File Under

Smooth Whiskey

R.I.Y.L.

Whiskeytown, Carolyn Mark
And Her Room-mates,
Kelly Hogan



COLD

Year Of The Spider **Geffen/Interscope**

These guys must be psyched that Evanescence scored massive who'd-have-thunk-it crossover coin with their goth-lite "Bring Me To Life." C'mon: a quintet of studly Trenchcoat Mafiosi fronted by an Aaron Lewis clone named—drumroll, please—Scooter? In a sensible world, Cold would be headlining the chicken-wing shack across from the mall; of course, in a sensible world, the last 10 years of modern rock radio wouldn't have happened. So we're left to ponder the portentous *Year Of The Spider*, Cold's third opus. Despite the modest success of prede-

cessor *13 Ways To Bleed On Stage*, the Geffen execs must have the guillotine raised and ready; everyone from Limp Bizkit to Creed have endorsed or collaborated with Cold, but their "moody" cookie-cutter bumper anthems have yet to translate to platinum. Scooter Ward's pity-party baritone is easier to digest than Scott Stapp's, even when uttering sentiments like "Wanna love ya, wanna bug ya, wanna squeeze ya" in "Stupid Girl" (um, you guessed it: not a Garbage cover), and *Spider* generally weaves accessible, mid-tempo webs for the downtrodden. Best is a heartfelt missive about how much Kurt Cobain's death sucked, dude, immortally titled "Kurt." "We could all feel the shotgun hit the floor," Scooter moans. Uh-huh. Still feeling it, dude. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI

Link

www.coldonline.com

File Under

Moody nü-metal

R.I.Y.L.

Staind, Staind, Staind



DEERHOOF

Apple O' **Kill Rock Stars**

While not as accessible as last year's *Reveille*, Deerhoof's fifth proper album, *Apple O'*, finds the band on a similar seesaw. The San Francisco foursome plays rough and humble, packing their simple, guitars-drums-vocals set-up with sticks, stones, sugar and spice. Sounding like labelmates Sleater-Kinney at their most lopsided, Deerhoof lumber in with "Dummy Discards A Heart," wherein banshee-cum-frontwoman Satomi Matsuzaki unleashes a heedless falsetto over the track's fairly friendly stadium-rock riffs. On "Flower," though, the opposite mechanism is at work: The guitar

moans and spits along with broken drums, and only Matsuzaki makes the track palpable by cooing an insistent melody. The sonic teeter-tottering soon expands to the realm of volume. For its first three minutes, "Apple Bomb" is the record's prettiest track, with Matsuzaki lamenting over a lightly strummed guitar and forging a volatile serenity; not even the eventual searing lines of reverb unleashed by exploding guitars can match the intensity the song finds in its initial tension. *Apple O'* hits its apex in its penultimate track, "Adam+Eve Connection," which features the loudest single moment on the record—a painful blast of vacuum cleaner-like white noise—followed by its simplest sound, a languid acoustic guitar in a meandering strum. The two-second transition sums up what's great about Deerhoof: their perpetual study of indie-rock dynamics. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.killrockstars.com

File Under

Who killed Bambi?

R.I.Y.L.

Blonde Redhead, the Boredoms,
Sleater-Kinney, Yoko Ono



ESTER DRANG

Infinite Keys **Jade Tree**

The verses of Ester Drang's "One Hundred Times" are terrific, with Bryce Chambers' vocals wheeling about gorgeously over a pinpoint array of guitars. But then comes the chorus, a bland barrage that could have been constructed by any My Bloody Valentine fans with access to right effects boxes. Such tensions recur throughout the Tulsa, Oklahoma band's second full-length, as strikingly original sonic combinations alternate with spot-the-influence passages that suggest both a talent for imitation and a lack of sure direction. The

upside: Inventive ensemble playing (like the bass-and-piano interplay on "No One Could Take Your Face") and solid drumming that insulates the multi-layered sound from sogginess. The downside: Fussy touches of vibes and electronics, culled from Tortoise and Mogwai, that sit oddly with the songs' sturdy pop structures, and an overall tendency to throw too many ideas at each arrangement. Oh, and what are they singing about? It's often hard to tell, given Chambers' Thom-Yorke-as-teen-dream wail. The band self-identifies as Christian, but the phrases that pop out are 'positive,' rather than sectarian: "Existence is my gift," "Tomorrow is another day." All that can be ignored: Ester Drang are young and still-developing, but they've got the skill to sound like anyone they choose—even, at times, themselves. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

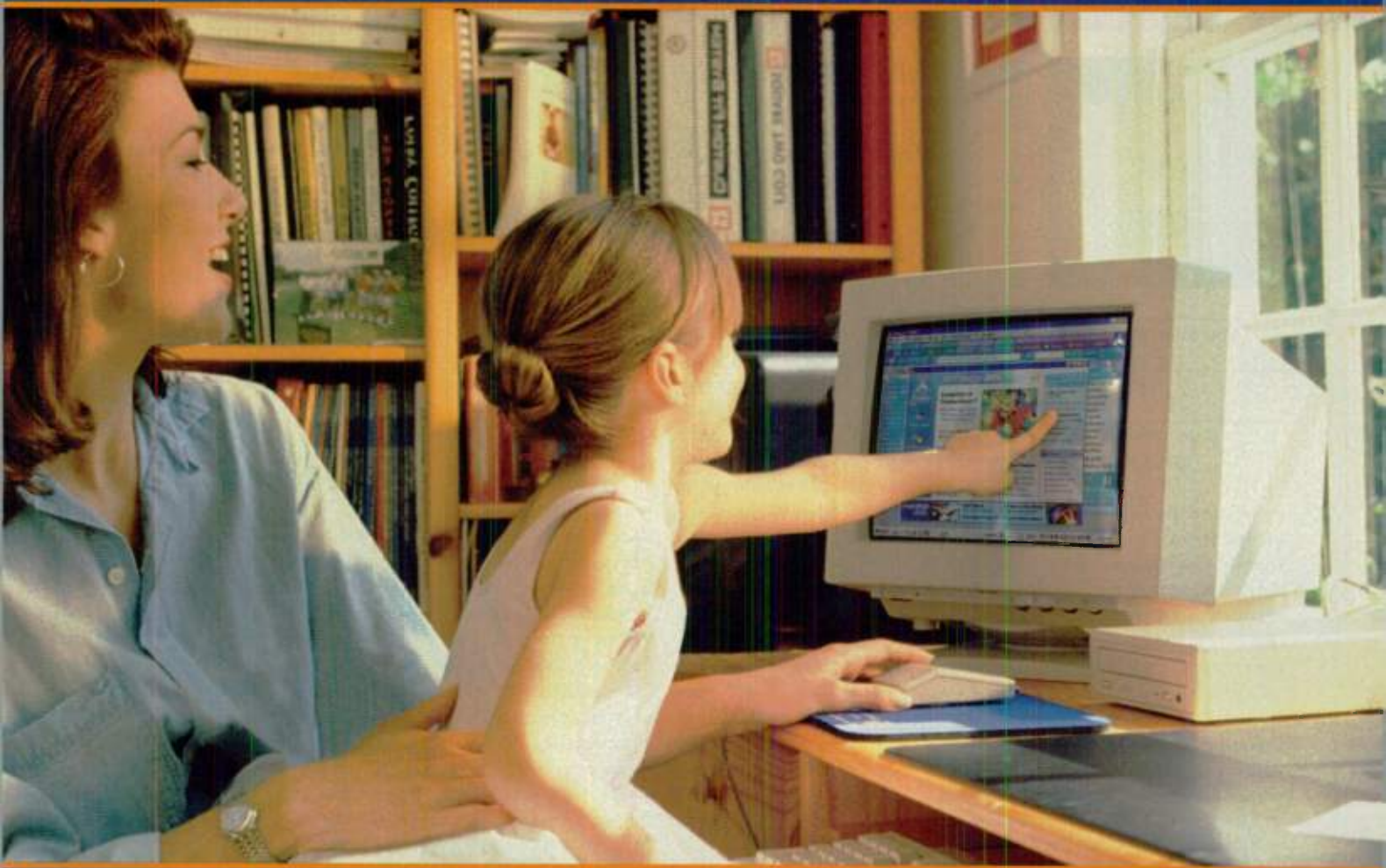
www.esterdrang.com

File Under

What Would Radiohead Do?

R.I.Y.L.

My Bloody Valentine,
Coldplay, Calla



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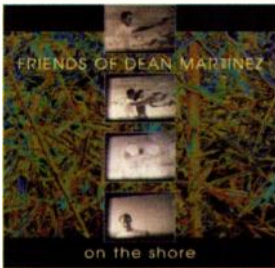


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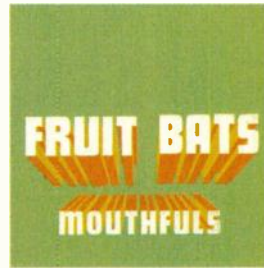
FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ

On The Shore Narnack

Man, some records should have come out before I quit smoking pot, and this two-CD set of sweeping, cinematic steel guitar-driven instrumentals is definitely one of them. Tucson pedal steel man Bill Elm and his Friends Of Dean Martinez (originally Friends Of Dean Martin, back when Calexico's Joey Burns and John Convertino were in the band) first put their thing together back in 1994, when their main gig was with Howie Gelb's Giant Sand. Over the years, Elm and Friends have issued several discs on different labels, and the first CD in this set is

culled from two European releases from 2001. Elm takes the steel, an incredibly evocative instrument capable of registering human-like sounds, chicken pickin' and grand, soaring atmospheric, to its outer limits. His moody compositions are sometimes lounge-y, sometimes massive walls of sound, but are always stately and cinematic, sort of like a soundtrack to *Koyaanisqatsi* if it had been scored by Ennio Morricone instead of Philip Glass. Covers of the Jimmy Webb tune "Wichita Lineman" and the old standard "Tennessee Waltz" offer traceable evidence to the band's country roots. But Elm, drummer Dave LaChance and guitarist Mike LaChance perform radical surgery to these familiar melodies in the course of crafting some very weird but very moving music. >>>BILL KISLUK

Link
www.narnackrecords.com
 File Under
 Steel your face
 R.I.Y.L.
 Giant Sand, Bill Frisell,
 spaghetti Westerns



FRUIT BATS

Mouthfuls Sub Pop

The Fruit Bats have grown more normal since their 2001 debut, *Echolocation*, and they're a better band for it. Leader Eric Johnson has dialed down the twang quotient, revealing a batch of smooth, leisurely paced and surprisingly accessible melodies. Johnson's served as a hired hand with Ugly Casanova and Califone, and his own project is more reminiscent of the latter. But the common thread is producer Brian Deck, who graces *Mouthfuls* with a mix so spacious it sounds like an acoustic guitar album despite frequent and tasteful use of piano, organ, shak-

Link
www.fruitbatsmusic.com
 File Under
 Soft rock without guilt
 R.I.Y.L.
 Wilco, Califone, Freakwater

ers and samples. Gillian Lisee, recently inducted as the second full-fledged Fruit Bat, contributes sweet, subtle harmonies that are among *Mouthfuls'* many charms. The duo soars when they lock into a lazy groove and bliss out, as on "Union Blanket," which most closely resembles Califone thanks to its sampled rhythm loops. Johnson professes a love of commercial apex-era Fleetwood Mac, and similarities to Lindsey Buckingham's vocals and Mick Fleetwood's melodic sensibility can be heard if you tilt your head and squint. The influence is particularly noticeable on closer "When U Love Somebody," a chipper singalong with the incongruous payoff, "When you love somebody, bite your tongue/ All you get is a mouthful of blood." Despite that mischievous turn, *Mouthfuls* hits the spot by emphasizing the sweet over the salty. >>>GLEN SARVADY



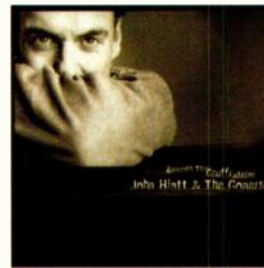
ED HARCOURT

From Every Sphere Astralwerks

On his 2001 debut, *Here Be Monsters*, piano-playing Brit crooner Ed Harcourt wondered if the emotionally overheated guitar-pop of the Coldplay set couldn't do with a little more drama, so he draped his heavy-hearted ballads in every serious rock signifier he could think of: string arrangements, creaky organs, songs referencing "crimson tears" and "the heart of darkness." The disc oozed affectation, but it also introduced a songwriter interested in exploring the love song's dark, creepy side; his promises of unending devotion occasionally felt like thinly veiled

threats. Harcourt went straight to the adult-rock source for his bleary follow-up, *From Every Sphere*, holing up with Los Lobos/Tom Waits engineer Tchad Blake and his well-stocked sonic arsenal to lay down another batch of elegantly twisted confessionals. The two make a good pair: Harcourt's songs tend to be fairly stuffy, but Blake's years of experience have taught him to find space where it doesn't exist; "Jetsetter" nearly bounces with a beatbox thump, and a pretty xylophone line in "Fireflies Take Flight" comes close to musical onomatopoeia. Harcourt's writing has improved, too—"Sister Renee" is a darkly comic reflection on death that rhymes "hatchet" with "Nurse Ratchet"—so Blake's fiddling seems earned instead of showy. *Sphere* is pure pulp, but Harcourt sells it like high art. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

Link
www.edharcourt.com
 File Under
 Piano-pop pulp
 R.I.Y.L.
 Jeff Buckley, Rufus
 Wainwright, Randy Newman



JOHN HIATT & THE GONERS

Beneath This Gruff Exterior New West

Halfway through "Uncommon Connection," the opening track on his new album, John Hiatt sings: "You can say what you want/ I'm not getting' old/ I've slowed down time/ I've nearly stopped it cold." Brave words from a man who just hit the big 5-0. At least age granted Hiatt the wisdom to cut another album with his band, the Goners, and that means that slide guitar genius Sonny Landreth is all over these tracks, kicking ass as only he can. Behold his definitive axe work on "How Bad's The Coffee" and "Circle Back." The latter tune is also a fine example of

Link
www.johnhiatt.com
 File Under
 Four-star Hiatt
 R.I.Y.L.
 Bob Dylan, Elvis Costello,
 Nick Lowe

how sentimentality can rock, at least when Hiatt's writing the song; that he's showing no decline in his geezerhood is verified by tracks like "The Most Unoriginal Sin," "Window On The World" and "Almost Fed Up With The Blues." The fact that *Beneath This Gruff Exterior* rocks like crazy might be interpreted by some as Hiatt's hedge against the march of time—50 is just a number, right? it doesn't mean you have to act mature and quit playing rock 'n' roll—but it probably isn't. Penning and performing rockin' tunes is nothing new for Hiatt, so take the latest CD for what it is—business as usual, and business is very good. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK



HOMESICK FOR SPACE

Unison Lakeshore Entertainment

Homesick For Space's Unison drifts into being like Sigur Ros's (). But when the guitars kick in, you realize that Sigur Ros would only sound this way covering early Queensryche. So is HFS the next big ambient act imported from somewhere near the Arctic Circle or the only prog-rock band left with an under-40 fanbase? In the strictest sense, the answer is neither. They're actually four Long Islanders who created HFS out of the remnants of I, Robot. In a more abstract sense, the answer is both, with a heavy dose of indie instrument-

alism thrown in. Unfortunately this mash-up of styles can come off like aging musicians (which they're not) in search of a trend. The chops, which show jazz and classical influences, are there in spades. The songwriting is serviceable, even beautiful at times, incorporating actual human emotion, something so often lost on prog rock's virtuosos. Ultimately, the combination of instrumentalism and vague longing never really clicks. "Drop Your Mask" and "Sink Or Swim" could easily be early-'90s piano poppers Suddenly, Tammy! on valium or, if stripped of the monotone vocals, Tristeza. "The Echo In Your Eyes" somehow manages to sound both wimpy and apocalyptic. Unison has the makings of a potentially stellar record, but never quite gets off the ground. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

www.homesickforspace.com

File Under

Ambient indie prog

R.I.Y.L.

Early Queensryche, late-'80s

Pink Floyd, Tristeza



THE LONG WINTERS

When I Pretend To Fall Barsuk

Pacific Northwesterner John Roderick's got an impressive knack for writing soft-touch pop-rock that deftly balances sugar-high melodies and syrup-sticky arrangements, but his real talent might be his ability to delegate responsibility like a Microsoft big shot. For *When I Pretend To Fall*, his second album under the Long Winters banner, Roderick corralled no fewer than 25 musicians (including members of Death Cab For Cutie, the Posies and Harvey Danger) into the studio to bring his cleverly drawn sketches of wayward friends and waylaid lovers to fully colored life. Those guests brought a high-school orchestra's worth of instruments with them, too: French horn, accordion, vibraphone, violins and about a half-dozen different keyboards weave in and out of Roderick's songs here, and even R.E.M.'s Peter Buck sneaks in a strum on the mandolin "Losing My Religion" made famous. Flexing his middle-management muscles, Roderick retains control over his enablers, centering the tunes around his sweetly scruffy rasp and lots of crisp acoustic guitars; the frilly detailing only really overpowers the material on the six-minute "Blanket Hog," a cute little evocation of domestic familiarity that inexplicably inflates to farcical prog-rock dimensions. But most of *Pretend* plays like an indie-boy version of ex-Velocity Girl singer Sarah Shannon's recent solo debut—maturity with a slight sprinkle of magic. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

Link

www.barsuk.com

File Under

Well-balanced whimsy

R.I.Y.L.

Badly Drawn Boy, Death Cab

For Cutie, Elliott Smirh

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MANITOBA

Up In Flames Domino

Dan Snaith, who is Manitoba, has complained about "lazy, complacent shitty electronic music where everyone uses the same keyboard sounds and shit drum sounds." This is sort of ironic, since that's what his 2001 debut album, *Start Breaking My Heart*, despite being the recipient of bucketfuls of kudos from the press and fans alike, sounded like: lazy, complacent shitty electronic music with the same keyboard sounds and shit drum sounds. But this isn't the case on *Up In Flames*. In fact, it's not entirely clear from the rapturous little pop gems populating the album that

Snaith's using much electronic gear at all now (he is). From the first single, the surprisingly spry shoegazer dream "Jacknuggeted," to the jangly guitar la-la-along ditty "Bijoux," Manitoba has so clearly—and brilliantly—left navel-gazing electronica behind that one wonders whether Snaith recently had a metal plate removed from his head. "Kid You'll Move Mountains" brims with Spiritualized's magical guitar noise, a happy fusion saxophone and a bum-rushing drumbeat that culminates in precious bird chirps; the next thing you hear is "Crayon"'s gentle glockenspiel and Snaith warbling somewhere in the background like a 5-year-old running gleefully through a flower field. *Up In Flames* could possibly join your own personal group of quintessential springtime-drive-with-the-windows-down albums. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

Link
www.manitoba.fm
File Under
Springtime avant-pop
R.I.Y.L.
Sigur Rós' *Ágætis Byrjun*,
Chapterhouse, Love And Rockets



MARIA MCKEE

High Dive Viewfinder

In the proto-alt-country band Lone Justice, Maria McKee came across like Dolly Parton on amphetamines, a breathless dynamo raving about "Ways To Be Wicked." But that was nearly 20 years ago, and there's little that could be called "country" about *High Dive*. The self-released album picks up, nearly literally, where 1996's *Life Is Sweet* left off, reprising that album's title track and indulging in a similar penchant for grand gestures. While McKee used to worship in the church of Van Morrison (covering two of his songs on 1993's *You Gotta Sin To Get Saved*), she now bows

to Ziggy Stardust-era David Bowie, mixing glam-rock power and orchestral flourishes with subtle and tender emotions. "Be My Joy," with its strings and horns, and "Non Religious Building," a rock 'n' roll suicide anthem with liberal doses of Pete Townshend-style wind-mill guitar, show off McKee's dramatic and commanding voice. Unfortunately, McKee's lyrics don't always merit their grandiose settings. For every two stirring successes—the soulful Laura Nyro-like street-corner harmonies of "Love Doesn't Love," the joyful "To The Open Spaces"—there's a clunker like "My Friend Foe," which finds McKee declaring, "You're too thin, my friend skin." Still, if *High Dive* gets a few points deducted for infelicities, it deserves high marks for ambition and degree of difficulty. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link
www.mariamckee.com
File Under
Grandiose ol' rock opry
R.I.Y.L.
Sheryl Crow, Shelby Lynne,
Patty Griffin



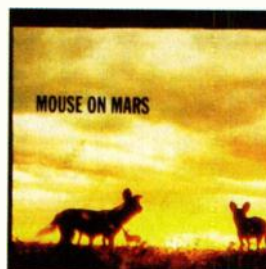
MEANEST MAN CONTEST

Merit Plug Research

Hailing from Oakland, California, Meanest Man Contest surfaced last year with "Contaminated Dance Step," an unlikely 7-inch combining lo-fi hip-hop beats with a rambling rap in which a white-collar middle manager handed out pink slips. Timely stuff, no doubt. While *Merit*, the duo's debut full-length for L.A. electronic label Plug Research, isn't as topical, it's nonetheless a strong statement as state-of-the-art independent hip-hop. Lyricist Eriksolo packs his verses tight with a dense, stream-of-consciousness flow that juxtaposes homelessness with PowerPoint presentations;

his vocals act less as a narrative device than as an abstracted instrument, with Jacob's Ladder rhymes turning language into pure tone color. With the majority of the tracks here instrumentals, the lyrical slides further into the background of the MMC aesthetic. Fortunately, Quarterbar's beats are more than strong enough to hold up their end of the bargain. Sonically, *Merit* recalls Fat Jon The Ample Soul Physician, Four Tet and even a mellower RJD2, combining all manner of sample sources—jazz licks, cobwebbed breaks, prog guitars—into dense, dubbed-out amalgams that swell and crest like waves. Even the instrumentals feel like they tell stories: Unspooling melodies and sounds as complex as Checkov characters give the album a distinctly narrative feel, as warm and lived-in as a dogeared paperback. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link
www.weapon-shaped.com/mmc
File Under
Swap-meet beats
R.I.Y.L.
Prefuse 73, DJ Shadow,
cLOUDEAD



MOUSE ON MARS

Glam Thrill Jockey

Mouse On Mars has always distinguished itself by being indistinguishable—mixing and tweaking its way beyond all comfortable definitions of electronic music. Why Andi Toma and Jan St. Werner, the men behind the Mouse, were recruited to score the soundtrack for a movie starring Tony Danza and Ali MacGraw, is a question best left for the ages. In any event, the resulting work, *Glam*, has finally been made available on CD (after a limited vinyl-only release in 1998) and it's one of their best. While notably absent is anything even remotely danceable,

MoM's distinct polyrhythmic frying pan of sound is served in double portions, interspersed with aptly named tracks "Snap Bar" and "Triplet Metal Plate." The rambling, lushly ambient motif of "Litamin" is one of several tracks where ambulatory stretches are left unmarked by their signature techno-blip brigade. Although the music in this collection is over five years old, it still remains as unclassifiable and out-of-time as the rest of MoM's timeless menagerie of all music earthly and unearthly—further proof that the duo out of Cologne is pioneering some of the most interesting and innovative electronic music out there. The re-release offers three tracks not included on the original vinyl release, which should prove adequate temptation to those steely fans with pristine copies of the original 12-inch packed away. >>>KARL WACHTER

Link
www.mouseonmars.com
File Under
Soft atmospheric sabotage
R.I.Y.L.
Aphex Twin, Stereolab,
Brian Eno

the natural history



Link

www.thenaturalhistory.com

File Under

The museum of angular hooks

R.I.Y.L.

Spoon, Wire, XTC,
the Walkmen, early Cure

THE NATURAL HISTORY

Beat Beat Heartbeat *Startime International*

Brooklyn's the Natural History traffic in angular, spiky rock, the kind created nearly a quarter-century ago by art-punk and new-wave bands such as Wire and XTC. That *Beat Beat Heartbeat* sounds so fresh and genuine is testament both to the powers of recycling and the durability of uncluttered, smart rock 'n' roll. With 11 tracks clocking in under a half hour, the Natural History hit it and quit it: The two- and three-minute songs seem concise rather than brief—they're terse, focused and razor-sharp. "Facts Are" opens with guitarist/vocalist Max

Tepper bashing out a slightly dissonant one-chord hook before the rest of the trio—his brother Julian on bass, Derek Vockins on drums—joins in, adding intensity and a backbeat. It's a winning formula repeated throughout *Beat Beat Heartbeat*. Tepper's an engagingly minimalist guitarist, even when he sounds like he's paying homage ("Dance Steps" is so close to "10:15 Saturday Night" that the band should be paying royalties to the Cure). His voice has a soulful, swaggering edge as he spouts non sequiturs and fractured narratives in the Spoon-fed title track and the clattering syncopation of "Telling Lies Will Get You Nowhere." Even though *Beat Beat Heartbeat* displays its influences prominently, the Natural History tweaks them enough to prove they're interested in evolution rather than museum-quality reproductions. >>>STEVE KLINGE



Link

www.nmallstars.com

File Under

Blues-tinted Southern pop

R.I.Y.L.

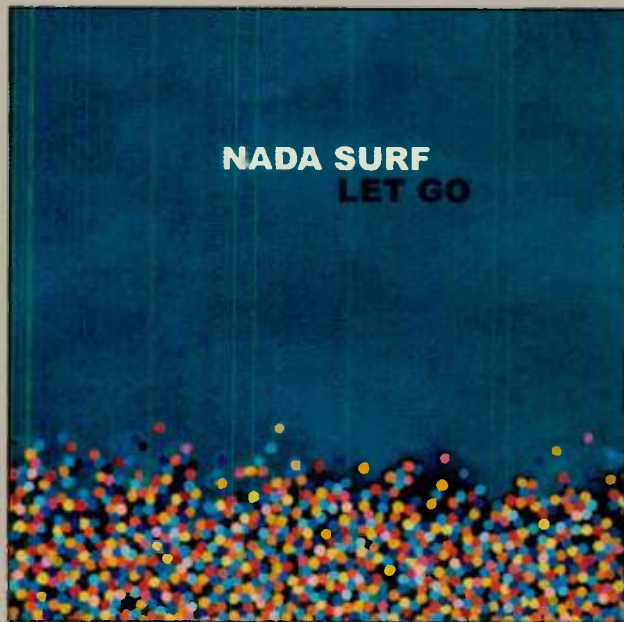
Gov't Mule, Derek Trucks,
the Allman Brothers

NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

Polaris *Tone-Cool/Artemis*

It's disconcerting when a CD is fronted by a statement like this, about psychedelic hoodoo-blues warriors the North Mississippi Allstars: "POLARIS, then, marks the real arrival..." For the love of genuine Southern-fried trance rock, let's hope not: If true, then the getting there was more satisfying, because the third disc from sibs Luther and Cody Dickinson is a mishmash, not nearly as distinctive as their 2000 debut, *Shake Hands With Shorty*, or 2001's *51 Phantom*. Take the collaborations with Noel Gallagher on the title track and "One To Grow On." Both come

off as uninspired exercises in modern rock with bluesy frills. The Oasis guitarist, singing on both tracks, didn't shift toward the Allstars; they moved toward him. Other tracks shoot in multiple directions: Allmans-eque tangy twin guitar harmonies slide over the low-end boogie of "Meet Me In The City" and a bonus 13th track, and the acoustic picking of "The One Thing" morphs into honky-tonk and then a spacey Dead-style jam. Several tracks, including "All Along," "Otay" and "Kids These Daze" reflect the Dickinsons' reverence for the punky pop of the Replacements (and studio connections with them as well—dad Jim produced *Pleased To Meet Me*). Not bad, but the Allstars' forte remains earthy, hypnotic grooves and nasty low-down guitar action, à la the woe-is-me rants "Hard To Please," "Bad Bad Pain" and "Be So Glad." More, please. >>>PHILIP BOOTH



nada surf *let go*

Nada Surf's first full-length in over four years is a revelation: a fascinating departure from their two previous albums that blows away expectations. Features "Blonde on Blonde," "Inside of Love," "The Way You Wear Your Head," and the US-only "Neither Heaven Nor Space." On tour this spring.

"...any surprise at the existence of this third LP is nothing compared to the fact of the record's brilliance. Matthew Caws has matured into an acme-level surgeon of life, lyrically smart without clever-clever." -MOJO

★★★★ -Rolling Stone

the long winters

when i pretend to fall

John Roderick is one of the best new American songwriters out there. The Long Winters' second album is a brilliant follow-up to last year's critically-lauded *The Worst You Can Do Is Harm*.

Featuring guest appearances from Peter Dinklage (REM), Scott McCaughey (The Minus 5), and Sean Ripstone (American Analog Set).

In stores May 6, 2003. On tour this spring with Nada Surf and Sondre Lerche.

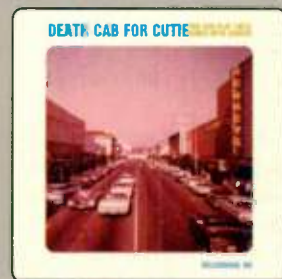


death cab for cutie

you can play these songs with chords

Beautifully packaged CD reissue of DCFC's out-of-print cassette-only first release, plus 10 tracks of unreleased early recordings, covers, outtakes and songs from their two domestic 7" vinyl singles.

"...this eighteen-song disc proves that Seattle indie-rock band Death Cab for Cutie was onto something before it even got started." - Rolling Stone



barsuk records

www.barsuk.com



OWL & THE PUSSYCAT

Owl & The Pussycat **Kill Rock Stars**

Lois Maffeo (here, Owl) is Olympia's original Quiet Riot grrl; Greg Moore (the Pussycat) is frontman for Bay Area surrealists the Moore Brothers. You can easily imagine either quoting Edward Lear's famed nonsense poem (the source of their name) to the other: "How charmingly sweet you sing." The pair's vocal harmonies are a constant highlight of this debut-of-sorts, as on "Don't Play Me," where Maffeo shifts bluesily beneath Moore's denatured, Donovan-esque high notes. Unlike previous Maffeo collaborators (Pat Maley, Fugazi's Brendan Canty), Moore shares

writing and singing duties throughout as well as the expected multi-instrumental ones. Largely, his arrangements are as calm and even as a river on a windless day, all stereo-strummed six-strings, though dabs of fuzz-bass on "Blinds" and the choppy rhythms of "Time Of Day" trouble the waters slightly. The songs themselves follow a well-marked indie-pop path, from bedsit isolation ("Curtains," "I Hate The Sun") to paeans to distant crush-objects ("Train Of My Eye"), although Moore's "Tigers" is considerably more carnal: "I know how you bite/ I know what I like." More sonic variation wouldn't have hurt any, and many will miss the politicized sharpness of Maffeo's best solo work; even so, *Owl & The Pussycat* makes a fine case for interspecies dating. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

[Link](#)

www.killrockstars.com

File Under

Tweesome twosome

R.I.Y.L.

Lois Maffeo, the Softies, the Crabs, Kings Of Convenience



PALE HORSE AND RIDER

These Are The New Good Times **Darla**

The "new good times" have a fatalistic solemnity to them. Or maybe it's just the company Jon DeRosa's been keeping. The 24-year-old singer-songwriter spent a few days at the Sacred Heart Church in Duluth, Minnesota with Low's Alan Sparhawk and crafted these 11 gems with the same ethereal foreboding that haunts Low's finest work. It's a world away from the drone-pop of Aarktica, DeRosa's previous sonic experiment, or the New Jersey coast town of Manasquan where he grew up, but DeRosa's determined to make the pieces fit, much like another

central Jersey boy who mythologized his own America. DeRosa's not unlike the downcast end of Springsteen. "Jersey Coast Line" could very well be *Nebraska's* 11th track, as its stately melody and modest hints of romance and nostalgia cast it into a folk music tradition that's always been more felt than heard. The sparse addition of banjo, harmonium and violin can recall the earliest attempts of the Palace Brothers or reflect an elegiac chamber pop ("I Came Here Every Night."). Where Will Oldham hiccuped in idiosyncrasies, DeRosa plays it straight. There's a Mark Kozelek-like resonance to "I Told Jesus Christ How Much I Love Her" and more than a hint of Townes Van Zandt's deadpan in "The Prettiest Girl I've Seen Tonight (So Far)." >>>ROB O'CONNOR

[Link](#)

www.palehorseandrider.com

File Under

Lonely boy folk music

R.I.Y.L.

Damien Jurado, Mark Kozelek, Palace Brothers



PILOT TO GUNNER

Games At High Speeds

Arena Rock Recording Co.

Chalk up another point for the Arena Rock Recording Co. on their recent acquisition of the phenomenal NYC foursome Pilot To Gunner. Their reissue of the band's 2001 debut full-length *Games At High Speeds* offers the uninitiated another chance to hear some of the most vital sounds rock music has to offer. Yes, it's that good. Anchored by one of the most ferocious rhythm sections in the business, PTG will move you out of your seat only to knock you right back on your ass. Drummer Kurt Herrmann pounds out dynamic patterns

that are as ambitious as they are infectious, while bassist Marty McLoughlin snakes in and out of the beat with a towering presence, propelling each song forward with trembling passion. Representing the treble, Patrick Hegarty provides the band with inventive, angular guitar goodness, sharpening its edges to a razor. But perhaps the most distinctive element to their sound is the voice of lead singer/guitarist Scott Padden, whose rousing rasp always sounds like an inspired call to action, occasionally revealing a keen sense of melody on tracks such as "It's So Good To Be Here In Paris." Together, the four make *Games* a riveting and raucous jaunt that begs repeated listening—and anticipation of the follow-up the band's currently recording with producer J. Robbins. >>>JASON KUNDRATH

[Link](#)

www.pilottogunner.biz

File Under

Post-hardcore you can dance to

R.I.Y.L.

Fugazi, At The Drive-In, Drive Like Jehu



PORTASTATIC

The Summer Of The Shark **Merge**

Mac McCaughan is still one of the hardest working men in indie rock. In between making records with his full-time band Superchunk, scoring independent films and running one of the most consistently surprising indie labels around, he's found the time to record yet another record of "solo" compositions—and they're his strongest to date. *The Summer Of The Shark* is a far cry from Portastatic's early bedroom recordings, but the host of esteemed guest players and flawless production make dreamy tunes like "Noisy Night" some of his most intimately beautiful

work. The few hints at big guitar rock on the disc generally have more character than the average Superchunk outtake, and they revel in the inventive simplicity of an artist free to explore his raw ideas. Solo, McCaughan's renowned for his insightful, heartwrenching acoustic guitar ballads, and while there's no shortage of those on this disc, his more expansive songwriting lends the songs a modestly upbeat feel. The first official full-length from this project in almost six years is more or less what fans have come to expect from Portastatic, but with a fleshed-out roster including members of Sleater-Kinney and Lambchop, the disc also serves as proof that this junior rock legend isn't running short of ideas. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

[Link](#)

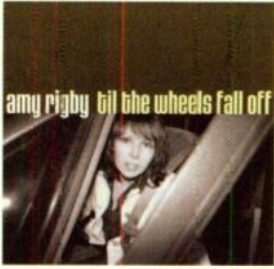
www.portastatic.com

File Under

Big Mac Attack

R.I.Y.L.

Superchunk, Guided By Voices, Lambchop



AMY RIGBY

Til The Wheels Fall Off *Signature Sounds*

Amy Rigby lays out her game plan on the first track, rhetorically asking why she's hung up on misery, loneliness and her every negative capability, knowing the answer all along. She's made her career singing extremely personal songs about her anxieties and failings; her naked, trembling voice wouldn't have the same vulnerability set to self-improvement manifestos. It's perfect asking, "Are We Ever Going To Have Sex Again?" or telling you, "You can't break a heart that doesn't work no more." Pathos is her métier. She dances and drinks alone with the melodically

excited Bill Lloyd co-penned tune, "Shopping Around." She takes a stand for the existentially challenged with the self-explanatory "Even The Weak Survive." She even uses her elder statesmom status to her advantage, working her daughter's insular, headphone-wearing indifference into her poignancy file ("Don't Ever Change"). These could be just witty, folksy observations, but Rigby's an old rock vet. She served time in the 1980's country-rock outfit Last Roundup and folk-pop trio the Shams. She wraps her ideas in a leather jacket: There's girl-group support vocals, muscular drumming and electric guitar throughout. Recorded in multiple settings—Nashville, New York, Scotland—with a rotating set of support players (Wilco's Ken Coomer, Lucinda Williams' Duane Jarvis), Rigby's fourth solo album leaves the beautiful losing streak uninterrupted. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

[Link](#)

www.amyrigby.com

[File Under](#)

Neurotic folk pop

R.I.Y.L.

Liz Phair, Jill Sobule,
Laura Cantrell



SERART

Columbia

What does it say when System Of A Down is your "normal" band? On the debut from System vocalist Serj Tankian's side project, Serart, it says that the twisted frontman's bizarre visions may be even more auspiciously inventive than anyone imagined. His teaming with Armenian multi-instrumentalist Arto Tunçboyacıyan is a genre-hopping exploration of poly-rhythmic percussion, disparate samples, globe-spanning undertones and the expected vocal theatrics. And it's wildly entertaining. Over beats that range from SOAD's histrionic chaos to

[Link](#)

www.serart.net

[File Under](#)

System of a dub

R.I.Y.L.

System Of A Down, Mr.
Bungle, Sepultura's *Roots*

tribal trances and spastic dance freakouts, Tankian's vocals approach avant-garde plateaus that would give Mike Patton a run for his money. Serart's influences stem far outside the average rock palette; an appreciation for various folk musics is the strongest component of the disc. A speed-addled tour through under-utilized modes of music may seem like a trip worth passing on, but this duo manages to tastefully guide the voyage, sequencing the 16 erratic, pulsating tracks with such attention to detail that the disc flows surprisingly well. There's no sense in guessing what's around every turn on this irrepressible debut, but it's safe to assume that its politically charged and musically extreme composers are so filled with conviction that it won't sound stale. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

anberlin

Blueprints For The Black Market

Debut Album In Stores 05.06.03

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(SMOG)

Supper Drag City

There's a certain cadence in almost every Bill Callahan song, a hard atonal drop at the end of a line that speaks threat and apology all at once. It sets every song of his ever-so-slightly on edge—not that most of them weren't already tilted more than a little awry—and whether calculated or not, that deadpan Callahan snap has also put the emotion of his songs behind bars, not unlike a set of parentheses with no other point but to deflect and occlude. So it takes a while for the sheer open-hearted beauty of Callahan's latest opus, *Supper*, to catch up with you. Glimpses of naked yearning turn up on

even the most gimlet-eyed Smog LPs—and 2001's *Rain On Lens* was Callahan's flintiest in years—but *Supper* sustains an unguarded mood as none of his albums since *Knock Knock*. Ruminative and resigned throughout, the record's strongest material pulls Callahan's downbeat Southern rock gently apart by means of Jim White's impressionistic drumming and layer upon layer of gauzily atmospheric instrumentation. "Feather By Feather," "Vessel In Vain" and "Our Anniversary" are the prettiest sounding Smog songs since *Red Apple Falls*, evanescent and dreamy in much the same way, but for better or worse, less adamantly brooding and strange, and simultaneously easier to listen to and tougher in their very directness than those old ghost stories. >>>MAYA SINGER



SPIRITUALIZED

The Complete Works Volume One Arista


The beauty of time-lapse photography is that you can watch a progression—a tiny green bud to the sprawling bloom of a flower, a freshly killed rodent to a pile of sunbleached bones—without having to bear audience to moments that, while essential to the progress, are pretty freaking boring. You might catch some cool sparks the time-lapse watchers miss, wading through *all* the moments, but is it honestly worth the time spent? Such is the question with early works/rarities compilations like the new *Complete Works* from Jason Pierce's Spiritualized, comprised of 24

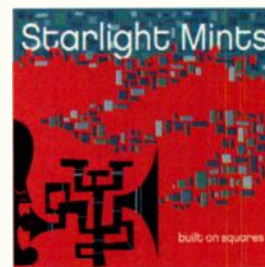
tracks that range from the band's first release, the "Any Way That You Want Me" single, to 1993's *Electric Mainline* EP. For Spiritualized completists who haven't managed to wrangle up the band's every recorded moment, it gives a vision into early steps, before Pierce's aural narcotics burgeoned from groggy minimalism to the fully realized and irresistible bombast of 1997's *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space* and 2001's *Let It Come Down*. Fans partial to the band's debut LP, *Lazer Guided Melodies*, will be interested in hearing early versions of the tracks that ended up on that disc, and Spacemen 3 enthusiasts will enjoy experiencing the sound of that band morphing into Spiritualized. Casual fans? Well, you might want to just skip straight to the payoff. >>>NICOLE KEIPER

LOVE&DISTORTION

THE STRATFORD 4

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 www.jetsetrecords.com



STARLIGHT MINTS 

Built On Squares PIAS [America]

A penchant for ambitious-yet-skewed orchestral pop arrangements, and a vocalist who favors absurdist lyrics and an intense, dramatic delivery—it's little surprise that Norman, Oklahoma's Starlight Mints' 2000 debut CD, *The Dream That Stuff Was Made Of*, got them pegged as descendants of the Flaming Lips. After all, how big could the Norman indie scene really be? If, however, the Mints hailed from a city with a big new wave revival of '80s underground enthusiasts, it would be as easy to see *Built On Squares* through

that particular pop lens. Because, more than anything, Mints singer/guitarist Alan Vest brings to mind the art-school flamboyance of Sir Bob Geldof from the *Fine Art Of Surfacing* days, replete with all those little background harmony flourishes his Boomtown Rats provided. And the queasy string trio arrangements that embellish tracks like "Brass Digger" and the hallucinogenic "Goldstar" are reminiscent of the cello parts that gave the Psychedelic Furs' *Forever Now* much of its distinctive sound. That doesn't quite explain the Bacharachian horns, harmonica or slide guitar of "Brass Digger," but Starlight Mints don't seem interested in being placed neatly in any boxes, which is how they most resemble the Lips, especially when Vest gets going with lyrics like "Switchblade, stuck in the moon/ Is that the little girl inside of you?/ Voom, zoom, how could I lose/ A superstitious girl like you?" >>>MATT ASHARE

Link
www.starlightmints.com
File Under
A new wave of new wave
R.I.Y.L.

The Flaming Lips, Frank Black, Boomtown Rats

THE STRATFORD 4



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www.stratford4.com

File Under

A view with a shoe

R.I.Y.L.

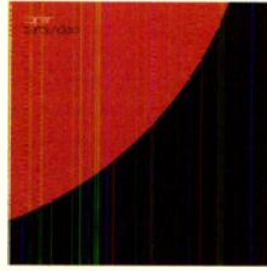
Swervedriver, Spiritualized,
My Bloody Valentine

THE STRATFORD 4

Love & Distortion *Jetset*

Any band trading in atmospheric guitars and spacey production is doomed to suffer endless My Bloody Valentine comparisons. That is the Stratford 4's curse, and deservedly so. On their sophomore release, *Love & Distortion*, the Seattle quartet brings the noise shoegazer style, tingeing it with a self-deprecating indie-rock drone. That guitars are most of the story here should be no surprise. They swoop and swoon, soar and dive: Parallels to Galaxy 500, Kitchens Of Distinction, Swervedriver and a billion other bands can be found. As important as

the noises coaxed from six strings jammed through a whole rack of effects is the space that exists in and around those noises. Not stifled by over-production, the cold and echoey "Telephone" and "Tonight Would Be Alright" have plenty of room to breathe. "Swim Into It," a sprawling epic that invites you to do just that, is so beautiful it hurts. "The Story Is Over" is a bit trashy, like *Spiritualized* when a sober J. Spaceman feels like rockin' out. A competent, if pedestrian, rhythm section lays down the bottom and beat while lazy faux-British vocals summoned from a druggy haze provide the requisite apathetic musings for these guitar heroes. The Stratford 4 isn't doing anything new here, let alone innovative. But they sure are doing it well. >>>NORM ELROD



Link

www.liquidinjuredhearing.com

File Under

A break from breaks

R.I.Y.L.

Boards Of Canada, Bola,
Peace Orchestra

TIPPER

Surrounded *My Utopia*

One of breakbeat's most innovative artists, Dave Tipper distinguishes his work by virtue of its attention to detail. His dancefloor tracks don't just go bang, they slither and twitch, constantly morphing and mutating—a far cry from the leaden thump that characterizes most breaks. Under the guise of Crunch, Tipper has tweaked the bubblewrap snap of leftfield electronics, chasing syncopation far beyond danceable thresholds. But *Surrounded* marks a new direction for Tipper—downbeat atmospherics. The title signifies not paranoia but sound design; the CD was mastered in 5.1 Surround Sound. Herein lies the problem, however: For those of us with access only to standard stereo setups, *Surrounded* will never live up to its potential. (And its reliance on sensorial effects begs the question, To what extent is 5.1 Surround a gimmick, sort of like early experiments in stereo-for-stereo's-sake?) Still, it's hardly a total wash. In the strongest tracks, it's the detail that differentiates Tipper's work: Chords don't just chime, they flare like solar storms, flickering around the edges. Ghost rhythms slink by under the cover of darkness. Like Boards Of Canada, Tipper polishes up by-the-numbers structures with sound design that threatens to overflow the foundations. Occasionally, *Surrounded* fails to overwhelm, but in a close space with the lights down low, it's possible to crawl inside the sound, no matter how many speakers on your hi-fi. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE



Link

www.triplethreatdj.com

File Under

Three the hard flay

R.I.Y.L.

X-Ecutioners, Invisibl Skratch
Piklz, Beat Junkies

TRIPLE THREAT

Many Styles *Fat Beats*

Winners of DMC and ITF championships, résumés that rep crews like Invisibl Skratch Piklz and Beat Junkies—the concept of Triple Threat is harrowing, indeed. The idea of proggy show-offs joining forces to make accessible jams has produced much more evil than good (Asia, GTR, Platypus, anyone?) but luckily the Triple Threat supergroup of DJs Apollo, Shortkut and Vinroc can safely shelve their pyrotechnics and not end up a disc-slicin' Damn Yankees. Last year, the X-Ecutioners provided the formula for turntablism

crossover success: Curb the ceaseless crab-walks and up the guest spots. Triple Threat follows suit to mixed success, since like the X-ecs, they misstep when putting substance above st-st-style. There's no surefire Linkin Park cameo (although Planet Asia, Souls Of Mischief and Black Thought are nice), so their un-wanky hip-hop joints seem flavorless when matched with their undeniable finger-poppin' scratchgasms. When they do hit, the Triple Threat production is a post-Dilated version of the DJ Premier skeleton, which provides plenty of space for Talib Kweli and Main Flow on the album highlight "Hip Hop Worth Dying For" and their all-too-infrequent scratching. The more showy routines don't disappoint, riding the same ol' school Double Dutch Bus that's currently unlacing hip-hop's collective Adidas. Although certainly not a threat in the production game, their routines are always three times dope. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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World Radio History



TRÜBY TRIO

Elevator Music *Compost*

Trüby Trio cut cultures and continents together with a sonic blender on chop, not frappe. While the German threesome isn't averse to combining the traditional and the electronic (like on the drum 'n' bass 'n' tropicalia of "A Festa"), their ingredients are generally clear cut and identifiable. Even so, their debut album *Elevator Music* feels mostly aimless. It's as though they're too eagerly striving to be, to paraphrase F. Scott Fitzgerald, that most limited of all specialists, the "well-rounded" band. Laying the in-your-face Afrobeat of "Runnin'" next to the

Spanish guitar-and-breaks commotion of "Jaleo" comes off as callous. The tiresome globetrotting goes further, marring the gorgeousness of the following pillowy samba, "Alegre." The sole unifying element is the trio's use of warm, early Chicago house-sounding keys. Along with Marcus Begg, who practically steals the whole *Elevator*, the keyboards beautify "Love To The World" and "Lover Uncover." Over the former's clash of '70s and '80s disco and the latter's ballad-into-boogie suite, Begg's baritone renders the dancefloor into a boudoir. *Elevator Music* has plenty of inspired moments that are more suitable for wax and clubs than a full-length disc. Strung together, though, these tracks are as charmless as a crayon-scrawled poster for Unicef. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.compost-records.com

File Under

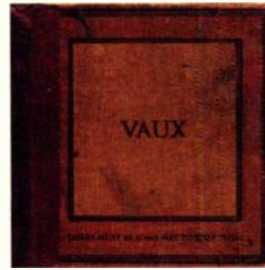
What goes up...

R.I.Y.L.

Vikter Duplaix, Tosca,

Kruder & Dorfmeister,

Bebel Gilberto



VAUX

There Must Be Some Way To Stop Them

Volcom

We rock hacks are trained to be cynical and think that when a band re-christens itself, there's something underhanded afoot, that the change is driven by image-conscious marketing consultants more than any artistic reasons. Maybe so, but with *There Must Be Some Way To Stop Them*, the band formerly known as Eiffel emerges from its cocoon—the larval stage was mostly spent as an efficient but pretty standard post-hardcore/hard emo outfit—with a chip on those new butterfly wings. And those three guitars might as well be

shotguns for they deter any cries of "fakes!" Now known as Vaux, the Denver six-piece teams up with producer John Goodmanson (Sleater Kinney, Unwound) for a lye-on-exposed-flesh intensity that befits the choked pain in Quentin Smith's vocals. "Set It To Blow" starts off with Smith screaming over Joe McChan's galloping drums and the first leg of a multi-stage guitar relay race. Most tracks follow a similar pattern, letting the hooks emerge from the starts, stops and dynamic shifts that jump out of nowhere. Mellow, Trail Of Dead-esque plodders provide a welcome respite, even if obtuse lyrics about "burning bridges" and "crumbling towers" seem kinda cloying and only serve to remind that on *There Must Be Some Way To Stop Them*, Vaux's volume—not its message—is the real attraction. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

www.volcoment.com

File Under

Morose by any other name

R.I.Y.L.

At The Drive-In,

Small Brown Bike, Juno

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VITESSE

You Win Again, Gravity! *Hidden Agenda*

Vitesse so slavishly recreates a hyper-specific sub-genre of early '80s techno-pop that it borders on the hilarious. The studio duo's chiming keyboards and simplistic drumbox patterns evoke a bygone era when mascara-clad Anglophiles danced in darkened clubs until the wee hours. Hewson Chen and Josh Klein allow plenty of sunny melody to peer through their music's dark, arty veneer, Chen's baritone reinforcing connections to clear antecedents Depeche Mode and OMD. His vocals also summon inevitable comparisons to the Magnetic Fields' nostalgic turn on *Holiday*, but Chen's tone is far warmer

than Stephin Merritt's. Catchy tunes like "Hunch" and "Not Forever" could slot seamlessly into a modern-rock radio '80s retro set without a drop in quality or a raised eyebrow, while jittery guitars and an insistent bassline alter the pace on the New Order homage "Ride The Hook" (Peter, perhaps?). The only misstep is a cover of Hüsker Dü's mindbending "Green Eyes," which strips the original of its grinding desperation, leaving a wispy trifle sung by guest Celeste Alexander. Although Vitesse's third disc is remarkably similar to its predecessors, the duo manages to churn out new material without growing tiresome or overtly aping the melodies of its influences. *You Win Again, Gravity!* is a compelling argument in support of the notion that sometimes fake can be just as good. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.parasol.com/hiddenagenda/vitesse.asp

File Under

House of retro pleasure

R.I.Y.L.

Depeche Mode, Orchestral

Manoeuvres In The Dark,

Magnetic Fields



THROWING MUSES

Throwing Muses 4AD

KRISTIN HERSH

The Grotto 4AD

Link

www.4ad.com

File Under

Polyglot punk pop

R.I.Y.L.

Pixies, Breeders, Belly



Link

www.4ad.com

File Under

Woebegone ballads

R.I.Y.L.

Cat Power, Songs: Ohia,

Edith Frost

but this album, recorded "quick and dirty" over three week-ends, suggests that the bandmembers haven't grown much musically since their last jam session. The addition of Donelly on backup vocals adds a few harmonic layers to singer Kristin Hersh's doleful howl, but not enough to consider this effort a glorious resurrection.

While it might seem foolish for Hersh to release a solo album on the same day as her old band's big comeback, *The Grotto* successfully illuminates the expanse between her work with the band and away from it. Since leaving Throwing Muses, Hersh has released five albums and cemented her reputation as an enigmatic songwriter with a storm-weathered soul. *The Grotto* strips away the brittle distortion of *Throwing Muses* to focus on the ragged innocence of Hersh's voice. Set primarily against sparse guitar arpeggios, the singer's wavering delivery makes it easy to imagine her lying in a tub filled with cold water exhaling every note with quiet desperation. Melodic hooks drift along like kites through the window, momentarily engaging, and then disappearing into the pale sky and leaving you to mull over imagistic lines like "The tears on my shoulder, freezed and boiled/ I wouldn't be here if not for your snake oil." Having just given birth to her fourth child, Hersh is no longer the tempestuous pixie she once was; yet *The Grotto* manages to be as riveting as some of her most raucous work with little more than an acoustic guitar. >>>NEIL GLADSTONE



EAMONN VITT

Deserted Music Self-Starter Foundation

Eamonn Vitt was a founding member of Boston's Karate, leaving in 1997 to pursue a medical degree. So you might expect his first solo full-length (on the heels of a 2000 EP) to trade in the spacious slowcore that his old band played when he was in it. Hardly: *Deserted Music* is a smart but entirely unpretentious singer/songwriter collection, modestly produced by New York indie veteran Adam Lasus (Mary Timony, Versus). Despite solid work from drummer Scott Adamson and guest shots from Mascott's Kendall Meade and Karate's own Jeff Goddard (who adds trumpet to

Link

www.eamonnvitt.com

File Under

The doctor is (rockin') out

R.I.Y.L.

Portastatic, Varnaline,

Tom Petty

two tracks), there's something of a one-man-band feel here, probably because the disc's introspective acoustic numbers and succinct pop-rockers (even the near-metallic "Left At Gallup") are tied together by Vitt's nice-guy vocals and well-traveled lyrical vignettes. At their best, these combine place and relationship winningly, as on the subway romance "Fate Maps" and the harsher "Coasting," with its cliff-edge advice: "Keep your eyes on the stars and don't look down." The most telling song, though, is "Work": Over a rollicking, "Mystery Train" rhythm, Vitt casts his lot with fellow artist/medicine man William Carlos Williams. "Hey you, in that white coat/ Heard you'll never play that song again," go the naysayers—*Deserted Music* is Vitt's demonstration that they're wrong. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

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OTTO VON SCHIRACH

Chopped Zombie Fungus Schematic

Next big thing: putting a big circular saw blade on your CD. Skeleton Key did it because they like to bang on things, Aereogramme did it for some godforsaken reason, but Otto Von Schirach did it because his music wants to cut your fucking fingers off. Like a blood-curdling Autechre for the death-metal set, or Russell Haswell for disconauts, Miami's Von Schirach is one scary motherfunker. Fueled on random metallic clanging, speaker-shredding beats, a disorienting free jazz-meets-IDM brainwarp and a puerile sense of humor ("Madame Queef

Blizzard"? C'mon, dude), this Otto-mobile drives full speed into Unapproachable City—like Kid 606 without the easy entry points of Missy samples or cuddly anime. Truly, this is music for aliens to burst into your belly and devour you to. "Pelican Moondance" is a pseudo-bhangra scuzzfest like a lost David Lynch Bollywood flick scored by a pissed off Aphex Twin and "Earjuice Synthesis" is like Alec Empire's take on Miami bass. A patience-trying 70 minutes of irritating construction site squelches is swell for the frayed synapses, but his sophomoric jokes (a feigned Euro accent: "Foxy mama/ Nasty nasty/ Sex sex sex sex/ Touch your boo-tay") are the only things that should prove irritating to hardcore electrofreaks. Once this master of industrial clatter takes himself seriously, everyone else would be foolish not to. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

www.schematic.net/artist/otto.htm

File Under

Kid 666

R.I.Y.L.

Autechre, Phoenicia,

Blectum From Blechdom



M. WARD

Transfiguration Of Vincent Merge

M. (Matt) Ward is one of those out-of-time iconoclasts who found refuge in the indie-rock world despite doing little that can be credibly described as rock. Notwithstanding the Granddaddy-esque guitar charge of the lovely, tone-setting "Vincent O'Brien" and the analog synth vurgles beneath the entrancing "Outta My Head," much of *Transfiguration Of Vincent* could be mistaken for an after-hours session captured at a blues or jazz club 50 years ago. Ward's raspy tenor and Tin Pan Alley melodicism recall Tom Waits, although his melancholy compositions tug the heartstrings

without the fever-dream theatrics of Waits' later work. Ward recorded the album in an attic with some Portland cronies, and the dust on his parlor piano and acoustic guitar is nearly audible. Frequent instrumental passages and low-key bluesy shuffles convey an intimate, just-for-friends vibe, punctuated by irresistible tunes like "Poor Boy, Minor Key" that showcase Ward's sturdy songcraft. *Vincent* closes with a nearly unrecognizable cover of David Bowie's "Let's Dance," transfiguring it into an acoustic guitar dirge retaining little but the original's lyrics. On casual listen, it might seem like a hokey stunt, but Ward wrings every ounce of emotion from those words, turning it into a fitting capstone for a stunning album centered on themes of fragility and loss. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.giantsand.com/mward

File Under

Dusty attic blues-folk

R.I.Y.L.

Granddaddy, Giant Sand, Elliott

Smith, Tom Waits, Lambchop,

Ben Sidran

Caitlin Cary
I'M STAYING OUT

CAITLIN CARY's second full-length album, *I'M STAYING OUT*, follows last year's acclaimed *WHILE YOU WEREN'T LOOKING*, called "the best recording yet to surface from the remnants of Whiskeytown" by *NO DEPRESSION* magazine. *I'M STAYING OUT* received some of that year's highest accolades.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY wrote: "Trekking through love's landmines, [Caitlin's] rangy soprano is all hard-won confidence -- the sound of an erstwhile second-fiddle changing first chair."

USA TODAY added: "Turns out Ryan Adams isn't the only talented scion of alternative-country dadies Whiskeytown. The band's ex-victrist blossoms out from under Adams' prodigious shadow. Cary crafts charming and bitter-sweet Southern pop."



WHIRLWIND HEAT

Do Rabbits Wonder? Third Man/V2

Think of Dr. Frankenstein trying to corral his monster after letting it loose. Or better yet, imagine trying to keep an ornery black bear on a leash. That's got to be how White Stripe Jack White felt when he got in the studio to produce the nerve-rockers from Whirlwind Heat. As rigid and formal as White is with his own group, the Grand Rapids, Michigan trio goes in the opposite direction with a synth/bass/drums attack that's about as musically non-linear as a John Cage composition. More than a few songs are hung on a two- or three-note distorted synth pattern, a few bass

Link

www.whirlwindheat.com

File Under

I am Jack's schizophrenic

no-wave band

R.I.Y.L.

Sonic Youth, Oh My God,

Arab On Radar, Brainiac

notes and drum fills—just enough to barely support David Swanson's nonsense lyrics about "trash bag helmets" and "cans of pure luck." The abrasive approach makes the songs impenetrable at first, but successive listens bring out the pretty tension of instruments and Swanson's vocals all pulling in different directions. Distinctions like "ballad" and "rocker" don't work here, but "Tan" (all 13 songs are named after colors) creeps like the Space Invaders theme, while "Blue" charges with an uncommon intensity. Put it this way: Back when people said Digital Underground's Humpty Hump looked like MC Hammer on crack, this is the sort of album he'd have been dancing to. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

PAUL WELLER
LIVE TWO CLASSIC PERFORMANCES

"...the bite and passion he has always poured into his music was undeniable and electric." —*Billboard* regarding Weller's recent US Tour

Over his 25-year career, PAUL WELLER has always been known for his incredible live shows and recently finished a critically acclaimed US/European tour supporting the release of his new Yep Roc album *Illumination*. TWO CLASSIC PERFORMANCES, the new DVD, includes his full 2-hour performance from London's HYDE PARK plus a stripped down solo performance, PAUL WELLER...LATER WITH JOOLS HOLLAND which includes guest appearances from Noel Gallagher and Jools Holland. TWO CLASSIC PERFORMANCES also includes a rare on-camera interview with WELLER that covers the making of *Illumination* and provides insights into the songwriter (whose career is now in it's third incarnation) from The Jam through The Style Council and up to his current success as a solo artist.

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CHRIS WHITLEY

Hotel Vast Horizon Messenger

Chris Whitley is a master of the National Steel guitar, a difficult instrument that (literally) slides between acoustic and electric blues. It's a description that also fits Whitley the artist, always caught in the distance between styles. Since 1991's *Living With The Law*, his startlingly sophisticated swamp-blues debut, Whitley's touched on Hendrix-influenced electric excess (1995's *Din Of Ecstasy*), solo acoustic blues (1998's *Dirt Floor*) and introspective, jazz-tinged covers (2000's *Perfect Day*). On his last album, 2001's *Rocket House*, Whitley collaborated

Link

www.chriswhitley.com

File Under

Millennial blues

R.I.Y.L.

Kelly Joe Phelps, Jay Farrar,
Nick Drake

with DJ Logic and others for a set of intermittently successful experiments in pairing drum loops with his steel guitar lines. He sounds more at home on *Hotel Vast Horizon's* set of quietly captivating originals. It's a spacious, dark album, full of understated tension and simmering passions, focused on images of desire, corruption and wanderlust. Whitley sings "Blues For André" in a raspy falsetto whisper, as if he's telling secrets you don't want to hear. Conversely, the percussive "Insurrection At Newtown" bristles with pent-up energy. "New Lost World" is Whitley at his best: His nicotine-stained vocals trace an undulating, hypnotic guitar line that's bluesy, but not the blues. The songs on *Hotel Vast Horizon* aren't as immediate as those on previous highwater marks like *Dirt Floor* and *Living With The Law*; they're more complex, but equally compelling. >>>STEVE KLINGE



YO LA TENGO

Summer Sun Matador

The summer sun can be fun, but it can also be cruel—harsh, inescapable, enervating. It sets tempers on edge as easily as it soothes frayed nerves. For Yo La Tengo, the summer sun brings happy-go-lucky optimism but also shadowy insecurities: One moment Ira Kaplan is smiling through breezy tunes such as the goofy "Moonrock Mambo" and the easy-rolling "Season Of The Shark"; the next, Georgia Hubley is cooing introspectively in "Today Is The Day" or James McNew is murmuring "summer stays too long" on "Tiny Birds." *Summer Sun* is an album of small details; it's not as grand a state-

Link

www.yolatengo.com

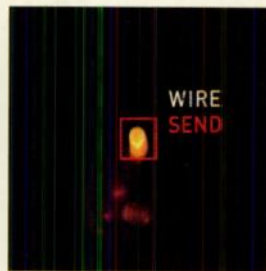
File Under

The sounds of the
sounds of summer

R.I.Y.L.

Portastatic, Stereolab,
Lambchop

ment as 2000's dark *And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside-out*, nor is it as experimental as last year's limited-release *The Sounds Of The Sounds Of Science*. It eschews feedback-driven squalls for sliding surf guitars, sexy samba beats and lightly burbling keyboards, and although the only cover here is a lovely version of Big Star's "Take Care," *Summer Sun* recalls 1990's *Fakebook* with its focus on compact, acoustic-flavored compositions that swing more than they rock. From the funky instrumental "Georgia Vs. Yo La Tengo" to the meditative "Don't Have To Be So Sad" to the sole epic, the flute-and-sax driven "Let's Be Still" (featuring members of avant-jazz band Other Dimensions In Music), Yo La Tengo's *Summer Sun* shines brightly and burns slowly. >>>STEVE KLINGE



WIRE

Send Pink Flag

Time is the great distorter. Punk, in its most essential definition, has been one of the most unfortunate victims of such distortion. It was basically defined by four components: social-political confrontation, avant-garde destruction of rock 'n' roll dogma, youthful rebellion and blistering volume. The first three—one and two being most imperative—were abandoned wholesale, and now punk is defined only by blistering volume (and now, well, skateboards and whining a lot). It's fitting, then, that Wire, punk's seminal art-school agitators, would return to set everyone the

Link

www.pinkflag.com

File Under

Nasty is the new arty

R.I.Y.L.

Early Wire, Killing Joke,
the Fall

fuck straight. After helping make excellent bedfellows of art and electro-pop in their first reunion of '86-'92, Wire are back again, and they're taking back their blistering volume from those who don't know how to use it properly. Their astonishing new record *Send* matches their early work in terms of bold aggression, but there's an artful precision to it—like throwing a grenade with a lacrosse stick. Among the killers here are "Comet," which is like speed-metal for art galleries, "In The Art Of Stopping," a stylish bit of retro post-punk, and the mechanized menace of "Nice Streets Above." The lyrics, as always, are as baffling as they are fascinating, masterstrokes of esoteric subversion. All in all, it's a stunning return. Listen up "not reinventing the wheel" kids: This is your father's punk rock. And guess what? He's way fucking cooler than you. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

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April '03 THE WHITE STRIPES



March '03 BEN HARPER



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CMJ

NEW MUSIC REPORT

YOU ARE CAT POWER FREE



TOP 75

#1
CAT POWER
YOU ARE FREE
MATADOR

1 CAT POWER <i>You Are Free</i> Matador	26 THE ATARIS <i>So Long</i> Astoria Columbia	51 LIGHTNING BOLT <i>Wonderful Rainbow</i> Load
2 THE POSTAL SERVICE <i>Give Up</i> Sub Pop	27 THE SEA AND CAKE <i>One Bedroom</i> Thrill Jockey	52 THE REALISTICS <i>The Realists</i> Capitol
3 MASSIVE ATTACK <i>100th Window</i> Virgin	28 BOY SETS FIRE <i>Tomorrow Come Today</i> Wind-Up	53 FICTION PLANE <i>Everything Will Never Be OK</i> MCA
4 SUPERGRASS <i>Life On Other Planets</i> Island	29 NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS <i>Nocturama</i> Anti/Epitaph	54 THE DIRTY THREE <i>She Has No Strings Attached</i> Touch And Go
5 CALEXICO <i>Feast Of Wire</i> Touch And Go	30 DANIEL JOHNSTON <i>Fear Yourself</i> Gammon	55 SMOG <i>Supper</i> Drag City
6 FISCHERSPOONER #1 Capitol	31 RAINER MARIA <i>Long Knives Drawn</i> Polyvinyl	56 TALIB KWELI <i>Quality</i> Rawkus
7 AFI <i>Sing The Sorrow</i> Nitro-DreamWorks	32 AISLERS SET <i>How I Learned To Write Backwards</i> Suicide Squeeze	57 ERLEND OYE <i>Unrest</i> Source/Astralwerks
8 IDLEWILD <i>The Remote Part</i> Capitol	33 THE BLOOD BROTHERS <i>Burn Piano Island</i> Burn ARTISTdirect	58 ELENI MANDELL <i>Country For True Lovers</i> Zestone
9 MINUS 5 <i>Down With Wilco</i> Yep Roc	34 THE THERMALS <i>More Paris Per Million</i> Sub Pop	59 NOFX <i>Regaining Unconsciousness</i> [EP] Fat Wreck Chords
10 FOLK IMPLOSION <i>The New Folk Implosion</i> Imusic/ARTISTdirect	35 THROWING MUSES <i>Throwing Muses</i> 4AD/Beggars Group	60 RY COODER AND MANUEL GALBAN <i>Mambo Simiendo</i> Perro Verde/Nonesuch
11 THE GO-BETWEENS <i>Bright Yellow</i> Bright Orange Jetset	36 AEREOGRAMME <i>Sleep And Release</i> Matador	61 THE BE GOOD TANYAS <i>Christmas</i> Nettwerk
12 STEPHEN MALKMUS <i>Pig Lib</i> Matador	37 LONGWAVE <i>The Strangest Things</i> RCA	62 SONGS: OHIA <i>The Magnolia Electric Co</i> Secretly Canadian
13 CURSIVE <i>The Ugly Organ</i> Saddle Creek	38 THE CORAL <i>The Coral</i> Deltasonic/Columbia	63 A BAND OF BEES <i>Sunshine Hit Me</i> Wall Of Sound/Astralwerks
14 CAVE IN <i>Antenna</i> RCA	39 ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE <i>Attention!</i> Blah Blah Blah Hopeless	64 M. WARD <i>Transfiguration Of Vincent</i> Merge
15 THE STRATFORD 4 <i>Love And Distortion</i> Jetset	40 DJ KRUSH <i>The Message At The Depth</i> Red Ink	65 THE PIECES <i>The Pieces</i> Benchmark
16 BEN HARPER <i>Diamonds On The Inside</i> Virgin	41 BETTIE SERVEERT <i>Log 22</i> Palomine/Hidden Agenda	66 THE MUSIC <i>The Music</i> Capitol
17 THE DATSUNS <i>The Datsuns</i> Hellsquad/V2	42 REGGIE AND THE FULL EFFECT <i>Under The Tray</i> Vagrant	67 SWINGIN' UTTERS <i>Deal! Towers, Bottom, Burgin's And Bones</i> Fat Wreck Chords
18 THE LIBERTINES <i>Up The Bracket</i> Rough Trade/Sanctuary	43 TANGIERS <i>Hot New Spirits</i> Sonic Unyon	68 COUNT THE STARS <i>Never Be Taken Alive</i> Victory
19 DEERHOOF <i>Apple O</i> SRC-Kill Rock Stars	44 TED LEO/PHARMACISTS <i>Hearts Of Oak</i> Lookout!	69 WOVEN HAND <i>Woven Hand</i> Sounds Familyre
20 ANI DI FRANCO <i>Evolve</i> Righteous Babe	45 BLUE MAN GROUP <i>The Complex</i> Lava	70 WHITE LIGHT MOTORCADE <i>Thank You, Goodnight</i> Octone
21 ZWAN <i>Mary Star Of The Sea</i> Reprise	46 THE DELGADOS <i>Hate</i> Mantra	71 FURTHER SEEMS FOREVER <i>How To Start A Fire</i> Tooth And Nail
22 NADA SURF <i>Let Go</i> Barsuk	47 SATURDAY LOOKS GOOD TO ME <i>All Our Summer Songs</i> Polyvinyl	72 CROOKED FINGERS <i>Red Carpet Down</i> Merge
23 APHEX TWIN <i>26 Mixes For Cash</i> Warp	48 THE JULIANA THEORY <i>Love</i> Epic	73 MOVING UNITS <i>Moving Units</i> Rx/Palm
24 BUZZCOCKS Merge	49 GLASS CANDY <i>Love Love Love</i> Troubleman Unlimited	74 NEW WET KOJAK <i>This Is The Glimmerous</i> Beggars Banquet
25 DRESSY BESSY <i>Little Music</i> Telegraph/Kindercore	50 MURS <i>The End Of The Beginning</i> Definitive Jux	75 PAPER LIONS <i>The Symptom And The Sick</i> Kindercore

3 YEARS AGO

MODEST MOUSE *The Moon And Antarctica* (Epic)
SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE *The Rising Tide* (Time Bomb)
BELLE AND SEBASTIAN *Fold Your Hands* Child, You Walk Like A Peasant (Jeepster/Matador)
JURASSIC 5 *Quality Control* (Interscope)
DANDY WARHOLS *Thirteen Tales From Urban Bohemia* (Capitol)

10 YEARS AGO

DINOSAUR JR. *Where You Been* (Sire/WB)
BELLY *Star* (4AD/Sire/Reprise)
BUTTHOLE SURFERS *Independent Worm Saloon* (Capitol)
FRANK BLACK *Frank Black* (4AD/Elektra)
LIVING COLOUR *Stain* (Epic)

HIP-HOP TOP 10

1	MURS The End Of The Beginning Definitive Jux
2	DJ KRUSH The Message At The Depth Red Ink
3	TALIB KWELI Quality Rawkus
4	COMMON Electric Circus MCA
5	THE ROOTS Phrenology MCA
6	BEANS Tomorrow Right Now Warp
7	SOUL POSITION Unlimited EP Rhymesayers
8	K-OS Exit Astralwerks
9	NAS God's Son Columbia
10	FREEWAY Philadelphia Freeway Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam

LOUD ROCK TOP 10

1	HAUNTED One Kill Wonder Earache
2	STRAPPING YOUNG LAD SYL Century Media
3	BOY SETS FIRE Tomorrow Come Today Wind-Up
4	VOIVOD Voivod Chophouse
5	THE BLOOD BROTHERS Burn Piano Island, Burn ARTISTdirect
6	OLD MAN'S CHILD In Defiance Of Existence Century Media
7	MINISTRY Animositisomina Sanctuary
8	E-TOWN CONCRETE The Renaissance Razor And Tie
9	AMON AMARTH Versus The World Metal Blade
10	AFI Sing The Sorrow Nitro/DreamWorks

RETAIL TOP 25

1	50 CENT Get Rich Or Die Trying Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
2	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me Blue Note
3	BEN HARPER Diamonds On The Inside Virgin
4	STEPHEN MALKMUS Pig Lib Matador
5	EVANESCENCE Fallen Wind-Up
6	R. KELLY Chocolate Factory Jive
7	AFI Sing The Sorrow Nitro/DreamWorks
8	ANI DIFRANCO Evolve Righteous Babe
9	COLDPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol
10	ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND Hittin' The Note Sanctuary
11	AUDIOSLAVE Audioslave Epic
12	SOUNDTRACK Chicago Epic
13	SEAN PAUL Dutty Rock VP/Atlantic
14	CAVE IN Antenna RCA
15	LIL' KIM La Bella Mafia Atlantic
16	FABOLOUS Street Dreams Elektra
17	MASSIVE ATTACK 100th Window Virgin
18	CAT POWER You Are Free Matador
19	JOHNNY CASH American IV: The Man Comes Around Lost Highway/American
20	THE ATARIS So Long, Astoria Columbia
21	EMINEM The Eminem Show Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
22	(HED)PE Blackout Volcano/Jive
23	KILLER MIKE Monster Sony
24	SOUNDTRACK 8 Mile Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
25	VARIOUS ARTISTS Atticus: Dragging The Lake Vol. 2 Side One Dummy



#1 RPM
APEX TWIN
26 MIXES FOR CASH WARP



#1 LOUD ROCK
THE HAUNTED
ONE KILL WONDER EARACHE



#1 RETAIL
50 CENT
GET RICH OR DIE TRYING
SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

RPM TOP 10

1	APEX TWIN 26 Mixes For Cash Warp
2	DJ KRUSH The Message At The Depth Red Ink
3	FISCHERSPOONER #1 Capitol
4	VIKTER DUPLAIX International Affairs V2.0 Hollywood
5	DJ SMASH Phonography 2 Blue Note
6	MASSIVE ATTACK 100th Window Virgin
7	P'TAAH Staring At The Sun Ubiquity
8	VARIOUS ARTISTS Requiem For A Dream Remixed Thrive
9	MR. C Change End Recordings
10	VARIOUS ARTISTS Rewind 2 Ubiquity

JAZZ TOP 10

1	FRED HERSCH TRIO Live At The Village Vanguard Palmetto
2	THE BAD PLUS These Are The Vistas Columbia
3	DAVE DOUGLAS Freak In Bluebird/RCA Victor
4	MATT WILSON QUARTET Humidity Palmetto
5	SCOLOHOFO Oh! Capitol/Blue Note
6	WAYNE SHORTER Alegria Verve
7	MARSALIS FAMILY A Jazz Celebration Marsalis Music
8	MATTHEW SHIPP Equilibrium Thirsty Ear
9	CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE BAND Vertical Vision Warner Bros.
10	BILL EVANS Big Fun ESC

JUST OUT

APRIL 15

JESSICA ANDREWS Now *Dreamworks*
 KURTIS BLOW 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection *Mercury*
 WARD CHURCHILL *Pacifism As Pathology Alternative Tentacles*
 PETULA CLARK Ultimate Petula Clark *BMG Heritage*
 KELLY CLARKSON Kelly Clarkson *RCA*
 COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS Live And Deadly *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 THE CRAMPS Fiends On Dope Island *Vengeance*
 DEL CIELO Wish And Wait *EyeBall*
 ENNIS SISTERS It's Not About You *Rounder*
 ESTER DRANG Infinite Keys *Jade Tree*
 DUDDOOS Specium Sommer *Sound Pollution*
 STEVE EARLE 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection
 EBONYS The Best Of The Ebonys *Legacy-Epic*
 EFFECTIONS Soundtrack To A Moment *Adeline*
 EL GUAPÓ Fake French *Dischord*
 RICHARD ELLIOTT Ricochet *GAP*
 EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE Plagiarythm *Nation V 2.0 Seeland*
 FLEETWOOD MAC Say You Will *Reprise*
 FLIM Helió Tom Lab-Carrot *Top*
 THE HIDDEN CAMERAS The Smell Of Our Own *Rough Trade*
 ISLEY BROTHERS 3 + 3 *Legacy-Epic*
 ISLEY JASPER ISLEY Caravan Of Love: The Best Of Isley Jasper Isley *Legacy-Epic*
 DANIEL JOHNSTON The Early Recordings Of Daniel Johnston, Vol. 1 *Dualtone*
 TOBY KEITH 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection *Mercury Nashville*
 LAND OF NOD Reality Channel: Introduction To... *Orange Sky*
 LAZILY SPUN Lazily Spun *Camera Obscura*
 LOVETONES Be What You Want *Committee To Keep Music Evil*
 ZIGGY MARLEY Dragonfly *Private Music*
 THE MANHATTANS The Manhattans *Legacy-Columbia*
 MATES OF STATE My Solo Project *Polyvinyl*
 HAROLD MELVIN AND THE BLUE NOTES Wake Up *Everybody Legacy-Epic*
 MOTT THE HOOPLE The Best Of Mott The Hoople *Legacy-Columbia*
 MOUNTAIN The Best Of Mountain *Legacy-Columbia*
 O'JAYS Ship Ahoy *Legacy-Epic*
 +/- Holding Pattern *Teenbeat*
 SLAUGHTER AND THE DOGS Dog Day Afternoon: Live In The USA *TKO*
 SLEEP STATION Hang In There Charlie *EyeBall*
 SPIRIT The Best Of Spirit *Legacy-Columbia*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Kitestringing: Prison Literature Project Benefit *Substandard-New Red Archives*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Underground Screams *Asian Man*
 VERBAL ASSAULT Volume One: Masses And Learn *Mendit*
 APRIL VERCH From Where I Stand *Rounder*
 VERY APE Koshier Boogie *Alive!*
 PETE YORN Day I Forgot *Columbia*
 ZZ TOP Mescalero *RCA*

APRIL 22

KING SUNNY ADE Synchro Series *Indigidisc-Hyena*
 ADIOS Ropes *Tribunal*
 ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND All Girl Summer *Fun Band K*
 ARAB STRAP Monday At The Hug And Pint *Matador*
 AUDIO BULLYS Ego War *Source-Astralwerks*
 BATTLEFIELD BAND The Best Of Battlefield Band *Temple*
 BETERCORE Youthcrustdiscography *Six Weeks*

BLACK LIPSTICK Converted Thieves *Peek-A-Boo*
 BLUELINE MEDIC Text Bomb *Fueled By Ramen*
 BLUE MAN GROUP The Complex *Lava-Atlantic*
 RANDY BRECKER 34th N' Lex *ESC*
 BYRDS The Essential Byrds *Legacy-Columbia*
 CARNAL FORGE The More You Suffer *Century Media*
 REGINA CARTER Paganini: After A Dream *Verve*
 EVAN DANDO Baby, I'm Bored *Bar/None*
 DEATH BY STEREO Into The Valley Of Death *Epitaph*
 JULIE DOIRON Broken Girl *Secretly Canadian*
 EARLY DAY MINERS Jefferson At Rest *Secretly Canadian*
 CATHY FINK AND MARCY MARXER Bon Appétit *Musical Food Fun Rounder*
 GOGOGO AIRHEART Love My Life... Hate My Friends *Gold Standard Labs*
 GOGOGO AIRHEART Gogogo Airheart *Gold Standard Labs*
 GOLDCARD Goldcard *Off*
 HANGNAIL Transparent *Tooth And Nail*
 GEMMA HAYES Night On My Side *Source-Astralwerks*
 INFLUENTS Some Of The Young *Adeline*
 ALBERT KING Talkin' Blues *Thirsty Ear*
 RAHSHAAN ROLAND KIRK Compliments Of The Mysterious Phantom *Hyena*
 LONG WINTER Breathing Underwater *Tribunal*
 IAN MCCULLOCH Slideling *Cooking Vinyl*
 MARIA MCKEE High Dive *Viewfinder*
 KEN MODE Mongrel *Escape Artist*
 MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK/SCHATZI Spit *Doghouse*
 MUCH THE SAME Quitters Never Win *A-F*
 MURDER CITY DEVILS R.I.P. *Sub Pop*
 NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE I Saw A Bright Light *Daemon*
 NOBUKAZU TAKEMURA Songbook *Bubble Core*
 OFFICER MAY Smoking In A Minor *Ace Fu*
 PALAXY TRACKS Cedarland *Peek-A-Boo*
 PINK ANVIL Halloween Party *Ipecac*
 SALTEENS Let Go Of Your Bad Days *Drive-In*
 SLOW COMING DAY Farewell To The Familiar *Tooth And Nail*
 STARVATIONS Get Well Soon *Gold Standard Labs*
 SUBTITTLE I'm Always Recovering From Tomorrow *Gold Standard Labs*
 SUKILOVE Sukilove *Hidden Agenda*
 T-LOVE Long Way Back *Astralwerks*
 TOKYO SEX DESTRUCTION Le Red Soul *Communité Dim Mak*
 UNDERGROUND RISE Sunrise, Sunset *Uprok*
 URSA MINOR Silent Moving Picture *Smells Like*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS La Musica Della Mafia Vol. 2: Omerta, Onurie Sangu *PIAS America*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Swami Sound System Vol. 1 *Swami*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Urbs In Horto-Chicago Indiepop *Johann's Face*
 VITAL REMAINS Dechristianize *Century Media*
 THE WATCHERS To The Rooftops *Gem Blandsten*
 WILDCHILD Secondary Protocol *Stones Throw*
 ZOHGAMIN Zongamin *Matador*

APRIL 29

COLD Year Of The Spider *Interscope*
 MARTIN L. GORE Counterfeit *Mute-Reprise*
 HYPER Bedrock Breaks: Fractured *Bedrock Breaks*
 TH' LEGENDARY SHACK*SHAKERS Cockadoodledon't *Bloodshot*
 SCUMFROG Extended Engagement *Positiva*
 RHONDA VINCENT One Step Ahead *Rounder*
 WINK Profound Sounds V. 2 *Ovum*
 WIRE Send *Pink Flag*



THE CRAMPS: APRIL 15

MAY 6

ANBERLIN Blueprints For The Black Market *Tooth And Nail*
 ANTHRAX We've Come For You All *Sanctuary*
 NATACHA ATLAS Something Dangerous *Martra*
 BLUR Think Tank *Parlophone*
 COAL CHAMBER Giving The Devil His Dues, B-Sides *Roadrunner*
 RICHARD DORFMEISTER A Different Drummer *Selection - A Decade In Dub '92-'02 Different Drummer*
 DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM Hand Clappin' *Matt Elliott*
 MATT ELLIOTT The Mess We Made *Merge*
 FALL OUT BOY Take This To Your Grave *Fueled By Ramen*
 FLARE Hung *Le Grand Magistry*
 GHETTO PRIEST Vulture Culture *On-U Sound*
 GOLDFRAPP Black Cherry *Mute*
 GRAVE Soulless/Hating Life *Century Media*
 WALT KELLY WITH NORMAN MONATH Songs Of The Pogo *Reaction*
 K WORD EP *LiquiLab*
 LABRAT Ruining It For Everyone *Century Media*
 LEFTY'S DECEIVER Cheats *My Pal God*
 THE LONESOME ORGANIST Furms And Follies *Thrill Jockey*
 THE LONG WINNERS When I Pretend To Fall *Barsuk*
 NAGLFAR Sheel *Century Media*
 THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS Electric Version *Matador*
 NOFX The War On Errorism *Fat Wreck Chords*
 OZMA Spending Time On The Borderline *Kung Fu*
 PLEASURE FOREVER After *Sub Pop*
 RANDY Welfare Problems *Epitaph*
 LEE RITENOUR Very Best Of Lee Ritenour *GAP*
 SEA AND CAKE Glass EP *Thrill Jockey*
 TOMAHAWK Mr Gas *Ipecac*
 TURBONEGRO Scandinavian Leather *Epitaph*
 VERBENA La Musica Negra *Capitri*

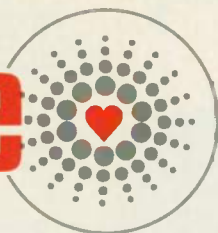
MAY 13

ALKALINE TRIO Good Mourning *Vagrant*
 BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE Space Girl And Other Favorites *Committee To Keep Music Evil*
 GEORGE CLINTON AND THE P-FUNK ALL STARS Six Degrees Of P-Funk: The Best Of George Clinton And His Funk Family *Legacy-Epic*
 DEATH COMET CREW DCC America *Troublemaker*

Unk'd.
 DEMINER Woes And So's *Johann's Face*
 EAVES Eaves *Ace Fu*
 GOVERNMENT ISSUE Strange Wine: Live At CBGB's *Dr. Strange*
 HELICOPTER HELICOPTER Wild Dog With X-Ray Eyes *Initial*
 HOT CROSS Cryonics *Level Plane*
 HOT CROSS/LIGHT THE FUSE AND RUN *Spit Level Plane*
 LEN We Be Who We Be *DreamWorks*
 LUSHY Lushy *Dionysus*
 MARKED MEN Marked Men *Rip Off*
 JACKIE MITTOO Champion In The Arena *Blood And Fire*
 MOVIES In One Era And Out The Other *Gem Blandsten*
 NORTH OF AMERICA Brothers, Sisters *Level Plane*
 NOXAGT Turning It Down Since 2001 *Load*
 PINK AND BROWN Shame Fantasy II *Load*
 PLEASURE FOREVER After *Gold Standard Labs*
 RED HOT VALENTINES Summer Fing *Polyvinyl*
 RIFFS Death Or Glory *TKO*
 SEBASTIAN ROGERS Repeat *DreamWorks*
 SOUNDTRACK Pal Jivey *Sony Classical-Legacy*
 TABULA ROSA Role Of Smith *A-F*
 TESTORS Complete Recordings 1976-79 *Swami*
 THREATS Demos And Rarities *Dr. Strange*
 ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK Before We Spark *Initial*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Songs Of John Hiatt *Vanguard*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Sound Pollution... High Energy High Voltage *Sound Pollution*
 ROCKY VOTOLATO Light And Sound *Second Nature*

MAY 20

JOSH BENNETT TBA *Private Music-RCA/VG*
 LUCILLE BOGAN Shame 'Em Dry: The Best Of Lucille Bogan *Legacy-Columbia*
 CABRET VOLTAIRE Methodology '74-'78: The Attic Tapes *Mute*
 CALLENISH CIRCLE My Pass on Your Pain *Metal Blade*
 CHERRYWINE Bright Black *Decide/Babygrande*
 CHINCHILLA Madropolis *Metal Blade*
 MILES DAVIS In Person: Friday Night At The Blackhawk, Complete *Legacy Jazz-Columbia*
 MILES DAVIS In Person: Saturday Night At The Blackhawk, Complete *Legacy Jazz-Columbia*



Van Halen

STORY: JOE KERN • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

I was just five years old, in the summer of 1979, when an explosion startled my older brother and I out of bed. The sound of falling, as though descending into hell, and after a few eerie rumbles...BANG! Imagining something like a demon riding a tornado, we ran downstairs to seek safety with our father, only to realize that it was his 10-inch woofers spewing forth this devil, and there he was, gleefully running right along with it.

Like any old man worth his salt, my dad liked old music—classical, big band, rock 'n' roll. But the 1970s came forth bearing heavy metal, and my dad fell in love with the pounding, visceral experience of it all: KISS, Black Sabbath, Judas Priest...Van Halen.

Upon reaching my musical age of accountability in 4th grade, my personal relationship with Van Halen started with "Jump" and the album that housed it, 1984. Inevitable lip-syncing and air-guitaring ensued, and soon, I graduated to a cardboard and electrical-taped tennis racket with a tin-shank whammy bar. I practiced the "jumping-off-the-bed-on-the-dramatic-downbeat" move, perfecting David Lee Roth's spread-eagles and roundhouse kicks, which, despite my best efforts, didn't endear me to my friends practicing to be ninjas. The "guitar" came with me for three straight Halloweens, and nearly made it into the talent show, but for the grace of an ill-fated decision to instead try out for host with a handful of jokes and anecdotes from my mother's *Reader's Digests*.

It was the music first and foremost that moved me, but the embodiment of my obsession was the logo—that vast, gleaming, metallic three-dimensional flying VH, the classic rendering of which festoons *VHIII*, demanding awe and worship. I drew it on notebook covers, in the margins, on my Trapper Keeper (leaving marker all over my step-dad's album cover, which I subsequently had to hide from him), on T-shirts, desks...I even cast it in aluminum in metal shop.

Band logoing, the mark of the heavy-metalled classes, began in 5th grade. The other boys at my suburban Minneapolis school were drawing that barbaric Twisted Sister TS in bones on everything—polar opposite to the triumphant VH. By junior high, logos were equivalent to identity: Heaps of girls sported clean, black Poison and Cinderella T-shirts, loner guys with poor hygiene sported Iron Maiden ones. The kids who smoked in the woods behind school spraypainted



the murderous knife-edged logos of Metallica and Slayer on the crumbling concrete wall by the creek. And beat me up.

But I fought the battle of iconolatry tenaciously, if meekly. My VHs continued to grace everything I owned, their soaring figures trumping the sinister logos of other bands. I knew my VHs made me cool beyond mere human judgment, in some sort of *a priori* universe where absolutes existed. I didn't hold it against anyone for not singing Van Halen's praises all the time: I understood that for some, life was to seek and explore the "new" cool. But I was a priest, keeping the old fire going lest it burn out, and somewhere inside each person in junior high, I knew they recognized that, and credited it to me with a quiet sobriety.

My five years of tagging culminated in a single moment: It was 9th grade, we were making launchable rockets for science class, and were left to decorate them however we wanted. I held my rocket horizontally at arms length, contemplating the glory of the flying VH I'd (naturally) drawn on it. The vision of my bold VH flying through the air on a powerful rocket, with accompanying music, played in my head as a popular kid and his cute girlfriend glanced at my handiwork. "Dude, you put *Van Halen* on your rocket?"

I was shocked—not insulted, or embarrassed (for once), just shocked. The implications had to be contemplated for several months: A cool kid didn't know that Van Halen was cool!? Obviously, to be cool is to be tapped into the secret well of cool things. Equally obvious is the fact that Van Halen was a *foundation* of that well. Can God play a guitar so loudly that He can't hear anything over it? It was philosophically staggering.

Resolving the dilemma in my mind was a simple exercise in logic, but the jolt to my belief system had much greater implications for my soul. I eventually broke my monogamy and began exploring other music: Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Cat Stevens. I still took refuge in my dad's record collection; he even held my hand while I explored the much-feared Metallica, possibly his favorite band, and I'd like to thank him for making devil music of all kinds safe for me to listen to. And while I've stopped scrawling the VH logo on everything I own, I still get the same feeling of power, reverence and glory whenever I happen upon it. For many of my most formidable years, it was my talisman, my coat of arms—my battle flag.

We sincerely hope that Joe Kern, currently vacationing in China, is not tagging the Great Wall with "VH."

"Hottie coming your way."

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