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A PERFECT CIRCLE



SPIRITUALIZED

A PERFECT CIRCLE 28

Maynard can you hear me... A Perfect Circle was nearly perfect with *Mer De Noms*, songs that ex-guitar tech Billy Howerdel spent a decade developing. So how do Howerdel and Tool's Maynard James Keenan do it again, with new bandmembers, a shorter time frame and Keenan... being Keenan? Tom Mallon interviews with the vampire.

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB 18

Apparently, BRMC's Robert Turner thought he was doing one of those cool "what I've Learned" interviews in *Esquire*, because that's what he wanted to talk about. Tom Lanham reviews the education process.

AESOP ROCK 20

How's this for infinite jest: It turns out that the "hip-hop literary genius" is more influenced by the waterbug in his toilet than the fancy-schmancy authors to whom he's been compared. Christopher R. Weingarten makes lots of pop culture references anyway.

MATTHEW HERBERT 22

If electronic producer Matthew Herbert's big band-sounding *Swingtime* was made using a restrictive creative process and is actually a political statement, why is it so fun to listen to? Richard Juzwiak takes his samples for analysis.

SPIRITUALIZED 24

You'd expect Jason Pierce to *really* hate Muzak. And to come up with a blissed-out take on garage rock. Mikael Wood floats in his space.

ON THE VERGE 14

The hot pants, sir? Aye, the hot pants: Jet, Stellastarr*, the Thrills, Jeff Klein.

ON THE CD 34

A Perfect Circle, Vuu, Spiritualized, OutKast, Metric, Shelby Lynne, Stellastarr*, Rachael Yamagata, Mike Errico, Aesop Rock, Memento, Gold Cash Gold, Dear John Letters, Dressy Bessy, Stereo Motion, Lords Of Acid, Stigmato Inc., the String Cheese Incident.

QUICK FIX 8

David Byrne's in a Glasgow state of mind, Iggy Pop reunites with the Two Stooges, OutKast slices the jam in two, Steve Burns does more than think on that chair, Mates Of State give you the combined advice power of *Team Boo*, get your first listen to a transatlantic Hiss, and make your own traffic laws with *Spy Hunter 2*.

LOCALZINE 38

O.A.R. rows around Rockville, Maryland.

GEEK LOVE 66

Joe Henry appraises Lorne Green's long arm of the law.

REVIEWS, CHARTS, SERVICES

BEST NEW MUSIC 40

REVIEWS 44

CMJ BIZ 63

7/16/03 11:46 AM Ben writes:

Okay, I guess it's not cool to be enthusiastic about your favorite bands, even if nobody's heard of them and you want more people to know about them. (Printing my letter about Party Of Helicopters, you felt the need to title it "Good God.") Yet it's perfectly all right to be hyperbolic about lame, derivative bands whom everybody already knows about (i.e., calling the New Pornographers "the greatest pop band in the world," saying Pearl Jam deserves to be noticed "now more than ever," describing Blur as "brainy").

Ben Coe
Gainesville, Florida

7/16/03 11:53 AM, scottf@cmj.com writes:

Ah, don't be so sensitive. We were working with a theme for the titles. One man's enthusiasm is another's hyperbole. Do you think we're keeping score here or something?

7/16/03 12:21 PM Ben writes:

No. I was just making a point about how *CMJ New Music Monthly* tends to gush about mostly-forgotten-for-good-reason bands, as well as all of the "next big things." Then when the backlash sets in, they're the first to jump on that bandwagon too. (For a recent example: In your new issue, one of your writers mocks certain music press coverage of the Streets with "last year's reactionary critical response to the Streets ("Ooh, he said "mates!" Four stars')." Yet anyone with a subscription to *CMJ* and a long-term memory remembers the glowing review of the Streets album by *CMJ*, as well as *CMJ*'s inclusion (twice!) of his track "Let's Push Things Forward" on its CD.)

7/16/03 12:35 PM, scottf@cmj.com writes:

We contain multitudes. We'll let a writer express that opinion even if it makes our earlier enthusiasm (as a whole) look bad. Anyone with a close eye will find contradictions in the magazine, because it's all about opinion. And opinions and enthusiasms change over time. And, because we don't have a strict party line about what we will and won't support. We did like that Streets record, but in retrospect, the praise was reactionary on all sides. I have no problem admitting that, just as I know that making broad statements about the quality of bands opens one up to criticism. Of course, I like some bands you think are lame, so what do I know?

7/16/03 12:45 PM Ben writes:

Aw, don't be so sensitive! I was just yanking your chain!

7/16/03 12:46 PM, scottf@cmj.com writes:

Glad we came to the same conclusion.

7/17/03 10:21 AM Ben writes:

Haha!

By the way, nice allusion to W. Whitman on the subject of self-contradiction ("We contain multitudes"). I've used that one myself!

See ya, B

CORRECTION: In the August issue, we ran incorrect artwork for Dressy Bessy's new self-titled disc. The correct artwork is to the right; *CMJ New Music Monthly* regrets the error.



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WHO WILL PLAY LIVE ON THE 31st ANNUAL AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS? YOUR VOTE COUNTS.

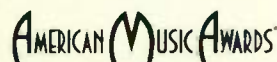
3 Finalists are entering the final stretch of the Competition. On 10/23/03, they'll give it their all at the Knitting Factory during the CMJ Music Marathon in NYC. Only one deserving act will win the chance to share the stage with some of the year's greatest musicians.

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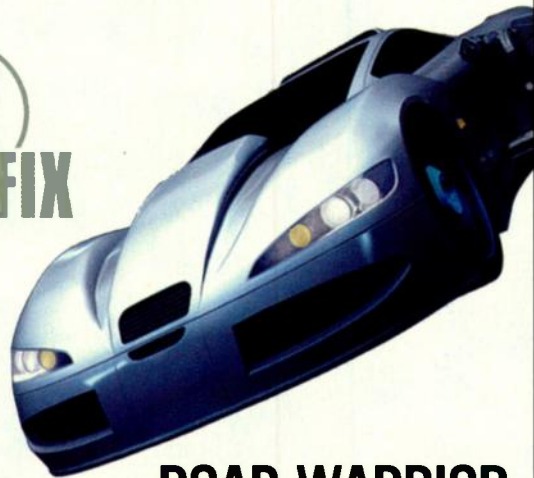
World Radio History





KID KOALA

Not only can Kid Koala scratch some mean vinyl—his live from-scratch trumpet solo needs to be seen to be believed—but he's no slouch with a pencil either. Instead of boring ol' liner notes, his new *Some Of My Best Friends Are DJs* (Ninja Tune) comes with a 50-plus-page booklet of his comics, packed with all the characters you see looming in the two above originals, from the blockheaded, unlucky Negatron to the elderly, ass-kicking Grandmaphone.



ROAD WARRIOR

SPY HUNTER 2 (MIDWAY FOR XBOX, PS2, GAMECUBE)

Your first road-rage incident will get you a slap on the wrist and a hearty round of anger management classes. Beat them to the punch by ditching your Pinto for the G-8155 Interceptor, whose auto-tracking gun turret, surface-to-air missiles, landmines and oil slicks can handle the other cars on the road much more efficiently than your middle finger, powerful though it might be. *SpyHunter 2* updates Midway's classic '80s game for the next-gen console set with customizable weapons, the ability to transform into a snowmobile or motorcycle, and a "mysterious, sexy female agent." There's something to do with saving the world from the sinister grip of a global terrorist organization too; feel free to ignore that and just use it as a vent for sweet, sweet rage. >>TOM MALLON

10.01.84 The Prince-masterminded *Apollonia 6* was released. **10.01.91** Prince And The New Power Generation release *Diamonds And Pearls*, introducing 23 positions in a one-night stand. **10.02.85** Prince puts out the "America" single; everyone likes "Raspberry Beret" better. **10.05.99** Prince releases "The Greatest Romance Ever Sold"; everybody likes... scratch that, nobody liked anything off *Rave Un2 The Joy Fantastic*. **10.06.83** Prince Charles gets off at a charity concert by... no, not Prince, but sexy MF Barry Manilow. **10.08.80** Prince releases *Dirty Mind*. **10.12.1810** Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria marries Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen; the peasants party like it's 1899 and create the first-ever Oktoberfest. **10.14.80** Prince releases *Controversy*. **10.16.89** Prince's "The Arms Of Orion" single comes out; everyone likes "Batdance" better. **10.26.94** Roseanne dresses up as Prince on her show. *Controversy* indeed! **10.31.92** Prince confounds us all with that "symbol" record; magazine editors protest by refusing to download the font.

FAKEBOOK

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

Rancid, Indestructible

It's rancid alright, but in reality it snapped quite easily.

Primus, Animals Should Not Try To Act Like People

Les adds former, better drummer and subtracts wacky historical fiction, we pretend that jam stuff didn't actually happen, everyone's happy.

Accidental Winona association

All the press, none of the career-destroying downward spiral.

Avenged Sevenfold

Sound like Iron Maiden (in a good way), look like AFI (in a not so good way). Only, if the singers in both those bands weren't pussies.

Wayne Coyne

Not mentioned anywhere else in the issue—just thought we'd say hi.

The Brooklyn Rheingold Explosion

The trucker hats and Benatar hair was one thing, but what's this obsession with uriney retro swill? They didn't even revive the beer's old slogan, "The 10 Minute Head."

Sufjan Stevens

Like Badly Drawn Boy, before the gigantic ego and the sucking and whatnot.

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds, God Is In The House DVD

Your home theater won't get across the feel of the audience's clammy goth hands, but this is the next best thing.

Taking Back Sunday/Brand New mic-swinging T-shirt war

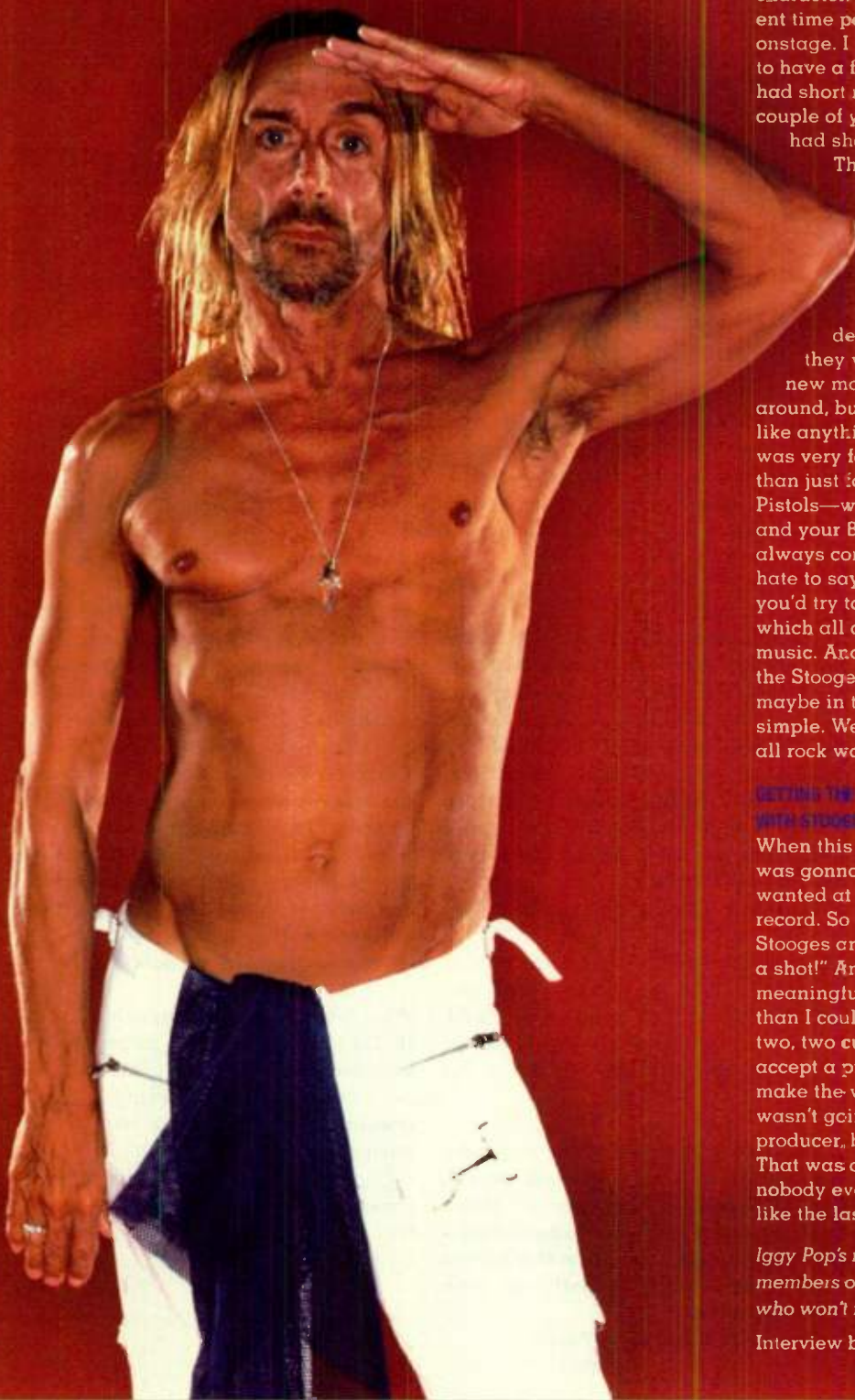
Gentlemen, humble suggestion: (we're not) emo battle raps. There's a goldmine waiting to be stripped.

Ryan Adams, still prolific, still drunk

Two EPs, an LP and a box set due before the end of the year. Calling Ryan an incorrigible popinjay is much more fun than decrying his rock star aspirations. Really, try it.

NEWSFEED: Paz Lenchantin exits **Zwan**; she'll be writing and performing with David Pajo's **Papa M** • !!! working on their second full-length • After scrapping *Love Is Hell*,

CHOSEN ONE **IGGY POP** ON ...



MARK BARN

WHY DID PUNK CHOOSE TO WORK THROUGH ME?

Why did the punk spirit choose to work through me? For one thing, I had a habit of picking up a lot of ideas, working through 'em quickly and discarding 'em. I had a five-year period between '68 and '72 where I managed to get together a band, the Stooges, and put out three albums, each quite different in character. And I looked a lot different in those different time periods, and I was doing different things onstage. I had a funny name, and it was not common to have a funny name then. So I was named Iggy; I had short red hair and silver lame gloves. And then a couple of years later, there was this guy Ziggy who had short redder hair, and silver lame everything.

Then a couple of years after that, there was the Sex Pistols. And I'd been singing about 'destroy, and nobody'd ever used—to my knowledge—the word 'destroy' in a contemporary rock or pop song. 'Destroy' just wasn't the kind of word you used—it was too strong. And suddenly the Pistols latched onto that word, and they were also covering one of my songs in this new movement—"No Fun." So these things go around, but what punk came to be does not sound like anything I did with the Stooges, because our stuff was very forward-looking and informed by a lot more than just four-bar blues. With the Ramones or the Sex Pistols—who formed the template for your Sum 41s and your Blink-182s—the rhythmic were almost always confined to some variation of a strict 4/4. I hate to say it, but it's basically a disco beat. Then you'd try to put some singalong melody on top of it, which all comes from the Beach Boys, frankly—surf music. And that's okay when it's done well, but with the Stooges it was probably more in the lyrics, and maybe in the music—in the fact that it dared to be simple. We dared not to be baroque at a time when all rock was going baroque.

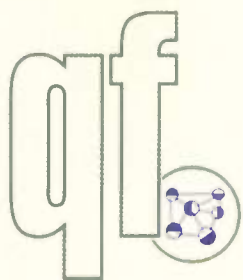
**LETTING THE RECORDS GO TOGETHER
WITH STOOGES SCOTTY AND DAN ARKIN**

When this record came along I made a decision that I was gonna work with a panoply of other artists—I wanted at least five or six different units on one record. So when I made the list I thought, "Jesus—the Stooges are the coolest people on the list. Let's give it a shot!" And it just turned out to be something so meaningful to me personally, and so much better than I could've possibly dreamed, that one cut led to two, two cuts led to four. And if I'd been willing to accept a producer, I could've gotten backing just to make the whole record a Stooges record—a major wasn't going to give me the money for that without a producer, but I don't want the Stooges to be produced. That was always one of the great things about us—nobody ever produced the Stooges. We were sorta like the last wild horse.

Iggy Pop's new Skull Ring (Virgin) features tracks with members of Green Day, Sum 41, and even some folks who won't make you groan, like the Stooges.

Interview by Tom Lanham

Ryan Adams has slated a different new record, *Rock N Roll*, for November • Badly Drawn Boy to release a "sparse, minimal" new album next March • Eminem following up his role in *8 Mile* as a puppet >>>



Tough Love

Here in the *CMJ New Music Monthly* Tough Love column, we're attempting to combine love and music, much like the proverbial chocolate and peanut butter. Lawrence, Kansas duo **Mates Of State** do that far better than we do (keyboardist/vocalist Kori Gardner and drummer/vocalist Jason Hammel are married), especially on the new *Team Boo* (Polyvinyl), which is a hell of a lot prettier than most of your love lives. *Hey, you. If you don't send letters about your cringe-inducing sexcapades, I'm going to kill this kitten:*
lovelorn@cmj.com.

The other night I was in a chatroom and started talking to a guy from the same town. We end up having cybersex and he is being totally aggressive. Then, he asks me for my phone number. I explained to him that I never give my phone number out, but he could give me his. He agreed to this and typed me his digits, when I saw the number across the screen I recognized it as my friend Will's cell phone number! Will is dating my other friend Jessica—and I am a guy. I don't know that this means he's gay, and at least he's not out having actual sex with other people, but... should I tell Jess, or hide it?! I'm so grossed out, what do I do?

—Gregg, Wilberforce, Ohio



You're grossed out because you're jealous. Think about the reality of cybersex. It's a video game with the ultimate prize. But, the game is over. You won the other night, but you don't take home anyone. Maybe Jessica loves vids too and she and Will agree this is a harmless way to indulge in fantasy. Maybe not. If it's a big deal to you, ask Will straight-away. Otherwise, find a new game.

My boyfriend's always talking about his friend Bill's girlfriend Colleen, who he seems to think is perfect. Not only is she hot, she drives a truck, loves baseball, and is happy to spend the weekend at the stock car races with Bill. I drive a sedan, bring a book to the ballpark, and think car racing is loud. Will I ever live up to Colleen?

—Gennifer, Clinton, Mississippi

No, you won't live up to her. Here's what to do. First, plant a huge kiss on Bill's girlfriend's lips, in front of your boyfriend. Then... quit dating meatheads. There are plenty of cute sensitive bookworms out there.

I work as a secretary for a young professional in his home office. I'm not attracted to him, per se, but I occasionally fantasize about him—like, have you ever seen the movie *Secretary*? Am I secretly in love with my boss?

—Traci, Queens, New York

I doubt it. *Secretary* made us all hot, which was the beauty of the film. Don't bring it up to him unless you don't care about the possibility of losing your job. Fantasize, and if you think you can get away with it... masturbate in the bathroom.

The other night I was messing around on Friendster, and looking at girls, and I come across one that sort of looks like my girlfriend. The picture's blurry and the name is Katrina (my girlfriend is Katherine), but it still seemed like her. Anyway, pretty much everything on there is from a dude, and the testimonials are all sexual, from weird dudes I don't recognize. I want to ask her but I think I'll look like a psycho, we've only been dating three months. What do you think I should do?

—James, Chicago, Illinois

What does your Friendster profile look like? Hi, I'm Mr. Lame-o. Testify on her site as a sexy dude and maybe you can have online sex with your girl, and find out what really goes on. Or, call her Katrina when you are bumpin' uglies.

Love,
Kori and Jason

on the next season of *Crank Yankers* • **American Music Club** have been working on a new record in San Francisco, their first full-length since 1994 • Estranged Libertine Pete Doherty has formed a new band

ANGRY GEEK AT THE MOVIES



BY VINCENT G. CURRY

Having failed in three shots at mainstream success (though *Wonder Boys* was excellent), Katie Holmes tries indie as the title character in **Pieces Of April**. Inspired by writer/director Peter Hedges' own experiences, we follow April as she tries to make her first Thanksgiving dinner in her Lower East Side apartment for her family, of whom she has not one single good memory. Her mother (Patricia Clarkson) is dying of cancer, but nonetheless more than once tries to abort the trip so she won't have one more bad memory of her daughter before the end. Adding to that fun, the oven breaks and April has to go from neighbor to neighbor using theirs. Yes, it's supposed to be funny. Though only 80 minutes, it's packed with scenes fulfilling enough to make it seem like more. **You can even forgive the digital video, which is as overrated as indie film itself...**

♦ ♦ ♦ Apparently Patricia Clarkson is going to make a film with every cast member of *Dawson's Creek*, because here she is again, this time with Michelle Williams in **The Station Agent** (she also starred with Joshua Jackson in *The Safety Of Objects*, leaving only Dawson himself). It was a winner at Sundance this year—the other films must have been as bad as rumored, because this is hardly impressive. **The praise seems to be solely based on the male lead being a dwarf. So what? Sure, it's great that he was cast in a "normal" role, but that just means he can be as boring as anyone else.** It's a "character-driven" piece about a guy who loves trains and inherits an old station house, and the odd, lonely characters drawn to him even though he just wants to be alone. There's enough humor to keep it going for a while, but it's nothing you haven't seen before, so it wears out its welcome well before the end.

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

“You are a bunch of slaves. You're all just fucking spectators. You're only here to see Metallica and more shite bands.”

—Bobby Gillespie vies to win popularity contests during Primal Scream's set at the Reading Festival.



SMELLY PLACES OF QUIET REFLECTION

One of the most notable objects in my apartment is the original *Blue's Clues* Thinking Chair. It's an enormous piece of furniture, it looks like a cartoon, and it is extremely useful in times of thought. It is also extremely useful in times of overflowing dirty laundry. It is equally useful as a drum, a place for thought, and a receptacle for dirty laundry... [*Blue's Clues*] gave it to me for my 25th birthday.

DUST DEVILS

I have a giant blue shag rug, and there are dust rhinos, big blue tumbleweeds, all over my apartment. Giant blue dustballs. I have to remove them with a chair and a whip. I have to drive them back under the Thinking Chair, from whence they came.

RAGING BULL

My family has a "Tackiest Christmas Gift" contest, and I'm the hands-down champion. Sometimes the gifts are so bad that I have to take them with me. The best one has been a disturbingly large bullfighting bull. It's as big as a good size cat. And it sits there, as a totem of virility in my bedroom, because it's extremely well-hung—it is terrible to behold. As a former kid's show host, I find it necessary to keep virility totems around. As many as possible.

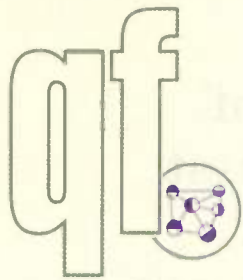
Interview by Tom Mallon.

IN MY ROOM

Who: Steve Burns
Where: His apartment in Brooklyn
Why: Steve Burns skidooed from *Blue's Clues* to take up residence with the Flaming Lips on his debut, *Songs For Dustmites* ([PIAS] America). Why he chose to sing to dustmites instead of the "dust rhinos" he lives with is anybody's guess.

ILLUSTRATION: GRAHAM BRICE, STEVE BURNS: ALI SMITH

of his own... called **the Libertines** • McLusky back in the studio with Steve Albini and a new drummer, aiming for early 2004 release • **The Vines** are holed up in upstate New York working on the "futur- >>>



Divided And Krunker

OutKast's split personalities of Big Boi and Andre Benjamin go solo, sort of.


Start checking eBay for Bozo-fabulous costumes and platinum blonde wigs once worn by sartorially adventurous rappers. Andre Benjamin, one half of Atlanta rap superstars OutKast, is closing the closets holding the sonic boom-loud clothes that defined his Andre 3000 persona since the duo's ascent to crossover stardom in late 2000.

The flash matched the kinetic vibe of the already classic *Stankonia* disc and helped the group attract goose-necked mainstream fans, but Benjamin said Andre 3000 went from a character to caricature, one that doesn't fit *Speakerboxx/The Love Below* (La Face/Arista), the conjoined solo albums where Benjamin and Antwan "Big Boi" Patton separate their creative outlooks. The two collaborate on each other's material—Patton's features beat-heavy rap-a-thons, while Benjamin's takes a quieter, introspective turn—but the result clearly shows two halves we're used to seeing whole. "This is more Andre Benjamin than Andre 3000, because he's

the guy from *Stankonia*, the one that made it such a weed-smoking, party kind of album," Benjamin says from the L.A. studio where he's been putting the "finishing touches" on *The Love Below* since January. "The songs are more intimate this time around and it wouldn't work for me to be wearing a wig and people expecting me to act like a fool all the time. It was time to move on."

One of Benjamin's new directions is toward Hollywood and the film *Lovehater*, that he wrote and will star in, playing a pianist in 1976 who goes on the lamb with his white punk-rock girlfriend when he's framed for murder. One song from the album, "Lovehater," will appear on the film's soundtrack, which was originally intended to house all of Benjamin's material from *The Love Below*.

"We had both been planning solo albums, but it made sense to work together and release them as an OutKast album. That way, even if it sounds like shit you know a certain amount of people will go check it out." >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

THE MIX

TITLE: Don't Be My Friendster
MADE BY: Sophistra (a.k.a. Kate Blumm of New York, NY)

1. **Ex Models**
Girlfriend Is Worse
2. **Sylvie Vartan**
Dadou Ron Ron
3. **De La Soul**
Ego Trippin
4. **The Vexers**
Mutual Masturbation
5. **P.I.L.**
This Is Not A Love Song
6. **New York Dolls**
Personality Crisis
7. **Officer May**
My Heart The Boomerang
8. **Gravy Train!!!**
You Made Me Gay
9. **Devo**
Satisfaction
10. **Au Pairs**
You
11. **Calla**
Strangler
12. **Pulp**
There's No Emotion
13. **Hint Hint**
Rung
14. **An Albatross**
Let's Get On With It!
15. **Shellac**
Didn't We Deserve A Look At The Way You Really Are?
16. **Pinback**
Concrete Seconds

You too can appear in these pages, even if you put *Gravy Train!!!* on your mix. But you'll have a better shot if you don't, in the Mix forum on cmj.com.

OF GREAT IMPORT

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



THE HISS *Panic Movement* (Loog/Polydor UK)

What it is: The debut album from the Atlanta four-piece rock band taking the Strokes route to success: conquering the U.K. first.

Why you want it: It's a bit ironic that the Hiss should be embraced overseas before scoring a hit on the U.S. radar, being that the band's music incorporates some very American countercultural ideals. Turn the sound down on *Easy Rider* and crank up *Panic Movement* in the background, and it will make more sense than *Dark Side Of The Moon* and *The Wizard Of Oz*. There are elements of Oasis and the Verve in the guitar solos, big choruses and gener-

al braggadocio here (Owen Morris, who produced albums for both those bands, also helmed this one), but there's also a classic Southern rock feel, along with a heap of West Coast psychedelic rabble-rousing. As dark, low-down and dirty as track titles like "Riverbed" and "Ghost's Gold" make them sound, the Hiss (who also couldn't have chosen a more fitting band name) are set to crank up their machines and ride across the homeland. >>>DOUG LEVY

LINK: www.thehiss.com

R.I.Y.L.: Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Oasis, Rolling Stones

istic but really very raw" follow-up to *Highly Evolved* • **Korn**, refusing to stop embarrassing themselves, to include their cover of **Metallica's** "One" on their sixth record • **Guided By Voices** to release another



David Byrne on...

WRITING EXISTENTIAL SOUNDTRACKS

Young Adam is a grungy, sexy mood film. It's not plot-driven in that my music has to generate excitement or terror or anxiety. There's almost a kind of flatness to it that I feel helps you sink into that mood. The film was very true to the book in that [writer Alexander Trocchi] was really going for an amoral, not immoral, view of the world. So I spun off from the title—his other book was called *Cain's Book*—and thought, "He means this to be some kind of allegory or metaphor about the human condition." So I thought I'd make the music portentous and a little bit pretentious to imply that there was some allegory and metaphor going on.

WORKING WITH BANDS FROM GLASGOW

I knew of Mogwai and Belle And Sebastian, but a lot of them I'd never heard of before the director suggested them. They all run into each other in the same pubs and quite a few use the same studio; they can't afford not to intermingle. On some of their records there's a tentative sense to the playing where the music feels like it has a rickety framework, like it's going to fall apart at any minute but it doesn't, which gives it this very quiet kind of tension.

GLASGOW ANEW

It used to really be one of the ugliest, dirtiest, most poverty-stricken towns in all of Europe. There was a certain amount of prosperity because of the industries, but at the same time there was a mechanical drudgery, black smoke and people drinking themselves into oblivion in response. Now, there's still a fair amount of drinking, but there's an amazing new art scene, alternative galleries and alternative spaces. In the U.K. they have the Beck's Futures Awards [for unknown artists], and this year half of the awards went to artists from Glasgow. So this transformation has happened enough so that it's substantially changed the way people think of their city.

POWERPOINT

I just finished a book that comes with a DVD of art pieces I did with PowerPoint. So it has a bunch of things that I wrote about PowerPoint and presentations and the bullet point style of thinking.

- David Byrne was born in Dumbarton, Scotland and lived there as a wee lad.
- His soundtrack for *Young Adam* is called *Lead Us Not Into Temptation (Thrill Jockey)*.
- Byrne is assembling a *Talking Heads* box set, so stop asking already.
- Interview by Steve Ciabattoni.

fucking box set, the six-disc *Hardcore UFOs*, on November 4th • All Tomorrow's Parties re-scheduled (again) for November 8, aboard the L.A. cruise-ship-turned-hotel the Queen Mary * * * * *



THE THRILLS

When they moved to exotic California for two summers in a row, daring Dublin outfit the Thrills didn't have anything musical in mind. The band had lost its U.K. label deal and brought some acoustic guitars along only for its own amusement. "We basically came there just to have a good time, hang out with friends, and get the hell outta Ireland," chirps ruddy-cheeked frontman Conor Deasy, who hit San Diego one year, San Francisco the next. Broke in the Bay Area, the Thrills soon discovered which bars offered free weekend barbecues, and gorged accordingly. In San Diego, Deasy recalls, the members rented a beachfront apartment, took up boogie boarding, "and discovered all these great Internet music clubs that we were scamming for loads of CDs. We were leaving the country in a few months, so we basically got boxes of shit, and by the end of the summer we'd listened to so much classic stuff, like Frank Sinatra, the Byrds, the Beach Boys." Which is how—back home in dreary Dublin—they wound up writing the soft, summery SoCal sonnet "Santa Cruz (You're Not That Far)," featured on the Thrills' Virgin debut *So Much For The City*. Other tracks ("Big Sur," "Hollywood Kids," "Don't Steal Our Sun") feature Deasy's distinct Neil Young-ish quaver and a recurrent California theme. "It's escapism through songs," Deasy explains. "We used to write that kind of music to just take us away." >>>TOM LANHAM

TOM CRAIG

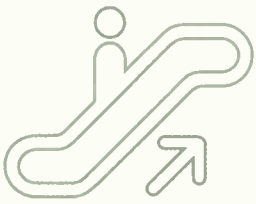
STELLASTARR*

When he first attended Brooklyn's Pratt Institute of the Arts, recalls Shawn Christensen, he had no real interest in art or music. A few years later, his paintings of well-known rock stars would grace countless New York nightclub walls, and his band, the new wave-ish Stellastarr* (asterisk = art-school flourish), would be the toast of the city's Interpol-hip popscene; an eponymous full-length

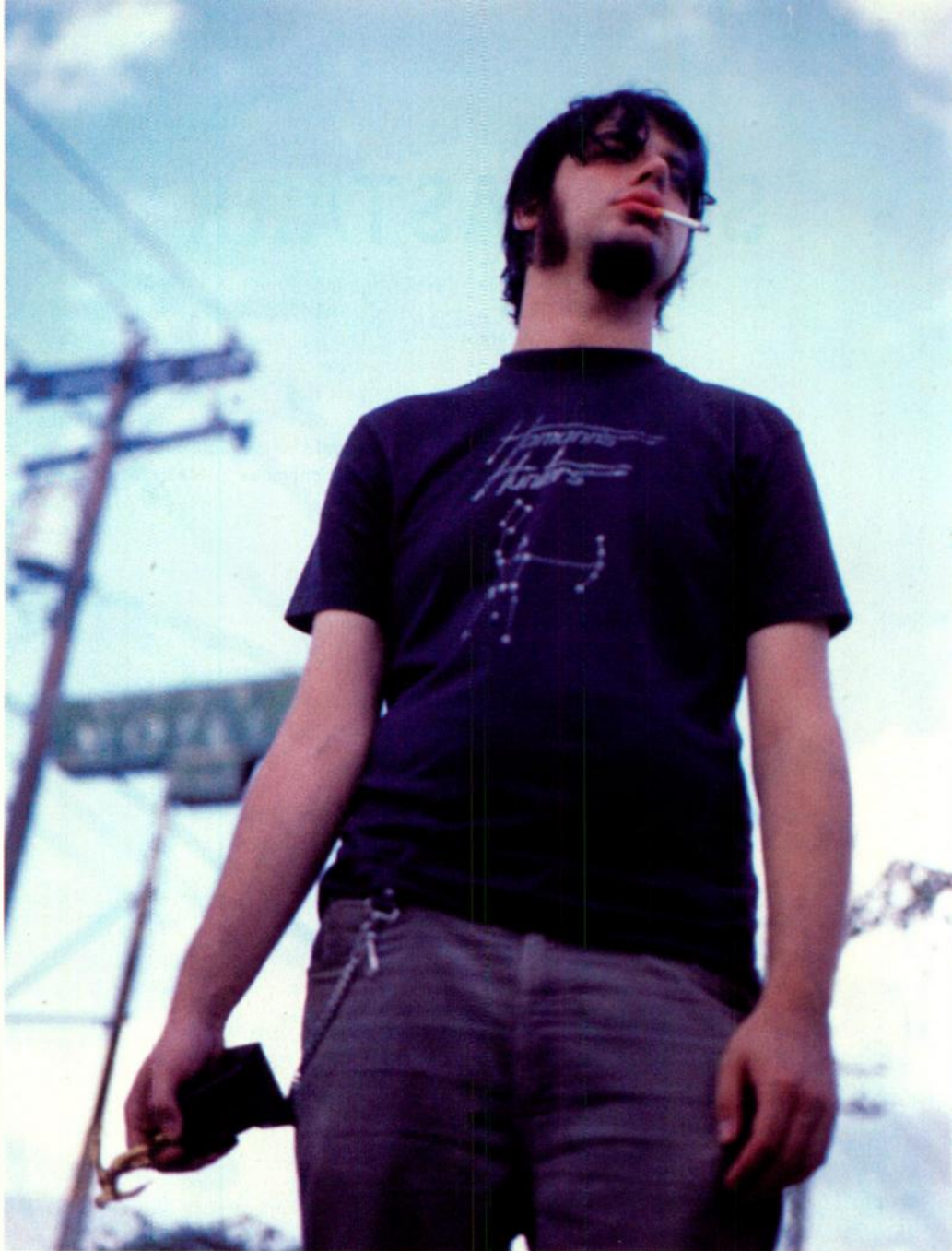
is out now on RCA. But back then, the singer busied himself "taking acting classes on the weekend—I loved acting, loved it, and I wasn't paying attention to any of my regular college classes." He wound up in Verizon Wireless and Priceline.com TV commercials, even a Rick Schroeder feature film, *The Lost Battalion*. His finest moment? Christensen gulps. "The day I was an extra on *The Guiding Light*—my role was to watch this horrible boy band that I'd never heard of, and pretend like I was loving the band with a hundred other extras. And they filmed it over and over again." Not that he necessarily wants the leading-man role. Fronting the Bunnymen-toned Stellastarr* happened by accident, when he tired of trying out female vocalists and started crooning the parts himself. "In acting, I kept getting these boring lead parts—18 years old, handsome, charming, but has a thing for this one girl. But I wanted the side stuff, the Steve Buscemi or Gary Oldman type thing. That's much more interesting to me." >>>TOM LANIHAM

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 





use the words 'fuck' and 'cockring' more than most singer/songwriters," says Jeff Klein, laughing off the genre cubbyhole. In the U.K., where his *Everyone Loves A Winner* (One Little Indian) has already been released to rave reviews, he's "Americana"; Stateside, he's sometimes lumped in with alt-country. So what is it he's trying to do? "I just want to make something that's a cross between Leonard Cohen and Dinosaur Jr.," Klein says with disarming conviction, "because I really love both of them." He got his start at 15, playing "greasy dive bars" with just his guitar, "entertaining the drunks and getting loaded" as he developed his songs and bullhorn of a voice. "I smoked much less heavily then," he rasps, "so I was more Bobby Brady than Rolf the dog." Now, he much prefers playing with a band, and has a regular group in his adopted hometown of Austin, Texas; he performs under his own name simply because he's "a control freak." He's still called on to play solo, though, and when he does, he's prone to turning his back to the audience and wandering away from the mic, bellowing out lyrics at Stanley Kowalski volume. "I'm not singing to you," he chuckles, "I'm singing at you." It was during a three-week residency of solo shows back in New York that Klein caught the attention of the *New York Post's* Page 6 gossips for apparently catching the eye of Winona Ryder. It was more hoax than hook-up, but Klein's not complaining. "She's got pretty good musical taste. Dave Pirner, Conor Oberst—there's a certain credibility." >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON



JEFF KLEIN



That straightforward Rolling Stones influence in Australian Next Big Thing Jet's eponymous debut (Elektra): You're not the only one to pick it up, smart guy. Mick and Keith heard it too. Which explains why the superannuated Glimmer Twins invited the little combo to open their recent tour Down Under. "When the Stones were in the U.S., they had the Strokes and the

White Stripes on the bill, so when they went to Australia they asked, 'Who's the band that everyone's talking about who should spend some road time with us?'" recalls muttonchop-whiskered drummer Chris Cester, who shares vocal duties with his guitarist brother Nic. On Richards' say-so, Jet was snapped up for six memorable dates. Did the Cesters get any advice from the rock royalty?

Sadly, Chris shakes his shaggy head. "Mick came in and had a quick chat with us. But when Charlie came into our dressing room, our bassist Mark (Wilson) had just taken a swig from his beer. But he got so flustered, all this fucking beer came spewing out his nose right in front of Charlie Watts. Charlie just looked at him, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out." >>>TOM LANHAM

JET

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club's Robert Turner has learned this much as a second-generation rock vet: For his band, his sound, the time to make people care is now.

STORY: TOM LANHAM • PHOTO: STEPHEN STICKLER

REBEL ROUSERS



PETER HAYES, NICK JAGO, ROBERT TURNER

Eight years or so ago, a skinny little 17-year-old named Robert Locke was stalking Bay Area stages, thundering away on his low-slung bass behind the Beggars, a picked-to-click combo on Island Records.

He'd dropped his father Michael's surname, Been, but relied on Dad—former mainstay of '80s angst-rockers the Call—as not only producer, but shrewd soundman. It seemed inevitable that the jangly quartet would hit the big time. But alas, no handouts came the Beggars' way.

Cut to one month ago, when Locke—now calling himself Robert Turner—returned to San Francisco after an unusually long absence, his mixing-board pop still in tow. Now one-third of buzz-sawing overseas success Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, with countless *NME* covers to his credit and a new disc, *Take Them On, On Your Own* (Virgin) to promote, he arrived as the conquering hero. Decked out in black everything—jeans, leather jacket, engineer boots, wraparound shades—he even looked like a proper rock star, with a monstrous tousled tornado of black hair worthy of his band's most obvious influence, the Jesus And Mary Chain. (The group's first U.K. smash, "Whatever Happened To My Rock 'N' Roll (Punk Song)," eerily echoed the JAMC's "I Hate Rock 'N' Roll"/"I Love Rock 'N' Roll" singles from the mid-'90s). Ask him what he's been up to, and he's quick to respond: "What do you think we've been up to? We've been getting famous all over the world!"

While British-born drummer Nick Jago and singer/axeman Peter Hayes (an old schoolmate of Turner's) busied themselves with soundcheck at a local club, Turner-née-Locke-née-Been grabbed a seat on the venue's concrete steps to tell his story as a series of lessons learned.

Having kinfolk mix your shows ain't half bad.

[For BRMC], we had to pull my Dad in a little bit after the fact. We'd kinda gotten things going fine on our own, but we went through too many fucking soundmen, one after another, and it was a nightmare. Then we asked him to come on the road for an American tour, and he just stayed on with us because overnight, everything sounded right. I mean, how's he gonna say no to his own son? And why not keep the money in the family?

Beggars can't be users.

What I learned from the Beggars was, don't get hooked on smack. It was a fucked-up ending to a good band, too much drugs—typical story. And when it ended, this thing hit me really fucking hard, which was, I didn't wanna rely on anyone else to make it alright for me to play. I wanted something to hold onto, so writing and learning to play the guitar made it so I didn't need anybody anymore—it was a simple primal place to go to. I became something completely different than what I was.

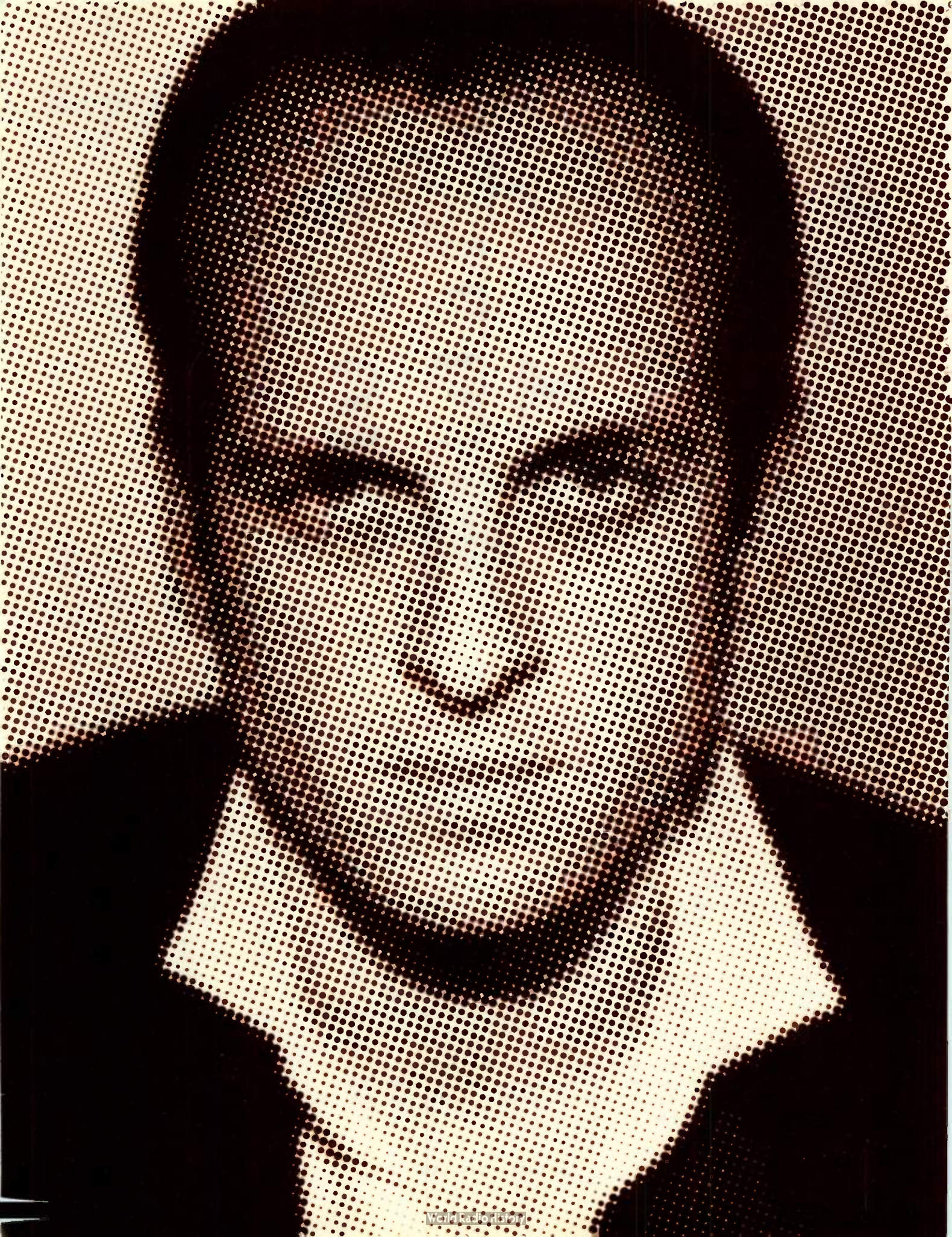
Pay it forward.

Oasis taught us to help the next guy down the line. When we were first signing to Virgin, Noel Gallagher came up and asked us to sign to his label. And we had to say no, with all due respect. But the next day, he didn't turn around and go, 'Fuck those guys'—he invited us to play Finsbury Park and the Royal Albert Hall, just 'cause he loved the band and he was an honest and true guy about it. And that was a big deal for us—I really respect that. So we kinda held onto that and now help great bands that we believe in, like Ty Cobb and the Warlocks. But any time you go to bat for somebody, you kinda shadow 'em a bit, too, and that happened to us with Oasis—we had to prove that we weren't just Noel's favorite band. We were a band on our own.

Take them on, on your own.

Things are finally fucking happening in music. But I want more; I want it to go further. Right now, it's up to all these bands to get their shit together and really nail it down and not fall through the cracks like all the other great times that fell away and faded. This time, we can learn from that shit and we can actually make this time mean something. We've had a feeling in our gut for years now, for a long time, and it's a feeling that I hope connects with more people and makes 'em feel that they're not alone. I want to be a part of these times, and this is our tool, these songs. Music for us is the best way we've got a chance of saying something—that's our weapon of choice. **NMM**





Swing Shift

With his Big Band, Brit beatsmith Matthew Herbert filters swing jazz through a Dogme 95-like set of rules, obsessive electronic refashioning and lefty politics. Of course he does.

STORY: RICHARD M. JUZWIAK • PHOTO: ALI MAHDAVI

I don't consider myself a genius," Matthew Herbert declares, disbelieving his own hype. "I really don't. I work extremely hard. It's almost scientific to me, figuring out what works and what doesn't. I'm just sorting stuff out."

The 31-year old Brit has been recording since 1993, but it wasn't until 2001 that he really sorted stuff out. That year, he released the microhouse/jazz masterpiece *Bodily Functions*, where songs of failed relationships doubled as metaphors for consumerism's grab on modern society. Last year's *The Mechanics Of Destruction* (released under his Radio Boy moniker) used sounds found from Starbucks, McDonald's and Rupert Murdoch (to name a few) to rail against globalism; it was not a toe-tapper. His new album, *Goodbye Swingtime* (Accidental), however, sublimates his political leanings by filtering them through the traditionally escapist genre of big-band music.

"I'm using what's basically an American music form that you can be damn sure would not be used to entertain troops," he says. "By making it political, it gives me a chance at dragging listeners away from the idea that big band is just a sort of retro, old-fashioned music."

Like much of his earlier material, *Swingtime* was written according to a series of self-imposed rules called PCCOM (Personal Contract for the Composition of Music), a sort of Dogme 95 for the sonic set. The doctrine, designed to ward off potential laziness, champions

the inclusion of accidents that occur during recording, while banning samples of existing music, drum machines and factory preset sounds. This leads to Herbert's manipulation and looping of environmental sounds, arguably the defining aspect of his music.

"What I choose to sample is describing my world and consequently, my vision of the world," says Herbert. "I'm not even slightly interested in the sound of a book opening and closing. I'm interested in the sound of a book by Noam Chomsky opening and closing."

Working with an orchestra for the film score of Blanca Li's *Le Defi* helped inspire Herbert to venture into *Swingtime* territory. After writing the album in seven months, Herbert enlisted bassist Russell Swift to assemble a crew of some 15 musicians, and principal recording took place over four days at Abbey Road studios. Herbert then toiled for months to give *Swingtime* an electronic sheen.

"It's ironic that it's a jazz record and I'm the only one improvising, really," says Herbert. "If I'm taking the music that I'm writing seriously, then some of these melodies need a fairer chance at life than me just kind of bluffing my way through them."

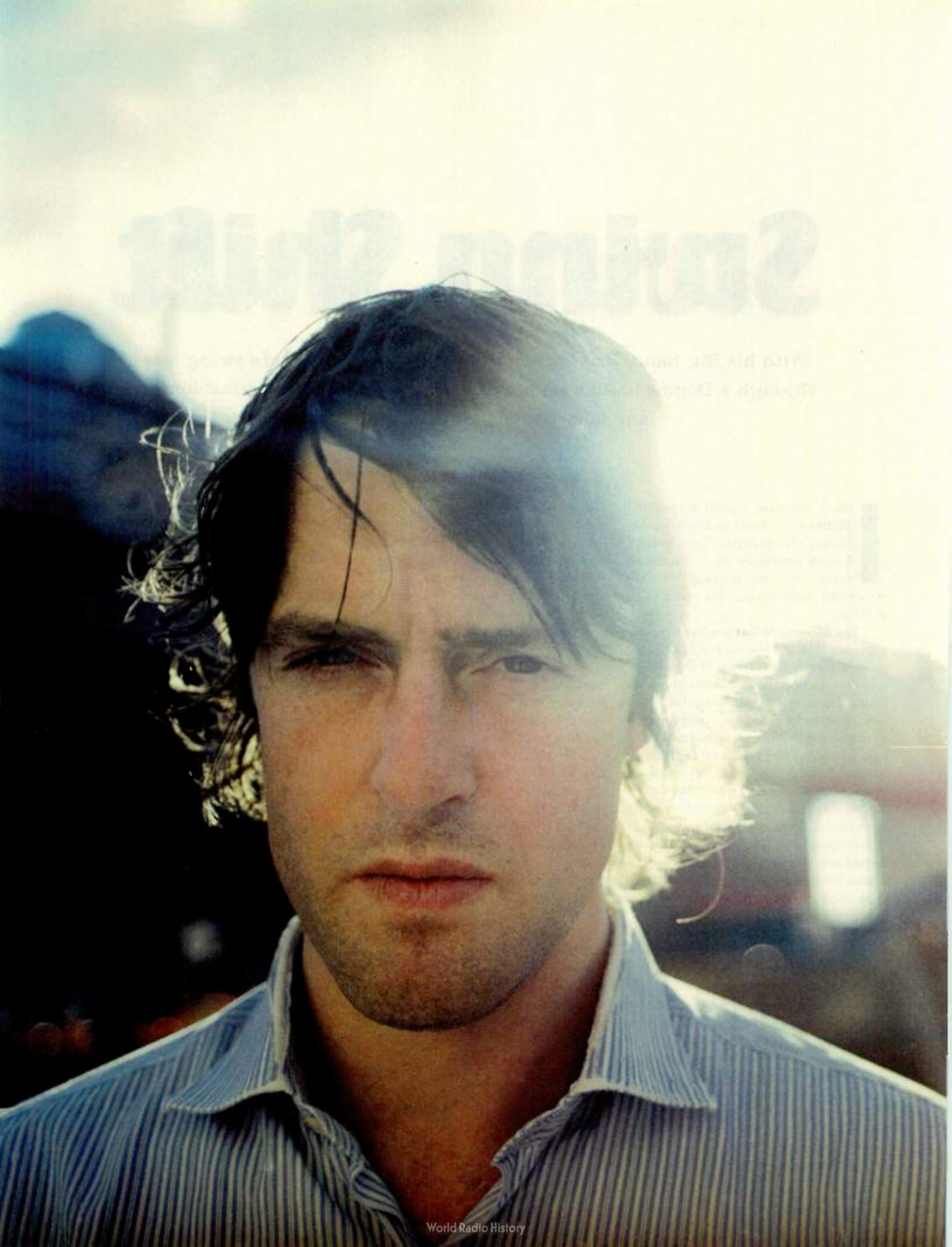
Between grandiose swoops and eruptions bursting and cooling in a matter of seconds, *Swingtime* ricochets with the sounds of political books, clipped articles about Iraq and the clicks of "www.soaw.org" being typed. Pages from that site, which details America's

involvement with South American dictators, can be heard printing on the album's elegiac centerpiece, "The Three W's," as vocalist Mara Carlyle mourns oblique, Herbert-penned lyrics, "Ears should be burning/ We should be learning this/ Hear stories start/ Here stories end." "Misprints," meanwhile, bubbles with idealistic exuberance and percussive press clippings, as Shingai Shoniwa exclaims, "If I heard it once/ And I read it twice/ I can feel that I can change it/ Gonna hate it when I stop/ Gonna hate it when I stop moving."

Swingtime, which contains over 3000 recordings, is home to protest music that's anything but obvious—often, you don't even have to blink to miss Herbert's message.

"If you see a picture of a woman in a gallery, you don't know if it's a queen or a prostitute, unless you have a degree in art. So you research. I think that moment where meaning dawns on you is the moment I'm trying to achieve," he explains. "I'm getting to the point where I'm not afraid to call what I'm doing art."

And while Herbert says he will venture into big-band territory again ("I feel like I've started something that's taken on a life of its own," he sighs), don't expect his ideology to become more obvious. "I really just cannot bring myself to include [someone like] Donald Rumsfeld in my lyrics," he offers. "I can't think of anything to rhyme with Rumsfeld. But that fucking evil wanker does not deserve to be in my music, anyway." **NMM**



2000

STATE OF GRACE

With the new *Amazing Grace*, Jason Pierce's constantly evolving **Spiritualized** makes a slight return to the psychedelic fuzz of his early years.

STORY: MIKAEL WOOD • PHOTO: DREW GOREN

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

JASON PIERCE CAN'T TAKE IT. IT'S NOT THE too-frigid air conditioning in a New York hotel bar where he's buffering jetlag with a pair of mid-morning Rolling Rocks, but the Muzak piped in to calm his fellow travelers' jangled nerves before board meetings or daytrips to FAO Schwarz. The Spiritualized frontman hates the tinkly stuff; it interrupts his thought processes, makes him unable to concentrate on conversation. So he sleepily goes in search of whomever it is that controls the annoyance and asks that it be silenced—not turned down a tick, as the helpful waitress suggests, but *off*. Pierce wants his highs and lows to be of his own making.

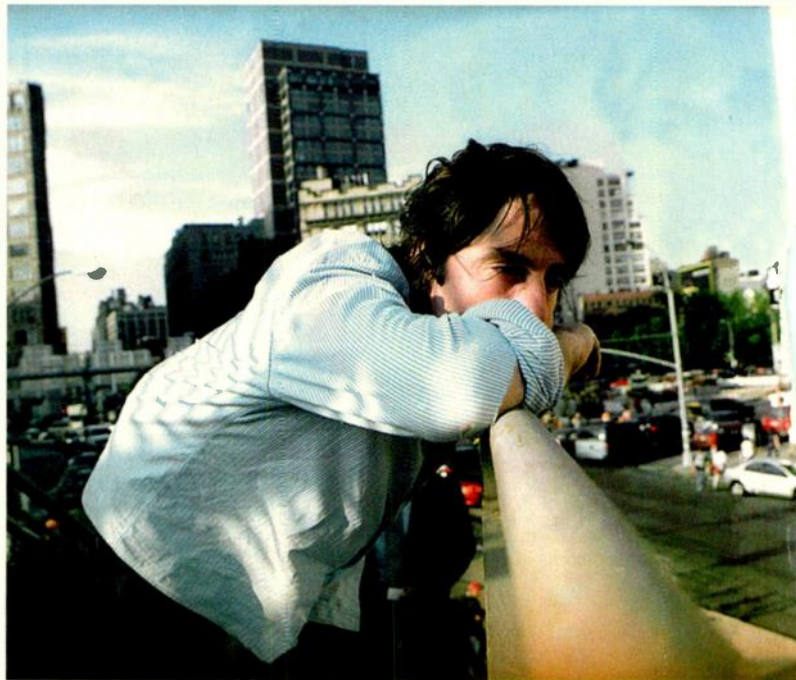
The same, too, with Spiritualized's records. Since Pierce founded the band in the early '90s following the dissolution of his seminal psych-rock outfit Spacemen 3, he's been vacillating between two sonic extremes: the warm sway of spaced-out gospel music

and the knotty bluster of garage-blues and free jazz. *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*, the group's 1997 album, was a virtual study in contrast, an expansive tapestry of scintillating guitar squall, choral vocals, rumbling percussion, astral strings and horns, and Pierce's own weary croon; like the drug experiences so many of Pierce's songs detail, the album crashed from dizzy highs to disconsolate lows on the way to some semblance of stability. The orchestral overload of 2001's *Let It Come Down* pushed further into the heavens, with more than 100 auxiliary musicians augmenting the core group; "Lord can you hear me," Pierce asked over an elaborate wail in the album's 10-minute finale, like a cathedral builder constructing something so big and ornate. He would.

Amazing Grace, Spiritualized's fifth studio album, tips Pierce's vision back away from that careful majesty and toward the joyful, unbridled noise of his back catalog. Opener "This Little Life Of Mine" sets things up straightaway with a blast of feedback that's pounced upon by a choogling piano riff and a drumbeat fixed at the tempo of a killer migraine; when Pierce enters the fray, he does it with a snarl as deep as the North Atlantic. "She Kissed Me (It Felt Like A Hit)" flips the title of the famous Crystals tune and turns it into breakneck Krautrock noise. The lyrical defiance in "Never Goin' Back" is backed up by righteous waves of amplifier fuzz and ragged sleigh bells. Even "The Ballad Of Richie Lee," a subdued ode to the late bassist of L.A. drone-rockers Acetone, throbs with a windblown urgency that would've sounded unfinished on *Let It Come Down*. *Grace*, essentially, is the opposite of Muzak: fast, loud, dirty, nerve-jangling and threatening to slip ever so slightly out of control. But where'd that shift come from?

"A few things, I guess," Pierce says, post-swig from the green bottle in front of him. "One was the [2002] reissue of [Cleveland proto-punkers] Rocket From The Tombs' album. It's such a blistering punk recording, the kind of electricity they got down. And that came out at a time when we were in America touring and playing radio sessions that weren't about that kind of electricity or spirit, but were very much about delivering music on the fly—"This is what you hear, this is what you get." Another swig. "Then towards the end of that tour, we'd also done recordings with [English electronic jazz outfit] Spring Heel Jack—I played guitar with them. And I think the way that people like [saxophonist] Evan Parker and [drummer] Han Bennink go about making music is almost the ultimate punk music; it's like, 'Press record, we play.' It's not garage, it's not punk, in that it's not 'what you hear is what you get,' because they're so well-tuned musically with each other; they're so attuned to listening. So somewhere in the middle of listening to *Rocket From The Tombs* on one hand and performing with [Spring Heel Jack] on the other, I thought there was this way that you could make a garage album that had amazing grace—something that was elegant, too elegant to be a garage recording."

He thought right. *Grace* is certainly the rawest record Spiritualized have made, but its songs don't sound like those of the young neo-garage hopefuls crowding rock clubs and record stores lately. There's a painterly beauty to the album that betrays its makers' familiarity with serious sound design, an attention to detail that just doesn't jibe with garage-rock's sim-



pler-is-realer diktat. Take "Hold On," an example of the kind of strung-out hymn Pierce has all but perfected—a frazzled instrumental wash that suggests Dr. John jamming with Jimmy Page bottoming out into a valley of strummed electric guitar and Old West piano—or "The Power And The Glory," which climaxes in a fit of manic horn-blowing and cymbal-splashing. There's abandon here, but from folks who know the way back.

"Everything about the idea of how it was gonna be recorded was in place—the way the recording was gonna be just about the recording," Pierce explains. "It wasn't gonna be about constructing an album, or building a massive piece of sonics. It was about this place between where people have learned what they're gonna play on the songs and where they first start out and explore what they can do—this electrical moment where they're still playing around with what's possible, but they haven't yet gotten to the stage where they say, 'Oh, it's four beats into the chorus.'"

Pierce says the band recorded quickly to preserve that electricity. "It was always gonna be done kind of fast. There's something weird about making a punk record and spending a year trying to put it together." Indeed, the speed with which the album has appeared has surprised even hardcore fans, many of whom weren't even aware that a follow-up to *Let It Come Down* had been recorded when the album appeared on file-sharing services last spring.

"We never announced it because it was always gonna be like, 'Here it is,'" the singer says, adding that since *Grace* is the first record he's released on his own Spaceman Records (after an amicable split with Arista), the decision was his to make. "I didn't want any kind of big build or big marketing ploy, all geared around the release date.

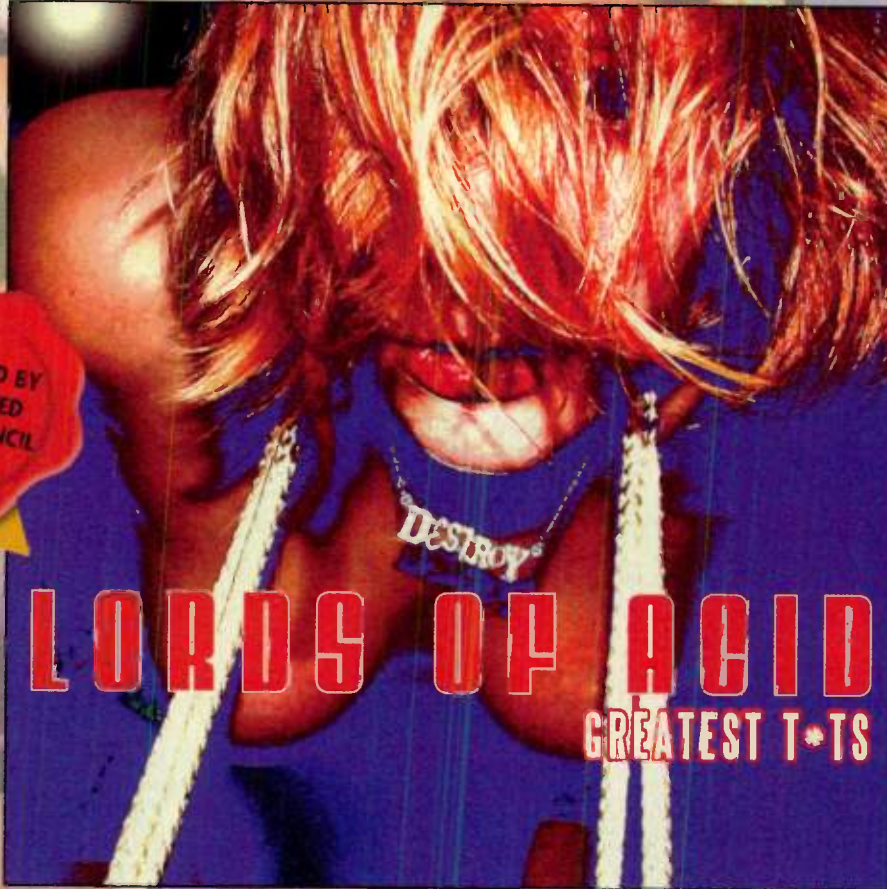
"That's why I wasn't bothered about it being leaked to the 'Net," he says, savoring the immediacy of the gratification, "at least people can hear it." **NMM**

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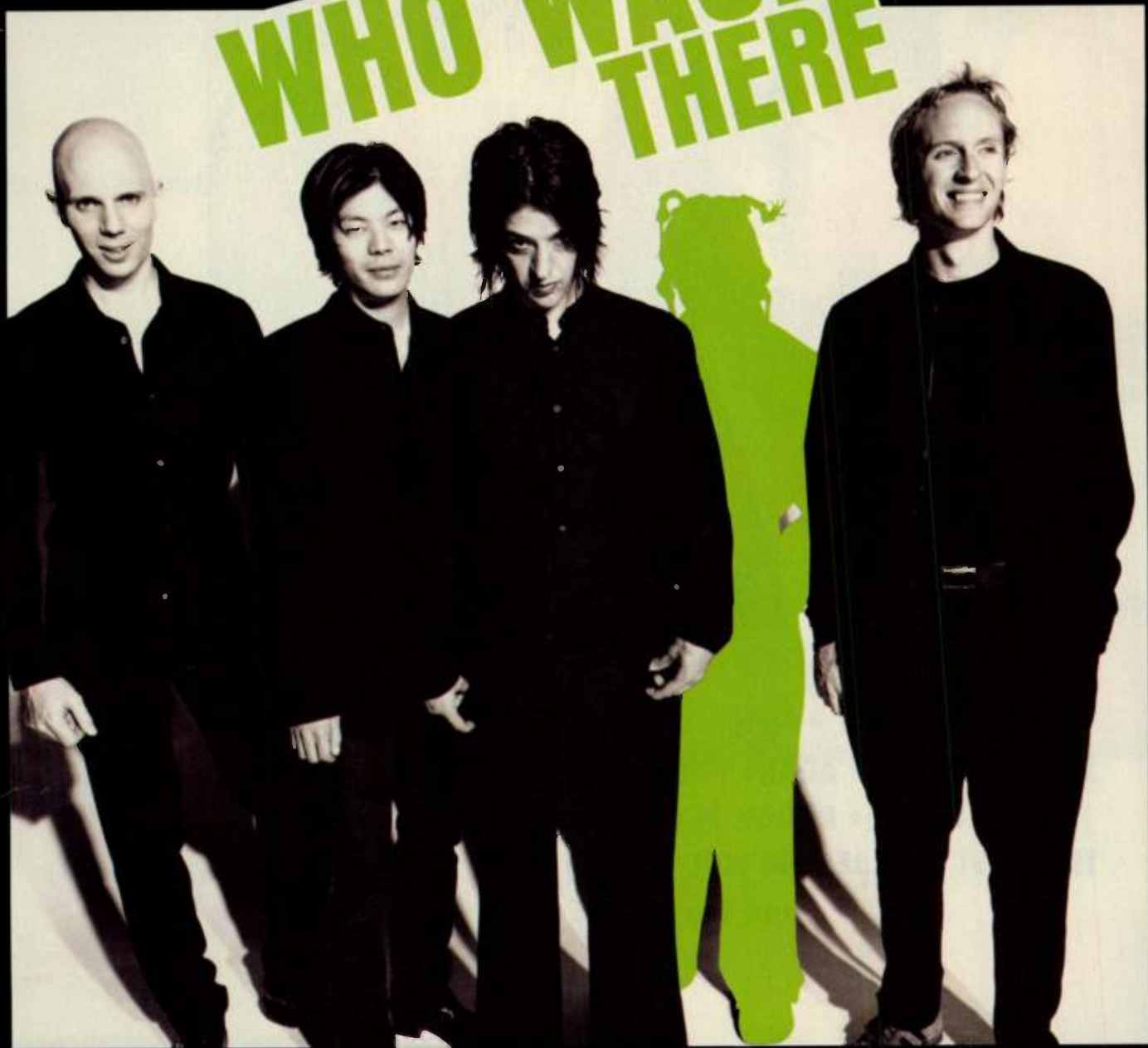


Amant Music

World Radio History



THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE



A PERFECT CIRCLE: Billy Howerdel is a former guitar tech whose downtime project turned into a platinum-selling band. He's used to the spotlight not being his. Maynard James Keenan, the singer in Tool, one of the bands Howerdel worked for, is another story. While lots of artists avoid the spotlight, he uses its glare in his ultimate disguise.

MAYNARD JAMES KEENAN IS TRAPPED IN A CAGE,

feet nailed to the floor, the crowd anxiously awaiting some serious suffering. The 4' by 4' cell, presumably of his own design, holds him high above the rest of his band and imprisons him behind a wall of white cloth. He'll spend the entire first song in this box, perhaps singing more to the wall directly in front of him than to the unseen audience behind it. Below him, A Perfect Circle demolishes "Pet," bathed in lights he can't see, while he waits for his turn. When it comes, the fury of sound and light joins him in the box. Outside, it looks like someone behind him opened a door onto the sun: The cage floods with light, blazing his silhouette nine feet high on the front wall, and the crowd screams for a man they can't even see.

The curtain drops and the cage opens, but thanks to a true marvel of modern lighting design, the crowd won't see Keenan's face for the entirety of the show. Even standing right in front of them, they'll see as much of him as when he was behind the curtain—just a silhouette with words coming from where the head should be. Later, shortly after offering up "3 Libras" and its mantra of "You don't see me," the stage lights converge on a spot some two feet in front of him, completely obliterating his image. The crowd goes apeshit; Keenan may as well not be there at all.

Keenan's a master of disguise, preferring wigs. Press photos for *Mer De Noms*, APC's debut, got a mid-torso-length straight brown number, and he treated Tool's *Lateralus* to a red spiky surfer cut; live, he's approximated everything from powdered televangelist to demon Smurf to Long Island housewife-turned-hooker. Earlier this particular afternoon, he hid in plain sight in front of millions on *MTV News* with the help of an Alanis-style bird's-nest and a pair of *Welcome To The Dollhouse*-rivaling glasses (which he doesn't need). Bored, fidgeting and letting guitarist Billy Howerdel be the face of the band, he looked more like a nerdy high-school girl than a hard-rock icon. As soon as he exited the interview, which he calls "a jaw-breaking yawn," he switched to the Regular Guy: Exit wig and glasses, enter beige jacket and army hat.

Up close, you don't fare much better than in the audience. Conversation Maynard's as blank a slate as shadowy Stage Maynard. Sitting next to him, you'll swear the temperature drops. Shaking his hand is like gripping a door handle. The army hat is pulled down snug, hiding his eyes; in a half an hour, he will look you in the face exactly three times, two of which come when you sit down and stand up. Ask him a question,

and there's a delay that suggests there's a little man behind his forehead flipping through a "How To Speak Human" dictionary. You don't know exactly where his mind is, but it certainly isn't sitting next to you—sitting next to you is the last place Maynard James Keenan wants to be, and answering questions about the themes woven through the dark, obsessive *The Thirteenth Step* (Virgin) is the last thing he wants to do.

In Alcoholics Anonymous lore, "thirteenth stepping" is deemed one of the most destructive behaviors one can indulge in: older members picking up on the new recruits, sexual predators seeing a newcomer's unstable sobriety as an open invitation. One independent AA group's newsletter advises its members that "thirteenth-stepping" is "the most self-seeking, willful and inconsiderate behavior, understandably despised and discouraged." Given the characters that populate *The Thirteenth Step*—the shameless, addicted liar of "The Package," the "medicated drama queen" he condemns in "The Outsider," or the trembling voice of "Weak And Powerless"—it would seem that Keenan's been devouring some AA literature. All throughout the record, demons are being exorcised, enablers turned away, poisons identified, isolated and flushed from the system.

STORY: TOM MALLON • PHOTO: SEAN MURPHY

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

"There might be some of that... maybe," Keenan says, the sound escaping him a scant fraction of his huge singing voice. "Some of it. I wouldn't say that's the entirety of it. As was [*Mer De Noms*], it definitely has to do with relationship dynamics. Trying to grow and understand the emotional, spiritual and physical repercussions of those relationships."

Keenan draws his fingers together at the tips and concentrates on them like he's building a house of cards. The visible bottom half of his face is as expressionless as a worn stone, each sentence in monotone, words dragged out by horses. The thirteenth step theory hits the same wall of indifference.

"That might be one of them," he sighs. A slight head movement. "I've been in L.A. for 13 years... I've been through a lot there, a lot of changes, a lot of different movements in my career and personal life, and this is like the 13th year in this process. It could be any one of those things you've looked up. I like to push the idea of drawing your own conclusions, and whatever of those definitions applies to wherever you are in your life, that makes them valid."

The other popular meaning of the thirteenth step is the final step into the grave.

"Hmm. Interesting."

A colossal pause opens up, a huge, yawning maw of silence, the type of silence good for contemplating the larger mysteries of the universe. His face retreats further behind the hat, leaving only the tip of a perfectly cleanshaven chin as representative.

"Could be that one too."

Keenan cuts short any further discussion of the album's themes. "I'm not really sure when this article comes out, but depending on who's reading it, if they haven't heard the album yet it would be best for them to skip over this section," he says, explaining his reticence. "Best for them to feel the album first before they start thinking it, or be given the cheat codes." He won't talk about the "Weak And Powerless" video either, preferring that everything remain as unspoiled as possible.

"Just like the music, you should just look and absorb rather than give too much of it away," he says, growing animated at last. "Did you see *28 Days Later*? Don't let anybody tell you anything about it—don't let anybody say a word about it. That way no one has imposed their opinion about any of it on you, you can just experience it

"BEST FOR PEOPLE TO FEEL THE ALBUM FIRST BEFORE THEY START THINKING IT, OR BE GIVEN THE CHEAT CODES."

for the first time. That movie, *Delicatessen* and *The City Of Lost Children*, *The Usual Suspects*, a bunch of movies that I saw without anyone telling me anything about them, it was a much better experience not having had someone push their opinion on me. I had a friend who told me that she knew what was up in *The Usual Suspects*. She said, 'Well, [people] said you've gotta go see it because it has a good twist.' It ruined the movie for her. She figured it out in the first half hour and the rest was just waiting for them to drop the bomb."

On goodbye, Keenan finally looks up, and gives a slightly more lifelike handshake—from doorknob to mannequin, perhaps. Waiting in a different area of the hotel for the rest of the band, a member of the APC entourage comes over and nods in Keenan's direction.

"How bad was it?"

Not that bad, he just... takes a while to open up.

"Yeah," he snorts. "Maybe if you had a few years to get to know him."

Billy Howerdel, ostensibly *A Perfect Circle*'s other half, makes for a much more inviting prospect. Dressed (like his bandmates) in the same head-to-toe black outfit that he'll wear onstage later that night, he smiles, he looks you in the eye, he seems as happy to be talking about *A Perfect Circle* as if it were a brand new band. Which, in a way, it is. Between *Mer De Noms* and *The Thirteenth Step*, Keenan and Howerdel redrew *A Perfect Circle*, starting with the writing process. For *Mer De Noms*, Howerdel dictated how most of the songs sounded, mostly due to the decade he spent laboring over them between guitar-tech gigs for bands like *Nine Inch Nails* and *Tool*. Starting with a cleaner slate led to giving up a certain amount of control and being more open to collaboration.

"Maynard had a lot more input in this record," Howerdel says. "The songs we presented to Maynard [at first]... he didn't...

he wasn't, you know, into some of the direction it was going, so I had to work a little harder in that respect, to accommodate what his vision was for it. Maynard's pretty much doing all of the artwork, he's doing the video; he had a lot more say as to how the music sounded this time, where last time I kind of steered the ship."

"The first time around we didn't have the luxury of time so we just had to go with what we had, and not stress about it or dissect it too much," Keenan said of the restructuring. "This time I wanted to take more time, and assert more of my musical ideas into it and blend them with Billy's. I don't think he'd really done that before, too much, so it was kind of a learning process for him as well, accepting other people's musical ideas."

Having handled the writing, they had to rebuild the band: After the project that Howerdel had been working on in his bedroom for a decade grew into a platinum band, he fell victim to poachers. Billy Corgan spirited bassist Paz Lenchantin away to Zwan, guitarist Troy Van Leeuwen wandered off into the desert with *Queens Of The Stone Age*. *APC*'s website played it off: The vegan Lenchantin, in a state of "meat deprivation," became delirious and "followed a 'bald man named Billy' onto the wrong bus" (she's since quit); Van Leeuwen was spotted "hanging around with Craig Kilborn." An alt-rock who's-who paraded through Howerdel's studio looking to fill the bill: Curve's Rob Halliday came in to play bass and guitar (unused). While Perry Farrell and Dave Navarro sullied their legacy elsewhere, Jane's Addiction bassist Eric Avery tried his hand with *APC* (also unused). *NIN* guitarist/bassist Danny Lohner contributed guitar and programming to *The Thirteenth Step* (used), and was announced as the band's new live guitarist, only to vanish when the new lineup was debuted. So many other people auditioned for the slots that Keenan



JAMES IHA, JOSH FREESE, JEORDIE WHITE, MAYNARD JAMES KEENAN, BILLY HOWERDEL

"THERE'S NO POINT BEING ON THE ROAD HATING EACH OTHER... I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE ON THE ROAD WITH SOMEONE LIKE AXL ROSE, IT WOULD BE RIDICULOUS, I WOULDN'T EVEN BOTHER."

can't even remember them all.

"We had a bunch of wonderful musicians come in and play bass and guitar, but they're not necessarily going to serve the project in the way it needs to be served," Keenan's take on it goes. "At the end of the day, they're all incredible musicians and they really brought a lot of themselves to the table, but I think, um... their personalities would be best served in a whole new and fresh project."

Keenan and Howerdel found what they were looking for in former Marilyn Manson bassist Jeordie White (née Twiggy Ramirez), who handed in his makeup and babydoll dresses last year after close to 10 years with the band. With APC, White seems like a man let out of prison. His playing on *Thirteenth* blows away his work with Manson with its sheer range, from the serpentine, hypnotic subtlety of "The Package" to the Tool-worthy, nimble "Weak And Powerless" or the titanic sludge of "Pet." Later that night at Irving Plaza, the comatose *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?* look discarded, he will actually smile onstage.

Bassist in place, it seemed that one bald turn deserved another: A bald man named Billy took Lenchantin, so APC's own bald Billy grabbed his former bandmate, Smashing Pumpkin James Iha, to replace the suddenly-exited Lohner—two weeks before the beginning of a tour. "Danny's an incredible player, very interesting ideas, but the ideas didn't necessarily match what we were doing here," Keenan said. "So all of a sudden I just thought of James, and Billy thought of James at the same time, completely separately, a passing thought. I was tripping over myself to get to the phone, like, 'Duh, James Iha.' There was a whole list of auditions that were coming in and we just had to call them and cancel

because I just knew in my heart that that was the right decision.

"It was a gamble, we were leaving in two weeks to go on the road, and James didn't know any of the songs. But he's a quick learner and the energy's really good. And at the end of the day, you've got to be in a bus with these fuckin' people for a year; you want to be friends and get along, there's no point being on the road hating and tolerating each other. It's a negative experience and that translates, and the music doesn't go the level that it should. I won't do it. I can't imagine what it would be like to be on the road with someone like Axl Rose, it would be ridiculous, I wouldn't even bother."

Iha indoctrinated, the circle is once again unbroken, with the right combination of personalities, complete and (for the moment) blissfully ego free. "I've never felt more like I was in a band," White says. "I just feel like everyone is an equal, on a personal level and talent level. It's a great thing to be a part of... This is a fresh slate for all of us to make a new relationship with." He laughs, perhaps surprised that someone who spent nearly a decade with the God of Fuck is painting such a bucolic picture. "In a few years," he jokes, "you'll ask us this question and we'll all hate each other."

Back at the show, from his podium, Keenan's turning a mirror on every selfish, destructive behavior he can think of, bringing fire down from the mountain, and drunk girls are grinding like it's a Christina Aguilera concert. Tatted-out, shirtless meatheads slam it out in the pit, record company vice presidents bob their heads while confabbing with their staff in the VIP section. Some dude yells "San Dimas high school football rules!" Keenan remains in the cage, lost in the

music, possibly completely unaware there's even an audience present. In fact, his voice reaches its most powerful when he turns his back to the crowd.

Throughout the show, Keenan seems to open up, cracking a few purposefully corny jokes from the shadows. The guy does have a sense of humor, after all, even if he's often loathe to show it. It shouldn't be a surprise: He's written songs called "Hooker With A Penis"; his publishing company is named Harry Merkin, after the inventor of the pubic wig. He'll pose for magazine shots in only his underwear and huge bug-eye glasses. He's outlandish, just completely, perversely deadpan.

Keenan invites Iha to tell a story; Iha takes the mic and wheezes his way through an asthmatic a capella while Keenan waves his hands in the air. A guy leans over to complain that he's annoyed by the jokes: "Why do they spend all this time setting up this theatrical set and then ruin it with bad stand-up comedy?" That's probably the point, to annoy people; that would appeal to Keenan's perverse sense of humor. Later, a fansite confirms that it's all pretend: The spontaneous joke portions of the set, and even many of the incidental asides, have been the same in every review, all the way back to the dress rehearsal. Keenan so carefully controls how he presents himself that even his spontaneity is scripted.

He reenters the shadows for the rest of the set, feet still rooted like he's standing in concrete. The silhouette throws its arms out, convulses, jacks off a huge, imaginary cock, and taunts the audience: "You don't, you don't, you don't see me." APC saves "Judith" for last, the lights igniting, eradicating the band over and over. As they exit, Keenan finally leaves his cage and comes down to the front, throwing his remaining water bottles to the drenched crowd and giving them the one thing they've wanted even more than a drink—a glimpse of his face, if only for a second.

Not two seconds after they leave the stage, the PA blasts into "Margaritaville," the most inappropriate song possible. It wouldn't be surprising if Keenan had planned that, too. It also wouldn't be surprising if a third eye opened in the middle of his forehead. Of course, you wouldn't see it. Like the other two, it would be under his hat. **NMM**



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13. **DEAR JOHN LETTERS** "We Could Be Angels" *Stories Of Our Lives*

www.djlmusic.com

Dear John Letters appear courtesy of Foodchain Records.

See Review p. 46.

14. **DRESSY BESSY** "Just Once More" *Dressy Bessy*

www.dressybessy.com

Dressy Bessy appears courtesy of Kindercore Records.

15. **STEREO MOTION** "New Face" *Stereo Motion*

www.stereo-motion.com

Stereo Motion appears courtesy of Flicker Records.

16. **LORDS OF ACID** "Gimme Gimme" *Greatest T*ts*

www.lordsofacid.com

Lords Of Acid appear courtesy of Sanctuary Records Group Inc./Amant Music

17. **STIGMATO INC.** "Strive To Be Happy" *Reality Check*

www.utensilrecordings.com

Stigmato Inc. appears courtesy of Utensil Recordings.

18. **THE STRING CHEESE INCIDENT** "Looking Glass" *Untying The*

www.stringcheeseincident.com

The String Cheese Incident appears courtesy of Sci Fidelity Records.

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1. **A PERFECT CIRCLE** "Weak And Powerless" *The Thirteenth Step*

www.aperfectcircle.com

A Perfect Circle appears courtesy of Virgin Records America, Inc.
See Cover Story p. 28.

2. **VUE** "She's Sweet" *Down For Whatever*

www.thevue.com

Vue appears courtesy of RCA Records.
See Review p. 62.

3. **SPIRITUALIZED** "She Kissed Me (It Felt Like A Hit)" *Amazing Grace*

www.spiritualized.com

Spiritualized appears courtesy of Sanctuary Records Group Inc.
See Feature p. 24, Review p. 59.

4. **OUTKAST** "Hey Ya!" *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*

www.outkast.com

OutKast appears courtesy of Arista Records.
See Quick Fix p. 12.

5. **METRIC** "Wet Blanket" *Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?*

www.ilovemetric.com

Metric appears courtesy of Everloving Records.
See Review p. 52.

6. **SHELBY LYNNE** "Telephone" *Identity Crisis*

www.shelbylynn.com

Shelby Lynne appears courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.
See Best New Music p. 41.

7. **STELLASTARR*** "My Coco" *Stellastarr**

www.stellastarr.com

Stellastarr* appears courtesy of RCA Records.
See On The Verge p. 15.

8. **RACHAEL YAMAGATA** *Worn Me Down EP*

www.rachaelyamagata.com

Rachael Yamagata appears courtesy of Private Music/Associated Labels.

9. **MIKE ERRICO** "Underwater" *Skimming*

www.errico.com

Mike Errico appears courtesy of Velour Music Group.

10. **AESOP ROCK** "Freeze" *Bazooka Tooth*

www.definitivejux.net

Aesop Rock appears courtesy of Definitive Jux.
See Feature p. 20.

11. **MEMENTO** "Saviour" *Beginnings*

www.mementoband.com

Memento appears courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

12. **GOLD CASH GOLD** "Vultures" *Paradise Pawned, Volume One*

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Gold Cash Gold appears courtesy of Times Beach Records.

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AESOP ROCK
Bazooka Tooth (Definitive Jux)



SPIRITUALIZED
Amazing Grace (Sanctuary)



OUTKAST
Speakerboxxx/The Love Below (Arista)

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Rockville, MARYLAND

STORY: CHRIS CULOS OF O.A.R.

Rockville is our home, and nothing beats home. Our hometown's located in the middle of everything, minutes from D.C. and Bethesda, only 45 from Annapolis and Baltimore, and two hours from the beach. As you can see, we've got a lot going on.

Although dive bars are my favorite when we're on the road, you're not going to find too many here. There's some weird law in Maryland that requires 50 percent of a bar's income to come from food sales, so the bar scene consists mainly of restaurants that turn into bar hangouts after hours, instead of establishments dedicated entirely to alcohol, "the cause of, and solution to, all of life's little problems." If you live here and are in your twenties, you've definitely been out in Bethesda more often than not. The Bethesda bar scene can quickly turn into a high-school reunion for locals, but it's still great to go out there. You'll want to try **Parker's American Bistro** (4824 Bethesda Ave., 301-654-6366), **Montgomery's Grill** (7200 Wisconsin Ave., 301-654-3595), **Tommy Joe's** (4714 Montgomery Lane, 301-654-3801) and **Black's** (7750 Woodmont Ave., 301-652-6278).

If live music is what you seek, you've come to the right place. We may not be Nashville or Memphis, but the **9:30 Club** (815 V St. NW, 202-265-0930) consistently wins "best venue of the year" awards nationwide—every great band in the world has played there, and we still get chills when we come through town and get to walk out on that stage. If you're looking for something a little more intimate, try **Blues Alley** (1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW, 202-337-4141) in Georgetown. This little jazz club is famous for bringing in the most popular jazz artists nightly.

Like water? Good...we have a lot of it. Sail your boat up to **Cantler's** (458 Forest Beach Rd., 410-757-1311) in Annapolis and eat crabs on the dock. Go paddle-boating at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore. Check out the cherry blossoms at the Tidal Basin. Or just go straight to the beach. There's a place for every mood—calm and quiet in Bethany Beach, busy and crowded in Ocean City, wild and loud in Dewey, or a little of everything in Rehoboth.



Walk along the row houses and cobblestone streets in Georgetown toward M Street and Wisconsin, and you'll find great shopping—everything from boutique shops to famous designer stores, antique stores, coffee shops, bars and restaurants. Then head down to the canal and walk along the gravel path until you hit the Potomac River for some spectacular views of D.C.

First time visitors to D.C., while we're on the subject, should make a point of heading downtown for the museums. First, visit the Holocaust museum, and then head over to the Air and Space museum for something... lighter. When it's nice outside, just walk along the mall and look at all of the monuments. We know there's too much to take in, but don't worry, you don't have to see it all today. You'll be back.

LOCAL LOGIC: O.A.R.'S FAVORITE SPOTS NEAR ROCKVILLE

Hangover cure: Even if you're just feeling under the weather, you need Pho—it's like Vietnamese "chicken soup." Go to **Pho 75** (771 Hungerford Dr., 301-309-8873) and order the soup with well-done brisket, noodles and flank steak, then add hoisin, bean sprouts, a lime slice and hot sauce. If you have the nerve and want to eat it like a real native, try it with the tripe, tendons and other body parts they have listed.

California rolls: Get to **Taipei Tokyo** (11510 Rockville Pike, 301-881-8388) before 3 p.m., and two rolls are only \$5.



18TH STREET LOUNGE



AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

Venue for the heavy drinker: If you've ventured out to D.C., try to find **Dan's Cafe** (2315 18th St. NW, 202-265-9241) in Adams Morgan. It's a fairly hard-to-find bar that serves fifths of liquor with soda cans and buckets of ice on the side. This is a nice change from the rest of D.C., where the bars are famous for watered-down rail drinks. Note: Use the wooden cup-holders on the bar to secure your drink when bar fights break out.

Surf Shop: Everyone who grows up in Rockville gets their first skateboard from **Malibu's Surf Shop**. A few years ago, the shop moved to Ocean City (8th St. & Boardwalk, Ocean City, Maryland 410-289-3000) and is now the coolest store on the boardwalk. Be sure to spot the broken longboard up on their wall, it was my uncle's.

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD:

O.A.R. TAKES YOU ON TOUR AT HOME.

Chris Culos (drums)

"An ideal night for me would start at **Jaleo** (7271 Woodmont Ave., 301-913-0003), my favorite tapas restaurant (try the soft-shell crab and peppers stuffed with crabmeat). After dinner, we'd head downtown, and check out **Mie N Yu** (3125 M St. NW, 202-333-6122) in Georgetown—the place is bizarre, with a décor based on the silk route; one room has an Indian theme, another has an Asian/Tibetan theme, another has a French-Baroque theme, etc. Then we'd stop by **Smith Point** (1338 Wisconsin Ave. NW, 202-333-8358), a little bar with brick walls and cement floors that make you feel like you're in an unfinished basement. Around 1:30 a.m. we'd head into Mid-Town, to visit **18th Street Lounge** (1212 18th St. NW, 202-466-3922). Owned by Thievery Corporation, it has the best vibe in D.C.—with wooden floors and couches everywhere, you feel like you're at a house party. The secluded terrace is the coolest part: Walk out onto this private deck where a Latin band is playing in the corner next to the outdoor bar, and you notice that it's surrounded by walls from the neighboring buildings, but not so close that you don't have a great view, especially if the stars are out. The Lounge is open late, so we can go home whenever we want to..."

Richard On (lead guitar)

"**Green Tea Cafe** (10072 Darnestown Rd., 301-545-1871) in Trivlah Square is owned and operated by a fellow Wootton High School graduate, and has great bubble tea (flavored green/black tea with tapioca pearls). I'd pay a visit to **Chuck Levin's Music Store** (11151 Veirs Mill Rd., 301-946-8808) in Wheaton—they have the greatest staff and selection around. For any gear junkie, it's like being a kid in a candy store. **Paul Kee Restaurant** (11305 Georgia Ave., 301-933-6886) is just a stone's throw away from Chuck's, and is the best authentic Cantonese restaurant in the area, bar none. But be warned: It's not for the novice Chinese food connoisseur. If seeing a roasted duck or pig hanging in a window isn't your thing, don't even think about eating here. Top five dishes: jellyfish and conch appetizer, crispy beef, crispy salty shrimp, watercrest in garlic sauce, and a bowl of wonton soup, Hong Kong style. If I'm in the mood for some sake, the trendy bar-side of **Tako Grille** (7756 Wisconsin Ave., 301-652-7030) in Bethesda has a great selection of cold sake, which is a summertime favorite. Back in Mid-Town in D.C. (where 18th St. and Connecticut Ave. intersect, to be exact), you have a choice of some of the coolest lounges/clubs/bars all within walking distance from each other, like the laid-back lounge setting of **Dragonfly** (1215 Connecticut Ave., 202-331-1775) or **Spank** (1223 Connecticut Ave., 202-822-1800), which is on the top floor of MCCXXIII (1223).

Benj Gershman (bass)

"**Great Falls Park** (9200 Old Dominion Drive, McLean, Virginia, Visitor Information 703-285-2966) is a string of waterfalls along a pretty steep and rocky part of the Potomac River, and in my opinion is one of the most beautiful places in the state of Maryland. There's a cool trail with a lot of scenic overlooks, called the Billy Goat Trail. If you're looking for nightlite, go down to Harbor Place in D.C. and try **Sequoia** (3000 K St. NW, 202-944-4200): It has a great menu that'll suit anyone's hunger and/or budget. In Georgetown, try walking around where M and Wisconsin meet, it's pretty much the center. While you're there, stop by **Old Glory** (3139 M St. NW, 202-337-3406)—I like it because it feels like every other bar in the world."

O.A.R.'s new *In Between Now And Then* is out now on *Lava/Atlantic*. Visit www.ofarevolution.com for all things O.A.R.



BEST NEW MUSIC

BRITISH SEA POWER

DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE


SHELBY LYNNE

THE NATIONAL

URSULA RUCKER

ROCKY VOTOLATO

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

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



BRITISH SEA POWER

The Decline Of British Sea Power Rough Trade/Sanctuary

With the insufferable politeness of bands like Travis and Coldplay, British pop now evinces all the subversive menace of your auntie's knitting class. With the brilliantly named British Sea Power, however, the time for a full-blown return to the tradition of Anglo-rock ostentation seems marvelously nigh. Already, with their magnificently arrogant debut album title—offered up on the cover as “British Sea Power’s Classic The Decline Of...”—they manage both self-coronation and the prediction of their inevitable demise. And for further statement of purpose, not only does the title obscurely reference WWI, they, in fact, even don vintage military gear onstage. More importantly, they musically outmatch their conceptual grandiosity. The record opens with 39 seconds of Gregorian chanting (“Men Together Today”), an appropriate salvo of bombastic majesty. BSP then lurch ferociously into a pair of flamboyantly titled Birthday Party-worthy thrashers (“Apologies To Insect Life” and “Favours In The Beetroot Fields”); little by little, they (un)settle into a tawdry marriage of early Echo & The Bunnymen fury and Pulp eccentricity. Smiths comparisons come by way of an ever-present, morosely dramatic undercurrent and by singer Yan’s wondrously overwrought conveyance of the great wrongness of human reality—in a voice like that of a feral Jarvis Cocker. It’s all quite grotesque and glorious; very English, then. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link
www.britishseapower.co.uk
 File Under
 Drama kings
 R.I.Y.L.
 The Smiths, Pulp,
 early Echo & The Bunnymen



DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

Transatlanticism Barsuk

Fans of dreamy Washington state guitar-popsters Death Cab For Cutie might have found cause for worry in the success of the Postal Service, singer/guitarist Ben Gibbard's side project with L.A. ProTools jock Jimmy Tamborello. That band's nifty Sub Pop debut from earlier this year showed that Gibbard's tuneful emo-for-adults can work in more than one musical setting—as the T-shirt claims, once you iMac, you never go back. But if anything, *Transatlanticism*, Death Cab's follow-up to 2001's *The Photo Album*, proves how much love for churning guitars and crashing drums Gibbard has left in his broken heart. The band sounds newly energized from the get-go, blasting through opener "The New Year" with the measured intensity of Low (or the New Year) as Gibbard recounts "lighting fireworks off on the front lawn." Later, in the title track, the singer equates the distance between lovers with the expanse of the ocean; when the futility of his circumstance overpowers him, a choir of sympathetic voices lifts him above the din. Guitarist Chris Walla, who also produces DCFC's records, matches Gibbard sob for sob—the crinkly percussion treatments in "Title And Registration" and night-sky hum in "Passenger Seat" are as smartly evocative as any of Tamborello's dots and loops. A powerful return. >>>MIKAEL WOOD



SHELBY LYNNE

Identity Crisis Capitol

Shelby Lynne is again sounding as determined as she did on 2000's *I Am Shelby Lynne*, which netted her a Grammy for Best New Artist (funny thing, considering she'd been making records for a decade by that time). But *Love, Shelby*, the trying-too-hard album that followed, was probably the platter that should have been called *Identity Crisis* (blame hit-making hack Glen Ballard for that one). Soon, the rising star found herself without a record label, so she decided to nest and write. Lynne penned and produced all the songs on *Identity Crisis*, choosing more modest Nashville-style settings to frame her finest asset—not what was hanging out of those cut-offs on her last album cover, but her voice. This uncluttered, mostly acoustic approach recalls Lyle Lovett's most satisfying work, though with an even more commanding vocal presence that smolders somewhere between Neko Case's belting and k.d. lang's crooning. The gospel inspired "10 Rocks" is the kind of song you'd love to have heard Elvis Presley and the Jordanaires take on. Ditto the soaring ballad "Lonesome," although Lynne had Pasty Cline in mind when she wrote it. If she was after something timeless and classic with these new songs, then mission accomplished. Hopefully, her new record label won't try so hard to make Shelby a star that they forget they've already got one. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



THE NATIONAL

Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers Brassland

With a slightly fuller croak of a voice than Tindersticks' Stuart Staples, the National vocalist Matt Berninger rummages the night in search of poetry. In pursuit of wisdom, he comes up with the dead ends of adulthood, as tricky girls and boys become less-than-ideal husbands and wives. He's lucky to have hooked up with the two sets of brothers who make up this Cincinnati-to-Brooklyn five-piece. Taken alone, Berninger's just another droll louse on a losing streak. However, with the grace of carefully stroked, warmly overdriven guitar for the modest moments, swelling points of orchestrated fanfare for the grandeur and the occasional tough rhythm track to pump up the false bravado ("Murder Me Rachael" is a promising call to arms), the National have the makings of a conceptually epic band. (Is that the Waterboys or U2 channeling through "Available"?) Their studio tan is radiantly depressive, calling to mind the fidgety masterworks of everyone from David Ackles to American Music Club to, most obviously, Tindersticks. They recorded their first album before playing a single gig and worked out their second one in seven different studios with several producers. Can a date with Brian Eno be far away? Rhetorical situations aside, this is music that despite its ambitions, comfortably settles for the back table at the neighborhood bar. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link
www.deathcabforcutie.com
File Under
Dreamy guitar drama
R.I.Y.L.
Coldplay, Built To Spill, Low

Link
www.shelbylynne.com
File Under
Stripped down and done right
R.I.Y.L.
Lyle Lovett, k.d. lang,
Willie Nelson

Link
www.americanmary.com
File Under
Because the night
R.I.Y.L.
Tindersticks, David Ackles,
American Music Club,
Lee Hazlewood

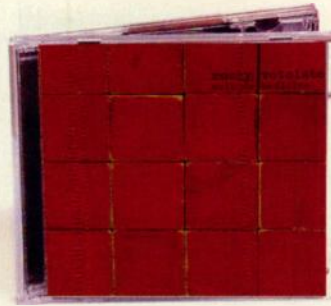


URSULA RUCKER

Silver Or Lead 1K7

For most music fans, spoken word is like the multivitamin of recorded material. Listening to it might be good for you, but who really enjoys it? Even Ursula Rucker's debut, *Supa Sista*, suffered at times from sounding like graduate seminar or street-corner tirade. For *Silver Or Lead*, the Philadelphia poet wisely enlists a team of A-list beatmakers (Jazzanova, 4 Hero, King Britt, Lil Louie Vega) to make the heady lyrics go down a little easier. The ethereal pitter-patter of the backing track on "Soon" tempers a bitter detailing of slavery's injustice. On "Lonely Can Be Sweet," a crackling rap rhythm livens a monologue of solitude into a toe-tapping declaration of empowered resilience. As Rucker's steady trickle of words delves into the indignities of alcoholism, rape and mass-media mind control, the string swells or vibraphone tines counter with promise and relief. Rucker also allows melody to overtake her voice, occasionally sliding a raspy, spoken-sung refrain into these chill-groove ballads, and instilling ruminations like "Can I live up to my own potential?" with an empathetic dreaminess. The producers' complex arrangements push the writer's flow, inspiring her to scat and swoon, happily skipping off of the conga hits and saxophone bleats. Rucker and her cohorts have pulled off a rare feat: a spoken-word record that not only drops advanced science, but also keeps your head bobbing through class. >>>NEIL GLADSTONE

Link
www.ursula-rucker.com
 File Under
 Drum 'n' word
 R.I.Y.L.
 Portishead, Sylk 130, Erykah Badu



ROCKY VOTOLATO

Suicide Medicine Second Nature

If I have to listen to a diminutive indie heartthrob singer/songwriter, I don't wanna hear "Your hair is everywhere, screaming infidelities and taking its wear"; I wanna hear "If I have to crack open your skull with my fist, I'll let the light and the sound escape." In this established safe haven for acoustic guitars, passive full bands and their fragile balladry, Seattle's Rocky Votolato is an anomaly, a threat even, not just for his bleak, accusatory lyrics that never quite lead to redemption, but his voice. Votolato's lungs are tailor-made to tear through the introspective-dude-with-guitar genre. His throat sounds coated with sandpaper, and when miked, the natural vibrato sounds like a neighborhood collapsing. Votolato also infrequently fronts the quartet Waxwing with brother Cody, who's currently a bit swamped with the Blood Brothers, sharing rock axe duties. On the chorus to *Suicide's* title track, Votolato's pained inquiry, "Is it the blue wire or the red wire?" belted out over a staccato strum would absolutely tear ass as a Waxwing song. That said, the full-band push works just fine on "Secrets Of A Salesman" and the vindictive "Every Red Cent." Yup, knowing when to alternate defense and offense... guys named Rocky kinda fare okay at that. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI

Link
www.rockyvotolato.com
 File Under
 Go folk yourself
 R.I.Y.L.
 Onlinedrawing, Further Seems
 Forever, Waxwing



RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

Want DreamWorks

If Billy Joel can make it on Broadway with *Movin' Out*, can't someone introduce Twyla Tharp to Rufus Wainwright? Because let's face it, this piano man is more than suited for that stage. For *Want*, Wainwright has enlisted the help of Björk co-conspirator Marius deVries, with magnificent results. With Björk, deVries' orchestral pop always seemed slightly out-of-place, but paired with Wainwright's style of operatic pomp, it makes for a more than appropriate pairing. The opening track, "Oh What A World," is an old-school musical number, sort of Kurt Weill meets the Gershwin Brothers on the set of *Sex And The City*; he actually utilizes Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue" as a counter-melody throughout the song. By melding modern and postmodern sensibilities to older song stylings, Wainwright creates a uniquely rich and varied musical identity. On tracks like "I Don't Know What It Is," *White Album*-era Beatles-y strings meld with *Bends*-era Radiohead chiming guitars to great effect. As a singer and songwriter, Wainwright has as unique a voice and vision as anybody making music. And when he unleashes that voice, on tracks like the marvelous "Go Or Go Ahead," Wainwright's transcendent, coming across like another Jeff Buckley, another Chet Baker or another reason to keep listening to modern music. >>>JEFF BROWN

Link
www.rufuswainwright.com
 File Under
 Best-in-show tunes
 R.I.Y.L.
 Ed Harcourt, Tori Amos,
 Randy Newman

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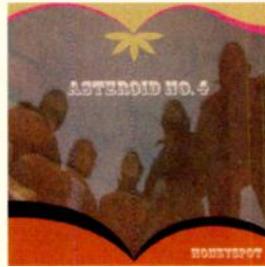
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REVIEWS

ASTEROID NO. 4
 A TEAM
 BALLBOY
 BAND OF BLACKY RANCHETTE
 PAUL BRILL
 EDDIE "THE CHIEF" CLEARWATER
 FEATURING LOS STRAITJACKETS
 ELVIS COSTELLO
 CURSE OV DIALECT
 DEAR JOHN LETTERS
 THE DECEMBERISTS
 DAVE DERBY
 EAST RIVER PIPE
 ENON
 THE HIGH LLAMAS
 THE HANDSOME FAMILY
 HEAD OF FEMUR
 THE INNOCENCE MISSION
 KING CREOSOTE
 LFO
 THE LUCKSMITHS
 NATALIE MERCHANT
 METRIC
 MT. EGYPT
 OKKERVIL RIVER
 ON THE MIGHT OF PRINCES
 PAPAS FRITAS
 PAPER AIRPLANE PILOTS
 PEACHES
 QUASI
 RANCID
 THE RAPTURE
 MATTHEW RYAN
 SCOUT
 SEX MOB
 SOUNDTRAK
 SPIRITUALIZED
 STARS
 STYLES OF BEYOND
 SWELL
 TOWN AND COUNTRY
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 JAMES BLOOD ULMER



ASTEROID NO. 4

Honeyspot Turquoise Mountain

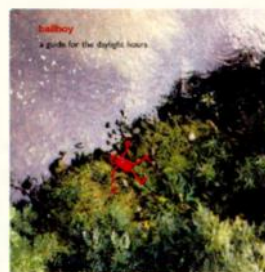
What made the original wave of garage rock bands in the 1960s so engaging was the simple fact that many of them weren't much good. What they lacked in professionalism and chops, they made up for with fanatic enthusiasm. Modestly flat harmonies, flubbed drum fills, lyrics from a freshman composition notebook and slightly out-of-tune guitars, when sprinkled with elusive fairy dust, coalesced into a sum far greater than the faulty parts. (Without the fairy dust, it yielded crap.) With no disrespect intended, Philadelphia's Asteroid No. 4 occasionally hit upon this magic formula. Much of their fourth

Link
www.asteroidno4.com

File Under
 You can take the band out of the garage but...
 R.I.Y.L.

Long Ryders, Critters, *Pebbles* compilations, Ryan Adams

studio release is competently performed country rock ("One Time," "California"), reminiscent of the Flying Burrito Bros. sans Gram Parsons or revivalists such as the Long Ryders. The quiet unassuming sway is bolstered by simple, catchy songwriting. "Made Up My Mind" is virtually a hand-holding anthem. However, consistency is not this quintet's concern. The album begins with a seven-minute ambling psychedelic roadster, "The Preacher And The Setting Sun," only to hit garage-rock paydirt with "He's A Fire" and "Runnin' Away," two tracks that sound like unvarnished work tapes worthy of inclusion on a *Pebbles* garage-rock collection. Hopefully, this stylistic schizophrenia will continue, as it's their wild card status that makes them candidates for the fairy dust. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



BALLBOY

A Guide For The Daylight Hours Manifesto

Because Ballboy's impressive 2002 Stateside coming-out party *Club Anthems* was technically a compilation of U.K. EPs, *A Guide For The Daylight Hours* is billed as the Edinburgh quartet's debut album. *Daylight Hours*, released in Europe nearly a year ago, subtly shifts the band's emphasis while for the most part reaching into the same bag of tricks. Frontman Gordon McIntyre de-emphasizes the manic strumming that drew rampant comparisons to the Wedding Present, instead leaning more on an array of Katie Griffiths' keyboard sounds, drawing new WedPrez comparisons, this

Link
www.ballboy.org
 File Under
 Novelty-leaning Britpop
 R.I.Y.L.
 Cinerama, Robyn Hitchcock, Hefner, the Delgados

time to David Gedge's new project Cinerama. There are fewer poignant solo turns on acoustic guitar, and greater emphasis on rudimentary 4/4 rock structures propelled by stadium-ready drums. McIntyre again hits paydirt by applying his thick Scottish brogue to a spoken-word narrative, this time accompanied by strings on "A Europe-wide Search For Love." Ballboy's wit remains intact, but its humor is more effective in EP-sized bites. Here, a parade of titles like "I Wonder If You're Drunk Enough To Sleep With Me Tonight" and "You Can't Spend Your Whole Life Hanging Around With Arseholes" pushes the troupe perilously close to novelty territory. Although *A Guide For The Daylight Hours* has enough charm to win over dyed-in-the-tartan Anglophiles, casual newcomers are best advised to reach for the more varied and inventive *Club Anthems*. >>>GLEN SARVADY



THE BAND OF BLACKY RANCHETTE

Still Lookin' Good To Me *Thrill Jockey*

Blacky Ranchette is the nominally "country" alter-ego of Giant Sand's Howe Gelb, but it's hardly clear what divides this album—his fourth under the moniker since 1985—from work released under his better-known band's name, or his own. It's not the personnel: Giant Sand mainstays Joey Burns and John Convertino (a.k.a. Calexico) are on hand, and even early-'80s member Tommy Larkins (now drumming for Jonathan Richman) lends a hand on a few cuts. Otherwise, Blacky's "band" seems to consist of whatever players and singers happen

to pass through Tucson within lassoing distance of an open microphone, from Lambchop's Kurt Wagner to Cat Power's Chan Marshall. Recent Arizona transplant Neko Case's duet with Richard Buckner on the white-trash tango "Getting It Made" is a high point, as Case lets loose with all the twang she withholds from the New Pornographers. It's still Gelb's rodeo, though, with "The Train Singer's Song" and "Mope-A-Long Rides Again," among others, displaying his undiminished gift for combining high sentiment and low punning. Despite the ultra-loose attitude toward recording and performance that ensures Gelb will always remain "way too real for wide appeal" (as "Square" puts it), *Still Lookin' Good To Me* is easily his most consistent release—under any name—since Giant Sand's 2000 *Chore Of Enchantment*. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.giantsand.com

File Under

Tucson City Limits.

R.I.Y.L.

Giant Sand, Neko Case, Bob Dylan, Simon Joyner



PAUL BRILL

Sisters *Scarlet Shame*

Paul Brill's plainspoken voice, earnest, literate storytelling and often-drum-free arrangements mark him as a rootsy traditionalist. But on *Sisters*, the New Yorker's second album, Brill sweetens his guitar strumming with accordion, horns and strings, and the chamber pop touches elevate the album beyond boilerplate singer/songwriter fare. It's full of tasteful details. Liz Claire's violin threads through the twangy, country-flavored "For The Sake Of Marjorie Ruth," the gypsy-tinged "Spit And Spite," which also features Tin Hat Trio's Rob Burger on accordion, and most other songs. The gently swinging

"Macon" features a jazzy, New Orleans-style trumpet solo, and the pulsing "Skylight" blends in cello and flute. *Sisters* is a restrained acoustic affair, although "Westering" works into a heady drone and "Two Stars" is soulful romp. Paul Brill can sound a lot like the Jayhawks' Gary Louris, especially on the wistful ballad "Blue Blanket," but his songs are more likely to depict urban anxieties than rural nostalgia, with recurring images of 9/11 fallout. "Happiness begins after all desire ends," Brill sings in the stream-of-consciousness "Begin At The End," and the sentiment, like much of *Sisters*, mixes hope and regret. Occasionally Brill's expanded palette becomes more of a distraction than an enhancement, but most of the time *Sisters* is subtle, moody and engrossing. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.paulbrill.com

File Under

Country gone chamber pop

R.I.Y.L.

The Jayhawks, the Trouble With Sweeney, Vic Chesnutt, the Mary Janes, Josh Rouse

Eddy "THE CHIEF" Clearwater



EDDY "THE CHIEF" CLEARWATER

featuring LOS STRAITJACKETS

Rock 'N' Roll City *Bullseye/Rounder*

Pairing blues guitarist Eddy "The Chief" Clearwater (known for performing in an Indian headdress) with Mexican-wrestling-mask-sporting surf rockers Los Straitjackets makes as much sense musically as aesthetically. Both artists are unapologetically stuck on the sounds of a bygone era. Clearwater's rock over blues (and vice versa) tendencies often earn Chuck Berry comparisons/accusations; Los Straitjackets work their fascination with surf/tiki culture in the same way. It's no accident then, that the album checks all that was cool about the Eisenhower years and in doing so,

reminds the listener that rock 'n' roll is a multifarious medium, encompassing rockabilly ("Old Time Rocker"), surf, country ("Peggy Sue"—not the Buddy Holly song), blues and soul ("Before This Song Is Over," the Stax-y "Midnight Groove"). "Hillbilly Blues" and the innuendo-laced "Ding Dong Daddy" fuel the Chuck Berry comparisons (the latter all but plagiarizes Berry's "My Ding-A-Ling"), and so can be either grating or intoxicating, given your perspective on such matters. "Monkey Paw" is the juiciest fruit of the project, a seemingly obligatory surf intro tune where Los Straitjackets' Danny Amis defers the lead-guitar limelight to Clearwater. The Chief's improvised reverb-basted blues licks are oddly and wonderfully suitable, proving that his headdress matches the 'jackets well. >>>RANDY HARWARD

Link

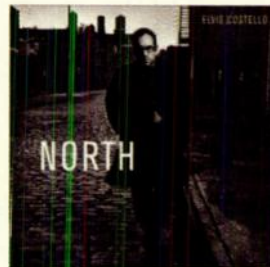
www.eddyclearwater.com

File Under

Cold war dance party

R.I.Y.L.

Chuck Berry, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Southern Culture On The Skids



ELVIS COSTELLO

North *Deutsche Grammophone*

While Warner Archives continues to deliver a steady stream of souped-up reissues from one of the more impressive back catalogues of the past three decades, Elvis Costello remains focused on honing his skills as a respectable composer/arranger, earning a release on the renowned Deutsche Grammophone classical label for his efforts. The mellifluous string quarter that opens the first track on *North* is fairly indicative of what Costello has in mind this time around. His voice—as tempered and well-trained as it may be—still sticks out like a sore thumb

Link

www.elviscostello.info

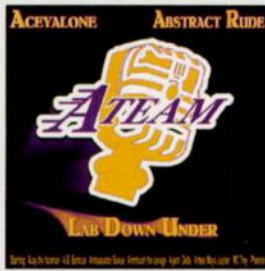
File Under

Elvis has left the idiom

R.I.Y.L.

Diana Krall, Chet Baker, "Almost Blue"

amid all the gentele string-bowing, brushed drums and refined horn-blowing. And Costello seems more concerned with generating just the right amount of vocal vibrato than with turning a witty phrase. Nonetheless, his singing fits in better here than it did on the Brodsky Quartet album, mainly because these songs are more in line with the lite-jazz pop of Costello's Burt Bacharach collaborations than with those classical-leaning sessions. This isn't the hot jazz of the swing revival, but a cool, West Coast variety associated with Chet Baker, the late trumpeter who had a hit with Costello's "Almost Blue." Unfortunately, there's nothing that catchy here. And, as impressive as it is to hear Costello mastering yet another idiom, *North* sounds too much like a songwriting exercise from an artist who long ago mastered the craft. >>>MATT ASHARE



A-TEAM
Lab Down Under *Basement*

CURSE OV DIALECT
Lost In The Real Sky *Mush*

"From Austin to Athens to Anaheim to Adelaide/A-Team always acquire the accolades"—the awesome array of alliterative acrobatics Aceyalone abruptly announces on A-Team's bloopy "What Time Is It?" continues the long tradition of off-off-center rhymes sired by Ace and his Freestyle Fellowship brethren in the early '90s. If the Australian guest rappers on A-Team's *Lab Down Under* (Ace's collabo with Cali cohort Abstract Rude) and the total fucking oddballs in Aussie avant-hop troupe Curse Ov Dialect are indications of what hip-hop sounds like in the land where women glow and men plunder; then, man, Oz must be suckin' down the Fellowship like cans of Foster's.

Inspired by their travels in the country so phat, it's a continent too, Ace and Rude use their trademark eccentric left-coast jaggedness to rock an Oceanic concept album (OK, it's more bragging, repping L.A., uplifting minds and weirdo poetry... but, hey, it's in *Australia!*) with help from a slew of Aussie ambassadors—Dave Dog of eclectic crew Resin intoxicatingly earnest Maya Jupiter. On the title track, the chief MCs seek clearer heads for headz (streamlining their sound like on Acey's latest record, the stellar *Love And Hate*), and the students have out-abstracted the teachers. Guests Meta Bass And Breath—producing and rapping—wash themselves in doom 'n' gloom strings, beam-me-up gushes and spastic cadences that have the predictability and soothing quality of an Ornette Coleman record played in a bumpy Jeep skipping across the outback.



Link
www.curseovdialect.com
File Under
Yahoos... Serious?
R.I.Y.L.
Dose One, Busdriver And
Radioinactive, Freestyle Fellowship

Dogs and among others, the

Post-Freestyle Fellowship nutcases Curse Ov Dialect are from Australia—naturally, the land of gawky nonconformists like the emu and the platypus. Their thick Oceanic accents stretch to new levels of quirk, with sampled digeridoos and noisemakers convoluting the already impossibly schizophrenic flows of these kid koalas. Its Anticonical loopiness is grounded only by hooks made of slowed down samples; since beats are made of snipping scissors and MC Atarungi delivers lines like "Mr. Disarray riddles plankton, little shoe, amoebas waging war with testicle residue... Spermazoids deploy-oy is noids from the voy-oid!"). Scuzzy buzz-buzz, monkey howls, Robert Carradine's *Revenge Of The Nerds* laugh—shit, these guys are supposed to be political, but damned if it's evident in this lunacy. Unless you find "Transit lounge balls at Charles De Gaulle/ An overnight beard growth in a duty-free mall" the backpacker version (excuse me, "marsupial" version) of Public Enemy.

Curse Ov Dialect's convoluted absurdity is certainly funnier, noisier and even more forward-thinking than their forebears in A-Team—and they're certainly one of the strangest things to emerge from a certain former prison island since that Nick Cave and Kylie duet—but for now only Ace and Rude will make you "bounce up and down like a kangaroo." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



DEAR JOHN LETTERS 
Stories Of Our Lives *Foodchain*

Can a band called Dear John Letters really sing about anything but Cupid's three big L's—love, loss and loneliness? Don't let the grand scope of the title, *Stories Of Our Lives*, fool you; the only stories on the Seattle quartet's third release (the first to find national distribution) deal with matters of the heart. Singer/songwriter Robb Benson pens clever, incisive and endearing indie rock for the lonely-hearts-club set. Sounding more comfortable belting out a line or screaming in pain than carrying a melody, he seems set upon proving, as is the whole emo nation, that

Link
www.djlmusic.com
File Under
Indie rock for the brokenhearted
R.I.Y.L.
We Ragazzi, Guided By Voices,
the Candy Butchers

golden pipes aren't required to express honest musical emotion. Here's a case, however, where polishing the vocals in these off-kilter get-together and break-up songs would only wear away the grit that makes them interesting. "You Always Win" is a folksy ditty about a woman who never tires of her boyfriend's stories. "We Could Be Angels" thumbs its nose at time's healing power with lyrics like, "If time heals all wounds, then I'm going to live forever, or die trying," before erupting into a raucous, decidedly anti-indie rock guitar solo. Despite being a collection of songs about love, *Stories Of Our Lives* is most interesting when Dear John Letters open it up a bit, which luckily enough is most of the time. Love may suck sometimes, but its music doesn't have to. >>>NORM ELROD



THE DECEMBERISTS

Her Majesty The Decemberists *Kill Rock Stars*

Like the Decemberists' wonderful debut *Castaways And Cutouts*, which originally came out on Portland's tiny Hush label in June 2002 before its re-release this past May, *Her Majesty The Decemberists* sails on a sea of acoustic guitars, accordion and organ, while Colin Meloy sings tales of archaic adventures and quirky characters. Meloy loves words; his songs are full of vocabulary more often found in an English class than in a rock club, and he has a pleasing penchant for alliteration. "O what a rush of ripe elan!/ Langour on divans/ Dalliant and dainty!" he sings ironically in "Los Angeles, I'm Yours," just after a spot-on parody of an L.A. soft-rock harmonica solo and string interlude. The word-drunk indulgence could be insufferably coy, but the Decemberists pull it off with, er, elan, and there's a kind of brilliance in the tangled sounds of phrases like "Song For Myla Goldberg"'s "I know I need unique New York" (try saying it aloud). The subject matter owes a lot to 19th-century folk ballads, with pirates and pantaloons, "chimbley" sweeps and knickers, gypsy uncles and undies, while the music shifts among ambling folk rock, Slavic rhythms, and bouncy music hall ditties. *Her Majesty* may lack the shock of the new that accompanied *Castaways*, but it quickly establishes the Decemberists as a band worth hearing—and reading. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link
www.decemberists.com
File Under
Literale sea chanleys
and folk ballads
R.I.Y.L.
Neutral Milk Hotel, Robyn
Hitchcock, Belle And Sebastian,
Patrick O'Brian novels

an L.A. soft-rock harmonica solo and string interlude. The word-drunk indulgence could be insufferably coy, but the Decemberists pull it off with, er, elan, and there's a kind of brilliance in the tangled sounds of phrases like "Song For Myla Goldberg"'s "I know I need unique New York" (try saying it aloud). The subject matter owes a lot to 19th-century folk ballads, with pirates and pantaloons, "chimbley" sweeps and knickers, gypsy uncles and undies, while the music shifts among ambling folk rock, Slavic rhythms, and bouncy music hall ditties. *Her Majesty* may lack the shock of the new that accompanied *Castaways*, but it quickly establishes the Decemberists as a band worth hearing—and reading. >>>STEVE KLINGE



DAVE DERBY

Even Further Behind *Badman*

Dave Derby spent a decade as the chief singer and songwriter of a good but mid-level pop band, the Dambuilders, then formed another "band," Brilliantine (really a solo project), shortly after the first one imploded. Now that he's finally decided to release an album under his own name, and you might think he's crassly trying to maintain a tenuous grip on the music business by trying everything and putting out anything until something worked. Well, don't. Eschewing the artifice of the later Dambuilders and the preciousness of

Brilliantine, Derby has turned in an album of sincere and rootsy pop/rock. The album shoots out of the gate with harmonies sounding like the Rembrandts at their catchiest, but with a rawer production. The whole album benefits from Derby's years in the studio as well as his access to excellent collaborators and guest musicians (Michael Kotch, Kendall Meade, Rainy Orteca and Phoebe Summersquash, among others). But the biggest boon to the record is Derby's casually great sense of melody and the liberal use of harmonies to accent it. Like 20 other famous people and probably your neighbor and maybe you, Derby writes songs about life, love, America and the young people who live in it. But it's these little things done right and well that set it above so much of the rest. >>>JOE KERN

Link

www.davederby.com

File Under

The American spectator

R.I.Y.L.

Elliot Smith, Ben Folds,
George Harrison



EAST RIVER PIPE

Garbageheads On Endless Stun Merge

All home-recording artists are essentially doomed. As anyone who's spent hours untangling buzzing guitar cables from humming effect boxes can tell you, what doesn't kill you makes your desire for a technical engineer to figure out why it sounds like crap stronger. Yet, for those who accept and embrace the limitations, there exists an intimacy that can never be replicated by the complex machinations of modern studios. Glen Ballard, take a seat. Alone in a room in Summit, New Jersey, F.M. Cornog (Mr. East River Pipe to you, madam) does battle with a Tascam 388 ministudio,

where his fifth home-schooled release continues his penchant for surprisingly lush yet unfussy pop songs that carry an undeniably attractive loner streak alongside their catchy golden-glove melodies. His narrators hang on the dark side where human fate is determined by a game rigged from the outset. The songs represent quiet revenge. "I Bought A Gun In Irvington" simmers with vigilante menace underneath its cordial facade of humble guitar and keyboard. "Where Does All The Money Go?" helplessly observes the rich getting richer, while the disenchanted can only ominously respond with "sweet, sweet *crime*" as their token, get-even scheme. By wrapping his twisted sentiments in melodies anyone can hum, Cornog gets the last laugh, even if only a few can actually hear him. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link

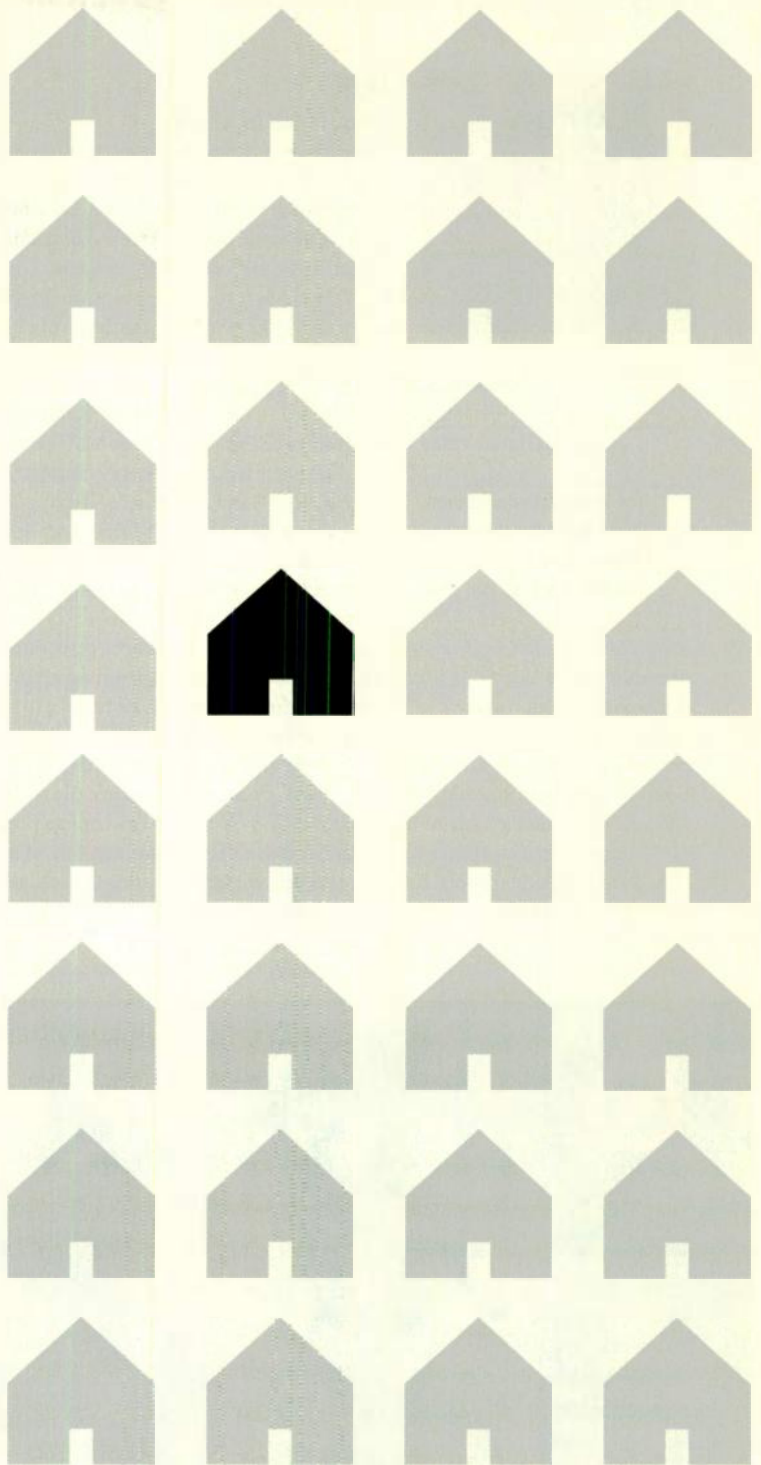
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Vigilante pop for shut-ins

R.I.Y.L.

The Magnetic Fields, Guided
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ENON

Hocus Pocus Touch And Go

Considering from whence the members of Enon came, it is pretty amazing to witness what they have become over the course of three amazing albums. Smart pop and angular art rock isn't what many would have expected from former members of the sometimes discordant and noisy Brainiac (guitarist/vocalist John Schmersal) and Blonde Redhead (bassist/vocalist Toko Yasuda, but lo and behold, *Hocus Pocus* is a magical update of Talking Heads/Gang Of Four's stop-and-start art-funk force fed into Lemonheads-esque, Pavement-y hook-laden, melodic indie pop. Like the two previous albums (*Believo!* and

High Society), *Hocus Pocus* is another schizophrenic mix of unpredictable genre-hopping fun. The album comes at you from so many different angles, it's easy to listen to straight through, like tuning into a solid set on your favorite college radio station. It's as if the band conceived of the disc as a killer mixtape, but where all the divergent boundary-hopping songs are their own. From the angular disco of "Shave" and the slacker-rocking "Storm The Gates" to the laptop pop of "Daughter In The House Of Fools" and the arty, dissonant thrust of "Utz," *Hocus Pocus* is an A.D.D. sufferer's dream album—there's no telling what the next song will sound like. >>>JEFF BROWN

Link

www.enon.tv

File Under

I love you, now change

R.I.Y.L.

The Dismemberment Plan,
Ted Leo/Pharmacists, Lou
Barlow, Cibo Matto, Papas
Fritas, the Tom Tom Club



THE HANDSOME FAMILY

Singing Bones Carrot Top

Too often lumped in with the No Depression hoi polloi, the Handsome Family make music more Western than country, high lonesome tales scattered with the bleached bones of travelers to Brett and Rennie Sparks' personal Death Valley. Stripped down, recorded as usual in their New Mexico living room and shot through with equal, and equally unexpected, doses of wit and redemption, *Singing Bones* is a paradigmatic case of "same thing, only different." But accusing the Sparks of being formulaic is a bit like moping that Shakespeare never got past iambic

pentameter and self-revealing monologues. Sure, the Handsome Family isn't genius on scale with the Bard, but the instinct is the same: life and its hardships, triumphs, losses, betrayals and revelations, and for that matter, human nature in general, are pretty predictably uniform, but express themselves in infinite variety, all ripe for writerly exploitation. The ballads on *Singing Bones* shine a light into a few new crevices of life's dark corners, accompanied by a broader musical palette than on previous albums. Most notably, "Far From Any Road" and "Gail With The Golden Hair" comes out with mariachi guns blazing and lilting, pitch-black choruses worthy of Lee Hazlewood, while opening track "The Forgotten Lake" shakes so much eerie beauty from its Spartan arrangements that the *deja vu* is more than welcome. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

www.handsomefamily.com

File Under

Catastrophe & Western

R.I.Y.L.

Lambchop, Calexico,
Jim White

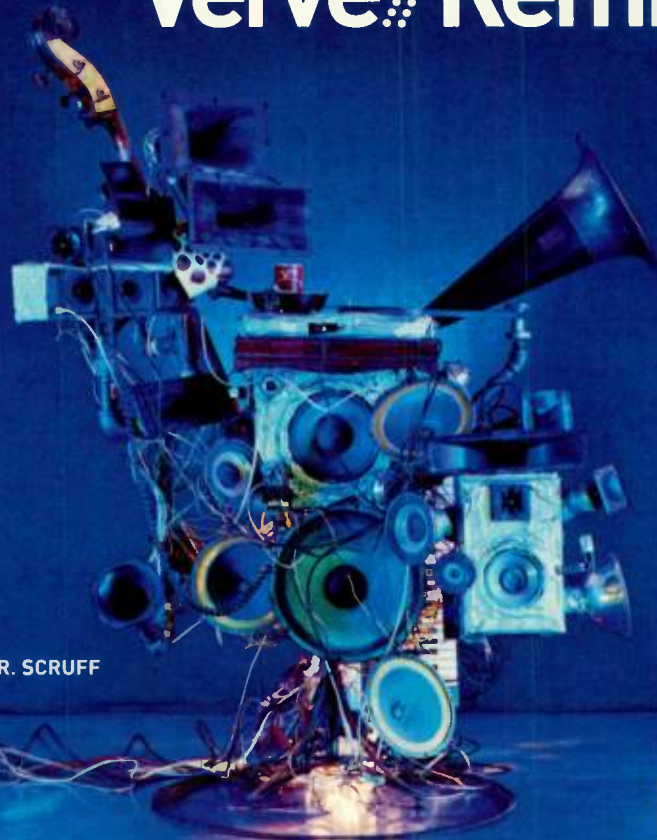


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File Under

St. Omaha's Fire

R.I.Y.L.

Bright Eyes, Brian Eno,

Roxy Music

HEAD OF FEMUR

Ringodom Or Proctor Greyday Productions

Drummers tend to be a modest lot, keeping to the shadows like the great and powerful Oz. For this reason, it's noteworthy when one sets aside the sticks to rock the mic, whether it be Phil Collins, Tommy Lee or Dave Grohl. The latest to take that step is Matt Focht, who you probably haven't heard of unless you're from Omaha, or happen to continuously type "I heart Conor Oberst" in your daily blog. When not drumming for Bright Eyes, Focht shares frontman duties with Ben Armstrong and Mike Elsener in the equally adventurous Head Of Femur.

The band's debut album is lush and orchestral, channeling influences from Lou Reed (the not-so-perfect day of "Yeoman Or Tinker") to Brian Eno, whose "The True Wheel" is covered here in stellar fashion. "Me, My Dad, My Cousin, And... Ronnie" could be Queen if you replaced fat-bottomed girls and bombast with... an accordion. "80 Steps To Jonah" sounds like a Bright Eyes confessional by way of Ziggy Stardust—violins and horns building to a gorgeous crescendo like Major Tom touching safely down in Nebraska. But ultimately, it's the spirit of Eno who serves as the album's guiding force. Lyrically ambivalent and musically daring, this is glam for the flannel and Pabst crowd. >>>ANDY DOWLING



Link

www.highllamas.com

File Under

Big hitter, the Llama

R.I.Y.L.

The Beach Boys, Burt

Bacharach, Stereolab

THE HIGH LLAMAS

Beet, Maize And Corn Drag City

If the title (a short-list of the dietary staples of the llama) is any indication, the High Llamas are getting back to basics with their seventh full-length, *Beet, Maize And Corn*. Shelving, for the time being, the electronic loops and computer manipulations that have run alongside the Llamas' consistently innovative pop musings in recent releases, Sean O'Hagan, leading Llama, has forged a record out of almost entirely acoustic instruments—banjo, upright bass, nylon-stringed guitar, the requisite vibes—even rounding out the sound with full horn and string sections. The Llamas

only make use of a wall outlet for some sparsely used electric guitar and, as liner notes admit, a "bit of synth." The result? An immensely rich and lush sound that perfectly accompanies this breezy yet structurally complex cycle of tunes. The group also eschews its recent penchant for adding instrumentals to its offerings, limiting themselves here to three non-vocal affairs, one of which, the slow-surf, psychedelic "Alexandra Line," is barely even there, clocking in at under 20 seconds. O'Hagan's songwriting has rarely been better; "The Holly Hills," filled with sweet sad sentiment, follows a meandering melody without hurry through only one refrain to reach a surprisingly satisfying and subtle finish. O'Hagan and Llamas have brought us more than the average harvest; *Beet, Maize And Corn* is well-prepared and liable to satisfy even the most discerning of appetites. >>>KARL WACHTER



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THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Befriended Badman Recording Co.

There's a small moment in "Tomorrow On The Runway," the first track from the Innocence Mission's latest, *Befriended*, when the guitar and vocals pause ever so briefly for a few soft strums of an acoustic. For most bands, such an instant would be no more important than any other. But amidst an album (indeed, a career) populated by beautiful small moments, this is yet another example of the Lancaster, Pennsylvania trio's lovely gift. Driven by vocalist and guitarist couple Karen and Don Peris, TIM brings the little things into sharper relief, both lyrically and musically,

revealing memories that can fill the heart with longing or warm it with reminiscence. Their stripped-down approach—organic, sparse and spacious yet warm and homey, as if recorded in mom's living room in front of a crackling fire—is ideal for Karen Peris' fragile little-girl vocals to wander through her husband's gentle guitar picks. This can be a tad precious, most notably on "I Never Knew You From The Sun." Her tremulous voice usually resonates with strength and vulnerability, though, gently recalling, as on "When Mac Was Swimming" and "Walking Around," what were seemingly more innocent, if no less complicated, times. *Befriended* is a welcome reminder of the small things that matter most. >>>NORM ELROD

[Link](http://www.theinnocencemission.com)

www.theinnocencemission.com

[File Under](#)

[Misty water-color memories](#)

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

[Natalie Merchant, the Sundays, Denison Witmer](#)



KING CREOSOTE

Kenny And Beth's Musakal Boat Rides Domino

In many ways, King Creosote—the latest of several members of Scotland's obscure Fence collective to strike out under a solo pseudonym—is your typical home-taper, cautiously embellishing his songs' acoustic cores with an ingenuity that outstrips his recording budget. His fuss-free, Lennon-y tunes and whatever's-at-hand approach to instrumentation recall New Zealand's Tall Dwarfs, though his affably burred voice has none of Chris Knox's confrontational edge. And his lyrics are neither better nor worse than the genre requires. For every intriguing detail ("A backward glance at mathematics/ And my tires, they had fresh air"), there's a patch of badly-withdrawn-boyishness ("You don't have to hide me, I'm invisible") or mantra-like repetition. If anything separates King Creosote from the four-track pack, it's his fresh ear for texture and rhythm. "Turps" and "So Forlorn" use mismatched keyboard-and-percussion loops to complicate the underlying songs' simply plucked or strummed patterns, while "Lonepigeon's Wineglass Finale" dispenses with melody entirely for an uneasily shifting drone that could have wandered in from a Philip Glass concert. Before a too-cute hidden track that documents a baby's first attempt to sing, most of *Kenny And Beth's Musakal Boat Rides* displays enough sonic sophistication to make its kid's-book title seem like false advertising. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

[Link](http://www.fencerecords.com/folks/kingcreosote_intro.htm)

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LFO

Sheath Warp

Leeds, England's LFO—the Warp techno groundbreakers, not the “Lyte Funky Ones” boyband—has just come out of a seven-year hiatus to release a record, and it's hard not to wonder whether it will be a “return to form.” Sorry folks, it's not in the cards—and thank God for that. Since the departure of Gez Varley, LFO consists now only of Mark Bell, who co-wrote Björk's massively popular *Homogenic*, and he veers *Sheath* more toward the smooth ambient atmospherics and complex aural structures of LFO's second LP, 1996's *Advance*, and farther away from the simplistic electro edge

that characterized 1991's *Frequencies*, whose infectious bleepy bass sound inspired the first generation of ravers to go mad all night. Of course, there are token goodies like the lead single, “Freak,” which utilizes the tired digitized voice that haunted “We Are Back” over a decade ago, and throughout *Sheath*, LFO's signature meaty bass permeates the surface of each track. But then you come to “Sleepy Chicken,” flirtatious as it is with a jazz bass riff and dreamy dulcet tones on par with Ninja Tune's best. On “Snot,” Bell perfectly emulates Human League's early minimalist synth edge, while “Premacy” sounds more like the heavily effected guitar on Durutti Column's *Another Setting* than primal dance music. So for all you 30-somethings thinking of dusting off the baggy jeans and donning a dust mask in honor of LFO's return, save yourself the trouble and stay at home with *Sheath*. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT

Link

www.warprecords.com

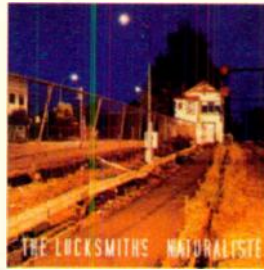
File Under

Goodbye nightclub, hello bedroom

R.I.Y.L.

LFO's *Advance*,

Monolake, Autechre



THE LUCKSMITHS

Naturaliste Drive-In

Without much fanfare, the Lucksmiths have amassed an enviable portfolio over a 10-year trek. *Naturaliste* finds the Australian trio pulling back from the numerous string and horn guest spots of 2001's *Why That Doesn't Surprise Me*, relying instead on the considerable charms of its unorthodox core setup. Tali White stands while brushing a barebones drum kit and singing lead in a sweet, guileless voice, leaving guitarist Marty Donald and bassist Mark Monnone to pen most songs and strum a jangly, hooky foundation. The stripped-down results range from the Billy Bragg-esque jaunt of “Camera Shy” to the Association-style “ba pa pa” backing vocals of the lovely “The Sandringham Line.” Economical brass touches glide into tracks like “Midweek Midmorning,” evoking images of Belle And Sebastian's *If You're Feeling Sinister* or the breezy AM hit radio of a bygone era. By delivering a particularly strong batch of infectious melodies and holding in check an occasional penchant for overly clever lyrics, *Naturaliste* rates as the trio's most consistently charming disc yet. After a decade, the Lucksmiths still sport the comfortable vibe of talented buskers playing for a small circle of friends. And if you recognize “There Is A Boy That Never Goes Out” as a play on a Smiths song title, you're in the club. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.thelucksmiths.com.au

File Under

Twee with substance

R.I.Y.L.

Billy Bragg, Belle And

Sebastian, Ladybug Transistor,

Aztec Camera, Housemartins

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NATALIE MERCHANT



Link

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File Under

Tigerlily in the wild

R.I.Y.L.

Emmylou Harris, Gillian

Welch, Mermaid Avenue

NATALIE MERCHANT

The House Carpenter's Daughter *Myth America*

Natalie Merchant has bit off the major-label hand that fed her for 18 years and is distributing her latest disc herself through her website and select retailers. *Daughter* takes advantage of this freedom by continuing the slide away from pop and toward the style she began on *Motherland*. Merchant wanted to do this project—readings of 11 folk songs—for years, and this thoughtfulness shines through in the song selection. Ranging from the expected Appalachian revival songs so recently in vogue, to the chilling union rally "Which Side Are You On,"

a jump rope chant ("Soldier Soldier"), things you might hear at Renaissance Festival ("House Carpenter") and a gem from the genre of "unfamous band that plays while you drink beer" (the Horseflies' "Sally Ann"). These songs are fleshed out with a bandful of roots musicians, particularly a generous use of banjo, in addition to bass drums and guitar. This means it's not just settin' 'round the campfire, as Merchant's pop sense is realized in lush arrangements and production. It's her voice that drives this record, however. While it's always had its unique qualities, through this material her voice reaches new heights of expressiveness and power. Merchant was just 17 when she joined 10,000 Maniacs; now nearing 40, she's still finding room to grow. >>>JOE KERN



METRIC

Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?

Everloving

Metric revolves around the core duo of guitarist James Shaw and singer Emily Haines, major contenders for the title of "Most Unlikely To Ever Settle Down." The two have moved from Canada to New York to London to L.A. and back (although not necessarily in that order, nor necessarily at the same time). But while they may be geographically unstable, their heads—when it comes to music, at least—are very much together. Haines is the perfect package of personality and prose: Her voice exudes attitude,

charisma and intelligence—a cross between a more stable Karen O. and a more enthusiastic Ladytron-ette—while her lyrics are both insightful and painfully witty. The music, meanwhile, is a highly evolved synthesis of electronics and traditional rock instrumentation, with the compositions themselves consistently taking surprising but extremely effective turns; this diverse full-length debut careens from the analog-synth-addled "Hustle Rose," to the rocking "Combat Baby" and the great hipster anthem, "The List." Further raising Metric to the crest of this latest wave of new wave is that *Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?* is basically a disc of *all* singles. An act with both talent and creativity to spare, Metric is a group that rightfully deserves to be measured on its own scale. >>>DOUG LEVY



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



MT. EGYPT

Battering The Hatches Record Collection

High-school health class films stress how drugs and alcohol impair performance, and that's true if you're Derek Jeter, but if you're looking to capture the beautifully wasted vibe of Neil Young's *Tonight's The Night*, it's best to load up on cheap wine, random barbiturates and whatever you can score on the Net from Thailand. Or maybe it's a matter of getting a couple of unembarassable musicians together and letting them ramble until something happens. Ex-skateboarder Travis Graves walks the shaky line established by Young (since permanently enshrined

Link

www.mtegypt.com

File Under

Ol' tired eyes sees a darkness

R.I.Y.L.

Bonnie "Prince" Billy,
Vic Chesnutt, Neil Young

as indie-rock institution by Vic Chesnutt and Palace-man Will Oldham) and hands in a sparse, erratically performed debut of cheap acoustic guitars, wheezing harmonica, slumbering drums, random piano accents and harmony vocals that, ahem, *redefine* harmony. From the opening title track, Graves sounds like a man calling it quits. And if he had while he was ahead, like at around 10 songs, this debut would've clicked—15 tracks (one hidden) in 37 minutes is still 15 tracks. Graves starts with captivating melodies, but like a drunk getting deeper into the bag, he loses the thread by the middle. "Chocolate Hearts" is an affecting sub-gee club singalong, followed up by "New Song," a singalong that sounds like Syd Barrett being chased down the hospital stairs. You have to get the medicinal balance right. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



OKKERVIL RIVER

Down The River Of Golden Dreams Jajaguwar

On their third full-length release, the Okkervil River boys leap gracefully away from the stormy recordings of their youth. The rawness of their old albums aided their storytelling in the past, but the irresistible slipshod sound of their sophomore release, *Don't Fall In Love With Everyone You See*, gets effectively streamlined on *Down The River Of Golden Dreams*. Case in point, when the Austin-based band rehashes "The Velocity Of Saul At The Time Of His Conversion" from their debut, *Stars Too Small To Use*, they replace the old string-snapping acoustic guitar freak-out with a melod-

Link

www.okkervilriver.com

File Under

Lyrical alt-country for poets
and sailors

R.I.Y.L.

Neil Young, Wilco, Nina Nastasia

ic solo, and carry the song at a gentler, more pensive pace. Amid meticulous orchestration, a delicately trembling Wurlitzer and carefully contained piano parts, Will Sheff's vocals make a bigger impact as they swell and stretch out of bounds. He sings the intricate stories of forlorn war criminals and unrepentant adulterers with a novelist's aplomb, and takes the old-fashioned love song to epic proportions. "Seas Too Far To Reach" is the anthem of a man who, in effort to connect with his grieving girlfriend, imagines rounding up a troupe of shipmen to set sail on the ocean on her sighs. It's a heroic and beautiful metaphor for the quest of growing up, and best of all, makes you want to sing along. >>>KARA ZUARO



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ON THE MIGHT OF PRINCES

Sirens *Revelation*

Scoff if you will at the rise of the "screamo" bands, but for those who like a little screaming while they're weeping, On The Might Of Princes' *Sirens* may be another record to add to the collection. This Long Island collective's third full-length release offers much more than screaming plus emo, however; *Sirens* entwines atmospheric instrumentals with frenzied guitars and pummeling rhythms. The vocal duties, shared between guitarists Jason Rosenthal and Lou Fontana and bassist Tommy Orza, vary from placid and vulnerable to moments of shouted

Link
www.onthemightofprinces.com

File Under
Emo-rock for bipolars
R.I.Y.L.

Thrice, Thursday,
Coheed And Cambria

intensity. And don't expect sappy emo lyrics; with unfriendly song titles such as "Go Fuck Yrself," the lines resonate with a tone of social anxiety rather than infinite sadness: "Who's gonna drink till there's nothing left/ Smoke till we turn ourselves to ash...It takes a mouth about as wide as the bags under my eyes/ With all the nightmares I'm still scared to wake." OTMOP's brooding lyrics and rough edges are refreshing in a genre that's becoming increasingly radio-friendly and slickly produced. And while most bands of the variety tend to waver ineptly between melodic whining and erratic shouting over conventional emo tunes, OTMOP manages to fuse poignant melodies with dynamic technicality. Expect them to become the underground darlings of emo-rock, even beyond the suburban shores of Long Island. >>>TRACEY JOHN



PAPAS FRITAS

Pop Has Freed Us *Minty Fresh*

Here's a question: Can an artist or group have a greatest hits album if arguably they've never had an actual hit? If you're the indie-pop outfit Papas Fritas, the answer would seem to be yes. Heck, they've had several should've, could've, would've-been hits in their slightly stellar career. One of their songs, "TV Movies" was used to promote the 1996 Super Bowl; another, "Way You Walk," was used to sell that chewing gum recommended by so many of those dentists. But that's about it, as far as mainstream recognition for Papas Fritas' better part of a decade crafting warm and whimsical lo-fi indie

Link
www.papasfritas.com

File Under
You want fries with that
R.I.Y.L.

The Apples In Stereo,
the Sugarplastic, Sebadoh,
the Pooh Sticks

pop of all stripes and sizes. In an indie alternative universe, however, Papas Fritas has loads of hits, hence, the release of *Pop Has Freed Us*. It's less an odds and sods collection and more like a boxed set on a budget, containing 8 of their most popular tracks, including the pleasantly peppy "Vertical Lives," the twee "Questions," the shimmering "Say Goodbye," the nearly chamber pop-esque "Passion Play" and the buoyant and brilliant "Hey Hey You Say," combined with several hard-to-find demos, alternate versions, covers and warm and welcome singles not heard by most, but inviting and heartfelt nonetheless. >>>JEFF BROWN

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



PAPER AIRPLANE PILOTS

The History Of Flying *Spade Kitty*

On every album, there are those nuggets that stay with you (guitar trills, background refrains and ecstatic choruses) long after you've forgotten the name of songs and the lyrics. Paper Airplane Pilots' songs are all about the nuggets—poppy-scented harmonies, blissed-out licks and dreamy, half-speed breakdowns—that keep your head swirling. When the Pilots are flying high, you'll speed easily from cloud to cloud with the chipper, mid-'60s style skiffle-pop tunes. Jeremiah Wallis and Ryan Duffy have been working together for a decade and that

experience shows in these well-honed performances. Rarely lasting more than two and a half minutes, the reverent numbers frolic in and out so quickly, some of them sound like just one long chorus. While these melodies are a lot of frothy fun, they occasionally leave you wanting for more texture and dynamics. Those arrangements that feature even a small string section show much promise, and the rollicking drinking number "Anna" illustrates that the Pilots can successfully break from a straightforward beat. Unfortunately, when the Pilots stop kicking out the singles and opt for a slow, strummy ballad, the hooks just aren't as strong. If you've worn down the grooves on your Badfinger and Big Star vinyl, you can easily slide Paper Airplane Pilots into the rotation. You'll get well-crafted pop, nothing more or less. >>>NEIL GLADSTONE

Link

www.paperairplanepilots.com

File Under

Classic pop reverence

R.I.Y.L.

Guided By Voices, Cheap Trick, The Chamber Strings



PEACHES

Fatherfucker *XL/Beggars Group*

When you meet Merrill Nisker for dinner, she's polite, easy-going and generally presents herself as a mild-mannered person. When you meet Peaches onstage or on CD, she's electroclash's punk-rock whore, brandishing her crotch in one hand and yelling out, "Are the motherfuckers ready for the fatherfuckers?!" over a lone Roland Groovebox. Funny thing is, Nisker and Peaches look an awful lot alike, which doesn't even beg the question, *is this just an act?* *Fatherfucker*, Peaches' second LP, is ingenious because its raw punk sound so perfectly masks the

Link

www.peachesrocks.com

File Under

Crotchrock

R.I.Y.L.

Le Tigre, Sex Pistols, Fischerspooner, Kid 606

fact that it's all an act, that Nisker just as well could be thinking about her stock portfolio as she demands all the guys and girls to "shake yer dicks, shake yer tits" on "Shake Yer Dix." And the act is total. She enlists punk icon Iggy Pop on the punchy "Kick It" to ratchet up the adrenaline of her lone guitar and drum machine, rides samples of Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation" like a horny cowboy on "I Don't Give A..." and screams her head off through the only two lyrics in "Rock 'N' Roll." Unlike other electroclash artists Fischerspooner and Adult, who both mix and sometimes confuse fashion with cutting-edge music performance, Peaches brandishes a whip-smart attitude that resonates with the some of the most guttural, offensive, jangling rawk ever produced. >>>HEATH K. HIGNITT

METRIC

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QUASI

Hot Shit Touch And Go

Sam Coomes has earned his rep as rock's cuddliest misanthrope. The long-time Elliott Smith cohort's sardonic lyrics and scruffy multi-instrumental talents have fueled some great albums, peaking with Quasi's 1998 touchstone *Featuring "Birds."* On recent outings, however, Coomes' flagging enthusiasm was audible. *Hot Shit* marks a relaunch of sorts, as Quasi has officially retired the Roxichord organ that defined much of the duo's sound but increasingly served as stylistic shackles (their vintage dilapidated model actually died a while back, but the duo soldiered on with a modern facsimile). Quasi's

revamped assault sounds closer to Coomes' suddenly seminal late-'80s band the Donner Party than to their own catalog. Coomes tilts the balance toward guitar, from which he wrings gnarled country-blues riffs that betray his recent low-profile solo turn as the Blues Goblins. He also plays a mean piano, frequently overdubbing the two to create even more frenzy as on "Seven Years Gone," which resembles a ferocious *Plastic Ono Band* outtake. The contributions of drummer (and ex-spouse) Janet Weiss can't be overstated. Her rock-solid drumming imposes needed order on a highly chaotic record, and her icy, dead-on harmonies support the notion that Sleater-Kinney underutilizes her talents. Coomes may be no more pissed off or disenchanting than ever, but he's sure interested in railing about it again. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.quasi2x2.com

File Under

That ex-husband and wife roots-rock stuff

R.I.Y.L.

The Grifters, The White Stripes, Doug Martsch, the Blues Goblins



RANCID

Indestructible Hellcat

It's hard to make out too many actual English words from the hurried mess of guttural sounds Rancid frontman Tim Armstrong spews between the sing-along choruses of "Indestructible," the title track of the East Bay foursome's sixth album in 12 years. Like most Rancid tunes, "Indestructible" is written and sung in a language known as punk rawk, an angry, street-toughened derivative of English originated by the likes of the late Joe Strummer back when the Clash were the only band that mattered.

Link

www.rancidrancid.com

File Under

Pretty in punk

R.I.Y.L.

The Clash, the Exploited, Operation Ivy

Indeed, to insure credit's given where it's due, Armstrong name checks both the late Joey Ramone and late Clash frontman Joe Strummer (which he rhymes with "drummer") before the tune is over. And from there, Rancid are off and running in the same direction they've been headed since day one, offering a loud, fast, raucous version of punk that owes equal amounts to the class of '77 Brits and the American hardcore underground of the early-to-mid-'80s. Unlike 2001's *Rancid*, which aimed to retrench Rancid in that all-ages hardcore scene, *Indestructible* allows for more variety, from the "Rudy Can't Fail" ska of "Red Hot Moon" to the organ-laced, Zydeco-flavored rhythms of "Memphis" to the Western-tinged chord progressions of "Django." It's all in the name of punk rock, with Armstrong continually offering his earnest love for the music that saved his life. Or, as he puts it on *Indestructible*, "Music has been our savior since day one," by which he means "punk rock." >>>MATT ASHARE

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THE RAPTURE

Echoes DFA/Strummer/Universal

Considering the year-plus stretch between the completion of the Rapture's first official full-length album and its release, you may be wondering if the very now sound of the well-worn single, "House Of Jealous Lovers," will sound dated on *Echoes*. The Rapture's response to this question is simple: Shut up and dance. The bar for this disc was set appropriately high with the brilliant post-punk dance-rock mashup of "Jealous Lovers," but the band vaults straight over it with the rest of the disc's songs. From the jazz-induced skronk that closes out the

storming "Heaven" to the shattered lilt of "Open Up Your Heart," the band goes well beyond its previous releases, displaying a diversity that will floor and/or confuse anyone expecting a non-stop beat-and-wail fest. If there's any downside, it's that when bassist Mattie Safer takes over vocal duties, as on the disco-fresh "Sister Savior," the group loses one of the chief elements that makes it so appealing: frontman Luke Jenner's beautifully fractured whine of a voice. Jenner echoes John Lennon (lyrically) and Robert Smith (vocally) on "Love Is All," and the album's closer, "Infatuation," sounds like Radiohead, of all things. The "echoes" at work here, you see, are rebounding all over the place—don't even bother trying to pin them down. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.therapturemusic.com

File Under

Apocalypse, wow

R.I.Y.L.

The Cure, Gang Of Four,

Moving Units



MATTHEW RYAN

Regret Over The Wires Hybrid

Matthew Ryan's last label release, *Concussion*, was a dark, haunting collection of songs, tracked in truly minimalist fashion. It was one of the most moving and emotionally complex albums to hit the racks in 2001, and it firmly established Ryan as a singer/songwriter of great depth. *Regret Over The Wires* finds Ryan taking a different tack, musically. The tunes on *Regret* are much more fleshed-out in terms of their arrangements. It isn't that Ryan has suddenly succumbed to pop melodicism with this album, but "Return To Me," "Come Home" and "I

Can't Steal You" are songs that, conceivably, could find their way to radio. Likewise, the emotional content of the material on *Regret* is not as harrowing as *Concussion*, though it's equally arresting. The album title is more than a clue: Ryan's latest batch of songs are filled with expressions of regret and loss. In that sense, his work here is very contemplative. After all, what is regret but a product of reflection, which can lead to the sort of disillusioned ruminations that characterize the twang-rich "Nails" and the rock tune "Come Home." *Regret Over The Wires* is such a well-done, artistically complete record, that it's easy to appreciate it as a watershed project, as an album that synthesizes everything Ryan has attempted up to this point. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link

www.matthewryanonline.com

File Under

No emotional rescue

R.I.Y.L.

Malcolm Holcombe, Lucinda

Williams, Tom Waits



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SCOUT

This Soft Life ModMusic

Willful or otherwise, getting the major-label stint out of the way early (with *Someplace Would Be Nice*, their 1998 Chrysalis debut) was the best thing that could happen to NYC popsmiths Scout. Their 1999 LP, *Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time* (ModMusic) purged any residual sense of defeat alongside singer/guitarist/songwriter Ashen Keilyn's love bummers; four years of unencumbered rocking (and some personnel switcheroos) later, *This Soft Life* is all realized identity and potential. Not in the least unaware, Scout struts its straight-no-qualifier guitar-pop stuff

throughout the album's 12-track duration, lending bite to "Before You," bounce to the breezy "Here's The Thing" and passive-aggressive bile to the low-sodium Veruca Salty "Never Never." But since good pop is always at least a little sad, they retain the depressive, lovelorn air that has become something of a hallmark for them. Hence "Here Come The Waterworks" and "Fly On The Window" are included to sate the saddies, as well as an irony-free overhaul of April Wine's proto-power ballad, "Just Between You And Me" (replete with backwards guitar and ambient noise). Truly, Scout's career path—backward as it may appear—is right for them and *This Soft Life* would be an early magnum opus, were it not apparent this band will only get better. >>>RANDY HARWARD

Link

www.scoutisaband.com

File Under

Scout gets the strains out

R.I.Y.L.

Liz Phair, the Replacements,
Blake Babies

DRYDEN

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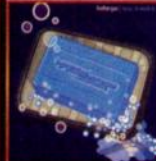


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SEX MOB

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Steven Bernstein, wielding an alternately beastly and beautiful braying slide trumpet, has led his fearless Sex Mob on inspired pillages of familiarities by Prince, the Rolling Stones, Duke Ellington, the Grateful Dead, Nirvana, two ex-Beatles, and in 2001, James Bond film music. Bernstein, alto saxophonist Briggan Krauss, bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Kenny Wollesen this time unveil a collection of interrelated original compositions, along with a demented take on "Blue Danube." Joined by free-jazz trombonist Roswell Rudd, Lounge Lizards clarinetist Doug Wieselman, keyboardist Peter Apfelbaum and guitarist David Tronzo, among others, the quartet blasts through a program best categorized as unvarnished jazz Americana. The woozy title track feels like the wee hours of the morning at a backwoods juke joint, when only the regulars are left, decompressing from the night's drunken euphoria and slipping into a chill-out mode: Horns lazily lean into bluesy long tones, the guitarist peals out wah-wah skronk and the rhythm section drops seriously laid-back grooves, with warm Fender Rhodes soaking through everything. Elsewhere, there's a New Orleans street band going its own twisted way ("Entrance Music," "Exit Music"), a trance dance whipped into a frenzy by hateful band nerds ("Mothra"), a guttural, human-sounding trombone preaching a sermon to the converted ("Call To Freaks") and beboppers gone loopy ("Conk Buster"). Scary-good stuff. >>>PHILIP BOOTH

Link

www.ropeadope.com

File Under

Hornzapoppin' hoodoo

R.I.Y.L.

Art Ensemble Of Chicago,
World Saxophone Quartet,
Dirty Dozen Brass Band



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SOUNDTRAK

Soundtrak Ace Fu

Between hanging out with politicians and a Gizmo-like fear of bright light (could we please see you without the sunglasses?) people seem to have forgotten that Bono is also in a darned fine band. Jorge Gonzalez, frontman for NYC's Soundtrak, is not one of those people. Soundtrak's self-titled debut aspires to *Joshua Tree*-era U2, from Gonzalez's rich, Bono-esque vocals to the anthemic drive of the guitars. At some points, the band even reaches these lofty heights. "In Time" is all sunshine and open roads—far more Ventura Highway than the concrete

and crush of the Bowery. On "Let Go," Soundtrak channel their inner Remy Zero for a pretty pop anthem destined to be the theme song to some show on the WB. But the album closer, "Curtains," is the stand-out cut. Here, Gonzalez questions his fall from grace and a fading love, crooning desperately over breakbeat drums, a sexy New Order bassline and guitars that shimmer like cartwheeling stars in a Van Gogh painting. The trouble is that the album ends just as the band is discovering its swagger, clocking in at an EP-worthy 22 minutes). So while this debut is often engaging, you can't help wishing they had spent more time searching out their angel of Harlem. >>>ANDY DOWLING

Link

www.soundtraktheband.com

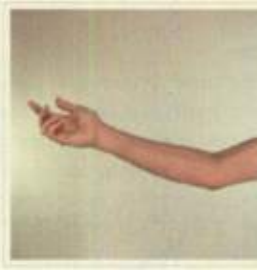
File Under

Soundtrak to a short film

R.I.Y.L.

Remy Zero, mid-period U2,

Phantom Planet



SPIRITUALIZED

Amazing Grace Spaceman/Sanctuary

By Spiritualized standards, *Amazing Grace* is a stripped-down, understated affair. But this is a band whose last album, 2001's *Let It Come Down*, boasted literally 100 contributors—leader Jason Pierce (a.k.a. J. Spaceman) is still writing dense, epic rockers and heavy, stately ballads. Pierce recorded *Amazing Grace* relatively quickly with his current touring quintet and added minimal overdubs, most obviously on the instrumental "The Power And The Glory," which features avant-jazz horn players Evan Parker and Kenny Wheeler, and on "Lord Let It Rain On Me," with its echoing chorus of female

gospel vocals. *Amazing Grace* proves that less can be just as much, since there's little appreciable loss in grandeur and power here, even when Pierce walks familiar paths, as on the screeching "The Little Life Of Mine" and the soulful "Lay It Down Slow," which bookend the album. Still, "She Kissed Me (It Felt Like A Hit)," aside from inverting the title of an old Carole King/Gerry Goffin song, exudes the sort of pure manic energy that never grows stale, and "Cheapster" cops the cadence of Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited" and sets it to a thrilling, saturated organ-and-feedback romp. *Amazing Grace* may not be the startling masterwork that was *Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space*, but still pretty amazing. >>>STEVE KLUNGE

Link

www.spiritualized.com

File Under

The gospel according to

Spaceman

R.I.Y.L.

Primal Scream, Black Rebel

Motorcycle Club, Spacemen 3



Rocky Votolato Suicide Medicine

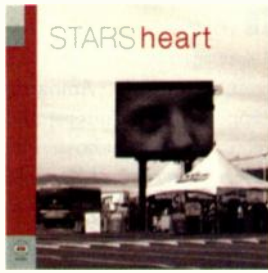
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STARS

Heart Arts & Crafts

A recap of the most interesting info about Montreal twee-pop outfit Stars prior to the release of new album *Heart* would undoubtedly be dominated by the fact that they do a pretty okay cover of the Smiths' "This Charming Man" and that frontman Torquil Campbell was once featured in an episode of *Sex And The City*. Now that *Heart* is available for purchase by buzz-hungry American aesthetes, following a warm reception in England earlier this year, Stars can add to that list their handy employment of classic synth-pop's most useful elements—instantly mem-

orable melodies, insistently grooving rhythms, stylishly extravagant haircuts—in their self-proclaimed mission to bring a "light, calm and voluptuous" sensibility to our battered world. When the quartet are at their best on *Heart* they resemble the Magnetic Fields or Pet Shop Boys, free of those groups' hard-won cynicism. "I can say what you want me to... I can do all the things you do," singer Amy Millan assures a lover in the title track, not setting him up for a fall but outlining the depth of her devotion. In "Death To Death" the band gets a little darker, suggesting a less trashy Garbage, but their delicacy persists in Campbell's breathy croon. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

Link

www.starsdeluxe.net

File Under

Electric effervescence

R.I.Y.L.

Pet Shop Boys, the Aluminum Group, the Magnetic Fields



STYLES OF BEYOND

Megadef SpyTech

Afficionados of feel-good indie-hop no doubt felt the pea under the mattress in 2001 when they got a listen to the Beatnuts' *Take It Or Squeeze It*. Sure it had all the inventive production and bling-free life tales that the conscious police fans of Jurassic 5 and the Roots could vibe to, but at times it came off as too hood-centric and graphic for the backpackers trying to rock words in the burbs. *Megadef*, the sophomore release from Styles Of Beyond emcees Tak and Ryu, takes that spirit and raises the intensity on both sides of the equation. Proof of their modus operandi comes on

Link

www.spytechrecords.com

File Under

Pissed-off SOB's

R.I.Y.L.

Beatnuts, Dilated Peoples, Kool Keith, Dead Prez

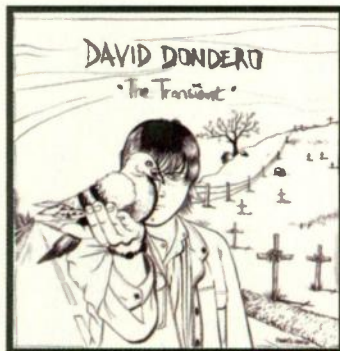
the early and short "Interlude" where a cockney accent declares, "We aren't nice boys. We're fucking nasty little bastards," followed by "Be Your Dog," which uses the grimy guitar line and chorus from the Stooges classic of (almost) the same name as its musical framework. Left-field found sounds and samples abound—be it a country blues crooner on "Playin With Fire" or an "awesome" Chris Farley clip—but they never steal attention from the duo's first-rate wordplay on the bright single "Mr. Brown" or the darker cuts that dominate the album. A crescendo comes at the end on a pair of melodically disparate tracks: "Superstars" grafts a metal guitar riff on full-speed raps, while "Eurobiks" features a glammy electro-dance beat, a groupie diva fawning, "That's a rad song" and Tak boasting, "I'm not saying it's not, bitch." Word. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

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David Dondero | THE TRANSIENT

"An eloquent, endearing, and memorable record" - CMJ

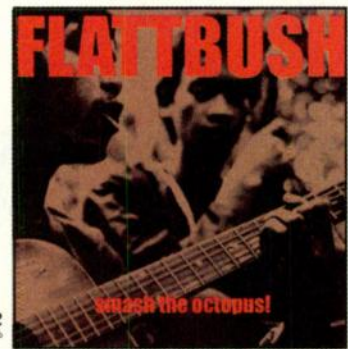
"David Dondero is in a class of crazies only available in the U.S." - La Opinion de Magala/Spain



Oranger | SHUTDOWN THE SUN

San Francisco's own modern psych-pop troubadours...the songwriting is crystal clear, their tunes propulsive and catchy.

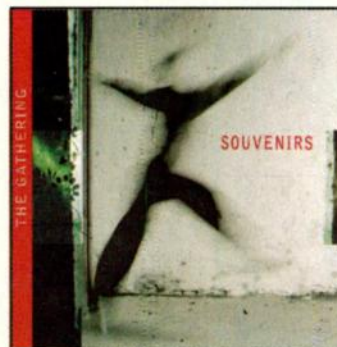
Jacqueline RECORDS



Flatbush | SMASH THE OCTOPUS

Politically charged lyrics sung in a mixture of English and Tagalog... extremely fast and chaotic bursts of music and sound.... totally exciting and new.

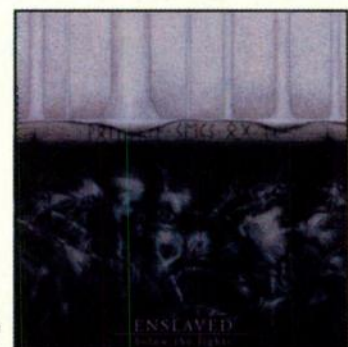
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Enslaved | BELOW THE LIGHTS

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The End Records





SWELL

Whenever You're Ready *Beggars Banquet*

Guiding force David Freel has been Swell's sole constant since the San Francisco band's 1989 inception. Full band efforts like 1997's *Too Many Days Without Thinking* hinted at indie-rock catharsis, but by 2001's sparser *Everybody Wants To Know*, Freel was the lone contributor. *Whenever You're Ready* returns Swell to its original configuration as a duo, pulling drummer Sean Kirkpatrick back into the fold. Kirkpatrick's kinetic, off-kilter percussion lent a unique vibe to Swell's early work, and portions of *Whenever You're Ready* rekindle that spark. Freel con-

tributes clipped figures of (mostly acoustic) guitar that essentially serve as another layer of percussion, then superimposes samples of found sounds that meld the human and synthetic in a manner recalling Grandaddy. Freel sings and plays just behind the beat as if in a THC-fueled delay, making even skittering tracks like "Say Goodbye" seem languid. The standout "Next To Nothing" pulls out all the stops, adding a simple organ pattern as Freel mumbles "I tried faith/ Just to see how it looked next to nothing," summarizing his nihilistic worldview on a record where religion repeatedly rears its head. Too many of its 13 tracks outstay their welcome, and stretches of mid-tempo drones fail to sustain interest through 66 minutes, but *Whenever You're Ready* houses enough winners to rate a decent addition to an already Swell story. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

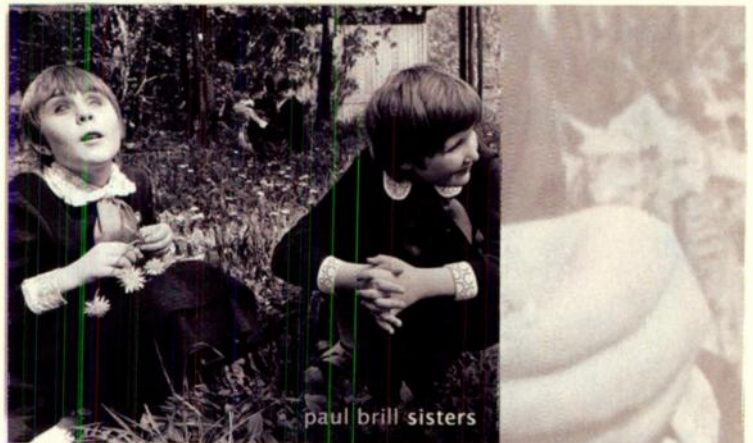
www.beggars.com/us

File Under

THC-fueled indie rock

R.I.Y.L.

Stephen Malkmus, Grandaddy, Sebadoh, Smog



paul brill sisters

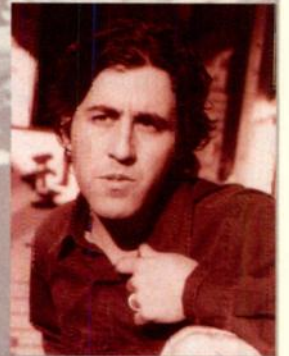
paul brill sisters

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[An] excellent effort..." **Harp**

"Exquisite..." **Mojo**

"For those wondering, 'Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?' he's right here..." **Billboard**

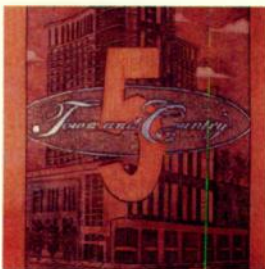


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TOWN AND COUNTRY

5 *Thrill Jockey*

Town And Country have crossed over into the world of true abstract musicianship; thankfully they've managed to bring their delicate and often fleeting melodic sense along for the ride. Lengthy sections of 5 are reminiscent of an orchestra tuning up, but to dismiss the album as a pastiche of random sounds would be like focusing on only a few square inches of a Jackson Pollock painting. The lengthy tracks, all recorded live and played on an array of acoustic instruments, are stripped-down versions of the textural experiments being perpetrated by acts

like Mogwai and their post-rock brethren. Without feedback and technical manipulation to rely on, however, T&C are forced to dig a little deeper into their bag of sonorous tricks. Noise disconcertingly rains down in sheets on a handful of tracks, only to have hints of rhythmic bubble up from the puddles a few minutes in. In other moments, the quartet rest comfortably on the haunting strains of a harmonium or clarinet for a spell before slowly wandering through a melody that threatens to fall apart if you listen too hard. Town And Country strike boldly away from the beaten path of instrumental rock, and judging by their music, they've found a more peaceful place in which to create. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

Link

www.thrilljockey.com

File Under

Bucolic post-rock

R.I.Y.L.

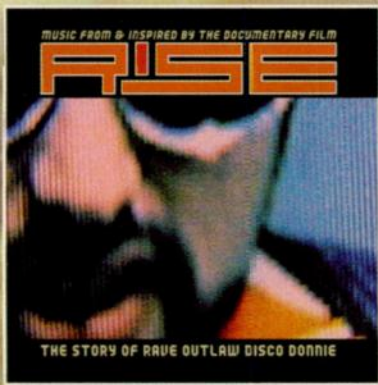
Tortoise, John Cale, Godspeed You! Black Emperor

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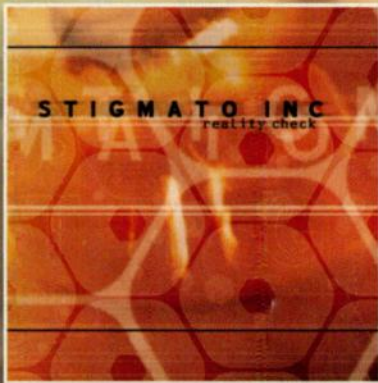
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RISE

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UTR-1001



STIGMATO INC reality check



Kaskade and Rithma remixes of "Strive To Be Happy" also available on 12" vinyl.

UTR-1002

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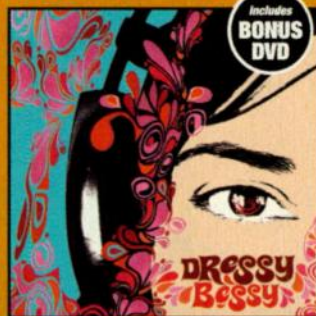
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VUE

Down For Whatever RCA

There's a reason the San Franciscans in Vue have been tagged as a left-coast answer to the Strokes by every music publication from here to, well, everywhere. Most of that not completely invalid comparison has more to do with their ultra-now fashion acumen than the quintet's music, which actually bears a much stronger similarity to the downtown groove of the dearly disbanded New Yorkers in Jonathan Fire*Eater. *Down For Whatever* doesn't reveal its charms all at once, though, and begins with the menacing stay-away warning of "She's Sweet,"

launched by Rafael Orlin's hollow barrel drums and propelled by guitarist/vocalist Rex Shelverton singing, "Quarantine your body, my love/ And there'll be no money tomorrow." The mood lightens considerably from then on, as Jessica Graves' keyboards float more than they pound, whether on lolling ballads like "Pretty Shapes" or the party vibe of the title track. The move to major label RCA (probably not coincidentally also home to the Strokes) after releases on Sub Pop allowed the band once known as the Audience to flesh out what was already a pretty saleable rock sound, but producer Nick Launay (the Posies, Semisonic) was careful to not buff away the rough edges that give Vue its identity, enough so that the band can hopefully end the comparisons to its Big Apple labelmates sooner rather than later. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

www.thevue.com

File Under

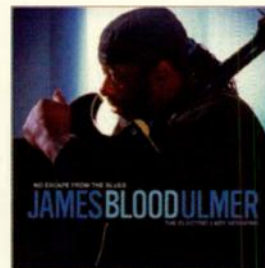
Style and substance

R.I.Y.L.

The Libertines, the Strokes, Jonathan Fire*Eater

JAMES BLOOD ULMER

No Escape From The Blues: The Electric Lady Sessions Hyena



James Blood Ulmer, who made his reputation as an avant-jazz guitarist with plenty of rock fire in his harmelodics, has obviously reconnected with the blues in a big way. First there was 2001's *Memphis Blood: The Sun Sessions*, which was as greasy as late-night barbeque. Vernon Reid is again in the producer's chair for *No Escape From The Blues: The Electric Lady Sessions*, giving Ulmer and his band plenty of freedom to just blow. And blow they do. Harmonica player David Barnes seems to channel the ghost of Little Walter, while on "Come On" Ulmer seems to have a direct line to Hendrix. Johnny Copeland's "Ghetto Child" burns on a tight fuse, where Ulmer's voice isn't so much cracked as broken and Scotch-taped back together. Fiddler Charlie Burnham is equally iconoclastic, making his violin sound like anything but itself, and the rhythm section swings. On his two solo cuts (including his classic "Are You Glad To Be In America?") Ulmer brings out the textures in the music, while the title cut and a joyous version of "Blues Had A Baby And Named It Rock & Roll" come from a surreal South Side bar where Muddy Waters has studied Ornette Coleman. And that's not even mentioning the Indian-inflected "Trouble In Mind." The blues today doesn't get much better than this. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.hyenarecords.com

File Under

Strange blue days

R.I.Y.L.

Muddy Waters, Ornette Coleman, Jimi Hendrix

while on "Come On" Ulmer seems to have a direct line to Hendrix. Johnny Copeland's "Ghetto Child" burns on a tight fuse, where Ulmer's voice isn't so much cracked as broken and Scotch-taped back together. Fiddler Charlie Burnham is equally iconoclastic, making his violin sound like anything but itself, and the rhythm section swings. On his two solo cuts (including his classic "Are You Glad To Be In America?") Ulmer brings out the textures in the music, while the title cut and a joyous version of "Blues Had A Baby And Named It Rock & Roll" come from a surreal South Side bar where Muddy Waters has studied Ornette Coleman. And that's not even mentioning the Indian-inflected "Trouble In Mind." The blues today doesn't get much better than this. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

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

CMJ

NEW MUSIC REPORT

TOP 75

#1 DANDY WARHOLS WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE CAPITOL

WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE THE DANDY WARHOLS



1 THE DANDY WARHOLS <i>Welcome To The Monkey House</i> Capitol	26 SUPERCHUNK <i>Cup Of Sand</i> Merge	51 MELT-BANANA <i>Cell Shape</i> A-Zap
2 WEEN <i>Quebec</i> Sanctuary	27 ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES <i>Take A Break</i> Fat Wreck Chords	52 FAIRWEATHER <i>Lunatic</i> Equal Vision
3 SUPER FURRY ANIMALS <i>Phantom Power</i> XL/Beggars Group	28 THE APPESEED CAST <i>Two Conversations</i> Tiger Style	53 TORA TORA TORRANCE <i>A Cynic's Nightmare</i> The Militia Group
4 GUIDED BY VOICES <i>Earthquake</i> Glue Matador	29 TEN BENSON <i>Benson Burner</i> Jetset	54 MADLIB <i>Shades Of Blue</i> Madlib Invadas Blue Note Blue Note
5 RADIOHEAD <i>Hail To The Thief</i> Capitol	30 THE CLIENTELE <i>The Violet Hour</i> Merge	55 ROBERT RANDOLPH AND THE FAMILY BAND <i>Unclassified</i> Warner Bros.
6 BJORK <i>Live Box 1992-2002</i> One Little Indian	31 DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL <i>A Mark, A Mission, A Brand, A Scar</i> Vagrant	56 TRICKY <i>Vulnerable</i> Sanctuary
7 CONSTANTINES <i>Shine A Light</i> Sub Pop	32 ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND <i>Summer Of '98</i> Magic Marker	57 GLASSEATER <i>Everything Is Beautiful When You Don't Look Down</i> Victory
8 BLACK BOX RECORDER <i>Passionaria</i> One Little Indian	33 HEAD OF FEMUR <i>Ringdorn Or Proctor</i> Greyday	58 A NORTHERN CHORUS <i>Spirit Flags</i> Sonic Unyon
9 THRICE <i>The Artist In The Ambulance</i> Island	34 LEAVES <i>Breathe</i> DreamWorks	59 JUANA MOLINA <i>Securdo</i> Domino
10 MANDO DIAO <i>Bring 'Em In</i> Mute	35 THE HUSBANDS <i>Introducing The Sounds Of The Husbands</i> Swami	60 THE KILLS <i>Fred My Little Brain</i> (EP) Sanctuary
11 MOGWAI <i>Happy Songs For Happy People</i> Matador	36 FIREWATER <i>The Man On The Burning Tightrope</i> Jetset	61 SOUNDTRACK <i>Masked And Anonymous</i> Columbia
12 JANE'S ADDICTION <i>Stays</i> Capitol	37 THE SLEEPY JACKSON <i>Lovers</i> Astralwerks	62 MIRAH YOM TOV ZEITLYN, GINGER BROOKS TAKAHASHI AND FRIENDS <i>Sung</i> K
13 BEULAH <i>Yoko</i> Velocette	38 SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER <i>Olden</i> Jetset	63 VARIOUS ARTISTS <i>Survive And Advance: Volume 3</i> Merge
14 METRIC <i>Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?</i> Everloving	39 MICHAEL FRANTI AND SPEARHEAD <i>Everyone Deserves Music</i> Boo Boo Wax/Parlophone	64 CONSONANT <i>Love And Affection</i> Fenway
15 BROADCAST <i>Haha</i> Sound Warp	40 BEN LEE <i>Hey You, Yes You</i> Red Ink/F2	65 MILLIONAIRE <i>Outsiders</i> The Simian Flock [PIAS] America
16 FIRESIDE <i>Get Shot</i> V2/Starracks	41 THE PASTELS <i>The Last Great Wilderness</i> Geographic	66 MICHAEL YONKERS BAND <i>Micro-miniature Love</i> Sub Pop
17 JOSH ROUSE <i>1972</i> Rykodisc	42 THE HIGH DIALS <i>A New Devotion</i> Rainbow Quartz	67 BARDO POND <i>On The Ellipse</i> ATP
18 BRASSY <i>Gettin' Wise</i> Beggars Group/Wiiiija	43 PEPE DELUXE <i>Beatitude</i> Emperor Norton	68 MOSQUITOS <i>Mosquitos</i> Bar/None
19 STEREOPHONICS <i>You Gotta Go There To Come Back</i> V2	44 YEAR OF THE RABBIT <i>Year Of The Rabbit</i> Elektra	69 PAINT IT BLACK <i>CVA</i> Jade Tree
20 POLYSICS <i>[New]</i> Asian Man	45 BEAR VS. SHARK <i>Right Now You're In The Best Of Hands...</i> Equal Vision	70 BRAND NEW <i>Leja En Endu</i> Triple Crown/Razor And Tie
21 THE MARS VOLTA <i>De-Loused In The Comatorium</i> GSL/Strummer/Universal	46 S.T.U.N. <i>Evolution Of Energy</i> Interscope/Geffen	71 SENOR COCONUT <i>Fiesta Songs</i> Emperor Norton
22 YELLOWCARD <i>Ocean Avenue</i> Capitol	47 KINGS OF LEON <i>Youth And Young Manhood</i> RCA	72 TV ON THE RADIO <i>Young Liers</i> Touch And Go
23 PUFFY AMIYUMI <i>Nice</i> Bar/None	48 GRANDDADDY <i>Sunday Will/V2</i>	73 OX <i>Dust Bowl Revival</i> Self-Released
24 FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE <i>Welcome Interstate Managers</i> S-Curve/Virgin	49 GUSTER <i>Keep It Together</i> Palm/Reprise	74 YEAH YEAH YEAHS <i>Fever To Tell</i> Interscope
25 THE NEW AMSTERDAMS <i>Worse For Wear</i> Vagrant	50 THE LOCUST <i>Plague Soundscapes</i> Anti-/Epitaph	75 KRAFTWERK <i>Tou: De France</i> Soundtracks Astralwerks

5 YEARS AGO

BEASTIE BOYS *Hello Nasty* (Grand Royal/Capitol)
LIZ PHAIR *Whitechocolatespaceegg* (Matador/Capitol)
SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS *Perennial Favorites* (Mammoth)
BOB MOULD *The Last Dog And Pony Show* (GM/Rykodisc)
RASPUTINA *How We Quit The Forest* (Columbia)

10 YEARS AGO

SMASHING PUMPKINS *Siamese Dream* (Virgin)
JULIANA HATFIELD THREE *Become What You Are* (Mammoth/Atlantic)
BREEDERS *Last Splash* 4AD/Elektra
URGE OVERKILL *Saturation* (Geffen)
MATTHEW SWEET *Altered Beast* (Zoo)

HIP-HOP TOP 10

1	MADLIB Shades Of Blue: Madlib Invades Blue Note Blue Note
2	ONRY OZZBORN The Grey Area One Drop
3	BROTHER ALI Shadows Of The Sun Rhymesayers
4	LISTENER Whispermoon Mush
5	PUSH BUTTON OBJECTS Ghetto Blaster Chocolate Industries
6	ACEYALONE Love And Hate Red Urban
7	GANG STARR The Ownerz Noo Trybe/Virgin
8	VARIOUS ARTISTS Grand Theft Auto Vice City O.S.T., Volume 5 Epic
9	UGLY DUCKLING Taste The Secret Emperor Norton
10	AKROBATIK Balance Coup d'Etat



#1 HIP-HOP
MADLIB
SHADES OF BLUE: MADLIB INVADES BLUE NOTE BLUE NOTE

LOUD ROCK TOP 10

1	ARCH ENEMY Anthems Of Rebellion Century Media
2	SUPERJOINT RITUAL A Lethal Dose Of American Hatred Sanctuary
3	POISON THE WELL You Come Before You Velvet Hammer/Atlantic
4	NEVERMORE Enemies Of Reality Century Media
5	AS I LAY DYING Frail Words Collapse Metal Blade
6	GOATWHORE Funeral Dirge For The Rotting Sun Rotten
7	THRICE The Artist In The Ambulance Island
8	EXHUMED Anatomy Is Destiny Relapse
9	THE BLEED Pass The Flask Fiddler/MCA
10	MISERY INDEX Retaliate Nuclear Blast



#1 LOUD ROCK
ARCH ENEMY
ANTHEMS OF REBELLION CENTURY MEDIA



#1 RETAIL
VARIOUS ARTISTS
NEPTUNES PRESENT...CLONES STAR TRAK/ARISTA

RETAIL TOP 25

1	VARIOUS ARTISTS Neptunes Present...Clones Star Trak/Arista
2	NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE Greendale Reprise
3	RANCID Indestructible Hellcat
4	T.I. Trap Muzik Atlantic
5	DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL A Mark, A Mission, A Brand, A Scar Vagrant
6	SOUNDTRACK Bad Boys II Bad Boy Entertainment
7	JUELZ SANTANA From Me To U Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
8	THE DANDY WARHOLS Welcome To The Monkey House Capitol
9	NEIL YOUNG On The Beach Warner Bros.
10	COLDPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol
11	KINGS OF LEON Youth And Young Manhood RCA
12	GUIDED BY VOICES Earthquake Glue Matador
13	EVANESCENCE Fallen Wind-Up
14	RADIOHEAD Hail To The Thief Capitol
15	BEYONCE Dangerously In Love Columbia
16	THE WHITE STRIPES Elephant Third Man/V2
17	JANE'S ADDICTION Strays Capitol
18	STATE PROPERTY The Chain Gang Vol. II Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
19	LOS LONELY BOYS Los Lonely Boys OR
20	CHINGY Jackpot Capitol
21	BOW WOW Unleashed Sony Music
22	THE BLACK EYED PEAS Elephunk A&M
23	50 CENT Get Rich Or Die Trying Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
24	JACK JOHNSON On And On Moonshine Conspiracy/Universal
25	SOUNDTRACK Freddy Vs. Jason Roadrunner

RPM TOP 10

1	PEPE DELUXE Beatitude Emperor Norton
2	VARIOUS ARTISTS !K7 150 !K7
3	LATIN PROJECT Nueva Musica Electric Monkey
4	BT Emotional Technology Nettwerk America
5	VERVE REMIXED 2 Verve Remixed 2 Verve
6	BONOBO Dial M For Monkey Ninja Tune
7	SI BEGG Director's Cut Novamute/Mute
8	VICTOR CALDERONE Resonate Statra
9	KRAFTWERK Tour De France Soundtracks Astralwerks
10	DANNY HOWELLS 24:7 Global Underground

JAZZ TOP 10

1	KEITH JARRETT/GARY PEACOCK/JACK DEJOHNETTE Up For It ECM
2	JAVON JACKSON Easy Does It Palmetto
3	WILLIAM PARKER VIOLIN TRIO Scrapbook Thirsty Ear
4	CYRUS CHESTNUT You Are My Sunshine Warner Bros.
5	GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA New York, New Sound Mack Avenue
6	TERELL STAFFORD New Beginnings Maxjazz
7	KENNY BURRELL Blue Muse Concord
8	SUNNA GUNNLAUGS QUARTET Live In Europe Sunny Sky
9	JACO PASTORIUS BIG BAND Word Of Mouth Revisited Heads Up
10	MCCOY TYNER Land Of Giants Telarc

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 APRIL MARCH Triggers *Pias*
 ATMOSPHERE Seven's Travels *Epitaph*
 CHRIS BROKAW Wandering As Water *Return To Sender*
 THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS The Singles 93-03 *Astralwerks*
 COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA America's #1 Band *Columbia-Legacy Jazz*
 JOHNNY CASH Live Recordings From The Louisiana Hayride; Christmas With Johnny Cash *Columbia-Legacy*
 JUNE CARTER Live Recordings From The Louisiana Hayride *Scena*
 ELVIS COSTELLO North *Deutsche Grammophon/Universal*
 CURLUPANDODIE But The Past Is Not Through With Us *Revelation*
 DAREDIABLO Feeding Frenzy *Southern*
 DR. JOHN All By Himself: Live At The Lonestar '86 *Hyena*
 EUROPA 51 Abstractions *Lo Recordings/Bubblecore*
 FERN KNIGHT Seven Years Of Severed Limbs *Normal*
 THE FINGER We Are Fuck You/Punk's Dead Let's Fuck *One Little Indian*
 FLOW Greatest Hits *Shadoks*
 PAULA FRAZIER Place Where I Know *Birdman*
 EDDIE IZZARD Circle *Anti*
 JACKIE RYAN This Heart Of Mine *Open Art*
 JOE HENRY Tiny Voices *Anti*
 KAZELL Driven *Velocity/Black Label*
 KINSKI/ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE Split *Sub Pop*
 LAWRENCE ARMS The Greatest Story Ever Told *Fat Wreck Chords*
 LEAVES Breathe *DreamWorks*
 SONDRÉ LERCHE Don't Be Shallow EP *Astralwerks*
 LOVE DEPRESSION Love Depression *Shadoks*
 MATCHBOOK ROMANCE Stories And Allis *Epitaph*
 MAVERICKS Mavericks *Sanctuary*
 MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO Storm The Studio *R.M.X.S. Timo Corp.*
 NEAL MORSE Testimony *Metal Blade*
 ON THE MIGHT OF PRINCES Sirens *Revelation*
 PAR AVION Global Indie Pop *Eenie Meenie*
 PEACHES Fatherfucker *XL/Beggars Group*
 PEARLFISHERS Sky Meadows *Manina*
 PINK GREASE All Over You *Mute*
 POLMO POLPO Like Hearts Swelling *Constellation*
 ROSIE THOMAS Only With Laughter Can You Win *Sub Pop*
 ROYKSOPP Spoiler *Wall Of Sound-Astralwerks*
 MICHELLE SHOCKED Short, Sharp, Shocked (Reissue) *Mighty Sound*
 SIX FEET UNDER Bring'r Of Blood *Metal Blade*
 DWAYNE SODAHBERK Unfortunately *Tigerbeat 6*
 SOUND FACTORY Sound Factory *Shadoks*
 SOUTH With The Tides *Kinetic*
 STEVE EARLE Just An American Boy - The Audio Documentary *Artemis*
 STREET DOGS Savin Hill *Crosscheck*
 STRING CHEESE INCIDENT Untying The Knot *SCI Fidelity*
 T. RAUMSCHMIERE Radio Blackout *Mute*
 THELONIOUS MONK The Paris Concerts *Hyena*

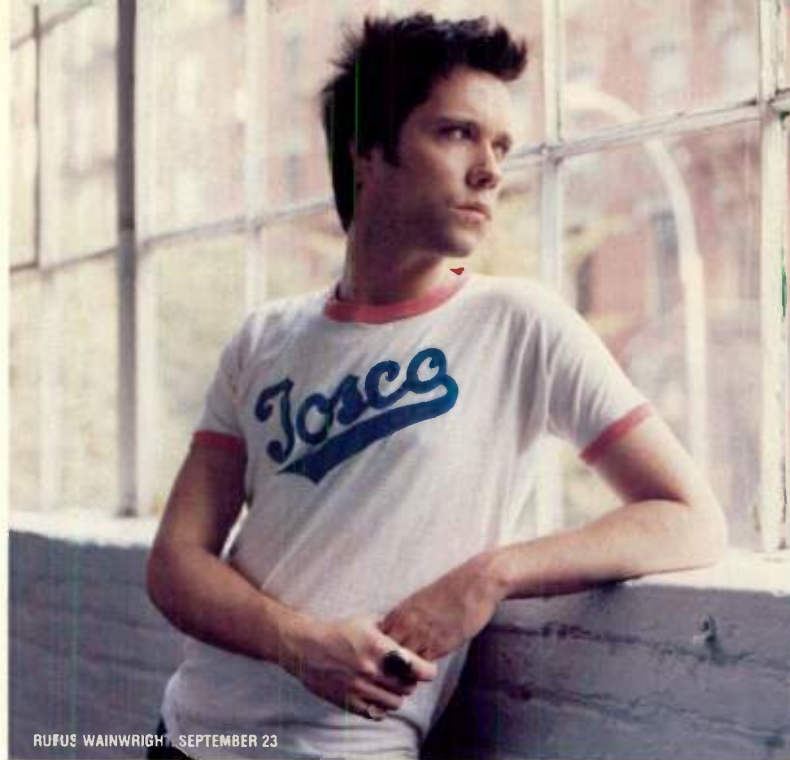
THUNDERBIRDS Tacos Deluxe *Benchmark*
 TRAILER BRIDE Hope Is A Thing With Feathers *Boodshot*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS 10 Years Of Astralwerks *Astralwerks*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Megasoft Office *Pias*
 RUFUS WAINWRIGHT Want *DreamWorks*
 DAVID S. WARE Threads *Blue Series*

SEPTEMBER 30

WILES DAVIS The Complete Jack Johnson *Columbia/Legacy Jazz*
 NEIL DIAMOND Stages: Performances 1972-2002 *Columbia/Legacy*
 SCOTTY EMERICK The Coast Is Clear *DreamWorks*
 ENIGMA Voyageur *Virgin*
 GLENN GOULD ... and Serenity *Sony*
 HIGH CEILINGS Edge Is As Safe As The Ground *Primary Voltage*
 THE MARS VOLTA De-Loused In Comatorium (LP) *Gold Standard Labs*
 NETWORK Money Money Money 2020 *Adeline*
 IGGY POP Skull Ring *Virgin*
 BONNIE RAITT The Best Of Bonnie Raitt *Capitol*
 MARTIN REV To Live *File 13*
 SANTANA Caravanserai; Moon Flower; Love Devotion Surrender; Welcome *Columbia/Legacy*
 SHIKARI Dead Men *Level Plane*
 SOUNDTRACK SSX 3 *Astralwerks*
 STRIKE ANYWHERE Exit English *Jade Tree*
 THOUSAND FOOT KRUTCH Phenomenon *Tooth And Nail*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Alan Lomax: Blues Songbook *Rounder*
 VEXERS Gangland Ballads And The Death Sex Set *Ace Fu*
 WILLIE NELSON Willie Nelson's Greatest Hits (And Some That Will Be); Pancho And Lefty; Always On My Mind; Tougher Than Leather *Columbia/Legacy*

OCTOBER 7

11TH DREAM DAY Prairie School Freakout *Thrill Jockey*
 2MEX Sweat Lodge Infinite *Temporary Whatever*
 AGENTS OF THE SUN Aurora *DCide*
 BACKUP PLAN Dearest Whomever *New Day Rising*
 TIM BERNE The Sublime And *Thirsty Ear*
 BORIALIS What You Thought You Heard *Capitol*
 DAVE BRUBECK For All Time *Columbia/Legacy Jazz*
 DAVID DONDERO The Transient *Future Farmer*
 HOWIE DAY Stop All The World Now *Epic*
 DAYDREAM NATION Daydream Nation *Orange Sky*
 DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE Transatlanticism *Barsuk*
 DECIBULLY City of Festivals *Polyvinyl*
 DEFIANCE No Future, No Hope *Punkcore*
 DISHES 3 *File 13*
 DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS Diamond Jubilation *Rounder*
 DOGS Suburban Nightmare *Dionysus*
 ERASE ERRATA At Crystal Palace *Troubleman Unltd.*
 THE EVERYOTHERS The Everyothers *Hautlab*
 FALCONER The Sceptre Of Deception *Metal Blade*
 FONDA Catching Up To The Future *Hidden Agenda*



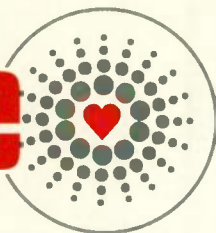
RUFUS WAINWRIGHT, SEPTEMBER 23

FREEDOM ARCHIVES Chile: Promise of Freedom *Alternative Tentacles*
 FRISK Audio Ransom Note *Adeline*
 FROM ASHES ARISE Nightmares *Jade Tree*
 FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY Maniacs *Metropolis*
 HOWE GELB Ogle Some Piano *Ow-Orn*
 GOV'T MULE The Deepest End *ATO*
 GRANDPABOY Dead Man Shake *Fat Possum*
 JIN Almost Famous *Virgin*
 DAVE KOZ Saxophonic *Capitol*
 TED LEO AND THE PHARMACISTS Tell Balgeary *Balgeary Is Dead Lookout!*
 LOST PATROL Songs About Running Away *Burning Heart*
 MARIA My Soul *DreamWorks*
 MELOTRON Sternstraub *Metropolis*
 MILITIA ALL STARS Militia All Stars Comin' At Cha *Entity Ent.-3 CityM-Native*
 MOLES On The Street *Wishing Tree*
 MONEEN Smaller Chairs For The Early 1900s *Lookout!*
 OCTAVIUS Audio Noir *Mush*
 RIDE Waves *First Time*
 ROUGHNECKS Twenty Bucks And Two Black Eyes *Hellcat*
 SELFMADEMAN The Daylight Robbery *Lookout!*
 SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE Compathia *Holy Mountain*
 TEAM SHADETEK WSHT: Radio Mix *Tigerbeat 6*
 PAUL VAN DYK Reflections *Mute*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The American Song-Poem Christmas: Daddy, Is Santa Really Six Foot Four? *Bar None*
 VERTEBRATS A Thousand Day Dream *Reaction*
 WHEAT Per Second, Per Second, Per Second... *Every Second Aware-Columbia*
 WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE Hymns For The Hopeless *Southern*

OCTOBER 14

ADEMA Unstable *Arista*
 CHRISTIANSEN Stylish Nihilists *Revelation*
 CURLUPANDODIE ...But The Past Is Not Through With Us EP *Revelation*
 THE GITS Enter The Conquering Chicken *Broken Records*
 HARD-ONS Very Exciting! *Bomp!*
 WANDA JACKSON Heart Trouble *CMH*
 JUST A FIRE Light Up *Asian Man*
 ALI AKBAR KHAN Swara Samrat *AMMP*
 KITES Royal Pain With The Mitalic Gardener *Load*
 ELECTRIC CHAIRS Sparkolounger *Dionysus*
 LIVING SCIENCE FOUNDATION Last Call For Nightfall *Second Nature*
 PEACHFUZZ About A Bird *Orange Sky*
 PIPEDOWN Metal Weaponry *A-F*
 QUAILS Song Is Love *Mr. Lady*
 SEKSU ROBA Pleasure Vibrations *Eenie Meenie*
 THE SIRENS Meet The Sirens *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 STREETWALKIN' CHEETAHS Maximum Overdrive *Alive!*
 STRIKE ANYWHERE Exit English *Jade Tree*
 THOSE UNKNOWNN Those Unknownn *TKO*
 THRALL Life *Alternative Tentacles*
 TWILIGHT SINGERS Blackberry Belle *Birdman-One Little Indian*
 UNION 13 Symptoms of Humanity *Disaster*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Beautiful: A Tribute To Gordon Lightfoot *Northarm/Just/Borsalis*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Blues Because I'm A Woman *Sugar Hill*
 VISION Detonate *Chunksaah*
 WESLEY WILLIS Greatest Hits, Vol. 3 *Alternative Tentacles*

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 STOP



Lorne Greene

STORY: JOE HENRY • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA



In 1966, as a 5-year-old living in Atlanta, I loved songs without thinking about them as a matter of any choice. I listened to them the way I ate a jelly sandwich: eagerly, and soon ready for the next one. I'm fairly certain that I didn't think of a song, initially, as something that someone had imagined and then constructed, but rather like a thing that was mined, like salt. And like salt, I didn't yet feel the need to go actively in search of songs: They were on every table, waiting to be savored.

My dad worked for Chevrolet and drove company-issued cars. Tape players were new to automobiles, and Chevrolet provided—for demonstration purposes—their own tapes consisting of a strange assortment of popular songs, bridged together by promotional voice-overs espousing the virtues of the latest coupes and sedans, Malibus and Biscaynes. This was the only tape we had in the car and it had as its climax a track featuring TV star Lorne Greene, who played Ben Cartwright on *Bonanza*, a Chevrolet-sponsored Western series. Greene performed a spoken-word song called "Ringo," which tells the story (in first-person narration, against a big-sky cowboy soundtrack) of an Old West rider who discovers a man that had been shot and left dying in the desert. After nursing the wounded man back to health, the two men go their separate ways, only to come face to face years later when Greene's narrator has become a sheriff and the recovered man a feared, ruthless outlaw. When the inevitable showdown happens, the gunfighter spares the sheriff's life in payback of his long-ago kindness, only to be gunned down moments later by the sheriff's posse. The sheriff, realizing there had existed an undetected spark of good in the hated fugitive, hangs up his star in disillusionment, leaving it literally upon the grave of the outlaw.

Greene's deep baritone seemed ominous in the dark of the backseat as we drove home from a Braves game, or a rare dinner out. It scared me, to tell you the truth, because the song was really about mortality—the character's and mine. Ringo was a misun-

derstood renegade—evil in deed, but ultimately moral, just and redeemable. And destined, like all of us, to die anyway. I took it all in because it was there in front of me as insistently as the long drive home.

In our "formative years," few of us know we are being...formed. And I certainly didn't know that many TV actors were cranking out cornball fare simply because they could. What I heard and took to heart was *song-as-narrative*, *singer-as-actor*. That's why, I guess, by the time I was coming of age and the singer/songwriter movement was happening, the song-as-confessional that was the code of the road couldn't touch me. My heart was already spoken for. I didn't care about songs being vehicles of autobiographical expression anymore than I cared about being a bubblegum teen angel. I had already learned that songs were short stories—small films and character studies.

When I finally moved on to more artful versions of this discipline than "Ringo," to songs by Randy Newman, John Prine, Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan and even Fats Waller, it was because I'd already been primed. Lorne Greene may have been Sunday night's prime-time TV attraction, but for me, in 1966, he was God's messenger. And he seemed to be saying, "Who do you want to be: Bobby Sherman or a gunslinger?"

Joe Henry heads back to the song mines on his ninth record, *Tiny Voices (Anti-)*.

...UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN LIKE WATERS
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



A young boy learns about the history of the
civil rights movement. Montgomery, Alabama.
Photo: Eli Reed/Magnum

imagine

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



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