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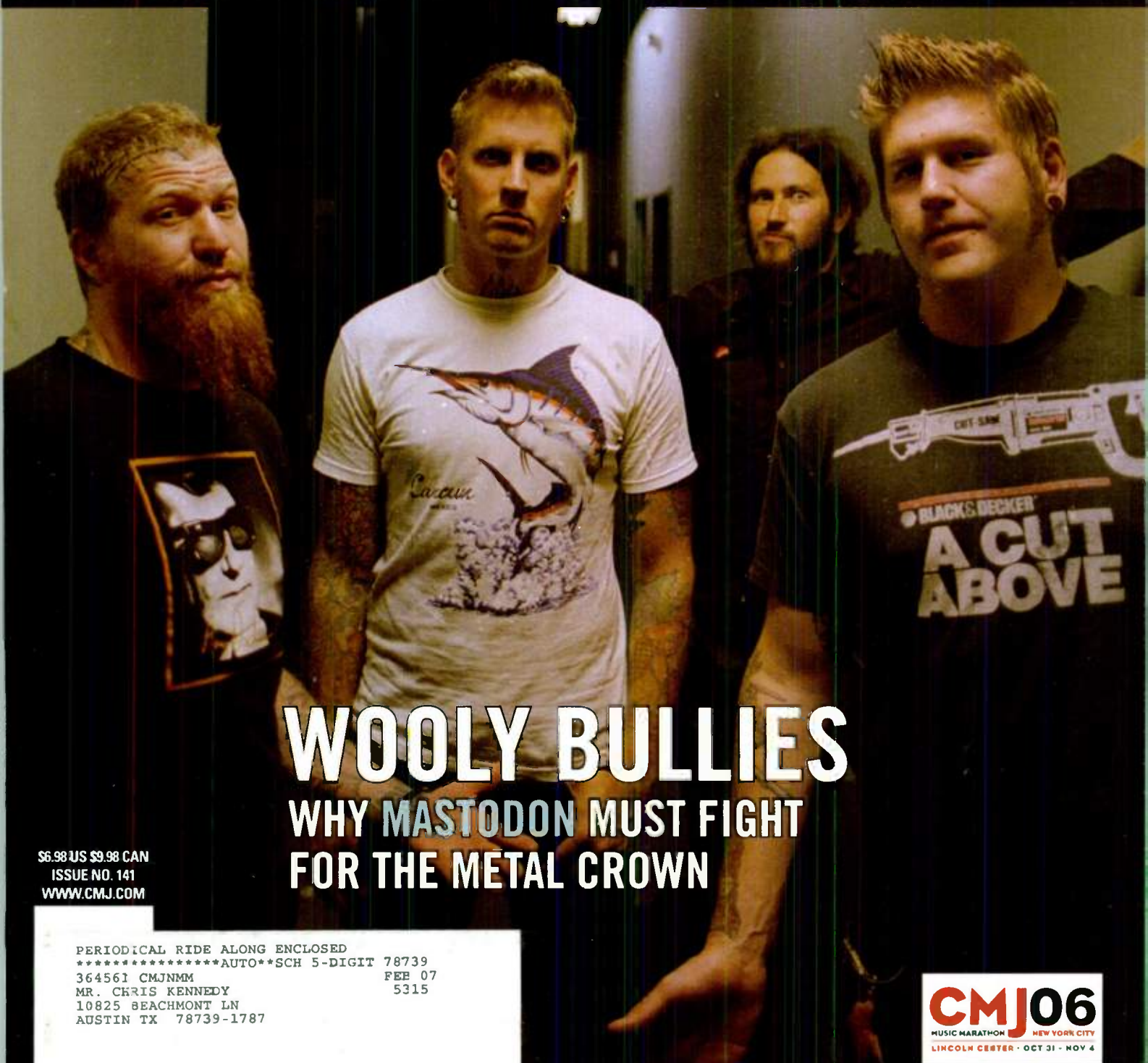
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CULTURE SHOCK 6

The debut of our new cultural zeitgeist page, featuring everything from awesome mp3s to even more awesome song titles to scene reports about the little-known bands in little-talked-about towns that should be on your radar. It's sort of like the wiseass pop-culture roundup pages you see in other magazines—except without all the demographic pandering and obligatory nudity.

QUICK FIX 9

Cursive's Tim Kasher scripts another conceptual gem. Also, John McEntire closes the book on his literary life; Jimmy Tamborello helps us Figurine his equipment out; and Page Hamilton jazzes up the magazine.

ON THE VERGE 14

They've been living on the edge of a broken chart: Professor Murder, Alice Smith, Brothers And Sisters, Daughters, Chinese Stars, North Atlantic

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After Led Zeppelin lost their drummer, they called it quits. Cowards.

MEW 24

Mew frontman Jonas Bjerre might sing like a girl, but don't even think about insinuating he throws like one.

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After six years of putting their prog pedal to the metal and hardly seeing a dime, Mastodon is ready to see some Moby-sized sales.

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If you want Blood Meridian, you've got it (see Best Mew Music), particularly if it's in the form of a Cattle Decapitation (see Abridged), because lord knows it would be sacrilege to offer up the heads of Mountain Goats (see Reviews). Oh, and while you're at, make sure to stop on by our new DVD Reviews and From The Archives pages. That is, if you're a fan of Patrick Swayze and SoCal hardcore... Don't ask.

CHARTS 49

The latest in who's hottest. Which sounds like a VH1 special. But it's still special.

DEEP COVER 50

The Sleepy Jackson's Luke Steele talks about why he wouldn't show his peter on the cover of *Personality*.

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Man, you guys are greedy. Fine... just log on to www.cmj.com. The guilt is your cross to bear.

CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY (ISSN 1074-6978) is published monthly (except bi-monthly in January/February) by The CMJ Network with offices at 151 W. 25th St., 12th Fl., New York, NY 10001. Subscription rates are \$39.95 per year. Subscription offices: P.O. Box 1016 NY, NY 10113 / Phone (800) 414-4CMJ. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to CMJ New Music Monthly, Membership Office, P.O. Box 1016 NY, NY 10114-0036. CMJ New Music Monthly is copyright 2006 by College Media Inc. All rights reserved; nothing may be reproduced without consent of publisher. Unless indicated otherwise, all letters sent to CMJ are eligible for publication and copyright purposes, and are subject to CMJ's right to edit and comment editorially.

BEST SONG TITLES OF THE MONTH

- 1 Daughters —“The Fuck Whisperer” (HydraHead)
- 2 Paper Chase —“The Kids Will Grow Up To Be Assholes” (Kill Rock Stars)
- 3 Knights Of The New Crusade —“What Part Of ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill’ Don’t You Understand?” (Alternative Tentacles)
- 4 Messer Für Frau Müller —“Acorns From Mars For Pigs From Earth” (AeroCCCP)

THE PAPER CHASE:
They’re not assholes,
but your kids are.



SCENE REPORT MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

**According To Goodnight Loving
Guitarist Colin Swinney...**

THE BEST PLACE TO SEE A BAND IS:
“Mad Planet in Riverwest. They usually bring in some of the bigger garage rock acts, like the Dirtbombs.”

THE BEST PLACE TO BUY RECORDS IS:
“Flipville and Farwell. Flipville is actually a used toy store too, so there’s all sorts of little knick knacks and shit to look at.”

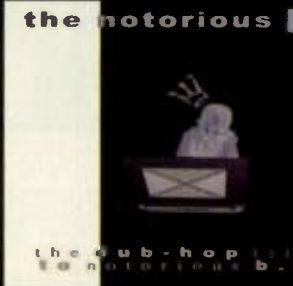
**THE BEST LOCAL BAND YOU NEVER
HEARD OF IS:** “Rapid Adapter. Very rock ‘n’ roll, very stripped down, off-tempo. Like Marked Men.”

The Goodnight Loving’s debut album, Cemetery Trails, is being released this August on Dusty Medical.



RAPID ADAPTER

HOMAGE IS WHERE THE HEART IS



In theory, at least. It doesn’t get more distressingly misguided than the Notorious D.U.B.’s *Dub-Hop Tribute To Notorious B.I.G.* It’s crazy enough to hear the world’s most flaccid dub “MC” desecrate the world’s most devastatingly good rapper’s legendary *Ready To Die* rhymes. But the crazier thing is that the album is neither dub nor hip-hop. It comes off more like a smooth-jazz smothering of tracks like “Warning” and “Juicy” with some studio echo and mailed-in female vox for the choruses. Our recommendation? Revisit the real record, which, an improbable 13 years later, still puts 90 percent of subsequent hip-hop, mainstream or indie, to shuddering shame.

MPEG'D FOR SUCCESS



Yeah, we know, maybe you’ve seen this one already, but the YouTube.com clip for “The ‘Very’ Final Countdown” (just put the title in the site’s search box) should serve as a pretty good indication of what we’re shooting for with this little feature. The video captures rare, primal footage of an overseas band of teenagers at some non-descript local fair, signing and playing every note and harmony of Europe’s “The Final Countdown” off-key and out of tune. The camera doesn’t move, and neither do the group’s members, save some pensive pacing on the part of their frontman. The guitar solo’s our favorite part, but hey, there’s enough miserable musical reinterpretation to keep the whole family howling.


THE WHAT THE F*#@? FACTOR

The continuing “fued” between the Killers and Fall Out Boy, which has been lumbering along in non-threatening fashion for several months, picking up steam again this summer. It’s like a revival of the days when LL Cool J and Kool Moe Dee exchanged diss songs or Axl Rose and Vince Neil exchanged blows (when they weren’t exchanging blow), but way, way lamer. Basically, Killers frontman Brandon Flowers, following up on critical remarks last year about his A&R guy working with Fall Out Boy, told NME.com that listening to emo bands like FOB was “dangerous,” clearly neglecting his own band’s suspect position on the pop culture/post-punk ladder. Even weirder, FOB singer Pete Wentz primarily took the high road, telling MTV that he kind of dug Flowers’ comments. Which, come to think of it, only substantiates Flowers’ taunts about Wentz being a little emo boy—just not a very dangerous one.

PHOTO: ANTON CORBIJN



THE KILLERS



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 – Matt Dentler/Indiewire

"Devoid of White Stripes' orthodoxy or Strokes' pretension, The Sammies buzz with that incandescent energy you could rule the world with if only you could bottle it; call it youth, call it abandon, call it rock & roll."
 – John Schacht / Cleveland Scene

"The coolest debut album I've worked on to date."
 – producer John Agnello
 (Dinosaur, Jr., Sonic Youth, Son Volt)

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM MORISEN:

The Talk "The Sinners of Daughters"
 Alternative Champs "Welcome to Fort Awesome"
 Snatches of Pink "Stag"
 Marat "Again"



SO, CURSIVE'S TIM KASHER... WHAT'S THIS SONG ABOUT?

Interview By Rebecca Raber

"At Conception"

We had a loose concept of Happy Hollow, the small town, and so throughout the album, we kind of wrote about characters that were in the town. They kind of fell into three categories: religion, small town or sexuality. ["At Conception"] was one of the songs where I got a chance to have it to be all three... It's about a teenage girl whose boyfriend goes off to war. A priest consoles her and they end up having a sordid relationship. The priest, who's championed as a kind of pro-life leader in the community, is the same one that insists the young girl gets an abortion... It's not necessarily us pointing our fingers at religion, it's just poor ethics, you know? But also, I can't help but kind of take little potshots at the pro-life movement.

"So-So Gigolo"

[It's about] somebody that grows up in a small town who perceives himself as kind of a big fish in a small pond and is off to go make it in the big time, in the big city, and how people kind of get swallowed up that way. People mention it as kind of a *Midnight Cowboy*-type of story, especially considering that he turns to prostitution... It's, I think, a young guy who seems to have certain attributes that define his physical demeanor and is kind of being had, being taken by these manager types, these agents and people who are just trying to use him in this slimy world. And he started out as wanting to be just an actor or something like that, but realiz[ed] the only

way he could make a living was through giving himself. I really wasn't going to write this song about that at all. Before I really had a full set of lyrics, I was just singing that refrain, "So-so gigolo," and it was really just a reference to myself, just how that's what you become as an entertainer. That half-ass selling of yourself, you know? But the band really liked the line and wanted me to use it, so I took that idea and tried to place it into the context of the town.

"Rise Up! Rise Up!"

I like the idea of a song that actually turns out to be a letter or a speech, so I was attracted to the idea of this song actually being a confession... I felt it was more the idea of me, personally, coming back to the small town I grew up in, having gone out and fleshed out some things about religion and then come back to the priest I'd been raised by... So yeah, that's why I wanted it to be like us, as Cursive, saying something. "Rise Up!" is my trying to be as positive as I possibly can, kind of as a pitch for atheism. It really meant a lot to me to stop having atheism being attached to the faith system and to these dark, dour people. Instead, I think that it's just another belief, it should be positive and it should be received better. I think that it's hardly talked about because atheists don't really need to preach to others, but I think atheism is in the closet in a lot of ways.

Kasher and his band, Cursive, just released Happy Hollow (Saddle Creek), a horn-heavy concept album about life in a fictional small town.

"It really meant a lot to me to stop having this atheism being attached to... these dark, dour people."



Gimme fiction: Kasher (front and center) gets less personal on *Happy Hollow*.

PHOTO: Saverio Truglia



BOOK CLUB

WITH JOHN MCENTIRE FROM TORTOISE
INTERVIEW BY ERIN EBERHARDT

John McEntire might not be a glamorous rock star, but he's one of the most significant personalities in the last decade-plus of atmospheric indie music. Besides his status as a core member of Tortoise and Sea And Cake, McEntire has helped engineer, mix and generally manipulate recordings by everyone from Smog to Stereolab. With Tortoise's *A Lazarus Taxon* (Thrill Jockey) box set on shelves, it seemed high time to catch up with the omnipresent McEntire. A man with his inclination toward experimentation certainly must be picking up an interesting new book every now and again, right? Well, actually, turns out he'd much rather play mad scientist in the studio

So we were curious what books might be catching your fancy these days.

[Laughs] I'm afraid I won't have much to tell you.

Not a big reader?

Well no, I don't really have a lot of time to read. So consequently...yeah....

What about as a kid, you didn't read then?

Trying to think... not specifically.

What about in high school? Were you a *CliffsNotes* guy?

This Tortoise pioneer (that's McEntire in the middle) never quite emerged from his literary shell.

I think I read the books...

Okay, well, on the road, there's no favorite authors you turn to keep you busy?

Nah, I really don't, I guess, no... The stuff that I do end up reading is really just like technical typically. Stuff related to music production and engineering. It's usually just short articles and things like forums on the Web.

Any specific websites?

Well there's a good one called ProSoundWeb that's probably the best. I don't know, it's all rather boring if you're not an audio professional.

Well, there might be this perception of your band, because of your music, as intense guys who would pick up Kant or Nietzsche....

I can say with certainty that nobody is reading Kant or Nietzsche. [Laughs] The stuff that people do like to read on the road are things like James Elroy. Yeah, definitely not on the philosophical tip.

Well you must have at least gotten around to *The Da Vinci Code* like everyone else.

Um, on a certain level, yeah, you know, it was effective. [Laughs] I couldn't put it down.

“There’s some trick to really getting the rhythms to swing right.”



We all live in a yellow Figurine.

MY FAVORITE GEAR

WITH JAMES FIGURINE
INTERVIEW BY NICK BREUL

One can never underestimate the value of an early education. James Figurine (better known as Dntel and the Postal Service's Jimmy Tamborello) grew up tinkering with the toys in his father's home studio, and the years of practice are evident on his new record, *Mistake, Mistake, Mistake, Mistake*. With help from friends like techno-maestro John Tejada and Rilo Kiley's Jenny Lewis, Tamborello's music makes it clear that he had all the right toys growing up. "My dad had a home studio, and there was a Roland B50 and some old sequencer, I can't remember what it was," he recalls. "The first keyboard that I had was a Roland F50 sampler, and that's what I used for my first four or five years."

While being around the right equipment is important in creating your own sound, it is learning how to finesse that gear that earns Tamborello props. "There's these things from this company called Elektron—I think it's Swedish,"

he says. "They put out these two things: a Monomachine and the Machinedrum. I just like the overall feel of them. It's like a step program, you know, like a lot of drum machines are, but you can edit every single step, make the sounds go really crazy, so you have a lot of control over it. I was used to playing a normal keyboard and playing notes that way, so it is nice to have a different way of doing it, doing it more like a drum machine."

Tamborello's finesse has manifested itself on *Mistake*, a techno-pop promenade akin to his work in the Postal Service. Yet despite years spent around synths and drum machines, the artist insists there's always more tweaking to be done. "There's some trick to really getting the rhythms to swing right, you know," he opines. "Sometimes it's accidental. I don't understand the difference between when it works and when it doesn't, so usually it has to be sort of an accident in the beginning. I might take some classes on that."



That's Page, front and center. Who wouldn't assume George Benson bred his guitar sound?

5 PEOPLE WHO MADE PAGE HAMILTON AN "UNSUNG" GUITAR HERO

Interview By Kenny Herzog

Ask any emo, screamo or metalcore band making the Warped Tour rounds who inspired them and, after you get through all the Lifetimes and Quicksands, the name Helmet—and more specifically, frontman Page Hamilton—will inevitably surface. But while his band may have been *Born Annoying*, the relentless, aggressively melodic rock guitar Hamilton helped bring to the mainstream wasn't born yesterday. In fact, as far as the formally trained musician and post-hardcore legend is concerned, jazz can be credited as the cornerstone of the Helmet sound and, subsequently, so much of what has come in its wake. Well, jazz and Geordie from Killing Joke. Here are the five guys that made Hamilton a guitar god in his own right:

Jimmy Page

As a kid I heard other things, like the Monkees and the Beatles, and I couldn't tell the difference when I was really young. But I became obsessed with Led Zeppelin and would listen to the music with the headphones or in the room with the lights off and get inside the music and pick guitar parts apart and solos. Before I even played, it made me want to be a musician.

George Benson

My mom had these records from George Benson, who was, at the time, already becoming a pop-jazz star. I didn't know anything about jazz, but I heard this style of guitar playing that was completely unfamiliar to me, and I was like, "Wow, that's so different from Zep and different from Jimmy." So I delved further into it; I got a guitar and I got a guitar teacher and he said, "Oh, here's a George Benson album called *The New Boss*

Guitar, and I was like, "Wow, this is very different from the album my mom has." It's this kind of groove-oriented, amazing stuff, like almost hard bop. So I really got hooked pretty early on in my guitar playing on jazz, and that ended up being a path that I took.

Wes Montgomery

I think he was the master of all guitar players—period, hands down, bar none. He does stuff that still seems to be technically impossible. People will incorporate elements of Wes' playing into their playing, but nobody could do what he did. As amazing as so many guitar players are, I just think he was incredible. And then you put the soul and the sound with it, and you've got a great master.

Geordie (Killing Joke)/Bruce Gilbert (Wire)

I loved these bands a lot: Killing Joke, Wire and Gang Of Four. I was like, "Wow, this is completely fresh and interesting." I was fresh out of jazz-guitar grad school and I was sick of all the formula pop-rock stuff that was on the radio, and I didn't know what I was gonna do with my life, but I heard these bands and I thought, "Oh my God, you can play rock that's powerful and interesting and has soul."

Helmet's new album, *Monochrome*, is out on Warcon Records. Check www.helmetmusic.com for more info and tour dates.

"I really got hooked pretty early on in my guitar playing on jazz, and that ended up being a path that I took."

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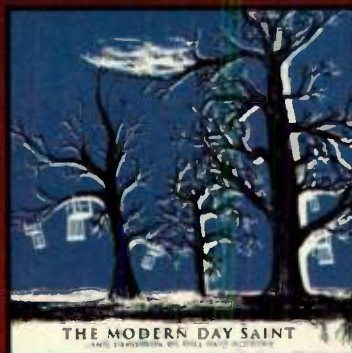


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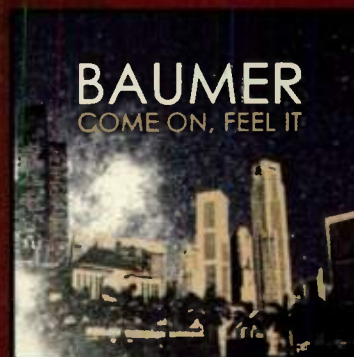
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"THESE MOMENTS ARE MOMENTUM"



THE MODERN DAY SAINT

"...AND TOMORROW WE WILL HAVE NOTHING"



BAUMER
COME ON, FEEL IT

BAUMER

"COME ON, FEEL IT"



ON THE VERGE



PHOTO: Chad Robert Springer

Murder was the bass that they gave me.

PROFESSOR MURDER

Professor Murder vocalist/timbalero Mike Bell-Smith performs as if a crowd of revelers is trapped under his skin. Equal parts reggae toaster, whistle-tooting cheerleader and cowbell connoisseur, he leaps through songs that harvest choice kernels of funk, punk, dancehall, dub and hip-hop. Like !!! and LCD Soundsystem, the New York four-piece layers deceptively familiar beats, vocal inflections and synth lines that sound anything but ordinary into danceable grooves. It follows that Professor Murder's name is lifted from an oddball rapper on HBO's cult-favorite comedy show *Mr. Show With Bob And David*. "It's also kind of paying homage to the history of Jamaican music—Mad Professor, Bounty Killer, that kind of vibe," Bell-Smith says. Aside from keeping the energy high, P-Murder's debut EP, *Professor Murder Rides The Subway* (Kanine), avoids letting one vibe

dominate the songcraft. "If there [is] some element of a dancehall song in one of our songs, it's probably mixed up in elements of hip-hop or rock music or whatever," drummer Andy Craven says. With bassist Tony Plunkett and keyboardist extraordinaire Jesse Cohen pushing weight along with Bell-Smith's lightning-fast verses, "Champion" revives the worldly percussion discussion started by Liquid Liquid. Even if the guys aren't keen on getting lumped in with indie rockers, the Faint-styled keyboard line fused with a funk beat on "Free Stress Test" is a mighty catchy showstopper. But it'll be hard to predict what infectious creations will come of the Professor's future recordings. Plunkett says keeping a consistent sound would be impossible. "The stuff we're playing now, it's all over the place," he explains. "That's the way we want it." >>>REED FISCHER

ALICE SMITH

Alice Smith is going to be huge. Like, win-a-Grammy-and-sell-Alicia-Keys-millions huge. The rapturous roundup of soul, funk and R&B on her upcoming debut, *For Lovers, Dreamers & Me* (BBE) is just authentic enough to make her musical cred bulletproof, but just accessible enough to break through mainstream walls. Not that the Southern-girl-turned-NYC-char-teuse sweats any of that. "I don't think about it like that so much. I'd like for it to be [successful]," she says hesitantly, before steering the tone of her voice in a more declarative direction. "I don't really want to know. I kind of just want to see. I'm trying to enjoy being involved in it more than having any expectations." Don't let the humility fool you though, as even Smith later confesses that no matter what style she's hopscotching across, "I sing all of it. I like to sing all of it. I'm good at singing all of it." That kind of confidence would be off-putting, were it not for her irrepressible Southern charm (you may even get a down-home "Ooooooh honey" on occasion) and one other key fact: She's absolutely right. *For Lovers* masterfully mines the echoes of everyone from Nina Simone and Billie Holiday to Anita Baker and Barbara Streisand (*Funny Girl* is her one of her all-time favorite movies). Not to imply the record is merely regurgitation. "It would be safer to say that I wasn't going for anything," Smith says, while acknowledging her influences. "I really just kinda was going for stuff that I liked. If I liked it, I'm gonna do it. If I didn't like it, I wouldn't do it. I just kind of wanted it to be me." >>> KENNY HERZOG



Smith & Fessin': Alice is as real and ridiculously talented as they come.

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BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Brothers And Sisters bask in the same golden sunshine as the Mamas And The Papas and the Byrds, but the Austin-based collective also mines that era's darker side, combining sugar-sweet harmonies with foreboding, gloomy lyrics. It's a dichotomy that singer/songwriter Will Courtney (aka Brother Will) sees no problem with. "I don't set out to have that contrast in my songs, but it does happen a lot," he says. "The truth is, life, for the most part, is filled with hardships, heartache and disappointment. But for me, I really never lose hope that the good stuff is just around the corner." And the good stuff is everywhere on the group's self-titled debut (*Calla Lily*): hazily strummed sing-a-longs, boy-girl harmonies, vibrant keys. Ask Brother Will what the band sounds like, however, and he'll most likely name cornerstone '70s cult films like *Five Easy Pieces*, *Being There* and *Harold*

And *Maude*, instead of bands or instruments. "All of those movies have this sense of longing for the past, but are aware that the present, however painful or joyful, is only here for a moment and you really have no choice but to embrace it," he explains. That desire to embrace the world is also part of the inspiration behind the band's name. While Brothers And Sisters only contain one pair of blood siblings (Will and his sister Lily), the moniker, as well as the Brother/Sister prefix attached to each member, has a lot to do with Courtney's childhood: "Lily and I were raised to believe that we're all brothers and sisters in this world," he says. "I really wanted to have a band that would be so big that it was like an audience on the stage, and it would break down the barriers between audience and performer." >>>JESSICA SUAREZ



PHOTO: Courtney Chavanelli

Brotherly love: Austin's best-kept, countrified secret



All hail the Daughters of the revolution.

DAUGHTERS

“Anyone can fucking scream and sing for a band and jump up and down, and it’s bogus and it’s bullshit,” says Daughters frontman Alexis Marshall, sounding surprisingly relaxed while watching a *Blue Planet* rerun at his Providence home. “I’ve been screaming in bands for 11 or 12 years, and it’s fucking tiresome and it’s starting to hurt my throat. And it’s uncomfortable and it’s a waste of anything that I’ve written where I really feel I wrote something good.” Compared to *Canada Songs*, the approximately 10-minute grindcore maelstrom disguised as Daughters’ debut full-length, their latest album, the almost-twice-as-long *Hell Songs* (Hydra Head), couldn’t sound more different, with its jagged, Arab On Radar-styled guitars and clear vocals. They’ve become a completely different band. After three years of playing the same set at every show, and after re-teaching *Canada Songs* to new members, Marshall had had enough. When the band was asked

to contribute a song to a Birthday Party tribute comp, they picked the obscure “Marry Me (Lie! Lie!),” and after screaming through it a couple times, Marshall thought he’d tackle it the way Nick Cave originally did, with a clear throat and a rancorous attitude. That was the turning point. “It’s so great to watch [Cave] go and just kick somebody in the face or something like that,” says Marshall. “Everybody’s interacting and that’s really cool—I’ve always tried to do that when we played at our shows.” Notorious for spitting on his audience or just stripping off his clothes, Marshall confounded fans with songs like “First Snake Woman” with his whispers and coherent lyrics during the song’s quiet breakdown. “I really want to be able to sing songs and have people understand what I’m saying,” he says. “It’s much more fun to pick out kids who think they know the words and don’t at all... Even if they don’t have the lyrics sheet, they can burn this fucking record and still figure out what I’m saying.”

>>>KORY GROW



The only Chinese democracy you'll hear any time soon.

THE CHINESE STARS

When Providence, Rhode Island noiseniks Arab On Radar collapsed at the height of their powers in 2002, it wasn't long before frontman Eric Paul and drummer Craig Kureck were briskly restructuring themselves as a tighter and smoother project, the Chinese Stars. After recruiting bassist Rick Ivan Pelletier of Six Finger Satellite and guitarist Paul Viera, this new endeavor carried a distinctly more restrained but no less caustic edge. "We kind of feel like we took [Arab On Radar] to the end," says Paul. "We started to appreciate a lot of bands that were songwriting oriented, and we just wanted to... start going that route because we had never really done that." While the band is shopping around for a label for their still-in-the-making, as-yet-

untitled second full-length, the studio is birthing new sonics for these noisy vets. "[There's] a song called 'Cold Cold Cold,'" says Paul. "It started with a keyboard line, then a drum line and then everything got layered on top of that... It has a different kind of intensity and feeling to it; the foundation is rather soft in nature, so it was an interesting thing to start soft and then add some harshness on top of it." What infused the Stars with their swifter post-punk attack? "A lot of pop music, actually," says Paul. "Like a lot of the girl groups. The Phil Spector stuff, we've been really into that... It's been really kind of fun to just appreciate the songwriting behind it and the mass appeal of it." >>>PAUL HANEY



PHOTO: Selena Salfen

The North Atlantic (from left): Cullen Hendrix, Jason Richards and Jason Hendrix—early '90s men

THE NORTH ATLANTIC

There was a time—historians call it the early '90s—when indie rockers like Archers Of Loaf, Drive Like Jehu and Superchunk were squeezing infinite energy, passion and playful sonic chaos out of negative-budgeted records. The North Atlantic's Jason Hendrix remembers that time. And he's betting on it being timeless, since the San Diego trio's *Wires In The Walls* (We Put Out Records), which heavily recalls that generation's halcyon days, was just given proper release, three years after the band took an indefinite hiatus for school. "There's something both intelligent and immediate about that era of independent music," recalls Hendrix. "It's self-conscious, but not overly self-conscious. It has its own style, but also that's not the gist of the music. Now you get a lot of music that is genre exercise." As for whether the band might have wanted to flex new artistic muscles after their considerable time

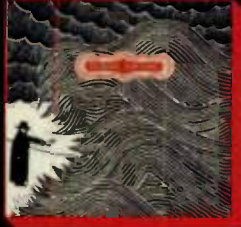
apart, Hendrix insists *Wires* accurately reflects the North Atlantic's musical mission. "We all listen to a lot of different music," he explains. "It makes for a post-modern kind of pastiche. I'd hope that a sound like that would always leave room to grow. I'm still proud of those songs. I still get goose bumps when we play them live." Some may question if the band's now in it for the long haul or whether some new, unforeseen hiatus is on the horizon. Steady as the West Coast weather though, Hendrix assures their fans that, "We're about as diehard as you can be about our music now. [We] put all that energy that we had siphoned off to be in school in the music... We have no intention other than to tour an insane amount and try to release the best records we possibly can."

>>>KENNY HERZOG



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Blood Is Thicker Than Water

The Thermals Strive Over Turmoil To Unleash Furious New Album

STORY BY REBECCA RABER // PHOTO BY BRIAN TAMBORELLO

Reports of the Thermals' death have been greatly exaggerated. Yes, the Portland, Oregon-based trio parted ways with their longtime drummer, Jordan Hudson, last year. And sure, that meant that singer/guitarist Hutch Harris and bassist Kathy Foster subsequently scrapped the follow-up recordings to 2004's *Pickin' A* and started over as a duo. But while Hudson may have quit the Thermals (a situation the band mostly declines to discuss), the Thermals aren't calling it quits.

"At least right now, that isn't a possibility. Things are just too good for us to break up," explains Harris in an affable, Bay Area-bred accent, saying little about the drummer's departure aside from, "We just kind of wanted different things. We could have come to a compromise, but we didn't."

"Hutch and I want to keep the band going strong," adds Foster in kind.

They certainly sound strong on their third record, the explosive and political *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* (Sub Pop), an urgent concept album about trying to escape a fascist theocracy. Harris' acidic lyrics—like "Then give us what we're asking for/ Cuz God is with us and our God's the richest/ Our power doesn't run on nothing/ It runs on blood and blood is easy to obtain/ When you have no shame"—perfectly collide with his sharp, insistent guitars. Foster, meanwhile, acts as a powerful one-woman rhythm section, laying down both the drum and bass parts in Hudson's absence. (They have since added drummer Caitlin Love.)

MANNING THE MACHINE

Though Harris is quick to note that his "alternately angry and frightened lyrics about religion being used for societal oppression are strictly a 'paranoid fantasy,'" it's hard not to take his tales of furiously patrolled borders and leaders power-drunk on God as personal and pointed social commentary.

"It's definitely a fictional story," insists Harris, "but one that I could possibly see happening in the future... A lot is based on reality, but it's more like, if things were to continue in this same, terrible, crazy fashion that I see them in right now, then a drastic measure might be needed in the future." The record's title, however, seems very specifically rooted in the present, referring to, as Harris puts it, "Christianity as a machine, as this force that seems to be less about loving—people loving Christ and God—and more about... using Jesus to tell people what to do."

With one of rock's original agit-punks, Fugazi's Brendan Canty, manning the boards, the band was primed to attack, anchoring Harris' cautionary parables in the Thermals' driving hooks. The frontman, however, claims to have had a very simple goal for the album.

"The main thing I was going to try to do was not to swear at all," Harris laughs. "Just because I had two records with plenty of swearing and... then I was just going to try to maybe not talk so much shit. But, instead, it turned out the opposite."

Which is more than OK with his bandmate. "I'm just

really proud of Hutch's writing," Foster says. "I read the lyrics and I get chills. It's just so good the way he worded things and how literary blatant, but at the same time, and, just very articulately expressed."

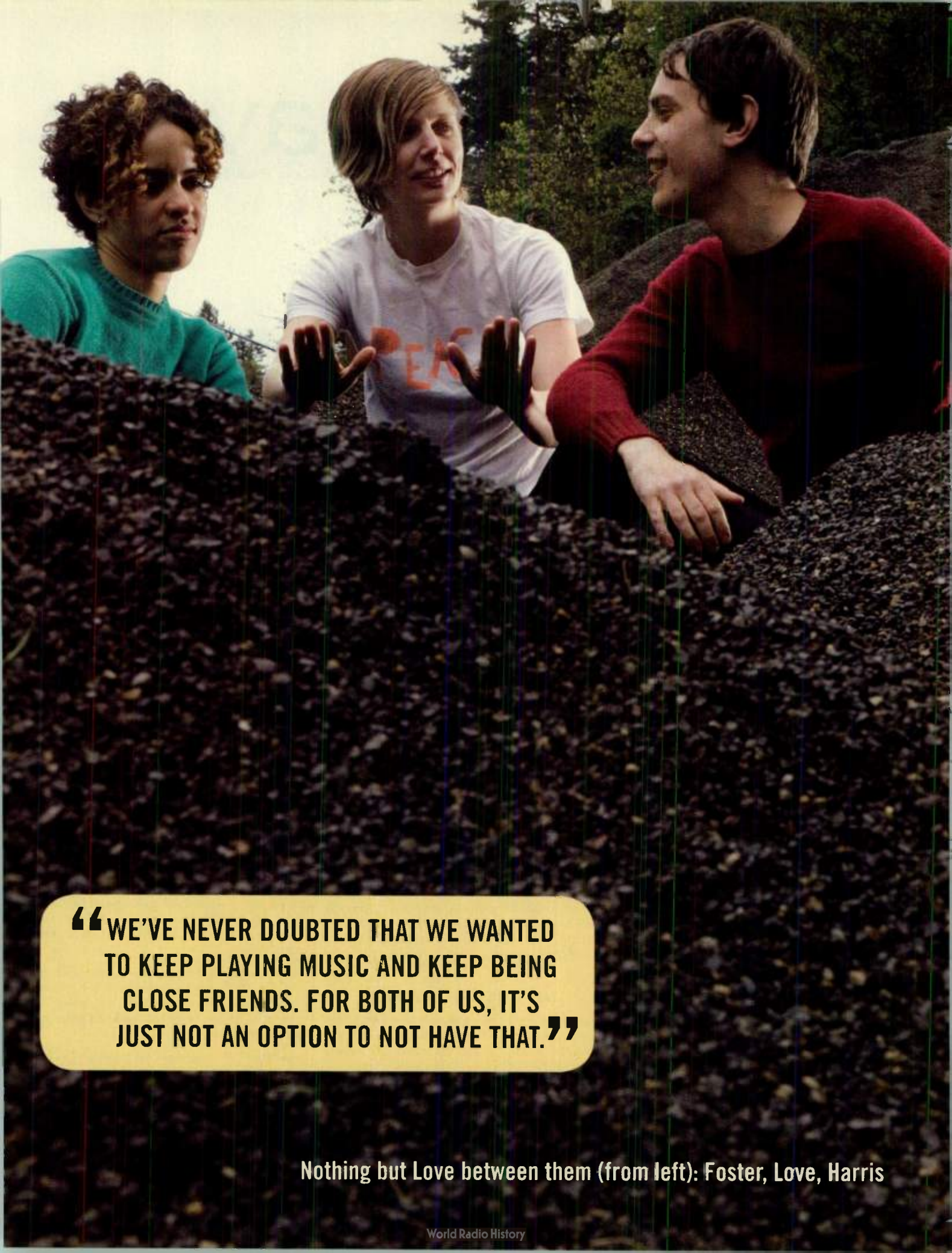
AND WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN

For Harris and Foster, who have played in more than three different bands together, living in cities from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon and changing from friends to lovers and back to friends, this record solidifies them as musical soulmates.

"It's hard to say why we have a similar aesthetic," says Foster. "We just do... We have such a unique relationship. We've never doubted that we wanted to keep playing music and keep being close friends. For both of us, it's just not an option to not have that."

Now, with Love in place and *The Body* wrapped up and ready to be dissected by listeners, the Thermals have their eyes fixed firmly on the horizon. And despite the pessimism that permeates their album, the bandmembers are excited about the future and looking forward to touring and getting back in the studio, where Harris would like to try his hand at writing some clean, pretty pop songs.

"Hutch and I have had a great journey together," concludes Foster. "And we're just both wanting it to go on for a long time."



“WE’VE NEVER DOUBTED THAT WE WANTED TO KEEP PLAYING MUSIC AND KEEP BEING CLOSE FRIENDS. FOR BOTH OF US, IT’S JUST NOT AN OPTION TO NOT HAVE THAT.”

Nothing but Love between them (from left): Foster, Love, Harris

Dream Weavers

Denmark's Mew (Finally) Brings Their Magical Mixture Of Surrealism And Sonic Bliss To The States

STORY BY KENNY HERZOG // PHOTO BY TORKIL GUDNASON



All you can ask for as a music fan is one album, once in a blue moon, that will reinvigorate your faith in the power of the medium; a record that will negate the need for iPods or CD shuffling and claim near-permanent residence in your headphones; a band that will have you excitedly scouring used and import racks to find the remainder of their discography.

Mew is that band. *And The Glass Handed Kites* (Sony) is that album. At least in their native Denmark. Mention their name here and you'll be met by the stares of people who think you're trying to say "Muse" but keep dropping the "s." Granted, that may be largely due to a delayed US release, but their transcendent fusion of Sigur Rós-esque atmospherics, Pixies-inspired guitars and surreal lyrical imagery almost feels too unabashedly blissful and beguiling to captivate jaded American listeners. Not that this poses a problem for the band's falsettoed singer Jonas Bjerre.

"I think if people come see a show, I'm sure that there will be parts they can enjoy," he opines of Mew's first major US tour, which has seen them open for Bloc Party and the Secret Machines. "Even if they think it's weird, they can still enjoy the emotions in it I think."

MORE THAN MEETS THE THIRD EYE

"Weird" is putting it lightly. *Kites* is essentially one hour-long track divided into, as Bjerre puts it, "a collection of skits that go into each other." It's a sequence the singer would prefer you listen to in order, as they worked rather hard to make it all fit, but he acknowledges that you "can't really ask that of people who don't even know your band, so I don't really mind." The lyrics are taken largely from Bjerre's own night visions, though he insists that aspect has taken on a misconstrued mythic status.

"I think this thing about my dreams inspiring the music has been kind of overdone a little bit," says Bjerre. "I am inspired by dreams, especially if it's a dream that takes me back into something primal or something that you feel like you've lost. You regain something in your subconscious. When you wake up, you feel extremely inspired—or that's how I feel anyway." But, he adds, "Other people in the band use different things and it's a very collective process writing

the song, so I think we use a lot of different things for inspiration."

Even still, lines like "You're tall just like a giraffe/You have to climb to find it's head/But if there's a glitch/You're an ostrich/You've got your head in the sand" from "The Zookeeper's Boy" (a gorgeous, moving masterpiece) are as confounding as they are catchy. Same goes for Bjerre's ambiguous, soaring vocals.

"A lot of kids in Copenhagen, if they ask for my autograph, they kind of tend to ask, 'Why is it you sing like a girl?'" he admits, shyly.

Mew's journey toward musical mastery began in Hellerup, Denmark, circa seventh grade, when Bjerre, bassist Johan Wohler (who has recently exited the group and been replaced with a session musician), guitarist Bo Madsen and drummer Silas Utke Graae Jorgensen came together over a film project. Before long, abstract art experiments and the alternative sounds of Dinosaur Jr. and My Bloody Valentine had them on a path to like-minded creative expression.

"[Those bands] were very early influences and I think that was very apparent to begin with," Bjerre explains. "But I think we pretty quickly discovered something I think we can call our own sound. And at least part of it was based highly on our own ideas, which were quite strange ideas, and a lot of people found it strange in the beginning. But it kind of grew on people, and we slowly got accepted in Scandinavia and Europe."

After a limited-release debut LP in 1997 (*A Triumph For Man*) and the self-released *Half The World Is Watching Me* in 2000, Sony snatched them up and 2003's *Frengers* began to explode overseas.

THE STORY IS IN NOT BEING SPOILED

For all the *NME* praise and UK record sales, America remained mostly uncharted territory, save a few New York shows. But traveling to the US in support of *Kites* and playing significantly smaller venues for potentially aloof crowds neither hurts the band's ego nor humbles them.

"I think it's fun," Bjerre says. "It's a different challenge when you're a support band. You have to captivate people for the first time, and they don't know your music so you have to make sure you get a grip

"That's what we aim for anyway, something that speaks to your heart and your mind at the same time."

of them... We try not to act like spoiled brats, you know? We still feel very privileged being able to make a living do[ing] what we do, to have this job that we love."

The visual feast that accompanies a live Mew performance, an offshoot of Bjerre's work at a post-production company, probably doesn't hurt the whole captivation thing. "The music is kind of visual to me anyway," he adds.

EMOTIONAL RESCUE

Even Dinosaur Jr.'s J Mascis—a source of inspiration, character in Bjerre's dreams and contributing vocalist on "Why Are You Looking Grave?" and "An Envoy To The Open Fields"—seems to have recognized the band's appeal, even if their acquaintanceship is slightly serendipitous.

"Our guitar player met him in Copenhagen when we were still a very young band," recalls Bjerre. "I think he lost his luggage or his wallet or something, and Bo helped him find a new bag and lent him some money and he played in a Mew T-shirt as a thank you... He was playing in L.A. while we were recording there, so we just went to see his show and talk to him afterwards and he decided to accept and come down to the studio. One of the things he mentioned was, 'You guys sure like weird rhythms.' But I think he can get into the feelings of the songs."

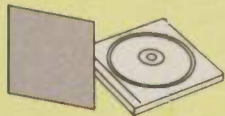
But then again, all that's required to become enamored with Mew's majestic anthems and lush lullabies is a willingness to be disarmed by music, something many of us have no doubt lost touch with since our first sonic epiphany.

"We still try and make music that has something that appeals to your emotions, even the first time you hear it, that you don't have to analyze it and think about it, you can just experience it," explains Bjerre. "And then if you're willing, you can also discover different layers of it later on, so it speaks to you on a longer-term basis as well... That's what we aim for anyway, something that speaks to your heart and your mind at the same time."



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UNDER PRESSURE



Metal Firebrands **Mastodon**
Find Out What Goes Into A
Heartbreaking Work Of
Staggering Genius

Story By Kory Grow // Photos By Ryan Russell

After six years of clawing their way from clubs into arenas, Atlanta-based Mastodon have become one of the most respected groups in the deluge of hipster-endorsed metal. Their acclaim has brought them all around the world and, most recently, gotten the attention of the majors, prompting them to ante up and sign to Reprise, who will release their third—and most anticipated—album, *Blood Mountain*, this September. By any accounts, they're on top of the world... or so it would seem.

"The other night—well, the past couple of nights—I lay awake wondering,

"What the fuck am I doing?" says six-stringer and soon-to-be father-of-two Bill Kelliher, having just arrived in Albany, New York to play the latest stop on Slayer's *Unholy Alliance* tour. "We've been doing this for six years; it's hopefully going to pay off somehow... It's tough, especially getting older and trying to age well and do this stuff at the same time. I'm not 20 anymore."

Despite Kelliher's mounting anxieties, Troy Sanders, Mastodon's scraggly haired bassist and singer, laughs it off, noting, "Yeah, Bill can be nervous, but I think the four of us are confident enough, and we all like [the album] a



The men of Mastodon (from left to right): Troy Sanders, Bill Kelliher, Brent Hinds and Brann Dailor

lot... so for me, that's all that matters."

"It's a lot of pressure and it's nothing that I've ever experienced," adds Scott Kelly, guitarist/vocalist of Neurosis and friend of the band, who also contributed vox to *Blood Mountain's* lead single, "Crystal Skull." "I think it's understandable, but they have their lives wrapped up into this now, and Bill's got mouths to feed... At the same time, I think he's gotta be proud of it, and once they get out and start doing the stuff in front of people and all that, it'll change for him."

If guest appearances are any indication of future success, then Mastodon should feel elated. Along with Kelly, who previously appeared on *Remission*, the Mars Volta's Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Queens Of The

However, the group decided that a few disparate stories weren't epic enough to follow up the *Moby-Dick*-inspired grandiosity of 2004's *Leviathan*, so they turned *Blood Mountain*—a title that represents both their ascent as a band and continuing struggles with alienated fans and errant rent checks—into a journey, full of mythological creatures and unforgettable struggles. Before long, Dailor found himself quibbling over things like sasquatches and cyclopes with frontman Brent Hinds, the two combining creatures for "Circle Cysquatch."

Musically, the process of making *Blood Mountain* was fairly similar to prior Mastodon records. Having already cited everything from King Crimson to Yes to, ironically enough, Peter Gabriel-era Genesis as influences, the band pushed deeper into the land of laser-light shows and instrumental geekery. "Sleeping Giant" is an echo-laden paean to Pink Floyd; "Bladecatcher" borders on minimalist prog, only offset by screechy keyboards; and "Capillarian Crest," with its change-on-a-dime time

signatures and flashy guitar-drum histrionics, pushes their musicianship to the limit.

"There were definitely ideas I had, as far as the sonics of the record," says the album's producer, Matt Bayles. "I wanted [the guitars and drums] to be grittier. The other primary goal was to build confidence in Troy and Brent when it came to their vocals. Whether it was screaming or something less-than-screamed, I wanted them to feel comfortable exploring any vocal idea they had."

BACK IN BACKLASH

When they finished recording, the band found themselves with a daring blasterpiece of proggy undertones and occasionally clear-throated vocals. However, for all *Blood Mountain's* innovation, it could possibly disaffect their metal-purist fans as curious art-rock crowds come calling. Coupled with major label backing, having their songs placed on videogames and getting prime slots on Ozzfest, it wouldn't be hard to imagine cries of "sellout." And sure enough, blog postings and Blabbermouth.net comments already abound about the band's new corporate home as fans began chiding the band after finding Mastodon T-shirts at Hot Topic.

"It's inevitable that some people are gonna hate it," says Dailor, while waiting for his soundcheck. "It's not the same record as *Leviathan*, and it's very much not the same record as *Remission*. It's a step in a totally different direction for us—not totally, but the left foot is in the last record and the right foot is somewhere else." And just like they straddle musical styles, they're walking the tightrope for their domestic futures as well.

"I guess when you become a parent, nothing's as important anymore as your child and his well-being," Kelliher offers in regards to their swelling popularity. "I just want to be able to take Mastodon a lot more seriously."

Ironically, it was on their current high-profile tour with Slayer, Lamb Of God, Children Of Bodom and Thine Eyes Bleed that Kelliher began doubting his career path. After spending Father's Day in Cincinnati with his bandmates (including Sanders, who has an 8-year-old daughter), the boys arrived back home in Atlanta for a show and some relaxation. Kelliher didn't even show up until it was time to play, preferring to spend time with son Harrison. Ultimately, he found this particular passing visit with his family bittersweet, a feeling that has permeated the entire tour.

"[Slayer frontman] Tom Araya has his two kids and his wife with him, so they hang out a lot," Kelliher says about his current tour. "I ran into them in Atlanta when I had my kid and I walked by his room and he was like, 'Hey, what's up, man? Have I ever introduced you to my wife and kids?' And I'm like, 'Yeah man, on the Jägermeister tour, you did.' And he's like, 'Man, what's your name? I don't even know your freaking name...' We met a couple times, but I totally understand... I don't know anybody's name."

BE THOUSANDAIRE

No matter the current musical climate or what label the band is affiliated with, it takes a lot of work to achieve household-name status, and few metal bands are better equipped, or more deserving, than Mastodon. But ultimately, this band of 30-somethings cares about little else besides the well-being of their kids and constructing the perfect snaggletoothed metal epic—two things that, as Kelleher reiterates, are by no means mutually exclusive.

"At the end of the day, I know that, even if nothing ever happens out of it, it was a fun trip and [we] made some good music and met some good friends and traveled to a lot of great places," he says, starting to sound more optimistic. "I definitely have some more years in me. Something just needs to happen.

"If you don't [advance], then you start writing 'Sussudio' before long..."

Some money needs to come in somewhere. I guess that's just a rebuttal against all these kids that might think, 'Well, you guys are just fucking rich rock stars.' It's just the total opposite of that, which sucks because I don't want to be portrayed like that and then people don't know the truth. I'm not saying I want to be a millionaire, but I'd just like to be maybe a thousandaire."

"It's tough, especially getting older and trying to age well and do this stuff at the same time."

Stone Age/Eagles Of Death Metal's Josh Homme both contribute to *Blood Mountain*. And like Kelly, Homme brushes off Kelliher's apprehensions.

"Oh, that means it's their best work yet," he insists. "It's a strange thing to attempt to lead your music along and not copy yourself, 'cause in a way, you're saying to yourself and everyone, 'Hi, we're going to where we've never kind of been...' and it's a scary perch to be on." Using Genesis' Phil Collins as an example of how such a scenario could go in the opposite direction, Homme jokes, "If you don't [advance], then you start writing 'Sussudio' before long..."

Though in fairness to Kelliher, there have been enough hassles throughout the band's past to give him—and the rest of his cohorts—pause. Even though *Leviathan* sold more than 100,000 copies, Kelliher claims they haven't seen a penny from those sales.

When word spread that the group's Relapse contract was coming to a close, the major labels immediately sent schmoozers to wine and dine them, which frightened the guys somewhat, since they weren't used to the royal treatment. When the president of Warner Bros., Tom Whalley, flew all the way to Oslo, Norway for an hour-long meeting, he explained that he didn't want them to change their sound, which was good news; having built their legacy on heady concept records and sweaty live shows for more than half a decade, often struggling to make a living, Mastodon felt they'd finally fulfilled their destiny.

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

During the *Leviathan* tour, drummer Brann Dailor read a book titled *Five Quarts: A Personal And Natural History Of Blood* by Bill Hayes and figured an album about the cultural history of blood would fit Mastodon's m.o.—from Roman gladiators who drank their victims' vital fluid to 20th century AIDS hysteria.

BEST NEW MUSIC

RIYL = RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



LINK www.ericbachmann.com

FILE UNDER Back in Bachmann

RIYL Iron & Wine, Bruce Springsteen, John Fahey

ERIC BACHMANN

To The Races Saddle Creek

The story spread like urban legend before the album even hit: Indie crooner/ex-Archers of Loaf leader Eric Bachmann lived out of his van, writing his second outing under his own name (the first was a well-received but obscure soundtrack for an unspeakably terrible baseball/serial killer film), crafting a stripped-down, no-frills response to the "meh" that met the more polished pop of Crooked Fingers' *Dignity And Shame*. The result? *No Red Devil Dawn*, but a magnificently melancholic collection of acoustic nuance with little populating its songs but Bachmann's gentlest plucking yet (think less *Nebraska*-era Bruce and

more Iron & Wine), occasional strings and piano and some finely placed female vocal harmonies. Some of his lyrics can still sound like the script to an episode of *Deadwood*, leaving some of the less musically engaging tracks out to pasture. But Bachmann's abilities as a singer have stretched enough (check the high notes on "Man O' War") and his knack for heartfelt folk phraseology can still carry a song on its shoulders ("Lonesome Warrior"), resulting in what will resemble a rebound to some, but to others, another timeless outing from a continually underrated songwriter. >>>KEMNY HERZOG



LINK www.bloodmeridianmusic.com

FILE UNDER Blues-blooded Canucks

RIYL The Replacements, Two Gallants, the Bad Seeds

BLOOD MERIDIAN

Kick Up The Dust v2

Much like the bleak Cormac McCarthy Wild West novel from which Blood Meridian takes its name, the lo-fi, countryish blues-punk on the Vancouver band's confident debut album smacks of dust, whiskey and foul-mouthed scorn. How did these folks—whose ranks include Black Mountain/Pink Mountaintops bassist Matt Camirand and drummer Josh Wells—from the verdant Pacific Northwest fever-dream such raw, thirsty cowboy chronicles? Perhaps they were inspired by the vagaries of road life—Blood Meridian began as a hotel room project for Camirand while he was on tour with his other band, the Black Halos. Or maybe he wanted to stretch his chops beyond the Black

Sabbath/Neil Young pastiche of his day job. Either way, the repetitive minor-chord guitars, quiet, keening organs and smoky howls of *Kick Up The Dust* viscerally summon despair, desert and Dewar's, though never falling prey to the genre's clichés. The guitars and Camirand's vocals (which alternate between unsteady falsetto and a twangy, flat-vowelled, left coast drawl) are fuzzy and imperfect enough to modernize the band's sound, keeping straight blues worship at bay. And lyrics like "Let's drink, let's cuss/Let's fight and let's fuck" work equally well as both retro saloon posturing and anthems for 21st century slackers. >>>REBECCA RABER



LINK www.canseidersexy.com

FILE UNDER Juniors, Seniors and other Art Eruts

RIYL The Go! Team, Peaches, Le Tigre

CSS

Cansei De Ser Sexy Sub Pop

Imagine if Gary Glitter and Peaches hooked up and yeasted out a brazen brood. That seems to be the guise of the debut from this São Paulo, Brazil sextet (major emphasis on the first syllable). They can turn synth-poppy ("Meeting Paris Hilton"), fuzz-disco ("Alala") or buzz-blip bashing ("Art Bitch") on a dime—all wrung from aging keyboards that seem to have been "fixed" by embittered ex-guitar shop employees, skuzzy butt-simple guitar plucks from the better-looking femme-teens who replaced them and a ginchy gal called Lovefoxx

whose comely broken English smarm-shouts are like a backwards-spun Bridget Bardot record, spouting nasty anti-techno snob taunts such as: "I am an artist, I am an art bitch, I sell my paintings to the men I eat," and a whole more mess of "bitches" and "holes." With all the sailor talk, hokey hip-thrust and rickety production, this is exactly the kind of funny fury that could save agit-disco from the noxious hands of Daddy's platinum card-carrying club kids. You've been warned... to dance! >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



LINK www.mylspace.com/goldensmog

FILE UNDER Radical Roots

RIYL Wilco, New Pornographers, Byrds

GOLDEN SMOG

Another Fine Day Lost Highway

It feels a bit silly to call a mostly laid-back alt-country outfit a "supergroup" (no thanks to Sebastian Bach, Ted Nugent and Co.), but Golden Smog just about fits the bill, boasting a current lineup of Gary Louis and Merc Perlman of the Jayhawks, Kraig Johnson of Run Westy Run and Dan Murphy of Soul Asylum, with contributions from no less than Wilco's Jeff Tweedy. It's been an eight-year hiatus for the collective, but the smog has lifted to reveal their most cohesive

and memorable record to date, feeling like the output of a unified, gelled group of musicians, not some occasionally inspired set of side musings. Less reliant on twang than taut pop and heavenly harmonies, *Another Fine Day* offers genuine gems like opener "You Make It Easy" and the crunchy jangle of "Corvette," keeping itself together over 15 tracks by allowing things to wander with precision over the expanse of rock 'n' roll's vast terrain >>>KENNY HERZOG



LINK www.mybrightestdiamond.com

FILE UNDER Quiet is the new noise-makers

RIYL PJ Harvey, Tori Amos, Kate Bush

MY BRIGHTEST DIAMOND

Bring Me The Workhorse Asthmatic Kitty

Shara Worden, aka My Brightest Diamond, spent much of 2005 doing high kicks, Illinoisemakers' cheerleader, easy to see why Steve too—Worden's got a and twists. It's got a Amos' breathy histrionic neath-the-surface and is a rock album, the guing the string flourishes

without overpowering them. Arrangements, however, play second fiddle to her voice and lush, shimmering



LINK www.fierisheye.com/chad

FILE UNDER Basement tapes 'n tapes

RIYL Joseph Arthur, Hayden, Beck's *One Foot In The Grave*

CHAD VAIL

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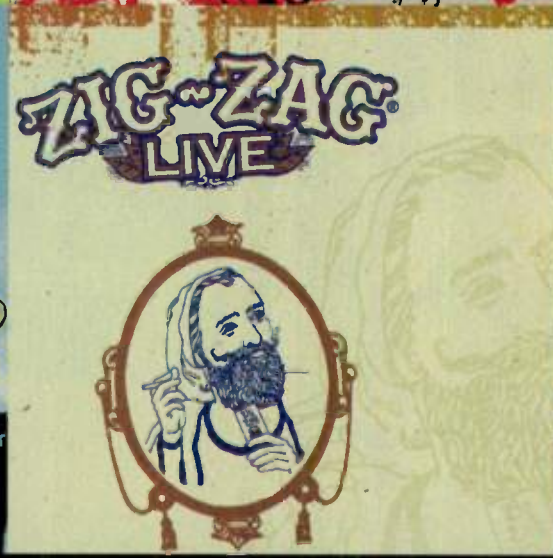
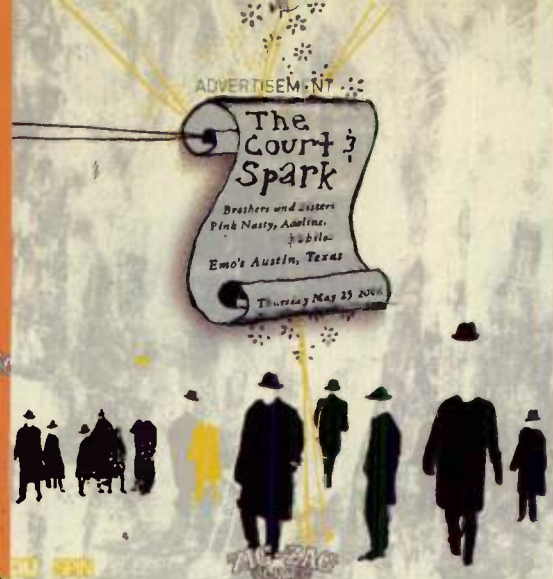
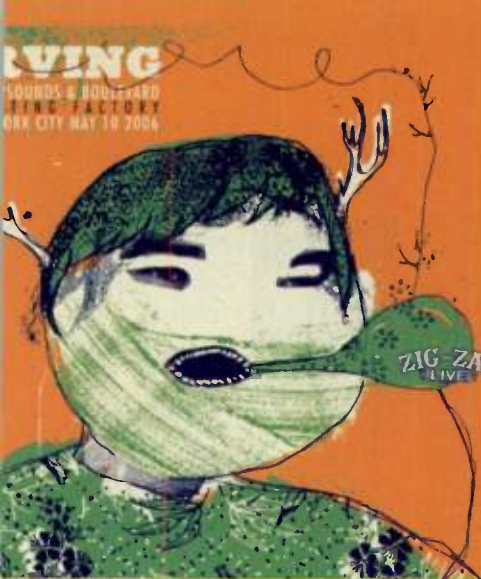
At his essence, Chad described as a single sonic adornment, tainly have a just-a-g ever, he's neither a d songwriter. What sets multi-instrumental pro like, from one diverge gauzy, haunting veneer omore release, *Skell* Smithian "Sing Me To lullaby its title would in



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REVIEWS

BARRY ADAMSON

Stranger On The Sofa Central Control



Throughout his career, Barry Adamson could best be viewed as an indie-music auteur, and not just because he's spent so much time

contributing songs to movie soundtracks or founded his own label after severing ties with Mute. Like his many other solo albums, *Stranger On The Sofa* finds the ex-Magazine/Bad Seeds bassist shifting moods on every song. He opens with the narrative speak-piece, "Here In The Hole," where a female voice suggests accepting the world as it is, and moves from there to cowboy-lounge, new wave and a Stones-y ballad for good measure... and that's just the fifth song. By each turn, he captures a different character—remember, this is the same guy who released a Serge Gainsbourg-gone-disco EP called *The Negro Inside Me*—hitting his high point on "You Sold Your Dreams," which could double as a Nick Cave song were it not for Adamson's exuberance and post-punk synths. Whichever character actually resembles Adamson, it's clear he treasures his vision above all else. >>>KORY GROW

Link www.barryadamson.com

File Under Sofa, so good

RIYL Serge Gainsbourg, Firewater, Pizzicato Five

THE CAIRO GANG

The Cairo Gang Narnack



This inaugural Cairo Gang collection emerged from Chicago-based singer-guitarist Emmett Kelly and a pool of supporting players including ex-Wilco member Leroy Bach. A Berklee College of Music dropout, Kelly often manipulates his vocals, guitar parts and arrangements phrase-by-phrase. Over the course of the static-laced sound collage "Assholes," the mood shifts from feedback thrash to what could be a Pixies demo to an atonal Eastern-style melody. The fuzz has cleared by "Bones In The Ground," and Kelly has adopted a Kings Of Convenience feel with a finger-picked acoustic guitar and fancy flutes. "Warning" introduces a flutes-as-percussion concept that reads weirder than it sounds, but makes for the set's signature turn. As a whole, *The Cairo Gang* is that rare album that takes experimental folk to the brink of noise rock and back without singeing a single eardrum. >>>REED FISCHER

Link www.myspace.com/thecairogang

File Under Folk Yr. idols

RIYL Grizzly Bear, Akron/Family, Six Organs Of Admittance

COMETS ON FIRE

Avatar Sub Pop



Because Comets On Fire hail from San Francisco, the birthplace of American psychedelia, their acid freakouts contentedly pay homage to their

Haight-Ashbury heroes, as well as early '70s Zeppelin and the Stooges. But this ain't yo mama's acid rock. Dark and heavy as hell, their balls-to-the-wall Sub Pop debut, *Blue Cathedral*, was a murky slop of screeching guitar riffs and pounding drums—like Black Sabbath on 50 hits of acid. On *Avatar*, the band still concocts an unlikely hybrid of fuzzed-out space rock, Allman-style dual-guitar attack, toned-down jazzy interludes and wild, head banging jam sessions. But this time around, the Comets show off a slightly more subdued side, crafting more concise songs with a lot less psychedelic clutter strewn about than on their previous releases. Whether your bag is high-octane jams like "Holy Teeth" or the bluesy sway of "Sour Smoke," *Avatar* is a trip not soon forgotten. >>>TODD HYMAN

Link www.cometsonfire.com

File Under A long, slightly less strange trip

RIYL Bardo Pond, Blue Cheer, Dead Meadow

DARKER MY LOVE

Darker My Love Dangerbird



Hard to believe a couple of the ground-gazers in this lot used to play in the Distillers and Nerve Agents, since *Darker My Love's*

mison de rock has little to do with mohawks or Marshalls. Knocking around for nearly five years, this Frisco foursome finally commits to a full-length, and it's all My Bloody Valentine psychedeloid. And, along with the Black Angels and Gris Gris, helps snatch this genre from the formulaic post-Dig! fallout. *Darker My Loves* whip up a fairly massive churn on dinosaur tail-wagers like "Opening" and "Hello Traveler," and kicks up the tempos when needed ("What's A Man's Paris"). By the tail end they do fall back on the swaying swoops and waning whines that land them squarely in current psych stereotypes. The mood of this movement—with *Darker My Love* being an impressive example—often feels less like invention than exasperation from Kevin Shields fans tired of waiting for his next record and making it themselves. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

Link www.darkermylove.net

File Under With the lights out

RIYL Brian Jonestown Massacre, BRMC, Jesus And Mary Chain

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DIRTY PRETTY THINGS

Waterloo To Anywhere Interscope



When the Libertines disbanded it was widely assumed that tabloid staple/addict/Dior muse Pete Doherty would be the band's

breakout star. But, like Sid Vicious before him, the band member who most embodies the spirit of rock 'n' roll is not always best equipped to create it, and thus it is in the new band of much less libertine Carl Barat that the mod-punk spirit lives on. Barat's new gang, Dirty Pretty Things, explode on their debut with tightly coiled guitars, cockney-inflected vocals that are alternately stylishly sly and drunkenly anthemic and rousing choruses that will play well both on dance floors and as down-the-pub sing-alongs. On lean tracks like "Doctors & Dealers" and "Gin & Milk" (featuring the best handclaps of the year), the band, led by Gary Powell's breakneck drumming, resurrects the raucous spirit of *Up The Bracket's* best tracks, but plays with a newfound urgency, as if Barat is afraid to hold anything back, lest he lose another collaborator in rock 'n' roll excess. >>>REBECCA RABER

Link www.dirtyprettythingsband.com

File Under Keeping Up The Racket

RIYL The Libertines, Arctic Monkeys, the Jam

FRENCH KICKS

Two Thousand Startime International



French Kicks haven't lost their knack for churning out yearning, soulful art-pop on LP number three, but they've kept it fresh

with the right amount of tinkering. *Two Thousand* sounds familiar: Nick Stumpf's buttery-soft falsetto and keyboard lines, along with Josh Wise's harmonies and guitar craft, still govern their tight melodies. The danceable, upbeat "Also Ran" shows the Brooklyn-based foursome hitting a defining moment without taking themselves too seriously lyrically, a trait that continues on "Keep It Amazed," as Stumpf glibly adapts Perry Farrell's "Hey alright, if I get by," from "Been Caught Stealin." Elsewhere, "England Just Will Not Let You Recover" pastiches Motown and then wraps with a synth-percussion comedown that Tears For Fears might have called upon back in the day. And new drummer Aaron Thurston and Stumpf's brother Lawrence on bass have enlivened the rhythm section so that even songs like "Cloche," which employs a mandolin tremolo, manage to thump and amuse. >>>REED FISCHER

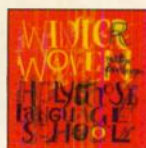
Link www.frenchkicks.com

File Under Kick Out The Hams

RIYL The Stills, the Walkmen, Hot Hot Heat

MATTHEW FRIEDBERGER

Winter Women/Holy Ghost Language School



859

Matthew Friedberger, the songwriting half of Brooklyn sibling duo the Fiery Furnaces, usually suffers from Ryan Adams Disease: Blessed

with an infinite wellspring of melodies and an enviable work ethic, he is often unable to extract the essential from the extraneous. Though he is concurrently releasing two solo albums, he has mercifully gotten his condition under control. This two-disc collection is overstuffed, but the ratio of successes to failures is much higher than usual. Almost all of the 16 summery pop songs on *Winter Women* are charming, replete with buzzing synths, saloon pianos and easy rhythms. And while *Holy Ghost Language School* is advertised as Friedberger's "experimental" record, most of the songs use spacey Enosque soundscapes and plinky, dissonant keyboards to an engaging, inclusive effect. His soft, peppery voice, overshadowed in the Furnaces by his sister's reedy vibrato, is the best thing here, anchoring the carnival-like atmospherics with a warm masculinity. >>>REBECCA RABER

Link www.thefieryfurnaces.com

File Under Funk Solo Brother

RIYL Fiery Furnaces, Jon Brion, Brian Eno

HEADLIGHTS

Kill Them With Kindness Polyvinyl



On their debut full-length, Headlights' cute-enough-to-pinch vocals and intelligently designed compositions seem like an immaculate indie-pop conception. But since this

Champaign, Illinois group contains members of Maserati and Absinthe Blind, their spacious twee musings are wholly their own. They seamlessly shift styles from "Lions" power-pop to the spacey "Trouble With Numbers," and they even sway with '60s verve on "Signs Point To Yes," as Erin Fein and Tristan Wraight coo amidst Beach Boys-inspired backups. The trio shines most on "Put Us Back Together" as Wraight and Fein's interlocking lyrics repeatedly plead, "Take us apart and put us back together right/So we can leave on our feet in the night," which they follow with a synth-smothered outro. Contrasting their giggly glockenspiels and pogo-inspiring beats, Headlights can also whip up some wit. On "Pity City," Wraight sings spitefully, "I have no pity for the girl in the city." But whatever impish chiding they put forth, the band remains divinely innocent at heart, and we can live with that. >>>LISA DONNELLY

Link www.headlightsmusic.com

File Under Hit the lights

RIYL Stereolab, New Pornographers, Postal Service



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REVIEWS

KAADA

Music for Moviebikers Ipecac



It's no slight to refer to Kaada's *Music For Moviebikers* as background music: The Norwegian "sound artist" himself admits

that his intention was for the album to act as the score to a nonexistent film. That's not to say that *Moviebikers* doesn't stand up as attentive listening, or that it doesn't deserve it. Elegant and expansive, Kaada's carefully constructed soundscapes build slowly, never exceeding a momentum that can be described as languorous, to achieve soft yet stirring results. Aside from oohing and aahing, most of the songs are vocal-free (save the anomalous and somewhat appropriately titled "Mainstreaming"), as Kaada uses an oddball orchestra's worth of acoustic instruments (everything from strings and guitars to homemade tools) to craft his delicate pieces. Though it's interesting to imagine the type of film for which *Moviebikers* would be best suited, the album doesn't need a movie to justify its existence—the music creates pictures all its own.

>>>MICHAEL PATRICK NELSON

Link www.kaada.no

File Under The Soundtrack Of Our Divine Lives

RIYL Max Richter, Sigur Rós, Charlie Haden and Pat Metheny's *Beyond the Missouri Sky*

LAMBCHOP

Damaged Merge



Life's quieter and more mundane tragedies are examined on *Damaged*, the ninth album from Nashville natives Lambchop. Led by

frontman Kurt Wagner, the ragtag musical ensemble tackles a unique blend of alt-country, chamber pop and classic soul and R&B influences. The collection of subdued tracks is in the same vein as 2002's *Is A Woman*, with Wagner's comforting baritone adding warmth to sorrowful string arrangements ("Fear"), glowering steel-pedal guitars ("The Rise And Fall Of The Letter P") and jazzy piano riffs ("Prepared [2]"). When not delivering stream-of-consciousness ruminations on skirts and rifles ("Paperback Bible"), the songwriter turns to heavier themes of relationships and regret. "I Would Have Waited Here All Day" sounds like a bluesy Motown throwback, with its bittersweet descriptions of desire and solitude. "My favorite hour of any day," Wagner sings, "is the one before you get home." For this Southern ensemble, the damage is in the details. >>>GINNY YANG

Link www.lambchop.net

File Under Silence Of The Lambchop

RIYL Vic Chestnutt, Belle & Sebastian, East River Pipe

LA ROCCA

The Truth Dangerbird



With their debut album, Ireland's La Rocca have likely cemented an enduring presence in the indie-pop world. *The Truth's*

happy-go-lucky feel shouldn't be a surprise with Tony Hoffer (Belle & Sebastian, Beck, Supergrass) as producer, but don't be fooled: Just because they sound light and airy doesn't mean they sacrificed a sense of purpose. Mixing bright xylophone riffs with driving guitars, songs like "This Life" and "Sketches (20 Something Life)" set the stage for the album's light-hearted mood, but if you listen a little closer, you'll realize these cuts are about serious matters like growing up and taking chances. "Goodnight" and "Capital Pill" delve deeper into sweeping piano and meditated guitars over lyrics about love and loss. As a whole, La Rocca have proven that catchy hooks and reflective ruminations can make a perfect combination. No lies here: *The Truth* is just the beginning of a beautiful career.

>>>ERIN EBERHARDT

Link www.larocca.ie

File Under You can handle *The Truth*

RIYL Belle & Sebastian, Wilco, the Shins

THE LONG WINTERS

Putting The Days To Bed Barsuk



Though there have been three long winters since the Long Winters' last full-length, John Roderick and his ever-changing

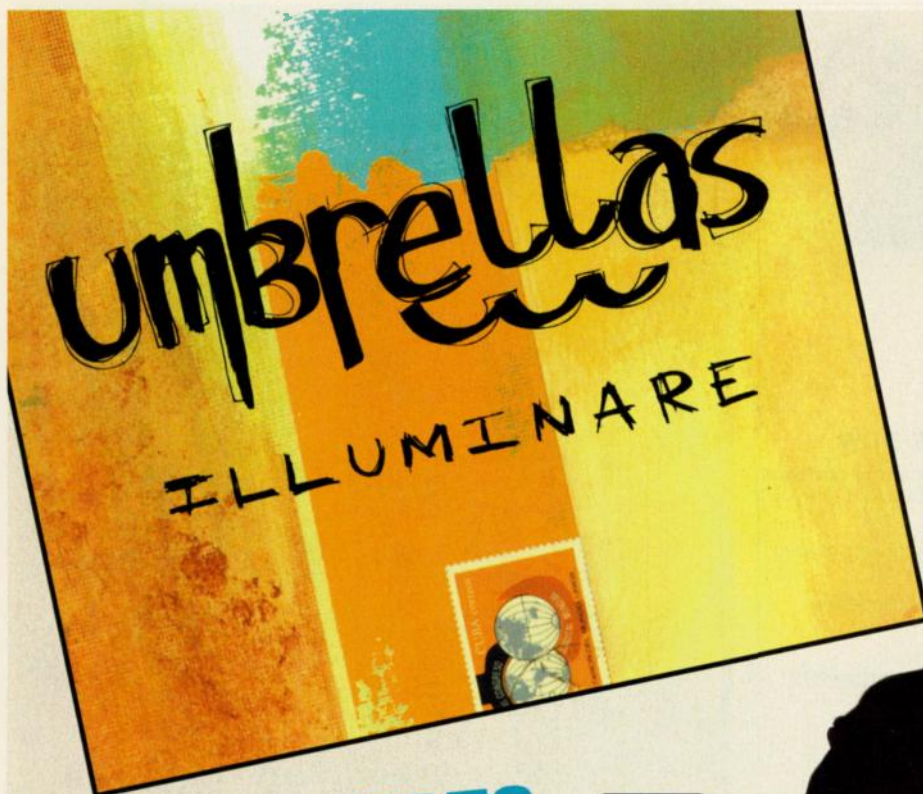
cast of collaborators don't sound rusty at all. On *Putting The Days To Bed*, the third album from the Seattle-based group, Roderick gives in to a chewy, consonant-heavy heartland drawl, which anchors his straightforward storytelling in a loose Americana tradition. Assured, unusual orchestrations (played by indie rock royalty like Death Cabber Chris Walla) flesh out the deceptively direct rock songs. To wit, the best track on the album, "Honest," a shuffling warning against loving a frontman, is wrapped up in warm banjos, weeping pedal steel, sprightly glockenspiel and rich hammer dulcimer (all courtesy of the Decemblers' Chris Funk). Like a Tom Petty for the Converse crowd, Roderick knows his way around a rootsy hook and infuses his songs with a comfortable familiarity, but his detail-obsessed, troubadour's ear imbues those jaunty boogie melodies with a singular depth and sophistication.

>>>REBECCA RABER

Link www.thelongwinters.com

File Under Bittersweet Symphonies

RIYL R.E.M., John Vanderslice, Built To Spill



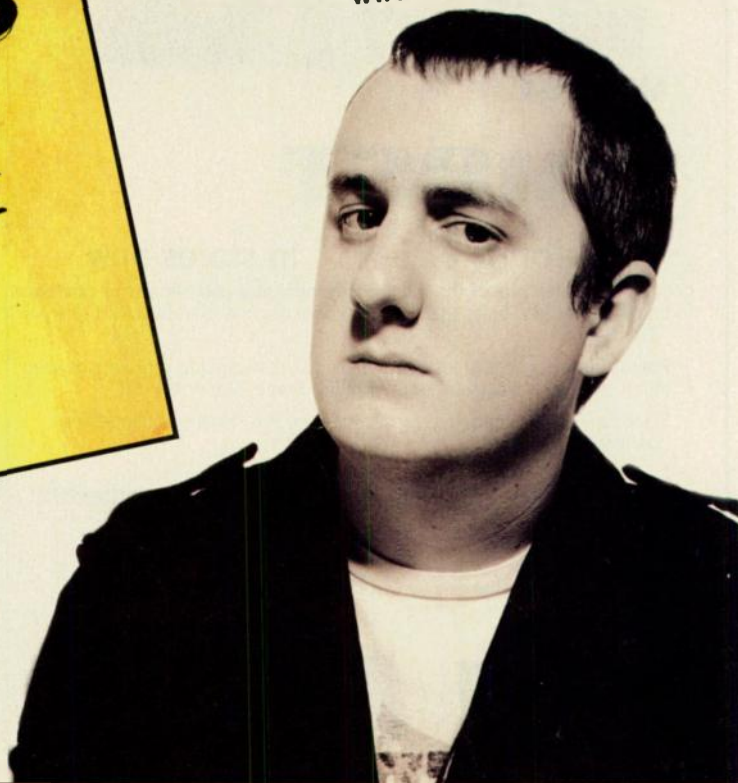
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MASTA KILLA

Made In Brooklyn Nature Sounds



Rooted in basic boom-bap percussion and low-dipping basslines, *Made In Brooklyn* is still smart enough to navigate accessibility through classic—but finely chosen—funk, soul and R&B samples (think less run-of-the-mill James Brown/Al Green standards and more Staxploitation-style). Like Ghostface's *Fishscale*, the record features production from MF Doom and Pete Rock, and it finds Killa snaking his rhymes along a giddy and gritty audio backdrop. Token cameos come from Raekwon and the irrepressible Ghost on "It's What It Is," Meth, U-God and RZA on head-nodder "Iron God Chamber" and Inspectah Deck and GZA on the mournful "Street Corner." But by and large, to his credit, this is Killa's show, and a couple of subpar radio singles aside, it's a big statement from an often overlooked alumnus about the continuing relevance of Wu-Tang's legacy.

>>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.mastakilla.net

File Under New Adventures In Old Wu

RIYL Old-school Wu, Rudy Ray Moore, *Fishscale*

DAMON MCMAHON

Mansion Astalwerks



Former Inouk frontman Damon McMahon has gone solo and unplugged for this bedroom folk record that feels like music you would snuggle up and eat hot oatmeal to. Or something. Something rather wintry at least, making its summer release a case of misguided marketing. But in truth, the album itself just isn't that interesting. If anything, Inouk was a promising band that had potential to benefit from bolstered production. With McMahon missing a more layered backdrop entirely, his songs (ironically with the exception of Inouk's "Somewhere In France" redone acoustic), despite the uniquely soothing quiver of his voice, are merely "whatever." And by whatever, I mean boring. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.astralwerks.com/damon_mcmahon

File Under Ino-yuck

RIYL Inouk, James Taylor, Eric Bachmann

MESSER FÜR FRAU MÜLLER

Triangle, Dot & Devil Aero!CCP



Truly one of the delightfully weirdest releases of '06, *Triangle, Dot & Devil* aspires for abstractness and accessibility with little explanation, rhyme or reason. And it works. Most of this Russian outfit's instrumental tracks can be traced to everything from swing and old-timey jazz to video games and gothic cathedrals. In the most condensed terms, most of Messer's slightly overlong but almost always engaging efforts sound like an electro DJ slapping on a zoot suit, inhaling laughing gas and entering a sexed-up haunted house at a carnival serving acid-laced punch. You're best off just letting it stream uninterrupted as you do double takes during the more mind-boggling moments ("Karate Feeling"), but if you must choose a song for your next slamin' party mix, check out the come-hither coos and lo-fi Daft Punk glitches of "Euro-Friendship" or the kids-show-on-crack quality of "Intime Service Cosmique." >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.aeroccp.com

File Under From Russia With "What The Fuck?"

RIYL Ratatat, animated shorts, Todd Browning movies

AMY MILLAN

Honey From The Tombs Arts & Crafts



Amy Millan's dreamy vocals are the finest facet of Stars' otherwise-overrated catalogue. Moving those pipes center stage on *Honey*, the studio effects that often layered them are peeled away, the instrumentation is stripped down to bare-bones acoustics and Millan tries to reinvent herself in more of a Neko Case mold. The lyrics—standard tales of love-lorn loneliness amidst alcohol binges—are mostly a reminder of how hard she's trying to convey some kind of cowboy's wife persona that ultimately rings false. What does remain, isolated from all the contrived context, are some genuinely beautiful songs, particularly "Ruby II" and "Come Home Loaded Roadie." But for anyone familiar with Millan's musical past, the album as a whole will prove pretty hard to swallow. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.amymillan.com

File Under She's (only a) Little Bit Country

RIYL Neko Case, Rosanne Cash, Emiliana Torrini

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REVIEWS

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS

Get Lonely 4AD



For a little over a decade, John Darnielle, aka the Mountain Goats, steered clear of musical autobiography, but on 2005's *The Sunset Tree*

he admitted some of his nasal exposition was factual. Whether or not he revisited his diary for his latest, *Get Lonely*, it sounds like home—albeit an empty home. Dwelling mostly in mid-tempo acoustic realms, any other singer-songwriter would sink into genre self-parody with lyrics like “You were almost asleep, halfway undressed/I lay right down next to you, held your head against my chest” on “Moon Over Goldsboro,” but Darnielle remains one of his generation’s most skillful lyricists, and he immediately counters that line with “A guy with any kind of courage would maybe stop to think the latter through.” That isn’t just literary guile, that’s plain smart: He’s employed romantic drivel to pedestal his own masculine ineptitude. Is this like some serious take on Woody Allen? As he makes amends throughout, it’s clear: What else can you do after you spill your guts but clean up? >>>KORY GROW

Link www.themountaingoats.net
File Under Only The Lonely...
RIYL Smog, Leonard Cohen, W.H. Auden

NECROPOLIS

The Hackled Ruff & Shoulder Mane Columbus Discount



Members of this Columbus, Ohio combo run the CDR label, which has released records by sub-buzzed bands like Times New

Viking and El Jesus De Magico, but their own collective might be the best of the bunch. True, Bo Davis’ warble sounds sort of like James Chance and maybe there’s some herky-jerky going on. Otherwise, no neu wave here, as these potentates of panic-rock aim to stumble through astral alleys haunted by discarded ’76 Pere Ubu reels and your last good memory of the Pixies. “Stalking Mark E. Smith Around NYC” is a swell distorto-shuffle, and “To The Bar” and “Cloud 151” are fun chunks. The rest is mostly a grab-bag bunch-up of imploding synths, reverbed guitar amps getting kicked, rust belt poetry, choppy riffs, scruffy dub and a PBR case of nervous tension. And tension leads to wanting to get out of tight, creepy, noisy places quick-like, which *The Hackled Ruff* does just in time. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

Link www.columbusdiscountrecords.com
File Under Monkey Gone To Purgatory
RIYL Pere Ubu, Liars, V3

JIM NOIR

Tower Of Love Barsuk



For all the legions of bands who have put their own own twist on the long-since-templated “Beatles-esque” formula, it’s nice to hear

an artist emerge as truly distinctive within that framework. As soon as “my patch” finishes going through its lo-fi Lennon-McCartney motions, it’s clear that Jim Noir is onto something good with *Tower Of Love*. Specifically, a rich melodiousness wrapped in a hush-hush package of minimal studio sheen, tastefully double-tracked vocals and other delightful accoutrements like subtle tambourine stomps and cheery, swirling organs. And with harmless little lyrics like “Every time I try to make a silly little song/My efforts are all wasted cause machinery goes wrong,” it’s clear his aspirations were merely to make magical ditties. Mission accomplished. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.barsuk.com
File Under Noir-Where Man
RIYL Brian Wilson, Push Kings, Kings of Convenience

NOUVELLE VAGUE

Bande A Part V2



Covers aren’t always easy to receive. If you’re a devout fan of Echo And The Bunnymen, Bauhaus,

the Buzzcocks or New Order, for example, it might be even harder to stomach the gimmick behind Nouvelle Vague. French duo Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux take post-punk favorites, strip them down to little more than their original chord progressions and lyrics, and then bring in young French singers (predominantly female) who have never heard the songs to sing the new, jazzed up bossa nova versions. The results are polished, sultry renditions, an entirely different breed from their originals. That said, the tracks are not only unique, but are so well arranged and produced that only the obdurate purist could resist. Besides, post-punk was always missing the effective use of an accordion. >>>AMANDA FARAH

Link www.nouvellesvagues.com
File Under En Vague
RIYL Camille, Yann Tiersen, Brazilian Girls

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JENNIFER O'CONNOR

Over The Mountain, Across The Valley And Back To The Stars Matador



Sometimes it seems too easy to be a singer-songwriter: Just nun-strum your acoustic under lyrics about love's more bitter moments. New

York singer-songstress Jennifer O'Connor somehow sidesteps these pigeonholes on her third album. More akin to Golden Era indie rockers like Mark Eitzel and Teenage Fanclub than, say, Shawn Colvin, O'Connor's lyrics dwell in in-between emotions and solid resolutions and her music matches her words with moody plucks and heavy chording. Spoon's Britt Daniel even contributes some backup vocals to "Exeter, Rhode Island," which matches his band's bouncy pseudo-optimism. O'Connor's voice takes many shapes throughout, from strong altos ("Complicated Rhyme") to breathy, sultry crooning ("I Was So Wrong"). But she reaches her apex on "Turn It Down," with its driving bass and jumpy lyrics about getting over ex-friends. Although some of O'Connor's past Liz Phair comparisons are still warranted, she's achieved a certain complexity on her latest that Phair lost in a supernova years ago. >>>KORY GROW

Link www.jenniferoconnor.net

File Under Phair play

RIYL Spoon, Cat Power, Liz Phair

OH NO

Exodus Into Unheard Rhythms Stones Throw



After a few decades of hip-hop stepping out in its various forms, it's safe to say the line in one's taste can be drawn between three basic styles: raw and rugged; unabashedly hooky and capable of setting a crowded dance-floor off; and thoughtful and earthy. Oh No doesn't quite qualify into the increasingly tiresome "conscious rap" category that could best encapsulate the latter, but the album title is certainly self-righteous enough to come close. You know the drill: middling, mid-tempo rhythms buoyed by classic R&B basslines, occasionally jazzy nuances that hardly qualify for engaging sonic experimentation, and stock guest appearances by other cult MCs that can't hold their own solo, like Wordsworth, MED and LMNO. Another depressing reminder that underground hip-hop has been continually eclipsed of late by its mainstream counterparts. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.stonesthrow.com/ohno

File Under Mundane nation under a groove

RIYL Jurassic 5, Dilated Peoples, et al.

ONEIDA

Happy New Year Jagjaguwar



While working on an ambitious triple-disc, the prolific Oneida decided to throw a follow-up celebration to last year's *The Wedding*. *Happy New Year's* opening track, "Distress," is a hymn chanted in a cathedral and shrouded with just as much mystery and meaning. There's something tribal, cult-like and secret about this *New Year* that is known only to the natives of Oneida; the grace of violins and cellos interlock with otherworldly hums for an eerie yet celebratory effect. The lyrics are nearly inaudible most of the time, but (thanks to the handy lyric sheet) they emerge like little poetic masterpieces from some omniscient spirit who's lived and died and speaks only in riddles and rhymes, never keeping up with the usually fast-paced beats, but entangling themselves within the other innumerable instruments. >>>MONICA MONZINGO

Link www.enemyhogs.com

File Under Is this the *New Year*?

RIYL Black Mountain, My Morning Jacket, Animal Collective

THE SADIES

In Concert Vol. 1 YepRoc



Known to many as one of Neko Case's several collaborators, the Sadies are in fact a fine-tuned country machine in their own right, with or without Case pulling vocal duty (whereas, let's face it, the New Pornographers are significantly less enthralling with only A.C. behind the mic). With this two-disc live set, we get a rollicking, howling good time. The crowd noise left in the mix by Steve Albini (a longtime collaborator with the group) is essential, adding to the down-home, Grand Ole Opry vibe on chunks of the disc, and equally bolstering the more Byrds-esque numbers, à la their legendary live recording of "Eight Miles High." *In Concert* offers a potent and never meandering concoction of everything from bluegrass to bluesy ballads and surfy interludes, but credit has to go to Albini for making each style feel ruggedly rooted in the same rich sonic soil. >>>KENNY HERZOG

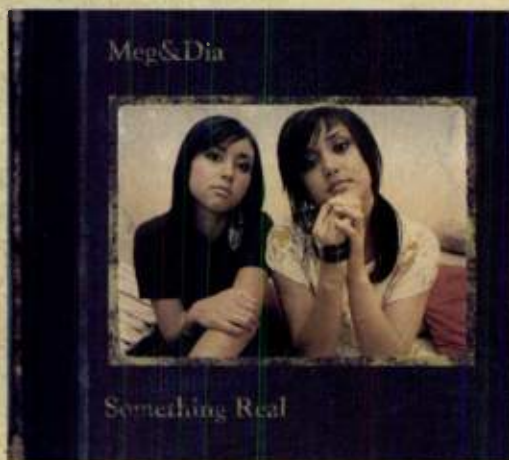
Link www.thesadies.net

File Under Country-fried pickin'

RIYL Ho-downs, Tom Waits, *Folsom Prison*

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REVIEWS

SHAPES AND SIZES

Shapes And Sizes Asthmatic Kitty



Pop songs can often feel like variations on the same pattern—three similar chords (well, five if you count the bridge) a catchy chorus

and back again, like some sort of musical feedback loop. Shapes And Sizes are able to remix that formula, creating pop tunes that feel just slightly off, and thus become infinitely more interesting. À la like-minded deconstructionists the Unicorns, Shapes And Sizes have two lead singers providing separate narrative points of view. On "Islands Gone Bad," a male voice complains about being stuck on a desert isle, while his female counterpart sees it as an opportunity to be close to him. The group also changes melodies as often as they swap singers, so there's very little momentum-building on any of the album's 10 tracks, a quality that can admittedly become annoying, especially once you land on a moment you'd like to hear reprised (like the verse change in the middle of "Wilderness"). But this scatterbrained tendency also fulfills one of the basic rules of listening to a good pop song—or at least a section of one: Enjoy it while it lasts. >>>JESSICA SUAREZ

Link www.shapesandsizes.ca

File Under Pop goes the pop

RiYL The Unicorns, Deerhoof

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rogue's Gallery, Sea Songs And Chanteys



Anti-

Only Gore Verbinski and Johnny Depp could convince some of the most impressive vocal talent out there that singing about the

life of a pirate would be an artistically credible adventure. Allegedly inspired by their experience of shooting the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* sequel, *Rogue's Gallery* somehow got everyone from Loudon Wainwright III and Ed Harcourt to Andrea Corr and Bryan Ferry on board, and the results, as with any conceptual compilation, are mixed. The focus isn't so much on quality and cohesion as it is evoking a consistent feeling of being stuck on the gay high seas, singing chantey songs and guzzling rum like it were Pellegrino. The results work best for those whose Gaelic accents lend themselves to the proceedings (Bono's "Dying Sailor To His Shipmates") and those who might actually descend from pirates to begin with (Nick Cave's "Pinery Boy"), and in the end, it's a niche collection anchored by some seriously alluring participants, and is best approached with that cautious level of seaskip optimism. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.anti.com

File Under Seaskip For Space

RiYL The Pogues, making pirate noises, Gaelic vocal talent

TUXEDOMOON

Hotel Bardo Soundtrack Crammed



Almost 30 years since their formation, avant-gardists Tuxedomoon are still proving their established talent with *Hotel Bardo*

Soundtrack, 20 tracks intended to back an experimental movie being shot by Greek visual artist George Kakanakis. And judging by the downright eerie nature of the music, that movie is going to be pretty damn weird. The instrumental songs flow into one another with no recognizable breaks, mixing elements of jazz and looming horns with a deep, hazy bass line to create an ethereal journey aimed straight for the senses. The interspersing of random audio samples layered over songs like "I'm Real Stupid" and "Mr. Comfort" add extra texture to the frequently minimalist proceedings. Another audio trance, *Hotel Bardo* is a testament to the impressive work Tuxedomoon has been turning out for years. >>>ERIN EBERHARDT

Link www.crammed.be/tuxedomoon

File Under In a silent way out there

RiYL Tortoise, Miles, Sigur Rós

M. WARD

Post-War Merge



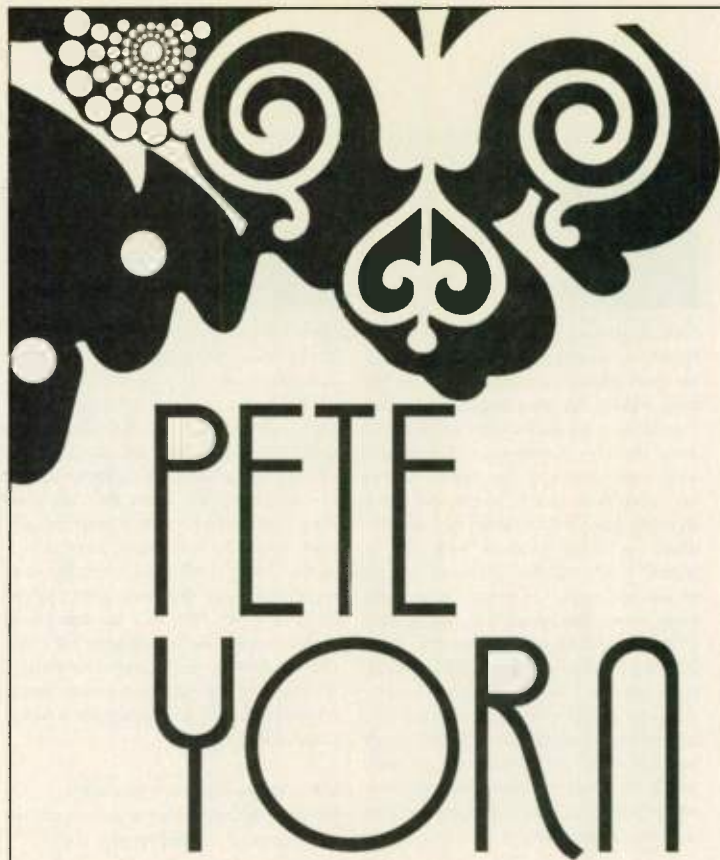
M. Ward's last album, 2005's wonderful *Transistor Radio*, was an homage to the sounds of radio's golden age, but even when

Ward is writing in the here-and-now, he sounds like a lost relic from another era. That's partly because of Ward's musical palette—deep-roots Americana that begins with Appalachian bluegrass and ends no later than Neil Young's *Harvest*—but mostly because of his impossibly antique-sounding voice. Falling somewhere between Billie Holiday and Tom Waits, Ward's dusty, expressive rasp is as warm and rich an instrument as any in the modern world, and on *Post-War*, that voice is effortlessly flexed over Ward's most immediate, tuneful songwriting to date. Sometimes his signatures can act as distancing elements—it can be difficult to fully embrace new music that seems like it was recorded onto wax cylinder—but listeners able to immerse themselves in Ward's vintage originals will find themselves transported and touched. >>>MICHAEL PATRICK NELSON

Link www.mwardmusic.com

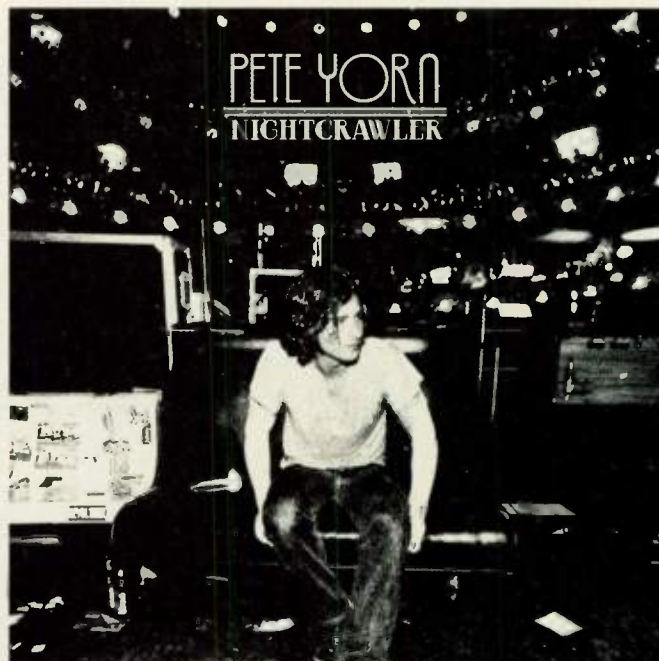
File Under The Art Of Ward

RiYL Jeff Buckley, My Morning Jacket, Ryan Adams



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SPOON

Telephono/Soft Effects Merge

Now that Spoon have scored some near-mainstream success, the folks at Merge have decided that the band's early efforts are ready for inspection. Reissuing *Telephono* (the band's 1996 Matador debut) and the *Soft Effects* EP (a five-song follow-up) coincides with the indie rock stalwarts' 10-year anniversary. Featuring original artwork and remastered tracks from the previously out-of-print recordings, the compilation provides a glimpse of Spoon's flannel-clad origins. The former disc is the punkier outing, featuring the deft melodic hooks of the Pixies. Meanwhile, *Soft Effects* shows the Austin natives moving away from reckless alt-rock ditties and closer to their current sound. It's the bonus material, however, that may be the most revealing—the video for *Telephono*'s "Not Turning Off" opens with scenes of the future Jaguar-jingle writers driving furiously into the night. >>>GINNY YANG



JESUS AND MARY CHAIN

Psychocandy/Darklands/Automatic/Honey's Dead/ Stoned and Dethroned Rhino

Blending the willful white noise of a punk-infused Velvet Underground with Phil Spector's melodramatic wall of sound and the secretly sullen heart of Beach Boys melodies, Jesus and Mary Chain crystallized the template for sweetly sorrowful, tinnitus-inducing pop. Early, "more important than the Sex Pistols" hype almost ruined their momentum, but the band survived into the late '90s, gaining songwriting strength, if de-fuzzing their sound. Any of these five re-releases would be welcome in your trench coat, but if pressed, the debut, *Psychocandy*, is a must for its jarring synthesis, and *Automatic*, their best blend of noise-streamlining and songwriting, is essential. There are no extra tracks (hopefully Rhino will reissue the 1988 B-sides/outtakes comp, *Barbed Wire Kisses*), but each disc adds that record's videos. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



MARK FOSSON

The Lost Takoma Sessions Drag City

Signed to John Fahey's Takoma label in the late '70s (and considered by the late acoustic maestro to be the best thing since sliced Kottke), Mark Fosson's masters never made it to marketed album. Why? Takoma went under, and Fosson's tapes have been in his garage since. Now unearthed by Drag City, *The Lost Takoma Sessions* reveal a guitar progeny of equal merit to Kottke and other contemporaries, and another in the list of forebears to everyone from Sam Beam to Eric Bachmann. There's nothing quietly earth shattering here, just plaintive plucking and gentle, deceptively complex arrangements that will be an automatic crowd-pleaser for fans of Fahey and his ilk. >>>KENNY HERZOG



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Suicide Squeeze—Slaying Since 1996 Suicide Squeeze

Seattle-based indie progenitors Suicide Squeeze may not have the consistent legacy of Matador or the historical caché of Sub Pop, but they've snuck some damn fine records down the pike since opening their doors. College music nerds who grew up on the early angularity of Modest Mouse will swoon over the material on disc one, which ultimately spans the gamut from Elliot Smith's haunting-in-hindsight "Division Day" to the charged, snotty melodies of the Magic Magicians' "Cascade Express." Disc two brings things up to modern-day melancholy with some beautiful cuts from Six Parts Seven and Red Stars Theory, a typically hazy and wonderful lo-fi groovefest from Black Mountain, and contributions from Hella, Minus The Bear and Headphones, among others. The key, though? Ninety percent of the set is out of print or unreleased. Unless, of course, you're into that whole illegal downloading thing. >>>KENNY HERZOG



CODE OF HONOR

Complete Studio Recordings 1982-1984 Subterranean

Code of Honor is a prime example of original Southern California hardcore that started strong but ended Warped (note the prescient cover shot of three skateboards and one guitar). Don't blame these guys. The tracks gathered here—while suffused with the polka beats and wordy political tongue-twisting that cramp Cali punk to this day—flail with the talking-then-spazzing polemics executed by East Coast brethren like Minor Threat and Bad Brains. Other songs evolve into the lurching tone that hardcore would take later in the decade, but this is mostly knee-scutt stuff, or as Chris Appelgren of Lookout! Records once said about California punk bands: "We were mad, but y'know, not that mad." >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



KENNY SMITH

One More Day Shake It!

After James Brown went to Cincinnati to record early '60s souls sides for King Records, lots of other brothers followed suit. While King got the acclaim, and subsequent reissues through the years, those other regional R&B howlers and their forgotten imprints made many a fine recording well into the '70s, usually released as very limited 7-inch singles, if at all. Now, local label Shake It! (which normally dabbles in modern garage punk) have set about rescuing many of those golden-era soul sounds from basement waterbugs, and will be rolling them out as the *Cincinnati Soul Spectrum Series*. This first volume is from Kenny Smith, a sure-shouter who smoothly switches from flair funk ("Here Comes The Law," "Go For Yourself") to crooning woo tunes ("Forgiveness") to novelty grind ("Skunkie") or pop butt-swingers ("Keep On Walkin' Baby"), but the stylistics all stay firmly funk. Smith wrote most of his tunes, so there are no middling covers of "Land Of 1,000 Dances." Packed with great info and images, *One More Day* is a saliva-inducing intro for the series. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

BLOWOFF ★

Blowoff Full Frequency Music
Not unlike Bob Mould's last solo outing (*Body Of Sound*), his new project starts off with guitars buzzing and vocals wailing away on two sweeping/catchy rockers. But this is a collab with house producer Richard Morel, so the rec soon shimmies off into the electro-shuffle beats and vocoder accoutrements (especially on the club-tastic "Saturday Night All The Time" and "Life With A View") that Mould seems to clutch tighter to these days, and to slightly better effect than on *Body*. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

BROADCAST ★

The Future Crayon Warp
Collecting all the hard-to-find miscelany of British futura-pop stalwarts Broadcast (from sexy 7-inch B-sides, like "Distant Call," to "DDL," the sci-fi Krautwerk homage off the first *All Tomorrow's Parties* comp) on one 18-track disc is a stroke of genius. These rarities feature slinky beats, icy chanteuse work and crisp sample collages that rival not only

their own better-known singles, but also those of Stereolab. >>>REBECCA RABER

CATTLE DECAPITATION ★

Karma. Bloody.Karma. Metal Blade
Distancing themselves further from default associations with the grindcore scene (the band once boasted two members from the Locust), Cattle Decapitation has unleashed one of the scariest American metal records in recent memory. Imagine if Anal Cunt was possessed by the spirit of a Norwegian black metal act. And, of course, add some banal lyrics about the banality of mankind. But if you're not into vocalists who sound like they're gargling Satan's babies, then steer far, far clear. >>>KENNY HERZOG

THE CHANNEL ★

Sibylline Machine C-Side
If you dig Pavement, the Silver Jews and laconic indie rock in general, there's nothing that should stop you from checking out the Channel. Unless you're pretty well satisfied with your Pavement and Silver Jews records. Some nice, Brian Wilson-inspired

vocal moments aside, *Sibylline* unfortunately feels a bit too familiar to make its mark. >>>KENNY HERZOG

CURSIVE ★

Happy Hollow Saddle Creek
Tim Kasher isn't the cleverest guy to ever hit the indie rock scene, despite noble attempts to couch his one-time emo band's work in ambitious concepts and complex instrumentation. But he is a vastly more sophisticated songwriter than most of his contemporaries. *Happy Hollow's* Pleasantville-gone-wrong backdrop is a bit overdone, but the music itself is expectedly catchy and quirky and Kasher's voice is still a fine instrument of angst. >>>KENNY HERZOG

SPENCER DICKINSON ★

The Man Who Lives For Love Yep Roc
Tough to say who will be psyched at the news of Jon Spencer joining forces with Luther and Cody Dickinson of the North Mississippi All-Stars. "Fine for what it is" would be an applicable statement, as Spencer's soul-man-on-uppers

vox rebel yell across skuzzy guitars that occasionally ("Sat Morn Cartoons") rev up to the point of intoxication. There's ultimately not much to distinguish *The Man* from a standard Jon Spencer Blues Explosion release, which may be both its fatal flaw conceptually and greatest asset musically. >>>KENNY HERZOG

ANI DIFRANCO ★

Reprieve Righteous Babe
Reprieve is essentially everything fans have come to expect from an Ani album: angry yet delicate, aggressive yet soft, political without going to the Neil-Young-*Living-With-War* degree. As always, DiFranco's quiver conveys authentic sentiments and her unique arrangements make for a fine folk record. >>>NICK BREUL

PETE DROGE ★

Under The Waves Puzzle Tree
On his fifth CD, Pete Droge hits the off-ramp where major label expectations are in the rearview mirror and the road ahead looks dark but more interesting. The sometimes icky quirks



CATTLE DECAPITATION

that have peppered his catalog are lost on this somber set. Still able to twirl an everyman melody ("Give It All Away"), most of *Under The Waves* is strummy songwriter stuff that echoes like ghosts of songs that once desired to fill bigger halls. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

GREG GRAFFIN ★

Cold As The Clay Anti-
Bad Religion frontman Greg Graffin must want us to know he's serious about this stripped-down folk affair by releasing it on Anti-. And it's a weird thing to criticize something that is obviously the result of earnest effort on the part of an intelligent man and veteran musician. But yikes. Hearing Graffin's familiar punk rasp bellow rebellion as he strums old-timey folk and takes flaccid stabs at singer-songwriter fare never feels like a fluid match. Here's to hoping something lights his plugged-in fire again soon. >>>KENNY HERZOG

MUSE ★

Blackholes And Revelations Warner Bros.
Muse is like the super-serious Brit-rock version of Kelly Clarkson. It's big, bloated, over-produced rock to make stadium masses sway and sensitive listeners swoon. Of course, most of us are suckers something anthemic and eager to please, hence Ms. Clarkson's crossover popularity. Or in the case of Muse, maybe there's a latent affinity for Queen inside all of us that needs to be explored. But like it or not, th UK faves' over-the-top bombast once again works, despite both itself and a few truly abhorrent tracks. >>>KENNY HERZOG

TOM PETTY ★

Highway Companion American
The venerable Petty's latest is aptly titled: Like the way his songs helped guide Orlando Bloom to Kirsten Dunst during the road-trip finale of *Elizabethtown*, *Companion's* 12 easy-going tracks are well-suited to cruising down dusky highways with the '65 convertible top popped open. Not in some superficial, Jack Johnson

laid-back fashion, of course, but by way of textured, rootsy folk, poignantly plucked ballads and honky-tonk stompers like lead cut "Saving Grace." The album might wear a bit thin by its finale, but Petty continues to age more gracefully than nearly all his peers. >>>KENNY HERZOG

RATATAT ★

Classics XL
Fuck yeah, *Zelda* kicks ass! Ratatat re-up with their second set of '80s video game-worthy instrumentals, full of stabby guitars and disco-y synths. By the time you make it halfway through, you might as well finish up and beat Gannon anyway. >>>KORY GROW

CARRIE RODRIGUEZ ★

Seven Angels On A Bicycle Train Wreck
On her third CD, this Berkeley grad with the languid violin and lowly voice has mastered her ethereal-country craft, as she sways from sparse strolls with sax, banjos or slow slide guitar to fiddle-full hoedown'n'outs.

Thankfully, Rodriguez's dreamy drawl has little of the condescending "hick" affects of many an alt-cowgirl. Her lyrics are standard "no-good man" fare, and the overall drowsy drift starts to drag by the end. Still, *Seven Angels* is swell for porch-sitting during the dog days of summer. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

SAY HI TO YOUR MOM ★

Impeccable Blahs Euphobia
Brooklyn collective Say Hi To Your Mom uses vampires as the muse for its latest effort—a 10-song concept album that is both quirky and bloodthirsty. Even with its morbid inspiration, the lo-fi trio remains committed to its Death Cab-style atmospheric and pre-occupation with idiosyncratic details. "The Reigning Champ of the Teething Crowd" in particular reveals the softer side of the undead: "She'll stop your pulse but not without some fun," announces singer Eric Elbogen. And this record's a good way to get the blood going. >>>GINNY YANG



PHOTO: Gray Blue

MUSE

CHARLIE SEXTON AND SHANNON MCNALLY ★

Southside Sessions Back Porch

A less-odd-than-it-seems pairing of the Austin virtuoso (Sexton) and the Long Island songbird (McNally) results in a better-than-expected vocal record sparsely sprinkled with acoustic accoutrements. Sexton's soulful twang and McNally's Bonnie Raitt-esque yearning mingle magically as they delicately hover over one another, avoiding obvious harmonies, but still forging memorable melodies. >>>KENNY HERZOG

SLAYER ★

Christ Illusion American/Warner Bros.

How do you follow up an album released on 9/11 that's titled *God Hates Us All*? If you're Slayer, you wallop blasphemous cover art together with an even more anti-Christian album title and songs about religion being a "whore" and terrorism from a terrorist's perspective. The lyrics might not cut as deeply as those on *Reign In Blood* or echo current events so creepily as

Seasons In The Abyss, but fuck if Slayer still ain't the most offensive band since Menudo. >>>KORY GROW

SNOWDEN ★

Anti-Anti Jade Tree

It takes balls to name your band after an iconic character from *Catch-22*, but these Atlantans, who fuse the layered, reverb-heavy guitars of Slow-dive and Ride with the cool, choppy rhythms of *Faith*-era Cure, work hard to earn the right to literary pretension on their debut collection of dark (think Interpol), dynamic pop songs. >>>REBECCA RABER

SUFJAN STEVENS ★

The Avalanche Asthmatic Kitty

This collection of 21 outtakes from *Illinois* doesn't dilute the quality of the original, but works as a fine companion piece. Though the three extra versions of "Chicago" are excessive, tracks such as "The Henny Buggy Band," "Dear Mr. Supercomputer" and "Adlai Stevenson" justify their existence. This set has bought Stevens more time to, say, write (he has a



TEDDYBEARS

masters in creative writing), knit (he teaches it to blind women) and sew (makes all the costumes for his band) before he has to get off his ass and write up another state. Maybe this time he'll make it easy on himself—Wyoming can't be worth more than an EP. >>>JESSICA SUAREZ

SUPERSUCKERS ★

Paid Mid-Fi

The line between the Supersuckers' rock records, country asides and singer Eddie Spaggetti's solo CDs is

completely blurred on the latest from these booze 'n' brawl vets. Sauced '70s West Coast bar rock bellies up to a couple of their patented revamps—this time in the form of decelerated takes on old faves "Roadworn And Weary" and "Jackelope Eye." *Paid* sees the 'Suckers well settled into ragged country rock country.

>>>ERIC DAVIDSON

SUPERSYSTEM ★

A Million Microphones Touch And Go
On their second LP, Supersystem



RATATAT



remain the best El Guapo knockoff El Guapo has yet to spawn. Their synths are dancier than their previous band's, and their spazzy weirdcore vocals usually stay on the right side of "weird." In sober words, it ain't just for the potheads anymore.

>>>KORY GROW

TEDDYBEARS ★

Soft Machine Big Beat/Atlantic
Teddybears want to rock the indie dance party, but it would be nice if they stuck to straight heavenly dance beats and things felt less like a scatterbrained experiment in cheeky good times. That said, when Neneh Cherry guests on the joyous, weirdly Len-esque summer smash "Are You Feeling It?" things finally click in near-classic fashion.

>>>KENNY HERZOG

THE THERMALS ★

The Body, The Blood, The Machine
Sub Pop
Until Death Cab For Cutie grows a pair, the Thermals will remain the Northwest literati's best punk band. With frontman Hutch Harris's

Degrassi Junior High romanticism ("We were born to sin... we don't think we're special, sir/We know everybody is.") and his band's ecstatic, post-Buzzcocks pop enthusiasm, it'll be a while before they can screw this up. >>>KORY GROW

THOM YORKE ★

The Eraser XL
On XL, Thom Yorke showcases his knack for odd-yet-endearing melodies and IDM-era clicks and cuts. Along with longtime producer Nigel Godrich, the little frontman that could carves a minimal sound out of slithering beats, raw piano and sparse guitar work. Some tracks feel a bit underdeveloped, but highlights like "Harrowdown Hill" and "Analyse" manage to fit a surprising amount of emotive beauty into such tiny packaging. *The Eraser* may not fully satisfy your hunger for new Radiohead, but it will certainly serve as a tantalizing snack. >>>TODD HYMAN

ZUTONS ★

Tired Of Hanging Around Deltasonic
These Liverpudlians exhibit the similar

polarizing effect of Queen—either they're gloriously maudlin or annoyingly campy, though there's little denying they've got real talent. Their second CD bumps around in a chromed-up T. Rex convertible, snappy hooks, catty horns and Boyan Chowdhury's vox like if Jack White were more burly. It's iffy until they hit a stride in the middle, and if you've stuck with them that long, you'll be a fan.

>>>ERIC DAVIDSON

VARIOUS ARTISTS ★

Anti-Disco League Vol. 1 Templecombe
Considering the latent silliness of Oi! music, coupled with the fact it often sounds like discarded Anti-Nowhere League demos, it's amazing to think the stuff's even attained genuine genre status. This compilation of recent Oi! gangs from around the globe lays off silly political rhetoric and sticks to pointing two stiff fingers towards those always-inspiring non-blue collared jerks, and offers a sturdy mix of thug punk (Crashed Out, Templars), a girl (!) singer (Deadline) and lots of garbled yobs who sound as if they're simultaneously chewing on their jack boots. Oi! >>> ERIC DAVIDSON

VARIOUS ARTISTS ★

Confuzed Disco Irma
Non-stop sickness. Obscure Italian electro from the '80s. Put this shit on at your loft party and bliss out for hours—or for what will at least feel that long. Just find this, then buy it. Then let your stereo (or whatever other good-time aphrodisiacs you require) do the rest.

>>>KENNY HERZOG

VARIOUS ARTISTS ★

Dolemite—The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack Relapse
This was never released on CD? And Relapse was the label that finally unearthed it? Good to know life still harbors inexplicable mysteries. If you haven't seen the flick, maybe you should begin with Rudy Ray Moore's kick-ass soundtrack, which brings the Stax soul, grindhouse funk and "mess with me and die" attitude of the movie into your eardrums. >>>KENNY HERZOG

VARIOUS ARTISTS ★

Drum Machinegun Relapse
This must be Armageddon: It's a Locust plague! With copious electro-grind bands issuing new releases (maybe we can also blame Agoraphobic Nosebleed), this comp features the best of the digital blasts, with Genghis Tron, Slough, Ocrilim [Octus] and something called "Mecha Bongzilla" leading the way. Resistance is futile, nerdlings! >>>KORY GROW

VARIOUS ARTISTS ★

Red Hot + Latin Redux Nacional
Not the most necessary redux of a not-necessarily-so-great comp in the first place, it's difficult not to cringe at many of *Red Hot + Latin's* cross-bred selections, most notably Los Fabulosos Cadillacs and Fishbone's take on the already cornball "What's New Pussy-cat?" Cibo Matto at least have some fun lounging around on "Aguas de Marco." But the sheer unfocused variety of artists fosters mixed results at best.

>>>KENNY HERZOG



CONFUZED DISCO

MUSIC ON FILM: DVD REVIEWS

KEY:



BUY



RENT



RECYCLE



The Legend Of Wu-Tang: The Videos

(BMG Heritage)



A few things stand out while watching *The Legend of Wu-Tang*: How superfluous U-God and Cappa Donna were to the otherwise standout talents of Ghostface, Meth, Raekown, et al.; how absurd and bloated the Clan's big-budget excursions were; but mostly, how scary—and scarily good—the no-nonsense, sword-and-rhyme-slinging Staten Island homeboys were in their hungrier days. “Protect Ya Neck” is a downright frightening journey into grimy slums, up there with the first time you saw *The Warriors* and decided never to leave your suburban enclave. It's a world where dudes stand nonchalantly with baseball bats and gats as nappy-haired hoodlums with gold teeth spit apocalyptic venom over black-and-white images of their crusty environs. The real treat, however, is the never-released 1994 documentary *Enter The Wu-Tang*, which is brief, but contains some classic interview footage with all members explaining their philosophies on music, martial arts and madness, spliced together with raw, early performances from *Yo! MTV Raps*. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Burn To Shine 3: Portland, OR 06.15.05 (Trixie)



In his continuing quest to document indie culture in its most thriving societies, Fugazi drummer Brendan Canty chose the City of Roses for his third *Burn To Shine* installment. As with Washington, D.C. and Chicago, Canty filmed a one-song-per-band concert in a condemned house that firefighters burn for training purposes at the end. There are some great “name” bands (Shins, Quasi, the Decemberists) on this collection, which are balanced by fine performances from some lesser-known artists (Wet Confetti, the Ready). The show-stealers, though, are the Thermals' energetic “Welcome To The Planet” and Sleater-Kinney's “Modern Girl,” during which drummer Janet Weiss crawls through a window to play with her band. The strangest part of the film is musical comedian Tom Heini's “Christmas Tree On Fire,” which they've unfortunately sequestered to the bonus material; he seems out of it, but the lyrics about a fiery Christmas seem fitting given the motif. Canty will have to do some traveling to find a city that will top this one. >>>KORY GROW



Roadhouse

(MGM)



True, aside from the Jeff Healey band's resident status at the movie's Midwestern dive bar, there's little musicality to this 1989 Patrick Swayze gem. But it's probably one of the most unintentionally entertaining, archetypal '80s cult films you'll have the privilege of enduring, and is packaged in self-aware fashion befitting its ironic status. Kevin Smith and his production partner Scott Mosier add some hilarious, *Mystery Science Theater*-style commentary, in addition to a separate commentary track by the director, who juxtaposes their mockery with absurd seriousness. Ditto for Swayze on the bonus features' new interviews, as he waxes philosophical for eons about Dalton the bouncer, despite co-star Kelly Lynch's sardonic look back at the film. From the bizarre-o cast (Ben Gazzara, John Doe and Terry Funk in the same awful movie?) to the insane one-liners and over-the-top violence (from monster trucks to throat-thrashings), this timeless beacon of dunderheaded, cable-classic excess is, as the box declares, “The last call...for action!” >>>KENNY HERZOG

Dreadheads

(Mutant Girl)



Steven R. Hurlburt and Flournoy Holmes have essentially crafted *Rich White Kids With Dreads Parking Lot*. And as a couple of their interviewees (notably a pissed off Oregon security woman) point out, the phenomenon of white neo-hippies with giant crusty dreadlocks is borne largely out of bored suburbanites. The film itself suffers from a more critical assessment of the culture and a lack of attention to the actual music. Of course, for the majority of “dreadheads,” it's just about getting spun and spewing pseudo-philosophical bullshit anyway. The most enlightened perspectives come from Bob Weir, Dennis McNally, Wavy Gravy and other key figures of the movement who, incidentally, don't have dreads, never did and don't seem to fully understand their origins. But yet at some point, legions of teenage runaways and spoiled societal dropouts equated their Rasta rip-off hairdo with personal freedom and anti-systemic rebellion. Ultimately, *Dreadheads* is a low-budget quickie that could have benefited from loftier aspirations and less inherently unlikeable subjects. >>>KENNY HERZOG



Afro-Punk

(Image)



There's no arguing with the importance of James Spooner's 66-minute documentary. The characters *Afro-Punk* profiles—blacks in the punk rock community, struggling to come to grips with their identities as outsiders in an outsider's world—have been long-overlooked (perhaps neglected) by rock historians and journalists. Indeed, like many documentaries of its kind, the film raises tough questions that don't have clear answers. But after the all the surface scratching and self-reflective musings on the state of punk rock, audience members are left feeling their noses pressed against the glass. Such a sensation could be seen as commentary (highlighting the disconnect a black punk rocker feels in an all-white community), if only Spooner's storytelling was more concise. Even so, the host of inspiring youngsters (Cipher), punk rock lifers (Fishbone) and true radicals (Tamar Kali) make the experience somewhat worthwhile for fans of punk anthropology. >>>ROBBIE MACKKEY

Hardcore—Raw & Uncut

(Fall Thru)



There's been some mild controversy over Fall Thru's home-video collages of people beating the living daylights out of each other. But the reality is, there's something utterly hypnotic about watching real clips of kids at hardcore shows and real screaming women in parking lots pound each other in uncoordinated, bloodthirsty fashion. Most of us are so conditioned to choreographed violence that actual bloodletting and unscripted brawls feel haphazard and, ironically, inauthentic. But it slowly sets in that these raw encounters and their crimson-soaked aftermaths are what real violence looks and sounds like—though fortunately, most of us don't know what it actually feels like. Things do segue from fascinating to disturbing to disgusting fairly quickly, largely because the “filmmakers” seem to take such giddy delight in filming the proceedings. That being said, like rubbernecking past the proverbial car accident it's undeniably difficult to resist the temptation to check it for yourself. >>>KENNY HERZOG

CMJ RADIO TOP 50

PERIOD ENDING 7/18/2006
WWW.CMJ.COM/NMR/

COMPILED FROM CMJ'S REPORTING POOL OF COLLEGE AND
NON-COMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS

TW	LW	2W	PK	WKS	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	1	1	1	6	SONIC YOUTH Rather Ripped	Geffen
2	3	4	2	6	HOT CHIP The Warning	Astralwerks
3	2	2	1	7	CAMERA OBSCURA Let's Get Out Of This Country	Merge
4	5	7	4	5	FUTUREHEADS News And Tributes	StarTime International—Vagrant
5	8	12	5	4	REGINA SPEKTOR Begin To Hope	Sire—Warner Bros.
6	7	6	6	8	RACONTEURS Broken Boy Soldiers	V2
7	6	3	1	9	GNARLS BARKLEY St. Elsewhere	Downtown—Atlantic
8	13	66	8	3	JOHNNY CASH American V: A Hundred Highways	American—Lost Highway
9	4	5	4	7	BE YOUR OWN PET Be Your Own Pet	Ecstatic Peace
10	74	—	10	2	THOM YORKE The Eraser	XL
11	11	13	11	6	ELVIS COSTELLO AND ALLEN TOUSSAINT The River	Verve Forecast
12	9	14	9	6	PSAPP The Only Thing I Ever Wanted	Domino
13	23	55	13	3	CANADA This Cursed House	Quite Scientific
14	14	11	11	5	FRANK BLACK Fast Man Raider Man	Back Porch
15	18	139	15	3	MICHAEL FRANTI AND SPEARHEAD Yell Fire	Anti
16	16	23	16	5	JOAN JETT AND THE BLACKHEARTS Sinner	Blackheart
17	20	28	17	5	SMOOSH Free To Stay	Barsuk
18	12	17	12	8	MOJAVE 3 Puzzles Like You	4AD—Beggars
19	184	—	19	2	MUSE Black Holes And Revelations	Warner Bros.
20	44	—	20	2	JAMES FIGURINE Mistake Mistake Mistake Mistake	Plug Research
21	10	10	4	7	ASOBI SEKSU Citrus	Friendly Fire
22	22	39	22	3	AWESOME COLOR Awesome Color	Ecstatic Peace
23	35	—	23	2	MIDLAKE The Trials Of Van Occupanther	Bella Union
24	41	—	24	2	CANSEI DE SER SEXY Cansei De Ser Sexy	Sub Pop
25	146	—	25	2	ONEIDA Happy New Year	Brah—Jagiaguwar
26	15	20	15	7	ZERO 7 The Garden	Atlantic
27	46	—	27	2	PEACHES Impeach My Bush	XL
28	17	8	6	9	MISSION OF BURMA The Obliterati	Matador
29	25	22	22	7	BOUNCING SOULS The Gold Record	Epitaph
30	34	34	30	6	AFI Decemberunderground	Tiny Evil—Interscope
31	21	24	21	5	MR. LIF Mo' Mega	Definitive Jux
32	45	84	32	4	KEANE Under The Iron Sea	Interscope
33	58	93	33	3	MSTRKRFT The Looks	Last Gang
34	40	102	34	3	PUFFY AMIYUMI Splurge	Tofu
35	30	33	28	6	CRACKER Greenland	Cooking Vinyl
36	42	57	36	4	GUSTER Ganging Up On The Sun	Reprise
37	26	36	26	6	ALEXI MURDOCH Time Without Consequence	Zero Summer
38	—	—	38	1	NEW YORK DOLLS One Day It Will Please Us To Remember...	Roadrunner
39	71	—	39	2	FORMAT Dog Problems	Vanity—Nettwerk
40	56	—	40	2	PET SHOP BOYS Fundamental	Rhino
41	—	—	41	1	SAY HI TO YOUR MOM Impeccable Blahs	Euphobia
42	48	72	42	4	SMALL SINS Small Sins	Astralwerks
43	28	44	28	5	BRIGHTBLACK MORNING LIGHT Brightblack Morning Light	Matador
44	24	9	5	9	WALKMEN A Hundred Miles Off	Record Collection
45	32	35	32	3	WIRE Pink Flag	Pink Flag
46	31	18	16	8	MURDER BY DEATH In Bocca Al Lupo	Tent Show
47	57	—	47	2	SILVERSUN PICKUPS Carnavas	Dangerbird
48	—	—	48	1	BOAT Songs That You Might Not Like	Magic Marker
49	19	15	8	8	RADIO 4 Enemies Like This	Astralwerks
50	47	51	47	4	DIRTY ON PURPOSE Hallelujah Sirens	North Street



SONIC YOUTH



THOM YORKE

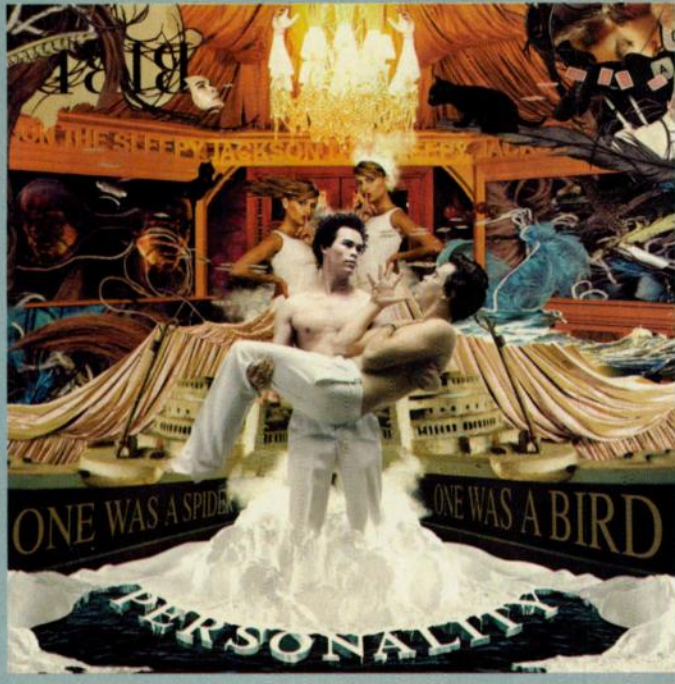
CMJ RETAIL TOP 20

TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	—	THOM YORKE The Eraser (40:00)	XL
2	—	MUSE Black Holes And Revelations (44:24)	Warner Bros.
3	2	GNARLS BARKLEY St. Elsewhere (70:03)	Downtown—Atlantic
4	1	JOHNNY CASH American V: A Hundred Highways (27:60)	American—Lost Highway
5	75	SUFJAN STEVENS The Avalancha: Outtakes And Extras From... (22)	Asthmatic Kitty
6	—	PIMP C Pimpalation (58:34)	Asylum
7	—	FORMAT Dog Problems (30:52)	Vanity—Nettwerk
8	—	PEACHES Impeach My Bush (40:26)	XL
9	5	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS Stadium Arcadium (49:96)	Warner Bros.
10	4	NELLY FURTADO Loose (6:30:02)	DreamWorks
11	3	RISE AGAINST The Sufferer And The Witness (69:50)	Geffen
12	8	CORINNE BAILEY RAE Corinne Bailey Rae (35:41:17)	Capitol
13	—	CUT CHEMIST The Audience's Listening (48:59)	Warner Bros.
14	14	RACONTEURS Broken Boy Soldiers (27:30)	V2
15	9	KEANE Under The Iron Sea (65:37)	Interscope
16	16	YUNG JOC New Joc City (83:37)	Bad Boy
17	—	ALL THAT REMAINS The Fall Of Ideals (82:56)	Prosthetic
18	12	SONIC YOUTH Rather Ripped (67:50)	Geffen
19	18	PEARL JAM Live At Easy Street (71:46)	J
20	13	WOLFMOTHER Wolfmother (40:36)	Modular—Interscope

CMJ A.I.M.S. TOP 20

(ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA STORES)

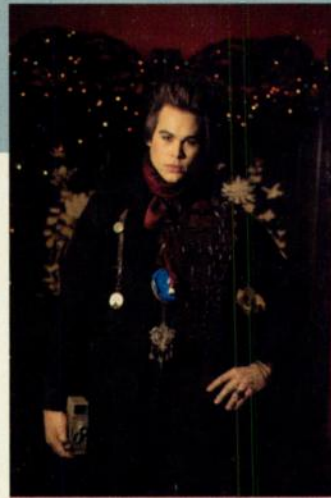
TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	—	THOM YORKE The Eraser (40:20)	XL
2	25	SUFJAN STEVENS The Avalancha: Outtakes And Extras From... (22)	Asthmatic Kitty
3	1	JOHNNY CASH American V: A Hundred Highways (27:60)	American—Lost Highway
4	—	BUTCH WALKER The Rise And Fall Of Butch Walker And The Lets... (64:9)	Epic
5	2	GNARLS BARKLEY St. Elsewhere (70:03)	Downtown—Atlantic
6	—	MUSE Black Holes And Revelations (44:24)	Warner Bros.
7	3	SONIC YOUTH Rather Ripped (67:50)	Geffen
8	—	PEACHES Impeach My Bush (40:20)	XL
9	12	ALEXI MURDOCH Time Without Consequence (85:40)	Zero Summer
10	8	RACONTEURS Broken Boy Soldiers (27:30)	V2
11	9	KEANE Under The Iron Sea (65:37)	Interscope
12	4	CAMERA OBSCURA Let's Get Out Of This Country (11:23)	Merge
13	13	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS Stadium Arcadium (49:96)	Warner Bros.
14	38	BEIRUT Gulag Orkestar (48)	Ba Da Bing!
15	6	REGINA SPEKTOR Begin To Hope (44:12)	Sire—Warner Bros.
16	24	MARK KNOPFLER AND EMMYLOU HARRIS All The Road... (85:62:42)	Warner Bros.
17	27	PEARL JAM Live At Easy Street (71:46)	J
18	5	DASHBOARD CONFSSIONAL Dusk And Summer (60:10:2)	Vagrant
19	—	TV ON THE RADIO Return To Cookie Mountain (26:07)	4AD
20	7	DR. OCTAGON The Return Of Dr. Octagon (92:17)	OCD International



DEEP COVER

SLEEPY JACKSON Frontman Luke Steele Gives Himself A Pick-Me-Up On The Cover Of *Personality: One Was A Spider One Was A Bird* (Astralwerks)

INTERVIEW BY KORY GROW



What's your history with art?

I did three years of graphic art school.

How did you approach the art for *Personality*?

Once the record's done, it's like, "Man, what are we gonna do?" I wanted it to look a bit '30s, but bands try and do it now, it just looks like, "Oh, you're going for that look." I was trying to get a new look with hints of that... Started off it was just me [but it] needed something more. So we had this concept to shoot it in this Gershwin room, which is this elaborate room in the Hyatt hotel in Perth. It's nice. It's just all wine cabinets [in this] octagon-shaped room—big, bulky, colored curtains hanging down and this big chandelier in the middle. So we did that photo shoot... like the last supper in 2020. But uh, Snappy [behind Luke] was there for all of the recordings, so she saw both sides of my personality.

How do you want to define those two sides?

Anyone can decide which is which. One's the spider, one's the bird.

Did you try to convey any musical themes in the imagery?

I tried to get that melting point of conflict and resolution. Ask anyone who's in drama: One actress is diplomatic, the other is undiplomatic, and that creates drama. All the characters in the middle react to other characters and that stems drama.

Is that why you put yourself in the center?

It was the main image that we started with, so it's going in. It was just white before, and then it had personality going along [the bottom] and it didn't work.

"I've been working out as well, so maybe it'll sell a few more records."

There's two of everything. There's me, but then there's another one of me there, and then there's this feather... but this is, you know, this is just the deeper one.

Why isn't anyone else in the band in the picture?

They didn't really go through that stuff. I mean, I went through it. You work for like five months, you go through it. It feels like 4,000 years or something. Bizarre, bizarre.

Why did you decide to go shirtless?

Well... I guess just to make it more personal, you know? Was thinking of just going full [nude], but maybe that's pushing a bit too far. [Laughs] And I've been working out as well, so maybe it'll sell a few more records.

What does the cover say about your personality?

There's this line: "I'm not all that God told me to be, but thank God I'm not what I used to be." When I was younger, I did a lot of stupid things... sort of mouthing off, typical kind of rock-head. All that makes what I am now, its not bad or worse, its just sort of true. What do you see in it?

It makes your life look chaotic.

Yeah, well when I was doing the record, there was a lot of confusion. Spending 50 grand and not really having a strong relationship, that's what its all about—having relationships with people, really kind of working with them. I became completely brainwashed in this state of confusion. Confusion is death, you know? I had to be honest with the music and take that step. That's why it's just me on the cover. It wasn't silent enough, it was just you and there's all these things... and you surrender to them and, once I did that, it just became amazing again.

VOICE

THE VILLAGE VOICE SIXTH ANNUAL

2006

SIREN MUSIC FESTIVAL™



Stars



Art Brut



Scissor Sisters



Art Brut



Tapes'n Tapes



She Wants Revenge



Serena Maneesh



The Cribs



Dirty On Purpose



The Misfits



The Rogers Sisters



Priestess



The Striks



Deadboy and The Explantmen



Man Man

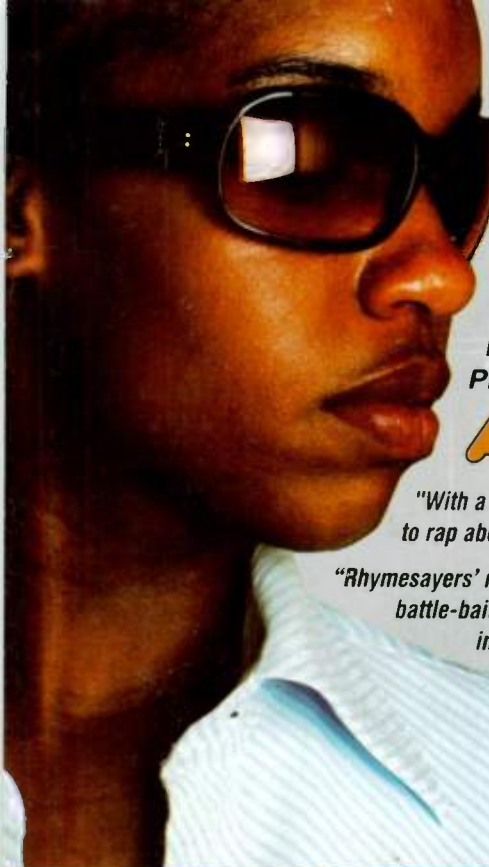


VOICE

The Village Voice would like to thank the Siren 2006 bands, audience, sponsors and promotional partners. Also, Community Board 13, Coney Island Chamber of Commerce, Coney Island Police Department - 60th Precinct, City of New York Parks and Recreation, New York Aquarium, and all of the local Coney Island businesses. Special thanks to the Siren Music Festival 2006 staff, crew and vendors for making The Village Voice 6th annual Siren Music Festival a success. See you next year! villagevoice.com/siren

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PSALM ONE

THE DEATH OF FREQUENT FLYER

The new album from Southside Chicago native Psalm One. Featuring appearances by Brother Ali, Thaione Davis, KaDi and Ang13. Produced by Overflo, Ant, Maker, Thaione Davis, Madd Crates, and V-Traxx.

AVAILABLE NOW

"With a smooth flow and a throaty voice...Psalm One is the rare woman to rap about her real life with a winning honesty." -ROLLING STONE ★★★★★

"Rhymesayers' newest star-and believe the star part...Psalm One spits jagged battle-baiting bits of braggadocio that meld seamlessly with scarred ventures into personal hurts. Finally, breath control from a female rapper is more than a blowjob joke." -URB ★★★★★

#1 Most Added at CMJ Hip Hop



Available on Rhymesayers CD and Double Vinyl.



SOUL POSITION



SOUL POSITION
THINGS GO BETTER WITH RJ & AL

"The mainstream may sleep on Rj and Al but you don't have to make the same mistake." -URB (★★★★)

"Rjd2 and Blueprint are two of the most talented artists making rap music today. Best album I've heard in 2006." -HipHopdx.com (XXXXX)

"Things do indeed go better with Blueprint and Rjd2 in your ears, because they recognize hip hop's limitless potential..." -RapReviews.com (9 of 10)

"What's with Minnesotans and their scary good indie hip hop records?" -Spin (A-)

"Equal parts melancholy, hopeful and hilarious, Audition is a hip hop album that flashes influences of metal, emo-rock and pop punk-inspiration that's mostly endearing and unusually authentic." -URB (★★★★)

"Audition is further proof that most of the interesting music being created today is coming out of hip hop...mature beyond his years." -Clamor

P.O.S
AUDITION



ATMOSPHERE



ATMOSPHERE
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE
HOW MUCH FUN WE'RE HAVING

"Atmosphere has never sounded as pointed and focused as it does here on it's fifth album." -Billboard

"Both a return to form and a major step forward" -URB (★★★★)

"An album that's for neither hardcore hip hop fans nor punkrockers, but for everyone." -Alternative Press

COMING SOON BROTHER ALI "THE UNDISPUTED TRUTH", MAC LETHAL "11:11" AND MORE...



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