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MONTHLY



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GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT US TO HEAR?
CMJ New Music Monthly

CULTURE SHOCK 6

Well folks, you'll be glad to know there's an all-new use for your iPod besides being a conduit for illegally acquired MP3s by bands that hardly make any money. Want to know more? Just flip to the most tawdry page six this side of the *New York Post*. There's also some fun stuff in there about what to do in Memphis if you don't care about Elvis and some of the month's most ludicrously awesome song titles.

QUICK FIX 8

Colin Meloy reveals that his closer kind of sucks. Also, Isis gets deep—and explores some of their favorite deep cuts; the Blood Brothers boast about dressing better than you, and Jeremy Enigk humbly proves he's more pious than you.

ON THE VERGE 14

Only two of them are from New York this time, we swear. We're not saying that means the other ones are any good, but hey, we figured we'll even throw Canada a bone. Check out the scoop on *Czford Collapse*, *Chin Up Chin Up*, *Earl Greyhound*, *Tokyo Police Club*, the *Horrors*, *Danava*, *Black Helicopter*, *Relay* and *Women & Children*.

BISHOP ALLEN 22

So much for the not-dating-over-New-York-bands thing. But how can you avoid it when they play such perfectly damaged indie rock and put out self-released EPs every friggin' month? Kevin Kampwirth tries to answer that question, but only discovers it's rhetorical.

SUNNO)))/BORIS 24

Not since Stryper contemplated collaborating with Loudness have such bi-continental metal powerhouses joined forces. But how on earth did Boris' Japanese raisiners understand what the hell any of the guys in Sunno))) were saying, nevermind make a wallop of a drone record with them? Leave it to Kory Grow to dig up the details.

ON THE COVER: CLIPSE 26

Sibling MCs Pusha T and Malice have been putting out lauded underground mixtapes while their fans wait for the long-delayed release of *Hell Hath No Fury*. And they've been talking smack about their own label. And pontificating on their rapidly growing fanbase of white, college backpackers. Jessica Suarez sat down with the guys for an eye-opening and brutally honest discussion.

ON THE CD 34

Bright Eyes, Oasis, Copeland, Mew, the Comfies, Amos Lee, Boys Like Girls, A.G., Sandi Thom, A Bac Think, the Rewinds, Hammock, Nicole Atkins, Terra Diablo, Delicate Noise, David Ford and Jay Wells

REVIEWS 36

We have a little theory here at *CMJ NMM*: You can never review enough stuff. Hopefully you dug our excavation of recent reissues from *From The Archives*, cause now there are two pages of remastered and previously unearthed gems by everyone from Pretenders to the Fix. Lovin' the *DVD Reviews*? Well, there's still just one page of those, but they're really interesting damnit. And just to prove we can read too, there's even some literary criticism tossed in for good measure. (Oh, and for those of you who like music, there's still more than 70 write-ups of spankin' new albums.)

CHARTS 46

These are bound to be filled with less bad news than your medical charts... unless you hate guitars.

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BEST SONG TITLES OF THE MONTH

- 1 The Blood Brothers-"Set Fire To The Face On Fire" (V2)
- 2 Holy Smokes-"If You Pull It Out, You Better Use It" (Skin Graft)
- 3 Danava-"Quiet Babies Astray In A Manger" (Kemado)
- 4 Dmonstrations-"Hairy Pretzel" (GSL)
- 5 Robert Pollard-"Tomorrow Will Not Be Another Day" (Merge)

THE BLOOD BROTHERS:
Making titles for the titles of things with titles.



HOMAGE IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Falling between Black Velvet Flag and Weird Al (with the voice-cracking, piano-pounding skills of John Mars), Richard Cheese is ready to unleash his holiday album, *Silent Nightclub*. But it's more fitting 'round Halloween, since he's dressing up vocally as his favorite pop and punk bands, from the Dead Kennedys ("Holiday In Cambodia") to Beyoncé ("Naughty Girl"). Though perhaps most fitting is Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus." So this season, light up a stogie, slap your stand-up bass and, as Richard himself would say, "Get down with the Dickness." Brilliant. >>>KENNY HERZOG



SCENE REPORT MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

ACCORDING TO RIVER CITY TANLINES GUITARIST ALICIA TROUT...

THE BEST PLACE TO SEE A BAND IS:
"[The]Buccaneer bar. Small, dark, great tasty drinks flow into the wee hours, nice bartenders, good catfish, outside sitting area. Little P.A., but the room has great sound, great jukebox. Goes crazy at night, girls take off their shirts, floor bounces, giant mermaid and pirate painting over the fireplace mantle. And it's a dive bar with wireless Internet!"

THE BEST PLACE TO BUY RECORDS IS:
"Goner Records. Great taste, stock rare blues, garage, rock 'n' roll, Memphis-based music, and they do live shows. Plus they put out great stuff on their label: King Louie, Guitar Wolf, King Khan."

THE BEST LOCAL BAND YOU NEVER HEARD OF IS: "The Oscars. Killed By Death-style punk rock 'n' roll with catchy-assed melodies and amazing sarcastic lyrics about how stupid people in this capitalistic world of ours are about war and money and beauty. More real than anyone can ever try to be, they are naturals at it."

River City Tanlines' latest CD, I'm Your Negative, is out now on Dirtnap. >>>INTERVIEW BY ERIC DAVIDSON

MPEG'D FOR SUCCESS

Not since *Wayne's World's* Garth left a fellow guitar-shop patron awe-struck with his Neil Peart-inspired drum solo has a percussionist come out of leftfield with such unexpected stick skills. Visit www.mranduck.com and put "four-year-old drummer" in the search box to watch this kid kit-basher keep time with some pre-recorded funk basslines for two jaw-dropping minutes. The little fucker even sports some big-ass studio headphones like a true pro. And surely, he will make thousands of aspiring-but-unsuccessful musicians worldwide feel like even bigger amateurs. >>>KH



THE WHAT THE F*#@? FACTOR

They've already got music-sensitive sneakers, and your iPod can be adapted to everything short of a microwave oven, so why not create a device that allows your MP3s to provide an orgasm? The new OhMiBod product is, basically, a vibrator. But it's a vibrator specially designed to pulse along with your favorite songs. While all that herky-jerky mathcore in your collection might not fit the bill, put some Portishead on your Pod and the attached OhMiBod will respond rhythmically in kind. The product is a creation of former Apple employee Suki (because wouldn't the mastermind of such a gizmo have an ambiguous name?), whose husband once got her an iPod and a vibrator as duel gifts, leading to Suki's brainstorm to merge the two. Think it's a novelty idea for perverts? I reckon not. Just ask "Tess M.C." from Boston, one of its 500 "test-drivers," who proclaims, "Finally, a way for women to enjoy their bodies and music simultaneously." And here that's why I thought they created dancing. >>>KH



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FIVE WORKS OF INSPIRATION

WITH ISIS' AARON TURNER AND MIKE GALLAGHER
INTERVIEW BY KORY GROW

Within the layered beauty of their post-jazz-metal malaise, Los Angeles-based quintet Isis question what reality means on *In The Absence Of Truth* (Ipecac). But while singer/guitarist Aaron Turner's lyrical muses may seem obtuse, guitarist Mike Gallagher brings the band back down to earth by marrying their heaviness with some lighter shades. The two members discuss their intellectual and musical inspirations, respectively.

AARON TURNER

1. *Hassan-I-Sabah*

I found a quote that was attributed to him in this book called *House Of Leaves*: "Nothing is true. Everything is permitted." And that was sort of where the [album] title came from.

2. *House Of Leaves*, by Mark Z. Danielewski

It's very much about the line between illusion and reality, which is partially what the album is about. And [the book's] about people's perceptions of things and how nothing is ever as concrete as we perceive it to be.

3. *Don Quixote*, by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

I felt that having gone to art school and taken no academic classes that I had been deprived of a well-rounded education, so in subsequent years I've been trying to take on the more "classic" works... The character Dulcinea was the interesting part of the story for me... Her relation to Don Quixote sort of embodied a lot of the ideas I was thinking about.

4. *Labyrinths*, by Jorge Luis Borges

I didn't actually get around to reading it until after I read *House Of Leaves*. And *House Of Leaves* employees the idea of a labyrinth as a metaphor to describe certain things in the context of the book... [Borges is] a magnificent storyteller and had an unconventional way of relating narrative.

5. *Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth*, by Gitta Sereny

[Speer] was Hitler's minister of arms... [Sereny] was able to convey it in such a way that you could understand how... people who were of reasonable or even exceptional intelligence could get roped into this fuckin' thing... I thought that was interesting and illuminating because, especially in our Western culture, we really do have a tendency to portray the enemy as very one-sided and one-dimensional.



Turner and Gallagher reveal the isis of their creative storm.

"IN OUR WESTERN CULTURE, WE REALLY DO HAVE A TENDENCY TO PORTRAY THE ENEMY AS VERY ONE-SIDED AND ONE-DIMENSIONAL"

MIKE GALLAGHER

1. *Dead Man*, by Neil Young

That record has been a major influence on me for probably seven years now... There's his main, reoccurring melody throughout and in between all that is this kind of cool soundscape with interesting sounds going on.

2. *Random Harvest*, by Friends Of Dean Martinez

If [it's] just late night in the car and you're on the open road, it's perfect for that. Those are the records I kind of love, just wide open with these beautiful melodies going on.

3. *Period*, by Jonathan Coleclough

He does a really good job of just finding interesting sounds and blaring them. It's a very ambient record... just real simple, real droney.

4. *Sea Change*, by Beck

[This style] is where I spend most of my time musically.

5. *Powerage*, by AC/DC

AC/DC is the reason I picked up the guitar in the first place. And that record in particular, although I have all of them up until *Who Made Who* or something like that, is the one that kills me the most... They are completely ridiculous and lyrically awful, but for whatever reason it still gets me.



"DRESSING UP AND COMING UP WITH NARRATIVES FOR OUR PHOTO SHOTS WAS JUST A WAY OF KIND OF SABOTAGING THEM."

Closet cased: Turns out Colin Meloy's got no medieval garb on his hangers.

IN MY CLOSET

WITH THE DECEMBERISTS' COLIN MELOY
INTERVIEW BY KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

Decemberists' frontman Colin Meloy is known not only for his enchanting chautauqs, but also for the creativity of his wardrobe. However, fans accustomed to the garish stage show that accompanied *Picaresque* could be in for a surprise when Meloy and Co. hit the road in support of *The Crane Wife* (Capitol). As the imaginative troubadour tells us, playing dress-up may have been a one-time only affair, and when it comes to his actual closet at home, the garb is far less elaborate than one might expect.

So what would we find if we took a peek inside your closet?

It's really not very interesting. I don't necessarily dress up in costumes all the time. It's a big closet, a walk-in. I have my chest of drawers and a little cigar box on top with some change in it, and a rack with some shirts and jackets and a shelf above that, which has some blankets and towels and sweatshirts on it.

A cigar box?... Neat! So you don't ever toss on costumes from the *Picaresque* tour?

No, not really. The [*Picaresque*] photo shoots [were] just a way to kind of tear down the idea of what a photo shoot is. I think it had a lot to do with just kind of being annoyed by what photo shoots are for rock bands and having

this feeling that like, "Oh, we're musicians, we're not necessarily models." It's such a silly industry standard thing that you have to do. So, dressing up and coming up with narratives for our photo shoots was just a way of kind of sabotaging them.

Didn't you record the album at your home, even if not in your closet?

[My girlfriend and I] had a finished basement when we bought the house last year. When we moved in, that was going to be where my studio was going to be, but it was attacked by black moles and we had to tear out the entire basement, which was a bummer. So I did all the recording for this record in the dining room on my laptop.

Speaking of *The Crane Wife*, it's based on a short children's story, no?

Yes, it is. I was working at a bookstore a couple years ago and it was recommended that we go and familiarize ourselves with the kids book section, because as an adult, you don't really know much about kids books. So I was back there and just grabbed a book off the shelf and it happened to be *The Crane Wife*... and thought it was a really compelling story. I think, overall, it's the record we had wanted to make for a while, so we're very pleased with how it turned out.

QUICKFIX

"PEOPLE THAT ARE MUSICIANS DOING CLOTHING LABELS, IT'S GENERALLY SORT OF REPPIN' IT. I'M ACTUALLY DESIGNING EVERYTHING."



Whitney's Museum? Maybe Johnny's (pictured in zombie/stalking pose) clothing will be considered classic someday.

DRESSED TO SHRILL

BLOOD BROTHER JOHNNY WHITNEY TALKS ABOUT ALBUM ART AND BAND FASHION
INTERVIEW BY KENNY HERZOG

The Blood Brothers are primarily known as politically charged post-hardcore innovators. And for certain, their latest, *Young Machetes* (V2), is a dazzling and daring adventure in sound, adding considerable rhythmic dimensions to their blitzkrieg assault. But music is not their only artistic pursuit. Bassist Morgan Henderson snaps their photos, and the rest of the members contribute to their albums' abstract artwork. Vocalist Johnny Whitney even started his own fashion line, Crystal City Clothing, in 2005. At home in Seattle taking a pre-tour respite, Whitney talked about the Brothers' behind-the-scenes creative pursuits.

Is the cover of *Young Machetes* still solely your guys' handiwork?

It was a collaboration, basically, between the photos that Morgan took and our friend Eric. We wanted somebody from the outside to do the artwork, and [Eric] sent us the cover and we sort of just replicated that with pictures of us throughout the record.

Is your involvement in the album design a matter of keeping creative control?

It's kind of just been born out of necessity. Maybe because we're such picky people, we tend to not really be happy in a lot of the instances where we have other people working for us.

Are there any artists you'd be willing to let design future covers?

There's this artist named Julian Gross, who plays drums in Liars. We really like his work. He did the EP for our last record.

What about other bands' artwork that influenced you?

I think the first record layout that I really wanted to replicate was Sunny Day Real Estate's *Diary*. I was really intrigued by it being this book of art and lyrics and having this sort of grandiose quality to it.

So where does Crystal City come about in all this?

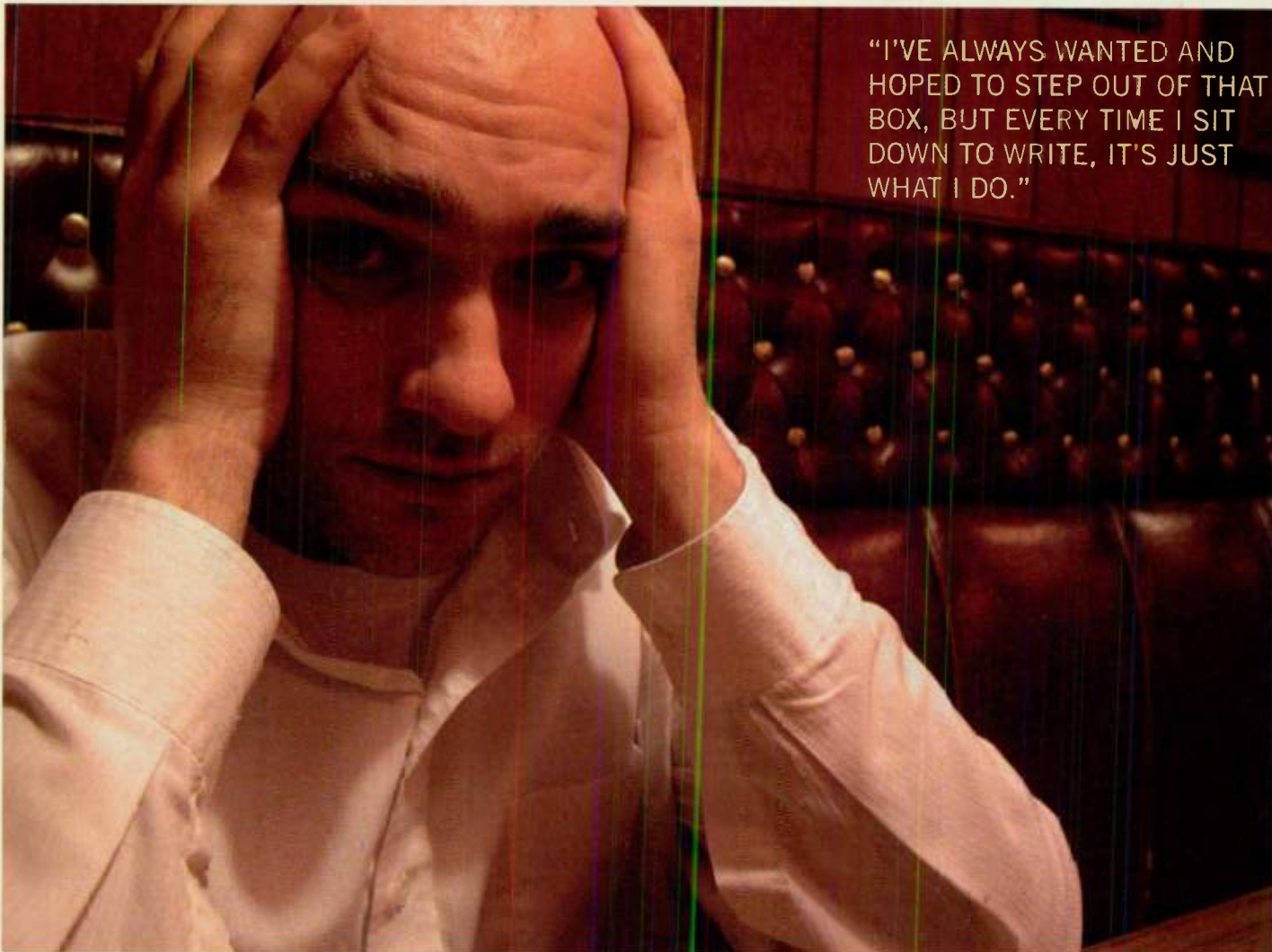
I spent a large part of my adolescence combing through Buffalo Exchanges and thrift stores looking for cool T-shirts. So when I started designing T-shirts for Blood Brothers, it just became this creative outlet that I didn't know existed. The whole idea behind the clothing line is to use that creative energy in a way that isn't totally band-related... And you know, it's also just a really fun thing to do.

Hey, if hip-hop artists can do it, why not the Blood Brothers?

Right. I think people that are musicians doing clothing labels, it's generally sort of reppin' it. I'm actually designing everything and picking out all the colors and mailing everything.

And is there a favorite item in the line?

We just got this new shirt called Cassette Claws that's my favorite. My favorite's always the newest thing. I always get sick of it after I have to look at it for three months.



"I'VE ALWAYS WANTED AND HOPED TO STEP OUT OF THAT BOX, BUT EVERY TIME I SIT DOWN TO WRITE, IT'S JUST WHAT I DO."

King Jeremy, the learned: Enigk can't bear to be without a good yogi.

BOOK CLUB

WITH JEREMY ENIGK

INTERVIEW BY KENNY HERZOG

Jeremy Enigk's in a good mood. In fact, the ex-Sunny Day Real Estate frontman claims he's "always" in a good mood. Say what you will about his oft-discussed conversion to Christianity, but it's certainly made him a mellower sort. Maybe that has something to do with all the religious literature he's been absorbing. And it is those very texts that helped him craft his first solo album in a decade, *World Waits* (Lewis Hollow). Enigk took a moment to reflect on how other people's written words have inspired his work.

I would imagine an inspirational book would affect your own creative process.

Yeah, I think the books I read inspire my life, which in turn reflects what I'm doing musically. I read a lot of spiritual books.

Any one in particular?

I read this guy—I think he died in, like, 1950—his name was Paramahansa Yogananda. He was this Hindu spiritual teacher who had an incredible connection to the unseen force of God, and he really encourages people to be the absolute best that they can be. It's almost like self-help or self-realization... very inspiring.

What about any non-spiritual texts you often return to?

Some books that I've probably read like two or three times are the *Earthsea Trilogy* by Ursula K. Le Guin. Those are probably my favorite books of all time. There are slight, I wouldn't say spiritual, but there's a lot of incredible wisdom in these books, but you also have the adventure of science fiction, of dealing with wizards and power.

So do these books directly influence your lyrics?

I think [they're] inspired more from the wisdom that I get from these books. My lyrics would probably be a little different hadn't I read some of these things... But then again, there is a certain point when I'm writing lyrics where it's more of a song, and the lyrics have to just melt into the song.

But yet, despite the way spiritual literature's influenced your life and music, the music on *World Waits* is still rooted in familiar sounds.

My music overall has pretty much stayed the same. More or less it still has that same sort of emotional, soul-searching quality. I've always wanted and hoped to step out of that box, but every time I sit down to write, it's just what I do. I've just created my own sort of sound and it's difficult to walk out of that.

What's New For Fall

1.



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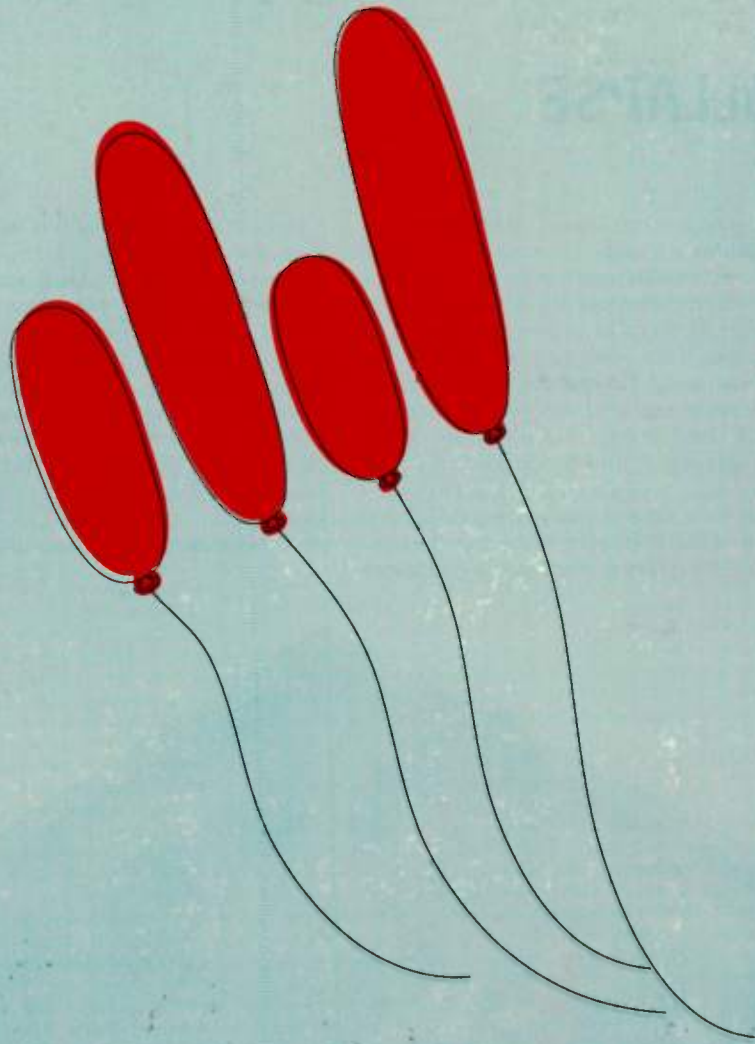
Oxford Collapse, Sub Pop's first-ever Brooklyn signees, acknowledge that starting out in New York City in 2001 made it tough to be original. "I guess we were victims of what was going on then," says Michael Pace, the crunchy college rock trio's wild-haired singer/guitarist, in between sips of a Red Stripe at a mid-Manhattan diner. "Bands were incorporating a lot of post-punk and dance elements... so the result of that was, 'Let's make the most intense, loud, screamy stuff possible.' And it was awful." Nonetheless, Kanine Records nabbed the band for 2004's *Some Wilderness*, which was full of said screamy stuff, and 2005's more evolved *A Good Ground*. "There were six months after [*Wilderness*] where we were just practicing, not getting good shows, but weening ourselves off this primal hardcore," Pace continues, adding that it "takes a while to find out what you like to do and what you're good at." And while greener ears may listen to their Sub Pop debut, *Remember The Night Parties*, and hear a Spoon/New Pornographers, contemporary indie-rock

resemblance, the band—with its meatier riffs and churning tempos—hopes to be connected to earlier indie originators. "We like to think we take most of our cues from bands we admire, a lot of '80s SST bands [like] Hüsker Dü, the Minutemen or the Flying Nun bands like the Clean and Verlaines," says Pace. "I'd like to think that because of the amount of time we've put into this and with no one caring for a while, it's similar to [those] bands, united by that D.I.Y. aesthetic." Ordering up one more round of beers, Pace points out that, thanks to the Internet, new bands are at least armed with a wide-ranging knowledge of recent musical history, even if their search lacks the adventurism of the pre-digital era. "Basically, I think I'm from the last generation that had to troll through the dollar bins, had to really dig and search for stuff," he says. "The [older] stuff we're taking cues from, it's not sexy or en vogue. But this is stuff ripe for rediscovery, I think." >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



PHOTO: Seth Olenick

Do you *Remember* the time? Oxford Collapse do their best to bring back Ameri-indie's glory days.



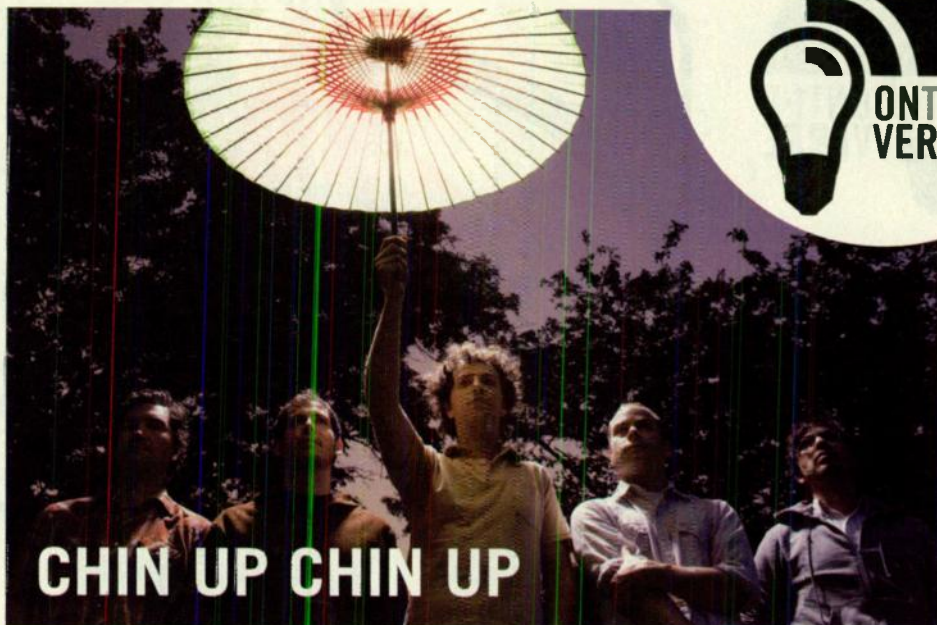
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Chicago-based avant-indie rockers Chin Up have been flirting with a more mainstream profile ever since releasing their excellent 2004 debut LP, *We Should Have Never Lived Like We Were Skyscrapers*. For their third LP, *This Harness Can't Ride Anything*, the band enlisted super-producer Sir Brian Deck (Iron And Wine, Modest Mouse), switched labels from Chicago-based Flameshovel to Seattle's hallowed Suicide Squeeze and readied a new slant on their sound. "Everything we've put out so far has kind of gone in different directions and I really want to continue to do that," says vocalist/guitarist Jeremy Bolen. "To me, every record's a totally new animal and, hopefully, the next one will be different too." Chin Up actually formed in 2001, but spent months tinkering with the formula for their debut, perfecting their gossamer of circuitous guitars and wretched keys. Shortly after releasing a four-song demo in early 2004, however, the band was dealt a crushing blow when bassist Chris Saathoff was struck and killed by a drunk driver outside the Empty Bottle in Chicago. Initially reticent to continue, Chin Up ultimately went on with the urging of Saathoff's family and their rapidly growing fan base. Fast forward two years, and the release of *This Harness* carves out a discernibly more abrasive sound than their past work, but still retains a good amount of the atmospheric depth that has always marked their music. "We were trying to simplify a bit, trying to make the songs a little closer



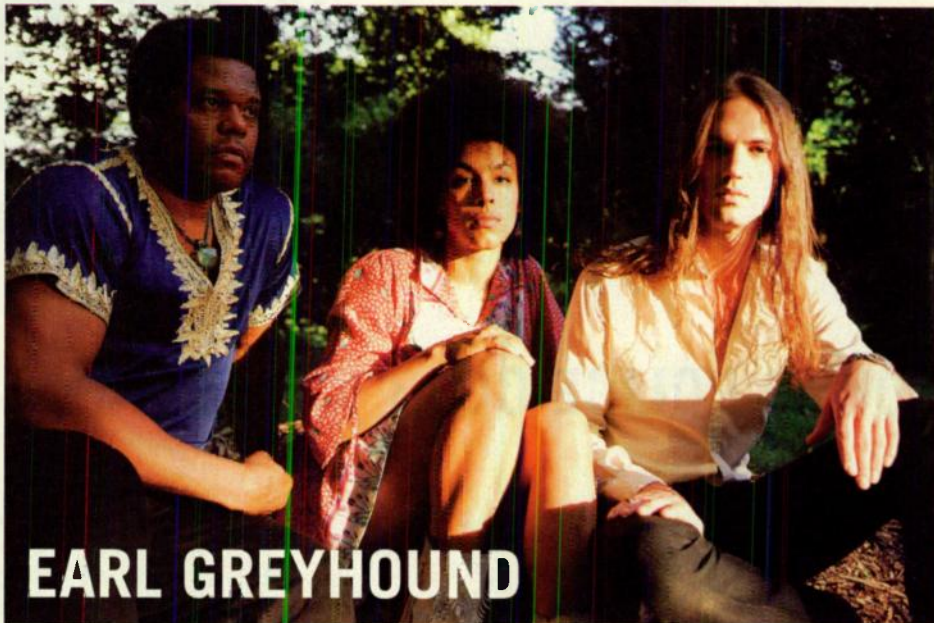
Sweet Chin music: Chicago's got another band on the Up-swing.

to traditional rock arrangements," Bolen says. "It seems to me that it came out like more of a rock record, kind of a less soothing record than those in the past." That's not to say they've given up on their

roots completely. "I've been listening to Jawbreaker a lot recently," Bolen admits. "I've kind of regressed into an 18-year-old as of late. Couldn't say what that's all about." >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH



Trailer Trash, tucked into the west side of Manhattan, is one of those crazy-crap-on-the-wall kinda restaurants devoted to low-brow mid-century ephemera: biker emblems, beer signs, Vegas Elvis pictures, etc. It seems a fitting meeting place for Brooklyn hard-rock revivalists Earl Greyhound. But surprisingly, they shrink from the ironic kitsch, hunkering together at a table near the door. And in conversation, as on stage, they're a tight-knit trio that feeds off each other. "We went through a lot of changes since the last record," says singer/guitarist Matt Whyte. "Our drummer left. We were searching for a while... and this guy Kirk, the guitar player from the Roots, showed up at one of our shows and said, 'I really dig this.' Then he started bringing Ricc [Shendan] to the shows." Sheridan, a hulking presence wrapped in a poncho and massive shades like some bounty hunter in a *Billy Jack* movie, only smiles wide and nods. As bassist Kamara Thomas explains, "I didn't even know Ricc was a drummer, he was super on the down low about it. And as you can see, he's a man of few words." The words between Whyte and Thomas, however, flow more readily, a result of plugging away for three years together, with lots of touring and an EP behind them. On their debut album, *Soft Targets* (Some), Whyte's horny wail and massive riffs, along with Thomas' sweeter back-up singing, helps the band sway from Led Zep-style dinosaur stomp to Big Star la-las, landing them somewhere between the Wolfmothers of current winking badassitude and the Heartless Bastards' more mercurial mash. "I can't figure that [dichotomy] out



either," admits Thomas. "We're heavy, but when I think about what happens between us on stage... There's a certain energy there that I think our generation of bands is starting to re-tao into. It's not necessarily about a 'sound,' but that energy is there, that flow between the people." Whyte, for his part, traces that energy back to a fairly unlikely source. "I think the most modern band that I really love is INXS," he says. "It fit into the mold

Their name is Earl—although not really: Yes, Greyhound is a trio, not a person.

of that mid-'80s stuff, but the songwriting is so great, [there's] incredible lyrics and Michael Hutchence had such a soulful voice. I loved all those bands I listened to in high school, but I think I had already gotten the bug from earlier bands."

>>>ERIC DAVIDSON



These rookies love Wookies (from left): Josh Hooks, Dave Monks, Greg Alsop, Graham Wright

TOKYO POLICE CLUB

They may be foreign, but despite their misleading moniker, there isn't anything remotely Japanese about the four young Canadians in Tokyo Police Club. "Naming a band isn't fun," says 19-year-old keyboardist/singer Graham Wright. "It's hard because most band names suck. [Ours] came from a lyric in the first song on the record... [So] it has a built-in advantage of having a theme song already written, and not a lot of bands have theme songs anymore." Like many who grew up bored and idle outside a big city, the boys—three of whom bonded over *Star Wars* trading cards in a gifted program of a suburban Toronto elementary school—shared an affinity for science fiction and playing Blink-182 covers. Both inspirations are evident on their jittery-cool debut EP, *A Lesson In Crime* (Paper Bag), which flies by in a 17-minute, seven-song flurry of infectious bass pulses, glossy keyboards and nonsensical sci-fi storytelling. Their taut, Strokes-y riffs and whiplash hooks sound entirely professional, even if their aspirations, at first, weren't. In fact, the band had already broken up and dispersed for different post-high school lives when last year's Pop Montreal

festival reunited them. "We'd applied for that not really expecting anything to come of it, just sort of for shits and giggles," says Wright. "And lo and behold we got accepted to play at the festival... And for a week, we weren't doing anything except being Tokyo Police Club and hanging out, waiting to play, putting up posters and then playing our show to 100 people who were actually listening and clapping and enjoying the songs. So, after that, our mindset shifted from, 'This is fun' to, 'Not only is this fun, but this is something that a) people seem to care about, and b) we could see ourselves doing for a living and seriously.'" Since then the band has become a full-time job, complete with glowing reviews and non-stop touring. And with "half of one song" completed so far for their full-length follow-up, plus time set aside to write more, there is no end in sight to their success. But while all the young dudes of Tokyo Police Club are growing up, they luckily still love the same things that brought them together. "*Star Wars*? Yes," affirms Wright. "But not *Star Wars* cards. But we do have a little Chewbacca figurine taped to our dashboard." >>>REBECCA RABER



Don't Cramp their style: The UK's Horrors are scaring up buzz on their own merits.

THE HORRORS

It would be fitting if the Horrors' Next Big Thing tag incited fed-up cries of "Nooooooooo!!" like some splattered graphic from a B-movie poster. The London four-piece has a sound (Cramps-cum-Pussy-Galore-cum-Brit-mod), look (mucho mascara and shocked 'dos) and self-titled EP on Stolen Transmission that screams stylish gore flick massacre. After scoring an *NME* cover less than a year into their existence, Horrors singer Faris Badwan had to quickly contend with the skeptics, even in the band's native UK. "Yeah, it's [happened] fucking astronomically fast," he says. "But the thing is, we've been playing so many shows. We've played over 50 shows, more than once a week on average, so it has been intensive." And as for those "poseur" slags from the American lo-fi garage-punk faithful? "I think that's bullshit," says Badwan. "Authenticity? If you wanna be in the fucking '60s, build a fucking time machine. What is being punk is not staying in one place." The Horrors started in London's mod scene where playing dress-up comes with the territory. "We were all like this before we met, from going to the same clubs that

play the kind of music we like," Badwan explains. "It was a natural progression really. We didn't have to work hard to get one of the members into a leather jacket." Yes, the fact that it always seems to take a smartly dressed Brit band to draw attention to a long-standing American sound (think Gories, Cheater Slicks, Black Lips) is frustrating. But more curious are their similarities to other recent, graveyard-stamping groups like the Hunches and, interestingly enough, another band with the Horrors moniker. "There are some good contemporary bands," Badwan says. "But those we like don't sound like us, and I don't think we've got many contemporary influences.... I think we're influenced by bands but don't actually sound like them. Even the Birthday Party, they're a big influence on us, but I don't think we have any songs that sound just like them." And, truth be sought, they're not even that big on B-movies. "I fucking hate horror movies," says Badwan. "I think they're fucking stupid. I love Hitchcock and stuff. Psychological horror is brilliant. Mostly I like good films rather than cheesy shit." >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



Hell bent for Feathers: Danava would rather get down to rockabilly icon Charlie than most of their axe-wielding peers.

DANAVA

Somewhere along the sweaty highways of Nashville, Danava frontman Dusty Sparkles is stopped at a roadside payphone, speaking through a deep, drawling Midwestern accent. You'd figure any rock enthusiast would be in awe at his Music City surroundings, but instead he casually concedes: "Eh, it's alright. I don't know much about this town, really. I'm [outside] a Kinko's right now." Which is fitting, as Danava's music is a kick-ass composite copy of the last few decades' worth of guitar godliness. On the Portland band's self-titled, Kemado debut, lo-fi Sabbath doom dances with distorted, high-pitched vocals, alien synth contortions and monster, virtuoso solos. But don't dare call it prog. "I always think of prog as a group that maybe has one or two guys that really wank a lot," he says. Understandably, the skin-and-bones singer, who spends more time listening to Charles Mingus and Charlie Feathers than the Sword, is also reticent to be associated with the Early Mans of the world. "The only thing that I like to say now, just because of this hipster metal crap and all this talk," he asserts, "is that I'll definitely never say that we're a

metal band." Sparkles is, however, lightning-quick to offer praise to his primary influences, from King Crimson to Blue Cheer. "I've just always had a love for guys like Brian May and Tony Iommi, but then on the other side of the coin, I've always loved great synthesizer music," he says, explaining the mash of sounds that make up Danava's long-player. Eventually, after discovering the world of amp distortion and emptying countless gas tanks to hunt down obscure records, Sparkles hooked up with bandmates Buck Rothly, Dell Blackwell and Rockwell, and the foundation for Danava was laid. And as the foursome continues to hit the dusty roads of our great states, Sparkles is aware of the struggles they could face, but keeps the faith that their sincerity will see them through. "It's cool if people like us, but then there's also these people who want to like us but don't want to like us, just because bands like Wolfmother have come on the scene," he sighs. "And I really can't care I guess. Part of me wants to, but in the end, it's like, 'You know what, when Danava ceases to be Danava, we're just not gonna do it anymore.'" >>>KENNY HERZOG

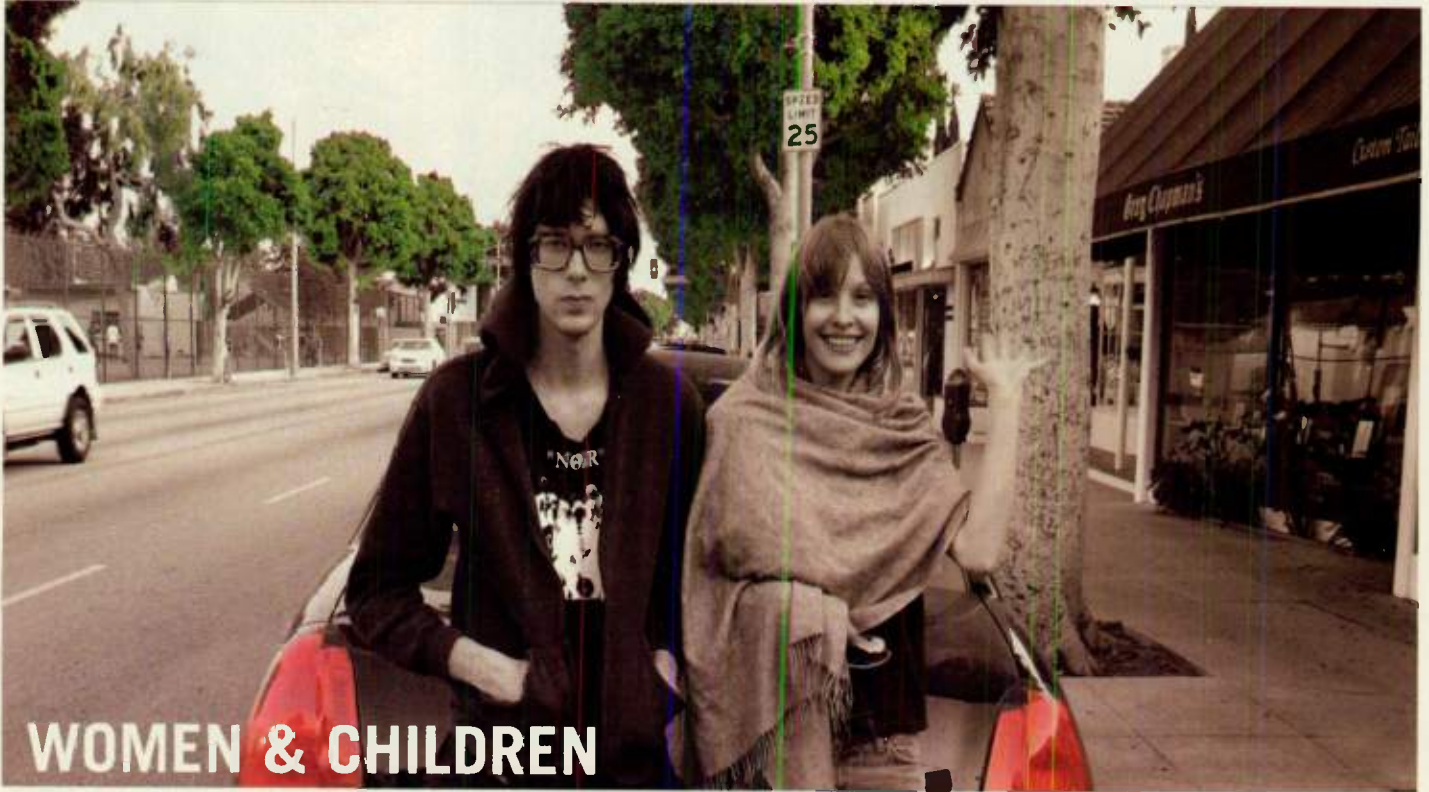
RELAY



PHOTO: Ian Rutter

Relay frontman Jeff Zeigler knows his way around the recording studio. Having spent five years engineering local bands out of his home in the Northern Liberties neighborhood of Philadelphia, Zeigler started his own four-piece about two years ago, pouring all that technical expertise into his own project. "I still do a lot of engineering stuff on a pretty daily basis and that definitely comes into play in terms of recording and moving back and forth between our projects," Zeigler says. "I've been able to pick up a lot of ideas on how to approach stuff from working with other people." Relay's debut LP, *Still Point Of Turning* (Bubblecore), excels at the sort of synth- and guitar-laden psych-pop that has caused a "My Bloody Valentine-esque" shoegaze tag to be leveled at them on more than one occasion. Preconceptions aside, Relay's appeal is primarily in their aseptic, blusterous guitars and stacks of airy keys set against vocals that stretch across the tracks like a patient etherized upon a table. If Prufrock ever had a love song, this would be it. Though for his part, Zeigler readily cites '70s AOR and art-rock progenitors Pere Ubu as more formative sources of inspiration. "It's surprising to me how much people picked up on sort of the shoegaze-y aspect because there's so much other stuff we're into as well," he contends. "So when that started happening, we were all kind of like, 'Huh? Okay, whatever...,' that doesn't really come into play that much when we're focusing on making it." >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

Don't call them swirly: Relay rejects the humdrum "shoegaze" tag.



WOMEN & CHILDREN

A loose-knit family: Women & Children are bringing their Parisian cave compositions to your town.

Women & Children principals Kevin Lasting and Cheryl June Serwa lived in an isolated Paris flat for seven years with scant exposure to current music, but they found inspiration in each other. The result was their evocative third release, *Paralyzed Dance, Tonight* (Narnack), which fits comfortably within the current experimental folk canon held together by artists like Vetiver and Wooden Wand. "We were very hermetic," Lasting says of their songwriting process. "We would sit around in our living room and play these sort of improvisational jam-outs on whatever we had. We wouldn't do live shows. It wasn't about the energy of a scene; it was just this sort of insular thing we were doing." While dueling song scribes Lasting and Serwa, along with fellow W&C multi-instrumentalists Olivier Robert and Jamie Moon, loved creating clipped, resonant piano- and guitar-based melodies in an

insulated French cave, it was tough paring down that material into discernable album cuts. "I guess there's an element of looseness in [the band's] core spirit," Lasting admits. And that looseness is expressed sonically through instrumentation like an *Amelie*-ish toy piano Moon found in a gutter and tracks like Lasting's "My Head In Your Dirt," adapted from an ancient blues tune (a technique reminiscent of M. Ward's). As the band takes their show on the road, audiences would be remiss not to catch Lasting's rustic tunes or Cheryl belting out haunting, Nico-meets-Jana Hunter compositions like "My Bad." They might even toss a pedal steel and banjo into the mix alongside all the toy pianos. "That would be a nice live directional thing or something just to work with," muses Lasting. "It's nice to keep things revolving and moving." >>>REED FISCHER

PHOTO: Women and Children



Black diamond in the rough: Thurston Moore plucked Black Helicopter's members out of alterna-obscure.

BLACK HELICOPTER

Sometimes in life, you find yourself in the right place at the right time. For Zach Lazar, bassist for Beantown rockers Black Helicopter, his came after opening up a few shows for their pals Mission Of Burma in 2005, at which point Thurston Moore came a-knocking and offered to sign the band to Ecstatic Peace! for their second album, *Invisible Jet*. "The higher profile has definitely helped us out [with] a lot of stuff we couldn't do ourselves," says Lazar. "We've been a band for so long that [it's] kind of nice to have someone on the outside championing us and pushing our records." Indeed, Lazar and his bandmates are far from the new kids on the Boston block. Comprising former members of early alternative acts Green Magnet School and Kudgel, Helicopter's lineup has played its fair share of shows and seen many trends pass. And on *Invisible Jet*, the band playfully mixes the sonic-boom sludge of the Melvins with some Shellac-

worshipping heaviness and J Mascis-esque crooning, courtesy of vocalist Tim Shea. Whatever you do though, don't call them grunge. "What the fuck does that sound like?" wonders Lazar. "Could be Nirvana, could be Stone Temple Pilots. Such a boring, generic term. I don't think it's that accurate." Conversely, they welcome any connection to groups they consider their heroes. "If we can be compared to Mission Of Burma, we basically succeeded as far as I'm concerned," Lazar says. Whether or not they attain the cachet of Burma themselves, Helicopter is merely looking forward to spending the next few months hitting small clubs and supporting *Jet*, all the while laying down groundwork for their next release. According to Lazar, all the multitasking is worth it. "We try to push as much as possible," he says, "because it's our favorite band since we've been in bands." >>>MATT PULLMAN



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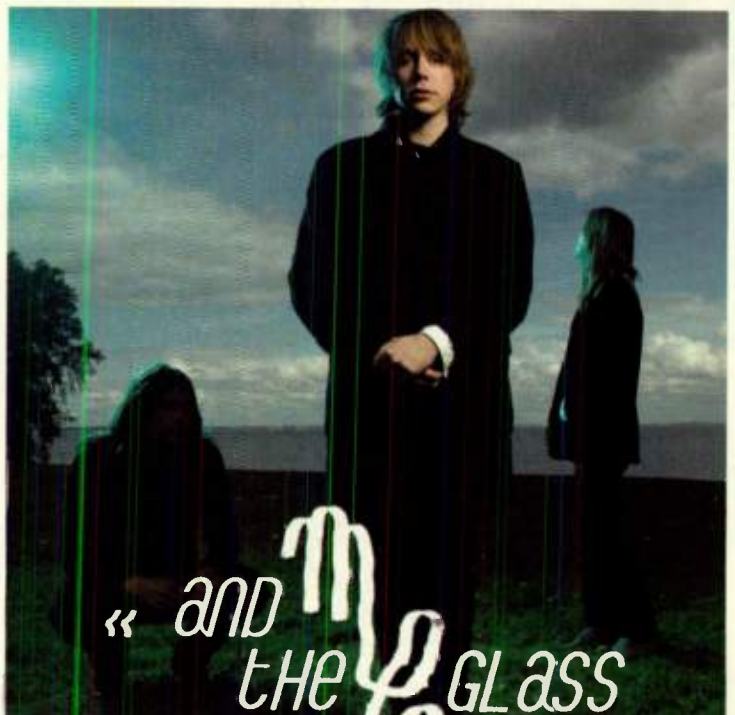
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CALENDAR GUYS

IT'S ALWAYS THAT TIME OF THE
MONTH FOR BISHOP ALLEN



Bishop Allen's Christian Rudder (l) and Justin Rice

STORY BY KEVIN KAMPWIRTH
PHOTO BY ELIZABETH WEINBERG

By year's end, Brooklyn indie-pop duo Bishop Allen will have released 48 new songs. So far, they have released 10 four-song EPs, one for each month of 2006. They are, admittedly, treading in dangerous territory; being overly prolific is not necessarily always a positive thing (as Ryan Adams and the Fiery Furnaces have proven). This has not, however, deterred their current project, one that can most simply and accurately be described as ambitious, to say the least.

"I feel better about our possibilities for writing new songs now than ever before," says singer/principal songwriter Justin Rice, about whether, at some point, their creativity will be stretched as thin as it can go. "[It's] like this idea that is harped on in creative writing classes that you have to find your voice and there's this long process where... you're able to sort of get some distance from what you imitate and start to do things in a more natural way. I think that's the point we're at with our songs now."

TRANSPLANTED AND ENCHANTED

Rice and lead-guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Christian Rudder met while undergrads at Harvard (their moniker is borrowed from a main drag in Cambridge) and have been playing music together for about 10 years now. The two moved to New York City in 2002, and began putting together what would eventually become Bishop Allen's debut LP, *Charm School*. The album was critically well-received and introduced audiences to the band's blithe, insouciant approach to jaunty, guitar-driven gems, which recall early Wilco as readily as classic Minutemen.

After touring to promote the record, they decided to start work on a follow-up. A year and a half of writing and recording, however, found them stymied and unable to complete the album. Unaware of where to find inspiration, inspiration, in turn, found them—in the form of someone else's garbage.

"We found a piano on the street and dragged it back to the practice space and started noodling around with it," Rice says. "Christian started playing the drums with his feet and then picked up a guitar and I was playing the piano and, all of a sudden, the idea that we were stuck, the 12 songs that we were working on for so long just kind of disappeared, and we just started having fun working on these new songs."

Although the group has always essentially consisted of Rice and Rudder, they've often enlisted

additional musicians to help round out their recordings and live shows. But about the time of their unfinished record, they became particularly enamored with a wider palate of sounds.

"We started experimenting and getting more instruments involved, so that means working with a lot more people than we ever have," explains Rudder. "But I have to say, it's been pretty cool. That's one thing that New York's great for. You can find anyone that plays any instrument at any time."

This also explains the widespread onslaught of Brooklyn-based indie-rockers over the last several years, and although Rice and Rudder acknowledge that such an enclave does exist, the two contend that they've never really thought about where they fit into it.

"It's not like Dayton [Ohio] where everyone who's involved in indie rock knows everyone else who's involved in indie rock," Rice says. "In Brooklyn, the guy who lives next door might be in a band that sounds just like us, but we might never know it. There are so many people here that it makes it impossible to know everyone... and there's just so much going on that [the scene] is sort of necessarily fragmented. Only in working with musicians who have played with other bands have we started to get a sense of what other local bands are like."

And it's because of this over-saturation that Rice contends it's important to hold Bishop Allen's music to a higher standard. "It's definitely harder to stand out here and it's kind of isolating in a way," he admits. "For us, I definitely think it makes us better because the idea of what we should be—in our mind, the bar is set so high as far as what we should be able to do."

CHARM SCHOOL GRADUATES

While the band's still-burgeoning career has been defined by more accolades than criticisms, an often-

cast aspersion is that their sound is too whimsical and they're not yet realizing their full potential as musicians.

"The *Charm School* era was a lot more of a playful time for us, so the record reflects that," Rudder says. "We feel like the EPs have been a lot more serious and we've been trying to kind of focus on the textures and underlying chords of the songs, the bones. There're just a lot of standard chord progressions on *Charm School* that are hard to love going back to, and we feel like now we're trying to think more about how to stack parts and build a song better."

This said, the band isn't changing the principle formula that has led to one full-length and several mini-albums of memorable music. "It's really one of those things [where] we would never want to take ourselves too seriously," Rice contends. "We're doing our best to do something that we think is important, but we have no delusions of changing the world. I really tend to like whatever we're working on, to not necessarily canonize the old stuff, and to just focus on what we're doing at the time."

As it happens, the band is in fact working on a new LP that they hope to release next summer. And unlike the EPs, which have been almost entirely DIY and sold through their website and at shows (Rice's girlfriend even designs the album art), the forthcoming long-player will be released on an Indiana-based indie label to which they've recently signed. For the moment though, they are staying mum regarding its identity. They also plan to tour throughout most of next year, playing most cities in the US "at least once, probably twice, maybe 10 times," according to Rice. In the meantime though, there are still a couple more months in 2006, which means a couple more EPs.

"I feel like we can write better songs over the next couple months than we've written all year, and the last month, well, the last month we're not too sure about," Rice laughs. "Whenever we have a really bad idea, we just go, 'Oh, okay, that'll be for December.'"

"THAT'S ONE THING THAT NEW YORK'S GREAT FOR. YOU CAN FIND ANYONE THAT PLAYS ANY INSTRUMENT AT ANY TIME."



Give 'Em Enough Robe: Boris and SunnO)))

BEAST MEETS WEST

Boris Brings Their Monster Doom To SunnO)))'s Studios

STORY BY KORY GROW // PHOTO BY ROSE KALLAL

Bicoastal, neo-doom metal duo SunnO))) and Japanese stoner-droner trio Boris have built reputations for mysterious, if exacting, experimentation. And with the release of their first collaborative album, *Altar*, both have budding careers at stake.

"This may be the record where we drive everyone away and no one is interested anymore," admits Greg Anderson, one bearded half of SunnO)))'s rumbling guitar troupe. It's a difficult realization for any artist, and one that first donned on Anderson last winter in the middle of tracking *Altar*, which he is now releasing on his own Southern Lord label.

If the sonic agitator wasn't considering his audience then (having felt that doing so could "ruin the creativity"), he surely must be now, as certain songs offer traces of accessibility. While the album as a whole isn't entirely a departure from their respective signature sounds, some tracks, "The Sinking Belle (Blue Sheep)" in particular, defy expectations. With Seattle-based, alt-country songstress Jesse Sykes lending whispery, sultry vocals, "Belle" has more in common with slowcore groups like Low and Bedhead than with either camp's obvious shared influences, Earth and the Melvins. Anderson, for his part, doesn't see it as such a dramatic shift.

"It would be different if Decide came up with the track," he says, maintaining the song was just a symptom of the moment: Boris guitarist Takeshi played some chords, which SunnO)))'s Stephen O'Malley in turn played on a grand piano, and then they gave Sykes free reign over the lyrics and vocals. For Anderson, these free-will collaborations rest heavily on two words he often employs: "aesthetic" and "organic." He concedes that in order for SunnO))) to collaborate with a band, they must already appreciate that artist's "aesthetic," and the best partnerships lead to an "organic" recording that should only require a couple of tries in the studio.

Anderson describes the aesthetics in Sykes' music with her own group, the Sweet Hereafter, as "stark and deep," qualities he felt he could relate to. After meeting through Sykes's bassist (and Anderson's mutual friend), Bill Herzog, and despite Sykes breaking Anderson's beloved "Ozzy hand" toy early in their friendship, they discussed joining forces, even though Sykes thought their proposed marriage of opposites was a put on.

"Basically, they gave [the song] to me months in advance, and I kind of just kept blowing it off," says the longhaired brunette from her Seattle home. "I kept thinking, 'Nah, they're fucking with me; I'm not gonna waste my time.'" When she did tackle the lyrics for what would become "The Sinking Belle," she felt moved by the sound of Boris guitarist Wata's baby daughter crying, and with that as inspiration, origi-

As for Carlson, the bands had asked him to add some guitar to "The Sinking Belle" because of his recent forays into cinematic alt-country with Earth, but they cut this during mixing as well. Ultimately, Carlson's lone contribution lies on the limited-edition version of *Altar*'s bonus CD, where each member of SunnO))) and Boris take round-robin drone solos, with Carlson getting two.

"Who cares if it's cheesy or whatever, we're gonna have a fucking killer drone jam!"

nally meant for it be a lullaby. But when she heard the finished version, the crying wasn't there.

"There was so much source material to work from that we really had to whittle it down to what it actually was," says Anderson. Inspired by stories of how Miles Davis edited *Bitches Brew* from several takes, Anderson, O'Malley and Boris drummer Atsuo found themselves making plenty of cuts, including the background crying, to retain an organic feeling.

They made similarly significant alterations on songs featuring Earth mastermind Dylan Carlson and former Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thail, who got turned onto SunnO))) and Southern Lord after playing on the label's Dave Grohl-lead Probot project. Thail, in fact, was left with just a few solos on the album's final song, "Blood Swamp."

"Kim was a little disappointed just because he was so into what we were doing, and he was really excited, and I think it was something for him—it was a new opportunity," says Anderson. "He understood that the thing that I keep on saying, that what we created was so in-the-moment and so organic... that putting something else on top of it was a real tricky affair."

Or as former Earth/Melvins bassist Joe Preston, who also contributed vocals to a track, describes the process, "It always builds itself from the germ of an idea over the session and continues to grow."

"It's kind of like we cannot not do that," explains Anderson. "Who cares if it's cheesy or whatever, we're gonna have a fucking killer drone jam!"

And it was the bands' connection in the studio that rendered any communication gaps moot, despite Boris' poor grasp of English. Their conversations happened primarily through music and metaphor. *Altar*'s opener, "Etna," is quite literally intended as a sonic volcano, bolstered by its drumless intro and bombastic middle. "Akuma No Kuma" refers to a phrase Boris has for O'Malley and Anderson: "The partying bears."

Collaboration is indeed a tricky thing, and in the end, SunnO))) and Boris wouldn't have been able to overcome its innate obstacles were it not for their mutual admiration. The fact that their sessions begat some entirely new sounds that neither group had previously attempted is even more remarkable and will either alienate old fans, attract new ones or both.

Ironically though, the most enthused parties seem to be the collaborators' collaborators, regardless of how their additions were trimmed down. Sykes even hopes to join them on stage one of these days.

"I'd like to sport one of those robes," she says without a hint of sarcasm. "But I don't know, I haven't been asked yet, so we'll see. I know that I'm starting to get dudes with names like Thor friending me on my MySpace, and that's pretty cool."



WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE BOYS

CLIPSE UNLOADS ON THEIR LABEL AND RAISES HELL ON OTHER MCS

STORY BY JESSICA SUAREZ//PHOTOS BY NOAH KALINA

"Voila," announces Terrence Thornton, aka Clipse's Pusha, seconds after the final track on *Hell Hath No Fury*, the best hip-hop album that may or may not come out this year. Leaning back in a chair inside Jive Records' Manhattan offices, his eyes move to the ceiling, where one story above this listening session, a floor full of label employees are deciding his record's fate. "I hate every inch of this room, this building," he says.

Whether or not it sees light, *Hell* is the album that Clipse—the partnership Pusha shares with his brother, Gene "Malice" Thornton—needed to make. It's complex but not overdone; it bears their anger and frustration but none of their anxiety. It sounds effortless, even though they've been working on it for three years. As of presstime, the album's release date has been pushed back yet another month (to Nov. 28). In fact, just a handful of people even have copies of it. Their publicist claims Pusha sleeps with it under his pillow, which sounds ridiculous, but their paranoia is justified.

"A photographer did try to take the album," says Malice. "Matter of fact, someone stole the album out the airport before, one of the baggage handlers, and we got it back. A leak right now would be bad. It would be horrible for us." Here's the problem: Their fans may never get to hear *Hell Hath No Fury*, even though its masterminds have been put through hell to get it out. But hell hath nothing on the Clipse.

The group's problems started in 1999, when Elektra released their first single "The Funeral," but gave it no promotional support, before shelving what was to be their debut album. Their second LP, *Lord Wil- lin'* (Star Trak/Arista), fared better, mostly on the strength of the single "Grindin'." That song's beat, courtesy of longtime Clipse collaborators the Neptunes, sounded and felt like a cannon going off—traces of it have reverberated throughout hip-hop in the four years since. But then Arista folded into Jive, who continued to push back the release date for *Hell Hath No Fury* until the Thornton brothers demanded to be let go from their contract. They stayed quiet

while their lawyers went to work, but in the end they were trapped. "We've had four years worth of delays. We've had enough delays," says Malice, eating some pasta that his brother turned down ("Carbs, yo"), while Pusha stays glued to his Sidekick.

The brothers Thornton kept relatively quiet during that period, but it was hard, especially with lesser rappers dominating the landscape. In 2004, the pair teamed up with MCs Ab-Live and Sandman, created the Re-Up Gang and released the mixtape *We Got It 4 Cheap Vol. 1*. In 2005 they released *Vol. 2* and took on their peers, eviscerating their beats, turning other rappers' songs into their own. Take the Game's "Hate It Or Love It": The original is about their experiences growing up—50 Cent recalls walking in on his mom kissing another woman; the Game thanks his grandmother for taking care of him. The Re-Up Gang's version sticks closer to the present. It's about the people who, like them, got into the drug trade in Virginia Beach. Here Malice names names and runs down the

BEST FIVE NEW MUSIC

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LINK www.asunder.info

FILE UNDER Patience is a virtue

RIYL Black Sabbath, Dystopia, SunnO)))

ASUNDER

Works Will Come Undone Profound Lore

What's heavier than a 22-minute, plodding doom metal dirge? Why, a 50-minute dirge with a cello solo, of course. Now that the genre seems to have lost footing amongst hipsterati, the time seems right for Oakland's underground emperor Asunder to reemerge with their trademarked orchestral epochs of depression. Centered around Dino Sommesse, former vocalist/drummer for Bay Area crust-metaloids Dystopia, Asunder rarely plays live and keeps their recordings to small, hard-to-find affairs. And with such an aversion to publicity, their forward-thinking interpretation of doom hasn't stretched far beyond underground metal's insular clique. Asunder's full-length follow-up to 2004's *...A Clarion Call...* album contains all the

musical contrast they can experiment with in the space of 73 minutes. After 20 minutes of slow-burning metal fuselage, the near-hour-long "Rite Of Finality" is rendered mostly quiet for close to half an hour with a didgeridoo-esque, barely audible bass drone connecting the footslogging cymbal battery to the eminent silence on either end the song. And nothing sounds more free than when the dark riffing throughout "A Famine" meets up with Alex Bale-Glickman's cello and Sommesse's near-Gregorian chanting. Despite the songs' length, this album's only weakness is ending too soon. >>> KORY GROW



LINK www.thedivinecomedy.com

FILE UNDER Chamber-made

RIYL Nick Cave, Cinerama, Tindersticks

THE DIVINE COMEDY

Victory For The Comic Muse Parlophone

After spending much of 2005 writing songs with the likes of Charlotte Gainsbourg, Neil Hannon (aka the Divine Comedy), has returned with a masterful stroke of beautiful melancholy. Sometimes it seems only British artists are capable of songs that breathe with such ornate musicality while still feeling intimate and whimsical. Opener "To Die A Virgin" actually has a near-glam feel—not just by virtue of its bouncy, Bolan rhythms but also thanks to Hannon's playful lyrics about a horny soul desperate for shagging. But it's on more conventionally baroque cuts like "A Lady Of A Certain Age" that this Comedy record truly flirts with

divinity. Throughout the standout track, Hannon floats his Nick Cave-esque vocal melodies above gorgeous orchestration and folk-ish acoustic strumming that wraps things in Leonard Cohen-worthy warmth. Hannon also displays a flair for the theatrical on the eloquently rollicking "Party Fears Two," as well as the melodramatic or "The Plough," a swooning tale of a young farm boy searching cities and small towns for his identity. *Victory For The Comic Muse* is a sweeping, lyrical and consistently beautiful and affecting affair that listeners on both sides of the pond should hardly ignore. >>> KENNY HERZOG



ENSEMBLE

Ensemble FatCat

Ensemble (real name: Olivier Alary) has seemingly made it a mission to merge the output of Sarah Records' sunny pop, Rephlex's bent electronic muse and the Touch label's poignant ambient soundscapes. The result is his own brand of balladry that's hazy from over-exposure to shoegaze but all the same in love with easy listening and folk constructs. This self-titled album features significant vocal turns for both Chan Marshall (Cat Power) and Lou Barlow (Sebadoh, Dinosaur Jr) that hint at a strong future in lounge singing, should either of them ever have to take it up. Both are able to capture the

fire-lit, breezy, sophisticated and emotionally rigorous modes set up by Alary's layered, subtle swirls of electro-acoustics. Alternating between warm and cool modes, Ensemble constructs long-form pop epics with the skill of dancers slowly unveiling a work of art in muted reds and deep, enveloping blues. Of particular note is the gorgeous cacophony of strings, orchestrated and arranged by pianist Johannes Maliatti, though these tracks represent his debut as an orchestra leader, they imbue Ensemble with the nuances and strokes of a seasoned master. >>>DOUG MOSUROCK

LINK www.fat-cat.co.uk

FILE UNDER Slower than Slowdive

RIYL Lisa Germano, Björk, Rameses III



THE HOLD STEADY

Boys And Girls In America Vagrant

This New-York-by-way-of-Minneapolis quintet's third effort is their best yet, the quintessence of their union of rousing E Street Band choruses and clever barstool poetry. Unlike *Separation Sunday*, which unfolded its narrative over the entire album, *Boys And Girls In America* is held together only by thematic congruence. Each song's story—like the opposites-attract tale of "Chillout Tent" about a working-class boy (who's "been to jail but never prison") and the college girl he meets at a concert—is a different take on Sal Paradise's declamation in *On The Road* that "Boys and girls in America have such a sad time together." It's a good match of subject and author. Singer/lyricist Craig Finn is adept at marrying the high

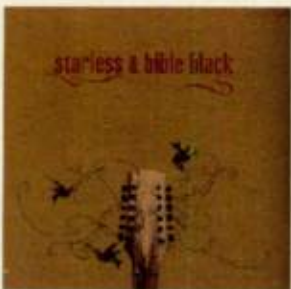
with the low (referencing Tennyson and Izzy Stradlin in the same breath) while casually describing minutiae ("The band was playing *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* (You thought it was stoney and adorable)") that makes his carefully drawn places and characters flicker with life. His alternately hopeful and hopeless sagas of unrelenting appetites for drugs, acceptance and intimacy are anchored by his slurred, rhythmic, Boss-like patter and a driving, at times lunky, rhythm section that bashes away underneath him like every song is "The Boys Are Back In Town." Though the lyrics are peppered with allusions to redemption, it's in the band's soaring organs and sweaty riffs where true salvation can really be found. >>>REBECCA RABER

LINK www.theholdsteady.com

FILE UNDER Boss hags

RIYL Bruce Springsteen, Thin Lizzy,

Drive-By Truckers



STARLESS AND BIBLE BLACK

Starless And Bible Black Locus

They may call Manchester home, but Starless And Bible Black are not your sister's Madchester band. This trio's debut album is filled with lyrical ballads that span an emotional rollercoaster; from sweet and charming daydreams to guttural expostulations, their words shift from weightless to crushing. Structured mostly around the finger picking of guitarist Peter Philipson, their delicate melodies are strengthened by resident noisemaker Raz Ullah and various friends the band called in to supply their rhythm section. But rather than accenting their acoustic tunes with pedal steel,

electric noise floats through each song, ranging from the almost cartoon-like effects in the opener "Everyday And Everynight" to the sci-fi-sounding drones of "B.B." What really sets Starless apart from the average acoustic-based warblers are Helene Gautier's vocals, notably her airy high notes, throaty alto and French (her native tongue)-via-Manchester accent. They add a richness to each song, whether layered upon themselves, blended with Philipson's vocal work, or when she's holding her own crooning in her original language. >>>AMANDA FARAH

LINK www.locusmusic.com

FILE UNDER Stellar Stars

RIYL Red House Painters, Mojave 3, Mum



UNDER BYEN

Samme Stof Som Stof Paper Bag

This Danish avant-pop octet's enigmatic, complex third album will have its listeners scanning the Web for a good Danish translation program. Henriette Sennenvald's luscious voice is only the first of Under Byen's many unfolding pleasures. The blonde chanteuse's pouty, breathy delivery—all in her native language—is charged with a dangerous sensuality reminiscent of Björk and Blonde Redhead's Kazu Makino. And her supporting cast parallels both artists' penchant for off-kilter, electro-orchestral arrangements and sweeping tempo changes. The singer gets frisky for the fuzzy, fiery Furnaces-style

synths of "Palads," but wilts on a dime for the Portishead dirge of "Siamesisk." Short interludes stitch the evolving musical fabric together, making for a luxurious listen for drama kings and queens. On several occasions, violinist Nils Gröndahl applies his bow to a saw to spooky effect, with his best results emerging on the discordant merry-go-round of a tune, "Af Samme Stof Som Stof." Melody makes a slight return on the shrill, solo piano number "Mere Af Det Samme Og Meget Mere Af Det Hele." In the end, even if we can't fully understand Under Byen, we still get it completely. >>>REED FISCHER

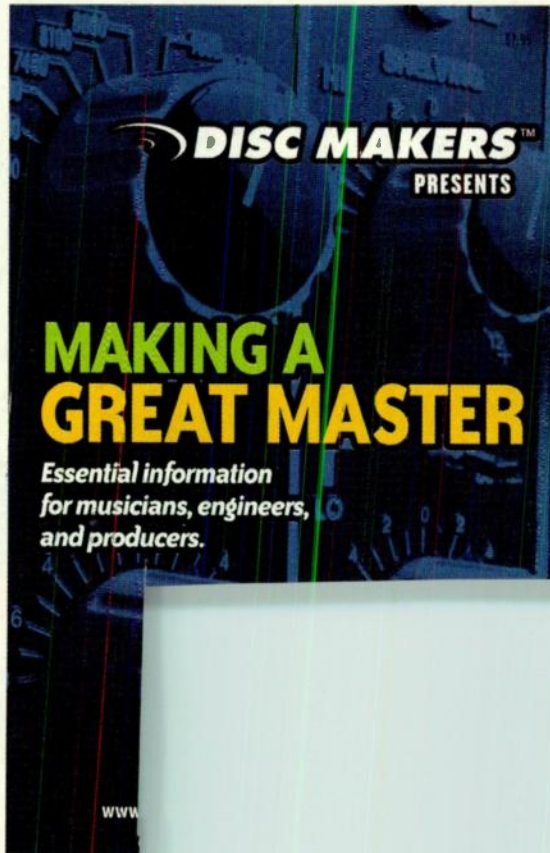
LINK www.underbyen.dk

FILE UNDER Melody Of Certain

Danish Lemons

RIYL Björk, Blonde Redhead, Cat Power

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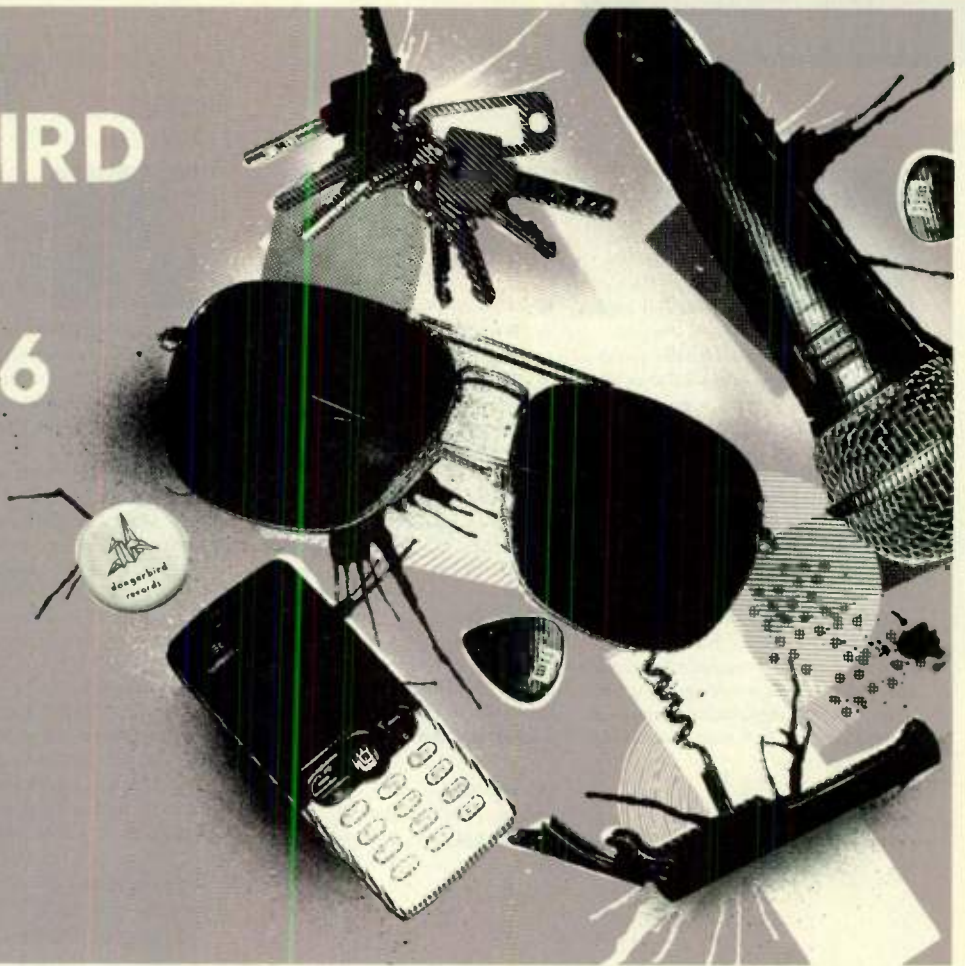
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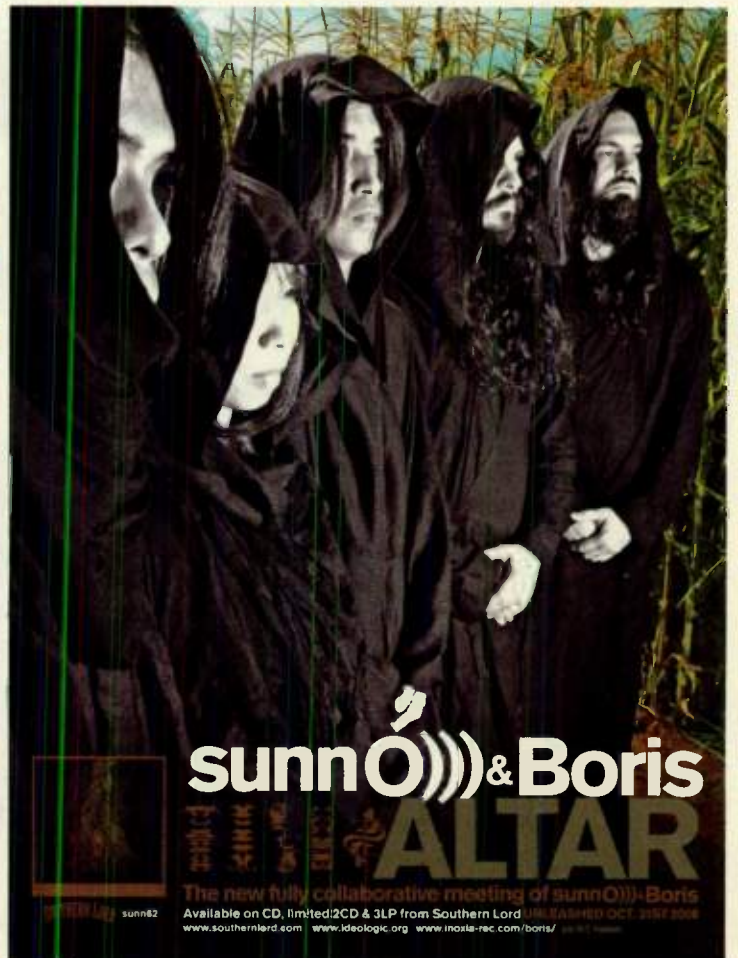
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120 DAYS

120 Days Vice

The eponymous debut from 120 Days is filled with distorted disco, filtered vocals and dizzying blasts of noise. Formerly known as the Beautiful People, the Norwegian electro-rockers' self-produced disc evokes the exhilaration (and occasional disorientation) of all-night rave-ups, particularly in the nine-minute anthem "Come Out, Come Down, Fade Out, Be Gone," during which frontman Ådne Meisjord passionately declares, "I lost my faith somewhere in the night/I was trying too hard to make you feel alright." With titles like "Sleepwalking" and "Sleepless Nights," the rest of the album alternates between various states of consciousness. "I can dance, I can dance this night away/Take me somewhere else and make me feel okay," Meisjord sings over glowering riffs in the former tune. Perhaps dreaming and dancing are one and the same for this Oslo set. >>>GINNY YANG

Link www.120days.no

File Under Daysdream

RIYL Primal Scream, Underworld, Kraftwerk

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

Hollinndagain Paw Tracks



This seven-track freak-out, AC's third official LP, was originally released in 2002 as a vinyl-only offering. At the time, only 300 copies (featuring several live 2001 appearances) were produced, each featuring a different cover handmade by the band. In its current state, the album showcases an extremely talented group of musicians in their nascent state, before eventually becoming one of the more celebrated live acts on the indie circuit. That said, *Hollinndagain*, though pulsing with ambition, is really not all that enjoyable a listen. Fans of AC's past output will no doubt be taken in by the frenetic guitar squalls and open spaces of incongruous ambient drones that still mark much of their current work, but the sound on this record is one of a band becoming, and its primal sense of urgency ultimately feels more stillborn than alive.

>>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

Link www.paw-tracks.com

File Under Alice In Blunderland

RIYL The Books, Akron/Family, hallucinogens

ASSASSINS

You Will Changed Us Chemicals Kill



This is an exceptionally well-produced album from a band that has been making waves in the Chicagoland area due to deserved comparisons to more well-known electronic-tinged bands like New Order and Primal Scream. As if to prove the comparisons true, they were hand-selected by Peter Hook to open for New Order on one of their US appearances. A fitting forum to assert themselves, since Assassins made their reputation live, and the confidence and style of their show is captured on *You Will Changed Us*. Merritt Lear, the band's mesmerizing vocalist, is a true talent, and her presence is evident on every part of the album, even when she sings background on the male-vox-lead tracks. Plenty of the record's highlights could be notable singles, particularly "Loved You Know," which combines the Assassins' strongest assets—their emotional vocals and slick musical styling—into a crescendo that leaves the listener breathless at its conclusion. >>>NORA CRONIN

Link www.assassins.com

File Under Hooks that kill

RIYL Goldfrapp, Primal Scream, Placebo

THE BLOW

Paper Television K



Khaela Maricich delivers her latest post-grad ruminations on romance via no-wave, glitchy grooves, much like on 2004's wondrous *Poor Aim: Love Songs* EP. *Paper Television*, which features fellow Pacific Northwest artist Jona Bechtolt (YACHT), boasts more length and even sharper wit. On the bangin' opener "Pile Of Gold," Maricich does her best Missy Elliott impression while explaining male-female relations as a complex economic exchange. "Parenthesis" melloes things out with a tropical ukelele tune set in a supermarket deli aisle. "When you're holding me, we make a pair of parenthesis," she sings. "There's plenty space to encase whatever weird way my mind goes." In the same way that Jimmy Tamborello needed Ben Gibbard's voice for a widespread audience to care about his synth pop, Maricich's ever-changing delivery and clever asides are necessary to keep some of these bare-bones productions from sounding like a guitarless Ratatat. But there are still plenty of rousing moments like "Fists Up," which is loaded with handclaps, a "Billie Jean" beat and a little Blondie dust that sprinkles over a dancing body with aplomb. >>>REED FISCHER

Link www.theblow.us

File Under Diary Of A MIDI Woman

RIYL Architecture In Helsinki, Feist, Junior Boys

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CALIFONE

[Roots & Crowns] Thrill Jockey



Chicago's woozy alt-hilljacks have returned with their seventh album, and opener "Pink & Sour" sets a tone right away, showing the band's more playful, tuneful side. "A Chinese Actor" skitters around with Indian trance riffs, distorted radio fuzz and falsetto vocals into an odd-dance sphere—if that sphere were rolled via flash flood into a swamp. "The Orchids" (a Psychic TV cover) and "Spiders House" (which flashes hints of horns) are as melodically sweet as anything Califone has uncovered. The band is still most cozy in their somber, creaky, mythologized Appalachian cabin, as on the hushed and backwards picking "Our Kitten Sees Ghosts" or distant fiddle and folk-pop swoon of "Alice Crawley." They still tend to nod off at times, but then their catalog aims to evoke some methadone fever dream. But even after four scraggly minutes into "Black Metal Valentine," sudden synthy warbles and metal scrapes rise and fall into the next banjo elegy. And it's this warm, willful willy-nilly that sets Califone far afield from most freak folks. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

Link www.pastrysharp.com

File Under Backwoods boogie-woogie-men

RIYL Iron And Wine, Modest Mouse, Moviola

GRAHAM COXON

Love Travels At Illegal Speeds Astralwerks



Like John Squire and Johnny Marr before him, ex-Blur guitarist Graham Coxon was often thought of as the unsung "real" genius of the band that made him famous, and also like Squire and Marr, since leaving that band, Coxon has done virtually nothing to maintain that reputation. After four solo albums of crude, crappy indie rock, Coxon released 2003's *Happiness In Magazines*, a smart and catchy collection of classic-sounding British pop-punk. The clumsily titled *Love Travels At Illegal Speeds* follows in the same vein, though it offers fewer highlights and generally sounds less inspired. Coxon is more than capable of crafting solid pop, and his guitar work is still impressive, but his childlike voice irritates quickly, and worse, his songs are rather forgettable—a far cry from Blur's classic catalog. In fairness, Coxon's solo work might be better appreciated by those not familiar with his pedigree, but that presents a paradox: Why would any non-Blur fans seek out such a modest, faceless artist? >>>MICHAEL PATRICK NELSON

Link www.grahamcoxon.co.uk

File Under By Damon be driven

RIYL Arctic Monkeys, The Buzzcocks, The Jam

DEARS

Gang Of Losers Arts & Crafts



Canadian artists may be hot right now, but these Montrealers clearly wish they were from somewhere else—namely Great Britain.

Led by the Damon Albarn-voiced Murray Lightburn, the Dears have always oozed an epic romanticism, wrapping their Smithsonian sense of alienation in grand pop harmonies and starry-eyed orchestrations. But on *Gang Of Losers*, they have pared down the instrumentation, focusing their sound on sadly jangling guitars, jaunty cabaret pianos and Lightburn's expressive croon, which, since 2003's *No Cities Left*, has gained soulful doo-wop shades reminiscent of TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe. Lightburn's lyrical takes on disaffection and loneliness ("You and I are on the outside of almost everything") remain ardently outsized, and it's evident that he empathizes with his titular gang. To wit, the album's most poignant moment is "Whites Only Party," where he pointedly addresses the outsider status of a black frontman in the lily white world of indie rock. "Don't say I'm paranoid," he sings. "It's more like just annoyed/Maybe a bit destroyed." >>>REBECCA RABER

Link www.thedears.org

File Under There is a Lightburn that never goes out

RIYL The Smiths, Broken Social Scene, the Stills

EL PERRO DEL MAR

El Perro Del Mar Control Group



Sarah Assbring's collection of sad and saccharine '50s-style pop was apparently inspired by a wet dog. Or least that's what her name suggests. El Perro Del Mar

(which literally translates to "sea dog") has a way of turning the ugly into something rather beautiful. Assbring coos about buying candy, drive-ins, dogs and hills, while her gentle inflection and minimalist production reveal the singer's anxieties. Her voice, which resembles both a happy, young girl and a desperate old woman, shies in and out of each track. On "Party," Assbring feigns happiness to win back a lover by forcefully singing, "Come on over baby, there's a party going on." The album shifts on the endorphin-induced "It's All Good," which packs a Partridge Family punch. El Perro forgets façade and nods to fellow Swede Jens Lekman in "This Loneliness," a gorgeously orchestrated ode to feeling solitary. As a multi-instrumentalist, Assbring's music is carefully layered, always giving way to her slight, at times androgynous, falsetto. "People" is an outsider's "Kumbaya" with quiet guitar strumming and a sha-la-la chorus. Sadness is not pretty, but El Perro Del Mar makes it sound sweet enough to sing along. >>>LISA DONNELLY

Link www.elperrodelmar.com

File Under Pump Up The Valium

RIYL Jens Lekman, Astrud Gilberto, Phil Spector

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MIHO HATORI

Ecdysis Rykodisc



Although "ecdysis" means shedding old skin to allow for new growth, Miho Hatori has not cast off all of her familiar quirks.

Originally released in Japan in 2005, the ex-Cibo Matto singer's first solo album emerges following her bossa nova Smokey & Miho project, a collaboration with guitarist Smokey Hormel, who notably helped Beck add tropicalia to his repertoire. Thus *Ecdysis* is a global cocktail of rhythm and language akin to David Byrne's recent work; the instruments evoke a rainforest filled with chirping insects. "A Song For Kids" incorporates African beats while a choir of Hatori spins some playful Japanese lyrics. "All I want is pleasure," she sings in between vintage organ and syncopated snatches of harmonica sparking from the cool fire of "Barracuda." The pleasure-seeking resonates in her backing players, including former Soul Coughing bassist Sebastian Steinberg and keyboardist Mark de Gli Antoni, who charge the Brazilian pop of "Today Is Like That" with a zoo's ambience. Guessing Hatori's hovering near the chameleon exhibit? >>>RF

Link www.mihohatori.com

File Under Viva! la world music

RIYL Cibo Matto, Pizzicato Five, Zero 7

TIM HECKER

Harmony In Ultraviolet Kranky



This is Hecker's sixth album of experimental sound and digital compositions that seem ready-made for a video installation at a museum. *Harmony In*

Ultraviolet might even inspire some "What is art?" conversations. If ever there were a visionary in the art of music production, it would be Hecker. While he is not really re-inventing the instrumental wheel here, listening to *Harmony*, you can't help but feel like there is something important at work in his creative process. The only problem is, being a visionary involves effectively communicating that vision to the masses, and there is a lot of listening time spent waiting for a message or theme to emerge. Much like a postmodern philosopher, the album risks being misunderstood for being so cerebral. Despite Hecker's prior critical acclaim, the album will either be loved for its artful experimentation or dismissed as boring digital noise. >>>NC

Link www.sunblind.net

File Under Art Of Accessible Noise

RIYL Tortoise, Radiohead, *Pure Moods*

IMITATION ELECTRIC PIANO

Blow it Up, Burn it Down, Kick it 'Til it Bleeds Drag City



When Imitation Electric Piano, once an instrumental Stereolab side project, decided it was time to throw

lyrics into their mix, they couldn't have chosen a better singer to add to their stylish, keyboard-infused pop melodies than Brighton folk artist Mary Hampton. A pretty voice singing desperate-but-not-serious lyrics is always cute, but the album retains rock sensibility, perhaps thanks to IEP's founding members, seven-year Stereolab veteran Simon Johns (fellow 'Lab cohorts Joe Watson and Dominic Jeffery are also present on *Blow It Up*) and Andrew Blake, who has played with Felt and Primal Scream. Yet the record packs a killer punch beneath Hampton's Hope Sandoval-esque vocals, showing Imitation could be more than just a fling. With some smart lyrics and memorable riffs to boot, at least one song from this collection will likely make it onto a mix tape for someone you are trying to impress. >>>NC

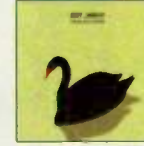
Link www.dragcity.com

File Under Imitation better than flattery

RIYL Stereolab, Jesus And Mary Chain, Metric

BERT JANSCH

The Black Swan Drag City



Scottish folk hero Bert Jansch earned a few Bob Dylan comparisons while finger-picking his way into legend back in the 1960s.

Today, both artists are senior citizens, but Jansch's croon shows considerably less wear. Beth Orton, Devendra Banhart and members of Espers added cred to *The Black Swan*, but this album belongs to its namesake. Jansch's exquisite acoustic fretwork on Brendan Behan's prisoner's song "The Old Triangle" and an original, "High Days," show why this master impresses Jimmy Page. "You play your guitar, but you never ever finish the song/Didn't matter then, I guess it doesn't matter now," he sings on the latter. José González, bow down! Orton shows poise as lead vocalist on several tracks, including Karen Dalton's classic "Katie Cruel," and she trades lines with Jansch on "Watch The Stars." Credit producer Noah Georgeson (Banhart, Joanna Newsom) for keeping flute, banjo and cello arrangements organized throughout. He even fits in "Texas Cowboy Blues," an anti-Bush stomp closest that comes closest to mirroring modern Dylan. No nods to Alicia Keys here, though. >>>RF

Link www.berljansch.com

File Under Blackwater flows again

RIYL José González, Nick Drake, Devendra Banhart

I must not think bad thoughts

I must not think bad thoughts

I must not think bad thoughts

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Vindylistic

KYLESA

Time Will Fuse Its Worth Prosthetic



It seemed only natural that the early '90s, particularly with a Democrat in office, would squelch the then-thriving crustcore

scene, which Savannah, Georgia's coed crew Kyleasa now mostly dominates, forcing many a peace-punk to take showers and find jobs in information technology. Well, thank God for King George Bush The Second, because Kyleasa has enough fuel to jumpstart a new round of Tompkins Square punk riots. Their third full-length, *Time Will Fuse Its Worth*, balances plodding hardcore riffage with shouted revolutionary lyrics about future devolution. When they're not playing fortuneteller, they're stuttering and tripping over their own riffs, which only add more character to the mix, since so many metalcore bands have tried to refine the breakdown. But rather than lean more toward metal, this album seems less leather and studs and more safety pin through the nose than their last one, *To Walk A Middle Course*, making it a heavy contender (no pun intended) for best punk album of the year. Even better news is that early reports suggest that if we just keep electing Republicans, their music will only get angrier and better. >>>KORY GROW

Link www.kylesa.com

File Under No cheese, extra crust

RIYL Nausea, Mastodon, Spitboy

LADY SOVEREIGN

Public Warning Def Jam



Looks like Jay-Z hired someone new to get the grime off Def Jam's floors. (And with that, we can dispense of the obligatory grime

references that lazily lace through all of Sovereign's reviews.) *Public Warning* is the hottest shit of the otherwise cool fall months, following through on the promise of her buzzed-about singles. In fact, her debut full-length would benefit from skipping past the redux'd "9 To 5," opening right off with the booty-beckoning bounce of "Random." From there, *Warning* hardly takes a breath, diving into the videogame, ADD warp speed of the title track (and its absolutely lunatic "Proud Mary"-meets-an-English football-chant coda), the distinctly American-sounding, scale-climbing synth loop of "Love Me Or Hate" and on through 12 tracks that, impressively, all clock in neatly between three and four minutes. In other words, no filler, no excess; Lady Sovereign is like the light beer of UK garage. But the best part of all is her relentless boasting. She's by turns dirty and sexy, bragging with a Lil' Kim-worthy bravado, but without the suffocating crassness and more of a sense of humor. You've been warned indeed. >>>KENNY HERZOG

Link www.ladysovereign.com

File Under Les Savy Sav

RIYL Dizzee Rascal, the Streets, M.I.A.

THE LEMONHEADS

The Lemonheads Vagrant



There hardly seemed any call for a Lemonheads reunion. Prior to their 1998 breakup, the band's artistic dividends had

been steadily declining since 1993's *It's A Shame About Ray*, and frontman Evan Dando's 2003 release, *Baby I'm Bored*, was pleasant and tuneful enough to satisfy anyone looking for a fix. Perhaps Dando and Co. were inspired by fellow reunited Massachusettsians the Pixies and Dinosaur Jr, or maybe they smelled a last chance at making a profit, or maybe Dando just wanted to rock again—regardless, *The Lemonheads* is a fine, if unnecessary, addition to a largely underrated catalog. Consistently fuzzier and louder than anything Dando has recorded since 1989's *Lick*, the eponymous album is populated by buoyant, if undercooked, punk-pop numbers. Of course, Dando has never been known as a painstaking craftsman, so it's hard to criticize him for turning out material that solely gets by on charm, energy and his wonderfully lazy, caramel-coated voice, which has rarely sounded better. >>>MPN

Link www.thelemonheads.net

File Under Evan Can Wait

RIYL Pavement, Matthew Sweet, Dinosaur Jr

MIXEL PIXEL

Music For Plants Kanine



Proving once and for all that you really can't play too many video games, Brooklyn electro-pop quartet Mixel Pixel have bashed

out their fourth full-length of infectious dance beats, driving rhythms and Atari-inspired sound effects. But the band does show a knack for being able to do more than literally push buttons. Their boy/girl vocals, though a bit loose at times, perfectly complement lyrics about parties, drugs and various boy/girl problems ("Everything is coming up Xs/That's what you get when you battle the sexes"—oh my!). And if you listen carefully enough, you can hear the crunch, sometimes furious guitars buried beneath the layers of synths and samples, adding to their cyberpunk package. If the studios ever get around to making a film version of *Neuromancer*, Mixel Pixel will have to supply the soundtrack.

>>>AMANDA FARAH

Link www.mixelpixel.com

File Under Pixel perfect

RIYL Devo, the Flaming Lips, William Gibson

HUGS AND/OR DRUGS

JESSICA BAILIFF feels like home krank097

"...fragile around the edges sometimes, like newly emerged moths, or fragments of dream memory upon waking." — *Dream Magazine*

CHRIS HERBERT mezzotint krank101

"Utterly quiet, with a pulse-soothing beat, it takes several listens to reveal itself, like a dark room slowly brought into focus." — *Disquiet*

CHRISTINA CARTER electrice krank103

"She is a singular and important figure inside the context of our era's music, creating rich, mysterious and highly individual carpets for all of us to sail away on." — *The Wire*.
Watch for Christina's guest appearance on DJ Shadow's "The Outsider"

BENOÎT PIOULARD précis krank098

"Crystalline folk-pop teeming with fragile vocals, acoustic guitars, electronics, and percussion in a hazy shoegaze style that's ... more than a little easy to fall in love with" — *Textura*

TIM HECKER harmony in ultraviolet krank102

"...chisels a pristine din out of soot-clogged guitar distortion and symphonics that litter from the heavens." — *XLR8R*

BODUF SONGS lion devours the sun krank099

"Picturesque and pastoral, using little more than his voice and guitar to create a vivid picture of the world around him. Only Sweet sees a world populated by very dark happenings and very dreadful ideas, all swirling, massing and waiting to descend..." — *Brainwashed*

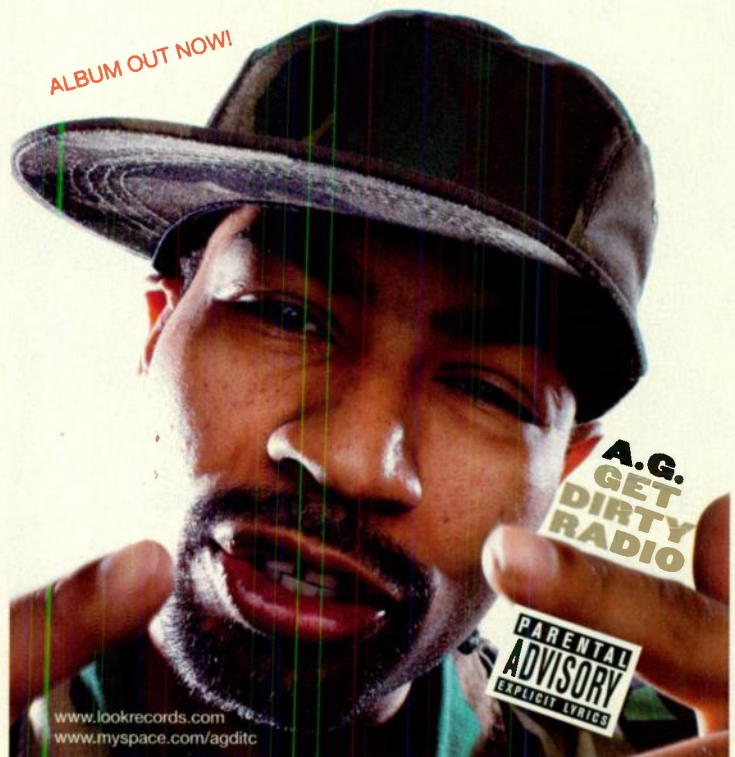
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REVIEWS

GEORGIA ANNE MULDROW

Olesi: Fragments Of Earth Stones Throw



The best thing about *Olesi* isn't even Muldrow's wonderful old-soul voice and the way it mashes unapologetically with a no-bullshit, new-school hip-hop attitude; or the way that being the daughter of jazz musicians has infused her with an authentic talent and smart-beyond-her-peers ear for a worthy groove. The best thing about *Olesi* is how playfully bizarre it is underneath the seemingly standard surface of organic percussion and bubbling funky bass. You can almost see Muldrow smiling as she lays jazzed-up vocals (or intermittently rapped fragments) atop rather untraditional R&B tracks stacked with strange sonic garnishing. It's not off base to compare the record to Erykah Badu's alter-earth-mother approach to the genre. And in a way, with most songs clocking in at blink-and-you'll-miss-it lengths and only sporadically imperative attention paid to verse-chorus-verse structure, Muldrow may have found a niche as the perfect vocalist companion to schizo MCs like Madvillain. Kudos to a wonderfully weird R&B record smartly rooted in its influences. >>> KH

Link www.stonesthrow.com/georgia

File Under Earthtunes

RIYL Erykah Badu, Quasimoto, The Roots

BENOIT PIVOULARD

Precis Kranky



Benoit Pioulard is the musical pseudonym of this Boston quartet, half of whom attended the prestigious Berklee School Of Music, is comprised of accomplished musicians. So it's unfortunate that on their debut EP, their chops are undermined by their blatant hero worship. Lots of bands wear their influences on their sleeves, but the guys in Protokoll are fully dressed in costume. Every track on the five-song disc explores a different aspect of their '80s pop pastiche. Opening track "Moving Forward" consists of a wiry, rhythmic verse pooled from Joy Division throwaways and a chorus that lifts the refrain from "In Between Days" by the Cure; "Delicado" marries repetitive, deep-voiced talk-singing with a soaring New Romantic synth line cribbed from Modern English's "I Melt With You"; and the skittering disco drums (is that a cowbell?) and funky bassline of "Sunken" recall every band the Rapture has already stolen from. That said, the hooks are tight, if not new, and at least Protokoll's picked good inspirations to emulate. >>>RR

Link www.kranky.net

File Under *Precis*-ion craftsmanship

RIYL Bright Eyes, My Bloody Valentine, Jeepster-era Belle And Sebastian

PROTOKOLL

Protokoll IHEARTCOMIX



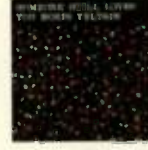
There is no doubt that this Boston quartet, half of whom attended the prestigious Berklee School Of Music, is comprised of accomplished musicians. So it's unfortunate that on their debut EP, their chops are undermined by their blatant hero worship. Lots of bands wear their influences on their sleeves, but the guys in Protokoll are fully dressed in costume. Every track on the five-song disc explores a different aspect of their '80s pop pastiche. Opening track "Moving Forward" consists of a wiry, rhythmic verse pooled from Joy Division throwaways and a chorus that lifts the refrain from "In Between Days" by the Cure; "Delicado" marries repetitive, deep-voiced talk-singing with a soaring New Romantic synth line cribbed from Modern English's "I Melt With You"; and the skittering disco drums (is that a cowbell?) and funky bassline of "Sunken" recall every band the Rapture has already stolen from. That said, the hooks are tight, if not new, and at least Protokoll's picked good inspirations to emulate. >>>RR

Link www.protokoll.us

File Under Been caught stealing

RIYL Bloc Party, the Cure, Editors

SOMEONE STILL LOVES YOU BORIS YELTSIN



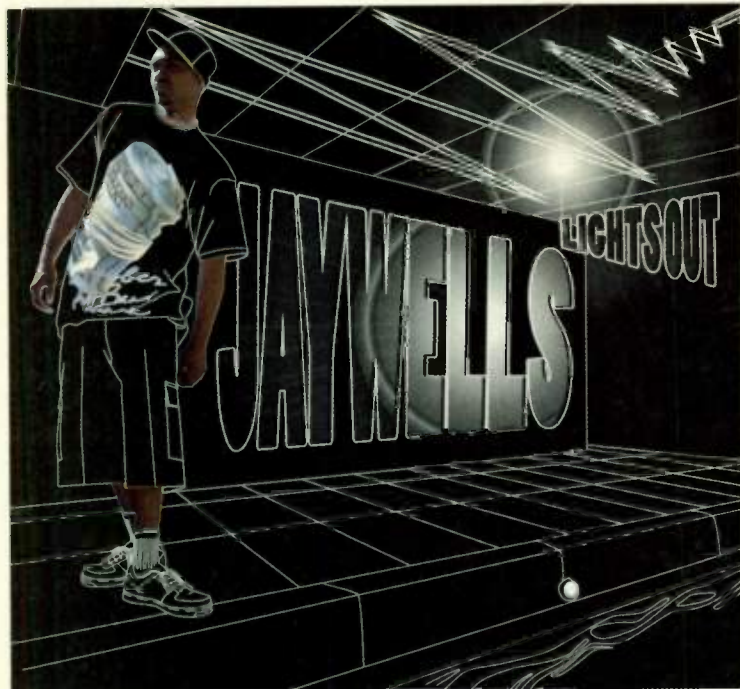
Broom Polyvinyl

Imitation, if executed with equal parts reverence and an aspiration to dilate pre-existing influences, is an art form in itself. So if, while listening to *Broom*, you're imbued with the unshakable feeling that you've heard this all before, it's because you just may have. Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin's debut LP, originally released last year before the band signed to Polyvinyl, is everything an indie-pop record should be. Much like current "it" band Tapes 'N Tapes, whose sound is an amalgamation of the best and brightest of '90s indie rock—SSLYBY has no apparent qualms cribbing ideas from the playbooks' heavy-hitting forefathers like Beulah, Weezer and, most recently, the Unicorns, whose lo-fi pop aesthetic pervades this record. So what is it that separates SSLYBY from the dizzying onslaught of like-minded artists? It's hard to say for certain, but the answer likely lies somewhere in stand-out track "Anne Elephant," which epitomizes their near-perfect formula. >>>KK

Link www.slslyby.com

File Under There's nothing wrong with loving Boris Yeltsin

RIYL Beulah, Weezer, Unicorns



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SPARTA

Threes Hollywood



Ever since their inception, the "other" band featuring members of At The Drive-In has incessantly been compared to their

former counterparts. With two good, if uneven, heavy post-punk albums under their belts, the band seemed snarled in a web of lost and underdeveloped ideas. With *Threes*, however, the band has produced their most complete effort yet. The addition of guitarist Keeley Davis, former leader of Engine Down, and singer Jim Ward's vastly improved vocal range propel the band's transcendence and rebirth. The familiar but incendiary Dubya-bashing of "Take Back Control" and anathematic post-punk tendencies of "False Storm" are equally commanding. More striking, though, are the moments that showcase the band's growth, such as the airy "Atlas" and the emotional, surprisingly soulful "Translations." Like a good stew that was lacking the right amount of salt, Sparta has finally fused all their collective parts into their most exciting and moving record yet.

>>>MATT PULLMAN

Link www.spartamusic.com

File Under *Threes* a charm

RIYL Rival Schools, Engine Down, Texas Is The Reason

SUBTLE

For Hero: For Fool EMI/Lex



The release of a second full-length from Adam "Doseone" Drucker and his experimental Bay Area hip-pop collective Subtle is

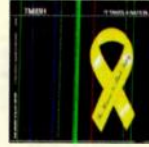
nothing short of miraculous. After a 2005 crash left band members injured and multi-instrumentalist Dax Pierson paralyzed from the waist down, their reemergence comes as a stunner. But *For Hero: For Fool* isn't a mere return; here the band sounds absolutely revitalized, rallying behind the determined, slowly mending Pierson, who appears on all of the record's tracks, playing harmonica, beat boxing and offering his vocal chords up for slicing and sampling. But while the increased energy is impressive, more than anything, the songwriting has improved. And now that Subtle has entered the EMI fold, it's a step up that couldn't have come at a better time. Their most accessible material to date, *For Hero: For Fool* borrows several tricks from the Crayola-shaded hip-hop of Gnarls Barkley, but the album's true success comes when Subtle hides that pop sensibility deep within their busy aberrations and weirdo eccentricities, making the trip to each song's core all the more rewarding. >>>ROBBIE MACKEY

Link www.subtle6.com

File Under DoseSix

RIYL DoseOne, Captain Beefheart, Gnarls Barkley

THIS MOMENT IN BLACK HISTORY



It Takes A Nation Of Assholes To Hold Us Back Cold Sweat

Just as their hometown is named "America's Poorest

City," Cleveland's aggro-anarcho crew drops their second Molotov cocktail. Like most great Ohio acts from whom they've taken inspiration (Pagans, Spike In Vain, Dennis Kucinich), they do not slide neatly into any specific category. The initially overt spazzcore flavor is there (think An Albatross), but *This Moment* flings bottles farther back to the Bad Brains' overwhelming fury at the state of things. After an introductory '60s Negro-relations-LP sound bite splice-up, the razor blasts kick in with a vengeance. But all the stabbing is undercut with Lamont Thomas' shifty, loose drumming, which takes a turn from the usual herky-jerky. And after dropping references to flamboyant ex-Cavaliers and Charlie Parker, the band exposes more tricky maneuvers, like spine-weaving riffs, synth-chopped pang-pop and the singer's fairly articulate spit-spew, which allows you to actually catch a couple of the complaints. >>>ED

Link

www.myspace.com/thismomentinblackhistory

File Under Cleveland browns and black and blue

RIYL An Albatross, Blood Brothers, Nation Of Ulysses

THUNDERBIRDS ARE NOW!

Make History French Kiss



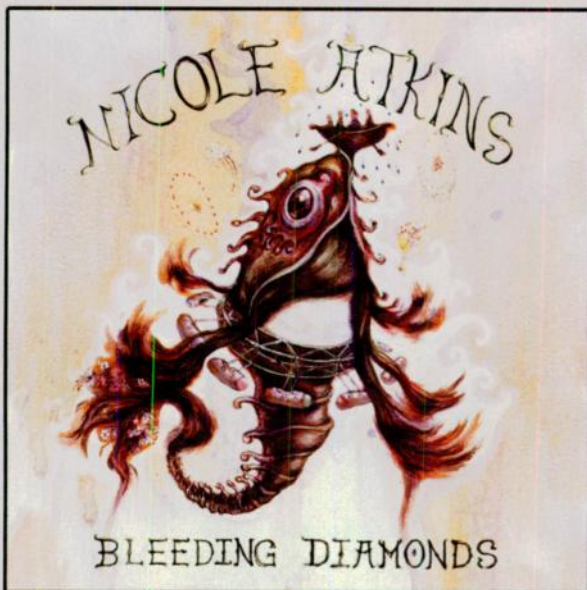
The opening bars of "Panthers In Crime," the first track off of *Make History*, are tender and folksy, with dulcet vocal harmonies

hanging in the air. Have Thunderbirds Are Now! gone soft on us? Fortunately, fans of the Detroit spazz-rockers don't have to wait for long for an answer, as the song eventually gives way to a jumpy, call-and-response chorus against capitalism. In their follow-up to 2005's *Justamustache*, TAN! tackles issues like violence and the ravages of human nature, littering the disc with images of lifeless bodies. "Who created the monsters?/Are they born or are they made?/From the densest cities to the Everglades/Their eyes are like knives, words like grenades," singer Ryan Allen charges in "Why We War." Jagged guitar lines and fractured beats round out the chaotic and exuberant collection, making listeners dance amidst a hearty offering of socio-political commentary. >>>GY

Link www.thunderbirdsarenow.com

File Under Die with your dancing boots on

RIYL !!!, Ween, Les Savy Fav



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REVIEWS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The DFA Remixes Chapter 2 DFA/Astralwerks



Why buy this comp? Because how else could you justify listening to Junior Senior or recent Nine Inch Nails? As with their

previous remix installment, Team DFA, composed of Tim Goldsworthy and LCD Soundsystem frontman James Murphy, has given the ultra-hip dance treatment to eight songs that really needed an ultra-hip dance treatment. And as promised, both Junior Senior's "Shake Your Coconuts" and Nine Inch Nails' "Hand That Feeds" far surpass their originals (save Trent Reznor's god-awful speak-singing). Original versions of songs that already carried some degree of likeability, like Goldfrapp's "Slide In" and N.E.R.D.'s "She Wants To Move," prove even more exciting after Murphy and Goldsworthy add the edge the originals unwittingly lost somewhere along the way. Moreover, it's fascinating how the duo has turned what is often viewed as a collectable novelty—remixes—to anyone other than club DJs and diehard electronica fan, into something far more valuable, not to mention enjoyable. And their subjects should most definitely be grateful, because on this night a DJ saved their lives. >>>KG

Link www.dfarecords.com

File Under Take ecstasy with them

RIVL LCD Soundsystem, N.E.R.D., Hot Chip

THE WALKMEN

Pussycats Record Collection



In 1974, both John Lennon and Harry Nilsson could get away with squandering label dollars on haphazard vanity projects.

Whether the Walkmen have earned similar stature is questionable, but their take on *Pussycats*, Lennon and Nilsson's intoxicated and indulgent mix of covers and originals, might be the band's most worthwhile effort. Drowned in bluesy vocals, woozy piano and playfully morbid decadence, most of their take on Lennon/Nilsson's takes on pre-existing songs (and a handful of the duo's originals) capture that Randy Newman-meets-Old West saloon vibe just right. Opener "Many Rivers To Cross" (penned by Jimmy Cliff) matches Hamilton Leithauser's nasal wail with a sublimely mournful slide guitar. Elsewhere, "Rock Around The Clock" finds the boys as reckless as they'll get, going for broke with horn solos and a carnival of effected vocals. So whereas *Pussycats* hardly holds up to either of its original participants' previous catalogues, and thus seems like a superfluous obscurity at best, it makes for a Walkmen record well worth digging into. >>>KH

Link www.recordcollectionmusic.com/ecards/pussycats

File Under Lennon-grads

RIVL Harry Nilsson, Randy Newman, *Let It Bleed*

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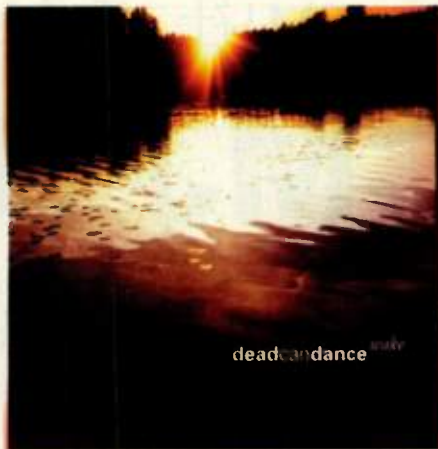


BRIGHT EYES

Noise Floor (Rarities: 1998-2005) Saddle Creek
 Conor Oberst's music is a love-it-or-hate-it proposition. That said, those not already under the spell of his witty, wonderful wordplay and emotionally wracked vocals would do well to take these rarities as an opportunity to acquire a taste. The reality is, behind those irritatingly long bangs, Oberst is the rare singer-songwriter whose intimate melodies transcend his nakedly poetic lyrics. The 26-year-old gets a lot of press for being young (the word "wunderkind" has definitely been overused), but he is even significantly younger on the adolescent bedroom tapes compiled here. Surprisingly though, on tracks like 2001's "I Will Be Grateful For This Day" (previously only available as a Sub Pop single) and 1999's lo-fi "The Vanishing Act," he sounds seasoned and poised. This collection makes it clear that, though his production has gotten cleaner and his orchestrations are now fuller and more refined, Oberst's gift for sensual metaphors ("Our bodies twist like shoe-laces" or "I let my pen bleed black and blue") has been with him from the get-go. Do yourself a favor and spring for the vinyl edition, which contains an extra five hard-to-find tracks, including the stunning B-side "When The Curious Girl Realized She Is Under Glass Again." >>>REBECCA RABER

DEAD CAN DANCE

Wake 4AD
 No one would dare deny world-music crossover goth-folkers Dead Can Dance's influence on indie rock, due to the legion of dark-robed Wiccans it would likely upset, so 4AD has covered its bases. Since best-of comps seem to come in two varieties—single-disc "hits" compilations and multiple-disc "fans-only" affairs—they've seemingly issued *Wake* to complement 2005's too-short *Memento* collection. In addition to containing almost every song on *Memento*, *Wake*, which represents guitarist Brendan Perry's favorite cuts from their 2001 box set, displays its worth by containing the demo for "Frontier" that caught their label's attention in the first place, showcasing songstress Lisa Gerrard's early command of neo-Middle Eastern vocal histrionics and Perry's knowledge of discordant instrumentations. It also



contains tracks from their *Garden Of the Arcane Delights* EP, one from an early '90s comp and the final song they wrote, "The Lotus Eaters." If anything, *Wake* sways easier than *Memento*, as it better covers each phase of the duo's evolution, despite weighing a little heavy on their most-successful mid-'90s period, rather than tumbling around history until the point where the duo became renowned soundtrack artists. Mostly though, it's right on mark with the key selections. >>>KORY GROW



THE FIX

At The Speed Of Twisted Thought... Touch And Go
 In 1980, a writer for the *Touch And Go* zine wrote, "If you don't know about the Fix by now, boy are you a lame fuck," followed by a disclaimer from his editor to non-local readers. But frankly, over a quarter-century later, he's still right. Judging from the recordings on this discography, this Lansing, Michigan quartet rivaled their peers—Black Flag, Dead Kennedys and Minor Threat—in ferocity and urgency. As the Touch And Go label's second release, the "Vengeance" 7-inch—which supposedly went for around a couple grand on eBay recently—makes a perfect companion to *Damaged* or the singles Dischord dispatched that same year. And the "Ain't got nothin' on me" refrain from the B-side, "In This Town," stands out for maximum anthem quality. The rest of this comp follows suit, and with

worthwhile outtakes, like a cut from Touch And Go's out-of-print *Process Of Elimination* comp, and a live tape rounding out the band's recordings, it will satiate casual fans as much as collectors. For maximum time-capsule pleasure, skip to the last track for a rousing cover of the Germs' "Media Blitz," recorded the same year Darby Crash died. >>>KG



INCREDIBLE BONGO BAND

Bongo Rock Mr. Bongo
 How's this for curious? Since hip-hop's inception, everyone from Grandmaster Flash to Jurassic 5 has swiped a sample of the Incredible Bongo Band's tribal-drum-smothered take on the Shadows' surf cut "Apache." But the R&B-flavored Bongo Band is actually the work of two über-white dudes, former MGM exec Michael Viner and cornball songwriter Perry Botkin, Jr. When Viner needed a song for a B-movie and birthed the Bongo Band, he ultimately recruited world-class bongo players and session musicians and released two albums of percussive instrumental funk. Viner and Botkin, however suspect their pedigrees, clearly knew how to fuse the right elements for a successful sound, because one would never call into question their racial makeup after an initial spin of *Bongo Rock*. This compilation of both their full-lengths, *Bongo Rock* and *The Return Of The Incredible Bongo Band*, pulses along with some serious grooves, only going noticeably awry when reinterpreting "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." Obviously, the proceedings get a bit redundant, but they're also relentlessly upbeat, and more to the point, keep up a constant level of peak musicianship by all players. Hell, even Ringo Starr, Harry Nilsson and John Lennon took part on a few tracks. The fact that the latter two were in their drunken lunatic phase is beside the point. >>>KENNY HERZOG

PRETENDERS

Pretenders/Pretenders II Rhino
 One of the great travesties of modern rock 'n' roll has finally been righted. The initial CD release of these first two Pretenders albums came out at the dawn of the format, where quickie crappy mastering was the norm; and considering the hefty

P R E T E N D E R S



influence the band and leader Chrissie Hynde have had on riot grrrls, female singer-songwriters, garage punk and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs et. al, it's surprising it's taken this long to re-master and re-release these new wave benchmarks. While it's true that by 1980 Hynde was no rookie (she was an *NME* writer and had been trying to form a band amidst the '77 British punk scene), the stylistic and emotional depth of her voice and lyrics is stunning for a debut, made more so upon hearing the previously unreleased early demos. "Brass In Pocket" and "Stop Your Sobbing" are even more delicate; "I Can't Control Myself" feels snidely sexual; and in "Tequila" she wallows in a then-untapped country weep mode. Behind her, the band created the crossover bridge from no-fat punk brevity to mainstream rock power. The better mastering really helps the unjustly maligned second album, amping up James Honeyman Scott's increasingly sinister riffs (perhaps too sinister—both Scott and bassist Pete Farndon were dead from overdose by early 1983). For "The Adultrous" and the outro of "Message Of Love" alone, *II* still ranks as one of the better records of the early '80s. The mostly live bonus tracks of the 18-song second disc are from a rare promo-only record from that era, plus some more demos. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



LOU REED

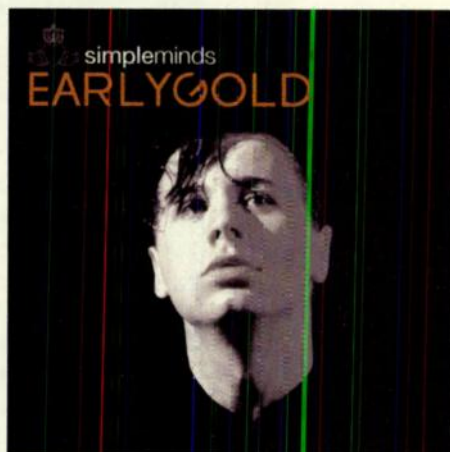
Coney Island Baby RCA/Legacy

Acting under a warning from on high at RCA, Lou Reed delivered this promised straight-up rock record, following the tape-loop experiment *Metal Machine Music*. It was 1976, and Reed was at the



Lou Reed in his oh-so-classy Coney Island days

lowest point of his career and saddled with tax troubles, so who can blame him? Of course all the polishing (icky, phlanged slide guitar, some pedestrian tempos) didn't result in much better sales anyway, but that was a lesson for future generations. Nevertheless, there are some tough treasures here. "Ooohhh Baby" and "Nobody's Business" are fine *Loaded*-era reloads, and "Kicks" is a cunning piece of pop-psychology where Reed poses questions to chattering party hangers-on in the background. Better he should've mixed in the fuzz-assed blast of the extra tracks ("Leave Me Alone," Nowhere At All) and the fist-slinging "She's My Best Friend" demo that bests the album's strolling take). While *Baby* is a more approachably emotional coming-out party, it's also the beginning of Reed's ongoing struggle to balance poetic verbiage with equally moving music. >>>ED

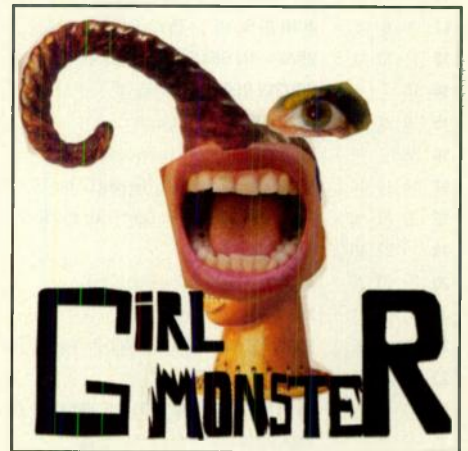


SIMPLE MINDS

Early Gold Astralwerks

This single-disc compilation of one of the late '70s/early '80s' most crucially experimental bands is actually part of a five-artist Astralwerks rollout that also includes reissues from Heaven 17, the Future Sound Of London, Captain Beefheart and

Tangerine Dream (whose excellent *Essential* retrospective got pushed back to a 2007 release). Disparate as the set may seem, all these artists have one key quality in common: being under-appreciated and foolishly pigeonholed. Problem is, we get more Heaven than we need (underrated as the Human League offshoot was), Future Sound is still hypnotic but feels slightly dated, and Beefheart's best work isn't necessarily represented. So what remains essential is the absurdly overdue retrospective of Simple Minds' first few albums. The UK auteurs-turned-pop stars fell victim to '80s teen-flick soundtrack success (a fate similar to Tangerine Dream's, who most people associate with Tom Cruise and Rebecca DeMornay fucking on a train). "Don't You Forget About Me" mooted the impact of Minds' influential early post-punk, although those gems are represented on this disc by *Reel To Real Cacophony* cuts like "Changeling" and "Factory," which brilliantly merged Wire-esque jerkiness with nearly danceable melodies. A bit unexpected from the Astralwerks camp, but *Gold* is one of 2006's most welcomed vault-clearers. >>>KH



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Girl Monster Chicks On Speed

Only the Chicks On Speed imprint would compile more than 60 tracks from the past three decades that celebrate women's accomplishments in punk, art-punk, new wave, neo wave and just about every other non-mainstream genre... and do it so well. This box set features songs—some exclusives, at that—by firebrands like Le Tigre, Björk, Delta 5, LiliPUT, Kevin Blechdom, the Slits, Erase Eratta, the Raincoats and of course the Chicks themselves. But by nature, these name-checks are only lure to discover the rest of the talent within. What makes this collection such a keeper are gems like French electro-songstress Sir Alice's "Super Hero" and its mechanical drums and building noise; Katastrophe's electro-hip-hop "Your Girlfriend," which threatens, "I'm gonna take your girlfriend"; and Françoise Cactus' keys 'n' guitars take on Johnny Thunders' classic, "You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory." Plus, the inclusion of Juliette And The Licks' "You're Speaking My Language" and the rocky "Somos Las Perras" by Las Perras Del Inferno shows the Chicks' commitment to all women's accomplishments, not just quirky electro stuff. This record more than makes up for his-story's mistakes, and to counter Pere Ubu's recent incendiary album title, we'd happily rename this comp, *Why We Love Women*. >>>KG

CMJ RADIO TOP 50

PERIOD ENDING 10/10/2006
WWW.CMJ.COM/NMR/

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

TW	LW	ZW	PK	WKS	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	2	4	1	5	BLACK KEYS Magic Potion	Nonesuch
2	24	-	2	2	DECEMBERISTS The Crane Wife	Capitol
3	1	1	1	7	TV ON THE RADIO Return To Cookie Mountain	Interscope
4	3	2	2	8	YO LA TENGO I'm Not Afraid Of You And I Will Beat Your Ass	Matador
5	7	77	5	3	BECK The Information	Interscope
6	4	3	3	6	BOB DYLAN Modern Times	Columbia
7	5	5	5	5	RAPTURE Pieces Of The People We Love	Universal
8	6	8	6	5	MARS VOLTA Amputecture	Strummer/Universal
9	12	18	9	4	BEN KWELLER Ben Kweller	ATO
10	9	12	9	4	BONNIE PRINCE BILLY The Letting Go	Drag City
11	17	173	11	3	MY MORNING JACKET Okonokos: Double Live Album	ATO
12	8	6	6	6	JUNIOR BOYS So This Is Goodbye	Domino
13	11	19	11	5	BRAZILIAN GIRLS Talk To La Bomb	Verve Forecast
14	10	7	6	6	GRIZZLY BEAR Yellow House	Warp
15	16	24	15	4	DJ SHADOW The Outsider	Universal
16	26	-	16	2	LEMONHEADS The Lemonheads	Vagrant
17	14	14	14	5	R.E.M. And I Feel Fine... The Best Of The I.R.S. Years 1982-1987	Capitol
18	20	25	18	4	EMILY HAINES Knives Don't Have Your Back	Last Gang
19	19	27	19	3	KASABIAN Empire	RCA
20	25	20	20	5	ALBUM LEAF Into The Blue Again	Sub Pop
21	15	11	11	6	XIU XIU The Air Force	SRC
22	28	-	22	2	SPARKLEHORSE Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of	Astralwerks
23	44	170	23	3	SCISSOR SISTERS Ta-Dah	Universal
24	40	-	24	2	ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE VENUS 3 Ole Tarantula	Yep Roc
25	29	31	25	4	VIVA VOCE Get Yr Blood Sucked Out	Barsuk
26	18	13	7	9	RATATAT Classics	XL
27	13	9	1	11	M. WARD Post-War	Merge
28	23	16	9	8	MOUNTAIN GOATS Get Lonely	4AD
29	42	35	29	4	MAGNOLIA ELECTRIC CO. Fading Trails	Secretly Canadian
30	32	40	30	4	SPITALFIELD Better Than Knowing Where You Are	Victory
31	22	10	9	8	THERMALS The Body, The Blood, The Machine	Sub Pop
32	54	-	32	2	FOUR TET Remixes	Domino
33	21	-	21	2	NOUVELLE VAGUE Bande A Part	Luaka Bop
34	-	-	34	1	CHIN UP CHIN UP This Harness Can't Ride Anything	Suicide Squeeze
35	33	28	27	6	HEAVENS Patent Pending	Epitaph
36	35	36	35	5	RAY LAMONTAGNE Till The Sun Turns Black	RCA
37	51	70	37	3	DARKEL Darkel	Astralwerks
38	68	-	38	2	HELLA Acoustics	5RC
39	111	196	39	3	KOOKS Inside In/Inside Out	Astralwerks
40	43	68	40	3	MATCHES Decomposer	Epitaph
41	53	42	41	5	CITIZEN COPE Every Waking Moment	RCA
42	-	-	42	1	PORTASTATIC Be Still Please	Merge
43	27	21	6	14	MUSE Black Holes And Revelations	Warner Bros.
44	47	54	44	3	JOHN MAYER Continuum	Columbia
45	36	45	36	3	AMY MILLAN Honey From The Tombs	Arts And Crafts
46	46	195	46	3	LUPE FIASCO Food And Liquor	Atlantic
47	57	64	47	4	IMA ROBOT Monument To The Masses	Virgin
48	49	80	48	4	JAY BENNETT The Magnificent Defeat	Rykodisc
49	99	-	49	2	KILLERS Sam's Town	Island
50	67	-	50	2	KAMIKAZE HEARTS Oneida Road	Collar City



BLACK KEYS



DECEMBERISTS

CMJ RETAIL TOP 20

TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	-	KILLERS Sam's Town (722102)	Island
2	-	BECK The Information (757600)	Interscope
3	-	DECEMBERISTS The Crane Wife (53981)	Capitol
4	-	EVANESCENCE Open Door (31202)	Wind-Up
5	1	LUDACRIS Release Therapy (722402)	Def Jam
6	-	HOLD STEADY Boys And Girls In America (442)	Vagrant
7	-	JET Shine On (83896)	Atlantic
8	2	SCISSOR SISTERS Ta-Dah (749902)	Universal
9	3	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE FutureSex/LoveSounds (88062)	Jive
10	5	BOB DYLAN Modern Times (87686)	Columbia
11	8	TV ON THE RADIO Return To Cookie Mountain (746602)	Interscope
12	10	YO LA TENGO I Am Not Afraid Of You And I Will Beat Your Ass (10692)	Matador
13	6	JOHN MAYER Continuum (79019)	Columbia
14	4	JANET JACKSON 20 Y.O. (30416)	Virgin
15	-	ROBIN THICKE The Evolution Of Robin Thicke (614602)	Interscope
16	-	SOUTH PARK MEXICAN When Devils Strike (6036)	Dopehouse
17	7	LUPE FIASCO Food And Liquor (83959)	Atlantic
18	18	HINDER Extreme Behaviour (539002)	Universal
19	-	SEAN LENNON Friendly Fire (35568)	Capitol
20	-	PEPPER No Shame (94536)	Atlantic

CMJ A.I.M.S. TOP 20

(ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA STORES)

TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	-	BECK The Information (757600)	Interscope
2	-	DECEMBERISTS The Crane Wife (53981)	Capitol
3	-	KILLERS Sam's Town (722102)	Island
4	-	HOLD STEADY Boys And Girls In America (442)	Vagrant
5	1	SCISSOR SISTERS Ta-Dah (749902)	Universal
6	3	YO LA TENGO I Am Not Afraid Of You And I Will Beat Your Ass (10692)	Matador
7	2	SPARKLEHORSE Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of A Mountain (70946)	Astralwerks
8	4	BONNIE PRINCE BILLY The Letting Go (420)	Drag City
9	5	TV ON THE RADIO Return To Cookie Mountain (746602)	Interscope
10	7	MY MORNING JACKET Okonokos: Double Live Album (86210)	ATO
11	8	BOB DYLAN Modern Times (87686)	Columbia
12	36	AKRON/FAMILY Meek Warrior (33)	Toung God
13	13	MASTODON Blood Mountain (44450)	Reprise
14	9	BLACK KEYS Magic Potion (79967)	Nonesuch
15	-	DJ SHADOW The Outsider (744302)	Universal
16	11	LUDACRIS Release Therapy (722402)	Def Jam
17	38	BEN KWELLER Ben Kweller (21559)	ATO
18	30	BRAZILIAN GIRLS Talk To La Bomb (622402)	Verve Forecast
19	-	EVANESCENCE Open Door (31202)	Wind-Up
20	15	RAY LAMONTAGNE Till The Sun Turns Black (83328)	RCA

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11/28 NYC Bowery Ballroom
11/29 Philadelphia Johnny Brenda's
11/30 Montreal Mile End Cultural Centre "Main" Halls
12/01 Toronto Horseshoe Tavern

12/02 Detroit Magic Stick
12/04 Cleveland Grog Shop
12/05 Chicago Empty Bottle
12/06 Minneapolis Triple Rock
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12/10 Dallas Gypsy Ballroom
12/14 Atlanta Earl
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31KNOTS

Polemics Polyvinyl
This metal-infused/jazz-indie/post-punk/prog-jam/indie-rock band (phee!) from Oregon recalls everyone from Modest Mouse to Fugazi to Einstürzende Neubauten to Mr. Bungle. Yet, the strongest song on this EP, "Sedition's Wish," is also the most cohesive. The production and extra sound effects on the album are an added bonus to the musical surprises that emerge every 15 seconds. Is that a blast beat? It wouldn't come as a surprise. >>>LISA DONNELLY



A HAWK AND A HACKSAW

The Way The Wind Blows The Leaf Label
Whether playing with blog-hype beneficiaries Beirut or gypsy-kissed bellwethers Neutral Milk Hotel, multi-instrumentalist Jeremy Barnes contributes an adroit appreciation for the antiqued sounds of Eastern Europe. With his third album under the Hawk And A Hacksaw solo alias, Barnes sticks close to what he knows, enlisting the help of longtime collaborator Heather Trost, and offering 11 blissful compositions that crib directly from traditional Mediterranean street-folk and Balkan brass music. >>>ROBBIE MACKEY



BE GOOD TANYAS

Hello Love Nettwerk
The all-female Canadian trio is back with their third full-length of bare-bones folk grooves. Frazey Ford belts out each number with equal parts pop sensibility and soul, guiding the Tanyas through their mournful twangs and stomping campfire tunes. And their cover of "When Doves Cry" helps to fill out the serious dearth of country covers of Prince songs. >>>AMANDA FARAH



BETTIE SERVEERT

Bare Stripped Naked Minty Fresh
Underrated duo Bettie Serveert has been inching from rock to unplugged, and with *Bare* it seems the acoustic end is where they want to stay. It's a shame to give them a hard time when they've delivered another album chock-full of some of the best vocals and songwriting in modern rock. And there are certainly standout tracks, including the single "Hell=Other People." But



long-time fans may be disappointed with this new folksy approach. >>>NORA CRONIN

BON SAVANTS

Post Rock Defends The Nation E To The I Pi
Not exactly the post-rock your Chicago graduate-student friend might tout, these cosmopolitan smarty-pants (MIT students in tow) eschew machismo not with math structures but with lovely, sweeping charm-rock that stops just short of histrionic. Crystalline croon-tunes in the vein of Brooklyn suaves like the National or Favourite Sons, but too much studio trickery sometimes saps the get-'em-in-bed desire the band juggles with Thomas Moran's cheese-border moan. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON



CARDIGANS

Super Extra Gravity Universal
The sixth album from this long-running Swedish pop act is a mixed bag. At best, it is a collection of well-done '60s-influenced pop songs, such as the sun-drenched, dreamy "Godspell." Several tracks, though, come up short, like the Jenny Lewis-esque "Overload." The Cardigans have always been a better-than-average pop export, but on *Gravity*, they only hammer the nail halfway. >>>MATT PULLMAN



COPELAND

Eat, Sleep, Repeat The Militia Group
Eat Sleep's opening track, "Where's My Head," commences with a simple vibraphone melody, then garage-rough drums effortlessly enter the mix, indicating a focus on the music first. It's a different approach from Copeland's two previous full-lengths, which rested on Aaron Marsh's falsetto and raw emotional lyrics. The instrumentation here, such as the crisp piano on "Love Affair" or the bold trumpet blare on "The Last Time He Saw Dorie," carries the vibe this time. >>>JESSEKA KADYLAK



DEFTONES

Saturday Night Wrist Warner Bros.
For the second straight record, the Deftones have gotten their signals crossed. After the critically credible *White Pony* defined the era's intelligent agro, *Saturday Night* continues Deftones' downward trajectory of mixing middling ethereal dabbings



with righteous thrashers, like the exceptional "Rats." By no means should the Caii skate-stoners relegate themselves to one-dimensional mosh-metal, but they should stop pretending they're the Cure for Family Values ticket holders. >>>KENNY HERZOG

KEVIN DEVINE

Put Your Ghost To Rest Capitol
Folky troubadour Kevin Devine's latest album is brimming with introspective lyrics and quarter-life confusion. Backed by the Goddamn Band, the Brooklynite sings with a hint of twang and a dollop of angst. "As I inch towards resolution/ I'm not sure which life feels right," he confesses in "You'll Only End Up Joining Them." With acoustic tales of shattered relationships, corrupt politicians and suicide, Devine's *Ghost* is clearly a tormented, but eminently listenable, one. >>>GINNY YANG



ALELA DIANE

The Pirate's Gospel Holocene
Promising singer/songwriter Alela Diane was first coerced into performing by friend Joanna Newsom. Both of these neo-folksters hail from Nevada City yet derive their sound from Appalachia. Newsom-haters, however, will find *The Pirate's Gospel* far more palatable, as Alela's soulful voice and gentle guitar plucking don't stray so far from the back porch. With all the intimate hooks and none of the Lisa Simpson-esque wails, Alela's debut offers an accessible alternative to her freakier folk contemporaries. >>>ALEX BILLIG



TANYA DONELLY

This Hungry Life Eleven Thirty
For her fourth solo album, our favorite ex-Throwing Muses/Breeders/Belly songstress continues her sweeping alt-country kick, to mixed results. But when she's on, she really nails it, as on "This Hungry Life." This year has already seen two excellent female-fronted alt-country/folk releases from Jenny Lewis and Neko Case, but it's refreshing to hear how a more seasoned singer transforms country clichés like soaring lap-steel guitar and rugged, simple love lyrics into something meaningful. >>>KORY GROW



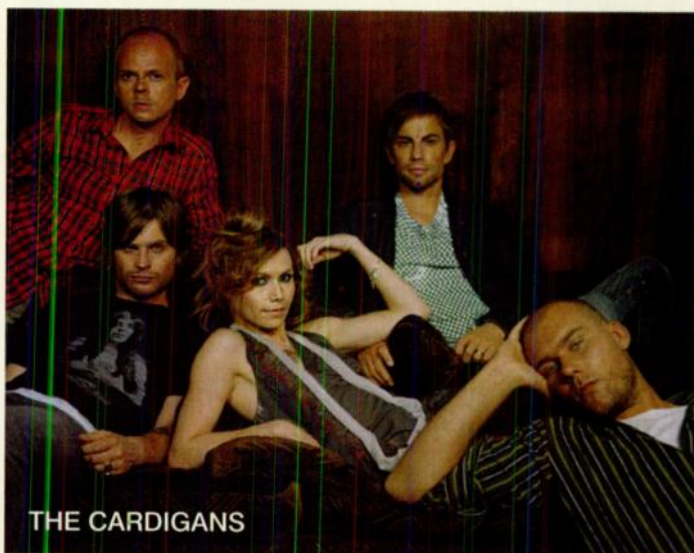
BENJY FERREE

Leaving the Nest Domino
The playful set of songs on Benjy Ferree's *Leaving The Nest* is a symphony of electric guitars, blasting horns and crashing cymbals. The album has a decidedly down-home vibe, from the harmonica-laden "Little At A Time" to the rockabilly-infused "Dog Killers!" The singer-songwriter, who sounds like a gentler version of Jack White, ultimately crafts folk-pop yarns that are both welcoming and slightly forlorn. >>>GY




GREY DOES MATTER

Your Job Will Kill You (Pop Rally/Wheatfield)
Jason Crawford, Grey Does Matter's frontman, offers a humble and sedate croon that hovers above thin layers of understated guitar lines within jagged, dark arrangements. All of this soothes the listener into




Crawford's beautifully quirky pop songs. Tracks like "Summer Song" and "Wait For Me" are immediate pleadings to some unknown figure, while the rest are mid-tempo, keyboard-heavy dreamscapes—the kind of dark reveries suited for a 3 a.m. subway ride. >>>SAM DUKE


THE GRIFTERS

The Kingdom Of Jones Shangri-La  Always curiously overlooked, the Grifters were a sludgy, vaguely bluesy alt-rock Memphis outfit, a logical byproduct of their generation's indie-slacker leanings and their hometown's storied rock history. *Kingdom* compiles a stack of pre-Sub Pop 7-inches, capturing them at their gloriously disjointed peak. But amidst the noisy trudging are the sort of catchy shambolic gems that later got them signed. This is a superb gathering of rarities by a band that never quite got its due. >>>KH

MICAH P. HINSON

Micah P. Hinson And The Opera Circuit Jade Tree  Let's get this straight: This youthful, reformed drug addict-turned-singer-songwriter espouses the same world-weary penumbra surrounding artists like Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen, but with a strange mixture of folk and orchestration (with a little help from friend Eric Bachmann). Sure, he's not doing anything totally new, but Hinson has a knack for eliminating most of the genre's elephant-trap clichés. >>>KG

ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE VENUS THREE


Ole! Tarantula Yep Roc  After 30-odd years, this surrealist singalong master somehow stays fresh. Just as recent acoustic simmer-downs felt like Hitchcock was ready to retire off to some ubiquitous English countryside manor, he pals up with Peter Buck and other ol' irreverents and is in jangly band mode. *Ole!* trots out swirling sure things of colorful chords and harmonies. And while his lyrics inch toward the lovey-dovey, Hitchcock maintains that healthy ability to salt the syrupy with references to bugs and other Dalí-isms. >>>ED

HOLY SMOKES


Talk To Your Kids About Gangs Skin Graft  Boasting members of Hella and

Pinback, among others, Holy Smokes is more than some experimental side project. Full of free-jazzy guitar-spazzy freakouts and wall-of-migraine-inducing-sound collages that recall Oneida at their freeform best, *Talk To Your Kids* is worth telling your peers about. Just suggest some Advil to go along with the disc. >>>KH


JENNY HOYSTON/WILLIAM WHITMORE

Hallways Of Always Southern  Erase Errata's Jenny Hoyston teams up with her former roommate, gospel-blues folkie William Elliott Whitmore, for a surprising EP of what sounds like classic country covers, but are actually intimate, acoustic originals. It's nice to hear Hoyston simply sing for a change, instead of warble artily, and the blend of her gentle, airy twang with Whitmore's gravelly, Appalachian-sounding baritone makes for a homey accompaniment to their spare, but unusual (banjo, singing saw) instrumentation. >>>REBECCA RABER

JUGGAKNOTS


Use Your Confusion Amalgam  Featuring the most badass sibling crew since the Jets, Juggaknots have an almost-hot LP on their hands. *Use Your Confusion* smacks of that post-New Jack, pre-gangsta period that ushered in the '90s. At its best, it lurks around like an early Wu-Tang underground banger, but overall feels more like a substandard Coup production, with significantly less vital lyrical content. Good thing brothers Buddy Slim and Breezly Brewin added Queen Heroine, who saves every verse she's on with her Lauryn Hill grit and Pharoahe Monch flow. >>>KH

KID CONGO AND THE PINK MONKEY BIRDS

Philosophy And Underwear New York Night Train  We must cherish the sullied souls who have any memory of pre-gentrified NYC sleaze. Enter Kid Congo. But lo, this is no leftover eighth Ramone nostalgia nap, but a bona fide gutter-glop rain dance of groovy Stones swagger, gypsy waltzes, female apparitions and '30s cabaret affectations, all stirred and swaddled in garage-fi gargle

and a droll belief that it's all quite cosmopolitan. After stints in the Cramps, Gun Club, Knoxville Girls and other gold lame luminaries, Kid Congo still shines bright. >>>ED


KID KOALA

Your Mom's Favorite Ninja Tune  Koala's turntable skills and personal tastes have never been in question. But with so many entertaining mix-maestros out there and ambient monoliths like DJ Shadow slamming down solid new efforts, *Your Mom's Favorite* feels moot. There's some fun sampling (be it blues-harmonica snippets or audio cuts from *Anchorman*), and as always, Koala resists superfluous scratching. But you kind of wish he assumed our moms danced their asses off more often. >>>KH

POP LEVI


Blue Honey Counter  This unabashedly retro EP from the former Ladytron bassist combines the bluesy howl of Led Zeppelin with the swagger of Marc Bolan, all wrapped up in a new-wave sheen. The Liverpoolian's five-song collection contains sludgy riffs, fuzzy vocals and strains of soul. However, things take some unusual and modern twists, as on the stand-out track "(A Style Called) Crying Chic," where Levi's deceptively simple lyrics about a special lady take a dark turn. >>>GY

(THE) MELVINS


(A) Senile Animal Ipecac  Other than the fact that it is indeed the fuckin' Melvins, which is reason enough to listen, the quartet sounds less than senile now that

core members King Buzzo and Dale Crover have teamed with hipster-bruiser duo Big Business, one of the few worthy bands making original music within hard rock. And nothing sounds better than metal on metal. >>>KG


NAYSAYER

Smoke Reality Red Panda  Apparently smoking reality leads one to meditate on love, sex and parents. Anna Padgett's girl-and-a-guitar project combines her electric strumming and cheeky lyrics to create a loveable That Dog-styled quirkiness, particularly on the violin-complimented "Miss And Hate." Though she largely sounds sweet, the delivery of some of her more aggressive lyrics suggests that perhaps you wouldn't want to cross her in a dark alley. >>>AMANDA FARAH

NORMA JEAN

Redeemer Tooth and Nail  This hardcore upstart's latest disc was produced by Ross Robinson, who's also worked with Slipknot and Sepultura, but *Redeemer* is so harsh and unrelenting it makes those bands sound positively pop by comparison. Vocalist Cory Branan screams out songs like a drill sergeant working in a new group of recruits. The guitar work is comparable to a jackhammer symphony, sans melody, which leaves noisy consistency as this disc's only twisted redeeming quality. >>>DAN MACINTOSH

PERNICE BROTHERS

Live A Little Ashmorit  Most people encouraged to live



a little usually just need to relax and stop obsessing over details. It's doubtful anybody has given Joe Pernice such advice. Though from the sound of the Brothers' sixth album, that's probably for the best. This beautifully orchestral pop effort, comprised of three-minute aural novels, is characterized by particularized character development. The track "Microscopic View" says it all by summing up this work's undistracted focus in just two words. >>>DM

PLACES

Songs For Creeps High Plains Sigh Were Joanna Newsom less precocious, Jolie Holland less pretentious and both quite tired, they'd probably dig kicking back with this fourth Places outing. Troubador folkie Amy Annelle continues to scale back band members and sonics, leaving sedate, stripped-down mountain music where the caverns are inhabited by city-folk ghosts (perhaps because she now resides in Manhattan). Spooky, sampled spoken snippets and yawning

guitar slides sometimes slip into her songs of empty rooms and/or cheating beaus. >>>ED

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS

Mercy Abacus Denver's emo-crustcore titans have been recording music for seven years, so why is this band still only almost good? They've got interesting, aggressive riffs, contrasting gravel-throated vocals and torrential bombast up the wazoo. But somehow *Mercy* just doesn't seem holy, possibly do to singer Gared O'Donnell's grunge-laden tendencies. But hey, we'll be around for another seven years to see what they do next. >>>KG

ROBERT POLLARD

Normal Happiness Merge The press release for Pollard's second post-GBV solo effort touts this as "Pure Power Pop For Now People," and that's not just an excuse to get all alliterative on our asses. A veritable 180 from his last record—the dour, ascetic

From A Compound Eye—Happiness finds Pollard once again filling tape with what he does best: crunchy, cockney-crooned, two-minute nuggets that recall why we originally fell in love with the man. >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

PORTASTATIC

Be Still Please Merge As Mac McCaughan continues to filibuster his other band, Superhunk (he's working, but he's not working for them), Portastatic still shines best on the ballads, including "Sweetness And Light" and the Dylan-esque "Getting Saved." Unfortunately, as with most Portastatic records, the best tracks are in the middle and end, a strange curse that even early placed guest appearances by Laura Cantrell and Annie Hayden can't prevent. But by the time "Like A Pearl" comes on, all is forgiven. >>>KG

SLITS

Revenge Of The Killer Slits SAF On the Slits' first new recordings in a quarter century, Ari-Up's feral voice sounds just as unhinged as it did in 1979. Though only she and Tessa Pollit remain from the original lineup, the punk pedigree of the guest performers (Sex Pistol Paul Cook and Banshee Marco Pirroni) more than makes up for it. As a 10-minute EP, however, this disc is just a tantalizing taste of the full meal that's hopefully still to come. >>>RR

THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES

Easter Jade Tree Judging from the herky-jerky post-punk of their debut EP, no one could have guessed these Seattle post-post-punkers would hit their mark with this album's odd mix of electronics, Deftones-y hard rock and rattling and humming, U2-like guitargasms. And is that an acoustic ballad near the end? Let's see if they can do it again. >>>KG

TUSSLE

Telescope Mind Smalltown Supersound Boring, DFA-style organic dance for the indie set by way of San Francisco. The outset of nearly every song teems with the promise of ass-shaking good times, but

quickly reveals its linear intentions and therefore lackluster results. Stick with DFA's latest remixes disc or catch a New Deal show before squandering your scratch here. >>>KH

URSULA POINTS

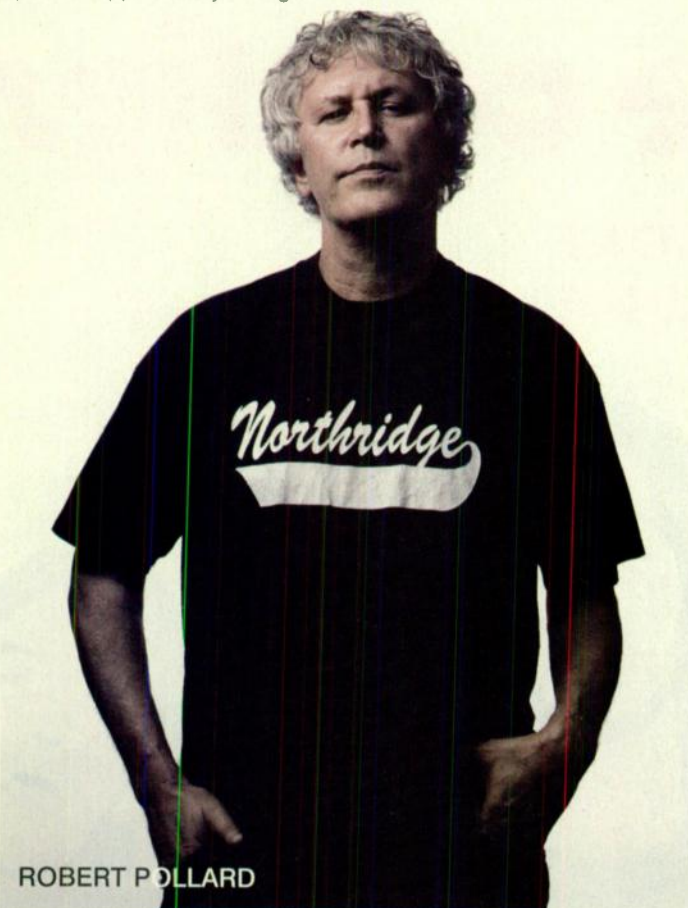
Light Up a Galaxy Psychic Hits These Brooklyn neo-shoegazers (nūgazers?) know every play in the MBV/Slowdive book (male-female vocals, blurry, bendy guitars), but they're not doing retreat or tribute. That's partly because the dreamy duo lets their sound serve their songs rather than the other way around, but also because they get even better as they steer away from trad-shoegaze moves (see: the aching, Red House Painters-ish "Oceans"). Both intimate and grand, *Galaxy* nearly lives up to its title's ambitious promise. >>>MICHAEL PATRICK NELSON

WE ARE THE FURY

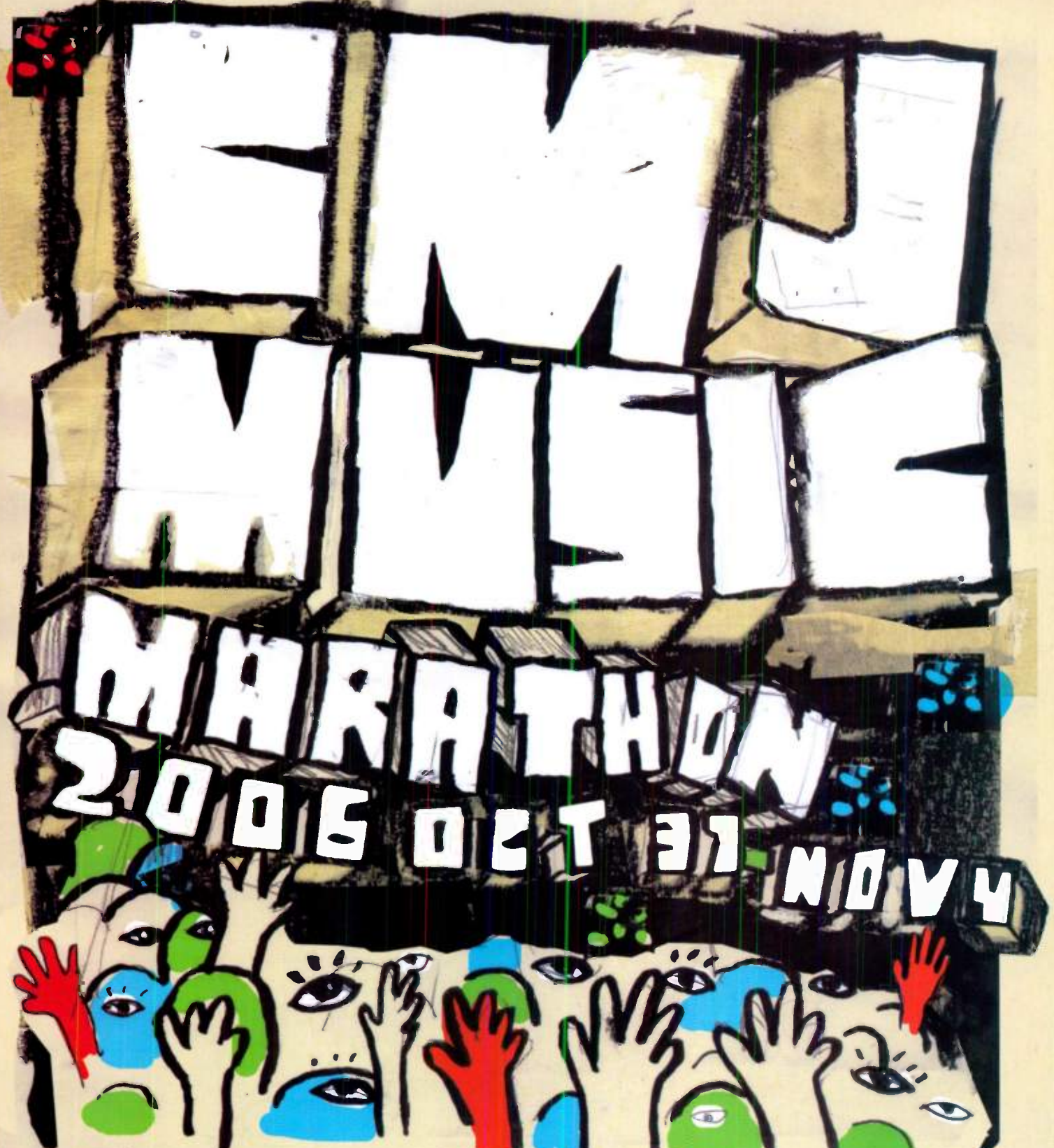
Venus East West This is an over-indulgent, if marginally ambitious, glam-rock effort from Ohio emo kids that have way too huge a Bowie fixation. Singer Jeremy Lubin painstakingly rips off the Thin White Duke, and the piano-tinged ballads and emo-romps below it are strangely forced and jarring. There are certainly successful moments of Friday night mischief (the tongue-in-cheek "You're My Halo"), but even these cuts can't salvage the bizarre grandiosity of the rest. >>>SD

WESTBOUND TRAIN

Transitions Hellcat Hellcat—frequent home to mostly useless cartoon street punk—has now released two fine dancehall ska-soul CDs this year. And while this Boston skank-vet crew's third CD isn't quite the equal of the fine Aggrolites record, it's a good East Coast companion. Hints of slide guitar imply rural influences, if also a future as a G. Love-esque frat excursion. "For The First Time" is Motown meets Jamaica, then things quickly grimey-up with slinky horns rather than the peppy blurts of most Hellcat ska. >>>ED



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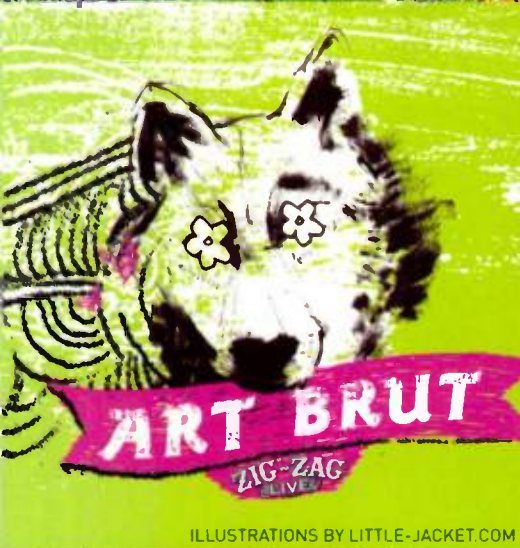
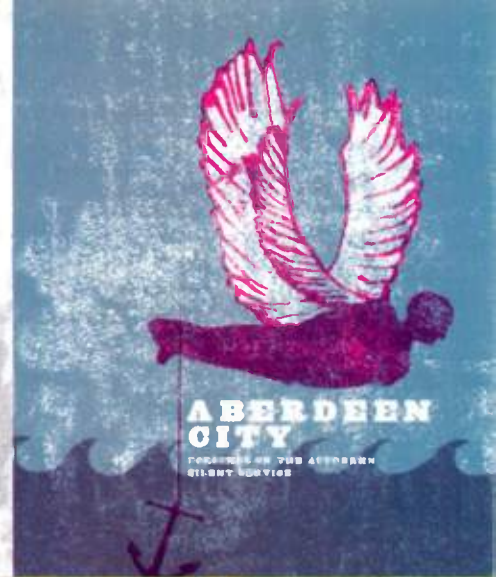
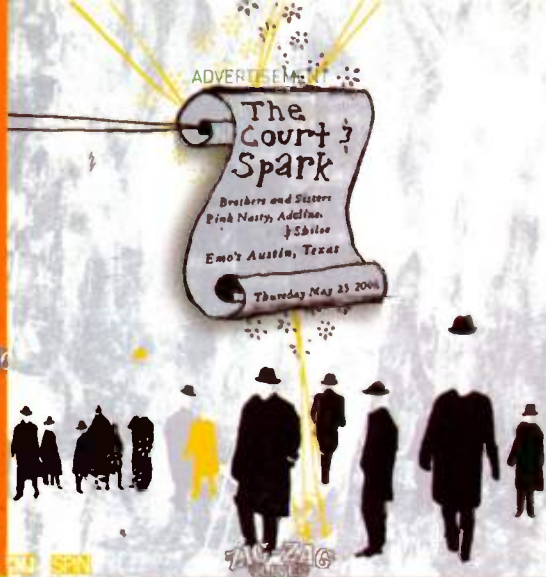
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Check out ZigZagLive.com for all the info on the Fall Tour, as well as album reviews, music news, and Zig-Zag® cigarette paper updates.