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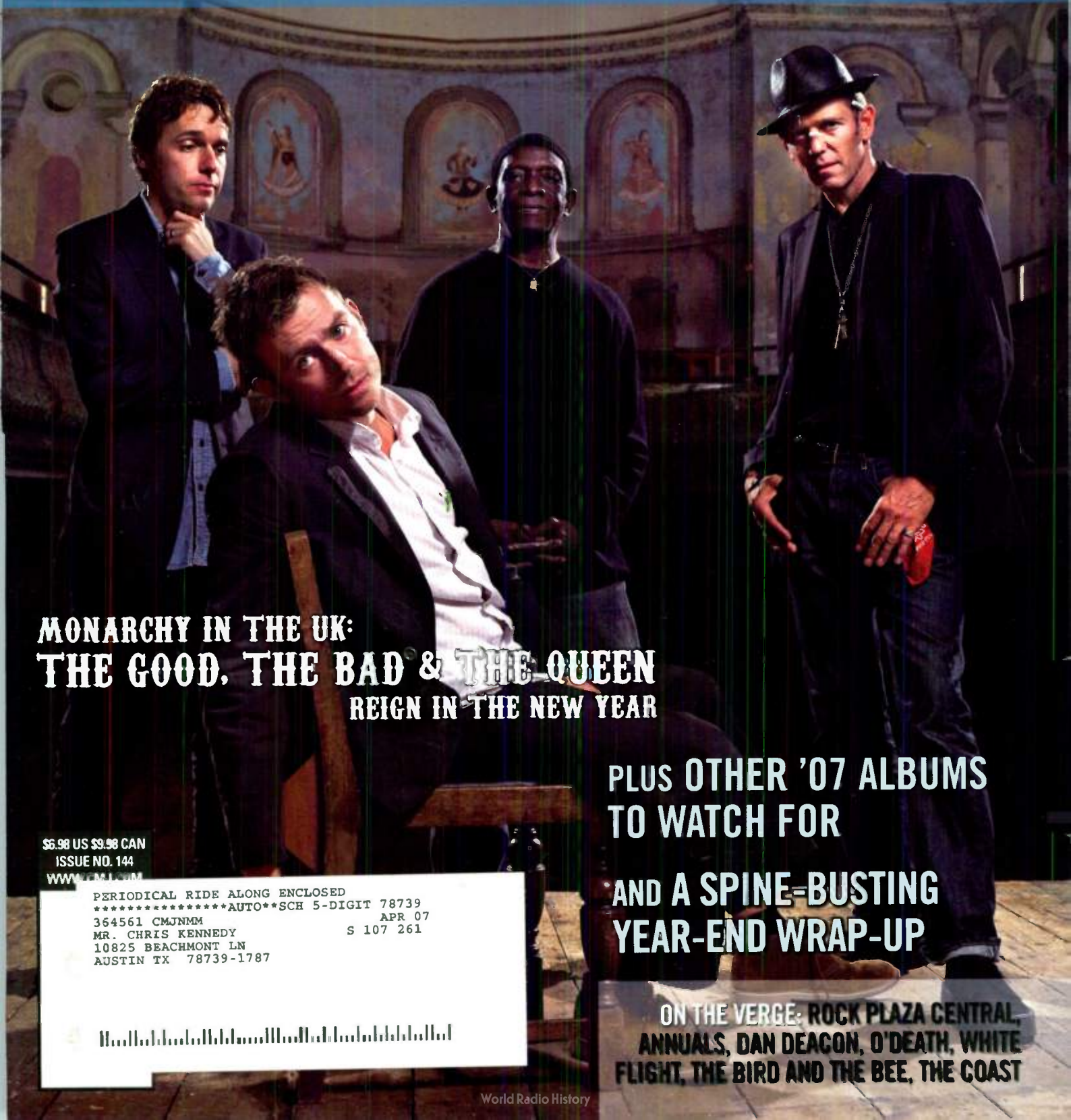
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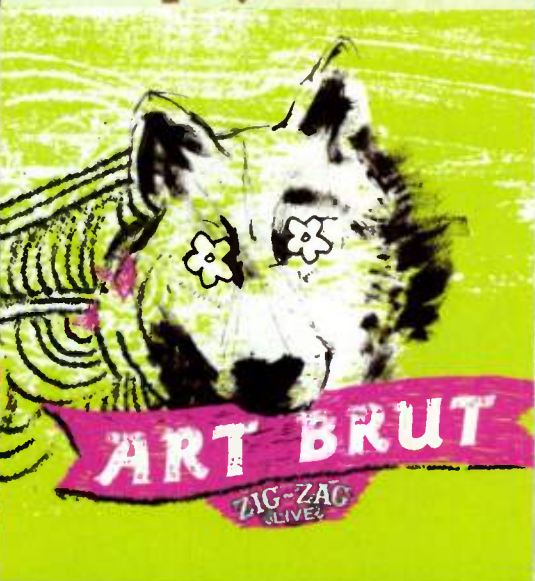
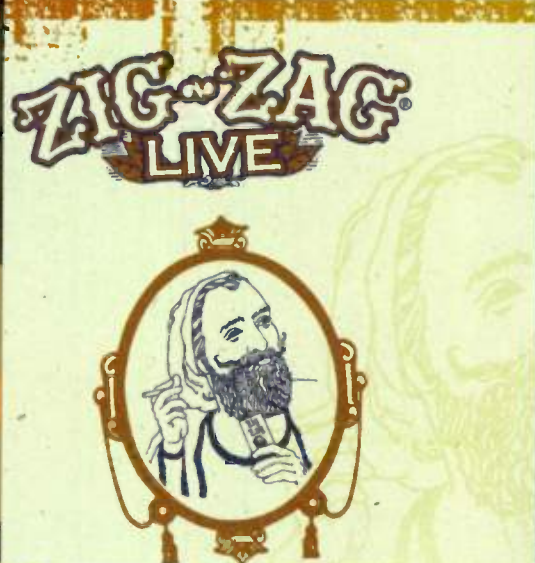
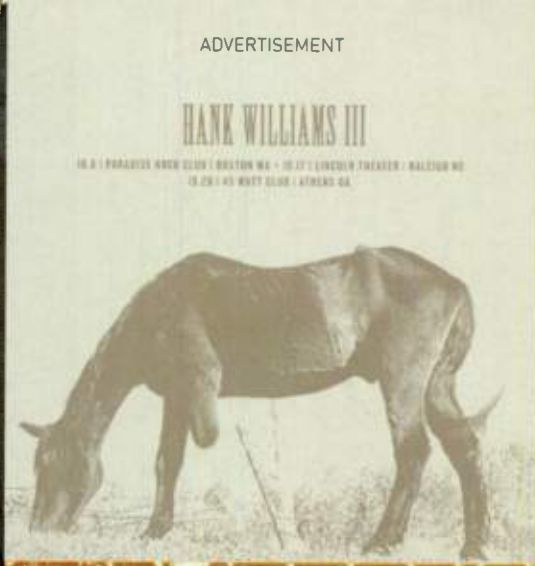


**ON THE VERGE: ROCK PLAZA CENTRAL,  
ANNUALS, DAN DEACON, O'DEATH, WHITE  
FLIGHT, THE BIRD AND THE BEE, THE COAST**



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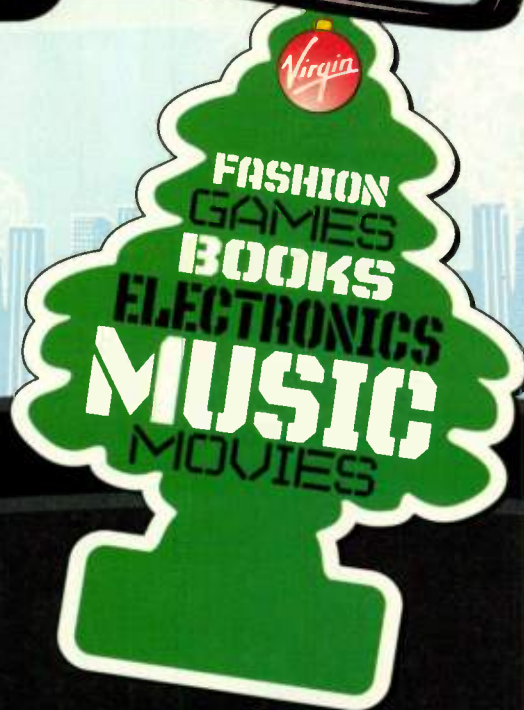
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# GIFTS



CBGB: DECADES OF GRAFFITI **BOOK**



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*Stop The Clocks*



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AMOS LEE  
*Supply And Demand*



THE DECEMBERISTS  
*The Crane Wife*



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## CULTURE SHOCK 6

It's been quite a month for cyber-nonsense, thanks to the Web buzz spawned by bankers doing their best Bono impersonations. And in case you were searching early for a perfect Valentine's Day gift, get your honey Lou Reed's new martial arts DVD. There was also no shortage of absurd song titles, a scenario always made easier when Tenacious D has a new album. Well, them and sexist death-metal assassins Lividity.

## QUICK FIX 8

Just in case you think we're messin' around, none other than Oasis' Noel Gallagher kicks off this issue's Quick Fix to tell us all about his band's new documentary and their newfound stare of docile happiness... And had the interview not been in person, we might have had the balls to ask him about Blur. Also, Nathan Larson talks film scoring and his Hot new cock-rock band; and Long Gone John wonders where he'll put all his wonderful toys.

## ON THE VERGE 11

These bands are, like, a-vergen: Rock Plaza Central, the Annuals, Dan Deacon, O'Death, White Flight, the bird and the bee and the Coast.

## SWAN LAKE 18

This supergroup claims it might just be here to stay. Or at least that's what Spencer Krug (Wolf Parade/Sunset Rubdown), Dan Bejar (New Pornographers/Destroyer) and Cary Mercer (Frog Eyes) have to say. Rebecca Raber talks with the Canadian trio about why they all seem to be on creative speed these days.

## BEST OF 2006 21

Year-end lists are both the bane of a music journalist's existence and the ultimate reward for a year of plowing through thousands of titles. Aw, poor us. But seriously, there were thousands. And for each of us, only 10 emerged as worthy of further discussion. Here they are.

## ON THE COVER: THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE QUEEN 28

Sure, Ameri-indie audiences might be salivating over the Shins, but overseas, a London-based powerhouse has people talking too. Damon Albarn has once again flexed his collaborative muscles, this time with the Clash's Paul Simonon, the Verve's Simon Tong and Fela Kuti/Afro 70 percussionist Tony Allen... And of course, a little bit of Danger Mouse for good measure. Kenny Herzog chats with the band about their sudden desire to play misty for England. Plus: A look at some of 2007's other noteworthy releases.

## ON THE CD 34

Brand New, Malajube, the Vincent Black Shadow, Bob Egan, +44, Dead Celebrity Status, Joemca, A Bad Think, Embrionic, April Skies, Sparky Dog, Wonderful Broken Thing, Tribattery Pops, These United States, Brian, Kenny, Linda, Lee And Butch

## REVIEWS 35

For the first time ever, every title reviewed in the *NMM* received negative notice. It was just that kind of month... No, not really. Well, some of them did. But not the ones in Best New Music. (Joanna Newsome, hello?!) Or From The Archives. (More Pavement reissues? Yes, please.) But maybe some of the books, DVDs and other, assorted new records we held up to the critical gaze of our illustrious staff. Though if you've read our year-end lists, you know not to trust any of our opinions

## CHARTS 46

Does the industry even put anything out in November and December? Does that mean the charts will basically be redundant of last issue? Bet you can't wait to find out.

## BEST OF 2006... CONTINUED 47

Were there any good soundtracks this year, or ever? Rebecca Raber starts modestly with a look at this year's. Also, what the hell was that random indie rock song in that car commercial again? And how did it wind up there in the first place? Leave it to Kevin Kampwirth to find out. Not that he had any choice once he was assigned the piece.

## SHADOWS BOXING 50

What happens when two bands with the same name (Vincent Black Shadow) try and co-exist in the music marketplace? In this instance at least, one brags about their MySpace friends and corporate clout while the other just kind of shrugs.

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# \*\*\* CULTURE SHOCK \*\*\*

## BEST SONG TITLES OF THE MONTH

- 1 Tenacious D—"Dude (I Totally Miss You)" (Epic)
- 2 Pernice Brothers—"Grudge Fuck" (Ashmont)
- 3 Man At Arms—"Who Died And Made You The Voice Of Reason?" (Joyful Noise/Friction)
- 4 Lividity—"Phallic Beat Down" (Epitome)
- 5 Steve Hackett—"The Fundamentals Of Brainwashing" (InsideOut)

C'mon, was there any other choice?



## HOMAGE IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Let's be honest: The Band is kind of "whatever." And could there possibly be a more modern take on "whatever"-ness than Guster or Jack Johnson? So do we really need the latter two artists (among an array of mundane others) offering their rendition of Robbie Robertson and Co.'s greatest hits, as they do on *Endless Highway*? As with similar tributes, there's a scatterbrained smorgasbord of musicians who's only connection is their love for the memorialized group. And while the point is to say, "Look at the wide range of artists the Band impacted," a more focused collection like Sub Pop's homage to Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* has a much better chance of standing on its own merits rather than riding awkwardly on the shoulders of its influence. >>>KH



## SCENE REPORT VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA

ACCORDING TO KINGSWAY & COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES SINGER/SONGWRITER RC JOSEPH

### THE BEST PLACE TO SEE A BAND IS:

"The best big venue is, hands down, the Commodore Ballroom. Best small venue is the Railway Club."

### THE BEST PLACE TO BUY RECORDS IS:

"Depends what part of town you're in. This is particularly relevant if, like me, you tend to blow all your gas money on records. Downtown: Scratch Records; Westside: Zulu Records; Eastside: Red Cat Records. But if there's gas in the car, I'm making the trip to Zulu."

### THE BEST LOCAL BAND YOU NEVER HEARD OF IS:

"Counterrevolutionaries are not only the best band from my town no one's ever heard of, they are arguably the best band from my country no one's ever heard of."

*Kingsway & Counterrevolutionaries' newest record, brand new golden oldies, is out on DDG.*  
>>>INTERVIEW BY KENNY HERZOG



## MPEG'D FOR SUCCESS

Ethan Chandler's Bank Of Americanized rendition of U2's "One" was a certifiably buzz-worthy clip. In just a few days of blogging, however, it was already the butt of nationwide jokes, the victim of legal action and, of course, the subject of parody. We had to hand it to David Cross in particular for being so hyper-aware of Internet culture. During a recent Modest Mouse performance, Cross and Johnny Marr unveiled an inspiring reenactment of "One Bank." Only in this postmodern, digitized age could a cover of a re-worked version of an old hit become almost as popular as the original track. Cease-and-desist orders from U2's catalog owner have already knocked the original video and the Cross parody off a number of sites, but they're still out there (as of presstime, Cross' clip could be found at [www.stereogum.com/archives/003993.html](http://www.stereogum.com/archives/003993.html)). >>>ALEX BILLIG



## THE WHAT THE F\*#@? FACTOR

The twilight years of a once-pioneering artist's career can offer an interesting Catch-22: Fans are often protective of their favorite musician's legacy, but that person also reserves the right to do what they damn well please in old age. Then again, Lou Reed's post-*Transformer* days have long been dotted with questionable moves, so does it really denigrate him to narrate an instructional martial arts DVD? Not if you ask Master Ren, his Chen Taiji mentor and friend, whose new home video, *Chen Taihiquan*, not only features the former VU frontman's narration, but two Reed-composed ambient soundtracks. And in case you were wondering, Chen Taiji is intended to encourage wellness and relaxation, so there will be no snippets of a robe-adorned Reed breaking blocks with his fists while still playing it cool in Ray-Bans. >>>KH



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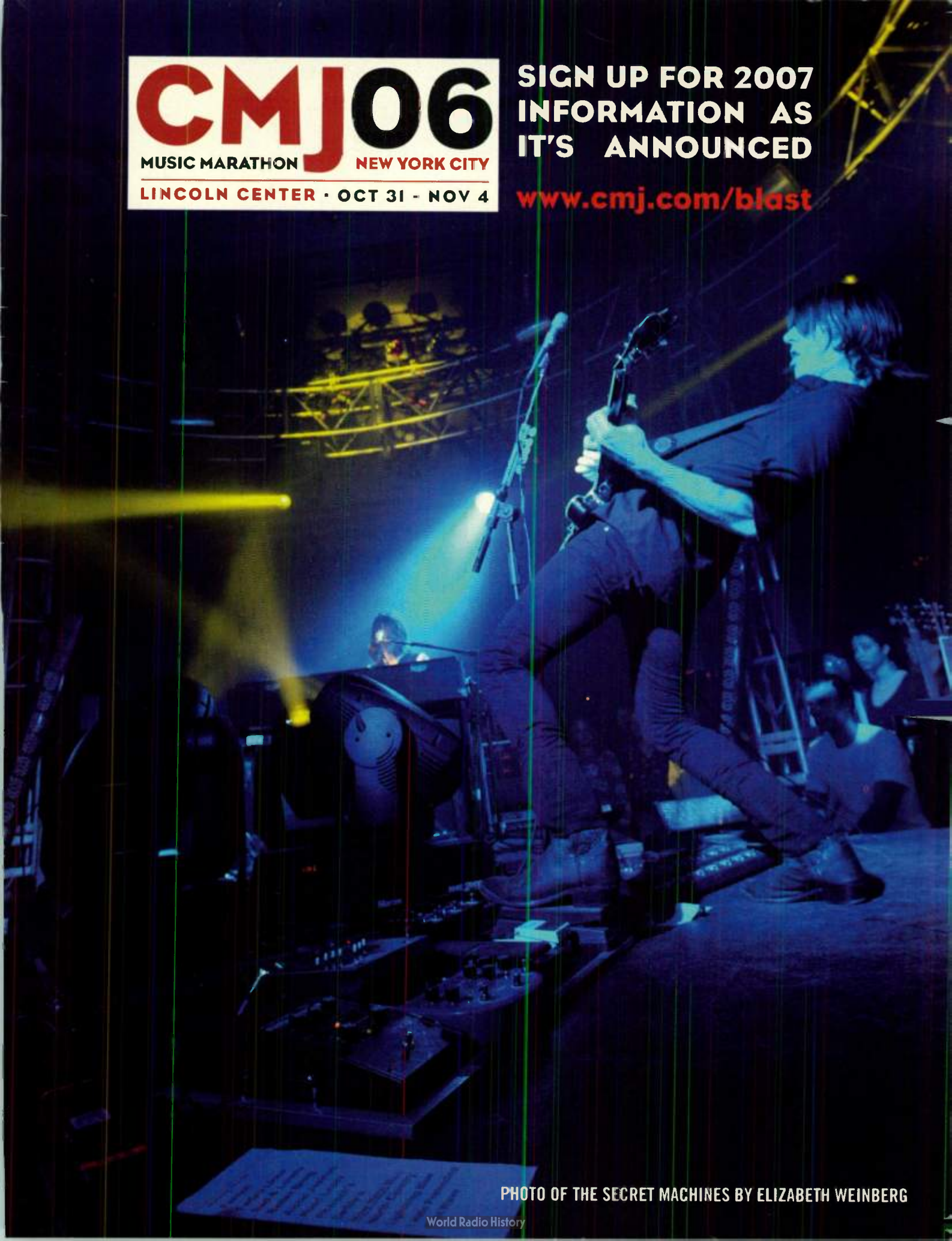


PHOTO OF THE SECRET MACHINES BY ELIZABETH WEINBERG

## ROLLING WITH IT OASIS' NOEL GALLAGHER HAS FINALLY SETTLED DOWN

INTERVIEW BY KENNY HERZOG

In the downstairs lounge of Manhattan's Director's Guild Theater, Oasis co-frontman and principal songwriter Noel Gallagher is minutes away from a Q & A with rabid fans, some of whom have been there since 5 a.m. Why? To catch both their hero and the world premiere of *Lord Don't Slow Me Down*, director Baillie Walsh's documentary, which captures Oasis' recent *Don't Believe The Truth* tour in classic behind-the-scenes, black-and-white fashion. The movie also depicts an older, considerably more mature and docile version of the band, an image reflected in Gallagher's cool, affable demeanor backstage. Suffice to say, he's met his fair share of admirers and media types. Before confronting the crowd, the notorious, near-40 rock star sat down to discuss the film, the band's loyal fans and how hard it is to not be happy if you're name is Noel Gallagher.

### So why was now the right time to do an Oasis documentary?

We were doing one of the singles off the last album and we were set to do a video for it. The guy who subsequently ended up following us around [Walsh] said he wanted to do a video of a band on tour, but with all the footage of the band being in slow motion, and he wanted to try and define the love between the band and the audience. So he came on the road with us for about two or three months and then we all had a meeting about where it was going and he said, "Look, I think what I'm shooting is so good that we should carry on and do a film about the whole tour."

### And were you guys immediately sold on the idea?

I wasn't really that enthusiastic about it. We're not overwhelmed by all this documenting real life, but we like Baillie and we decided to give it a shot. Our only reservations were that he might have thought he was trying to film Oasis of 10 years ago, which was a vastly different group. I was 29, and we were in a vastly different place chemically. So we had to sit down and say, "Don't try and make us out to be something that we're not. If you feel that it's not exciting, that's what you're gonna have to shoot, because all the drugs and all that... and the drinking champagne out of cowboy boots at 10 in the morning, we've done all that and it's just a pity you weren't there to see it."

### Did you have much creative involvement in the final cut?

We kind of didn't get involved that much in the editing. It is what it is. I mean, to be quite honest with you, people have asked me what I think of it, and I'm



Noel Gallagher (l) with Matt Pinfield at the premiere of *Lord Don't Slow Me Down*

**"ALL THE DRUGS AND ALL THAT... AND THE DRINKING CHAMPAGNE OUT OF COWBOY BOOTS AT 10 IN THE MORNING, WE'VE DONE ALL THAT AND IT'S JUST A PITY YOU WEREN'T THERE TO SEE IT."**

kind of like, "I don't know. It's not for me. It's for the people, I guess, fans, to decide what they think."

### The one thing that does seem clear from the footage is that you're fans are, in a word, lunatics.

Yeah, well, every band that I've ever met kind of envy our audience, 'cause our audience go fucking nuts, and I see other bands at stadiums and it's kind of a bit subdued. I guess we just attract a certain kind of lunatic. The contrast would be ourselves and my very dear friend Chris Martin. We both play football stadiums, but our respective crowds are vastly, vastly different.

### Was that a sarcastic reference to Chris Martin?

No, he is actually one of my friends, but we're equidistant from the same point, the Coldplay and Oasis crowd. Ours are just fucking drug-taking, drinking fucking lunatics and theirs are more kind of reserved. But I don't mean that in a derogatory way.


### All in all though, the film portrays you guys as having found a comfortable place as a band and individuals.

If you weren't comfortable with it now, you'd be having problems, wouldn't you? I was comfortable with it 10 years ago when it was absolutely insane, and I think it's great now. I guess because I dictate where the band goes, I'm more inclined to say that than anyone else.

### In a nutshell, you seem happy.

Well how could you not be? You gotta be happy, unless you really have regrets and you think that you could have done so much more. But we couldn't do anymore then. We can't do anymore now. I think everybody's generally quite content with it.





"I'M LOOKING AT A MINIMUM OF \$30,000 TO MOVE."

## TOY SOLDIER: SYMPATHY FOR THE RECORD INDUSTRY'S LONG GONE JOHN MOVES TO WASHINGTON...WITH ALL HIS SHIT

INTERVIEW BY ERIC DAVIDSON

**Long Gone indeed:** This collectable connoisseur/label owner's got no more sympathy for L.A.

Few indie labels have track records like *Sympathy For The Record Industry's*—18 years, 750-plus releases. And it's all run by one man: Long Gone John (real name: John Mermis). However, after setting numerous bands (White Stripes, Rocket From the Crypt, Hole) on their course to stardom, or something like it, seeing the returns from distributors steadily increase and getting just plain sick of "80 degrees 10 months of the year," Long Gone is moving from L.A. to Olympia, Washington and mulling over the future of one of the planet's best rock 'n' roll labels. This also means someone's got to move his enormous, infamous collection of toys (he even owns a toy-manufacturing company called the Necessary Toys Foundation), paintings and other memorabilia, like Iggy Pop's jacket from the back sleeve of *Raw Power* and a huge screaming-demon mantelpiece carved out of wood, not to mention roughly 100,000 records.

**Rumor has it you're thinking of selling off a lot of your amazing stuff.**

No, I'm not selling anything. Well, I said facetiously that when I move I'll sell all my extra copies of everything. With records, I used to buy two of everything when they came out, with this ludicrous mentality that one day I would use them as trade. I just kept buying and buying. Things like all the original hand-silk-screened Residents singles, all the Misfits singles... I used to buy them every time I'd see them. Everything is mine 'cause I was always so anal.

**But I guess you've slowed down as you've gotten older.**

No, I go out every weekend and get more shit. I don't buy records much, but I go to the swap meets. That's what I really enjoy.

**Is there anything you'd sell if you absolutely had to?**

Well, I have a lot of things I would never part with: a Manson family jacket. I used to live with Squeaky, Brenda and a few of the other girls. Ed Wood's personal annotated script from *Plan 9*; the complete works of Edward Gorey; Sid Vicious' gold record for *Never Mind The Bullocks*; an original paper-mâché sculpture by Dr. Suess. Fortunately, I've never been in that position [to have to sell things]. I feel very badly for people who've had to sell their stuff because of hard times.

**How did you get into the toy business?**

It's the same path as records. I was a record collector, and one day, I decided that I wanted to create records. The [toy] figures is something I've always been into, and I went from being a fanatical over-the-top collector to one day saying, "Fuck, I wanna do this myself." I now have eight pieces out.

**So what's the plan for moving?**

I'm looking at a minimum of \$30,000 to move. It's been estimated at 70,000 pounds and two semis with an overflow. The [estimator] said he has never seen anything like this in 10 years of work.



Hot for features: Nathan Larson (top right) shudders to think how good *Once Upon A Time In America* could be without the conch.

## THE FIVE SOUNDTRACKS NATHAN LARSON WISHES HE'D WRITTEN

INTERVIEW BY KENNY HERZOG

Nathan Larson is one of the coolest unheralded musicians of the last decade. He's also just a cool guy, plain and simple, who's willing to discuss everything from his old band, Shudder To Think, to his current political cock-rock project, Hot One, to his love of analog-synth scores. After exiting '90s noise-rock icons STT, Larson briefly indulged in a solo career, but more notably moved on to film scores for little works like, oh, *Boys Don't Cry*. It was a natural progression for Larson, since STT worked on the soundtracks for *Velvet Goldmine* and *First Love*, *Last Rites*, and it's something he looks forward to returning to, if for no other reason than it funds his personal passions, like Hot One's self-titled debut (Modern Imperial). There are other reasons too, as we learned when the singer/guitarist/composer listed off some of the films he wishes he could have gotten his hands on and why.

### *Blade Runner* (1982)

I think *Blade Runner* is fucking amazing, and the way the score is, which is this total analog synth [makes mock-analog noise] through the whole movie. It's Vangelis, and he's got his huge analog synthesizers up, and I think it still works when you watch that movie.

### *Once Upon A Time In America* (1984)

This is like total blasphemy, but if you look at a movie like *Once Upon A Time In America*, that epic with DeNiro, and you listen to that music, [Ennio Morricone's] got that conch thing going, and you're like, "Dude, chill with

the conch." And it just fucks everything up.

### *Hellraiser* (1987)

I would have loved to have done something with *Hellraiser*, only because I think that they went really far for the time, in terms of a horror movie, and they could have gone even further with the sound of it.

### David Lynch's Filmography

Any of the Lynch films, really. They're such classic scores that you can't really touch [them]. And that's a case where that dude, [songwriter Angelo] Badalamenti, hasn't been able to take his vibe outside of the context of Lynch's world and make it work. He's tried to work on other movies, and to my ears it hasn't really worked. It would be interesting to take one of these films where there's this sort of classic marriage of filmmaker and composer—like you have even in something like *Star Wars*, where it's John Williams equals *Star Wars*—and completely retool it.

### *Safe* (1995)

That score doesn't work for me either anymore. At the time, it was just a little bit on the synth-y side of things, and now it just doesn't date well. And it's such a great movie. I would have liked to have had a shot at that.

"YOU'RE LIKE, 'DUDE, CHILL WITH THE CONCH,' AND IT JUST FUCKS EVERYTHING UP."



Rock steady: Plaza's ready for central show booking.

## ROCK PLAZA CENTRAL

To call Chris Eaton "eccentric" is going a bit too far; he's simply a guy who sees art in eccentricity. As the primary singer/songwriter of Toronto-based seven-piece Rock Plaza Central, Eaton's compositions are ones of alternate realities and subconscious meanderings. For example, RPC's first effort, 2003's self-released *The World Was Hell To Us*, weaved an apocalyptic story of a war between angels and human beings. "The first one surprised me and surprised pretty much everyone, because [we] went in and recorded everything in two days, all first takes." A spontaneous approach to making music is what the band thrives on though, and Eaton (also an established novelist) sees that as their greatest strength. "My songwriting just sort of comes in fits and starts," he says. "One weekend, I'll just get some ideas, and then the next show I'll probably just launch into a song without having told anybody and just see how it goes." Having accrued initial comparisons to some of the more revered names within the indie scene—Neutral Milk Hotel, Will Oldham, Arcade Fire—RPC's

most recent, self-released LP, *Are We Not Horses*, takes this formula and continues to run with it. "The album is, in a lot of ways, songs about not being very sure where you fit in," Eaton says. "I mean, we're a bunch of friends playing music and having fun, but does that count as a real band? Like, there's people who you can say, 'Well, these guys are rock stars, a real band, people who do this for a living,' and if we're not doing it for a living and we're just living through it, are we a real band?" Having cultivated an accomplished and unique sound, the answer appears to be a resounding yes, a notion Eaton is beginning to embrace, despite the band's conception as a loose collective. "The idea I think for us is that we're making music together and we're definitely a band that wants to have this one voice, instead of lots of voices going off in different directions," he says. "In the end, I really love playing with this band and it would be fun to get up there and play live every day for a while."

>>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH



O'Death becomes them.

## O'DEATH

**O**n a converted stage in a knickknack shop in a shady part of Brooklyn, Greg Jamie is plucking at an acoustic guitar, his scraggly beard covering his T-shirt, as he screeches lyrics like, "All the world is dead!" at the top of his lungs along with banjo player Gabe Darling. Behind them, rusty-haired, shirtless bassist Captain Newman M.D. screams louder than the PA and drummer David Rogers-Berry pulverizes his converted drum set, which includes a gas-can snare and a tambourine boot. "It comes out of us," Jamie says later at a Manhattan bar, about unleashing their adrenaline-fueled folk. "It's kind of spiritual to us. It's a response to the way we feel. Any pent up feelings that we have just come out live, when you're in front of people." Every time they punch a word too much, a light goes off inside the speaker cabinet, an effect more akin to a metal show than a folk performance. This is O'Death. Named after the traditional old-timey song recently popularized by Ralph Stanley on the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack—which Jamie points out was recorded earlier by his heroes, Charley Patton and Dock Boggs—the band specializes in the shrill, post-hillbilly skronk that suffered growing pains before officially

becoming country music during the mid-1900s. "I was always into folk music," says Jamie. "It was a lot darker and just more interesting... It sort of made sense to go that far back, skipping over the boring stuff that was done in the '60s." They recorded and mixed their self-released second album, *Head Home*, in analog and wrote their songs in the style of the music they listened to. There are narratives like "Nathaniel" that channel traditional numbers like "Stack O'Lee" and there are songs like "All The World" that feed off current times. Like their inspiration, O'Death's music is authentic, despite the *Village Voice* cheekily naming them New York's Best Appalachian Hardcore Band. "We're not trying to be postmodern or anything like that," says Jamie. "We like the Pixies. We like country music. We like punk. People like to classify things in New York a lot." There is, however, a certain dose of truth behind their morbid moniker. "I think there's a lot of seriousness in what we do, even though we're having a really good time," says Jamie, laughing. "I think we're a bunch of sad guys, you know. We're all a little down about stuff. Life isn't that easy." >>>KORY GROW

PHOTO: NICOLE FULMER



We're not even Canadian: North Carolina's Annuals

## ANNUALS

In conversation, Annuals' 20-year-old frontman Adam Baker can come off as somewhat self-deprecating, but don't be fooled: With *Be He Me* (Ace Fu), his band has created one of the more stunning and assured debuts of the year. "Man, I'd be happy if it sells, like, 50 copies," Baker insists. "I've tried to not have any expectations at all because I know they won't be fulfilled." Buzz surrounding the North Carolina-based six-piece has infiltrated blogs and the indie community in general over the past several months, based largely on their reputation as an explosive live act. "Really, our live show is us portraying the songs and having as much fun as we possibly could," Baker says. "There's no other place I'd rather be than onstage." The fact that their sound has garnered frequent comparisons to Broken Social Scene and the Arcade Fire hasn't hurt either. Baker, however, resists such parallels. "I've listened to all those bands, and I like them, that's for sure, but I don't really see much of a comparison," he assures. "We all

have an extremely different take on music." The core of the group—Baker, guitarist Kenny Florence and bassist Mike Robinson—have been playing in bands together for the better part of the past seven years and formed Annuals around the time Baker left high school—just shy of graduation—so he could pursue music. After adding Zack Oden (drums/guitar), Anna Spence (keys) and Nick Radford (drums), the band found their identity. Indie darlings Ace Fu (who's ever-growing list of talent also includes Pinback and Devotchka) took notice and decided to sign the band. A year-end tour with Art Brut and Tapes 'N Tapes has only reinforced the idea that, with all this band has going for it, the possibilities are seemingly endless. "The new material is already pretty much laid out for the next record and a lot of it is already recorded," Baker says. "We have a very deep well of songs... there's no stopping for us."

>>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH



ON THE  
VERGE



Good vibrations: White Flight's Justin (Moses) Roelofs

## WHITE FLIGHT

Justin Roelofs, once a fixture on the late-'90s Midwestern emo scene, has made a lot of changes in the last two years. His keyboard-heavy, Vagrant-signed group the Anniversary disbanded in 2004, and shortly thereafter he embarked on a vision quest of sorts. Traveling to Peru, where he hiked in the Andes with shamen, and through Mexico, where he studied sound vibrations while living in Mayan ruins with members of a horse caravan, Roelofs (who now prefers to go by the name Moses) found time in between his travels to return to making music, recording a self-titled album under his new White Flight moniker. "The spirit led me down south," he recalls. "And the whole time I was in Peru, I was playing, but not writing 'cause I just decided that I wanted to save everything up. Save up the energy, let it boil up again, and then, as soon as I get back from my journey, let it all flow out." When he returned home, what flowed out was an unusually detailed and textured work of sample collages, sinewy rhythms, experimental vocals and spare melodies. Recorded in a "super clean-cut, white, wealthy, suburban area in Kansas," everything about *White Flight* (Range Life), down to its sociological name, is an exploration of the surroundings

in which it was created. "A lot of my western capitalist conditioning happened [there]," says Roelofs. "In a way I felt like I had to go back to this area and cleanse it, and just prove to myself, and other people too, that something really bright could happen there... I started to see the suburbs as a total spiritual ghetto ... [and] only one who has more drive and exquisite vision and connection with that spirit is able to totally free themselves from the prison. 'Cause it's definitely a prison." The nomadic Roelofs, who not only fled the suburbs himself, but also hasn't actually had a permanent place to live in the year and a half since he sold all of his possessions that couldn't fit in one backpack, has fluid hopes for the finished record. "I used to think of myself as a musician or a songwriter," he says. "Now I don't think anything like that. I'm just experimenting with sound because the more I experiment with it, the more I feel like I'm getting connections with the other dimensions or with the other spirits... I'm just experimenting with the vibrations, and I hope that I can open access to some vibration that feels good physically on other human beings when it hits their eardrums or hits their bodies or hits their heart." >>>REBECCA RABER

PHOTO: Courtesy of Force Field PR



Dan Deacon: dancing to the beat of his own drum machine

## DAN DEACON

One-man, exploding-disco act Dan Deacon has just finished a seizure-inducing performance at Brooklyn's 3rd Ward, complete with spastic dancing, meticulous knob-twiddling and frantic hand-operated strobe. "I try to write music that's fun," he concedes following his set, as if admitting to blasphemy. For the last two years though, he has been voted Best Solo Performer by the *Baltimore City Paper*, and his last record, *Acorn Master* (Psych-O-Path), even spent time atop the odd college radio chart. In short, turning heads toward his music has been a cakewalk; but legitimizing his art has been the real struggle. "It's easy to call something that sounds weird 'goofy,'" he says. "It doesn't help that I wear Goofy T-shirts, but I'm a big fan of cartoons." Much like Devo, whom he frequently cites as an influence, Deacon's music is both wildly innovative and widely misunderstood. His absurdist lyrics, surging arcade-like beats, and anomalous dance moves have caused some critics to label him as "wacky" or "zany," but a closer examination of his prolific output makes it clear that he's not just playing around. After completing his studies in electro-acoustic and computer music composition at SUNY Purchase, Deacon and a few of his

college buddies left New York for Baltimore and established a flourishing performance space known as Wham City. "It's not just a space anymore," says Dan. "It's sort of becoming more of an aesthetic than a venue." Earlier this year, Dan and nearly 20 other Baltimore acts embarked on the Wham City Round Robin Tour. For two nights in each city, roughly 10 bands set up around the perimeter of each club and, without stopping, rotated performing duties after each song. "It's sort of like a living mixtape in a sense," says Deacon. "It's kinda the only way I want to play anymore." In fact, Round Robin will be revived in the spring, making a stop at the South By Southwest festival. Deacon also claims to already have three albums finished and ready for release in the new year. "I'm starting to write music less in a dance music format... not to lose the intensity of a dance party, but more like... ritualistic." The intricately crafted melodies featured on *Spiderman Of The Rings*, his upcoming release, offer further proof that Deacon should be viewed less like a stooge, and more like a mad scientist. "I just don't want to be typecast as a clown," he reiterates while perched on the venue's fire escape. "I take what I do really seriously." >>> ALEX BILLIG



Birds for hire: Inara George and Greg Kurstin are finally forging their own path.

## THE BIRD AND THE BEE

Inara George and Greg Kurstin are accustomed to collaboration. She's the siren-voiced singer of three different bands and he's done studio work for the likes of Jenny Lewis, Gwen Stefani and the Flaming Lips. *On the bird and the bee*, the duo's self-titled debut (Metro Blue), their teamwork connects the musical dots between George's soft-spoken melodies and Kurstin's studio wizardry. It's a happy tug-of-war between the organic and the electronic, a mixture of clever Brill Building pop and modern, pre-programmed percussion. "The songs started with piano," explains Kurstin, who originally studied the instrument with jazz icon Jaki Byard. "Then we'd take them into the studio and experiment around, trying to find a balance that fits what we do." *The bird and the bee's* balance can be found everywhere—between the R&B influences and Phil Spector homages; the pissed-off sass of "Fucking Boyfriend" and the dreamy innocence of "Spark"; and George's barbershop harmonies juxtaposed against Kurstin's dance-driven rhythms. "We can do anything we want," Kurstin says with relief. "When you're writing music for most projects, there's usually the limitations of a record label. But this was originally just for fun, and [Metro

Blue] ended up signing us after the record was already done." George, whose father fronted the boogie-blues outfit Little Feat, is similarly relieved. "There's a playfulness with these lyrics," she explains, "and we don't have to be so serious all the time. I was always a big fan of musicals—not Broadway-style, but old ones with Gene Kelly. They're full of jazz standards, and I guess [the bird and the bee] is my 'pop-standard' personality. You get to wear fun costumes and not worry about being yourself; you just crawl into someone else and go into character." George plays the part of "the bird," flitting her way between pop-perfect melodies as if they grow on trees, while Kurstin creates a buzzing hum of instrumentation beneath her. Organs mix with acoustic guitars, trumpets chirp muted solos and keyboards underscore the mix with drones and accented riffs. It's the Wall Of Sound with a Pro Tools twist, and it's proven to be a very comfortable nest. "I'm more invested in this project," says Kurstin, whose in-demand piano and studio skills are featured on more than 15 artists' releases this year. "When you produce someone, you step into their world and have to find their sound. This is more about our sound." >>>ANDREW LEAHEY





California, here they come: Canada's the Coast merges O.C. sheen with Britpop smarts.

## THE COAST

Toronto's the Coast may have inadvertently stumbled on critical and commercial genius by merging the wordy worlds of O.C.-endorsed pop and atmospheric UK rock into a sound that perhaps should be dubbed... Bloc Party Of Five. "We're definitely interested in making pop records," concedes the quartet's 23-year-old singer/guitarist Benjamin Spurr, whose "abouts" and other Canadian affectations are almost as endearing as his heart-on-sleeve lyrics. "Those are the ones we grew up liking, and I think if you're overly self-conscious about the way that you write, you can end up being disingenuous." What makes the six tracks on their self-titled EP (Aporia) work though, is the balance of blissful melodies and strong hooks with shimmering layers of *Joshua Tree*-era U2 guitars and often-unconventional song structures. "That said, we want to sound like ourselves and put our own spin on things," Spurr continues. "I think we're approaching that more and more. I used to shy away from putting idiosyncrasies into the songs, but these days that doesn't seem

worth it to guard those things. We're not trying to be Prince or anything, but we hope our own personality and our own sentiments come out in these songs." And if Spurr sounds like a weathered veteran, it's because he and his still-young cohorts (guitarist/keyboardist Ian Fosbery, bassist Luke Melchiorre and his brother, drummer Jordan) have played under different guises since 2000, while they were still in high school. "We can't really get away from each other, even if we tried at this point," Spurr laughs. But maintaining that level of personal and professional chemistry, whether between buddies or brothers, isn't always easy. Just ask everyone from Fleetwood Mac to At The Drive-In. "I think it is pretty rare," concurs Spurr. "But we've achieved a lot musically... We started to play together before we could play our instruments, so it's never gotten boring because we've always tried to improve ourselves. The way that we play individually and the way that we play together has kind of kept on changing over the years."

>>>KENNY HERZOG



The animal collective: Wolf Parade's Spencer Krug, Frog Eyes' Carey Mercer and Destroyer's Dan Bejar are Swan Lake.

# *Birds Of A Feather*

SWAN LAKE MAY BE A LARK FOR THESE THREE BUSY FRIENDS, BUT DON'T CALL IT A SIDE PROJECT

STORY BY REBECCA RABER//PHOTO BY CHRIS FREY

Western Americans like to pat ourselves on the back for our nationally inherited Puritan work ethic, but compared to our neighbors to the north, our indie rockers are downright lazy. Sure, Colin Meloy is a genius, but he's a genius who only put out one record this year. And yes, Conor Oberst is terribly prolific, but he spends all his time writing and recording for one measly band. Try being Spencer Krug for one day, Mr. Bright Eyes. Or Dan Bejar. Or Carey Mercer for that matter. Though those three Canadians already have their hands full with successful bands—Krug leads both Wolf Parade and Sunset Rubdown; Bejar is, for all intents and purposes, Destroyer, as well as a member of the New Pornographers; and Mercer fronts Frog Eyes—they somehow found time this past year for a mutual project they've christened Swan Lake, and they didn't even break a sweat.

"It makes me a bit ashamed that terms like 'stressful' can ever be applied to such a graceful art as music," says Mercer of his plethora of band obligations. "[It's] better to be busy than longing for something to fill the void of the doldrums."

Between the three of them, they've been responsible for the release of six albums since August 2005, but like a parent of many children, no one project seems to be more important than the others. Admittedly, touring as Swan Lake has thus far been out of the question with their myriad commitments. However, the trio does plan to continue recording together and bristles at the mention of the "s" word in regards to their new collaboration.

"I hate the term 'side-project,'" says Mercer. "Because it implies that it's for the junk songs, you know?"

"I don't think it's a one-off," concurs Krug. "But if it's a band, I think it will be a very slow, quiet snail of a band."

That quiet snail, however, has gotten off to quite a rocket-fueled start. This past February the three longtime friends convened in Mercer's hometown of Victoria, British Columbia to record what would become their fine debut, *Beast Moans* (Jagjaguwar). Pillaging the haunting keyboards, fuzzed out Bowie-worship, hyperliterate lyricism and densely layered production from their other bands, they wove together eerie-yet-ethereal songs that manage to sound both exactly like everything they've done before and absolutely nothing like it.

"*Beast Moans* is limitless," says Bejar. "The only threads [to our previous work] I can really detect are the drums sounding like an animal's version of a robot and a certain hissing frequency in the cymbals. I guess it's all a little wordy and everyone sings kind of weird... [But it's] effortless classical rock."

"I think the fact that the band didn't exist, [that] we weren't rockin' it on the road for months before really playing these songs, so the only people that heard [them] were the three of us, adds a kind of private element to the record," says Mercer. "I think it's a little more pastoral, too... When I hear Swan Lake, I almost hear peasant music."

If, as Mercer suggests, the music sounds intimate and decidedly non-urban, that can be attributed to the conditions in which *Beast Moans* was recorded; the trio

worked in seclusion in a cabin in British Columbia as a three-man band and production/mixing team.

"This was all fly-by-the-seat-of-our-pants," says Krug of those sessions. "Just pressing record and starting to play before you know what you're going to do. It's fun. And if it doesn't work, you just erase it."

Despite his nonchalance, the album clearly owes its playfulness and loose feel to the shared history of its composers. Only among close friends can experimentation without fear of judgment be so comfortable, and only over time can familiarity breed such creative shorthand.

All originally coming up in the same B.C. scene, the three men had floated in and out of each others' lives for years—"I can't remember exactly when

a little scary. I mean, one of the concerns was that it would end up sounding like a mixtape."

Surprisingly, it doesn't. Everybody's influence is audible, from Mercer's chaotic, thickly spackled guitar overdubs to Bejar's glam-pop vocals and Krug's percolating, spacey keys. But the songs are totally cohesive because the sum of their collaboration is more casual, trippy and spacious than any of their previous work.

"I think you can always tell whose hand's on the composer pen for the most part," explains Bejar. "But a lot of the songs were just constructed out of thin air, as far as arrangements and instrumentation go, which obviously is just as important as the 'writing' aspect. And that part of it was extreme collaboration."

*"I don't think it's a one-off, but if it's a band, I think it will be a very slow, quiet snail of a band."*

I met them," says Krug, who has been roommates with both of his band members. "It was far too long ago"—but the idea to formally collaborate didn't occur to them until 2004. Though they had played together before and long admired each other's work, it wasn't until Carey and Spencer joined Bejar as his sidemen on the European tour behind Destroyer's *Your Blues* that they joked about actually making a record together.

"It was wicked," says Mercer of the tour. "I mean, I'm getting kind of sick of saying this, but we were like, 'Man it's too bad that we didn't make a record from scratch together... Spencer has added so much to my music, and I've worked on Dan's music, but it would be really awesome if, for example, I could get Dan singing on one of my songs and I could play guitar on one of Spencer's songs.' So that's how [Swan Lake] happened. It was just like, you know, if we could do this, we might as well. It might be really neat."

Although those wishful road discussions were less than serious—"Actually, it was totally a joke," confesses Krug—the band eventually secured label support and set about writing songs for one another to perform.

"It was mostly Carey's doing," says Krug. "He's kind of sneaky. I think he even called Jagjaguwar before even calling Dan and I and said, 'If this were to come about, would you guys want to put it out? Would you help us record it?... We all wanted to do it, but I don't think Dan and I would've taken the initiative to actually try to realize it in the real world.'"

The three came to the sessions prepared to collaborate, with whole songs already written with their friends' voices and strengths in mind. "The point wasn't to write together," says Mercer. "The point was that everyone would have songs fully written, and then the collaborative aspect would be to sing on them and play guitar on them, play piano on them. The record would be a mix of everyone's songs too, which was

That said, what ironically becomes most obvious while listening to *Beast Moans* is that for three musicians who are often compared to one another, they all have strikingly different aesthetics. It is, therefore, a profound joy to simply listen to them play off one another, influencing each other's styles and nudging along their nascent sound with individual ideas about production.

"I'm more the holdin'-down-the-fort guy," says Krug. "Like, making sure the chord progressions are represented clearly, making sure there's a bassline in there to hold things down. Carey's just all over the place, he's like almost all high-end and really, really spontaneous playing. I'm less noodle-y than him, basically, or Dan."

"It was always very civil and constructive," adds Mercer. "But there was lots of differences of opinions on things between us. Usually, I think the three of us are used to, when we're making our own music, taking a kind of tyrant's role... and, not to get too gushy or Canadian or anything, but I think we probably respect each other enough to be like, 'Thank God, you're right.'"

The prolific musicians in Swan Lake may be some of the hardest-working men in show business, but luckily, they also know how to take it easy. *Beast Moans*, with its casual, spontaneous origin and remarkably few promotional requirements, is actually a break of sorts from their day jobs. And with no immediate plans to tour the record, the three men are letting it speak for itself as they look forward to the holidays. Mercer is home in Victoria with his wife. Bejar is wintering in Spain. And Krug, who slogged through much of 2006 on tour with Wolf Parade and Sunset Rubdown, admits that he has no shows booked for the rest of the year.

"[It] is a nice feeling," he says of the free weeks that stretch before him now. "Or," he clarifies, "a weird feeling."

# 2006: A SOUND ODYSSEY

## A CMJ STAFF RUNDOWN OF THE YEAR'S BEST

Illustration by Wesley Allsbrook



Not every year can be 1991, when *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and *Bandwagonesque* both hit shelves, or 1997, when *OK Computer* and *Lonesome Crowded West* baffled and beguiled us. But hey, we can say with certainty that 2006 was way better than 1906 (not Tin Pan Alley's finest year). And who knows where we'll be in another century? None of us, actually, since we'll be dead. That said, 2006 was an exciting 12 months, thanks to a roll call of artists that made us bob and smash our heads, dance and tweak our asses off, or in many cases, just kind of sit around and pleasantly tap our feet. Rather than collate a collective staff list of '06's finest, we let our writers, the people whose opinions you've been following in this mag for the last 52 weeks, provide their individual bests. And if that weren't enough, the rest of these pages contain

a look back at the year's best soundtracks, most surprising songs to find their way to TV ads and, of course, a look ahead to 2007.

But oh, one last thing, and then you can move ahead to our incredibly biased, self-indulgent and contradictory lists. CMJ is a company of many men and women who are passionate and informed about music, whether or not their byline is a frequent inhabitant of these pages. From our production coordinator, Jason Glastetter, to our Art Director/Designer, Lauren Denitzio, there's simply too much music knowledge in our offices to limit to this physical issue alone. For a full rundown of the rest of our staff's best-of lists, visit [www.cmj.com/bestof2006](http://www.cmj.com/bestof2006). >>>KENNY HERZOG

## KENNY HERZOG, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **The Goodnight Loving** *Cemetery Trails* (Dusty Medical)  
It's the best rock album no one's heard, the best debut album by a rock band no one's heard and the best rock album by a band—gasp!—not from New York. *Cemetery Trails* has it all: incredible songs (think Uncle Tupelo meets the Feelies meets the Violent Femmes), smart lyrics, smart style and, above all, a sense of fun and "fuck it,

let's just play" recklessness. Say hello to Milwaukee's best.

2. **Various Artists** *Confuzed Disco* (Irma Casa Di Primord)

3. **Ghostface** *Fishscale* (Def Jam)

4. **Mew** *And The Glass Handed Kites* (Sony)



5. **Clipse** *Hell Hath No Fury* (Re-Up/Jive)  
Simultaneously charismatic and menacing, and utterly absent of a dull moment, the now-mythologized album from these VA siblings is the year's most defiant middle finger to its genre, its peers and its parent company. *Hell* doesn't just live up to the hype—it transforms it into legend.

6. **Masta Killa** *Made In Brooklyn* (Nature Sounds)

7. **Bob Egan** *The Glorious Decline* (GarCorps)  
Armed with a voice that bellows and croons like Johnny Cash and a knack for tastefully atmospheric pedal/lap steel and slide guitar, the Canadian ex-Wilco-ite has crafted a mini-epic of sadness that feels like '06's North American answer to more dramatic UK melancholia.

8. **Rock Plaza Central** *Are We Not Horses* (Self-Released)

9. **Against Me!** *Americans Abroad!!! Against Me!!! Live In London!!!* (Fat)

10. (Tie) **Alice Smith** *For Lovers, Dreamers & Me* (BBE)/**Kronos Quartet/Mogwai** *The Fountain* (Nonesuch)

### TOP SINGLES

1. **Justin Timberlake** "SexyBack" (J)

2. **Rick Ross** "Hustlin'" (Def Jam)

3. **E-40** "Tell Me When To Go" (Warner Bros.)

4. **Girl Talk** "Smash Your Head" (Illegal Art)

5. **In Flames** "Take This Life" (Ferret Music)

### ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Various Artists** *More Trance Anthems* (Water Music Dance)

There's something so endearingly simple and surface about a perfectly executed cheesy trance track that's impossible to ignore. It's like watching the sad ending to a movie that's designed and screen-tested to make you cry, except in this case the reaction is an undeniable, if embarrassing, feeling of euphoria.



PHOTO: Drew Goren



## REV. MOOSE, VICE PRESIDENT OF CONTENT

### TOP ALBUMS

1. **The Knife** *Silent Shout* (Mute)



These Swedish siblings volley his-and-hers melodies across throwback darkwave synths on their US debut. Astute listeners will recognize the Knife's "Heartbeats" from fellow countryman Jose Gonzalez's cover version on his 2005 release, *Veneer*. But the real gems are the playfully flirtatious lyrics hidden between dance moves, like when Karin Dreijer teases, "Some things I do for money/Some things I do for free."

2. **Gnarls Barkley** *St. Elsewhere* (Downtown)

3. **VAUX** *Beyond Virtue, Beyond Vice* (Vx/Outlook)

4. **Dead Heart Bloom** *Dead Heart Bloom* (Kei)

5. **Against Me!** *Americans Abroad!!! Against Me!!! Live In London!!!* (Fat)

6. **Mohair** *Small Talk* (Grunion)



Back when I was a young lad, I watched the Monkees get themselves out of perilous situations with a sugary-sweet radio ditty and a high-speed Keystone Kops-style montage. Take out the corny free-for-all and you have Britain's Mohair crooning about lovers courted, snagged and lost. *Small Talk* is just as safe to bring when babysitting your neighbor's 4-year-old as it is to put on a mixtape for that girl you're crushing on.

7. **Andrew W.K.** *Close Calls With Brick Walls* (Dope)

8. **Murder by Death** *In Bocca Al Lupo* (Tent Show)

9. **...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead** *So Divided* (Interscope)



It took over five listens to realize the highbrow genius behind *So Divided*, but something kept pulling me back for more. Perhaps it's the texture between the many sonic layers, or perhaps it's that this is more Built To Spill than Built To Last, but this is the type of album that goes down as a must-own for any indie rocker coming of age.

10. **Figurines** *Skeleton* (The Control Group)

### TOP SINGLES

1. **Gnarls Barkley** "Crazy" (Downtown)
2. **VAUX** "Are You With Me" (Vx/Outlook)
3. **Dead Heart Bloom** "Saint Henry" (Kei)
4. **Pink** "Cuz I Can" (La Face)
5. **Andrew W.K.** "One Brother" (Dope)

### ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Pink** *I'm Not Dead* (LaFace)

Even if "Stupid Girls" was just viewed as a Top 40 slap in the face to the music industry, Pink's anti-Bush "Dear Mr. President" and her one-take duet with her father showcase her humanity.

### REBECCA RABER, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

#### TOP ALBUMS

1. **Girl Talk** *Night Ripper* (Illegal Art)

This not-a-mash-up mash-up record, by this not-a-DJ DJ, made your CD collection obsolete. Gregg Gillis' ADD-added edits rubbed Ciara's heavy breathing against Boston's noodling and Biggie's tough flow against a chirping Elton John for the best party album of the millennium so far. Lost amongst the din of praise for his cheeky

samples was acknowledgement for the synth lines and beats that Gillis wrote himself; in such celebrated company, they sounded ripped from hit

albums too.

2. **The Thermals** *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* (Sub Pop)

These lo-fi pop-punks got political on their third full-length, imagining a claustrophobic world in the not-too-distant future where religious tyranny reigns and power is paid for in blood. Though the nightmarish concept album flaunts a newfound lyrical maturity, the Thermals smartly haven't abandoned their breathlessly adolescent sound. Those urgently downstroked guitars, singalong choruses and thunderingly sexy rhythms make this bitter pill easy to swallow.

3. **The Hold Steady** *Boys And Girls In America* (Vagrant)

4. **Islands** *Return To The Sea* (Equator)

5. **Sunset Rubdown** *Shut Up I Am Dreaming* (Absolutely Kosher)

Wolf Parade's Spencer Krug is a busy guy (see: Swan Lake feature on pg. 18), but he still managed to find the time to carve intimate, piano-driven ballads (and a few shambolic barnburners) out of squiggly keyboards, twinkling glockenspiels and fuzzy vocals as Sunset

Rubdown, formerly a solo project. The effect is eerie and poignant, especially given the ambiguous yet lovely poetry of Krug's lyrics, and at no time does this sound like the work of a side act.

6. **Grizzly Bear** *Yellow House* (Warp)

7. **Malajube** *Trompe L'Oeil* (Dare To Care)

I love bands from Montreal—there are three on this list—but what separates Malajube from the rest of their neighbors is that they not only represent the spirit of their francophone hometown, but they also sing entirely in its native language. With new wave nods to Plastic Bertrand, they weave the best of their local scene—Unicorns' keyboard buzz, Wolf

Parade's ramshackle rhythms, Arcade Fire's arty song structures—for the best French-language pop album since the death of Gainsbourg.

8. **Jenny Lewis With The Watson Twins** *Rabbit Fur Coat* (Team Love)

9. **Morrissey** *Ringleader Of The Tormentors* (Sanctuary)

10. **Love Is All** *Nine Times That Same Song* (What's Your Rupture?)



## TOP SINGLES

1. **Arctic Monkeys** "I Bet That You Look Good On The Dancefloor" (Domino)
2. **Dirty Pretty Things** "Doctors And Dealers" (Interscope)
3. **Lady Sovereign** "Random" (Def Jam)
4. **Tokyo Police Club** "Nature Of The Experiment" (Arts & Crafts)
5. **Matt And Kim** "Yea Yeah" (IHEARTCOMIX)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Commander Venus** *The Uneventful Vacation* (Wind-Up)

I love Conor Oberst, OK? And the long-awaited reissue of the second album by his high school-era band has taken up a residency in my stereo that can't seem to end. Yes, it sounds like a relic from 1996 (because it is). And yes, it's hopelessly earnest and angsty (though, who wasn't at 16?). But it's also raw, sloppily anthemic and full of promise. Plus, Cursive's Tim Kasher and the Faint's Matt Bowen are on board, which makes listening to this like flipping through the Saddle Creek yearbook.

## ERIC DAVIDSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **Mannequin Men** *Showbiz Witch* (Swamp Angel)

As the indescribably "Huh?" liner notes will let on, these sauced shulbs are from Chicago, but I'm guessing not the math rock regions. Even the good garage scuzz scene there seems to be a bit unawares of this shrewd crew. 'Course, from the sounds of this Wipers-wiped-with-sandpaper loaf-eye intelli-poonk debut, maybe it's best people stay the heck away from the Mannequin Men.



2. **Yeah Yeah Yeahs** *Show Your Bones* (Interscope)

Even the insta-slaggers who salivated at the chance to diss this disc must give the Yeah Yeah Yeahs a yup yup yup for figuring out a way from the yalp 'n' screech over to some kind of new pop groove. If that means channeling previous chasm-straddlers the Pretenders or Siouxsie Sioux while also quelling

their increasingly divisive personal sitch, then c'set la va-va-voom.

3. **Kid Congo And The Pink Monkey Birds** *Philosophy And Underwear* (New York Night Train)



4. **Haunted George** *Panther Howl* (Hook Or Crook)

A former member of '90s garage-psychos the Beguiled moves to some godawful outpost in Texas, argues with half-empty moonshine jugs, gathers his non-senses once more and decides to rattle the ghosts of Charlie Feathers, the Cramps' first demos and the most crazed late-night horror movie TV hosts of 1969 to create a new graveyard

storyteller for these slowly dying times. Alternately very spooky and funny, which is a tough trick for a one-man band.

5. **Geisha Girls** *Disappearing Act* (Number 3)

6. **Jack-O And The Tennessee Tearjerkers** *The Flip Side Kid* (Sympathy For The Record Industry)

7. **Black Angels** *Passover* (Light In The Attic)

8. **The Fever** *In The City of Sleep* (Kemado)

9. **Fucked Up** *Hidden World* (Jade Tree)

10. **Girl Talk** *Night Ripper* (Illegal Art)

### TOP SINGLES

1. **Teddybears** "Punkrocker" (Big Beat)
2. **The Kooks** "Eddie's Gun" (Astralwerks)
3. **TV On The Radio** "Wolf Like Me" (Interscope)
4. **Top Ten** "Easily Unkind" (Classic Bar Music)
5. **Scissor Sisters** "I Don't Feel Like Dancin'" (Universal/Motown)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Heaven 17** *The Luxury Gap* (Reissue) (Caroline)

I have long ago dispensed with such useless emotions as "guilt." However, the particular milieu in which Heaven 17 pranced was despicable to the point of name-dropping amongst Nomi-come-lately electroclash nerds. And those nerds would've snatched up this reissue had they not moved on to Sabbath. No matter, because this confusing meld of '80s greed and Marxist half-theorizing makes it the most interesting of techno-pop slabs. And it's got the horn section from Earth, Wind & Fire!

## KORY GROW, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### TOP ALBUMS

1. **Television Personalities** *My Dark Places* (Domino)

2. **Arab Strap** *The Last Romance* (Transdreamer)



3. **Nachtmystium** *Instinct: Decay* (Battle Kommand)

Suburbanite Chicago black meddlers Nachtmystium re-upped into a bigger, blacker beast with their third full-length, but sidestepped the usual corpse paint/blast beat mire with angelically ethereal background vox and blacker-than-black goth guitar solos that recall Joy Division and Siouxsie Sioux more than Mayhem

and Emperor. It's rare a band that can find new uses for guitar, but black metal may have found its Jimi Hendrix in Nachtmystium's main man, Blake Judd.

4. **Jenny Lewis With The Watson Twins** *Rabbit Fur Coat* (Team Love)

5. **TV On The Radio** *Return To Cookie Mountain* (Interscope)

6. **Mogwai** *Mr. Beast* (Matador)

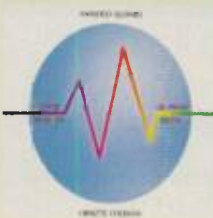


7. **Black Heart Procession** *The Spell* (Touch And Go)

Throughout their careers, most dreary indie rockers alternate between full, lush symphonies and stylized, minimal pluckery (Swans, Dead Can Dance), but melancholy West Coast contrarians Black Heart Procession have sawed convention in half since their early albums steadily grew from depressing anti-music to *The Spell's* anxious arias.

This album's high point in low feelings, "The Letter," makes a good case for keeping these lads off meds.

8. **Isis And Aereogramme** *In The Fishtank 14* (Konkurrent)



9. **Ornette Coleman** *Sound Grammar* (Sound Grammar)

Considering every almost-subversive artist ever mentioned in these pages owes more than a thank you to Coleman, who reinvented the avant garde in the late '50s, this album—his first new material in a decade—holds special significance, if not for the fact that his harmolodic experiments don't sound dated. Playing with only two

standup basses and a drummer, Coleman evokes more depth and color than most symphony orchestras, and his *Sound Grammar* still translates perfectly into all languages.

10. **Burst** *Origo* (Relapse)

### TOP SINGLES

1. **Jesu** "Star" (Hydra Head)
2. **Jenny Lewis With The Watson Twins** "The Charging Sky" (Team Love)
3. **The Coup** "Laugh/Love/Fuck" (Epitaph)
4. **Turbulence** "Notorious" (VP)
5. **Gossip** "Are U That Somebody" (Kill Rock Stars)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Rued Langgaard/Danish National Symphony Orchestra And Choir**  
*Antikrist* (Dacapo)

The religious questioning carrying Danish post-Romantic composer Rued Langgaard's 1923 opera, *Antikrist*, predates Scandinavian church burning by about seven decades. Plus, unlike any corpsepainters, it's actually pro-Christian, more an admonishment than a threat. This year, Dacapo released conductor Thomas Dausgaard's 2002 production of *Antikrist* by the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Danish National Choir, and its beauty and intensity are unparalleled in that period's opera.



PHOTO: Michael Levine

YO LA TENGO

**KEVIN KAMPWIRTH, STAFF WRITER**

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **The Thermals** *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* (Sub Pop)
2. **Yo La Tengo** *I Am Not Afraid Of You And I Will Beat Your Ass* (Matador)

Now 20 years into their recording career, there can be little argument that Yo La Tengo is one of the great American rock bands. This album is simply stunning, stylistically tantamount to their 1997 masterpiece *I Can Hear The Heart Beating*

as *One*. But here, their formulaic harmony-cum-discordance avant-pop has finally crystallized into an art form all its own.



3. **Califone** *{Roots And Crowns}* (Thrill Jockey)
4. **Subtle** *For Hero: For Fool* (Lex)
5. **Bishop Allen** *January-December* (Self-Released)

Despite juggling other jobs, touring and plotting material for their 2007 sophomore LP, this young, label-less and talented indie-pop duo recorded, produced and self-released a new four-song EP

every month of 2006. Impressive, sure, but they didn't scratch their way onto this list because of their diligence: Their songs are tight, jaunty, three-minute gems guaranteed to land on every mix CD you make for your girlfriend from this point on.



6. **Annals Be He Me** (Ace Fu)
7. **Ghostface** *Fishscale* (Def Jam)
8. **Oxford Collapse** *Remember The Night Parties* (Sub Pop)

Within an indie-rock scene that continues to create more music that you need a slide rule to figure out (here's looking at you, Fiery Furnaces), it's refreshing to hear a record that can exist under the auspices of being, simply, a solid,

no-nonsense indie-rock record. Credit Brooklyn's Oxford Collapse for recognizing this, and putting out an album that is as infectious, cohesive and outstanding as just about anything else this year, regardless of genre.

9. **The Hold Steady** *Boys And Girls In America* (Vagrant)
10. **Sunset Rubdown** *Shut Up I Am Dreaming* (Absolutely Kosher)

### TOP SINGLES

1. **Gnarls Barkley** "Crazy" (Downtown)
2. **...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead** "Wasted State Of Mind" (Interscope)
3. **Girl Talk** "Smash Your Head" (Illegal Art)
4. **Christina Aguilera** "Ain't No Other Man" (RCA)
5. **Decemberists** "O, Valencia" (Capitol)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Bone Thugs-N-Harmony** *Greatest Hits* (Ruthless)

I'll always look back on the summer of 1995 as the last true halcyon days of my youth, just before the cold, harsh truths of the real world swallowed me whole. It was also the summer that Bone Thugs released *E 1999 Eternal*, their first, and irrefutably greatest album. Granted, I still thought "Buddah Lovaz" referred to some spiritual leaning, but that's precisely the point: Nostalgia and ignorance will never be mutually exclusive. And yes, I do miss everybody.

## MATTHEW FIELD, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **TV On The Radio** *Return To Cookie Mountain* (Interscope)

Switching out their drum machine for a flesh-and-blood rhythm section infused TVOTR's sophomore full-length (and major label debut) with an organic swing heretofore absent, and as Tunde Adebimpe and Kyp Mallone croon over the rich, kaleidoscopic textures of tracks like "Playhouses" and "Let The Devil In," try—and fail—to name another name another album

from 2006 that wields a fuzz-collage palette as robust and emotionally engaging.

2. **Girl Talk** *Night Ripper* (Illegal Art)
3. **Iron Age** *Constant Struggle* (Youngblood)
4. **Isobel Campbell And Mark Lanegan** *Ballad Of The Broken Seas* (V2)



Campbell and Lanegan's sweet and dour vocals, respectively, two-step around a concise survey of American roots music, and the result is as fetching as it is melancholy. Producing and writing most of the album herself, Campbell's aesthetic conveys more genuine emotion than the corporate Nashville country music death

5. **Genghis Tron** *Dead Mountain Mouth* (Crucial Blast)
6. **The Knife** *Silent Shout* (Mute)





7. **Fucked Up** *Hidden World* (Jade Tree)  
Few hardcore acts operate from such a focused set of principles, and even fewer intentionally and successfully obscure their m.o. as well as Fucked Up. After many singles and EPs, the enigmatic Toronto-based outfit's debut LP lends hope that punk still has the potential to be both subversive and cerebral.

9. **Mastodon** *Blood Mountain* (Reprise-Warner Bros.)  
10. **The Hold Steady** *Boys And Girls In America* (Vagrant)

## TOP SINGLES

1. **Iron Age** "We're Dust/The Violator" (Youngblood)
2. **Liars** "It Fit When I Was A Kid" (Mute)
3. **Cloak/Dagger** "Daggers Daggers" (Grave Mistake)
4. **Jesu** "Silver" (Hydra Head)
5. **Spank Rock** "Rick Rubin" (Big Dada)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

(Tie) **Dengue Fever** *Escape From Dragon House* (M80)/**Regurgitate** *Sickening Bliss* (Relapse)

*Dragon House* spurred my recollection of a blissful night involving a pan-Asian restaurant/karaoke bar and school boy crushes on the Southeast Asian patrons/divas-in-training. And since discovering the films of Herschell Gordon Lewis and skateboarding, every Regurgitate album has left me re-examining the decision to spend my hard-earned money to pay for skate decks instead of gallons of fake blood.

## MATT PULLMAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **Fucked Up** *Hidden World* (Jade Tree)  
2. **Man Man** *Six Demon Bag* (Ace Fu)  
Armed with a barrage of influences, from Beefheart to Waits, this group of renegade noise pirates from Philly created an addictive barrage of eccentricity and experimentation on *Six Demon Bag*. And, seriously, who can argue with a band that comes on stage in white short shorts and battle paint?



3. **Belle And Sebastian** *The Life Pursuit* (Matador)  
*The Life Pursuit* is a landmark achievement in an already outstanding career for the long-running Scottish outfit. Sharp, warm and memorable pop songs and amicable but not overdone quirkiness are what make *Pursuit* so immensely satisfying and possibly their best album yet.

*Fur Coat* (Team Love)



4. **The Draft** *A Million Pieces* (Epitaph)  
5. **Jenny Lewis And The Watson Twins** *Rabbit*

6. **Sonic Youth** *Rather Ripped* (Geffen)  
After a series of ho-hum records, *Rather Ripped* is a renaissance for the legendary noise-rockers, drifting away from the drawn-out and overanalyzed atmospherics of the last few longplayers. Who knew that simply going back to the sound of the band's halcyon days could sound oh-so-good?  
7. **Toys That Kill** *Shanked!* (Recess)  
8. **Morrissey** *Ringleader Of The Tormentors*

(Sanctuary)

9. **The Lawrence Arms** *Oh! Calcutta!* (Fat)  
10. **The Hope Conspiracy** *Death Knows Your Name* (Deathwish)

## TOP SINGLES

1. **Gnarls Barkley** "Crazy" (Downtown)
2. **Cursive** "Bad Sects" (Saddle Creek)
3. **Boy Least Likely To** "Be Gentle With Me" (Too Young To Die)

4. **Lucero** "Cass" (Liberty And Lament/East West)  
5. **Joseph Arthur** "Enough To Get Away" (Megaforce)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Joan Jett And The Blackhearts** *Sinner* (Blackheart)

It's not an embarrassing record to listen to per se, particularly since it's Joan fucking Jett at her best. She's back to her anathematic, in your face and jukebox-hoggin' ways. Unabashedly fun while still edgy, Ms. Jett proves that she just may be even more of an ass-kicker now than she was as a Runaway. Need I say more?



PHOTO: Aubrey Edwards

## AMANDA FARAH, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

### TOP ALBUMS



1. **Starless And Bible Black** *Starless And Bible Black* (Locus)

This Mancunian trio layers finger-picked guitars, electronic noise and rich female vocals throughout songs that range from happy-go-lucky to downright depressing. French transplant H el ene Gautier's voice helps this debut stand miles ahead of your average singer-songwriter set up, and tunes penned by the madcap prolific genius

Billy Childish don't hurt either.

2. **Punish The Atom** *I Cry Demolition!* (48)  
3. **The Thermals** *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* (Sub Pop)  
4. **Various Artists** *Marie Antoinette* (Verve Forecast)



5. **William Elliott Whitmore** *Song Of The Blackbird* (Southern)

Whitmore rounds out his trilogy of personal loss with more heartbreaking, banjo-backed tunes reflecting his country background and punk upbringing. He has also started experimenting with more complex arrangements, introducing his songs to a backing band. Roots rock has never

continued on page 47

# ON TOP OF OUR GAME



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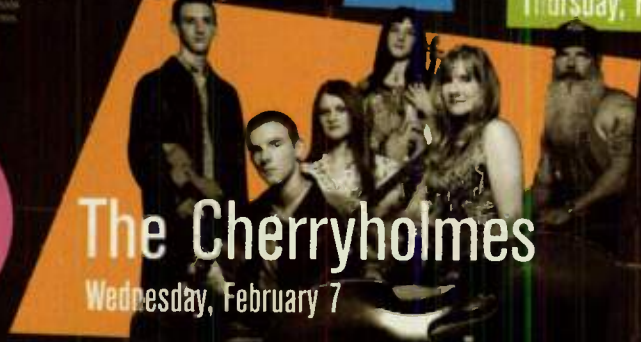
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# LONDON YEARNING

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE QUEEN COMMAND 2007'S THRONE

All hail (l to r): Simon Tong, Damon Albarn, Tony Allen and Paul Simonon

STORY BY KENNY HERZOG

Funny that the Good, the Bad & the Queen would emerge on the heels of *49Up*, the latest installment in Michael Apter's long-running documentary series. The storied films, which checked in on 14 British schoolchildren every seven years, have served as a mirror into a half-century of ever-changing English life. The Good, the Bad & the Queen, and their self-titled debut (*Honest Johns/Parlaphone*), chart a similar course over 12 tracks, musically lacing through London's past, present and future and taking stock of changing neighborhoods and shifting politics.

"Yeah, except the last song ends with a praise of the next generation," observes ubiquitous frontman Damon Albarn, about his latest sans-Blur side project, which finds him sharing sonic space with Clash bassist Paul Simonon, Verve guitarist Simon Tong, Fela Kuti/Afro 70 percussionist Tony Allen and producer extraordinaire Danger Mouse. To be specific, *The Good, The Bad & The Queen's* closing title track concludes with the following sentiment: "Don't kick the crackheads of the green/They are a political party/And the kids are never going to tire/Coz everything has ever so slightly come." It's an echo of a refrain once bounced off "The Wall" and curiously counter to sentiments shot from a Sex Pistol.

"I quite like being a left-wing, sort of quasi-Communist patriot," says Albarn of his love for Britain, and specifically West London, the muse for much of *The Good, The Bad & The Queen's* lyrical arc. "The area where we live, Paul [Simonon] and I, is particularly sort of cosmopolitan and everyone is close to each other. There's big North African communities, East African communities, West Indian communities, Mediterranean communities... More so than any other part of London, there's a lot of integration and that has reflected on a lot of music that's come out of this part of London, so I suppose this record has opened the debate again of, 'That's a good thing.'"

**"I QUITE LIKE BEING A LEFT-WING, SORT OF QUASI-COMMUNIST PATRIOT."**

Indeed, virtually all those worldly influences are apparent in the record, whose songs are a far cry from the hip-hop-injected bounce of Gorillaz or the creative chaos of Danger Mouse's Gnarlz Barkley project.

"The sort of music we're doing is not, 'Crank it up really loud and jump around,' maybe like what Damon would have done with Blur or what I would have done with the Clash," says Simonon. "It's a whole different outlook."

While the dub gallop of Simonon's bass and Allen's Afro-beat rhythms are prevalent throughout, the group's collective creativity has coalesced into an even-keeled, surprisingly laid-back affair, like *Sandinista!*-era Clash B-sides on quaaludes. That was less by design, however, than a natural result of the circumstances under which it was recorded.

**FINDING THE RHYTHM**

In 2004, Albarn and Tong traveled to Lagos, Nigeria to work on songs with Allen. However, Gorillaz' *Demon Days* soon took precedence, and by the time Albarn revisited the sessions with Danger Mouse, the idea had morphed into more of a concept record about West London, and Simonon was brought on board to flesh things out and, ultimately, help start from scratch. From that point forward, the album was completed in Albarn's comfortable West London studio and peaceful Devon home, with the singer/songwriter divvying up duties and Danger Mouse conducting affairs and keeping everyone focused. (Albarn jokingly refers to he and his bandmates as a "herd of quite rowdy cattle," laughing at the idea of Danger Mouse—whom he refers to as Brian—as the "all-conquering cowboy.")

"The thing is, from day one I said, 'Let's give it a go,'" recalls Simonon. "Because the situation could go astray or not quite work out, but everyone got on well, and musically we managed to be able to communicate with each other. We are a bit like a jazz group in that respect, because everybody's listening to what each other's playing." A fitting analogy, since Albarn likens Allen to being "something like an Art Blakey figure."

"I'm someone that don't like ego business, ego trippin'," laughs Allen in response. "I have different ideas... but I am not going to put them in front, because it's not me."

*continued on page 31*

**OTHER '07 ALBUMS TO WATCH FOR**

(Some release dates and album titles are TBA or subject to change.)

1/09

Sloan—*Never Hear The End Of It* (Yep Roc)

1/23

The Broken West—*I Can't Go On, I'll Go On* (Merge)

Clinic—*Visitations* (Domino)

Deerhoof—*Friend Opportunity* (Kill Rock Stars)

Of Montreal—*Hissing Fauna, Are You The Destroyer?* (Polyvinyl)

Alasdair Roberts—*The Amber Gatherers* (Drag City)

The Shins—*Wincing The Night Away* (Sub Pop)

Six Parts Seven—*Casually Smashed To Pieces* (Suicide Squeeze)

David Vandervelde—*The Moonstation House Band* (Secretly Canadian)

Vietnam—*Vietnam* (Kemado)

1/30

Clap Your Hands Say Yeah—*Some Loud Thunder* (Self-Released)

2/06

Apples In Stereo—*New Magnetic Wonder* (Simian/Yep Roc)

Bloc Party—*A Weekend In The City* (Vice/Atlantic)

Sondre Lerche—*Phantom Punch*

(Astralwerks)

Loney, Dear—*Loney, Noir* (Sub Pop)

Yoko Ono—*I'm A Witch* (Astralwerks)

Jesse Sykes & The Sweet Hereafter—*Like,*

*Love, Lust & The Open Halls Of The Soul*

(Barsuk)

2/20

The Frames—*The Cost* (Anti-)

Trans Am—*Sex Change* (Thrill Jockey)

2/27

Lifetime—*Lifetime* (Fueled By Ramen)

3/06

!!!—*Myth Takes* (Warp)

Air—*Pocket Symphony* (Astralwerks)

Arcade Fire—TBA (Merge)

El-P—*I'll Sleep When You're Dead* (Def Jux)

3/20

Andrew Bird—*Armchair Apocrypha* (Fat Possum)

LCD Soundsystem—*Sound Of Silver* (Capitol)

Low—*Drugs And Guns* (Sub Pop)

The Ponys—*Turn The Lights Out* (Matador)

Ted Leo And The Pharmacists—*Living With The Living* (Touch And Go)

TBA

MF Doom & Ghostface Killah—*Swift And Changeable* (Lex/Nature Sounds) (February)

Architecture In Helsinki—TBA (Bar/None) (Winter)

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club—TBA (RCA) (Winter)

Kings Of Leon—*Because Of The Times* (RCA) (Winter)

Modest Mouse—*We Were Dead Before The Ship Even Sank* (Epic) (Winter)

Polyphonic Spree—*The Fragile Army* (Hollywood) (Winter)

Lavender Diamond—TBA (Matador) (May)



PHOTO: Brian Tamborello

- Rilo Kiley—TBA (Brute/Beaute)(May)
- Ryan Adams—TBA (Lost Highway) (Spring)
- Akron/Family—TBA (Young God) (Spring)
- Massive Attack—*Weather Underground* (Virgin) (Spring)
- The National—TBA (Beggars Banquet) (Spring)
- Spoon—TBA (Merge) (Summer)
- Oakley Hall—TBA (Merge) (Fall)
- Iron & Wine—TBA (Sub Pop)
- New Pornographers—TBA (Matador)
- Radiohead—TBA (TBA)
- Shellac—*Excellent Italian Greyhound* (Touch And Go)
- Wolf Parade—TBA (Sub Pop)

PHOTO: Capitol Records

# MSTRKRFT The Looks

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Nov. 2 – New York City, NY – Galapagos Art Space (1am)

Nov. 3 – New York City, NY – Union Square (Puma) (4pm)

Nov. 3 – New York City, NY – Fader/Cornerstone Party (7pm)

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Artistic



We Meet Every Deadline





Simonon (r) provides Albarn (at piano) with a spark, as Allen looks on

It's not my composition. I just try to swing with that." Like Simonon, the drummer feels that selflessness from all parties made the album possible. That, and in his estimation, Albarn, whom he notes is "one of the composers I really cherish."

And with all due respect to the legendary Kuti sideman's resume, Albarn does seem to have an exceptional knack for making collaborations click, dating back to his Deltron 3030 contributions and up through Gorillaz, Mali Music and now the Good, the Bad & the Queen.

"I really enjoy working with people," Albarn says, simply. "It's always pretty laid-back. I've worked with a lot of people and it hasn't worked the first time, and we've gone out and had a few drinks and come back a month or two later and done it again. And on a couple of occasions, we've had to come back a third time before it's really kind of hit the button for everyone. So I think if there's a knack, it's identifying what it is that you have in common with someone and then allowing that to evolve."

Humble as that assessment may be, Albarn is still quick to highlight examples of more awkward, calculated collaborations. "The weirdest one was at the Grammys," he says. "I'm watching Jay-Z and that fucking god awful band [Linkin Park] and Paul McCartney. Now that's just odd. This is a bigger problem, and I'll tell you why: You look at Live Aid... The whole point to me of having musicians engaging in awareness is to try and reveal the similarities, not the differences between people. And you can only do that if you really get to know people and

become friends. You can't make music with people you've only met five minutes ago."

True to his convictions, Albarn has known and worked with Allen for six years (the drummer tracked him down after being name-checked in Blur's "Music Is My Radar") and Tong had replaced Blur guitarist Graham Coxon upon his departure from the group.

"Damon has a very set way of working," says Tong. "It's a very chaotic way of working, but for each project his creative process is very similar. It's just the people that change. You just kind of settle into the way of working."

In a sense, as Albarn continues to expand his network of collaborative musicians, and those musicians in turn work more and more with each other, it spawns a rhizome-like fraternity of similar-minded artists, comparable to comedic actors who frequently pop up in each other's films.

"Exactly," concurs Albarn. "It's the same sort of thing. It's great to work with friends. You're stronger in numbers I think. No solo bullocks."

## AN AMBIGUOUS QUEEN

The notion of bullocks naturally brings one back to the Sex Pistols, or in this case, their peers in the

**"YOU CAN'T MAKE MUSIC WITH PEOPLE YOU'VE ONLY MET FIVE MINUTES AGO."**

Clash, who were similarly prone to tirades against the state of their homeland. And while it's not as if Simonon suddenly views England as a perfect place, present-day West London has endeared him to a different, more optimistic perspective, one whose stamp is all over *The Good, The Bad & The Queen*.

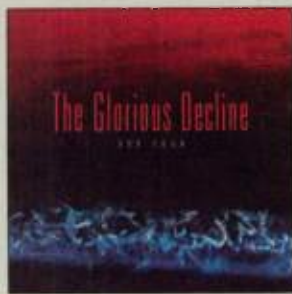
"There's a line there that you can follow," he says. "I suppose in some ways the first Clash album had a lot of references to our experiences with people living in London, and this is an updated version, so far as we're older people now, so it's a different outlook on life... In a way, [West London] is a vague template for the rest of the world. It is possible for us all to have our differences and still get along."

Certainly, the band seems to have re-appropriated "the Queen" into a more positive metaphor than the Pistols did in pleading for her salvation or the Smiths in proclaiming her figurative death. That said, what kind of English band would the Good, the Bad & the Queen be if their motives weren't a bit coy?

"There's a definite nod to those kinds of groups as well... a slight wink," assures Tong. "It could be taken as being derogatory." After all, he pauses, "You are replacing the word ugly in the phrase."

# BEST NEW MUSIC

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**FILE UNDER** The acoustic slide  
**RIYL** Low, Tom Waits, Red House  
Painters

## BOB EGAN

### *The Glorious Decline* GarCorps

From its wonderfully oxymoronic album title to its devastating opening track and the subtle horn flourishes that linger over "Pleasantville Bar," former Freakwater/Wilco member Bob Egan's fourth solo record is one of those little albums that gets everything right. And it does so with scant pomp and circumstance, a quality that's long made singer-songwriters from Nick Drake to Mark Kozelek endlessly endearing. Armed with a voice that bellows and croons like Johnny Cash (who personally encouraged Egan to join Wilco) and a knack for tastefully atmospheric pedal and lap steel and slide guitar, the Canadian has crafted a mini-epic of sadness that feels like '06's Western Hemisphere answer to UK melancholia like Neil Hannon's *Divine Comedy*. Whereas overseas counterparts often evoke depression through theatrical production and sweeping orchestration, *The Glorious Decline* is all dustbowl rust. Egan's pedal steel drifting through wide-open spaces that echo with the subtlest

percussion and barely noticeable but deceptively varied instrumentation. The one exception to this otherwise consistent vibe might be "Montreal," which suffers little for veering toward a more conventional Simon And Garfunkel folk prettiness, even if it's a bit out of place. But back to that opening track. Nailing a great album opener can be an art in itself, and "An Airport Bar On Christmas Day" (boy, does this guy have a knack for evocative titles) is absolutely masterful, building to an unforgettable, piercing crescendo nearly five minutes in, coming closer to melodramatic melody than anything on *The Glorious Decline*. It spreads his sonic repertoire out on the table, lays all its parts bare and dares the listener to have faith that the remaining eight tracks will follow through on the promise of its hypnotic nuance. Have faith, listeners. This is one instance where your piousness will be rewarded.

>>> KENNY HERZOG



**LINK** [www.entranceband.com](http://www.entranceband.com)  
**FILE UNDER** Jonestown brain  
massacre  
**RIYL** Devendra Banhart,  
Spiritualized, T. Rex

## ENTRANCE

### *Prayer Of Death* Tee Pee

If one more sap utters the term "freak folk," fists might have to start flying. As that genre enters its officially annoying phase, leave it to one of the first freak-flag wavers—Tee Pee Records—to snatch up this truly trippy troubadour. It's odd that Entrance (basically Guy Blakeslee) should hop around so much (this is his fourth CD in as many years for as many imprints), considering his pal-proximity to any number of hep indie movers and shakers. One guess is that in addition to the humorous parody amongst the sitars, winding violins

and reverb vox, there's a maniacal rush to *Prayer Of Death* that probably puts off those into the freak folk game who are tall grass-snoozing hippies at heart. The album contains moments of Stooges-ish bugged-outness rather than blissed-out wah-wah feedback flailing ("Silence Of A Crowded Train," "Lost In The Dark") that recall the headiest excesses of Union Carbide Productions, Spacemen 3 and other late-'80s post-hardcore misfits. And if Blakeslee hopes to line his larynx with velvet someday, he's currently stuck with splenetic



stucco. Sure, his first album of all originals does find him stretching out in song length and guitar layers. The vocal and 12-string-only "Prayer Of Death" is a bit coffee house—a coffee house on Pluto that is. And yes, the Indian mantrants (and a purportedly dippy live

experience) spell bong soundtrack. But should you be the beer-tipper in the room, this *Prayer* may mostly sound like those belabored old blues laments about death that sound, uh, freaky in the current wartime political milieu. >>> ERIC DAVIDSON



**LINK** [www.malajube.com](http://www.malajube.com)  
**FILE UNDER** Musique Magnifique  
**RIYL** Wolf Parade, Phoenix, Arcade Fire

## MALAJUBE

### *Trompe L'Oeil* Dare to Care

Having taken French from junior high through college, it's difficult to remember enough of it now to translate the words on the side of a shampoo bottle, much less the 12 songs that make up Montreal quartet Malajube's sophomore full-length, *Trompe L'Oeil*. That language barrier makes it impossible to offer a balanced criticism of the record, but it presents no obstacles to enjoying it, or—more accurately—listening to it with an enthusiasm that borders on obsession. There's no particular genre to which Malajube (pronounced "Mal-a-zhoob") is dedicated; they're nominally filed under indie rock, but nothing on *Trompe L'Oeil* overtly suggests that such a label is warranted. Instead, the band offers a joyous celebration of sounds that run the gamut: There's austere folk next to raucous cabaret, psychedelic prog alongside towering anthems, carefree pop bumping up against electro weirdness. Sometimes (often) these genres collide within individual songs; never, though, do they

clash—or, at least, never do they clash enough to sound willfully disparate or self-consciously random. Like fellow Montrealers Wolf Parade, Malajube craft songs that skirt chaos and are occasionally submerged in chaos, but they don't succumb to it. *Trompe L'Oeil*'s group sing-alongs invite the audience to join in as well. And it's not an easy invitation to turn down. For all its moods, textures and wild imbalances, this is a very catchy album, even when gloomy, even when simply odd. Its absolute highlight (surrounded by quite a few contenders) is "La Monogamie," a chilling rave-up that shifts from winsomely plucked acoustic guitars and dreamy melodies to jagged, hard-charging riffage, and finally comes crashing together in a swelling, moving final third. Like most of *Trompe L'Oeil*, it's complex and exciting, and even those with no fluency in the language being sung will have little trouble seeing the powerful imagery within >>> MICHAEL PATRICK NELSON



**LINK** [www.dragcity.com/bands/newsom.html](http://www.dragcity.com/bands/newsom.html)  
**FILE UNDER** Rejoicing in the harp  
**RIYL** Vashti Bunyan, Devendra Banhart, Björk

## JOANNA NEWSOM

### *Ys* Drag City

Who knew that all Joanna Newsom needed to take her from an annoying-voiced weirdo to a Björk-esque artiste was the arranging and production talent of FOBW (that's Friend Of Brian Wilson) Van Dyke Parks? Swathed in his sweeping symphonics, the arty strangeness of her voice, which can still kindly be described as girlishly quirky, is tempered with the lush sweetness of gilded strings and dignified reed instruments. Even in the more intimate moments, where she flutters and trills over just her own hushed harp plucking, she is somehow solter and scrappier than on 2004's *The Milk-Eyed Mender*. Those that were put off by that album's spare squeaking will find much to love here. Newsom has wisely chosen other legendary collaborators, including engineer Steve Albini, who found a sense of angsty urgency in these languishingly romantic tracks, and mixer Jim O'Rourke, whose avant-garde leanings are a good match for Newsom's Renaissance-fair aesthetic. What hasn't changed since

*Mender*, though, is Newsom's sprightly interpretation of pastoral music. On *Ys* (pronounced "Eess"), which is technically a five-song EP, though it lasts almost an hour, her autumnal songs evoke old-timey country living in both instrumentation and theme. "Monkey & Bear," an almost-10-minute suite about a simian and ursine pair of lovers, opens with a mini-madrigal of Newsom's own overdubbed vocal harmonies, then expands into a feisty children's symphony, a *Peter And The Wolf* with *West Side Story* lyrics. And on album opener "Emily," with her gentle harp imitating a mournful piano vamp, Newsom is at her smoky, Chan Marshall-ish best. Though they might ramble—the lyrics for each track take up at least four pages each—Newsom's tales of mountains, meadows and maidens are composed of enough charming instrumentation and inventive lyricism to keep listeners engaged and straining for the next whimsical note. >>> REBECCA RABER



**LINK** [www.rivulets.net](http://www.rivulets.net)  
**FILE UNDER** Brood for thought  
**RIYL** Smog, Red House Painters, sedatives

## RIVULETS

### *You Are My Home* Important

Within any medium, artists whose work straddles the line between visceral and melodramatic most often end up drifting unwittingly toward the latter. It's difficult to maintain the balance between cathartic energy and the sweeping nuance that has propelled the brief but brilliant careers of a select few. Ask Jeff Mangum, or for that matter, Jackson Pollock. Rivulets is the musical vehicle of singer/songwriter Nathan Amundson, who, with his spectral acoustic strumming, grainy falsetto and sparse arrangements, personifies minimalism; this is someone who has no doubt listened to his share of plaintive songwriters. Amundson though, who's been recording as Rivulets for nearly a decade, doesn't seem content to simply abscond into this concept of lo-fi troubadour autonomy. He has, in fact, done quite the opposite, enlisting an impressive array of support musicians for his third proper LP under the moniker. Produced by Shellac/Mission Of Burma member Bob Weston, the album also

features former Codeine and Come drummer Chris Brokaw and renowned cellist and jazz composer Fred Lonberg-Holm. Despite the notable pedigree, Amundson applies their contributions sparingly, placing extra notes only where absolutely necessary, often setting them in the shady corners of the songs where they aren't immediately apparent. They are certainly not obscured though, and when the album fully reveals itself, the results are simply stunning. Although the word "ambient" is a difficult one to apply to music that lies essentially in an acoustic realm, there is a palpable dream-like mien that surrounds the record; it's demure and often placid as a funeral. Yes, *You Are My Home* is austere, but as author Robert Alden once said, "There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of even one small candle." Rarely have these words been more apt. >>> KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

the  
majestic twelve  
schizophrenology



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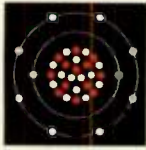
- 01 **BRAND NEW** "Sowing Season (Yeah)" 4:31 (Interscope Records)
- 02 **MALAJUBE** "Montréal -40°C" 3:19 (Dare To Care Records)
- 03 **THE VINCENT BLACK SHADOW** "Metro" 4:26 (Bodog Music)
- 04 **BOB EGAN** "Virginia" 2:56 (GarCorps)
- 05 **ANNUALS** "Brother" 3:43 (Ace Fu Records)
- 06 **+44** "155" 3:29 (Interscope Records)
- 07 **DEAD CELEBRITY STATUS** "We Fall, We Fall" 4:22 (Bodog Music)
- 08 **JOEMCA** "Strangers" 3:22 (One Stone Records)
- 09 **A BAD THINK** "Catch 22" 4:20 (Vinylistic)
- 10 **embrionic** "Superfantastic" 3:16 (Black Egg Records)
- 11 **THE APRIL SKIES** "X" 4:27 (WiAB Records)
- 12 **SPARKYDOG** "Little Bit Of Love (LoFi Mix)" 2:28 (Sdog Records)
- 13 **WONDERFUL BROKEN THING** "Roam Around" 2:27 (Long Live Crime Records)
- 14 **TRIBATTERY POPS - TOM GOODKIND CONDUCTOR** "Residents' Waltz"  
2:29 (TriBattery Pops)
- 15 **THESE UNITED STATES** "The Business" 3:03 (Self-Released)
- 16 **BRIAN, KENNY, LINDA, LEE, AND BUTCH** "Grandpa's Revenge" 3:35  
(Plastic Dreams)

**BRAND NEW**  
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## ALUMINIUM

Aluminium XL



You know you've got something special if you have to register it like you would a computer, a blender or a sex offender. And

apparently Jack White wants everyone who owns a copy of his first classical music foray, *Aluminium*, to log their name onto his site, since it's scarce at 3,333 copies. Orchestral music, however, seems parallel to the White Stripes' world, considering how he's reworked some of his band's blooze stompers here. It could be the soundtrack to practically any '60s-era Jack Lemmon/Walter Matthau vehicle, no doubt finessed by real-life composer Jody Talbot. Rife with stabby string and horn parts, it often leaps and bounds with sinewy percussion, a Stripes staple. And while it ain't Rachmaninoff, *Aluminium* certainly sounds informed equally by Philip Glass' repetitiousness and the symphonic Rolling Stones album that inspired producer/label head Richard Russell to make this happen. Though blatantly self-aggrandizing, *Aluminium* has enough common ground to satiate fans of both *Elephant* and "Baby Elephant Walk."

>>>>>KORY GROW

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

File Under Happy Jack

RIYL James Bond scores, Henry Mancini, Bernard Hermann

## BIG SIR

Und Die Scheibe Andert Sich Immer GSL



Big Sir's third album opens with "Blutrausch (Smooth Interlude)," which could suitably replace Zero 7 as the soundtrack to Zach

Braff's ecstasy trip in *Garden State*. It's a fluid dance song for the bedroom set, smooth and sexily subtle despite an active bassline. Big Sir excels at this sound, and *Und Die* is a confident exploration of the intersection between experimental pop and jazz. Bassist Juan Alderete de la Pena—also of the Mars Volta—fingerplucks his way through an arsenal of tranced-out grooves, while singer Lisa Papineau sings each melody like a jazz singer weaned on light R&B. The beats are top-notch, mixing live drums with programmed rhythms and assorted blips 'n' beeps. Big Sir doesn't pack the same frenetic punch as the Mars Volta, nor does it approach the ambient electronica of Air (for whom Papineau often sings). Still, this supergroup knows what it's doing, and *Und Die* allows its members to flex their musical muscles to tuneful effect.

>>>ANDREW LEAHEY

Link [www.bigsir.ne](http://www.bigsir.ne)

File Under Big Sirvings of trance-pop

RIYL Portishead, Sneaker Pimps, Beth Orton

## BRAND NEW

The Devil And God Are Raging Inside Me... 



Interscope

When Long Island scenesters Brand New released 2003's *Deja Entendu*, they thwarted the ama-

teurish implications of their first record, opting for more developed—if melodramatic—song structures and less overt lyrical content about how much breaking up sucks. Three years later, this much-anticipated 12-track opus maintains most of what made *Entendu* so compelling: unabashedly large, dynamic, midtempo bangers lifted by the doubled, loquacious lines of frontman Jesse Lacey. Here though, the band's ambitions have lengthened even further. Catchy-as-hell scream-alongs ("Sowing Season (Yeah)") are still prevalent, but so are forays into noisier, swaying instrumentals ("Welcome To Bangkok") and calculated indie-centric jams ("Luca"). The band continues to balance their most obvious touchstones—first-wave Britpop and Long Island hardcore—as they coalesce into some beautifully crashing moments, like the album's standout track, "Archers." >>>SAM DUKE

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

File Under Morrissey And V.O.D. Are Raging Inside Me

RIYL Taking Back Suncay, Morrissey, Mogwai

## STEPHEN BRODSKY'S OCTAVE MUSEUM

Stephen Brodsky's Octave Museum



Hydra Head

Young Stephen Brodsky loved hardcore (he's from the Boston area). So he formed Cave In with some friends and they got popular, and

as he grew up a little, screaming started to bore him so he did some Kinks/Zeppelin-inspired solo albums. Then Cave In started playing Rush-inspired indie-prog and he was happy again, but then RCA dropped them and the other guys went heavy again. So Brodsky created the Octave Museum. Museum seems an apt descriptor, since Brodsky's quirky, *Zombies/Beatles*-influenced chording seems beamed from another era. In fact, he might actually be doing this better than he's doing Cave In lately. But what mostly makes this Brodsky solo album better than past efforts is the fact that he's got a backbeat courtesy of Scissorfight drummer Johnny Northrup for his plugged-in electro-flashback. Just like the '60s albums that inspired him, he's crafted a few perfect (and equally forgettable) AM poppisms on this album that could outlive Cave In if they could just find themselves on the right *Nuggets* box set. >>>KORY GROW

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

File Under Brodsky goes electric

RIYL The Kinks, White Stripes, *Jupiter*-era Cave In

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## ISOBEL CAMPBELL

*Milk White Sheets* V2



After transforming from chamber-pop pixie to alt-country muse, Isobel Campbell has reimagined herself yet again. Released

less than a year after *Ballad Of The Broken Seas*, her highly regarded collaboration with Mark Lanegan, *Milk White Sheets* finds the Scottish chanteuse in full-blown folkstress mode. The ethereal and tender set eschews her previous Americana inclinations in favor of traditional, '60s-style British songwriting. Campbell's fragile-as-china vocals are minimally paired with an acoustic guitar and a mournful cello throughout the disc, and in "Loving Hannah," she sings with no accompaniment at all. Although she recruited Smashing Pumpkins' James Iha and Vaselines' Eugene Kelly for the effort, *Sheets* often feels too bare. While beautifully crafted, the down-tempo tracks seem to lack the much-needed heft that Lanegan provided in her previous release. For every track like "Willow's Song" or "James" that contains full-bodied instrumentals, there are tunes like "Cachel Wood" that give off a nursery rhyme vibe: simple and enjoyable, yet sparse and wispy. >>>GINNY YANG

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

File Under If You're Feeling Somber

RIYL Shirley Collins, Jean Ritchie, Anne Briggs

## CAURAL

*Mirrors For Eyes* Mush



So what happens when you mix hip-hop beats with South Asian influences and a shoegaze penchant for noise and try to

force them all to exist together in that nebulous world of "experimental" music? Ask Zachary Mastoon, the multi-instrumentalist that is Caural. *Mirror For Eyes* is somewhat schizophrenic, sometimes working with smooth hip-hop beats and other times regressing into the cacophonous smashing of a rock band going all out at the end of their set. As for vocals, they range from ethereal (read: creepy) tones to slick rhymes to less-impressive Light FM-style melodies. Caural is eclectic to say the least, but he definitely has focused strengths—he's at his best when working more with beats and less with noise—and when on display, those tracks stand miles ahead of the rest. A broad scope of influences can definitely be an advantage, but as *Mirrors For Eyes* shows, it still helps to narrow your concentration. >>>AMANDA FARAH

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

File Under Caurally fixated

RIYL Squarepusher, Dntel, the Album Leaf

## DIRTY FACES

*Get Right With God* Brah



Sleaze is a breeze if you figure a weathered trucker cap gives you motor-home mojo. The air of sleaze that hangs over these

Philly swillers has soaked up an exhaust that can't be gleaned from just scanning a few American Apparel ads. This is batter-dipped boogie sludge punk of a greasy vintage. Guitars squeal like fingers clawing eyes out on a particularly horny acid trip ("Somnambulist's Vacation"), and overall Dirty Faces save the face of grit-riffing from lingering post-Nashville Pussy doldrums or recent Wolfmother-y miscues. But while ballin' and bashin' feel second nature here, there are enough moments that slump around sparse and creepy ("Slow Train," "Watching The War From Above") and wind through some Beefheartian bends ("Sister Redux"), occasionally letting out a Stones burp ("Like a Thief"). Cock-blocking it all is T. Glitter's slimy growl, which sounds sonorous enough for him to gloat over swiping your stash, then recoil at the karma that's coming. >>> ERIC DAVIDSON

Link [www.dirty-faces.com](http://www.dirty-faces.com)

File Under American apparently drunk

RIYL Fucked Up, Man Man, Claw Hammer

## THE ESOTERIC

*Subverter* Prosthetic



Hailing from the rural, left-leaning college town that is Lawrence, Kansas, grindcore outfit the Esoteric are something of an anomaly set next to

the environs from which they hatched. One can't help but wonder what it is that makes these boys so angry. The band's sophomore release offers more of the same agitating blend of thrashing vocals, nucleonic guitars and all-out drum kit assaults as last year's *With The Sureness Of Sleepwalking*, but does so in a way that is at once harsher and more technically proficient than its predecessor. That being said, there's really nothing here that sets the record apart from any other band that has to scream to be heard, which, in my mind, reinforces the underlying flaw of the entire genre: unabashed anonymity. If I want to be yelled at in a language I don't understand for 45 minutes, I'd sooner re-take French I. >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

Link [www.the-esoteric.com](http://www.the-esoteric.com)

File Under Kansas Slayhawks

RIYL Cave In, Dillinger Escape Plan, Converge

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## DAVE FISCHOFF

*The Crawl* Secretly Canadian



Dave Fischhoff's follow-up to 2001's *The Ox* and *The Rainbow* suggests everyday moments of quiet contemplation: solitary walks down the street, the swirling sight of snowdrifts, the touch of someone else's hand. "Always remember/If you face an unforgiving wind in fields of my December/ You can taste the buried flowers in my skin," he sings over bombastic instrumentation in "The World Gets Smaller When You Dream." Fischhoff bolsters the electro-flavored disc with obscure samples from the Chicago Public Library, and occasionally, his grizzled-man pipes obscure the sensitive nature of his lyrics. But coupled with the proper minimalist backdrop, stripped of ringing horns and blasting guitars, his rumble can add a dose of wisdom to the tracks. The simple synth melody of "Rain, Rain, Gasoline," for example, highlights the song's yearning lines: "And now I feel us letting go of something that we both had hoped to nourish and to keep/The tears we shed are raindrops mixed with gasoline." >>>GINNY YANG

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

File Under Contemplative crawler

RIYL The Postal Service, the Polyphonic Spree, Tom Waits

## THE GAME

*Doctor's Advocate* Geffen



Ushering in a heavily anticipated period of mainstream hip-hop releases (Jay-Z, Nas, Clipse, etc.), the Game has set the bar fairly high, despite the collective pedigree of his aforementioned peers. After Dr. Dre backed out of production duties (something to do with Game and 50 Cent's silly beefing), the Game soldiered on, and right from the opening track, he takes a lyrical stance that Dre or no Dre, his day has arrived. And like Ice Cube on *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*, Game is at a point where he's earned his swagger, which is now at a fiery peak. And while it doesn't possess that record's political urgency, it's the most sensible comparison, as *Doctor's Advocate* is wall-to-wall intensity and danger, but never forgets to keep your head bobbing (see the Swizz Beats-produced "Scream On 'Em" for prime proof). Game's staunch loyalty to hard-hitting West Coast gangsta rap, even in an era where Southern syrupiness and East Coast experimentation is all the rage, continues to make him a legitimate candidate for hip-hop's most magnetic MC. >>>KENNY HERZOG

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

File Under Game far from over

RIYL Ice Cube, Tupac, *Chronic* 2001

## GIDDY MOTORS

*Do Easy* FatCat



Back in the early-to-mid '90s, a certain strain of sleaze-encrusted, mathy Midwestern US noise rock was finely encapsulated on the first dozen or two albums released on the first dozen or two albums released on the Skin Graft label. Now, London's Giddy Motors, back with their second album, *Do Easy*, pay a not-quite-sincere form of tribute. Imitation having something to do with sincerity and flattery notwithstanding, there are power moves on the album's eight songs lifted almost verbatim from that Chicago-land stable, copping the manly grooves and rhythmic tension of long-gone acts like Mount Shasta, Shorty and Dazzlingkillmen, as well as compatriots like Shellac. If you aren't aware of these bands, it's easy to see how Giddy Motors could get a pass on enthusiastic aggression. But there is just so much going on here that's been voiced in the past 15 years, from Gaverick de Vis's raspy howl to the precision tool-and-die bass/drum interplay, that you'd find way more value by scraping the originals out of used bins than this weakly re-purposed, point-and-click appropriation. >>>DOUG MOSUROCK

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

File Under Noise "R" Us

RIYL Rapeman, Jesus Lizard, Shellac

## THE HEAD SET

*Way Past Used* Businessman Businessman



After countless gigs, an EP and two years of recording, New York's the Head Set have finally released their debut LP. *Way*

*Past Used* starts off strongly; "Enemies" has a very sexy groove, "Hollywood" is full of snarky goodness and the title track has an appealing string backing and a booming chorus. Unfortunately, the songs caught in the middle of the album aren't as tight as the openers, and some of the later tracks drag along as well. The Head Set have fallen into the trap of the string arrangement: Though it may compliment some tracks very well, it won't make up for a song that is already lacking. Still, it's worth a continued listen, if only to get to the insanely catchy "Last Minute Rescue," and the closer "Never Make It Home," which helps compensate for some untrimmed fat. >>>AF

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

File Under Still fresh

RIYL Aberdeen City, the Bravery, Editors

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# REVIEWS

## NORFOLK & WESTERN

*The Unsung Colony* Hush



Adam Selzer plays more than folk music; his fuzzy, cinematic pop comes out slow and warm, beginning on the back porch but

hitting the big city by song's end. Under the Norfolk & Western name, Selzer's been using the ol' build-around-the-acoustic tack for a while now, but never have his songs sounded so profoundly picturesque and seriously damaged. In the same way Big Star destroyed monuments like "Holocaust" and put 'em back together perfectly wrong, Selzer breaks his songs' backs and botches their surgical repair in all the right ways. But where Alex Chilton and Co. went either overtly stark or ultra peppy, Selzer keeps his tone ambiguous and leaves every song feeling heartbreaking and beautiful all at once. >>>ROBBIE MACKEY

**Link** [www.norfolkandwestern.org](http://www.norfolkandwestern.org)

**File Under** Best Western

**RIYL** Sparklehorse, Iron & Wine, Flaming Lips

## OL' DIRTY BASTARD

*A Son Unique* Koch



The most, um, inspired moment on ODB's posthumous LP is probably his "duet" with Macy Gray on a borderline-unlistenable rendition of "Don't Go Breakin' My Heart," which sort of sounds like Elton John and Kiki Dee teaming up with the Kids Of Whitney High. It's a natural pairing of course, as Gray is the perfect lunatic, female doppelganger for the late Wu-Tang MC/maniac. But it also speaks to the exploitive novelty value of *A Son Unique*, which mostly digs up a bunch of nonsensical ODB utterances and surrounds them mechanically with quirky party tracks and mailed-in verses from some Wu mates, Missy Elliott, M.O.P. and a smattering of others. RZA, Rockwilder and the rest of the record's producers actually take some care to mold its beats around Dirty's ADD/good-time personality, but it mostly just feels kind of creepy, a much less successfully organic effort than last year's Biggie duets comp. But then again, that was Biggie. And while we all love ODB, it wasn't always for his MC skills. >>>KH

**Link** [www.kochrecords.com](http://www.kochrecords.com)

**File Under** Paydirt McGirt

**RIYL** Mid-'90s Wu-Tang, general lunacy

## PETER AND THE WOLF

*Lightness* Worker's Institute



On Red Hunter's (aka Peter And The Wolf's) debut, life is portrayed as a voyage. Most of the drum-less album was recorded in such lo-fi places as bedrooms, living rooms and hotels on a cassette 4-track and borrowed computers. *Lightness* will immerse the listener in eerie folk tunes that inspire day-dreams of being on the road. "Safe Travels" depicts a character who had to leave someone, possibly a woman, behind. Perhaps Hunter is describing life on tour, where a musician is never in any one place very long, and therefore has to discard people, places and all attachments. But this also leaves the traveler "lucky to be so unusually free," as revealed in "The Apple Tree." The tracks with Dana Falconberry accompanying on vocals are breathtaking, as she perfectly complements Hunter's muted and despondent voice. So while Hunter might set out to keep his projects minimal, the result is in fact quite bountiful. >>>JK

**Link** [www.whiskeyandapples.com](http://www.whiskeyandapples.com)

**File Under** For a long drive with something to think about

**RIYL** Castanets, Magic Numbers, Sun Kil Moon

## THE RATCHETS

*Glory Bound* Pirate Press



They may not be crying out for anarchy in the UK or pleading for sedation, but it's a comfort to know that punk has survived in its original spirit. It's very clear from their occasional reggae-influenced riffs that the Ratchets were raised on the Clash, but the fact that they were left with simple yet solid song construction and a political consciousness has put them years ahead of their contemporaries. The music itself may not come across as anything terribly original, but it's a respectful and intelligent presentation of a genre that has all too often been subjected to grousing about girlfriends. At just over half an hour, the 10 tracks on this record are very high energy and should hold the attention of even those with fidgety stereo fingers. Plus, even if their lyrical insights don't spur the masses toward a call to action, the album is, if nothing else, is an incredibly fun listen. >>>AF

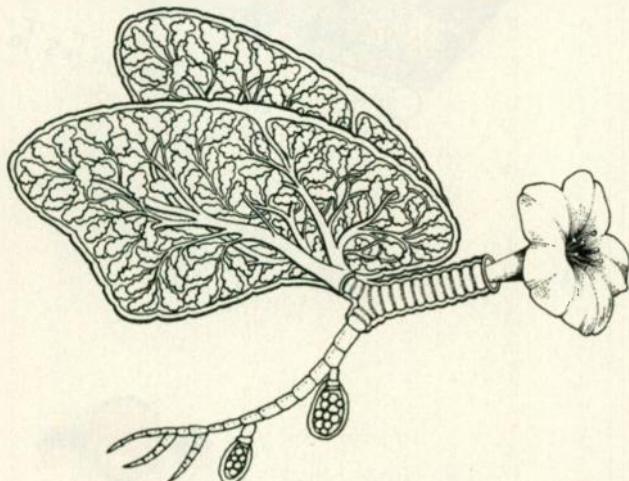
**Link** [www.theratchets.com](http://www.theratchets.com)

**File Under** New Found Death Or Glory

**RIYL** The Clash, the Replacements, the Ramones

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## SÉBASTIEN SCHULLER

*Happiness* Minty Fresh



Perhaps out of fear that run-of-the-mill electronic experimentation is starting to get old, many artists are giving up the ghost of empty beats in favor of talking about their feelings. There is no one more ready for the task than Paris native Sébastien Schuller, who is poised to become the poster-boy for a new genre (emo-lectro?) with *Happiness*, a dream-like reflection on loss of innocence told through a vocal mixer. While that might sound terribly depressing, Schuller has enough good sense to pair his haunting piano with happier basics like synths and acoustic guitar melodies. Not that *Happiness* isn't a tough sell at first listen, at times evoking Radiohead's *Kid A*. But hang in there, because Schuller has the skill of an expert musical craftsman and a heart that's been broken, and if you go along for the ride, he'll make sure you feel every jarring emotion along the way.

>>>NORA CRONIN

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

File Under The French Connection

RIYL Autolux, Radiohead, Spiritualized

## J.P. SHILO

*As Happy As Sad Is Blue* Smells Like Records



Building on the trend of male songwriters who take on mysterious pseudonyms and subsequently craft genius records (Eric Bachman, Conor Oberst, etc.), J.P. Shilo gives us *As Happy As Sad Is Blue*. Shilo is the artist formally (and formerly) known as John Brooks, who counted Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley among his fans when he played with Hungry Ghosts, an instrumental group that barely saw the dawn of the new millennium before they split in 2000. Shelley was so sold on the youth that he decided to fund the release of Shilo's debut album on his own label. The end result is an unstoppable tour-de-force. The title track, a slick, 90-second number, sounds like the opening to a film noir, while "Begune Dull Care" could have been lifted from a tape recording of a band playing on a boat floating down the River Seine. Romantic and moody, Shilo provides a shining example of how cool music can be when innovation is prioritized over imitation. >>>NC

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

File Under Sad As I Wanna Be

RIYL Portishead, Air, Velvet Underground

## SONIC YOUTH

*The Destroyed Room: B-Sides And Rarities*



Geffen

Remember that time you did acid to "The Diamond Sea" and woke up 20 hours later (read: 20 minutes) played out on your floor? Well, now it's got 5 more minutes of spaced-out feedback. And so it goes for much of *Destroyed*. Bits of out-of-tune chaos and amp-damaged experimentation and an occasional discernable groove lime lace this taxing-but-rewarding odds-and-ends set. For historical purposes, it's nice to have "Razor Blade," the "Bull In The Heather" B-side, even if it's really just a minute of Kim Gordon anti-folk. Ditto for "Fauxhemians," culled from a 2001 *All Tomorrow's Parties* comp, even if it's mostly superfluous scratching and scraping. There are moments of pure unlistenable cacophony, but there are also some small pleasures, like *Sonic Nurse's* Japanese bonus track "Kim's Chords," which at least approaches a melodic backbone. It's a worthwhile expenditure to have these recent obscurities in one spot. Just don't bother putting it on at a party. Unless you're doing acid. >>>KH

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

File Under Another Wash cycle

RIYL Godspeed! You Black Emperor, Glenn Branca, Thurston Moore's noodling

## URGEHAL

*Goatcraft Torment* Southern Lord



In case the goat's head on the front and the inverted cross on the back hadn't already tipped you off, Urgehal vocalist Trond Nefas

kindly opens *Goatcraft Torment* with the snarl, "This is Satanic black metal!" Thanks, dude! They've also lovingly dedicated the title cut to Satan (surprise, surprise) and the rest of the album contains one cloven-hoofed Satanic homage after another, save the occasional misanthropic indulgence. What's fascinating about the album, however, is the occasional rhythmic shifts Urgehal makes. Most black metal drummers would stick to straight blasts at all times, and for the most part, Urgehal stick man Uruz maintains a steady beat, but every so often there's a belch in the northern sky that doesn't really transition into anything musical other than waking the listener up from their Satanic monotony. It's too bad they're the only band that got the memo. And while Satan might not have all the best tunes, Urgehal surely does the best Darkthrone impression this side of Transylvania. >>>KORY GROW

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

File Under The power of anti-Christ compels you

RIYL Darkthrone, Bathory, Motörhead

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

*These Are Some Serious Times...* XL



Hopefully, the 16 songs that Federation Sound culled from Kingston could undo some of the negative attention dancehall

artists have received due to well-publicized homophobia. Disc One on *Serious Times* is a mix full of echo effects, dancehall horns and dub plates, and Disc Two contains all of the original versions. Standouts include Turbulence's pro-religion, "conscious" anthem, "Notorious," Jah Mason and Simpleman's "If you don't smoke it, promote it" medicinal ganja celebration, "Marijuana," and Sizzla's punky and proud "Ain't Gonna Fall." There are so many styles throughout that by reaching the comp's apex—Gyptian's doo-woppy title cut and 10-year-old QQ's heart-wrenching "Poverty"—you've traversed a nation of music. Although this hipster-friendly XL comp will likely preach to the converted, it contains enough (if excessive, as the mix is enough on its own) uplifting riddims to bring some rude boys back. >>>KG

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

File Under Roots radicals

RIYL Sizzla, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Yellowman, the ganja herb

## WHITE MAGIC

*Dat Rosa Mel Apibus* Drag City



When picking up an album by a band called White Magic, one can pretty much assume that certain aesthetic guidelines will be met even before hearing it. Call that an unfair generalization if you must, but they're just begging to be pigeonholed. Think wizards and enchanted forests. Think sitars, Grace Slick and rabbit holes. At the risk of tossing out the "psychedelic" tag, think swirling colors and incantations, if that helps. The debut LP from this Brooklyn-based trio is all of those things, but the fact that they tug at the sleeve of neo-psych pretensions so unapologetically makes it worth at least giving a spin. And it does take time. Frontwoman Mira Bilotte is at the helm of every song, and her sinewy piano lines and caterwauling alto crawl along for the better part of an hour. It takes patient ears to fully realize *Dat Rosa*, and in this case, it's not entirely clear whether that's a good thing. >>>KK

Link [www.myspace.com/whitemagicmusic](http://www.myspace.com/whitemagicmusic)

File Under Surrealistic Pillow Fluffer

RIYL Cat Power, Joanna Newsom, Lewis Carroll

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**AKON**

*Konvicted* Universal Motown  
The Senegalese singer's new LP gets off to such a blazing start that it is, fittingly, almost criminal to witness it subsequently nosedive. Akon is an absolutely magnetic vocalist, and even though his specialty lies in being a hook man, he stands up fine on his own during "Shakedown," "Blown Away" and the almost gleefully sexist "Smack That." Hardly a better album-opening trifecta is to be found in any genre this year. But once things devolve into half-assed reggae jams and dramatic balladry, it barely recovers in time for the corny but strangely hypnotic wedding-song closer "Don't Matter." >>>KENNY HERZOG



for waking up in the afternoon after a night of partying on the beach in a foreign country. So it may seem strange that the Melbourne-based All India Radio has released a chillout record for indie rock kids. About 15 minutes into *Echo Other* though, the sound of guitars emerges and helps make the album listenable and familiar. The musical equivalent of a Bloody Mary, reach for this record when night turns to dawn. >>>NORA CRONIN

**THE BALDWIN BROTHERS**

*Return Of The Golden Rhodes* TVT  
This Chicago electro quartet (comprising musicians that are neither related nor named Baldwin) crafts music for the after-party; their collection of sparse, laid-back grooves and schizoid samples is a strictly loungey affair.



**ALL INDIA RADIO**

*Echo Other* Minty Fresh  
The term "chillout" is usually reserved for soundtracks meant



**JOEMCA**

**DEAN & BRITTA**



Wordless ditties like "Just Me (On the Dance Floor)" are more suited for head-bopping than hip-swiveling. Elsewhere "The Party's Over," which features Mark Lanegan on vocals, captures the hollow feeling of going home alone. >>>GINNY YANG

**DEAN & BRITTA**

*Words You Used To Say* Zoe  
This too-good-looking-for-life twosome—otherwise known as former Luna duo Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips—has graced us with an EP of predictably lovely covers and one original (the title track) that doesn't deviate from the overall vibe of the four reinterpretations. Not so predictable is how they transformed songs by obscure folkie Michael Hoiland, hipster Adam Green, Bobby Darin and even the great Donovan into one consistent strain of Lcu Reed and Nico-pleasantness. But perhaps that's what makes them not only super sexy, but super awesome music makers too. >>>KH



**GOB IRON**

*Death Songs For The Living* Transmit Sound  
In 2004, Son Volt frontman Jay Farrar and Varnaline mastermind Anders Parker began to forge a musical relationship that would ultimately lead to Gob Iron and the this album, a collaborative effort that reworks and expands upon primarily traditional folk songs. Multi-instrumentalist Parker lends a revitalizing post-rock feel to the disc while contributing some great vocal tracks, but the album is distinctly Farrar's, an avant-acoustic excursion through American music, which is what the man's always done best. >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH



**GRAFTON**

*Jumpstart Wire* Dead Canary  
Hard to believe this Columbus, Ohio gang started 10 years ago as somewhat timid indie rock fumbler. Jason McKiernan's massive pound and Lou Poster's gravely growl wouldn't let them fumble for long, and they've since developed into a sturdy, Schlitzbilly glower





trio. With this fourth full-length, all their touring and never-ceasing stomp shows signs not so much of lessening as getting loosey-goosey by adding much-needed groove to the rhythms and some sneaky hooks. >>>ERIC DAVIDSON

### HAMMOCK

*Raising Your Voice... Trying to Stop An Echo* Darla 🤘

*Raising Your Voice* is recommended for pure relaxation and clearing of the mind, but not much else. The Nashville duo attempts to create an ambiance similar to that of Sigur Rós, but they come up short in comparison. Hammock needs something unique to fill the emptiness of the instrumentals, like Jonsi Birgisson's voice, which completes Sigur Rós. Then again, a collaboration between the two groups could be quite the success. >>>JESSEKA KADYLA



SWASHBUCKLE

### HAUNTED GEORGE

*Bone Hauler* Dead Beat 🤘

Haunted George is Steve Pallow, former yowler for '90s garage-dige demons the Beguiled and Necessary Evils. Pallow has since retreated to some dusty Texas outback to concoct this spooky one-man-band blood-gurgle, like a rat-poisoned Porter Wagoner suddenly crackling for help out of that busted TV set that's sitting

in the corner of the basement, jostling you from a 3 a.m. dream where the Cramps are kicking empty cans of rat poison through a graveyard. >>>ED

### HYBRID

*I Choose Noise* Distinctive 🤘

Trance-y electronica tends to have its niche appeal, but Hybrid's latest, as is the case with most

of their output, warrants a listen by those normally not a fan of the genre. For those who are game, *I Choose Noise* finds the band, who were last seen collaborating with New Order's Peter Hook, creating cinema-ready scores with some Arabian influences. And hey, Perry Farrell gives his vote of confidence by landing his legendary pipes to "Dogstar." >>>NC

### JOEMCA

*Joemca (Jum + Ka)* One Stone 🤘

Combining towering vocals and fractured beats, Joemca sounds like Bono armed with an English degree and Pro Tools on his debut EP. But instead of self-righteous arena rock, the Brooklyn singer-songwriter delivers oblique lyrics that often reach Thom Yorke-ian levels of paranoia and alienation. "I'm lost out here in the daylight," he sings in "Strangers." "And there's no one left around." "Glass Eyes," however, takes on an otherworldly quality, with a heartbeat thud and a melancholic piano used to back his descriptions of a set of peepers and their mysterious ways. >>>GY

### THE SLIP



### JOHNNY ACTION FIGURE

*Asks The Room To Please Stop Spinning* DRP 🤘

Essentially an EP, the sophomore release from this Reading, Pennsylvania-based emo-pop foursome spans seven songs and 25 minutes, rehashing a formula reminiscent of early Jimmy Eat World with a healthy dose of latter-era Death Cab spread across the songs in what seems to be an effort simply to contemporize the mid-to-late '90s emo-punk aesthetic. If it was tiresome then,



**SNEAKY THIEVES**

imagine how it must sound now.  
>>>KK

**THE SLIP**

*Eisenhower* Bar/None  
Now more than 10 years into their career, Boston-based trio the Slip has made, with this effort, their most accessible album to date. This is a band that has transfused multiple genres over time, from jammy, Phish-esque roots to their current incarnation as smart, pop-minded tunesmiths. *Eisenhower* embraces their entire body of work, showcasing a band comfortable within the confines of the Coldplay crowd, but one still not afraid to toss in the requisite nine-minute track. >>>KK



**SNEAKY THIEVES**

*accident(s)* Other Electricities  
Thieves frontman Freddy Bale's voice is an intriguing mix between Nick Cave and Conor Oberst's (but minus Oberst's shakiness). While *accident(s)* could be successful with Bale's lead alone, the band adds numerous collaborators who contribute a healthy array of instruments, including banjos, keys, accordion and some sampling. The album is slow and mellow, and at first listen, inviting. But once concentration veers toward the lyrics, it morphs into a captivating, dark set of songs. >>>JK



**SOFT COMPLEX**

*Barcelona + Ag*  
Seconds into the lead track on *Barcelona +*, Chris Connelly reaches for the star-spangled fretwork of Johnny Marr, sending guitar notes hurtling head-over-feet and setting the tone for the rest of the D.C. band's '80s-minded debut. But the Smiths nod is deeply reverent. Dripping with the post-emo pathos of each member's former band (Alexia Kauffman played with Engine Down, Mike Harbin was in Burning Airlines), Soft Complex re-appropriates gloomy Britpop without sounding like post-punk trend jumpers. >>>ROBBIE MACKEY



**SWASHBUCKLE**

*Crewed By The Damned* Bald Freak  
Something like a cross between early Anthrax and the recent *Rogue's Gallery* compilation, Swashbuckle might be 2006's most awful-yet-amazing anomaly. Basically, they're from Jersey, they dress like pirates and half their songs are acoustic chanteys while the rest are genuinely blistering thrash. And somehow, the balance actually works, and the ferocity of the music itself overtakes the conceptual and lyrical absurdity, allowing you to find Swashbuckle amusing but not dismiss them as a complete joke. Aho! >>>KH



**TRISTEZA**

*En Nuestro Desafio* Better Looking  
Although heavily identified with the Chicago post-rock/experi-



mental scene, Tristeza actually hails from San Diego, which is important to remember given the band's output to date. The atmosphere of the record is decidedly more humid than that of, say, fellow Chicago post-rockers Tortoise and succeeds in spite of its inherent inertia. The low-end pulses, guitars cascade and the keys are so lush they'd absorb water. Still, Tristeza remains art via indolence, which poses the question: How long before they fall asleep? >>>KK

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**



*This American Life: Stories of Hope & Fear* Shout! Factory  
Radio series *This American Life* features more chatter than music, but there are no annoying talk radio pundits here. And the music, by the likes of Blonde Redhead, takes a backseat to superior storytelling. Whether host Ira Glass quizzes his coworker about phone company runaround with "On Hold No One Can Hear Your Scream," or hapless amateurs describe their comedy club debuts during "Is This Thing On?" you'll be hooked. Call it the talk radio antidote. >>>DAN MACINTOSH

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**ATLANTICS**

*Atlantics* Something.hot

The Atlantics hit the East Coast rock scene in the late 1970s and helped to fill the void between punk's demise and new wave's emergence with punchy blasts of British-influenced power pop. If the blogosphere had existed 25 years ago, this Boston-based five piece would've caused more Internet chatter than a barrel of Arctic Monkeys. Their hometown success failed to replicate itself nationally though, and the group quietly disbanded after releasing one album. Perhaps it's odd that a self-titled collection of B-sides and unreleased tracks should show up decades later, but *Atlantics* shows how versatile this outfit really was. The post-punk time changes of "Believe In Love" are followed by a faithful cover of Gary Glitter's "Rock And Roll, Part II." "Lonelyhearts" charges through four minutes of guttural vocals and sharp-angled guitar, while "Tired Girl" saunters as deliberately as the Cars' "Moving In Stereo." And then there's the stand-out track, "Back In The World," whose frenetic riffs and four-part harmonies come danceably close to pop-radio perfection. If this is what Atlantics have in their vault, we should all hope for a reunion. >>>ANDREW LEAHEY



**THE CLASH**

*The Singles* Epic/Legacy

Just when it seemed all definitive discography-worthy accounts of the Clash had been released, the *Singles* set arrives in stunning splendor. Every single, every rare 12-inch version or B-side, every pertinent and peripheral moment in the band's history is here, packaged in miniature replications of their original 7-inch form and remastered to crisp perfection. That latter point is especially crucial, as most fans already own tracks like "Capitol Radio" and "Bank Robber" in some form or other. But rarely has Paul Simonon's bass in particular bounced with such clarity and depth, and to possess chunks of *The Clash* that actually sound audible on your iPod is a revelation. While the individual packaging of the singles, which start with "White Riot" and conclude with "This Is England," makes it a somewhat impractical purchase, no one but true Clash collectors would likely squander the dough to begin with. Plus, the liner notes, which provide accompanying anecdotes for each single courtesy of contributing essayists like Pete Townshend and New Order's Bernard Sumner, serve as a fun and validating

testament to The Only Band That Matters. And given the superfluous quality of *Clash On Broadway* or *Essential Clash*, this might be their only retrospective that matters. >>>KENNY HERZOG



**MUSTAFA OZKENT**

*Gençlik İle Elele* B-Music

**SELDA**

*Selda* B-Music

Mancunian beat-digger/DJ/graphic designer extraordinaire Andy Votel is at the forefront of a recent trend of rare-music rediscovery. He and his compatriots have been busy over the last few years combing the world for new breaks and finding ways to dismantle the borders of geography, genre and availability. "B-Music," as Votel brands it, encompasses a style all unto its own, working from sources as disparate as decades-old film scores, hard soul 45s, Eastern interpretations on Western pop music, drug-laced psychedelia and funky, bearded prog-rock. This pair of discs—under a new Anatolian Invasion banner, highlighting the '70s meeting between traditional Turkish folk and studio experimentation—shows a new, focused direction merely hinted at on Votel's previous mix CDs. It's mere seconds into *Selda*, a reissue of material by outspoken musical activist Selda Bagcan, before you're confronted with a formidable wall of fuzz, coming from an amplified saz, a Turkish stringed instrument similar to the lute. This blends into the wah-wah guitar wash, primitive analog synth stabs, disco-fied rhythmic breaks and Selda's own impassioned voice (she's been referred to as the Joan Baez of her homeland). There is a weary yet urgent feel to all of the material here, whether from a breathless vocal break ("Yaz Gazeteci Yaz"), stand-ins for "House of the Rising Sun" ("Nasirli Eller") or uptight, Norman Whitfield-informed funk ("Nem Kaldi"). Far more playful, the instrumentals on Ozkent's *Gençlik İle Elele*, adorned with a tape-strewn, suit-jacketed chimpanzee on the cover, comprise a seriously oddball and impossibly dope roll of session-man grooves which stand up to the best library music the '70s had to offer. Rooted in native melodies but playing to a world audience, Ozkent offers up an unstoppable collection of drum breaks, organ riffs, in-the-pocket bass and mental, acid-soaked guitar leads. These rarest of Turkish platters are currently in the place you'd least expect: at your local record store. >>>DOUG MOSUROCK

**PAVEMENT**

*Wowee Zowee: Sordid Sentinels Edition* Matador

Pavement validated the grunge era's cautious apathy, so when *Wowee Zowee* came out in 1995 and the top ra-



dio rockers were Hootie and the Three Blind Mice, it's no wonder they started to care a little. As one critic said at the time, "You can say exactly what you mean if you pretend it's not, or pretend you're making fun of yourself." Surprisingly though, *Wowee Zowee*, Pavement's third LP, garnered mixed reviews from the rest of the world, mostly due to their eclectic flirtations with country, punk and surfy undertones. Nevertheless, a decade-plus of hindsight has proven that it still does indeed sound like Pavement, even if it lacks as clear a single as "Cut Your Hair." Matador's third double-disc Pavement re-up includes session outtakes, B-sides, the *Pacific Trim* EP, Dutch and Australian concert and BBC recordings, a Descendents tribute and their contributions to the *I Shot Andy Warhol*, *Schoolhouse Rocks* and *Kids In The Hall: Brain Candy* soundtracks. It's all solid, the extras doesn't detract from the original album and, in some strange way, this reissue actually provides some insight into the weird, wondrous and otherwise pretty boring year that was 1995. Pavement wouldn't have it any other way. >>>KORY GROW



**NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE**

*Live At The Fillmore* Reprise

There is no shortage of Neil Young live albums. His abundant concert output includes 1973's *Time Fades Away*, critical favorite *Live Rust* and the relatively current CD/DVD *Year of the Horse*. But the previously unreleased *Live At The Fillmore East* predates them all. Drawn from a few of Young's 1970 dates with Crazy Horse, this backwards glance features original Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten. His presence makes it a special treat for longtime Horse watchers because Whitten, the tragic inspiration for Young's harrowing anti-drug opus "Tonight's The Night," died of an overdose in 1972. Crazy Horse lovers also tend to be mad for sloppily sincere garage rock, and this set gifts them in spades with extended "Down By The River" and "Cowgirl In The Sand" jams. Listeners are advised, however, to skip over "Wonderin'," a throw-away that later found its way onto Young's faux-rockabilly nightmare, *Everybody's Rockin'*. Another, even bigger downside is the disc's chintzy length. A set of six is hardly a filling dish and inquiring minds want to know what's been left out. Size does matter, especially when there are healthier live Young testaments to choose from, making *Fillmore East* a significant piece of history with minimal cosumer value. >>>DAN MACINTOSH

# CMJ NEW MUSIC REPORT

## CMJ RADIO TOP 50

PERIOD ENDING 11/28/2006  
WWW.CMJ.COM/NMB/

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

TW	LW	ZW	PK	WKS	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	3	3	1	4	<b>TOM WAITS</b> Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers And Bastards	Anti
2	1	1	1	8	<b>DECEMBERISTS</b> The Crane Wife	Capitol
3	2	2	2	9	<b>BECK</b> The Information	Interscope
4	8	-	4	2	<b>JOANNA NEWSOM</b> Ys	Drag City
5	4	6	4	5	<b>THE BLOW</b> Paper Television	K
6	11	11	6	10	<b>DEARS</b> Gang Of Losers	Arts And Crafts
7	5	9	5	5	<b>BADLY DRAWN BOY</b> Born In The UK	Astralwerks
8	10	15	8	6	<b>MIHO HATORI</b> Ecdysis	Ryko
9	17	20	9	4	<b>BEN FOLDS</b> Supersunmyspeedgraphic, The LP	Epic
10	19	22	10	4	<b>BRIGHT EYES</b> Noise Floor Rarities: 1998-2005	Saddle Creek
11	6	4	3	7	<b>HOLD STEADY</b> Boys And Girls In America	Vagrant
12	29	47	12	3	<b>AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD</b> So Divided	Interscope
13	12	10	7	8	<b>KILLERS</b> Sam's Town	Island
14	15	16	13	5	<b>ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES</b> Love Their...	Fat Wreck Chords
15	22	23	15	6	<b>COPELAND</b> Eat, Sleep, Repeat	Militia Group
16	16	12	8	7	<b>CHIN UP CHIN UP</b> This Harness Can't Ride Anything	Suicide Squeeze
17	13	7	1	11	<b>BLACK KEYS</b> Magic Potion	Nonesuch
18	18	19	16	7	<b>COLD WAR KIDS</b> Robbers And Cowards	Downtown
19	36	-	19	2	<b>MIRAH</b> Joyride: Remixes	K
20	23	28	20	4	<b>MARIE ANTOINETTE</b> Soundtrack	Verve
21	9	5	2	14	<b>YO LA TENGO</b> I'm Not Afraid Of You And I Will Beat Your Ass	Matador
22	76	102	22	4	<b>LADY SOVEREIGN</b> Public Warning	Def Jam
23	30	30	23	4	<b>BLUE VAN</b> Dear Independence	TVT
24	14	8	8	6	<b>BLOOD BROTHERS</b> Young Machetes	V2
25	27	29	25	4	<b>MXPX</b> Let's Rock	Side One Dummy
26	21	24	21	5	<b>ANNUALS</b> Be He Me	Ace Fu
27	-	-	27	1	<b>BRAND NEW</b> The Devil And God Are Raging Inside Me	Interscope
28	40	158	28	3	<b>TENACIOUS D</b> The Pick Of Destiny	Epic
29	20	13	1	13	<b>TV ON THE RADIO</b> Return To Cookie Mountain	Interscope
30	24	18	14	6	<b>GOTHIC ARCHIES</b> The Tragic Treasury	Nonesuch
31	25	17	9	9	<b>MY MORNING JACKET</b> Okonokos: Double Live Album	ATO
32	7	14	7	10	<b>HIDDEN CAMERAS</b> Awoo	Arts And Crafts
33	46	98	33	3	<b>NELLIE MCKAY</b> Pretty Little Head	Hungry Mouse
34	34	84	34	3	<b>EL PERRO DEL MAR</b> El Perro Del Mar	Hybris
35	26	34	26	4	<b>ANIMAL COLLECTIVE</b> Hollindagain	Paw Tracks
36	-	-	36	1	<b>SWAN LAKE</b> Beast Moans	Jagjaguwar
37	146	-	37	2	<b>SHINS</b> "Phantom Limb" [Single]	Sub Pop
38	51	-	38	2	<b>ZUTONS</b> Tired Of Hanging Around	Red Ink
39	33	56	33	4	<b>MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE</b> Black Parade	Reprise
40	61	85	40	3	<b>HOT IQS</b> Dangling Modifier [EP]	Yawaction
41	154	-	41	2	<b>YUSUF</b> An Other Cup	Atlantic
42	44	-	42	2	<b>+44</b> When Your Heart Stops Beating	Interscope
43	71	106	43	3	<b>JEREMY ENIGK</b> World Waits	Lewis Hollow
44	28	21	18	11	<b>BRAZILIAN GIRLS</b> Talk To La Bomb	Verve Forecast
45	48	62	45	4	<b>BENJY FERREE</b> Leaving The Nest	Domino
46	38	37	37	5	<b>NORFOLK AND WESTERN</b> The Unsung Colony	Hush
47	92	-	47	2	<b>DAMIEN RICE</b> 9	Vector-Warner Bros.
48	31	35	31	7	<b>MUTE MATH</b> Mute Math	Teleprompt
49	68	79	49	4	<b>LILY ALLEN</b> Smile EP	Capitol
50	41	52	41	5	<b>SHINY TOY GUNS</b> We Are Pilots	Universal



TOM WAITS



JAY-Z

## CMJ RETAIL TOP 20

TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	-	<b>JAY-Z</b> Kingdom Come (804502)	Def Jam
2	-	<b>BEATLES</b> Love (79808)	Capitol
3	-	<b>TOM WAITS</b> Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers And Bastards (86677)	Anti
4	-	<b>BRAND NEW</b> The Devil And God Are Raging Inside Me (803402)	Interscope
5	-	<b>SNOOP DOGG</b> Tha Blue Carpet Treatment (802302)	Geffen
6	1	<b>THE GAME</b> The Doctor's Advocate (793302)	Geffen
7	-	<b>KGSR BROADCASTS VOL. 14</b> Various Artists	Self-Released
8	-	<b>KILLSWITCH ENGAGE</b> As Daylight Dies (618058)	Roadrunner
9	-	<b>U2</b> U218 (802810)	Interscope
10	2	<b>AKON</b> Konvicted (796842)	Universal
11	-	<b>2PAC</b> Pac's Life (802502)	Interscope
12	-	<b>SUFJAN STEVENS</b> Songs For Christmas (28)	Asthmatic Kitty
13	4	<b>DAMIEN RICE</b> 9 (43249)	Vector-Reprise
14	7	<b>J.J. CALE AND ERIC CLAPTON</b> Road To Escondido (44418)	Reprise
15	3	<b>TENACIOUS D</b> The Pick Of Destiny (694891)	Epic
16	6	<b>JOANNA NEWSOM</b> Ys (303)	Drag City
17	8	<b>NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE</b> Live At The Fillmore East (44429)	Reprise
18	11	<b>JOHN LEGEND</b> Once Again (80323)	Getting Out Our Dreams
19	12	<b>BECK</b> The Information (757600)	Interscope
20	17	<b>BEYONCE</b> B'Day (90920)	Columbia

## CMJ A.I.M.S. TOP 20

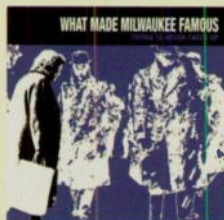
(ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA STORES)

TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	-	<b>TOM WAITS</b> Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers And Bastards (86677)	Anti
2	34	<b>SUFJAN STEVENS</b> Songs For Christmas (28)	Asthmatic Kitty
3	1	<b>JOANNA NEWSOM</b> Ys (303)	Drag City
4	-	<b>BEATLES</b> Love (79808)	Capitol
5	-	<b>BRAND NEW</b> The Devil And God Are Raging Inside Me (803402)	Interscope
6	2	<b>DAMIEN RICE</b> 9 (43249)	Vector-Reprise
7	-	<b>SWAN LAKE</b> Beast Moans (0542)	Jagjaguwar
8	-	<b>JAY-Z</b> Kingdom Come (804502)	Def Jam
9	4	<b>AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD</b> So Divided (714618)	Interscope
10	6	<b>DECEMBERISTS</b> The Crane Wife (53981)	Capitol
11	5	<b>PAVEMENT</b> Wowee Zowie: Sordid Sentinels Edition (10722)	Matador
12	3	<b>TENACIOUS D</b> The Pick Of Destiny (694891)	Epic
13	7	<b>BECK</b> The Information (757600)	Interscope
14	31	<b>+44</b> When Your Heart Stops Beating (775402)	Interscope
15	10	<b>EVENS</b> Get Evens (160)	Dischord
16	15	<b>WHITE MAGIC</b> Dat Roca Mel Apibus (293)	Drag City
17	8	<b>NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE</b> Live At The Fillmore East (44429)	Reprise
18	16	<b>J.J. CALE AND ERIC CLAPTON</b> Road To Escondido (44418)	Reprise
19	14	<b>ANNUALS</b> Be He Me (45)	Ace Fu
20	20	<b>SUNN O))) AND BORIS</b> Altar (62)	Southern Lord

continued from page 25

been this accessible to the hardcore crowd.

- 6. **Mojave 3** *Puzzles Like You* (4AD)
- 7. **The Paper Chase** *Now You Are One Of Us* (Kill Rock Stars)



8. **What Made Milwaukee Famous** *Trying To Never Catch Up* (Barsuk)  
The Milwaukee boys play a brand of energetic, danceable rock they only breed in Austin (their name is taken from a Jerry Lee Lewis tune). This re-release of their 2004 debut is full of solid melodies and undeniably catchy pop hooks. Songs like "Hellodrama" and "Bldg. A Boat..." are guaranteed to get hands clapping and feet

stomping.

- 9. **Boris** *Pink* (Southern Lord)
- 10. **Graham Coxon** *Love Travels At Illegal Speeds* (Astralwerks)

## TOP SINGLES

- 1. **Jim Noir** "Eenie Meanie" (Barsuk)
- 2. **Mixel Pixel** "Coming Up X's" Mixel Pixel (Kanine)
- 3. **The Blood Brothers** "Love Rhymes With Hideous Car Wreck" (V2)
- 4. **Lady Sovereign** "Love Me Or Hate Me" Lady Sovereign (Def Jam)
- 5. **Oxford Collapse** "Please Visit Your National Parks" (Sub Pop)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Oasis** *Stop The Clocks* (Columbia)

It didn't take much to love Oasis in 1995, but for those of you who forgot about them after "Champagne Supernova" (or didn't scrounge eBay for the rare 12" single with "Acquiesce" as the B-side), *Stop The Clocks* is your chance to be reacquainted with the Gallaghers and their better moments before, during and since *What's The Story*. But we can still pretend that *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* never happened.

## ALEX BILLIG, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

### TOP ALBUMS

- 1. **Joanna Newsom** *Ys* (Drag City)
- 2. **World/Inferno Friendship Society** *Red Eyed Soul* (Chunksaah)  
For anyone familiar with Inferno, their latest and greatest release came as no surprise. In the four years since these Brooklyn cabaret punks' last full-length, the group amassed a wealth of gloriously catchy new pop songs that had already become crowd favorites. These are the same danceable, punk rock show tunes that fans
- 3. **Jeffrey Lewis** *City And Eastern Songs* (Rough Trade)
- 4. **Sibylle Baier** *Colour Green* (Orange Twin)
- 5. **Beirut** *Gulag Orkestar* (Ba Da Bing)



crave, but the glossed-up engineering and veteran composition makes this their best work to date.

- 6. **Final Fantasy** *He Poos Clouds* (Tomlab)
- 7. **Ane Brun** *A Temporary Dive* (V2)
- 8. **Blood Brothers** *Young Macheses* (V2)



In 2006, Zach Condon was blessed and cursed by Internet hype. Over-excitement about the Albuquerque teen's ability to mimic Balkan folk stuffed blogs and catapulted the Beirut mastermind to near stardom before he had even assembled a band to perform his DIY opuses. In reaction to the hyperbolic talk, my opinion of the album was initially, "It's ok," but truth be told,

when I hear his Morrissey meets Stephen Merritt crooning, I swoon.

- 9. **Final Fantasy** *He Poos Clouds* (Tomlab)
- 10. **Ane Brun** *A Temporary Dive* (V2)
- 11. **Blood Brothers** *Young Macheses* (V2)

After overdosing on Beirut, listening to the Blood Brothers is good way to restore one's machismo. Their caustic squeals and off-kilter incantations



aren't exactly masculine, but it's their unbridled breakdowns and warped circus balladry that can sprout hair on anyone's chest. *Macheses* is their tamest record to date, but I'm getting a little old for the mosh pit, so that's fine by me.

- 9. **Noah Britton** *The Red Pony* (H.I.G.)
- 10. **Tom Waits** *Orphans* (Anti-)

## TOP SINGLES

- 1. **Islands** "Rough Gem" (Equator)
- 2. **Matt And Kim** "Silvertiles" (IHEARTCOMIX)
- 3. **Mecca Normal** "Attraction is Ephemeral" (Kill Rock Stars)
- 4. **Fionn Regan** "Put A Penny In The Slot" (Bella Union)
- 5. **Mirah** "La Familia" [Guy Sigsworth Remix] (K)

## ALBUM I SECRETLY SPUN OBSESSIVELY

**Meat Loaf** *Bat Out Of Hell III: The Monster Is Loose* (Virgin)

As television has taught us, the only thing as entertaining as the genuinely great is the genuinely terrible. The finale of this epic trilogy is the best of both worlds. Half Jim Steinman classics, half hilariously half-assed imitations, this album actually benefits from its oh-so-apparent failures.

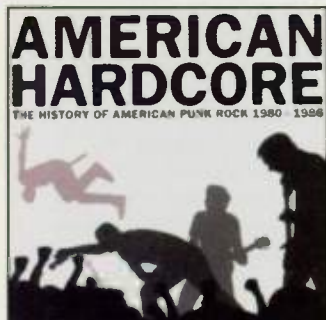


JOANNA NEWSOM

PHOTO: Paul O'Valle

# THE SOUNDTRACKS OF '06's LIVES

For anyone with more than a passing interest in music (which is clearly all of you, dear readers), modern movie soundtracks are a snore. They are usually just a bunch of "various artists" lumped together by some label, with no regard for congruence or sense of storytelling. And the Zach Braff-ification of the genre, wherein a bunch of lesser-known, mawkish singer-songwriters are clumped together with Coldplay for "the perfect mixtape," has made things so much worse. That said, there were five soundtracks that bucked the boring trend this year, bringing lively new music to a cinema near you. We salute them. >>>REBECCA RABER



**American Hardcore: The History Of American Punk Rock 1980-1986** Rhino

While this isn't necessarily an excellent hardcore compilation, it is an outstanding soundtrack of hardcore music. Don't understand the distinction? Any fan of the genre probably already owns most of these tracks by Black Flag, Bad Brains, Circle Jerks and Negative Approach, but collected together (along with rare nuggets like the '82 Cro-Mags demo) this two-disc set is the perfect audio accompaniment to the story of hardcore's birth.

**Marie Antoinette** Verve Forecast

The two-disc soundtrack for Sophia Coppola's candy-coated biopic would get a pass simply for bringing My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields out of seclusion to work on two Bow Wow Wow remixes, but its anachronistic New Romantic and electronica gems fit perfectly with the spirit of the period film. After all, its story is practically a Gang Of Four lyric—"The problem of leisure/What to do for pleasure"—come to life!

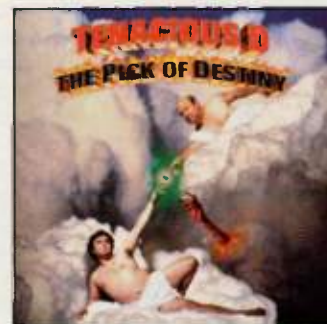


**Shortbus** Team Love

Unless you're a huge fan of wakka-wakka guitars and cheesy '70s basslines, the music in most porn is unlistenable. But in John Cameron Mitchell's film about modern life in New York City (which features lots of non-simulated sex), the music is as epicurean as the tastes of his characters. Released by Conor Oberst's label, the soundtrack finds Hidden Cameras, Animal Collective and Yo La Tengo side-by-side with local acts like Scott Matthew and the Hungry March Band for a real slice of NY living.

**Tenacious D In: The Pick Of Destiny** Epic

C'mon, it's KG and JB together again! That, in and of itself, is worth mention. Think the duo couldn't write a song better than "Fuck Her Gently"? You're wrong. Featuring guest spots by Meatloaf and Ronnie James Dio, this soundtrack of funny, metal-ish songs takes the D's sound to its logical, potty-mouthed, outrageous next step.



**Tsotsi** Milan

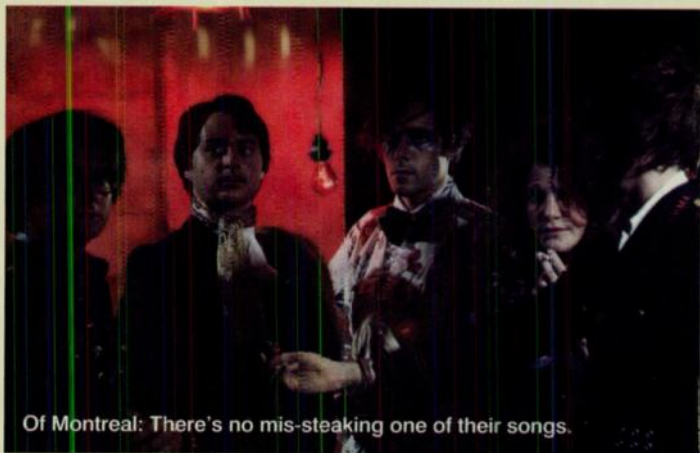
The winner of last year's Best Foreign Film Oscar, *Tsotsi* tells the story of ghetto life in Soweto Township in post-apartheid South Africa. The soundtrack's kwaito music, a blend of hardcore hip-hop and house beats indigenous to Johannesburg, acts as another character in the film, imparting gritty realism to the street tale. The collection is worth owning for Pitch Black Afro's "Matofotofo" alone, which features a sample of "I Put A Spell On You" melting into a thunderous bassline, but the other tracks, including ones by local superstar Zola, will appeal to Eminem and mbaqanga fans alike.

# AFTER THESE MESSAGES... LIFTING THE CURTAIN ON THE YEAR'S STRANGEST INDIE ROCK-ADVERTISTER PAIRINGS

It stands to reason that indie rock and advertising would go together about as well as a mayonnaise and marshmallows. But lately, it seems—poor taste notwithstanding—it's hard to flip through the channels without stumbling across your favorite college rockers pushing everything from doughnuts to life insurance. Here's a few spots from the past year that caught our attention, and one that never came to pass, thanks to a band that still prefers their mayo and marshmallows separately, thank you very much. >>>KEVIN KAMPWIRTH

## The Commercial: Outback Steakhouse

**The Song:** Of Montreal—"Wraith Pinned To The Mist (And Other Games)"  
**The Story:** The steakhouse chain tricked out the lyrics on this cut to coincide with a montage of decadent Outback entrees. Of Montreal frontman Kevin Barnes has defended their decision to lend the track out, pledging to put all proceeds from the commercial toward a theatrical production for their next tour. And as for the meat-loving chain, Nancy Schneid, brand consultant to Outback's parent company, OSI Restaurant Partners Inc., explains that the song "really captured the relaxed, 'no worries' feeling people enjoy at Outback." Unless, of course, they're a vegetarian.



Of Montreal: There's no mis-steaking one of their songs.

## The Commercial: Beck's

**The Song:** Mohair—"Stranded (In The Middle Of Nowhere)"  
**The Story:** It's hard to cast aspersions of selling out on this fun-loving, four-piece English upstart. In fact, lending this jaunty, harmony-laden pop gem to a commercial was their idea. While visiting the same agency office that handles Beck's advertising, they checked out the rough footage for kicks and suggested "Stranded" as the soundtrack to the "Wake Up" ad, in which a lonely bachelor feels moved to join neighboring partygoers after grabbing a cold one from the fridge. "We were thrilled," says Ronnie Tucker, director of marketing for Beck's about working with the band. She adds that the "appropriate music track fit the ad's message to experience the most out of life." Like, ya know, beer and chicks.



Mohair: Who doesn't think German beer when they hear British pop?

PHOTO: Ami Barwell

## The Commercial: GEICO

**The Song:** Royksopp—"Remind Me"  
**The Story:** For the latest turn in their ceaselessly entertaining "So easy, even a cave-man can do it" series, GEICO poses our favorite hapless homo erectus walking through an airport over the airy strains of the ambient-electro duo's tune "Remind Me" as, once again, the early-man becomes offended. Yes, the commercial is hilarious, and yes, "Remind Me" is a great song, but neither is doing justice to the other. Why GEICO decided they needed to dish out for 25 seconds of elevator-esque music instead of just licensing actual Muzak is anybody's guess.

## The Commercial: Dunkin' Donuts

**The Song:** They Might Be Giants (Sort Of)—Assorted Songs  
**The Story:** As part of their recent "America Runs On Dunkin'" blitz, the doughnut conglomerate commissioned some original quirky nerd-pop from an ambiguous-but-not-really duo. To most trained indie ears, the tunes were immediately recognizable as the work of They Might Be Giants. But while the ads have worked out smashingly, the TMBG boys were clearly leery of the association. Turns out DD signed contracts to never even mention the name of the musicians behind the successful ditties, according to Andrew Mastrangelo, communications manager for Dunkin' Brands Inc. So any assertions that TMBG are in fact the jingle scribes come purely from fan conjecture and consumer speculation. Either way, let's just hope Jared from Subway doesn't catch wind of this.

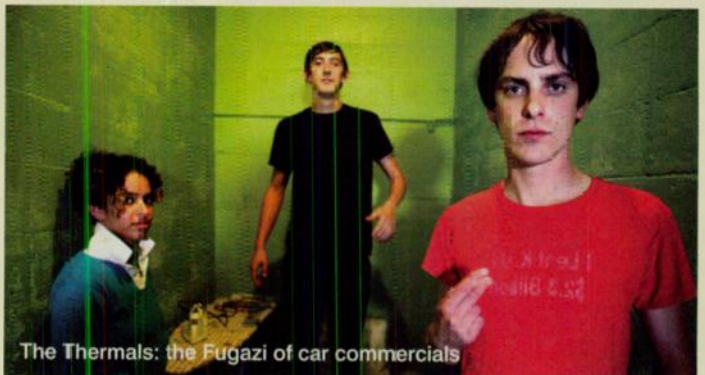
Dunkin' Donuts: We'd show a They Might Be Giants pic here, but we might get somebody sued.



Food participation may vary.

## The Commercial: Hummer

**The Song:** The Thermals—"It's Trivia"  
**The Story:** Late last year, the Thermals were approached by Hummer, who offered them \$50,000 for the rights to use this song as part of a campaign for a new gas-guzzler. After thinking about it for, as frontman Hutch Harris has put it, "about 15 seconds," they told Hummer they could kindly go truck themselves. In this case, principles triumphed over paychecks as the Seattle trio went on to release one of the best indie-rock albums of 2006 with *The Body, The Blood, The Machine*, a concept album of sorts that details, among other things, the pitfalls of capitalist America.



The Thermals: the Fugazi of car commercials

PHOTO: Tom Oliver

# SHADOWS BOXING

THE TALE OF TWO BANDS WHO SHARE  
THE SAME NAME—AND LITTLE ELSE

INTERVIEWS WITH ERIC DAVIDSON



PHOTO: Tonino

PHOTO: Tom Boardman

Bodog's Vincent Black (II) is casting a big-label shadow on their psych-rock counterparts.



In 1967, it would have been understandable if jangle-poppers the Cyrkle weren't aware that there were at least five other groups with that name. But today, despite the fact that the Internet makes such innocent oversights nearly impossible, bands' monikers still frequently overlap. For instance, Merge Records upstarts the Brokedown recently had to rename themselves the Broken West after receiving a cease and desist order from a same-named outfit. And indeed, these situations often devolve into lawsuits. Things have yet to come to legal blows, however, between Vancouver alt-goth-rockers the Vincent Black Shadow (Bodog Music) and Baltimore garage-pysch-rockers Vincent Black Shadow (Heart Break Beat). We talked to members from each Shadow to gauge their awareness of the other, their respective expectations and what the chances are that court could be in their future.

### AND IN THIS CORNER...

**Robbie Kirkham (guitarist, the Vincent Black Shadow, Vancouver):** We just got added to Fuse, and we've been hitting the Internet hard, letting people know that our video was on *Oven Fresh* and to go vote for it. And we ended up finishing number two. We beat out Panic! At The Disco and Justin Timberlake! And in the last week, we've been averaging like 5,000 plays a day.

**Adam Black Savage (singer, Vincent Black Shadow, Baltimore):** Excuse me, I'm just cooking up some Ramen noodles.

### SELF-DISCOVERY

**Kirkham:** About a year ago, someone sent me an e-mail saying, "Oh, you guys should lose your name because it's already being used." And I went on [Vincent Black Shadow's] site, and they didn't seem like that serious of a band.

**Savage:** We heard about [the Vincent Black Shadow] on the Internet. Then later there did start to be some confusion, like when they were on the Warped Tour and all our friends thought we were on the Warped Tour, which is ridiculous. And we got a couple angry e-mails from people who saw us play, but bought their record online and were like, "Uh, you guys were really awesome live, but I really don't like this record at all." So then it makes us look bad because they think we're bad now.

### TO "THE" OR NOT TO "THE"

**Kirkham:** Nobody's actually used "the" Vincent Black Shadow except for us so far. Not to sound like a jerk, but we've already taken legal steps to secure the name. The difference is you've got a band that's basically still on a very small scale and... not that we're huge, but we're definitely getting a lot of buzz and we've been a band since 2003. I didn't want people to get confused, because some of their reviews, y'know, haven't been so glamorous. The good part is that we sound completely different from them.

**Savage:** We started in 2004, but we definitely don't have a "the" in our name.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**Kirkham:** I'm a fan of Hunter S. Thompson. I was reading *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* and he talks about that motorcycle, and I just thought that name really suited the sound of the band, because it's a mysterious motorcycle. And it was really popular back in the '50s, and we kind of have that retro feel to our sound.

**Savage:** It took us a really long time to pick a band name, and finally we all agreed on one and we just went with it without really checking it out. There's a song from Richard Thompson called "1952 Vincent Black Lightning," which is another motorcycle.

### BYE-BYE SPACE

**Kirkham:** I went on MySpace because I wanted to see how the legal thing was coming along and their MySpace was gone. Part of me was worried that people would look up the Vincent Black Shadow and their name would come

*"It's only going to cost them money, because I know their label's really small."*

up, but their name's not even listed in Google anymore. Luckily we have some friends at MySpace, and everytime our Space got messed up they would help us right away.

**Savage:** Yeah, we got banned from MySpace. One day it was there, the next it wasn't. They sent us all these ridiculous messages that didn't make any sense, these "Terms of Service" contracts. At first I thought maybe it was the Canadians who kicked us off, like that was the first step in the legal process [laughs].

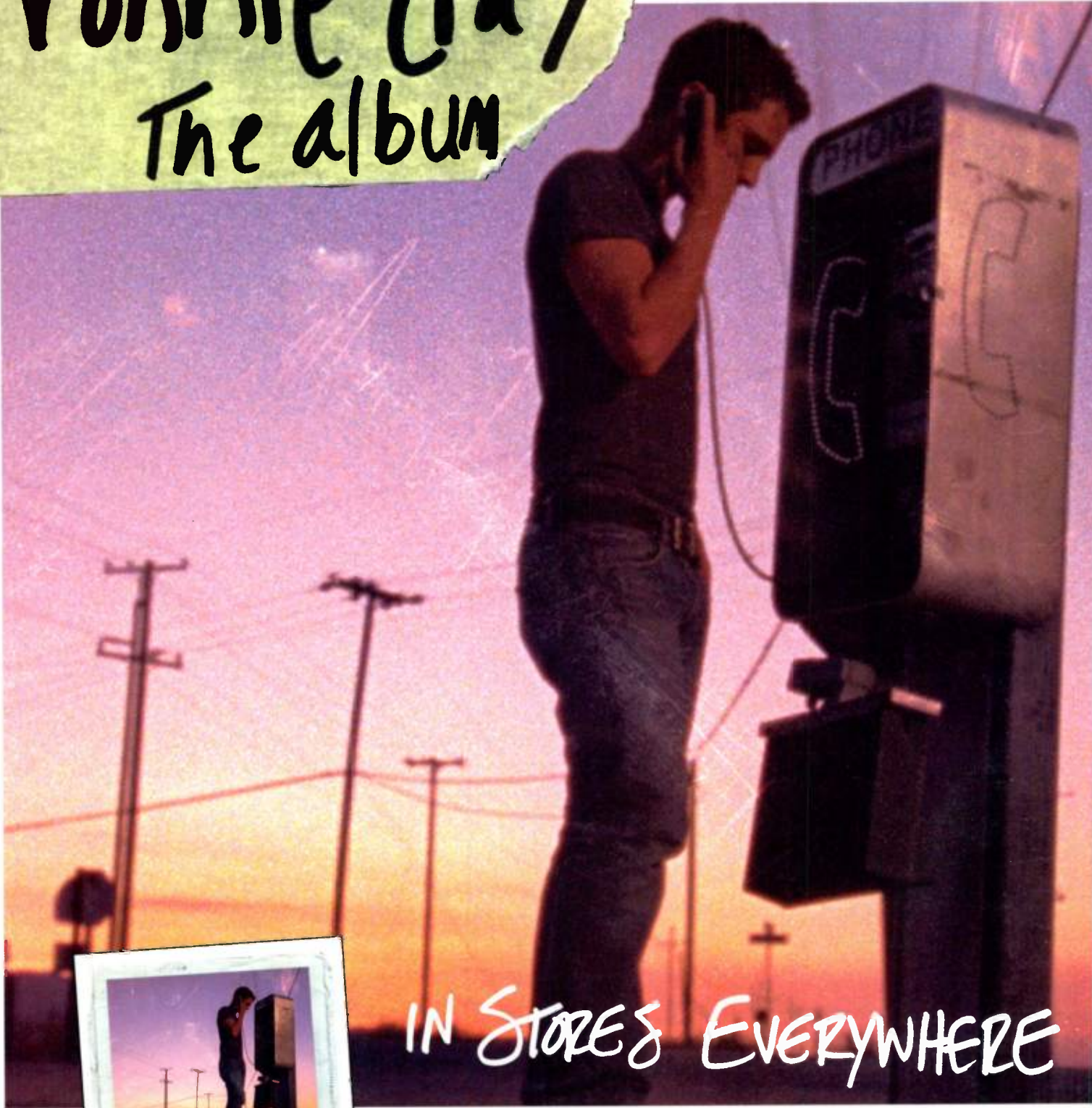
### LEGAL RECOURSE

**Kirkham:** Bluntly, our label has more money. And that sounds really bad to say as a musician, but at this point I really take this career seriously. This is what I want to do with my life, and we'd have to go and change all the album artwork. We have like 15,000 friends on MySpace, so I'd definitely be willing to say, "Fine, take us to court." It's only going to cost them money, because I know their label's really small. Not that we're trying to bully anybody, I just really believe that we used it first.

**Savage:** Yeah, well that's ridiculous. They're a bigger band, but I don't really care. I don't think we have that similar of a fanbase. I mean if they want to go to court, yeah, I'll go to court. As long as they're "the" Vincent Black Shadow and we're us, I really don't care. They're kind of a more professional band and I feel like we're more American underground.

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