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ways to leave your lover**

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The FCC's microradio plan

**CAPED CRUSADERS:**  
Darkwave and Goth

**HELLO DALI:**  
Olivia Tremor Control's  
surrealist rock

**MOCEAN WORKER:**  
Drum 'n' bass and all that jazz

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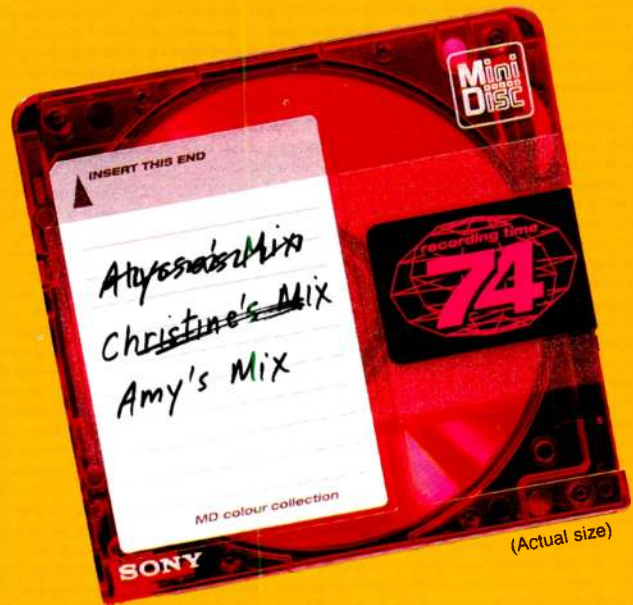
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## ON THE COVER

BLUR: UNCHAINED MELODY

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"I really got myself caught up in some heavy shit in England, you know, real bad shit. So I got away, and I think this record gives us an opportunity to go where we want and be who we are, to go wherever." With its fifth album, *13*, Blur shakes loose the last vestiges of Brit-pop and all manner of personal entanglements. Tom Lanham takes notes on the band's beverage consumption.

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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

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Corporate consolidation has left little room on the FM dial for the voice of the community. The FCC is proposing low-power radio as a remedy, but commercial radio balks at the intrusion. William Werde tracks this explosive issue.

OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL

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"I love the titles, it's just fun to make stuff up." The band that called its debut *Music From The Unrealized Film Script 'Dusk at Cubist Castle'* is back with a follow-up, *Black Foliage: Animation Music By The Olivia Tremor Control*. Andrea Moed edits them down.

MOCEAN WORKER

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"I would just put the radio on and be like, 'Whoa! What's this? I don't want to work with Celine Dion. I want to work on stuff that pushes the fences back.'" Adam Dorn, a.k.a. Mocean Worker, forsakes a lucrative career as a studio dude for a chance to bring a new, jazzy energy to drum 'n' bass. Andrew Beaujon gets it on tape.

LATIN PLAYBOYS

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Outside projects are "an opportunity to go off on a little fishing trip, and when we come back, we're just better dads to our kids," says Louie Perez, who's in both Los Lobos and the Latin Playboys. "We had a chance to go out and have a good time with the boys." Natalie Nichols gets the scoop on the Playboys' second album *Dase*.

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Coverboys Blur, tweaked pop from Olivia Tremor Control and Sparklehorse, electronica from Underworld, remixes of Medeski, Martin & Wood and Beth Orton, altered Norte Americano roots from the Latin Playboys and Hounddog, hip-hop from the Roots, and radio-ready rock from Jason Falkner, Wilco and Liars Inc.

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DAMON ALBARN OF BLUR  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY DENNIS KLEIMAN

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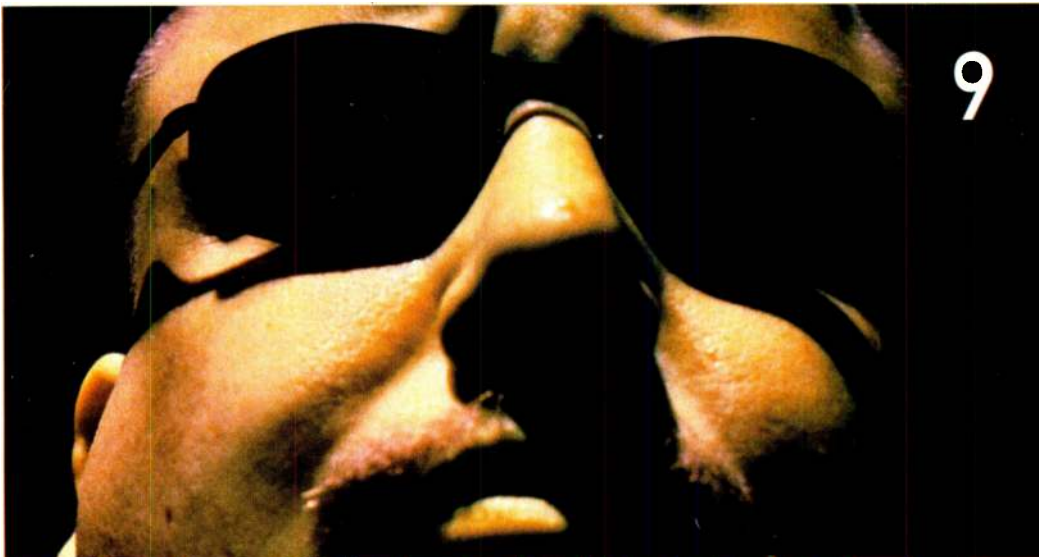
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## Not Ani More

No More Ani!!! Please! I have nothing against Ms. DiFranco—I even bought one of her CDs—but please, enough is enough. In the last 3-4 years since I started getting CMJ, somehow she has made it onto the sampler a half dozen times. Do you folks own stock in Righteous Babe, because no other band has been given this much attention. Well now that Ani has made it to the cover, we can all agree she's been given enough exposure, now can we put the *New* back in *New Music Monthly*?

Thanks,  
Mike Snapp  
snapp@worldweb.com

*If you think that letter is harsh, you should see the one my dad wrote when he felt that some of the mechanics he was reading about weren't, let's say, "popular" enough. —Ed.*

## DiFranco family values

So when are you guys gonna change the magazine's name from *CMJ* to *The Ani DiFranco New Music Monthly*? Why are you beating us over the head with her? She's been on the cover at least twice and been on the CD three times in the last year or so. I listened to the song the first time around and it didn't do anything for me. For those who did like it, I'm sure they went out and bought her CDs. There are plenty of other bands and musicians who deserve the recognition and could use the space that she is taking up. Enough is too much.

Darryl  
ENAT21213@aol.com

*It's always hard for us to know when we're not supposed to cover an artist anymore. On one hand, we have an artist whose music has been consistently rated highly by our readers, and the last cover we did with her sold well. "A-ha!" you say, eager to point out that we're all venal sell-outs and unintentionally invoking that horrible "Take On Me" song—but consider that seeing what sells on the newsstand is a key indication of what people are interested in. This is Ani's second turn on the cover and I can't say that my admiration for her has waned at all, which leaves me in the position of pitting something I'm genuinely interested in against commercial considerations, like that Mike and Darryl and folks like them might get bummed because she's on the cover and the disc again. So which is the sellout? —Ed.*

## Burning bright

I purchased your magazine and found it a far cry from *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*. The artwork looks like an acid trip.

Tiger  
batfish10@aol.com

*Should I be worried that resident art guy Merv's reaction to the acid trip comment was "right on"? Should I be worried that I work with someone who uses the phrase "right on" with some regularity? If we were a closer cry to Rolling Stone or Spin, would there be a Doppler effect? —Ed.*

## Ironic, don't you think?

I didn't hate any of the songs on the February issue's CD. In fact most were really good. I like variety. Please make all subsequent issues exactly the same.

Thanking you in advance,  
Mark  
xush@datasync.com

*You get the idea that Mark is the guy who writes "this gum tastes funny" on the men's room condom machine? —Ed.*

## Ghost of Christmas passed

Christmas was truly awful this year. How dare you put Mr. Manson on the cover and then put a few less-than-wonderful photos of Jon Spencer (the sexiest fuck to walk the planet) on the inside! Fuck you and the reindeer you rode in on, Santa!!

Qeeeeeeeeek  
Qeeek@aol.com

*We'd have loved to make anyone named Qeeeeeeeeek's days merry and bright, but when it comes to us, Spencer is more often the surliest fuck to walk to planet. Besides, Manson's hair does have a certain poinsettia quality. —Ed.*

## Moon rocks

You've got me like a trained seal, out in front of my house waiting for the mailman right around the 5th of the month. Yea yea yea! Give it to me! I run in and plow through when wham! A two-page spread on Autechre! My fave and I never knew what they even looked like. Shit, they're kids. From your fave West Coast pot-bellied 44-year-old Throbbing Gristle listening cab driver,

Dave Moon  
Somewhere in California

*Dave is easily our favorite respondent to the handy Feedback form in the back of the magazine. Maybe it's because he includes in the envelope a well-worn Ramones pin or some other evidence that his misspent youth is continuing into middle age. Maybe it's because every single month, we can look forward to his fevered scrawl covering the entire clip-out section, front and back. Maybe I just like the idea of a cabbie playing Coil or Throbbing Gristle for his fares—it almost beats the guy who looked and talked just like Albert Collins and spent the entire ride to Brooklyn counseling me on mortgage rates. —Ed.*

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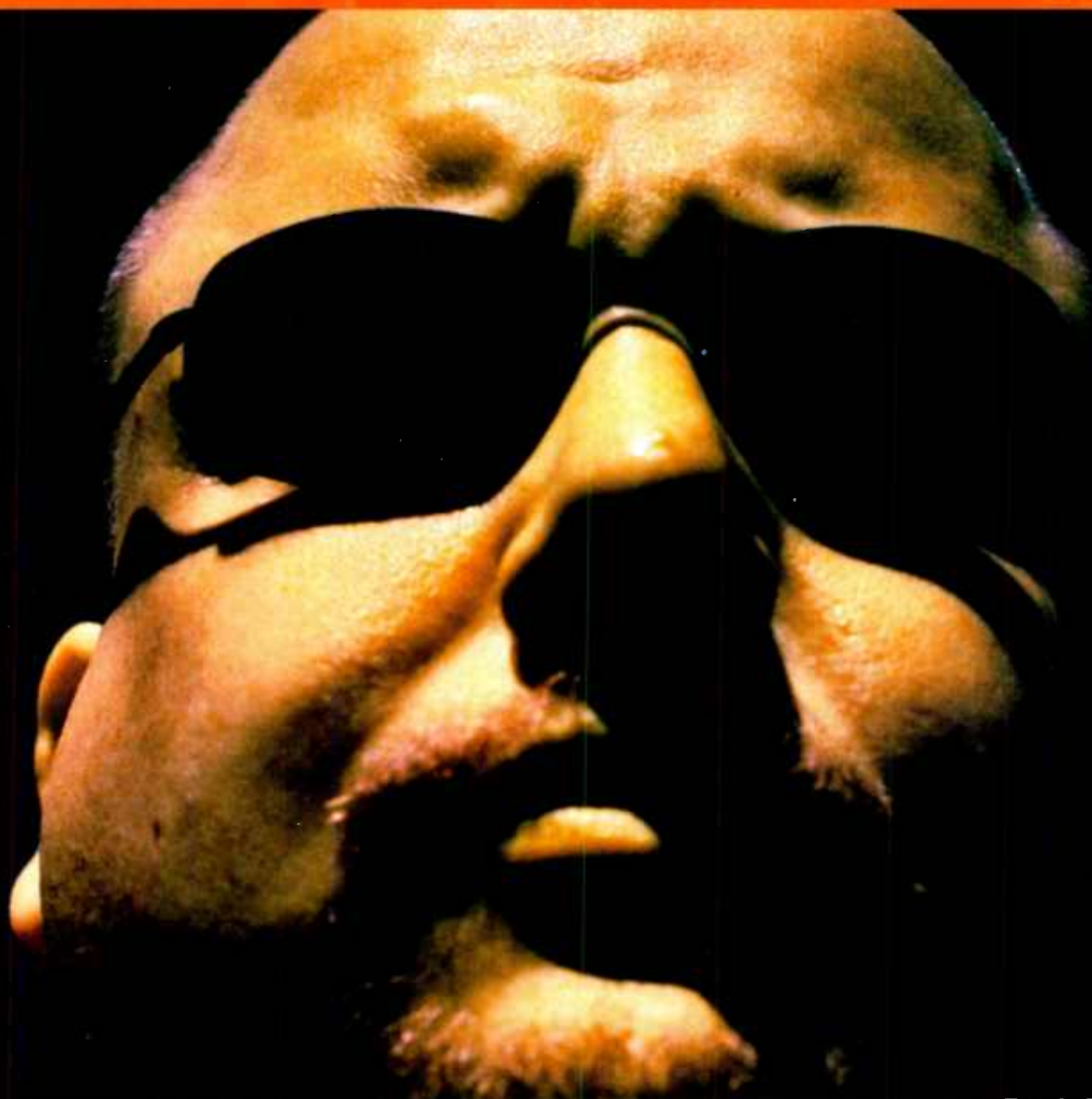
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# Black Celebration

**FRANK BLACK** OUTFRUNS HIS PIXIE PAST.

Story: Glen Sarvady  
Photo: Chapman Baehler

Frank Black has just returned from a taping of *Space Ghost Coast To Coast*. "I hope I gave them something to work with," he offers earnestly. "It's kind of weird sitting in front of a blue screen. You can't tell how you're coming across."

Poor Frank seems doomed to perpetually outrunning yesterday's image. At first blush, his obsession with space travel and alien beings seems perfectly suited to *Space Ghost*. Then you realize he hasn't played that shtick for two albums. "I finished that. It had a good effect on some songs, mediocre effects on others, I suppose. But I didn't want it to become a cliché."

After the bloated production budget and limited success of 1996's *The Cult Of Ray*, Black proclaimed a return to basics, convened an old-fashioned guitar/guitar/bass/drums

lineup, and captured *Frank Black And The Catholics* live to two-track in three days. He found the experience so liberating he insists he's through with multi-tracking. "It's the feeling you get when you accomplish it—you've done it for real. It's like a badge of honor," he beams about the bare-bones process. The Catholics' follow-up, *Pistolero* (spinART), reprises the formula with similarly impressive results: a raw, unadulterated (but cleanly recorded) blast from the garage delivered with an

on CD." (Black's offerings, as well as much of the spinART catalog, can be checked out at [www.goodnoise.com](http://www.goodnoise.com).)

Last year's spate of Pixies anthologies, including the well-received *Death To The Pixies* and *Pixies At The BBC*, tripped memory synapses, but also threatened to dredge up a past Black was on the verge of shaking off. For his part, though, he's made peace with his notorious beginnings. "We play a couple of Pixies numbers"—"The Holiday Song" is featured on the current

out smaller clubs to a rabid core fan base. "We have no crew with us. Me and the guys are doing this for the same reasons we wanted to when we were 13 years old. I thought performing in a tiny nightclub was a glamorous thing when I was a little kid, and I still do. At 5 p.m., clubs are shitty places to be. But the place fills up, the music starts, and the cruddy part goes away."

On stage Black exudes the demeanor of a virtual blues icon, right down to his dark suit and portly frame.

**"I thought performing in a tiny nightclub was a glamorous thing when I was a little kid, and I still do."**

intensity Black hasn't achieved since his Pixies days.

At the opposite end of the technology spectrum, Black has gained a reputation as a trailblazer in making his music available on-line. Again this seems a savvy move for a man whose former band trails only *The X-Files* in influencing cool e-mail handles, but he downplays the significance. "This whole Internet downloading system is interesting, but it's not going to change my lifestyle or anything. I've gotten a lot of nice publicity out of it, but it still takes 15 minutes to download a two-minute song. Sure, there's a few geeks out there who will stay up all night to download an entire album, but it's not like I'm going to stop making my stuff available

tour—"and that usually satisfies the old fans. You can't be mad at someone for shouting out a song you wrote. They paid their money, it's not a lack of appreciation for who you are now. I don't feel offended at all. They like the new stuff too. And there's definitely a new crowd who don't even know the Pixies stuff and their point of reference is Frank Black." The loud wails of recognition and approval for "Los Angeles," off his 1993 solo debut, at recent shows prove Black's point.

With *Pistolero* arriving just seven months after its predecessor ("It's not that I'm so prolific," Black explains. "The first album was held up for a while by label hassles"), the Catholics are on a heavy touring regimen, regularly selling

It's odd to think of this former *enfant terrible* maturing into something of an elder statesman. "I certainly enjoy being a musician more now than I did five or ten years ago, partially because I'm better at it. Plus we're enjoying being self-sufficient." Old-timers may miss the Pixies' borderline psychosis and stop/start quirkiness, but a strong melodic sense, dispensed with blistering guitars and uncommon fury, remains.

When he disbanded the Pixies, the world assumed it was a case of an ego run amok. The newly christened Frank Black claimed he'd simply get bored if he didn't mix things up every few years. Five years and several renditions later, it may be time to start believing the guy.

## RANDOM QUOTES



"Man, rock 'n' roll is still new, and I don't think people should give up on it just because corporate America tells you it's not hip. You know what I mean? It's about soul, and I don't really hear a lot of soul in anything."

>>>Black Crowes' Chris Robinson, on shaking his money maker

"Look at the music from the '20s. Does anyone listen to that anymore? So how old is rock 'n' roll? Sixty? It's getting close. It's going to turn over. More than a defining point, I think in the next ten, 20 years, music is really going to turn over. To me [turntablism] is all just part of that. If people want to put some names and tags on it, I'm down with that."

>>>Ming, of DJ duo Ming & FS, on turning the tables



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KIM APLEY

## GET LUCKY

The Sea And Cake's **Sam Prekop** takes his chances on a solo outing.

"I'm feeling kinda lucky," quips Sam Prekop, smiling as he strolls down Prince Street. We'd been discussing where to get a cheap lunch in chi-chi Soho, and I'd warned him that with hot dog vendors, you take your chances. I wasn't feeling as lucky, so we settled on empanadas.

After finishing a spicy chicken turnover, Prekop settles into my stream of questions about his first solo album, which follows a spate of releases from his current group the Sea And Cake and previous outfit Shrimp Boat. In all contexts, Sam picks out delicate guitar parts, writes lolling songs, and sings with a peculiar emphasis that makes his language sound only tangentially related to the English I speak. "Mainly it was just convenience," he recalls of the circumstances surrounding the album. "Because John McEntire, who's in the Sea And Cake and Tortoise, was going to be gone all year pretty much, so I knew I had a break coming up. It wasn't some longtime ambition, like 'I have to do a solo record.' And on this record, it's a band really."

The band on Sam Prekop (Thrill Jockey) consists of Sea And Cake-mate Archer Prewitt on guitar, drummer Chad Taylor (of jazz improv unit Chicago Underground Duo), stand-up bassist Josh Abrams and producer/multi-instrumentalist Jim O'Rourke (ex-Gastr

Del Sol). Prekop's new songs stretch out in the looser confines of a jazz-oriented rhythm section. "It's always been kind of cloudy to me where it's writing as opposed to improvising. They're almost the same thing in a sense. Usually when you talk about improvising, that's your main goal. You're on this little passage of discovery at all times, but I've never really done that."

That's not exactly true. Prekop's vocal style takes cues from improvisation techniques. Especially with Shrimp Boat, he's been known to invent or change lyrics on the spot, or even mumble along with a melody. "I'm not like a storyteller. That's not why I write these tunes, like 'I have to say this,'" admits Prekop, who also paints—check the beautifully non-representational landscape on the album's cover. "The words are not unconsidered, but they don't necessarily have to be [the main point]. Hopefully they mingle in an interesting way. I like the idea that some words will stick out and others will reveal themselves later, even as a word, multiple layers of the use of language or something. Although that could also be lazy."

While I'm doubting it, Sam's on to explaining his touring plans for the album, which include US dates in April, "and then in May we're going to Europe, and then to Japan. I can't believe [the fans there]. I'm still... I don't know who I fooled. Like 'How the hell did I get here?!' It's great. It definitely represents a sense of accomplishment. I can't believe I get to go to Japan! I feel lucky, definitely." >>>Lydia Vanderloo

## NOTHING RHYMES WITH ORANGE

Literate punk super-group *Jets To Brazil* takes off.

Lately, former Jawbreaker singer/guitarist Blake Schwarzenbach has noticed, word's gotten out about one of his new band *Jets To Brazil*'s little secrets. "People have been coming up to me at shows," he recounts from his Brooklyn apartment, "saying 'I got it—it's *Breakfast At Tiffany's*.' They always act like they figured it out on their own, but I'm a little suspicious because there's always so much dialogue about that stuff on the Internet."

Yeah, the name *Jets To Brazil* comes from Blake Edwards's 1961 romantic comedy, from a travel poster than can be spotted in one of the movie's backdrops, to be exact. But you don't have to be a film buff to appreciate the real inspiration behind the indie-punk super-group, which recently became a foursome when Schwarzenbach, former *Texas Is the Reason* drummer Chris Daly, and former *Handsome* bassist Jeremy Chatelain added second guitarist Brian Maryansky (ex-*Van Pelt*). All you have to do is listen to a track like "I Typed For Miles" on the band's debut *Orange Rhyming Dictionary* (Jade Tree), and read between the excruciatingly honest lines. "I need a word to change my life," Schwarzenbach sings against a surging guitar riff, "I've tied my ankles to the table legs with wire/He can't write so much as type."

"I have a pretty tortured relationship with music writing," Schwarzenbach admits, "but I feel really bad if I don't do it. Basically you have to go into your room and wait, and sometimes you wait and nothing happens."

In a sense, *Orange Rhyming Dictionary* is an album about the hopes, fears, and doubts that sprang from Schwarzenbach's time in *Jawbreaker*, which was signed to Geffen and found itself pulled into the wake of the alt-rock explosion. It's about the struggle to maintain some kind of personal artistic integrity in the face of commercial expectations. "I felt that I really didn't like myself in that situation," Schwarzenbach recalls. "The situation itself was good—I didn't feel abused or taken for granted, and we were given everything we wanted. I felt they were very generous with us, but I also think we were just three guys playing chords and we really didn't deserve all the attention. And I always envied those bands who were sure that they were great—the ones who didn't flinch when they got signed—because they were genuine little rockers."

Ironically, with its new-wave hooks and melodies, *Orange Rhyming Dictionary* is probably the most accessible treatment that Schwarzenbach's ever given his songs—just the sort of thing that might have pleased the folks at Geffen. But Schwarzenbach, who clearly relishes the opportunity to start over again, doesn't have any regrets. "I've done a lot of fanzine interviews where I feel like they're looking for me to express regret about what happened with *Jawbreaker*, but I felt like I had to let them down." >>>Matt Ashare



## Weird Record Of The Month

Finland's **MIESKUORO HUUTAJAT** is a 40-piece men's choir with a repertoire of patriotic songs, but it's not exactly an ordinary choir. For one thing, its members don't sing—they yell. (And if you've never heard 40 strapping Finnish men bellowing in unison, well, it's an experience.) For another thing, their patriotic songs aren't necessarily their own, and they don't play them especially straight, either. Led by Petri Sirviö, the "shouting choir" has been around for more than ten years now, and is reportedly a big concert attraction in Finland. Their *H.Y.V.Ä.* EP (*Bad Vugum*) has four more-or-less traditional Finnish songs, plus utterly bizarre hollering arrangements of six national anthems, from "Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles" to "The Star-Spangled Banner." Is it a comment on the way nationalist music essentially screams at people until they submit to pride? Or just an excuse for the group to lift every voice in total lack of song? >>>Douglass Wolk



## Label Profile

"The main theme I have is B-Boy music—music that puts a smile on my face," grins Peanut Butter Wolf, a.k.a. Chris Manak, **Stones Throw Records'** owner, head of A&R and biggest fan. Since 1996 this Bay Area-based hip-hop label has been one of the country's most reliable rap indies, producing popular "DJ tools" records by the Turntablist (J-Rocc) and Fanatik, full-lengths by Peanut Butter himself, lyrical muscleman Rasco and DJ Rob Swift, and singles by the Lootpack, Charizma, Encore and Persevere. In addition to a steady flow of LPs and singles, this year promises an interesting series of one-off 45s by well-knowns (Biz Markie, Rob Swift) and straight-up wackos (Captain Funk A Hoe, Dudley). Why tackle such an unusual project? "I've been collecting hip-hop singles for years now," says Manak, "and have always wanted to get a jukebox for my house and fill it with hip-hop 45s. Now if I only had space for a jukebox...." >>>Brian Coleman



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ANDREW CLEAL

## LOGICAL PROGRESSION

Squarepusher's electrical engineering results in *Budakhan Mindphone*.

In the field of drum 'n' bass, Squarepusher, a.k.a. 24-year-old Tom Jenkinson, has always mapped out his own trajectory. An acoustic musician and bass player long before he ever delved in the art of knob twiddling, Jenkinson burst into the electronic music scene in the mid-'90s with a series of frenetic 12"s, later compiled on Warp's *Burning'n Tree*. A few years and albums later he found a domestic home at Trent Reznor's Nothing Records, which released both the *Big Load* EP and the album *Music Is Rotted One Note* last year. With the live instrumentation on his recordings, Jenkinson gives the sampler a soul, resulting in an organic feel that's absent from most other drum 'n' bass records.

Although they were recorded a year apart, *Big Load* and *Music Is Rotted* were issued Stateside within a span of a few weeks. Jenkinson's development between releases reveals his desire to break from the often tedious process of programming, moving towards the freedom and spontaneity of experimental jazz. "After *Big Load*, which for me was a definitive breakbeat record, I thought it was time start again and almost go back to [my] first principles," he says. "It was a time when a new direction was the only option basically. I felt there was really nowhere else to go after *Big Load*."

His new seven-track EP *Budakhan Mindphone* (also on Nothing) continues along a similar path. "It's an extension of the same approach," explains Jenkinson. "I'm doing it all live still, but I'm using a bit more of digital technology with the sampler." But he also seems to be discovering the power in the space between notes, and the impact of varying speeds. "I'm feeling the pull back in high BPMs, actually," he adds. "But it's a different approach using a bit more space and not cramming in the details quite as much."

The moniker Squarepusher implies that Jenkinson is constantly challenging himself, daring himself to transcend the boundaries that only recently defined his musical space. "It's a step forward, but it's a bit sideways as well," he says of *Budakhan Mindphone*. "There are certain things on *Music Is Rotted One Note* that I've left behind and there are other things which remain somehow ahead of what I've done now. It's not a literal progression really. It's a move forward, but still a bit sideways." >>>George Masek

## IN MY ROOM

### LOCAL H

Joe Daniels



**Queens Of The Stone Age**

Queens Of The Stone Age

**Monster Magnet**

Powertrip

**A Bug's Life** (film)

**Creeper Lagoon**

I Become Small And Go

**Saving Private Ryan** (film)

### ANTHRAX

John Bush



Anything by **Slayer**

**Naked** (book)

By David Sedaris

**Santiago, Chile**

**Donnas**

Rock 'N' Roll Machine

The fan backlash to the

**NBA lockout**

### SLOAN

Jay Ferguson



**Belle & Sebastian**

The Boy With The Arab Strap

**Rufus Wainwright**

Rufus Wainwright

**Maxwell**

Embrya

**Orange Juice**

You Can't Hide Your

Love Forever

**Various Artists**

Beg, Scream & Shout (Rhino

'60s soul box set)

## RANDOM QUOTE

"I try not to take this too seriously. We're talking about short... creatures with TVs in their stomachs."

>>>Gay And Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation representative Bill Horn, on the public's rampant conjecturing that Teletubby Tinky Winky is "gay"

HOLE'S ERIC ERLANDSON



Q&A

It may not be the single hardest job in rock 'n' roll—that would either be cleaning up after Gwar, carrying the Rolling Stones' suitcases through Canadian customs, or running "errands" for Fatboy Slim—but weathering a decade as Courtney Love's right-hand guitar man has probably had its moments. Eric Erlandson was there

at the start, and has remained Love's quietly loyal ace in the Hole. He's also been the only guy in the turbulent band, all along. None of which has stopped Hole's critics from consistently overlooking Erlandson's role as one of Love's main songwriting partners. We thought it was time to offer credit where it's due and called Erlandson at home in LA during the band's holiday break.

>>>Matt Ashare

**Q: I've seen you do two kinds of shows with Hole: the ones where it seems like you have no idea what Courtney is going to do next, and ones where she appears to be on her best behavior. Do you have a preference?**

A: I used to like it when Courtney would just fall apart on stage. I guess I'm a voyeur in that way. But I think it's better when we're all locked in and just playing songs. We're a real live band—we don't use loops and our drummer doesn't use a click track. So the songs definitely come across differently when we play live. It's also very important right now to mix the new songs in with the older ones so everybody sees how they relate.

**Q: Because of the controversy over whose songs they are?**

A: Not so much that, because all the songs are our songs. It's more just that the new album is so different from the last album.

**Q: How difficult is it to go up on stage every night not knowing what to expect from Courtney?**

A: I'm used to it now. I've been accused of not being spontaneous—I guess I can be overly practical when it comes to certain stuff—but I think I've gotten better. Just recently, on our way from doing a show in San Francisco to playing a radio thing in LA, I had to sit next to Courtney on the plane and I was like "Oh, okay, What's gonna happen now?" And she turns to me and goes "Hey, let's play a surprise show tonight in LA. We'll play at the Roxy on the Strip. I want to have a riot on Sunset Strip." So I was like, "Uh, wow, I dunno. It's short notice. I'm sure the club's already booked." But I was like, "Well, okay, I'll go for it." So she grabbed the phone right there on the plane, called somebody and said, "Make this happen." It was one of the funnest things we've done in probably ten years.

**Q: Ten years is a long time.**

A: Yeah, but I think Courtney and I have always been on the same page about where we've wanted to take the band. We're both really ambitious.

**Q: Does it bother you when you hear people giving Kurt Cobain or Billy Corgan credit for writing Hole songs?**

A: I just never felt the need to respond to any of that. It's kind of frustrating because I've put a lot of effort into all our albums. But I know what I did and we'll just leave it at that.

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Funkadelic  
Free Your Mind (Live)  
Sneetches  
Everybody's Talkin'  
Zumpano  
Throwing Stars  
Jimmy Webb  
Galveston  
Sloan  
Good In Everyone  
Swervedriver  
Magic Bus  
Cowboy Junkies  
State Trooper  
Freakwater  
Drunk Friend  
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Swingin' For Coca-Cola

**Side Two:**

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Step Into The Breeze  
The Action  
Shadows & Reflections  
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Endless Life  
Neil Young  
Don't Be Denied  
Captain Beefheart  
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Lodestar  
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Damien Jurado  
Yuma, AZ  
Pram  
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May The Circle Remain  
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A Survey

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houndog

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**UNDERWORLD** ★

**Beaucoup Fish**

V2

Electronic dance music has helped define the late '90s music landscape, but it still hasn't produced its genre-defining album, its *Nevermind*. Underworld's terrific 1994 release *Dubnobasswithmyheadman* could have been that album, but it took until the group's contribution to the *Trainspotting* soundtrack, "Born Slippy," and the subsequent *Second Toughest In The Infants* before America started paying attention. If there's anyone left who's still not paying attention, *Beaucoup Fish* is bound to change that. It has everything a good crossover effort needs: It's filled with pounding breakbeats and propulsive melodies, but wrapped up in rock-influenced songcraft. The album's 12-minute opening track "Cups" may turn out to be techno's "Stairway To Heaven," building steadily from bedroomly contemplation into a driving, trancey climax. *Beaucoup Fish* isn't as consciously hip-hop-inspired as some of the records by Underworld's big-beat compadres; instead, it draws more on ambient, trance, and yes, mid-'80s synth-pop. It's been a long, strange trip from "Blue Monday" to here, but *Beaucoup Fish* includes tastes of nearly everything that's happened along the way, leaving us with an album that's minimal without being barren and cutting-edge without being arcane. The techno aesthetic will probably go on being dominated by singles and the live DJ experience, but *Beaucoup Fish* may well be remembered as one of its finest albums.

>>>David Jarman



**OUT:**  
April 13.

**FILE UNDER:**  
Album-oriented electronica.

**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Orbital, Propellerheads, BT, New Order.

**WILCO** ★

**Summer Teeth**

Reprise

The release of Wilco's sprawling '96 double-disc *Being There* coincided with a band-promoted campaign to disassociate frontman Jeff Tweedy from the alt-country movement he helped spawn with Uncle Tupelo. But that album had enough twangy shadings to make such an assertion seem disingenuous. With the long-incoming follow-up, *Summer Teeth*, Wilco finally expresses in action what it's tried to in words; this record's more John Lennon than Johnny Cash. Amid the torrent of three-minute pop tracks are "Nothingsevergonnastandinmyway (Again)," "Can't Stand It" and "A Shot In The Arm," all featuring taut guitar hooks, crystalline piano shadings and Tweedy's surprisingly sunny vocals. Not that it's an altogether upbeat romp. "How To Fight Loneliness" is a heartfelt self-help tune with a breezy jazz tempo, and it segues into the similarly melancholy "Via Chicago." But more notable than the pop, more commendable than the ballads, Wilco introduces an experimental, almost psychedelic thread that's subtly woven into nearly all of *Summer Teeth's* 15 tracks. Most prevalent in the Beach Boys-like "Pieholden Suite" with its warped strings and distorted banjo, this newfound taste for sonic chicanery surfaces in a spaced-out intro to the retro-melodic "Candyfloss" and as a mellotron solo in the singsong "When You Wake Up Feeling Old." Excepting this sole slip-up, Wilco skewers its stereotype style beautifully and moves into a deeper, more arty realm.

>>>Richard Martin



**OUT:**  
March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**  
Pop pangs mious the twang.

**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Golden Smog, Billy Bragg and Wilco's *Mermaid Avenue*, Sparklehorse.


**RUSSELL GUNN** ★

**Ethnomusicology Volume 1**

Atlantic

Russell Gunn is a chameleon within the quintessential chameleon genre—jazz—having worked with Mr. Traditional Wynton Marsalis, brother Branford's funky Buckshot LeFonque, out-there explorer Oliver Lake and soul grinder Maxwell, among others. On *Ethnomusicology, Volume 1*, Gunn snorts in funk and hip-hop grooves, samples and scratches, and blows them out his trumpet, creating a rolling, linear vibe while retaining an atmosphere of instrumental freedom. While he's credited with fusing hip-hop and jazz, what Gunn imagines is actually more complex than that; yes, "The Blackwidow Blues" seamlessly combines the glory of *Kind Of Blue*-era Miles Davis with Eric B. & Rakim samples and quotes, but he transforms the piece into a compositional achievement that stands as a high-water mark of '90s jazz. As the record progresses, Gunn dives deeper into pure jazz, shedding the more concrete hip-hop characteristics while retaining its focused groove. Gunn weaves his horn throughout, recalling the confident tone of fellow East St. Louis alum Miles Davis, but breaking away from Miles's influence into a brand new world: one that signals the arrival of a different kind of fusion, one that gathers the totality of African American musics—from jazz and urban blues to funk, disco and, yes, hip-hop—under one roof.

>>>Randall Roberts



**OUT:**  
February 16.

**FILE UNDER:**  
A different kind of fusion.

**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Don Byron's *Nu Blaxploitation*, Buckshot LeFonque, Miles Davis's late hip-hop excursions.

## JOE HENRY

Fuse

Mammoth

Once upon a time, Joe Henry was a singer/songwriter, releasing collections of sharply written story songs with folk and roots settings. Then, with 1996's *Trampoline*, he headed for his garage, enlisted Helmet's Page Hamilton and his metallic guitar, and came out with an impressionistic and unsettling album full of rhythmic drones and melancholy narratives. On *Fuse*, the smoky noir atmosphere remains, as do the evocative and paranoia-tinged lyrics, although they now seem to come from characters in search of a narrative. Gone, for the most part, are the metal-flake guitars; in their place, soul signifiers course through the album: electric piano, wah-wah guitar, distant strings. Maybe Curtis Mayfield albums played next door as Henry arranged his songs: He hasn't written soul songs per se, but the sounds creep in, almost subliminally, and lend an urban atmosphere far from heartland roots. Henry self-produced *Fuse*, but Daniel Lanois had a hand in mixing, and he leaves his fingerprints in the album's echoey darkness. Even when the Dirty Dozen Brass Band cameos on "Beautiful Hat," the effect is dirge-like rather than New Orleans second-line thump, and "Want Too Much" and "Like She Was a Hammer" use claustrophobic repetition to suggest the unhinged desperation of the narrator. There's something ominous about *Fuse*, something that reveals itself gradually, but something captivating and lasting.

>>>Steve Klinge



**OUT:**

March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Smoky noir confessions.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Tindersticks, Lloyd Cole, Willie Nelson's *Teatro*, Daniel Lanois.

## DAMIEN JURADO

Rehearsals For Departure

Sub Pop

Whoever gave Damien Jurado the Nick Drake box set for Christmas deserves a trophy. Which isn't to say the Seattle singer/songwriter has rejected his own distinctive character to ape the English folk legend, although the vocal semblance between the two on "Ohio" and "Eyes For Windows" is unnerving, in a good way. The idiosyncratic songwriting that distinguished 1997's *Waters Ave S.* remains intact, but the enthusiastic warts-and-all singing that often grew taxing has been tempered dramatically. And like the canon of somber early-'70s songster Drake, Jurado's second full-length showcases hypersensitive delivery, hushed intonations (the delicate "Curbside" almost dissipates into thin air), and chamber music arrangements. Producer Ken Stringfellow (ex-Posies) wisely focused the majority of energies on eliciting the best possible performances from Jurado, who meets the challenge with admirable grace. But just when matters begin to get too gloomy, the team pitches a judicious curve ball, be it the fortissimo piano punctuation in the title track, or the string quartet framing the singer's most vulnerable performance, on "Love The Same." Like last year's *Gathered In Song* EP, the lyrical subjects here—abandonment, estrangement, infidelity—suggest that Jurado has suffered romantic misfortunes of late. Judging from this superlative album, his loss is definitely the listener's gain.

>>>Kurt B. Reighley



**OUT:**

March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Teary-eyed troubadour tales.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Nick Drake, Elliott Smith, Pedro The Lion.

## GRAND MAL

Maledictions

Slash-London

It's tempting to simply rattle off 15 references to provide a dead-on picture of where Grand Mal is coming from. Johnny Thunders's Heartbreakers are an obvious jumping-off point, for starters. But originality is hardly the goal here; attitude is the grail, and this NYC-based quartet has plenty. Grand Mal's core consists of Bill Whitten, whose guitar-drenched past with St. Johnny is evident, and John deVries, whose time with the more high-minded but equally chaotic Agitpop is less obvious. Also dumbing down and hanging loose for this exercise are two contributors from Mercury Rev: Dave Fridmann produces and Grasshopper chips in on keyboard and guitar, and their trademark blissful iconoclasm shines through. The band appropriates some T. Rex-y guitar lines and percussive stomp, and hits paydirt with Marc Bolan's time-tested tactic of enlisting a soulful female vocalist to wail away deep in the mix. Grand Mal's twist on the genre is to integrate the occasional electronic beat, evoking images of Primal Scream holding court at CBGB's instead of a rave. In fact, *Maledictions* could be mistaken for a UK sensation; perhaps it most closely resembles the fuzzed-out nihilism of early Creation bands like the Jesus And Mary Chain. If you enjoy the forebears name-checked above, you'll likely dig Grand Mal's glorious bursts of scuzzed-out glam choogle.

>>>Glen Sarvady



**OUT:**

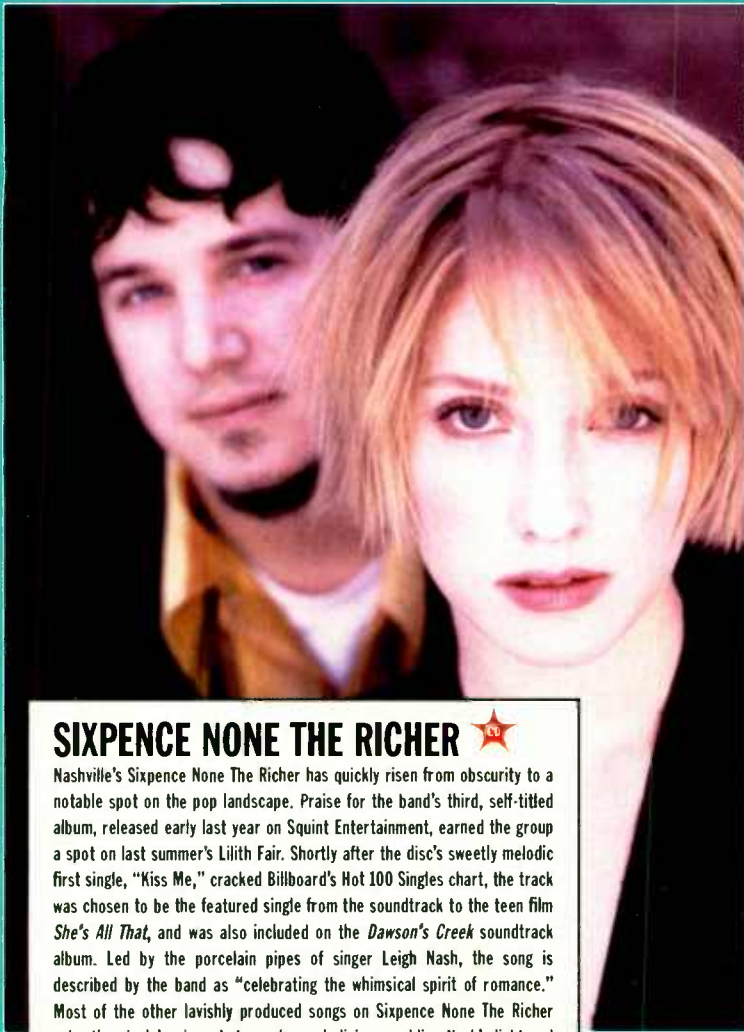
March 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Supercharged stoner glam rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Johnny Thunders's Heartbreakers, Jesus And Mary Chain, Primal Scream, T. Rex.



## SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

Nashville's Sixpence None The Richer has quickly risen from obscurity to a notable spot on the pop landscape. Praise for the band's third, self-titled album, released early last year on Squint Entertainment, earned the group a spot on last summer's Lilith Fair. Shortly after the disc's sweetly melodic first single, "Kiss Me," cracked Billboard's Hot 100 Singles chart, the track was chosen to be the featured single from the soundtrack to the teen film *She's All That*, and was also included on the *Dawson's Creek* soundtrack album. Led by the porcelain pipes of singer Leigh Nash, the song is described by the band as "celebrating the whimsical spirit of romance." Most of the other lavishly produced songs on Sixpence None The Richer echo the single's wispy, but punchy, melodicism, padding Nash's light and airy vocals with strings, guitars, and percussion. Still signed to an indie, Sixpence None The Richer has sold more than 60,000 albums, but if its recent success is any indication of things to come, the band can think about removing the "None" from its name. >>>Glen Sansone



## FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE

"I create my music as a soundtrack for anybody who lives in the city," says Tomoyuki Tanaka, the bespectacled cigar smoker behind Japan's Fantastic Plastic Machine, the latest stylish act at the helm of what's often called Japanese club-pop—think Pizzicato Five, Towa Tei and Cornelius. And after hearing the groovy retro-kitsch vibe of his two albums, replete with the swagger of lite '60s pop, Bacharacian arrangements, and the smart stew of samples, bits of electronica and savvy dance beats that Pizzicato Five's known for, his goal makes sense. Tanaka, who name checks the "3 Bs"—Bach, Burt Bacharach and the Beatles—as his all-time musical favorites, has only done selected DJ dates in the US so far, but will likely be back late this spring to support his most recent album, *Luxury* (Emperor Norton). It's easy to get smitten with the album's sparkling melodies, sung by a roving cast of vocalists, but you'll also be charmed by its light-hearted approach—one track's a cover of the Eurythmics' "There Must Be An Angel (Playing With My Heart)" and another, "Bossa For Jackie," is just that, a hip-swiveling tribute to Mrs. Kennedy Onassis. We'd hate to think his music should be confined to urbanites! >>>Lydia Vanderloo

# on the verge



JOSHUA KESSLER

MCKAY, FAR RIGHT

## MACHA

Most rock musicians only travel as far as the local record store to nurture their influences, but Joshua McKay's jones for Javanese music led him all the way to Southeast Asia. The frontman for Athens, Georgia's Macha has visited the islands of Indonesia twice in recent years, picking up exotic instruments like Sumatran gongs and the Javanese zither. Back in the States, McKay, his brother Mischo, a drummer, and multi-instrumentalist Kai Riedl formed Macha (they were recently joined by keyboardist Wes Martin). The trio's 1998 self-titled debut on Jetset may have invented a new genre—call it Indo-rock. Rather than ape the tonal percussion of gamelan, Macha incorporates Indonesian sounds into a glorious mess of hammered dulcimer, guitar riffs and distorted vocals. "I don't feel like an interpreter of traditional Indonesian music," McKay says from an Athens studio, where Macha's recording a follow-up EP due this spring. "The rock band format is what excites me." The moments where Macha sounds like a rock band are fleeting; a song like "Visiting The Ruins" establishes a pleasant melody before entering a jam that's part tribal, part trance. It's a markedly unorthodox approach, but it's paying off. McKay gushes that he's received almost unanimous praise. "People are realizing that music is completely open—if your mind is," he says. >>>Richard Martin

# Power To The People

Story: William Werde Illustration: Jason Johnson Color: Bad@\$\$



The FCC is proposing to give low-power community radio a place on the dial, if the National Association of Broadcasters doesn't jam the signal.

## On paper, 91.7 WSUM, the University of Wisconsin at Madison's student radio station, seems to have a lot going for it.

Dave Black, the station's general manager, calls Madison "one of the most active campuses—as far as student activism—in the United States." The station also has the support of a student body with an interest in radio: A few years ago, a student referendum decreeing that student government should make radio a priority passed by a nine-to-one margin. It has a substantial budget for equipment and operation. It has strong roots in the

establishing a third "microradio" class at power levels from 1-10 watts. The FCC intends for the proposed stations to be less expensive to institute and run, with a streamlined application process. Currently, a station must be capable of a 6,000-watt broadcast to be licensed. A typical urban commercial station broadcasts at 50,000 watts.

"A 1,000-watt station would be fine," says Black. Under the newly proposed FCC guidelines, it is possible that WSUM would be able to construct a broadcast antenna atop a university building, precluding the need to build the controversial tower, and

consolidation that's resulted in corporations owning as many as eight stations in a single market.

Not everyone is clamoring for the acceptance of low power radio, however. The commission—Chairman William Kennard and four commissioners—voted four-to-one to issue the notice of proposed rulemaking. But the dissenting vote and corresponding statement issued by Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth spoke to the concerns of many already involved in commercial radio.

Roth was critical of the prospect of loosening protection standards—the rules that dictate distance between stations, both

markets—for existing broadcasters, their would-be digital feeds, and new low-power stations.

Space on the FM dial is at the heart of this issue. In theory, LPFM would allow the FCC to identify niches in the spectrum, and fill them with perfect-fit stations that would broadcast just strong enough so as not to interfere with existing stations. But in many urban markets, spectrums are so clogged, there may be no space to divvy up. Roth states in his dissent that there would be no 1,000- or 100-watt stations created in New York City, and the current Los Angeles spectrum would only allow for

# With large corporations owning as many as eight stations in one market, low power radio advocates claim it is vital to the survival and growth of community radio.

community, working in local schools with radio projects. And it has a 2,500-square-foot office from which Black carries out his duties.

In fact, about the only thing WSUM lacks is a broadcast signal.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved WSUM's application for broadcast rights in 1996. But due to FCC engineering rules regarding interference, the station must transmit from a four square mile area in rural Montrose, 14 miles southwest of Madison. And in order for the signal to reach Madison, it would have to be broadcast from a 400-foot tower.

Montrose locals frowned on the perceived intrusion. "We got painted with the broad brush of urban sprawl," laments Black. "The same kind of brush as a nuclear waste dump, a power plant or a mine." WSUM's right to build its tower is currently tied up in circuit courts.

WSUM is just one potential beneficiary of a new set of rules being considered by the FCC regarding low power FM radio (LPFM). In an official notice of proposed rulemaking announced January 28, the FCC proposed to license new 1,000-watt and 100-watt LPFM radio stations, and sought comment on also

saving thousands of dollars in the process. According to LPFM advocate group the Low Power Radio Coalition, there are currently more than 140 other colleges and universities that operate carrier current, cable or daytime-only stations, at least in part because of lack of space available in the FM spectrum and the associated costs of broadcasting under current regulations.

LPFM is an issue that transcends college campuses. If the FCC proposal becomes the rule, many others could benefit, including local governments, neighborhood-based community groups, religious groups, minority groups and small businesses, which all might have interest in speaking to their local and nearby communities. Some in the indie rock world are already pushing low power radio as a forum for less-mainstream music; if LPFM is ruled to be non-commercial, as is being considered, the stations would be less conscious of major label promotion dollars. The FCC and LPFM advocates claim that it is vital to the survival and growth of community radio, especially in the wake of a 1996 ruling that removed caps on the number of commercial stations one entity could own, which sparked a

on the spectrum and from their literal transmitting sites—for LPFM radio. "This is a severe incursion on the rights of current license holders," his statement read. He also cited concerns about what LPFM might do to the quality of current broadcasts, opining that the proposal "potentially impairs the ability of current licensees to serve their listeners, who must not be forgotten; while new people may be able to broadcast, others may lose their ability to receive and listen to existing stations due to interference."

Another potential drawback of LPFM radio—voiced particularly by the powerful lobbying group, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)—is that moving forward with LPFM now would provide a significant stumbling block for the NAB's hopes of realizing digital radio.

Lynn Claudy, senior vice president of science and technology for the NAB, says that digital broadcasting is a priority for his organization. The NAB would like to see a simulcasting transition period, in which digital signals are broadcast in the adjacent channels of their analog counterparts, until analog can be phased out. And there simply isn't enough room on the FM spectrum—certainly not in major

one 1,000-watt station and a handful of 100-watt ones.

In its notice, the FCC acknowledges that there are many issues that need clarification. Which rules from commercial radio will apply to low-power stations? How, and to whom, will stations be awarded? Will they all be noncommercial? Is there to be a cap on the number of stations one entity can own? The FCC seeks comments from all interested parties. More information on offering your opinion (along with some very pro-LPFM viewpoints) can be found at <http://www.fcc.gov/mmb/prd/lpfm>.

Those on both sides of the issue say they are continuing to research their positions. Mike Bracy, executive director of the Low Power Radio Coalition, says he hopes commercial radio is willing to work with him. "If the NAB's primary concern is the technology and the impact on the FM band, I hope we can get the NAB and the FCC working together to look at the engineering to figure out where it's going to work and where it may have some challenges," he says. "But we also hope the NAB would acknowledge all the potential benefits that low power FM could bring."

NMM

For psych-rock troupe **Olivia Tremor Control**,  
dreams aren't reserved for sleep time.

Story: Andrea Moed Photos: Chris Billheimer

# Day Trippers



**Picture yourself in a boat on a river—you know, the one with the plasticene trees and so forth. Suddenly, you notice that the sky isn't diamonds, it's... a "Harpichord Canvas"?** There's a burst of

percussive burble and the song is over, before you can even finish saying its peculiar name. Welcome to the world of the Olivia Tremor Control. Psychedelia will never be the same again.

"I love the titles, it's just fun to make stuff up," says Olivias bandleader Will Cullen Hart. Over wildly expensive beers in a downtown Manhattan bar,

stashed in a corner.

But there was another side to the music. As a student of Surrealist painting once wrote, "In just about every work of art worth discussing, a dream has somewhere been caught and captured." Olivia Tremor Control, this decade's great Surrealist rock band, seems to take this principle for granted. "We're really interested in the idea of dreaming in a lot of different contexts," notes Hart. On *Dusk*, a series of dreamy pop songs surrounds a core that's a *musique concrète*-type suite called "Green

exploration. "We started having fun sampling ourselves," says Doss. Hart adds, "Like, if we did the horns that day, we'd sample that track, and everyone would go home and mess around with that. After a week or two, we'd bring in the tapes [we made]. It's an ongoing process of retooling." In that process, songs were taken apart, recombined and reworked. Parts of two or more songs were made into short interstitial pieces they called "combinations." A motif from the title track got spun out into five different "animation" pieces, which are scattered all

## "We're really interested in the idea of dreaming in a lot of different contexts."

Hart and his co-bandleader Bill Doss are revealing the secret origin of the six-second track listed on their new album as "The Sky Is A Harpichord Canvas." It seems that, like its spiritual ancestors the Dadaists and Paul McCartney, Olivia Tremor Control sometimes bases a composition on nothing more than an odd bit of language.

That same serendipity seems to have applied throughout the making of the new record, which is called *Black Foliage: Animation Music By The Olivia Tremor Control* (Flydaddy). The band began working on it two and a half years ago, with a raft of songs that didn't make it onto its massive first CD, *Music From The Unrealized Film Script Dusk At Cubist Castle*. More than any of its previous work, *Dusk* had made OTC's reputation beyond its hometown of Athens, Georgia, and its circle of socially and aesthetically aligned bands, known as the Elephant Six Recording Company. Scads of critics on both sides of the Atlantic proclaimed OTC the heir to the pop aesthetic forged on *Sgt. Pepper* and *Pet Sounds*. Incredibly, this band of four-track home-recorders managed to evoke an age of magical studios filled with organs, French horns, and glockenspiels, with the occasional string section

Typewriters," which was inspired by dreams and features crickets, typewriter keys, and mysterious voices. While the Olivias' live show consists mainly of pop songs, the band has recorded lots of the ambient stuff, releasing a CD of expansions on the "Typewriters" material and an EP made jointly with the Black Swan Network, a side project dedicated to making "sound sculptures" based on real dreams collected from their fans and collaborators.

The most obvious new development on *Black Foliage* is that the band's two languages have merged into one, an intricate and unpredictable mix of hooky, three-minute pop songs and fuzz-filled, ambient passages. "There are a lot of different things we do... full-on electronic music, our 'sculptures.' This time we were trying to cram it all into one thing and see what happens," says Hart. What holds all the music together is a sense of synaesthesia: Each track seems to contain as many images, feelings, and premonitions as sounds. The lyrics speak of "black foliage," "pleasant gray rain," or "several meanings," and the "sound environments" pick up the evocation where the words leave off.

As the group worked on the album, each newly recorded bit became an avenue for

over the record. Like the head in a jazz composition, the motif keeps recurring, each time in a different arrangement.

These variations are possible because the band has outdone itself instrumentally, packing an orchestra's worth of sound into each intensely layered track. As Doss explains, the Olivias got that range by recruiting at least 14 collaborators from among the local Elephant Six bands. "Julian from the Music Tapes plays accordion, singing saw, banjo, lots of weird instruments." And who's the new violinist? None other than OTC's horn player John Fernandes, who recently reconnected with his classical roots after getting his violin back from his mom.

Beer glasses drained, Hart and Doss get ready to move on to the evening's next interview stop. They made the trip from Athens to New York to promote the new record, but from the looks of it, they're just as busy gathering new material for the next prodigious batch of tunes. "We were just marveling earlier," says Doss, "that you go underground for a while and then you come up and you're in a whole different part of the city. This is just unreal!" They put on their hats and coats and head uptown, dream-catching.

NMM

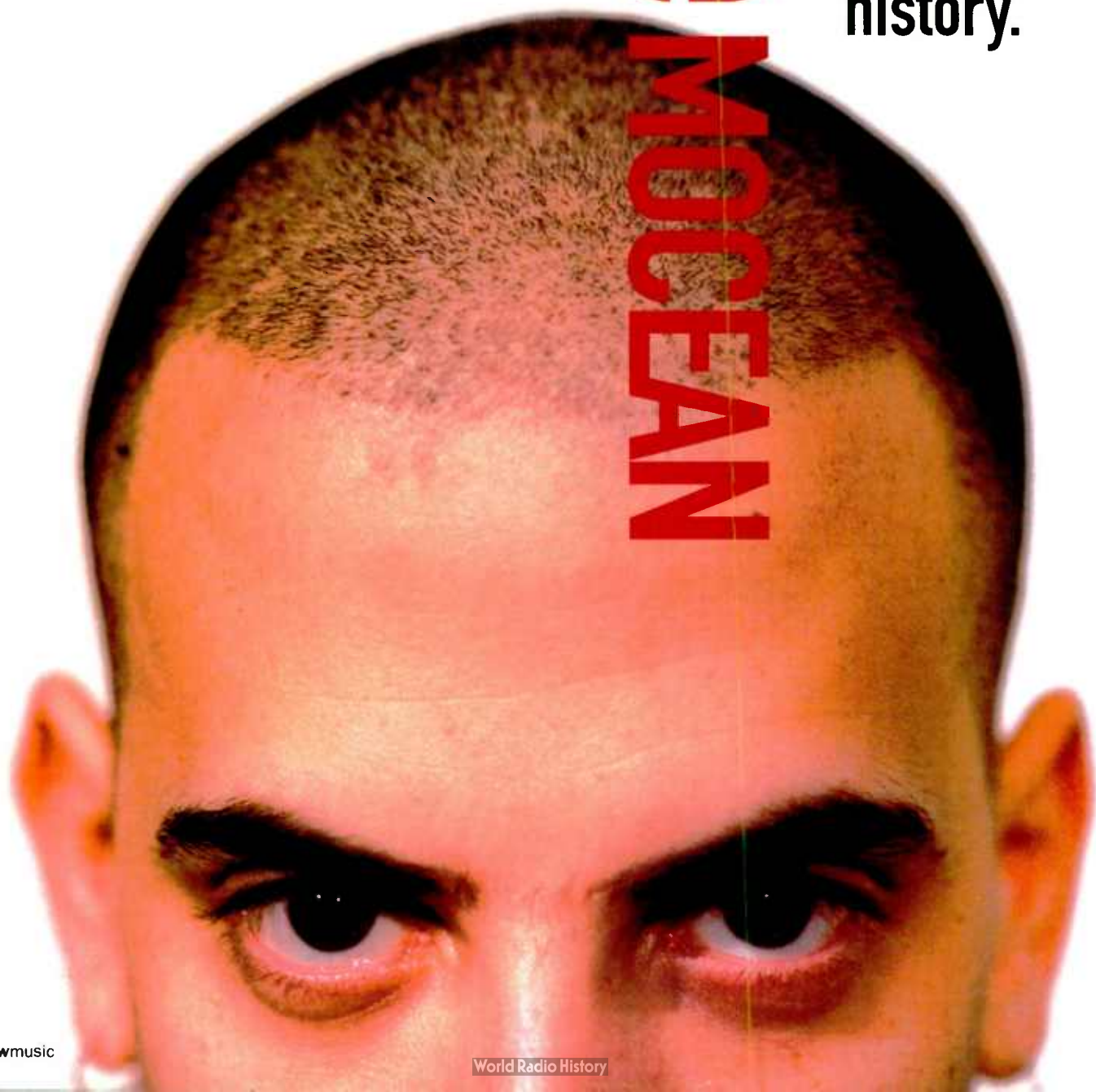


it's not the BEAT, **it's** Mocean  
Worker's

Adam Dorn  
jazzes up  
drum 'n  
bass with  
a sense of  
history.

Story: Andrew Beaujon Photos: Johnny Guinta

**it's the MOCEAN**





**“I always say that instead of going to my prom, I hung out with Miles Davis,”** says

Adam Dorn, who makes electronic music under the name Mocean Worker. He’s not talking about sitting in his room with headphones on, either: When Dorn was 16-years-old, he left high school to work with Marcus Miller, who produced Davis’s later records, as well as sides by Luther Vandross, Chaka Khan, and fusion stalwarts including David Sanborn and Michael Brecker. This early break was a touch of kismet, but it also had something to do with Dorn’s father, Joel, an A&R representative at Atlantic Records in the 1960s, whose own list of production credits hardly pales in comparison: Roberta Flack, Les McCann, and the Allman Brothers are but a few. As Adam’s eagerness to get started in the music biz grew, Miller’s wing was more than adequate shelter for the young bass guitar prodigy.

“I was his, I don’t want to say protégé, I just kind of hung out with him for two years before I went to college,” says the affable, closely shorn Dorn. “For me, the coolest thing was, I got to learn how Marcus made these records.” Dorn took his pedigree to Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he further honed his bass-playing skills before moving to France at the age of 22. “I wasn’t over there working with Daft Punk and all the French hip-hop, I was working on French pop records, so like,

Patrick Bruel, an actor who, in the French tradition, is also a pop star. From his tenure with Bruel, Dorn found work both with other French pop musicians on television and touring with teenybopper concerts called *la variété*. “It’s ten crappy artists—well, they’re not crappy, it’s like ten artists that sort of do the same thing,” says Dorn, “and they tend to all use American musicians, and I just happened to get in sync.”

After about a year and half, though, Dorn was ready for something else. “I got into dance music when I was in France,” he says. “I would just put the radio on and be like, ‘Whoa! What’s this?’ I was like, ‘I don’t want to work with Celine Dion. I want to work on stuff that pushes the fences back.’” So he returned to America, determined to put the synthesizers he’d been collecting to good use, and began making his own music under the name Mocean (pronounced “motion”) Worker. His early work, collected on the now-out-of print LP *Home Movies From The Brainforest*, set a pattern for his later work, with classy samples flavoring his beats.

“My buddy Steinski, he’s this guru of sampling, he was like, ‘You should do something with Mahalia Jackson,’” Dorn recalls. “That night I took the ‘Funky Drummer’ loop, slowed it down a lot, cut it up, and let [a Mahalia Jackson] record play straight into my DAT; it took about 20 minutes.” But he’s



recordings of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Billy Strayhorn. Dorn says that sample clearances for records that, as he puts it, “kind of sit under the radar” are a nightmare. “Unless you’re Snoop Doggy Dogg, you get a call back two or three months later. I tried for nine months to clear the Mahalia Jackson sample. When I finally got a call back, they’re like, ‘We want six cents a record and a \$10,000 advance.’ I said, ‘You know, I’m going to sell, like, 2,500 records! You’re crazy!’ My album budget was \$40.”

Dorn expresses admiration for fair-use pioneers like the Tape-beatles, sound collagists who construct new aural experiences from bits of already existing ones. “I love them. They’re just like, ‘You know what? Come after us, ‘cause we’re going to sell like four or five hundred.’ And in a weird way I kind of take that approach, because if someone who really, really, really knew music dug into my records, [they would

Records founder Chris Blackwell’s new label, Palm Pictures. A few days after we speak, Dorn is heading off to Britain to DJ at a party for the label, and at one for Howie B.’s Pussyfoot label, for which he and the producer Hal Willner made a house single. There’s just one problem: “I’m not really good,” he laughs. “I told them, ‘I’m not a DJ!’ and they were like, ‘Well, don’t worry about it—none of the other guys coming are DJs either!’” Dorn’s okay with the distinction, though. “There are the mega-DJs,” he says, “and then there are guys that just get by on their taste.”

Which Dorn has to burn, even if he’s still catching up with dance music. “I was in a record store last night talking to this guy DJ Prozac. I was like, ‘You know I don’t know anything about house music, give me some records!’ And these guys are really cool, they’re really supportive. They’re like, ‘I’m not going to fault you for not knowing about

**“If someone who really, really, really knew music dug into my records, I would owe hundreds of thousands of dollars for sampling. But you know what? You can’t find it.”**

not to be negative or anything, but I constantly was working on something that I hated. And I was really there with a girlfriend, so I kind of felt like there was no difference between [what I was doing and] me being a dishwasher in a restaurant. I would have actually preferred to have done that.”

In France, Dorn worked with

hardly Puffy Combs: The majority of Dorn’s samples are not as recognizable, and on his new record, *Mixed Emotional Response* (Palm Pictures), most of the identifiable nicks are from recordings owned by 32 Jazz, the reissue label Dorn runs with his father. One in particular, “Counts, Dukes & Strays,” is built almost entirely from 32

discover some big names and] I would owe hundreds of thousands of dollars for sampling them. But you know what? You can’t find it; you can’t come check out my hard drive.”

That hard drive will probably be gathering dust over the next year, as Dorn gears up to promote his new record, one of the first releases on Island

something ‘cause you know about other stuff.’ It’s kind of nice. ‘Cause at some levels of electronica, it’s kind of close-minded: ‘Yo, we gotta keep this real, we gotta keep this underground, you got to know your history.’ And I’m like, ‘History? Do you know who Chick Webb is? ‘Cause we can go way, way back!’”

NMM

Story: Natalie Nichols Photos: Chapman Baehler

# NUMEROdose

The Latin Playboys offer up a second batch of tweaked songs and sounds.

Not that Los Lobos is kaput, or even on hiatus; the Lobos will release a new album, their first for Hollywood Records, this spring. It's just that one band isn't enough for these guys. Gathered in a lounge at Froom and Blake's Hollywood HQ, the Sunset Sound Factory, where many modern classics—including both Playboys albums—have been crafted, they explain why they need other outlets. "It's the new hustle theory," jokes Hidalgo, who has another project in blues act Hounddog (more on that in a minute) and last year joined Los Super Seven with Lobos bandmate Cesar Rosas and such luminaries as Flaco Jimenez, Freddy Fender, and Joe Ely. "We just try to find little things to do between [Los Lobos] albums, and eke out an income so we don't have to kill ourselves on the road."

But seriously, a creative, long-lived act like Los Lobos can't go off on every tangent the members dream up and still hold its collective center. Outside projects are "an opportunity to go off on a little fishing trip," says Perez, "and when we come back, we're just better dads to our kids. We had a chance to go out and have a good time with the boys."

What better fun could a bunch of knob-twiddling multi-instrumentalists have than playing around with a wonky four-track cassette of fascinating musical bits that Hidalgo recorded in his kitchen? That singular recording, tape anomalies and all, formed the basic tracks for the first Latin Playboys album. "Noise doesn't bother us," says engineer Blake, "except when it's louder than the music! Sometimes we had to add noise, or maybe an instrument or outdoor sounds, to cover it up. It wasn't always,

'Wouldn't it sound nice here if we had birds chirping?'" The arrangements were similarly constrained, says Froom. "Dave put those tracks down as ideas, thinking he would later organize them into popular-song structures. So that led us down a different path, too."

What motivated the quartet to follow that offbeat track again? The heady freedom of it all, says Froom. Not to mention the prospect of going on the road, adds Blake, happily pointing to the band's freshly minted spring tour schedule. Recording with the Latin Playboys "was a completely exhilarating experience," rhapsodizes Froom. "If you're producing a singer-songwriter, you have to worry about serving the song, and bringing out their personality. This is much more free-spirited. We don't have any A&R guys saying stupid things. If Dave sings the wrong words, but they sound good, then those are the words. There's more of a sense of abandon."

The process was actually a bit less chaotic this time. The Playboys went hi-tech and used an eight-track for the basic tracks for *Dose*, although most were still recorded at Hidalgo's house. The finished album is another eccentric collection of evocative instrumentals and English-Spanish vignettes, if cleaner sounding, trippier, and more groove-oriented than those on the debut. But the reverberating core of bone-rattling percussion, minimal acoustic riffs, and wide-open space is remarkably similar. That's the sonic thumbprint of Froom, of course, who gave a similar shimmering, out-of-time patina to Los Lobos' 1993 album, *Kiko*.

As much as they love being Latin Playboys, Froom and Blake are modest about their contributions. "We add stuff around the edges," says Froom. "We're the sweetening team," demurs Blake. But Perez emphasizes, "What Tchad does, and what Mitchell does, are components of what Latin Playboys is." Their arid aural

landscapes perfectly frame Perez's lyrics, which prove more impressionistic than his Los Lobos work. Such fleeting but vivid portraits of East LA life as "Dose," "Latin Trip," and "Cuca's Blues" are funny, poignant, and profound—sometimes all at once.

"I had more freedom to express things about time and place, but not necessarily tell a



story," says Perez. "It's not the traditional songwriting technique, where you follow the syncopation of the melody and just fill in the blanks. There isn't any melody, it's just this bed of music, and whatever atmosphere that music creates."

The song "Ironsides," for example, captures the fuss

"You think differently when you're doing something else," notes Hidalgo. "The Lobos have a certain mind set, the Latin Playboys have another." And Hidalgo had yet another mind set for Houndog, his collaboration with veteran LA musician Mike Halby. The

Latin Playboys in its angular percussion and spare arrangements. They even seem a bit eccentric for using a violin—not a lead instrument usually associated with the blues—on such tracks as "No Chance." The concept originated in the late '50s, says Hidalgo, with LA

go there. Mike asked me, 'Well, do you play violin?' And I said, 'Yeah, well, I'll try it.' So it became part of the sound."

"That's why I like the record so much," interrupts Froom. "The hardest thing to make now is a blues record. It all sounds recycled, like a beer commercial."

**"We don't have any A&R guys saying stupid things. If Dave sings the wrong words, but they sound good, then those are the words."**

and chaos surrounding a family's trip to the movies in the father's beloved truck, whose charms aren't as apparent to the kids. "Louie does all the voices," says Froom, "but he doesn't change his inflection, so you can't tell who's talking. That's a real Latin Playboys kind of idea." As in, slightly tweaked.

pair met through a mutual friend and, over three years of intermittent sessions at Halby's home studio, recorded the tunes that comprise the album *Houndog* (Columbia Legacy), a raw-edged collection of romantic laments.

Though drawn from the deep well of the blues, *Houndog* faintly recalls the

musician Don "Sugarcane" Harris of Don & Dewey and, later, Frank Zappa fame.

"He was the inspiration for that," says Hidalgo. "There was space for some sort of a lead instrument, like where a harp would traditionally go. But we didn't want to use a harp. We couldn't play it anyway, but we didn't want to

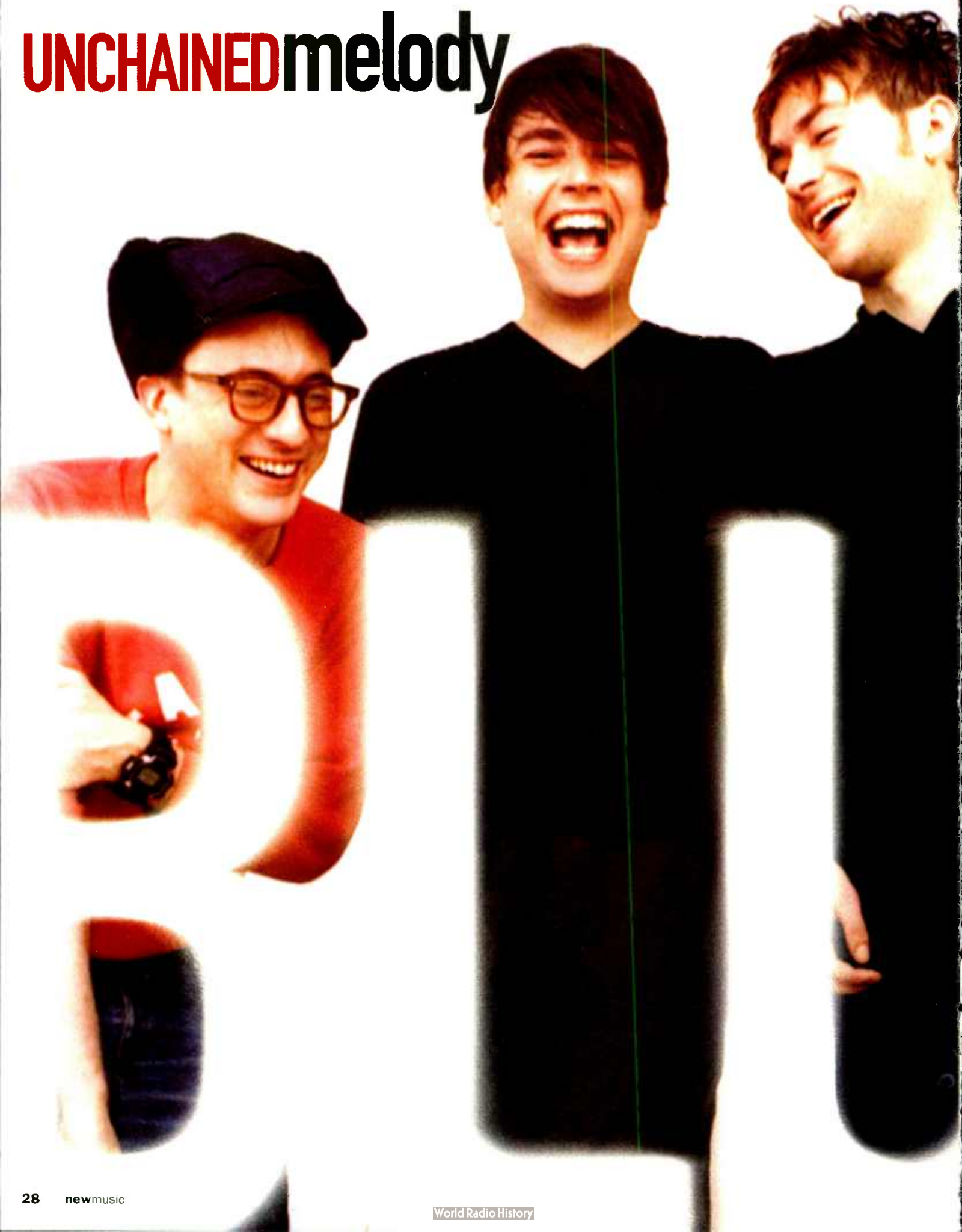
I haven't heard a new blues record I like, except *Houndog*." To Hidalgo he quips, "You owe me!"

Hidalgo just laughs softly, pleased that he and Halby managed to transmit their respect for the music. "We were just trying to brush by, just capture the essence of the blues," he says. "It's cool that we got to where we got." **NMM**



L-R: BLAKE, FROOM, PEREZ, HIDALGO

# UNCHAINEDmelody



**Damon Albarn** has broken free of Brit-pop, broken through in America with—woo-hoo!—"Song 2" and broken up with his rocker girlfriend. Is Blur's new **13** his lucky number?

**Story: Tom Lanham**  
**Photos: Rankin**

L-R: COXON, JAMES, ALBARN, ROWNTREE  
COVER GROOMING BY GABRIEL TRUJILLO @ RED SALON NYC

**Wraparound sunglasses masking his bleary scarlet eyes, a visibly hung-over Damon Albarn shuffles into the lobby of his chi-chi New York hotel at 10 a.m. and downs the first glass of orange juice he can get his trembling hands on.** Then

another. And then he switches to steamy cups of coffee. Each opening of the establishment's huge drawbridge of a front door sends another gust of brisk winter air blasting towards him; even in his sweater, puffy parka and regulation army fatigues, the man shivers like an igloo-tied whippet. Not much he can do about it—folks keep checking in, checking out. But 48 hours earlier, conditions for one of Britain's pop darlings were worse. Much, much worse.

Liquor wasn't involved. And there were no espresso machines handy to fend off frostbite. Two days ago, Albarn—tabloid-hounded frontman for UK chart darlings Blur—was just another adventurer, conquering a monolithic, blue-hued glacier in the unforgiving wilds of Iceland. Just a speck on the jagged horizon when the winds—literally the worst the North

# "I'm no longer a rock musician. I'm a composer."



and potentially lethal, outdoorsy pursuits: snowmobiling across half-frozen fjords and over mountains land-mined with bottomless crevasses; four-wheeling up 45-degree glacial slopes for a picnic at the summit; diving headfirst into open-air, geyser-heated pools in the dead of winter, when some 20-odd hours of darkness blanket the nation daily. But Albarn isn't passing through on a dilettante trip, as some carpetbagging spiritual/cultural tourist. "Iceland is part of my soul," he swears. Half Scandinavian from his mother's side, he terms his interest in Northern lands a "roots thing" that began several years ago, "when I had a recurring dream about a beach with black sand. And then I saw a picture of Iceland, and it was a beach with black sand. So it was obviously an ongoing subconscious dialogue, and I reconciled it by going there and buying a house and making peace with this part of my subconscious."

In 1996, as his quartet was mapping the strange sonic territory of its fifth album *Blur*, Albarn followed his dream and visited Iceland for the first time. Now, he smiles contentedly when talking of his adopted country. "They treat me like one of their own these days, even though I've been incredibly negligent about learning their language. I love the place, love the people, and I'm not there looking for a wife or anything. And actually, when I first went there, I think that's what they thought I was all about. But I like the landscape, and the land and the nature are very captivating and I feel very at peace there. I write most of my songs there, I sing all of my songs there." For several minutes, he enthuses over some of his favorite Icelandic sights—a volcano-abutting glacier topped by two giant ice formations in the shape of devil's horns. A witch who lives down the road, beneath the protection of a waterfall. "Ghosts, little people, spirits—it's all flying around," he whispers. "It's the old religion. There's a bit of it in my mother, so I was brought up with the old religion, definitely brought up more with that than Christianity. And I mean the old religion—feeling the nature, understanding that just because something isn't there in front of you doesn't mean that it isn't there."

Albarn lowers his defensive shades for a minute, blinks his swollen, mole-like eyes through long, unkempt auburn bangs. He seems to be wondering, "Am I getting through? Is my point clear enough?" If not, one listen to *13*—Blur's new William Orbit-produced experiment (Virgin)—should clarify matters. If the grinding indie rock-influenced *Blur*—whose grungy, "Woo-hoo"-ing "Song 2" not only broke the group in America, but wormed its way into film soundtracks and even an Intel TV commercial—saw Albarn and company crawling out on a primal rock limb

Atlantic island had experienced in a century—came storming across the terrain. "It was so cold that I really felt physically sick," relates Albarn, after repairing to a well-heated alcove near the front desk. "I mean, bone-chilling cold. And because there were such bad gales, all the snow had turned into big hard waves." He reaches for the coffee cup, warming his hands to drive away the frigid memory. "Ummm, it wasn't exactly Orange County."

Still, the London-based Albarn maintains a permanent part-time residence in Reykjavik. He also maintains a proprietary interest in Kaffibarinn, one of the city's hottest restaurant/nightclubs. He's participated in the country's rugged,





within pop music, you can't really let yourself go, it's just too straight and narrow. And I've gotten really bored of things being so limited."

"Limited" is not a word that readily applies to Blur's mold-shattering *13*. Albarn had rocketed to fame via hits like "Stereotypes" and '95's "Country House" (the release date of which he cleverly rescheduled to coincide with—and then defeat—arch-rival Oasis's "Roll With It" at the very apex of Brit-pop mania). He sang these hum-along, music hall-ish ditties in an exaggerated Cockney accent that simultaneously spoofed and coddled the English working class. But *13* features less irony, more heart-on-sleeve honesty, as in the seven-minute opening ballad "Tender." It starts tentatively, on a tinny microcassette-recorded guitar line from Coxon that's pure backwoods American twang, then mortars its musical bricks into an imposing, Gospel-choired wall that echoes Lennon's "Give Peace A Chance" as much as it does vintage Johnny Cash. And Albarn's walking-wounded ruminations (he recently ended what overseas music circles regarded as a poster-perfect romance with Elastica's Justine Frischmann) are delivered in his natural voice, without poncey affectation: "Tender is the touch of someone that you love too much... Lord, I need to find someone who can heal my mind." It finishes in a pep-talk flourish: "Come on, come on, come on/Get through it... love's the greatest thing that we have."

And, aside from another relationship tearjerker, "No Distance Left To Run," that's about as linear as the record gets. No sooner have the gentle tones of "Tender" faded than "Bugman" bulldozes in, on a scratchy, squealing head of Coxon guitar steam, with a vocoder-muffled Albarn woofing in tandem.

**"It's so blatantly a drug record. All those fucking bleeps and echoes, man? You don't do that normally."**

after four discs' worth of cynical Brit-pop, *13* is the sound of them sawing. Sawing so furiously at that limb, Blur—as a concept, as music, as people—is about to drop into one helluva creative free-fall. "I really got myself caught up in some heavy shit in England, you know, real bad shit," Albarn confides, sliding low into his seat, kicking off his shoes and propping his feet on the marble table. "And I had to get away. So I got away, I got that distance, and I think this record gives us an opportunity to go where we want and be who we are, to go wherever." He pauses, pondering the right word. "Unchained. Unchained is a very good term for it."

Blur guitarist Graham Coxon—a spindly, elastic-limbed chap who appears lost inside his marshmallowy anorak—stumbles downstairs a few moments after Albarn. He softly scratches his nap-shaven head, trying to shake his own hellish hangover, the first he's suffered in months. Bassist Alex James is so hammered, he's still upstairs, can't drag himself out of bed. Coxon doesn't like Iceland, he says, thinks it's too wild, too lawless. "Some psycho will blow your head off there for no reason at all, just because he's pissed," he declares, before a tamer amendment: "Well, I get that idea, ya know?" His girlfriend is Swedish; he prefers Sweden. Historically, he's seen his position in Blur as something of a tug-of-war: No matter how hard he prods the material in a dissonant direction, he sighs, "Damon's songs usually turn into chart-friendly things, and whatever I do will never make any difference." But Coxon agrees with the "unchained" metaphor. Regular verse-bridge-chorus structure—the kind that shackled Blur for two of its most popular overseas efforts, the Brit-pop flagships *Parklife* and *The Great Escape*—felt to him "like imprisonment. When you're working





("I love the idea of using and twisting clichés, like the hammering-on-silly-metal solo in the middle of that song," Coxon snickers wickedly.) A troika of atonal anomalies bisects the disc—"1992," "Battle" and a punky send-up/salute to the corporate parent of the band's UK label, Food, "B.L.U.R.E.M.I." (Quips Albarn, "It was like, 'Can we get away with singing this song and [EMI] understanding why we're singing it?' And if we can, and they do, then it'll be a great year.") Three numbers that resonate like dream sequences flesh out the second half—the lounge-music-from-hell "Trailerpark," a surreal anti-pop pastiche called "Caramel," and "Trimm Trabb," which, according to Albarn, is "the very last of my sort of ambiguous songs. I think it sounds like U2, like something off *Achtung Baby*."

But *13* does not make itself apparent to the listener the first time through. Like all pivotal works, it demands scrutiny, thought, consideration. And don't get caught up in its emotional eddies, Albarn warns. "I mean, I haven't lost faith in love or anything, but 'Tender' and 'No Distance' are pretty succinct, and they're exactly how I feel. It's easy enough for me to see Justine—the songs say that—but I'd rather just be left alone. It was very, very slow, agonizing degrees of separation for us. But finally, thank God, both of us just realized, 'Enough already.' It was a battle of wills." Since the separation, the

**"I just decided that I love music so much, why fucking beat around the bush? Just get married to it."**

singer has been linked to All Saints' Shaznay Lewis ("If I was more of a man, I'd take her for a wife," he deadpans) and a new mystery girl whose identity the British tabloids are offering cash rewards to discover. Albarn shrugs, rolls his eyes. "I have no private life," he moans, as yet another cute female hotel employee—the fifth this morning—waves to him as she sashays past. Going into *13*, he adds, "I had nothing to lose. Nothing to lose but to sort of... marry music. I just decided that I love music so much, so why fucking beat around the bush? Just get married to it."

Albarn is more than confident about *13*—he's almost defiant. In fact, the only time he shows any uneasiness at all is at the mention of "Bug Man," whose paranoid, scattered imagery feels as brain-fried as Hunter Thompson's *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*. "Well, the Bug Man is... out there... in the city," the Blur mouthpiece falters. "Uh... but let's not talk about drugs on this record, because..." Because why? "Because it's so blatantly a drug record. All those fucking bleeps and echoes, man? You don't do that normally. But I didn't do any of those. I just sat around and listened to people doing them. In my head." But isn't Albarn fairly anti-drug? He nods. "I am anti-drugs. I always have been, always will be." So what's the substance in question? He lowers his shades again, scans the lobby to make sure no one's within earshot. "Marijuana," he draws. So *13* is a pot album? Albarn giggles with impish delight. "Oh, yeah! Absolutely!"

Coxon, Albarn and James all recently turned 30. Drummer Dave Rowntree—who's remained in London with his wife—is five years their senior. This year marks the outfit's tenth anniversary. Following in Albarn's adventurous footsteps, Blur's other members have doggedly pursued outside interests: Rowntree is involved in computer animation, James does double-duty in the hard-drinking novelty act Fat Les, and Coxon owns his own label, Transcopic, which issued his first solo foray last year, *The Sky's Too High*.

## Jason Falkner

*Can You Still Feel?*

His new album featuring  
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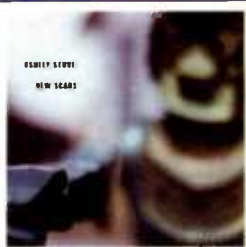


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**ASHLEY STOVE**

**New Scars**

Merge

**OUT:**

February 16.

**FILE UNDER:**

Melodic Chapel Hill guitar pop.

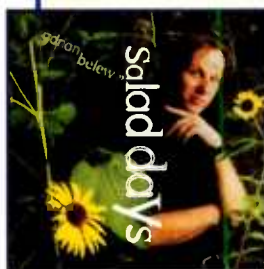
**R.I.Y.L.:**

Recent Superchunk, Spent, Connells.

Ashley Stove is a veteran of the North Carolina pop scene, with two small-label CDs and several singles under its belt. With *New Scars* the band graduates to the higher profile Merge label, and the fit is as comfortable as a pair of trusty corduroys. If there's such a thing as a Merge sound, Ashley Stove has captured it pretty well. The group's vibe is similar to Superchunk's on *Indoor Living*, albeit with a gentler touch to the guitars and a less anthemic sense

of melody. Like Mac McCaughan, Ben Barwick wields a raspy regular guy voice that strains endearingly at the higher registers. Barwick and Matt Brown's ringing guitars have enough scuff marks around the corners that *New Scars* doesn't qualify as lo-fi, but no one blew a wad on a production budget, either. One shortcoming is a lack of variety: After front-loading the disc with distinctive tracks like "Fire" and "24 Kisses," much of the remaining 49 minutes settles into good-not-great sameness. Ashley Stove has made a small, unassuming record, and those with a discerning pop collection should make room for such an accomplishment.

>>>Glen Sarvady



**ADRIAN BELEW**

**Salad Days**

Thirsty Ear

**OUT:**

February 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Arty acoustic pop, homestyle

**R.I.Y.L.:**

David Byrne, later King Crimson, XTC.

The idea behind *Salad Days* isn't unprecedented (Sparks and Wire have tackled similar projects), but remains an interesting conceit: crafting a greatest hits/tribute CD that recasts one's own back catalog in a starkly different light. The oddity in Adrian Belew's case is that he willingly neutralizes his calling card as a guitar pyrotechnician by opting for solo acoustic interpretations. Belew's retrenchment to his home studio shifts the focus to his songwriting, and that's not entirely a bad thing. He proves to be an astute self-critic, harvesting the standouts

from solo albums spanning 15 years as well as selections from his work in both the '80s and '90s incarnations of King Crimson. Most versions consist of nothing more than Belew's voice with a shimmering acoustic guitar, captured with such presence he might as well be at the corner coffeehouse (in fact, many of these takes were previously available on limited edition CDs sold only at Belew's solo shows). Most impressive is the reimagining of the formerly rocking "Men In Helicopters" as a piece for string quartet and voice. The occasional integration of world rhythms betrays a debt to Belew's work with Talking Heads. *Salad Days* will prove of greater interest to fans able to juxtapose these tracks to the originals, but the pared-down melodies are sturdy enough to intrigue newcomers as well.

>>>Glen Sarvady



**NATACHA ATLAS**

**Gedida**

Beggars Banquet

**OUT:**

March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Pan-Arab, dance floor-savvy chanteuse.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Transglobal Underground, Anoka: Soundz Of The Asian Underground, Sheila Chandra.

Political and religious conflicts in the Middle East have long been divisive rather than uniting factors. But on the dance floor, nobody knows your affiliations. Natacha Atlas, whose heritage is both Sephardic and Muslim, is one of the progenitors of a pan-Arabic groove society that takes cues from traditions as varied as the indigenous vocal styles of Morocco and Egypt, '60s soundtrack lushness and '90s drum 'n' bass dance music. Atlas, a collaborator with Transglobal Underground and singer of unparalleled nuance, brings

these elements together in songs whose simple, yet penetrating, poetry is brought to life by the seductive rhythms of North Africa. There are a few East-meets-West clichés on her second album, *Gedida*, but when it starts to really pulse it maintains a musical vocabulary that's all her own. Atlas's voice, which generally moves in a high register, is limber and evocative. In "Bastet," she performs a sinuous rap on "distorted political, religious belief systems" that is an inspiring plea for rationality and liberation. In "The Righteous Path," Atlas curves her voice around the Morricone-like guitars and strings in a prayer of hope. With *Gedida*, which means "new" in Arabic, Natacha Atlas proves that getting down can be a form of diplomacy.

>>>Lois Maffeo



**BOREDOMS**

**Super AR**

Birdman

**OUT:**

December 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Electro-noise psych-out.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Can, Ghost, early Butthole Surfers.

From the first US appearance of the Boredoms in the early '90s, there seemed to be something downright religious about the band. Two furious drummers, Yoshimi P-We's blow-down-Jericho trumpet blasts, and leader Eye Yamatsuka's polyphonic screaming and ritualistic fixation on words like "anal" all suggested an ascension beyond mere adrenaline, to a punk ecstasy that seemed to defy the containment of stage or stereo. These days the Boredoms sound more contained than ever—at least acoustically. In his current role as producer, tape manipulator, and

knob twiddler, Eye aims precisely at the space between your headphoned ears. It's there that you can best appreciate the interlocking drum parts on "Super Are," the Ping-Pong action of two keyboards, or the slow morph of a voice into a vocoder howl. At the same time, his compositions and the band's playing and vocalizing have grown more expansive. Tracks like "Super Going" build on the drone experiments of the recent *Super Roots* records, blending repetitive grooves and sung syllables in a style reminiscent of Can and other European proto-disco. But while the Boredoms may have discovered mellow, their devotional fervor is undiminished. Savoring the transitions from bass-driven bombast to shimmering trance to melodic call-and-response and back again, *Super AR* makes a ritual out of subtlety.

>>>Andrea Moed



**BURNING AIRLINES**

**Mission: Control!** DeSoto

Resurfacing as Burning Airlines, Jawbox guitarist Bill Barbot (on bass here) and singer/guitarist J. Robbins, along with Pete Moffett (Wool, Government Issue), have come up with a nicely executed pop album. There are some neat tricks, as on "Three Sisters," a deliciously murky ballad that begins with an X-Ray Spex guitar riff and ends with the bass ringing scratchily like plucked piano strings. And it's hard to argue with Robbins's solid tenor rattling off world-worn concessions, like "I learned to love/The taste of bitter fictions/The ring of contradictions." Mostly, *Mission:*

*Control!* has the stamp of herky-jerk, XTC-esque pop, notably the title track kicks off with sharp woo-woo-oo-ing. "Crowned" indulges in flighty imagery ("Crowned in the candy coronation"), goofy, staccato guitar lines and group-shouted vocals worthy of *Drums And Wires*. Not that XTC's Partridge and Moulding didn't rock hard, but done up by the Burning Airlines, the poppy proceedings can be overwrought. Even "Meccano," which spins around a patch of hardcore drumming, isn't grating enough to stick in the craw. To be sure, the band's confident delivery of straightforward tunes and cynical lyrics makes the album immediately likable, even without any full-bore immediacy. *Control?* Mission accomplished. But one can't help feeling robbed of one sweet, ground-busting rocket launch. >>>Callie Chapman

**OUT:**  
February 15.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Pop painted by hardcore.  
**R.I.V.L.:**  
XTC, Foo Fighters, Fretblanket, Jawbox.



**ROKY ERICKSON**

**Never Say Goodbye** Emperor Jones

Some say Roky Erickson is touched by genius, others say he's touched by madness. Who would have thought that he's touched by the poetry of humanity? Between the acid evangelism of the 13th Floor Elevators, and the apocalyptic alien imagery of his early '80s work, you'd have little ground for calling Erickson a romantic. But that's precisely the word that comes to mind while listening to *Never Say Goodbye*, a collection of "field recordings" made in the early '70s—the "field" in this case being his bedroom and a state mental

institution in Rusk, Texas. The fidelity of these recordings is strikingly crude—not in a cool "bedroom rock" kind of way, but rather, in a voyeuristic, "did he really intend for anyone to hear this?" kind of way. That question notwithstanding, there's a lot to be gleaned from these songs. They constitute Erickson's own *John Wesley Harding*. Like Dylan's *Harding*, *Goodbye* is informed by trauma (for Dylan it was a debilitating motorcycle accident, for Erickson it was sanitarium incarceration), it searches for reconciliation, it covets the simple human elements—love, family, home—long obscured by the baggage of fame and drugs. *Never Say Goodbye* isn't a stunner from start to finish, but its best songs belong among the classic loner works of Syd Barrett, Skip Spence or Sly Stone. >>>Matt Hanks

**OUT:**  
February 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Sanitarium homesick blues.  
**R.I.V.L.:**  
Early Sebadoh, Mountain Goats, Syd Barrett.



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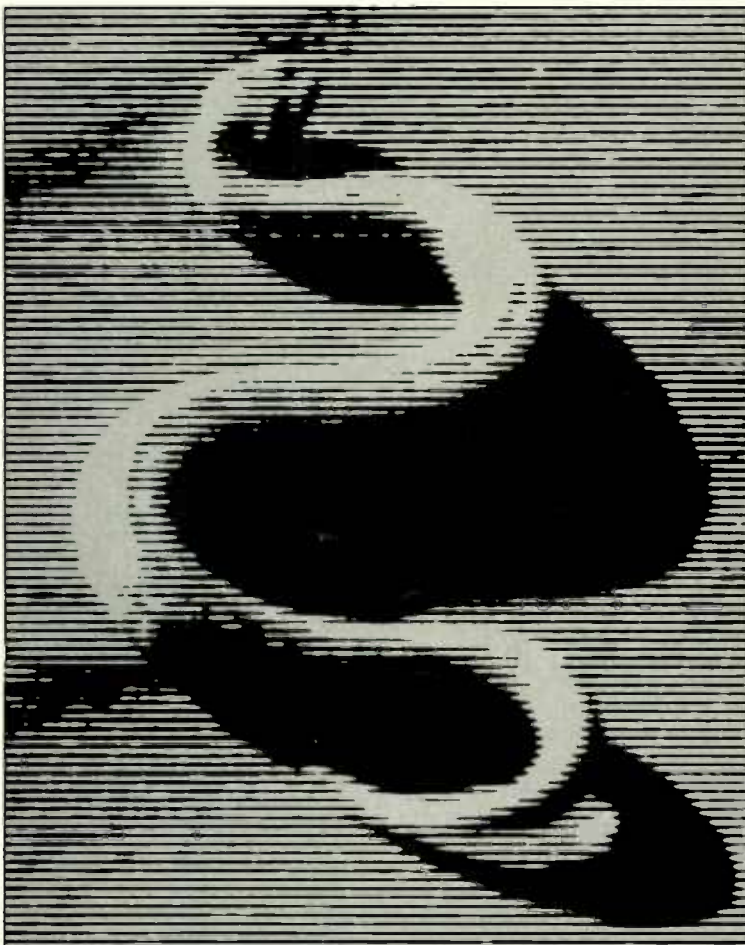


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## reviews

R.I.Y.L.-RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Sweeping soul-pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Paul Weller, Fourtains Of Wynona,  
Ben Folds Five.

## JASON FALKNER

Can You Still Feel?



Elektra

Few guitarists and songwriters know their way around a pop hook as well as Jason Falkner, the LA musician who first appeared with Jellyfish in 1990, briefly resurfaced with the Grays, and went on to release an underrated solo debut a few years later. On the follow-up, *Can You Still Feel?*, he's altered the focus; the catchy melodic devices now serve as pivot points for displays of his improved vocal skills. Falkner's a crooner, a balladeer, a rock star and a folkie, slipping into each role with the

assuredness of a seasoned character actor. In "Author Unknown," Falkner assumes a subtle snarl to accompany the crunching riffs and stop-start rhythms. The synth-laced, pseudo-psychedelic "Holiday" finds him climbing the register as he draws out pithy phrases. In the alternately sedate and anthemic "I Already Know," Falkner adopts a sensitive-guy tone for the baroque-flavored verses but steps into a metal-tinged shriek in the choruses. The end result could have been dizzying and strained, but Falkner has become a soulful, intuitive singer-songwriter, and the entire record—which was co-produced by Nigel Godrich, famed for his work on Radiohead's *OK Computer*—is flawlessly executed.

>>>Richard Martin



**OUT:**

January 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Catchy psychedelic pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Happy Mondays, Brian Jonestown  
Massacre, Spiritualized.

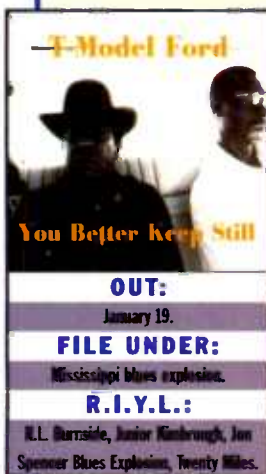
## FAMILY OF GOD

We Are The World

Sugar Free

The liner notes to *We Are The World* bear the cryptic message "the word is not the thing." You can presume that Family Of God masterminds Adam Peters and Chris Brick are referring to other people's words, because they pack lots of messages into their psychedelic pop, dreamy space rock and hypnotic dance tracks. The problem is whether or not to take them seriously, because some of the mantras here ("we're hypnotized by culture and technology") make more sense than others ("tattoos are going quickly, get a tattoo while you can"). British expatriates Peters and Brick make an unlikely pair—Peters (a former keyboardist and string arranger for Echo & The Bunnymen) coos dreamy vocals, while Brick (owner of hipster clothing stores in New York City) rants like a crazy man. But each of their vocal parts adds extra personality to an already wild assortment of sounds—acoustic guitars and tambourines, electric guitar effects and a myriad of keyboard sounds. The closing track's 17-minute ranting drags on too long, but otherwise FOG's mix of melody and madness makes for interesting listening. Whether or not you want to join Family Of God's revolution, you can still groove to it.

>>>Wendy Mitchell

**T-MODEL FORD****You Better Keep Still**

Fat Possum

**OUT:**

January 19.

**FILE UNDER:**

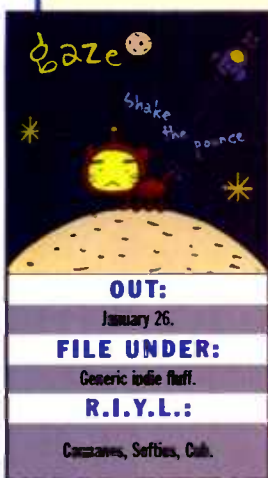
Mississippi blues explosion.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

R.L. Burriside, Junior Kimbrough, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Twenty Miles.

kicked up more mud, rock, and shrapnel than Boss Hog on a Ten High bender without even trying to get pretty. This time Ford sets his guitar aside, wonders what it would be like to be pretty, and, well, wings it over nothing more than Spam's rickety beat on the first tune, "If I Had Wings (Part 1)." It's something of an oddity from someone who's an odd guy to begin with. Later, he has Sonic Youth/Blues Explosion buddy Jim Waters remix a track ("Pop Pop Pop") into the sort of hip-hop funk jam that really pisses off blues purists, which isn't really such a bad thing. But Ford's still at his best when he's recklessly cruising on a blues riff with Spam riding shotgun or taking a trad blues tune like "The Old Hunter" for a spin.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Matt Ashare

**GAZE****Shake The Pounce**

K

**OUT:**

January 26.

**FILE UNDER:**

Generic indie fluff.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

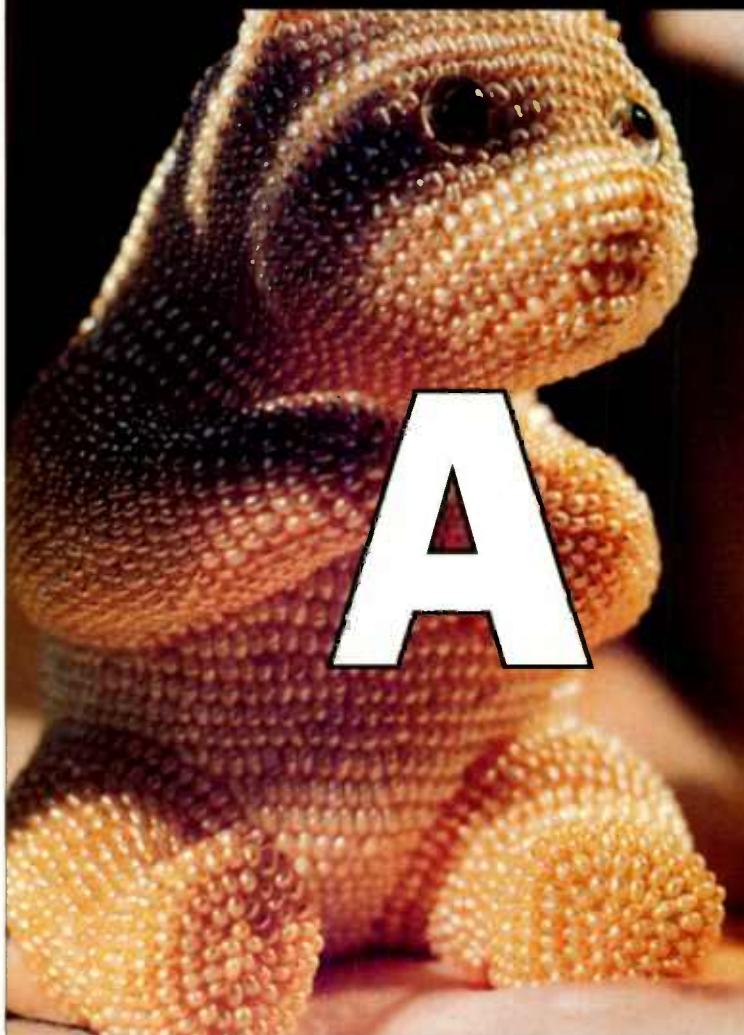
Cascades, Softies, Cali.

band does so little to rise above the rest. At its worst, the songs on the group's second album sound not-quite-fleshed-out, in a way that makes it seem as if the three players thought they didn't have to work that hard on it—and maybe that's true, since it appears that these days, we ask less and less of our lightweight pop (even that of the lowest-fi). Singer Miko Hoffman's atonality does little to lift the too-often trite lyrics out of the mire. The hit on this record is really Gaze's cover of Game Theory's "Nine Lives To Rigel Five," with harmonizing that could beat the best of them. But the standout moments the trio achieves here are too few and far between, and even drummer Rose Melberg's stellar coattails (Softies, Tiger Trap) can't take this band for a ride.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Liz Clayton

# PAN SONIC

"PAN SONIC obliterate all traces of humanity or melody through the use of cold, robotic beats and mangled samples until the music resembles alien communications."  
- *Alternative Press*



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- *Time Out, NY*

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**GOLDIE**

**Ring Of Saturn**

frr-London

Goldie's landmark debut *Timeless* wove uplifting female vocals over stone cold drum 'n' bass, earning his reputation as a fearless jungle avatar and putting drum 'n' bass on the commercial map. Given the high-water mark of *Timeless*, it's hardly surprising that his ambitious subsequent efforts struggle to match up. *Saturnz Return*, his follow-up, somewhat frustratingly mixed moments of intense beauty (the Latin-tinged "Dragonfly") with wearying self-indulgence (the hour-plus autobiographical "Mother"). *Ring Of Saturn*, pegged by Goldie as "a natural evolution" from *Saturnz Return*,

combines remixes (including efforts by Grooverider and Optical) with new tracks and a more manageable edit of "Mother." The three versions of "What You Won't Do for Love" intrigue, but ultimately underscore the superiority of the version dominated by Diane Charlemagne's soulful vocals. So far in Goldie's work, Charlemagne's singing has provided welcome islands of relief in a sea of digital battery. But the new tracks here suggest that jungle's poster boy is now eager to phase out her human touch. He appears intent on following an increasingly experimental and abrasive trajectory, replacing the soaring peaks of *Timeless* with a harsher, industrial soundscape that jars rather than transports. If *Ring Of Saturn* represents Goldie's natural evolution, take fair warning, and expect his next project, *Sonic Terrorism*, to be just that. >>>Sarah Pratt

**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Industrial drum 'n' bass.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Grooverider, Boymerang, Spring Heel Jack, Roni Size, Optikal.



**JOHN WESLEY HARDING**

**Trad Arr Jones**

Zero Hour

Those who decry today's movie and TV violence as an indication that the modern world has been driven bloodthirsty should take a listen to traditional folk music. Talk about blood and guts! The plot lines of 17th to 19th century English and Scottish folk tunes are as hot-blooded, treacherous and love-forsaken as *Melrose Place*. The traditional songs on *Trad Arr Jones* were arranged, written or rewritten by Nic Jones, a prolific folk performer whose career was curtailed following

a 1982 car crash. As reverently covered by modern-day folk star John Wesley Harding, these tragic love stories, sea chanteys and handdog eulogies capture the old school action of yore in simple, acoustic readings. Love never shines brighter than when it's threatened by a long absence. So the proto-feminist in "William And Nancy's Parting" plots to come along on her sailor lover's voyage disguised as a young man. Another parting song, "The Flandyke Shore," employs merry accordion in ironic contrast to the tragic outcome. With few harmonies or overdubs, Harding's vocal delivery might sound old-fashioned or mired in coffeehouse tedium, but a close listen to these songs will afford you many simple pleasures. >>>Lois Maffeo

**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Folk undercurrent mixing on traditional songs.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Richard Thompson, Nikki Suddon & The Jacobites, late model Elvis Costello.



**HAGANS**

**Animation Imagination**

Blue Note

At the wise old age of 60, the Blue Note label has done well to keep an ear open for the future of jazz, welcoming genre-pushing artists like Charlie Hunter, Don Byron and Medeski, Martin & Wood. At 44, trumpeter Tim Hagans has also heard the future, and for him, it is an erotic mixture of Miles Davis's '70s explorations and up-to-the minute digital beat manipulations. While the digital groove running through *Animation Imagination* may not break barriers in the electronica

world, the sampling by DJ Kingsize, DJ Smash and Matthew Backer is miles ahead of the limp, store-bought looping over which desperately-seeking-cool jazzmen have been noodling for much of the '90s. What helps is Billy Kilson's real drumming and the fact that Hagans has allowed for a bit of improv to give his music texture, rather than the appearance of arranged marriage of two tastes. Hagans is best when the tempo is high; the interplay of the digital and real drums shines on his brisk, bright lines. When things cool down, *Animation Imagination* relaxes into a film score mode, and the gooey vibe runs the risk of jettisoning Hagans out of the cool territory he'd staked out earlier. >>>Steve Ciabattini

**OUT:**

January 26.

**FILE UNDER:**

Hardcore jazz.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Miles Davis, Parthenissa, Graham Haynes, David Holmes.



**JOI**

**One And One Is One**

RealWorld-Astrakwerks

Madonna's recent fascination with all things Indian and the rash of bindi-wearing club kids would seem to indicate that Eastern culture has finally gravitated to the commercial leagues and that saris, Yoga, and Bollywood will be milestones for the millennium. Anglo-Bengali brothers Farook and Haroon Shamsher, who make up the DJ/production duo Joi, have existed at the epicenter of England's swelling Asian dance scene since the early '90s. *One And One Is One*, the pair's full-length debut, fuses the modern West—drum 'n' bass and techno—with sounds of

the now-familiar ancient East—splashes of sitar, flutes and tablas—to fascinating textural effect. Joi's distinctive sound is most compelling on cuts such as "Fingers" and "ESY-SHJ," where the chanting and mantras of a female vocalist overlay trancey beats, bleeps and samples. The duo has garnered a healthy renown for steaming up hip English clubs, but many tracks here are less dance-oriented, more downtempo and moody, to the point where they occasionally lapse into ambient hippie tedium. Towards the end, though, the album heats up, closing on a frenetic breakbeat high: "Joi Bani" and "Indie," replete with Giorgio Moroder overtones, should satiate the staunchest dance fiends. The morning after, however, it's unlikely you'll remember just what you were jerking your body to the night before. >>>Sarah Pratt

**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Asian-spiced drum 'n' bass.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Talvin Singh, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan remixes, Bally Sagoo.

KID LOOPS: *TimeQuake***OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Spicy, drum 'n' bass-y melodies.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Thinvery Corporation,  
Azone Tolin, Plaid.**KID LOOPS***TimeQuake*

Ultra

Kid Loops—actually North London's Jamie Lexton—dropped the drum 'n' bass from drum 'n' bass to produce his beautiful debut, *TimeQuake*. Not literally, of course, but by keeping the rapid-fire breakbeats of traditional drum 'n' bass, while simultaneously easing off a bit on d 'n' b's typically heavy bass lines and dominant percussion, he creates a high-treble pitter-patter that is the perfect backdrop for his melodies. And what melodies they are! Vocal samples are cleverly woven with synth riffs: At times, Lexton creates synthetic sounds and atmospheres so

spacey and so enchantingly pretty, it's as if a team of Speak 'N' Spells were providing the musical accompaniment to a ballet under the Northern Lights. Layered with burbling sonic textures, the album charms and soothes, groove by groove, jolting occasionally with carefully placed bursts of bass or drum muscle. Particularly beefy are Lexton's takes on hip-hop: a jungle version of Eric B. & Rakim's "Microphone Fiend" and the bottom-heavy "Wicked Loops." "Kidtronix" starts with what sounds like a marble being clacked on a Formica countertop—on beat—before giving way to a slowly-building spongy melody of snare bursts and video-game bleeps and blurps. This song demonstrates what Lexton does best, pulling together seemingly disparate parts and crafting them into a compelling whole. >>>William Werde

**OUT:**

March 2.

**FILE UNDER:**

Quirky Latino-American rock.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Los Lobos, Soul Coughing, Jim White,  
Tom Waits, Ry Cooder soundtracks.**LATIN PLAYBOYS***Dose*

Atlantic

This second album by the Latin Playboys—David Hidalgo and Louie Perez of Los Lobos with pals Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake—is for anybody who thinks Lobos' Latin-and-the-kitchen-sink sound couldn't get any quirkier. Lobos are always critically acclaimed, but producer/keyboardist Froom and engineer Blake deserve just as many hosannas. Originators of a dense and tactile studio sound, they've produced—and all but transformed—Suzanne Vega, Sheryl Crow, Bonnie Raitt, and Crowded House. Their work with Lobos, starting with 1992's

seminal *Kiko*, has been their most fruitful marriage. But the Playboys' albums are like a Tijuana honeymoon—spontaneous and willfully cavalier. The songs sound Latin at first blush, but turn strange at a moment's notice, veering from low-fi to mid-fi and featuring animal noises, sound effects and incongruous instruments (tuba, xylophone). The songs barely qualify as such; a few, like "Nubian Princess" and "Paula y Fred," are more like tone poems. The pleasures are not in the ersatz ditties but in the sounds: "Latin Trip"'s lounge keyboards, "Paletero"'s fat bass, "Lemon & Ice"'s swank female vocals. *Dose* rewards close listening but doesn't punish background listening—unusual for an album that starts with a blast of feedback and ends with alarms and car horns. >>>Chris Molanphy

**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Hardcore Brit-pop enthusiasts only.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Mercury Rev, Echo & The Bunnymen,  
The Verve.**KID SILVER***Dead City Sunbeams*

Jetset

What is that elusive thing about over-the-top British pop music that can make it so captivating to even the most reluctant listener? How do its victors manage to get away with such heady-ness—fantastic to the biggest fans, decadent, guilty pleasures to the rest of us? The answer is a mixture of the "right" ingredients: drama, orchestral excess, swirly indulgence and libertine malaise. Kid Silver's *Dead City Sunbeams* does little more than reinforce the belief that really, there must be something more than the sum of those parts to make this sort of thing good. Kid

Silver is the alias of ex-Rollerskate Skinny daydreamer Ken Griffin, who seems to have been let loose here like a kid in a sampling store. In this pastiche of studio over-zealousness (not in terms of huge sound as much as gimmickry), Kid Silver throws everything into the soup: film-y crescendo, "Hey Jude" ripoffs, druggy lyrical motifs, and a good dose of the over-wrought. While some of the parts are charming and even exciting, they mostly get lost in a mess of confused arrangements, silly sounding laments (about "Layabout Superstars," "devils and demons," etc.) and a somewhat oppressive attempt by Griffin to sound just like Ian McCulloch. *Dead City Sunbeams* both takes itself too seriously and wafts untethered into the darkest regions of sonic mishmash. >>>Liz Clayton

**OUT:**

March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Bedsit hip-hop with a Scottish burr.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Belle & Sebastian, Blue Aeroplanes, Land Of  
The Lumps, Ewan McGregor in *Trainspotting*.**LOOPER***Up A Tree*

Sub Pop

If the homespun sampling of "A Space Boy Dream" or the spoken storytelling of "A Century Of Elvis" are among your favorites on Belle & Sebastian's records, listen up: *Up A Tree* is a full album of the changes-of-pace bassist Stuart David contributes to his more notorious band. And even if these numbers strike you as distractions, Looper is still worth a listen; David's unassuming narratives and ambling backing tracks, which pair programmed rhythms and simple organic instrumentation, work better as

the main dish than as appetizers for the songs of Belle & Sebastian's other Stuart. "Impossible Things #2" is typically well observed, narrating a seven-year correspondence that blossoms into cautious romance. When he's not playing the innocent, David can get a bit paranoid: In "Columbo's Car," the TV detective shows up to question him about unauthorized samples, to the tune of double bass and cop-show horns. On "Ballad Of Ray Suzuki," there's no story at all, just a variety of dropped-in voices accusing, "You're a looper... bunch of loopers." There are a few "real" songs ("Quiet And Small"), but here, these are the distraction; the strength of *Up A Tree* lies in David's prosaic tales' combination of spacey wonder and wordly wit. >>>Franklin Bruno



**MÓA**  
Universal

Tommy Boy

Well, seeing as how she hails from Iceland and goes by one rather strange name, Móa probably has a lot of people figuring that the folks in Reykjavik have finally found themselves another Björk. And, sure enough, her album *Universal* grooves and glides with the same sort of techno-organic sophistication that has more or less defined Ms. Gudmundsdottir's solo career. Of course, Móa didn't really need Björk to show her how to put the trip next to the hop—Massive Attack,

Portishead, and Mono have all provided perfectly serviceable blueprints. The approach is by now a familiar one: Surround a sultry female voice with the latest in streamlined beat technology, some retro soundtracky embellishments, maybe a little lite-jazz exotica, and a few futuristic electronic effects or a couple of DJ scratches. But the effect is still enchanting. Think Portishead with a bit more drum 'n' bass in the mix, or a less overtly Bacharachian Mono. Vocally, Móa most resembles Portishead's Beth Gibbons. But, like the Cardigans' Nina Persson, she is a lovely tease with nothing much to say and an awfully nice way of saying it.

>>>Matt Ashare



**MUZZLE**  
Actual Size

Reprise

Marrying two schools of Pacific Northwest rock—crunchy guitars propelling polished pop songs—Seattle quartet Muzzle's *Actual Size* shows marked improvement over its 1996 debut *Betty Pickup*. The tight vocal harmonies of "Been Hurt" and "Second Time Around" underscore just how dedicated singer/songwriter/guitarists Tom Maxwell and Wesley Nelson are to solid craftsmanship; the chorus of "Broken Tooth" and the bridge of "Complicated" pack strong enough hooks that they could connect with radio listeners. Yet while the impeccable production of Lou Giordano

ensures the band sounds great, his young charges don't yet boast an identity distinctive enough to distinguish themselves as more than disciples of the producer's better-known clients (Goo Goo Dolls, Sugar). Aside from occasional outbursts of unbridled enthusiasm, such as the exuberant intro to "Obvious," a dearth of dramatic peaks and valleys sabotages the consistent quality of Muzzle's material. Ironically, of the two tunes that truly buck this trend, one pays tribute to the inspirational nature of classic pop (the boisterous, penultimate "Drop The Needle"); the other, the gentle closer "Thanks To You," shines largely as a consequence of thoughtful track sequencing. Let's hope Muzzle harnesses the ebb and flow enthusiasm of this fantastic last gasp for the full duration of *Actual Size's* follow-up.

>>>Kurt B. Reighley

**OUT:**  
March 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Trip-pop exotica.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Portishead, Mono, Massive Attack.

**OUT:**  
March 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Crunchy pop rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Goo Goo Dolls, Sugar, DeLuge, Kara's Flowers.



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**OUT:**

January 26.

**FILE UNDER:**

The thinking man's Young Country.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Louvin Brothers, Bill Monroe,  
Gibson Bros.**OKRA ALL-STARS**

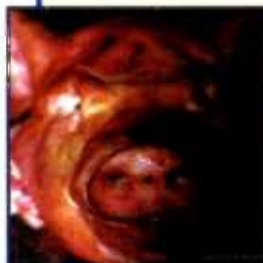
Okra All-Stars

Innerstate

Is "Americana" roots music for post-punks or country music that refuses to revolve around the Nashville axis? Dan Dow, of Ohio's the Gibson Bros., ran a record label called Okra that specialized in this hard-to-classify sub-genre. Before the label bit the dust in 1993, he put out this collection of covers and originals by a conglomerate composed of members of the Schramms, the Fellow Travellers, the Hoot Owls and the Dead Ringers. In this reissue, each All-Star gets a turn at the mic, and

each has a distinct voice and delivery. But the standout singer is Jeb Loy Nichols of the Fellow Travellers, a band with the unlikely distinction of being the world's only country/dub band. His voice has all the nasal twang of Randy Travis, but he doesn't sound like he's gonna make you sign the Contract With America. The All-Stars' nifty blend of bluegrass, country and folk makes for the musical version of comfort food. With the exception of the uncomfortably cynical "Big Mistake," these heart-hardened, homesick and love-crazy songs have lots more dreamy expressiveness and charm than your standard Young Country.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Lois Maffeo

**OUT:**

February 16.

**FILE UNDER:**

Kitchen-sink downtown experimentalism.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Directions in Music, Miles Davis circa  
74, Bill Laswell.**OUT IN WORSHIP**

Sterilized

Perishable

This collaborative sprawl, masterminded by drummer Doug Scharin (June Of 44, Rex) and guitarist Joe Goldring (ex-Swans), is about as "post" as rock can get: The 19-minute title track alone encompasses "natural" beat-keeping, dub techniques, subliminal ambient pulses, guest Ill Media's turntablism, and recurrent Indian flavorings supplied by tabla-player Adheesh Sathaye. Here (and on the closing "Navajos"), Scharin and Goldring act as traffic directors, less concerned with imposing a shape on the various elements than with using the

mixing board to keep them from colliding. Despite the disc's best groove, "Jam Jar Superstar" throws up its hands and lets wordless, treated vocals and Julie Lui's fine viola jostle uncomfortably with optigon whirrs and John McLaughlin-esque wah-wah. (Actually, late electric Miles Davis is a good reference point for what's being attempted here.) It's not that this excess of ideas would benefit from being packaged into songs: When Dawn McCarthy adds artsy moans (and the disc's only lyrics) to "Shift," things get worse, not better. Despite the wealth of studio know-how brought to bear, and the sense that the creators are clearly aiming to escape conventional sonic hierarchies, the lack of focus (emotional, compositional, or dynamic) here makes for music only a soundboy's mother could love.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Franklin Bruno



World Radio History



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**PAN SONIC**

**A** Blast-First Mute

This is not music in any normal sense—this is something far beyond that. *A* is closer to what you'd expect to hear while working as a night watchman in a deserted factory that's staffed only by robots. The main sound you hear is nothing, but in the distance are quiet rattles, pulses, bleeps, clunks, squeaks, and drones. It's unclear whether the noise is coming from ghosts, intergalactic transmissions, or malfunctioning machinery reaching self-actualization, but the overwhelming sense is that the entire album was made

without any human input whatsoever. Fear not, though: *A* is the third full-length from Pan Sonic (formerly Panasonic until the similarly-named Japanese corporation took notice), a Finnish duo of humans who have built many of their primitive synthesizers and tone-generators from scratch. Pan Sonic might get lumped in with armchair/cerebral techno for convenience's sake, but this is even colder and more abstract than Aphex Twin and its ilk. *A* seems more influenced by the creepy minimalism and found-sound ethos of the early industrial bands of the late '70s, but compared with the somewhat organic feel of artists like Throbbing Gristle, Pan Sonic is in a totally different world. This is what the world will sound like after humans are gone.

>>>David Jarman

**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Machine-generated noise.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Oval/Microstoria, Photek, Suicide.



**OUT:**

March 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Love Japanese style.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Kazumi Karie, Air, Cornelius.

**PIZZICATO FIVE**

**Playboy & Playgirl** Matador

Pizzicato Five's insistent genre-surfing on a flurry of albums in its native Japan shifted shortly after its music became known in the States, as the early multi-culti kitsch clamor subsided into a modern drum 'n' bass-fueled chug. With *Playboy & Playgirl*, composer Yasuharu Konishi and vocalist Maki Nomiya return full-tilt to the pre-disco era, reveling in their hand-rolled amalgam of horn flourishes, Latin rhythms, French pop and TV themes, and adding a distinctive seasoning of American soft-rock. The clean, rolling piano vamps and Maki's clipped vocals make "Rolls Royce"

sound like a Japanese translation of something from *Godspell*, and "Concerto" evokes memories of the Partridge Family with its tinny harpsichord and sprawling pop arrangements. The '60s fascination that Technicolor many of Pizzicato Five earlier songs lurks beneath the '70s MOR swirls of the slickly soulful "Such A Beautiful Girl Like You," the rumbling "Week-end" and the buoyant "A New Song." The most offbeat track, "The International Pizzicato Five Mansion," hints at this style-hopping, decade-defying approach, combining a staccato voice-over in Japanese and English with morphed samples of a dot matrix printer and typewriter, and concluding with a solo piano lament. *Playboy & Playgirl* is less a masterful music accomplishment than a suave and eloquent diversion, a candy-coated dose of subliminal fun. >>>Richard Martin

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World Radio History

★ ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

## POP ROMANTIQUE

**OUT:**

March 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Retro-pop with a French twist.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Serge Gainsbourg, Ivy, Apples In Stereo.

POP ROMANTIQUE:  
FRENCH POP CLASSICS

Various Artists

Emperor Norton

Unless you believe that "French" and "pop" don't belong in any sentence that doesn't contain "Stereolab" (which this album doesn't), *Pop Romantique* may be just your baguette. This collection features remakes of '60s French pop classics—including four from Serge Gainsbourg—and a few originals, and favors chipper retro-pop over maudlin ballads, although John Wesley Harding and the Ladybug Transistor featuring Kevin Ayers contribute a few of those. The songs harken back to the craft of Bacharach and David or the cool brilliance of Dusty Springfield, and

most of the bands—many of them based in NYC—treat the originals with respect, even recasting them in their own image. Ivy finds a perfect fit with the lounge-pop stylings of Gainsbourg's "L'Anamour." The Hang-Ups, Heavenly, and Luna transform their French source material into indie-guitar pop; the Apples In Stereo set their guitar pop original in French. Godzuki and Sukia play around with electro-kitsch. While Lloyd Cole's glib translation of Dylan's "If You Gotta Go, Go Now" and the Magnetic Fields' questionable sincerity on "Le Tourbillon" may cock some eyebrows, the inspired collaboration of French sexy boys Air with sexier French chanteuse Françoise Hardy on "Jeanne" justifies the album's concept; Hardy's sophisticated and understated performance here is breathtaking. *Pop Romantique*? C'est bon, mes amis.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Steve Klingle

**OUT:**

March 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

More angry jungle.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Grooverider, Johnny L., Lunatic Calm.

## SOURCE DIRECT

Exorcise The Demons

Astralwerks

Throughout its short but well-documented life span, drum 'n' bass has thrived on change. Progenitors like Roni Size and Grooverider brought their own sounds and styles to the table, and advancements in the sounds heard on underground dancefloors were converted to records for the masses as quickly as labels could say "next big thing." And while this has made readily available some phenomenal music, it's also produced a plethora of less ambitious fare. So to say that Source Direct's full-length debut, *Exorcise The*

*Demons*, is a competent, well-produced drum 'n' bass album is to give it faint praise. The UK duo—Jim Baker and Phil Aslett—achieves a hard-edged sound, manipulating bass lines and siren-like samples, and pulling and prodding at tempos to evoke angst-ridden, spastic soundscapes. But a heavy reliance on yesterday's tricks—like pulling a video game sample into "Dubstar," or the vocal snippet from a ninja movie later in the album—and similar-sounding hi-hat kicks and bass lines throughout, produce a rather uninspiring collection of tracks. Diehard fans of the genre will certainly have nothing to complain about, but those looking for innovation, diversity or a fresh sound won't find it here.

&gt;&gt;&gt;William Werde

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## reviews

R.I.Y.L.-RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE

CD ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



### SWIMMER Surreal

Maverick

**OUT:**

March 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

LA modern rock stew.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Jane's Addiction, Blind Melon, Hole,  
Jeff Buckley.

There's nothing wrong with versatile vocalists, but Anday McCarron approaches ventriloquism on Swimmer's debut. He's able to sound sincere, disaffected, wispy and really, really pissed off within the space of a chord change. A song like "It's So Perfect" coasts on a placid wash of ringing guitars and steady rhythms with McCarron singing as if he were locked in an intimate moment, then suddenly, after a barely detectable segue, he's swaggering and scowling like Axl Rose and leading the NYC quartet into dangerously shallow waters.

The oscillations also detract from the sophisticated pop that appears fleetingly in the winding title track and the almost Radiohead-like "Because Today," and distracts from the tragic lyrics in the punch-drunk "Sick Friend." On the few consistent tracks, Swimmer excels. "Dirty Word" establishes a sharp pace adorned with spectacular hooks; McCarron sings the verses in a winningly sarcastic tone that he should have pulled out of his bag more regularly. And "Playing Jesus" has a likable string of rhymed couplets set to an almost orchestral arrangement. But the soft to loud pattern pervades, leading to the inevitable album closer, "Halo," which punctuates the extremes: McCarron's laconic intro slowly builds along with the accompaniment, and by song's end he's holding his notes, swooping and soaring as he rides off into the sunset.

>>>Richard Martin



### TRANS AM Future World

Thrill Jockey

**OUT:**

March 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Kraftwerks in progress.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Tortoise, Kraftwerk, John McEntire.

Trans Am began as a guitar-based rock trio minus a real singer. Not that that's ever stopped anyone from singing before, but Trans Am has stuck to a no vocals policy even though surf instrumentals were not one of the band's specialties. Of course, that was back when the proliferation of over-emoting Eddie Vedder acolytes was just beginning to reach a critical mass, so who could really blame Trans Am for not auditioning a front person. Four albums and going on seven years later, keyboards of the old analog variety have taken their place

alongside Philip Manley's electric guitar and Nathan Means's bass, drum programming has become part of drummer Sebastian Thompson's job description, and Manley has begun crediting himself as a "DJ mixer." If *Future World* sounds like the sort of subtle album title those wacky dudes in Kraftwerk might have dreamed up (assuming androids really do dream of electric sheep), then you've got the general idea. There's even a song title that looks like it might be German—"Am Rhein." For a change of pace, the disc opens with some echoey sax improvisation, and offers a few tracks with vocoder vocals. None of which detracts a bit from Trans Am coming across like three former Rush fans on an Autobahn joyride, which sure beats the hell out of Rammstein.

>>>Matt Ashare



**OUT.**

March 2.

**FILE UNDER:**

Urban country.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Tarnation, early Geraldine Fibbers, Barbara Manning, Sally Timms.

**VIRGINIA DARE**

**Baby Got Away** Absolutely Kosher

Virginia Dare is one of the most sparkling, curious urban country bands in America, a little secret that's teased us with two glorious EPs over the last three or four years but never produced an album. A trio consisting of veterans of the Wannabe Texans, American Music Club and Pell Mell, Virginia Dare ambles over varying tempos throughout its first album, *Baby Got Away*, occasionally slowing down to look up at the sky or, more often, down at the dirt. "Dig me a ditch on my true love's lawn/I'll sleep there till the autumn comes/Fill my

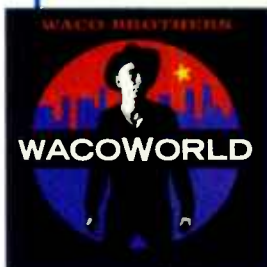
mouth with sticks and leaves/When the sky turns red please think of me," sings vocalist Mary O'Neil in a deadpan but evocative tone while she strums on her autoharp. Meanwhile guitarist Brad Johnson picks a fucked-up twangy guitar that squirms more than it moans. Missing from most songs are drums, giving the recording an unrooted, transient quality, adding an air of unfocused dread; *Baby Got Away* constantly teeters on the edge of nervous breakdown, moving from bitter invectives to utter remorse in the course of a single verse, like the sound of a schizophrenic cowgirl on lithium. "Johnny Depp saves all his love for me," O'Neil sings, and whether she's delusional or delighted, it matters not, because her sense of pure conviction transcends disbelief. >>>Randall Roberts

**WACO BROTHERS**

**Wacoworld** Bloodshot

A Chicago-based band of stray Brits from the Mekons and Jesus Jones with a small busload of friends and associates, playing quasi-country music? It's a better idea than it sounds. Head Waco Bro Jon Langford's fascination with ten-gallon hats and Johnny Cash suits has been bearing fruit since the Mekons' early-'80s country-rock period, and the group's shows are drunken fun. But *Wacoworld*, the group's fourth album, never quite gets to the lone prairie of its dreams. The problem isn't the lyrics, which do deliciously wicked things with

country tropes ("that's why they're called bars, 'cause they keep me inside"), or the band's energy; everybody sounds like they're having a great time. It's that almost none of these songs have a fully realized melody or riff, and the Brothers' loving simulacrum of the sounds that inspired them—generic rock augmented with fiddle, mandolin, pedal steel, even a horn section—can't make up for the fact that it rarely goes anywhere. Country depends on melody first and foremost, and on the power of a striking voice second, and despite a few fine moments—particularly the charged-up country blues of "Red Brick Wall" and Langford's nod to "Lost Highway" in the middle of "Corrupted"—neither is quite distinctive enough here. >>>Douglas Wolk



**OUT:**

February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Old-school y'allternative.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Mekons, Billy Bragg and Wilco's *Mermaid Avenue*.

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by M. TYE COMER

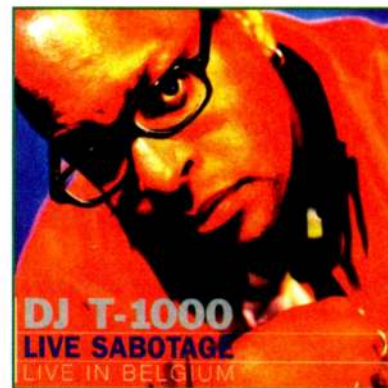
## mixed signals

Most DJ mixes are meant to capture the experience of being at a nightclub, house party or rave. That's mainly because the DJ's traditional role is to provide a soundtrack for the dance floor, a situation which still causes many outside club culture to view the folks behind the decks as nothing more than human jukeboxes. Austria's Peter **KRUDER** and Richard **DORFMEISTER** have



never subscribed to such a limiting interpretation of their artform. In fact, the two have spent their lengthy career together challenging the rules set by their peers, using their turntables to craft audio experiences based on emotion rather than motion. Their attention to detail on the decks, as well as their praised output as producers and remixers, has made Kruder & Dorfmeister one of the most

respected teams in acid jazz/downbeat electronica. On **Conversions** (Spray-Shadow), the recent domestic release of a K&D DJ mix originally recorded in 1995, the team uses the beat of drum 'n' bass as its guide in assembling 10 tracks whose ambient musicality, serene sound textures and sensual melodies take the mind on a journey much longer than the feet could travel. K&D have a knack for choosing tunes that blur the lines between breakbeat, acid jazz, and lounge, and their ultra-smooth layering of the tracks makes the sum greater than its individual parts. Accomplished underground artists such as PFM ("One And Only"), Count Basic ("Speechless Drum & Bass") and Omni Trio ("Nu Birth Of Cool") provide Kruder & Dorfmeister with the raw materials for their audio art... The less-is-more philosophy of minimal techno has been around for quite some time. Artists such as Detroit's Robert Hood and Canadian innovator Richie Hawtin (Plastikman) have based entire careers on the idea that you don't necessarily need multi-textured soundscapes or a barrage of beats to achieve musical intensity. Alan Oldham, a.k.a. **T-1000**, is another Detroit player who subscribes to that belief, and his latest mix, **Live**



**Sabotage: Live In Belgium** (X-Sight-Brooklyn Music), is his testimonial. The sound of Oldham's hour-plus set is crisp and stark: Deep pulses of ice-cold techno weave between driving backbeats and stuttering hi-hats, ebbing and swelling with an almost subliminal subtlety. Rhythmic patterns repeat to hypnotizing extremes, with Oldham's seamless mixing and awesome beat-juggling telling the tale. The set includes tracks by some of the most important names in the techno scene, including Surgeon ("Action Balance"), the Advent ("Distance"), DJ Hyperactive ("RX Tribe"), and many others. This offering is not for everyone, as the music—engineered for high-decibel replay—loses some of its power and impact when pumped into your living room. But for those who reside deep in the underground, this 15-track collection is a welcome release, successfully capturing the musical and DJ elements that have driven Detroit's minimal techno scene for the last decade.

NMM

Musketeers-style, all of them agreed about *13*: They wanted a challenge, a new way of working. And the tutorial bill was perfectly filled by William Orbit, who was fresh from recording Madonna's *Ray Of Light* and who'd already wowed the group with his outlandish remixes of *Blur* for a Japanese release. Old co-producer Stephen Street had always made the musicians track their parts separately, whereas Orbit encouraged live jam sessions until, in Albarn's words, "it felt like one big holiday. We were all acting exactly how we wanted."

"And I didn't fiddle around with getting the amplifier sounding great," Coxon adds. He merely plugged in his trusty Telecaster, "cranked it and off we went. And if there were shitty buzzes and horrible distorted noises, William didn't care—he'd use it. So what's actually being played on *13* is unorganized, but the editing has organized the chaos." Incidentally, Albarn adds, the album title is no voodoo-hex secret. "I sang my vocals in Iceland, but I recorded the album initially in my little bus-station studio called Unit 13. Then we went to a bigger studio, then to an even bigger studio to mix it."

**"What's actually being played on *13* is unorganized, but William Orbit's editing has organized the chaos."**

À la Kafka's Gregor Samsa, Albarn—and indeed, Blur itself—went to bed pre-*13* as one thing, but woke up the next morning an entirely different creature. His collaborations with minimalist film scorer Michael Nyman (such as the Virgin-released soundtrack to *Ravenous*, a pioneer-cannibal shocker from director Antonia Bird) helped set the stage for this metamorphosis. With Blur, he played acoustic guitar, melodica and keyboards; with Nyman, he stresses, "I delegated, as I often do these days. I mean, there were 76 people involved with *Ravenous*, choirs and stuff. It's a proper score, back to a '70s aesthetic way." A sip of coffee before he comes right out and says it. And even then, it proves a bit difficult. "I'm a composer, not a... a... Well, that's it: I'm no longer a rock musician. I'm a composer. And I no longer view music as, you know... Well, it's just become my life. And it might sound corny, but, like I said, I'm really in love with music."

Coxon is fidgety during his interview, full of nervous energy. As soon as he's said what he has to say, he springs from his chair, on the move, trying to track down a missing milkshake he ordered a half-hour earlier. Albarn is another animal. With every one of his carefully carved quotes, he sinks deeper into his alcove nest, until he's practically reclining. He'll be up and running like his partner soon enough—he's flying to Sundance to catch the premiere of *Ravenous*. But Iceland, where "you can actually drink the tap water, actually catch huge salmon right in the middle of Reykjavik," has helped teach this city slicker a valuable millennium-angst lesson. "I've just slowed down," Albarn says purposefully, like a tortoise crossing the finish line. "I've realized that you've got to go at half speed if you're ever going to have a chance of taking on the world. You've got to move a lot slower than everyone else. So you train yourself—I generally speak a lot slower, walk a lot slower, I just do everything slower."

Albarn lowers his shades to watch another stiletto-heeled New York filly go clickety-clacking past, and adopts the deep, husky rasp of an old blues singer. "An' I mean slow, like, nice an' easy, BAAYYYYY-buh!")

NMM

**13**

The new album. Featuring "Better Days (and the bottom drops out)"

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# DARKWAVE

**Perennially bubbling under the music mainstream, goth has been steadily evolving since its birth as a post-punk movement in England two decades ago. And while many insiders think it will permanently remain an underground phenomenon, others feel it is poised to break out in grand fashion.**

Indeed the goth aesthetic has been seeping into pop culture: Retail chain Hot Topic has brought goth style to shopping malls; brooding films such as *The Crow* and *Dark City* and stylish comic books such as *Death* and *Hellboy* have the look, and mainstream TV shows including *Daria*, *Felicity*, and CBC's *Straight Up*, all feature goth characters. *Saturday Night Live* successfully parodies the scene with the recurring "Goth Talk" skit, a modest sign of its mainstream presence.

Every few years, goth seems on the verge of exploding, yet it never quite happens. One significant reason is the genre's splintering into many sub-factions, which makes today's goth difficult to define. Traditional gothic rock is characterized by angst-ridden baritone vocals, minor-key guitar melodies and chord sequences (think Bauhaus and Joy Division), and danceable rhythms (think Sisters Of Mercy). Classic death rock is more punk-inflected, as with the squealing guitars of early '80s Christian Death. But the new wave of dark bands is incorporating Medieval, Celtic, tribal, industrial, ambient, techno, and neo-

classical elements into the music. Female vocals, both wispy and operatic, have become fashionable, particularly in the ethereal sub-genre. Given these new elements, the term darkwave is being used more and more frequently to describe the dark rock, dance, and folk sounds emanating from different factions around the goth-influenced globe.

Since the mid-'90s, the subculture has quietly flourished. Events such as Convergence and Projekt Fest have become annual rituals, and cities including New York, LA, Chicago, and San Francisco frequently host goth club nights. Darkwave and electro songs have made it onto TV series such as *Viper*, *La Femme Nikita*, and *Psi Factor*. "The funny thing with goth is that industry-wise, it's kind of a joke," says Cleopatra Records General Manager Brian McNelis. "Yet right now, my average goth act is selling about five times [more than] my average electronic act." In fact, Cleopatra compilations such as those in its *Gothic Rock* series sell between 30,000 and 50,000 units.

Independent labels such as Projekt and

Cleopatra have good distribution, and newer indies including Neue Asthetik Multimedia, Precipice Recordings, and industrial labels Metropolis and Cop International are set to make waves. Projekt Records label chief Sam Rosenthal says the new Black Tape For A Blue Girl album is the label's best-selling CD to date, benefiting from media coverage on MTV News, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and in *Time*.

The return of some old school favorites—such as Siouxsie Sioux's post-Banshees project the Creatures—has also brought renewed attention to the scene. While some argue that the successful reunion tours from Bauhaus and Sisters Of Mercy herald a resurgence in the goth subculture, others complain that the bands are only trying to make some quick cash. Either way, the tours brought new focus onto the movement. For example, Cleopatra gothic trip-hop band Switchblade Symphony, which has sold approximately 80,000 records of its two releases combined, got a stamp of approval by being asked to open for the Sisters on their tour.

To many, Switchblade Symphony represents the great goth hope. "I think if anyone can make it, they can," declares Neville Wells, promoter for Manhattan's "Batcave" night. "During the last few years, their following's really been building. In New York they can actually draw 600 to 800 people now. They're not diluting their old crowd, they're picking up other people who see them and say, 'Wow, these girls have got great voices.' If Switchblade's first album had gotten airplay, it could have blown up."

Which leads back to the issue of why popular underground acts such as Switchblade Symphony, Faith & The Muse, and Sunshine Blind, which tour frequently and sell a fair number of CDs, are buried so deep in the underground. "Pop culture is escapist, looking for the quick and easy way out of mundane reality," observes Rhea's Obsession vocalist Sue Hutton. "Goth culture is more introverted."

"The subculture can seem silly to people who aren't a part of it and don't understand it," adds Patrick Rodgers,





## TEN DARKWAVE GEMS FROM THE '90S

president of Philadelphia-based promotion company Dancing Ferret Concerts. "Its elements of drama and romanticism can seem grandiose and melodramatic to people who don't feel so deeply. I feel that goth music is like the little girl with the little curl: When it's good, it's very, very good, and when it's bad, it's horrid. Few things are worse than a bad goth song."

Given the recent darkwave renaissance, there are plenty of great goth songs out there. Bands such as Lycia and Black Tape have gained notoriety for their tragically romantic visions, yet harder-edged electro groups including London After Midnight and Collide have also generated a buzz. Faith & The Muse, Rhea's Obsession, and the Moors all play what's called Celtic and tribal darkwave. Then there are the unexpected fringe crossovers, such as Love Spirals Downwards, whose recent album *Flux* offers ethereal breakbeat fusion. The most successful sub-genre to date is goth-metal, a style played by European acts Moonspell, Paradise Lost, and My Dying Bride. "I wouldn't be surprised if some of the underground bands were signed [to major labels] in six months," says Rosenthal. "I have this feeling that they're looking to see who rises to the surface."

This musical splintering, along with the broad musical tastes of most goth fans, is what could really break the new generation of darkwave bands. Goths often appreciate artists in other genres whose sense of yearning or melancholy echoes those of the dark music underground. Ed Klein, one of the DJs at San Francisco's "Death Guild," says that clubgoers at his events request Tori Amos and Loreena McKennitt as frequently as dark music standards. While events like the aforementioned Convergence generally attract a sea of black-clad fans, larger crossover artists like Rasputina, Cranes, and the now-defunct Dead Can Dance have brought together goths and "normals" at their concerts. Scary Lady Sarah, a veteran Chicago DJ whose night "Nocturna" is 11 years running, has witnessed a transformation in the scene overseas, a "much faster-paced, more techno-infused" sound, which she feels will affect Stateside sounds in the future. Gothic house (some of it available on England's Nightbreed Recordings) is yet another emerging style.

For Cleopatra's McNelis and others, solving the darkwave enigma goes back to the success of Trent Reznor, whose video for "The Perfect Drug" utilized every goth cliché in the book. "Good songs are good songs," asserts McNelis. "What makes something pop isn't the way that you dress it, it's in the

way that it affects people. I think Nine Inch Nails is essentially a pop band that uses and identifies with the culture and the imagery of the darkwave underground." **NMM**



- BLACK TAPE FOR A BLUE GIRL** *A Chaos Of Desire* (Projekt)
- COLLIDE** *Beneath The Skin* (Re-constriction)
- FAITH & THE MUSE** *Elyria* (Neue Aesthetik Multimedia)
- LORETTA'S DOLL** *World Of Tiers EP* (Suffering Clown-World Serpent)
- LYCIA** *Ionia* (Projekt)
- MOONSPELL** *Sin* (Century Media)
- MOORS** *The Moors* (Castle Von Buhler)
- RHEA'S OBSESSION** *Initiation* (Spider)
- ROSETTA STONE** *Adrenaline* (Cleopatra)
- SWITCHBLADE SYMPHONY** *Serpentine Gallery* (Cleopatra)

RHEA'S OBSESSION

# THE WONDERFUL MUSIC OF DISNEY

I guess you could say I wasn't the textbook 18-year-old kid in 1986. While most guys and girls were saving for their first set of wheels, counting down the months before they became legal, or experimenting with recreational drugs, I was wearing out my videocassette of *Mary Poppins*. By that time I was already well aware of my peers' odd fetishes and strange fascinations. And this was mine, my deep, dark secret—the one I kept from my friends. I was a closet Disney freak.



friends, who mocked me for mentioning Dick Van Dyke's bad cockney accent in *Mary Poppins* as we shot jumpers on my driveway basketball court. I spent hours and hours watching classics like *Peter Pan*, *The Jungle Book* and *Alice In Wonderland*, studying them like an architect student studies Frank Lloyd Wright. Disney's use of music in films, in television programs and even at theme parks was seamless, always leaving fans with a perfectly fitting, hummable tune on their tongues.

Aside from the true genius of *Fantasia* (a film that defines the power of music and animation), I personally favored *Mary Poppins*. Numbers like "Chim Chim Cher-ee," "Feed The Birds" and "A Spoonful Of Sugar" (penned by Richard and Robert Sherman) weren't the dopey children's songs to me. Not only are such songs amazingly catchy, but they're also crucial to the story. This revelation made me view Disney's animated features differently. I could watch films like *The Jungle Book* a thousand times simply because it had great music that was married so happily to the animation. "The Bare Necessities" and "Wan'na Be Like You," sung by Louis Prima, are rollicking swing jazz gems. Disney's most essential work featured the best songs, from his use of "Turkey In The Straw" in 1928's *Steamboat Willie* onward. The timeless music contained in films such as *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*, *Bambi* (a 69-minute film with fewer than 900 spoken words of dialogue—that's not much, even for deer), and *Pinocchio* (featuring "When You Wish Upon A Star") was among the best.

My devotion and respect for Disney's work was heightened by how evocative the songs were. For instance, the snappy "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah" has become synonymous with happiness, "Heigh Ho" is recognized

as the quintessential work song, and "Supercalafragilisticexpialidocious" is both the silliest and the longest word most people can say.

There was a time, probably during my 543rd viewing of *Robin Hood*, that I stopped and thought about my obsession. I recall thinking that I might eventually become a fan of show tunes, Andrew Lloyd Webber, or juiced up Vegas song and dance numbers, but I soon realized my devotion was much more acute. I was interested only in stuff up to 1977's *The Rescuers*, and was most intrigued by the features (pre-1967) that Walt himself had overseen. My favorite musical pieces were the jazzier numbers, such as the Louis Armstrong-styled, back alley jazz number "Ev'rybody Wants To Be A Cat" (sung by Scatman Crothers) from *The Aristocats* and the vampy "Cruella De Vil" from *101 Dalmatians*. But I also couldn't ignore the great music written by Tin Pan Alley songwriters such as Mack David and Jerry Livingston for '50s films such as *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan* and *Alice In Wonderland*: songs like "The Unbirthday Song" and "The Second Star To The Right."

For many years I kept my Disney fetish under lock and key. The only way anyone could discover my obsession was to check my extensive (more than 20 films) videocassette library of colorful titles including *The Three Caballeros* and *Lady And The Tramp*. These days, however, I am less secretive. Recently I've felt somewhat validated by hearing artists I greatly respect cover Disney tunes, from the Replacements ("Cruella De Vil") to John Coltrane and Belly ("Trust In Me"). In some small way, it makes me think that those artists saw the music's genius the same way I did, and that maybe I'm not so freakish after all.

MM

Like most kids growing up reading Disney books, watching *The Wonderful World Of Disney* on Sunday nights or vacationing in Walt Disney World, I credit Walt as a major contributor to my childhood development. It wasn't until my late teens that I began spending most of my free time analyzing Disney's animated classics and the incredible music behind them. To do this, I had to quickly come to terms with the accompanying Disney baggage: Annette Funicello, Angela Lansbury, and Mouseketeers named Cubby and Moochie. I was ready to move on.

My fascination with Disney film music seemed more a disorder to my

## metal top 25

- 1 MESHUGGAH  
Chaosphere Nuclear Blast America
- 2 SEPULTURA  
Against Roadrunner
- 3 NOTHINGFACE  
Everyday Atrocity DCide-Mayhem
- 4 BLACK SABBATH  
Reunion Epic
- 5 SPINESHANK  
Strictly Diesel Roadrunner
- 6 METALLICA  
Garage Inc. Elektra-EEG
- 7 BOLT THROWER  
Mercenary Metal Blade
- 8 MALEVOLENT CREATION  
The Fine Art Of Murder Pavement
- 9 ONE KING DOWN  
God Loves, Man Kills Equal Vision
- 10 SOILENT GREEN  
Sewn Mouth Secrets Relapse
- 11 SUICIDAL TENDENCIES  
Six The Hard Way Suicidal
- 12 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
ECW Extreme Music Slab-CMC International
- 13 DEATH  
The Sound Of Perseverance Nuclear Blast America
- 14 SINISTER  
Aggressive Measure Nuclear Blast America
- 15 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE  
Queens Of The Stone Age Loosegroove
- 16 CRADLE OF FILTH  
Cruelty And The Beast Fierce-Mayhem
- 17 FEAR FACTORY  
Obsolete Roadrunner
- 18 CRYPTOPSY  
Whisper Supremacy Century Media
- 19 EXHUMED  
Gore Metal Relapse
- 20 SOUNDTRACK  
Strangeland TVT
- 21 MY DYING BRIDE  
34.788% Complete Peaceville
- 22 FLOTSAM AND JETSAM  
Unnatural Selection Metal Blade
- 23 ALL OUT WAR  
For Those Who Were Crucified Victory
- 24 PUYA  
Fundamental MCA
- 25 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
So Mote It Be Alabaster

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

## SHEAVY

The Electric Sleep

The Music Cartel



For those of you who regret not having been born yet when Black Sabbath was in its prime, there is Sleep; if you napped through that band's brief invisible reign, now there is Sheavy. While Sleep dove exclusively into the first four Sabbath records, Sheavy examines lighter mid-'70s albums like *Technical Ecstasy* and *Never Say Die*. Sheavy's "Velvet" kicks a mighty groove, and why shouldn't it? The same fattened riff worked perfectly well as the bridge to Sabbath's "Johnny Blade." In this era of proliferate consumer choice, there is a shelf reserved for a derivative type of band, content to find its original voice using the distinct vocabulary of stylistic forebears. Witness any number of Buzzcocks cover bands, the Discharge

tribute explosion of two years ago, or the Austrian band Komputer, which diligently picks up the craft and work of Kraftwerk. Whatever sneaks into *The Electric Sleep* derives from Sheavy's okey-doke laziness—the Ozzy clone sometimes sounds downright happy, and the guitarist comes across as more Jeff Beck than Tony Iommi. Black Sabbath's music has been spellbinding for 30 years because it rings with the conviction that music needs to be obsessively distinct. In contrast, Sheavy's *The Electric Sleep* is pleasant hard rock in a world of ultra-negative Sabbath purists. The Sheavy anthem "Born In A Daze" sounds more like a prospective theme for *That 70's Show* than a hymn for a black mass. Sheavy will never be truly great, but that doesn't mean it can't sound as if it is once in a while.

>>> The seven heath-ens in **DESEKRATOR**, a gag-parody outfit from Norway, are in real bands like Enslaved and Gorgoroth, so their playing is as accurate and agreeable as it is goony. Everything is exaggerated—chug-riffing, crappy black metal production, and loopy solos. For the sake of a laugh, these guys are exploring the parameters of their music. Metalheads, often misjudged for any number of reasons, deserve credit for being capable of this kind of self-reflection. Besides a healthy dose of Scandinavian scene in-jokes, there's a plodding, tuneless dirge called "Execution" that satirizes Corrupted/Noothgrush-style doom metal. Another track is introduced by a Norwegian pretending to be a Texan rocker.... **IN THE WOODS**, not exactly a household name west of Oslo, is (along with Ulver) one of the ambitious old school Norwegian black metal acts that has developed into something remarkably high-toned. The crystalline violin and sonorous voice of Agnet M. Kirkevaag turn on complex, moving acoustic melodies.

On its progressive merits, the band's third album, *Strange In Stereo* (Misanthropy), could be likened to Queensrÿche, except that In The Woods bypasses all similarities to Journey and heads straight to the lessons of the musical conservatory. Along with inspiring beauty, you also get the eight-minute "By The Banks Of Pandemonium," a ponderous load of overblown crap.... Biding time between dungeon adventures, Swedish dark ambient character **MORTIIS** has cast the dice and launched his moody mythos into outer space. His latest single as **FATA MORGANA**, "Space Race" b/w "Robot City," is a peculiar invention that tacks trademark Mortiiis keyboard dirges onto blatantly repurposed Kraftwerk songs. "Robot City," for example, is "Showroom Dummies" with a vampy synth sax lick and lyrics tacked on from "We Are the Robots." Huh? Contributing to the captivating wrongness, Mortiiis's MIDI rhythm sounds a little drunk, creating the perception that his android minions (which may only be goblins in silver suits) are running amok.

# UNRULY CLUB CLASSICS VOL. 2

Various Artists

Unruly

Even while electronic music has achieved a certain level of national appeal, it's worth noting that many cities have their own distinct movements and sounds and that those records often never leave the city limits. Washington, DC's lively go-go movement and the bounce sound of New Orleans are but two examples. Another one that surely deserves wider national recognition is Baltimore's trax sound, which has been filling area clubs and impressing the likes of Premiere and Guru (of Gang Starr) for nearly five years, even though the records are rarely played in clubs even as close as DC. That's a crying shame, because what has emerged from Baltimore is a dance music like no other, combining elements of Miami bass (sans the misogyny) with the stripped down jump-up cuts of the Chicago trax stars such as DJ Deon and DJ Funk. The principle of the Baltimore sound is deceptively simple: Combine heavy 4/4 house kick drums and obscenely over-modulated breakbeats culled from who knows where, and strip out the bass line to leave the percussion and drums flapping in the breeze of the smoke machines and strobes. The "stars" are all here: K.W. Griff and DJ Booman, Kool Breez, Scottie B, and DJ Technics, hammering out thrash tracks as though their lives depended on it. Within the past few months, some of the Baltimore music has made its way to Texas, Delaware, and LA, but it's only a matter of time before a wider audience recognizes that this music gets the crowd pumping and isn't going to disappear anytime soon.



>>> I feel like I'd be doing the electronic community a disservice if I didn't talk about the latest series of records from **THOMAS BRINKMANN**, the electrician from Cologne, Germany, whose elegiac, mesmerizing exercises in minimal groove music leave many people simply slack-jawed. How does one do so much with so little? Only Brinkmann could supply an appropriate answer to that question. His latest project is the *X-100* EP, which consists of two 15-minute sides of vinyl running at an odd 3/4 time signature. Brinkmann heats up the bass line from a faint simmer to a rolling boil while he pans the thick kick drum across the surface of the mix, enveloping the listener in a thick ambient atmosphere, and yet there's almost nothing there. His latest EPs are also treats for the stark-minded. On the "Inge/Jutte" 12" he develops a series of interlocking grooves that seem to clash with one another before he

brings them into a sudden unexpected synchronicity that's breathtaking. Brinkmann's technique is to hand-etch pieces of vinyl to reproduce the sound of click tracks, snares, and high hats that are always slightly off beat. He certainly isn't going to be playing in your neighborhood in the near future, so keep an eye out for these records.... Kieran Hebden is a member of the band Fridge, which is often unfairly characterized as a British post-rock outfit. Fridge's music doesn't bear that description out, and Hebden's solo work throws the argument out the window. Look no further than his new 7" "Falken's Maze," recorded under the name **JOSHUA FALKEN**, which sounds like New Order/Donna Summer-era electro with the occasional free jazz sax blast thrown in for good measure. Hebden's range of reference points is wide (he's currently working with Pole) and his first full-length solo record is due this spring.

# dance top 25

- 1 **GROOVERIDER**  
Mysteries Of Funk Higher Ground/Columbia-CRC
- 2 **TALVIN SINGH**  
OK Island
- 3 **KRUDER & DORFMEISTER**  
The K&D Sessions Stud!o K7
- 4 **FATBOY SLIM**  
You've Come A Long Way, Baby Astralwerks
- 5 **ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION**  
Rafi's Revenge Slash-London
- 6 **THE ORB**  
U.F. Off: The Best Of The Orb Island
- 7 **HIVE**  
Devious Methods ffr-London
- 8 **PAUL OAKENFOLD**  
Tranceport Kinetic-Reprise
- 9 **NEOTROPIC**  
Mr. Brubaker's Strawberry Alarm Clock  
Ninja Tune (Canada)
- 10 **FUNKER VOGT**  
Execution Tracks Metropolis
- 11 **DUB PISTOLS**  
Point Blank 1500-A&M
- 12 **PAUL VAN DYK**  
Seven Ways Mute
- 13 **SQUAREPUSHER**  
Music Is Rotted One Note Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 14 **HATE DEPT.**  
"Release It" (CD5) Restless
- 15 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Elastic 21-3-Arcade America
- 16 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Digital Empire II: The Aftermath Cold Front-M-Tel
- 17 **SLY AND ROBBIE**  
Drum & Bass Strip To The Bone...  
Palm Pictures-Rykodisc
- 18 **PLASTIKMAN**  
Artifakts (BC) M\_nus/Novamute-Mute
- 19 **RUNAWAYS UK**  
Classic Tales 360-Arcade America Pictures-Rykodisc
- 20 **PORTISHEAD**  
Roseland NYC Live Go! Beat-London
- 21 **PISH POSH**  
Up Jumps The Boogie Raw Kuts-Rawkus
- 22 **MATMOS**  
The West Deluxe
- 23 **MONTAUK P**  
Def=Lim Blue Room Americas
- 24 **SOMATIC**  
The New Body Caipirinha
- 25 **TAKAKO MINEKAWA**  
Cloudy Cloud Calculator Emperor Norton

Compiled from *CMJ New Music Report's* weekly RPM charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

# hip-hop top 25

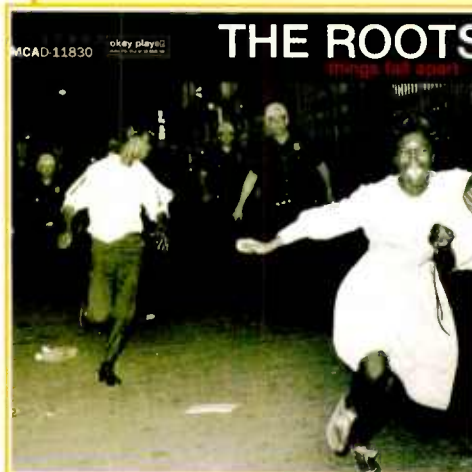
- 1 ROOTS  
Adrenaline MCA
- 2 ROOTS  
You Got Me MCA
- 3 REDMAN  
I'll Bee Dat! Def Jam
- 4 JAY-Z  
Hard Knock Life Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
- 5 OUTKAST  
Rosa Parks LaFace-Arista
- 6 TRAGEDY KHADAFI  
Bloodtype Gee Street-V2
- 7 INSPECTAH DECK  
R.E.C. Room Loud-RCR
- 8 DJ CLUE  
It's On Def Jam-Roc-A-Fella
- 9 RZA  
B.O.B.B.Y. Gee Street-V2
- 10 BAD MEETS EVIL  
Nuttin' To Do Came
- 11 AFU-RA  
Whirlwind Thru Cities Gee Street-V2
- 12 PETE ROCK  
Tru Master Loud-RCR
- 13 BLACK STAR  
Re:Definition Elek
- 14 EMINEM  
Just Don't Give A F---k Aftermath/Web-Interscope
- 15 BRAND NUBIAN  
Don't Let It Go To Your Head Arista
- 16 KRS-ONE  
5 Boroughs Jive
- 17 DEFARI  
Likwit Connection Black Label-Tommy Boy
- 18 SAUCE MONEY  
Middle Finger U MCA
- 19 BAD SEED  
Dem Grits Ruff
- 20 ICE CUBE  
Pushin' Weight Priority
- 21 A TRIBE CALLED QUEST  
Like It Like That Jive
- 22 2PAC  
Changes Death Row-Interscope
- 23 GHOSTFACE KILLAH  
Mighty Healthy Jive
- 24 LYRICIST LOUNGE ALL-STARS  
CIA Elek
- 25 PACEWON  
I Declare War Ruffhouse/Columbia-CBS

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Beat Box charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio hipsters.

## THE ROOTS

Things Fall Apart

MCA



Philadelphia's Roots have been one of the consistently brightest hopes of hip-hop's new school to have emerged in the '90s. Their forward-thinking, on-point, no-b.s. lyrics, and fresh, funky live beats—brought to the people on wax and through exhaustive touring for the better part of this decade—have earned them a well-deserved airtight rep. With *Things Fall Apart*, their third major-label release, the Roots have gone back to the basics, scuffing up most of the smoother edges they displayed on 1996's *Illadelph Halflife*. Lyricists Black Thought and Malik B are in top form throughout, backed by a set of tracks that occasionally highlights the Roots' kinship with late-model A Tribe Called Quest. "The Next Movement," "Dynamite" and "Don't See Us" are all guilty as charged, using minimal drum snaps, pulse-tone bass lines and ethereal background effluvium to grab our ears. The juxtaposition of the calming tones and the aggressive, battle-oriented lyrics makes for a strong combo, and the pattern works time and again. These tracks can also be raw: "Without A Doubt," "Step Into The Realm," and "Double Trouble" (featuring Mos Def) could all go up against any underground track you might bring to the table. *Things Fall Apart* will rank as one of 1999's most enjoyable hip-hop platters.

xxx The Bomb label has been at it again, inducer has been throwing down dishing out two excellent new releases. incredible instrumental sagas for the past several years. This compilation shows UK-bred and NYC-dopebeat-fed producer **BABY J** has assembled a lineup of instrumental hip-hop at its finest—a lesser-but-soon-to-be-known-talent for his *Birth* debut, with MCs culled mostly from the streets of New York. Poetic, known to most as the Grim Reaper from the *Gravediggaz*, is the highest profile artist of the bunch, and he presides over the basic, but impressive "Saviour" and contributes to the excellent posse cut "Angels Of Death," on which he's joined by Yogi, Freestyle and Shabazz The Disciple. Other notables include Arsonists member Freestyle's "Focus," Shaqueen's "Truth," Celestial Souljahz's aurally cinematic "War Trilogy," and the A-Alikes' "Walk With A Bop" and "For My Army."... The **JEEP BEAT COLLECTIVE**'s two-CD US debut, *Technics Chainsaw Massacre* (also on Bomb), is a completely different animal, exploring the worlds of pre-millennial cut-'n'-scratch and early-to-mid-'80s electro in an invigorating and thoroughly body-shaking way. Also known as The Ruf, this UK-based one-man breakdance-

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>>> Desco Records' string of classic-style funk singles continues with "In The Middle" from the **DAKTARIS** (whose



members also record as the Soul Providers). "In The Middle" is a mellow little instrumental the James Brown band recorded in the '60s, and this 7" is designed to look like

an old-style radio promo single, with a mono version on one side and stereo on the other. The mono side, though, Africanizes the original with percussive polyrhythms and a drum break, while the stereo side updates it about six years by changing the mix around to play up a little guitar lick that showed up on JB's records in 1975. Their command of the minutiae of funk history is just uncanny.

>>> An even more ingenious pair of covers appears on a single by the abstract-electronics project **FENNESZ** (Mego). Listen to the single without



looking at the label, and all you may hear are buzzing sounds, random high and low notes,

crackling textures, a repeated phrase or two, the odd guitar note or sampled plink, lines counterpointed and strung together in a hauntingly familiar way. But then note what the songs are supposed to be—the Rolling Stones' "Paint It Black" and the Beach Boys' "Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)"—and all of a sudden everything comes together. The hither-and-thither notes, leaping between octaves and tones, are recognizable as classic melodies, and the sounds that seemed to be interference approximate the original recordings' atmospheres, the way a digitized scan of big green and brown and yellow blocks can turn into the picture of a tree it used to be if you look at it right.

>>> Years ago, when Chumbawamba was an anarchistic punk band that appeared on compilations like *Fuck EMI*, its first record was a slam at Band Aid called *Pictures Of Starving Children Sell Records*. Now that the group has signed to EMI (in Europe, anyway) and become international pop stars, the underground is getting its revenge. First up are

## AUTECHRE

Peel Sessions

Warp-Nothing

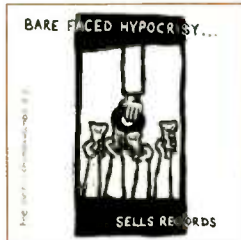
One of the reasons Autechre may be the most important group in instrumental electronica is that, although the intricacy and detail of its records suggest that the duo is reliant entirely on the studio, it's a great live band too. Sean Booth and Rob Brown don't stick in a DAT and press "play"—they take thousands of sequences and samples and tones that they can arrange and mutate in real time, and essentially improvise with them. No two Autechre shows are especially similar, but since the pair doesn't play in public very often, that side of them hasn't made it to record much. The format of the sessions recorded for British DJ John Peel's program, though, demands that a group of songs be taped start-to-finish in a day, so this 20-



minute-or-so EP is Autechre's most playful, spontaneous disc. It's unmistakably the band's work—it has a handful of favorite timbres, notably an ultra-high-end twitching percussion noise that sounds like an insect's mating call—but the group is happy to find a groove and explore it, without getting as austere and cerebral as it has on its recent albums. "Inhake 2" is especially wonderful, a flurry of rhythmic motifs dancing around a dry-drill bass line, each one ceding mix-space to its next partner. Only the 11-minute "Drane" spills out of control, and even that seems to be the result of too many good ideas. The waving synth tone that comes in after a few minutes is a thoughtful tribute to the beginning of New Order's "Blue Monday," and when the main body of the track has ended, little croaking and bubbling tones scurry after it to catch up. Very nicely done.

**OI POLLOI** and **WAT TYLER**; the savage, smeary, bilious little bursts of record itself has been re-labeled with a noise.

couple of stickers, and it's down to four tracks (including one not listed on the



sleeve). Inside, discover new wave, there's a note it can be a beautiful explaining that thing. The lesson there were legal **AUDIENCE** has problems with learned from the including a MTV of its youth is to couple of Chumba let each instrument parodies. Uh-oh—find its own voice but why did the and its own melody. The group's single "Young Soul" (Gold Standard Laboratories) is blessed with a South Carolina hardcore band B-side called "The Voyeurs," which grafts the band's multi-guitar roil and bellow-and-hope vocals onto a spiffy 1984-sock-hop beat straight out of "Lust For Life," or maybe "Goody Two Shoes." The A-side is a bit more straightforward—if it weren't an original, it could be an Echo & The Bunnymen cover executed with plenty of oomph—but the band plays guitar gasps and synth howls off against each other expertly.

>>> Speaking of emo kids: When they



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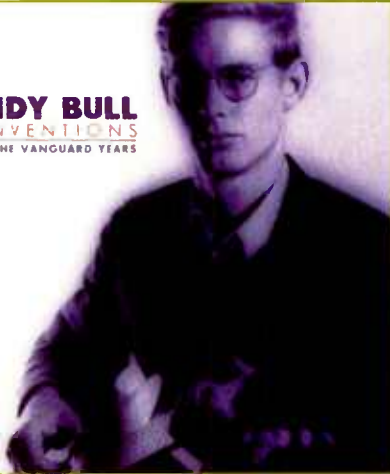
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# SANDY BULL

Re-Inventions: Best Of The Vanguard Years

Vanguard

**SANDY BULL**  
RE-INVENTIONS  
BEST OF THE VANGUARD YEARS



same breath, but back then such breadth was a rare and welcome thing. Today's "jam bands" owe a tremendous debt to Bull's exploratory musical vision. Had there been a H.O.R.D.E. tour in 1965, Bull would have been a natural for its second stage. Other artists, such as guitar innovators like Jim O'Rourke and Thurston Moore, also tread on the paths laid by Sandy Bull's quiet and intriguing albums. Put on one of his records today and you will fill the space around you with a fascinating world of sound.

There are certainly bigger names and brighter stars, but Sandy Bull deserves attention for being an iconoclastic performer who defied categories and never stopped questing for something different. The virtuoso guitarist recorded four instrumental albums for Vanguard in the early '60s that are still wonderful and inspiring to listen to. It's as if Bull were not merely ahead of his times, but was completely outside of them. Bull was a guitar visionary, able to synthesize Chuck Berry and Brazilian music with influences from Middle Eastern music and Indian raga—all a full two decades before such esoteric pairings and fusions became part of our standard way of thinking about music. Today it's nothing special to appreciate Bach and Sufi singers in the

>>> When it comes to rock, I am seldom one to cut corners or mince words. Let's cut right to the chase: The **DEEP PURPLE** box set is a mammoth, sprawling four-CD mass of metal,



or descending into the moronic abyss of endless blues soloing. Last year, Rhino paved the way for this awesome monstrosity of a rock 'n' roll box set by issuing deluxe editions of Purple classics *Made In Japan* and *Machine Head*, both of which included bonus tracks, alternate versions and hilarious Spinal Tap-ish liner notes. But this is the coup de grace, the ultimate. There's nothing esoteric or candy-coated about it. Listening to "Smoke On The Water" in 1999 is actually surprisingly pleasant: It's a monster riff, and the song's storyline about a Frank Zappa fan who accidentally burns down the plush century-old Casino in Montreaux is certainly among the immortal tales in the annals of rock history.

>>> After a period surprisingly devoid of quality world music reissues, there's been a resurgence.

In February, I wrote glowingly of the *Ethiopiquest* series and now there are some new titles from the somewhat-revived Earthworks label. There's a collection of **African Salsa** that's truly an ear-bender. It may seem a bit strange on the surface, but it turns out that most of the biggest African musicians and record producers are rabid fans of Latin and Afro-Cuban music. The Earthworks compilation *African Salsa* documents some African forays into the genre, a showcase for percolating rhythms and sinewy, athletic vocalists. Another fabulous title is fairly self-explanatory: **South African Gospel According To Earthworks**, a spectacular overview compiled with the label's unerring sense of good taste. Ladysmith Black Mambazo is the biggest marquee name here, but the other artists are equally impressive, if not even more so, making this a solid, worthwhile collection. The album also features tracks from Mzwaki Mbali, the South African poet and vocalist who has spent his entire career as an outspoken critic of racism and injustice in the South African political milieu. In one of the most sinister abuses of justice against a musician since Fela Kuti was thrown in jail for currency smuggling, Mbali is currently incarcerated in a South African prison, where he has been awaiting a trial for nearly two years. In an earlier court session, the first four police witnesses failed to identify him; others have made claims that they were paid to

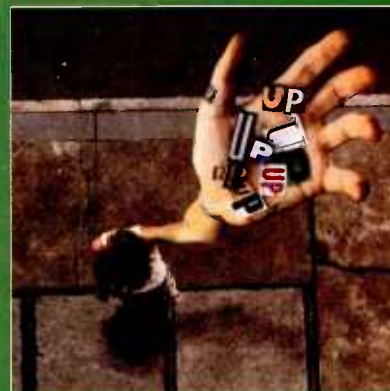
implicate him in a series of crimes (bank robbery, sticking up a businessman in the street, robbing a bottle factory) that make little sense given Mbali's lifelong passion for positivity and peace. That this could happen in the "new" South Africa is shameful and wrong.

>>> Even more interesting African music has been made available through the *Anthology Of World Music* series, available from Rounder Select. A couple of recent installments focus on two very different African countries. First, there's **Music From Rwanda**. Ranging from field recordings to polished studio productions, it's a powerful overview of some unique African music. There's also a truly fabulous volume of **Music Of Islam And Sufism In Morocco**. It's a must-hear for fans of Moroccan music (think of the Master Musicians Of Jajouka) and Sufi mystic singers such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. In its crossroads position between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Morocco is one of the age-old power-spots for humanity's spiritual energy, and Islamic mysticism has produced some of the deepest, most powerful music of the globe. Rounder has also released some positively antique recordings of calypso music culled from vintage 78s. The sound is squawky but surprisingly fun to listen to. The compilation is titled **Roosevelt In Trinidad: Calypsos Of Events, Places And Personalities 1933-39**. Much like today's rappers, the great calypsonians of the '30s would often compose topical selections dealing wryly with current events. They may not be as bold as "Fuck Tha Police," but are still pretty hilarious. There are also a couple of new titles in the excellent series of Alan Lomax archival recordings, *Deep River Of Song*. Current volumes include **Black Texicans, Black Appalachia** and **Bahamas 1935**. The *Black Appalachia* collection is particularly intriguing, as it points to the connection between hillbilly mountain music and African-derived, blues-tinged music. Wonderful stuff.

>>> All this exotic stuff may have you yearning for something a little less authentic, and sleazy exotica might be just the ticket. Del-Fi has just released **Jungle Jive!**, a collection of schmaltzy easy-listening from the early '60s ranging from innovative, ahead-of-their-time instrumental wonders to recordings that are inexplicable and truly bizarre, that celebrates the trashy easy-listening kitsch aesthetic at its finest. The inclusion of rare tracks by cult favorites such as Preston Epps of "Bongo Twist" fame make this a



1 ANI DIFRANCO	Up Up Up Up Up Up	Righteous Babe
2 SPIRITUALIZED	Live At The Albert Hall	deConstruction-Arista
3 TAKAKO MINEKAWA	Cloudy Cloud Calculator	Emperor Norton
4 FATBOY SLIM	You've Come A Long Way, Baby	Astralwerks
5 BECK	Mutations	DGC
6 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Bombay The Hard Way: Guns, Cars & Sitar	Motel
7 ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION	Rafi's Revenge	Slash-London
8 FEAR OF POP	Volume 1	550-Epic
9 STEREO LAB	Aluminum Tunes	Drag City
10 LAGWAGON	Let's Talk About Feelings	Fat Wreck Chords
11 JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION	Acme	Matador-Capitol
12 R.E.M.	Up	Warner Bros.
13 KITTY CRAFT	Beats And Breaks From The Flower Patch	Kindercore
14 MOJAVE 3	Out Of Tune	4AD-Sire
15 JASON FALKNER	Can You Still Feel?	Elektra-EEG
16 DON CABALLERO	Singles Breaking Up Vol. 1	Touch And Go
17 JAWBOX	My Scrapbook Of Fatal Accidents	DeSoto
18 PASTELS	Illuminati	Up
19 PLACEBO	Without You I'm Nothing	Hut-Virgin
20 MXPX	Let It Happen	Tooth & Nail
21 BOREDOMS	Super Are	Birdman-Reprise
22 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Songs For The Jet Set Vol. 2	Jetset
23 SEAN LENNON	Half Horse Half Musician	Grand Royal-Capitol
24 DIG	Life Like	Universal
25 MACHA	Macha	Jetset
26 TALVIN SINGH	OK	Island
27 SUGAR RAY	14:59	Lava-Atlantic
28 GROOP DOGDRILL	Half Nelson	Mantra-Beggars Banquet
29 BOO RADLEYS	King Size	Creation-Never
30 JUCIFER	Calling All Cars	Crack Rock
31 PORTISHEAD	Roseland NYC Live	Go! Beat-London
32 LO-FIDELITY ALLSTARS	How To Operate With A Blown Mind	Skint/Columbia-CRG
33 AFGHAN WHIGS	1965	Columbia-CRG
34 JETS TO BRAZIL	Orange Rhyming Dictionary	Jade Tree
35 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Yo-Yo A Go-Go: Another Live Yo-Yo Compilation	YoYo
36 CARDIGANS	Gran Turismo	Mercury
37 RONDELLES	Fiction Romance, Fast Machines	Sol 3-RCA
38 MANKIND LIBERATION FRONT	MLF	4AD
39 HIS NAME IS ALIVE	Ft. Lake	Crank!
40 GLORIA RECORD	The Gloria Record (EP)	Kindercore
41 MASTERS OF THE HEMISPHERE	Masters Of The Hemisphere	Fueled By Ramen
42 JIMMY EAT WORLD	Jimmy Eat World	TVT
43 PORTABLE	Portable	Kill Rock Stars
44 LONG HIND LEGS	Feb. 4th - 14th 1998	MCA
45 PUYA	Fundamental	Grand Royal-Capitol
46 BEN LEE	Consult Your Electric Minions	Island
47 PJ HARVEY	Is This Desire?	Matador
48 CAT POWER	Moon Pix	Restless
49 HATE DEPT. 2	"Release It" (CD5)	Red Ink
50 P.J. OLSSON	P.J. Olsson	Knitting Factory
51 HARRIET TUBMAN	I Am A Man	Columbia-CRG
52 OFFSPRING	Americana	Slabco
53 BUCKMINSTER FUZEBOARD	How To Make C60BR24 In Under An Hour	Matador
54 BELLE & SEBASTIAN	The Boy With The Arab Strap	Southern
55 KARATE	The Bed Is In The Ocean	Slash-WB
56 SOUL COUGHING	El Oso	Up
57 764-HERO	Get Here And Stay	Capricorn
58 CAKE	Prolonging The Magic	Capricorn
59 VIC CHESNUTT	The Salesman And Bernadette	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
60 SQUAREPUSHER	Music Is Rotted One Note	Slash-Island
61 IMPERIAL TEEN	What Is Not To Love	4AD-Mammoth
62 HOPE BLISTER	...Smile's OK	Mercury
63 RUSTED ROOT	Rusted Root	Tooth & Nail
64 ROADSIDE MONUMENT	I Am The Day Of Current Taste	Future Farmer
65 FOR STARS	For Stars	Endearing
66 BONADUCES	The Democracy Of Sleep	Too Pure-Beggars Banquet
67 HEFNER	Breaking God's Heart	Atlantic
68 JEWEL	Spirit	HiFi/Elektra-EEG
69 MARVELOUS 3	Hey! Album	Tommy Boy
70 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats Vol. 1-4	Rykodisc
71 GOLDEN SMOG	Weird Tales	Flip/Elektra-EEG
72 FINE	Against The View	Mutant Sound System
73 DR. ISRAEL	Inna City Pressure	Flydaddy
74 NUMBER ONE CUP	People People Why Are We Fighting?	Soleilmoon
75 MUSLIMGAUZE	Hussein Mahmood Jeeb Tehar Gass	



#1 ANI DIFRANCO  
Up Up Up Up Up Up Up

FIVE YEARS AGO

1. RAMONES	
ACID EATERS	RADIOACTIVE
2. LEMONHEADS	
COME ON FEEL THE LEMONHEADS	ATLANTIC
3. JAWBOX	
SAVORY + 3 EP	ATLANTIC
4. TORI AMOS	
UNDER THE PINK	ATLANTIC
5. SPINANES	
MANOS	SUB POP

TEN YEARS AGO

1. LOU REED	
NEW YORK	SIRE-WB
2. VIOLENT FEMMES	
3	SLASH-WB
3. THE FALL	
I AM KURIOUS ORANJ	BEGGARS BANQUET-RCA
4. WATERBOYS	
FISHERMAN'S BLUES	ENSIGN-CHRYSALIS
5. R.E.M.	
GREEN	WARNER BROS.

Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 30 most played releases that week.



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# LIFE/STYLE

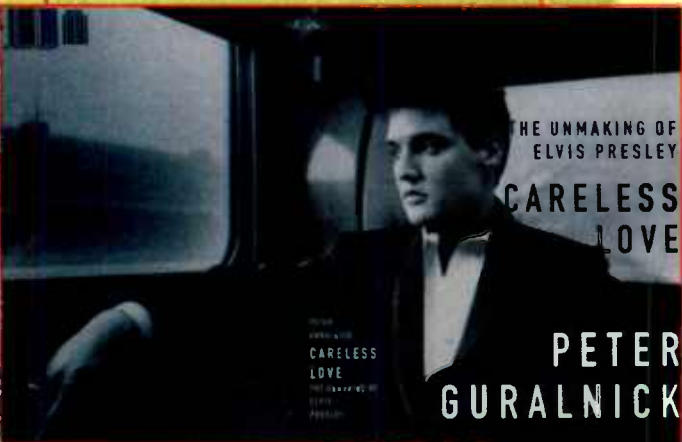
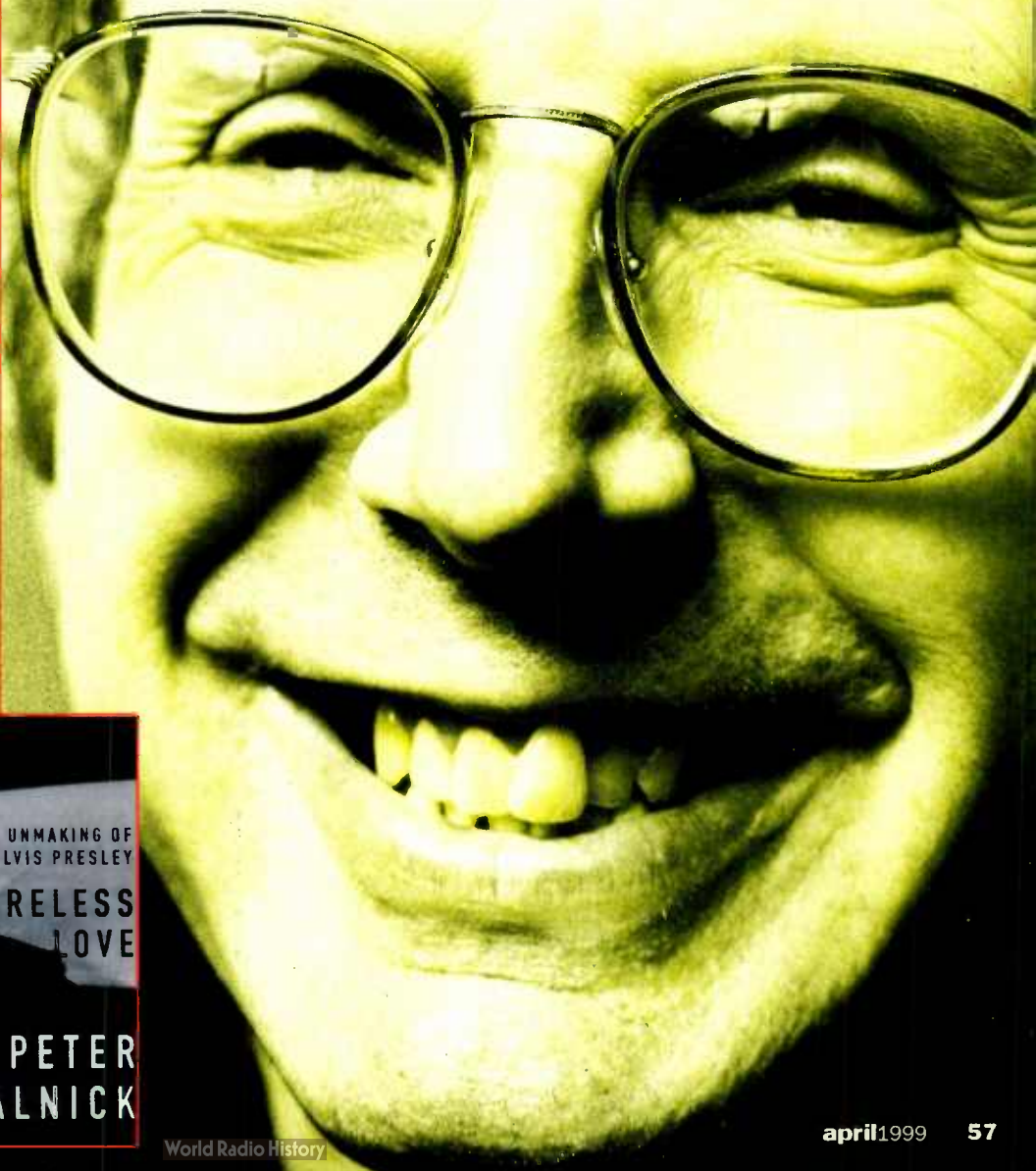
## PETER GURALNICK: SEE SEE WRITER

It really is as simple as this: Without the handful of books Peter Guralnick has written since the early 1970s, the careers of Charlie Feathers, James Talley, and, say, Robert Pete Williams might be little more than footnotes scrutinized by only the most eccentric of music nerds. Worse, the knowledge of who these men were might be as lost as their music.

Fair enough, Feathers, Talley, and Williams are still hardly household names. But their stories and so many others remain in print, their majesty still to be revealed as needed within the pages of *Feel Like Going Home*, *Lost Highway*, and *Sweet Soul Music*. Along with a handful of other writers—notably Samuel Charters, Robert Palmer, Nick Tosches, and Bill C. Malone—Guralnick has labored since the 1960s to study and record as much as he could about the uniquely (North) American musics those artists made.

This work has culminated—in a commercial sense, that is, for he has many other projects pending—with the publication of *Careless Love*, the second volume in his definitive biography of

*(continued on page 65)*



## XIU XIU: THE SENT DOWN GIRL

(Stratosphere Entertainment)

It's been awhile since we've seen Joan Chen, the radiant Chinese actress from *The Last Emperor* and David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*. (I'm still p.o.'d at what her character did to poor Sheriff Truman, though.) Apparently, she's been busy making *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl*, a distressing tale recounting a girl's coming of age during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The movie, set in 1975, concerns Xiu Xiu, a teen who—like so many “intellectual youths” exiled before her—dutifully leaves her family to learn a trade. Thinking that this is only a six-month gig, Xiu Xiu resigns herself to the task at hand: learning about horses on a lonely stretch of Tibetan countryside. Her instructor is a simpleton long forgotten by society. (We're told he lost his penis in a war.) As you might expect, hardship is right around the bend. Chen, who serves as director, producer and co-writer, had faced the inevitable call to be “sent down” as a youth. (She was selected to be a student at the Shanghai Film Studio instead.) Despite the large-scale production—filled with beautiful vistas and sunsets—Chen's look at innocence lost under tragic circumstances remains an intimate affair.

>>>John Elsasser

## THE VELOCITY OF GARY\* (\*NOT HIS REAL NAME)

(Cineville)

This isn't the worst movie ever produced—it just seems like it. Vincent D'Onofrio and Salma Hayek are two-thirds of a bizarre love triangle set in Manhattan. D'Onofrio is Valentino, a former porn star diddling both Hayek and street hustler Gary (Thomas Jane). The trio forms a makeshift family after Valentino is hospitalized with AIDS. This appalling vanity project, based on a one-man theater piece, never makes sense. Characters, including Ethan Hawke as a tattoo artist, drift in and out of the narrative. There are perplexing flashbacks and dream sequences, then we fast-forward “several months later” (something the audience will be able to relate to). When director Dan Ireland runs out of ideas, characters lip-synch while in drag. D'Onofrio tries to be charismatic, but he comes across like some mook you'd encounter at an Ozzy Osbourne show. Hayek is actively awful, yelling and baring her magnificent midriff, which looks as if it were recently buffed with furniture polish. (And we're supposed to believe this sexpot works in a doughnut shop?) A true waste of talent. And time.

>>>John Elsasser



## SLC PUNK!

(Sony Pictures Classics)

To be or not to be punk rock? That is the question for Stevo (Matthew Lillard), the angst-ridden, upper-middle class, college-educated, blue-haired anarchist at the center of *SLC Punk!* In writer/director James Merendino's autobiographical look at rebellious youth in 1985 Utah, Lillard (who played goofy supporting roles alongside Skeet Ulrich in *Scream*, Marlon Wayans in *Senseless*, and Kathleen Turner in *Serial Mom*) shines as the protagonist concerned about bowing down to the man. Lillard and costars including Annabeth Gish (*Shag*) and Michael Goorjian (TV's *Party Of Five*) have mastered the drunk, disenfranchised and depressed vibe of young slacker punks. What's more, the film's art direction (cast and crew credits are emblazoned on phony 7" sleeves), soundtrack (including, natch, the Ramones, Dead Kennedys, et al.), and costuming (makeshift razor-blade jewelry, gravity-defying mohawk spikes, grandpa-plaid polyester pants and Doc Martens) would get the punk purist's seal of approval. Watching *SLC Punk!*, you'll remember all the times you gave the finger to responsibility, thought your parents were being uncool, had a falling out with a lover, or buried a friend too early. With the exception of a few Mormon jokes and an extended discussion of state-run liquor stores, this is a coming-of-age tale that could have taken place anywhere kids fight for identity and cliques like punks, mods, or gamers are born.

>>>Carrie Bell

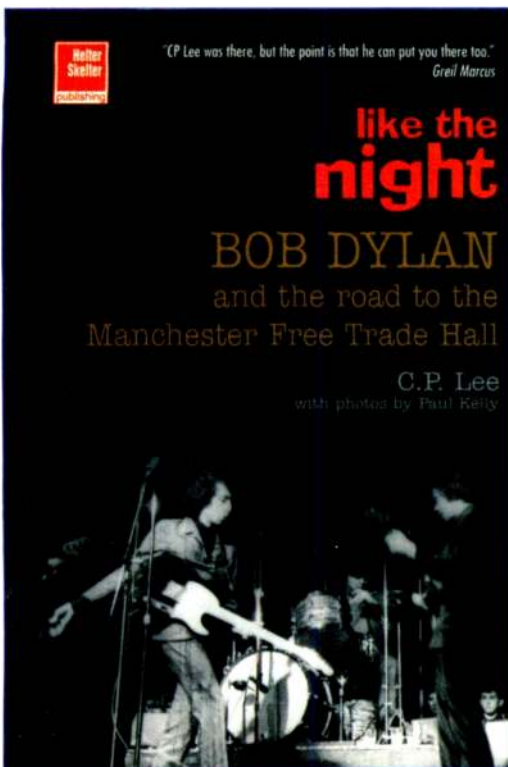
## SPARKLER

(Strand Releasing)

*Sparkler* is the debut feature by Darren Stein, whose second film, *Jawbreaker*, was recently released. (Don't worry—none of this will be on the midterm.) *Sparkler*, a melancholic black comedy, throws together dissimilar groups of people outside Las Vegas. In a bar called the Backwoods Inn (described as “a Home Depot nightmare”), three young men from Los Angeles meet Melba (the plucky Park Overall from TV's *Empty Nest*), an impressionable woman in her 40s trying to

escape a bad marriage. Skipping over loads of malarkey—mostly involving dumb luck and coincidence—she follows the boys to Vegas to start a new life. While Stein has a gift for colorful observations, all potential fun is squashed by dubious plot developments, overused stereotypes and uninspired acting. Freddie Prinze Jr., the biggest name in the ensemble cast, is a leading hunk in the making after *She's All That, I Know What You Did Last Summer* and its oddly named sequel. During this joyless exercise, though, his off-putting personality falls between a rock and Keanu Reeves. Perhaps Stein could have called this *Fizzler*.

>>>John Elsasser



## DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALL RIGHT: BOB DYLAN, THE EARLY YEARS

By Andy Gill  
(Thunder's Mouth)

## LIKE THE NIGHT: BOB DYLAN AND THE ROAD TO THE MANCHESTER FREE TRADE HALL

By C.P. Lee  
(Helter Skelter)

By current estimates, some 450 books have been written on Bob Dylan, putting him on a par with Hitler and JFK as one of the most scrutinized individuals of the 20th century. And though there's little left to say about Dylan, every few years we find ways to revise what we already know. To wit, Dylan books 451 and 452 share a

subject and a spirit, but they approach them in vastly different ways. Though it's marred by ghastly layout and an utterly throwaway title (pick a Dylan song, any Dylan song), Andy Gill's *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right* offers an admirably earnest, at times acutely perceptive, song-by-song review of Dylan's '60s canon. Though it lacks the breadth and assurance of Ian McDonald's similarly formatted Beatles book, *Revolution In The Head*, when *Don't Think Twice* succeeds, it peeks through to that elusive space between the mind and the body, where Dylan's music itself resides.

C.P. Lee takes a different tack entirely. He filters all of Dylan's '60s work through a single, albeit seismic, event—his notorious, near-perfect 1966 Manchester Free Trade Hall performance (a.k.a. "The Royal Albert Hall" show, recently issued by Columbia). Lee contends that all of Dylan's early '60s work is merely preamble to this historic concert. He likens Dylan's electric quest to Captain Ahab's search for Moby Dick—"one man in pursuit of the impossible." Lee asserts that Dylan's folk fans felt more insulted than betrayed by this pursuit. He recalls that Dylan "represented an alternative escape route that defied the dictates of society." The folkies took Dylan's Telecaster as a nod to the lowest common denominator. And what are you escaping from, they reckoned, if everyone else is escaping with you? Little did they know, Dylan was making the most literate, complex music of his career. Funny how revisionism works, isn't it? >>>Matt Hanks

## MOON: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A ROCK LEGEND

By Tony Fletcher (Spike)

During his 14-year tenure with The Who, Keith Moon raised the bar for all contenders that dared follow, both from behind his enormous drum kit, and in the press, with his drink-and-drug-induced exploits and outrageous sense of comedy. Fletcher's biography sets a similarly daunting standard. Painting Moon as the embodiment of all that glorified British rock in the '60s, as well as its troubled '70s decline, this exhaustively researched text incorporates dozens of voices, from Hollywood glitterati like Oliver Reed and Larry Hagman, to the

rare individuals with whom Moon actually dared quit clowning around. Tracing his origins as a practical joker and surf music enthusiast, through his tumultuous years with "the Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band in the World" (plus a disastrous stab at Hollywood), Fletcher details the factors that drove the drummer deep into his notorious "Moon the Loon" alter ego. The author's enthusiasm makes even the most outrageous episodes—like Moon's insistence that demonic possession spurred his destructive outbursts—harrowing and believable. Boasting nearly 600 pages of detailed prose, Moon proves as engrossing a read as befits its maligned, misunderstood subject.

>>>Kurt B. Reighley

## PATTI SMITH COMPLETE: LYRICS, REFLECTIONS, & NOTES FOR THE FUTURE

By Patti Smith (Doubleday)

"I haven't fucked much with the past, but I've fucked plenty with the future," wrote Patti Smith in 1978, and the future has borne the truth of her audacious proclamation: Twenty years on, Smith is recognized as the godmother of punk, of riot-grrrls, of rock poets. Now that she's past 50, it's time to fuck with the past, and *Patti Smith Complete* documents in words and pictures the rock 'n' roll side of her story thus far. This beautifully designed book links lyrics from her seven albums with occasional journal entries and reminiscences, a final recent poem ("Notes For The Future"), and brilliant photos from Robert Mapplethorpe, Annie Liebovitz and others. The photos, from raw CBGB's performances to startlingly domestic family portraits to recent appearances with Bob Dylan, capture Smith's balance of artistic seriousness, intensity, and humor; they are half the attraction of this pricey volume. Smith is one of the few rock 'n' roll writers whose words can hold their own on the page without seeming trite or pretentious; the lyrics, from *Horses* especially, resonate with the energy of Beat poetry and the revolutionary spirit of her hero, French poet Arthur Rimbaud. *Patti Smith Complete* captures the evolution of an important and literate artist.

>>>Steve Klinge

## SWING: A NEW RETRO RENAISSANCE

By V. Vale (V:Search Books)

V. Vale, the co-founder of famed seditious publishing arsenal RE/Search Books (*Industrial Culture Handbook*, *The Guide to Bodily Fluids*, *Freaks and Bob Flanagan: Super-Masochist*) is at it again. Vale's new company, V:Search, has just published *Swing: A New Retro Renaissance*, wherein Vale argues that swingtime is not the forum of yuppies with cigars, but "cultural rebellion in its most subversive form." It is a niche society with its own distinct symbols, language and morals, not unlike the body mutilators that Vale so thoroughly defined in *The Modern Primitives*. *Swing* follows the oral history format that Vale is known for, which allows the key members of the swing revival ample time to reminisce. The reader comes away with both a thorough explanation of the development and nuances of the scene. If there is one shortfall, it is that San Francisco native Vale celebrates the importance of the Bay Area scene almost to the point of neglecting equally important developments around the country. This doesn't detract from the fact that with *Swing*, Vale once again proves that he is the foremost chronicler of American sub-culture.

>>>Sam Wick

## OVER-THE-COUNTER RELIGION

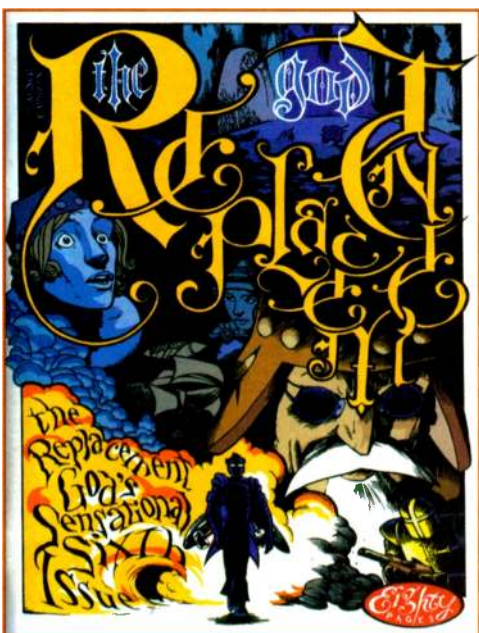


It takes a certain kind of conspiratorial devotion to minutiae and obscurity to make sense of the music underground, so it's inevitable that somebody would create Dagobert's Revenge (\$5 from Tracy R. Twyman, 2301 New York Ave., 2nd Fl., Union City, NJ 07087), subtitled "Musick, Magick, Monarchism." It's got the style and look of a music 'zine, but it's all about the Knights Templar, the Scottish House of Stewart and its alleged bloodline going back to Jesus Christ and King David, the Holy Grail, the severed head of Baphomet, the US government's underground tunnels—that kind of thing. There's a record review section, but it's entirely devoted to albums by bands named after Freemasonry (the Templars, Masonic Youth, the Gnomes Of Zurich...). The writing is all under silly pseudonyms (Sir Hiram Firam, Mason Dixon), and very deeply into Templar conspiracy theory. There are interviews with Scottish prince-in-exile Michael Stewart and H.E. Sir Scott Stewart, who an introduction notes is "the American Ambassador to the Royal House of Stewart... as well as a manager at Circuit City." In a few places, the 'zine gets a little too deeply whacked-out, as when it reprints part of the *Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion* (a forged anti-Semitic libel, which it doesn't mention) or provides a list of people who "must not be allowed to breed" ("Women's Studies majors" and "people who wear ribbons for social causes," for instance). But there's also some amusing "found" material, like a page of dreadful poetry found in a Masonic magazine from the '60s and a lot of fascinating religious-conspiracy-theory images.

In a more conventionally religious vein, Jai Agnish's 'zine *Flygirl* operates at the intersection of indie-rock culture and Christianity, which is an unexpected but surprisingly fruitful combination. Agnish lets his contributors take a few pages to do whatever they like, sometimes concerned with music and spirituality, sometimes not, but generally surprising and visually striking: Inside its scribbly cover, it's a beautiful-looking magazine, with lots of breathing room. Issue #8 (\$7 post-paid from 43 Morris Ave., West Milford, NJ 07480) includes a CD with tracks by indie-types that have done explicitly Christian work before (Brother Danielson, Soul-Junk), a few unknowns (including Agnish's own projects Jags and Indiam), and one big surprise—Bonnie Prince Billy, a.k.a. Will Oldham, covering Joe Wise's "Watch With Me"—which isn't really such a big surprise, on reflection. And, instead of articles about bands, Agnish gives musicians space to work with: Julie Doiron contributes five photographs of her family and friends, Dennis Callaci of Refrigerator and the Shrimper label handwrites a long, spare poem, the Silver Jews' D.C. Berman does a very peculiar one-page prose piece, and Buzzsaw does a weirdly hilarious comic strip conflating Moses and Grandpa Munster.

And, for a look at a completely new theology—if, admittedly, a fictional one—check out Zander Cannon's charming, engaging comic book *The Replacement God* (\$6.95 from The Handicraft Guild, 89 S. 10th St. #315, Minneapolis, MN 55403). Cannon has been publishing the series through a couple of bigger companies, but with the mammoth sixth issue—80 pages!—he's started self-publishing it. The main story is a convoluted fantasy concerning a freed slave who's destined to take over for a dying god and destroy a kingdom, the spirit of a dead Visigoth, a couple of religious warriors, and a million soap-operatic subplots. This could get out of control pretty quickly, but Cannon is a born storyteller, whose narratives stay clear and engaging even where he hasn't quite worked out the kinks in his drawing style (and it's mostly there, with cartoony figures set against detailed, *Prince Valiant*-ish backgrounds). He also keeps the dialogue lighthearted and slangy, which lets him sneak in some awfully bulky sword-and-sorcery background features that let him stretch out a little more: "The Knights Of Houlihan's," a strip about hard-drinking knights drawn in a cute "bigfoot" style, and "Knute's Escapes," an ongoing joke that works on the strength of its Rube Goldberg formula. Keep your eye on what Cannon does: He's got great things ahead of him.

MM



## KILL YOUR RADIO: MUSIC ON THE 'NET

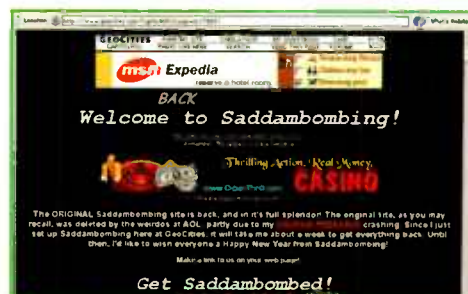
The beginning of 1999 saw huge trembles in the music industry, and though the MP3 revolution of high-quality downloadable music was only a little tremor in the distance, it's getting closer. Musicians have been talking about distributing their work exclusively over the Web, but the ones who have made their new work's first public exposure as computer files have generally fallen into one of two categories: unknown bands trying to get heard any way they can (a lot of them can be found pitching their wares at the likes of [www.mp3.com](http://www.mp3.com); the Monster Island site, [www.monsterisland.com](http://www.monsterisland.com), has a label's worth of them), and music-biz veterans for whom it's the best way to reach what's left of their fan base (like Todd Rundgren, whose [www.todd-rundgren.com](http://www.todd-rundgren.com) doesn't seem to have been updated in quite a while).

Public Enemy, though, made a splash in the online world with some recent announcements. In response to a tiff with its label, Def Jam, over having posted some tracks from the band's forthcoming remix album, *Bring The Noise 2000*, on its [www.public-enemy.com](http://www.public-enemy.com) site, PE came up with a new track, exclusively available as a download from the site: "Swindler's Lust," whose most significant line is "you own the master or the master owns you." (But was that the most tactful song title for a band that's had some problems with accusations of anti-Semitism in the past?) The word came through shortly thereafter that the band had split with Def Jam, and that a new album, *There's A Poison Goin' On*, would be available as a free download from [public-enemy.com](http://public-enemy.com) in a few months. PE is past its commercial prime, but it's still significant enough that this is a heck of a development.

Elsewhere on the Web, though, there are relatively established musicians who have free music that's only available on their sites, just as a gesture of kindness to their fans. The Artist Who Doesn't Have A Name Anymore initially tried to release his album *Crystal Ball* through mail-order sales advertised on the Web, but that turned into something of a fiasco. As if to make up for it, his site at [www.love4oneanother.com](http://www.love4oneanother.com) has a bunch of unreleased-in-stores jams and live tracks, in RealAudio and RealVideo form—they're a little bit hidden in the profusion of frames, animations, press releases for attention-getting stunts and ads for releases on his label, but they're there. Edith Frost's site, at [www.edithfrost.com](http://www.edithfrost.com), has a "jukebox" with songs from all of her records to date—and then a bunch of bonus tracks, not available in stores, that shed some light on her country-girl musical tastes: covers of the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, and Reno & Smiley, among others, all recorded at home, and an adorable version of Sparkle Moore's "Skull And Crossbones" taped with her old rockabilly band the Roadhouse Romeos. It's fun stuff, and a good introduction for those who don't know her yet and enlightening for those who do. And They Might Be Giants' legendary Dial-A-Song service—unreleased songs on an answering machine—is now available on the Web, too, on the band's own site at [www.tmbg.com/dial/dial.html](http://www.tmbg.com/dial/dial.html). It only has one song at a time, but that's still a treat for fans who don't want to pay long-distance charges.

Some dedicated fans have put up RealAudio or MP3 files of work by their favorite artists that was once officially available, but isn't any more. For a while, there was a circuit that traded MP3s of rare tracks by IDM ("Intelligent Dance Music") artists—but, of course, those turned out to be the artists who were the most likely candidates to be on the web and cracking down on unauthorized reproduction. A devotee of the brilliant Indian film composer R.D. Burman ("Pancham") has put up a big page of RealAudio files of Burman songs from the '60s through the '90s ([members.spree.com/entertainment/tiara2c/Pancham\\_website.html](http://members.spree.com/entertainment/tiara2c/Pancham_website.html)), and it's all amazing, inventive stuff, equal parts *Shaft*-style funk, huge orchestral balladry and experimental weirdness, usually all at the same time.

Then, of course, there are songs that for one reason or another probably couldn't be legitimately released, but survive in *samizdat* form on the Web. There's a hysterical (if politically scary), fully produced parody of Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping" that goes under the name of "Saddambombing"—yes, it dates from last year's Gulf War II near-miss. It's popped up most recently at [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7383/](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7383/), but if it's gone by the time you read this, just do a search for the title. On the other side of the political spectrum, some insanely dedicated person taped a few weeks worth of Rush Limbaugh's show, chopped it up word-by-word, and rearranged it with surprising delicacy (if that word applies here) into a little ditty called "I'm A Nazi." Point your browser to [www.99x.com/rush.ram](http://www.99x.com/rush.ram), and stand back.

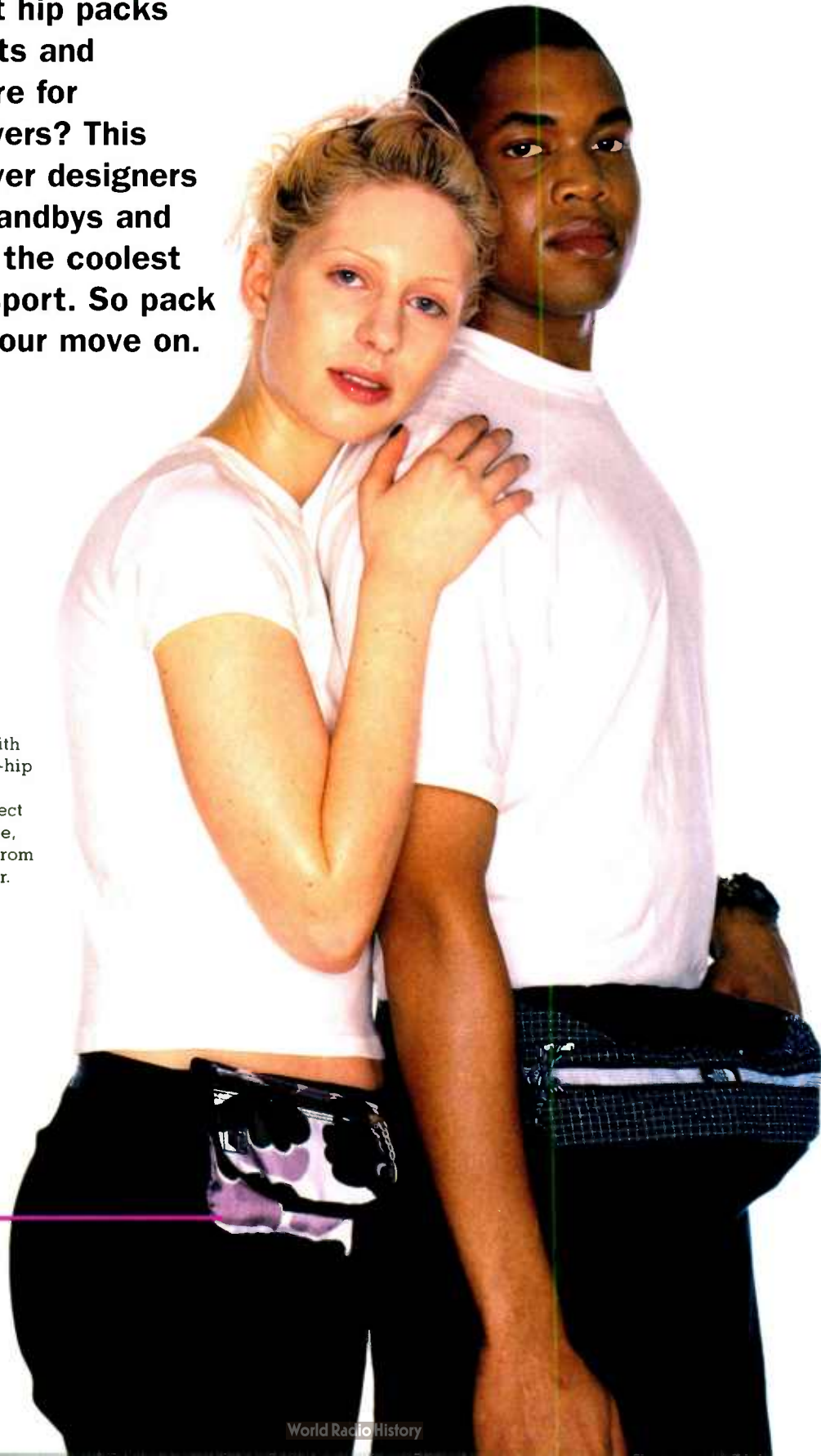


# GET CARRIED AWAY

Text: Michelle Zacks Photos: Britt Carpenter

So you thought hip packs were for tourists and wristbands were for basketball players? This spring, six clever designers reinvent old standbys and turn them into the coolest modes of transport. So pack it up and get your move on.

It can be a jungle out there, so buckle up with this camouflage mini-hip pack by **STEVE MADDEN** (\$24). Perfect for: a Swiss army knife, matches, and a map from your local park ranger.



Grooming: Amanda Redgrave for Bradley Curry Models: M. Tye Comer and Tara Sugar



Your split personalities will find harmony inside all of the compartments provided by **DIESEL**'s neoprene CD bag (\$42). Slide in: Marilyn Manson's *Mechanical Animals*, Beth Orton's *Central Reservation*, or whatever your ears dictate.

For those who wear their heart on their sleeves, **BRADY ARCHMENT** offers you this nylon arm-pouch (\$75) for all your sensitive documents. Fits: your little black book.



This athletic-inspired wristband from **DAWLS** (\$15.50) is perfect for those who travel light. Just enough room for: some cash, a house key, and a stick of gum.



It's sleek, it's snug, and you can sling it over your shoulder. The essential shoulder holster by **XS** (\$27) carries: your wallet, your Walkman, and spare batteries in case of an emergency.



Spaceheads and adventurers alike will appreciate this survival kit from **THE NORTH FACE** (\$29). Load up: a calling card, an extra pair of socks, and Tang.



## JOHN HUGHES

John Hughes, the '80s teen film kingpin who gave us *16 Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Pretty In Pink*, returns to the topics of adolescence's undoing with his latest film, *Reach The Rock* (Gramercy Pictures). Tortoise's John McEntire provides a brooding instrumental score for the film, a dark character study about Robin Fleming, a twenty-something guy who uses desperate measures in an attempt to revive a high school romance.

**Q:** *Reach The Rock* marks your return to a film about the post high-school years. Why did you decide that you had something else to say about that age group?

**A:** Actually it was a script that was written as sort of an escape. I'd finished *Planes, Trains And Automobiles*—we shot that movie in Buffalo, New York, New York City, St. Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara. It went from March to July. So I thought, "I hate this." I want to be in a room with a couple of people talking. So I said, "I'll put a guy in jail." I just like writing younger characters. There's so much more freedom as a writer to create a young character than to create an old character.

**Q:** How so?

**A:** They don't have a history to protect. Their emotions are raw, everything's new, everything's possible. Much more optimistic. **A**

pessimistic kid is just interesting anyway because it's so against type. You can take two young people and put them into a very emotional conversation without them having to know one another. If you do that with adult characters... it just doesn't work. Like with *The Breakfast Club*, somebody said, "Why don't you do it with adults?" Because it would never work. Because they'd lie, not in the worst sense, but they would couch things much more carefully. They would all get along. They would look for consensus, rather than have consensus come out of their actions.

**Q:** Is the character of Robin based on anyone you grew up with?

**A:** This is based on my 10-year high school reunion. I was not Mr. Popular, so I had this odd group of friends, me and other people who didn't quite fit in. There were these kids from a naval base. They didn't quite fit in with the oxford cloth Brooks Brothers shirt/khaki pants crowd, nor did I, so I hung out with a lot of these guys. When I went back to my 10-year reunion, one of those guys was there, and he was exactly the same. *Exactly*. Nothing had changed. So he started talking about all these things we did, and I never remembered any of them. I realized he never left. All [Robin] gets out of the movie, he doesn't win, he just realizes he's losing. Which I thought was an interesting proposition: What someone will do to rise out of their class?

**Q:** Have you seen any of the recent teen films?

**A:** No, not one. But I haven't seen anything. I'm currently watching *Singing In The Rain*. I saw some of *Rushmore*, which I thought was extremely good. I haven't seen any of the other ones. It just seems like everybody has a leather jacket. Every male has short hair, combed forward, and a leather jacket. And every woman a midriff showing. And a barrette.

## VIDEOGAMING



### HERETIC II (FOR PC)

(Raven-Activision)

When Raven Software announced that its sequel to the DOOM-engined *Heretic* would stray from the first-person shooter formula and instead be a third-person adventure, the gaming community shuddered. Perhaps the announcement conjured up images of the aging, bit-mappy *Tomb Raider* series, with its see-through walls and difficult character movement. Happily, the only thing *Heretic II* shares with the aforementioned title is that third person perspective; it takes a little getting used to, but once you do you won't want to go back. Seeing your character onscreen not only makes for great death-matches (with a

larger field-of-view) but also allows accurate pole-vaulting and jump/kick combinations with your default weapon, a stick-blade. Raven has tweaked the Quake 2 engine to the point of non-recognition. *Heretic II's* beautiful lighting and detailed architecture is just astounding, as are the abundant translucent weapon effects. Character control is amazingly precise and—unlike that other third-person game—the camera always shows you what you need to see. *Heretic II* has been hogging Game-Of-The-Year awards at gaming fan sites and computer gaming mags alike. With a compelling story, immersive environments and the best multi-player experience out there, it's easy to see why.

>>>Aaron Clow



### MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER (FOR MAC/PC)

(Bungie)

If you wrote off *Myth: The Fallen Lords* because everything about its name and packaging screamed "role-playing game"—too much to read, too many hours to learn—you missed out on one of the best action titles of last year. While it's true that *Myth* takes place in a fantasy world of sorcerers, knights, dwarves, and ghouls, gameplay is both fast-paced and challenging, making it a quintessential multi-player game. *Myth II* hasn't done anything to shake the *Dungeons & Dragons* stigma. Serious effort went into preserving the original story line and creating a friendlier environment for the numerous

*Myth* "orders." Yet, like the original, *Soulblighter* makes room for those who don't care about anything more than fighting friends and strangers on a virtual battlefield. Click and point controls make for a relatively short learning curve, but the simultaneous real-time play requires that you quickly hone your reflexes and develop strategies lest you find your troops splattered across the beautifully 3D-rendered landscape. Smoother animation, new characters, solid net support, and more multi-player options (Assassin, Stampede, King of the Hill) make it hard to imagine exhausting *Myth II's* potential.

>>>Sam Cannon



(continued from page 57)

Elvis Presley. More than 300 books have been published about Presley, and it took Guralnick 11 years (or his entire life, depending on how you wish to count) to get the story as nearly right as it's ever going to get.

This was not, naturally, exactly how he had planned matters. A few weeks after his 21st birthday in 1965, a small press in Boston produced a second volume of Peter Guralnick's short stories, in an edition of 2,000. He remembers that they had sold several hundred mimeographed copies of a first volume, and the young writer had every reason to hope that his work might some day be mentioned next to that of John Updike or J.D. Salinger.

Today, having found himself on a different shelf, the one-time classics instructor at Boston University still reads and writes fiction (only his novel *Nighthawk Blues* has been published), and nurtures passions for film and baseball. And goes quite modestly about his work, for he technically became a full-time writer only in 1992, when, after 22 years, he closed down the summer camp his grandfather had opened in 1937.

"Say 'enthusiast,' not 'expert,'" Guralnick asks, settling into a Nashville hotel room chair in the middle of the obligatory 18-cities-in-21-days author tour. His is a wiry, unassuming presence, and though he's been sleeping four hours a night he seems refreshed by yesterday's tennis game with the

Vanderbilt women's coach.

"It's really simple," he continues. "I just fell into the blues when I was around 15. By happenstance this kid I knew went down to the Newport Folk Festival, and when he came back we started listening to a bunch of records, including Woody Guthrie, Woody Guthrie [with] Cisco Houston, and among them were some blues records that we were just exploring. When I heard this blues—Lead Belly, Big Bill Broonzy, Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, Howlin' Wolf, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry—the blues just knocked me out. I wasn't looking for it, I didn't know what it was, and it just turned me around."

Turned so far that, 30 years on, Guralnick has trouble separating stories he heard from both Bobby Blue Bland and Bill Monroe about playing baseball on the road. Not the same story, mind you, just another common current running through the music.

"What I am always looking for is something that just draws me in," he says. "It's like writing. The point is that I show up every day, and I show up in the hopes that inspiration, too, will show up at some point. But my strong belief is that if I don't show up, inspiration may come knocking, but the door isn't even open because I'm not there."

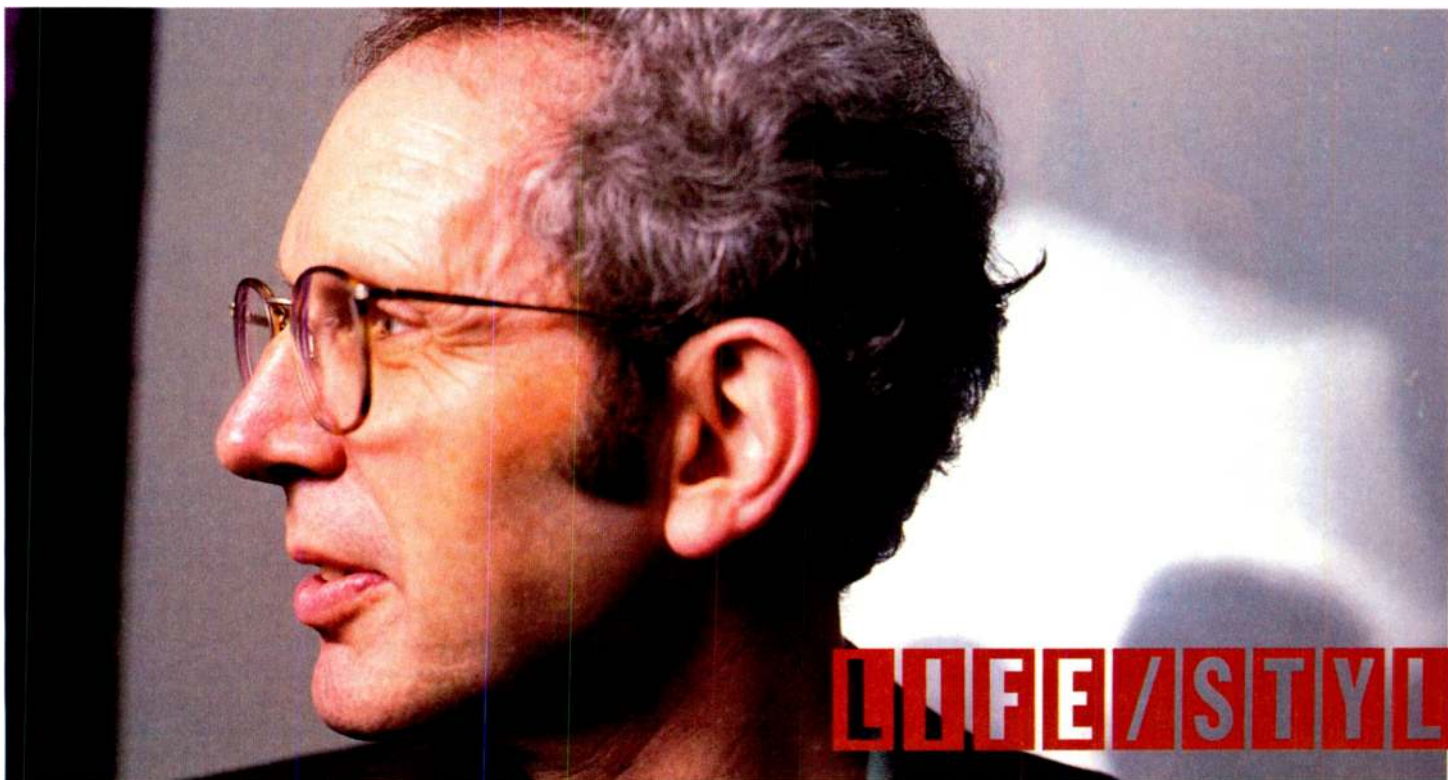
"And in that same way, with music, I try to be open to a lot of different stuff, with the idea that it's to my benefit. I'm not sitting in judgment on stuff; I'm looking to get lost. I really believe in Chet Baker's

'let's get lost.' I think that's everything, it's what you're looking for in any creative act. It's what somebody who is an automobile mechanic is looking for as much as a writer. It's obviously what people are looking for in sex. And it's what you're looking for in music.

"It's not interesting to sit back and write down in a little notebook, 'this is just not quite the caliber that that was.' This is the kind of thing you do when you're seven years old and argue about who's the greatest baseball player of all time. I think this is not particularly relevant. What is relevant is the experience that you get from music."

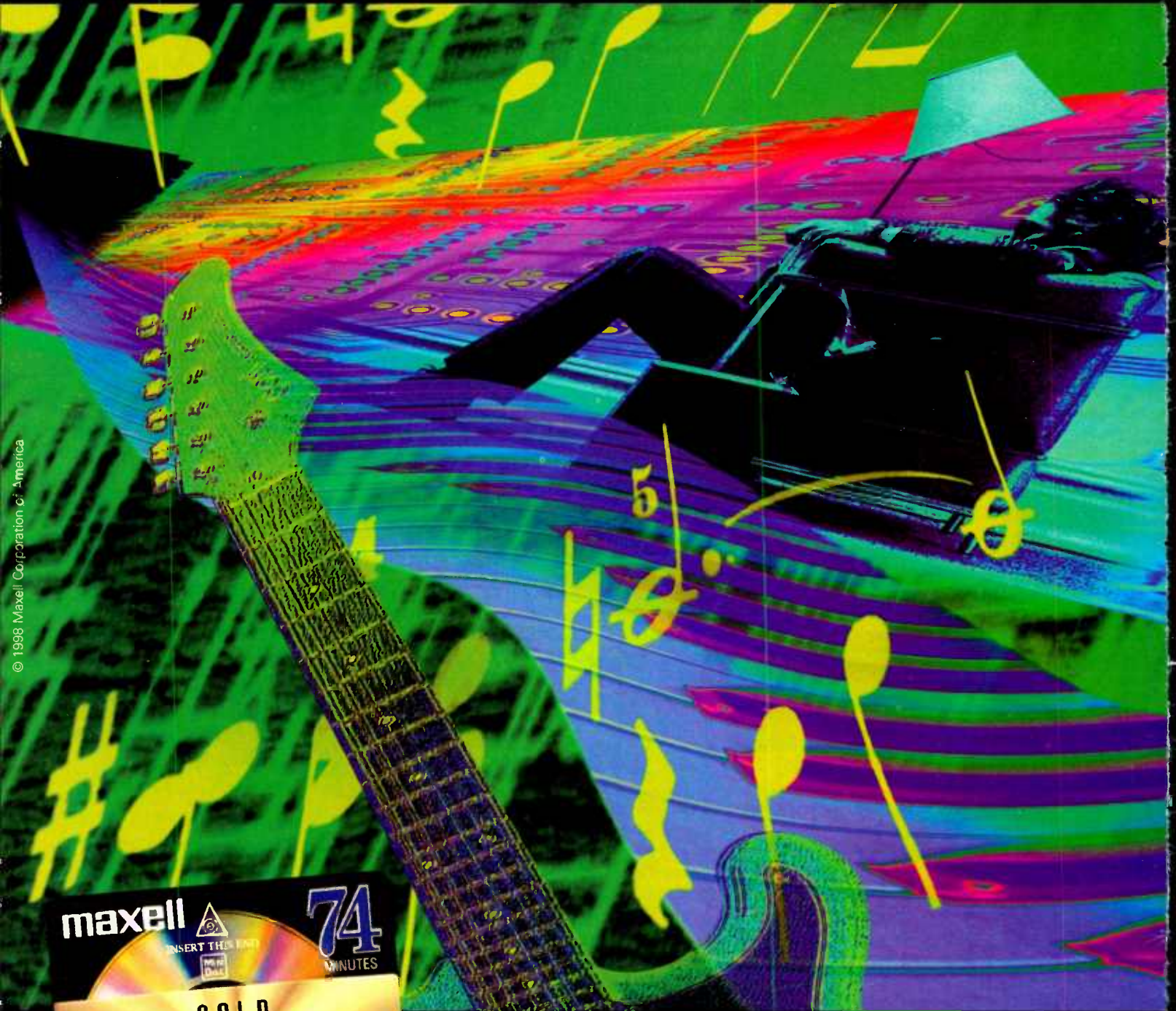
This openness has served Guralnick especially well in sifting through the conflicting testimony of Presley's survivors. "I learn things all the time which call into question stories that people have told me," he says. "And I would never show somebody up in print. There are people who may need certain stories, either for their own image or because this is how they make their living. I'm certainly going to tell the story as truly as I can, but I'm not going to get into a quarrel about it."

Nor is he apt to stop anytime soon. Waiting at home is a 350-page second draft of a novel, along with notes for a short story cycle Guralnick would like to write, and maybe a biography of Sam Cooke that he's been edging toward for 15 years. And a fresh stack of music. **NMM**



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OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL



FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE



MIGHTY BLUE KINGS



OLD PIKE

**16** "Jeff [Mangum of Neutral Milk Hotel] and Will [Cullen Hart of Olivia Tremor Control] and Robert [Schneider of the Apples In Stereo] went to school together in Ruston, [Louisiana,] and I moved there as a kid," says OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL's Bill Doss, describing how the Elephant 6 collective of bands formed. "My friends either wanted to play basketball or go hunting. Which I didn't want to do. [I thought], 'Wow, you guys like to sit around and listen to records and play guitar and talk about music? And you don't want to go hunting or play football? Wow, that's great!'" "A New Day" is from OTC's new album, *Black Foliage: Animation Music By The Olivia Tremor Control* (Flydaddy). (See feature, pg. 22.)

**17** Tomoyuki Tanaka, a.k.a. FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE, combines the Shibuya-kei retro-pop aesthetic of his Japanese peers like Cornelius with a DJ background. We wondered which other artists he might like to collaborate with in an ideal world. "People like Michael Jackson, Prince, and Beck, who constantly challenge and try to transcend the boundaries besides their incredible talents come up to my mind," he told us. "Or, ultimately I'd love to work with aliens or any creatures who are from other planets." "Electric Lady Land"—produced with no guest aliens, to our knowledge—is from *Luxury* (Emperor Norton), his second American release. (See On The Verge, pg. 19.)

**18** "I grew up listening to the Stones and Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton," says MIGHTY BLUE KINGS frontman Ross Bon. "All those guys stemmed out of roots bands, but from that they put their own twist on things, created their own music. That's what I want to do. But at the same time, I enjoy seeing the way things were perceived back then. Everything had a personal touch to it, and that's what our music is about. The blues isn't the exclusive property of a few entrenched old-timers, and jazz doesn't mean you have to be a scholar with a degree to understand the music. It's all about the same things: spirit, life and energy." "Buzz, Buzz, Buzz" is from the band's third album, *Live From Chicago* (Red Ink).

**19** OLD PIKE opened for Ben Folds Five in the fall of '97 as an unsigned band. Now on Folds's label (550), the group has released its rookie effort, *Ten Thousand Nights*. Is Old Pike enjoying its shot at success? "It has taken over everything, but it's what we want," says keyboardist Mike Flynn. "It's funny because our passion for rock 'n' roll has played havoc in our personal lives. So I just want it known out there that I love the great outdoors, dancing, walking on the beach late at night holding hands." "The Rest Of You" is taken from *Ten Thousand Nights*.

**20** New York's SWIMMER says visual impact is extremely important to a band. "If everyone in the audience was blind, the visual aspect of our show wouldn't matter," says drummer Chad Royce. "But the audience isn't blind, and we want to give our show an exciting look." The band recently played at a downtown Manhattan club's transvestite night, with hardcore videos and drag queens. "We don't like making people feel too comfortable with the music or the image," singer Andy McCarron says. "We don't want to be predictable." "Dirty Word" is from Swimmer's debut, *Surreal* (Maverick). (See review, pg. 44.)

# cmj new music

**1** "It's one of those things where, if I told ya, I'd have to kill ya," says BLUR's Damon Albarn of the amount of money his band made from the Intel commercial that features a portion of "Song 2." "But [we didn't make] as much as we would've made if we'd have let the US government use it to launch their new multi-wing excocet fighter. We got this call from the US military saying, 'We wanna use your song to launch our new fighter!' And at that point, I realized that I'd better concentrate on music for the rest of my life and not have any illusions about anything. Because if *this* was where it was gonna lead me, I didn't wanna go there!" "No Distance Left To Run" is from the band's new album, *13* (Virgin). (See cover story, p. 28.)



BLUR

**2** "[People] thought [we were] 'Britrock' 'cause the rock bands cut their hair off and they tried to make a scene out of that," says 3 COLOURS RED's lead singer Pete Vuckovic. "Which is a bit ridiculous, because some of those bands were just blatantly heavy metal, and they were trying to be put into the scene. We'll never fit that scene; we choose not to." "Beautiful Day" appears on the band's critically praised debut full-length, *Pure* (Epic).



WILCO

**3** "It is a constant reminder that the music is not the most important thing in the world," says WILCO's Jeff Tweedy about the impact that being a parent has had on his music. "[It reminds you] that the worst thing that is going to happen is that you are going to have a bad show or make a bad record or write a bad song. In the grand scheme of things, that's pretty minimal." "Can't Stand It" is from Wilco's third full-length, *Summer Teeth* (Reprise). (See Best New Music, p. 18.)

**4** Raile, the frontman for LA rock outfit LIARS INC., came to his music in an unconventional way: His mother was a hair stylist for rock stars. "My mom actually turned me on to a lot of music," he confesses. "She gave me albums by the Police and Sly [Stone] and even took me to an Elvis Costello concert at Hollywood High School. I must admit that I didn't like the idea that it was my mom who was introducing me to new music, but she was so hip that she knew about the best new bands before my friends." "Anybody" is from Liars Inc.'s debut, *Superjaded* (Foodchain).



LIARS, INC.

**5** "This project is like a part of our lives pulled up, roots and all," says SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER's main songwriter, Matt Slocum, of the band's self-titled third album (Squint Entertainment), from which "Love" is taken. "It's not a scattered collection of unrelated songs. It's all one story, a whole story, a journey.... We've been given a lot of freedom to dream and create. It's something that we probably would have taken for granted a few years back, but it means so much more when you've had to struggle and pray and wait for it." (See On The Verge, p. 19.)

how to use this page

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UNDERWORLD



LATIN PLAYBOYS



MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD



RUSSEL GUNN

**6** Before UNDERWORLD was king of the electronica world—before the group hooked up with DJ Darren Emerson and patented its new-wave-y-trance sound—it was a synth-pop band in the late '80s. Its zenith was opening for the Eurythmics. "I stood in front of like 30,000 people," recalls group member Rick Smith in a recent *Urb* interview. "It was nice for five seconds, and after that it was awful." Adds bandmate Karl Hyde, "We realized we were never going to have success writing traditional songs. Why? Because we were shit!" "Push Upstairs" is from *Beaucoup Fish* (V2). (See Best New Music, p. 17.)

**7** The bare-bones, down-and-dirty blues played by HOUNDDOG may not seem to share much with the light-hearted ditty "Hound Dog" that Elvis recorded in 1956, but if you've ever heard the version that Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton recorded three years earlier, you'll sense a definite connection between the two 'dogs. Heard here playing "No Chance," from its self-titled debut album (Columbia Legacy), Hounddog is comprised of multi-instrumentalist David Hidalgo (of Los Lobos, Latin Playboys and Los Super Seven) and vocalist Mike Halby (of Canned Heat and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers). (See feature, p. 26.)

**8** "It's a rare, completely self-contained band. All the words, all the engineering—everything is done within the group," says Mitchell Froom of the LATIN PLAYBOYS' collaborative environment. "We don't need anybody. That part feels really good." But Froom and fellow Playboy Tchad Blake are generally better known for their production work. "[Tchad and I] have worked on records that have sold a lot," Froom continues. "And everywhere I go in the world, nine times out of ten, someone says, 'Oh, I love the Latin Playboys.' It makes me feel really strange." "Mustard" appears on the group's second album, *Dose* (Atlantic). (See feature, p. 26.)

**9** For their 1996 album *Shack-man*, MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD recorded live in Hawaii. For their follow-up, *Combustication* (Blue Note-Capitol), they recorded in New York City. "It was a contrast of jungles, with New York having fewer coconuts and more coffee," jokes keyboardist John Medeski. "Recording in New York gave us more time and space to experiment with fine tuning the details instead of relying exclusively on capturing what we do live." "Nocturne (Dan The Automator Remix)" is from an album of remixes of *Combustication* tracks.

**10** RUSSELL GUNN doesn't shy from his influences. "I feel I'm shortchanging myself if I just go in and play some shoutune chord progressions instead of really dealing with all the things that have made a true impact on me," he says. "I have traveled around the world and heard a lot of great music. I live in Brooklyn now and I hear everything that goes on there—the sounds coming out of apartment windows and cars driving by." "Sybil's Blues" is from his Atlantic debut, *Ethnomusicology, Volume 1*. (See Best New Music, p. 17.)

"As far as everything else that's going on in hip-hop, I try to block that out," says the ROOTS' main MC, Black Thought, talking about his interest in keeping his focus on the music he makes. "Because there's not too many people that's really in it for any artistic value at all. People are saying shit in their rhymes like, 'Fuck hip-hop. Fuck rap. It's just about loot.' So if that's how they feel, fuck them. I'm on some straight hip-hop shit!" "You Got Me," which features guest vocals by Erykah Badu, appears on the Roots' fourth album, *Things Fall Apart* (JMC). (See Hip-Hop, p. 53.)

**12** Explaining how his band chose its name, CITIZEN KING vocalist Mike Sims says: "[It's] a combination of that old Orson Welles movie, that French king who used to go out dressed in rags to see what his subjects were sayin' about him, and that former Governor of Louisiana, Huey 'Kingfish' Long, whose slogan was 'Every Man A King.' We're an all-access band. We're making fun of totalitarianism and high-browism. It's all about an attitude. We're all citizen kings." "Better Days (And The Bottom Drops Out)" comes from the band's major label debut, *Mobile Estates* (Warner Bros.).

"Sadness doesn't always have to be a bad thing," says SPARKLEHORSE's Mark Linkous. **13** "Not to take advantage of it, but if I didn't have the opportunity to vent it, to make something pretty out of it, I don't know what would happen. I would just start obsessing on all the bad shit in the world and just go and be a fucking hermit or something. A guy that just sits out in the woods and shoots rabbits." Linkous makes plenty of pretty things on his second long-player, *Good Morning Spider* (Capitol), from which "Pig" is taken. (See feature, p. 26, March issue.)

"For me, bands have been the root of all evil in my life," says JASON FALKNER, about what made **14** him opt for the solo career that recently yielded *Can You Still Feel?* (Elektra), which features "Author Unknown." "All this forced democracy stuff just doesn't work, and that's probably because I've never been in a band with a kind dictator. The Jellyfish experience got to be really miserable, which sucks because I was really proud of that record. The Grays was this noble concept of this total anti-band—no leader, three songwriters, three separate lead singers. It turned into four fascist separatists. That became a nightmare as well." (See review, p. 36.)

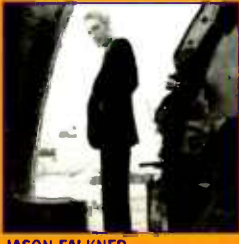
BETH ORTON, an avid reader, is known for being monastic while recording. So what did **15** she distract herself with while making her second album, *Central Reservation* (Deconstruction-Arista)? *The Outsider* by Albert Camus. "It kind of summed up how I felt while I was making the record," she recently told an interviewer. "Like I'd been sentenced! Some books can act as a mirror, can help to liberate you from your own sickness. You can see the neurosis in bold, and it can shock you out of dead-end mind rot." "Central Reservation (The Then-Again Remix—Ben Watt)" is a reinterpretation of the album's title track. (See Best New Music, pg. 16, Feb. issue.)



ROOTS



SPARKLEHORSE



JASON FALKNER

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**JEFF BECK** Who Else! Epic

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**CHOKING VICTIM** No Gods, No Managers Hellcat

**CORNELIUS** CM Matador  
—Cornelius remixes Money Mark, High Llamas, UNKLE, Pastels, Damon Albarn of Blur and Buffalo Daughter

**CORNELIUS** FM Matador  
—Money Mark, High Llamas, UNKLE, Pastels, Damon Albarn of Blur and Buffalo Daughter remix Cornelius

**CYCLEFLY** Generation Sap MCA

**DEADLY VENOMS** Deadly Venoms A&M

**DROPKICK MURPHYS** The Gangs All Here Hellcat

**ROGER ENO/LOL HAMMOND** Damage Thirsty Ear

**GIGI** Your Love Tommy Boy

**GUS** Word Of Mouth Parade Almo Sounds

**JOE HENRY** Fuse Mammoth  
—Guests include Jakob Dylan, Daniel Lanois and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band

**HUGO LARGO** Drum Thirsty Ear  
—Reissue of 1988, contains two additional tracks

**HUGO LARGO** Mettle Thirsty Ear  
—Reissue of the group's last record on Brian Eno's Opal label

**JEGA** Spectrum Matador  
—Licensed from Britain's Planet μ label, run by μ-Ziq (a.k.a. Mike Paradinas)

**DAMIEN JURADO** Rehearsals For Departure Sub Pop

**BEN LEE** Breathing Tornadoes Grand Royal-Capitol

**LOOPER** Up A Tree Sub Pop  
—New project from Belle & Sebastian bassist Stuart David

**PAUL MCCARTNEY & WINGS** Band On The Run Capitol  
—Two-CD reissue

**MASE PRESENTS HARLEM WORLD** The Movement Columbia

**VAN MORRISON** Back On Top Virgin

**MUZZLE** Actual Size Reprise

**NATURAL ELEMENTS** 2 Tons Tommy Boy

**OLD PIKE** Ten Thousand Nights 550

**PULLEY** Pulley Epitaph

**ROTTING CHRIST** The Sleep of Angels Century Media

**GLEN SCOTT** Without Vertigo 550

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—Featuring Blur, Placebo, Skunk Anansie, Fatboy Slim, Marcy Playground, The Verve and others

**SOUNDTRACK** Life Interscope  
—Music written by Wyclef Jean for Eddie Murphy/Martin Lawrence film

**SOURCE DIRECT** Exorcise The Demon Science-Astralwerks

**SWANS** Cop/Young God/Greed/Holy Money Thirsty Ear  
—Double-CD reissue compiling the albums Cop, Greed and Holy Money and the Young God EP

**TOAD THE WET SPROCKET** Greatest Hits Columbia

**UB40** Labour Of Love III Virgin

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** In Your Ear Hybrid-Sire  
—Music from the Independent Film Channel, including

Victoria Williams, Morphine, Tom Waits, Rev. Horton Heat and others

**VITRO** Distort Columbia

**WILCO** Summer Teeth Warner Bros.

**ROBERT WYATT** EPs By Robert Wyatt Thirsty Ear  
—Reissue compilation of five EPs

## March 16

**TINA ARENA** In Deep Epic

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—Electro pop duo, producer Daniel Lenz of Psykoonik and vocalist Free

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**JOEY MCINTYRE** Stay The Same Columbia  
—Solo debut from ex-New Kid On The Block

**SILVERCHAIR** Neon Ballroom Epic

**NED SUBLETTE** Cowboy Rumba Palm Pictures

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## March 23

**BEULAH** When Your Heartstrings Break Sugar Free

**FRANK BLACK** Pistolero spinART

**CUTS** Heart Attack EP Lookout  
—Debut for Oakland band

**DIE FORM** Histories Metropolis  
—Double-CD retrospective

**DJ DB** Presents Shades Of Technology F-111-Warner Bros.  
—Mix CD includes tracks from Jonny L, Optical, Ed Rush, DJ Krush and others

**ESTER** Default State Thirsty Ear

**FUTURE PILOT AKA** Vs. A Galaxy Of Sound Beggars Banquet  
—20 track, double-CD remix project featuring Cornershop, Scanner, Kim Fowley, the Pastels and others

**GOV'T MULE** Live Capricorn  
—Recorded at their New Years '98 show at The Roxy in Atlanta

**GROOVIE GHOULIES** Fun In The Dark Lookout

**COREY HARRIS** Greens From The Garden Alligator  
—Harris contributed to Wilco/Billy Bragg's Mermaid Avenue; Billy Bragg guests on one song

**B.B. KING** The Best Of MCA

**KREIDLER** Appearance And The Park Mute  
—First American release from German post-rockers

**LADYBUG TRANSISTOR** The Albarmar Sound Merge

**MAKE-UP** I Want You K  
—Singles compilation

**BRANFORD MARSALIS** Requiem Columbia

**MEJA** Seven Sisters Columbia

**MÓA** Universal Tommy Boy  
—Debut album from Icelandic trip-hop songstress

**BETH ORTON** Central Reservation Deconstruction-Arista  
—Finally

**OVAL** Szenerio 12" Thrill Jockey

**BIJOU PHILLIPS** I'd Rather Eat Glass Almo Sounds  
—Debut album from ex-model and daughter of John Phillips of the Mamas & The Papas

**PIZZICATO FIVE** Playboy & Playgirl Matador

**QUEERS** Later Days And Better Lays Lookout

**REVELERS** Day In, Day Out SpinART

**ROCK\*A\*TEENS** Golden Time Merge

**SAUCE MONEY** Middle Finger U MCA

**SLICK SIXTY** The Wrestler Mute  
—American debut for big beat group, featuring Lionrock remix

**SQUATWEILER** Horsepower spinART

**STATIC X** Wisconsin Death Trip Warner Bros.

**SWIMMER** Surreal Maverick

**NOBUKAZU TAKEMURA** Meteor 12" Thrill Jockey

**TRANS AM** Future World Thrill Jockey

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Reich Remixed Nonesuch  
—Remixes of Steve Reich by Howie B, Ken Ishii, Coldcut, Andrea Parker, DJ Spooky and others

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Source Material Astralwerks  
—Compilation of French producers from the label that brought you Air

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Unknown Werks Astralwerks  
—Collection of electronic music from unsigned artists

**VELOCETTE** Fourfold Remedy Beggars Banquet  
—Features former members of Comet Gain

## March 30

**FUNKI PORCINI** The Ultimately Empty Million Pounds Ninja Tune

**GHOSTFACE KILLAH** Supreme Clientele Epic

**KULA SHAKER** Peasants, Pigs & Astronauts Columbia  
—Produced by Bob Ezrin of Pink Floyd fame

**LOW** Just Out Kranky

**NAZ** I Am... Columbia

**JIM O'ROURKE** Eureka Drag City

**PINHEAD CIRCUS** BYO

**RZA** RZA Hits Epic  
—Greatest hits compilation

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Ruffhouse 10th Anniversary Ruffhouse-Columbia  
—Includes Lauryn Hill, Fugees, Pras, Wyclef Jean and others

**WACO BROTHERS** Waco World Bloodshot

## April 6

**APPLES IN STEREO** EP SpinART

**BIG SUGAR** Heated Capricorn

**CRABS** Sea And Sand K

**DELGADOS** Peloton Beggars Banquet

**FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE** Utopia Parkway Atlantic

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(working six turntables) known as the Bombshelter DJs never fails to offer a mind-blowing mix of hip-hop, vintage funk and trancey ambiance whenever it works a local club. Bombshelter member Z-Trip is frequently lauded as one of the most exciting DJs on the national scene.

The rootsiness heard in Tempe's popular early-'90s bands continues to reverberate in such bands as the Revenants, which sounds like Nick Cave with a twang, and the Peacemakers, a new group formed by ex-Refreshments Roger Clyne and P.H. Naffah.

But possibly the most popular sound in the Valley is a kind of heavy funk, best executed by the ultra-tight, spliff-friendly trio Fred Green, but attempted with lesser results by a host of young bands.

## Venues

Arizona's conservative bent has wreaked havoc on Valley clubs, as the state liquor board seems to be on a perpetual mission to shut down any bar that dares to book hip-hop or all-ages shows. In the last year, that's resulted in the closing of the Electric Ballroom—a Tempe club that hosted mid-size national shows—and The Heat, an uncompromising punk club that drew too many kids to avoid the state's wrath. More recently, the liquor board approved a dubious regulation that requires all-ages clubs to impose barriers preventing underage patrons from mixing with 21-and-overs.

Crawling from the wreckage of this state interference is **Boston's** (910 N. McClintock, Tempe, 921-7343), which remains the most popular local club for underground rock—recent shows by both Built To Spill and Modest Mouse drew overflow crowds—and established local bands.

Unlike Boston's, **Hollywood Alley** (2610 W. Baseline, Mesa, 820-7117) doesn't risk all-ages shows, but it's an endearingly down-home, blue-collar joint. Best of all, it willingly dabbles with equal enthusiasm in everything from punk to power-pop to prog-rock.

**Big Fish Pub** (1954 E. University, Tempe, 966-5010) is an Arizona State University hangout that tends to focus on funk and metal, but it's recently turned Wednesday into hip-hop night, a much-needed outlet for a genre that tends to get buried in the desert.

Two promising new venues have just been

launched by key players in the Valley music community. Charlie Levy, who formerly booked the much-loved Tempe club Nita's Hideaway, has helped remold a lame sports bar called Fumbles into a legit music venue known as **The Green Room** (560 S. College Ave., Tempe, 968-9190). Like the old Nita's, The Green Room is liable to run the gamut from Whiskeytown to raunchy R&B senior citizen Andre Williams. Equally intriguing is **Modified** (407 E. Roosevelt, Phoenix, 252-7664), a new art space/music club created by Kimber Lanning, owner of Stinkweeds Records. Modified promises to link the highbrow local art crowd with indie kids, and if anyone can pull it off, it's Lanning.

**Chez Nous** (675 W. Indian School, Phoenix, 266-7372) does feature its share of local R&B and jazz acts, but its old-world charms have little to do with what's happening on the bandstand. This dark, kitschy bar looks like a set for a David Lynch film, and it positively reeks of '70s chic.

## Record Stores

Although its founder Brad Singer died last May, **Zia Record Exchange** (105 W. University Dr., Tempe, 829-1967) remains the definitive Arizona record store. A pioneer in the used record business, Zia has survived all competition, and it's provided jobs for practically every noteworthy musician in the local community. Some complain that both the store's inventory and vibe have declined since Singer's passing, but Zia is still the reigning king.

The two other noteworthy indie shops were both formed by ex-Zia employees. **Stinkweeds** (1250 E. Apache Blvd., Tempe, 968-9490) is such a popular source for indie-rockers that the Valley punk scene is regularly described as "the Stinkweeds crowd." **Eastside Records** (217 W. University Dr., Tempe, 968-2011) offers similar stuff, and it also has a solid collection of jazz and blues rarities, plus the best current fanzines and comic books.

## Eating

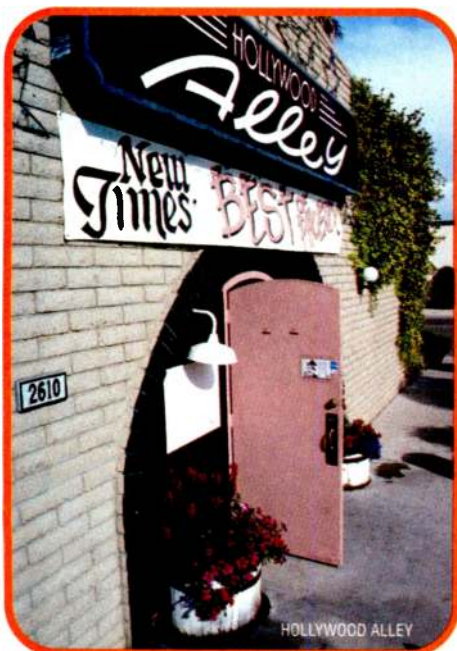
Mill Avenue in Tempe remains the epicenter of the local scene, but in the last few years it's been engulfed by the corporate likes of T.G.I. Friday's and Ruby Tuesday. Not far from Mill, though, you can still find less generic fare if you look for it.

**Pita Jungle** (1250 E. Apache Blvd., Tempe, 804-0234) offers cheap, likeable pseudo-Greek cuisine, and its wall of fame attests to how popular it is with local musicians. **Casey Moore's Oyster House** (850 S. Ash, Tempe, 968-9935) tends to draw more people to its bar than its restaurant, but it's consistently one of the best seafood places around.

**Durant's** (2611 N. Central, Phoenix, 264-5987) is a spiritual cousin to Chez Nous, a vestige of old Phoenix and a lovably retro steak house where you have to walk through the kitchen to be seated.

All phone numbers are in the 602 area code.

Gilbert Garcia is the music editor at Phoenix New Times.



# ocalzine

## Phoenix, Arizona

by GILBERT GARCIA



PHOTOS: DOUG HOESCHLER

CHEZ NOUS

It's often said that even as we approach the 21st century, Arizona clings to the Old West mentality of its first settlers. Although this is a decidedly right-wing state, and Phoenix is particularly conservative (which draws the scorn of the slightly more bohemian Tucson), what really defines this area is not ideology as much as a peculiar individualist bent, a contrarian tendency to go against the grain. This mindset can lead to embarrassing shortsightedness—for example, Arizona stubbornly resisted approving the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, even while the rest of the nation looked on in horror—or surprising progressiveness—voters twice ignored the anti-marijuana lobby and approved pot's medical use.

Some of that rebellious individualism shows up in the Phoenix music scene. What most people, even locals, refer to as Phoenix is actually a conglomeration of distinct cities that make up the Valley, including Tempe (the college town), Mesa (the Mormon enclave) and Scottsdale (the ritzy resort community for graybeard rockers in golf pants). But even within each city, there are a number of different musical sensibilities peacefully coexisting, with little regard for what's considered hip at the moment.

A few years ago there was talk of a "Tempe sound," a rootsy desert-rock jangle sparked by the success of the Gin Blossoms and the Refreshments, and the major-label signing of bands like Dead Hot Workshop and One. These days, that Tempe sound is little more than a memory, but if the scene is now harder to get a handle on, the music has hardly suffered. In fact, it's probably better for the diversity.

### Bands

The Valley's best bands are a diverse lot, but they seem linked by a surrealist sense of humor that's par for the course when you're stuck in the desert and you have to spend four months of the year battling temperatures in excess of 110 degrees.

Consider the name of this Phoenix duo: Lush Budget Presents The Les Payne Product. This group defies the limitations of its guitar-drums format, with drummer Chris Pomeranke occasionally employing a free hand to plunk out a chord on a cheap Casio. Les Payne is currently the subject of a forthcoming indie film by producer Ryan Page that will touch on such band obsessions as freemasonry, trips to the sun, Hopi prophecies, and other aspects of the Arizona desert myth.

Trunk Federation recently lost both its record label (Alias Records) and its bass player, but this group continues to be among the most imaginative—and unsung—examples of Flaming Lips-inspired trippiness around. Trunk's second Alias album, last year's *The Curse Of Miss Kitty*, was not only a production masterwork, but its title also paid tribute to the group's van, which was once owned by former Gunsmoke star Amanda Blake.

In tune with such twisted fare is Vic Masters, a gifted songwriter originally from New York. Masters writes and sings like Elvis Costello, but his performances constitute karaoke guerrilla theater at its best, whether he's writhing on the floor to Frank Sinatra's "That's Life" or reenacting the Jerry Springer show as a musical free-for-all.

The East Valley punk scene is also heavy with emo-based tunefulness, as heard in local kingpins Jimmy Eat World (which recently signed with Capitol), and highly deserving bands like Reuben's Accomplice and up-and-coming quartet Chula.

The local rave scene continues to grow, and it's blessed with some astonishingly talented DJs. In particular, the tag-team trio

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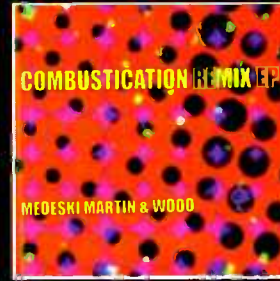


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