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53 REVIEWS

Damon Albarn: flogging Mali.

THE VERY CORPORATION: BUSINESS IS GOOD.

Spoon: hates indie.

THE MEKONS: CAN RENT A CAR.

Beth Orton: not a delicate flower.

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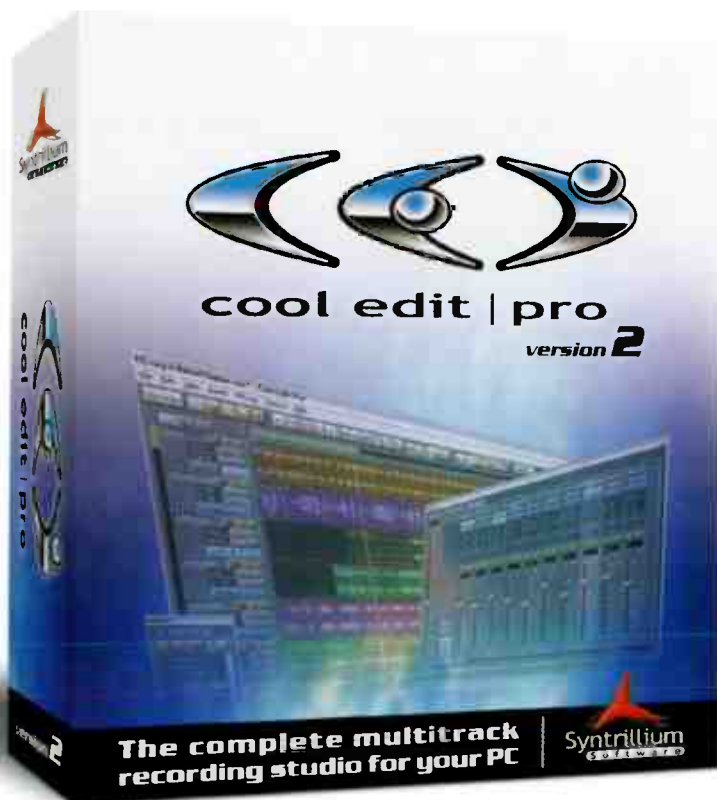


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World Radio History



THE HIVES



SPOON

THE HIVES: JULI WEEGER; SPOON: DREW GOREN; BETH ORTON: VALERIE PHILLIPS; THIEVERY CORPORATION: BRIAN LIU



BETH ORTON



THIEVERY CORPORATION

THE HIVES 30

The Hives are a testament to the power of positive thinking: They told everyone they were the greatest band in the world, and little by little, the world began to believe them. Bryan Mealer gets the itch.

BETH ORTON 20

Beth Orton's not who you think she is: She's not morose, she's not delicate, and she has no idea how she writes those excellent songs. "I don't know if I ever try to express anything, really," she says. Scott Frampton hears Beth calling.

THE MEKONS 22

Country-punk legends the Mekons have been a band longer than most of you have been alive. This has afforded them some perspective; these days Jon Langford's more likely to sing about the economic theories of William Blake than cry for anarchy. Chris Nickson puts 25 candles on their cake.

SPOON 24

Before you go calling Spoon indie-rock heroes, you should know that frontman Britt Daniel can't stand the stuff. Don't panic, Steve Ciabattoni took notes.

THIEVERY CORPORATION 26

Meet the new face of D.I.Y.: tailored suits in place of ripped jeans, suave nightclubs in place of trashy art spaces. Thievery Corporation proves that you don't have to dress badly to take control of your art. Scott Frampton takes their measurements.

ON THE VERGE 16

You'll listen if you know what's good for you: Mad At Gravity, Interpol, the Mars Volta, A.I.

ON THE CD 35

Sonic Youth, the Mars Volta, Hot Snakes, Violent Femmes, Spoon, Superdrag, *Mali Music*, Marianne Faithfull, Supreme Beings Of Leisure, Zeromancer, O.A.R., the Soundtrack Of Our Lives, Beth Orton, Belly, the Webb Brothers, Bright Eyes, Koester, Consonant, Twinemen, Eleni Mandell.

QUICK FIX 8

Damon Albarn finds peace in Mali, D&D fanatics vanish into a virtual world of folklore, the Angry Geek tears up some questionable films, John Vanderslice gives in to studio fever, the Lone Pigeon shows us around his cuckoo's nest and Luna's Dean Wareham encourages you to sleep with 18-year-old girls (finally, a voice of reason).

LOCALZINE 38

You can't avoid Sweden these days, so just give in and go to Gothenburg already. Local band Citizen Bird will show you around.

GEEK LOVE 66

Bob Bland bows to the Funk—the Grand Funk—who gave his inner child its afro.

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Gomez add-ons

I was so thrilled to see that you included Gomez on your May 2002 CD. I know they are cherished in their native England (e.g. their Mercury Music prize in 1998 for *Bring It On*), but I can't help but feel that they are not appreciated as much in the U.S. Hopefully, your other readers will be inspired by "Shot Shot," buy Gomez's albums and fall in love just like I have. It's good to know that I am not the only "sucker for Ben Ottewell's sand-papery vocals," however, please note that there is no "r" in his last name: He's no otter!

Jessica Grundfast
Blacksburg, Va.

We regret the spelling error, but you have to admit Ben's propensity for floating on his back, placing shellfish on his tummy and cracking them open with a stone is confusing. —ed

Fluidium

I like the new covering on the CDs so I don't keep smudging them with bodily fluids. Thank you.

AmplificationMag@hotmail.com

Since we changed to the plastic sleeve from paper 18 months ago, we have to assume that any new covering referred to here might actually be bodily fluids. —ed

Monkey trial

Am I to understand that, according to Tom Mallon, no one is using a Mac platform to make music? What about Reason or Rebirth or Logic? A retarded chimpanzee couldn't have done a worse job at covering the subject of home recording.

Jenn H
jiantjenn@hotmail.com

First of all, Reason, Rebirth and Logic? Who's coding these programs, Hobbes and Locke? Secondly, all our chimpanzees are in a room full of typewriters, as CMJ has decided to devote the majority of company resources into proving that they'll eventually type Hamlet. Sadly, times being what they are, we've had to repurpose their non-Shakespeare output, resulting in this issue's Thievery Corporation story. As for the Home Recording piece, Tom, our lone editorial staffer working on a Mac platform, responds:

Unfortunately, most retarded chimpanzees (myself included) can't afford the \$1600 base

price tag of a skeletal G4, much as we'd like to. Please note that the Digi 001, MOTU 828 and Cubase are all cross-platform. Reason does not record audio without being externally connected to something like Cubase, and the steep learning curve of Logic led me to cover easier-to-use (and in some cases, cheaper) programs. As indicated in the piece, this was intended to be a very basic intro, not a sweeping overview of everything that's available; that would require years of magazines, not four pages. As for the artist coverage, I can't vouch for what they use, that's their personal preference; it was merely a matter of coincidence that they all happened to use PCs. —T. Mallon.

Assholier than thou

I am sick of the people who only listen to indie or underground artists and think they are holier than thou because of it. So many I have talked to actually think they may discard their significant other because she listens to Dashboard Confessional, or he listens to Dave Matthews Band. I receive this magazine because I am a lover of all music—from matchbox twenty to Wilco, and beyond. I appreciate articles on artists I have never heard of. They broaden my musical knowledge and taste, but constantly opening the magazine to read a whining letter by some reader kicking *CMJ New Music Monthly* in the ass for printing a bit on a "music for the masses" artist is really getting to me. Sometimes we need "middle of the road" songs to sit back and enjoy without developing a migraine while trying to understand the deeper meaning. Other times we need the migraine—oh what a wonderfully mind-numbing experience when done right! No matter how one may hate them, these are artists putting their asses on the line, hoping they will be accepted by someone, and no matter who they are, that takes balls. On a different note, kudos to you, *CMJ New Music Monthly*, for not giving letter or number grades in your reviews. They are insightful and let the readers decide for themselves. Brilliant.

Stacey Ellis
yosly20@msn.com

So wait, it takes balls to put your ass on the line? What is that, a pressed fruit plate? We actually advocate breaking up with anyone who listens to anything but what we cover, as we're trying to create a super race of music snobs. To this end, we're also applying our R.I.Y.L. concept to humans, so that you know about a person's taste in music, intoxicants and frequency of coupling. Likewise,

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"R.I.Y.L. Tawny Kitaen" could serve as a Dave Matthews-type warning. —ed.

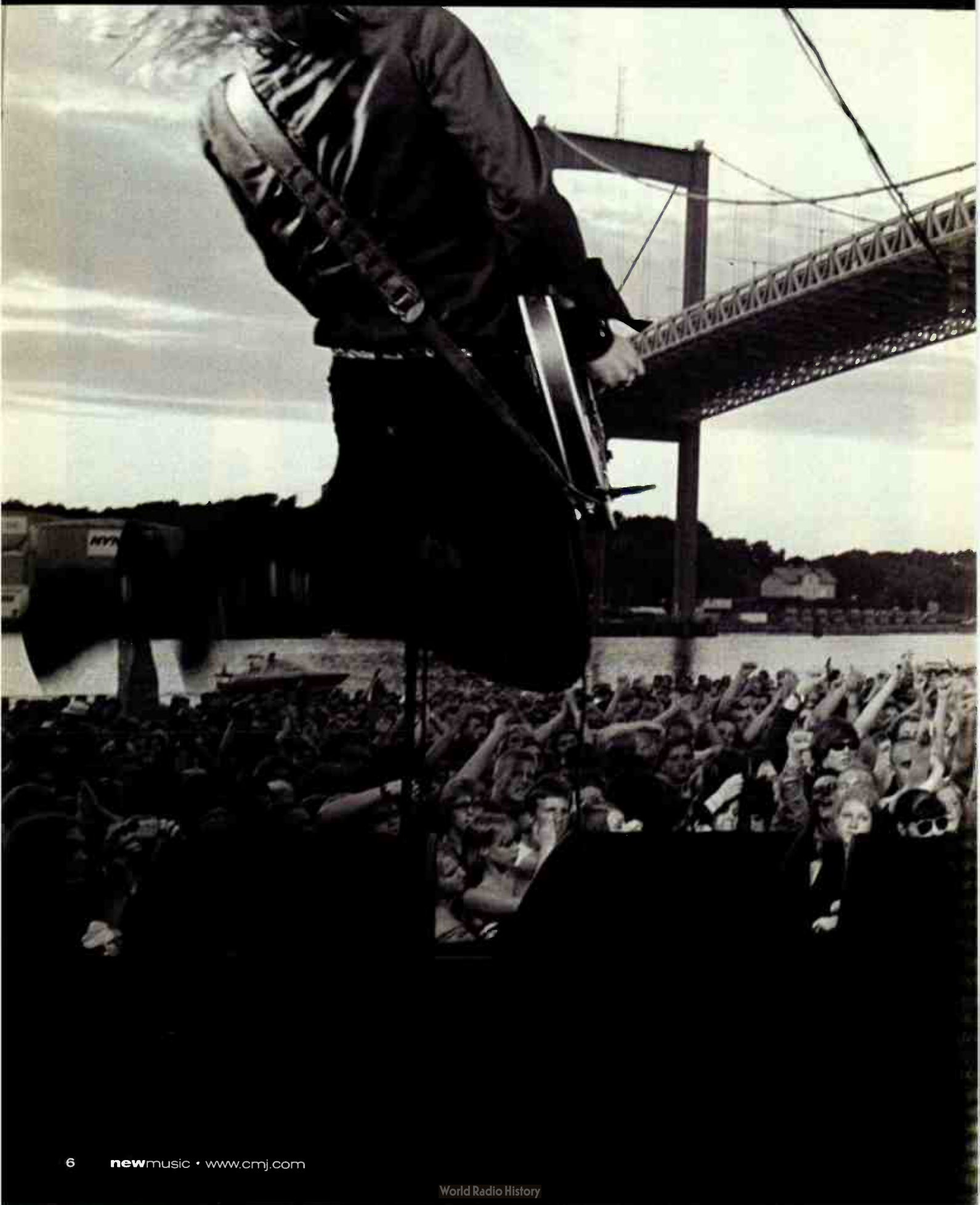


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THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES

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

• GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN 2001

• The Soundtrack Of Our Lives' latest, *Behind The Music*, washed on American shores last year, but its exquisite pop is now really starting to make some waves. Unlike some other Swedish rockers, you won't find matching suits or Beatles boots here—but you might see a halry bear of a Swede in a mumuu.

• **Photo: Lars-Olof Johansson**



Answer Me

Damon Albarn is quite clear about Blur, *Mali Music* and the Gorillaz in his midst.

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

Sneering at Blur leader Damon Albarn's recent Gorillaz tour, where the spinoff group performed behind a program of projected cartoons, Oasis mouthpiece Noel Gallagher recently dismissed the singer for not "even being bothered to fookin' go out in front of a fookin' screen." The Gallaghers still hate Blur that much for a press-spawned who's-better rivalry from the mid-'90s. Ironically, Albarn is now quite happy to remain in the shadows, with his surprise worldwide hit Gorillaz, and the *Mali Music* project—a full album recorded with some of the West African nation's most renowned musicians, including Afel Bocoum and Toumani Diabate, issued through his new Honest Jon's imprint, via Astralwerks. So let those heathens rage, chuckles Albarn, from the London studio where a new Blur album is being tracked. A low profile is where it's at. >>>TOM LANHAM

How is that new Blur set coming along?

I think it's really going to be amazing. And there's so much of it now—we've got nearly 30 tunes finished. Half the songs make you want to dance, half the songs make you want to cry. So there's some really harrowing stuff, but it's up—real feel-good depressing music.

You've said that September 11th really affected you, made you look at music-making more seriously.

Yeah. And it's kinda weird. I'd been leaning toward a lot of Arabic music already, which started with Mali. Because Mali is a Muslim country, but quite laid back, definitely not fundamentalist. So there's a touch of Arabic music in Malian music. And I've just come back from Morocco, and it was something I really had to absorb

because rock records need to be made with a nod to that culture. We need to build a substantial dialogue in these very dark times, and there are some extraordinary connections. It's given a new potency to something I was interested in anyway.

So the simplicity of life and music in Mali also affected you?

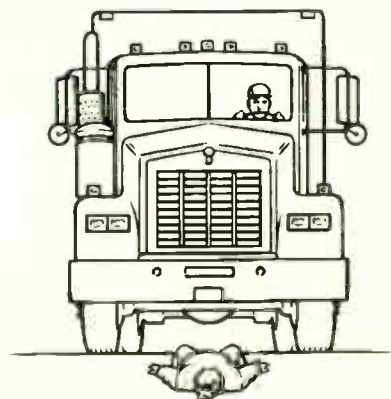
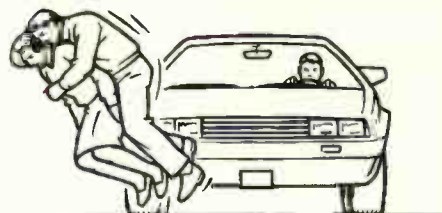
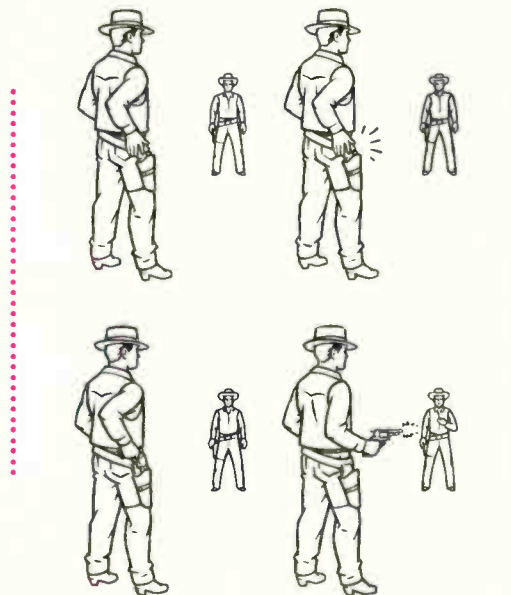
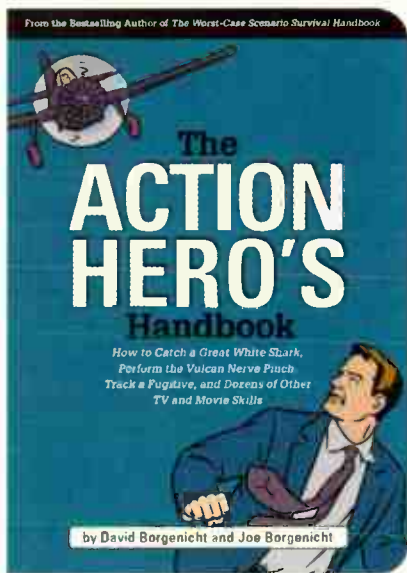
There are definitely advantages to not being weighed down by capitalism. But Mali saved my life and gave me everything I need to carry on and improve as a human being, and as a musician. And working with these musicians was the best way to become sympathetic to the other cultures that exist, cultures that are blocked out by our Western mentality. It's the only thing that interests me now. And I really do believe that music is a language that can translate across the globe and bring people together.

Even you and Noel Gallagher?

Someone should just whisper in his ear quietly that I've actually sold more records than him. It's all just so silly. But it's quite interesting in England—there's a book being written and a documentary being made about the whole thing between Oasis and Blur and the Labor government, and the ways that the music was abused by a political party... Well, history will show it to have been a very negative and sinister thing. I just thank the Lord that I survived it and learned my lesson and got a bit of humility from it, which Noel obviously hasn't, and it's a shame. Because you can't progress unless you start to have that genuine humility. How can you actually be open-minded enough to really learn about your craft in music unless you have the humility to listen to other people?

GREG WILLIAMS

NEWSFEED: **R.E.M.** makes their remix record, *r.e.m.IX*, available for free at their website, www.remhq.com • **Badly Drawn Boy** expects to



Demolition Men

"At some point or another, you're going to crash or be thrown through a huge plate glass window." Chances are, you are completely unprepared for such an incident; *The Action Hero's Handbook* (Quirk Books) will make sure that international supervillains don't catch you unawares. The makers of *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook* have returned with another set of advice for average, everyday situations like "How To Take A Bullet," "How To Climb Down Mount Rushmore" and "How To Catch Someone In Mid-Air When You Don't Have A Parachute," all written in a helpful, matter-of-fact tone. (From "How To Tell When Someone Is Really Dead": "Open his eyes and rub a piece of cloth across the 'dead' person's eyeball. If he blinks, he's not dead yet.") >>>TOM MALLON

release his third record, *All Possibilities/Have You Fed The Fish?* later this year
 • **Placebo** returns to the studio to record their fourth, as-yet-untitled >>>>



Masters Of The Universe

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS (INFOGRAMES FOR PC)

Face it, you love folklore; even now, you're probably hiding D&D books under your bed like most people stash porn. With the release of *Neverwinter Nights*, life as you know it has to come to an end. This is the most expansive D&D game ever released: In addition to amazing graphics and a huge single-player campaign, *Neverwinter* allows you to play Dungeon Master and create your own universes, where you make the rules, set up the story and subject your friends to your every sadistic whim. A quickly growing online community means you'll never be without a new game to play (and you'll never have to step foot in the real world again). >>>TOM MALLON

ANGRY GEEK AT THE MOVIES

BY VINCENT G. CURRY Writer/director Andrew

Niccol's new *S1m0ne* is a matter of style and sentiment over substance: Somewhere in this film is a sharp comedy about movie-making, celebrity and idol (idle?) worship, but his maudlin script and slick "retro-Armani" style obscure that—it was fine in *Gattaca*, but simply distracts here. Al Pacino plays a washed-up director whose reach exceeds his grasp (no doubt drawing inspiration from Coppola during *Godfather III*), and when the star (Winona Ryder) walks out on his latest film, he replaces her with a computer-generated actress (*Simulation One* = *Simone*). Everyone accepts her as real and she's soon a worldwide sensation. **There are some genuinely funny moments...before it collapses in on itself.** ♦♦♦ Hollywood stylish but needlessly sentimental is Sundance World Cinema Audience Award-winner *L'Ultimo Bacio* (*The Last Kiss*)—if more foreign films were like this, I wouldn't hate them so much. Sure, you'll have to read subtitles, but this romantic comedy about a group of late-20-something men prematurely having a life crisis is mercifully devoid of mentions of politics, poverty or bodily functions, which have marred more foreign films than I care to remember. Italy looks wonderful, everyone's successful and gorgeous. **Its only flaws are a lack of nudity (hey, I thought this film was Italian?!)** and the unavoidable European trait of never saying something in 90 minutes when you can drag it out to 120. ♦♦♦ No style equals style for *The Chateau*, the second feature from director Jesse Peretz (who helmed the Foo Fighters' "Learn To Fly"). Taking cues from the Dogma 95 movement, which strives to strip film of its artifice by eliminating silly things like sets, lighting and decent sound, **he only succeeds in unnaturally creating what comes naturally for pretentious film students everywhere.** This comedy about brothers who inherit a chateau in the south of France is neither funny (please, a moratorium on ugly Americans who think yelling and money can transcend language) nor esthetically pleasing (the unlit digital video sometimes looks like sandpaper projected onto the screen). Paul Rudd and current French star Sylvie Testud (*Murderous Maids*) are good, but wait to see them in something where you can actually freaking see them.

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

album • **Primus's** Les Claypool to release solo album in September, calling it "early Peter Gabriel meets Tom Waits meets Pink Floyd" • **Granddaddy**

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THE LANGUAGE OF CITIES

File Under: Gritty-Yet-Melodic Instrumental Rock. The band's hard-hitting and heavy, drummer-in-front stage show features sprawling and spiraling guitars that dominate their slow-rockers and store up energy to fuel the more explosive numbers.



2

I AM THE WORLD
TRADE CENTER

KINDERCORE RECORDS

THE TIGHT CONNECTION

File Under: Pastiche Ice Cream. Cuts and pastes stomping house beats, Manchester grooves, hip-hop bling and electro breakdowns into their laptop and calls it pop.



3

VHS OR BETA

ONI RECORDINGS

LE FUNK

File Under: Handmade Dance Funk. America, your answer to Daft Punk is here. The Louisville, KY group's ultra-modern dance grooves are played with enough precision to give DJs and their turntables a run for their money.



4

MOONEY SUZUKI

GAMMON

ELECTRIC SWEAT

File Under: Garage Days Revisited: This hot-blooded album packs the thunder of the early Who with its preening swagger and tackles the R&B balladry like urban young punks like Them did back in the day.



5

MASTERS OF THE
HEMISPHERE

KINDERCORE RECORDS

PROTEST A DARK ANNIVERSARY

File Under: Exuberant Lo-Fi Rock. Unabashed pop songs bristle with DIY orchestration that bring like a well-behaved, but just as deliciously catchy version, of Ween.



6

DRESSY BESSY

KINDERCORE RECORDS

SOUND GO ROUND

File Under: Shiny Happy Indie Pop. With sunny female vocals and quick and catchy pop nuggets, Denver's Dressy Bessy makes everything sound like Summer (the summer of 1969 that is).



7

DUREFORSOG

KOOL ARROW

ELECTRIC MACHINE

File Under: Next Wave Of No Wave. This Copenhagen band's music is a nervy experiment of caustic sonic landscapes where punk, industrial and avant garde stare each other down.

“I think this is true. Hitler went to Heaven [if such a thing as Heaven really exists]. He felt that what he did was right, and I think that if what you feel you’re doing is right, in your heart, then you can’t be wrong.”

-KORN GUITARIST MUNKY SHAFFER OPENS MOUTH, INSERTS FOOT WITH METAL HAMMER MAGAZINE.

MY FAVORITE GEAR:
 Tiny Telephone Studios is like a **John Vanderslice** monkey on his back.

John Vanderslice is a hopeless gear nerd. Give him a chance to talk about his obsession with old-school analog recording equipment, and his calm California drawl speeds directly into long, frantic sentences strung together out of pure excitement. That geeky passion’s helped make his own Tiny Telephone Studios the perfect place to make not only his own records, but those of artists like Death Cab For Cutie, Beulah and Richard Buckner.

His ARP Odyssey, a mid-’70s synthesizer endorsed by Pete Townshend and Jimmy Page, is one of his favorites. Vanderslice beams, “You plug in this synth and you just hear the history of prog rock, man—it’s out of control.” Another object of pride is an Ibanez AD202 Delay. “This is the reggae/dub pedal. You can tweak its knobs and get these really kind of destabilizing swirling patterns out of whatever instrument you have going into it. I’ll put string samples through it and slowly shift the speed so it just feels like something’s really off.” The centerpiece of any studio is the console—Tiny Telephone’s is a Neve 5316, which Vanderslice acquired from a BBC station in London called Central TV. “It’s definitely the most important and most bankrolled thing in the studio. I have a \$50,000 loan out on it.”

You might say his gear-love borders on sickness, though—something Vanderslice is slowly coming to terms with. “It’s all I fucking do,” he confesses. “People just go to eBay and look at photos on the auctions—they’re not even gonna bid, they just want to look at the gear. It’s like pornography and I do it all the time. You’re fetishizing this gear... I’m obviously filling up some hole in my soul, you know? But on the other hand, I think, ‘Whoa, this is really beautiful esthetically.’” >>>MIKE CONKLIN



IN MY ROOM

Who: Gordon Anderson, a.k.a. the Lone Pigeon
Where: His house in Fife, Scotland
Why: Anderson is Syd Barrett to the Beta Band’s Pink Floyd: a founding member who left before they broke due to mental instability.

But is it art?

I have a large and strange collection of things, since I’m always doing art and have an exhibition soon to work for. For one, I have a formaldehyde Cyclops Womble in an old coffee jar. I have a chair that you can’t sit on as it’s also a guitar; I got so happy with that Captain Barnacle song that I “took apart” a guitar and a chair and eventually glued them in various ways together into one Picasso-looking thing.

Rats against fascism

I have a large glass hollow army tank (the ones that fire bullets) with a few pet rats inside that were dyed from head to foot in the colours of the rainbow. In the corner, there are three large full-size casts, done in cheese, of three of the world’s vilest dictators, namely Mao, Hitler and Stalin, that will eventually be put on show with the glass tank, as the rats can be fired out of the tank into the area with the cheese, so they eat the dictators.

Completely unrelated things

I have a wonderful striped Furby that talks nonstop every time I don’t want it to. Also, in the cupboard I have a wasps’ hive, that the wasps have actually made themselves, out of paper and chewed wood. Finally, [I have] a clock that is made entirely out of plasticine with a large smiling face on it, as I’m currently working on a friend’s bathroom decorating it entirely in neon plasticine.

This might make more sense to you when you listen to the Lone Pigeon’s Concubine Rice (Domino). Then again, it might not.

demos 20 songs for their third album • **Wire** reforms for new EP and brief tour of USA in September • **Jane’s Addiction** enters the studio with producer >>>

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Fri June 21	Pittsburgh, PA	Amphitheatre At Station Square
Sat June 22	Pittsburgh, PA	Amphitheatre At Station Square
Fri July 05	Milwaukee, WI	Summerfest
Sat July 06	Cleveland, OH	Feeling Better Than Everfine Festival @ Tower City Amphitheater
Wed July 10	Charlotte, NC	Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre
Thu July 11	Atlanta, GA	Hi-Fi Buys Amphitheatre
Fri July 12	Raleigh, NC	Alltel Pavilion @ Walnut Creek
Sat July 13	Columbia, MD	Merrifweather Post Pavilion
Wed July 17	The Woodlands, TX	C.W. Mitchell Pavilion
Thu July 18	Dallas, TX	Smirnoff Music Centre
Sat July 20	Winter Park, CO	Winter Park Resort
Sun July 21	Albuquerque, NM	Journal Pavilion
Thu July 25	Chula Vista, CA	Coors Amphitheatre

TOUR DATES

Date	City	Venue
Fri July 26	Phoenix, AZ	Cricket Pavilion
Sat July 27	Irvine, CA	Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre
Sun July 28	Mountain View, CA	Shoreline Amphitheatre
Thu August 01	Concord, CA	Chronicle Pavilion
Sat August 03	George, WA	The Gorge
Sun August 04	Portland, OR	Rose Garden Arena
Wed August 07	Antioch, TN	AmSouth Amphitheatre
Thu August 08	Noblesville, IN	Verizon Wireless Music Center
Fri August 09	Burgettstown, PA	Post-Gazette Pavilion
Sat August 10	Clarkston, MI	DTE Energy Music Theatre
Sun August 11	Tinley Park, IL	Tweeter Center
Wed August 14	Wantagh, NY	Jones Beach Amphitheatre
Thu August 15	Virginia Beach, VA	Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre
Fri August 16	Camden, NJ	Tweeter Center @ The Waterfront
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Tough Love

LUNA When you're coming up on 20 years as a professional musician, it's safe to say you've amassed some experience with matters of love—or lust, however you want to look at it. All that history helped Luna's Dean Wareham feel romance-knowledgeable enough to call his new record *Romantica* (Jetset)—the band's seventh, and some of their best work—so we think he's plenty qualified to tell you how you're *totally fucking up your love life*. Listen, you've already blown it countless times. We guarantee that rock personalities have much more sex than you do. Learn from them: lovelorn@cmj.com.



NEVER MIND THE BHANGRA

HERE'S THE

Opium Jukebox

A SEX PISTOLS TRIBUTE

WEIRD RECORD

I Wanna Be... Gandhi

The Sex Pistols have gotten a lot of mileage out of their one and only studio album: *Never Mind The Bollocks* has spawned countless live records, bootlegs, reunion tours, films and, of course, the dreaded tribute records. But *Opium Jukebox* (Martin Atkins's funny-music-when-I'm-bored side project) takes the cake with *Never Mind The Bhangra*, a fully instrumental tribute that swaps the buzzing guitars and foaming-at-the-mouth vocals for sitar, tabla and drum 'n' bass rhythms—playing something like the soundtrack to one of Bill Laswell's new-age nightmares. Let's hope Rotten and co. don't hear it; the Filthy Rupees Middle Asian tour will surely follow. >>>IAN SIMS

I live with my girlfriend and another girl, our roommate. Lately, things with my girlfriend have been awful—things with our roommate are awesome, though. My girlfriend works a lot and me and Erin spend a lot of time hanging out at home together. I'm starting to have serious feelings for her. How the fuck can I manage to work out this ridiculously complicated situation?
—Daniel, Weehawken, N.J.

Daniel: You're in a pickle, that's for sure. It sounds like someone's going to be hurt, and there will probably be some crying and cursing and shouting, and maybe some of your favorite things will get thrown out the window. But at least your house isn't being bulldozed by an army tank, and you have clean running water and electricity. And it sounds like you could have some fun with Erin.

I brought my girlfriend with me and my best friend to a Killswitch Engage show a few months ago. We wanted to get up front, and she was into that. When people started dancing, my friend got into it, and he accidentally elbowed her in the chin. It sucks that he hurt my girl, but he didn't mean to do it, and it's a hardcore show, you know? Now she wants me to stop being friends with him. I think it's total bullshit and that she should just suck it up. Who's right?
—Vinny, New Hyde Park, N.Y.

Vinny: I'm not familiar with this Killswitch Engage that you speak of. But once many years ago my band Luna were driving from San Diego back to Los Angeles after a show. I'm not sure how it got started, but I believe I was holding Sean's shoe out the window, and he'd taken my bag, and before you know it there were a couple of punches thrown, and Sean's girlfriend was accidentally elbowed in the mouth. By Sean. Well, she was pretty steamed about it. Sean and I made up, but he's no longer with that girl.

Let's say for instance you're, like, 25, and you meet this girl, who's a friend of a friend, and she's only 18. But she's adorable and sweet and irresistible. Are you a disgusting dirty old man if you try and go for her?
—A.F., Akron, Ohio

Don't be ridiculous. If she's not sleeping with you, she'll be sleeping with some fumbling 18-year-old boy who is too embarrassed to even talk about birth control and may ejaculate prematurely. I think you have much more to offer her, don't you?

Love,

Dean

Bob Ezrin for first all new LP in 12 years • Joining the ranks of Abba and Queen, **Madness** will get their own musical, *Our House*, opening in London in October • **Elbow**

5 SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT ROCK DJ JAZZY JEFF'S HOMEBASE



1. Jazzanova, *In Between*

It's one of the most incredible records I've heard in a long time, because it covers so many different bases. They cover so many different emotions—lemme give you some hlp-hop, lemme give you some jazz, lemme give you some funk, lemme give you some soul. It's like a musical journey.

2. J-Live, *All Of The Above*

This is the kind of hip-hop that I really love, because he shows so much musical diversity, from really jazzy, smoothed-out to really driving rhythms. As a lyricist, he might be one of the dopest out there, just changing styles and telling a story.

3. Bilal, *1st Born Second*

I thought this was one of [last year's] most slept-on albums. Bilal reminds me of Prince; his creativity, you just have to let him go and see where he ends up. There was a lot of stuff on that record that people didn't really have a chance to get into.

4. The Roots, *Things Fall Apart*

They're innovators, to take the boundaries of hip-hop with [a live band]. They make you not care that it's a live band—which you shouldn't care in the first place—but they've become masters of creating these rhythms and painting these pictures, it's like a hip-hop jazz band.

5. Masters At Work, *Our Time Is Coming*

They're the godfathers of house music, in the way they take a lot of the instrumentation and Latin rhythms and piece it all together. No one does it like them.

Jeff's first non-Fresh Prince artist album, The Magnificent, is out on BBE.

WORD OF MOUSE

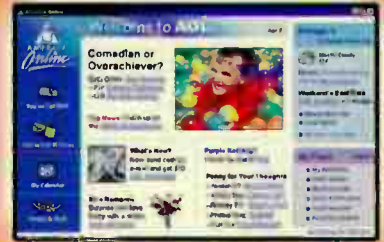
EVEN BETTER THAN THE SHITTY BEATLES.

The only people who understand music less than record execs are television/movie execs, who cobble together formulaic fictional bands like a speed-riddled Lou Pearlman. The **Rocklopedia Fakebandica** (www.vgg.com/tp/tp_080700_fakeband.html) offers a nightmarishly thorough chronicle of their every attempt, from heavyweights like Spinal Tap to unknowns like the Krofft Supershow's Kaptain Kool And The Kongs (quoth the site: "Um, maybe I'm wrong, but is having a bandname that abbreviates to KKK a good thing?") Sample entry: "Cherry Bomb—Bomb, indeed. This all-female 'punk' band was in the 1986 bomb *Howard The Duck*. They were the mid-'80s, Hollywood version of punk, that is to say, a terrible pop/rock band with dyed hair. Lead singer and guitarist Beverly Switzier becomes disturbingly enamoured of Howard (Hello?! Different species!) and he ends up managing the band. As I recall, the movie ends with a rousing guitar duel between Beverly and Howard."

to spend summer working on sophomore LP in between U.K. festival shows * * * * *

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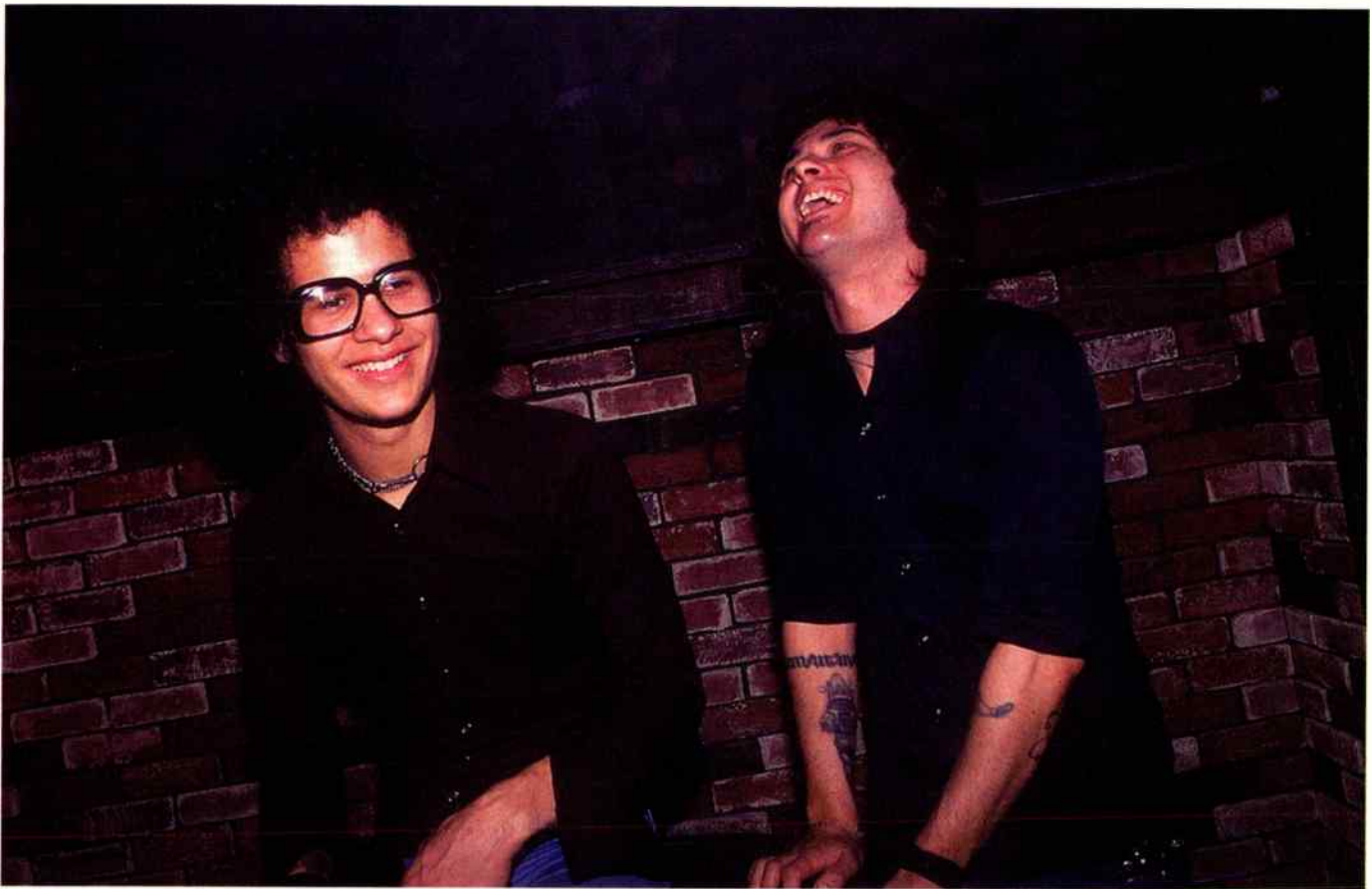


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THE MARS VOLTA

Some people, even friends, called Omar Rodriguez and Cedric Bixler crazy when they left At The Drive-In in early 2001—right after ATDI had broken well clear of the basement-punk underground with 2000's *Relationship Of Command*. Now, the pair (still sporting MC5-style 'fros at last glance) are working full-time with the ingenious six-piece outfit, the Mars Volta. "My soul feels the most musically fulfilled that it has in a long, long time," admits Rodriguez. Mars, a roughly year-old outfit based out of Long Beach, Calif., is a supergroup of sorts, featuring keyboardist Ikey Owens from Long Beach Dub Allstars, powerhouse skinsman Jon Theodore of D.C.'s Golden and Jeremy Ward from De Facto (Rodriguez and

Bixler's dub/salsa "instrumental improvised music" project) on effects and synths. The three-song *Tremulant* EP, released on Rodriguez's own Gold Standard Laboratories label in April, finds the outfit taking off from the proggy side of ATDI and never looking back. "We're playing with people with the same idea, esthetic. Now, there's less of a concern with pop-oriented song structure," Omar notes. The band plans to re-record "Tremulant" for a full-length with GSL-Universal this fall. In the meantime, Theodore is moving to Cali, and the group (which has already toured the U.S., Europe and Japan) is taking its time, "sorting everything out" before naming a producer. "We've paced it. We take it easy and do whatever we want." >>>JOHN OUGAN

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

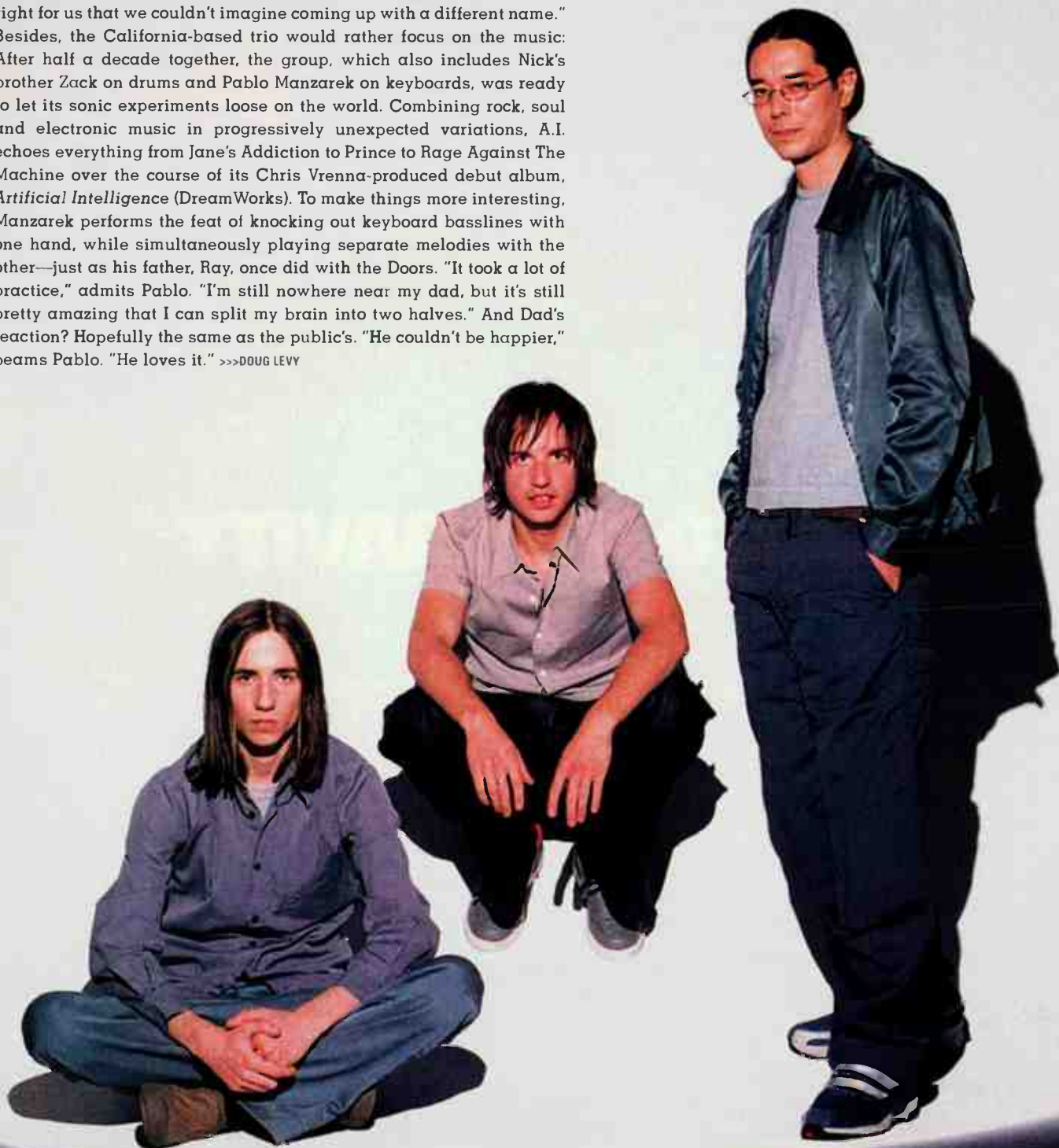


MAD AT GRAVITY

Lynn Johnston was the last piece of the Mad At Gravity puzzle, and he paid the price. "There were a lot of bizarre initiation rites," he reports with a laugh, "but there was minimal scarring." The singer recovered enough to record *Resonance* (ARTISTdirect), a debut collection of radio-friendly yet odd-metered songs that stylistically stretch from Incubus to Tool. Their debut single, "Walk Away," started popping up on radio stations in early summer and is featured in the post-apocalyptic dragonslayer flick *Reign Of Fire*. It's been a whirlwind time for the band—drummer Jake Fowler, guitarists James Lee Barlow and Anthony "Bosco" Boscarini and bassist Ben Froehlich—who went from slaving away in Calif.-based underground bands to a record deal in short order. "It's so surreal and mind-blowing that it really hasn't even sunk in," says Fowler. "It's hard to even comprehend that there are these stations out there playing our stuff." Although it would be nice, Fowler doesn't have a conquer-the-world philosophy. "You know, there's reality and there's fantasy," he chuckles. "I live in the reality world and I know how hard it is to be a baby band. We have amazing opportunities, but you know, that could all backfire. You just can never gauge what's going to happen, and I've been working for this for so long I just want to have fun with it." >>>DAVID JOHN FARINELLA

A.I.

What do you do when a bomb of a Hollywood movie comes along and tarnishes your band's name before you've even released a record? In the case of A.I., nothing. "We were worried about it," reveals frontman/guitarist Nick Young, "but it just felt so right for us that we couldn't imagine coming up with a different name." Besides, the California-based trio would rather focus on the music: After half a decade together, the group, which also includes Nick's brother Zack on drums and Pablo Manzarek on keyboards, was ready to let its sonic experiments loose on the world. Combining rock, soul and electronic music in progressively unexpected variations, A.I. echoes everything from Jane's Addiction to Prince to Rage Against The Machine over the course of its Chris Vrenna-produced debut album, *Artificial Intelligence* (DreamWorks). To make things more interesting, Manzarek performs the feat of knocking out keyboard basslines with one hand, while simultaneously playing separate melodies with the other—just as his father, Ray, once did with the Doors. "It took a lot of practice," admits Pablo. "I'm still nowhere near my dad, but it's still pretty amazing that I can split my brain into two halves." And Dad's reaction? Hopefully the same as the public's. "He couldn't be happier," beams Pablo. "He loves it." >>>DOUG LEVY

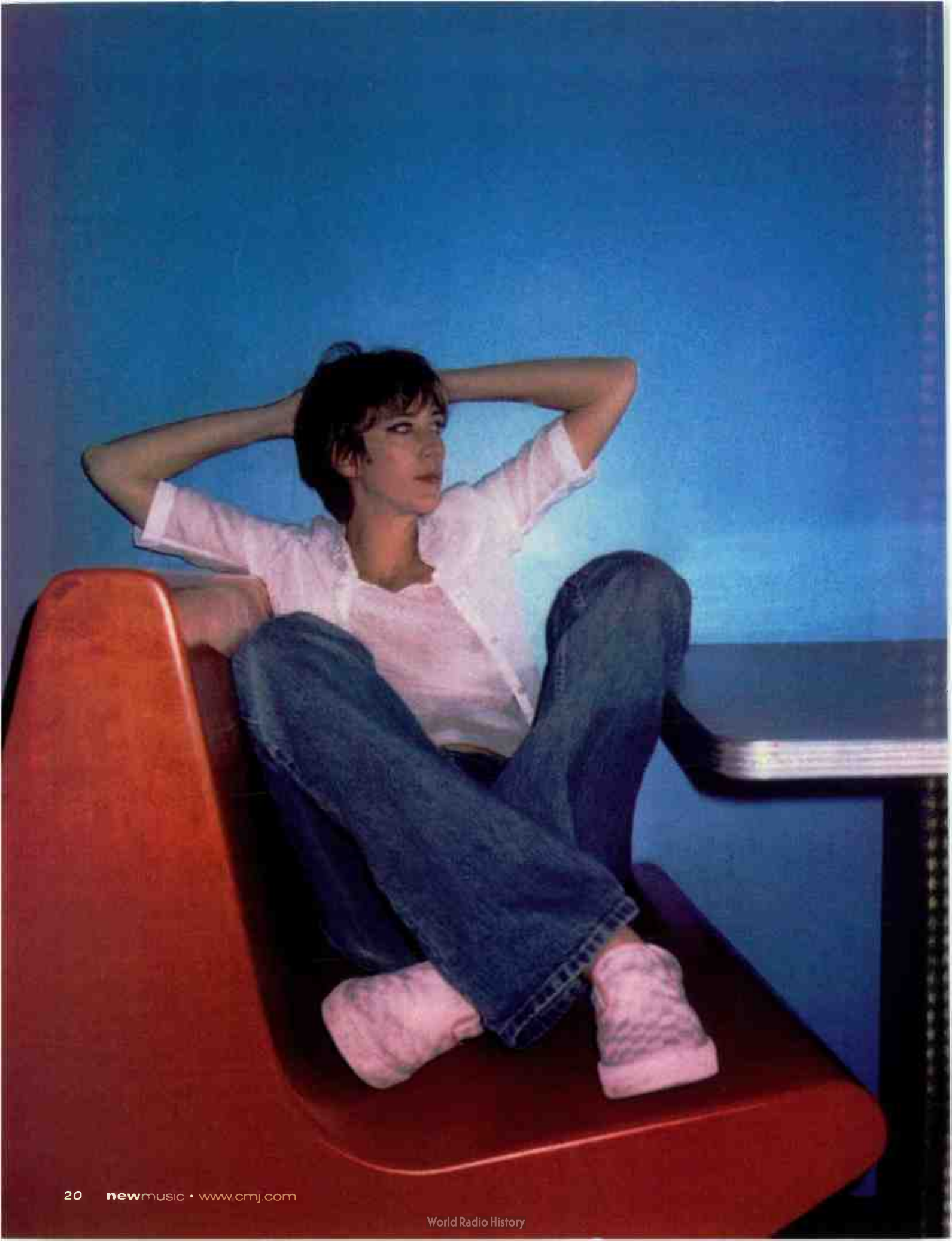




INTERPOL

This is the worst martini I've ever had," Interpol singer/guitarist Paul Banks says, wrinkling his nose in the basement of a Manhattan dive bar. "That's because you're in a raw rock bar," drummer Sam Fogarino offers. He's right; the members of Interpol, all decked out in three-piece suits, are very out of place in the confines of this dingy bar. It's a fitting metaphor for their place in the New York scene—the lone element of style in an otherwise trashy, garage-ridden landscape. While everyone recycled their Television and Stooges records last year, Interpol sculpted *Turn On The Bright Lights* (both Matador), a batch of textured, melancholy rock that owes as much to My Bloody Valentine as it does to new wave and Joy Division's Ian Curtis (to whom Banks's voice is most often com-

pared). Of course, they've been lumped in with the new garage scene anyway—"I guess it's, 'They're from New York, they're not electro so they're garage,'" bassist Carlos Dengler says—but have somehow managed to avoid the soul-crushing hype that came with it, quietly selling out NYC's 800-capacity Bowery Ballroom with only two now-out-of-print EPs to their credit. After the release of a self-titled teaser EP and *Bright Lights* this summer, their first stop is the European festival circuit, where their greatest adversary isn't hype—it's sunlight. "As soon as we can, we're going to implement a rule that Interpol does not play in the daylight," Fogarino says. "When Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds played Lollapalooza, they had to play in the daytime—so wrong!" >>>TOM MALLON



Morning Star

Beth Orton doesn't go looking for songs, they just bowl her over like a sunrise. And her new *Daybreaker* should do as much to you.

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTO: VALERIE PHILLIPS

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

"Am I really that tall?"

Beth Orton unfolds her tangle of limbs and slides out from behind the café table to size herself up, curious.

She's a few inches shy of six feet. Not that tall, it's agreed. She's also not morose, or a delicate flower. She's not a lot of things she's read about herself. Squinting in the sun of the first hot day of the year, it's like she's peering in a distant mirror, trying to see what everyone else is seeing.

Daybreaker (Astralwerks), her third record, has a lot of what people love about Beth Orton. Her wounded bray nestles comfortably in electronic textures, a full band with strings or just acoustic guitars tumbling like rain; her gentle rasp holds soft notes like a lover's whisper. On songs like "Paris Train," words splash over the choruses as if she's trying to catch up to a part of her life that's getting away.

As much as the natural break in her voice imbues her songs with heartbreak, that kind of desperation isn't a tenable persona, and getting caught up in the middle of how she sounds and what she's trying to express leaves her flustered. "I don't know if I ever try to express anything, really," she says of her songwriting. "It just sort of comes, to be honest. I don't mean to be an ass, but it's true. I never go in with an intention, necessarily. The intention takes its own time.

"I don't know. It's really hard to describe," she continues. "I don't sit down and go, 'I want to write a song about this particular subject,' and yet, at the same time, I sit down and write about a particular feeling, which isn't the same thing.

"I'll tell you a story about 'God Song,' and how that came about. I was doing a Harry Smith project. You know Harry Smith? The folk anthology? [The seminal three volume *The Anthology Of American Folk Music*.] They wanted me to do two songs, and

I'd been busy, and the day before the gigs, the CD arrives, you know, the folk anthology, and the idea is there are particular songs they want me to sing. So I tried to put the CD on, and for some reason my CD player decided to break that day. So all I had was the words, and the chords at the top of the page. I had never heard the song 'Frankie And Johnny' before. 'He's my man and he keeps doing me wrong,' is the chorus. So I just had these words, and I just made up my own melody. And I sang it that night, and I was like, 'Fuck, I love this,' and I was like, 'I'll just do a cover of it.' And then I was like, 'Oh fuck it!' And then I heard the original, and mine is nothing like the original. And I was like, 'What if I wrote my own words to the chorus?' So I just started just messing around in my own time, not for anyone else, not for any reason, but for my own thing. And then I was just more interested in the idea of he's my man and I keep doing him wrong. And now, maybe this is my answer to that song, maybe this is me being Frankie. Maybe, maybe, I'm the modern-day Frankie and I'm just admitting that actually I'm doing him wrong, or maybe he is God, and maybe when you reflect on someone, you reflect on your relationship to God. And... I don't know... If you want to get really into it, there is a literal sense in what I'm saying, but what I'm saying is also really not literal. It's kind of a... I don't know... I just really get into all that... For me, it's like this on top of this, that underneath."

She gestures, stacking her hands and hoping to augment whatever intuitive sense she made with that last sentence, and draws a long breath. Her eyes stop darting around the table, the patio, the idling linen truck a sidewalk away, and make contact. They really are that big. She was lost for a few minutes in that song, but now she's back.

"Do you know what I mean?" **MMM**

25 TO LIFE

EVEN THE MEKONS CAN'T STOP THE MEKONS.

STORY: CHRIS NICKSON • PHOTO: FRANK SWIDER • ARTWORK: JON LANGFORD



When punk first raised its spiky head, no one imagined that it would not only last, but profoundly influence the music that followed.

And certainly nobody—not even the band themselves—would have believed that the Mekons, one of punk's most ramshackle organizations, would survive 25 years.

"No," agrees founding member Jon Langford, "maybe when we got to 20 years, we thought 'possibly,' but there's never much thinking ahead with us anyway; there never has been."

It's been a long, rocky path from their beginnings at Leeds University in England, but the band is still around to celebrate their silver anniversary with a new album, *Oooh! (Touch & Go)*. While the disc has that unmistakably ragged Mekons sound, the singing has a decidedly smoother quality. To Langford, "All the vocals sound pretty insane. We worked on them a lot; it's definitely a vocal-based thing. More like the concept of having lots of people singing together, a soccer crowd-cum-Baptist choir."

While they've always been overtly political, the band has also always been known for its elliptical lyrics. But in the scorching opener, "The Long Trip To Jerusalem," concerning the ongoing social and political divide in Britain, they're at their most explicit.

"I was thinking about some English traditions of socialism," Langford explains. "I've been reading a lot about [William] Blake, and reading E.P. Thompson about Blake is particularly interesting. You can't get that much into a three-minute song, but that's the beauty of it in a way; you can tip your hat in all different directions."

To commemorate their time together, along with the new record, the band will be touring the U.S., and "there's going to be an illustrated lyric book coming out," Langford says, "and a touring art show which will travel with us. If we can keep doing stuff that's interesting, it's not ludicrous, us having been around for 25 years. The criticisms we get are when we don't play enough new songs, because we've been too lazy to learn them. The people who are into us expect us to be pushing ahead all the time."

It's a reasonable expectation: Whether the band was injecting punk into country (long before the term alt-country was even a gleam in a journalist's eye) with 1985's *Fear And Whiskey*, dipping a toe into world music waters with 1988's *So Good It Hurts* or biting the corporate hand that briefly fed them in the early '90s, the Mekons have always gone their own way, willful and anarchic. The CD artwork of *Oooh!* is meant to reflect that history, with "25 years of futile and intense activity," as Langford describes it. "Loads of things scrawled, and other things scrawled on top. Even if we haven't been that busy much of the time, there's been that illusion of intense activity."

In reality, for many years, the Mekons has been just one facet of expression for many of the members: Langford plays in several others bands, including the Waco Brothers and Pine Valley Cosmonauts, in addition to being a critically acclaimed visual artist. Sally Timms and Rico Bell both have solo careers, and Lu Edmonds is one of Billy Bragg's *Blockers*. How do they manage to keep it all straight?

"We have to plan well in advance," Langford admits. "But we're in a really good position, with the label and the agency we're with, so we don't have the logistical problems we once had—we're no longer fighting 'The Man,' which was really boring anyway. It nearly broke the band up a few times. Now we can think about what we want to do and make the records we want to make. We made some great records in people's basements, and we can do that again if it's fun, but there's a different thing going on now. We can say, 'We're going to be the Mekons for a month here, a month there.'"

But with 25 years down, what are the possibilities of a Mekons golden jubilee? Will they still be easing onstage with their walkers in 2027?

"I was hoping we could be like a soccer team," Langford says, "bringing in young blood and putting some of the old codgers on the bench, but it doesn't seem to work like that—the oldest ones seem to be the most tenacious. The only way you can leave is in a box. If there are some people who aren't dead after 50 years, they can probably continue." **NMM**





Major Motivation

Spoon knows it's not about how big your label is—it's about the size of the effort. And they'll prove that to you or *Kill The Moonlight* trying.

STORY: STEVE CIABATTONI • PHOTO: OREW GOREN

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

Britt Daniel has a sly grin. Actually, it's closer to a smart-ass smirk than anything else, but the Spoon singer/songwriter/guitarist is dead serious about one thing. "My motivation is to add to the history of great rock records."

Ten years ago when Daniel hooked up with drummer Jim Eno in Austin, Tx., the ambitions were probably not as defined, or as grand. "It's a great thing to start a band with friends and to do it casually," he says. "But after a while, I knew that this is really what I was going to do. It's me getting older and realizing that I'm going



nowhere with my life," he half-jokes. "I know now that I want to work at this as hard as I can."

For Daniel, hard work means hiding out for three months in Connecticut writing songs for Spoon's fourth album, *Kill The Moonlight* (Merge). Where 2000's brilliant *Girls Can Tell* filtered 1960s pop through Spoon's wiry rock lens, *Kill The Moonlight* is leaner and nervier, often driven by spare, unexpected grooves. The main percussion for the song "Stay Don't Go" was carried over from Daniel's demo, where he laid down guttural grunts, human-beat-box style, rather than fire up the drum machine. "For *Girls* I was more into chords and over-the-top melodies. With this one I just wanted to be more...more out there. This one's more Julian Cope," Daniel explains, referencing the legendary Britpop madcap. "I don't think we're the weirdest band in the world—there are also some pop songs on this record I think people can digest—but it is more out there than the last record."

Kill The Moonlight's opener, "Small Stakes," testifies for Daniel that this is in fact their "most Cope-y record." Drenched in reverb and marked by staccato keyboard riffs and a tambourine beat, the song feels like vintage psychedelia and the future of rock at the same time. "From a songwriting perspective, this record is more mature, but I also think it's ballsier," offers Jim Eno, who, when not working his day job as an electrical engineer, serves as Daniel's sonic foil, maximizing the tension of the songs with surprising rhythmic ideas and arrangements. "When you hear a track, a lot of times it's very obvious, like, 'This needs something,'

because the chorus is coming and something needs to explode," Eno says. "It can be a battle at times, because when someone writes a song and they're so intimate with it, they have an idea how it needs to sound. But Britt is really good at allowing me to do something and not shooting it down right away."

Kill The Moonlight is only 35 minutes long, but its compact songs don't leave you wanting for much more. "I think that a lot of records suffer from the fact that CDs became the dominant technology and that you could put more than 70 minutes on there," Daniel offers. "Most people are not that inspired on a single album. I just think that's fluff; I'd rather not have any fluff."

Fluff can also mean people wasting time talking more about Spoon's label drama than their actual records. The band's brief affair with Elektra for the 1998 album *A Series Of Sneaks* (now reissued through Merge) made Spoon a sort of poster child for indie bands swallowed and then summarily spit out by the majors. But Daniel isn't holding onto the bitterness much. In fact, he's quite uninterested in having his band represent the "indie rock" anything.

"I don't like most indie rock," Daniel says flatly. Realizing he needs to elaborate, he continues. "Almost categorically I don't like it as a genre. A lot of the 'indie' bands make it seem like it's not cool to care or to try."

"I think that's what's wrong with that music," he asserts, underscoring his conviction. "That's what that music should be about: You should really want to try." **NMM**



World Radio History



Stolen Moments

Thievery Corporation, D.C.'s D.I.Y. connoisseurs of club cool, set the mood with their new *The Richest Man In Babylon*.

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTOS: BRIAN LIU

You know what D.I.Y. looks like. It's T-shirts and Chuck Taylors. It's guitar/bass/drums in a van and house shares in a shabby part of town. It's not suave. It's not swank nightclub. It's not Thievery Corporation.

If it makes you feel better, Eric Hilton was thrown off his college radio station for playing Minor Threat. Also, right now he and partner Rob Garza kind of look like crap.

They're on the ass end of a cross-country red-eye and the two days of new-record promo hassle for *The Richest Man In Babylon* in L.A. preceding it. Ironically, for a couple of guys who, not without effort, exude jet-set cool, they don't like flying, and Hilton popped a Xanax to calm his nerves before the flight, the effects of which he's slow to shake. They're out of character, so to speak—no bespoke suits or cocktail affectations today, just untucked short-sleeve shirts and minibar Coronas on the hotel roof deck, puffy eyes squinting at late-afternoon New York sun. They're not playing up the image of the international electronic music smoothies they're too smart not to have at least partially calculated—proof, maybe, to even those who make a hobby of separating art and artifice that these appropriators of sounds from around the globe are not characters at all, but a couple of guys committed to their own ideas of how to do things.

"We have a nice group of people that we enjoy working with," Hilton says of the mini empire he's building in D.C., which includes the Eighteenth Street Lounge he co-runs and its namesake label. "It's a very do-it-yourself sort of label. It's very non-corporate, which is good."

"Just doing everything independently is one of the things we're most proud of, that we're able to sell as many records as we have and have people enjoy our music and do it without having ever signed to a major label," Garza adds, referring to the 100,000 copies sold of the group's previous disc, *The Mirror Conspiracy*.

"In the end, the freedom is priceless," Hilton continues. "I just think it would be so miserable to have to jump when they say, 'Jump.' We work for ourselves. If we want to do it and it sounds fun, we'll do it. If it doesn't, we won't. And you can maintain your sanity that way. It's nice to be able to say, 'OK, let's do this show in Spain because we've never been there,' rather than have somebody say, 'Forget Spain, you have to tour Scotland for four weeks because the record hasn't sold anything there.' Whatever, we want to go to Spain right now."

As much as any kids who discovered punk rock in the D.C. area have to be influenced by Dischord Records and the scene's D.I.Y. tendencies, Hilton and Garza are less about ideology than a shared desire to do things their way and to do them right, which in the way of all utterly confident people, is the same thing. They started making electronic music because they were both bored with the techno they were hearing in the mid-'90s, releasing it as white-label 12-inches. Then, the second of these singles, "Shaolin Satellite," was included on a *DJ Kicks* mix CD by Austrian downtempo majordomos

"In the end, the freedom is priceless. We work for ourselves. If we want to do it and it sounds fun, we'll do it. You can maintain your sanity that way."

Kruder & Dorfmeister, creating a buzz that brought labels of all sizes calling; they weren't opposed to the idea of recording for a major, yet.

"We've actually sat down with some major labels at different times and we've read the contracts," Hilton says, hands spread out on the table in front of him. "It's a form of slavery—they own you at that point. And it's funny, because the people trying to sign you promise you everything, then you read the contract and they take it all away. The craziest thing in most record contracts is, they'll try to sign you as 'Thievery Corporation,' but you sign personally. So that means if Rob decides he really likes folk music and wants to just pick up a guitar and do a folk project, he can't. He has to do it on the label. Or if I want to do something like that, I can't. They own you, they own your creativity, your creative product, no matter what you're doing. That's slavery as far as I'm concerned."

Their freedom is addictive, but they soon discovered other benefits of going their own way.

"When you're not part of that big corporate marketing machine, people get to discover that record on their own a little bit," Hilton says, using the two-year gap between *The Mirror Conspiracy* and *The Richest Man In Babylon* to further illustrate the advantages of their situation. "And that's nice because the life span of the

record seems to last longer. You might not have massive sales numbers the first few weeks or whatever, but it steadily goes along. We're not trying to get rich by it, we're just trying to do music that we enjoy doing and hopefully continue to be able to do it."

"It's not the feel-good hit of the summer," Garza chimes in. "We work in a lot of very subtle forms of music. It's just not something very obvious, like some kind of anthem. It's something that, once you have it on a few times you really start to hear the different textures."

Like the best of Thievery Corporation, *The Richest Man In Babylon* goes down smooth—in the background at a club, all you'll hear is the beats and tasteful use of tablas, sampled wood flute, vibes and well-curated vocal performances. But there's also enough going on that it stands out even in the current flood tide of downtempo records released as relaxed became the new active, or something. This is because just as the two got together out of boredom with what they were hearing, they also got bored with what they're doing.

"As a matter of fact," Garza continues, "if we're working on a song, and it's starting to become too obvious in one direction, we try to rein it back in. I think of this dub track that never made it on the record, but you know we'll do something with it. But it had this sort of house underpinning to it, but to us it was just sounding too house-y, so we just let it sit for a while. It was a little too get-up-and-party for us."

"Also, a rhetorical question is, can music be challenging without being abrasive, you know what I mean?" Hilton offers.

As much as the computer cut-and-paste of *Babylon*—the first disc not to use the "old gear, which was really simple"—grew tedious, the process of editing and recycling thrives on the spark of inspiration.

"Each song is sort of like a journey," Hilton says, a little leery of his own metaphor. "It takes all these twists and turns and there's a lot of songs on there where we've said, 'I hate this song, forget this song, we're not going to do this one, forget it.' And then a couple weeks later we get back to it, and something happens. We'll listen to it and go, 'Hey, I kinda like this,' and then we'll add a vocalist and it makes all the difference in the world."

Case in point is when Emiliana Torrini "stumbled into the studio one night, this drunken night. I was out of town, actually," Garza says.

"It sounds like she was drunk. Actually, I don't think she was drunk, but her companions were drunk," Hilton corrects. "She was touring. We have a friend who's the marketing director for Icelandic, and she's Icelandic, the band was Icelandic. He comes to the Eighteenth Street Lounge pretty often, and one night he came in late with this crew of drunk crazy Icelandic people, one of them was the drummer for the Sugarcubes, who's the drummer in her band; they were fun and I was just killing time in the studio, so I was letting them all play different keyboards and basses, making up all these silly songs. She was just kind of sitting there enjoying, but quiet, and someone said, 'Emiliana, sing, sing,' so she went into the vocal group, and she was singing to



ERIC HILTON, ROB GARZA

this silly, kinda cacophonous pots-and-pans thing they were all doing. And then we stopped and I put on this track that Rob and I had started, a super-early on, embryonic track, and she starts singing to it and it was gorgeous. Everybody who was drunk and boisterous, they just shut up. The whole place was silent. Everyone was just listening.

"We had her back in D.C. for a few days and did some sessions with her. She projected a lot of emotion into ["Heaven's Gonna Burn Your Eyes"]. A lot of real emotion, it wasn't just for the moment. She really felt it."

For Thievery, that sort of emotion is what keeps things true. It's a way to, borrowing a hip-hop cliché, keep it real.

"To me, I feel like no one's saying anything anymore," Hilton says. "Especially in dance music. Party music these days just seems so silly to me."

"I know we have a thing about dance music," Garza

counters, "but at the same time I could go upstairs to the second floor of the Lounge and listen to a Brazilian group doing things with melody and harmony and great instrumentation and just love to dance."

"And that's why some people had asked us why we wear suits. That was the answer. What you just said," Hilton returns, making a tired-person synaptic leap. "I'm just saying, you know, it's curmudgeonly in a way. It's not wanting to take part in WB culture, and what's going on, no real need for it."

Garza nods, because for Thievery Corporation, how you dress, the music you make, how you live—it's all the same thing, especially when you take the care to do it yourself.

"It's being able to take from all these different influences," he says, "and put them into one sort of style that has your fingerprint on it." **NMM**



NICHOLAUS ARSON, DR. MATT DESTRUCTION, VIGILANTE CARLSTROEM, CHRIS DANGEROUS, HOWLIN' PELLE ALMQVIST

THE HIVES

What's The Buzz



For nearly 10 years, **the Hives** have been calling themselves the best band in the world. So what happens when the world suddenly starts to believe them?

STORY: BRYAN MEALER • PHOTO: ULI WEBER

It's mid-June and the Swedish punk band the Hives are playing a second night at New York's Bowery Ballroom, on a three-week North American tour that has busted the seams in every city. When their singer, Howlin' Pelle Almqvist, finally prances onstage a full minute behind his band, he stands rigid, feet planted together, and blows kisses like a beauty queen at a parade. The crowd is swelled and snaps into hysterics from an already static roar. He grabs the microphone and the band tears into their first song, "The Hives—Declare Guerre Nucleaire," a fitting title for the band's campaign on the plain of mediocre rock 'n' roll.

Like the rest of the band, Almqvist is dressed in sleek black pants, black shirt and a white tie that matches his scuffed white bucks. A uniform black-and-white American flag hangs in the background, illuminated beneath a blinking sign bearing the band's name. On a drumbeat, he jumps and lands in the splits, hops back up and playfully pats the head of a girl in the front row. He's rock-star handsome, thin as a pole and has a piercing glare that could melt an iceberg. "Yes, boys and girls, it's that easy," he exclaims. "New York City loves the Hives." He looks up to the VIP balcony where a phalanx of eager music executives, journalists and celebrities crowd behind the iron railing, and beams, "Yeah, you love your rock star, don't you?"

If you ask the Hives, it hasn't always been that easy, and the world hasn't always been in love. Granted, right now the band is one of the biggest acts in a resurgence of raw, rocks-off rock 'n' roll that includes New York's the Strokes and Detroit's the White Stripes, not to mention a handful of Swedish acts like the Hellacopters, the (International) Noise Conspiracy and Sahara Hotnights. The Hives are reaping the long-fought-for success of their second full-length album, *Veni Vidi Vicious*, a record that was first released in Scandinavia and Europe in 1999 by Swedish label Burning Heart, then (with little fanfare) in the U.S. the following year by Epitaph. But it wasn't this spring, when Warner Bros. re-released the album on its imprint Sire, that the Hives found an American audience starved for a proper kick in the pants.



Their single, "Hate To Say I Told You So," is a radio regular, and the video is in constant rotation on MTV, MTV2 and Much Music. Lately, the band talks more to reporters than with each other. Corporations are reportedly offering millions for use of their songs in commercials. And major labels shadow them at every turn, with rumored record deal offers reaching upwards of \$12 million.

But therein lies the Hives' grand jest. For nearly a decade, the band has scraped and struggled for their success, which is certainly nothing novel for a rock band. But even during their incipient years, the time when all young bands are still flailing wildly to connect with their sound, to find their voice, the Hives were calling themselves the best band in the world. They were booed and hissed, chased out of clubs, threatened with steel-booted ass-kickings. Yet they taunted and teased, bowed their chests, and in the face of surly punkers who raised the finger, they plainly told them, "We are the greatest. If the Hives aren't your favorite band now, we will be soon."

The question is, did they actually believe it would work?

According to the Hives, they were hardly a product of chemistry or fate, but rather of manufactured brilliance, not to mention a savvy knack for D.I.Y. mythology. Like their names, Howlin' Pelle Almqvist, Dr. Matt Destruction (bass), Vigilante Carlstrom (rhythm guitar), Chris Dangerous (drums) and Nicholas Arson (lead guitar), their story has a Ramones-esque

comic book quality, one of world domination at the hands of rock 'n' roll superheroes. Who just happen to be from Sweden.

What is certainly true is that the Hives hail from Fagersta, a small steel town (pop. 13,000) about 100 miles from Stockholm, strangely famous for its two legends of the National Hockey League, Ulf Samuelsson and Tomas Sandstrom. And what is now part of their long yarn of lore is that in 1993, when they were 14 and 15 years old, they each received a letter from a *Charlie's Angels* Svengali-type character named Randy Fitzsimmons, instructing them to meet at a certain time and place. (According to Nicholas Arson, who is Almqvist's older brother, that place was the basement of Matt Destruction's home in Fagersta.) The boys each chose an instrument that "genetically" best fit them, says Matt, and began learning to play. The basement became the first of several home bases the band dubbed "Hive Manor," which acted as a central headquarters and rehearsal space. There were posters of their favorite punk groups plastered on the walls, and in order to practice, the band had to fold up a large ping-pong table to make room. Practices would last hours, sometimes starting at noon and stretching till two in the morning. The band would write songs based on what they'd swiped from their parent's records collections. Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, the Yardbirds and '50s rockabilly were some of their first leanings. It was also then that they began perfecting their flamboyant stage choreography: the jump kicks, Mick Jagger chicken walks and splits.

"That's what we thought rock bands did live," says Almqvist. "We assumed that if you play energetic music, then people danced in the band. I mean, we'd seen the Who on TV. And then we went and saw rock bands and realized that they didn't do anything onstage. We got really disappointed."

Fagersta is a sleepy, blue-collar burg where the kids bore easily, and as a result, tend to ally themselves with various cliques and factions. In the early to mid-'90s, says Almqvist, small groups of racist youths calling themselves Nazis or skinheads roamed the streets, waiting outside rock shows where the punks might give them a fight. Because of Fagersta's lack of real music venues, bands played wherever they could find a stage and a plug for their guitars. Shows usually took place in basements or bars that had been closed down and served no alcohol. A thin crowd of punks with mohawks and spikes mixed easily with normal-looking kids, both groups thrilled that their friends belonged to a band.

A year after the Hives received their letter, the band began appearing at these places with a limited repertoire of short, two-minute scorches. The first Hives songs were written mostly in English, yet some were in Swedish. (The band refuses to play those songs now, something Matt likens to "walking around in your old shoes.")

From the very beginning, the Hives were agitators. Even in their first days in Fagersta, now 15 and 16 years old, the band was visualizing the style that would eventually become their signature. They wore all black and white, even suits—often mismatched,

The German punks didn't always understand the suits, either. They booed and screamed, "Who do you think you are? We're punks, we don't wear suits!" or simply "Fuck you!" And while many German punk bands on the same billing played long, nearly two-hour sets, the Hives were usually finished in about a half hour. This started fights as well. Because by the time their sets were over, they had won the admiration of the crowd, who were now angry that they couldn't hear more.

The Hives got their first professional nod in 1996, when a record executive for Burning Heart named Peter Ahlqvist heard the band and let them record a six-song EP titled, *Oh Lord! When? How?* that got them recognized in Europe. A year later they cut their first album, *Barely Legal*, for Burning Heart, a 14-song, compact tirade of classic punk that weighs in at only 27 minutes. The album broke the band and sent them on their first tour through Europe and America.

Almqvist remembers the night when the band first realized their career had launched, when they would no longer have to be an opening act, when they could realistically begin plotting the future they'd visualized. They were headlining at Hamburg's Molotov club, and as the band pulled up in their van, they saw a line wrapped around the building, "more people than could fit inside.

"There were 300 there just to see us," he says. "It was then that we knew. We looked at each other and said, 'Look at that! Tons of people! It's about time.'"

With the wheels finally turning, the Hives went back into the studio, and in 1998, released the EP *a.k.a. I-D-I-O-T*, followed by 1999's *Veni, Vidi, Vicious*, which exploded in Sweden and turned them

"I CAN'T STOP SOMEONE FROM SAYING WE'RE THE SAVIORS OF ROCK 'N' ROLL. AND YOU KNOW, I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF WE WERE, FRANKLY."

whatever fit—and carried themselves with a pompish swagger and air of nobility.

"We played with these Swedish punk bands who didn't like us because we wore suits," says Matt. "Looking at it now, it was more new wave, but you didn't know it then. They got really annoyed and would try to beat us up afterward."

For the next three years the band drove from one small town to the next. At first, their travels took them in a large circle that surrounded their hometown. But it wasn't until they left Sweden and began playing in Germany that they truly came of age as working musicians. In Germany, they would try to get included on whatever billing they could. The "venues" were usually dark, condemned buildings full of squatters, dive bars, basements and run-down recreation centers. There could be 300 people in the audience or there could be nine. Sometimes, says Almqvist, the best shows were for nine people and a dog. The scene in Germany was more extreme, meaner and dirtier than the band was used to in Fagersta. There were more people in the crowd using drugs, carrying knives and willing to fight over nothing.

"We're 16, 17 at the time," says Almqvist. "Here we are having grown up in this safe environment in Sweden, and even though there was fighting between the hicks, it was super safe. But as we started touring, we sort of grew up in these seedy German punk squats."

into national superstars. They were nominated for a Swedish Grammy Award and won Sweden's Best Live Act 2000. The buzz reached Alan McGee, president of the struggling British label Poptones, who seized a ripe opportunity and released *Your New Favourite Band: Poptones Present The Hives*. The album is a compilation of songs from *Barely Legal* and *Veni Vidi Vicious*, along with a few rare B-sides. It was all the band needed. The U.K. press embraced it, and in turn, so did all of Europe. It paved the way for the Warner Bros. release that eventually brought the Hives to America, or, brought America to the Hives.

It's the afternoon before their second show in New York and the Hives are appearing on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. The night before, the band had celebrated the birthday of their drummer, Chris Dangerous, and a few of them are still struggling through their hangovers. A bag has been lost containing precious stage clothing, including a pair of shoes, and three crewmembers and a few PR people are scrambling to find it. The band appears exhausted, pale from too many hotel rooms and airport terminals. But never do they complain.

At soundcheck, the bandmembers wear black and white T-shirts bearing their stage names in bold, block letters. These shirts stay on whenever they're not onstage. They run through "Hate To Say I Told You So" while Conan O'Brien hangs in the back, dressed

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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

Sonic Youth

THE MARS VOLTA

Spoon

SUPERDRAG

Beth Orton • Bright Eyes

AUGUST 2002 • ISSUE 104

15. **THE WEBB BROTHERS** "Some Velvet Morning" *Total Lee! The Songs of Lee Hazlewood* (Astralwerks)
After working the Windy City, these pop-rock brothers garnered rave reviews with their two previous albums. Here, they remake a gem from classic songwriter Hazlewood.
16. **BRIGHT EYES** "Lover I Don't Have To Love" *Lifted, Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear To The Ground* (Saddle Creek)
Nebraska-based songwriter Conor Oberst likes to hurt, and we like to listen. On his new double-disc LP, *Lifted, Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear To The Ground*, Oberst shivers from lo-fi confessionals to lush, symphonic, er, confessionals. (See Review p. 45.)
17. **KOESTER** "Vow" *The High Highs The Low Lows* (Pitch-A-Ten)
The title of Koester's second longplayer is fitting: From noise-pop to Euro-pop to ambient noise, tracks like "Vow" hint at all of bandleader/namesake Steve Koester's musical and emotional highs and lows. (See Review p. 53.)
18. **CONSONANT** "Blissful" *Consonant* (Fenway Recordings)
Witness the return of Mission Of Burma bassist/songwriter/vocalist Clint Conley, with jittery rhythms, pounding drums and utter relentlessness all intact. (See Best New Music p. 40.)
19. **TWINEMEN** "Spinner" *Twinemen* (Hi-N-Dry)
Out of the ashes of Morphine come Twinemen, with a darkly hopeful self-titled debut. It's late-night listening, both comforting and chilling. (See Review p. 60.)
20. **ELENI MANDELL** "Don't Lose My Trail" *Snakebite* (Space Baby)
Sinister and entrancing, sexy and lush, Mandell's third album is full of smoky, back-alley lounge songs that seem both timelessly retro and shockingly modern. (See Review p. 54.)

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case



1. **SONIC YOUTH** "The Empty Page" *Murray Street* (Interscope)
Get out your ripped jeans and party like it's 1990: Sonic Youth returns, with some of their best work in years, in boot. *Murray Street* is their first album with Jim O'Rourke as a full-fledged member.
2. **THE MARS VOLTA** "Concertina" *Tremulant* (Gold Standard Laboratories)
Omar and Cedric of At The Drive-in fame express their more erratic sides; something like floating in space and witnessing the beauty of the Earth being hit by a comet. (See On The Verge p. 16.)
3. **HOT SNAKES** "Gar Forgets His Insulin" *Suicide Invoice* (Swami)
What's the recipe for rock that will scare off your parents? Ah yes, a couple dashes of Drive Like Jehu, a snippet of Rocket From The Crypt and a creamy crème de la Delta 72, and voila! (See Best New Music p. 40.)
4. **VIOLENT FEMMES** "Gone Daddy Gone" *Violent Femmes [Deluxe Edition]* (Slash/Rhino)
Teen angst never sounded as brilliant as it did on the Femmes' 1983 debut. Except perhaps on the two-disc reissue that features this song and 35 others, 22 of which were previously unavailable.
5. **SPOON** "The Way We Get By" *Kill The Moonlight* (Merge)
Austinities Spoon have been crafting good indie-rock hooks for years now—with *Kill The Moonlight*, they take the leap to great. (See Feature p. 24.)
6. **SUPERDRAG** "The Staggering Genius" *Last Call For Vitriol* (Arena Rock Recording Co.)
"Who sucked out the feeling?" Superdrag couldn't care less anymore, clearly, as the Knoxville guitar popsters inject an irresistible amount of it into their fourth full-length. (See Best New Music p. 42.)
7. **AFEL BOCOUM, DAMON ALBARN, TOUMANI DIABATÉ AND FRIENDS**
"Sunset Coming On" *Mali Music* (Astralwerks)
Oxfam sent Damon Albarn (Blur, Gorillaz) to Mali, and luckily he brought a DAT recorder along. Here, experience Albarn's collaborations with local talent. (See Quick Fix, p. 8; Review, p. 45.)
8. **MARIANNE FAITHFULL** "Wherever I Go" *Kissin' Time* (Virgin)
Pairing up with another unforgettable voice, namely Mr. Billy Corgan, Faithfull gracefully paints her rock picture with the flare and wisdom of her years. (See Review p. 49.)
9. **SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE** "Divine" *Divine Operating System* (Palm Pictures)
This trip-hop pop outfit is very American, which is to say that its lineage stretches to India, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Japan, Puerto Rico and Ireland. Divine is the follow-up to 2000's seductive self-titled debut.
10. **ZEROMANCER** "Send Me An Angel" *Eurotrash* (Cleopatra Records)
The metallic guitar crunch added to Australian new romantics Real Life's '83 hit is as fine an introduction as any to this gothy electro band, made up of ex-members of Prick, Kidneythieves and Vampire State Building.
11. **O.A.R.** "Hold On True" *Any Time Now* (Everfine Records)
College-boy chartbusters Of A Revolution muster a two-disc live album, satisfying their fanbase with fratty flavor and energy.
12. **THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES** "Sister Surround" *Behind The Music* (Hidden Agenda-Parasol/Warner Music Sweden)
Sweden is the new Seattle, or something. Only members of TSOOL's former band, Union Carbide Productions, fell in better with the garage-rock explosion; their current sound is less Stooges, more psych-rock. (See Localzine p. 38.)
13. **BETH ORTON** "Concrete Sky" *Daybreaker* (Astralwerks)
Picture what the title of U.K. songstress Orton's track here implies—vastness, a cool depth, awe, impenetrability—and you'll have a fair approximation of her grace and grasp of gorgeous melody. (See Feature p. 20.)
14. **BELLY** "Feed The Tree" *Sweet Ride: The Best Of Belly* (Sire-Rhino)
It was a sweet-but-brief ride into commercial success for Tanya Donnelly's first post-Muses effort. Belly's new best-of compilation, complete with remixes, B-sides and the group's sexy pop hit, "Feed The Tree," provides thorough documentation of the trip.

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in a blue plaid shirt and khakis, enthusiastically bobbing his head.

While his brother strums that now-famous opening riff, Almqvist stares into a nearby monitor, his eyes lost for a moment at the moving image of his band on national American television. As they file out of the studio, O'Brien stops a few of them in the hallway outside his dressing room. His towering frame literally dwarfs the moustached Matt Destruction, who is the shortest member of the band.

"You know guys, a lot of people are talking about you these days," O'Brien says, looking down at them, arms folded over his chest, his persona that of an awkward, distant uncle. "I think you guys are really good. You're loud, but really good."

The door to O'Brien's dressing room is open and Nicholas Arson points inside to a wall of mounted guitars.

"That your dressing room?"

O'Brien snaps to the question. "Yeah, you wanna see my guitars?" The lanky talk-show host walks over to the wall and takes down a well-used, vintage Gretsch electric guitar and hands it to Arson, who admires it carefully, then gives it back. The exchange is almost boyish.

to help them brainstorm their next record. Almqvist says the band recently lost its previous Hives Manor and will have to find another old house once they return to Sweden. The last one, he says, was out in the country, and actually looked like a castle, complete with manor-like roof towers and a nearby lake. The inside was decorated "Hives style, all black and white." When the band has time to relax, they do nothing but "kick about in robes and slippers, watch TV and old movies, read books. Maybe go fishing." Almqvist speaks of those times as if they happened decades ago.

Something they will certainly have to address in the foreseeable future is the major label tug-o-war that has ensued over their next record. It has been reported that the band has been offered \$12 million from Universal to cut its next three albums, with Interscope Geffen A&M labels possibly handling the US markets. Another rumored deal would give them \$5 million for worldwide release rights. Arson and his brother won't comment, saying only that they'll hold out as long as possible if it insures 100 percent control over their music. "If it comes to it," says Almqvist, "we'll just refuse."

All the band is focused on now is ending their tour. After completing their American dates, they get a brief rest before wrapping

"I MISS THOSE TIMES RUNNING AROUND THINKING WE WERE THE BEST BAND IN THE WORLD, WHEN NOBODY ELSE KNEW ABOUT IT!"

"You play much?" he asks O'Brien.

"Yeah," O'Brien says, shrugging and delicately placing the guitar back in its hook. "But you know how music goes. I'm a much better comedian."

Arson chuckles. Before today, he never even knew the man existed.

When you're the band that everyone talks about, a lot of the chatter is aimed toward assigning you a place, giving you a function. With the Hives, they have been credited with damn near saving rock 'n' roll (along with their current pals-in-the-spotlight, the Strokes and White Stripes), helping breath life into an industry hemorrhaging under the sagging weight of nü-metal and candy pop. It's a dubious title, but one they'll humor for the press.

"We only carry our own flag," says Arson, lying flat on his back on the floor of a quiet hallway after the band's soundcheck. His long, sinewy arms are bent over his head, shielding his eyes from the bright fluorescent lights. "I don't think there would be this much talk about us if the Strokes and White Stripes hadn't been successful before us. Proper music paves the way for more proper music. If we are carrying a torch for rock 'n' roll, then we are to please ourselves."

Later, when Almqvist is confronted with the same question, he replies: "I can't stop someone from saying we're the saviors of rock 'n' roll. And you know, I wouldn't be surprised if we were, frankly." He pauses for a moment and grins. "But that's not my job."

One thing the two brothers agree on is that the band is home-sick and ready to come off the road. They have been on tour now for three straight years, with only three months of rest. It has finally begun to take its toll, and they feel the success of their latest album has afforded them a lengthy respite. They talk of retreating home to Fagersta, where their alleged guru Randy Fitzsimmons is waiting

up the summer in Europe and Japan. Fortunately, one of those dates is a homecoming show in Fagersta. They are weary, but it's a winner's fatigue. America has left the Hives downright giddy, glowing as the rapid-fire of praise shuffles them from one city to the next. They are grateful for the legions of recruits who now call them their new favorite band. Pretty good, they'll say, for the horse no one would bet on.

"I miss those times running around thinking we were the best band in the world, when nobody else knew about it," says Almqvist, in his most earnest tone. "It was our little secret. But now that everybody knows, it's different. But it's worked because we never second-guessed ourselves. We knew exactly what we wanted and we did just that. We never really thought it would catch on. The whole antagonistic Hives approach was based on the people in the audience not liking us. So it's weird now that everybody does. I don't have a problem with it. It's gotten a bit weirder, but I'm not gonna stop doing it."

At the *Late Night* taping that afternoon, with guest Larry Hagman seated on the couch after his interview, O'Brien introduces the new sensations from Sweden. Their faces are radiant, anxious and have shucked all earlier signs of exhaustion. Their white ties even sparkle under the wash of the studio lights. In the middle of the song, which by now has become flawless in its execution, Almqvist jumps off the stage and back on again. He tries standing on the monitors, then bounces off the drum kit. He kicks the air and lands in the splits. Nicholas Arson holds a note long enough for his brother to recognize it as a hoop. Then Howlin' Pelle holds one hand high above his head, like a ringleader waiting for his cue. His eyes dance into the camera. "We've toured your country east to west, north to south," he says. "And we've found one thing and one thing only—America loves the Hives!" **NMM**



Gothenburg, SWEDEN

When John Waters attended the annual Gothenburg Film Festival (www.goteborg.filmfestival.org) early last year, he told the local press that Gothenburg reminded him of Baltimore, a city that's provided him with a lot of material. That similarity most likely comes from the fact that in Gothenburg, too, it's the people who create the atmosphere, rather than the facilities (or the lack of them). The adage that great art is born out of misery may hold some truth—not that Gothenburg can be compared to Bosnia, but boredom seems to often have a positive effect on the locals.

Want to learn how to avoid boredom in Gothenburg? Local psych-rock quintet CITIZEN BIRD will be glad to show you around the place. Just keep your feet off the furniture.

The best Swedish band ever, **Union Carbide Productions**, could never have developed their, er, "unpredictable" style anywhere but in Gothenburg. There was a truthfulness in the way singer Ebbot Lundberg penetrated himself with a Fanta bottle that clearly wasn't staged—it was pure expression. The underdog mentality can sometimes be a tiresome slacker pose, but in the case of UCP, it just felt real. Today, some of the members of UCP play in **the Soundtrack Of Our Lives**, and have a central role in the Swedish music scene, recording other bands' albums in their rehearsal space.

Gothenburg has always been home to the best bands in Sweden: **Whipped Cream, Cortex, Freddie Wadling, Broder Daniel, Svenson, the Knife, Barusta** and **Per Nassil**, to name a few. Each sounds very different, but they have one thing in common: They're beyond saving from a stylistic point of view. If nothing else, Gothenburg breeds a knack for innovation and unique mixes of genre and sound.

The D.I.Y. mentality is strong in Gothenburg; when concerts happen, they quite often take place in someone's living

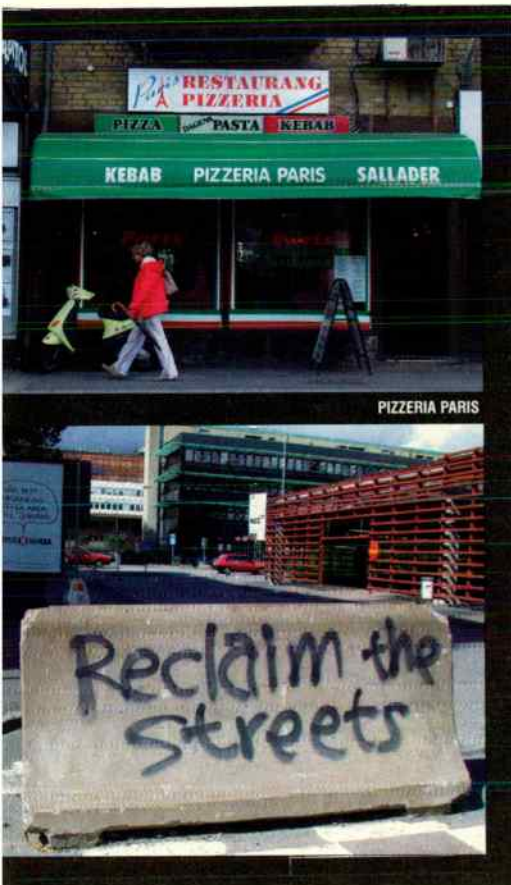


room. On the rare occasions when domestic bands turn up in the city, they're most likely playing at **GUMP** (Jazzhuset Thursdays, Rådhusstræde 13, 1466 København K; Phone: 033-15 20 02) or **Playground** at the **Pustervik Theatre** (Järntorgsgatan 12, 413 01; Phone: 031-13 93 37). On Wednesdays, you can always go to **Sweet Sister** at the **Pharmacy** (Västra Hamngatan 15; Phone: 031-701 49 27)—a club run by two girls who look like they've just leaped out of Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" video. You'll hear '80s retro, new wave and newer indie stuff being played there. **Club Ideal** (at Nefertiti on Thursdays, Hvitfeldtsplatsen 6, 411 20; Phone: 031-711 15 33) operates a small label called **Ideal Records**, which releases improvisational music and noise. The bands you see at the club often come from newer electro, punk and noise scenes. Our friend Joachim runs the place, and also plays in one of Gothenburg's

best bands, **Kid Commando** (who sound like a mix of JSBX, Napalm Death and Mickey Mouse). Once in a while, Kid Commando arranges gigs at their rehearsal space, too—very cool and D.I.Y., but never enough beer to go around.

If you're interested in modern art-music, there's the **GAS Festival** (or Gothenburg Art Sounds festival, www.gas-festival.com) in late Autumn. Last year, Ryoji Ikeda and Carsten Nicolai/To Rococo Rot performed, among many others.

The art and gallery scene in Gothenburg isn't the city's greatest boasting right, but it ain't bad, either. The gallery **Hemma Hos**, once located in the home of the artist Stefan Linderoth, was very influential in the '90s. The artists on exhibition could use whichever room was suitable for their specific project—the kids' room, the kitchen, wherever. Unfortunately, when Linderoth passed on, so did the project. The spaces worth visiting nowadays include the artist-run



PIZZERIA PARIS

LOCAL LOGIC: GOTHENBURG'S BEST

Places to get candy from strangeness: For the sweets-obsessed, Gothenburg has a lot to offer—only you'll generally have to contend with giant beasts to get to it. During the summer you can go to the **Liseberg Amusement Park** (Box 5053, 402 22; Phone: 031-400 100) to hang out with man-sized green rabbits and eat sugar bars. Another good candy spot is **4-GOTT** (Kastellgatan). It has an enormous selection of delicious sweets, and a giant bear offers you toffee from his basket.

Trip in the way-back machine: **The Opium Den** (Stigbergstorget) is the best place to go if you want to hang out with the sailors. It takes you back to the '50s, when quarrels about whether or not the false teeth in your mouth belong to you were common.

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD

Galleri Box (Kastellgatan 10, 411 22; E-mail: galleribox@telia.com), **Galleri 54** (Erik Dahlbergsgatan 18, 413 44; E-mail: galleri54@natverkstan.net) and **Sub Bau** (Kastellgatan 8, 41107; E-mail: subbau@telia.com).

Because Gothenburg is the largest port in Northern Europe, we've been blessed with a tremendous trade and shipping museum, the **City Museum Of Gothenburg** (Norra Hamngatan 12, 411 14; Phone: 031-61 27 70). There you can find the remains of Eric (the slaughter Viking) Torner's great viking ship; it's something you can't afford to miss if you have even the slightest interest in bloodbaths.

The harbour and the working-class mentality have clearly affected the cultural life in Gothenburg, something noticeable in the city's long tradition of revolutionary, Communist movements. Political awareness in the city is growing again, which has, in some cases, resulted in violent protest—during the EU meeting, President George Bush's visit incited riots, ending with demonstrators being shot by police. But good things are emerging from it as well: People are educating themselves and organizing, and the future looks bright.

Essential Gothenburg stopoffs, according to the members of Citizen Bird.

Jon Olmeskog, keyboards
"At the **Road House Café** (Burgrevegatan 27B; Phone: 031-13 01 30), you can hang out with the taxi drivers in Gothenburg. If you're a regular customer, you'll get invited into the kitchen and downstairs. In that cellar, you can play poker and make a fortune."

Anders Gustafsson, drums
"Good pizzas at **Pizzeria Paris** (Skanstorget 2). If you see a red Ferrari parked outside, you'll find Mickey Dee of Motörhead inside; it's his favorite pizza place also."

Jukka Rentamaki, bass
"In Slottskogen you can visit a gigantic caged elk. It's fascinating to see him eat. I saw him eat a whole birch branch once."

Simon Ohlsson, vocals
"At **Wanda's Salonger** (Andra Långgatan 16; Phone: 031-24 00 03) you can relax and watch dancing performances—sometimes great ones."

Citizen Bird's self-titled debut LP is out now on Stinky Records.

David Baerwald <here comes the new folk underground>

ACCLAIMED
SONGWRITER,
RECORDING
ARTIST,
COMPOSER
& PRODUCER

Best known for the 1986 hit "Welcome To The Boomtown" and for founding the Sheryl Crow Tuesday Night Music Club, David Baerwald now takes listeners on a ride with his new studio album. The lyrics on *Here Comes The New Folk Underground* fall somewhere between beautifully poetic and darkly twisted, and are complimented with strong melodies and musicianship.

<davidbaerwald herecomesthenewfolkunderground>

produced by David Kitay, Will Sexton and David Baerwald
www.losthighwayrecords.com

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CONSONANT

Consonant

Fenway



Clint Conley penned Mission Of Burma's most melodic and familiar tunes, like "Academy Fight Song" and "That's When I Reach For My Revolver," but dropped out of sight after the landmark Boston band's 1983 dissolution. Consonant marks his unexpected reemergence, with Conley shouldering songwriting and vocal duties and enlisting Beantown scene vets to round out the quartet, offering plenty to resonate with longtime fans without merely rehashing past glories. *Consonant* is surprisingly Burma-esque, down to its galloping guitars and martial, tom-heavy drums. Burma cohort Roger Miller even pitches in, albeit on keyboards rather than guitar—it's Miller's simple, off-center piano pattern that clinches opener "Blissful." Conley shows little sign of mellowing, even as his voice brings a newfound frailty and elegance to tracks like "John Coltrane's 'My Favorite Things'" (not a cover). He's delegated most lyric writing to poet Holly Anderson, creating a juxtaposition that at times sounds like, um, a rock band reciting a poet's words. Yet the combination more often hits the mark, as on the vengeful "Post-Pathetic." Though no hummable classic like "Revolver" leaps out, Conley's delivered a cohesive batch of pensive, edgy songs building to the cathartic "What A Body Could Do." For those unfortunately stationed outside the itinerary of Mission Of Burma's recent reunion shows, *Consonant* is the next best thing, and in its freshness may be even better. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.consonant.cc

File Under

Back from Burma

R.I.Y.L.

Mission Of Burma, Versus,
later Hüsker Dü

HOT SNAKES

Suicide Invoice

Swami

When Rick Froberg sighs the title of *Suicide Invoice*'s curtain-raising "I Hate The Kids," you can't help but empathize. While Drive Like Jehu, his collaboration with Rocket From The Crypt carry John "Speedo" Reis, toiled in mid-'90s major label obscurity, today's "kids" are molesting Jehu's passive-aggressive epics into commercial screamo. Hot Snakes is the ghost of Jehu, still clanging around, just a little smarter. Reis assembles simple, biting chord progressions for his frontman to play, letting Froberg concentrate on the skewed, throaty come-ons ("I like the way you lurch!") that have always enlivened their mutual efforts. The swarm of bends that inundate "Kids" initially seems a harbinger of fuel-injected hard stuff, but the Snakes are out to charm rather than bite this time. Reis and Froberg have never specialized in hummable choruses, but the sinister singsong of "LAX" ("L.A., L.A... L.A.X.!") sticks, opaque metaphors notwithstanding. Jehu followers will get a charge out of "Paperwork," in which Froberg nods to the common-man-down, underwriter's lab adventures chronicled on Jehu's *Yank Crime*. Still, nothing here is as instantly jarring as the majority of debut Snakes LP *Automatic Midnight*. *Suicide Invoice* is Hot Snakes settling into a groove; hopefully, familiarity and permanence will yield more shocks next time. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI



Link

www.hotsnakes.com

File Under

Garage math rock, sans coils

R.I.Y.L.

Murder City Devils, Sonic Youth,

Radio 4

BRAD MEHLDAU

Largo

Warner Bros.

Imagination and unpredictability are precious traits for a jazz player/composer, and pianist Brad Mehldau has plenty of both. In collaborating with producer/musician Jon Brion, Mehldau was matching his distinctive compositional style with an unorthodox producer known mainly for his work with pop artists. It was as if Mehldau was looking to push his *Largo* sessions into creative warp drive. The result could've been incoherent; instead, Mehldau and Brion tracked one of the most challenging jazz albums of the year. Everything that's cool about the Mehldau musical brain is here: His affinity for broad, cinematic, compositional statements is beautifully expressed on "Franklin Avenue" and "When It Rains"; his piano wanders speculatively through a growling array of electronic voices on "Sabbath," feeding his appetite for complex soundscapes; his undying affinity for improvising on elegant melodic statements come to the forefront with his interpretation of the Lennon/McCartney gem "Dear Prudence." Mehldau fuses Tom Jobim's samba jazz classic "Wave" with Lennon and McCartney's "Mother Nature's Son" and, working vibes instead of piano, makes one fine groove out of two songs. He accomplishes this while riding a pure hip-hop drum track, laid down by Victor Indrizzo and Matt Chamberlain. The trite lament that jazz is dead was never more lame than when faced with the creative vigor of a record like *Largo*. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK



Link

www.wbjazz.com

File Under

Jazz for your head

R.I.Y.L.

Jacky Terrasson, Bill Evans,

Jason Moran

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Songs For The Deaf

Interscope



Link

www.qotsa.com

File Under

Stoned immaculate

R.I.Y.L.

Monster Magnet, Deep Purple,

Queen's *Sheer Heart Attack*,

Masters Of Reality

Listening to *Songs For The Deaf*, one gets the idea that if Queens Of The Stone Age ended up at a party with the stoners they supposedly play to, they'd spend a lot more time laughing behind their backs than partying with them. Each QOTSA release takes a few more steps away from stoner rock, a genre they virtually created in Kyuss (and a signifier they dislike, preferring "robot rock" instead). *Songs For The Deaf* continues the trend, laying more catchy melodies and harmonies on top of the fuzz, and proves QOTSA one of the smartest bands in hard rock in the process. The opening blast of "Millionaire" is pretty standard stoner fare, all single-note riffing and Josh Homme screaming his head off, but watch what happens: By the next track, "No One Knows," everything has changed. Fuzz power gives way to tight, staccato chords, galloping-horse drums (courtesy of superfan Dave Grohl) morph into one of the most crisp, snappy beats you've ever heard, and Homme's screech turns into a smooth croon. This is where *Deaf's* real power lies: QOTSA knows how to give you both sides of the coin. Songs like "First It Giveth_#1" and "Gonna Leave You" even combine the two, building on the fuzz foundation that stoner fans crave, but weaving in the disaffected pop melodies they started developing on 2000's *Rated R*. Witness a brand new animal: Stoner rock's first totally uncompromised, pop-smart crossover band. >>>TOM MALLON

REVIEWS

BOBBY BARE, JR.
THE BEVIS FROND
BIS
THE BLOOD BROTHERS
AFEL BOCOUM, DAMON ALBARN,
TOUMANI DIABATÉ AND FRIENDS
BRIGHT EYES
BEAT HAPPENING
CALVIN JOHNSON
BUTTHOLE SURFERS
CONJURE ONE
D'GARY
JOHN DOE
FRANK BLACK & THE CATHOLICS
DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
MARIANNE FAITHFULL
FILTER
NIK FREITAS
FUTURE BIBLE HEROES
FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON
PETER GABRIEL
MARY GAUTHIER
THE GET SET
JAMES
KOESTER
LETTUCE
JASON LOEWENSTEIN
MAYFLIES USA
ELENI MANDELL
MCLUSKY
MUDHONEY
THE MUSHROOM RIVER BAND
NO. 2
ORBITAL
ORISHAS
PERE UBU
THE PROM
REINDEER SECTION
SIX BY SEVEN
SKELETON KEY
TEGAN AND SARA
TENDER TRAP
VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Total Lee: A Tribute To Lee Hazlewood
TWINEMEN
VIDA BLUE
KELLY WILLIS



bobby bare jr.'s
YOUNG
CRIMINALS'
STARVATION
LEAGUE

BOBBY BARE JR. Young Criminals' Starvation League

Bloodshot

When "I'll Be Around" opens Bobby Bare Jr.'s *Young Criminals' Starvation League* with a gently rolling guitar strum and a heartbroken voice, Bare Jr. fans may expect it to lead to a crash of twanging, supercharged Southern rock. Instead, the song breaks into an irresistible chorus of '60s-styled ba-ba-bas and Herb Alpert-like horns. *YCSL* is full of such surprises. Bare's taken a break from his Bare Jr. bandmates, hooked up with a bunch of guys from Lambchop and come up with a subtly textured collection of bittersweet pop songs. Wry

character sketches match lyrical twists with musical turns: "Flat Chested Girl From Maynardville," about an alienated girl who "trades all her CDs for weed and ecstasy," waltzes slowly until its psychedelic, circus-organ coda; "The Monk At The Disco," who "says a prayer" for the girl "who forgot to put on her underwear," sneaks an electro-funk break in the middle of its chiming pop. Throughout, Bare's voice cracks endearingly: It's unpolished but glows and winks with emotion. On "Dig Down," the funny ode to rock originators from Chuck Berry to Black Francis, Bare laments, "If rock 'n' roll dies, it's not my fault/ I do the best with the leftovers that I got." He's selling himself short: *Young Criminals' Starvation League* is full of vibrant, fresh pop 'n' roll. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.barejr.net

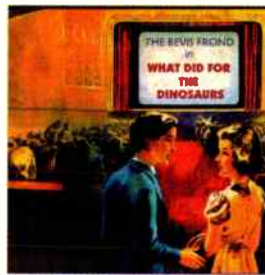
File Under

More pop than twang

R.I.Y.L.

Lambchop, Paul Westerberg,

Robbie Fulks



THE BEVIS FROND

What Did For The Dinosaurs Rubric

Boy-band overkill and the deluge of cookie-cutter, breast-beating hard rock bands have finally made at least one member of the alternative-rock fraternity snap. Nick Saloman (a.k.a. the Bevis Frond), according to the album's title track, is "through with avuncular diplomacy" and coming right out and letting the new generation have its idols. "This stuff is rubbish, I can't stand it and that's that," he sing-speaks. He admits on the eight-plus-minute track that he's turned into his dad, a dinosaur playing the music of his youth. Well, almost, but not quite. Saloman's been releasing his

Link

www.rockmuse.com/bfrond.html

File Under

Psychedelic dinosaur rock

R.I.Y.L.

Blue Cheer, Eric Matthews,

the Flaming Lips, Donovan

psychedelic '60s-styled fuzz-pop for over 15 years now, and through sheer persistence and a shockingly high level of consistent quality, stands as a favorite of *Ptolemaic Terrascope* fanzine (of which he's publisher) and the Terrastock psychedelic music festival. *Dinosaurs* is his first digitally recorded album, and it sounds slightly cleaner than his analog catalog, but barely. The layers of fuzzed guitars (sometimes tweaked to sound like electric sitars) still buzz through, and whether it's the jangly Byrds-like shuffle of "Silver Dart," the shimmering tremolo-ed guitar vortex of "Hold Me Up" or the acoustic balladry of "Our Number" and "Lost Soul's Day," all reflect the easy, accessible melodicism of '60s folk rock. His influences may make him old, but the songwriting is timeless. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



BIS

Plastique Nouveau spinART

Is it electro or just retro? That's a question prompted by this mini-LP of remixes/reissues by Bis. When the teenaged Scottish trio—Steven, Manda and John—emerged in the mid-'90s, they were kiddie-core avatars, shouting pop-punksters with a hint of '80s new-wave nostalgia. As Bis has aged, the vocals have gone from chants to robo-funk and the guitars have disappeared, absorbed by the old-school synth-pop the band adores. *Plastique Nouveau* represents the final step in Bis's evolution—a totally synthed-out summary of their

recent material (a great deal taken from last year's *Return To Central*) that touches on the current electro movement led by Felix Da Housecat but more often sounds like an ode to the era when Euroweenies roamed the earth. The opening remixes of "Protection" and "Robotic" are authentic, up-to-date club-dub with overtones of early New Order. But Bis may actually be stronger as a full-blown nostalgia act: "Don't Let The Rain Come Down" and "Make It Through," resurrected from a 2001 EP, are the great follow-up hits Information Society never released, dance-pop dashboard-thumpers that could be slipped into an '80s theme night without notice. If New Order and Depeche Mode were smart, they'd team up for a package tour now, with Bis opening. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY

Link

www.bisnation.com

File Under

Old-school new wave

R.I.Y.L.

Felix Da Housecat, Depeche Mode, New Order, Daft Punk



THE BLOOD BROTHERS

March On Electric Children Three One

The Blood Brothers obviously huffed quite a few aerosol cans behind the local supermarket when they were kids, because only slightly brain-damaged individuals could make this kind of way-out-in-left-field music. *March On Electric Children* was heavily educated at the Mike Patton school of rock, resulting in a delusional, delightfully dysfunctional hybrid of screechy punk rock and mathematical post-hardcore that requires careful, monitored doses. Most of the tracks have a demented-clown-hiding-under-your-bed vibe, thanks to Cody Votolato's speed-metal guitar

Link

www.thebloodbrothers.com

File Under

Patton-led cracked rock

R.I.Y.L.

Fantomas, the Locust, Dillinger Escape Plan, Refused

parts and carnival-esque samples. Had Refused never imploded, but instead went on to make even more ground-shattering psycho-punk, this is the type of musical course they might have continued on. The Brothers' output will doubtlessly turn off casual music appreciators, since the band gives a nice loud "fuck you" to form and structure. It's so dizzying, you can't possibly emerge without a headache. But if you like your rock 'n' roll as easy to follow as astrophysics, then *March On Electric Children* will be the crown jewel in your music collection, sandwiched between the latest Fantomas and Dillinger Escape Plan records. But a necessary warning to weak-hearted folks: Proceed with caution. >>>AMY SCIARRETTO



AFEL BOCOUM, DAMON ALBARN, TOUMANI DIABATÉ AND FRIENDS

Mali Music Honest Jon's-Astralwerks

Welcome to Damon Albarn's sketchbook. Invited to the West African country of Mali by Oxfam, the Blur/Gorillaz frontman took along a DAT recorder and a melodica, playing with some top local talent like Toumani Diabaté (a master of the harp-lute know as the kora) and singer Kassemady Diabaté. Then he brought the tapes home, and with the help of his Gorillaz pals created an impressionistic scrapbook of his visit. Some tracks, like the self explanatory "4am At Toumani's" are raw, just instruments and voice. Others, such as the moody "Spoons" (whose theme, frighteningly reminiscent of a Sting song, recurs through the album) were created later in London, while still more bring the two elements together to a greater or lesser degree—"Bamako City" drops a simple rhythm behind the kora, while "Makelekele" builds a completely new structure over a Malian foundation, transforming the music while keeping its heart intact. The result is something that's neither world music nor electronica, but more personal and quirky. Albarn doesn't impose his personality on the record, but instead lets others shine through—whether it's the stunning vocals of Bocoum (who recorded his contribution later), the ngoni playing of Ko Kan Ko Sata Doumbia, or the spontaneous rap of Les Ecrocs—then brings in some friends to help color and frame here and there. Odd, but beautifully real. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

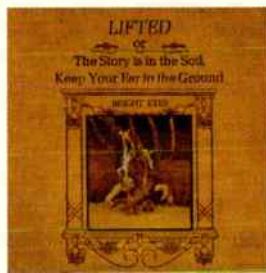
oxfam.org.uk/involved/events/damongig.html

File Under

Albarn went to Mali, and all we got was this great CD

R.I.Y.L.

Toumani Diabaté, Gorillaz, Afel Bocoum



BRIGHT EYES

Lifted Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear To The Ground Saddle Creek

"Do you like to hurt? I do, I do," Conor Oberst confesses on "Lover I Don't Have To Love," the fifth song on Bright Eyes' latest full-length—as if we didn't know it already. The Nebraska-based songwriter's oeuvre is overflowing with enough poignantly articulated mental anguish to keep sensitive girls with mothering complexes busy for the next decade. With *Lifted*, however, things might be looking up. Just as the album reveals the group's sound expanding at times into mighty orchestral pop, it also finds Oberst warming to the possibility of happiness. The piano-driven toe-tap-

Link

www.saddle-creek.com

File Under

Indie king of pain gets happy... almost.

R.I.Y.L.

Dashboard Confessional, Elliott Smith, Dnlinedrawing

per "Bowl Of Oranges" is probably the most hopeful song he has ever written, while both "False Advertising" and "Laura Laurent" end with raucous cheers. Many tracks begin as acoustic laments, only to explode into upbeat sing-alongs by the chorus. But hardcore fans needn't worry that their hero has gone soft, as *Lifted* includes plenty to commiserate with, particularly the gloomy opener "The Big Picture" and "Waste Of Paint," a solo tour de force of almost unbearable bitterness. Oberst is a stellar songwriter who has proved his ability to make listeners feel his pain. Perhaps it's time for him to let us feel his joy. >>>AMY PHILLIPS



BEAT HAPPENING

Crashing Through **K**

CALVIN JOHNSON

What Was Me **K**

Call it "cuddle-core," "love rock," or "lo-fi": The bulk of the self-consciously naïve music made since the '80s under the direct influence of Washington's Beat Happening was just plain awful. But the same applies to any genre-defining artist, from Dylan to Minor Threat to Tortoise. Collecting five albums allowed to slip from print by Sub Pop, as well as singles and performance videos, and accompanied by a lavishly illustrated 90-page booklet (written by fellow Olympian Lois Maffeo), *Crashing Through* is a welcome chance to assess the band for what they did rather than the mini-revolution they sparked.

Untroubled by technique or tuning and bassless to the end, Beat Happening saw and raised the punk-rock stakes, dispensing with not only instrumental virtuosity but with the conventionalized aggression of louder-faster-harder. But Calvin Johnson's songs were never as artless as they seemed: Even the early "Our Secret" complicates its rudimentary thump with oddly-placed maracas and tambourine, and his spook-house baritone makes the aggressively suburban lyrics ("We had dinner with her family") as threatening as anything Swans ever sang. Johnson's been such a visible figure in the U.S. underground that his bandmates are often forgotten: Bret Lunsford's Cramps-inspired guitar carries career highlights like "Bad Seeds" and "Redhead Walking" while Heather Lewis's open-heartedness ("I Let Him Get To Me") is a needed foil for Johnson's pre-adolescent come-ons and teen-exploitation-movie politics. At seven discs, *Crashing Through* might test anyone's tolerance for inspired amateurism. Fortunately, their final two albums (*Dreamy* and *You Turn Me On*) found the trio playing and writing with increased confidence just in time to disband.

Since then, Johnson has grown his K label into a thriving business, and fronted both the Halo Benders and the Studio One-influenced Dub Narcotic Sound System. *What Was Me* is his first stab at a singer-songwriter solo album. And we're talking solo—he sings, snaps and hums through nearly half its length a capella. (Current labelmates Mirah and the Gossip's Beth Ditto join in on a track apiece; the former harmonizes charmingly, but the latter's faux-gospel stylings are the disc's worst moment.) His voice hasn't changed much, but the way he uses it has: Now, he's less a child imitating an adult than Clint Eastwood crooning his way through *Paint Your Wagon*. You could almost call the material "mature, but coyness still peeks out ("I don't want to have to ask for a Valentine/ But please won't you give me one?"), and one song is based around a nonsensical palindrome ("A girl, a plan, a canalPalriga!"). A few tracks are overlong, given their minimal musical material, but that matches Johnson's subtly confrontational approach. An indie-era seven-inch carried the title "Calvin Johnson Has Ruined Rock For An Entire Generation." On *What Was Me*, he's going for two. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

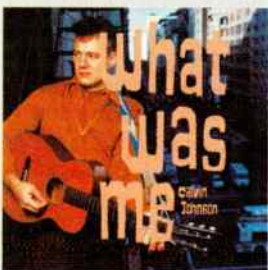
www.kpunk.com

File Under

Revolution come and gone

R.I.Y.L.

The Cannanes, Marine Girls, Howlin' Wolf



Link

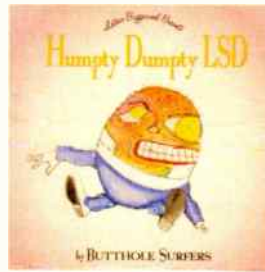
www.kpunk.com

File Under

One foot in the grave

R.I.Y.L.

Jonathan Richman, Johnny Cash, the Mountain Goats



Link

www.buttholesurfers.com

File Under

The mighty flag of Texas

R.I.Y.L.

Chrome, Captain Beefheart, Honky

stables. Given the Surfers' prolific home-recording history (some of their finest work was committed to 4- and 8-track machines), there should be a lot to choose from. In addition to unreleased ersatz studio material, this disc makes accessible a number of rare tracks, including the rocked-up cover of Roky Erickson's "Earthquake" (from the 1990 Erickson tribute *Where The Pyramid Meets The Eye*), the punked-up "I Hate My Job" (*Cottage Cheese From The Lips Of Death*) and the zoned out original, "Gandhi," culled from a radio-only vinyl EP issued during the *Independent Worm Saloon* campaign. *Humpty Dumpty LSD* is a bit cobbled together, and probably should have proceeded more chronologically, but it shines necessary light into some remarkably screwy, important corners. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY



Link

www.conjureone.com

File Under

Midnight expressive

R.I.Y.L.

Delerium, Bel Canto, This Mortal Coil, Afro-Celt Sound System

CONJURE ONE

Conjure One **Netwerk**

Attempting to build on his past success as a member of industrial innovators Front Line Assembly, and more recently the tribal-pop of Delerium, Rhys Fulber is striking out on his own under the nom-de-dance, Conjure One. But despite being three years in the making, Fulber doesn't really expand or improve on Delerium's formula of ambient synths and world-flavored beats. Perhaps the only defining factor in Fulber's sound is the almost exclusive venture into Middle Eastern belly dance grooves, having nicked samples from various CDs attained in specialty shops throughout the region. The production remains consistent throughout the album despite several behind-the-scenes maestros such as songwriter Billy Steinberg (co-writer of such '80s hits as Madonna's "Like A Virgin" and the Bangles' "Eternal Flame") and Tom Holkenborg of Junkie XL. Perhaps in an attempt to recreate the winning formula he experienced with Sarah McLachlan on Delerium's "Silence," Fulber has also recruited an impressive menagerie of female vocal talent, including Sinéad O'Connor, who lends her breathy burr to the sultry "Tears From The Moon," and seductress Poe on the uplifting "Center Of The Sun." It's the inclusion of such haunting voices that rescue this release from becoming merely another faceless world-music-plus-beats affair. >>>RYAN RAYHILL



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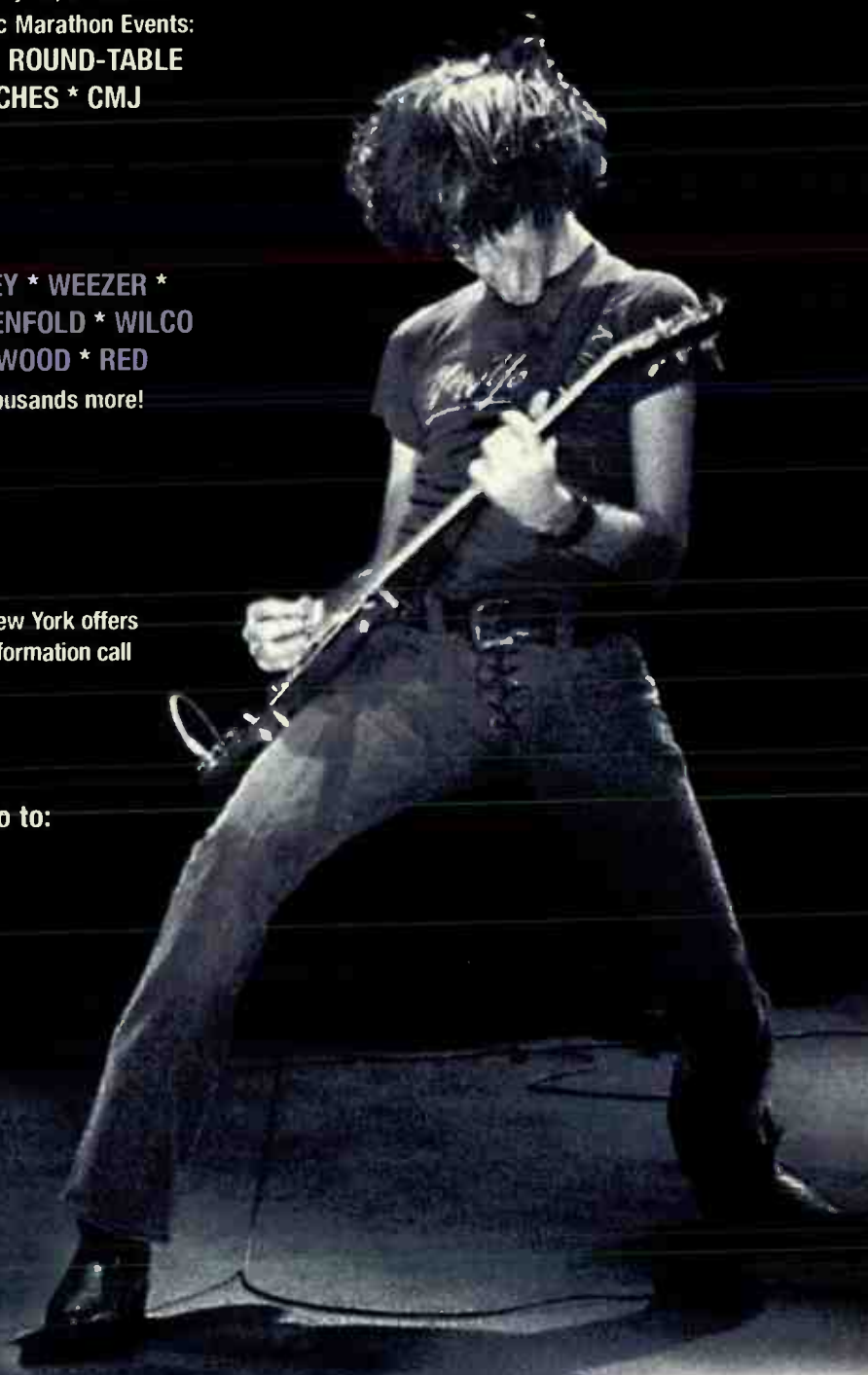
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FRANK BLACK AND THE CATHOLICS

Black Letter Days

spinART

Devil's Workshop

spinART



Though it may ring blasphemously with a very wide and mule-stubborn contingent of indie rockers, there's something about Frank Black's solo work that resonates with more immediacy than his tenure with the Pixies, and the truth is right there on tape. While that oft-cited band plotted a curious, artsy art path through every guitar, drum and bass style around (and it was great stuff, assuredly), Frank Black—with or without his Catholics—has treaded more directly, with greater surefootedness than he did years ago. Part of that is musical maturity, and the other part is Black's recording methods. Having eschewed big budget and high gloss, he and his Catholics cut tracks live in a two-track studio, no overdubs, no editing, period—a

methodology long since abandoned by 99 percent of musicians and abhorred by labels. But considering the crystalline quality of these albums, Black's technique is spot-on. Given his prolific output (word has it Frank Black and Weezer's Rivers Cuomo have a standing gentlemen's bet to see who can cough up the most albums in the shortest time period; may the best man take the trophy, then take a break), it's not surprising to see the simultaneous release of two new ones this summer, even if the discs are not thematically related.

The first of the two, *Devil's Workshop*, kicks things off with "Velvety," an acoustic-driven rave-up reminiscent of early '70s Stones that sets a bouncy tone for the rest of the album. Like his best work—like all of his work, for that matter—the songs here are an eclectic hodgepodge of grassroots rock, lighthearted punk, surf, rockabilly, clickety-clack country and lo-fi indie. When it's done right, Frank Black & The Catholics carve exceptional chunks of Americana. At its worst, it's simply middle of the road; acoustic rock for 30-something ears long done with serious amplification.

Bookended with different takes on Tom Waits's "Black Rider"—the first a loose shuffle, and the final pipelined with surf guitar—*Black Letter Days* is a moodier set than *Devil's Workshop*, double in length, less propulsive and arguably not as poppy. "Cold Heart Of Stone," with its dark quietude, bears an eerie similarity to the early Stones single "Heart Of Stone" (that's two Stones references already). It's probably the better of the two.

The overall difference between *Devil's Workshop* and *Black Letter Days* isn't that pronounced—in other words, these aren't companion pieces of contrasting moods or themes. But with over 100 minutes of new music in tow, better to load them into two separate cars than burden the public with a ponderous double-album. For that, thank you, Frank Black. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

Link

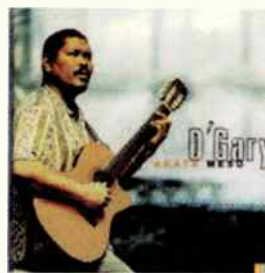
www.spinartrecords.com

File Under

Still a cheerful mischievous sprite

R.I.Y.L.

Pixies, John Doe, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones



D'GARY

Akata Meso Indigo

When D'Gary started releasing records in the early 1990s, he was hailed as a natural guitar genius, an untrained player from a village in southern Madagascar armed with blistering finger-style riffs, a battery of unique tunings and a blend of melodious warmth and dizzying rhythmic complexity. He's recorded in solo, small ensemble and band settings, but he's settled here on a spare trio lineup. That's fine, because D'Gary's playing has only grown with the years, so to hear it with just light percussion and vocal backing works beautifully. The opening notes of "Very

Link

N/A

File Under

Polyrhythmic guitar genius

R.I.Y.L.

Michael Hedges, Djelimady Tounkara, Tarika

Ny Bado" say it all—feathery, precise picking on a steel string acoustic, rolling rhythms broken by fitful, stop-and-dash guitar flourishes and softly breathy singing. D'Gary has also grown as a singer, knowing when to coo and when to snarl, but he's wisely left much of the singing to his two golden-voiced accompanists. When they harmonize on "Zaza Somondrara" or "Resaka Marandray," the sound is apt to split your heart open like a coconut. D'Gary extends his guitar range here on tracks featuring a roaring electric tone and a guest tabla player. Best of all is "Bobo-Drano," in which the guitarist's racing finger-picking style lifts off to discover a vivid, exuberant, electrifying new voice. >>>BANNING EYRE



JOHN DOE

Dim Stars, Bright Sky iMusic

John Doe's understandably had a hard time living up to the legacy of X, the legendary L.A. punk band he once fronted with Exene Cervenka. Nevertheless, he's made several earnest efforts to establish an identity of his own, starting back in 1990 with the now out-of-print *Meet John Doe*, a disc that more or less picked up where X had left off in terms of mature, perhaps overproduced, country-inflected rock. When that didn't pan out—his similarly styled 1995 Rhino release *Kissingsohard* is also out of print—he finally sounded a little desperate again on the *For The Rest Of Us*

Link

www.thejohndoething.com

File Under

Mature roots pop

R.I.Y.L.

X, Dave Alvin, John Hiatt

EP (Kill Rock Stars, 1998), a rough rockin' and refreshingly looser collection of straight-shooting tunes that used the word "fuck" a lot, and sounded awful good doing it. Yet, by 2000's *Freedom Is...* (spinART) he was stuck back in a middle-of-the-road rut with songs that lacked any of the sparks that had flown on the KRS EP. On *Dim Stars, Bright Sky* he continues to court the already marginal audience for Elliott Smith sensitivity and Freedy Johnston songcraft, with a bit more piano and vocal cameos by Juliana Hatfield, Jane Wiedlin, Aimee Mann and Jakob Dylan that do little to spice up the otherwise bland mix of refined roots and moody blues. >>>MATT ASHARE



DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Southern Rock Opera *Lost Highway*

Although ostensibly an "opera" about the rise (Act One) of the wonderfully named fictional band Betamax Guillotine, and the fall (Act Two) of the real Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Drive-by Truckers' *Southern Rock Opera* is less about narrative continuity than about exploring the "duality of the Southern thing," as they sing on "The Southern Thing." Steeped in deaths and drinking, in race and rebellion, in clear-eyed honesty and protective myth-making, and most of all, in unabashed, irony-free triple-guitar-threat '70s arena rock, *SRO* succeeds both as rousing

Link

www.drivebytruckers.com

File Under

Grand new rock opry

R.I.Y.L.

Lynyrd Skynyrd, Neil Young,
William Faulkner

Skynyrd-style Southern rock and as thought-provoking storytelling. Beginning with a car crash—an archetypal anecdote of a joy-riding high schooler with "Free Bird" on the stereo—and ending with the Skynyrd plane crash, the record roams freely through the Southern landscape. "Dead, Drunk, And Naked" recounts the life of a juvenile glue-sniffer. "The Three Great Alabama Icons"—Skynyrd's Ronnie Van Zandt, football coach Bear Bryant and Governor George Wallace—explores the tensions and complexity of hero worship. "Ronnie And Neil" brings Neil Young into the picture and has raspy-voiced leader Patterson Hood acknowledging that "us Southern men need both of them around." The Skynyrd story does get a little forced at the end of this double-disc set, but that's a quibble when *Southern Rock Opera* is so full of ideas, tales and capital-R Rock. >>>STEVE KLINGE



MARIANNE FAITHFULL

Kissin' Time *Virgin*

She's done it again. Marianne Faithfull deleted her origins in innocent folk-pop with the profane brilliance of 1979's *Broken English*, and since then, she's released a series of dark, nicotine-stained albums with only a few missteps (her collaboration with Angelo Badalamenti sounded good on paper, but...). Now in her mid-50s, Faithfull has found new inspiration in collaborating with some blokes a generation or two younger. *Kissin' Time* enlists the Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan, Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, Pulp, Blur and Beck for a set of collaborations held

Link

www.vmg.co.uk

File Under

A randy new woman

R.I.Y.L.

Beck, Pulp, Serge Gainsbourg

together by the force of Faithfull's unmistakable voice—ravaged and weary but commanding and sexy—and by an emphasis on keyboards and sex. The songs with Beck triangulate his talents: "Sex With Strangers" is *Midnite Vultures*-style electro-funk (and very funny, indeed); "Like Being Born" is rooted in the '60s pop of Faithfull's past; "Nobody's Fault" retains its bluesy character from *Mutations*, but Faithfull makes it sound like she's lived it. Her talent for lending anything she sings an autobiographical edge makes "Sliding Through Life On Charm"—the rousing, "Common People"-style narrative with Pulp—a bit disconcerting when she sings "Now everybody wants to kiss my snatch," but that's just part of Faithfull's persona. Rumor has it that Faithfull's contemplating a gyno-centric sequel featuring Polly Harvey. Can't wait. >>>STEVE KLINGE

beth orton daybreaker



Beth Orton returns with a new collection of inspiring songs to awaken the soul. Effortlessly crossing musical boundaries, richly evocative and lyrically profound, *Daybreaker* is Beth's most diverse and accomplished record.

Features collaborations with **The Chemical Brothers, Ben Watt, William Orbit and Johnny Marr**, all paired with Beth's spine tingling vocals and songwriting.

Includes the first single "**Concrete Sky**," "**Anywhere**" and "**Thinking About Tomorrow**."

"In an age of Twinkies with fake tits gyrating in shrink-wrapped half-tops, it's encouraging to know that someone like Beth Orton will still be going strong long after they've exceeded their expiration dates."

- **Bust**

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FILTER

The Amalgamut Reprise

After veering away from the industrial scene and discovering his Top 40 sensibilities on 1999's *Title Of Record*, Filter mainman Robert Patrick has decided not to stray too far from that pop-beaten path on the band's aptly titled third record, *The Amalgamut*. While attempting to, as its name implies, mix several styles, *The Amalgamut* still manages to crank out the angsty, chugga-chugga guitars that won Filter fans pre-*Title*. But while tracks like "You Walk Away" (in which Patrick does his best Weiland impression) are tolerable enough, others

sometimes fall flat; see "So I Quit," which starts off with a promising Motorhead-inspired riff but morphs into an over-the-top Linkin Park number as Patrick screams, "You're going to fucking die you piece of shit!" Their attempts to be "hard" also become somewhat moot when they are sandwiched between the melodic VH1 balladry of "Where Do We Go From Here" and "The Only Way Is the Wrong Way." Lyrically Patrick mixes everything from post-9/11 commentary ("The Missing") to almost whiny tales of frustration and alienation ("God Damn Me"), and ending the disc with eight minutes of indecipherable whispers doesn't help to further Filter's attempts at staying edgy. Not particularly gripping at any point, despite Patrick's best efforts, *The Amalgamut* lacks the focus to be considered a classic. A decent shot, man, but a little off-target. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

Link

www.officialfilter.com

File Under

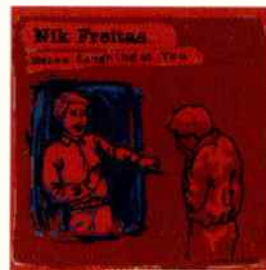
Industrial waste

R.I.Y.L.

Stabbing Westward, Stone

Temple Pilots, Linkin Park,

Gravity Kills



NIK FREITAS

Here's Laughing At You Future Farmer

Erstwhile staff photographer for skate mag *Thrasher*, Nik Freitas's debut album doesn't sound like the work of your average ramp rat. Freitas traffics in dreamy, off-kilter pop songs, wearing his veneration of *Rubber Soul*-era Beatles on his sleeve. The songs on *Here's Laughing At You* are almost aggressively pretty—and at their best, as on "Pull My Leg," aggressive and pretty all at once. That track pulls off some nifty shifts in time signature as it moves between one keyboard hook to another; likewise, "Normal" chugs along like a sweeter version of Elliott

Link

www.futurefarmer.com

File Under

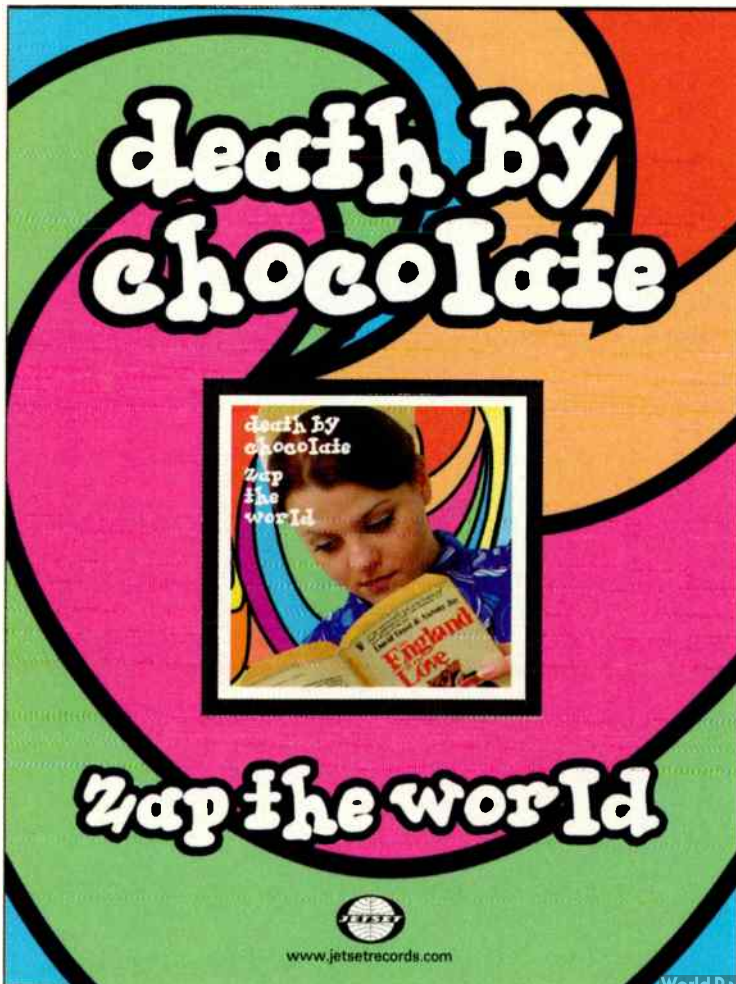
Aggressive prettiness

R.I.Y.L.

Built To Spill, Elliott Smith,

John Vanderslice

Smith before breaking into an organ splash that Freitas's Northern Cali confreres in Granddaddy would have expanded into a sound as big as the universe. (What drugs are they doing in the San Joaquin valley? Why don't we have them everywhere?) These songs speak to Freitas's promise as a songwriter, as does his melodic sense, which is obvious everywhere but especially preponderant on the hallucinogenic "Pictures Of The Sun" and excellent moper "Same Old Song." But *Here's Laughing At You* suffers from a lack of dynamism—there's not enough dimension in the bigger numbers to play counterpoint to truly lo-fi stuff. This may be the fault of the small-scale production, as much as anything; some tracks still sound like demos. Here's hoping Freitas has an opportunity to shoot his good ideas in Cinemascope next time around. >>>MAYA SINGER



FUTURE BIBLE HEROES

Eternal Youth Instinct

"Stephin Merritt's so prolific that..." you can almost sense a vaudevillian punchline coming next, replete with a ba-dum-bump from the drummer—it's just such a familiar trope. Not only does his pen support four projects, but his last release, *69 Love Songs* by his longest-running outfit the Magnetic Fields, was a three-CD collection of no less than 69 songs. With that amusing feat out of the way, Merritt returns here to the relative comfort of Future Bible Heroes, the most collaborative of his commitments. A trio that features production/programming by Christopher Ewan and vocals by longtime

Link

www.houseoftomorrow.com/fbh.html

fbh.html

File Under

Orchestral maneuvers on a lark

R.I.Y.L.

The Magnetic Fields, the 6ths,

Gothic Archies

Magnetic Fielder Claudia Gonson, FBH bask in the youthful innocence of synth-pop's salad days, when half the fun was in coaxing the latest burlles and bleeps out of Casio's newest gizmo. Indeed, there are a few too many playful passages of silly little analog sounds on *Eternal Youth*. But the disc doesn't skimp on some of Merritt's finest songwriting, where the mix of maudlin moods, witty wordplay and memorable melodies is just right, as in "Doris Daytheearthstoodstill," which even has sci-fi edge to complement its retro-futuristic surroundings. The equally wry "I'm A Vampire" seems like it might have been meant for a Gothic Archies (another Merritt project) CD. Maybe Merritt's gotten so prolific that he's forgotten which band this is. . . ba-dum-bump. >>>MATT ASHARE



THE FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON

The Isness *Hypnotic*

What's problematic about portending the future of music, is that the past keeps coming right back 'round to thwart the progress. After all, futurists like Gary Numan and OMD were replaced by alt-rock/grunge, which was really just '70s classic rock as informed by punk. Later on, astonishing electronic architects like Underworld and Orbital gave way to nouveau house music, which was just disco made by white British guys. Most frustrated must have been the highly prescient Future Sound Of London, whose experimental ambient was likely just too genius for their

own bloody good. Thus, returning after a six-year absence with *Isness*, they've basically ditched the futurism and made a brilliant '70s prog-rock album...only with expensive new gadgetry. Citing inspirations as divergent as Pink Floyd, Ananda Shankar, John Barry and Mercury Rev, *Isness*, other than tracks like the 007-worthy groover "Osho" and the cinematic "Elysian Fields," deftly recalls the days of pre-punk English head music. The rest of "Yes My Brother" could be Syd Barrett with a sitar; "High Tide On The Sea Of Flesh" is the new "Space Oddity"; and "The Mello Hippo Disco Show" could be (very) early Genesis. But it all works in a magical, bonkers sort of way that will have you imagining yourself sitting on a rock in the Welsh countryside, pondering castles and surreal forest creatures. Lewis Carroll, meet the techno generation. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

www.futuresoundoflondon.com

File Under

Progressive folklore

R.I.Y.L.

Pink Floyd, Orbital,

Terrance McKenna



PETER GABRIEL

Long Walk Home: Music From The Rabbit-Proof Fence *Heal World*

First of all, this isn't the long-delayed new Peter Gabriel album; it's the soundtrack to an Australian film. The closest you get to actually hearing the man's voice is a few wails on a couple of tracks. As a soundtrack, it's mood music, whether that's the sad descending motif of "Running To The Rain" and "Gracie's Capture," or the ascending swell to victory in "Ngankarrparni" and "Cloudless," where the Blind Boys Of Alabama add their sublime harmonies (while Gabriel wails lightly). The didgeridoo, clapping sticks and

rhythms provide the Aboriginal feel that underpins the music, while Gabriel and some of his usual suspects (David Rhodes, Richard Evans) add the textures on top. It's not *Birdy*, his 1985 venture into movie work, and certainly not *Passion*, Gabriel's groundbreaking 1989 world music soundtrack (although Shankar's violin and samples of the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan occasionally hint at the latter). Where it really succeeds is in the lush tide of sound Gabriel constructs to carry the listener along—like the movie itself, the music is a journey, sometimes fast, sometimes achingly slow, but always moving, the melodies shifting like landscape and emotions. The trick, perhaps, is not to come to this expecting a Peter Gabriel album. Take it on its own terms, as music to accompany a film, and it works—beautifully. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.petergabriel.com

File Under

Not exactly Peter Gabriel

R.I.Y.L.

The Future Sound Of London,
Trance Mission, Dhol Foundation

Cousteau

"Reminiscent of David Bowie, Bryan Ferry and Nick Cave at their most unguardedly romantic."— *New York Times*



INMUSIC.COM

Sirena is the new album from England's *Cousteau*, featuring the single 'Talking to Myself'.

"This British band's second album is a glorious wallow in gloom eclipses such pensive pretenders as Coldplay and Starsailor." — *USA Today*

Includes a special, limited edition Bonus DVD featuring the videos for 'Talking to Myself' and 'Last Good Day of the Year' plus previously unreleased audio tracks and more.



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MARY GAUTHIER

Fifth & Fire *Signature Sounds*

Mary Gauthier spins bleak stories from America's underbelly with piercing honesty, blessed with the kind of authorial voice that buoys the early works of Bob Dylan or Tom Waits. She certainly comes by it honestly: A teenage runaway from Thibodeaux, La., Gauthier got high, got jailed and got a bright idea to open a Southern restaurant in Boston; she then got the attention of folk fans and critics, who knew they were hearing something real on 1997's *Dixie Kitchen* and the follow-up, *Drag Queens In Limousines*. Her drawl curls like a vine around her

words, the accent accentuated by the solid and spare work of producer Gurf Morlix (Lucinda Williams, Robert Earl Keen) and a backing band anchored by drummer Rick Richards, famed mandolin player Peter Rowan and organist Ian McLagan, a longtime studio god and veteran of the Faces. Pretty much every tune has a few brilliant lines or crystalline images, and Gauthier's powerful singing—her voice cracks more out of weariness than frailty—is the perfect vehicle for them. "After You're Gone" is as fine a country weeper as you'll find, McLagan's echo of a carnival atmosphere offers a memorable ride on "Merry Go Round," and "Sugar Cane" is a rallying cry about work conditions down South that would make Utah Phillips and the folkies of another era proud. >>>BILL KISLIUK

Link

www.marygauthier.com

File Under

Hard times aren't a-changin'
R.I.Y.L.

Lucinda Williams, John Prine,
Denis Johnson's *Angels*



THE GET SET

Down Marriott Lane! *Crank!*

Rob Goraieb is something of a pop-tease. The Get Set songwriter claims inspiration (like many a pop-rock outfit) from '60s rock, and *Down Marriott Lane!* does contain its share of yeah-yeah choruses, ooh-woo harmonies and wah-wah guitars. But he too often neglects the true hallmark of Beatlesque pop-rock: the Big Chorus. Most of *Marriott's* songs are under three minutes long and showcase some decent hooks, yet they seem to stop just short of crescendo. Goraieb's lyrics are earnest attempts at universality, but that time-tested pop formula

really only works when paired with an indulgently catchy melody. He nails the "Love, love me do" part, and sometimes even makes it to "I'll always be true," but rarely does he go in for the kill: the "plee-eee-ase, love me do" that drives everything home. Goraieb finally goes for the Big Chorus with Oasis-like grandiosity on "Thin" ("Don't you know they'll never sell your soul?/ And don't you feel that everything is real?"), providing some not-quite-instant gratification. As a whole, *Down Marriott Lane!* is better-than-average pop-rock, and a good beginning for a band that just formed early last year. A few more of those Big Choruses and the Get Set will be all set. >>>KERRY MILLER

Link

www.thegetsset.net

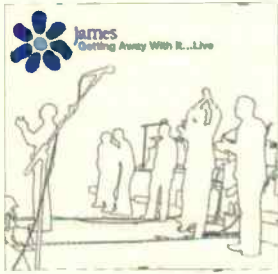
File Under

Mod-ish mod-rock
R.I.Y.L.

Oasis, Third Eye Blind,
Elvis Costello

THE COMP PILE (OUR GUIDE TO COMPILATION CDS) BY KATIE LEE HASTY

TITLE	Making God Smile (Silent Planet)	Plastic Volume 6 (Netzwerk America)	La Musica Della Mafia, Il Canto Di Malavita (PIAS)	USSR—The Art Of Listening (Ninja Tune)	Me Without You (Sony)
CONCEPT	Chilled-out Brian Wilson moments closely recreated by a notable Christian artists	Twelve reasons to get off the couch and shake it	Italian folk music unwrapping the hard-knock Mafia life	Hip-hop intelligence fed by an equally bright DJ/producer DJ Vadim	An eclectic mix of everybody and their mom
TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	You can't get enough of tributes	Newbies unsure if electronica has anything to do with them	Italian majors, Mafia expats, <i>Goodfellas</i> fans	Listening is an art. Are you an artist?	Your tastes are very, very random
NAMES TO DROP	Sixpence None The Richer, Dolour, Phil Keaggy	Timo Maas, DJ Tiësto, Chemical Brothers	Francesco Sbano, Mimmo Siclari	Features from Demolition Man, Gift Of Gab	The Clash, Depeche Mode, Nick Drake
SUMS IT UP	"Add Some Music To Your Day" (Kate Campbell)	"Mindcircus" (Way Out West)	"Cu Sgarra Paga (Who Fails, Pays)" (F. Cimbalo)	"That Which Is Coming" (Revd. Cleve Brown)	"Strange Feelin'" (Tim Buckley)
VERDICT	It's like giving someone back the same birthday present they gave you 30 years ago, with a lot of the same wrapping paper.	All names drop-able, beats chart-top-able, dancing probable. Some tracks too long-able.	The only guy to previously perform these songs in public was assassinated. Enough said.	Mad beats ahead of their time. Beat the rush—come visit the USSR.	The soundtrack to your life, if you've had an 8-track collection, lived in Britain or done lots of drugs.



JAMES

Getting Away With It...Live Sanctuary

In an attempt to ceremoniously call it quits after an almost 20-year run, folky British pop-meisters James are giving die-hard fans one last hurrah with *Getting Away With It...Live*. This two-disc, 22-song set, recorded in James's hometown of Manchester during their final performance ever, covers many high points of the Morrissey-approved band's 10-plus albums of material; It ranges from older, lesser-known songs such as the shuffling "Johnny Yen" and stabbing horn blasts of "God Only Knows" to their UK mega-hits, "Say Something" and "Sit Down," that open

and close the set, respectively. While never maintaining a consistent formula over the years, James's strongest points were always their ability to churn out moving, melodic anthems and singer Tim Booth's rapier-sharp lyrics. The musicianship of the band, including reunited members trumpeter Andy Diagram and guitarist Larry Gott, remains as keen as ever on *Getting Away With It*. It's Booth, however, who tends to drag down an otherwise poignant performance. Booth's flip, sometimes sarcastic remarks between songs—a few directed at the crowd—and often underwhelming vocal delivery, like on their best known Stateside hit, "Laid," comes off like it's his last day at the office, just going through the motions knowing that tomorrow he can sleep in. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

Link

www.jamestheband.com

File Under

Cheeky Britpoppers say bye-bye
R.I.Y.L.

The Smiths, late-'80s R.E.M.,
Gene, Suede, the Stone Roses



KOESTER

The High Highs The Low Lows Pitch-A-Tent

Let's just get this on the table right away: "One Day You Too Will Bleed" is perhaps one of the best break-up songs of all time. Over a haunting piano-bass-drum track, Koester's namesake Steve Koester sings with understated vengeance: "I had dreamed that you had left on the dark road to your death with black flowers in your hair." He goes on, but you get the idea. This album, however, is not a complete ode to rejection. Rather, Koester touches on many of life's, well, high highs and low lows. Over the course of 10 songs, Koester (joined by Miguel Urbiztondo,

Link

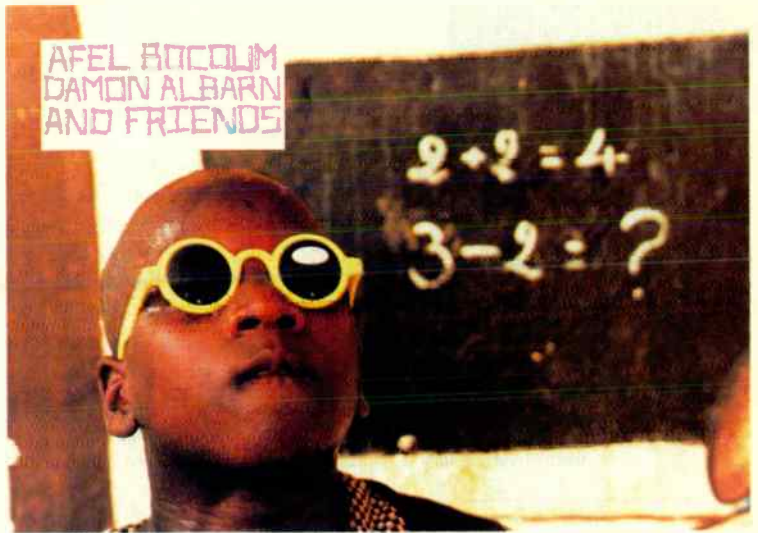
www.koesterrock.com

File Under

Some jingle-jangle mourning
R.I.Y.L.

Sparklehorse, Stereolab,
Pink Floyd, Spiritualized

Tim Buckley, John Daniels and Alan Weatherhead) offers a string of dissonant and noisy pop ditties that work in the most deconstructed of ways. It's an interesting evolution for Koester, whose first album was a bit less colorful. "Vow" opens with a Euro-pop/'80s revival keyboard feel and "The Blood Red Poppies Of October" is a languishing ambient/noise tune that doesn't conform to typical songwriting structures. Elsewhere, Daniels dabbles in fuzz bass, the ultimate in noise making, during the funky and lighthearted "Transistor Sister." From top to bottom, *The High Highs The Low Lows* is a fresh breath. >>>NAVID JOHN FARINELLA



MALI MUSIC

"Damon Albarn's [Blur, Gorillaz] collaboration with Mali musicians might be the best thing he's ever done." - NME

"Brilliant...a perfect way in to the music of Mali" - Paul Weller

"...a genuinely fresh blend of modern and traditional, European and African, high-tech and low-fidelity" - The London Times

Proceeds from the sale of this CD will be donated to Oxfam's programs in Mali.

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TOTAL LEE!

The Songs Of Lee Hazlewood

The mad and tortured genius of musical maverick

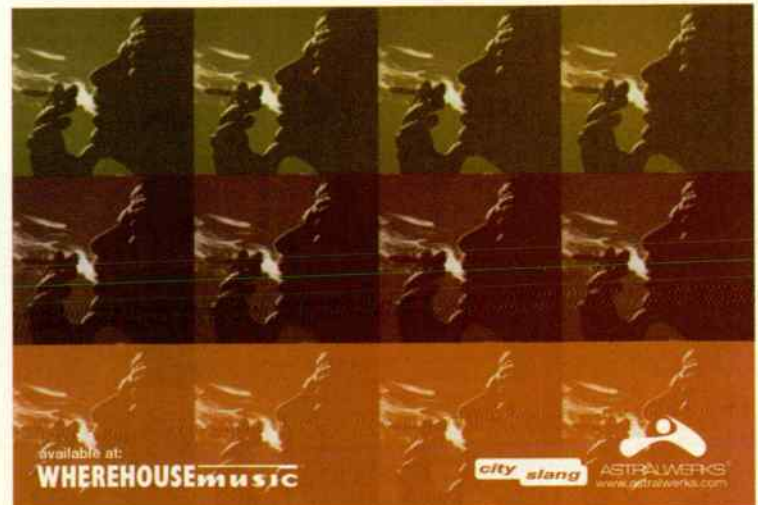
Lee Hazlewood reinterpreted by

Lambchop · Madrugada feat. Neil McNasty · The Webb Brothers · Calexico feat. Valerie Leulliot · Johnny Dowd · St Thomas · St Etienne feat. Nathan Bennet · Jarvis Cocker & Richard Hawley · Erlend Øye · the amazing Pilots · Kathryn Williams · Tindersticks · Stephen Jones & Luke Scott · Calvin Johnson & Mark Pickerel · Evan Dando & Sabrina Brooke · Kid Loco feat. Tim Keegan

"Pop eccentric Lee Hazlewood gets the tribute he deserves...fascinating." - Q

"What a cool f@#k" - Time Out

"Unique fusions of country, widescreen pop and psychedlia...some of the most risqué lyrics of the era" - The Guardian



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LETTUCE

Outta Here Velour

Who would've thought that lettuce was the funkier of vegetables? Seems like bok choy or even rutabaga would rank up there, yet over the course of their 11-song debut, the eight members of Lettuce prove their point. The album's opening (and title) track sets the funky tone with an unrelenting stone-cold, bass-driven groove. "The Dump" pushes them into an acid-jazz tempo, while "Squadlive" is an out-and-out James Brown party tune. Though the lads have broken out and set up their own funky shops elsewhere—Eric Krasno and Sam Kininger

with Soulive, Adam Smirnoff with the Squad, Adam Deitch with John Scofield, Jeff Bhasker in Kudu, Ryan Zoidis founded Rustic Overtones and Erick Coomes is a producer—they have come back together sounding cohesive and polished. Nowhere is that more evident than on "Back In Effect," where each of the members gets a chance to shine without overpowering the tune. The band gets a hand from guitarist John Scofield on "Flu The Coop" and "Back In Effect," from trombonist Fred Wesley on "Superfred" and the title track and Soulive's organist Neal Evans on "Outta Here." Tonni Smith adds a great vocal to the tune "Twisted." >>>DAVID JOHN FARINELLA

Link

www.velourrecordings.com

File Under

Garden-variety funk

R.I.Y.L.

Galactic, Soulive, Dag



JASON LOEWENSTEIN

At Sixes And Sevens Sub Pop

As the oft-quoted Jason Loewenstein said himself, "When Sebadoh stopped playing, I didn't," an accurate plot-summary of *At Sixes And Sevens*, the former Sebadoh bass player's debut as a solo artist. He wrote all the songs, played all the instruments and recorded and mixed himself. The Louisville, Ky. native's amp'd, wry hand is as apparent here as it was on the tracks he wrote for any of Sebadoh's seven studio albums. Fans of Lou Barlow's shy, melancholic stitches might not be as into Loewenstein's linear rock route, but overall, it's a more thrilling ride. Much

like the early Foo Fighters material when Dave Grohl knocked out all the tracks himself, the melodies are tight and the playing is fresh, as one would expect from someone emancipated from group decision-making (or bandleader tyranny). It's simple, and the guitars cut cleanly, with Loewenstein's earnest, punky vocals beaming through; this is honest, unassuming album rock. Plus, unlike the collective quirkiness of Sebadoh's output, which, though charming, often seems quilted from different bolts of cloth, *At Sixes And Sevens* is a solid rocker from start to finish, with plenty of eclectic flourishes, like the spastic Latin rock instrumental, appropriately titled "Crazy Santana." >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

Link

www.jakerock.com

File Under

The freed man


R.I.Y.L.

Sebadoh, Foo Fighters,

Guided By Voices

BIS

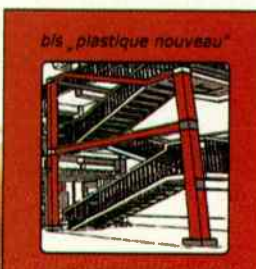
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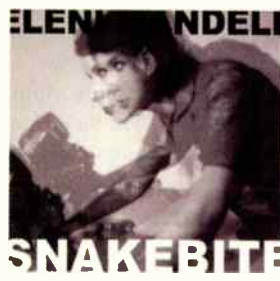
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ELENI MANDELL

Snakebite Space Baby

Eleni Mandell has one of those voices that can eroticize anything. Even in the midst of throbbing rock, delicate folk or jaunty Rickie Lee Jones-esque pop, her cabaret soul is painted in red over the backbeat, sexual yearning haunting every note, every line. And more than ever, Mandell's third release finds her channeling Tom Waits in prime Kurt Weill mode; though the razor-sharp noir-punk that peppered her last album, *Thrill*, is sorely missed (nothing here matches the track "Pauline" for sheer diabolical glee), *Snakebite* is more satisfyingly moody, slower over-

all and a finer showcase for Mandell's maturing interpretive skills. Opener "Dreamboat" sets the tone. It's a stripped-down track with a death wish throbbing around Mandell's lyrics, right from the start: "Dreamboat, out to sea/ Land lovers, he's leaving me..." Part of the ambience comes of Mandell and producer Brian Kehew's rhythmic sense. All manner of percussion is employed—upright bass, marimbas, thumping pedal steel and acoustic guitar played more for beat than note. Tracks such as "Don't Lose My Trail" and "Alien Eye" thus come off like they were recorded in a Beat-era coffee house, yet Mandell never sounds less than modern. *Snakebite* is something like the musical equivalent of a David Lynch film, reaching back to old forms and manipulating them, with results suggestive, oddly mysterious and infused with a louche glamour. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

www.elenimandell.com

File Under

Mulholland dive

R.I.Y.L.

PJ Harvey, Nina Nastasia,

Tom Waits



THE MAYFLIES USA

Walking In A Straight Line Yep Roc

Walking In A Straight Line is the first Mayflies USA album not produced by power-pop legend Chris Stamey (dB's), but you'd never know it. Three albums after its debut, the band has so perfected its timeless Big Star-patterned sound that they could probably operate heavy machinery while performing it. Perhaps the Mayflies knew they were getting too adept—they banged out *Walking* with producer Keith Cleversley in a marathon, month-long session that found them sleeping with their instruments. It's this rough-hewn, hung-over camaraderie that gives the album what

Link
www.themayfliesusa.com

File Under
Easy-drinking power pop
R.I.Y.L.
Big Star, Fountains Of Wayne,
Teenage Fanclub,
Guided By Voices

edge it possesses; the band instills just enough power to make the power-pop tag apropos. Songwriting chops don't hurt, either: "The Greatest Thing," "Malaysia" and the ace kiss-off "I Won't Forget" are Chiltonesque nuggets faulted only by their seeming ease. It's a bit difficult to tell Mayflies' gems apart from their also-rans after they've been filtered through the pretty harmony vocals of guitarist Matt McMichaels and bassist Adam Price, but their sweetness is nicely underpinned by a shimmering multi-guitar shred and drummer David Liesegang's resounding crash. The skronking, calliope-based closing song "Sweet 16" sounds like an apology for the preceding album's sweetness, but at this late date, it's a kind of betrayal; Mayflies USA have found their formula, and they're destined—damned—to keep perfecting it. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY



MCLUSKY

Mclusky Do Dallas Ton Pure-Beggars Group

With such attention being lavished on the resurgence of the early '80s CBGB scene, Mclusky focuses on a later chapter of punk's dingy clubs and sonic fury. The Welsh trio's U.S. debut joyously rekindles the anarchic heyday of the Jesus Lizard and the Membranes. *Mclusky Do Dallas* crashes the gates with the sub-two minute fusillade "Lightsabre Cocksucking Blues," waiting mere nanoseconds after its stop-start, breakneck-paced din has ceased before launching another round of mayhem. This pattern repeats over 14 songs and 36 minutes, exiting narrowly before the formula grows tiresome. Producer Steve Albini, undoubtedly tickled to find a

Link
www.toopure.com/artists/mclusky

File Under
Short sharp shocks
R.I.Y.L.
The Jesus Lizard, Pixies'
Surfer Rosa, Membranes,
Three Johns

band squarely within his sweet spot, imbues Mclusky with the same dentist's-drill guitar and vacuum-chamber drums that worked wonders on the Pixies' *Surfer Rosa*. Mclusky packs lyrical zingers into virtually every song (vocalist Andy Falkous wails like John Lydon experiencing a psychotic break), demonstrating that a sense of humor and a ferocious musical attack need not be mutually exclusive. The mock self-congratulatory "To Hell With Good Intentions" chants, "Our love is bigger than your love, we take more drugs than a touring funk band—sing it!" Rather than coming across as drunken goofuses, Mclusky are rabblers who don't take themselves too seriously, with the sense to ride a springy bassline and enough melody to keep the racket from spinning off the edge—just barely. >>>GLEN SARVADY

JEFF TROTT

DIG UP THE ASTROTURF



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MUDHONEY

Since We've Become Translucent Sub Pop
 Since We've Become Translucent unfurls in a lengthy, blank-eyed stare of oozing, sax-pierced psychedelic blues lamenting the lack of light at tunnel's end. After *Tomorrow Hit Today* failed to produce commercially, it looked as though Mudhoney's tread had finally worn off, leaving a trail of shredded rubber all the way back to Seattle's gloomy trenches. When *Tomorrow's* tour ended, the quartet hibernated or called it quits—you pick: Bassist Matt Lukin retired outright, leader Mark Arm re-focused on the even garagier Bloodloss, and Mudhoney was out with a hoarse

whimper. But those few years off paid in spades. With *Translucent*, this Mudhoney sounds refreshed, and cozies up to sudsy fuzz-rock in ways it hasn't in many albums. With a horn section blasting through a few tracks, the added layer of brassy pastiche over their scuzzy amplified stew results in a snappier, more tuneful batch. Though still loose-limbed and sly, this is a band in the joyous throes of Dionysian revival, just check out the stinging, Stax-soaked "Come To Where The Flavor Is." If nothing else, it starkly contrasts the bleak spaciness of the aforementioned opener, "Baby, Can You Dig The Light?" Rewedded with Sub Pop, Arm and company seem at ease with their station. They've taken the punches, they've winced under the pain; they've been there, done that. As he snarls, Iggy-like, during "In The Winner's Circle," "I'm a winner, cuz I've got nothing left to lose." >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

Link

www.subpop.com

File Under

Too legit to quit

R.I.Y.L.

Stooges, Sonics, Union Carbide Productions



THE MUSHROOM RIVER BAND

Simsalabim MeteorCity

Albuquerque's desert-dried MeteorCity label has quickly become the premium place to go for so-called stoner rock; oddly enough, one of their best efforts yet comes from the decidedly non-desert climes of Sweden. *Simsalabim*, the Mushroom River Band's first record since frontman Spice left Spiritual Beggars and made Mushroom his full-time gig (second record overall), is a whole other species than what you've been hearing from Sweden lately. No Stones stage moves or poppy, retro-leaning punk nuggets here: *Simsalabim* aims right for the throat with 10 breakneck anthems, each track raging at a barely contained

pace and coming off like a Black Sabbath record played at double-speed—same brand of concrete riffs, just twice the tempo. Spice's lyrics deviate strongly from the established hot-rods-and-acid norm, preferring instead to dwell on the world's fucked-uppedness (from "The Big Sick Machine": "Hold tight to the comfortable lie/ The working class hero is a fucking lie"), delivered in a voice that alternates between a guttural bark and a scream. *Simsalabim* also has the distinction of being one of the best-produced records of the stoner genre, with the lo-fi fuzz dynamics swapped for Anders Linusson's mile-high, perfectly crisp riffs. On "Proud Of Being Cool," Mushroom asks, "What happened to your balls?" With *Simsalabim*, he's answered his own question; apparently they're in Sweden. >>>IAN SIMS

Link

www.meteorcity.com

File Under

Desert-dried pissed-off hot-rod party... from Sweden

R.I.Y.L.

Queens Of The Stone Age, Kyuss, pre-Powertrip Monster Magnet, Spirit Caravan

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NO. 2

What Does Good Luck Bring?

In Music We Trust

Given Heatmiser's notoriety as the launching pad for Elliott Smith and Quasi's Sam Coomes, it's easy to forget that Neil Gust was actually the primary frontman for the Portland quartet. On his current trio's second outing, Gust dials up the straight-ahead rock quotient a notch from No. 2's debut, *No Memory*, though never to the blast furnace levels of his old band's early days. *What Does Good Luck Bring?* is stylistically similar to Heatmiser's stellar swansong, *Mic City Sons*, occasionally letting the sparks fly but drawing most of its power from playing slow burns and gentle passages off one another. Gust's rave-ups are top drawer, leaning on razor-edged Keith Richards-style boogie shuffles and impressive overdubbed guitar interplay. Gust is less surefooted on the softer acoustic material. His melodic sensibility is similar to Smith's, which may explain these tracks' pleasant familiarity, but the few that don't build to crescendos ultimately sound a bit faceless. Although Coomes makes a brief, unobtrusive keyboard cameo on the title track, Smith's harmonies that graced *No Memory* are sorely missed. Despite a few missteps, our good luck brings a disc focusing on No. 2's strengths, like the soaring chorus of "A Little Confusion" and the angular tension of "Traveling." >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.inmusicwetrust.com

File Under

Starts to melt his clutch

R.I.Y.L.

Heatmiser, Imperial Teen, Grifters, Elliott Smith's Either/Or



ORBITAL

Back To Mine **DMC**

"Chillout" was once a descriptor that implied cool, sexy sonic play, often laced with an air of danger. But lately, most of the music branded with that moniker feels about as exciting and dangerous as a nap. Leave it to the Hartnoll brothers to reinvigorate a concept that grew tired too soon after getting out of its (conceptual) bed. Orbital, after all, was one of the first electronic acts to earn mainstream accolades, and the duo continues to make refreshingly innovative music by repeatedly reinventing their approach. So, how might they reinvent chillout? Simple, really: Challenge conceptions of the style by throwing some surprises in

the mix. Put P.J. Harvey's blistering "Kamikaze" back to back with "Celebrate The Bullet" by perennial ska favorite the Selecter, for example. Or offer up Jethro Tull and the Divine Comedy right alongside Plaid and Severed Heads and make it all flow as if the tracks were actually written to be heard in exactly that way. And don't forget to add a slamming exclusive track of your own—Orbital's "Ska'd For Life (Instrumental Mix)" in this case. In fact, the only real drawback to Orbital's *Back To Mine* mix (aside from the unsettling creepiness of Earth Leakage Trip's "No Idea") is that it might get you too worked up to actually, you know, chill out. >>>00UG LEVY



ORISHAS

Emigrante **Universal**

When Orishas appeared in 2000 with *A Lo Cubano*, they were riding a wave of international hip-hop, and in "537 C.U.B.A." they played on the familiarity of Compay Segundo's Cuban anthem, "Chan Chan," gaining a wider audience. Two years later, their sound has matured; even more than on their debut, singing and live instrumentation are a vital part of the mix, augmented by programming that gives subtle hip-hop underpinning and beats to the music without being overwhelming. The rappers, Roldán, Ruzzo and Yotuel, have refined their flow, sliding in and out,

never macho or militant but allowing the melodies to be heard and the music to breathe. They take the things that make Cuban music special—the percussive polyrhythmic swing, the gorgeous melodies and harmonies—and use those as their building blocks, keeping the sound close to its roots, even down to the voodoo Santeria drumming that closes "Habana." In a time when hip-hop is becoming more stripped-down, Orishas assert their individuality by adding to the lushness of their music—even the stark beginning of "Desaparacidos" is quickly filled out by the swell of strings. So while nothing has the immediacy of "537 C.U.B.A.," *Emigrante* captures the sound of young Cuba in the way *Buena Vista Social Club* sums up the old masters: aware of the past, but energetically looking to the future. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

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PERE UBU

St. Arkansas *spinArt*

Pere Ubu will never make another *The Modern Dance*, its 1978 avant-garage masterpiece. It also won't return to *Cloudland*, the apex of the band's commercially focused (relatively speaking) early-'90s phase. These cold realities notwithstanding, the long running, gradually morphing Cleveland outfit still shows remarkable vitality. *St. Arkansas* follows the path blazed by recent outings *Pennsylvania* and *Ray Gun Suitcase*, dispensing a heavy dose of art spiked with occasional garage-rock catharsis—both distinctive Ubu traits. Frontman/beat poet David

Thomas holds court on the workaday alienation of Middle America, a theme driven home on the aptly titled, slow-burn closer "Dark." A few tracks teeter under the weight of Thomas's unfettered influence, his malleable, off-kilter vocals (the sole constant across Ubu's 27-year history) supported by boilerplate downtown free jazz. More frequently, *St. Arkansas* succeeds on the strengths of five tightly interwoven musicians. The rhythm section ably shoulders a heavy load, with analog synth squiggles or Tom Herman's taut, mangled guitar often the only embellishments to the low-end groove. The primordial stomp of "Steve" and "Jonah Phone Home" recalls the band's early days and illuminates the link to '60s icons like the Seeds. Pere Ubu remains a challenging but rewarding listen, uncannily able to move forward while preserving its unmistakable vibe. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.projex.demon.co.uk/stark.html

File Under

A lotta avant, just enough garage
R.I.Y.L.

Soul Coughing, Primus, *Death Of A Salesman*-era Grifters



THE PROM

Under The Same Stars *Barsuk*

Piano-led bands needn't traffic in jazzy harmonic sophistication; still, one expects a little instrumental flash to be on the table. But the Prom's James Mendenhall is as meat-and-potatoes as they come, not so much tickling as slugging the ivories on power ballads ("A Note On The Kitchen Table") and Billy Joelish struts ("The City Gets Lonely") alike, occasionally joining his resourceful rhythm section (Joel Brown and David Broecker) to hammer an ensemble figure home. Nothing wrong with this four-square approach per se; listeners should just know going in that

they're not getting Arthur Rubenstein, or even Rufus Wainwright. *Under The Same Stars* differs from the Prom's previous releases in adding strings and horns to the core trio. "Ink On The Paper" waltzes along nicely on its bed of flute and cello, but elsewhere, the frosting doesn't quite mask the material's rhythmic sameness. Ultimately, the disc stands or falls on Mendhall's voice and lyrics. The former is plaintive and pleasantly strained; the latter deal with small-town aimlessness ("I got some money, you got a pack of cigarettes"), post-adolescent confusion ("All my friends are different now and have no place to go"), and several varieties of romantic loss. The words don't always fit the tunes as snugly as they might, but these awkward moments are in line with Mendhall's guilelessness: "These songs are like letters/ I employ the pen to write." >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.barsuk.com
File Under

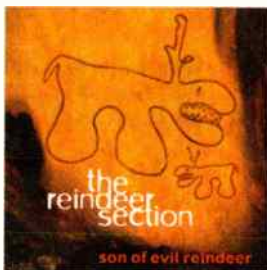
Orchestral emo
R.I.Y.L.

Ben Folds, Jeremy Enigk,
the New Amsterdams

THE REINDEER SECTION

Son Of Evil Reindeer (PIAS) America

Although it's both, the Reindeer Section sounds more like a side project than a Scottish supergroup. Snow Patrol's Gary Lightbody spearheads the band that culls its members from Glaswegian staples like Belle And Sebastian, Mogwai, Arab Strap and Idlewild, and sounds nothing like any of its parts would suggest. Since the band's decidedly unthreatening debut of downtrodden, rootsy rock, 2001's *Y'all Get Scared Now, Ya Hear!*, the roster has ballooned from 15 to 27, and it shows. The gentler, less maudlin *Son Of Evil Reindeer* opens with the Reindeer Section at its most grandiose—after a deceptive intro of Peabody going at it solo acoustic,



Link

www.reindeersection.com
File Under

On Colburn, on Moffat, on
Cummings and Woomble!
R.I.Y.L.

Snow Patrol, My Morning
Jacket, Red House Painters,
Lambchop

"Grand Parade" explodes into an orchestrated three-minute epic, played by no less than 17 musicians. Lightbody composes dulcet, toe-tapping lovesongs that are lushed-up by mourning horns and cinematic strings. The irony here is that its best track, "Where I Fall," also has the least amount of instrumentation. Only four people played on the breezy folk song that allows Lightbody's muscular voice to penetrate with lines like, "I will beat your love out of my chest." The Brit-folk that the members of the Reindeer Section arrive at is among the most confounding musical intersections. No matter, it's a lovely soundtrack for head scratching. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



Link

sixbyseven.co.uk
File Under

Joyless Division
R.I.Y.L.

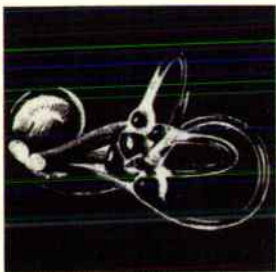
Radiohead, The Church,
Jack Frost

hot on *Closer* with the rhythm section especially cooking. Here, everything forms into a muddy gray, obscuring the songs' structures and dynamics. Where once guitarist/vocalist Chris Olley approached the mic with a sly self-consciousness, shifting from Mark E. Smith harangue to Thom Yorke falsetto to Billy Corgan whine depending on the song's need, now he appears to be employing his natural singing voice more often to less ear-grabbing effect. Saddest of all, the overall monochromatic treatment drains all the use value out of the mopey, bummed-out lyrics. Olley's just wallowing in his girl problems and chronic inability to grow up and only the goofy sound effects on "So Close" will induce anyone to wallow along with him. >>>KEVIN JOHN

SIX BY SEVEN

The Way I Feel Today *Mantra-Beggars Banquet*

The Closer You Get, this Nottingham band's previous disc, was a great, out-of-left-field record whose recombination of ordinary punk and shoegazer usages made it difficult to pinpoint what made it so great in the first place. Somewhat predictably for music of such precarious charms, the disappointing follow-up puts their previous achievements into unwitting relief. Apparently, the emphatic production on *The Closer You Get* left the band cold, and so they recorded *The Way I Feel Today* live with no overdubs—big mistake. Each instrument was mixed



SKELETON KEY

Obtainium Ipecac

Detached downtown hipsters Skeleton Key were probably the most confounding band to boast a Capitol Records contract since the Moffatts. Deformed pop hooks lurked underneath the bash of propane tanks and Radio Flyer wagons—their clanging, clanking, sputtering, puttering, squealing and hissing modus operandi sounding like Girls Against Boys being mutilated in some rusty abattoir. Luckily they've escaped to Mike Patton's surrogate home for smarty-panted absurdist (Ipecac Recordings) and released *Obtainium*, their first collection of warped polyrhythmic junkyard pop since

1997. Although Ipecac would certainly allow the clattery S-Key to be as unlistenable as they pleased, they seem content to subvert their skronky avant-gardisms through bigger hooks and funkier rhythms—like Fat Albert And The Junkyard Gang growing goatees, chugging coffee and hitching a ride to the Lower East Side. At their most raucous ("Panic Bullets"), Skeleton Key trick some Einstürzende NewYorkbauten metallic racket into trying to out-crazy a Jesus Lizard freakout. At their most solemn, they cop Tom Waits's Beefheartian blues until pistons implode into demi-industrial squall ("Candy") or simply ride out his predilection for ambiguous imagery and "skinny millionaires" ("Roost In Peace"). Of course, in their twisted minds, a cranky song warrants the sounds of actual cranks—but their new melodicism makes such dry, existential humor an easy pill to swallow. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

www.skeletonkey.org

File Under

The junk soul brothers

R.I.Y.L.

Idiot Flesh, Tom Waits's *Bone Machine*, Fat Albert And The

Junkyard Gang



TEGAN AND SARA

If It Was You Vapor

Although they're hardly angelic in the song "Want To Be Bad" on their latest album, *If It Was You*, Canadian twin sisters Tegan And Sara have zero in common with last year's pop tart Willa "I Wanna Be Bad" Ford. Shunning a glossy, overdone look and slick production in favor of tomboy-next-door appeal and a bare-bones sound, the sister act has more of a kinship with Ani DiFranco or Juliana Hatfield than its pop contemporaries. That's not to say the follow-up to their 2000 U.S. debut, *This Business Of Art* (on fellow Canuck Neil Young's Vapor Records) doesn't have moments of boppy

Link

www.teganandsara.com

File Under

Coffeehouse folk with a bitter-

sweet bite

R.I.Y.L.

Ani DiFranco, PJ Harvey,

Indigo Girls

bliss—the uber-catchy "Monday, Monday, Monday" even sounds like it cribbed its melody from the Vapors' "Turning Japanese." Produced by the New Pornographers' John Collins and Dave Carswell, *If It Was You* is full of simple compositions that snarl angrily one minute, then coo sweetly the next. Such juxtaposition rules in songs like the banjo-driven "Living Room," which flip-flops between maternal concern and stalker-like obsession. And on the edgy, PJ Harvey-influenced "Terrible Storm," the quiet-loud dichotomy is in glorious bloom, giving the sisters a lush, powerful sound that will probably change your idea of what two folkies with guitars should sound like. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

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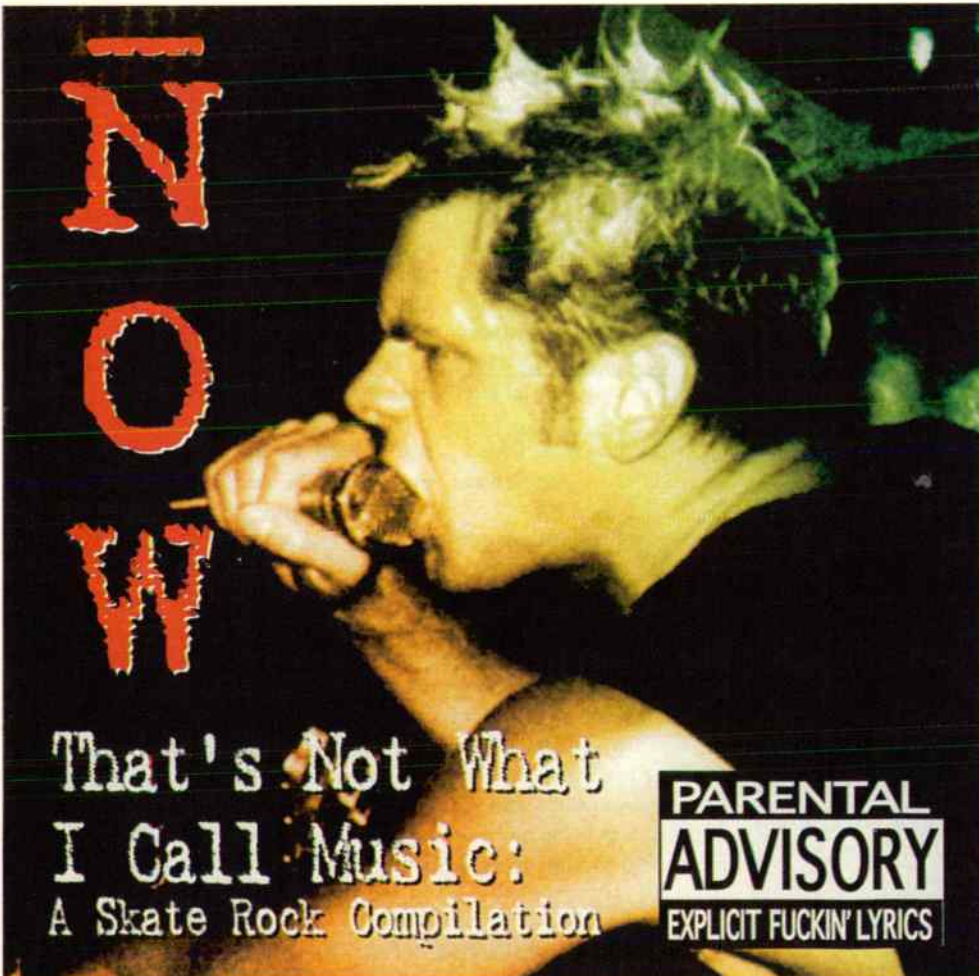
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TENDER TRAP
Film Molecules K

Amelia Fletcher and Rob Pursey's penchant for switching bandnames makes you wonder whether they believe that bands should last as long as their original lineups, or if they're just trying to confuse us. Talulah Gosh begat Heavenly and Heavenly begat Marine Research and Marine Research begat Tender Trap; in over 15 years, their music's evolution can only be described as nominal. Sure, over time they've ironed out most of the raggedy punk tendencies, eased up on the saucer-eyed lyrics, and have now begun to experiment with electronics. Still, the music-

to-cuddle-to approach to songwriting and Fletcher's endearingly flat timbre remain intact on *Film Molecules*. And, often enough, so does the quality. "Oh Katrina," is a hook-filled ray of C-86 sunshine with bopping surf guitar and an intoxicating bridge. "Face Of 73" transcends its standard electroclash frame via lightly strummed guitars and Fletcher's domineering vocals. The essentially solo-electric "Emma" is an atmospheric, beatless ballad that eschews all cuteness for sincerity and ends up almost uncomfortably poignant. We've heard most everything here before (whether by Pursey and Fletcher's hands or not), and ultimately, that's ok. Like the 50-something who hasn't stopped wearing that Members Only jacket, Tender Trap's '80s revivalism is about to wrap around and sound hip all over again. Regardless of whether it's by default, they're poised for freshness. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

listen.to/tendertrap

File Under

Twee and grow

R.I.Y.L.

Heavenly, Beat Happening,
Field Mice, Felt



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Total Lee: The Songs Of Lee Hazlewood

Astralwerks

If de Sade had taken office space in the Brill Building, his output might have sounded like Lee Hazlewood's. An early mentor of Phil Spector who produced and wrote hits (and misses) for Duane Eddy and onetime wife Nancy Sinatra from the mid-'50s to the mid-'70s, as well as a string of increasingly uncommercial solo albums, the Haze couldn't help slipping messages of mortality, dark sexuality and existential dread into allegedly chart-bound compositions. More talked about than listened to, his work is ripe for the tribute treatment. Of the 16 artists let

Link

www.astralwerks.com

File Under

Anti-hero worship

R.I.Y.L.

Jimmy Webb, Scott Walker,
Gene Pitney

loose on Hazlewood's catalog, a few (Lambchop, St. Etienne) unaccountably choose his slightest material, while others mangle his best. Madrugada's Nick-Cave-with-loops treatment of "Come On Home To Me" and Johnny Dowd's howling "Sleep In The Grass" miss the originals' tension between craft and creepiness, heading one-dimensionally toward the latter. On the upside, two lesser-knowns (St. Thomas, Kathryn Williams) turn in the best-sung readings of the lot, and "Some Velvet Morning," the ultimate Hazlewood/Sinatra duet, is as jarring as ever in the Webb Brothers' hands. One nice touch: Like Rykodisc's recent Ray Davies tribute, *Total Lee* includes comments on the songs and their interpretations by the writer himself. Balanced and often self-deprecating, these indicate that the semi-retired Hazlewood has a better perspective on his work than some of those he's influenced. >>>FRANKLIN BRUND

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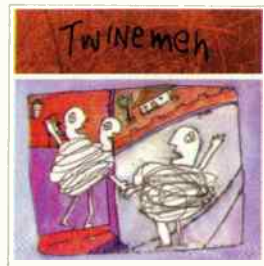
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TWINEMEN

Twinemen Hi-N-Dry

Twinemen was born out of the ashes of Morphine, a band whose run necessarily ended with the death of singer/two-string slide bassist Mark Sandman. To remain faithful to, but not remain forever in the shadow of that legacy, drummer Billy Conway and saxophonist Dana Colley hooked up with Boston vocalist Laurie Sargent to form Twinemen. Judging from this debut, it's a good fit, as the group fleshes out Morphine's "low rock" sound with keyboards and drum programming. That said, this is still late-night listening; to call the music

Link

www.twinemen.com

File Under

Cure for pain

R.I.Y.L.

Morphine, Miles Davis's
Kind Of Blue

moody is like calling rain wet. Sargent's singing is often impressionistic and eerily echoes Colley's floating baritone sax. She's such a fine singer that it's disappointing when her vocals get buried in the mix of some tracks. The songs here work best as part of a larger whole. The arrangements are open-ended and melodies fold back on one another; one song bleeds into the next, and the disc makes its best impact consumed in one sitting. Colley is such an evocative player he could make a totem pole weep, and Conway is so valuable because he understands that empty spaces sometimes speak more eloquently than dense rhythmic work. The musical execution on *Twinemen* is taut and there's not a note out of place. Out of tragedy emerges a grace note. >>>KEN CAPOBIANCO



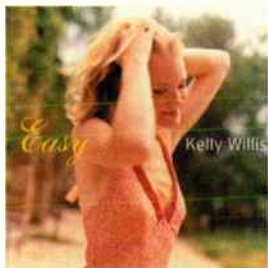
VIDA BLUE

Vida Blue Elektra

"Out of space and time," Page McConnell sings on "Most Events Aren't Planned," the floaty opening track on the versatile Phish keyboardist's debut as a leader. Vida Blue, the band and the disc, aren't as freaky as those lyrics might suggest: This is mildly trippy groove music with pleasantly diverting pop flourishes. The funk, sunk deep and swampy by drummer Russell Batiste (Funky Meters) and bassist Oteil Burbridge (Allman Brothers/Aquarium Rescue Unit), is appropriately greasy on "Where's Popeyes" (maybe an ode

Link
www.vidablue.net
File Under
Groovy granola and grease
R.I.Y.L.
Phish, Aquarium Rescue Unit,
Pink Floyd

to post-session stoner munchies in the Cajun-fried-chicken chain's headquarters of New Orleans), dominated by pastel keyboard swirls on the techno-edged "CJ3" and driven hard by Burbridge's rubbery action on "Fresh Tube." McConnell's vocal contributions—"Most Events," "Who's Laughing Now" (with DJ Logic) and the wordless "Final Flight"—are located approximately halfway between art rock and pure pop; they're sweet and vaguely psychedelic, if less than compelling. Vida Blue, organized in the Crescent City, arrives with retro-'70s references intact, as references to electric Miles and pre-*The Wall* Pink Floyd lurk everywhere. Bottom line for phans: It's fine as a holdover until the phamily reunites. But like Trey Anastasio's Oysterhead project and disc, it hardly feels like a major career move. >>>PHILIP BOOTH



KELLY WILLIS

Easy Rykodisc

Kelly Willis is the country artist Goldilocks would choose—everything about her seems "just right," for better or worse. For over a decade now, her oeuvre has steered a steady course away from the temptations of top-of-the-charts glitz, neo-traditionalist rigidity and alt-country insurgency. *Easy*, her second album for Rykodisc after unsuccessful stints at two different majors, maintains that same cautious path. As always, Willis's generous vocal talents showcase a variety of subtle smarts. A particularly clever touch occurs when Willis sings "cold, cold heart" from

Link
www.kellywillis.com
File Under
Country chanteusery
R.I.Y.L.
Mandy Barnett, Alison Krauss,
Gillian Welch

Kirsty MacColl's "Don't Come The Cowboy With Me Sonny Jim!" with all the hurt emotion she can muster. And her phrasing on "Reason To Believe" allows her to catch her breath immediately before the word "breath" in the line "catching my breath each time." But vocal pleasures are practically the only ones made available. Tune and narrative are sacrificed to better showcase that voice. What you remember from a Kelly Willis record, then, is the intelligent, moderately passionate personality behind the project, rarely individual songs or even moments. Luckily, Willis has the talent to pull this off yet again on *Easy*. But after five short and same-sounding albums in 12 years, you wonder if the sound of her own voice takes more out of her than she ever lets on. >>>KEVIN JOHN

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TOP 75



SONIC YOUTH
MURRAY STREET
DGC-INTERSCOPE

#1

5 YEARS AGO

PRIMUS

Brown Album (Interscope)

WEEN

The Mollusk (Elektra)

YO LA TENGO

I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One (Matador)

GUIDED BY VOICES

Mag Earwhig! (Matador)

SPIRITUALIZED

Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space (Dedicated Artists)

10 YEARS AGO

LEMONHEADS

It's A Shame About Ray (Atlantic)

HELMET

Meantime (Interscope-Atlantic)

SONIC YOUTH

"100%" 5" (DGC)

BEASTIE BOYS

Check Your Head (Capitol)

L7

Bricks Are Heavy (Slart)

ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
1 SONIC YOUTH	Murray Street	DGC-Interscope
2 THE FLAMING LIPS	Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots	Warner Bros.
3 DJ SHADDW	The Private Press	MCA
4 DOVES	The Last Broadcast	Capitol
5 THE BREEDERS	Title TK	Elektra
6 GUIDED BY VOICES	Universal Truths And Cycles	Matador
7 WEEZER	Maladroit	Geffen
8 SUPERDRAG	Last Call For Vitriol	Arena Rock
9 DEATH BY CHOCOLATE	Zap The World	Jetset
10 ELVIS COSTELLO	When I Was Cruel	Island
11 WILCO	Yankee Hotel Foxtrot	Nonesuch
12 ASH	Free All Angels	Infectious (UK)-Kinetic
13 BELLE AND SEBASTIAN	Storytelling	Matador
14 DAVID BOWIE	Hathen	Columbia
15 ALL-TIME QUARTERBACK	All Time Quarterback	Elsinor-Barsuk
16 UGLY CASANOVA	Sharpen Your Teeth	Sub Pop
17 LDS LOBDS	Good Morning Aztlan	Mammoth-Hollywood
18 MOBY	1B	V2
19 DIRTY VEGAS	Dirty Vegas	Capitol
20 MY VITRIOL	Finalinis	Epic
21 THE GET UP KIDS	On A Wire	Vagrant
22 GOLDFINGER	Open Your Eyes	Mojo-Jive
23 DILLINGER FOUR	Situationist Comedy	Fat Wreck Chords
24 JUCIFER	I Name You Destroyer	Velocette
25 YEAH YEAH YEAHS	Yeah Yeah Yeahs	Touch And Go
26 SIX BY SEVEN	The Way I Feel Today	Mantra-Beggars Group
27 NO USE FOR A NAME	Hard Rock Bottom	Fat Wreck Chords
28 PERE UBU	St. Armands	spinART
29 REEL BIG FISH	Cheer Up	Jive-Mojo
30 DXES	Dixies	Monitor
31 SCAPEGOAT WAX	Sivax	Hollywood
32 EL-P	Fantastic Damage	Def Jux
33 MUM	Finally We Are No One	Fat Cat
34 GOGOGO AIRHEART	Exhaling	Gold Standard Laboratories
35 THE VINES	Highly Evolved	Capitol
36 JASON LOEWENSTEIN	At Sixes And Sevens	Sub Pop
37 BRYAN FERRY	Francis	Virgin
38 INTERPOL	Interpol (EP)	Matador
39 HOWIE DAY	Australia	Epic
40 ENON	High Society	Touch And Go
41 LUNA	Remission	Jetset
42 GIRLS AGAINST BOYS	You Can't Fight What You Can't See	Jade Tree
43 PAUL OAKENFOLD	Bunkko	Warner Bros.
44 ROCKING HORSE WINNER	Horror	Equal Vision
45 ELF POWER	Creatures	spinART
46 TOM WAITS	Blood Money	Anti
47 GREEN DAY	Shenandoah	Reprise
48 VHS OR BETA	Le Tour	Dn
49 CALVIN JOHNSON	What Was Me	K
50 THE RISE	Spirit In The Sky	Ferret
51 CHUCK PROPHET	No Other Love	New West
52 THE GOSSIP	Admission Heat (EP)	Kill Rock Stars
53 HANK DOGS	Half Smile	spinART
54 OZMA	Don't Be Dumb, Don't Be EP	Kung Fu
55 THE BLODD BROTHERS	March On Electric Children	Three One G.
56 TAGGING SATELLITES	One Night Falls	Recovery
57 ZUCO 103	Tales Of High Fever	Six Degrees
58 JAY BENNETT AND EDWARD BURCH	The Palace At 4am (Part II)	Undertow
59 A	Hi-Fi Serious	Mammoth-Hollywood
60 SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY	Going Down Swinging	Southern
61 JRCORDUROY	I Don't Want To Be Around When You're Gone For Good	Sealed Fate
62 NATIONALE BLUE	A Different Kind Of Listening	Iodine
63 CONSONANT	Consonant	Fenway
64 BLAKE HAZARD	Little Airplane	Kimchee
65 PREFUSE 73	92 Vs. '02 Collection EP	Warp
66 SWEARING AT MOTORISTS	This Flag Signals Goodbye	Secretly Canadian
67 THE CELLS	We Can Replace You	Orange Recordings
68 BLACKALICIOUS	Blazing Arrow	MCA
69 THE WHITE STRIPES	White Blood Cells	V2
70 NOFX	45 Or 46 Songs That Aren't Good Enough...	Fat Wreck Chords
71 MILKY WIMPSHAK	Lovers Not Fighters	Troubleman Unlimited
72 JORMA KAUKONEN	Rev. Chairman's Heart	Columbia
73 PATTY GRIFFIN	1000 Kisses	ATO
74 KING OF WOOLWORTHS	Mung Star	Beggars Banquet
75 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Fish And Streams	Kill Rock Stars

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. Glass tanks that shoot rats! He wins.

LOUD ROCK TOP 25

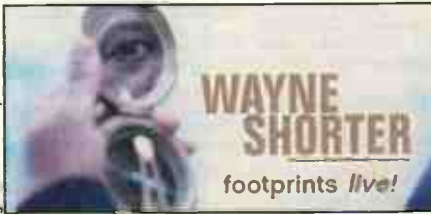


1	SOULFLY Soufly 3	Roadrunner
2	DANZIG Danzig 777: I Luciferi	Spitfire
3	OTEP Sevas Tra	Capitol
4	SKINLAB ReVolting Room	Century Media
5	HALFORD Crucible	Metal-Is-Sanctuary
6	SUPERJOINT RITUAL Use Once And Destroy	Housecore-Sanctuary
7	MASTODON Remission	Relapse
8	KILLSWITCH ENGAGE Alive Or Just Breathing	Roadrunner
9	CRADLE OF FILTH Lovecraft...	Koch Records-Music For Nations
10	CANDIRIA The Coma Imprint	Lakeshore-C.O.M.A.
11	GREAT DECEIVER A Venom Well Designed	Peaceville
12	VADER Revelations	Metal Blade
13	LOLLIPOP LUST KILL My So Called Knife	Artemis
14	BEYOND THE EMBRACE Against The Elements	Metal Blade
15	MANOWAR Warriors Of The World	Metal Blade
16	OVERKILL Wrecking Everything - Live	Spitfire
17	THE RISE Signal To Noise	Ferret
18	ORIGIN Informis Infnitas Inhumanitas	Relapse
19	KORN Untouchables	Immortal-Epic
20	WAGE OF SIN The Product Of Deceit And Loneliness	Immigrant Sun
20	DIO Killing The Dragon	Spitfire
22	W.A.S.P. Dying For The World	Sanctuary
23	CHEVELLE Wonder What's Next 4-Song Sampler	Epic
24	TERROR 2000 Faster Disaster	Nuclear Blast
25	ATREYU Suicide Notes And Butterfly Kisses	Victory

RPM TOP 10



1	DJ SHADOW The Private Press	MCA
2	HIGH CONTRAST True Colours	Breakbeat Science
3	JOHN DIGWEED MMII	FFSR/WSM
4	APHRODITE Aftershock	V2
5	ATJAZZ Labresults	Mantis Recordings
6	STEVE LAWLER Lights Out	Global Underground
7	PREFUSE 73 '92 Vs. '02 Collection EP	Warp
8	MOBY 18	V2
9	JAZZANOVA In Between	Jazzanova-Compost
10	VARIOUS ARTISTS Defining Tech	Orbisonic



JAZZ TOP 10

1	WAYNE SHORTER Footprints Live!	Verve
2	TRIO 3 Open Ideas	Palmetto
3	WILLIAM PARKER QUARTET Raining...	Thirsty Ear Recordings
4	SCOTT COLLEY Initial Wisdom	Palmetto
5	DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND Medicated Magic	Ropeadope
6	E.S.T. Strange Place For Snow	Columbia
7	MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD Uninvisible	Blue Note
8	CASSANDRA WILSON Belly Of The Sun	Blue Note
9	RAY BROWN TRIO Some Of My Best Friends...	Telarc
10	CHET BAKER Deep In A Dream...	Thirsty Ear

HIP-HOP TOP 25



1	PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS O.S.T. (12 inch)	Om
2	ATMOSPHERE Modern Man's Hustle	Rhyme Sayers
3	DJ KING SHAMEEK D.R.S. b/w City Wise	Keep It Raw-Landspeed
4	EMANON Emcees Like Me b/w Andyadon'tstop	Single Tone
5	AFU-RA Stick Up b/w Hip-Hop	Koch Entertainment
6	BABU THE DILATED JUNKIE Duck Season (The Beans...)...	Sequence
7	SLUM VILLAGE Tainted	Capitol
8	DILATED PEOPLES Certified Official	ABB-Capitol
9	EL-P Deep Space 9mm	Def Jux
10	FOREIGN LEGION Happy Drunk	Insidious Urban
11	MARS ILL Redefine	Ill Boogie
12	YUKONN MC Sweet Baby b/w The Underrated River	Emerge
13	FLOETRY Floetic (12 inch)	DreamWorks
14	DEL THA FUNKEE HOMOSAPIEN One Big Trip	Red Urban
15	BAS-1 F/ FANATIK Instant Rap Star	Bomb Hip-Hop
16	STYLES F/ PHAROAE MONCH The Life	Rawkus Entertainment
17	CONCISE Fame (f/ DJ Revolution) b/w Double Up	Jay Swing
18	MR. LIF Home Of The Brave b/w The Unorthodox	Def Jux
19	BOOM BIP Mannequin Hand Trapdoor b/w Reminder	Iex
20	CORMEGA Built For This	Landspeed
21	LEXICON Makin' Music	Spy Tech-Landspeed
22	EPIDEMIC Magnificent	Independent
23	CRAIG G Say What You Want	D&D
24	SCRATCH F/ BLACK THOUGHT... U Know The Rulez	Ropeadope-Atlantic
25	SCARFACE My Block	Skinny Gangster-Prince

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

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

Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Hip-Hop charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.



GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

STORY: BOB BLAND • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

My dad didn't spend much father-son time with me when I was a kid, even though I had no siblings to compete with for his attention. He preferred watching sports to playing them, so I spent many embarrassing afternoons in the front yard throwing a football to myself while passing motorists and pedestrians snickered at my utter lack of either athleticism or dignity. He never even let me go with him to Houston to see the Astros, as my presence likely would have impeded his ability to join his Falstaff-swilling buddies for a post-game round of pilsners and pasties at the Bayou City's famed Crystal Pistol.

But one day out of the blue, he let me hop into his lima bean-green '72 LTD for his weekly trip to the local purveyor of grooved vinyl, B&O Records. Of course, Dad's car was equipped with the latest in 8-track technology, so he usually opted for the neon-hued rectangular cartridges. I had a record player in my bedroom, but I had nothing to play on it other than some dusty 45s from my mom's high-school days. Not relishing the prospect of listening to *Sugar Shack* in perpetuity, I made the bold move of asking the old man to buy me Bad Company's *Straight Shooter* album (mainly because promotional posters of said record were plastered throughout the store, and I thought the dice on the cover looked really cool).

Instead of taking advantage of this rare opportunity to redeem himself for nearly a decade of lousy parenting by spending a mere \$5.99 on his only son, the miserly bastard directed me toward the 25-cent used record bin. Thank God for his unloving chintz, because it was in that very bin I found my salvation—in the form of white guys with afros. They weren't just funk, they were Grand Funk! I thought no wiser expenditure of a single quarter could possibly exist anywhere else on the entire planet. And boy, was I ever right!

From the moment my dime-store stylus picked up the opening riff of "Got This Thing On The Move," I knew this pasty-skinned wuss would someday grow up to become a Fender-wielding maniac with a pelt-covered chest. I couldn't wait for each week's father-son voyage to B&O, so I could acquire Grand Funk Railroad's entire

back catalog one quarter at a time. I didn't even let the nude gate-fold in *We're An American Band* faze me. This was rock 'n' frecking roll, man! Who needs to play catch with your old man, when you can screech every word of "Footstompin' Music" at full volume without the aid of anything more closely resembling a microphone than your Hair Bear Bunch toothbrush?

As the years passed, I eventually fell victim to the heartless whore known as Top 40 radio. Soon, the disco era was upon us, and I unfortunately still lacked the maturity and judgment needed to avoid becoming temporarily infected by that plague. It wasn't until my parents made the questionable decision to send me to the testosterone-depleted wasteland of tennis camp that I rediscovered my three-headed muse.

I ended up hanging around with this little rich kid named Collier who turned out to be the son of the local funeral home director. I became overwhelmed by the compulsion to corrupt this sheltered child by any means possible. And seeing how I really wasn't prone to graffiti, vandalism or anything else that could be remotely categorized as juvenile delinquency, I decided to dig up an old Grand Funk cassette I had made by placing my "portable" Realistic tape recorder in front of my turntable speakers, knowing that when my finger depressed the "play" button, Little Lord Collier would never be the same.

Sure enough, I had managed to procure my very own pint-sized protégé, and even drew enough strength from the Funk to pick a fight with another rich kid, who unfortunately was both bigger and older than Collier. And even though that trust-fund truant showed me the business end of a Rod Laver-model tennis racquet, I never lost my love for Farner, Brewer and Schacher... despite losing a tooth or two courtesy of an elevated ground stroke.

Texas-based writerly type Bob Bland is not now, nor has he ever been, your captain. (Or anyone else's for that matter.)

★★★★ Rolling Stone
"Their finest record since Daydream Nation" Q



SONIC
youth

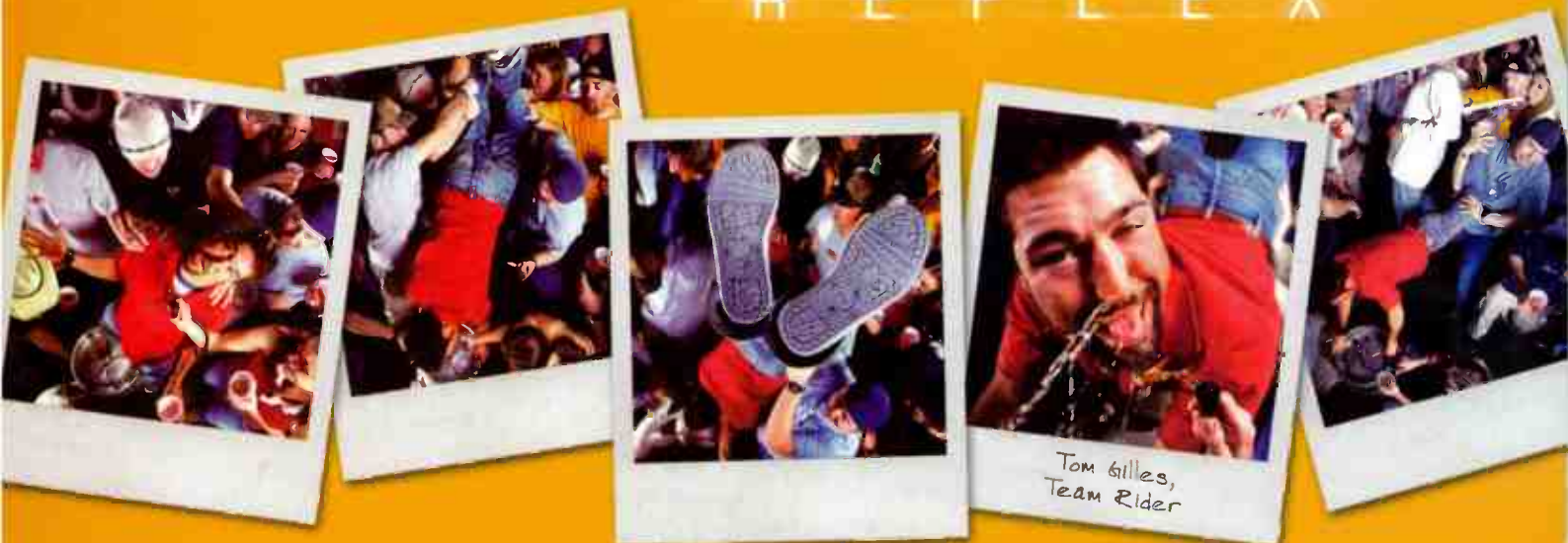
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World Radio History



AIRWALK

R E F L E X



Tom Gilles,
Team Elder