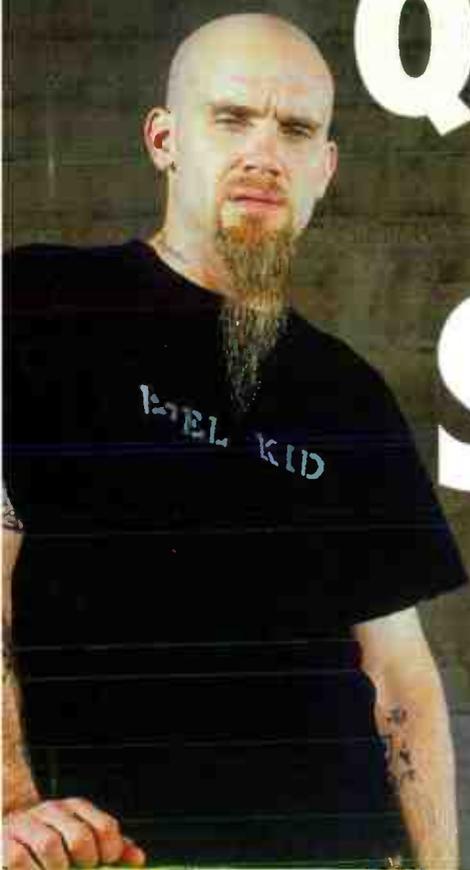


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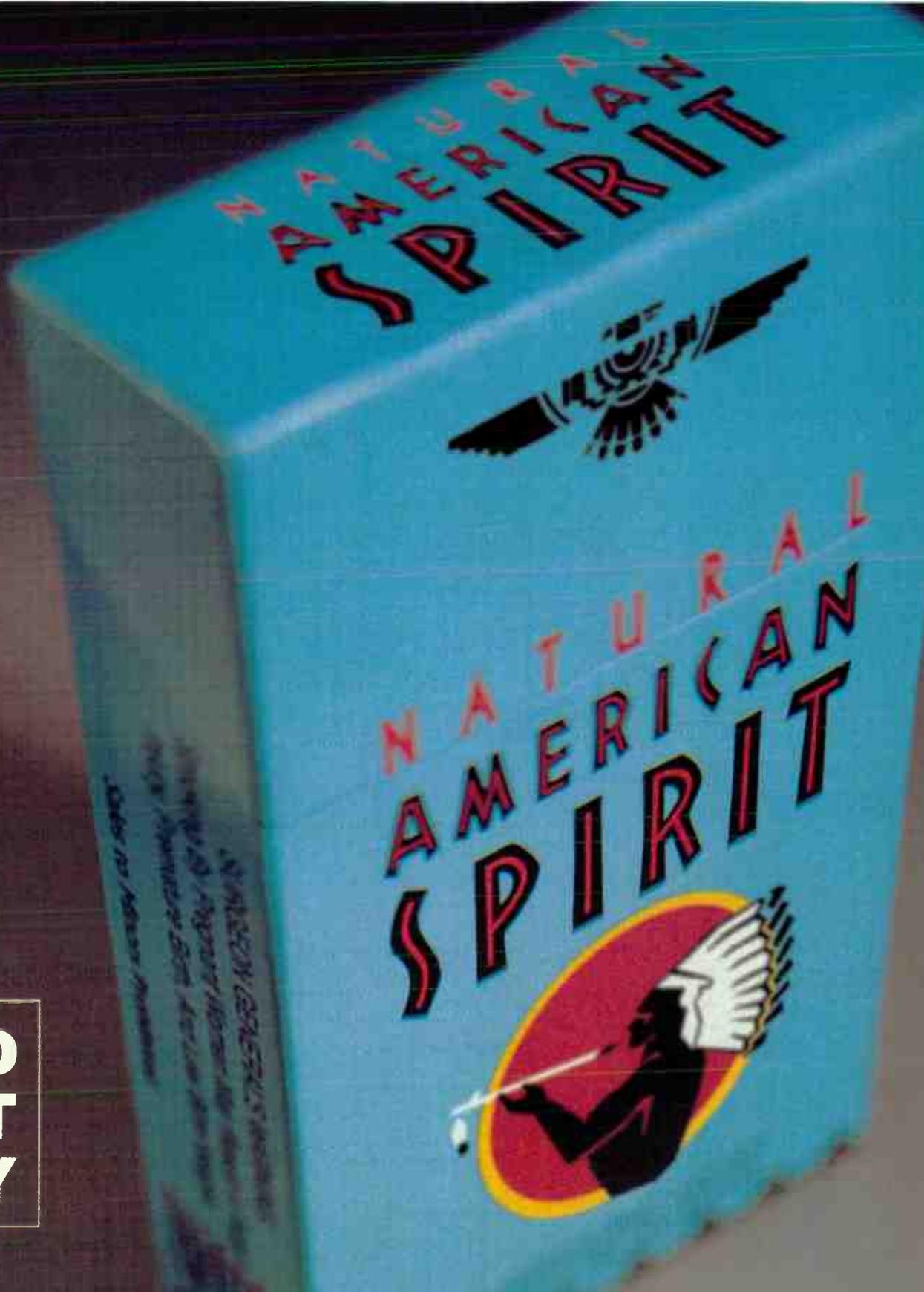
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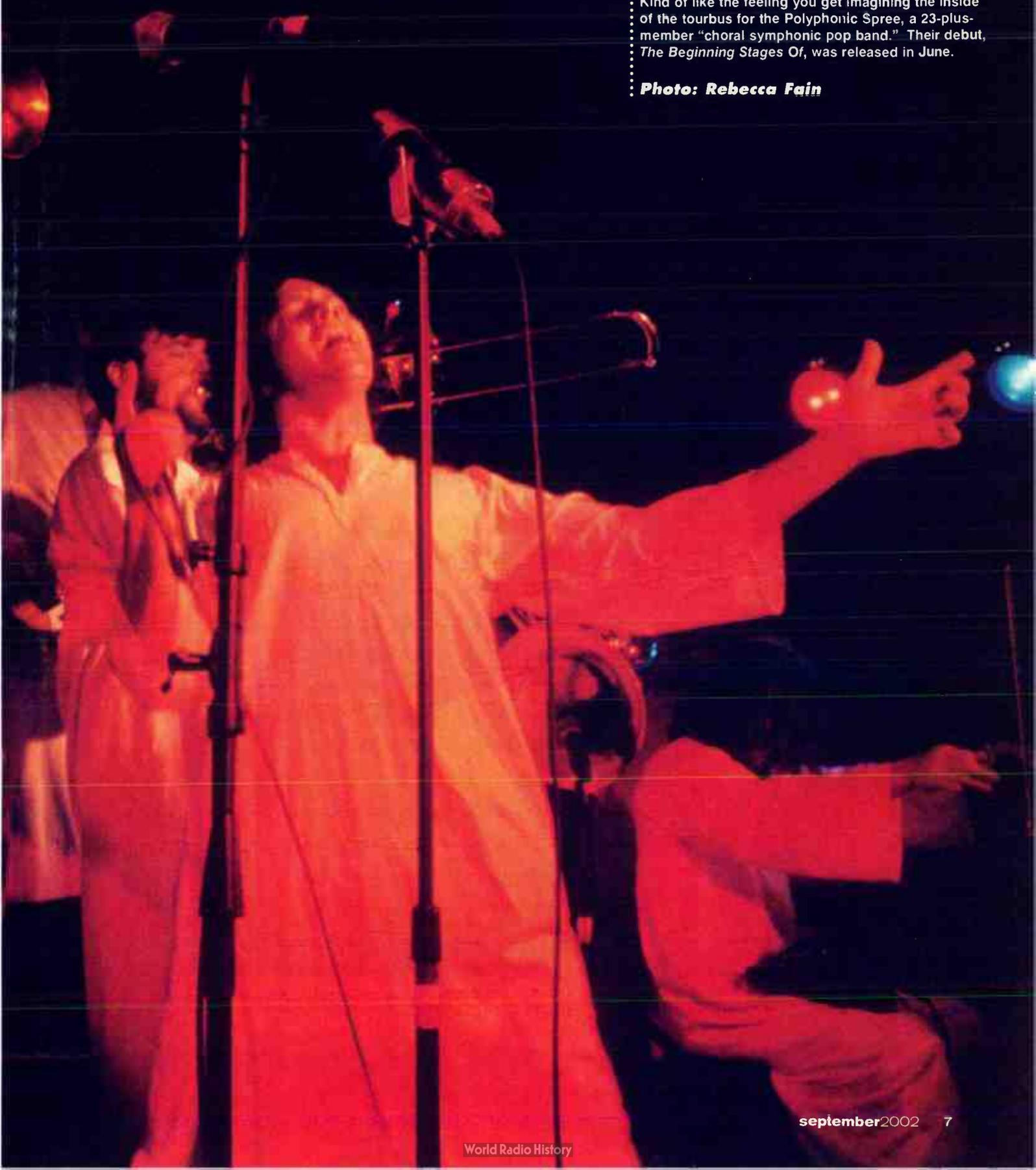
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THE POLYPHONIC SPREE

MERCURY LOUNGE, NEW YORK, 6.27.02
Colorful, but it can't be too healthy. Didn't you always feel a little queasy after downing a tube of Spree? Kind of like the feeling you get imagining the inside of the tourbus for the Polyphonic Spree, a 23-plus-member "choral symphonic pop band." Their debut, *The Beginning Stages Of*, was released in June.

Photo: Rebecca Fain



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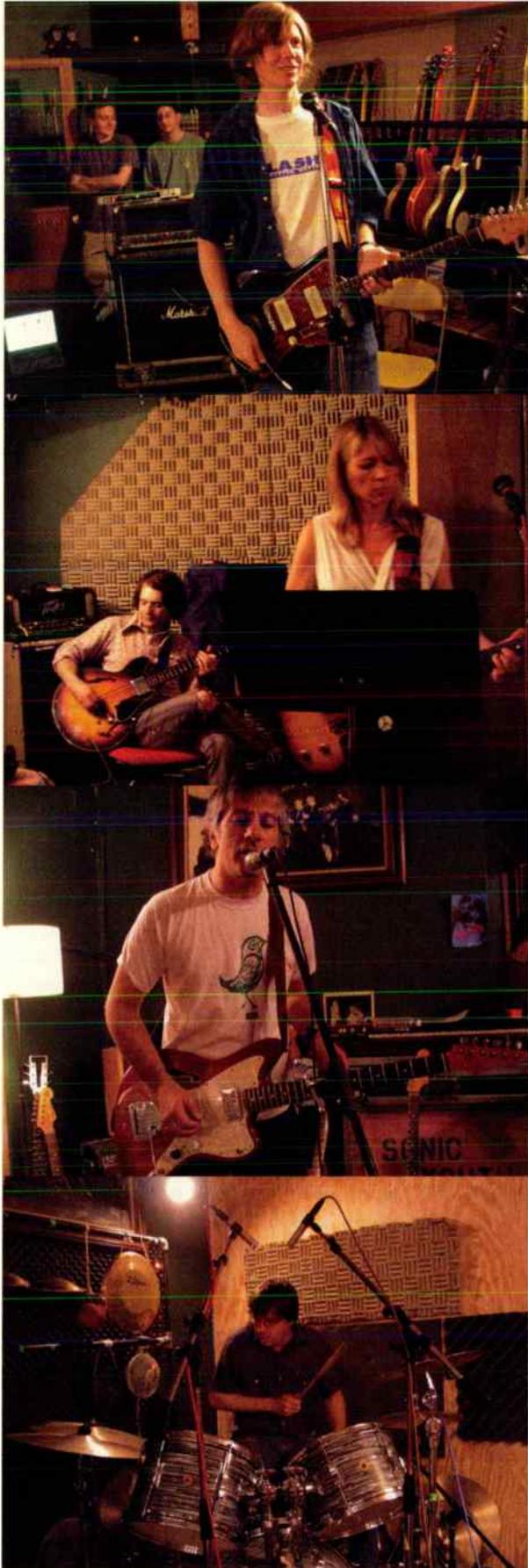
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Photo Credit: Keri-Ann Laurito

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STEFANO GIOVANNINI

THURSTON MOORE, JIM O'ROURKE, KIM GORDON, LEE RANALDO, STEVE SHELLEY

One From The Road: Sonic Youth

Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo grace our e-mail inbox with the 411 on their European *Murray Street* tour.

Where are you right now?

LR: Cagliari, Sardegna—*island off the west coast of Italy.*

What were last night's accommodations?

LR: Fine Italian hotel on the edge of town—not in the center of the city, unfortunately, which is always nicer, but a short cab ride away.

Who in the band has the most annoying sleeping habits?

TM: We don't sleep together... well, Kim and Coco and I do. This is hardly annoying, in fact, it is quite pleasant. Coco's not-wanting-to-sleep habit can be a bit wearying.

How are you traveling?

LR: We are taking trains and flying on this trip, as there were only "dirty, smelly" buses available for such a short tour as ours (five weeks). I prefer this in many ways to the "rolling hotel" life, as it sort of "wears you out," as the guys from Suede would say.

What's currently being played on the tour vehicle soundsystem?

TM: Sparks: *Kimono My House*; Jackson C. Frank: *Blues Run The Game*.

What rituals do you have that are part of every tour?

TM: Seeking out record shops and watching Jim O'Rourke drop \$300 on a Henri Chopin 7-inch single (with signed print).

What song request are you most tired of hearing?

TM and LR: "Teenage Riot"

What's been the best show of the tour thus far?

LR: One of the best was two nights ago in Belgium, at the Werchter festival in a huge tent before about 15,000 people. We got stuck in traffic and arrived late and had to basically jump onstage—although we had a minute beforehand to meet the two kids from the White Stripes (they were nice). We only had 60 minutes to play and were totally unprepared and just kicked it out big time and it was loose and fun and, I thought, very powerful. Crowd seemed to dig it, even with all the new material thrown in.

What question should be asked of a touring band but never is?

TM: Anyone care for a backrub?

NEWSFEED : The fourth Foo Fighters disc, *1X1* (recorded in three weeks), set for Oct. 22 release • William Orbit joins Dan The Automator as another producer >>>>

Tough Love



NEKO CASE Put on any of her three LPs, and you'll understand in a heartbeat why Neko Case is well-qualified to ruminate on your troubled love life: The woman clearly knows about love, heart-break and everything in between, and ain't afraid to tell it like it is. On her new *Blacklisted* (Bloodshot), she reaches a level of dirge-like beauty that's addictively painful—much like some of your relationships, it seems. *Maybe if you'd asked a rock personality first, you wouldn't be spending so much time "watching movies" alone in your bedroom: loveorn@cmj.com.*

I only talk to guys when I'm wasted. I'd like to have an actual relationship, but I don't want to spend the rest of my life with a bottle of vodka in my hand. Should I just join AA right now?

—Dana, Falls Church, Va.

Vodka makes people smell like the hospital, which is a bad thing. If you're not going to stop drinking, switch to bourbon, it smells buttery. Who doesn't love butter? You sound like you want to quit though (good for you!), so get advice and loving support from your friends and family. If they freak out on you, avoid them. AA may be good if you're willing to confront your habit, though its underlying

quasi-religious aspects may creep you out. But it sounds like you've got the right idea. Spend some time being self-reflective. Be good and kind to yourself, the boyfriend will come later.

I share a studio apartment with another girl, who was the sweetest, quietest thing for the first three months we lived together. Then she got a boyfriend. She seems to think it's okay to have (loud) sex at all times of the day and night. I don't see why she can't just go to his place, but she says I'm unreasonable and if I had a boyfriend (which I don't), she wouldn't care, so neither should I. Is there a compromise to be found?

—Michelle, New York, N.Y.

Perhaps the "silence" of your "sweet" roommate was a stealth cover for a "listen-to-me-while-I-fuck-like-an-oinking-pig"-style fetishist. If she won't listen to your very reasonable request, I suggest you march out that door and get yourself a bona fide coprophiliac, enema-lovin', shit-spraying performance artist boyfriend. I assure you, this will put an end to her alpha-female bullshit stranglehold on your nights at home. Performance artists need love too.

I got really drunk and went on and on to my girlfriend about how much I wanted to marry her someday. Now she leaves copies of bridal magazines around and seems to think we're a permanent item. I don't want to break up, but I don't want to walk down any aisles either. Should I fess up and tell her it was the alcohol talking, or will that totally scare her off?

—Sebastian, Lighthouse Point, Fla.

Well Sebastian, I wouldn't start off using any rash phrases like "it was the alcohol talking" unless you want to end up on *Unsolved Mysteries*. Also, getting married in general is a really bad idea book-ended by a tacky, expensive party that you don't have fun at, and either a hearse (à la *Unsolved Mysteries*) or a grizzly divorce. So before you go messing with such dangerous ju ju by speaking its earthly name, I suggest you slap your own face, see how it feels, and accept that this will be her response. You may get out of this with lots of begging and profuse apologies.

Love, Neko

WEIRD RECORD

Appetite for destruction...

To put Negativland in the Weird Record section is almost redundant: Constantly sued, always infringing and never normal, every one of their records belongs under that heading. They've upped the ante with *Deathsentences Of The Polished And Structurally Weak* (Seeland), a multimedia project focusing on the disturbing beauty of car crashes. The CD is 45 minutes of unlistenable noise with nary a melody nor beat to be found. But *Deathsentences'* beauty is in its presentation: The bankruptcy-inducing packaging includes a lavish, glossy 64-page book (full of photos of various deceased autos and transcriptions of the grammar-defying letters found within) and a die-cut accident report envelope, where you can record the details of the gory accidents you'll surely have while listening to this jarring disc. >>>IAN SIMS



of Beck's other new record, due next year • Massive Attack founder Daddy G, still a member of the band, won't be featured on their upcoming album • Mos Def, the Neptunes, Beck and mem-

“Except for the fans, [Chicago] has never given us **any respect**, and at this point I don't even care. So we **took a shit** in the dressing room and moved on to Detroit.”

—Filter's Richard Patrick, mistaking his feces for a political statement, which could explain a lot, on the band's site www.officialfilter.com.



MY FAVORITE GEAR:

On the road again with Frank Black's mobile studio

Multitrack recording is tedious, boring, and Frank Black never wants to do it again. That's why he records everything live to two-track tape—nary a bit of Pro Tools magic to be found—on his ever-growing mobile studio. The studio fits into 10 rack cases, takes about half a day to set up, and consists of a ragtag set of equipment Black has scored from everywhere from churches to county A/V departments. Black's pride and joy is the older analog gear that contributes to his raw, *Aftermath*-era Stones sound: a late-'70s Ampex tape machine, a litter of mic preamps from the '40s and '50s, and an early-'70s Neve Kelso mixing board. "Live to two-track" means no overdubs and no post-recording mixing of any kind; the mix has to be done in pre-production and the performance has to be perfect, which sometimes leads to sacrificing mix quality for the best take. "All the Catholics records are chock full of those moments," Black says. "That was the best performance by the band, but the engineer says, 'The lead

guitar is pretty buried in the mix.' If [it's] an awkward problem, we'll continue to do it. But if it just sounds cool [we'll leave it]. Like when you listen to certain records, like a Stones record, there are things that aren't overly clarified. And you start to get this nice, slightly blown-out, leathery synchronicity between the ingredients." Black's plan is to eventually put the studio *literally* on the road. "We don't have a 'recording truck,' but that's where we're headed," he says. "We'd like to put some of our gear into a truck, so we can take all of it to Fuddydaddy's this Saturday for the hot gig, lay down some snakes and use the nightclub as our studio. We just want to do it to see if we can do it. To be able to set it up at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Fresno. It's our fantasy thing. 'Hey, we know this guy with a silo! We're gonna set it up there!'" >>>TOM MALLON

Feel the leathery synchronicity of Black's Devil's Workshop and Black Letter Days (spinART).

bers of the **Strokes** named amongst judges for the second Shortlist Prize For Artistic Achievement, the U.S. version >>>>

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THE COOPER TEMPLE CLAUSE

See This Through And Leave Morning (U.K.)

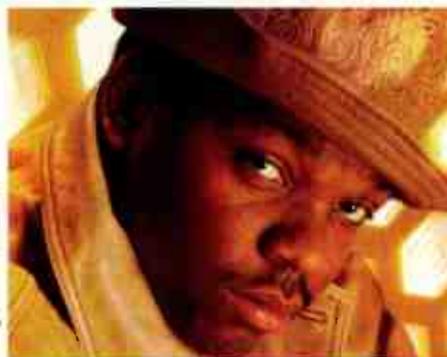
What it is: The debut album from an oddly named Reading, England six-piece that makes guitar rock sound so cool again, it's scary.

Why you want it: Unconcerned with the concept of developing a signature sound, CTC's music runs the gamut from electronic experimentation to big choruses to songs to wage war by. The approach is reminiscent of a darker Super Furry Animals, minus the pop leanings and cartoon aliens. Opener "Did You Miss Me?" starts off as a softly spoken introspective bleep-and-bloop affair, only to explode into something an amphetamine-crazed Jim Morrison might have made collaborating with Death In Vegas. After that, there's the fiery melodic punk of "Film-Maker" and the potentially Armageddon-inducing techno/guitar blast of "Panzer Attack," and "Who Needs Enemies" sounds like the great single Oasis could make if they stepped into the 21st century. Plus, there's a musical challenge disguised as a singalong called "Let's Kill Music" and an epic closing track, "Murder Song," that unashamedly clocks in at almost nine minutes. Don't wait for a possible U.S. release. You need this album in your life now. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link: www.coopertempleclause.co.uk
R.I.Y.L: Primal Scream's *XTRMNR*, early Oasis, Supergrass

5 SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT
MAKE SLUM VILLAGE'S
T3 GO "BANANAS"



1. N.E.R.D., *In Search Of...*

I wasn't expecting this album to be an alternative rock kind of album. And being that they're in the mainstream, I like to see an artist cover two aspects of music at the same time; that's how I see Slum Village.

2. John Mayer, *Room For Squares*

I just heard the single but I'm gonna go out and buy it. He plays guitar. I seen him live on... what's my man from MTV that got his own show now? Carson Daly! I seen him on Carson Daly's [*Last Call*] and he did this guitar; I thought it was just so bananas. I was instantly a fan.

3. Slum Village, *Dirty District* mix

One of my own albums, we have a mix-tape album out right now. Up and coming Detroit MCs, doing their thing.

4. Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66, *Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66*

An old-school classic. That's like samba music. That's inspiration, from time to time I need that to get me through. That's my joint.

5. Stereolab, *Dots And Loops*

I'm a real big fan of those guys. The electronic music, the way they sing their melodies, when they do these like three-part melodies and the 1-2-3 start-over beats. I like listening to them when I wanna relax and just think.

You will not hear an ounce of John Mayer's influence on Slum Village's new Trinity (Past, Present And Future) (Capitol).

Interview by Tom Mallon.

of the Mercury Prize • **JJ72** to release their Flood-produced (NIN, Depeche Mode) second album, *To Sky*, on Oct. 7 • **Meat Beat Manifesto** to release first full length since 1998, *R.U.O.K.?*, in >>>

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MASERATI
KINDERCORE RECORDS
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.



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THE TIGHT CONNECTION

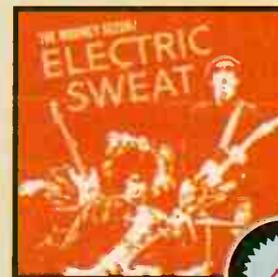
File Under: Pastiche Ice Cream. Cuts and pastes stomping house beats, Manchester grooves, hip-hop bling and electro breakdowns into their laptop and calls it pop.



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.



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.



MASTERS OF THE HEMISPHERE
KINDERCORE RECORDS

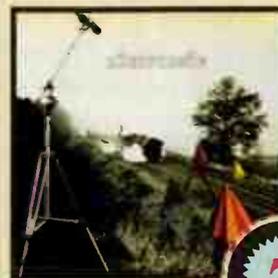
PROTEST A DARK ANNIVERSARY

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.



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).



DUREFORSOG
KODL 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.

ANGRY GEEK

AT THE MOVIES

► **BY VINCENT G. CURRY** Sporting a large all-star indie cast (Adrian Grenier, Rosario Dawson, Michael Imperioli and the ubiquitous Steve Buscemi), **Love In The Time Of Money** is the latest adaptation of the old "ring" story where we follow one person, then the person they encounter, then on to the next, until we're back to our original character. In this case, the common bond isn't a passing ring or currency (as in the superior *20 Bucks*), but sex. There was a porn film 20 years ago based on the same idea called *Ring Of Desire*, and it wasn't until seeing this that I realized just how good *that* film was. **The viewpoint of sex here is so dull and relentlessly bleak, I can't believe it's not French...** ●●● A more perverse (but ironically healthier) take on sex is **Secretary**, starring James Spader—who is to movie sex freaks what Dennis Hopper is to movie wackos. And like Hopper, even though you've seen him do this before, if you really pay attention you realize he always does it differently. In **Secretary**, **his sexual fetish is domination, which turns out to be just what the secretary likes**. So much so that she stops the self-mutilation for which she was formerly institutionalized. And believe it or not, this movie is a romantic comedy, bordering on genuinely sweet, complete with a happy ending... ●●● Initially, I thought the trailer for **Shaolin Soccer** was a short film satire. Not only was it real, but it was a big hit in China, taking all the over-the-top conventions of Hong Kong action films and putting them to maximum use in this comedy about a group of **down-and-out former Shaolin students who use their martial arts skills to play soccer**. If that wasn't enough, throw in the occasional Steven Spielberg and John Woo parody, at least one dance number and a goalie that dresses and acts like Bruce Lee. This may be my favorite film of 2002. No kidding.

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



Answer Me

Mike Doughty loves boy bands and pays no attention to "groovy people music."

Soul Coughing's "deep slacker jazz" came to a lurching stop in 2000, but you've by no means heard the last of smoothly spastic former lead man Mike Doughty. A shinier, happier, busier Doughty has emerged; he's pumped out a solo disc, collaborated with BT (on last summer's club hit "Never Gonna Come Back Down") and They Might Be Giants, released a book of poetry, *Slanky*, and fiercely toured the U.S. solo. He reaches a new crescendo by releasing *Smofe + Smang: Live In Minneapolis*, recorded at the Woman's Club Theater this past February (available in a limited edition through MusicToday.com), while searching for a new record-label romance and planning yet another tour. >>>KATIE HASTY

You stay in close contact with your fans on your very chatty website. [www.superspecialquestions.com]

I try to write something at least once a week, even if it's just like, "I like ice cream sandwiches." It's a cool way to run a website. It became this efficient way of getting out information, of dealing with people, dealing with rumors. I have this really loyal audience there—they're a lot more interested in themselves than me, which is the perfect condition for an audience. The great thing about it, as far as bulletin boards on the Web go, is that there aren't a bunch of guys writing stupid stuff. It's friendly. But it's a delicate balance where anybody could come in and write, "Fuck shit dick, fuck you up the ass!" etc., etc. Actually, I believe I'll go write it right now.

On Smofe + Smang you claim to be a "patsy for The Man." Are you paddling for the mainstream?

It's amazingly... horrible, what's happening in the music business. I really enjoyed the boy bands and the pop music, and when it came out I was like, "This is great." But now what's going on in the world is really boring and nobody is buying it. Being number one on TRL in 1999 meant you ruled the world, and now it's just like... meh. But clearly I'm a fringe artist. I've never really paid much attention to what was going on in alternative, the groovy-people music. But I understand that I'm very much a part of the world of groovy-people music.

Would you prefer not to be a "fringe artist"?

It's interesting because in the '90s, I was extremely cynical and I thought, "I really just want to make money, and I don't care about music and I don't care about art." But in these past few years I've discovered that I'm really an artist, in a very pure sense, that I'd be doing this even if I wasn't doing it for a living.

So is this living your dream?

Yes. Well [laughs]... no. When I was living my dream I had a really miserable time. But now I'm living my life, and I'm having an amazing time.

October • Obligatory **Radiohead** update: After trying out 15 new songs on their summer tour, band will record their sixth LP in Los Angeles this fall, scheduled for March 2003 release * * * * *

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World Radio History



SAHARA HOTNIGHTS

A quick scan through Sahara Hotnights' online tour diary offers one major revelation about the Swedish rock quartet: These girls love food. With gastronomic passion, every restaurant is detailed, every delectable dish they've consumed is listed. Why? "Hey—it's pretty much like, whenever we have some time off from playing, eating out is the only thing happening that's worth mentioning," says frontwoman Maria Andersson (favorite food: raggmunkar, a fried potato dish served with lingonberry jam). Her kitchen in her hometown of Robert's Fors is too tiny to cook in, alas; besides, she's been spending all of her free time promoting Sahara Hotnights' barnstorming Jennie

Bomb (Jetset), or canoodling with her high-profile beau, Howlin' Pelle Almqvist of the much-ballyhooed Hives. Named for an Australian racehorse, the group formed when its members were barely teens, and fought its way up from death-metal bills to its current next-big-thing, Donnas-but-better status. Check out song titles like "Alright Alright (Here's My Fist Where's The Fight)"—these ladies are ready to rumble. Andersson's only worry? IKEA. "I haven't had IKEA food yet, but I know all about it," she says of the furniture stores luring shoppers with Swedish meatballs and other traditional fare. "I'm just really scared that they're not representing Swedish food in a very good way." >>>TOM LANHAM



DAN MONICK

BOOM BIP

I don't want to be known as a beat-maker," Bryan Hollon, a.k.a. Boom Bip, says emphatically, "and I definitely don't want to be known as a DJ." Considering his work with left-of-center rapper Doseone, that sentiment may come as a surprise. However, one listen to *Seed To Sun*, Boom Bip's debut solo album (and the first full-length release on new Warp imprint Lex Records), makes it clear that this is a man with a head full of sounds all his own. "There are very few samples on it, and there's a lot of live instrumentation," he explains. "It's just me playing stuff, and then I go back and sample myself playing it and kind of chop it up in different ways." The disc does see a few MCs, including Doseone, pop in to lend their talents, but for the most part, the remarkably offbeat blend of down-tempo hip-hop, acoustic rock and ambient electronica plays out on its own. "I really enjoyed actually trying to make songs that stood alone, that didn't need the help of a vocalist or some insane instrumentalist," says Hollon. "I've always been kind of a reclusive, isolated person anyway... So, it was just natural for me to do an album that was all just me." >>>DOUG LEVY

MIA DOI TODD

I made this skirt," Mia Doi Todd notes, fluffing her ruffled maxi-dress. "And I made this handbag too, like a walking mandala design. I've sold a bit of my stuff, but I gave that up because the marketing aspect is just too hard to handle." She sighs, and frowns. "Maybe someday I'll have the time. But that'll be my next career, my third." Todd, the Irish/Japanese daughter of famed sculptor Michael Todd, isn't exaggerating. She studied Noh, Butoh and Kabuki dance/theatre with traditional instructors in New York and Tokyo, and tried her hand at professional acting. Too unique-looking for prime parts, she took to writing her own dialogue: processionals, acoustic-plucked songs, songs that, on her fourth outing, *The Golden State* (Columbia), owe as much to her Tokyo teachings as they do to coffeehouse folk. Producer Mitchell Froom only adds to her already ethereal mix. So career number two, Todd concludes, seems to be going fairly well so far. And she's pleased that it's more passive than aggressive. "There's a way of interacting with the world that Japanese people have, and I think I've absorbed some of that. It's a quietness, a quiet exterior." >>>TOM LANHAM

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HEM

It started with a "vocalist wanted" ad that Hem songwriter Dan Messe placed in *The Village Voice*. The demos he received were predictably awful, except for one scuffed, self-recorded tape of traditional lullabies, sung by a woman who cautioned that she wasn't exactly a "singer." "That this homemade, tossed-off thing could be the most magical thing you've ever listened to—that to me, was such a revelation," Messe says of finding Sally Ellyson three years ago. Emboldened that fate was on their side, they undertook recording *Rabbit Songs* (Waveland/Bar-None). The album became part labor of love, part vanity project, with bandmembers risking bankruptcy to pay for the 18-piece orches-

tras that round out what Messe calls "haunted country lullabies." Unlike most music coming out of New York at the time, "We didn't want to be ironic at all," Messe says. "We really just wanted to write something that was straightforward, emotionally speaking." Released in the U.K. in 2000, it took two years for *Rabbit Songs* to make it back to the States. Still, by the time the band went on tour with Beth Orton in August, the disc had been a Number 1 top seller at Amazon.com, and Hem didn't have any copies of the album left to sell. It was vindication for what Messe says Hem knew all along: "Even though we can't describe what it is, if people hear it, they're gonna buy it." >>>KERRY MILLER

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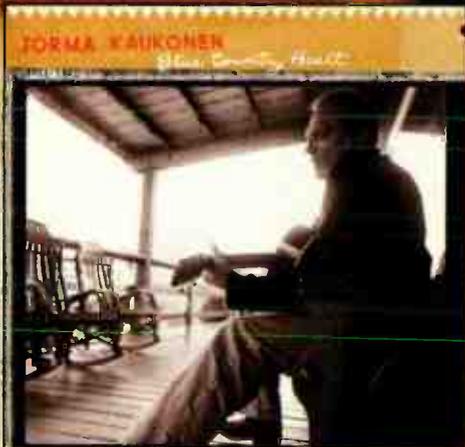
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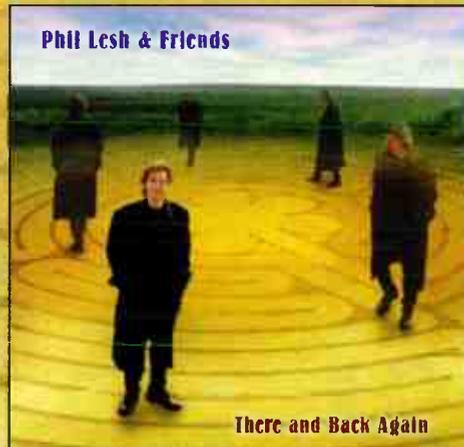
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READY



SET

OK Go was opaque and arty, then they decided to make like their single and get over it.

STORY: JOHN DUGAN • PHOTO: JUSTIN SCURTI

OK Go enjoy mocking the boy-band phenomenon as much as anyone: Touring with the traveling version of the NPR *This American Life* radio show in 2000, the Chicago foursome brought down the house with an 'N Sync-rivaling dance routine. But wait—was it a parody, or homage? After all, the band shares some career secrets with the bubblegum superstars—as singer/guitarist Damian Kulash recounts, *This American Life* host Ira Glass was the Lou Pearlman-like svengali steering their career.

"One drunken night, he gave me a lecture," Kulash explains. Glass put it to him point-blank, asking the Brown-educated frontman the question all Ivy League rockers eventually contend with: "Do you want to be clever, or honest?" The result was "a strange breakthrough of writer's block" for Kulash, and a tune, "1000 Miles Per Hour," which sounds vaguely like the spirit of "Born To Run" channeled through the shuffling rhythm of "Wonderwall."

For OK Go, whose self-titled debut full-length for Capitol is full of smart-ass remarks, knowing smirks and indictments of pretentiousness of all kinds, "1000 Miles" represents a broadening outlook. When the band first recorded the record, Kulash explains, "there wasn't enough of an honest moment on it," but "a lot of sarcastic" ones. It was "self-consciously arty. Unfocused." Absorbing Glass's influence, the band scrapped what they'd finished and went back in the studio for a chunk of 2001 to do it all over again, this time with heavies Howard Willing and Tom Lord-Alge engineering and mixing.

The end result is a debut that sounds ready for the radio, but stuffed with smart, catchy verses that give way to sunny, synthed-out choruses. It's not an opaque, arty indie-rock record, like the one that Kulash, bassist Tim Nordwind, drummer Dan Konopka

and guitarist/keyboardist Andy Duncan sacked back in Chicago. It houses melodies and ideas that everybody can, and should, get. The single "Get Over It" opens with a "We Will Rock You" stomping rhythm; "Don't Ask Me" tumbles along with an "Antmusic" beat. Sassy and new-wavey, "You're So Damn Hot" is spiteful anti-romance à la the Cars, and "What To Do," about some exclusive "art school friends," recalls the melodic guitar-pop of Badfinger, except you can spend an afternoon unraveling the specifics of Kulash's diss. "Shortly Before The End" and "Return" might even nod to shoegazing Brits like Ride and Moose, if the vocals didn't cut through the haze so much, and "C-C-C-Cinnamon Lips" is bubblegum, fairground fare, off-off-Broadway at times, nearly irritating in its saccharine fixation.

Still, fans of the band's first two self-released EPs needn't worry: OK Go haven't lost their wit or sense of humor in a desire to get candid. There's plenty of Kulash's winking wordplay, from incisive critiques of the kids in the hipster neighborhood to a smirking admission that, "sweetie," despite many shortcomings, "you're so damn hot" that nothing else matters. And then there's one song about a cat named Cybil moving to Hollywood ("Bye Bye Baby").

Back at home in Chicago, experimental music flourishes—there's a smokin' free jazz scene there, for chrissakes—and right now every art school diploma with a laptop is plying glitchy beats in the lofts. But this somehow makes OK Go's right-out-of-the-showroom polish gleam even brighter.

"A lot of the most notable Chicago music has worn its intelligence on its sleeve," Kulash notes. But he feels that good rock music can be accessible, too. "It doesn't seem that there was anything particularly stupid about Cheap Trick or Queen, [What's so wrong with] stuff everybody can get?" **MM**

HEAD OUT ON THE HIGHWAY

Chevelle drops the clutch on *Wonder What's Next* and burns rubber on Ozzfest.

STORY: AMY SCIARRETTO • PHOTO: CHAPMAN BAEHLER

Chevelle is moving out.

"We're throwing everything into storage," lead singer/guitarist Pete Loeffler offers, more excitement than mover's strain in his voice. "We're going on the road for the next nine weeks, and we're packing everything up. It's like the idea that you have to clean your room before you leave so it's clean when you come back. But we'll probably be crashing on couches when we get back."

The band's not hesitant to scrub away any traces of sedentary life and trade them for road dust and dirt. But the house isn't the only thing about Chevelle that's clean as your mom's kitchen floor. This is a band of clean-cut Midwestern brothers, the kind your momma prays you'll bring home and marry. Rounded out by drummer Sam and bassist Joe, Chevelle may take its name from a tough, classic muscle car, but they're as adorable and sweet as a basket of puppies.

But make no mistake: Just because they're nice guys doesn't mean they're wimps. The vitriol maintained on *Wonder What's Next*, the threesome's second album and first volley for Epic Records, will attest that they still have plenty to be ornery about.

The brothers Loeffler (former carpenters and all self-taught musicians) are coming off a difficult couple of years. While they toured with the likes of Powerman 5000, Filter, Fu Manchu and Anthrax in support of 1999's Steve Albini-produced *Point #1*, the band's relationship with its former label (Squint) quickly soured and Chevelle found itself tangled in red tape, making music but not knowing if they would ever be able to put anything else out. Breaking up was an option. *Wonder What's Next* is a result of their frustration and annoyance at that situation—a scorcher of an album that recalls the stop-start riffs of Meantime-era Helmet, the fluid vocal style of Tool's Maynard James Keenan and the post-hardcore vibe of Quicksand.

While *Point #1* proudly boasted a Helmet influence, *Wonder What's Next* finds the band forging its own sound. Produced by "It" knob twiddler GGGarth (Kittie, Project 86, Spineshank, Melvins), the record shows a distinct maturity. As Pete says, "The difference is huge and we're growing as songwriters. With GGGarth, we spent weeks going over each song. I wrote new verses and bridges for most of the songs. If people were to listen to the demos, the record came out quite different. Who wants to make the same record twice?"

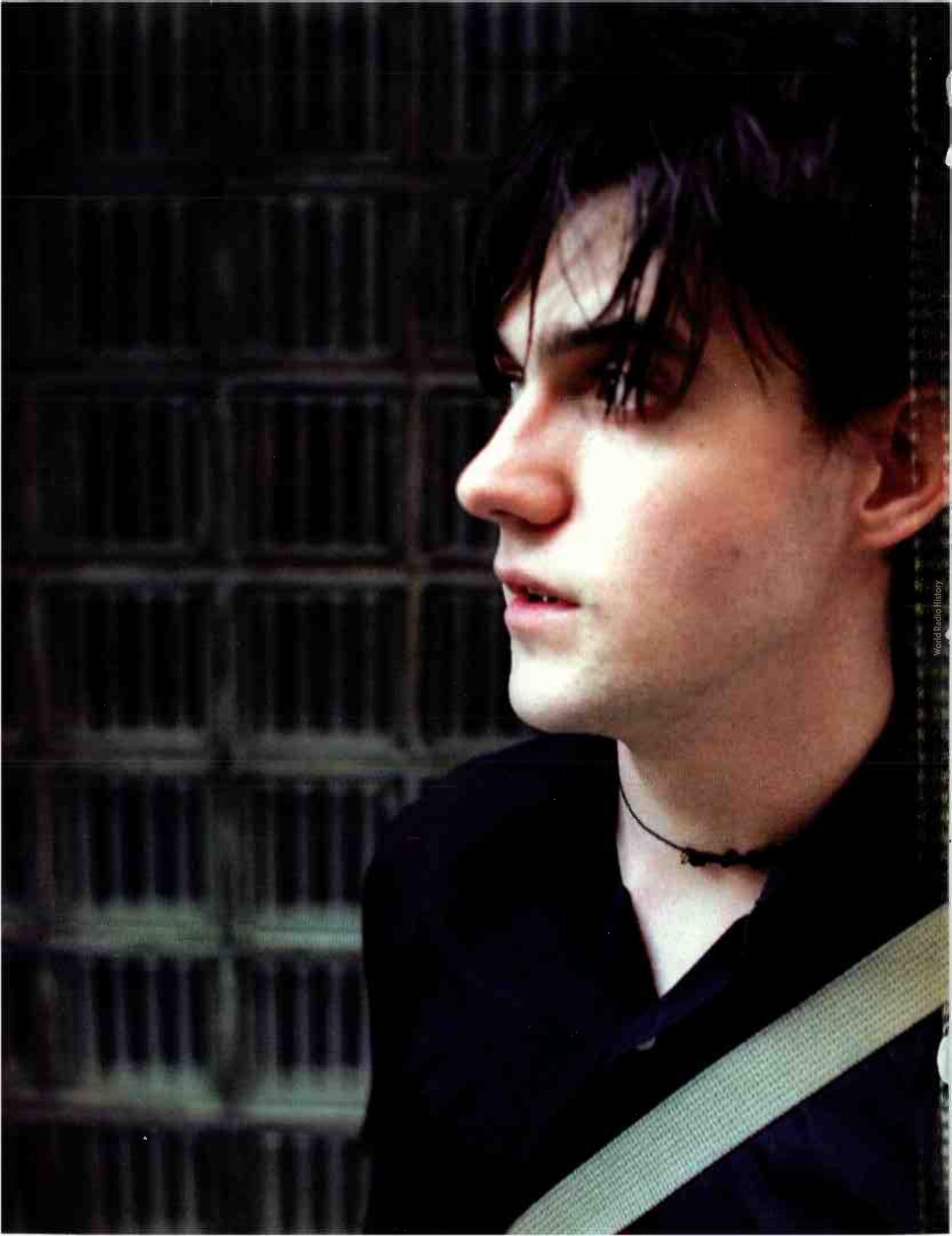
The boys are on their way to Ozzfest in support of *Wonder What's Next*, where they'll be a delightful standout among the rap-rockers and mainstream metallists on the roster this year. But as Pete explains, they've got a few good-natured concerns: "We're praying for a good slot. I don't want to perform after Hatebreed or Ill Niño! Those guys are super freakin' heavy!"

It's easy to assume that life on the road with your brothers is simpler than touring with friends, but Pete concedes that working with family has its own set of complications. "Well, you can play in a band with people you haven't lived with and you don't know their quirks or which buttons to push," he theorizes. "You can get to know them better and that's the best part of touring... getting to know people. You can grow closer when you tour with someone—that happened with my techs. But when you're with your brothers, things might get tense."

Still, their familial bond's certainly been a source of support, too. "[Our parents] have been watching *The Osbournes* show [because we're on the Ozzfest], and they all come out when we come through Chicago and Milwaukee," confesses Pete. "They're excited about all the progress we've made. They've always been really supportive, and I'm glad to have a family that's into it. Our siblings and their kids will come out, and our dad will be up front, wearing a Chevelle T-shirt." **NMM**



World Radio History



OMAHA STAKES

Bright Eyes' troubled heart wouldn't beat as loudly without the support of the Saddle Creek posse.

STORY: NICOLE KEIPER

Conor Oberst is fidgeting on his publicist's cushiony black leather couch. He excuses himself, timidly, to step out to the restroom, mustering his best polite smile; maybe he's taking a moment to compose himself, expecting another session of psychoanalysis. He's been in here all day, after all, talking about his pain.

That's a favored focus with the 22-year-old songwriter. He's revealed too much. Fans and journalists devour his lyrics as a glimpse into a troubled boy's head and need to probe further, need to understand just how badly he's been hurt. His scores of young followers want passionately to save him—that's Oberst's power: He makes you care desperately, not just about his music, but about him.

Oberst is spending the day discussing Bright Eyes' fourth full-length album, *Lifted Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear To The Ground*, out on the label he co-founded with his closest friends, Saddle Creek. The album houses more of the confessionals he's been known for since *Fevers And Mirrors*, his third LP, caught the ears and hearts of anyone with a taste for elegant indie rock or maintaining an unhealthy mothering complex. He doesn't like explaining his lyrics. He writes them all out in his records' liner notes, and can't that be enough? He good-naturedly endures all this grilling as a necessary evil, since he's chosen to share his music as a career.

He'll get a short break from psychoanalysis this afternoon. Conor Oberst is a brilliant singer/songwriter who pens heartrending lyrics, but he's also an entrepreneur. Bright Eyes, Cursive,

the Faint, Now It's Overhead, Desaparecidos, Son, Ambulance—they're building an empire out of Omaha, Nebraska. Saddle Creek is the living, breathing embodiment of their friendship and their art. There's much to talk about.

Ahh, a *real* smile.

"I'm most proud about Saddle Creek and all my friends as a whole, more so than any other individual band [I've been in]," Oberst beams. "It's our own thing. I could do anything and these dudes would support me."

The roots of the Saddle Creek label are that simple: a support system of friends with common ethics and esthetics. Sometime around 1993, Oberst, his older brother Justin and Ted Stevens of Lullaby For The Working Class/Cursive released a cassette, under the label name Lumberjack Records, of some of then-13-year-old Conor's four-track recordings. They dubbed about 300, selling them at shows for a few bucks apiece. They printed up some Lullaby 7-inches, some other 7-inches, dubbed some more tapes. Then came current Cursive singer Tim Kasher's band Slowdown Virginia, and the first CD



THE OVERACHIEVERS: THE FAINT ARE LOVED. BY THEIR LABELMATES, FANS, NO DOUBT AND EVERY MAJOR LABEL KNOWN TO MAN (BAECHLE, FAR LEFT).

THE WUNDERKIND: CONOR OBERST STARTED RECORDING AT 13, WAS AN INDIE-ROCK HERO BY 20.

the group of friends would release together.

"It was everyone's favorite band," remembers the Faint frontman Todd Baechle. "We all really believed in the music, everyone was like, 'This is the greatest music there is.'" "We were fucking crazy about them," Oberst enthuses. "Me and Justin were the totally annoying, spazzy little kids that came to every show, too young to drink or chill out, so we were just like, 'Aah! Tim! Play that song!'"

They pooled money and pressed 500 copies of the *Slowdown* debut, with modest goals in mind. "Getting the CD in the Antiquarium [a record store in Omaha] and the one kind of cool record store in Lincoln, Neb., that was a big deal to us," says Oberst.

Saddle Creek became a legitimate business affair casually, almost accidentally—largely due to Robb Nansel, once guitarist in Oberst and Baechle's early band Commander Venus, now the label's kingpin.

"It wasn't a label that anyone would answer the phone at [in the beginning], it was just, 'Hey, we put this name and address on the CD with a drawing of a little lumberjack guy,'" Baechle explains. Nansel and Mike Mogis, who plays in Bright Eyes, took a business class and had to draft a proposal as a project. They created a sketch of a record label—"decided what they would do with it, drew it all out, had to make some sense of it being an actual company. They said, 'Well, that's a pretty good plan, let's do it.'"

In terms of the music business as we know it, Nansel is an unlikely label honcho. He's sweet, honest, with a calm Midwestern politeness and nary a trace of financial bloodlust. But for Saddle Creek's *modus operandi*, he couldn't be more ideal. He has the music and its creators in mind, first and foremost, but "has a really great sense of not getting ripped off and getting a good deal," Baechle says.

Nansel now has three full-time staffers working with him in the office they opened this past February in the Benson neighborhood of Omaha—"a pretty old-school run-down part of town," according to Oberst. Opening this storefront was a big deal. "Before that," he grins, "it was like we were playing record label."

There are a few reasons the label can afford this, starting with the fact that it manages to be largely self-sufficient,

"I've tried to come up with analogies to explain it, because I don't think any labels really work like this, but Saddle Creek is basically like the Mafia."

—Conor Oberst

through the help and work of friends. Very little is spent on recording, everyone laying songs down at Mike Mogis's Presto Recording Studios. "He's a fucking genius and he has all this great equipment," Oberst gushes. "He's so obsessed with recording, [I'd estimate] he has several hundred thousand dollars in recording equipment, and then he drives this car that doesn't have heat, and he lives in a [tiny] apartment that has pretty much no furniture." They refuse to hemorrhage money in the name of marketing. "We've always been opposed to spending a bunch doing all the things that record labels do to get their records out, buying their way into things," Nansel explains. But largely, Saddle Creek thrives simply because its bands are the kind people can't help but obsess over.

"Conor Oberst and Tim Kasher," Baechle states, matter-of-factly, citing the reason his label's done so well. "There are a lot of people who made it happen, but without those two guys, who are really talented songwriters... I think it worked because of how good they are."

You'd do well to include Baechle himself in that list, too, with the Faint's recent neo-new wave epic *Danse Macabre* selling more than 30,000 copies already and garnering spasmodically positive press. The Saddle Creek roster stages a sort of success leapfrog: The shivering indie-folk of Bright Eyes' *Fevers And Mirrors* shed light on Cursive; the brainy post-hardcore of Cursive's *Domestica* sent eyes toward the Faint; *Danse's* synth-pop grace captured more attention. And on to Now It's Overhead's pop-noir, and Desaparecidos' politico-rock.

"At each period of time, it seems like one of the bands has sort of carried everyone else," Oberst says. "The first band that got any national attention was Lullaby For The Working Class; they were the first band to do a successful U.S. tour, go to Europe, get written up in the bigger publications, and that definitely helped everyone. Then Cursive, their first record as far as hardcore/emo/whatever-that-shit-is was way better than all those bands doing that, they kicked ass in that world. Bright Eyes kind of got popular with [*Fevers*], then the Faint's hugely successful. Everyone always knows you couldn't do it without everybody else."

It's not competition that this breeds, but drive. "It helps



THE VITRIOLIC YOUNGSTERS: DESAPARECIDOS SHOWCASES OBERST'S PISSED-OFF, POLITICALLY CHARGED SIDE.



THE ELDERS: BOTH BRIGHT EYES AND THE FAINT CREDIT CURSIVE'S TIM KASHER (RIGHT) AS THEIR INSPIRATION.

from a songwriting standpoint," explains Oberst. "It keeps you humble. Every time Tim makes a record I feel like the bar's been raised, so I have to make a better record... It helps motivate you." The biggest fans of the Saddle Creek bands are each other: Both Oberst and Baechle say that Tim Kasher inspired them to make music; Baechle says he owes all of his success to Oberst. Your standard labelmate relationship it's not.

"I've tried to come up with analogies to explain it, because I don't think any [labels] really work like this," offers Oberst, "but it's basically like the Mafia, or just like a family." Labels don't work like this, unless you're talking about Dischord (a label Oberst and Baechle cite as an ethical influence). They do run their ship like a Family, each individual weighing the good of the group in every decision. No one can be inducted into the collective without the others' consent. Everyone's vote is important. They'll only do business with friends. And with any large decision, meetings are called so that every ramification can be dissected and discussed.

They've had cause to call quite a few meetings since Bright Eyes, Cursive and the Faint have become successful. About label offers, about big tours, about changes. They used to sit around someone's kitchen table and debate, free-form. Now they meet in the Saddle Creek offices, or at a bar. Bright Eyes signed a publishing deal with Sony around the time of *Fevers*, the Faint toured with No Doubt following *Danse*. These decisions didn't come about without input.

"[Taking the No Doubt tour] was a hard decision," explains Baechle. "We talked about it a bunch... it was cool that they

asked a band not on a major; they have a lot of pressure to ask someone on their own label... They were doing it because they liked our music, they liked our band. Those are the kinds of decisions that we make."

But ultimately, every artist on Saddle Creek has come to the same conclusion: Regardless of the sometime concessions they make to big business, they're staying where they are.

"It came down to what they all wanted," Nansel says. "Do you want to be super big rock stars playing in front of a bunch of people that you don't necessarily associate with? They didn't want that. We struggled with it from all different perspectives—at what point is it no longer what you set out to do? No one really wants to be the rock star. It varies from band to band how little they want it—Conor certainly has no interest in that. Everyone grew up and said, 'It'd be really cool if we can play in a band and have people like us and get to tour, not have to go to a 9-to-5 job.' A lot of [us] are able to do that at this point, so it seems we've achieved the goal."

Oberst's tendency to curl his fingers around his lips when he speaks goes away most when he's talking less about himself, more about his friends and Saddle Creek.

"We all dreamed about it and wanted it to happen. There's a million ways you can [run your music career], but the way we have it arranged with Saddle Creek is, for me, the best possible situation. I like records, I like to go to record stores and buy them, so someone needs to facilitate that to happen. If we can do it to our standards, to our ethics, exactly the way I want to do it, with as much life of the music in mind as possible..." he trails off, smiling. **NMM**



TROY VAN LEEUWEN, NICK OLIVERI, JOSH HOMME, MARK LANEGAN

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

CAVEMAN STOMP

Josh Homme and Nick Oliveri's modern Stone Age family includes Dave Grohl, Mark Lanegan and a growing legion of hardcore fans. And always, the cat will stay out for the night.

STORY: BRYAN A. MEALER • PHOTO: JOE QUINTO

It's Saturday night and Josh Homme lifts his glass, a content man who toasts nothing more than the fresh round of drinks. He sits with a group of friends at a corner table in the private bar of the Sunset Strip's Standard Hotel, where the walls shimmer blue like tinsel caught in the breeze. His crop of red hair glows under bar lights, also blue, and nearby, a tall, lanky beauty in a scant halter top swings in a chair that hangs from the ceiling.

Homme is the guitar player and patriarch of Queens Of The Stone Age, a band he has worked to build since he was 14. Tonight, one in a long succession of no days off, he is considering his recent fortune. He is fresh off tour of Europe, where his band is embraced as royalty. Their third album is due out in a month and is considered the most anticipated rock record of the year. Better, its entire production was done using his closest friends, including bassist and fellow singer Nick Oliveri, who he has played alongside since he was 12. Across the table, Homme's girlfriend Tobey huddles with

two of her friends on a long, plush sofa and smiles whenever he speaks. With jet-black hair and tattoos, catty and intelligent, she is easily one of the prettiest girls in the bar. And to top it off, his giant 6'4" frame is getting a bit thick in the middle, and he wears it like something he proudly built himself.

Homme is here to meet his friend Twiggy Ramirez, who has recently parted ways with his own longtime bandmate, Marilyn Manson. Twiggy spins records here on Wednesdays, but tonight he's here with his girlfriend, Jessica, a leggy brunette who wears a red Mexican dancing dress and gives Tobey an honest run for her money in the looks department. Twiggy appears surprisingly normal compared to the make-up and macabre that became his signature m.o. with Manson. His long, dark hair is pulled back and held by a pair of sunglasses that rest snug on his head. He sits hunched on a stool and shows off his new pair of brown suede shoes, looking like a sleepy college student, sad almost.

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

"Let's play spin the bottle!" exclaims Jessica, scanning the group with a raised eyebrow. Josh and Twiggy, suddenly jarred out of their conversation, loudly agree. The table is sticky and littered with squeezed limes, empty glasses, and an ashtray stacked high with butts. Homme clears a space, takes an empty Budweiser bottle, and Tobey gives it a spin. When it finally stops, it's pointed right at Twiggy. But before he can even react, Tobey grabs Jessica's face with both hands and kisses her firmly on the lips, holding the pose like actors do in old movies. This invites some hoots and applause from other patrons in the bar. When their other friend, also named Jessica, spins the bottle a second time, it lands on me. Instead, she kisses Tobey. The next spin, the same thing.

Homme takes the bottle and sets it upright. "Why even bother with the game?" he asks. The bottle is forgotten and the three girls playfully pile onto one another, kissing and tickling, a tangle of arms, legs and lips that eventually breaks apart in giggles.

Homme gives Twiggy a knowing grin, then turns around. "Say what you want about L.A.," he says, "but I fuckin' love this place."

Homme isn't complaining about where his band has found themselves, either. Their third album, *Songs For The Deaf* (Interscope), is a commanding follow-up to their 2000 release, *Rated R*, which catapulted the band into the stratosphere of power rock with the song "Feel Good Hit Of The Summer" leading the charge with its looping mantra "Nicotine, Valium, Vicodin, marijuana, ecstasy and alcohol . . . c-c-c-cocaine."

While the assembly of musicians and techs plug away behind a thick, black door, Oliveri takes a break in an adjoining room that contains a couple of sofas, a small kitchen and a lazy brown Labrador named Abby. Oliveri's bald head is closely shaven and his goatee hangs a good seven inches, stroked neatly to a devilish "V." He wears shorts, sandals and a T-shirt with "Britney Spears" written in glitter script. Homme soon follows, walking directly to the fridge, announcing, "I'm gonna start drinkin'."

Homme describes *Songs For The Deaf* as the third album in a complete set that began in 1998, three years after Homme split from Kyuss and recorded the Queens' self-titled debut. Oliveri, having left Kyuss a few years before to play with the punk group the Dwarves, joined Homme for the first tour and has been with Queens ever since.

"I've been thinking about this record since the first one," says Homme. "But I wanted to proceed slowly or else we'd lose people."

"This record is how we are," Oliveri interrupts. "But we had to move in stages. We don't have a huge fanbase, but the fans we do have, we love them and don't want to stray too far away."

Undoubtedly, the band will draw more fans as a result of Grohl, who first met Homme and Oliveri back in 1992 when he and Nirvana bassist Krist Noveselic became diehard Kyuss fans, reportedly buying stacks of their records and handing them out to friends. Grohl agreed to play with the band until their July 27th gig at the Fuji Rock Festival in Niigata, Japan. He has since left to finish recording the Foo Fighters album that is scheduled for release

"Dave Grohl played on the record because he wanted to. It was a bonus that he wanted to do shows. What are we gonna do, tell him no?"

The new album brings back former Screaming Trees singer Mark Lanegan, who shared some of the songwriting and lead vocal duties on *Rated R*, and whose smoky voice is heard on four tracks on *Songs For The Deaf*.

But what has elicited the most hype is the band's reintroduction of Dave Grohl to the drums. It's the first time the Foo Fighters frontman has assumed a full-time behind-the-kit role since Nirvana's demise eight years ago, playing on all but two tracks on the album and doing much of the touring to promote it. His presence on the album is monumental—almost nostalgic—a style so powerful it sounds as if he's chopping wood in an empty gymnasium. For many fans and critics, it was glorious history in the making, coming at a time when such moments seemed long impossible.

Songs For The Deaf is yet another chapter in a long dynasty of turbo-driven rock 'n' roll that Homme and Oliveri have cultivated out of the California desert, one that began in the late '80s with the band Kyuss and sprouted in various directions, producing many projects, friends and projects for their friends. One such project is unfolding early Saturday evening in a small studio in Van Nuys, where Homme and Oliveri are laying down tracks for Lanegan's sixth solo album. Queens touring guitarist and keyboardist Troy Van Leeuwen, taking a break from his own band A Perfect Circle, is also present at what is essentially a Queens recording session wrapped with a different bow.

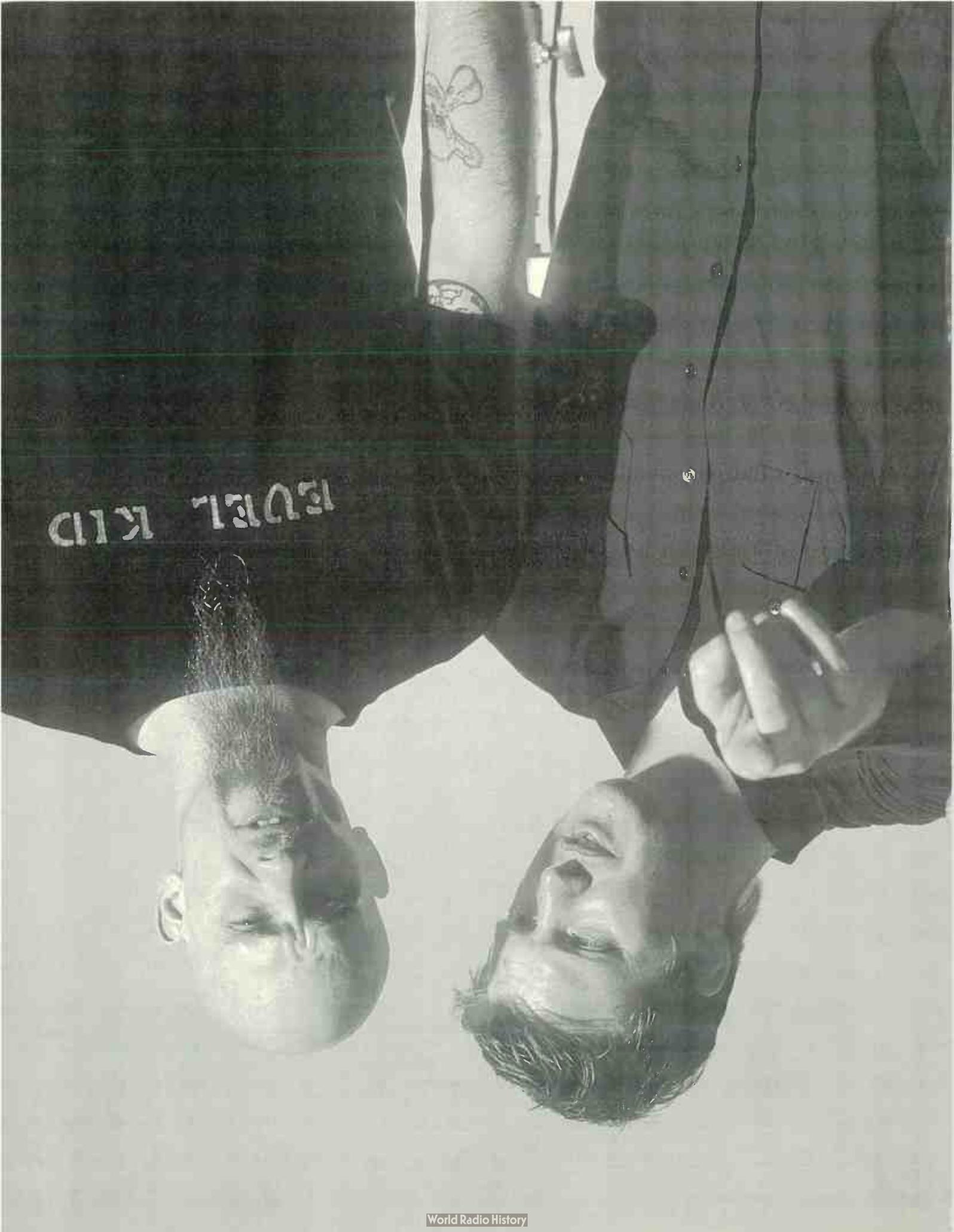
in October.

"Dave came into this band and relished not having to be in charge," says Homme. "And he understands our drumming philosophy, which is play each hook as if it were a guitar. He understands that tight, robotic sound. Dave seized a great rock 'n' roll moment by joining Queens and returning to the drums."

"He played on the record because he wanted to," says Oliveri. "It was a bonus that he wanted to do shows. What are we gonna do, tell him no?"

"And what was really cool," Homme adds, straight as a judge, "is that we got to ride around in that Wonder Woman jet that's clear. Have you ever seen the clear Wonder Woman jet? Dave bought that jet. It was awesome."

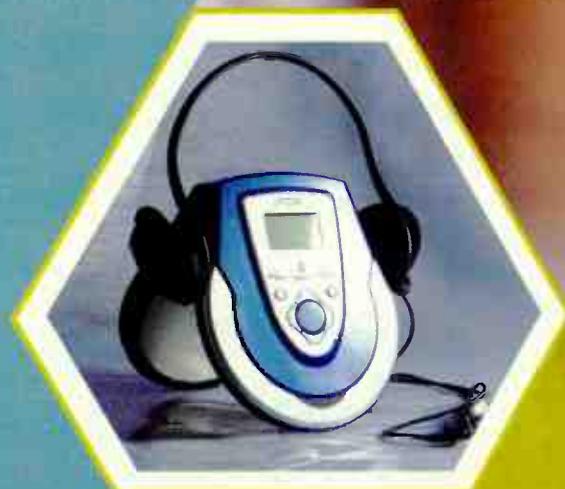
You can't tell the story of Queens Of The Stone Age without first going through the desert. It's there in the Coachella Valley, in the small resort community of Palm Desert (pop. 42,350), where both Homme and Oliveri were raised and often return. The town lies just south of bucolic Palm Springs on Highway 111, 117 miles east of L.A., on the edge of Joshua Tree National Monument. Like Palm Springs, its climate and proximity to Hollywood have turned it into a buzzing retreat for old stars and politicians. It's a home of celebrity tennis tournaments, and on a nearby cliff sits Bob Hope's sprawling estate. Currently, the aver-



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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Snapcase

LADYTRON

DRUMS & TUBA

Mia Doi Todd • Dälek

SEPTEMBER 2002 • ISSUE 105

14. **NOVA SOCIAL** "There There" *The Jefferson Fracture* (Big Sleep)
The debut from New Jersey duo Nova Social oozes different moods like a ripe pine tree in summer, but the group's pop roots stay firmly planted on each song.
15. **KOUFAX** "Younger Body, Older Soul" *Social Life* (Vagrant)
Koufax is the secret love child of the Beach Boys and the Get Up Kids—piano-heavy rock 'n' roll for those of you still pining over Ben Folds Five.
16. **PILOT RADIO** "Obvious Things" *Antiques* (Solar Flare)
The four young modern-rocking Texans in Pilot Radio cite Tom Petty, Van Morrison and Better Than Ezra as influences. Now, Petty and Van Morrison we get—but *Better Than Ezra*?
17. **IDAHO** "Social Studies" *We Were Young And Needed The Money* (Idaho Music-Retrophonic)
Jeff Martin's calming voice and pretty ditties will lull you into a somnambulant state on this collection of Idaho's older material. (See Review p. 52)
18. **KIND OF LIKE SPITTING** "Passionate" *Bridges Worth Burning* (Barsuk)
In 2000 alone, there were four full-length releases from Ben Barnett, lone member of KOLS. And now with *Bridges Worth Burning*, he's on six full-lengths total. Can't say the man ain't motivated. (See Review p. 53)
19. **DREW ISLEIB** "Tore Your Hair Out" *Sounds Through The Wall* (Ernest Jennings)
Lo-fi singer/songwriter Drew Isleib played every instrument on his debut album, and is currently couch-surfing while he tours interminably. Think that might have something to do with this song title?
20. **ETHER** "The Link" *Great Ocean Road* (Ether Management)
Ether clearly like the ideas of dreaminess, calmness, smooth flow, open expanses—if the bandname and title of their new LP didn't clue you in to that, just give the music a spin.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case

1. QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE "No One Knows" *Songs For The Deaf* (Interscope)
The Queens are Dave Grohl's favorite band—no likes the loud-rock statesmen so much he decided to play drums on their new record and man the kit for part of their recent tour. Who are you to argue with a guy who was in Nirvana? (See Cover Story p. 30)

2. SNAPCASE "Exile Etiquette" *E-d Transmisson* (Victory)
Straight-up intelli-chugga-chugga from Buffalo, New York. Snapcase are like that guy on the football team who wrote poetry after practice: able to kick your ass good and hard, but a lot smarter than your average agro display.

3. THE DEREK TRUCKS BAND "Joyful Noise" *Joyful Noise* (Columbia)
To hear this 22-year-old songwriter/guitarist is to realize why he was asked to join the much, much older Allman Brothers.

4. DRUMS & TUBA "Clashing" *Mostly Ape* (Righteous Babe)
We should all thank Ani DiFranco for asking eclectic rock/Afrobeat/jazz trio Drums & Tuba to reform and support her 1998 tour. They just might be single-handedly redeeming horns in rock from the dastardly scourge of ska. (See Review p. 50)

5. MIA DOI TODD "Autumn" *The Golden State* (Columbia)
With a classically trained voice that's almost operatic in its power, it'd be hard to compare Mia Doi Todd to anyone—which is why this mostly unknown but mesmerizing singer demands your attention. (See On The Verge p. 18)

6. JEFF TROTT "No Substitute" *Dig Up The Astronaut* (Black Apple)
Always the sideman-but-never-the-lead guitarist Jett Trott (a whole lot of Sheryl Crow, a little Stevie Nicks) steps out front, dealing his own impressions of classic rock.

7. LADYTRON "Seventeen" *Light & Magic* (Emperor Norton)
The name Ladytron makes you think of a robot dancing in a French maid's uniform, right? Well, it should—the group's angular and sparse Kraftwerk-esque soundscapes are quirky, oddly sexy and kind of creepy (in a good way). (See Best New Music p. 44)

8. BADAR ALI KHAN "Black Night (DJ Baba G & Dan The Automator Remix)" *Asian Groove* (Pulumayo)
Cousin of legend Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Badar takes traditional Qawwali and heats it up with electronic beats and flourishes. Here, DJ Baba G & Dan The Automator help out. (See Camp Pile p. 50)

9. GRITS "Here We Go" *The Art Of Translation* (Gone)
Grits have much to say, which makes the Tennessee duo's dirty South hip-hop rep keen for the mind and ear. (See Review p. 52)

10. THE WARM GUNS "The Elephant Pig" *Blown Away* (Zircon Skye)
The Warm Guns say they're not in the music business to "be cool," but to deepen society's moral fiber. We know, morals are no fun—but their psychedelic weirdness is.

11. DALEK "Spiritual Healing" *From The Filthy Tongues Of Gods And Griots* (Ipecac)
Dalek speaks to every head in the crowd, indie to jazz, and their *sui generis* brand of noise-hop is harder to package than a life-sized elephant toy. (See Best New Music, p. 43)

12. SING-SING "I'll Be" *The Joy Of Sing-Sing* (Manifesio)
This indie-pop duo—featuring former Lush member Emmi Anderson—is a whirlwind of tripped-out atmosphere and Brit harmonies. (See Review p. 58)

13. HIS & HER VANITIES "Dispatch Elevation" *His & Her Vanities* (Science & Sound)
The two boys and two girls of this Wisconsin quartet probably do indulge vanities of both sexes, exploring "experimental pop-rock, punkish art-rock, psychedelic alternative rock, new wave, lo-fi indie noise pop... depends on the song."

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age age in Palm Desert is 48 years old, actually much younger than a decade ago—meaning when L.A. punk ripped through its borders during the 1980s, specifically SST acts such as Black Flag and the Descendents, it gave kids like Homme and Oliveri a reason to live.

Homme received his first guitar when he was 10, an acoustic Seville that his father had bought for around \$50. Two years later, he was already part of a rusty jam band with future Kyuss drummer Brant Bjork and singer John Garcia that rehearsed in Bjork's bedroom after school. The lineup eventually included Oliveri, who Homme knew from school, and who showed up one afternoon to play guitar.

"I came and I sang," Oliveri says, straining to piece together those first days

"No," Homme says. "You played guitar and when John left that day, you sang. You sang better than John, but we didn't have the balls to kick him out."

Homme gives Oliveri a buddy-slap on the back and smiles. "But we did have the balls to keep Nick in. So that's how Kyuss got started."

The band's first gig was a bomb. Under the name Katzenjammer, they agreed to play a party in a friend's backyard in town. The party consisted of people much older than Homme, who was in the sixth grade, and Oliveri, who was in the eighth. So when

"We'd drive 4x4's up there because the cops would get stuck in the sand," says Oliveri, who later adds that he began shaving at 15 just to kick-start a beard so he could buy beer. "There would be three or four bands, a keg of beer, and a raging bonfire. We were all underage. People would run around naked and there was sand everywhere. In your amps, in your ass, what you coughed up the next day. But it was worth it."

By the time Kyuss broke up in 1995, they had released four albums and achieved a near-cult status as purveyors of the "desert sound." It was enough to give Homme the momentum and chops he needed when it came time to convince people that he was ready to experiment with a new one.

When Homme assembled Queens Of The Stone Age for their first concert, the crowd was significantly smaller than even their first show as Kyuss some 10 years before. It was played at El Café de Mexico, a quaint restaurant on Highway 111 in Palm Desert, where no more than 25 close friends cheered and raised their beers.

Oliveri had just come aboard after being relocated and recruited by Homme to play bass. Oliveri left Kyuss in 1992 to play with the Dwarves under the name Rex Everything. When Homme found him at the South By Southwest festival in Austin, Tx. shortly after cutting the first record, he was performing with his own band, Mondo Generator, and blowing fire onto an audience of shrieking

“If you have to completely dismantle a full bedroom set every time you play and put it back together just to go to bed—that means you love music.”

Garcia, their lead singer, failed to show up, the crowd got riled.

"There were these guys yelling at us," says Homme. "They were screaming, 'You better fuckin' play right now,' so we did, without a singer."

The band had nearly finished their six-song playlist when Garcia came running to the mike to finish the set. He had been parked in front of the house the entire time, nervously going over his lyrics, despite hearing his band playing without him.

"After the set was finished," Oliveri laughs, "they made us play the entire thing again."

For two years the band wrote songs and rehearsed them in their tiny bedrooms, rotating from house to house. Because of the desert heat, a garage band wasn't even an option. At each rehearsal, beds were taken apart and pushed up against walls to make room for amplifiers and drums.

"In hindsight, that shows me how truly committed we really were," says Homme, who remembers his walls being papered with the dust sleeves containing the lyrics of his favorite punk records. "Because if you have to completely dismantle a full bedroom set every time you play and put it back together just to go to bed, that means you love music."

Kyuss shows eventually made their way out of town and into the desert, in and around Joshua Tree, where they would plug guitars into generators and play until morning. A favorite place to throw parties was on the grounds of an abandoned nudist colony, where only a few walls still stood, and where a drained swimming pool became "Nudebowl," a skateboarding institution for years afterward.

music executives.

That first album barely resonated with anyone who wasn't already familiar with Kyuss, but it did what Homme had intended, which was break away from the old sound and subtly make room for the thin layers of pop that would be added with subsequent recordings. With *Rated R*, Homme tossed aside many of his aversions to sounding too catchy. Several songs on the album make one wonder why he didn't leave Kyuss years earlier. Songs such as "Feel Good Hit Of The Summer" and "The Lost Art of Keeping A Secret" not only placated the old fans, but won scores of new ones looking for a smart, heavy rock band that they could actually sing along to. Plus, it was a way for the band to separate itself from the machismo that stigmatizes many harder acts.

"It's supposed to be tough enough for the guys and sweet enough for the chicks. That's what the Stooges were," says Homme. "We've been slowly trying to weed out boys who want to bounce off each other and have their girlfriends come instead."

What *Rated R* did with combining hard guitar and sing-song melodies, says Homme, *Songs For The Deaf* one-ups, latching onto those same hooks and pulling them out even more. While songs like "Millionaire" and "Six Shooter" are characteristic of the band's earlier scorchers, much of the album relies on softer melodies, however big the wall of noise behind them might be. A few tracks, "Another Love Song," "I'm Gonna Leave You" and Lanegan's beautifully sung "Hanging Tree," are the most radio-friendly the band has ever sounded.

"Most of my favorite punk rock had a pop melody or pop sen-



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sibility," Homme says, citing the Descendents' 1982 classic *Milo Goes To College* as one of the best examples. "And since I've always been afraid of pop but liked it, I censored it from our melodies. This is the first record where I didn't do that at all. This is how I feel it and see it."

Which brings Homme and Oliveri to a subject they hit upon throughout the interview: how punk-rock guilt destroys potentially great music, and how with Queens, they've finally shed the burden that's plagued them since they first picked up an instrument.

"It's what I call my *They Theory*," says Homme. "What will They say, what will They do? That's what happened to Kyuss throughout its entire career and that's why I left to start this. How can you ever anticipate what They want? Who the fuck are They? Have you met Them? Those guys are probably *assholes*. As long as we do well and feel good about the music, I'll never feel bad if we do good, and I'll never feel bad if we do poorly."

In a couple of weeks, the band will embark on another tour that will take them to Japan, then back for another spin through the States with ...*And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead* and *Burning Brides* supporting. There's Lanegan's record, not to mention individual side projects, their own and those of friends, that they can't help but involve themselves with. And unbeknownst to them, their publicist has booked press appointments the entire length of the way. Amidst a music climate that allows bands to measure success in dollar signs and endorsements, Homme and Oliveri are happy if all their friends got to play on their record, or are sharing this success in some fashion. It's a small-town approach to rock stardom, measured in terms of personal bonds, hard work and the pride one takes in work that is done well.

"We're just trying to find our people," says Homme. "But I don't want everybody. I don't want to sell 10 million albums. That would suck. Where we are as a band—I wouldn't have it any other way. That's to say that we can make another record, for sure. I know it now. Because when we left the studio, we liked this record a lot. It's in my car. Have you heard the new Queens record? It's badass, dude."

Long after the bar is closed, the party has relocated to a suite in the Whyndam Belage. A 12-pack of beer warms on a table and the sliding glass door is left open to a balcony with a sweeping view of the city. The girls are inside talking to a latecomer to the party, an older gentleman who claims he was the subject of one of Picasso's last great pieces of art. Out on the balcony, seated at a glass table and chain-smoking cigarettes, Homme and Twiggy are wrapped tight in a discussion about American foreign policy in the Middle East (Homme is more a hands-off conservative; Twiggy is cautious and skeptical). The subject drunkenly meanders its way back to the band and its recent good fortune, and how Homme considers himself blessed to have Oliveri as a friend and partner. "Nick," Homme says, staring into the dark, "he's solid."

And as the sun begins to show itself over West Hollywood, shooting slivers of orange and red through a cloudy morning sky, the party and its long faces disband. Homme gets up and wraps Twiggy in a hug, then grabs Tobey by the hand, and heads out the door, a tired man who needs his rest for another day of work tomorrow. **NMM**

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-- Irfan Shah, Crud Magazine (U.K.)

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Birmingham, ALABAMA

Birmingham grew from a tiny rural village to a bustling Southern metropolis entirely through the power of rock and metal. Sure, we're talking coal, limestone and iron here—but it's just as fitting that the city would eventually birth a vibrant music scene rife with the power of rock, metal, country, pop and everything in between. And naturally, since we're in the South, there's so many restaurants that you'll have a better chance of going home hungry from a pie-eating contest.

Pop-rock quartet WAYNE proudly calls Birmingham home, and like the good Southern boys they are, will be glad to show you the best of their town.

Birmingham is a sizeable city with a lot to offer both visitors and full-time Alabamans. Pick up a copy of either of the city's weeklies, *The Black And White* (www.bwcitypaper.com) or *The Birmingham Weekly* (www.bhamweekly.com), available free just about anywhere in the downtown area, and you'll be able to browse a thick cross-section of the city's culture, from music and movies to food, politics and art. We head to the live music section first—so we'll do the same here.

There are a number of places we regularly visit for live music, but the first one that comes to mind every time is *The Nick* (2514 10th Ave. South, 205-252-3831). If you're planning a long night out, at some point you'll inevitably end up here anyway—trust us, it just happens. Wayne played its first show at the Nick and the name of the band was suggested by the establishment's owner/operator. It's a very small space that may remind you of your favorite little bar back home: black, shaped like an oversized shoebox and stuffed with pool tables, a bar, a stage and two dirty restrooms. The band styles vary from night to night, and you'll always find an "interesting" character roaming around without looking too hard. A bit of local folklore: The rumor is, if you can accurately count the number of staples on the walls and ceiling, you inherit the club!

5 Points Music Hall (1016 20th St. South, 205-322-2263) and Zydeco (2001 15th

Ave. South, 205-933-1032) are fairly close to one another and normally host touring acts from around the country. 5 Points leans toward the pop/rock side, Zydeco trafficking more in alt-rock/country/songwriter fare. Both offer a chance at a fine live music experience nightly, but Zydeco has an in-house kitchen serving up some irresistible dishes. In the same vicinity you'll find food and music mixing and mingling with sports and dance at such establishments as *The Mill* (1035 20th St. South, 205-939-3001), *The Arena* (1024 20th St. South, 205-251-5360), *Halfshells Oyster Bar* (1005 20th St. South, 205-933-0525) and *Bellbottoms* (2001 Highland Ave. South, 205-933-2778).

If you're looking for food and drink minus the musical accompaniment, Birmingham can certainly oblige—we'll omit the normal fast-food dives and franchises that are as unavoidable here as anywhere else. First, of course, is a personal favorite of the majority of our band: *Bombay Cafe/the Canteen* (2839 7th Ave. South, 205-322-1930/205-322-2727) houses two places in one, offering the same menu on both sides—food from the land and sea prepared by people who definitely know what they're doing—with a few exceptions and a little difference in price. *Bombay* is a bit more formal (though it's a loose requirement and not strictly enforced) and the *Canteen* sports a bar and booths in front with table dining in the rear. We make sure to go there when someone from the music industry is picking up the bill.



WAYNE

Around the corner you'll find the **Lakeview Oyster House** (731 29th St. South, 205-252-5888). Pricing is a bit more moderate here, and the atmosphere just as appealing. The food is great, to boot, but sadly, the name is misleading—there's no view of a lake to be found.

About 15 minutes from downtown you'll stumble on another big cluster of entertainment and food, on Highway 280 in Inverness. A few of the music-offering venues also serve food into the evening, which is easily appreciated when you've stood through five bands in as many hours over the course of a night. **Superior Grill** (4710 Highway 280, 205-991-5112) complements

fishing, or drop by **Oak Mountain State Park** (about 10 miles south of town) and golf, horseback ride or hit the BMX tracks. Head to the **Cahaba River** for fishing and canoeing, or visit the **Coosa**, which provides some of the state's power and spawns lakes for boating and fishing. Outdoor festivals are always being planned in Birmingham from the **Crawfish Boil** (crawfishboil.org) to **City Stages** (citystages.org) to **Do Dah Day** (dodahday.org).

There's good reason people call the city **Sweet Birmingham**—it's a fine place to visit, and a place you're glad to come home to.

LOCAL LOGIC: BIRMINGHAM'S BEST

Singer/guitarist **Rodney Reaves:**

Sauce and food combination: Try a chicken sandwich with Billy's white sauce at **BILLY'S** (2012 Cahaba Road, 205-879-2238).

Place to score breakfast on a lazy morning: **THE ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE** (1931 11th Ave. South, 205-933-8837) in 5 Points South is the perfect venue for stuffing yourself when you know you shouldn't.

Way to mix your rock and jock sides: Stop in and see the guys at **HIGHLAND MUSIC** (3000 Clairmont Ave., 205-254-3288) for many things vintage, accessories for every instrument imaginable, and to get your ass kicked at ping-pong by Highland mainstay Jeff.

Bassist/vocalist **Justin Johnson:**

Good old Southern BBQ: There are many choices, but it really only comes down to two places. For everyday BBQ, there's **THE GOLDEN RULE** (locations throughout city)—great sauce and easy to find in every part of town. For the absolute best ribs anywhere, it's **DREAMLAND** (1427 14th Ave. South, 205-933-2133), which has the finest sauce anywhere in the world. A friend once told me, "I'd eat a turd with Dreamland sauce on it."

Guitarist/singer **Michael Swann:**

Good old-fashioned burger: **MILO'S HAMBURGERS** (Numerous locations throughout the city). Get the burger. Eat it. Start smiling.

Space to capture musical genius: **SYNCHROMESH STUDIOS** (1116 Ford Ave. #A, 205-808-0808).

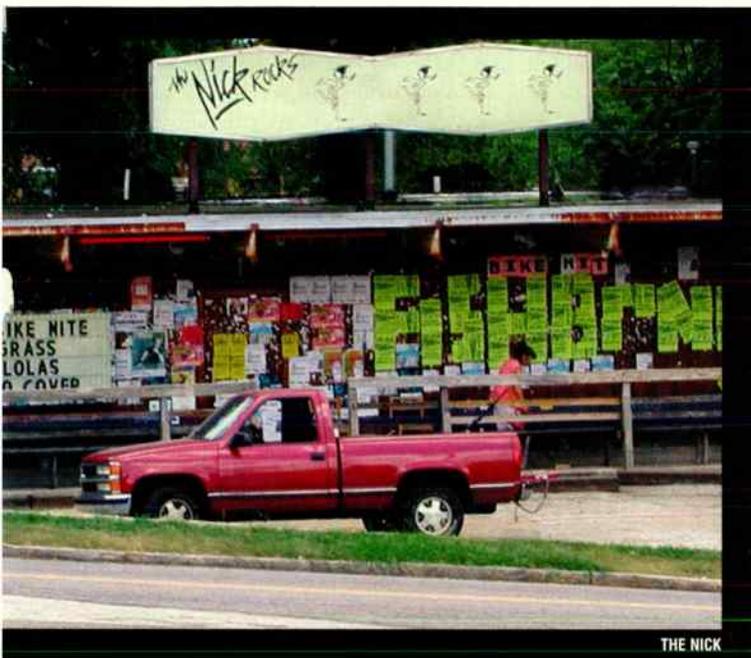
High-culture hangout: **BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART** (2000 8th Ave. North, 205-254-2566).

Drummer **Jon Hornsby:**

Way to feed a family of four with one dish: Stop by **FAMOUS FRED'S** in Hoover (1615 Montgomery Hwy, 205-823-5749). They're notorious for their chicken bite basket. With enough chicken fingers to feed a small army, you can probably take some home and spend your next few days with a nice chicken salad, chicken sandwich, etc., etc.

Place to take care of 3 a.m. munchies: **AL'S DELI AND GRILL** (1629 10th Ave. South, 205-939-4278) and **THE PURPLE ONION** (1931 2nd Ave. North, 205-252-4899), home to 24-hour Mediterranean food. Also, a popular place for the kids to head after a long night of drinking.

Sure, they're Southern, and they rock, but Wayne's version of Southern rock is less Skynyrd, more R.E.M. The band's new Music On Plastic is out on TVT Records.



their food with some music, and **Café Firenze** (110 Inverness Plaza, 205-980-1315) tops off their music with a little food. (They're conveniently within a mile of each other.) Although the music leans heavily toward cover bands, original music peeks in from time to time. One of the best places to track down food in all of Birmingham resides right next door to Café Firenze, too: **Crazy Cajuns' Boiling Pot** (125 Inverness Plaza, 205-408-0630) may be small, but it's wonderful.

On the same stretch of 280, you'll pass theatres, a bowling alley and restaurant chains, among other stopoffs. There's plenty of entertainment to be found in this part of town, but the local authorities keep their eyes peeled later into the night, so be careful if you've had a little too much fun.

Should you be looking for a place to have a little too much fun, the **Oasis** (2807 7th Avenue South, 205-323-5538) has good music six nights a week, darts, foosball and a laid-back, well, oasis-like atmosphere, partly from having literally been the only bar in the area for a while. But the surrounding part of town has since quickly become an alternative to the 5 Points neighborhood in Southside.

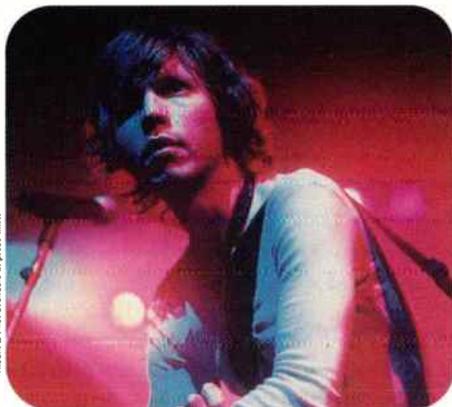
Of course you might want to get outside once in a while, too, and conveniently Birmingham offers plenty of worthwhile outdoor activities. You can enjoy some golf at any of the city's many courses, but we recommend the **Robert Trent Jones Golf Trails**. About an hour drive from Birmingham is Alabama's highest point, **Mt. Cheaha**: Here, go rock climbing, hiking, camping or



BECK

Sea Change

Geffen



Album art not available at press time.

Link

www.beck.com

File Under

Mellowed gold

R.I.Y.L.

Gram Parsons, Elliott Smith,
Ryan Adams

Beck Hansen built his career on his ironic, genre-blending cut 'n' paste abilities, but his best work has often been done in the same place he got his start: stripped down, lo-fi country and folk. (It's no coincidence that giants like Johnny Cash and Tom Petty have covered songs off his acoustic-driven indie releases.) 1998's *Mutations* was the first time listeners got to hear that side of him in a high-quality studio situation; it demonstrated that his flair for writing subdued, accomplished tunes was equal—maybe even superior—to his abilities in the funk department. *Sea Change* is a similar venture, recorded in a matter of weeks with his live band and Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, and yields even better results. His usual come-ons and non sequiturs are put aside in favor of a set of world-weary, introspective lyrics that he didn't previously appear capable of; the man who once promised to "make all the lesbians scream" now admits, "These days I barely get by/ I don't even try." *Change* is full of melancholic and almost bitter references to dissolving relationships, probably due in part to his recent and reportedly nasty breakup with his girlfriend of almost a decade. Godrich and the band provide the perfect, subtle soundtrack for his broken heart: lonesome pedal steel wails, warm electric pianos and gauzy beds of strings, all floating in a sea of seemingly endless reverb. Folk-in-space songs like "The Golden Age" and "Nothing I Haven't Seen" are probably among the finest he's ever produced—Beck should turn his attention inward more often. >>>TOM MALLON

NEKO CASE

Blacklisted

Bloodshot

Neko Case's voice has always been a little too big for the room. With the New Pornographers, it shot through *Mass Romantic's* clutter and clang; it ricocheted around her own *Furnace Room Lullaby* with the sass of Loretta Lynn first shaking off the mud of the holler. So it's not that she's found her voice with the brilliant *Blacklisted*, her third solo disc, but that she's found someplace for it to go. Accompaniment is spare—slide guitar, her own tenor four-string, stand-up bass, minimal percussion and some banjo—but rendered in reverb as big as the prairie, setting plangent laments loose into the open night. "Deep Red Bells" makes a chorus of its title, stretching out the words until the last floods over everything but the rat-a-tat of brushes on the snare. Case brings a sepia landscape into focus with lyrics like "There's a handprint on the driver's side/ It looks a lot like engine oil and tastes like being poor and small/ And popsicles in summer." *Blacklisted* is reminiscent of Nick Cave or the Gun Club's later quiet spookiness, but is effectively genreless. What it is, though, is country. Not the "& western," Nashville kind, or even the alt-kind, but a sound that, like her voice, echoes the soul of what used to be rural America. Neko Case is major. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON



Link

www.nekocase.com

File Under

Torch songs settin' the woods on fire

R.I.Y.L.

Nick Cave, Freakwater, Nina
Nastasia, *Absolute Torch* And
Twang-era k.d. lang

COLDPLAY

A Rush Of Blood To The Head

Capitol

Everyone's expecting something from Coldplay. There's probably an even spread: On one side, the Anglorock-philes who, wooed by the band's debut, *Parachutes*, are praying desperately that they'll dodge the sophomore doldrums; and on the other, all the sadist hype-haters who salivate over the possibility of watching the nice boys fail. So, have the accolades made Coldplay bloated and big-headed? Have they taken the bait from the bashers who called them wussies and predicted their one-hit-wonderdom? Sorry, doom-mongers, Coldplay's only gotten smarter, deeper—better. The 11 tracks on *A Rush Of Blood To The Head* retain all the things that made *Parachutes* so irresistible: Jon Buckland's chimey guitar lines swoop and swirl around Chris Martin's effortlessly hummable vocals, Guy Berryman and Will Champion brilliantly driving every rhythm. But there's a maturity to this album that *Parachutes* only hinted at—they're letting the songs breathe a little, Martin's voice is soaring more, they're exploring ideas and letting them stretch their legs. But with their maturity, Coldplay hasn't gotten unapproachable; this is still pop, it's just more poetic, less obvious. Single "In My Place" may not be as tenacious as "Yellow," but it's got the kind of draw that comes in slowly and *really sticks*. Pray they keep this pace—this is a career band, and those come along too infrequently. >>>NICOLE KEIPER



Link

www.coldplay.com

File Under

Everything in its right place

R.I.Y.L.

The Beatles, the Verve, Doves, U2

DÄLEK

From Filthy Tongue Of Gods And Griots

Ipecac



Link

www.deadverse.com

File Under

People under the blares

R.I.Y.L.

Techno Animal, EVOL-era Sonic Youth, Alec Empire, EI-P

When Chuck D said "bring the noise," there was absolutely no fucking way he was talking about Dälek. But that's still the ideal way to describe what they do: The Newark trio (MC Dälek, producer Oktopus and tablist Still) transform shrieking noisescapes and corrosive walls of fuzz into pulverizing hip-hop as deafening as a trainwreck at Merzbow's barbecue. MC Dälek doesn't scream to escape the noise—rather, he's calm and deliberate, taking the Jesus And Mary Chain route of finding solace in the scuzz. He debates organized religion with methodic skepticism, decries hip-hop stereotypes and paints visions of cities in tatters as layer upon layer of horrific screeching are meticulously stacked atop one another, creating a cacophonous cocktail like My Bloody Valentine and Faust tussling over a broken ghetto blaster. "Spiritual Healing" gusts with the subtle squeal of 20 fingernailed chalkboards going through a stack of Marshalls, and "Classical Homicide" sounds like it was cobbled together by a gaggle of Cuisinarts (DJ Still often prefers to scratch with the *stylus* of the turntable). "Black Smoke Rises" is possibly the most damning thing to ever be labeled "hip-hop," 12 minutes of terrorizing, dissonant artfuck noise (sans beat) that sounds like 1,500 subway trains simultaneously pulling into a mythical station. These Jersey boys bring enough noise to send Sonic Youth running for the hills. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



LADYTRON

Light And Magic

Emperor Norton



Link

www.ladytron.net

File Under

Robo-bop 2

R.I.Y.L.

Golden Boy And Miss Kittin,
Human League, Fischerspooner

Ladytron's debut, *604*, arrived last year like a message from the future, heralding the imminent arrival of what would blossom with astonishing speed into the electroclash scene of today. With their sophomore effort, however, Ladytron have gone on to prove that far from just acting as a precursor to the scene, they remain at the very heart of it. The same heady mix of coyly monotone feminine vocals, krautrock indulgences and self-aware compu-pop that made the group so great in the first place is back (once again, in black), with new elements to make it even more fun this time. Opener "True Mathematics" glides over a one-note drill-tone, a sly nod to the essential electro track "Warm Leatherette." It's followed by single-in-waiting "Seventeen," a song that tricks you into thinking it's Blur's "Boys And Girls" before revealing itself as a softly-cooed reflection on (take your pick) society's obsession with youth or the ephemeral nature of fame. Booming hip-hop beats rear their heads on the popstastic "Blue Jeans" and amid the epic string-samples of "Startup Chime." A head-spinning 15-track journey, it ends with the most retro composition of the bunch, "The Reason Why," bringing us back full-circle, appropriately, to where it all began. You do, after all, need to understand the past to truly appreciate the present, and Ladytron remain the ultimate pros at both. >>>DOUG LEVY

SONDRE LERCHE

Faces Down

Astralwerks

A boy wonder in his native Norway, 19-year-old Sondre Lerche has already gobbled up that country's version of the Grammy and kudos galore for this album and two prior EPs. In just its first few measures, *Faces Down* argues that Lerche is not just for Norwegian ears. Like Rufus Wainwright, another precocious tunesmith, Lerche is fond of using assorted musical touchstones from the 20th century as his playthings. It's not everyday you hear whispers from the likes of George Gershwin, the Zombies and Beck harmonizing so well on a debut album. Even when Lerche's musical footnotes are a bit more overt, as on "You Know So Well," where melotron phrases and drum patters sound as if they were plucked straight from strawberry fields, it's forgivable considering there are other sonic touches (like strings arranged by High Llama Sean O'Hagan) to embrace. Lerche isn't really about the "rock," but his songs are pretty spunky in their use of a folkie/jazzy vibe that gets decorated every which way. His equally clever and lush surroundings are a natural match for his sweet, confident voice, but when there's a bit more edge to the music (rugged guitars take a bow on "Sleep On Needles") or an acoustically spare backdrop ("Side Two"), there's something to be said for hearing all that young talent in the raw. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



Link

www.sondrelerche.com

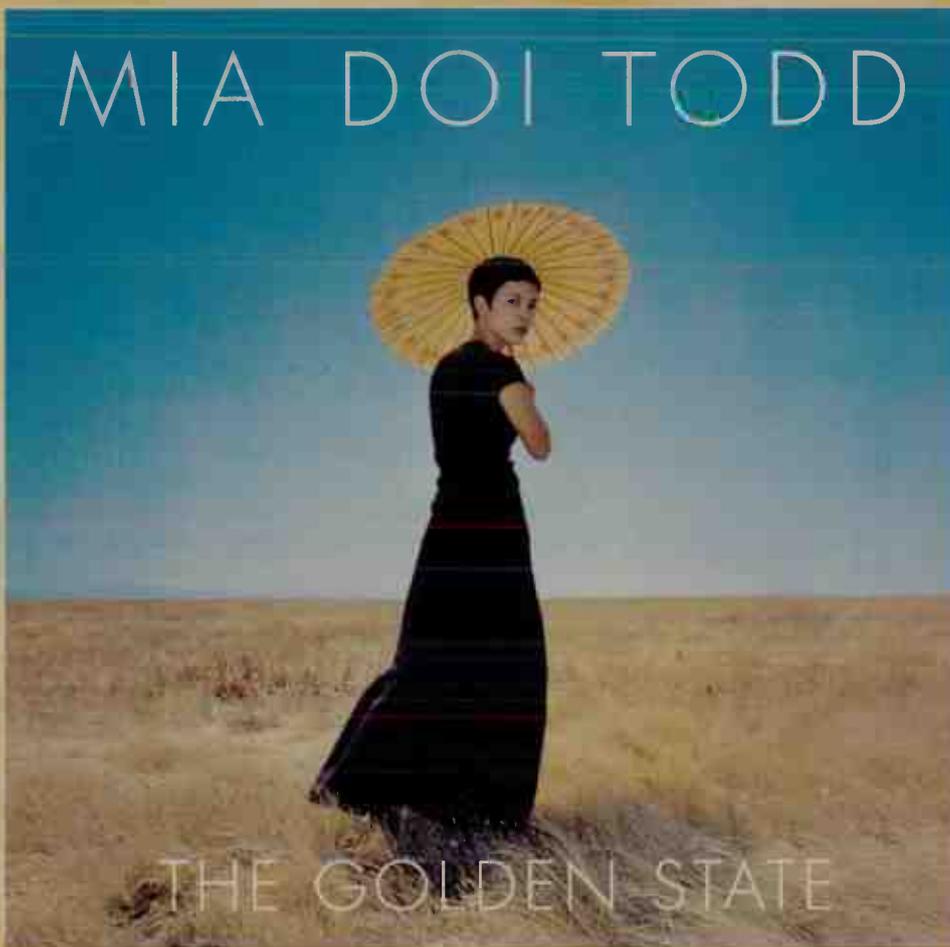
File Under

Exchange honor student

R.I.Y.L.

Rufus Wainwright, Eric Matthews,
Jason Falkner

MIA DOI TODD



MIA DOI TODD "THE GOLDEN STATE"

featuring Autumn & 88 Ways

"Like a 21st century Yeats she transforms our species' dilemmas, follies and misery into cathartic beauty. In this time of relentless ugliness, we need Mia Doi Todd."

— Michael Simmons, *LA Weekly*

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World Radio History

REVIEWS

16 HORSEPOWER
 HOWIE BECK
 BLACK DICE
 BROKEN SPINDLES
 DJINJI BROWN
 THE CHERRY VALENCE
 GUY CLARK
 DAG NASTY
 ANI DIFRANCO
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 DRUMS & TUBA
 ECHO
 SUE GARNER
 GREAT LAKES
 GRITS
 IDAHO
 IRVING
 KIND OF LIKE SPITTING
 LIARS
 LOW
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 CHRIS MILLS
 MR. LIF
 BIF NAKED
 NIGHTMARES ON WAX
 NO KNIFE
 JOHN PARISH
 PULP
 RADIO ZUMBIDO
 ROOTS MANUVA
 SING-SING
 SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE
 SWAYZAK
 TIN HAT TRIO
 TRS-80
 VIVA DEATH
 WOODBINE
 JAMES YORKSTON AND THE ATHLETES



16 HORSEPOWER

Folklore Jetsset

"O Sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in..." Thus Jonathan Edwards implored, nigh on 300 years ago. 16 Horsepower's David Eugene Edwards may not be related by blood to America's archetypal fire-and-brimstone preacher, but his lyrics mark him as a spiritual heir. Musings such as, "O Sinnerman, where will you run to? Run to your grave, your grave will not hide you..." are typical 16 Horsepower hell-fire and damnation, made all the more frighteningly insistent by the rolling, roiling Johnny Cash-esque guitar hook (hurdy-)girding the sentiment; the

music's eerie beauty also makes the message go down like manna. Equally apropos is Edwards's ferocious cover of Hank Williams's "Alone And Forsaken," as elsewhere on *Folklore* (16 Horsepower's fifth studio album), the line between the band's immaculately considered, backwoods-Gothic treatment of traditional folk songs and Edwards's original material is invisible. Like Moses staring across the border at the Promised Land, Edwards feels God's wrath in his soul, and one need only hear the weary piano trickle opening "Beyond The Pale" to understand the singular loneliness of one who longs to feel His grace shine down again. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

www.16horsepower.net

File Under

Mired in brimstone

R.I.Y.L.

The Gun Club, early solo Nick Cave, Bonnie Prince Billy

HOWIE BECK

Hollow Devil In The Woods-Future Farmer

In recent years, a new breed of songwriter has redefined what it means to love the nightlife. Dissing the boogie and embracing the 4 a.m. vibe has become all the rage: Mark Eitzel, Mark Kozelek, Smog, Hayden, Ida, Pernice Brothers... Who would've suspected that the ballad, most often reserved for track 11 on any given rocker's album, would become the thing on which entire careers are based? Yet, that's exactly the modus operandi of *Hollow*, Howie Beck's debut album that's just been released in the U.S. after a year of critical acclaim in the U.K. and



Link

www.howiebeck.com

File Under

Midnight moaner

R.I.Y.L.

Elliott Smith, Hayden, Gus, Pernice Brothers

Canada. It was recorded in Beck's Toronto apartment on an eight-track in the late-night hours, when to sing above a whisper or electrify beyond a muted solo would be to encourage murderous rancor. Beck's frequently been compared to Elliott Smith, and he admittedly shares both vocal timbre and harmonic instinct ("Serves You Right" could trick you in a blindfold test). Still, there's plenty to admire: the eerie, sweeping notes of "Scarecrow Down," the broken acoustic guitar chords of "Wanted Man," or the unintentionally hilarious pathetic-man pathos of "Baby Plays Around On Me." (Men stay in abusive relationships for fear of missing out on a great new song.) Add *Hollow* to the growing stack of albums perfect for late-night company. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



BLACK DICE

Beaches & Canyons DFA

Forget everything you've read about the New Rock when you put on Black Dice's *Beaches & Canyons* for the first time. Forget about electroclash, and forget about Williamsburg's much-touted rising cultural capital. The storm that the Brooklyn-via-Providence quartet kicks up is guaranteed to drown out any of the soundbyte buzz that follows their name like an echo. Despite DFA's alleged interest in bridging the dance-music and indie-rock communities, Black Dice have little to do with either. Instead, their epic jams

(average track time is 12 minutes) stir up squalls of feedback, shimmering electronics and hurricane-strength percussion. Exercises in heavy lifting, their songs lay massive planes of sound together the way sculptor Richard Serra balances lead slabs in precarious configurations: You wander beneath them filled with wonder and trepidation. Despite the overwhelming mass, though, subtlety prevails. "Seabird" sparkles with synthetic twitter and faraway tribal chanting; "Things'll Never Be The Same," which washes over you in slow, rolling waves of cymbal and delay, is shot through with the same kind of microscopic detail, just as indebted to composer Iannis Xenakis as it is to Godspeed You Black Emperor! Nominally instrumental, Black Dice's songs yield fragmented cries and howling deep in the mix, a testament to the human spirit locked inside the heart of the machine. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

www.dfarecords.com

File Under

Dissonance of the spheres

R.I.Y.L.

Sonic Youth, Earth,
Francisco López



BROKEN SPINDLES

Broken Spindles Tiger Style

In every band there lurks a member overflowing with ideas that are completely inappropriate for said band. In the Faint, that member is bassist Joel Peterson. With Broken Spindles, Peterson steps out far beyond the Faint's new new wave borders, dipping his toes into everything from Aphex-inflected IDM to piano dirges to thumping almost-house. The story is that the project sprung from Peterson's being asked to do some songs for a friend's video (none of which were used), with the only instruction being to make it "ethereal with edge." It's a fitting enough description: "Videosection"

starts with tense harpsichord swimming in synth burblings and eventually lands on top of beats that would have been perfectly comfortable on Depeche Mode's *Violator*; "Matte" marries smooth vibraphone chords to the clicking, sputtering Warp-isms that have captivated bands like Radiohead as of late. It's not all the frown-inducing moods that "ethereal with edge" implies, though. "Downtown Venues" crosses Daft Punk with Front 242 to create subwoofer-shaking industrial dance, and "Empty Bottle" introduces French house to glitch and messy guitar squalls. These 11 tracks prove Peterson a capable, if not particularly standout, groove writer (even if parts of the triumphant "Connection In Progress" do sound like victory music straight out of *Double Dragon*); it will be interesting to see how much effect his sonic wanderings will have on the Faint's future work. >>>IAN SIMS

Link

www.tigerstylerecords.com

File Under

With a side of edgy ethereal

R.I.Y.L.

Aphex Twin, Daft Punk,
Warp Records



DJINJI BROWN

Sirround Sound Seven Heads

Djinji Brown is a revisionist, and his trans-global *Sirround Sound* is a funky anachronism, playing as if Afrika Bambaataa had kick-started hip-hop's global revolution by rocking those European shows 10 years earlier. *Sirround Sound* is a planet-rock without borders: Bongo blasts, timbale shimmer and all breeds of African, Cuban and Brazilian percussion pony up to hip-hop and jungle, cross-pollinating into modernized '80s minimalist funk jams. Brown—who has twiddled knobs for A Tribe Called Quest and Pete Rock and

Tribe Called Quest and Pete Rock and C.L. Smooth—confidently and competently flirts with many microgenres, spilling his love of all things worldly into his love of all things funky. "Blue Hunny" is downtempo tribal-house injected with Caribbean percussion, as if the scrapers and agogos of Carnival took some mysterious detour into a smoky Detroit hotspot. "Apache's Revenge" takes the omnipresent break from the Incredible Bongo Band (beloved by LL Cool J, Geto Boys, Sugarhill Gang and countless others), cranks that bitch to 200 mph and unleashes it as wicked jungle. His dub experiment is mercifully short and his collaboration with Seven Heads compatriots Asheru and Blue Black is painfully uninteresting, but his squelchy jungle, Afro-Cuban electronica and errant chants from far-off lands make a surprisingly cohesive record, despite wearing so many hats. And just when you thought hip-hop's obsession with world music was over. Oochie wally, indeed. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

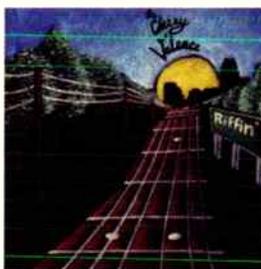
www.sevenheads.com

File Under

Buena vista block party

R.I.Y.L.

Transglobal Underground, Tom Tom Club, Loop Guru, Afrika Bambaataa



THE CHERRY VALENCE

Riffin' Estrus

A tough critic might suggest the Cherry Valence really isn't outdoing its peers in the bare-bones rock idiom; garage-land is simply garageland. The riffs are basic, the snare lands on the two and the four, the tempos are mid-paced, and the everyman (and -woman, on a few tracks) vocals are gruff. But on closer inspection, the Cherry Valence toys playfully with odd meters, and does their damndest to avoid—or at least lessen—the resurgent rock clichés. The band plays with utter conviction; they're riffin' alright, mining a blend of rockabilly simplicity and Aerosmith pomp and strut. Tim Green's (the

Fucking Champs) production is raw, unfiltered and straight-to-tape, capturing the North Carolina quintet's earnest assurance with the material. It's not terribly gutsy stuff, but it's certainly gritty. Not cocky, but sure-footed, earnest and not ironic (one hopes). *Riffin'* is a solid rock album, and it has its glittering moments, including the sliding groove of the T. Rex-ish "Undercovers" and the sticky-sweet Black Crowes Southernalia of "Summertime Chill." With most of the members contributing lead vocals, each song, while basically adhering to a similar groove and riff structure, is lifted with the nuance of a different voice. Even if it's a harvest of soul-rock clichés, *Riffin'* promises, to borrow the Grand Funk album title, good singin', good playin'. >>>PATRICK KENNEOY

Link

www.thecherryvalence.com

File Under

Resurgent rock

R.I.Y.L.

The Hellacopters, Jason & The Scorchers, the White Stripes,
Black Crowes



GUY CLARK

The Dark Sugar Hill

Texan Guy Clark can make you give a damn about a dog you've never met. "Queenie's Song" is all about burying a pooch shot by some errant sumbitch, and Clark's gift is that, before you know it, you're as mad as if it were your dog. That's the deal with him: He's a consummate storyteller, a songwriter whose ethic has always reflected his good sense. He keeps it simple and literate, very much in the manner of his longtime compadre Townes Van Zandt. *The Dark* is Clark at his most direct; Verlon Thompson and Darrell Scott handle most of the instruments, and Clark delivers a dozen songs with as

little fuss as possible. Memorable imagery abounds here, as on the title track (co-written with Buddy Mondlock), and, almost too vividly, on "Soldier's Joy," a tune about a Civil War casualty who loses a leg. Clark co-wrote "Homeless," one of the most arresting songs on the album, with Ray Stevenson after Stevenson saw a homeless man holding a sign that read "Friend for life, 25 cents." Clark never fails to include a Van Zandt tune on every album he releases, and for *The Dark* he chose the dolorous ballad "Rex's Blues." This CD is a beautiful piece of work and a distinguished follow-up to Clark's notable 1999 release, *Cold Dog Soup*. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link

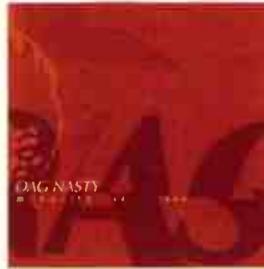
www.andrew.barron.net/guy_clark/main.html

File Under

A Guy to be reckoned with

R.I.Y.L.

Rodney Crowell, Townes Van Zandt, Charlie Robison



DAG NASTY

Minority Of One Revelation

D.C.'s Dag Nasty, along with Guy Picciotto's pre-Fugazi outfit, Rites Of Spring, presaged the hardcore scene's transformation into the emo world. And they did so without venom or bile, but with fragility and equivocation. On the band's sparkling debut, *Can I Say*, D.C. hardcore's righteous indignation (see: *Minor Threat*) yielded to an open-ended question through Dag Nasty's mouthpiece, Dave Smalley. Bottom line: Emo wouldn't be so emo without Dag Nasty's flawless first stab. Sixteen years later, the original Dag Nasty has regrouped, recorded and issued an

album. Brian Baker, whose day job is playing guitar in Bad Religion, retains his knack for the fast, melodic riff, loaded with plenty of ringing mid-range tone; it's a timeless sound. *Minority Of One*, a bit cleaner than its predecessors, glistens with the harmonic sheen of Baker's Bad Religion, for better and for worse. Smalley's voice, still a sturdy but fragile vessel, is that of a reluctant, humanitarian commander, and countless tours and albums with Down By Law and All have paid off in straightedge spades. The fact that *Minority Of One* doesn't sound quite as fresh and wide-eyed as *Can I Say* is absolute testimony to that album's—and this band's—enduring and widespread effect on hardcore and, for that matter, rock and pop music in general. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

Link

www.daghouse.com

File Under

When hardcore met emo

R.I.Y.L.

Down By Law, Bad Religion, Fugazi

haven
between the senses

FEATURING THE UK HITS
let it live
saysomething
til the end

AND TWO U.S. EXCLUSIVE
BONUS TRACKS!

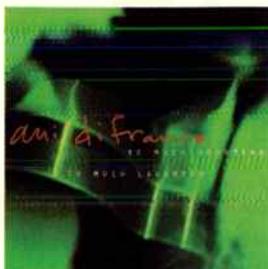
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ANI DIFRANCO

So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter

Righteous Babe

One of Ani DiFranco's greatest strengths is her uncanny sense of self-awareness. This may be most evident in her introspective lyrics, but it proves a useful skill when she sits down to compile a retrospective of her work. Like its predecessor, *Living In Clip*, *So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter* is a double-disc set that showcases live performances from various cities. Impeccably mixed and assembled, the collection is bookended by two of DiFranco's best songs about her career: "Swan Dive" and "You Had

Time." The former's incarnation here is a blueprint for the intelligent cacophony DiFranco's expanded band lineup can create: Horns and drums punctuate the ever-percussive guitar over an ethereal keyboard line. Unfortunately, the myriad instruments that have been folded into DiFranco's sound often serve to soften what used to be lean folk-thrash. DiFranco's maturing, though, is not at the expense of her ability to write kickass political dirges. "Self Evident" could be DiFranco's most eloquent, complex political commentary yet, and the couplet from which the song's title was taken ("And we hold these truths to be self evident/ Number one, George W. Bush is not president...") is enough to cause a Sister Souljah-sized scandal. DiFranco can probably afford to be this brash (it's gained her fans so far), but that doesn't make her words seem any less brave. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

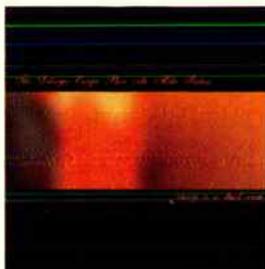
www.righteousbabe.com

File Under

Live and righteous

R.I.Y.L.

Dar Williams, Billy Bragg,
Joni Mitchell



THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

Irony Is A Dead Scene

Epitaph

Your younger bro, starry-eyed over prog pyrotechnics and crushing metal throb, might call that new Tool album "sick." Sure, Tool is sick—Mr. Bungle and Meshuggah are sicker—but progressive-hardcore musical calculators the Dillinger Escape Plan are the sickest. Their 1999 album *Calculating Infinity* sounded like Bad Brains tearing through the King Crimson catalog at the velocity of an asteroid careening towards earth—and *Irony Is A Dead Scene* again presents some of the most violent, disorienting music to ever torment a synapse.

Link

www.dillingerescapeplan.com

File Under

ADD rock

R.I.Y.L.

Mr. Bungle, Botch, Deadguy,
Tool

Recorded while between singers, *Dead Scene* was yelped by none other than avant-metal messiah Mike Patton, creating an unholy matrimony of his onomatopoetic screeches and Dillinger's dizzying complexities. Its mere 18 minutes play out like a savage beating—inhuman time signatures, impossibly jagged turn-on-a-dime rhythms and the most skittery drumming this side of *Squarepusher*. Considering the only equivalent to Dillinger's ADD-addled restlessness is IDM, the boys supply a mind-bogglingly accurate cover of Aphex Twin's "Come To Daddy," drummer Chris Pennie miraculously nailing every note. Showing a more mature side after years of brutish, chops-intensive pummeling, Dillinger and Patton inject *Dead Scene* with honest-to-God hooks (gasp!), a few graspable measures of 4/4 (gasp! gasp!) and intensely atmospheric production. A balance of extremes, *Irony Is A Dead Scene* is Dillinger's sickest work, and their strongest. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

VIVA DEATH



AVAILABLE NOW



DRUMS & TUBA

Mostly Ape Righteous Babe

Since its birth in 1995, Drums & Tuba, once Austin's tastiest street band, has evolved considerably. Since Tony Nozero (drums) and Brian Wolff (tuba, trumpet) were joined early on by guitarist Neal McKeeby, the sound has morphed from Crescent City brass band to New Orleans R&B, specifically of the variety influenced by the Meters. The trio, recording for Ani DiFranco's Righteous Babe label since last year's *Vinyl Killer*, continues to expand its sonic palette, dropping myriad electronic effects and other elements into the bracing (if esoteric) mix. Led Zep-style power chords and

unison quick stops, for instance, seem to drive home every other sprawling chorus, including those on the opening "Brain Liaters" and "Sevens." The groovealicious material that's recently attracted Jam Nation support is here, too, beginning with "The Metrics," all earthy brass punch, dirty guitar scratch and catchy minor-toned melody. Also inducing rhythmic wriggles are tracks like the heavy, heavy "4Style," "Clashing" (bolstered by syncopated rhythms and six-string atmospherics), the deep funk of "Air Con Dee" and "Super Bee" and the hypnotic squiggles and overblown brass and guitar textures of the closing "Magoo." A little bit human, a little bit primate. >>>PHILIP BOOTH

Link

www.drumsandtuba.com

File Under

Marching band meets Medeski

R.I.Y.L.

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band,

Medeski Martin And Wood,

Lettuce



ECHO

Echo New Line

Vocal standards married to drum 'n' bass? A high-concept trainwreck, right? Too reverent, and there's no point in even bothering to cover the classics, while aggressive updating of already time-tested material is often just crass. (There's a special place in Hell for the Jive Bunny And The Mastermixers people.) So it's hard to tell if Echo is really that good, or if the buzz that this self-titled disc imparts is more the relief that it's not scrotum-tighteningly awful. Echo is the brainchild of Joy Askew, a solo artist who's better remembered for backing up others (Joe Jackson on the *Night And Day* tour, Peter Gabriel,

Link

www.joyaskew.com

File Under

Slinky standard-bearing

electronic

R.I.Y.L.

Verve Remixed, Faithless,

Jazzanova

Laurie Anderson) and Takuya Nakamura, whom Askew found playing trumpet and keyboards at a New York club. Askew's vocals seize the spotlight, adeptly traversing the slippery electronic rhythms applied to "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Night And Day" and "Everytime We Say Goodbye," among others. Of the standards, only "Girl From Ipanema" suffers from the reworking, as Nakamura's otherwise spot-on rhythm-jiggering can't match Jobim's sexy sashay. On repeat listenings, though, it's the originals that shine. "Sparks From A Wheel" fuses R&B, jazz and techno as well as any current down-tempo wiz, and "Secret Self" is sexy in every way but lyrically. So maybe it really just is that good. >>>SCOTT FRAMPTON

THE COMP PILE (OUR GUIDE TO COMPILATION CDS) BY AMY PHILLIPS

TITLE	Party At The Palace (Virgin)	Survive And Advance Vol. 1 (Merge)	Asian Groove (Putumayo)	The 4 A.M. Sound Of Tech House (:run)	One Big Trip (Hieroglyphics Imperium)
CONCEPT	Has-beens (British and otherwise) embarrassingly debasing good songs	Low-priced label sampler with mostly unreleased tracks	A fusion of traditional Indian music with funk, hip-hop and electronica	An introduction to the emerging electronic sub-genre tech house	Drug-fueled teen road trip movie and its hip-hop soundtrack, on one double-sided DVD/CD
TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	Rich people with no taste, members of the Royal Family	Indie kids despondent over Audiogalaxy shutdown	Body Shop customers, Timbaland	You know the difference between techno and house	Super 8-wielding lily-white pot-heads who wear Triple 5 Soul
NAMES TO DROP	Joe Cocker, Bryan Adams, Rod Stewart	Spoon, Lambchop, Portastatic, Destroyer	Nitin Sawhney, Badar Ali Kahn with Dan The Automator	Layo & Bushwacka!, Terry Francis, Eddie Richards	Jurassic 5, Dilated Peoples, Del Tha Funkee Homosapien
SUMS IT UP	"God Save The Queen" (Brian May)	"Smile: No One Cares How You Feel" (Gothic Archies)	"A Night In Lenasia" (Deepak Ram)	"Deepinit (Souldoubt Remix)" (Scott Findley)	"The High Road" (Swollen Members)
VERDICT	Effective backup for those who think the British Monarchy is a waste of tax dollars	You don't have to be a Stephin Merritt completist to get off on these tracks from the high-quality Merge roster.	There are some intoxicating grooves here, even if you're usually terrified by the words "world music."	Who cares if the songs all sound the same when you're dancing? Bring a case of Red Bull and some comfortable shoes...	Dude, this disc is, like, silver on one side and gold on the other. Whoa. And that Royce Da 5'9" track is bumpin!



SUE GARNER

Shadyside Thrill Jockey

Sue Garner's third solo outing fits squarely between its predecessors, the post-rock-inflected *Still* (co-credited to husband and longtime bandmate Rick Brown) and the more organic, intimate *To Run More Smoothly*. Her newfound middle ground proves even more rewarding than those already fine discs. Garner clears a wide berth for her collaborators to leave their imprint, a generosity she honed as a primary contributor to egalitarian-minded bands like Run On, Fish And Roses and the Shams. She cedes the spotlight to guest Marc Ribot's avant-flamenco guitar-plucking on

Shadyside's opener, "Yes," allowing her voice to be spliced and scattered amid a hypnotic rhythm track. The backdrop quickly shifts with "Come Again," its straightforward country folk offering a platform for the Hoboken resident's native Southern drawl to peek through. Garner's sweet, homespun voice is *Shadyside's* unifying force though alternating unadorned tracks and ambient production flourishes. That the highest points come from gimmick free melodies like the gorgeous "These Old Walls" (featuring understated guitar work by Yo La Tengo bassist James McNew) is testament to Garner's underlying talent. *Shadyside* is a warm, vibrant record on which technological embellishments are mere icing on the cake. >>>GLEN SARVAOY

Link

www.thrilljockey.com

File Under

Sweet voices, with or without technology

R.I.Y.L.

Beth Orton, Emmylou Harris, Califone, Freakwater



GREAT LAKES

The Distance Between Orange Twin

How many more albums can compel writers to use the words "Pet Sounds redux," even against their better judgment? A hell of a lot, if bands like Athens, Ga. trio Great Lakes keep making music. The follow-up to the band's self-titled 2000 debut, *The Distance Between* is laden with the same basement-brewed vintage pop that put their Elephant 6 peers Apples In Stereo and Elf Power on the map. Beach Boys-style harmonies, piano-based arrangements, and a smidgeon of psychedelic noodling pepper pensive songs about love hard-won and harder-lost; a cover

of Mike Nesmith's "Some Of Shelly's Blues" hides a sadsack plea in a sunny melody reminiscent of the Everly Brothers. "The Morning Of My Life," a gorgeous remake of an obscure Bee Gées track, breezily reflects on waning innocence. Other highlights include a cover of the Zombies classic "This Will Be Our Year" and the cleverly titled orchestral beauty "Ever So Over." While there are countless indie bands dressed in bootcut cords and summer camp T-shirts doing the same brand of horn-accented, retro-flavored pop, it's rare to see it done with such mastery and heart, even if the best songs here happen to be retreads of the real thing. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

Link

www.orangetwin.com

File Under

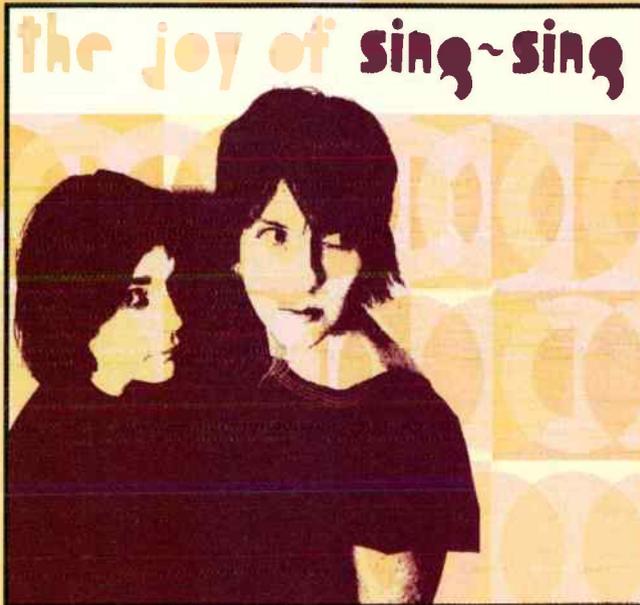
Summery retro pop

R.I.Y.L.

Apples In Stereo, Elf Power, Beulah

SING-SING

featuring EMMA ANDERSON
formerly of LUSH

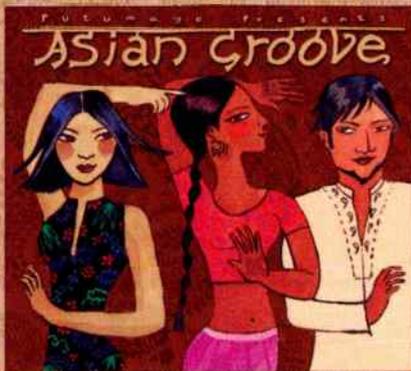


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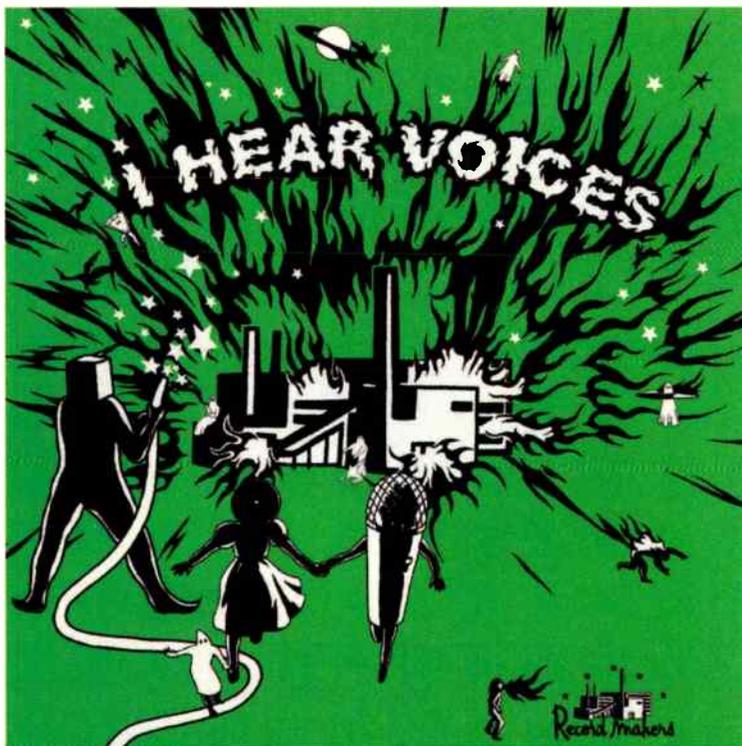


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GRITS

The Art Of Translation Gatee

When GRITS spit lyrics like, "Do you understand the ill-coined phrase 'gospel rapper?'" from their mini-phrase "Ill Coined Phrase," brows may bunch—this is not your average rap band. They continue: "We got a mandate to translate for Christ's sake/ We teaching unteachables, reaching the unreachable." To quote Black Rob: "Whoa!" Not until the sixth song on this Tennessee rap duo's 17-track CD does their mission become Windex clear: GRITS rap for reasons other than girls, gold and the glamorous life.

Link

www.grits7.com

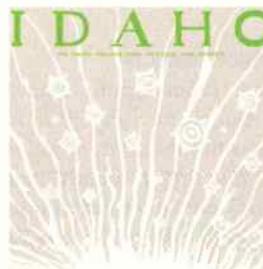
File Under

God squad

R.I.Y.L.

L.A. Symphony, Nappy Roots, OutKast

Sure they've got mainstream game on the catchy lead single "Here We Go," and the bounce chant "Tennessee Bwoys." And lines like "The only bars I stay locked in now are 16 and 8" (from "Get It") prove their rhymes are as tight as many of their secular peers'. But most of their fourth CD is filled with spiritually enriching jewels like "Ooh Ahh," the commitment-celebrating "Be Mine" and "Believe," featuring the rich vocals of Grammy-nominee Jennifer Knapp. With mass appeal quotables like "It's Ludacris the way I throw them bows" from "Get It," and amped anthems like "Keep Movin'," a tame version of Ludacris' "Move B***h," GRITS have crafted a successful formula for mixing the secular and spiritual. >>>JESSICA KOSLOW



IDAHO

We Were Young And Needed The Money

Idaho Music-Retrophonic

Los Angeles' Idaho has carved out a career making beautiful downer albums focusing on the sleepy baritone and spare compositions of Jeff Martin, who's earned comparisons to depressive maestros like Marks Eitzel and Kozelek. For this "unofficial follow-up" to 2001's *Levitate*, the band dipped into its back catalog and came up with 17 previously unreleased tracks from its decade-long career. Similar in spirit and scope to 2000's live compilation *People Like Us Should Be Stopped*, *We Were Young And Needed The Money* is comprised of rarities and outtakes,

Link

www.idahomusic.com

File Under

Low and Codeine bedfellows

R.I.Y.L.

American Music Club, Red House Painters, really mellow Sonic Youth

supposedly from, well, when Idaho was young and needed the money. Tracks range from early melodic gems like 1992's "Carefully Turning," to more recent works such as album opener "Social Studies" (from 1999's *Hearts Of Palm* sessions). The standouts, which include 1995's "Teeth Marks," with its strange Seam-meets-Beck quality, and 1997's "This Day," which sounds like Dinosaur Jr. on Quaaludes, are perfect sad/tense showcases for the ragged ache of Martin's brooding, delicate vocals. While odds-and-ends collections like this will surely appeal to zealous Idaho fans, it may not be the best introduction to the band for beginners: Those folks would do well to check out 1996's *Three Sheets To The Wind*. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD • R.I.Y.L. - RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



irving

IRVING

Good Morning Beautiful Eerie Moenie

With five different singers and songwriters, it's not surprising that Irving's *Good Morning Beautiful* is a bit ... fragmented. Although it all falls loosely under the big Beatles-esque indie pop tent (yes, that's Of Montreal at the next booth), the sound is understandably a bit inconsistent. Some songs edge towards Magnetic Fields synth-pop, while others contain a bit of country-pop twang à la Beachwood Sparks. *Good Morning Beautiful* walks the line between a pleasant sort of musical déjà vu, in which Irving's influences are evident but not overpowering, and just plain generic, which has the

band's influences trotted out for show and tell. Even the band's name blends into the crowd: Wayne, was it, or Matthew? Joshua, perhaps? The album is anchored by the psychedelic shrieks of the Andy Paley-produced "L-O-V-E." Although the sentiment of the chorus, "L-O-V-E, I love you," is none too original, the song has just enough oomph to lift it, and *Good Morning Beautiful*, out of the faceless bin, and is catchy enough to keep your head bobbing... at least until you get a copy of the new Of Montreal album. >>>KERRY MILLER

Link

www.thebandirving.com

File Under

Indie-pop déjà vu

R.I.Y.L.

Of Montreal,

Beachwood Sparks, the

Ladybug Transistor



KIND OF LIKE SPITTING



Bridges Worth Burning Barsuk

Ben Barnett is no stranger to indie introspection; his last six discs as Kind Of Like Spitting have seen the insanely prolific songwriter warble through endless tales of failed relationships, lost friends and childhood memories, all with a pop edge and some slight vocal quivering. On his latest paean to emotion and insecurity, Barnett has shed the mostly acoustic approach of past records and pieced together a fully realized rock band that also features Brian Grant on bass and Death Cab For Cutie's Ben Gibbard behind the kit. KOLS stalwarts may find this record's

Link

www.barsuk.com

File Under

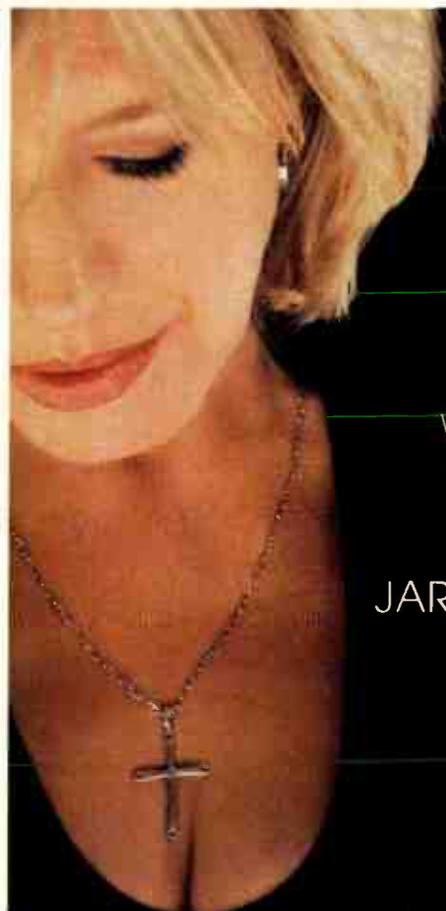
Happy rock for sad kids

R.I.Y.L.

Death Cab For Cutie, Hey

Mercedes, the Promise Ring

finely produced and rocked-out approach a bit unnerving when compared to the intimacy of the earlier albums, but the band's contributions, especially those of Gibbard and guest spots from DCFC's Chris Walla and Hey Mercedes' Bob Nanna, don't weigh Barnett down, and the songs' fullness is always tasteful. Still, *Bridges Worth Burning* isn't as soul-stirring as Barnett's past efforts. But he does have a few surprises up his sleeve, from the complicated, percussion-heavy "Passionate," to the solo-acoustic nugget "Canaries," and even in the self-effacing music-nerd lyrics of "Crossover Potential," all of which prove his songwriting skills are still flourishing unabated. >>>PETER O'ANGELO



MARIANNE FAITHFULL

THE NEW ALBUM
KISSIN TIME

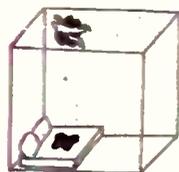
FEATURING
WHEREVER I GO

FEATURING GUEST ARTISTS
BECK, BILLY CORGAN,
JARVIS COCKER AND BLUR



MARIANNE FAITHFULL
KISSIN TIME

PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



LIARS

They Threw Us All In A Trench and Stuck A Monument On Top *Mute-Blast First*

Fresh from the fertile breeding grounds of New York City's burgeoning rock scene, Brooklyn-based Liars are a band poised for an interesting future. Aside from their penchant for onstage violence and long, quirky song titles, Liars are surfing the near-forgotten sound of danceable art school skronk with *They Threw Us All In A Trench And Stuck A Monument On Top*. Near-seven-foot, Australian-born hyper-nerd frontman Angus Andrew, complete with a stylishly ironic mustache, mouths off like a very tall child

who isn't getting his way; Nebraskans Pat Nature (bass) and Ron Albertson (drums) provide dense rhythms to shake that ass to as Aaron Hemphill's guitar explodes in taut bursts. *They Threw Us* is at times charming (check the cowbell breaks of the unnaturally catchy "Mr. Your On Fire Mr." and the handclaps of "We Live NE Of Compton") and at others irritating—even the very adventurous or very high will find little reward in listening to the drone of "Nothing Is Ever Lost Or Can Be Lost My Science Fiction Friend" or the exhausting 30-plus minute closer "This Dust Makes That Mud." Despite those moments, it all flows naturally; while coming hardcore with a sound perfected some 20-odd years ago by British post-punk bands like A Certain Ratio and Public Image Ltd, Liars sound unquestionably now. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

Link

www.liarsliarsliars.com

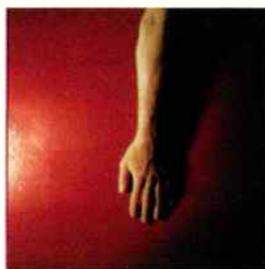
File Under

Danceable art-school skronk

R.I.Y.L.

The Fall, PIL, A Certain Ratio,

Wire, Sonic Youth



LOW

Trust *Kranky*

When Low began carving out their unmistakable sound eight years ago, they also boxed themselves in. For years, they adhered to a minimalist, sloth-like esthetic and only with their past few releases have they opened up their music to the occasional song over, say, 30 bpm. Following their most accessible and immediate record, last year's *Things We Lost In The Fire*, *Trust* is yet another milestone: It's their least cohesive, most haphazard album yet. Plenty of the material here, like the album's brooding opener, "(That's How You Sing) Amazing Grace," harkens

back to Low's more difficult and dissonant *The Curtain Hits The Cast-era* sound. "In The Drugs" is vintage Low sweetness—a deliberate, deliciously melodic acoustic ballad arranged so gorgeously that Mimi Parker's backing vocals form a halo around hubby Alan Sparhawk's lead. That song is a great reminder of how well Low do what they do, but it is also a counterpoint to the record's less characteristic tracks. Sparhawk's guitar in "Canada" rocks and rumbles like never before, and "Point Of Disgust" finds Parker harmonizing with herself over only a handful of high piano notes. *Trust* won't go down as Low's shining moment, but it does suggest that there's beauty in a band transcending its own shtick. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.chairkickers.com

File Under

And behold

R.I.Y.L.

Codeine, Bedhead,

Galaxie 500



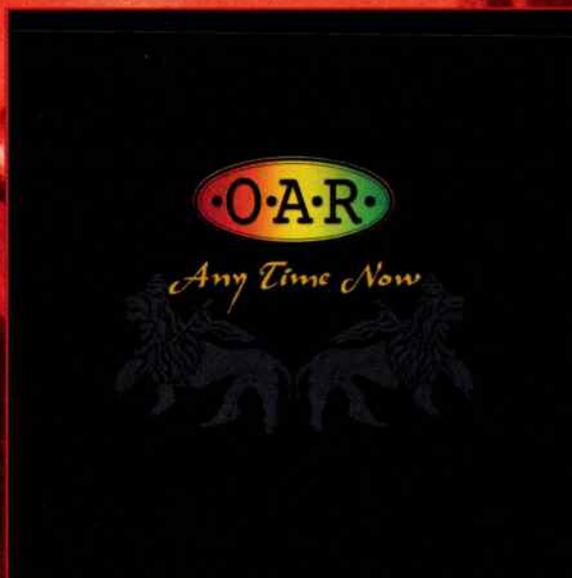
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AIMEE MANN

Lost In Space SuperEgo

Now that Wilco has supplanted Aimee Mann as the poster artist of corporate label struggles, *Lost In Space* arrives without the back-story fanfare that greeted the stellar one-two punch of the *Magnolia* soundtrack and *Bachelor No. 2* two years ago. Mann continues her independence by releasing the album on her own SuperEgo label and co-producing it with her guitarist, Michael Lockwood. Call the result *Bachelor No. 3*—a worthy addition to her canon, if a tad too familiar. Mann specializes in melancholy tales of frustration and heartache sung in a clear,

sweet soprano that cloaks a bitter core, and she's still writing relationship-gone-wrong songs that could apply either to a lover or to the record industry ("This Is How It Goes"). Several midtempo ballads—"Guys Like Me," "It's Not"—revisit melodies from *Bachelor No. 2*, but those are quibbles, since *Lost In Space* does, ultimately, have its own character. Songs revolve around images of distance and separation and use lush string swells, slinky keyboards and some unexpected touches such as the dobro on "High On Sunday 51" and staticky loops in "Real Bad News." And with "Humpty Dumpty," a seamless extended metaphor that anchors a tale of psychic fragmentation, she matches her own high standards for subtle, literate songwriting. *Lost In Space* finds Mann in a holding pattern, but she's circling at a lofty level. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.aimeemann.com

File Under

Super-smart songwriting

R.I.Y.L.

Elliott Smith, Beth Orton,

Elvis Costello



MIGALA

Restos De Un Incendio Acuarela

Migala's introduction to the U.S. was last year's *Arde*—"it burns." It's fitting, then, that the title of this disc, a collection of songs from the Madrid band's past three records that they've rerecorded after developing new interpretations live, should translate to "The Remains Of The Fire." These songs sound as if a fire has burned through them, leaving only charred husks behind and achieving the kind of world-weariness usually reserved strictly for Nick Cave and Leonard Cohen records. The outlook is beautifully, relentlessly bleak; *Restos's* 10 tracks drip with the defeated atmosphere perfected by the likes of Black

Heart Procession and Tindersticks (it helps that Abel Hernandez's voice is a close approximation of Stuart Staples's). While the vocals may feel like the focus, the band's secret weapon is their subtle arrangements. Organs and weepy accordions float in and out of tracks, propping up reverb-swamped, almost spaghetti-Western guitars (see "Tiempos De Desastre" (Times Of Disaster) for the best example). Migala brings up the energy level sparingly, but when they do it's to maximum effect, especially on tracks like the opening instrumental, "La Canción De Gurb" (The Song Of Gurb), which slowly builds from a droning organ into a dense, textural swirl, only to peter out just like the fire for which the record's named. >>>TOM MALLON

Link

www.migala.net

File Under

Atmósferas del fuego

R.I.Y.L.

Leonard Cohen, Nick Cave,

Tindersticks, Arab Strap,

Mazy Star

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CHRIS MILLS

The Silver Line Powerless Pop

Chicago singer/songwriter Chris Mills' 2000 disc *Kiss It Goodbye* (Sugar Free) stands nicely alongside the best alt-country records of the last decade. But for all the overwhelmingly positive press clippings, Mills was left without a label to release its follow-up. So, the 25-year-old decided to release his brilliant new LP, *The Silver Line*, on his own dime, and even at only 10 tracks, it's a monster of a record. *The Silver Line* bespeaks Mills' infatuation with the rowdy spirit of country music—even if the only way it really comes out is through his desperate delivery of lines like "Can you play me that suicide note/ The one that's supposed to kill the pain/ And won't you please tell my dear mother I am sorry/ But this is the last chord I can afford to play." But rather than packing the record full of loud, twangy rock riffs, Mills fleshes out his songs with piano, strings and horns, creating a sound that can easily be identified with the Chicago music scene. Now three full-lengths and an EP into his career, it's about time this guy gets some widespread recognition for his passionate and intelligent take on Americana. >>>MIKE CONKLIN

Link

www.chris-mills.com

File Under

Drinking songs for the sophisticated

R.I.Y.L.

Wilco, Edith Frost,

Richard Buckner

... (This text is part of the main review paragraph above and is not repeated here for brevity.)



MR. LIF

I Phantom Definitive Jux

I Phantom, the long-anticipated full-length from revered Bostonian lyricist Mr. Lif, traces some narrative over its 14 tracks, but since the impossibly coiffured MC navigates at the speed of light/life, it becomes a tricky trail to traverse. The antihero character of *I Phantom* suffers worker-ant anguish at a shitty job, finds inner solace in lyric writing, begrudgingly returns to work, drags wife and child into suburban hell, warps more offspring in a volatile remarriage, suffers though nuclear holocaust and, as his melted flesh lays helpless in the rubble, frets over the

Link

www.mrlif.com

File Under

Advanced placement hip-hop

R.I.Y.L.

Micranots, Insight, El-P,

Dead Prez

CEOs he didn't kill. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Lif presents the first hip-hop concept album about futility. This is think-hop in its most literary variety—consciousness through thick filters of sarcasm and role-playing—and a contrast to his equally exciting Bush-baiting EP *Emergency Rations*. Less virulent and more metaphorical, Lif rages against our Feudal economic system in the Coup-esque "Live From The Plantation" and struggles through the family/work tug-of-war on the austere "Success." Def Jux kingpin El-P produces six tracks—saving that Philip K. Dick dystopian scuzz for his solo stuff and giving the KRS-ian Lif more bounce to the ounce. Whether blaming the apocalypse on our "silence and complacency" or just sneaking into the club, this Beantown hip-hopper is dense enough to be on your summer reading list. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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BIF NAKED

Purge Her Royal Majesty's-Lava-Atlantic

Tattooed non-genuine Bif Naked tackles her follow up to 1999's *I Bificus* with varying styles—and varying degrees of success—on *Purge*. Originally released last year in her native Canada, *Purge* finds Ms. Naked's spunky guitar-driven pop littered with tres en vogue new-wave synths and bleeps, at times rendering her a Bizarro-world Gwen Stefani. The first single, "Tango Shoes," and the chugging rocker "Dawn" faithfully pay tribute to acts like the Cars and the Go-Go's without losing any steam. The tempo begins to falter, however, when the self-affirming "I

Link

www.bifnaked.com

File Under

Uncomfortably Naked

R.I.Y.L.

Liz Phair, the Cars, No Doubt,

Alanis Morissette

Love Myself Today" gives way to the goofy piano schmaltz of "Stolen Sidewalk," whose lyrics ("I'm a weakling/ You are strong/ Pick me up/ Where I lay") negate the riot grrrlishness displayed earlier on. But she picks it up again with "Leader" as she snarls, "Don't follow me/ Don't bother me/ I'm no leader!" to any overzealous fans. While Bif puts on a tough veneer most of the time, *Purge* often reveals a sensitive little kid inside who doodles hearts on her notebook and daydreams about meeting a "really square, regular guy." While these are not bad things, it works against her here, as there's not much to grab you by the collar, slap you around and demand your attention. >>>RYAN RAYHILL



NIGHTMARES ON WAX

Mind Elevation *Warp*

As anyone familiar with its past releases can attest, Nightmares On Wax is an obvious misnomer. In fact, the music that George Evelyn (the man behind N.O.W.'s metaphorical curtain) has consistently delivered is much more likely to inspire sweet dreams than anything of a more sinister nature. *Mind Elevation* is no exception, finding Evelyn once again living up to his DJ acronym, E.A.S.E. (Experience A Sample Expert). Right at the start, there's a tip-off that things will be a little different this time; where the first three albums began

with variations on Quincy Jones's classic "Summer In The City" (titled alternately "Nights Interlude" and "Les Nuits"), this one marks a new phase by leading off instead with the slow sunny jazz of "Mind Eye." The toker's esthetic that he's displayed in the past continues to play a lead role in the tunes, with downbeat diversions and dub delights aplenty, but it's when Evelyn expands his scope that things get really interesting. The album's vocal tracks break from the traditional N.O.W. mold to provide some unexpectedly upbeat moments, including the Euro-reggae flashback of "'70s '80s" and the soul-saturated "Know My Name." If there's a flaw, it's only that in diversifying, Evelyn at times risks inconsistency. Then again, it was eclecticism that got N.O.W. where it is today, and will undoubtedly keep it going brightly into the future. >>>DOUG LEVY

[Link](#)

www.nightmaresonwax.com

File Under

Smoking grooves

R.I.Y.L.

Thievery Corporation, Tosca,

Fila Brazillia



NO KNIFE

Riot For Romance *Better Looking*

Not long after they acquired guitarist/vocalist Ryan Ferguson, San Diego's No Knife evolved from "Hmmm... they've got potential" post-punk lab rats to "Holy God!" stone-cold rock monsters. Their ensuing *Hit Man Dreams* and *Fire In The City Of Automaton* LPs were progressive and frenzied, yet airtight studies in how to do math-pop right, rife with the shark-tooth downstrokes that have become their signature. *Riot For Romance* is a less immediately dazzling contemplation from a band that nearly disintegrated following a high-profile tour

[Link](#)

www.noknife.net

File Under

Punchy emo architects subdued

R.I.Y.L.

Drive Like Jehu, Jimmy Eat

World, Jejuné

with Sunny Day Real Estate. It includes three tracks borrowed from EPs and 45s ("Permanent For Now," "The Red Bedroom" and "Flechette"), which are abrupt and familiar, but disrupt *Riot's* flow simply by not being new. Guitarist Mitch Wilson assumes most of the vocal load again, but this material favors fragile, repetitive melodies over daredevil change-ups, diluting his impact. The instrumental "May I Call You Doll?" and finale "This Moon Life" are leisurely dirges better suited to a film score than a No Knife album, indicating that the band is at a crossroads. The machine still clicks on the title track and "Parting Shot," all hot and bothered with lurching bass and harmonics, but they fail to ignite the *Riot* you might've anticipated. >>>ANDREW BONAZELU

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World Radio History

BILLBOARD MAGAZINE May 4, 2002
The collection (*Says Pop*) has already drawn raves for its poetic lyrics and its sweet blend of acoustic-pop and guitar-rock.

THE STRIP MAGAZINE March/April 2002
I wish I could convey just how good this record is, but no combination of words can do Roman Candle's *Says Pop* justice. BY CARTER DAVIS

Premiering on MTV's
"YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST"
this September

outlook music co.
est. 1992



JOHN PARISH

How Animals Move Thrill Jockey

As a producer, John Parish has lent an understated grace to Sparklehorse, Giant Sand and 16 Horsepower, a quality he brings to his solo work as well. *How Animals Move* exists primarily as a showpiece for five Parish compositions performed by an 11-piece ensemble featuring Portishead's Adrian Utley and Giant Sand's Howe Gelb. These swelling, midtempo tracks incorporate cornet, violins and piano, evoking a cinematic grandeur that recalls Tom Waits's macabre marches or Calexico's southwestern vistas without the overt mariachi stylings. Armed with enough material for half a captivating album,

Parish rounds out the package with incidental music better suited for a film score. Many of these latter recordings date back to 1997-98, leaving an impression of stray ideas in search of a home. They succeed at sustaining *How Animals Move*'s eerily relaxed vibe, similar to *Dance Hall At Louse Point*, Parish's 1996 collaboration with long-time ally PJ Harvey. Ironically, it's Harvey who breaks the spell with the bluesy juke-joint stomp "Airplane Blues," one of the disc's few vocals. It's the top-drawer, impassioned performance we've come to expect from Harvey, but in this context it leaves the impression that the slow-paced art film *How Animals Move* could capably support abruptly concludes with a bawdy burlesque scene. >>>GLEN SARVAOY

Link

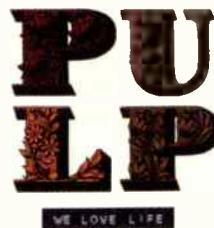
www.johnparish.com

File Under

Soundtracks in search of a movie

R.I.Y.L.

Giant Sand, Calexico, Ennio Morricone, mellow PJ Harvey, Roy Nathanson



PULP

We Love Life Sanctuary

In the same loosely thematic way that Pulp's 1995 breakthrough *Different Class* was about the class system (and sex) and 1998's difficult follow-up *This Is Hardcore* was about aging (and sex), *We Love Life* is about the environment (and sex). "The trees, those useless trees, produce the air that I am breathing," sings Jarvis Cocker on the chorus of "The Trees," a grand, orchestral tale of heartbreak. "Weeds" uses the plants to represent the tenacity of Britain's refugee population, while "Weeds II (The Origin Of The Species)" uses them as metaphors for insidious sexual

Link

www.pulponline.com

File Under

Theatrical Britpop

R.I.Y.L.

Scott Walker, the Flaming Lips, Julian Cope

impulses. "The Birds In Your Garden," "Roadkill," "Sunrise"—the album's full of nature metaphors and images, but they are only the roots of Jarvis Cocker's perceptive, literate narratives. Aided by producer Scott Walker, the '60s pop icon turned oddball auteur, Pulp has crafted a lush and complex album that is densely layered, full of string sections and backing choirs, dramatic pauses and crescendos, spoken interludes and soaring choruses. *We Love Life* is an arty album, but it's not devoid of pop hooks. With its ringing guitars, the witty "Bad Cover Version" ("I heard an old girlfriend has turned to the church—she's trying to replace me, but it'll never work") ranks among Cocker's best melodies, and *We Love Life* is a stirring art/pop hybrid. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Frank Black and The Catholics

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RADIO ZUMBIDO

Los Últimos Dias del AM Quatermass

Juan Carlos Barrios is the man behind Radio Zumbido. A member of the nuestra rock crew Bohemia Suburbana, Barrios set out to do a solo record when that band disintegrated; while hanging near Lake Atitlan in Guatemala, he began to devise *Los Últimos Dias del AM*, essentially a low-tech techno project. The album has all the trappings of a found-art piece, as Barrios hammers together field recordings and an intriguing variety of samples (spoken word, old jazz and salsa blurbs, percussion). For anyone who grew up in the middle of

Link

www.radiozumbido.net

File Under

Los Últimos Dias del Lo-fi Techno

R.I.Y.L.

Massilia Sound System, Artefakto, Nortec

rural nowhere, back when the only receivable radio was AM (still the situation in Guatemala), this album sounds very much like spinning that dial and being bombarded with a variety of sonic weirdness. Some tunes have a particularly pointed resonance: "DJ Salvacion," for example, overlays a radio evangelist with a lazy guitar loop; "Lo-fi Chicken Bus," aside from being the best song-tittle on the album, juxtaposes a lovely Latin lounge sensibility and busy percussion loops; and "El Hampa," a clever tune that comments on itself, features an instrumental track which unfolds in a rumba tempo and then dissolves into Ruben Blades speaking about growing up in Panama listening to music on the radio. Barrios' working-class techno concept plays out as a consistently intriguing and cleverly nuanced collection of songs. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK



ROOTS MANUVA

Dub Come Save Me **Big Dada**

U.K. hip-hop has long been accused of aping American styles, and not very well at that. But South London's Roots Manuva—a.k.a. Rodney Smith—went a long way towards rescinding that charge on last year's *Run Come Save Me*. His molasses-thick flow had more to do with the ragga toasting of his Jamaican heritage than with any Stateside stylistics, and his breaks-and-bleeps production made a similar declaration of independence, drawing a straight line back to the Jamaican soundsystem culture of the British inner city. *Dub Come Save Me* is an even more explicit statement of his

Caribbean lineage and leanings: Comprised of four dubs from the original album and six tracks culled from the dozens that didn't make it onto that record, *Dub* is a Janus-faced beast that tests the limits of dub and hip-hop alike. At its most basic, it's a shuddering assemblage of echo-soaked chords, wormhole bass and thunderclap percussion. But tracks like "Revolution 5," featuring Jurassic 5's Chali 2na, take things a step further, fusing lumbering polka blats and sci-fi sweeps with stutter-step snares and vocals so gravelly you could fill potholes with 'em. Call it roadmaker dub, blazing a brand new transatlantic trail. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

www.rootsmanuva.co.uk

File Under

Dubmobasswithmyrootsman

R.I.Y.L.

No Protection: Massive Attack

Vs. Mad Professor,

New Flesh, Spacek



SING-SING

The Joy Of Sing-Sing **Manifesto**

In the video for "Feels Like Summer," included on the CD version of Sing-Sing's *The Joy Of Sing-Sing*, former Lush guitarist Emma Anderson and her new musical partner, vocalist Lisa O'Neill, loll about on a beach and in fields of green grass, under blue skies illuminated by afternoon sunlight. Indeed, most of the British duo's debut album is a perfect soundtrack to a lazy summer afternoon in the countryside: It's relaxed and beautiful, if a bit dull. O'Neill's sweet but indistinct voice harmonizes with itself over lulling trip-hop, spacey synth-pop and acoustic-driven electro-folk, delivering

Link

www.sing-sing.co.uk

File Under

Lush-ious dream pop

R.I.Y.L.

Lush, Saint Etienne, Cinerama

innocuous lyrics and charming "la la"s and "doo doo"s. Only with the Garbage-like "Tegan" and the danceable new wave of "Panda Eyes" do Sing-Sing let themselves loose to break the easygoing mood. The highlight of the album is its unlisted bonus track, a simple, thrilling duet between O'Neill and Departure Lounge frontman Tim Keegan, accompanied only by an accordion and a violin. Comparisons to Lush are inevitable, as Sing-Sing's music falls squarely in between the shoegazery soundscapes of *Spooky* and the straight-up pop of *Loveline*. However, only the closer, "I Can See You" (which sounds a whole lot like the Verve's "Bittersweet Symphony") approaches the ethereal majesty of the former, while the bite of the latter is sorely missing. But for those still mourning the dissolution of Anderson's former band, *The Joy Of Sing-Sing* will be a welcome dream-pop fix. >>>AMY PHILLIPS

DRUMS & TUBA

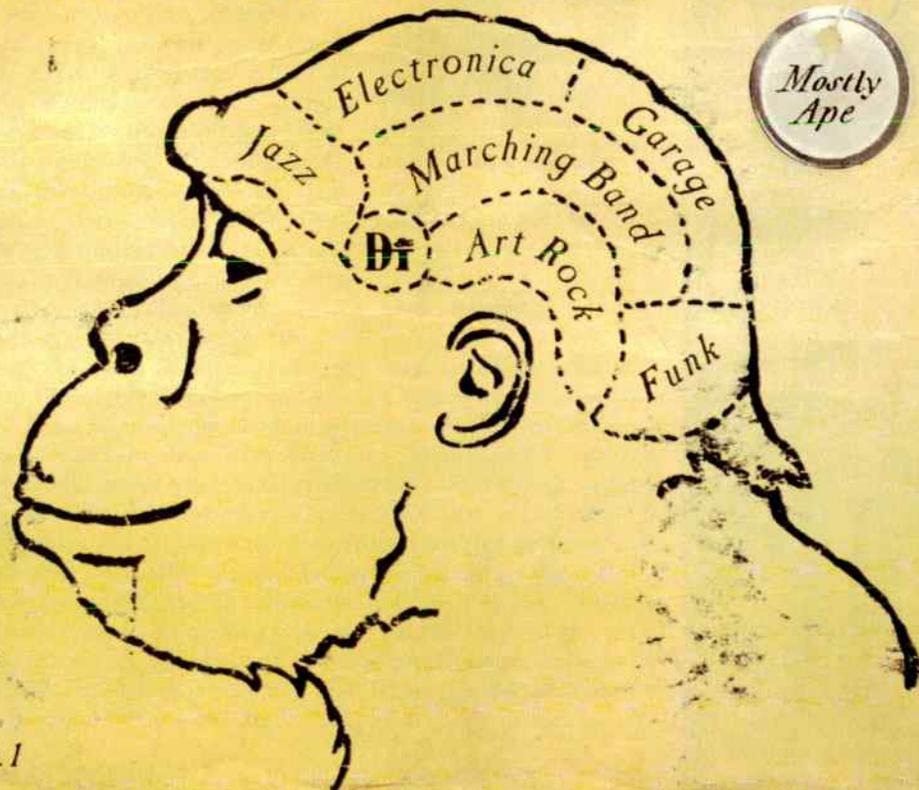
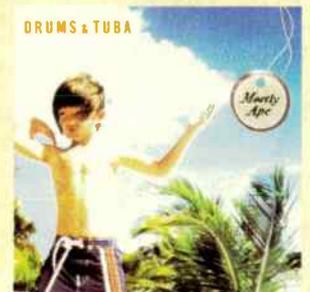


Fig. 1

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Prepare your underdeveloped ears for an enthralling instrumental adventure on *Mostly Ape*, courtesy of Drums & Tuba. It's a rare beast of a record, one that's sure to contend for the top spot on the rock 'n' roll food chain.

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www.righteoushabe.com

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[Shirley Bassey, MOA, living
beyond your means](#)

sexy music. *Divine Operating System* takes cues from disco, '60s lounge pop and early '80s British blue-eyed soul, and in doing hands us the paradigmatic urbane soundtrack for those whose lives would be swinging even without Vince Vaughn, thank you. Sensual, retro numbers like "Catch Me" and "Rock And A Hard Place" are woven seamlessly around dubby, *au courant* tracks like "Calamity Jane" and "So Much More," showing off the band's effortless musical range. Most significantly, Geri Soriano-Lightwood, though not a tremendous technical singer, is nevertheless a remarkably inviting vocalist, who seems to wrap her flamboyant persona around every word. Divine, indeed. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

SPOON

SPOON / KILL THE MOONLIGHT

Kill the Moonlight

the long-awaited and stunning follow-up to
Girls Can Tell, in stores now

MERGE



[Link](#)

www.swayzak.co.uk/swayzak

[File Under](#)

[Nobody puts tech-house
in the corner](#)

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

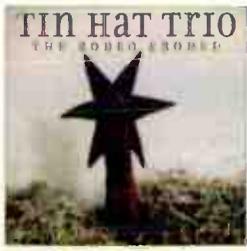
[Herbert, MRI, Akufen](#)

SWAYZAK

Dirty Dancing !K7

It's unsurprising that the British tech-house duo Swayzak's third album, *Dirty Dancing*, finds the band sounding more influenced by electroclash than ever before, since the genre's popularity is mounting and their "State Of Grace" appeared on Ministry Of Sound's *This Is Tech-Pop* compilation earlier this year. Thankfully, those galloping basslines and robo-synths effortlessly fit into their clicking, dubby house. "In The Car Crash" steadily taps minimal pulses and clanks unpredictably throughout—it's far away from the mind-numbing repetitiveness that this kind of house music often suffers from. The '80s hobnobbing is not always welcome, however: Adult's Nicola Kuperus turns in a typically grating performance on the otherwise frenetic and percolating "I Dance Alone." When Swayzak switch gears to create atmospheric micro-house, though, they achieve full potential—the breezy album opener "Make Up Your Mind," featuring Clair Dietrich's frigid voice, is about as gorgeous as dance music gets. Chock-full of vocals and hooks, *Dirty Dancing* is immediately reminiscent of Herbert's to-be-classic 2001 LP *Bodily Functions*. While not as heedlessly inventive as Herbert, Swayzak do busy themselves refining their skills by balancing pop-oriented songwriting with challenging, multi-genre experimentation. When they can pull this off and propel listeners to the dancefloor, they're nothing short of brilliant. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD • R.I.Y.L. - RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



TIN HAT TRIO

The Rodeo Eroded Ropeadope

Tin Hat Trio's third album, and debut for Ropeadope, finds this curious threesome as lost in space and time as ever. Surely Carla Kihlstedt, Mark Orton and Rob Burger would've found a regular gig in a Weimar Berlin cabaret—maybe that's the past-life experience they share. The old-world sensibility that dominates their sound is definitive esoterica, something Kurt Weill would surely have appreciated, and Willie Nelson's vocal presence on their version of "Willow Weep For Me" confirms Tin Hat Trio's ability to draw the listener, and other artists, into their

distinctive little corner of the musical experience. Their tune "The Last Cowboy" is a remarkably oblique meditation on country and western music à la Gene Autry and Tex Ritter. In a completely different frame of mind, songs such as "Maximo's Plunge" and "Fear Of The South" at times invoke the emotional weight and underlying passion of Piazzolla's nueva tango with such precision that a tanguero might be prompted to take the dancefloor. The opening track, "Bill," is a salute to guitar wiz Bill Frisell that's clearly a double entendre, referencing Frisell's pensive style and doing so while mimicking the vibe of Frisell's most recent album, *The Willies*. That's pretty shrewd and very convincing musicianship, and it's those qualities, joined with creative imagination, that make this such a unique and cool album. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link
www.tinhattrio.com

File Under

Life is a cabaret, old chum
R.I.Y.L.

Andrew Bird, Les Yeux Noirs,
Boris Kovac & Ladaaba Orchest



TRS-80

Mr. Kickass Invisible

Experimenting without being overly experimental (read: annoying), Chicago elec-trio TRS-80 takes live drums and solders them to vintage synths and digital laptopy to create a unique and challenging experience. While so many electronic acts lose any sense of humor the second they log on to their Powerbooks, TRS-80 blends kitsch and dramatic flavor, bringing something different to the table in every track. From the creepy horror-movie string stabs of "Glass Lining" and "American Smooth Division" to the unabashedly cheeseball "Arnold Palmer," complete with a

sweeping, Moog-heavy climax that would be right at home in a gay disco, TRS-80 eagerly demonstrates its dynamic range. The band's extensive catalogue of samples runs from obscure jazz records to ABBA to a real live hooker negotiating her fee for the evening ("Times have changed, man. \$150 for an hour? You need to go to New York with that shit"). But this is not to say that *Mr. Kickass* is not to be taken seriously. Underneath the slightly goofy surface they rock equal parts Portishead, David Axlerod and crunked-up hip-hop. Despite being, at times, abrasive and unfocused, *Mr. Kickass* can be exhilarating, giving premiere beat miners such as the Neptunes and DJ Shadow a run for their money. >>>RYAN RAYHILL

Link

www.trs80.com

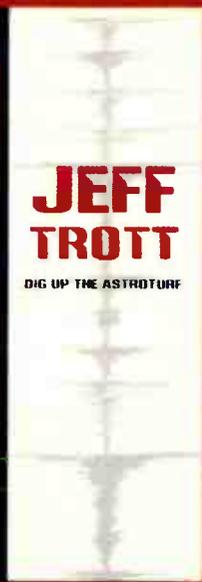
File Under

That's Mr. Kickass to you
R.I.Y.L.

DJ Shadow, Daft Punk, μ -ziq,
Squarepusher, Cabaret Voltaire

JEFF TROTT

DIG UP THE ASTROTURF



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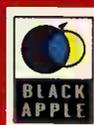
"On his first solo effort, *Dig Up The Astroturf*, Trott works from an expansive palette that blends his Rubber Soul jones with haunting electronica to create a sparkling, almost elegant, psychedelic document.

Portland's Jeff Trott is one of the coolest musicians you haven't heard of yet."

~ rollingstone.com

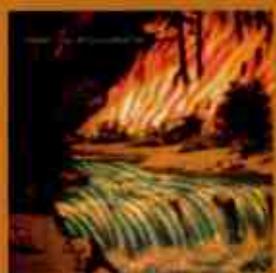


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Hayden
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Conversation Hall

22 songs recorded live at Hayden's March 2002 solo concert in Toronto. This double CD contains 3 new songs, a cover of Neil Young's "Tell Me Why" and a 10 page lyric booklet. Though it was recorded live, it remains intimate and magical. It remains intimate and magical.



MESHUGGA

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5 (out of 10) - *Nick* - Oh how this fall/winter.



Lanterna
Sonic

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Maladies**

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LOUD ROCK TOP 10

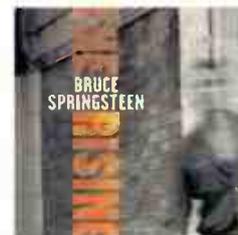
1	MESHUGGA Nothing Nuclear Blast
2	SOULFLY Soufly 3 Roadrunner
3	SENTENCED The Cold White Light Century Media
4	CATTLE DECAPITATION To Serve Man Metal Blade
5	PULSE ULTRA Headspace Velvet Hammer-Atlantic
6	HALFORD Crucible Metal-Is/Sanctuary
7	GLASSJAW Worship And Tribute Warner Bros.
8	ZAO A Parade Of Chaos Solid State
9	O7EP Sevas Ira Capitol
10	VADER Revelations Metal Blade



#1 LOUD ROCK
MESHUGGA
NOTHING NUCLEAR BLAST



#1 RPM
JAZZANOVA
IN BETWEEN JCR-ROPEADOPE



#1 RETAIL
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
THE RISING COLUMBIA

RPM TOP 10

1	JAZZANOVA In Between JCR-Ropeadope
2	APHRODITE Aftershock V2
3	FREQ NASTY Y4K Next Level Breaks Distinctive
4	DJ SHADOW The Private Press MCA
5	ERICK MORILLO Subliminal Sessions Three Subliminal
6	PREFUSE 73 '92 Vs. '02 Collection EP Warp
7	CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA Everyday Ninja Tune (USA)
8	AARON MICHELSON The 4 A.M. Sound Of Tech House Lakeshore
9	LAYO AND BUSHWACKA! Night XL Records-Beggars Group
10	HIGH CONTRAST True Colours Breakbeat Science

JAZZ TOP 10

1	WAYNE SHORTER Footprints Live! Verve
2	BOBBY WATSON Live and Learn Palmetto
3	E.S.T. Strange Place For Snow Columbia
4	LARRY GOLDINGS TRIO Sweet Science Palmetto
5	DJ SPOOKY Blue Series: Optometry Thirsty Ear
6	WILLIAM PARKER QUARTET Raining... Thirsty Ear
7	VARIOUS ARTISTS Jazz Chillout Vol. 1 Blue Note
8	ANDREW HILL A Beautiful Day Palmetto
9	RON CARTER Stardust! Somethin' Else Records-BlueNote-Capitol
10	KARRIN ALLYSON In Blue Concord

RETAIL TOP 10

1	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN The Rising (86600) Columbia
2	LINKIN PARK Reanimation (48326) Warner Bros.
3	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND Busted Stuff (68117) RCA
4	BETH ORTON Daybreaker (39918) Astralwerks-Heavenly
5	NELLY Nellyville (017747) Universal
6	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS By The Way (48140) Warner Bros.
7	EMINEM The Eminem Show (493 290) Shady-Aftermath-Interscope
8	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me (32088) Blue Note
9	FILTER The Almagut (47963) Reprise
10	THE FLAMING LIPS Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots (48141) Warner Bros.

JUST OUT

AUGUST 27

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 BOYS NIGHT OUT Broken Bones And Bloody Kisses *One Day Savior*
 JOHNNY CASH Ballads Of The True West *Columbia-Legacy*
 JOHNNY CASH Live At Madison Square Garden *Columbia-Legacy*
 JOHNNY CASH Silver *Columbia-Legacy*
 JOHNNY CASH Songs Of Our Soil *Columbia-Legacy*
 COLOPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head *Capitol*
 CONGA FURY Chaotic Noise *Six Weeks*
 DEEP IMPACT Trilogy *Digidawg*
 DEREK TRUCKS BAND Joyful Noise *Columbia*
 JIMMY FALLON The Bathroom Wall *DreamWorks*
 FREE LOAN INVESTMENTS Ever Been To Mexico? *Shelllife*

BRENDAN GAMBLE Heartless Moon *Mud*
 GRIEVING THE DAYS TO COME Unsaid Everything *Tribunal*
 GUSGUS Attention *Moonshine*
 HAVEN Between The Senses *Virgin*
 HONEYRIDER Sunshine Skyway *Orange Sky*
 HOT SNAKES Automatic Midnight *Swami*
 KILLWHITNEYDEAD Inhaling The Breath Of A Bullet *Tribunal*
 LAGWAGON Let's Talk About Leftovers *Fat Wreck Chords*
 MAN WITHOUT PLAN Get Right *Immigrant Sun*
 OF MONTREAL Aldhils Arboretum *Kindercore*
 ORTHRELM 2nd 18/04 Norlidvoth Crallos-Lomrixth *Urthlin Three-Ono G*
 ORWELL The Following Days *Hidden Agenda*
 OUTCRY Here The Castles Crumble *Digidawg*
 MARTIN REV Martin Rev *ROIR*
 ROTTEN APPLES Real-Tuff (Durable Plastic) *Empty*
 BILLY JOE ROYAL Very Best Of *Taragon*
 SCREAMER Greatest Hits *Teenbeat*
 SHIMMER KIDS UNDERPOP ASSOCIATION The Natural Riot *Hidden Agenda*
 SINGING MELODY Expressions *VP*
 SOUVENIR Pints De Suspension *Shelllife*
 THELONIOUS MONK Live At Newport 1963 And 1965 *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 THELONIOUS MONK Monk *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 THELONIOUS MONK Monk's Dream *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 MIA DOI TODD The Golden State *Columbia*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Dancehall 101, Vol. 3 *VP*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Dancehall 101, Vol. 4 *VP*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS La Musica Della Mafia *PIAS America*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Party Time *VP*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Soca 101, Vol. 2 *VP*

SEPTEMBER 3

BARRY ADAMSON King Of Nothing Hill *Mute*
 A TRIGGERING MYTH Forgiving Eden *The Laser's Edge*
 BOOM BIP Seed To Sun *Lex*
 DAN COVAY House Of The Blue Lights *Sepia Tone*
 IDAHO We Were Young And Needed The Money *Idahomusic-Retrophonic*
 INCREDIBLE STRING BAND Incredible String Band *Sepia Tone*
 INCREDIBLE STRING BAND Liquid Acrobat As Regards The Air *Sepia Tone*
 KEVIN KENDLE Music For Yoga *New World Music*
 KITARO Silk Road Vol 1 And 2 *New World Music*
 LIVING COLOUR Vivid *Epic-Legacy*
 MCGILL MANNING STEVENS Controlled By Radar *Free Electric Sound*

NIGHTMARES ON WAX Mind Elevation *Warp*
 JOHN SERRIE And The Stars Go With You *New World Music*
 TARWATER Dwellers On The Threshold *Mute*
 TSUNAMI BOMB The Ultimate Escape *Kung Fu*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Buzzlighter #1 *Shut Eye*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS I Hear Voices *Astrahwerks*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS A Low Watt Document Boxed Set (4xCD) *Shut Eye*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Rough Guide To Latin Dance *World Music Network*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Rough Guide To Passion *World Music Network*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Rough Guide To Youssou N'Dour And Etoile De Dakar *World Music Network*
 CHRIS WHITLEY The Best Of Chris Whitley *Columbia-Legacy*
 WUTHERING HEIGHTS To Travel For Evermore *Sensory*

SEPTEMBER 10

CABLES AND FRIENDS Baby Why? *VP*
 PETER CASE Beeline *Vanguard*
 MILES DAVIS The Complete Miles Davis At Montreux 1973-1991 *Columbia-Legacy*
 ANI DIFRANCO So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter *Righteous Babe*
 ELEMENT 101 More Than Motion *Tooth And Nail*
 EXHAUST Eneigstreur *Constellation*
 HOICICO Signos De Aberracion *Metropolis In STRICT CONFIDENCE Mistrust The Angels Metropolis*
 IVY Guestroom *Minty Fresh*
 LAYO AND BUSHWACKA! Night Works *XL-Beggars Group*
 THE MERCURY PROGRAM A Data Learn The Language *Tiger Style*
 MISSION Aura *Metropolis*
 JOSHUA REDMAN Elastic *Warner Bros.*
 SECTORSEVEN Sectorseven *Sonic Union*
 SHINER Lula Divinia *De Soto*
 SIMPLEKILL Shear Confidence *Florida Local Music*
 SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE Ovine Operating System *Palm*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS G-String *VP*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Rematch *VP*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS The Beach *VP*
 JAMES YORKSTON Moving Up Country *Domingo US*

SEPTEMBER 17

ANTISEEN Fat More Possum *TKO*
 RUBEN BLADES Mundo *Columbia-Sony Discos*
 CHARLIE CHRISTIAN The Genius Of The Electric Guitar *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 COCKNODSE Men, Butchers And Bleeders *TKO*
 CONJURE ONE Conjure One *Network America*
 COOL JERKS Cleaned A Lot Of Plates In Memphis *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 CRUSH Here Is Where I Cross My Fingers *Adeline*
 CURLEW North America *Cuneiform*
 DEAD MEADOW Got Live If You Want It *Committee To Keep Music Evil*
 DISCO BISCUITS Senor Boombox *Megaforce-Hydrophonic*
 DISTRACTION Calling All Radios *Dirtnap*
 EVOLUTION Unnatural Selection *Network*
 ARETHA FRANKLIN The Queen In Waiting: The Columbia Years (1960-1965) *Columbia-Legacy*
 GODOL BORDELD Multi Kontra Cumi Vs Irony *Rubric*
 HERBIE HANCOCK The Herbie Hancock Box *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 HOPE CONSPIRACY Endnote *Equal Vision*
 ANDY HUGHES Progressive House Elements

Neurodisc
 KINGS OF NUTHIN Fight Songs... *Disaster*
 KIRBY GRIPS Rotations *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 LEGENDARY PINK DOTS All The Kings Men *ROIR*
 LIFHOUSE Stanley Climbfall *DreamWorks*
 MATCHING MOLE March *Cuneiform*
 MR. AIRPLANE MAN Moanin' *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
 OK GO OK Go *Capitol*
 RICHARD PINHAS Event And Repetitions *Cuneiform*
 PROTO-KAW (KANSAS) Early Recordings From Kansas 1971-73 *Cuneiform*
 PULSES Pulses *Dirtnap*
 GREGORY SCOTT The Waking Hour *Pyram-Axis*
 KEVIN SECONOS/MATT SKIBA Split *Asian Man*
 SHIVAREE Rough Dreams *Capitol*
 SNAKES Snakes *Committee To Keep Music Evil*
 SOTOS Platypus *Cuneiform*
 THEORY OF A DEADMAN Theory Of A Deadman *604 Records*
 VANDALS Internet Dating Super-Studs *Kung Fu*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Bosse Sound *Bacchus Archives*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Mailorder For The Masses *Asian Man*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Punch Drunk IV *TKO*
 WALKMEN/CALLA Split *Troubleman Unltd.*

SEPTEMBER 24

AGENDA Start The Panic *Kindercore*
 AK1200 Shoot to Kill *Lakeshore*
 ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION Facts And Fiction; Frontline (reissues) *Beggars Banquet*
 BEENIE MAN Tropical Storm *Virgin*
 BDRIALIS Brialis *Capitol*
 FRANKLIN BRUND Cat May Look At A Queen *Absolutely Kasher*

BURNING BRIDES Fall Of The Plastic Empire (reissue) *V2*
 CLAIRE VOYANT Love Is Blind *Metropolis*
 EXIES Inertia *Virgin*
 MATT KEATING Tilt A Whirl *Future Farmer*
 LIVING SACRIFICE Conceived In Fire *Solid State*
 MCLUSKY McLusky Does Dallas *Too Pure-Beggars Group*
 MORTAL Nu-En-Jin *Tooth And Nail*
 PDDR DLD LU The Waiting Room *Tooth And Nail*
 SCENIC The Acid Gospel Experience *IPR-Hidden Agenda-Parasol*
 JOHN SERRIE Midsummer Century *New World Music*
 JOHN SERRIE Ibandia *New World Music*
 JOHN SERRIE Tingri *New World Music*
 SPRING HEEL JACK Amassed *Thirsty Ear*
 UNDERWORLD A Hundred Days Off *V2*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS After Hour Power *Moonshine*
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Idol Tryouts *Ghostly*
 MILES DAVIS Water Babies *Columbia Legacy Jazz*
 MICHAEL OOWOLE A Sacred Christmas *Excel Entertainment*
 FAIRWEATHER Alaska EP *Equal Vision*
 MARTIN LASS Sonnet *Galactic Music*
 LES HOMMES Les Hommes *ESL*
 DAN LITTLETON AND TARA JANE O'NEIL Music For Meteor Showers *Tiger Style*
 MINUS 8 Minuit *Compost*
 TADD MULLINIX Panes *Ghostly*
 NIGHTMARES ON WAX Know My Name *Warp*
 ORBITAL Work 1989-2002 *FFRR-WSM*
 PARALYSED AGE Into The Ice *Dancing Ferret*
 PENANCE Proving Ground *Martyr Music*
 PERMER Summerdays Attract The Pain *Hidden Agenda*
 GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS Ladies' Love Oracle *Zoe*
 REDEMPTION 87 All Guns Poolside *Blackout!*
 SIDONIE Let It Flow *Rainbow Quartz*
 SPIRITU Spiritu *Meteor City*

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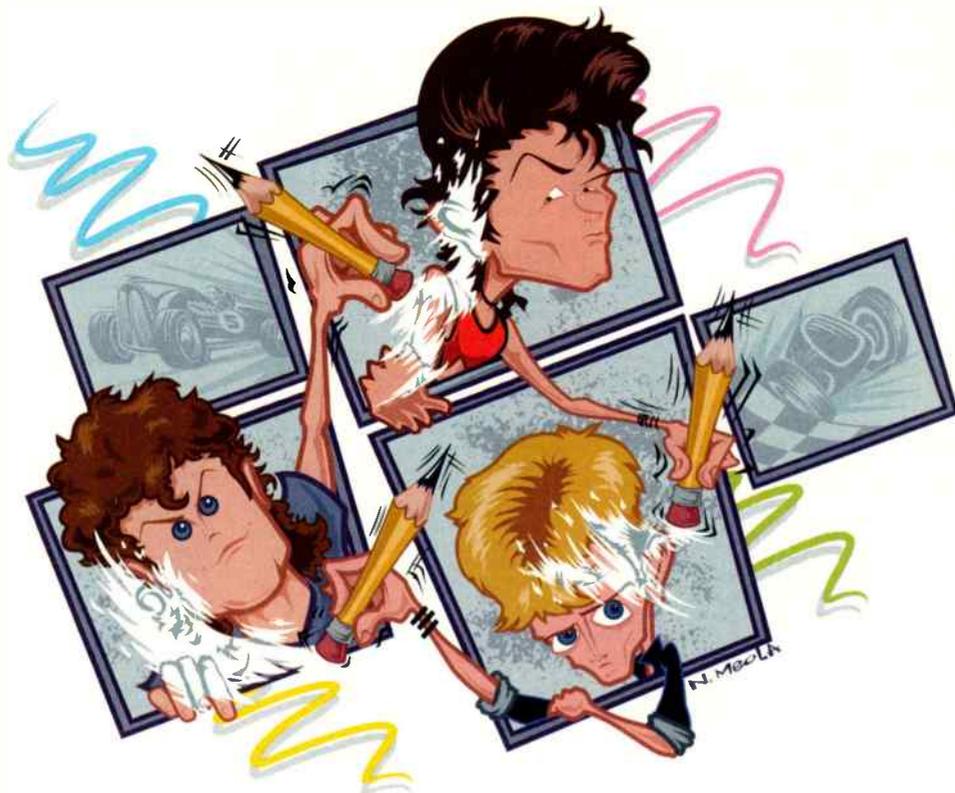
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A-HA

STORY: NORM ELROD • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

Why wouldn't my parents let me camp out for concert tickets? Were they scared of what would happen to their pudgy 14-year-old son with gravity-defying hair in a suburban mall parking lot at 2 a.m. (after all, this was 1986), or did they just not feel like giving me another ride? Whatever their reason, this soon-to-be rabid music fan was left with but one option: Dad's credit card and the redial button on my plastic Radio Shack pulse phone. As the glow-in-the-dark hands on my fake wood-veneered alarm clock inched toward 10 a.m. and the opening of Ticketron's phone lines that Saturday morning, I, in my worn-out footy pajamas, finger poised on the keypad, watched the seconds slowly tick away.

My music tastes weren't quite my own just yet. The penny-ante Michael Jackson, Huey Lewis and Weird Al records from Columbia House could no longer compete with the U2 and Pink Floyd records my dad brought home. I would soon fall in with the older and cooler fringe kids in their black make-up who would turn me on to Depeche Mode, the Smiths and the Cure. But at this moment I was basking in my first musical discovery, brought on by three little words: Take. On. Me.

On the strength of a dancing keyboard line, a soaring falsetto and (still) one of the most amazing videos ever, a-ha broke big in the States. But their 1985 debut, *Hunting High And Low*, ran much deeper than the one '80s-compilation mainstay. These three Norwegians with perfect hair, killer looks and names I can barely trace, let alone spell or pronounce, defined my pubescent angst. I imagined myself as the lonely and tortured soul in such heart-breakers as "The Blue Sky" and "Here I Stand And Face The Rain." "Living A Boy's Adventure Tale" might as well have been my own personal anthem—the music and me against the world.

As all pop stars eventually learn, youthful music tastes can change faster than a nervous freshman in the boys' locker room. *Scoundrel Days*, their second batch of synth-pop melodies, marked

the end of a-ha's 15 minutes. The album tanked, and the winners of 1986's MTV Video Music Award for "Best New Artist" became 1987's has-beens. But someone forgot to tell Warner Bros. Records that one-hit wonders by nature only have one hit: The label released *Stay On These Roads* domestically in 1988, followed by *East Of The Sun, West Of The Moon* in 1990 and *Memorial Beach* in 1993, with nary a hit to be found.

Each of these albums has its moments, however, and each found its way into my CD collection, even if my tastes had moved beyond the a-ha catalog. A self-anointed music authority and purveyor of good taste must stay ahead of the times, lest he lose credibility with his friends, after all. Still, I never quite gave up hope. Unlabeled mixtapes given to friends often carried one of their tracks buried five or six deep on side B. My college radio shows featured their music hidden among atonal 4-track recordings, shoegazers with too many guitar effects and whatever Seattle bands were popular that week. I was a rebel amidst the insurgents, thumbing my nose at the "indier than thou."

As for the concert tickets, luck smiled on me that morning; I reached a ticket agent with my third attempt and scored front-row seats. On the night of the show, thousands of young girls aimed their screams at the stage from behind us. My friends and I high-fived each other whenever the trio broke into one of our favorites. Who remembers what else they played (or if they really played it)? I could probably guess, and the tour poster I've kept in good condition all these years shows a set list. What I do know is that a-ha's latest album has just been released. And when tickets for the U.S. tour go on sale, I'll be ready with the cell phone and my own credit card.

New York-based freelance writer Norm Elrod spends his days hunting high and low for editors willing, as he puts it, to take on me.



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