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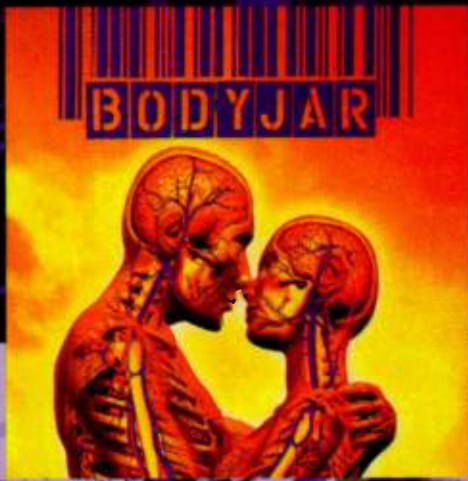
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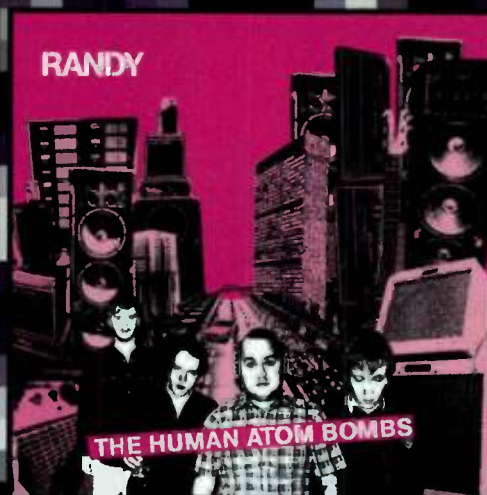
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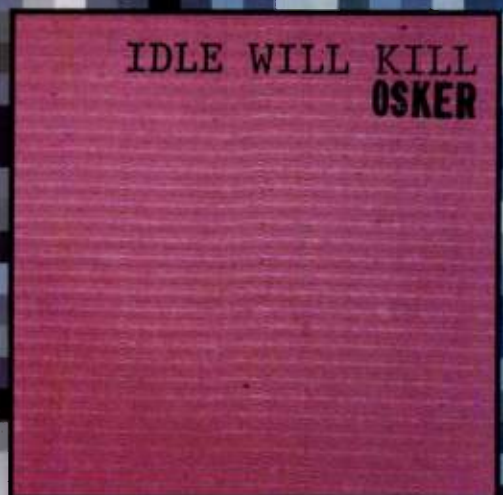
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volume 7 • number 9

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Letters

AYE, THEY LIKE-A THA SWEEP

I've never seen anything quite like the 30-minute Interview Sweep and thought it was funny. You should have that as a running thing every month. Maybe you could add a fourth category to judge contestants on—pure entertainment value. While Eric did try to damage Electric Frankenstein's relationship with Victory Records and ask other bands for bribes, I thought it was pretty damn funny.

Sam Campbell
Skokie, IL

INTERVIEW SWEEP CONTROVERSY

I had to write in to say that the Interview Sweep on the back page of the magazine's last two issues totally ruled. I literally laughed out loud and had to grab copies to show the people I work with. But I have to protest and say that Eric Weiss (Contestant #1) got robbed. He might not have interviewed as many people, but his style totally trounced Hopper—not to mention the fact that the guy from the one band totally dissed Eric by not showing up for the interview. Your refs must be blind. Do they also officiate the [Philadelphia] Phantoms' home games?

Mike O'Riley
Philadelphia, PA

WARDROBE, YOU'RE FIRED!

Long live Wino and Spirit Caravan. Thanks for the story, and keep covering a diverse group of artists. I think everything he has done is great, but I still have one thing sticking in my brain. Why was Dave from Spirit Caravan wearing his own band's shirt in the photos? It reminds me of every time Jason Newsted wore a Metallica shirt onstage and in videos. What's with that? Would you wear a Black Sabbath t-shirt to a Black Sabbath show? It just seems a little redundant, if not egotistical. Maybe you can start air-

brushing the band member's shirts to save them embarrassment.

James Young
Portland, OR

THAT'S ENOUGH, DAN

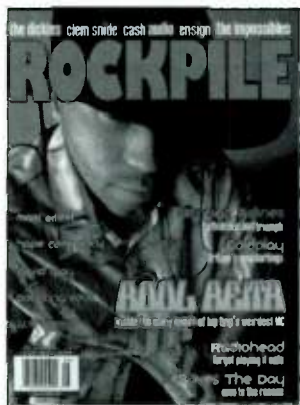
I don't usually write in about this sort of thing, but being a loyal *Rockpile* reader for a while now, I have to commend you on this past issue. I REALLY liked the Melvins article by Dan Pastorius. His writing style was refreshing in the Burning Brides piece too. I hope you continue to impress with worthy writing. I'm looking forward to it.

Anonymous
via e-mail

DOES THIS COUNT AS A DIS?

Kool Keith on your cover—are you people high? This guy doesn't deserve his name scribbled on a napkin, let alone a national magazine. If this alleged MC spent more time making sense and less time swimming through porn, maybe he'd have a chance in hell of dishing out something that wasn't totally wack. If I have to hear one more quote from this joke about how everyone is biting his shit, I'm going to get nasty on his toy ass. How about supporting some real shit?

Rodney
Elizabethtown, NJ



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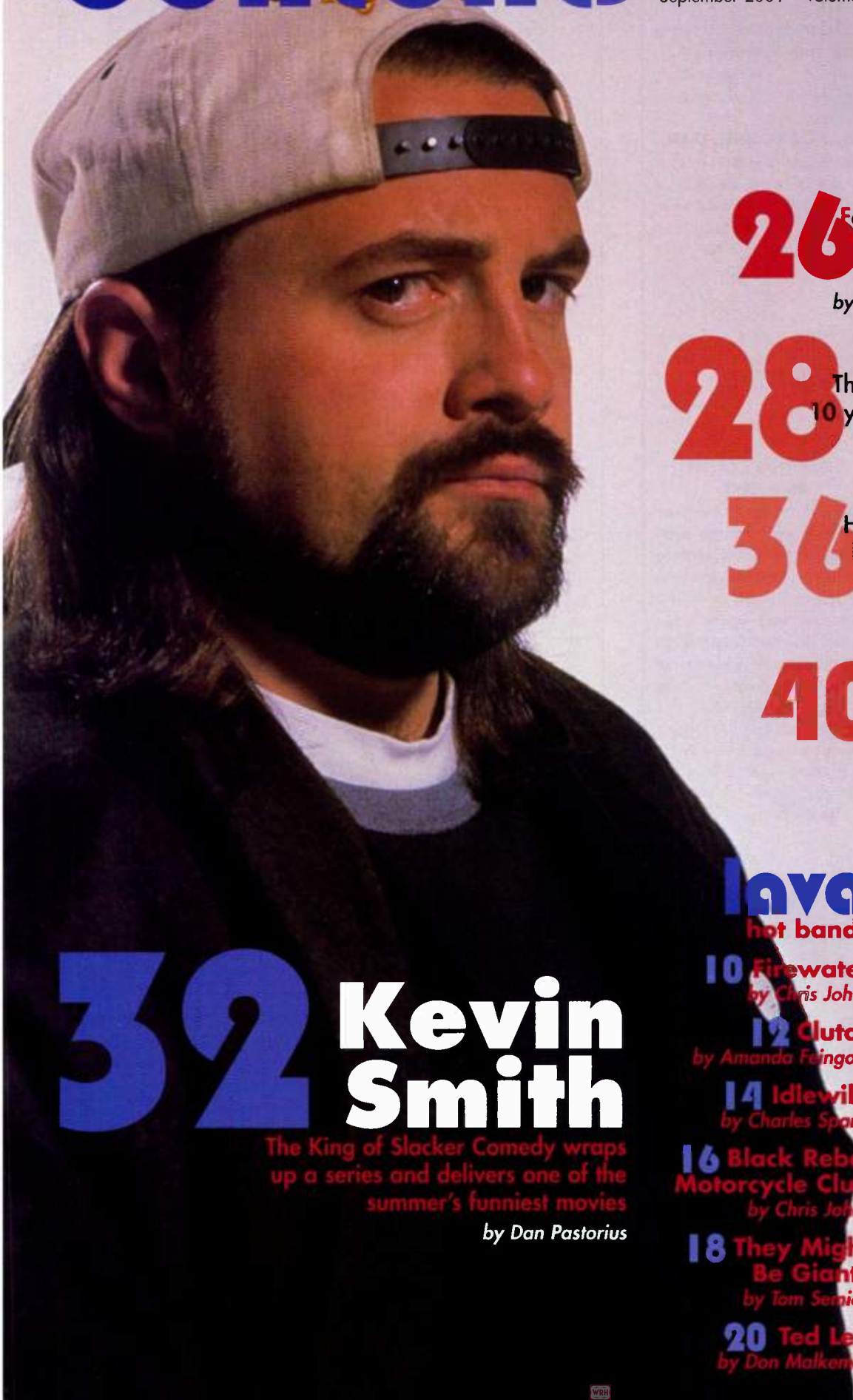
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contents

September 2001 • volume VII • number 9 • issue 73



32 Kevin Smith

The King of Slacker Comedy wraps up a series and delivers one of the summer's funniest movies

by Dan Pastorius

26 Built To Spill
Famously apathetic frontman Doug Martsch on writing, touring and a new album
by Don Malkemes and Greg Trahan

28 Joe Strummer
The punk rock veteran breaks 10 years of silence to go Global
by John D. Luerssen

36 Rufus Wainright
His new album casts alluring bachelors, drug addicts and a knack for black humor
By Tom Semioli

40 Ben Folds
The solo Folds keeps it real and rocks the 'burbs.
By Dan Pastorius

lava

hot bands

10 Firewater
by Chris Johns

12 Clutch
by Amanda Feingold

14 Idlewild
by Charles Spano

16 Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
by Chris Johns

18 They Might Be Giants
by Tom Semioli

20 Ted Leo
by Don Malkemes

departments

05 Letters

08 Gravel Pit
music news and interviews

43 Records

52 Under The Radar
music you may have missed

54 Switched On
hip hop/electronic

56 Hard Rock News

58 All Things Indie

62 Straight From The Edge

64 Links

66 Afterthought
the parting shot

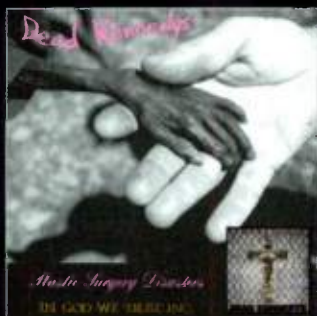
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RHINO RELEASES JOY DIVISION BOX SET

After three years of U.K. availability, a four-disc box set of Joy Division's material titled *Heart and Soul* has finally been released in America. The prolific from-the-vaults Rhino label brought the highly anticipated set to American soil early this August. While short-lived, Joy Division became one of the most influential bands in the post-punk world, setting the standard

for goth-rock and gloomy, mood-oriented music. Discs One and Two of the set feature the band's first two albums—1979's landmark *Unknown Pleasures* and 1980's *Closer* (released three months after singer Ian Curtis' suicide). Disc Three includes the band's first EP, *Ideal For Living*, while Disc Four compiles rare live tracks from various concerts. Each disc also boasts numerous outtakes, rarities, demo versions and singles. British music writer and punk historian Jon Savage penned the accompanying booklet containing track-by-track commentary, a band history and photos. This release comes on the heels of New Order set to release a new album of their own—the first in eight years. *New Order Get Ready* is slated for release Oct. 16. New Order formed in the wake of Curtis' death, with remaining Joy Division members Peter Hook, Bernard Sumner and Stephen Morris. Hook and Sumner were the architects of the box set.



IAN CURTIS

MISTA CHUCK IS HOLDING AUDITIONS

Public Enemy wants your help. The radical hip hop group announced it is seeking aspiring and professional musicians, remixers and producers to provide the backbeats to some of PE's newest songs. The group's follow-up to 1999's *There's A Poison Goin' On* will feature a collaboration between Chuck D, Flavor Flav, Professor Griff and you. The group plans to release the vocal tracks to one new PE song each week for a month for the public to download from Chuck D's SlamJamz.com. Interested parties are

encouraged to construct music around the songs and upload submissions back to the site for PE to judge. The producers of selected tracks will receive production credit on the group's upcoming album, as well as a \$1,000 prize. The deadline for submissions is Sept. 14. "Dare to be different," encourages main MC Chuck D. "Public Enemy and SlamJamz.com are looking for tracks with the widest range of sound and style and no limitations. Don't be confined by traditional hip hop boundaries."



THE BARGAIN BIN STRIKES BACK

The stock for Body Glove just went up a fraction of a point—maybe. Funk-metal group Living Colour has completed a string of East Coast and Midwest tour dates, fanning the flames of a flickering comeback. Following an unannounced reunion gig this past December at New York's CBGB's, the band played a handful of sold-out club dates along the West Coast this May and has peppered the festival circuit in Europe and South America so far this summer. Reports indicate the band has also discussed recording a new album, although no details are yet available publicly. Before disbanding in 1995, the band released three studio albums—none quite as popular as its 1988 debut, *Cult of Personality*, which won the group a Grammy for Best Hard Rock Performance. In the six-year interim, the members have kept themselves more or less busy. Vocalist Corey Glover is currently acting in the independent film *Reunion 81*. Meanwhile,

guitarist Vernon Reid and bassist Doug Wimbish have been collaborating with hip hop hero Mos Def. The trio spent time in Japan this July performing with acclaimed jazz bassist Jack Bruce. The reformed Living Color insists it is still not a "Glamour Boy" and is instead still "Fierce."



COREY GLOVER



NEKO CASE

NEKO CASE COVERS UP

Alt-country/pop chanteuse Neko Case recently finished recording an eight-song EP featuring her renditions of songs by Hank Williams ("Alone and Forsaken"), Neil Young ("Dreamin' Man"), some lesser-known Canadian artists such as Sook Yin Lee and Mike O'Neil. Recorded mostly in Case's home kitchen, *Canadian Amp* features an impressive list of musicians including Jon Rauhouse, Robert Lloyd and former Rock*A*Teen, Kelly Hogan. Case says she selected the songs for this album mostly in tribute to songwriters and performers she admires,

referring to it partially as "a love poem for Canada." This latest release, which should be available in time for an upcoming tour, continues a busy year for the Chicago resident. Her tracks on The New Pornographers' debut, *Mass Romantic*, quickly became the album's charting singles after it was released last Winter. Earlier this year, Case saddled up for two tours and reserved studio time for her third solo album. Immediately after the recording of *Canadian Amp*, Case returned to the road with her partners in The New Pornographers.

TSOL

In today's everybody-gets-paid punk rock scene, there are plenty of generic and uninspired bands. When a band does come along, capable of setting itself apart from its peers, it is truly a breath of fresh air. In 1980, TSOL formed as a cut above the rest. Now resurrected after 17 years, the band is still in a class of its own. Dubbed one of the original goth-rock bands by combining hardcore punk with dark and ambient atmospheres, TSOL quickly rose to the peak of Southern California's seedy rock underground.

"A lot of people just labeled us death rock, but it wasn't our trip," explains singer Jack Grisham. "We really were just creepy guys."

Creepy is probably an understatement for TSOL. Even before forming the band, Grisham revealed he and the other members liked to break into churches, noting the easy access of unlocked chapels and the high-quality sound systems inside. Grisham also admits he and the boys used to dig up graves for kicks.

"We were the kind of guys in stories you read," he laughs. "The kids drive out to some field, and there's some guy out there with an axe. We were like the guy with the axe."

Sadly the band was rather short-lived its first time around.

"Every show we played turned into a riot," reveals Grisham. "We were real anti-hero worship. I changed my name in every record just to show it didn't matter who was in the band. It's anybody, you're singing. Please don't look up to us."

Despite the band's staunch anti-celebrity stance, recognition and relative fame eventually became a reality for the band in the early-'80s punk and new wave circuit. In an

effort to counter the trend, Grisham devised a scheme to change the band's name and start fresh. His idea was met with firm resistance by his bandmates, and Grisham left the group in 1983.

"The way we got back together wasn't a planned deal," says Grisham. "Believe me, this was not a band that was going to get back together."

While Grisham and company had only intended to reunite for one show, but the rush of performing live proved too much to shake. Less than a year later, Nitro records released *Disappear*.

"You got to look at this like it's a first record," insists Grisham. "Everybody was listening to different stuff. Our influences have changed and we'd been apart for a long time."

Possessing a real penchant for analogy, Grisham offers, "It's like getting back together with an old girlfriend—you know, she's been with a ton of guys you fuckin' hate."

The band's live show is truly something to be experienced, characterized by passionate deliveries from Grisham and the crew. The high-energy TSOL set has been known to include fans being tied to chairs and the occasional fan being set on fire. Although smirking, Grisham refuses to reveal how it's pulled off, offering instead, "It's real protective and real inclusive for people that come out to the shows."

The 30-something gloom punk can't resist injecting another metaphor to help describe the reformed TSOL.

"The closest thing you can think of is when you were being a kid and you were screwing around with your friends, just getting in trouble."

—Steve Mowatt



KORN GETS SKARY

Critics have long been fearful of hearing another Korn record for personal reasons, but now the band may actually get some deserved scares. Horror filmmaker and author Clive Barker has begun a collaboration on an interactive DVD with Korn frontman Jonathan Davis and composer Richard Gibbs. Sony has set a release date later this year for the disc featuring 12 original paintings by the horror king accompanied by the music of Davis and Gibbs. Viewers will enjoy what the project's publicists describe as a melding of

music and paintings, while the DVD will also offer features such as a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Barker painting and the two musicians composing together. This as-yet-unnamed horror-oriented DVD marks the second collaboration between Korn's frontman and Gibbs. The two had worked together previously, having recently completed songs for an upcoming film based on an Anne Rice novel titled *Queen of the Damned*. Fans have no reason to worry, however, as Korn remains Davis' top priority.



TOMMY LEE—A CLASS ACT



Rock stars and the newly rich are easy targets, but always worth a laugh. While it's no secret a good number of rock stars have a taste for Jager-meister, it's surprising to see how many musicians are actually sponsored by the liquor company. The members of Pantera, Bloodhound Gang, Nothingface and (hed) p.e. are just some of the rockers who drink on the house. Still, few can prove their brand loyalty quite as tangibly as Mötley Crüe's Tommy Lee. The infamous drummer and honeymooner enjoys the juice so much, he recently had the company install a Jager tap directly into the bar in his Los Angeles home. A man of impeccable taste and little self control, Lee had Starbucks install one of its coffee machines in his home earlier this year. Now, if he could only negotiate a sponsorship deal with the company manufacturing little beverage toothpick umbrellas.

lava



FIREWATER

"Psycho pharmacology. There's a nine-dollar word for you," Firewater's Tod Ashley surmises. Ashley remains the group's bassist/vocalist/mastermind, not some freak burning the midnight oil on a farfetched doctoral dissertation. A few rounds of *Psychopharmacology*, however, might have listeners wondering.

"Depression seems to go hand-in-hand with creativity of varied stripes, from music to art to whatever," explains Ashley. "This record is about, 'Do you go through life depressed how God made you, or do you try and do something about it and risk changing your personality?'"

It's a question Ashley has good reason to ask. In the approximately two years Firewater—rounded out by Oren Kaplan (guitars), Tamir Muskat (drums/percussion) and Paul Wallfisch (organ/piano)—took in extricating itself, the group's frontman was faced with some rough times, bringing real focus to psychopharmacology (the study of psychoactive drugs, not the record). When several close friends committed suicide throughout his recent years, Ashley wrestled with the pros and cons of chemically assisted peace of mind. Separating moods and conditions of depression from the creative and expressive sides of the brain proves tricky business—a debate still raging for Ashley and his band.

"It's fascinating that everything we think of in terms of a personality or identity basically boils down to varying chemical levels in your brain," he explains. "I don't enjoy the depression, but a lot of my identity comes from the fact that I make music, and I wouldn't want that to change."

While Ashley candidly admits to being a victim of depression, much of his Firewater pitfalls have less to do with his condition than with major label politics. Initially signed to Universal, the group was shelved by the giant company as mergers and buyouts complicated and queered the band-label relationship. Feeling lost in the shuffle, Ashley and the gang began wrangling with Universal to free Firewater from its contract, finally pairing up with the decidedly more intimate Jetset label.

Psychopharmacology, the band's third record, fits the moods with which its frontman has often wrangled, delivering a dark ditty about suicide ("Fell Off The Face Of The Earth"), a tune about air travel "slung from the hoary heavens" ("Black Box Recorder") and a duet with Elysian Fields' Jennifer Charles ("Bad, Bad World") to which the notoriously downbeat Ashley laughs, "It was funny to do a love song. It didn't come out exactly as I thought, but then again, nothing ever does."

Ashley's life reads like a disclaimer for this very sentiment. After high school, he spent two years in film school before abandoning it for fear of incurred debt. Soon after, the young frontman found himself in the driver's seat of Cop Shoot Cop. While the band proved good for good times and sustainable living, in hindsight Ashley takes a critical view of this first endeavor.

"I always felt the presentation of Cop Shoot Cop was a bit too extreme and not too many people ever fed into it's underlying efforts to poke fun," he recalls.

As if to stack the cards in this new band's favor, Ashley and company flirt with a cornucopia of worldly influence. The result sounds more like a rollicking black comedy or the score to a carnival freak show than a standard industrial rock group.

"A lot of it is intentional," says Ashley when questioned about the festive vibe. "I love circus music. The next one is going to be more in that vein actually."

Throughout his personal stories of turmoil and despair, Ashley stands on the fire escape of his Manhattan residence taking in a sunset across the Hudson glaring off towards the twinkling lights of a New Jersey horizon. Ironically, as the sun disappears, *Psychopharmacology* is hitting the shelves everywhere leaving Ashley feeling naturally apprehensive.

"I think I'm going to go into the store tomorrow and make sure I'm not hallucinating after two years of waiting around," he proposes. After pausing for a moment, as the sun hisses into the Hudson, Ashley leaves the door open for a change of plans.

"Then, who knows—I may go out and get really drunk."

By Chris Johns

5 questions



FOR STARS

Formed from a group of friends at California Polytechnical Institute in San Luis Obispo, For Stars has been making its mark on the national music scene since its self-titled full-length on Future Farmer debuted three years ago. The band's most recent release for the label, *We Are All Beautiful People*, is perhaps its strongest release to date. Earlier this summer, For Stars spread the good word opening for Mark Eitzel on a tour of the United States before flying off to Europe for a handful of festival dates. Holed up in one of the Super 8 franchise's most posh motels in the Tifton, Ga., region, the band took the time to answer some of our most pressing questions. Answers by Carlos Forster (guitar, vocals) and Dan Paris (keyboard, guitars)

Describe your worst grade school or high school teacher.

My fifth grade teacher was named Sister Margery. She was by far the cruelest person I have ever met. She loved making kids feel insecure and shitty. In some weird way she's was one of the most inspiring people I've ever met.

What teen movie best resembles your actual experience and memories of your time in high school?

I want to say the John Hughes movies told my story. The trouble is, my life never really lived up to the pure '80s glory *The Breakfast Club* offered. I guess mine was more of a breaking away kind of story—a strange and aimless group of awkward friends in a pretty boring, suburban setting find reasonably deviant but sweet diversions while growing up and away from each other. Of course, where their climax was the big bike race, ours was when our singer would stick the microphone up his ass on stage.

What's the best come-on line you can think of to use on a study date?

There's really only one for any given situation—any time, age, place— "Tell me a story, darlin'." But you can't use it, because it's mine.

Have you ever applied anything you learned in high school towards your life in music?

I hope I can learn to assimilate all the things I've learned into the music, the everything. I still try regularly, even though I fail miserably, to impress the girls with my bench press technique. Oh, and the music.

If you were still sticking your high-scoring achievements on the refrigerator for everyone to see, what would you have posted up there recently?

I've always dreamt of the "best looking" award, but I just don't deserve it. I would have to say the most recent achievement I'm proud of is quitting smoking. I have been eating out of control, but I feel great!

Hours before the doors open, an anxious crowd has already assembled to see Clutch play a one-gig show on the East Coast. One fan explains he and his wife have been traveling around to see the band for years and over time have become acquainted with thickly bearded vocalist Neil Fallon, guitarist Tim Sult, bassist Dan Maines and drummer Jean Paul Gaster. He has a license plate for Fallon to autograph. It reads "Pro Rock," representing the band's website, Pro-rock.com. A group of teens mention they rode 15 hours from Detroit on a Greyhound bus just to see their heroes play one show. Soon they plan to see Clutch in Ohio.

This kind of ravenous devotion is often difficult to appreciate, but in this case it's perfectly understandable. A live Clutch show is an unparalleled experience. Fans have trouble just settling for one fix of the uninhibited, solid drumming of the sweat-drenched Gaster and the animated facial expressions of Fallon as he stomps around a stage. While energy is one of its greatest strengths, the group's careful musicianship doesn't suffer for it. Combining jazzy basslines, bluesy, winding riffs and a knack for creating the perfect groove to whip audiences into a frenzy of moshing and head nodding, Clutch's improvisational jams dodge categorization but might be best described as thick, heavy rock.

"Jean Paul, Dan and Tim can play straight jazz," says Fallon of his bandmates. "And as they learned to do that, I think it influenced our music indirectly. It's not on purpose, because we're not trying to do a jazz odyssey. But on some of the more liquid instrumental parts of the set, they just go off on a tangent."

Complementing the music is Fallon's lyricism—wry, unique and wholly independent of anything else happening in other rock outfits. Rather than focusing on personal woes or political issues, he opts to tell a story with most Clutch songs.

"Each song's different," he says. "For some songs, I have an idea before I hear the music. Other ones, the music inspires it. A lot of it comes from me taking something out of context. Like if I see something on a newspaper headline or hear something on the TV, and the line is in itself ear-catching enough, then I just try to expand on that for the length of a song."

Pure Rock Fury, Clutch's latest effort, is a culmination of experience and influence—comprising hard-driving, energetic rock, slower, groove-oriented numbers, some live recordings and a raw production quality—making it one of the band's strongest albums to date. After bouncing around a lot between major and independent labels, Clutch hopes it has finally found a home with Atlantic Records.

"We wanted to get on the radio," says Fallon. "We make no bones about that. It's why we signed to Atlantic."

Clutch formed 10 years ago in Maryland, where Fallon, Sult, Maines and Gaster went to high school together. The

foursome soon relocated to Shepardstown, W.V., to remove itself from unnecessary distraction. A tight-knit group developed based on mutual respect for each other's musical styles and abilities. Fallon says the band just has fun performing together and doesn't consider it work.

"There's very rarely drama," he says. "And it's so few and far between that when it does happen it's very dramatic, because we're not used to that."

The one thing driving the band crazy is inappropriate categorization and labeling. Early Clutch recordings are straightforward loud rock with hardcore hooks, but when the band released a self-titled album in 1995 it truly developed the smooth basslines and jam rock style for which it is now known. This, combined with its improvisational tendencies, lumped the group into the budding category of stoner rock along with Fu Manchu and Nebula. None of these bands seem to appreciate the label, and Clutch is no exception.

"I think stoner rock as a moniker is absolutely idiotic," insists Fallon. "I haven't met one band that likes being called that. It's juvenile, and it depletes the value of the music—to think that all the people making it are drug addicts, or to appreciate it you have to be a drug addict."

At least he is able to look on the bright side.

"The bands lumped into that group are some of my favorite bands," he chuckles. "So to be associated with that—despite the fact I can't stand the name—is cool."

Fallon really shouldn't complain. Clutch has fared pretty well in the whole pigeonholing process. The band's diversity affords it a bit more freedom where categorization is concerned. Clutch has landed on an eclectic variety of bills—they've toured with hardcore heroes

Vision Of Disorder and Murphy's Law, trippy rock bands Spirit Caravan and Corrosion of Conformity and the infamous thrash gods Slayer—while many bands affixed to the stoner rock tag play mainly with other diehards of the same aesthetic. Despite the reputation of hostile Slayer fans known for their brutality towards opening bands, Clutch held its own in the opening slot and was well-received on the tour.

"I was really surprised by the reactions we got," laughs Fallon. "We were ready to get pelted every night, but the Slayer crowd was really receptive. On the other hand, a couple months later we did the Iron Maiden tour. They hated our asses. When Bruce Dickinson is on the tour, you cease to be a band. You become four guys delaying Bruce Dickinson's stage appearance."

Undaunted by the stretch with Iron Maiden, Fallon says the next adventure for Clutch will be to branch out and play in different parts of the world.

"I want to play Japan," he says enthusiastically. "I want to play Australia. I want to play South America. I want to play Eastern Europe. That's my next biggest goal."



l-r: Neil Fallon, Tim Sult, Jean-Paul Gaster, Dan Maines

CLUTCH

By Amanda Feingold

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Idlewild is sitting in the back room of the Crocodile Café (a club/bar/restaurant you might recognize from the band photo in the liner notes of R.E.M.'s *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*). Sort of the CBGBs of Seattle, it's all rock 'n roll—black walls, high ceilings and red vinyl booths. The last time Idlewild came to town, *100 Broken Windows* hadn't even been released in the States yet. Now the British band has performed on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, received major college radio airplay and heavy M2 rotation for the expressionistic video "Little Discourage." Still, on tour with Placebo, they've run into familiar problems in Canada where the album is yet to be available domestically.

"The Canadian gigs are a little weird because no one knows who we are," says vocalist Roddy Woomble. "But the few gigs we've done so far in America were great—really good."

It's not surprising for a group garnering comparisons to R.E.M. and Nirvana—two great bands, but neither of which sound much like Idlewild. (Incidentally, Peter Buck is married to the owner of the Crocodile, Stephanie Dorgan, so it's an apt location for this discussion.) Guitarist Rod Jones, quieter and more withdrawn, muses, "We all like R.E.M., and it's always flattering to get compared to bands you like. I don't think we sound particularly like R.E.M., but I suppose people have got to have some sort of idea what your band sounds like."

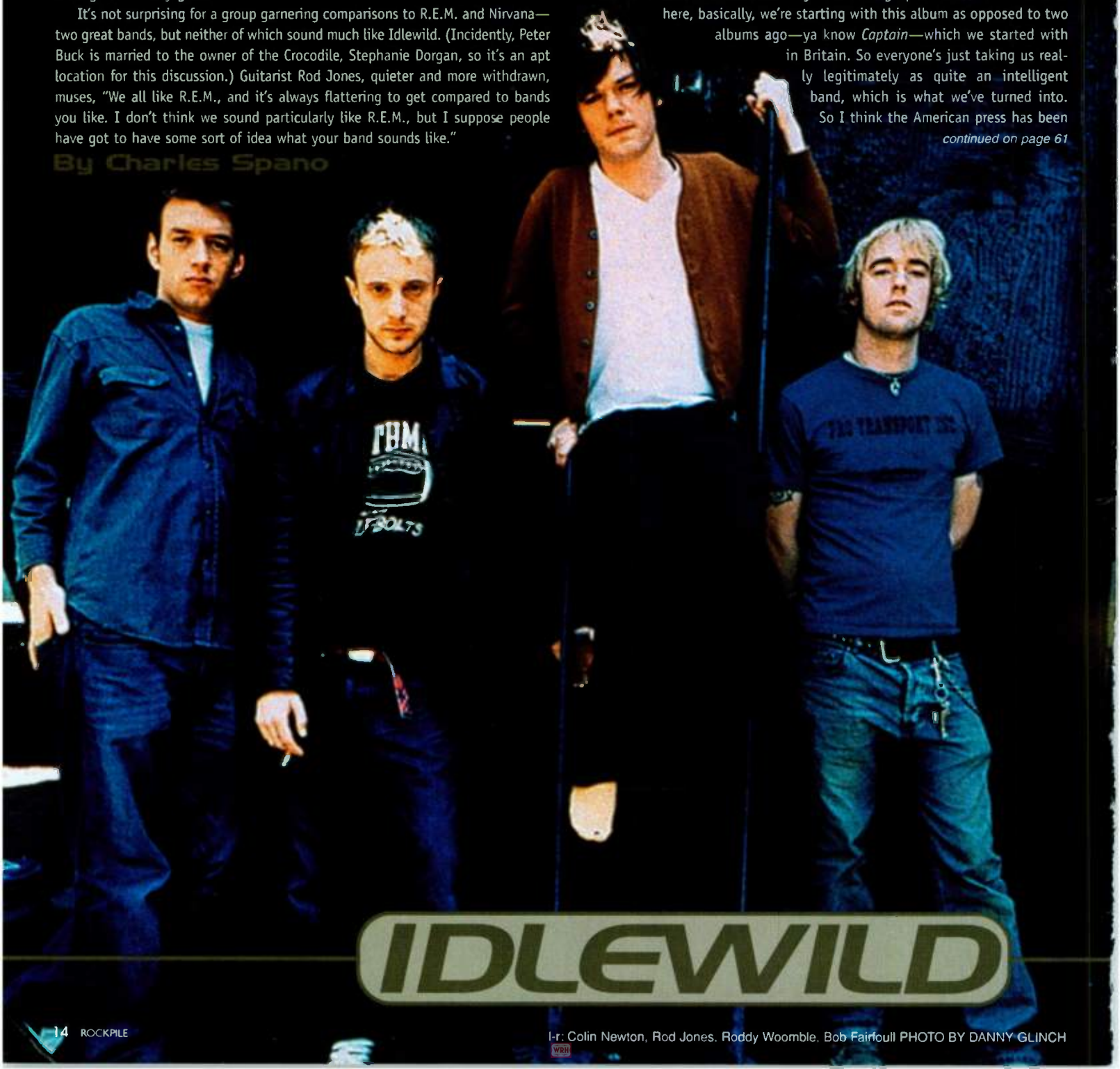
By Charles Spano

"People have got to have a handle," Woomble adds. "For example, say you play in a band and I say, 'What do you sound like?' and you say, 'We sound a bit like R.E.M.,' and I'm like 'Cool.' But at the same time, the thing I don't like is when people think that you're just listening to *Document* or *Nervermind* or whatever album. It's like they just think that you're just copying it or that it's your reference point."

But the members of Idlewild are thankful for the press in America, which at best is more open-minded and less sharp-tongued than its British counterpart. Woomble appreciates the fresh take on the band. "I think in Britain we're pigeonholed more because we've been around there for a few years. A lot of people have made their minds up about us before they've even heard any of our new music. To them we're just a teenage punk band, whereas over here, basically, we're starting with this album as opposed to two albums ago—ya know *Captain*—which we started with in Britain. So everyone's just taking us really legitimately as quite an intelligent band, which is what we've turned into.

So I think the American press has been

continued on page 61



l-r: Colin Newton, Rod Jones, Roddy Woomble, Bob Fairoull PHOTO BY DANNY GLINCH

Puya

Salsa and heavy metal are not two types of music people usually mention in the same breath. Furthermore, they are not typically heard on the same album. But if you grew up in Puerto Rico in the 1980s like the members of Puya, most radio stations played either hard rock or salsa. Therefore, it's only natural these musicians would draw on the influences of their environment and mix them together into one rhythmic, percussive, salsa/metal sound.

The members of Puya began jamming together in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in various incarnations in the early '90s. In 1996, the solid lineup of vocalist Sergio Curbelo, guitarist Ramon Ortiz, bassist Harold Hopkins and drummer Eduardo Paniagua moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., to broaden its musical horizons, merging Latin and metal influences and English and Spanish lyrics. Puya released its first album, *Fundamental*, in '99 through MCA and hit the tour path opening Ozzfest with bands like System of a Down, Sepultura and Type O Negative.

Fundamental was an experiment of sorts, employing a full horn section and a few mellow, dreamy tunes like "Keep it Simple." On the newly released *Union*, however, Puya ditched the horns (save for one song) and went straight for the jugular with aggressive jams like "Ride" and "No Interference." The members of

Puya say spending so much time on the road with various metal bands inspired them to focus on their aggressive side, becoming even heavier the second time around.

"The music evolved this time. The key factor is to not use the horns," explains Curbelo. "I feel like it sometimes waters it down. I like the more aggressive stuff. I love the Latin side too, but the heavier percussion stuff is much more what I like."

Many of the songs on *Union* are driven by tribal conga and bongo drums—the live act allows for invigorating percussive jams.

This unexpected mixture of metal with world music is growing more popular, as bands like Soulfly and Sepultura incorporate indigenous Brazilian sounds with thrash metal, and System of a Down brings an Armenian influence to the table. Puya may be breaking down barriers for more Latino bands to meld Latin music with hard rock. After all, Puya's debut album won a Billboard Latin Music Award in 1999 for "Rock/Fusion Album of the Year."

"I wouldn't call it a trend, because there's not that many bands doing it," says Curbelo. "But it would be interesting to see more bands do it. There's a lot of great ethnic music out there that probably won't see the light of day because of the fact that it's not mainstream or not something that really gets any attention."



Puya is currently wrapping up a tour with Fear Factory and hopes to be able to headline its own gigs later this fall.

"It's great to be able to go out

with other bands," says Curbelo. "But it would be nice to go out on our own and stand on our own two feet as far as touring goes."

—Amanda Feingold



JERSEY

The humble state sandwiched between Philadelphia, New York and the Atlantic ocean has never slouched in producing rock talent. Bon Jovi, The Misfits and Bruce Springsteen have all called Jersey home. Despite New Jersey's established rock history, the members of this band instead hail from Burlington, Ontario—yes, Canada. While it's unclear whether the band takes its name in tribute to the garden state or an athletic pullover, the boys in Jersey manage to pack all the punch of Danzig and The Boss, even without the benefit of a real Jersey address. Touring consistently throughout the past six months, Jersey has held opening spots for Anti-Flag in the United States and Canada, and for MXPX and Less Than Jake in the United Kingdom.

The band's new five-song EP, *Definition*, appears on Florida's Fueled By Ramen Records, compounding all the confusing geography.

Answers by Greg Jersey (nice last name, Greg)

Describe your worst grade school or high school teacher.

My worst high school teacher was a Nazi. His name was Mr. Randolph, and he used to bring in things like severed heads. He would say that heads—eaten in their rawest form—were the best.

What teen movie best resembles your actual experience and memories of your time in high school?

Probably something like *Dazed and Confused*.

What's the best come-on line you can think of to use on a study date?

Hey, Cindy, those test tubes kinda look like... well, you know.

Have you ever applied anything you learned in high school towards your life in music?

Maybe a little math.

If you were still sticking your high-scoring achievements on the refrigerator for everyone to see, what would you have posted up there recently?

I never did that. I wouldn't want to start.

"It feels like we're based on the road," confides Black Rebel Motorcycle Club bassist/vocalist Robert Turner. Racing down I-295, just escaping the clutches—and traffic—of New York, Turner explains the band, while from San Francisco, now calls Los Angeles the closest thing it has to a home. But recently there hasn't been much lounging at home for the band between tours and fulfilling the king-of-the-road promise at which its name hints.

"It's pretty open-ended for us right now," adds British-bred Nick Jago, who along with Turner and guitarist/vocalist Peter Hayes comprise BRMC. Taking its name from Marlon Brando's biker gang in the 1954 film *The Wild One* and its sound in part from The Jesus and Mary Chain's recurring melodies and brutal, guitar-driven crunch, the band is embracing the sights, sounds and high-velocity pace borne from its eponymous Virgin/Abstract Dragon debut.

"It just keeps getting faster and speeding up everyday," Turner summarizes the last couple of months.

BRMC recently finished up a headlining run, including an appearance on CBS' *Late Late Show With Craig Kilborn*. It spent July with the Charlatans UK, and the month before it opened for Guided By Voices.

By Chris Johns

While it all seems a bit easy for these (surprise) black-clad, West Coast 20-somethings, BRMC's decidedly lo-fi and sinister album suggests these easy riders offer much more than a too-cool-for-school image.

"We're a lot more dangerous live," warns Jago. "It's a little bit more of what fans might expect."

Save for a few deviations (such as the opening track, "Whatever Happened to My Rock 'N Roll (Punk Song)," "Love Burns" and "Red Eyes and Tears"), Black Rebel Motorcycle Club delivers a nearly uninterrupted thumping, psychedelic trip.

"We usually slow it down a bit and find a lot more rhythms in the music that way," states Turner. "We can go all out, but (we) only do it as much as we need to and dig a little bit deeper for some of the other stuff."

While some bands might rut themselves in this approach, for BRMC it is an opportunity to master a craft the members have been tooling with since their school days. Turner and Hayes met in high school, where the pair initially started writing and playing together. Most of their early

continued on page 61

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

l-r: Peter Hayes, Robert Turner, Nick Jago

Two Man Advantage

Two Man Advantage's new album, *Don't Label Us* (Go Kart), is about hockey, hockey and more hockey. "Zamboni Driving Maniac," "New Season," "The Sweep," "Hall of Fame," "H.O.C.K.E.Y."—14 out of 17 tracks reference the sport in some way. Why hockey? For lead singer Drunk Bastard, the answer is obvious.

"Hockey is just like the music we play and love," he says. "It's fast, hard-hitting, in your face and an all out war. Hockey players get paid a lot less than any other athletes and so do punk bands. No one knows how to market hockey to the masses, and punk rock is still sort of underground. It's like the two are parallel."

Doing for hockey what Gang Green did for skateboarding, Two Man Advantage feels a special kinship with other puck punk bands. Not surprisingly, the members are huge fans of Canada's The Hanson Brothers—a No Means No side project with hockey overtones.

"A few years ago they came to the East Coast to play," says Bastard. "They were scheduled to play Brownies in NYC, and I was so excited. Then the show got canceled.

I was going to fuck with them and show up with full hockey equipment and heckle them like a drunk Ranger fan up in the blue seats."

Besides the love of hockey, if there is another major driving force behind Two Man, it is probably a love of beer.

"Drinking has a lot to do with it," explains Bastard. "Feeling young again, drinking beers in the back of my GTO. Yep, it's all an excuse to feel like kids again."

While some might see this outlook as limiting, Bastard would disagree. He feels the hockey motif is central to the band's sense of self—and humor.

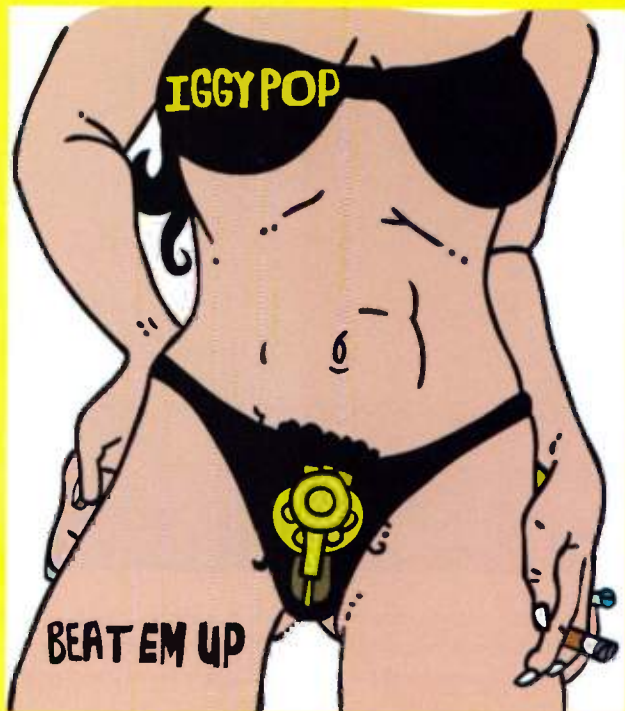
"I think if we decide to stop with the hockey, the team spirit of Two Man will be gone," he confesses. "Punk rock is the greatest music in the world because you can sing and scream about whatever it is you feel passionate about. You can be political or you can be in love—it doesn't matter. Two Man sings about hockey because we love it, and we believe in it.

"There's no gimmick there," he concludes. "Just passion."

—Mark Ginsburg



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THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Let's dispel one myth right now. The fact is, musicians do pay strict attention to entertainment rags regardless of their status in the rock music food chain or how aloof they may portray themselves in the media. John Flansburgh and his partner in pop crime, John Linnell, are collectively known as They Might Be Giants, and they readily admit to collecting back issues of *Rockpile* in order to gauge the competition and eavesdrop on themselves. We will not fail them.

For nearly two decades, this Brooklyn-based duo has brought the world infectious melodies with a penchant for quirky humor, garnering a cult following. They've seeped into our national consciousness without fanfare or blasphemy. From their MTV Breakthrough Award in the early '90s to the soundtracks of *Austin Powers*, *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart* and *Malcolm In The Middle* to producing videos for artists such as Ben Folds Five, Frank Black, Soul Coughing and Harvey Danger, the Giants have lived happily among us.

Mink Car is the culmination of two years worth of writing sessions, paused and resumed to accommodate side projects including a John Linnell solo album and a series of specially recorded tracks to *McSweeney's Literary Journal's* Art and Music Issue.

"We're very much a new wave band," Flansburgh declares from a hideaway in the Catskills. "John and I write short, melodic songs with interesting lyrics, which is not a contemporary idea. Nowadays things are much more groove oriented and cut and paste. We're into craft."

In order to bring *Mink Car* to fruition, TMBG enlisted the help of U.K. hit-makers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley (who engineered TMBG's British Top-10 hit "Birdhouse In Your Soul") along with Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne/Ivy fame in the producer's chair. Allowing their guests to choose finished tracks, Flansburgh and Linnell felt the duo could be brought to another level.

"Adam is an old-fashioned producer," Flansburgh notes. "He's not an engineer that brings a sonic quality to what's already going on. His approach is to make the songs as extreme as possible. Normally with other producers, it's very important that the record's sound has a continuity to itself, which seems to me to be completely anathema to the spirit of TMBG. The more difficult each transition is, the more powerful a project it becomes. I realize that sounds kind of perverted, but we're about variety. No matter how much we try to run away from it, it's us."

The wide range of recording methodology employed on *Mink Car* encompasses cuts with TMBG's acclaimed backing live ensemble, The Band Of Dans (yes, they're all named Dan), to purely electronic offerings—not to mention a few hybrids. The stories behind the tracks are encouraging to those who believe in the power of chance encounters. While in a London studio, TMBG intended to call upon punk rock legend Joe Strummer to chant on the coda of "Cyclops Rock," but instead chose Cerys Matthews of Catatonia. The Welsh bombshell flips out in a tune detailing the story of a fellow who feels betrayed by a woman.

"Joe was on the scene," Flansburgh adds. "But Clive suggested Cerys, who coincidentally happened to be working down the road. He'd just done a record with her. I didn't know Cerys from Adam. She's a total sport and has an incredible amount of character."

TMBG's cover of beloved English pop star Georgie Fame's "Yeah Yeah" was a gem waiting for re-discovery. A psychedelic guitar solo by Dan Miller punctuates the Giant's hallmark tendency to champion the surreal. While the result might ruffle the feathers of a few purists, TMBG insist the cover was done out of love and tribute.

continued on page 64

By Tom Semioli

l-r: John Flansburgh, John Linnell PHOTO BY: SUSAN ANDERSON

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5 questions



CROWNS ON 45

Crows On 45 is never short on attitude—check out one of the band's live shows for proof. For the past three years, this quirky quintet has made queer punk a threat again with its infectious style of angular, aggressive dance floor rock. Most people recognize the band for its track, "Shallow End," from the *Calling All Kings And Queens* compilation on Mr. Lady records. Despite the association, it was the prolific Heartcore imprint responsible for the release of the band's first full-length this August. *Not on the Menu* features the Crows at their best, proving once and for all that you, Miss Thang, are not all that.

Answers by Chris Ohnesorge (drummer)

Describe your worst grade school or high school teacher.

The worst teacher I ever had, hands down, was my sixth grade homeroom teacher, Mr. Pena. He went around the room one day and told everyone what their futures would amount to. He told all the rich kids they'd be huge successes and the poor kids that they'd be miserable failures. Also, we once caught him pulling up his pants with a conspicuous bottle of hand lotion on the table.

What teen movie best resembles your actual experience and memories of your time in high school?

I went to a weird artsy/hippy school, so none of them really apply. But I was super into *Heathers*, just because a killing spree would've been fun at the time.

What's the best come-on line you can think of to use on a study date?

It'd have to be school play-oriented. "Hey Bobby, want me to help you rehearse for the love scene in *Romeo & Juliet*? I'll be Juliet..."

Have you ever applied anything you learned in high school towards your life in music?

Not really. But I did learn you can totally suck at math, nearly fail it and still keep time perfectly as drummer. So, you don't need it!!!

If you were still sticking your high-scoring achievements on the refrigerator for everyone to see, what would you have posted up there recently?

I'd probably stick the little write up we got in the *Village Voice* for our show on the main stage at the Knitting Factory. I thought of saying something crass about sex with a groupie, but I realized that would be total fiction.

THE FRISK



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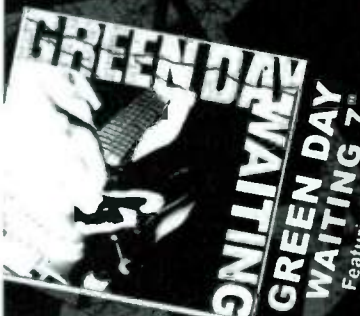
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The Faint

"Technology is the greatest thing in the world," proclaims The Faint's bassist, Joel Peterson, speaking into his cell phone from the road during his band's recent coast-to-coast tour. His proclamation is scrambled into a digital code, beamed up to a satellite, bounced over to another cell phone, unscrambled and delivered to my eardrum in about one second.

On their new LP, *Danse Macabre*, Peterson and his comrades brandish their love of technology to thrilling ends. The aptly titled album is a bumping, thumping dance floor manifesto of shockingly catchy synthesizer-driven new wave tension. As Peterson explains, The Faint's sound is shaped by its members' evolving relationships with their machines.

"The music for *Danse Macabre* is a result of us getting more familiar with the technology, learning to manipulate our instruments better."

It has been a roundabout journey. In the beginning, there were no synthesizers.

"We were coming from a rock band past, but we got tired of guitars," Peterson recounts. "We were

always aware of bands like Kraftwerk, but they were not necessarily direct influences. Our music was always more of a reaction than an emulation."

From the very start, the Omaha, Neb., group aimed to make music unlike its own favorites. As the guys grew more skilled at their instruments, they grew more and more weary of guitars. Synthesizers provided a fresh alternative to help distance them further from their contemporaries. Although its music's style and danceability may have taken some evolution, The Faint's indie rock spirit has remained a pretty solid constant. The Faint are much akin to forward-thinking indie bands as Brainiac and Six Finger Satellite, choosing electronics not to emulate the '80s so much as to wake up the lethargic '90s scene. Lethargy, in fact, along with stagnation, are the targets of some of The Faint's most vehement assaults. *Danse Macabre* is largely a meditation on the grim futility of the working life.

"It's a dark record," says Peterson. "*Danse Macabre* translates as Dance of the Dead. The Dance of the



Dead is the routine of society."

In songs such as "Agenda Suicide," The Faint's resentment toward the alienation of the working man is laid bare. Over a driving, apocalyptic pulse, Todd sings, "Agenda: suicide/ The drones work hard before they die." Despite such scathing lyrics, Peterson insists The Faint is not a political band.

"We are just discussing the topics rather than taking a stance," he claims. This neutrality complies with The Faint's choice of weaponry—a sense of detachment lies inherent in

the inhuman synths and in Todd's deadpan, at times coded vocals.

As The Faint's music is shaped by its machines, so Peterson believes music in general will continue to be shaped by technology.

"Bands will embrace technology more and more," he predicts. The logical question is how. What direction does The Faint foresee once electronics have replaced guitars at the foundation of indie rock?

You could ask Peterson, but his cell phone has cut out.

—Curran Reynolds

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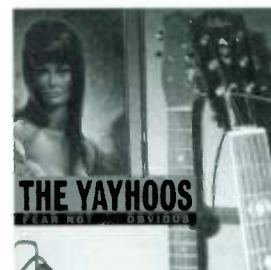
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IN these insouciant days of post-prog-indie-boombap yawn, Ted Leo continues to bring the pop. Most know him from the late, great mod outfit Chisel. A brave few remember his stint in the transient Sin-Eaters. Others hearken back to his hardcore beginnings with such bands as Citizen's Arrest and Animal Crackers. The man gets his probers. But Ted regards himself in a more humbling hue.

"I consider myself well-rounded," he says. "I consider myself a perpetual English major, but I also get into bar fights."

When pressed, he'll quickly fess up, "I lied to you. I don't really get into bar fights. I'm just sensitive and bookish."

Perhaps it's this sensitive and bookish persona placing Leo above the modern-rock benchmark. Along with asserting the personal as political in such songs as "Treble in Trouble" or "My Vien Ilin," he bridges into the theoretical as well. Leo's new album, *The Tyranny Of Distance*, ponders the linguistic confines of life in "Stove By A Whale," a steaming, fuzzed-out groover. If Leo points out the trouble with language, he doesn't seem terribly caught up in it. Rather, he moves freely around big words and concepts to leave the average rock star dizzy.

"One of the tenets of my education was the whole cyclical nature of culture in general," he begins. "Not necessarily like there's nothing new under the sun, but in that every artist's task is less about actually creating something new, but to dream the dream onward—to keep moving things forward. But it's kind of the same dream, the next step."

Dreaming his own dream onward, Leo's early solo material was thick with effects, featuring his tape machine and Echoplex more than the falsetto musings and catchy riffs Chisel fans had come to revere. It seemed Leo might be withdrawing into the shadowed valley of esoterica with his first solo release, *tej leo (?)*, *Rx/pharmacists*.

"I hadn't performed enough to figure out how I was comfortable doing it," he explains. "I started out doing tons of stuff with the tape machine and really staying in the background."

His no-wave tendencies presented some obstacles. "It's a really hard balance to strike, not just logistically but also conceptually. Half of my songs really can't be done justice without being up-front and clear. It's hard to shift in the middle of a set into a much more personality-recedent kind of sound. I enjoyed doing that, but ultimately I just want to rock."

So he rocks. The tape machine once forming Leo's backing band, The Pharmacists, was replaced by actual musicians—a rotating line-up featuring members of Fugazi, the Make-Up, Trans Am, The Warmers, Native Nod, Holy Childhood

and The Smiles. *Treble in Trouble*, his following EP, trumpeted a return to the up-front Ted Leo. If *Treble* set the stage, Leo's new album on Lookout Records steals it, setting a new standard for intelligent pop songwriting.

With a breaching whale adorning the cover, *The Tyranny Of Distance* drenches the listener in a sound much more rock-oriented than Leo's previous endeavors.

"I hate to be turning into a cliché," he laughs. "But that is the way it tends to happen. There's a different kind of energy. The freneticism that characterizes a lot of Chisel stuff wouldn't express where I'm at right now."

Apparently, he is located somewhere between *Moby Dick* and *Treasure Island*. Even a brief conversation can expose his fascination with the sea and nautical culture. According to Leo, the title of his new album hails from a Split Enz song, "Six Months In A Leaky Boat," celebrating the drive of old sailors and explorers.

"I guess it's just a real corny longing for—or a metaphor for—that kind of searching," he explains.

He cites Curtis "Keep on Pushing" Mayfield, whose falsetto vocal style is reflected in much of Leo's singing, as another integral influence.

"He is one of the greatest examples of someone who can make politics poignant and be incredibly intimate and honest about romantic things, political things, social things," pines Leo. "He can get super specific and still hit on some universal topics."

Ironically, many would pay the same compliment to Leo himself, who frequently fuses the pop and soul force of Paul Weller, Thin Lizzy and Elvis Costello with the scathing politics of Billy Bragg, Chumbawumba or Crass—Leo in fact samples the latter two.

References to T.S. Elliot's *The Wasteland* and Joyce's *Ulysses* add to the recurring shiver-me-

timbers theme, also suggesting Leo to be well-rounded, well-read and—to be frank—extremely smart. If you get him started, he can even rationalize his repetitive-to-redemptive songwriting style through the philosophies of different schools of literature.

"I get into really repetitive parts in my songs, but then the rocker kicks in and I make it pay off," Leo explains. "Romanticism ultimately overrides the modernist. But I like to think that my romanticism is tempered by a healthy dose of modern skepticism and vice versa."

Tempering these moods for moderns, Leo has become one of the few erudite and endearing songwriters of the millennium. Of course, his romanticism bleeds through as he briefly fancies his next step.

"I might do some Renaissance fairs," he smirks. "I can see myself doing that. Get my tin whistle and my lute out. I can do the Renaissance fair and the Irish festival circuit."



TED LEO

By Don Malkemes

Defacto

Earlier this year, the wildly popular At The Drive-In seemed to disappear into an unannounced and unexplained hiatus. While this blow to indie rock wasn't received well by the group's stalwart fans, Defacto will help cushion the impact. ATDI guitarist Omar Rodriguez and vocalist Cedric Bixler haven't been resting on their laurels. In fact, Defacto was set in place before ATDI broke into the national spotlight.

Defacto is not merely an ATDI side project. Since 1996, it has been the other, albeit less visible, half of Bixler and Rodriguez's musical geniuses (Bixler holds drumming duties while Rodriguez trades his six strings for four).

The four core members, including keyboardist Ikey Owens and vocalist Jeremy Ward, have developed a community of creativity in addition to being a band. To date, the coalition has also produced zines and short films, as well as produced many musical collaborations—remixing tracks for 90 Day Men, Crimson Curse and The Killingtons.

"Anytime anyone has a project, we basically put it out under Defacto," Rodriguez explains. "If Ikey's going to go play with some people, he's there representing Defacto."

Concentrating on improv jams and loose grooves reminiscent of late-'60s era Miles Davis sessions, Defacto's own productions are a far cry from the driving rock anthems associated with At The Drive-In.

"Punk shows are very different than what's happening here," explains Rodriguez. "There's no guitars. It's a totally different style of music, but to us, it's all related."

It's not an easy thing to catch on a disc—Bixler claims Defacto demands to be experienced live. But the best alternative to witnessing a live performance is through their latest effort, *Megaton Shotblast*. Recently released on the Gold Standard Laboratories label (which also put out releases from The Locust, Lost Kids and other big hair, small-waisted rockers), the 10-song disc is a collection of a few live tracks recorded in Slovenia and the Netherlands,



plus a number of studio sessions recorded throughout the past year.

"There's a lot of different feelings on *Megaton*," says Rodriguez. Some of them include recordings from Rodriguez's home studio, early material from the band's hometown of El Paso, Texas, and even some traditional salsa music featuring Rodriguez's father. Dad's not the only one allowed to jam with Defacto, however.

"We're always open to musicians coming in and laying down tracks,"

says Rodriguez. "They can come and sing or have some sort of abstract idea. Again, our premise is just to explore and not be ashamed."

Although the band is very improvisational, Rodriguez clarifies it isn't out to establish an ethic of sheer randomness.

"Most of it is just jamming," he admits. "But we do have actual arrangements. Even if it doesn't seem like it."

—Waleed Rashidi

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Owls

Once upon a time in the late '80s, in the very windy city of Chicago, there were four boys named Tim, Mike, Sam and Victor. Tim and Mike were brothers, and Sam and Victor were good friends. They played in a band together called Cap'n Jazz. For eight years, Cap'n Jazz made music in four-minute increments reflecting upon the Boones-drinking, Sassy-reading, driveway-loitering, kiss-stealing years of late adolescence. The band captivated the starry-eyed girls and boys who crowded the basements, rec halls and sunny summer backyards in which Cap'n Jazz made its name. Today, they're still friends. In fact, they're still making music. Only now, they're called Owls.

"Where Are They Now?" would be a weird way to put it since me and Sam and Mike have been playing together the whole time, and Victor's been playing with Sam the whole time," explains 26-year-old singer Tim Kinsella. He still resides in Chicago, as do the other Owls, all of whom went on to form cousin bands—most noteworthy Joan of Arc and Ghosts and Vodka—in the years following Cap'n Jazz's 1995 disbanding.

"It doesn't feel strange or like any kind of reunion," Kinsella continues. "I think all four of us have this kind of momentum of being in a band and working on music. Now we're collaborating together again. It doesn't seem very strange. It's actually probably easier than it's been in a long time."

Owls practiced constantly leading up to its debut recording, which perhaps explains why these songs—unlike a few too many Joan of Arc tracks trickling through the Jade Tree catalog in recent years—sound so damned tight. Kinsella says practicing actually felt rusty, which is hard to believe considering all of the unyielding tours and records he, brother Mike, Sam Zurick and Victor Villareal managed to squeeze under their skinny-cinched belts in the past decade.

"That was kind of our idea when we started (playing as Owls)," says Kinsella of his rediscovery of the "normal" recording process. "It was like, 'Hey, remember how we used to practice and write songs, and then record?' So there's no computers on this record. It's the normal way a



rock band records, I guess, but it's the first time in a long time for me, so it's interesting. Joan of Arc was more about finding the songs, making all this noise and then being, like, 'Oh, what have we here?'"

Owls might be an accessible rock band, but at the same time, its songs are built on a dozen years of DIY cred. But don't mention the words "sell" and "out" in the same sentence. "I don't ever want to write a song that people can get stuck in their head," he says. "If I'm going to that, why don't I just write for a Best Buy commercial and make a lot

of money? I...I...I hate the world. I don't want to give it songs to sing." And why does he hate the world? "Because all the people are so wonderful, and they don't know it."

Maybe it's purely for abstraction that Owls have always worked so many changes into their songs: to distract the wonderful listener enough to really listen. And it works. While Tim Kinsella may still be one of the few people who can sing "Let's get it on/Let's drive to Alaska" and get away with it sounding hip, he honestly hopes to inspire others to do the same.

—Lauren M. Viera

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Distributed by: Caroline / Lumberjack

The Icarus Line

"Guns n' Roses, Jane's Addiction..." All Joe Cardamone wants to talk about is Los Angeles rock bands. Trying to coax the Icarus Line's pucky ringleader into admitting influences from outside his cherished hometown is like pulling his chompers. But one listen to the band's new album, *Mono*, brings to mind a whole slew of kindred musical spirits from around this great country—from San Diego's Drive Like Jehu to Washington, D.C.'s Nation of Ulysses. Yet the Icarus boys are so utterly rooted in the City of Angels, they perceive these bands as nothing but distant cousins.

"We're an L.A. rock band," bassist Lance Arnao declares. "Certain bands, there's no way they could come from anywhere besides L.A. Not that L.A. is a better place, but there's just a certain chemistry here."

Icarus' five members hail from different ends of the city, but each reports a similar account of growing up—friendless high school days of playing in punk bands. Nowadays, the boys live and breathe the music.

"We don't do anything besides music," Joe declares.

The dedication is paying off. The Icarus Line just might be the next important L.A. rock band. Like all their idols, they succeed because they are just so damn unpredictable. Their songs twist and turn, yet somehow always flow smoothly into unexpected conclusions. They meander through neurotic screamo tirades, Jesus Lizard stomps and epic buildups, only to veer off into hauntingly melodic interludes for indefinite respites. The sheer sincerity of its music sets the band far apart from the ironic indie rock mob.

"We were never the cool band,"

shares guitarist Aaron North. "We've always been hated by all the cool bands."

This said, The Icarus Line has befriended and played with some of the most highly acclaimed bands of its generation, including At the Drive-In, Ink and Dagger and Dillinger Escape Plan. Live, The Icarus Line's explosive sound is at once airtight and terrifyingly erratic, an internal contradiction yielding thrilling results. During a set at New York's CBGB this spring, the youthful Icarus Line is transformed into a world-weary band sweating confidence from every pore underneath matching shirts and ties. Cardamone struts and poses with an Iggy Pop swagger, convulsing and ultimately landing on the floor—yet hitting every scream, holler and yelp dead on and with perfect pitch. With legs spread and head banging, Lance churns out the bottom end with the determination of a bullet train—perhaps more Morbid Angel than Angel Hair. Drummer Jeff Watson flails like a mime on fire. Meanwhile, Aaron and second guitarist Alvin Deguzman rock out like yin and yang, Aaron prancing about and Alvin standing stock still, studiously conjuring one startling riff after the next from his low-slung axe.

Now on its first headlining tour, The Icarus Line is living its dream.

"We've been evolving from a punk band since age 16, and here we are now, some fucked-up, trashy rock band," says Aaron. "We're broke now, but better to be broke on the road than at home."

"Hell, we're makin' money now," Joe chimes in, grinning. "Ten bucks per diem to eat, that's fuckin' amazing!"

—Curran Reynolds



7



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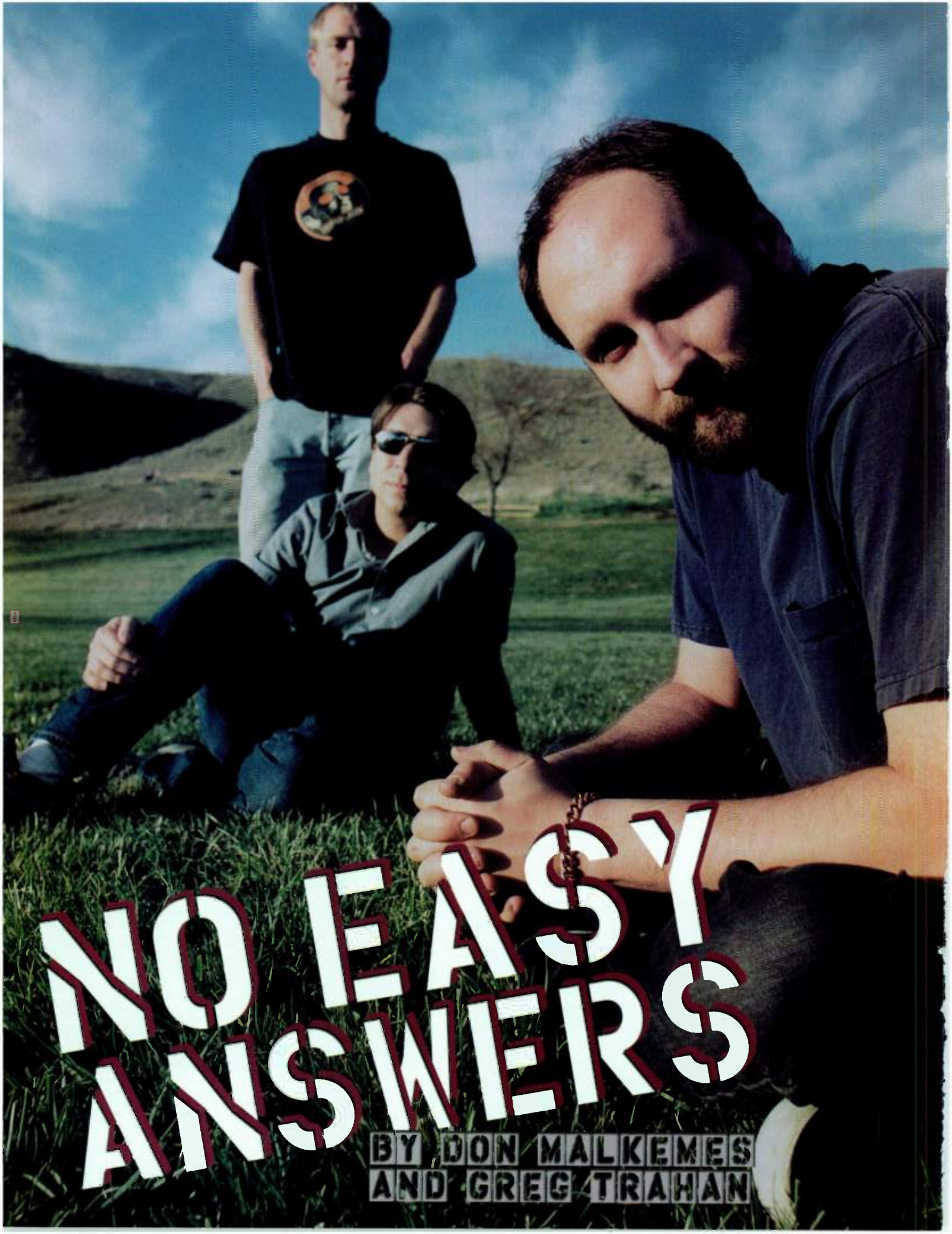


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NO EASY ANSWERS

BY DON MALKEMES AND GREG TRAHAN

BUILT TO SPILL'S FAMOUSLY APATHETIC FRONTMAN DOUG MARTSCH SPILLS HIS GUTS

Nobody really knows where they were when they first heard Built to Spill. The band just isn't like that. Scott Plouf, resident drummer, reminisces. "I probably listened to those records [pre-Plouf Built to Spill releases] maybe two or three times, and that was when I went to somebody else's house. I really hadn't heard that much Built to Spill."

But you listen to a song here, a song there, and before you know it, you're hooked. You find yourself bleating the lyrics to "Kicked it in the Sun." You spend an hour debating with a friend what the hell is meant by passages of the band's debut, *Keep It Like a Secret*. Laced with shoe-gazing, rock 'n roll allure, Built to Spill has proven highly addictive.

Why? Siphoning answers from the singer—melody-maker, lyricist, media-aholic Doug Martsch—is analogous to getting a Philip Morris executive to admit smoking causes cancer.

"I think at this point, it's been completely internalized," Martsch expands. "I'm at the point now where I don't even think. There's so many things that influence what I do. There's different things that aesthetically appeal to me at different times, and I don't even know where to start. I don't even care."

Certainly, dialectics concerning the aesthetic nature imbued by the stressors of our burgeoning hi-tech age can be complex. Martsch retains his artistic integrity by walking a narrow path between the disilusioned minstrel and the idiot savant.

"When I write songs, it's like a puzzle," he explains. "Things make sense for completely random reasons that I couldn't even explain. I don't even care to understand. I just know what I like."

While this philosophy has produced a quiver of impressive songs, its connection to the songs' broad emotional spectrum is penury.

"It's not about expression for me anymore," Martsch shares. "It's about making sounds that are cool."

Even Martsch, a paragon of the "ehh, whatever," cannot bequeath all of the credit to the aforementioned attitude. The science and execution of rock also requires a fair amount of elbow grease. Martsch describes songwriting as hours upon hours of work yielding seconds or minutes of useful material.

But music isn't everything. Built To Spill is as respected for its musical content as it is its verbiage. *Ancient Melodies of the Future*, the newest addition to the band's catalog, continues this tradition with memorable quips such as "as long as it's talking with you/talk of the weather will do" (from "The Weather") and the axiomatic "happiness will only happen when it can" (from "Happiness").

The interpreter should not, however, stray from the Tao of Doug.

"If something good comes out that's great," he reflects. "If I can't get anything good, then I'll just put in some stuff. But that's another example, like a

puzzle, in the way I choose the words. It makes sense to me in an intuitive way, but that's about it."

Applying this elliptical process, Built to Spill has once again metastasized through rock culture with its eighth release, *Ancient Melodies of the Future*. The record, complete with a smooth-flavored mellotron, offers a looser sound than the band's previous full-length, *Keep It Like a Secret*. Plouf explains, "*Keep It Like a Secret* came out of jams where I would come out here and he would—we would—just noodle around and come up with little parts that turned into songs. And the most recent record, Doug had a lot of the stuff written, but he didn't really have parts for Brett or (me). So it really changed quite a bit from each record."

Martsch adds, "For one thing, I guess we didn't practice the songs as much as we did the record before. I don't know how to account for that."

Martsch's official review of his band's latest release is simple, ambivalent and vague. Martsch isn't one for fanfare.

"I'm pretty satisfied," he shrugs. "I'm not blown away. I'm not bummed about it either."

The creator has looked upon his work and has seen it is good. He doesn't dwell upon specifics. The dark and moody electronic groove of "Strange," the lyrical minimalism of "You Are," Martsch craves not these things.

"For me the record is just a bunch of sounds now," he confesses. "I don't even remember what the songs are about or anything. Because after you work on something for so long, you just become involved in each step of the process."

This indifference extends beyond the latest release. Martsch has successfully ignored the self-indulgent curiosity of looking back. While fans and the press might still swing in the band's wake, Martsch is numb to the nostalgia of Built To Spill's previous works.

"I do stuff and I don't even think about what I've done in the past," says the blunt frontman. "I don't remember what was going through my head when I did other things. I'm not interested in the creative process. I've tried thinking about it before, and I don't really get anywhere."

Plouf diplomatically notes, "I don't think anyone goes in thinking they're going to make something different from the last one. It's just that's what we're capable of doing at the time."

The recording, mixing, mastering and production have all been completed. Now is the time to tour. With the addition of Jim Roth and Brett Nelson on the road, Built to Spill has been touted as one of the great rock shows of the era. Considering the band's casual approach to songsmithing, one wonders if the same attitude bleeds into the on-stage presentations.

Martsch, for one, attests, "When we're touring, just playing the songs is a lot more fun than when we write them. Playing live is like basically all pretty fun,

and sometimes superfun. Every once in a while it sucks. But during a show, at least half of the time the show is fun playing."

Although nationally recognized as a leader in new rock, Built To Spill (based in Boise, Idaho) has major ties to the northwest rock scene. In the weeks of a different-day-different-city schedule, Martsch claims it's easy for things to blend together.

"It seems the same everywhere as far as what we see—a bunch of Built to Spill shows," says Martsch. "They're all kind of the same everywhere. The country is not culturally diverse if you're just playing indie rock. It all looks the same—Denny's, Texacos and Built to Spill shows."

Martsch's professed ambivalence in the studio seems to be tethered during the tour. The symbiotic exchange of energy between audience and artist is not lost even on the cynical Martsch.

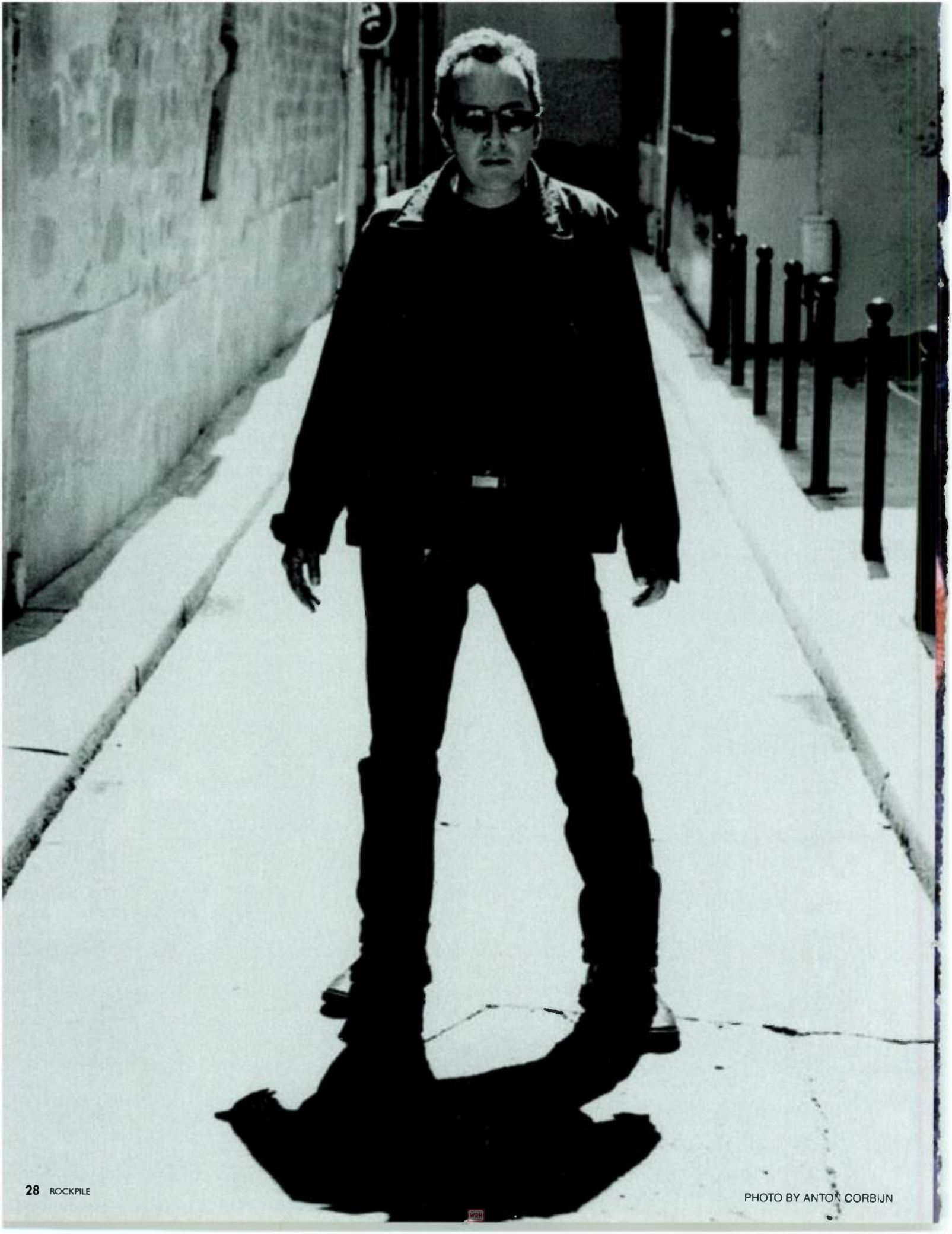
"I definitely care about what people think," he admits, in a rare moment of giving a shit. "I'm not doing it just for me, that's for sure."

Through the amorphous sonic fates, Built to Spill has ascended to the rank of a rock demigod. Fans and critics alike herald Martsch, Nelson, and Plouf (OK, mostly Martsch) as indie heroes. Plouf responds, "It's usually me and Brett reading articles and just giggling. That's how it affects the band."

Martsch comments, "Obviously, I know that a lot of people are interested in what I'm doing. But there are thousands of times more people who like Limp Bizkit. Just because people think you're good does not mean you're good. In fact it usually means you're not. You can't help but think you're doing something wrong if you're selling out the big club."

It's a conundrum. While becoming increasingly celebrated, the public eye also blinks less. Martsch regards media attention in a less than favorable light, noting he rarely enjoys interviews with bands. In his own words, Martsch says he's usually disappointed—"The things I really love, I don't want to know much about, actually," he says.

Staving off rock-hubris, Built to Spill has produced some great, though inexplicably originated songs. Coupled with the esteemed live performances and Doug Martsch's Andy Kaufman-esque contempt toward rock's media, Built to Spill has created an insatiable craving among the masses. The populace knows very little concerning this reguish band, yet the cynical, touching aura inherent to each song ineluctably draws people closer. The band is the Boba Fett of the rock world—a little blue, a little gray and packing a rocket-launcher. Whether it's found in the Plouf-described "boogie-rock feel" of "Happiness," the bubbling "Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss" or the maudlin "The Weather," *Ancient Melodies of the Future* delivers what the consumers have come to recognize as the taste of Built to Spill Country. And the fans all want it. Some might even believe they need it. ■



WALKER

WALKER

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Mr. London Calling,
Joe Strummer,
Goes Global Again
by John D. Luersson

Joe Strummer's contribution to popular music—specifically his work during the five years he fronted The Clash—is undisputed. His impact on performers like Rancid singer/Hellcat Records founder Tim Armstrong and The Wallflowers' Jakob Dylan is well-documented. Still, Strummer's influence over thousands of young teenagers in the early '80s who went on to be freethinking musicians, artists, writers and educators is just as important.

In my youth, Strummer's sway over me, as resident mouth-piece in the only band that mattered, was sizable. The Clash offered a gateway to the other punk acts—and to a lesser extent the hip-hop and reggae artists—of the time. My Clash adulation reached an apex, prompting me to shave the sides of my head, cut the sleeves off my uncle's old army shirt and score a pair of combat boots. Perhaps most significantly, Strummer inspired me to form a band. Like the countless others congregating in suburban garageland USA, my misunderstood pals (including future Lifetime/Kid Dynamite guitarist Dan Yemin) and I were given courage by The Clash to create our own primitive noise.

These notions run through my head as I nervously wait for Strummer to call me in my basement office. As a music writer speaking to artists on an almost-daily basis, it's still quite a rare occasion that I'm offered the opportunity to speak to one of my heroes, and I'm damn apprehensive. When he comes on the line, Strummer puts my nerves instantly at ease with a gregarious greeting of "How ya' doin,' man?" delivered in his croaky, familiar voice.



l-r: Martin Slattery, Scott Shields, Joe Strummer, Tymon Dogg, Pablo Cook PHOTO BY ANTON CORBIJN

In conversation, Strummer reveals himself to be a very genuine man, an unguarded personality honest enough to take responsibility for the errors he's made through the years. He did, after all, unceremoniously sack partner Mick Jones at the height of The Clash's popularity. When he explains the 10-year gap between solo albums preceding his recent creative spurt, Strummer bluntly admits, "It's my own fault. I bet if I went at the label a bit more aggressively, I could have done a record sooner." Strummer amends his confession by explaining his daughters were growing up at the time, and he felt comfortable in his safe, European home. Ultimately, the urge to play again pushed Strummer to concede any future Clash reunion to Sony, and he was set free as a solo performer.

During the course of an hour-long conversation, Strummer makes one thing perfectly clear—he's grateful to be back on his own terms. He is thankful for the second chance afforded to him and his band, the Mescaleros, by the support of Hellcat Records.

Speaking of his arrangement with Hellcat, Strummer enthuses, "Tim and the guys there are smart enough to let me and the band do our thing, which is really reassuring. If Hellcat has any involvement at all, it might be in suggesting a track sequence or something. I think they're just happy I'm making a racket again."

Missing for more than a decade, and presumed musically dead until a comeback album, *Rock Art & The X-Ray Style*, resuscitated his career in 1999, Strummer is clearly making up for lost time. In the two years since *Rock Art* hit the shelves, he has

helped bolster his rock presence with a solid touring ethic, a BBC Radio program suitably dubbed *London Calling* and a vibrant and diverse new studio record, *Global A-Go Go*.

"Global is a bit more stripped down than the last one, without losing any of the spirit," Strummer opines. "We bashed out a few tunes in an acoustic setting, with the bongos and stuff. It felt great, so we carried that vibe into the studio."

Written and recorded in the studio throughout a two-month period, Strummer heralds The Mescaleros' active participation as integral to this latest project. While he considers himself "too disorganized" for certain methods of songwriting, he feels right at home in the studio, finding his own niche inside the Mescaleros' jams. Ultimately, Strummer says, he allows this shared studio vibe direct his lyrics.

The end result is a skilled blend of guitars, ethnic percussion and traces of dub and electronica promoting the notion of freedom on the airwaves. Strummer attributes this melting pot musical approach and his long fascination with radio—first evident in Clash staples like "Capital Radio Two" and "Radio Clash"—to a childhood spent throughout the world.

"I remember being so amazed that I'm in the middle of the African bush in the middle of the night grooving to the Top Ten," he muses. "My father was in the Government's foreign office stationed out in Africa. I had been in boarding school, but when I was about 13, I went to visit him for the

summer. I had a battery-operated short-wave radio, and I can remember tuning in the World Service and getting the *Top of the Pops* weekly rundown."

Thirty-five years later, Strummer has made tea with the BBC via a unique career opportunity. Says Radio Joe, "I've always felt that the definition of an ace station would be one that you put on and never know what's coming next. One day I bumped into a producer at the World Service, and he offered me a half-hour show playing records, so a couple times a year I get to do it."

When asked for his opinions of the slick and predictable sounds dominating the commercial airwaves in 2001, Strummer surmises the strict formatting can't be healthy.

"Tim and the guys there are smart enough to let me and the band do our thing, which is really reassuring. I think they're just happy I'm making a racket again."

"Everything's been airbrushed down into the same thing. It's stagnating. But it is good in the sense that it drives everything back to the underground, which is where good music always was. It gives it back to the hipsters who are willing to go searching for things."

Strummer hopes the aforementioned hipsters will be drawn to *Global A-Go Go* and has planned a full U.S. tour this autumn to promote the set. Fans who are lucky enough to make it to a show will surely not be disappointed. Strummer confides his real fuel is playing for enthusiastic crowds. And although he's not above treating audiences to a Clash song or two, mentally he is decidedly in the now.

Old-school Clash aficionados may be surprised to learn Strummer—the man behind the musical manifesto *Sandinista!*—has eased up on the political leanings charging much of his early output.

"When you realize that all governments fail at one time or another, it takes the shine off of democracy," he laughs. "All of its speeches and policies, you realize, are all an empty she-bang."

When asked for his take on the state of punk music 25 years after The Clash helped usher in the movement, Strummer asserts, "I have nothing but respect for the newer bands. Most of them are very sharp and very witty. Think about it, when The Clash were at Rancid's stage of development, there was no way we were together enough to run a label."

His previous band's influence has made enough of a huge impact on music, recently snagging the esteemed Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Contribution to British Music.

Strummer sneers, commenting the award is 20 years late. Still, he says it was a pleasure to meet up with his former bandmates to claim the title. One can't help but wonder if the experience was pleasurable enough to spark a reunion. Strummer seems prepared for the inevitable question on every fan's mind:

"Putting the Clash back together would be like marrying a woman you've already divorced," he says. "Lately, though, I've been thinking more about it. It would be really cool to get together and make a record because we wanted to, and not because someone wants to throw a shuload of money at us. The Clash were never about money."

When asked how he summarizes such an intense run in rock's history, Strummer isn't at a loss for words. He isn't afraid to reflect on his decade-long sabbatical, the pressures of popularity and his times—both good and bad—as ringleader for The Clash. The slogan Strummer says kept him going—Never give up.

"It's when you're at your lowest you really need some sort of credo, isn't it?" chuckles Strummer. "It's really useful in the darkest hour. Besides, it's only three words long so you can't fucking forget it."



PHOTO BY PIPER FERGESON

FOR THE HISTORY OF THE ALBUM

THE CLASH (Epic U.K. 1977)

"Someone came in and said, 'You've gone straight in at #12 in the album chart.' I remember thinking, 'this can't be, is this real?' Punk was just beginning and it was all very uncertain. We didn't know if anyone was really out there or not. I guess they were."

GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE (Epic 1978)

"Epic had given our manager a list of five or six producers. One of them was Sandy Pearlman, who had produced Blue Oyster Cult. I think our manager had heard 'Don't Fear The Reaper' and said, 'Oh, Sandy's the man' [laughs]. It's got a very large sound compared to the debut."

THE CLASH (Epic 1979, U.S. version)

"The album had sold like 100,000 copies on import, which is amazing. It showed that we were on it, and the

record company—having refused to release it for so long—wasn't."

LONDON CALLING (Epic 1979)

"We were in a very difficult situation before that, in kind of a rut. By concentrating on it and getting in there and doing the work, we pulled ourselves out of a hole. It's quite a stylistic shift, without sacrificing the spirit of punk. I'm so proud of that one."

BLACK MARKET CLASH (Epic 1980)

"There was a bunch of stuff that we realized you couldn't get hold of anymore—especially in the States—so we were kind of keen to put all the stuff that fell through the cracks on one record."

SANDINISTA! (Epic 1980)

"The initial sessions were a three-week burst following a U.S. tour. Normally, after a tour, you go back to your house and fall down on your

bed. Instead we went without any material to record. It was unique to hit the ground running, although in hindsight it was quite a strange maneuver."

COMBAT ROCK (Epic 1982)

"That was quite a difficult session. By that time we were getting burned out. We really needed a year in a rest home. If we had a break, things might have turned out differently for us."

CUT THE CRAP (Epic 1985)

"It's a painful record for me. Everything had gone wrong with Topper and Mick. That's such a tough time for me to even talk about. There are some pretty good tunes there, specifically 'This Is England.'

EARTHQUAKE WEATHER (Epic 1989)

"The shortcomings on that are my fault. I was feeling a bit low at the time, so I turned the vocals down in the mix. I think I ruined the album by doing that."

THE CLASH ON BROADWAY BOX SET (Epic 1991)

"It's quite complete and really expensive. It's still pretty good even if there might be a couple of omissions."

ROCK ART & THE X-RAY STYLE (Hellcat 1999)

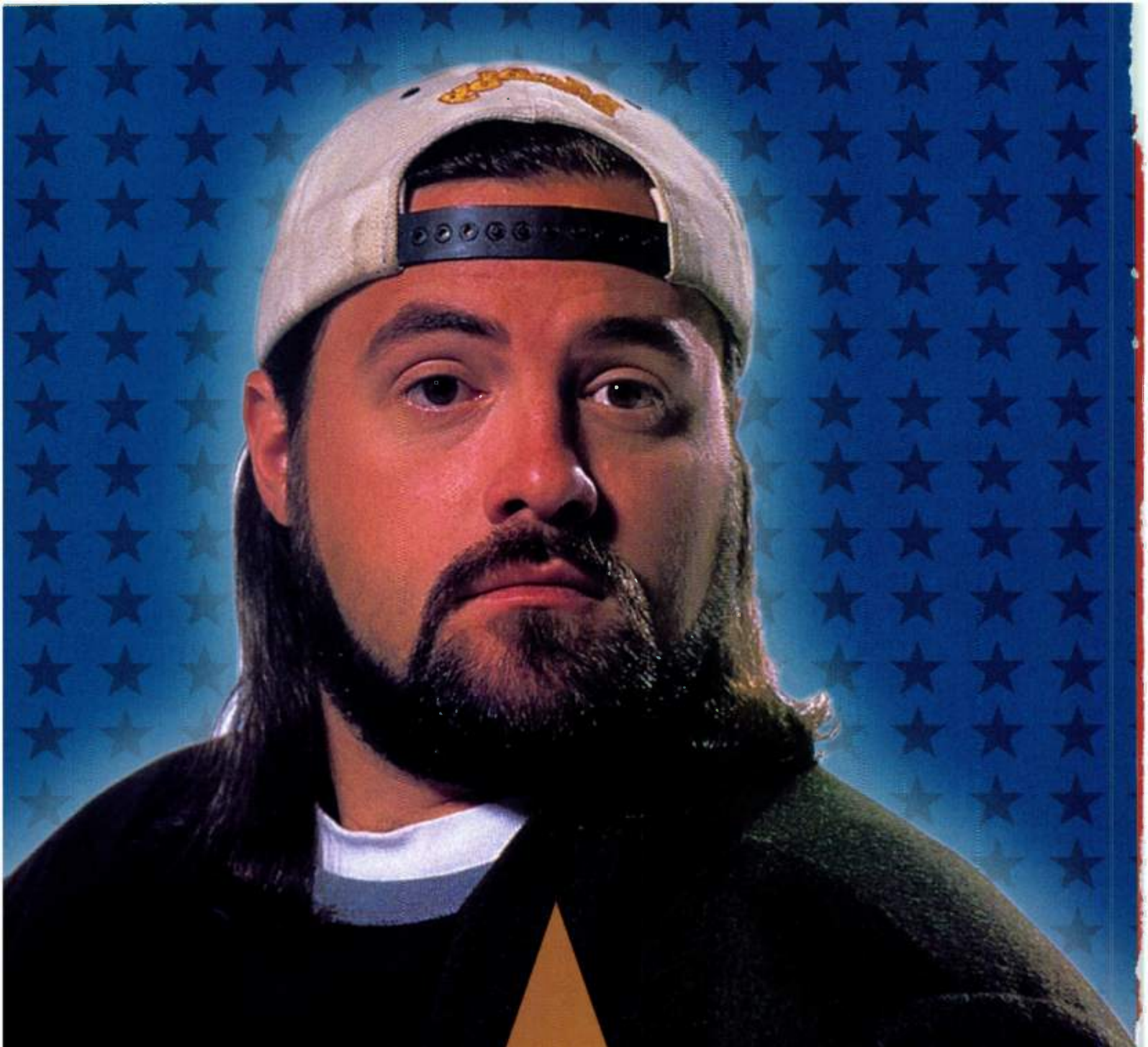
"It felt great to come back and be well-received. It was something of a rebirth."

THE CLASH LIVE: FROM HERE TO ETERNITY (Epic 1999)

"Believe it or not, Mick had much of the involvement with that one. I kind of kept away from it."

GLOBAL A-GO GO (Hellcat 2001)

"I think we've made a great record. We were playing for ourselves and worked as a team. I'm really proud of the way it ended up."



BEYOND SNOOCHIE-BOOTCHIES

From Black & White To The Silver Screen,
Kevin Smith Chronicles His Wild Ride And Looks Ahead

by Dan Pastorius

About seven years ago, Kevin Smith decided to take a chance. It was his 21st birthday, and the man now responsible for creating the '90s' answer to Abbot and Costello had just walked out of his first indie movie experience. The movie, Richard Linklater's *Slackers*, had such a profound effect on the young Smith, it changed the course of his life—and American cinema, for that matter—permanently. Filled with a mixture of self-described “awe and arrogance,” Smith, creator of the indie cult classics *Clerks*, *Mallrats*, *Chasing Amy* and *Dogma*, was struck by a revelation. He had finally found his calling.

“I remember being in awe because it was a movie I had never really seen before,” says Smith. “It had no plot, no main characters, no conventions really. It was just people walking around. The arrogance was looking at it and thinking, ‘well, I can do this, if this counts as a movie I can do this.’ So I decided to get into independent films.”

Thus begins the story of Smith's career. He decided to make movies. He longed to spin tales of his favorite super heroes. Smith owns a comic book store in his hometown of Red Bank, N.J., named, appropriately enough, Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash. And now, with *Jay and Silent Bob Strikes Back*—Smith has translated his greatest fantasy into reality and onto the big screen. He plays leading man as Silent Bob next to his partner in crime, legendary, foul-mouthed, drug-dealing sidekick Jay. The big question to moviegoers at large is clear. Is the mainstream public ready for another big screen dose of the “snooze to the muthafuckin' nuge” mentality?

THE RED BANK DAYS

Take a few steps back in time as we join Jay and Silent Bob—or, rather Jason Mewes and Kevin Smith—in their early teenage years in Central New Jersey. The duo first met during a road trip to a New York comic convention through mutual friend Walt Flanagan (better known to fans of Smith's movies for his dog). According to Smith, their initial meeting was no case of love at first sight.

“As we drove up, Mewes was the asshole who yelled ‘shotgun’ and took the front seat,” Smith recalls. “So Jason's up in the front seat talking his little nonsense. I was jealous because I was Walt's funny friend, and suddenly there was a newer funny friend. So, he's up there yelling ‘snoogans’ and I'm in the back seat, arms crossed, going, ‘he ain't so funny.’”

It seems the characters aren't much of a fantastic departure from the reality of these two buddies. Smith still relishes the irony of his history with Mewes.

“Walt eventually lost interest in him, and then Mewes would show up at my house and be like ‘what do you want to do today?’ I was like, ‘dude, I am not your friend. We share friends, but that doesn't mean we hang out.’”

Despite the lukewarm start, Smith eventually warmed up to Mewes when he visited the Quick Stop where Smith was a convenience store clerk. Mewes began making a regular trip to the store each Sunday at the ungodly hour of 5:30 a.m., helping Smith with newspapers and displays.

“None of my other friends did that,” Smith says warmly.

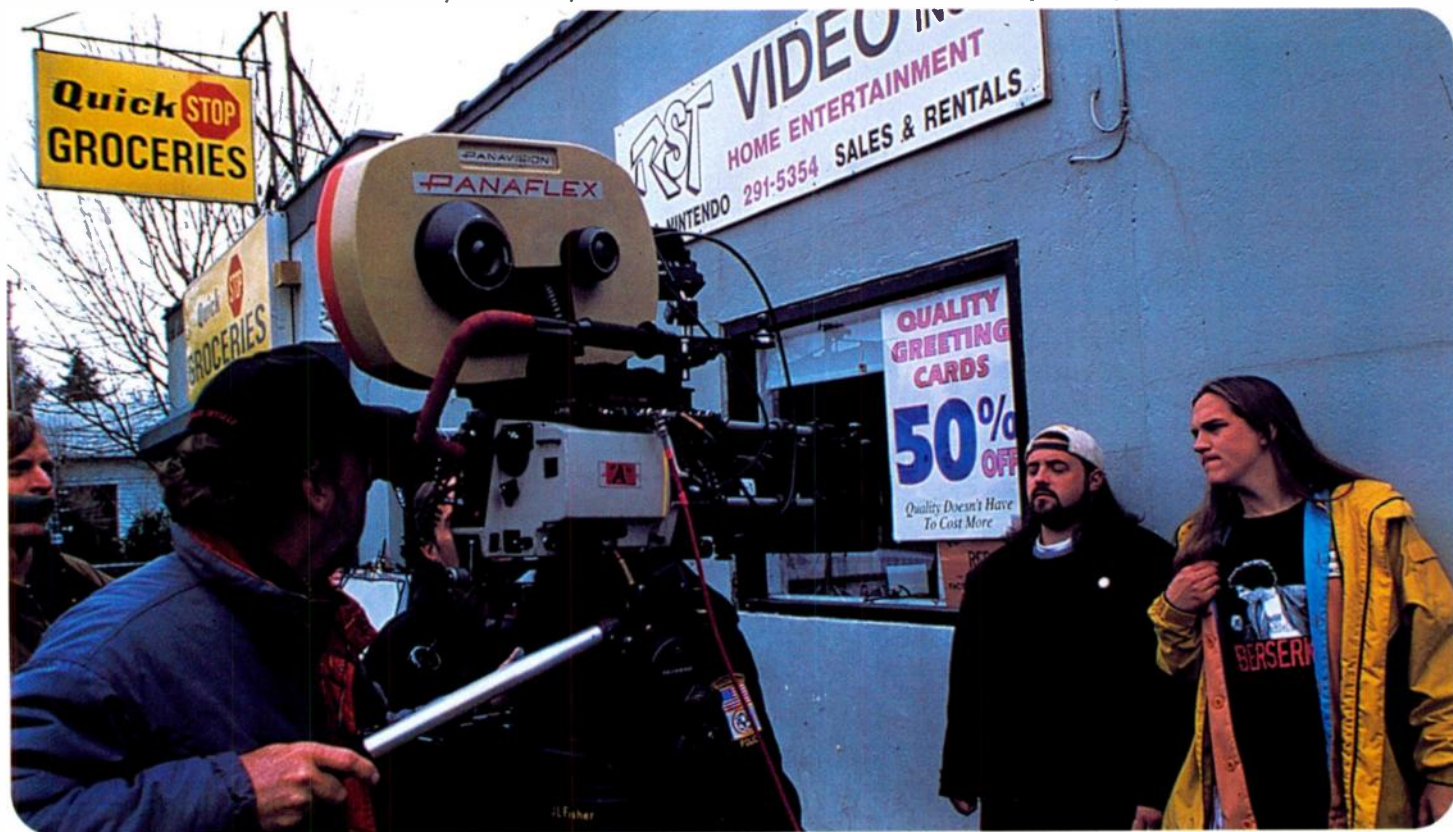
It was during this time, bonding at the Quick Stop over *Silver Spoons* and *Degrassi Jr. High* reruns, Smith realized what a unique specimen he'd found in Mewes. When *Clerks* began to take shape, Smith already had a character in mind for his new friend.

“The character of Jay is kind of based on who Jason Mewes was as a young teen,” explains Smith. “It is a romanticized version of who he was—just a kid of urban legend, the kid the town owns. He's the kind of guy that people are like, ‘I hear he fucked a dog,’ but you find out later he really didn't fuck the dog, he just kind of blew it a little. He was just this weird sonic boom with dirt on it, that was ever talking about pussy, but had never seen pussy outside of where he was born or in a magazine.”

To offset Jay's arresting personality, Smith knew he had to create some sort of sidekick to be the ear of Jay's inane rants. Thus was born the all-knowing but never-speaking character of Silent Bob, a man of few words, adding a much-needed balance to the outspoken duo. Originally, Smith was supposed to play the part of Randall in his first film, but as production inched closer, he realized he couldn't memorize all of the dialogue. It was then Smith reluctantly gave the role to high school chum Jeff Anderson and stepped into the role of Silent Bob.

“Silent Bob was just a creation for Jay to stand next to, essentially,” explains Smith. “You didn't want to have somebody dialoguing with him, because he goes off on these stream of consciousness rants. So I was like, ‘let's just throw a guy next to him, as kind of his muscle—because he is supposed to be a pot dealer. Plus, if this was going to be the only movie I make, and I was going to go into debt for it, I at least wanted to be in it too.’”

Despite the witty dialogue and clever script he'd developed, Smith was unsure of how his film would be received. *Clerks*, when finished, was as bare-bones as just about any homemade film shot on a Super 8—it was filmed in black and white, primarily in one location—a convenience



store—and starred Smith's unknown friends. To bankroll the film, Smith maxed out a bunch of credit cards and sold his comic book collection. As he looks back, he's amazed he made it out unscathed.

"The time to do that stuff is when you're young," muses Smith. "If you are going to fuck up royally, then fuck up in your youth. I don't recommend it for people with a family and responsibilities. I figured the worst case scenario was I'd be \$28,000 in debt, but why not give it a shot?"

Smith inhales, then exhales in a breath still, after seven years of relative success, sounding vaguely like relief.

"It worked out."

JAY AND BOB RETIRED

These days, Smith is more than excited about the current vision he's brought to life. *Jay and Silent Bob Strikes Back*, due out in theaters August 22, revisits everyone's favorite suburban pimps, now wrapped up in their most paradoxical situation yet—they are trying to stop the Jay and Silent Bob movie from being made. Joining the disproportionate duo are many familiar faces.

"It is pretty much a round trip to Hollywood," confesses Smith. "Very few people from the past films don't show back up. The heavyweights, the



people we spend a lot of time with in the movie, are Holden, Brodie and Banky (played by Ben Affleck and Jason Lee), and there are other people who have been in and out of our flicks like Chris Rock and Matty Damon."

Although *Strike Back* is the finale to a five-part series, Smith says this is his most mainstream movie to date.

"It touches on everything we have done thus far," he shares. "If you have seen the other stuff, there are inside jokes in there for you. But it is actually, weirdly, our most accessible film. We have been showing it at test screenings, and nobody feels left out."

As for the humor and tone of the film, Smith says he is revisiting *Mallrats*—a commercial disaster at the box office, which has since recouped its losses with a cult following in home sales. This second chapter of Smith's New Jersey-oriented series was loaded with enough comic book memorabilia and fart jokes to have every fanboy in America crying with laughter. As one of the most overtly funny films in Smith's cannon, it is no surprise the director should want to return to this winning flavor.

"*Mallrats* is the most watchable of the bunch for me," offers Smith. "I can still pop that in and enjoy it. It's where *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* came from, because this movie is very close to *Mallrats* in terms of tone and sensibility. It is just a big joke affair. There is a sweetness to it like there was to *Mallrats*, where it wears its heart on its sleeve, but it is just joke, joke, joke, joke—there is nothing serious about it, no message, nothing."

Unfortunately, the rumors spread far and wide across the Internet are all too true—despite the love fans have developed for Smith's self-contained New Jersey universe, Smith is pulling the plug on the series after this. *Strike Back* marks the passing of characters like Brodie and Banky, Dante from the Quick Stop, Randall from next door, Alyssa Jones and, perhaps most sadly, Jay and Silent Bob.

"You don't want people to turn on them like they all turned on Pauly

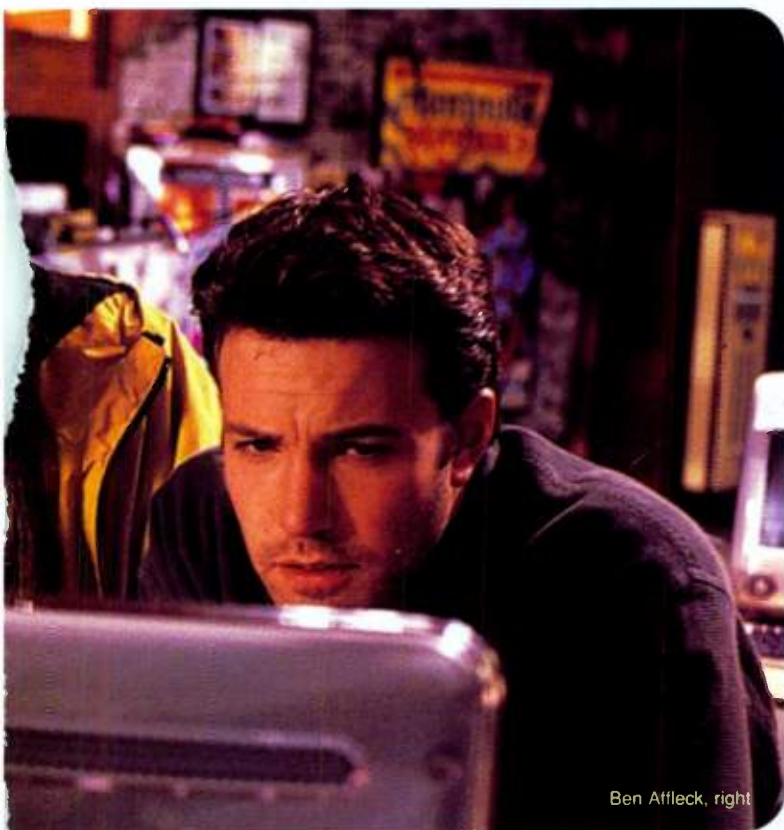


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Ben Affleck, right



L-R: Ali Larter, Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith, Shannon Elizabeth

Shore," says Smith. "Remember when people loved Pauly Shore and they were like, 'heeeeee buuuuudy?' I would never want to overstay the welcome. You always feel kind of lucky that you got in at all."

While Smith is ever the humble filmmaker, he is completely enthusiastic about his latest work and claims it's his best yet.

"We send them out with a bang," Smith reassures. "You get to see Jay and Silent Bob in a light saber fight. If it has to end, this is the way to do it."

In the immortal words of Stan Lee, "nuff said."

THE SAGA CONTINUES....

As all of his film efforts deal with some type of personal experience, Smith says he is ready to put the past behind and focus on the present. Being a new father (Smith's wife recently gave birth to a little girl, Harley Quinn Smith), he has started writing a yet-to-be-titled script about the joys and downfalls of parenthood. Fans of Smith's work have no reason to fret however, as Smith insists it won't be any sort of weak, Meg Ryan-with-the-sniffles offense.

"I don't think the next film will be as funny, but it's not that kind of movie anyway," he says. "The fans can expect a lot of what we have been doing thus far, but just without the same characters. I'll never leave humor behind."

One indication of Smith's dedication to laughs involves his future plans to revamp the infamous *Fletch* series, popularized by Chevy Chase in the late '80s. Smith plans to make a movie based on author Gregory McDonald's *Fletch Won*, preceding the existing series at the start of the character's career.

"As long as Jason Lee is playing it," Smith says emphatically, "I am there."

Smith's schedule looks busy in the months to come, leaving fans plenty to look forward to in the future. Still, the departure of two of the '90s most devious and lovable characters is hard to swallow. Is this really, finally, absolutely the last fans will see of the duo?

Nope. They'll be back in a big screen cartoon.

"It is going to be a weird trajectory for them. *Clerks* started off as a black and white flick and became a cartoon at one point. Now it will become a cartoon movie. So we are doing a *Clerks* cartoon movie based on the *Clerks* television cartoon. That will be one of the next projects. It's

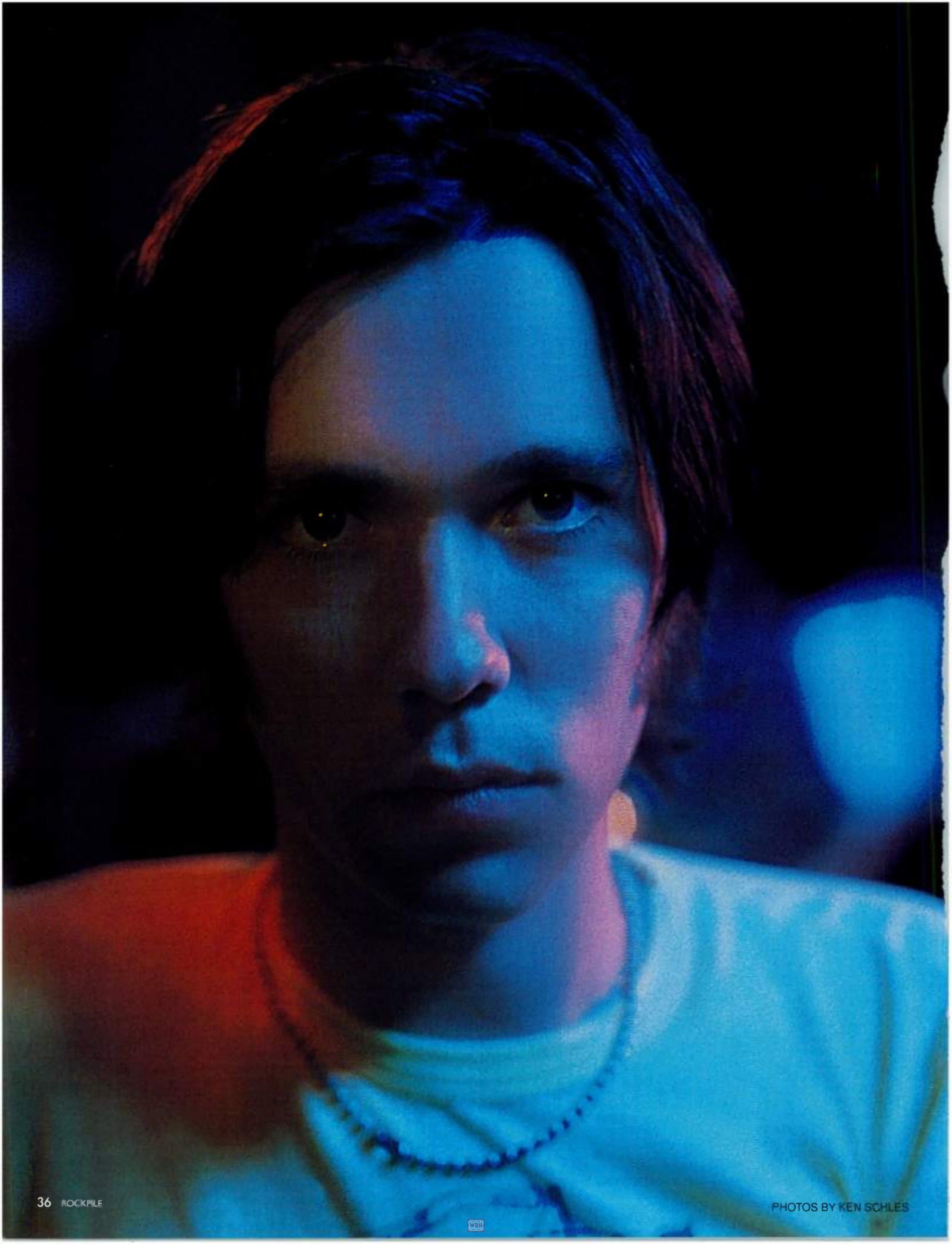


something I can write and the animation guys actually direct."

Smith sounds extremely satisfied with the way things are looking, closing an unexpectedly successful chapter and beginning new. Now and then, the irony and humor of his own situation still give Smith a cause to snicker. The young director considers himself lucky.

"Sometimes on the set, Jay and I would just chuckle to ourselves," he confides. "After a while you grow accustomed to the fact that this is what you do for a living. You're like, 'I make movies.'"

"But it is a whole different universe when you are the leads in a movie—everything is resting on your shoulders. We'd just kind of chuckle from time to time. Two guys standing outside the convenience store are now the two guys running the show. It's just kind of weird." ■



Rufus Wainwright's Walk On the Wild Side

On an unusually cool summer morning in Manhattan, chamber-pop troubadour Rufus Wainwright is leisurely recovering from jet lag and carefully not revealing the complexities imbedded in his new sub-concept album, *Poses*. Though Wainwright's self-titled 1998 debut landed Top Ten Album Of The Year accolades in *The New York Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New Yorker* and *Washington Post*, his initiative is still on the upswing. *Poses* is intended to reach a wider audience without falling prey to pop vogue or alienating those who fell in love with him in earlier listens.»

By Tom Sanioli

"I felt up to the challenge,"

he says. "In an odd way my first record took three years to make, and this one took a year and a half. If I'd wanted I could have made a few other albums that sounded like my first one. I like to think of each record I make as having its own 'monumental career.'"

Loosely based on the story of an alluring bachelor who makes a pilgrimage to the city and departs as a wrecked drug addict, *Poses* is an ambitious collection of mini-dramas, which may or may not be autobiographical. This meditation began in a burst of inspiration for the 27-year-old son of '70s folk legends Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III. Wainwright admits he was less of a control freak in the creation of his acclaimed sophomore effort, leaving producer Pierre Marchand anointed the central protagonist.

"Pierre is a master of bringing out the vocals," Wainwright confides. "The first record he ever produced was one of my mom's (Kate and Ann Magarrigle's *Heartbeats Accelerating* in 1990), and I needed to have an objective person behind the board for me. Pierre can be a little over-critical and even nasty. But I can also hold my ground as well. There were some hard choices."

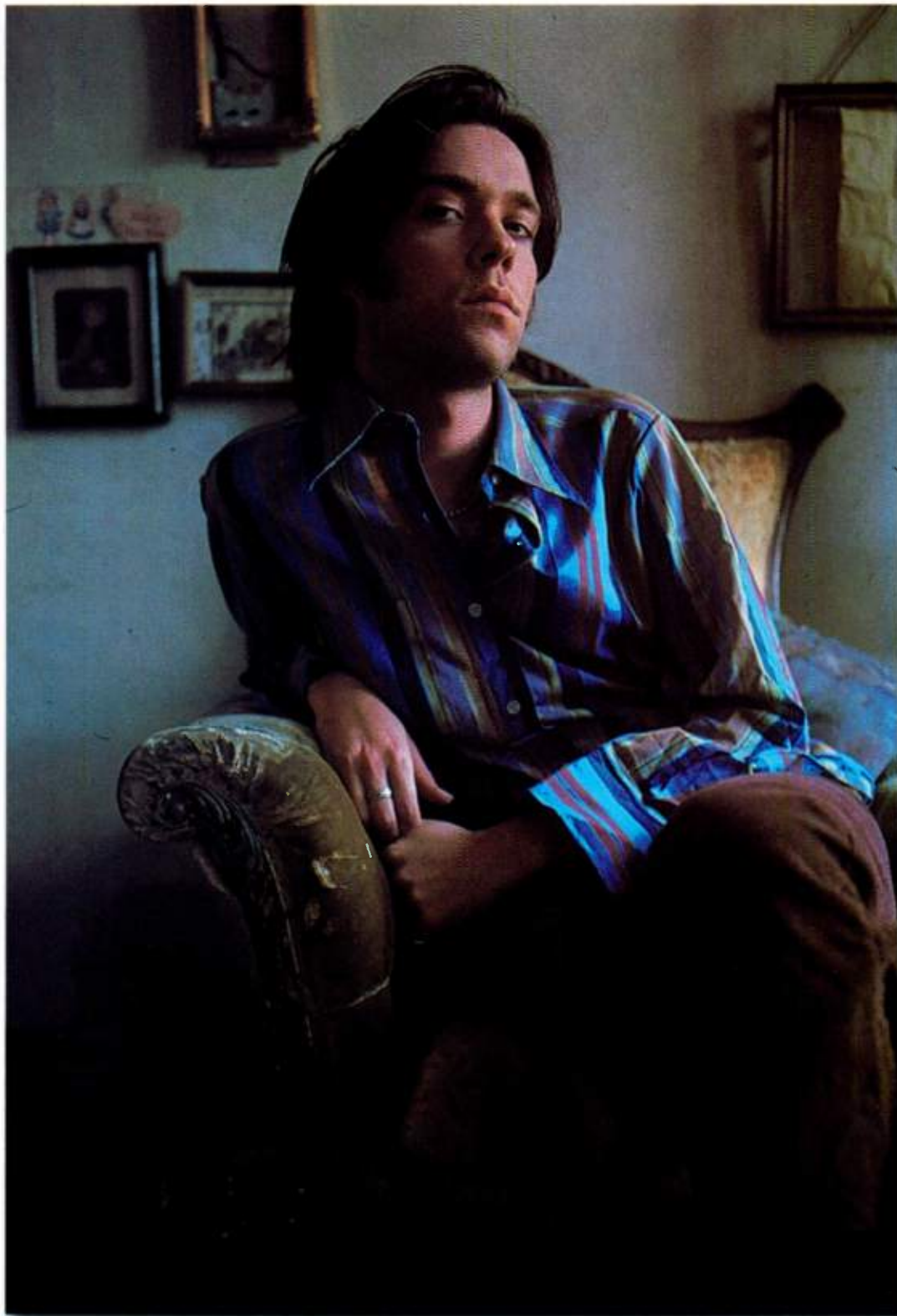
Wainwright's lush theatrical musings on *Poses* were further enhanced via cameo appearances by an illustrious ensemble cast of players including Alex Gifford (Propellerheads), Teddy Thompson, composer Damian le Gassick, Belmont Tench of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers and drum legend Jim Keltner.

"I think it's real important to work with your friends," he says. "I feel blessed that others toiled on my behalf."

Wainwright extended the invitation to his newfound comrades and afforded them the opportunity to cut loose in the studio. The result is a natural sound, accentuating the chemistry between Wainwright's songwriting and a collection of friends the artist, no doubt, enjoyed assembling.

"I'm quite the social animal," he blushes. "After my first record was completed, I went on tour and decided to go out and make lots of new acquaintances. It's far better than sitting in your room and practicing scales."

This hands-on attitude is nothing new for Wainwright, who exhibited a fiery initiative even at a young age. His monumental journey commenced during his childhood days in Montreal when he began playing the piano at age six. "I'm very spoiled. I used to sing with Emmylou Harris when I was eleven," he recalls. By the time he had



reached puberty, he was on stage with his sister, mother and aunt under the bill "The McGarrigle Sisters and Family." An early song of his was nominated for a Genie (the Canadian equivalent of an Oscar) for Best Song In A Film. At 14, Wainwright garnered a Juno nomination (a Canadian Grammy) for Most Promising Young Artist.

In his mid-teens, Wainwright came out to his family and friends as homosexual. Around the same time, he says he began gravitating towards classical music. Upon the insistence of his famous father, he enrolled in the distinguished Millbrook School of Music in New York and later studied at McGill University in his Canadian hometown. There, he devoted his energies to opera and eventually lost himself in a world of fantasy as he became immersed in the arias of Verdi.

"I have a real weakness for composers, or for the notion of a composer. I was looking for some sort of figure in my life to model myself after. I fell for the mysticism of great composers."

The model did not last, however. Trading in his classical yearnings for pop music—"all the cute boys were doing rock"—Wainwright became a staple in Montreal's cafe circuit, performing original songs and enjoying a life of excess. When pianos became hard to find on the small club scene, Wainwright took up the guitar, living the romantic life of a boheme while his mom footed the bills.

"I like to think of this record as a play with a cast of intriguing characters, declares Wainwright of Poses. "My voice is the star of the play."

When his father heard an impressive series of demos the younger Wainwright had cut with Marchand, he passed them on to revered songwriter/producer Van Dyke Parks who in turn forwarded the sketches to DreamWorks executive Lenny Waronker. The label inked the aspiring musician and the wheels were set in motion.

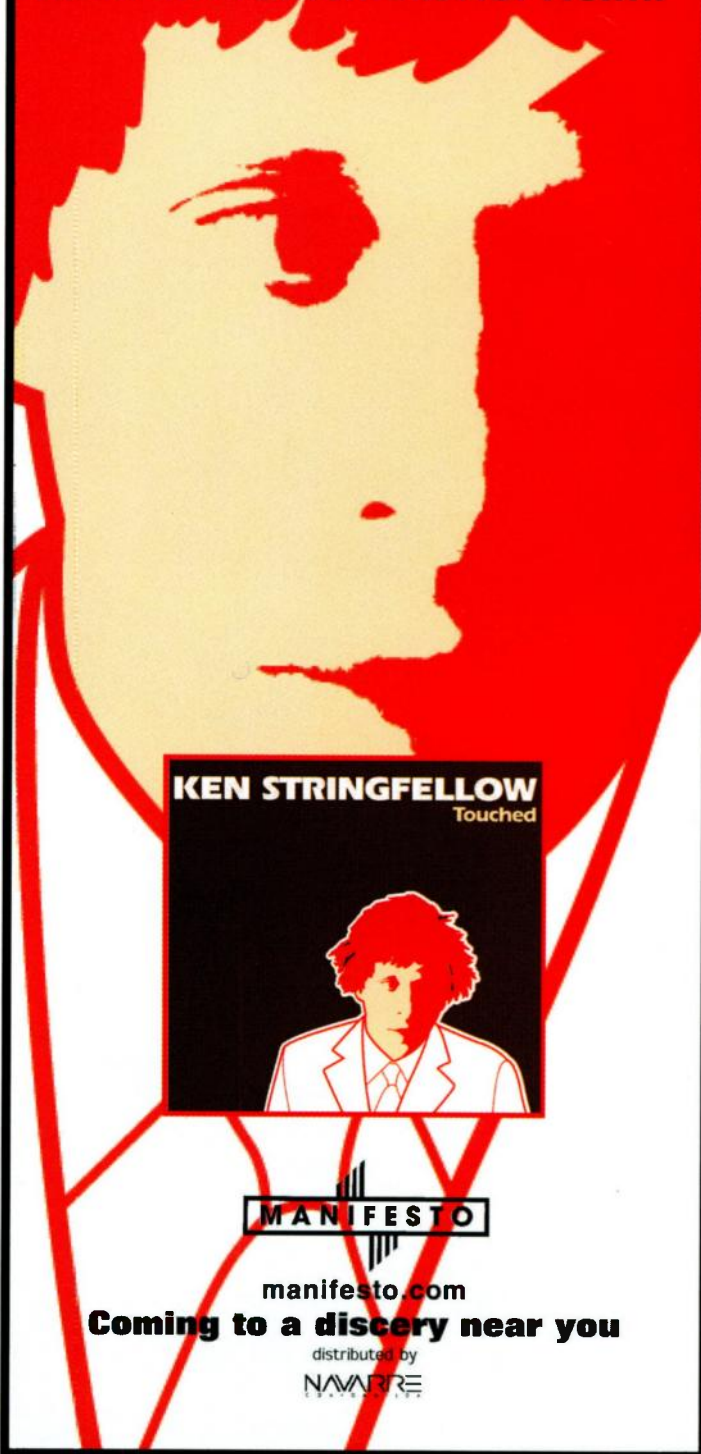
"I like to think of this record as a play with a cast of intriguing characters," declares Wainwright of *Poses*. "My voice is the star of the play."

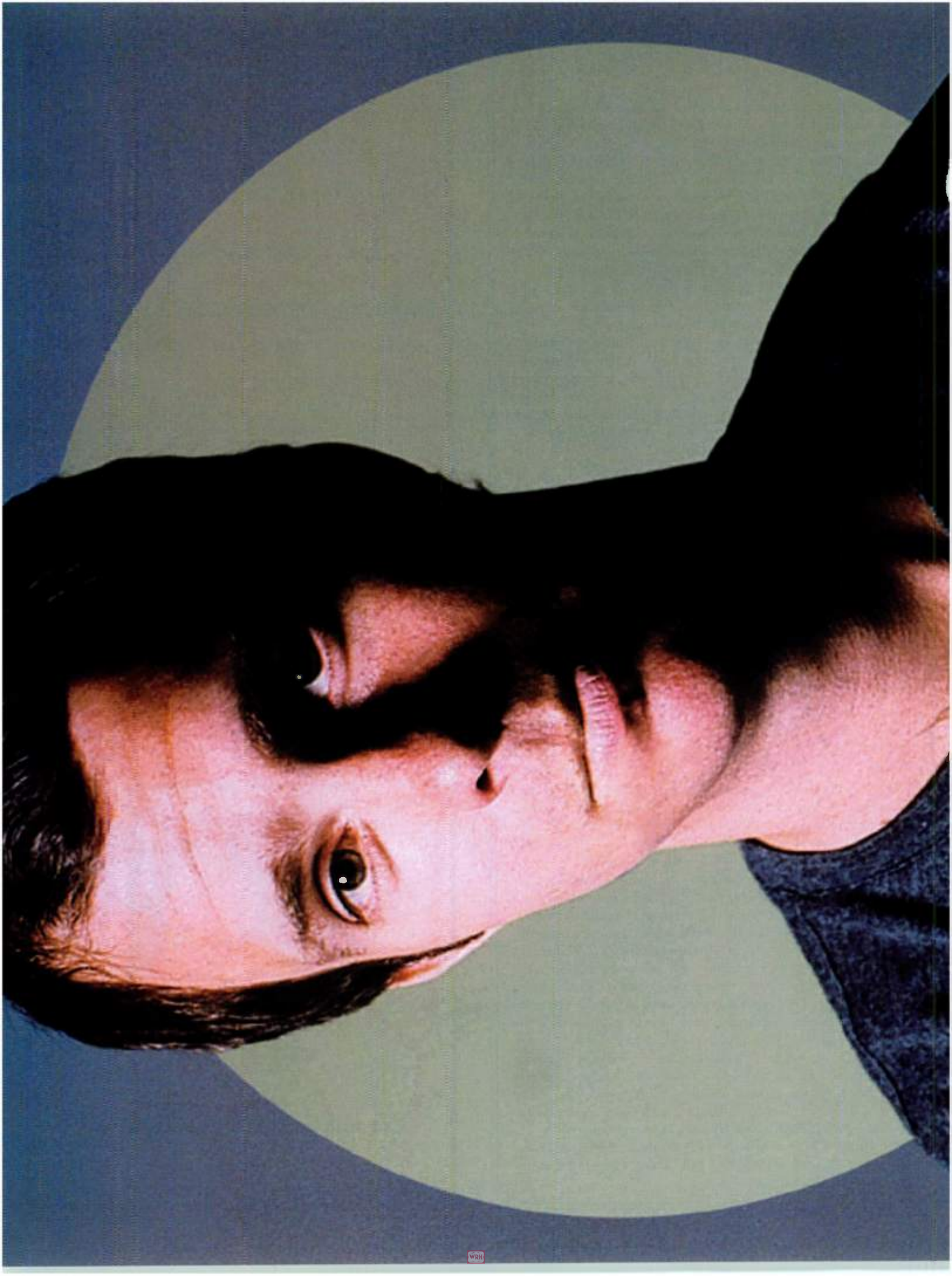
He defines his work as trying to write modern standards (emphasis on "trying"). Others have labeled his dramatic take on American contemporary music as "popera." In either incarnation, Wainwright maintains his role as an entertainer with an intention to serve the audience. He handily achieves this through seductive melodies and a world-weary voice. His movie star good looks attract the girls, even though he's probably more interested in their older brothers. While pop audiences may have Wainwright in their sights, 'N Sync he is not.

Evident throughout the *Poses* song cycle is Wainwright's penchant for black humor. The majority of the vocals were done in one or two takes, and the album artwork enhances the mystery of the music within. ("When you open up the booklet, the lyrics are printed in little black letters. It kind of looks like the Vietnam Memorial.")

"I wanted it to be a little creepy," Wainwright confesses, who then turns for a smirk. "It's more of a brushing up against death as opposed to doing the dance." ■

new album from
ken stringfellow
of the posies and big star
and touring
multi-instrumentalist for r.e.m.





NO FRILLS

BEN FOLDS MAKES PUNK ROCK FOR SISSIES

Since the mid-'90s, Ben Folds has been captivating audiences around the country with his unique blend of saucy piano licks and smart-ass cynicism. As chief songwriter in the aptly titled but now-defunct entity known as Ben Folds Five, the kamikaze piano playing frontman has never failed to entertain even the most rock-oriented of audiences. Dubbed "punk rock for sissies" and adored by a legion of fans, it is clear the band carved its niche into the pop-culture realm America calls mainstream rock 'n roll.

While Folds has maintained a relatively low profile since the band's demise almost a year ago (although he did partake in those Priceline.com commercials and contributed to the occasional soundtrack), it hasn't been due to a lack of inspiration. Just two months after the split, Folds was nearing completion on a handful of songs he was demoing at his home base in Australia. These songs now comprise Folds' first post-BFF endeavor, *Rockin' The Suburbs*, a moody, upbeat concoction of pop-fueled hooks and delicate vocals. Upon first listen, it's obvious *Suburbs* isn't your typical

Ben Folds fare. Although his infamous piano boogie stylings remain intact, the album also incorporates beats, a string section and even guitar at points. But lest anyone believe Folds is moving away from the rollicky sound of his past albums, *Suburbs* demonstrates how he stays true to his roots from yore.

"I think that in a way when the band split up, I felt like people who were fans of the band expected that if I continued, it would be pretty different somehow," he explains. "I think there is a little of all the albums in it actually. There's something about this album that kind of encapsulates what I do—at least what I do right now—and that in itself is a pretty big accomplishment."

An accomplishment it is, considering how Folds has been critical of his work in the past. The pressure to put out another album was so stressful for him that during the writing process for BFF's final album, *The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner*, he became withdrawn from the band and almost tried to snag a spot touring with Elliot Smith as his piano player.

"I'm just such a big Elliot Smith fan, and

I was in a very humble servant kind of mood, and I think that in a perfect world that would have been the best thing for me to do," says Folds. "There is nothing wrong with that, but there is such a career thing to take into account that it makes you insane to do something like that. You lose your record momentum, you know what I mean?"

So instead, Folds pushed forward with *Messner*. Instead of taking any downtime to recharge after the laborious effort of making the album, Ben Folds Five embarked on a tour to support it. The tour confirmed the band's suspicions it was time to retire and pursue separate ventures.

"We played our last shows and just couldn't seem to want to even get through the first half of the sets," muses Folds. "We were definitely a good band, we were getting great, and our recordings sound really good. They just don't sound like there was a lot of life in what we were doing, and the guys and I knew it. It just wasn't inspiring or fun anymore, and if it is not fun for us then it's not going to work."

Add this to the fact Folds had recently remarried and relocated to Australia, and it

became obvious the band would not be regrouping for *Messner's* follow-up. As it eventually turned out, the move to Australia eased Folds' tension, got the creative wheels spinning and gave him the freedom to create and produce an album completely of his own merits.

"I began writing a bit more because I had been living in Australia and had some space. When I made demos for the band I always wanted to play piano, bass and drums, and that was it. When I was making the demos for (*Rockin' The Suburbs*) I was thinking that the songs might be for the band, and it was sometimes guitar and drum machine, like it wasn't the same formula. I was just doing what I felt like, really."

Folds' newfound situation not only expedited him from past limitations within a collaborative environment, but the blank slate created after the breakup rejuvenated the writing process that was almost spent after *Messner*. "I'd wake up in the morning and go 'Oh, there's a song,' and I'd see something happen somewhere and I'd be inspired to write about it. This is partially

continued on page 65

by Dan Pastorius

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SUPERCHUNK

Here's To Shutting Up



Once in high school, in a morning's moment of hurry and haste I doused a bowl of cereal with milk conspicuously close to its expiration date. Malaise throughout first period and a spell of vomiting during Biology taught me a lesson worth carving in stone—not all things age with grace. While dairy, trash, employment and label loyalty to Matador only grow more problematic with time, a rare class of finer things breaks the golden rule, improving and maintaining as the calendar loses pages. The list dominated by wine, vintage cars and favorite t-shirts now welcomes a new addition in Superchunk. *Here's To Shutting Up*, the band's eighth record, is a testament to longevity and the ability for rock 'n roll to evolve while simultaneously adopting and resisting genre guides from punk to indie to guitar to alternative and beyond. With *...Shutting Up*, Mac and company gets by with some help from friends Chris Lopez (Rock*A*Teens) and John Weff and Heather McIntosh from Japancakes. Marked by precision playing, layers of guitars, intricate melodies and a cinematic grasp of imagery, essentially Superchunk remains dedicated to the pursuit of moody pop rock. Recorded at Atlanta's Zero Return Studios under the guidance of Brian Paulson (Uncle Tupelo, Wilco, Slint), this album marks the band's first revisited producer—Paulson previously worked with the group on 1994's *Foolish*. While groundbreakers like Modest Mouse, Call And Response and Jimmy Eat World draw on godfathers like Hüsker Du and Guided By Voices, it's encouraging to see some of the pioneers still pushing the edge of the envelope themselves. (Merge, P.O. Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514)

—Chris Lawrence

track listing

01. Late-Century Dream
02. Rainy Streets
03. Phone Sex
04. Florida's On Fire
05. Out On The Wing
06. The Animal Has Left Its Shell
07. Act Surprised
08. Art Class
09. What Do You Look Forward To
10. Drool Collection

For Fans Of: Pavement, Tsunami, Dinosaur Jr.

Ratings: ●●●● The Bomb ●●●● Highly Recommended ●●●● It Doesn't Suck ●● Better Than Silence ● Don't Bother

THE ACTUAL TIGERS
Gravelled And Green



Soaring with intelligent arrangements and compositions harkening to the heart of Paul Simon, *Gravelled And Green* scores big with a light rock foundation and impeccable musical performances. Every track offers the listener something to enjoy, be it tasty guitar work or simple infectious melodies, topped with vocals complementing the band's sound. It is the songwriting ultimately setting The Actual Tigers apart from the pack with lyrics, music and instrumentation working in tandem to tell a tale. Based on the simplicity of an acoustic guitar, layers of instruments are added to enhance, enchant and captivate. The production is the final element in realizing this gem, expertly mixing the elements and completing what was already a fine piece of work. (Netzwerk, 8730 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills 90211)

—Andre Calithanna

ADAGIO
Sanctus Ignis



Another in the growing line of project bands (where musicians from various

bands combine talents while their main moneymaker is between albums), Adagio is French guitarist Stephan Forte's baby, giving him the opportunity to strut his progressive metal guitar chops. He enlisted the services of Elegy drummer Dirk Bruinenberg, Majestic keyboardist Richard Anderson and Pink Cream 69 vocalist David Readman to record eight original tracks plus a cover of Led Zepplin's "Immigrant Song." The music is predominately mid-tempo and fairly technical. "In Nomine" begins with orchestral instruments—including harpsichord—before transforming into a fleet-fingered exercise where guitar and keys trade insane speeds. (Limb, Postfach 602520, Hamburg, Germany 22235)

—Mark Gromen

ALFIE
**"if you happy with
you need do nothing"**



Alfie has provided concrete evidence proving indie rock can be well-crafted while remaining true to the artists. The songs on this album are uplifting and orchestral with a unique blend of standard guitar, bass and drums. The band also includes a full-time cellist,

live horns and violin. A ton of emotion has been poured into this recording without losing it to overblown drama. Each of the five members of Alfie contribute to create an arresting sound borrowing without stealing from other musicians. (XL, 580 Broadway, Suite 1004, New York 10012)

—Teil Linn Wise

AMERICAN STEEL
Jagged Thoughts



Although they share crunchy guitars and So-Cal melodicism (as well as a producer) with Lookout! favorites MTX and Green Day, there isn't much casual snottiness on *Jagged Thoughts*. These are tunes about "the ghosts of ex-lovers" and "constellations of corpses," and they crash hard like dropped crowd surfers before getting right back up in your face. While this approach may deserve some criticism for its dependency of formula, the dynamic between gentle, barely audible verses exploding into bombastic, soaring choruses will never lose its punch. It might get old, but American Steel proves it has this down to a science. (Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

—Luke O'Neil

THE APPLES IN STEREO
Let's Go!



Apples in Stereo is a modern band making music for a different time. Usually the schism works, but not on this spotty five-song EP. Taken from last year's soundtrack to *The Power-puff Girls*, "Signal in the Sky (Let's Go!)" is propelled by infectious synths and zealous backing vocals. While it is the ideal anthem for Bubbles, Blossom and Buttercup to apprehend animated criminals, those without an eight o'clock bedtime might not feel the super power. More palatable is "If You Want to Wear a Hat," a two-minute bubblegum romp about the woes of learning to dress properly. A live cover of the Beach Boys' "Heroes & Villains" and acoustic takes on "Stream Running Over" and "Signal" round out the EP in a ho-hum fashion. Simply put, this is collectors-only fare. (SpinART, P.O. Box 1798, New York 10156)

—Neal Ramirez

ASHLEY PARK
The American Scene



Terry Miles has a lot on his plate. As the one-man ensemble known as

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Ashley Park, he should sound a bit ruffled and haggard, but his melodic, tranquil voice is a terrific contrast. Sounding much like Neil Young circa *Harvest* (Miles even covers "Tell Me Why"), the simple, acoustic guitar-laden arrangements provide a picturesque backdrop to these wandering tales. Harmonies with Kelly Haugh—notably on "Return To Me"—break up the monotony of Miles' sweeter-than-thou utterances. Of the 15 tracks, there are no remarkable standouts. Leading the pack, however, are "The Last Day In The Life Of Grand," "Clear The Corners" and the closing "I Know I Love You." Many of the songs appear as incomplete snippets, fading out just as quickly as they faded in. Still, Ashley Park is definitely onto something. (Darling, P.O. Box 93559, Nelson Park, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6E 4L7)

—Jason MacNeil

AUTOLINER

Be



The trio known as Autoliner has some musical abilities, but the various styles throughout combined with each member sharing vocal duties makes

the title of the second track ("Misunderstood") sound all the more ominous. John Ross, Brian Leach and Tom Curless have cut their teeth on a summery Californian wall of sound, but the end result is a studio experiment gone terribly awry. "Weakened," which opens the album on a high, gets bogged down in melancholic vocals. The choppy tempo changes sound too rehearsed and methodical to be given any credence. "Green Mary" demonstrates this perfectly, as the harmonies and Kravitz-ian riff seem stuck together. If there is one bright spot, it's the acoustic-tinged "Lighthouse"—a Beatlesque ballad soaring high above the other tracks. *Be?* Well, maybe a generous C+. (Parasol, 905 S. Lynn St., Urbana, IL 61801-5205)

—Jason MacNeil

AVANTASIA

The Metal Opera



A star-studded assemblage by Edguy singer Tobias Sammet features many of power metal's best vocalists. While the word opera is a little misgiving, the storyline and plethora of voices make the choice appropriate. Amongst the 13 tracks are appearances by Timo

Tolkki (Stratovarius), Rob Rock, Kai Hansen (Gamma Ray/Iron Savior), David DeFeis (Virgin Steele), former Angra vocalist Andre Matos and With Temptation's Sharon den Adel. The music is handled by an equally impressive line-up, comprising members from Helloween, Rhapsody and Gamma Ray. The entire majestic ride is an upbeat, pomp-filled celebration of stratospheric voices, galloping rhythms and beer hall sing-alongs. (Century Media, 1453-A 14th St., #324, Santa Monica 90404)

—Mark Gromen

BABLICON

A Flat Inside A Fog/
The Cat That Was A Dog



Squeezing out a sound combining classical, jazz and rock, Bablicon cranks out an ambitious double album on *A Flat Inside A Fog/The Cat That Was A Dog*, its third release on Misra Records. The names of the players and instruments reads like science fiction, as Bablicon features Blue Hawaii on electric bass, melodica, keys and tape effects, The Diminisher on electric piano, clarinet, saxophones, oboe, theramin and ghetto duck, and Marta

Tennae on drums, fuzz organ, piano and electronics. The experimental instrumental compositions involve a myriad of overdubs and hidden sonic treasures. This album requires some effort from its listener. Bablicon's piano-oriented compositions are smart and très modern—a perfect soundtrack for those chic late night martini and mushroom parties. (Misra, P.O. Box 20297, Tompkins Square Station, New York 10009)

—Andre Calilhanna

DANNY BARNES & THREE OLD CODGERS

Things I Done Wrong



Texas native Danny Barnes has been playing banjo and guitar at clubs for almost three decades. With the Terminus Records release of *Things I Done Wrong*, he continues to deliver a diverse selection of tunes running the musical gamut from country and bluegrass to jazz. As the former frontman for the legendary Austin bluegrass band The Bad Livers, he grew up on the traditional sounds of Flatt & Scruggs, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubb and Jimmie Rodgers. Barnes has teamed up with bassist Keith Lowe (Zony

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K New Problems



First there was Beekeeper, then Ida and now K, the new solo side project by Karla Schickele. As the main songwriter for the aforementioned bands, Schickele continues the introspective feel with some coffee house acoustic numbers and Velvet Underground undertones. Dedicated to a family member, K keeps each tune finely balanced with a melodic, yet minimalist feel. Whether Schickele is on the piano or supported by members of Ida, the simplicity of each track shouldn't be taken for granted. "Reminder" and "Knoxville" are perhaps the rockiest offerings, with guitars and percussion escalating throughout. "Play By The Book," however, is a symphonic affair with violin and clarinet. Another asset

is the urgency felt on each song, most clocking in just a tad longer than two minutes. As most of the songs are basically cleaned up demo efforts, Schickele wastes little time telling each tale. Written entirely by herself (with the exception of a cover of the Mamas and the Papas "Got A Feelin?"), there really isn't a clunker present. "Fighter Dove" appears to be the album's acme, with the bassline battling for space with the harmonies of Schickele and Rose Thomson. "There is nothing more for me to say," Schickele sings on "Telegram." Hopefully, she doesn't mean it. (**Tiger Style, 149 Wooster St., 4th Floor, New York 10012**)

—Jason MacNeil



track listing

01. *
02. Not Here
03. Always So Good
04. Reminder
05. Play By The Book
06. Hip Flash
07. Bad Day At Black Rock (Regular Girl)
08. Fighter Dove
09. Telegram
10. Knoxville
11. Got A Feelin?
12. Poor Dumb Bird (demo)

For Fans Of: Ida, Tori Amos, Red Emma

Mash, Bill Frisell, Fiona Apple) and violinist Jon Parry (Goose Creek Symphony) to form Danny Barnes & Three Old Codgers. *Things I Done Wrong* departs from Barnes' most recent work with The Bad Livers. He steers away from the punk, but isn't afraid to express himself musically. Songs like "Hey Baby I'm Falling," "Good As I've Been To You" and "Everything Fades" show Barnes is focused on the songwriting process. *Things I Done Wrong* boasts 10 original tracks and two covers, including Barnes' version of the classic "Better Times A-Coming"—immortalized first by bluegrass legend Jimmy Martin—and T. Rex's "Broken Hearted Blues." (**Terminus, 981 Ashby St., Suite 102, Atlanta 30318**)

—Ginny McCabe

THE BIONAUT

Lubricate Your Living Room



Influential techno artist Jorg Burger—best known under the alias The Modernist—compiles his mid-'90s Euro-only material for the benefit of spaced-out electronic pop lovers everywhere. The Bionaut's humming, minimalist soundscapes percolate like

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the coffee pot atop your office desk. But *Lubricate...* is more than just music to accompany mundane daily rituals. The record builds and breathes through the course of its 18 tracks. Burger's lost treasures make for a fascinating listen, with a holistic tact reaching beyond the traditional boundaries of electronica. Whether you're swinging or sitting, *Living Room* is downright juicy. (Matador, 625 Broadway, New York 10012)

—John D. Luerssen

CADILLAC BLINDSIDE

The Allegory of Death and Fame



Lead singer Zachary Zrust's voice is buried in the mix. This unfortunate circumstance plagues the otherwise solid album. *The Allegory of Death and Fame* is an aggressive modern-rock set rife with boundless energy and catchy arrangements. Such songs as "Premeditated Redrum" and "Where Will I Sleep Tonight" race on in the

style of Sponge, the band who gave us the hit "Molly," and other earnest modern rockers. A seasoned producer would do Cadillac Blindside a world of good. The band has great potential, despite a few shortcomings in the production department on *The Allegory*. A band as kinetic and moving as Cadillac Blindside can't really be grounded by these kinds of setbacks—unfortunately, an album can. (Fueled By Ramen, P.O. Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604)

—Liana Jonas

CORPORATE AVENGER

Freedom Is A State Of Mind



In recent years, the world has seen artists blending elements of rap, metal and electronica. Although the concept might not be totally new, Corporate Avenger has taken a fresh approach to this modern musical hybrid. Ominous drones, muted guitars and subtle layers of synthesizer effects all add to the swell. The most striking feature

on this new album is the lyrics. Songs like "The Bible is Bullshit" and "Christians Murdered Indians" portray a world where religion has contributed to injustice, prejudice and violence towards other races. Other controversial topics can be found in "Taxes Are Stealing," "Voting Doesn't Work" and "FBI Files." For those who appreciate heavy music with equally heavy messages—released by marketing-savvy corporate record labels—this CD is a must-have. (Koch, 740 Broadway, New York 10006)

—Domenic Dispaldo

SEAN CROGHAN

From Burnt Orange To Midnight Blue



Sean Croghan's solo turn is evenly matched with a 12-pack of Yuengling Lager and a pack of stale American Spirits. Like the affordable poison selected, the songs on his nine-track *From Burnt Orange* have their share of intoxicating highs and uneven lows, sometimes in the very same song. Croghan's album gets off to a strong start on the pensive, adeptly performed "Gweneveire," but the tune soon knocks itself off-balance by

name-checking mope-rock has-been Morrissey and adding some dreadfully tuneless harmony vocals. Still, Croghan is mostly on the money lyrically, recalling a young Mark Eitzel on lines like "If you want to hang out with that bastard, I'll give you enough rope." With his heart—rather appropriately—in the wrong place, Croghan reveals both a promising future and a knack for clever titles like the somber ballad "Friday's Face In Sunday's Suit," and the punchy, Stones-inspired "Cupid's Credit Card." (In Music We Trust, 15213 SE Bevington Ave., Portland, OR 97267-3355)

—John D. Luerssen

TOM DAILY

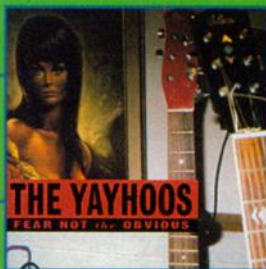
The Burlington Northern



Formerly of the band Not Rebecca and Smoking Popes, Tom Daily offers up his second solo release, the indie pop-rock *The Burlington Northern*. Not even Daily's Michael-Stipe style can save the album's opener, "The Kids Are Not Alright," from sounding painfully lo fi. The song boasts obnoxious guitar feedback (found on most of the disc). Luckily, the album does get exponentially better. The contemptuous "World

THE YAYHOOS

Fear Not The Obvious



If Bloodshot Records wants to define itself the purveyor of the honky schronk revolution, The Yayhoos have to be the band on the front line. Featuring a mighty loose approach at salvation through southern rock, The Yayhoos stumble through the 12 tracks on *Fear Not The Obvious* with charm and an unfaltering rock agenda. The band consists of former Georgia Satellite Dan Baird along with Eric Ambel, Terry Anderson and Keith Christopher. Each contributes songs and vocals—though Baird's offerings outnumber the rest. Keith Richards-inspired harmonies abound, and most every track is a feel-good, Southern rock stomper begging the listener to grab a pitcher of beer and throw some coin on the pool table. The only tune to wander is the Allman-inspired "Wicked World," which features a slippery dual guitar line and an intensity not found anywhere else on the album. The rest is pure good-ol-boy rock with a

touch of humor, most notably evidenced in the goofy chorus to "Baby I Love You" and the inclusion of an Abba cover. It's actually a little too loose, which prevents *Fear Not The Obvious* from being taken more seriously, but it's a safe bet if you're looking for a summertime beer hall rocker. (Bloodshot, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago 60618)

—Andre Calilhanna

track listing

01. What Are We Waiting For
02. Get Right With Jesus
03. Monkey With A Gun
04. I Can Give You Everything
05. Bottle And A Bible
06. For Cryin' Out Loud
07. Oh! Chicago
08. Wicked World
09. Baby I Love You
10. Hunt You Down
11. Hankerin
12. Dancing Queen

For Fans Of: The Sadies, Wilco, Naked Raygun

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of Yawns" quickly offers redemption. This energetic and earnest song successfully inspires listeners, while the winning "Reese Witherspoon" continues on Daily's R.E.M. vibe with charming results. The laid-back "Your Walkman" offers comic relief. On it, in an entirely deadpan vocal performance, Daily wryly, and in great detail, depicts breaking an ex's defenseless Walkman. If you can withstand low production quality, there's good stuff here. Daily is a colorful musician with much to offer. (Thick, 409 N. Wolcott Ave., Chicago 60622)

—Liana Jonas

DEAD MOON
Trash & Burn



There is no denying Dead Moon has an incredible sound. If Neil Young had cranked himself up high and loud enough to become a full-blown punk rocker, he would have made something like *Trash & Burn*. Patti Smith, Television—the whole '70s art scene, in fact—is heard here without a shred of pretentiousness. It's natural, distorted, honest music from the heart and the gut. Long-haired folks make punk rock, and the result is absolute

genius. Go figure. (Empty, P.O. Box 12034, Seattle 98102)

—Mark Ginsburg

ELEMENT 101
Stereo Girl



Recalling superb—but unfortunately long forgotten—female-fronted bands like The Darling Buds and The Primitives, New Jersey's Element 101 gives the formula a boost on its vibrant second album, *Stereo Girl*. Incorporating beefy riffage, punchy drumming and a lucid sense of melody, frontwoman Crissie Verhagen and her bandmates serve up a bold and appealing record. Blasting Room house producers Stephen Egerton and Bill Stevenson (also of Descendents/All fame) give Element 101 the kind of rich sound drawing listeners in time and again, even when Verhagen's lyrics lean toward the melodramatic ("Intro-spective"). The hard charging opener, "To Whom It May Concern," and the optimistic "A Wish For You" might be the obvious standouts, but the bulk of these songs are keepers nonetheless. (Tooth & Nail, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle 98111)

—John D. Luerssen

THE ENEMIES/PITCH BLACK
Split



An interesting marriage of bands. The Enemies kick out solid hardcore punk with the usual social and political themes, while Pitch Black is pure horror show. True, the tunes address many of the same subjects with a ripping punk-rock sound, but the lyrics of Pitch Black's efforts are tweaked to express these concepts with a degree of darkness appropriate to the band's image. The level of serious intent in these songs far exceeds the usual Misfits emulators, setting them in a class alongside hardcore sickos Ink and Dagger. Good stuff from both bands, and a bargain at half the price. (Lookout!)

—Mark Ginsburg

EX-GIRL

Back to the Mono Kero!



Ex-Girl could imaginably pen the soundtrack to the most disturbing anime nightmare the world has ever known. Darting from noise-pop decadence to blissful girl-group harmonies without warning, *Back to the Mono Kero!* shakes its listeners up pretty

well before launching into over-the-top, "Bohemian Rhapsody"-style operatic moments. The band ties together these wild extremes with a Nintendo-punk guitar clinking frantically in and out of the hidden corners of every song. If the Keropi and Sanrio characters formed a Melvins tribute band, Ex-Girl might very well be the result, throwing absolutely everything a listener's way without warning, and making it all sound as if it couldn't have happened any other way. (Ipecac, P.O. Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501)

—Luke O'Neil

FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE
Beautiful



It won't be a revelation to say Fantastic Plastic Machine has an uncanny ability to make the old seem new—but then again, there's nothing particularly unexpected about this album. If you aren't familiar with FPM yet, think Stereolab coos and Pizzicato Five's kitchen-sink-and-all beats. *Beautiful* is demonstrative of the East-meets-West eclecticism passing for progressive dance in some circles these days. This isn't to say you won't find it a fun listen. Japanese DJ

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—Luke O'Neil

FANTOMAS

The Director's Cut



The Director's Cut features 16 retooled versions of film's most frightening and atmospheric scores. The supergroup Fantomas consists of mastermind Mike Patton (Faith No More, Mr. Bungle), bassist Trevor Dunn (Mr. Bungle), drummer Dave Lombardo (Grip Inc., ex-Slayer) and guitarist Buzz Osborne (Melvins). The result is some of the most chilling and terrifying songs a band has ever delivered—aside from the Partridge Family's cover of "Seasons in the Sun." Fantomas knows exactly how to set the mood with dynamics, carefully placing heavy, distorted guitars at all the right moments. As if Bernard Herman's "Cape Fear," Henry Mancini's "Experiment in Terror" and Robert McNaughton's "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer" weren't scary enough scores already, the twisted genius of Fantomas raises the bar. (**Ipecac**)

—Steve Mowatt

THE FARTZ

What's in a Name...?



It's 1980 all over again with this release from Seattle hardcore legends The Fartz. The new stuff sounds very much like old stuff, addressing most of the same topics dominating the Reagan years. There's also a Vietnam song. Listening to this disc, the first thought brought to mind is how little things have changed. Domestic and national affairs are pretty much the same, people are still being beaten down for expressing their beliefs, and a band like the Fartz is still relevant today. It's a darn good thing they reformed! (**Alternative Tentacles, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco 94141-9092**)

—Mark Ginsburg

FOETUS

Flow



Wild-eyed industrial pioneer J.G. Thirlwell revs up his circus sideshow once more for this new assault on the senses. His first album under the Foetus moniker in five years, *Flow* alternates between churning metallic stomps and swinging, maniacal lounge

numbers peppered with incongruous instrumentation, from harmonicas to violins. Thirlwell's acidic, pun-ridden verse runs non-stop through the musical schizophrenia, leading the parade straight to hell. With lines like "Give me librium or give me meth," Thirlwell is as sharp and misanthropic as ever. Look out for a companion album, *Blow*, coming soon. (**Ectopic Ents, P.O. Box 1085, Canal Street Station, New York 10013-0862**)

—Curran Reynolds

REBECCA GATES

Ruby Series



In much the same way Mark Eitzel's *The Invisible Man* ended up, former Spinane Rebecca Gates has decided to go for an ambient feel on this seven-track EP. The use of marimba, glockenspiel, wurlitzer and vibraphone on gems such as "Lure And Cast" and the gorgeous "Doos" are a good blueprint to the path Gates is steering her sonic vessel. In a style Juliana Hatfield could only wish for, Gates and her supporting cast—including co-producer and engineer John McEntire and Mikael Jorgensen—are fairly successful throughout. The only stumbling block comes with "Move," which seems to shy away from something more promising. "In A Star Orbit" also sounds a bit forced—like a Stereolab demo. Regardless, it's a fresh and promising direction. (**Badman, 1388 Haight St., #211, San Francisco 94117**)

—Jason MacNeil

THE GRANNIES

The Grannies



It seems as if everyone has a gimmick these days. Whether it's facepaint, different colored contacts or an elaborate stage set, theatrics and gimmickry has become an obsession in music today. Unfortunately, The Grannies are no exception. The band—clad in cowboy hats, geriatric robes and grandma masks—looks a lot like a punk rock version of *Grumpy Old Men* on acid. Although the costumes are admittedly a bit corny, The Grannies most definitely rock—incorporating blues, punk and straight-up rock into a Southern-fried stew of crunchy riffs and mindless lyrics. The band, no doubt, puts on one hell of a live show. All The Grannies need are two scantily clad females who play guitar and blow fire into the audience....oh, wait, someone already has that angle covered. (**Dead Teenager, P.O. Box 470153, San Francisco 94147-0153**)

—Dan Pastorius

HADES

DamNation



From the aggressive, no-holds-barred metal attack of *DamNation's* first track, "Bloat," Hades makes clear its intention to conquer. The title track and "Biocaust" demonstrate Hades' speed-metal side, while "Force Quit" and "California Song" reveal stoner-metal influences. Whatever the direction, the band always flows with the feel of the song. Overall, *DamNation* showcases the many songwriting styles of a very talented metal band. While it's doubtful Hades would appeal to many outside the metal set, a band so skilled at its craft is a pleasure to hear. (**Metal Blade, 2828 Cochran St., Suite 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065**)

—Domenic Dispaldo

JACK & THE BEANSTALK

Cowboys in Sweden



Reading the lyrics doesn't always provide a good indicator of how a band is going to sound. When an entire song reads "Baby, baby, baby, bah-bah, b-b-baby/Hey baby, hey girl, hey baby-girl," however, it's probably safe to make some assumptions about what's

fueling this particular rock machine. Songs like "Heard It All Before" and "Who Will Save Rock 'n Roll" betray Jack & the Beanstalk's self-consciousness about its simplicity. Still, hearing it all before, doesn't mean we've necessarily tired of hearing it. (**Parasol**)

—Luke O'Neil

KIDSNACK

First Steps



Kidsnack sounds just like the band you saw at that college deck party, pumping out guitar-driven pop with baseball caps turned backwards and eyes fixed on their shoes. Everything about the band sounds amateur and thin—from the crepe-paper guitar tone to the sterilized vocals and harmonies. The production doesn't do anything to help—burying the guitars, accenting uninspired vocals and the piercing snare drum. *First Steps* plods along, with forgettable choruses and boring verses. As the disc continues, it becomes difficult to discern between tracks as tempo, attitude and tone remain static through. (**Double Zero, P.O. Box 7122, Algonquin, IL 60102**)

—Andre Calilhanna

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CANNIBAL OX
The Cold Vein



Dark and surrounding, Cannibal Ox's latest release on the Def Jux label is more enveloping than a 3-D movie—and without the clumsy glasses. Producer EL-P (formerly of Company Flow fame) has quickly proved himself as one of the land's most creative and dexterous soundsmiths, creating deep, multidimensional tracks worthy of praise once reserved exclusively for The Automator and The Rza. Tracks such as "Real Earth," "Painkillers" and "Iron Galaxy" steam like an ice cube on a stove-top, with MCs Vordul Megilah and Vast Aire spitting, hissing, drawing and cooing their way through some of the most visceral and clever lyrics the mic has yet endured. Instead of a cluttered tirade of profanity and

scatterbrained rage, Cannibal Ox releases a slow burn—devouring, cleansing and creating a fresh space. Megilah and Aire trade off their verbal volleys, sometimes dropping into a cool, collected spoken-word documenting their vision of hometown Harlem in cinematic, nearly tangible clarity ("I found compassion/in aerosol cans/and hands clappin'"). *The Cold Vein* is not only one of the stronger hip hop albums of the year, it is unquestionably the sound of quality things to come. (Def Jux, 199 Lafayette, #3B, New York 10012)

—Chris Lawrence

For Fans Of: Company Flow, Dalek, Mr. Lif

track listing

01. Iron Galaxy
02. Ox Out Of The Cage
03. Atom
04. A B-Boys Alpha
05. Raspberry Fields
06. Straight Off The D.I.C.
07. Vein
08. The F-Word
09. Stress Rap
10. Battle For Asgard
11. Real Earth
12. Ridiculoid
13. Painkillers
14. Pigeon

THE LADDERBACK
Introductions to Departure



From a whisper to a scream, Raleigh's The Ladderback beat the hell out of 11 songs in 29 minutes. Tender moments like the violin-based "Victoria" juxtapose the mountainous clamor of "Bordering the Metric." The band is at its best when coalescing the two extremes, as on the off-kilter Fugazi-esque "T.T.T." In an effort to distinguish itself from those bloated by complex, meandering tunes, a number of songs end before the two-minute mark, denying the listener time to process the trio's intricacies. Incorporating jazz and math-rock elements, The Ladderback set itself apart from less adventurous emo bands. (Bifocal Media, P.O. Box 50106, Raleigh, NC 27650)

—Neal Ramirez

LIAR
Liar's Hell



The Bolt Thrower hessians have cut their hair, moved to Belgium and given up meat. It's all here—the slow, plodding riffs churning relentlessly, the triumphant melodic leads conjuring images of battlefield glory, the

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raspy whisper screams and solemn, spoken-word mumblings. Forget *Liar's Hell*, this is *The Fifth Crusade!* Yet while its sound is derivative indeed, Belgian straightedge vegan crew Liar is unique within the context of its scene—where its metalcore contemporaries rely on technical wizardry, clean vocals or Scandinavian melodies to keep their hardcore current, Liar opts for lagging tempos, repetitious riffage, and adamant 4/4 time signatures. With Bolt Thrower as muse, Liar eschews today's trends and provides a refreshing, truly metallic alternative for dispossessed Earth Crisis fans. (Alveran, P.O. Box 10 01 52, D-44701 Bochum, Germany)

—Curran Reynolds

LOST HORIZON

Awakening the World



"No Fate/Only the Power of Will." Such is the battle cry of metal warriors Lost Horizon. Clad in black leather, archaic jewelry and medieval war paint, the members of Lost Horizon stand bare-chested under an ominous, starlit battlefield in defiance of all who might challenge their path. Surely they are not the first to utilize such medieval imagery. Then

again, Lost Horizon takes it to a much deeper level than the average metal band. Going beyond mere clothing, the members of Lost Horizon sport monikers like "Cosmic Antagonist" and "Ethereal Magnanimus," to name a few. Not to worry, Lost Horizon put just as much thought and precision into its well-crafted sound as it does its image. The songwriting is equally focused on hooks, melodies, harmonies, high-octane tempos and finely executed instrumentation. *Awakening the World* is an excellent example of what European-styled metal should sound like. (Koch)

—Domenic Dispaldo

NINE LIVES

The Fugitive



Look what the cat dragged in—Nine Lives, an energetic alternative pop-rock band gifted at creating infectious melodies and spirited choruses. Each of the buoyant 16 cuts on *The Fugitive* inspires sing-along participation from listeners. The disc's title track and "Lead Belly, Nine Lives," a tribute to a fly car, take a departure from frat-boy alterna-pop to serve up pure rock 'n roll. Lead singer Rob Vitale has a fiery voice to soar and croon over the

hooks—it's hard for listeners to not get excited about this music. In fact, Vitale comes off as the guy at a party who'd pull the one wallflower out onto the dance floor. The obligatory break-up song appears in the worthy "No More Tears," taking the tempo down a few notches. If you're looking for a reference, Nine Lives features former members of Black Train Jack and can sit comfortably alongside American Hi-Fi, Weezer and Blink 182. (Too Damn Hype, P.O. Box 15793, Philadelphia 19103)

—Liana Jonas

NOCTURNE

Welcome To Paradise



Combining the post-industrial stomp of late-era Ministry with the gothic sensibilities of Switchblade Symphony, Dallas' Nocturne vamp up the nü-metal scene with heavy, metallic riffs programmed under a tortured female voice. With its latest release, sarcastically called *Welcome To Paradise*, Nocturne creates an ethereal, doomed soundscape with moods ranging from Trent Reznor despair to Marilyn Manson crunch. (Triple X, Box 862529, Los Angeles 90086)

—Dan Pastorius

NORTHSIDE KINGS

This Thing of Ours



You can take the hardcore outta New York, but you can't take New York outta the hardcore. Three of Gotham's finest tough guys (ex-members of Sheer Terror, Cause For Alarm, M.O.D. and Whiplash) have left their home turf and relocated to the greener pastures of Arizona. Lucky for us, their bad attitudes are still intact. On *This Thing Of Ours*, Northside Kings delivers a pure, Italian working-class pummeling, NYHC-style. The sound is predictable as are the rants (the usual passionate espousals of vague ideals, for the most part), but it's a joy to hear these fish out of water holding true to their hometown style, even amidst the cacti. (Thorp, P.O. Box 2007, Upper Darby, PA 19082)

—Curran Reynolds

NOVADRIVER

Void



Straight from the streets of the Motor City comes Novadriver with its debut release, *Void*. This is a high-octane blast of raw power exploding with songs like "Satellite Night," "Shoot

continued on page 53



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VICTORY RECORDS

under the radar

by Gail Worley

After being dropped by two consecutive major labels in what can only be called a spectacular run of bad luck, New York-based pop trio Ivy resurfaced on Nettwerk America with its third album, *Long Distance*. Comprising French chanteuse Dominique Durand, guitarist Andy Chase (her husband) and bassist Adam



Schlesinger (from Fountains of Wayne), Ivy's sophisticated, dreamy guitar pop transcends any Paris-organ-grinder-at-the-out-

IVY Long Distance

door-cafe-in-springtime comparisons, despite Durand's heavily accented English. While *Long Distance* is moodier and mellower than 1997's *Apartment Life*, Ivy continues with its boiler plate for a perfect pop song—deceptively upbeat melodies disguising dark, heavy lyrics. In this way, tunes like “Lucy Doesn't Love You” (conjuring The Velvet Underground jamming with Herb Alpert) and “Worry About You,” tossing a little drum and bass into the chorus, manage to come off as both retro and modern. Imbuing their lyrics with sensual images from nature (“Undertow” and “Edge of the Ocean”), many songs deal with various stages of romantic relationships, and Durand's throaty vocals, punctuated liberally with oohs and ahhs, add all the right touches. For those who enjoy high art, '60s-style pop, *Long Distance* is perfect easy listening.

Four years after shoe-gazing, heart-tugging Toad the Wet Sprocket ceased to exist, vocalist Glen Phillips releases his first solo album, *Abulum*, on Brick Red Records. A gifted, somewhat Dylanesque storyteller, Phillips' turns *Abulum* into a slightly tongue-in-cheek version of *Born In The U.S.A.* (if you can imagine that).



GLEN PHILLIPS Abulum

“My Hometown” becomes “My Own Town,” with Phillips keenly observing and reporting back on characters he finds living a sort of “Trailer Park” existence. On the dark side of town, both “Men Just Leave” (a pro-birth control song if there ever was one) and “Professional Victim” take sideways glances at the self-perpetuating cycle of abuse (“It doesn't get any better/when you've got such an eye for the bad seed”). But you have to smile when a father and son bond over milk shakes after unsuccessfully shooting the neighbor's dog on “Drive By.” Phillips' fluid, expressive voice means you don't necessarily have to catch all the lyrics to grasp his message. Maybe he isn't setting the stage for a huge increase in popularity, but *Abulum* should appeal to TWS's core audience. If you loved Toad, this is your thing.

This month, Under The Radar has a headache, and will now kill you softly with gentle rock action.



How does Jason Martin, singer/songwriter/guitarist for Starflyer 59, really feel about the perpetual cult-favorite status of his exceptionally talented band? Find out on *Leave Here A Stranger*, from a label built on Christian punk rock. Recorded in mono (Just like *Pet Sounds!*), SF59's seventh album

reveals Martin to be a reluctant John Lennon in Brian Wilson clothing—not overly ambitious considering any SF59 album is usually, by definition, the best of the year. *Leave Here A Stranger* (the title says it all) is an inter-album referential collage of songs chronicling Martin's nonchalant pessimism regarding the validity and viability of his band. Check out the diary rock of the first three songs—“All My Friends Who Play Guitar” asks, “Know who we are?/We never go far;” “Can You Play Drums?” pleads in desperation, “I need a drummer/and I need one tonight;” and “When I Learn to Sing” makes unnecessary excuses with “When I learn to sing/I'll change the key of everything.” Self-doubts aside, Martin steadfastly refuses to “Give Up the War.” As usual, his seductively wispy voice hits like opium, and the pastoral, semi-psychedelic feel of layered guitars and Farfisa organ make this astounding album compulsively listenable.

STARFLYER 59 Leave Here A Stranger



Former members of the late Los Angeles indie rock outfit Dada—guitarist Michael Gurley and drummer Phil Leavitt—morph into Butterfly Jones with their Vanguard Records debut, *Napalm Springs*. Reinvigorating a genre long mired in mediocrity and cliché, Butterfly Jones knows how to fold sharp

satire and self-mockery into some pretty sweet pop/rock songs shimmering with brilliant production, choruses of chiming guitars, soaring harmonies and clever lyrical phrasing. There's a good variety of rock styles on *Napalm Springs*, but the band maintains a cohesive feel and never loses track of its identity. Some highlights include the sweeping strings of “Suicide Bridge,” “The Systematic Dumbing Down of Terry Constance Jones” with the manic pace and wry humor of a mock-folk tale and the delirious ecstasy of the album's best cut, “Dreamtime.” Butterfly Jones sounds only vaguely similar to early Beatles (the title cut) and Chad & Jeremy (“When People Are Mean”) but seem to have been heavily influenced by these groups just the same. There's not one bad track on the disc. Good going guys.

BUTTERFLY JONES Napalm Springs

RECORDS continued from page 51
 the Sky" and "Sleep." Metal influences mix with psychedelic sounds for a greasy, '70s juggernaut of haunting guitar grooves and thunderous drums. The favorable collaboration between Billy Reedy, Eric Miller, James B. Anders and singer Mark Miers demonstrates some formidable chemistry at work. Vocally, Miers delivers melodies amidst a thrashing of guitars. *Void* is full of energy, inviting listeners to join the band in the absolute euphoria of a full-throttle live performance. Whether the distant and sometimes sterile effect of recording will make for a convincing invitation remains to

be seen. (Small Stone, P.O. Box 02007, Detroit, MI 48202)

—Ginny McCabe

PATRICK O'DONNELL

Limbo



With song titles such as "Love Songs Make Me Nauseous," "I Just Wanna Degrade You" and "Everything About You Reminds Me of You (Except for the Look in Your Eyes)," it is obvious Patrick O'Donnell is a singer/songwriter who calls it as he sees it. His vocal stylings rely more on tongue-in-cheek verbal assaults than melody and harmony. For all of the dark and vio-

lent content, however, there is an air of humor present throughout—sort of a weird Joy Division-meets-Frank Zappa feel. In fact, track eight, "Isolation," is a Joy Division cover. (Skoda, P.O. Box 77611, Washington, D.C. 20013-7611)

—Teil Linn Wise

QUIET RIOT

Guilty Pleasures



Pop-metal is as dead as spandex, but no one told Kevin DuBrow and the rest of Quiet Riot. Still plodding forward, Quiet Riot's most recent album has some of the most contrived and cheesy tunes stacked right besides some genuinely catchy party songs. The album's title, *Guilty Pleasures*, is truly appropriate considering how few people will actually admit to liking it publicly. Still, many of us closeted Crue and Twisted Sister fans can't help but find some rock-for-rock's sake re-deeming value even in this latest batch of rockers. Granted, listeners won't be singing out loud to the refrain of "Rock the House," ("Hey everybody rock the house/Slammin' til we all freak out/Hey everybody rock the house/Rock, Rock Rock!"), but we just might catch ourselves playing air guitar. (Bodyguard, 138 Fulton St., New York 10038)

—Steve Mowatt

THE REIGN OF TERROR

Sacred Ground



The brainchild of ex-Yngwie Malmsteen/Loudness/Obsession vocalist Mike Viscera and guitar wizard Joe Stump is a dozen neo-classical examples of '80s-inspired, Americanized metal. The opener, "Save Me," is one of the stronger cuts, alongside "Undercover," with its Ritchie Blackmore/Rainbow flare. There are also a pair of full-blown instrumentals—the classical adaptation "Paginini's Purgatory" and the acoustic "Dante's Danza." Why Reign Of Terror sought to cover "Kill The King," let alone end the album with it, is a great mystery, since trying to outdo Ronnie James Dio is not something Viscera can ever hope to accomplish. (Limb)

—Mark Gromen

THE RESIDENTS

Icky Flix—Original Soundtrack Recording



It's nearly impossible to rate a record by The Residents. This band (the term is used loosely) has been confusing the masses for nearly 30 years, with listeners settled firmly in adoration or complete confusion. Experimental, no-wave and avant-garde are just

continued on page 55



ZENI GEVA
10,000 Light Years



Japan's pioneering noise-rock behemoth Zeni Geva returns with *10,000 Light Years*, its most thrilling space odyssey to date. Frontman and mastermind KK Null's broken-English narration in the opening track sets the tone for the album—"The poison drives me crazy, but it's cool/I can't see you/I can't get you/Because I am 10,000 light years away from you." Thus the forward blast into the stratosphere begins. With guitars, drums and electronics, Null, Mitsuru Tabata and Masataka Fujikake execute a truly colossal din, slipping and sliding through devastating rhythmic maneuvers with jazzy finesse. *10,000 Light Years* is a psychedelic power-noise freak-out in interstellar overdrive—a relentless procession of jaw-dropping surprises, both crushingly heavy and furiously musical throughout. Zeni Geva's balance of enormity and smoothness prevails from the first note to the last, thanks in part to longtime collaborator Steve Albini's production. Along the way, the band ignites a galaxy-sized fireworks display of dazzling instrumentation. Null's voice arises from out of the maelstrom only a few times throughout the album, but when it does, it is as striking as when a cello (or synthesized facsimile) makes its stern, surprise cameo during the searing "Hazchem." Founded by Null and Tabata in 1987 from the same scene as Merzbow and Boredoms, Zeni Geva's influence can be detected all over today's indie map—from Neurosis' tribal warfare to Bloodlet's tortured cool to Shellac's rhythmic obsessive-compulsions. As crucial as any of the band's prior work, *10,000 Light Years* takes Zeni Geva's trailblazing sound further than ever before. (Neurot, P.O. Box 410209, San Francisco 94141)

—Curran Reynolds

track listing

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 01. 10,000 Light Years | 05. Tyrannicide |
| 02. Implosion | 06. Last Nanosecond |
| 03. Blastsphere | 07. Hazchem |
| 04. Interzona 2 | 08. Auto-Fuck |

For Fans Of: Neurosis, Man Is The Bastard, The Locust

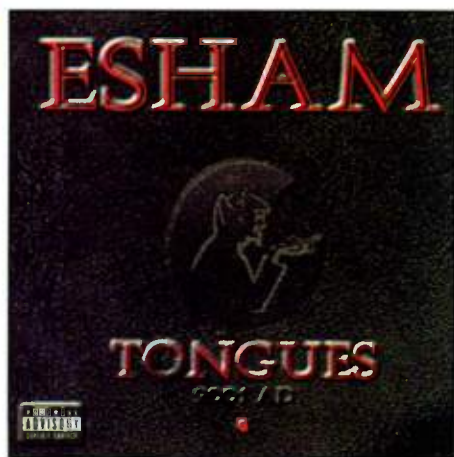
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ESHAM Tongues

"He's said to be dead," declared the promotional campaign for *Tongues*. One listen to Esham's latest proves the MC is anything but. In fact, homeboy comes across with such a raw delivery, he could probably wake the dead. With his latest album (he's put out over a dozen), Esham showcases more of a lyrical rhythm than on his previous works. A combination of gangsta tales mixed with spiritual madness seems to work in his favor. This drastic combination is perhaps most evident on "Chemical Imbalance." On "Poetry," the album's high point, Esham shows he truly has skills to be recognized, while cameos from rhymestress Heather Hunter and Mastamind add flavor and diversity to an otherwise dark album. The beats are hard hitting and bass-heavy, giving the album an eerie, haunting sound. (TVT, 23 E. 4th Street, New York 10003)

—Ahmad Lawton



BEANIE SIGEL The Reason

Regarded by many as South Philly's best export since Rocky Balboa, Sigel returns with *The Reason*, the follow-up to his debut, *The Truth*. The first track, "Nothing Like It," automatically hooks listeners, pulling them into the world through Sigel's eyes. On *The Reason*, Sigel deals with career changes and how he's come so far in

such a short period of time. Jams like "Moms Praying" show a tender side of the rapper, as he speaks of family issues and hardships. As an MC, Sigel's flow is unmatched as he rhymes in patterns Kinkos couldn't copy. Songs like "Gangsta Gangsta," "Get Down" and "I Don't Do Much" demonstrate the diverse styles Sigel has mastered in his refusal to pigeonhole himself with one, narrow voice. A rendition of EPMD's classic "So Whatcha Sayin" and "Think it's a Game" will reach everyone from modern gangstas to old-school philosophers. *The Reason* itself is the reason why Beanie Sigel will be a permanent staple in hip hop for a long time. (Roc-a-fella/Def Jam, 825 8th Ave., New York 10019)

—Ahmad Lawton



THA LIKS X.O. Experience

For a while it seemed as though party rap had been packed up and locked in storage along with the Beastie Boys' hydraulic stage penis. West Coast rappers E-Swift, Tash and J-Ro—collectively Tha Liks—are back with the noise to set the record straight. The group now sports an abbreviated version of its old name, Tha Alkaholiks, but has lost no love for booze and debauchery. *X.O. Experience* proves there hasn't been a loss of skill, either. From the frenetic grumble of the album's opener, "Bar Code" (featuring Xzibit), to jilting vibes on "40 Oz.," "Goin' Crazy" and "Anotha Round" to the smooth flavors of tracks like "Da Da Da" and "My Dear," Tha Liks deliver a diverse and highly physical album, just in time for the best parties of the summer. While E-Swift produces the bulk of the group's new album, Tha Liks also enjoy soundboard magic from DJ Scratch and the infamous Neptunes. Since its 1992 Loud debut, the *Make Room* single, this gang of West Coast party hounds has enjoyed more than its share of Billboard charters as well as a fanatical word-of-mouth reputation and following. *X.O. Experience* promises to continue this tradition, ranking Tha Liks as one of the strongest forces in California. Keg stands and house parties never sounded so good. (Loud/RCA, 550 Madison Ave., New York 10022-3211)

—Mike McKee

Hip Hop Newz

By Ahmad Lawton

As hip hop evolves generating new, fresh styles, it becomes increasingly difficult for old schoolers to withstand the storm. As a result, they often succumb to vapid commercialism or just fall off completely. One of the exceptions is gangsta storyteller and pioneer **Kool G Rap**. Already loaded with undeniable classics from the last decade, Kool G is back in the new millennium with *The Giancana Story*, courtesy of **Rawkus**... Back on the scene with a shortened name, **Tha Liks** (formerly Tha Alkaholiks) have dropped *X.O. Experience* on **Loud**, featuring cameos from **Busta Rhymes**, **Xzibit** and some legendary **Neptunes** production work... **Jadakiss** from the **LOX** lights the fire with *Long Kiss Goodbye* on **Interscope**... **Matador Records**, known mainly for its indie rock releases, will release a new album from **The Arsonists**... Underground legend and over-achiever **Cormega** finally gets his chance with a new album on **Landspeed** called *The Realness*... **Tragedy Khadafi** tries to redeem himself with *Against All Odds* on **Gee Street**... **Wu-Tang Killa Bees** strike with *The Flood* this fall... Pioneers **Q-Tip** (A Tribe Called Quest) and **Grand Puba** (Brand Nubians) both have new albums due out early this fall... **Cannibal Ox** (Def Jux) will be touring throughout the summer in support of its new album, *The Cold Vein*. The record's producer **El-P** (formerly of Company Flow) is already busy with new projects, including **Aesop Rock's** *Labor Days*, which hit the streets in early September... New York's indie label **75 Ark** boasts upcoming releases from **No Luck Club** and **Mista Sinista** (X-Ecutioners). The label is finishing up production on *Party Music*, the new full-length from political raptivists **The Coup**. A national tour throughout September and October is expected to follow. Giving Rawkus a good run for its money, 75 Ark also promises an album from **Sammy's Romanians** (a collaborative project from El-P and **Dan The Automator**), a second **Deltron** record and *Music To Make Love To Your Old Lady By* (October 9), the latest offering from **Nathaniel Merriweather** (The Automator) of **Handsome Boy Modeling School**. ■



Kool G Rap

RECORDS continued from page 53

some of the terms used to describe this gang of enigmatic, tuxedo-clad, eyeball-headed conceptual artists who have never revealed their true identities. The band's latest offering, *Icky Flix*, might be compared to a psycho-ward escapee's first encounter with an elaborate synthesizer. Crying babies, ticking clocks and keyboards replace the normally dominant guitar in The Residents' efforts to dismantle rock 'n roll. This CD also doubles as a DVD (providing nearly three hours of music) featuring some unquestionably odd videos. (East Side Digital, 530 N. 3rd St., Suite 230, Minneapolis 55401) —Steve Mowatt

SHADOW GALLERY
Legacy

Inspired by '70s progressive rockers Kansas, as well as today's premier like-minded act, Dream Theater, the seven gentlemen comprising Shadow Gallery are talented, if not long-winded and a might boring. Most of the 70-plus minutes wander at a pedestrian tempo, and multiple voice choruses are anything but raucous. "Cliffhanger 2," a 13-minute cut in two parts, opens the disc, while the 34:14 "First Light" closes it out. In between, Shadow Gallery keep things a little more direct, especially the relatively lively "Destination Unknown." (Magna Carta, PMB 1820, 280 E. 51st St., New York 10022-6500)

—Mark Gromen

SHIMMER KIDS
UNDERPOP ASSOCIATION
Prairie Prayers

Stuck somewhere between The Beach Boys and *Star Trek*, Shimmer Kids Underpop Association revels in lo-fi oddness as confounding as it is entertaining. It's hard to imagine the sound coming out of the speakers is the exactly what the Shimmer Kids intended. There's a definite creativity at work, crafting complex vocal harmonies and arranging horns and pianos and theramins to create a bizarre undercurrent of music. But *Prairie Prayers* is so deliberate in its weirdness, it prevents the Shimmer Kids from establishing the hip facade required to elevate something this experimental into something worth recommending. (Parasol)

—Andre Calihanna

THE SKY CORVAIR
Unsafe At Any Speed

These songs were recorded in 1994 and 1995 and were originally released

on a different label. *Unsafe At Any Speed* reintroduces the material to the public through the Divot Records label. For those not in the know, The Sky Corvaire features members of Joan Of Arc, Cap'n Jazz and Braid, although even the most stalwart of the aforementioned's fans would do well to take *Unsafe* with a grain of salt—or a spoonful of sugar. The Sky Corvaire remains faithful to the loud-to-quiet formula, rooted strongly in the traditions of Midwestern indie rock. All four members contribute to vocals—usually in the form of jolted screaming. *Unsafe At Any Speed* is principally interesting for its perspective on the members' previous and future endeavors. (Divot, P.O. Box 14061, Chicago 60614-0061)

—Thomas Shebest

SNAPDRAGON
Family Jewels

Snapdragon has all the pieces in place, including a raspy yet syrupy female lead vocal and a guitar pop/rock sensibility crafted specifically for radio airplay. Each song on *Family Jewels* was written as a single, with multi-layered harmonies on the choruses, repetitive catch phrases and three-minute expirations. The production is fairly expansive but much too stilted and sterile, raising doubts regarding Snapdragon's live capabilities, particularly as all the voices on the album belong to one singer. In the end, the songs are too formulaic and the payoff a little too predictable to be exceptional. Snapdragon lacks grit and tries so hard to keep its sound clean it slips right by without raising eyebrows. (Straight Line, 5 E. 19th St., 2nd Floor, New York 10003)

—Andre Calihanna

SUMMER HYMNS
A Celebratory Arm Gesture

Let's get one thing straight—Georgia's Summer Hymns is not the typical indie rock band. Sure, it shares a kinship with fellow Athenians Elf Power and Of Montreal, but Summer Hymns is on the far side of eclectic. Singer Zachary Gresham barters in psych-folk, giving impressive nods to Neil Young ("I Could Give The World Away"), and even if the Hymn's lean a little too hard on Apples In Stereo's organ pedal at times ("One More Teardrop," "Fuzzy Side Of Life"), the eccentric bunch deserves praise for exuding such a wide musical aptitude. There are few retro-flavored outfits capable of shifting from sugary-pop one minute ("Something's Going On")

to a lap-steel-steered instrumental the next ("Turn Here"). Arm Gesture? Sure. High fives all around. (Misra) —John D. Luerssen

SWELL
Everybody Wants to Know

Swell proves its roots are grounded in original, guitar-driven rock on its sixth release, *Everybody Wants to Know*. The vocals are casual, yet emotive, and the messages are thoughtful and introspective. The music runs a predictable but effective route with the riffs and grooves each vying for center stage. Thin Lizzy this is not, but Swell doles out some winners all the same. Together, the duo of David Freel (guitars, keyboards, vocals) and Rey Washam (drums) create an original collection of quality music. Penned by Freel, "This Story," "A Velvet Sun" and "Call Me" are among the album's notable cuts. (Beggars' Banquet, 580 Broadway, #1004, New York 10012)

—Ginny McCabe

THRALL
Hung Like God

OK, this disc has one hell of a fantastic title. The noise inside is even

better. Sick, desperate, hand-wringing vocals are backed with a wall of guitar snarl, tribal drums and deep, throaty bass. From the rock 'n roll bastard attitude of "Hollowed We Follow," to the edge-of-madness slither of "Remove and Replace," Thrall goes out to nail the listener to the cross with a great big hammer—and succeeds. (Reptilian, 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore 21231)

—Mark Ginsburg

THE THUMBS
Last Match

The Thumbs follow up last year's brilliant *All Lesser Devils* with yet another great collection of smart, fast and loud songs. Launching furiously into "Bruno Batta," the band careens without pause through a dozen well-penned, scathing tracks. With several cuts about recent punk music, the lyrics possess a strange poetic quality not detracting from their pure, acidic fury in the least. *Last Match* will ring in the head long after the last echo of distortion has faded away. (Adeline, 5337 College Ave., #318, Oakland, CA 94618)

—Mark Ginsburg
continued on page 57

NEXT MONTH
IN ISSUE #74

Nikka Costa
Superchunk
Gorillaz
Jimmy Eat World
The Coup
Dead Meadow
Six Feet Under
The History Of Black Metal
Michael Gira
Nic Endo
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ILL NINO

Like Puya and Soulfly, Ill Nino takes musical influences from its ethnic background and mixes these sounds with metal. Though the band is from New Jersey, the members are all South American or Latin born. Ill Nino plays modern, chunky metal giving way to smooth Spanish guitars and driving conga drum rhythms. The lyrics alternate between Spanish and English. "The idea is to be as heavy as possible and as melodic as possible—with a Latin twist," says drummer Dave Chavarri. Chavarri previously toured with Max Cavalera's Soulfly as an interim drummer, an experience giving him the focus and inspiration he needed to establish Ill Nino. With the mission of churning out devastating metal while staying true to its roots, Ill Nino recorded its debut album, *Revolution Revolution*, for Roadrunner Records. Ill Nino definitely brings aggression to the table, but the percussion parts and flamenco guitars break up the typical metal formula. The band has toured with the likes of Kittie, Soulfly and Snapcase. With this debut album now on the streets, expect Ill Nino to make a huge splash in the hard rock scene.

VISION OF DISORDER



After the release of its last album, 1998's *Imprint*, Vision Of Disorder seemed to fall off the face of the earth. Rumors surfaced the Long Island metalcore outfit had called it quits, but

actually it was just flying below the radar. Vision Of Disorder has experienced some turbulent times

in the past few years, between parting with its record label and management. Now after writing and experimenting with new sounds, VOD has returned with its third full-length album, *From Bliss to Devastation*, onTVT records. It's a little slower and different from what VOD fans are used to, but the band's songwriting abilities have grown tremendously. VOD employs melody and rage in its songs, still exuding the heaviness it is known for without conforming to the standards of metal or hardcore. The music is just heavy, angst-filled rock in the vein of the Deftones. "As far as I can tell, I think that our record doesn't really sound like anything else," says singer Tim Williams. "It's got its influences—what record doesn't—but all in all, I don't think it sounds like anything else out there, which I'm pretty psyched about." VOD is currently touring with labelmates Nothingface and will visit Europe with the *Tattoo the Planet Tour* this fall.



STEREOMUD

This new band of music veterans is composed of former members of hardcore favorites Life Of

Agony, Stuck Mojo and Pro-Pain. In fact, Stereomud's only newcomer to the music industry is guitarist John Fattoruso. Columbia Records recently released the group's debut album, *Perfect Self*, introducing the singles "Pain" or "Stepping Away." For this album, the members of Stereomud have taken influences from their past musical outfits and combined them with melody and soulful singing from frontman Erik Rogers. Stereomud takes a mid-tempo approach to things on *Perfect Self* and chooses to express its aggression with a slow, churning intensity rather than blinding speed. This may be a stretch for these former hardcore heroes, but they have each been around long enough to know how to write quality songs. Though the previous bands of these musicians were marginally successful, they hope combining forces in Stereomud will be enough to propel the band to the next level. Stereomud just wrapped up a tour with rap metallers Crazy Town and will be embarking on the *Pain and Suffering* tour featuring Saliva and Systematic.

SEASON TO RISK

It is very difficult to place Season To Risk in any one category of rock. Critics have labeled it as noise rock, hardcore, indie rock and countless other things, often relentlessly comparing the



group to the equally eclectic Jesus Lizard. It's true—the band's music does resemble the frantic rock stylings of the Jesus Lizard and Frodus, but Season To Risk is its own body of musical dissonance. On this fourth and latest album, *The Shattering*, Season To Risk starts off rocking pretty hard with songs like the title track and "Ace of Space," but other songs like "Spasser" lumber along with the drone of a malfunctioning machine. The band specializes in discordant noise as singer Steve Tulipana screams wildly, but each cacophonous song is anchored down by occasional melodies and a solid rhythm section. The band is not afraid to show its experimental side with tracks like "Or Highwater" where Tulipana takes on a deep, haunting tone like Type O Negative's Peter Steele, and the last track, "Cease to Exist," where the band mixes ambient sound effects with harsh feedback noise. *The Shattering* is out now on Owned & Operated records. ■

TIGER ARMY

II: Power of Moonlite



Tiger Army is a hardcore band with a twist. The trio's disc, *II: Power of Moonlite*, essentially charges at a dizzying pace. Lead singer and guitarist Nick 13 sings with vein-popping intensity and launches a frenetic assault on listeners with his bone-crushing leads and tasty licks. To be sure, Tiger Army delivers a collection worthy of audiences' head-bobbing and fist-waving loyalty. However, somewhere around the disc's second half, the band introduces several refreshing departures from its hardcore format. For instance, on tracks seven and eight, "Cupid's Victim" and "Valley of Dreams," Nick 13 sheds his screaming for what closely resembles '50s-style singing. "In the Orchard" has a distinct country-western flavor with Nick 13 sounding like a true punkified Elvis. While hardcore by design, Tiger Army has plenty of nifty tricks up its sleeves to position itself strategically slightly ahead of the rest. (Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 90026)

—Liana Jonas

ULTRABABYFAT

Eight Balls In Reverse



Ultrababyfat proudly salutes its early-'90s, female-fronted influences (Letters To Cleo, Juliana Hatfield and Veruca Salt) with affable results on this 14-song pop smorgasbord. Chunky-riffed sugar smacks like "Gunshy" and "Bored In Paris" are as contagious as a flu outbreak, but songs like "Already There" affirm there's more than irresistible radio fare in the Ultrababyfat songbook. On "Diamond Back," this Atlanta quartet too closely resembles Transvision Vamp to make *Eight Balls* entirely flawless, but with a winsome tune like "Water Tower" or the Fetchin' Bones nod "Shake And Bake," UBF has move than enough to satisfy listeners. (Orange, 4761 Long Branch, San Diego 92107)

—John D. Luerssen

THE UNSEEN

The Anger and the Truth



While not breaking new ground, the Unseen do kick it out with a high level of power and sincerity. There is also a refreshing anti-violence tone in the lyrics. Dodging content with the

simple-minded message "war is bad, the government is bad," this band instead suggests there is more to revolution than simply destroying—creating something positive also has a hand in achieving change. Beyond the message, guitars chunk, drums pound, bass thrums, and this stuff is really catchy. (BYO, P.O. Box 67609, Los Angeles 90067)

—Mark Ginsburg

VPN

Small Wire



New York's Very Personable Neighbor shouldn't have shortened its well-chosen name, because the title captures its sound perfectly—it's sort of a pleasant surprise when VPN stops by, but you wouldn't really go out of your way to invite the boys over yourself. This LP features two previously released songs, "Eleanor (Has 4 Arms)" and "Laughing For Help." It hearkens back to a mid-'90s fuzz-pop sound, when co-ed harmonizing, chunky power chords and high energy seemed like enough to rule the world. (Evil Teen, P.O. Box 651, Village Station, New York 10014)

—Luke O'Neil

THE WALKMEN

The Walkmen



The Walkmen is taking its first steps, emerging from the eclectic side of the streets of New York with this eponymous four-song debut. Featuring Matt Barrick, Paul Maroon and Walter Martin of Jonathan Fire*Eater and Peter Bauer and Hamilton Leithauser of The Recoys, The Walkmen combine elements of what made a lot of bands in the '70s and '80s really cool—with a 21st century twist. Everything falls together, from the thick sound created by the keys, bass and guitar to the off-beat compositions and analog production feel. But it is Leithauser's vocals ultimately keeping things cemented, with a combination of Bono's grandeur and Thom Yorke's knack for melody. Look for more from this band. (StarTime International, 285 5th Ave., PMB #452, Brooklyn 11215)

—Andre Calihanna

THE WANNA BE'S

The Wanna Be's



Just when it seemed Seattle had finally run out of punk-pop exports, *continued on page 60*

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TALKING SHOP WITH THE FUCKING CHAMPS

"We're total audiophiles," admits Champs guitarist Tim Green. The Fucking Champs is a band where the members wear their obsessions on their sleeves in an ongoing quest to obtain new sounds. Bands have bored their friends idling on about gigs and gear since the dawn of time, but few can claim to geek out quite as much as The Champs.

"All of our amps are modified," begins Green, refusing to divulge any specifics. Although the band is reluctant to release pertinent information about its custom-built gear, it certainly has no problem listing all of the equipment used on its latest release, *IV*, on Drag City. Everything from the recording tape and transducers used to what guitar was played and who performed each solo is conveniently listed in the liner notes.

Green's resume reads like an obscure indie rock laundry list with time spent in Nation Of Ulysses, Red Eye, Young Ginns and The Fakes. Green also served as stand-in bassist on a European tour for The Wipers. He and Josh Smith, who handles the nine-string (yup, nine) guitar duties, make up two-thirds of the Bay Area power trio. Drummer Tim Soete, with his use of a mighty double-bass pedal, fills in what little gaps are left over from the syncopated, arpeggio-filled guitar arrangements. The band uses a Korg synthesizer and a Roland guitar synthesizer in place of a bassist. Let it be known though that there hasn't been this much rock on the Drag City label since... well, never.

Live, the band boasts its own stage system—patent-pending—called "The Amphitheater," involving an exact cabinet arrangement eliminating the need for monitors and ensuring audiences will hear both guitars clearly.

The Fucking Champs' newest album does everything possible to create music defying labels and genre guides. Despite hammer rolls galore and a marked prog-Iron Maiden influence, only Smith has the prerequisite hair length for a metal outfit. The songs on *IV* each deserve a category of their own. "Thor is Like Immortal," with its

sweeping arpeggios, comes off like a triumphant church choir gone into an extended Sunday service. Meanwhile, the synth-guitar heavy "Police-nauts" invokes images of vengeful circa-'83 video arcade games hunting down a quarterless victim.

The Fucking Champs is a three-piece not to be written off as a bad joke or an irony-based novelty. Even its music commands respect.

"About a year ago, we decided to change the name to The Fucking Champs (from The Champs), so people would realize that we're serious," explains Smith. "We wanted to legitimize the music by swearing."

With such an encyclopedic knowledge of rock gear and the gumption to drop the F-bomb, it's difficult to imagine The Champs ever calling it quits. Smith isn't afraid to reveal the band's open-ended expiration date.

"We're still trying to write a song we're incapable of playing live," he declares. "That will be when we break up."

—Christopher Baronner



WHITE STRIPES MAKE RIGHT

While a whirlwind of hype and a constrictive buzz among hipsters coast to coast threatened to render The White Stripes annoying by association, the publicity smoke has cleared to reveal a capable and visceral garage-level rock band. Without orchestras, keyboards, session players or studio effects, The White Stripes are guitarist/singer Jack White and his sister, Meg. Brace yourself for a quick inside tip—they're not really brother and sister, but rather husband and wife. Eschewing arena-sized amplification and gimmickry for the basics, The White Stripes play what might best be described as minimum R&B—stripped down in raw contrast to the massive, maximum angle offered by The Who so many years ago. Drawing on influences such as The Kinks, Blind Willie McTell and Loretta Lynn (to whom the Stripes dedicate their latest album, *White Blood Cells*, on Sympathy For The Record Industry), Jack and Meg serve greasy, gritty blues rock the way a truck stop diner serves burgers—their way, no substi-

tutions. Slide-guitar wizardry on tunes like "Little Room," "Aluminum" and "Hotel Yorba" display an earnest appreciation for the classics, while irreverent ditties such as "I'm Finding it Harder to be a Gentleman" and "Offend in Every Way" take the torch and run. With a bratty attitude and some Texas-sized gumption, The White Stripes have reinvigorated the notion of their hometown Detroit Rock City and made every indie rocker a little more conscious of Robert Johnson. Too bad high-water Dickies and a lap-steel make such an odd match, hipsters.

—Mike McKee



STEREOLAB: People Aren't Over This Band?

On one hand Stereolab has, since conception, issued a steady stream of emphatically retro pop records starting with its 1992 debut, *Peng!* For more than 10 major releases, listeners were guaranteed a hearty helping of moogs, dour francophilic vocals, warm bass tones and a discography interchangeable with much of Austin Powers' mood music. It would seem Stereolab would have worn out its welcome, having exhausted the '60s retro vibe. Instead, the band is as popular as ever, and its latest album, *Sound-Dust*, is as flavorful and engaging as any of the group's previous winners. This is because, like innovators such as Tortoise and Mouse On Mars, Stereolab is able to evolve—not only from album to album, but on each track, allowing itself the freedom to explore varying flavors and attitudes in every song. In comparison to its most recent releases, *Sound-Dust* invokes a more approachable and upbeat Stereolab, reminiscent of the acclaimed *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*. Still, regardless of what modifications an artist makes, there is an inevitable point where the weight of retro's own irony will collapse on itself, leaving the associated music to stand and be judged on its own. With *Sound-Dust*, Stereolab hints this unfortunate fulcrum may be closer than it or peers such as Belle And Sebastian, Apples In Stereo or Black Box Recorder may realize.

—Chris Lawrence

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BACK ISSUES



#57
May 00
Lambchop,
Grandaddy,
Gomez



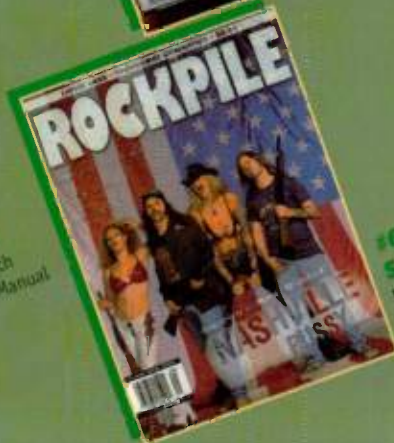
#58
Jun 00
Boss Hog,
Jucifer,
Kittie



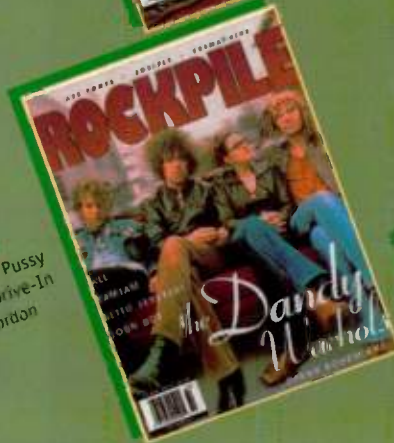
#59
Jul 00
Apples In Stereo,
Murder City Devils,
Sleater-Kinney



#60
Aug 00
Sonic Youth,
Damage Manual,
XTC



#61
Sep 00
Nashville Pussy,
At The Drive-In,
Nina Gordon



#62
Oct 00
Dandy Warhols,
Bettie Serveert,
John Doe

QNTY

- ___ #30 Jan 98 Huffamose, Chumbawamba, The Best And Worst Of '97
- ___ #31 Feb 98 Coal Chamber, Bardo Pond, Mecca Bodega
- ___ #32 Mar 98 Guitar Wolf, The Dwarves, The Pietasters
- ___ #33 Apr 98 Royal Trux, Clutch, Bad Luck 13 Riot Extravaganza
- ___ #34 May 98 Reverend Horton Heat, Tuscadero, Fuel
- ___ #35 Jun 98 Rocket From The Crypt, Pere Ubu, Nashville Pussy
- ___ #36 Jul 98 Monster Magnet, Robert Pollard, Curve
- ___ #37 Aug 98 Yo La Tengo, Rancid, Front 242
- ___ #38 Sep 98 Sunny Day Real Estate, Agnostic Front, The Specials
- ___ #39 Oct 98 Shonen Knife, Massive Attack, The Donnas
- ___ #40 Nov 98 Mudhoney, Everlast, Electric Frankenstein
- ___ #41 Dec 98 The Queers, Flat Duo Jets, Silver Jews
- ___ #42 Jan 99 Famous Monsters, Incubus, Sevendust
- ___ #43 Feb 99 Sick Of It All, Bad Livers, Patti Smith
- ___ #44 Mar 99 Boo Radleys, Blue Tip, Spineshank
- ___ #45 Apr 99 Ben Lee, Wilco, Beulah
- ___ #46 May 99 Moby, Agent Orange, Meshuggah
- ___ #47 Jun 99 Gwar, Ministry, Biohazard
- ___ #48 Jul 99 Man or Astroman, Bouncing Souls, Orbital
- ___ #49 Aug 99 Switchblade Symphony, Superchunk, Orange 9MM
- ___ #50 Sep 99 The Magnetic Fields, The Get Up Kids, Cibo Matto
- ___ #51 Oct 99 Stereolab, Fireball Ministry, Mr. T Experience
- ___ #52 Nov 99 Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Bulemics, Matthew Sweet
- ___ #53 Jan 00 Mike Ness, Danzig, Buzzcocks
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- ___ #55 Mar 00 Snapcase, The Genitortures, Sloan
- ___ #56 Apr 00 Fu Manchu, Jello Biafra, Adrian Belew

QNTY

- ___ #57 May 00 Lambchop, Grandaddy, Gomez
- ___ #58 Jun 00 Boss Hog, Jucifer, Kittie
- ___ #59 Jul 00 Murder City Devils, Apples In Stereo
- ___ #60 Aug 00 Damage Manual, Sonic Youth, XTC
- ___ #61 Sep 00 Nashville Pussy, At The Drive-In, Nina Gordon
- ___ #62 Oct 00 Dandy Warhols, John Doe, Bettie Serveert
- ___ #63 Nov 00 The Sea And Cake, The Posies, Modest Mouse
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- ___ #66 Feb 01 Stephen Malkmus, Add N To (X), New Found Glory
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RECORDS continued from page 57

The Wanna Be's emerge from nowhere to add a blast of power-chord bounce into today's exhausted scene. With a self-titled debut, The Wanna Be's incorporate a smart blend of Ramones and Buzzcocks-inspired riffing mixed with its own slant on the standard punk formula. Songs like "Dropped On My Head" and "This Party Sucks" demonstrate a sense of humor, while others showcase more serious overtones. While the album does have some generic moments, it's still an enjoyable listen for fans of fast, rhythmic punk. (Panic Button, P.O. Box 148010, Chicago 60614-8010)

—Dan Pastorius

WARRIOR

The Code of Life



In recent years, there has been a resurgence of new bands embracing the sounds of the '80s. Take Warrior, a band whose long hair, black leather image and sound would fit any typical '80s European metal band, from Judas Priest to Iron Maiden or older Helloween. The songs on *The Code of Life* feature distorted yet melodic guitar riffs, twin guitar harmonies and pas-

sonate, tasteful vocals. Add a strong emphasis on songwriting, and Warrior has all the elements of a top-notch, classic metal band with its craft down to a science. (Nuclear Blast America, P.O. Box 43618, Philadelphia 19106)

—Domenic Dispaldo

WELT

Brand New Dream



Talk about radio-friendly alt-rock. Welt's *Brand New Dream* leaps right out of the starting gate with the rousing opener "Two Years"—think Lit or early Goo Goo Dolls. In fact, most of *Brand New Dream* is straightforward, speedy modern rock. The one breakaway moment occurs on "One Way Ticket," which gives a nod to '80s punk with crafty guitar work. The one distinguishable quality on *Brand New Dream* is lead singer Jason Cooper's raspy tenor voice. Unfortunately, more than a good throat is needed to give this band an identity, however. While any one of these songs could succeed as a single, as a collection it's standard fare. Its lack of originality is the only thing preventing this good album from being great. (BYO)

—Liana Jonas

WES DANDO
The Tired Hours



No, this isn't the long-lost brother of the Lemonheads' pansy-rock god Evan Dando. Wes Dando actually consists of three members—Kevin Bray on drums, Erik Newbill on guitar and vocals and Peter Sanderson on bass. They're a bit more expressive than the Lemonheads, although both groups possess an inoffensive, teenage girl-friendly alternative rock sound. The nasal vocals of Newbill irritate quickly, staying in mid-range until the sharp emotional peaks at the end of each song. The guitar and bass speak more than the vocals, gelling together to create a crisp mood and spark. (Fracaso Music, 810 NW 63rd, Seattle 98107)

—Teil Linn Wise

WIZARD

Head of the Deceiver



The style Wizard embraces has been described as speed metal or power metal. Regardless of such labels, much of the material on *Head of the Deceiver* features galloping, high-velocity tempos embellished with equally potent, yet melodic guitar

riffs. However, there's more to the sound than fast riffing, as evidenced by the slower grooves on tracks like "Defenders of Metal" and "The First One." Wizard is blessed with a powerful, clear vocalist—no growling or abrasiveness here. The singer is very much in control of his range, whether he chooses to sing in a low baritone or a higher register. By focusing its collective talents on the songwriting, Wizard has created an impressive collection of quality metal. (Limb)

—Domenic Dispaldo

ZEN GUERRILLA

Shadows on the Sun



Zen Guerrilla plays bluesy classic rock with a garage backbone (a.k.a. grunge), lending proof to the claim Sub Pop was and always will be a grunge label. There's a lot of pre-tread ground on *Shadows Of The Sun*, but there is a remarkable late-'80s, Seattle-meets-late-'60s-San Francisco vibe making "Inferno," "Captain Infinity" and "5th & Cecil B." irresistible. The grunge gospel of "Where's My Halo?" is worth the price of admission alone. (Sub Pop, P.O. Box 20645, Seattle 98102)

—Neal Ramirez

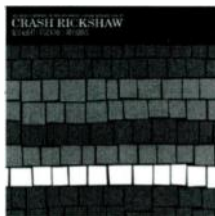
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IDLEWILD *continued from page 14*

great because it's basically picked us up right at a moment when it was right to pick us up."

The right moment indeed. While *Hope Is Important*, Idlewild's second album, has amazing bits of thrashy post-punk (like the raw-vocals opener "You've Lost Your Way" and the chugging, ominous "A Film For The Future") *100 Broken Windows* is a fully conceived, consistent record. Their songwriting has really come into its own with a pop sound maintaining its hard edge. Almost every track is radio-friendly—from the rock anthems "Little Discourage" and "These Wooden Ideas," to the somber jangle of "Let Me Sleep (Next To The Mirror)." It's one of those albums where every other song could be a hit single. If you want a thumbnail to understand the trajectory, think Hüsker Du going from the melodic hardcore of the eclectic *Zen Arcade* to the solid, rocking pop record *New Day Rising*. Jones gets right to the point on this topic—"Well we're all big Bob Mould fans."

Like Hüsker, Idlewild can't really be forced into the perceptive confines of a genre like punk. "We never considered ourselves to be a punk rock band," explains Woomble. "It carries so much baggage—people want to have a go at you straight away. I mean a lot of music that we grew up listening to was punk rock, ya know, whatever you want to call it—Fugazi, Black Flag, all those kinds of records. And that's the kind of records I loved, and that's what the roots of the band are based in. But these kinds of definitions mean something different in every single state and every single country. Now I just call ourselves a rock band 'cuz it made it much easier than indie rock, punk rock. You know, we're just a rock band that's been influenced quite heavily by punk rock, but at the same time we just stay away from that. A lot of people say that punk's more of an attitude, and yes, I agree with that, but I also think it's one of the most overused words in music today."

This is quite a watertight argument, especially in America where a lot of so-called punk has become a dogmatic sound for the MTV set. In this context, rock 'n roll is the more reactionary choice. "And also just for everything to be rock and roll. Like, Black Flag can be, we can be, Mogwai can be—it's the same sort of thing."

This philosophy has done Idlewild well, and the proof is in the pudding. Though they're labelmates with and have even opened for Blur, Idlewild avoids all the trappings of Brit-pop by combining disparate influences into something wholly unique. On the tour bus, the band has been listening to records as diverse as Mogwai's *Rock Action* ("I love that," says Woomble. "It's the best thing they've done by far.") and the Harry Smith Folk Anthology ("I just bought that, its absolutely fantastic.") Woomble explains how all these influences sneak in. "I listen to music constantly—all day if I can—and I think it does play some, you know, just purely subconscious [role] when I'm doing something that way, and I don't even think about what I'm doing, but it probably does sound like there's reference points there for loads of groups and singers and things like that. I mean I think that's the whole nature of doing something creative—take rock and other things and kind of make them into some kind of weird form that you can understand yourself."

Idlewild is excited about how this approach is crystallizing on the new album, which is being produced by Patti Smith guitarist Lenny Kaye. "Someone just suggested to us that we work with Lenny," says Jones, "because he'd been to see us play and he seemed to enjoy it." "Or 'dig it' as he says," adds Woomble. The band has high hopes Kaye's recording style will lead to their best record yet. "He always talks about feelings a lot—going for a feeling, wants to get the right feeling, and we're like 'OK,'" Woomble explains. Jones, who's mostly reserved, has much to say on this subject. "It's kind of not really taken shape yet. We've recorded about seven songs, but we've gotta wait to do some more recording with Lenny Kaye at the end of this tour. At the moment nobody really knows what it's going to sound like. I think we've probably got ideas of how we want it to sound, but generally we just tend to write a lot of songs."

"It's like a jigsaw puzzle," Woomble interjects. "We play lots of songs and have ideas of sounds and then try to make them into an album. We

continued on page 65

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB *continued from page 16*

efforts were dumped into four-track recordings in the garage. In 1998, however, the drummerless group ran into Jago, a recent art school graduate. (Jago's visual work adorns the album's accompanying 7" singles.) Now blessed with solid percussion, the gang began recording and performing live in San Francisco. They subsequently recorded a full-length demo, printing a small run of 500 CDs with no label backing. Concentrating on Los Angeles in the summer of '99, the band played around the town relentlessly for six months, quickly becoming one of the most talked about bands before choosing Virgin Records from a vast and impressive list of suitors.

"Initially Noel Gallagher of Oasis wanted to sign us to his label after hearing some of our material," says Jago. "While it didn't necessarily work out, it was great to get feedback from your peers. It also makes for a good story."

Mr. Gallagher was not the only one who was impressed. The anticipation surrounding BRMC's album is all the evidence one needs. Despite the attention, Turner and Jago seem to keep level heads.

"It's amazing, coming from a place that seemed a bit outside of everything," Turner says. "All of the sudden, to have a record that everyone is talking about and caring and interested in is pretty amazing."

While so much emphasis is placed on what a band has to say these days, BRMC lets the burden fall squarely on its broad sonic shoulders, supported by introspective lyrics and inventively pure rock 'n roll.

"A lot of people don't really get that," explains Turner. "We try to keep a sense of un-clarity in our music. None of us are much of talkers anyway."

Turner says he often aims for a certain level of ambiguity in his lyrics. What some might call vague, BRMC insists is just the natural way for it to let its music breathe.

"Basically," he concludes, "people always get hung up on rock but usually forget to roll." ■



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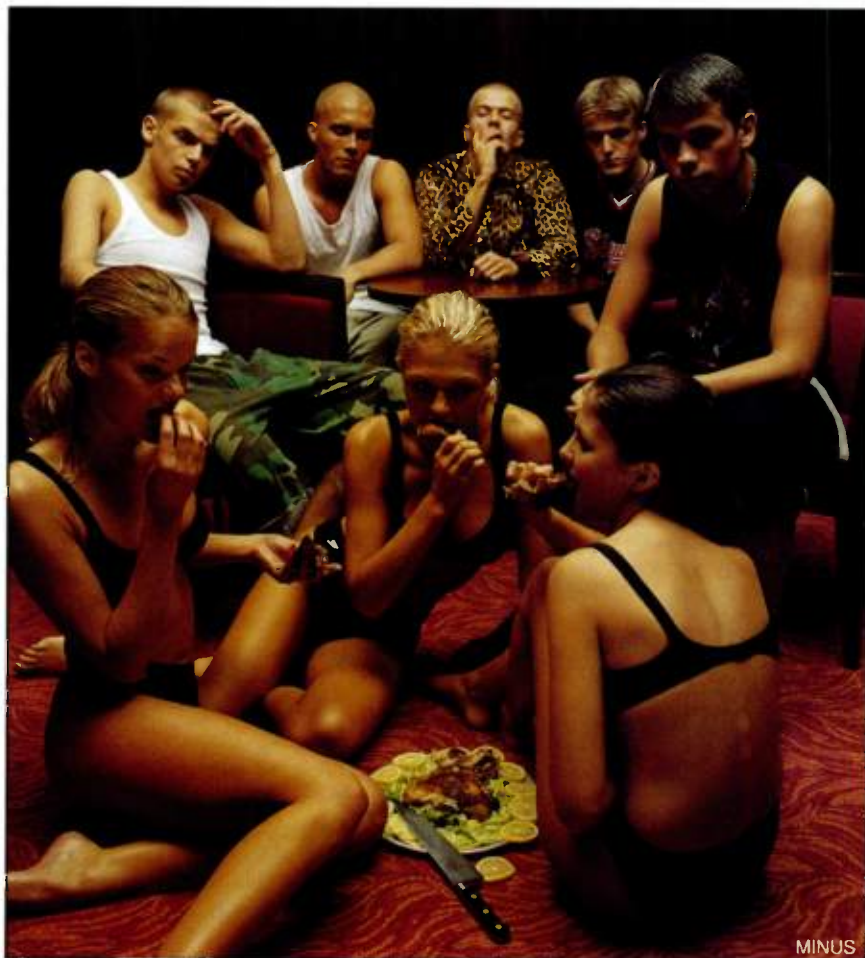
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ANOTHER VICTIM

Former members of **Another Victim** have surfaced in both **Santa Sangre**—with a debut, *Feast For The New Gods*, on **Eulogy Records**—and **True Love**, with releases pending on **Equal Vision** next spring. Santa Sangre is screamy metalcore, while True Love sounds like later **Earth Crisis**... **Ferret** has signed **Remembering Never** and **The Theresa Banks Profiles**. The reputable New Jersey label also released new material from **Every Time I Die** (the sickest band at Hell Fest 2001) and **From Autumn To Ashes**... **Nora's Loser's Intuition** is out on **Trustkill** this month... Guitarist Jason Hager has left **Chimaira** for personal reasons. The Ohio band will release *Pass Out Of Existence* on **Roadrunner** shortly... **Killswitch Engage**, the metalcore band formed from the ashes of **Overcast**, has signed to **Roadrunner**. The new demos are astonishing, with KSE coming into its own sound with a less Euro-metal vibe. Expect an album sometime next year... A new **Botch** EP should surface sometime in the fall... Richmond, Va.'s **Strike Anywhere** has released a new album on **Jade Tree** titled *Change Is A Sound*... **Poison The Well** will hit the studio in November to record the follow-up to *The Opposite Of December*... **Lickgoldensky**—a band formed by some of ex-**Turmoil** boys—has been playing consistently on the east coast. The five-piece released *Enjoy Forever* on **Hawthorne Street Records**. Fans should be warned, this sounds absolutely nothing like the dearly departed **Turmoil**. Lickgoldensky is slow, sludgy noise—like **Neurosis** and **Keelhaul** with a dash of **Deadguy** thrown in for good measure. Definitely worth a try... It seemed **Krishnacore** staple **Shelter** had broken up again after last year's reunion tour and its *When Twenty Summers Pass* album. Now (editor's note—unfortunately), a new disc called *The Purpose And The Passion* has surfaced on **Super Soul Records**, promising vintage **Shelter** for all the old-school fans... An EVR sampler is floating around the scene with two new **Converge** tracks, "The Broken Vow" and "Distance And Meaning," from the band's forthcoming *Jane Doe*. These tracks are a clear indicator **Converge** is going to elevate

itself to **Dillinger Escape Plan** status in the extreme hardcore underground... **Bane** is writing material for a new album... **Most Precious Blood's** debut, *Nothing In Vain*, will see the light of day thanks to **Trustkill**... **Victory Records** just released *Jesus Christ Bobby* by **Minus**. If **Refused** and **Maharaj** went into combat against each other, the result might sound like **Minus**, not to be confused with [minus], which is more on the emo tip... **God Below** has parted ways with its frontman. The Syracuse-based band is seeking a replacement... Two members of **Project 86** have a side project (no pun intended) called **Crash Rickshaw**... **Sepultura** has parted ways with **Roadrunner**... Finally, in its quest to be the **Spinal Tap** of hardcore, **Hatebreed** has lost another drummer. Rigg Ross is out. A temporary replacement is filling in while the band finishes its stint on **Ozzfest**. ■



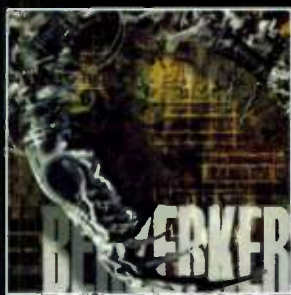
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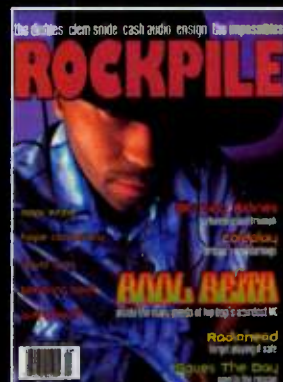
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"I've always loved that song," says Flansburgh. "The original has an under-cooked quality that maintains an impossibly cool vibe. We stretched to figure out another arrangement and did a lot of stunt work."

Whatever the motivation, whatever the modification, any song TMBG writes, or re-tools, instantly becomes their property. One hypothesis Flansburgh holds to the light captures the essence of TMBG in the present tense.

"As songwriters, we started without a rhythm section," he explains. "That's how we wrote for the first 10 years. Without commitment to a set configuration, we're not invested in certain stylistic decisions like most bands. TMBG are musical Flying Dutchmen. We're totally free in that sense. Once you get a taste of working our way, it's impossible to step away."

Flansburgh admits he has no theory regarding TMBG's longevity, aside from bellowing Ad Reinhardt's quote, "After me, there is nothing!" When pressed for a less dramatic answer, he stresses the importance of the relationship between himself and Linnell.

"The only way you can succeed as a band like ours is to have something that ties it all together," he says. "In our case, it's John and me. If we were simply genre hopping, we would not be successful in the most essential way. We'd be transparently bad."

It is the creativity of this long-standing, anti-pop duo defining They Might Be Giants and allowing the group to flow seamlessly through stylistic borders. Flansburgh refers back to another bit of historical dialogue. This quip comes courtesy of blues legend John Lee Hooker. When asked to comment on his legion of imitators, the aging Hooker blasted, "They want to play the blues sooo bad." After a pause, Hooker concluded, "Then, they play the blues so baaad."

Somewhere between the two, They Might Be Giants has balanced ambition with creativity to find a comfortable, quirky little niche. ■

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links by Steve Mowatt

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Need to know when John Denver's first album came out? Can't shake a nagging need to pinpoint the exact date Culture Club or The Electric Prunes formed? Not much reason anyone really should need this information, but for those who do, there's the All Music Guide's web site. Primarily a published guide to music, AMG created this online site to contain all of it's information, adding the web's easy searching and cross-referencing capabilities. AllMusic.com is the definitive online source to discover reviews, ratings and information for just about every artist in every genre.

The site allows users to search by a couple of variables including artist, genre and record label. Each artist's entry includes a complete discography, the names of past and present band members—hyperlinked to their own bios when possible—as well as the band's birthday and, when applicable, expiration date.

The site's discography-by-artist feature is unique and engaging, including detailed information, studio credits and reviews indicating which album's are an artist's best or most representative releases.

AllMusic.com gets credit for avoiding comparisons between artists, instead summarizing each on their own merit. Well-written explanations present each band in a thorough, introductory manner of

interest to a longtime fan, as well as the surfer who hadn't previously known such a sound had existed. Each rating is based on the artist, not its overall position in the music world. AllMusic.com wisely recognizes a four-star Leonard Cohen album could in no way equate to a four-star G.G. Allin record.

Perhaps the best feature of this site, however, is the thorough "see-also" listings to which users are treated when researching bands. With this feature, artists are placed in a rich context of influences, followers and collaborators, which users can then in turn investigate. With this feature, it is easy to see the web of artists growing around each other.

Some smaller tools on AllMusic.com include a music-map and music-genre section. Capsules on each type of rock, jazz and country—to name a few—provide brief histories of each style, representative bands of the genre and a web-like structure showing the origins and evolution of various sounds.

AllMusic.com's easy navigation opens up a plethora of information from one of the web's most encyclopedic music sites. Best of all, AllMusic.com might has finally developed the tools for music fans to expand their collections without running the risks of those disappointing "later albums," where the hair and the solos grow unchecked.

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FEATURED STYLE **Brazilian Jazz**

IDLEWILD continued from page 61

have an idea of what we want to do, I've got an idea of what I want to do, but it's more like a sketch. By the end of the summer, that's when we're setting ourselves to finish it, so we'll have like an album." He adds one last thing about the new record, and the irony is not lost. "Then, hopefully it's gonna be released the same time in America and Britain."

At Sonic Boom, a little more than an hour later, there are maybe 100 people crammed into the small space waiting for the in-store appearance. It's pretty clear Idlewild is not going to be annoying the shoppers this time. It's a mixed crowd—aging hipsters, an "indier than thou" t-shirt, a few Scott Walker haircuts, kids in Buddy Holly glasses. Idlewild plays a sublime acoustic set. Tonight's versions of "Roseability," "These Wooden Ideas," a tune from *Captain* and their single, "Little Discourage," slow down to take on a bittersweet melancholy, like a Smiths' B-side. Woomble's voice is all water and glass, pure and clear, and the kids just love it.

Afterwards, with only 25 minutes before they have to be onstage back at the Crocodile, the boys continue to charm their fans, taking the time to talk to everyone who walks up to shake hands or offer praise. Fairfoull even autographs a girl's arm with a Sharpie marker. They've gained some new followers too. A middle-aged woman in nine-to-five wear goes up to the counter and awkwardly gets directions to the Crocodile. A really extroverted girl in a Harley shirt plays the wannabe groupie, then even asks Jones, "What's the name of your band?" He tells her without even laughing. When she asks where the name Idlewild came from, Jones politely explains how they got it from an *Anne of Green Gables* novel, and he even seems flattered by all the questions.

Idlewild is going to be big. But there's absolutely no rock star posturing here. With a van waiting out front, Jones grabs CDs of Cat Power's *The Covers Record* and Jawbox's *Novelty*, then actually waits in line to pay. Idlewild may be on the way to the top, but they're as modest as ever. Cheers to them staying that way. ■

BEN FOLDS continued from page 41

probably because of being emancipated from my old business situation, just having that like a new thing. And of course there's the motivation like 'Oh man, I'm starting off from the beginning in a way again, so I can't rest on anything. This has to kick ass.' So I knew it had to be good, and I worked hard, and it yields results. And it was like, 'Oh man, let's just keep going.'"

The end result of Folds' spurt is a sprawling 12-song assortment of tunes showcasing how his songwriting has evolved since his last jaunt with the Five, while also demonstrating how much things really haven't changed. Songs like "Zak & Sara," "Not The Same" and the title track stomper reveal the jacked-up, wild persona fans have come to expect during his live shows, while the quiet, introspective subtleties of "The Luckiest" and "Fred Jones Part 2" lend an almost McCartney-ish tone to the mix. Most of the titles of the songs on the album are named after particular characters, something Folds says he really enjoyed doing.

"I like writing with characters. I think it is good, it is fun for me," he says. "A lot of the songs are different characters, but of course it goes without saying that when people write from characters, they are writing about themselves. It is just a different way of expressing that, and it's a fun way to do it."

Fun seems to be what Folds is all about these days, and if there is an underlying thread holding *Suburbs* together it is that he's not afraid to show it. He plans on making videos for the album and has gathered some close friends to put a tour on the road later this year. As for now, Folds is content about the present and gives no indication of worry in the future.

"I think it is a good record. I'm not nervous about it, and I feel like I can stand behind it," he enthuses. "And that's a pretty good achievement if you can feel OK about it." ■

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afterthought



PICKING UP WHERE EARTH CRISIS LEFT OFF...

This summer saw the loss of one of loud rock's most colorful personalities in the breakup of acclaimed straightedge hardcore band Earth Crisis. On July 8, the controversial band played what proved to be its last official show at the summer's Hell Fest in its hometown Syracuse, N.Y. The band had gained international notoriety throughout the last years, due, in part, to its militant approach towards animal rights, ecological awareness and a cruelty-free, vegan diet—not to mention the basics like no smoking, drinking or drugs. Frontman Karl Crisis had appeared in numerous television news shows and even before the U.S. Congress as a spokesperson for the straightedge, vegan, animal rights movement. In the wake of Earth Crisis' demise, *Rockpile* has compiled a list of up and coming bands dedicated to pushing the struggle even further. Pay attention, Young America, and consider this your wake-up call...

GIRTH CRISIS

This portly quartet espouses a hearty, plentiful diet and ample servings for all. Towing a party line of "if you're not fat now, you never were," Girth Crisis unloads its scathing attack on waif culture, *No Compromise In Defense Of Our Girth*. The album's most incendiary track is the blistering two-minute assault, "Out Of Shape," with its confrontational lyrics, "I don't jog!/I don't diet!/At least I can f**king eat!" No doubt, this band will help define the burgeoning hardcore subset of Fat Edge, along with contemporaries like Floormunch, Rorsnack, Youth Of Buffet, Bikini Fill and the artsy Nation Of Obeses.



APATHY A.D.

"For years, young people have existed under the tyranny of opinion," shrugs Apathy A.D. frontman Ducey Carre. "It is time we stand up and not care!" Carre has appeared on TV and at parent/teacher association meetings as a representative of militantly apathetic youth. Citing a "lack of motivation," the band finally released its first two-song demo after nearly five years of occasional practicing. Although not widely distributed or promoted, the band's self-titled demo, *These Kids Don't Want Their Say*, has rocketed its "why bother" attitude into a rallying cry for disaffected young people everywhere.



Illustration by Keith Greiman

X TALL ORDER X

Determined champions of the little man, Belgium's X Tall Order X make no apologies for their "height does not make right" stance of size-based egalitarianism. A sampling of lyrics from the band's debut EP prove these five rockers won't be short changed. "I'd stab you in the back/If only I could reach it/Short and alert/We practice what we preach-it!" Look for an upcoming LP on Small Victories Records titled *All Ages Means All Sizes*.



DISROBE

Combining blistering, mosh-heavy riffage with nudist sentiments, Sweden's Disrobe blasts onto the scene with its debut LP, *State Of The World Undress*. Scandinavian news agencies have already reported accounts of militant nudity among the region's exhibitionist crews. Fearing another Blink 182, Sweden's internal police have struggled to keep tabs on perceived agitators like Disrobe and

Streak Anywhere as well as sympathetic activist groups such as No Shirt, No Shoes, No Peace.

X-PLETIVE

"Yo, sucka, you need some soap for your mouth! Bid-ip-bo!" By now, the catch phrase from the anti-profanity movement's most outspoken band, X-Pletive, is as much a part of punk lore as Minor Threat being tossed out of Disneyland, Shelter's Ray Cappo suing Nabisco or Roger and Vinny from Agnostic Front's commonwealth marriage in Arizona. Although the band has taken slack for being overly puritanical, the members of X-Pletive stand by their creed. "Cursing is usually just a crutch for people with a weak vocabulary," says guitarist Abe Edge. "'Hard' and 'core' are the only four-letter words we've ever needed." Putting money where their G-rated mouths are, the boys used the proceeds from their first album to purchase thesauruses and bars of Lifeboy Soap for local reform schools.



WELCOME TO THE SUBTERRANEAN SECT



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Beauty In Darkness Vol. 5

The *Beauty In Darkness* series is best known for its exceptional selection of bleak and brooding compositions from notable metal bands and *Volume 5* is no exception. With such a broad selection of excellent bands like Dimmu Borgir, Nevermore, Amorphis and more, this collection of epic songs will surely appeal to all fans of metal and gothic blackness. Available Now!



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Nuclear Blast Festivals 2000

Nuclear Blast Festivals 2000 clearly demonstrates the brutal intensity and force behind some of Nuclear Blast's greatest bands and proves these acts have what it takes to devastate the stage. This awesome disc features killer live cuts from Destruction, Hypocrisy, Crematory, Kataklysm and Raise Hell at a fan friendly price. Available 8/7!



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AT THE GATES/GROTESQUE
Gardens of Grief/In The Embrace Of Evil

Century Media Records is exposing the roots of Gothenburg's metal scene by releasing the monumental debut release from Grotesque combined with the original release from the band they evolved into-At The Gates. These revolutionary albums planted the seeds that would eventually sprout into the lush gardens that now house some of today's top metal acts such as In Flames, Arch Enemy, The Haunted, and Soilwork!



SIGH
Imaginary Sonicscapes

Imaginary Sonicscapes is the fifth full-length release for Japan's frenetic metal trio, Sigh. Described as "f**ked up, crazier-than-a-sh*thouse- rat Japanese Metal assault" by Terrorizer and "utterly insane, yet also uniquely compelling" by Kerrang! this is one album that needs to be heard to be believed!



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Identity 7: Deadly Sins

The latest in the *Identity* series featuring unreleased tracks from Skinlab, Stuck Mojo, Jag Panzer, Sigh and Century Media's latest signing, Scar Culture, as well as young up and coming acts like God Forbid, Krisiun and Haste. All surrounded by established names like Iced Earth, Candiria, Nevermore and Cryptopsy, among others.



AVANTASIA
The Metal Opera

Created by Edguy vocalist, Tobias Sammet, Avantasia's release is a true "metal opera" based around a fantasy story rife with deceit, treachery, religion, imprisonment and witchcraft, featuring members of Angra, Edguy, Gamma Ray, Helloween, Rhapsody, Stratovarius, Virgin Steele, Warrior and Within Temptation.



CREMATORY
Remind

Remind is a comprehensive retrospective of Crematory's illustrious musical history featuring all the top favorites from their extensive career. Harshness, melody, excellent guitar arrangements and catchy hooks are all elements incorporated within the Crematory style and *Remind* is an excellent example of Crematory's unique sound and vision. Available Now!



PIG DESTROYER
Prowler In The Yard

Melding an insane musical attack with similarly jarring lyrical prose and an unmatched propensity to incite, *Prowler In The Yard* is a coal-black monolith of nihilism. "...don't miss out on this". - PIT



NEUROSIS
A Sun That Never Sets

Coming August 7th!!!! A truly moving experience that demands to be heard, *A Sun That Never Sets* blends unprecedented beauty and radiance with the band's classic passion and power. The wait will be well worthwhile. Prepare



ZYKLON
World Ov Worms

World ov Worms is one of the year's heavy highlights. Featuring Samoth & Trym (Emperor), Destructhor (Myrkskog) and Daemon (Limbonic Art) is a mammoth album. Catch the band's US debut at the Milwaukee Metal Fest August 10/11.



DIABOLICAL MASQUERADE
Death's Design

The exceptional side project of KATATONIA's Blakkheim will hit store shelves on August 21st. Heavy music with a dark and morose edge composed and produced by Blakkheim and Dan Swan. Performed by Diabolical Masquerade with guest musicians and the Maillen Quartet. www.olympicrecordings.com

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