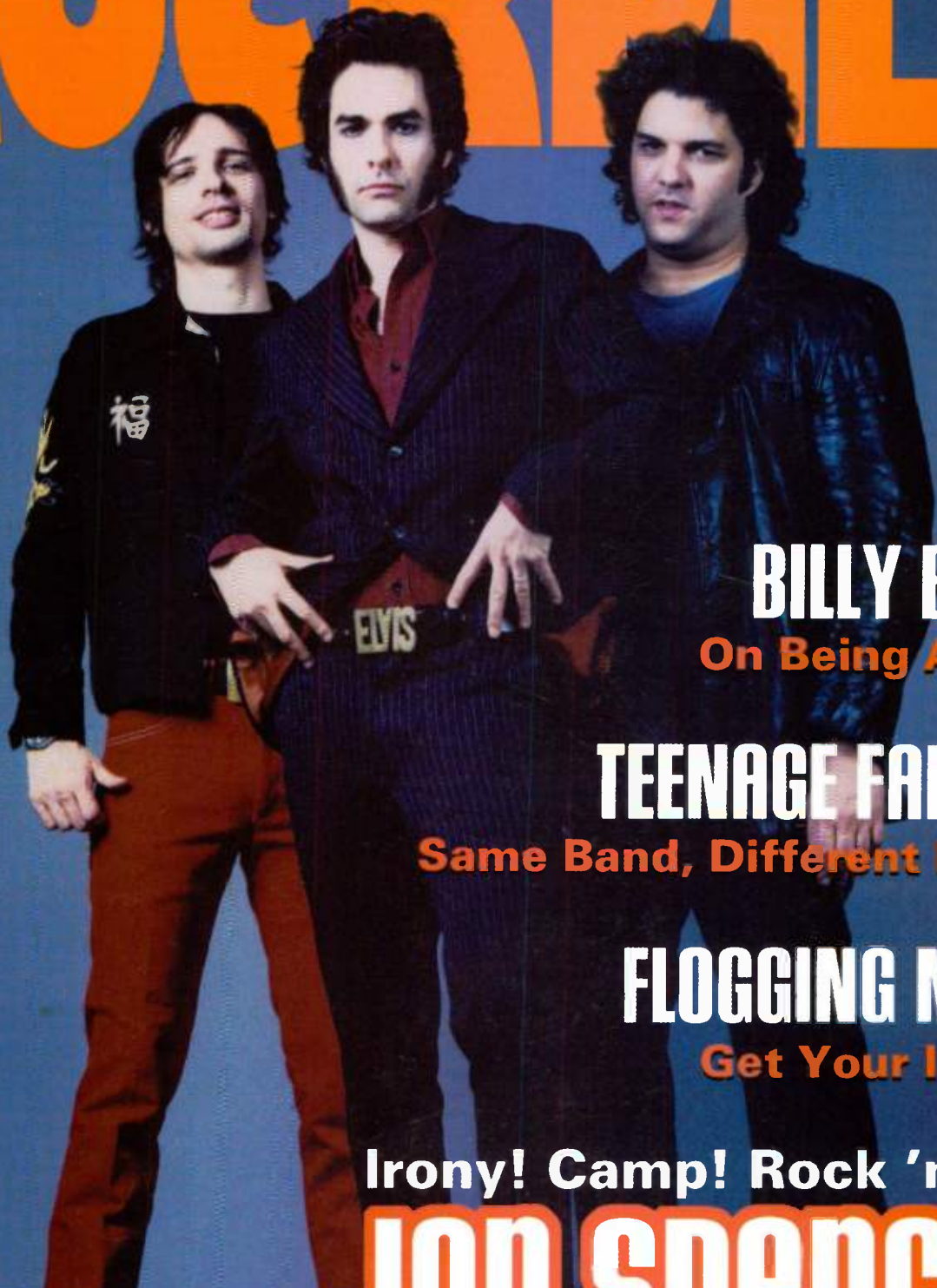


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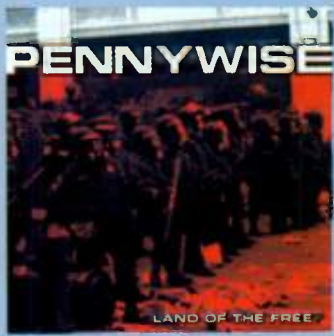
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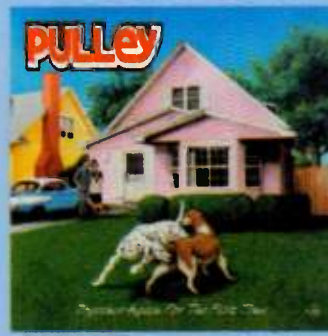
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volume 8 • number 3

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# Letters

## ***They Like-A Da Promo Photos***

Just wanted to drop a line to give credit where it's due. The Afterthought of the January issue was worth carrying around just to show to friends. Bands always look so ridiculous in promo photos and the amount of genre-specific showboating that goes on could kill a horse! If I had to pick my favorite, I'd vote for Jimmy Eat World walking-because-they-couldn't-afford-a-tour-van photo. Keep up the good work.

*Arthur Sellers  
Isla Vista, CA*

## ***Indie Pessimism***

DIY—the letters have faded into history, but the hope of a comfy musical career without big-label backing still dominates all advice to players eager for a less rocky road to freedom. It's not surprising that proof of this myth never goes deeper than anecdotes, since even a cursory knowledge of music careers leaves DIY hobbling on rotten crutches. In an economy merciless to any worker without company protection how useful can independence be when the artist is overwhelmed by medical bills or venal club owners? No amount of exhausting multi-tasking can give atomized individuals the power that only comes from a tightly organized community as widespread and cunning as the industry determined to keep each musician looking out for the loneliest number.

*James Hopkins  
via e-mail*

*(Editor's Note: Apparently bands like Shellac, The Ex and Fugazi and labels like Touch 'N Go, Merge, Dischord and Mr. Lady failed to receive this important memo.)*

## ***Better Think of Your Future***

Hats off for the decent story on Jenny Toomey a few months back, but I was disappointed to see the brevity with which you covered her involvement with the Future of Music Coalition. For those not in the know, the FOMC is a grass-roots activist group (co-founded by Toomey) out to protect artists' rights in this brave new world of corporate restructuring and technological Prometheus. Through her own diligence, Toomey has sat at the discussion tables of record executives, CEOs and congress-

sional policy makers, injecting a much-needed dose of the indie musician's perspective. While many of the Coalition's events come with admissions/plate fees enough to make most indie musicians run screaming, in true, populist spirit, most can be viewed online or have their minutes posted on the net. Most recently, the website [www.on-the-i.tv](http://www.on-the-i.tv) hosted a series of presentations from various artists titled "New Models," including Toomey, Fugazi guitarist/Dischord Records owner Ian MacKaye and Indigo Girl/Daemon Records owner Amy Ray. Any musician who takes her art seriously—especially those for whom there is an intersection between music and business—ought to be following what Toomey and company are up to. The FOMC might not have all the answers, but Toomey's been engaging policy makers in some interesting debates.

*Saul Campagna  
Athens, GA*

## ***You Make the Call***

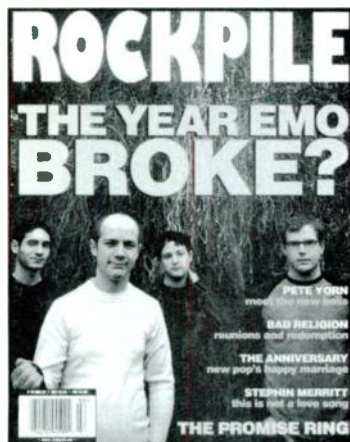
I just want to get this straight. You do a big story on emo music and interview people from Troubleman and Jade Tree and they both claim they're not emo labels? Fair enough. Now run the story where Radiohead says they're not pretentious and The Strokes say they're music is original.

*Kurt Evans  
Evanston, IL*

## ***The Naked Truth***

Hey, I'm totally digging March'02. Amanda, you are such a good writer. Stinking Liz is honored and lucky to have your mighty pen behind us. The picture shocked me. I had forgotten all about it. It's great. For sure we don't look like anybody else. Thank you again and again.

*Cheshire Agusta  
Philadelphia, PA*



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# CONTENTS

April 2002 • volume VIII • number 3 • issue 79

## JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

Blues Explosion frontman Jon Spencer goes larger than life on the band's first new album in four years.

By Dan Pastorius

### TEENAGE FANCLUB 28

With consistency as both a blessing and a curse, Scotland's Teenage Fanclub returns with a hearty howdy!

by Peter Bothum

### BILLY BRAGG 36

Britain's leftist bard reinvents the notion of Englishness.

by Steve Paul Gibbs

### FLOGGING MOLLY 40

The new kings of Celtic punk release *Drunken Lullabies* and wow the Warped Tour—Danny Boy, the half pipes are calling.

by Chris Johns

# 32



### DEPARTMENTS Lava hot bands

Letter from the editor .....	5
Gravel Pit .....	8
<i>music news and interviews</i>	
Records .....	43
Switched On .....	52
<i>hip hop/electronica</i>	
Under the Radar .....	54
<i>music you may have missed</i>	
Hard Rock News .....	56
All Things Indie .....	58
Straight From the Edge .....	62
Afterthought .....	66
<i>the parting shot</i>	

The Lawrence Arms .....	16
<i>by Liana Jones</i>	
Sean Na Na .....	18
<i>by Liana Jones</i>	
The Mooney Suzuki .....	18
<i>by Jonathan Cholewa</i>	
90 Day Men .....	22
<i>by Chris Johns</i>	
BYO Turns 20 .....	24
<i>by Allan Martin Kemler</i>	
Tristeza .....	26
<i>by Steve Paul Gibbs</i>	



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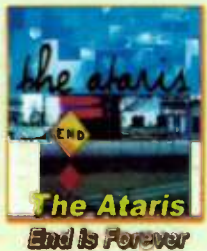
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## 5 QUESTIONS



### THE MAROONS

When John Moen isn't playing drums for indie luminaries like The Spinanes, The Fastbacks, The Gossamer Wings and Stephen Malkmus, he can be found fronting The Maroons. The band's 1996 debut appeared courtesy of Slo-Mo Records and was followed by some touring around the Northwest. A regional following soon translated into a more national affair as fans and critics attempted to describe the band's unique songwriting with a myriad of terms—the most creative being "speed Sinatra." Now, the respected In Music We Trust label drops *You're Gonna Ruin Everything*. Answers by John Moen (vocals/guitar)

**Describe your best strategy to get out of a traffic violation or a speeding ticket.**

You've got to belt out a rousing rendition of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," and pretty soon you'll have that ol' copper crying and dancing a reel. He'll be singing along—it's a real hootenanny.

**What makes you squeamish?**

Passats and little, tiny eyeglass frames.

**If you'd gone out to audition for Limp Bizkit, what would you have done to make a lasting impression?**

Rousing rendition of "Will the Circle..."

**What's your favorite ocean, and why?**

The only one I have a real relationship with is the Pacific. I love her because she is an unforgiving mistress and because of the great film starring Lee Marvin and Tishiro Mifune called *Hell in the Pacific*. I also love the delicious Dungeness Crab.

**What's the best misinterpretation of a popular song lyric you've ever made? (my high school hooky-partner swore Fugazi's "Waiting Room" started off with "I am a Cajun Boy, I sail away away away")**  
"She'll be comin' 'round the mountain with a gun..."

## GOOD INTENTIONS by Mike McKee

Forget "giving at the office" and drop the protest-folk stereotypes. Plenty of modern rockers are using music to help benefit needy organizations and do-gooders around the country. From prisoner rights, homelessness and anti-violence campaigns, countless groups working on a myriad of social justice issues are finding allies in the music world. Here's three new releases filled with artists who put their music where their mouths are. Product of your environment? Change your world instead.

### VARIOUS ARTISTS With Literacy and Justice for All

With Literacy and Justice for All...



A Benefit for the D.C. Area  
Books to Prisons Project

Liner notes to *With Literacy and Justice For All* document the alarming growth of the U.S. prison industry (we spend more than \$5 billion on the construction of new jails every year). Personal and informative writing enclosed within details the benefits of educating and remembering those behind bars—apparently rehabilitation isn't a forgotten ideal after all. Benefiting the Washington, D.C.-area Books to Prisons Project, this CD compiles a diverse crew of punk and indie-rock bands, from the skate-minded thrashers of Crispus Attucks to former Smart Went Crazy frontman and Fugazi/Dismemberment Plan engineer Chad Clark. Fans of the angsty emo-pop supergroup Thursday ought to take special note—the band has contributed a completely exclusive song, "Mass As Shadows." A thick booklet

included with the CD provides plenty of places to learn more about the bands or the issues. For starters, try [www.NoMorePrisons.org](http://www.NoMorePrisons.org) or [www.PrisonActivist.org](http://www.PrisonActivist.org). (Exotic Fever, P.O. Box 297, College Park, MD 20741)

### VARIOUS ARTISTS Life and Debt Original Motion Picture Soundtrack



If the dominant face of anti-globalization movement in everyone's mind is a ski-masked student protester dodging rubber bullets in Seattle (or Los Angeles, D.C., Prague or Genoa), than perhaps people haven't heard the full story. The legendary Tuff Gong label (Bob Marley, Peter Tosh) is out to spread the righteous word as usual, this time with a soundtrack to the award-winning film *Life and Debt*, which explores the devastating effect of global economic policy of the working class people of Jamaica. Hailed by *New York* magazine as the most vibrant synergy of reggae music, politics and passion since Jimmy Cliff's *The Harder They Come*, *Life and Debt's* soundtrack boasts contributions from big names like The Melody Makers, Buju Banton, Peter Tosh and the prophet himself, Bob Marley. Proceeds from the soundtrack benefit the non-profit group URGE (Unlimited Resources Giving Enlightenment, [www.unlimitedresources.com](http://www.unlimitedresources.com)). The group, founded by Ziggy Marley, is committed to promoting social welfare and poverty reduction for children and young adults of lower income in the



United States, Jamaica, Haiti and Africa. If the smashed-out windows of a downtown Starbucks fail to affect, the militant poetry of "the people's music" is sure to point out the International Monetary Fund as dem Babylon I no wan' support. Rrrright. (Tuff Gong, 632 Broadway Ave., New York 10012)

**THE PINE VALLEY COSMONAUTS & GUESTS**  
**The Executioner's Last Songs**



Bloodshot, Chicago's premier alt-country label releases this 18-song anti-tribute to capital punishment from The Pine Valley Cosmonauts—an all-star affair boasting Jon Langford and Steve Goulding (Waco Brothers, Mekons) and Tom Ray (Devil in a Woodpile). Since 1989, 13 innocent men have been exonerated and released from Illinois' death row (the national total is 99). Apparently the odds just aren't sure enough for the Cosmonauts, whose new record benefits Artists Against the Death Penalty and the Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Campaign (chiefly responsible for the state's current halt on capital sentencing). The cameo cast in agreement with the band is what really makes this CD, however, with appearances from Steve Earle, New Pornographer/alt-country superstar Neko Case, Kelly Hogan, Rosie Flores and Handsome Family's Brett Sparks. Even Future of Music Coalition founder/former Tsunami guitarist Jenny Toomey pops up for a rendition of Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets."

Other notable tracks include a remake of Johnny Cash's "25 Minutes To Go" from members of The Aluminum Group, and Dean Schlabowske (Waco Bros.), Sally Timms, Tracey Dear and Kelly Hogan's take on The Adverts' punk anthem "Looking Through Gary Gilmore's Eyes." (Bloodshot, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago 60618)

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Home Alive**  
**Compilation II: Flying Side Kick**

In 1993 when Gits frontwoman Mia Zapata was tragically raped and murdered, concerned friends and supporters helped found Home Alive, a community organizing project providing affordable and accessible self-defense classes to women and girls. The curriculum of Home Alive is structured to address the issues of bigotry, sexism, homophobia, racism and abuse in our society. Although the group is based in Seattle, its example and coalition work connect it with countless like-minded organizations across the country. *Flying Side Kick* marks the second release in a series benefiting the Seattle organization, and compiles songs from a variety of artists who support the group's work. Olympia, Wash.'s The Need delivers a brooding rendition of Metallica's "Frayed Ends of Sanity," while The Pinkos offer a Joe Hill cover. The Gossip's "I Want It (To Write)" and Amy Ray & The Butchies' "On Your Honor" weigh in as some of the compilation's heavy hitters, while The Makers' "Tattoo for Julie" is sure to keep the mod-punks a-smilin'. Assistance from Dead Moon, Sanford Arms, The Black Halos, Zen Guerilla and Songs For Emma helps round out the collection—a diverse gathering for a good cause. For more information on Home Alive, point your fearless browser to [www.Home-Alive.org](http://www.Home-Alive.org). (Broken Rekids, P.O. Box 460402, San Francisco 94146)

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## GETTIN' DOWN (SOUTH) TO THE NITTY GRITTY

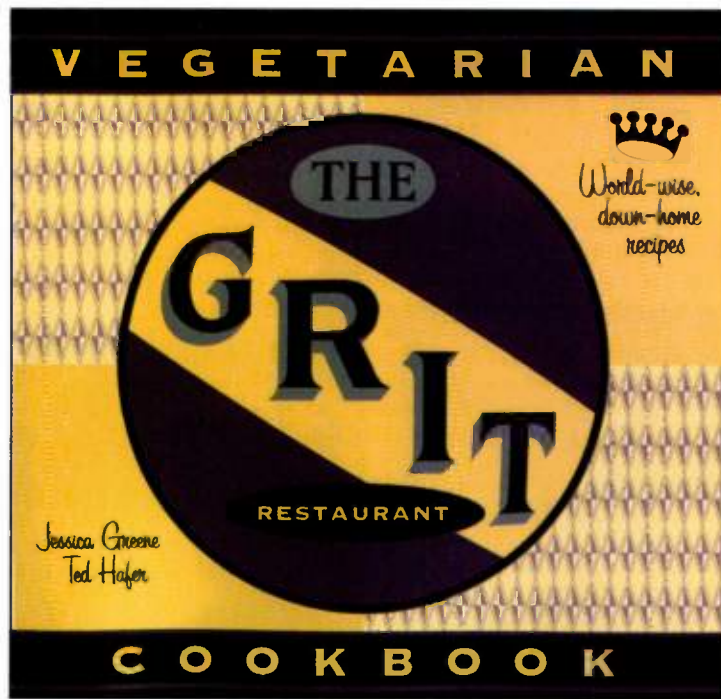
Located in Athens, Ga., The Grit has been famous for its innovative, vegetarian take on traditional southern recipes, as well as its unexpected and culturally infused menu since the early '90s. The playfully reminiscent design of the book echoes the attitude of the restaurant, incorporating some of the many entertaining chalkboard designs, which have greeted customers with evening specials over the years. The book features more than 130 of the spot's most requested dishes, including many salads and dressings, soups and sandwiches, breads and desserts, sauces and side dishes.

The most interesting thing about this book (besides its curry split pea soup recipe) is the fact it features quotes and commentary from a long list of well-known indie rockers. Whether you have heard of them or not, they all urge you to stop in The Grit should you find yourself south of the Mason-Dixon. It seems the

diverse menu attracts an equally diverse crowd—from Spalding Gray to the Jayhawks—the list goes on and on.

A favorite tour stop for Ian MacKaye of Fugazi and countless others, The Grit is credited as one of the outstanding vegetarian restaurants in the country, if not the best. Good, perhaps eccentric, company and an affordable menu seem to be a few ingredients keeping the likes of Michael Stipe and Kate Pierson of The B-52's coming back for seconds. Poetry dances and vegan dessert-inspired impromptu performances are enough to keep the locals standing in line. Again and again, the down-home atmosphere and generally quirky patronage of the establishment are referenced in the list of reasons not to skip a trip to The Grit when in Athens.

Fortunately for those who aren't apt to travel to Georgia any time soon, all the qualities of this



charmingly unique place have been wrapped up into a little book full of delicious ideas sure to make even the most hard-core carnivore salivate. Take Dave Schools of Wide-spread Panic's word for it when he

says, "If every town had a vegetarian restaurant as good as The Grit, there would be a lot more cows, pigs and chickens running around." (Hill-StreetPress.com)

—Matthew McGlynn

Playing fetch with his cat during a surprise snowstorm in Georgia, Bill Doss, mastermind behind The Sunshine Fix, reveals the paradoxical inspiration beneath the making of *Age Of The Sun*—"to create another Dark Side Of The Moon," he laughs.

Doss, who first gained notoriety as half the braintrust of psychedelic pop pundits Olivia Tremor Control, views his solo bow under a groovy new moniker with measured anticipation. A studio rat by nature, the spectacled alt-hippie Svengali composed the entire song cycle on keyboards. The abrupt change was promulgated by his mom, who gift-wrapped the family piano and shipped it from her Louisiana home to Doss' analog laboratory in Athens.

"I sat down and started making up new chords," he recalls before lapsing into more cryptic commentary. "The album is a suite, though not conceptually."

Honing his chops by playing along to vintage Ray Charles records, Doss cut and pasted a series of trippy sound collages, tempering his current Pink Floyd infatuation with a dose of 1970s Curtis Mayfield AM-radio funk. "It took a long time to make. Often I couldn't tell if it was good or bad."

Relying on the advice of anyone who'd lend an ear, Doss tested demos on friends,

lovers and other strangers to ensure the melodies he heard in his head weren't plagiarized from songs absorbed while falling asleep to oldies stations. George Harrison lawsuits aside, Doss had no reason to worry.

"Will Cullen Hart, my writing partner in OTC once came in with what was essentially 'Strawberry Fields.' When I hear a melody and put chords behind it—nobody recognizes it. It's like the sun emerging from behind the clouds."

Bringing Doss' acid-drenched opus to fruition was the work of a stellar cadre of local heroes, including Of Montreal bassist Derek Almstead, drummers Ryan Lewis of The Four Corners and Neil Cleary of Essex Green and Hayride guitarist Kevin Sweeney. According to Doss, his compositions undergo several transformations before he finally presents them in the studio. Affording his collaborators a template allowing free reign to expand on his original ideas, it's no wonder the results are nothing short of mind-blowing.

Surrendering so much control to fellow cooks in the kitchen bespeaks a certain level of clarity and confidence. Still, Doss insists his household isn't free of self-doubt. Even his pet seems prone to schizophrenia, opting for a game of fetch rather than a stretch of feline lounging.

"Perhaps he was a dog in a previous life," Doss



offers of his pet's apparent identity crisis. "Either that, or it's a dog in a cat suit that can't get out."

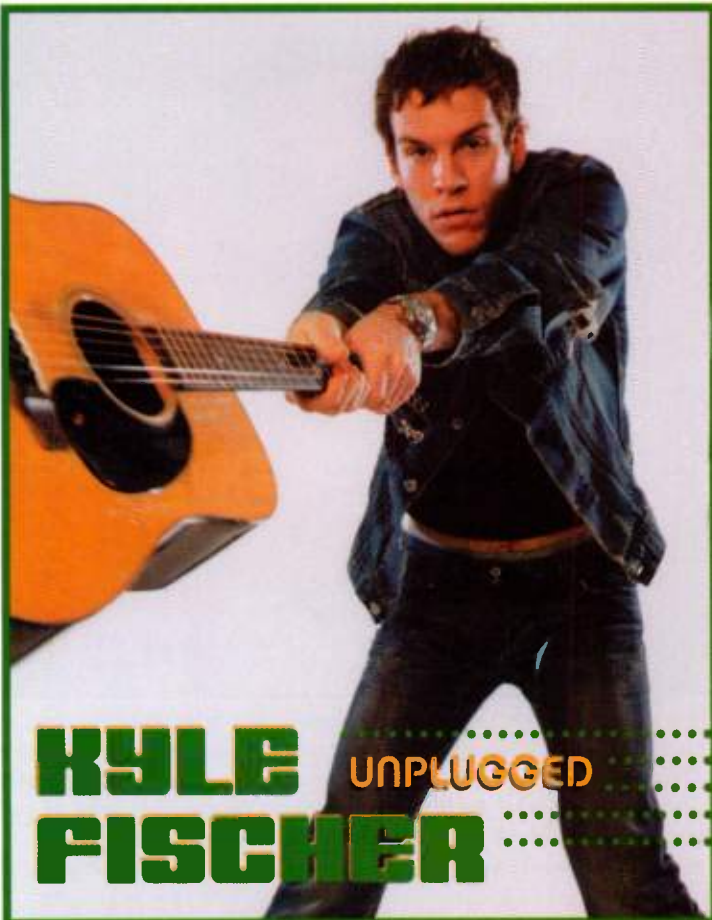
Luckily, the musician himself is faring better than his cat.

"There are times when I walk around ask-

ing myself, 'what am I doing?' I don't have a job, I don't have a career," he admits. "Then a great song pops into my head and I realize this is what I'm supposed to be doing!"

—Tom Semioli





# KYLE FISCHER UNPLUGGED

When Kyle Fischer speaks of his debut disc, he refers to himself as “we.” Although collaboration with friends and kindred artists helped fuel Fischer’s latest, the project was clearly a solo endeavor. As a guitarist and songwriter with the emo-pop trio Rainer Maria, Fischer hardly has time to relax. Between logging more than 200 shows last year, the band found time to release the critically acclaimed *A Better Version of Me* (Polyvinyl), bringing Rainer Maria to a wider, new audience. In the midst of all the hype, Fischer stepped away from the whirlwind of group activity to tie up a few loose ends, which became *Open Ground*, a collection of quiet acoustic songs.

“There was no pressure at all,” Fischer recalls of his newfound incarnation on a cold Saturday morning in New York. “Some of the tracks were written as early as 1997 when we were in Berlin working on the first Rainer album. I originally thought they’d be band songs but they didn’t quite stick.”

Initially conceived as a side venture with Rainer Maria cocreator Caitlin De Marrais—who contributes lead vocals, bass and piano on a few cuts—Fischer became the headliner by accident. Ironically his presence wasn’t required on “Too Soon To Know,” a De Marrais composition questioning her wandering spirit.

“All of a sudden, I was making my own record, even though it’s somewhat collaborative,” Fischer says. “The style of these songs is obviously different than what people would expect.”

Enlisting Rainer Maria producer Mark Haines

(“an absolute fucking genius” according to the new solo artist), Fischer relied on the studio wizard’s knack for “preserving the innate beauty and delicate sound of stringed acoustic instruments.”

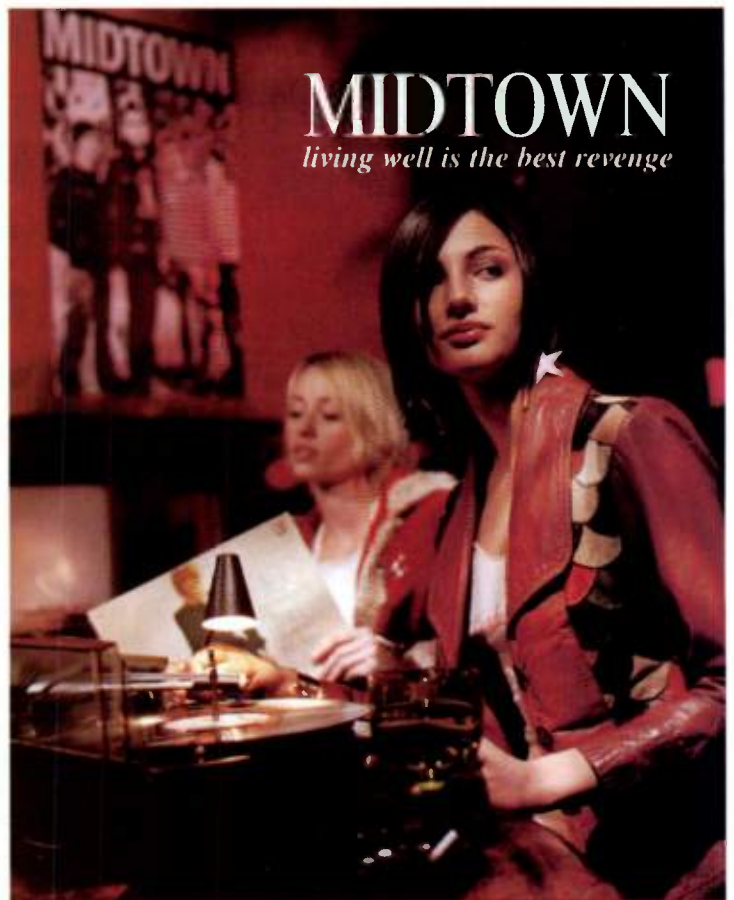
When Fischer thought the mixes were perfect, Haines would tell him to “get lost,” while he continually twiddled knobs and tweaked the timbre until the guitarist returned. The irregular work method succeeded in conveying the immediate energy of the sessions without sacrificing intimacy. However Fischer had to put his foot down every now and then. During the recording of “The Noon Day Song,” a friend in the control room admonished him for recording the “worst song ever” after basic tracking was completed. Fischer held his ground and the trippy space-rock collage stands as the album’s ethereal touchstone.

The cover shot of Fischer was taken by Henry Leutwyler, a famous Swedish photographer who had recently completed the entire Christmas issue of *Newsweek*.

“I came in from the rain cold and soaking wet and had to loop a shoe-lace around my guitar neck because the strap was too short,” remembers Fischer. “I kept shouting ‘no Henry this is wrong!’ But he wouldn’t listen. All he would say to me was ‘Eets perrrrfect! Veee shoot now!’ Henry made me look a lot better on film than I actually am in person.”

Fischer plans to record more solo albums in the near future but declines comment on a male modeling career.

—Tom Sanioli



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## MUSTACHES EARN CASH FOR KIDS' CHARITY

Deciding on a winner for the hotly contested title of 2001's weirdest charity fundraiser was easy this year. The Indiana Children's Wish Fund ([www.indwish.org](http://www.indwish.org)) reported receiving an impressive \$5,500 raised by a group of nearly 50 young men from Bloomington, Ind., who garnered sponsorship for the temporary growth of mustaches.

Mustaches For Kids began on Nov. 1, 2001, as volunteers put aside their razors and started seeking pledges. According to furry-lipped do-gooder and recent Indiana University grad Ryan Noble, the fundraiser followed the same model as a typical cancer or March of Dimes charity marathon. Instead of asking for money-per-mile, however, volunteers sought pledges for every day a 'stache was maintained. Pledges were based on five incremental packages named after various mustached celebrities—25 cents sponsored a "Tom

Selleck" (the most popular pledge, according to Noble), \$1 a "Burt Reynolds," \$2 a Wilford Brimley. For a stout \$5-per-day pledge, volunteers cultivated a "Rollie Fingers," named after the notoriously moustached Major League baseball pitcher.

Noble and co-conspirator Stuart Hyatt say they were inspired to launch Indiana's Mustaches For Kids following the success of a friends' Los Angeles chapter credited with raising over \$3,000 in previous years.

Indeed, charitable facial hair seems to be an infectious concept. Within the first two weeks of the Indiana drive, the original group of volunteers had nearly quadrupled in size, including growers from all across the state. Next year, Noble says the Indiana crew will renew the campaign, as will new chapters cropping up across the country.

The popularity of the campaign



is also due in part to the savvy marketing of Noble, whose Kangaroo Press churned out T-shirts, posters and buttons for Mustaches For Kids. A clever blend of marketing, humor and charity, it

seems, has brightened the days of numerous sick children and their families in the Hoosier state. Perhaps the cure for cancer is just a mullet away?

—Mike McKee

It's a startlingly cold evening when I meet Matt Pond, purveyor of stringed baroque pop, in a tiny oriental coffee shop in Philadelphia's Chinatown. After a few minutes of conversation with drummer Mike Kennedy, frontman Matt shows up, slapping a bottle of Vicks throat spray down on the table, announcing an illness he's been wrestling with all week. Whatever his health, this is the same Matt Pond who somehow managed to make five recordings of magnificently sad-eyed pop sketched out in ornate detail by a cadre of cellos, violins, vibraphones and French horn without ever infringing on any discernible style of music. No country. No rock. No eclectic French pop. No folksy pining or whining. Instead, his songs have a sort of purity to them—a kind of internal logic revealing itself in melody. He says he prefers the word "pure," but it's Kennedy who explains how the trick was done.

"Matt uses these strange, made-up tunings that he invents himself, and I think that's what makes the music have such a unique sound," Kennedy reveals. "Because they're so different, they force you to think about the structure of the music outside of what's normal."

Sipping on a cup of oolong from a ceramic mug, Pond explains how his new album, *The Green Fury* (Polyvinyl), is just another step in the band's musical evolution. Though at first glance much of Matt Pond PA's music may seem a bit dour or even melancholy, after a few spins you begin to understand what he means when he describes—or rather defends—his music as "Saturday night



music." It may not be Saturday night dance party music in the typical sense, but it does have a certain airy quality suggesting anything's possible.

But whether the music makes you want to stir things up or just stir a few cocktails and lay in bed, either way the effect is intentional.

"I did have an idea for the sound," explains Pond of the band's origin and pretext. "I don't like guitar solos. In general, anyone who likes to write guitar solos a lot is not someone I can relate to. I'm such a retarded guitar player. Then, I love French horns

and strings. Somehow incorporating the two seemed it would really add backbone to what I wanted to do."

Though Pond is steeped in experience as a rock musician, he says things with his previous bands never felt quite comfortable. When his last band broke up, Pond set out to find the elements needed to create the perfect sound, birthing new confidence on stage. The search yielded the beautifully, absurdly finessed playing found on Matt Pond PA's first album, *Deer Apartments* (Lancaster Records).

While only two members remain from the first

album, the band's sound has remarkably both stayed the same and evolved at the same time. Now, after spending so much time performing and recording with this current incarnation, Pond says he's ready to let go of his writing responsibilities and truly collaborate with the band bearing his name.

"The reason I feel so comfortable with the whole thing is because everybody is just so fucking good," offers Pond. "Now when I'm up there, I don't feel stupid anymore."

—Allan Martin Kemler





# THE STRATFORD 4

## products of fate

Sometimes things are just meant to be. Just ask Stratford 4's Chris Streng, who used to play in a band with equally talented and like-minded musicians Robert Turner and Peter Hayes. When the three ended their casual jam band, Turner and Hayes went on to form the highly lauded Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, while

Streng resided in relative obscurity, bandless.

As fate would have it, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club began sharing its practice space with a band on the hunt for a new vocalist. When the newcomers asked the BRMC for suggestions, Streng seemed an obvious reference. Thus The Stratford 4 was born.

The line-up, consisting of Streng handling vocal and guitar duties, Jake Hosek (guitar), Andrea Cateregli (drums) and Sheetal Singh (keyboards), had to go through the normal growing pains of a band, figuring out who would write, what to call the band and how things ought to sound. While some bands wind up driven

by a central megalomaniac, The Stratford 4 maintains things as a group effort.

"We tend to have a pretty good balance where no one person takes over too much," says Streng. "We all listen to different kinds of stuff among the band members. There are a couple of records we all have and we all listen to—we all bring this different element in."

*The Revolt Against Tired Noises*, the band's debut on New York's Jetset label, is a mixture of shoe-gazing pop and spacey experimentalism. Streng's relaxed vocals lend tranquillity to the band's broad, expansive sound. Just having a record out on a cool label doesn't guarantee acceptance, or popularity, however. Streng doesn't seem all that concerned.

"With The Stratford 4, I don't think we'll ever really reach a point where we are deemed acceptable," he says, unfazed. "I think we are all OK with that."

—Jonathan Cholewa

### RARE EARTH MATERIAL RE-ISSUED

Some bands create classics destined to gestate like sleepers, buried in the underground until some lucky someone does the digging. While the band Earth might not be much of a household name, the outfit helped establish the experimental end of noisy, fuzzed out groove rock while laying the groundwork for peers like Sleep. As a project of Dylan Carlson and former Melvin/The Thrones performer Joe Preston, Earth's recorded matter always remained a bit of a rarity until now. The newly minted Philadelphia label No Quarter has recently unearthed some of the

band's classic recordings, compiling them on one CD, *Sunn Amps and Smashed Guitars*. *Sunn Amps* contains both ends of the spectrum in the world of Earth. What some might describe as an abrasive annoyance, others will surely treasure as an exhumed piece of genius. "Ripped on Facist Ideas" is 30 minutes of feedback and droning guitars culled from a 1995 performance in London. A close listen actually reveals a unique rendition of Skynard's "Freebird," slowed to a snail's pace. The four remaining tracks (bonus tracks for this re-release) illustrate Earth's penchant for extra-heavy riffs and big grooves, churned at the speed of the earth's tectonic plates. These four recordings are apparently from Earth's first recording session making for quite an interesting listen. Grunge completists—say what?—will take special interest in "Divine and Bright, sung by Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. (No Quarter, P.O. Box 13462, Philadelphia 19104)



—Mike McKee



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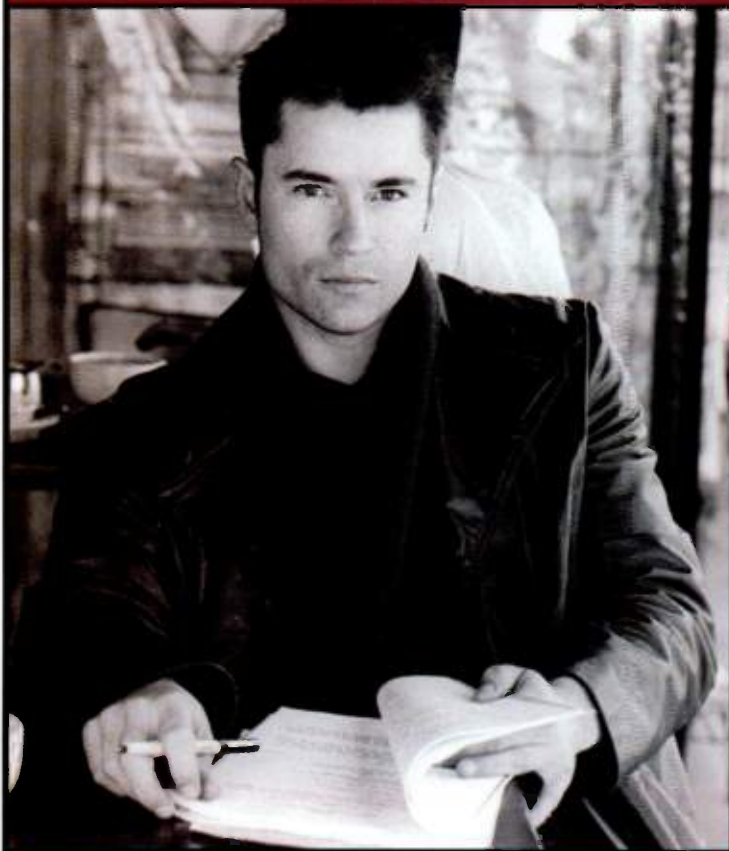
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## MAKING IT IN THE REAL WORLD:

### Rockpile's Mike McKee Chats with the Director of *The Real World Chicago*



Take seven strangers, put them in a house, pay their bills, stick cameras in their faces at all hours of the day and night, replay the rare tidbits of drama with a hip soundtrack and show it all on the network responsible for launching Adam Curry into rock 'n roll history. Such is the formula for MTV's *The Real World*, the vanguard of the recently exhausted reality TV trend—surprisingly people still seem like they can't get enough. Kenny Hull, an edgy and accomplished fashion photographer, directed the show's recent and controversial Chicago season.

*As a director, what were you looking for and/or hoping for in this season's cast?*

I was looking to break out of the old patterns that had been building over the past few seasons, such as the *Angry Black Man* or the *Will She or Won't She Make It Back From Rehab?* While those stories were told well in the past, I wanted Chicago to be about fresh ideas. I wanted humor. I wanted sexuality. I wanted honesty. I wanted normal kids searching for themselves without the clichés.

*Yeah, we wouldn't want clichés. So, to what do you credit the enormous success of the *Real World* series? And what do you feel makes your Chicago season so damn special?*

I must give most of the credit to the cast. With our show, you can have the greatest city and the coolest house, but if you don't have a good cast you are sunk. We spent four months searching for these guys. They aren't perfect, but that's the point. Secondly, the crew we employed was the best ever. If you watch for such things, you'll notice that the photography and coverage of these scenes makes you feel like there is a three-camera setup, but in reality I only had one camera and operator knocking off a shot list on the fly, listening to the story, holding for reaction shots, panning to the roommate who just walked in. It's exhausting and it never stops, but that's what makes it the most rewarding gig ever. Finally, summer in Chicago can't be beat. After that long winter, people lose their minds. We did as well.

*Cara slept with three different people in one episode. That's tight girlfriend is so comfortable with getting her*

*freak on. But can you promise me none of this is coaxed or encouraged by the staff or writers? Besides, who was the anonymous rockstar for whom she notched her bedpost?*

Cara, and all of them, were immensely comfortable with their personal lives. That also has a lot to do with the success of the show. Cara acted not unlike millions of other young adults do every day. I commend her for it. Sorry about the rockstar, but no gossip. I bet you can figure it out. Search the chat rooms.

*No thanks. Anyway, how did you wind up as a director for *The Real World*?*

I started as a casting director for the shows, traveling all over the world to find new people. Then I moved into post production and wrote outlines of the shows for the editors. Out of 10,000 hours of footage, we use nine of them. Someone has to decide what story you are telling. I got my start as a director on the New Orleans series. After that harrowing experience, they called me to lead direct. They said I could pick the cast and the house, and I said yes.

*That sounds harrowing.*

*Why Chicago?*

It had always been a place MTV had wanted to go, but our shooting schedule was always from January to June. If you have ever been to Chicago during those months, you would know not to try to shoot too much outside. In 2001, the network ordered two seasons. One for January (New York) and one for July. After 10 seasons of putting it off, we jumped at the chance to explore one of the most beautiful, growing cities in the world.

*Are you still talking about Chicago?*

*Apparently not everyone who lives there was as thrilled about the show coming to the 'hood. Reports of protesters throwing rocks at windows makes it seem pretty intense. How aware were you and the cast of these protests? I guess this explains the red paint splattered on the door of the house early in the season?*

Yes, it explains the paint. No, we weren't trying to be colorful that day. I love abstract art, too, but come on. Possibly they were drunk and angry that they weren't picked for the show themselves? We were safe and kept

on with our own business. After September 11th, I think they felt foolish for protesting a couple of teenagers living their lives.

*(I doubt it.)*

From what I could tell, the demonstrators were reacting to the gentrification of the neighborhood. Supposedly, we had come in with our glitz and glamour and raised the property values of the entire area. Thus, the artists of the neighborhood were being moved out. To say we started that is ludicrous, but there were some people who felt the current status of the neighborhood was not right and that we were responsible. That's their opinion and they have a right to it. We came in for six months and left—once we move out, the building is restored to its original condition. Their propaganda and energy, which I say was alcohol induced, was a cheap attack on an obvious target.

*Simply as a non-participant, what types of scenarios/casts would you like to see on future seasons of *The Real World*?*

The same as Chicago—brutally honest, flawed, wonderful people. You pick them in a casting process and you think you've asked them every question under the sun and you can predict what they'll do once on the show, but you are nearly always wrong. You can't predict life. That's the beauty of *The Real World* from a director's standpoint. There is no second take. I can't yell, "cut!" I want to see the stories that make me laugh and feel something personal. I want to relate to the cast. I want to learn something important about the way humans work.

*Is there any backstage or behind-the-scenes drama that never made it to air that you'd like to share?*

Sorry, I am bound by contract not to say. Please check out *The Real World You Never Saw Video* online or at your local video or book store.

*A commercial? A crummy commercial? Rockpile is a music magazine and we'd like to know what makes up the Kenny Hull playlist?*

Right now, hip hop is running my life—Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Ja Rule, Snoop and Dr. Dre, Tu Pac, Outkast. I'm also a Radiohead geek, and I like Beck, Al Greene, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Pink Floyd and The Velvet Underground.



# THE DEVOTCHKAS

..... disrupting the pond of punk .....



Money, politicians and society's ills have long reigned as common enemies amongst the legion of punk rock. But today, the flag bearers of the genre face an enemy far deadlier than the perils of nuclear warfare, however. The enemy's name is stagnancy. Preaching to the converted and putting fashion above the lethal power of ideas have rendered many a punk and hardcore outfit complacent, devoid of the passion of their predecessors. Such grim opposition only makes it all the more refreshing to see somebody throw a rock into those waters.

Rebuilt and reloaded, New York's The Devotchkas have "thrown the rock" as Jello Biafra would say. The all-female street punk band geared up for its 2001 *Live Fast, Die Young* album with a lyrical adjustment, a line-up change and a collaborative songwriting effort re-tooled to include every band member. The result is a collection of songs well honed in their anger and awareness, yet retaining the ever important bite of street punk's truest traits. Driving drumbeats and guitar riffs (think old-school *Business and Partisans*) drive lyrical rampages through songs such as "Pushed to the Limit" and "Wicked Heart." No kids, this is not The Donnas.

A lot has happened to The Devotchkas since this time last year, when the band began pursuing a more group-oriented approach to songwriting. This collective effort was enhanced by the addition of a new front-woman named J.J.—former lead vocalist of New York's The Relix. Everyone in the band seems thrilled at the new life J.J. has brought to the band, along with her cathartic brand of punk vocals.

This new personality helps solidify the new face of an outfit finding itself in the minority of the male-dominated street punk scene. With an all-female line-up, The Devotchkas find themselves tackling ground

even the legends of yesterday's street punk heroines (think Vice Squad and The Violators) never had to face.

"A lot of times, we're looked upon as some kind of novelty act, which we absolutely aren't," Alaine declares. "Some guys tend to think that we were four blow-up dolls with instruments and mics."

Interestingly enough, gender hasn't been the band's only pigeonhole. All too often, The Devotchkas find themselves framed as the female version of The Casualties. There are worse comparisons—The Casualties are arguably one of the most popular street punk bands in the underground. All the same, it is a shallow comparison.

"Our music isn't similar, and our lyrics do not cover similar subjects at all," Alaine expounds.

Although the band recently released *Live Fast*, and had already garnered a level of name recognition through rigorous gigging along the East Coast, the ladies have decided to change the name of the group to complement the past year's accelerated growth. From now on, they will be known as The 99's. Alaine explains the historical source of the new moniker—a reference to a women's aviation group from the 1920s.

"They made the same accomplishments—if not better—as men at the time, but they never got credited for it just because they were women," Alaine explains, insinuating the already obvious parallels to the band. "I thought that would make a cool name for a girl band."

With a never-say-die attitude and a strong work ethic, the sky's the limit for The 99's. The newly re-named band will be playing shows around its hometown of New York throughout the spring and plans to head off to Europe this summer with former Violent Society roadie Adrianna.

—Greg Boyle

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# THE LAWRENCE ARMS

drunks—not partyers

By Liana Jonas

An already excited studio crowd at a *Jenny Jones* taping cheers as the show cuts to a commercial break. As the applause light fades, the controversial host addresses fans and the curious casually. In a moment of indiscretion, Jones drops the bomb, calling Oprah Winfrey—Chicago’s reigning queen of televised self-love—“a bitch.”

Such heated gossip arrives, not from the fiery typewriter of Liz Smith, but from singer/bassist Brendan Kelly of Fat Wreck Chords’ The Lawrence Arms.

And you thought *Springer* was rough.

But recreation is recreation, especially in Chicago. If anyone ought to know, it’s Kelly and his co-conspirators, Neil Hennessy (drums) and Chris McCaughan (guitar). Kelly describes the band’s social life as being “contingent on alcohol”—a substance easily obtained from any number of neighborhood bars in the musician’s working-class Windy City home. (For the record, Kelly and his fellow Lawrence Arms frequent a no-frills joint called the L&L, with plans to visit it after the interview.)

Now before you go writing Kelly and his bandmates off as drunken buffoons, let them pitch their defense. While there are many alcohol-inspired references on the band’s new, pogo-inducing disc, *Apathy and Exhaustion*, imbibing the night away for The Lawrence Arms is not about getting wasted simply for the sake of being an ass or getting laid.

“It’s not necessarily the happy place,” says Kelly of the standard Chicago pub—a neighborhood institution erected in droves in the early 20th century, when the city was rebuilt after the great fire. “You come in from freezing your ass off,

or you come in from a hot day laboring. We’re drunks, not partyers. It’s much more day to day.”

There’s some pretty morose lyrical content atop the speedy music on *Apathy*, and Kelly says much of this has to do with Chicago’s extreme climate—deathly cold and dark in the winter, humid and unbearable in the summer.

“I’d say it’s definitely very conducive to writing these sorts of songs,” explains Kelly of *Apathy*’s black lyrical content and its connection to the weather. “The extremes here make people feel disgusting—either you’re stuck in the house or soaking in the sheets. The winters and the summers here, they leave an imprint on you.”

It takes more than blustery days to get a Lawrence Armer down and out, however. Try living in a basement the size of a closet for more than a year. This is what Kelly did last year, and four of *Apathy*’s songs (the bleakest of the bunch, in fact) were written during his subterranean days. For instance, in “Boatless Booze Cruise Part 1” the protagonist begs for someone to slit his throat (feel-good song of the year?).

“Last summer, all my friends went away, and I was living in a basement on the floor,” Kelly explains, surprisingly upbeat. “I feel like a lot of my friends decided to move on and forgot the bond of friendship. It’s sort of like being dead when your entire existence is based on nothing, which is how I felt at that time.”

After speaking some more with Kelly, it becomes apparent he’s not actually depressed, or even angry. He’s awestruck—not with rock ‘n roll life, but with life in general, and in particular, with people.

“There’s so much potential for good and happiness in the world,” he says, with a hint of optimism. “The problems are all man-made. I recently read that we grow enough food in Kansas to feed the entire world for three years. The world is set up to support life and is a great place to be—we just fuck it up.”

So, who’s buying the drinks? ■



I-r: Brendan Kelly, Chris McCaughan, Neil Hennessy



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Sean Na Na does not give a fuck what people think. Critics, peers, the Pope, Whoopi Goldberg—no one. And his manifesto applies to all areas of life, from his career to his personal and countless romantic relationships.

God bless him, because no matter where his musical path takes the indie popster, Sean Na Na (a.k.a. Sean Tillmann) will only have to answer to himself, something people should be doing more of in the first place. At 24, it's an impressive lesson to have learned.

Just how much does this guy not give a crap?

Well, let's take a look at Har Mar Superstar, Tillmann's garish, R&B alter-ego, for some insight.

"Har Mar lets me say and do what I want, without taking responsibility for it," says Tillmann with an air of arrogance. "I always berate the crowd—who are usually a bunch of people who obviously see two bands a year—and make them cry. It's hard to say whether they like it—sometimes they like it."

This is a pretty confident position to be taking with a brand new album, *My Majesty* (French Kiss Records), currently on offer. Luckily for Tillmann, his record—an impressive blend of indie pop, retro '50s rock and maximum swank—justifies his cockiness. Bastard.

"I want to blow up and take over," says Tillmann, reminiscent of Madonna's appearance on *American Bandstand* ('I want to rule the world!'). "I want to be able to do what I want to do easily. I want to be able to call and collaborate with whoever I want and tour how I want."

Oh, so that's all.

By now, the following should come as no surprise: Sean Tillmann couldn't give a rat's ass about commercial success. The former Calvin Krime frontman is steeped in the so-disaffected-with-celebrity-that-I'm-a-rockstar-by-virtue-of-not-caring culture popularized (intentionally or otherwise) by the Kill Rock Stars set. Ironically, his take-it-or-leave-it attitude is probably going to be just the ticket to get the majors excited.

"I don't give a fuck about it," says Tillmann of making it big in the mainstream. "I'm not looking to pander to any major labels, but I'm not anti-major,

**"I DON'T  
GIVE A  
#@!%"**  
—spoken like a  
true Sean Tillman

By Liana Jonas

either. I'm not ready to dance for anybody."

Before I can finish asking Tillmann my next question, he finishes my sentence, explaining how if he weren't a musician, he'd probably be a music writer. I assure him it's as noble a profession as when he left it as a freelancer a few years back. Despite the annoying stupid-pet-tricks periphery of the business, Tillmann admits to a genuine appreciation of pop music.

"I'm a fan of good records," he says sweetly, for a moment abandoning his imperial airs. "I'm obsessed with good songs and cultural phenomenon, and I think it's interesting that if something is presented in a way that it's cool, then 3,000 kids are dressing that way."

Tillmann's moment of reflection reminds you there is a difference between being cocky and

just being a cock. The Sean Na Na frontman is far from the latter, as I'll grow to understand.

Beneath his devil-may-care exterior, the Beck-styled pop man expresses a deep affinity for close relationships with family and friends, describing himself as a sort of bastion of strength for those within his social circle. He says he's here "to amuse people," noting he's the guy to go to when you're having a bad day.

When it comes to love, Tillmann has his own specific ideals, some of which are expressed in "I Need a Girl"—a song he says hits closest to home.

"I'm asking for way too much and being totally unrealistic," he says of the flighty song. "I can't settle for one person, and that's why I float around. I never had a girlfriend and never will. If I have to hang out with one person for too long I feel resentful of them, like they're holding me back. I want to be able to pick up and go whenever I want. The ideal situation would be to see a girl once a week, and not have her ask me where I've been."

His is an interesting *modus operandi*—while he craves personal connection ("I don't like to be alone," says Tillmann)—he is sternly protective of his freedom and likes to keep moving around, which is one reason why he loves to tour so much.

*My Majesty's* chief selling point is diversity. Elvis Costello, Morrissey and Foreigner can all be cited as influences, with Tillmann executing it all, front



and center with an effortless cohesiveness. Other artists who sport varying sounds on their records sometimes sound lacking direction.

Tillmann explains his childhood as a ravenous pursuit of music, from R&B records to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* to the *Footloose* soundtrack. When he'd aged a bit, Tillmann says he tried the "whole indie-rock thing," but felt no one involved was doing anything new.

Gez, ya think so, Sean?

"It just seems like the people are too into the records for the sake of having records, but they're not listening to them," Tillmann opines. "There are so many kids out there who are like, 'I own every 7-inch—does that make me a geek?' People concentrate too much on trying to look like their favorite band, one song will sound like another. I find it hilarious."

While commercial success is all about the big dollars, success in indie-land is more like, "Hey, I can pay the rent this month." Tillmann is in tune with this all too well. Days before our interview, he had just returned home to Minneapolis from a three-week tour with The Strokes, and was paying his bills from the past three months. When I ask him if he had enough to cover his expenses, he's fortunate enough to be able to say yes. So, in many ways Tillmann is already a success.

"Everything I took out loans for, worked my ass off for, is paying off," he says, proudly. "I can make more in three nights on the road than I can at a regular job. A lot of indie rock bands make the jump to the commercial world. I think I skate the line, because I could also tour the big tour. However if it works out for me I'm gonna do it."

With a bit of math, Tillmann's beginnings can be traced back to when he was 17. Young Sean forfeited the whole let's-get-drunk-and-go-to-the-mall summer plan to tour the country with his band, Calvin Krime—an abrasive, rhythmic punk machine eventually landing on the esteemed Amphetamine Reptile record label. Things didn't really take off for Tillmann until the band collapsed and he began his semi-solo Sean Na Na. A touring stint as merch man and whipping boy for the reformed Bratmobile helped further Tillmann's

infamy through nightly onstage rumpshaking competitions. His 2001 interview with Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst (dedicated, in part, to handjobs and on-tour indiscretions) only fueled the fire of the legend. Now, a full-fledged indie rock celeb, Tillmann muses on fame with a wise and critical approach.

A famous rock musician once said, "I love the music, but I don't want to be a rockstar anymore."

"It's really stressful," Tillmann concurs. "You see these kids who are awesome people and musicians, but they have to hide backstage and have their tour manager say when it's safe to go out to the bus and sign autographs. They can't live a normal life anymore. There are definitely pros and cons to celebrity, but I don't have to worry about that now."

So remember earlier, when I promised Tillmann wasn't a total cock? Well, here's where this is all going to come into play.

The word "hero" has been in liberal use as of late for obvious reasons. When I ask Tillmann if he has any heroes of his own, the question seems to catch him off guard. After a bit of stammering, his answer surprises me even more.

It's Samuel Beckett, the playwright.

"He got me into existentialism, and the feelings he leaves out of his work—which are pretty much everything except for longing—are so much more powerful," Tillmann muses. "His callousness is his passion. It leaves you a lot more room to think for yourself. It leaves you a lot more time to feel helpless, and feeling helpless makes you work harder for what you want. At least for me it does."

Among the myriad of things Tillmann doesn't give a fuck about, it seems most surprising his own vulnerability would make the list as well.

In keeping with his true, irreverent spirit, however, this writer feels obliged to leave you with this slightly more cocksure Tillmannism.

"*Better Off Dead* is the most-viewed movie in my life," he declares.

I'm sure he'd prefer this sort of ending, don'tcha think? Maybe, like Sean, you just don't give a fuck.

**IRON MAIDEN**

**Rock in Rio**

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Being a band in New York can be tough, just ask The Mooney Suzuki. You have to compete with dozens of other bands for gigs and attention, and now some band called The Strokes comes along and steals the buzz. This can all be a positive thing, however, as chord-thirsty A&R people flood The City's clubs in search of the now sound. For The Mooney Suzuki, this means show time.

One of the hardest working bands around, The Mooney Suzuki puts blood and sweat into everything it does. So what's up with the funky name? Evidently the moniker was adopted from the last names of two members of the art-rock outfit CAN, Malcolm Mooney and Damo Suzuki.

"We would get gigs because of the name," says Mooney Suzuki vocalist Sammy James (yes, he insists this is his real name). "Then a lot of people would come to our shows and tell us how much our name sucked."

With the popularity of fringe bands like The White Stripes and The Strokes increasing, the odds of another band cashing in—even one with a bunk name—improve exponentially.

"Wouldn't it be great if there was cool music getting the majority of

the attention?" asks James. "Now labels are more likely to take a chance on a band like us. I see no reason why The Mooney Suzuki shouldn't be as big as Led Zeppelin, but how do you convince someone who has the money to make that happen? Maybe we can't convince them, but fortunately there are other bands that are starting to do well, and maybe that can convince them."

Maybe this is what Fluid was saying when "Smells Like Teen Spirit" went platinum.

The Mooney Suzuki has spent a great deal of time concocting the right formula, mixing the best of '60s mod with raw punk energy.

"Our sound came from the idea that, to get your head above water in New York, someone is going to give you about five seconds of their attention before they decide to walk out or not," James says wryly. "We knew that live we had to make every second as monumentally explosive as possible, so that if one of those seconds happen to be in the five that you are giving us, your wig will be completely blown off." ■

# THE MOONEY SUZUKI

—“our name sucks!”

By Jonathan Cholewa



Photo by Adrienne Cohen



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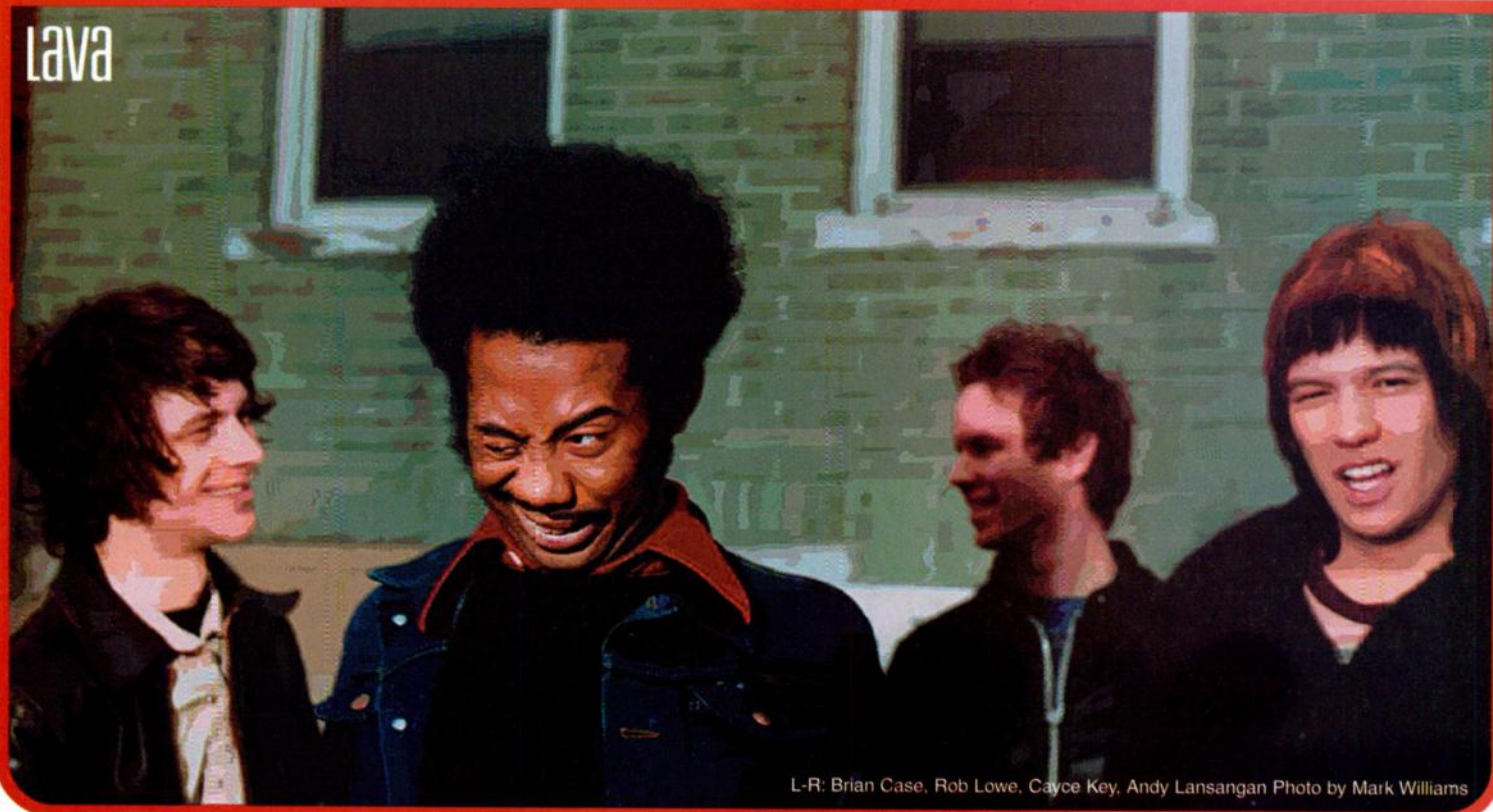


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L-R: Brian Case, Rob Lowe, Cayce Key, Andy Lansangan Photo by Mark Williams

"They said, 'Well, when the red light comes on, you're recording,'" recalls 90 Day Men vocalist/guitarist Brian Case about the band's memorable 2001 John Peel session.

In the midst of a U.K. tour, the band had received the occasional hint such a session might take place, but details were scarce. Case says he and his bandmates had all but written it off when they received words of confirmation from Southern Records' London offices. Before the end of the week, Chicago's 90 Day Men found itself walking—and making music—on the same holy studio ground where legends from Led Zeppelin to The Beatles to Wire had before—at the board of the respected and selective engineer John Peel.

"It ended up being the best recording we ever had," beams Case. "If it wasn't so expensive I'd love to buy it and release it, but it costs more than all our records combined."

The band recorded four songs at the BBC studio, and the station ran the session twice on the air. Clearly, it's still high from the honor.

For the 90 Day Men—Case, Rob "No Relation" Lowe (bass/vocals), Andy Lansangan (piano/vocals) and Cayce Key (drums)—the BBC and beyond has been a slow build. The quartet formed in the late '90s in St. Louis and soon released an interesting rock EP titled *If You Can Bake a Cake, You Can Build a Bomb*. Before long, the band followed this up with a self-titled EP on Baltimore's Temporary Residence label. Finally, the band caught the attention of Southern Records, releasing *[it (is) it] Critical Band* in the middle of 2000. The esoterically titled album served as the band's large-scale introduction, debuting a twisted atmosphere of jarring No Wave stylings fused with melodic keys and jagged outbursts. If critics had initially expected Slint, they soon were adding Sonic Youth to the band's list of reference points. While the band dropped a split album with San Diego's Gogogo Airheart (Boxfactory Records) the same year, it still managed to find time to tour in support of its Southern debut.

Throughout Y2K, 90 Day Men toured the United States, saving a portion of the summer to write new material. Finally, after a fairly pedestrian two-year period, 90 Day Men returns with its sophomore release on Southern, *To Everybody*.

## 90 DAY MEN

### analyzing their sound fresh from sabbatical

By Chris Johns

"It took long enough, huh?" laughs Case.

*To Everybody* finds Case and company in Dallas with musical contemporary (and Dallas resident) John Congleton.

"We wanted to get out of town and really focus on the record," explains Case. "Dallas is definitely not Chicago. Dallas is my favorite town in the world, but there wasn't a whole lot to do, so we were able to focus on the record."

As Case explains, recording out of town has a unique set of advantages—no one receives phone calls in the studio, no one has to meet someone else later on, no one falls prey to the

distractions of daily life at home.

"It's really easy to go in and forget about daily living," says Case. "You know you've got nothing else to do except sit in that studio. We holed ourselves up for two weeks and wanted to see what we could get."

Case describes every release as a step forward for 90 Day Men, with *To Everyone* capturing the exact mood and effect the band had hoped to convey. So, if the band was already excited about its new record, the BBC Peel session was just the icing on the cake.

Still, the band shows no signs of dulling its pace. The remainder of this year will find 90 Day Men on the road. After an American tour, the band plans to hit Europe for a few months before returning Stateside for a small break this summer. Case aspires to get most of the next record done during this vacation time—yet another U.S. tour is planned for the fall.

On stage, 90 Day Men finds recreating the organic studio vibe lies in the moment. According to Case, the band's music is written in an open manner, where musicians play off of each other, allowing room for some improvisation.

"It gives us the ability live to change as we feel the song," Case notes.

The band's hometown lineage, however, is something less susceptible to variation. Despite the Dallas recording retreat, Case insists 90 Day Men is firmly rooted in its hometown, the windy city.

"I think Chicago is still a really good place for new music," he says. "Not everything coming out of here sounds like Shellac and Tortoise. There's a lot of new, good music and even those bands are releasing new music and changing what they're doing. It's a really tight community." ■



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# BYO RECORDS TURNS 20

By Allan Martin Kessler

Punk rock might have started with a bang, but by 1982 it was reduced to a parody of itself. Shows like *Quincy* and *C.H.I.P.s* saw to that, as they twisted punk's outer image into easy stereotypes for public consumption.

But even as punk was being panned as a flameout—tortured on the small screen opposite Jack Klugman, the same media responsible for turning it into a caricature was by turns helping to fan its dying embers.

It's simple, really. Television hi-jacked punk's message, distilled it into a hastily placed safety pin and then broadcast it over the airwaves as fodder for the masses—but it backfired. Instead of ridiculing punk into submission, those transmissions worked like a beacon calling acolytes to prayer, anointing thousands of searchers in a quest to find the Holy Grail (a.k.a., their local scenes). Graffiti proclaiming "Punk's Not Dead," littering countless back alleys and train trestles across the country, suddenly, now rang true.

Jump back to 1980, where three brothers from Los Angeles are making his-

tory in band called Youth Brigade. Shawn, Mark and Adam Stern formed the band in the summer of '80 and spent three more years cutting their teeth playing with legends like X and the Addicts at seedy Hollywood venues like the Masque.

But the difference between the old punk rock—standing in a Quaalude-induced stupor—and the new punk rock, was clear. Whatever was wrong with the world, the new punk rock was going to change.

Toward this end, the Stern brothers formed Better Youth Organization (BYO) Records in 1982 and released the seminal *Someone Got Their Head Kicked In* compilation. Featuring tracks by Social Distortion, Battalion of Saints, Aggression and Youth Brigade, the comp was nothing less than a spectacular documentary of the SoCal scene during the early '80s.

"The reason we did the comp was just to get experience getting the music out," explains a now middle-aged Mark Stern. "We threw that thing together because we were friends with all these bands, and we thought it'd be cool. So that's kind of how we learned."

For its next trick, BYO released nothing less than a string of punk rock classics—both 7 Seconds' *The Crew* and *Walk Together, Rock Together* (the latter recorded on tour in Washington, D.C., with Minor Threat frontman/Fugazi-to-be Ian MacKaye), S.N.F.U.'s *...And No One Else Wanted To Play*, Youth Brigade's *The Sound and The Fury* and Aggression's *Don't Be Mistaken*.

Nevertheless, for Stern, the compilation was a means to an end.



"The main thing is we wanted to do a Youth Brigade record," he says. "So after doing the comp, we had a little more experience so we could do the Youth Brigade thing. From there it just kinda built. Through touring and meeting people on the road, we'd meet bands and we'd be like, 'Oh, this is a cool band, we should put your record out.' But no one really knew how to do it."

By late '86, as the Reagan years were winding down, punk rock had once again fallen on hard times. As Stern explains, many of the original music distributors willing to work with the new crop of American punk bands had folded, while many bands called it quits. Gang violence on the West Coast had reached pretty serious proportions as well, seeping into the punk scene.

BYO wasn't doing too great either. Punk rock was in an awful state during that time, a time when speed-metal passed for the real deal, so the label didn't sign any bands and handed over its distribution duties to a British label called Southern Specialty.

But the Stern brothers didn't give up. Instead, they began hosting big warehouse parties where bands like the Beastie Boys and Social Distortion would play.

"Everyone would just come over and that was it, because you'd hang out with who was cool," Stern remembers. "It was like, 'why go to this show because the bands suck or I'm gonna get in a fight or something?' So we'd end up having parties."

By late '89, things were starting to get better. BYO still wasn't selling a ton of records, but the Stern brothers had formed a new jump-blues band called the Royal Crown Revue, while the punk rock spirit that had evaporated like so much ether a few years earlier was beginning to coalesce around the burgeoning swing scene.

In 1991, BYO took back its distribution rights and began shipping RCR's debut album, *Kings of Gangster Bop*. Oh yeah, and a little band called Nirvana broke—big.

It was Nirvana, says Stern, and MTV, of all things, who helped bring the music of such stalwart punk bands as Bad Religion and Youth Brigade to the

masses, thus signaling the triumphant return of BYO's place in punk.

"MTV definitely changed a lot of things in independent music," reflects Stern. "Green Day and the Offspring getting big definitely helped our label. I think it helped everybody. It opened up a lot of touring opportunities and more distribution. It made everything way more accessible to everyone."

With tons of kids suddenly making a run on Manic Panic, all the labels, distributors and zines who managed to survive the proverbial 40 years in the desert were now flush with new bands to package, sell and dissect. After more than a decade of teaching themselves the ropes and building a solid distribution network, BYO was poised to take off with "the new wind" (to quote 7 Seconds).

And they did, by releasing another string of punk rock classics. In 1994, BYO released the Bouncing Souls' *The Good, The Bad and The Argyle* and Youth Brigade's *Happy Hour*. In 1996, it issued the reggae and ska stylings of Hepcat's *Scientific* and another Bouncing Souls barn-burner, *Maniacal Laughter*.

In 1999, BYO began offering a series of split full-length LPs, pairing bands of similar styles and audience.

"We want these records to be something that will be like a definitive record of a certain era and style of punk," Stern says proudly. The first two releases paired England's Leatherface with Hot Water Music and Youth Brigade with the Swinging Utters.

Though Stern likens the last 20 years to one long roller coaster ride, things seem to have stabilized for the best, considering at the time of this interview, Stern was in the midst of shipping out BYO's biggest release ever—150,000 copies of the new NOFX/Rancid split full-length. These days it seems Stern's biggest worry is the possibility of choking (again) at the annual DIY Punk Rock Bowling tournament in Las Vegas.

"I never thought we'd still be doing this 20 years ago," he laughs. "The first record we did kind of became a cult classic, and the next thing we know we're on the college charts." ■

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**TRISTEZA**

By Steve Paul Gibbs

It's all about perspective. Perspective and hard work.

Even through the murky, claustrophobic windows of a beat-up van, the stars in the sky can still shine brightly. Although yet another punctured wheel has fallen into the gutter, this doesn't mean your heart and mind need to follow.

Tristeza has spent its innovative and nomadic five-year existence transcending its earthly status, simply by creating shockingly beautiful music daring to reach beyond our mundane lives, both to find its inspiration and exert its influence.

"We are a live rock band, and have never done things in a conventional way," confirms drummer Jimmy Lehner. "We never have a set pattern of our life, or our actions as a band. Our vision is unique to our own vision."

As if to further confound expectations, the band's lustrous second album, *Dream Signals in Full Circles*, has recently morphed into *Mixed Signals*, a variety of electronic-based makeovers by such luminaries as Marumari, Windy & Carl and Simon Raymonde of Cocteau Twins. Lehner is excited by this latest



remix release for its unique perspective on Tristeza's music.

"It allows the different dimensions of our sounds to be interpreted by others," he explains, simply enough.

Ranging from experimental breakbeats and glitches to lush, ambient atmospheres, *Signals* isn't as much of a departure as it might initially appear. Fans of electronic music have naturally gravitated towards Tristeza's chiming, enveloping guitar patterns, while guitarist Jimmy Lavelle indulges in a beat-driven side project, The Album Leaf.

It is thought by some this progression has already begun. In lulling the listener into an ethereal hypnosis, Tristeza effortlessly moves beyond the confines of post-rock to create something universal and vividly cinematic. The band is wonderful, stunning proof "instrumental soundscape" music doesn't have to be pretentious and cold. In fact, many of Tristeza's compositions are imbued with more warmth, humanity and emotion than many vocalists could ever imagine.

Lehner admits the band maintains an affiliation with cinematic soundtracks, but feels this need not affect the listening experience for others.

"It is up to you to decide what you see for yourself," says Lehner. "That should be the idea behind music anyway. You feel how you want to feel."

The band does suggest people listen to its music in new situations, with a focused and open mind. Ultimately, though, Tristeza simply makes music for itself, led only where its own minds take it.

"All the songs have some sort of meaning to us in our personal lives," Lehner says of the wordless stories he and his bandmates create. "But we are just playing and doing what we feel like doing. That is the bottom line."

This is music full of contrasts, despite the delicate flow. A great weight underpins each song, along with an immaculate innocence and—perhaps most significantly—an intricate attention to detail. As the band's spokesperson today, Lehner agrees nonchalantly, noting, "Detail is very important to us. If you can catch the detail when you are listening, then it's a good thing."

*Dream Signals in Full Circles* was itself a marked progression from the

band's previous releases, such as debut album *Spine and Sensory*, prompting some effusive critics to hail Tristeza as the pioneer of a new level of creativity in guitar-based music.

"We do not play in standard tuning ever," Lehner offers. "And we are always trying to do better things, write better melodies with our instrumentation. We are definitely experimenting a lot more with sounds."

This constant drive to add new color and texture to a stereotypically esoteric genre is one of the essential tenets of the band, grown from a history of playing in teenage hardcore bands (The Locust and Crimson Curse).

"It wasn't transition, just taste," Lehner says wryly. "We were 16 or 17 years old. Our past is not really relevant to us at all now."

Roughly six years since the members' days of basement punk, one trait it adheres to is a preference for the freedom to move between independent labels—recently the band has made the Tiger Style imprint its home, although this too is subject to change.

"There's a lot of good people out there to work with and be a piece of history in their history and our history," the drummer explains. "We are actually moving labels again for our next record."

Following a well-deserved break (good time for a remix record), the band says it will soon return to its prolific road schedule and the voracious work ethic for which it is known—writing new material and a few months of touring are perched at the top of Tristeza's to-do list.

The ethics of independence remain strong with these five kindred spirits, content to go wherever, and however far the music takes them, allowing personal inspiration rather than career savvy to mold their future. One thing listeners can be sure of, Tristeza will never fall into the rockstar club. Lehner sees a huge discrepancy in living the life of a musician—surrounded by an underground community of friends—and going the route of a full-fledged, tantrums-and-tiaras rock star.

"A musician lives a healthy, balanced life, or at least strives to achieve that life," he concludes, knowingly. "A rock star has succumbed to the poorer, darker aspects of one's career." ■

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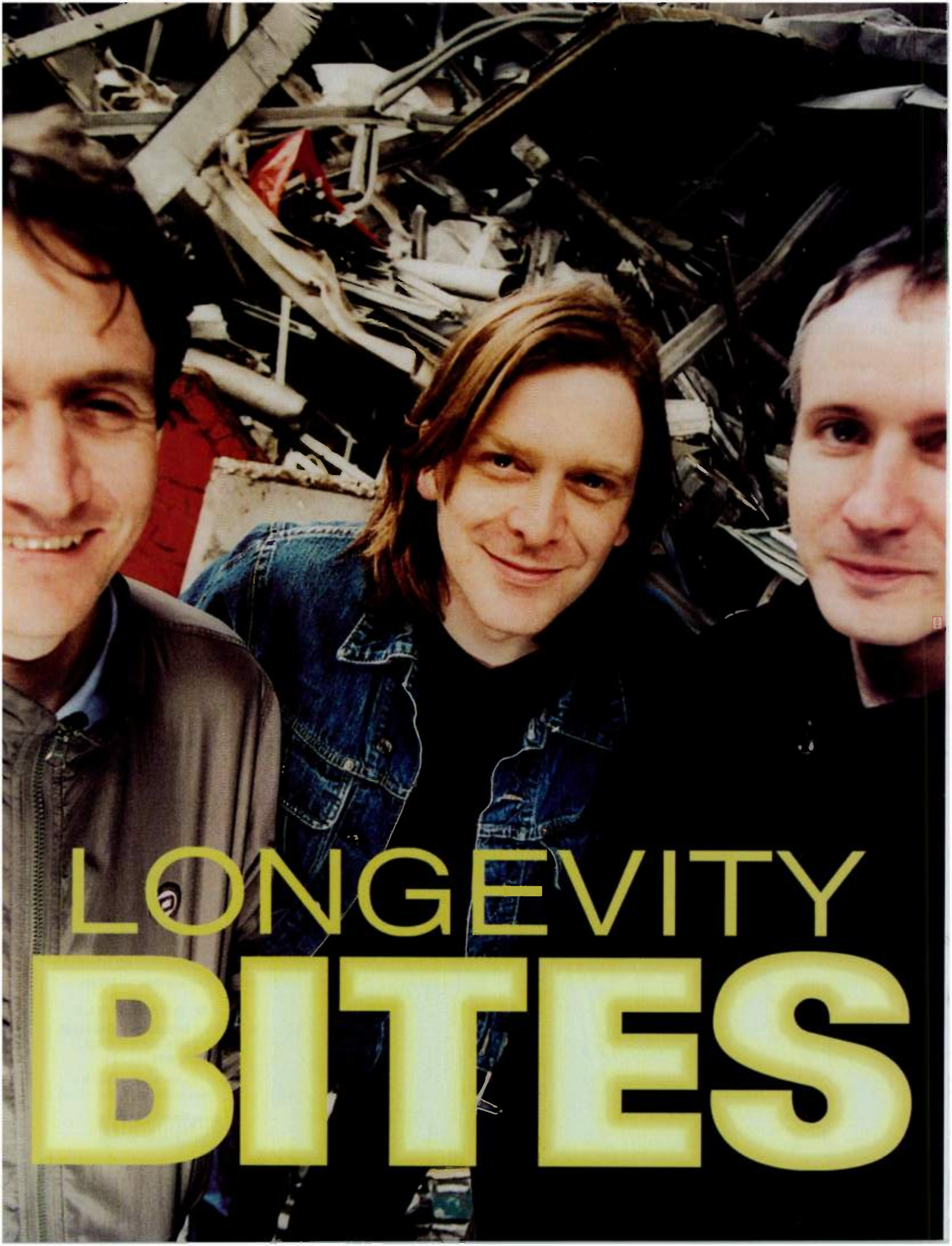
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## TEENAGE FANCLUB sticks with the formula.

Too many songwriters. It's been the death of many a good rock band.

The much-ballyhooed Belleville, Ill., outfit Uncle Tupelo spawned a universe of so-called "No Depression" bands—blending the elements of traditional country with punk and rock—and was just about to break when its 1993 album, *Anodyne*, hit the shelves. The climb to near-stardom was made mostly on the back of one songwriter, Jay Farrar, until Jeff Tweedy also began to emerge as a formidable songsmith. The group split not long after *Anodyne's* release, with Tweedy pouring his songs into Wilco and Farrar dumping his into Son Volt.

Too many songwriters, not enough space for the egos.

By the late '80s, the eclectic post-punk rockers of The Pixies had pretty much revolutionized rock from the underground up, but their influence had yet to manifest itself in the form of Nirvana and early '90s grunge. The band sprung to cult stardom by combining the songwriting talents of frontman Black Francis and bassist Kim Deal. But after earning praise with her early tunes like "Gigantic," Black Francis, later known as Frank Black, froze Deal out, providing no space for her songs and even cutting her out of back-up vocal duties by the time the 1991 swan song *Trompe Le Monde* was released.

Too many songwriters, not enough room for the egos.

Some people might remember a little '60s quartet called The Beatles, which had a whopping three songwriters—four if you count Richard Starkey. So, as we know, John and Paul took up most of the room on the records. And George would have to get his. And Ringo would get his cut, too. But what if Paul dreamt up more songs? Or what if John felt creative instead of political? Or what if George successfully argued his case for three tunes? Without a doubt, the overabundance of songwriters and songs helped push the Fab Four down the road to disintegration.

On a whole separate level, because the power pop rock group boasts three excellent songwriters in Gerard Love, Raymond McGinley and Norman Blake, critics and music aficionados have probably been forecasting the demise of Glasgow, Scotland's Teenage Fanclub for the day before yesterday.

Despite the predictions, the band perseveres in the present tense. Teenage Fanclub formed in 1989 and went on to release five albums and numerous EPs and singles. The group is still together, still churning out records, still cranking out power pop jewels in the style of Big Star or Badfinger, each stamped with the individual stylistic mark of one of the three songwriter's style.

Blake says, unlike most bands, the presence of more than one gifted songwriter has actually helped to keep Teenage Fanclub together. Besides, neither Blake (usually the group's straightforward pop-rock writer), McGinley (who writes off-kilter pop songs filled with word play) or Love (most likely to shoot for the whimsical or crank out the classic power-pop ballad) are overly productive. Blake says he writes about 15 songs per year. Some songwriters crank out two or three times this amount, tossing away the outtakes and forgotten b-sides. ▶▶

**By Peter Bothum**



"We're not massively prolific," he admits with a smirk. "We seem to write what we need to. The thing is, we look at it as being a bonus. It takes the pressure off me when it comes to time in the studio. If I'm maybe stuck for lyrics, or stuck for parts or whatever, somebody else will have an idea. It gives you that breathing space."

After the release of the head-turning 1990 EP *A Catholic Education* on the then-unknown Matador label, the three-headed lead singer approach worked out amazingly well. The band was only able to record and release the EP because McGinley had inherited a cooker and a refrigerator from a neighbor when she died. McGinley sold the stuff, and Teenage Fanclub was able to use the money to book studio time.

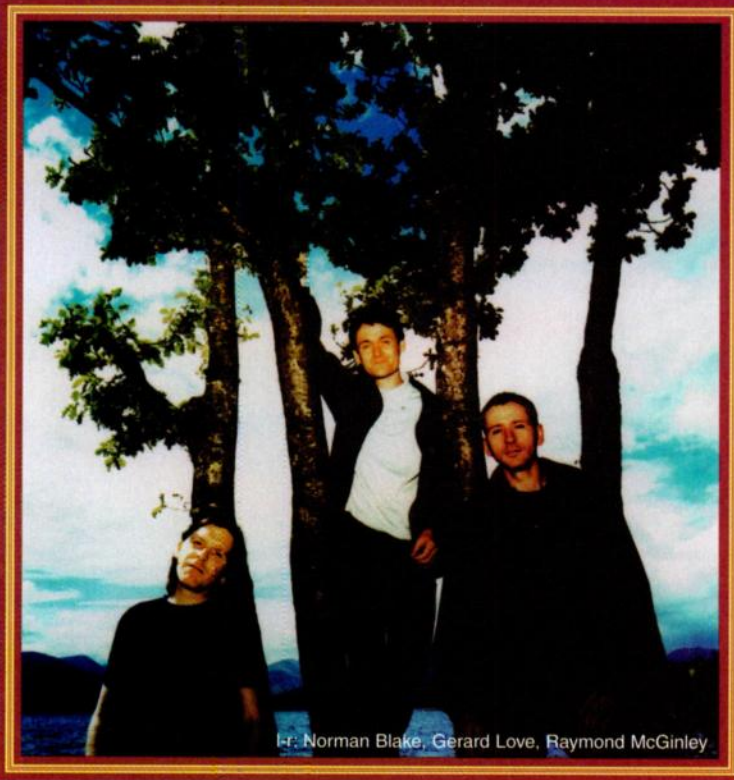
But the guys wouldn't need anything else from the dead lady's house from there on out. The buzz from *A Catholic Education* reached Geffen Records, and the label gladly inked the band, then including Brendan O'Hare on drums, to a record deal. Geffen got its money's worth right away in the form of 1991's *Bandwagonesque*, a 12-song album stuffed with guitar-heavy, ultra-catchy rockers ("Star Sign," "Pet Rock") and a few foot-stomping slower numbers ("The Concept," "December").

Every tune on the record had Big Star written all over it. But unlike Alex Chilton's ill-fated, power-pop juggernaut, *Bandwagonesque* actually took off, landing "Album of the Year" honors from *Spin* magazine (beating out the likes of Nirvana's *Nevermind* and R.E.M.'s *Out of Time*) and scoring the band a spot as musical guests on *Saturday Night Live*.

The 1993 follow-up, *Thirteen*, was just as impressive, sporting six unlisted bonus tracks, including covers of Phil Ochs' "Chords of Fame" and the Flying Burrito Brothers' "Older Guys." Critics, however, largely panned the record saying it sounded too similar to the group's first.

What's so wrong with being consistent?

"I'm not entirely sure," says the 36-year-old Blake. "We were flavor of the month for a time, and we had some success with the *Bandwagonesque* record. There's not really a great deal that you can do to determine how successful your record's going to be. There are a number of different factors that will affect that. But the last thing you



L-R: Norman Blake, Gerard Love, Raymond McGinley

**“We see each other, but it’s not like a gang,” Blake chuckles. “I’d be depressed if I was still hanging about with the guys in the band.”**

want to be doing is be worrying about it.”

*Grand Prix*, the group's last album for Geffen, came out in 1995 to, again, lukewarm reviews (it also featured former Soup Dragon Paul Quinn in place of O'Hare on drums). As before, the foulest cries dealt with the group's unwillingness to alter its recipe. Obviously, the critics didn't think McGinley's opener, "About You," recalled the sunniest moments of the Byrds and the shimmer of Rubber Soul. Obviously, they could resist Love's "Sparky's Dream," a catchy speedster of

a tune frantically switching gears like the race car on the album's cover. Obviously, they didn't care for Blake's rocker "Neil Jung," a psychological portrait recalling the former Crosby, Stills and Nash partner.

After *Grand Prix* and the split from Geffen, Teenage Fanclub landed with Sony and Creation Records—an arrangement which never really blossomed. Sony has inherited the band's Creation deal (the small label is now kaput), and the band is just completing its deal with Creation by pounding out a compilation album. The band's new album, *Howdy!*, comes to listeners courtesy of Thirsty Ear, a Connecticut-based label. Blake says Teenage Fanclub is currently a free agent unless Sony picks up an option on the group for future records.

Maybe sometime around 1994 Teenage Fanclub should have ditched the power chords and distorted guitars in favor of a heavy attack of mandolin, strings and pedal steel à la Berry, Buck, Mills and Stipe. Maybe before releasing the chiming, late-British Invasion-influenced records *Songs From Northern Britain* and the new album, *Howdy!*, McGinley, Blake and Love should have rolled in the beeps, blips and howling artistry of Radiohead.

And while Blake admits the band has made limited ventures into augmenting its trademark pop sound, he says the idea of chucking it all for a new direction has never been a consideration.

"I think it would be a difficult thing for us to do, because there are three of us writing songs individually," he says. "You know, Radiohead are a band that a lot of people have tried to sound like. But nobody does it as well as Radiohead—they had the original idea. If you want to go down that route of trying to sound like a band that is successful, you're always going to be six months behind, aren't you?"



If Blake and company care little for the fickle criticisms of the press, they seem to have a softer spot in their hearts for the feedback of fans and audiences. Blake warmly notes many of the younger bands he meets on tour claim to have been influenced by Teenage Fanclub.

This doesn't mean Blake doesn't have influences of his own—the cosmos seems to have inextricably linked Teenage Fanclub to the legendary Big Star.

When Fanclub first started playing together, McGinley had fallen in love with Big Star's first two records, *#1 Record* and *Radio City*, and would play them constantly during practice and recording sessions. Teenage Fanclub even backed up Chilton during a couple of recent shows abroad.

Now, it seems Teenage Fanclub is doomed to endure the same kind of record label gaffs responsible for sidetracking the brilliant Big Star—shoddy distribution. Poor promotion. Instability.

Even if the parallel isn't as apparent to the boys of Teenage Fanclub, Blake seems to empathize with Chilton and respect a career of such longevity.

"Alex was pretty unlucky," says Blake. "It's ironic that everyone's into him. He's this cult artist—people are raving about him in the papers, and he's not making any money. You can really learn a lot from musicians that've been around the block and done a lot."

Not only has the group's sound remained in tact for more than 12 years, the three songwriters of Teenage Fanclub have also managed to keep the themes simple without aiming for self-importance or over-indulgence. They never get political. They never try to save the world. They never mope about personal problems. "Need a crystal ball to see her in the morning, and magic eyes to read between the lines," from Love's "Sparky's Dream," is about as deep as Teenage Fanclub will get.

According to Blake, this is just a function of the members writing about what they know—a safe approach in his opinion. Simplicity, he says, has proven to be a virtue for the Scottish band.

The boys of Teenage Fanclub have kept it simple enough. All four still love to make music, still love recording and still love playing together. The band recently recorded an album with Ann Arbor, Mich.'s Jad Fair, who flew over to Scotland recently for dinner with the guys and somehow ended up in the studio.

Outside the band, Blake explains everyone shoots for a healthy dose of independence. Both he and Love have contributed to records by melancholy indie-rockers and fellow Glasgow natives the Pastels. Also, Blake and McGinley are married, while Love enjoys a steady relationship. The members of the trio—essentially Teenage Fanclub in its entirety—don't often hang out together. Maybe, as one of their songs says, it's better that way.

"We see each other, but it's not like a gang," Blake chuckles. "I'd be depressed if I was still hanging about with the guys in the band."

In the spirit of tradition, the early reviews on *Howdy!*—a record out-retroing even the most retro of bands, such as Apples in Stereo, Elf Power and Sloan—say Teenage Fanclub fails to take enough chances on this new release. Once again, the band is catching hell for not re-inventing itself.

Blake just doesn't get it.

"If you listen to our latest LP, and compare it to our first one, they're pretty different records," the songwriter argues, pointing to a new use of harmonies and some more subdued guitar work. Although Blake admits the band adheres to a traditional sense of rock's basic verse-chorus structure, he maintains Teenage Fanclub puts a fair amount of work into every record.

Despite the tug-of-war between fans, critics, reviewers and pundits, Blake says he couldn't care less about all the fuss.

"If someone gives us a real slugging off, it really doesn't hurt my feelings," he says. "The thing is, people are entitled to their opinion. And if they think our records are crap, and we can't sing, and we're terrible songwriters, then so what? I really don't even think about it." ■





# Defying



The Jon Spencer Blues  
Explosion bursts out  
of the garage for good

# Cate



**I**n a crowded field filled with genre-splicing copycats, The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion manages to stay consistently fresh. Boasting a name bent on irony and a sound defying categorization, the band's trademark proto-blues-rock style is all too present on *Plastic Fang*, its first album of new material in nearly four years. While it's a bit of a departure from the direction the Blues Explosion has taken with recent efforts, the album is still guaranteed to whip up sweat, tears, booty-shaking and the esteem of many of today's post-punk purists.

Since forming from the ashes of singer/guitarist Jon Spencer's avant-garde Pussy Galore project, the Blues Explosion has covered a lot of different territory during its 11-year tenure. In looking at its discography, the band has grown steadily, from riffing wildly and incoherently around Spencer's preacher-at-the-pulpit vocal style to finding its place in an amalgamation of punk, funk and rock 'n roll. The blues is most definitely number one in Spencer's book, but in drawing influences from just about every genre in music today, obvious categories mean nothing to the band. The Blues Explosion just want to rock, and with *Plastic Fang* the band presents a new window for itself with a strong emphasis on tight songs, funky backbeats and loads of catchy riffs and hooks. ▶▶

BY DAN PASTORIOUS

# gategorization



According to Jon Spencer, the Blues Explosion—consisting also of guitarist Judah Bauer and drummer Russell Simins—is finished with the small talk. After just completing a whirlwind of press in Europe comprising 12-hour days of constant grilling, the band is more than ready to step out of the interviewee's chair and get onstage to do what it does best—full-tilt rock 'n roll.

"The Blues Explosion is more predicated on action and spontaneity than anything else," Spencer shares from his New York home. "A lot of the songs on the record have to do with monsters, so the title reflects that—the monster teeth. I guess the plastic part is the rock 'n roll part, in the sense that there is some sort of showmanship to it. The easiest thing is to go out and play. It is so much better than words. Playing live makes everything a whole lot more palatable."

## COMING OUT OF THE GARAGE

Although Spencer and his Blues Explosion comrades may feel a bit press weary, one couldn't tell by their upbeat tone and positive attitude when discussing the latest effort. *Plastic Fang* brings the band full circle from its tinkering with technology and producers on 1998's *Acme*, to the more organic, full-blown sound fans of the band's earlier work will appreciate.

While Spencer says he enjoyed the creative process behind *Acme* and the opportunity to work with peers Alec Empire, Dub Narcotic Sound

mainstream, really from a different kind of world than us, so for some reason it is kind of perverse that we worked with him. But, he did such a great job with the record. The sound is in-your-face but not in an unpleasant way."

While *Acme* initiated the idea of working with a producer to complement Spencer's input, Jordan's contribution to *Plastic Fang* allowed the Explosion to focus more on the music rather than the tedious aspects of recording. With the added know-how behind the boards, the band might have succeeded in recording its strongest release yet. According to the Blues Explosion frontman, Jordan helped the band relax, careful to bring out the its natural essence.

"We felt really comfortable in the studio, and we felt really comfortable with Steve, so that probably contributed to how the album sounds more laid back," adds drummer Simins. "It was like we had another member of the band with us. That is what I think a great producer does."

Perhaps the person most enthused with Jordan's input is Bauer, who describes recording as a learning process. Having never recorded in a traditional studio environment before, the guitarist says the experience not only improved the songs, but also pushed him to become a better musician.

"In our history, we have only done songs two or three times at the most when recording," explains Bauer. "When you do 23 or 24 takes with a producer, you really flesh out the songs and really get to know

them. Generally, we kind of have this self-destruct kind of punk rock element that sometimes we say fuck it and do something anti-melody, but he steered us away from that impulse we have to flaunt things and just really kept it musical. It was almost like coming out of the garage finally and becoming a real rock 'n roll band."

## MATURATION FEELS SO GOOD

Part of the reason *Plastic Fang* sounds different from its predecessors is because of a stepped-up recording budget and the opportunity to work with different types of gear. According to Spencer, while recording the album, the Blues Explosion wasn't under contract with its record label, therefore there were no stipulations or restrictions hanging over the bands' head. They did all of the hiring

and writing, and came out with the exact product they desired.

"We had written these songs that warranted a more straight-ahead rock record," says Simins. "It just felt like it was time to give certain controls to someone else, and I think it worked out really well for us."

Meanwhile, Spencer's primping and prodding vocal style has become a Blues Explosion trademark over the years, with his primal howls and refrains setting the catalyst to the band's sultry yet explosive vibe. While these elements are still present on *Plastic Fang*, Spencer's lyrics have evolved from an audience-rousing tool to a vessel of discussion on the matters of relationships, love and God, among other things. He opens up when prodded, explaining how more personal issues quickly came to the forefront during the writing of this latest album. More than any one stylistic influence, Spencer says he was affected by the emotions and events in his own life, and finally felt like drawing on these experiences for his lyrics.

The songwriting process, meanwhile, went down in traditional Blues Explosion fashion, with each member convening at one of their studios



System and Dan "The Automator" Nakamura, he sees *Plastic Fang* as an opportunity to substitute the urban sound the band had been leaning towards for a pure rock 'n roll experience.

"There was a narrower focus we were working with on this one," offers Bauer, noting the album's natural, stripped-down sound. "Instead of involving so many people and going through the huge creative process of *Acme*, we just wanted to let one person into the band and help with the songs before we got to the studio. That person was Steve Jordan."

Spencer credits much of the new album's sound to Jordan's expertise as an accomplished musician with a knack for capturing live recordings. With credits ranging from the Rolling Stones, The Robert Cray Band, Aretha Franklin and the Blues Brothers, studio pundit Jordan succeeded in harnessing the exact rock 'n roll edge the band was looking for, while maintaining the art-punk ethos the Blues Explosion has preserved since 1990.

"This is the first time we have worked with a producer and have done it in a real traditional way," says Spencer. "Jordan is really from the



“I would say this is really back to basics rock ‘n roll record for the Blues Explosion” adds Spencer. “We set our mind to make this type of record, and we did it.”

(both Simins and Bauer have one in their homes) and jamming until the songs came together. Whereas on previous albums the band has been limited to the standard equipment it has collected over the years, recording with Jordan allowed each member access to different equipment, something Simins says helped make *Plastic Fang* sound unique. When a song called for a specific snare-drum sound or a particular kick-drum effect, the tools were finally all at the band’s disposal—a valuable arrangement in the pursuit of making “a really great record,” according to Simins.

Still, despite the new producer, a freer recording budget and better access to equipment, Bauer cites the evolution of the band as a songwriting machine as the ultimate catalyst of *Plastic Fang*’s tone.

“The thing about this Blues Explosion record is that maybe after doing this for 10 or 11 years now, I finally feel like what I’m playing is me,” says Bauer. “Everything just kind of gelled finally. During *Orange* I was thinking about the meters. We’ve been real conscious about our influences up until this point. But with *Plastic Fang* I wasn’t thinking about anything, I just played.”

“I would say this is really back to basics rock ‘n roll record for the Blues Explosion,” adds Spencer. “We set our mind to make this type of record, and we did it.”

## ROCK ‘N ROLL, BLUES EXPLOSION STYLE

While *Plastic Fang* marks a departure from the Blues Explosion’s recent forays into hip-hop territory, the album still leaps from the speakers as a haywire, funk-meets-punk party focused more on the groove than riling the mosh pit. It is heavy at points, soulful at others, while still based on the subtle blues undertone typically defining the Blues Explosion’s unique sound.

However, make no mistake—the Blues Explosion is far from the Mississippi-made style its namesake implies. Although elements of blues, soul and jazz are incorporated into the sound, JSBX fits all these influences into one niche of pure, unadulterated rock ‘n roll.

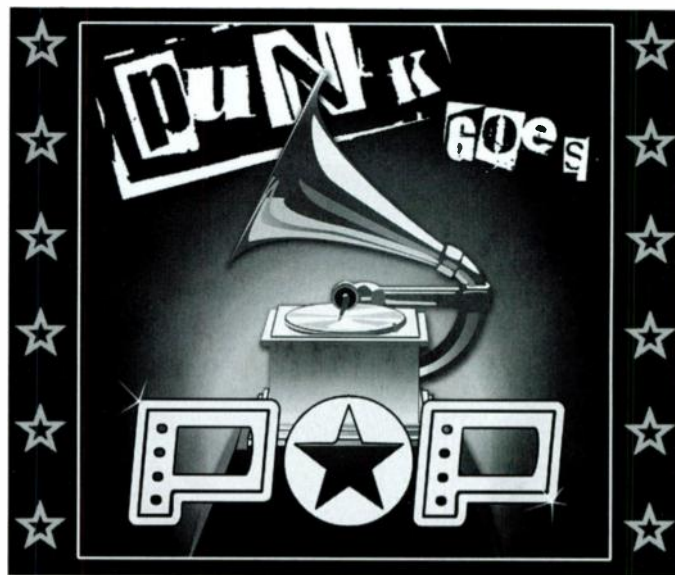
“You hear roots in our music,” says Simins. “We will experiment the way hip-hop experiments, we get juiced by the energy of really cool soul and R&B. We grew up totally inspired by punk rock. It is who we are, and that’s what makes us the Blues Explosion.”

Bauer describes the band as a sassy, amped-up, sexual band playing would-be house-party music.

“Our music is all about what America is, because it has all of its roots in there,” he chuckles.

Regardless of what category critics place the Blues Explosion into, the band’s bass-less mix of distorted guitars, precious little backbeat and howled, manic vocals prove an exciting distraction from the current slew of rock bands flooding the mainstream market these days. As Spencer continues to try and explain where his band ultimately fits into the rock ‘n roll wheel of categories, he cites Keith Richards, noting whatever goes into the ears eventually comes out, one way or another, in the music.

“We can just do our own thing and make our own way, and it is very important to us,” says Spencer. “The fact the three of us can make this type of music together is very special. It really defies categorization.” ■



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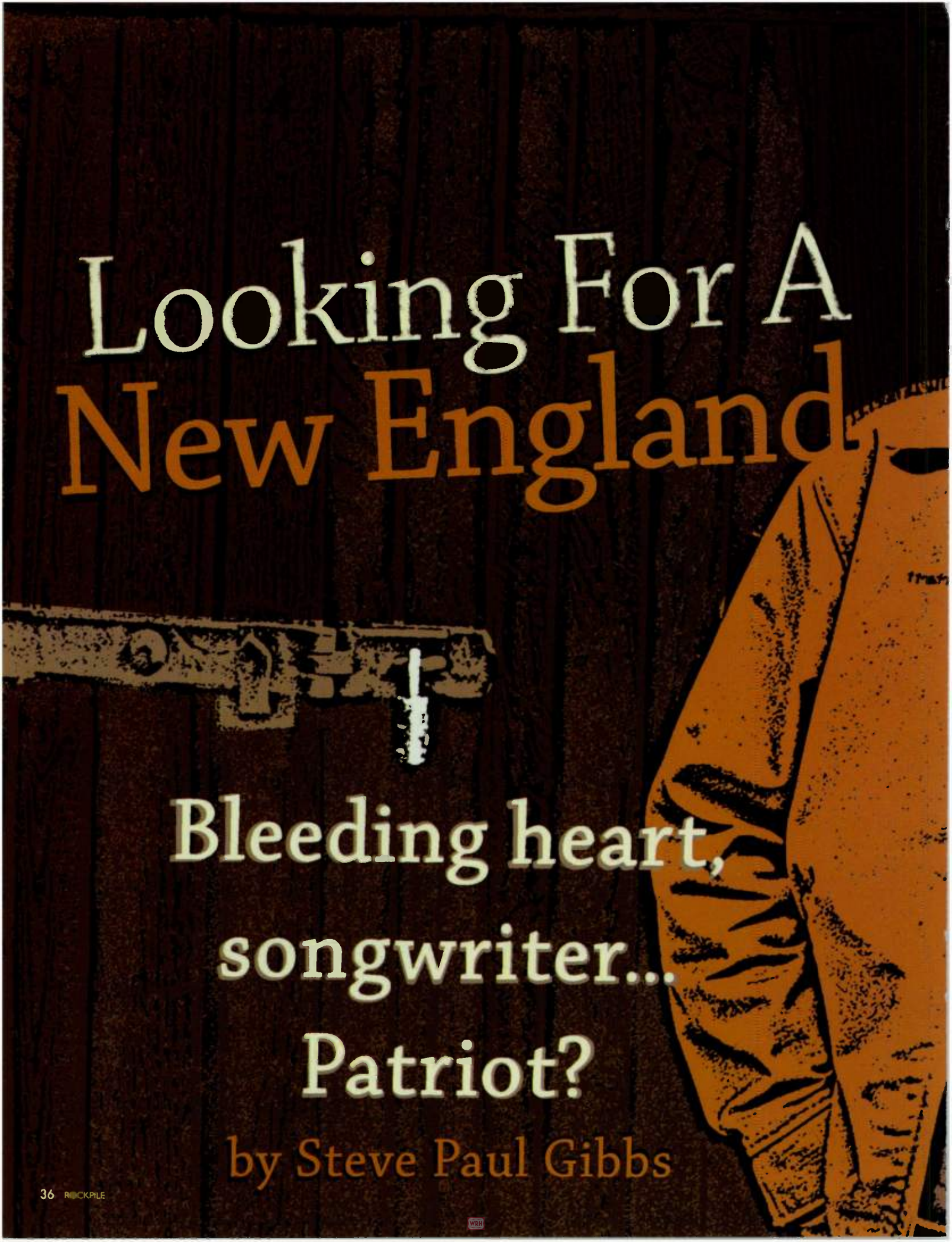
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# Looking For A New England



Bleeding heart,  
songwriter...  
Patriot?

by Steve Paul Gibbs





**The** multi-hued political animal known as Billy Bragg is the voice of a bygone age sure to echo with great resonance and relevance long into the future.

A folk-punk antihero frequently mistaken for a pop star, Bragg was inspired to pick up a guitar by the insurrectionist punk attitude of The Clash shortly after walking away from a brief career in the army. Despite his wild side, the middle-aged Brit is best known in America for his interpretations of lyrics by folk legend Woody Guthrie. Bragg has mimed a hit single on Britain's *Top Of The Pops* and then appeared as a political commentator alongside members of British Parliament on national television.

With the release of his latest album, *English, Half English*,—his first of wholly original music and lyrics in years—Bragg is now the unlikely defender of a sort of English heritage you won't find in many tourist guides.

As Bragg himself readily admits, it's been a strange career for this "great big bundle of culture tied up in the red, white and blue." The album, from which those words come, is the latest installment in a 20-year journey through songs of protest and poignancy, love and left-wing sentiments, driven by his enduring commitments to companionship, justice and equality.

Rarely can the simple, earthy marriage of a battered guitar and an equally battered voice have inspired such devotion, or evoked such colorful, bittersweet cosmopolitan vistas. Yet, from the Anytown tragedy of "Levi Stubbs Tears" to the corrupted economics of "North Sea Bubble," Bragg proves himself as articulate and voracious a social diarist as music has seen in many years.

Whilst this newest album may be called *English, Half English*, covering issues of identity and loyalty specific to his own country, Bragg's appeal has always transcended mere geographical boundaries. A solid Bragg song usually connects as strongly on the Moors as on the Hudson.

One might easily assume Bragg's quintessential Englishness places his lyrics in another time and place entirely, but Bragg delivers some of the most enlightened, prescient views on the here and now.

"Patriotism must not become divorced from reason," he explains in his instantly recognizable brogue. "And when it does, you really are in trouble. Very often patriotism—to most people—manifests itself in a sense of 'my country, right or wrong.' That's not patriotism, that's chauvinism."

As Bragg explains it, when George W. insists on a with-us-or-against-us policy, Americans all have to ask themselves what it means to be an American, and what we'll allow to be done in our name. Although he's a lifelong Brit, Bragg's pluralized pronouns seem only natural. After all, he's the popster who first noted, "the fate of the great United States is entwined with the fate of us all."

Bragg is careful to draw the distinctions between an appreciation and healthy critique of one's country and a bigoted contest of one-upmanship. As the guitar slinger explains it, he's not interested in making everyone proud to be English, he just wants to get people to the point where they're not intimidated by the Cross of St. George—or the Stars and Stripes.

In expressing such marginalized, erstwhile taboo, viewpoints, Bragg remains as relevant as he did during those dark years of the 1980s, back when Britain was blighted by a Conservative government and the Miners' Strike.

"I really do try to make sure the context of albums I make is from the present, not the past," Bragg says. "I can't write songs about Margaret Thatcher, she's not around. I'm trying desperately to make sense of the world as it is, not as it was."

Many of Bragg's early songs, like "A New England," have endured the ravages of modernity and technology to become timeless classics. Some of the more politically infused tracks, however, have suffered from a finite shelf-life for all their undeniable quality.

"The love songs work all the time, and there are other songs that come round and bite you in the ass when you think they've gone ▶▶





away," chuckles Bragg. "'Island of No Return' is ostensibly about the Falklands War, but I got letters in the Gulf War from young British squaddies saying they listened to that the night before they went into the Gulf. That's the unfortunate thing about writing topical songs, they can become topical again."

Moving out of his traditional socialist urban stomping grounds of London and Essex to the affluence and relative tranquillity of Dorset has actually rekindled the spirit of activism so prevalent in Bragg's younger years. During the general election of June 2001, he established the Vote Dorset campaign to facilitate vote swapping between Labor and Liberal Democrat supporters in this conservative heartland—he has written a weighty script on the abolition of hereditary peerage in Britain's House of Lords called *A Genuine Expression of the Will of the People*. And when all this wasn't enough, he took to leading a songwriting class at his son Jack's school.

"Since I've been down here, I've actually become more engaged," says Bragg. "Moving to the country has given me a bit of perspective to gather my thoughts."

This time to reflect is expressed on Bragg's latest album. As he explains it, the time spent working on the two *Mermaid Avenue* albums (Bragg's work with un-scored Woody Guthrie lyrics) afforded him ample time to cultivate something new and interesting to say about the issues relevant today.

*English, Half English* is indeed a richly eclectic and intelligent body of work. Full of soul and texture, it constitutes part country lament and part uplifting celebration, and is imbued with both a refreshing innocence and an educated anger. This he also attributes to his continued association with backing band The Blokes, five gifted and greatly experienced individuals who share the creative burden. Bragg says he's been revitalized by this bunch of musicians, noting a truly collaborative writing process and an impressively prolific work ethic.

Poetically, the eleventh album of a highly eventful career is released exactly 20 years to the day after his first-ever gig—a most inauspicious

debut playing a sociology group disco at North London Polytechnic College. At the time, Bragg was just one of many thousands of disaffected students dreaming of emulating the punk icons who so rejuvenated a flaccid youth culture and music scene. Now, of course, he's a national treasure and almost part of the establishment, writing regular columns in broadsheet newspapers and having a road in his hometown named after him. All of this stretches somewhat beyond the initial aspirations he had for himself and his longtime associate Wiggy, with whom he formed his first band, Riff Raff.

Billy Bragg is the product of a definite time and place, when for young, ideologically motivated people there was plenty to change in the world. The twin pillars of punk and folk have always been prolific breeding grounds for political spokespersons, but how fulfilled can Bragg truly feel as an artist who has so overtly set out to inform and educate people?

"That's a difficult one to gauge," Bragg begins hesitantly. "I sometimes get letters from people who say, 'I listened to your music and I became a Civil Rights activist.' But the truth is, they would have done that anyway. My music just perhaps gave them the soundtrack and a little bit of encouragement and made them feel like they weren't the only person who wanted to do this kind of stuff. So I'm loathe to take credit for those kind of intangible things, but by the same token, even if it had made absolutely no difference whatsoever, you would still have the urge to do it. You can't wait around for the results."

"In some ways, I don't wish to take credit for anything other than making some good records and for doing some great gigs."

Despite having achieved so much, Bragg retains a wealth of ambition, driving him into the future. When asked what he still feels he needs to achieve, the weathered Bragg says he'd like to hold a flag up for political songwriting until the next generation comes along. Noting how he himself was inspired by the protest singers of the '70s, Bragg mentions artists like David Gray and Damon Gough of Badly Drawn Boy as some of political songwriting's best candidates in coming years.



Ultimately, this could be Bragg's extensive legacy to the still-thriving skill of songwriting—in leaving such a vast and invaluable inheritance to his successors, he will both extend the artform's longevity and seal a place in the pantheon of singer-songwriters alongside the very people who gave him his own muse.

"The trouble with legacies is you can do something once, and it gets right out of control, and everyone remembers you just for that," Bragg offers. "Maybe in America people will look back at me as the man who helped to reassess the legacy of Woody Guthrie. And I wouldn't mind that at all. In Britain people may just think of me as someone who was working with the Labor Party in the 1980s."

When asked how he'd like to be seen in hindsight, Bragg says he hopes to be seen as a link in a chain of political songwriters including The Clash, Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie. The two *Mermaid Avenue* albums—drawn from more than 1,000 sets of lyrics left behind by Woody Guthrie—remain Bragg's finest hours in America. They are, he believes, the most extraordinary moments of an extraordinary career. Bragg says plainly he feels encouraged and fortunate for having been graced with the opportunity. Reflecting on Guthrie's legacy, he muses on the idea of artistic influence and legacy.

"There's what you might call pop music, which by its own definition is disposable," he says. "But there's another kind of music, which is always out on the margins. There are always people outside the mainstream who are looking for something exciting and real, and when they discover this music—because they found it for themselves—they really take it to heart. Perhaps we should call it organic music. That's the kind of music that I've always set out to make."

Even at the height of his popularity, Bragg substituted throwaway pop charisma for an uncomplicated charm and righteous enthusiasm. In doing so he became a most surprising star of a *Top of the Pops* scene hitherto dominated by the likes of Phil Collins and Madonna.

"In the '80s there was a very political atmosphere around the world," says Bragg. "I tried to respond to that, and subsequently, I came across as being part of the zeitgeist. But you can't constantly surf the zeitgeist, because other people come along who are more pretty and can dance better and have got bigger tits!"

Bust notwithstanding, Bragg remains more relevant and more inspiring than most—even if these days he is as concerned with his role in fatherhood as his role in championing social justice. And how many other enduring luminaries of such a transient, fashion-obsessed business can honestly claim to not cringe when faced with their former selves?

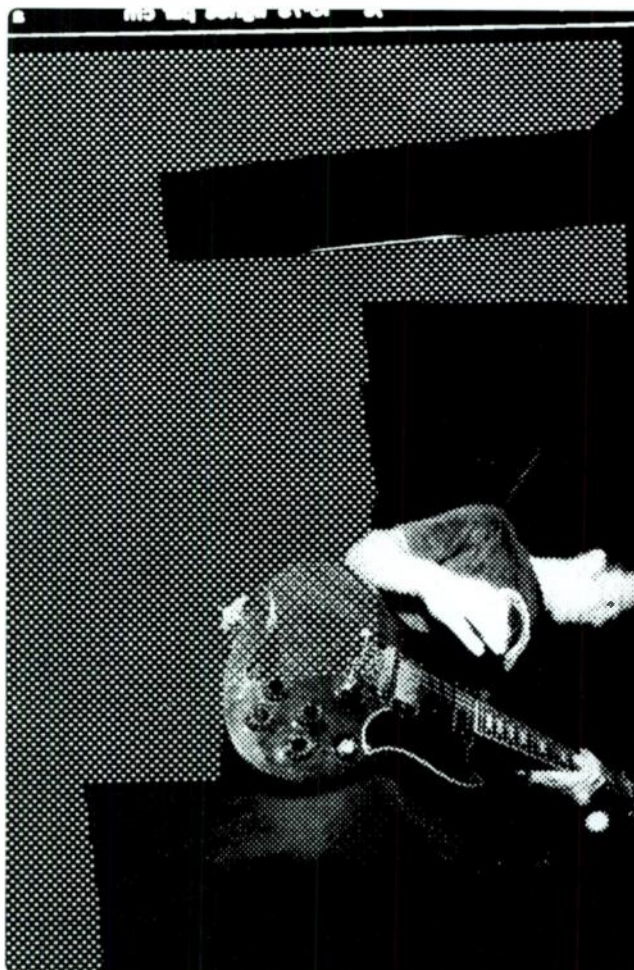
"Someone turned up during the election campaign with some film of me from 1985, and I thought, 'oh my God, what lunatic, left-wing revolutionary stuff will I be saying? How ashamed will I be to see my 26-year-old self?'" Bragg recalls. "The funny thing is, what I was saying is more or less what I'm saying now. Apart from the terrible haircut, it wasn't that startlingly different."

One might consider this as proof Bragg has successfully operated on the fiercest edges of pop stardom, infiltrating the inner-sanctum at only the most opportune moments. Long may he continue to do so, searching for the perfect lyric, the ideal combination of harsh reality and his trademark wry humor and wordplay, and holding a torch for a truly necessary discipline. Just so long as it feels worthwhile.

"I'm very happy that after 20 years people still give a shit about what I'm up to," Bragg adds. "I don't take any of it for granted."

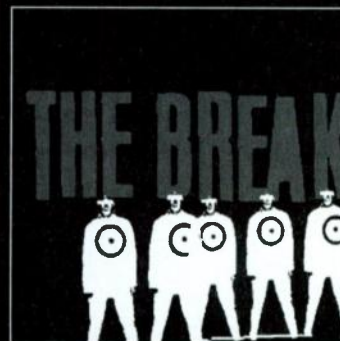
"Even if it is a stupid job for a grown man, when you think of the rest of the people in my industry. But as long as I keep my shirt tucked in and my voice in tune, I think I'll carry on doing it. I don't really want to get to the belly-button, pretty-boy level. I'm just calling it like I see it."

And in an industry currently ruled by marketing opportunities and manufactured icons, that's really all you can ask of anybody. "Help Save the Youth of America," indeed.



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# CELTIC SKELTIER





# Flogging Molly Finds Itself in the Same Old Mess, Singing Drunken Lullabies

By Chris Johns

**W**hen Dave King enters the bar, the man behind the counter gives him a look. It's subtle—nearly imperceptible to the untrained eye—but Dave King has seen it before. The look is one every barfly has been shot after some serious indulgence, reserved for those who know the way to the local watering hole better than their way home. Accompanied by Flogging Molly guitarist Dennis Chase, King doesn't look up as he passes by the bar, possibly in the hopes there's a different barkeep this afternoon than there was last night. More likely, King keeps his face down because his red eyes and pale complexion haven't fully adjusted to the afternoon rays (his stomach still has a problem with the thought of another pint). The gig is up on the slight Flogging Molly frontman even before he whispers in a thick Irish brogue, "I left here last night at 3:30, maybe four."

Welcome to Ireland's 32 Pub (the unspoken math implying 26+6). Located in the Los Angeles suburb of Sherman Oaks, such a pub might seem oddly placed. Then again, what's one of the biggest torchbearers for Irish music doing here in the States anyway?

Ireland's 32 is your standard Erie-American hole with European imports on draft and a small stage for aspiring Molly floggers. The stale air reeks, and the walls are sticky with last night's sweat. You don't come here to be seen. Fittingly, the regulars and staff at Ireland's 32 know King well. He obviously returns the love.

After 20 minutes of recounting last night with several patrons and pleading for a cup of coffee, King settles at a table with a steaming mug in hand. The air of recovery doesn't last long. "For fuck's sake," he spits. "There's whiskey in this!"

Chase laughs, taking a casual approach towards his friend's plot, cradling a fresh Guinness. King collects himself quickly and throws a scowl in the bartender's direction. He doesn't send it back.

Finally, King is ready to talk shop. It's not a difficult subject for him—things are good for Flogging Molly these days. The Los Angeles-based septuplet—King (vocals/acoustic guitar), Chase (electric guitar), Bridget Regan (fiddle, tin whistle, uilleann pipes, stereotypical Irish name), Matt Hensley (accordion), Nathen Maxwell

(bass), Bob Schmidt (mandolin, banjo) and George Schwindt (drums)—is on the cusp of releasing *Drunken Lullabies* on Side One Dummy Records. In true Molly form, *Lullabies* delivers 12 rollicking numbers to fuel the jig pit, not too mention several poignant tear-in-your-beer gutwrenchers. Flogging Molly will celebrate the release with a three-night stand at the Troubadour in West Hollywood. When asked what he expects from the locals, King only smiles.

*Drunken Lullabies* again finds the group working with renowned engineer Steve Albini (Nirvana, the Pixies, Page/Plant, the Breeders) at his Electrical Audio Studios in Chicago. Albini worked with the group previously on its Side One Dummy debut, *Swagger* (2000). Both capture the group's energetic angst. Preceded in 1997 by an independent live release *Alive Behind the Green Door*, *Swagger* took the band's pub-rock success to a whole new level. A strong cult following and infectious, word-of-mouth support soon whisked the band towards the Warped Tour crowd and away from the small, intimate pub settings. Although King and company might play different, larger venues now, one bar in particular is with the band, at least in spirit. The tiny Fairfax Avenue club Molly Malone's is credited as the band's namesake.

"Molly is such a traditional Irish name," King explains. "We're basically flogging Molly or flogging Irish tradition."

Traditional or not, music has always been a big part of King's life. In fact, the frontman refers to the stuff as if it were his oxygen growing up in Ireland.

"Basically, Queen, Bowie and T. Rex took me out of Beggars Bush," he says, referring to the home of his youth home in Dublin, a spot he pays homage to on *Swagger*. "Who would have known I'd someday be playing music, releasing albums and doing things like the Warped Tour?"

Taking a swig of his own Guinness (the coffee didn't last long), King squints as he's interrupted by an intense ray of sunlight piercing the shadows of Ireland's 32. He and Chase look at each other grimly.

"I'm waiting for my wife to walk through that door looking for me," King says.

"Tell me about it," mumbles Chase.



## Flogging Molly Frontman Dave King Takes Rockpile Inside Drunken Lullabies, Track by Track.

### DRUNKEN LULLABIES

"It's not necessarily about drinking, but about how long we're going to be talking about the same old thing?"

### WHAT'S LEFT OF THE FLAG

"A lot of what I write about starts off with me and my father and becomes 'we.' My father was a very smart man who pumped gas, but kept all of the books for the company. This song is basically me expressing things that he would tell me, but no one else. In a weird sense, I sing songs like this one through him. Though he died when I was 10, he still has a voice."

### MAY THE LIVING BE DEAD (IN OUR WAKE)

"It started off as a ballad, but I wasn't really into that aspect of it. It's a song about being in love with the woman you're in love with and not giving a fuck what anybody else thinks."

### IF I EVER LEAVE THIS WORLD ALIVE

"It's about friendship."

### THE KILBURN HIGH ROAD

"This is a place I used to live in London and Bridget's boyfriend was in a play called, *The Kings of Kilborn High Road*. So I wanted to write a song about it. So she says, 'I'll get you the script.' But, I had written the song before I read the script since I had lived there. It's a fucking shithole in London where all the Irish go."

### REBELS OF THE SACRED HEART

"It's about organized religion back home. I mean it's 2002 and Dublin is a cell-phone, computer-center city and we're still voting on whether a woman has a right to an abortion. There's a line in there that says, 'In God's Name We Built a Barbed Wire Fence.' I think that says a lot."

### SWAGGER

"Swagger's just swagger."

### CRUEL MISTRESS

"It's about a French sailor who didn't want to die at sea who carried a load of soil with him. So, if he died they could bury him in the soil."

### DEATH VALLEY QUEEN

"There's a beauty queen I know, and the whole idea of her being Miss Death Valley Queen was ironic."

### ANOTHER BAG OF BRICKS

"It's about being in America and taking what I've learned here and not being so close minded."

### RARE OUL' TIMES

"It's an old traditional song about Dublin. I wrote it with no music and just words before it became what you hear."

### THE SON NEVER SHINES (ON CLOSED DOORS)

"It's about not being back to see me mother in eight years and her door basically being closed to me."

Prior to Flogging Molly's 1997 inception, King had most notably done time in Fastway, the band formed by ex-Motorhead guitarist "Fast Eddie" Clark. In addition to playing the famed Madison Square Garden three times—a fact in which King takes great pride—Fastway took King around the world. It took hopes of a solo career, however, to land King on Californian shores more than 10 years ago. Give the man some credit, at least it wasn't Boston or New York.

"I can remember being in the studio working on some solo material when I first got here," remembers King. "I started questioning some of the stuff we were doing, because it wasn't what I wanted. The engineer was like, 'Uh-oh, we have an artist here. They're not going to like you.'"

King writes exclusively on his acoustic guitar before taking it to the band, where it goes through the process of becoming Flogging Molly fare. The frontman counts the Dubliners, The Pogues and Stiff Little Fingers among his influences. His father bought him a live Dubliners album and Johnny Cash's *Folsom Prison Blues* when King was a kid, but he says living in America is why he writes like he does.

**"You have to leave home to write,"**

**says King, quoting Joyce.**

**"That's exactly how I feel. I'm really glad I stayed here,**

**but it took a lot of time and distance to get over that."**

"I'd say what I write is more American-Irish than Irish-American," King smirks. "After starting off in the rock world and realizing it wasn't for me, I had a couple of fiddles and mandolins and was really thinking about what kind of music I was going to write. I made a conscious decision to sit down with my guitar and write for myself. If I hadn't come to America, I never would have written the way I do."

Throughout the afternoon, King refers several times to the famous Irish writer James Joyce. Regarded by many as the quintessential exiled writer of the 20th century, Joyce obsessively related to his past by distancing himself from it—much like King.

"You have to leave home to write," says King, quoting Joyce. "That's exactly how I feel. I'm really glad I stayed here, but it took a lot of time and distance to get over that."

King admits before this past Christmas he hadn't been back to Ireland in eight years. With all the romantic talk of rolling green hills, rocky cliffs, the Blarney Stone and the land he left behind, the obvious question must be asked—would King ever want to take his aggro-Celt outfit back to Ireland?

"For me, personally—I cannot speak for the rest of the band—what I write about is from a different era," King reflects. "Dublin is now a

*continued on page 45*





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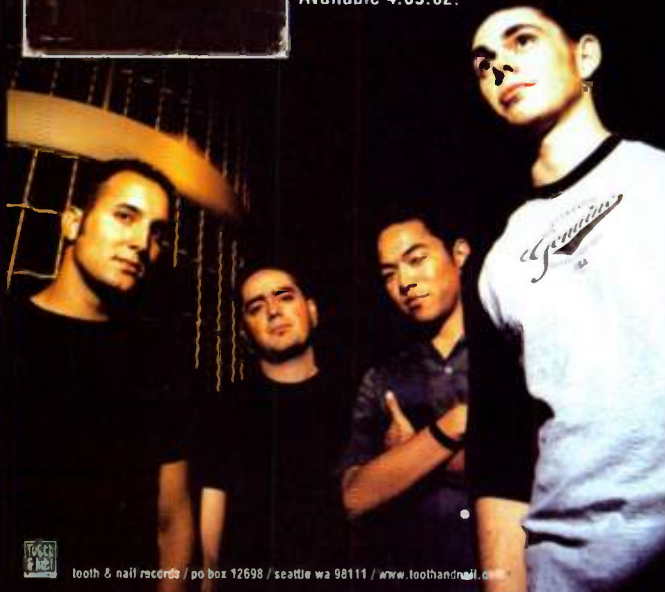
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Slick Shoes

Slick Shoes follows up last year's triumphant "Wake Up Screaming" with their best yet. Produced by Neill King (Green Day, Elton Costello), their self-titled fourth full-length for Tooth & Nail Records is a marriage of pure pop impulses with raw, joyous punk rock energy.

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SQUAD FIVE-0

For their second album on T&N, this gnt-rock band records with producer Barry Poynter (Zao, Juliana Theory), and heads off in a different direction, closer to the street rock of "the Clash meets the Ramones meets the Rolling Stones." A dozen songs with more singing and less chanting, and a new upbeat sound. Featuring "I Don't Want To Change The World I Want To Change Your Mind," "Screaming With the Sirens," and "Underground Hearts."

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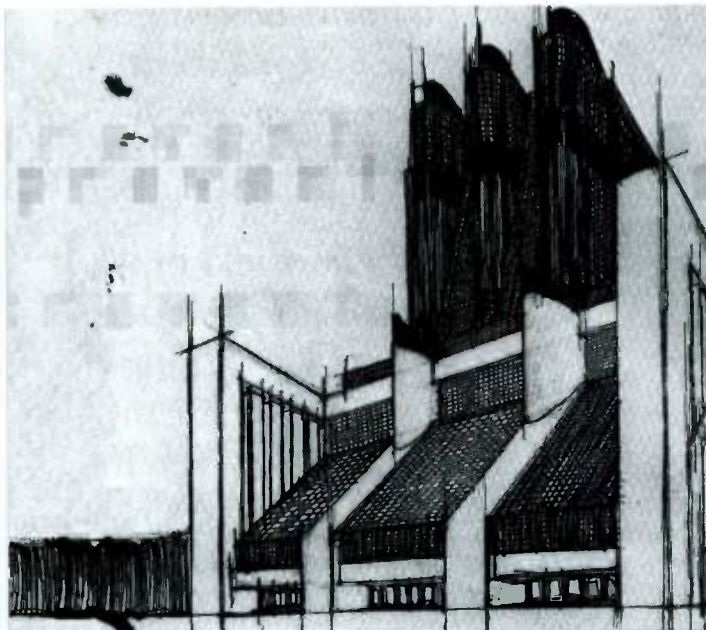


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**FLOGGING MOLLY** *continued from page 42*

very cosmopolitan city. It's not the Dublin I remember or write about."

Surprisingly, King says he wouldn't be disappointed if the band never made it to Ireland, although he is quick to point out this doesn't mean he lacks a love for the island. He also tips the proverbial hat to his mates back home, noting he would never rule out the possibility of a Flogging Molly trip to Erin.

After several Guinness refills, along with the graduation to the occasional shot of some mighty smooth whiskey, King and Chase say they are looking ahead to what the next year has in store for the group. A short headlining trip along the West Coast will be followed by the three-week Deconstruction Tour in Europe, featuring The Mighty Mighty Bosstones and No Use For A Name. This summer will find Flogging Molly on the Warped Tour main stage again. For accordion player Matt Hensley, it's a match made in Southern California heaven. In addition to his band duties, he's also a professional skateboarder and owns Innes, a skateboarding-related clothing company based in Encinitas, Calif.

With a new record in his hip pocket and a fresh plate of fish and chips at the table, Chase says he realizes the best is yet to come for Flogging Molly.

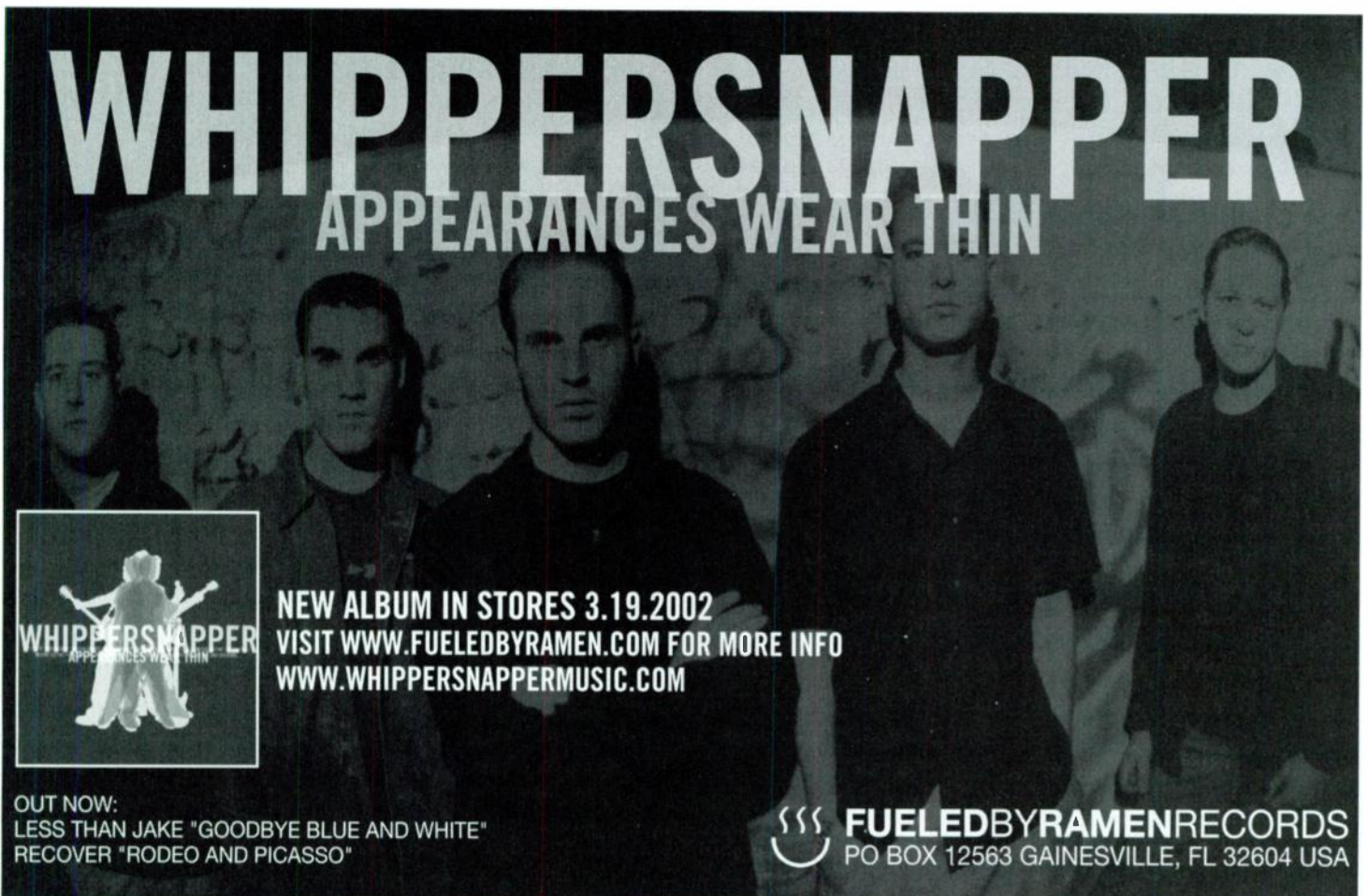
"We're really excited to get back out on the road," he says in between fries. "We can't wait to get back out with all those bands on the Warped Tour. It's a little different than playing in places like this. The Warped Tour still has it's intimacy and I think we are an intimate band.

"Besides, the Warped Tour is basically a big, open-air bar anyway. And for Flogging Molly, everyday is St. Patrick's Day." ■


**"We can't wait to get back out with all those bands on the Warped Tour..."**

**Besides, the Warped Tour is basically a big, open-air bar anyway.**

**And for Flogging Molly, everyday is St. Patrick's Day."**



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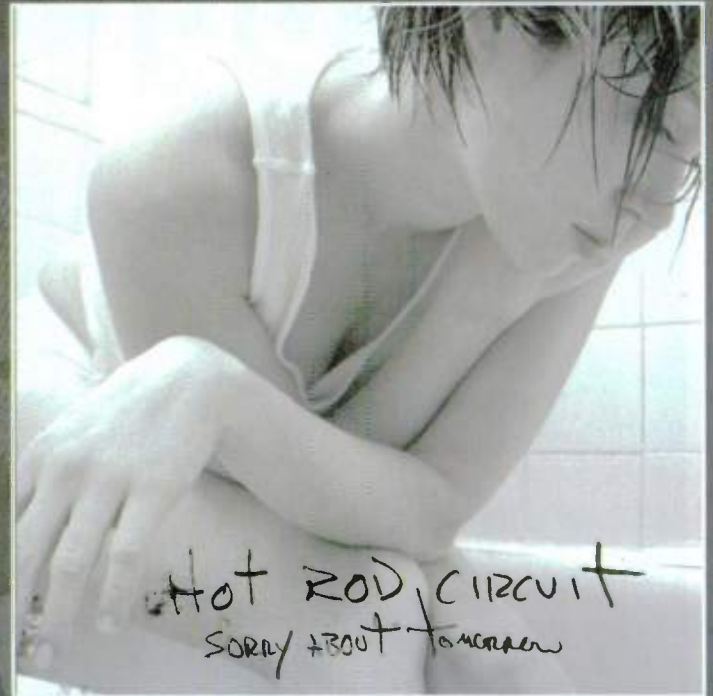
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## STEPHIN MERRITT

### Eban & Charley



original soundtrack by STEPHIN MERRITT



• film by James Bolton

## Eban & Charley

**B**orn a tangential flight of instrumental prose and a choreographed soundscape, Merritt's first release under his natural born moniker is more than a soundtrack to a sure-to-be controversial movie—it's a musical moment unto itself. Merritt may be best known for his flights of fancy under the names The Magnetic Fields, The 6ths, Future Bible Heroes and the Gothic Archies. On the soundtrack to *Eban & Charley*, however, Merritt goes it alone for the first time. *Eban & Charley* is the controversial story of a homosexual relationship between a 29-year-old man and a 15-year-old boy. His involvement in the project was at the request of an admirer, James Bolton, the writer and director of the indie flick. Merritt wound out writing all the music for the movie, both principal and background scores. While parts of the soundtrack seem like dismembered parts in need of their corresponding visualizations, the album is fraught with light and bright pop moments. Standing alone are the tracks "This Little Ukulele" and "Poppyland," two songs harkening back to days of simple indie-pop grandeur. Smiling instrumentation and Merritt's coy croonings complete the package. Appearing also are classics "O Tannenbaum" and "Greensleeves," but done in unique Merritt style. With *Eban & Charley*, Merritt not only succeeds at making a name for himself, but also at creating an album holding its own weight behind an already weighty film's subject matter. (Merge, P.O. Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514)

—Cynthia Gentile

### track listing

01. Mother
02. Cricket Problem
03. Some Summer Day
04. O Tannenbaum
05. Poppyland
06. Drowned Sailor
07. Maria Maria Maria
08. Titles
09. That Little Ukulele
10. Tea Party
11. Tiny Flying Player Pianos
12. Mother Remembered
13. Victorian Robotics
14. Water Torture
15. Greensleeves
16. Stage Rain

**For Fans Of:** Magnetic Fields, Daniel Johnston, Policy of Three

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



## Feedback Is Payback

Finally some melodic hardcore stands out from the masses. Epitaph's 1208—fronted by the nephew of Gregg Ginn (Black Flag) and Raymond Pettibon (Black Flag artwork)—smashes up the bland MTV punk cast. With spiraling, intense, processed vocals ("1988"), old-school, pogo punk ("Jimmy") and angular sing-a-longs ("Retired"), *Feedback Is Payback* is actually worth getting up in the morning for. Check out "Erase 'em All" if you need proof this band isn't afraid to lay down a guitar solo. And it's in the spirit of SST's late greats, which is never a bad thing. (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, 90026)

—Charles Spano

ALKALINE TRIO/  
HOT WATER MUSIC

## Alkaline Trio/Hot Water Music

Split albums are always a little weird and usually lacking in cohesion while still possessing an alluring quality. This one from the Alkaline Trio and Hot Water Music is no exception. If it were a battle, the obvious winner would be Chicago's Alkaline Trio. Especially through the simmering "Queen

of Pain," packed with dark, ascending grooves and Matt Skiba's blistering, lapsing vocals, the band has proven itself closer to brilliant, genre-defying innovators like Jawbox than the current boxed-in set of emo and pop punk. Hot Water Music is no stranger to originality either, and it checks in with two new tunes and two Alkaline covers, all exhibiting the band's raspy, post-hardcore sound. This represents one in a series of split EPs from the industrious Delaware label. (Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810)

—Charles Spano

## AVEO

## Bridge to the Northern Lights

Hailing from Seattle, the debut album from three-piece Aveo combines a solid blend of The Smiths, Elliott Smith and the oft-forgotten Icicle Works. William Wilson's guitar playing is as maniacal and soothing as any Johnny Marr wannabe could ever hope to be. Accompanied by Mike Hudson's brittle Elliot Smith-esque vocals, it makes almost as lethal a combo as the Boz and Marr ever had. Giving credit to the production by Phil Ek (Built to Spill, Modest Mouse, 764-hero, etc.), the solid base the band may have had

before was surely solidified in the studio. While *Bridge* is not an amazing debut, this is definitely a band worth keeping an eye on. (Red Tide, P.O. Box 22546, Seattle 98122)

—John Stanley

## BEVEL

## Where Leaves Block the Sun

Indie-folk group Bevel is the solo project of Drunk guitarist Via Nuon. The entire album seems intentionally ambiguous and incomplete, with every song accentuated by a strong sense of seclusion and melancholy. The arrangements are gentle and minimal, with little more than raspy vocals, acoustic guitars, piano and the occasional fiddle, harmonica, organ, pedal steel or whispery percussion. This wide variety of instruments and artists gives the album a gorgeously dark and sullen—yet warm and inviting—feel. Sad in a comforting way, it's consistently lovely through every song. (Jagjaguwar, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, Indiana 47401)

—Eddie Fournier

## BOLT THROWER

## Honour Valour Pride

As if the Anglican spellings in the title don't serve as a clue, Bolt Thrower is British. Actually, despite the occasional unavailability on retail record racks, the group is one of the earliest practitioners of grindcore. Having smoothed the early rough edges to become full-blown death metallers, Bolt Thrower stands apart from the so-called competition—despite a preoccupation with war themes—thanks to superior musicianship, conviction and the ability to write good songs. Like the slow turn of a tank tread crushing everything under its weight, the likes of "Inside The Wire," or any of the three tunes sharing a one word title with the name of the album, plod onward, resolute in the direction and mission. A rare bit of speed, as in "A Hollow Truce" or "K-Machine" is enough to avoid stagnation. (Metal Blade, 2828 Cochran St., PMB 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065-2793)

—Mark Gromen

## BOYLION

Up, Up, Down, Down,  
Left, Right, Left, Right,  
B, A, Select, Start

If you love punky, keyboard-laced emo bands like The Get Up Kids and The Anniversary, check out Boylion—a new source of pretty, energetic pop music about love and loss. Sound

familiar? Well, the first time the band jammed, it was on Jimmy Eat World's *Lucky Denver Mint*, if that tells you anything. You can't call Boylion original, but then, one can't deny the music is catchy, either. The lackluster production causes the entire effort to suffer, while predictably sappy lines like "I lay down with memories of you/I'm way down knowing that you're gone" force even the most sentimental of listeners to cringe. Overall, though, *Up, Up, Down...* is a solid effort. (MOC, 4932 Linscott Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515)

—Eddie Fournier

## BREATHE IN

## From This Day On

Citing Black Flag as the leader in a variety of influences, Breathe In has a tough time deciding what type of band it wants to be. The group leans more towards hardcore, but it takes the route of acts like Planes Mistaken For Stars, adding melody to pull in listeners who aren't sure if they like hardcore or not. Breathe In even goes so far as to almost sound like a pop-punk act with less intelligible vocals on tracks like "11-10-00 (Long Drive Home)." At other times, the band seems content with the straightforward, chugging punk style of bands like NOFX. The album is all over the map, but the guys seem to have a somewhat firm grip on the styles they try to pull off. The vocals can get a little abrasive, but things fly by at such a furious pace, some listeners may not even notice. (Bridge Nine, P.O. Box 990052, Boston 02199-0052)

—Eddie Fournier

BURNING POINT  
Salvation By Fire

Once in a while a truly tasteful, well-crafted metal band appears on the scene. Burning Point knows heavy riffs alone do not make a great metal band. The band focuses on high-energy rhythms, catchy vocal hooks, tight musicianship and—above all—tasteful songwriting. After a brief intro of atmospheric effects, the album thrusts gears into the high-speed guitar attack of "Under the Dying Sun." From there, the band keeps the adrenaline going for the duration. Even slower songs like "Black Star" help maintain momentum. In addition, the music really benefits from the crystal-clear production. *Salvation By Fire* is definitely a highly recommended release. (Limb, Postfach 602520, Hamburg, Germany 22235)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

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**CHUCK**  
**The Conference**



Incorporating thick elements of jazz and instrumental jam rock, Chuck is a trio of extremely talented musicians in the midst of discovering themselves on *The Conference*. The album is dense with chops, but Chuck speaks as one voice, which is perhaps why a vocalist is not missed on the compositions. The instruments never fight for dominance, but rather Jaisen Buccellato (guitar), Ryan Kozar (drums) and Robert Hahn (bass) play in perfect tandem, bolstering each other's contributions. Kozar's drums sound crisp and tight with some interesting stereo panning employed to spice up the mix. It doesn't hurt he's as good a drummer as you're likely to hear. Hahn's bass fits beautifully with both Kozar's drums and Buccellato's signature guitar, ranging from moody keys to impeccable, unmistakable picking reminiscent of Hendrix on a hollow body. Add it all up and *The Conference* is a fierce independent release. (Chuck, 221 Daly St., Philadelphia, PA 19148)

—Andre Calilhanna

**DAMAGED**  
**Do Not Spit/Passive**  
**Backseat Demon Engines**



Those who are fans of extreme metal may already be aware of Damaged. What many fans may not be aware of is the Australian band has been around since 1983, the same year Metallica's classic *Kill 'Em All* debuted. Early on, Damaged set out to make the most brutal music ever heard. One listen to the songs on *Do Not Spit...*, a remixed collection of older material, and it's clear the band is not kidding about its intentions. The music charges forward at a blistering speed only to stop suddenly, slow the tempo dramatically, then build up the aggression again—all within the space of a two-minute song. The musicians in Damaged are precision players who know their craft well. Judging by the quality of material on *Do Not Spit...*, it's easy to see how Damaged has survived for nearly two decades. (Rot-ten, P.O. Box 56, Upland, CA 91786)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

**[DARYL]**  
**The Technology**



In an increasingly digitized world, the overarching theme of man versus machine is starting to lose some of its symbolic muscle. Radiohead had the final word a few albums ago, but apparently, Texas five piece [DARYL]

hadn't heard when it recorded *The Technology*. The opening instrumental (one of seven) sets the obvious tone, with washes of violin atop digitized white noise, before breaking into the angular rock of "Motion in Progress." Many of the non-instrumental tracks like "Style of the Trace" and "Stare" recall the mix of technology and rock 12 Rods mastered on *Split Personalities*. The clean, unfettered production invokes images of the band playing in a hermetically sealed plastic bubble, further advancing the theme. This is more like *OK Computer* for dummies than the real deal. (Beatville, P.O. Box 42462, Washington, DC 20015)

—Christopher Fritz

**DIAGRAM OF SUBURBAN CHAOS**  
**Status Negatives**



*Status Negatives* is trans-Atlantic travel music. With a moody undertow and punctuated beats, Diagram of Suburban Chaos' proper debut marries the best of intercontinental electronica. Spanning the Krautrock minimalism of Deutschland and the best IDM of stateside dancehalls, the one-man band creates a beautiful, ordered chaos. The ebb and flow of the synths on the album opener, "Mental Wound," is shattered by punchy beats, while the off-time, deep house vibe of "Brane Damage" is too off kilter for even the funkier person to get down. Getting down, however, is not the point—getting into it. The electronic squeal of "Clogg" can make heads bob, but on a more cerebral level than most Saturday-night club dreck. Every song flows seamlessly into the next, each offering a different melodic idea while still giving the feel of one singular composition. "Rooftop" polarizes ambient melodies and skittery breakbeats to great effect. Even the ultrasonic, freakout pastiche of "Fn-tonal" has a hook. Diagram of Suburban Chaos has assembled the best elements of Autchere and Mouse On Mars without all the confusion. (Imputor, P.O. Box 17489, Seattle 98107)

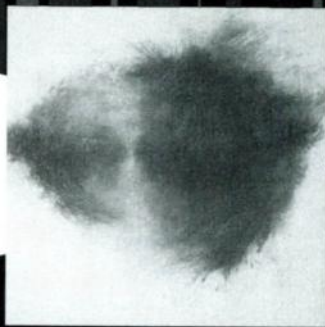
—Chris Fritz

**THE DIPLOMATS**  
**Instrumental Action Soul**



Here's a modern band playing music right out of the '60s and '70s. Booker T. and the MG's are The Diplomats' idols and it certainly shows. The sound is there, and they even try to recreate some of Booker T.'s songs as their own. The Diplomats jam through 13 instrumental tracks of unabashed fun and retro-rock. A little surf, soul, psychadelia and even spy movie

**MIRAH**  
**Advisory Committee**



"Cold Cold Water," the first single off the new album from this West Coast-cum-Philadelphia artist, plays like a soundtrack combining *Dancer in the Dark*'s ferocity with the Western mystique of *Desperado*. The production work of The Microphones' Phil Elvrum gives the song an edge, but also fails to let it stand on its own feet. For a truer representation of Mirah, listeners ought to direct their attention to some of the more lo-fi ditties on the album—those recorded in stark, signature fashion a la the indie rock chairman of the board, Calvin Johnson. A less passionate delivery might have doomed Mirah to a reputation as a basement Ani DiFranco. The bold and dramatic movements of *Advisory Committee*, however, should place the artist squarely on solid ground where she can reap the rewards of so impressive a full-length debut. (K, P.O. Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507)

—Neal Ramirez

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themes all soak into *Instrumental Action Soul*. Take some classic organs and pianos, add some twang to the guitars with an infectious rhythm section and it's difficult to not find some merit in the mix. (Prescription, P.O. Box 3194, Iowa City, IA 52244)

—Steve Mowatt

**FLESHCRAWL**  
Soulskinner



Fleshcrawl is a German outfit formed back in '87 and now spawning enough name recognition and sales to warrant different labels picking up each of its previous half dozen releases. Now it's Metal Blade's turn. All the intervening years have done little to alter the band's original aesthetic path. The nine originals are still primitive—albeit competently performed—death metal, with titles like "Carved in Flesh," "Legions of Hatred" and "Breeding the Dead." The disc closes with the umpteenth cover of Judas Priest's "Metal Gods." (Metal Blade)

—Mark Gromen

**FURTIPS**  
When My Baby Smiles  
At Me, I Go To Rio



Herman Bunscoeke formed the Furtips in 1992 and ditched them a year later

because of the success of his other band, Bettie Serveert. Smart man. Even without Bunscoeke, the Netherlands-based outfit is still around, exploiting American indie conventions. Ignored in their home country, the Furtips have developed a remote pocket of fans in Florida with their nonsensical strings of non sequiturs and fuzzy guitar distortion. There's a distinct Malkmusian vibe on "Selection Kat," with its weird shifts in time and tone, while the broken harmonies of "Grapes, No Vine" invoke the twee of the Elephant 6 consortium. There are a few original moments, like the mod synths of "Colonel Impossible" and the radio-friendly pep of "Isn't She Pretty." With their boxy rhythm section firmly entrenched in the mix of bumbling bass and stiff drumming, the Furtips are fun, but ultimately unaffectionate. (Animal World, 2205 Tanglewood Terrace, Tallahassee, FL 32303)

—Chris Fritz

**GWAR**  
Violence Has Arrived



Lately, Gwar has been churning out a slew of records—each one worse than the previous. Following years of a downward trajectory, the band seems unable to play itself out of the joke into which it has disintegrated. While

Gwar's live show is still something to be experienced, the band's music has been suffering since '94. *Violence Has Arrived* shows Gwar has finally decided to take its comedy seriously again. The music is easily its most brutal, perfectly in tune with Gwar's newfound heights of glorified mayhem and ultra-violent lyrics. Another glorious, blood-soaked triumph for every pimple-faced, gaming teenage loser. (Metal Blade)

—Steve Mowatt

**NEIL HALSTEAD**  
Sleeping on Roads



It must be said Neil Halstead sounds just like a modern day Nick Drake. His first solo effort follows three albums, each by two Halstead-led bands—the dreamy Slowdive, which epitomized '90s shoegazing, and the more roots-oriented Mojave 3. Why a solo album? One might speculate these songs are so completely different than anything Halstead has done, naturally they should

comprise a solo album. In actuality, *Sleeping on Roads* piques a suspicion these tunes simply weren't good enough to make a Mojave 3 album. Still, even Halstead's throwaways are pretty good. "Hi-Lo and Inbetweens" and "High Hopes" are striking portraits from a natural poet. (Beggars' Banquet, 580 Broadway, #1004, New York 10012)

—Neal Ramirez

**HARICOT VERT**  
Les Moyennes Des Folklore



Angular rock is clearly a hot commodity when Europeans start screaming and detuning their guitars like Louisville, Ky., natives. France's Haricot Vert is pure early-'90s indie rock, evidently influenced by American acts like Polvo and Archers of Loaf. The band plays its instruments impeccably and even journeyed to Georgia to record with producer Brian Paulson for the authentic American slacker vibe.

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**ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND**

All Girl Summer Fun Band

This Portland quartet, led by Softies' member Jen Sbargia, is more punk rock than its pink skirts and Hello-Kitty guitar straps suggest. If All Girl Summer Fun Band seems to have little in common with the Stiff Little Fingers or Operation Ivy vein, it surely captures much of the same punk ethos fueling The Shaggs, The Modern Lovers and Tiger Trap—impassioned music saying exactly what it wants. Rocking a baker's dozen worth of songs in less than a half hour, the themes of this debut album are typical—love gone sour, hipster boyfriends and, most importantly, fun. Be it the sexual confusion kickstarting the catchy "New in Town" or the garagey "Car Trouble," these songs might seem trivial upon first listen. However, the group's enthusiasm proves more effective than deep lyrical subject matter, revealing a wealth of sassy attitude and coy girl power. (K, P.O. Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507)

—Neal Ramirez

**track listing**

- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 01. Brooklyn Phone Call | 08. It's There      |
| 02. Canadian Boyfriend  | 09. Girl #3         |
| 03. Car Trouble         | 10. Stumble Over My |
| 04. Later Operator      | 11. New in Town     |
| 05. Cut Your Hair       | 12. Cutie Pie       |
| 06. Somehow Angels      | 13. Cell Phone      |
| 07. Theme Song          |                     |

**For Fans Of:** Heavenly, Tuscadero, Tiger Trap



The chunky riffs of "Ascertain Ocho" would make Doug Martsch proud, but the lead singer's yelps sound better coming out of Modest Mouse's Isaac Brock. With few redeeming qualities, this six-song EP sounds almost as contrived as a Mandy Moore movie. (**Moodswing**, 3833 Roswell Road, Suite 104, Atlanta, GA 30342)

—Neal Ramirez

**HELLSPAWN**  
Lords of Eternity



If the band's moniker and album title don't conjure up satanic imagery, then perhaps the inverted pentagram and goat's head on the cover art will. Interestingly, Hellspawn has a unique distinction from many of the death/black metal bands out there—it does not hail from Scandinavia, or anywhere remotely near it. Rather, this Australian musical menace gives new meaning to the term "Thunder from Down Under." More significantly, the band has achieved something eluding most other death metal bands. Somehow Hellspawn wrote an album of extremely dark metal, which is actually somewhat palatable, even for those who wouldn't normally be fans. There aren't too many bands able to boast this claim. This is precisely the reason Hellspawn is able to stand apart from many other lesser-talented bands in its genre. (**Rotten**)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

**HUMAN FORTRESS**  
Lord of Earth  
and Heavens Heir



On first impression, one might think Human Fortress is one of the many bands specializing in European-styled metal. Certainly, tracks like "The Dragons Lair" and "Divine Astronomy," featuring high-speed riffing alongside theatrical vocals, are good examples. However, the band embellishes its sound with a bit of moody, atmospheric keyboards and haunting, Goth chants for good measure. The result is a heavy, melodic album featuring many interesting musical twists and turns. Fortunately, the arrangements are easy enough for the average listener to digest, thanks to Human Fortress' strong emphasis on songwriting. (**Limb**)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

**THE JAZZ JUNE**  
The Boom, the Motion  
And the Music



Like the lighter side of Mogwai, The Jazz June creates swelling, wandering music with change-ups slipping from hushed serenity to crashing jams. But instead of working with the aggression of death metal, The Jazz June is all indie-rock jangle. This is a tough band to pin down, sometimes sounding a little like Sunny Day Real Estate ("Bullets in the Backpocket"), sometimes like Engine Down ("When the Drums Kick In"), but always pushing the limits of listeners' expectations. Without the bombast of some of its rock kin, The Jazz June often leaves one aching for greater extremes—louder, softer, more aggressive, whatever. Surrounded by the swamp of homogeneity out there, however, The Jazz June sounds entirely like its own band. (**Initial**, P.O. Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217)

—Charles Spano

**JUCIFER**  
I Name You Destroyer



Self-described as "Southern Gothic Death Pop," the duo known as Jucifer certainly knows how to create interesting, genre-defying music. Each of the 15 tracks on *I Name You Destroyer* explore different avenues of musical experimentation far from the beaten path. Some of the album's eclectic musical ingredients include slow, grinding metal, hard-edged punk and elements from practically every other modern-rock subgenre. Through it all, vocalist Amber Valentine captivates listeners with a voice spanning from angry to soothing and hypnotic. (**Velocette**, 83 Walton St., Atlanta, GA 30303)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

**DAVID KILGOUR**  
A Feather in the Engine



Solo jaunts usually mean overindulgence in styles usually stifled by band dynamics. When your band only releases a record every five years, however, this precept won't hold true. David Kilgour is the founder of Clean, one of the most influential bands in a country where sheep outnumber people and Peter Jackson is king. Coming together in New Zealand in 1978, Clean's brand of post-punk psychedelia became an oft-imitated sound

continued on page 53

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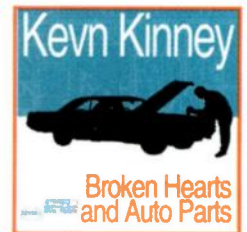
**Kevn Kinney**  
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# SWITCHED ON

Hip Hop & Electronica

The world famous DJ Clue is back with another installment to his library of mixes and compilations. Using the popularity of the PS2 video game, Clue has called this series **Grand Theft Audio**. This time the DJ seems focused on younger talent rather



than big names. Artists like Joe Buddens, Paul Cain and regular Clue freestyler Billy Bathgate all join in the mix, along with some fresh-from-the-oven material from heavies like Jay-Z, Busta Rhymes and Flipmode. Some R&B remixes weigh down on the comp's momentum, while the title track, ironically, turns out to be the weakest on the CD. Tracks from the Jigga Man and Camron, however, garner a decent score for Clue's latest. Overall it's just another Clue comp with some very high points, as well as some low ones—nothing to write home to Mom about. (Rocafella/Def Jam)

—Ahmad Lawton

In a world where commercialism rules with an iron fist, the underground rebellion continues to ravage cities with hopefuls. Seattle's **Uprok Records** is one of the many underground railroads carting runaway rappers to the promised land. Already packing some recognized names like Tunnel Rats, ILL



Harmonics and Deepspace 5, Uprok is also home to previously unheard talent, such as New Breed and Sinner's Prayer—the latter being one of the label's strongest acts. For the most part, the songs on the album are filled with depth and original content. Lyrical diversity is one of the compilation's biggest strengths—it's clear these acts all hail from different regions, bringing their own unique slang and style. While the lyrics are up to par, the production ruins some potentially good songs, for instance the Chemist's track, "How Do You Like Your Hip Hop," plagued with repetitive, uninspired beats. Meanwhile, other would-be high-scoring tunes such as LPG's "Remember" and Dialogue's "Visual Rap Credential" are marred by the same weak production. While Uprok has a strong portfolio of artists, its production will need to improve if the label is to become a serious mover and shaker in the industry. (Uprok, P.O. Box 12698 Seattle 98111)

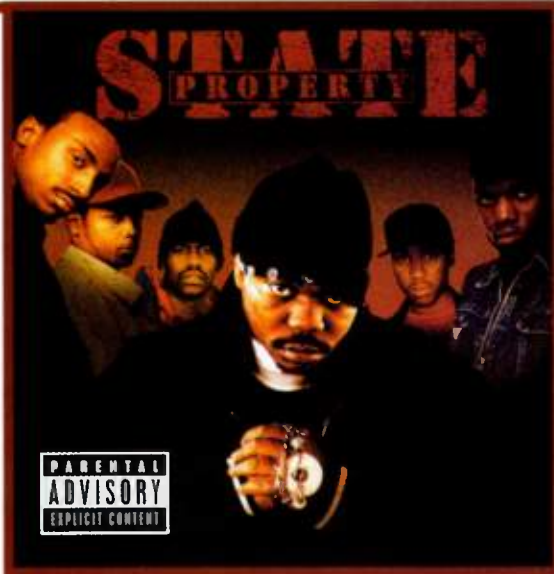
—Ahmad Lawton

An album like *Temptations* occurs when a group of talented wordsmiths get together and throw down hard, albeit often in the wrong direction. Each track walks the line between conscious and ego-ridden rap, a precarious position for any unit that could, should, yet just doesn't. The **Freestyle Fellowship**, a seminal group of nationwide waywards, combines street-smart, off-time poetry with tight beats and a rough intellect unfortunately lacking in melody. Aceyalone, Self Jupiter, P.E.A.C.E. and Mikah-9 have incredible flow, work well together, and inspire. Still, the rhythms become repetitive, not only track-to-track but within songs themselves. Employing a Supernatural plug via "Freestyle Dedication" only continues this general trend of laziness. *Temptations* is a solid effort, but one can't shake the feeling it simply could have been done better. Meanwhile listeners may or may not have names in mind when wondering who the "other rappers" the Fellowship disses might be. Most listeners, however, would probably prefer to hear a progressive lyric rather than such rampant self promotion. Tracks like "Every Reason Why" and "Ghetto Youth" have solid beats but no dynamics. "Seasons Change" is top-notch, yet a few hundred extra dollars to acquire a singer for the hook could have made it great. Ironically, the group's "No Hooks, No Chorus" sums up the disc pretty well—here's a poetry collective with incredible potential settling for mediocrity. (Blowed Project Records)



—Derek Beres

Jay-Z and Rocafella Records seem to be doing a lot of artist shopping in Philadelphia nowadays. Ever since the addition of South Philly's Beanie Sigel, the Roc realized there's a whole city of hungry talent waiting to kick in the door of opportunity at the first hint of a knock. Perhaps feeling the nip of competition at its heels, Rocafella went out and recruited a few good MCs to



help them conquer the rap world. Enter **State Property**—consisting of the duo Oschino and Sparks, the teenage Young Guns, a fierce soloist named Freeway and of course the general himself, Beanie Sigel. Armed with nothing but bad attitudes and microphones, the newest soldiers finally get their chance to prove their worth with a new album and a movie of the same name. The first single off the album, "Roc The Mic," features Beanie Sigel and Freeway, and promises to become a club and street anthem in no time. Although the song lacks depth and content, it's obvious these boys just want to have fun. Tracks like "Trouble Man" and "Hood I Know" are the standouts needed to highlight these young thugs-in-the-making, but the album's masterpiece comes courtesy of Freeway's solo track, "International Hustler." (Rocafella/Def Jam, 825 Eighth Ave., New York 10019)

—Ahmad Lawton



**RECORDS** continued from page 51  
 in the little Down Under. Kilgour's new solo album, while quieter, is true to historical form. *A Feather in the Engine* is one of the most heavily reverbed albums since R.E.M.'s *Monster*, but the sound remains remarkably clean. "I Lost My Train" chugs at an appropriate pace, with echoed, buried vocals and some sly electric guitar seeping through the acoustic layers. Kilgour also harbors a Byrds/CSNY influence, which rears its head on lonesome tracks like the instrumental "Sept. 98" and "The Perfect Watch." The real star here is "Today is Gonna Be Mine." With a fuzzy guitar hook and Kilgour/trumpet harmonizing, it's got college radio single written all over it. (Merge, P.O. Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514)

—Chris Fritz

**KILL ME TOMORROW**  
**Chrome Yellow**

When experimental noise pop is working at its best, you can still discern the traditional song elements beneath all the fuzz. On this collection of five new songs and a handful of remixes from various friends of the band (Tristeza, Black Heart Procession), the oddity is kept on the level with the pop, and the result is a sort of quirky mix of new wave and disso-

nance—think Sonic Youth sung by Jarvis Cocker and PJ Harvey. (P.O. Box 620463, San Diego, CA 92162-0463)

—Luke O'Neil

**FRANK LENZ**  
**The Hot Stuff**

The first notes of *The Hot Stuff* immediately suck listeners in to what is currently Frank Lenz's brilliant, hip retro sound. Somehow he's managed to straddle 1978 and 2002, and *The Hot Stuff* grooves and smokes out of the speakers with a doped-up grace, flawlessly incorporating Fender Rhodes, wah-wah guitars, horns, synths, fluid bass lines and syrupy falsetto vocals. Lenz does not fall slave to the retro concept thankfully, and every track on *The Hot Stuff* is vital, enjoyable, and really cool. Lenz keeps things rather low key, singing with a breathy delivery over layers and layers of keyboards and funky guitar tracks. Under it all, it's the bass keeping the album swinging. Lenz maintains momentum by dishing the music out in small doses—10 tracks come in under 35 minutes. It's a nearly perfect album of super-cool funk/rock sure not to disappoint. (Northern, 2461 East Orangethorpe Ave., Suite 200, Fullerton, CA 92831)

—Andre Calilhanna  
 continued on page 55

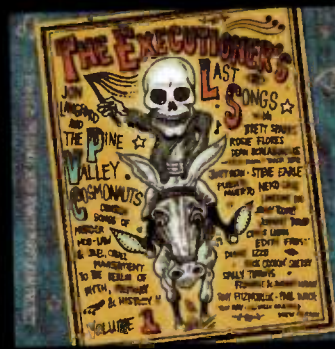


**FINCH**  
**Falling Into Place**

From the moment the first (and best) of the four tracks, "Perfection Through Silence," comes blaring through the stereo, listeners might have to reassure themselves this comes courtesy of Drive-Thru—a label known best for its less abrasive, radio-friendly pop-punk. Finch blends bits and pieces of its label's familiar sound with emo, hardcore and nu-metal to create something refreshingly unique in comparison to its labelmates. Some of the lyrics are a little predictable, but the layered vocals, aided by the background singing of RX Bandits' Matt Embree, almost make up for it. The slower, closing track, "New Kid," is easily disposable, but with a little time, this young band has the potential to do something great. (Drive-Thru, P.O. Box 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413)

—Eddie Fournier

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# under the radar

This Month: A Brief History Of Pop Music by Gail Worley



## THE COWSILLS The Best Of The Cowsills

One of the true pioneers of the where-are-they-now phenomenon, The Cowsills—a Rhode Island family comprising a mom, five brothers and a sister—predated the Osmonds and the Jackson Five as America's premier musical family back in the late '60s. It's no secret The Partridge Family was created to approximate the look and sound of The Cowsills, a fact firmly securing their place in pop culture history. Twelve of the group's best-loved songs are preserved on *The Best of The Cowsills*, part of Universal Records' Millennium Collection series. Known primarily for feel-good pop tunes like "The Rain, The Park and Other Things" and "Indian Lake," the family also dabbled in Christian rock ("The Prophecy of Daniel & John the Divine") and pop-country (covering "Silver Threads & Golden Needles"). Nothing on the record, however, quite reaches the dizzying level of euphoria delivered by their outrageously psychedelic rendition of the theme to the Broadway musical *Hair*, (though an amazing flashback cover of the theme song from TV's *Love, American Style* comes close). Accentuated by high-gloss production and gorgeous crescendos of multi-part harmonies, The Cowsills made music without irony, pretense or posing. While the bubblegum factor is writ large and many of their songs sound like cartoon pop from some Saturday-morning animated rock band, it is useless to resist: you will want to sing along. The cheese, as they say, stands alone.

Through his work with both The Box Tops and cult favorites Big Star, Alex Chilton is considered among the most revered American pop songwriters to surface in the wake of the first British invasion. Surely you know that children by the millions scream for him and are in love with his songs. At this point, he's probably overdue for a career homage like LunaSea Records' *A Tribute to Big Star*, which offers a truly comprehensive education (23 tracks clocking in at 74 minutes) on a band whose influence permeates every emo rock act from Built to Spill and Jimmy Eat World to heavy hitters like Guided By Voices, R.E.M., The Posies and, of course, The Replacements. Even if you don't own a Big Star record, you've heard its songs covered by The Bangles ("September Gurls"), This Mortal Coil ("Kangaroo" and "Holocaust") and Cheap Trick—whose version of "In The Street" is better known as the theme to *That '70s Show*. Chilton has always received an unfair share of the kudos for this band's staggering influence, so it's comforting that his Big Star co-vocalist/songwriting partner, Chris Bell (who left the band after one album, and was killed in 1978), is properly credited on this release. Those who share an affinity for any of the bands mentioned above will not find *A Tribute to Big Star* a disappointment. A well-written song endures forever.

## ALEX CHILTON A Tribute To Big Star



## JOEY RAMONE Don't Worry About Me

In a recent interview, Captain Sensible, guitarist for British punk legends The Damned, confessed there probably wouldn't even have been a British punk rock scene without the influence of The Ramones. Count Sensible among the various guests (contributing vocals on the loony tune, "Mr. Punchy") appearing on Joey Ramone's posthumous solo debut, *Don't Worry About Me*, on Sanctuary Records. Embracing everything Joey and the Ramones stood for as a band in a career spanning 22 years and 23 albums, and incorporating historical influences from bands like The Sex Pistols, The Dickies and The MC5, *Don't Worry About Me* is an exceptional collection of rock songs ranking among the best of the Ramone's substantial catalog. Joey's considerable flexibility and growth as an artist is evident on his exuberant, life-affirming cover of "What a Wonderful World," the Detroit garage rocker "1969" and the girl group-influenced "Stop Thinking About It,"—and his voice sounds better than ever. It doesn't take a room full of rock critics to tell you when Joey died we lost one of the greats. *Don't Worry*

*About Me* is a terrific album—a sentimental, fitting epilogue to the rich life of Joey Ramone and a tribute to a career having influence on thousands of bands. The Ramones will be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in March.

Comparing Mike Viola—the alarmingly poetic, astutely insightful frontman of New York's Candy Butchers—to Elvis Costello and Roy Orbison may seem like lofty praise. But a few spins of *Play With Your Head*, the RPM/Columbia Records follow-up to 1999's brilliant *Falling Into Place*, easily validates the comparison. The Candy Butchers (including drummer Mike Levesque and bassist Pete Donnelly) return with an impressive selection of ecstatic blasts of power pop offset by stunning ballads, with Viola still addressing the dualities inherent in living a life of any real consequence. Whether at his most upbeat and self-mocking ("Worry My Dome," "My Monkey Made a Man Out of Me") or plumbing the depths of a tragic past that continues to be a blur of painful reckoning ("I Let Her Get Away," "Call Off The Dogs"), Viola demonstrates a truly artistic lyrical bent. With each of the words so carefully chosen as to build lovingly upon the previous, his stories of love, loss and personal triumph unfold without ever burrowing into self-indulgence. Viola's lyrics are completely unadorned and on the surface, ("I set fire to her heart/so I could see her in the dark" and "Your life, it's such a mess/But everyone's impressed" to cite just two examples). It's easy to imagine your way into his head. As always, hauntingly beautiful melodies provide the glue holding it all together.

## CANDY BUTCHERS Play With Your Head





**LIARS**

**They Threw Us in a Trench and Stuck a Monument on Top**



I, for one, am so glad rock 'n roll has finally taken the 10 steps back it needed. Enough of the polishing—give me some posing. Make my ass move, make me either want to dance or punch the guy next to me. Bands like the Hives, Rapture, International Noise Conspiracy and now New York-via-Australia-based Liars have finally given me a reason to make a fist again. The band demonstrates the Rolling Stones were just as influential on the punk movement as the Sex Pistols, and they're not afraid to say it. Each song brews with venom and spits it at you with a sexiness rivaled only by Iggy Pop. Wire, Gang of Four, the Stones, Birthday Party, PIL—it's all here. The true testament is in the ending 30-minute opus, "This Dust Makes That Mud." Powerful, repetitive and damn good. (Gern Blandsten, P.O. Box, 356 Rivers Edge, NJ 07661)

—John Stanley

**LIGHTHEAVYWEIGHT**

**Isn't it Pretty to Think So?**



Consisting of members of Waxwing and Fields of Mars, Lightheavyweight creates beautifully layered, soulful alternative rock. There is a Brit-pop feel to much of the album, with songs like "Suburbs" and "H.S.P" mixing elements of older Radiohead with the vibe of newer acts like Travis. Other songs, like the infectiously catchy "Day Job," feature the quirky feel of Blur. While the guitar is occasionally spacey, it's always crisp and clear, reminiscent of The Edge or Johnny Greenwood. Slightly schizophrenic vocals sound like Bono one minute, Thom Yorke the next and Jeff Buckley the moment after. The rhythm section is solid and understated. Fortunately, for the sake of originality, Lightheavyweight manages to take the broad range and raw power of all those comparable artists and melt them into one refreshingly new and invigorating sound. (Your Best Guess, P.O. Box 64, Denville, NJ 07834)

—Eddie Fournier

**LIVE NOT ON EVIL**

**Lucky Stiff**



Live Not On Evil has combined all its influences to ultimately create a record all its own. A Dead Kennedy's tinny and high-pitch style guitar solo dominates the album's opener, "Brainwash," and "The Machine" has an intro so severely influenced by Danzig, listeners will be checking for John Christ in the liner notes. From there, Live Not takes its metal-tinged, guitar-dominated rock and molds it into something unique. The music is dark, heavy and fuzzy, with a melodic side creeping in at times. LNOE also combines its shadowy and gloomy music with equally ominous lyrics of paranoia, passion and terror. ([www.simplyfiendish.com/livenotonevil](http://www.simplyfiendish.com/livenotonevil))

—Steve Mowatt

**MATT POND PA**

**The Green Fury**



With two albums, an EP and a few singles under his belt, Matt Pond has moved on to the greener pastures of the Polyvinyl label to release yet another masterpiece. *The Green Fury* carries on where *This is Not the Green*

*Fury* and *Thought You Were Sleeping* led us just a few years ago. Pond's lyrics are just as heartbreaking as his voice suggests. Conjuring images of a man with eyes closed, fists clenched, rocking back and forth softly singing, "Silence is beautiful, I hope you agree." A solid backing band—consisting of members of Lefty's Deceiver, Rhode Island and the Rachels—has supplied just the right amount of depth and subtlety to complement Pond's lyrics and voice. Tracks such as "City Plan" and "Silence"—with its softly plucked strings and soft, repetitive drums building into itself—could be called typical, but it refuses to tread the same water twice. The album feels so brittle and frail, yet comes across with strength and force. A perfect album for the lingering winter months. (Polyvinyl, P.O. Box 1885, Danville, IL 61834)

—John Stanley

**ROBERT MCCREEDY**

**Streamline**



The landscapes are truly American as seen through the Midwestern eyes of Robert McCreedy. In his first solo

continued on page 59

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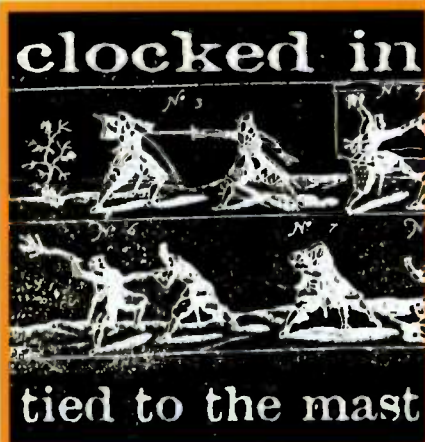


# HARD ROCK NEWS

by Amanda Feingold

When you think of the Deep South, maybe punk rock is not the first thing that comes to mind. Maybe you think of dueling banjos and men in overalls with no shirt underneath. But Atlanta band **Clocked In** wants the world to know spirited, emotional hardcore can come from below the Mason-Dixon line, so the quintet is bringing it to the people with its debut LP, *Tied to the Mast*. Not having the best production or sound quality gives the release a demo feel, but it works for hardcore music with a classic punk edge. The band wears its influences on its sleeve, showing elements of Avail, Fugazi and Sick of It All. Clocked In has appeared on several compilations in the past, including *Too Legit For the Pit*, a Radical Records collection in which hardcore bands paid tribute to the popular gangsta rap classics they love so much (check out Clocked In's version of Ice-T's "New Jack Hustler," Candiria's take on Dr. Dre's "Deep Cover" and Snoop Dogg and Stretch Arm Strong's version of N.W.A.'s "Express Yourself.") On the band's website, singer Matt Sleep says, "Clocked In is a more interesting, more exciting bet

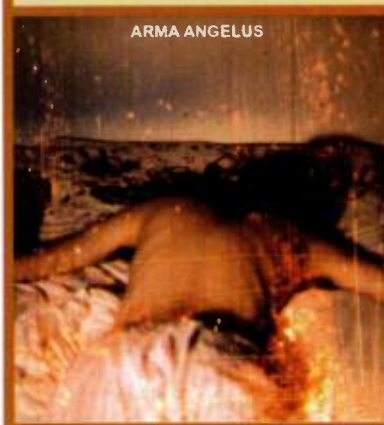
than spending our '20s slinging beers and painting cars. It's rebellion against everyone who thinks we can't seriously fulfill our dreams. Clocked In is rebellion against all of the shallow, crappy music passing itself off as punk rock right now. Clocked In is about being the underdog. We're all heart and all guts and no sense and no shame, and we know that's how it has to be. Clocked In is a fucking rock band." Damn, I guess that says it all.



South Florida hardcore band **Until the End** has recently released its first full-length album, *Blood In the Ink*, via Eulogy Recordings. Though the band has been around for only two years, the musicians make up a seasoned cast from the underground scene. Drummer Wes Keely came from Walls Of Jericho, guitarist Mark Mitchell played in Red Roses For a Blue Lady and guitarist John Wylie was a member of Where Fear and Weapons Meet. Until the End sounds similar to metal core bands like Hatebreed and Buried Alive, always keeping a furious pace while singer Mean Pete shouts his throaty, hoarse vocals. The band does preach the straight-edge lifestyle, but if you are looking for youth crew posi core, look elsewhere. Until the End conveys scary, angry images with its album artwork, comprising pictures of a guy with his throat cut, a man on fire and a man with a gun to his head—not exactly uplifting. For those who can't get enough of the gore, there is a limited edition *Blood In the Ink* digipak available at the Eulogy online store. The band toured Europe in March and April, and is already writing material for the next album.



Chicago's **Arma Angelus** is another Eulogy band, and believe it or not, the artwork for its latest album, *Where Sleeplessness Is Rest From Nightmares*, is even more disturbing than that of Until the End. All the photos depict someone getting stabbed to death while lying on a bed. This could be symbolic of the band's dissatisfaction with politics or the death of the hardcore scene, or it could be just plain gross. At any rate, Arma Angelus formed about two years ago, bringing together members of Racetrailer and Extinction. The band blends the sounds of hardcore, American metal and European black metal. They can at times sound like Pantera, Biohazard or Euro bands like Opeth and Brainstorm. The songs tend to be long, dark opuses, and Peter Wentz' raspy vocals deliver lines like, "There is no happily ever after in the end/There is no cure/I can't get it out of my head/I sink and drown as fairy tales end." Despite



all the gloom and doom, the band still thought it appropriate to cover Cheap Trick's "Surrender" for a hidden track on the CD. Arma Angelus played some hometown shows in March with Bloodlet and Dead to Fall, but the band plans to embark on a wider tour in late spring or early summer.



Christian punk band **Dogwood** has been kicking around the San Diego scene for seven years, and its sixth album, *Matt Aragon*, was recently released on Tooth and Nail Records. In addition, Facedown Records also just reissued the band's 1998 self-produced, self-titled album. So don't be fooled, *This Is Not a New Album* is not just the name of the CD, but it is, in fact, not a new album. Dogwood doesn't show a

wide range of influences or sounds on this reissued disc, but its pop punk sensibility is catchy nonetheless. The sound is similar to *Punk in Drublic*-era NOFX, with the exception of the religious aspects about which this band sings proudly. As for *Matt Aragon*, the band feels it has achieved a more mature sound and even more acclaim. Dogwood recently won a San Diego Music Award for best punk band. While good things are happening for the band, it did lose longtime guitarist Sean O'Donnell, who chose to pursue other projects. New axeman Daniel Montoya, formerly of Logos, has gladly filled his shoes.





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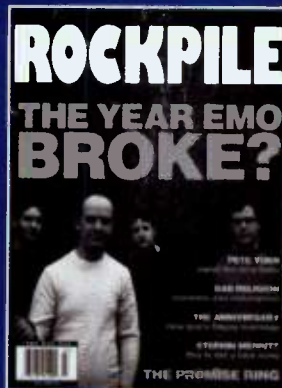
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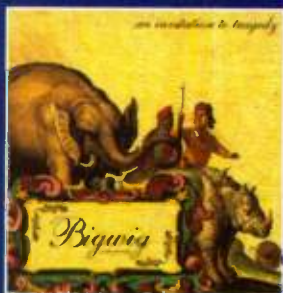
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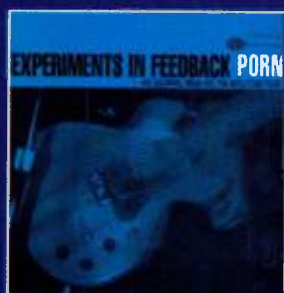
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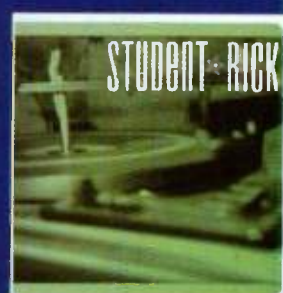
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# all things indie

by Mike McKee

Mixing percussion, guitars and soft-sound plucking from both organic and electronic palets, Philadelphia's **Aspera** raises the bar set by its 2001 full-length *Sugar & Feathered*. While melodies are kept more or less intact, listeners are advised to be patient with the band, as eccentricity and quirk rule on *Birds Fly*. Cathedral-sized choir vocals and layered synthesizers sweep like ether-soaked glaciers over the notably retro foundations penned by the quartet. The vocals on *Birds* are strained and otherworldly, in a way brokenthroated perpetrators from Moldy Peaches to Bright Eyes will envy. With nods to John Lennon and Magnetic Fields, Aspera creates a dramatic, albeit odd experience through the five songs on this new 18-minute EP. While Aspera's latest isn't necessarily an easy listen, depending on one's mood or sanity, it shouldn't be too difficult to find for listeners to find this disc a home. (Suicide Squeeze, P.O. Box 80511, Seattle, WA 98108)



It's hard to verbalize a stronger testament to the tremendous legacy of Olympia, Wash.'s **Beat Happening** than the sheer volume and weight of its seven-CD box set. *Crashing Through* compiles all five of the band's albums and a sixth album of singles, rarities and compilation tracks. When the band crashed onto the scene in 1983, loud and fast ruled the American punk landscape. Beat Happening's response was one of ice cream and hand-drawn kitten faces rather than spraypainted anarchy symbols and mosh pits. For all the sugary aesthetic, however, the trio and the wave of indie pop it helped initiate have maintained as strong a grip on punk's autonomous ideals as some of the most distortion-heavy competition. Frontman Calvin Johnson founded the now legendary K Records, while the label and Beat Happening forged a cutesier cousin to the mohawk set in the form of the "international pop underground." Now, nearly 20 years since its inception, the idea is still an intriguing one, to mix the fierce independence, raw learning-as-we-go musicianship and what-we-do-is-secret camaraderie of punk with the infectious and liberating qualities of pop music. For those who missed out on the cool-kids' club throughout the '80s and '90s, *Crashing Through* provides an encyclopedic history of one of the last 20 years' most influential bands, credited with affecting the likes of everyone from The Pastels, Yo La Tengo, Courtney Love (the band) and Bratmobile to Fugazi, Nirvana and Bikini Kill. The seven-CDs in this box set are complemented by an impressive 96-page booklet written by Olympia songwriter Lois Maffeo (Courtney Love, Lois), which recounts the story of the band in the frank words of its members and their peers. Along with the commentary, Maffeo includes clips of obscure poster art, EP sleeves and rare photographs of the band. As if all this weren't enough, *Crashing Through's* seventh CD is an exclusive, enhanced CD-Rom packed with footage of the band playing live and producing videos. While fans might already be familiar with the bulk of the material provided on five of the seven discs, there's enough on *Crashing Through* to satisfy both completists and the curious. (K, P.O. Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507)

## INDIE ROCK CONFIDENTIAL

Elizabeth Elmore former frontwoman for Midwestern indie darlings **Sarge** has formed a new group called **The Reputation**. The band has a new record out on **Initial Records** and will be touring sporadically throughout the next few months... **Southern Records** will soon release *Millions of Brazilians*, the latest full-length of subdued intricacies from **Dianogah**... There's been plenty of activity around Washington, D.C., and Virginia as of late, with a new full-length from **Engine Down** (courtesy of **Lovitt Records**) and two new releases from **Dischord**. The first is a new album from **The Capital City Dusters** (featuring Alec Bourgeois of **Severin/Common Cause**) titled *Rock Creek*. After a brief hiatus, the band (perhaps best known for its split 10" with fellow DC band **Most Secret Method**) is back and will be touring this April. The second release comes from a relatively new experimental trio, **El Guapo**. Labelmates **Q** and **Not U** recently lost bass player Matt Bourlique, leaving guitarists Chris and Harris plan to fill in the blanks with a combination of new arrangements and keyboards. A new seven-inch courtesy of Dischord will serve as a progress report on the new model this spring... Meanwhile, another formerly bassist-less band, **The Lapse**, has reformed with **Ink and Dagger/Liys** member Don Devore filling in the low end. The new lineup—also consisting of Chris Leo (**Van Pelt/The Smiles**) and Chris Wilson (**Pharmacists**)—has renamed itself **Sparrow** and will be playing up and down the East Coast throughout the spring... Richmond, Va's **Denali** will soon release a self-titled full-length through the prolific **Jade Tree** label. The label also has a new release from **Pedro the Lion**... The **Godspeed You Black Emperor**-related project **Do Make Say Think** will be releasing a new full-length on the group's **Constellation** label (also responsible for releases from spin-off outfit **A Silver Mount Zion**)... After more than 15 years of symbiotic relations, indie/punk rock publication *Maximum Rock 'n Roll* has severed its distribution ties with indie distributor **Mordam**, citing conflicting opinions on appropriate bedfellows and practices... Back on the East Coast, things are heating up as two **Ladyfests** (popular female-oriented indie music festivals) are in the works this year for Philadelphia and Washington, D.C... One of the D.C. organizers, former **Bald Rapunzel** drummer/**Exotic Fever Records** owner **Katy Otto**, will be heading into the studio with **Inner Ear** engineer Chad Clark (**Dismemberment Plan**, **Fugazi**) to record a full-length with her new power-trio **Del Cielo**... **Karate** frontman/**Secret Stars** member **Geoff Farina** has recently released a new solo record through the **Kimchee** label called *Blobscape*. A concept album, *Blobscape* consists of improvisational tracks culled from more than 100 recordings generated as Farina played guitar accompanying and responding to abstract paintings from fellow **Secret Star** **Jodi V.B.** As **Southern** released a new **Karate** EP, *Cancel/Sing*, last month, fans will have some options in the age-old question raised by the Boston hardcore legends of **SSDecontrol**: "How much art can you take?"

Following last year's buzzworthy tour with fellow D.C. rock outfit **Motorcycle Wars**, the capital city's **Cry Baby Cry** has at long last dropped its debut full-length, *Jesus Loves Stacey*. The album appears courtesy of the **Skoda** label (with a little help from **Dischord**) and injects a healthy dose of lighthearted, danceable good humor to an often dour indie scene. Heavily reverbed garage stompers like "The Fast-Assed Sumbitchie" (quality title), "Calling Out" and the title track form an irrefutable invite to storm the dancefloor. The band avoids the predictable retro pitfalls with plenty of personality and ample doses of rock—the rock, after all, should be in no short supply, as the band includes former members of **Trusty** and **The Norman Mayer Group**. Production credits go towards former **Jawboxer** **J. Robbins** (someone ought to send him and **Steve Albini** photographs of the outdoors so they might remember what it's like to leave the studio). With nods to **The Rondelles**, **X**, **Billy Childish**, **Chisel** and **The PeeChees**, **Cry Baby Cry** proves on *Jesus Loves Stacey* it is indeed a band "dedicated to the art of moving butts" (**Tribe Called Quest**). (Skoda, P.O. Box 7761, Washington, DC 20013)





RECORDS continued from page 55  
 record since leaving The Volebeats, McCreedy sings about dusty roads and longing for love in a sort of calm, understated sophistication. The production on *Streamline* shows a true knack for highlighting the beautifully plain sounds of acoustic guitar, mandolin and fiddle, and his skillful use of different instrument combinations throughout the record creates distinct personalities for each track. On "Gone Again" McCreedy even shows off Laura Cantrell on backing vocals. (Safehouse, P.O. Box 214, Poultney, VT 05764)

—Joe Cherry

**THE MENDOZA LINE**  
**Lost in Revelry**



The Mendoza Line is heavy on melancholy attitude. Each of the 13 songs on *Lost In Revelry* is deeply downhearted, a lush orchestral arrangement featuring a wide variety of instruments blending in aching harmony. Some tracks, like "A Damn Good Disguise" and "What Ever Happened to You?," even evoke a bit of a country flavor. What is most striking are the vocals—the female and male vocals seem to struggle touchingly with the disheartening lyrics. The most consistent aspect of *Lost In Revelry* is the exceptional percus-

sion. From the slow ballads to the faster-paced songs, the drums hold each song together with strong syncopation and compelling, infectious beats. The Mendoza Line has succeeded in creating a truly passionate and honest record. (Misra, P.O. Box 20297, Tompkins Square Station, New York 10009)

—Steve Mowatt

**MIDNIGHT SUN**  
**Metal Machine**



Clad in black leather, studs and dark shades, the members of Midnight Sun bear close resemblance to those of another, better known metal band. It seems a bit obvious British metallers Judas Priest were an inspiration to Midnight Sun in several ways. The album cover for *Metal Machine* features a cartoon metal vehicle with fangs and heavy artillery. As far as the song titles are concerned, "Dungeons of Steel," "Metal Gods" and the title track could have fit nicely on any Priest album. Musically, the band has a lot of ideas, but could use a bit more focus in the songwriting department. The saving grace is a beautiful, acoustic ballad, ironically hidden after the end of the disc. Ultimately Midnight Sun has potential, if it ever overcomes its apparent identity crisis. (Limb)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

**MISFITS**  
**Cuts From the Crypt**



Let's start by saying we all know this is not the true Misfits. Keeping in mind this outfit is a totally different entity than the heroes we all worshipped on our skateboard decks and book covers, these songs deserve some credit. The tunes on *Cuts From the Crypt* are infectiously catchy (even if childishly simple), maintaining an inescapable sing-along quality. *Cuts* is a collection of demos, rare tracks, covers and live songs from the 1996-2001 era of the Misfits v2.0. The band's rendition of the '50s stomper "Monster Mash" is worth a chuckle, while the album's opener—a quite powerful track which was strangely left off the *American Psycho*—packs a notable punch as well. Fans of the Jerry Only Experience will find some appealing elements to this collection, but most Misfits purists will probably end up destroying all known copies of this record once they hear "I Wanna Be a N.Y. Ranger." (Roadrunner, 902 Broadway, New York 10010)

—Steve Mowatt

**NEKROMANTIX**  
**Return of the Loving Dead**



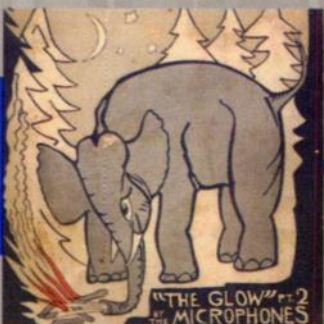
There has been a huge resurrection of horror punk and psychobilly recently, and *Return of the Loving Dead* provides the perfect fix for anyone who can't get enough. Hellcat Records released Tiger Army's exceptional *II: Power of Moonlite* late last year, and now Nekromantix counters all of the late-night, broken-hearted blues of frontman Nick 13 with an album full of ghoulish mischief and campy fun. Sure the band struggles with copying psychobilly rock gods The Meteors, but Nekromantix has a lot of fun with its own brand of psychotic pop. (Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 90026)

—Steve Mowatt

**RACEBANNON**  
**In the Grips of the Light**



Picture this if you will—a man known only as the Hamburgler, aggravated by years of failing to steal food from a clown named Ronald and drunk on his own delusions of power, decides to exact his revenge via rock music. To do so, he burgles some trashy sex from Pussy Galore, pilfers The Locust's explosive maelstrom, absconds with

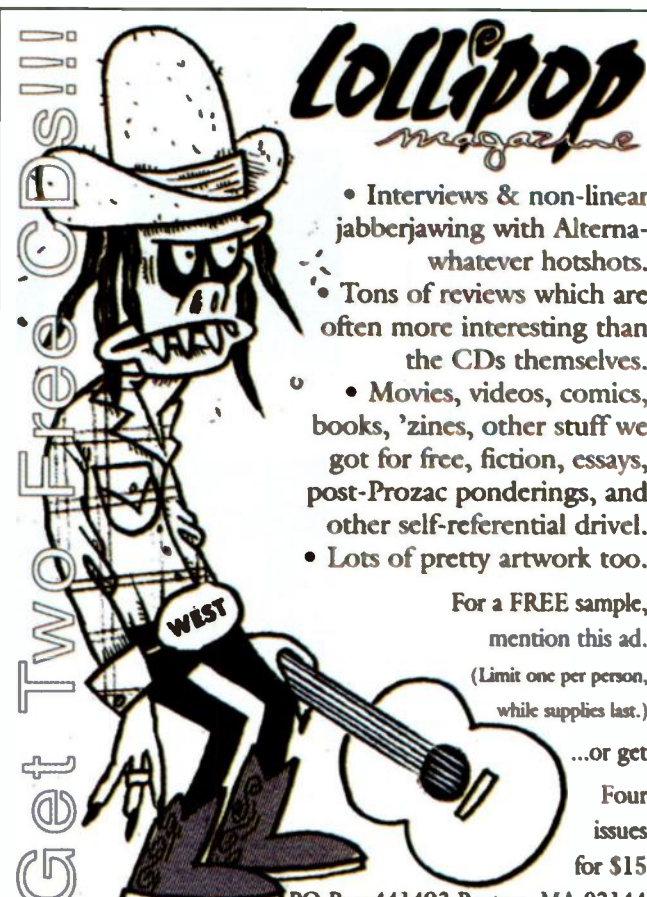


**THE MICROPHONES**  
**"The Glow" Pt. 2**

◆◆◆◆

The soul of Eric's Trip is not lost in black space. It is purveyed in the sunbathed tales of the Microphones. From the big, mysterious brain of Phil Elvrum, member of D+ and Old Time Relijun and producer to the Northwest stars, comes another big, mysterious epic. The Microphones throw lo-fi and hi-fi together for a stew of back-porch sounds and Phil Spectorisms. The results, from the bluesy "I Want Wind to Blow" to the Muddy Waters-cum-Stereolab sound on "The Moon," are not only a tech head's dream, but also highly sensitive songs about simple emotions. The only problem with "The Glow" Pt. 2 is its length. Twenty songs are fine for a retrospective, but for one album, listeners should be prepared for a whole lot of eerie shit. (K, P.O. Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507)

—Neal Ramirez



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Black Dice's ambient roar and then vents his twisted rantings over the backdrop. This pretty much sums up Racebannon, a band with all instruments set to palpitate and the vocals on gibber. Still, whether you think it pushes the limits of the medium or just the edges of obnoxiousness, one thing remains certain—a band christening a song with a title like "Flip and Fuck" must have some unique, eternal value. (Secretly Canadian, 1201 S. Walnut Bloomington, IN 47401)

—Reed Jackson

**RITUAL SPACE TRAVEL AGENCY**  
Ratbelly vs Gorgotron



Just wondering if the ability to actually read sheet music is part of the job requirement when you play for Ritual Space Travel Agency. Sounds that way, as it might be just near impossible to memorize most of the music on *Ratbelly vs Gorgotron*. Equal parts Frank Zappa, Rage Against The Machine and latter-day King Crimson, with a touch of Rocket From The Crypt (how's that for eclectic?), RSTA has set out to push the envelope beyond recognition through a diverse mix of instruments (including alto sax, hammered dulcimer and auto-

harp), progressive-rock arpeggios and a surprise beyond every corner. Pissed-off vocals a la Jesse Prentiss punctuate this artistic endeavor, of which people will either hail with cult-like status or hate, depending on their frame of reference or frame of mind. Not samey in any regard, the songs shift from the preachy and angry "Fractured" to the funky-turned-bizarre "On An Island," with a bevy of twist and turns along the way. Hold on tight and let the mind go free. (Bandaloop, 565 Garden Road, Columbus, OH 43214)

—Joe Chery

**SODOM**

M-16



Sodom has yet to disappoint. For 20 years the band has been producing the loudest, toughest and most aggressive thrash metal in the United States or Europe. Sodom has typically explored subjects involving war and its lasting effect, and the band's latest is no different. *M-16* retells the horrors of the Vietnam War in tracks like "I am the War," "Napalm in the Morning," "Cannon Fodder" and others. Sodom is still at its brutal best with the trademark blazing solos and memorable

heavy-crunch riffs, but it gains an extra push with superior production lacking in its earlier work. This album also has one of the greatest covers ever recorded for the last track. "Surfin' Bird" is ripped out in such a vicious punk fashion, it offsets the intense tightness of the record's other songs. *M-16* is a must-have for any fan of metal. (SPV GMBH, P.O. Box 72 1147, 30531 Hanover, Germany)

—Steve Mowatt

**SOUTH**

Here On In



The only direction South is headed is straight up. This band pumps out one trippy, melodic tune after another, with a strong resemblance to the former Richard Ashcroft band, The Verve. The opening song, "Broken Head I," seems to be made of the purest vibes of the band's soul—a preview of the peaceful yet intense mix of hypnotic rock to come. The album is cleverly split in half with the continuance of "Broken Head II." In keeping with the soothing, mellow feel, "I Know What You're Like" might be an experiment with the bluegrass sound. *Here On In* is tied together by "Broken Head III," haunting listeners with a

memorable breeze of a groove. (Kinetic, 425 W. 13th St., 5th Floor, New York 10014)

—Rita George

**THE STARTING LINE**

With Hopes of Starting Over



Sounding remarkably similar to labelmates New Found Glory, The Starting Line is the latest addition to the increasingly agitating pop-punk trend. Take catchy guitar hooks, a bit of punk attitude, a few songs about relationships and how they suck, at least one slower sad song, an attempt at a clever or funny song (the third track, "Three's a Charm") and a cover of a cheesy '80s tune (Jefferson Starship's "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now"), and you have yourself another standardized pop-punk EP. In all, every track bleeds into the following one without leaving much of an impression. Fortunately, the guys are very young. With a little luck this trend may soon end, leaving the guys young enough to start over and be a little more original. (Drive-Thru, P.O. Box 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413)

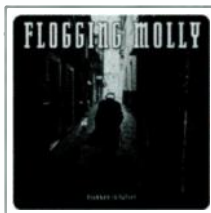
—Eddie Fournier

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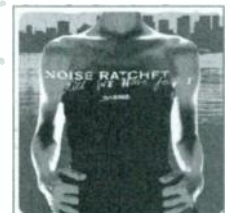
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**SUPER FURRY ANIMALS**  
Rings Around the World



Super Furry Animals are constantly hailed as the Welsh saviors of psychedelic rock. The band's fifth proper album is by far its most powerful and consuming effort to date. After 2000's *MWNG*, an album of Welsh-sung tunes, one could only imagine what direction the band was going to take. The band serves up yet another helping of bar-raising, mind-boggling tunes combining elements of great pop stalwarts ELO, Beatles and even Jellyfish. *Rings Around The World* bubbles with sci-fi-related sound effects, while songs such as "It's Not the End of the World," "Shoot Doris Day" and "Presidential Suite" showcase the

sweeping, Bacharachian orchestration the Animals have come to embrace. "Sidewalk Serfer Girl" and "Receptacle for the Respectable" are solid moments of the pure, Super Furry pop expected and unexpected of such masters. Even though it's pretty damn early in the year, due to its late state-side release, this could easily be a contender for album of the year. (*Beggars Banquet*)

—John Stanley

**TARENTEL**  
The Order Of Things



Signed to the Neurosis imprint, the loose collective of San Franciscans is the antithesis of the noisy label founders, preferring to indulge in

lengthy instrumental compositions without definitive shape. The opening "Adonai" is almost exclusively acoustic guitar, yet around the seven-minute mark spacey synthesizers take over. A cover of Ricky Lee Jones' "Ghostly Head" crops up early on. Classical music mixed with the progressive, minimalist and at times atonal. It's not clear who the intended Tarentel audience is, but undoubtedly it needs hallucinogens, as the music makes little sense sober. (*Neurot, P.O. Box 410209, San Francisco 94141*)

—Mark Gromen

**TEENAGE FANCLUB**

Howdy



Is it me, or has it been ages since Teenage Fanclub mattered? Sure, we all loved them during the innocent indie-rock days of the early '90s, but those halcyon times have fled, helped on their path by TF's steady stream of negligible later-day records. And now *Howdy* arrives on your doorstep, smiling sheepishly like a forgotten lover (acting as if the years haven't passed at all). And damn it if we don't let him in the door. Somehow, the Fanclub has pulled off a huge left-field comeback, crafting the pop

album to win 2002. Like the overly hyped Beachwood Sparks (without the affected twang), or the justly lauded Shins (minus the claustrophobia and helium), Teenage Fanclub has made a record at once wistfully nostalgic and sharply modern, sweet yet wisely resigned and as appealing as dimples on a two-year-old. Song after song unveils a seemingly endless supply of loosely jointed guitars playfully circling amidst smiling bursts of distortion, drawling vocals celebrating the simple joys of acceptance, encouraging eddies of organ, trumpet and hook after intoxicating hook. Who knows what kind of artistic Viagra these guys are on, but suffice it to say it worked and was well worth the incubation time. (*Thirsty Ear, 274 Madison Ave., Suite 804, New York 10016*)

—Reed Jackson

**TEENAGE FANCLUB & JAD FAIR**  
Words of Wisdom and Hope



*Words of Wisdom and Hope* manages to combine the sincere, non-cynical power pop of Teenage Fanclub with the off-kilter intensity of Jad Fair. With Fair on vocals, the result is somewhere between Lou and the Velvet Underground and a

*continued on page 64*

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Century Media Record  
10 Year Anniversary



It's fitting the premier U.S. metal indie opened a new office to celebrate a decade in business on these shores. The limited edition, (10,000 worldwide) three-CD collection is a lavish production, housed in a four panel digi-pak with archaic drawings on each and a thick paperback book, chock full of photos. It's a nice concept, but suffers on many counts. Notably, on the final disc of supposed rarities (most will be tempted to buy the set for this disc alone), only Stuck Mojo's effort is truly a new, exclusive song. The rest are long out-of-print renditions, tracks from seven-inch vinyl or bonus cuts off various imported versions. The initial disc is dedicated to signees from North America, mainly the United States. The contributions are somewhat chronological, but by no means all encompassing. While homegrown failures like Graveyard Rodeo and Mucky Pup are thankfully not included, less than stellar outfits, like Haste, Eyehategod and the much-ballyhooed and mercifully short-lived Only Living Witness are represented. The remainder of disc one shows what a spotty record the talent from this side of the pond has mustered—most of the bands are no longer active and the few ever really clicked with audiences anywhere. The second disc is the jewel of the collection, but any metalhead with knowledge of Century Media probably owns something by every band showcased, if not all the songs. The beginning is dedicated to the Euro acts inked earliest, an admittedly dodgy contingent of Morgoth, Grave, Asphyx and Unleashed. The fifth of the 17 tracks, Samael's "Flagellation," hits paydirt and it's quality material through to the end. The label's fortunes have mimicked the flow of the songs, scouring the globe for the best bands, regardless of location, offering a fertile environment for growth. (*Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250*)

—Mark Gromen

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# STRAIGHT FROM THE EDGE

by Amy Sciarretto

The long-awaited new HATEBREED opus, *Perseverance*, hits stores any day now. Not one to disappoint, the Connecticut band serves up heavy hitters such as "Healing to Suffer," "Broken" and "Call For Blood." This time around the breakdowns are heavier and the 'Breed focuses more on song craft. While the album retains Hatebreed's keep-it-simple formula, the band's songs are longer and more structured. Expect the thug-core crew to become even more of a household name this year. The album will be issued through UNIVERSAL... Speaking of Hatebreed, frontman Jamey Jasta's label, STILLBORN, has just released STALEMATE's self-titled EP—highly recommended for fans of GLASSJAW. Meanwhile, Glassjaw has parted ways with ROADRUNNER and is continuing to work on new material with ROSS ROBINSON. Speculation suggests WARNER BROS. has snatched the band for itself... SANTA SANGRE—the band composed of the smoldering ashes of ANOTHER VICTIM—has broken up due to the members' lack of interest... SUPERMODEL RECORDS has made the hard rock world an uglier, angrier place with the release of *Live at the Dungeon*, a split between the technical wizards of ALL ELSE FAILED and the fire-breathing maniacs of THE BAD LUCK 13 RIOT EXTRAVAGANZA... BROTHER'S KEEPER is working on some new demos, titled *Box Office Smash*. While the songs are just demos, they showcase the new direction the almighty B.K. might be taking... Southern hardcore band CODESEVEN recently completed *The Rescue*, to be released by THE MUSIC CARTEL sometime this month. The band parted ways with one of its singers last year, so this new album is cer-

tain to have a different vibe to it... VICTORY RECORDS has signed Orange County, Calif.'s ATEYU... EQUAL VISION has signed TIME IN MALTA. The band is currently writing material for its label debut and should issue it sometime this summer. Ardent scenesters might recall Time In Malta was supposed to sign with REVELATION more than a year ago, before the deal fell through unexpectedly. Revelation has followed through with signing PITCH BLACK, however, which features former members of THE NERVE AGENTS... DEATHWISH INC. has released a CD from KNIVES OUT, a new band featuring former members of I HATE YOU/CHRIST/AMERICAN NIGHTMARE... ZAO had a meltdown on stage last month and is rumored to be parting ways... ESO CHARIS is a new band featuring members of LIVING SACRIFICE. The new outfit recently released a self-titled album through SOLID STATE, full of screamy, choppy, harmonically distorted rock... UNDECIDED RECORDS has unleashed BREAKING PANGAEA's *Cannon To A Whisper*. Fans of RIVAL SCHOOLS and QUICKSAND ought to take notice. Emotional post-hardcore might just have a new name, and it's Breaking Pangaea... Meanwhile, a new band featuring the classic duo of Dan Yemin and Dave Wagonschutz (LIFETIME/KID DYNAMITE) and Matt Miller (CATHARSIS) has dubbed itself PAINT IT BLACK, and has begun playing around the East Coast. Fans can expect a record on JADE TREE later this year. The Delaware-based label also drops the debut full-length from TRIAL BY FIRE—a D.C.-area band combining melody with aggressive rock, reminiscent of AVAIL or STRIKE ANYWHERE...





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Grandaddy  
Gomez



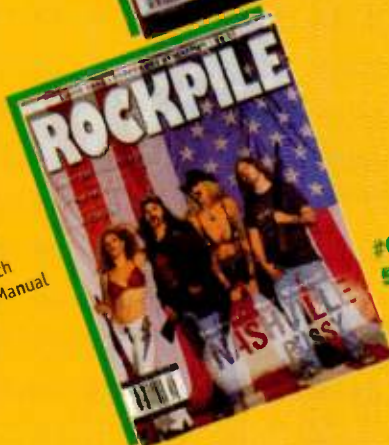
**#58**  
Jun 00  
Boss Hog  
Jucifer  
Kittie



**#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**

- \_\_\_ #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
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- \_\_\_ #39 Oct 98 Shonen Knife, Massive Attack, The Donnas
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- \_\_\_ #59 Jul 00 Murder City Devils, Apples In Stereo

**QNTY**

- \_\_\_ #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
- \_\_\_ #67 Mar 01 Low, Bright Eyes, Frank Black
- \_\_\_ #68 Apr 01 Rocket From The Crypt, Luna, Tortoise
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- \_\_\_ #70 Jun 01 Guided By Voices, Arab Strap, Good Riddance
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**RECORDS** *continued from page 61*  
 mellower *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*-era R.E.M. In fact, "I Feel Fine" echoes Lou Reed's supreme state of being (Reed: "It was Alriiight") with a commentary for a frenetic world (Fair: "I Feel Fine"). Jad ruminates, "Early in the morning/no chance of a robot uprising/look what the sunshine brings." Listeners can't help but think of the Velvet's "Who Loves the Sun?" The album moves on to rambling rockers with backing vocals from the Pastels' Katrina Mitchell ("Near to You"), dark jams—reminiscent of "Heroin"—about crushes ("Crush on You") and sleepy paeans to love ("Cupid"). Just listen to the slow build of "Smile" to realize *Words of Wisdom and Hope* is the greatest darkness-meets-bubblegum pop revival of the Velvet Underground since the Feelies' *Crazy Rhythms*. (Alternative Tentacles, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco 94141-9092)

—Charles Spano

**TOSCA**

**Different Tastes Of Honey**



Tosca is the electronic brainchild of Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber, and this collection of dub mixes exposes the duo for what it is: a remix master with a delicate touch. The nuances and subtleties woven into the music on this CD are fantastic, and it is the sophisticated specialty of this duo setting it apart from heavy-handed producers in the same genre. There is such a diversity of sound—from voices to synthesizers to lots of bass and extremely intricate beats. It's here the real magic starts, as Dorfmeister and Huber incorporate an amazing array of percussion instrumentation as well as an astounding ability to use it intelligently in the scope of a dance beat. These guys are masters at creating a groove and layering on top of it. Great party music. ([www.k7.com](http://www.k7.com))

—Andre Calilhanna

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**The Royal Tenenbaums**



As far as quirky, dysfunctional family flicks go, *The Royal Tenenbaums* is a rousing success. The soundtrack, with original music composed by Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo), is just as much of a hoot all on its own. Special additions to the soundtrack include two Nico gems, "These Days" and the achingly beautiful "The Fairest of the Seasons," as well as some well-placed Velvet Underground ("Stephanie

Says"), Dylan, The Clash and Ramones with "Judy is a Punk." Representing the music of latter day saints are Elliott Smith and Nick Drake, among others, with forays into emotive indie-pop painting a picture almost as clearly as the scenes on screen. (Hollywood, 500 S. Buena Vista Blvd., Burbank, CA, 91521)

—Cynthia Gentile

**THE TOWER RECORDINGS**

**Folkscene**



The Tower Recordings' sprawling, 22-song, lo-fi epic of noise, samples and tape manipulations is a dose of quiet insanity causing most listeners to climb up the walls with madness. There is gold in the hills of these quirky multi-instrumentalists' experimental ambiance, but most will have trouble getting in the mindset to find it. These pieces are probably perfect for somebody's film soundtrack, but for everyday listening, go with the Zoviet France. After taking some Nyquil for a fever, this album probably becomes pretty darn trippy. A final word—do not, under any circumstances, listen to *Folkscene* while operating heavy machinery. ([www.midheaven.com](http://www.midheaven.com))

—Charles Spano

**THE WITCH HAZEL SOUND**

**This World, Then the Fireworks...**



The Witch Hazel Sound serves as something of a tonal bridge for the 1960s. Straddling the waters between the Box Tops-style Euro-pop of yesteryear's radio and the psychedelia of its underground, this Kent, Ohio, outfit seems more concerned with its sound than with its actual songs. From the multi-tiered vibraphones and keys to the spacey, distorted vocals, The Witch Hazel Sound incorporates all the requisite touchstones—the flaw is in the execution. The song structures are so delicately simple and transparent, the slightest shift of the sonic breeze would topple them like a house of cards. "Fireworks" suffers from a laughable chorus of la la's, while "The Guild of Splinters" verges on parody with its stumbling keyboard line. The muted horns of "Blue City" fuses well with the provided string arrangements, while an acoustic ambling steers things in the right direction. Unfortunately, as with much of *This World, Then the Fireworks*, the hooks still remain woefully understated. (Hidden Agenda/Parasol)

—Christopher Fritz



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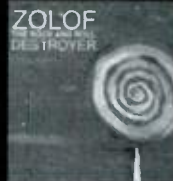
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## NEXT MONTH IN ROCKPILE ISSUE #79

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Hatebreed

LISA LOEB




# AFTERTHOUGHT

## This Month: You Can Get Annoyed, But You Can't Avoid The Floyd

by Mike McKee

Floyd is something of a West Coast punk legend. As a shitworker at Fat Wreck Chords, Floyd is constantly clicking heels with the upper crust of the Warped Tour set. Ironically, it's Floyd who, more often than not, steals the spotlight with his biting wit, charming girth and irresistible sex appeal. His celebrity status is maintained through his amateur wrestling matches and through lyrical tribute in J Church songs ("Floyd calls me on the phone," starts one popular tune).



**FLOYD QUICK FACTS**  
NAME: Floyd    AGE: 29    HEIGHT: 5' 10"  
Weight: Somewhere around 300 pounds  
STARTED WORKING AT FAT WRECK CHORDS: Fall of '96  
HOBBIES: Floyd has absolutely no time for hobbies when the fate of humanity (not to mention the scene) rests in his hands.

Since Floyd seems so clever and omnipotent, we thought we'd approach him for some of his sage wisdom regarding our most burning queries.

*Elizabeth Elmore from Sarge has a new band called The Reputation. I like them, but I feel a little guilty because sometimes I just want them to play Sarge songs since this really cute girl put them on a mix tape for me once. Is it wrong for me to be thinking of the "other band" while watching Elmore's new jam? What should I do?!*

When it comes to cute girls, regular rationale goes right out the window. You're not thinking about the other band, you're thinking about the girl. And I hope she was really cute, because Sarge blew.

*The word on the streets is that you sometimes wrestle punk rock celebrities. What style of conflict do you prefer to engage?*

I definitely practice some sort of sumo-freestyle combo thing. It is sort of like Bruce Lee's Jeet Kun Do, except whereas he took the most effective moves, I just steal the ones I have a possibility of pulling off. I've wrestled too many people to keep track of names, but I have a winning record versus straightedgers. My boss recently told me I had to quit beating up the talent.

*Can you breakdown the linguistic history and evolution of the popular phrase found on the Jay-Z hit H To The Izzo.*

Ask Noam Chomsky. For a linguist, he only seems to talk about politics these days.

*What's the best way to ask someone out on a date?*

I never ask—people ask me. You ever read those interviews where the supermodel says they don't get asked out because people are too intimidated. They lie.

*What is "docking?" My friend Martin describes it as "the ultimate expression of love between two men," but that description doesn't quite fill in the blanks for me. Please help.*

"Docking" is the act of getting children to eat their food by pretending it is a plane coming in to land. I do believe it is non-gender specific.

*People say "it's good to have goals." Do you agree?*

You can't win the Stanley Cup without them.

*What do you do at Fat Wreck Chords? None of your coworkers seem to be able to figure this out. What's the biggest fringe benefit of your job?*

I answer emails, oversee the mailing operation, receive and do returns. Kids like to send me gifts of candy and porn. I've learned to never let your coworkers tape you to a chair.

*What's the best way to keep a mohawk standing up?*

Elmer's Glue.

*Describe what makes a good burrito. (Only a West Coaster would answer this.)*

The key is to make sure the rice-to-bean ratio always favors the bean.

*Pair the following foods with the most complementary beverage/garnish:*

London Broil.....beer  
Veggie Indian Vindaloo.....beer  
General Tso's Chicken.....beer  
Marinated Tofu.....beer  
Guinness Beer (draft).....beer

*Funny, Earth Crisis gave the same answers. Anyway, what's the worst thing you would do to another human being for \$25?*

I'd make four \$5 contributions to various religious organizations in the person's name. With the remaining \$5, I'd sign them up for various CD clubs. This would stake them out for a lifetime of junk-mail hell.

*Once in Amsterdam, I checked my luggage right next to Fabio the supermodel. While the female clerks remained collected, I almost pulled my hair out screaming his name. Please describe three of your most intense brushes with fame or celebrity?*

I am going to eliminate any rock star meetings since, in my line of work, I guide the stars on a daily basis. Besides, those who have passed through my bedroom can read like a who's-who.

Orville Redenbacher—I met him on a tour of the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. Afterwards we dined, and he gave me his dessert. I found

out he snuck his own popcorn into the movies, oblivious to the health code violations. A true punk.

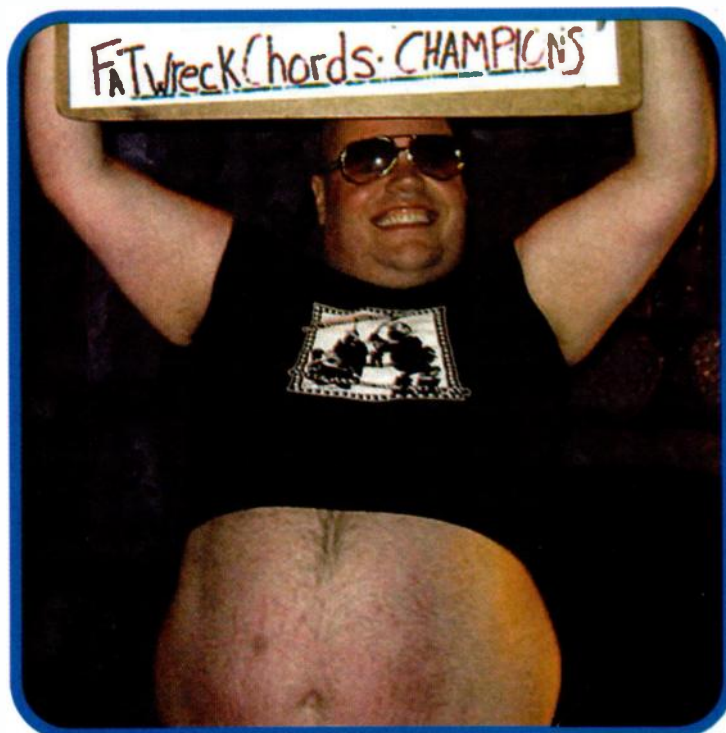
Mark Hamill—Luke Skywalker himself worked the booth next to me at a comic convention one year. He would show up and quietly sell comic books until word got around he was in the building. Then he would have to leave because all the sci-fi comic geeks would mob him. This was post auto accident Hamill, and he looked nothing like the young Jedi who took on an empire.

Corey Feldman—He bowled for Nerf Herder at last year's Punk Bowling tourney in Vegas. Last time I checked he had never appeared on a Nerf Herder record, but that didn't stop old Corey. He had a flabby bodyguard with a crazy jeri-curl. I think the bodyguard was there to keep Corey from turning into another Robert Downey Jr. more than protecting him from a crazy fan.

*Who are your heroes?*

John Belushi and Chris Farley, who died because they did too much cocaine, not because they were fat. Orville Redenbacher, because—aside from giving me his dessert—he handed out stickers that said "I met Orville Redenbacher." How cool is that? And Marvelous Marvin Hagler, because he legally changed his name to Marvelous. Need I say more?

You can read more about Floyd, as well as his oft-updated advice column online at [www.FatWreckChords.com](http://www.FatWreckChords.com).



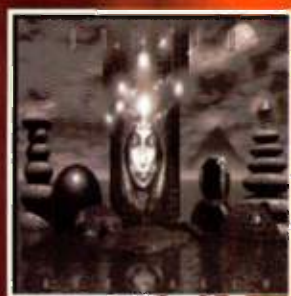


# WELCOME TO THE SUBTERRANEAN SECT



## SCAR CULTURE *Inscribe*

New York's Scar Culture is a volatile mix constantly spewing forth new tunes more eclectic, passionate and stiffly combative than the last. On their debut album *Inscribe*, the band's unbridled emotion, mosh-evoking rhythms and spiritual mind twists fuse into an aural fist that packs a punch potent enough to knock out even the most seasoned of listeners. On tour now with Fissing Razors! Playing at Crocodile Rock Cafe in Allentown, PA 3/14



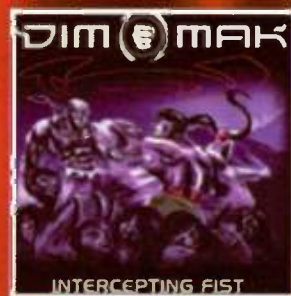
## ONWARD *Reawaken*

Reawaken, the sophomore effort from heavy metal act Onward, highlights their infectious brand of ferocious, straight-ahead, guitar-driven traditional metal with powerful, soaring vocals! Onward features the talents of guitar virtuoso Toby Knapp whose solo album on Shrapnel Records received high acclaim from underground and mainstream press alike.



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*Where Were You When* is the long awaited discography from one of the underground's most celebrated and influential bands. This double disc set includes every recording in its entirety from HUMAN REMAINS' history, documenting the beginnings of musicians who went on to play with BURNT BY THE SUN, DEADGUY, DISCORDANCE AXIS. It also features the first glimpse of post-HUMAN REMAINS outfit THE SKIES DENIED!



## LOCK-UP *Hate Breeds Suffering*

*Hate Breeds Suffering*, clearly shows why the members of Lock-Up are still not content with the current state of metal. The collective talents of Lock-Up, featuring Nick Barker (Dimmu Borgir, Cradle Of Filth), Jesse Pintado (Napalm Death), Shane Embury (Napalm Death) and Thomas Lindberg (The Crown, At The Gates) have culminated another brutal classic for the masses. Their anger, frustration and hatred for mediocrity continues to fuel the fire and Lock-Up have, once again, created a truly modern old-school grindcore album that will make your ears bleed.



## DEW-SCENTED *Inwards*

Inspired by an Edgar Allen Poe poem of the same name, Dew-Scented adopted this term to punctuate their inherently grim, evil and foreboding style and sound. Dew-Scented combine brutal guitar wizardry with a crushing, rock solid rhythm section and an in-your-face, blunt force vocal approach that will leave you wanting more. Fans of Slayer, The Haunted and At The Gates will freak when they hear the extreme brutality and punishing technicality of Dew-Scented!



## BURNT BY THE SUN *Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution*

A Striking metallic hybrid. A detailed study in the forward motion of intelligent hardcore. Features ex-members of HUMAN REMAINS, DISCORDANCE AXIS and ENDEAVOR. Fans of Dillinger Escape Plan take note!!! Burnt By The Sun @ TLA with Coalesce Wed, 3/27



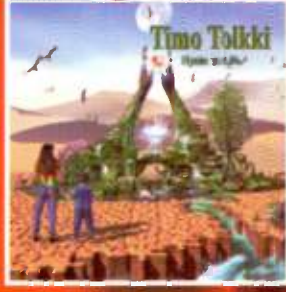
## ROYAL HUNT *Watchers*

*The Watchers* is Royal Hunt's second release for Century Media and further highlights the band's merging of powerful heavy metal with classical influences that is sure to please their incredibly loyal fan base! Voted "Best Performing Band" by readers of the world renowned *Burn!* (Japan's hard rock bible), Royal Hunt's upcoming performances will be a "must see!"



## SUNN *Flight Of The Behemoth*

The 3rd sub-sonic masterpiess of doomed unholy despair! Featuring members of Goatwhore/Burning Witch and Khanate. 5 bowel-moving anthems including a remix by Merzbow. Heavier than shit slower than time (RIP Paul Baloff!)



## TIMO TOLKI *Hymn To Life*

Timo's lengthy and illustrious career has spanned almost twenty years and over a dozen releases, allowing Timo to establish himself as one of the premiere musicians in the progressive metal world. He formed the legendary and highly influential progressive metal band Stratovarius and has been the band's primary songwriter and guitarist since they began in 1982. Timo has teamed up with original Stratovarius keyboardist, Mika Ervaskari for his first Nuclear Blast solo effort *Hymns To Life*, which boasts guest appearances by original Helloween frontman Michael Kiske and Within Temptation's vocal siren Sharon Den Adel.



## GENOCIDE SS *We Are Born Of Hate*

Antagonistic, ass-kicking and antisocial, GENOCIDE SS is an unyielding "Motorhead vs. Misfits" fireball of vicious punk. Welcome to motorcycle hell! Features members of Sweden's Nasum!

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— The Guardian (London)

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