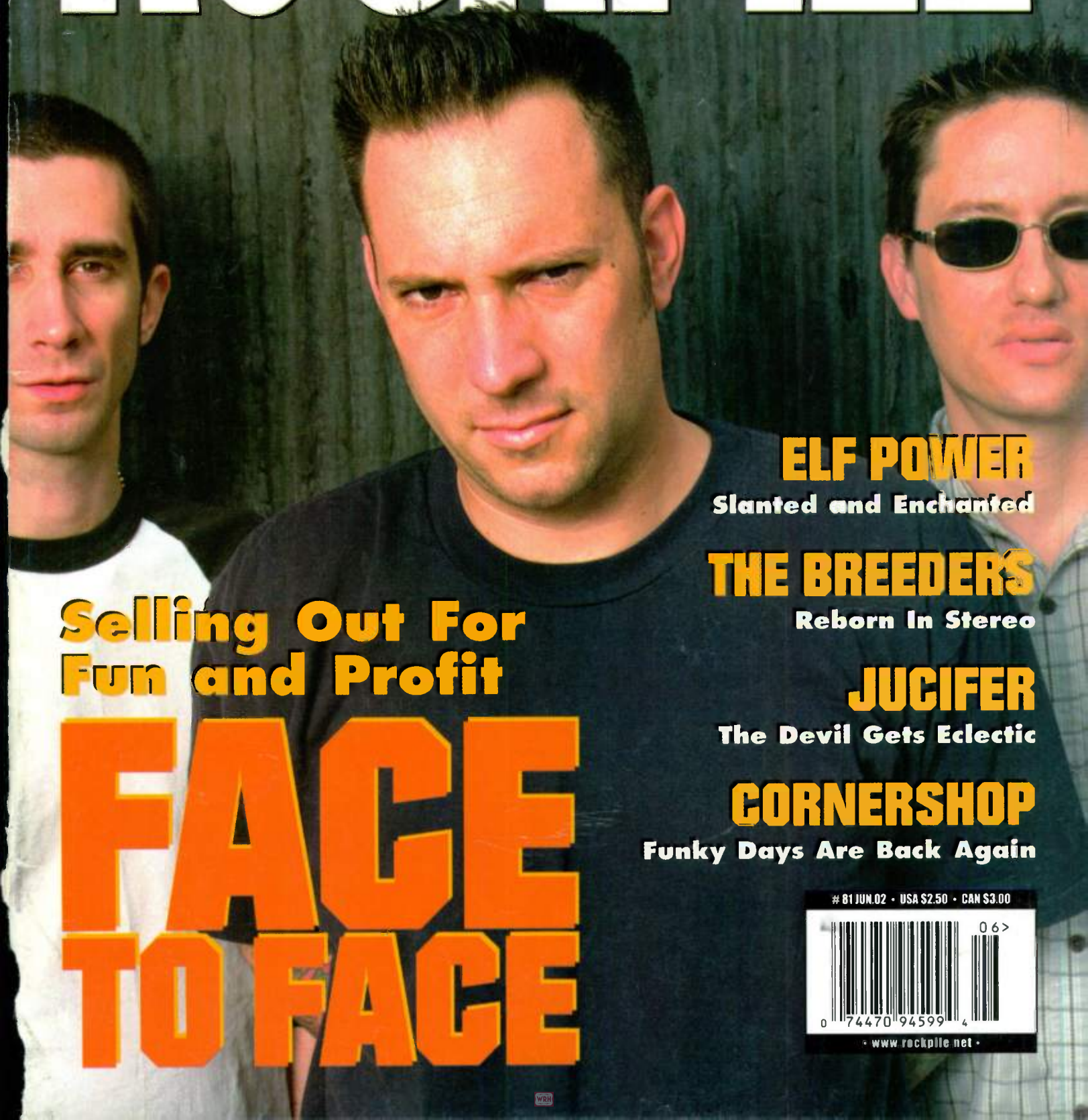


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CONTENTS

June 2002 • volume VIII • number 6 • issue 81

Lava *hot bands*

The Six Parts Seven 12
by Reed Jackson

Lisa Loeb 14
by Alyson Mead

Need New Body 18
by Allan Martin Kemler

Azure Ray 20
by Gordon Downs

Habebreed 22
by Amy Sciarretto

Richard Hawley 24
by Allan Martin Kemler

DEPARTMENTS

Letters 5

Gravel Pit 8
music news and interviews

5 Questions 10

Ask Floyd 17

*Fat Wreck Chords' famed
grunt worker answers your queries*

Records 47

Switched On 52
hip hop/electronica

Hard Rock News 56

All Things Indie 58

Straight From the Edge 62

Afterthought 66

JUCIFER

26

With a deafening wall of 15 guitar amps, Southern Rock's Amber Valentine and Ed Rivengood are through with telemarketing and digging graves.

by Joe Sweeney

CORNERSHOP

28

CornerShop's Tjinder Singh on race, rock, global understanding and success in spite of the mainstream.

By Steve Paul Gibbs

ELF POWER

38

Elf Power's Andrew Rieger talks about psychedelia, spirituality and *Creatures*.

By Allan Martin Kemler

BREEDERS

42

Alt-Rock's comeback kid Kim Deal battles EQ, ProTools, rehab, geography and post-"Cannonball" blues to revive The Breeders.

By Mike Coyle



FACE TO FACE

Punky innovator Trevor Keith answers all your burning Face To Face questions—except why he has two first names!

By Jon D. Luerssen

Photos by Chrissy Piper

32

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GRAVEL PIT

CHARITABLE GREEN DAY DONATES GREEN BACKS TO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

When most people think of Green Day, they probably think of three snot-nosed California slackers responsible for stubbornly catchy tunes haunting us all months after we last heard them on a passing radio or a home stereo. The punker-than-you set might reflect on the image of three snot-nosed teens loafing around the infamous Gilman Street club—a virtual mecca of West Coast punk, trying to score an opening spot with the likes of Jawbreaker or Crimpshrine. Suffice to say, few people think of philanthropy when they think of Green Day. However, this all might have to change—snotty noses notwithstanding.

The Bay Area superstars' April 29 concert at the Oakland Arena raised several thousand dollars for its community after the group—Billie Joe Armstrong, Mike Dirnt and Tre Cool—announced it would be donating a significant amount of its proceeds to Children's Hospital Oakland. The late April concert was one of the few local dates the band set aside before heading out on the Pop Disaster tour

this June with Blink 182.

According to guitarist/frontman Armstrong, all three members of Green Day had spent time in and out of the hospital, and anticipated their children would as well. Citing the facility as an invaluable community resource, Armstrong says he believes it only makes sense for Green Day and others in the East Bay to give something back to the hospital.

Established in 1912, Children's Hospital Oakland is the oldest and largest pediatric medical facility in northern California. The hospital's integrated, family-centered approach encompasses a policy of never turning away a child for financial reasons.



TALIB KWELI KICKS OFF HIS FIRST SOLO TOUR

Rawkus Records' Talib Kweli officially stepped out on his own last month with a 20-date solo tour. Kweli, best known for his partnering with Mos Def on 1998's acclaimed Black Star album and his 2000 Reflections Eternal project with DJ Hi Tek, kicked off the tour April 14, debuting a star-studded cast of

guests including the legendary KRS-One and godfather of rap Afrika Bambatta. The "Quality Tour," as it was christened, also featured current indies Slum Village and Blacklicious.

The tour, introducing audiences to the solo Kweli, was quickly marked by packed venues and plenty of hype. This is particularly good news for Kweli, who will release his first solo record through Rawkus this August. The album, titled *Quality Control*, builds off of Kweli's work in Black Star and Reflections Eternal, while establishing a stronger, individual voice for the unique MC. Cameos from The Roots' Black Thought, former Black Star partner Mos Def, Common and Bilal pepper the upcoming release.



THE RESIDENTS CELEBRATE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Following a three-decade history as one of the world's weirdest bands, electronic pioneers The Residents are prepared to party as they announce their group's 30-year anniversary in the scene—whatever scene the group might call home.

Although the band is exploring limited live engagements, The Cryptic Corporation label (previously Ralph Records) announced it will celebrate the group's eclectic career with a year-long

stretch of re-releases and commemorative compilations.

Furthermore, The Residents will release *Demons Dance Alone*, their first studio album since 1999. Still going strong, the band has also announced it will embark on one last tour in support of *Demons* beginning this fall.

The parade of re-releases and rarities will begin this June with a two-CD box set appropriately called *Freak Show*.

DAVE MUSTAINE WHINES ABOUT INJURY, QUILTS MEGADETH

After an impressive and loudly lauded career spanning nearly two decades as the frontman, vocalist and lead guitarist of Megadeth, Dave Mustaine recently announced his departure from the group.

The public announcement follows an early-January injury suffered by Mustaine while Megadeth was on tour in Texas.

The injury was diagnosed as radial neuropathy—the effect of a compressed radial nerve in Mustaine's left arm and hand. Doctors announced early on it would take Mustaine about a year to make as complete a recovery as is possible, although even then, it is unclear to what extent Mustaine will be able to play his wicked ax.

While Mustaine recently spoke positively about his team of doctors and therapists, he says he plans to dedicate the year of recovery towards reappraising his career. The former Megadeth frontman's first new career move, it seems, has been to walk from the pio-

neering metal outfit. When asked about his plans outside the band, Mustaine alludes, only vaguely, to exploring other areas of the music business where he might make a meaningful contribution without playing guitar.

Mustaine also referred to more family-oriented goals, specifically spending more time with his wife and two children. Despite several gold, platinum and multi-platinum records, Mustaine admits he feels he still has a way to go before being a golden parent.

In a recent press release detailing his decision, Mustaine closed his statements by quoting a French phrase sung on Megadeth's *Youthanasia* album, "A tout le monde/a tous mes amis/Je vous aime/Je dois partir." While the passage translates into "To all this world/to all my friends/I love you/I have to leave," unfortunately, all reports suggest the leaving-the-world sentiment was meant only figuratively.



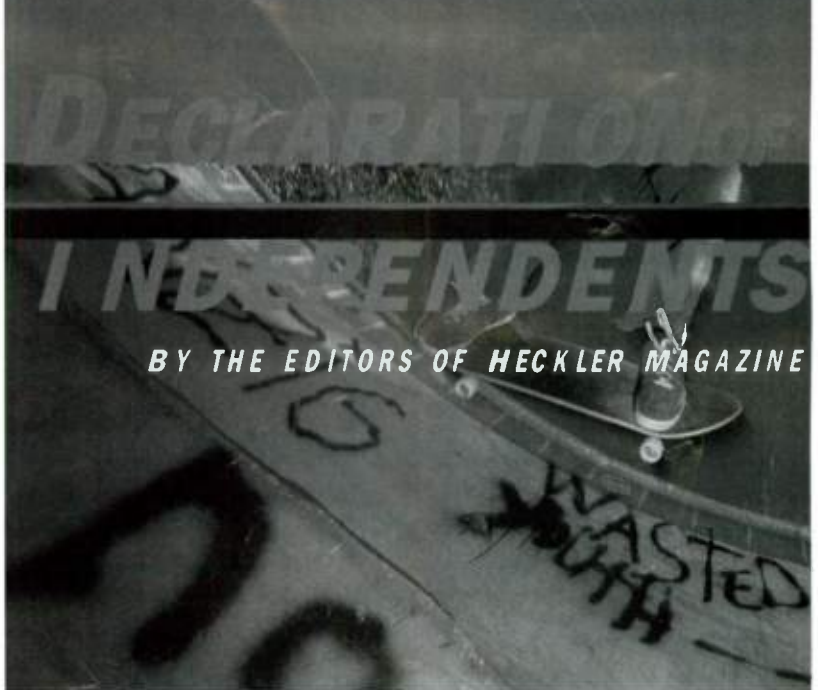
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS
Snowboarding, Skateboarding and Music:
An Intersection of Cultures by the
editors of Heckler Magazine

The down-to-earth, unorthodox and sometimes controversial Heckler magazine has been a visceral voice for real life 'boarders since the early-'90s. The magazine, started by skaters John Baccigaluppi, Sonny Mayugba and Chris Carnel, evolved along with the sports as it grew in popularity and increasingly engaged the mainstream. Meanwhile, the extreme nonconformist nature of the sports enjoyed a nearly symbiotic relationship with the culture and racket of the underground punk rock scene. *Declaration of Independents* explores the common ground between these extreme sports and underground music in candid, open interviews with some of the most influential people who laid the foundations, as well as those who continue to push the idea along. Skaters such as Tony Alva, Steve Caballero, Tony Hawk and Jake Burton speak frankly about one of America's few original sport arts, while musicians such as Ian MacKaye (Fugazi, Minor Threat, Embrace), Moby, J. Robbins (Jawbox, Burning Airlines), Sleater-Kinney, Chuck D. (Public Enemy) and Kevin Marvelli (7 Seconds) discuss the forging of a culture. Those who helped document the movement are also represented through interviews and the photography of Glen E. Freidman and Cynthia Connolly. Essentially, *Declaration* is a fan's book, made for those who are influenced or interested in skate, snowboarding or punk culture. Still, the editors have included more than a few pieces critical of each movement's status quo and have provided enough passionate, first-hand writing to explain to the most 'board-illiterate reader what would possess someone to hurl their body across blacktop at dangerous speeds or dive into an unpredictable pit of moshing bodies. While some chapters fare better than others, *Declaration* should prove to be a welcome addition to any coffee table currently sporting copies of *TransWorld* or *Punk Planet*. (www.chroniclebooks.com)

—Mike McKee

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5 QUESTIONS

There's no shortage of bands pushing the resurgence of traditional, bluesy rock 'n roll these days. Revivalists like The White Stripes, Jucifer, The Gossip and The Strokes have tangled the usual "who'll save rock?" debate into a free for all. Still, not many can boast an appearance on *The Sopranos* soundtrack. Vue can, so there. The band recently raised the bar set by its 1999 EP, *The Death of a Girl*, with a self-titled full-length on the respected Sub Pop label.

Answers by Rafael, drummer

If music is a form of communication, what is this album saying?

While we do believe that music can be used as a form of communication, we wanted to be sure our message got across. So if you listen closely to track three on the record you'll hear the words "kill music journalists" whispered over and over like a mantra.



What's the greatest invention of all time? Why?

The mullet haircut. It's mint.

What did you learn this week?

Miami is everything Will Smith said it would be and more.

Name a work of popular of classical literature you're fond of and summarize it in entirety in less than 20 words.

Dubliners by James Joyce—symbolism, stream of consciousness, Ireland, Catholicism, headmaster, drunk, get me the fuck out of here.

Describe an unlikely tour you'd like to see.

Some kind of a VH1 classic summer tour. Maybe a triple bill featuring Foreigner/'Til Tuesday/Fine Young Cannibals.

When they're not ruffling the feathers of Florida's stuffy authorities, the members of Wonderlick are reading up on French existentialist literature. When they're not doing that, they're turning out the rock in neat, pop-minded, melodic doses suitable for both relaxed and frenetic listening experiences. The band's latest full-length demonstrates an improved view of nearly radio-ready pop, while still maintaining the true grit indie-philes have come to expect.

Answers by Tim Quirk, guitar

If music is a form of communication, what is this album saying?

We're all gonna die, so please fuck me right now. The album makes it sound a bit more romantic, but that's the gist of it, really.

What's the greatest invention of all time? Why?

The Antares Vocal Producer rack mount, because it means Wonderlick can sound like Cher's robot spawn on tour as well as on CD.

What did you learn this week?

The state of Florida considers the word "atheist" too offensive to qualify for a vanity license plate. I suppose I already knew that, so here's another thing I learned: I've been pronouncing "Jamiroquai" wrong in my head for a couple of years. I'd never said it out loud before, and when I did, everyone laughed at me.

Name a work of popular of classical literature you're fond of and summarize it in entirety in less than 20 words.

Albert Camus' *Exile and the Kingdom*: We're all gonna die, so please fuck me right now, then go away.

Describe an unlikely tour you'd like to see.

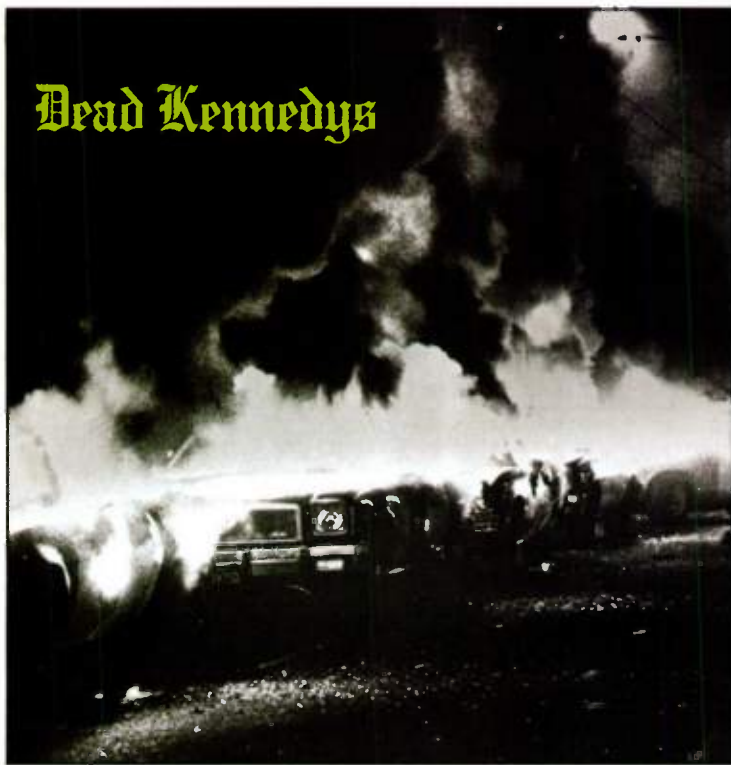
J.D. Salinger's next book tour.





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Various Artists • CLP 1168
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ful tribute album series ever. The third installation, far and away the most brutal of the series, features industrial remakes of "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)," "Leper Messiah," "The God That Failed," with appearances by Razed In Black, Funker Vogt, Godeater and several others!



instrumentally intellectual:
**THE SIX
 PARTS
 SEVEN**
 convey emotion through music
 BY REED JACKSON

It's exactly 8:30 p.m., EST, but Allen Karpinski wouldn't know it. Due to a prolonged freak storm in his home state of Ohio, the electricity in the residence of The Six Parts Seven guitarist has been repeatedly cutting out.

"It's been a pretty chaotic day," says Karpinski of the circumstances. "Right now everything digital in my house is blinking. On top of that I just quit my job, which I'd had for seven years."

The situation is not entirely dissimilar to Karpinski's instrumental sextet. Formed in 1995, the band has since undergone a few lineup shuffles, changed record labels twice, and—in the down time—forged a flexible yet distinguished sound maturing with each release. Currently consisting of Allen's brother Jay on drums, Tim Gerak on guitar and samples, Stephen Clements on grand piano, Brad Visker on bass and James Haas on lapsteel, ebow and rhythm guitar, it seems as if TSPS may finally have things down to an exact science with the release of *Things Shaped in Passing* on Seattle's Suicide Squeeze label. Or maybe not.

"Our music intends to be transitory and elusive," Karpinski comments of the band's trademark fluidity. "We seldom ever return to the same melodies or series of notes during songs. The songs keep moving and never come back, which makes them more life-like if you think about it."

This may be a bit of an overstatement, as repetition certainly forms

a fundamental axis of the band's new album. The first track, "Where are the Timpani Heartbeats," develops into a spidery, recursive guitar melody, which then acts as the point of departure for the shifting eloquence of the piano. Repetition serving as a locus for more expansive elaboration is a technique reappearing throughout the album, the ebow often acting as a guidepost and fixing-point as well. Indeed without such a steady anchor, *Things Shaped in Passing* would be in danger of drifting off into the ambient ether of shapeless assonance.

"We certainly eschew the sort of verse-chorus-verse style of arrangement that even most instrumental rock bands or the majority of jazz groups adhere to," Karpinski clarifies. "That's the repetition we avoid."

Despite this policy, The Six Parts Seven is careful not to mimic the chaotic frenzy of free jazz artists or the complete repudiation of basic structure practiced by such avant-gardists as Storm and Stress.

"Everything the band does springs from a from a very exacting discipline," the guitarist asserts from the depths of his darkened apartment, still fishing for a flashlight. "In many ways, our music is more similar to classical music, in terms of strategy and forethought."

When alerted this might seem like an awfully egg-headed way to go about shaping a city built on rock 'n roll (especially considering the

DENALI

rock 'n roll dreamin'

"I've been wanting to do this since high school," gushes Maura Davis, the 21-year-old frontwoman of Denali. "It's been a really awesome experience. I can't believe it's been this great!"

While Davis' voice is upbeat and excited discussing the flurry of activity surrounding her band lately, perhaps it's best known for its passionate and eerie presence on Denali's self-titled debut album.

A mysterious and captivating voice is just one of reasons Denali's record—courtesy of Jade Tree—is sure to win over fans and critics alike. With multi-instrumental abilities and a tremendous voice ranging from an operatic bellow to pixie-like whisper, Davis' debut and promise as a musician far surpass her 21-year-old frame.

The majority of the Richmond, Va., band's debut was produced by Alan Weatherhead and Mark Linkous (both of Sparklehorse fame)—a pretty accomplished honor for a band still shy of its two-year anniversary.

"I'm not exactly sure how that happened," Davis says. "We had a five-song demo we recorded with someone else in our homes, that we were selling burned copies of. Then,

this past summer, Mark was free, and we were free, so we said, 'let's try recording two songs with him and see what happens.' It was awesome, but we couldn't really afford him for our whole album."

While the two songs recorded with Linkous were never officially released, Weatherhead's engineering on the group's Jade Tree debut is enough to prompt any listener to wonder what could possibly sound better. Weatherhead's time in Sparklehorse and his time knob-turning at the studio has provided him with a valuable level of experience.

Davis' bandmates, meanwhile, also come to Denali with their own resumes square intact. Brother Keely Davis, who plays keyboards, also plays in Engine Down (Lovitt Records). The rest of the group comes from the ashes of the venerated Sleepytime Trio. It's Davis, surprisingly, who is the rookie in the troop.

"I am paying my dues now," she chuckles, when pressed about her novice status. "They've been in bands forever, while I went to school for classical voice training my freshman year of college."

The opportunity to sing in a rock-oriented setting landed in Davis' lap shortly after she transferred schools to Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. Ironically, she'd made the switch to become a science major.

With her falsetto voice and Rhodes piano in tow, Davis has stepped onto the scene right on cue. Before the album's release, a significant buzz had brewed about the new ex-members-of-Sleepytime-Trio band. The ethereal, haunting voice of the newcomer quickly took center stage in the word-of-mouth circuit, however, as more audiences caught the band live. The album delivers on the grapevine's promise, showcasing an accomplished blend of electronic synth and rock as

well as a slight hint of what could have been if Nina Simone had the good sense to grow up around the Blackheart Procession or Lungfish. Such kinetic and ghostly tracks as "French Mistake," "Prozac" and the piano-driven "Function" quickly render unimaginative Portishead comparisons obsolete.

Although the band has yet to travel much beyond the eastern seaboard, Denali will be touring the States this summer in support of its self-titled debut and will return to the road again in the fall. For Davis, the calendar couldn't be crammed with better plans.

"All I've wanted to do was just be in a rock band," she declares.

—Gordon Downs



recent vogue of such primate chord-bashers as The White Stripes and The Strokes), Karpinski understandably bristles a bit.

"I can't understand how the word 'intellectual' came to be such an albatross," he says sternly. "Just because we're instrumental that doesn't make us all detached and obtuse. The whole goal of The Six Parts Seven is to fashion something intelligent and emotional that causes you to think and feel at the same time."

Intellectual stigma aside, one can't help but wonder why a band so concerned with emotional connections would eliminate the most obvious and time-honored vehicle of delivery—the vocals.

According to Karpinski, the band had originally tried to include some singing when it began writing songs. Vocal tracks were even recorded for several of the songs on the band's debut album. Ultimately, however, nothing they tried felt engaging, and the members of The Six Parts Seven decided to scrap the vox all together. When reminded how such grim assessments never fazed the likes of Joy Division or Cap'n Jazz, Karpinski chuckles but seems solid in his band's decision.

"When we sacrificed the vocals, we discovered that the songs became more elusive and open-ended," he expounds. "The whole listening experience became more subjective, and we decided to pursue that. Though it wasn't a conscious direction at first, we found that it opened up a lot more avenues for us."

Though perhaps not as blazingly original as the members may have once thought at their 1995 Ohio inception, The Six Parts Seven yield a particularly distinctive sound to the discerning listener. *Things Shaped in Passing* contains more than enough grace and fiber to assume the now

Will Oldham-ized Papa M's vacant instrumental throne.

Despite the obvious leap in complexity the sinuous guitar interactions have undertaken, *Things Shaped* possesses a spacious, loose-limbed gait and a profoundly uncluttered gaze. Harmonies and themes build incrementally against the intuitive drone of the ebow and the preternatural push of the drums, ultimately winnowing into kaleidoscopic patterns simultaneously unexpected and inevitable. The climax of this approach occurs in "Sleeping Diagonally," a stirring and subtle piece of threaded respiration somehow transforming into a hook devastating enough to snap the song's own reverie in mid-stride.

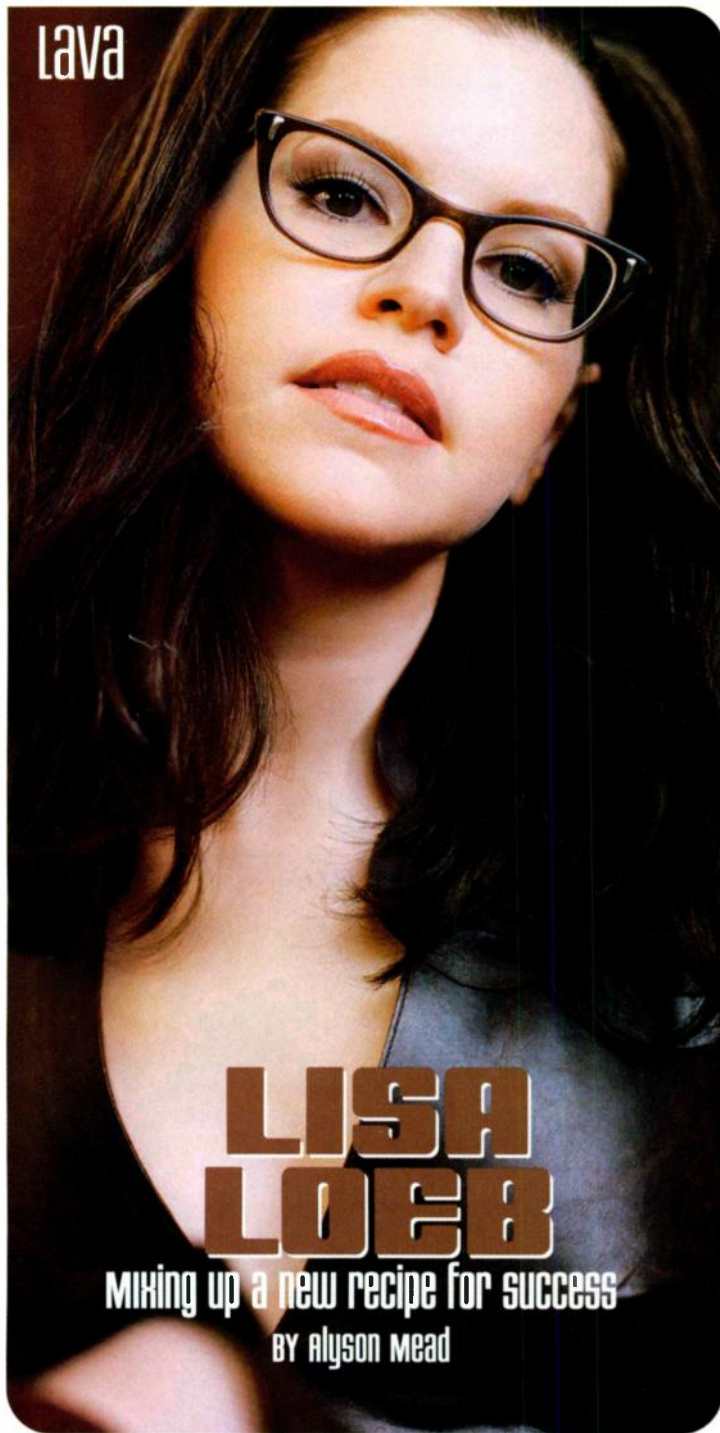
"Keeping a sense of space is paramount," suggests Karpinski, now with flashlight in hand, having established a few candlelit footholds around his apartment. "We always give you a moment of reflection, no matter how brief. It's a challenge to do that and still sound connected and cohesive, but that's what we struggle with."

Staying connected might well prove a concern to a newly unemployed person in a sporadically powerless apartment with no functioning clocks. Yet amid all their ambiguities, Karpinski and company find much to hold on to—chiefly music.

"Music needs to be authentic in order to achieve spontaneous transcendence, to reach that point when time freezes and you can truly feel it," he says. "In the end, we just attempt to manipulate pure sound into meaning, into a personal evidence of feeling. From there on out, it's all you."

Seldom has shouldering the burden of interpretation been so enjoyable a task. ■

lava



**LISA
LOEB**
Mixing up a new recipe for success
BY Alyson Mead

Miss Lisa Loeb, she of the sweet voice and fresh, quirky insights, has been very busy since her last record, 1997's *Firecracker*. She's taken writing workshops in Cuba, France and New Mexico, adopted two kittens, traveled to Japan for advance press on her new record, *Cake and Pie*, bought and remodeled a house and attended the marriages of two siblings. She's moved from New York to Los Angeles, using her time off to craft a life filled with things other than work—including baking (a personal obsession) and tap dancing.

Those who thought this female songwriter—poised between geek and grace—would fade into oblivion after “Stay” rocked the *Reality Bites* soundtrack should think again. Finished in 1999 and delayed because of record company b.s., *Cake and Pie* is a mature work by a solid and thoughtful human being who's not finished growing.

Loeb's quality-of-life plan leaves plenty of time for reading (recently Isabelle Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* and Steve Martin's *Shopgirl*, among others), listening to music (the new Ben Folds Five record, along with Los Angeles' La Raza radio station—home to drama-laden Mexican banda music)

and honing her baking skills on numerous cherry pies.

She's well-rounded, indeed, as all good artists ought to be. A comparison with Allende's prose is particularly apt. In order to escape an oppressive and male-dominated environment, Allende's writing is grounded in a distinctly female perspective. Though the author can be unflinching in her descriptions, she maintains a compassionate interest in others and a desire to see human qualities come to light. The same can be said for Loeb's lyrics, often dealing with the frailties of our all-too-fragile interactions.

“I worry that I write about relationships too much,” she confesses. “I don't want to be too preachy or wear my heart on my sleeve. But these are the feelings in everyone's lives.”

To be fair, two of *Cake and Pie*'s songs are about non-relationship subjects. “You Don't Know Me” is about Dweezil Zappa's little sister landing her first boyfriend, while the CD's closer, “She's Falling Apart,” is a moving portrait of an anorexic woman and how the disease inevitably affects those around her. Though most of the disk falls squarely into Loeb's tried-and-true, girl-with-guitar folk-rock idiom, “The Way it Really Is” (the CD's opening track, co-written with uber-producer Glen Ballard), continues in the tradition of *Firecracker*, with complex, yet subtle string arrangements. Maybe it's because Loeb's classical composer brother conducted the strings on this track, as well as those on “Someone You Should Know.” Loeb herself spent a chunk of time in 1997 performing Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* with brother Ben, but for her the fascination with music and storytelling go hand in hand.

She says, “I'd like to challenge the different audiences, and to introduce them to each other. It might open their minds a little bit.”

Another storytelling-meets-classical-music-performance run is tentatively scheduled for 2003, and from the excitement in Loeb's voice, it's not to be missed.

This marriage of song and story have seeped through to her lyrics as well, which can turn from inward—“We sit on our couch and we watch our TV/And the phone doesn't ring and it's perfect/To be here playing house is no comfort to me/It's just more of the same again and again and again” (“Kick Start”)—to conversational—“Yes, I complicate/I know, it's just my way/But 'If?' is a question that I ask and nothing more” (“We Could Still Belong Together”)—to positively empowered—“Who do you think you are?/You're talking so loud/And bury the sound of your heart that's singing out” (“Someone You Should Know”).

Deceptively simple is a phrase sure to come to mind when listening to *Cake and Pie*—the words and themes are all very familiar. The way Loeb sings them, however, imbue with real meaning.

Since so many of her songs revolve around personal transformation, usually in the midst of relationship confusion or awkward situations, it's tempting to ask what immediate personal goals Loeb keeps for herself.

“I have very realistic goals,” she shares. “I want to be creative and travel and be inspired by books and music. I'd like to learn to crochet better and organize my office. But things take time.”

The new record pairs Loeb with some new songwriting partners, some of whom might seem out of keeping with her reputation as an alternative darling, Ethan Hawke's pal, the whole thing. But thank the folks at Gibson Guitars, whose 1999 award event brought Loeb together with country great Randy Scruggs. On *Cake and Pie*, the two come up with the lilting, lovely “Everyday,” which combines a sweet, almost country feeling with the saddest lyrics this side of Hank Williams. And her new musical family doesn't stop there. Loeb has made great connections with the aforementioned Ballard, Dweezil Zappa—who apparently came to her live shows and learned all the string parts to *Firecracker* on guitar before they started writing together (now that's devotion), and Gary Burr. The partnership with Scruggs, particularly, has yielded songs Loeb hopes to release soon.

Though Los Angeles might not be known for its sense of community, moving there seems to have influenced Loeb's decision to go bigger with everything.

“I wanted the acoustic songs to be more acoustic than before, the rock songs to be more rock,” she says. In a land where no budget is too large and no implant is too small, her instincts are right on target.

As for the title of the new record and the emphasis under the word “and,” Loeb replies perfectly in character.

“I think you should live life to the fullest,” she smirks. “Why not have cake and pie? It's my way of saying you should strive for everything possible in your life.”

Right on, Sister Sledge. ■

= did I ever tell you you're my 764-HERO

It's 5:30 p.m. at the Cha-Cha Lounge on Capitol Hill in Seattle, and multi-tasker John Atkins is simultaneously tending bar and giving an interview about his band, 764-HERO. So far it's like a game of Pong, interviewer versus a line-up of rotating thirsty opponents. Atkins is the ball—fielding a question then bounding to the bar to pour a drink and gratefully accept a tip. As happy hour gains momentum, so does the velocity of the back-and-forth. Atkins deftly keeps up, but one is left to ponder just how 764-HERO manages to tour and stay active around its members' day jobs.

The singer-guitarist explains it amounts to mutual support among the Cha-Cha staff, which also boasts members of Pretty Girls Make Graves and Carissa's Weird.

"When we're about to go on tour, I ask a couple guys, 'can you work all my Thursdays for a month?,'" explains Atkins. "Everyone pulls weight."

So as 764-HERO—also including drummer Polly Johnson and bassist Robln P.—prepares for a month-long tour supporting its fourth album, *Nobody Knows This is Everywhere* (Tiger Style), Atkins has been sure to cover all his shifts in preparation for the coming rock.

Those 764 savvy will note a deviation from the band's normal modus operandi, as the new record appears courtesy of Tiger Style rather than the usual Up Records (responsible for nearly every one of the band's releases since 1996's *Salt Sinks and Sugar Floats*). A recent decision at the Washington-based Indie label to focus on keeping up with back catalog sales resulted in some pared down opera-

tions in the new releases department. It was then Atkins and company decided they ought to look elsewhere to release the new record.

As he explains simply enough, Tiger Style was interested so the band switched labels. Before dodging a server and preparing another drink at the bar, Atkins elaborates the move was necessary and amicable for the band to benefit from the push it needs behind the new record.

Musically, *Nobody* amounts to a refinement of the sound scraped on 2000's *Weekends of Sound*—lustrous, reflective, pedal-to-the-melody rock 'n roll. In essence, an improvement on the already sublime. Atkins attributes this evolution to two main factors—764-HERO's loose but committed work ethic and continued production from Phil Ek (Modest Mouse, Built to Spill).

"Having fun with good friends is the main thing," he adds at the last minute.

His words hang in the air as he excuses himself once more as a customer barks about somebody taking "too goddamn long."

When he returns, a smirking Atkins shares the band's upcoming tour will see 764 hooking up with peers such as Les Savy Fav, The Six Parts Seven, Matt Pond PA and fellow Cha-Cha employees Carissa's Weird.

When asked how the Cha-Cha will cope minus two musical employees, Atkins pauses and tries to answer something about things working themselves out naturally. His answer is cut short by another "excuse me, sir," from another customer.

Atkins offers a self-assured grin. We'll have to excuse him.

—Randy Harward



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—*Revolver Magazine*

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06.04.02

"Vocalist Scott Angelacos' metaphor-rich lyrics unleash plenty of morbid images...the depression and psychological scars they depict are the darkest things here." —*Alternative Press*

Recorded by Steve Albini



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excitement and dedication: the aesthetic of

ENGINE DOWN

"It's pretty exciting that we're getting to the point of where we can do what we love to do full time," says Engine Down guitarist Jonathan Fuller. "I always used to tell myself that I was just doing the music for fun, but in the back of my mind if it did work out to where we could do it full time it would be amazing. We're reaching the point that we wanted to reach."

The band is on tour in support of *Demure*, its latest release on Virginia's respected Lovitt Records. After talking to Fuller and drummer Matthew "Cornbread" Compton, one quickly gets the sense of overwhelming exuberance surrounding the new release and the future of the band in general. It seems the goals Engine Down has set for itself are being accomplished.

According to Fuller, the primary goal is taking listeners to a new place by immersing themselves in the tone and mood of the album.

"We don't want to write catchy songs that get stuck in your head, and we don't want it to be background

music either," explains Fuller. "We want the music to stand alone as an aesthetic experience."

One of the most interesting aspects of *Demure* is the album's unwavering cohesiveness. Although each song is intricate and textured in its own way, the band has carefully linked everything together to create a mood resembling the soundtrack to a film. According to Compton, the band isn't trying to model itself after any specific cinematic vision, but instead trying to get the listener involved in the record on a deeper level than the average pop jam.

"We are not necessarily trying to write cinematic music, but the films we like are primarily trying to create a mood and not so much a message," says Compton. As an example, Compton refers to the mood-heavy films of Paul Thomas Anderson—a filmmaker known for concentrating on tone and mood even when working with an unpleasant palette.

While the band has delivered plenty of quality recorded output, many won-

der if the intense and introspective sound of the album can be duplicated in a live performance. Every band devotes studio time, ranging from days to months, to create the best listening experience possible, leaving live performances as the more spontaneous exchange. According to Compton, Engine Down has made a pact to put forth all the energy its members can muster into its live shows.

"We strive to make the live performance a notch higher than our recorded material," he says. "We hope we are giving a good impression

of what our records have captured, and we try to build off of that live."

Although the success of its latest record and the prospects of continuous touring are indeed milestones for the band, one gets the sense the members of Engine Down are merely music fans at heart. Although the band's drive and ambition are high, everyone in the Richmond-based quartet finds time to have fun.

"We played last night in Minneapolis, right near the club where they shot *Purple Rain*," Fuller gushes enthusiastically. "We watched the DVD of the film before we left on tour, and it's pretty mind-blowing seeing the place in person."

Morris Day would have been proud.

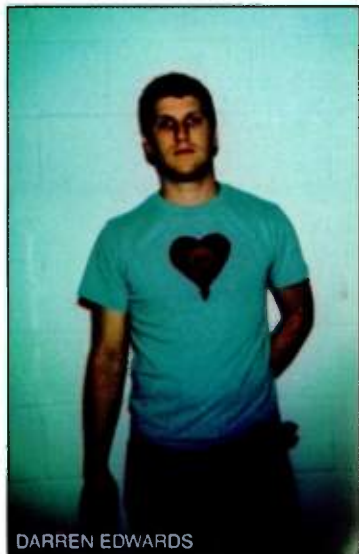
—Brian Peterson



SUB CITY LABEL ECLIPSES \$100K MARK

The strange thing, says Hopeless Records' Darren Edwards, is sometimes giving money away can be the hard part.

He's referring to the label's charity-based arm, Sub City, created three years ago by label head



DARREN EDWARDS

Louis Posen to support worthwhile causes through music sales.

"There are a lot of people that don't want to take your money," says Edwards, who sometimes encounters negativity from charitable organizations not welcoming help from punk labels. The concern is large corporate contributors may be uncomfortable associating themselves with a charity funded in part through punk rock. "Really, it's upsetting when you think the people who are suffering wouldn't be very glad to know the organization was turning down money."

But that's merely the downside. Here's the upside. Since it's first release 20 CDs ago, Sub City recently eclipsed the \$100,000 mark in charitable donations to organizations like The National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE), the Foundation for Fighting Blindness, Prison Radio and many others.

"Sub City has laid out a struc-

ture where musicians make a commitment to changing the flow by donating to organizations that have sprung up or been neglected under the current corporate fiefdom, thus hopefully making the desires in their songs an attainable reality," sums up Stephen Carroll, guitarist for The Weakerthans. His band, along with others on the Sub City stable—including Fifteen, Thrice and Against All Authority—donates five percent of the suggested retail price of each CD sold to an organization of its choice. It translates to roughly 70 cents per full-length. Each release also contains the organization's mission information and contacts, encouraging people to get involved.

Edwards says one of his greatest senses of accomplishment with the project has been seeing fans taking part. "It's the letters that we get from kids just saying, 'Hey I really appreciate what you guys are doing. I've really turned around from what I was doing before.' They're getting involved in all these non-profit agencies."

Hopeless owner Posen adds, "When there is something connected to putting out these records, much more important than just sales, it makes staying late that much more worth it. I like to work to be an example; if a company our size can do all this, imagine what someone larger could do. Hopefully other people can look at us and say, 'Me, too. I want to help.'"



LOUIS POSEN

ASK FLOYD

Fat Wreck Chords' famed gruntworker answers your queries

Hey Floyd, what's up with skinheads going to college? Aren't they supposed to relish sticking it out in rubber factories and watching soccer?

*Jon Brandon
Madeira Beach, FL*

No, skinheads are supposed to play tennis. That is why they wear Fred Perrys and why Andre Aggasi shaved his head.

Floyd, I got dumped. What's the better breakup soundtrack: Jawbreaker or Bright Eyes? Or should I be looking elsewhere?

*Tom Karlsbad
Wayne, PA*

Tom, if you had a Bright Eyes album in your collection you deserved to get dumped. Fuck sensitive songwriters.

So, Floyd, people always concentrate on conservative government here in America claiming it results in better punk music, meanwhile often ignoring the role religion plays. Can we expect any musical trends to follow the highly publicized abuse scandal rocking the Catholic Church?

*D-Kay
NYC*

Besides lots of bad covers of DiVinyls "I Touch Myself," nothing much. The thing is, D-Kay, the Catholic school girl has been played to death, and nobody can do the school boy after Angus. When is the Pope finally going to croak anyway, I've had him on my dead pool for years.

What would the cartoon based on your life be called?

*Aimee Borland
Washington, DC*

I will never allow for a cartoon based on my life. I learned from the mistakes of Hammer, Mr. T and others. The only way to shorten your career faster, Aimee, is to release a Best Of record.

Floyd, maybe you can settle an argument between my girlfriend and I. Let's talk about monster trucks. Are they punk? Why?

*Allison Mirant
Providence, RI*

No, monster trucks are not punk!! Is there any event that is more full of mullet-wearing, redneck-thug, good 'ol boys than a monster truck rally. Demolition derby—now that is punk.



What's the attitude to help you win in sales?

*Nick T.
via e-mail*

A horse head in every bed.

Why was the promise of the October Revolution never realized? What can we learn about communism from this historical event?

*James LeFulfs
Goleta, CA*

James, the promise was never materialized in the clutch because the Communists didn't have "Mr. October" Reggie Jackson in the clutch.

Yo, Floyd, who from this year's list of Grammy nominees would you most like to take out on a date? What would that date entail? Send me some free posters.

*Dave Powell
New Brunswick, NJ*

Well, since I can have any musical performer with the snap of my pudgy little fingers, I would have to choose Jimmy Carter (Best Spoken Word Record). That way me and the man could discuss peanut farming.

Floyd, what's a good way to tell if someone I'm interested in is right for me? How can I check for compatibility? A lot is riding on this!

*Darrel Hyde
Philadelphia, PA*

First thing to do, Darrel, is check the music collection. Nothing ruins the mood more than when you are ready to get down and nasty and your other decides to throw on the Grateful Dead or Get Up Kids. Next, if you want somebody who you can talk to after a night of heavy petting, check the book selection. Is it good? Does it appear that they might have actually read them? (Note, this step can be tricky with college students. They have books they are forced to read.) Both the music and literary selections will also tell you how anal the person is about organization by the way they are kept. Finally, if you want to know if the person is a cheap bastard, check the bathroom. One ply means they're cheap. Two ply at least means they know some things in life are worth spending on.

What would've made *Lord of the Rings* a better movie?

*Mattias In Chicago
via e-mail*

More elf-dwarf conflicts. My publicist put you up to this question didn't she?

lava



Free Jazz, Philadelphia style

NEED NEW BODY

fuses skronk with scrapple BY ILLAN MARTIN KEMLER

"Dale always wanted to be a unicorn," says Need New Body drummer Chris Powell. The percussionist's cryptic comment makes plenty of sense when you meet the band. The members of Need New Body are possessed. They make hoodoo. They eat artichoke hearts from the can. They are six beatniks from Philadelphia skronking away like it was 1959. Of course, that's just one side of the equation, but it's apt.

"CR Eyeball," the most accessible piece on the sextet's self-titled disc, is a perverted, backwoods juke with the smell of crawfish in its hair. "Tittiepop" is an electric-caveman shout driven by a blinking synthesizer decorated with blasts of erratic brass toodling. "Gamble On/Banji" wafts on a basmati-scented breeze just before breaking into a goggle-eyed march through some Dadaist jungle.

"We can suck," says Powell, explaining the band's creative approach. "No. Really, we can. We can have 10 days where we really suck, and then we'll get one good catch."

Assembled from the ashes of their former band, Bent Leg Fatima—a twisted bit of Psychadelia folk and percussion madness collapsing under its own weight—the members regrouped under the moniker Need New Body and immediately put the capital F back in freaky, fun and free-jazz.

Far beyond the structured psychedelia of most Lennon and Wilson worshippers, NNB manages to craft interesting and engaging bits of found art from leftover jams and creative editing gone wild.

"We take a lot of the outtakes and we cut them up," explains keyboardist Dale Jimenez. "All throughout the record there's splices and bits and pieces of little moments that were magical. There's probably only maybe 10 songs on the album—maybe only six—but 10 pieces and then 22 bits."

Songs, however, are clearly not NNB's forte. Recorded in Chicago at Truckstop Studios by Griffin Rodriguez (a.k.a. Blue Hawaii of Bablicon), NNB (File 13) translates the band's penchant for playful self-indulgence into a captivating blend of goofy-footed pot banging and electronic squiggles augmented by inspired tape splicing. Luckily, with Rodriguez's help, the album never delivers that cloying experimental flavor mucking up so many of these kinds of releases.

Live, the band's dextromethorphic sound is enhanced by such free-form antics as impromptu dance routines (choreographed by banjoist and aesthetician Dan Murphy) and the wearing of costumes. One particularly spritely show around the time of the NBA all-star game involved a funk-punk version of Cheech and Chong's "Basketball Jones," complete with flowing gowns and Greek theater masks.

But despite the affectations to weirdness, NNB's true charm lies in its old-fashioned irreverence. When asked what the album says to listeners, all five musicians present reply in unison, "Fuck You!" Though songs like "Boba Fett" may not sound like a collective flip-off, in the wake of popular music's increasing suckiness this might well be the intent. (Can I get an amen?)

While the band is sure to keep people guessing with its eclectic live performances and schizophrenic well of influences, musically Need New Body raises a consistent challenge to the tradition and pieties of standard rock music.

"You have to let go of all that," says Powell of the traditional verse/chorus approach to writing music. "We've jammed out for at least 10 years in the lamest bands imaginable. How many times do you have to do it before you want to step it up? I mean, damn!"

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moving in stereo

AZURE RAY

BY GORDON DOWNS

Popular music, as a diversion, seems an odd vehicle for the down and brokenhearted, and yet it's been a winning formula since the first bluesman woke up to find love had packed its bags. An equally strange juxtaposition might be found in the bright lights of hype surrounding seemingly insignificant little hamlets like Athens, Ga., and Omaha, Neb. Few bands illustrate the ironic coupling of contradictions quite like Saddle Creek's Azure Ray. The chemistry between Maria Taylor and Orenda Fink, however, is as natural a match as the sky and the color blue.

"It's weird how in sync we are, and the way we write songs, even," explains Taylor. "We'll just move in a direction together without even planning it. But I think that structurally these songs are less structured and maybe just more linear in a way."

Somewhere between aroused and depressed you'll find Azure Ray and its sophomore release, *Burn and Shiver*. Taylor and Fink, both taking turns in a few prosperous bands from the Midwest (Japancakes, Bright Eyes, Little Red Rocket, Now It's Overhead), have found a common ground in their new project. With acoustic guitars, pixie-like voices and synthesizers ready at hand, Azure Ray's brand of music is truly an entity unto itself. On *Burn and Shiver* the duo has reached a definite plateau with its signature introverted songs. This time letting what seems to be a little sunlight in, the women of Azure Ray, although still somewhat down in the dumps, have nothing to do but smile these days—their lives and careers just seem to move together in a perfect cadence.

The linear feeling on the album is obviously present. The addition of strings and horns lend a sophisticated feel to the band's latest. Conventional pop hooks are hard to come by with Azure Ray. For the patient and intent listener, however, there is more than enough theme and melody to carry one through a unique listening experience.

"I don't know," Taylor ruminates. "I feel like it might be harder for people to grasp onto it right at first, because there aren't quite as many hooks as on the last album. So I think it's gonna take a little more effort on the listeners' part. Maybe it will take just a few more listens before the songs start sinking in."

Azure Ray's self-titled debut album was a much-needed breath of fresh air for a media and public consumed by the latest incarnation of emo pop. Although the air was stark and mysterious, it was well accepted by the fans and garnered much attention from the independent media. One might suspect the band's inclusion in the soundtrack to the second installment of the popular *Felicity* TV series. As evi-

dent on this new album, however, the degree of success enjoyed thus far hasn't changed things so drastically.

With somber and often depressing sounds, Azure Ray has managed to piece together yet another delicate shroud of music with *Burn and Shiver*. With song titles like "Raining in Athens" and "While I'm Still Young," the images of a bleak and lonely world come into vision. Though steeped in what would be a bucket of personal exorcism, according to Taylor, Azure Ray's music is a cathartic form of personal exorcism.

"For me especially, it's an outlet," she explains. "It's my way of being a happy person, being able to take out my sadness and sit in my room with my acoustic guitar and just get it out, record it, and then it's out of my body. I feel fortunate that I have that outlet."

Recording *Burn and Shiver* at their homespun studio in Athens, Ga., with Crooked Fingers frontman Eric Bachmann behind the board was the most comfortable arrangement Taylor and Fink could envision. The collaboration seems to have been a success. According to Taylor, the benefits of working with a studio veteran like Bachmann vary from song to song. At times, he would translate the duo's keyboard parts into sheet music to have string musicians come into the studio and record sweeping tracks of violin and cello live. For other songs, he would actually compose new parts to complement Fink and Taylor's sparse acoustic arrangements. Clearly, the band has a lot of trust in Bachmann.

"It was just more comfortable, because we had already worked with Eric," Taylor explains. "We had already established a working relationship with him, and we had gone on a month-long tour with him where he was right there with us. So when we give him these songs he can see our vision and even beyond our vision."

Taylor says Bachmann's participation was instrumental to the outcome of *Burn and Shiver*. For Taylor and Fink, the recording of the new album hinged not only on the ability to work with someone they felt a personal and creative connection to, but also to do so in a familiar environment. Citing the often sterile, sometimes draining atmosphere of many recording studios, Taylor explains how she and Fink were set in their choice to record the album from their own home.

"It was the perfect environment to create," she states, simply enough.

The result of this perfect environment is 12 new songs to enhance any listener's experiences in either making or breaking up. With impressive production quality and a truly cohesive overall structure, *Burn and Shiver* stands out as Azure Ray's most ambitious record to date. Wholly devoid of up-tempo tracks, the album sets a soundtrack equally suited for romantic intimacy or attending a funeral. Despite the general down vibe of the record, Azure Ray is careful to maintain a universal quality, encompassing agony, ecstasy and often both at once.

"With every album we're just coming into our own a little more," says Taylor. "I feel like we try to keep it on the same track. We don't want to lose sight of where we're going. We just try to develop it a little bit more, to keep growing, evolving."

While Athens has provided the ideal location to record, as well as a comfortable homebase since the two met in art school several years ago, Taylor and Fink have decided on a change of address. The duo is currently planning a somewhat hectic move to its label's hometown of Omaha. As the stomping ground of label heavyweights like Bright Eyes and The Faint, the quaint Nebraska town offers a new set of influences on the still relatively young band.

Meanwhile, with Fink currently on sabbatical in India, Azure Ray's tour plans for 2002 are just as mysterious as some of its ethereal music.

"We definitely are going to tour, although I'm not exactly sure when," Taylor promises earnestly.

While her bandmate travels, Taylor will tour as a drummer for Bright Eyes. By the time the two both return, the schools will be out of session for the summer—a time Taylor is concerned might be disastrous for an Azure Ray tour.

The plan for now is to wait out the dog days of summer for September, when the colleges are back in session. As the fall sets in, however, Taylor guarantees some serious miles racked up for the Azure Ray tour van.

Although September seems like a few bleak and distant months away, *Burn and Shiver* quickly comes to mind as a way to pass the time. Spreading a sentimental, haunting web from city to city, leaving no heart unbroken, the album, while stark and melancholy, is an albatross of emotion soothing and tearing at our frayed ends.

See you in September.

KNUCKLE SANDWICH

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HATEBREED

music to beat the hell out of someone to

BY Amy Sciarretto

It's 6 p.m. and Hatebreed frontman Jamey Jasta is just waking up. But make no mistake—the cherub-cheeked, hoarse-voiced twenty something isn't leading a charmed life. Hatebreed works. The band is a road dog, racking up more miles in the past three years than most bands have in entire careers. Hatebreed is the Phish of hardcore.

Jasta is calling in from Texas on a day off from his band's pre-album tour with hardcore heroes Diecast and the metal militia of Slayer. He's also recovering from a night of partying at The Clubhouse, a high-profile strip joint owned by Vinnie Paul and Dimebag Darrell of Texas metal royalty Pantera.

"Slayer's Kerry King was there, and he introduced us to Vinnie and Dime," recalls the surprisingly lucid, always affable singer. "We drank until we closed the bar and beyond. It was dawn. Chris Beattie [Hatebreed's bassist] smoking cigars, surrounded by 11 naked women smoking cigars."

While it sounds like a night of pure debauchery, Jasta writes it off as a hardworking band having a good time and enjoying some release. The Hatebreed frontman's voice fills with an almost childlike awe when gushing over his time spent with his heroes in Pantera. While Jasta is known for his accessibility to his younger fans, last night, the opportunity to swap tour stories with the infamous Dimebag Darrell proved too strong a temptation as the two holed themselves up in the gentlemen's club.

"Kids were coming up to me from the show and wanting autographs,"

chuckles Jasta. "I am always totally psyched to meet fans, but when you're with Pan-fucking-tera, it's different. Dime is a seasoned vet."

Jasta also notes the Pantera guitarist is a gracious host, buying plenty of drinks.

To bar patrons watching from afar, Connecticut's Hatebreed might seem like a thuggish bunch of heavily tattooed miscreants. Underneath the hulking exteriors, however, lie hearts of solid gold. Jamey Jasta is somewhat of a scene celebrity who started booking hardcore shows in his homestate in his early teens. He runs Stillborn Records and is the father of two-year-old Madison. Her name emblazoned on his arm is the only ink he sports. Bassist Beattie, meanwhile, is an energetic wild child, covered head to toe in tattoos, including the likeness of porn star Chelsey Lain. Guitarist Lou "Boulder" Richards is a lovable teddy bear, while guitarist Sean Martin is the strong, silent type. Drummer Matt Byrne is new to the fold, recently defecting from All Out War. Jasta describes Byrne as the gentleman of the group. Fans maybe ought not to get used to him—the 'Breed has had more drummers than Spinal Tap in their eight-year existence.

Hatebreed is readying the release of its second full-length, the aptly titled *Perseverance* on Universal Records, home to commercial radio phenoms Three Doors Down and Godsmack. It's been nearly four years since the band's Victory debut, *Satisfaction is the Death of Desire*, a 27-minute opus of unbridled adren-

aline selling more than 250,000 copies to date. The band got in a bus and waged itself as a road warrior worth of Mad Max acclaim.

"Originally, we felt like we were never going to get bigger opportunities if we didn't get our sales up and go out with different bands so we could actually have a big draw," explains Jasta in a diplomatic tone. "We wanted direct support slots because that's how you gain fans, by playing in front of the majority of the crowd. So we just kept touring."

This steadfast dedication allowed the band to show up for the 15th anniversary concert of all-metal radio station WSOU, with only three members and a borrowed drummer Hatebreed still ripped a new asshole for every maniac in the moshpit.

Touring takes a bit of a toll, emotionally. Jasta misses his daughter, noting he tries to block it out most of the time. A quick glance at her picture, or a voicemail from home, however, is usually enough to break the little thug's heart.

According to Jasta, while all the time away from home can be rough, essentially music makes him happy and allows him to provide for his family.

While Hatebreed was on the road for years at a time, with Warped Tour and Ozzfest stints under its belt, time passed without a follow-up to the band's Victory debut.

"People were desperately wanting new music," he explains. "But we had problems with Victory, so we weren't going to give that label a record. We would break up before giving them a record."

Ever the businessman, Jasta got himself out of the Victory deal. At long last, the band found a home at Universal.

Over time, Hatebreed's brutal, ballistic, balls-out hardcore, vicious live energy, staunch work ethic and imposing physical appearance earned them an unfair reputation as assholes and misanthropic thugs.

"We treat people the way we want to be treated for the most part," explains Jasta. "I'm sure there are a good amount of people who think we're total assholes, but as far as bands go, whether you're Slayer or Sworn Enemy, we will give you the same amount of respect."

Perserverance is a cathartic slab of angry hardcore, full of mosh-friendly breakdowns designed to create pit casualties and carnage, with universal lyrics both new metal and hard rock fans will enjoy. It's a cleansing, raw experience sure to drain its listeners of every emotion and leave them with a clean, fresh slate.

It's obvious Hatebreed is proud of its newest album, and its members understand why kids will be drawn to it.

"What we do is tangible," offers Jasta, who used to pound veal at a butcher's shop for a living. "You can not only beat the hell out of someone to it, but you can also bob your head to it. It's something that's not technical. There's no solos or off-time parts. I made the vocals clear and understand every word, screams more maniacal, more discernible."

Hatebreed wants its legion of young fans to be able to share in its words and music. Sure, you can lose your mind over it, but it's not meat-headed tomfoolery. When asked if people are wrong to consider his music negative, Jasta says he chooses to see it as a kind of therapy.

"It's not aimless negativity, and it's not targeting any group of people," he reflects. "We're not doing something where the outcome is purely negative. We are commenting on problems and taking action to reach a positive solution. Whether you hate your job and you come to the show to scream your head off, or you're getting over a messy breakup or someone passes on, these are issues you go through and you can get something positive after the negative."

Hatebreed has one goal for *Perserverance*. According to Jasta, the band has already prepared a nail on the studio wall and on the wall of the tour bus. This band wants a gold record so badly, Jasta jokes, bassist Beattie is prepared to put a nail in his foot just so he can walk around and display the trophy.

"We just want to be the band that does what no other hard rock band has done before."

Despite the high-altitude ambition, with a little patience and a little *Perserverance*, this goal might well become what Sick of it All and Blast Master KRS-One once referred to as a "hardcore reality." ■

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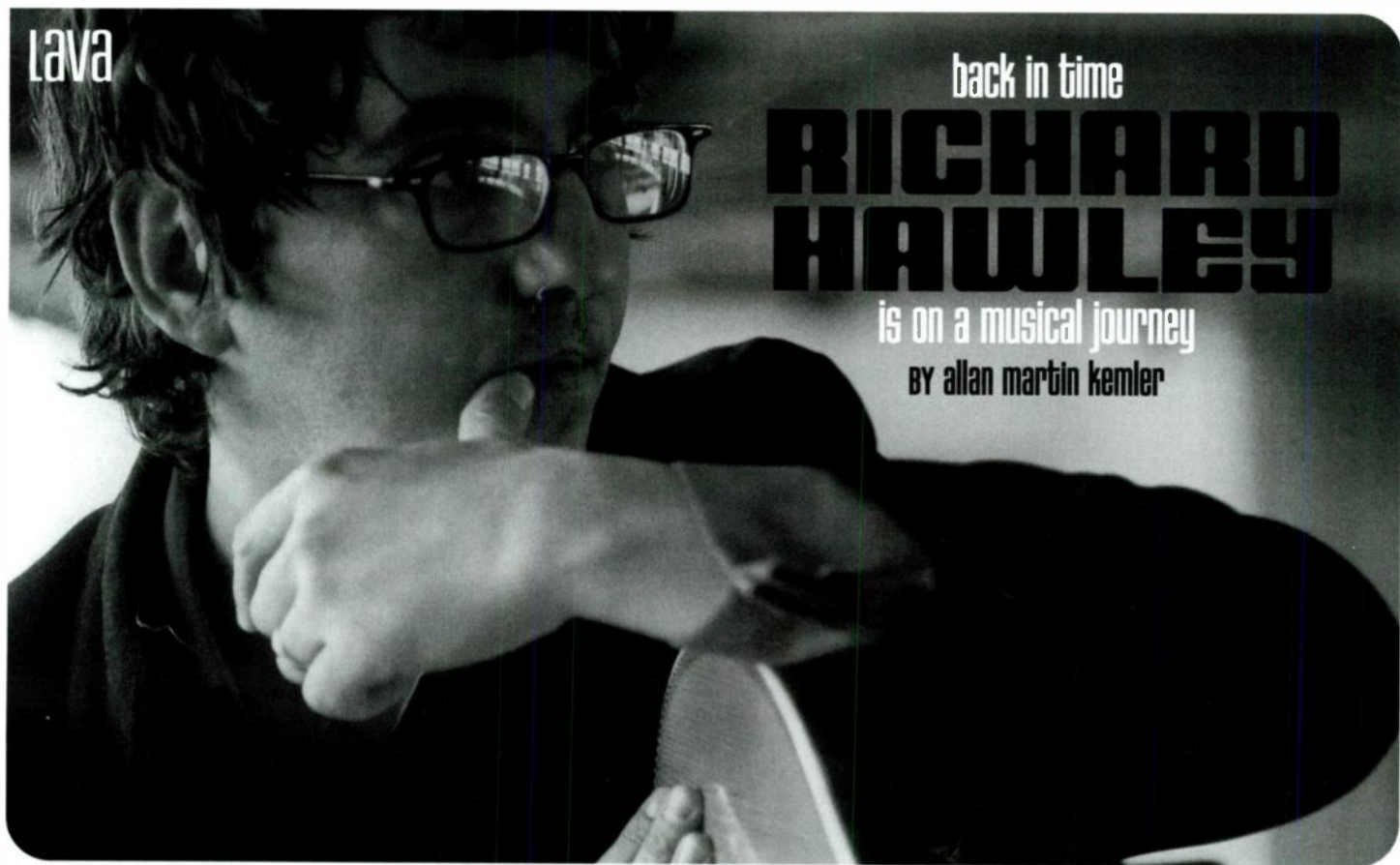
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RICHARD
HAWLEYis on a musical journey
BY allan martin kemler

Back in the fabled days of yore, when rockers wore Brillcreem in their hair and two-tone wingtips on their feet, it was still acceptable, if not positively de rigueur, to be accompanied by an orchestra. Back when music was still recorded by geniuses in midnight studios where electric signals were shot through vacuum tubes and copper wires and burned onto acetate, music was still pure. Richard Hawley's music lives in those days.

Stepping from his bed in the still of the night to scratch out vague melodies of contrition and woe, Hawley is a man haunted by the memories of a by-gone era including trips to the market with his mum, bingo halls in Blackpool on holiday and Scotty Moore licks learnt at his father's knee. Like Kronos himself, Hawley manages to step back through time and capture the essence of what made such luminaries as Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison and Scott Walker legends.

Of course, he is no misty-eyed dreamer sadly reminiscing about the days back when. Rather Hawley is a modern man about town, living in Sheffield and playing guitar in one of Britain's most celebrated bands of the last half decade—Pulp.

Hawley steps out of the shadow of Jarvis Cocker and confidently strides into the limelight with the release of his new solo album *Late Night Final* (Setanta), a collection of songs so elegant and graceful as to recall the best jazz, country and western and rhythm and blues artists of the 1940s and '50s. But no matter how beautiful the finished product, the seeds of the songs themselves were wrung out of dreams deep in the night.

"Half of them I was half asleep," recalls Hawley from a recording studio in Sheffield. "I'd kind of wake up in the middle of the night and these bloody melodies would be in my head, so you kind of have to get out of bed and work the fucker out. Sit down, work it out—I just threw them on a Dictaphone tape and then I'd go back to bed, because once it's out I can go back to sleep."

Whether they're the stuff of dreams or just one man's attempt to recapture the golden tones of yesteryear, Hawley's songs ache with sincerity and shimmer with the glittery shine of moonglow on lamé. The album's opening cut, for instance, "Something Is...!", spins a lovelorn tale of two star-crossed lovers into a danceable novella in shuffle time. "Yeah, I'm leaving on the next train that's blowing round the bend," sings a cavalier Hawley to his would-be lover, "and I'll be there by the morning and I won't be back again." "Love of My Life" sweeps out of the closet of Hawley's mind, a whispered melody trembling with tremolo, pinned to the earth by a lone cymbal gently swishing in the background.

But whether he's lamenting the cold wind accompanying restless spirits as they shamble from town to town or singing of the simple pleasure of listening to the rain with his love, Hawley treats each song with the delicate care of a journeyman craftsman, turning simple melodies into eloquent statements communicating lifetimes of meaning with the subtle shift of a plaintive chord against a few notes pecked out on an old piano.

"I'm not interested in fashion, and I really despise the idea of glamour," sighs Hawley, explaining the album's guiding principle. "Without sounding cheesy, I wanted it to sound romantic."

Mission accomplished. Like a woman who understands there is something sexy about leaving a few things to the imagination, Hawley's songs hint at the edges of faded memories and half-recollected dreams with faintly familiar wisps of melody and a lexicon full of American cultural references, creating a palette of classic sounds without stooping to mere mimicry or outright plagiarism.

"It's quite ironic that the thing I went into the studio with—a world weary thing I thought no one was going to like—was the right thing in the end," confesses Hawley. "It means I was right, that kind of stuff fundamentally means more to people than the stuff that's just churned out."

Quite so. But Hawley's path to solo success was nearly left undiscovered until an extra week's worth of studio time was converted into a personal challenge to see if the perennial sideman could cut it with his own songs using his own voice.

"It was kind of an accident," explains Hawley. "I'd gotten some studio time left over after a session, so I went in and wrote seven songs in seven days to see if I could do it. Initially, I was looking for another singer, and then I just got really, really drunk and I sang the 'Coming Home' thing. The next day I heard it back and I thought, 'Not too bad.' Because I've never really ever sung in my life, I thought people would laugh. But I'm quite chuffed because not too many people are actually laughing."

Released in Europe in October, the album has won rave reviews from such tastemakers as *NME* and *The Guardian* and has been well-received in Germany, France and Spain. Nevertheless, Hawley is philosophic about his achievement.

"I went on tour with Frank Black and the Catholics, and I was shitting myself. I just thought, 'Christ, there's all these hardcore surf punk kids, and they're just going to hate what I do,' and they loved it. Fundamentally, that's what it's about: I've done it and now it exists." ■

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Drawing on an array of influences, Jucifer's singer/guitarist Amber Valentine and drummer Ed Rivengood dish out a passionate, schizophrenic blend of garage-metal. (Think Kim Gordon with Kathleen Hanna's pipes backed by Tony Iommi and Keith Moon to get a nebulous idea of their sound.) Their new record, *I Name You Destroyer*, is their most-accomplished aural melting pot, filled with solid pop hooks, electronic experimentation and impenetrable walls of heavy-metal screams, wails and crunches.

Following the usual path to goth-rock stardom, Valentine and Rivengood met in the mid-'90s while working side by side as gravediggers. Their destiny as a band was revealed to them in the depths of the freshly dug earth: it was there that they found a tattered piece of paper that was completely blank except for the handwritten word "Jucifer."

"The story gets even creepier," Valentine laughs. "After that job, we became telemarketers."

By night, Jucifer shed their headsets and began creating a legitimate buzz around the clubs of the alternative mecca they call hometown, Athens. To pull off the duo's inexplicably massive, towering sound, Valentine enlists an army of about 15 amps and an infantry of pedals.

"There'd be no room for me to stand at some shows," Valentine remembers. "Club owners would just say, 'Oh, come on, can't you just play with five amps?' It would get kind of hairy at times."

When asked about the legendary Athens scene, Valentine glows.

"It's a place with very little conformity, where everyone is very open and receptive. We'd get on bills with hippie bands, punk bands, you name it. It's a great place for a young band to exist. We'd be Jucifer no matter where we grew up, but Athens let us know right away that it's OK to come out of our shells. Great people gravitate here."

Many shows and promoter palpitations later, the duo was able to break out of its cubicles and focus on music full time, releasing the acclaimed debut *Calling All Cars on the Vegas Strip* in 1998. It gave the public its first dose of the duo's surprisingly honed production talents. The record perfectly balances the trademarked trashy explosiveness of Jucifer's live show and the ambitious, avant-garde studio trickery pervading its recorded works.

Calling All Cars caught the ear of several industry folks and fellow musicians, including

GOATH

SOUTHERN STYLE

hometown hero Michael Stipe, who called Jucifer "a very loud and aggressive Southern Gothic version of PJ Harvey."

The duo tightened up its live show some more, recording *Destroyer* a few years later, only to see it shelved for a lengthy period of time due to label problems. This spring, the long-awaited record will finally see the light of day.

"On *Calling All Cars*, I think we held back a bit too much," shares Valentine. "We were a little bit too afraid about how to reproduce things live. *Destroyer* was recorded in a more spur-of-the-moment way, with a ton of improvisation and experimentation with weird instruments. We'd just keep laying down tracks, sometimes just because we hadn't used them all."

This looseness and expansiveness can be felt all over *I Name You Destroyer*, from the airy banjo-plucking of "Black Satin, White Ice" to Valentine's banshee-like screaming on "Queen B." But nowhere is it better heard than on the one-two punch of "Into the Undertow" and "Undertow," nestled towards the end of the record.

The former is a somber, understated piece beginning with Valentine's muted guitar riffing and whispering vocals, followed by a chorus coupling an out-of-tune cello with her voice, creating a blissful dissonance of which any forward-thinking producer would be proud. "Undertow" is a simple rock instrumental combining Valentine's fuzzy low-end with Rivengood's incessant bashing, building up to a destructive, instrument-smashing climax.

"We recorded that one outside," she chuckles. "You can hear the weed-wackers from a neighboring landscaping crew in the background. Once you start smashing things, you don't know how it's gonna turn out. We got lucky. The glass breaking, cymbals rattling, guitars smashing—they all sound great."

The track is the spirit of Jucifer in a nutshell. While at times brooding, disturbingly dark and deadly serious, the duo isn't afraid to drop a Cars-era synth line or a Lennon/McCartney harmony in the mix. Valentine and Rivengood's sense of humor is also firmly entrenched in the music, immediately showcased in their album photos (the inlay of *Calling All Cars* shows Rivengood holding a 40 oz. of Old English malt liquor, the *Lambs* EP shows them holding hands in the woods, wearing black executioner masks). It's this attitude separating them from the hordes of morbid suburbanite rockers, from the Orgys of the music world. If you pay close attention, you'll realize underneath the suffocating pillars of amps, the howling drums and brash vocals is a team of two talented rock songwriters who are simply striving to be able to look back at normality, lying in a motionless heap in their rear-view mirrors. *I Name You Destroyer* appeals to the Helmet fan one second, the PJ Harvey fan the next, walking down the line and borrowing from Sonic Youth and The Pixies, all the while paying tribute to Geezer Butler and John Bonham.

"When people ask me what we sound like, I usually say that we're weird, heavy and melodic, which actually sounds like a really horrible band," Valentine says. "We just want people to be moved, even if they hate us. As long as we can warrant a reaction. Regardless, we're gonna get off on it—even if they don't." ■

ATHENS-BASED BAND JUCIFER IS ANYTHING BUT A COOKIE-CUTTER ROCK OUTFIT. BY JOE SWEENEY



Singh SONG

Cornershop Forges an Ethnic Pop Identity 13 Years Ahead of Its Time

Trends are temporary, and class—some say genius—has yet again proved to be very much permanent.

Four years might be tantamount to an eternity in this most transient of industries where tastemakers change mass-market opinion on a weekly basis, but such notions appear lost on Cornershop's Tjinder Singh.

Returning with *Handcream For a Generation*, a new album, the follow-up to 1997's *When I Was Born For The Seventh Time*, Cornershop instantly resets the prevailing agenda with effortless grace and infectious artistry. The world will have little choice but to fall back in line behind this wonderful new noise.

A collection for which Singh echoes the only-half-joking brag of his American agent, calling *Handcream* "album of the year, whatever year it comes out," the album is the most eclectic cabaret show imaginable condensed into 13 tracks transcending both musical and geographical boundaries.

Yet surely the single most refreshing thing about Cornershop is despite however much fans and critics want to analyze its cultural significance in the grand scheme of pop and politics, Tjinder himself simply doesn't care. At least not today, as he's nursing a brunch-time coffee in a North London jazz bar after an all-night stint in the studio. He does what he does and leaves everyone else to figure out where it belongs.

"It's nice to get some clear water," explains Singh in his almost reticent Midlands accent, realizing individuality and creative space are infinitely superior to the commercial homogenization he feels he plows an increasingly lonely furrow against. "Really, I don't look at what's going on. I just wanted to make sure that every idea was a good, strong idea, rather than worry about what other people are doing. We've never really

By Steve Paul Gibbs

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thought too much of what else is going on, but at the moment it's particularly terrible."

Existing on the independent peripherals of the mainstream, these most unlikely of pop stars continue to embody the starkest set of contradictions imaginable. And none more poignant than the personal strains endured by Singh while making what most people seem to think is an album positively rejoicing in its own happiness. Singh, for one, is surprised by the overwhelming perception of Cornershop as a carefree, feel-good band. The lengthy recording process of the band's famous debut album was fraught with difficulties and personal obstacles.

"I went through quite a lot in the recording process," explains Singh. "My father passed away, and then a month later I had my kid. There were a lot of problems along the way. It wasn't that easy to record."

It's not surprising Singh describes the celebrated album as a partially cathartic experience. According to the Cornershop frontman, each finished track in those studio sessions was an intense relief.

"When people say they think it's really funky and upbeat, it's very good that they think that, but I was on my knees," laughs Singh.

Yet, of course, with Cornershop we've been here before. Or so it looked to all but the most privileged insiders. Reports abounded, after the phenomenal successes of *Born for the Seventh Time* and its Fatboy Slim-remixed "Brimful Of Asha" single, that the band had split up under the pressures of fame. This, says Singh now, couldn't be further from the truth. From talking with him, one gets the impression few groups have been less affected by such success. In listening to the new record, Singh seems confident fans will see the band has just carried on as usual.

Back then, as with the recording of *Handcream*, Singh admits there were moments he was tempted to retreat back to his family. He concedes there were many times he and his Cornershop partner, Ben Ayres, were on the verge of throwing in the towel. Now, though, Tjinder is looking forward to a month-long tour across the States, and once again ready to bring his music to a world that has previously bought his product in droves without, he thinks, actually entirely grasping its meaning.

It's no surprise Americans have lapped up his particularly homegrown tales of an alien culture, says Singh, who feels audiences in England have never fully understood Cornershop. When pressed, Singh will politely admit he feels his band is best digested in mainland Europe or America.

Still, at least there are commercial benefits finally being felt, as the great-unwashed masses at last get to grips with song titles like "Kawasaki, Hotter Than Chapatti."

Ultimately, Singh is glad people are enjoying his music, as is reflected in the growing popularity of Cornershop's back catalog. By building slowly, maintaining tight creative control with each step, Singh and company have ensured a secure foundation from which to work now and in the future. As Singh explains, the method, it seems, hasn't always been apparent to outsiders.

"I don't even think the other band members have figured it out," he reveals perhaps with a bit too much candor. "I know what I'm doing, it's just they don't."

The way Singh sees it, it's good people might have to work to really appreciate Cornershop. With a penchant for quirky, seemingly juxtaposed titles and lyrics, Singh shies away from the obvious approach.

"I think people have to educate themselves. I've never set out to educate anyone. People have always said, 'Cornershop are a political group,' and we don't hide that fact. To us, politics is a very simple thing. It's not an intellectual thing, it's a mere reflection of what's going on around you."

From the group's very name—turning a British stereotype pointedly back onto its perpetrators—to the racial integration of new track "Wogs Will Walk," this is a band gate crashing the mainstream with an outlook equally radical for ethnic minorities and the music industry alike. However, always eager to push his own boundaries even further, Singh still wishes

the band's musical innovation was given greater recognition. After all, this obscure indie band from the U.K. was collaborating with current flavor-of-the-month producer Dan the Automator and respected engineer John Savage as early as 1994. The band also boasts a healthy history of innovative packaging and creative management.

Politically motivated songs are a tradition almost as old as music itself, but in an age where many albums exist simply as background noise or party soundtracks, some criticize the medium viability as a vehicle for such complex issues. Singh, it seems, disagrees, noting music is one of the most widely enjoyed avenues of expression.

"I also think it's pretty good that people don't need to get the ideas, they can just get off on the melodies," he explains. "Even with 'Brimful of Asha,' people didn't realize the political content of that—there's a lot of issues in there that people will never get. But that doesn't really matter—if they want to delve into it, they can. If they want to know who (French playboy actor and musician) Jacques Dutronc is, they can look into it."

Even this relatively flexible approach has set Cornershop apart from any peers they might otherwise attract. According to Singh, when Cornershop began, he and his bandmates weren't interested in the usual goals and extras of the music industry. Rather, they were bored by what was happening in popular music and thought they could do it better. ("Of course, we couldn't play a note then," laughs Singh.)

Like William Morris, the idealist band fights a losing battle. With a shrinking student movement in England and the increasing difficulty to find smaller, independent venues, the avenues for new, experimental music are hard to find.

During its 10-year existence ("Ten years old and we've spent half of it in exile," jokes Tjinder), Cornershop has felt ever more isolated. As the only all-male group embraced by the short-lived Riot movement of the '90s, they found brief kinship in groups such as Comet Gain, Wimpy Milkshake and Kenickie. As the movement fizzled, however, Singh says Cornershop was soon left lonely. He says the few contemporaries he identifies with now are mostly from America, such as Moldy Peaches, Jeffrey Lewis and The White Stripes.

Ten years on and Cornershop still owes its biggest mainstream hit to date to another man—Fatboy Slim. Despite a good deal of indie hype and scoring the No. 1 spot on John Peel's "Festive 50" chart, "Brimful of Asha" only truly blew up when the famous remix guru added his spin to the tune.

Through this, one might wrongly get the impression Cornershop is a band prone to dismiss its past. While focused on the future, Singh says this is not the case, noting the sense of pride and accomplishment he feels in Cornershop's work to date.

"When we started in 1992, if you were an Asian on stage, by an Asian community you were very much cursed, if it wasn't in a religious environment. And to have a guitar with you was sacrilege. That's where we've come from, so it's always nice to look back and see what's happened. We're very proud of what we've done and the way that we did it."

For a man who almost fell into music by mistake, who very nearly ended up just another faceless IT industry statistic, Singh is remarkably prescient and forward-looking, despite always keeping one eye on his band's history and currently not planning far beyond this summer. Cornershop's independence has endured while many acts around them were either underachieving, selling out or disappearing completely.

Now, Singh is playfully convinced 2015 will be Cornershop's year, regardless of what the band does after this new album.

"I think even if we stop after this album, 2015 is still going to be our year. That's how long I envisage for the word of mouth to really take."

While one gets the sense the Cornershop singer might be joking, it might well take so many years before the rest of the world catches up with the hyper-creative imagination of one Tjinder Singh—reluctant icon, personal fortune teller and quite possibly the world's loneliest defender of a global faith. ■



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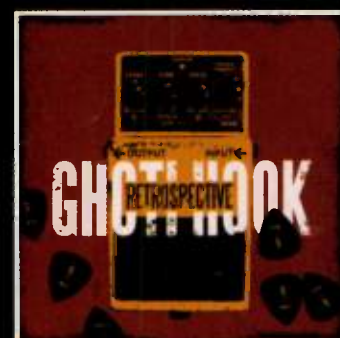
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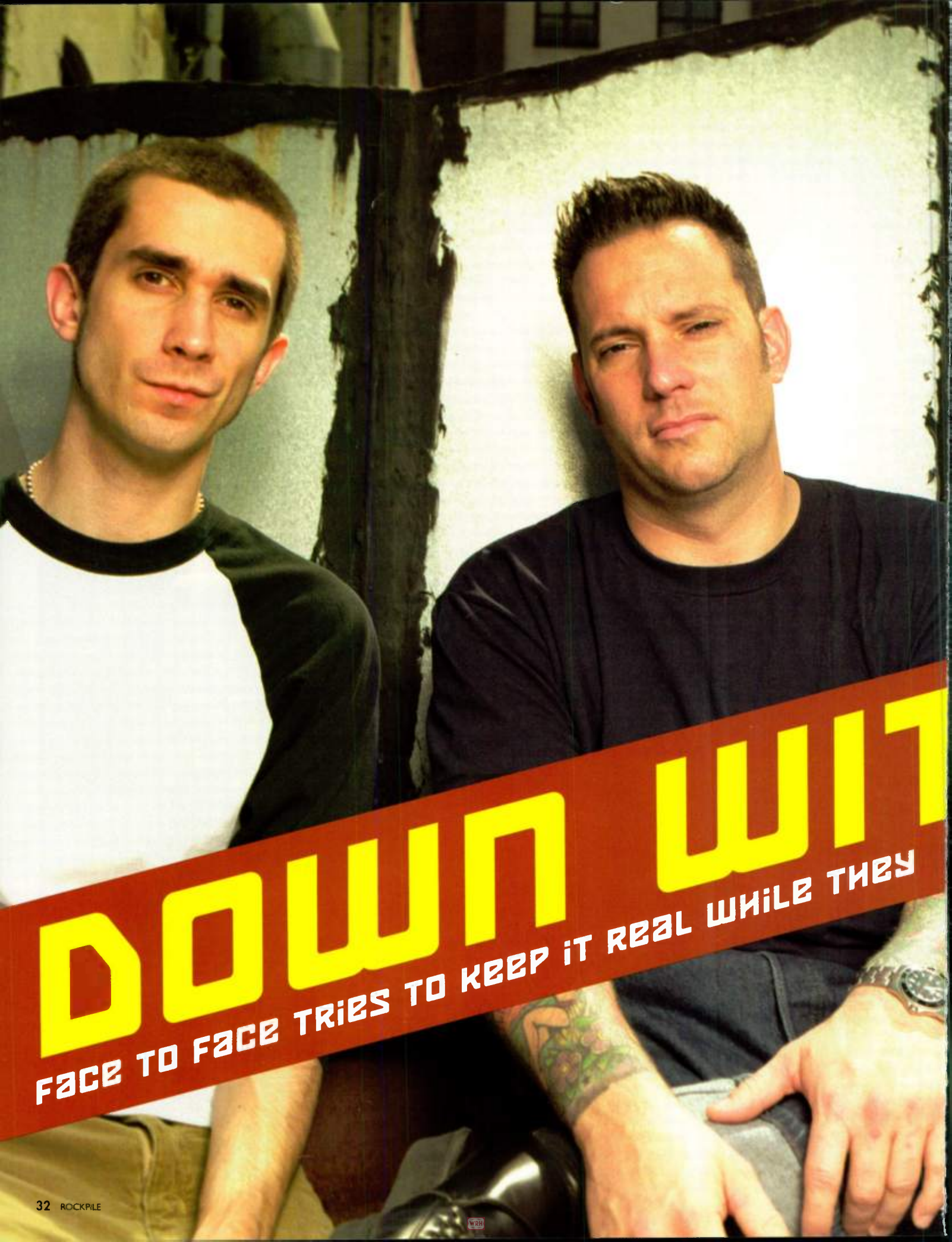


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DOWN WITH

FACE TO FACE TRIES TO KEEP IT REAL WHILE THEY



L-R: Pete Parada, Trever Keith, Scott Shiflett

HOW TO RUIN EVERYTHING

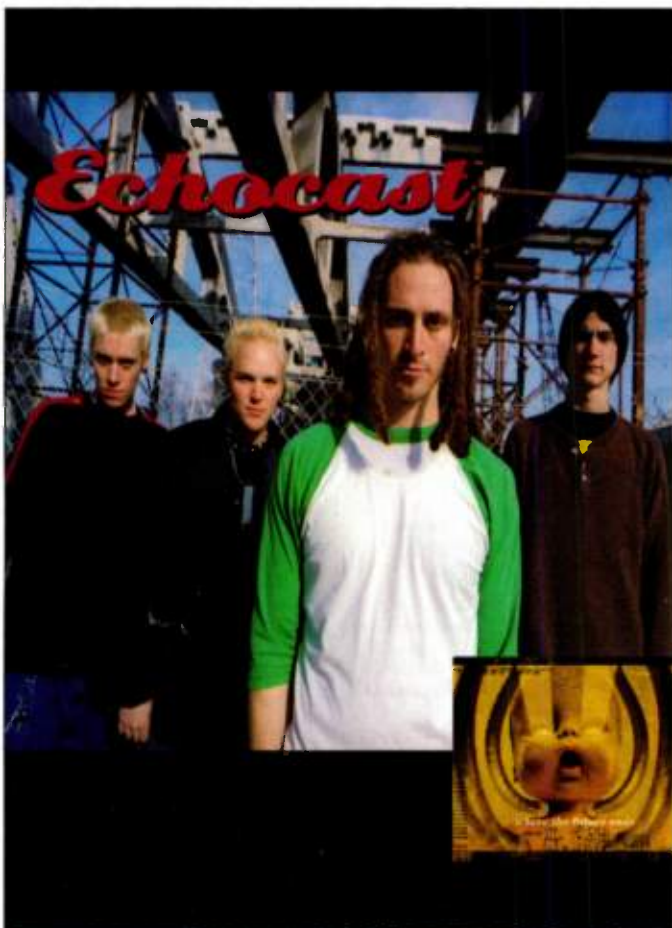
WORDS BY JOHN D. LUBRSSEN PHOTOS BY CHRISSY PIPER

Looking for a punk rock idea man? Face to Face's stout-hearted Trever Keith is your guy. With a decade spent steering the supercharged Southern California trio, the frontman keeps life interesting by regularly thinking up new ways to involve his core fans.

Take 2000's *Reaction* album, for instance, where an internet poll of fans determined which of the band's finished studio tracks would make the final cut.

For the opening leg of Face to Face's spring 2002 trek supporting *How to Ruin Everything*, the guitarist/vocalist hatched an idea to give aspiring regional punk acts a crack at an opening slot. The band sent display boxes to various indie record shops across America for hopeful bands to submit their demos for consideration. The winners would be selected to open for Face to Face in their hometown.

While the contest meant he, bassist Scott Shiflett and drummer Pete Parada had to sift through stacks of demos in each tour stop from upstarts looking for a chance at wider exposure, for Face to Face it's all about audience interaction. And while it's not known if selected acts like Salt Lake City's Hospital Food or Omaha's Fatty and the Twins will someday rise up to the type of success Face to Face has realized, the fact Keith, Shiflett and Parada make the effort to give these unknowns a break says a lot about how they prioritize their otherwise nameless fans across the country.



The Kicks have been one of Little Rock's most popular bands, winning the ASCAP-sponsored Arkansas Musician's Showcase. Musically, The Kicks fit neatly alongside bands like The Ramones, appealing set of crunchy, guitar-driven punkish pop highlights.



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Following a recent Toronto sound check, Keith is caught totally off-guard. The 30-something frontman immediately comes across as approachable. As the conversation unravels, he reveals himself to be self-assured but unguarded and not above laughing when his willingness to experiment does, at times, blow up in his face.

"Last night the band we picked to open for us didn't even show up," he says of a Detroit gig. "And there's been a problem in nearly half the cities so far where the record stores weren't good at getting us the submissions. But we've only been out for a week, and I guess we should have expected a bumpy start."

Still, Keith calls this sort of fan engagement paramount to his band's success. As he sees it, the fans are the foundation of a Face to Face tour, without whom the band members would just be making records for themselves and their friends. Keith is quick to emphasize he and his bandmates exercise no superiority complexes simply because of the band's successes. While word-of-mouth accounts of the band's attitude around promoters, photographers and behind-the-scenes people can cast doubt about Keith's claim, the Face to Face singer seems truly rooted to his fans. The band's recent appearance on NBC's *Last Call With Carson Daly* served as an example.

"I was a nervous wreck," Keith chuckles. "We were in the same studios where they film *Saturday Night Live*, and I was very intimidated. Thankfully, a lot of our fans came to the taping and made us feel right at home."

Some fans might balk Face to Face is betraying its roots and principles by saddling up with cheesy national television. In truth, the band has not had a historical following in the more puritan underground punk scene. Pragmatism is a virtue the band embraces, while Keith is prepared to take the accusations in stride.

"I'm not so punk rock," he admits, not surprising many. "It doesn't go down that deep for me. I'm in Face To Face 24-7, and I'll do what I can to make it successful."

Clearly this approach carries over to Face to Face's dealings with the music business and record companies in specific. When probed about his tendency to switch labels—the band has been on Dr. Strange, Fat Wreck Chords, Victory Music (which went bankrupt in 1995), A&M, Vagrant, Beyond and back with Vagrant again—Keith's disdain for music's corporate side is apparent.

"Thank God we got away from Beyond," he says of Face To Face's previous label relationship. "At first we were really hoping things were going to be everything we were promised, but we were fed a line of bullshit."

Unfortunately, Keith confides, the situation was not entirely different than the troubles the band endured at A&M. Finally, Keith says, he and the others approached their manager, Rich Egan (who had founded Vagrant Records roughly 10 years before). Egan was able to wrangle the band from its Beyond contract, signing them to his Vagrant label.

Most with a rudimentary knowledge of business, the dark side of human nature and the last 50 years of popular music would quickly identify some sticky risks in this situation. Having the owner of the record label responsible for releasing your band's records also serve as the band's private manager opens up a whole truckload of potential conflicts of interest, where it's unclear if decisions ultimately look out for the welfare of the band or the label's bottom line.

Keith and Co., however, seem like they couldn't be more pleased with Egan and Vagrant's performance—they regard Egan as a good friend and the label as a homebase. Speaking freely, Keith says Egan is managing the band for good reasons, noting "he's a smart cookie."

"We're staying put," Keith beams. "I don't see any reason to ever seek out a relationship with any other label."

(Has he ever said this before?)

"The music industry is just barely limping along right now," says Keith—apparently oblivious to the fact it's a multi-billion-dollar industry. "All these corporate takeovers and consolidations have created a big gap, so there's more room than ever for smaller labels to move in and blossom."

**"I'M NOT SO PUNK ROCK,
IT DOESN'T GO DOWN THAT DEEP FOR ME.
I'M IN FACE TO FACE 24-7,
AND I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO MAKE IT SUCCESSFUL."
—TREVER KEITH**





"SO MUCH OF THIS RECORD IS ABOUT THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY AT LARGE.

THERE ARE SO MANY CLUELESS PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES."

Although Keith's model fails to include the various advantages and expansive control these sorts of mergers grant the major labels, the market for an aggressive, privately owned label with some major-label distribution deals has rarely been so lucrative.

Vagrant, for one, has clearly picked up the baton, going beyond its standard pop punk and emocore of Hot Rod Circuit, Dashboard Confessional and The Get Up Kids to make room for an influential giant like Paul Westerberg.

Keith couldn't be more pleased.

Even with Face to Face's bright future, Keith's still a little disgruntled about the bean counters that have done him wrong in the business world over the years. His feelings about said sour dealings dominate *How to Ruin Everything*.

"The New Way," the album's contagious first single, is a declaration of relative independence, while "The World in Front of You"—the finest chant-along from the band since its mid-'90s radio smash, "Disconnected"—is about sizing up the opposition. But Keith makes his point with piercing accuracy on his lessons-learned diatribe, "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," issuing the following rant:

*You had your way of speaking
I was full of naivete
We had a common interest
And a trust based on a need
I've got my own ideas
I've got my integrity
You've got your binding contracts
You've got your misery*

"'A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing' is absolutely about my experiences with the record industry," Keith shares. "So much of this record is about the entertainment industry at large. There are so many clueless people behind the scenes. But mostly this record is about encouraging people to think for themselves and be comfortable in being an individual."

Speaking of free-thinking, Keith, who toured the States in 2000 with support from the now-dead file sharing company Napster, is still a pro-

ponent of getting turned on to music for free.

"I still hope file sharing becomes the revolution we were hoping for," he says. "I know there are sites out there, the perception is that it's become difficult to keep up with it. I keep urging people who are into it to keep up with it, though. The big companies aren't going to be able to keep filing these injunctions against the public forever. If the public wants file sharing then they're going to get it."

As far as addicts of Napster-imitating software like Morpheus, LimeWire and KaZaa are concerned, Face to Face supports such enthusiasm among its fans.

"I think it's done nothing but help our sales. People who get into bands because of the internet are using it as a way of becoming educated. After they discover a band, they go out and grab the releases because they want to support the band and get the artwork and the lyrics."

When pressed about his status in the rock world, Keith reflects on his tenure and the respect it commands. Still, he says the success has largely snuck up on him and his bandmates.

"I feel like we did *Disconnected* only yesterday, and now we're being regarded as an influential band," he reflects. "It's like, 'when the hell did this happen?' It feels great and it feels eerie to be one of the lasting bands out here. It makes me feel old, which is kind of a bummer, but the respect that comes with it is very gratifying at the same time."

With the status comes a level of recognition. Not surprisingly, the lads in Face to Face get asked for guidance from those newer combos on a frequent basis. Ironically, the most common advice people ask for involves record labels and careful business decisions.

"I don't think I'm really qualified to comment," Keith laughs heartily. "I guess I can tell people what *not* to do."

The fact he's still in the game and thriving must mean he's doing something right. As he considers his next move—possibly putting out a book of his lyrics. The various legs of touring in support of *How to Ruin Everything* stretch well into 2003, a testament to Face to Face's commitment and impressive work ethic.

Keith smirks as he prepares to push off onto another city on the dizzying tour.

"They can't kill us, we're like cockroaches." ■

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in the

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The Magically Delicious Elf Power Drop
More Pop for the Elephant Six Set

By Allan Martin Kemler

Athens, Ga.—land of pecans and blooming dogwoods, land the local chamber of commerce calls the “closest place to Heaven on Earth.” Fifty miles northeast of Atlanta and 600 feet above sea level, the little college town credited with spawning such legendary acts as the B-52’s, R.E.M., Pylon, Guadalcanal Diary and The Olivia Tremor Control has another name to add to its list of famous artistes—Elf Power.

While the name might not have the same roll’s-right-off-the tongue quality of, say, fellow Athenians Juicifer, the band makes up for it by combining strummy acoustic guitars, plaintive organs and guitarist Andrew Rieger’s gloriously adenoidal vocals with bubblegum melodies pillaged from Buddha Records’ glory days.

Formed by Rieger and fellow University of Georgia at Athens classmate Laura Carter in 1993, the pair pressed 12 songs of lo-fi surreality recorded on a cassette four-track into vinyl and gave away 50 LPs to friends. The friends flipped over the mystically absurd *Vainly Clutching at Phantom Limbs* (Arena Rock) and Rieger and Carter realized they had a band on their hands.

Now, eight years later, the band never meant to be is set to release its fifth record and go on a big tour of Europe, Japan and the States. Like many of his band’s songs, however, Rieger sounds neither excited nor surprised. More than likely, it’s just his laid-back southern disposition coming through. Rieger did concede *Creatures* (SpinArt) is the band’s most accomplished album so far, so he’s not completely ambivalent about its success. »

THE HONEYMOON IS BACK

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ABOUT THE BREEDERS' LONG DAY'S
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"This album is my favorite," the Greenwood, S.C., native confesses from his home in Athens. "But most of them usually are when we're done with them. I'd be disappointed if it weren't. It's a little more direct musically and lyrically and a little bit catchier. I don't know if it's a conscious thing, but once it was done, I definitely noticed that was the case."

Perhaps it's because the band went back to its home-recording roots for this album. Or maybe it's because Glands bassist Neil Golden joined the group. Or maybe it's because after six years the core of the band has been together long enough to really gel. Whatever the case, Rieger says he's happy with the results.

"This one was a lot easier to record than any of the ones in the past," he admits. "With our new bass player, if I thought I could do something better I'd punch in and change it.

That was a cool way to do it because our old bass player kind of had his parts and he had them set, so we couldn't elaborate on them."

With a little more freedom to experiment and growing confidence in the studio, Rieger and Co. were able to apply the knowledge they gained over the last few years towards recording a more direct-sounding album. Rather than burying melodies under layers of icing, Rieger said he and his bandmates focused on getting each song across as directly as possible.

"One problem we've always had with some of our earlier recordings is that we tend to throw so much other stuff on the top that sometimes the

drums get lost," said Rieger. "I think we consciously tried to be a little more minimal this time. The last album we recorded over a nine-month period at home and in the studio. We had lots of time to try different things and experiment. This time we rehearsed all the songs, and then we recorded them basically with the arrangements we rehearsed. It makes the songs more direct and simple."

For *Creatures*, Rieger says he wrote most of the material at home on his

acoustic and recorded the basic tracks to his Fostex T-88 digital eight-track, then transferred the tracks to tape at the studio to warm up the recording's cold digital sound. After spending a couple of weeks developing vocal melodies and fooling around with the lyrics, Rieger got the band together to write their own parts and help arrange the songs. However, it hasn't always been done this way, he explains.

On the first album, Rieger says, the songs were written as they were recorded. For the next two releases—the *Winterhawk* EP and *When the Red King Comes*—the band used a mixed approach, vacillating between making up the songs on the spot and rehearsing songs religiously before drastically changing them in the studio.

The band's third release, *A Dream in Sound*, employed producer Dave Fridmann's expertise (Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev) in order to get a bigger rock sound. However, because it was recorded over an extended period of time with numerous breaks in between, Rieger says the band had a lot of

"To me psychedelic is 'Tomorrow Never Knows' by The Beatles, where it sounds like some sea gull from another dimension or something coming in and ripping your head off. That's the kind of psychedelia that we strive for."

DEALER WWW.LUCKY13APPAREL.COM **INQUIRIES**

opportunity to tinker with arrangements, which ultimately ended up changing many of the songs.

When it was time for the *Winter is Coming* sessions in the spring and summer of 2000, the group decided to go back to straight home recording, which yielded yet another crowded-sounding record, albeit a gem. So for *Creatures*, Rieger said he wanted to cultivate a more direct, less layered sound, which led the band to hook up with friend and engineer Andy Baker (Japancakes, Juicifer, Shannon Wright) at his home studio in Athens.

With Baker now at the board, and packing a new appreciation for restraint, Elf Power has created a disc of blithely blissed-out tunes as sunny and inviting as honeysuckle on the vine and as dark as a summer-time rain cloud. "The Creature," with its minor-key melody and hushed vocal delivery ploughed under by Doug Stanley's (Glands) bubbly pedal steel solo at precisely 1:47, is a perfect example of how both styles can happily coexist.

Unlike some of the band's friends and collaborators linked to the Elephant 6 collective (a loose coalition of psychedelically oriented bands clearly influenced by The Beatles and the Beach Boys), Elf Power tends to use the darker elements of the Velvet Underground, T. Rex and Neil Young's styles as its muse. Whatever similarities to fellow E6 alumni (namely Apples in Stereo or The Olivia Tremor Control) Elf Power might bear, Rieger claims he doesn't think his band's music is really all that psychedelic.

"It depends on what you define as psychedelic," he argues. "A lot of people think of the Grateful Dead or Phish playing some 10-minute blues jam, and that to me is not psychedelic. To me psychedelic is 'Tomorrow Never Knows' by The Beatles, where it sounds like some sea gull from another dimension or something coming in and ripping your head off. That's the kind of psychedelia that we strive for."

Psychedelic or not, Elf Power's lyrics paint vivid mental pictures through oblique references to made-up mythological creatures, magic powers and the visions of seers. Though few of Rieger's songs rely on a strict linear narrative, he says the sentiments they contain are generally the same—peace, love and spiritual understanding. For instance, on the current album Rieger says the word "creatures" is really just a metaphor for the natural spirits with which all humans used to be in touch.

"There's a lot of mention of creatures on this album, but the creatures aren't really meant to be thought of like little animals, but more like natural spirits," suggested Rieger. "Another way to put it is that mankind used to be more in touch with its natural side, and as materialism has slowly dominated our cultures over the last few centuries and put the part of our brain that deals with spiritual things to sleep, we've lost touch with those creatures. It sounds a little New Age and hokey, but that's not where we're coming from at all."

Of course, given a shot, Elf Power's happy, vaguely euphoric pop sound might win over a few self-described bodhisattvas. In the meantime, though, the band is preparing to hit the road in May, when it will be bringing its show to the West Coast, Texas and Chicago, followed by festival dates in Europe in August, an East Coast tour in the fall and Japanese dates in the winter.

Though nothing is set in stone yet, Rieger says one thing is for sure. After opening up for so many bigger bands in the past, Elf Power will definitely be the headliner on this tour. Perhaps this will leave more time at the end of the show to bust out some of its heartfelt but haggard versions of Brian Eno's "Needle in the Camel's Eye," David Bowie's "Queen Bitch," the Stooges "I Wanna Be Your Dog" or the Velvet Underground's "What Goes On."

"You know, the masters," Rieger chuckles.

But even if Athens never does build a shrine to its local pop artists, Elf Power can rest assured thousands of aficionados of the lo-fi recording aesthetic found on its first album, not to mention several thousand record collector types, will go on loving them till their dying days. Besides, it was all a lark anyway.

"We didn't know anything in the beginning," recalled Rieger. "We weren't a real band, and we didn't think anybody would really be interested in putting our music out. We just did it ourselves for fun." ■

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THE HONEYMOON IS BACK

**KIM DEAL TELLS THE WHOLE TRUTH
ABOUT THE BREEDERS' LONG DAY'S
JOURNEY BACK TO ROCK**

BY MIKE COYLE





Kim Deal is screaming with her sister in a public bathroom at London's All Tomorrow's Parties festival. Her voice is already strained from a blistering set she and her new Breeders lineup have just delivered. While alcohol and party favors render most of the Deal sisters' impromptu bathroom singalong incomprehensible, it's rewarding just to see the two having a good time. The Breeders have plenty to celebrate.

While London's a long way from home, the All Tomorrow's Parties festival is an appropriate place to celebrate. It was, after all, Steve Albini, curator of the multi-day concert and producer of The Breeders first record in nine years, helped Kim Deal rediscover she doesn't suck. She only thought she sucked for three days, and given the arrests, rehabs, bandmate flakiness and studio nonsense she's endured since "Cannonball" landed her on the Lollapalooza main stage, well, a lesser person would have fallen a bit farther.

The Breeders drama is a resurrection story, which starts after the Lollapalooza tour ended in the summer of 1994. Now, in London and back in front of a huge audience, Deal enters the happily-ever-after (hopefully) phase. She is open about her struggle to get to this

This is where Kim Deal's struggle takes on a slightly more grim, me-against-the-world quality. Reaching herself to recall the challenges with a measured breath, she sighs before explaining 1997's failed attempt at another Breeders record. The '97 incarnation of the band imploded in the recording studio, releasing nothing. While Deal says the exact why's and who's aren't important, the disenchantment left from the whole experience was something harder for her to shake.

The experience compelled Deal to learn to play the drums and move to New York. She came to the Big Apple in 1998 with the intention of recording all her own material.

"I figured, I'd do it all on my own," she explains.

Deal didn't expect there to be any problems with the solo model. She hadn't planned on technical difficulties. In the late '90s New York, indie, white-label hip hop became all the rage, and recording studio engineers rushed to buy the soon-to-be ubiquitous computer production program ProTools. While the software opened up vast opportunities for electronic home recording, it also armed renegade engineers with a new toy too tempting to resist. Deal would soon learn how easy ProTools would make it for the studio rats to add their own touches to her music.

"NOW I'M WISHING I'D CALLED THE AMPS RECORD A BREEDERS RECORD, IF ONLY TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM ASKING ME WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS"
—KIM DEAL

point, and she begins back in the mid-'90s.

"I had a hard time getting anybody to play with me," she summarizes. "Everybody from The Breeders was confused or embattled with the law."

She's talking about Josephine Wiggs, who just sort of drifted away from the band, and her own twin sister, Kelley, who was arrested for accepting a parcel containing heroin.

"That would've never happened in Los Angeles," Kim says of the bust. "Where we lived, it's just such a small town outside of Dayton, Ohio. They're all into cops. It's a German town, so four grams was a really big deal."

The arrest did get Kelley Deal into rehab, however, and now she's back with the band. The only needles she's using these days are to knit the handbags she sells online.

After the bust, Kim Deal says, there was a period of jail time, lawyers, court appointments and piss tests, keeping her sister pretty busy. Still driven to make music, she decided to start up a new project with a new name, out of respect for her sister and Josephine.

So she recorded as The Amps with then Breeders drummer Jim MacPherson. The album was generally liked, but never made it up to the mainstream. The group toured America, opening for Sonic Youth. Then Kim Deal busied herself with some engineering work on albums by her pals in Brainiac and Guided By Voices.

But what of The Breeders? Josephine was clearly no longer interested in coming back and Kelley Deal was still recovering. To top it all off, MacPherson settled into a more traditional family life and left the mix.

"Now I'm wishing I'd called the Amps record a Breeders record, if only to keep people from asking me what I've been doing for the last 10 years," she laughs.

"I was recording, and I had this part in my head I'd been trying to get down," she explains. "I played the drums on time and I played the bass guitar really behind, on purpose, so that the kick and the bass slammed against each other. In my head I heard this really cool thing, and I thought I would drop a Moog (keyboard) right in between that seam of that slam—and then the whole thing would just pulse. I can hear it in my head. For two days I'm working on getting this. For two days I'm walking into the control room, listening to this and going, 'God, I suck. What am I doing? This doesn't sound anything like what I thought I was playing. It's sounding stiff, it's sounding... I don't understand. It's just me, I just suck.'"

A couple days later some observant friends proved her wrong when they discovered the house engineer was taking drum measures and bass notes and looping them into a refined, digital version of what he assumed Deal had desired—a trick executed all too discreetly with ProTools.

Naturally, Deal was irate.

"If anybody's gonna do that to my music, I'm gonna do that," she barks, relaying the story. "I told him, 'I'm going straight to fucking tape—no EQ. If I want EQ, I'll ask for it.'"

A confused and frustrated Kim Deal went back to Ohio to recollect herself. Like anyone in a moment of need, she wound up calling on a trusted soul. Unlike most other people, for Deal, this meant Shellac frontman/recording wiz Steve Albini, whom she first met while recording the Pixies' breakthrough album, *Surfer Rosa*. Albini also worked on The Breeders' 1990 debut, *Pod*. She had her father drive her the six hours up to Chicago and quickly discovered she'd made the right choice.

**"PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY MOVE TO EAST L.A.
PEOPLE TRY TO GET OUT OF IT"** —MONDO LOPEZ



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"Steve was bent over, helping me load my gear, and I asked right out there on the street in Chicago, 'Hey Steve, where should I put my sampler?' He didn't even look up, he just went, 'How 'bout outside.'" Deal laughs recounting the chilly Chicago anecdote, and illustrating the gloomiest parts of her story are over.

So she's up at Albini's Electrical Audio studios, playing all the instruments herself, straight to the tape, not sucking, when something else begins to dawn upon her—completing the record would officially make her a studio writer, forced to hire session musicians if she wanted to tour.

With half an album under her belt, Deal took some time off and went back to New York to search once again for anyone with the mettle to become a Breeder. In order to keep writing, she rented out a studio called Loho (Chinese for good luck). And it must have been some luck that led the girl from Dayton to run into the guys from Los Angeles in a New York City bar one night in late 1999.

And they must have made one hell of an impression on her, because a few months later she moved out to Los Angeles to write more songs with them.

The guys, Richard Presley (a distant relative of Elvis and nephew of Hope Sandoval from Mazzy Star) and Mondo Lopez, were in town playing guitar and bass with a reunited version of the punk band Fear.

Initially, because of their ages (both Lopez and Presley are in their late 20s, while Fear had burst onto the scene in the early '80s), Deal thought the two were roadies or working the merchandise for the seminal band, Lopez explains.

"Yeah, but I was still nice to you," Deal chimes in.

The three ended up talking, and as the bar was getting ready to shut down she lured Lopez and Presley over to Loho with beer. They jammed and discovered a kindred spirit, so she thought she'd pop the question.

"I asked them if they'd want to try some things I'd been working on,"

Deal recalls, a joy rising in her voice. "The night we played together, I just said, 'seriously, I'm going out to L.A. to play with you guys.'"

Two months later, to the surprise of even Lopez and Perez, Kim Deal made good on her word and showed up in East Los Angeles in a station wagon with a U-Haul in tow.

"People don't usually move to East L.A.," Lopez jokes. "People try to get out of it."

Kim Deal refers to her new home as "East Los," and offers as a description, "Where Cheech came from."

While her new digs are a world apart from Dayton or New York, Deal says she likes it, adding, "It's real neighborhooody—dog parks, ice-cream trucks, children crying. I've been out there for two years, and it gets weirder and weirder every day. In a good way."

Lopez and Presley hooked the new Breeders up with a drummer, Jose Medeles, and a month after Kim Deal got to Cali, a clean Kelley Deal joined her.

"Title TK" starts out with Kim Deal musing, "I will sing/Title TK/If I don't black out." It's easy to see why she might feel unstable, but right now she's just happy to have a band together and a record out—and to be in London getting ready for a big show.

The new Breeders act like old friends. On stage, Richard polishes up his one liners between songs—"Hey Kim, ask me about my sex life," he instructs.

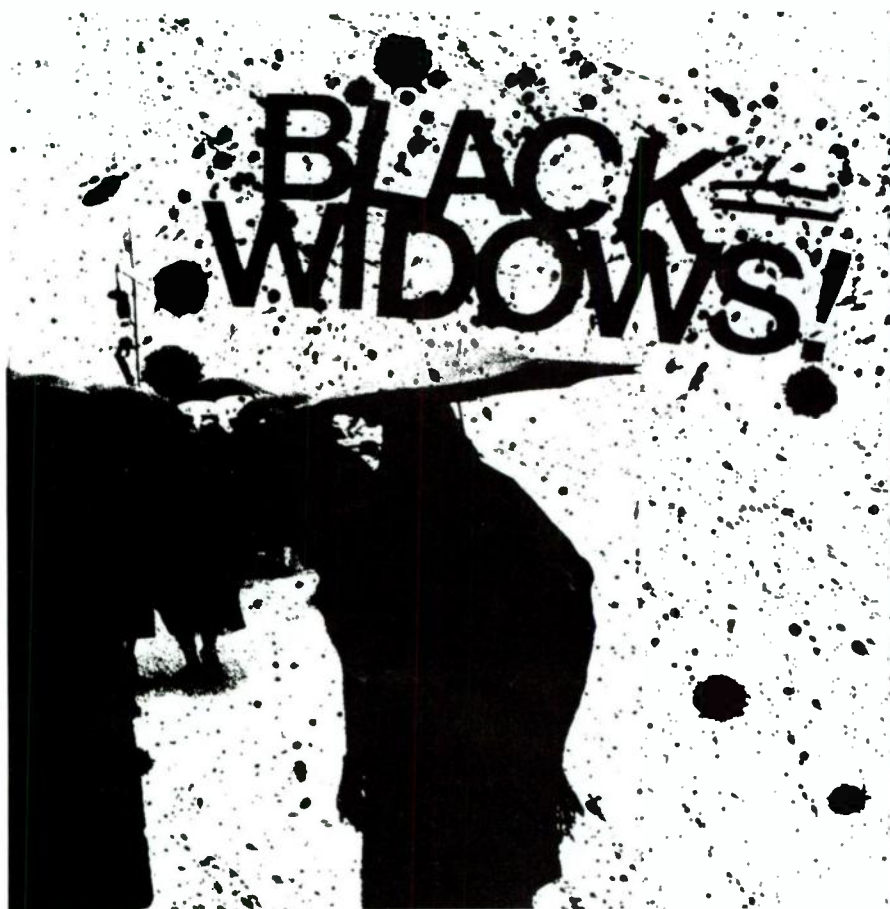
"How's your sex life?" she asks.

"I'm holding my own."

And they all crack up. Thunderous peels of laughter from audiences are still pending.

"We've already got some ideas for new material," Lopez shares freely.

And indeed it will be cool if we don't have to wait nine years for the next Breeders album.



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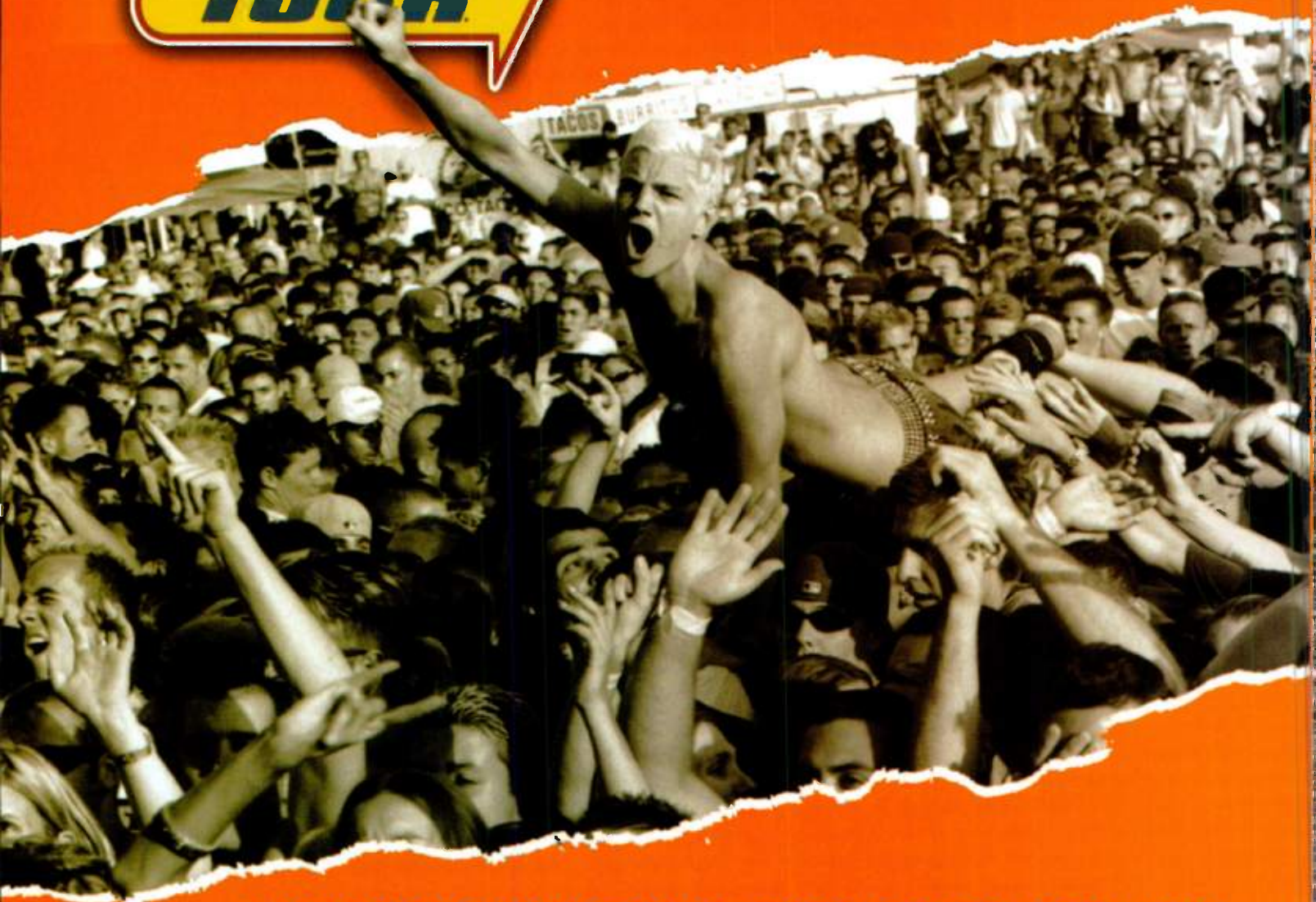
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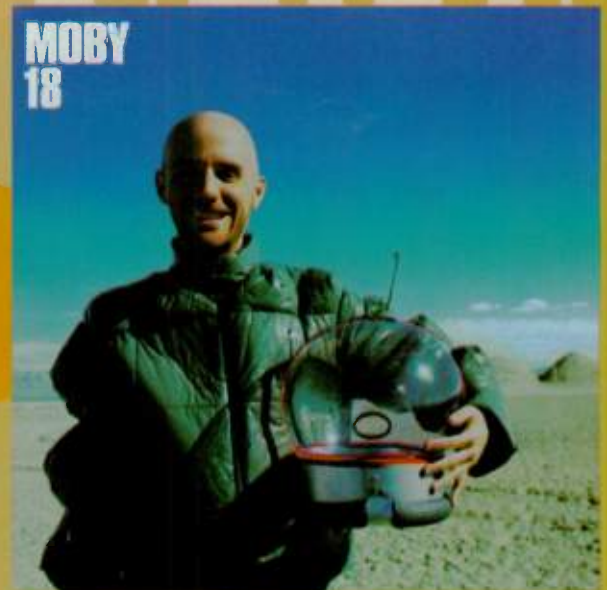
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MOBY

18



Moby makes a pretty crappy rock star. With more than 20 million records sold (by conservative estimates), we're still waiting for a trashed hotel room or an aggravated assault charge. Whatever drugs he does (if any, geez), he has yet to make a mess of himself in public. He's always sporting the same haircut, and on top of all this, a beat-up track suit seems to be the flashiest outfit in his wardrobe (besides the gold lamé tux worn on 1999's *MTV Awards*). Crappy, crappy rock star. Despite the rather non-sensational press the soft-spoken DJ seems to generate, one thing Moby does seem to do well is create rich and engaging music—perhaps something worth valuing more than macho sexcapades and odes to escalades. While 1995's *Everything is Wrong* had American and U.K. audiences more worked up than a hyper teenager at an ecstasy party, Moby had simultaneously proven himself as an artist capable of going beyond the expected turntablist/DJ mold. Then with 1997's *Animal Rights* Moby proved he was capable of going beyond what most critics and music journalists find good listening (the album was harshly panned across the board). Plowing ever forward, largely on his own terms, the runt from Connecticut proceeded to release *Play* to unprecedented mainstream success. Moby's dedication to his own musical vision is an element of his career more impressive than any typical rock star bravado could conjure. With *18*, the multi-instrumental DJ continues what he does best—his own damn thang. With guest vocal appearances from Jennifer Price, Azure Ray and Freedom Bremner, the 18 songs on Moby's latest offer selections from a decidedly diverse aural pallet. Sinéad O'Connor's vox on the haunting, mid-tempo "Harbour" mark one of the album's highpoints (as if Angie Stone and MC Lyte's cameo on "Jam for the Ladies" wasn't enough), while Moby's solo "Extreme Ways" is a sure greatest single ne'er-to-be. If nothing else, *18* is proof great music need not come from the arrogant pricks we most commonly look towards to feed our ears. (V2, 14 E. 4th St., 3rd Floor, New York 10012)

—Mike McKee

track listing

01. We Are All Made Of Stars
02. In This World
03. In My Heart
04. Great Escape
05. Signs Of Love
06. One Of These Mornings
07. Another Woman
08. Fireworks
09. Extreme Ways
10. Jam For The Ladies (Featuring Angie Stone & Mc Lyte)
11. Sunday (The Day Before My Birthday)
12. 18
13. Sleep Alone
14. At Least We Tried
15. Harbour (Featuring Sinéad O'connor)
16. Look Back In
17. The Rafters
18. I'm Not Worried At All

For Fans Of: Richie Hawtin, Void, Mob 47.

AVENGED SEVENFOLD
Sound the Seventh Trumpet

The guitar intro to this record is so overblown it could herald a new rock opera by Spinal Tap—although Spinal Tap would have at least followed it with something funny. Avenged Sevenfold instead goes for growling histrionics, completely unintelligible and painfully dull. Chunk, chunk goes the band, speeding up, slowing down, thumping then wailing. This is so unrelentingly tedious, it might just make a good sedative. Some will be sure to find the combination of black metal style and SoCal punk entertaining. Ultimately, however, *Sound the Seventh Trumpet* fails to excite. (Hopeless, P.O. Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409)

—Mark Ginsburg

BANABILA
Spherics

Spherics is an album you could imagine King Crimson making if the metallor decided to take a few hits of ecstasy then drown in numerous bottles of Cognac. It's a hallucinogenic sojourn through astral innerspace,

perpetually droning in the bottom end of reverberating speakers. Bass heavy and hypnotically abstract, *Spherics* flows well from song to song, but occasionally becomes tedious within each. It's a good effort nonetheless, lacking in melody but full of solid musicianship. Banabila has created a laboratory experiment for *Space Odyssey* freaks—if they come, they will be pleased. Solidly produced and progressively auditory, it's a great chill-out album if you want to watch a few dozen Alfred Hitchcock flicks and fade into the reflective chasm of your own solitude. (Tone Casualties, 6353 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood 90028)

—Derek Beres

BRENDAN BENSON
Lapalco

Artists like Brendan Benson represent one of the biggest oxymorons in music—the sensitive-yet-brave pop singer. Like contemporaries Ben Folds, Fountains of Wayne and Old 97's, Benson doesn't hide behind brooding walls of drum machines, distorted squeals or odd time signatures. He's not trying to reinvent the wheel, which leaves him pigeonholed and

vulnerable to criticism. His new record, *Lapalco*, is a collection of songs about love and the lack of it, stuffed to the gills with pop hooks and a unending supply of falsetto oohs and aahs. Not quite as polished as Folds and not yet as catchy as Rhett Miller, Benson can still get the job done, whether it's plaintive acoustic yearning or Rolling Stones riffing (sans the Jagger swagger). "Jetlag" ends the record on a lush note, complete with Brian Wilson-esque production flourishes. Still, the tune refuses to stray from the comfortable terrain of hummability. (Startime International, 285 5th Ave., PMB #452, Brooklyn, NY 11215)

—Joe Sweeney

CALIBRETTO 13
Adventures in Tokyo

Adventures in Tokyo features six tracks, each of which demonstrate the different styles making up Calibretto 13's sound. The EP opens with "Father," an upbeat, rockabilly song with a punkish edge. While some of the songs on *Tokyo* reflect the band's snot-nosed punk attitude, the guitar tone on this EP distinctly lacks an ele-

ment found on most punk albums—distortion. Rather, the band's preference for clean-tone electric and acoustic guitars is consistent throughout. There are some interesting lyrical messages as well, as indicated by the anti-conformist message of "Why Can't I Be on MTV?" Other notable tracks include "I'll Talk to You Tomorrow," a softer tune with a tempo reminiscent of a slow, '50s-styled ballad. Overall, *Adventures in Tokyo* is a worthwhile release for those who are sick of run-of-the-mill punk. (Tooth & Nail, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle 98111)

—Dom DiSpaldo

CALLENISH CIRCLE
Flesh_Power_Dominion

While this is the third album by the famous Dutch metallers it is only the first to receive domestic distribution, thanks to labels lacking financial commitment and bureaucratic boondoggles. Originally, the plan called for 10 of these tracks to have gone under the title *Obey Me* as a different release. Catchy yet aggressive, the material will appeal to fans of early In Flames, Soilwork and harder-edged acts Arch Enemy or The Haunted.

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"Bleeding" has the same classically orchestrated, pedestrian growl of vintage Paradise Lost, while album closing cover of Death's "Pull the Plug" is bittersweet irony, given Chuck Schuldiner's recent passing. (Metal Blade, 2828 Cochran St., PMB 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065-2793)

—Mark Gromen

CENTINEX Diabolical Desolation



Like 95 percent of the death metal bands in existence, Centinex are from Sweden. Even though the band has been around since 1990, it didn't play its first show in the United States until last year. Despite a strong international following, the band never developed a huge audience in America, but make no mistake about it—Centinex fans are out there, and they are a dedicated troop. The band's latest, *Diabolical Desolation*, is a gritty, yet melodic death-metal outing sure to attract fans of Carcass, Death and Arch Enemy. The album's highlights—"Forthcoming Terror," "Spawned To Destroy" and "The Bloodline"—present numerous shifts in both tone and timing, defining Centinex as a band boast-

ing masterful performances. (Candlelight USA, P.O. Box 29459, Kensington Station, Philadelphia, PA 19125)

—Kevin Boyce

CONSORTIUM PROJECT II Continuum in Extremis



The art of writing progressive rock concept albums dates back to the early '70s, when English artists such as Yes, ELP and King Crimson challenged listeners' with their intricate, lengthy compositions. In recent years, heavier bands have blended progressive rock with a harder-edged sound. Enter Consortium Project II, a band possessing elements of the latter-generation's progressive bands. Like Dream Theater, there are lots of heavy guitars, pounding tempos and fluid, layered vocals. Like Queensryche, there is a delicate balance between intricate arrangements and concise songwriting. As evidence, the song lengths are kept under seven minutes. Because of this, *Continuum in Extremis* may appeal to a wider audience, including those who like heavy music but not excessive song arrangements. (Locomotive, P.O. Box 116094, 28080 Madrid, Spain)

—Dom DiSpaldo

COPYKILL Victim or Witness



For true musical aggression, look no further than Copykill. This is one band not interested in pulling any punches. Charging tempos, warm, distorted guitars and angry in-your-face vocals are all part of its charm. Fortunately, the vocals aren't as unbearable as those of so many other extreme metal bands. Aggressive, yes, but they serve the songs well rather than rendering them unlistenable. Those who appreciate truly heavy music and are not afraid of the more extreme subgenres of metal should give this a fair listen. Copykill is one solid band, and *Victim of Witness* is proof. (Alveran, P.O. Box 100152, D-44701 Bochum, Germany)

—Dom DiSpaldo

CREAM ABDUL BABAR The Catalyst to Ruins



The songs on *Catalyst to Ruins* fall into two categories—morbidly quiet sound passages and non-stop screaming over constant distortion. One might have trouble deciding which of these two modes are more unnerving. To put it simply, Cream Abdul Babar's

music isn't easily digestible for the average listener. One may wonder if the album's title might refer to what this band does to tasteful music—leaves it in ruins to die a horrible death. (At A Loss, P.O. Box 3597, Annapolis, MD 21403)

—Dom DiSpaldo

CREMATORIUM A World Where Only Nightmares Prevail



If Satan hasn't already hired a house band, he should consider giving Crematorium the job. This band conjures up enough darkness, musically and lyrically, to make even the Dark Prince cringe. Since *A World Where Only Nightmares Prevail* is a four-song EP rather than a full-length release, the brutality only lasts for a total of 13 minutes (no kidding). The EP closes with a hyperspeed rendition of Metallica's speed metal classic "Whiplash," performed in a lower tuning for added heaviness. How can one possibly make such a heavy tune even heavier? One might call it overkill, but extreme metal fans call it Crematorium. (Dismal, P.O. Box 6488, Burbank, CA 91510-6488)

—Dom DiSpaldo

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THE DEARS

Nor the Dahlias (1995-1998)



If you're a little confused as to why The Dears put out this career retrospective after only one proper studio album, look no further than the liner notes. In them, lead singer/songwriter Murray Lightburn speaks frankly about his severe distaste for the record, which was released to fulfill contractual obligations with the band's label. Despite this, *Nor the Dahlias* is a collection of fresh, ambidextrous pop songs, taking bows to The Smiths, Cars, Beatles and Blur, all doused in classic, hissing, basement-tape energy. There's a beautiful McCartney jaunt ("She's Well Aware"), a Blondie homage ("Corduroy Boy") and an unabashedly hook-filled, string-laden gem ("Can't Remember Anything Else"). Forget the contracts and hurt feelings; we're all better off because this music saw the light of day. (Grenadine, P.O. Box 42050, Montreal, PQ, Canada H2W 2T3)

—Joe Sweeney

THE DEFACED

Domination Commence



Like *Burn My Eyes*-era Machine Head and vintage Pantera, Sweden's The

Defaced offers a volatile mix of spirited thrash metal boasting plenty of chunky guitars, meter-perfect drumming and vocals teetering between tuneful and terrifying. *Domination Commence* plays like an aural steamroller, as it chugs through 11 testosterone-propelled numbers complete with moshy breakdowns and a simple agenda to fracture the eardrums of those who dare listen. (In metal, this is a good thing.) From machine-gun rhythms to lyrics like "I am God on earth/I'll take you down/Understand that there's no way out" (from the cut "Fanatic Minds"), this is one platter sure to please the most stringent speed metal zealots. (Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250)

—Kevin Boyce

DISHWALLA

Opaline



You may remember hearing Dishwalla's hit "Counting Blue Cars" all over modern-rock radio a few years back. You may also remember the urge to drive your car off a steep incline after hearing it for the fifth time in one day. Prepare to start your engines again because the Dish is back with *Opaline*—

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a mellow album peppered with acoustic guitars and designed to fit perfectly in a commercial-free block of commercial radio alongside Matchbox 20 and Jimmy Eat World. All this is not to say *Opaline* is unbearable. In fact, some songs have the kind of laid-back melodies one might find enjoyable after a long day. On the other hand, this album is about as adventurous as stockbrokering. Occasionally, lead vocalist JR Richards' voice is reminiscent of a young Bono. Most of the time, however, he's merely lost in the shuffle of the vast sea of forgettable radio singers. There's also what seems to be an Indian influence making its presence known throughout this album and serving to do little more than become annoying. Surely, Dishwalla will find its audience—*Opaline* might well go sextuple platinum. It's a better bet to turn on the radio and hear this stuff for free. (Im-mergent, 2231 S. Carmelina Ave., West Los Angeles 90064)

—Zack Needles

DRAZY HOOPS
Bring On The Hate



It's been a few years since MTV managed to fit in a Wilco video between

game shows and commercials or anyone mentioned the phrase "alt-country" without a hint of irony. But Drazy Hoops unabashedly busts out more than a few slow-burning, pedal-steeltinged numbers on *Bring on the Hate*. But this certainly isn't 16 tracks of pure country rock. A few tracks ("Hunky Dory" especially) are upbeat rockers slightly reminiscent of a more straightforward Frank Black. Hoops' deep, scratchy-yet-melodic voice is a mixture of the aforementioned ex-Pixie, Beck and perhaps even Lou Reed. On his latest release, he showcases his knack for penning catchy riffs and sarcastic lyrics at home with frantic pop rock and meandering summertime country ballads alike. "Feel the Snake" has a certain sleaze to it not really showing up anywhere else on the album, but working nonetheless. In between two soft alt-country tunes, Hoops' throws in a tune like "Such a Cruel Design," winding up with a fluttering Randy Rhodes-style guitar solo. The last song, "Strangely the Same," even features a tuba! Any artist who can competently pull off this sort of variety deserves respect. (Slow Burn, drazy@webspan.net)

—Zack Needles

continued on page 53



CROWNS ON 45
Not On The Menu



Despite the name of its label and the rather precious album cover (depicting the lower halves of two skinny-tied, denim-clad hipsters clasping hands), *Crowns on 45* is in no way out to get your emo on. Instead imagine The Strokes with female vocals or Sleater-Kinney with more bottom end (the musical kind, you nit). Though not so fresh or so clean as either band, CO45 still kick up a pretty nice racket, with all the requisite gritty chic gripping Brooklyn's Williamsburg area these days. The band works best when singer Heather Hellskiss embraces her Babes in Toyland side and unleashes the banshee within. While *Crowns* may remain an opening band for now, larger things may lie ahead. (Heartcore, 1415 E. Sampa Lane, Placentia, CA 92870)

—Reed Jackson



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SWITCHED ON

Hip Hop & Electronica

This Philadelphia-based duo's *Will We Ever Be Famous?* EP (2001) boasted a unique—if not yet fine tune—style characterized by a liberal, expressive array of beats and support. This time around, **Dept. of Rec.** returns with heightened self awareness, tighter production and a cleaner package to its intellectual street attitude. "Thinking Outside The Box," a tune fitted for original, radio and instrumental mixes on this EP, is a dark, brooding number (still brighter than neighbors Dalek or Oddattee) responsible for scoring D.O.R. some East Coast notoriety. The production, courtesy of Stape Mega and DJ Low Budget, focuses on complex, layered drums and experimental noise flourishes. "Lawndarts," with its orchestral string arrangement, is an up tempo affair featuring appearances from Doap Nixon, Planet and Breez Evaflowin'. The group returns to a more reserved approach for "Blessings" before closing the EP with "Earth vs. Star," driven by a minimalist piano progression and a cameo appearance from MC Charlie Bawles (of Skitzofreniks fame). While it's clear big names like Siegal, Black Thought and Dieselboy will continue to attract the brightest spotlights along Philly's skyline for some time to come, the committed Dept. of Rec. provides, with *Raising Illatropolis*, another platter to put the underdogs on the map. The indie Arrakis label responsible for the duo's latest EP stays on course, continuing to push skilled production and lyrical delivery ever towards improvement. *Raising Illatropolis* is valuable for its quality as a landmark of progression as it is simply for its quality.



—Mike McKee

Most old-school rappers have trouble trying to keep up with the post-modern sound of today's hip hop. For the majority, they end up failing in their comeback attempts only to fade as drum-pattered memories. Then there's the exception. Kool G. Rap was to '80s hip hop what Larry Bird was to '80s sports. Adapting with the times, Kool G. emerged again as the Charles Barkley of the '90s, and now in the 21st Century, he returns as the Allen Iverson. **Kool G. Rap** stays on top of the game with impeccable flow and one of the most impressive senses of delivery found in rap past and present. Back again with his latest album, *Giancana Story* (released by the floundering Rawkus label), G. Rap illustrates why he was, is and will always be The Man. "Streetz" picks up right where G. Rap left off on his last album, the gap in time nearly imperceptible. The beat, consisting of a hard-hitting piano riff, causes instant motion of the neck and shoulders, while G. Rap does what he does best—rip the song to shreds in a riveting, storytelling fashion. From there, he introduces listeners to his new group, Black Guerrilla Family, which appears on five of the album's tracks. These young 'uns shine bright, but on the same song as Kool G., their skills fall to the wayside. Snoop Dogg even drops in for a cameo on the unlisted bonus track, rounding out representation from each of hip hop's focal motherlands—East Coast, West Coast and the dirty South. *Giancana* even features thug cut "Holla Back," featuring Nas, AZ and newcomer Papoose. The tune is a sure mixtape gem, while "Black Widow" benefits from its placement and presentation on the album as a whole. With one of the best beats on the album behind him, G. Rap lyrically assaults the mic, ranting about a very dangerous female. This song will be getting plenty of sub-woofer time on the airwaves of car stereos. The album's strongest cut, however, is "Who's the First," where G. Rap reminds everyone of his status as a trailblazing street griot—a claim given further credence by production from DJ Premier. (**Rawkus**)

—Ahmad Lawton

Although it's only June, 2002 has already proven to be the year of the young guns. From underground to mainstream, young talent has been rushing through the door like hooligans storming a European soccer game, eager to prove themselves on the harsh field of hip hop. Indie label Uprok Records has rounded up some top draft picks of its own. The first to show and prove is **Ill Harmonics**. Made up of two guys who look more like computer nerds than hip hop artists, Harmonics comes with an entirely different sound and flavor, demonstrating some vastly diverse styles on its new album, *Take Two*. The first song, "Take Two (Call Me in The Morning)," can be described in one word—hot. From the jazzy beat to the easily adaptable lyrics, these guys sound like seasoned veterans despite their rookie status. The title track is the perfect way to grab the attention of the skeptical listener. Hate if you want—the song is tight. From there, the Latin guitar sound of "San Jose" drops like a dash of hot pepper on a burger. The alternating beat keeps the listener interested while the two Harmonics MCs trade verses back and forth like baseball cards. Songs like "Backside of the Sun," "Must Be Crazy" and "Mr. Chris T. Ian" stick to the jazzy, Roots-style sound, while "Cats Like These" references a more acoustic, backpack sound. Ill Harmonics replaces the street thug-gery prominent in the current mainstream with a pure, fresh-out-the box brand of definition hip hop consisting of knot-tight beats and easy flowing, laid back lyrics with a touch of attitude. Uprok definitely has its prime time players in Ill Harmonics, now it's just up to them how they're going to use them. (**Uprok, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle 8111**)

—Ahmad Lawton



HIP HOP NEWS

by Ahmad Lawton

The dirty South stays in the game with talent coming out of the woodwork daily. **Lady May**, a Southern belle and hip hop rookie, tests the rough waters with her debut, *May Day*, early this summer... **The Baby Face Assassins** drop their debut, *The Ruby Red Eye*... Kung Fu rapper **Afu Ra** comes out kicking with *Life Force Radio* this month, delighting the backpack set... Federal prisoner and former **Refugee Camp** member **John Forte** will be releasing his second effort, *I John*... **Rawkus'** release of *Soundbombing III* earlier this month sparks an impressive following, but fails to guarantee the label's sustained shelf-life. The label receives another attempt at resuscitation with the August release date of **Talib Kweli's** first true solo record, *Quality*... **Mobb Deep** spin-off **Infamous Mobb** released its debut, while **Havoc**, the brains and skill behind Mobb Deep, is already in the studio gearing up for his first solo album... The psycho rappers of **Onyx** ambush the world with their comeback on the heels of *Bacdafucup: Part II*... **Babu the Dilated Junkie** comes with *Duck Season Vol. 1* this spring... **Canibus** attempts again at a successful album with *C True Hollywood Stories*... **Tame One** from the now defunct **Artifacts** (remember *That's Them?*) comes back with *Rappers Attack*... **Eminem** is back with his third full-length, *The Eminem Show*. Production credits once again go to **Dr. Dre**, although one can't help but wonder if the hype will follow for a third lap... **King Sun** makes an underground return with *Heat 4 Da Streetz*... **Tribeca** releases his full-length album, *Homerun Kings*... Be on the lookout for Philly's fastest moving acts, **Ms. Jade** with *Girl Interrupted* and **Lost Children of Babylon** with *Word From the Duat: The Book Of Anubus*. More next month...



EIGHTEEN VISIONS

Vanity



Orange County's Eighteen Visions deems itself "hardcore kids playing rock 'n roll music in a metal band." While it might be hard to follow, this is actually a pretty accurate description. *Vanity* embodies elements of all those styles in a compressed, vitriol-soaked package. Featuring members of O.C. moshcore legend Throwdown, Eighteen Visions has stepped up its metalcore assault on this latest album. The breakdowns are vicious enough to incite plenty of pit carnage, but the band has also paid close attention to the pretty parts. Vocalist James Hart can go from demon to

angel at a second's notice, throwing even the most seasoned hardcore vet through an emotional loop. If Poison the Well and Hatebreed got into the ring with Lamb of God, Eighteen Visions would emerge as the victorious prizefighter. Go forth and draw blood with "Fashion Show," "A Short Walk Down a Long Highway" and "You Broke Like Glass." (**Trustkill, 157 Spoonbill Court, Jupiter, FL 33458**)

—Amy Sciarretto

EVELYNN

Dreaming of the Fifth



Evelynn, it seems, suffers from a spot of schizophrenia. Although the band cranks out guitar-centric rock, it fails to coin an original sound. The record

flounders between Lifehouse and Deftones, with songs boasting erratic breaks and rhythms cheated by a lack of a clear schematic. Singer Scott Cooper injects such passion into his vocals, though one wonders how much better they'd ignite if the music were more cohesive. Straining and bellowing without the unspoken human fire is tedious noise—the anchor tied to *Dreaming of the Fifth's* legs. Still, the skill and punch of the band suggests once Evelynn has found its own voice, listeners will have no choice but to take notice. (**Pluto, P.O. Box 1201, McKinney, TX 75070**)

—Liana Jonas

FORTY WINKS

To The Lonely Hearts



Despite a cool comic book cover and some enhanced CD features, Forty Winks' *To the Lonely Hearts* walks the same ground as early Weston but isn't as catchy and lacks the genuine goof-ball feeling. I'm sure during its live show the Winks get audiences moving—the band has a knack for keeping the pace up and the members' bounding energy is its real strength. On the stereo, however, these tunes fade fast from memory. "Anchor" does

walk the good side of Green Day, while "Every Single Doubt" plays the loud-soft dynamic to an interesting effect. The band shoots for a Descendents vibe with "Til the Moonlight Comes" and its narrative about penis size. But how do you explain why the Descendents were so good and why their legions of followers have such a hard time measuring up? Forty Winks, you have talent—so come out from under someone else's shadow. (**End, P.O. Box 101013, Fort Worth, TX 76185**)

—Charles Spano

FREESTYLERS

Pressure Point



I spent enough of my youth hanging out at the Jersey shore to know it's not the place to go dancing. Cheap, cheesy, bottomed-out techno blasting five years too late while bulky, testosterone-driven males stare at over-perfumed, underdressed women downing bottles of Bud is not my idea of a good time. Unfortunately, it is for the Freestylers. *Pressure Point* shouldn't even have been made in 1988, so there's no explaining why it's popping up now. It's bad enough Reaganomics have returned via Bush Jr. and his

continued on page 55

Audio Learning Center's *Friendships Often Fade Away* is a rich, mature collection sure to be a stylistic turning point for Vagrant Records. Nowhere near the label's emo-pop norm, Audio Learning Center offers poignant tales of depression, loneliness, self-discovery and the runaway rock-hate anthem "A Dedication" ("My hate for you grows with every day," opens the song). Fronted by former Pond bassist/songwriter Chris Brady, and brought to life by longtime friend Steve Birch on guitar and newcomer Paul Johnson on drums, the trio captures a powerful, tight sound. A sound encompassing the soft, dripping tenderness of "I Love Robot" (a tale of trying to bring to life the robot you have fallen in love with) to the guitar-driven rock of "Broken." The emotional outpouring of "Prescription"—a bleeding number about trying to conquer life's challenges with the help of modern medicine—through the bass-driven, quiet-to-loud roar of the guitar and drums on "Winter," "disperses all emo categorization with ease. A contender for Album of the Year, Audio Learning Center puts honesty and emotion back into rock without playing to any clichés. (**Vagrant, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403**)

—Alex Steinger

track listing

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 01. The Shell | 07. Broken |
| 02. Hand Me Downs | 08. Prescription |
| 03. Favorite | 09. December |
| 04. Winter | 10. If You Choose |
| 05. The Dream | 11. I Love Robot |
| 06. A Dedication | |

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- ___ #56 Apr 00 Fu Manchu, Jello Biafra, Adrian Belew
- ___ #57 May 00 Lambchop, Granddaddy, Gomez
- ___ #58 Jun 00 Boss Hog, Jucifer, Kittie
- ___ #59 Jul 00 Murder City Devils, Apples In Stereo
- ___ #60 Aug 00 Damage Manual, Sonic Youth, XTC
- ___ #61 Sep 00 Nashville Pussy, At The Drive-In, Nina Gordon

QNTY

- ___ #62 Oct 00 Dandy Warhols, John Doe, Bettie Serveert
- ___ #63 Nov 00 The Sea And Cake, The Posies, Modest Mouse
- ___ #65 Jan 01 J Mascis and the Fog, Less Than Jake, Versus
- ___ #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
- ___ #69 May 01 Of Montreal, Folk Implosion, Henry Rollins
- ___ #70 Jun 01 Guided By Voices, Arab Strap, Good Riddance
- ___ #71 Jul 01 Melvins, Spirit Caravan, The Living End
- ___ #72 Aug 01 Kool Kieth, Radiohead, Coldplay
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- ___ #74 Oct 01 Nikka Costa, Spiritualized, Michael Gira
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RECORDS continued from page 53
 conservative thievery, but now we have to re-endure the same horrid music. First Sebastian Bach appears on Broadway, then Tommy Lee resurfaces with his alleged hip-hop album, and now this. Somebody pull the plug already, the scene is dead. Let it rest in the unrelenting compost it deserves. (Mammoth, 99 Hudson St., New York 10013)

—Derek Beres

THE FRUSTRATORS
Achtung Jackass



Despite one of the stupidest album titles of all time, *Achtung Jackass* delivers pop punk managing to stand out from the masses. It's a welcome change for a punk album to kick off with an angular, mid-tempo groove ("Hide and Seek") instead of the usual beat. From there, the members of the Frustrators (including Green Day's Mike Dirnt) do the title justice with satisfyingly dumb punk ("Frustrators Jingle," "Pirate Song"), new wave (a cover of the Cars' "My Best Friend's Girl," "AAA") and even Black Flag assaults ("25"). It won't change music as we know it, but the sampled swordfight sounds on "Pirate

Song" are sure to put a smile on anyone's face. (Adeline, 5337 College Ave., #318, Oakland, CA 94611)

—Charles Spano

THE GADJITS
Today is My Day



This is a great bluesy jam record, with no apologies and no excuses. The Gad-jits kick it out with an incredible amount of soul, attacking their songs straight from the gut. On top of it all, the Hammond organ sounds fine (an exquisite instrument often neglected in rock 'n roll). After slamming through a trio of high-energy tunes, the band makes a switch to a more gentle, studied approach for "Waffle House is Not a Home," spinning a small-town tale in a leisurely and completely captivating manner. One track later, the intensity shoots up again, this time mixing blues with a punk sensibility. (Thick, 409 N. Wolcott Ave., Chicago 60622)

—Mark Ginsburg

THE GHOST
This is a Hospital



Falling somewhere between At The Drive-In and Thursday, The Ghost cre-

ates an interesting sound with oddly atmospheric, melodic hardcore periodically delving into screamo. The dark and slightly artsy lyrics blend well with the dark and slightly artsy music. Album opener "Death by the Bay" provides the perfect example of this with lyrics like "Burn my body on a windy night" and "Every night is Halloween." The Ghost, however, is just as well-equipped for more melodic songs taking their cue from emo as demonstrated on tunes like the excellent "By the Books" and the more subdued "The Exhibition." The latter sounds equal parts Thursday and Third Eye Blind. More points are awarded to the band for having the novel idea to end the CD with one of the album's strongest tracks, "Red Slippers, Red Wheels". *This is a Hospital* is the sort of record sure to grow on its audience with each listen. (Some, 51 MacDougal St., #458, New York, NY 10012)

—Zack Needles

GORILLAZ
G Sides




Dan The Automator's output has reached comical proportions. Time and again, the maniac produces CD


after incredible CD. The last few months alone have seen the release of *Lovage*, *Wanna Buy a Monkey?* and now a remix of his infamous Gorillaz project, *G Sides*. The verdict? You guess. Granted, a remix project might not take the same, exhaustive amount of work as an original composition, since a sizable foundation has already been laid, but those tunes were already stand-outs, and the new flavor leaves a hearty taste behind. Two offerings of "19-2000" will keep many a dance floor rocking late, while an expanding, retracting "Latin Simone" is as creepy as the original. "The Sounder," opening with the hip hop, streetwise vibe this project was created in honor of, bounces with technological perfection, a charged over funk-ed rendition with hooks a la Prince and abstract fusion Hawaiian sitar plucks. "Faust" sounds as good on record as in literature—a surreal based-up classical jog through Alice-in-Creep-land. Obviously, the breakthrough "Clint Eastwood" is married to persuasive harmonies, an extension of rap brilliance. If you dug the self-titled debut, you'll want to cop the remixes. If this is your first visit, welcome, sit

continued on page 59


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HARD ROCK NEWS

by Amanda Feingold

Anyone who follows the underground world of stoner rock is familiar with Brant Bjork's work. He was the drummer for the seminal band Kyuss on its first three albums before joining California fuzz-rock outfit Fu Manchu. His talents can also be heard in various side projects with other Kyuss alumni The Desert Sessions, Mondo Generator and Che. But after recording *California Crossing* with Fu Manchu last year, Bjork decided it was time to move on and explore other musical interests. In March he released a solo album via The Music Cartel called *Brant Bjork & the Operators*, on which he (gasp!) sings, plays drums, bass and guitar. *Rockpile* recently sat down with Bjork to talk about his solo career, the desert rock community and The Ramones.

Why did you leave Fu Manchu?

I left Fu Manchu because it's somewhat of a one-dimensional band. I love what they do, and I had a great time doing that, but I like to do other things as well. It was time for me to move on and evolve as an artist.

Is it true that you joined Queens of the Stone Age?

That's just a rumor. They're obviously buddies of mine because I grew up with Nick and Josh, and we used to play in Kyuss back in the day. They are looking for a drummer to tour on their next record, and we talked about it, but we decided that it's not going to happen. This is my time to do my own thing and I don't think I want to go tour for another year and a half.

Your solo album sounds nothing like the two bands you are most associated with. Were you trying to distance yourself from that sound?

Well, that's my music. That's what I naturally do. Sonically, what I do on my own is something completely different than what I did as a drummer playing in those other bands. I'm excited to continue to play drums, but now I've got my own band and we're going to go out and do it for real.

Old-school thrash is back! Killswitch Engage's debut album, *Alive or Just Breathing*, sounds like equal parts In Flames and Opeth with a little Fear Factory sprinkled on top. But despite the strong European guitar tones, this quintet actually hails from Massachusetts. There are brushes with melody throughout the 12-track album, but most of the songs are heavy, unadulterated, headbanging material. Lyrically, Killswitch Engage makes a call for unity and lashes out at people who create negativity in the world. Singer Jesse Leach refers to the band as "a calling," or a way of life. "I want people to feel the urgency and desperation I feel," he says. "I want people to stop and think about what's going on instead of walking through life. Hence, the title: are you alive or are you just taking in the air?"



Has anyone ever told you that when you play drums you look like Animal from The Muppet Show?

Yeah! He was actually an influence on me as a kid. I always wanted to be Animal—I loved him.

Is the desert rock scene still a big influence on you?

To the people outside who read about it, it's just a scene or a movement. But to me, that's my family. These are people I grew up with. I lived out there my whole life, and the desert is a huge influence on me. And the musicians who make up the desert bands in this movement—we're talking about not even 20 people—and we've been doing it for years.

And those 20 people have spawned many bands!

Yes! Because we look at ourselves as musicians. We're just freaks, kind of like the jazz movement. We just jammed with whomever. Everyone wants to be free to be creative.

I know The Ramones were a big influence on you. Did Joey's death affect you?

I dedicated the record to him, and it affected me because I probably wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today if it wasn't for The Ramones. I listen to many different types of music, but The Ramones were the band that gave me the courage to follow my conviction and music and art. Joey, to me, was a magical person, and for him to take off was a shame. But he was here and he did what he had to do. The Ramones influenced people and culture—kind of like The Beatles. The Beatles influenced pop culture, and that's what The Ramones did in the late '70s. In fact, I think The Ramones have a bigger influence on pop culture today, far more than they did even then.

Swedish band The Hellacopters is serving up a thick slab of classic rock 'n roll with its fourth album, *High Visibility*. Delivered to the States via Gearhead Records, *High Visibility* is a throw back to '70s guitar rock with a punk influence mixed in for good measure. The simple guitar-driven, high-energy songs are equally reminiscent of Lynyrd Skynyrd and MC5, though the band is now leaning more toward the classic rock sound than it did in its punk and sludge rock past. In fact, to further reinforce the classic rock vibe, The Hellacopters include piano and organ accompaniments on several tracks. This band may be an underground sensation in the United States, but *High Visibility* has already been certified Gold in Sweden and was nominated for a Swedish Grammy—an award the band won in 1996 for its debut album, *Supershitty to the Max*. Look for The Hellacopters on tour this summer.



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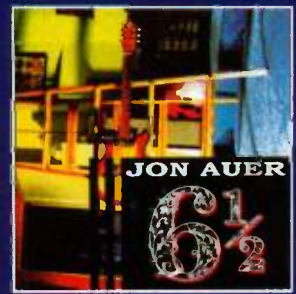
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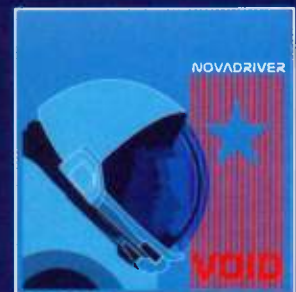
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ALL THINGS INDIE

by Mike McKee

A good number of indie aficionados have most likely figured this dynamic, Washington, D.C.-based trio for dead, and with good reason. Shortly after its first full-length, *Get Lovely* (Slow-dime), hit the shelves, bandmembers scurried off to different corners of the East Coast in pursuit of formal educations in jazz and Shakespeare.

Finally, after a seemingly endless wait, Superbad Records has compiled a variety of recordings culled between 1998 and 2001 to release *Our Success*. With production credits including the experienced engineering of Ian MacKaye, Chad Clark, Don Zientara and Juan Carrera in settings ranging from the renowned Inner Ear Studios to the stage of the Black Cat Club, it's astounding how coherent and fluid *Our Success* remains as a finished product. Such continuity makes it difficult to pull out highlights, although listeners will no doubt appreciate the driving pop deconstruction of "Spill More Blood," "Some White People Don't Know When to Quit" and the exceptionally grounded "Daggers." **The Most Secret Method**, it appears, is no longer an active band. Those looking for epilogues can find drummer/stunning illustrator Ryan Nelson playing with indie producer/former Smart Went Crazy guitarist Chad Clark. (Superbad, P.O. Box 21313, Washington, DC 20009)



Some veterans of rock's many little niches find it comfy enough to ride out their past successes, issuing a steady stream of unimpressive, luke-warm tunes with all the passion of an incoming fax. Others, thankfully, have the heart to push themselves—and their fans—a little further with each endeavor. Richmond, Va.'s **Bats and Mice** benefits from

a collection of musicians who dare, hailing from the likes of underground faves Sleepytime Trio, Four Hundred Years, Rah Bras and the more widely celebrated Milemarker. While the River City quartet boasts a pretty formidable pedigree, what listeners are treated to on *Believe it Mammals* goes far beyond the lazy path of emo-for-emo's-sake and squarely into something new and rewarding. Layered, intricate vocals mesh with a mood-driven drone, sometimes bordering near the ambient side of the spectrum. The group's debut is kept kinetic with a healthy dose of post-hardcore crash and swoon. *Believe it Mammals* is a prime example of just the sort of record continuing to elevate Lovitt's reputation for serious, high-quality and original music. (Lovitt, P.O. Box 24B, Arlington, VA 22210)

BATS & MICE
BELIEVE IT MAMMALS



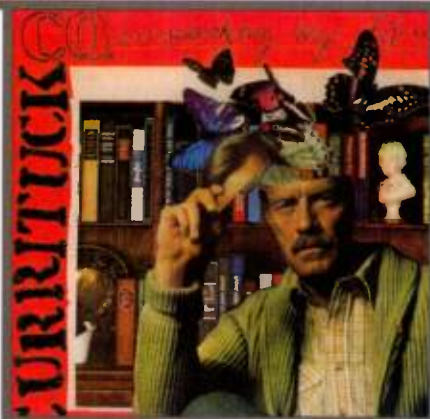
Goodnight White Stripes, thanks for trying. While yesterdays perpetrators bed down for the summer, the world can wake up to **Cometgain**, one of England's veterans of the real garage underground. *Realistes* packs all the attitude and swagger of Serge Gainesberg ducking down a Cam-dentown alleyway with Sid Vicious, guitars crunchy, vocals maxing out reverbed

speakers and heads filled up with the bombastic prose of a Huggybear record. Kindred spirits—such as Kenickie, The Rondelles or the Shins—the modern day slacker answer to sinister moptops like the Velvet Underground—have tried, but few have succeeded in delivering so strong an album. Recorded at Milou Studio's (Croydon, London), *Realistes* lends a punk perspective on Phil Spector's wall-of-sound philosophy, capturing the stuff of '50s dime-store teen pop fiction—gang debs, knife fights and bouffant headbutts, oh my! "Moments in the Snow" recalls the noisy, ambient spoken-word passages of Huggybear's oft-sought-after EPs, while rambunctious tracks such as "Why I Try to Look So Bad," "My Defiance" and "Don't Fall in Love if You Want to Die in Peace" crackle, pop and holler their way towards an echoey rendition of youthful angst and sexuality. Track seven's "Ripped-Up Suit!" features guest vocals from Kathleen Hanna (Bikini Kill/Julie Ruin/Le Tigre) in her best cameo since The Rickets' rendition of "Voices Carry." (Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State Ave., Olympia, WA 98501)



A more adult taste than one might expect to be found on Teen Beat's latest pop offering, **Curritick Co.**—short for Currituck County—is the performance name of acoustic balladeer Kevin Wai Kwong Barker. Captured in rich recording by producer Mark Greenberg, Barker's rustic indie flavor is delivered in the 17 tunes constituting *Unpacking*

My Library. Ranging from the lighthearted "Antichrist" and "The Collision" to the subtle tension of "Nightmares Are the Sounds" and "Staynor Family Breakdown," Barker adds an outdoorsy influence to a crowd most commonly associated with twee guitars and wintry, subway clichés. Comparisons to Jonathan Richman and a folkier They Might Be Giants seems in order for tunes such as "Where is My Friend" and "Let it Rain." Despite the strength of many of his songs, one can't help feeling Barker has overextended himself with this rather epic debut. Seventeen songs is a lot to bear from any artist, so *Unpacking My Library* seems best designed for those absolutely floored by Barker's music. All others ought to skip around the CD—they'll still be glad they gave it a chance. (Teen Beat, P.O. Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203)



RECORDS continued from page 55
down and enjoy. It'll be worth your time. (Virgin, 338 N. Foothill, Beverly Hills 90210)

—Derek Beres

GRAVITY KILLS Superstarved



Gravity Kill's song "Guilty" found its success way back in the '90s—around the same time Nine Inch Nails and Filter were emerging—mostly because it sounded like a carbon copy of both of those bands. One listen to *Superstarved* indicates Gravity Kills still hasn't made many attempts to find its own sound. A lot of this record finds the band following in the footsteps of industrial posers like Dope, coming off as a less-interesting and more-contrived version of the already boring and contrived Marilyn Manson. The highest point of *Superstarved* comes in the form of a cover of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus," which starts off with a skipping acoustic guitar loop sure to have listeners checking the CD's underbelly for scratches. Ultimately, *Superstarved* contains most of the same old shtick reaching into virtually every form of metal as of

late. Detuned guitar parts revolve around the same four or five chords for stock-titled songs like "Suffocate" and "Enemy." Somebody call up Trent Reznor and Al Jourgensen before industrial metal permanently goes the way of Winger. (Sanctuary/BMG, 1540 Broadway, New York 10036)

—Zack Needles

SCOTT HOWARD Lucky One



Scott Howard takes us on a journey through the power of pop and the magic of a well-written song. His debut album, *Lucky One*, plays like a concept album putting the listener into the shoes of a man hunting for love, self-discovery and the freedom to achieve his life long dream (writing and playing music to be heard by people everywhere). There are enough traces of singer-songwriter talent throughout the course of the disc to make Billy Joel proud. An oozing pop sensibility recalls the best of what (don't wince) Stevie B. had to offer. If this weren't enough, there's even a Jim Steinman-influenced rocker called "Running in the Rain." While *Lucky One* might sound like an old-timers delight, it's not.

With respect given recently to the talents of a new generation of singer-songwriters, Scott should find himself mixed in with the playlists of radio's pop-oriented stations. (www.scotthowardmusic.com)

—Billy Patton

HYPOCRISY Catch 22



Despite line-up changes (the band was a five-piece at its inception) and a short-lived breakup, the musicianship and songwriting of the trio Hypocrisy has consistently improved since its 1992 debut, *Penetralia*. Captained by singer/guitarist/producer Peter Tägtgren (whose production credits also include Dimmu Borgir and Immortal), the band remains a confident force in heavy music, generating technical material brave enough to be as melodic (like Carcass) as it is sinister (like Entombed). On *Catch 22*—a pungent, 10-track concoction of menacing guitar lines and seething vocals—the band dives headfirst into the melody pool without sacrificing its signature sting. In fact, *Catch 22*'s the catchiest full-length Hypocrisy has delivered to date. The album may not reinvent the wheel, but it man-

ages to give it an enthusiastic twirl, resulting in a pretty solid long-player sure to attract fans old and new. (Nuclear Blast)

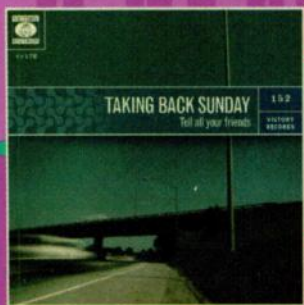
—Kevin Boyce

IDAHO Levitate



Whether you're the miserable type or you just like your tunes served with a twist of melancholy, Idaho is worth a handkerchief or two. Since the early '90s, Jeff Martin and various co-conspirators have dished out record after record of slow sadness, not unlike their San Francisco neighbors in Red House Painters. While *Levitate* isn't quite as exceptional a record as the Painters' *Ocean Beach*, it does boast enough quality atmospheric songs to give Idaho its own distinct identity. Better than a Sunday morning hangover, "20 Years" captures early adulthood, while "Come Back Home" is a late-night driving song rife with ProTools wizardry. The piano-propelled title track shows the reason we shouldn't be surprised to hear Idaho in a Volkswagen commercial in the year 2030. (www.idahomusic.com)

—Neal Ramirez



TAKING BACK SUNDAY Tell All Your Friends



What do you expect from Victory? This is melodic hardcore the way it's been done since Lifetime's well-deserved success made the formula safe. Amityville, N.Y.'s Taking Back Sunday (just home from a tour with Rival Schools) does the sound well, but without much in the way of surprises. Passionate vocals and heartfelt lyrics are carried on a wave of guitar riffs with seemingly unstoppable momentum. Aside from the style's originators, the band's sound owes a lot to guitarist Ed Reyes' band Movielife. Taking Back Sunday's strength comes from its ability to pepper the emo crunch with bits of spare piano melodies ("You Know How I Do," "The Blue Channel," "Cute Without the 'E'"—clever, no?). The gentle vocals of Michele Nolan on "Bike Scene" and "Ghost Man on Third" are a welcome deviation from the norm. This is only the band's first full-length, and with a list of influences including Modest Mouse and The Who, Taking Back Sunday might just deliver some truly unique gems in the future. (Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago 60607)

—Charles Spano



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LIMP
Limp



If you've been losing sleep waiting for Lagwagon's new record or wondering when Fat Mike's going to put away his Hawaiian shirts and return with the newest chapter in the NOFX legacy, you may want to check out Limp. This band plays some catchy punk rock in the vein of many of the bands on Fat Wreck Chords and its love child Honest Don's. While Limp is only a trio, the members have enlisted the help of an outsider to play lead guitars and lend some vocals. The addition of a second guitarist enables the band to create guitar harmonies reminiscent of other 12-stringed punk units like... well, NOFX and Lagwagon. On "Ails," the band lays down a speed-bump Green Day style with a catchy acoustic number complete with string arrangements. It's completely off-task from the nine preceding punk tracks and the one proceeding ska number, but it doesn't feel out of place. The majority of this couldn't be more straightforward, though Limp adds some interesting twists to make the album worthy of multiple listens. (Honest Don's, P.O. Box 192027, San Francisco 94119-2027)

—Zack Needles

LONELY KINGS
Crowning Glory



With its fourth album, Santa Cruz trio The Lonely Kings has achieved something few rock bands seem to be very interested in these days—crafting a record undeniably solid from start to finish. The first strums of acoustic guitar on album opener "Less Than Zero" quickly give way to 12 tracks of melodic, punk-influenced rock with a gritty sound reminiscent of Face To Face, Hot Water Music and Welt. However, with "Rajas," the 13th and final track, the Kings somehow manage to pull off an eight-minute marathon run of spacey, sitar-inflected heavy rock with a closer kinship to Tool than to punk. *Crowning Glory* is not light years away from the mainstream, but it manages to maintain an edge keeping the music interesting. (Fearless, 13772 Golden West 545, Westminster, CA 92683)

—Zack Needles

MENTAL HORROR
Proclaiming Vengeance



More than vengeance, this album proclaims a lack of clarity. Brazilian trio Mental Horror offers a barbaric, rudi-

mentary approach to death metal, a well-worn road to fame and fortune for many a countrymen before them. After a raging thunderstorm intro (which continues well beyond the first track), the threesome delivers blitzkrieg guitars combined with indecipherable and belched lyrics. The performance, however, is lackluster from the opening song and the brief high point ("Genocidal Inquisition") through to the grand, symphonic finale of a title track. (Deathvomit, P.O. Box 14815, Fremont, CA 94539-4815)

—Mark Gromen

MILLENCOLIN
Home From Home



When playing standard rock 'n roll Millencolin can be quite engaging. The tracks "Man or Mouse" and "Greener Grass" are heavy-duty smokers. Unfortunately, the rock sound is in the minority here, overwhelmed by poppy sweetness and new-school clichés. "Botanic Mistress," "Fingers Crossed" and the title track all suffer from a lack of power. The potential thrust of the songs has been sliced off with pretty guitars and a limp mix. "Happiness for Dogs" is a major disappointment, starting out with a bril-

liant lo-fi, nasty Stooges riff before dissolving into an imitation of every other tuneful Epitaph band. This disc is a tribute to what might have been, if only rock had ruled the sessions. (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 90026)

—Mark Ginsburg

MINUS THE BEAR
This is What I Know
About Being Gigantic



The debut EP is a mysterious thing. It can be like a horrid TV pilot or a rocking first date. A perfect example of the latter is the debut by Seattle's Minus the Bear. If *This is What I Know About Being Gigantic* sounds mature it might be because many of the members are schooled in Rock 101 via gigs in established groups such as Sharks Keep Moving, Botch and Kill Sadie. Surprisingly, Minus the Bear comes off more like a fully realized band than a mere side project. Apart from Jake Snider's confident singing (which emulates Burning Airlines' J. Robbins), the group's most immediate distinction is the way Matt Bayles' skillful keyboards accentuate the vibrant drums and expressive guitars. If you like forward-thinking indie rock, you

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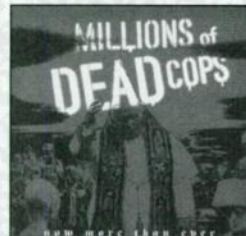
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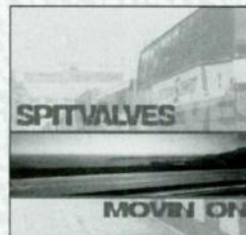
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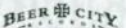
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will dig Minus the Bear. (**Selfie Squeeze**, P.O. Box 80511, Seattle 98108-0511)

—Neal Ramirez

THE MOVIELIFE Has a Gambling Problem



It's Lit! No, it's American Hi-Fi! Wait a cotton-pickin' minute, it's The Movie-life. There is no profound analysis to describe *Has a Gambling Problem*—it truly does sound like a Lit album. The Movielife has succeeded in capturing the Los Angeles, three-chord party vibe. This spirited disc oozes commercial pop-rock appeal, and it's a fun listen. The band has the genre down to a perfected science—the vocals are top-notch quality as is the album production. (**Drive-Thru**, P.O. Box 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413)

—Liana Jonas

NITIN SAWHNEY Prophecy



If "technology is a drug," as the insert of this CD proclaims, consider Nitin Sawhney your dealer. For better or for worse, *Prophecy* showcases the utilization of technology to create natural, organic sounds. The first track, "Sunset," would probably appeal to a portion of the R&B and soul crowd, but it's hard to get passed the chilling thoughts of new-age granola crunchers like Enya or Enigma conjured up by the Native American chant sample repeatedly popping up in the track. Continuing with the world music routine, "Moonrise" is distinctly Latin with flamenco guitar, maraca samples and Spanish lyrics. The track isn't particularly listenable. "Ripping Out Tears," however, is definitely a worthwhile listen. Easily the most aggressive track on the disc, it features talented female rapping set to a bumping techno backbeat. This track walks the thin line between sounding very cool and sounding like Kriss Kross, but manages to stay afloat and make for an enjoyable listen. It's just a shame this is but one song in 15, and while Nitin Sawhney has certainly made a very spiritual and eclectic electronic album, most of the time *Prophecy* just seems one tiny step away from *Pure Moods*. (V2, 14 E. 4th St., 3rd Floor, New York 10012)

—Zack Needles

PHOBIA Serenity Through Pain



This is an odd collection of 23 rants against everything—some good, some bad. Phobia speaks out against

racism, fascism, religion, patriotism and the U.S. government. An acoustic intro belies the death metal vocalized grind to follow, with samples of film dialogue preceding most songs. Given an unprepared audience, Phobia would make a lot of enemies, which is what punk is supposed to do in the first place. Unfortunately, the Orange County outfit is already preaching to the converted, as any fans are most likely already alienated kids riling against an establishment never intending to include them. (**Deathvomit**)

—Mark Gromen

THE QUEERS Pleasant Screams



The excellent, Lawrence Livermore-produced *Surf Goddess EP* (1995) was the last Queers record to move me and perhaps the only indispensable release from the band. *Pleasant Screams* actually recalls the old EP's promise of Black Flag meeting up with the Beach Boys and Undertones on songs like "I Wanna Be Happy" and "It's Cold Outside." *Pleasant Screams* isn't reinventing of the wheel, but by moving closer towards pop and surf rock, the band is finally evolving, making the crunchy Ramones melodies actually sound fresh. The guest vocals from Smear's Gretchen on the impressively catchy new wave "You Just Gotta Blow My Mind" and the occasional groovy keyboard make this the best Queers album in years. The band even offers up "Homo," which is as close as you'll get to an apology for the Queers' previous latent homophobia. (**Lookout**, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

—Charles Spano

RHAPSODY Rain of a Thousand Flames



Over the years the genre of metal has been subdivided into so many factions, the term can scarcely be used to fully describe a band's overall sound. For Rhapsody one must employ a wide range of sub-categories to describe what's at work—progressive, medieval, European and classical. Rhapsody has used all of these elements to create an operatic, full-scale concept album known as *Rain of a Thousand Flames*. For those who can appreciate the cohesiveness of a concept album *Flames* has a lot to offer both musically and thematically. There are many textures and lush musical landscapes, all colored by guitars, keyboards and vocals. Like many concept albums, however, *Flames* requires more than a casual listen to fully absorb all it offers. Those who make

the effort will not be disappointed. (**Limb**, Postfach 602520, Hamburg, Germany 22235)

—Dom DiSpaldo

SHAPE OF DESPAIR Angels Of Distress



The death/doom side project of Amorphis vocalist Pasi Koskinen incorporates classical strings (particularly violin) and meandering passages to deliver an unsettling noise similar in scope to the earliest works of Anathema and My Dying Bride. Through the 54-minute debut, Koskinen provides all the male vocals, of both the guttural and clean varieties. He is briefly joined by a female voice on "To Live For My Death." The piano-generated "Quiet These Paintings Are" is almost entirely instrumental, grows peppering only a small portion of its 14 minutes, a trait shared by most of the five tracks. (**Release**, P.O. Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082)

—Mark Gromen

SHARKS AND MINNOWS Light as a Feather, Stiff as a Board



There's nothing wrong with Sharks and Minnows. Here is a commercial

rock band with all the right moves—crunching guitars, loads of attitude, meth-inspired drumming, spirited vocals, the token rock anthems. Unfortunately Sharks and Minnows is another band liable to get lost in the crowd, because there's nothing to distinguish it from every other act out there now. It's painful to listen to these hopefuls—not because the band lacks talent, but because it suffers from a stifling uniformity. Shark and Minnows' only hope is a stroke of luck involving right times and right places. (**Two Sheds**, P.O. Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107-0455)

—Liana Jonas

SHARKS KEEP MOVING Pause and Clause



It's always refreshing to hear some dynamics in music, so when "Tied to the Tracks" on *Pause and Clause* opens up with a jazz/funk-rock drum rhythm, clearly employing all percussion toys, listeners' ears feel happily satisfied. Actually, it's the strong and varied rhythm section providing the chief backbone of the songs here. The band's jam-style fusion playing is reminiscent of Dave Matthews Band or

continued on page 63

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STRAIGHT FROM THE EDGE

by Amy Sciarretto

A short-lived, yet-to-be-named band composed of the former members of Washington, D.C.'s INSURRECTION has called it quits with guitarist Mike Fellows' sudden decision to move to California for college... AS THE SUN SETS, a DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN-influenced band, has broken up due to inner-band drama. R.I.P. UNDECIDED will still issue an album posthumously... LIVING SACRIFICE is in the studio... Florida's GLASSEATER has booted its singer and replaced him with the group's drummer... Crazy Vermont metalcore act DROWNINGMAN is in the studio working on *The Best Album Ever*... SNAPCASE has decided to call its forthcoming album *Pariah*. The Buffalo band is currently in the studio with Brian McTernan (Salad Days)... SUICIDE NOTE just recorded its FERRET MUSIC debut, which was produced by CONVERGE's Kurt Ballou. It's hardcore with some serious indie rock influence and doesn't sound like anything else out there today... Former members of LUDDITE CLONE and AS DARKNESS FALLS have formed a new band called KISS THE CYNIC... GO! FOR THE THROAT's *Here and Now* (UPRISING) is the latest addition to the hardcore sweepstakes, with traditional, mid-'80s-style riffs, chants and singalongs filling out the album. Meanwhile, Dave Haus (PAINT IT BLACK/Go! for the Throat guitarist) has a new band called THE CURSED. The band has already released a powerful six-song demo and has garnered a buzz along the Northeast Corridor... Be sure to check out DEAD WRONG's *Hellbomb* on STILLBORN RECORDS if thugged-out hardcore suits your fancy... *Nasty Habits*, a long-running hard rock show on Boston's college radio station WERS, has released *Nasty Habits: Live on WERS*, a compilation featuring exclusive, in-studio performances by KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, HASTE, EIGHTEEN VISIONS, UNEARTH and POISON THE WELL. The CD, available via CORROSIVE RECORDINGS, is a must-have for collec-

tors. Net savvy hardcore-aholics will have no problem locating the disc... Baltimore's REPTILE HOUSE has disbanded. The group's tattooed frontman Dan Higgs has apparently formed a new, more groove-oriented band, rumored to soon have a release on SIMPLE MACHINES... TIME IN MALTA's new album is probably the most anticipated hardcore record of the year, and advance listens prove it won't disappoint. The album will be available in July... DEATHWISH Inc. has released full-lengths from THE PROMISE, REACH THE SKY and JESUSEATER (featuring Shawn Brown of SWIZ, SWEETBELLY FREAKDOWN and DAG NASTY)... A DEATH FOR EVERY SIN just released *In a Time Where Hope is Lost* via EULOGY RECORDS... RECOURSE RECORDS, home to SAVED BY GRACE and LOVE IS RED, has signed OLIVER'S ARMY... Jazzcore behemoth CANDIRIA will release the double disc *The C.O.M.A. Imprint* next month via LAKESHORE ENTERTAINMENT... New Jersey's finest rapcore act E-TOWN CONCRETE has been working on new material. It's absolutely fantastic and catchier than a cold in January, namely the tunes "Doormat" and "Mandible." Here's to hoping ETC gets signed to a big label sooner rather than later... Killswitch Engage guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz is producing NORMA JEAN's (formerly LUTIKRISS) new album... Current it band THRICE is being courted by majors and is expected to sign a new deal soon... Metalcore band EXTOL has switched from SOLID STATE RECORDS to CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS... STRETCH ARMSTRONG is covering PINK's pop anthem "Get This Party Started" for an upcoming FEARLESS RECORDS comp. SAS is known for its fun renditions of non-punk tunes... NEW EMBODYMENT demos find the Texas band continuing the same direction of last year's *Hold Your Breath*. Some gems include "She's There" and "Segue Station." More next month...

THRICE



RECORDS continued from page 61

Counting Crows. Sharks Keep Moving, in fact, offer more of a trance effect on some tracks. One shortcoming is the vocals, which sound amateurish and pale in comparison to the colorful and textured music. There really is no definitive category for Sharks Keep Moving—it's just a group of guys extracting some cool and diverse sounds from their instruments. The music is all about the mood and certainly not founded on any formula. (Status, P.O. Box 1300, Thousand Oaks, CA 91358)

—Liana Jonas

SOILWORK

Natural Born Chaos



This band has come a long way from the *Steel Pole Suicide* debut, losing much of the traditional metal (albeit played at hyperspeed) influences and staking a claim as one of Gothenburg's elite acts. Although the 10 latest tracks are more polished, the searing guitar work and wild, undulating changes are still evident. Synthesizers play a larger role than ever before—most notably on the poppy "As We Speak" and "Minefields," while "The Bringer" employs Pantera-styled guitars. The smooth chorus of "No More

Angels" uses multiple voices, but the remainder of the song is gruff-throated. (Nuclear Blast)

—Mark Gromen

STARS

The Comeback EP



If you're a fan of retro synth pop (early Cure or Yaz) and '60s psychedelia (later Beatles and Beach Boys *Pet Sounds*), you're gonna like Stars' light and airy *Comeback EP*. "Krush's" repeating keyboard riff might be simple and Casio-centric, but coupled with the breezy carefree vocals of Amy Millan, it all works. Stars, thankfully, illustrates some musicians out there do use their brains and abilities to create more than cookie-cutter swill. While, sadly, there probably isn't much of a commercial market for the band—perhaps special mix shows and college radio—the disc is a must for your personal collection. (Le Grand Magistry, LLC, P.O. Box 611, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303)

—Liana Jonas

ST. GERMAIN

Boulevard (New Version, the Complete Series)



Continuing his quest for the ultimate

groove with which to sip cognac, French wizard Ludovic Navarre takes his unbelievably smooth Parisian-soul compositions to the limit under the guise of St. Germain—an incarnation he first brought to American ears with 2000's remarkable *Tourist*. This year's *Boulevard (New Version, the Complete Series)* is a souped-up reissue of St. Germain's classic debut, originally released in 1995. While not quite as accomplished as *Tourist*, the record gives some prime examples of Navarre's Booker T. and the MG's-meets-Dmitri From Paris sound, dabbling in psychedelic Medeski organ runs, Latin rock structures, a dash of dub and plenty of smoking jacket 'n pipe-style lounge. A few cuts from the original are absent from the new version, replaced by the more-than-worth titles "Soul Salsa Soul" and "Alabama Blues." It's a valuable peek into the history of one of the more creative electronic music makers of our time. (F Communications)

—Joe Sweeney

ST. THOMAS

I'm Coming Home



Imagine Neil Young's backing band from the early '70s on a variety of

potent barbiturates, trying to recreate *Harvest* in a garage. Now imagine this scenario with Tiny Tim on vocals. This is the vision listeners may confront upon first hearing "The Cool Song," the first cut from St. Thomas' new effort, *I'm Coming Home*. Lead singer/bandleader Thomas Hansen's ridiculous, trembling falsetto is such a mess, it's comical. Over the span of 12 songs, which move like molasses and refrain from saying anything particularly interesting (except for the riveting couplet "I walked down to the bookstore/to find myself a book"), the humor starts to wear thin, morphing into a sense of dull annoyance. Unlike bands who make slow, artful country music work (think Sparklehorse), St. Thomas comes off clownish and Cod-eine-ridden. Listeners will curse *I'm Coming Home* as their eyelids become forcibly heavy. (Misra, P.O. Box 20297, Tompkins Square Station, NY 10010)

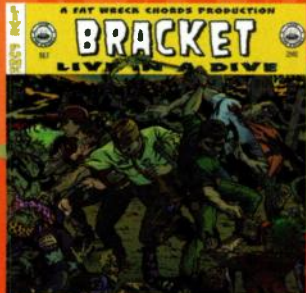
—Joe Sweeney

STUDENT*RIK

Soundtrack For a Generation



Note: Student*Rick is neither a single student nor a guy named Rick. It is an Indiana four-piece with a sound akin



BRACKET
Live in a Dive

Live in a Dive was recorded at the Bottom of the Hill Club in San Francisco. I saw the Strokes there before they blew up, and though Bracket's set is less overwhelming, the record deftly captures the enthusiasm of the Bottom of the Hill scene. Frankly, it's one of the best live records I've heard, because it accomplishes the unusual feat of committing not just the music, but the live energy, to an album. This may actually be Bracket's most exciting release, and it serves as a best-of compilation as well. The band's skewed punk vision is in full effect with old-school paranoia ("Trailer Park"), happy-go-lucky melodies ("Talk Show") and its take on Nirvana ("Hermit"). "Warren's Song: Part Eight," meanwhile, is an all-too-short concoction of '70s guitar rock, speedy punk and Beach Boys harmonies—a mini masterpiece. As an added treat, *Live in a Dive* is an enhanced CD including interviews and videos. (Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco 94119-3690)

—Charles Spano

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ARE YOU STANDING

to everyone's favorite broken-hearted bands New Found Glory and The Ataris. Apparently these guys aren't quite making it with the ladies, which is of course, the emo-punk way. *Soundtrack For a Generation* is tight and sufficiently melodic but lacks the originality to propel the band to the head of the pack. Much of this album rocks like Midtown and boasts a wider range of instruments than most pop-punk records, employing keyboards, strings and (most impressively) the glockenspiel. However, the problem lies in the lyrics. Many of them sound like the lines were lifted from an emo Lyric Of The Day calendar. *Soundtrack* is an obvious product of its influences, and as a young band, Student*Rick has plenty of time to hone its skills and become important in the emo world. (Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago 60607)

—Zack Needles

THY PRIMORDIAL The Crowning Carnage



Sadly, black metal has become predictable in recent years. While Thy Primordial houses all of the conventional ingredients of the genre—Cookie Monster vocals, majestic guitar

lines, dizzying time changes, scary face paint and a drummer who has mastered the art of double bass—the band does manage to produce several moderately exciting moments on its fifth full-length, titled *The Crowning Carnage*. On this album, the band blasts through nine teeth-chattering numbers with a conviction unheard on its previous efforts. Technically, Thy Primordial is tighter than ever. Despite displaying solid musicianship, *The Crowning Carnage* ultimately becomes a victim of its own mediocrity. Simply put, there's better black metal out there to be discovered. (Candlelight)

—Kevin Boyce

TREMBLING BLUE STARS Alive to Every Smile



It isn't 70 minutes long, but I'll be damned if *Alive to Every Smile* isn't Trembling Blue Stars' *Disintegration*. The same dreamy, moody guitars and experimental savvy making the Cure's record such an experience is awash on the London quintet's fourth album. Bob Wratten, mastermind behind the seminal '80s popsters Field Mice, is not only a songwriter of exceptional sensitivity but also a lover of the lush, studio creations producer Ian Catt has

captured on Saint Etienne records. Hipsters will brag each member has ties to the twee-as-fuck Sarah Records, but all you need to know is these Stars shine bright in the pure pop sky. Containing harpsichord and 12-string guitar ballads ("Here all Day"), full-on rock songs ("The Ghost of an Unkissed Kiss") and more electronic pieces, *Alive to Every Smile* bears the same I-love-you-but-you-ran-away-with-my-worst-friend-so-I'll-write-another-song-about-it feel of past Trembling Blue Stars albums. Call it fresh familiarity. (Sub Pop, 2514 Fourth Ave., Seattle 98121)

—Neal Ramirez

TUNGSTEN 74 Await Further Instructions



With 15 tracks comprising one song, Tungsten 74 has created more of an atmosphere than an album. It's 100 percent vocal-free indie rock peppered with trance-inducing whirling sounds, motorcycle engines and what sounds a lot like jets taking off a runway. *Await Further Instructions* is basically one continuous song, save for the seven seconds of completely dead air humorously (but cryptically) titled "What Hip Hop Smells Like." On the funny-song-name tip, some other stand-out monikers include "Upgrade to Flash Gordon," "Stop Liking Your Job," "Long Hot Naked Winter" and "Long Hot Naked Summer." This is a record to which one could easily fall asleep. It's laid back without being slowed to a crawl. Simultaneously intriguing and listenable, this is the sort of unhinged, unorthodox musical excursion bound to appeal to the more open-minded and adventurous listeners of the *Kid A* set. (Technical Echo, 172 5th Ave, #51, Brooklyn, NY 11217)

—Zack Needles

UNDEROATH The Changing of Time



If At The Drive-In was more hardcore or if Converge went down the emo route, the results might sound a little like Underoath's *The Changing of Time*. Keyboards are a rare, almost discontinuous ingredient in most metalcore bands. With Underoath, however, the instrument works with the band rather than against it. "When the Sun Sleeps" and "Letting Go of Tonight" have the same commercial sheen as anything Jimmy Eat World or Thursday have done, while retaining an aggressive edge. Those keeping score can expect to see kids singing their hearts out in the front row of every Underoath show thanks to the emotional element of

The Changing of Time. (Solid State, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle, WA 98111)

—Amy Sciarretto

UNWRITTEN LAW

Elva



What separates this from a lot of other pseudo-metal, pseudo-punk, melodic records coming out this year? Nothing. Get a barf bag and fill it with every nauseating element of the current scene—a dash of '80s metal-ballad guitar, a pinch of Creed-style vocals, a huge, steaming pile of trite lyrics—and there you have Elva! (Interscope, 2220 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, CA 90404)

—Mark Ginsburg

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Czech Assault



Czech Assault is the latest entry in Relapse's global assault, where the best unsigned bands from a particular area (thus far Brazil, Poland and now the Czech Republic) are given a couple of tracks to strut their stuff. The label then signs whoever receives the most positive feedback. Each of the acts is afforded five cuts to impress, and given the issuer's predilection for the offbeat or most sinister sounds, it's no surprise the heretofore undiscovered entities exhibit said qualities. Imperial Foeticide takes the opportunity to introduce its death metal barrage with a classical crescendo, then ending with a short, similarly sparse outro. Two of the bands perform covers giving insight into the overall approach—Intervalle Bizarre offers up Terrorizer's "After World Obliteration," while Mortician's "Slaughterhouse" is done by Fleshless. The other pair, Negligent Collateral Collapse and Contrastic, inhabit the eclectic realm of electronic effects and death metal grunts now known as Relapse's recent trademark. (Release, P.O. Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082)

—Mark Gromen

VERMONT Calling Albany



This is not an offensive endeavor, but halfway through *Calling Albany* you forget where the album starts or ends. Songs like "Ballad of Larry Byrd" are simple and unfortunately infecting (humming the song incessantly since the first listen proves its testament as a true pop song). There's even a Bread-like feeling in tracks such as "Hello-Goodbye Sex," minus the unfortunate and unnecessary perjury of the Beatles' "Long and Winding Road."

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Nothing about this release is new, but at least it's honest. So when you have a taste for simplistic, acoustic-based pop songs, look no further. (Kindercore, P.O. Box 461, Athens, GA 30603)
—John Stanley

WAGE OF SIN
The Product of Deceit
and Loneliness

Proceed with extreme caution—Wage of Sin features five extremely brutal, angrier-than-boars women from the New York area, each viciously adept at churning out the hardcore. Guitarist Rachel Rosen hails from Most Precious Blood, while the pedigree of her bandmates is proven throughout this debut album. *The Product of Deceit and Loneliness* is a specimen of screechy metalcore so ferocious it sounds capable of unapologetically ripping through skin and bone. Dissonant chunks of riffing and subtle melodic vocals coincide with shrill barks from front-woman Melissa Fornabio. Breakdowns a la Most Precious Blood and Hatebreed will fuel moshpits from here to CBGBs with songs like "Open Doors" and "Who Comes Out on Top." A must have for fans of Walls of Jericho or

Silent Majority. (Immigrant Sun)
—Amy Sciarretto

WATCHMAKER
Kill.Crush.Destroy

Watchmaker's *Kill.Crush.Destroy* is as terrifying as it is precise and as aggressive as it is grammatically unsound. The new album from Wonderdrug is powerful and deadly, forcing listeners to bow in deference. *Kill.Crush.Destroy* is not for the faint of heart—instead it's bent on pulsing slabs of dissonant, discordant, extremely unpleasant metal making Today is the Day look tame. While critics might bash the album as an intolerable racket, fans will find it to be a wholly glorious offering. Songs like "Mournful Visage" and "Salt Fertile Earth" are dense soundtracks fit for a mass murderer's playlist. (Wonderdrug, P.O. Box 995, Boston 02123)

—Amy Sciarretto

THE WILLARD GRANT
CONSPIRACY/TELEFUNK
In the Fishtank

Amsterdam's Konkurrent label has developed a long-standing tradition

with its impromptu Fishtank sessions. By extending a recording invitation to bands touring overseas, Konkurrent has racked up a significant catalog, including mini-CD sets from NoMeansNo, Tortoise, Low and now Willard Grant Conspiracy. All invited artists are given two days to lay down about a half hour of tracks of whatever they want, from joke songs to improv. Boston's rotating neo-folk collective of the Willard Grant Conspiracy was joined in its session by Dutch electronica foursome Telefunk in the hopes the proceedings might spark up an old-meets-new aesthetic. Instead, there is a friendly keyboard/guitar dichotomy on these six turn-of-the-century folk songs and spirituals, although at time the effect remains almost indistinguishable. The Conspiracy's melancholy Americana shines best on "Grun Grun," while Telefunk's droning aboriginal synths provide the backdrop for meandering guitar. (Konkurrent, P.O. Box 14598, 1001 LB Amsterdam, NL)

—Chris Fritz

THE YOUNG AND THE USELESS
A Smile is No Good for Me

With hardcore bands like Hatebreed

and Poison the Well releasing breakthrough albums this year (*Perseverance* and *Tear From the Red*, respectively), fans of the genre have the luxury of getting even more discriminating. Florida's The Young and the Useless presumably understand this and want to take advantage. On their latest LP, dubbed *A Smile is No Good for Me*, the band manages to sporadically rise above hardcore's hackneyed image—typically defined by a Sam Kinison-sound alike on vocals and the musical skills of an above-average garage band—and offer a respectable dose of substance reaching beyond its screams and tuneful chaos. Musical formulas are meant to be broken, especially in the genre hardcore, and the band succeeds at doing this, albeit on a minor level. Boasting eyebrow-raising breakdowns and refreshing instrumentation (there is some nice guitar work going on here, especially on "Breaking, One Beat at a Time"), this album is certainly a step in the right direction, but ultimately isn't the permanent footprint on hardcore the band has the potential to make. (Thorp, P.O. Box 2007, Upper Darby, PA 19082)

—Kevin Boyce

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AFTERTHOUGHT



M E M O

To: Jamie (Marketing), Hutch (Production), Zee (Promotion)
From: Mike M. (Creative Development)
Re: **NEW SHOW PITCHES- YOUR EYES ONLY!!!**

Okay People,

As we're all aware, Network is thrilled about the success of The Osbournes, but concerned we may be setting ourselves up for failure if we're not constantly keeping an eye forward.

As per the ultimatum from "Upstairs," here are the results of our 11th hour brainstorming powwow. Please reply ASAP and CC your comments to Karen in Marketing & Research.

SO, Is This Our Fall Lineup??

Mike

Creative Development (ext. 213)

PARADISE BY THE DASHBOARD LIGHT -or- JAILHOUSE ROCKS

Dashboard Confessional's weepy Chris Carraba gets sent up the river on a statutory rape charge after being caught emoting with one of his many underage female fans. While in the pen, Carraba forms some inspirational friendships, teaches the prisoners the healing powers of song and learns what it is to be a man. Possible tie in with new hit tune, "Aimless Amy (She Said She Was 18)." Plenty of room for weekly guest appearances.

- POSSIBLE SOUNDTRACK TIE-IN

THE MAN FROM T.O.R.T.O.I.S.E.

Ubiquitous Chicago prog band revealed to actually be a spy organization dedicated to thwarting evil (Those boring albums were actually code!). Aided by a studio full of deadly gadgets and a talking PowerBook, intrepid agent John McEntire saves the world anew every week, all the while kicking out the jams.

- DO I HEAR SPONSORSHIP?

DEAD BJORK AND WASHED UP, SHRUNKEN PAUL

Paul Westerburg plays an alcoholic has-been with one year to re-establish some form of functioning career (and liver), lest he should forfeit his inheritance left behind by an eccentric uncle. As if the stipulations of the will weren't enough of a challenge, Paul is shrunk to the size of a dime by a careless scientist. Each week, mini-Westerberg must try to get back in the saddle, aided by the ghost of late Icelandic superstar Bjork, who appears in the form of a Rhesus monkey escaped from the zoo. Heartwarming hilarity ensues.

IS BJORK DEAD?

CONTEMPT OF COURT

Despondent over his departure from Rage Against the Machine, Zach de La Rocha drinks some bad Sandanista meşcal and regains consciousness to discover he's joined a big time New York law firm! Will Zach learn to change the system from inside and win the heart of a vivacious co-worker (is J-Lo available??)-or will his renegade methods and unorthodox wild style land him in hot water with grumpy judge? Frequent musical guest Chris Cornell.

ZING!!

RECLAMATION BAY

Tricked respectively by sinister recording moguls and a mischievous Guy Piccioto, badboy rocker Andrew W.K. and Fugazi frontman Ian MacKaye find themselves marooned together on a remote desert island. Watch as the two strong personalities struggle to cooperate and cohabit, with only the land and their wits to sustain them in this wacky and gripping mix of *The Odd Couple*, *Gilligan's Island* and *Survivor*.

JONATHAN WINTERS?

-WHERE ARE THE BOOBS??

WELCOME TO THE SUBTERRANEAN SECT



ABSU - TARA

ABSU *Tara*

The mighty ABSU return with *Tara*, a mythological occult metal journey that delivers listeners a compelling, thought-provoking, dark musical and lyrical journey. *Tara* also features an amazing 40-page layout.



GOD FORBID *Determination*

"Now on tour with Chimaira and Diecast! The New Jersey quintet mixes harsh vocals, aggression and melody, in the process creating a sound that will endear them to fans of At The Gates, In Flames, The Haunted and Sick Of It All." —Hit Parader
God Forbid playing with Chimaira and Diecast at Electric Factory in Philadelphia on Friday, May 17th



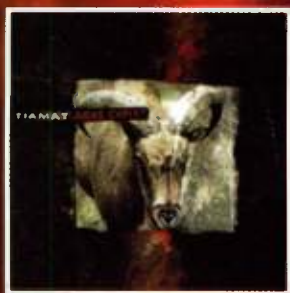
VARIOUS ARTISTS *Tribute To The Beast*

Don't be fooled by lame tributes. A *Tribute To The Beast* is THE true tribute disc for the true Iron Maiden fan. Made by metalheads for metalheads, Nuclear Blast's *A Tribute To The Beast* will prevail as the definitive and ultimate tribute to one of the greatest heavy metal bands of all time, Iron Maiden! Up the irons with *A Tribute To The Beast!*



UPHILL BATTLE *Uphill Battle*

California's UPHILL BATTLE storms heavy music's elite on their self-titled Relapse debut. Combining grindcore's speed and severity with a hardcore sense of tension, UPHILL BATTLE's hectic riffing, strafing percussive assault and tortured vocals bleed conviction. UPHILL BATTLE is one of the scene's brightest hopefuls. "Sounds like CONVERGE with a bionic, grindcore drummer!"



TIAMAT *Judas Christ*

On *Judas Christ*, the seventh album in their storied and far-reaching career, the Scandinavians reveal their true strengths yet again, allowing muted keyboards to blend perfectly next to harsh guitars, tying together melancholic distance with rhythmic advances, magnificently staging Edlund's ice-cool voice.



THEATER OF TRAGEDY *Assembly*

Considered by many to be the true originators and leaders of the ambient gothic rock scene, Theatre Of Tragedy further accentuate their credibility with their latest release *Assembly*. Theatre Of Tragedy successfully blends elements of hard rock, goth, electronica and trance on *Assembly*, which will coax and capture listeners from all genres of music.



TAD MOROSE *Matters Of The Dark*

Sweden's best-kept secret Tad Morose return with *Matters Of The Dark*, an album that fulfills all the requirements of a classic Power Metal release! Tad Morose once again prove to be one of the tightest and most reliable Power Metal units within the European movement!



TAPPING THE VEIN *The Damage*

The seductively dark blend of heavy alternative, goth and hard rock bestows *Tapping The Vein's* full-length debut *The Damage* with a vast spectrum of musical expression that will appeal to a diverse fan base ranging from Tori Amos and Sheryl Crow to fans of Lacuna Coil and The Gathering!



RED HARVEST *Sick Transit Gloria Mundi*

"The quintet's brand of apocalyptic industrial metal hinges on what could be the extreme music equivalent of Blade Runner—it's futuristic and gritty, uncommonly raw and daring. Like sounds recorded over old mix tapes of NEUROSIS, GGFF, SKINNY PUPPY and DARK THRONE and then left to warp on the dashboard of a car." —DIGITALMETAL.COM
Licensed for North America from Nokturnal Art (Samoth Of EMPEROR's label) The perfect mix of the good elements of old MINISTRY and FEAR FACTORY.



HEMDALE *Rad Jackson*

Rad Jackson is the long-awaited official discography from Ohio's legendary death/grind fiends, HEMDALE. After taking the underground by storm in 1995 with their godly self-titled demo, HEMDALE proceeded to brutally maul and mutilate fans of the sickest music around with their down-tuned, blasting dementia, tongue-in-cheek humor and stunning live performances. *Rad Jackson* contains the band's classic demo as well as their long out-of-print splits with EXHUMED, EXIT-13 and DISGUST. Delicious gory fun!!



MASTODON *Remission*

Mastodon awaken the slumbering heavy music scene on their debut full-length *Remission*. The band's prodigious ability bridges the soulful and technical as herculean yet incisive songwriting is effortlessly fused with an expansive and emotive tenor. Creative, distinct, graceful and strong, Mastodon's "Remission" features the traits of a benchmark release, a standard to which others will be held and ultimately measured by. Rarely is rock so pure and hard-hitting. "One of the most exciting metal discs to come out...anyone in doubt of the band's impact need only to see them live to know that they're the real deal!" —CREATIVE LOAFING
"Brann Dailor is not only one the top 3 drummers in metal/hardcore but probably in all of music in general!"



HIGH ON FIRE *Surrounded By Thieves*

With a heavy-hoofed gallop, the gargantuan HIGH ON FIRE bash out towering dimensions of sound on the highly-anticipated *Surrounded by Thieves*. Burning down the pillars of time with quadrupled intensity, HIGH ON FIRE inject tonal infectiousness as the mammoth, plaster-cracking guitar and throaty war cries of founding member Matt Pike (SLEEP) interlock with elephantine bass grooves and cannon-like percussion, creating the last word in paralysis by sheer volume. *Surrounded by Thieves* perfectly delivers the behemoth sounds of an immense band. Sonic its sound...Destroyer comes down. "Like BLACK SABBATH, VELVET UNDERGROUND and PINK FLOYD, HIGH ON FIRE can turn a single riff into a microcosmic void that encapsulates the listener..." —PULSE!
"...Pike has topped BLACK SABBATH's Tony Iommi to become the new God of heavy metal thunder." —ALTERNATIVE PRESS

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