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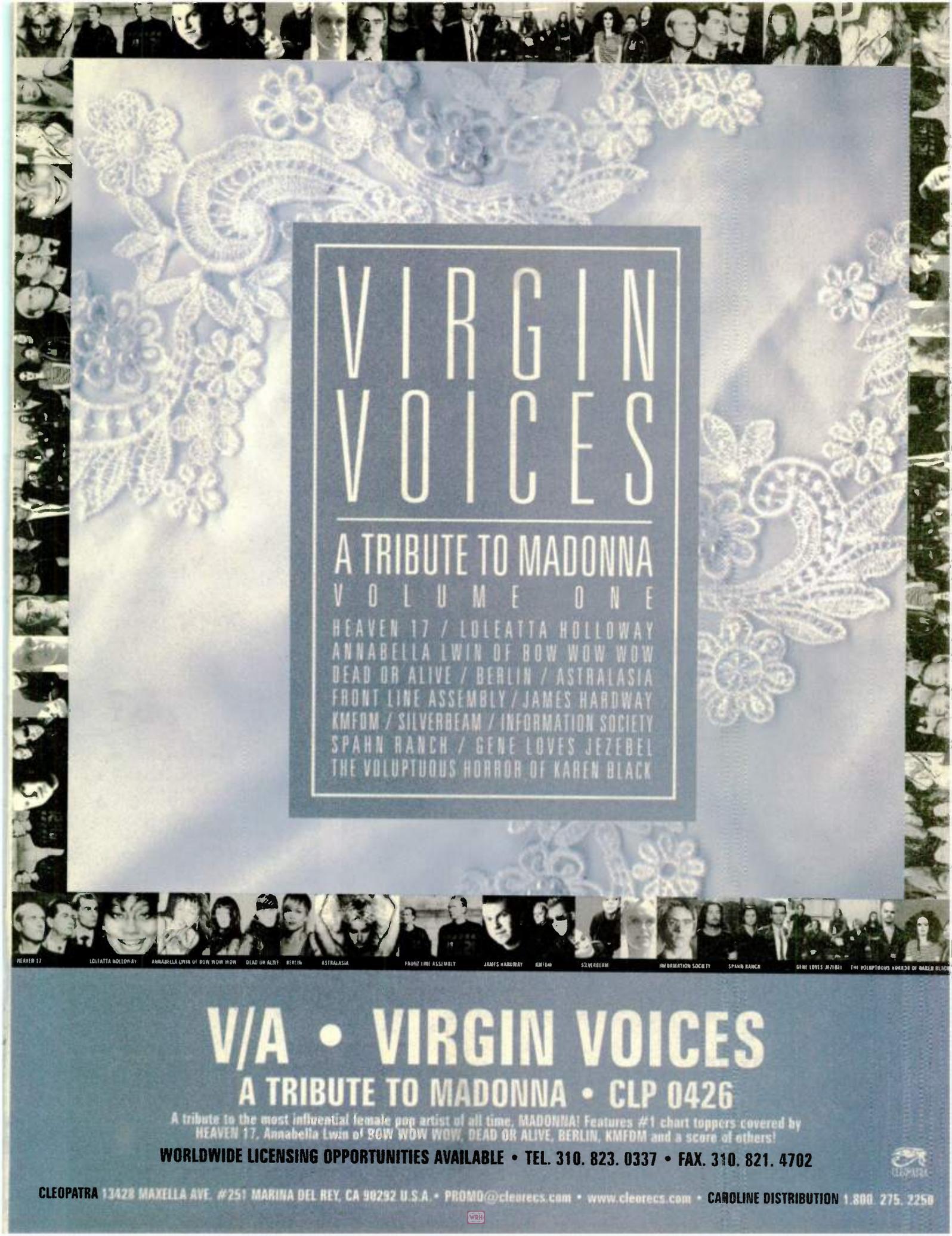
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EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Joseph Kirschen

MANAGING EDITOR

Erik Caplan

SENIOR EDITORS

Cynthia Gentile

Elisa Ludwig

COPY EDITOR

August Roderick

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Peter Bothum

André Calilhanna

Kim Crawford

Blag Dahlia

Domenic DiSpaldo

Amanda Feingold

Mark Flatt

Amy Freeman

Dylan Gadino

Mark Ginsburg

Mark Gromen

Chris Johns

Mike McKee

Gregg McQueen

Erin O'Neal

Alan Pinkerton

Stuart Pitt

Greg Roth

Amy Sciarretto

Patrick Shannon

Frank Valish

Kevin Wheeler

Ed Yashinsky

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Joseph Kirschen

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Matt McGlynn

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSULTANT

Marc Slutsky

CENTRAL PA OFFICE

Ed Glazier (717) 846-3962

INTERN

Stuart Pitt

ROCKPILE

Editorial and Advertising:

PO Box 258

Jenkintown, PA 19046

Tel (215) 885-ROCK

FAX (215) 885-7161

Rockpile Online:

<http://www.rockpileonline.com>

E-mail: RockpileMg@AOL.com

Rockpile is published monthly by
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H2O



A PLEA FOR PEACE

Following last spring's successful *Ska Against Racism Tour* (a mobile event featuring Less than Jake, The Toasters and other popular ska acts), tour organizer, former Skankin'

Pickle frontman and Asian Man Records founder Mike Park is putting together a more diverse lineup for

this year's similarly themed *Plea For Peace Tour*. The Swingin' Utters, Tilt and Against All Authority have already signed on, and Park hopes to include more than the punk scene in the fight against racism this time around.

"This tour's emphasis is on being more polit-

ATTACK OF THE HIP HOP JEWS

"You like to Jew-dis, Judas?" asks Dr. Dreidel (a.k.a. Hileel Tigaye)—half of Los Angeles' Jewish schtick-hop act Members Of The Tribe (M.O.T.)—of *Raygun's* Managing Editor, Eric Gladstone. Gladstone gave the Sire/Warner act a "Special Dishonorable Mention" in the *Village Voice* critics' poll recently. In response, the duo showed up outside *Raygun's* offices in Santa Monica with bullhorns to protest what it considered Gladstone's anti-Semitic commentary. While Gladstone shouldn't be accused of anything more than being afraid to laugh, ya gotta love M.O.T. for knowing how to pull off a good publicity stunt. *Raygun* and Gladstone had no comment.



ically aware of what's going on in the community," says Park. "Last year it was more just a concert with a tag on it." The current roster of bands is punk-heavy, but Park has approached the ska act, Hepcat, to even out the lineup and give the tour a broader appeal. The hardcore scenesters of H2O have also been mentioned as a possible addition. The details of the tour are still being ironed out,

but Park expects it to kick off on the West Coast in late April.

BECK IN THE STUDIO

Beck's been hard at work on his next album, and he's had a few special guests stop by to join him. Apparently, Kool Keith (of Dr. Octagon fame) and singer/songwriter Beth Orton were in Beck's studio to lend vocals for new tracks. Rumor has it Beck and Orton got along well enough to attend a West Hollywood club together and sit in on multi-instrumentalist Jon Brion's set. Beck has already finished more material than one album will allow—it hasn't been determined which of the newly recorded tracks will find their way onto the album or end up as a b-sides. Typically sardonic and vague, Beck calls the effort "peppy, enjoyable music for all ages."



A HARRY PROPOSAL

The biography, *Deborah Harry: Platinum Blonde*, by New York writer Cathay Che, will be released this Spring in the United Kingdom, and negotiations with stateside publishers are underway for a fall U.S. release.

"This book doesn't pretend to be about Blondie just to talk about Deborah," says Che. "She's her own icon."

Platinum Blonde begins in '70s New York and culminates with Harry's work with the Jazz Passengers. The tribute/biography work features unpublished photos and extensive interviews with Harry, Blondie guitarist Chris Stein and members of the CBGB scene, including David Byrne, Joey Ramone and Iggy Pop. Also included are kind words from singers Harry influenced, such as Courtney



Love, Shirley Manson of Garbage and Madonna. The book also includes stories about Harry's crude wit. For instance, at a mid-'80s birthday party for the ever-flamboyant amazon vocalist Grace Jones, Harry took time to indulge a male fan who requested an autograph. Harry reportedly looked at him and said, "Only if I can sign your dick." The fan was not disappointed.



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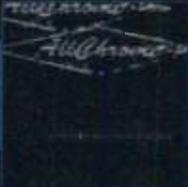


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Beulah



The release of Beulah's second full-length album, the aptly titled *When Your Heart Strings Break*, marks what will be a departure from all the gloom and doom of pre-millennialist music. Well, one can hope. The album is chock full of pop gems, taking a page from the golden song book of The Beatles, The Association and The Beach Boys. There is simply no way to be in a bad mood when Beulah is spinning. Taking its name from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where the moniker meant "the land at the end of life's travels," Beulah sounds like what it means—a simple plan playing out like a little slice of heaven.

But the behind-the-scenes world of Beulah is not quite so carefree. Having recently been recruited to join the esteemed ranks of the Elephant 6 collective, the boys of Beulah know they have a lot to work towards.

"The whole Elephant 6 thing came about really by surprise," explains frontman Miles Kurosky. "As far as I can tell, we are the only band who doesn't live in Athens [Ga.] or Denver and doesn't have some secret childhood connection to the rest of the collective. We were totally shocked and flattered when they wanted us to release the album under them."

At the time, Beulah wasn't even looking for a label.

"The story goes something like a friend of ours gave a tape of our first album to Robert Schneider from the Apples in Stereo. He had just spent the past several minutes waxing on and on about what was wrong with music, and when he popped our tape in he said, 'this is what's right

about music,' or something like that," he laughs, audibly blushing.

Kurosky is quick to admit he had been a big fan of the E6 collective since its inception, but he never really dreamt of becoming part of it.

"I always thought it was impenetrable. From the first time I heard Neutral Milk Hotel's *Everything Is* seven-inch, I knew these guys had it all under control. But being part of it is really both a curse and a blessing. It's bad because we get unfairly compared to other bands in the collective that we have nothing to do with. But at the same time, we are associated with some of the best bands walking the planet," he continues.

After just one listen to *When Your Heart Strings Break*, it becomes quite clear the Beulah boys deserve to be walking the hallowed halls of E6. Just three years after the release of its first album, *Handsome Western States*, Beulah has fortified its sound and its status as a band.

"When we recorded the first album, we had no intentions of playing live. I just really wanted to record, so I asked some friends if they'd help me make an album. We didn't practice at all. Everything came together in the studio," he says.

Kurosky still feels a strong connection to the recording process. "That is the foundation of all of our creativity. When we are recording, the songs all take on a life of their own," he says. "But when we are playing live, we are just a rock band. Like the MC5s, but a little different."

—Cynthia Gentile

(l-r) Bill Swan, Pat Nool, Miles Kurosky, Steve LaFollette, Bill Evans, Steve St. Clin

A Tale of Two Frontmen

The respective conductors of Drown and Videodrone share their stories of aspiration, betrayal and ultimate success with Chris Johns.

The sun is finally shining on Lauren. Though the menacing 6' 3" founder of Drown might be reluctant to believe it, things couldn't be better. That is, until he's prompted about the plight of his band and nearly four years of perseverance preceding the release of Drown's aptly titled second full-length record, *Product of a Two-Faced World*.

"Imagine having this dream and that your entire life you know, is your heart this is what you want to do. You never wake up any day questioning this is what you want to do artistically, but yet, bullshit politics are the only things that stop you from doing what you should be doing. It's just a bunch of fuckin' idiots in offices that have no idea what's going on," snorts Lauren, referring to the bouts he and his charges have endured with industry heavyweights Elektra and Geffen before finding a home at Sire. "It had nothing to do with the live shows, fans or the music, which are really the most important things."

Incorporated in 1987 as Yesterday's Tear, Drown's highs have been balanced by a string of bad luck and timing. 1994 saw the group release *Mold on the Hollow* on Elektra. After a year of touring with White Zombie, For Love Not Lisa and Prong, Drown returned to its California home to find itself an unfortunate casualty in a messy corporate merger. Two members left the band, and Lauren added guitarist Patrick Sprawl and bassist Sean Dermott to drummer Marco Forcone, rounding out his current lineup.

"If anything, we became a better band because of it. Those two (Sprawl and Dermott) are so much more talented, that, in a way, we were able to take something positive out of a negative situation," he continues.

Drown, currently touring in a supporting position for Clutch, then signed and wrote more than 30 new songs (eventually to become *Product of a Two-Faced World*) for Geffen in 1996, only to find the same top-40 mentality shift in the front office.

"They (Geffen) were like, 'We're not going to release any more hard records. We don't think hard music is a viable commodity in the market place.' I was like, 'What the fuck? White Zombie, Marilyn Manson, Deftones or Korn if they think it's a viable commodity. While you're at it, go ask all the punk bands or the speed metal bands what they think of hard music,'" Lauren challenges as he recoils out of his seat and pushes up his sleeves, revealing "ALONE" inked up his left forearm.

It's all the same, but only the players change for Ty Elam, lead singer of Videodrone. Elam's band is the second signee to Korn's Elementree/Reprise label, following Dmy. By no means is the group, whose self-titled debut was actually produced by Korn assist Fieldy, a case of overnight success.

Videodrone's lengthy apprenticeship began in 1988 as Cradle Of Thorns and subsequently began to build a fan base as a local favorite. Over the years, extensive touring spawned a national underground following as COT signed in the early '90s to Triple X Records (Social Distortion, Jane's Addiction) and released *Remember It Day* in 1990 and *Feed Us* followed by *Download This* in 1994.



(l-r) Patrick Sprawl, Sean E. Dermott, Lauren, Marco Forcone

LAVA • LAVA



(l-r) Mavis, Kris Kohls, Ty Elam, David File, Rohan

"I'd have to say the biggest difference between Cradle Of Thorns and Videodrone is that with Videodrone we now have more of a focus, which is the reason we changed our name. Back through the years, we were into a lot of different things, but I'd say Cradle Of Thorns just hadn't ever found themselves," Elam rationalizes.

The members of Videodrone, natives of Bakersfield, Calif., support their moniker by featuring a wide array of electronic effects and hints of hip-hop to the band's crunch-heavy sound.

"We added the electronic aspect with Videodrone, but didn't necessarily go to the far extreme of it. If you're not careful, all of the sudden you could become Milli Vanilli," he quips.

By no means does having Fieldy on its side deter Videodrone's current success. Massive exposure via a support slot on Korn's *Rock Is Dead* tour with Rob Zombie is understandably positive for the band.

"The tour has been great so far. We're out here with the guys from Korn, whom we've known forever. They've been great by signing us to Elementree and taking us on tour. They're giving back to the people who've been there all along," says Elam.

It may be all smiles for Elam and his band of David File (guitar), Rohan (keyboards/samples), Mavis (bass/vocals), and Kris Kohls (drums and percussion), but digging deeper reveals a Drown-like feeling towards the hand that feeds them.

"The whole label/artist relationship is one of a necessary evil. We need each other, but both are always afraid of what the other is doing. I'd say it's a lack of communication at times that breeds the animosity," adds Elam. "I'm a believer that all good things happen in due time with this business. I know we're in the same boat as Lauren when we say 'Shit happens.' We've been through all the crap, as has he, but I think for you to be able to actually appreciate the success, you have to go through those bad times, which we both can attest to."

Fittingly, Lauren and Elam go back to the beginning. As friends and musicians, they could regularly be seen supporting each other's musical beliefs in the late '80s and throughout the '90s when Yesterday's Tear/Drown would share the marquee with Cradle of Thorns and vice versa.

"He's (Lauren) so headstrong. I love him for that. He's one of the most real guys I know. I mean, he fought through all the bullshit and finally ended up winning," Elam compliments his long-time friend.

"I wish those guys all the luck in the world," adds Lauren. "I can remember all the way back to hanging out with Ty and Jonathan Davis, when Korn was still known as LAPD. All those guys haven't changed a bit. They've been so great for all the people who supported them as well. Sure, it was frustrating for all my friends like Jonathan to be doing so well and for me to be fighting legal battles, but on the flip side, those fans may have finally been turned on to Drown."

While Lauren provides back-up vocals on *Videodrone*, Elam can be found lending his creative efforts to Drown's newest limited-edition EP, featuring several versions of "Kerosene," a cover of the Big Black classic and a staple in Drown's live set since 1991.

"Ty and I had talked about hitting the road when both our bands are free," Lauren informs. "You could say it would be like reliving the past, like we've always wanted it to be. It's just taken a little longer than either of us had ever planned."



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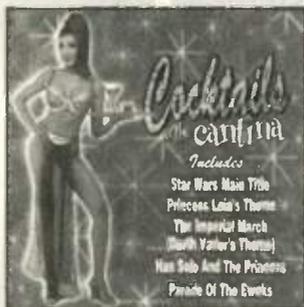
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(l-r) Igor Cavalera, Paulo Jr., Derrick Green, Andreas Kisser

SEPULTURA

Life After Max

Everyone knows what happens when a band loses its lead singer. Fans abandon the group, thinking it will never be as good again. Remember when people said, "Van Halen will never be as good without David Lee Roth," or "Anthrax will be nothing without Joey Belladonna?" What would the legendary Brazilian metal outfit Sepultura be without its much-loved vocalist, Max Cavalera? Sepultura fans thought the day would never come. But now that the post-Max era is here, will the band ever be the same?

Sepultura has had an image make-over since the old days. It began when the band started incorporating percussion and Brazilian sounds into its music, rather than just writing straight death metal. Now, the make-over continues with new frontman Derrick Green at the helm. Green brings a huge presence to the stage, stomping around and thrashing his long dreadlocks to the music. He wears a menacing facial expression, and his eyes bulge as he growls Sepultura's angry lyrics.

"Derrick is getting better by the day," says guitarist Andreas Kisser from the comfort of Sepultura's tour bus. "He's playing some guitar live and doing a lot of percussion."

Sepultura has been touring in support of its new album, *Against*, since October, and so far most fans seem to be accepting the new face on the stage.

"Some people really don't understand Derrick in Sepultura," continues Kisser. "But at the same time, a lot of new fans are coming out and some of the old fans are seeing Sepultura going in a new direction, which was always the idea of Sepultura. With every album, we tried to bring something new."

This certainly is true of *Against*. Besides incorporating tribal sounds like the band presented on *Roots*, Sepultura also recorded with Japanese musicians. The track, "Kamaitachi," was recorded in Japan. Though the song appears as an instrumental on *Against*, Mike Patton (of Faith No More fame) has written lyrics and recorded vocals for it. "Kamaitachi" will soon be released as a single with Patton's vocals. Many of the lyrics

on *Against* reflect the changes Sepultura has been through during its long career. They also reflect on the difficult parting between the band and its former lead singer—the most turbulent time of Sepultura's career. "Rumors" was obviously inspired by this event.

"That's where the influence came from," says Kisser. "But rumors are put in every situation—friends in school or TV or whatever. I didn't want to write specifically about the fight, because this album is going to be recorded and its going to be there forever. So I don't want the album to be a bad memory."

Kisser admits it is strange for the band to be on the same record label as Max Cavalera's new band, Soulfly.

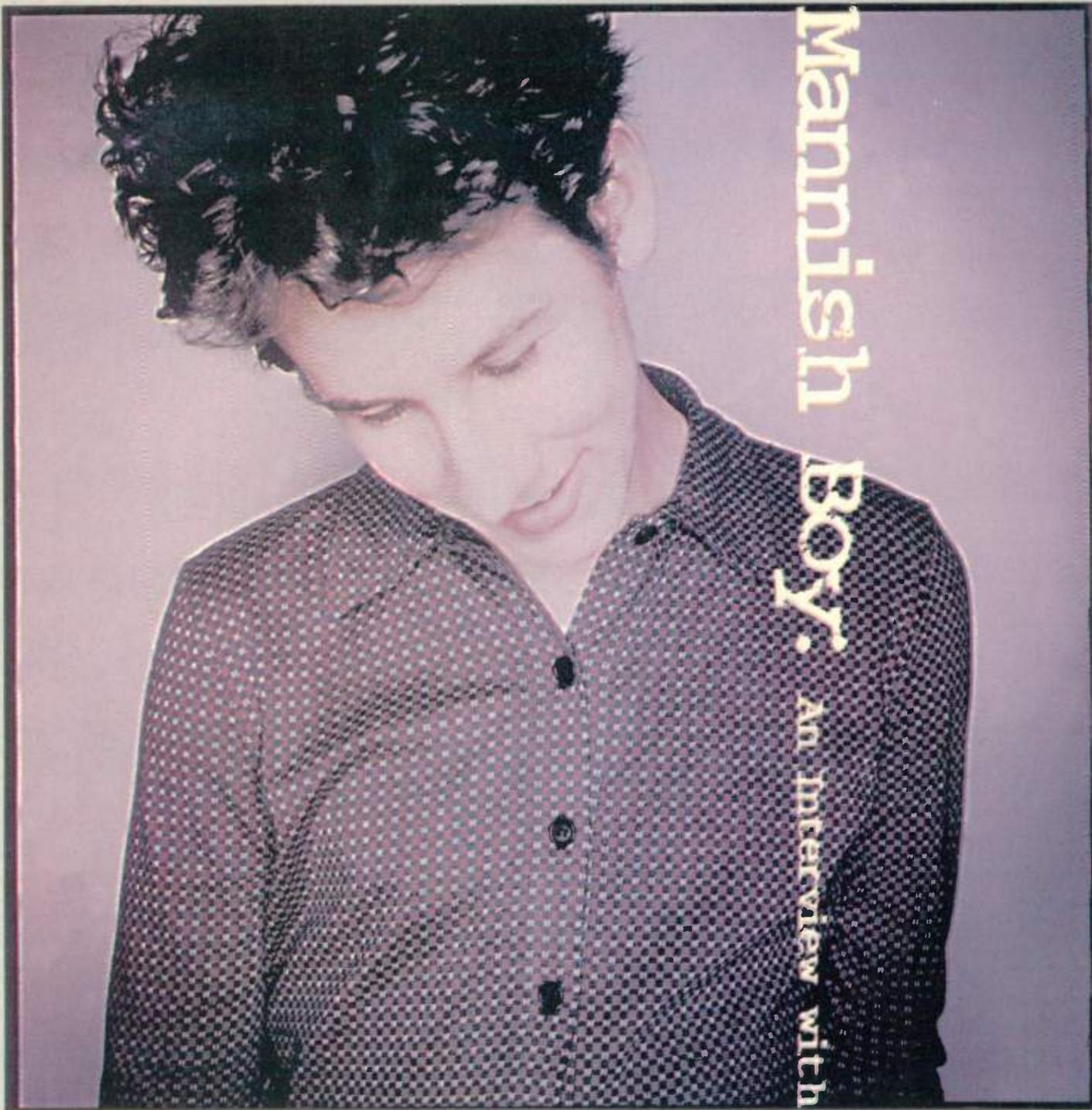
"Yeah, its weird to work with the same people," Kisser says while sipping his bottled water. "It's been working all right. I mean, both bands have different schedules, so we're just doing our job, and they're doing theirs."

Sepultura is currently touring with Biohazard and Spineshank, with the live show covering everything from *Beneath The Remains* to the band's latest material. It is difficult for an entire 15-year career to be covered in one set, but Sepultura does it effectively by playing songs from every album. Of course, the band knows it can't please every fan all the time, but Sepultura is no stranger to criticism. Many of the old-school hardcore fans did not accept Sepultura's switch to more slow-paced tunes with a Brazilian flavor. However, the band will continue to grow and change, picking up a new generation of followers along the way.

Later this year, Sepultura will do a South American tour with Metallica and may appear at Ozzfest again this summer. The band also made a video for "Choke," but due to MTV's lack of support for heavy metal, don't expect to see it too often.

"America sucks like that," Kisser laughs. "It's terrible. MTV Latino—they show it a lot. MTV is good in Brazil."

—Mandy Feingold



Mannish Boy: An interview with

Outside Other Music in New York City's East Village, a line of teen- and College-age indie rock kids stretches down Fourth Street and around the corner onto Lafayette. Huddled together against the winter evening's cold, they murmur excitedly about the minutes-away in-store performance promoting the stateside release of *Breathing Tomatoes*, the third solo effort by the Australian wunderkind, singer/songwriter Ben Lee. Born in September 1978, Ben Lee is a veteran of the music business at age 20. His schoolboy punk band, Noise Addict (formed when he was a mere 14), caught the eyes and ears of both Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and The Beastie Boys' Mike D., who nabbed Lee for the Beastie's Grand Royal label with the release of Noise Addict's 1994 EP, aptly titled *Young And Jaded*. Buoyed by the major label distribution arm of Grand Royal, Capitol Records, Lee is primed for worldwide exposure—there seems no choice but

to proceed full speed ahead. To paraphrase Elvis Costello, Ben Lee is This Year's Boy.

Keeping competitive pace with Lee's career coverage is his high-profile relationship with girlfriend, actress Clare Danes, making magazine gossip columns at a steady clip. Danes and Lee, who are quite inseparable, look like they learned how to be affectionate by watching chimpanzees maul each other. Though the couple can scarcely stand to be apart for the time it takes to conduct an interview, their devoted ardor is actually quite charming. Among scattered autobiographical tunes on *Tomatoes*, the straightforward, folkish "Birthday Song" and "10ft. Tall" keenly capture the elated joy of true love—in much the way an XTC song of the same name did 20 years ago—and are clearly inspired by their affair. Inside the intimate setting of Other Music, Lee and his band perform a short and sweet

unplugged set—a few old tunes, a few new tunes and a conspicuous cover of “Don’t Think Twice, It’s Alright” by Lee’s venerated idol, Bob Dylan. Earlier in the evening, Lee presided over a Sonicnet on-line chat session, and tonight’s in-store is just one of many promotional appearances he has scheduled during the coming weeks.

The Ben Lee hype machine has kicked into high gear. Sitting alone with Lee in the store’s loft office, it seems hardly necessary. Ben Lee has clearly mastered the art of the interview and, despite a patently hectic day, he is bright-eyed, consummately poised and professional. He’s anxious to blaze the trail of each question to its journey’s end.

“It’s anticlimactic when your record comes out if you’re not Puff Daddy,” he says by way of easing into conversational mode. “For me, a record coming out is the beginning of a really long time of work. It’s kind of a psychological thing, where I’m like, ‘OK, today it all starts.’”

In a way, he already has his work cut out for him. An unfair emphasis is often placed on Lee’s tender age in contrast to the sage wisdom he reveals through his very personal songcraft. Granted, he’s a huge fan of music, and such a profound love of music alone can inspire great creativity and imagination. Yet the level of sophistication and emotional intensity of his lyrics suggest a deeper well of experience than a man of 20 years could possibly possess. Neither fans nor critics are shy about expressing curiosity as to how Lee creates such authentic images of feelings and associations of which he seems unlikely to have firsthand knowledge.

“In terms of the legitimacy of doing it,” says Lee, “I’ve always thought

that idea was bullshit. My God, if you can’t write pop songs about things you haven’t lived, where can you fantasize? That’s what music’s about. For me, it doesn’t have to be real, and it’s even better if it’s not. I used to hate it when people would talk about authenticity and legitimacy—and people are doing it less—but it was really alienating.”

The thing is, Lee’s songs—ruminations on love and loss, intoxication, death, the desire to escape and the freedom inherent in surrendering to the inevitable—all rich with their accompanying sentiments and visuals, do come across as completely real, authentic and heart-felt.

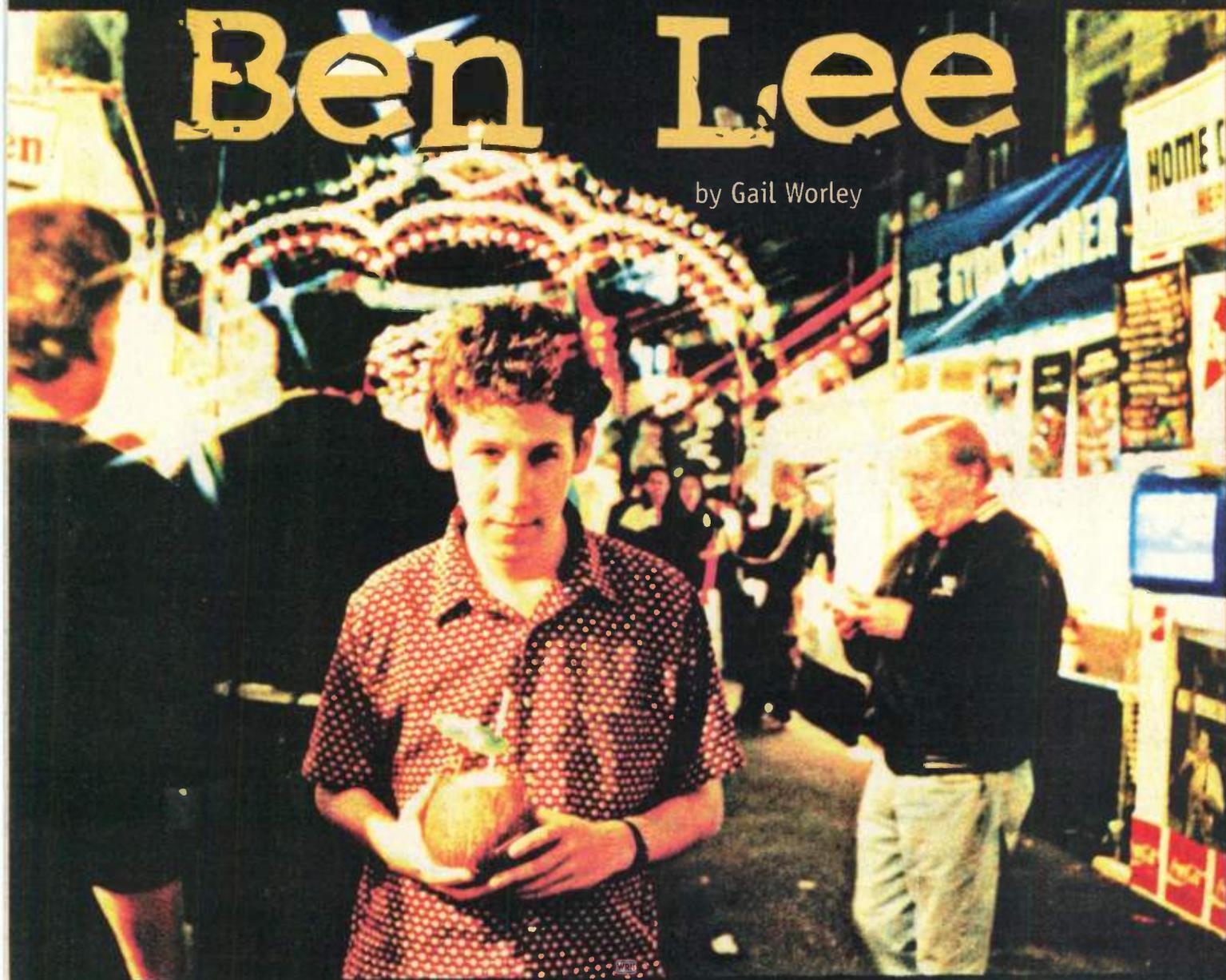
“There’s people who say that to write you never have to see anything from after you’re four years old. People have all kinds of theories. I just think things aren’t as sophisticated as people make out. You know, ideas are easy. It’s the feelings that are coming more slowly to my music. I’ve always understood things at a cerebral level much quicker than I’ve understood them emotionally. I used to be very much concerned with what I was saying—that I hate rock, the lifestyle and the clichés about it and the danger and all this kind of thing. It’s a performance. Not that I’m so into rock n’ roll decadence, but I’m starting to understand things about emoting. It’s almost like actors—actors that have lived and are drawing on life experience, and actors that understand it perfectly but haven’t had the experience, and they give different performances. I’m starting to work that stuff out. Whatever, I’m working it out.”

The pressure, real or imagined, of living up to his own reputation is

—continued on page 22

Ben Lee

by Gail Worley



Giant trucks and dreadful hot wheels rumble past a lonesome pay phone outside Russo's auto shop on Route 309 in McAdoo, Pa., yet another stop in an endless stream of tiny towns in the center of what seems like an endless state.

Dust floats around the flying, crumbling gravel, and it's a little hard to hear the voices on the other end of the line. Operator transfers to receptionist, receptionist transfers to desk clerk, desk clerk transfers to publicist. Finally, Wilco guitarist Jay Bennett arrives in his room at the cozy Roger Smith Hotel—a mere 200 miles or so away in the center of Manhattan—and the poor guy is a little out of breath. He and frontman Jeff Tweedy, bassist John Stirratt and drummer Ken Coomer are in town to promote their fantastic new record, *Summer Teeth*.

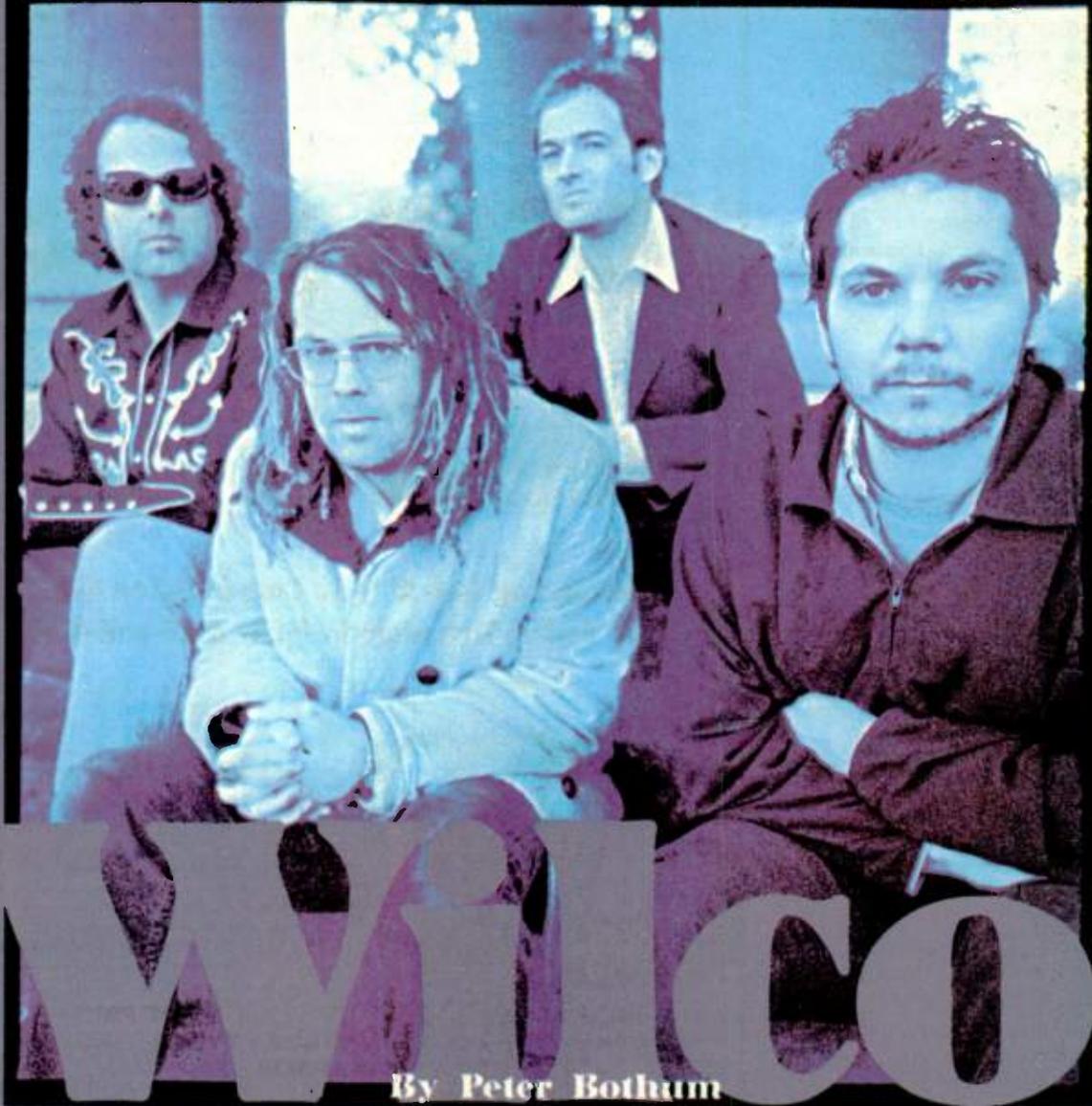
Somehow it seems like the four of them should be here in McAdoo instead of flashing their mugs and peddling their record around the City That Never Sleeps.

Since the band formed from the wreckage of Uncle Tupelo, the members of Wilco have been the poster children for blue-collar, do-what-you-want roots rockers. The gritty Stones-influenced rock and the smooth, front-porch folk of 1996's *Being There* would sound just fine while washing down a cold one in a one-horse town like McAdoo.

Then again, maybe not. The twang is gone on *Summer Teeth*. Grit and guts are replaced by wavy studio trickery, bouncy pop ditties and keyboards straight out of the new wave closet. Suffice it to say, *Summer Teeth* may not make it into a local juke box any time soon.

Bennett says that wasn't Wilco's intention when the band began recording the album a little over a year ago. In fact, no one involved in the recording realized *Summer Teeth* would be devoid of country-influenced tunes until three-quarters of the 16 songs were finished. By leaving the folk and country behind and turning to

A Little Bit Rock N' Roll



(l-r) Ken Coomer, Jay Bennett, John Stirratt, Jeff Tweedy

rock and some pretty experimental pop elements, Wilco completely revamped its sound.

"That really was not a decision prior to recording. We just didn't have anything that was overtly country," says Bennett.

Twang isn't the only absence here. There's no multi-instrumentalist—Bob Egan and Max Johnston have filled the position both live and in studio—and *Summer Teeth* stands as the first album recorded by Wilco's four core members.

"Ever since (we went to four members), it's been moving more and more toward being a real band," says Bennett, who played in Tommy Keene's band and Titanic Love Affair before joining Wilco for *Being There*. "There really isn't a leader, and it's far more collaborative (compared to 1995's *A.M.* and *Being There*)."

Another departure—there's almost no Bennett lead guitar or guitar solos on *Summer Teeth*, with the exception of "ELT" and "Can't Stand It." "A-Shot In The Arm" mixes synth sounds, strings, Bennett's climbing piano and Stirratt's roaming bass. The New Wave bent of "I'm Always In Love" is paced with more '70s synth noise.

But the true gem is "Candyfloss," with Bennett's rollicking Attractions-esque keyboards leading Tweedy's dead-on Elvis Costello.

Blind rock purists may dismiss *Summer Teeth* as a soft, wussy effort because of the lack of chunky, up-front guitar. But Bennett says it's not even something listeners will even notice.

"When I think of keyboard pop, I think of The Attractions. You don't listen to *Armed Forces* and hear "Oliver's Army" and think it's a wimpy record. One day people are going to wake up and say, 'Hold it. There's no guitars on this record.'"

Forsaking the electric axe for major keyboard and piano duty was no problem for Bennett.

"There's no guitar solos, but I got to play more piano. I don't know if I like it better. You can only do so much with guitar," he says. "Guitar is fun live, because you get to stand up and move around. But the band has two other guitar players (Tweedy and Stirratt). I think I have a lot more to do with how the record sounds (by playing keyboard and piano)."

It's getting really cold outside in McAdoo, and Bennett has to run off with the rest of Wilco to play a private gig somewhere in Manhattan. No, these guys wouldn't fit in around here.

After all, they're big stars now. Stirratt, Coomer, Bennett and Tweedy attended last month's Grammys, mostly to see how *Mermaid Avenue*—their amazing collaboration with Billy Bragg, in which they wrote music for a batch of leftover Woody Guthrie

"When I think of keyboard pop, I think of The Attractions. You don't listen to *Armed Forces* and hear "Oliver's Army" and think it's a wimpy record. One day people are going to wake up and say, 'Hold it. There's no guitars on this record.'"

lyrics—would fare in the best contemporary folk album category.

It didn't win.

But the boys did get to don tuxes, behold all the mammothly produced performances and

rub shoulders with their more famous peers.

If listeners and radio stations give *Summer Teeth* the same warm reception critics have, Wilco could be rocking next year's ceremony and may even be taking home a few trophies.

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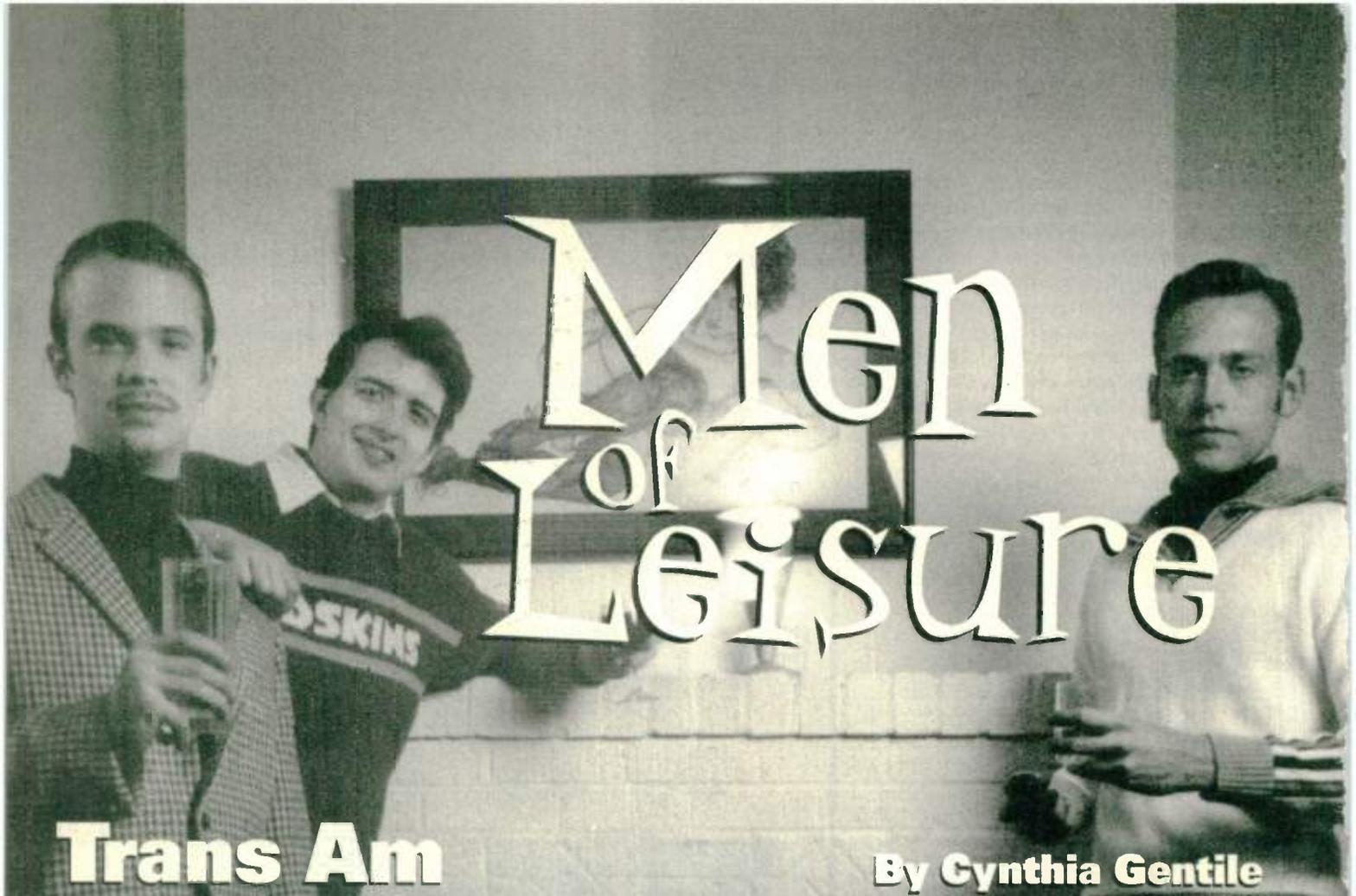
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Men of Leisure

Trans Am

By Cynthia Gentile

On its fourth full-length release, the presciently titled *Futureworld*, Trans Am shows once again a merger between organic rock n' roll and synthesized noise can be accomplished well. The album is an exercise in pre-millennialist tension, but it is not without its lighter side.

"We are basically a rock band. We still play classic rock and blues rock when we are just around rehearsing. And I am most excited by our music when those influences come out spontaneously," says Philip Manley, guitarist and electronic vocalist for the band.

Futureworld feels anything but spontaneous, due in part to the hyper-driven drumming of Sebastian Thomson, whose style has helped define the sub-genre oddly dubbed math rock.

"Sebastian is a scientist. He has a degree in physics, and I think this totally comes out in the sound. He has an analytical mind and can break down songs into individual parts. For him it is a lot less about feeling and is more ordered," he explains.

Although Trans Am may take a methodical approach to its sound, it is not without emotions. "Cocaine Computer" and "Positron" are the album's most hyperactive tracks, bouncing from a requisite backdrop of computerized sounds to a dense sonic web. The result engages the listener in the ultimate aural dichotomy.

Trans Am can trace its roots back to a Bethesda, Md., junior high, where Manley first met bassist Nathan Means. Thomson was introduced to the pair a few years later after attending high school in Argentina. The band released its eponymous debut to critical acclaim, following it up with 1997's *Surrender to the Night*. Although this was the band's most electronic effort, it was clearly built around the concept of integrating the two distinct media of rock and electronica. Its next album, *Surveillance*, was released in

1998 and continued to leave reviewers perplexed. *Futureworld* is sure to do the same. At any given instance, Trans Am may conjure up vintage Kraftwerk or old-school Metallica.

"The one thing that seems to most schizophrenic to people is the instrumentation. We use a lot of electric guitar, and that carries with it certain implications and connotations. But we still impose the same aesthetic ideas as when we are toying with the keyboards or the synthesizers. It is not our intention to confuse, but I guess that is kind of unavoidable when you are trying to constantly progress toward something," he says with an audible smile.

The band still lives in the Washington, D.C., area and has recently constructed its own recording space.

"At this point we do all of our own recording. Although there are positive aspects to working with other people, you still get stuck doing a lot of explaining what you want the track to sound like rather than just doing it," he says.

Although the band's National Recording Studio was not finished when Trans Am went in to record *Futureworld*, the band just felt it was time to put down the tracks for posterity.

"In the past, we have entered the studio with a clear concept for the record, and I think that is apparent in our other albums, but this time we had just had the songs. We had been playing them live for a while, so we had a good idea of what we wanted them to sound like. But getting those ideas to become reality is very frustrating," Manley explains.

Because Trans Am's sound is distinctly fluid, the band uses its own brand of quality control to decide where to take a particular track. Manley's younger brother, Paul, helps the band to this end.

"He will definitely tell me if something sucks," he says. "We have a few friends who are good at that."

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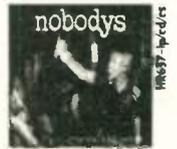
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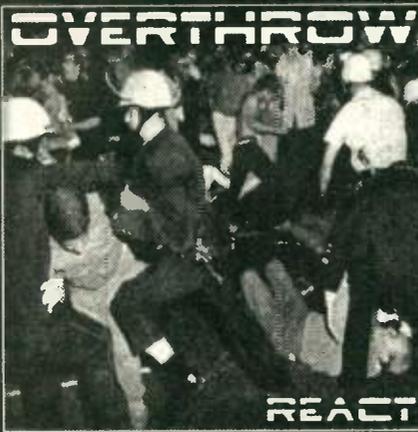
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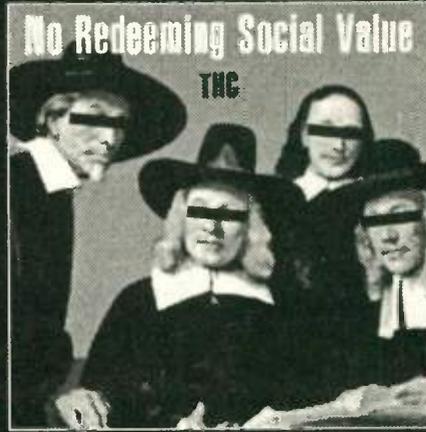
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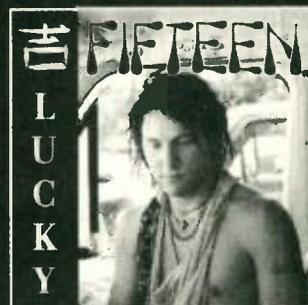
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(l-r) Jackson, Spike, Dave, Joey, Mike

Deep down inside, anyone in a cover band knows they're a joke. Yes, cover bands make a lot of money, but they have to realize the audience is rocking out to songs someone else wrote, no matter how good the lead singer does Eddie Vedder and how much like Hendrix the guitarist sounds. Still a joke.

Me First And The Gimme Gimmees is different.

It's a cover band—consisting of Fat Mike from NOFX, Chris Shiflett from No Use For A Name, Joey Cape and “Dave-just Dave” from Lagwagon and Spike Slawson from the Swinging Utters—playing punk rock covers of soft rock and show tunes. The band's first album of covers was its way, in the words of lead singer Slawson, “of fixing songs with acoustic guitars and bongos—the hard rock was all right in the first place.”

Slawson is groggy from not being drunk or hung over—a natural state of affairs for him—and his voice is raspy. A surl enters his voice as he clarifies the uncertain genesis of Me First And The Gimme Gimmees.

“We started as a cheesy cover band to play in frat houses and yuppie bars—plus, this doesn't involve too much creativity,” he says.

The new album, *Are A Drag*, is the band at its best, changing gears to do an album of all show tunes. Raging punk covers of “Tomorrow” from *Annie*, “Phantom Of The Opera,” “Over The Rainbow” and “Cabaret” are but some of the songs gracing the album. Anything with three chords and a good sound was recorded over a week of partying and heavy drinking. *Are A Drag* was the end result.

To mix things up and keep the album interesting, a surf version of George Gershwin's “Summertime” was included. The band decided to poke fun at punk legends Bad Religion by morphing the cover of

“My Favorite Things” into “Generator” off the seminal punk album of the same name. Greg Graffen's (Bad Religion) lyrics, “Like a rock/Like a planet/Like a fucking atom bomb/I remain unperturbed by the joy and the madness I encounter everywhere I turn,” becomes, “Like a dog bite/like a bee sting/I don't feel so fucking bad/Raindrops and roses and whiskers on kittens.” The band has done the same treatments to Face To Face and Rancid as a nod to their styles.

“The whole thing is thievery. Popular music is all covers anyway,” Slawson says in a moment of lucidity. Is he summing up *Are A Drag* or the whole music industry?

Meanwhile, don't expect to see Fat Mike or the guys from Lagwagon on the road unless it's at a special show in a big city like San Francisco or New York. They're busy with their own bands, doing originals. Recently, Slawson had time off and decided to tour, so he grabbed some friends to hit the road and bring some mayhem to an unsuspecting populace. One practice later, they sallied forth.

“It's kind of lame when people expect more (from a cover band),” Slawson continues. “The people in Germany got the joke, but by the time we got to England they expected a good set, and it just isn't.”

He doesn't see too much of a future for Me First And The Gimme Gimmees, because any kind of extensive tour is out of the question. Slawson is adamant about this—really, really adamant.

“It's not the kind of thing you can do for 10 nights in a row. It gets, like, really lame after about four nights. Nobody likes to feel like a hack,” he says.

The world can rest easy that one less cover band will be forced upon it. Even if it is just a joke.

—Kevin Wheeler

—continued from page 15

also something Lee thinks about, though he admits most of the pressure is self-imposed.

"I see people around me under so much more pressure. I haven't had a hit record, [so] I'm not under that kind of pressure." Lee envisions, for example, what it might be like to walk in the shoes of a band like U2. "You have the CEO's of oil companies calling you up, telling you they need the record to be a hit because they have their shares in the company. That's pressure, know what I mean? I put myself under more pressure than anyone else does, but that's how you get things done. This is about a process of creating the person I want to be and working it out in music and working it out in my life. So, that's deadly serious."

Production duties on *Breathing Tornadoes* were placed in the eclectically creative hands of Ed Buller, best known for his work with the Psychedelic Furs—a band whose career was peaking at about the time Lee was taking his first steps. Despite a distinctive Furs flavor on several tracks, Lee confesses he has never heard their music. Any influence, he says, "was a total subconscious thing. Everyone says 'Nothing Much Happens' is the most Psychedelic Furs-ish [song], and that's probably the song that Ed had the least input on. I just think our musical personalities had been rubbing off on each other so much that I wrote the song in the style of a band that he used

to be in."

On the insistent, feedback-drenched "Ship My Body Home," Lee's voice recalls the husky tones of Psychedelic Furs frontman Richard Butler. Presented with the comparison, Lee flippantly remarks he's heard Butler reportedly "wasn't such a good dancer."

An obvious, stylistic leap spans the gap between the acoustic folk of Lee's 1997 release, *Something To Remember Me By*, and the highly experimental blend of pop flavors (emulated baroque strings meet bossa nova beats) of *Breathing Tornadoes*. What goes into such an extreme re-invention of the self?

"I think it's one of those things that's specific to pop music," Lee says. "You have to change from one record to the next, just to be relevant. Not that you have to be trendy or hip, but you have to be different, 'cause pop music's about getting the new record, which is meant to say something new. On the other hand, you're still an artist. You have to develop in a way that's about what you need to get back from your work, and what's going to reveal something that you want to say."

Lee says it's like the proverbial rock and a hard place of being wedged between where "the pressure to change and what you have to evolve into meet." In the nearly two years between recording *Something To Remember Me By* and *Breathing Tornadoes*, Lee began college and then dropped out, working his way through a period of

artistic epiphany.

"I thought so much about what music means to me, and it was just a very intense period. That was a real deciding moment, where things started sounding differently, and I started not feeling guilty about examining things," he says. "That's the only way I can describe it."

Another minor controversy encircles the manner in which *Tornadoes* was recorded. *Breathing Tornadoes*, for all its warmth and subtle nuances, was captured entirely on computers, a process generally associated with an artist like Trent Reznor or others of the industrial genre. According to Lee, the impetus for doing it that way began as purely financial.

"The amount of experimentation I wanted to do, I couldn't do paying \$1,500 a day for the studio. I didn't have a budget that was big enough for that," he says. "My concern was that it wasn't going to sound big enough, [that] it was going to sound like four-tracking. I wasn't so aware of exactly how amazing computer technology is. [Ed and I] did a few experiments, and it sounded incredible."

The amount of information involved in the process took six hard drives to store. The record was completed in four months.

"Everyone talks about the loss of organic feel and all this kind of thing about recording digitally," he continues. "But to me, that's more than compensated for by the freedom you're given to experiment. The fact that you can spend no money on an album basically, but be able to cut and paste as if [you had] been recording for three years? That's beautiful! That's what punk rock should be like. It shouldn't sacrifice quality."

The song that took the longest to record, "Nighttime," is Lee's tribute to club life and his own smoldering passion for music.

"That was the first song we played to Grand Royal when they came in to visit the studio, 'cause they really stayed out of our way," he says. "We played it and—you can imagine, they'd heard *Something To Remember Me By*, and then they came and heard this song—they were just like, 'What are you guys doing?' And I was like 'Do you like it?' and they said, 'We don't know.' I mean, it was such a shock."

Though Lee claims he was never completely happy with the mix, "Nighttime" is arguably one of the records' strongest tracks.

An early review of *Breathing Tornadoes* declares the record indicative of Lee having "lost his sense of humor." Lee seems a bit nonplussed by the criticism.

"I've realized that a lot of the way my career has gone has been that people want to have an opinion of me and want to dislike [what I'm doing], so you just have to let them. You know, they'll find the reasons. It's weird, though, to say someone has lost their sense of humor. It's not like I was a comedian," he laughs. "I'm just trying to work it out, you know?"

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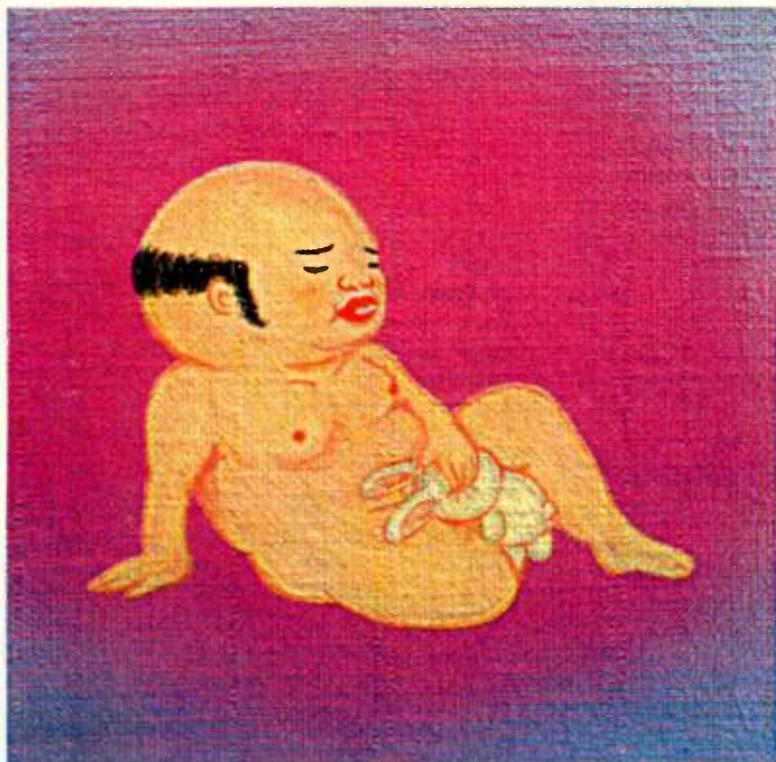
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JIM O'ROURKE



RECORDS

Eureka

This second solo release from legendary producer and musician Jim O'Rourke is a mighty dose of sonic experimentalism with a dash of sweet pop humor thrown in for good measure. From the first strumming subtleties of "Prelude To 110 or 220/Women Of The World," the unique vision of this unexpected bard begins to take shape. It's not until the album has been played 10 or 20 times that the real story is born.

O'Rourke has been causing quite a scene in the busy behind-the-scenes world of indie rock since the early '90s. He has six albums under his own name, including his last effort, the critically acclaimed *Bad Timing*. But that's only the beginning. O'Rourke was a member of the seminal avant garde outfit Gastr Del Sol and worked with The Red Krayola on two albums. He has made smashing guest appearances on Smog's *Red Apple Falls* and Edith Frost's *Calling Over Time*, and has worked as a producer and/or remixer for Sam Prekop, U.S. Maple, Faust, Tortoise and Oval, just to name a few. He is currently producing the next Stereolab and High Lamas records.

Clearly, O'Rourke is no stranger to hard work, especially of the technical variety. But be not afraid. *Eureka* flows naturally

and with grace. Instrumental tracks punctuate the album, making it easy to get lost in the notes. The best of these is "Happy Holiday," featuring a sad horn section amidst of sea of melancholia. Real masterpiece moments are "Movie On The Way Down," showing O'Rourke's careful croonings can lay well with soft instrumentation, as well as the cutest cover of Burt Bacharach's "Something Big."

In the past, O'Rourke has been known as one of those artists one either loves or hates. The guys from The Arab Strap were quoted as saying O'Rourke's *Bad Timing* was single-handedly responsible for the rule calling for personal stereos only on his tour bus. But *Eureka* is a wholly lovable album. It is timid and sullen in places, but not without its moments of impetuous youth.

So what's next for this impromptu indie legend? O'Rourke has begun work on his long-promised record. Set to be called *Novelty Act*, the album will feature covers of songs people hate. So far *Novelty Act* is said to include Bruce Hornsby's "The Way It Is" and Crash Test Dummies "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm." Can't wait. **(Drag City, P.O. Box 476867, Chicago 60647)**

—Cynthia Gentile

ANOTHER NOTHING

New Breed

New Breed is the debut from hardcore's newest hotshots, Another Nothing, and, for the most part, it lives up to the hype. Heavy grooves a la VOD set the tone, but Another Nothing isn't afraid to switch it up to a more trippy feel. The vocals are scathing at times, mellow at others. The music, although generally straight-forward, occasionally throws a curve ball, just enough to keep one's attention. Certain parts seem slightly misplaced, and the laid-back vocals don't always work. In all, *New Breed* is a very well-rounded record. The production is great—so important for this kind of record. Definitely a band to look out for in the future. The kids probably go ape-shit at a live show. (Chord, P.O. Box 15793, Philadelphia 19103)

—Pat Shannon

ARCH ENEMY

Stigmata

To some, technical death metal is synonymous with any mildly efficient player who stands out

from a sea of indecipherable, whammy bar-bending noise merchants. Still others find the terms mutually exclusive. The Amott brothers, Mike (of Carcass fame) and Christopher (late of Armageddon), join with the elder's ex-Carnage singer, John Liiva, on nine lively tunes threatening to destroy the preconceived notions of all narrow-minded listeners. Issued a good while back, the interim has seen more and more bands upgrading the chops without sacrificing intensity of aural clarity, yet Arch Enemy helped spearhead the movement. The piano and synthesized strings of "Vox Stellarum" form the sole respite from an assault built on coarse, intelligible vocals and a tuneful fretboard blitzkrieg. Musicians search entire careers for riffs as catchy as the chorus of "Sinister Mephisto," while the finger gymnastics of the title track deserve perfect scores. A gold medal performance, all around. (Century Media, 1453-A 14th St., #324, Santa Monica, CA 90404)

—Mark Gromen

BIOHAZARD

New World Disorder

What's this? Piano on track seven of the new Biohazard album? What's going on here? Brooklyn hardcore fans needn't worry though, the piano only lasts about 40 seconds. Then Biohazard drowns it out with a head-nodding, mosh-inducing hardcore romp. The album kicks off with "Resist," a definite candidate for a hit single. The song is fast with a deep, catchy groove and the traditional Biohazard shouting gang vocals. The band also has not shied away from its traditional lyrical themes about rebellion, social injustices and overcoming adversity. "I resist the pressure to be who you want me to be/I resist the pressure/I resist so I am free," and "I'm the underdog, and I will overcome," are a few of the die-hard, spirited messages vocalists Evan Seinfeld and Billy Graziadei shout out to fans. The band does show some versatility by strumming acoustic guitar and singing rather than shouting on "End Of My Rope" and "Cycle Of Ab-

use," but those are only momentary lapses in the band's usual repertoire, as both songs soon give way to low, heavy guitar riffs and angry shouts. With *New World Disorder*, Biohazard stays true to its famous *Urban Discipline* formula. Nothing has changed about the band's knack for mixing rap-style vocals with heavy guitar riffs and energetic, jump up-and-down beats. The only thing out of the ordinary on the band's latest effort is the title track, a straight hip-hop tune. For loyal Biohazard fans, this will be another angry, high-energy installment to add to the band's already impressive catalogue. (Roadrunner, 536 Broadway, New York 10012)

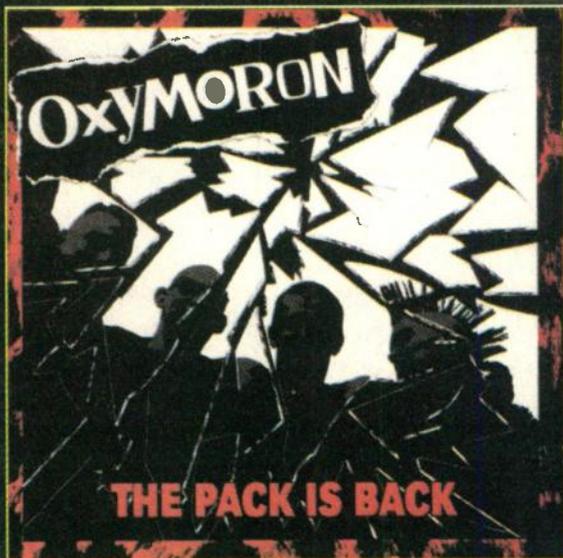
—Mandy Feingold

BOMBPOP

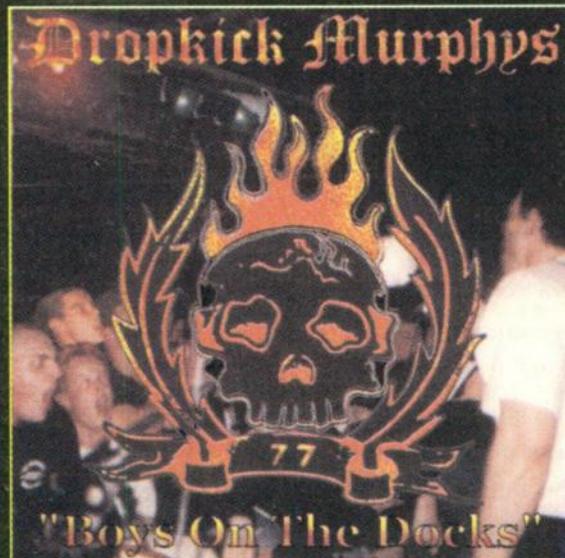
The Day I Had to Explode

The Day I Had to Explode is the debut album from Charlottesville, Va.'s, Bombpop. Bombpop's music is pure pop in the style of later-period Lemonheads. Each of this album's 12 tracks contains a catchy tunefulness and an upbeat sensibility.

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The problem with Bombpop is neither of its alternating vocalists is incredibly adept at hitting the correct notes. Melodies drift above and below the correct pitches, never really hitting their mark. This is disconcerting because the songs on *The Day I Had to Explode* are so inherently catchy. The listener is faced with the dilemma of loving them or being irritated by their off-key tune. All in all, with its debut, Bombpop creates a music with potential unattained because of sloppy vocals. **(Snap, Box 3364, Charlottesville, VA, 22903)**

—Frank Valish

THE BOWLING GREEN

One Pound Note

This new addition to the Nothing roster adds another funky level to its hyper-electro-pop. The Bowling Green, or Micko Westmoreland, produces a tight and easily danceable product embracing kitsch and futurism in the same beat. Tracks like "Astrakhan" and "Go Kart" showcase some of the best The Bowling Green has to offer with a happy tryst into techno-a-gogo. Beyond Westmoreland's penchant for musical amalgams, he has also made himself known on the other side of the entertainment world, starring in Todd Haynes' *The Velvet Goldmine*, as the ethereally beautiful Jack Fairy, a character loosely based on Marc Bolan and Brian Eno. So if the mere musical mention of '70s funk, '80s electronics and '90s big beats aren't enough to convince the critical masses of The Bowling Green's eclectic presentation, his stunning visage in one of the most chronologically convergent looks at the music world should just about do it. **(Nothing, 10900 Wilshire Blvd., #1230, Los Angeles 90024)**

—Cynthia Gentile

BUCKCHERRY

Buckcherry

It's possible to immediately write Buckcherry off as a cheap derivative of The Black Crowes, particularly as the vocals come off as something of a cross between Chris Robinson and Axl Rose. But Buckcherry refuses to not rock, and while there isn't the

innate ability to create a melody the Crowes have, Buckcherry manages to pull off a solid effort. The compositions lack finesse, particularly in the lyrics, but finesse isn't Buckcherry's goal. Instead, the band spends the album keeping its head down and plowing through acres of rock n' roll. Apparently, it's a one-guitar attack, aggressive throughout and a little sloppy on the side. The album does get a little lean after the third track, as the songs tend to lose distinction in the album. But "Lit Up" and "Lawless and Lulu" make a good opening case for Buckcherry, and "Dirty Mind," drives it home near the close. Not the greatest band ever, Buckcherry knows what it likes about rock n' roll. **(Dream Works, 100 Universal Plaza, Universal City, CA 91608)**

—André Calilhanna

CATERPILLAR

Peace, Love and Prosperity

Caterpillar makes nicely palatable pop with goofy vocals echoing Guv'nor's Charles Gansa. With titles like "Nimble Tongs Walt" and "I Meant Everything I Never Said" it's clear Caterpillar is trying to be clever and avoid being taken too seriously. "Kodiak" sounds like a facile nod to They Might Be Giants. On the other hand, "Serious Thrill" is seriously catchy and "Onus" and "Miannin" rock with appropriate abandon. For all its lack of solemnity, Caterpillar is strong throughout on rhythm, displaying tight drumming and bass lines. "Brenda Stone" the album's only instrumental, builds slowly and gracefully, showing what Caterpillar might do if the band doesn't choke itself with its own irony. **(Tappersize, 884 Greentree Sq., Rt. 73 N, Marlton, NJ 08053)**

—Elisa Ludwig

CORNELIUS

FM/CM

Japan's Cornelius, a.k.a. Keigo Oyamada, finds his *Fantasma* album put to the turntable test on *FM*. Mixes by Shibuya-kei buddies Buffalo Daughter and Pizzicato Five's Konishi Yasuharu sit alongside the Wilson-in-Hawaii sound of High Llamas, Scottish punkers The Pastels and

MUZZLE

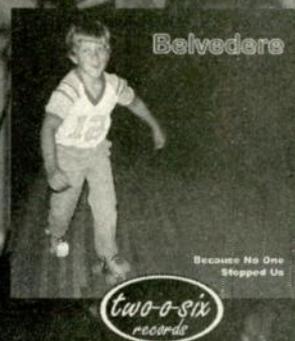
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such DJ notables as Coldcut, Money Mark and U.N.K.L.E.. Damon Albarn (of Blur) takes "Star Fruits Surf Rider" to a new pop high, while Coldcut renders "Typewrite Lesson" ever more abstract. The Pastels' take on "Clash" adds a charming vocal track. Most successful is Yasuharu's "Count 5,6,7,8.," elaborating on the original while keeping true to the Cornelius sound. Packaged alongside *FM* is Cornelius' retaliation, *CM*, features his mixes of the artists who have remixed his work. (**Matador, 625 Broadway, New York 10012**)

—Elisa Ludwig

DWARVES

Lick It 1983-1986/Free Cocaine 86-88

OK, let's ignore Blag Dahlia's literary contributions to *Rockpile*. Let's just assume Dahlia and his crew of super-punks are just another old-school, destructive band from the '80s. No problem. It's difficult to ignore a band whose sole purpose (at one point) was to piss off the hip-

sters in 'Frisco. In 1983, Dahlia, along with guitarist Hewhocannotbenamed and the crew would dress in the antithesis of punk fashion (bell-bottoms, psychedelic stuff) and pound out obnoxious tunes like "I'm A Living Sickness" and "Average Dick" while berating and abusing the crowd. Quite often, the band would be expelled after performing for only 15 minutes. Man, that's punk. The material from this era is copious—*Lick It* has 34 tracks and *Free Cocaine* has 39—and it's just oozing with blood, semen and the bad attitude only a band like The Dwarves can produce. The band put out these songs on seven-inch vinyl originally, and it's all pretty much impossible to find these days. Recess Records must have been smart enough to realize a Dwarves re-issue would just kick ass and sell out quicker than the band used to get kicked off stage. While *Lick It* shows the band in its earliest, rawest form, *Free Cocaine* gives gives a look at some of Dahlia's later noodlings on a Farfisa

organ. Of course, these days The Dwarves reputation has attained something of a legendary status in punk rock. Where the band's most recent album, *The Dwarves Are Young And Good Looking*, showcases a rock-solid approach to poppier songs, *Lick It* and *Free Cocaine* offer a mostly unavailable glimpse at the beginnings of a truly classic punk band. (Editor's note: Blag slipped me \$20 to write this review.) (**Recess, P.O. Box 1112, Torrance, CA 90505**)

—Erik Caplan

ELEVATOR THROUGH

Vague Premonition

Elevator Through is clearly influenced by Pink Floyd, particularly in Rick White's uncannily Gilmour-esque vocals. "Energy" rolls out in tense rhythmic waves. "Foggy Sea" with its distorted vocal effects and keyboard whorls makes a nice neopsychedelic anthem. Surprisingly, Elevator Through bursts out into full-on guitar pop in "The Only See To Thought" and slips right back into the quieter

clothes of "Comfortable, But Almost." Though some songs here fall short of the mark, leaving nothing of interest between overcharged riffs and breathy, too vague lyrics, Elevator Through manages to pull off a wide array of sounds and moods. (**Sub Pop, P.O. Box 20645, Seattle 98102**)

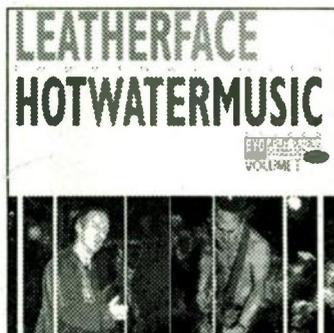
—Elisa Ludwig

EUPHONE

The Calendar Of Unlucky Days

Ryan Rapsys, for whom the moniker Euphone has come to stand, is joined by fellow Heroic Doses member Nick Macri for this release. Pushing the jazz-dub experiment envelope further, *The Calendar of Unlucky Days*, makes loose play into sonic satisfaction. Rhythm-heavy song structures like "Broken Gourd" and "Needle and Crate" get a groove on, while others move in freer spaces. Not quite as complex as Tortoise, Euphone works with a simpler palette, making more accessible music without compromising its unpredictability.

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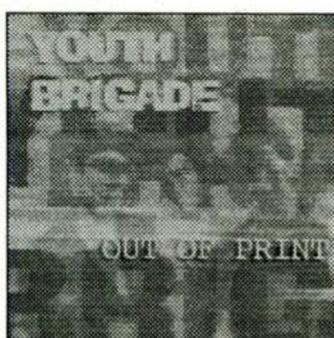
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—Elisa Ludwig

THE FRANKENSTEIN DRAG QUEENS FROM PLANET 13

Night Of The Living Drag Queens

Nobody here at *Rockpile* was too surprised when this disc made it into heavy rotation in the office CD player. The cover art features four truly unattractive, giant-sized, zombie-like transvestites stomping a metropolitan city. A look at the song titles gets the old salivary glands worked up in expectation of nasty rock n' roll. Check out these songs—"Mr. Motherfucker," "Die My Bride," "Full Metal Jackoff"—oh, man, how could this *not* rock. If it didn't, the world just isn't spinning on its axis correctly. One listen, and ka-bam! There's no question. This band just rules. Imagine Nashville Pussy with better songs instead of fire-breathing, seven-foot tattooed lesbians. Wednesday 13, the vocalist/guitarist has a great, leather-lunged voice, perfect for TFDQFP13's violent jams. Pure attitude, guts and snot. The songs are mostly up-tempo numbers with searing, slash-and-burn guitar playing and abusive drumming. One listen would have the meekest, mildest-mannered librarian-type throwing chairs through plate-glass windows and kicking over mailboxes with wild abandon. Yes, it really is that good. Prepare for world domination by a bunch of Frankenstein Drag Queens. (Uncle God Damn, P.O. Box 666, Landis, NC 28088)

—Erik Caplan

GARDENER

New Dawning Time

Featuring Aaron Stauffer of Seaweed and Van Conner of the Screaming Trees, this full-length is a delight. Although dark in places, the album is catchy and wholly singable. The band compliments itself in a unique and positive way—the members don't seem to compete for the front seat and clearly recognize where each musically belongs. Aptly enough, "Backseat" showcases this the best, and the strumming "Shakedown Cruise" adds nicely to the mix. Sweet instrumentation and emotionally driven vocals make *New Dawning Time*

a must-have, particularly for fans of these two seminal indie-pop outfits. (Sub Pop)

—Cynthia Gentile

GUTFIDDLE

Kung Foolery

Pop-punk in the Fat Wreck Chords vein. Fast and catchy with searing lead work, Gutfiddle's members sound like they are trying to race each other to the end of the song. Long, drawn-out, poppy vocals and two-part harmonic backing vocals are the frosting on the cake and make for an instantly hummable album. "Drinking With The Boys" harkens back to the days when every pop-punk album had an obligatory ska song with crappy horn parts, lyrics about masturbating, drinking beer. *Kung Foolery* finds the boys from Gutfiddle with their tongues firmly planted in cheek. In "Shitty Love Song," the lead singer mercifully spares the world from another pop-punk love song as he dismisses himself and the genre with, "Knowing the lyrics to this song will probably make you stupider." A band that can laugh at itself and the music it plays—definitely a rarity. (Onefoot, P.O. Box 30666, Long Beach, CA 90853)

—Kevin Wheeler

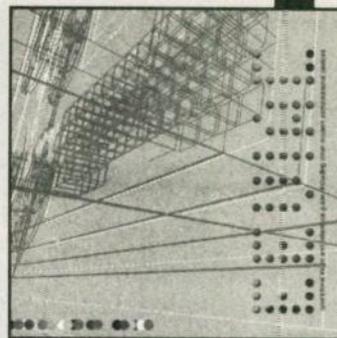
HEAD SET

Brownout

Mini-skirted go-go dancers should be in all of this band's videos. English wave vocals meets what would be a perfect soundtrack for the *Mod Squad* movie on *Brownout*. This is very poppy stuff sounding instantly familiar yet uniquely Head Set. As much as this album reminds one of The Animals at times, *Brownout* conjures images of early '80s MTV bands like Thomas Dolby, Gary Neuman, The Buggles and The Cars. While Head Set features two keyboard players—giving *Brownout* an electronic feel—it's not at all rave-ready. The upbeat music belies the not so happy lyrics. Songs like "Asteroyd Lloyd" and "Suicide Van" provide a glimpse into Head Set's darker side. The song "Suspension" has a progression similar to The Beatles' "She's So Heavy," while others

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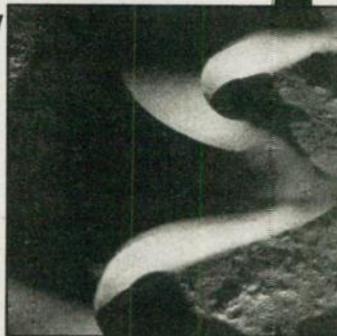
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would fit nicely along side *Middle-era* Pink Floyd material. Apparently, Head Set doesn't play out much because the members are convinced no one likes their music. Too bad, as Head Set could do a double bill with Lusk and not sound at all alien. "Twisted Steel, Leather Donut" seems a light-hearted jab at German electronic bands and is definitely the most unique track on *Brownout*. Head Set combines so many different influences yet comes out sounding fresh. There's got to be something here for radio. **(Centipede, 6245 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90038)**

—August Roderick

JEFFERIES FAN CLUB

Nothing To Prove

"This is the end of something good," lead-singer Mike Dziurgot sings on the first track, but, as it turns out, it is just the beginning. Catchy, well-played ska/punk with lyrics about the rigors of touring, being in a band and the stupid things guys do. Although it is very good, most of *Nothing To Prove* lacks the texture needed to grab a listener's attention. The horns, vocals, drums and bass seem to go at the same speed as the guitar. This proves to make each song run together. Instead of rapid-fire horn parts over a quick drum beat or a leisurely guitar solo over a reggae beat, Jefferies Fan Club should try more divergent parts. Remember what happens when something black is held against something white—contrast. Despite the lack of a standout single, Jefferies Fan Club's *Nothing To Prove* is a better-than-average release sure to earn a place in any rude-boy's collection. Standouts include the mid-tempo "Walking Backwards," the fast-paced lead track "Something Good" and the melodic guitar work from "Like A Dog." **(Vegas, Box 2175, Newport Beach, CA 92659)**

—Kevin Wheeler

JEGA

Spectrum

One of the most highly acclaimed electronic albums of recent history is finally getting it stateside release under the Matador label. *Spectrum* was released in the UK

last year, but the domestic version includes two bonus tracks, "Unity Gain" and "Naem." In the spirit of ambient techno from days gone by, Jega uses little or no vocal samplings, wrapping the listener in a web of dense noise. The man behind the mask, Dylan Nathan, is a student or architect, a predilection which surfaces throughout the album's carefully constructed tracks. Jega is reminiscent of the improvisational sonic stylings Aphex Twin or Squarepusher, as well as Nathan's architecture school classmate Mike Paradinas, a.k.a. u-ziq, a fitting connection as *Spectrum* is being released on Paradinas' Planet U label. In the over-populated world of techno, Jega is a welcome and imperative addition sure to make a lot of stellar noise. **(Matador)**

—Cynthia Gentile

JOAN OF ARC

Live In Chicago 1999

Joan of Arc's third album, despite its title, is not a live recording. Tim Kinsella of Cap'n Jazz fame writes finely wrought, challenging songs. The beautiful, fluttering "Who's afraid of Elizabeth Taylor?" mixes quiet beats and horns with acoustic guitar. "I'm Certainly Not Pleased With My Options For The Future" begins with the words "I've got this idea for a song," threatening to be little more than a conceptual joke, but then unfolds into a gentle melody. Joan of Arc sounds like a hybrid of Chicago jazz-noise experiments and the sparest of emo-core. **(Jade Tree)**

—Elisa Ludwig

KING MISSILE III

Failure

It's easy to imagine John S. Hall as one of those guys who got superb grades high school for his absurd poems—a kid with a *Star Trek* fetish and a *Dr. Who* scarf to match his *Monty Python* silly walk. In short, an intellectual dork dripping with disdain for anyone with a lower I.Q. It's an attractive stereotype to assign Hall, the lead vocalist of New York's abstract conglomeration, King Missile III, but probably not really accurate. With *Failure*, Hall and his cronies come off as intelligent without sounding smug or overly cocky.

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Recently renamed for its third album, King Missile III gained a degree of notoriety with two singles from an earlier effort, namely "Martin Scorsese" and the *Beavis And Butthead*-approved "Detachable Penis." The fame Hall and company gained from the video exposure of these was misleading—most fans seemed to think the band's image was purely based on humorous songs about kitsch subject matter. Cerebral supporters of the band looked at the band as a kind of sellout—after all, popular videos on MTV are a signal of abandoning true artistic integrity, right?

Destined to be the opposite of its moniker, *Failure* should appeal to both types of King Missile aficionados—the folks who liked "Detachable Penis" will roll on the floor with laughter at the lyrical content of "Up My Ass," "Gay/Not Gay" and "A Good Hard Look," while the intellectual set will delve deeply into the varied instrumentation and fascinating structures of "Happiness" and "Tour Diary: Louisville." *Failure* is an example of that rarest of efforts—an intelligent collection of songs without the alienating tendencies of most challenging music. "A Good Hard Look," for example, lampoons the sensitive, liberal new-age guy's need to put down the sexual prowess (and penis size) of sexist, macho blue-collar men. Hall doesn't exclude himself from the "literary, intellectual, feminist-type," either. He encourages men like him to simply admit it—dick size matters, and the sensitive types just haven't got it in the pants. "So just admit it/You'll feel better about it once you accept it/I admit it, I accept it/And I'm not about to watch basketball games on television or join the army or vote Republican just for the sake of a few extra inches/Forget it, it's not worth it."

Yep, something for everybody. (Shimmy Disc, 74 Leonard St., New York, 10013)

—Erik Caplan

KITTY BADASS

One Cell At A Time

Kitty Badass plays the kind of punk rock is best suited for a *Party Of Five* scene where one of the younger kids goes to his or her first show—not abrasive, not

adventurous, not interesting. Actually, it isn't all that bad, but, with the possible exception of the beautiful vocals, it is nothing but a pop-punk cliché clinic. The lyrical content is interesting as well, but there is just so little going on musically it is difficult to pay attention. It's a shame, too, because the production is excellent. If Kitty Badass had anything to offer, at least it would have been heard loud and clear. (Elevator Music, P.O. Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06505)

—Pat Shannon

LIMP

Guitarded

The first track sounds like They Might Be Giants got pissed off about being blown off the stage by its opening band again and learned how to play. Fortunately, *Guitarded* continues to increase in depth with song after song of catchy vocals and choppy power chords. With super-fuzzy distortion, two-part harmonies and catchy rhythms, Limp manages to create a unique sound best described as "mopey" or a rainy day set to music. Occasional forays into ska territory become a welcome change and makes for a dancer-friendly record. The band still makes the bouncy rhythms seem melancholy. Even the guitar solos seem to be done by someone who can't decide whether to make the change from E to C or commit suicide. Limp's reliance on guitar rhythms for pop hooks could become a weak spot in the future but it's nothing a little keyboard or some riffing can't overcome. Besides, the album is called *Guitarded*, so it's kind of a warning to the listener not to expect too much from a technical point of view. Most bands don't live up to the singles they release on comps, but *Guitarded* is a great effort. Here's hoping the boys in Limp keep off of the Prozac. (Honest Don's, P.O. Box 192027, San Francisco 94119-2027)

—Kevin Wheeler

THE LUCYS

Looking For A Plane Or Two

With the slightly off-key opening vocal and not-quite-sure acoustic guitar on "You Steal Fo'give-ness," the band may seem to trip

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over itself on its debut release, *Looking For A Plane Or Two*, but Lucys leader Jesse Jameson knows exactly what he's doing. A regular on the Philly indie scene for several years, Jameson, along with bassist Joe Kim and drummer Bret Tobias, delivers sly pop hooks and a faux-British accent across a predominantly acoustic record with wonderful results. From the "I'm a Boy"-inspired "A Leading Part" through the anthem "Now That You've Screwed All of Your Friends" and the tender "Invitation," *Looking For A Plane Or Two* is chock-full of great songs. Along with Elliott Smith and newcomer Don Piper, this band serves up intriguing acoustic sheen with intelligent lyrics and the right amount of pop sensibility. (Tappersize)

—Ed Yashinsky

LUNGBRUSH

Old School New School

Go back to school! Another primitive, unimaginative slice of deathcore, even an infusion of Machine Head-styled guitar squelches and technological gim-

mickry can't disguise the fact it's the same music festering since the dawn of the decade. Today, the sound is as played out and over hyped as Monica Lewinsky. Fourteen choices within forty minutes. Props are deserved for the above average lyrical themes, including the anti-gang "Urban Tribes," a pair of anti-drug messages, "Heroin Suicide" and "I Quit," a tale of the dangers on both sides of prostitution called "Janie" and the frequently espoused rant against mainstream radio/labels ("Corporate Bullshit"), but the papers and TV news are filled with similar images. This is supposed to be music, not a political soapbox, and as such, Lungbrush fail to garner votes. (Pavement, P.O. Box 50550, Phoenix 85076)

—Mark Gromen

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP

The Unforgiven

Michael Schenker is back once again with another collection of hard rockin' tunes. The latest offering from MSG, entitled *The Unforgiven*, explores various commercial hard rock styles of

the '70s and '80s. The vocals add to the feel of this time period, as singer Kelly Keeling often sounds like a cross between Sammy Hagar and former Whitesnake vocalist David Coverdale. MSG does get adventurous at times, as demonstrated in "Hello Angel," played in an odd time meter. For the most part, however, *The Unforgiven* consists of power ballads and straightforward hard rock tunes. (Shrapnel, P.O. Box P, Novato, CA 94948)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

BORISLAV MITIC

Borislav Mitic

Serbian guitarist Borislav Mitic certainly knows his craft. His self-titled album features 13 instrumentals showcasing his highly polished guitar technique. Each of the instrumentals evoke a multitude of different musical moods, and Mitic uses his guitar like a painter's palette to color each musical landscape. There are classically-influenced pieces ("Sky Rider"), beautiful, ethereal pieces ("Mystic Part I" and

"Ballade Pour Elle") and all-out shredders ("Bird Dance"), to name a few. Borislav Mitic is definitely a talent to watch. (Shrapnel)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

VINNIE MOORE

The Maze

Vinnie Moore is a well-known name in progressive metal/guitar virtuoso circles. What many outside of those circles may not realize, however, is that Moore is just as good at songwriting as he is at guitar pyrotechnics. Considering all of the songs on *The Maze* are instrumentals, the ability to hold the listener's interest with songs that are devoid of lyrics is quite an accomplishment. And Moore achieves this, thanks to his easily digestible arrangements, serving serve the song rather than the guitar solo. Overall, *The Maze* is a guitar-driven album that is light on self-indulgence, and heavy on accessibility. And, above all, enjoyable. (Shrapnel)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

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.AR. PINK
Frontierman

Is there a better time than right now to be a woman in rock n' roll? Probably not. As Hole tears up the charts, L7 kicks ass and Mr. Pink is taking names. Mr. Pink has a sound less whiny than the former and more carefully constructed than the latter. The band knows how to lay back, too, as tracks like "Derelict" show a maturity and depth of melodic sensibility so elusive to many young acts. On the rocking side, "Tormenta" and "Lo Que Sabe" demonstrate one thing clearly—this band's got teeth. Named after the Steve Buscemi character in *Reservoir Dogs*, Mr. Pink doesn't miss a trick. (**Planetary, 2614 W. Cary St., Richmond, VA 23220**)

—Stuart Pitt

MUSTARD PLUG
Pray For Mojo

Pray For Mojo is the sound of the unending tour—a tour with another night spent in some town with no name, another load-in, another load-out, clean-

ing spit valves, etc. Lead singer Dave Kirchgessner sounds like he speaks for the band when he sings, "Can't punch the clock/Can't walk the walk/Abhor the rut" in "Not Giving In." It also sounds like Mustard Plug has transcended the ska/punk label and started making "music." Listen to tracks 10 and 8 to be wowed by the transformation as backing vocals and more mature guitar work make a stronger appearance. It sounds as if Mustard Plug has come to terms with its songwriting ability. Surprisingly, "Mend Your Ways" is a non-punk/non-ska number sure to knock even a casual fan's socks off. The band intersperses hard-driving punk with straight ska without ever really doing a straight ska number. Where other bands sound like rip-offs, Mustard Plug has an established sound different from the norm. Could it be the horns ability to not overplay, Kirchgessner's gruff vocals or just so many years of playing together? Who knows, it works and *Pray For Mojo* is the end product. It's always a treat to

hear a band get better with age. (**Hopeless, P.O. Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 914409-7495**)

—Kevin Wheeler

THE NEVILLE BROTHERS
Valence Street

As the cross-bearers of the New Orleans sound for more than 20 years, The Neville Brothers studio recordings have always maintained a certain comfort. Whether its Aaron Neville's to-die-for falsetto, Cyril Neville's booming tenor or Art and Charles Neville's funky, rhythmic explosions, New Orleans' first musical family always delivers sweet ballads juxtaposed with funky voodoo stomps, floating into the memory like a perfect breeze off the bayou. With the band's Columbia Records debut, *Valence Street*, The Neville Brothers get right to the heart of all things Neville and deliver what may be this act's best record to date. Along with Aaron's incredibly strong performances on "A Little Piece Of Heaven," "Give Me A Reason" and "If I had a Hammer," and the grooving funk

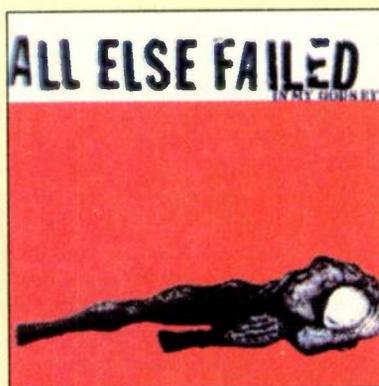
propelling "Over Africa," "Valence Street" and "The Dealer," Fugees frontman Wyclef Jean eases The Neville into his hip-hop world with the enchanting, "Mona Lisa." It remains to be seen if The Neville Brothers can garner the widespread success Aaron has received on numerous solo performances, but *Valence Street* (like every Neville Brothers record) only reinforces the special musical nature of the Neville clan. (**Columbia, 550 Madison Ave., New York 10022-3211**)

—Ed Yashinsky

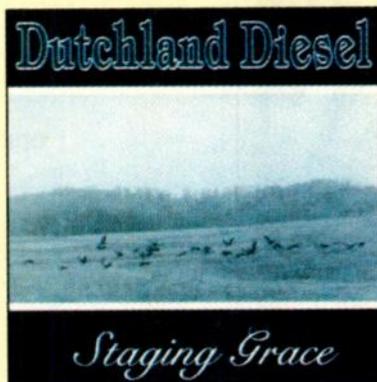
NO INNOCENT VICTIM
Flesh And Blood

The lyrical aesthetic-of Christian metallions like Zao or Living Sacrifice (or the whole Solid State roster, for that matter) multiplied by the hardcore sonics of Strife yields No Innocent Victim. The San Diego Jesus-core band sounds like its going 100 miles-per-hour down the highway to hell, but there is definitely a positive message wrapped in this sizzling metallic package. No fear—NIV doesn't

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hurl Psalms or encourage its listeners to start fasting and praying novenas. The opening chords and subsequent clusterfuck of breakdowns in "CEB" will incite marathon moshpits. Keep an ear out for grandma's commentary, too. It's a gem. Thanks, Victory, for putting the "hard" back in hardcore. (Victory, P.O. Box 146546, Chicago 60614)

—Amy Sciarretto

OF MONTREAL

The Gay Parade

Like fellow Elephant Six band Elf Power, Of Montreal makes whimsical songs out of fantasy almost surely derived from hallucinogenic drug use. But such drugs are not necessary for the listener—*The Gay Parade* is its own trip. Athens, Ga.'s Kevin Barnes, reincarnated as Claude Robert, fashioned *The Gay Parade* along with a bevy of Elephant Six buddies to relieve himself from the sorrow of heartbreak. In *The Gay Parade*, '60s pop celebrates the joys of a "Neat Little Domestic Life" as well as the series of imagined characters, with names like Tulip Baroo and Nickee Coco, who make up the parade. Unapologetically cheerful, *The Gay Parade* might be a wonderful children's album, but at Barnes' invitation it can be visited by anyone at any time. (Bar None, P.O. Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030)

—Elisa Ludwig

OPETH

My Arms, Your Hearse

The tremendous influence Pink Floyd has had on rock music is well documented, yet the most surprising aspect remains the tie-in with seemingly incompatible extreme metal bands. From the cover of "Astronomy Domine," by Canadian cyberpunk act, Voi Vod, to the gradual development of Tiamat, The Gathering and other European acts abetted by the legalization of psychedelic drugs, Roger Waters and company hold sway over many ferocious characters. Sweden's Opeth has issued three platters of marvelous, mind-expanding music, defying easy categorization. Aggressive, gruff-throated passages interceded with

dreamy, acoustic bits and whiplash-inducing, drop-of-the-dime changes of intensity. The rabid juxtaposition is immediate, as the exaggerated silence and lone piano notes comprising "Prologue," give way to the searing "April Ethereal," a nine-minute amalgamation of gruff tones, spoken word, acoustic and electric guitars, often simultaneously. From an acoustic intro, "When" explodes brutally, yet often revisits subtlety, while the short, but aptly titled "Madrigal" demonstrates Opeth's commitment to melodies, as well as off-the-wall experimentation. (Century Media)

—Mark Gromen

PARTIAL POST

Lessons

Somehow, this form of rock/hip-hop clings to legitimacy and relevance and remains barely breathing, regardless of how derivative nature. For example, Partial Post incorporates socially-related themes over hardcore funk rock, while the guitarist spends a good amount of time carving parts out of strange tones. Sound familiar? And while some of the rap passages are passable, the band is incapable of coming through with melody or anything resembling a hook at the choruses, making half of every composition entirely useless. Limited ideas coupled with a limited range of playability leaves this book of lessons short in substance and long in tedium. Rap is a form of music relying on its being savvy and real. With a few notable exceptions, this element gets stripped away when incorporated with aggressive rock. The result finds both elements weakened and the music becomes completely irrelevant and a difficult listen. That's the lesson for today. Class dismissed. (Bullet, 1003 N. George St., York, PA 17404)

—Andre Calihanna

PEP SQUAD

Yreka Bakery

Pep Squad manages to pull off punk sounds with mellow beats. It also kicks up some ska sounds in "Friend or Foe," an Adam Ant and Marco Pirroni



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cover, by using a trumpet. "On That Day" slows the pace after "Wildpack" and "Freak Show," two faster songs on the album. Pep Squad goes from upbeat and crazy in "Kandigram" to slower guitar effects mixed with a simple repetitive bass line in "Black And Blue." "The Floor" doesn't even belong on *Yreka Bakery*. It has a trippy, disco-funk sound that's just all wrong for any band to include on an album. It's a long lost *Saturday Night Fever* track, listeners are advised to cover their ears and run. (Tooth & Nail, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle 98111)

—Erin O'Neal

PINHEAD GUNPOWDER

Shoot The Moon

Depending on their age demographic, people either love, hate or don't know Green Day. It's easy to love Billie Joe Armstrong and Tre Cool as a teenager—it's almost a requirement in some high schools. It's equally easy to hate them if the listener is older than 25—anyone older probably remembers the days when being into punk

music was a freaky, weird thing to do. Those who remember that time period have an "I'm old-school and I remember good punk rock" complex. And, of course, there's always a backlash against a band with a good sales record. Either way, it's impossible to deny good punk rock music. Pinhead Gunpowder is a side project of Green Day's irrepressible front-man/guitarist, Armstrong, and it's just good, old-fashioned punk. Oh sure, Armstrong's celebrity status might help to sell *Shoot The Moon*, but the band's songs are the real reason East Bay punk fans should buy it. While the band never hits the poppy mark established by his other band, Pinhead Gunpowder is just as valid (or perhaps moreso) for its brutally concise, unfaltering take on pop-punk. (Adeline, 5337 College Ave., #318, Oakland, CA 94618)

—Erik Caplan

PONGA

Ponga

Loosegroove obviously prides

itself on being somewhat experimental, and this collection of instrumental meanderings will certainly help propagate the notion. Whether it will help the label sell any albums is doubtful, but that doesn't appear to be the primary focus. *Ponga* has some moments of clarity, but the reality is this is a masturbatory effort with the band facing toward King Crimson and bowing in reverence. The drums and guitar smack of Bruford and Belew, and the overall tone and feel of the album might as well be outtakes from Crimson's library. Outtakes, of course, because this isn't quite the real thing. Not to say *Ponga* doesn't score some points. The comparisons come from the players' ability to play and their ability to create a spacey, eclectic brew of psychedelic art rock. But the album wears thin before the fourth track ends, and *Ponga* could make one drive off the side of the road. Beware. (Loosegroove, 2508 Fifth Ave., #110, Seattle 98107)

—André Calilhanna

STEPHEN PRINA

Push Comes To Love

A recent contributor to Red Krayola and an accomplished conceptual artist, Prina brings his keen (albeit cerebral) talents to pop. Though most of the lyrics are his own, Prina also borrows from friends like Krayola's Mayo Thompson, fiction writer Dennis Cooper and filmmaker Robert Bresson. Though Prina sounds a bit like a lounge singer, the unfurling melodies of songs like "The Achiever" deliver him from the depths of anachronism. Featuring the ubiquitous John McEntire on drums and the final collaboration of David Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke (whose band, *Gastre del Sol*, recently disbanded) as co-producers, *Push Comes To Love* is the ultimate Chicago scene-track. (Drag City, P.O. Box 476867, Chicago 60647)

—Elisa Ludwig

PRO-PAIN

Act Of God

After five studio efforts, the name Pro-Pain unfortunately evokes some negative reactions. Forget whatever image the mind con-

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juries, as *Act Of God* is the fiercest collection of pain yet assembled. Leaving the Big Apple and relocating to sunny Florida has not only rejuvenated the veteran band, but rededicated it to the metallic cause. Formed by Gary Meskil from the ashes of hardcore legend The Crumbsuckers, Pro-Pain has constantly fought for an identity, vacillating between the often derisive worlds of punk and heavy metal, with limited success. The guitar-driven dominance of songs like "Stand Tall," the title cut and "Hopeless?" are built around breaks and solos, tipping the scales in favor of a more metallic sound. No ska horns or other odd instrumentation, just adherence to the Motorhead creed—speed, heaviness and a good dose of snot. (Nuclear Blast America, P.O. Box 43618, Philadelphia 19106)

—Mark Gromen

THE REVELERS

Day In, Day Out

Replacements fans looking for, well, a replacement, will find

The Revelers an apt fill-in. Employing the same kind of jangly guitar pop just a bit too loud to be British, *Day In, Day Out* should have been recorded in 1982. Unfortunately, it is all too dated to be interesting in 1999. Ranging from the somewhat catchy to the downright annoying, songs here never go a beat more than predictable. (Spin-art, P.O. Box 1798, New York 10156)

—Elisa Ludwig

ROAD RAGE

Nothin' To Declare

Nothin' To Declare is an album so good it's hard to know where to start, but the best place is with a bunch of adjectives sans their "g." Boot stompin', ass kickin', beer drinkin', pit makin', fist wavin', etc. Anything goes in this Oil band's vocabulary as long as it is off-beat and unexpected—weird changes, sing-along choruses, raging guitars and a better-than-average-punk rock drummer make for a very successful album. Plus, most of the songs hover at about the two-to-three-minute mark, so

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most songs end before Road Rage has exhausted all its tricks. Isn't there some kind of punk rock penalty for using the word "Oi!" in a song after 1995? Nah, who cares—by track 13 any true fan will be drunk and looking for a soccer stadium to trash. Road Rage is definitely a band to watch—preferably out of bottle-throwing range. (**Radical, 77 Bleecker St., New York 10012**)

—Kevin Wheeler

ROCK A TEENS

Golden Time

Gritty, hillbilly melodrama seeps out of the Rock A Teens' third album like ketchup through Wonder bread. Sporting a sound the band aptly calls "Orbisonic," the Rock A Teens wail and grind through operettas of adolescent excess. Mating garage rock with big pop bounce on "Across The Piedmont" and "Tuesday's Just as Bad," this foursome finds just the right combination to stay on the edge. With equal parts angst and reverb, Chris Lopez beams, "All that death jazz/It's all they ever had/To feel so young and so alive." The Rock A Teens make living sound tough, but then again, what is rock without the blues? (**Merge, P.O. Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514**)

—Elisa Ludwig

RORSCHACH TEST

Unclean

Rorschach Test is angry at the world. Everyone gets dissed on this album, from the Kennedy family to O.J. Simpson. And the band really hates Elvis—there are two versions of the song "Elvis" on this album, one being the "dis-graceland mix." When the band isn't trashing Elvis, the other lyrics aren't exactly uplifting either. "God please set the world on fire tonight/Please let it burn until it dies/Wipe all the madness from my eyes/I'm bored with everything/I'm sick of everything." It doesn't quite make listeners want to join the "up with people" movement. Those who like dark, industrial music in the vein of Ministry and Front Line Assembly will find this disc in heavy rotation on the CD player. The thick layer of guitars succeeds in mixing a heavy,

aggressive sound with the keyboards, but the programming is a little less imaginative than Ministry or FLA. Also, the singer goes back and forth from mimicking the raspy vocals of Al Jourgensen to sounding like the lead singer of Seven Mary Three. However, the effort could become a little more polished with time. *Unclean* is a decent industrial album, but Rorschach Test needs to make a few adjustments in order to become a great industrial band. (**Slipdisc, 101 W. Grand, 6th floor, Chicago 60610**)

—Mandy Feingold

SKANATRA

Skanatra

Although the late "Chairman of the Board" hasn't inspired a fanatical personality cult of weirdness like Elvis, consider Skanatra to be one of the first, uh, offbeat offerings in tribute to Frank Sinatra. Does an album of Sinatra covers translate well into two-tone? Yes and no. Where "The Lady is a Tramp" falls flat and sounds forced, "Fly Me to the Moon" is whimsical and infectious as a reggae/big band number. More importantly, Skanatra has captured the swinging, drunken fun of mid-period Sinatra when the Rat Pack ruled the world. Live shows with Skanatra must be a gas, with everyone in the audience singing along, alcohol being passed by Willie the Senior Toastmaster, and a rastafarian-sounding lead singer (hopefully clutching a martini glass). The story of Skanatra, enclosed in the CD cover, makes for an interesting read, and the drawings in the style of Carol Lay are just adorable. Bar-laden Hoboken, NJ, has found a new hometown hero to carry on the good fight. Dream show for alcoholics—Skanatra opening up for The Pietasters. (**P.O.S., 321 Newark St., Hoboken, NJ 07030**)

—Kevin Wheeler

SONGS: OHIA

Axxess And Ace

This third full-length release from Songs: Ohia, a.k.a. Jason Molina, is the perfect love-songs album for sinners and saints alike. All nine tracks of *Axxess And Ace* are fraught with pain and plea-

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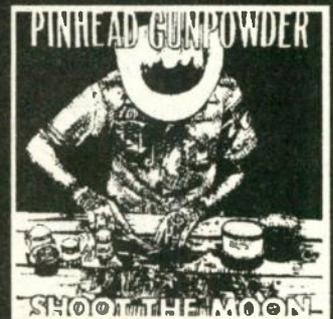
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sure, real feelings captured and kept close. Admittedly, it may take a few spins to appreciate the depth Molina has managed to create, but it will be worth the effort. Guest appearances from Edith Frost, Geof Comings (Party Girls), Michael Krassner and David Pavkovic (Boxhead Ensemble) and Joe Ferguson (Pinetop Seven) add much of the beautiful background noise, but Molina's stark and pained voice never strays from the forefront. And if the abstract honesty isn't enough, the fact the album was recorded almost entirely live and with musicians who had only heard the material on the day they recorded should solidify Molina's place in indie rock's upper echelon. **(Secretly Canadian, 1703 N. Maple St., Bloomington, IN, 47404)**

Strife record, for that matter, they probably already do. The majority of the record is live—a plus only if hearing a 13-year-old sing the chorus is appealing. The recording is decent, the songs are the same and the kids probably had fun. The studio stuff is classic Strife, with the exception of "Untitled," showcasing a more experimental sound hopefully to be continued in Angermeans, the new band formed from Strife's remains. All in all, pretty cool. **(Victory)**

—Pat Shannon

SWINGIN' UTTERS

The Sounds Wrong EP

A typical fast-paced, punk rock crew sporting leather and disgruntled looks, the name Swingin' Utters alone raises a few questions for this band. The Utters' six song EP, *Sounds Wrong*, was originally released in 1996 by IFA Records and became its fourth album on the Fat Wreck Chords label when re-released in 1998. The slurred speech pronounced with a British accent, brings back memories of early English punk with all-American

—continued on page 39

STRIFE

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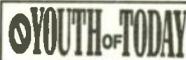
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STRAIGHT FROM THE EDGE

Looks like Ken will be battling for Barbie's affections now that 21st Century Toys has manufactured Misfits dolls! Plastic, 12-inch versions of Jerry Only and Doyle Von Frankenstein will be available this summer... Soulfly has replaced guitarist Logan Mader with Snot's Mikey Dowling... Earth Crisis has recorded a live video with High Roller Productions for the song "End Begins." Live footage has been taken from the band's fall tour with Sepultura... Joan Of Arc's next full-length, *Live In Chicago 1999* is due May 18. The title is deceptive—it's not a live recording and has been described as "quiet" and "experimental"... In My Eyes is working on a 10-song follow-up to last year's *The Difference Between*... Shai Hulud's adorable singer Chad Gilbert has two side projects, Boddicker and New Found Glory. NFG supposedly sounds like Gameface's blend of pop/punk. NFG will release a record on Eulogy Records, run by former Morning Again guitarist and current Where Fear And Weapons Meet guitarist

John Wylie... Will Haven has tentatively titled its third album *WHVN* and the album has a radio theme running through it... Battery is in the studio demoing tracks and will record in May. Singer Brian McTernan is moving his Salad Days Studio from Boston to Washington, DC... H2O will release a three-song seven-inch on Temperance Records as a prelude to *F.T.T.W.*, its second pitch for Epitaph Records... Pennywise and The Dropkick Murphys have been confirmed for this summer's *Warped Tour*. Skarhead will play select northeast dates, and The Bouncing Souls and H2O may also join the tour as well... Agnostic Front will release its second album in two years... Coalesce released a Led Zeppelin tribute for Hydrahead Records...



Stoner-rock outfit Nebula has signed to Zero Hour Records, with a full-length scheduled for July... A new Unsane record is forthcoming on Relapse Records at the end of the year... Dimmu Borgir bassist Nagash has left the black metal band... The Bad Brains tribute is called *Never Give In*. Confirmed contributors include Snapcase, VOD, Sepultura and Skinlab... In the span of two months, a slew of California bands have had equipment stolen while touring. Fear Factory, Spineshank and System Of A Down fell victim to thieves in Philadelphia, while The Deftones' gear truck was stolen in Michigan... Merauder's *Five Deadly Venoms* is due this summer on

Century Media! It should satisfy those who adore the Brooklyn hardcore band's classic, *Master Killer*... Slayer, Sick Of It All and Meshuggah are touring together, covering the thrash, hardcore and industrial metal bases... Silent Majority signed to Initial Records... Sevendust is in the studio, working with producer Toby Wright, who twiddled knobs for Alice In Chains and Korn. Look for the new album onTVT Records this summer... Boy Sets Fire will tour with Avail this summer... Method Man, Eminem, Korn's Jonathan Davis and Scott Weiland are all scheduled to appear on Limp Bizkit's forthcoming *Significant Others*, due in July... Candiria has signed to MIA Records... Get ready for Buried Alive's *Death Of Your Perfect World*... Turmoil's *The Process Of* is out on Century Media and it's punishing... Metal brothers-in-arms Manowar will release its second live album in as many years on Metal Blade Records. *Hell On Stage Live* is the title.

—Amy Sciarretto

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CLICKS & BEEPS

By Cynthia Gentile

After spending most of his post-adolescent life in the stunning world of house music, DJ, producer and label head Jack Frost has a lot to say. He has seen many trends come and go. In some instances, he was at least partially responsible for their timely demise. Frost knows what's next, and he is not afraid to say, "I told you so."

"I am under no obligation to play what people want to hear. I think I try to play them what they should want to hear. All I can do is hope people can appreciate what I'm trying to do. I just try to keep enough vision not to stray too far from the course," he declares.

Frost started his label, V Recordings, along with his partner Bryan Gee, because he knew there was a lot of music not getting out. The label is responsible for introducing the world to the now infamous Roni Size.

"When I first heard Roni I knew he was doing something good, and I knew people would love it. So we did what we could to get it out there," says Frost.

1998 saw the release of a two-volume CD set entitled *V Classics*, solidifying Frost and Gee's place in the fickle world of electronica. The label's follow-up, *Planet V*, is slated to hit the streets April 6. The release date is the same domestically and abroad, a feat many have tried and most have failed. But the V Recordings releases are

Jumpin' Jack Frost Talks Shop



L-r: Bryan Gee, Jumping Jack Frost

atypical in another key way as well. Most of the artists included on the album have major label deals. Peshay is signed to Mo Wax, Adam F is on the Astralwerks roster, DJ Krust is signed to Talkin' Loud, and the list goes on. The V label is so well-respected, artists jump at the chance to be included.

"I ask artists to contribute when their music makes me feel a certain way. I can't really describe it, but I know when I hear something that brings up all kinds of funky, sexy images, that's the one I want. It has to have a very passionate edge," he says.

Frost has spent his life in the dance scene, alternating between fixations on acid house and drum n' bass, but what really fuels his fire is old-school jazz and funk.

"Those people were the real masters, and we'd be nowhere without them. Funk is the backbone of drum n' bass, and V is still primarily a funk label," Frost continues.

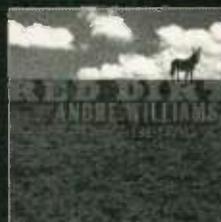
But V does not churn out standard jazz hybrids—an all-too-common problem in the scene today.

"We have to modernize it, but stick to the same vibe. It's all about feeling it," he says. "There are a lot of people doing it and doing it well. I think DJ Die is going to break big, and I really respect the stuff King Britt is putting out. The passion is definitely there and people can recognize that."



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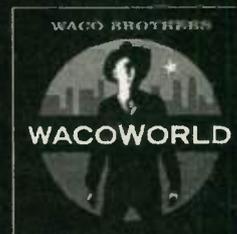
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BRAND NEW!!!

—continued from page 36
 lyrics. From Jehovah's witnesses to vermicelli, these five guys know how to write a good song. **(Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco 94119)**

—Erin O'Neal

TERRA FIRMA

Terra Firma

Terra Firma is not one of those '90s hard rock bands trying to break new ground or create its own genre in the music business. In fact, Terra Firma is simply keepin' it real. And the band does this by paying homage to the creator of heavy metal—Black Sabbath. The vocals on "Good Stuff" sound like they were done by Ozzy himself, and any listener would swear "Fifth Wheel" is a Sabbath cover until looking at the songwriting credits inside the CD booklet. This is not to say Terra Firma is just a wanna-be Sabbath cover band. The guitarist uses some eerie, trippy guitar effects a la Tony Iommi, but a lot of the tunes on this 10-track effort are faster than the typical Black Sabbath song. The album flows from the punchy, grinding "Goatburn," to the mellow ballad "Separate Graves" with ease. Then, suddenly, the band launches into the lightning fast "Spiral Guru," with the bass-drum going double time. Sudden speed changes such as these keep the album from getting stale. Also, thumbs up to this Swedish band for not falling into the trap of typical "European metal," by staying away from high-pitched, screechy vocals and long, technical-yet-cheesy guitar solos. This album would appeal to old-school Sabbath heads as well as younger music fans looking for something new with an older sound. Terra Firma succeeds in keeping thing fresh by not trying to sound cutting edge. This band seems to know the classics will always withstand the test of time. **(The Music Cartel, 106 W. 32nd St., 3rd Floor, New York 10001)**

—Mandy Feingold

3 COLOURS RED

Revolt

Like any good English pop album, *Revolt* serves up massive, cascading production with washy guitars melting into orchestral

arrangements. 3 Colours Red also provides exemplary vocal performances, complemented by harmonies of both voices and guitar. Multiple melodies are interlaced, giving the listener an abundance of ear candy. This being said, *Revolt* is an album of potential singles. Every track on *Revolt* has its reason for commercial appeal, from the sparse rock and guitar hook of "Pirouette" to the mid-tempo nostalgia of "Beautiful Day" to the unabashed pop message on "Song on the Radio." 3 Colours Red is a little wimpy for alternative rock, but perhaps just English enough for college radio and certainly tasty enough for video consumption. With the popularity of bands like The Verve and Oasis, and guitar-pop of Tonic, there is reason to believe 3 Colours Red will pave its way into American CD players. **(Epic, 550 Madison Ave., New York 10022)**

—André Calilhanna
 VA

Satori: A Tribute To Bauhaus

This CD is worth it for the liner notes—they're hilarious. *Satori* is Japan's most creative and bizarre gathering to pay homage at the altar of artsy goth, and boy, oh boy is it an eclectic mix of industrial and electronica. Each artist twists and kneads the songs like bread to create a unique concoction but in the spirit of unbounded experimentalism—the hallmark of Peter Murphy and company. All the favorites are here—"Bela Lugosi" still retains a dark and gothic feel but is more spacious and expansive, "Stigmata Martyr" sounds like it could be played in the techno-goth club of a vampire flick and it sounds better than Ministry's version. Don't listen to *Satori*, dance to it. Dance until light peeks over the horizon, dance until the X wears off, until the strobe light bursts into flames. *Satori's A Tribute To Bauhaus* begs for

—continued on page

—continued from page 40

the release of conscious thought, unleashing the animalistic urge to surrender to the pulse and the beat. Embrace it. **(Creativeman, 3619 Motor Ave., #280, Los Angeles 90034)**

—Kevin Wheeler

VA

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In The Groove

Homer Simpson once said, "I used to rock n' roll all night and party every day. Then it was every other day. Now I'm lucky if I can find a half an hour a week in which to get funky." *In The Groove* will cure all the woes of those suffering from this problem. This compilation could easily be confused with the *Dazed And Confused* soundtrack. 14 tripped-out, grungy, trash-rock bands added to this tribute to '70s stoners, including Roachpowder, Nebula and Acid King, to name a few. Just the names of these bands should give listeners a clue about their intentions. This album cannot be appreciated without putting on a ripped-up old tye dye or a bandanna, and breaking out a black light. Highlights include Leadfoot's "Gonna Creep Up On You," with its rockin' beat and crazy guitar effects, and Bakerton Group's funky instrumental, "The Mack." Raging Slab even contributes a cover of "Mississippi Queen," keeping the '70s vibe authentic. Even the CD itself is decorated with a blurry, pink and green tone colored photo of a tattooed girl in denim cut-offs.

Anyone who drives a 1973 Chevelle or Dodge Charger should be on the lookout for this album. **(The Music Cartel)**

—Mandy Feingold

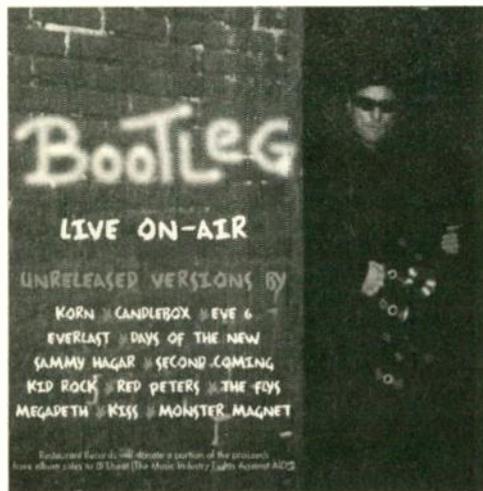
VA

Songs For The Broken Hearted

It's a little difficult to tell exactly what the purpose of this album is, but it plays like one of those mix tapes one makes for someone to show off one's cool taste in music. A collection of 17 tracks by various unsigned and signed bands, *Songs For The Broken Hearted* features 17 tracks on the whiny side of cool. The songs apparently are threaded together by some sort of love-gone-wrong theme, or love-gone-right, depending on the perspective of the listener. But why? At least two of the bands are already defunct (according to the liner notes) and there doesn't appear to be anything external to the album (like a movie, for instance) to make this compilation necessary. **(Glue Factory, P.O. Box 404, Redondo Beach, CA 90277)**

—André Calilhanna
continued on page 49

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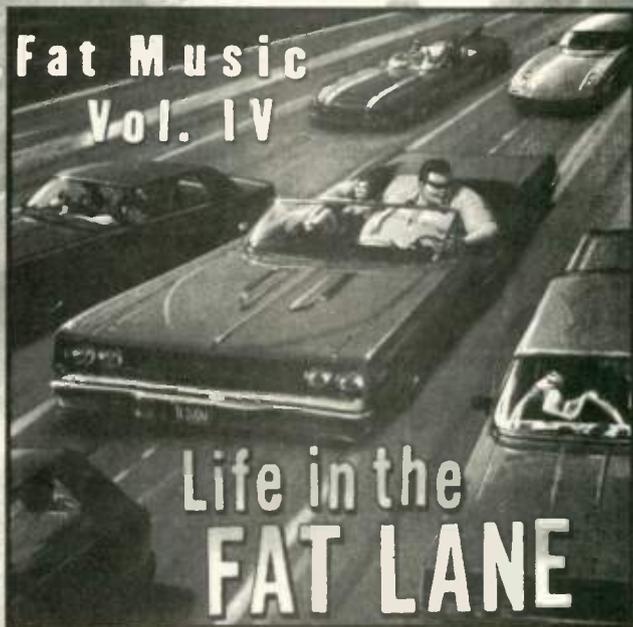
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ANNIKA BENTLEY

See You Around, Lifeguard

As the songs on *See You Around*, *Lifeguard* illustrate, singer/songwriter Annika Bentley has several means of expressing her artistic vision. Not only is Bentley gifted with a beautiful, resonating voice, she also highlights her piano and acoustic guitar skills. Bentley is backed by an all-female string section consisting of violin, cello and acoustic bass—all helping to enhance the material. Bentley's album is at once calming, soothing and haunting, often within one song. Overall, *See You Around, Lifeguard* is an intriguing effort showcasing the graceful art of this talented performer. (P.O. Box 10781, Rochester, NY 14610-0781)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

THE SHEILA DIVINE

The Sheila Divine

Walking a tightrope between Jeff Buckley and Bono, Aaron Perrino fronts The Sheila Divine with a haunting tenacity. Alternating between an ethereal, psychedelic mire and crooning English guitar-pop, The Sheila Divine establishes its personality from the first notes of "Modern Log" and

UNSIGNED

carries the torch through this five-song EP. The compositions are a bit redundant, but this band is perched on the verge of discovering itself, and this is an excellent introduction to The Sheila Divine. The five tracks offer a variety of elements, from the gritty but polished rock of "Like A Criminal" and "Modern Log" to the falsetto lullaby of "The Amendment." The Sheila Divine maintains a solid formula throughout, enchanting the listener. It's a studied style, which requires a predilection toward sensitive pop/rock from the listener, but this is a well-conceived, well-produced effort. (398 Centre St., #1, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130)

—André Calilhanna

SKINFLOWER

A Different Engine

Skinflower is a New York-based trio whose musical style is difficult to classify. On the surface, the songs on *A Different Engine* resemble hardcore punk. Suddenly, distorted, metallic guitars fill the air, followed by Rob

Zombie-like vocals as well as sitars and other Eastern instrumentation. The songs take quite a few unexpected turns into a schizophrenic, musical Neverland. Unadventurous listeners may not find *Skinflower* easy to digest. (151 1st Ave., #169, New York 10003)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

SUPERMAN CURL

Soundcheck

Soundcheck is an accurate title for a disc of half-baked songs, since soundcheck is usually the time for a band to drag out new ideas. Sometimes these ideas grow into great songs—sometimes they grow into an entire crappy CD. Superman Curl exists somewhere between the land of The Gin Blossoms and a hearing-impaired seal. The guitar playing is wretched—tuneless and boring. The singing is also abysmal, something like a yodeling monkey on crack. This should be called Superman Hurl. (92 Kenilworth Ave., South Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K2S9)

—Stuart Pitt

TORSION

Torsion

Based in the Philadelphia area, the trio known as Torsion has its own brand of modern rock, heavily influenced by the in vogue electronica movement. All four tracks on this self-titled EP are heavy on programmed beats, effects and samples. Vocalist Kathryn Matuch adds a nice touch. Her smooth, flowing vocals help balance the more jagged, synthetic beats, making the songs more enjoyable. (26 Cherry Ave., #3, Collegetown, PA 19462)

—Domenic DiSpaldo

TWITCH

From The Pimp Room

Twitch takes processed hardcore and marries it with a vocalist who raps a staccato barrage with no regard for structure. Twitch is a basement band with a basement sound, and *From The Pimp Room* is a premature offering at best. Whether or not Twitch eventually develops into an aggressive, heavy, tight ball of fury and rap, it hasn't done so yet. The drums are often hesitant and imprecise, the guitars are a wash of processed distortion, and the vocals are sophomoric at best. (239 East Road, Doylestown, PA 18901)

—Kim Crawford

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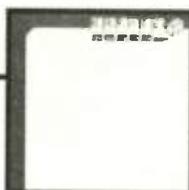


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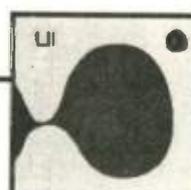
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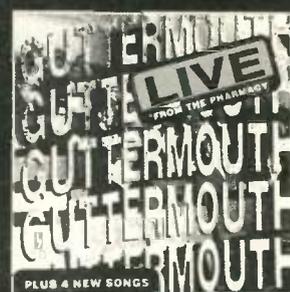
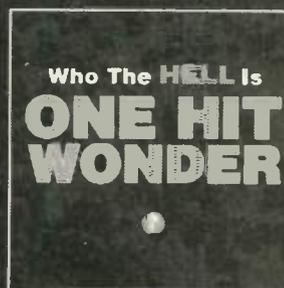
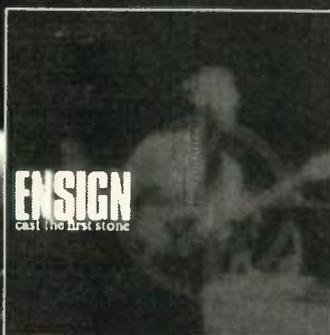
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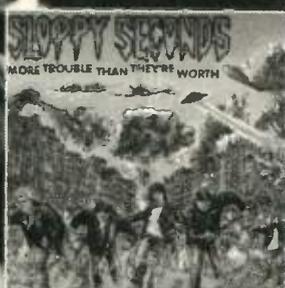
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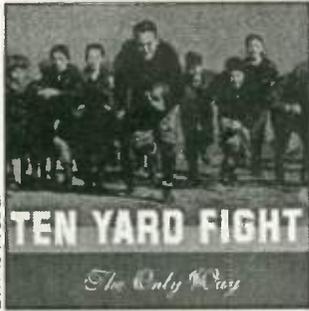
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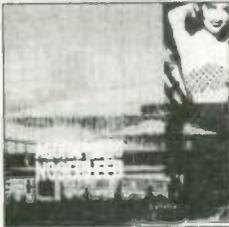
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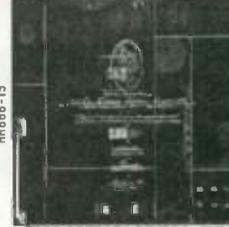
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-August Roderick

Aside from a Gov't Mule show, there's only two places to find more ponytails—an Allman Brothers show and a horse farm. In fact, Friday's show at the TLA was as close as some would get to an Allman Brothers concert. The evening's opener, The Derek Trucks Band, featured a young, blonde guitar player named Derek Trucks—son of Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks. Trucks' band also featured a lead vocalist/keyboard player with a set up similar to Greg Allman's and even sang with a southern rock,



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blue-eyed soul common among classic rock jam bands. The audience seemed to know the lineage of Trucks and was enthusiastic during his band's set. Trucks played slide on his Gibson SG with a furious, liquid ease far more mature than his youthful appearance. The venue filled in quickly as Trucks and his band played, and the floor was later mobbed when ex-Allman Brothers guitarist and now Gov't Mule leader Warren Haynes and his drummer Matt Abts joined Truck's band for an extended jam session. At this point, the TLA became unbearably warm and began smelling like a THC-addled locker room. Usually, when there are two bands, the audience retreats for drinks and bathroom breaks when the first band is done, and re-convenes for the headliner. After The Derek Trucks Band was finished, however, the crowd didn't take a break. During the intermission even more sweaty people jockeyed for position in front. This show was the real thing. It was as if the concert goer was transported back to the mid '70s. Long hair ruled, a huge, psychedelic mural depicting the band's latest album cover hung against the wall behind the stage and Haynes, drummer Abts and bass player Allen Woody (also an ex-Allman) all wore clothing befitting a Woodstock tribute. Simply, Gov't Mule kicked out the jams (to copy a phrase) and the capacity audience loved every note. Everyone left with, at least, their ears buzzing and a fresh coating of hard-earned, smokey concert sweat.

BURN WITCH BURN

BLACK 47

Trocadero
Philadelphia

Mar. 14

-Kevin Wheeler

The last time this many white people got together to dance this badly they called it the 1988 Republican Party inauguration ball. Blame it on the blarney or too much St. Patty's Day celebrating but, damn, it was like watching a nun mount a Harley. Fortunately, rhythm didn't matter because everyone was in high spirits and despite the worst snowstorm to hit the Philadelphia area this season, a good-sized crowd turned out to see Burn Witch Burn open up for Black 47 at the Trocadero.

Burn Witch Burn is fronted by ex-Dead Milkmen lead singer Rodney Anonymous and features Celtic folk rhythms and weird off-the-wall lyrics to the accompaniment of a mandolin, drums, guitar and violin. Normally the band plays in small, cozy pubs where the audience is half-drunk and the band is fully pissed by the third set. In these small pubs, over the course of two to three hours, the band will vary between mournful traditional Gaelic songs, Clash covers and tense, well-built rockers. This didn't translate well to the cavernous interior of The Trocadero. Burn Witch Burn is a band for those who enjoy drinking heavily.

Anonymous' gruff vocals sounded best when

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mixed with the smooth alto of the fiddle player, Vienna Linderman. They should do more duets, as her sustained notes soaring high above Anonymous' spat-out lyrics proves a perfect contrast. Everyone's ears really perked up when they sang together.

Entertainment was provided by the guy in front of the stage who looked like he had seen Michael Flatley's "Feet Of Flames" routine too many times. In between hardcore floor punches and rudeboy skanking, he attempted tricky "Lord Of the Dance" stuff.

Black 47 was an Irish-American's equivalent to Bruce Springsteen. The band just had the feel (whether it was the sax player in overly tight leather pants or the twangy Fender rhythm guitar) of being in a '80s time-warp where every song is a mid-tempo "Born To Run" with bagpipes. The crowd really got into the band as the lead singer entreated them to clap their hands to the music and talked during breakdowns. When "Danny Boy" started with the same horn-intro-into-quirky-guitar part as the previous three originals, it was time to go. A Black 47 show is like listening to a decent three-minute song stretched into a nine-minute drudge. The band gets points for energy and a decent stage show but loses out in originality.

SOPHIA
Mercury Lounge
New York
Feb. 24

-Amy Sclarretto

Sophia is the brainchild of former God Machine singer/guitarist Robin Proper-Sheppard, and used to be referred to as the Sophia Collective due to its rotating cast of supporting musicians. (Much like Doug Martsch and Built To Spill's spontaneous, revolving-door membership.) Recently, Proper-Sheppard solidified Sophia with former members of Swervedriver. Considering the lineup featuring musicians of such a high caliber combined with the rarity of a stateside performance of this act makes a Sophia show one not to be missed.

Sophia's members made the overseas sojourn to downtown New York City's Mercury Lounge. The bar was warm, cozy, and dimly lit by table-top candles on this blustery, winter evening. Proper-Sheppard took his post at the center of the stage on a backless bar stool, armed with only an acoustic guitar and microphone, while the guitarist, drummer and bassist/keyboardist took their positions around him. Sophia is about as different from the God Machine and Swervedriver as a sapphire is from an emerald and a diamond. The band proceeded to perform a series of gentle, melancholic ballad-type tunes of love lament. The plaintive quality of the songs land with the intensity of an atom bomb. The sad, woeful lyrics, sung in Proper-

Sheppard's nasal voice, elicit breathy sighs. Songs like "If Only," "I'd Rather," "Every Day" and "Woman" came from Sophia's *Infinite Circle* album and were desperately haunting. The closeness of the music and its creators to the stage-hugging crowd was overwhelmingly intimate, like one big group-therapy session with Sophia serving as the leader. If one let his or herself remember a lost love while listening to Sophia, there is no doubt tears would well up.

Sophia's music may be sad, but its members are rather humorous. Proper-Sheppard made small talk with his adoring audience of about 50 while he fixed broken guitar strings on two occasions. He cradled his instrument as though his life depended on it.

While Sophia's songs are often low-key, the band does toss a few rockers in the swirl of melancholia. "The River Song," recalling The God Machine only in its simple title, picked up the pace a little, but it was those soft, lilting moments that made Sophia so endearing.

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This album is not only a socially responsible purchase, it is the perfect introduction to all that is right and good in rock n' roll. Very few compilations maintain anything close to a consistent level of intrigue and entertainment, but *Mystique...* succeeds where so many before have failed. With contributions from bastions of pop-dom like Honeybunch, Purple Ivy Shadows and The Future Bible Heroes (remixed by Saffs of Cornershop), offerings from indie mainstays like Astrud, Sleepyhead and The Push Kings, as well as introductions to legends-in-the-making Garlands, The Beachwood Sparks, Telegenic and The Fly Seville just to name a few, this 15-track compilation has a lot to offer. All proceeds go directly to the AIDS Action Committee, the largest and oldest AIDS organization New England, so it is not

only a complement to any collection, it is a good place to drop a few hard-earned dollars. (**Sealed Fate, P.O. Box 9183, Cambridge, MA 02139**)

—Cynthia Gentile

VERSUS

Afterglow EP

This New York power-pop outfit delivers five stunning new tracks. As always, intelligent lyrics match dense, layered guitar noise. The catchiest track here is "Raining," in which Fontaine Toups' mellifluous vocals on float almost indifferently over her driving bass. "True Believer" is a tale of violent sexual obsession in which victim and attacker become blurred. In "Santa," singer Richard Balayut stretches his voice to accommodate an emotional climax alongside a peak of guitar frenzy. *Afterglow* is a nice taste of the goodies to follow on a full-length later this year. (**Merge**)

—Elisa Ludwig

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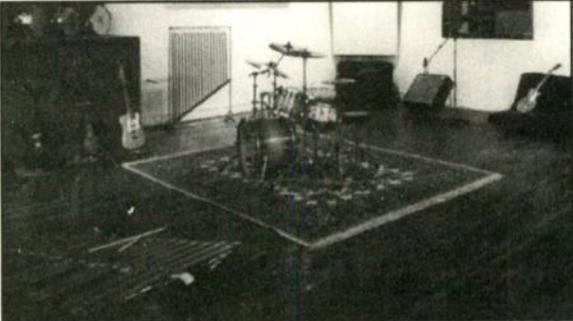
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EGO

Oh jeez. Somebody stop this band. "Fiddlesticks," this demo's opening track, is pretty much indicative of Ego's sound—and it's totally corny. Lame lyrics like "I like to touch both girls and boys/Inside their bodies/I like to taste their sexy toys/Tonguing and drinking" don't do much for the band's Duran Duran-meets-prog-rock sound. The songs feature hyper-affected guitar playing (it's out of tune most of the time, what a plus) and overly dramatic dorko vocals. The guitar playing is especially repugnant and reprehensible—the technical shortcomings are only overshadowed by poor note choice. No more please. (201) 507-0638

IRONBOSS

Head and shoulders above the recording quality of most demos submitted here, Ironboss comes across with attitude and big balls. The band clearly has its roots in classic rock like Ted Nugent, Lynryd Skynryd and late-'70s era punk bands from New York. Most of the songs owe a serious debt to dueling guitar solos like the one from "Free Bird." The vocals are sung in a raspy baritone with a southern twang, and the whole package is darn entertaining. (410) 377-4358

KURT MARKS

One of the basic tenets of indie rock is vocals should be whiny and only partially in tune. Kurt Marks is an indie rock god in this sense. Hey Kurt, ever heard of Pavement or Apples In Stereo? Sure

DEMOS

By Alan Pinkerton

you did. The songs here are actually quite good once one gets used to the annoying vocals stylings of Mr. Marks. His style is something of cross between Robert Plant and Robert Pollard, and this is a nice change from the typical. (732) 758-6672

MAU'DIB

Imagine a lone ball bearing bouncing randomly around in an empty room made of steel. Just record that sound, add some cello and put it over a jazzy beat. There's Mau'dib in a nutshell. The word experimental was coined for bands like this one. It's a cool, trippy sound with a load of potential—really bizarro and dark. There's definitely something happening here. (P.O. Box 60060, Phila, Pa 19102)

NEW RADIO GALAXY

Uh-oh. Somebody spent too much time listening to Jane's Addiction's *Nothing Shocking* record. Yikes. Perry Farrell was able to pull off his vocal style through a combination of clever lyrics, interesting melodies and a ton of effects. Unfortunately for the guy from this band, Jane's Addiction is already a very popular band. Sorry, it's already been done. (215) 235-0799

RADEGAST

This demo is kinda like a car crash. As horrible as it sounds, it's almost impossible to stop listening once it starts playing. The drummer is in a race with himself—specifically, his double-bass drum playing is really inconsistent. The

guitar is detuned beyond anything even remotely in the ballpark of coherency. It's just silly. And the singing (using the term loosely) is mostly just a bunch of demonic hollering. It's great stuff. Anyone hoping to get evicted should blast this at top volumes all night. (P.O. Box 91, Schnecksville, PA 18078)

ROOT DECO

Sound effects start this project with a murky mood. Just when it seems like the whole thing will consist of nothing but noises, an actual song begins. It's kind of like KMFDM or Pig, with a ton of reverb on the vocals and a big guitar sound. Track three uses an interesting mix of guitar, bass, drums, vocals and a distorted harmonica—really different and cool. (P.O. Box 563, Annandale, Va, 22003)

TOMFOOLERY

Ground control to Major Tomfoolery—David Bowie is pissed as hell, and he's not gonna take this crap anymore. Stop being so deep—everyone's gonna cry. The whole thing sounds like "Space Oddity" at 45 RPM, except for the parts where it sounds like a rip off of the theme from *Shaft*. This sure is a bad, bad mutha. Hush your mouth, please. (215) 943-7315

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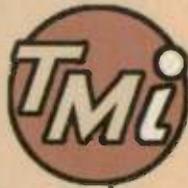
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Sat., April 10th Murph's Other Bar [behind York College/717-846-6556]

Sat., April 17th The Vault (18 & older) [Baltimore, 410-437-0437]

Thurs., April 22nd Chameleon Club [Lancaster, PA/717-299-9684]
(All ages, Alcohol upstairs)

Sat., April 24th Fletchers (18 & older) [Baltimore, 410-558-1889]

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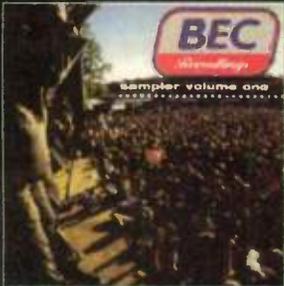
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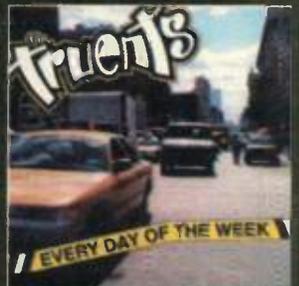
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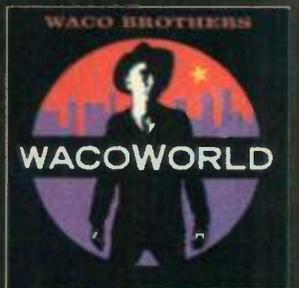
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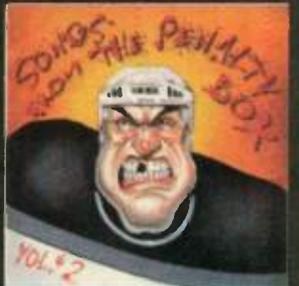
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Joe Kirschen: Did you guys check out *The Oscars* the other night?

Erik Caplan: I didn't watch 'em. I don't even know who any of the stars are anymore.

August Roderick: I'm trying to remember what I was doing Monday night.

JK: It was Sunday night. That's OK, same thing.

EC: I never watch the awards shows anymore, especially the acting ones. I never recognize any of the actors. It seems like it's just lots of skinny people with pronounced cheek bones saying, "Thank you Mom and Dad," and "I want to thank the Academy." You see one, you've seen 'em all.

JK: Everybody's trying to act so sophisticated, and it's just a big pat-on-the-back session. And then there's the standing ovation for the geezer who's about to croak in a month.

AR: Don't they get paid millions anyway? And then to have a self-indulgent ceremony awarding themselves for being rich, famous and beautiful kinda makes me ill.

JK: It's just a big fat commercial for all the movies. I mean, I didn't even see any of these damn movies! *Shakespeare In Love?* There's an intriguing title.

EC: I didn't bother with it.

AR: It was good.

EC: You saw it?

AR: Yeah! I liked it. I left feeling like it was a good movie. I don't know about *Oscar*-good.

JK: But you didn't leave feeling Gwyneth Paltrow. I don't know about her, she's like anorexic or something.

EC: She doesn't look healthy.

JK: She needs a suntan or something.

AR: I think she looks great.

EC: What's weird about award shows is people get up and act all surprised. Don't you think they know they're gonna win before the show? They

have a seat up front for a reason.

JK: The whole thing is scripted, like who's gonna fart and when.

EC: I think that's when the best acting takes place. Like, "Oh my God, this is such a shock! What a surprise!"

AR: I just think the whole thing takes up too much time on television. All that valuable space going to people who are already ungodly rich.

EC: I don't know man, people who watch TV are really into it.

JK: Basically they just watch to see whose boobs are gonna fall out of whose dress.

AR: Whose dress is probably exactly right.

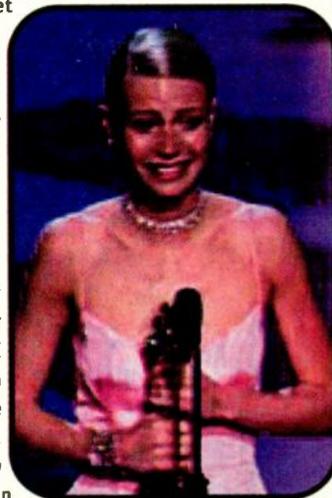
JK: And who's got the worst hairstyle. This year it was probably Robert Deniro. Did you see his hair? His hair was totally shaved on both sides but he had a lot of hair on top.

AR: It was like a Tweedle Dee.

EC: What is that? What is he, like Johnny Unitas or something?

JK: He's obviously playing some 52-year-old vegetable in his next movie 'cause he looked dressed for the part.

EC: What happened to him? Robert Deniro used to get so much respect cause he was this awesome actor—*Taxi Driver*, you know all that stuff?



Now he's playing a gangster, again! And worse, in a comedy with Billy Crystal!

AR: He makes a good gangster.

EC: Yeah, but don't you think he's done all the gangstering he can do? They want to see him as mega-mobster, and say "fongoo" constantly. And say Scungilli.

AR: What does that mean?

EC: It means you're from Wisconsin.

AR: Scungilli means you're from Wisconsin? What do you know about Wisconsin?

EC: Scungilli's food, man.

AR: Oh really? What kind of food?

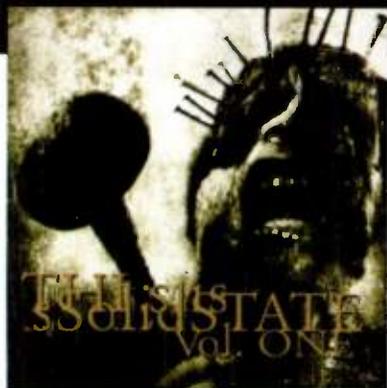
EC: Pasta, what else?

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