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World Radio History

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EVERCLEAR

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--Huh

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"★★★★"

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Detroit's Motor City madness. By Kevin Munro of Mule.

Note: This is the last issue produced with the able assistance of self-titled Editorial Lackey Steve McGuirl, who is moving on to greener pastures. We will greatly miss his organizational abilities, vintage shirts and KISS quotes.

Correction: The number for New York City's Poemfone in our December issue should have read 212-631-4234. CMJ regrets the error.

COVER: Belly photographed by Michael Wang • December 1994, New York City

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Can music change people's opinions about politics?
Has it ever changed yours? Those of anybody you know?
Tell us what you think, by mail, fax (516-466-7159) or
email (cmj@cmjmusic.com).

Backlash Backstab Backflips

In our January issue, we asked what you thought about alternative backlash and selling out. Here's what you said.

As long as artists remain true to their roots, then they should not worry about the title of "sell-out" or any other demeaning label. Although it's difficult to assess, I believe that there is some sort of balance between mainstream success and the compromise of beliefs for the sole purpose of selling albums. Next question is—who's the authority?

Bulge
address withheld

I like to see my favorite bands do well, but I'm afraid there will be a huge glut of so-called "alternative bands." Even worse, I'm afraid this will cause a major reduction of quality alternative music until it undergoes a renaissance—but it's not even dead yet. I remember when *Nevermind* started to sell, Kurt Cobain mentioned that the same kind of people that beat him up in school were buying his music. That's the thing that bugs me. People that picked on and beat people up because they were different buy these albums by Soundgarden, Green Day and Nine Inch Nails, and don't get it because they don't understand punk or industrial or much of anything that hasn't been spoonfed to them by radio and TV.

I hate when good songs are overplayed. Blur's *Parklife* is one of my favorite CDs of 1994, but I always skip past "Boys And Girls." This has happened with endless numbers of bands. I've noticed as this happens I delve into more indie and local stuff—music I don't see five times a day on MTV or hear on the radio. People should understand and get something out of music, not just consume it.

Sean Stevenson
Nampa, Idaho

Yes, backlash is inevitable due to the small minds most people possess. No band is a sellout until it dilutes or changes its sound in order to sell, or allows its label to do the same. But many people in the "alternative community" are offended if someone from outside the "group" hears something new or different and claims it as their own. I'm tired of hearing punks and freaks complain that their ex-favorite band is big on the charts and MTV, when a few months ago they were telling everyone they know to go out and buy a copy of the CD. I applaud bands that retain their sound and get the recognition they deserve. It's like being proud of a family

- As a regular Letters To The Editor feature, the CMJ editors pose questions to you, our esteemed readers—this is the "Q" part—as well as answering some of your questions directly.

member who worked hard and finally got a promotion. Anyway, I like being the first person to tell my friends to check out a new band that finally makes it big. It makes it look like I actually know what I'm talking about. By the way, your CDs and reviews help to keep me looking that way.

Angelique Sidler
Bowling Green, OH

A Peachier Georgia

I received your Jan. '95 issue in the mail today and was excited to see that your "Localzine" section featured my hometown, Atlanta. I'd like to make an addendum to Ms. Yeske's article.

Since July of '94, Criminal Records has been located at 466 Moreland Ave., a larger space than they had on Euclid Ave. Besides having a great selection of music, Criminal has comics, underground magazines and pinball—yes, pinball—machines.

The Star Community Bar is the heart of the city's rockabilly scene. Eddie's Attic (515 N. McDonough St., in nearby Decatur) features mainly acoustic music and has writers' nights. The Variety Playhouse (1099 Euclid Ave. NE) is an all-ages venue that features local and national acts.

Some of my favorite local performers include Drivin' 'N Cryin', Dew, Big Fish Ensemble, Joybang!, Marcy, Rusty Johnson, Uncle Green, The Rocketeers and Michele Malone.

Susan "Sue Max" Maksimuk
Atlanta, GA

Salty Opinion

The review of Veruca Salt in the January '95 issue is pathetic. How can you be taken seriously when a review begins with "woman-led bands will continue to be labeled as such as long as bands like Veruca Salt exist"? Veruca Salt is one of the purest bands from Chicago and have terrific songs (my opinion), but even more impressive is that their songs possess more than just hooks—they have tremendous dynamics and feeling. Listing "Seether" and "Victrola" as the "two best" cuts tells me that this reviewer listened no further. I'm so glad to see more women in the forefront of music these days, it truly is giving a lot more dimension to what's out there, but unfortunately, they have to contend with the idle curiosity of reviewers such as yours.

Howard Elovitz
Chicago, IL

r e s p o n s e

Have you ever noticed that
Black folks have a way of
takin'

words that **mean one**
thing

and turnin' em 'round so
that
they mean
another

D

KNOWLEDGE

all
that
and
a bag
of
words

THE NEW ALBUM

But not
just
any old
bag of
words,
but a bag of
our **words**, with our meanings,

That's what she is,

She's all that and a
bag of words,

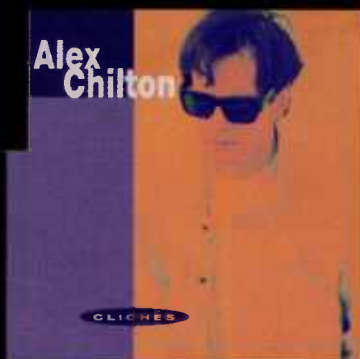
with our meanings...**That's all!**

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World Radio History



ARTISTS' **in my room**
PERSONAL PICKS

GIN BLOSSOMS

ROBIN WILSON

Lobo
DC Comics

Violator
Image Comics

Life After God
by Douglas Coupland

Twin Peaks home video

Rollerblades

The Jayhawks: A Little Bit Country, A Little Bit Rock 'N' Roll

Drop the term "country-rock" and most people, unfortunately, think of '70s snoozers like the Eagles and Pure Prairie League. Yup, the Jayhawks are a true country-rock band, but they're a far cry from those who unleashed the dull easy-listening beast that gave the genre a bad name. Instead, the Jayhawks are carrying on the vision of country-rock pioneers like the Everly Brothers, the Byrds and Gram Parsons—artists inspired by the possibilities of combining folk, country, rock and soul without blunting the edges of its component parts—a compelling hybrid Parsons once called "Cosmic American Music." For Jayhawks singer/songwriter/guitarist Mark Olson, the band's sound is the result of being exposed to a lot of different music and having the good sense to realize there are really only two types—good and bad. Growing up in Minneapolis, Olson says he would "listen to pretty much anything. I'd just turn on the radio till my Mom asked me to turn it off. I was into my mom's folk records, and then I got into punk rock. I started listening to a lot of country a little before the band started, and I'd go out to a lot of blues clubs, too."

In 1985, Olson and bassist Marc Perlman began playing with different local musicians around Minneapolis as the Jayhawks. Gary Louris came aboard soon afterwards as permanent lead guitarist, and when he and Olson realized how well they could do old-fashioned country vocal harmonies, the Jayhawks' sound quickly began to take shape. "We learned those Louvin Brothers songs and started doing that on a lot of stuff," Olson recalls. It's their gorgeous harmonies, as well as Louris' guitar playing—alternating between Neil Young crunch-and-squall and pedal-steel-sounding fills—that define the band's sound to this day.

A country-rock band in a town that was quickly becoming known as *the* hippest punk-rock city, the Jayhawks played at the same punk clubs frequented by Hüsker Dü, Soul Asylum and the Replacements, where Olson had hung out as a skate-punk back in high school. "We didn't *totally* fit in," admits Olson. "It was a little disconcerting, but we were having a good time, and we were building a following." To pay the bills, the Jayhawks played everywhere they could. "I look back at our schedules, and we were playing like 10 times a month, and this is a time when we were all working our day jobs. We even played an Indian reservation."

Nine years later, after two critically-acclaimed records (*Blue Earth* on Twin/Tone and *Hollywood Town Hall* on American), relentless touring, record company frustration, slobbering props from other well known bands, and a growing cult following, the Jayhawks have released their most varied and commercial effort to date, *Tomorrow The Green Grass* (American).

But where can a traditional country-rock band fit in? Can the Hawks' simple, often unbearably beautiful and sad songs win over kids who seem to crave excess more and more? "I don't really think about that," Olson says. "Although I did get a little nervous when someone told me *Nine Inch Nails* sold out Madison Square Garden. I wondered, 'God, are people going to be into our music at all?' But I think there are enough people out there for an audience if you put out songs people remember." If Olson is right, the Jayhawks should have nothing to worry about. Just dig an earful of the new tunes like "Blue," "Miss Williams Guitar," or "Red's Song" and try not to sing along at the top of your lungs. 1995 could go down in the annals of rock history as "The Year Cosmic American Music Broke."

—Steve McGuire

Tours We'd Like To See

THE BREAKFAST CLUB:

Milk, Toast, The Jam, Eggs, Sausage, Orange Juice, Coffee (or Cuppa Joe), Mary's Danish and your choice of Kix or Total

QUICK FIX

DEFINITION OF SOUND

Guitar Work: n: A skilled musician whose guitar-playing technique is more interesting than actual musical output. Spends considerable time tapping the frets and strings instead of strumming or picking the way the good Lord intended. Guitar works always make better music in a band, but can't fight the urge to do solo records which flop, forcing them to become guest columnists in guitar magazines. Generally named Steve (e.g. Hackett, Howe, Morse, Vai, Lukather).



Bad Religion: Good Science

Greg Graffin is the singer/frontman for Bad Religion, one of the most popular, influential punk bands of all time. He's also a Ph.D. candidate in biology at Cornell University, studying the evolution of bone tissue.

Graffin (far right in the picture above) swears juggling academia and a high-profile musical career is easier than it sounds because the two are interrelated. "Music is similar to teaching in one respect. As a teacher, [I'm] able to share ideas with people, and get their feedback on whether it was good or bad. Same with music—each of my songs is a survey of some aspect of life, and I'm able to share that with people...and then I get feedback through interviews and seeing people backstage." He agrees with a laugh that it must be weird for his students, admitting that they sometimes ask about the band. "But big deal," he says bluntly. "They're here to learn, and I'm here to give them a lecture. We can talk all you want about my songs, but it's not going to get you a better grade."

The no-nonsense tone of his detailed explanation of the "physical and metabolic evolutionary changes" in vertebrates' bone tissue summons up those unsettling science class oh-my-God-I'm-in-over-my-head memories. In fact, his intelligence and keen perception seem more out-of-place in the often mindless world of rock 'n' roll than the singer does in the classroom. "What you're talking about here is what separates Bad Religion from virtually all other bands, and that is our insistence on writing relevant and provocative music. We wouldn't release a record if, for some reason, we stopped doing that.

"I can't handle the music business, and I can't handle devoting my entire life to nothing but music. My mind is too active for that, and so I need another outlet. I need some other goal in my life," he says firmly. "When my career is over—and Bad Religion will someday be over—there's going to be a lot more time for me to do other things. And research is one of the greatest things you can do in life."

—Katherine Yeske



BLACK 47'S LATEST CD IS HOME OF THE BRAVE.

LOSIN' IT

An excerpt from *Life In America ('47 Books)* by Larry Kirwan of Black 47 (second from left). Kirwan's latest book documents the inspiration, spirit and genesis of many of Black 47's socio-political songs. Kirwan is also the author of *Mad Angels*, a collection of plays.

"I returned to New York as I left it—penniless.' How many times have I echoed Henry Miller upon arrival at Kennedy, LaGuardia or Forty-Deuce! And yet, I've never experienced his disgust or disorientation. Oh, I've been apprehensive on occasion, but when all is said and done, I love this city to distraction. I adore the very stones of the streets, its constantly shifting population of scum bags and its manic energy.

"Unlike Henry, I never leave without a fistful of money or some functioning plastic. I just wouldn't risk getting stranded in London, Des Moines or Dingle. And although I have rarely been solvent in New York, it seldom fazes me. I automatically switch into overdrive and prowls this jungle, keen as a tiger.

"Nor have I ever had a creative block here. If I need music, I stand on Broadway—the scream of traffic and the motion of the mob electrify me. If I need poetry, the multilingual babel of Canal Street is invariably inspiring.

"And yet, like many New Yorkers, I am mere seconds away from hysteria. I explode into expletives at the smallest of provocations, both real and imagined. Along with 10 million other nut cases, I teeter precariously on the brink of psychosis. Like Chuckie R. Law, I am a walkin' time bomb when it comes to significant others. Dump me and I'm liable to be found dancing naked in the rain outside CBGB's, crashing a wedding in Bensonhurst or passing out in Manhattan and waking up in Haiti.

"I suppose that's why I live here. Taxis and mailboxes may want to sleep with me; you may have left me for a cab driver who looks like a cross between Jesus and Yul Brynner; and the ladies at Victoria's Secret may tremble when I appear in their doorway brandishing a blowtorch. Still and all, tomorrow I'll wake up, pop a couple of Tylenol and go about my business. No one will even raise an eyebrow. They all know I was just losin' it."



THE SINGLE

"FUNK SOUL SENSATION"

FROM THE DEBUT EP

SCARS AND PAIN

COMING SOON!



a PolyGram company

QUICK FIX

ARTISTS' **in my room** PERSONAL PICKS

NICK LOWE

The Alan Bennett Diaries

Last Train To Memphis by Peter Guralnik

Carl Smith Capitol Years

Arthur Alexander Best Of

Jigsaw Puzzle from Titanic Exhibition at National Maritime Museum-Greenwich.



NICK LOWE: Older, Wiser, Richer

The richer part is easiest to relate. Start with Curtis Stigers covering Lowe's "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace Love And Understanding." That cover, once a hit for Elvis Costello, found its way onto the multi-platinum *Bodyguard* soundtrack. Stigers' version barely got heard, but thanks to Whitney Houston's selling power, Lowe picked up an estimated cool million in songwriting royalties.

While the extra money has been very nice, it's his new record *The Impossible Bird* that Nick Lowe is keen to discuss.

The title was stolen from a 17th-century theology book, because it struck Lowe on a few different levels. "It really doesn't mean anything, but a 'bird' can be a slang name for a woman, a sort of equivalent to 'dame,'" says Lowe. "You can also get the bird on stage, and in England you can call people birds if they're generally old and rather eccentric," he adds as if hinting at personal experience, though he's wary of getting too personal in his work.

"I'm not really a guy for putting my diaries in music. I subscribe to the theory of inventing a situation and a character, and you hold them in your mind and try to let the character write the song," Lowe says. "If you don't get in the way and stick your oar in too much, the character can come up with something that you might not have because you try and complicate it with all sorts of personal references, whereas the character will just get to the point."

Much of *The Impossible Bird* employs the heartbroken song structures of country and rhythm and blues. Songs like "The Beast In Me," which his ex-father-in-law Johnny Cash recently covered, sound simple, but contain broader themes. "I didn't set out to make this record *country*. But I still love stuff like Arthur Alexander so much because he plops his stuff down in that funny grey area between rhythm and blues and country, where lies pop music in my opinion."

Lowe's opinion of pop is worth something. In the '70s, he produced debuts for Costello, Graham Parker and the Pretenders, as well as some hits of his own. But now he's more concerned with the quality of his songs than with resting on the laurels of the new wave.

"I really have to sing and write stuff which is grown-up and big-hearted now. It's unseemly for a man of 46 to pretend he's some sort of art student," he concedes. His dedication to writing more substantial songs kicked in a few years back. "I got encouraged to do solo performances by Elvis Costello, and that was a fantastic experience. You can see your songs very, very clearly—all their strengths and weaknesses. I resolved that when I made my next record I would make sure the songs were really, really strong, so much so that they take an unbelievable amount of abuse."

The Impossible Bird shows no signs of sonic decay; it's a smooth listen, not in an easy-listening way, but in a cool, soulful way. "In order to achieve the intimate thing, it was very important for me to cut the vocal at the same time with the track," Lowe says. "So I looked for really comfortable [recording] places. I also used musicians who know how to play within the song." Granted, the Turk's Head Function Room and the Old Cinema in Middlesex, where he recorded, aren't Grade-A studios, but those spaces kept the atmosphere of the band at a premium.

As for side projects, Lowe says not to close the door completely on Little Village (with John Hiatt, Ry Cooder and Jim Keltner), but he's not eager to resurrect Rockpile, the group he and Dave Edmunds fronted for a one-LP stint.

"Little Village was very fine and very disciplined, but Rockpile—we were young, drunk and high and that's all that mattered, a sort of headlong chase to see the '70s out. The vodka and amphetamines that we were consuming were part of the sound, and the thought of doing that again is out of the question." —Steve Ciabattone

It Makes A Satisfying "Crack!" Sound, Too

We realize that those of you who pay for all your CDs might wonder what happens to a disc when you grab it out of your player, throw it against the wall and stomp on it a few times. We suddenly did, too, when listening to the CD single of *Willie One Blood's* "Whiney, Whiney (What Drives Me Crazy)," a song included, not the least bit ironically, on the *Dumb And Dumber* soundtrack.

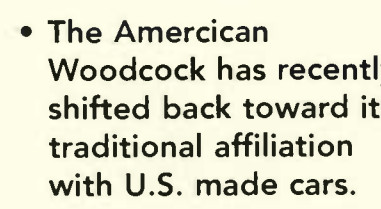
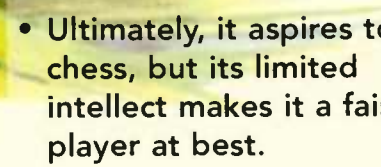
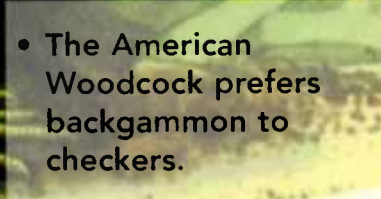
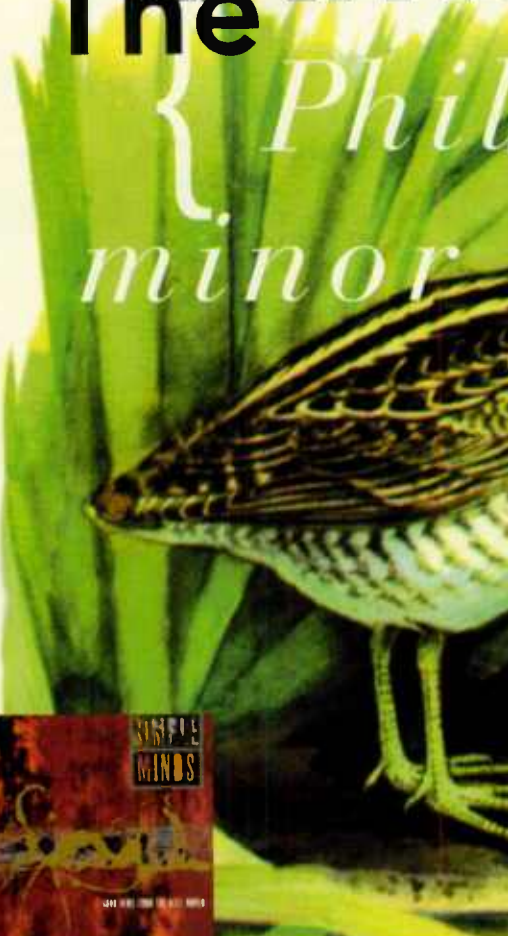




#2

The American Woodcock

Philohela minor



- The American Woodcock prefers backgammon to checkers.
- Ultimately, it aspires to chess, but its limited intellect makes it a fair player at best.
- The American Woodcock has recently shifted back toward its traditional affiliation with U.S. made cars.



Simple Minds featuring "She's A River" On Tour Now



Massive Attack Protection Trocey Thorn Appears Courtesy of Blanco y Negro



Royal Trux Thank You

The Skatalites: Return To Navarone

Few musicians can claim to have pioneered a groundbreaking musical style. Fewer still can claim to have nurtured their musical creation through its adolescence to watch it become their country's most popular music, and the rebel music of choice for thousands of youth worldwide. And even fewer experience the satisfaction of stewarding a



resurgence in their creation's popularity over a quarter of a century after its invention. Tommy McCook and the Skatalites, the pioneering band he formed in 1964, helped to introduce high-octane Jamaican dance music to the world, and the group's new *Hi-Bop Ska* is a masterful celebration of three decades of music.

"Ska is alive and well," McCook declares jovially. "It has been received widely by everyone who hears it, and this resurgence is part of the reaction of people around the world."

Settling in the U.S. after the Skatalites broke up in the mid-'60s, McCook made a few unsuccessful attempts to reunite and revive the group in the '70s and '80s, before the popularity of American bands like the Mighty Mighty Bosstones and the proliferation of a network of clubs and fans gave ska a home in the United States. In the late '80s, the regrouped Skatalites began touring small American clubs as Jamaican dance ambassadors. Now ska is gaining

a wide audience in this country while, ironically, it has become something of a musical stepchild in its motherland.

"There are no ska groups in Jamaica now," McCook notes sadly. "The kids there have never heard horns play—they're accustomed to the singers and the deejays." Still, the band's performances in Jamaica in recent years have been well-received. "We made quite an impression on the kids—they were glued to their seats," he says of a recent performance in Kingston. "The music goes round and round. Sooner or later, people will get tired of reggae... Ska has only just been exposed to American people. Now there are a lot of American bands—the Allstonians, Bim Skala Bim—everybody's doing their own thing."

Hi-Bop Ska, which includes old favorites like "Guns Of Navarone" and "Man In The Street" as well as future classics like "Burru Style" and "Everlasting Sound," provides a much jazzier instrumental experience than most American ska bands, thanks to the prominent involvement of David Murray, Steve Turre and Lester Bowie. The three Americans (on tenor sax, trombone and trumpet respectively) add depth and flavor to the already formidable Skatalite horn section (featuring McCook and ska legend Roland Alphonso on tenor saxophones), blasting the band's signature horn lines over driving ska rhythms, as well as improvising colorful solos.

"I met Lester many years ago in Jamaica," McCook says. "I was playing a jazz set and he came and sat in and we played some songs together. I invited him to play on the album; he was pleased and got involved, and came with a New Orleans type of sound that everyone loves." Ska pioneers like Toots Hibbert (of Toots And The Maytals) and Jamaican pianist Monty Alexander also appear on the album. And Skatalite veterans like bassist Lloyd Brevett and drummer Lloyd Knibb, both key technicians in the creation of the Jamaican sound, are characteristically brilliant.

Though a full U.S. tour in the near future is unlikely ("We're getting too old for that," McCook chuckles), McCook has other big plans. "I have a reggae rock record to be released soon," he says. "It's reggae, but it's focused on the instruments instead of the vocals." McCook also hopes that the band will finally get the credit and remuneration that eluded it in Jamaica, despite its work on hundreds of now-classic songs.

"We started this thing at home and people made millions off it," he says indignantly. "Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff—all of them started with ska. Maybe one day we'll also have a million seller. Who knows?" —Philippe Wamba

THE SKATALITES' "GUNS OF NAVARONE" APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

Computer Geek USA

These frames come courtesy of the Smashing Pumpkins computer screen "raver." You're supposed to watch these fluctuating images while listening to the Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream*. Small wonder the disc recommends you listen to the track "Geek USA."




"The Suns combine a hazy ambient production style, catchy pop choruses, fluid hip-hop rhythms, and some very intriguing samples to come up with a sound that's distinctly their own." — Jim DeRogatis, Request Magazine



certain distant suns

happy on the inside

the new album, featuring "Bitter"

 ©1994 Giant Records

Produced by Justin Mroz & David Tringio
Personal Management by Marshall Berle

BEST NEW MUSIC

BELLY
King
Reprise-Sire



If you approach music made by Tanya Donelly—whether as a member of Throwing Muses or the Breeders, or as the leader of Belly—looking for anything obvious, you're bound to be disappointed. On *King*, Donelly seems to be less interested in teaching new tricks to the old verse-chorus-verse dog that made *Star* a hit than she is in engaging in wild, yet restrained structural grazing. Donelly's forte is writing lyrics that sound like odd non sequiturs at first but make more sense after numerous listens. On *King*, Donelly's still planted firmly in left field in terms of her verbiage. "Is there a place for me in the patterns that grow on your skin and your clothes?" wonders Donnelly's dulcet, fractured voice on "Silverfish." Belly is smack between Throwing Muses' art and the Breeders' rock, especially on "The Bees," which juxtaposes her delicate vocal chorus with groovy, noodly electronic effects. There's an unsettling sense of small-scale drama in lyrics like "There's a lady who walks everywhere on her hands/she don't trust where her feet want to take her." It's not always easy to understand what Donelly's talking about, but that's what makes her ideas timeless. *King* sounds like it arrived from a romantic, imaginative world that's comfortably familiar, but surreal at the same time. Keep us guessing, Tanya.

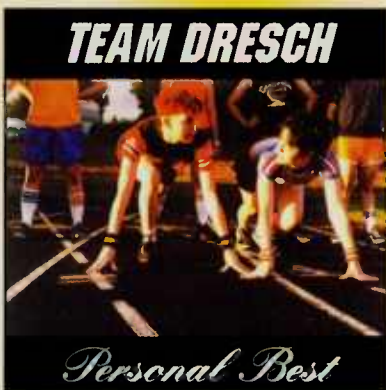
—Robin Eisgrau

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14. First single "Now They'll Sleep,"

FILE UNDER: Homespun art-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Juliana Hatfield, new R.E.M., Pixies.

TEAM DRESCH
Personal Best
Chainsaw/Candy-Ass



The word's been flying about Team Dresch for months, based partly on a single, a couple of compilation tracks and a tour or two, and partly on this Pacific Northwest punk-pop supergroup's individual reputations. Guitarist/bassist Donna Dresch has made a name for herself playing in Dinosaur Jr. and Screaming Trees, as well as running the Chainsaw label and fanzine; the other three members' time in Hazel, Adickdid and Calamity Jane has never quite produced records that lived up to their rep (though Hazel may yet). So it's a pleasure to say that *Personal Best* hits it straight out of the park. From the desperate guitar riff that opens "Fageterian And Dyke" to the howled confession of love at the end of "Screwing Yer Courage" less than 25 minutes later, it's absolutely thrilling, peak after peak strung together without a chance to catch your breath. The band dashes through every song (three in under two minutes apiece) like they can't wait to get to the end because then they get to play the next one. Listen closely, and you'll notice the first-class musicianship and melodies sparkling beneath Team Dresch's punk attack; a little more closely, and you'll hear the band's witty, angry lyrics ("well how did I do/not good/fuck this/I spent the last ten days of my life ripping off the Smiths"). What's instantly clear is the backs-to-the-wall passion that drives the band. When singer/guitarist Kaia screams "fuck you fuck you fuck you" in "Hate The Christian Right," she sounds furious, but she also sounds terrified—if she's giving the impression that she's fighting someone who wants to see her dead, it's because she is. A moving, electrifying debut.

—Douglas Wolk

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 23. The band is also putting together a compilation of songs about self-defense, *Free To Fight*.

FILE UNDER: Fast, smart, emotional punk-pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Sugar, Bikini Kill, Green Day.

QUICKSAND Manic Compression

Island



After the world has waited two years for a record, the first half of Quicksand's latest—six songs clocking in under 15 minutes—listens so quickly it's possible to be disappointed. Hell, the entire album wraps in a brisk 36 minutes. But the fact is, Quicksand doesn't make a habit of rock 'n' roll dawdling: When the band's got something to say, it says it and shuts up. Unlike many of the hopelessly shallow wanker bands, Quicksand doesn't squander a second of precious groove time. Not until the fade-out of the six-minute-plus finale, "It Would Be Cooler If You Did," where shards of feedback fly like sparks off a grinder, does the band really loosen up. But there is strength in brevity as long as you keep your arguments cogent, and Quicksand proves that lesson in impressive fashion. The sonic turf it stakes out—punk, psycho-trance, and metallic riffing—often suggests quality bangers like Jane's Addiction ("Backward") and Soundgarden ("Blister"). And though the band keeps its arrangements simple, once inside, Quicksand explores generously. The howling guitar on "Brown Gargantuan" beams in from nowhere, as does the spooky ambient intro to "East 3rd Street." Skillful instrumentation, combined with the yin/yang of disciplined chaos, lets the band realize its astonishing potential. So, while a single spin of this disc may not take long in real time, you may not be too quick to remove it from your player.

—Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28.

FILE UNDER: Cogent power-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Jane's Addiction, Helmet, Soundgarden.

MIKE WATT Ball-Hog Or Tugboat?

Columbia



Seminal post-punk bass player Mike Watt (Minutemen, FIREHOSE) has branched out on his own with a little help from his friends. *Ball-Hog Or Tugboat?* showcases Watt's versatility as a songwriter, ambling through any style of music that interests him—from the jazzy beat of "E-Ticket Ride" to the pop sensibilities of "Piss-Bottle Man" to the funk of "Tell 'Em Boy." The diversity of the album comes, in part, from the cast of musicians; every song features a different star-studded lineup (nearly all the big names from the last few years of alternative rock are here) and a different direction. The best collaborations are tracks sung by Eddie Vedder ("Against The '70s"), Evan Dando ("Piss-Bottle Man") and Mike D. of the Beastie Boys ("E-Ticket Ride"). There's even a track featuring a spiel from riot grrrl Kathleen Hanna—an answering machine message from her to Watt explaining why she won't guest star on his "white rock boy hall of fame." Though *Ball-Hog Or Tugboat?* sounds like an uneven melange of disparate parts, at the base of each song is that bass—the unmistakable slap of Watt, the real star of the show. On this album, he's found the perfect balance between being the ball-hog and the tugboat, sometimes jumping into the forefront and at other times just steering the course.

—Dawn Sutter

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28. Video for "Big Train."

FILE UNDER: Alternative rock parties.

R.I.Y.L.: FIREHOSE, Lollapalooza.

MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD Friday Afternoon In The Universe

Gramavision-Rykodisc



Hipster slang like "Swings like nobody's business, daddy-o" seems to describe the sound of Medeski, Martin & Wood better than any astute musical dissection about the polyrhythms and chromatic dissonance found within *Friday Afternoon In The Universe*. John Medeski (keys), Billy Martin (drums) and Chris Wood (bass) are all well-schooled musicians, with honorary degrees earned in their apprenticeship in New York's "downtown" scene (Lounge Lizards, John Zorn, etc.). As a starting point, it's safe to call *Friday Afternoon In The Universe* a jazz record, but this is the rubbery, psychedelic and free-flowing jazz that's been dormant since Sun Ra passed on. The trio's interplay recalls magical jazz jam sessions and soul throwdowns from decades past, but there's nothing nostalgic about these performances. MM&W put twists and turns on old grooves, and hold a carefree disregard for structure that suggests jazz's future can be found within the quivering spaces of Medeski's careening organ solos. While Martin and Wood weave beats and pulses, Medeski gives his Hammond, Wurlitzer and Clavinet organs a workout, hopping, skipping and jive jumping all over hot-buttered soul and jazz, defining the poised and possessed nature of the trio. Now with three LPs as evidence, Medeski, Martin & Wood have proven themselves the most invigorating instrumental trio working today.

—Steve Ciabattini

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. First release of the new Rykodisc-Gramavision partnership.

FILE UNDER: Volatile groove juice.

R.I.Y.L.: Grant Green, Ginger Baker Trio, Max Roach.

ROYAL TRUX

KEEP ON TRUXIN'

by David Sprague

A few years ago, a men's room wall in one of the Lower East Side's finest drinking establishments was indelibly emblazoned with the legend "Royal Trux is God." New York being what it is, felt-tip debate ensued. Still, even Trux-atheists had to agree that Neil Hagerty and Jennifer Herrema moved in mysterious ways—a trait that's never been more palpable than on *Thank You* (Virgin), a major-label debut that shores up a longstanding rock-star veneer with arena-ready blues-rock sonics sure to baffle some of the band's more elitist supporters.

"People seem to think they know their position on mediocre mainstream culture, and just lump all rock records into that area," says Hagerty. "They want to reach outside their middle-class culture, and that's where rock comes from, so they hate it. I don't think we've made a mainstream record, but I think we made a record that a lot of people are going to be able to relate to. Our old records were more like a voyeuristic thing—we exposed everything about ourselves for people to stare at."

There was often plenty to stare at in the days when Hagerty and Herrema were better known for their intake than their output—although they've long since eschewed such habits. "Jennifer and I went through a lot of different scenes and just tried to maintain our self-respect and not get suckered," says Hagerty. "I would never expect people to actually enjoy what we were doing before. Now, we've come out of the toilet."

The fact that the duo discarded band members more often than they did syringes made the early days of Royal Trux a decidedly, er, erratic proposition, with some shows (and recordings) lapsing into coherence by sheer suspension of disbelief on the part of a small-but-loyal audience. Hagerty, then fresh from several years in Pussy Galore, and Herrema drifted from coast to coast, racking up plenty of debts (Herrema has admitted that the band blew a Matador advance on recreational powders, then stopped returning the label's calls), but also issuing some of the more remarkable albums of the past few years. Perhaps the most (in)famous Royal Trux release—other than the self-made, Theater of the Absurd-styled documentary film *What Is Royal Trux*—was *Twin Infinities*, a freakout-filled two-disc set that prompted countless comparisons to Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* (and more than a few trips to stereo repair shops).

"We kind of did things backwards, but we did that very consciously," says Hagerty. "Take a band like the Kinks, where people say 'I liked their first few records, but then they started writing these rock operas.' We're supposed to be getting worse now that we've been lavished with all this access, but now we're at the controls and we've never been in better shape."

The first evidence of the new, improved Royal Trux came in 1992, with the release of the band's second self-titled LP (the first, issued three years earlier, was subsequently made available to digital-age folk by the Drag City empire). By the time the band started touring, Herrema—masked in parka, shades and a curtain of blonde hair—had developed an icy stage presence that mesmerized those not accustomed to finding a sexual jolt at the core of their indie-rock.

"We listen to things that are perceived as very academic, like Anthony Braxton, but then we also listen to blues and country records where that [sexual] aspect is undeniable," says Hagerty. "As long as it's presented with a little detachment, with

PHOTO BY CATALINA LEISENFRING

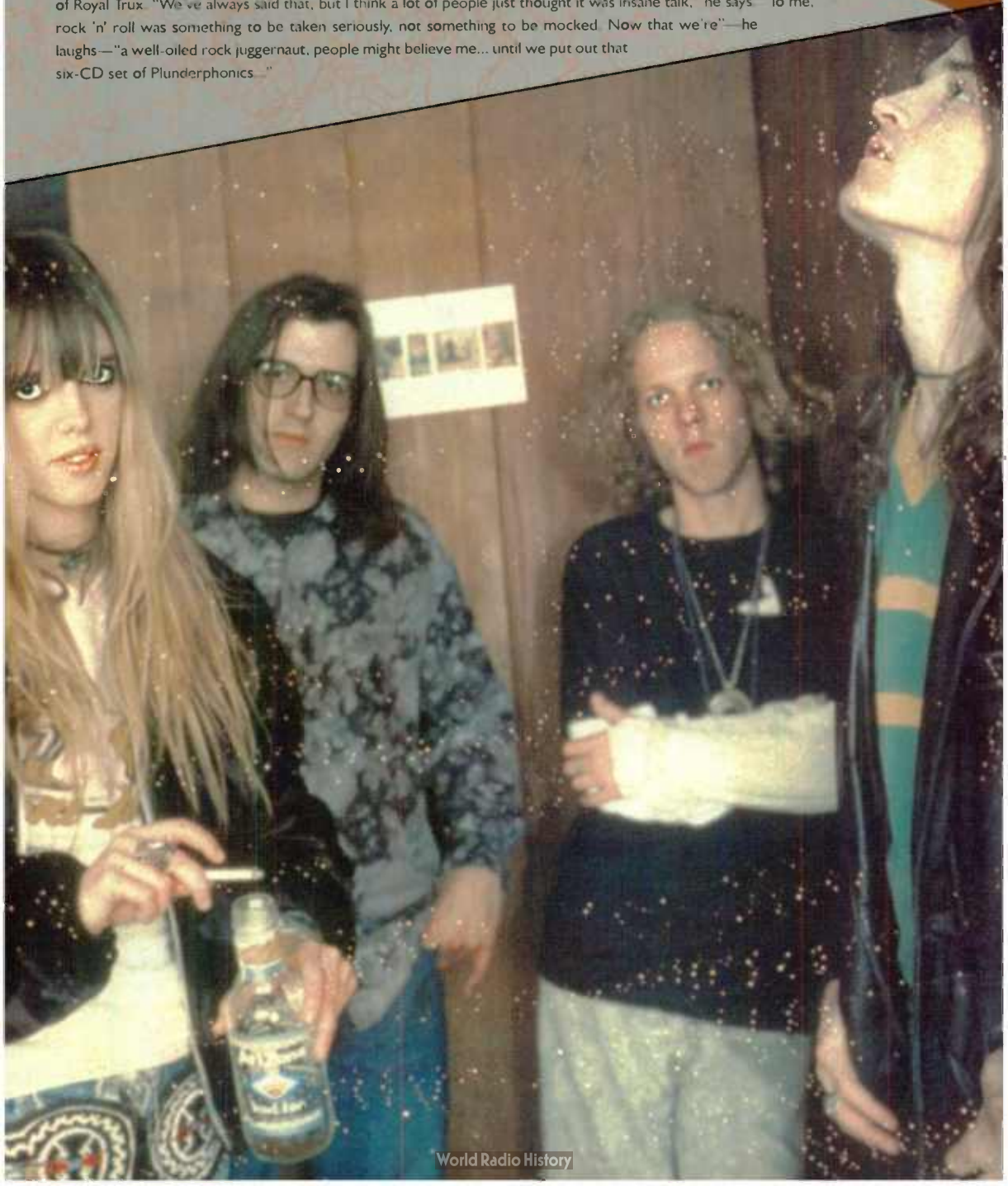


moments of loathing, it's okay."

By the turn of 1994, Royal Trux had released another relatively concise album, *Cats And Dogs*, embarked on one last period of prog-rock sprawl (with shows that saw Hagerty spend most of his time sawing away at a violin, while Herrema concentrated on perfecting her slow-motion cigarette smoking), and picked Virgin from a pack of potential suitors. *Thank You*—recorded by the current dual-drummer lineup—strips things down even further than the accessible *Cats And Dogs*, punching up Herrema's rasp and exposing every nuance of Hagerty's deceptively complex riffage.

"Our first instinct was to pick a producer that did jazz records," Hagerty says. "[David] Briggs was really into recording live. The first session he ever did was Ray Charles, so that lets you know where he's coming from. In the past, we'd just blow into the studio and it was more like working against people than working with them. By the time we got to the studio this time, we'd rehearsed so much that we basically finished the album in three days."

That breathless intensity is evident in the album's every moment—from the near-glam choogle of "Ray-O-Vac" to the paranoid-but-catchy rant "You're Gonna Lose"—all of which are tied together by a thread of danger redolent of the Stooges' halcyon days. It's all very rock 'n' roll—a feeling Hagerty insists has always been at the heart of Royal Trux. "We've always said that, but I think a lot of people just thought it was insane talk," he says. "To me, rock 'n' roll was something to be taken seriously, not something to be mocked. Now that we're"—he laughs—"a well-oiled rock juggernaut, people might believe me... until we put out that six-CD set of *Plunderphonics*."



B E L L Y

B Y C H R I S M O L A N P H Y

Despite what countless fans and journalists have concluded, Tanya Donelly of Belly is not an overgrown kid. At least, she's not intentionally childlike. She can be playful, jokey—even giggle or shriek like a teenager unfettered by the demands of life. But “the little-girl thing,” as the 28-year-old Donelly refers to it, has gotten a little tired.

♦ She's self-aware enough to understand where people could have gotten the wrong idea. Star, Belly's debut album, was a fanciful series of fairy tales offset by dark lyrics that would have made the Brothers Grimm smile, perverse stories which only repeated listenings made apparent. Listeners unsurprisingly took Star as the product of a youthful mind, and the genial, pretty Donelly as the world's newest pop princess.

P H O T O G R A P H Y B Y



T A N Y A

M I C H A E L W O N G

Two years later—on the eve of the release of *King*, a tougher record that should lay the *Star* image to rest once and for all—Donnelly reflects on how she's grown, if only perceptually. "*Star* was definitely [written] from a child's point of view, to a certain extent," she says. "This new one is less so, but there's still a couple of songs—well, really only one, 'Red'—coming from that angle. The rest of them are relatively mature. From my perspective, I was a little bit conscious of it, because the little-girl thing was played up the last time out, and I was trying to sing like a 28-year-old woman this time."

Of course, it helps that the band has had time to mature, too. Back when *Star* was recorded, Belly was still a concept more than a band. A creation of Donnelly's, springing from songs she wrote just as she left her longtime cohorts, college-rock heroes Throwing Muses, Belly was brought to life in the studio with the help of guitar- and drum-playing brothers Thomas and Chris Gorman and a temporary bassist, Fred Abong.

As songs like the chiming "Feed The Tree" and the jaunty "Slow Dog" became MTV and college radio staples, Belly turned from a newborn venture into an established act in a hurry. A new, permanent bassist, Gail Greenwood, joined the band just as it embarked on an 18-month tour. "We got to know each other very well," Donnelly says with unintended understatement. "Part of the progression on this new album comes from touring for more than a year straight."

"It's hard for a star," Donnelly sang on the title track from Belly's debut album. Though she was doubtless singing about the trials of some ethereal light, Donnelly and her bandmates are learning that earthbound stars endure trials of their own. Sitting next to Chris Gorman and enjoying a much-deserved cigarette in a quiet room in Time-Warner's New York City headquarters, Donnelly is trying her best to maintain an

engaging and friendly persona amidst a week of photos, interviews and preparations for a music video shoot in support of *King*.

She remains amiable as she weighs the pros and cons of their second, upcoming year-long tour, which will take them everywhere from Italy to New Zealand. "I like playing, and I like traveling," she says. "I don't necessarily enjoy the waiting around and stuff that comes with touring. But it's a job, and so there's going to be things about it that are going to be job-like."

Gorman, who has had to endure less of the primping from makeup artists and prodding from journalists, is a bit more at ease, in a loose gas-station-attendant shirt apparently once worn by somebody named Steve. "This is a working trip for us," he says.

The hassles of promotion and the dreaded sophomore curse aside, the circumstances under which *King* was recorded weren't bad. The band had a brief sabbatical in which to write new tunes, which were produced by Glyn Johns, the veteran British producer whose long credits stretch back to the '60s and the Beatles and Stones. Moreover, Tanya didn't do as much of the heavy lifting by herself. "It was easier this time because Tom and Gail both brought music in, so it was much more collaborative," she says. "Also, everybody was involved with the arranging, so it went much more quickly."

Quick is how it feels. *King* is a crackling, earthy album that attacks the senses where *Star* preferred to entrance them. The sharp rock hooks Donnelly crafted on the first album's "Slow Dog" and "Gepetto" have been honed into a wall of happy guitar noise on *King*'s "Now They'll Sleep" and "Super-Connected." The record is still welcoming, still sweet, and still catchy as all hell; but it is filled with newly aggressive songs that will blossom even further on the concert trail (much like the latest songs by R.E.M., with whom the band will be touring Europe later this year). "It'll be easier" to play the *King* songs live, Gorman says. "The

G A I L





“Oh, I’m a fuckin’ angel,” Donnelly says, taking another drag on her cigarette. “They all said that after the last record: ‘She’s just so fucking nice.’”

album lends itself to touring, really easily—the dynamics of the songs.” “*Star* changed completely live,” Donnelly adds, recalling a tour in which the still-formative band’s sound jelled and became much leaner. “Our approaches to the songs were really radically different—much less precious, more aggressive.”

Donnelly’s lyrics are still a little elliptical. Angels and magic silverfish still abound on *King*, but they’re tempered by a wisdom that the rock setting makes convincing. When Donnelly does address kiddy-friendly topics, as on “Red” and “The Bees,” she sounds more like a mother (“Where does it hurt?”) than a child herself. As she has always been, Tanya is hesitant to reveal exactly what her songs are about. The new tunes, she says, are “probably more autobiographical this time... I say ‘I’ more, but there are songs where I’m saying ‘I’ where I don’t mean me, and there are songs where I do. It’s kind of 50-50.”

The album’s live feeling was enhanced by producer Johns, who earned renown 25 years ago for producing the unreleased, rawer version of the Beatles’ *Let It Be* before Phil Spector took over and drenched it in strings and choirs. His Steve Albini-for-a-gentler-age reputation pleased Donnelly and company, who feel *King* is stronger for Johns’ warm but unadorned approach. “There’s a lot of happy accidents in there, and Glyn Johns is great about that—that’s his forte,” says Donnelly. “He’s a ‘feel’ person; if the song felt good, even if I played the wrong chord a couple of times, he wants you to leave it in.”

Having bassist Greenwood in the studio for the first time also enhanced the jam-friendly aura. “There was a comfort level in the studio,” Chris Gorman says. “Tanya’s been doing this for a long time, but other than an EP we recorded, [making *Star*] was the first time Tom and I had been in a studio for a session. So this time we were more assertive on what we wanted, because we had a much better idea.”

Donnelly does indeed have a long recording history for someone still so young, a past that critics can’t help but hold up as a yardstick for Belly’s success. Growing up in Newport (a small island community outside Providence, Rhode Island), Tanya and her stepsister, Kristin Hersh, shared a passion for their guitars that eventually blossomed into Throwing Muses, who recorded their first EP when Donnelly was a mere 17. They became the stars of the Newport band scene, which also included the then-unknown Gorman brothers.

Though the Muses made an impressive series of idiosyncratic guitar-pop records featuring Hersh’s songwriting and eccentric vocals, the band was unable through the ’80s to break out of the college-rock circuit. By the early ’90s, Donnelly was feeling constrained by the dynamics of the group, which had showcased her own prodigious songwriting talents on only two cuts per record. She had already

stepped away from the Muses once to work with Kim Deal, then of the Pixies. Deal formed the Breeders with Donnelly in 1990 as a side project. (For Kim, the rest is history, gilded in platinum: After the Pixies split, she reformed the Breeders as a full-time project, bringing in her sister Kelley to replace the indisposed Donnelly on the hit *Last Splash*.)

Tired of playing kid sister to Hersh, Donnelly parted ways with the Muses in 1991—amicably, quietly and for good—after the release of the band’s *Real Ramona* album. Tanya took with her some songs she’d written that would wind up two years later on Belly’s debut, an album which, much to her surprise, eclipsed the Muses’ entire sales history within a year.

Compounding the irony, both bands are now signed to Sire and releasing albums a month apart: *King*, to be launched on Valentine’s Day, was preceded in January by *University*, the Muses’ best record in years. The latter is being released to general acclaim and a feeling that the time has finally come for America to fall in love with Kristin Hersh’s veteran band.

Tanya Donnelly, who makes a point of noting she’s “still a fan” of her former band, would like nothing better than to see her sibling and best friend get that recognition. “I think the new record is great,” she says. “And people are ready to hear it; there are more doors open now.” Just as her break with the Muses in 1991 was relatively peaceful, she insists that there’s no reason for people to turn the albums’ simultaneous release into a competition. “If it’s gonna be weird, it’s not going to be because of anything coming from either band; it’s going to be coming from outside sources. I don’t think it’s going to be an issue.”

Donnelly doesn’t see much of her old friends—the famous ones—now that everyone has tasted success at varying levels. “Everybody’s so busy. I see Kristin a lot, because she lives in Newport, but I don’t see Kim and Kelley that much at all—we talk on the phone every few months.” Still, Donnelly didn’t stray from her hometown in picking new cohorts. Though six years older than Donnelly, Gail Greenwood, a veteran of an unsung Newport hardcore band, has become a spiritual sister to the younger yet more experienced bandleader. And in the Gormans, the sibling tradition in Tanya’s bands continues.

27-year-old Chris Gorman and his brother Tom, one year older, learned their respective instruments more than a decade ago, when Tom was asked to join a local band and had to pick up the guitar fast. Over the years, drummer Chris and guitarist Tom played, both separately and together, in a variety of short-lived Newport groups. “There was a time period during, like, the early ’80s when everybody played something—there were so many people playing, you could always play with someone,” Chris recalls, as Tanya nods in assent. “Some of the bands I played in only lasted two weeks; then three of the

C H R I S



guys from that band would start a new band, with a new name, with somebody else playing guitars."

Although brothers can tire of one another, the Gormans would allow themselves to be hired together if something decent came along. Like Belly. "We were living together at the time when this project came around. So I think," Chris says, glancing at Tanya as if to confirm his supposition, "we were invited as a package." Tanya laughs, as if to reassure him, while Chris explains that for the brothers, joining her venture required little arm-twisting. "It was something we both wanted to do. We had both worked toward getting an opportunity for a long time, and just nothing good had come about before this one."

As Donelly knows all too well, siblings do fight, but she's learned when not to meddle with Chris and Tom. "At first, it used to upset me, like, 'Don't fight!'" she says. "It happens very infrequently, and when it does, at this point, I'm used to it."

"Besides," she adds, giggling. "Kristin and I fought—but in stranger ways. We had silent fights, which could just as easily clear a room. It was like ESP fighting."

"Psychic warfare," Chris suggests. On the other hand, he points out, having a silent bond with one's sibling can have positive effects as well. "Musically, it's a serious advantage," he says. "Tom and I grew up listening to the same stuff, we have the same influences, and when you play together, you have an intuition that's just inherent in your style. I can recognize things that Tom does, where I don't have to understand where he's coming from; I can sort it out pretty easily on my own."

Donelly is glad she has a spiritual, if not an actual sister in the band in Greenwood; at the very least, Gail's presence gives Belly a perfectly balanced gender ratio. Tanya doesn't want to make too much of it, saying that she and Greenwood generally communicate in what she terms a

"genderless" way. But having a co-ed band just pleases her somehow.

"I think that balance is more interesting than a uni-gender situation," she says. "I don't mean visually, I mean what gets contributed. It is different, but it's on an unconscious level. I mean, we wouldn't be able to look at our songs and say, 'This is what Chris contributed 'cause he's a boy, and this is what I contributed 'cause I'm a girl.'"

But I do think that bands that have both genders sound more interesting, for whatever reason."

Her gender awareness, however, doesn't make her sympathetic to the topic of "women in rock," one which every guitar-playing woman from Chrissie Hynde to Liz Phair has had to endure. Donelly feels that the term "women's rock," like "alternative rock," is gradually losing its potency as more women step forward to stake their claim. "I actually think that the overexposure, as far as 'women in rock' goes, has been a positive thing, because it's become the norm," she says. "That side of it, treating [the woman rocker] like a circus animal, has kind of fallen by the wayside."

Which brings Tanya back to that other dreaded subject: her stature as a bandleader, Belly's own circus animal. Now that she's got a new album with her band that submerges and roughs up that adorable persona of hers, does she think that people will continue to perceive her as a pop princess? More to the point, is she still as accessible, as warm, as friendly as everyone thinks she is?

"Oh, I'm a fuckin' angel," she says, taking another drag on her cigarette. Chris laughs while she ponders her reputation for a moment, rolling her eyes and repeating the well-intentioned but belittling compliment she's been given once too often. "They all said that after the last record: 'She's just so fucking nice.'"

She smiles and softens a bit. "I still take that as a compliment, I guess."

T O M

The Holy Grail of Punk Rock



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The Grindcore Song
Primitive Enema
I left My Gun in San Francisco
Shutup
Ten Seconds of Heaven
Yesterday
Ode to Dickhead
Pink Gun
Blind

The Missing Pieces of

HITCROCK

BY
JAMES
LIEN

Rhino has brightened the late winter months by domestically reissuing Robyn Hitchcock's pre-A&M albums from the '80s, when he was a much better kept secret, a cult artist in search of a cult. All of the reissues will include extra tracks, unreleased tracks, alternate versions, expanded liner notes, and other fun things. There's even a whole album of previously unreleased material. Where did all these unreleased tracks come from, and why hasn't the world heard of them until now?

"I didn't have tapes of them to listen to," Robyn says, attempting to explain how 30 or 40 finished recordings languished for over a decade.

"I took a rough cassette away [from the studio], and my cassette broke, or I lost it, so I had kind of forgotten about them. And there were songs like 'Birdshead,' that I did with Peter Buck, that I used to play live with him. And a lot of songs from around '85 to early '87."

Among the albums being rereleased is Robyn's *I Often Dream Of Trains*, originally released in 1984 on Midnight Records. Largely acoustic and recorded by Hitchcock solo, it's unlike any other album he's made, even though he's made other acoustic albums and written many quirky, moody songs. On it, his influences—Syd Barrett, Big Star, *White Album*-era Beatles, early Bowie—shine through, but the album is still one of the most unique artistic statements of the decade. "Hold it," he interrupts the question, destroying the hushed, reverential mood that encircles any fan's discussion of *Trains*. "We've got some problems with the cat here. There's some sensitive things on the table and she's getting onto them." Cats seem to have a habit of honing in on the one thing in the room you don't want them to mess with, and in this case it's a table full of Robyn's illustrations and paintings. "She's got an unerring nose for artwork today. She's gonna have to be disciplined."

"*Trains*," he picks up. "I think I really savored making *I Often Dream Of Trains*, if that's the word for it. Because I hadn't done any recording for two or three years, so it wasn't a chore. I didn't have a group, I didn't have any dates to perform, and I had no career, I had nothing at all at that point, apart from my life. And the songs were really written just for their own sake, so the stuff was very unadulterated. I had no deadline, no input from anybody else. I had no goal, I had nothing. And so, it just existed entirely for its own sake." So it's no surprise that the album's stark acoustic texture marks it as an internal, introspective record. Robyn comments, "You know, people sometimes say, if you were the only person in the world, and you were an artist, would you continue to paint or write songs or write books? You know, what would be the point of art if there was nobody to share it with? And I've got a feeling that if the last person in the world was an artist, they'd probably carry on creating art, even though nobody but them could see it. And that's how I felt when I was doing *Trains*..."

"I'm kind of really scraping around the vaults with a flashlight to make sure that I've found everything this time, that there isn't anything clinging to the ceiling," Robyn says of the reissues, which are being released in three three-disc batches. "I've also assembled a collection of short stories, but whether they'll come out in printed form or as spoken word. I'm not sure yet. I've got three new songs coming out on K Records that I recorded in Calvin Johnson's basement in Olympia. There's a lot of things around, but you just can't see them really. It's a bit like interviewing a crocus in November and saying, 'okay, Mr. Crocus Bulb, what are you planning?' We can't see anything poking out of the ground right now.' Well, this crocus is keeping a low profile, now isn't it? But believe me, the whole thing will blossom with frightening clarity come the spring."



Selected Discography:

[all titles included in Rhino reissue series, unless otherwise noted]

Black Snake Diamond Hole
Groovy Decay/Decoy
I Often Dream Of Trains
Invisible Hitchcock
Eye
You And Oblivion (rarebox)

with The Egyptians:

Fragments!
Gotta Let This Hen Out!
Element Of Light
Globe Of Frogs (A&M)
Queen Elvis (A&M)
Perspex Island (A&M)
Respect (A&M)

SINCOLA

what the nothinghead said



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Featuring "Bitch"



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Young, Popular And Sexy TEENBEAT AT 10

Mark Robinson (a k a Mark E., a k a MRR) is a man on the go. The frontman and mastermind behind the now-defunct indie-rock band Unrest is busier than ever—writing and recording songs for his new band Air Miami, signing new bands to TeenBeat (the label he runs out of his house), writing songs for longstanding side project Grenadine, compiling an Unrest greatest-hits record, signing distribution deals, preparing an album of special Mark Robinson remixes, and putting together *Wakefield*,

a mammoth four-CD compilation celebrating TeenBeat's tenth birthday.

"Take as much as you can," he says to me, slightly cryptically. "Know what I mean? Take as much control as you can."

I'm sitting on a low couch in the living room of the TeenBeat residence/office/practice space/yard, surrounded by Sammy Davis Jr. records and junk tinsel from a polyurethane Christmas tree, facing down the elusive, and often uncommunicative, head of TeenBeat. We're talking about new wave records, his own and others', sharing stories about obscure British dance bands. ("It'd be great to go back in a time machine and record with Section 25," Mark gushes, confirming one of my convictions. "Their album on Factory Benelux is amazing; it's like one of the best records ever recorded.")

He's also grudgingly forthcoming with stories from ten years of TeenBeat, the label Mark started in 1985, while still in high school, to put out his and his friends' recordings. Early releases were almost entirely cassette-only, produced as needed and sold at cost to friends and admirers, featuring bands like Unrest, Clarence (Mark and Phil Krauth from Unrest, songs by Phil), the Thirsty Boys, and Jungle George and the Plague—the last band featuring Andrew Beaujon, a k a Scaley Andrew, better known as the man behind later-day TeenBeat supergroup Eggs. "We didn't really know about the outside world," Mark confesses. "We sold things on consignment at a couple stores, but we would go back a year later and they'd have sold none of them."

Today's TeenBeat is another creature altogether. Since Unrest's

BY MICHAEL VAZQUEZ

demise, Mark has been devoting himself increasingly to running the label—"more and more, all the time"—and the roster includes brisk-selling stars like Eggs, the mighty Versus (from New York), and Tuscedero, a saucy, up-and-coming group whose debut single, featuring an excellent song bemoaning the loss of a cache of Nancy Drew books to an insensitive mother hell-bent on housecleaning, went through three pressings last fall. Cath Carroll, the British music journalist-turned-British pop star, Mapplethorpe photo subject, and Unrest cover girl (hers is the face and the reference of 1993's *Perfect Teeth* album, as well as the subject of the single "Cath Carroll"), is now a regularly recording TeenBeat artist. Blast Off Country Style's bland of off-kilter comedy and trashy pop has endeared it to numerous consumers, including the head of Japanese pop label 100 Guitar Mania, who's been licensing its records for Japan. Then there's Los Marauders, a shit-kicking hee-haw rockabilly outfit, and Romania, a dancey synth-pop unit in the tradition of early Depeche Mode. And then, inevitably, there's Unrest.

Unrest (Mark, Bridget Cross, and Phil Krauth) disbanded in the spring of 1994; no explanation, then or now, save "exhaustion." The band had become remarkably successful: signed to British label 4AD (home to Throwing Muses, Dead Can Dance, and any number of industrial goth bands), all three members quit their day jobs and embarked on a series of highly successful tours, playing to great acclaim in England. But after a final tour in the winter of '94, long-simmering personality conflicts seem to have boiled over. A week later, Mark and Bridget were playing together, writing songs under the name Air Miami.



MARK ROBINSON'S HOUSE (TEENBEAT 97)



UNREST (L-R): MARK ROBINSON, BRIDGET CROSS, PHIL KRAUTH

The name "Air Miami" is not taken from Dan Marino's pass-heavy Miami Dolphins ("I hate the Dolphins," Mark insists. "I've always hated the Dolphins"), but rather a riff on real-life airline Air Jamaica. The sound, however, is vintage Unrest—quick, brittle, danceable and breathy. Still, there are differences; Mark is subtle in describing them. "Unrest was basically Mark. Air Miami is Mark and Bridget. Bridget sings on every song. We both sing on every song. And she's playing guitar. She usually comes up with some totally different harmony, like on 'Airplane Rider,' coming in with a totally different vocal line, weaving in and out."

"Airplane Rider" is the A-side of the band's brilliant inaugural single, perfectly expressive of Mark's coy reading of the new wave: As Bridget croons "Air-plane rah-eh-duhr," Mark exhales "Go!" over her last note, pushing the song forward and upward and lending the song a metallic beauty. It's a piece of authoritarian modernism every bit as convincing and amusing as 1991's "Hydroplane" ("I can/hydroplane/for you/I must/hydroplane") or "Can't Sit Still" from the first Unrest LP, a seemingly upbeat rock song which ends with the half-ominous line "I know you/You can't sit still."

Air Miami has begun gathering speed: another single and several compilation tracks are imminent, as well as a long-player. There's also a full-length compilation of Unrest's greatest hits in the offing, *B.P.M.* (1991-1994). If Caroline Records ever gets around to de-accessioning the rights to the second and third Unrest records, *Malcolm X Park* and *Kustom Karnal Blaxploitation*, the TeenBeat CD reissue *Chocolate City Cherry* can finally see the light of day.

Meanwhile, founding Unrest member Phil Krauth (drums and percussion) has a full-length solo record out in March, *Cold Morning*, a pleasantly sprawling collection of songs with a more reflective, somber

sound than Unrest—missing, as it is, Mark's distinctive aggro-twang on guitar, and filled out with piano, synth-effects and tape-loops. It's a superb record, all hits and no misses. Most of the songs fall into a sort of *Girl From Ipanema-meets-Hawaii Five-O* territory, wind-swept and mod. Unrest's breakup may have been the best thing that could have happened to Phil; these songs are too good to remain bottled up for long, and Phil's single contribution to *Perfect Teeth* ("Meet Me In L.A.") barely hinted at the depths and charm of *Cold Morning*.

Mark Robinson's projects have always engaged in artful appropriation. In Unrest's earliest incarnation, when the band was an instrumental four-piece jamming at home (and at the Wakefield High talent show), at a time when most DC bands were still busy working through the minimalist fury of *Minor Threat*—or were, like *Rites of Spring*, inventing emotional hard-core—Unrest was already dancing to a distinctly different drum. Early Unrest paid roughly equal tribute to *hardCore*, art-rock, and the brand of new wave music spawned by *Joy Division* and its imitators on Manchester's *Factory* label: *King Crimson*, *Henry Cow*, *A Certain Ratio* and *Crispy Ambulance* were regularly feted in the band's prolific cassette-only releases. ("TeenBeat" and "Unrest" are, in fact, copped directly from *Henry Cow*—"Teenbeat" is the title of a song from *Legend*, the first HC record; *Unrest* is the name of the second LP)

The fascination with the *Factory* label included a severe attraction to the sharp angles and muted colors of Peter Saville's graphic design team, most famous for the elegance and stark foreboding of the packaging of *Joy Division* and *New Order* releases. Mark invests a tremendous amount of time designing the look and feel of most TeenBeat products. There's a shelf in his workroom where Mark puts

BLAST OFF COUNTRY STYLE



TUSCADERO



records he plans to use for "inspiration"; three of five, during my visit, were designed by Peter Saville. When I ask him whether he'd like to meet Saville or Tony Wilson, Factory's founder, Mark is incredulous: "Sure. But that's like asking, 'Do you want to meet the President? Do you want to meet Madonna?' I mean, sure."

Wakefield is TeenBeat's tenth anniversary present to the world, a four-CD box set chock full of highlights and rarities, as well as a handful of brand new tracks and a complete discography ("we call it a book of numbers," says Mark). It's also another sidelong Factory appreciation: *Palatine*, a four-CD set released by Factory in 1988, was also a ten-year compilation, named after the street address of the Manchester offices at 86 Palatine Road.

TeenBeat's distinctive cataloguing system, which records each new release along with label and band tee-shirts, posters, and cultural curios like Mark's station wagon (TeenBeat 20), the TeenBeat HQ in Arlington, Virginia (715 North Wakefield St., TeenBeat 97), and a handsome metallic sculpture Mark made in shop class (Unrest metal box, TeenBeat 26), is itself modeled on the infamous Factory discography, which included Happy Mondays records, New Order manager Rob Gretton's molar reconstruction, and the Hacienda, the Manchester dance club famous for making designer drug Ecstasy a British public-health panic. All Mark needs to do now is open a disco.

The whole business is awesome and goofy at the same time (like many of TeenBeat's best moments). But what Mark's really after, I think, is magic—the kind of mysterious nostalgia produced by the random pairing of time and numeral, the implication of a world or a scene and a sensibility through the wealth of objects—both funny and serious, almost always stylish—that find their way into the Book of



all-new material from most of the label's regulars, and TeenBeat just signed a two-year distribution deal with Matador Records.

While we're talking, Mark plays me a series of new Air Miami songs. One of them leaps out for its lyrics—"Hey, hey, hey, I've got it/World Cup fever"—and I immediately think of New Order's ill-advised (but commercially viable) foray into corporate patriotism,

mark robinson's projects have always engaged in artful appropriation.

Numbers. It's not quite as effective as the original: Factory products were often titled or modeled after obscure anarchist movements, pamphlets or personages, which made the mystery deeper, somehow, more historically resonant. TeenBeat products, meanwhile, refer primarily to obscure Factory products.

Wakefield and the various Unrest offshoots and reissues are just the tip of the iceberg. There's a retrospective CD featuring seminal DC noisecore band No Trend's first single and early demos; a CD of Versus' long-lost cassette-only release (a sort of singles compilation, since most of the band's singles and compilation tracks are culled from that first tape); a Scaley Andrew compilation; and lost albums by Butch Willis, Vomit Launch, and, just maybe, Miaow, Cath Carroll's late-'80s Factory band. ("If we could get the rights to that record, I'd put it out in a second," Mark admits.) There are scheduled releases of

"World In Motion," the "official song" of the 1990 British soccer team. "How did this song happen?" I ask Mark, liking it more and more. "This woman Esther," he answers. "I was wearing pretty much only soccer clothes all summer long, and Esther said that I had World Cup fever. Thus the song."

"Is that all?" I press him, suspicious. I bring up the New Order song.

"Well, definitely, that's part of it." He smiles fancifully. "See, if this song comes out this year, and then Air Miami gets really big, and then that song garners a little more popularity... then by 1998, it could be the official theme." We both laugh at that, loudly. But I'm not sure, in the end, who's laughing at whom. I suspect Mark Robinson usually gets the last laugh.

✪ "AIRPLANE RIDER" BY AIR MIAMI APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD.



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SKATALITES

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Lou Barlow look-a-like into Liz Phair, L7, Pumpkins seeks indie-chick into digging through garage-sale record bins, thrifting, and (generally) rocking out.

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A.C. ACOUSTICS *Able Treasury* *Trance Syndicate*

a.c. acoustics (the band prefers the lower case) is a spectacularly ragged and gorgeously spontaneous guitar outfit toiling in Glasgow. Some of the group's material, "Mother Head Sander" and "Sister Grab Operator" in particular, sounds like the kind of music Smashing Pumpkins would have recorded had Billy Corgan stayed urban and not gone technically stratospheric with his guitar. Though a muddy production prevents singer/guitarist Paul Campion and his guitar-mate Roger Ward from being heard clearly, the bludgeoning aural wounds both inflict are not completely lost. Gaps filled with thick shards of hard rock, peripheral feedback, sax squeals, and distant single-note solos make songs like "Fat Abbey," "Oregon Pine Washbake" and "M.V." formidable sculptures of noise. Indeed, it's that same guitar mess that makes the record's finale, "Sweet Lodge," as exciting and unruly a sonic extravaganza as you're likely to hear. Though a follow-up CD EP, *Hand Passes Plenty*, reveals a different, more experimental side to the band, a.c. acoustics is in any case a brash and adventurous outfit, brimming with ideas and more than ready to turn jaded ears into receptive ones.

—Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24.

FILE UNDER: Scots on the rocks.

R.I.Y.L.: The Fall, Smashing Pumpkins, My Bloody Valentine.

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS *Call Me Burroughs* *Rhino*

For those who've grown up hearing his warbling voice intoning snippets of his apocalyptic sci-fi prose everywhere from Beat conventions to *Saturday Night Live* to Nike commercials but never really explored his work properly, this legendary, newly reissued mid-'60s recording of Burroughs reading from his work is perhaps the best sonic representation of the man yet. This is the *real* Burroughs, very close to prime form. Surprisingly, the humor comes through strongest here—it's black humor, twisted beyond the mores of his time, but now the world has caught up. In a lot of cases, stuff that's really only marginally humorous on paper becomes the stuff to induce wicked cackles when heard in Burroughs' sickly monotone. There's Dr. "Fingers" Schafer, a mad psychiatrist who develops a "de-anxietized man," a hideous shape-morphing black centipede of a beast consisting of a spinal column, some goeey undifferentiated tissue and little else. Elsewhere, an undercover policeman mutates into a gelatinous blob that assimilates other beings, including a district vice squad supervisor. The judge tries to pin a murder charge on him, but there's no dead body, and no evidence, so he reluctantly has to let him go. The bewildered judge chooses his words carefully, simply because the old words can't accurately describe a person who has become a blob that sucks in other life forms and turns them into plasmic pulp. The anecdote reveals one of the cruxes of Burroughs' work, and it puts him in perspective in literary evolution: In many ways, he's always been a writer describing a world that's gotten too weird for words. Language fails when it has to describe the undescribable, and Burroughs felt he had to use cut-ups, montages, and a hallucinogenic prose style to pick up the slack. When Burroughs wrote *Naked Lunch*, the world didn't have shape-shifting *Terminator*-style special effects, it didn't have virtual reality technology, it didn't have interactive television or brainwashing purple dinosaurs. Now we have all of those things, and more, and Burroughs' writings suddenly seem a lot less far-out and wiggly, and a lot more prescient. While Burroughs was banging away on the keys in Tangier, the old fool was using an old typewriter to tap out a story that was the end of words.

—James Lien

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24.

FILE UNDER: Punk fiction.

R.I.Y.L.: *Spare Ass Annie And Other Tales* [Burroughs with Michael Franti and Hal Willner], John Giorno, Karen Finley.

a.c. acoustics



CALL ME BURROUGHS

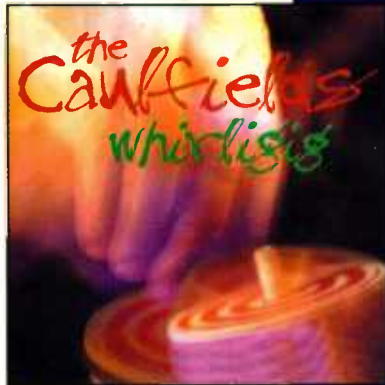


"[Aliens] are examining me like a guinea pig, just to see what kind of man I am. They have plugged into my brain like a computer. They have either downloaded things into me or taken information out. I've caught them two or three times doing this to me and after it happens, I have this incredible new knowledge available to me and I am led to places and things and people that totally verify certain things for me. The last time it happened, I woke up in the morning going, 'I'm going to Malta.'" — *Sammy Hagar, from an interview in Seconds magazine.*

THE CAULFIELDS Whirligig A&M

"I only wrote these words because they rhyme," sings John Faye of the Caulfields on "Hannah, I Locked You Out." Faye, also guitarist and songwriter for the band, may not realize just how ironic his lyric is. While he clearly has a talent for a thoughtful turn of phrase, sometimes his lyricism comes off a bit silly. "...Makes his bed for what that's worth/he likes to use vocabulary/His bank account a state of dearth," he sings on "Awake on Wednesday." Or on "Rickshaw": "I just wanna pull your rickshaw all around the town.../I just wanna wear your ripped-up hand-me-downs." Melding new wave influences like early Elvis Costello and Squeeze with pop/punk grooves *a la* the Smithereens, the Caulfields do many things well on their debut. The musicianship is solid, the production is meticulous and the flourishes—like the guitar break on "The Day That Came And Went"—are impressive. The aforementioned "Hannah..." is a poignant break-up song, with some tender, evocative images. Occasionally, Faye forces the issue, trying too hard to come up with unusual lyrical hooks and cryptic gimmicks. On most of *Whirligig*, though, he's crafted some nifty songs.

—Bob Gulla



DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 7.

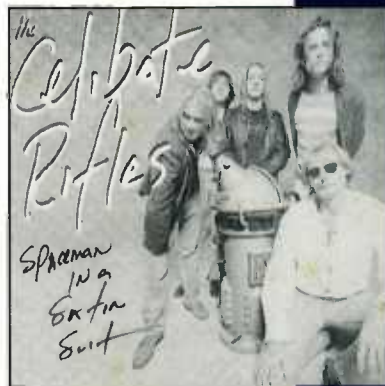
FILE UNDER: Neo-New Wavers.

R.I.Y.L.: Squeeze, early Joe Jackson, the Smithereens.

CELIBATE RIFLES Spaceman In A Satin Suit Hot-Restless

For over a decade, Australia's Celibate Rifles have been a rambunctious outfit. The band has recorded a slew of consistent records, drawing on the intensity of the band its name parodies (Sex Pistols, get it?). A high-energy, no-nonsense attitude has earned the band a loyal following back home and abroad. *Spaceman In A Satin Suit*, released in the midst of a punk resurgence in the pop arena, serves as a reminder of the group's storied history. When energy is a primary catalyst behind the music, however, age is not always a blessing. The album definitely has a few serious failings, courtesy of some terrible vocals and uninspired guitar work when the band slows the tempo down. Nonetheless, when the band turns on the jets, as on "Spirits" and "Cutting It Fine," few do it better. And though the Celibate Rifles aren't necessarily rewriting history, at least they're not rewriting Nirvana hits.

—Bryan McNamara



DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14.

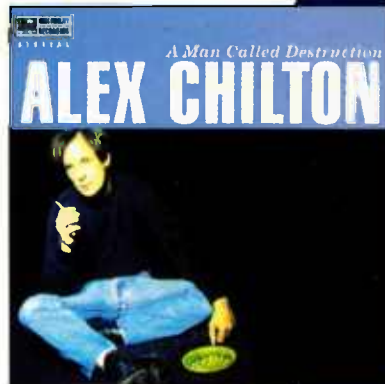
FILE UNDER: Aged Aussie-punk.

R.I.Y.L.: The Meanies, Gas Huffer, Pegboy, Ramones.

ALEX CHILTON A Man Called Destruction Ardent

Alex Chilton never wanted to be a pop mystic, a cult hero, an influential touchstone to a generation of musicians. He never wanted to be a sensitive, misunderstood artist, a fragile romantic soul dashed on the rocks by fickle audiences and the wickedness of the music business. From the looks of his last few albums, all he really wanted all along was to be in a bar band. While he's often portrayed as an erratic, disheveled musician-type, the kind who never wears a watch and always turns up late, since his re-emergence in the late '80s, he's actually shown himself to be the type who turns his watch around to the inside of his wrist so he can watch the minutes tick by while he plays. So, as he returns to Ardent Records (a resuscitated version of the label he first recorded those Big Star albums for so long ago), it'd be nice to call it a return to his glory days, but Alex Chilton remains Alex Chilton, not the people's romanticized conceptions of Alex Chilton. Still, of all his post-Lost Decade output, *Shame Spiral* sounds like the most fun; there's a horn section adding levity, especially on the mock-dirge of "It's Your Funeral." You can go see Alex live in a club and you certainly won't have a bad time—some of his songs, like the Delfonics' "What's Your Sign" or the Plastic Bertrand-ish Italian rocker "Il Ribelle," are genius cover-selections—and he always manages to capture some essence of the originals in his covers, where other groups who cover and rewrite his stuff often miss the point. But if you're looking for Big Star's 4th, you're looking in the wrong section—try under the Posies, Teenage Fanclub or Velvet Crush.

—James Lien



Evel Knievel Quote #1:

"There are two professions in this country, in the world, that are much more renowned have much more history to them than football, baseball, basketball, track and all the rest of 'em put together. And those businesses: one is prostitution, the other is spilling our blood. The greatest competitor in all of life is death. [My stunts] weren't a sport, they were a way of life for me. But because I used the motorcycle, it was compared to the motorcycle racing sport *per se*..."

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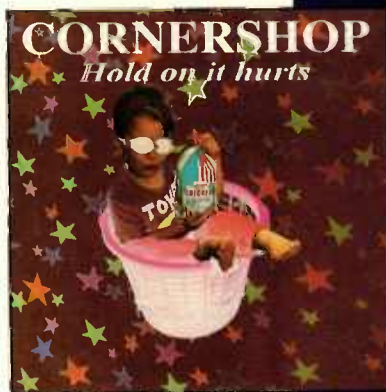
If Huggy Bear (the UK's answer to Bikini Kill) is "about" gender, then Cornershop, its labelmate on the English indie Wiiiija, is "about" race, right? After all, the band's name refers to a limiting perception of the role of Indo-Asians in British society, and its debut single was on "curry-colored" vinyl. But, truth be told, the most politicized feature of its Stateside debut is the reclamation of sitars from their position in rock as an "exotic" instrument favored by Western posters fascinated by the "mysterious East."

Cornershop uses its sitar the same way the Velvets sometimes used John Cale's viola: as another noisemaker among already chaotic, often atonal guitars. "Kalluri's Radio" alternates between a two-riff Three Johns-style groove and burbling, buzzing sitar-and-bird interludes, while the deadpan-reading-with-Indian-restaurant-music of "Tera Mera Pyar" bears an uncanny resemblance to *White Light/White Heat's* "The Gift." Other songs are conventional noise-rock, blending English pop-cultural references (who's Tessa Sanderson?) and incendiary sloganeering ("I'm gonna get my head together so I can step on yours") over bass and drums right off of *Psychocandy*. And the pop-situationism of "Change" ("Gimme gimme change, for the sake of change's sake") is as silly and simplistic as the Monkees' closing theme, which seems to indicate that Cornershop's political cheek has a little bit of tongue in it. —Franklin Bruno

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. American version also contains the Lock Stock And Double Barrel EP, featuring the Morrissey-baiting "England's Dreaming."

FILE UNDER: Anglo-agitprop updated for a shifting cultural landscape.

R.I.Y.L.: Jesus and Mary Chain, The Mekons' "rockier" albums, Gang Of Four.



DEAD VOICES ON AIR *Hafted Maul* *Invisible*

Remember a time when industrial music didn't mean an arena full of Doc Martens-clad teenaged mop-tops moping along with Trent Reznor, but rather formless, toneless, beatless, surreal clumps of found sound and machine-generated noise? (I personally was in elementary school at the time, so don't feel bad if you don't.) Mark Spybey certainly does; at the time, he was a member of Zoviet France, once of the pioneering groups of the industrial avant-garde, a group so obsessed with dismantling the usual signifiers of popular music that at first it refused to name their works or even the band members, and packaged its music not in record sleeves but with materials such as aluminum foil and plywood. Spybey recently moved from the UK to Canada, but his efforts to displace neatly-packaged music with improvised, layered agglomerations of sounds from primitive 'instruments' continue on, under the guise of *Dead Voices On Air*; what began as idle kitchen improvisation sessions with fellow Vancouverites (Skinny Puppy's cevin Key appears on *Hafted Maul*) instead evolved into another full-scale project for Spybey. The resulting album is a disconcerting listen for an audience expecting any sort of simple landmark like a riff, a beat, a vocal, or even an identifiable instrument—but then, that's precisely what Spybey would want. —David Jarman

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24.

FILE UNDER: Experimental sound constructions.

R.I.Y.L.: Zoviet France, Throbbing Gristle, the experimental side of Nine Inch Nails.



D.KNOWLEDGE *All That And A Bag Of Words* *Qwest*

D.Knowledge is Derrick Gilbert, a Ph.D. candidate at UCLA who's careful to call himself a poet, not a rapper. Which makes sense. He belongs to the tradition of Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets (whose voices he takes after to an amazing extent—the drawl, the rise and fall of each syllable) more than current rappers: he's more interested in words and their meaning than in telling a story or hitting a flow. "Just Bein'" riffs on Black English uses of "to be" before it switches off into a list of great African-Americans. "Have you ever noticed how black folks have a way of taking words that mean one thing, and turning them around so that they mean another?" he asks on the title track, a witty take on unlikely words that get used as compliments ("phat," "the shit"). "Wet Massage" is a convincing erotic reverie; "It's Okay" sounds like sarcasm, but is actually dead serious. D.Knowledge's backing can be a minimal G-funk groove (as on the memorable "To Be Or Not To Be"), an even more minimal percussion line, or even—on a few tracks recorded live in front of a very receptive audience—nothing at all. His speaking voice alone can carry an audience the same way a good comedian's or orator's does, moving slowly, pausing, then flashing down for emphasis like a magician's hand. This kind of performance poetry can be tough to pull off on record (remember the spoken-word revolution of last year? Like Martin Mull said, that shit almost caught on), but D.Knowledge is an impressive addition to a distinguished line. —Karen Eliot

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14.

FILE UNDER: Afrocentric performance poetry.

R.I.Y.L.: Boogie Down Productions, Dick Gregory, Gil Scott-Heron.




EL GENERAL *Es Mundial* *BMG Latin*

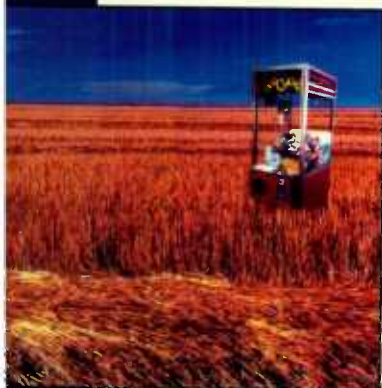
His gold sequins and epaulets recall Michael and Janet Jackson, but El General (a.k.a. Edgardo Franco) is a Panamanian dancehall majordomo with a crew the size of the NPG and a generalissimo persona that remains in full force throughout the drum-machine driven *Es Mundial*. His style is machine gun-sharp, even when he duets with the silken-voiced *chica* Anayca on "Rica Y Apretadia" or attempts to suave up his act with an R&B groove on "Poema I." Fortunately, the album is at its best when El General is most relentless, as in "Las Chicas (Version Merengue)," with its kickin' "shave-and-a-haircut" trumpet riff, and the campy "Latinos a Ganar," which pumps his rap up with stadium-style reverb and surging-crowd sound effects. By the end of *Es Mundial*, El General sounds like the best-dressed audio-animatronic MC around, but his battalion of party people hardly seems to mind.

—Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. Touring in March.

FILE UNDER: Adrenalized dancehall.

R.I.Y.L.: Shabba Ranks, Achanak.


FACE TO FACE *Big Choice* *Atla-A&M*

Big Choice is the leanest, meanest, most badger-aggressive record to yet careen out of the punk "underground." Like GBH's classic *City Baby Attacked By Rats*, its songs start on slow, deceptive heavy-metal notes, then—with a chainsaw-revving "1-2-3-4!"—they slam headlong into high gear. And it's a kinetic energy too, really catching—the opening "Struggle" hits your speakers, and you can't help it, you've gotta move, punch somebody in the arm, tear a phone book in half or something.

The funny thing is, you can listen to this disc over and over again and never get tired of it. Singer Trever Keith's bratty fuck-you stance is exhilarating, an uppity attitude you just don't hear on record anymore no matter how angry the rock stars may claim to be in interviews. Maybe it's living out in the middle of the desert (Victorville, CA), where the only bit of nearby culture is the Roy Rogers Museum, that pissed these guys off so much. "I don't care what you think of me/Your opinion means nothing at all," Keith warns a punk-movement leech in the sonically stunning flag-waver "AOK." The chorus says a lot about this quartet too: "Don't say I'm okay/I'm not okay." Face To Face hasn't gotten this far by mincing words, though. "I don't want promises/And I don't want condescending words from you," Keith wails on "Promise," and it feels like mop duty from your acne-faced shift manager at McDonald's. The track blasts by so smoothly, so shrewdly, you almost miss the bitter lyrical edge. If Green Day equals the sloppy, fucked-up Sex Pistols in the modern punk equation, then Face To Face equals the more clever, craft-oriented Clash, and *Big Choice* is its "White Riot."

—Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28.

FILE UNDER: Punk rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Green Day, Offspring, Adolescents.


GOO GOO DOLLS *A Boy Named Goo* *Reprise-WB*

A word of advice to all you whining weeniebutts still wringing the tears out of your flannel shirts over the big Replacements breakup: Shut the fuck up, act like an adult, and put on the goddamned new Goo Goo Dolls disc. If you thought the 'Mats' *Let It Be* was as good as rock 'n' roll could get, you're in for a big surprise. *A Boy Named Goo* is the fourth punky power-pop-fest from this Woodstock, NY trio, and—from opening power-chord to closing guitar squeal—it cries the galloping anthemic alarm like a veritable Paul Revere.

The Goo Goo Dolls make good-time, jump-around-in-the-back yard music, nothing too heady or political. And the songs are evenly divided into two camps: Raspy-throated growler Johnny (who bears an uncanny vocal similarity to Paul Westerberg) snaps 'n' snarls through common-man protests like "Flat Top," "Only One" and "Long Way Down." He gets so lathered up by the end of each track you'd think he'd contracted rabies. Then there are the numbers bassist Robby sings, in his best weaselly voice—"Impersonality," "Burnin' Up" and "Something Bad" are all perky pop, done in adrenaline-rush hyperspeed, but pop just the same. The lyrics are fun but innocuous—Johnny's upset about the TV news, and Robby just wants to regress himself back to childhood. And it's fun hearing records from some goofy guys who refuse to grow up.

—Tom Lanham

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28.

FILE UNDER: Power pop.

R.I.Y.L.: Velvet Crush, Soul Asylum and, well... the Replacements.

"Yeah, just, you know."
—J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr., from an interview in *The Aquarian Weekly*.

GOOD HORSEY Kazue Trackshun

Sleight-of-hand artists call the kind of magic based on subtle techniques and practice rather than gimmickry "the real work." If there's a rock equivalent to "the real work," Vancouver's Good Horsey is doing it, within the broad framework of post-punk. The production has the warts-and-all clarity of a well-recorded jazz session, the musicianship is creative and sympathetic but never slick, and the song structures are fresh and varied. *Kazue* is about one-third succinct instrumentals like "Ascending The Plateau Divine," which references Chicago-born free music both in its mystical title and in its percussive timbres (pie plate, xylophone). The cryptic "Rainy" passes through bassist Mark Szabo's mumbled vocals into a collectively improvised section, with Justice Schanfarber's exploratory stabs of guitar set off by Max Lee's remarkable, jazz-inflected drumming, before ending with a quiet repeated chorus of "Sally, where's your baby now?" Szabo's lyric-based songs are slightly more straightforward pop laments, heavy on evocative detail, light on explanation, like the Fall or the Apartments. Lines like "he isn't good at anything but spotting a rerun" ("Summer Replacements") are delivered in a weary, desultory tone, like half of an eavesdropped-on conversation. Other highlights include the fiery five-minute Television-style jam of "Burn Up The Sun," and "Delighted," a minutely observed story of the birth, life and death of a bohemian garage band. "So when does something fun become a struggle?" the narrator asks. "Is it when you start to think it's good?" Adventurous and unsettling, *Kazue* is that rare album that makes independent rock seem full of untried possibilities.

—Franklin Bruno

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 9. New Shrimper/18 Wheeler 7" in March.
FILE UNDER: High-fiber D.I.Y. improv-rock.
R.I.Y.L.: Early Go-Betweens, the Wanna Buy A Bridge compilation, Television.

HEATHER NOVA Oyster Columbia

In trying to describe Ms. Nova to a friend recently, I suggested she fell somewhere in between Kate Bush—without the pretentious artiness—and Sinead O'Connor—without the politics.

"What's left?" came the inevitable reply.

What's left is a classic sense of songweaving, a flair for dramatic mystery, and a blooming but not crass sexuality that the likes of Liz Phair threaten to make extinct.

Remarkably, Nova's music, which blends lilting cello with a more standard gritty rock combo, is more convincing live than on this debut studio disc. Produced by Youth (U2, Killing Joke), her tracks here are well augmented by additional instruments, but can come off overslick and achingly mainstream until second-half numbers like "Truth And Bone," "Light Years," and "Verona" drive the point home. Joni Mitchell? Marianne Faithfull? She could become either one with a throw of the dice.

—Eric Gladstone

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 21. First single and video "Walk Through This World."
FILE UNDER: Ophelia screams.
R.I.Y.L.: Cocteau Twins, Throwing Muses.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Incredibly Strange Music, Vol. 2 Re/Search-Asphodel

Re/Search continues its assault on normalcy with a second collection of fever-dream music. Like Vol. 1, this album combines bizarre instrumentation, hipster babbling, spoken-word raving, horrific bad taste and things that just can't be explained by sense or logic. The first volume was a bit fresher, but Vol. 2 has its share of inspired absurdity, including sitars twanging out the Box Tops' "The Letter," and a bolero version of "Flight Of The Bumblebee." However, it's probably not a good idea to dwell too much on why this music was made, as one can only conclude that much of it was created by people who were feebleminded, demented or both. Just why did Les Baxter record "Terror," in which a girl singing "Baa Baa Black Sheep" turns into the sounds of a brutal rape? And just what does Ken Nordine have against green, anyway, with his chillingly baffling spoken-word musings which personify colors? Still, the disturbing cuts are matched by the unselfconscious innocence of others. My personal favorite is the utter absurdity of "Walking On The Moon," in which a woman sings, scats and crows like a rooster over what could optimistically be called a Dixieland beat. Someone should look into whether Sting stole his version from this one.

—Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28. A companion book is available.
FILE UNDER: Tacky treasures.
R.I.Y.L.: Tiki music, Juan Esquivel.



Evel Knievel Quote #2:

"Young people who are in their 20s in this country—I've had a lotta girls and a lotta guys come up to me and say 'I remember you as a kid, and I remember what you said to me about taking drugs, and what you said about stressing my thoughts to become a better human being... and I want you to know it meant a lot to me.' And most of the kids who come up to me and tell me that—99% of 'em—you can just look at 'em and tell that they are by far superior human beings. I mean they have excelled at something."

KRONOS QUARTET Performs Philip Glass *Elektra Nonesuch*

Listening to the music of Philip Glass often happens like waiting for something to happen, only to realize that it's been happening all along. In its renditions of four Glass string quartets, the Kronos Quartet saves you the wait. From the outset, each piece fairly shimmers with tension and precision. Abrupt tempo changes are frequent, with pulsing, melodic passages giving way to bright dervishes of fiddling. At times, these quartets have an ambient, airy texture; at other points, the sound is so full that you think you're hearing an orchestral string section. Together, the four pieces are an incredible expression of the Kronos' tightness. Glass's music can often come off as cold and mechanical—a problem with a lot of contemporary classical music that's particularly endemic to him—but the Kronos is known for its ability to breathe life and spirit into contemporary repertoire as much as it is for its own glossy exterior (designer fashions, clever marketing strategies). The result is both flashy and genuine, pulsing with the soul of a new machine. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 7.

FILE UNDER: Accessible avant-garde.

R.I.Y.L.: Aphex Twin, film music.

LILYS *Ecstasy* The Photon Band *spinArt*

A few years ago, it was easy to peg the Lilys as Americans who really wanted to be shoe-gazing Brits. Now that the Brits have moved on to other flavors, the band has slid further and further into pop catatonia, while embracing the space-keyboard-and-tape-loop fascination of its former labelmate Stereolab. *Ecstasy's* 14 tracks (ten real songs, four burbly little segues) take the Lilys deep into psychedelic territory, where songs move at a glacial pace and are called things like "fbi and their toronto transmitters" and "the turtle which died before knowing." Too many of these are throwaway melodies layered over with tape loops, tone clusters and flugelhorn, but a couple of worthwhile songs poke through the haze. Like a toy glider, "High Writer At Home" starts on a drone, graduates to a dull roar, and putters out fuzzily as the lyrics take their course. Singer Kurt Heasley sounds like David Gilmour's slightly less evil twin, numb but not quite comfortable. Much more chipper is the radio-ready "Radiotricity," whose jangle and singsong vocals bring the band back to its la-la origins. —Andrea Moed

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 10.

FILE UNDER: Slow trippers.

R.I.Y.L.: Stereolab, Smashing Orange, Codeine.

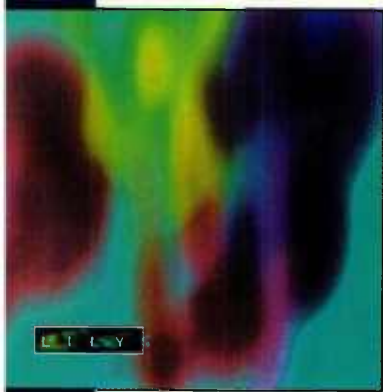
LOVE BATTERY *Straight Freak Ticket* *Atlas-A&M*

Less cluttered and rainbows more colorful than last year's muddled *Far Gone*, *Straight Freak Ticket* finds Love Battery finally zeroing in on a clearly marked sonic target. Ever since the band's debut EP, *Between The Eyes*, hit back in '89, Seattle's best-kept secret had eluded both categorization and a well-defined artistic vision. Bits and pieces of that debut work and the follow-up album, *Dayglo* (which included the underground classic "Foot"), hit remarkable highs, but not until *Straight Freak Ticket* has the package come together so completely. Bruce Calder's crystalline production does a sweet job of separating the complex, dueling work of guitarists Ron Nine and Kevin Whitworth, and an even better job of illuminating Nine's disjointed lyrics. "Not making sense is making sense to me," he sings with more than a little irony on the *Sergeant Pepper*-esque "Dropped D." In fact, *Straight Freak Ticket* bristles with Nine's enigmatic states of mind, keeping the listener off balance psychically as well as physically. And the grooves follow that same discombobulation. "Sunny Jim" shuffles along in a bluesy style reminiscent of ZZ Top (!), "Perfect Light" locks into a satisfying hard rock lurch, and "Waylaid" adds a touch of the Davies brothers on the vocal tip. *Straight Freak Ticket* is a challenging, unpredictable hippie rock record; just the one we've been waiting for from Love Battery since Seattle broke. —Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28.

FILE UNDER: Liverpool by way of Seattle.

R.I.Y.L.: Screaming Trees, Afghan Whigs, late Beatles.



MAGNETIC FIELDS *The Wayward Bus/Distant Plastic Trees* Merge

The recordings most often sought fruitlessly by indie-pop fans may be The Magnetic Fields' first two albums, which were originally issued in '91 and '92 and vanished more or less instantly. Now Merge has reissued both of them on a single disc that probably has more great melodies than any given foot of your CD shelf. Songwriter extraordinaire Stephin Merritt [interviewed here last month—ed.] combines a blackly romantic lyrical perspective ("You won't be happy with me/But give me one more chance/You won't be happy anyway") with an unbelievable knack for tunes. The opening "When You Were My Baby" takes on the entire Phil Spector oeuvre on its own turf, and emerges bruised but victorious; the chorus of "You Love To Fail" will break your heart and then never stray far from it. Singer Susan Anway, who appeared only on these records before Merritt took over vocals himself, doesn't interpret his songs—she's a straight-up instrument, singing everything clearly, beautifully and emotionlessly. She lets the songs' meanings be communicated by their texts and melodies, and by Merritt's ear-boggling synthesizer arrangements. The bizarre, sweet "Old Orchard Beach" reclines on a bed of tuba, calliope and cricket noises, with a masterful duet at the end for cello and some kind of berserk electronic buzz. These songs are gentle enough to sing someone to sleep with, and strong enough to give them strange dreams.

—Penny Gratton

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 23.**FILE UNDER:** Masterfully written synth-pop.**R.I.Y.L.:** Yaz, Everything But The Girl, Young Marble Giants.**GRANT McLENNAN** *Horsebreaker Star* Beggars Banquet-Atlantic

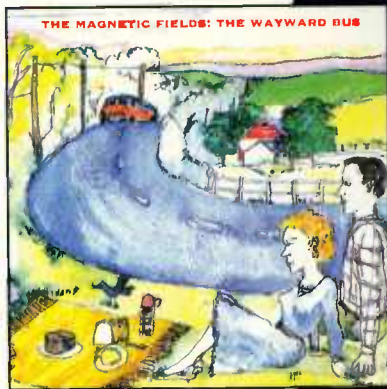
This double-album-length opus, McLennan's third record since the demise of the Go-Betweens, falls somewhere between the overproduced *Watershed* and 1993's earnest *Fireboy*, with, once again, mixed results. Where McLennan's songs within the Go-Betweens were often angular constructions in odd time signatures, his solo work seems fascinated by its own simplicity. Some tunes get a sparse country treatment ("Don't You Cry For Me No More"), others get a fuller pop production (the disposable "Girl In A Beret"), but nearly everything here would be equally effective in a solo acoustic setting. The ambitious, eight-minute "What Went Wrong" is pure *Blood On The Tracks*, with its twenty-five quatrains and brief chorus, but, unlike the Dylan epics it apes, it's less than the sum of its parts. (Best verse: "You could shave your head/Grow a beard/I'll bet Joan of Arc was never that weird.") On the plus side, there's nothing as pointless as "The Pawbroker," *Fireboy*'s attempt at Tom Waits noir, and there are several modest gems scattered among these 18 (!) songs. "Coming Up For Air" is a gentle memoir that could be addressed to an ex-bandmate or an ex-lover ("Well, Rachel's burned her hand and moved to Roma/We found this town in a coma"); "Open Invitation," with its strings and expansive minor-key melody, recalls just how sweet a Go-Betweens ballad could be. Best in show is "Hot Water," an understated, chillingly oblique elegy. When McLennan is this good, one can almost forgive the tepid, anonymous backing that plagues the album's weaker stretches.

—Franklin Bruno

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28. First single "Simone And Perry."**FILE UNDER:** Pure pop with pastoral touches, nicely written, indifferently performed.**R.I.Y.L.:** The Bats, Dylan's *Nashville Skyline*, Paul Kelly.**MOBY** *Everything Is Wrong* Elektra

The latest album from techno's reigning king spans the range of contemporary sounds, from the New Age instrumentals which open and close the album to the straight-ahead dance hits "Feeling So Real" and "Everytime You Touch Me" and the needy diva ballad "When It's Cold..." It's a highly accessible, danceable and tuneful mix that will probably alienate the hardcore strobe-light set. The weirdest song is "What Love," which ventures into industrial territory, with KMFDM-esque shouts about "goin' down to see my girl." A hilariously unconvincing guitar solo vividly demonstrates the gulf between keyboard whizzes and guitar gods. Thankfully, the very next song, "Into The Blue," returns to a more glassine and soothing sound. While *Everything Is Wrong* is well-crafted, and there's no denying Moby's songwriting skill, it's hard not to feel that the formula is getting stale. (Those tinkly piano breaks are a cliché in their own right.) Nothing here ever goes beyond the foundations of techno that Vince Clarke built over a decade ago. It's definitely time for some new patches on the sampler, guys.

—Heidi MacDonald

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 14. First single "Feeling So Real."**FILE UNDER:** Techno goes mainstream.**R.I.Y.L.:** Bronski Beat, Erasure.

"The Beatles are men?"—
Dancehall star Patra, on
hearing "Here Comes The Sun."


NE ZHADALI *Hey Driver Cool Down The Horses!!!* Rec Rec Music (Germany)

From Estonia comes a band both abrasive and witty, a mad cross between downtown jazz and Eastern Europe's klezmer tradition. The streets of Tallinn are paved with brass and strings, and Ne Zhadali are trekking down the avenue into territory both familiar and surreal. There's a taste of Russian romanticism, German beer hall and French cafe chic in their music, and instrumentation to match. Brass, electric guitars, keyboards, piano, bass and drums are spiked with didgeridoo, odd percussion and punchy, raw vocals. The sound is akin to a New Orleans marching band on bad drugs, and the energy is off the scale on every cut. The lyrics are in Estonian, French and Russian, but their tales of gypsy romance and frustrated life translate into any language. It's all in the music, as they themselves explain in one song in Hebrew: "it's untranslatable, has no meaning, sounds nice to Russians." Sounds nice may be generous, but sounds interesting? Yes!

—Cliff Furdald

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 10. Rec Rec releases are available through Wayside Music in the U.S.

FILE UNDER: Modern klezmer.

R.I.Y.L.: John Zorn, 3 Mustaphas 3, New Orleans brass bands.


NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN *Brainbloodvolume* Chaos-Columbia

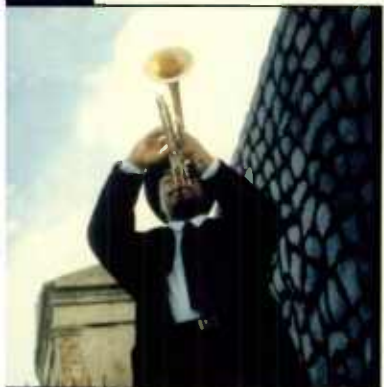
Although this is by no means the Neds' first outing, you'd never guess it, considering all the enthusiasm with which this British band tackles its songs. This time around, the songs are fast, fresh and furious, more like straight-ahead rock gone slightly punk than angst-ridden or skewed music gone more mainstream. Ned's appeal in England has come from its brashness, and that characteristic is here in spades, from "All I Ask Of Myself Is That I Hold Together," which asks its long-winded question in a terrifically catchy (albeit simplistic) anthem to the artists-in-suffering song "Song Eleven Could Take Forever." The guitars dive in and out of the melody in unison, with solos kept to a minimum, as the twin basses crank up the rhythm to a rolling boil. And the band is also capable of some strong power-pop when it drops the tempo, as on "Stuck." Live, the band is often compelling, but its recordings can occasionally make the Neds' big rock sound almost generic. On *Brainbloodvolume*, however, the band's zeal and earnestness win out. This is a surprisingly sweet record that demonstrates that sometimes it's possible at least to alter the wheel when reinvention seems unnecessary.

—Megan McLaughlin

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 22.

FILE UNDER: You've got indie in my rock.

R.I.Y.L.: The Wonder Stuff, early Pop Will Eat Itself.


NICHOLAS PAYTON *From This Moment* Verve

There's a lot of mixed signals emanating from *From This Moment*, 21-year-old trumpeter Nicholas Payton's debut for Verve. You might dismiss it as another album by another guy in a suit playing neobop, but it's more, and far better, than that. While its title is one of those meaningless, gushily romantic post-Wynton clichés, it's really about moments in a jazz context—that really awesome drum fill that crashes out of nowhere, that trumpet diving into a solo headlong, the way that the hi-hat cymbal rides along with the bass before the snare beat falls in the middle. Not even four minutes into the first song ("Beginning Of The End"), drummer Lewis Nash kicks into a gorilla-style drum solo executed with such burning intensity and relentless precision, it reminds you that these guys play every day, all day, and have for most of their lives. Then there's guest guitarist Mark Whitfield, another young star (who just put out his own record on Verve), who plays it straight and supportive, but still throws a few curves in the mix. *From This Moment* very unpatronizingly lets everybody have some cake: It's deep and artistically satisfying for those who crave profundity in their music, but still good for others who tire of the pretensions heaped around the current crop of big-suited young jazz musicians. It's not sentimental, precious, or dear, but it's also not afraid to stay in the pocket.

—James Lien

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28.

FILE UNDER: Crisp-suited, straight-ahead jazz.

R.I.Y.L.: Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, pre-cool Miles Davis.

POLARA Polara *Clean-Twin/Tone*

Stripped down to its basic essentials, Polara is Minneapolis native Ed Ackerman. Known for his work in bands like 27 Various and Antenna, and as a producer for a handful of local acts, Ackerman's pop tastes don't stray much beyond the Big Star canon. In fact, on some of Polara's quieter tracks ("Taupe," "Anniversary 6") he sounds eerily like Alex Chilton himself, constructing delicate acoustic melodies around his nasal vocals. But this pop allegiance is more indicative of Ackerman's stellar songwriting skills than a desire to emulate a particular style or sound. As a full band, Polara succeeds in playing the best kind of guitar pop: gloriously full of itself, at times ecstatic, and undefinably *bright* beneath all its interesting effects and flourishes (drum machines, Farfisas, vintage effects pedals). Almost every song on the band's debut sounds undeniably like a single, and you don't have to look far for the hooks or melodies that make them so. Ackerman also knows the small details that makes simple pop elegant—perfect harmonies, subtle touches of texture—and it's this careful handiwork that assures each repeated listening of Polara to be an increasingly gratifying experience.

—Colin Helms



DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14.
FILE UNDER: Classic pop hooks in a shimmering guitar shell.
R.I.Y.L.: Teenage Fanclub, Big Star, Boo Radleys.

POSTER CHILDREN Junior Citizen *Sire-Reprise*

On their first two records, Champaign, Illinois' Poster Children established themselves as an up-and-coming post-punk outfit, writing catchy, guitar-powered songs. Since then, the band has been touring constantly, building a reputation as a live powerhouse. It's also been subjected to high expectations, often outdistancing its prior work and looming over subsequent endeavors. The P-Kids' latest, *Junior Citizen*, finds the band at its most experimental stage to date. The results, however, are diminished, as the raw power of the band's early material has become superseded by technical noodling. The verve which powered the Children before is still there, as evidenced on "Get A Life" and "Mustaine," but falls short of compensating for the deficiencies, like the annoying new-wave sound of the title track. Poster Children definitely have a stacked resume, but need to do more to live up to their own precedents.

—Bryan McNamara



DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 14. Video for "Junior Citizen."
FILE UNDER: Alterna-rock reach exceeding its grasp.
R.I.Y.L.: The Jam, Sonic Youth, Treepeople.

PROFESSOR TRANCE & THE ENERGISERS Shaman's Breath *Island*

Professor Trance (a.k.a. Frank Natale) is the leader of an international tribe, the "Energisers," who practice trance-dancing, which is supposed to infuse spiritual energy into those who perform it. This style of dance has no particular steps, no rules, only the emotion and passion of the participant guiding the movement. The same can be said of Professor Trance's album. *Shaman's Breath* contains just about every incarnation of rhythmic music possible, with a strong emphasis placed on the organic, soothing sounds usually associated with ambient. But where *Shaman's Breath* differs from the post-Eno school of ambience is in his reliance on a strong, continually grooving beat, a mixture of organic and inorganic sounds that results in a blend of dance and trance. The multicultural blend is completely smooth, with no sharp edges to show where the two worlds have collided. The songs on *Shaman's Breath* move skillfully from one to the next, with a guiding tribal sound throughout. While it's easy to be cynical about this spirituality, the music itself is refreshingly honest and pure, with a very obvious earnestness emanating from the grooves. So even without the mumbo-jumbo, Professor Trance's *Shaman's Breath* is a great rhythmic dance album.

—Megan McLaughlin



DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 17. Video for "Kozuma"; 12-inch release of "Drumming Circle."
FILE UNDER: Multicultural rave.
R.I.Y.L.: Enigma, those crazy monks, Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

"Rides broke down shortly after opening and restaurants and refreshment stands ran out of food and drink. Fantasyland had to be temporarily closed due to a gas leak, workmen were still planting trees and in some areas paint was wet to the touch. The blistering heat of the July day added to the distress as the spiked heels on women's shoes sank into the soft asphalt on Main Street."—a description of Disneyland's opening day, from a press release on the theme park's 40th anniversary.

R.I.Y.L.: RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE

ROYAL TRUX *Thank You* Virgin

Who would have thought, listening to 1990's *Twin Infinitives*—Royal Trux's unquantifiable sprawl of a double LP—that this band would be signed to a major before the halfway point of the decade? Early on, the Trux' insider edge—via fine pedigree (guitarist Neil Hagerty co-founded Pussy Galore) and superb, hard-to-find singles—made the band a favorite among the hippest of the hip set. The early songs spiral and screech, yielding no familiar ground to the listener. More recently, the group has found structure, edging its sound ever closer to the Stones, circa 1973. Even in hindsight, however, these developments did little to pave the way for Royal Trux's major label debut, *Thank You*. The record is subsumed by a *Beggars Banquet* feel—it could just as well be Keith Richards on backup vocals. Hagerty's guitar riffs, displaying a songsmanship heretofore lacking, actually sound like the Black Crowes. And Jennifer Herrema's surly growl of a voice—like a latter-day Joplin, incidentally—lends a gritty legitimacy to the effort. Songs like "Ray-O-Vac" and "You're Gonna Lose" show a confidence and poise that was missing in the band's raw days. Of course, it wouldn't be a Royal Trux record without a long ramblers—approaching seven minutes, "Shadow Of The Wasp" fits the bill nicely. Though the distinction between sell-out and crossover is sometimes blurred, the masterful *Thank You* allows the band to make its transition in style.

—Megan McCarthy

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 21.

FILE UNDER: Neo-Stones rock 'n' roll.

R.I.Y.L.: Black Crowes, Boss Hog, Hole.

SHARKBOY *Matinee* Nude/TriStar-Sony

Though their effect is lulling, ocean waves arise from opposing forces. Dragging undertow and incoming tides are contradictory rhythms: their resolution—a breaking wave—only arrives after a violent collision. Sharkboy's music mimics this process. Hailing from the seaside town of Brighton, the British quintet pits sheets of resonating guitar against pools of hollow drumming. Singer Avy's lyrics tell of pleasures slowly sullied by pain; her blues-scratched vocals sink like a stone then rise like a swell. Cello and picked guitar add a catacomb of undercurrents to the band's *sturm und drang*. The sinisterly beautiful "Crystalline" [sic] epitomizes the result: As Avy asserts "I'm sure I can hide/The milky wastes I keep inside/Wish I was sick from/The way I feel tonight," a trumpet swings and a guitar stabs, both intent upon toppling the song, piercing through it, then leaving it to bleed in peace. It's moody aggression with bite.

—Julie Taraska

DATALOG: Release date: Dec. 13.

FILE UNDER: Rainy-day weepers for the '90s.

R.I.Y.L.: Mazzy Star, Gallon Drunk, Cowboy Junkies.

SINCOLA *What The Nothinghead Said* Caroline

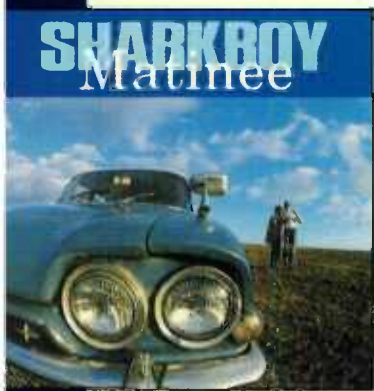
After Sincola released its debut EP on Austin's Rise Records, the band was surrounded by the kind of buzz that immediately inspires suspicion in well-meaning indie types. Fortunately, the buzz was justified and the suspicion wasn't. *What The Nothinghead Said* won't change your life, but it's still good enough to warrant repeated listening. The two best tracks from the EP reappear in slightly different versions, and once again they're just about the best of the bunch—"Bitch," in particular, still kicks major lower region the second time around. Singer Rebecca Cannon has solid, determined pipes and is not averse to occasionally screaming her heart out. The band rocks competently, and the songs unfold smoothly, not too slow, not too fast, not too aggressive, not too soft. Sincola's energetic, innocuous predictability is pretty satisfying in the end. Kinda like a tried-and-true flannel shirt: It won't win any fashion prizes, but you keep coming back to it.

—Elisabeth Vincentelli

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 21.

FILE UNDER: Tough Texan rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Veruca Salt, Happy Family, Babes In Toyland.



SWANS *The Great Annihilator* *Young God-Invisible*

When the essential New York City doom-rockers Swans recently relocated to rural Georgia, forcing fans to contemplate images of Michael Gira skipping barefoot amidst red earth and hissing cicadas instead of skulking head-down through Lower East Side squalor, the question sprang to mind: What phase could possibly be next for these mercurial artists? However, the band's new *The Great Annihilator* takes up right where its last studio effort, 1992's *Love Of Life*, left off, swirling the Swans' previously discrete styles of acoustic melancholy and bombastic guitar noise into one sweeping and cacophonous whole. The alternation of harrowing songs/soothing songs/harrowing songs becomes predictable fairly quickly. Nevertheless, both the tempestuous power of the arrangements (bolstered by drummer Bill Rieflin's pounding) and the visceral imagery and unabashed romanticism of Gira's lyrics succeed in utterly absorbing and transporting the listener. Gira's apocalyptic vision and creepy baritone might well have played better in the early 19th century, instead of this, the era of the po-mo ironic smirk, but even the most jaded slackers should be impressed by the power with which the Swans cover a wide range of ground, both musically and emotionally. —David Jarman

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24.
FILE UNDER: Nightmares and elegies.
R.I.Y.L.: Nick Cave, Bauhaus.



SYBIL VANE *Sybil Vane* *Island*

Sybil Vane's self-titled debut filters fierce, UK-inflected girly pop through a prism of crunchy guitars. It sounds, if such a thing is possible, like the Cranberries would if that band had spent the better part of the '80s listening to Heart instead of U2. It's hard to tell what Sybil Vane is trying to do—be the new Eve's Plum or the old Bow Wow Wow—but the fact that the record resists classification is one of its easier virtues, since either way it's a tough sell. Breathless and enthusiastic vocals—like Julie Ritter's if she got religion, like Sinead O'Connor's if she lost it—and sturdy drum work go a long way towards making up for the record's lack of invention, but ultimately not far enough. There's something about Sybil Vane that seems decidedly out of whack, and not a good sort of out of whack either. The record seems to be coming from that rare intersection of alternative and arena-ready power rock that made Pearl Jam millionaires, but this time around it isn't a pretty place, since for all of its alternative leanings, Sybil Vane sounds as if it could just as easily have been Sunset Strip hair farmers circa 1985. Though the band can bang it out on occasion, as on "Pixy," the record's crisp lead-off track, much of the record borders on the self-indulgent, like "Intoxication," which clocks in at a whopping 6:33. —Allison Stewart

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 28. First single "Pixy." Touring in March.
FILE UNDER: Brazen, bombastic, almost metallic girl-rock.
R.I.Y.L.: Bow Wow Wow, Primitives, Mary's Danish.



TARIKA *Bibiango* *Xenophile-Green Linnet*

On Tarika's last U.S. tour, Tarika's leader explained the meaning of "bibiangoo." Roughly, it means "hungry animals" or "roaring lemur," and refers to the contrast between the sweet, cuddly image of that Malagasy animal and what the group wants to portray in its music, a wild, aggressive energy that comes from a seemingly serene source. Tarika plays the traditional instruments of Madagascar, the *valiha* and *marovany* (small bamboo and box zithers), the mandolin-like *kabossy*, the *sodina* flute and many different kinds of percussion. But they add electric guitar and accordion, and electrify the trad instruments. Adding alternately mellow and thunderous vocals, they produce enough fire to burn the house down.

Madagascar holds an interesting place on the map, and its influences run on two lines, one from southern Africa through Indonesia and on to the small islands like Okinawa of the Pacific; the other directly from western Europe. That their music can sound African, Portugese and Javanese all at once is the beauty of "world" music. Tarika exploits all of these possibilities, and then twists them into a new music all its own, full of acoustic nuance and pop power. —Cliff Furdal

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 7. Formerly Tarika Sammy.
FILE UNDER: Malagasy pop.
R.I.Y.L.: Joseph Spence, Rossy, D'Gary, S.E. Rogie.



THEE SPEAKING CANARIES Songs For The Terrestrially Challenged *Scot*

It might be a little harsh to say that Thee Speaking Canaries' 1993 debut *The Joy Of Wine* was forgettable, but even though it had its moments, it pretty much faded into the indie-rock din. *Songs For The Terrestrially Challenged*, however, is a complete reinvention of the band, and a rocket launch from its more ordinary predecessor. Almost two years have passed between these records, and sometime during that break, guitarist and frontman Damon Che developed a pretty deep library of David Lee Roth-era Van Halen and an almost religious fanaticism for the power to be found in staid but substantial 4/4 time signatures. These are thick, syrupy songs, varying in length from a minute and a half to nearly 13, stuffed with sprawling linear excursions, heaping chunks of rock-solid chords and technical guitar wizardry. *SFTTC* is a hugely ambitious record, and while some long instrumental sections roam too far or can't find their anchor, when they hit the mark, they're right on. To further the comparison to Van Halen's rhythmic and melodic structure, the Canaries go so far as to cover *Diver Down*'s "Secrets" (replete with Diamond Dave sound-alike vocals and a long wolf-whistle near the end), keeping *SFTTC* from turning into too much of a scholarly exercise. The depth and breadth of this record is remarkable; listening can be work, and each time reveals new aural tricks, hidden complexities and moody textures. It's a big time investment, to be sure, but the rewards are guaranteed. —Cheryl Botchick

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. The band also features Karl Hendricks of the Karl Hendricks Trio. A different, lo-fi recording of the entire album will be available as a double LP on Mind Cure.

FILE UNDER: Too much music theory as a child.
R.I.Y.L.: Van Halen, Bastro, heavy King Crimson.

NIK TURNER Space Ritual *Cleopatra*

Nik Turner, as every space-rock aficionado who's earned cadet stripes knows, was one of the fearless leaders of the good ship Hawkwind—a ship that's still flying high under the aegis of Cpt. Dave Brock & Co. Today, Nik seems poised to explore the outer reaches once more, as witnessed by a new studio album and this document of his superstar-laden "Space Ritual 1994" tour. Much like *Star Trek: Generations*, this tour featured both seasoned space-rock veterans and relatively raw recruits, highlighting a sense of the historical continuity within the "movement": from the psychedelic '60s (Brock) through the punk (Helios Creed) and industrial (Genesis P-Orridge) '70s and '80s, onward to the present (members of Pressurehed). So how do these intrepid music-cosmonauts fare on the road? Judging by this two-disc set, they're geared up for interstellar domination. One caveat, however: if you're not already a fan of the genre, start with the original albums. Having said that, "the band can really rock," to paraphrase Wesley Willis. The young, energetic rhythm section lays a dynamic base for Turner's vocal's and sax and the always cortex-coring guitar playing of Mr. Creed. Unfortunately, the analog synthesists are at best decorative (like shortwave radio static) and at worst sound like someone let a rhythmless, tone-deaf, highly amplified slide-whistle player loose in the venue. The band's admirably spartan reliance upon two power chords can wear rather tedious on untrained ears for a two-hour-long set, but this chordal dialectic is broken up several times by effective sci-fi spoken word pieces (Michael Moorcock's classic "Sonic Attack," and "Armour For Everyday," a noble effort on the part of P-Orridge to recite and dodge bottles simultaneously). Other highlights include Turner's folkly flute showcases "King" and "Serenade," and the entirety of the ripping encore, which moves from Chrome's classic "T.V. As Eyes" to Hawkwind staples "Orgone Accumulator" and "Silver Machine" (which, at four chords—twice average!—seems positively glam until it breaks down into a highly unexpected version of "Gloria"). A good night out. —Jason Witherspoon

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24.

FILE UNDER: Space-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Hawkwind, Chrome, Spacemen 3.



"For the spoken word part in the middle that goes, 'When I saw you coming out of school that day, I knew I've got to have you—got to have you.' I always pictured myself in a black car across the street from a school, watching a young girl."—Gene Simmons, on "Christine Sixteen," from a special all-KISS edition of *Guitar World* magazine.

WINGTIP SLOAT Chewyfoot VHF

Wingtip Sloat is the hardest-working band in America. Between its members' jobs in printing, independent contracting and accounting, Falls Church, VA's sartorial trio makes its music on the sly. The Sloats have been unsung heroes for years, with a string of exotic homemade singles, a couple of cassettes on their own Sweet Portable Junket label and the occasional compilation track. *Chewyfoot* is their first long-player, and it is sweet indeed: varied, ambitious and insistently melodic, hee-haw music for the tweed-and-corduroy set. Patrick Foster snarls and croons with a soft voice half-broken, like a wiser, older version of Fugazi's Guy Picciotto, while stickman Dave Bishop drums like a spastic duck. The band is long on sensibility, and a little short on execution, though you don't really know to miss it: "A Tree Fowl" is a funky, semi-experimental instrumental, dorky and clattering with woeful imprecision. "Slouching Towards Dulles" (Dulles Airport, that is) is dumb and sparkling and beautiful, slow, sparse and angular. The only real disappointment is a lackluster melange of cover songs from the first Minutemen record ("Games/Ruins/Gravity"), which transforms three clipped nuggets of semi-acoustic hardcore into lo-fi spoken-word meandering. Still, *Chewyfoot* is very much the record Sloat fans have been hoping for. Loosen up and enjoy.

—Michael Vazquez

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 23.

FILE UNDER: Weird but friendly rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Gastr Del Sol, Minutemen, Rodan.

XANAX 25 Denial Fest Futurist

A wolf in sheep's clothing? That's the image the New York City quartet Xanax 25 projects on its debut *Denial Fest*. As much as the band attempts to shroud its indie rock in a super-sensitive blanket of folk sensibility and jangly guitar, there's a hungry wolf lurking beneath, dying to crank out some savage heavy metal. Traces of Zeppelin, Sabbath and lesser metal purveyors like UFO abound on *Denial Fest*. Hook after hook, bridge after bridge, the arrangements recall the classic metal of the mid-'70s. The kick drum and bass work together on deep and simple rhythm tracks, while vocalist/lyricist Jaik Miller pours his passion out by the bucket. All of this sounds fine when the metal traces remain simply traces and the songs stay anchored to an indie-rock vibe. But when an entire song succumbs to clichéd metal riffing, as it does on "Painting," tedium sets in and the quality plummets. The other downer on *Denial Fest* is Miller's hopelessly troubled attitude. Whether singing about ending it all (the world's "suffering" or his own life?) on "All This" or pleading "Don't waste your time on me... Fuck you!" on "'80s Kid," his raspy bluntness is often overbearing in a hardcore-punk kind of way. One exception: "Scary Dreams Fade," on which Miller's voice exudes tingling, soul-baring paranoia.

—Bob Gulla

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. First single "'80s Kid." Xanax 25 is the name of a frequently prescribed tranquilizer.

FILE UNDER: Analyst-couch rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Chris Connelly, Marianne Faithfull.

MARTIN ZELLAR Born Under Rykodisc

The late, beloved Gear Daddies (the pride of Austin, Minnesota, birthplace of Spam) imploded a while back, leaving a few great records and a host of unanswered possibilities behind them. But during their brief, late-'80s heyday—such as it was—they played muscular country-rock the way Soul Asylum used to: brisk, uncomplicated, with tinges of folkie pathos, and always underplayed. The Daddies' guitarist/lyricist/singer Martin Zellar, on his own for the first time, has turned out a fine, gently appealing country record that hews closer to traditional, Nashville country (Johnny Cash, or even Roy Acuff) than to anything the Gear Daddies ever did. Zellar drags out his old band's fondness for understatement to such an extent that it's hard for some of the record to really register the first few plays, but give it a chance. While Zellar never comes close here to raising the ruckus he did in the old days, numbers like "Problem Solved" trade in the Daddies' shake-the-rafters rock for an almost Marshall Crenshaw-like shimmery pop, and come out the better for it. Zellar knows his way around a mournful barstool dirge, too (the fine "Summer Kind Of Sad"), but country music wouldn't be country music if it didn't feel sorry for itself, and he has a shaky, whiskey-soaked voice just right for the sort of bitter laments *Born Under* spills over with. Zellar also gets able assistance here from members of Soul Asylum and the Jayhawks, but he doesn't need it.

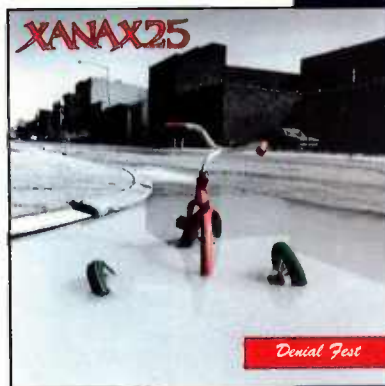
—Alison Stewart

DATALOG: Release date: Jan. 24. Currently touring the Midwest.

FILE UNDER: Smart, spare country-rock.

R.I.Y.L.: Joe Henry, the Jayhawks, Soul Asylum.

R.I.Y.L.: RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



"Lulu, you and I were born in the same pool. Honey, you got soul."—James Brown, as quoted in the liner notes of *From Crayons To Perfume: The Best of Lulu*.

FLASHBACK

ROOTS • REISSUES • RETRO

by James Lien

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Hi Times

(The Right Stuff)

Memphis is a city long on soul. Throughout its history, its central location has made it a great place for music—it's not the deep South of Jackson or New Orleans, but it's not the North either, so it enjoys some of the best of both worlds. Perhaps more so than any other city, Memphis has displayed a knack for producing entrepreneurial empires of local music, with strong, distinctive regional identities: Sun, Stax, Ardent, Hi.

From the late '60s to the late '70s, Hi Records was a soul powerhouse enjoying a run of artistic success virtually unparalleled by any other label of the period, with the possible exception of Stax Records on

McLemore Ave. (Stax has three box sets documenting its own soulful saga; the third volume, just released, chronicles the high-flying, bellbottomed mid-'70s soul the label unveiled after the success of Isaac Hayes' "Theme From Shaft.")

Now, *The Right Stuff* has rolled out *Hi Times*, a look back at the monumental soul label's greatest years. Track for track, single for single, this box set takes a close second place to the awesome first Stax box set on the market. It's that rare kind of box set where overkill still isn't enough; you won't find yourself having to skip over certain tracks, and unlike a lot of box sets out there, the last disc won't end up sitting on your shelf unplayed while you keep grabbing for the hits on disc one.

In its prime, Hi Records had all the key ingredients of a massive soul label. Like Sun, it had a constellation of stars with differing, often complementary talents (O.V. Wright, Ann Peebles, Al Green, Syl Johnson); like Stax, it had the rock-solid playing of some crack house studio bands. And like all great labels, Hi had momentum—listen to the singles in order as they unfold, and you sense that each one indeed tops the last.

When you listen to the great Stax singles consecutively, Otis Redding's singing and songs leap out from the rest of the pack; when his voice comes in on every sixth or seventh song on the Stax box, you know it's going to be good. On *Hi Times*, that role is played by Al Green, the label's biggest star. Green bottled up the wild religious fervor of gospel and poured it into smooth, torchy and very secular love songs. When he left the label, the momentum shifted; things just weren't the same.

These are the sort of records where you simply can't think of anything that could make them any better—if you added or subtracted any notes or instruments or verses, if you ever-so-slightly tampered with the perfect formula, you'd end up with something less. Fortunately, they didn't, and that's what makes *Hi Times* essential listening.

METERS

Funkify Your Life: The Meters Anthology (Rhino)

New Orleans' reputation ain't so shabby either when it comes to funky music, and now, at long last—like maybe 20 years long—the story of one of the greatest

musical combos to ever strut the earth is finally being definitively told. That would be the story of the Meters—Art Neville, Cyril Neville, George Porter Jr., Leo Nocentelli and Joseph "Ziggy" Modeliste, who laid down some of the greatest, nastiest, funkier grooves ever constructed. And because of the vagaries of the music business and the wicked world we live in, while James Brown, Sly Stone and Curtis Mayfield have rightly been exalted to the heavens, the original Meters have remained largely unknown except to an ardent cult audience.

The Meters formed in the late '60s as a Booker T. & The MGs-styled instrumental combo, recording for the tiny Josie label; the first disc of this set cherry-picks the best bits from their three incredibly groovy albums of the period. Their records at this time (mostly 45s) instrumentally exhorted listeners to strut, stretch, bend, wiggle, wobble and cluck like chickens. But what they really created was a musical world all their own. Inside these early Meters 45s is a whole little universe of geometrical, mathematical, rubbery cartoon funk, with its own rules and logic, where the only law of the jungle is to have a good time.

The secret of their magic lies in the way the instruments lock together, or don't; while most funk bands have one or two players who inspire loyalty and love from their fans for their specific contributions (think James Brown asking Maceo to blow his horn, or the Ohio Players announcing that Sugarfoot is going to play his guitar), the Meters, rather remarkably, had four such talents, each sparring with or playing off the others for maximum syncopated effect. The results are some of the most elastic and irrepressibly danceable grooves ever made. Once you hear them, going back to the real world seems kinda boring and plain, and not nearly as much fun as dancing in the spaces on these records.

Just after the turn of the decade, the Meters inked with the Reprise label and expanded their sound, adding Art's brother Cyril for extra conga-power and vocals. Their music came more in line with the mainstream currents of '70s soul, but lost none of its innovation or wicked syncopation. Yet albums like *Cabbage Alley* or *Fire On The Bayou* still didn't click with the larger public, probably because they were peppered with so many obscure references to local New Orleans culture that folks who didn't know about Mardi

Gras or red beans and rice just

couldn't pick up on it. So the Meters were hanging out with the likes of Paul McCartney and the Stones (the band opened for the Stones' 1975 U.S. tour), yet they never penetrated the mainstream as deeply as, say, the Ohio Players or Bootsy Collins. Nefarious

interlopers and wicked

business dealings soon intervened,

and by the end of the '70s, the Meters had run out of time. Art and Cyril went on to form the Neville Brothers, George occupied himself with session work and various bands, and Ziggy, one of the greatest drummers of all time, became so disillusioned by the music business that he dropped out of sight completely. Their end was a sad one, but their music was among the finest of a generally watershed decade. Put 1977's "Be My Lady" on next to any soft-soul hit of the period, and the fact that the Meters have so long been merely a cult attraction remains a mystery. Albums like *Fire On The Bayou* and *Rejuvenation* still get played at parties in New Orleans to this day, and now, thanks to Rhino, this two-CD set can be added to the essential party mixture.



ORANGE 9mm

DRIVER*



orange 9mm

driver

Elektra

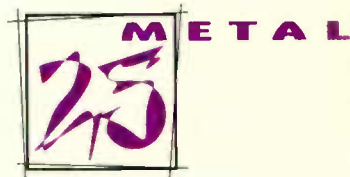
METAL

by vlad

Brace yourself for one of the most impressive debuts to come down the pike in a long time. Orange 9MM is a New York band whose roots are similar to Quicksand's—both are from New York, both released debut EPs on shit-hot SoCal indie Revelation, and 9MM vocalist Chaka Malik even played in a hardcore band called Burn with Quicksand drummer Alan Cage—but Orange 9MM adds another dimension to the post-hardcore framework. Last year's self-titled EP had barely hit the shops before the band was snapped up by Elektra, and *Driver* finds the band delivering on all of that record's promise and more. Although the sound is familiar—reference points include the aforementioned Quicksand and Fugazi, as well as Rollins and Rage Against The Machine—Orange 9MM is simultaneously funkier and more commercial than any of those bands. Malik is equally adept at singing and rapping/shouting, and the band is tight as a vise, but the X-factor here is guitarist Chris Traylor, whose sharp-edged, highly melodic playing lifts the band into the next dimension, and earmarks him as a serious new talent. Looking for the next big thing? Here's a good bet.

RIFFS

Choosing this issue's best metal album was really difficult, so no disrespect to **QUICKSAND** while we spotlighted the underdog. Anyway, the band's third release, *Manic Compression* (Island) finds it vaulting toward greatness with breakneck velocity. While it's not doing anything drastically different from '92's *Slip*, two years of hard touring have refined the group's sound to a razor-sharp point, and Walter Schreifels has truly come into his own as a lead singer. Shadows of diverse influences—everything from AC/DC to the Smiths to Fugazi—still pop up in the mix, but the band is rapidly maturing into a sound all its own. With crushing riffs, memorable songs and agile tempo shifts, *Manic Compression* promises that Quicksand will be one of the most vital loud rock bands for years to come... Over the past few years, film soundtracks have become clearinghouses for bands' stray tracks, usually veering between classics (like Smashing Pumpkins' "Drown" on *Singles*) and complete dreck. The soundtrack to *Tales From The Crypt Presents Demon Knight* (Big Screen-Atlantic) is no exception, featuring ace tracks from the Melvins, Sepultura (the scathing 90-second "Policia"), Machine Head, Biohazard and Filter, about whom I know nothing except that they sound like Nine Inch Nails fronted by Cheap Trick's Robin Zander. You also get fairly perfunctory tracks from Megadeth and Ministry (the long-lost B-side "Tonight We Murder"), a fairly pointless remix of Pantera's "Cemetery Gates," and a plodding jam from Rollins that, quite frankly, sucks shit... On the uglier side of things, Florida's **DEATH** re-emerges with its sixth album, *Symbolic* (Roadrunner). While many of its death-metal contemporaries have fallen by the wayside or drifted into total irrelevance, these innovators of the genre haven't missed a step, as their weighty riffs and blistering percussion (courtesy ex-Dark Angel thumper Gene Hoglan) continue to pummel with all the subtlety of a brick to the head. While vocalist/mastermind Chuck Schuldiner's vocals have always left something to be desired in the arena of melody, this LP will certainly keep fans happy... From the cold clime of Norway comes **BURZUM**, whose *Det Som Engang Var* (Misanthropy-Futurist) may prove to be its last—vocalist Count Greshnek is in prison, accused of murder and attempted desecration of historic Norwegian churches! The band's sound mixes crushing Eurometal riffs with some of the most larynx-shredding screaming this side of Brutal Truth, and lyrics that are apparently Norwegian for all sorts of nasty things (although even a world-class linguist would be hard-pressed to understand a word). Pretty it ain't, but if this is your thing, chant "Sny mikrokosmos tegn" 10 times and see what happens.



- 1 KORN • Korn (Immortal-Epic)
- 2 SLAYER • Divine Intervention (American)
- 3 MEGADETH • Youthanasia (Capitol)
- 4 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Nativity In Black: A Tribute To Black Sabbath (Columbia)
- 5 TESTAMENT • Low (Atlantic)
- 6 CORROSION OF CONFORMITY • Deliverance (Columbia)
- 7 SICK OF IT ALL • Scratch The Surface (EastWest America)
- 8 MERCYFUL FATE • Time (Metal Blade-Priority)
- 9 TREE • Plant A Tree Or Die (CherryDisc)
- 10 BRUTAL TRUTH • Need To Control (Earache)
- 11 OVERDOSE • Progress Of Decadence (Futurist)
- 12 GODFLESH • Selfless (Earache-Columbia)
- 13 FUDGE TUNNEL • The Complicated Futility Of Ignorance (Earache)
- 14 MONSTER VOODOO MACHINE • Suffersystem (D-Tribe-RCA)
- 15 MACHINE HEAD • Burn My Eyes (Roadrunner)
- 16 DANZIG • 4 (American)
- 17 MELVINS • Stoner Witch (Atlantic)
- 18 MARY BEATS JANE • Mary Beats Jane (Geffen)
- 19 QUEENSRYCHE • Promised Land (EMI)
- 20 WIDOWMAKER • Stand By For Pain (CMC International)
- 21 SOUNDTRACK • Demon Knight—Tales From The Crypt (Atlantic)
- 22 MESHUGGAH • None (Nuclear Blast)
- 23 OBITUARY • World Demise (Roadrunner)
- 24 INCANTATION • Mortal Throne Of Nazarene (Relapse)
- 25 GROOVEZILLA • Groovezilla (Mausoleum)

Compiled from the CMJ New Music Report's weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

SINGLES

by douglas wolk

To go along with the Rhino reissues of his back catalog (see the feature elsewhere in this issue), **ROBYN HITCHCOCK** has a new solo single out on K. "I Something You," the A-side, is self-consciously jokey and sort of forced—the hallmark of bad Hitchcock—and "Man With A Woman's Shadow" is passable and not much else. "Zipper," though, is a first-class rocker, short, catchy, tough and peculiar—and hinting that Robyn's been listening to Mecca Normal, which is a weird but good sign.

Good things don't always happen when teenaged girls play rock, but the average has been pretty damn high of late. Four teenaged Scottish girls, calling themselves **LUNG LEG**, have recorded a completely charming seven-song 7", *The Negative Delinquent Autopsy* (Piao!). "Here we are/We hate cars," they chant on "Punk Pop Travesty"; the title of "Eek!" is its sole lyric. The band's exploding with good ideas—it just doesn't have any big ideas yet, and it's still getting the playing-the-instruments thing down. Compare the first records by the Mekons, TV Personalities, Raincoats and other like-minded groups, and you'll see why this one is so neat.

On the home teenage-girl-rock front, Berkeley's **TOURETTES** have unleashed their first EP, *Hidden Keys To Loving Relationships* (Lookout!). It's also their last—they broke up a few weeks before press time. A couple of them were formerly in the "jailbait-core" band Raouul, which had an excellent split album with Skinned Teen last year. Like Raouul's, these songs are all short, hardcore-y, and very, very funny, from "Battle Hymn" ("Didn't mean to burn down your town, and yet we have no regrets/There's a plague going around, and we're called the fucking Tourettes") to "A Fifth Of Whiskey And The World Is My Bitch" (self-explanatory). They've also got maybe the most incomprehensible singing ever—a marble-mouthed howl that's impossible to follow even with the lyric sheet.

Fans of Bikini Kill may be tempted to pick up "Boy Poison," a newly issued single by singer Kathleen Hanna's pre-BK band **VIVA KНИЕVAL** (Ultrasound)—yes, that's how they spell it. Save your money. It's flat-out terrible: poorly played, poorly recorded, completely unmemorable hard rock. Annoying liner notes, too—Hanna's writing about potentially interesting stuff, but there's no excuse for starting every sentence with some variation on "And, uh, you know."

Saving you time and money, pt. 2: there's an untitled 21-song 7" EP by the Japanese grindcore band **SENSELESS APOCALYPSE**. Songs 1-7 and 9-21 are all called "No Title." The remaining one is called "La, La, La (Nuclear Power)." It's on a German label called Regurgitated Semen Records. The record itself doesn't add anything much to that. How could it?

Almost as ridiculous in concept, but much more fun to hear, is *Never Fear The Unfearable*, the EP that comes with the ninth issue of *Bananafish* magazine, featuring short, sharp noise pieces by seven different artists. The most interesting is Harry Pussy's "Rehearsing The White Improviser," which starts out sounding like a random blurt of noise; then, as the band stops and repeats it several times with slight variations, it becomes clear that it's a specific blurt of noise—a rehearsal rather than an improvisation. There's even a piece recognizable as a (rather pretty) song, by Bill (Smog) Callahan and Cindy Dall.

Finally, two gems from New Zealand. The first single by **LOVES UGLY CHILDREN**, "Senseless" (Flying Nun), mines the fertile very-loud-pop vein of Archers Of Loaf, early Hüsker Dü and Superchunk, with a twiddly two-finger hook that's all it really needs to get by. Its rich, heavy B-side, "13-2-94," is in that style's slower cousin. The band's driving down a familiar street, but in a very nice vintage Cadillac.

And **BROWN VELVET COUCH**'s "Once In A Very Blue Moon" (Roof Bolt) is a strange case. The recording isn't easy to listen to—it's a bit on the tinny/rough side, which isn't appropriate for singer Viv Crowe's wistful voice and songs (she sounds a bit like Barbara Manning)—but the music and performances (the band is basically Crowe backed up by the band Trash) are strong and haunting. The result is that the record's better when you're remembering it than when you're actually listening to it. And it's worth hearing for the memory.



"pat's trick" helium

Matador

Helium *auteur* Mary Timony's songs are so good that they suspend time. Her last single was delayed by mastering problems—nobody noticed it was more than six minutes long until it was too late. "Pat's Trick," timed on a watch, is three and a quarter minutes long, but it might be a minute, or 10, or less or more—you get lost inside the world it makes. There are violent, ornately constructed hooks all over the place: "you are the most beautiful thing," Timony sings, elongating "thing" in a hollow, distorted soprano until it latches onto a rock-crushing guitar-and-bass riff. But the micro-structure of "Pat's Trick" is less important than the superstructure. You have to think about the song as a whole to notice the way the end is much faster than the beginning, but there's no audible speed-up, or the way that vocal and rhythmic hooks get traded between sections. An amazing piece of work, in conception and execution. "Ghost Car," on the other side, is a disturbing ballad arranged for voice, piano, percussion and lots of tape hiss: "I am the devil and here is my fist/I am evil but I don't exist."



DANCE

by tim haslett

m-beat featuring general levy

"incredible" (12")
Payday-ffrr

Slowly but surely, the jungle revolution is reaching North American shores. Discovering how this music will play itself out on U.S. terrain in the coming months should be interesting indeed.

The first domestic jungle compilation, *Law Of The Jungle* (reviewed last issue) appeared on Moonshine, a label identified largely by its techno output. What better way to introduce rap enthusiasts (among others) to this hip-hop-influenced genre than for Payday, home to street purist Jeru The Damaja, to release M-Beat's storming U.K. Top 40 single, "Incredible." Opening with a dragging, time-stretched vocal cadence and plunging headlong into a sea of drum-and-bass calisthenics, this is one of jungle's finest moments of the last year.

General Levy's raggamuffin vocal delivery is adroitly syncopated with the percussive momentum so that the thudding reggae bass pulse swells beneath the mayhem on the surface of the mix. The best jungle is full of musical cross-pollination—the complex hybridity apparent in "Incredible" is no surprise, since black British youth have grown up on a diet of Jamaican and American music (dub, techno, dancehall, hip-hop et al.), and are now creating their own music from a dialogical engagement with these musical forms. Dance music must continually reinvent itself in order to stay vital, but the emergence of new genres rarely occurs where you might expect. Jungle is a fine example of how the musical imagination is always just ahead of the critical analysis of it.

IX LIE'VZ MUSIC

The long-awaited U.S. debut album by **Aphrohead** (a.k.a. **Felix 'Da Housecat**) is every bit as imaginative as expected. Felix Stallings first emerged as a youngster with the landmark acid garage of Pierre's Phantasy Club in 1988. In the past 18 months, however, he has virtually become a genre by himself, influencing DJ Pierre, DJ Duke and Junior Vasquez, just to name a few. Aphrohead's characteristic muted, throbbing kick-drum and thick, glooming bass lines have come to dominate many a dancefloor where hardhouse is in demand. Frankly, a great many of the tracks on *Thee Industry Made Me Do It* (Power Music) sound as though they were recorded underwater through sheet metal, and it's a testament to Stallings' remarkable sonic acumen that they have the power to drive a dancefloor to the edge of sanity. In other words, these tracks would probably be a heavy-handed mess in the hands of another producer. Stallings has said elsewhere that his chief influences are Marshall Jefferson, Prince and Jimi Hendrix. How he draws on his idols to create music that bewitches the way this record does is nothing short of breathtaking. One listen to the LP's dense, humid title track or the spooky, mysterious "Bangin' Rain" will convince you you're listening to music that is simply too raw for this world. Though his trademark sounds are now unfortunately (and unsuccessfully) mimicked by so many lesser producers, Stallings has delivered another clutch of tracks that will leave imitators guessing for a full year. *Thee Industry Made Me Do It* is a remarkable achievement.

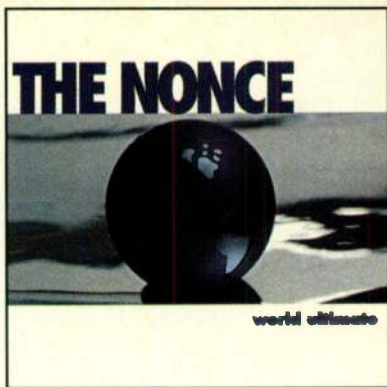


- 1 PLASTIKMAN • Musik (NovaMute)
- 2 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Law Of The Jungle (Moonshine)
- 3 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Trance Europe Express 3 (Volume (UK))
- 4 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Secret Life Of Trance: An Exploration (Planet Earth)
- 5 GRID • Swampthing (deConstruction)
- 6 LORDS OF ACID • Voodoo-U (WHITE LBL/Antler Subway-America)
- 7 AIR LIQUIDE • The Increased Difficulty Of Concentration (sm:e)
- 8 HUMAN MESH DANCE • Mindflower (Instinct)
- 9 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Recycle Or Die (Planet Earth)
- 10 VARIOUS ARTISTS • United State Of Ambience II (Moonshine)
- 11 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Concept In Dance (XL-Moonshine)
- 12 GLOBAL COMMUNICATION • 76:14 (Dedicated)
- 13 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Lost Legion (Silent)
- 14 VARIOUS ARTISTS • A Mission Into Drums (Eye Q-Planet Earth)
- 15 VARIOUS ARTISTS • None Of These Are Love Songs (Planet Earth)
- 16 YELLO • Zebra (Smash-4th & B'way)
- 17 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Artificial Intelligence II (Warp/Wax Trax!-TYT)
- 18 MOBY • Everything Is Wrong (Elektra)
- 19 COSMIC BABY • Thinking About Myself (Logic)
- 20 ORBITAL • Snivilisation (ffrr-London)
- 21 HIGHER INTELLIGENCE AGENCY • Colourform (Waveform)
- 22 SPACETIME CONTINUUM • Sea Biscuit (Astralwerks-Caroline)
- 23 COTTON CLUB • "The Gabber" (12") (CC)
- 24 AXIOM AMBIENT • Lost In The Translation (Axiom-Island)
- 25 GROOVE COLLECTIVE • Groove Collective (Reprise)

Compiled from the *CMJ New Music Report's* weekly RPM charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

HIP-HOP

by glen sansone



world ultimate
Wild West-American

the nonce

In the never-ending battle for coastal supremacy, the debut release by Los Angeles' The Nonce (Nouka Base and Yusef Afloat) courageously refuses to fall prey to the usual criminal slang found festering in West Coast rap, or to the empty freestyle rhymes of some Eastern MCs. *World Ultimate* tips its cap to both L.L. Cool J

and MC Shan, while joining loose, outgoing B-Boy posturing with old-school beats jacketed in an ethereal coating, as on "Mix Tapes." They'd probably be lying if they didn't say they'd listened to plenty of A Tribe Called Quest and Dignable Planets, but the duo somehow manages not to be restrained by any direct correlations, giving the City Of Angels a refreshing new sound to go along with established crews like the Pharcyde and Freestyle Fellowship. The opening track, "On The Air," is brushed with wordy lyrical interplay, while the bouncy bass line and playfully boisterous rhymes on the title track hit with the force of an open hand rather than a clenched fist. "On The Road Again" sees the crew kicking its feet up and sleepwalking through deadpan rhyming highlighted by vocal support in the chorus. The galvanized funk beats never fall off on this captivating debut.



- 1 PETE ROCK & C.L. SMOOTH • The Main Ingredient (Elektra)
- 2 DIGABLE PLANETS • Blowout Comb (Pendulum-EMI)
- 3 KEITH MURRAY • The Most Beautifullest Thing In This World (Jive)
- 4 METHOD MAN • Tical (Def Jam/RAL-Island)
- 5 BLACK SHEEP • Non-Fiction (Mercury)
- 6 BRAND NUBIAN • Everything Is Everything (Elektra)
- 7 CRAIG MACK • Project: Funk Da World (Bad Boy-Arista)
- 8 ROOTS • Do You Want More? (DGC)
- 9 SOUNDTRACK • Street Fighter (Priority)
- 10 REDMAN • Dare Iz A Darkside (RAL-Island)
- 11 NOTORIOUS B.I.G. • Ready To Die (Bad Boy-Arista)
- 12 VARIOUS ARTISTS • Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool (Red Hot-GRP)
- 13 COMMON SENSE • Resurrection (Relativity)
- 14 ICE CUBE • Bootlegs & B-Sides (Priority)
- 15 BOOGIEMONSTERS • Riders Of The Storm: The Underwater Album (Pendulum-EMI)
- 16 GROUP HOME • "Supa Star" (12") (Payday/frr-Island)
- 17 SOUNDTRACK • Murder Was The Case (Death Row/Interscope-Atlantic)
- 18 SLICK RICK • Behind Bars (Def Jam/RAL-Island)
- 19 LORDS OF THE UNDERGROUND • Keepers Of The Funk (Pendulum-EMI)
- 20 O.C. • Word...Life (WBid Pitch-EMI)
- 21 MOBB DEEP • "Shook Ones Pt. 2" (12") (Loud-RC)
- 22 SCARFACE • The Diary (Noo Trybe/Rap-A-Lot-Virgin)
- 23 BRANDY • Brandy (Atlantic)
- 24 SOUNDTRACK • A Low Down Dirty Shame (Hollywood-Jive)
- 25 RAS KASS • "Won't Catch Me Runnin'" (12") (Patalwerk)

BONUS BEATS

Hip-hop MCs are rarely self-effacing or aware of their possible limitations. When rappers decide to show even a glimmer of vulnerability, peers and fans will affix words like "soft" to their style, as if they have just broken some unwritten law of hip-hop. Today, as most hip-hop struggles to represent something real, the debut from Cashville's (a k a Nashville) **COUNT BASS D** entitled *Pre-Life Crisis* (Hoppoh-Chaos) packs more charisma and candor than other MCs achieve over an entire career. "T-Boz Tried To Talk To Me" describes a fleeting moment Count Bass D (a k a Dwight Farrell) spent with the singer from TLC. An ordinary MC would embellish it to conspicuously perverted ends, but the Count's description is unaffected and comical as the chorus reveals: "Man, really, T-Boz tried to talk to me... It may have been a big mistake/And if it was, my heart will break." Count Bass D also balances his occasional goofiness and sing-songy choruses with sharp, penetrating rhymes ("Sandwiches"), and a tireless flair for clever similes. Check "The Dozens" for the line "When I step up in the jam and wax you all/You're as frustrated as Michael Jordan trying to play baseball." *Pre-Life Crisis* cross-breeds heavy hip-hop beats with live instrumentation throughout much of the album, peaking on "I Got Needs," an advanced study in hip-hop ingenuity... When Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin formed the Def Jam label in 1984, little did the pepper-and-salt duo know that they would create one of the most powerful hip-hop empires in the universe. With the two splitting the production and managing of acts like L.L. Cool J and the Beastie Boys, Def Jam turned out some of the most influential hip-hop ever recorded. After Russell and Rick parted ways in 1987 (right after the Beastie's quadruple-platinum debut), Russell assumed his role as label CEO and Rick formed what is now known as American Recordings. The *Maroon Compilation* (Infinite Zero-American), named for the old, maroon-colored Def Jam labels, is a collection of early, hard-to-find singles (produced by Rubin) that are essential to any old-school hip-hop fan or record collector who has been unable to locate the original vinyl. The Beastie Boys' AC/DC-sampling "Rock Hard," served up here, shows Rubin's verve for joining the rebellious spirits of heavy metal and hip-hop into an adventurous design (he also did it on Run-D.M.C.'s "Walk This Way"), while the drum machines and nimble rhymes of L.L. Cool J take flight on the head-nodding "I Need A Beat." L.L., whose *Radio* was the first LP released on Def Jam, also turns up on "I Want You" and "Dangerous." An instant B-Boy classic when released, T La Rock & Jazzy Jay's "It's Yours" shows how indispensable the DJ once was to a hip-hop record, while Rubin also uncovers the 1985 single "Cold Chillin' In The The Spot" by Jazzy Jay, featuring Russell Rush (a k a Russell Simmons) doing a freestyle rap that we're sure he wishes remained layered in dust. Word out.

Compiled from the *Billboard* New Music Report's weekly Beat Box charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

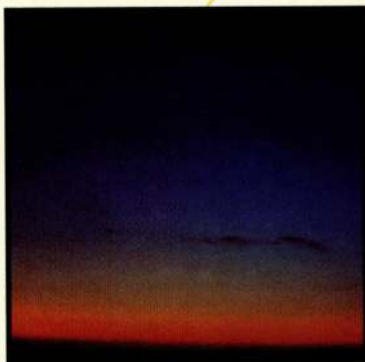
on the verge

UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

compiled by Lydia Anderson

flying saucer attack

The cascade of otherworldly sounds rainbowing out of Flying Saucer Attack's guitar amps certainly warrants the band's space-conscious moniker, but this mysterious group from Bristol, England, has more than effects pedals and a heap of irreverence up its sleeves. The band's expansive snarls of sound congeal easily into songs—some tranquilizing experiments with repetition and sound collage, some melodic gems whose vocals and structures cover under the massive cloud of guitar fuzz smoking out of the amps. Virginia indie label VHF introduced America to FSA last year by releasing the band's self-titled debut and a singles collection called *Distance*. The band's new album, due out later this year on Drag City, is rumored to be acoustic, stirring up much excitement about the jewels buried beneath the ribbons of sound. (LA)



strummed guitars and rootsy strings. Johnson's already at work on his second album, which should be out on Atlantic later this year. (LA)



squirrel nut zippers

The Squirrel Nut Zippers sound like nothing you've heard lately, unless frantic Dixieland, Rudy Vallee, and the poppier sides Jimmie Rodgers recorded with Bob Sawyer's Jazz Band have been in heavy rotation on your hi-fi. The Zippers' songs and arrangements of banjo, standup bass,



guitar and horns are disarmingly authentic, bringing to life images of flappers and shady characters in smoky speakeasys, forgotten vaudevillians, and gassed frat-guys swallowing goldfish and cutting a rug in raccoon skin coats. Sure, it's retro and tongues are often placed prominently in cheek, but the Zippers aren't just about shtick—they also write catchy, funny pop tunes. The Efland, North Carolina seven-piece have one single out on Merge, and a full-length on Mammoth is due soon.

—Arthur Park

mike johnson

If you've ever seen Mike Johnson's gangly figure, crowned with close-cropped white-blond hair, it was probably in Mark Lanegan's creepy video for "House A Home" or playing with his band Dinosaur Jr. On his first solo LP *Where Am I?* (Up), Johnson fills us in on exactly where he's been when he's not in the shadows, and it's a pretty intriguing, if dimly-lit place. His low, gravelly voice finds solace in the delicate folds of his blues-inspired music, a discreet rock backdrop trimmed with carefully

bardo pond

Philadelphia-based quartet Bardo Pond plays noisy, sluggish, feedback-laden rock songs. Underneath the random gruffness, though, lie guitar hooks that sneak up and grab your attention. Isobel Sollenberger's pretty vocals and unexpected flute playing are rendered nearly indistinguishable by the lo-fi recording technique. The band has a full-length record, *Bufo Alvarius* (Drunken Fish), which was initially released only on vinyl, but is now available on CD with extra tracks. —Dawn Sutter

ARTIST FEATURED ON THIS MONTH'S CD

SEEING THE SITES

by Misha Glouberman

teach

This month, I'm emptying my box of saved string, and bringing you some neat Internet sites to check out, along with some signposts to help you find the quirky, out-of-the-way stuff you want.

The librarians. Lots of people have set themselves the thankless task of making useful compilations of what's out there. One of the best is Michael Kerwin Breen's *Music Harmony List* (http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/mbreen/music_links.html). This guy's working hard to keep up on all the newest resources. The list is encyclopedic, with categories for radio stations, local scenes, labels and tons more. A whole separate page (<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/webmaster/artists.html>) lists artists with web sites, sorted alphabetically and divided—lest you thought net-culture was getting overly comprehensible—into three major categories: industry, independent, and marching bands.

On the off chance that Breen has missed something, other good music meta-lists can be found at <http://www.cecer.army.mil/~burnett/MDB/musicResources.html> and <http://www.cc.columbia.edu/hauben/music-index.html>. *Vibe Online* also keeps a pretty good list at <http://www.timeinc.com/vibe/mmmj>.

These guys put their egos aside and list everything they can find, whether they like it or not—although hauben refuses to list anything to do with Adam Curry, listing Madame Furry's Empty TV (<http://www.galcit.caltech.edu/~ta/mtv/main.html>) instead. For a more subjective view of things musical, check out the music review archives at <ftp.uwp.edu> in `pub/music/reviews`.

Finding people to talk to. The net is, of course, primarily a technology by which people who have no friends (a hot, fast-rising demographic) can pretend that they do. What better way to simulate human contact than to find a group of far-away people who share your narrowly defined geekish interests? Newsgroups are easy enough, but mailing lists offer even narrower subjects, with the added bonus of filling up that depressingly empty email box. A previous column told you that the list of music lists was hard to find. No more: check it out at <http://server.berkeley.edu/~ayukawa/10mm1.html>, or, if it moves again, by nostalgia-inducing ftp at <ftp.uwp.edu> in `/pub/music/misc/mail.lists.music`. Talk to others who want to reminisce about Factory Records; have week-long conversations about the Jazz Butcher (with occasional appearances by Pat Fish, the Butcher himself). If you want to find lists on non-musical topics, too, check out <http://alpha.acast.nova.edu/cgi-bin/lists>, for a searchable index of thousands of subjects.

Making your own music. Or playing it yourself, anyhow. Archives of guitar tabs for thousands of songs are scattered all over the net. Try <ftp.nevada.edu> in `/pub/music/guitar`. Tab archives can be tricky to get to sometimes, given their dubious legality. If all else fails, go to Usenet, home of most Internet lawlessness, and read `rec.music.makers.guitar.tablature`, or `alt.guitar.tab`.

Speaking of copyright laws, **Negativland** has a pretty nice web page up (<http://sunsite.unc.edu:80/id/negativland/>). This band defines the essence of indie music better than anyone. Their music is smart, funny, and almost impossible to listen to. I won't bore you with the details of their perpetually ongoing feud with Island Records over their *U2* record—go to the site and get the whole story, along with up-to-date details and every related document you can think of (pics of the band, links to the full text of the 1976 copyright act: the usual stuff). If you've got the time and your machine's got the juice, you can even download their bizarre "cover" of "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," complete with No Melody, Casey Kasem swearing (edit it into a startup sound for your Mac!) and spooky noises. Far be it from Negativland to get overprotective of their intellectual property.

What better way to simulate human contact than to find a group of far-away people who share your narrowly defined geekish interests?

And if all this should get you into a musical free-speech frenzy, you might want to take a look at the Censored Music Page (<http://fileroom.aaup.uic.edu/FileRoom/documents/Mmusic.html>). Reel at the stupidity of community standards, and wonder if your community is any better.

Downright stupid. I have to share these so I can get them out of my system. The Strawberry Pop Tart Blowtorch page (<http://cbl.tamucc.edu/~pmichaud/toast/>) is just what its poetic name suggests: a very scientific study, complete with photos, of the proposition that "Strawberry Pop Tarts may be a cheap and inexpensive source of incendiary devices." Not as good as sprinkling powdered coffee creamer over a lighted match, but still fun. Equally pleasing (which is to say, perhaps not at all) is the surrealist compliment generator (http://pharmdec.wustl.edu/cgi-bin/jardin_scripts/SCG), a computer program with a keen algorithm for weird flattery. I blushed when told "Were scissors to bend in driving rain they would case quietly by the tire prints of your feet."

Oh yeah, one other thing. Most of the resources listed here are Web sites. You need a Web browser to get to them. If you're using a browser other than Netscape, you're really missing something. Go to <ftp.mcom.com> and grab this amazingly good program.

Punk Diary
1970-1979

mixed media

compiled by dawn sutter

COVERT CULTURE SOURCEBOOK 2.0

by Richard Kadrey (St. Martin's Press)

"This is not a rah-rah underground-culture-rules book," warns Kadrey in the introduction to the sequel to (not revision of) the first CCS. "It's an information guide... I have no intention of putting things in perspective for you." That should clearly explain this catalog of fiction (like Mirabeau's *Torture Garden*), biography, explorations of the mind (*Lucid Dreaming*), body (Femalia's vulva photography), sex, conspiracies, media, video, religion, comics and music (theremin and didgeridoo to Arvo Pärt and far beyond). Yes, of course, the Internet and cyberspace are here, too. Use it as an introduction to new pleasures, a glossary for whatever your cutting-edge friends are talking about, your own quick-fix of the avant garde, or just a good bathroom reader.

—Eric Gladstone

reads

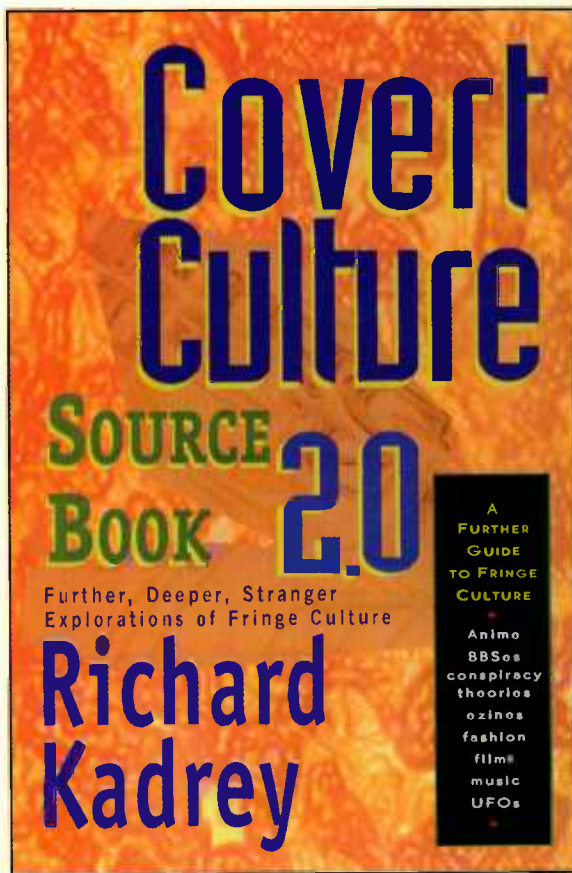
PUNK DIARY

by George Gimarc (St. Martin's Press)

Like any other cultural trend, the punk rock movement has had its share of histories. But more than most, punk's memoirs have taken the tone of heavily opinionated (if only lightly informed), agenda-filled revisions of which you have to absorb a half dozen to get the full story. This makes *Punk Diary* a godsend. Very simply, it's a week-by-week record of punk's development from 1970 (starting with the release of the Stooges' *Funhouse*) until the end of that decade. Though the entries concentrate on English bands (and Americans accepted by the Brits), what's notable about the volume is its attention to long-forgotten details-of-the-moment (Factory Records' Tony Wilson was a TV rock show host; tickets to the Sex Pistols' American tour were \$3.50; etc.), lists of bands playing every week, and the pre-fame activity of artists including Elvis Costello, XTC, Joe Jackson and a very wide variety of obscure, or "legendary," others. Both U2 (*née* the Hype) and the New York Dolls (*née* Actress) are followed from their earliest moments. And the whole thing is capped off with an alphabetical artists index to find the dates when they're in the news.

Though it's hard to imagine reading *Punk Diary's* small print cover to cover, the book is also incredibly hard not to thumb through for hours. With a radio program-style CD of equally captivating interviews by the disc jockey author included, *Punk Diary* is essential not only for every alternative music fan but also for every would-be rock journalist. Get the facts.

—Eric Gladstone



panophobia

#2
\$1.00



posterchildren TSUNAMI ian mackaye
sleepyhead polvo SLANT 6 tiger trap
huggy bear superchunk SPINANES seaweed

'zines

PANOPHOBIA

P.O. Box 148097, Chicago, IL 60614 \$1

Jen and Sarah, the two clever women who run Septophilia, a swell vinyl-only mail order company, also publish this excellent little square journal that gives the demi-stars of indie-pop a new subsect on which to focus: fear. Howie of the Poster Children asks, in issue #2, "Pan Of Phobia?" The reply: "No, no, 'panophobia,' like 'pan' from Latin or Greek or whatever, meaning 'all,' and 'phobia,' of course, meaning fear." In the first two issues, we get to read about Ian MacKaye's fear of ashtrays (he used to picture himself dragging his teeth on the bottom of ashtrays), how Angela of Tiger Trap has a fear of falling in love (I'm sure she is alone in that category), and members of Polvo and Yo La Tengo agreeing that flying bugs are scary. *Panophobia* also features groovy definitions that will help you identify phobias you didn't know the names of (I am erythrophobic: I have a fear of blushing). And there's a section called "Man-on-the-street-phobia," but since the editors were too scared to actually go out on the street and talk to people, we get to read their pals' phobias, many of which are accompanied by self-portrait illustrations. —Gail O'Hara

flicks

FASTER, PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!

In nationwide theatrical re-release in honor of its 30th anniversary, *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* is a tour de force of gratuitous violence, lesbians, greed, sex, very large women, cleavage, fast cars, hip-huggers, and side-splitting dialogue. Trash just doesn't get any better than this. (John Waters has called it his favorite film, to give you an idea.) Director/writer Russ Meyer parlayed an obsession with the aforementioned themes into a series of legendary films in the '60s and '70s, and *Faster, Pussycat!* (along with 1970's brilliant *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls*) catches Meyer at his peak. A study of good vs. evil and the then-daunting possibility of female empowerment, *Pussycat's* storyline is basically three well-endowed go-go dancers, led by Meyer favorite Tura Satana (Yowza! What a dish!), ditching their night jobs to embark on a reign of terror through the California desert via switchblade, karate chop and sports car. Sound a little thin? Well, if you want a compelling plot, stay home and read a book, college boy! Those who are more politically correct will no doubt be offended by the goings-on, and it's likely that *Pussycat* seems weirder now than it did in 1965, but as long as there are thrill-seeking cads and creeps out there, *Faster, Pussycat!* will continue to be treasured. —Steve McGuire



THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT



by

BRYAN TALBOT

BOOK TWO

THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT

by Bryan Talbot (Dark Horse)

funnies

Bryan Talbot has been doing comics for well over ten years—he's best known for an adventurous but ultimately incoherent science fiction series, *Luther Arkwright*. His style has more in common with Victorian book illustration than with most comics art. In *The Tale Of One Bad Rat*, he's finally found a story suitable for his illustrative and narrative gifts. The four-issue miniseries is about a teenaged runaway named Helen, emotionally battered by years of sexual abuse and tortured by horrific visions. Obsessed with turn-of-the-century children's book author Beatrix Potter (whose drawings she copies, and whose work inspired part of the visual approach of the comic), she follows Potter's path across England, accompanied by her pet rat. Although the sections that deal with Potter sometimes seem a little too well-researched, the main story is handled powerfully and realistically, with graceful shifts between third-person narrative, Helen's perspective (and the way that her visions distort her surroundings), and frequent flashbacks. When, near the end, she gets ready to confront her parents, it's immensely moving without jerking emotional strings—most of the series is visually understated and leavened with wit, so when Talbot gets serious, it really works. —Douglas Walk

TOP 75

ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY



VERUCA SALT

ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	LABEL
1 VERUCA SALT	American Thighs	Minty Fresh-DGC
2 ASS PONYS	Electric Rock Music	A&M
3 PEARL JAM	Vitalogy	Epic
4 R.E.M.	Monster	Warner Bros.
5 LIZ PHAIR	Whip-Smart	Matador-Atlantic
6 CATHERINE	Sorry	TVT
7 DEAD CAN DANCE	Toward The Within	4AD-WB
8 BUSH	Sixteen Stone	Trauma-Interscope
9 JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION	Orange	Matador
10 PORTISHEAD	Dummy	Go! Discs-London
11 NIRVANA	MTV Unplugged In New York	DGC
12 CRANBERRIES	No Need To Argue	Island
13 LAURIE ANDERSON	Bright Red	Warner Bros.
14 SOUL COUGHING	Ruby Vroom	Slash-WB
15 DAVE MATTHEWS BAND	Under The Table And Dreaming	RCA
16 SMASHING PUMPKINS	Pisces Iscariot	Virgin
17 STONE ROSES	Second Coming	Geffen
18 TOM PETTY	Wildflowers	Warner Bros.
19 ECHOBELLY	Everyone's Got One	Fauve-Rhythm King
20 VICTORIA WILLIAMS	Loose	Mammoth-Atlantic
21 TREEPEOPLE	Actual Re-enactment	C/Z
22 BAD RELIGION	Stranger Than Fiction	Atlantic
23 WEDDING PRESENT	Watusi	Island
24 GOLDEN PALOMINOS	Pure	Restless
25 CRANES	Loved	Dedicated-Arista
26 DINK	Dink	Capitol
27 WEEN	Chocolate And Cheese	Elektra
28 JONI MITCHELL	Turbulent Indigo	Reprise
29 VARIOUS ARTISTS	All Virgos Are Mad	4AD
30 18TH DYE	Done	Matador
31 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Tulare Dust: A Songwriters' Tribute To Merle Haggard	Hightone
32 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool	Red Hot-GRP
33 PALACE SONGS	Hope (EP)	Drag City
34 TODD SNIDER	Songs For The Daily Planet	Margaritaville-MCA
35 THROWING MUSES	University	Sire-Reprise
36 LORDS OF ACID	Voodoo-U	WHITE LABEL/Antler Subway-American
37 PIZZICATO FIVE	Made In USA	Matador
38 EVERCLEAR	World Of Noise	Tim Kerr-Capitol
39 SOUNDTRACK	Clerks	Chaos-Columbia
40 LISA GERMANO	Geek The Girl	4AD-WB
41 SOUNDTRACK	Pulp Fiction	MCA
42 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Unplugged Collection, Volume One	Warner Bros.
43 BIG AUDIO	Higher Power	Columbia
44 MIGHTY MIGHTY BOSSTONES	Question The Answers	Mercury
45 GASTR DEL SOL	Mirror Repair	Drag City
46 CRAMPS	Flamejob	Medicine/Giant-WB
47 MELVINS	Stoner Witch	Atlantic
48 CHRIS CONNELLY	Shipwreck	Wax Trax!-TVT
49 JESSAMINE	Jessamine	Kranky
50 LATIMER	World's Portable (EP)	World Domination
51 TUSCADERO	The Pink Album	TeenBeat
52 SPELL	Mississippi	Island
53 ANTIETAM	Rope-A-Dope	Homestead
54 RUSTED ROOT	When I Woke	Mercury
55 SWANSONS	Shake	Citizen X-Interscope
56 SMALL FACTORY	For If You Cannot Fly	Vernon Yard
57 LONDON SUEDE	Dog Man Star	Nude-Columbia
58 AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB	San Francisco	Reprise
59 SUGAR	File Under: Easy Listening	Rykodisc
60 CHROME CRANKS	Chrome Cranks	PCP
61 FASTBACKS	Answer The Phone, Dummy	Sub Pop
62 GREEN DAY	Dookie	Reprise
63 SOUNDTRACK	Dumb And Dumber	RCA
64 LOU BARLOW AND FRIENDS	Another Collection Of Home Recordings	Mint (Canada)
65 LOUD FAMILY	The Tape Of Only Linda	Alias
66 COME	Don't Ask Don't Tell	Matador
67 NEW RADIANT STORM KING	August Revital	Grass-Dutch East India
68 LOVE BATTERY	Nehru Jacket (EP)	Atlas-A&M
69 ERIC CLAPTON	From The Cradle	Reprise
70 BLAST OFF COUNTRY STYLE	Rainbow Mayonnaise Deluxe	TeenBeat
71 SONNY LANDRETH	South Of I-10	Zoo
72 FATIMA MANSIONS	Lost In The Former West	Radioactive
73 JUNED	Juned	Up
74 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Why Popstars Can't Dance	Slumberland
75 SILVER JEWS	Starlite Walker	Drag City

Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 150 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 35 most-played releases that week.

just out

NEW RELEASES
FEBRUARY - MARCH

TISH HINOJOSA Frontejas (Rounder)
WINGTIP SLOAT Chewyfoot (VHF)
FUN-DA-MENTAL Seize The Time (Beggars Banquet-Atlantic)
ROYAL TRUX Thank You (Virgin)
ALEX CHILTON A Man Called Destruction (Ardent)

VARIOUS ARTISTS Incredibly Strange Music, Volume 2 (Re/Search-Asphodel)

VARIOUS ARTISTS Wakefield (TeenBeat)

LOVE BATTERY Straight Freak Ticket (Atlas-A&M)

NITZER EBB Big Hit (DGC)

ROBYN HITCHCOCK Fegmania; Gotta Let This Hen Out; Element Of Light (reissues) (Rhino)

METERS Funkify Your Life: Meters Anthology (2-CD) (Rhino)

BAND OF SUSANS Here Comes Success (Restless)

GOO GOO DOLLS A Boy Named Goo (Warner Bros.)

NEW ORDER The Best Of New Order (Qwest-Warner Bros.)

JAMES BROWN Hell; Get On The Good Foot; Reality; Roots Of A Revolution (reissues) (Polydor)

THE J.B.'S Funky Good Time: The Anthology (Polydor)

P.J. HARVEY To Bring You My Love (Island)

QUICKSAND Manic Compression (Island)

DEL AMITRI Twisted (A&M)

FACE TO FACE Big Choice (Victory-A&M)

CLAWHAMMER Thank The Holder Uppers (Interscope)

MIKE WATT Ball-Hog Or Tugboat? (Columbia)

FEBRUARY

GENESIS P-ORRIDGE & PSYCHIC TV A Hollow Cost (Invisible)

SPENT Songs Of Drinking And Rebellion (Merge)

CAKEKITCHEN Stompin' Thru The Boneyard (Merge)

SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS The Inevitable (Mammoth)

ADAM ANT Wonderful (Capitol)

ABBA Thank You For The Music (4-CD Box) (Polydor)

THE BLUE UP? Spool Forka Dish (Columbia)

CHRIS WHITLEY Din Of Ecstasy (Columbia)

URBAN DANCE SQUAD Persona Non Grata (Virgin)

FRANKIE KNUCKLES Welcome To The Real World (Virgin)

DEAD MILKMEN Final Delivery (Restless)

EGGS How Do You Like Your Lobster? (TeenBeat)

ANNIE LENNOX Medusa (Arista)

VARIOUS ARTISTS Pay It All Back Vol. 5 (On-U Sound)

LAURIE ANDERSON The Ugly One With The Jewels & Other Stories (Warner Bros.)

MUDHONEY My Brother The Cow (Reprise)

VARIOUS ARTISTS Led Zeppelin Tribute Album (Atlantic)

JAMIROQUAI Return Of The Space Cowboy (Columbia)

FAITH NO MORE King For A Day, Fool For A Lifetime (Slash-Reprise)

D*NOTE Criminal Justice (TVT)

MOBY Everything Is Wrong (Elektra)

KMFDM NIHIL (Wax Trax-TVT)

NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN Brainbloodvolume (Columbia)

EMERGENCY BROADCAST NETWORK Telecommunication Breakdown (TVT)

MELVIN VAN PEEBLES Ghetto Gothic (Capitol)

MERLE HAGGARD The Lonesome Fugitive: The Merle Haggard Anthology 1963-77 (Razor & Tie)

MONSTER MAGNET Dopes To Infinity (A&M)

UNDERGROUND LOVERS Dream It Down (Atlas-A&M)

ELEVATOR TO HELL Elevator To Hell (Sub Pop)

SMOG Wild Love (Drag City)

THE SEA AND CAKE Nassau (Thrill Jockey)

VERSUS Dead Leaves (Teenbeat)

SPIRITUALIZED Pure Phase (Arista)

BUTTHOLE SURFERS The Hole Truth...and Nothing Butt (Trance Syndicate)

CHANNEL LIVE Station Identification (Capitol)

FOETUS Gash (Columbia)

CHARLES & EDDIE Chocolate Milk (Capitol)

DURAN DURAN Thank You (Capitol)

MARCH

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ON TOUR

TOURING IN MARCH

THE RED KRAYOLA

MAXWELLS, HOBOKEN, NJ • JANUARY 7, 1995

Though 28 years have passed since its first record (*The Parable Of Arable Land*—recently reissued on Collectables and now available in the oldies bin of a chain-store near you), this is the Red Krayola's first American tour. The band consists of genteel Texan wildman Mayo Thompson and whomever he happens to rope in for a given project. In the past, the lineup has included all of Pere Ubu, punk saxophonist Lora Logic and novelist Frederick Barthelme at various times. Tonight, it's Thompson with David Grubbs (Squirrel Bait, *Gastr Del Sol*), Tom Watson (Slovenly, *Overpass*) and George Hurley (Minutemen, *FIREHOSE*). Though the group's never quite broken through to the masses, it's maintained a cult following since the beginning, especially among musicians—its songs have been covered by everyone from stately, calm Galaxie 500 to splattercore freaks the Dwarves to psychedelic droneheads Spacemen 3.

Thompson, in a heavy jacket, wraparound shades and an unruly mop of dirty-gray hair, looks like a weird uncle that the family never talks about. The years have not been kind to his voice, a nasal, quavering baritone that's too often altogether unmoored from pitch. But he's a striking stage presence, clearly basking in the adoration of his juniors in the band, and yelping his brainy lyrics like he's having the time of his life ("They say that art killed Pollock/As if that could be/In fact he missed a bend and drove his Ford into a tree"). And the band's absolutely great: Hurley has mastered the insane, personal blurt-rhythms of Thompson's songs, and drums them out so forcefully that Watson and Grubbs could just be sucked along for the ride if they weren't playing their guitars with so much gusto themselves. The quartet leaps from songs to "free-form freakouts" (as *Parable Of Arable Land* called them) and back again, often without even giving the audience a chance to applaud.

Of course, the great advantage of not having toured before is that Thompson has more than half a dozen albums' worth of great songs that he's not sick of playing and the audience isn't sick of hearing. The set tonight draws a little on the Red Krayola's new self-titled album (*Drag City*), notably the Bo Diddley-in-the-desert raver "People Get Ready (The Train's Not Coming)." Mostly, though, it makes use of songs from every phase of the band's lengthy, diverse career, even reaching back to '67 for the proto-punk classic "Hurricane Fighter Plane." For an encore, the group plays the heady 1980 single "Wives In Orbit," and it sounds fresh and celebratory, like they're nailing it live for the first time. At times, on record, the Red Krayola is too intellectual for its own good; tonight, its pleasures of the mind are tempered but undiluted by the pleasures of the flesh.

—Douglas Wolk

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March 16 San Diego, CA
17 Costa Mesa, CA
18 Los Angeles, CA
22 Palo Alto, CA
24 Portland, OR
25 Seattle, WA

FASTBACKS

March 1 Minneapolis, MN (w/ Gaunt)
2 Chicago, IL (w/ Gaunt)
3 Cleveland, OH
(w/ New Bomb Turks & Gaunt)
4 Columbus, OH
(w/ New Bomb Turks & Gaunt)
9 New York, NY
10 Hoboken, NJ
11 Cambridge, MA

OASIS

March 3 Asbury Park, NJ
5 Virginia Beach, VA
7 Philadelphia, PA
8 New York, NY
10 Providence, RI

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Localzine

by Kevin Munro

MOTOR CITY MADHOUSE

In the 1940s, Detroit was hailed as the Paris of the Midwest. Unfortunately, that was quite some time ago. These days, Detroiters spend their moments proudly relishing the media's stereotyped vision of the city. The tough nature of the Motor City's reputation (riots, gun murders and Devil's Night blazes) just reinforces the fact that this city is heavily fueled with passion. The same passion that has given us Black Bottom blues, Motown records and Iggy and the Stooges has likewise given us union conflicts, race riots and a seriously depressing amount of crime and unemployment. Despite all the cool negative hype, Detroit's music scene, though influential, has remained largely isolated. It appears that almost everyone who has done anything worth mentioning has had to leave town to do it.



In the early '80s the vast majority of shows went down in the city's Cass Corridor, a decrepit haven for prostitutes, junkies and punks. Places like the Freezer and the Clubhouse did a considerable number of legendary gigs at the time, and even today the area caters to underground rock needs. Today the gigs are at clubs like Zoot's and the Old Miami, where I met up with Dan Kroba, frontman of the Demolition Doll Rods and the late great garage monsters The Gories. Dan had somehow managed to attract the attention of a six-foot-tall black transvestite whore who accused him of trying to steal her look, giving our conversation an easy start.

"I started dressing in drag because Margaret (rhythm guitar player for the Doll Rods) wanted a girlfriend... I've also been inspired by streetwalkers down here. I'm into the whole history of the Cass Corridor. The MCS played and lived down here. There was Fortune Records over on Third Ave., which was the home of all kinds of crazy rhythm and blues, gospel, country and rockabilly. They recorded guys like Roy Hall, who taught Jerry Lee Lewis some stuff. They also recorded total nut cases like Andre Williams.

"You know... I'm not leaving Detroit no matter what... for the band or anything. I don't care what anybody says: Detroit's been happening, always will be happening."

In Detroit, more often than not, bands play out way too much, never leaving the suburban area to do a show. They tend to hold to their minimum wage jobs like they're living in a communist country. Besides all this, there are some excellent bands playing out right now, like The Henchmen, who just signed with Norton for three albums, and Rocket 455, whom I spoke with.

"When we play, people dance and people get hospitalized—the band included. We don't get the biggest crowds, but they're into it. Our fans are drunker than other Detroit crowds I've seen... I guess we've made our own scene," the band's Jeff Meier says.

Rachel Nagy, the queen of the basement floors and frontwoman for the newest Motor City band, The Detroit Cobras, was reluctant at first to speak to me because I was out of booze.



"We played this benefit for an orphanage only because they paid us in shots. The people in bands are the only ones that come see us... but they're the ones who greet us at the door with martinis. Kim Marro, the guitarist from **Hot Foot N' Puddin' Pie**, summed us up by saying we sound like we learned all our songs from listening to old scratchy 78 records."

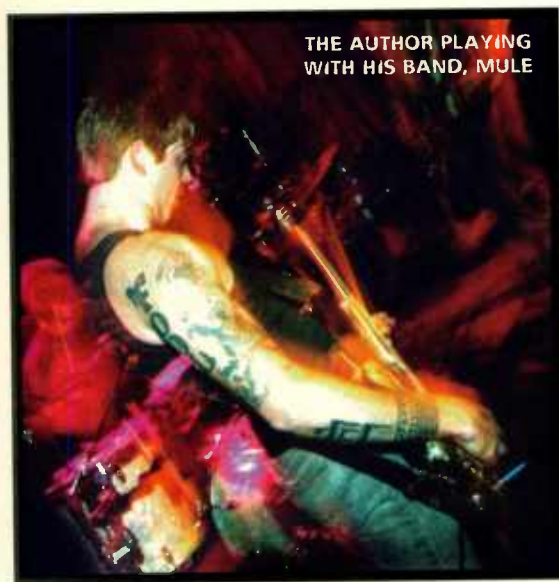


GOOD ST ANNE

Another relatively new band on the scene is **Good St. Anne**, a dramatic and melodic jazz-bent four-piece, complete with horns and a Detroit superstar veteran line-up. It features Hobey Echlin, formerly of Majesty Crush, as well as Aku Lahti, formerly of Cathouse (on Detroit's Nocturnal Records). The band also boasts two members of Saltlick, John Bardy and Ian Fraser.

I stopped off recently at the S2nd Street Show Bar, a biker-owned strip joint located on Michigan Ave., to meet with another great player from a whole other school, Eric Gustafson, the guitarist from the transitional punk-jazz combo **Blue Dog**. Eric hipped me to some of his recent thoughts since their debut disc, *What Is Anything*, was released on Knitting Factory Works.

"When you're out of town, instant respect follows Detroit bands, talent aside," says Eric, "but at home, if you succeed in having an arms-folded, black-leathered Detroit audience pressed to the stage and whispering to themselves, you've already won. You couldn't ask for more."



THE AUTHOR PLAYING WITH HIS BAND, MULE

As in most other cities across the country, the best bands are forced to put out their own recordings. Steve Albini once convinced me that there was a label available for every conceivable genre of music, and true as it may be, there were no obvious suggestions for Detroit's ethnic gypsy gods, **The Immigrant Suns**. This forced them to put out their own full-length recording, *Montenegro*, on their own Pho-ne-tic label in November of '94. The band's style of demented Slavic-European folk sounds travels that Captain Beefheart-Butthole Surfer highway, not unlike the new twists to bluegrass that the Bad Livers so eloquently deliver us. Djeto Juncaj, the Immigrant Suns' guitar player, broke from the suburban Royal Oak corner where they had just pulled in \$200 in an hour's time to give me some feedback.

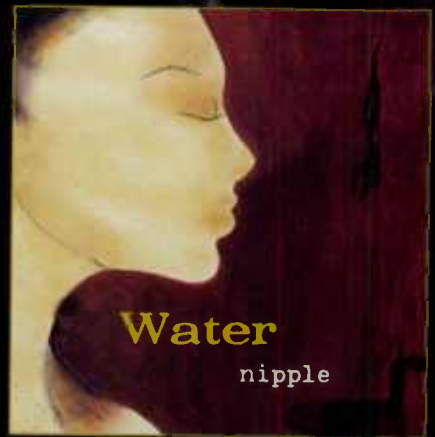
"Our music reflects Detroit's ethnic diversity; maybe the people identify with us because they recognize the music of their ancestors. We try to transform something traditional by using electric guitars as well as acoustic instruments. Some kid told us after our first gig that we sounded like Sonic Youth playing Romanian folk music on speed."

Even though there seem to be a lot of promising new bands, the city's far from a real musical renaissance. Despite the efforts of larger bands such as **Big Chief** or the less familiar **Laughing Hyenas**, **Wig** and **Mule**, Detroit has not had much recent national attention. Even with the city's rich musical history and a metropolitan area of four million people, towns a quarter of the size seem to produce more nationally recognizable acts. To the touring bands from outside the state, the city has taken the back seat, if it's even part of the itinerary, avoiding the logical step between Chicago and Cleveland. Even Detroit bands have looked on the city as "just another stop on the tour," which is all part of the town's "fuck you" attitude. If any serious revival is going to happen, it'll be a long drive.



Water

nipple



The Debut Album

Containing

“Thoughts”

“Deep”

“Spin”

MCA

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World Radio History

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MANIC COMPRESSION



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