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SEBADOH • BUILT TO SPILL • PRINCE PAUL • 33 REVIEWS

# NEW MUSIC

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MONTHLY

## The Day The Music Died

rock five years after the death of Kurt Cobain

by Michael Azzerad

MARCH 1999 \$5.99 US \$7.99 CAN

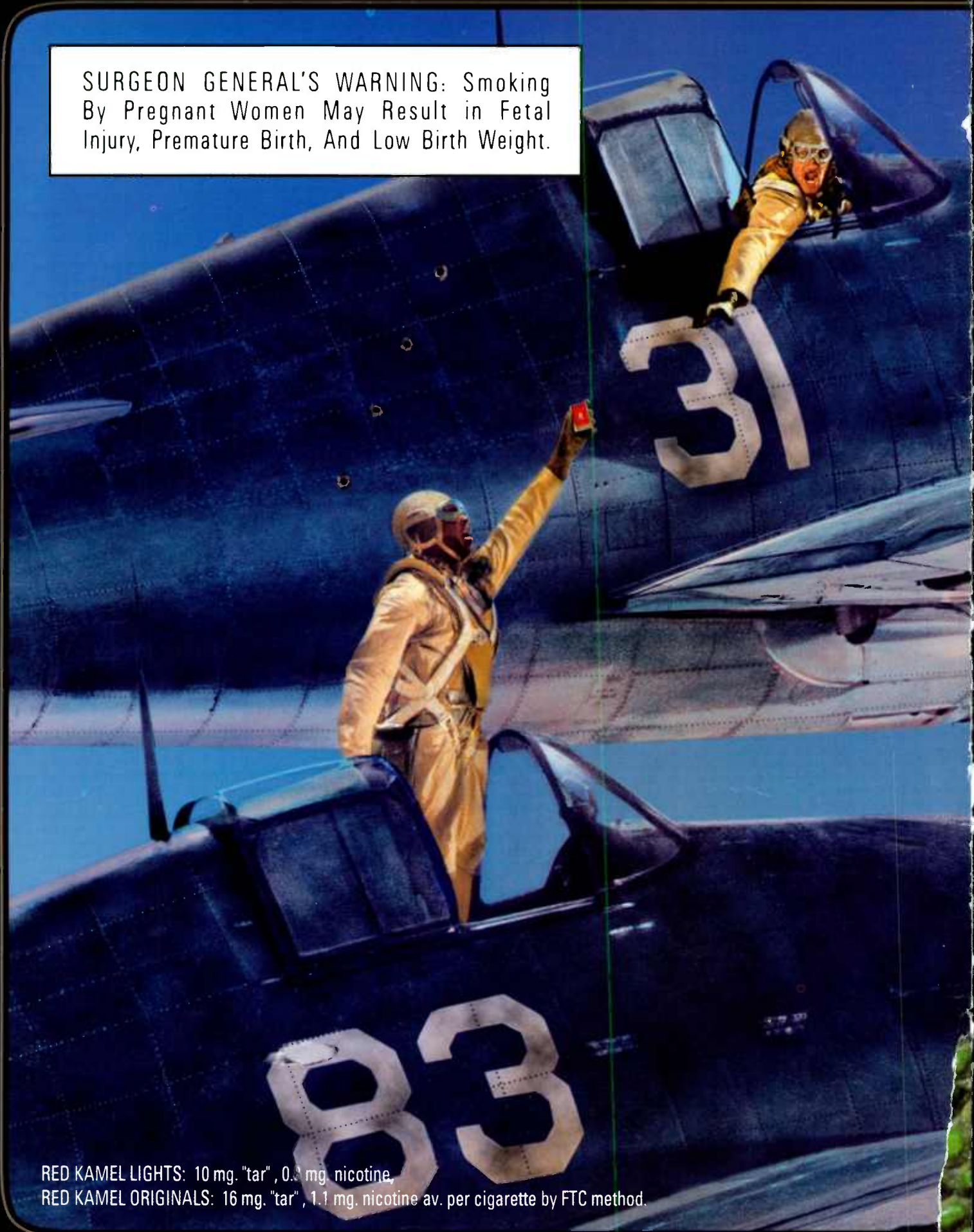


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**ON THE COVER**

**THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED: A RANT 28**

"Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. It's like indie rock never happened." On the fifth anniversary of the death of Kurt Cobain, Nirvana biographer Michael Azzerad surveys the music landscape.

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"I didn't know how to make movies, so I said, 'Why not make the soundtrack first?'" With his second solo platter, the former Stetsasonic, De La Soul and Gravediggaz turntablist crafts a story in beats and rhymes.

**SPARKLEHORSE**

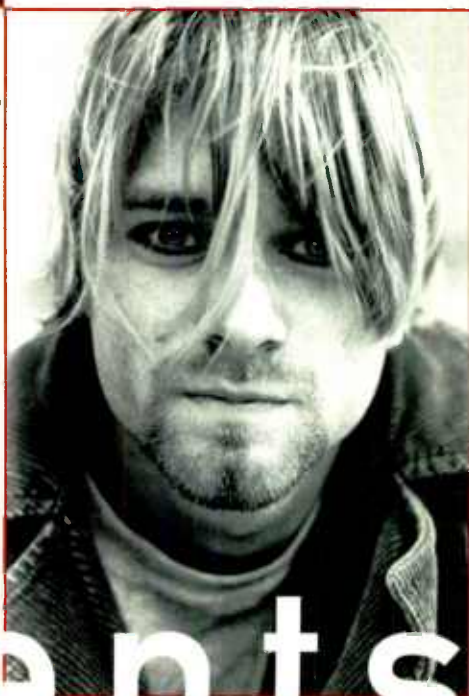
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"The tree you planted has become fecund/With kamikaze hummingbirds," sings Mark Linkous on his new disc of yarns, *Good Morning Spider*. Richard Martin talks with the Sparklehorse front man about various little creatures.

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Delectable guitar-pop from Built To Spill, Sebadoh, XTC and Imperial Teen; Euro-influenced sounds from April March and Arling & Cameron; gritty alt-country from the Damnation TX; leftfield hip-hop from Peanut Butter Wolf; aggro-hip-hop from Fever; and singer/songwriter stuff from Glen Scott, Diane Izzo and Gus.



ON THE COVER:  
**KURT COBAIN**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY AKI

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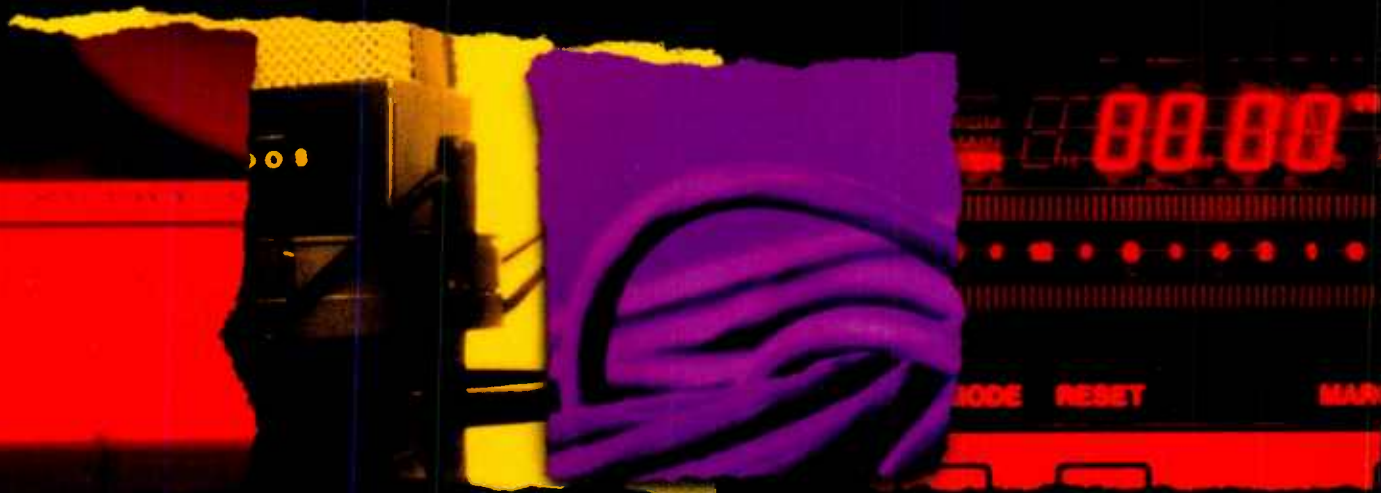
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# ISSUE 67 MARCH 1999

# Imperial Teen



## What Is Not To Love



The new album in stores February 23<sup>RD</sup>. Featuring "Yoo Hoo" and "Lipstick".



**A SHARE OF THE CREDIT**

I was very impressed with the Matt Ashare article on the new Marilyn Manson. I thought that he wrote it very well and to the point. As to this new and improved rocker, well I don't really know. I mean, now he has all of these feelings that he doesn't know what to do with. Use them for the benefit of getting a greater understanding of your world.

That's all I can think of for that.

Brittany Torgerson  
Vista, CA  
ghost66@nctimes.com

*I know one of Manson's new feelings that I wouldn't know what to do with would be the wind whistling through my cut-out drawers. I mean, I applaud anyone for drawing inspiration from Ryan O'Neal in the movie So Fine, but I wonder if Manson's latest sartorial expression might explain why the band has opted for playing theaters instead of those drafty hockey arenas. Two words: chapped ass. —Ed.*

**BUM LOOKER, CHEEKY MONKEY**

For Chrissakes—Marilyn Manson on the cover? Your magazine is better than that. The only thing I'm more tired of than schticky turds like Manson is the attention he gets for simply dressing funny and churning out what the eighth grade stoners want to hear. Your readers deserve more than a guy who gets rich by being sad and pissing off the Christian Coalition. I have to admit though, the guy has the '90s music scene figured out—if you can just raise enough of a fuss to get the right-wing Jesus-nazis to march outside of your shows, people won't even notice that your music sucks ass. Sorry, Marilyn—I noticed.

Casey Howard  
caseyhowardmsc@hotmail.com

*Wait—doesn't the phrase "Jesus-nazi" describe the personality Manson adopted for the last record? Anyway, you've got to hand it to a guy who's not afraid to piss off both sides of the aisle, and by that I mean both Manson and Casey. —Ed.*

**OLD CHESNUTTS**

Just a note to tell you how much I've enjoyed CMJ over the years. I'm pleased that you give attention to artists like Vic Chesnutt and the Bad Livers. They may not be the favorites of the kids today but they are worthy musicians who don't get much ink elsewhere. Thanks for looking out for aged music lovers such as myself (38).

Jeff Eason  
Boone, NC

**OUR SWEETEST DECLINE**

I've been subscribing to your magazine for a couple of years now, and I'm sorry to inform you that your product has rapidly declined in value. For some reason or another, you folks are under the impression that the majority of today's target musical audience wants nothing more than electronica, Marilyn Manson, and sampling. You couldn't be further from the truth. I'm 23 years old, and though I don't really play an instrument (save the occasional djembe), music is an integral portion of my existence. What I've always loved about music is that there's such a wide variety beyond the demon that is pop radio, beyond MTV, beyond mainstream music. While CMJ New Music Monthly manages to incorporate a large number of obscure bands, is it necessary to have 90 percent of them fall into the category of electronica, Marilyn Manson, or sampling? I just read the issue with Beth Orton on the cover and was delighted to see extensive comments on such bands as 764-Hero, Modest Mouse, Guided By Voices, Olivia Tremor Control, and A Tribe Called Quest, among others. It led me to believe that you folks are still aware that there's something out there besides DJ Fuck You and the Sample Kings and Trent Reznor projects. Come on! Kid Rock? Was it really necessary to review his latest disc? And how many times can you describe Tricky, the Orb, and all those folks without beating a dead horse, so to speak. The horse, in this case, ain't dead; it's decomposing, and fast. Do me a favor: don't let that happen to your magazine, as well. I can already smell the formaldehyde.

Brandon Dameshek  
bdameshek@aol.com

*Formaldehyde actually prevents decomposition, but we're not going to let a misbegotten metaphor get in the way of Brandon telling us that we're going to hell and he has the hand basket to prove it. The problem with eclecticism is that it means covering some kinds of music that will likely incense a certain percentage of your readership, and ardor being what it is, sometimes their perception of your mag is that it's now dominated by that music. So while it's easy to suggest that Brandon take that broad brush he's painting us with and give those crevices of his a quick cleaning, the truth is that variety and eclecticism always cut both ways. Even if "that music" totals something closer to 25%, personal calculus is always different. And we're not asking anyone to subscribe to a philosophy, just a magazine. —Ed.*

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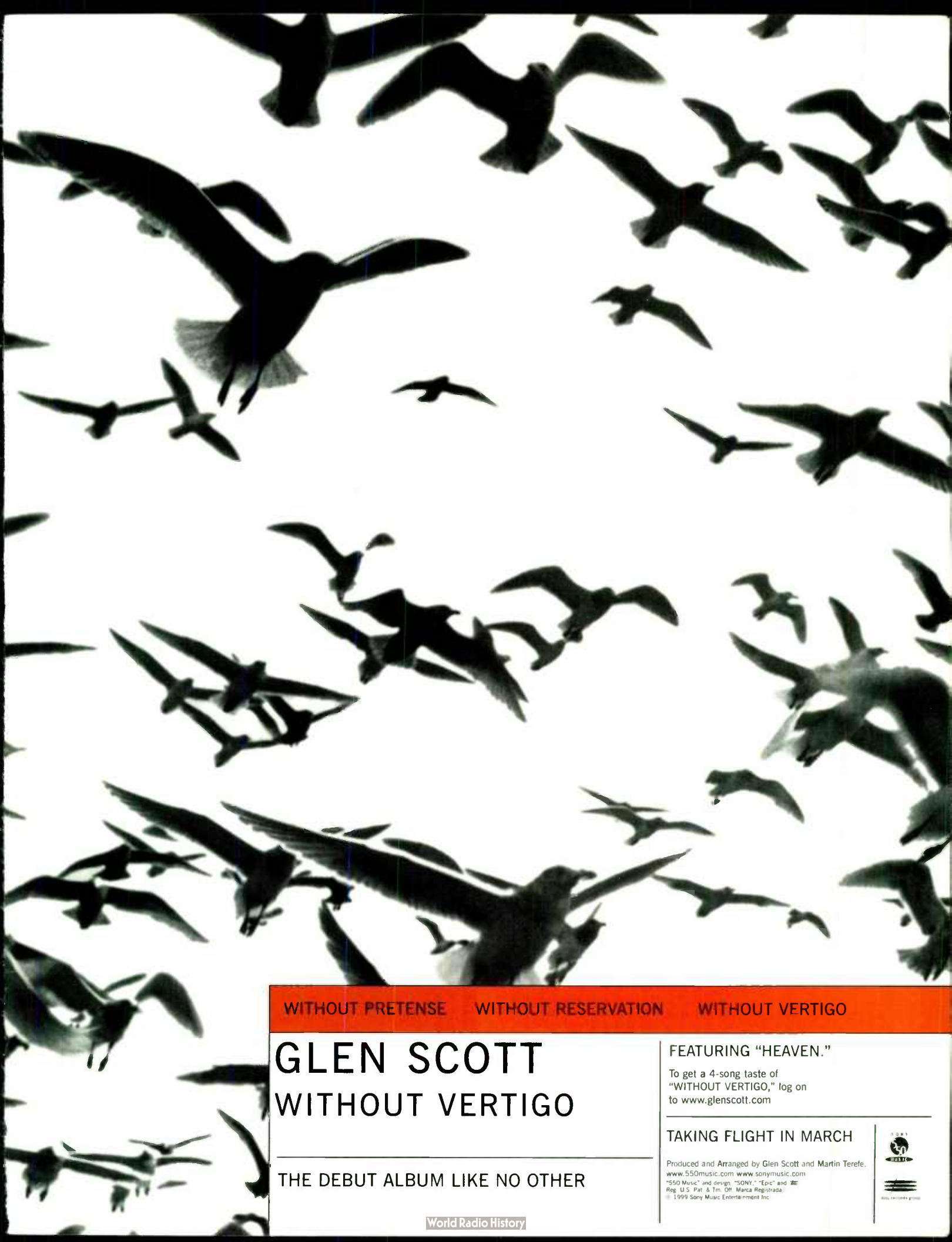
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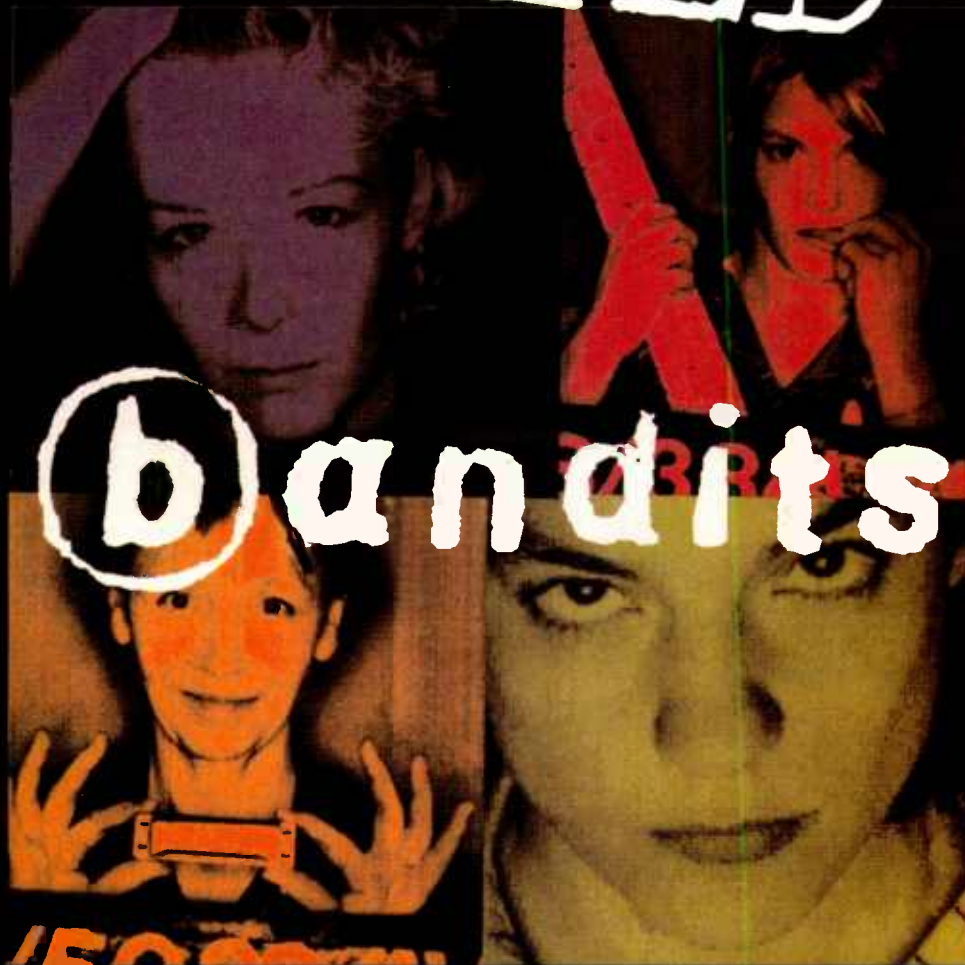


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L-R: Barlow, Pollard, Loewenstein.

## The Natural One

**AFTER OUSTING ITS DRUMMER, SEBADOH FINDS ITSELF WITH *THE SEBADOH*.**

Story: David Daley  
Photo: Chrissy Piper

**It's taken Sebadoh eight albums to finally name one after itself.**

The band's latest is called, simply enough, *The Sebadoh* (Sub Pop), which seems significant since the one thing Sebadoh has never been is a singular entity.

"Something that intrigued me when I moved to Louisville was seeing how bands down here palled around together. We never did that," says bassist Jason Loewenstein. "In a way, we're entering a

whole new era. Now we're a talking-to-each-other band, a working-out-parts band. It's so much more what I thought a band should be."

The group's new approach largely grew out of frustrations with its last album, 1996's *Harmacy*. Arriving not long after Lou Barlow's left-field hit with the Folk Implosion's "Natural One," *Harmacy* should have been the album that made Sebadoh sensitive slacker superstars. Loewenstein felt discouraged that his songs weren't as mature and fully realized as Barlow's. After complementing him so well on



"Flame (Radio Version)" by Sebadoh appears on this month's CD.

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*Bakesale*, Loewenstein cast himself as the punk-rock id to Barlow's introspective pop ego, and his noisy rants contrasted with Barlow's brooding ballads and gave *Harmacy* a schizophrenic feel.

More painfully, however, Barlow and Loewenstein realized that Bob Fay's limitations as a drummer restrained the band's growth. *Harmacy* producer Tim O'Heir told them this in the studio, complicating recording even more. While they came to agree with him, they didn't feel like they could fire their friend and hire a session drummer partway through the record.

"Tim O'Heir reduced me to tears one night," Barlow remembers. "He's like, 'You've got to get rid of Bob. These songs aren't happening. This record isn't happening.' Now I listen to it and it just feels very tame, and very controlled sonically, especially Jason's songs. I know Jason's four-track versions ripped them to shreds. The final songs felt like we'd

**"We've done every thing you can do to alienate people and they still come to our shows."**

taken somebody's really cool room and thrown white paint all over it."

Barlow and Loewenstein realized they had to make changes, and tried to determine how to break the news to Fay. Meanwhile, Loewenstein met Russ Pollard during a Louisville jam session.

"I felt this crazy connection to Russ. We kept winking at each other," Loewenstein says. "It sounds really sexual, but I wanted to say, 'Let's ditch these guys and go back to my place!'"

When Barlow heard the demos they recorded together, he realized they'd found the drummer to re-energize the band.

"I wasn't a Sebadoh fan," says Pollard.

"He still isn't," cracks Barlow.

"We were playing flat rock before," says Barlow. "Now we're playing phat rock."

Which brings us back to the new record. If *Harmacy* was too scattered, *The Sebadoh* might spend too much time in the same frothy overdrive. But there's a vibrancy and enthusiasm to the songs that's been missing from recent efforts, and that seems directly related to the band's new collaborative recording style.

"I left a lot of my songs really open-ended when we got into the studio, which was a little bit frightening at first," Barlow admits. "I usually have very locked-in parts and everybody would play them.

Russ and Jason were able to fill out the extremes of my songs, and brought out stuff I didn't know was there."

Barlow is considerably less eager to discuss the lyrics. It's an album with immediately apparent themes about how fragile trust can be. "Hypocrites like us deserve a little trust along the way," Barlow contends, in "Tree." "Sorry," turns an unfaithful mate's apology on its head—"No, I mean it/I'm really sorry/Here, I'll say it again," he sings. "I want you to know it/But the more I say it/The less it means anything."

Still, Barlow doesn't want to talk about the turmoil that went into these songs, another chapter of the tumultuous, life-long relationship he's had with wife/muse Kathleen Billus. "There's stuff that's gone on in the last year that I'm not telling anybody about," Barlow says.

That might include listeners, as Barlow believes his songwriting

has become less exhibitionist. "Accusing people of things in songs is a little bit old. I'm a little old for that," says Barlow, 32. "It's okay to spend your twenties wallowing at heartbreak, but at some point, you have to learn how to face it and survive.

"I have a relationship. I have a little house. That kind of security made me stupid. A lot of this record is about overcoming that stuff. I think the record ends with a big question mark. 'Sorry' and 'Drag Down' are these two big question marks. The album is this whole journey, and it ends on an 'I don't know.'"

Sebadoh also doesn't know how this record will be received. Asked what he thinks of modern rock radio, on whose fickle whims Sebadoh's sales depend, Barlow says simply: "I don't listen to it."

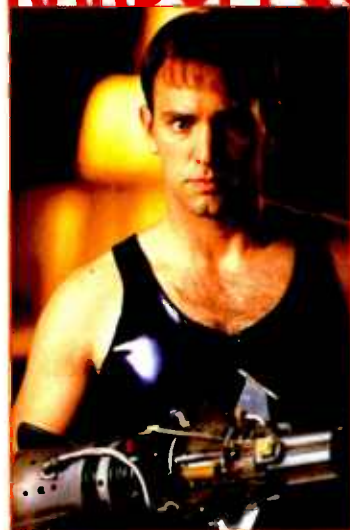
"I don't care," adds Loewenstein.

"We've done every thing you can do to alienate people and they still come to our shows," says Barlow. "People have stuck with us, though I can't figure out why. I don't know how the hell people still find anything going on with us."

"I think in a certain sense, we haven't settled into anything," he says. "It's weird. I still feel like I'm grasping and climbing. I don't feel like I've arrived anyplace. I kind of like that feeling."

MMM

## RANDOM QUOTE



"We asked ourselves, 'What can this be? **Can it be because we talk about bodily fluids?**' Then *There's Something About Mary* comes out, where you see cum on some guy. **It can't be nudity**, because we have none. **It can't be violence**, because we only have kung-fu fighting, which we all know is PG. **All that's left**, and this is what's scary, **is religion**. I honestly think that's why they are giving it an NC-17, which... just proves that the MPAA is a very right-wing religious group trying to keep America Christian."

>>> **South Park** co-creator **Trey Parker**, on expecting a fair shake when you call your film **Orgazmo**



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**GROOP DOGDRILL • Half Nelson**  
 While their music invites comparisons to Girls Against Boys and Rocket From The Crypt, these three English lads make their own unique brand of tattoo covered grease monkey rock that's as good to hear as it is hard on their instruments.



**THE PASTELS • Illuminati**  
 The Pastels in remix. The source material is mainly The Pastel's own acclaimed "Illumination" LP. Features remixes by Stereolab, Cornelius, My Bloody Valentine, The Make Up, Ta RaCoca Rat, Jim O'Rourke, and more!



**VARIOUS • Real: The Tom T. Hall Project**  
 Perhaps best known for penning the mega hit "Harper Valley PTA", Tom T. Hall is one of Nashville's most loved songwriters and performers. This tribute features Johnny Cash, Freddy Johnston, Coleखा, Joe Henry, Iris Dement, and more.



**ZERO • Live: Nuthin' Lasts Forever**  
 Featuring exclusive live recordings from San Francisco's legendary Moritome Hall. After ten years as a band, Zero have established themselves among the most widely followed roots-rock jam bands around.



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**MOJAVE 3 • Out Of Tune**  
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**SEAWEED • Actions and Indications**  
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## Label Profile

In 1989, when Washington, DC's Jawbox wanted to put out its first 7", it hoped that local label Dischord would agree to release it. "But [owner] Ian [MacKaye] did me one of those favors you hate at the time but later come to appreciate. He's like, 'It could be a half-Dischord release. You should really learn how to do it yourself,'" recalls bassist Kim Coletta of how the now-defunct band finally wound up releasing that first effort on its own **DeSoto** label. Coletta now runs the DeSoto and has put out more than 30 records, both 7"s and long-players, by bands—mostly of the punk-rock variety—including Dismemberment Plan (which recently signed to Interscope), Compound Red, Candy Machine and Shiner. In addition to last fall's beautifully packaged Jawbox compilation, *My Scrapbook Of Fatal Accidents*, the label recently issued 7"s by Les Savy Fav and Roads To Space Travel and a full-length from Jawbox alumni J. Robbins and Bill Barbot's new band, Burning Airlines. March will see the release of Seattle band Juno's debut album, a co-release with the PacifiCo label



## Weird Record Of The Month

The California label Vinyl Communications releases a lot of digital peculiar-core of one kind or another, but a new CD single by **VOMIT LUNCHES** (a Japanese group—no relation to the old California punk band Vomit Launch) rings the "what the hell?" gong on the Test-Your-Strength game of computerized tweakdom. "Violent Clash Between Killer Bastards Of Ear Dot Remix"—that's the title—comes in five mixes, all of them strung-together garlands of sound effects, spoken gibberish, cartoon-y chaos, gargling oscillators and xylophones, shrieks, quacks, white noise and the occasional chirrup of "Thank you!" No beats, no repetition, no form, no differentiation between one mix and another, just 15 straight minutes of channel-surfing in Dimension X. >>>Douglas Wolk



## READY, WILLING AND ABLIST

Turntablist **ROB SWIFT** is pushing the boundaries of his craft.

Most folks have a basic idea of what DJs do: They blend and mix records in a club, or cut them up on a record or on stage. Simple as that. But 27-year-old Rob Swift, a member of the four-man turntable-based wrecking machine called the X-Ecutioners, is trying to change that line of thinking. "I always knew that I didn't just want to scratch for people on records. I was just never content with that," explains Swift, who's been around turntables longer than many of his fans have been eating solid food. Hearing his album *Souful Fruit* (originally released as a mix tape) and the X-Ecutioners' stunning *X-Pressions* makes his aims clear. The DJs, or turntablists, do more than just cut, taking on the role of composer and band.

On his new album, *The Ablast* (Asphodel), Swift further broadens his musical palette to include cut-and-scratch battle sequences, performances with a live band, a cappella raps phoned in from jail cells, and even Rob's own turn at rapping. "On the X-Ecutioners album, our goal was to prove to people that the turntable was a musical instrument. On this album I'm going beyond that. When you take a turntable and match it with a keyboard or a bass or drums, the relationship works."

It's Swift's skill that makes *The Ablast* such a deft display of the DJ's many functions. "For me *The Ablast* album exposes Rob Swift as a hip-hop artist and conceptualist, and not just a turntablist. As someone who can compose," he explains. "I don't necessarily want you to pay sole attention to my scratches, but to what's going on in each song, in its entirety." Tracks such as "All That Scratching" and "Modern Day Music" utilize the guitar/bass/drums/sax mix of the band Dujee? to great effect, with Swift's turntables blending into the group's sound rather than simply doing the wicki-wicki over the top. "Fusion Beats," a duet with Swift and keyboardist Synare, is more sparse sonically, but just as vital, with the two instrumentalists feeding off of each other in true improvisational style.

Swift has been busy, but he's only getting busier. The X-Ecutioners' upcoming sophomore shot will be coming out on Loud Records, home to the Wu-Tang Clan and Pete Rock, and Swift has no intentions for it to be the same-old same-old. He muses, "We already understand that there's DJs that can scratch a thousand miles an hour and be dope. But now, what more can we do with a turntable?"

>>>Brian Coleman







ANDREW CLEAL

L-R Cameron, Arling

## SUM OF THEIR PARTIES

Dutch duo **ARLING & CAMERON** makes pop for a "friendly atmosphere."

Imagine crashing a soiree where George and Ira Gershwin, Prince, Cornelius and Kraftwerk are all rubbing elbows. If you're wondering what the resultant drunken sing-along at such a bash might sound like, check out *All-In* (Emperor Norton), the debut album from Dutch duo Arling & Cameron. From the cartoon chattering of "We Love Dancing," to the streamlined '60s pop of "Speeding Down The Highway" and the sultry single "Voulez-Vous?," the record coos a siren song for pop aficionados perched on the points of intersection between drum 'n' bass, show tunes and the Japanese pop style known as Shibuya-kei.

Although both members of the duo hail from the same town in Holland, it's not surprising that the two partners didn't meet in their youth. While Gerry Arling was honing his chops as a jazz bass player, singer Richard Cameron was moaning away at the helm of the local Joy Division knockoff. "We're talking 1983," notes Cameron, via e-mail from Japan. Considering the infectious zest and high spirits of Arling & Cameron, it's hard to imagine him pulling an Ian Curtis today.

The two came together a decade later in Amsterdam, when Cameron approached Arling to help the art collective V.O.L.V.O. with a new work: "A virtual band... a band existing on paper only." The group's only song was entitled "Airbag," which it recorded and re-recorded 19 times, "with the help of Gerry and pretty much every well-known Dutch house DJ at the time." The results were compiled on the double-LP *Airbag—A Tribute To Safety*, the first release on Cameron's Drive-In label.

Around the same time, Cameron, his DJ and label partner Karin Ras, and the other members of V.O.L.V.O. got involved in the Amsterdam club scene, throwing their own mini-party in the dressing room of popular venue the Roxy. Instead of the standard house fare, the crew served up a program of Northern soul and ska singles, peppered with thrift store and flea market finds.

"The parties became more and more popular and moved to other venues," continues Cameron, before they ceased in 1997. "And in these bigger venues, with bigger sound systems, it became apparent that the music we were playing lacked the depth of sound available in modern dance-music." But when they started searching for new records that matched the "friendly atmosphere" they cherished in their secondhand platters, they came up empty-handed. So Arling and Cameron set to producing their own tunes, starting with the album *Stereo Showcase* by Popcorn, followed by the *Easy Tune* series of mini-CDs (all on Drive-In), featuring the duo billed under 16 different pseudonyms.

"The only rule they set themselves," writes Cameron, lapsing into third person, "was to make whatever they felt like, as long as it was different and fun."

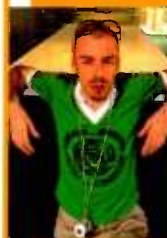
Many folks Stateside discovered the team when they joined forces with Pizzicato Five on the percolating *Happy End Of The World* ditty "Arigato, We Love You." More recently, Arling & Cameron worked with Elisabeth Esselink (alias Solex) on their next album *Soundshopping*, and are preparing a special live show for select American dates. Both men also have plenty of outside projects, but Cameron admits they've got a good thing going together. "In our case, one plus one equals more than two."

>>>Kurt B. Reighley

## IN MY ROOM

### MOMUS

a.k.a. Nick Currie



**To ex**  
I Don't Like Remixes

**Harmony Korine**  
(book) *A Crack Up At The Face Riots*

**Douglas Coupland**  
(book) *Girlfriend In A Coma*

**Emi Necoza**  
Shell

**Studio Voice and Cutie**  
(Japanese magazines)

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Jake



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"Speeding Down The Highway—Fastest Girl Around" by Arling & Cameron appears on this month's CD.

World Radio History



## INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY

Will Oldham releases a new album under yet another moniker; one writer tries to penetrate the enigma.

No matter what Will Oldham calls himself—and he's now taken six different monikers in as many years—he's perhaps never been called funny. He's been called lots of other things. Critics compared Palace's beautifully bleak songs to everything from Appalachian folk music and Scottish minstrels to Leonard Cohen. Then they called Oldham obnoxious, or worse, for his unresponsive interviews.

Yet there's something undeniably comic about the ever-regal Oldham's latest persona, Bonnie Prince Billy. Over four singles and the new full-length, *I See A Darkness* (Palace), the prince of indie roots-folk exhibits a dark, mordant sense of humor, and revels in sending up his image.

"Death to everyone is going to come," Oldham mourns, in "Death To Everyone," concluding, "But it makes our living fun." He chooses oddball covers, knowing his hushed, reedy voice and minimalist arrangements lend anything profundity. He gives songs amusingly somber titles like "Another Day Full Of Dread" and "Today I Was An Evil One," intimating he might not take the macabre that seriously.

"I think so. There you go. In five minutes, you've got all the answers," says Oldham, barely cooperating in our interview. When he does speak, he's deliberate and deadpan. "Perhaps it's a more overtly comic approach [with this album]. More explicit as opposed to implicit."

Oldham hasn't got a lot to say—to interviewers, at least—about his new album. But even as he's infuriatingly obstinate, he manages to be somehow amusing. Ask why he changed his stage name again, and he responds, "I can't remember. I was on the flight home from Australia. It was a long flight." Wonder about the new emphasis on piano, and he says, "I bought a piano. I thought it would go with the house." Change the subject and inquire why he moved from Kentucky to New York, and he says, dryly, "It's a woman thing. I'm getting my sex change operation here."

All of which means that getting to the heart of Oldham's music means taking him up on the album's funniest line: "Well, I like to have a good time/Any of my friends will tell you." Indeed, they will—while also describing a complicated guy with a strange anti-social awkwardness.

"He's got social skills when he wants to," says the Silver Jews' David Berman, a longtime friend. "He can be a real son-of-a-bitch. He's kind, and one of my best friends. But he can also be a complete bastard, and that can happen real quick."

Asked what he thinks drives Oldham's music, Berman answers, "Power. Like anybody. The desire to release the same magic through music that was released on you when you were younger." That very passion, friends suggest, might keep him so quiet in interviews, as he seems to prefer to say nothing rather than explain his songs.

"I couldn't with authority say much about the voice used in any of the songs, because I don't feel I have the authority," Oldham says.

He even makes the question of whether he'll continue performing as Bonnie Prince Billy sound beyond his control.

"I hope so. I hope so," Oldham repeats. "I can live with being called Bonnie."

>>>David Dailey



## RANDOM QUOTES

"Eventually I might decide to quit. I know I can, because I got strong willpower. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to get this far in life, because there's just so many obstacles before a person that either help them grow when they get over it, or the obstacle breaks them because they can't get over it. I'm an obstacle-climbing motherfucker."

>>>Cypress Hill's B-Real, on kicking the weed habit

"Oh, we're gonna do a big New Year's show close to home—my home, that is. Big pyrotechnics and everything. We're gonna blow a hole right in the middle of Michigan!"

>>>Metallica's Jason Newstead, on celebrating Y2K



Q&A



Jim Carroll

His semi-autobiographical *Basketball Diaries* was a *Catcher In The Rye* for the punk generation, and his *Book Of Nods* made him junkiedom's poet laureate. But Jim Carroll has always been a writer with a rock 'n'

roll heart, which he put to good use back in 1980 with the Jim Carroll Band on *Catholic Boy*, a post-punk classic. Carroll left music in the 1984 to focus on writing and spoken-word. And except for a cameo on the soundtrack to the *Basketball Diaries* film a couple years ago (performing "Catholic Boy" with Pearl Jam), he'd been away from rock until last year, when Mercury released *Pools Of Mercury*, an solid album of songs and spoken word.

>>>Matt Ashare

**Q: What got you back into doing music again?**

A: Mostly it was just that I thought that a lot of my new poems would work well with music. The album started out as spoken word pieces. I didn't plan on having any songs. And it was kind of a problem for me when some of them turned into songs because for years I'd been blowing off these A&R guys around New York who wanted me to do a rock 'n' roll record. There were two guys in particular who I really felt like I might be betraying. You know, because I'd have lunch with them once a year, they'd ask me to do a record, and I'd say, "No way." But somehow this record just took on this complete rock 'n' roll vibe.

**Q: What kept you from doing a rock album all those years?**

A: I always said I'd do three albums and that would be it. And that's what I did. There were times over the years that I was tempted to do another one—I'd be writing songs for other people and I'd catch myself putting a couple aside to keep for myself. But I'd remember that the psychological paraphernalia surrounding rock 'n' roll and touring was something that had really worn on me.

**Q: One of the more affecting spoken word pieces on the album is about Kurt Cobain. Did you know him?**

A: I'd met him but I didn't really know him. He came to a reading I did in Seattle—it was right when Nirvana was getting big. We met again, later, but we didn't talk much. He wasn't all that forthcoming and I'm pretty reticent myself. But there was a connection. I just felt something... I guess I can't deny that there was some junk affinity.

**Q: So what's next?**

A: I can't really look ahead to doing anything else musically. Even just doing this record freaked out my literary agent because I'm supposed to be working on a novel. You can write poems while you're working on prose, but the musical thing is a bigger commitment and that drove my agent nuts. So I'm back to work on the novel now. I'm still doing readings and stuff, but just on the weekends.

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| Golden Smog            | Bottle Rockets      |
| Please Tell My Brother | Coitee Monkey       |
| Richard Buckner        | James Brown         |
| Goner w/ Souvenir      | There Was A Time    |
| Radiohead              | Los Super Seven     |
| Subterranean Homesick  | La Sirena           |
| Alien                  | John Scofield       |
| The Make-Up            | Chicken Dog         |
| Drop The Needle        | Tom Waits           |
| Beck                   | The Fall OI Troy    |
| Canceled Check         | Gillian Welch       |
| Morcheeba              | Whiskey Girl        |
| Shoulder Holster       | Unbelievable Truth  |
| Jocelyn Montgomery &   | Angel               |
| David Lynch            | Run-D.M.C.          |
| Et Ideo                | Perfection          |
| James McMurtry         | Jas. Mathus And His |
| Comioitable            | Knockdown Society   |
| Parliament             | Turkey Buzzard In A |
| Theme From The Black   | Pork Pie Hat        |
| Hole                   | Grant Green         |
| Compay Segundo         | Ease Back           |
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# six ways TO SUNDAY



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**MOCEAN WORKER**

**Mixed Emotional Features**

**Palm Pictures**



Timbres, textures, breakbeats and soundscapes: All are useful, to a point, in describing the music of Mocean Worker. But where those words fail is where *Mixed Emotional Features* succeeds. These songs don't clatter with the ruthlessly analytical beats of armchair techno or pound with the booty thump of pure dance music; instead they swing with a bluesy grit or swoop like a John Barry film score. It's electronic music, but feels as organic as turning mulch. Adam Dorn, who is Mocean (pronounced "motion") Worker, has created a portable world, a cerebral escape full of mystery, suspense and emotion, all seduced from your imagination. These mini soundtracks are a respite from the standard and clichéd images music videos have wedded to popular music; songs like "Wonderland," with its jazzy piano and spy movie theme horns, playfully hint at intrigue and exotic locales. Dorn's compositional skill gives these sounds, from the planking piano and muted trumpet of "Counts, Dukes & Strays" to the truncated funk of the Meters sample in "Jello Dart," heft and musicality. In teasing out these reveries, *Mixed Emotional Features* is much like club-oriented electronic music, only that it's aimed less at your feet and hips than at your brain. And like those dance floor epiphanies, it puts a human face to the circuitry.

>>>Scott Frampton

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Cinematic, jazzy drum 'n' bass.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Roni Size, United Future  
 Organization, Grooverider,  
 Moby's 007 theme.

**STEVE EARLE AND THE DEL McCOURY BAND**

**The Mountain**

**E-Squared**



Although *The Mountain* marks Steve Earle's first true bluegrass album, it sure ain't high and lonesome. But neither is Earle—at least not anymore. To continue the post-rehab renaissance that began with 1995's similarly rootsy and acoustic *Train A-Comin'*, Earle enlists one of the world's finest bluegrass bands to support his latest batch of well-crafted songs, and what results feels like a hoe-down, a hootenanny, and a house party. Earle's worn and weary voice rasps appealingly against the McCoury brothers' plucky banjo and mandolin playing (Del's classic high tenor hides in the background), and if some songs smack of genre-exercises, it's because of bluegrass's relatively fixed conventions. But even when "Yours Forever Blue" rewrites El Corazon's "You Know The Rest" and "Leroy's Dustbowl Blues" cribs a chorus from Dylan's "Tombstone Blues," Earle and company invest the songs with the joy of collaboration and celebration. Truth be told, Earle's in a bit of a rut: Like his recent albums, *The Mountain* includes a sweet-and-sour duet (here with Iris DeMent), a couple geographic rave-ups ("Texas Eagle," "Dixieland"), and an in memoriam valedictory (the gospel "Pilgrim"). But it's a high-caliber rut, of classic-sounding songs, and *The Mountain* should appeal to bluegrass aficionados and neophytes alike.

>>>Steve Klinge

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Alt. bluegrass.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Ralph Stanley, Iris DeMent,  
 Blue Mountain, Freakwater.

**DAMNATIONS TX**



**Half Mad Moon**

**Watermelon-Sire**



Amy Boone and Deborah Kelly, co-leaders of the Damnations TX, might be New York-born and bred, but they cut their teeth in the early '90s at venerable, folksy Austin venues like (the sadly defunct) Chicago House. Now a regular and popular part of Austin's rich scene, the Damnations deliver an irresistible debut that proves Austinites still know their tunes. Clearly, so do the Damnations. From the folksy, bittersweet "Spit And Tears" and tender "Jack's Waltz" to the bright, gritty "Things I Once Adored" and rollicking "Down The Line," *Half Mad Moon* is the kind of record y'all alternative fans have been waiting for—a challenge from country-rock's second generation, packed with character, class, and originality. Neighbor John Croslin's tasteful, understated production brings out the Damnations' best, as the group piles on stellar musicianship, warm keyboards, and a host of strings (acoustic and electric guitars, banjo, mandolin, etc.). Half-sisters Boone and Kelly hook listeners in with supple vocals, heartfelt harmonies, and engaging stories, including a simple, gorgeous tale of a stolen amplifier ("Black Widow"). Mixing fun and frolic ("Finger The Pie," "Unholy Train") into their twang and tears, the group confidently honors the past as it keeps its eyes and ears on the future.

>>>Mark Woodlief

**OUT:** February 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Stylish shit-kickers.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Uncle Tupelo, Old 97's,  
 Kelly Hogan.







## KELLY WILLIS

**What I Deserve**

Rykodisc

**OUT:** February 23.

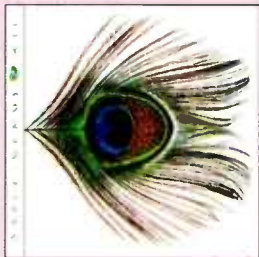
**FILE UNDER:**

The cream of the new traditionalist crop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Lucinda Williams, Rosie Flores, Nanci Griffith.

It's all too easy to compare Kelly Willis to Lucinda Williams. Like Williams, she transcends genre, beautifully blurring the lines between country, rock, and folk, and like Williams, her critical acclaim is matched only by her commercial frustrations and music biz missteps (Willis has gone through three record labels in this decade alone). But there's a problem with this spindle. See, Lucinda Williams is, as the kids say, scary-talented—a peerless songwriter and a very tough act to follow. That's too bad for Willis, because *What I Deserve* is her most assured album to date. Its best songs, in particular the title track and "Real Deep Feeling," sway with ease and a strangely abiding sadness. They find solace in life's limitations, and a universe in the space between two people. Willis's voice—pure as a tear, real as a lump in your throat—has never sounded better. And her subtle harmonies recall those of the Everly Brothers at their keening best. In any other 12-month cycle Willis's new album would be a much fawned over salve for the new country blues. And while Williams's recent *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road* has raised the critical bar on that salvation, so that *What I Deserve* doesn't sound quite as good as it might have a year ago, it still spotlights a talented craftswoman in her prime. >>>Matt Hanks



## XTC

**Apple Venus Vol. 1**

TVT

**OUT:** February 16.

**FILE UNDER:**

Studio-bound orch-pop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Burt Bacharach, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Of Montreal.

Often, demotion from a major label to indiedom means a corresponding drop in ambition, or at least production budgets. This isn't the case for venerable art-poppers XTC; the group's first album in seven years is as elaborate as anything it's done. Several numbers go the fully orchestrated route, including the opening "River Of Orchids," with Andy Partridge's unmistakable vowels embedded in crisscrossing string and horn lines. XTC has done the string thing before (*Skylarking's* "One Thousand Umbrellas"), but never so often, or so well. Even band-oriented moments avoid electric guitar: "I'd Like That" and "Harvest Festival" are largely acoustic, while "Frivolous Tonight" boasts a Herman's Hermits-ish keyboard clomp. A few songs (Colin Moulding's "Fruit Nut") are cloying, but several are top-flight, including the modal, *Revolver*-styled "Greenman" and the uncharacteristically bitter "Your Dictionary," which asks "F-U-C-K, is that how you spell 'friend'?" As always, Partridge closes the album on a grand downer, inviting humankind to line up for "The Last Balloon" only to worry that "we won't qualify." *Apple Venus* is impressive, even touching, though one wishes that the lushness were anchored by an edgy electric moment à la "Respectable Street" or "Funk Pop A Roll." Maybe on Vol. 2. >>>Franklin Bruno



## SNAKEFARM

**Songs From My Funeral**

Kneeling Elephant-RCA

**OUT:** February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Folk-hop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Anna Domino, Suzanne Vega's 99.9 F, Beth Orton.

Anna Domino's music and image may resonate with cool poise and tidy minimalism, but her soul sure seems restless. Of all the chanteuse's sporadically released recordings since the mid-'80s, *Songs From My Funeral* is the darkest, programmed exclusively with folk songs depicting tales of murder, betrayal and loss. But this is also Domino's most confident release to date. The decision to reinterpret the classics, rather than meticulously fuss over original material, seems to have given the singer and her Snakefarm partner, guitarist/arranger Michel Delory, an inspirational shot of objectivity. Although they're peppered with unusual textures like banjo, dobro and accordion, these ten tracks sound remarkably uncluttered; in Domino's less-is-more world, one poorly programmed drum machine can substantially detract from her refined artistry. Coasting atop propulsive rhythmic arrangements, Domino's distinctive, papery voice holds the focus throughout. Artists like Nick Cave tackle similar material with a battered and bruised bluesman's pathos, whereas Domino remains unnervingly calm, her delivery etched with resignation, polishing the grim beauty that galvanizes this material. By not overwhelming these timeless standards, Snakefarm makes even the best-known ones ("Rising Sun," "Frankie And Johnny") its own. >>>Kurt B. Reighley







## THE BETA BAND

The British music press, always eager to seize on "the next big thing," has sunk its claws into a mesmerizing Scottish quartet called the Beta Band, which has garnered glowing write-ups for its first three EPs. Problem is, gushing journalists have had a hard time describing the group's eclectic music. The foursome has been called "mad, crazy and totally insane" and "a category clusterfuck," its music "cosmic folk slop" and "The Verve playing the music of Beck." "It just seems they've got a musical category for everyone," complained Beta Band member John McLean in a recent issue of *Melody Maker*, "and our musical category is... we don't fit into a category." That assessment bears out on the band's US debut, *The Three E.P.s* (Astralwerks), which drifts from arty, acoustic-based rock tunes threaded through with tensile melodies to lo-fi experiments in texture. There are also samples, horns, dub rhythms, and Steve Mason's earthy vocals, all sewn together with a psychedelic spirit that recalls Olivia Tremor Control. The Betas have just completed a new studio album, due out in May, and will be bringing their live show—"an aesthetic shitstorm, a style nightmare and a critique-crippling musical meltdown," according to *NME*—to our shores in the next month or so. Don't forget to bring along a thesaurus. >>> Lydia Vanderloo



## on the verge

## DUBTRIBE SOUND SYSTEM ★

San Francisco's Dubtribe Sound System has been steadily building a fan base from the underground up, "touring" the rave scene since 1993 and hosting its own popular website ([www.imperialdub.com](http://www.imperialdub.com)). Now, after a series of well-received EPs on its own Imperial Dub label, Dubtribe emerges with *Bryant Street*, its debut full-length (Jive Electro). Wife-and-husband team of Sunshine and Moonbeam Jones showcase a distinctly San Francisco sound—an earthy blend of funk, soul and tribal house grooves, laced with a distinctly spiritual vibe. "There is an energy that flows between the crowd of dancers and the DJ or performer," says Sunshine. "We hope, at best, to both transmit and receive this 'vibe' and filter it through our musical vision of things." *Bryant Street* draws heavily on the material the two have been playing during DJ sets for the last couple of years. At parties, they perform not from DAT but live, using a concoction of samplers, synths, keyboards and mixers, often bolstering their sound with live drummers. Dubtribe will be touring the US beginning in late February. >>> William Werde



## DANIELLE HOWLE

"I've just been livin' and diggin' bein' alive," draws singer/songwriter Danielle Howle, talking about what she's been up to since she finished her latest touring jag and returned home to Columbia, South Carolina. Howle, who played in Lay Quiet Awhile, has spent the better part of the last two years on the road (both by herself and with her backing band, the Tantrums), playing with acts like the Indigo Girls (whose Amy Ray put out two of Howle's records on her Daemon label), Ani DiFranco, Mary Lou Lord and Elliott Smith. Like those artists, Howle plays a very modern sort of folk music, approaching the form from the perspective of someone who discovered her love of song through punk rock. "When I was younger," she explains, "I only wanted to hear Molly Hatchet and Dio and all that big shit like Metallica. Then I started digging, like, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Sometimes my punk rock friends would go, 'What the hell you listenin' to that hippie music for?' And I was like, 'You need to listen to what this motherfucker's talkin' about. He's talkin' about a lot of the same shit your music's talkin' about.'" Howle's latest record, tentatively titled *Catalog*, will be released by Kill Rock Stars in April. >>> Jenny Eliscu





**Seeing a wisp of smoke rising from the guitar amplifier at Built To Spill's San Francisco sound check made my heart sink.** In the rush of amp replacement panic, I realized that perhaps fate was intervening to preempt my interview with Doug Martsch. But Doug just shrugged and said, "Let's talk on the way to the repair shop." Perhaps fate did intervene. Sitting in the band's mini-van in the Mission District, waiting for Red Top, the amp guy, to do his

scene, Martsch has developed a guitar-playing style that's both intricate and playful. In Built To Spill he is joined by Brett Nelson's melodic bass and the joyous drumming of Scott Plouf—a musical interplay that, as Doug describes it, keeps getting better. "They are such awesome players. I don't feel like there are any limits at all. They are both good enough, and open enough, to play anything." And together they have created *Keep It Like A Secret* (Warner Bros.), a graceful epic that, like many classic rock albums, regenerates themes and

*Perfect From Now On*), we just got together and learned the songs. So after it was done, Scott came out to Boise and we all just spent a week jamming and recording. We did hours of jam sessions just to see what kind of a band we were going to be. Half the songs from the new album are based on that collaboration."

As chance would have it, one of the standout songs from *Keep It Like A Secret* nearly didn't make it onto the finished album. "You Were Right" gives a tongue-in-cheek appraisal of rock 'n' roll lyrics, lifting

**"There's no way that a piece of music is going to affect someone in a certain way. What really moves you about music are the things you can't choose. You just stumble across it."**

magic, it began to make sense. Amid the sounds of people laughing and talking, the stereos blaring and the dogs barking, it seemed like the perfect place to discuss the work of Built To Spill, a band that plays music that sounds like life being lived.

For Built To Spill singer and guitarist Doug Martsch, music doesn't need to be overly reflective or bombastic. He and his Pacific Northwestern band mates just allow the music to course through them at the speed of life. "I've always believed that the listener is responsible for whether or not music is any

gives skillful expression to life's mysterious unfolding. From the march-tempo blast of "The Plan" to the painful exegesis of "Broken Chairs," *Keep It Like A Secret* reverberates with the throb of existence.

Although the album's lyrics are acutely perceptive, Martsch finds it hard to get back to the feelings he had when writing them. "By the time we're done making a record, it's all technical. All the creative stuff is over, so there's no way for me to be affected by the music anymore." Doug might not call it creative, but the technical aspects of his

lines such as the Stones' "You can't always get what you want" and the Doors' "This is the end." "Warner Brothers' lawyers decided it was going to be a problem," Doug explains. "Our lawyer and I certainly didn't agree, but they decided to ask permission from all these people. It was ridiculous. Everyone knew off that bat that the Rolling Stones and [the estate of] Jimi Hendrix were gonna say no. And sure enough, everyone said yes, except them." Built To Spill considered re-recording the song to replace the offending quotes, but a last minute miracle arrived in the form of permission



**Story: Lois Maffeo Photos: Michael Halsband**

good," he explains. "There's no way that a piece of music is going to affect someone in a certain way. What really moves you about music are the things you can't choose. You just stumble across it." This laid-back evaluation might sound odd coming from someone who is regarded by fans and critics alike as something of a guitar god. But his attitude echoes the approachable grooves of the band's music, which upon closer listening also reveal his technical acumen and intricate songwriting.

Self-effacement or no, Doug Martsch is responsible for penning some of the most complex and compelling guitar rock of the 1990s. Praised by critics as a reincarnation of the mythical '60s ax man and loved by fans for his associations with the emo-core

recordings are what many find to be the brain-expanding allure of his audio universe. Longtime friend and producer Phil Ek is responsible for much of that presence. Although Doug doesn't agree with the assertion that Phil Ek is "Built To Spill's George Martin," he is quick to praise Ek's ability to wrangle the recordings. "We do a lot of overdubs—goof around with it on each stage of the way. Everything we do bounces off Phil. I'll show him things and we'll decide together."

*Keep It Like A Secret* is also the first Built To Spill album in which Doug has collaborated on the songwriting with his bandmates Nelson and Plouf, a line-up that has finally settled after years of revolving membership. "When we made the last record, [1997's

from the Stones and Hendrix camps. "More remarkable to me than the fact that they said yes is the fact that [Warner Brothers] even bothered to ask permission. To me, they're clichés, they're not samples," Martsch wearily asserts.

Such offhand appraisals are what make Doug Martsch so in touch with his fans. His down-to-earth assessments of the vagaries of human experience are what crown the dense layers of his musical compositions. But don't bother telling him how brilliant he is. "I'm drawn to blues music from the '20s and '30s," he says. "They're all playing the same song that nobody wrote. I like the idea of that—a socialist concept of music that doesn't belong to people. I hate the idea of genius. I just like the idea of music that sounds great."





## secret stars

Doug Martsch has been made out to be a guitar god, but he doesn't want the job.



L-R: Nelson, Plouf, Martsch

World Radio History



Prince Paul doesn't have multiple cell phones, decorative teeth or a fleet of fancy cars. He lacks the name-brand novelty of Puffy, Busta and Method Man. He's never released an album that's debuted in the top 10.

Yet despite his low-key style and modest string of successes over the past 15 years as DJ and producer for Stetsasonic, De La Soul and the Gravediggaz, Prince Paul is poised to break out in '99 with his second solo release, *A Prince Among Thieves* (Tommy Boy). But he's not waiting for the limo.

"I never feel like it's my time," he says with a note of exasperation, while seated in a downtown New York office and dressed casually in a gray sweatshirt, blue jeans and a red-and-black checkered cap.

A rapid-talking 28-year-old who's quick with a smile and almost as physically animated as his friend Chris Rock, Prince Paul accepts his status as hip-hop's also-ran. He's too busy having fun or striving for artistic nirvana to worry about why he

Clan to Insane Clown Posse, but the lukewarm reaction—400,000 in sales and few nods from critics—left Paul depressed. His self-funded solo debut, *Psychoanalysis: What Is It?!*, began with the song "Why Must You Hate Me?" But the record put Prince Paul back on the map, and Tommy Boy re-released it and provided him with the funds for a follow-up.

Seizing on an idea he'd developed in the early '90s, Paul holed up in libraries and wrote a screenplay about a couple of street friends, one of whom dreamed of becoming a hip-hop star and one seemingly content with dealing drugs. Paul says he learned screen-writing techniques in part from Chris Rock, who'd enlisted him to produce the comedian's Grammy-winning '97 album *Roll With The New*. "Chris explained the process," Paul says. "Like to make sure I had an ending to the story before I had everything else." After completing the script, Prince Paul decided to forego the film making process and concentrate on the score.

"I didn't know how to make movies," he

overlooked. These include Big Daddy Kane, Kool Keith, Chubb Rock, Biz Markie, Xzibit, Everlast and Sadat X; Chris Rock, who appears in a cameo as a pleading, trash-talking crack addict, is the album's only bona fide celebrity.

Paul hints that his label would have liked to see more big names associated with the project, but his tone grows embittered when discussing his wish list. He'd wanted aging crooner Lou Rawls to perform the album's tongue-in-cheek ballad "Mood For Love," but the singer's management said that Rawls abhors rap. Craig Mack and Shock G wouldn't sign on. Paul stopped there. "I would have gotten Lil' Kim to play a hooker," he concedes, "but I didn't have the money and I didn't know if she'd be interested in working with me. Why get my feelings hurt?"

Some old friends that came through were the members of De La Soul, who reunite with Prince Paul for the soulful hip-hop romp "More Than U Know."

"We made each other," he says of his old



# Prince Paul

Story: Richard Martin Photos: Kim Apley

hasn't been welcomed onto hip-hop's lucrative commercial bandwagon.

"I don't know if it's one of those things that when I'm long gone, it'll be like, 'Wow! This is really great,' or if it's that I'm wack or out of tune or whatever," he says, waving a hand dismissively. "With my stuff, people either love it or hate it. I've heard everything, from I'm a genius to I'm a punk."

Paul Huston was just a young punk when he began DJ-ing in his hometown of Amityville, Long Island. As a teen, he took the train to Brooklyn to explore New York City's nascent rap scene and became the turntablist in one of hip-hop's first proper bands, Stetsasonic. In 1989, Prince Paul and three friends from Amityville formed De La Soul and unveiled one of the decade's defining albums, *3 Feet High And Rising*, a whimsical blend of hip-hop and comedy that sampled everything from raw street beats to French lessons to Steely Dan riffs.

De La's debut would eventually go platinum, but the two succeeding albums didn't fare as well,

explains. "I said why not make the soundtrack first."

Paul wrote out the individual parts to *A Prince Among Thieves* and began casting friends. For the lead roles of the rapper Tariq and his dealer friend True, Paul enlisted underground New York MCs Breeze and Sha. Their relationship fuels the plot: When Tariq needs \$1000 to record a demo that will get him a meeting with the Wu-Tang's RZA, he asks True for the cash. Rather than lend him the cash, True convinces his naive friend to earn it hustling drugs. But it's a set-up. True tips off the cops about the green dealer, then steals Tariq's demos and passes them off as his own. The betrayal leads to a deadly showdown and a bleak ending.

Woven together with Prince Paul's flamboyant beats and rib-tickling hooks, *A Prince Among Thieves* nevertheless carries some pointed commentary about friendship and fiendishness in the burgeoning hip-hop industry.

"While I was writing I didn't realize it, but in hindsight when I look at the psychology behind it..."

mates. "Granted I was making records before them but not to this capacity. It was working with each other that gave us the chemistry. I thought it was important to have that on this album."

With *A Prince Among Thieves* on the shelves, Prince Paul may finally cash in. He's also got two high-profile collaborative albums in the pipes for release this year. He'll team with Dan The Automator on *Handsome Boy Modeling School*, featuring hip-hop and rock guests such as Sadat X, DJ Shadow, Mix Master Mike, Cibo Matto and Radiohead's Thom Yorke. Paul and the Automator will also team up with Dust Brother Mike Simpson to construct tracks for an album humorously titled *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*, with help from Beck, Cornershop, De La and others. But at the moment, Prince Paul would rather focus on his solo tour de force: Even though he doesn't have dollar signs in his eyes, he does want his well-deserved props for the years of hard work that have brought him to this point.

**"I unfold stuff every time I make a record and learn more about myself. This album shows how much I don't trust people."**

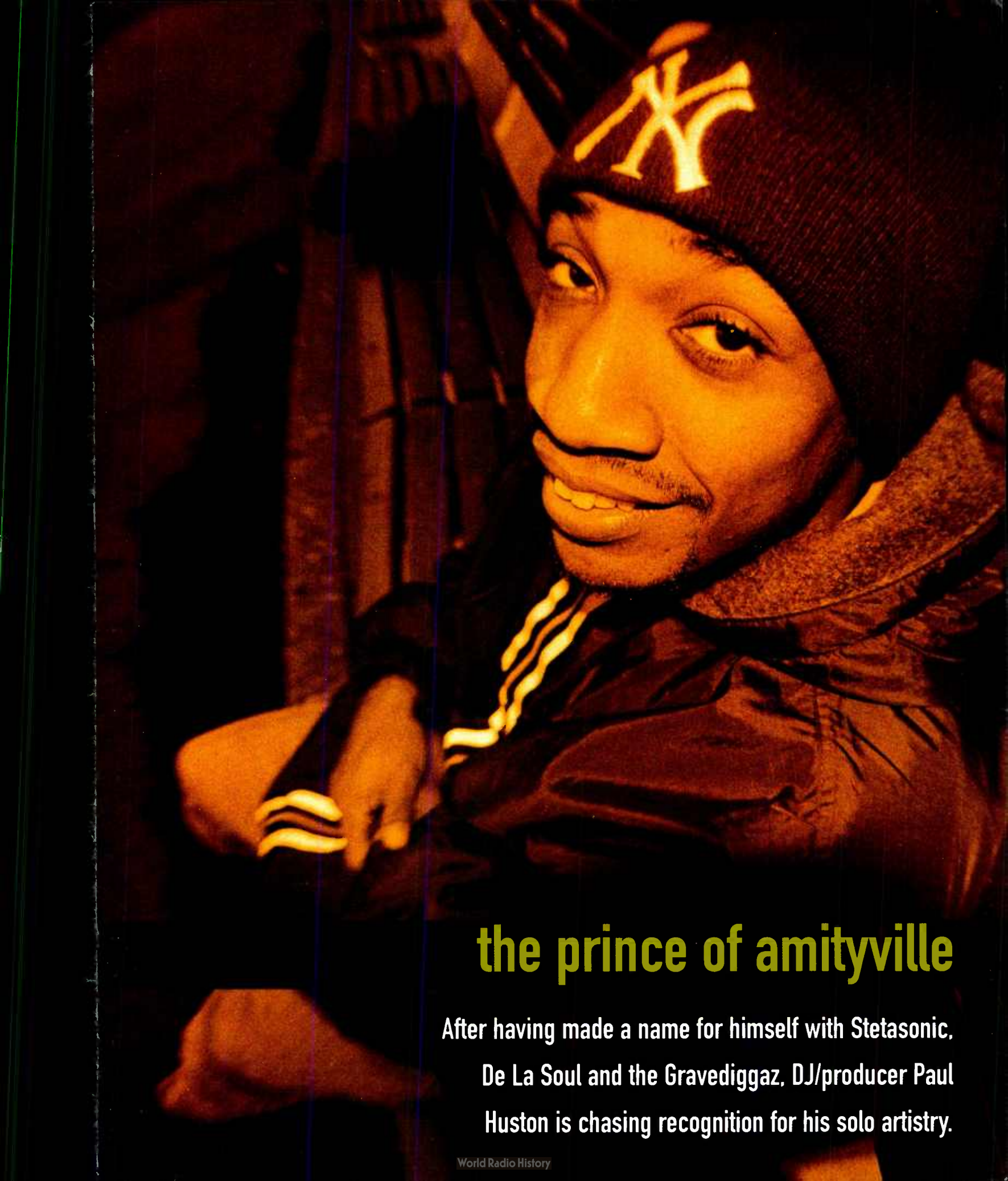
and Prince Paul split after 1993's *Buhloone Mindstate*. After his label, Dew Dew Man Records, died in its crib, Huston sought out three similarly down-on-their-luck MCs—including future Wu-Tang guru RZA—to scare up the Gravediggaz. The dark, pointed beats and horror-themed raps that marked the band's *Six Feet Deep* may have paved the way for harder-edged music from the Wu-Tang

Paul says, trailing off for a moment. "I unfold stuff every time I make a record and learn more about myself. This shows how much I don't trust people."

Still, he had enough like-minded allies to complete the audacious project. Paul filled out the cast of hookers, prison inmates and players with musicians whose work he respects but whom he feels the music industry has neglected or

"People might not like the album," he says of *Prince*, "but hopefully people will respect the work I put into it. I mean, yo, taking nothing away from people who do records now, but I don't see anybody putting half the energy I put into this album into theirs. I did everything myself. I engineered it. I mixed it. I called up everybody who's on it. It was hard, but it's fulfilling, because I did it."





## the prince of amityville

After having made a name for himself with Stetasonic, De La Soul and the Gravediggaz, DJ/producer Paul Huston is chasing recognition for his solo artistry.





## ride a painted pony

After nearly dying on the floor of a London hotel bathroom, Mark Linkous returns with *Good Morning Spider*.



These days, local television news broadcasts look something like a sanitized, suburbanized version of *Wild Kingdom*. We're barraged with mindless non-stories about water-skiing cats, life-saving dogs and mischievous otters—apparently because this cavalcade of cute critters attracts higher ratings than gang violence or drug-related murders. The neatly

Linkous had every reason to write and record a morose set of songs. After releasing the country-by-way-of-modern rock sprawl of *Vivadixie*, a tragic turn of events took him to the brink of death early into Sparklehorse's first European tour. In a London hotel, he accidentally overdosed on prescription antidepressants, then fell to the bathroom floor and passed out; the pressure on his folded-

that's soothing enough to play in a doctor's office waiting room. The album's catchiest track, "Sick Of Goodbyes," which Linkous co-wrote with Lowery, lurches along on a T. Rex-like guitar hook and rhythm, then explodes into a high-flying chorus.

His ability to pen the occasional tune with potential mainstream appeal has its drawbacks, in that some would like to see Sparklehorse have

**"I do write some really poppy songs and some rock songs. So rather than being able to reside in a certain peer group with people like Will Oldham, Cat Power and Smog, there's a chance I could get a song on the radio."**

coiffed anchor robots spewing these light-hearted tales would probably be horrified, or at least perplexed, by the animals that populate the world of Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous.

On his band's latest, *Good Morning Spider* (Capitol), the lanky Virginian sings about running over a dog that comes back to haunt him in "Ghost Of His Smile," then unreels a creepy couplet in "Hundreds Of Sparrows": "The tree you planted has become fecund/With kamikaze hummingbirds."

This fascination with creatures great and small extends to real life. A few minutes after lavishing affection on a floppy-eared dachshund that also happens to be visiting the offices of Linkous's PR company in downtown Manhattan, he's peering out from under the brim of his off-white cowboy hat and cataloguing the residents of the farm he and his wife share in rural Virginia. "We've got four dogs, some horses and cats," he says in a measured drawl. "There's two new cats. We got 'em the week Jimmy Stewart and Robert Mitchum died, so they're named Jimmy Stewart and Robert Mitchum."

For the follow-up to the tongue twisting 1995 debut *Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot*, Linkous tipped his hat to arachnids, though not so one-dimensionally. While recording in London, he and drummer Scott Fitzsimmons were trying

over legs nearly paralyzed them, and he suffered a heart attack during the emergency rescue procedures.

He spent two months recovering in a London hospital, then returned to Virginia to recuperate. At first, he couldn't walk or play music. "David Lowery came over and left me a guitar," Linkous says of the Cracker frontman and frequent Sparklehorse collaborator. "But it took me a long time to be able to make chords again."

By early '97 Linkous was back on tour—in a wheelchair—and writing songs. The material that would develop into *Good Morning Spider* obviously wasn't upbeat, but neither was it bleak. The first song he wrote, an ode to his English nurses called "Saint Mary," is typical, with spooky acoustic guitar and piano accompaniment that masks Linkous's gentle, generally optimistic tone. Other tracks sound even moodier, with crude samples, echoing vibraphone, forlorn cello and a variety of manipulated keyboards. Most of the up-tempo rocker "Chaos Of The Galaxy/Happy Man" lurks beneath a surface of static, as if broadcast from a short-wave transmitter somewhere in Africa. An otherwise straightforward cover of Daniel Johnston's "Hey, Joe" contains an under-layer of scratches from a worn record and a menacing tape loop. In the

hit. "I think the expectations of my record company and my manager are a little high," Linkous explains with a note of anxiety. "I do write some really poppy songs and some rock songs. So rather than being able to reside in a certain peer group with people like Will Oldham, Cat Power and Smog, there's a chance I could get a song on the radio and be in the same category as the Foo Fighters, or whoever they play on the radio these days."

But Linkous's aims veer more toward the artistic. Rather than record in a state-of-the-art studio with a hotshot producer, he put most of *Spider* to tape in his 16-track home studio. Rather than slip a slick guitar solo into the mesmerizing "Sunshine," Linkous used a murky answering machine message from his pal Vic Chesnutt to fill out the middle-eight. And rather than set his sights on the charts, Linkous says his main goal is to someday release the pop equivalent of Tom Waits's bluesy masterstrokes like *Swordfishtrombones* and *Rain Dogs*.

Linkous admits that *Good Morning Spider* doesn't achieve this goal, but it's a positive first step after a harrowing experience. Now he can walk and play standing up again; his pain has subsided enough that for the first time in two years he doesn't need morphine; and he's free to cavort with the animals on his farm. Of course,

# Sparklehorse

Story: Richard Martin Photos: Danny Clinch



out a vintage pump organ called a harmonium when the phrase hit him. "It had mechanical sounds," Linkous recalls of the instrument, "and it sounded like a spider building a web. So I named the song 'Good Morning Spider,' and I loved the title. Then in France somebody told us that there's a superstition that if you see a spider at night, the next day will be a hopeful or good day. But if you see a spider in the morning, it's gonna be a sad day."

jarring album opener "Pig"—another of his ominous animal references—Linkous sings through effects that make him sound like one of his favorite peers, PJ Harvey.

Yet as on *Vivadixie*, Sparklehorse intersperses these atmospheric theatrics with radio-ready pop tunes and standard-issue rock songs. "Maria's Little Elbows" rides along on a pleasant acoustic-based melody before blossoming into the type of soft-rock chorus

this can lead to more twisted tales, as with the groundhog that wreaked havoc on the property until Linkous caught up with it. "My wife was hitting it over the head with a broom and stunned it, and I shot it," he says with mounting excitement. "Then, the animal control people came out and cut off its head to test it for rabies. We'd killed the first rabid groundhog in the state! We made the front page of the local paper."



# The Day The Music Died



A RANT



Five years after the death of

# Kurt Cobain

Nirvana biographer Michael Azzerad assays the alt-rock apocalypse.

Lead Illustration: Michael Lopez Photo: Alice Wheeler Sidebar Illustrations: arl Heitmüller

It's hard to believe, but it's coming up on five years since that nightmarish day when we all learned that Kurt Cobain had died. Five years is an eternity in pop life; things should change a lot in that span of time. But rock has been becalmed ever since that fateful day. It's just stayed in place and stagnated.

Ever since then, there's been a deluge of bands that have followed in the wake of the *Nevermind* phenomenon, pumping out endless but minute variations on Cobain's simple formula. And the results are even more derivative than usual because Nirvana's music wasn't that original to start with; it was just a synthesis of a lot of stuff that had come before it—the Beatles, Black Sabbath, the Sex Pistols, Hüsker Dü, Pixies and others. But it was *inspired*. None of the bands that cop Nirvana's formula have even come close to that band's melodic, sonic or spiritual heights; they've made the mistake of copying a sound and not a sensibility.

While this process of stagnation was inevitable, Kurt's absence has

he was about to discard. If Nirvana still existed, it could well have released its fifth album by now, and you can bet that it would have been radically different from the moody verse/explosive chorus template. And you can further bet that Nirvana would have dragged the copycat bands at least a little bit in that direction, too.



But with Kurt gone, there has been no genuine article left for the copycat bands to be measured against. Sure, there have been a number of

band doesn't quite have the goods.) There's the visionary Kim Deal, but she's been pretty much AWOL ever since *Last Splash*. Sadly, Polly Harvey has abandoned rock for some sort of cerebral goth-lounge. That leaves Billy Corgan. 'Nuff said.

The fact is, all this derivative commercial alternative crap like Everclear and Creed and Seven Mary Three is for people who missed Nirvana the first time around—someone who's 16 now was nine when *Nevermind* came out. Then again, Nirvana was for people who had missed indie rock the first time around. And indie rock was for people who had missed punk rock the first time around. And punk rock was for people who had missed the '60s the first time around. The '60s were for people who had missed Elvis Presley the first time around. Elvis Presley was for people who had missed Little Richard the first time around.

There was nothing before Little Richard. He's the original.

The thing to remember is that whenever things get this crappy, something really good is about to

**“With Kurt gone, there was no genuine article left for the copycat bands to be measured against.”**

hastened it. He was already completely rethinking his approach to music, leaving a host of imitators and *arrivistes* from Silverchair to Days Of The New to churn out pallid rehashes of the formula

contenders. There's Eddie Vedder, the only person with enough charisma, soul and talent for the job, but he—very understandably—wanted to have nothing to do with it. (And face it, his

happen. It happened in '76 with the advent of punk rock, it happened in '84 with masterpieces by Hüsker Dü, the Meat Puppets, the Replacements and the Minutemen all in one year, it



# PRODIGIES OR DAFT PUNKS: DID ELECTRONICA HAPPEN?

As is often the case with life's thornier riddles, answering the question "Did electronica happen?" boils down to matters of semantics, on a couple of levels.

First there's the catchall term "electronica." What qualified as "electronica"? Certainly not the brand of artists it originally addressed in the UK press, innovative weirdos like Autechre that didn't slip into any neat slots. It didn't encompass all dance music either: "Music Sounds Better With You" by Stardust rocked countless parties, but it wasn't "electronica." Big beat artists like Fatboy Slim, Chemical Brothers and Death in Vegas, select drum 'n' bass acts, and the bastard children of Portishead (Mono, Morcheeba, Soukai Flops), were.

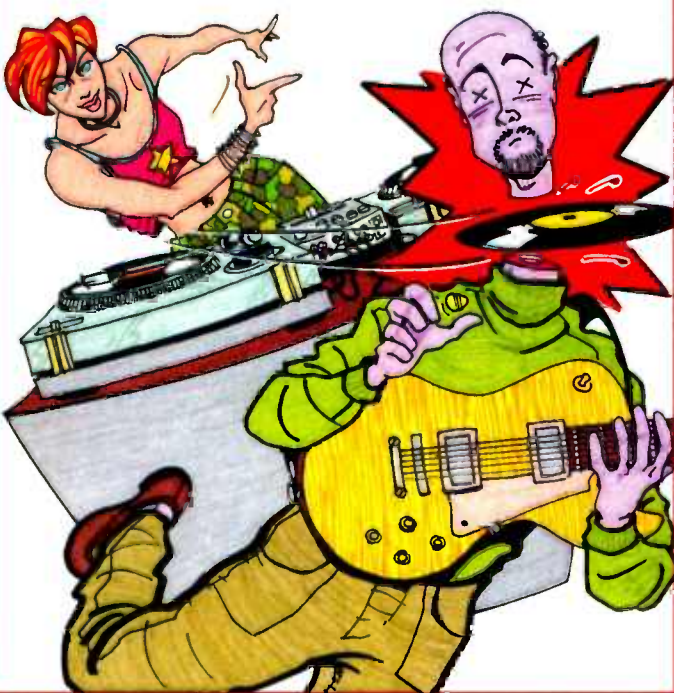
Now let's wrestle with "happen." As far as Dan Cohen, national director of publicity for A&Rnetworks, is concerned, "electronica" happened. "Every major label now has at least two electronic acts," he observes. Daft Punk and Crystal Method have achieved gold record status, awarded for sales of more than 500,000 copies; the Chemical Brothers pulled off that feat *and won* a Grammy award. These numbers aren't staggering compared to Celine Dion, but they certainly stack up against Pavement.

More importantly, music formerly cradled in the bosom of the underground seeped into mainstream pop culture. By the time Prodigy's *The Fat Of The Land* entered the US album charts at #1, even your mom recognized Keith Flint as "that crazy guy from MTV." Tracks by the Orb and Crystal Method popped up on the tube hawkling products from Volkswagen to Gap khakis.

What didn't occur was complete over-saturation or a subsequent backlash. Most of the industry couldn't grasp the fundamental differences between rock and dance music. The big boys sought out candidates from the arena of the latter that met the standard criteria for the former: performance-oriented material, simple melodies and lyrics, verse-chorus-verse structures, and recognizable stars. Suitable contenders turned out to be limited.

"The main reason electronica did not have the same galvanizing industry effect as grunge and disco is because it has too many characteristics which were and are in direct opposition to mass consumptive music," observes Brian Long, who does A&R for Geffen Records.

Ultimately, the hype around "electronica" did raise public consciousness of dance music as a vital component in the pop spectrum. If that shift in attitudes allows less commercial artists like Squarepusher easier access to potential listeners and consumer dollars, that's a very "happening"—in the present tense—thing indeed. >>>Kurt B. Reighley



happened in '91 with *Nevermind*—basically, every seven years or so. So have heart, because we're due.

Another reason for the dire state of alt-rock is that the major labels have learned absolutely no lessons from the indie movement that had fueled rock's early '90s renaissance. Nirvana, Soundgarden and all the others exploded because they had spent at least a few years building a fan base and honing their craft both live and in the recording studio. Their early albums didn't sell well in major label terms, but they were given time to develop because the financial stakes weren't that high. If Soundgarden sold "only" 50,000 copies, the bean counters at SST Records were doing backflips. It took selling something like 20,000 copies of Mudhoney's *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge* to bail out Sub Pop in 1991 (just before the label hit the jackpot with a catalogue item titled *Bleach*). How many do you think Mudhoney would have to sell to bail out its ailing current label, Warner Brothers?

Yet in the post-Nirvana euphoria, major labels were giving all kinds of lip service to artist development. "We won't expect results at first," they'd say. "We want the band to develop organically." But then they didn't follow through on all the big talk. The harsh reality is, most alt-rock bands have lacked good looks, powerful management and catchy pop tunes, so they haven't gotten to drink as deeply from the corporate teat as tuneful pretty faces like Jewel, Duncan Sheik and Fiona Apple, who have drained off resources. (The notoriously shrewd Courtney Love sized up the situation and hired powerful management, got people to help her write some hooky songs and simply *bought* some good looks—and presto, the promotional bucks are flowing like Q-Tip.) As in the film business, a blockbuster mentality predominates:

**"The fact is, all this derivative commercial alternative crap like Everclear and Creed and Seven Mary Three is for people who missed Nirvana the first time around."**

Now, no matter how great your record is, if you don't get a hit straight out of the box, you're toast. Bands don't get a chance to grow and fans never make long-term connections with them because it's all hit-based. Even the bands with hits aren't immune—do you really think Third Eye Blind will be allowed to make a third record for Elektra if its next album flops? Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. It's like indie rock never happened.

But popular music will get out of the alt-rock rut sooner or later. In the music business, as with everything else in the known universe, things go in cycles. For instance, in the mid-'80s, hair metal was king. You had your Warrants, your Wingers, your Bullet Boys. (Aquanet sales skyrocketed and scientists discovered a hole in the ozone layer—see a connection?) Then there was a rock drought in the late '80s pop music charts; having a guitar on your album was virtually commercial suicide. Oh, those were bad times. C+C Music Factory and its ilk were everywhere. Pundits were pronouncing the death of rock right and left. And then a bunch of rock bands turned the tables again.

The folks who run the major labels aren't entirely stupid. Some music biz sages knew that the pendulum would swing away from the early '90s American rock



renaissance just as inevitably as it had swung toward it. A new guitarless music would surely take its place. And since that same pendulum swings from one side of the Atlantic to the other, it was logical that this new music would come from England. Hey, electronica is happening in England—*that must be the next big thing!*

But the major labels knew that no underground music movement can really break through without a face, a tune and a good live show. The A&R people for Chuck Berry, LL Cool J and Nirvana will all tell you that. Faceless, tuneless, not really

**"The thing to remember is that whenever things get this crappy, something really good is about to happen. So have heart, because we're due."**

a live genre, electronica did not fit the bill at all. After a little tinkering, though, we got that Flock Of Seagulls reject jabbering about pyromania. And lo and behold it worked—well, once anyway. But for the most part electronica resolutely resisted old school templates—it doesn't even really need a stage. It represented a paradigm shift that the clueless codgers at the majors were not in a position to grasp. It's hard to get a whiff of the Zeitgeist from the 42nd floor.

So The Great Failed Electronica Hype of 1997 was the best thing that could ever have happened to the music. It was like a homeopathic remedy—that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger. The music proved its vitality by fending off the onslaught of hype and moving right along, barely even breaking stride. Even after the flood there's gobs of staggeringly good music like *µ-ziq*, *Squarepusher*, *Aphex Twin* and *Phitek*.

Things got to this point because it pays for major label record companies to have little or no imagination. If a particular band sells well, you can bet that dozens of A&R people will start scurrying around the country trying to sign groups that either sound just like that band naturally or intentionally ape its sound in order to get signed. So for years, everyone has been trying to find "the next Nirvana." *But the next Nirvana won't sound anything like Nirvana.* What the majors do instead is flood the market with sound-alikes, knowing that although they probably won't hit a major jackpot, they'll be assured a safe minimum of sales. And the even less imaginative people who control the purse strings at major labels are happy to release promotional dollars for known quantities.

Some of those copycat bands do well because there are huge masses of kids out there who are very slow to accept new trends. They will embrace them only when it is completely safe to do so. This *derrière-garde*, if you will, happens to comprise most of the record buying public. I was wandering around a Pearl Jam show at New York's Downing Stadium in 1996 and saw guys sporting standard-issue grungewear like backwards baseball hats, plaid flannels and jam shorts like it was 1990 all over again. Sure, they were late to the grunge table, but their money is as green as anyone else's, so the majors will gladly sell them millions and millions of Bush CDs.

In fact, the major labels are just like those kids in the jam shorts. They are very slow to pick up on emerging trends and even slower to relinquish them. That's because the people who run them are basically fuddy-duddies. They are out of touch with youth culture and don't want to relinquish power to the younger people in the business who are; this will never

(continued on page 34)

## A MAJOR MALFUNCTION: WHERE HAVE ALL THE LABELS GONE?



It wasn't long ago that everything Geffen touched turned to *Mellow Gold*. Geffen seemed the very model for a major label in the modern rock '90s. The label signed Sonic Youth and guaranteed the group creative control, then broke Nirvana's *Nevermind*, and watched as those bands brought other artists to Geffen just as the presence of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen attracted songwriters to Columbia in the late '60s and early '70s. Platinum records followed for Beck, Weezer, Hole, Veruca Salt and Counting Crows.

Then Kurt Cobain committed suicide, follow-ups like Hole's *Celebrity Skin* and Weezer's *Pinkerton* floundered, and Teenage Fanclub, That Dog, Sloan and the Posies never became the next big thing. Now, Geffen has been folded into Interscope as part of mergers triggered by Seagram-Universal's \$10 billion acquisition of PolyGram—the largest restructuring the music industry has ever seen, reducing the number of major label distribution houses from six to five.

The new Universal label—which now includes PolyGram, Motown, Def Jam, Mercury, Verve, Island, Interscope, Geffen and A&M—will account for more than 23 percent of domestic album sales, but the bloodletting could cost as many as 3,000 jobs, and as many as 200 bands could be looking for new homes. But unlike the book business—where greater concentration of conglomerate booksellers terrifies independent shops—indie labels see new opportunities for themselves even as the big get bigger.

Jim Guerinot, who runs Time Bomb and also manages the Offspring and Chris Cornell, compares the new model to television: Major labels will be the networks, and indies will trailblaze and specialize like cable outlets. "Small, artist-driven, entrepreneurial labels have opportunities now like they've never had before," he says. "But bands and labels have to realize what their strengths are. There's a place on Columbia for the Offspring. But if I'm a new act looking for development, I'm not sure those companies are the best places."

Some career artists are thinking the same way. Bob Mould, They Might Be Giants, and Frank Black are among the high-profile, one-time major-label artists who have realized they're better off selling the same amount of records on an indie, rather than a major—and their ranks will likely swell after this next round of roster trimming. For example, spinART snatched Black's last record and Cinerama, a spin-off of the ex-Island and RCA band, the Wedding Present, and will release the next record by the Poster Children, formerly on Warner Bros. With a smaller infrastructure, spinART can profit by selling 15,000 records, which a major never could. And since those bands have built-in fan bases, their promotional costs are much less than those facing a label trying to break a new band.

The Internet will only bring indie-label infrastructure costs down further. It's no accident that the same December week that the Universal merger became official, major-label executives met in New York to protest the ease of downloading music over the web. "The Internet changes it all," says SpinArt's Jeff Price. "It will give me the same distribution power as Sony, CEMA, WEA and Universal [four of the "big five" major label distributors]. I'll be able to reach the same number of people with fewer manufacturing and promotional costs when everyone has high-speed modems and burnable CD-R machines with their computer or home entertainment system.

"This is not a far-fetched thing," Price says. "Great opportunities exist right now."

While the technology is certainly different, the opportunities are similar to those in 1980, when a former artist manager and label owner returned to a slumping music industry with a new label after six years of making movies. That label? Geffen Records.

>>>David Daley



# SIX DEGREES OF NIRVANA KEVIN BACON STEP ASIDE

**NIRVANA**

Wayne Kramer

MC5

Dale Crover:  
drums on demo and parts of *Bleach*

Bad Religion

Johnny Thunders

Dan Peters:  
plays on "Sliver" single

Brett Gurewitz

Heartbreakers

Mudhoney

Epitaph Records

Richard Hell

Matt Lukin

Melvins

Television

Pat Smear

Germs

Minutemen

Scream

Mike Watt

Porno For Pyros

Dave Grohl

FIREHOSE

Taylor Hawkins

Jason Everman:  
second guitarist during *Bleach* era

Soundgarden

Foo Fighters

Sunny Day Real Estate

Krist Novoselic

Bruce Pavitt

Chris Cornell & Matt  
Cameron

Temple Of The Dog

Sweet 75

Sub Pop Records

Alice In Chains

Layne Staley

Mad Season







# DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE: HOW SOUNDSCAN CHANGED THE FACE OF POPULAR MUSIC

"When we first spoke to labels in fall of 1990," says Mike Shalett, co-founder and chief operating officer of SoundScan, "our sales brochure was called 'Marketing on a Level Playing Field.' No one could be afraid of an honest count. Everybody said 'Let's get it going! Let's take the hype out!' Now," Shalett laughs, "I hear people say, 'It fucked up the music business—it took all the fun out.'"

Though it was May 25, 1991, when *Billboard* magazine started using SoundScan data—marketing information recorded at point of sale, collected and analyzed by SoundScan, and then sold to those with a "need to know" in the music industry—the impact of the change still resonates. With its ability to provide consumer demographics by region, SoundScan brought music marketing into the '90s. And with its bottom-line approach to compiling the influential Top 200 pop chart, SoundScan forever changed the industry's—and the world's—perception of what was "popular music."

"It made people stand on their ears," says Fletcher Foster, Arista Nashville's director of media relations. "When that first week [of Soundscan reporting] came, country albums were numerous in the top 10, top 20. It was a total awareness that 'Yeah, country music can sell that much.'" The weekend of the switch, Garth Brooks's *No Fences* jumped from number 26 to number four on the weekly sales chart. Whereas many record store employees were only reporting genre sales to genre charts, SoundScan took a more inclusive approach to compiling the influential Top 200 pop chart. "I think what we have done now is make [country] a lot more hip," says Foster. "Soundscan legitimized it as a mass format—when you're selling that many units, obviously you're reaching across demographics."

While SoundScan revealed country as a perhaps under-appreciated genre, it also showed that "urban music," especially rap and hip-hop, had been unfairly undervalued. The styles frequently didn't fit the reporting model. "Every rap record doesn't get played on the radio," says Marilyn Batchelor, national director of marketing for MCA. "A lot [of them] start in the underground, or in clubs. Or sometimes a song might only get played for a minute in a DJ mix, and that won't [be reflected] in the charts. The only accurate way to look at how people are receiving a product is to look at how they are buying it. Now we know rap records can sell as big as pop records."

"I'm an entrepreneur," says Shalett, asked if he was pleased with the impact SoundScan has had on the music industry. "I can't pay my bills on hype. I have three children. I think artists are entrepreneurs, too. They need real sales to be successful. I'm proud of what we've done."

>>> William Werde



(continued from page 31)

change. The majors ignored countless great indie bands throughout the '80s and only sat up and took notice when R.E.M. and Jane's Addiction began to shift units in 1990. That was almost ten years of willful ignorance. Now that they've grasped grunge, how long do you think it will take them to realize what the next Next Big Thing is? Probably another ten.

It's not like any of this is very surprising; in fact, it's inevitable. This always happens when the underground goes overground. Back in the day, you could only hear rock 'n' roll like my man Little Richard on low-wattage black stations in the South or Mexican pirate radio. Then the mainstream assimilated it and pretty soon you had Pat Boone emasculating "Tutti Frutti." In the mid-'60s, San Francisco bands like the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead were playing uncompromisingly psychedelic music for a small enclave of acid-fried bohemians; a couple of years later, the Lemon Pipers topped the charts with "Green Tambourine."

Same thing with so-called alternative rock. Once it became big business, it got pasteurized and homogenized for mass consumption. But that's nothing to fret about. That happens to every movement. It's the natural end state of innovation. You can either fret about it or you can have the bravery to move on and find something else.

Most people who were part of the indie rock movement have moved on. They've embraced electronica or free jazz—or Buddhism or yoga or painting or the Internet or politics or any number of things. They were never wedded to indie rock per se, they were devoted to exploring, to pushing the envelope, no matter what the medium. So they're not shedding any tears about the mediocrity of Creed or Eve 6.

All the major labels (well, maybe not the pop-oriented Arista) are guilty of killing the alt-rock goose. Ironically, it was Geffen/DGC, Nirvana's label, which was one of the prime offenders. Until last year, it seemed like Geffen was putting out a record every week: Linoleum, Sugarplastic, Alabama 3, Seahorses, the Dear Janes, Loud Lucy, the list goes on and on. And it was all alterna-dreck.

This was classic fling-it-against-the-wall-and-see-what-

**"The major labels knew that no underground music movement can break through without a face, a tune and a good live show. The A&R people for Chuck Berry, LL Cool J and Nirvana will all tell you that."**

sticks behavior, i.e., business as usual. The label's best people fled in droves; Geffen went down the tubes farther and farther with each defection. A bloated roster and a bloated staff size sucked Geffen dry. As the landscape changed and rock sales began to slump, the same thing happened at other labels, hence the recent spate of budget cuts, mass firings and procrustean consolidations.

Maybe now the majors will start thinking about becoming lean and mean, about developing artists instead of expecting a hit out of the box, about signing great artists that they truly care about and then working them with all their hearts and minds.

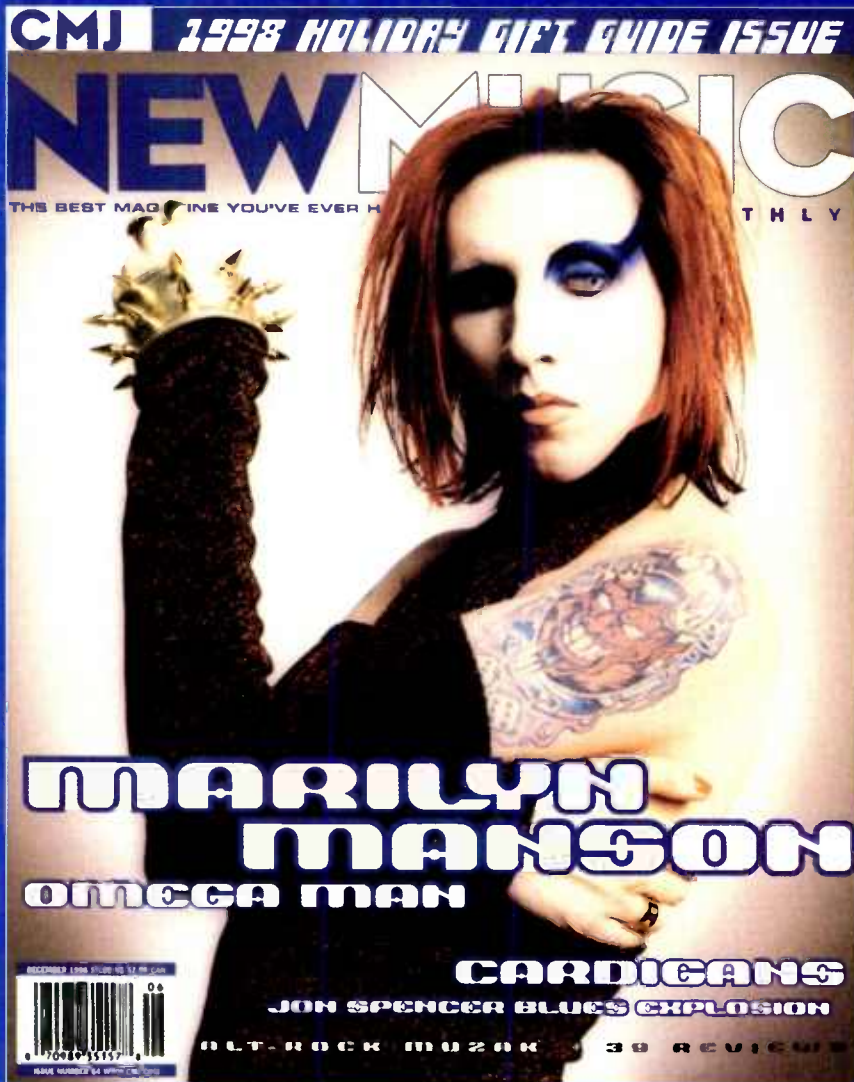
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**TIFFANY ANDERS**  
**Runnin From No Place To Nowhere**  
 Up

Runnin is a lot different than running. Running is done by athletic types who have high metabolism rates. Runnin is done by slackers and stoners who have absolutely no intention of running. It's merely a form of getting away from something, with bad spelling. Tiffany Anders does a lot of runnin on this record. She, like her spiritual brother Neil Young, feels a distinct need to express displacement from whatever upheld wisdom is currently in vogue. Hence, the

**OUT:** October 20.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 What if Neil Young were a girl?  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Dinosaur Jr., Built To Spill, Fuzzy.

runnin. A woman singing this flat, emo-esque style is certainly a novelty, but Anders has yet to lift her songs above the mere cadences of Young's angular vocal style. Her tepid rock songs have a mid-tempo sameness that buries the interesting vocal patterning in a thrum of electric guitar and lo-fi drumming. The extended vowels of her singing provide a cozy, rootsy feel, and Anders's impressive abilities to cover guitar, bass and piano chores are promising, but the overall feeling is somewhat basic. Another Young acolyte, J Mascis, also appears on this album, leading me to believe there is a new conspiracy afoot to let the freak flag fly. I'm not sure I'm ready for anyone to be runnin that rock style up the flagpole again.

>>>Lois Maffeo



**BANYAN**  
**Any Time At All**  
 Higher Octave

Drummers don't usually make for the best rock bandleaders. Granted, they *always* lead an ensemble in their own way: They can speed up the tempo and the rest of the musicians almost have to follow. But seldom are they able to devote equal energy to melodic and structural concerns while concentrating on their first love, the beat. Stephen Perkins realizes this, and on *Any Time At All*, the second album from his LA collaborative outfit Banyan, Perkins has ceded much control over the compositions to his numerous collaborators: Mike Watt

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Collaborative experimental rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Medeski Martin + Wood, Porno For Pyros, Mike Watt.

(Minutemen, Firehose), Nels Cline (Geraldine Fibbers, Scarnella), Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers), Buckethead, Rob Wasserman and others. Over the course of a month, the musicians popped in and out of Perkins's studio, laying down tracks and examining ideas in a wonderfully free atmosphere, resulting in music that roams from oceanic ambience to hard-edged funk to curious (and occasionally annoying) fusion. But even the annoying sounds are fresh, if only because Perkins has provided an opportunity for a cast of free thinkers used to making music in a more structured atmosphere to let loose and explore new avenues of expression. *Any Time At All* won't floor you, but it will help you to appreciate the musicianly side of a host of rock players.

>>>Randall Roberts



**BIG RUDE JAKE** ★  
**Big Rude Jake**  
 Roadrunner

With a name that sounds like a ska band and a fedora-and-pleated-pants style that's perfect swing-night cocktail fodder, Big Rude Jake is a guy with an image problem. Because the expat Canadian New Yorker doesn't play ska and you'd be hard pressed to Lindy hop to the palooka rhythm and blues he does play. Jake is basically a cabaret take on Raymond Chandler chic, fueled by a sound that relies mostly on Louis Jordan jump jive and rockabilly flourishes—influences he shares with Brian Setzer, for whom he warmed up crowds through much of '98. But while that fits in neatly with contemporary swing clichés, Jake is more of a blues shouter, and there's a persistent wit to the proceedings. For example, the song that sounds the most swing is "Queer For Cat," which is actually about swinging—in the open marriage sense of the word. But the record has more to offer than double entendres, like "Buster Boy (Walk Tall)" loping along to a French Quarter rhythm or "Blue Pariah" riding a monster bass line and *Hawaii Five-O* horns. So while the pop culture curtain is likely coming down on spectator shoes and carrying a flask as a sign of style (as opposed to alcoholism), Big Rude Jake is living up to his name, shouting epithets from the wings as swing takes its bow.

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Bent-nose swing.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Brian Setzer Orchestra, Mighty Blue Kings, Amazing Crowns.

>>>Scott Frampton



**BLONDIE**  
**No Exit**  
 Beyond-BMG

Though Blondie had disco hits with "Heart Of Glass" and "Rapture," the biggest, best part of its catalog combined '60s girl-group melodies and post-punk oomph. Given that a gazillion grunge bands have appropriated Blondie's sweet 'n' tough formula with moderate success, you'd think the New York band would, after a 16-year hiatus, return to show the pretenders how its done. Unfortunately, the quartet (which still includes original members Debbie Harry, Chris Stein, Jimmi Destri and Clem Burke) doesn't play to that strength. Instead, *No Exit* dabbles in ska, jazz and

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Hybrid pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Concrete Blonde, No Doubt, Josie Cotton.

metal, while almost completely ignoring the band's new wave roots. All of the experimentation would be laudable if it didn't come off as half-hearted. Harry doesn't even sound as if she's fully developed her vocal line on the two-bit, two-tone number "Screaming Skin" (why they made this tune the album opener is anyone's guess). There are a couple of light, forgettable tracks such as "Forgive And Forget" that will probably sound good on the dance floor and, thankfully, there are also a couple of numbers that prove the band can still approximate its classic fare. "Under The Gun" and "Maria" have a head-bopping chewiness reminiscent of *Eat To The Beat*. But there are frustratingly few of these moments. Here's to hoping the band is just rusty rather than out of ideas.

>>>Neil Gladstone



**C-AVERAGE****C-Average****Kill Rock Stars**

Imagine, if you will, a small table in a comic book shop surrounded by gamers idly destroying each other in savage rounds of Dungeons & Dragons. Their minds are flashing with very heavy messages that have a lot to do with death and destruction. Elves are being slain with ambient testosterone. It is not a pretty sight. Now imagine the music that might accompany this vision. Except you don't have to, because C-Average has made it for you. As black-souled as they come, C-Average is heavy into heavy metal—

hammer-on and double bass drum style. Gnarly guitar solos shred through switchbacking, stop-start drumming. Sci-fi imagery abounds on this mainly instrumental album's few lyrics, and it also includes quirky covers from Queen's campy "Ming's Theme" to a jugular-ripping version of "He's Waiting" by the Sonics. This self-titled debut has a bizarre charm that might stem from the irony of the thin-ish, non-metal vocals, the song titles like "Orcs Vs. Elves" or the mere notion of a heavy metal band consisting of two guys, neither of whom has a mullet. C-Average might be driving nails into Olympia, Washington's "love rock" reputation, but the band isn't doing a thing to dissuade anyone that the whole town is inhabited by nerds. Thank God.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Lois Maffeo

**DRUMHEAD****Drumhead****Perishable**

Drumhead's press release describes this pile-on percussion project as "a drum circle duking it out with a Macintosh G3." Two or three tracks into the album, it's pretty obvious who won the brawl, and damned if isn't the drum circle. Not to impugn the firepower of Apple's worthy product—it's just that the drummers of Drumhead seem unusually dedicated, for a percussion group in this sampled and scratched age, to attuning themselves to human rhythms. The ensemble, which includes Tony Maimone (ex-Pere Ubu), Sheila McCarthy,

**OUT:** February 16.**FILE UNDER:**

Low-fi trance.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Medeski Martin + Wood,  
Uj, Crash Worship.

and leader Josh Matthews, rolls gently along on track after track. Beats enter the mix, politely insinuate themselves, then leave without a fight. Whether the instruments are hand drums, nipple gongs, Casios, or some Lewis Carroll-esque thing called a March Snare, a transcendental headnod runs through the record, uninterrupted by dynamic or significant rhythmic breaks. Do you really need so many people to make this little noise? More importantly, Drumhead seems to ignore what percussion concerns from Autechre to Les Batteries know: that art percussion is not about human rhythms, but about superhuman ones. Otherwise, y'know, I have a tin can, a stick, and a table to rap my fingers on. Why buy what I can get for free?

&gt;&gt;&gt;Andrea Moed

**DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE** ★**Something About Airplanes****Elsinor-Barsuk**

Death Cab For Cutie derives its name from a Bonzo Dog Band song in the *Magical Mystery Tour* film. I mention this not because the Bellingham, Washington, four-piece bears much resemblance to the Fab Four or Bonzos, but because it might explain why its music lacks the sinister tones one might otherwise surmise from its moniker. Death Cab For Cutie favors a brand of off-kilter bedroom pop spiked with enough science experiment to conjure images of an Elephant 6 Northwest.

Benjamin Gibbard's fragile vocals recall Elliott Smith's, and the band members play with such restraint that Nathan Good's tom-heavy drums often seem like the lead instrument. When Christopher Walla fires up his organ, Death Cab's sound approximates that of a full-band version of Quasi. The spare, obtuse pieces are interesting, but Death Cab excels when it rocks out a bit and Gibbard's thoughtful wordplay turns misanthropic, as when he dryly intones, "I think I'm drunk enough to drive you home now" on the standout "Champagne From A Paper Cup." *Something About Airplanes* has the aura of a young band still crafting its own voice, but working fertile ground and already producing some impressive results.

&gt;&gt;&gt;Glen Sarvady

**FEVER** ★**Too Bad But True****Digital Hardcore**

Just because you can put a unique twist on a genre doesn't mean you should. Someone should have told this to Din-S.T. and Paul P.M. As Fever, the two of them assault the eardrums with the fervor one might expect from the Digital Hardcore camp, but they also assault the good name of hip-hop. The band has been billed as "where hip-hop takes a flying leap into uncharted territory," but most of *Too Bad But True* sounds like where hip-hop takes a flying leap away from anything rhythmic, melodic or sensible. There are moments—

**OUT:** February 9.**FILE UNDER:**

Busta Rhymes meets Tron.

**R.I.Y.L.:**Rammstein, Atari Teenage Riot,  
Add N To X, Techno Animal.

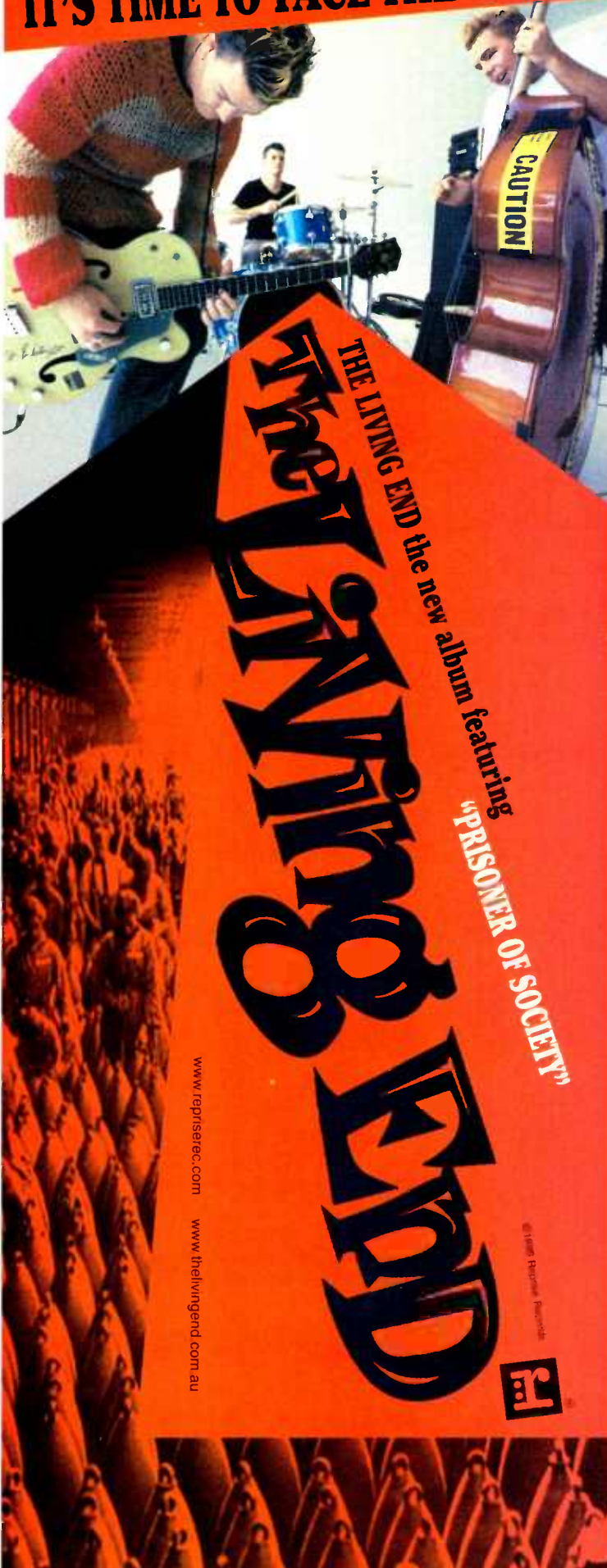
particularly on the opening track "Rubber Cell" and the following track "See You Runnin"—where Fever's use of dissonance mimics the textures of hip-hop, as angry synth sounds, loops and samples create a dark, futuristic beat. But those moments are too frequently interrupted by the duo's apparent obsession with sporadic outbursts of noise and inexplicable tempo changes. For much of the album, just as you start to find Fever's angry groove, the pair yanks it away from you. The shining exception here is "Two Poles," where surly vocals and clever wordplay meet with strings and swirling sirens in an electronic pastiche that reveals the group's potential. With a little more direction and focus, *Too Bad But True* could have been truly chilling.

&gt;&gt;&gt;William Werde

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## reviews

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



### FINE

**Against The View**  
Flip-Elektra

In the rush to nab a spot on radio stations' ever-tightening playlists, many bands refine their songs into the musical equivalent of mass-produced sugar. When the shrieking guitar riffs and faux-passionate "yay-ahs" subside, such tunes offer the same gnarly aftertaste as Sweet 'N Low. Los Angeles's Fine looks to be the latest entry into the formulaic modern rock sweepstakes, from the "kicking the heroin habit" theme to front man Ashley Hamilton's ultra-earnest vocal yowls. But closer inspection of *Against The View* reveals a sharply detailed, melodically

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:** Emotionally taut modern rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Afghan Whigs' *1965*, Scott Weiland's *12 Bar Blues*, Smashing Pumpkins' "1979."

inventive record that should allow Fine to succeed without resorting to shallowness. The quartet benefits greatly from the presence of pianist Brad Mehldau, the L.A. jazz whiz who brilliantly translates his sensibilities into the rock arena. Rather than pummel the listener with bombastic riffs and resounding rhythms, Fine—including guests Scott Weiland, ex-Sex Pistol Steve Jones and ex-Pornos For Pyros bassist Martyn LeNoble—calls on pop devices and even acoustic guitars to enliven such infectiously appealing songs as the single "Wrecking Ball" and the hook-filled, Pumpkins-esque "So Unkind." Records with the potential for widespread consumer appeal generally don't come packed with such artistic enterprise, which makes Fine a real find.

>>>Richard Martin



**FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS** ★  
**100% Colombian**  
Virgin

This NYC-based trio's million-selling debut caught flak for glamorizing the gangsta life. The follow-up, *100% Colombian*, continues in the psuedo-gangsta mode, but tones down the streetsmart raps with a more melodic groove, often anchored by a mellow sax, trombone or string riff. Befitting their moniker, Fun Lovin' Criminals' charm rests in their tongue-in-cheek delivery and insouciant disregard for musical boundaries. Like B-grade Becks, the Criminals whitewash hip-hop with an eccentric mix of musical styles: the psychedelic '70s funk of stand-out "All For

**OUT:** January 26.  
**FILE UNDER:** Fun lovin' hip-hop hybrid.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Beastie Boys, Beck, Martin Scorsese dialogue.

Self," the rockabilly rhythms anchoring the urban reality rap about copping "D" on "10th Street," and the humorous country twang of "Mini Bar Blues," featuring B.B. King. And there aren't many front men like Huey, who would sing a song about how Barry White saved his life. Indeed, Huey's dusky, smooth raps bear a distinct resemblance to the aforementioned King of Seduction. Although lines about super models with "platform heels and nose job bills" are entertaining, many of the musings about life on NYC's mean streets tend towards cliché, and too often rely on a few repeated snappy raps. But the Criminals are about fun and send-up: *100%* concludes with a commercial advertising a limo service. Fans of this sort of spoof on thug life will find *100% Colombian* 75% dope.

>>>Sarah Pratt

★ ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



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



**GIGOLO AUNTS**  
**Minor Chords And Major Themes**  
 E Pluribus Unum

Adam Duritz is a power pop softie at heart, judging by the signings to his major label-distributed E Pluribus Unum imprint. Boston's Gigolo Aunts emerge from five years of contractual purgatory with a disc that seems to consciously verify a genre punch list. Doctrine is followed to the letter on *Minor Chords*: emotive, high-pitched male vocals, girl trouble, radio ready production, cathartic dual guitar rave-ups alternating with Big Star-esque lilts. Unfortunately, it all comes across as a style exercise rather than

**OUT:** February 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Radio-ready power pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Matthew Sweet, Fountains Of Wayne, Neilson Hubbard.

the inspired music-making that characterizes power pop success. "Super Ultra Wicked Mega Love" is more stadium cheer than song, combining recited fragments of personal ads with a chorus consisting of the title repeatedly chanted in an apparent attempt to snatch some novelty-oriented modern rock airplay. It's probably coincidence that "The Big Lie," one of the disc's highlights, features cameos by Duritz and the Fountains Of Wayne's Adam Schlesinger. The influence of these guests isn't noticeable, other than that the Aunts sound more spontaneous and sincere on this track than elsewhere. It's nice to see a band be allowed to get back to plying its craft, but in five years' time you'd think they could have come up with some more memorable hooks. >>>Glen Sarvady



**GUS** ★  
**Word Of Mouth Parade**  
 Almo Sounds

There's a legacy of troubadours who have taken their gee-tar on the road, soaked up the local color and written music that reflected their surroundings. Gus is many a train ride short of rivaling Woody Guthrie or even Bob Dylan, but the Los Angeles native recorded his brooding '96 debut during a stint in gloomy Seattle. For the follow-up, Gus went back to LA and assembled a crack team of musicians, including ubiquitous drummer Joey Waronker (Beck, Elliott Smith). The result?

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Nuanced Cali-pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Tom Petty, Chris Isaak, Remy Zero.

A sunnier, more expansive effort that pulls out of the garage and sails down the highway of life. On *Word Of Mouth Parade*, Gus and friends work up a carefree stomp in "Baby Blue Airplane," take a vaguely Caribbean turn in the spry "Summer Day" and settle into radio-ready grooves for "Laugh I Could Learn To Love" and "Please Don't Go." He's adept with a sophisticated ballad as well, slipping into a falsetto in the string-swept "Floodlights" and singing earnestly to a lover in the acoustic guitar and piano-led "Going Our Way." As the title to another of the plaintive tracks, "Gravity," suggests, Gus feels at home in LA, and it's evident on this comfortable-sounding record.

>>>Richard Martin

★ **ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD**

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**HI FI KILLERS**

**Jamaica**  
**Loosegroove**

*Jamaica* breaks from the superfly, '70s TV show funk that the Hi Fi Killers perpetrated on their previous albums, *Loaded* and *Possession*. Here, primary Killers Kevin Lee Oakland and Johnny Horn, white boy DJs who spin regularly at Seattle's Art Bar, delve into dancehall. In order to make the most of their latest stylistic excursion, they took their beats to Kingston, Jamaica, to work with Solgie Hamilton (Shabba Ranks's engineer) and Jamaican producer Charlie Morgan. Additional cred comes from Clinton "Basie" Fearon, who (Gladiators,

**OUT:** January 26.

**FILE UNDER:**

Dancehall and mellow reggae hip-hop.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Bobby Konders, Beenie Man, Beastie Boys' *The In Sound From Way Out*.

Upsetters) sings standard reggae lines like, "Who's gonna judge the judge/Who's gonna guard the guard?/Who's gonna tell the truth to the people?" on "Tell Dem," and Jamaican MCs Scorpion and Blackout, who slinging raspy Jamaican Slang Teng with much piss and vinegar. The Sharpshooters Horn Group (Horn's side band) injects unobtrusive brass sounds into the mellow bouncing beats. The laid-back feel jibes with the quietly murky electronics and smooth bass grooves. Instead of punctuating the politics with aggressive electrofunk punch, the Hi Fi Killers go for inertial chill with background vibrations, muted, texturized beats and low-key instrumentals like "Indo Dub" and "Nuff Na Na Dub," making *Jamaica* subtly relaxing, if not edifying. >>>Callie Chapman



**KODO**

**Sai-so: The Remix Project**  
**Red Ink**

Remix records pose a specific type of dilemma: They exist in the gray area where single-artist releases and various-artist collections intertwine. Who's the author? Who's inspired? On *Sai-so*, the confusion is compounded by the fact that Kodo—a Japanese percussion troupe that creates rhythmic puzzles consisting of only intense beats, an occasional flute and random human shouts of encouragement—has been sampled so often that it's tough not to think that their beats are derivative, when the reality is the opposite. That's a lot of

**OUT:** January 26.

**FILE UNDER:**

Primal pound unwound.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Bahia Black, DJ Krush, DJ Spooky.

baggage to consider while listening to *Sai-so*, a project organized by Bill Laswell and containing remixes by him, DJ Krush, Strobe, David Beal and others. But if you erase your brain, it's all quite easy to understand: Kodo creates a furious beat mirroring the one that's pumping blood inside your body right now, and a slew of remixers want to probe inside there and fudge with it. Not a good idea. The majority of these tracks add useless filler—synthetic hand-claps, spooky Japanese wind chimes, meandering noise—which just diverts attention away from the power of Kodo rhythm. Perhaps in more inspired minds, this would have been worthy. But a better idea would be to cut a breakbeat album and let a bunch of irreverent DJs really fuck it up. >>>Randall Roberts

diane izzo **One**

"Man, a god when he dreams, barely a beggar when he thinks."  
—Hölderlin

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**"We Are the World"**

NYC duo create mystic disco that transcends trance.



**Chris Mills**  
**"Every Night Fight for Your Life"**

Homespun tales of love, loss and devotion.





## LIVING END

### The Living End Reprise

**OUT:** February 2.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Punkabilly.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**

Green Day's Nimrod, Stray Cats, Sham 69.

In a sense, the music that the Living End hammers out is revival music, both of straight-ahead '70s Brit punk and early '80s Stray Cat rockabilly, filtered through the eyes of impressionable little punks looking to harness the power of the three-chord, three-instrument (bass, guitar, drums) perfect circle. The success of such a seemingly played-out formula—recall Sid Vicious's attack on Eddie Cochran's "Something Else" more than 20 years ago—depends, obviously, on your willingness to

view the Living End not as revolutionary musical minds, but devoted disciples looking to hammer out a little corner of a specific universe. In its little corner the band attacks the politics and lifestyles of its native Melbourne, Australia, with cocky but concerned protestations, screaming with the hard-headed notion that it can change things if it yells loud enough. If you're not into the combined sound of punk and rockabilly this late in the millennium, the Living End will roar out of the speakers only to fall flat on the floor, weighted down by the reality that *it's been done*. But if you've got fresh ears and aren't burdened by years of cynicism, *The Living End*, which hit number one down under, just might go upside your jaded head and slap some sense into you.

>>>Randall Roberts



## APRIL MARCH

### Chrominance Decoder Ideal-Mammoth

**OUT:** February 2.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Light rock en Français.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**

Ivy, Dimitri From Paris, Combustible Edison.

April March may occasionally affect a Parisian accent and sing in French, but she is a purely American invention. The brainchild and alter-ego of former Ren & Stimpy illustrator and part-time garage-rocker Elinor Blake, March exists in the same realm of swinging nostalgia that seriously-kidding lounge revivalists Combustible Edison call home—though, like the Combustible folks, March would probably be the last to admit that there's any tongue in either of her rouged cheeks. On *Chrominance Decoder* (not her first

April March disc, but the first with solid national distribution), Blake does her best to approximate a French approximation of American rock 'n' roll that was popular in Europe back in the '60s and has more recently garnered underground respect in the US among exotica aficionados. Stylized and severe, even when it's playing lighthearted games, it's a song form that owes as much, if not more, to Broadway show tunes and hipster cocktail jazz as it does to Elvis or the Beatles. Whether she's singing in accentless English about naive girls ("Kneesocks"), or in deadpan French about a boyfriend ("Mon Petit Ami"), the production by Frenchman Bertrand Burgalat is pure everything-and-the-kitsch'en-sink vintage schmaltz, replete with Bacharachian horn charts, Esquivelian sound-effects, theramin-ish squiggles, and bossa nova beats.

>>>Matt Ashare

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## reviews

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



## OLD SCHOOL VS. NEW SCHOOL

**Various Artists**

**Jive Electro**

**OUT:** February 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

Hip-hop meets  
breakbeat/house.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Fatboy Slim, A Tribe Called  
Quest, Chemical Brothers.

Before hip-hop became the chart-topping, platinum-certified American pop music, street poets and beat junkies ruled the underground with fresh rhymes and iron-clad executions, earning pivotal roles as scene innovators. Jive Records, crucial to hip-hop's formative years, likens the genre's rise to the rise of the underground dance movement—hence, the label's new Electro imprint and its first release, *Old School Vs. New School*. Comprised of influential rap tunes remixed by some of the electronic dance movement's biggest names, the collection is either inventive or insulting, depending upon your school of thought. Bad Boy Bill's hard-house take on Kool Moe Dee's "I Go To Work," for example, will never compare to the original in the minds of the hip-hop hardcore, and it's questionable whether the track will retain interest once its novelty subsides. But *Old School* attempts neither to eclipse the past nor to create new anthems. The compilation is simply a funky and undeniably fun look at how underground vibes have progressed over time. And there are plenty of gems to behold, such as Aphrodite's drum 'n' bass take on A Tribe Called Quest's "Ince Again," Bassbin Twins' breakbeat reworking of Boogie Down Productions' "A Crate Of BDP," and both Grooverider's and Rabbit In The Moon's diverse takes on the compilation's only non-hip-hop/R&B cut, the Stone Roses' "Fools Gold." >>>M. Tye Comer



## WILLIAM PARKER/ IN ORDER TO SURVIVE

**The Peach Orchard**

**AUM Fidelity**

**OUT:** November 11.

**FILE UNDER:**

Heady, visionary jazz.

**R.I.Y.L.:**

Charles Mingus, Matthew Shipp,  
David S. Ware.

If you're in New York listening to a combo subvert harmony and riff on the edges of free jazz, chances are William Parker is the one providing the bass. His work with David S. Ware and Matthew Shipp has secured his reign as the high end of downtown jazz's low end. Parker's own discs reveal his sturdy compositional skills, a facet often undervalued in free jazz, or "creative music," as Parker prefers. Over two discs and more than two hours, *The Peach Orchard* spends its time searching for "it"—an elusive moment of cool that comes only after each player has bleated, beaten or boiled an instrument to its extreme. Some call it pushing the envelope, but for Parker's vision that reference is too mundane—he's looking to expand more metaphysical boundaries. Rob Brown's bracing sax speaks wildly but effectively and Parker's pulse helps pieces like "Three Clay Pots" cook up a sizeable groove, but elsewhere, *The Peach Orchard* can be a bit demanding. It's a bit like looking at too much abstract art in a gallery all at once—"too many notes," a king once said. If you dare, take one album (or even one piece) at a time, as *The Peach Orchard* is often more about possibility than palatability. >>>Steve Ciabattoni





**POLE**  
**CD 1**  
**Matador**

As early as 1981, hip-hop legend Afrika Bambaataa realized that Kraftwerk was making icy, German synth pop that was to change forever the face of modern music. At roughly the same moment, halfway around the globe in Jamaica, King Tubby was using impossibly limited electronic equipment to take apart and rebuild reggae standards in a surreal fashion. Pole's *CD 1* is the place where these two movements collide, and the effect is very much like that of a distant explosion which seems to move

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:** Instrumental post-electronica dub.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Oval, Autechre, Pan American, King Tubby.

inexorably closer, then withdraw, only to burst upon the eardrums again. Imagine a lonesome sound system, heavy on the subwoofers, echoing through the Grand Canyon, with whistling, jittery pan pipes and crystalline melodies that are cold and translucent like frosted glass. By day, Pole, known to his friends as Stefan Betke, is the mastering engineer at the Berlin studios of renowned minimalist techno label Chain Reaction. By night, he searches the city for ghostly, unearthly, beautiful sounds, which he filters through a mile-wide wall of audio crackle and pop in order to produce spine-chilling and gorgeous vistas of sound. Pole's debut is one of the most powerful and evocative electronic records of this decade.

>>>Tim Haslett



**POSTER CHILDREN**  
**New World Record**  
**spinART**

Swept up in the great Illinois major-label signing blitz of 1993, Champaign's Poster Children put out four remarkably uncommercial albums on Sire and Reprise and are now, like former Jawbreaker dude Blake Schwarzenbach (Jets To Brazil) and former Jawbox-er J. Robbins (Burning Airlines), back to doing the indie thing. Ironically, or at least amusingly, the Poster Kids have marked their return from the majors by recording their most accessible album

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:** Millennial post-punk.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Jawbox, Girls Against Boys, Jets To Brazil.

yet, this time at a studio they built for themselves back when the Warner Bros. folks were footing the bill. *New World Record* benefits greatly from guitarists Rick and Jim Valentin's newfound appreciation for dynamics, and by a more tasteful use of the sequencers, samplers, and video game-noises that played such a devastatingly large role on '95's *Junior Citizen*. Less bombastic and more melodic in its updating of what the kids used to call new wave, *New World Record* is even permeated by the creeping paranoia and alienation that defined post-punk pop in the '80s, especially when Rick Valentin does his Ian Curtis impression and the band does its best to sound like Joy Division on "Chemicals."

>>>Matt Ashare



the new album

featuring

"THE PLAN."

"CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE"

and "YOU WERE RIGHT."







**SAM PREKOP**

**Sam Prekop**  
**Thrill Jockey**

From his earliest days in Shrimp Boat through his recent work with the Sea And Cake, Sam Prekop's music has always possessed a daydream vibe, a meandering, free-floating ephemeral quality that drifts throughout his songs like a flock of birds drawing curves in the sky. As he grows as an artist, though, he seems to be moving away from a reliance on simple melody and logical hook, preferring to stretch each progression to reveal the cracks and crevices, inside of which exist other microscopic tunes that compliment—

and occasionally contradict—each other. You can hear the big song, but inside you can hear little songs begging for your ears. On his self-titled solo debut, Prekop employs the production skills of Jim O'Rourke, the guitar work of fellow Sea And Caker Archer Prewitt, and a cast of Chicago session players to create soft pop that resembles most closely—philosophically, not musically—the chilled West Coast vibe of Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker. Which, in the case of Sam Prekop, makes at first for a difficult listen since you can't immediately capture the melody or sing along. Rather, you have to let it breathe awhile. Pop it on, get frustrated at its elusiveness, then relax your ears and let it adjust inside your head. It worked for me.

>>>Randall Roberts



**GLEN SCOTT** ★

**Without Vertigo**  
**550 Music**

Several artists in the past decade have pushed at the boundaries of soul, finding the points where it intersects modern rock while paying homage to its classic romanticism. For every Maxwell or Seal who reinvigorates the genre, however, there's a Terence Trent D'Arby who bursts out and then fizzles. British singer-songwriter Glen Scott makes the latest charge up that hill, and his ambitious debut *Without Vertigo* marks the arrival of a soul explorer and studio wizard. If the album is too crafty and occasionally heavy-handed, it nonetheless overflows

**OUT:** March 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**

Esoteric soul.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Terence Trent D'Arby, Maxwell,  
Lenny Kravitz, Seal.

with creative instrumentation and a willingness to take risks. Blessed with a lovely falsetto and raw melodic gifts, Scott takes his more esoteric (read: British) influences and matches them with down-and-dirty soul tropes. The superfreakish lyrics of "Wet Super Model" are enveloped by a trance-like jungle dance rhythm. "It's Alright," a jab at an unfaithful lover, sports a jaunty guitar melody and a Beatlesque piano break. At the other extreme, Scott threatens ponderousness on his ballads and reflective epics; some succeed (the airy album-opener "Heaven," the baroque "Valentine Molloy"), while others (the churchy "Cold Flame," the turgid, sorrow-drowning "My Protection") are crushed by pretension. Still, one comes away admiring Scott and hoping that his ego—hinted at on the album-closing "Superstar"—doesn't get the better of him.

>>>Chris Molanphy

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THE 3 E.P.'s



**JOHN P. STROHM**

**Vestavia**  
**Flat Earth**

After more than a decade in indie-pop, wanderlust may finally be catching up to John P. Strohm. A founding member of Boston's Blake Babies, the Indiana-born Strohm also helped out the Lemonheads before moving on to marginal success with Antenna, Velo-Deluxe and Polara (with *Vestavia* co-producer Ed Ackerson). The captivating *Vestavia*—named for a suburban area in Strohm's new hometown, Birmingham, Alabama—is a clear statement of Strohm's determination, and it finds him in peak form. It's drenched in classic pop sensibilities ("Wouldn't Want To

**OUT:** February 2.  
**FILE UNDER:**

Pop-rock craftsmen.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Paul Westerberg, Tommy Keene,  
*Damn The Torpedoes*-era  
Tom Petty.

Be Me," "Better Than Nothing," the nimble, Byrds-ian 12-string of "In Your Dreams"), sonic adventure (the dreamy, muscular psychedelia of "For A While" and "Edison Medicine"), and sweet vulnerability ("Sylvia's Gone," "Mission Delores"). The album's vivid characterizations and sweeping songwriting illustrate the precision in Strohm's songwriting and an emerging confidence. He masterfully balances toughness and vulnerability as he searches for peace of mind and a place to belong through much of *Vestavia*. "When home is away/That's where you're gonna stay," he sings on the telling, Lennon-esque "Home." "When away is my home," he adds, "I'll make it on my own." *Vestavia* definitively—and defiantly—proves he can, firmly establishing Strohm as one of contemporary pop's finer talents.

>>>Mark Woodlief



ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CO





## SUGAR RAY

14:59

Lava-Atlantic

On a recent celebrity tournament of VH1's *Rock 'N' Roll Jeopardy*, Sugar Ray lead singer Mark McGrath trounced Graham Nash and Joe Walsh, showing a stunning breadth of pop knowledge for a goateed rock upstart. As impressive as his diversity of musical interest is on a game show, however, it makes for strange listening on Sugar Ray's latest, *14:59* (a self-deprecating reference to the Warholian limit on fame). Not content to ride the Cali ska-gone-tropical vibe of their monster hit "Fly," McGrath and pals ape their way through

every style they love. If you've ever been curious to hear one album contain Bay Area-style punk, Devo-esque new wave, dub reggae ("Live & Direct," featuring KRS-One), and a note-perfect cover of Steve Miller's "Abracadabra"—want to bet this gets pushed as a single if the album starts to flounder?—your wish has been granted. None of these songs are unlistenable, but neither are they expertly executed, and McGrath's frat-boy voice doesn't help. Sunny pop remains the band's strength, as shown by *14:59*'s two best songs: the single "Every Morning" ("Fly" redux) and the flamenco-flavored "Someday." It's very *fin de siècle* for bands to show off how much pop culture they've soaked up, but you wish the good-natured Sugar Ray knew its limitations.

>>>Chris Molanphy



## TEN FOOT POLE

Insider

Epitaph

West Coast punk has the strangest way of sounding all too similar, partly due to the area bands' incestuous habit of swapping members and favoring only a handful of producers. So to gauge what's good, you have to look at the spin a band gives to the formula of requisite big riffs, manic drumming and carefully polished, yet still whiny, vocal harmonies. On *Insider*, Ten Foot Pole's fourth album, the band manages to blend the signatures of NOFX and Bad Religion, which produces 12 songs

with whiplash-inducing intros, a respect for dynamism and a Greg Graffin-styled vocal delivery. Atop that solid foundation, Ten Foot Pole does its best to add sufficient pizzazz in an attempt to make these songs its own. The band tacks on small embellishments, such as a timid display of vocal distortion coupled with oddball, outer-space-sounding guitar noodling on "Seven," a cool ditty about an alien that's been stranded on Earth. There's also the herky-jerky sonic halting of "Late At Night," a portrait of a girl obsessed with cutting her skin. But the derivative nature of the beast looms all over *Insider* and the album offers mostly safe, solid Southern California similarity.

>>>Kelso Jacks



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**CHUCK E. WEISS**  
**Extremely Cool**  
 Slow River

Because he's the title character in Rickie Lee Jones's "Chuck E.'s In Love," more people have heard about LA quasi-legend Weiss than have heard his music. *Extremely Cool* is producer/longtime buddy Tom Waits's attempt to rectify the situation. Weiss is a purist at heart, and Waits keeps his own artiness mostly in check—the feel here is more *Heartattack And Vine* than *Rain Dogs*. Still, the jerry-rigged percussion of "Pygmy Club" is straight out of Waits's later work, and the

**OUT:** February 2.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Beatnik/blues revivalism.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Tom Waits, Dr. John,  
 Royal Fingerbowl.

world's last beatnik clearly had a hand in the double-talk of "Do You Know What I Idi Amin." Beyond this, the album offers generic but lovingly rendered romps through several urban blues styles—swampy on "Just Don't Care," juke-joint jumpy on "Rocking In The Kibbutz Room." At times, the pursuit of authenticity turns to shtick, as on "Roll On Jordan," with its scratchy 78-style production gimmick. Weiss comes off best when his broke-down hipsterism is most exaggerated: The luckless narrator of "Deeply Sorry" finds his girlfriend and mother together in bed, and when Weiss intones, "If you want to find me... just ask the operator for Extremely Cool" over a slinky groove on the title track, you can practically hear the shades wrapping around his head.

>>>Franklin Bruno



**PAUL WESTERBERG**  
**Suicaine Gratification**  
 Capitol

Ever since he disbanded the Replacements in the late '80s to embark on a solo career, former post-punk ruffian Paul Westerberg has been waging an awkward battle with adulthood. The spry acoustic-pop of his first two albums was smart and cheery enough to nearly make up for their lack of piss and vinegar, even if this newfound maturity seemed a bit ill-fitting coming from the Minneapolis punk who once penned "Bastards Of Young." But where those records got by on the winsome reflections of a thirtysomething standing

**OUT:** February 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Good singer/songwriters  
 treading water.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Gin Blossoms, Keith Richards's  
 solo albums, Goo Goo Dolls.

atop the wreckage of his destructive twenties, *Suicaine Gratification* has naught to offer but the fatigue of a songwriter who seems to be growing bored with his own art. The album starts off promisingly enough with the slightly country-bent ballad "It's A Wonderful Lie," on which Westerberg asks himself (and the listener): "What am I doing?/I ain't in my youth/I'm past my prime/Or was that just a pose?" Unfortunately, he seems to answer his own question with the series of sentimental piano ballads and tired mid-tempo rockers that follows. There are a few moments where he hits his stride melodically (the sweetly romantic "Born For Me"), but Westerberg's ringer has always been his smirking sense of humor, of which there's a wearisome lack of here.

>>>Colin Helms

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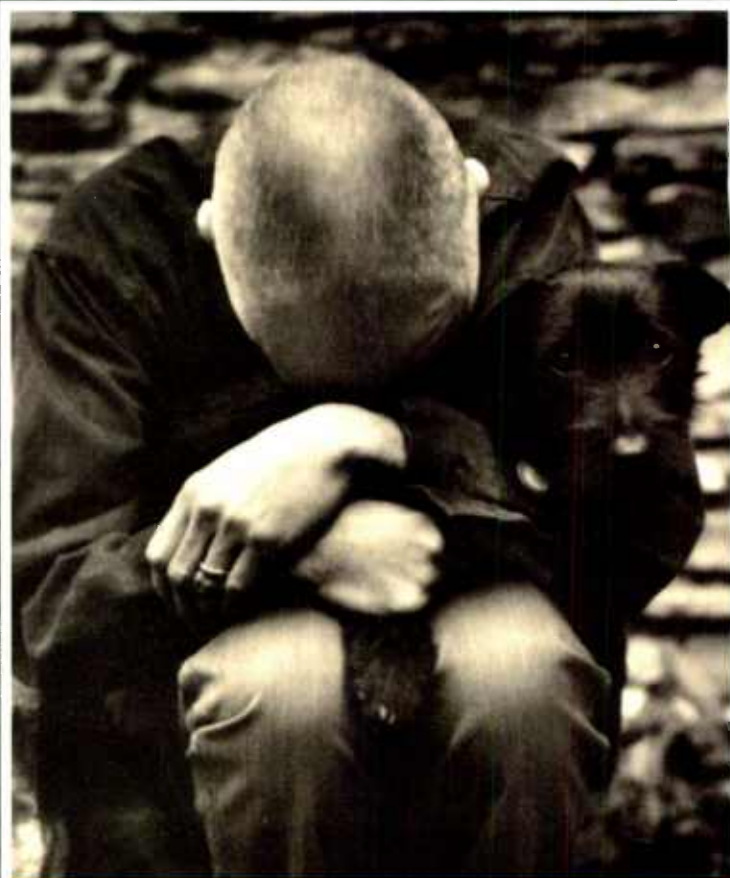
## mixed signals



Since rising from the respected and influential Chicago house scene in 1992, Windy City native **TERRY MULLAN** has proven himself to be one of the boldest talents (and biggest draws) within the American rave/underground club circuit. A house hero in the midst of a scene saturated with techno and breakbeat, Mullan blends

together aggressive, up-tempo drum kicks, soulful bass licks and looped disco samples—an all-mighty groove that is often spliced by his smooth, cut-and-paste mixing style that reveals his hip-hop roots. While no CD release can quite touch the spontaneous energy fans experience during live sets, **Speaker Phreaker** (Sm:)e Communications) is one the finest legitimately released (non-bootlegged) demonstrations of Mullan's prowess to date. Incorporating tunes from his American contemporaries with those of his UK counterparts, the 16-track, hour-plus mix is some of the funkier house fare to hit your speakers this season. Contributions from DJ Sneak ("In Da Clouds"), Jan Driver ("V8") and Speaker Phreakers—Mullan and Chicago's DJ Halo—"Nickel Bag Da Funk") up the ante... There is little that can be said about UK trance DJ **SASHA** that hasn't been said in the pages of any British dance magazine time and time again. But while the skills of this world-renowned jockey have been the stuff of urban legend in his homeland for nearly a decade—he was recently voted one of the world's top five talents in English rag *DJ Magazine's* annual reader's poll—the past few years have seen Sasha focus on making a mark on US soil. Sasha and partner-in-crime John Digweed have taken their mix of sweeping progressive house and driving ethereal trance to cities from New York to San Francisco, and their commitment to wooing American audiences is one of the main reasons their brand of anthemic, emotive club music is becoming more commonplace on domestic shores. Sasha presents his most recent catalog of music on **Global Underground: San Francisco** (Boxed-Thrive), a two-CD set and the third domestic release from the regarded UK series, following releases by fellow crusaders Digweed and Paul Oakenfold. Over the course of the two discs, Sasha moves from dreamy, soothing house-influenced textures to fierce, acid-drenched frequencies, providing an honest overview of the music American audiences have come to expect from him in recent months. And while *San Francisco* does not harness the technical superiority or artistic inspiration found in Sasha & Digweed's *Northern Exposure* series, the disc is still a must-hear for the music's devoted followers and new converts alike.

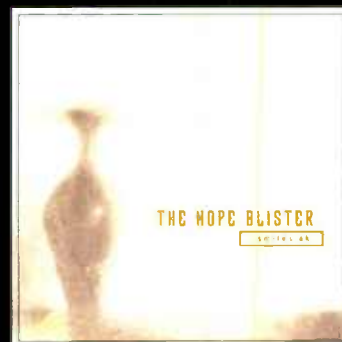
>>>M. Tye Comer



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# ENNIO MORRICONE

**"I think that Morricone's music has a basic timelessness. It emotionally affects people."** —*Stephen McRobbie*

Deciding what is classic and what is merely nostalgic in our culture has never been harder than now. Does an Eames chair exert a timeless expression of form, or does it just look rad at the moment? Will white eye shadow live any longer in our cosmetics palette than the gauche robin's egg blue that went before it? As for music, the faster we flip through styles, the faster we approach a wall of kitsch, certain to hit it at top speed. Although the lounge craze threatened to nullify the importance of the '60s soundtrack, the work of Ennio Morricone managed to rise above the tacky frou-frou of that ill-advised "movement" to take its rightful place in the pantheon of great, elemental music.

Ennio Morricone began his career as Sergio Leone's second choice to score *A Fistful Of Dollars*. No doubt Leone was glad that his first choice bowed out, as Morricone's score became as emblematic of the spaghetti western as Leone's cold drifters and banditos. From scoring the Italian westerns, Morricone moved on to all manner of soundtracks, from mainstream and B movies to television music and avant-garde compositions. As his recent scores for *Cinema Paradiso* and *Lolita* attest, he is still a highly active composer and arranger, but it is his work from 1965 to 1972 that makes up what is generally regarded as his classic period. It is from this body of scores and compositions that some of today's more clever and stylish musicians have been drawing influence. Perhaps that is a hallmark of a classic: It lives to see another day.

Morricone's music insinuates itself into your consciousness long before you become aware of the compositional qualities comprising each tune. Most people first hear Morricone floating above Clint Eastwood's squint in a late-night broadcast of a Leone western. Stephen McRobbie, Morricone enthusiast and member of the Scottish pop group the Pastels, remembers his introduction more vaguely than specifically. "It was quite a long time ago, maybe 14 or 15 years now. I first became aware of him from the spaghetti westerns on TV. At the end of the credits I would see his name and it would stick in my head. And then I managed to get a copy of *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*." Tim Gane, of Great Britain's Stereolab, is another Morricone exalter who discovered the cool music of the Leone films before he realized what it was. "It was some of the first music I ever got excited about, but it wasn't until much later that his compositional style, chord sequences and instrumentalism totally captivated me."

McRobbie and Gane are among a handful of the current pop, ambient and post-rock musicians that are synthesizing the ideas and motifs of Ennio Morricone into their own work. From Barry Adamson to John Zorn, there are several contemporary artists in whose work you can hear his extended vocal patterning, compositional stylings and expressive moods. Morricone's influence on these and other artists is not always acknowledged or even recognized, as it is more a flavor that Morricone imparts rather than a strict outline. In the static singsong of post-rock practitioners Tortoise you can hear the metronomic swagger of Morricone's clean-cut Western themes. In the hands of soundtrack savant Barry Adamson, Morricone's leanness



ENNIO MORRICONE

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/VENICE, CA

the scene is now



and mystery creates haunting nostalgic codes. Ambient Frenchmen Air put the continental cool of the composer's early '70s output to use in their early singles, and the music of their fellow countryman Kid Loco brings to mind Morricone's elegant detachment by creating a cinematic ambiance with phantom movie dialogue.

It was John Zorn who started the ball rolling with his 1987 tribute to Ennio Morricone, which took its name from the Lee Van Cleef western, *The Big Gundown*. Zorn's complex imagining of the film's theme, strange enough as written, took on a bizarre life of its own with buzz-sawing interludes and keening wails. His approach was neither orthodox nor reverential, but like most of the new crop of Morricone acolytes, Zorn is more interested in the conceptual modes of the composer rather than the specific notes and chords. As Gane stresses, "Any Morricone influence at present is usually in the form of pastiche and I'm just not into that. The freedom the soundtrack medium gives 'pop' composition is the one area in which I've always tried to aspire to." McRobbie declines, as well, from citing a specific influence to his songwriting style. "The Pastels have never tried to copy anyone else's music. It never interested us. But I sometimes try and imagine how he creates drama and apply it to the music we make."

It is no easy feat to create more than 300 scores and compositions. In fact, it is well beyond most composers' comprehension. Although not every Ennio Morricone score is a complete winner, his uncanny sense of melody often creates a lyrical interlude in an otherwise humdrum score. In Gane's estimation, it is his "hyperdelic arrangements" that work that magic. "For me," he says, "it's these warped arrangements which seem to metaphysically relate to the action of the film on screen. Somehow an enhanced 3-D effect is achieved by his deformed and bizarre cadences coupled with his exaggerated textures." For McRobbie it is Morricone's blending of classical,

folkloric and modern sounds that signal his greatness. "One of the things I really like about his music is that it forces you to use your imagination. He doesn't do the obvious thing. Like the way he uses harmonica is really quite abstract. The instruments he's using are often traditional, but a lot of the music is, in a way, quite futuristic." Gane concurs that Morricone's use of instrumentation has an effect on his own musical style, noting his "odd choice of instrument to play a particular line, his use of brilliantly exaggerated vocals and his experimentation with melody" as influences.

As for other bands influenced by the Morricone sound, Tim Gane is slight in his appraisal. "Some of Beck's new LP [*Mutations*] nods to Morricone and is well done." He also cites his friend and collaborator Sean O'Hagan of the High Llamas as being highly interested in Morricone's oeuvre. McRobbie swings his arc of analysis a bit wider, noting the influence on the aforementioned Kid Loco, Air, John Zorn and Tortoise. "I do think he is particularly in vogue at the moment," he says. "Some of Stereolab's things are very Morricone-like. Movietone has similar feelings. And Jim O'Rourke is definitely going for the look." As for why it seems to be Morricone's day in the sun, McRobbie says, "There are a lot of reissues at the moment and people are more aware than ever of how much music he actually scored. I think that the music has a basic timelessness. It emotionally affects people."

If there is another hallmark of a composer's music reaching classic status it is that its adherents are so poised in their respect and appreciation for it. "I think he is one of the best songwriters of the 20th century," says McRobbie. "The thing with Morricone's music is that it personally establishes the atmosphere of those films. If you take it outside that context and stop thinking of the films for a moment, it could be really different music. It's the way he makes you feel." **NMM**



KATRINA MITCHELL

STEPHEN McROBBIE



RANKIN

AIR



JEAN CLAUDE DHIEU

STEREOLAB



# Barry Manilow

**In terms of musical taste, I had such promise as a toddler. Dean Martin was my idol. Every week, I would run to the television set and try to kiss his image. I even named my first dog after the man. In retrospect, my parents probably should have sought professional help—having your first crush on an alcoholic crooner probably isn't a tremendously healthy sign... not to mention the fact that my puppy died a month after I got him.**

I soon outgrew my Dino fixation, however, and turned my attention to the albums my aunt had left at our house. The downward spiral had begun, as I tossed aside Beatles albums in favor of the Monkees. I was six years old and I was smitten. But even my crush on cute little Davy Jones and my affection for Mr. Martin couldn't prepare me for the first true love of my life—Barry Manilow.

I'm not really sure how I stumbled across Barry, but my world was quickly transformed. Endless listenings to "Last Train To Clarksville" and "Stepping Stone" gave way to "Mandy" and "Could It Be Magic." I bought one cassette, and then the rest. I joined the fan club and got a black-and-white photo, which I kept in a special box. I learned to write in the pseudo-Deco font emblazoned on the front of *Barry Manilow Live*. (What amazingly good fortune that "Barbara" contains the same letters as "Barry"!)

I wore out at least one copy of the live album. I was the only kid in class who had the same favorite singer as our very popular teacher, Mr. Nichols. I was cool.

Okay, maybe I wasn't cool. I was happy, though. Thoroughly enthralled with Barry's rich, beautiful voice and the stories he wove in his songs, I spent hours with my cassettes, constructing the stories—the long-distance love affair of "Weekend In New England," the wistful nostalgia for an ex immortalized in "Even Now." Barry's world was full of romance—of longing, loving, breaking up, remembering and trying to forget. (My eventual gravitation toward goth seems pretty inevitable, eh?)

In Barry, I found a kindred spirit, someone who was as much of a hopeless romantic as I was (or at least as much of a hopeless romantic as you can be at 10). In addition, he had style (admittedly questionable in retrospect), wit (listen to some of the banter on the live album), talent (he wrote all of the really great jingles of the '70s) and production values! And besides, he wrote "the songs that make the young girls sing"—that was me!

Like any great romance, especially the prepubescent ones, Barry and I eventually grew apart. He became increasingly schmaltzy and I got wise enough to figure out that my inherent geekiness already made junior high a risky enough proposition without the handicap of a visible Barry Manilow fixation. We had a brief reunion when my high school marching band played "One Voice," but I hadn't thought much about him until I started working for Triple X Records.

It was there that I encountered another lapsed Barry fan, and it was this contact that rekindled the flame. Jeff and I called someone in Arista's publicity department and promised them anything in the Triple X catalog—including the Jane's Addiction EP—for any and all Barry albums. We were anxiously awaiting *Barry Manilow I and II* on CD; instead we got a Christmas EP and some other truly lame disc. We were disappointed, but back on the bandwagon.

A couple of years later, I became friends with someone at

Arista. I happened to mention my love for Barry and to my delight, he sent me a huge package with several greatest hits albums, the box set, the live album (finally on CD!) and *Swingin' With The Big Bands*. Score! Since the bulk of my history with Barry includes and precedes *One Voice*, I was a little disappointed by the inclusion of so much latter-era material on these albums. But damn if the old songs don't still hold up. "This One's For You," "Somewhere In The Night," "Can't Smile Without You"—close to two decades later, they still make me swoon.

Yep, Barry and I have had our ups and downs—I have to admit to feeling a little betrayed when I recently looked at the songwriting credits and realized that he didn't write "I Write The Songs"—but I feel like I can now embrace the things I've loved about him all along. In fact, it's almost like the chorus from "Looks Like We Made It"—"Looks like we made it/Left each other on the way to another love/Looks like we made it/Or I thought so 'til today/Until you were there—everywhere..." I love you, Barry!

NMM



CARL STOLWA



BY IAN CHRISTE

## metal top 25

- 1 **MESHUGGAH**  
Chaosphere Nuclear Blast America
- 2 **SEPULTURA**  
Against Roadrunner
- 3 **BLACK SABBATH**  
Reunion Epic
- 4 **METALLICA**  
Garage Inc. Elektra-EEG
- 5 **NOTHINGFACE**  
Everyday Atrocity DCide-Mayhem
- 6 **SPINESHANK**  
Strictly Diesel Roadrunner
- 7 **DEATH**  
The Sound Of Perseverance Nuclear Blast America
- 8 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Extreme Music Slab-CMC International
- 9 **BOLT THROWER**  
Mercenary Metal Blade
- 10 **SHADOWS FALL**  
Somber Eyes To The Sky Lifeless
- 11 **SOUNDTRACK**  
StrangelandTVT
- 12 **SOILENT GREEN**  
Sewn Mouth Secrets Relapse
- 13 **SUICIDAL TENDENCIES**  
Six The Hard Way Suicidal
- 14 **MALEVOLENT CREATION**  
The Fine Art Of Murder Pavement
- 15 **QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE**  
Queens Of The Stone Age Loosegroove
- 16 **FEAR FACTORY**  
Obsolete Roadrunner
- 17 **PIECEMEAL**  
Somewhere Between Crucifixion & Resurrection Lies Redemption Wonderdrug
- 18 **STINKBUG**  
Sweettit Last Beat
- 19 **CRADLE OF FILTH**  
Cruelty And The Beast Fierce-Mayhem
- 20 **SAM BLACK CHURCH**  
The Black Comedy Wonderdrug
- 21 **DAMNATION A.D.**  
Kingdom Of Lost Souls Revelation
- 22 **EPOCH OF UNLIGHT**  
What Will Be Has Been The End
- 23 **ROB ZOMBIE**  
Hellbilly Deluxe Geffen
- 24 **MY DYING BRIDE**  
34.788% Peaceville
- 25 **CRYPTOPSY**  
Whisper Supremacy Century Media

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

## ENSLAVED

Blodhemne

Osmose USA

Norway's Enslaved is a group of progressives in an already revolutionary genre. Where black metal is typically pinned down on either side by melody and outrage, this group vaults madly across the map, refuses to answer any questions, and ends songs abruptly rather than ever committing to a pattern. It's mixed-up and majestic music, which insinuates itself on a room like a creeping malevolent mist. As we would hope, most of the vocals are a distorted shriek, and the tempo is quadruple the dictate of natural law. Still, secretive keyboard bleeps and unusual horse rhythms sneak past every corner. Among other moments, the intro to "Nidingaslakt" is a non-repetitive chunk riff which more characteristically follows the logic of a cut-up digital drum pattern than the behavior of a living band. Enslaved is brilliant, because it makes such endless, complex permutation sound natural. All of this is aggressive as hell, but you'd have to look pretty hard to find evidence of evildoing. Robert Bly would find great validation in the histrionic man-crooning that arcs over "Henker Til Ragnarok." Still, the resistance to predictable structures is an obviously militant creative choice. While the world turns ever more cool and minimal, Enslaved is crooked, explosive, and rebellious, forging a sensational original identity in a culture laden with ever more intense codes. Plus they have nice Viking hats.



>>> **AURA NOIR** must be a good band, because it's as easy to enjoy *Deep Tracts Of Hell* (Hammerheart) as it is to watch a fire consume an elementary school. The group's immediate appeal is a course in hardcore-influenced basement metal, the abrasive fluency of early Possessed and Destruction settled in a Burzum-ized nest of nettles. However, if it were a cinch to mix such a concoction with vitality, there would have been 300 more top-notch metal albums last year. Aura Noir's secret is speed, speed, and more speed, and let the suffocating slag pile up on the side of the road. The band plays without ponderous nods to metal history, and that comes much appreciated... There is **WITCHERY**, too, an exceedingly raw Florida act that could pass for Aura Noir's stumpy cousins. Harkening to Seminole Satanites like Death and Dead, Witchery is a band of lo-fi devils inspired by the gravelly sound of a steak knife penetrating a ribcage in a cheap horror film. The group's five-song demo *Evil Shall Prevail '98* is cheap and drippy, and it hurts just right—ripe with the crude feeling of dread and willfulness that only surfaces in metal and very dire blues. Congratulations, fellas... **EXHUMED**, on the other hand, makes the long-perfected death metal from the accessible early '90s. Combining post-thrash leanings with a breeziness pioneered in Cannibal Corpse, *Gore Metal* (Relapse) is an intense, ugly, and predictable response to practice room overkill. The enthusiasm is there, but just because the band is feeling it doesn't mean I am. In terms of pristine calculated ability to stimulate morbid curiosity, the record is like a replica Civil War musket, which is respectable but not exactly a compliment.



# BOLA

Soup

Skam

With the recent domestic release of the Boards Of Canada record, US audiences have been introduced to a tiny Manchester label called Skam, which is notorious for its elusiveness, its tendency to make available only tiny quantities of each release. This might seem an elitist marketing move, an attempt to restrict the audience, but the Skam folks spend so much attention to detail in artwork and sound quality that it's easy to forgive them. Like Boards Of Canada's *Music Has The Right To Children*, Bola's first full-length strings together a series of gorgeous, crystalline melodies with latticework percussion and heavy drum sounds. On tracks such as "Aguilla," this technique is brought to a new level in which form and content seem to clash, yet are so beautifully synchronized that there won't be a dry eye in the house. Like the exquisite early music of the Durutti Column (another Manchester group), there is a plaintive quality to this album that hints at song structures, but veers away as soon as convention seems to predominate. In many ways, the spirit of Bola's *Soup* is rooted equally in the tradition of deep vocal house and disco in that it is highly emotional, moving music that retains a powerful rhythmic punch. You will likely hear more about Bola and other Skam artists over the next couple of years.



>>> In this column I've lamented the sorry state of drum 'n' bass many times over, but every time the death knell starts to ring, along come a couple of records that restore my faith in the art form. Thus, we have the lacerating sonic impact of **ED RUSH & OPTICAL's** long-awaited *Wormhole* LP (Virus), which has all the fury of an angered doppelganger haunting its host across the globe until vengeance has been meted out. This is a scary, evil record which actually never takes itself too seriously, though I wouldn't recommend spending a lot of time alone listening to the ten tracks here. Optical, who produced the recent Grooverider album, is known in many circles for his production dexterity and ability to make records sound at once crisp and polished and flanged-out and filthy. Ed Rush is the Freddie Krueger of drum 'n' bass, a dangerous, malevolent spirit who constantly returns in mutated form to make tracks such as "Point Blank," which still scares the hell out of me, even as I wear a wide grin on my face. The marriage of Rush & Optical is perfect. Their furious brand of tech-step carries you along on a dizzying ride through hell, complete with staccato, machine gun-like percussion and drum breaks that are doubled over like palm trees in a hurricane... Not dissimilar in its intricate, powerful production is **KLUTE's** first full-length record, *Causal Bodies* (Certificate 18). Klute is actually one Tom Withers, a onetime Connecticut resident who used to front a punk band called the Stoopids before moving to Britain, where he started making the sort of drum 'n' bass that is still very hard to categorize. His singles have been experiments in out-jazz, muscular percussion and breakbeats that seem to come from places you wouldn't expect. *Causal Bodies* is by no means a dance floor record; rather it moves in out and of sensory perception, flickering at the edge of consciousness like a half-remembered dream.

## dance top 25

- 1 **GROOVERIDER**  
Mysteries Of Funk Higher Ground/Columbia-CRG
- 2 **TALVIN SINGH**  
OK Island
- 3 **KRUDER & DORFMEISTER**  
The K&D Sessions Stud!o K7
- 4 **PAUL VAN DYK**  
Seven Ways Mute
- 5 **FATBOY SLIM**  
You've Come A Long Way, Baby Astralwerks
- 6 **THE ORB**  
U.F. Off: The Best Of The Orb Island
- 7 **HIVE**  
Devious Methods fir-London
- 8 **FUNKER VOGT**  
Execution Tracks Metropolis
- 9 **NEOTROPIC**  
Mr. Brubaker's Strawberry Alarm Clock Ninja Tune
- 10 **PAUL OAKENFOLD**  
Tranceport Kinetic-Reprise
- 11 **PLASTIKMAN**  
Artifakts (BC) M\_nus/Novamute-Mute
- 12 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Elektro-Discharge DSBP
- 13 **MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO**  
Actual Sounds + Voices Nothing-Interscope
- 14 **SPAHN RANCH**  
Beat Noir Cleopatra
- 15 **LEATHER STRIP**  
Yes - I'm Limited Vol. III Metropolis
- 16 **S.P.O.C.K.**  
Assignment Earth Subspace Communications
- 17 **DJ SPOOKY THAT SUBLIMINAL KID**  
Riddim Warfare Outpost
- 18 **ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION**  
Rafi's Revenge Slash-London
- 19 **60 CHANNELS**  
Tuned In Turned On World Domination
- 20 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats, Vol. 1-4 Tommy Boy
- 21 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Moonshine Over America 98 Moonshine
- 22 **SQUAREPUSHER**  
Music Is Rotted One Note Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 23 **SKINNY PUPPY**  
ReMix Dys Temper Nettwerk
- 24 **DUB PISTOLS**  
Point Blank 1500-A&M
- 25 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Elastic 21-3-Arcade America

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



BY ERIC COLEMAN

## hip-hop top 25

- 1 **ROOTS**  
Adrenaline MCA
- 2 **OUTKAST**  
Rosa Parks LaFace-Arista
- 3 **BRAND NUBIAN**  
Don't Let it Go To Your Head Arista
- 4 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats Vol. 1-4 Tommy Boy
- 5 **METHOD MAN**  
Dangerous Grounds Def Jam
- 6 **TRAGEDY KHADAFI**  
Blood Type Universal
- 7 **PETE ROCK**  
Tru Master Loud-RCA
- 8 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Slam Sampler Immortal-Epic
- 9 **JAY-Z**  
Hard Knock Life Roc-A-Fella-Def Jam
- 10 **FAITH EVANS**  
Love Like This Bad Boy-Arista
- 11 **PACEWON**  
I Declare War Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 12 **REDMAN**  
I'll Be Dat! Def Jam
- 13 **2PAC**  
Changes Interscope
- 14 **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST**  
Like It Like That Jive
- 15 **BUSTA RHYMES**  
Gimme Some More Elektra-EEG
- 16 **PETE ROCK**  
The Game Loud-RCA
- 17 **BLACK STAR**  
Definition Rawkus
- 18 **DJ QUIK**  
Hand In Hand Arista
- 19 **HIEROGLYPHICS**  
You Never Knew Hierperium
- 20 **AFU-RA**  
Whirlwind Thru Cities Gee Street-V2
- 21 **RZA**  
B.O.B.B.Y. Gee Street-V2
- 22 **BAD SEED**  
Dem Grits Makin'
- 23 **L.A. THE DARKMAN**  
Spring Waters Supreme Team
- 24 **DEMASTAS**  
Ain't No Sunshine London
- 25 **CYPRESS HILL**  
Tequila Sunrise Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG

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

## PEANUT BUTTER WOLF ★

My Vinyl Weighs A Ton

Stones Throw

San Francisco's Stones Throw label has been pumping out amazing underground hip-hop for over two years now, and it's about time that the label's proprietor, DJ Peanut Butter Wolf, finally gets his chance to shine. As he proves on his debut full-length, he's not only Stones Throw's CEO and A&R Director, but also its best musical resource. As a producer, Peanut Butter has an obvious love for both hard drums and tossing changes into a track mid-song, making damn sure that you're paying attention. Outside of the three supreme DJ-centered tracks (including the breathtaking epic "Tale Of Five Cities," which features Kid Koala, Rob Swift, Shortkut, Cut Chemist and J-Rocc, among others, cutting like mad), it's the vocalists who make this the truly props-worthy package. Planet Asia kills on "Definition Of Ill" and "In Your Area," Rasco rips up "Hold Up" and "Run The Line," the skills of the late Charizma are remembered with "Keep On Rockin' It," and the Lootpack and Kazi represent solidly on "Styles, Crews, Flows, Beats" and "Breaks 'Em Down," respectively. For the best of what the left coast has to offer, you won't do much better than this.



Don't even think about sleeping on **DEFARI's** impressive and mature debut, *Focused Daily* (Tommy Boy). A member of Los Angeles's Likwit Crew, Defari not only holds two masters degrees, but he's also a killer on the mic, with a rock-solid flow, intelligent lyrics and a distinctive voice. The production on *Focused Daily* is split between Cali-based aces Evidence, Alchemist and E-Swift, and Defari is aided vocally by pals Tha Alkaholiks and Phil Tha Agony (on "Likwit Connection") and Xzibit and Tash (on the excellent "Thunder & Lightning"). But as he also shows on solo works like "These Dreams," "Keep It On The Rise," "Never Lose Touch," and "People's Choice," this is an MC with much to offer, and many places still to go... Brooklyn's Sir Menelik is still up to his persona-hopping tricks, and his latest incarnation is a street-wise lyrical howitzer named **SCARAMANGA**. The great production on *Seven Eyes, Seven Horns* (Sun Large-Fat Beats) comes courtesy of the very up-and-coming Scholarwise, who lays down some of the best underground beats to come from a single source in quite a while. Over these minimal, brooding soundscapes, Menelik's lightning-fast raps detail the world of a street hustler supreme, with a slippery, Wu-inspired flow that never fails to captivate and entertain. Add some help from Godfather Don on two cuts and you can't go wrong... It's been a while since Wu-warrior **METHOD MAN** has been on the solo tip. To remedy this, he returns with *Tical 2000: Judgement Day* (Def Jam), a solid and entertaining but generally musically unimaginative effort. This isn't the end of the world, though—you could listen to Meth rapping over Liberace and it would sound dope. And sound dope he does. Augmented by Wu upstart Streetlife (who, not coincidentally, is managed by Meth) and a cast of well-wishers ranging from Left Eye and Chris Rock to Inspectah Deck, Raekwon and Redman, Method Man spins his husky-throated tales in prime form, with cuts like "Dangerous Grounds," "Grid Iron Rap," "Elements" and "Big Dogs" shining like the gold around his neck.



"Styles, Crews, Flows, Beats" by Peanut Butter Wolf appears on this month's CD. **march**1999





>>> Those who were disappointed that **U2's** *The Best Of 1980-1990* skimmed on the early stuff, or who didn't want to pay 20 bucks for one revised version of an old B-side, are directed to the import single of "Sweetest Thing" (Island (UK)). Like most UK-chart-directed singles, it comes in two versions; the one to look for, though, is the one with live versions of "Twilight" and "An Cat Dubh." Recorded at the same 1983 Red Rocks concert that produced *Under A Blood Red Sky*, they catch U2 in the brief window where they were the greatest live band in the world, after they'd built dazzlingly tight instrumental rapport but before their blazing passion started to ossify into shtick. The other one isn't bad either—it's backed with two songs from their first single, "Stories For Boys" and "Out Of Control," recorded live in early 1981, and it's a glimpse at them just as they were getting their act together—and, honestly, the new "Sweetest Thing" is nice too. Bonus: no phone calls to world leaders!



>>> On a similar "cheaper than buying the double-CD greatest-hits" front, **DEPECHE MODE's** "Only When I Lose Myself" (Reprise)—the only new one on *The Singles 86>98*—has come out as two different CD-singles in the US.

(What's up with that? Wouldn't all the remixes fit on one single?) "Lose Myself" is far from the best song Martin Gore's come up with, and even though Gus Gus's "Longplay Mix" of it on the better of the two singles makes a healthy bounce out of its Tim Simenon-produced bass part, it still gets a little dull. But keep listening for a neat oddity: DJ Shadow's remix of "Painkiller," which interpolates a few bits of Leonard Lecour's soul obscurity "Kill The Pain" and gives the song's quasi-industrial minor-key riffs some old-school hip-hop bite.

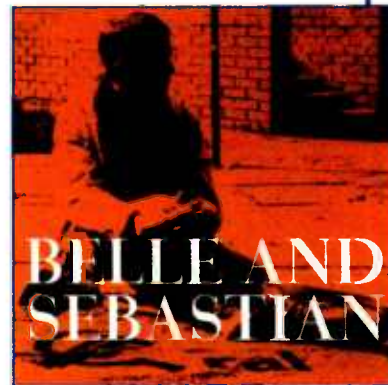
>>> Matt Elliot of **THIRD EYE FOUNDATION** made his name by hybridizing the two main schools of recent music from Bristol: the guitar thunderstorms of Flying Saucer Attack and Amp and the menacing drum 'n' bass and post-dub of Massive Attack and its associates. With "Fear Of A Wack Planet" (Domino), an adjunct to his recent album *You Guys Kill Me*, he's taken a sharp left turn. It's essentially guitarless, built instead on what sound like shards of Greek Orthodox chant, and instead of the double-time beats he's used before, he's slowed

## BELLE & SEBASTIAN

"This Is Just A Modern Rock Song"

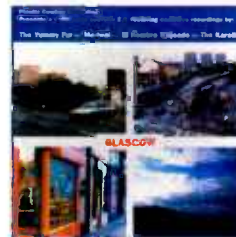
Jeepster

It's been over a year since Belle & Sebastian's last single, but they're a singles band at least as much as, say, the Smiths were—and the continuing tinted-photograph series on their record sleeves isn't the only sign that the Smiths were a big influence. "Modern Rock Song" has been floating around the band's repertoire for a couple of years, but B&S have been saving it for a single release. It's the simplest song Stuart Murdoch has written yet—three chords, a little singsong melody—and the longest, at almost eight minutes. But it's funny and charming and meticulously, lovingly orchestrated, slowly building an ornate instrumental facade on its self-consciously "modern rock" frame. Best moment: a second singer—could it be guitarist Stevie Jackson?—taking over for a verse, groping for the notes: "We are four boys in our corduroys/We're not terrific but we're competent." Two of the disc's other songs aren't quite up to Belle & Seb's usual standards—Murdoch's "I Know Where The Summer Goes," a mooning-over-youth toss-off, and "The Gate," Isobel Campbell's second recorded song and a so-so attempt to follow Murdoch's example—but the fourth is another of the band's high points to date. "Slow Graffiti," written for the movie *The Acid House*, has a little guitar-and-drum hook with the classic grace of Burt Bacharach or "Tennessee Waltz," and a horn section that does great things for it. Give this band a full orchestra to play with, somebody.



the rhythms way down. If you're thinking "sounds like Enigma or something," you're right in theory but not in practice: Elliot is too attached to the scent of fear to let things get too pretty. The religious choruses are set against themselves and blurred into an indistinct, accusatory mass, and the beats, slithering backwards or opening up into heavily processed cries, are unmistakably dark and unnerving.

>>> A few quick drops of the needle: **GUIDED BY VOICES** fans should keep an eye out for an unpretentious little 7" comp, *Rebound Vol. III* (Rebound), featuring "Panthers," a brief, sure-footed rocker from the band's late 1995 sessions with Steve Albini. It's also got tracks by Swearing At Motorists, To Rococo Rot, Bill Ding, Hood and Marmoset, most of them pretty insubstantial... Skin Graft's AC/DC tribute series continues with **Sides 7-10**, a double 7" taking the concept out into the stratosphere. Mt. Shasta's "Whole Lotta Rosie" and Killdozer's "Let Me Put My Love Into You" are fairly straightforward, if ultra-heavy, readings, but then there's the Denison/Kimball Trio's feathery instrumental "Back In Blanc," bearing only the faintest genetic resemblance to "Back In Black." And what are we to make of Zeek Sheck's Pee-Wee's *Playhouse*-style bizarro-fest "Wowy—The Love Song"?... Four fine bands from the Glasgow underground turn up on **Glasgow EP** (Plastic Cowboy); if Mogwai's "I Can't Remember" is a throwaway for them and El Hombre Trajeado never quite get off the ground, the Yummy Fur's "Shivers" is as enthusiastically tetchy and bumpy as we've come to expect from them, and the Karelia get points for noting that their "New Year In New York" was "recorded at Argyle Knitting Factory."





BY JAMES LIEN

>>> The venerated jazz label Blue Note continues to celebrate its 60th Anniversary in high style, rolling out a series of remastered editions of what seems like virtually all of its classic albums. The latest batch includes '50s and '60s titles from **MCCOY TYNER**, **JOE HENDERSON**, **HORACE SILVER**, **CANNONBALL ADDERLY**, **ART BLAKEY**, **HERBIE HANCOCK** and **HANK MOBLEY** (whose album *Soul Station* is one of the classics of the "soul jazz" genre). There's also **ERIC DOLPHY**'s landmark cutting-edge album *Out To Lunch*, and a reissue of *Unity* by organist **LARRY YOUNG**, an underrated player whom John Medeski cites as one of his main inspirations. Late last year, Blue Note also snuck out a fabulous CD by unique two-



handed jazz guitarist **STANLEY JORDAN**, entitled simply *Live In New York*. Although later in the '80s the guitarist got gimmicky and succumbed to commercialized smooth jazz, this previously unreleased live recording captures a dazzling virtuoso performance in a straight-ahead setting at the beginning of his career.

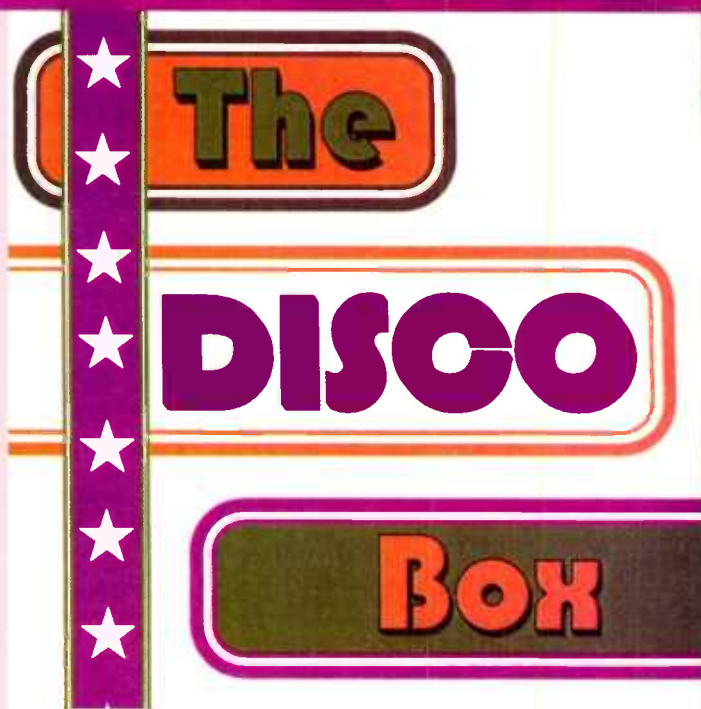
>>> In other jazz reissue news, indie label Koch has begun licensing a slew of jazz records from the depths of the Atlantic Records jazz archives, many of them albums from the '70s that have never before been issued on CD. The first batch includes two phenomenal early '70s albums by the **ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO**, *Baptizum* and *Fanfare For The Warriors*. (Interestingly, *Baptizum* was recorded at the same Ann Arbor Blues And Jazz Festival as the *Motor City Blues* compilation mentioned below, only one year earlier.) There's also an interesting album by **CLIFFORD JORDAN**, where the saxophonist *Plays Leadbelly*. Many people discuss how blues and jazz are related, but this record proves the point. The most intriguing album of the lot is **GIL EVANS**'s 1973 *Svengali*, which could have been called "Switched On Cool." It finds the cool jazz composer/arranger experimenting with



buzzing synthesizers and kung fu funk, and gluing it all together with his trademark strange arrangements. That and the very disco-fied typeface on the album cover make it an instant lounge favorite.

>>> Fans of raw, unrepentant blues should sit up and take note of two recent releases. Total Energy-Bomp! has just released a jaw-droppingly great blues compilation called **Motor City Blues**. Produced by John Sinclair, it's culled from a stash of tapes recorded live onstage at the Ann Arbor Blues And Jazz Festival in 1973. Detroit performers are an idiosyncratic bunch, and this informal, loose live recording is a treasure, featuring such unsung names as Dr. Ross (a one-man band who simultaneously played harmonica, guitar and kicked on drums with his feet), Eddie Kirkland, Bobo Jenkins, and One String Sam (yep, his homemade guitar had only one). At one point during Washboard Willie's set, an inebriated man wandered onstage, grabbed the mic and started singing along. Ah, the '70s... Another spectacular blues reissue comes from Chicago's Delmark Records. **ROBERT NIGHTHAWK** gets cited again and again in blues history as a prime influence on Chicago heavies like Muddy Waters, Elmore James and Earl Hooker. *Bricks In My Pillow* is a collection of his raucous post-war Chicago blues recordings from the '50s that can easily stand beside the classics by greats such as Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters or Little Walter. Nighthawk was a bluesman that other bluesmen on the scene all looked up to, making him one of the key behind-the-scenes figures deserving of wider recognition.

>>> If you had to list the top five memorable musical moments from Quentin Tarantino's cinematic oeuvre, the **DUSTY SPRINGFIELD**/*"Son Of A Preacher Man"* sequence from *Pulp Fiction* ranks right up there with Bobby Womack's "Across 110th Street" and the infamous use of "Stuck In The Middle With You" by Stealers Wheel. The original 1969 album that contained the track, *Dusty In Memphis*, has been reissued by Rhino in a lavish package including 14 extra tracks, with rare singles and outtakes. The idea was to team the English-born chanteuse with the cream of America's soul music scene, and boy, did it work. Another album just re-released by Rhino is Dusty's similar *In London*, which repeats the basic formula, placing the late soulful singer in groovy old London, the epicenter of the swinging '60s.



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### The Disco Box

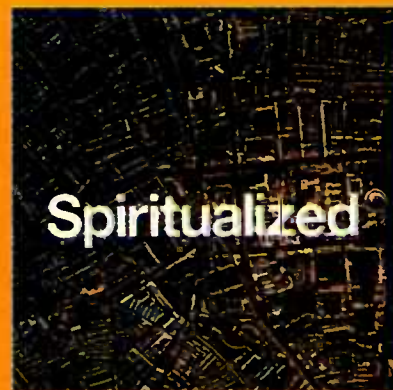
### Rhino

Burn, baby, burn! On a socio-politico-cultural-whatever level, disco represented the apogee of the '70s—the free love and "live for today" ethos of the '60s transformed into feather boas, platform heels and wild nights of excess and libidinous abandon. The disco phenomenon takes on another intriguing layer when you put it in terms of the socioeconomic backgrounds of many of the aspiring young musicians. While there were some disco hits by rediscovered older stars, most disco artists were able to get off the streets and through the velvet ropes only by generating the music that drove the opulent night life celebrated by the famous trendy discos. (For all its glitter and opulence, disco came out of the slums of New York City, and its four-on-the-floor beat came directly from Latin and Afro-Cuban models. The whooping "ooh ooh" of the disco call is actually a vocal approximation of the steel whistle prevalent in Latin percussion sections.) Disco's street roots lived on in a lyric like "working at the car wash" and gave a whole new connotation to dance names like the Hustle. This four-CD box set tells the tale better than any packaged set since the *Casablanca Records Story*. In addition to well-worn disco chestnuts like "Y.M.C.A.," this glamorous set also includes lesser-known but equally essential dance floor gems like "The Glow Of Love" by Change and "I'm On Fire" by 5000 Volts. My only quibble is there are too many KC & The Sunshine Band cuts—granted, that's a bit like saying there are too many Roxy Music songs in the soundtrack to *Velvet Goldmine*, but even so, the nostalgia could have been spread around a little more. Recently I overheard an interesting conversation between two professional bar and club owners about how original, large disco balls now command a premium price on the used market. The quality of the music on this box set speaks volumes about why interest in the era has endured.

FLASHBACK



1	SPIRITUALIZED	Live At The Albert Hall	deConstruction-Arista
2	BECK	Mutations	DGC
3	JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION	Acme	Matador-Capitol
4	STEREOLAB	Aluminum Tunes	Drag City
5	MACHA	Macha	Jetset
6	R. E. M.	Up	Warner Bros.
7	AFGHAN WHIGS	1965	Columbia-CRG
8	JETS TO BRAZIL	Orange Rhyming Dictionary	Jade Tree
9	PORTISHEAD	Roseland NYC Live	Go! Beat-London
10	CARDIGANS	Gran Turismo	Mercury
11	PLACEBO	Without You I'm Nothing	Hut-Virgin
12	FEAR OF POP	Volume 1	550-Epic
13	TALVIN SINGH	OK	Island
14	JAWBOX	My Scrapbook Of Fatal Accidents	DeSoto
15	FATBOY SLIM	You've Come A Long Way, Baby	Astralwerks
16	HIS NAME IS ALIVE	Ft. Lake	4AO
17	764-HERO	Get Here And Stay	Up
18	HEFNER	Breaking God's Heart	Too Pure-Beggars Banquet
19	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Bombay The Hard Way: Guns, Cars & Sitar	Motel
20	RONOELLES	Fiction Romance, Fast Machines	Smells Like
21	UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH	Almost Here	Virgin
22	SEAN LENNON	Half Horse Half Musician (EP)	Grand Royal-Capitol
23	CAKE	Prolonging The Magic	Capricorn
24	ASIAN OUB FOUNDATION	Rafi's Revenge	London-Slash
25	SOUL COUGHING	El Oso	Slash-WB
26	PJ HARVEY	Is This Desire?	Island
27	BAXTER	Baxter/Television (EP)	Maverick-WB
28	CAT POWER	Moon Pix	Matador
29	REEL BIG FISH	Why Do They Rock So Hard?	Mojo
30	BOREOOMS	Super Are	Birdman-Reprise
31	SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS	Christmas Caravan	Mammoth
32	OASIS	The Masterplan	Epic
33	KARATE	The Bed Is In The Ocean	Southern
34	WHALE	All Disco Dance Must End In Broken Bones	Hut-Virgin
35	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats Vol. 1-4	Tommy Boy
36	GLOEEN SMOG	Weird Tales	Rykodisc
37	SILVER JEWS	American Water	Drag City
38	PETER MURPHY	Recall	Red Ant
39	BLUETIP	Join Us	Dischord
40	GRADUATES	Up In Downtown	Beatville
41	GROOVERIDER	Mysteries Of Funk	Higher Ground/Columbia-CRG
42	VIC CHESNUTT	The Salesman And Bernadette	Capricorn
43	BELLE & SEBASTIAN	The Boy With The Arab Strap	Matador
44	GANG OF FOUR	100 Flowers Bloom	Rhino
45	OFFSPRING	Americana	Columbia-CRG
46	JAO FAIR & YO LA TENGO	Strange But True	Matador
47	BRIGHT EYES	Letting Off The Happiness	Saddle Creek
48	NUMBER ONE CUP	People People Why Are We Fighting?	Flydaddy
49	EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN	Ende Neu	Nothing-Interscope
50	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Zum Audio Vol. 2	Zum
51	FOR STARS	For Stars	Future Farmer
52	DROPKICK MURPHYS	Curse Of A Fallen Soul (EP)	Hellcat-Epithaph
53	VARIOUS ARTISTS	In Their Eyes: '90s Teen Bands Vs. '80s Teen Movies	Cheap Date-Rhino
54	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Nuggets: Original Artyfacts...	Rhino
55	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Chef Aid: The Songs Of South Park	American/Columbia-CRG
56	PAUL VAN DYK	Seven Ways	Mute
57	RUSTED ROOT	Rusted Root	Mercury
58	LESS THAN JAKE	Hello Rockview	Capitol
59	PROMISE RING	Boys + Girls (EP)	Jade Tree
60	DIG	Life Like	Universal
61	MERCURY REV	Deserter's Songs	V2
62	FURSLIDE	Adventure	Virgin
63	PHISH	The Story Of The Ghost	Elektra-EEG
64	JONATHAN RICHMAN	I'm So Confused	Vapor
65	MORAL CRUX	Something More Dangerous	Panic Button
66	EDITH FROST	Telescopic	Drag City
67	P.J. OLSSON	P.J. Olsson	Red Ink
68	SEAM	The Pace Is Glacial	Touch And Go
69	PLASTIKMAN	Artifakts (BC)	Mute
70	SON VOLT	Wide Swing Tremolo	Warner Bros.
71	CINERAMA	Va Va Voom	SpinART
72	SQUAREPUSHER	Music Is Rotted One Note	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
73	MASTERS OF THE HEMISPHERE	Masters Of The Hemisphere	Kindercore
74	BEN LEE	Consult Your Electric Minions	Grand Royal-Capitol
75	ZEBRAHEAD	Waste Of Mind	Columbia-CRG



#1 SPIRITUALIZED  
Live At The Albert Hall

FIVE YEARS AGO

1. SPINOUT

SPINOUT DELICIOUS VINYL

2. VARIOUS ARTISTS

NO ALTERNATIVE ARISTA

3. TOM WAITS

THE BLACK RIDER ISLAND-PLG

4. LEMONHEADS

COME ON FEEL THE LEMONHEADS ATLANTIC

5. VARIOUS ARTISTS

STONE FREE: A TRIBUTE TO JIMI HENDRIX REPRISE

TEN YEARS AGO

1. R.E.M.

GREEN WARNER BROS.

2. SONIC YOUTH

DAYDREAM NATION BLAST FIRST-ENIGMA

3. THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

LINCOLN BAR/NONE-RESTLESS

4. WATERBOYS

FISHERMAN'S BLUES ENSIGN-CHRYSALIS

5. MINISTRY

THE LAND OF RAPE AND HONEY SIRE-WARNER BROS.

Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 30 most played releases that week.





## DUTCH HARBOR

### Aleutians Of Grandeur

Story: Neil Gladstone Photos: Dennis Kleiman

To some, Dutch Harbor is America's last frontier town. To others, it's the armpit of the world. It's known as the largest and most lucrative fishing port in the United States, and the inhabitants of this Aleutian island spend a good portion of the year enduring the waves and winds of the Bering Sea. For Laura Moya, who loves extreme environs, it sounded like a great place to make a documentary.

"When you're a fisherman working in Alaska, Dutch Harbor is known as the big boys' club," says Moya. Every year, workers flock to Dutch Harbor to make their annual wage in a handful of months. When the population increases during the winter season, so does the crime rate. Moya, a New Mexico native, first heard about Dutch Harbor while living on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. The more she found out about life on the island, the more she wanted to capture it on film, but she was a photographer, not a documentarian.

(continued on page 64)

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BRADEN KING

World Radio History



**METROLAND**

(Lions Gate Films)

From an outsider's perspective, Chris (Christian Bale) has a lot going for him. As the centerpiece of *Metroland*, a fine you're-an-adult-now tale set in 1977, he leads a decent life in his suburban London birthplace. Sure, he has a mortgage now, but he also has a cool wife (Emily Watson), a cute kid, and a respectable job in the city. Trouble arises when the rambunctious, womanizing Toni (Lee Ross), Chris's globetrotting best mate, pays a visit. Toni can't believe what has happened to the thirtysomething Chris, that he's become a married old man who abandoned his dreams. Toni's reemergence fuels Chris's desire to leave suburbia—alone—and reject his middle-class values. Through flashbacks, we learn of Chris's unbridled bachelor days when he was a struggling photographer in Paris and had few responsibilities other than keeping his sexy French girlfriend happy. Although *Metroland* treads on familiar angst-ridden terrain, Bale supplies a praiseworthy performance free of gratuitous emotional displays. While the solution for Chris seems obvious (I'd take Emily Watson any day), his performance makes it easy to empathize with his struggles. >>>John Elsasser

**THE HARMONISTS**


(Miramax)

*The Harmonists* is a competent, but mild, exercise in revisiting life in pre-WWII Nazi Germany. The subtitled film follows the true-to-life rise and dissolution of Berlin's cherished Comedian Harmonists, an a cappella sextet famous for its intricate arrangements, its winking cabaret shtick and its remarkable ability to mimic orchestras. Believing themselves insulated from the Nazis—though three are Jewish—the singers dismiss the movement as a passing political trend. The characters, while likable enough, fall quickly into watery, stock types (e.g. the fey ladies' man, the restless ingenue). Director Joseph Vilsmaier avoids the aggressive cheesiness of *Swing Kids*, but surprisingly the conflicts come off as too slight. Ulrich Noethen is appealingly befuddled as Harry Frommermann, but

**LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS**  
(Gramercy Pictures)

There's plenty to ooh and ah over in *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels*, a high-octane caper that manages to be at once brawny, bloody and funny. This British import concerns four likable lads who live in London's East End and have a penchant for crimes and misdemeanors. When Eddie (Nick Moran), the leader of the pack, loses big in a high-stakes poker game, he has one week to repay the \$800,000 debt to an underworld boss/porn magnate named Hatchet Harry. If not, Harry—who purportedly once beat a man to death with a 15-inch dildo—will start chopping off Eddie's body parts. So the boys figure they'd better concoct a scheme to pay off Harry. From here, the plot involves rival gang members, inept drug dealers, a ferocious debt collector who makes the rounds with his young son, and a pair of antique shotguns. (By the way, Sting—whose wife, Trudie Styler, served as an executive producer—plays Eddie's tempestuous father.) In his feature film debut, 30-year-old writer/director Guy Ritchie neatly ties together these disparate elements. Along the way, he displays exquisite technique—scenes of the ill-fated card game are particularly exhilarating—while offering a fresh perspective on art-house bloodletting. In addition, Richie's movie has a feisty soundtrack, including choice nuggets by James Brown, the Stooges and the Stone Roses.

>>>John Elsasser



his struggle with bass Robert Biberti (Ben Becker) over a young student, Erna Eggstein (Ben's sister, Meret Becker, last heard singing on Einstürzende Neubauten's *Ende Neu*), never feels palpable. The movie rushes to resolve both the romantic and political conflicts, leaving a small, uncertain hollowness. The film only elicits a twinge instead of evoking its intended sense of tragic loss.

>>>Callie Chapman

**MY NAME IS JOE**

(Artisan Entertainment)

[To be read to the tune of Suzanne Vega's "Luka."] My name is Joe. I live in Glasgow on the second floor. Health inspector Sarah, I'm falling for you. Yes, I met you at Liam,

the smack addict's, door. If you hear something late at night, some kind of trouble, some kind of fight, just don't ask me what it was. It's just my alcoholic past ruining my love buzz. Just trying to stay out of trouble with the fuzz. Director Ken Loach illustrates how life is crazy. And you suffer consequences from hanging with a bad crowd. The stock is gritty and the lighting hazy. The fine performances would make actors' mothers proud. The film's better than okay. Although there's no need to see it again. Like *Trainspotting*, it's hard to comprehend what they say. So they added subtitles to help you on your way. A spot of comedy changes the tone. But the drama can't help but make you feel bitter and alone.

>>>Carrie Bell

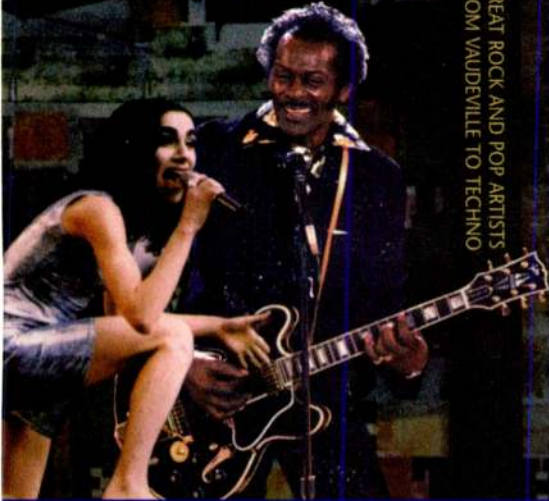


>>> compiled by jenny eliscu <<<

## GROWN UP ALL WRONG

ROBERT CHRISTGAU 75

GREAT ROCK AND POP ARTISTS FROM VAUDEVILLE TO TECHNO



### GROWN UP ALL WRONG

By Robert Christgau  
(Harvard University Press)

Village Voice writer, "Consumer Guide" maven, and so-called Dean of Rock Critics Robert Christgau is a thinker, and that's his blessing and his curse. In *Grown Up All Wrong: 75 Great Rock And Pop Artists From Vaudeville To Techno*, which assembles mostly Voice pieces from the last 20 years, he likes to pick fights with other critics, toss out hyperboles, and cram too many ideas into one sentence. He can be provocative and insightful, but he can also seem self-serving and pedantic. When he writes of his beloved New York Dolls, "The Dolls carried to its illogical conclusion the

egalitarian communalism that was one logical response of fun-filled affluence to alienation," he's knotted several insights into one sentence, but it takes a couple of readings to find them. More often than not, however, he's thought provoking and prescient, especially about culture, class, and context. Even though Christgau weighs in on artists as varied as Gershwin, DJ Shadow, Mahlatini, Sleater-Kinney, Lynyrd Skynyrd, George Clinton, Iris DeMent, and Lou Reed, the pieces won't necessarily send you to discover the recordings; Christgau cares more about analyzing the artist than about describing the music. He's a thinker, not a fan or a historian or a consumer. So read this book if you like to think about the music you already know, and call it a B+.

>>>Steve Klinge

### BACKSTAGE PASSES & BACKSTABBING BASTARDS: MEMOIRS OF A ROCK 'N' ROLL SURVIVOR

By Al Kooper  
(Billboard Books)

Whatever you think of his music, hearing producer/arranger/musician Al Kooper's take on the swinging '60s and the roaring '70s is quite a trip indeed. This is Kooper's update on his 1970s tome *Backstage Passes*, rewritten with a healthy dose of '90s irony and perspective that can sometimes be side-splittingly funny, but at others can lapse into shtick on the level of Joan Rivers or Rodney Dangerfield. In addition to playing organ on Bob Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone,"

fronting Blood, Sweat & Tears, producing Lynyrd Skynyrd, and owning one of Jimi Hendrix's guitars, Kooper also had some of the seamiest managers and most surreal music-biz experiences, and was generally in the room for some of the craziest moments of the '70s. Da Koop's best attribute is his uncanny knack for thumbnail descriptions of eyewitness encounters with notorious '60s and '70s legends, such as a Learjet ride with Brian Jones ("he appeared to be convening in the neighborhood of Jupiter") or his depiction of the legendary decadence of the Rainbow Bar & Grill in '70s Los Angeles ("I think this is where George Lucas got the idea for the *Star Wars* bar"). If you make sure not to take any of it too seriously, it's a great read.

>>>James Lien

### THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POPULAR MUSIC

Compiled and edited by Colin Larkin  
(Muze Books)

With dizzying breadth and dazzling detail, this eight-volume, 18,500-entry reference guide is unquestionably the most authoritative guide yet published on the soundtrack of the 20th century. Lovingly and exhaustively compiled by British musicologist Colin Larkin, the EPM's third edition is nearly double the size of its predecessor, mining even deeper the roots of blues, R&B and country, and becoming ever more current with '80s punk/new wave and '90s indie. Not only does the EPM pass the obscurity challenge (yes to Smog, Sarah Records, Magnetic Fields; no to Pylon), but also every page bursts with unknown albums and careers to explore, written with cheery clarity. Most impressive for a popular music reference guide, Larkin heralds acclaimed underdogs and beautiful losers with as much passion as the best sellers. Some critical assessments seem rushed—on Billy Bragg's *William Bloke*, the EPM concludes unhelpfully: "Bragg has certainly grown but he has never sold out," and the Smithereens merit as many four-star albums as the Smiths. Yet quibbling, searching for favorites, and debating amongst yourselves is part of the fun with a reference guide this warm, sweeping, and erudite. >>>David Daley

### GREAT POP THINGS: THE REAL HISTORY OF ROCK-AND-ROLL FROM ELVIS TO OASIS

By Chuck Death and Colin B. Morton  
(Verse Chorus Press)

He's a veteran of the Mekons and a Waco Brother, and leads his own Skull Orchard. When he's not playing in rock bands (which seems like never), he's an accomplished painter. In other words, he's one busy guy. So how has Jon Langford—known here as Chuck Death, co-conspirator (along with his former Welsh neighbor Colin B. Morton) of *Great Pop Things*—found the time over the past ten years to work on this irreverently scathing comic strip? Readers of alternative newspapers including the *LA Weekly* and *Chicago Reader* aren't particularly concerned with the answer. They're just happy to revel in the ongoing skewering of rock history, with pot-shots aimed at nearly every icon of the rock 'n' roll era—Prince, Madonna, the Beatles, old Mekons adversary U2, Keith Richards, and Elvises Presley and Costello are among targets in this retrospective. One of my personal favorites: the strip depicting irascible Steve Albini feeding his cat.

>>>Mark Woodlief





Nobody has officially come out and said that a music 'zine that doesn't come with some kind of musical medium attached might as well not bother publishing, but it seems to be a little bit more true by the day. So some of the more interesting new (and old) 'zines have been coming with music—and one or two of them are nothing *but* music.

**MULTIBALL** (P.O. Box 40005, Portland, OR 97240) is part of that subgenre of 'zines that try to be more interesting than their straight-up music counterparts by being about something-else-and-music—in this case, pinball. Issue #15 includes an interview with a pinball machine technician, an article about the state of pinball machines in Spain (apparently there are lots of "Bingo pins"—gambling machines without flippers), a discussion with Telstar Records' Todd Abramson about his favorite machines, and a selection of short "references to pinball we've found in culture" pieces reminiscent of nothing quite so much as the old Monty Python routine about "the news for gibbons." There are also two (!) pieces that deal with the history of Little Black Sambo iconography, for some reason. Naturally, the record that comes with the issue is pinball-related, too—a split single by the Dickel Brothers ("Ballyhoo Blues," an old-time hillbilly-ish number about their favorite old-time pinball machine) and Antietam guitarist/well-known pinball demon Tara Key doing "Second Chance," a love song

with a whole lot of references to classic machines.

The first issue of **HONEYTHUNDER** (P.O. Box 155, Mendon, MA 01756) includes an interview with Earworm Records' Dominic Martin, and accordingly comes with an Earworm flexi-disc with so-so tracks by Metrotone and Isan. Editor Stephanie Costello seems to be especially into spacy, dreamy stuff, and she gets some solid interviews with the High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan (who talks about how he's way past that whole Beach Boys thing now—uh-huh) and Spectrum/E.A.R.'s Sonic Boom (who talks about how he's gotten more and more interested in drones and less and less interested in everything else). It's got a lot of promise, though this issue is a little high on the random-stuff quotient—the maze and crossword really aren't necessary. Also, it includes the now-widely-circulated "Associated Press" story about composer Anton Webern having been a double-agent for Nazi Germany, as part of a clique that invented "serialism" as a code for encrypting spy messages. It's a convincing fraud, folks, but it really is a fraud.

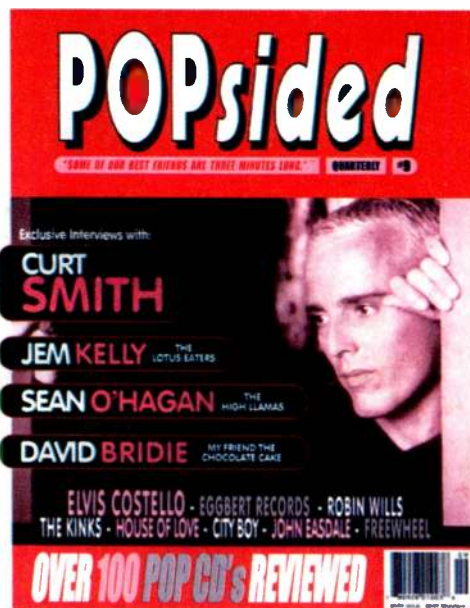


**ANALOG INTERNET** is a zine in the form of a bargain-priced cassette—there's no address on it, but it's from Go Records in Munich (also known as Stop Records), and it claims to be "the first of a series of magazines in tape form running from A-Z." The only magazine of that sort to have made it all the way through the alphabet is the late, great Op, but this is a nice start: short, alarming pieces by electronic terrorists known to some (Panasonic, Hecker, Chris Korda) and relatively unknown over here (G-Zitronen + Chicks On Speed, Snake 88). There's enough spoken content that parts of it seem more 'zine-like than music-like, but the line is very blurry.

The new issue of the always-reliable English experimental music magazine **RESONANCE** is out (c/o London Musician's Collective Ltd., Unit 3.6, Lafone House, 11-13 Leathermarket St., London SE1 3HN, UK), and it's got a couple of extraordinary features: a discussion of "the

limits of composition" between La Monte Young and Morton Feldman, two pioneers of very different areas of experimental composition, as well as interviews with Terry Riley and Pauline Oliveros. There's also a CD with several pieces recorded for the Resonance Radio project this past summer, including a very loose adaptation of Moliere's *The Misanthrope* ("Alceste played by Paul Wilcocks; all other characters played by machines").

**POPSIDED** (650 N. Rose Dr. #415, Placentia, CA 92870) is a desktop-published-looking 'zine devoted to pop of a certain jangly/post-mod kind—the cover story of #9 is an interview with Curt Smith (of Mayfield, formerly of Tears For Fears). There are some pointless features—most notably, a survey of Elvis Costello's discography that says nothing terribly interesting about any of his records, and an interview with Sean O'Hagan that asks about the Beach Boys enough times that his indignation in *Honeythunder* makes sense—but it's best where it digs up international pop oddities and micro-indie releases for some loving attention. This is one of the few 'zines where you'll see reviews of the likes of the Ray Mason Band, the Pansies and Veg, and features devoted to My Friend The Chocolate Cake and the Lotus Eaters (featuring ex-members of Not Drowning Waving and the Wild Swans, respectively). And it's got no records, tapes or CDs at all attached to it—who'd have thought?





>>> by douglas wolk <<<

Yeah, *The Onion* ([www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com)) is brilliant, but you can only look at it so often. If you want to find additional laughs on the Net, though, there are all sorts of possibilities. If there's one thing computer programmers like, it's a joke. (Remember, a lot of Net jargon got its start in comedy—unsolicited ads wouldn't be called "spam" if not for Monty Python.) And if you're just looking for a joke, technology is on your side.



**Jester: The On-Line Joke Recommender** ([shadow.ieor.Berkeley.edu/humor/](http://shadow.ieor.Berkeley.edu/humor/)) is a joke database with a twist. It works on the same principle as other Net "affinity engines": Once you rank an initial set of 25 (rather ancient) jokes according to how funny you find them, it will give you successive waves of jokes that you're likely to be amused by. Rank them, and its grasp of what you find funny gets even keener. Jester isn't quite at the point where it can pinpoint something that will produce howls of laughter every time, but it's worth a few giggles, at least.

The biggest and best joke database on the Web, though, belongs to the archive of Brad Templeton's venerable **rec.humor.funny** newsgroup—a moderated, more-often-than-not amusing alternative to the spam-polluted **rec.humor** group. The website for the group ([www.netfunny.com/rhf/](http://www.netfunny.com/rhf/)) includes a lot of the old jokes sorted by topic, a handful of excellent cartoons by Templeton's brother Ty (who also wrote *Batman Adventures* for several years!), and a section that skims the cream of the already rather creamy group. Best of all are the winners of the newsgroup's annual competitions for original jokes: "If

Milli Vanilli fall in the woods, does someone else make a sound?"

If your taste in humor runs more to "net.dreck"—the jokes that are endlessly circulated by email, and tend to be awfully funny just by Darwinist law—then check out the **Electronic Freedom Foundation**, an archive of some of the best and most familiar of their kind ([www.eff.org/pub/Net\\_culture/Folklore/Humor/](http://www.eff.org/pub/Net_culture/Folklore/Humor/)). Here you'll find the IBM internal memo about "mouse balls," the skit where the crew of the *Enterprise* defeats the Borg using Windows, the legendary "Emily Postnews" piece detailing what *not* to do, netiquette-wise (written by Brad Templeton, who gets around), and enough other classics that you'll practically feel the pocket protector growing in your shirt.

On the other hand, maybe you'd rather not go for the easy laughs. Maybe you'd rather simply find jokes that confuse the living heck out of you. In that case, go straight to

**Jokestan Persian Jokes** ([123easy.com/gcn/jokestan/jokestanmenu.htm](http://123easy.com/gcn/jokestan/jokestanmenu.htm)), allegedly the biggest collection of jokes by Persians on the Web. Aside from the fact that Turks seem to be the butt of jokes a lot of the time, nearly every punch line is utterly incomprehensible to anyone not deeply familiar with Persian language and culture. But it's fascinating to see how certain joke setups are universal. "A Rashti, a Tehrani and a Ghazvini were traveling on a plane..."

Then, of course, there are certain kinds of humor that are indigenous to the Web. One kind that really couldn't have existed before the advent of Netscape is **Stick Figure Death Theater**—a very silly idea (brief animated gifs of stick figures being killed in



all sorts of horrible/amusing ways) that has become a bit of a cottage industry. The place to start is probably [www.sfdt.com](http://www.sfdt.com), where Matt Calvert's original stick-figure movies appear. It's spawned enough sites, though, that there is now an **Animated Deaths Webring**, with roughly 50 more stick death sites. SFDT's main site includes links to category listings of stick-death superheroes, sports, falling, vehicles—you name it. In particular, don't miss out on **Sticks O' Death** ([webhome.idirect.com/~rthompsn/stickmain.html](http://webhome.idirect.com/~rthompsn/stickmain.html)), including stick-figure versions of "Waiting For Godot" and Robert Frost's "The Death Of The Hired Man" that must be seen to be believed.

Finally, a description would only do a disservice to **Furniture Porn** ([www.fringenet.com/vgg/furnporn.html](http://www.fringenet.com/vgg/furnporn.html)). All I can say is that this site, supposedly created by a high-school student, is one of the most perfect parodies this medium has yet produced. Brace yourself.





# IT'S YOUR BAG, BABY

Text: Jenny El'acu Photo: John Garbarini

In its catalog, **Spiewak** pictures New York DJ David Morales sporting its **EMS Bag** (90), but don't let that keep you from stuffing it with your books, threads or whatever. With its reflective strips and shiny fabric, this multi-pocketed bag is as jazzy as it is practical.



Another way to distinguish yourself from the crowd is to snag one made by a cool label. This **DJ Bag** (54) comes from the **Liquid Sky** label, which also has its own store full of rave-wear in New York City.



Tak Pak makes a \$115 properly backpack designed for professional DJs, but this **Vinyl Bag** (58) is just fine for lay-people. Its unique design is a cross between a backpack and a shoulder bag. The strap fastened by Velcro crosses your chest. It's not quite big enough to hold 12"s, but it's nicely fits 10" or 7" vinyl or CDs.



You don't have to be a DJ to want a DJ-styled bag. Because whether you're transporting white label 12" records to your evening gig, or just schlepping a few newly-purchased records home from the store, you'll want something snazzier than your mom's public television tote bag. Here are six bags guaranteed to get the job done in style.

**Jansport's Dee Jay bag** (\$59.95) is big enough to fit 12" records, but that's not its neatest feature: The bag has a zip-off, padded CD player compartment and a hole through which to slip your headphones. Plus, it's got a compartment just for storing CDs.



**Manhattan Portage** is best known for its top-notch bike messenger bags, but the company also makes this popular **DJ Bag** (\$39.95), which has a simple, durable construction and comes in a variety of colors. MP also offers to customize your bag with reflective tape or rain-free corners.



For those who prefer buying their gear from off-the-beaten-path boutiques and street vendors, look for bags like **Halfmoon's** adorable record bag (\$46). It's not quite as durable as some of the others (made of vinyl rather than Cordura, or another similarly rugged nylon), but it shows way more signature style.



(continued from page 57)

In 1995, while living in Chicago ("doing the city thing") and working at the Chicago International Film Festival, she talked up her idea to co-worker Braden King.

King, a USC film graduate, loves films with "spontaneous, creative energy" and "poetic" imagery. (He told his film class his favorite flicks were *Repo Man* and *Wings Of Desire*.) In a matter of months, Moya and King were living in Dutch Harbor, preparing to shoot a feature with a 16mm camera and little money. "We were too naive to know any better," admits King.

In wintertime, there are only six or so hours of daylight. The fierce weather wrought havoc on their camera and sometimes just sleeping took quite a bit of effort. "When you're trying to go to bed and 70-mile-per-hour winds are blowing down the stove pipe and all the windows are shaking, it makes you think more about your relationship to the world," he says. The two-room house they lived in was bolted to the ground so it wouldn't blow away. Moya took a waitressing job to make money. Having no car, she'd wake up at 4 a.m., sheath herself in five layers of clothing, and walk five miles to get to work in time for the 6 a.m. breakfast shift, often braving snow and rain. After five grueling months, Moya and King returned to Chicago with seven hours of footage, 10 hours of interviews and no clue how to put it all together.

*Dutch Harbor: Where The Sea Breaks Its Back* certainly isn't a traditional documentary. With no synch-sound, talking head shots or even a central theme, the film collects a handful of personal narratives about Dutch Harbor's last days as a frontier town. A short time before Moya and King visited, the first Burger King and supermarket had been built on the island. Meanwhile, the Aleutian population that had settled the land was dwindling away.

"A fisherman we interviewed said Dutch Harbor was the last place to go where you can go and be your own person and be free," recalls King. "With the advent of Burger King and cable TV, the place gets a little closer to the rest of the world."

Before editing was completed, King enlisted his old friend Michael Krassner to score the documentary. After unsuccessfully attempting to write a folky soundtrack himself, Krassner called up local Chicago band Gastr Del Sol. "The austerity of their music was just perfect," explains Krassner. "A lot of ambient music is stagnant, but theirs has plenty of movement." Although he figured Gastr Del Sol alone might fit well with *Dutch Harbor's* stark, black-and-white images, he wanted to create a soundtrack that mirrored the documentary's improvisational approach. So he brought members of that group together with a handful of indie-rock luminaries, including Will Oldham, Jim O'Rourke and Ken Vandermark.

The musicians assembled in Krassner's studio and viewed sections of footage of the uncompleted film. Krassner suggested keys and scales, but let members of the group create their own motifs. The pieces resulting from the day of improvisation were spliced together with the film. The lulling, hypnotic music influenced King's editing, helping to produce an epic, haunting piece.

Soon after *Dutch Harbor's* completion, organizers of a Belgian film and music festival asked if the indie-rock conglomerate providing the soundtrack, now known as the Boxhead Ensemble, would play live with the movie. King and Krassner had never considered it, but were thrilled by the suggestion and quickly set up a 20-city European tour for the movie and music project. The filmmakers enlisted many of the original scoring musicians, plus Edith Frost, Charles Kim and Eleventh Dream Day's Rick Rizzo.

"What's really interesting is that you have musicians such as Ken Vandermark who improvise five nights a week playing along with people who improvise maybe once a month," explains Gastr Del Sol's David Grubbs. It wasn't long before the live score took on its own dynamic. The result of these sessions was captured on the *Dutch Harbor Soundtrack* and *The Last Place To Go: Recording Of The Dutch Harbor European Film Screening Tour* (both on Atavistic).

When Moya and King returned to Dutch Harbor to premiere the finished film, they found out that two of the people they'd interviewed had died, the roads were paved and several of the older buildings they'd captured on tape had been demolished. Though Moya concedes that the harsh environment of Dutch Harbor made it one of the worst places to attempt a first documentary, she's happy about what they captured on film. She reflects, "I see it as a record of a time that is terribly important."

NMM

# LIFE/STYLE







We thought it would be interesting to see who among CMJ's staff would master pressing the PlayStation's "X" button on the fourth beat and prove to be the best Bust-A-Groove dancer at 11 Middle Neck Road. Maybe it's just us, but the game wasn't as interesting as psychoanalyzing each player's character choice.



PHOTOS: KIM APLEY

DAVID DAY, AS PINKY, CUTS LOOSE IN "FEVER TIME."

in order of finish:

1

## M. Tye Comer

**Credentials:** *New Music Monthly* contributing editor; "Mixed Signals" columnist.

**Real life dance skills:** Formidable.

**Favored character:** Shorty.

**Analysis:** He's a prodigious gamer and a dance music authority, naturally he wiped the dance floor with the rest of us. No surprise either was his choice of Shorty, who clearly speaks to this club maven's inner raver.



2

## Glen Sansone

**Credentials:** *CMJ New Music Report's* Managing Director; former *New Music Monthly* "Hip-Hop" columnist.

**Real life dance skills:** Mostly limited to the wedding shuffle.

**Favored character:** Kitty-N.

**Analysis:** The accomplished drummer's rhythm and gaming skills made him the natural number one contender for the Bust-A-Groove belt. Less natural were his slight growling sounds at the sight of Kitty-N in her alternate black cat suit.



3

## David Day

**Credentials:** *CMJ New Music Report* editorial assistant.

**Real life dance skills:** He's from Kansas.

**Favored character:** Pinky.

**Analysis:** For a conspicuous reader of Harper's, he showed an impressive sense of rhythm. His choice of Pinky, a cross between RuPaul and a '70s blaxploitation hooker with a heart of gold, would have made Freud's head spin.



4

## Megan Frampton

**Credentials:** *CMJ Senior Director of Sales and Marketing*; former Editor of *CMJ New Music Report* and alt-dance trade publication *Rockpool*.

**Real life dance skills:** Impressive.

**Favored character:** Strike.

**Analysis:** Her natural sense of rhythm resulted in increasingly high scores in later rounds. After thrashing her husband (see below), her Warriors-style street thug character, Strike, pulled his gat and squeezed off a couple of rounds. That's communication in a relationship.



5

## Scott Frampton

**Credentials:** *CMJ New Music Monthly* Editor-in-Chief.

**Real life dance skills:** Still plying the same '80s pop-lock moves he's been working since high school.

**Favored character:** Hiro.

**Analysis:** The only one to actually dance while playing, his lack of game skills (and apparent manual dexterity) lead to increasingly poor showings. Hiro is a sleek, arrogant disco fop; you do the math.





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FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS



PEANUT BUTTER WOLF



DUBTRIBE SOUND SYSTEM

"Colombian is a term we use—it's like a vernacular. If something's good, then it's Colombian. If it's really, really good, it's 100% Colombian," says FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS frontman Huey, explaining the title to the band's new album, *100% Colombian* (Virgin), from which "Korean Bodega" is taken. "I know that a lot of people mix that up and put drug references on the end of it. But people are going to do that. So as long as they don't say I am sleeping with [TV character] Webster, it's fine!" (See review, pg. 38.)

**16** Paul P.M. (Paul Affeld) and Din-S.T. (Frederick Schaefer) first met in Berlin's Suicide Club and soon after formed FEVER. Last fall, they passed a tape of their synth-driven hip-hop to Digital Hardcore Recordings's Alec Empire, who liked the maelstrom of sound enough to release *Too Bad But True*, the band's stateside debut, from which "See You Rumin'" is taken. Though they trade off duties for shows, on the album Schaefer handles most of the programming and DJ responsibilities and Affeld is the MC. (See review, pg. 37.)

**17** PEANUT BUTTER WOLF was working on his major-label debut when his partner, Charizma, was killed in 1993. In '95, he started his own hip-hop label, Stones Throw, he says, "as an outlet to put out all the talented artists (including Charizma) that I knew in the Bay Area that I felt were getting overlooked by the big labels in New York and Los Angeles. It's definitely a different sound than people are used to, so major labels have been weary of putting it out." "Stylos, Crews, Flows, Beats" is from his self-produced debut, *My Vinyl Weighs A Ton* (Stones Throw). (See Hip-Hop, pg. 53.)

**18** DUBTRIBE SOUND SYSTEM has long been an unsigned hero of the underground rave scene. So what does the group think of its new label, Jive Electro? "It's not like we signed up to Warner or Geffen or anything," says Sunshine Jones, who with wife, Moonbeam, leads the group. "Jive is an independent company owned by one man. He's accountable for his actions and clearly a good person. So is everyone else we've met from the label. So we have been really happily surprised. Good music, good people, good distribution. What the fuck?" "Ain't Gonna Do You No Good" is from Dubtribe's full-length debut, *Bryant Street* (Jive Electro). (See On The Verge, pg. 21.)

**19** "I feel like for a large part most of us are all on the same plane," says DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE's Nick Harmer. "Of course we all draw from different influences and music is a pretty personal thing so you can't say that everyone [has] one exact detailed goal. But I know that the music that we make comes closer to anything I hear in my head than anything [else] I've done." The Bellingham, Washington, band has been together for a little over a year now and has just released its debut album, *Something About Airplanes* (Elsinor-Barsuk), from which "President Of What?" is taken. (See review, pg. 37.)

# cmjnewmusic

**1** "There's this pretty good analogy that Calvin Johnson once told me, where he's talking about the *Decline Of Western Civilization* [documentaries]," says BUILT TO SPILL's Doug Martsch, talking about his idea of success. "There was one made in the early '80s about the punk rock scene in LA. And then they made another one, *The Metal Years*. In the film, heavy metal musicians are asked, 'What are you gonna do if you don't make it?' They're like, 'Oh, we'll make it.' In the first [film], that's not even an issue. [For the punks], there's no making it, they're not striving to make money and be famous or anything. They're living." "The Plan" appears on *Keep It Like A Secret* (Warner Bros.). (See feature, pg. 22.)

**2** "I fly no flag ever, and I don't think any band is the greatest thing in the world," says SEBADOH's Lou Barlow. "It's like, yeah, there's a couple of bands in the world that made a couple of good records... there's tons and tons and tons and tons of great music, but... it's like, when I meet some musicians, it's like they want to get Keith Richards's guitar sound. I just don't care about that stuff at all. I hate the cult of rock or this idea that, 'Oh yeah, man. The Velvet Underground are like the greatest band that has ever existed.'" "Flame" is taken from Sebadoh's latest full-length, *The Sebadoh* (Sub Pop-Sire). (See Quick Fix, pg. 11.)

**3** "It was bizarre. I was hearing some of those albums for the first time in 15 years, as I never play them at home," says XTC's Andy Partridge about listening to his band's old material while compiling the book *Song Stories*. "It flooded a lot of useless trivia back. I could remember what whose I was wearing at a particular session, or what I'd had for dinner when I did that vocal. It was like a wall of minutiae." "I'd Like That" is from the band's first new record in seven years, *Apple Venus Vol. 1* (TVT). (See Best New Music, pg. 20.)

**4** "It's a weird thing when you try to move on," says GUS about having relocated from Seattle back to his Los Angeles home since his last album. "Sometimes you think you've grown a bit but you realize you're still, in a sense, the same person in your core.... It's really hard to change what you are at the core." "Floodlights" is from the singer/songwriter's second long-player, *Word Of Mouth Parade* (Almo Sounds), which he says is "essentially about communicating and the breakdown of communication." (See review, pg. 39.)



BUILT TO SPILL



XTC



GUS

how to use this page

1. Cut along dotted line.
2. Fold in half.
3. Slip into our CD holder or a jewel box.
4. Keep your eyes on the road, your hands upon the wheel.





APRIL MARCH



ARLING & CAMERON



BIG RUDE JAKE

**5** In the timeline that accompanies the bio she provided her record company, Elinor Blake, a.k.a. APRIL MARCH, records the following important dates: "May 4, 1970: Learns to sing and clap 'Eight Days A Week' with older sister," "July 4, 1977: First exhibition of Elinor's drawings at North Haven Maine Public Library," and "Oct. 1978: Chosen in city exchange program for French students to go to Junior High in France for 6 weeks." Each of these dates marks the budding of one of Blake's passions: singing, drawing (she used to be a professional animator), and all things French. "Sugar" appears on her latest album, *Chrominance Devolver* (Ideal-Mammoth). (See review, pg. 41.)

**6** If IMPERIAL TEEN's sound is cohesive, perhaps it's because the band members are so close off-stage. "It would be a drag if we didn't like each other," said guitarist Sean Stebbins in a recent interview. "If there was somebody you couldn't stand to be in a little van with, somebody with a really bad personality. We all have our moments, but..." Lynn Perco, drummer and guitarist, continued: "I hate to say it, but we're like a particular family now, definitely." "Lipschick" is from *What Is Mad To Love* (Slash-London). (See feature, pg. 18, Feb. issue.)

**7** ARLING & CAMERON—actually the Netherland's Garry Arling and Richard Cameron—got their start in 1994 by throwing a series of parties in Amsterdam. This led to a compilation of singles on their own label, Drive-In, and international recognition spread as their music caught on in Japan and Europe. Today they frequently collaborate with other artists. "[We're] part of a positive network of people," said Cameron in a recent interview. "It's more about attitude, a positive attitude connecting us, Kinski, Takako Nishikawa, Massive, Cornelius [and] Le Hammond Inferno." "Spending Down The Highway—Fastest Girl Around" is from *All-In* (Empire Records). (See Quick Fix, pg. 15.)

**8** GLEN SCOTT began his musical career before he'd even entered his teens. Scott's father, who had emigrated from Jamaica to London with his school teacher mother, was a Pentecostal preacher at a church whose organist suddenly quit, providing an opportunity for young Glen to fill the seat behind the Hammond. Once in his mid-teens, Scott had joined a reggae-group band comprised of other members of his father's congregation. More than ten years later, Scott has released his first album, *Without Vertigo* (550 Music), from which "It's Alright" is taken. (See review, pg. 44.)

**9** "I could never be one of those fellas you see these days; these male singers who pretend to be shy and aloof, moody and depressed," says BIG RUDE JAKE. "That meek and defeated attitude just seems put on to me; you know, the sort of thing you pretend to be to get girls. I remember a time when I tried to be passive and coy in order to meet women. It just didn't work. No one bought it for a second. There's nothing less

sexy than indifference. So I just went completely the other way." "Queer For Cat" is from Jake's self-titled debut (Roadrunner). (See review, pg. 36.)

**10** "We're not a furious punk band," says TEN FOOT POLE's Dennis Jaggard of the Southern California group's music. "Our goal is not to speak angrily about how pissed off we are at the world. The world is screwed up and there are definitely people who are screwed up, but that's not going to change by me screaming. The world is a vampire! The world is a vampire, but that's not our wife." "The Getaway" is from the band's second album, *Inside* (Epitaph). (See review, pg. 45.)

**11** "The original foundations of rockability started in America and to have the chance to play there is nerve-racking," says THE LIVING END's Chris Cheney. "But I've always loved that music. There's no reason why we can't be as good at it or as much into it just because we grew up in a different country. Maybe there are no bands overseas who are like us. I guess what we're doing is kind of unique." "Growing Up (Falling Down)" is from the Melbourne band's self-titled state-side debut (Reprise). (See review, pg. 42.)

**12** "We all love it and we all love the Misunderstood," says DAMNATIONS TX's Amy Baine. "A lot of people like to romanticize our story and make it seem like we're the Lucero Brothers or the Carter Family or the Byrds. But that overlooks a big part of our background, which was punk music and even NISS. There's a whole lot of music that we just took in without even thinking about and internalized without even knowing." "Utahly Train" is from the band's major label debut, *Half Mad Mean* (Watermelon-Sire). (See Best New Music, pg. 19.)

**13** DIANE IZZO began playing music by teaching herself guitar from the Barfly live three-chord songbook. Her musical legs began to strengthen over the next few years, as she moved from state to state. But the picaresque life took its toll on Izzy's health and she later settled in Chicago to recover from a mysterious illness. Once she began playing again, it wasn't long before her demo tape beat the ear of local producer Brad Wood (Liz Phair, Bin Lee). Wood later helped Izzo record her debut album, *One* (Sugar Free), from which "Ground" is taken. (See review, pg. 40, Feb. issue.)

The songs on SNAKEFARM's debut, *Songs From My Fingers* (Kwesing/Elephant-REX)—including "SL James"—are all covers of folk tunes that the band's frontwoman, Anna Devine, first heard during her childhood. "[They] are songs I grew up with," Devine told an interviewer. "The kind of Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly-type stuff I heard even before I started taking guitar lessons as a teenager in Ottawa, Canada. As a child I was never in one place for more than two years. Seven of these songs were the only constants." (See Best New Music, pg. 20.)



TEN FOOT POLE



THE LIVING END



IMPERIAL TEEN

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your reaction to each track

- 5 = love
- 4 = just friends
- 3 = pleasant ambivalence
- 2 = benign indifference
- 1 = nausea

Check box if this CD introduced you to the artist

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. BULL TO SPILL	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. SEBADOH	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. XTC	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. GUS	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. APRIL MARCH	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. IMPERIAL TEEN	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. ARLING & CAMERON	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. GLEN SCOTT	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. BIG RUDE JAKE	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. TEN FOOT POLE	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. THE LIVING END	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. THE DAMNATIONS TX	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. DIANE IZZO	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 14. SNAKEFARM	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. FEVER	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 17. PEANUT BUTTER WOLF	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 18. DUBTRIBE SOUND SYSTEM	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 19. DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE	5	4	3	2	1

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Enough about you, let's talk about me:

- 1. I am:  male  female
- 2. I am:  under 18  35-44
- 18-24  45 & up
- 25-34  beyond age
- 3. And I buy \_\_\_\_\_ CDs per month:  0-2  6-10
- 3-5  more than 10

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Correction: The January CD included a track by the Nields, not the Eels, as suggested by the issue's Feedback listener response form (pg. 76). The correct information for that track, as well as the correct track order, appears on that issue's CD sleeve, and in the disc liner notes.



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**BIG RUDE JAKE** (Roadrunner) Reviews pg. 36, On The CD pg. 67, [www.lizraeljake.com](http://www.lizraeljake.com)  
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## LABELS OF ARTISTS WHO APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

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FEBRUARY 9

- A.G.O.L.** Do You Love Me (12") Tommy Boy  
**ARSONISTS** Pyromaniac (12") Matador  
**ASHLEY STOVE** New Scars Merge  
**BAD LIVERS** Dust On The Bible Quarterstick  
 —reissue of 1994 cassette-only release, plus bonus track  
**ADRIAN BELEW** Salad Days Thirsty Ear  
**BLIND GUARDIAN** Nightfall In The Middle Earth  
 Century Media  
**NIGEL BUNN** Index Emperor Jones  
**COLLECTIVE SOUL** Dosage Atlantic  
**CYNTHIA** Thinking About You (12") Tommy Boy  
**DEADLY SNAKES** Culebras De Muerte (12") Tommy Boy  
**DEFARI** Focused Daily Tommy Boy  
**DWARVES** Sugarfix & Thank Heaven For Little Girls  
 Sub Pop  
 —two-on-one reissue of the band's last two albums  
**ROKY ERICKSON** Never Say Goodbye Emperor Jones  
 —first release of newly unearthed recordings made by  
 the psych savant in the early '70s  
**FUNKI PORCINI** Rocket Soul Music (12") Ninja Tune  
**GOLDIE** Ring Of Saturn Iftr-London  
 —Remixes of Saturnz Return  
**JOYDROP** Metasexual Tommy Boy  
**DAMIEN JURADO** Rehearsals For Departure Sub Pop  
**GEORGE LEMOND** Greatest Hits Tommy Boy  
**MUCHO MACHO** The Linehouse Link Beggars Banquet  
**MICHAEL NYMAN** Ravenous Soundtrack Virgin  
**SAM PREKOP** Sam Prekop Thrill Jockey  
**QUINTRON** These Hands Of Mine Skin Graft  
**RIPTONES** Cowboy's Inn Bloodshot  
**RUFF DRIVERZ** Dreaming (12") Tommy Boy  
**SKEME TEAM** Plan-A (12") 3-2-1  
**SOUNDTRACK** Hedwig & The Angry Inch Atlantic  
 —music from the off-Broadway rock opera  
**SOUNDTRACK** Message In A Bottle Atlantic  
 —music from the motion picture, including Edwin  
 McCain, Hootie & The Blowfish, Faith Hill, Laura Pausini  
 and more  
**SOUNDTRACK** Rushmore Island  
**SUPERCHUNK** The Majestic (7") Merge  
**DAVID SYLVIAN** Dead Bees On A Cake Virgin  
**ROBERT WYATT** EPs By Robert Wyatt Thirsty Ear  
**YUKMOUTH** Thugged Out: The Albulation Virgin

FEBRUARY 16

- ADAM X** Wax Trax! MasterMix Volume 2 Wax Trax!  
**ARLING & CAMERON** All-In Emperor Norton  
**BOUNTY KILLER** Fifth Element Blunt  
**CORRS** The Re-mix Album Atlantic  
**DAMNATIONS TX** Half Mad Moon Watermelon-Sire  
**FLANGER** Template (12") Ninja Tune  
**FRONTSIDE** Frontside Wax Trax!  
**RUSSELL GUN** Ethnomusicology Vol. 1 Atlantic  
**HONKY TOAST** Whatcha Gonna Do Honky? 550 Music  
**LATANYA** What U Gonna Do Blunt  
**NEVILLE BROTHERS** Valence Street Columbia  
**VERSUS** Afterglow (EP) Merge  
**XTC** Apple Venus Vol. One TVT

FEBRUARY 22

- FROGS** The Frogs Moikai  
 —reissue of their debut LP  
**KISSOFFS** Goodbye Private Life Peekaboo  
**JIM O'ROURKE** Eureka Drag City  
**STEPHEN PRINA** Push Comes To Love Drag City

SILVER SCOOTER Orleans Paish Peekaboo

FEBRUARY 23

- APHILLYATION** Dry Tears (12") Tommy Boy  
**AVENGERS** ...Died For Your Sins Lookout!  
 —live recording from seminal punk band  
**BAD COMPANY** The Original Bad Company Anthology  
 Elektra  
**BANYAN** Any Time At All CyberOctave  
**BRONX HORNS** Catch the Feeling 32  
**BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD** Box Set Elektra  
**GARY BURTON** Alone at Last 32  
**LARRY CORYELL** Shining Hour 32  
**COUNTRY TEASERS** Destroy All Human Life Fat Possum  
**CYNTHIA** Like A Star Tommy Boy  
**D GENERATION** Through The Darkness C-2  
 —first release from new Columbia imprint  
**D MACHINE** Enter The Machine (12") Tommy Boy  
**EDENSTREET** Edensreet A&M  
**JASON FALKNER** Can You Still Feel? Elektra  
**FINE** Against The View Flip-Elektra  
**FRIDA** Something's Going On A&M  
**FUTURE PILOT AKA** vs. A Galaxy Of Sound Beggars  
 Banquet  
**GUS** Word Of Mouth Parade Almo Sounds  
**JOHN WESLEY HARDING** Trad Arr Jones Zero Hour  
**TOMMY HENRIKSEN** Tommy Henriksen Captiol  
**DAVE HILLYARD & THE ROCKSTEADY 7**  
 Playtime Hellcat  
**HUGO LARGO** Mettle Thirsty Ear  
 —reissue of the band's 1989 sophomore album  
**IMPERIAL TEEN** What Is Not To Love Slash-London  
**JOI** One And One Is One RealWorld-Astralwerks  
**RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK/YUSEF LATEEF**  
 Separate But Equal: Case Of The 3-Sided Dream/Part Of  
 The Search 32  
**BEN LEE** Breathing Tornados Grand Royal-Capitol  
**LUCY LEE** Don't Stop Asking Island  
**ROBERT LOCKWOOD JR.** The Complete Trix  
 Recordings 32  
**ME FIRST AND THE GIMMIE GIMMIES** The Boxer  
 (7") Lookout!  
 —cover of the Simon & Garfunkel hit by all-star punk band  
**MEJA** Seven Sisters Columbia  
**MUNROS** Scottish Moods Virgin  
**NAS** I Am: The Autobiography Columbia  
**OF MONTREAL** The Gay Parade Bar/None  
**OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL** Black Foliage:  
 Animation Music By The Olivia Tremor Control Flydaddy  
**PAN SONIC** A. Mute  
**POLE** CD 1 Matador  
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**PRINCE PAUL** A Prince Among Thieves Tommy Boy  
**ROOTS MANUVA** Movement (12") Ninja Tune  
**RUBBERROOM** Reconstruction (12") 3-2-1  
**SEBADOH** The Sebadoh Sub Pop-Sire  
**SKINLAB** Disembody... The New Flesh Century Media  
**SNAKEFARM** Songs From My Funeral Kneeling  
 Elephant-RCA  
**SOUNDTRACK** Still Crazy Island  
**SPINANES** All Sold Out (7") Sub Pop  
 —Rolling Stones covers  
**SPY** Music To Mauzner By Lava-Atlantic  
**TIN STAR** The Thrill Kisses V2  
**UGLY DUCKLING** You Know What I'm Sayin' A&M  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Pop Romantique Emperor Norton

WACO BROTHERS Waco World Bloodshot

PAUL WESTERBERG Suicaine Gratification Capitol

MARCH 2

- BOLT UPRIGHT** Red Carpet Syndrome 550 Music  
**GINUWINE** 100% Ginuwine 550 Music  
**GRAND MAL** Maledictions London  
**JANITA** Janita 550  
**LATIN PLAYBOYS** Atlantic  
**VIRGOS MERLOT** Signs Of A Vacant Soul Atlantic  
**JOEY MCINTYRE** Columbia  
**MOUSSE T** Columbia  
**RAHSUN** It's Not A Game 550 Music  
**RED HOUSE PAINTERS** Old Ramon Island  
**SOUNDTRACK** Reach The Rock Hefty  
 —original score by John McEntire, also feat. Tortoise, the  
 Sea And Cake, Bundy K. Brown, Polvo, and Dianogah  
**TANITA TIKARAM** Cappuccino Songs Island

MARCH 9

- NATACHA ATLAS** Gedida Beggars Banquet  
**BONESHAKERS** Shake The Planet Virgin  
 —sophomore record by band featuring Pee Wee Atkinson  
 of Was Not Was  
**HADDA BROOKS** I've Got News For You Virgin  
**CHOKING VICTIM** No Gods, No Managers Hellcat  
**CORNELIUS** FM Matador  
 —Money Mark, High Llamas, UNKLE, Pastels, Damon  
 Albarn of Blur and Buffalo Daughter remix Cornelius  
**CORNELIUS** CM Matador  
 —Cornelius remixes Money Mark, High Llamas, UNKLE,  
 Pastels, Damon Albarn of Blur and Buffalo Daughter  
**DEADLY VENOMS** Deadly Venoms A&M  
**DROPKICK MURPHYS** The Gang's All Here Hellcat  
**FUNKI PORCINI** The Ultimately Empty Million Pounds  
 Ninja Tune  
**GIGI** Your Love Tommy Boy  
**WALTER HAWKINS** Love Alive V, Vol. 2 Gospo Centric  
**JOE HENRY** Fuse Mammoth  
**JEGA** Spectrum Matador  
 —licensed from Britain's Planet  $\mu$  label run by  $\mu$ -Ziq  
 (a.k.a. Mike Paradinas)  
**IDENTITY 5** (I Dely) Sampler Century Media  
**LOOPER** Up A Tree Sub Pop  
 —solo project from Stuart David of Belle & Sebastian  
**MASE PRESENTS HARLEM WORLD** The Movement  
 Columbia  
**PAUL MCCARTNEY & WINGS** Band On The Run Capitol  
**VAN MORRISON** Back On Top Virgin  
**NATURAL ELEMENTS** 2 Tons Tommy Boy  
**OLD PIKE** Ten Thousand Nights 550 Music  
**PULLEY** Pulley Epitaph  
**ROTTING CHRIST** The Sleep Of Angels Century Media  
**GLEN SCOTT** Without Vertigo 550 Music  
**SOUNDTRACK** Cruel Intentions Virgin  
**SOUNDTRACK** Stigmata Virgin  
**SOURCE DIRECT** Exorcise The Demon Science-Astralwerks  
**TOAD THE WET SPROCKET** Greatest Hits Columbia  
**UB40** Labour Of Love III Virgin  
**UNDERWORLD** Beaucoup Fish JBO-V2  
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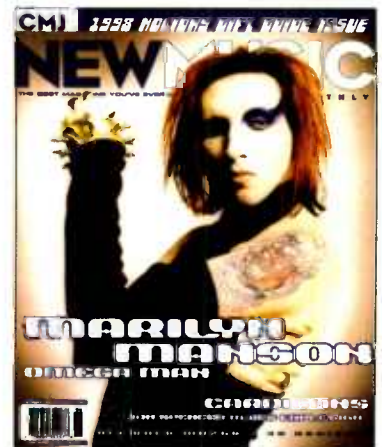
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seem to decide. For good sight lines on national and proven local acts, Lupu's is the place, though the Met's got better beer.

Across town, in the late-night bustle of the jewelry district (Providence is a significant manufacturer of costume jewelry), the **Call** (15 Elbow St., 751-2255) and its building co-tenant 'round the corner, the **Century Lounge** (150 Chestnut St., 751-2255), offer everything from blues and rockabilly to punk and electronica. Freeloaders might want to check out the blues buffet at the Call on Thursday nights, when a fin gets you in and fed. Down the street, Sylvia at **CAV** (stands for "Coffee, Antiques, Victuals") (14 Imperial Pl., 751-9164) will, for not a lot of cash, seat you, entertain you with decent blues, folk, or ethnic music, and serve up a piping hot bowl of excellent coffee. Antiques and bric-a-brac cost extra. Try to make it there when Paul Geremia, Providence's treasured acoustic blues dude, takes the stage. Nearby, the Green Room at **Snookers** (145 Clifford St., 351-7665) rocks the house with heady party bands, and doesn't concern itself much with booking trend acts. Nor does **AS220** (AS stands for "Artist Space") (115 Empire St., 831-9327), where the artistic anarchy is organized and battles over merit take place on the gallery walls and the music stage.

On the odd side of I-95, the **Living Room** (23 Rathbone St., 521-5200), a longtime downtown establishment that used to host bands like R.E.M., Hüsker Dü, and Television back in the early '80s, now finds itself in a new location—its fourth—behind a donut shop, considerably off the beaten path. But it is hands-down the best place to catch local hard music—Tuesday night is rave night—and the cover charge is always do-able.

## Record Stores

Anyone can throw up a few walls, toss some CDs on a shelf, and call himself a record store owner, but few do the job as well as Chris Zingg and the gang at **In Your Ear Records** (286 Thayer St., 861-1515), a fine purveyor of new, used, and collectible discs sold by a knowledgeable staff. Thanks to Zingg and a few other quality Mom & Pop record stores on Thayer St.—the artery at the heart of Brown University and Providence's East Side—a shiny new Sam Goody's couldn't take the heat and folded after only a few months. Power to the people! Just off that



axis, it's worth your time to head over to the strictly indie **Fast Forward Records** (5 Steeple St., 272-8866), where Ron and Judy will be happy to lead you through a minefield of indie discs, vinyl, and 'zines. On the vintage side, the hoary **Round Again** (278 Wickenden St., 351-6292) houses a decent collection of vinyl and reissues.

## Food-age

If there's one thing that Providence has always been proud of, it would have to be its restaurants. Chalk it up to the preponderance of Italians in town, or perhaps the number of college students looking for late-night munchies ten months out of the year, but Providence is a mealtime paradise, especially if you're looking for chew-ables on the cheap. For carnivores, you can put "some South in your mouth" over at **Wes's Rib House** (Olneyville Square), an out-of-the-way warehouse dedicated to the fine art of barbecue. Many college kids call **Loui's Diner** (286 Brook St., 861-5225) home, though we prefer to call it "homey" or even "homely." Just don't sit in the reclining chair off to the side. That's where sleepy owner Loui Gianfrancesco takes his mid-morning naps. Feed your Mexican fix at **Tortilla Flats** (355 Hope St., 751-6777) and bring the kids, if applicable. If you have a little extra scratch and a hankering for grilled swordfish salad, try **Olga's Cup & Saucer** (103 Point St., 831-6666).

## Miscellaneous

Strangely enough, there are no better emissaries for our fair city than the Big Nazo puppet troupe, a grotesque but fun-loving gaggle of latex and imagination that shows up at all of the area's major events. Demand is running so high for Big Nazo, the puppets have recently begun filming their pilot for a possible kids' show on Nickelodeon.

If hoochie koochie, not puppetry, is on your mind, Providence can actually be a decent place to flex your love muscles. Catch a movie first at the romantic **Cable Car Cinema** (204 South Main St., 272-3970), making sure you get one of the pleasantly ratted-out couches on the right side of the aisle. After the movie, head across the street to **L'Elisabeth's** (285 South Main St., 861-1974), a French-style salon that's a little pricey but very cozy and a great place to catch a quiet, sexy buzz on green creme de menthe. After that, if you're not too, um, eager, walk up College Hill to **Prospect Terrace** (Congdon St.), where you can, next to an imposing statue of Roger Williams, look out over all of downtown Providence.

Then there's the acclaimed **Trinity Repertoire Theater** (201 Washington, 351-4242), the **RISD Museum** (224 Benefit St., 331-3511), **Mobee's Music** (297 Thayer St., 351-4705), where you can get a black light poster of Farrah Fawcett and a strobe light for your apartment, but perhaps I should stop here... We wouldn't want to make Providence sound like Shangri-La. We've already got ourselves more growth than we can handle. Did I mention the Mafia and the part about our mayor being a felon?

*All phone numbers are in the 401 area code.*

*Bob Gulla writes for the Boston Globe and People magazine, among other publications, when not tending to his flock or fast-tracking through CDs.*



# ocalzine

## Providence, Rhode Island

BY BOB GULLA



PHOTOS: GLENN TURNER

When you mention Providence, most people respond with sympathy, a kind of sad-eyed look of condolence, as if to say, "I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?" In reality, though, the city on I-95 'twixt Boston and New York has rebounded in a way few folks outside the city realize. Sure, we still have a felon as mayor, but Providence feels upbeat, civil, and far more arts friendly than ever before. We have a new public performance space (Waterplace Park), a new outdoor skating rink, an in-town convention center, and a just-built, lantern-lit promenade along the Providence River, all smack in the center of downtown. And though the Mafia still holds sway in the Federal Hill neighborhood, those mobsters still need to eat and we've got some good restaurants to keep them happy. (Brief history lesson: Rhode Island was originally founded as a rebel colony by ideological and religious separatists Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. Which accounts for a lot.) Of course, if the sight of smartly pressed Armani suits gives you the chills, you can always head to the culturally-boho East Side, home to Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design, where flannel shirts and sweat pants are the rule. Considering the ample psychological damage done to the city's visitors over the last, say, 20 years, it might take outsiders a little while to come around again. That's okay. We like our privacy.

### Tuneage

As with any rebel colony across the US, music plays an important role in Providence. Modern rock fans might remember that the city spawned such notable acts as lounge-trend catalysts Combustible Edison, ragged power poppers Velvet Crush, psycho-rockers Six Finger Satellite, multimedia electro-dudes Emergency Broadcast Network, resident genius Chick Graning (formerly of Scarce), and indie darlings Small Factory. Today, the scene may not be pushing out hit-makers with any regularity, but it seems content to gurgle along in a healthy, diverse kind of way. Moody psychedelic rockers Purple Ivy Shadows, signed to Slow River, draw consistently well, as do bands like brainy jammers Medicine Ball, the canny V. Majestic, and hardcore activists Drop Dead. If a band gets lucky, perhaps Ben over at Load Records, Providence's long-time boutique label, will squeeze out a single. Providence also hosts one of the premier national indies within its modest limits: Flydaddy Records, formerly of Seattle and New York City, is now open for business downtown. But I digress.

The Fabulous Itchies are one of the latest in a long line of rockabilly-swing bands to hail from the Ocean State, the progenitor, of course, being the classically swingin' Roomful Of Blues (and its now solo guitarist Duke Robillard), who have made swingin' blues less a trend than a way of life here since the mid-'70s. Both bands' shows in P-Town are always near-classic local events. And speaking of swingin' events, Providence is especially proud of its latest bust-out national act, the Amazing Crowns, good-time punk rock coming to a junior high near you.

### Venues

And speaking of venues, the city's music stages seem to be in a constant state of flux. At press time, there were two clubs you could count on—the venerable **Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel** (239 Westminster St., 272-LUPO) and its companion joint, the much smaller **Met Café** (130 Union St., 861-2142)—a few that were on semi-solid ground, and a generous handful that can't



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