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World Radio History

ON THE COVER

DJ RAP: SPACE 1999 34

"Drum 'n' bass is about frequencies, and that's why I find it hard to do drum 'n' bass, because you have to go away from the song. Some people are really technical and can get the most out of that. But I don't think they could write a song." One of Britain's hottest jungle DJs steps out from behind the decks to make *Learning Curve*, one of the year's most irresistible pop records. DJ Rap talks with Kurt B. Reighley about her sordid past and bright future.

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At the end of the day, "Revolution Action! The virus has been spread! Deutschland must die!" means to its audience what "Be-bop-a-lula" meant in 1956: "We're cool! Time to rock!" Craig Flanagin, of confrontational NYC group God Is My Co-Pilot, tries to figure out just what revolution Alec Empire and his group Atari Teenage Riot are trying to foment.

VERBENA 26

"If you're going to record a great album, you'd better develop some serious animosity toward everybody else in the band and then be willing to be so passive about it that you never say anything." Conflict resolution may not be Verbena's strong point, but as Richard Martin learns, the Alabama trio's new Dave Grohl-produced album proves that the band is putting its vitriol to good use.

FREESTYLERS 30

"For the past two years there's been a very big resurgence in England of breakdancing. It never really went away, but it's back in a big way. And it's one of those things that we were totally influenced by. Also, it looks great on stage." Britain's Freestylers are kicking it old school, with a stage show that's actually as good as the record. Matt Ashare checks them from both angles.

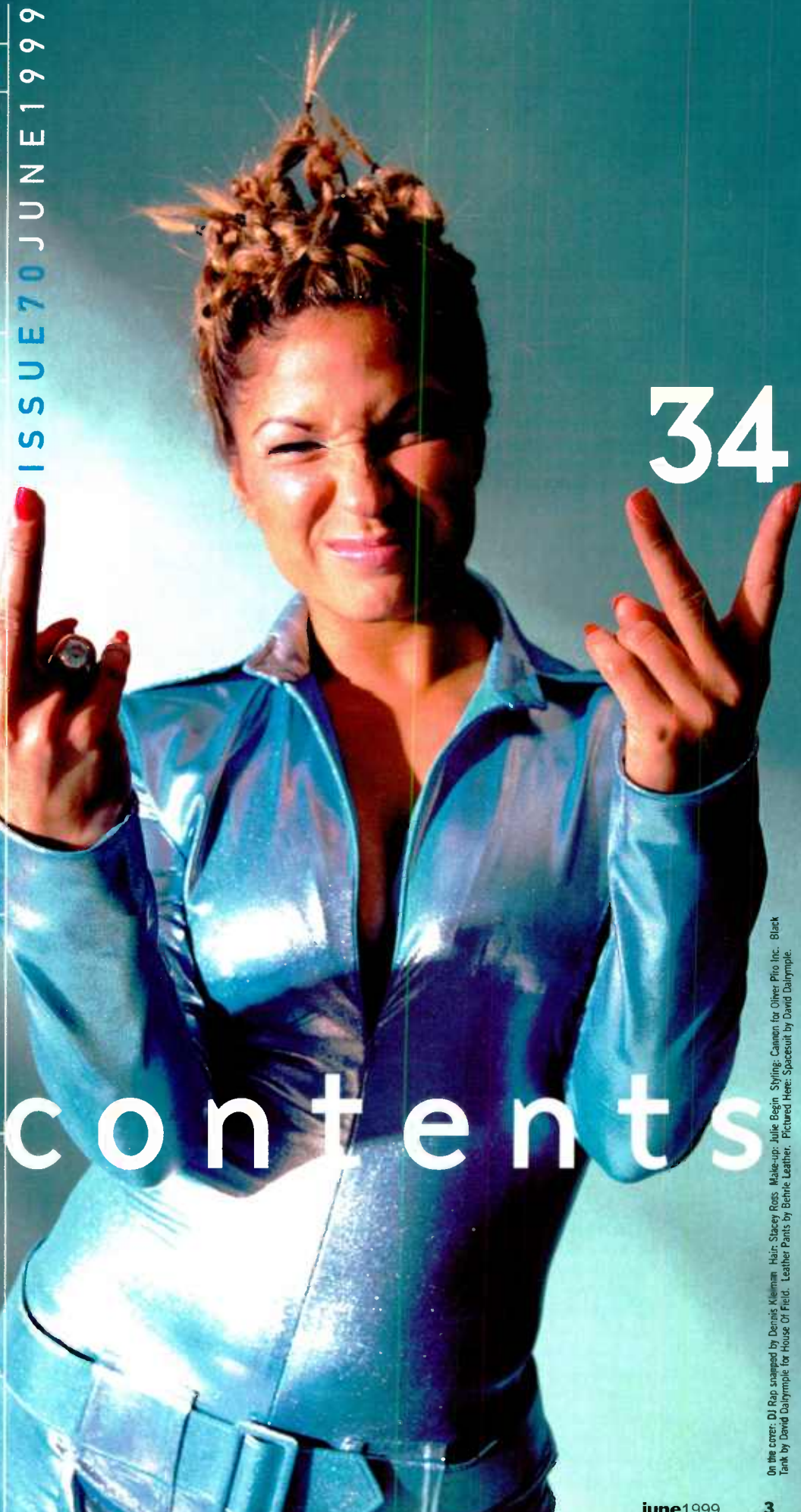
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This month's disc includes savvy pop from cover star DJ Rap, angst-core from Atari Teenage Riot, swing from the Atomic Fireballs, Brit-rock from Mansun and the Manic Street Preachers, hip-hop-infused tracks from the Freestylers and the Herbaliser, arty post-rock from Joan Of Arc, funk/metal from Bolt Upright, electronica from Orbital and much more.

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On the cover: DJ Rap snapped by Dennis Klemm. Hair: Stacey Ross. Make-up: Julie Begin. Styling: Cannen for Oliver Piro Inc. Black Tank by David Dalrymple for House Of Field. Leather Pants by Behle Leather. Pictured Here: Spicesuit by David Dalrymple.

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"I feel like I've caught lightning in a bottle where rock video stuff is concerned. I mean, I don't know if I'm just flukin' it in the rock 'n' roll world so far, or what, but it just doesn't seem that tough." McFarlane, creator of all things Spawn-related, designer of Korn's last record cover, and animator of Pearl Jam's last video, makes it all seem easy.

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World Radio History

DRIVE MY CAR

Mike Ness, Social Distortion's frontman, takes a solo ride with *Cheating At Solitaire*.

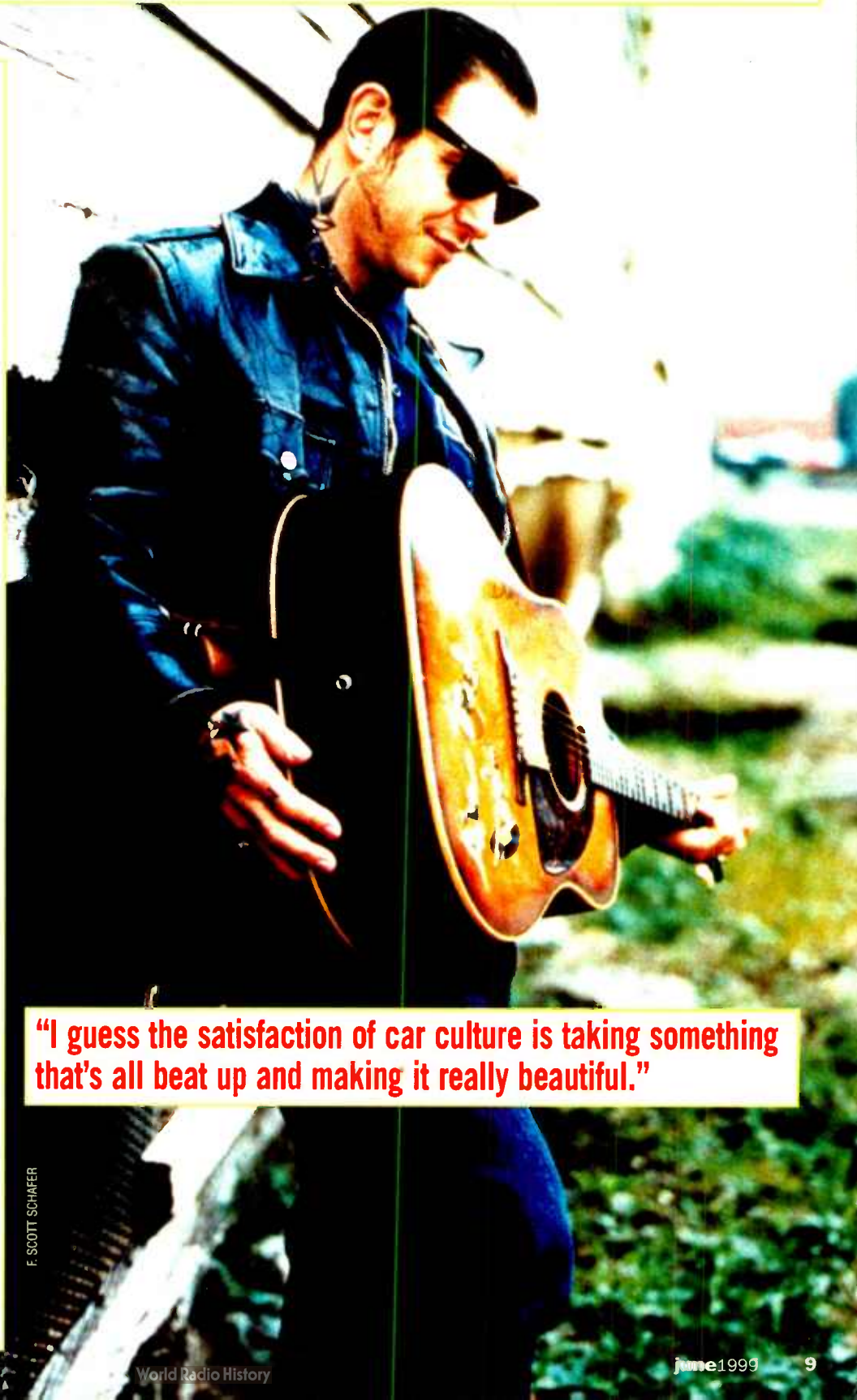
Story: Tom Lanham

Thanks to the retro-fueled swing fad jitterbugging across the nation, growls Mike Ness, suddenly every dork with a DA and Dickies wants to own a cruise-worthy hot rod. This does not please Ness. In fact, it makes him very angry. And, if you've ever met this muscle-bound hulk of a tattooed gearhead, you'll understand the gravity of getting the man riled.

"Everyone has a cool car now," Ness sneers, in the gunpowdery voice that has, for nearly two decades, rallied his roughneck Orange County combo, Social Distortion. "And they think all it is, is just buying one and being seen in it, posing in it. But once they realize how much heartache and heartbreak it can be, and how much money it'll cost, a lot of 'em end up selling theirs. For a lot of these people, this image forming is just a phase until the next thing. They were into Guns N' Roses until Guns N' Roses went away, and now they've got slicked-back hair, sleeve tattoos and an old car." Ness chortles, deep and menacing. "It's not like a phase for me. I'm not going through some fucking phase."

Ness's new solo album, *Cheating At Solitaire* (Time Bomb), does find him revving on the creative red line. There's a wicked duet with Bruce Springsteen ("Misery Loves Company"), a sinister six-string cameo from Brian Setzer ("Crime Don't Pay"), and some high-octane mandolin and pedal steel on several folk/country covers (which include Hank Williams's definitive "You Win Again"). But when he howls "I'm In Love With My Car" over a piston-pumping riff, Ness isn't playing James Dean chicken. "I didn't get a car until about ten years ago because I could never afford one," he explains, knowing his truant, impoverished past has been exhaustively documented in many a Social D. anthem. Now he's the proud owner of a chopped '54 Chevrolet, a '60 Impala and a '53 panhead Harley Davidson. "And I just built a motor for my '54. I built a '63 small-block Corvette [engine] for \$2,000, and normally it would've cost \$5,000 to do it the way I did it: a completely nostalgic, internally-strong and bulletproof motor." Ness is no grease-monkey dabbler—he's really done his research. "The whole thing about period custom work from the '40s and '50s," he authoritatively notes, "was that they

(continued on page 10)



"I guess the satisfaction of car culture is taking something that's all beat up and making it really beautiful."

F. SCOTT SCHAFER

Mike Ness (continued from page 9)

were taking beautiful Detroit cars one step further. Like, for instance, if you took a '57 Chevy, stock, it looks kind of grandpa. But you slam it on the ground and it automatically takes on a different stance, automatically has an attitude."

Zen and the art of jalopy maintenance? Something like that, admits Ness, 37. He takes part in national auto shows; showcases his wheels at annual gatherings like the OC Hootenanny; keeps in touch with his ever-growing network of fellow collectors, including the motor-mad Reverend Horton Heat, with whom Ness just jammed at this year's South By Southwest convention, and constantly patrols the local wrecking yard for essential spare parts. "There's a kid there who's a fan of mine, and he sold me all this stuff for, like 60 bucks," purrs Ness. He's not so angry anymore. "I guess the satisfaction of car culture is taking something that's all beat up and making it really beautiful. And it's peace of mind when you're driving at four o'clock in the morning up the California coast, and you're the only one on the road. It's just peace of mind."

And if *Cheating* wins the kitty, what's the one vintage machine that would get Ness purring on a more regular basis? No question, he murmurs, back in tough-guy mode again. "A '36 Ford Coupe. They're really mean looking. There's one in Los Angeles that they've nicknamed the Black Dahlia, and it looks like death. And I mean evil!" **NMM**

Label Profile

"I've never been very good at working for other people. I've been fired from every job I've ever had," says Jetset founder Shelley Maple, explaining what inspired her to start her own label in 1996. Earlier this year, Jetset earned the "Best Independent Label" award at radio trade publication *Gavin's* annual seminar, an honor that's usually reserved for longer-standing labels. Maple says that the label—whose 21 releases include albums by groups as varied as Indo-pop act Macha, German punkers Golden Lemons, and boozy rock band Firewater, as well as the ultra-swanky, contemporary exotica compilations *Songs For The Jetset, Vols. 1 & 2*—consciously avoids being pigeonholed. She jokes, "Originally our A&R policy was to sign independently wealthy bands who could pay to make their own records, but we only found one. So instead, we decided to look for bands with deep-rooted insecurities and paranoia and we seem to have been quite successful in this area."



SMOKE CITY



The puff daddies in the Herbaliser fuse hip-hop, jazz and electronic beats on their mellow new platter, *Very Mercenary*.

Bass player Jake Wherry and DJ Ollie Teeba, who comprise the West London duo the Herbaliser, are relaxing backstage before a New York City show, and it smells pretty much the way you might expect it to smell when guys who call themselves the Herbaliser relax: dank. Very, very dank.

Wherry is finding it hard to relax these days, however, even when uh, unwinding. "I got arrested last week in London for a drug offense," he says, taking another puff. "It was really shit how it happened. I mean, I'm 29. I got a kid and a family. I'm almost thinking about stopping weed now, just from a legal point of view. I never thought I'd come to that."

Wherry is probably less surprised that he and partner Teeba have come to *Very Mercenary* (Ninja Tune), their third album of blunted beats and hip-hop grooves. "I'm more into funk and jazz and soul," he says. "But I've always loved hip-hop. And Ollie's more into hip-hop, but naturally, hip-hop and jazz and funk all sort of link together anyway. We sort of meet in the middle so we're not hardcore jazz and we're not hardcore hip-hop."

By embracing so many genres, Herbaliser is, in effect, refusing to be restricted to one. "[New York City hip-hop record store] Fat Beats won't even take Ninja Tune's phone calls!" laments Wherry. "When we first came out we were more trip-hop, but now we use a lot of hip-hop beats. I think perhaps some Americans should accept that hip-hop is now a whole global village: Japan, Canada, France, England and many more. We've always used hip-hop production, samples, [and] turntables since day one."

This August and September, the Herbaliser will be in America with a backing band for the first time. "It's really exciting," says Wherry. "We have a funk band, and a lot of the musicians hang around the studio—good friends, you know—we said 'Let's do the Herbaliser live. Put some beats on a DAT and we'll just play live.' It's worked from day one. It goes in a more jazzy direction, because we have saxes and flutes and congos and bongos and keyboards."

"It's more funk than jazz, really," adds Teeba. "To an untrained ear it seems very jazzy, but to a jazz person, it seems very hip-hop."

"The Ninja scene, [unlike] people that have been into jazz and hip-hop for years, most of the people have been brought up on techno and house and drum 'n' bass," ruminates Wherry. "So when they hear a flute, they'll be like, 'Ooh! A flute, not a synthesizer!'"

"Most people dig it," says Teeba. "But sometimes, someone will go [Teeba scrunches his face, wistfully] 'Ooh, It's a bit flute-y-jazz-y.'"

"When actually," laughs Wherry, "the bloke is just playing the hardest like, porn flute!"

>>>William Werde



Dido no angel



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Weird Record Of The Month



On **Rock, Rot & Rule** (Stereoloffs), WFMU DJ and comedy fiend Tom Scharpling interviews "author" Ronald Thomas Clontle (né Superchunk drummer Jon Wurster) about his new book of the same name. Billed as "The Ultimate Argument Settler," *RR&R* places every band in the canon of popular music (at least the ones Clontle has heard of) into these three curiously defined categories. Clontle's research, logic, and execution are all maddeningly flawed, but he sticks to his dictates with the blind fortitude of a rock 'n' roll Richard Nixon. His assessments—"Madness invented Ska," for instance—set the phone lines alight, and a hilarious music geek tête-a-tête ensues. "Time will vindicate me," Clontle insists. Watch your tailfeathers, Dave Marsh: *RR&R* is a rock list for the hopelessly misinformed. And our numbers are legion. >>>Matt Hanks

Random Quote

"She's got anything and everything to do with Dad that ever was, that ever is, and ever probably will be... You know, she owns his likeness... I mean, it's really sad. Yes, he liked scribbling and drawing and doing a bit of art. But to see it taken to this level. This is not what Dad was about, selling dinner plates with his drawings, and cups and mugs and ties. I mean, that's what I received for Christmas once, an electric blue tie with one of his sketches on it."



>>>Julian Lennon, on Ono's soul

No. 2 Pencils Ready

Alice Cooper will be hosting the Third Annual Rhino Music Aptitude Test (RMAT) on May 12th in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas and live over the Internet. You can find out more by checking out www.rhino.com or calling 1-888-846-3848.

BURN BABY BURN



L-R: MATTEI, BOYLE, TIM KINSELLA

Joan Of Arc stakes its reputation on *Live In Chicago*, recorded in, of all places, a recording studio.

Chicago's Joan Of Arc works really hard at making the meticulous sound spontaneous. Formed from the ruins of Windy City post-punks Cap'n Jazz, Joan Of Arc abandoned its feral rock roots for a new sound bent around keyboards and computers. On its third album—the misleadingly titled studio LP *Live In Chicago 1999* (Jade Tree)—Joan Of Arc continues its experiments with noise-enhanced electronica and acoustic pop songs.

"Every band is part of a larger dialog that says, 'This is my take on how things sound,'" explains Joan Of Arc singer/songwriter Tim Kinsella. "The important part is to be confrontational in crossing that dialogue because it is so static."

Kinsella, Joan Of Arc's primary songwriter, found himself creating *Live In Chicago* solo after the band's break-up following the release of its 1998 album, *How Memory Works*.

"It started kind of ambiguously. I was just recording," Kinsella clarifies. "I guess I started it and then [the other band members] started coming around a little." Eventually all of the original Joan Of Arc members—Kinsella's brother Michael on drums, guitarist/bassist Todd Mattei, and keyboard/computer controller Jeremy Boyle—contributed to *Live In Chicago*.

The result is an engulfing 13-song collection of odd noises and occasional acoustic guitar breaks tied together in an angular fashion that suggests both Pere Ubu and Chicago contemporaries like Gaster Del Sol. Intentionally unpredictable, *Live In Chicago* leaps from synthesizer-induced instrumental interludes to disheveled pop songs before landing on a cleaned-up cover of '60s crooner Scott Walker's "Thanks For Chicago, Mr. James."

Kinsella explains that the juxtaposition of folk-inflected pop songs with erratic instrumentation is not just for shock-value. "Within Joan Of Arc, the other way to try to represent a more honest portrayal of culture is to butt forms up against each other," he says. "It's not diverse for diversity's sake, but rather you can't hear a Joan Of Arc song and say, 'That's how Joan Of Arc sounds.'"

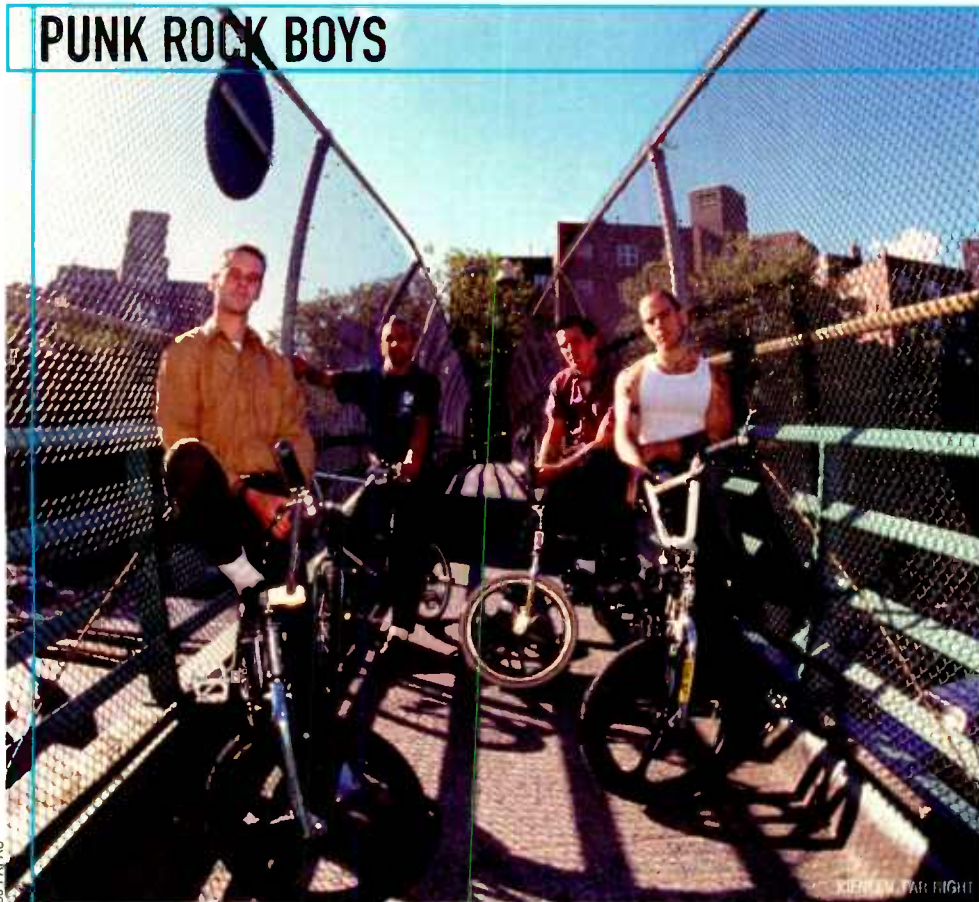
Because of its diversity, *Live In Chicago* makes the most sense swallowed whole, rather than digested in pieces. While a few tracks blend into one another, others collide when Kinsella challenges conventional definitions of what makes a song. Non-linear tracks such as "Live In Chicago 1999" and "I'm Certainly Not Pleased With My Options For The Future" (which features Kinsella's a cappella monotone explaining, "I've got this idea for a song... It will just be me explaining what the song will be like") might confuse pop song purists, but they'll delight fans of more eccentric music.

If anything, Joan Of Arc's sonic experiments prove that punk rock isn't the only way to rebel musically. "Certain forms still exist because white males throughout history have validated that as a fine form because it's entertaining and easy to digest," Kinsella explains. "Now you think about alternative rock bands or movies or whatever and it's like, 'This is what it should be.' I don't believe in 'should-be's.'"

>>>Jason Buhrmester



PUNK ROCK BOYS



BU PAPPAS

To the **Bouncing Souls**, it don't mean bunk if it ain't got that punk.

"It's like a Zen process," explains Bouncing Souls bassist Bryan Kienlen about the punk band's songwriting. "You just kind of curb your brain, stay out of the way, and let it write itself. We're developing this sort of Zen where it's pretty effortless, pretty painless. It's a matter of opening up."

The notion of Zen-punk may seem a bit far-fetched, particularly coming from New York City's Bouncing Souls, whose live show reflects not Zen stoicism, but overwhelming exuberance. For Kienlen, though, it is this balance that makes the band. "The Bouncing Souls aren't as two-dimensional as four guys that are all into the same punk shit," he contends. "The music ends up being the fifth element out of four guys throwing their shit in the middle.... Sometimes we're digging deep, pulling shit out of our guts, and having a serious moment about something, or reflecting about something inside. Sometimes we're just having a laugh. And both are very important," Kienlen emphasizes. "You need release and you need relief."

Balance comes not just in the material, but in the process itself. "It was done all right around in a circle. Literally," the bassist says of the writing for *Hopeless Romantic* (Epitaph). "Somebody would get an idea and write a couple lines, pass it to his left, someone would add to it, pass it to his left. And we'd write a song that way."

Veterans of nearly 12 years, the Bouncing Souls were together before punk became an attractive bandwagon in the middle of this decade, but Kienlen is content to let nature run its course rather than enter the punker-than-thou fray.

"It's going to weed out a lot of that [bandwagon] element and it's just going to be the true blues," he surmises. "People [say,] 'This is punk and that's punk.' Fuck it. We're punk because we don't give a fucking flying fuck what anyone thinks."

At the same time, Kienlen emphasizes a willingness to venture beyond preconceptions of punk—but *Hopeless Romantic* is at its best with irresistibly catchy sing-along anthems like "Bullying The Jukebox" and "Ole."

"That's because it's the most fun. You're bringing the listener from being the listener to [being part of] one big gang with us," he says. "And that's like the kind of musicians we are, generally. We're best and most comfortable in that range."

"I don't even know shit, man," he concludes. "I just play by ear. I hear things and then I play."

>>>Mike Magnuson

Tours We'd Like to See



All In The Family:

UNKLE, Auntie Christ, Cordelia's Dad, My Dad Is Dead, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Big Daddy Kane, Mommyheads, I Mother Earth, Mother Love Bone, Big Brother, Brother Sun Sister Moon, Twisted Sister, Swingout Sister, Shakespear's Sister, Sister Double Happiness, Sister Hazel, Godfathers.

Random Quotes

"I'm wearing swimming trunks, by the way. So you don't have to think about if I'm naked. My wife would kill me. I just didn't want you to hear the water rustling and think I was some pervert."



>>>Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, doing an interview—and Lord knows what else—from his hotel bathtub

"I categorically abhor the notion that acoustic music cut live-in-the-studio is a red badge of courage. Like when people say, 'I saw Sting and he came out in the encore with an acoustic guitar,' as if he were throwing himself to the lions. That's ludicrous.



And when people hear 'singer-songwriter,' they assume that's what you're about and that's what you're reaching for, some kind of 'honesty' in music. Which is why I resist that tag. **I've said numerous times that I think honesty is the most overrated quality in music."**

>>>Joe Henry, on why Sting's a wuss

In My Room

LOOPER Stuart David



Fatboy Slim
You've Come A Long Way, Baby

Land Of The Loops
Bundle Of Joy

Bentley Rhythm Ace
Bentley Rhythm Ace

The episode of *Seinfeld* "where Jerry and George grow mustaches to take a holiday from themselves"

"The DIY program called 'Changing Rooms,' where neighbors decorate one room in each other's houses, and they don't get to see the results till the end"

BURNING AIRLINES

J. Robbins



Nikos Kazantzakis
The Last Temptation Of Christ (book)

Uno (the game)

At The Drive-In (the band)

XTC
BBC Live/Transistor Blast (box set)

Soul Coughing
El Oso

GUS GUS



Al Green
Truth In Time

Pole
CD2

ABBA
Super Trooper

Jim Jarmusch
Dead Man (film)

Emir Kusturica
Times Of The Gypsies

SLICK AND TWISTED



Aphex Twin: Only Perry Farrell has gotten more action in a limo.

How could Aphex Twin's Richard James and video director Chris Cunningham (Madonna's "Frozen") top their dark, disturbing video for "Come To Daddy"? By making something light and even more disturbing. The eight-and-a-half-minute clip for "Windowlicker" plays like a hip-hop video as directed by David Cronenberg, complete with a couple of hapless playas in a convertible, a white limo whose entrance is like the Imperial Cruiser in the opening of *Star Wars*, California sun, and fulsome women in bikinis—all of whom, through make-up and special effects, wear the face of Richard James, locked in a frozen grin. (Some of the black women, though, end up looking a little like *Dr. Funkenstein*-era George Clinton.) Slow motion shots of phallic champagne bottles and rippling, loose booty give way to James prancing across the pavement like a pre-surgical-mask Michael Jackson, crotch grabs and all. The folks at Sire, ascertaining that MTV isn't likely to show it anytime soon, have kindly made the video available to interested parties for \$3.99.



ART OF NOISE'S PAUL MORLEY Q&A



MORLEY, SECOND FROM RIGHT

Anne Dudley, Trevor Horn, Lol Creme and Paul Morley (version 3.1 of the Art Of Noise, as they say) find themselves at the end of the century looking back at its beginning and into the life and work of another innovative artist for *The Seduction Of Claude Debussy* (ZTT-Universal). >>>Steve Ciabattini

Q: Why Debussy?

A: A lot of pop groups these days go back with their influences maybe ten or 15 years. We thought it might be good to go back 100 years to somebody who set up a lot of the possibilities of 20th Century music. He was angry about mediocrity. Early on in his career he was a music critic. He had a name, the Dilettante Hater. Some people say about critics that they're cynics because they seem to be attacking things, but my attitude is that it's because you believe in something—you want to make the world a better place. Debussy had that thing. He was rebelling against that almost cathedral, gothic type tendency of Beethoven and Wagner. He was such a great mascot for Modernism.

Q: Do you hope Art Of Noise might inspire someone in 2099?

A: Why not? One hundred years later there are many things that Debussy did that still hold true. It's one of the reasons why we wanted to use contemporary rhythms [on the new record] and use a rapper, to show that the music was flexible enough to take breakbeats, drum 'n' bass and rap. For me, it confirmed Debussy's hopes and wishes when he wrote the music—that it wasn't going to fossilize.

Q: One expectation for Art Of Noise would be to make an "electronica" record, but you've sort of been there, done that, right?

A: Absolutely. The big motto for this one was "sample free," because it was so associated with Art Of Noise the first time around. Now that a lot of people do that kind of thing, it seemed clumsy and obvious to come back and make that kind of "noise." It seemed more important to use the technology to liberate the imagination, not just make a technological record with very little imagination.

Q: Any New Year's concert plans?

A: We've been watching with amusement with everyone else that's planning. From Barbra Streisand in Las Vegas to David Bowie in New Zealand.

Q: Think Streisand would be a good gig for you?

A: It's either play with Barbra Streisand, play with the Pet Shop Boys or play with Karlheinz Stockhausen. There's part of me that can't quite believe that on that date, that you would have to be sat in an audience, watching something. There's a kind of arrogance about it—like with Bowie—that he would want to take the attention to himself away from what elsewhere is an interesting moment.

Q: Who wants to say at the turn of the millennium that they were holding up a lighter during "Diamond Dogs"?

A: Exactly. It's too specific. I hope to being doing 27 different things at once from something electronic to something sexual.

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Thurston Moore
Cindy (Rotten Tanx)
Butter 08
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Björk
Enjoy
Morcheeba
The Music That We Hear
Sean Lennon
Queue
Sublime
Badfish
Faithless
Insomnia
Roni Size/Reprazent
Watching Windows
Sleater-Kinney
It's Enough
David Garza
Discoball World
Spokey Ruben
Wendy McDonald
Buffalo Daughter
Silver Turkey

SIDE TWO:

Cibo Matto
Birthday Cake
Kraftwerk
Radioactivity
Wire
Outdoor Miner
Electronic
Get The Message
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Elysium
Eric's Trip
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Ozomatli
Cumbia
Talking Heads
Psycho Killer
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Far
Mother Mary

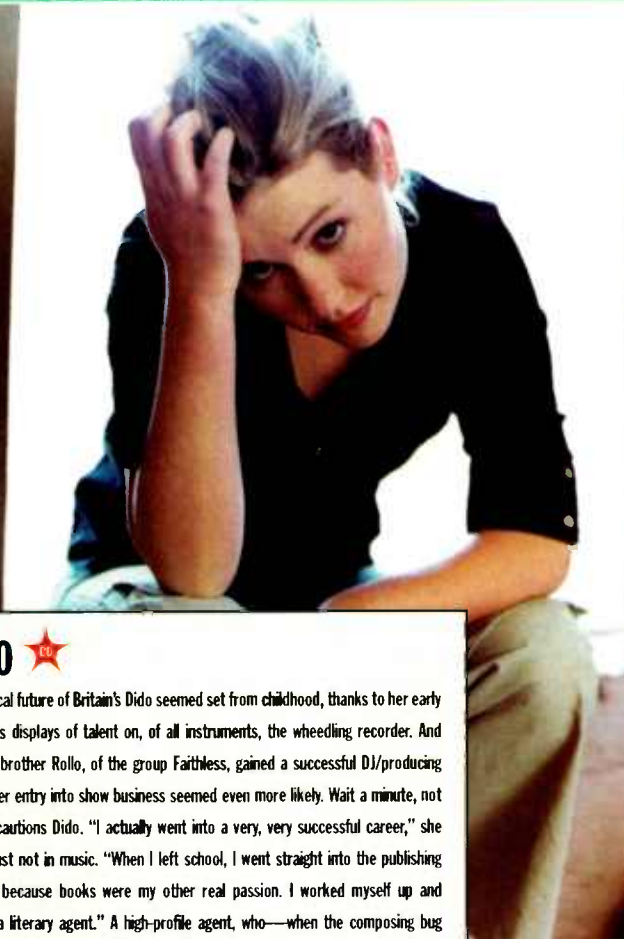
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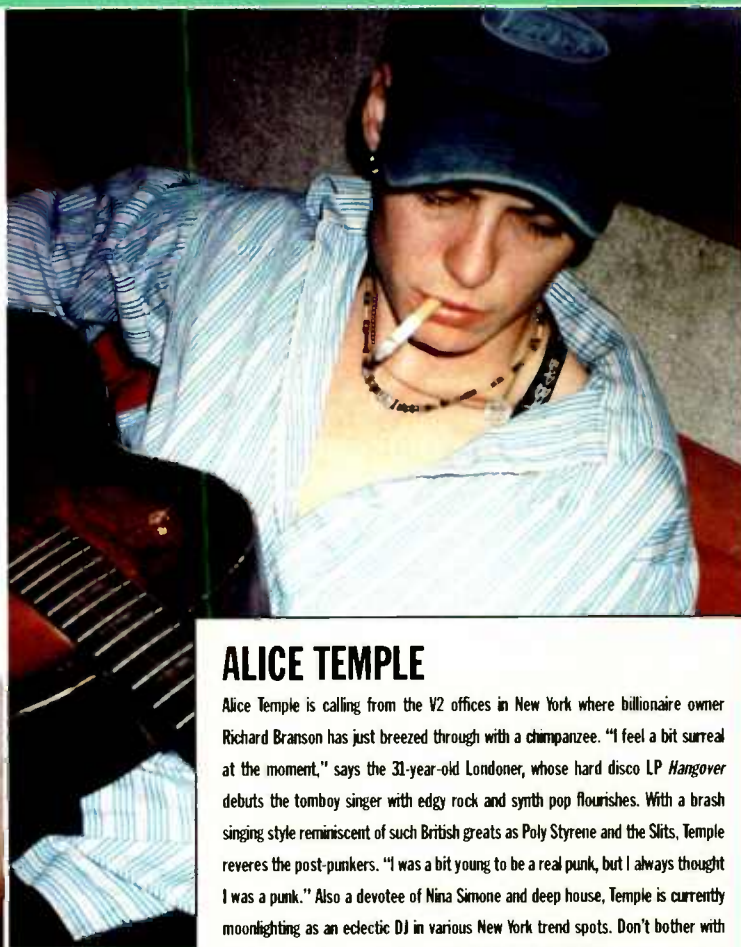




DIDO

The musical future of Britain's Dido seemed set from childhood, thanks to her early prodigious displays of talent on, of all instruments, the wheedling recorder. And once big brother Rollo, of the group Faithless, gained a successful DJ/producing profile, her entry into show business seemed even more likely. Wait a minute, not so fast, cautions Dido. "I actually went into a very, very successful career," she says—just not in music. "When I left school, I went straight into the publishing industry, because books were my other real passion. I worked myself up and became a literary agent." A high-profile agent, who—when the composing bug finally bit her again—had to request a year off from her understanding boss. The result? So long, publishing; hello, record making. *No Angel*, Dido's surreal, cerebral debut for Arista, is layered in heavenly keyboard (and yes, recorder) textures and lush swathes of Dido's haunting vocals, which are likely to draw Sarah McLachlan comparisons. Sounds like a bestseller.

>>>Tom Lanham



ALICE TEMPLE

Alice Temple is calling from the V2 offices in New York where billionaire owner Richard Branson has just breezed through with a chimpanzee. "I feel a bit surreal at the moment," says the 31-year-old Londoner, whose hard disco LP *Hangover* debuts the tomboy singer with edgy rock and synth pop flourishes. With a brash singing style reminiscent of such British greats as Poly Styrene and the Slits, Temple reveres the post-punkers. "I was a bit young to be a real punk, but I always thought I was a punk." Also a devotee of Nina Simone and deep house, Temple is currently moonlighting as an eclectic DJ in various New York trend spots. Don't bother with any dance floor kibitzing, though; she's not having any of it. "I played some Roni Size the other day and can you believe, people were bummed?" With smoldering butch sexiness, Temple is poised to break some hearts, as well as break into the rock diva enclave. As for the competition, Temple asserts, "I can kick Alanis Morissette's ass. I can't kick PJ Harvey's."

>>>Lois Maffeo



10c

"Pop-hop" is the phrase Los Angeles group 10c invented to describe its music. "People ask you, 'How do you describe your music?' And it's such a nightmare to come up with something," explains singer/guitarist Sean Russell. "So it was like, okay, I'll just try to make it easy on myself." His band's music indeed fuses pop and hip-hop, relying as heavily on chirpy melodies and a guitar-bass-drum lineup as on mellow, blunted grooves, scratches and vocals with a flowing rap style. The group's second album, *Buggin' Out*, is its first to feature a DJ, new recruit Paul Cheeba, and its first to be released by Hi-Ho Records, the label run by hotter-than-Hades studio team the Dust Brothers, who produced decade-defining records including *Paul's Boutique*, *Odelay* and "MMMbop." "I've learned some things, that's for sure," Russell says of recording *Buggin'* with the Brothers. "It's inevitable, I suppose. It's all coming back to the very first-point of writing, going back to step one, like Van Gogh or Picasso or something. You learn all these new techniques, but basically your first instinct was closest to it."

>>>Lydia Vanderloo

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OLD 97'S ★

Fight Songs

On their earlier releases, Dallas's Old 97's charted more frenzied, fucked-up, angry/drunk country-punk territory, but on their fourth full-length, *Fight Songs*, they deliver the depressive downswing of their bipolar-manic cycle—the morning after, if you will. Shifting the overall mood from frustration to hopelessness, the 97's have also swayed more towards the sing-songy pop sensibilities they've previously sped through with more teen angst. Singer/songwriter Rhett Miller's unfailingly smart lyrics tackle self-deception and past and future mistakes, and brim with all the sentiment of a hopeless romantic trying to convince you he's through with love, this time for real. On *Fight Songs*, though, the sexually-charged, heart-on-sleeve, drink-in-hand passion of their previous records is mellowed on all fronts. It's more laid back and country pop-focused, and smoother overall (if not slicker) than anything they've done to date. "Murder (Or A Heart Attack)" and "Oppenheimer" are super-catchy, fantastically crafted songs. Brilliantly skilled at nailing that desperation-turned-euphoria thing, the Old 97's hit the mark most often on their more rocking songs. But "Jagged" and "Valentine" provide glimpses at their rootsy, lonesome country side, which is what really drives the Old 97's, and what gives *Fight Songs* its depth and poignancy.

Elektra

>>>Liz Clayton



OUT:

April 27.

FILE UNDER:

Downcast roots-pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Wilco, Whiskeytown, Replacements.

ADD N TO (X)

Avant Hard

On last year's spectacular debut, *On The Wires Of Our Nerves*, Add N To (X) combined a nerdy interest in early electronic music with an uncensored adolescent goofiness. In the wake of rave reviews and a contract to produce original music for MTV spots, the trio's follow-up, *Avant Hard*, explodes with all the retro bombast of its predecessor. Spewing a boundless array of analogue synthesizer effects, the band serves up 11 slices of fun house madness. On the opener, "Barry 7's Contraption," a warped calliope haunted by a spooky theremin is assaulted by a battery of phaser blasts and bop guns. The second track kicks into a throbbing drum 'n' bass vamp overlaid by a cheesy melodic motif, paying homage to Iggy Pop and Kraftwerk simultaneously. With its galloping Moog and whinnying horses, "Ann's Eveready Equestrian" calls up images of Ichabod Crane riding headless through the night. And the record's first single, "Metal Fingers In My Body," continues the band's fascination with cyborg sexuality, celebrating the erotic contact of warm flesh and cold steel. Not since Manfred Hübler and Siegfried Schwab's late '60s horror/porno soundtracks (documented on Motel Records' fantastic *Vampyros Lesbos* CD) has electronica sounded so wacky and experimental at the same time.

Mute

>>>Christoph Cox



OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Man-machine meltdown music.

R.I.Y.L.:

Stereolab, Trans Am, Kraftwerk.

MANDY BARNETT

I've Got A Right to Cry

This second album from country wunderkind Mandy Barnett features the last four songs recorded by famed producer Owen Bradley before he died last year. It's only appropriate that the producer who made Patsy Cline a star end his career arranging Barnett, who starred in the Cline tribute show "Always... Patsy Cline," and whose mesmerizing voice and aching songs evoke the passion of early-'60s country greats. Bradley helped fashion Cline's and Kitty Wells's sound—heavy on torchy vocals and sentimental strings—which was at the time sometimes derided as "countrypolitan" by country purists. The authenticity police, as usual, proved wrong, and Bradley's uptown Nashville sound resonates with timeless purity here. Barnett, still in her early 20s, has a spine-tingling voice for the ages. Like young jazz throwback Madeline Peyroux, Barnett selects sparse, soulful material, and nails the small details. She languishes deliciously over the saddest lines, stretching out syllables that make "lonely" and "affair" each seem like three words. Her slight dramatic pause in "I'm Gonna Change Everything" between "I'm gonna take the pictures off the wall—and burn them" is exquisitely timed, as is her dreamy opening to "Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings," as she lingers over the alliteration, then follows the band's punch, rushing together the words "started walking, all over my mind."

Sire

>>>David Daley



OUT:

April 13.

FILE UNDER:

Torch and twang.

R.I.Y.L.:

Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells, Brenda Lee, k.d. lang.



DJ WALLY

The Stoned Ranger Rides Again

Liquid Sky

Here's a tip, off the record: Smoke a joint before you put on *The Stoned Ranger Rides Again*. Really. The echoed voices and secret samples will get all three dimensional on your hazy ass, and you'll *really understand* this music. Or so I've heard. DJ Wally is a New York DJ/producer whose work in the outer limits of instrumental beat music has earned him the respect of both the hip-hop and electronic communities (he's remixed Black Star, DJ Spooky, Pitchshifter and DJ Soulslinger, and co-produced an upcoming Luscious Jackson cut), and on *The Stoned Ranger* Wally illustrates why: He's got both a unique, absurdist sense of humor, a knack for building beats that are as uncomplicated and unassuming as they are solid and strong, and a mad scientist's love of curious amalgams. The cuts here are thick and juicy, and the louder you listen, the more sneaky samples reveal themselves. You'll hear a tiny rudder way down deep that's been guiding a track without you even knowing it, and you'll hear a quiet trumpet sample that changes the whole tone of the song. Wally's one of the unheralded master producers of New York, and with *The Stoned Ranger* should bring him the respect he obviously deserves.

>>>Randall Roberts



OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Thick and juicy instrumental hip-hop.

R.I.Y.L.:

UNKLE, Herbaliser,
Mix Master Morris.

SHANNON WRIGHT

Flight Safety

Quarterstick

If matches could be made between Southern Gothic literature and the current slew of Old South songmaids, Cat Power would be the darkly spiritual Flannery O'Connor and Shannon Wright would be the sweet and shattered Carson McCullers. Wright's songs have the vague longing that coursed through McCullers's stories of apartness, but with the musical shadings of baroque folk to color the haunting lyrical atmosphere. In a music world over-saturated by singer/songwriters, Shannon Wright deftly sidesteps the pitfalls of the genre by avoiding sentimentality and allowing her gaze to linger on homely, hard-edged moments with delicate grace. By playing all the instruments on her solo debut, Wright insures that the tone and tempo are perfectly balanced to her high, arid voice. Strings linger in shadowed corners, piano winds elliptically through quiet space and guitars find mannered pop structures in slow motion reveries. In the mid-'90s, Wright sang for the rootsy pop band Crowdsell, but in the time since the band's breakup she's been developing her hybrid sound of slow bluegrass, '70s troubadour folk and '90s singer/songwriter gravity. Her oblique lyrics might baffle some, but they eventually settle, like ragged poems that sink in to your psyche. On a dark, humid night, Shannon Wright is the soft breeze that sways the curtains.

>>>Lois Maffeo



OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

The new Southern Gothic.

R.I.Y.L.:

Elliott Smith, Kristin Hersh,
Cat Power.

JACK LOGAN

Buzz Me In

Capricorn

Some music easily conveys the love that went in to making it, and *Buzz Me In*'s loose, straightforward rock 'n' roll is nothing if not genuine. Jack Logan and his cohort (and Georgia motor shop coworker) Kelly Keneipp spend their free hours creating songs by the bulk-load (Keneipp's Backburner Records recently released *Tinker* by the aptly named Jack Logan's Compulsive Recorders) and consistently manage to find new twists on old forms. Former Clash-conspirator Kosmo Vinyl produced, and the occasional strings and horns and rhythm effects add colors to the broad stylistic palette, which ranges from the Clash-like opening of "Weren't Gone Long" to the soulful jazz shadings of "Gimme A Room" to the drawl of "Pearl Of Them All." Logan's got the eye of a short story writer—he can create a world with a few telling details or a line of dialogue, whether it's with the rootless cosmopolitan of "Metropolis" or the xenophobic character of "Glorious World" or the shrieking ceiling fan bearing of "Hit Or Miss." Although the foursquare rockers strike first—it's hard to deny the hoedown riff of "I Brake For God" or the "doo doo doo" hook of "Metropolis"—what lasts, and what makes Logan exceptional, are the naked honesty of his vocals and the weird slice-of-life perceptions of his lyrics. Honest.

>>>Steve Klinge



OUT:

May 11.

FILE UNDER:

Smart and scruffy rock 'n' roll.

R.I.Y.L.:

Freedy Johnston, Todd Snider,
Joe Henry.



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Photo: JOSHUA KESSLER

ATARI TEENAGE RIOT

frontman **ALEC EMPIRE** is taken to task by another confrontational rocker, **GOD IS MY CO-PILOT'S** Craig Flanagin. Will putsch come to shove?

Talking to Atari Teenage Riot leader Alec Empire is like talking to a Jehovah's Witness: No matter where it starts, the conversation ends up with him saying what he was going to say anyway. It always comes back to the Riot, because ATR is a band with a mission. "We could be seen as a sort of avant-garde, but I don't like this term. We try to create a situation in which people can make change happen."

The music sounds just like hardcore punk circa 1988, but instead of guitars and drums, the players use guitar samples and drum machines. And it's beautiful, irresistible in its aggressive linearity, with that brutal simple-mindedness where repetition and volume serve in place of variation and exposition. In this regard, ATR is the musical heir of some of the late-'80s' most charming loud, aggressive bands: Kreator, Slayer (before it tried to prove it could write songs), and Napalm Death (before it went dub).

Everything about Atari Teenage Riot is cartoon-character exaggeration: its hilariously aggressive beats, its sloganistic lyrics ("Deutschland must die!" "Start the riot!"), Alec clad in leather from head to toe, wearing eyeliner at 11 am. Anyone raised on comic books can't help but find the presentation appealing.

This is not accidental. From the beginning, in Berlin in 1992, the band was intended to stand clearly for one thing. Within months of reunification, the German political climate had swung wildly to the right. (I remember seeing T-shirts on the Berlin streets saying, "We want our Wall back!") ATR formed in response. "Okay, that's enough!" proclaimed Alec. "We have to say something! Let's use the strategy that the media uses. Let's form a band that has simple, straight messages."

Why music? Why not politics, or direct action?

"Music reaches people on an emotional level, and is really powerful. For us, it's a political thing."

ATR is all about motivating people to action. Action! Now! But exactly what action is never obvious from the songs.

"We see riots as a way of attacking the system. Because if a lot of people do it at the same time—or even not at the same time, timing doesn't really matter—in public places, and stuff gets destroyed, and costs the state money, at some point it will lead to a situation where the system will implode."

Then what are people destroying? They're coming from your show, then going out into the streets...

"Only they don't need to come from our show. They can do it without us. Do graffiti. Get rid of your TV. Don't work. Don't vote."

None of these ideas is new, of course. Revolutions of the past have failed to meet the same goals

"Music reaches people on an emotional level, and is really powerful. For us, it's a political thing."

using the same tactics. "It's great that people felt similar in the past," says Alec.

Being in a rock band with a political agenda carries an inherent difficulty: Rock has its own agenda, and rock conventions don't always support what you'd like to say. While your songs may be "about" ethical choice—bringing down capitalism, or progressive social change—the fact of getting up on stage with a guitar in front of a paying audience addresses (and on one level certainly endorses) macho power, posturing, and hero worship. Bands from Fugazi to Bikini Kill have struggled with these contradictions, as has Rage Against The Machine, whose support act on last year's North American tour was Atari Teenage Riot.

So why did Rage Against The Machine name its album after ATR, and why do the band's members think Alec is evil?

"*Evil Empire*? Yeah, I thought that too! Because we do more aggressive music, maybe, and we have our strategy worked out. So if we would ever become that successful, we maybe wouldn't get trapped with an audience who doesn't really care. Their approach is still good, but it's not how we would do things. We confront our audience all the time. A lot of bands use as an excuse—'Oh, these people don't understand! Then make them understand.'"

I ask about the fistfights at ATR shows, something Alec is becoming known for. He starts giggling, proud. "Yeah, that happens all the time. Especially with the audience!"

Hmmm. Okay, let's talk about the music. Instead, Alec tells me about the Riot.



"Atari has to fulfill its function. We want everybody to identify with what we are saying."

"The name is done like that too," he continues. "We do the stuff on the Atari, the trash of the computer industry, that you could use to fight back. And 'teenage riot' is really obvious [in] what it means."

But you're not teenagers...

"In general I criticize the term, because it was created by the industry. But we try to reverse that meaning more into an attitude thing."

When DC band Nation Of Ulysses said exactly this ten years ago—about our revolutionary responsibility to all be teenagers—it was funny, and thought-provoking in a Situationist kind of way. Hearing it now, with such earnestness, doesn't have the same effect. Nation Of Ulysses's humor made its deliberate pomposity enjoyable. Humor is just what Atari Teenage Riot lacks.

Alec Empire has a deep background in techno. With home studios and computers changing the way music is produced, DJs and dance clubs changing the way music can be experienced live, and machines making sounds that have never been heard before, why use all this cool technology to sound like guitars and drums? The answer, of course, is the Riot.

"We want it to sound really alive. The guitar is really powerful," Alec says. "We use elements of popular music so that people will understand what we are trying to do."

But techno music can also reach people on a visceral level. Isn't the music of Squarepusher just as aggressive as ATR's in some regards?

"It's not aggressive, it's editing!" spits out Alec. "Nerds! Nerd music! Sit in front of a computer and program something. It's a totally different thing!"

A-ha! There's the missing part of the equation: cool. Finally I understand. Techno is for nerds; Atari Teenage Riot is for revolution. Revolution is cool. Trying to figure out what ATR is "really" saying does the group a disservice. That's just quibbling. At the end of the day, "Revolution Action! The virus has been spread! Deutschland must die!" means to its audience what "Be-bop-a- lula" meant in 1956: "We're cool! Time to rock!"

Atari Teenage Riot's assertions are too vague to have face value. But they're not meant to be analyzed or understood, except viscerally. Their power is the power of Rock, where insistence has always stood in for meaning, and cool is always cool.

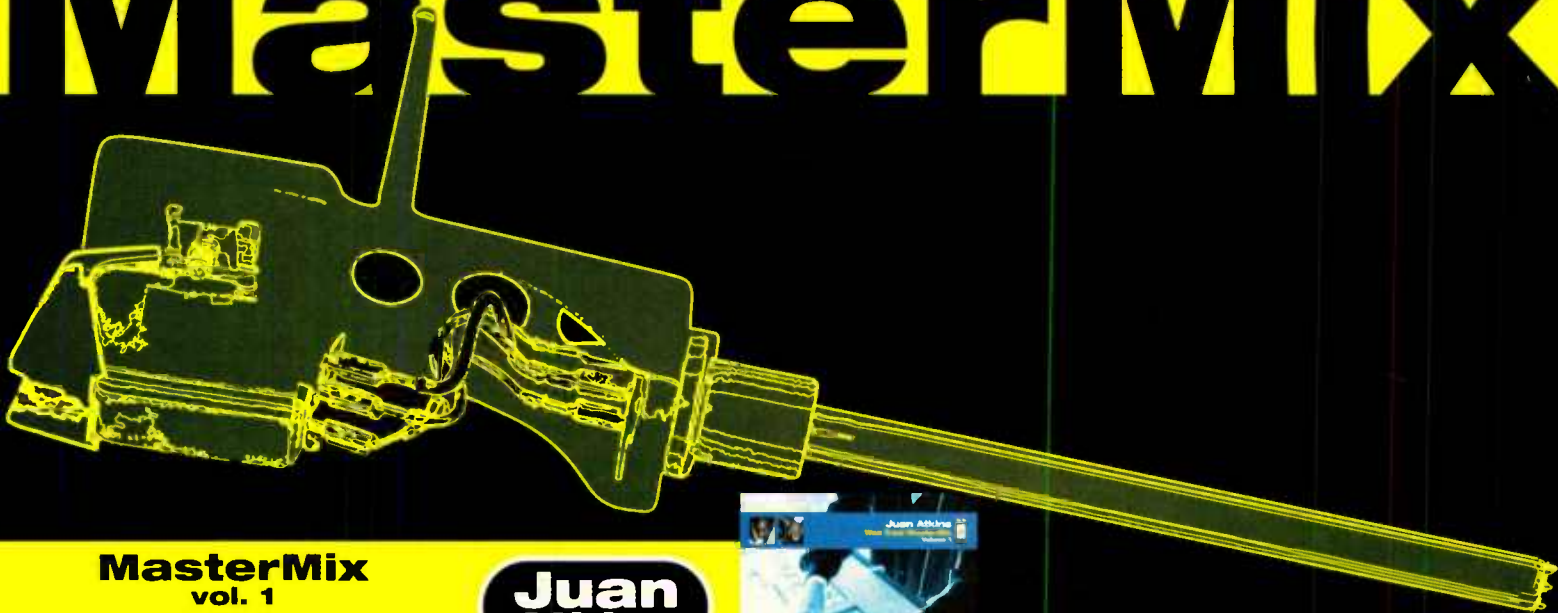
Of course, Atari Teenage Riot is doomed to repeat history. That's the point. What redeems the band is its scrupulous ignorance, its indefatigable optimism, and its comic-book seriousness. Any ten-year-old can tell you what Batman stands for. Atari Teenage Riot strives for the same archetypal power.

There's a slogan from Alec Empire's solo album *The Destroyer* that sums up the ATR program: "Hard like it's a pose!"

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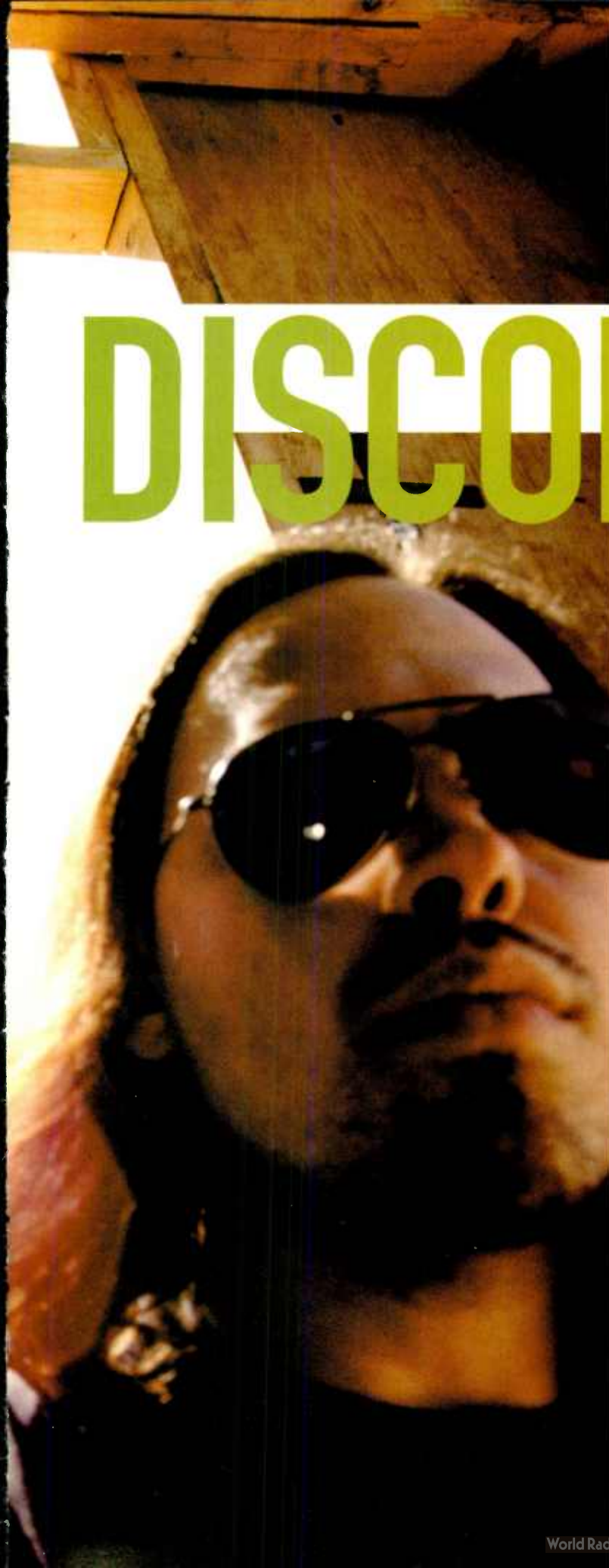




SOUTHERN

VERBENA rocks, and fights, like a dissolute Rolling Stones, and reminds even producer Dave Grohl of Nirvana. It's a recipe for disaster, or the next great rock record, *Into The Pink*.

Story: RICHARD MARTIN
Photos: CHAPMAN BAEHLER



Animosity can break couples apart. It can turn friends into enemies. But among bandmates, as rock 'n' roll history has proved time and again, animosity is the fuel for spectacular music. Examples? How 'bout the Beatles, the Stones, the Kinks, maybe even Fleetwood Mac. But here's the catch: These artists already had hit records before intra-band tension kicked their productivity into overdrive. What, then, will become of the supremely talented, perpetually bickering, hard-rockin' and potentially drug-taking trio called Verbena?

Sprawled around a table in a sterile Austin, Texas, hotel bar, songwriter/guitarist/vocalist Scott Bondy, guitarist/vocalist Ann Marie

DISCOMFORT

Griffin and drummer Les Nuby are too busy arguing to consider this explosive question. But Nuby, a married man who reportedly can play any instrument thrust into his hands, lobs an explanation about this Birmingham, Alabama, band's dynamic.

"If you're going to record a great album," he says, "you'd better develop some serious animosity toward everybody else in the band and then be willing to be so passive about it that you never say anything."

Shaking her head of stringy bleach-blond hair, Griffin begs to differ. "That's Les's plan," she says, drawing out the syllables like a true Southerner. "Scott and I just whip each other's asses."

It's hard to tell if she means this literally or figuratively. The two singer/guitarists' edgy rapport dates back to the early '90s, when they began playing together in an outfit with the not-so-original name Shallow. Along with a since-departed bassist and the original drummer

"You have to understand the relationship within the band to work with them. They're all sensitive, brilliant and insane." —Dave Grohl

for Remy Zero, Louis Schefano, the band re-christened itself Verbena shortly before releasing a rugged indie-pop EP, *Pilot Park*. Though typical of the label on which it appeared, Superchunk homestead Merge Records, the record doesn't reflect Verbena's propulsive and sexy sound at present—a heady stew of the Stones' swagger, Nirvana's melodic punch and the Stooges' raw power. Bondy, whose unkempt, bleach-blond hair, intense stare and gaunt countenance will do little to discourage Kurt Cobain comparisons, bristles when asked about the little-noticed debut.

"I wasn't in the band," he says, lying. For a moment Griffin backs him up. "We refuse to talk about that," she adds.

But then a mischievous glimmer appears in her eyes. "Scott was the only one in the band and he was queer at the time," she says, goading Bondy, who slams down his double whiskey.

"I just said I wasn't in the band," he growls, though without unfolding himself from his slouch. "Do I have to hit you now?"

There's no real threat of physical violence, but the verbal sparring exposes the root of Bondy and Griffin's tortured, potentially troubling and artistically fruitful relationship. Together, their voices and guitars

metaphorically undress each other; on the 1997 full-length debut, *Souls For Sale*, the two effortlessly slid from sultry, almost private grooves into bluesy punk blasts of unwieldy aggression. With due respect to Nuby's thoughtfully bellicose drumming, the key was Bondy and Griffin's vicious interplay.

"If that ceases to exist, we're over," Bondy asserts.

But at the same time, such friction would seem to grind away at any chance of longevity. Nevertheless, Verbena mustered enough cooperative spirit to spend four weeks at Sound City studio in Los Angeles last year, recording a follow-up to *Souls For Sale*. It helped that the respected, if under-appreciated, first LP attracted some A-list fans,

including A&R exec Dave Ayers, who signed the band to Capitol, and Dave Grohl, who first enlisted Verbena to open for his Foo Fighters on a couple of tours, then agreed to produce the band's major-label debut.

"At first, I said, 'I don't want to be responsible for the demise of your career,'" Grohl recalls, speaking on the phone from his home in Virginia; he'd never produced another band's record. But the more he and his friends in Verbena thought about the pairing, the more it made sense.

"You have to understand the relationship within the band to work with them," Grohl continues. "They're all sensitive, brilliant and insane."

This potent recipe nearly led to disaster, according to all parties. After recording *Souls For Sale* in the bucolic setting of upstate New York,



L-R: GRIFFIN, BONDY, NUBY

why would these Alabamans want to become a trash-talkin', bad-ass update of the Beverly Hillbillies? In part, says Bondy, to erase the elements of pop and twang that had carried over from the EP to the first full-length.

"We figured that if we were going to make a more aggressive album, then we shouldn't have to fake it, but just go somewhere that really makes you upset," he explains of Los Angeles. "So it makes you really upset and you make the angry stuff, and then it makes you so upset that you break down and that's when you make the pretty stuff."

The city evidently had the desired effect. *Into The Pink* begins with a heartbreaking piano ballad, "Lovely Isn't Love," in which Bondy's

question their intentions, like 'Okay, here's a knock-off. They're out to cash in or something.' I'm usually the first to write off any band that blatantly rips off Nirvana, but with Verbena, I don't question their intentions at all. They make songs for the sake of the songs to be heard."

Ironically, sounding like dead-ringers for Nirvana doesn't translate to hit potential these days. After finishing the grueling recording sessions and insuring that the songs had enough gloss to appeal to radio programmers, Capitol's promotions team presented Verbena with a frustrating Catch-22. "The bad news is that there's nothing like this on the radio," Griffin recalls having been told. "The good news is there's nothing like this on the radio."

"We've gotten so much junkie bullshit. I'm so sick of it."

subdued drawl sounds so smooth that he could be crooning a downcast Burt Bacharach tune, but the moment is ephemeral. Soon, Nuby pounds out an ominous rhythm as Bondy and Griffin's vocals and guitars fuse into a furiously rendered melody on the title song. They twist and mangle this formula on many of the subsequent, raucous tracks: the bottom-heavy yet singsong-y "Baby Got Shot"; the jaunty and jagged "Submissionary." There are, however, a few other examples of the "pretty stuff." "Prick Of The Sun" winds along methodically, with the front-couple wringing meaning from the evocatively naturalistic lyrics as the guitars get propped up by subtle synthesized orchestration—the only hint of Grohl's production besides Nuby's bone-rattling drum sound ("If there's one thing I know in the studio, it's how to get good drum takes," the ex-Nirvana drummer boasts). And the sun sets on *Into The Pink* with Bondy and Griffin, alone with their guitars, singing in chillingly organic harmony.

As the record ends and Bondy sings his final line with a soulful sigh, it's even tougher to avoid thinking of him as a spiritual heir to Cobain. Increasing the complexity of the situation is the presence of Griffin, a charismatic and fashionable sidekick who's like a less pretentious Courtney Love, and of course, Grohl, the man who once backed Cobain in Nirvana. Bondy's keenly aware of what all this means, though he downplays the connections.

"The Nirvana comparison?" he says, heading off a question about whether he thought about it when Grohl came on board as producer. "Yeah, and I'm sure he did too. We can't deny that we listened to that band when we grew up."

Grohl's more down to earth on the subject. "There are amazing similarities," he says. "It could be the demise of a lot of bands. You

Both Grohl and the band suggest skirting the Nirvana angle to appreciate the force and gritty elegance of Verbena. "They have a dark, scummy Southern sound," says Grohl. "It's gross, but it's beautiful."

Nuby adds, "You've got the driving beat and the dirty guitar riff and sleazy sex vocals, and that's cool."

But there's another obstacle to Verbena's success. Bondy and Griffin, who once sang of the junkie-chic trend among super-models on *Souls For Sale*'s "Junk For Fashion," have a tendency to look strung-out. Jokingly referring to themselves as the "Slimmer Twins"—a play on Mick Jagger and Keith Richards's Glimmer Twins—they say that the stress of recording made some of the employees at Capitol nervous about their health.

"They were calling our A&R guy and asking, 'Are they okay?'" Bondy remembers. "They were like, 'You're not going to let them die, are you? Are you going to let Scott die?'" Even their lawyer phoned to warn them against the trouble they'd have finding a high-powered manager if the drug rumors were true. They laugh their way through denials and insist that alcohol's their main vice, but then Griffin grows serious. "We've gotten so much junkie bullshit," she says. "I'm so sick of it."

Bondy addresses the topic as well, and for a minute the members of Verbena, so often given to petty arguments about which Led Zeppelin song is better or who's telling a white lie about the past, suddenly are in accord.

"Our problems are our problems and not anybody else's," Bondy says.

These problems could make Verbena fizzle, but if the public embraces the band's reinvigorating rock ethic, this little band from Birmingham could rule our lives.

NMM

Guitarist Charlie Hunter and percussionist Leon Parker are clearly two of the most innovative talents in jazz. These stunning duets combine styles ranging from blues to funk, gospel to Brazil and be-bop to Brian Wilson. Charlie and Leon share a vision of a new jazz renaissance!

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duo

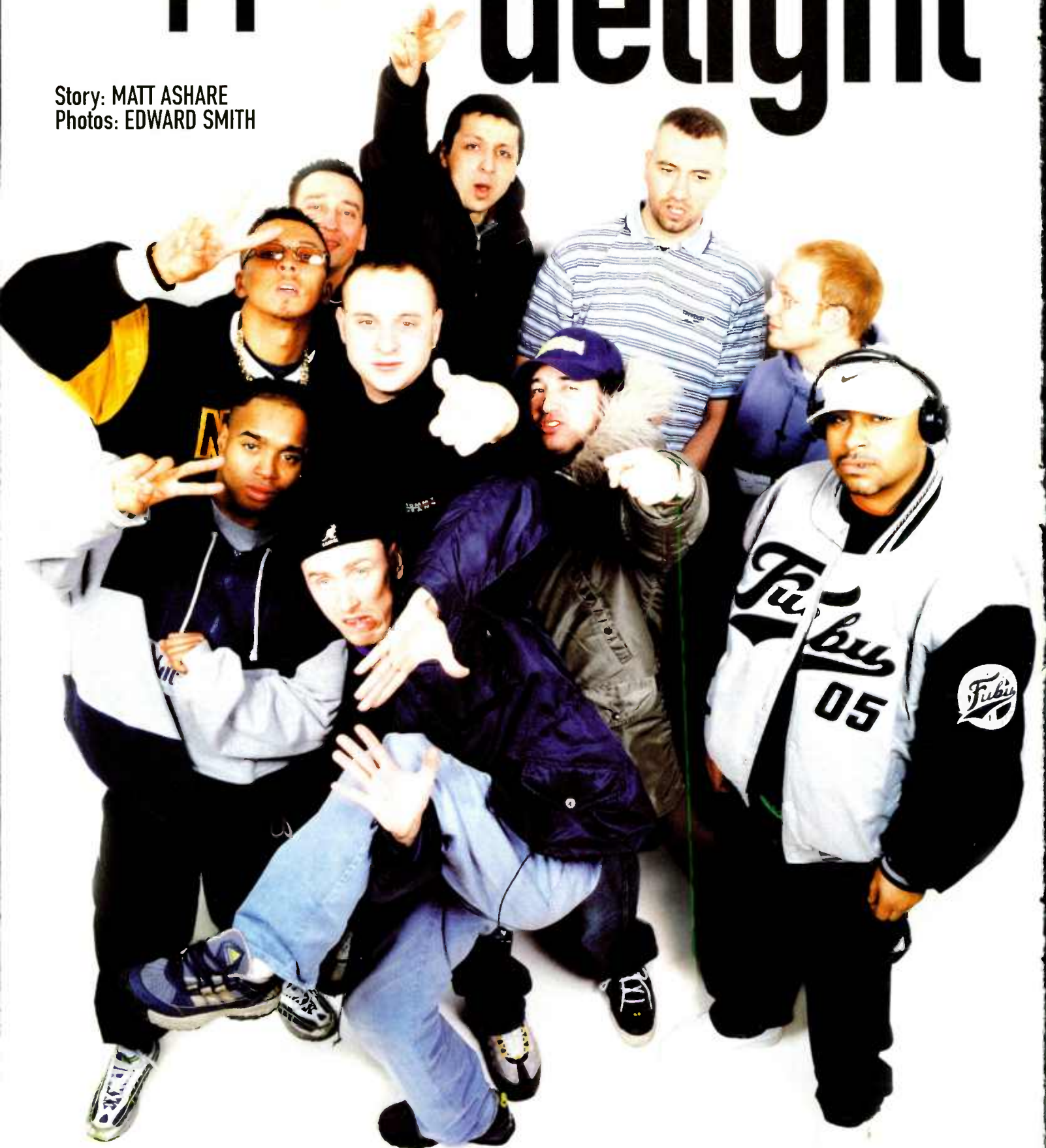
charlie hunter leon parker



99187

rapper's delight

Story: MATT ASHARE
Photos: EDWARD SMITH



CENTER, POINTING: CANTOR, HARVEY
CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: TONY AYIOTOU, JAY ROCK, JOE HENSON, TENOR FLY, MARAT KHOULLION, FRANK RAMPTON, NAVIGATOR, CLIVE JENNER

THE FREESTYLERS

are reviving hip-hop's earliest traditions—
breakdancing included—and taking it to the stage.

"All music is a repackaging of something else—we're just doing it obviously and blatantly." So says Matt Cantor, one of the two British DJ/producers who together go by the name of the Freestylers, over drinks with his partner Aston Harvey at the Austin Hyatt hotel during the annual South By Southwest Music Conference. It's the kind of brash statement you might have expected to hear from one or another of the Gallagher brothers or any number of Brit-pop heroes who helped stage a resurgence of Beatlesque '60s rock a few years back (though Oasis did go to the trouble of prohibiting the Freestylers from using a "Wonderwall" sample). But it applies even more literally to Cantor and Harvey, a pair of rave-generation studio whiz-kids who moved to the head of the class in England's old-school hip-hop revival with tracks like "Drop The Boom," an electro party jam that wouldn't have sounded out of place in an Afrika Bambaataa set circa 1981. Public Enemy samples and a vocal cameo by the Soul Sonic Force pepper the duo's US debut, *We Rock Hard* (Mammoth). And on stage the Freestylers have even been bringing back breakdancing, that sometimes forgotten hip-hop art, as part of their live sets, which also feature turntable scratching, hip-hop MCing, and a full bass/drums/guitar backing band.

"On a basic level, breaking is part of where we come from, it's the most exciting form of dance to me," Cantor explains.

"Yeah," Harvey agrees, "and for the past two years there's been a very big resurgence in England of breakdancing. It never really went away, but it's back in a big way. And it's one of those things that we



"I'd say we were hip-hop if you're talking about what hip-hop was back in the day. As far as what hip-hop is today, with all the big attitudes, we're not part of that."



were totally influenced by. Also, it looks great on stage."

"But I'd never say I represent hip-hop, or that I represent this or that scene in hip-hop," Cantor adds. "I'd say we were hip-hop if you're talking about what hip-hop was back in the day. As far as what hip-hop is today, with all the big attitudes, we're not part of that. We don't take ourselves that seriously. We make music. We pillage, and we take stuff that excites us. I'm not die-hard about my music. I respect all sorts of music. I love house music and disco. When I DJ, I play everything: reggae, Public Enemy, new breaks, drum 'n' bass, French house, whatever. I like all forms of dance music. I'll play a Police record, as long as it's funky."

"In respect to the old school hip-hop thing, it's the hip-hop that I was into," says Harvey. "I mean, I'm not really into hip-hop anymore because it doesn't use the old funk breaks and the rapping is more about style than what you're saying. Hip-hop has moved on, but I like it how it was and not now. So we're trying to reflect the kind of hip-hop attitude that we used to like."

What inspired two white twenty-something British dudes to stage what very nearly amounts to a Sha-Na-Na-style hip-hop revue? "Rave" is the one-word answer. "In '89 and '90, when I was like 18 and Matt was 16," recounts Harvey, "we had a musical revolution called rave in England and that totally changed everything. Rave had a big influence on us and on what we do now because it was everything from house to hip-hop to reggae," Cantor continues. "And it was all



sped up and fattened up and shoved out the speakers. Those were my best nights out."

"It was an adventure," adds Harvey.

"And then it moved on and became jungle," Cantor concludes with a full stop.

But not everyone involved in the utopian rave scene moved on to the darker dystopian vibe of jungle and drum 'n' bass, at least not for the long haul. Both Harvey and Cantor became solo DJ/producers. Harvey worked on everything from house to underground jungle tracks, and Cantor actually had some commercial success with one of his house records. But when the two joined forces in 1992, the music they bonded over was the old-school hip-hop that they'd both listened to as kids. The first track they did together was "Drop The Boom," and it was good enough to eventually make the cut for the full-length *We Rock Hard*. But it was a later hip-hop-inspired track, "B-Boy Stance," that brought the duo chart success, thanks in part to Noel Gallagher's well-publicized refusal to let the Freestylers sample part of a song that some might say really belonged to the Beatles anyway. No hard feelings, unless you count the reference in "B-Boy Stance" to "Mr. bad man."

For the most part, though, Cantor and Harvey have been content to confine their studio pilfering to tracks that are at least ten if not 20 years old, and to focus their energies on building a live show that recreates the mythical party mood of a late '70s/early '80s Bronx block party. One rather interesting byproduct of the latter development is that the Freestylers you see on stage are a very different entity from the

"Breakdancing in England never really went away, but it's back in a big way. And it's one of those things that we were totally influenced by."

Freestylers who work in the studio and show up for interviews. In fact, chances are you won't see Cantor at all during a Freestylers set. Sometimes he's there to DJ ahead of time and sometimes not. Although Harvey tours as an integral part of the band, he's mainly a sound-effects guy who oversees the sampler, sequencers, and electronic beats.

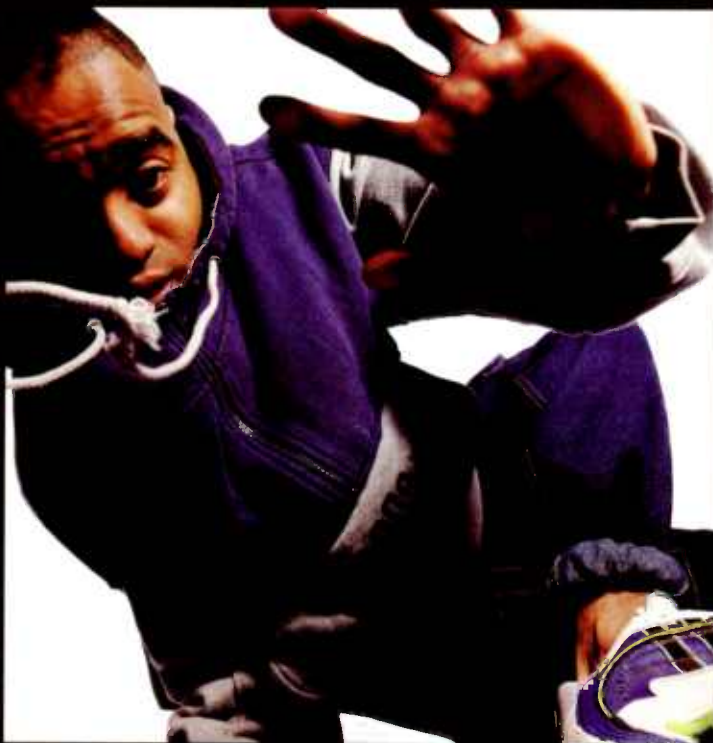
"Basically, as it stands now, the Freestylers is me and Aston," Cantor explains. "From a grassroots level it involves me and Aston going to the studio with boxes of records, playing each other breaks, samples, and loops, talking about ideas, and then when we agree on something, we start working on it. But what happened with the live thing is that after putting out records for about a year that were doing well on the underground scene, we started toying with the idea of doing a real live show. I used to DJ at an old-school hip-hop night in London and a lot of breakdancers were coming down to those shows. So I thought it would be nice to incorporate some of that in something we could do. We gave it a go with me and Aston on samplers, playing with DATs and triggering sounds, with a guy dancing and a DJ scratching, and that was it. I was MCing, which was ridiculous. It was more of a beer-boy London thing. It worked, the place rocked, but I was more like a line-dancing MC."

Eventually, the Freestylers evolved into its current full band experience. And, while Harvey found appealing the camaraderie of hitting the road with the crew, Cantor opted out of the live experience. "The band exists without Matt," Harvey admits, "but the Freestylers doesn't."

"That's the great thing about dance music: You don't have to be out there playing an instrument," adds Cantor. "Because the industry knows that me and Aston are the Freestylers, I can go and DJ regularly in clubs all over Europe and people know me as the Freestylers."

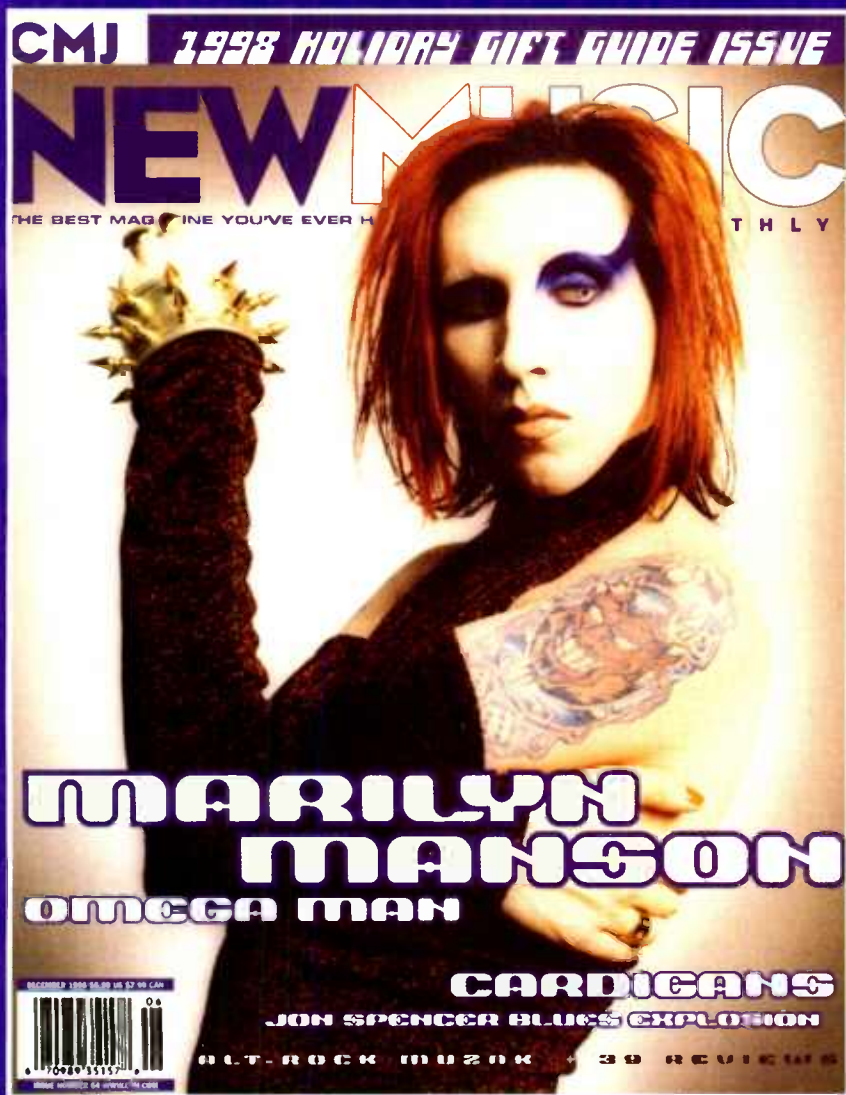
Which raises a rather tantalizing possibility that by reaching back to the past for inspiration, Cantor and Harvey appear to have created a thoroughly modern, if not postmodern, invention. It's a pop first: a group capable of performing simultaneously in two different locations.

NHM



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World Radio History

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"GOOD TO BE ALIVE" BY DJ RAP APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD.

dj RAP SPACE 1999

She's rocked UK clubs spinning other people's records, and had European hits with her own. Now with *Learning Curve*, this jungle DJ-turned-pre-millennial pop diva is poised to be the first star of the US electronic age.

Story: KURT B. REIGHLEY
Photos: DENNIS KLEIMAN

The most essential skill in an entertainment journalist's arsenal is the ability to become your subject's new best friend. Sometimes that's pretty tough. Leave it to Charissa Saverio—alias England's DJ Rap—to make amends for countless interviews spent listening to flavor-of-the-month rockers get defensive about their three-chord masterpieces. Ostensibly we've met to discuss her new album *Learning Curve* (Higher Ground-Columbia). Yet within moments of sitting down in a tony New York café, she's turned the tables... by asking how my parents responded when I came out of the closet.

DJ Rap is an accomplished recording artist,

Of her brief stint as a 15-year old topless model, Rap says "the only regret I have is that I look much better now."

with a decade's worth of seminal dance classics to her credit; she's been a leading light on the wheels of steel for almost as long. DJ Rap serves as head honcho for UK label Proper Talent (and its subsidiary Low Key Recordings), which has roughly 20 releases—including her own 1995 debut *Intelligence*—to its credit. DJ Rap is smart and savvy and funny and beautiful. And most importantly, DJ Rap is very open.

"I'm a Sagittarius and I'm very forthright," she shrugs. "I'm a very honest person, and I'm quite prepared to take the risk of you cutting me, and making me look foolish. Because I have nothing to hide, and I'd rather be like that."

Thus for the duration of our visit, there are no secrets. We gush about our favorite Hollywood hunks; DJ Rap bought a portable DVD player just so she'd never have to be far from Brad Pitt. She praises UK chart-topper Robbie Williams, who kept her in stitches at a party while both were "buzzing" on assorted illicit substances. A minute later, she dismisses Naomi Campbell harshly. "She's really nasty. I've met her a couple times."

But nothing seems to excite DJ Rap so much as when we're comparing notes on ex-boyfriends, and I mention a former beau's fondness for sharks. "You cannot get me away from the TV during Shark Week on The Discovery Channel," she exclaims. She collects authentic attack videos, and gushes about bite radiuses. Great whites are her favorite. "If I wasn't in music—which I can't conceive—I would've been a biologist."

The depths of her passion stop at the television and the aquarium, though. When she was four years old, her father was attacked while scuba diving, and lost part of his foot. "Ever since then, I won't go in the water. In my dreams, I would like to go in a great white cage and be this far away from one," she says, leaning into my face. "But wild horses couldn't get me there."

Instead, DJ Rap went into the music business.



Outside of dance music devotees, DJ Rap's name doesn't ring many bells Stateside, despite her lengthy track record. *Learning Curve* stands a strong chance of changing that. The 12 cuts smolder and spark with the same mix of intelligence, emotion and honesty that radiate from their creator. The album runs a gamut of styles, from the seething, slo-mo space funk opener "Bad Girl" to the acoustic guitar and voice on album closer "Ordinary Day," inspired by the rave classic "Strings Of Life." The orchestral "Good To Be Alive" soars like a view across the ocean from high atop a cliff, while the skittish "F**k With Your Head" ("I want to get inside your head/Just f-f-fuck with your brain") isn't recommended for recovering schizophrenics.

Like Madonna's *Frozen*, *Learning Curve* offers up polished pop informed by an underground sensibility; where it trumps the Material Girl's platter is its absence of any discernible whiff of opportunism. And yet some UK critics decried the album, released overseas last autumn, for aiming at the mainstream, as if aiming for broader audiences constituted a rejection of Rap's underground pedigree.

Prior to *Learning Curve*, she was known at home for enduring club anthems like "Ambience—The Adored" (1990), "Spiritual Aura" (1993) and "Roughest Gunark" (1995). Her DJ sets, mixing blistering breakbeats with liquid melodies, made her the first female to play countless major parties; her installment of the *British Journeys By DJ* CD series is among the finest. And Rap was the first jungle/breakbeat artist to release an album of her own material on her own label (take that, Goldie).

DJ Rap hasn't abandoned any of the lessons she's learned from her impressive accomplishments by making an ambitious pop album. Rather, she's folded all of those experiences into musical traditions that run deeper in her creative spirit. "Beethoven is my hero," she points out. "I was classically trained, and that's how I write." She spent ten years composing songs before she invested four hashing out the fine points of *Learning Curve*. "As I got more proficient in the studio, as I learned how to use my equipment, I was always writing and writing."

By Saverio's estimation, she went through more than 200 tracks to arrive at the dozen that finally made the grade. Now that the work is through, she's about as unlikely to play favorites as Carol Brady is. "I'm very into the music that I've done," she says. "That's why the album took so long." She even replaced four tracks on the American version with new songs she felt were stronger, "to get to a point where I am nuts about every track on the album. Doesn't it suck when you buy an album and there's only one good track? Albums like Nirvana's *Nevermind*, every track's incredible."

As far as DJ Rap is concerned, creating an acourant dance track or an enduring pop album pose completely different challenges. Her approach to making a drum 'n' bass track owes much to her DJ style. "It's all about how you bring a tune in, knowing exactly when to bring one out so the next

tune has maximum impact. I make a great intro that you can mix into, or start your set with. And there will be a drop that you really know, with huge rolls."

Saverio insists that the best drum 'n' bass tunes, like her most beloved symphonies and sonatas, typically experiment within set forms, rather than eschew them. "There are formulas you have to stick to, because they work and you need them. Otherwise people don't know what happens, or when." Yet sometimes playing by the rules—even though she knows them well—doesn't come easily. "I find it hard to produce [straight] drum 'n' bass, because I like to write songs with everything. I have to really restrict myself to get back to just raw drum 'n' bass."

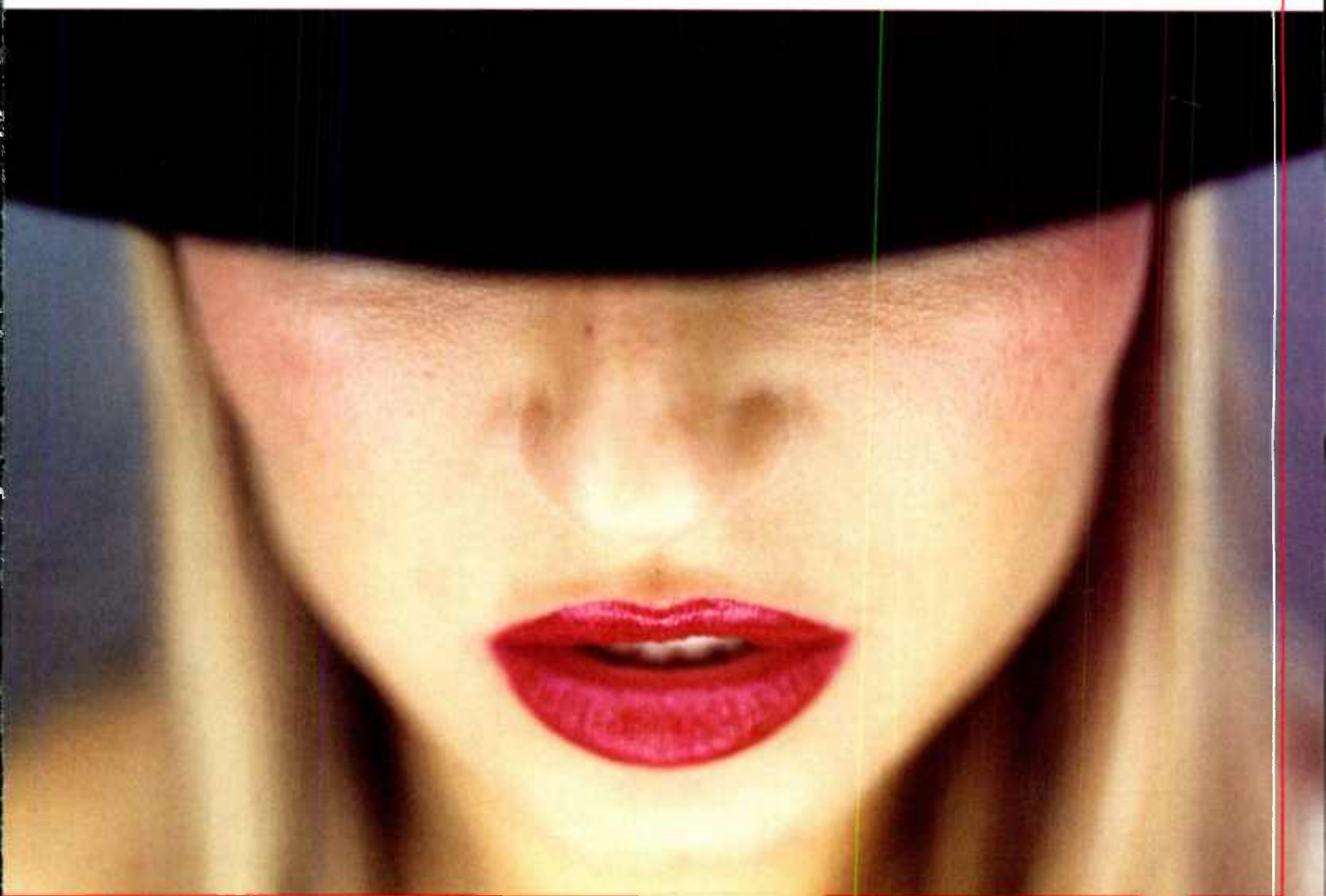
"Drum 'n' bass is about frequencies, and that's why I say I find it hard to do drum 'n' bass, because you have to go away from the song.

Some people are really technical and can get the most out of that. To me, they're producers. That's why people like Ed Rush and Optical are top. But I don't think they could write a song. I'm not saying that's bad, just different."

"With songs, it's a totally different fix," she continues. "[My DJ experience] doesn't effect me so much, because I have no rules in my head when I'm songwriting. Except that I know about making an impact and I always use that in my songs. The beat has to be slamming."

Songwriting boasts its own unique obstacles. Lyrics in particular dog DJ Rap. "I will sit there with a song and cross through every word. That's the hardest part of it."

With time, DJ Rap has grown more confident about her songwriting. She's one of the only DJ/producers to tackle her own vocals, and her singing has improved markedly since "Ambience—The



"To have 80,000 people come just to see you perform? And you make them happy? That's the ultimate orgasm."



Adored" ("My voice sounded like Minnie Mouse," she laments of that track). But the part DJ Rap really lives for is producing the music itself. "Being in my studio and twiddling the knobs," she beams. "That's when you're really free. You're in your own space."

"When you've had a row with your guy or your girl, it's the best thing in the world to lose yourself for 12 hours in the studio. I have had a very turbulent love life, always, and I don't know what I would have done without music being there, to keep me sane. It's therapy. I've often sat down in my studio and gone, 'What would I have done without this? I'd have keyed his car... I'd have killed him!' I just wish more people knew about that."

Shortly before Charissa Saverio became DJ Rap, she almost cast her lot swimming with a different school of sharks. After a few years backpacking around Europe in her teens, she got tired of sleeping on beaches ("I've only done that twice," she later recants) and took a job at a law firm. "But I had these two friends—wacked out on acid—named

endured plenty of abuse.

"And then [my parents] decided to spend all their money on their own, without me," she continues. "I was shipped off to boarding schools in Malta, convents in Indonesia. I was locked away, all the time." Music was her primary source of solace. "The only thing that kept me sane was classical piano."

Nowadays, DJ Rap is less bitter about these experiences. "I'm a great believer in turning negative into positive." She learned how to find common ground with strangers very quickly, because she had to do it constantly. "I can sit down with anyone and get on a level with them straight away." And the globetrotting gave her perspective on what's really important in life. "I can't be fazed by the glittery stuff, and I don't give a fuck about money. I'm very spiritual. Those are great things to have learnt."

Her family finally settled back down in England when she was 12, but young Charissa didn't stick around long. "I hated my stepfather, and my mum chose him over the family, so that was it. As far as I was concerned, our relationship was over. I left home at 14,

"I'm a very honest person, and I'm quite prepared to take the risk of you cutting me, and making me look foolish. Because I have nothing to hide."

Jackie and Heather." The acid house scene was in bloom, and the girls kept insisting Charissa would love it. "I don't know," she'd countered to her pals. "You two live in a squat, you're out there, you're scary."

Jackie and Heather persistently urged her to pack in her deadbeat boyfriend, quit her job, and join the circus. One night, they finally convinced her to come to see it firsthand. "I'd had a particularly bad fight with my dorky boyfriend, and I said, 'Fuck it, I'm going out!' So I went to this rave, took my first pill..." Soon afterwards, Saverio was single, unemployed, and a squatter.

She spent the next few years raving non-stop. But she didn't start buying records until she got her first taste of hardcore techno. "I was totally blown away by it, like 'God has landed!'" Despite her tight financial constraints, she started collecting her favorite records and learning how to mix. She got her first shot one night when London club DJ Fabio (of "...and Grooverider" fame) couldn't make a gig and a promoter she'd been pestering relented.

Gradually she landed bigger and steadier gigs. Around the same time, she began making her own tunes. After a bad experience with a shifty co-producer, she decided to take matters into her own hands and began to master her way around the studio. "I thought, 'I'm not going to get fucked over again. I'm going to do it all myself.' Then I opened up my own label, because I kept making hits and getting ripped off. I'd sold 80,000 records before I had a deal, and I didn't make any fucking money. So it was time to do things for myself. And the rest is pretty standard stuff," she concludes, as if these feats were everyday fare.

Independence came very early to DJ Rap. And any doubts I've harbored about her proclamations of being completely open evaporate when she discloses how and why she learned how to stand alone from a young age. Since she's already investigated my family, I feel comfortable asking about her clan.

She hesitates momentarily. "I hated them," she admits. "I still do, really. No, hate is the wrong word. I'm indifferent." Her parents divorced when she was four; she's only met her real father once since, two years ago when she was in Australia. Relations with her mother were strained, and she despised her stepfather, who ran luxury hotels in Asia and Africa. "So as a little kid, that was my life. Every three months I had to go to a new school, or I was moved around to a different country." She didn't make many friends, and because she was perceived as wealthy, she

the moment I could."

It was shortly after leaving the nest that Saverio made her first foray into the public eye, working briefly as a topless model. Understandably, after 15 years of far more remarkable accomplishments, she's tired of the topic. "I was destitute and thought, 'I'm not working nine to five. I'm going to go earn 200 pounds in an hour by taking my top off, and party all week.' I lied and said I was 16. I wasn't thinking that far ahead. I was confused, and I wanted to hurt my mum and be very wild."

Although she wouldn't repeat the experience, she admits, "the only regret I have is that I look much better now. I train, and I do martial arts. I was fat then." She grimaces as the images come rushing back at her. "And I had bushy eyebrows... I didn't know about plucking."

DJ Rap's relationship with the cameras is much more amicable these days. She still takes heat for some layouts she does, but criticism in general doesn't faze her. "I get a little buzz out of shocking people," she admits. She's happily consented to appear in lads-only men's magazines like *Maxim* and *Loaded*, despite admonitions from friends and advisors. "That's going to be bad?" she smiles. "Okay. I guess now I'm a porno queen."

And these days, she and her mother are learning to be friends. Her stepfather is no longer part of the equation (he committed suicide), and the fortune ran out long ago. "My mum is a different person today from what she was. She's adopted two children, and she works. And she's really happy with her life, because she's not sitting there, doing nothing. I admire the fact that she's never moaned about how they lost everything; she just got on quietly. I have respect for her now, and that wasn't there before."

As our afternoon winds down, DJ Rap confesses that her expectations for *Learning Curve* in America are surprisingly modest. "If I died tomorrow, I'd be pissed off, because I've still got lots to do. But I'm very happy with everything as it is. Whether the record makes it or not is irrelevant to me. What matters is that I'm healthy enough to make music."

She looks forward to playing more shows with a live band, connecting with audiences from behind a microphone instead of two turntables. The latter is nice, but it simply can't compare. "You're just one DJ amongst another 12. You're in your glory for an hour," she notes. "But to have 80,000 people come just to see you? And you make them happy? That's the ultimate orgasm."

NMM



1000 CLOWNS

Freelance Bubblehead

Elektra

On the second track of *Freelance Bubblehead*, 1000 Clowns' main rapper MC Kevi drops this little bit of science: "I know I'm not the greatest rapper in the world, but would ya, would ya, be my girl?" Okay, so that refrain is more like a grade school science fair project. Kevi's got a chummy, laid-back, street corner delivery that would be darn endearing if he were your little brother's best friend. He rhymes about the people he misses on rainy days (awww, isn't he sensitive?); loving New York (hey, I thought he lived in Cali!); and the way

"everybody smells so different" (tee hee, isn't he funny?). The tracks, produced by Mickey P (Beck, Luscious Jackson), mix classical Spanish guitar licks, horn licks and organ grooves. They're easy on the ears—so easy, they'd sound just fine coming over the loudspeaker at a roller-skating rink. 1,000 Clowns' fly girls—sisters Anita and Michele—chime in every so often with call-and-response choruses that are catchy yet woefully formulaic. It's easy to picture the group performing at a bar mitzvah with all of the grandmothers clapping along. If you had any doubts about the mainstreaming of hip-hop, *Freelance Bubblehead* is proof positive.

>>>Neil Gladstone

OUT:

May 11.

FILE UNDER:

Bubble gum rap.

R.I.Y.L.:

G. Love & Special Sauce, Beck, LL Cool J.



ATOMIC FIREBALLS

Torch This Place

Lava-Atlantic

Here's a thought: Detroit's Atomic Fireballs didn't play their first gig until February 1997—a full year after Squirrel Nut Zippers' trend-launching *Hot* came out and months after the film *Swingers*. While bandwagon-jumping doesn't guarantee a group will suck (two words: Beastie Boys), one listen to the Fireballs' thudding, louder-than-a-Gap-commercial take on swing will set off cacophonous bells in the heads of all but the least discriminating. This pulverizing album will prove very popular at your next party if a keg is the main attraction at said event. *Torch This*

OUT:

May 18.

FILE UNDER:

McSwing—now with extra volume!

R.I.Y.L.:

Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Brian Setzer Orchestra.

Place doesn't lack energy; the Fireballs appreciate swing's power as good-times music and kick like it's Mardi Gras. There hasn't been such an insistently beat-heavy non-dance album since AC/DC's last one. Lead singer John Bunkley, with his Louis Armstrong-meets-Dicky Barrett growl, defines the sound, and how well you like him may be indicative of how you'll feel about the whole enterprise. Like the Bosstones to the Skatalites, the Fireballs would probably swear allegiance to Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan, but that doesn't make their clumsiness—the utilitarian brass section misses notes here and there—forgivable. To be offended by the Atomic Fireballs is to take this swing revival too seriously. On the other hand, Brian Setzer is sounding more authentic every day.

>>>Chris Molanphy



ALL THAT

The Whop Boom Bam

Upstart

All That combines the street-party krewé feel of New Orleans marching bands with amateurish, frat-boy rapping. It's a less than inspiring pairing. The eight-man outfit—two guitars, an organ, drums, and a four-piece horn section—aspires to an updated brass band groove, and musically, it is impressive: On the album opener "Funk With Me," a growling organ line, rumbling sousaphone and romping saxophone drive a modern-day march. But the band trips over its anemic, clichéd vocals.

Whether the band is purring about girls with "big fake tits, nose jobs, liposuction and pancake makeup," weaving an inept tale of dope dealing in a college town, or waxing eloquent on variations of the timeless beans and rice theme, its lyrics just don't stand up; they'd be laughable if they didn't make you wince. To make matters worse, the band's assorted rappers lack any real sense of flow or rhythm—it's no surprise that the album's best track is a high-octane cover of Led Zeppelin's classic "Moby Dick." All That made its mark gigging live around New Orleans, and its infectious energy probably translates well on stage. On disc, however, the sophomoric lyrics overshadow the band's robust musicality.

>>>Seth Mnookin

OUT:

April 13.

FILE UNDER:

Frat boy N'Awlins funk.

R.I.Y.L.:

Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Groove Collective, Galactic.



AUX 88

Xeo-Genetic

430 West-Direct Beat

The current fascination for all things electro has re-invigorated the techno community on a global scale. In Detroit, it's manifest in "techno-bass," named for its similarity to the Miami trunk-of-funk music of the late '80s, although it's also firmly rooted in the Motor City's passion for operatic grandeur and majestic, sweeping synth sounds. Aux 88, consisting of Tommy "Tom Tom" Hamilton and Keith Tucker, has been one the most consistently innovative producers of techno-bass. The two recently parted, leaving Hamilton working under the moniker. Xeo-Genetic is a triumphant

OUT:

March 26.

FILE UNDER:

Lord of the (break) dance.

R.I.Y.L.:

Kraftwerk, Afrika Bambaataa, Two Live Crew (circa '87), Newcleus.

return to form, an electronic record with more bounce to the ounce (as funk band Zapp so eloquently put it) than 90 percent of what passes for techno these days. Much of electro's appeal lies in its sense of playfulness and humor—it flies in the face of techno's often self-righteous seriousness, and rocks just as hard. "Don't Stop It" exemplifies that dynamic sense of rhythm as 808 bass lines layered thick as concrete slabs move suddenly like trap doors. There's a surprising warmth to this record, because despite its analog technologies, the funk is deeply embedded into its grooves. Hamilton manipulates his instruments in such a way that he always retains a sense of human imperfection, making Xeo-Genetic a floor-slammer that moves from Pathfinder to dance floor in a heartbeat.

>>>Tim Haslett

THE BLACK HALOS**OUT:**

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Punk rock, emphasis on rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Dead Boys, Damned, D Generation.

BLACK HALOS**The Black Halos** Die Young Stay Pretty-Sub Pop

After just 30 seconds, it's hard to imagine Vancouver's Black Halos donned in anything but black leather jackets, black denim pants, and maybe a few studded wristbands or bandanas, flailing away late at night in some dingy club. This is the stuff that was branded as punk rock in the late '70s but in reality is no-nonsense, balls-to-the-wall rock 'n' roll. Billy Hopeless sports a Stiv Bators rasp that suggests he screamed his lungs out every night for a month before entering the studio to record this debut full-length (which

includes two earlier tracks the band released as the Black Market Babies before changing its name to avoid confusion with the old DC band). He also slings an odd, intermittent Cockney accent, apparently lifting a page from the Robert Pollard style manual (the British Columbians I know don't talk like that). There's no rocket science to this sort of music and the boys perform the task with appropriate gusto, but they lack the distinguishing hooks or sense of variation to sustain interest over 47 minutes. In the end, the Black Halos strike me as an opening act that I'd find initially entertaining but after 20 minutes I'd be primed to move on to the main attraction.

>>>Glen Sarvady

the controls**OUT:**

March 9.

FILE UNDER:

Lounge-inflected trip-hop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Morcheeba, early Tricky, Baby Fox.

CONTROLS**One Hundred**

sm:je

A friend heard this CD and became convinced it was Ani DiFranco fronting Morcheeba. A scouring of the liner notes reveals no Ms. DiFranco credits (which forced my friend to drop his hypothesis), but the anecdote fairly illustrates the turf staked out by this NYC duo. The Controls' center of attention is Ann Colville, who tinges her vocals with jazz cadences to evoke a hazy sensuality. A gentleman billed as Dub-L spikes his mixes with some interesting flourishes like Spanish guitar, flutes and violins. Unfortunately,

though, the musical backdrops rarely rise above serviceable trip-hop and at times border on hokey and dated (I hadn't been reminded of the Art Of Noise in a while). At times the pieces fit together nicely—Colville's voice propels a bare-bones, martial rhythm track on "Coward Of The Year" into something akin to Martina Topley Bird's contributions to Tricky's *Maxinquaye*, and "Muses Of Leviaquan" employs a neat circular guitar sample. But Colville's importance is underscored by the generic nature of two tracks with a male guest rapper. Though I'd love to include a few tracks from *One Hundred* on a woody late night mix tape, the overall package will likely appeal only to avid trip-hop fans.

>>>Glen Sarvady

**OUT:**

March 2.

FILE UNDER:

The genius blend of funk and metal.

R.I.Y.L.:

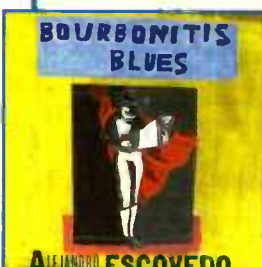
311, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Rage Against The Machine, Mr. Bungle.

BOLT UPRIGHT**Red Carpet Syndrome** 550 Music

Five white boys relocated to Los Angeles independently of one another and by some otherworldly, cosmic force, came together to form Bolt Upright. The sonic result? A sound that's busier than rush hour in Manhattan. An able turntablist dubbed DJ Johnny Love scratches and spins underneath chunky, low-end riffage and the hip-hop-influenced, post-adolescent rants of vocalist Tory Tee. Bolt Upright isn't the brilliant, virtuosic Third Coming of funk metal, but the band does carve up infectious rhythmic slabs manufactured

for good ol' bumping and grinding. While borrowing heavily from the funk-groove stylings of 311 (another transplanted-to-LA band) as well as from the rap-plus-metal-plus-DJ formula harnessed by Limp Bizkit, Bolt Upright doesn't function as a carbon copy or tired rehash of any of these commercially successful styles. Rather, the bleached hair, baggy pants b-boys take pieces of each and sew them together in their own patchwork of songs. *Red Carpet Syndrome* is a collection of roof-raisin', rump-shakin' anthems that arrive just in time for summer. You can roll that convertible top down, blare a tune like "The Next Level" or "Crazy Chicks" and get down.

>>>Amy Sciarretto

**OUT:**

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Roots, mid-'70s division.

R.I.Y.L.:

Lou Reed, Silos, Whiskeytown, Peter Case.

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO**Bourbonitis Blues**

Bloodshot

Alejandro Escovedo has released three albums of stellar orchestral rootsy rock, albums of cohesive unity and thematic focus, the last one being 1996's *With These Hands*. Now comes *Bourbonitis Blues*, and like his last two albums, 1997's Buick MacKane side project and last year's live one, it has the feel of a 'tweener—it's new and it's good, but it's not, in artistic terms, Escovedo's fourth album. Three new songs, one revision, and five covers do not a statement make. Instead, call *Bourbonitis Blues* a heartfelt tribute to some of Escovedo's heroes: Ian Hunter

("Irene Wilde"), John Cale ("Amsterdam") and Lou Reed (a beautiful duet with Kelly Hogan on "Pale Blue Eyes"—and yes, the world can use just one more version of this song), the Gun Club (a slow "Sex Beat"), and Jimmie Rodgers (a ballsy "California Blues" featuring the ubiquitous Jon Langford). As for the originals, "I Was Drunk" stands with Escovedo's best work; his "glam orchestra," balancing cello-lead string sections and rootsy rock, combines textures and emotions beyond the range of most bands working today. And "Sacramento & Polk" and "Everybody Loves Me" demonstrate Escovedo's equal skill with Stooges-style noisy garage rock. If you share some of Escovedo's heroes (as I do), *Bourbonitis Blues* will reinvigorate your memories, and maybe we shouldn't wish for more. But I do.

>>>Steve Klinge



EXPANSION UNION ★

World Wide Funk Wax Trax!-TVT

I feel ashamed to admit that, as a person who gets paid money to review electronic dance music, I haven't the slightest idea where the sub-genre boundary lines are drawn. Do I know my hardstep from my techstep from my trance? Do I even know exactly where jungle stops and drum 'n' bass starts? Hell, no. But I'm starting to realize that doesn't matter a whole lot—after all, this isn't butterfly taxonomy, it's something you shake your butt to. And the truly good electronic music, the material that we'll actually remember

five years from now, is the stuff that, instead of clinging to one rigid framework, draws on a variety of sounds and textures, interpolating pop sensibilities. Expansion Union is a case in point: The group's debut, *World Wide Funk*, contains a lot of unremarkable trance as its main ingredient, but it ranges all over the electronic spectrum. It gives a shout to almost everyone, from a DJ Spooky-styled sci-fi-hip-hop/avant-turntablism workout, to a good-vibey girl-vocals track à la Statik Sound System, and even a few tracks that suggest somebody's still listening to old Skinny Puppy records. Is it a case of "jack of all trades, master of none"? Maybe, but it shows a band full of ideas and a willingness to cross-pollinate with impunity.

>>>David Jarman

OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Electronica pu-pu platter.

R.I.Y.L.:

Underworld, BT, Chemical Brothers.



GAZA STRIPPERS

Laced Candy Man's Ruin

Spaz-genius Rick Sims, most notable for spearheading the vastly underappreciated Didjits, has come back from his few years' meandering as utility man for artists such as Fred Schneider and the Supersuckers to deliver his new band Gaza Strippers. Cleaner and slicker sounding than the Didjits, Gaza Strippers are just as energetic and driven as their predecessor, if not as overtly crazed. Rest assured—they bear out some of the Didjits' most charming imbecilic nuances; for example, on the song "Ape," they sing, repeatedly, "I'm

OUT:

April 7.

FILE UNDER:

Speed-freak guitar rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Didjits, Buzzcocks, Supersuckers.

an ape!/I'm an ape!/Let me suck on your face!" Gaza Strippers are all riff and space-flange, and it's tough to imagine whether they'd attract more party boys or punk rockers these days, when kids of all ilk are lining up for bands like the Offspring (which itself covered a Didjits song not too long ago). *Laced Candy* is almost entirely solid (which, at a blindingly fast 33 and a half minutes long, we could only hope it would be), but its standouts are grand. The album's opener, "Automat," is rock near-perfection, and "C'mon Join The Ride," well, it just makes ya wanna dance. Even the (unexpected) Love And Rockets cover ("Yin And Yang The Flower Pot Man") kicks out the jams. Maybe the kids'll like Sims's new "offspring" better this time.

>>>Liz Clayton



FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ

Atardecer Knitting Factory

It was a great idea whose time came and went—mix a couple of strong shots of saloon bourbon into the cosmically comic cocktail retro-revolution and come up with a novelty concoction suitable for folks who wanna wear cowboy boots around their space age bachelor pads. Bill Elm basically invented it with his smooth steel guitar stylings and a little help from a couple of Giant Sand journeymen (though some would argue that either Duane Eddy or Ennio Morricone was there first), and Sub Pop bought it. But the mass market for instrumental kitsch just never developed

and the cult audience for lounge moved on to more interactive dress-up games like swing. So Elm and his Friends have moved on too, from Seattle's Sub Pop to NYC's Knitting Factory and from spaghetti Westerns to brainier foodstuffs. God knows what *Atardecer* means, but it features Elm experimenting more with moody ambient textures and toying with loops, Moogs, Theremins, and something called "space phone guitar." There's still some roller-rink organ and one tune that sounds like it's played entirely on one of those Wurlitzer keyboards they used to sell at the mall, clicking rhythm track and all. But most of the compositions on *Atardecer* find Elm repositioning Friends Of Dean Martinez as a serious outfit that wouldn't be out of place opening for Tortoise on its next tour.

>>>Matt Ashare

OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Spaghetti Best Western.

R.I.Y.L.:

Combustible Edison, Giant Sand, Ennio Morricone.



GHOST

Tune In, Turn On, Free Tibet Drag City

In the late '60s, the promoters of psychedelia believed that the world was turning on. Only the most nostalgic baby boomers remember it that way today, but listen to Ghost, and you just might think again. On the folkie end of the Tokyo psych scene, the band has spent years recovering the most endearing aspects of Krautrock, English folk, San Francisco hippie music, and other spiritually inquisitive and aesthetically excessive movements of the period. Ghost has just released two full-length albums that expand on the eclecticism of its '96 release,

OUT:

April 5.

FILE UNDER:

World psychedelia.

R.I.Y.L.:

Amon Duul, Can, early Grateful Dead.

Lama Rabi Rabi. *Tune In* is the more adventurous of the two (the other is *Snuffbox Immanence*), ranging from acoustic folk, to ethereal chant-and-xylophone concoctions, to droning, sputtering space rock. The band's widely noted Amon Duul obsession takes center stage on "Comin' Home," in which Masaki Batoh's earthy and percussive guitar is foiled by several goofy deep voices, chanting like narcoticized druids. On "Way To Shelkar," shimmering Mellotron-like tones and chimes are sprinkled in among the strings. The final title track is a sprawling, decentered soundscape that deploys a whole battery of pedal effects, violins, and vocoders, until the rhythm section comes in to ground things. Like a successful commune, the piece is unified while allowing for individual expressions and hallucinations.

>>>Andrea Moed

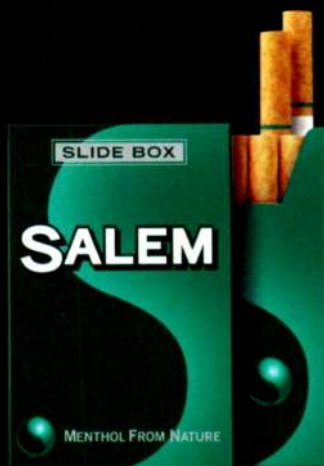


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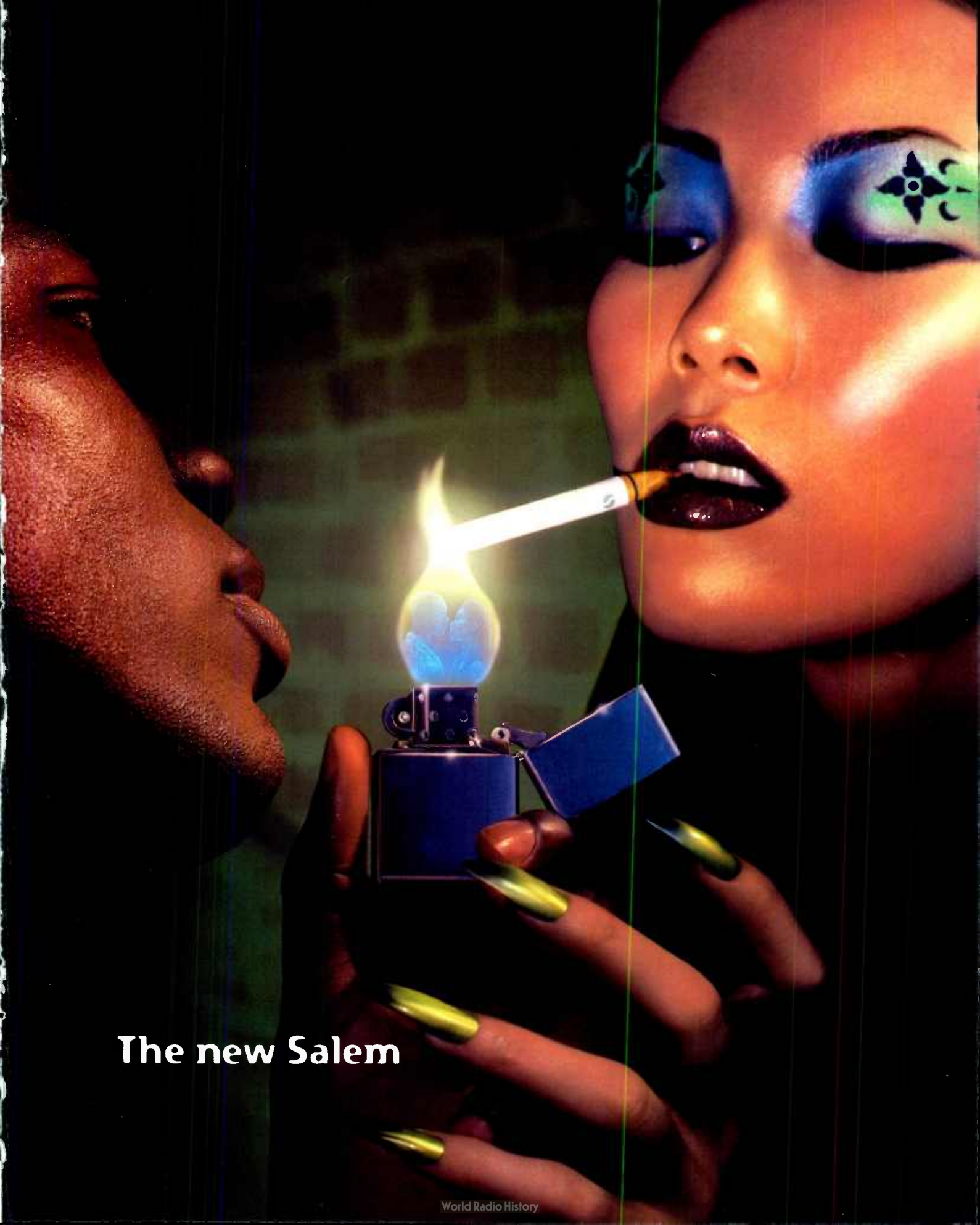
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GO-BETWEENS
78 'Til 79 The Lost Album Jetset

Robert Forster's description of the earliest incarnation of his Go-Betweens as a collision between Patti Smith and the Monkees is endearing, if not terribly accurate. This artifact captures the band before drummer Lindy Morrison completed the equation and before Forster shared songwriting duties with Grant McLennan. The results are surprisingly dissimilar to the off-kilter art pop of the band's first studio LPs. These Go-Betweens traffic in fairly straightforward '60s garage rock (think of post-John Cale Velvet Underground) delivered at rapid tempos

owing a debt to '70s new wave. Forster's voice is unmistakable, though, and when the pace slows (as on the wonderful "The Sound Of Rain"), the seeds of his unique, loping melodic sensibility shine through. The opening paean to "Lee Remick" is entertaining if unusually frivolous ("She was in *The Omen* with Gregory Peck/She got killed, but what the heck"), while the urgent, organ-driven "People Say" and the minstrel-y "Don't Let Him Come Back" provide the strongest indicators of the wonders to come. Those already smitten with the Go-Betweens will undoubtedly want these two-track bedroom productions (augmented with early singles). Newcomers are advised to start with the benchmarks *Before Hollywood* and *Tallulah* (a greatest hits package, *Bellavista Terrace*, has also just been released on Beggars Banquet). >>>Glen Sarvady

OUT:
April 6.
FILE UNDER:
First steps for future icons.
R.I.Y.L.:
Melodic Velvet Underground, Lloyd Cole, Modern Lovers, Chills.



GROOVIE GHOULIES
Fun In The Dark Lookout!

The monster shtick doesn't go much deeper than the band name, spooky album art, and a song or two like "(She's My) Vampire Girl." Other than that, the creatures of the night the Groovie Ghoulies most resemble are the Ramones, whose first couple of albums represent their musical blueprint, and maybe the New York Dolls, whose "Lonely Planet Boy" provides one of two covers on *Fun In The Dark*. With Queers bassist B-Face joining Groovies mainstays Kepi (on drums and vocals) and Blitzkrieg hopping female guitarist

Roach, the band kicks things off with a humorous salute to Carly Simon (a song titled "Carly Simon" featuring the chorus "And it's just like Carly Simon said/Things are coming round again") and then bash their way through a dozen more revved-up pop punk numbers that don't fetishize the Ramones quite as much as the Riverdales do, but borrow just as liberally from Johnny and Joey's trademark buzz pop. "Ivy Says" turns out not to be about Cramps guitarist Poison Ivy, which is a minor disappointment considering the Ghoulies' ghoulish orientation. And "Outbreak," with its monkey bites, may seem a bit dated to anyone who remembers the film. But mostly the Groovie Ghoulies are all about keeping things simple, tuneful and, well, timeless.


>>>Matt Ashare

OUT:
March 23.
FILE UNDER:
Blitzkrieg bop.
R.I.Y.L.:
Ramones, Riverdales, Queers.

the new album by


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DAVID HOLMES
This Film's Crap, Let's Slash The Seats Go! Discs/1500-Interscope

David Holmes's debut still makes a noise in today's electronic forest, even if few in the US were around to hear it when the Belfast-born beatmeister dropped it back in 1995. Four years is practically two eternities in a genre where the present cutting edge can dull quickly, but for Holmes, breaking new ground is a rather mundane goal anyway. He prefers making his own worlds as he did in 1997's underrated urban sprawl, *Let's Get Killed*, and the deep-grooved soundtrack for the film *Out Of Sight*. The spacey *This*

Film's Crap (this new domestic issue comes with a bonus remix disc) provides the same thrill that good cinema does for an audience willing to close its eyes in a dark room and let the music paint the scene. The occasional B-movie sound clips lend some campy, comic relief ("uh...the planet's exploded, sir") to Holmes's trip-hoppy collages and Saint Etienne's Sarah Cracknell adds tear-jerking, romantic lushness to "Gone." Holmes's flair and quick stylistic edits suggest he spends too much time flipping TV channels, but his work is much more than sample-driven updates of the wanky private eye theme music of the '70s. Here, the melodic and rhythmic twists and turns have more suspense than any prime time car chase.

>>>Steve Ciabattoni

OUT:
 April 20.
FILE UNDER:
 Cinematic trip-hop.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Howie B., DJ Spooky, Mocean Worker,
Out Of Sight soundtrack.



KREIDLER
Appearance At The Park Mute

While many of the new electronic artists and free-floating progressive acts these days express an affinity for the mathematical approach to song construction—precise, stainless steel sounds that seem riveted to very specific locations—far fewer express any sort of kinship with gushy pop melodies or loose, human generated rhythms. Kreidler loves synthetic melody; you can just tell. And this fun-loving tension between the mechanical and the organic drives their mostly instrumental music: A real life drummer generates flexible kick

drumbeats and finger-fluttered hi-hat treble, while keyboardists (one of whom, Stefan Schneider, is also in To Rococo Rot) concoct hummable Kraftwerkian melodies. And actually, Kreidler, which is from Dusseldorf, Germany, often incorporates the classic feel of Kraftwerk on *Appearance At The Park*. The sounds the group submits seem anachronistic on the surface, but underneath the pleasant electronic tones a swirling energy tilts them a bit, resulting in electronic pop that's just a wee bit askew, but with an Autobahn-ready energy that propels them, flat tire and all. *Appearance At The Park* isn't going to shake you or surprise you—it's more subtle and unassuming than that. What it will do every time you listen to it, though, is make you glad you plopped down the money.

>>>Randall Roberts

OUT:
 March 23.
FILE UNDER:
 Post-Krautrock.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Kraftwerk, U2, Trans Am,
 To Rococo Rot.



KHAN
1-900-GET-KHAN Matador

If you're in the mood for copulating—like, *really hot and bothered*—anything will work. You could pop on the *Sounds of the American Fast Food Restaurant 45* and find enough sexiness within to make it, er, work. But if you and your honey need a little nudge, you could do much worse than *1-900-GET-KHAN*. Filled with rhythmic, synthetic slow groovin' tones, the record seeps with a certain kind of vibe that quickly ripens your nether regions. This vibe usually revolves around a centered subharmonic bass beat that kicks a song into gear and a bunch of satellite sounds—

tings and bells, fake hand claps and woodblock scratches—that push the record past the generic and into the realm of the subtly sublime. Khan, who's half of the german duo Khan & Walker (though he lives in New York now), is a master at empty spaces and how to fill them without burying individual sounds. *1-900-GET-KHAN* is a wonderful success because synthetic melody and rhythm intertwine so effortlessly and seamlessly (and the addition of vocalist Julee Cruise on a few choice cuts doesn't hurt, either), and as a result the record flows as one unit while retaining each song's unique identity. (Note: The 900 number actually works, and you can connect to some live phone sex—if, of course, you're over 18—or, if you're feeling freaky, actually talk to Khan himself on his cell phone.)

>>>Randall Roberts

OUT:
 May 4.
FILE UNDER:
 Synthetic humpin' beats.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Khan & Walker, Portishead,
 Vampiros Lesbos.



LADYBUG TRANSISTOR
The Albemarle Sound Merge

Having mastered shimmering indie-pop on the 1997 gem *Beverly Atonale*, the Ladybug Transistor takes a left turn and slams into the Left Banke, the short-lived late-'60s band behind the indelible hit "Walk Away Renee." Anyone who's heard that song, or other pristine orchestral pop classics of the AM radio era, will get a memory jolt from *The Albemarle Sound*, a ferociously un-modern album that favors wandering horn arrangements and gleeful piano vamps over screaming guitars, ska toasts or anything else vaguely of-the-moment.

This New York City group assembles the aesthetic puzzle like a nursing home's jigsaw champ, complete with an album cover placing the retro-clad maestros in a leafy, sun-drenched nature scene. But what of the songs? Three-minute romps like "Meadowport Arch" and "The Swimmer" float along nicely, with soothingly slick vocals and clever instrumental diversions like an off-kilter piano break or an isolated acoustic guitar riff. The band takes a worthwhile baroque spin on the airy "Oceans In The Hall," and veers south of the border for the mariachi maneuverings of "Cienfuegos." They're all intricately woven tunes, and they all pass by swiftly and forgettably on this commendable, yet overly commemorative, record.

>>>Richard Martin

OUT:
 March 23.
FILE UNDER:
 Pop for time travelers.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Apples In Stereo, Magnetic Fields,
 Elliott Smith's "Baby Britain."

**OUT:**

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Interstellar surf instrumentals.

R.I.Y.L.:Shadow Men On A Shadowy Planet,
Phantom Surfers, Pell Meil.**MAN OR ASTRO-MAN?****EEVIAC:** Operational Index And Reference Guide, Including
Other Modern Computational Devices **Touch And Go**

Man Or Astro-Man? is a band that's gained its notoriety less for its music than for its awe-inspiring concert staging and its development of a hilariously comprehensive band mythology. But unlike say, Gwar, MOAM is not just an on-stage gimmick with songs attached—it has plenty to say musically, and is constantly exploring new angles. On *EEVIAC*, the Alabama band's sixth full-length, its Dick Dale-meets-Devo shtick is still in full effect. It's a less computer-generated and bloop-and-bleep-filled

album than the group's previous release, *Made From Technetium*, with a healthy serving of the tremolo-soaked punkish surf instrumentals that were the band's early bread and butter. Vocoder treatments and synthesized bass lines show up in places and sci-fi movie samples are, of course, everywhere, but it's an album with a full human (or alien?) presence. And Man Or Astro-Man? sets off in a few unexpected directions: "D:Contamination" sounds like a nerdier Blues Explosion, with dirty skronk on top of a hip-hop beat, and the closing instrumental "Myopia" is even more of a surprise, it's echoey, soaring and anthemic, sounding more like Ride at its prime than anything Man Or Astro-Man? has ever done. *EEVIAC* sees the group still staying miles ahead of the dreaded novelty band tag.

>>>David Jarman

**OUT:**

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Rejuvenated British guitar pop.

R.I.Y.L.:Manic Street Preachers, Supergrass,
XTC.**MANSUN** ★**Six****Epic**

Mansun, current darlings of the fickle English music press, is the latest British group to proclaim it's going to change the face of rock music. Not again! *Six*, Mansun's follow-up to its 1997 British chart topper *Attack Of The Grey Lantern*, is no *Nevermind*, but it does proffer an enticingly fresh take on guitar-rock. Mansun hasn't discovered a new secret ingredient; the quartet merely throws more variables in the Cusinart: heavy Hendrix-style guitars, Pink Floyd psychedelic touches, quirky bursts of everything from "God Save The Queen"

to playground gibberish stitched together with frontman Paul Draper's sneering soprano. The outcome, like such recent memorable Brit-pop ventures as *Urban Hymns* and *Definitely Maybe*, is almost annoyingly catchy. Against your better judgment you'll find yourself merrily singing along to pop tunes about euthanasia, breakdowns, TV-induced inertia and life wearing you thin. "Serotonin" is a lovely downer about migraines, and the nearly ten-minute "Cancer" opens with a barrage of noise guitar, weird samples, and anti-religion hooks about being "emotionally raped by Jesus." Nevertheless, for those numbed by electronica overload, *Six* should act as an uplifting guitar-driven stimulant.

>>>Sarah Pratt

"A gift for turning low-key tales into hummable little masterpieces."
NEWSWEEK

"Melodies that get into your brain as fast as possible and burrow there forever."
NY DAILY NEWS

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MEPHISTO:
SAN FRANCISCO PLASMAFUNK VOL. 1
 Various Artists Om

San Francisco's Om Records has been a godsend for jaded ears in the latter part of this decade, providing us with two volumes each of the *Mushroom Jazz* and *Deep Concentration* future-funk compilations. But credit for the great mix of music on this 13-track collection must be given to the five-year-old Mephisto label, from which the tracks are licensed. The music on *San Francisco Plasmafunk* is too varied to pin it down to one category—for every slinky house groove there's a break-beat throwdown to turn

your ears the other way around. But this bunch of tracks isn't meant as a genre or scene snapshot as much as it is a spotlight on an underground musical aesthetic still under construction. San Francisco artists including Orpheus, BMF, DJ Saga and Sci-Fi Select dominate the proceedings, but Florida electronic heroes like Q-Burns Abstract Message and Pimp Daddy Nash shine too, laying down well-constructed, dramatic and thoroughly engaging grooves. From the electro-spy breaks of Q-Burns' "In Cold Blood Remix" to the irresistible new-jack disco of Sci-Fi Select's "Future Musik," the mix works and the pacing and variety of the album make it a highly enjoyable listen, and an essential party platter for the fast-approaching future.

>>>Brian Coleman

OUT:
 March 30.
FILE UNDER:
 Electro-house-funk 2010.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Fatboy Slim, Mushroom Jazz Vol. 1 & 2, Amand Van Helden.



MOCKET
Pro Forma Kill Rock Stars

On its third full-length, Olympia, Washington's Mocket adapts its new wave Casio blues to the aggressive, anti-funk, Bush Tetras grooves of a new rhythm section—The Need's Rachel Carns and Radio Sloan. The result is more no-wave than new-wave, with Mocket regulars Audrey Marrs and Matt Steinke laying their robotic, Man-machine verse over a noisy bed of Sonic Youth tunings, analog keyboard squiggles, a little Farfisa cheese, and terse, angular drum patterns. When the band isn't trying a bit too hard to grab its

piece of the improvisational post-rock pie, Mocket can still sound like Bangles as imagined by Thurston Moore instead of Prince—"Spelling Effect" walks like a daydream nation Egyptian before it runs into the sort of tangled time signature the Pixies used to use to skew their pop. Elsewhere, *Pro Forma* mostly keeps its avant-garde up by matching each melodic flourish with a noisy refrain, though it comes across more like an after-school project than the doctoral dissertations that have become the post-rock norm in Chicago. In other words, in the spirit of fellow indie new-wavers like Satisfact, the Bangs, and The Need, Mocket is still a garage band rather than a laboratory experiment, and on *Pro Forma* it sounds like the band is having fun deconstructing its own retro-pop fetishes.

>>>Matt Ashare

OUT:
 April 13.
FILE UNDER:
 Neo-new wave/no wave.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Satisfact, Bangs, The Need.

beulah
 when your heartstrings break



Sunset Valley
 "The New Speed"
 Ear numbing space rocket pop and roll.



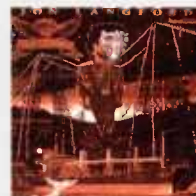
Wheat
 "Medeiros"
 Mesmerizing heartfelt beauty that crackles with mid fi pop.



Diane Izzo
 "One"
 Jagged dark pop that falls in the space between Townes Van Zant and PJ Harvey.



Family of God
 "We Are the World"
 NYC duo create mystic disco that transcends trance.

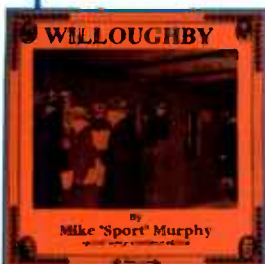


Jon Langford
 "Skull Orchard"
 Head Mekon delivers blistering rock and socialist blues.



Chris Mills
 "Every Night Fight for Your Life"
 Homespun tales of love, loss and devotion.



**OUT:**

March 9.

FILE UNDER:

Americana, with a twist.

R.I.Y.L.:Jonathan Richman, Billy Bragg/Wilco's
Mermaid Avenue, John Doe.**MIKE "SPORT" MURPHY**

Willoughby

Kill Rock Stars

To appreciate *Willoughby*, you need to know where Mike "Sport" Murphy is coming from. Whereas most neo-folkies look to the '60s for musical models, Murphy takes inspiration from a much earlier era. The New York City singer/songwriter's admitted primary influence is 19th century composer Stephen Foster, a pioneer of early American song whose compositions include "Oh, Susanna," "Camptown Races" and "Old Folks At Home." None of Murphy's songs are as simplistic as those referents would imply, and there is a rock backbeat propelling most of them, but Foster's ghost

looms in the straightforward, minstrel-like quality of *Willoughby's* songs, which marry familiar-sounding vocal melodies with jaunty piano and guitar/ukulele/banjo parts. Thankfully, a healthy irreverence attends the exercise and Murphy plays with wacky noises (birdcalls, toy piano, mouth harp), includes silly little instrumental numbers, and writes goofy lyrics that rhyme "Sanka" with "Paul Anka." His deep, smoky voice most often approximates Nick Cave's or Scott Walker's, but at points he sounds quite a bit like Jonathan Richman, and "The Night Surrounds Me" is almost a dead ringer for the ditty Richman sang in *There's Something About Mary*. Some of *Willoughby* is pleasant enough, but the problem is that, in the end, none of it coheres very well and even if you "get" what Murphy's attempting, you're just left scratching your head. >>>Jenny Eliscu

**OUT:**

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Sludge-metal lamentations.

R.I.Y.L.:

Godflesh, Melvins, dirgey Sabbath.

NEUROISIS ★

Times Of Grace

Relapse

For a band that's usually classified as metal, Neurosis really doesn't act or sound the part. (Okay, so the band is painfully loud and some of its members have hair, but that's about it.) It sounds as if when the members of Neurosis were listening to Black Sabbath as teenagers, what piqued their interest wasn't the obvious anthemic songs about super heroes but the dirgy, discomforting material about mental instability—which probably led them into Joy Division and Swans, whose epic-scale anguish seems to inform Neurosis as much as anything else. Simply put, on almost

every song, it sounds like the guys in Neurosis are having the worst day of their lives. Their music is usually leaden and chugging, a slow moving but towering fog bank of grinding minor chords. The vocals are hoarse-throated and blood-curdling, but not out of any black metal bandwagon-hopping—they're more primal screams of agonizing catharsis. In the past, Neurosis has had the problem of sounding pretty monotonous by the end of an album, but on *Times Of Grace*, the band has expanded its reach considerably, interspersing the wall of pain with a few gentle ballads and elegiac instrumentals combining funeral drumming with, in places, strings, horns, and even bagpipes. It sounds like it has the potential for baroque hokiness, but in the album's overall context, the pathos works perfectly. >>>David Jarman

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NIGHTMARES ON WAX

Carboot Soul Warp-Matador

Don't let the name fool you: The grooves laid down by Nightmares On Wax (a.k.a. George Evelyn) are about as likely to provoke night sweats as the pseudo-jazz muzak of Kenny G. But that's not saying Evelyn's idea of mood music is quite so anemic. First surfacing in 1991 with the innovative hip-hop-by-way-of-techno album *A Word Of Science*, Nightmares On Wax has since made a few highly lauded contributions to the UK-based down-tempo beats scene over the past decade. On *Carboot Soul*, NOW's third album, Evelyn dips heartily into lite soul,

jazz and funk for inspiration, eschewing darkly suggestive atmospherics in favor of pillowy-soft make-out music. Using a live backing band to abet his sampler and drum machine, Evelyn tempers his soulful kitsch with a slight nod to mutated hip-hop forms, underscoring the album's spare, Barry White-worthy instrumentation with a head-nodding snare loop or some dubbed-out bass. When the album goes straight-up trip-hop (about a third of the time), Evelyn's subtle application of '70s-style studio touches to the low-slung grooves lends it a beautifully stoned, almost erotic quality. There's not much happening here, but that's exactly the point: *Carboot Soul* isn't intended to entertain, but to provide the appropriate grooves to entertain to.

>>>Colin Helms



OLD TIME RELIJUN

Uterus And Fire K

Resolving the differing impressions supplied by the name of this group and the title of its second record, one could guess that it possesses a particularly dementia-addled vision of Americana. Yearning for the days when the songs of the *Anthology Of American Folk Music* weren't artifacts, Old Time Relijun sounds like a product of the open frontier, when backwoods folk was the music of everyday life, blood and conflagration were common themes, and musical forms had not yet been set in wax. The most interesting thing about Old Time Relijun

is how the band anchors this to *Nuggets*-worthy garage rock: The band relies on flushed megaphoned vocals, a twangy minimalist guitar evoking surf rock lines gone sour, fingerboard-busting upright bass, and loose, clod-hopping percussion that sounds more the result of an animal stampede than practice. A variety of other instruments are so mistreated that tracing their original sources is difficult. Are those jew's harps, hurdy-gurdies, pierced accordions, or saxophones muddying the mix? When he's not yelping like a primate version of the Violent Femmes' Gordon Gano, singer Arrington de Dioniso is equally happy to abuse his voice box. On songs like "Archaeopteryx Claw" and "Telephone Call," he emits fluttering gurgles worthy of a Tuvan throat singer.

>>>Alec Hanley Bemis

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Marc Olsen

MARC OLSEN
Didn't Ever... Hasn't Since My Own Planet

Seattle's Marc Olsen has a voice to match his music: hushed, chilling, spacey—a cross between Neil Young on his rustic albums and Elliott Smith. And like Olsen's music, that voice's heft and emotional depth gradually creep up on you. Not to be confused with Mark Olson the former Jayhawk, Marc Olsen made his name in the Northwest cult favorite Sage, as well as a stint in space-rockers Sky Cries Mary. On his second solo album, he continues to make good on those influences, picking out deceptively simple melodies that recall a time when

Seattle music just meant brooding music, sans flannel shirts or three-guitar attack. The secret to Olsen's success is the very thing that might seem drab about his approach: the almost unwavering tempo. Even the songs on *Didn't Ever... Hasn't Since* that rock out are tempered by cavernous layers of tremolo- and reverb-heavy guitar and subtle vocals that make current Pearl Jam sound like hair-metal by comparison. What Olsen does share with Pearl Jam are lyrics heavy on quivering self-exploration, minus Eddie Vedder's righteous self-abasement. At a time when rock bands are aping the brute dynamics of early grunge but not its spine-tingling drama, Marc Olsen recaptures what once made that music so enthralling, without turning up his amp even halfway to 11.

>>>Chris Molanphy

OUT:

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Brooding solo guy.

R.I.Y.L.:

Recent Pearl Jam or Smashing Pumpkins, Neil Young, Sage.



ORBITAL ★
The Middle Of Nowhere London

If Orbital's excelled at one thing over the course of its 10-year career—and the brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll have excelled at quite a bit, achieving stadium-rocker status in the UK and producing some of the most recognizable and aching beautiful tracks in rave's history—it's been delivering emotion-drenched electronic music. Whether it was the clever chordal progressions of 1989's "Chime," the ethereal beauty of '93's "Halcyon," or the consciousness-ingraining piano riff of '96's "The Box," Orbital buried its carefully constructed

beats in the listener's head and soul. So to say Orbital's latest, *The Middle Of Nowhere*, is a disappointment, is to judge it against the group's stellar past. The album bears many of the hallmarks of vintage Orbital—compelling vocal snippets, rolling sound-scapey valleys and plateaus of beats—but the parts don't really gel. Loops recycle themselves and linger too long, at times seeming directionless. The emotions on this mostly-dark album seem forced—angsty vocal snippets are too obviously spooky on "I Don't Know You People" and "Autumn," while "Way Out," with its pretty vocal bits, wears its beauty on its sleeve. The standout exception is "Style," which crafts a great song from a cheap organ called a stylophone, but it's got to be said: *The Middle Of Nowhere* will have fans yearning for Orbital's "Halcyon" days.

>>>William Werde

OUT:

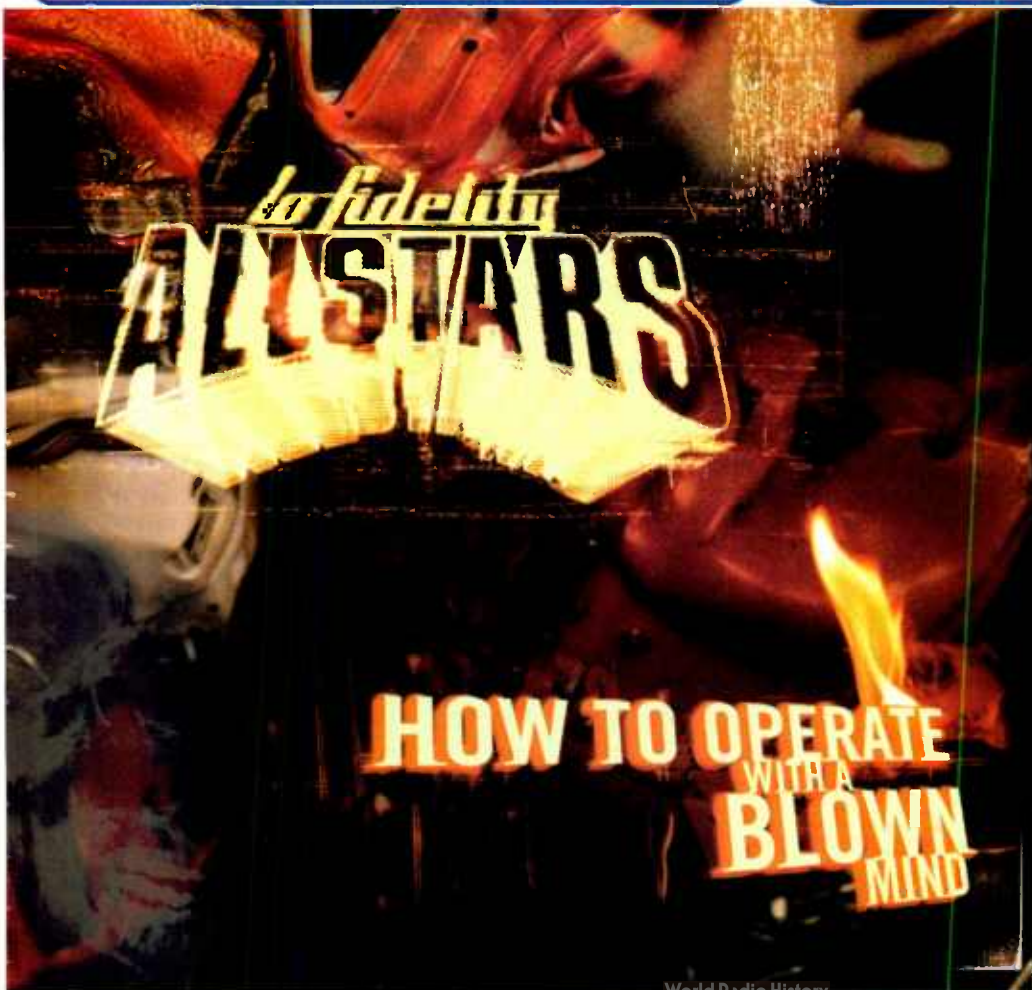
June 22.

FILE UNDER:

Anthem techno.

R.I.Y.L.:

Chemical Brothers, Faithless, Future Sound Of London.



includes
"Battle Flag"
 (featuring Pigeonhed)"

"It's so f***ing cool, the nation's thermometers should be recalibrated. It's so damn funky, James Brown should chop his legs off in tribute. To attempt to resist its lascivious bass squelch and stacked-up beats is foolhardy."

- NME

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reviews

R.I.Y.L.—RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE

CD ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Dancey eclecticism.

R.I.Y.L.:

David Byrne, Sky Cries Mary, Charles
Lloyd, B-52s remixes.

POI DOG PONDERING

Natural Thing Plate.tec.tonic-Tommy Boy

Regional acts like the Dave Matthews Band and Phish occasionally break through nationally, but Poi Dog Pondering took the opposite tack. Jumping out of the gate a decade ago, the Austin, Texas, band earned legions of collegiate devotees with its organic yet smartly whimsical folk-rock tunes. After three solid records, frontman Frank Orrall relocated to Chicago, and Poi Dog became an all-over-the-map groove band that packed local clubs while releasing albums that were mostly ignored outside the Windy City. Said to be the final effort from Poi Dog's current

incarnation—Orrall intends to make it even more experimental—*Natural Thing* slithers from deep house to light hip-hop to funk-jazz fusion without making any real imprint along the way. A nine-minute epic opens the disc with a hypnotizing ambient passage that swirls off into a string-led tornado of grooves, and it sounds like an easy-listening variation on electronica. A "French Mix" of one of Poi Dog's old pop tracks, "Ta Bouche Est Tabou," becomes an uneasy blend of Muzak and Afro-Caribbean. Fortunately, several tracks feature complex instrumentation and revolve around stronger rhythms and melodies: "That's The Way Love Is" is an uplifting dance floor anthem, while "Jealous" compliments Orrall's friendly vocals. But this record lacks the live energy that a Poi Dog show generates, and it's painfully evident. >>>Richard Martin



OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Avant-jazz/funk/live drum 'n' bass.

R.I.Y.L.:

Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, John
Zorn's *Naked City*, Phitek.

PONGA

Ponga

Loosegroove

Uniting downtown jazzers (keyboardist Wayne Horvitz and drummer Bobby Previte) with West Coast space-rockers (saxophonist Skerik of Critters Buggin' and Tuatara and keyboardist Dave Palmer), Ponga puts a new spin on fusion by placing techno textures inside a loose, avant-groove context. These improvised instrumental tracks embrace both the laid-back airiness of electric-era Miles Davis and the dense, break-neck propulsion of drum 'n' bass. Maintaining roughly an even balance between the organic and the mechanical, the group chills out noisy

electronic episodes by laying in greasy organ chords or nudges earthy funk grooves toward techno territory by bathing the drums in drastic amounts of flange or reverb. To this end, Skerik is Ponga's secret weapon, able either to loft graceful, ethereal sax lines or to get down and dirty with percussive honks and squawks. And though Previte, eschewing loops in favor of real-time drumming, harnesses the rhythmic vocabulary of drum 'n' bass, he is unconcerned with machine-like repetition, instead embellishing his snappy patterns with brisk snare fills and cowbell asides. Ultimately, Ponga succeeds by honoring spontaneity and by dispensing with the desire to adhere authentically to any musical style. >>>Michael Parillo

prolapse

ghosts of dead aeroplanes

OUT:

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Boy/girl noise dub.

R.I.Y.L.:

Unwound, Sonic Youth, Gang Of Four.

PROLAPSE**Ghosts Of Dead Aeroplanes** Jetset

A good album is one whose velocity you can't control. As in a schoolyard game of crack-the-whip, you are compelled to move at the speed the leader chooses. And if you've got the courage to hang on to this one, you're in for some excellent kicks from Prolapse. When the band veers from the twisted guitar/dub of their large-scale opener "Essence" to the mach-one fever of "Fob.com," the acceleration seems like a natural pull. Even in the placid numbers, the gait of *Ghosts Of Dead Aeroplanes* is expertly planned and executed. Leicester, England's Prolapse is a well-regarded

guitar band that has never seemed to be able to decide whether to be noise or pop. That uncertainty, along with the curiously mismatched vocals of Linda Steelyard and Mick Derrick, make for a reputation built upon disparate intrigues. Taking a more polished approach to its third album, Prolapse has found that you can sometimes get a more messed up vibe by straining things off. The noise that clung to the group's earlier music is now cleared away somewhat. Heavy and cyclic, the bass and drum foundations loop around the nervous, twitchy guitars. Steelyard's girlish voice bleats softly while Derrick's spoken interludes are delivered in a rakish brogue. Prolapse manages to rope all these elements of post-punk aestheticism into a focused musical opportunity. It's a ride worth hanging on for. >>>Lois Maffeo

Splender
Halfway Down The Sky

OUT:

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Earnest, radio-ready rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Goo Goo Dolls, Fuel, Collective Soul.

SPLENDER**Halfway Down The Sky** Columbia

This may not be cause for rejoicing, but earnest rock has made a comeback. The tongue-glued-in-cheek irony of early '90s rock has given way to a rash of bands that "really mean it, man." It is a bit of a relief, even if too often this trend brings us Matchbox 20 or an overplayed ballad by a newly gushy Green Day. Stepping into the breach is this debut by Splender. Singer-songwriter Waymon Boone and his cohorts have played together since the early '90s and, while picking up the expected influences, have had time to develop real chemistry. Produced by

legendary dilettante Todd Rundgren, *Halfway Down The Sky* works best when it cribs from Rundgren's classic power-pop sound; the producer hasn't totally moved guitarist Jonathan Svec away from pearl-jamming, but Boone's songs—helped by bassist James Cruz—are punchier than they have a right to be. "Yeah, Whatever" qualifies as the best bubble gum grunge single since... well, the last one (Fuel? Everclear?), while "Spaceboy" and "Special" adeptly toe the line between acoustic melody and rock crunch. Other than a few late-album wank-fests and a mid-tempo ballad that mentions God and could've been written by a focus group, the guys in Splender sound proud to be giving rock 'n' roll to you. It would be just fine if they became radio's new flavor—for several months, even. >>>Chris Molanphy



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MIA DOI TODD

Come Out Of Your Mine Communion

OUT:

May 25.

FILE UNDER:

Trad folk singer/songwriter.

R.I.Y.L.:

Joni Mitchell, Kendra Smith,
Cat Power.

Mia Doi Todd has an unusual resume for a folk singer/songwriter: Instead of making her name at street fairs and open mic nights, she went to Yale and then studied in Japan with masters of *butoh*, a traditional/modern dance style. What may be even more surprising is that such an odd (and high-falutin') trajectory took her back to a very familiar-sounding place: probably her mom's crackly LPs of folk singers of the late '60s. *Come Out Of Your Mine* is a gentle and placid listen, with no trickery, just acoustic guitar and Todd's robust voice. And the vocals seem somewhat old-school, too: Rather than the explicit autobiography and flat, deadpan delivery that tend to be *de rigueur* today, Todd spins stream-of-consciousness narratives, heavy on the metaphorical imagery, in a voice that's warm and consciously artful. *Come Out Of Your Mine* feels downbeat, partly for its quiet, minor-key melodies and partly for its echoey if not ghostly production, which makes Todd sound like she's playing alone in an empty concert hall. It's a fairly conventional album from a young artist, but one that shows she has the goods. Perhaps as Todd finds her feet, she might next try blending traditional Japanese as well as American folk styles into a truly eyebrow-raising combination.

>>>David Jarman



VELOCETTE

Fourfold Remedy Wiiija-Beggars Banquet

OUT:

May 4.

FILE UNDER:

Chanteuse-led bedsitter pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Sundays, Slowdive, Ivy, Autour De
Lucie, Saint Etienne.

This sparkling debut from British trio Velocette has its unlikely roots in the scruffy, riot grrrl-inspired London combo Comet Gain. Velocette's three members left their former bandmate David Charlie Feck with the name Comet Gain and the angsty, post-grunge framework they'd worked in. What the trio has kept is an ear for melody—more tangible now that it's shed the white noise—and the sweetly serene vocals of Sarah Bleach. Fans of Saint Etienne's Sarah Cracknell and the Cardigans' Nina Persson will rejoice. Bleach coos her way through nine of *Fourfold Remedy's* ten tracks (one's a groovy, organ-fueled instrumental), and quickly endears herself with her honest-as-a-schoolgirl delivery. Musically, the album begins on a sluggish note with "Reborn," first evoking the restrained jangle of the Sundays. But a few minutes later the organs come barreling in, followed by billowing strings, and it's clear that Velocette is out to capture a more up-to-date, smoky vibe than just the rainy day blues of Britain's finest bedsitter pop; although there's no trip-hop here, the mood is occasionally akin to that of discs by Mono or Morcheeba. Although many songs here are enchanting even after several listens, eventually Bleach's vocals start to sound the same, suggesting that a bit more depth might have strengthened the album and provided more reasons for repeated listens.

>>>Lydia Vanderloo



we™

OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Drum 'n' space.

R.I.Y.L.:

DJ Spooky, Squarepusher, Autechre.

WE

Square Root Of Negative One

Asphodel

We takes its name from a dystopian work of the same name, written in the 1920s by Russian futurist Yvegeny Zamyatini, which should give you an inkling that this electronic offering is not merely brainless rave fodder. We—actually DJ Olive, Lloop and Once 11—emerged with the New York City illbient scene in the early '90s, doing installations in Brooklyn warehouses and eventually hitting Manhattan with the likes of DJ Spooky, Ben Neill and others. *Square Root Of Negative One* follows up We's

debut, *As Is*, and it offers more of the same, really: a meticulous melange of beats and samples, at times arranged cautiously and sparsely, at times flaring out with vociferous drum 'n' bass kicks. *Square Root* is artsy enough to come across as creative and fun—as on "Ririka," where the group pulls a man's vocals into what sounds like a seizure set to the beat, until you suddenly realize the man is trying to ask "How can they get by with this?"—but not so pretentious that it sacrifices music or melody. Unlike the recent outpouring of work from breakbeat artists such as Squarepusher and Autechre, We manages to consistently wrap its beat constructions (and deconstructions) around discernible melodies. Which is actually kinda refreshing. >>>William Werde



OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Ambient, trip-hop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Portishead, Tricky, Björk's *Post* and*Homogenic*.

WEED

Hard To Kill

Netwerk

Weed isn't exactly the most endearing name for a band, although according to Dan Handrabur, half of this Romanian-refugee husband and wife duo, weeds get a bum rap. On *Hard To Kill*, the pair's hypnotic debut, he ably applies his classical training to keyboards, guitars, violin and harmonica while his wife Cristina manipulates the synths and vocals. Kicking off with "Further Away"—an Eastern-styled techno anthem spotlighting a pre-millennial mantra, "Hypnotized, Digitized, Radical, Virtual," that perfectly describes Weed's

sound—the duo takes you on a rousing alchemic affair, flirting suggestively with trip-hop, trance and ambient. Moods oscillate from hippie spirituality and hokey pronouncements that "the power of the heart awakens the mind" to the sensual slow-groove come-on of "Love Takes Two" to the Tricky-like menace of dark industrial tracks featuring Cristina singing churlish lines about "looking at the little children through the barrel of a gun." Throughout Cristina's vocals mesmerize, mixing Björk's coquettish innocence and Enya's new wave chants with the snaky hiss of Tricky cohort Martina Topley Bird. Occasional tracks seem aimless and endless, but like most common garden weeds, this debut plants strong roots.

>>>Sarah Pratt

Sad Truths

Break Ups

Drive Throughs

Heart Attacks

Quarter Moons

Punch Lines

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The history of American rave culture stems back to New York City's STORMraves gatherings in the early-'90s: parties held in warehouses and abandoned lots that took the vibes of the burgeoning UK scene and

transplanted them to US shores with added urban flavor. Fusing the techno sounds stemming from Brooklyn, Belgium, Germany and Detroit into one rapturous, unified sound, **ADAM X**, along with brother Frankie Bones and friend Heather Heart, introduced a counterculture into the bloodstream of New York's youth that continues to serve as the model for every city with an underground dance scene.

Adam X has spent years



turning his love of, and obsession with techno grooves into an empire—namely the lauded Sonic Groove label and vinyl store in Manhattan. But it's his infallible Technics tactics that have truly distinguished him and brought him international success as one of the world's most in-demand techno DJs. It's rare to find a recorded documentation of Adam's skills—even on bootlegged tapes—which is one reason why his **Wax Trax! MasterMix Vol. 2** (Wax Trax!-TVT) release is garnering so much attention. The other reason, of course, is that the 72-minute, 18-track set slams with the kind of minimal, edgy techno attack he is known to deliver in live settings. The journey is virtually seamless, rising from subliminal electronic pulses to grating, mechanical flourishes and back without a flaw or a flinch. Drawing on original cuts by cohorts Reade Truth, Kevin Saunderson, and Kooky Scientist, as well as two of his own productions, the disc is an exemplary representation of today's best underground techno and of one of its finest purveyors...

The sound of **Ultimate B.A.S.E.** came to America in July '98 when world-revered DJs Carl Cox and **JIM MASTERS** took their weekly London club event to New York City's Twilo club. Under the venue's unparalleled sound system, Cox, Masters, and a host of global DJ luminaries have wowed Manhattan clubbers with their eclectic mix of hard house, thumping techno, and shocking electro sounds. The monthly gig, as well as others around the country, has allowed Masters, a former resident of London's Ministry Of Sound and a DJ with a resume as untarnished as his technique, to grow in fame and respect among American DJ enthusiasts. And his recent mix, **The Sound Of Ultimate B.A.S.E. 2** (Worldwide Ultimatum-Moonshine), will undoubtedly garner him more followers. There's hardly a moment throughout the 71-minute set when Masters isn't working: He's constantly layering tracks, flanging between two cuts, dropping in the melody of one over the break of another. The track selection is reason enough to give this gem a spin, as it incorporates electro, house and techno bangers from Luke Slater, Ken Ishii, Adam Beyer & Lenk, Slam and others. But it's how Masters energetically and intelligently manipulates the music that will really have the disc glued to your CD tray and your feet flailing in your living room. Absolutely no trainspotters allowed on this ride.



KREIDLER

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movement coined the
"Teutonic Boom" by NME.
Other acts who currently
make up the list include
To Rococo Rot, Schneider TM,
Mouse on Mars and Tarwater,
plus American acts
Tortoise and Trans Am
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AUTOBAHN SOCIETY THE CHILDREN OF KRAFTWERK



TIM JARVIS/RETNA

Last year Tommy Boy released two very different but nonetheless related four-CD sets: *The Perfect Beats* and *Greatest Beats*. The first compiled "New York electro hip-hop and underground dance classics" that came out between the years of 1980 and 1985. The second brought together some of Tommy Boy's more successful singles, mostly from the label's hip-hop vaults, including tracks by Coolio, Digital Underground, Queen Latifah, House Of Pain, and De La Soul. But both sets began in the same place, with hip-hop Godfather Afrika Bambaataa and his Soul Sonic Force turning the automated synthesized groove of Kraftwerk's "Trans Europe Express" into an anthem celebrating the dawn of a new era: the 1982 classic "Planet Rock." In other words, two of the most relevant pop forms of the late-'90s—hip-hop and electronica—had been traced back to the same source, a fluke mid-'70s hit by a German synth-rock band that had once set out to invent, as Lester Bangs once put it, "the final solution to the music problem."

"You can count the successful German bands on one hand," admits Blixa Bargeld, the frontman of Germany's veteran avant-industrial band Einstürzende Neubauten, when asked about Kraftwerk. "There's Rammstein, the Scorpions, Kraftwerk, and to a certain extent Neubauten. And that's probably the order it goes down in terms of record sales. And if you were talking about credibility and influence you'd probably turn it around, except that Kraftwerk would then be on

top instead of Neubauten."

The point about Kraftwerk's influence was certainly true in the early '80s when Detroit techno pioneers Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson used tracks such as "Tour De France" as a blueprint for a new brand of high-energy post-disco dance music and Bambaataa borrowed "Trans Europe Express" for his electro-hip-hop party. And it's becoming valid again in the late-'90s as Kraftwerk's minimalist aesthetic is, for the first time since punk began incorporating synthesizers and mutated into new wave, having an impact on a new generation of underground bands like Trans Am in the US, Add N To (X) in England, and Kreidler in Germany.

"I guess the first really important thing that Kraftwerk did for us was that it made us listen to electronic music in general," explains Sebastian Thompson of Trans Am, a Maryland-based instrumental trio whose new Thrill Jockey album *Future World* finds the former bass/drum/guitar trio experimenting more and more with programmed beats and sequenced synths. "Kraftwerk was kind of the gateway, and I think it's like that for lots of people.

"The second thing for us was the Kraftwerk musical aesthetic, which is very simple and repetitive and minimal. For me as a drummer, that's had a big influence. I took a lot of stuff from [the 1981 Kraftwerk album] *Computer World* because I really like the percussion on that album. It's probably my favorite electronic drum album of all time. I

hate to say the word, but it's 'funky,'" he points out, echoing the words of veteran techno DJ/producer Carl Craig, who's quoted in Simon Reynolds's *Generation Ecstasy* as saying Kraftwerk were "so stiff, they were funky."

"The drumming on *Computer World* is just very driving," Thompson continues. "It has a lot of forward momentum. But it also has these sort of little nuances that add a lot to the music with interrupting the flow. A lot of drummers have a tendency to get bored and add little fills that break up the flow of a song. What I learned from Kraftwerk is that you can keep the same basic pattern going but make little changes here and there that don't get in the way."

And, as Thompson adds, the same approach applies to songwriting in general. "Simple melodies were so important to Kraftwerk's music. As you get better as a band or a musician there's always the urge to start using a lot of complicated chord progressions or riffs or whatever. But I think what we took from Kraftwerk is, again, that if you start with a really catchy melody you don't really have to add much to it."

The streamlined simplicity and single-minded determination to wring every last drop of humanity out of their music is what eventually separated Kraftwerk from the other groups that fell under the Krautrock umbrella like Can and Neu. And it's probably what originally made Kraftwerk's music so useful to DJs in search of the perfect mechanized beats to cut 'n' paste into new tracks, and so seemingly useless to rock bands of that era, particularly in the US, where synth-pop was mainly imported from England. So, what's changed to make rock bands like Trans Am, Providence's Six Finger Satellite, and even Illinois rockers Poster Children want to infuse their version of rock with the modernist aesthetic that Kraftwerk brought to bear?

"Maybe it's not an issue of time," Thompson concludes. "Maybe Kraftwerk just hit on something that's really special, that's the way it goes. You know, sometimes there just isn't any way to progress beyond what certain bands have done in certain genres of music. I mean, is there any hard rock band that's better than Led Zeppelin or AC/DC? So maybe Kraftwerk's like that for electronic music. For us that's not really a problem because we're not trying to do exactly what Kraftwerk did. That's just not our goal. We're happy just to take stuff from them."

Kraftwerk's robotic "Man/Machine" legacy looms just as large if not larger for the British trio Add N To (X), only in a very different context. "We're aiming to be the anti-Kraftwerk," explains Barry Smith. "We deliberately decided not to be Manmachines. We wanted to be sort of in battle with our machines rather than trying to look like and replicate robots. We don't want to be one with our computers. Computers structure music in such a way that it's the machine that actually makes the music, not the human. All the human ends up doing is the organizing, which is a role reversal. Machines are supposed to organize and human beings are supposed to make the choices that make the music."

Nevertheless, it's hard to imagine the analog-rock grooves of Add N To (X)'s US debut *On The Wires Of Our Nerves* or its new *Avant Hard* (both on Mute) existing in a world without Kraftwerk. And, sure enough, Smith did find in Kraftwerk's early work a crucial aesthetic model for Add N To (X)'s battle with technology. "To me [the 1975 album] *Radio Activity* and the first two Kraftwerk albums are the most important to our sound because those are the records where Kraftwerk were using live drums and flutes with electronics. After that they became a pop machine and then they lost it completely by replacing all their analog equipment with digital equipment. The only track I like after *Radio Activity* is 'Neon Lights.' It's a song where the machines really are singing. It's not pop music, it's not electronic music, it's not rock music. It's the strange other world. It makes you think about noise in general as music rather than noise and you start to hear melodies and rhythms in fax machines, traffic, anything. To me that was probably the most important statement a band could make at the time. And that's really why Kraftwerk are still so important."

NMM



OLIVER

TRANS AM. THOMPSON, CENTER



INSÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN. BARGELD, CENTER



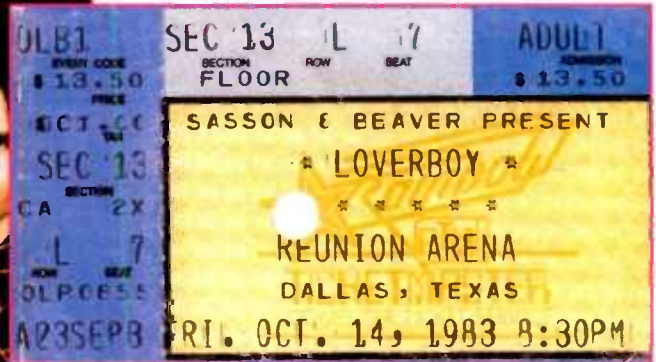
JOE DILLWORTH

ADD N TO (X). SMITH, LEFT

LOVERBOY



THE BAND'S LATEST PRESS SHOT



In July 1980 Mike Reno, lead vocalist of Canadian rockers Loverboy, sang on the band's self-titled debut, "The kid is hot tonight/Whoa! So hot tonight." Then he paused

and posed the serious question, "But where will he be tomorrow?" It is perhaps ironic that a band would rise to fame and have its first hit single with a song that made fun of rock stars who copy proven musical formulas rather than do something original.

"Tomorrow" is a somewhat vague term, time being infinite, but if by "tomorrow" he meant 1999, I can tell you exactly where he "be": fat, balding, and on the CMC record label, the elephant graveyard of music labels where aging hair bands go to die, where he joins fellow band members Paul Dean, Scott Smith, Doug Johnson, and Matt Frenette. I should make no bones about it because, as we all know, the first step to recovery is admitting that you have a problem: I love Loverboy. There, I feel much better. A second confession, one that somehow seems a bit redundant after the first confession: I'm a dork. And let me clarify this statement. I'm not one of those indie-alternath rockers that thinks, "I'm so nerdy that I'm cool" kind of dorks. I'm just a middle-of-the-road, try-to-be-cool-but-really-can't-pull-it-off kind of dork. Perhaps this explains my fascination with this incredibly mediocre, headband-wearing classic rock staple. I try to overcompensate. Ask me what the very first rock concert I ever attended was and I will look you straight in the eye and smugly answer, "Devo." This is a big lie. My first concert was actually Loverboy; Devo was my second.

Q: Just how cool does it sound to say that your first foray into live musical entertainment was a double bill featuring Golden Earring and Loverboy?

A: Not very.

I'm not the only one who was okay with mediocrity. In a 1984 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Reno said, "We're commercial. That's a dirty word to some people, but not to us. We're middle-of-the-road and commercial. We're not trying to hide it. We don't really try and be middle-of-the-road. That's the way the songs turn out. That's

probably because that's the way we are—the music reflects our personalities. As people, we're in the middle, that comfortable middle. It's hard to beat the middle. It'll certainly be tough to leave it. It's certainly been good to us."

There is nothing wrong with mild—it's my favorite Taco Bell sauce flavor. Other confessions that I feel I should share in an effort to feel better about myself: I know it's just wishful thinking, but every time I watch *The Late Show With David Letterman*, and Paul Schaffer starts in with the theme music on his keyboard, I think they are going to play "Turn Me Loose." I'd pay a million dollars Canadian for that to happen.

I camped out, and got floor tickets to said first show. I eventually wormed my way to the front row. When the band came back on stage for its encore, Reno and guitarist Paul Dean leaned back-to-back and raced each other to see who could finish drinking a Moosehead first. I was so close that their fermented hops and choice barley spilled on my then newly purchased Keep It Up long sleeve tour shirt. I proudly wore the unwashed shirt to school the next day with my parachute pants.

My best friend at the time and I took it upon ourselves to make a homemade video for "The Kid Is Hot Tonight." I still have it somewhere and think it rivals the real video for the song—the technology and budget seem comparable. Although I never wore a bandanna headband, I would sometimes wear a Fila tennis headband. I truly believe that Loverboy's song "Heaven In Your Eyes" from *Top Gun* is far superior to Berlin's "Take My Breath Away." I think that if pioneers of bland Loverboy hadn't carved a path we would not have gotten to enjoy the fruits of fellow Canadians like Glass Tiger and Corey Hart. Wow, I feel so much better. Honesty is the best policy. Since I've pretty much just created cool-ness suicide, I might as well take it one step further. Could someone please explain Guided By Voices to me?

NMM

Trent Buckroyd is working for the weekend as Music Editor of Flaunt magazine.

by IAN CHRISTE

metal top 25

- 1 **SICK OF IT ALL**
Call To Arms Fat Wreck Chords
- 2 **PRO-PAIN**
Act Of God Nuclear Blast America
- 3 **GRIP INC.**
Solidify Metal Blade
- 4 **OVERKILL**
Necrosline CMC International
- 5 **STAIN'D**
Dysfunction Flip/Elektra-EEG
- 6 **SKINLAB**
Disembody: The New Flesh Century Media
- 7 **PUYA**
Fundamental MCA
- 8 **ONE KING DOWN**
God Loves, Man Kills Equal Vision
- 9 **FU MANCHU**
Eatin' Dust Man's Ruin
- 10 **NEVERMORE**
Dreaming Neon Black Century Media
- 11 **FEAR FACTORY**
Obsolete Roadrunner
- 12 **LOUDMOUTH**
Loudmouth Hollywood
- 13 **VIRGOS MERLOT**
Signs Of A Vacant Soul Atlantic
- 14 **NOTHINGFACE**
Everyday Atrocity DCide-Mayhem
- 15 **MESHUGGAH**
Chaosphere Nuclear Blast America
- 16 **GONEMAD**
Planet 9 896
- 17 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Straight To Hell: A Tribute To Slayer
Deadline-Cleopatra
- 18 **ORANGE GOBLIN**
Time Travelling Blues Rise Above-TMC
- 19 **SPINESHANK**
Strictly Diesel Roadrunner
- 20 **GRINSPORN**
Guide To Better Living Universal
- 21 **MORGION**
Solinari Relapse
- 22 **FLOTSAM AND JETSAM**
Unnatural Selection Metal Blade
- 23 **STATIC-X**
"Push It/Bled For Days" (CD5) Warner Bros.
- 24 **SOLITUDE RETURNUS**
Adagio Olympic-Slipdisc
- 25 **BOY SETS FIRE**
In Chrysalis (EP) Initial

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

NAPALM DEATH

Words From The Exit Wound



fascinating grindcore drummer Danny Herrera, a Bill Ward-like character who plays circles around the incredibly speedy beat. Singer Barney Greenway assists more than usual, by stretching his voracious vocal scorch across a new range of tones. It would be cliché to call this a return to form for Napalm, and not entirely accurate, as the three-fifths American lineup hasn't relented once during this decade. This is definitely a looser attempt than the last couple of outings, however, and with extra slack in the whip, the sting is even sharper. The intricately syncopated pummeling has made peace with new melodic tendencies, creating something as intriguing and listenable as it is powerful. Three extras to this American release, the live tracks "Hung," "Greed Killing," and "Suffer The Children," are ferocious, roaring and awesome.

>>> In an alternate universe formerly known as West Germany, there remains a need for classic melodic thrash metal as presented by **IRON SAVIOR**. Comprised of members of Helloween and other German '80s giants, the group shows the benefit of ten years of maturation on *Unification* (Noise), but throws in a futuro concept to cast attention away from the retro music. Check the cover of Sabbath's "Neon Knights" for an instant point of reference. Though certainly an acquired (and for most people long ago discarded) taste, the high-pitched vocals and twin guitars are impressive, if only for their practiced tenacity... **NEUROSIS** ★ is probably the most cinematic act in metal, but I have yet to find the right angle from which to appreciate its presentation. *Times Of Grace* (Relapse) is a chugging picturesque ride through the flaming land of American angst, complete with production by Steve Albin, but the entire album plays as ponderous, overly precious and self-impressed. The sense of grandiosity is all out of proportion to what little dark magnificence is actually rolling,

and I'm again left squirming uncomfortably in my seat... **LUNGBRUSH**, on the other hand, knows how to put on a party. Despite bearing a bad name and many trappings of Pantera-influenced metal, this Chicago act sizzles intensely throughout *Old School New School* (Pavement). The repetitive, melting, detuned guitars drip distorted white death boogie, coalescing in a maelstrom that coordinates modern day Corrosion Of Conformity with a hint of the chaotic possibility of old school C.O.C. Though not forevermore unforgettable, it's an enticing album that shows potential for Lungbrush to linger as something more than a parking spot for tattoos... **GWAR** has released another album of goony metallic shock rock, *Kill Everything* (Metal Blade), but it doesn't mention anywhere whether or not the band's prop department has devised a rubber Monica Lewinsky for the stage show.



Earache

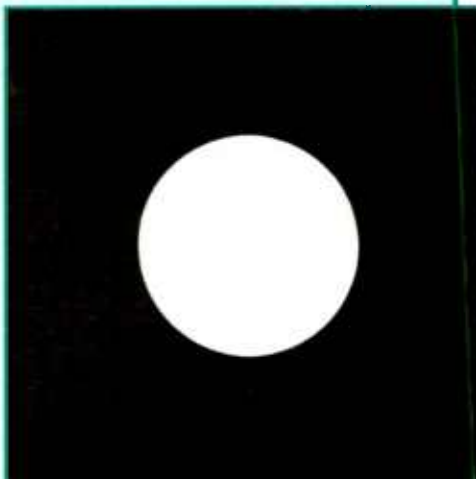
Earache Records claims that Napalm Death has sold more than a million records in the past decade. Still, the world at large fails to recognize the band's work as the iconoclastic, fast-paced, challenging music of modernity, and so its struggle for due respect continues. It seems the Birmingham, England-based quintet is perpetually put in the position of proving itself, which has been greatly gratifying for those dedicated to wading through Napalm Death's prodigious output. This time around, producer Colin Richardson does an even more fantastic job than usual of presenting the musical subtlety and cleverness of compositions that could easily be lost behind an enormous wall of noise. The waves of churning guitars are cleanly arranged above the erratic stutter of

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The West Coast Electro Sound Of Holland (Vols. I & II)

Bunker

The grim, decimated city of Den Haag, once a thriving port town in the southern reaches of the Netherlands, is now the murder capital of that country, which is not a fact that the city would probably go to great lengths to publicize. But they don't have to, because the group of electronic miscreants clustered around enigmatic artist Ferenc have titled one of their many labels Murder Capital, just to get the point across. The underground has been thriving in The Hague since at least 1988, but distribution has been so poor that even obsessives like me have had a hell of a time finding these records. Now, with increased US visibility, the immense pool of talent is becoming quite apparent. Nowhere is that better demonstrated than on these two rough-and-ready compilations, which cull music from nine artists (working under various pseudonyms) who take the concept of electro-funk in directions that the genre's pioneers would never have foreseen. Complaints that all of this music sounds alike are quickly dispelled here, as these two compilations move from the severe, whip-cracking, voice-box funk of DJ Technician's "Never Answer The Phone" to the jazz-inflected "Sperti Project" by Dr. Dudu. Above all, these tracks are about returning the fun and humor to electronic music's often-unsmiling visage. And if you like these collections, there's a lot more where they came from.



>>> I've been yammering on about dub in this column for ages because its return to the center of contemporary music is no longer a hunch on the part of a bunch of journalists and trainpotters. Whether it be Berlin's Pole or the Pan American project from Mark Nelson of Labradford, the echo chamber has been reopened on a scale not seen since the first Clash album. You needn't look any further than **LION DUB STATION's** self-titled EP (Lionhead) and **DJ SCUD I-SOUND's** self-titled EP (Soundlab-Cultural Alchemy). Dub is a generous art form in that rather than defining the rules and casting out those who don't obey them, it is a stepping-off point for an enormous range of musical possibilities. Thus, the aforementioned records are as similar as chalk and cheese, yet both are deeply informed by dub structures. The Lion Dub collective combines live bass playing, 707 drum machine programming and analog echo boxes to make some of the most moving, melancholic, rootsy dub to emerge from North America, if you exclude expatriates such as Scientist and Mad Professor. Though mostly schooled in rock environments, Lion is fully conversant in dub's spooky environmental after-effects. DJ Scud (a.k.a. Toby Reynolds) and DJ I-Sound are not only dub enthusiasts par excellence, they also have a penchant for extreme electronic hardcore. Scud's and I-Sound's music makes Alec Empire/Digital Hardcore sound like

George Benson. I previously reviewed Scud's "Total Destruction" here and this domestic EP contains new tracks from Scud as well as some deranged music from I-Sound, whose "Nuclear Winter" sounds like Lee "Scratch" Perry and the Skatalites fed through machines that were never even designed to make music at all. Quite how I-Sound can make white noise funky remains a mystery to this writer, but it's a talent he possesses in abundance... Underrated Viennese electronic maverick Gerhard Potuznik has been making superb experimental electronic records for nearly a decade now. He has a US record forthcoming this summer, but for now you could do worse than obtain a copy of **CUBE & SPHERE's** *Great Norwegian Explorers* (on German label Sub Up), which sees Potuznik collaborating with German electrician Hans Platzgumer (formerly of prog-punkers H.P. Zinker) for an oddly constructed drum 'n' bass record that stretches the connotations of that term to the limit. Platzgumer is peripherally connected to the growing post-Krautrock movement (which includes such groups as Kreidler, Schneider TM, Fx Randomiz, and To Rococo Rot) and so his contribution here offsets Potuznik's analog funk with a more somber tone. The pair pays homage to the legendary Swedish metal guitarist on "Yngwie Malmsteen," then turns around into the darker recesses of the psyche on "Together In Despair" and "Accidental Suicide."

dance top 25

- 1 **MOCEAN WORKER**
Mixed Emotional Features Palm Pictures-Rykodisc
- 2 **JEEP BEAT COLLECTIVE**
Technics Chainsaw Massacre Bomb Hip-Hop
- 3 **ARLING & CAMERON**
All-In Emperor Norton
- 4 **SLY AND ROBBIE**
Drum & Bass Strip To The Bone
Palm Pictures-Rykodisc
- 5 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
DJ Kicks: Kemistry & Storm Stud!o K7
- 6 **CASSIUS**
1999 Astralwerks
- 7 **SQUAREPUSHER**
Budakhan Mindphone (EP)
Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 8 **AUTECHRE**
Peel Sessions Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 9 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Old School Vs. New School Live Electro
- 10 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Reich Remixed Nonesuch
- 11 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Big Dirty Beats 2 Moonshine
- 12 **POLE**
CD 1 Matador
- 13 **DJ KRUSH & TOSHINORI KONDO**
Ki-Oku Instinct
- 14 **PAN SONIC**
A Blast First-Mute
- 15 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
World Dance: The Drum & Bass ...
Mutant Sound System
- 16 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Together As One Moonshine
- 17 **SOURCE DIRECT**
Exorcise The Demons Science-Astralwerks
- 18 **ROB SWIFT**
The Ablist Asphodel
- 19 **COLDCUT**
Let Us Replay Ninja Tune (Canada)
- 20 **SUICIDE COMMANDO**
Construct Deconstruct Possessive Blindfold
- 21 **JUNGLE FUNK**
Jungle Funk Zebra
- 22 **FRONTSIDE**
Frontside Wax Trax!-TVT
- 23 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Tribes Of Da Underground !K7
- 24 **RAZED IN BLACK**
Sacrificed Cleopatra
- 25 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Tommy Boy's Perfect Beats Vol.1-4
Tommy Boy

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

hip-hop top 25

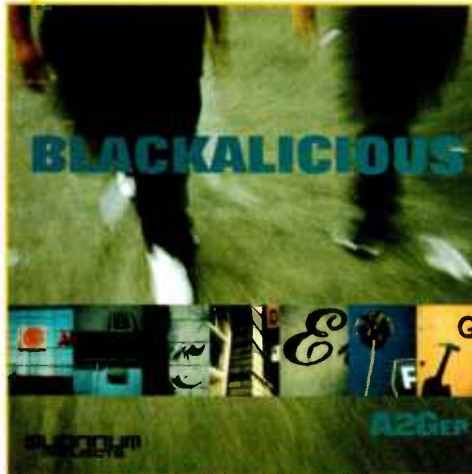
- 1 ROOTS
You Got Me MCA
- 2 NAS
Nas Is Like Columbia/CBS
- 3 EMINEM
My Name Is Interscope
- 4 KRS-ONE
5 Boroughs Jive
- 5 CHOCLAIR
Flagrant Jive
- 6 PRINCE PAUL
More Than U Know Tommy Boy
- 7 JAY-Z
More Money More Cash More Hoes Jive
- 8 PSYCHO, IRISCENCE, RIP ONE & BABU
On Deadly Ground Backery
- 9 BLACK STAR
Respiration Elek
- 10 LAURYN HILL
X-Factor Jive/Columbia/CBS
- 11 OUTKAST
The Art Of Storytelling LaFace/Arista
- 12 RZA
NYC Everything Gees Street EZ
- 13 KARDINAL OFFSHAL
And What! Jive IV
- 14 RUFF RYDERS
Ryde Or Die Interscope
- 15 ROOTS
Adrenaline MCA
- 16 RAS KASS
Rassassination Priority
- 17 RAHZEL
All I Know MCA
- 18 DEFARI
Likwit Connection Back Label
- 19 KONBO
Pop Shift Jive/T
- 20 MASTERMINDS
Bring It Back West Star
- 21 HARLEM WORLD
I Really Like It All Out/So So Def/Columbia/CBS
- 22 SPORTY THEIVEZ
Even Closer Jive/Columbia/CBS
- 23 SKEME TEAM
Con Artist 3-2-1-Jive Jive
- 24 MOBB DEEP
Quiet Storm Loud/RCA
- 25 N.O.T.S. CLICK
Back Up Off Me Official

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

BLACKALICIOUS

A2G

3-2-1-Quannum



throughout this seven-course manifesto. Gift Of Gab's smug, rolling, tongue-in-cheek vocal style is instantly identifiable, and he matches vocal dexterity with intellectual acumen. The alphabet weighs heavily on A2G: "A To G" and "Alphabet Aerobics" both show off the speed at which Gab can hold the word wheel steady, rapping up and down the A-to-Z's as he thrusts himself beyond the MCs around him. Brainy metaphors fly on "Clockwork" and "Back To The Essence," both of which make the most of deeply funky mid-tempo grooves. And the idea of "keeping it real" is given crystalline expression on both "Deception" and "Making Progress." Blackalicious is one of the only truly unique underground groups on the planet, and it's great to have 'em back.

>>> Philadelphia has given us another great hip-hop export with the **MOUNTAIN BROTHERS**. Their debut *Self: Volume 1* (Mountain Brothers) is a departure from the rock-hard posturing of the East and the looser styles of the West, finding a place somewhere in the middle of both. Produced by group member Chops, the music is almost all live instruments, trading samples and worn-out drum patterns for a sound that laps up against '70s jazz-funk shores. Lyrically, Peril-L, Styles and Chops slowly unfold their version of hip-hop in the 9-9, making clear their dedication to art over commerce (detailed in "Paperchase"), but also taking time to have fun with some hilarious Prince Paul-esque tracks: the Big Willie send-up "Brand Name," the day-to-day complaint of "Day Jobs" and the faux booty rap of "Oh Oh Oh"... Go figure: Germany has given us the most interesting indie rap compilation since *Lyricist Lounge*. The Cologne-based Groove Attack label has put together a fine lineup on **Superrappin': The Album** (distributed by Ubiquity), with cuts ranging geographically from sea to shining sea, stretching to Canada and even delving into South Africa. From the left side, Rasco & Planet Asia's "How Many X's" and the Lootpack's "New Years Resolution" take best-of-show. Canada represents with Frankenstein

While the hip-hop underground continues to be co-opted by the mainstream (and vice-versa), we can—and should—be thankful that Blackalicious exists. Consisting of producer/DJ Chief Xcel and MC Gift Of Gab, this amazing Bay Area duo has been painfully unprolific since 1993, previously giving us only one single ("Swan Lake"), one EP (*Melodica*) and "Touch The Stars" from 3-2-1's *Connected* compilation. Nevertheless, the group's reputation among heads in-the-know is spotless, and rightfully so. The pair's new A2G, a foretaste of its upcoming album *Nia*, is what prog-hop should be: different, forward-thinking, thought-provoking and consistently engaging. Chief Xcel has a fetish for dusty, booming drum beats, and a jones for analog rare-groove guitars, pianos and keyboards. His tracks are thick and meaty

& Chocclair's "So I" and Mathematik's "Following Goals" (with Philly's lyrical siren Bahamadia). And New York shows its stuff, of course, on L-Fudge's "Dimmin' The Life," Network Reps' "Games, Dames In Automobiles" and the posse cut "Nobody." Despite the wide range of music makers, the overall production shows a disappointing lack of envelope pushing. But for a snapshot of where the worldwide underground is at today, this is a great platter to check... Brooklyn's **BLACK MOON** and Queens' **MOBB DEEP** make returns this year, with *War Zone* (Duck Down-Priority) and *Murda Muzic* (Loud), respectively. Black Moon has sadly been off the national radar for years, but this group means business once again. Producers the Beatminerz (Evil Dee and Mr. Walt) don't go out of their way to break aural boundaries on "War Zone," but tracks like "One-Two," "Duress," "Annihilation" (with a great guest spot by M.O.P.) and "The Onslaught" remind us how dope this crew (featuring lyricists Buckshot and 5 FT) can be. Mobb Deep's latest produces similar musical results. Every track sounds pretty much the same on *Murda Music*, but the edge on Prodigy's and Havoc's vocals is always good for making one feel uneasy, and the minimal boom-bap formula they begot with their 1995 debut *The Infamous* still holds water.

Japanese anti-logic rock heroes **BOREDOMS'** series of *Super Roots* experimental EPs continues with another leap sideways—do they know any other directions? *Super Roots 7* was centered on a half-hour fantasia on the Mekons' punk chestnut "Where Were You?" Now, the 14-minute *Super Roots 8* (WEA Japan) is based on three versions of disco-synth soundtrack composer Isao Tomita's "Jungle Taitei," his theme to a movie that may have inspired *The Lion King*. The main point of it appears to be a pun on "jungle," with Yoshimi P-We singing overdubbed harmonies on a jungle-exotica theme while Yamantaka Eye cranks up the pitter-patter of djembe-and-bongo beats so fast that they could pass for the other kind of jungle. "Tuneful" is not a word that's been too applicable to Boredoms' records before, but they're up for any kind of challenge, it seems.

Ludicrously fast beats have their fans in the US, too. **BLITTER'S** 7" single "Convoy Ordinary Garden Hose Band Peeps" (Reckankreuzungs-klankwerkzeuge) implies octuple-time beats even when it's cruising bumpily along at a normal velocity. The mix seems scattered, schizoid, about to explode into a peppery spray of beats at any second, or to flip back into itself—any given element can be at the forefront of the audio field, then disappear as if it fell through a hole in the ground. The B-side, "Gravity Doris Ordinary Garden Hose (Hekla's Steeze)," relies more on mutating conventional ideas of breakbeats, and develops into a massive swell of chaotic antiphony by its end. And both sides end with a locked groove that's exactly 133 and a third beats per minute—meaning it can go on for a while before you realize it's not going anywhere.

Judging by Kevin Shields's comments in a recent issue of *The Wire*, it's going to be a real cool time in the underworld before we see another My Bloody Valentine record, so it's a good thing that he's keeping the name alive as a remix identity. The MBV remix of **HURRICANE #1's** "Rising Sign" (CTP) is another stroke of slumming genius, putting very 1999 beats in a guitar-rock context (with ex-members of Ride!) and making it look easy. The signature of the first half of the remix is a tiny drumroll so fast it sounds like a rolled "r"; Shields uses it to get through the vocal part of the song, then starts piling forwards and backwards guitar parts on top of each other, stitch by cross-stitch. By the time he introduces the vocals again, they've turned into just another element coloring the giant, iridescent knot of guitar lines.

Chicago's guitar/trumpet/drums project **ISOTOPE 217** has a swell two-track CD-single (on Aesthetics) with long remixes by

INCH (feat. Mark E. Smith)

Regal

How do you make a record without an artist? "Inch" was originally supposed to be released as a single by The Fall a year and a half ago, though it was a collaboration between Fall singer Mark E. Smith and Manchester producers D.O.S.E. (who had previously made a fine single with Smith, "Plug Myself In"). But there were multiple fallings-out, and "Inch" never came out—though #1 Fall fan John Peel was presented with an edition-of-one single that he played repeatedly on his BBC Radio One show, and an alternate version of the song, "4 1/2 Inch," showed up on The Fall's *Levitate* album. In any event, it's finally been released, with no artist credit other than a "featuring Mark E. Smith." "Inch" is a looming, walloping bass-monster of a track: The low end is a merciless, bludgeoning buzz, the drums spasm and stutter and barely stay in time. Smith seems to be bellowing desperate warnings through a megaphone, but can't make himself understood—the only words that seem to make it through in one piece are "The house is falling in! Nine to ten!"—and by the very end, he's resorted to making up a little tune to sing along with that flooding bass riff, laughing in the face of doom. The disc also includes some sharp techstep-ish remixes that mangle the vocal even further, and starts with a hilarious sound-bite of Smith human-beat-boxing to demonstrate what the rhythm's supposed to be.



COMMANDER MINDFUCK (reportedly Tranquility Bass operating under a pseudonym) and **DESIGNER** (a.k.a. Casey Rice of Tortoise, who's also been recording lately under the name Resigned). The former, "Hodah," is especially trippy and rewarding, with Isotope's sounds blurred out into watercolor bleeds, stretched and layered so that they don't stay in a coherent groove for more than a minute or so, and sprinkled with odd sound effects, like a woman's canned laugh. Particularly when the trumpet gets brought up for a morning-after moment of clarity, it's clearly meant to recall some of Teo Macero's more daring tapework for early-'70s Miles Davis.



A few quick drops of the needle: The second single Neutral Milk Hotel's goofy multi-instrumentalist Julian Koster has made under the name the **MUSIC TAPES** (Elephant Six), "The Television Tells Us," is a lot more coherent and catchy than the first. As those who've seen the project's live shows might expect, it's fascinated with TV, both as a subject and as an instrument, and it's thickly orchestrated, with bits of tuba, ukulele and melodica turning up in the thick, home-recorded broth. Look for the band's upcoming debut album on Merge... **KING BISCUIT TIME'S** EP *Sings Nelly Foggitt's Blues In "Me And The Pharoahs"* (Astralwerks) is another whacked-out side project, in this case of the Beta Band's Stephen Mason. It's like a more scaled-down, compressed version of what the full band does: breakbeats with a hint of hippie acoustics to them, alongside stoned acoustic guitar, Underworld-ish chants, low-tech keyboard space-drones, and Mason's spacy murmur... Vinyl artifacts don't get much more potentially intriguing than the **I'm So Bored With The USA 12"** compilation (Diskono), featuring 18 electronic-outsider types doing pieces allegedly inspired by The Clash song of the same name. Unfortunately, only a couple of tracks actually reference the "source material," and most of the rest don't live up to the concept anyway.

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND

Grow Fins (box set)

Revenant



Almost two years in the making, *Grow Fins* is a grand opus from perhaps the single artist who is most overdue for box set celebration. An American creation like Captain Beefheart could only have come from California; in fact, he emerged from the same high school as his longtime friend and musical supporter Frank Zappa. In his early period, Beefheart was sort of a psychedelic blues interpreter, eerily able to approximate the sound of Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters records, playing to an audience of bewildered proto-hippies. By the late '60s, his work with his group the Magic Band had metamorphosed into something else entirely—a zany, cacophonous, avant-garde, delightfully funny and primitive free music that defies description and has never really been approximated or equaled by anyone else. Rather than compile

previously released material, John Fahey's Revenant label has instead delved into the reams of unreleased Beefheart recordings spanning three different decades, including the most talked-about item, informal rehearsal tapes from the sessions that yielded his greatest opus, 1968's double-LP *Trout Mask Replica*. Also exciting about this box set are the multimedia components: Pop the discs in your computer, and they'll play rare videos of the man in action with the Magic Band, which, for those of us who were too young to see it firsthand, is a real eye-popping experience. These days, the reclusive Captain has reverted to his Christian name, Don Van Vliet, lives in the desert with his wife, and has forsaken music for the visual arts, painting wonderful childlike paintings that uncannily suggest the sound of his music. But his influence still reverberates throughout the modern musical canon, in that there simply hasn't ever been anyone else remotely like him.

>>> If your world changed when you heard the Silver Apples, then you ought to check out **MOTHER MALLARD'S PORTABLE MASTERPIECE CO.** Mother Mallard's (not to be confused with Mallard, a '70s hard rock outfit) predated, or was contemporary with, other early synthesizer groups such as Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream, working with Bob Moog on some of the earliest synthesizers available. Cuneiform Records has re-released the trio's long out-of-print, self-released debut album from 1969 with several unreleased bonus tracks. Prescient is the operative word here, as this synthesizer group forged new ground in the early days of electronic instruments. There's even one cut with a tape loop experiment that sounds strangely like a modern-day sample!

>>> **DUKE ELLINGTON** may have died in 1974, but that hasn't stopped folks from



celebrating what would have been his 100th birthday. The festivities are already well underway: Sony Legacy has kicked things off by reissuing several major Ellington works. The best one so far is the soundtrack to the famed black-and-white crime flick *Anatomy Of A Murder*. The score is classic Duke, a provocative gumshoe soundtrack to the courtroom thriller. Ellington was a master of texture and arrangement, and *Anatomy Of A Murder* is one of the select few great movie soundtracks that also listens well as an album of music. Rent the movie and you can see Jimmy Stewart play a piano duet with Duke and his orchestra!

>>> In the heady atmosphere of the '70s jazz underground, there were quite a few players who somehow escaped the recognition they deserved. One such group was

CATALYST, a Philadelphia-bred funk-jazz ensemble of the early '70s. The quartet of Odean Pope, Tyrone Brown, Alphonso Johnson and Anthony Jackson made a handful of albums which have since become sampler's delights, full of funky sounds, beats and grooves reminiscent of the '70s work of Herbie Hancock, the Headhunters and others. Reissue label 32 Records (co-run by Adam "Mocean Worker" Dorn) has just released a double-CD of the quartet's entire collected works, aptly titled *The Funkiest Band You Never Heard*.



>>> Fearless indie roots music label Bloodshot Records has just announced a new label, Bloodshot Revival, which will focus on rare archival country and Western swing releases. Among the first releases is a wonderful set by fiddler **SPADE COOLEY & THE WESTERN SWING DANCE GANG**. *Shame On You* features 25 radio transcription recordings from the glory years of Texas swing. This lilting swing music sounds just as neat today as it did then. Not the first record you'd instantly pick out of the retail bins, but it's classic stuff.

>>> **BARRY ADAMSON**, ex-member of Manchester pop-punk group Magazine and one of Nick Cave's original Bad Seeds, has long been a cult artist here in the States, creating moody film music for movies both real and imaginary. His *The Murky World Of Barry Adamson* on Mute offers a retrospective of his works thus far, and it's a good jumping-in place for somebody who's curious but just getting on board. Adamson's love of film noir music as well as his smirking, quirky records like *The Negro Inside Me* have drawn attention to this singular artist.

>>> Without much fanfare, Blue Note recently rolled out several intriguing reissues, among them two volumes of the wonderful compilation series **Blue Note In A Latin Groove**. Long available only as an elusive import, the first volume features killer vintage '60s and '70s Brazilian jazz tracks from giants like Milton Banana, Edu Lobo and Joyce. The second volume leans a little more on the '70s kitsch/easy listening side, but will probably appeal to Brazilian newbies just getting into Os Mutantes and the Tropicalia movement. More, please!

1 SLEATER-KINNEY	The Hot Rock	Kill Rock Stars
2 BUILT TO SPILL	Keep It Like A Secret	Warner Bros.
3 SEBADOH	The Sebadoh	Sub Pop-Sire
4 BETH ORTON	Central Reservation	deConstruction-Arista
5 BEN LEE	Breathing Tornados	Grand Royal-Capitol
6 ROOTS	Things Fall Apart	MCA
7 KID SILVER	Dead City Sunbeams	Jetset
8 XTC	Apple Venus Vol. 1	Idea-TVT
9 JIMMY EAT WORLD	Clarity	Capitol
10 WILCO	Summer Teeth	Reprise
11 RENTALS	Seven More Minutes	Maverick-Reprise
12 BURNING AIRLINES	Mission: Control!	DeSoto
13 LOOPER	Up A Tree	Sub Pop
14 OF MONTREAL	The Gay Parade	Bar/None
15 DROPKICK MURPHYS	The Gang's All Here	Hellcat-Epithaph
16 CREATURES	Anima Animus	Instinct
17 ANI DIFRANCO	Up Up Up Up Up Up	Righteous Babe
18 SPY	Music To Mauzner By	Lava-Atlantic
19 POSTER CHILDREN	New World Record	spinART
20 ARLING & CAMERON	All-In	Emperor Norton
21 SPARKLEHORSE	Good Morning Spider	Capitol
22 PAUL WESTERBERG	Suicaine Gratification	Capitol
23 EMINEM	The Slim Shady LP	Aftermath-Interscope
24 LIVING END	The Living End	Reprise
25 BEULAH	When Your Heartstrings Break	Sugar Free
26 FRANK BLACK & THE CATHOLICS	Pistolero	spinART
27 SILVER SCOOTER	Orleans Parish	Peek-A-Boo
28 JIM O'ROURKE	Eureka	Drag City
29 LOW	Secret Name	Kranky
30 APRIL MARCH	Chrominance Decoder	Ideal-Mammoth
31 IMPERIAL TEEN	What Is Not To Love	Slash-London
32 CITIZEN KING	Mobile Estates	Warner Bros.
33 SQUAREPUSHER	Budakhan Mindphone (EP)	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
34 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Pop Romantique: French Pop Classics	Emperor Norton
35 BUCK-O-NINE	Libido	TVT
36 SOUNDTRACK	Reach The Rock	Hefty
37 SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION	Gabriel's Waltz	X-Ray
38 BLUR	13	Virgin
39 GIGOLO AUNTS	Minor Chords And Minor Themes	E Pluribus Unum
40 SICK OF IT ALL	Call To Arms	Fat Wreck Chords
41 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Anti-Racist Action Benefit	Asian Man-Attitude
42 SMOG	Knock Knock	Drag City
43 PAN SONIC	A	Blast First-Mute
44 BETA BAND	The 3 E.P.'s	Astralwerks
45 SAM PREKOP	Sam Prekop	Thrill Jockey
46 MAKE-UP	I Want Some	K
47 PRINCE PAUL	A Prince Among Thieves	Tommy Boy
48 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Reich Remixed	Nonesuch
49 OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL	Black Foliage: Animation Music Volume One	Flydaddy
50 KREIDLER	Appearance And The Park	KiffSM-Mute
51 KLEENEX GIRL WONDER	Ponyoak	March
52 ADEN	Black Cow	TeenBeat
53 LATIN PLAYBOYS	Dose	Atlantic
54 JASON FALKNER	Can You Still Feel?	Elektra-EEG
55 STAIND	Dysfunction	Flip/Elektra-EEG
56 TOBIN SPROUT	Let's Welcome The Circus People	Luna
57 D GENERATION	Through The Darkness	C2/Columbia-CRG
58 ENGINE DOWN	Under The Pretense	Lovitt
59 POP UNKNOWN	Summer Season Kills	Deep Elm
60 LIT	A Place In The Sun	RCA
61 BOY SETS FIRE	In Chrysalis (EP)	Initial
62 SOUNDTRACK	Hedwig And The Angry Inch	Atlantic
63 AUTECHRE	Peel Sessions	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
64 JOE HENRY	Fuse	Mammoth
65 BIG RUDE JAKE	Big Rude Jake	Roadrunner
66 VAN MORRISON	Back On Top	Pointblank-Virgin
67 FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	100% Colombian	Virgin
68 BAILTER SPACE	Solar 3	Turnbuckle
69 GRAND MAL	Maledictions	Slash
70 DON CABALLERO	Singles Breaking Up Vol. 1	Touch And Go
71 STEVE EARLE & THE DEL MCCOURY BAND	The Mountain	E-Squared
72 ROB SWIFT	The Ablist	Asphodel
73 KISS OFFS	Goodbye Private Life	Peek-A-Boo
74 QUINTRON	These Hands Of Mine	Rhinestone-Skin Graft
75 THEE MICHELLE GUN ELEPHANT	Gear Blues	Heatwave-Triad



#1 SLEATER-KINNEY
The Hot Rock

FIVE YEARS AGO

1. NINE INCH NAILS
THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL (NOTHING/TVT-INTERSCOPE)
2. SOUNDGARDEN
SUPERUNKNOWN (A&M)
3. GREEN DAY
DOOKIE (REPRISE)
4. PAVEMENT
CROOKED RAIN, CROOKED RAIN (MATADOR)
5. TORI AMOS
UNDER THE PINK (ATLANTIC)

TEN YEARS AGO

1. XTC
ORANGES & LEMONS (Geffen)
2. ROBYN HITCHCOCK & THE EGYPTIANS
QUEEN ELVIS (A&M)
3. ELVIS COSTELLO
SPIKE (WARNER BROS.)
4. REPLACEMENTS
DON'T TELL A SOUL (SIRE-REPRISE)
5. FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS
THE RAW & THE COOKED (I.R.S.-MCA)

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.

FILM	66
BOOKS	67
LIGHT READING	68
ELECTROMEDIA	69
SNEAK PREVIEW	70
GAMING	72
Q & A	72

TODD MCFARLANE

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

story:

DAVID HOLTHOUSE

photos:

DOUG HOESCHLER

Todd McFarlane—comic book artist, toy maker, animator, marketing wizard, millionaire, rebel, baseball fanatic—rubs the grotesque, molten scarring on the bald scalp of a molded bust of his franchise character Spawn and chortles at the memory of he and Eddie Vedder in a room together.

"People who think I have dark tastes, they obviously haven't met Eddie Vedder. That guy freaked me out with some of the ideas he had in his head, and that's saying a lot."

McFarlane and Vedder collaborated on the concept and animation for Pearl Jam's first music video since 1992, last year's "Do The Evolution." "It's a good thing there were people around us to sort of keep us in check, because when Eddie and I first got together, we started feeding on one another, and it got evil in a hurry," McFarlane says. "We were just like, 'Yaaargh! Fuckin' annihilation, man!'"

The animated narrative for "Do The Evolution" reads like the epitaph for a dead, cruel world, its images of human depravity, corporate fascism and thermonuclear destruction rendered in McFarlane's seamless, street-wise style. The video hit a nerve, spent six

weeks on MTV's top ten request list and was nominated for (but did not win) a Grammy award.

In 1998, McFarlane also designed the cover for Korn's double-platinum album *Follow The Leader*, and incorporated elements of the album art—a sinister take on the Pied Piper tale—into the video for "Freak On A Leash," which he directed. The video melded McFarlane's animation with conceptual and live performance footage.

"I feel like I've caught lightning in a bottle where rock video stuff is concerned,"

McFarlane says during a recent interview in the Tempe, Arizona, headquarters of Todd McFarlane Productions, which houses enough Spawn original art and memorabilia to induce a true comic geek to spontaneous orgasm.

"I mean, I don't know if I'm just flukin' it in the rock 'n' roll world so far, or what, but it just doesn't seem that tough," McFarlane continues. "It's always been curious to me that the music industry, as a rule, does not use more consistency between the album art, and the video, and the promotional campaign. I mean, they get one person to do the album

(continued on page 72)

THE WINSLOW BOY
(Sony Pictures Classic)

So what's David Mamet doing directing a turn-of-the-century, British costume drama? (And one in which there's not even any swearing!) With the likes of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Homicide*, and *American Buffalo*, Mamet earned a reputation for writing machine-gun dialogue peppered with more four-letter words than you'd hear at Yankee Stadium on a Saturday afternoon. Mamet, however, also specializes in tightly constructed, penetrating narratives. And *The Winslow Boy*, adapted by Mamet from British dramatist Terence Rattigan's play, fits that bill. Based on a real-life story, the jarringly elegant movie—set in 1912 London—concerns young cadet Ronnie Winslow, dismissed from his academy for allegedly stealing a five-shilling postal note. When the lad maintains his innocence, proud papa Arthur Winslow (Nigel Hawthorne) aims to clear the family name by hiring the country's most prominent attorney. Don't turn your nose at the prospect of yet another courtroom drama, though: Mamet never shows the actual trial. The movie mostly unfolds inside the Winslow home, where fighting for the truth takes its toll on the family, and Mamet displays his prowess as a filmmaker.

>>>John Elsasser

THE LOSS OF SEXUAL INNOCENCE
(Sony Pictures Classics)

It would be easy to write nasty things about *The Loss Of Sexual Innocence*—like, say, that it's an incomprehensible, pretentious mess. Yet there are images here that are hard to shake. This pet project of Mike Figgis (*Leaving Las Vegas*) chronicles random episodes in the life of Nic, played at various ages by, among others, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers and Julian Sands. The point? To see how these situations shaped Nic's persona. Meanwhile, Figgis parallels this already complex, nonlinear structure with the downfall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. (See, I told you it was pretentious.) Together, these intertwined stories aspire to summarize mankind's loss of innocence. Or something. Some of the Adam and Eve stuff smacks of bad performance art, especially the part where they discover the joys of urinating. More often than not, though, Figgis maintains an intoxicating vibe abetted by the haunting soundtrack that he composed. While you may not always understand it (join the club!), credit Figgis for creating a movie that at least will make you think.

>>>John Elsasser

DROP DEAD GORGEOUS

(New Line)



Too bad New Line thought *Dairy Queens*, the original interest-piquing title of this beauty pageant/Midwestern life spoof, might get the company into legal trouble, because *Drop Dead Gorgeous* reeks of a *Silk Stalkings*-esque movie-of-the-week about a dead hooker, an association that may send moviegoers running. But don't lace up those Nikes or you'll miss one of the funniest films ever written. Relying on comical stereotypes, political incorrectness, sight gags, one-liners, physical humor, and the best Midwestern accents since *Fargo*, it tells the darkly comic story of the Mount Rose American Teen Princess Pageant and what a group of Minnesota girls will do to win—including animal calls, interpretive sign language dances, and, of course, murder. The bodacious Denise Richards plays a spoiled rich girl whose overbearing mother (Kirstie Alley) is a former Princess and the contest's coordinator. Considering Richards played virtually the same role in *Wild Things* and *Starship Troopers*, she has the routine down pat. Kirsten Dunst, a sincere and smart trailer-trash beauty who dreams of being Diane Sawyer, is her polar opposite and stiffest competition. Ellen Barkin is almost unrecognizable as Dunst's beer-drinking, hair-dressing mom. The documentary style adds an authentic *Real TV* touch, establishes characters, and lets the audience wander freely behind the scenes. Do the laugh-inducing performances by the leading ladies and an oddball assortment of pervert judges, sluts, paint sniffers, and stiffs push the film straight into the upper echelon of mockumentaries, where *Spinal Tap* and *Waiting For Guffman* reside? You betcha.

>>>Carrie Bell

FOLLOWING
(Zeitgeist Films)

An admission: There have been whodunits in which I didn't figure it out until the theater workers arrived to sweep the aisles. So I was proud of myself for thinking I'd quickly solved the mystery in this dandy black-and-white English thriller. Of course, I was wrong. Bill (Jeremy Theobald) is a lonely, London-based writer who begins shadowing random people. Once he finds out where the person works or lives, he stops. He rationalizes that he's merely researching for his unwritten novel. Trouble abounds when

Bill gets collared by one of his subjects, an acerbic cat burglar named Cobb (Alex Haw). Bill soon becomes Cobb's partner in crime and, because of various plot twists, suffice to say that Bill meets with trouble in his new line of work. *Following* is the first feature by 29-year-old Christopher Nolan, the writer, director, producer, co-editor and cinematographer. (What, no catering duties?) With an admirably economic style (the entire film unspools in 75 minutes), Nolan has assembled a cleverly handled story that remains riveting through the revealing finale.

>>>John Elsasser

>>> compiled by jenny eliscu <<<

LATIN JAZZ: THE FIRST OF THE FUSIONS, 1880S TO TODAY

By John Storm Roberts
(Schirmer Books)

Writer and record producer John Storm Roberts's premise is that Latin musical influences have shaped the course of jazz music's century-long evolution in a greater fashion than previously documented. Looking for clues as to the Latin roots of jazz, *Latin Jazz* starts out on a fascinating note, peering into the mists of time from the era prior to the invention of recording techniques. Roberts comes up with some fascinating speculations: What about that group of Mexican musicians who were a smash hit when they played at the New Orleans Cotton Exposition in the 1880s? What about early jazz trombonist Willie Cornish, who spent time in Cuba with a military band after the Spanish-American war? Unfortunately, from these exciting beginnings the book too often devolves into a string of overworked record reviews, as Roberts plows through decade after decade of Latin albums, methodically dissecting and naming every Latin component or rhythm on every cut but not offering enough insight into how or why the music happened the way it did. When Roberts is on, such as when he points out a little known tidbit like the fact that jazz musician Horace Silver's father was a Portuguese-speaking immigrant from Cape Verde, this book is a phenomenal read. And as something of the first of its kind, it's a fairly indispensable tome, mapping out a helpful guide to a century of Latin music. >>>James Lien

SCARS OF SWEET PARADISE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JANIS JOPLIN

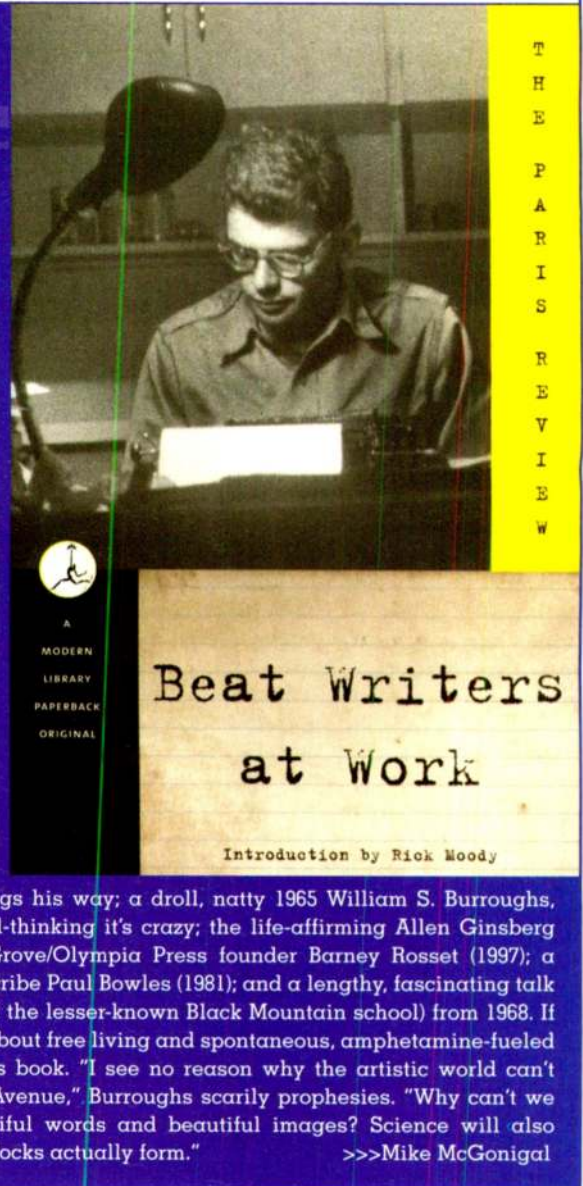
By Alice Echols
(Metropolitan Books)

Alice Echols is one of the first "outsiders" (not a relative or friend) to examine Janis Joplin's life, and she succeeds in painting the fullest picture of her yet. Echols casts Joplin as not just a rebellious, boozy rock chick, but also a fragile, intelligent person. When the 27-year-old Joplin overdosed in October 1970, she became the voice of '60s martyrdom, but she is really a voice of the ages. So it's a bit disappointing when Echols becomes too deeply embedded in the historical context of the era. For example, there are pages and pages about how LSD was introduced to San Francisco, which is nearly irrelevant, since Joplin herself rarely dropped acid. But Echols succeeds in neither glorifying nor condemning Joplin, presenting her drug use and homosexual experimentation without making value judgments. *Scars Of Sweet Paradise* is a poignant, powerful reminder of the struggles Joplin faced as she tried to battle stereotypes of gender and race. In the

BEAT WRITERS AT WORK

Edited By George Plimpton (Modern Library Paperbacks)

Those wily Beat writers continue to fascinate young readers; their work resonates throughout youth culture, from Gap ads to poetry slams. Too many books have been written about them, however, and each new biography or overview seems a futile exercise in taxidermy. But the original documents themselves endure, and that's why this collection of colorful, process-oriented interviews—culled from George Plimpton's long-running, upstanding lit 'zine *The Paris Review*—with major Beat figures is such a gem. The reader is treated to (among other things) a superbly cantankerous Charles Olson in 1970, arguing and picking apart every word Gerard Malanga slings his way; a droll, natty 1965 William S. Burroughs, whose statements are so forward-thinking it's crazy; the life-affirming Allen Ginsberg (three times—1966, 1980, 1995); Grove/Olympia Press founder Barney Rosset (1997); a humble, honest chat with expat scribe Paul Bowles (1981); and a lengthy, fascinating talk with Robert Creeley (a member of the lesser-known Black Mountain school) from 1968. If you thought the Beats were only about free living and spontaneous, amphetamine-fueled confessionals, then you need this book. "I see no reason why the artistic world can't absolutely merge with Madison Avenue," Burroughs scarily prophesies. "Why can't we have advertisements with beautiful words and beautiful images? Science will also discover for us how association blocks actually form." >>>Mike McGonigal



era of Courtney and Alanis, it's easy to forget what a hard, lonely battle Janis fought as one of the first "women in rock."

>>>Wendy Mitchell

BLUE BOOK OF GUITARS, 5TH EDITION

By Steve Cherne
(Blue Book Publications)

If you've ever wondered why that beat-up Fender Stratocaster in the window is worth \$3,000 more than the brand new one with the shiny parts, you'll find the answer, and more, in these comprehensive indexes of vintage and current guitars. Sold separately—one for acoustic and one for electric guitars—these guides provide encyclopedic detail on nearly

every conceivable major guitar manufacturer and small, custom luthier, from year-to-year model variations and serial numbers to well-researched, and often telling, histories on significant manufacturers. In addition to a helpful glossary on guitar parts, each volume provides a critical grading system that determines the condition and, ultimately, the price of a guitar. These books are a nightmare for any music shop that makes a fast buck from throwing jargon and half-truths at unsuspecting schmoees too busy drooling over that 1961 Gretsch Duo-Jet to know any better. If you paid more than a grand and it wasn't in excellent shape, you got taken. >>>Steve Ciabattini

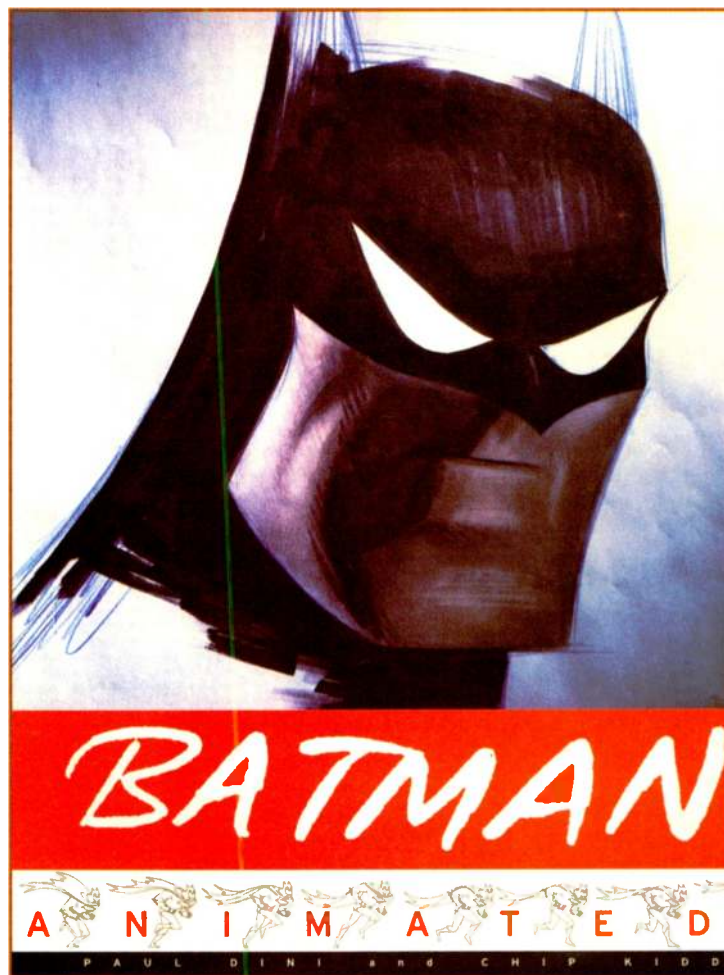
BATMAN'S PRE-MILLENNIAL TENSION

The history of long-running comics is the history of the world around them, turned into a sort of heroic-allegorical form. To look at 40 years' worth of *Legion Of Super-Heroes* is to look at the evolution of images of what the future will look like; 60 years of *Captain America* comics are as neat an examination as one could have of the recent evolution of the idea of patriotism in America. And *Batman* is an especially curious case: as the most human of comic-book heroes (and the only significant one in American comics who is merely human), he mirrors changing ideas of the individual's place within culture and relationship to justice. The new book *Batman In The Sixties* (DC), by focusing on the massive stylistic changes that happened in *Batman* comics in that decade alone, becomes a history of the '60s themselves through a peculiar filter.

The earliest stories in the volume, written only a few years after Sputnik, are giddy with technological possibilities that bump up against leftover '40s iconography. Bill Finger, who had been writing *Batman* since the beginning, more than 20 years earlier, loved to surround his characters with giant props and mechanical wonders, and wasn't too concerned with ordinary causality as long as the mechanisms of his plots allowed clearly-defined good to triumph over clearly-defined evil. The post-Kennedy *Batman's* "New Look," coordinated in 1964 by editor Julius Schwartz, ditched the fantasy and science fiction trappings in favor of a more grounded realism and focus on problem-solving. That moment didn't last long, since the terrifically popular *Batman* TV series that started in 1966, and the comics that immediately followed suit, were an explosion of biff-bang-pow youth culture, camp and psychedelia, and the staid old conventions of heroism and narrative had to hustle out of the way. (One '66 story here begins at a "sensational 'pop' art show"—the extra quote marks say a lot.) By the last few stories, originally published at the tail end of the decade, the riot of colors has been replaced by the riots of '68 Paris: Robin deals with teacher strikes and heads off to college, and *Batman* engages himself directly with urban corruption and human failure.

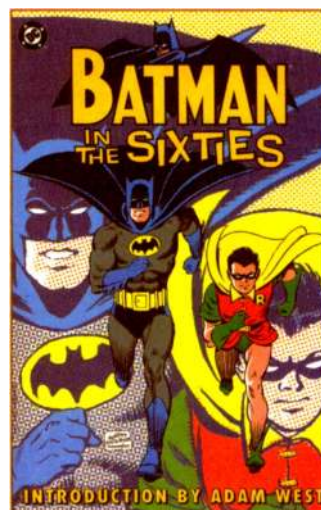
The *Batman* of the '90s has been less visible in comics than, once again, on TV, in particular in the animated series that are fêted in *Batman: Animated*, by Paul Dini and Chip Kidd (HarperCollins). It's a big, lushly illustrated volume that encompasses a history of the show, character sketches and story boards, profiles of everyone from the background designers to the music's composers, and pictures of the merchandise based on the TV show's stylized character designs (the *Batman* ice cream bar with bubble-gum eyes is particularly brilliant). The picture it gives, though, is a *Batman* of a thoroughly postmodern moment: created by committee (though Bruce Timm's designs, more than most things, defines it), mix-'n'-matching decades of iconography, carefully edited to be suitable for imagined children, powerful and fascinating in part because of a simplicity and timelessness dictated by economic concerns.

Meanwhile, even as the animated series has morphed into the futuristic *Batman Beyond*, the comics' *Batman* has been facing a situation that's all but explicitly millennial. In the "No Man's Land" story line running throughout this year in all four monthly *Batman* series (*Batman*, *Detective Comics*, *Shadow Of The Bat* and *Legends Of The Dark Knight*), and written and drawn mostly by comics newcomers who have displaced the long-tenured writers and artists, Gotham City has been ravaged and decimated by plagues and earthquake. Sealed off and abandoned by the government, it's become a lawless war zone, divided into semi-corporate territories marked by the "brand identities" of the heroes and villains who control them. *Batman* and the remains of the Gotham City police department are trying to tame and unify the city under their banner, but nobody can agree on which tactics are useful or



ethical, or what their goals are, other than a struggle against entropy. How, uh, 1999. What lies beyond? There have been a few rumors in the comics community of something about a "city of glass," but nobody's talking.

For another sidelong take on the culture of the moment—with no pictures at all!—former *Might* magazine editor Dave Eggers has founded a literary journal, *McSweeney's*, that's published two outstanding issues to date (\$8 from 394A Ninth St., Brooklyn, NY 11215). Intent on turning ordinary magazine paradigms upside down (and doing it with a deadpan style that nods to 19th-century formalism), Eggers has published pieces by the likes of David Foster Wallace, Zev Borow, Jon Langford and Ana Marie Cox: discursive letters, experimental journalism and even more experimental fiction (a short story in the first issue is presented in the form of a floor plan), and lots of forms that there really aren't names for. There's also a superb, minimal *McSweeney's* web site at www.mcsweeneys.net—check out the pieces called "The Service Industry" for hilariously nasty insider stories of the magazine business



NMM

ELVIS SIGHTINGS: THE KING ON THE WEB

Elvis is everywhere—don't try to deny it. He's kept up with the latest thing from 1954 on, so of course now he's the King of New Media. There is, of course, an official web site for Graceland (www.elvis-presley.com), but who wants the official story?

TCB in a (Macromedia) Flash, we start our tour with **Elvis Lives In Evil Lewis** (wsrv.clas.virginia.edu/~acs5d/elvis.html), the personal site of a woman named Anne Stinehart, who is a very, very big fan—but, blessedly, doesn't take her Presley-worship so seriously that she doesn't provide links to some rather ridiculous sites. She's also set up an "Oracle" to connect Elvis to any other actor or actress, "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon"-style, and on one page she tries to argue that Lisa Marie is, in fact, not Elvis's daughter but the King himself in disguise.

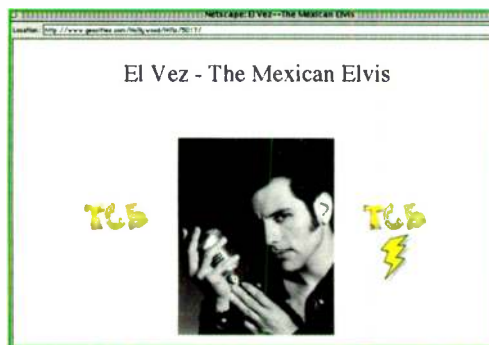
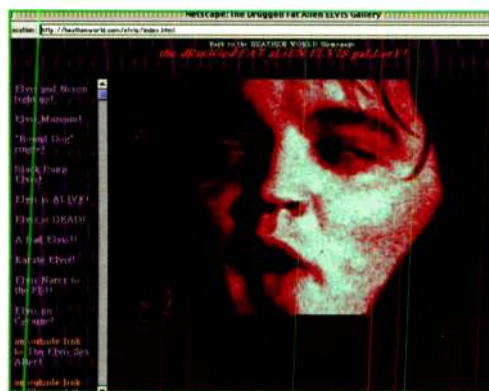
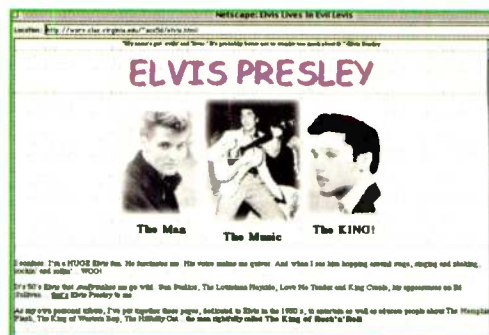
A rather more passionate Lisa Marie site has been assembled by author Lisa Johansen, who believes she should be better known as Lisa Marie Presley (www.i-lisa-marie.com), rather than that... that... usurper. She treats the royalty metaphor as scarily close to reality: "Her often-lonely late childhood and teen years growing up in exile in Sweden under an assumed name and identity prepared her for the extraordinary ordeal she would face when she returned to America for an epic struggle to regain her rightful legacy," reads the blurb on the home page.

America has had its own ordeals with Elvis. The most frequently requested document from the **National Security Archive** is the photo of Elvis shaking hands with Richard Nixon. The NSA's web site now has a section (www.seas.gwu.edu/nsarchive/nsa/elvis/elnix.html) devoted to the complete documentation of the visit (at which the drug-addled Presley asked if Nixon could make him a "Federal Agent-at-Large" in the Bureau of Narcotics), including Nixon's deadpan thank-you note ("I want you to know how much I appreciate your thoughtfulness in giving me the commemorative World War II Colt .45 pistol, encased in the handsome wooden chest"). It's better comedy than anybody could make up.

The Nixon photo turns up again, with a giant spliff Photoshopped into Elvis's mouth, as part of **The Drugged Fat Alien Elvis Galley** (heathenworld.com/elvis/index.html). Still another altered version of that legendary photo appears on **Disgraceland** (www.nwlink.com/~timelvis/)—this time, the President is posing with site owner Tim-Elvis's pet bird Friz-Elvis, the world's only budgie Elvis impersonator. There's also a "reading room" with selected posts from the alt.elvis.sighting newsgroup, and a page of "The Elvae," with photographs of human impersonators (and a where-is-he-now message about one of them). The best Elvis impersonator around at the moment, though, is **El Vez**, the Mexican Elvis—old-time punks may know him as Robert Lopez of the Zeros, but now he tours the world, backed up by the Memphis Mariachis and the Elvettes, and making records like *G.I. Ay Ay Blues* and *Graciasland*. His home page (www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/5017/) is a little spare at the moment, but it's got tour dates, fan club information, and some priceless pictures.

There are some sites that make the King's case with better HTML. **Tickle Me Elvis** (www.auschron.com/mrpants/elvis.html) shakes and laughs when you click on him. **Gimme That Dang Pill!** (www.deluxoland.com/ELVIS.html) is a small but deeply amusing Shockwave-animation game where the goal is to flush all the pills down the toilet before Elvis eats them; if you do well enough, you can win a fried peanut butter and banana sandwich. And the scholarly-minded **Elvis And Tom** page (www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Backstage/2175/index.html) posts RealAudio files of songs that were sung by both Presley and Tom Jones—a new one every few weeks.

Finally, there are a few sites that suggest that following Elvis can be a meaningful principle for leading one's life. It may be just as a way of gratifying the flesh—and who would know better about that?—as on **Elvis Presley's Sex Altar** (www.freepartyusa.com/elvis/), at which you select from a list of sacrifices (a sheep, a jelly donut, etc.) and prayers ("Group sex is what I'm praying for. Help me Elvis"), then click through to... a page of X-rated links. Oh well. If you want to get more serious, there's the **First Presleyterian Church** (chelsea.ios.com/~hkarlin1/welcome.html)—"He has a hunka-hunka burnin' love for whosoever believeth in Him." The exhaustively detailed site includes a list of the "31 Holy Items"—the things that the King demanded to have permanently available in his home, and that his followers should have in theirs (Brown 'n' Serve hot rolls, fresh-made banana pudding, Feenamint laxative gum...). Perhaps you should simply follow his example in all things, and **www.whatwouldelvisdo.com** has been set up to make that path a little easier. Sample question: "Linda Tripp keeps calling and trying to get you to badmouth President Clinton. What would Elvis do?" Sample answer (submitted by somebody of little faith, clearly): "He'd just lie there decomposing like he has done for the last few years." **NMM**



SNEAK PREVIEW

TEXT AND STYLING: Michelle Zacks PHOTOS: Kim Apley

We invited **seven** of the most **interesting clothes horses** we know to share their **expert opinions** about **this season's coolest footwear**.

Warning: These people have not been formally trained in the art of sneaker judging, so please use your own discretion.



L-R: ROSEN, GROBMAN, MONOGENIS, SULTANIK, CASOIN, ONLOOKER 1, ONLOOKER 2, FLEISIG, JANNEY

Our distinguished panel of judges:

Alexis Fleisig and **Eli Janney**, of ever-fashionable rock band **Girls Against Boys**
Eli Casdin, **Dean Monogenis** and **Mitch Grobman**, creators of the funk'n' fresh clothing label, **EDMC**
Edina Sultanik, the "in" Fashion Director at **Sportswear International** magazine
Judi Rosen, downtown scenester and fashion designer for the hip set

Take 'em or leave 'em, here's what our judges had to say about...

1. **Acupuncture's** side-laced trainers in maroon, navy and gray (\$95)

Eli, GVSB: These are the kind of shoes you'd wear just to be controversial.
Judi: They're too crazy—too many colors.
Dean: I think the colors are all right.
Alexis: The soles are cool.
Eli, GVSB: Yeah, but would you look down and say "I have yams on my feet?"
Mitch: I think these shoes might come with a free Frisbee.



2. **Vans'** 1999 reissue of the "Spicoli" athletic shoe (now called the Cyclone) (\$70)

Judi: I'm down with the old-style, surfer, checkerboard thing.
Mitch: I almost bought a pair of checkerboard shoes yesterday.
Dean: Are these Vans or Airwalks?
New Music Monthly: Would anybody wear these?
Eli, GVSB: If there was glass on the floor and I had to run across it.
Edina: I'm anti-Spicoli footwear.
Table: Vans, as a brand, is cool.



3. **New Balance's** lightweight, breathable mesh racing shoes (\$75)

Dean: Dude, breathable mesh!

Edina: They have a reflective "N" for the disco dancer.

Eli: These would be good for the beach, they're so light.

Eli, GVSB: You could wear these with a black suit to spice it up.

Edina: I really think that mixing trainers with suits is so '98. Not to be snotty or anything.

Mitch: I like New Balance as a brand.

Eli: New Balance shoes are for geology teachers.

Edina: Hey, my mother is a geology teacher. [She really is!]



4. **NM '70s'** multi-colored sneakers with reflective stripe (\$58)



Eli and Dean: Thumbs up. These are awesome.

Judi: They wouldn't match anything I own, but I like the styling of them.

Dean: I like them because they don't have an exposed logo and the colors are really nice.

Edina (to EDMC): I think these would match something you guys make.

Eli, GVSB: I'm into the weird colors but I don't like the soles.

Judi: The reflective taping is good.

Mitch: Yeah, safety first.



5. **Nike's** Air Zoom Seismic silver sneakers (\$115)



Table: Oooh. Aaahh. Whoa.

Eli: I want to wear these, but I don't know if I can. I'd try.

Edina: Everyone would look at you, but they'd never look at your face.

Eli, GVSB: Well, if you have a bad hair day...

Mitch: They're definitely very cool looking.

Judi: They seem like they'd mold to your foot perfectly.

Dean: Nike's really taken sneakers to another level.

Edina: These make me think of a really urban kid riding the subway.

Judi: That's where you see all the new sneakers—on the subway.

[Note: Both Eli's tried to steal these shoes.]



6. **Royal Elastics'** two-tone blue slip-on sneakers (\$90)

Eli: I like these.

Judi: I'm not into the color combo or the blue soles.

Dean: But they're royal.

Mitch: They might look better once they got dirty.

Dean: I feel like there might be a K-Mart counterpart to these.

Edina: But K-Mart would only do them in one color.

Eli, GVSB: Didn't Zips come in this color?



7. **Fila's** off-white sneakers with red and blue side stripes (\$64.95)

Eli: My dad would wear those all day long.

Judi: They're like, for a 50-year-old guy in his Trans Am.

Edina: But come on, they're so old school. Let's say you have a red, white and blue track suit.

Dean: With a Sergio Tecchini sweatsuit... maybe.

Judi: They look like Rockports.

Eli, GVSB: Rockports are more ironic.

Edina: You think Rockports are ironic?

Dean: These are just way too post-modern.

Eli, GVSB: See, with Fila it's a commitment. I could see somebody wearing a whole Fila outfit with these.





STEWART COPELAND

In 1984, Stewart Copeland composed the soundtrack to Francis Ford Coppola's *Rumblefish*. Since then, the former drummer for the Police has done more than 40 TV and movie soundtracks, collaborating with directors such as Oliver Stone, Ken Loach and John Waters. He's currently working on the upcoming *Simpatico*, starring Sharon Stone, Jeff Bridges and Nick Nolte.

Q: You just did *She's All That*. Why wasn't there a soundtrack album? That Sixpence None The Richer song was huge.

A: Well, there is a record for the movie, but it's not connected with the movie. It's on [the band's] album, and that's why there's not a movie soundtrack. Someone decided that it would be dishonest to release a soundtrack album without that track on it. I'm sure that's not the real reason. But that's the story I was told and I'm sticking to it.

Q: By the way, I want you to know that I own, on vinyl, the soundtrack to *Out Of Bounds* [the forgotten 1986 Anthony Michael Hall vehicle that Copeland composed the music for].

A: Jesus Christ! Damn! That album has a crucial Adam Ant track on it.

Q: That's one of the reasons I held on to it. Plus, I see a big resurgence in Anthony Michael Hall coming.

A: [Slowly enunciating each word] Anthony Michael Hall. What's he doing now? He's probably 40.

Q: I remember watching *The Equalizer* on TV in 1986 and

seeing your name in the credits. I wondered if it was the same Stewart Copeland.

A: That series was like boot camp for film composers. A new show every week. Twenty-one of them a year for three years. Within three episodes, I ran through my entire cupboard of licks, riffs and chops.

Q: Did you find that some Police fans were surprised by your new job?

A: Yeah, on occasion. It pleases people that there's life after rock 'n' roll, though. People get a warm glow when they hear my story, I suppose.

Q: Do you ever miss being a rock star?

A: No, not being a rock star. Never. But I do miss playing those live shows.

Q: How did your career as a composer come about?

A: It came from Uncle Francis Coppola, who plucked me from obscurity—film composer-wise—and allowed me to score *Rumblefish*. Actually, he thought he was going to score it himself, but I got there and wormed my way in. And the rest is a career. Never thought about it before that.

Q: I believe that average moviegoers underestimate the importance of a good score.

A: You're right. The same is true for the lighting, the director of photography, the editors.

Q: Who do you think is more under-appreciated: the drummer or the composer?

A: Goddamn—that's a tough one. [Pauses] I think they're both equally under-appreciated. The thing is, it's annoying for the drummer to be under-appreciated and it's a wonderful thing for the film composer to be under-appreciated. The anonymity, combined with the joy of making music, is very cool.

NMM

GAMING

SILENT HILL

(PlayStation)

Every few months, a new PlayStation RPG attempts to claim the crown for "Best Of Genre." This time it's Konami's spooky *Silent Hill*. As Harry Mason, searching the fog-entrenched town for your daughter, you're sure to be startled by the skinless dogs jumping out at you from the mist, as well as the zombie coming at you from some dark corner of a room. But as highly as *Silent Hill* scores on atmosphere and despite some pretty amazing-looking cut scenes, it fails just as strongly where overall play is concerned. You'll spend an inordinate amount of time running around town looking for keys and clues. It doesn't help that many of the game's "alter-ego" areas (which are the same areas of the town, only darkly lit and textured with bloodstains) look all too similar and that navigating them without a map is an exercise in repetition and futility. Perhaps if *Silent Hill* rewarded the player's efforts with a few more of those beautiful cut scenes, I could forgive it for making us run around so much. As it stands though, games like *Resident Evil 2* and *Parasite Eve* have led Playstation RPG'ers to expect a bit more for their 50 bucks.

>>>Aaron Clow



CIVILIZATION II

(Microprose/Hasbro Interactive)

My father, who hasn't lost a Thanksgiving Day game of Risk in over 20 years, attributes his success to patience. And patience, not strategy or skill, is what it takes to win any game whose sole object is to conquer the world. Likewise, aging



strategy games such as the popular *Sim* series have always matched the appeal of an extra hour of history class. *Civilization* challenged that stigma by balancing strategy and action to make the prolonged playing time more bearable. *Civilization II* picks up where Sid Meier's original left off, improving the game's battle realism by assigning units firepower, hit points, and movement restrictions. The user interface has been simplified to speed up the learning curve—there's even a surprisingly intuitive PlayStation version available. A greater number of options (race, difficulty, maps, number of drones) keeps *Civ II* fresh, throwing new scenarios at you even after many games. I never thought I'd utter these words but, there's never a dull moment with *Civ II*. I found myself forgoing food, sleep, even *90210*, to finesse my tenuous alliance with the Chinese or to oversee the completion of a new university. Dad, just you wait until they develop the multi-player version—then I'll show you a thing or two about patience.

>>>Sam Cannon



(continued from page 65)

cover, and another to do the video, and so you get two totally different looks and feels. To me, from a marketing standpoint, that's counter-instinctual. It simply doesn't make sense. So when all these people were blown away by the idea of transferring ideas from the Korn cover to the Korn video, I was just like, 'Hm. I think I like the music business.'

McFarlane's cocky, but he's got the game to back up the trash talk. He first made a blip on pop culture radar in 1990 as the artist at Marvel Comics who gave Spider Man a long-needed makeover. Frustrated with the lack of creative and commercial autonomy he found at Marvel, McFarlane engineered a revolt within the comic giant, leaving the company in 1992 and taking seven of its other top artists with him. (Marvel's stock went into a tailspin when trading opened the next day.)

Led by McFarlane, the defectors founded Image Comics, the first vastly successful "indie" comic book company, and effectively broke the stranglehold Marvel and D.C. Comics had long had on comic book artists and buyers. McFarlane's signature title *Spawn* has sold more than 135 million copies worldwide since he unveiled the title in May 1992.

Spawn is the story of Al Simmons, a CIA assassin who, betrayed and murdered, burns in the hellfire, then returns to earth as a Hellspawn, a tortured, horribly disfigured general in Satan's army, caught in the spiritual rip tide between good and evil. *Spawn* is a brooding, postmodern super hero, more of an anti-hero, really, in the Quentin Tarantino vein of remorseless killers who win dance contests and operate in shades of gray.

Spawn the comic title consistently outsells

Batman, *Superman* and *Spiderman* by a two-to-one margin. *Spawn* the movie, which came out in 1997, grossed \$100 million. *Spawn* the HBO adult animation series put an Emmy Award in McFarlane's trophy cabinet last year, and will enter its third season this May with the release of six new, grim and grisly half-hour episodes.

Then there's *Spawn*, the toy company. In 1993, McFarlane reached a critical level of frustration at the glacial progress of negotiations with major toy manufacturers who wanted to license *Spawn* characters for action figures. "They kept telling me I couldn't do what



I wanted to do, which was make the best action figures on the market for an average retail price of nine or ten bucks. So I told them, 'Fuck you, then. I'll do it myself.'

McFarlane launched his own toy company, McFarlane Toys, with a line of *Spawn* figures he designed himself. "I mean, look—I don't listen to my mom and dad anymore on most things, and I love them, so why the fuck would I listen to Mattel, Kenner or IBM? The answer is I won't. My attitude toward corporate America is: I don't like you, I sure as fuck don't love you, and I'm not going to listen to you, because you're not as smart as you'd like the rest of us to think you are."

McFarlane has sold over 22 million action figures in 47 countries (*Spawn* figures outsell *Star Wars* toys in Japan), and his figures are easily the finest detailed and most articulated of their kind. McFarlane personally designs all of his toy company's products.

Two years ago, his company issued a series of KISS action figures in full make-up and regalia, which sold out in one week. He followed up with the KISS Psycho Circus collection last year. (The figures, which posed KISS members as circus demons with demented sidekicks, were cross-marketed with an

accompanying monthly comic book.) A McFarlane Toys series of figures based on the PlayStation game *Metal Gear Solid* sold out in three weeks in February and is now on back order. An Ozzy Osbourne figure—depicting a buff, cloaked Ozzy with a cross in one upraised hand and a freshly-decapitated bat in the other—is scheduled for release later this year (along with, of course, an accompanying comic title). So is an *Austin Powers* figure, timed with the

release of *The Spy Who Shagged Me*, and a Beatles *Yellow Submarine* series.

McFarlane's eyes dart wildly while he talks, and he fidgets with whatever's at hand—usually *Spawn* toys. He describes his marketing strategy as "make it all cross-over with everything." McFarlane scored a coup of free publicity last fall when he revealed himself as the anonymous bidder who paid \$2.7 million for big league slugger Mark McGwire's 70th home run baseball, a purchase which simultaneously fed McFarlane's long-standing obsession with baseball and jacked his public exposure up another big notch.

He realizes, however, that there is such a monster as too big, too mass market. His one failure, McFarlane says, was the *Spawn* movie, which many fans felt watered down the disturbing essence of the comic book and HBO series for the sake of Hollywood and mass consumption. During the making of that movie, McFarlane also, for the first and so far only time in his career, caved in to corporate pressure and changed one key character from black to white at the insistence of studio executives who were afraid of making a "black movie." (*Spawn* is a black super hero.)

McFarlane says the *Spawn* sequel, due out in 2000, "will be much closer in look and feel to the HBO series. It will represent more of the stuff I'm personally interested in, and where *Spawn* is in my head, which is an intelligent suspense thriller that's really dark and cool to look at, like the movie *Seven*, but doesn't rely on special effects.

"What I'm ideally hoping for is that fans who are really into the HBO stuff, but maybe got turned off by the first movie, will look at what we do with the second film and go, 'Cool. Todd's not pandering, and he's not selling out. He's getting more sophisticated.'"

McFarlane draws an arrow on an imaginary bow.

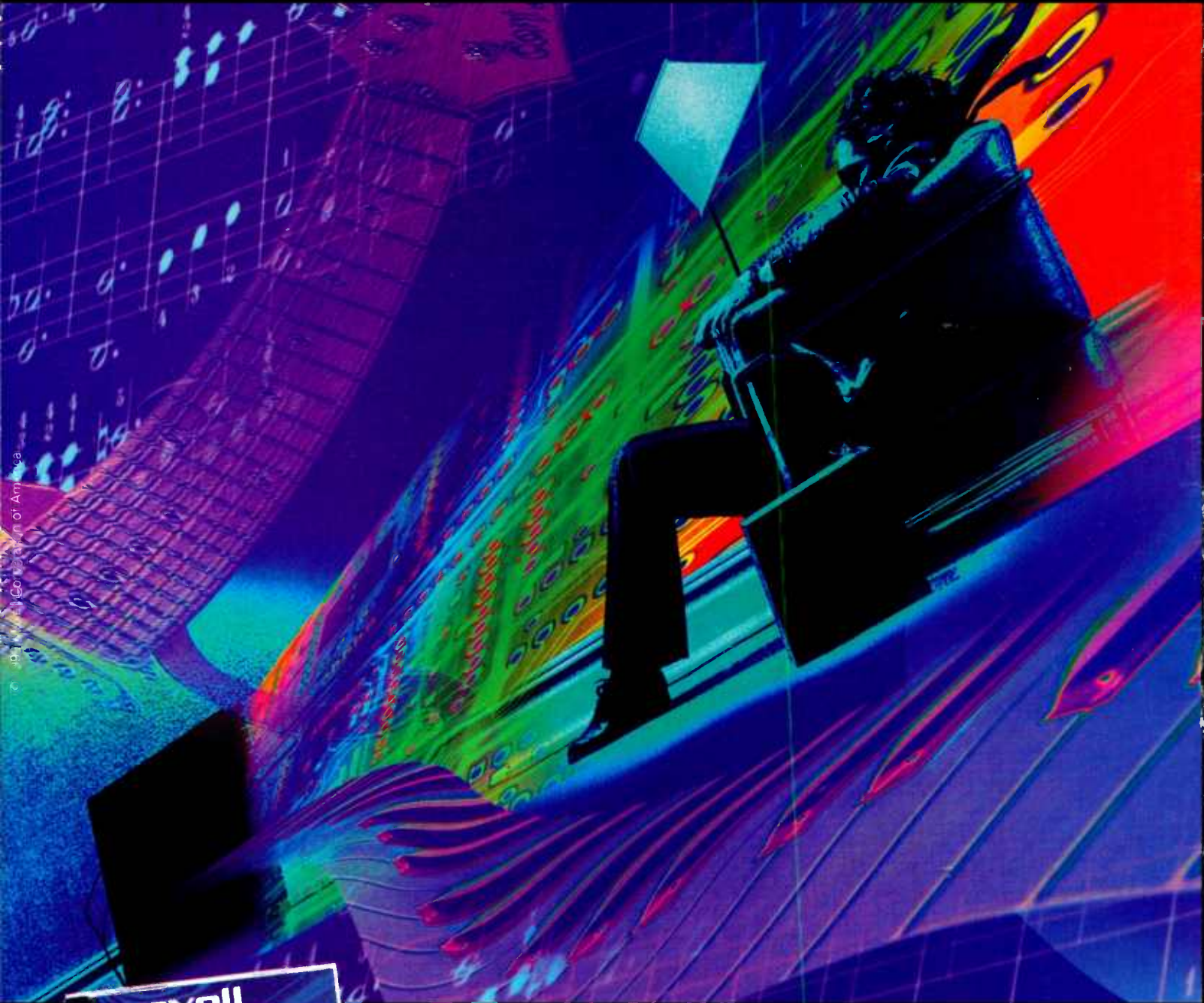
"That's what I'm aiming at. That's the bull's eye I'm going to fucking nail."



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EXPANSION UNION



LION DUB STATION

16 Electronic musician James Bernard lives and breathes his passion: When he isn't making music with **EXPANSION UNION**, he is product development guru with synth manufacturer Korg USA. But with all that tinkering, he still finds time to check out plenty of music: "I developed some radical and voracious tastes over the last few years, for stuff as diverse as Philip Glass, Brian Eno, Kraftwerk, Depeche Mode, Squarepusher and Pink Floyd. Nine Inch Nails to Portishead and then into Sunny Day Real Estate and Rabbit In The Moon," rhapsodizes Bernard. "World Wide Funk" is from the album of the same name (Wax Trax!-TVT). (See Reviews, p. 42.)

13 **MERCALISER** isn't just bass player Jake Wherry and DJ Ollie Teeba—it's a whole collective of funky MCs and musicians. But it wasn't always that way. "We didn't know MCs at first," explained Wherry in a recent interview. "But that helped to develop our style. We had to come up with something slightly different. Now that we're working with rappers, we don't need so much busy music, just a nice, fat beat, good loops and scratches and then let the MC do the rest of the talking." "Goldrush" is from *Very Mercenary* (Ninja Tune). (See Quick Fix, p. 10.)

14 The sound of **LION DUB STATION** represents a collaboration between members of the Iceburn Collective, a Salt Lake City hardcore-cum-free-jazz band, and New York rockers Weakling, but its music is primarily centered around dub tracks produced by Cache Tolman (bassist for Iceburn and Civ). "Secret Weapon," taken from the group's eponymous album (*Lionhead*), was just that for Tolman: "It's called that because I composed it—I don't remember composing it, I don't remember doing anything with it—I didn't even know it existed until I got the CD back on DAT. It must have been composed in a different universe." (See Dance, p. 60.)

CMJ NEW MUSIC

1 For longtime underground jungle DJ Charissa Saverio, a.k.a. **DJ RAP**, it indeed must be "Good To Be Alive." She's just launched her singing career with her debut full-length *Learning Curve* (Higher Ground-Columbia). "If people think this is a pop album," she said in a recent interview, "that's fine. For me, I can't make an album that is just one vibe. I just like to make stuff with a really fucking good beat and a melody—if that's pop, then great." (See cover story, p. 34.)

2 "We're into really instant music," says Aston Harvey of the **FREESTYLERS**. "Too many dance artists are making jazz albums, because they feel it's the mature thing to do. There are plenty of great home listening albums. But not enough proper party ones." Bassist Joe Stubbs concurs: "We're the opposite of when you go to a drum 'n' bass gig looking to have a dance, and instead end up enduring a saxophonist farting away for ages." "B-Boy Stance featuring Tenor Fly" appears on the band's new record, *We Rock Hard* (Freskanova-Mammoth). (See feature, p. 30.)

3 "This album represents a broad spectrum of 10c," says singer/guitarist Sean Russell of the "pop-hop" group's second album *Buggin' Out*, which was produced by the notorious Dust Brothers and released on their Hi-Ho label, and which includes the track "Bubble Bath." "Working with the Dust Brothers is like science. We're talking major schooling." But there's a caveat says bassist Tina Link, "It makes people skeptical of the product. As in 'Oh, you worked with the Dust Brothers. Well then that album better be the shit.'" (See On The Verge, p. 16.)

4 A student of London's Guildhall School of Music, singer/songwriter **DIDO** had already learned to play piano, violin and recorder by the time she was ten. During her teens, she toured Europe with a classical music ensemble, but it was only when, at 16, she discovered Ella Fitzgerald that her musical passion really took root. Later she sang with her brother Rollo's band, Faithless, and eventually recorded her debut album, *No Angel* (Arista), from which "Here With Me" is taken. (See On The Verge, pg. 16.)

5 "We didn't want to do what every fucking guitar band is doing these days: string-drenched melancholy with a mid-tempo beat," says Paul Draper, frontman for Britain's **MANSUN**. Is *Six* challenging? he wonders of his band's new album for Epic. "Or is everything else around just boring? If *Six* was a painting, it would be an early Cubist one. The sort that makes people say, when they first come across it, 'What the fuck is that?'" "*Six*" is the album's title track. (See Reviews, pg. 45.)



DJ RAP



FREESTYLERS



10c

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NEUROSIS



JOAN OF ARC



PUSH STARS



OLD 97'S

11 **ORBITAL**—brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll—has been revered in the world of electronica for over ten years now. In a recent *Urb* interview, Phil reflected: "Some of the finest moments are when people come up to me and say, 'That track really did this to me,' or they tell you a little story. I think 'Fucking hell, that's like nothing to do with what we were thinking at the time.'" "Style"—made with a synth called a stylophone—is from the British duo's latest, *Middle Of Nowhere* (ffrr-London). (See Reviews, p. 49.)

12 The **PUSH STARS** are on a hot streak: Since coming together three years ago, the Boston trio has received *Boston Magazine's* "Best Rock Upstart" award and the Boston Music Awards' "Outstanding Rock Band" and "Outstanding Song/Songwriter" honors, and won EMI Music Publishing/*Radio & Records* magazine's "Best Unsigned Band In America" competition. Recently, the group's songs have been heard on *All My Children*, the soundtrack to *There's Something About Mary*, and MTV's *The Real World and Singled Out*. The ultimate coup? Appearing in a Dockers Khakis ad. "Drunk Is Better Than Dead" appears on the band's major-label debut, *After The Party* (Capitol).

13 In a letter meant to serve as his band's bio, **OLD 97'S** vocalist/guitarist Rhett Miller writes, "This record is about precariousness. Placing a mason jar on the edge of a high shelf. Trying to keep your voice low enough not to disturb the neighbors. Thinking that a face glimpsed in a passing car's windshield is someone you know (or knew). An ex-girlfriend. Sitting in a phone booth in Frankfurt with the door closed. Without using the phone." "Murder (Or A Heart Attack)" is from the band's fourth long-player, *Fight Songs* (Elektra). (See Best New Music, pg. 19.)

14 *Swingers* director Doug Liman may have moved on to the rave scene with his latest film, *Go*, but the neo-swing generation that was launched by his first movie is still jittersbugging. Solidifying swing's place in the mainstream, Hollywood-ites Matthew Perry and Neve Campbell star in an upcoming major motion picture with an all-swing score. The **ATOMIC FIREBALLS** will appear on that soundtrack, and are also laying down their version of "Luck Be A Lady" for an upcoming Frank Sinatra tribute record. "Man With The Hex" is from the Detroit octet's major-label debut, *Torch This Place* (Lava-Atlantic). (See Reviews, pg. 40.)

15 "When I was little, I had this real funny voice," says 29-year-old singer **MACY GRAY**. "Every time I talked, the kids would make fun of me—so I stopped talking. It never occurred to me that I could sing." But, by college, Gray's voice had developed into the sonic doppelganger of Billie Holiday's, and people began to demand to hear it. "I really thought these people were all lying to me and that they didn't know what they were talking about, because I was still thinking about the girl who didn't talk!" "Do Something" appears on Gray's debut album, *On How Life Is* (Epic).



MANSUN



BOLT UPRIGHT



ATARI TEENAGE RIOT

8 "We did consider changing the name and starting over again, and we probably would have if we knew he was dead," says **MANIC STREET PREACHERS'** Nicky Wire of how the English band adjusted to the mysterious disappearance of its former lead singer, Richey James. James disappeared four years ago and the only clue to have surfaced was the discovery of his car at a gas station near England's Severn Bridge. The band—now lead by Wire—has changed labels since James's disappearance (from Epic to Virgin) and just released its fifth record, *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*, from which "If You Tolerate This, Your Children Will Be Next" is taken.

1 "I went from wearing an army jacket and smoking dope to becoming a breakdancer and going roller-skating and listening to rap in the early '80s, to rediscovering rock again and combining all that stuff into a big melting pot," says **BOLT UPRIGHT's** Damien Mayek. Guitarist David Aguire adds, "We were all into Prince, Parliament, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix... the roots of funk. We were all into that, the craziness of the funk." "Longevity" is from the Hollywood-via-Milwaukee band's debut album, *Red Carpet Syndrome* (550 Music). (See Reviews, pg. 41.)

9 Alec Empire and **ATARI TEENAGE RIOT** have released yet another confrontational album, *60 Second Wipeout* (Digital Hardcore Recordings), which includes "Your Uniform (Does Not Impress Me)." "Riot songs produce riot music," mused Empire in a recent interview. "That's the idea with ATR, to destroy the economy presented by the media and government. [Our songs have] very aggressive arrangements to push the adrenaline in everyone's body, so people are filled up with this revolutionary energy. That way, they'll want to change this boring fascist life we have." (See feature, p. 22.)

6 "We've always been attracted to spiritual symbology," says **NEUROSIS** guitarist/vocalist Steve Von Till, explaining the symbols the band uses in its psychedelic light shows. "It's a Jungian perspective, I guess, trying to bring up archetypes of things that speak deeper to people than words or music can. Music brings up deeper things than words do, but words in combination with music and symbols and pictures put it in more of a full perspective." "Times Of Grace" is the title track to the Oakland, California, quartet's latest album on Relapse. (See Metal, pg. 59.)

10 "For the most part, everyone's heard of **JOAN OF ARC** but not many people know exactly who she was or what it is she did, and if they do know, then our name is probably that much cooler to them," says the band's Tim Kinsella. "But also in a way it's like we're stealing from history. It's the thought of taking part in this band and when this minuscule faction of society hears the name Joan Of Arc, they're not going to think of this woman in history, but instead think of boys from Chicago who make music." "When The Parish School Dismisses And The Children Running Sing" is from the band's second long-player, *Live In Chicago 1999* (Lade Tree), which is not actually a live record. (See Quick Fix, pg. 12.)

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MAY 4

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—First release for LA "pop-hop" group on the Dust Brothers' Hi-Ho label, formerly known as *Ideal* and *Nickelbag*

90 LB. WUSS *Shorthand Operation* Tooth & Nail

ALUMINUM GROUP *Wonder Boy Plus Minty Fresh*
—Reissue of the group's debut album

BLACK HALOS *Black Halos Die Young Stay Pretty*

BLUE RAGS *Eat At Joe's* Sub Pop

BOUNCING SOULS *Hopeless Romantic* Epitaph

TONY BURGOS ORCHESTRA *Swing Now!* Lindy K-Tel

MANU DIBANGO *A La Claire Fontaine* Tinder

DREAM CITY FILM CLUB *In The Cold Morning Light* Beggars Banquet

FLORALINE *Floraline* Minty Fresh

HAUJOBB *Ninety-nine* Metropolis

TOMMY JAMES AND THE SHONDELS *Best Of* Dominion

JOAN OF ARC *Live In Chicago 1999* Jade Tree

KHAN *1-900 GET-KHAN* Matador

L'ALTRA *L'Altra (10")* Aesthetics

LILLIAN AXE *Fields Of Yesterday* Z

MR. SCRUFF *Return Of The Swing* Ninja Tune

NEUROISIS *Times Of Grace* Relapse

PAN SONIC *B (12")* Mute
—Group formerly known as *Panasonic*

PENNYWISE *Straight Ahead* Epitaph

PROLAPSE *Ghosts Of Dead Aeroplanes* Jetset

RED SNAPPER *Making Bones* Warp-Matador
—First domestic release from Warp Records artist

SAINT ETIENNE *Places To Visit (EP)* Sub Pop
—Six new track including a remix by Sean O'Hagan of the *High Llamas*

MATTHEW SHIPP DUO WITH WILLIAM PARKER *DNA* Thirsty Ear

SPACETIME CONTINUUM *Spacetime Continuum (EP)* Astralwerks

TOURE TOURE *Ladde* Tinder

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Burning London* 550-Epic
—Clash tribute, featuring *Alghan Whigs*, *Third Eye Blind*, *No Doubt*, *Indigo Girls*, *Ice Cube* and more

VELOCETTE *Fourfold Remedy* Beggars Banquet
—Features former members of *Comet Gain*

VELVET ACID CHRIST *Decipher* Metropolis

VNV NATION *Praise The Fallen* TVT
—English political electro-industrial band

X MARKS THE PEDWALK *Retrospective* Metropolis

MAY 7

ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES *In Your Barcalounger (7")* Alternative Tentacles
—Fat Mike of *NOFX* on bass, *NOFX* roadie *Spike Slawson* on vocals

MAY 11

1000 CLOWNS *Freelance Bubblehead* Elektra

ATARI TEENAGE RIOT *60 Second Wipeout* Digital Hardcore Recordings

BOOM BOOM SATELLITES *Out Loud* 550

CYCLEFLY *Generation Sord* Radioactive-MCA

FREESTYLERS *We Rock Hard* Mammoth

BEVIS FROND *Vavona Burr* Flydaddy

DANIELLE HOWLE *Kill Rock Stars*

JORDAN KNIGHT *Jordan Knight* Interscope
—Solo debut from former *New Kid On The Block*

JACK LOGAN *Buzz Me In* Capricorn-Mercury

PLATEAU *Space Cake* Metropolis

BIJOU PHILLIPS *I'd Rather Eat Glass* Almo Sounds
—Long-delayed debut from ex-model and daughter of *John Phillips* of *The Mamas & The Papas*

RAHZEL *Make The Music 2000* MCA

MELKY SEDECK *Sister And Brother* MCA

FRANK SINATRA *Swing Along With Me* Reprise

FRANK SINATRA *Francis A. & Edward K.* Reprise

FRANK SINATRA *The Concert* Sinatra Reprise

FRANK SINATRA *Sinatra/Basie* Reprise

SPACEHEADS *Angel Station* Merge

THIS WAY *This Way* Reprise
—Debut for NY pop group, produced by *David Kahne* (*Sugar Ray*, *Soul Coughing*)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Del-Fi Surf Monsters* Del-Fi
—Features old and new surf bands such as the *Bomboras*, the *Lively Ones*, *Huevos Rancheros* and more

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Trippin' On The Sunset Strip* Del-Fi

MAY 18

BARRY ADAMSON *The Murky World Of Barry Adamson* Mute
—A career retrospective from the former *Magazine* and *Bad Seeds* member

AIR *Premiers Symptomes* Astralwerks
—Reissue of the French band's early singles with two tracks not on the original version

CRAIG ARMSTRONG *Soundtrack: Plunkett And MacLeane* Melankolic-Astralwerks

ATOMIC FIREBALLS *Torch This Place* Lava-Atlantic
—Major label debut for Detroit swing band

BLACK HEART PROCESSION *2* Touch And Go
—First album for Touch And Go from San Diego band

CAN *Can Box* Mute
—Multimedia anthology of Krautrock pioneers

CARDIGANS *Emmerdale* Minty Fresh
—Domestic issue of Swedish group's debut album, with a four-song bonus EP

CHEMICAL BROTHERS "Hey Girls, Hey Boys" (CD5) Astralwerks
—First single from the *Brothers'* upcoming new album, *Surrender*

COVENANT *Euro (EP)* Metropolis

DJ RAP *Learning Curve* Higher Ground-Columbia

DOGWOOD *More Than Conquerors* Tooth & Nail

MIKE ERRICO *Hybrid-Sire*
—Debut for NY singer-songwriter

GANG STARR *Full Clip: A Decade Of Gang Starr* Virgin

GO *Ready, Sexed, Go!* Epitaph

GO-BETWEENS *Bellavista Terrace* Beggars Banquet
—"Best of" collection

GOGOGOIRHEART *Things We Need* Overcoat

GV'NER *In The Fishtank* Konkurrent-Touch And Go
—Domestic release of one in a series of Dutch EPs

WILL HAVEN *WHVN* Revelation

HOT SAUCE JOHNSON *Truck Stop Jug Hop* Outpost
—Debut for LA alternative band

H2O *F.T.T.W.* Epitaph

MICHAEL KRASSNER *Michael Krassner* Atavistic

LYDIA LUNCH *Shotgun Wedding* Atavistic

LYNNFIELD PIONEERS *Free Popcorn* Matador

LVNAC STREET PREACHERS *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours* Virgin

WYNTON MARSALIS *Columbia*

NAKED FUNK *Evolution Ending* Palm Pictures

NERVES *New Animal* Thrill Jockey

NOMEANSNO *In The Fishtank* Konkurrent-Touch and Go
—Domestic release of one in a series of Dutch EPs

NO TALENTS *...Want Some More* Estrus

PAVEMENT *Spit On A Stranger (CD5)* Matador
—Preview of the group's upcoming album, *Terror Twilight*

MAXI PRIEST *So What If It Rains* Virgin

RON SEXSMITH *Whereabouts* Interscope

SNUFF *In The Fishtank* Konkurrent-Touch And Go
—Domestic release of one in a series of Dutch EPs

SOUNDTRACK *Dawson's Creek* Columbia

SPINANES "All Sold Out" (7") Sub Pop
—Two Rolling Stones covers

STYLES OF BEYOND *2000 Fold* Hi-Ho
—Reissue of album by underground hip-hop act

SWITCH TROUT *Psycho Action* Estrus

TASSILLI PLAYERS *In The Fishtank* Konkurrent-Touch And Go
—Domestic release of one in a series of Dutch EPs

TODD TERRY "Let It Ride" (CD5) Astralwerks
—Preview of *Resolutions*, forthcoming album from eminent DJ/producer

TORTOISE/THE EX *In The Fishtank* Konkurrent-Touch And Go
—Domestic release of one in a series of Dutch EPs

U.S. BOMBS *The World Hellcat*

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Punk Ass Generosity* Onefoot

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Suck It And See* Pussyfoot-Palm Pictures
—Two-CD musical tribute to pornography compiled by *Howie B.*'s *Pussyfoot* label

WHISTLER *Whistler* Beggars Banquet

ANDRE WILLIAMS & THE SADIES *Red Dirt* Bloodshot

WILLIE AND LOBO *Division I* Atlantic

DWIGHT YOAKAM *Greatest Hits: Last Chance For A Thousand Years* Reprise
—Greatest hits of the '90s

MAY 25

CITIZEN FISH *Active Ingredients* Lookout!

DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND *Buck Jump* Mammoth

LEN *You Can't Stop the Bum Rush* Work
—Major label debut for Canadian band; features guest performances by *Biz Markee*, *Kurtis Blow*, *C.C. Deville* of *Poison* and *DJ Mr. Dibbs*

LONDON SUEDE *TBD* Columbia

LUNA *The Days Of Our Nights* Elektra
—Produced by *Paul Kimble*, formerly of *Grant Lee Buffalo*

SPEAKER *Orizaba* Capricorn

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Panthalassa* Columbia
—DJs *King Britt*, *DJ Cam*, *Doc Scott*, *Jamie Myerson* and *Bill Laswell* remix *Laswell's Panthalassa*, a remix album of *Miles Davis* source material, released last year

VELVET ACID CHRIST *Fun With Knives* Metropolis

KATHARINE WHALEN *Katherine Whalen's Jazz Squad* Mammoth
—*Squirrel Nut Zippers* vocalist's solo album of jazz classics and originals

JUNE 1

HARRY CONNICK JR. *Columbia*

JURASSIC 5 *J5 (EP)* Interscope
—First major-label release from Bay Area hip-hop group

DAVE MYERS & THE SURFTONES *The Moment Of Truth: The Best Of Dave Meyers & The Surftones* Del-Fi

PENNYWISE *Straight Ahead* Epitaph

SENTINELS *Sunset Beach: The Best Of The Sentinels* Del-Fi

SOUNDTRACK *Desert Blue* Velvel
—Featuring music from *Rocket From The Crypt*, *Cat Power*, *Ben Lee*, a collaboration between *Nina Persson* (*Cardigans*) and *Nathan Larson* (*Shudder To Think* guitarist), and others

SOUNDTRACK *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* Maverick

SPACETIME CONTINUUM *Double Fine* Zone Astralwerks

SWAY & TECH *The Wake Up Show* Interscope

TAXIRIDE *Imaginate* Sire
—Debut for Australian alternative pop band

TODD TERRY *Resolutions* Astralwerks

JUNE 8

APPLES IN STEREO *Her Wallpaper Reverie* spinArt

BELLE & SEBASTIAN *Tigermilk* (reissue) Matador
—Long-awaited reissue of Scottish group's long-out-of-print, vinyl-only debut

CIBO MATTO *Stereotype A* Warner Bros.
—Anticipated sophomore album from NYC duo consumed with food; features *Arto Lindsay*, *Caetano Veloso*, *Dave Douglas* and *Sean Lennon*

CLEVELAND BOUND *Death Sentence (7")* Lookout!

COYOTE MEN *Two Sides of the Coyote Men* Estrus

DONNAS *Get Skin Tight* Lookout!

GUITAR WOLF *Jet Generation* Matador

HELLACOPTERS *Grande Rock* Sub Pop
—Label debut for Swedish rawk band

JAMIROQUAI *Synkronized* WORK

JUNE OF 44 *Anahata* Quarterstick

BRAD MEHLDAU *Warner Bros.*
—Jazz pianist known for his interpretations of *Radiohead*, among others

MINISTRY *Dark Side Of The Spoon* Warner Bros.

PAVEMENT *Terror Twilight* Matador

PRETENDERS *Warner Bros.*

RACHEL'S *Selenography* Quarterstick
—Double CD

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS *Warner Bros.*

RED KRAYOLA *Finger Painting* Drag City

SHOOTZY GROOVE *High Definition* Kinetic-Reprise
—NY rock/hip-hop hybrid

SMASHMOUTH *Astro Lounge* Interscope

SOUNDTRACK *Wild, Wild West* Interscope

SPELLS *The Age Of Backwards (EP)* K

NABAKAZU TAKEMURA *Scope* Thrill Jockey

TENTACLES *K*

US MAPLE *Talker* Drag City

VANDERMARK 5 *Simpatico* Atavistic

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(continued from page 82)

music programming. Spin anywhere else on the FM dial and you'll find more Top 40 and classic rock than you can stand.

Hang Outs

The **Captain Kidd** (77 Water St., Woods Hole, 548-9206) is a waterside bar populated by local characters; the **Land Ho!** (corner of Route 6A and Cove Road, Orleans, 255-5165) is an inland pub with a similar collection of eccentrics. The food at **Horizons** (98 Town Neck Road, Sandwich, 888-6166) has gone downhill, but the restaurant's deck offers an unmatched view of Cape Cod Bay. **Shop Therapy** (344 Commercial St., Provincetown, 487-3942), a former head shop, now sells sex toys and other essentials and also houses the Cape's only albino python. Film buffs can get a fix at the **Cape Cinema** (Route 6A, Dennis, 385-2503) and the **Nickelodeon Cinema** (742 Route 151, N. Falmouth, 563-6510), which feature the art-house fare not found at mall multiplexes. The ten teams in the **Cape Cod Baseball League** offer a chance to see today's best college players before they become petulant overpaid pros. For an introduction to the Cape's geological and natural history, stop in at the Cape Cod National Seashore's **Salt Pond Visitor Center** (off Route 6A, Eastham, 255-3421).

Eating Out

Don't leave the Cape without tasting the chowder and clam cakes at **Captain Frosty's Fish And Chips** (219 Route 6A, Dennis, 385-8548); displayed on the wall is a collection of paper plates featuring faded autographs from the faded stars who've performed at the nearby Cape Playhouse ("Hey, look, there's Gavin McLeod!"). The curmudgeonly owner of **Jack's Outback** (161 Main St., Yarmouthport, 362-6690) will serve you insults with your breakfast. Some other best bets: **Spiritus Pizza** (500 Main St., Hyannis, 775-2955, and 190 Commercial St., Provincetown, 487-2808), **Sam Diego's** for Tex-Mex (950 Route 132, Hyannis, 771-8816), the **Box Lunch** for picnic food (nine locations around the Cape), and **Four Seas Ice Cream** (360 S. Main St., Centerville, 775-1394). **Gina's By The Sea** (134 Taunton Ave., Dennis, 385-3213) has everything you want in a gourmet restaurant without the snooty waiters and rigid dress code.

Tourist Mode

The highest density of quaint New England villages is along **Route 6A**, which stretches the length of the peninsula from Sandwich to Provincetown. Finish your drive with a walk along **Commercial St.** in Provincetown. Some of the strip's more bizarre little shops have been squeezed out by boutiques pitching over-priced fashions, so the best attraction is the street parade of drag queens. (The second best attraction? The sight of shocked middle-American moms and dads trying to cover their kids' eyes.) **The Wellfleet Drive-In Theater** (51 Route 6, 349-7176) is one of a dying breed, so catch a flick while the place is still around. Mini-golf courses, on the other hand, are thriving; **Pirate's Cove** (728 Main St., S. Yarmouth, 394-6200) is the most architecturally garish of the bunch, making it a must-see if you want a taste of Cape Cod kitsch. The **Burgess Park Frisbee Golf Course** (Route 149, south of Race Lane, Marstons Mills) offers a hipper alternative. No trip to the Cape is complete without a swing past the **Kennedy compound** in Hyannisport, but the gates, walls and ten-foot shrubs will keep you from seeing JFK, Jr. and his rowdy cousins. The Cape's next best-known wildlife can be viewed from the various **whale-watch cruise ships** that operate out of Barnstable and Provincetown Harbors. If all this activity leaves you hungry, swing by **Cape Cod Potato Chips** (Breeds Hill Road, Hyannis, 775-7253), which offers free tours, complete with samples, on weekdays.

Beaches

The crowds head to **Craigville Beach** (Centerville) to ogle buff guys and gals, **Nauset Beach** (Orleans) for surfing, and **Coast Guard Beach** (Eastham) for a postcard-worthy version of a Cape Cod beach. As for the lesser-known quiet beaches, well, that's one secret I just won't share. NMM

All phone numbers are in the 508 area code.
Bill O'Neill is the lifestyle editor and music columnist for the Cape Cod Times.

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RON SCHLOERB

As a year-rounder, I'm not supposed to tell you certain things about Cape Cod. It's bad enough that you tourists bring traffic to a crawl during the three months between Memorial Day and Labor Day, but you also fill up our beaches, nightclubs and restaurants. The unspoken deal among locals is that there are some places that are best kept secret. So it's at great risk of alienating some friends that I'm sharing these insider's tips with you. I figure the upside is that the dollars you toss around in the summer will help keep some of these businesses from going under during the blissfully quiet remainder of the year.

Live Music and Clubs

Local musicians worth checking out include singer-songwriters McCawley Burke, Christa Dulude and Anna Whiteley. Two Cape bands on the rise are made up of high school students: Fortress and Cast Of Lyndon come across like teen-aged versions of Throwing Muses and Pavement, respectively. Then there are the local legends, the Incredible Casuals, a band that sounds like the Kinks after the Davies brothers have been in the sun too long. The Casuals have been playing the Sunday happy-hour show at the **Beachcomber** (Old Cahoon Hollow Road, Wellfleet, 349-6055) for two decades. Housed in a former sea-rescue station, the 'Comber always has the Cape's best summer music line-up, bringing in performers like Maceo Parker, the Dambuilders, Come and Burning Spear. More traditional fare is offered by the **Melody Tent** (21 West Main St., Hyannis, 775-5630), which hosts annual appearances by Steve and Eydie, Don Rickles and Engelbert Humperdinck, although most years' lineups includes a wild card like David Byrne or Richard Thompson.

The Cape has dozens of meat-market nightclubs, but if you're

willing to put up with a bad Top 40 cover band in exchange for a decent chance of scoring, try the **Mill Hill Club** (164 Main St., West Yarmouth, 775-2580) or **Pufferbellies** (183 Iyanough Road, Hyannis, 790-4300). The **First Encounter Coffeehouse** (220 Samoset Road, Eastham, 255-5438) hosts a range of national folk and blues acts. In addition to serving gourmet java and excellent sandwiches, the **Prodigal Son** (10 Ocean St., Hyannis, 771-1337) hosts poetry readings, open-mic nights and shows by regional rock and folk musicians. **Joe's Twin Villa** (195 Old Mill Road, Osterville, 428-9861) is one of the Cape's oddest venues: a worn-out looking blues shack in the Cape's most chichi village. But the most way-out Cape musical experience is the burlesque show by Philo Rockwell King, now in his 39th year at the **Sand Bar** (4 Lighthouse Road, West Dennis, 398-2244). The King of Korn delivers a mix of racy jokes and boogie-woogie.

Music Stores and Radio

You already know to avoid the national chain stores, unless you're looking for an over-priced N'Sync CD. The New England chain **Newbury Comics** (Festival Mall, Route 132, Hyannis, 778-0747) has the Cape's deepest stock of alternative music. Locally owned **Spinnaker Records** (176 Main St., Falmouth, 457-1796, and 596 Main St., Hyannis, 778-4122) and sister-store **Strangeways** (289 Commercial St., Provincetown, 487-4416) have a quirky selection of new and used discs. The closet-sized **Instant Karma** (121 Route 6A, Orleans, 240-7166), which calls itself "the world's smallest record store," specializes in used vinyl. Ask owner Dylan Stanton to tell you why vinyl sounds better than CDs, but only if you have an hour or two to spare.

Radio offerings are lean. Best bets are two stations with limited range: Cape Cod Community College's **WKKL** (90.7), which alternates student programming and National Public Radio, and the community-operated **WOMR** (92.1), with its eclectic mix of

(continued on page 81)

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