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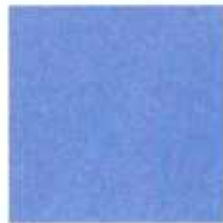
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The Rap goes on

Why do your readers totally freak out every time you put a woman in a tank top on your cover? You must have a large readership in the fundamentalist Muslim countries. Hey! Why don't you just stop putting women on the cover? This way no one will be offended!

Nick Berry [dwecho@juno.com]

Getting Limp

Hot damn! Am I one of these people? While I don't think the DJ Rap cover was in sync with *CMJ New Music Monthly's* regular slew of semi-rock star covers, I didn't find it nearly as inappropriate as everyone else did. And referring to DJ Rap as a "slut with [a] turntable," or asking when you will "...go back to putting real artists on the cover," as two of your fair, non-judgmental readers did, is a little bit overboard. So, we discredit someone because they show a little bit of skin? Is this still a Puritanical society? And why am I certain that you won't have nearly as many people write in to ask what the hell you were thinking with letting Limp Bizkit slip by on the cover? I will take a moment to discredit them as artists not because I've seen Fred Durst, et al. attired in little more than a skimpy mini-shirt, but because they are homophobic, misogynist, talentless bad-pop-culture-music cuisinartists who have absolutely nothing new to offer music that hasn't been done just as badly before. Remember, if you can actually make a George Michael song sound worse, it's time to reevaluate your position in life.

Star [WedronStar@aol.com]

Get real

So I finally got around to reading your Limp Bizkit spread, and when I finished, I found myself asking, "Was that for real?" I'm not sure if it was a satirical take on the band by Kurt Reighley or not. From the article the guys in the band, or more specifically Fred Durst sounds like an overcompensating, insecure, too-famous-too-soon dude. Even the pictures for the layout were way too cheesy for real (but maybe that was the point... part of the satirical message).

Some of the comments that stand out include "I'm still just like you," "spending time with his black friends, going to parts of town other white kids never saw," and "more than half my friends are gay." The whole article sounds more like an apology by Durst for becoming famous and an opportunity to say, "Hey I'm not racist or homophobic."

It just seemed so over the top, it made me wonder if Durst has any white straight friends. And guess what, Durst, you're not just like me. For godsake, I hope you're just like you! I mean be the individual you are and ride this stardom thing as long as you can, accept it and enjoy it. Most rock stars started at the bottom, in the mosh pit, we know that we don't need you reassuring us that you're no different. I mean really, here's a band that produced an album of decent catchy tunes, became real big real fast, got the breaks and saw the opportunities and is now flying high on its laurels. Good for them. And I hope the band accepts and embraces their fame 'cause denying it won't make it go away.

Craig Mosley (Guelph, Ontario) Canada, eh!

Rock is Limp

I'll be brief. I've read the August issue and I've listened to the CD. Now I'm going to rush out and buy as many jazz CDs as I can. Please call me as soon as something interesting starts happening in rock. Thanks.

James Chabot [jchabot@vermontech.com]

Bizkits are done

Imagine my annoyance when talentless hacks Limp Bizkit leered goonishly from the cover of *CMJ*. Listen—every other lowest common demonimator publication already is waving its trendily tattooed ass in the direction of drunken pre-teens loitering in fast-food parking lots with itchy disposable income fingers... no need for you to do it too. Besides, that audience is still holding June's *CMJ New Music Monthly* cover below eye level, tilting its lower end away from them, hoping they can thereby peer further into DJ Rap's cleavage. More music, less showbiz, please.

Jeffrey Norman [jnor@csl.uvm.edu]

I can say with some pride that I loitered in fast-food restaurant parking lots as a drunken teen. Actually, I was sadly sober, but loiter I did, because I had nothing better to do except crank up some ugly noise. Which begat uglier noise, which begat working at college radio, a record store and eventually a magazine. And which is maybe why I refuse to judge music by who listens to it, and why I so like way this record sounds really loud. Individual results may vary. —Ed.

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On The Web: <http://www.cmj.com/>

NewMM/nmmsub.html

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CMJ
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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

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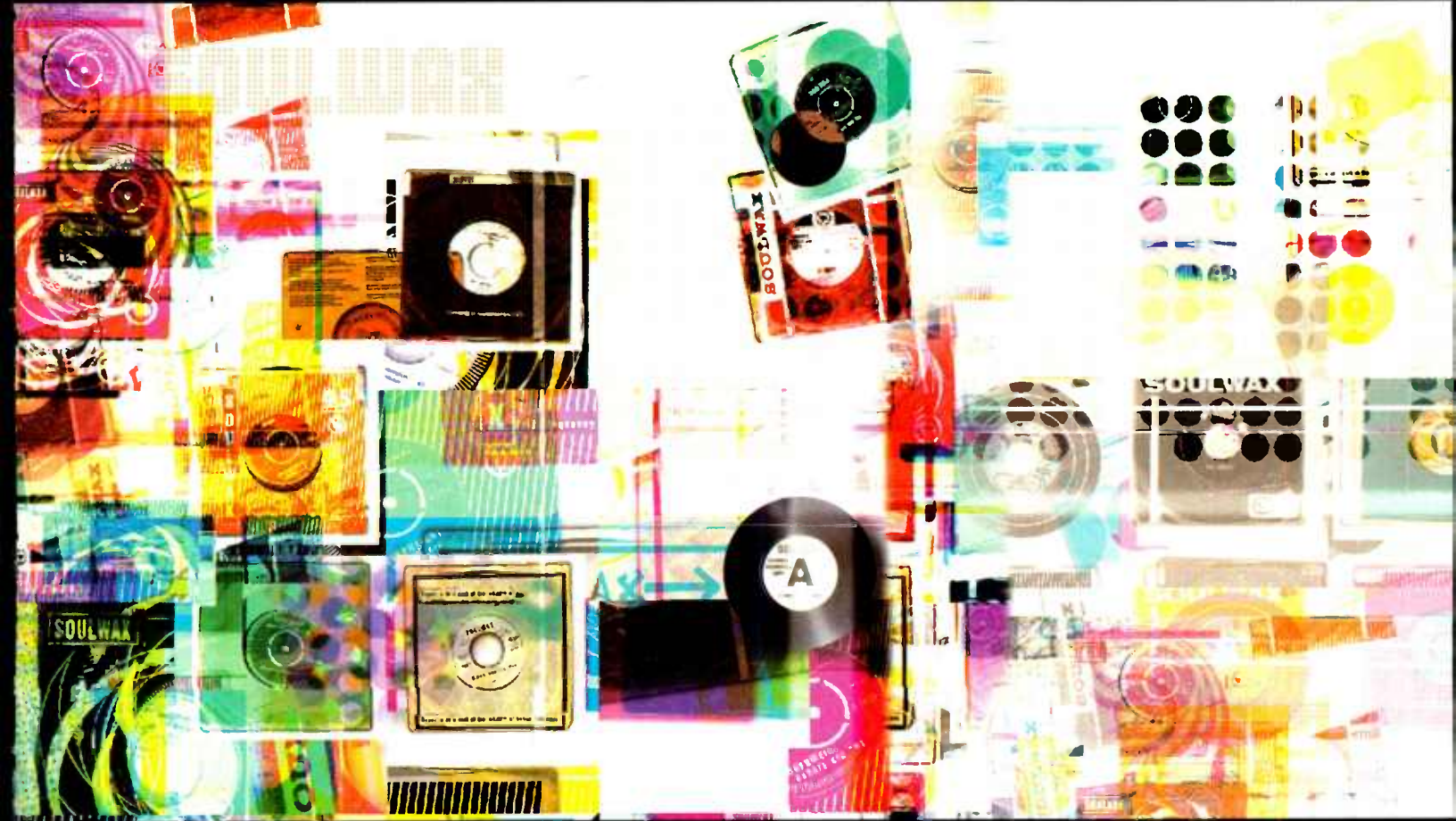
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LOVE UNLIMITED

Stephin Merritt writes better, and more, songs than anybody else for **MAGNETIC FIELDS'** *69 Love Songs*.

STORY: ANDREA MOED PHOTO: BRIAN INATSUKA

Stephin Merritt now knows what it feels like to be shat on by the object of his devotion. He has come to recognize desperation, and the threat of solitude. But clearly, he's coping: No sooner than he notices his new Chihuahua puppy assuming the telltale squat by his shoes does he scoop the dog up in one hand and plant him on a nearby square of newspaper. Mission accomplished, he tucks Irving (named for Irving Berlin) under one arm and the puppy falls asleep in his lap.

"I can't leave him for a minute," Merritt says softly. "He starts whining because he doesn't know I'm coming back. He thinks I'm leaving him to die." That sounds a bit melodramatic, but what else would you expect? Primal feelings like loneliness, fear and the craving for affection are at the heart of nearly every one of the songs he writes for the Magnetic Fields. "I've written lots of songs about abandonment," Merritt confirms, adding, "My characters are always attempting suicide... they're pretty vulnerable."

All the same, no one dresses up desperation in sophisticated dreams quite like Merritt. His arrangements have played nimbly with country, blues, wall-of-sound pop, and most other genres in the American songbook. His inimitably clever lyrics suggest that he missed an historic appointment with mid-century musical theatre. When he chooses a theme for a Magnetic Fields album, such as miniaturism (*Distant Plastic Trees*), road tripping (*The Charm of the Highway Strip*), or escape (*Holiday*), he comes to it with the wisdom and the gimmickry of centuries up his sleeve.

For their newest record, Merritt took on not only the ponderous theme of the love song, but the challenge of writing 69 of them in only a few months. In this case, at least, love was no match for him. "I wrote about a hundred, and threw a lot away," he says. The result is a magnanimous triple CD, with 13 songs per disk. Along with the usual band members, three guest vocalists shared the singing duties.

(continued on page 12)

"MY CHARACTERS ARE ALWAYS ATTEMPTING SUICIDE"

BRAND NEW, YOU'RE RETRO

"Basically," Merritt deadpans, "I did this huge, epic record because I didn't have anything qualitative to say. I wanted to say something quantitative... I was trying to do an Andy Warhol style manufacturing of love songs. I think that's the best way of ending this century." Leafing through the lyric sheets, it's easy to imagine the songs lined up like cards in a Hallmark shop, with a section for infatuation, another for free-floating bitterness, and so on. There are lines that seem custom-made for the personals: "Eligible, not too stupid/intelligible, and cute as Cupid/knowledgeable, but not always right/salvageable, and free for the night." Songs like "The Night You Can't Remember" cry out to be played on the stage: "No rose conveyed your sentiments/ Not even a petunia/ but you've got vague presentiments/ and I've got little Junior." The similes alone ("Love is like a bottle of gin," "A pretty girl is like a violent crime," etc., etc.) should supply anyone with love-letter-fodder for the next few decades.

If Merritt's abundant words get scattered to the winds, if they launch a million personal ads and covers good and bad, Merritt's bandmate and manager Claudia Gonson will be quite content. "I agree with Stephin that songs are commodities," she says. "They can be these integrity-filled things you sing solo on stage with a guitar, or you can put them into a beer commercial." Gonson is a self-described bystander in the songwriting process. "The [writing and] recording part is very much Stephin's," she explains. "Once we start to translate these songs live, it becomes more of a full band experience." Even so, the recording of *69 Love Songs* gave her a feel for Love writ large. "There was an understanding that the love song is a universal theme, so it lends itself to extreme play. Each time you feel you've reached the limits, you can get into a whole new idea of what it means."

For now, though, Gonson has to concentrate on learning to play the darned things. The band is about to kick off their U.S. tour with a two-night revue of all 69 tunes, with even more guests joining in. Originally, says Gonson, "the idea for the revue was more like a piano and a woman reclining lazily on it, wearing a slinky dress and a tiara—a Rainbow Room kind of thing. Now, it's more like a record release party." That's probably just as well. As the record makes clear, there are times when love is just too overwhelming to be kept intimate. **NMM**



LES RYTHMES DIGITALES'
Jacques Lu Cont mines '80s synth pop but sounds fantastically *au courant*.

With his slim figure, impish grin and maraschino cherry-red pixie cut, Jacques Lu Cont looks like he just stepped out of the pages of UK style bible *The Face* circa 1981. The mischievous 21-year-old's hairdo may have made his mother cry, but image is essential for pop stars. "That's why it'll never be good enough for me to stand on a street corner in a baggy T-shirt."

Well, unless it reads FRANKIE SAYS... On his domestic debut, *Darkdancer* (Wall Of Sound-Astralwerks), the French-born London resident makes no secret of his devotion to sounds of the Reagan/Thatcher regimes, anchoring vintage synthesizers à la *Speak & Spell*-era Depeche Mode with contemporary dance beats. The Human League's pivotal *Dare* was a big inspiration. "I'd dismissed that album as shit because it had 'Don't You Want Me, Baby' on it," he confesses of his original reaction. When the record still sounded fresh 18 years later, his appraisal changed dramatically.

"Sometimes," the follow-up to LRD's breakout single "Jacques Your Body (Make Me Sweat)," even features Nik "Wouldn't It Be Good" Kershaw on vocals. Shannon ("Let the Music Play") also turns in a sparkling performance, on "Take A Little Time." Practically the only flashback favorite missing from *Darkdancer* is Grace Jones... but just barely. "She's beautiful, she's got a great voice, and she's an icon of mine," Lu Cont gushes. Unfortunately she's also expensive, and Jacques couldn't cough up her asking price.

If his family had gotten their way, Lu Cont would be working with divas of a different distinction. Both his folks were classical pianists, and lowbrow fare was verboten in the home. "My parents thought that pop music made you stupid... an inferior person," Jacques recalls. "The first single I bought, 'West End Girls' by the Pet Shop Boys, was literally put up on a high shelf." Eventually, they recanted, and he immersed himself in Prince, Duran Duran and New Order.

Yet Jacques doesn't plan on mining the new wave vein until he's tapped to star in a West End production of *Kajagoogoomania*. Jiggy hip-hop/R&B is his next proposed bill of fare. Shocked? Don't be. "I could make a record that sounds like Fatboy Slim now, but what's the point?" he concludes. "Who's going to remember me? They'll remember Fatboy Slim. But if in ten years time someone turns around and goes, 'Oh, Les Rythmes Digitales—he made an '80s album in 1999, and an R&B album in 2001. That was different...' then I've done something good."

>>>Kurt B. Reightley

RANDOM QUOTE: "The next time you see 20,000 people in such an ordered chaos and without a police state, let me know." >>>Dori Mondon, saranwarp.com, on why she prefers Burning Man to Woodstock.

RANDOM QUOTE: "Mr. Weiland came to the courthouse in a limousine and left in a sheriff's van," >>>Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney Norm Montrose on Scott Weiland's preferred methods of transportation.



GRIEVOUS ANGELS

For the lovely ladies of **FREAKWATER** the end is often just the beginning.

Janet Beveridge Bean and Catherine Irwin, musical partners for many years ("I think now we're saying 17; I think we said 13 for about five years," laughs Bean) are inseparable best friends who happen to live in different states. As teenagers growing up in Louisville, Kentucky, the two bonded over punk rock, then found inspiration playing bluegrass and country covers, which led to original songs. It is a testament to their egoless, creative approach that each can easily slip from lead to harmony vocals—Irwin's dusky, world-weary voice mirrored in her wildly expressive face, while Bean's fine features reflect her pristine soprano.

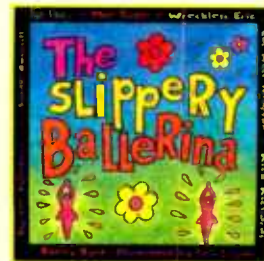
Bassist David Wayne Gay completes the core trio of Freakwater, whose gorgeous new *End Time* (Thrill Jockey) is the group's sixth album and its most fully realized work to date. With the help of Eric Heywood on guitar and pedal steel, drummer Steve Goulding and producer Brendan Bourke (who brought in a string section), *End Time* shimmers with the lush "Countryopolitan" sound of Nashville's Patsy Cline/Omar Bradley golden era, while still echoing the high lonesome laments and fiddle ditties of earlier Freakwater recordings.

Like blues musicians who play to stave off the demons, Bean and Irwin are no strangers to heartache. You know from the weight of her vocals that Irwin means it when she tells you that "the dirt beneath my nails is not from some field of flowers" ("Good For Nothing"). Sometimes this stance seems to conflict with the women's chatty, goofy personalities. At a recent performance, Bean, yukking it up with some Jagermeister, was clearly reluctant to launch into the gospel-inflected "My History," a song so steeped in sadness it dispels all other emotions. But sing it she did, knowing perhaps that it would be followed up by a tune like the giddy, grrrly "Queen Bee"—for whom the boys are "waxin' her legs and doin' her nails/Knittin' her sweaters with their pointy little tails."

Country music may inform all the songs Bean and Irwin write, and they may have deep indie rock roots—Freakwater is a key act on the highly regarded Thrill Jockey label, and Bean also plays with Chicago's Eleventh Dream Day—but their audience is as diverse as they come. "We're the band that people's parents like," says Irwin. "I'd like to be able to play at the Grand Ole Opry, but I would feel really odd if my audience was just people who go to see Barbara Mandrell." Bean notes that a friend of theirs who drives a psychiatric ambulance says they're a big hit with the emergency patients. Something in the middle would probably be perfect. >>>Steffie Nelson

WEIRD RECORD OF THE MONTH

What are Clay and Mark Harper, composers of the Daniel Johnston-meets-Hans Christian Andersen musical *The Slippery Ballerina* (Casino Music), thinking? A listen to this would-be children's record (it tells the story of Monkey, a tiny dancer who blows her chance at stardom and product endorsement by sweating profusely) leads one to believe that their record, which features an all-star cast of underground rockers, really isn't for kids at all. Only twentysomethings and up would chuckle at Moe Tucker croaking her way through the role of Monkey or snicker at former James Brown backing vocalist Bobby Byrd playing a Barry White-style MC. What's even weirder is that the Brothers Harper (did we mention Clay runs an Atlanta restaurant called Fellini's Pizza?) have imbued their record with anti-kid sentiments. Byrd warns the kids not to talk to him or touch his clothes, and Wreckless Eric, who plays one half of a Faginesque duo, cracks that some kid looks like a bleedin' potato. This wobbly alt-rock community theater makes Disney's earnest grandeur—happy meal tie-ins and all—look less evil. >>>Carlene Bauer



TOURS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

It's a bird, it's a plane...

Supa Kings Back, Supafuzz, Superdrag, Superkreme, Super Falling, Supersilent, Superzero, Supersnazz, Super G, Supersoul, Superstar Rookie, Jesus Christ Superstar, Superchunk, Super Furry Animals, Supertones, Supernatural, Superstar Disco Club, Supermarket, Superdude, Supersuckers, Supergrass and Supertramp.

LABEL PROFILE

"When I see Kurt Loder—and I will see him," sputters Flip records founder Jordan Schur, angrily, "I'm just going to fucking tell it to him. He really tried to hurt them." Schur's



outburst is in response to what he perceives as attacks by the MTV talking head on his label's star, Limp Bizkit, in connection with the mess that was Woodstock '99. The passion and protectiveness is typical of Schur, a hands-on label owner and music fan. He often tours with his bands, and believes in "breaking them" not through MTV or commercial radio, but by developing a fan base with relentless touring. "Kids want bands that their parents can hate," continues Schur. "Loder didn't hurt my band. He hurt his own credibility. Because every kid that saw him mouthing off on MTV was like, 'What is this guy talking about? Get him out of here.'" Schur didn't just do it for the nookie; he started Flip when Kurt Cobain died, looking to fill a "hard rock with pop sensibilities" void. He left his family's lucrative import-export business and got the label running with his own cash. Today the label sports such aggro-heavyweights as Limp Bizkit and Staind, and rising stars Cold and Dope.

IN MY ROOM

KRIS BONES

is a.k.a. Genaside II. His debut is *Ad Finite* (Durban Poison).

"The spare room is where all the shit goes down," he says



20,000 pieces of vinyl - "CDs are banned from that room. Under no circumstances are CDs to be in there!"

A Roland 303 - "It doesn't get used because there's so many digital things that can recreate it. Same for my 808, my 909, all my old analog keyboards. If it makes a funny noise, buy it."

Big picture of the cover of *Love Supreme* by John Coltrane - "It takes up a whole wall. When you get drunk and walk in, you're like 'Fuck!'—there's a massive black eye looking at you. But it's only Coltrane, trying to tell you it's a love supreme."

All kinds of weed paraphernalia and ashtrays - "There's probably more ashtrays in the studio than in all of London. I don't smoke anymore, but people come in and smoke. The walls have changed colors from it."

Assortment of empty cups - "They once had coffee or tea. Now there's things growing in them. It's not the neatest room in the house."

ARCHER PREWITT'S

latest is *White Sky* (Carrot Top).



8 Sam Prekop paintings - "My favorite is a little orangey-brown one with lots of little tiny pieces of info at the bottom. It looks like Vegas out in the desert."

Acme Novelty Library - "Chris Ware's latest comic book. Very powerful, very moving."

"I've been really getting into Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*."

Green homemade drafting table - "I made it from a shelving unit. It looks more like a medieval monk's drafting table."

A gumball machine - "I put my own little toys in it. It's not properly stocked at the moment."



FROM MOSCOW, WITH FUNK



CRESTINA VELIA FORCINA

DJ VADIM is Russia's foremost hip-hop émigré.

Seems like everyone's favorite Russian expat hip-hop producer living in London, DJ Vadim, has finally gotten it right. After a notable period of toiling around with abstract sounds and minimalist beats—progressive and interesting but not very endearing to even the most open of hip-hop heads—Vadim has finally hit his stride with his latest album, *USSR: Life From The Other Side*.

Through two previous albums, releases from alter egos Andre Gurov and The Isolationist (with New York underground rhyme trio Anti-Pop Consortium) and his duties for his own Jazz Fudge label, Vadim has become known for making creeping beats collide with a flurry of thrift-store samples to form scintillating, body-rocking sonic soundscapes. But he found working with US and UK underground MCs on *USSR: Life From The Other Side* to be transforming.

"I don't want to work with MCs just for the sake of working with MCs," he says, "but yeah, I think it's some of my best stuff." The array of voices is eclectic, including the feisty El-P from Company Flow, underground heroes Dilated Peoples, otherworldly Kool Keith protégé Moshun Man, defiant poet Sarah Jones, and newcomer Blurum 13. "I didn't want to have ten people on the record who all sound the same," Vadim explains. "There's a lot of DJ collaborative LPs out there—Funkmaster Flex, Pete Rock... and I didn't want to sound anything like those projects."

But the beats still come first. "I want to make beats that sound like myself," he asserts. "I want to make my tracks as individual as possible. If I would've started working with MCs from the beginning, then now, the music would be secondary. I think the balance is getting there now—I've got vocals, music, scratching, instrumental bits. It's all starting to come together."

>>>JAZZBO

Q & A MARC ALMOND



Open All Night (Instinct) is Marc Almond's first Stateside release of all new material in almost a decade. And befitting someone who's been out of the US limelight for so long, Almond's return is nothing less than a multi-media extravaganza. Aside from the new album and tour, this fall sees the release of his book of poetry and lyrics, *Beautiful Twisted Night*, and his tell-all autobiography, *Tainted Life*. And to top that, there's talk of a new Soft Cell album and tour next year. Who knows, they might even play "Tainted Love."

>>>Sarah Pratt

Q: How is it working with Soft Cell partner Dave Ball again?

A: We've written about nine or ten songs and we were so excited by what we were doing that we were like, 'Well, this has got to be a Soft Cell album.' I mean the songs that we've been writing sound like Soft Cell songs but with very much a '90s feel. I think it was important to us that we weren't going to do a retro thing that was going to be like, 'Lets try and record the album that we didn't record in 1985' or something. It's still a little bit up in the air, but hopefully if it all happens there will be a brand new Soft Cell album and a tour next year.

Q: How might the reader feel after reading your autobiography?

A: Exhausted! I mean, I read it and I just felt absolutely drained and exhausted by the end of it. Though there are a lot of dark things in the book and there are a lot of funny things as well. It's a lot of me learning a lot of lessons. It's also a journey through the music business and the whole absurdity of the music business, the bizarreness of it and everything, and the way I've dealt with it. It's a book about my music in a way. I've gone through all my albums and said what I was going through when I did these albums and why I did them and I've kind of re-reviewed them in a way. Would I have done that the same now? Which was crap and which was good? But there's also the personal stuff in there as well.

Q: How do you remember the '80s?

A: I think it was just a kind of soulless greedy time. When I think of the good times of the '80s, I think about the early '80s, which was really a hangover from the '70s. I had a great time around the early '80s. It was a wonderful time for me I can't deny that. I got to record three albums in New York. You know, I was a kid from a seaside town on the North of England that was given fame. I met lots of interesting people. I took too many drugs. But the latter half of the '80s for me was a very dark time. Here in Britain it was a very conservative, hypocritical climate. It was a time of greed. It wasn't a glamorous time. It sucked basically. Yes, there was some great music—great, fantastic. Let's celebrate that great pop music by all means. Please don't bring back the hairstyles and fashions, though. I'm afraid I can't get into this fond nostalgia for the '80s. I'm sorry I just can't.

hippest band coming up. I heard Underworld a long time ago and knew something would happen there. When I hear >>>Barry Manilow on why Underworld writes the songs, they write the songs.

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- Body Movin' (Fatboy Slim Remix)
- Young MC
- Busta Move
- Booker T & the MG's
- Green Onions

SIDE TWO

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- Horny
- Touch & Go
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- Cha Cha Cha
- Perry Farrell
- Magic Carpet Ride (Steir's Remix)
- Run DMC
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ZAP MAMA

A Ma Zone

Luaka Bop

Zap Mama is essentially just one hot talented Mama: Belgian-bred, Zaire-born Maria Daulne. Her exquisite spirited singing in French, English and Wolof is the locus from which *A Ma Zone's* other charms—catchy polyphonics, riveting syncopation, and subtle offbeat instrumentation—emanate. But what makes *A Ma Zone*, Daulne's fourth album, sound so unlike anything else is that while her past work managed to make traditional music sound hip and cutting edge, here she fuses old world African rhythms and Pygmy chants with hip-hop and drum 'n' bass. Aptly, as Daulne fearlessly cross pollinates, she's assisted in concocting her bewitching musical brew by a diverse group of artists from members of the Roots to "Soul Makossa" sax man Manu Dibango. On the dance gem "Rafiki," Daulne's pretty singing crests over Wolof harmonies, scratching, and syrupy basslines, before flowing into a funky rap accompanied by the Roots' Black Thought; on the stirring "Call Waiting," phone bleeps, sparse strings and drum 'n' bass beats accentuate her Björk-like vocals. And on "Gissie," an extraordinary chorus of backing voices issues thick, sucking drum sounds and burbling percussive scats. Although Western musical forms dominate (almost to a fault), *A Ma Zone* blends a melting pot of sounds into something cutting-edge and exotic, like a trip through some breathtaking tropical forest.

>>> Sarah Pratt



SLOAN

Between The Bridges

Murderecords

Sloan has released one near-classic (1994's *Twice Removed*, unfortunately hard to find in the US) and four maddeningly disjointed affairs peppered with pop gems. The cover art for *Between The Bridges* seems lifted directly from a bin of used '70s LPs, and the accompanying music would be at home in the same rack. There are fewer immediately hummable tunes than on last year's appealing *Navy Blues*, but repeated listens reveal Sloan's usual share of treasures. The Canadian quartet's penchant for tight four-part harmonies helps bridge a widening schism between heavy metal riffage and airy mainstream confections along the lines of old-time craftsmen like Stephen Bishop and 10cc. The most successful tracks blend these attributes, such as the Cheap Trick-esque "Friendship" and the somewhat jangler "All By Ourselves." Sloan has long been blessed/cursed with four separate songwriters and vocalists, ensuring variety but also hampering consistency. *Between The Bridges* instills a sense of cohesion to this smorgasbord by segueing together virtually all of its 12 tracks into a non-stop ride. The resulting effect is akin to a long set on a mid-'70s album rock station. I've tuned out my share of commercial free jams, but Sloan continues to deliver often enough to warrant patience through its less-than-perfect moments.

>>> Gise Sarvady



DJ SPOOKY VS. THE FREIGHT ELEVATOR QUARTET

File Under: Futurism

Caipirinha Records

Despite his annoying desire to justify his musical theses with an arsenal of academic buzzwords and lofty scholarly ideas, when it comes down to it, DJ Spooky sure can spit out a beat and some wacked-out subtextual layers. He's also a pretty bright bulb when collaborating, and has teamed with a great one in the Freight Elevator Quartet, a NYC group who, like Spooky, seeks to bridge the highfalutin' fancy and the low-brow freaky. The concept: *File Under: Futurism* is "a commentary on cultural and aesthetic oppositions, through a musical exposition and juxtaposition of early twentieth century Futurism (imagine a sublime technology) and the exponentially accelerated culture in which we live today." For the thick headed among us: They wanna rock the professors and the punks, and seek to harness the new technology to create something smart and pretty. Who doesn't? They do, however, succeed grandly here; while the pretension level is high, so are both the adrenalin and beauty. This is Spooky's most fully realized and rigorous creation to date, with rapid-fire jungle riffs that the Quartet levels with gorgeous string arrangements. For every wind sprint, there is a wind-down, and for every dose of speed, a dash of Demerol. An excellent, textured, smart musical thesis, despite the Foucaultian falderal.

>>> Randall Roberts



SUNSET VALLEY

Boyscout Superhero

Sugar Free

Writing a basic pop song shouldn't be *that* hard. How difficult can it be to string together three or four chords, right? Yet it's a talent, skill, or maybe just a knack that eludes nine out of ten bands who try it. Sunset Valley, though, is one of the few who make it all sound so easy. Singer/songwriter Herman Jolly bangs out insanely catchy two-minute jingles like it's second nature. He and his band of Portland scene veterans, who include former Heatmiser (as in the band that spawned Elliott Smith) drummer Tony Lash, roam the pop universe in search of all manner of hooks to hang a couple of tuneful guitar riffs on. The slower, heavier tracks on *Boyscout Superhero* make a convincing case that it's worthwhile to support the ailing Northwestern genre known as grunge. Others have a clipped, bouncy new wave sensibility, thanks, in part, to the presence of rinky-dink Cars-style keyboards. The best tracks, though, owe a debt to the Pixies: little ditties like "Solid Goldmine" are crunchy, manic, virtually bursting with deranged energy. *Boyscout Superhero* is a portrait of a band who are equally happy playing power-pop, punk-pop, grunge-pop, indie-pop—anything, really, as long as there are hooks aplenty and the word "pop" gets prominent billing.

>>> David Jarman



SUNSET VALLEY
BOYSCOUT SUPERHERO

OUT:

October 12

FILE UNDER:

Snap-and-crackle pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Posies, Weezer, Superdrag.

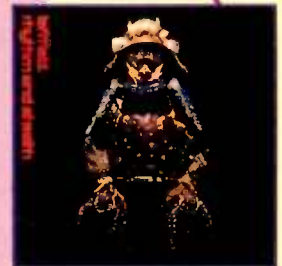
LEFTFIELD

Rhythm And Stealth

Higher Ground-Columbia

Paul Daley and Neil Barnes have spent a solid decade at the center of the British dance music scene, only occasionally receding to the periphery in order to regroup, record, and emerge with music that leaves their peers in shock. Considering that *Leftism* was released in 1993, the group has forced listeners into an interregnum in which the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born. But, the new has now arrived with a grandeur and power that is unmistakably characteristic of Leftfield's singular vision. And, yet, it sounds like nothing else the duo has ever recorded. The much sought-after singles, "Afrika Shox" and "Phat Planet" have been objects of intense searching by transpotters on both sides of the Atlantic for some time. The wait is now over. Opening with the stentorian "Dusted," which features now-renowned British rapper Roots Manuva, and the electro-charged "Phat Planet," this album never lets go of its tremendous forward momentum. "Dub Gussett" is a subdued, glowering dub exercise. The standout here is unquestionably "6/8 War," a fusion of steel-plated electro drum patterns and whispers from the echo chamber. Cheshire Cat provides the mournful roots vocals on "Chant of a Poor Man," an Adrian Sherwood/Creation Rebel-esque piece with a loping rhythm track. If another six years elapses before the next record from Leftfield, it will certainly be worth the wait.

>>> Tim Maslett



OUT:

September 28.

FILE UNDER:

Dancefloor force majeure.

R.I.Y.L.:

Chemical Brothers, Prodigy, Orbital.

THE SADIES

Pure Diamond Gold

Bloodshot Records

Toronto is a long way from the blue grass fields of Kentucky and the riptide surfs of Cal-i-for-ni-yay, but that hasn't stopped the Sadies from handling country music with Nashville precision and laying into surf tunes like they were born on the beach. Like most of Bloodshot's "insurgent country" bumpkins, the Sadies add a twist of punk and a healthy dose of irreverent humor to lift these songs out of the nostalgia rut. *Pure Diamond Gold* draws on the sparseness of acoustic folk, the blurring speed of hot-picking bluegrass, and the reverbed buzz of surf guitars, with little touches of banjo, dobro and mandolin, so expertly that you quickly become aware that this is no amateur hour. In fact, guitarist Dallas Good and his mandolin and fiddle-playing brother Travis (joined in the Sadies by suave drummer Mike Belitsky and dapper upright bassist Sean Dean) are the scions of the Good Brothers, one of Canada's most famous country bands. But the Good progeny took divergent paths before forming the Sadies—Travis honed his skills on tour with the family while Dallas turned his adolescent attention to punk rock. They find a common ground in the Sadies by having some serious fun with everything from gospel ("Higher Power") to barroom blues ("It's Nothing To Me").

>>> Lois Maffeo



OUT:

October 5.

FILE UNDER:

Surfin' bluegrass.

R.I.Y.L.:

The Phantom Surfers, Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet, Southern Culture on the Skids.

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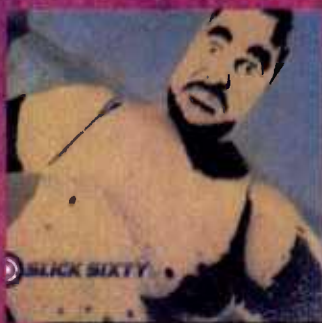
Local San Francisco legends including Mark Farina, John Howard, Joshua, Jeno, and Garth have carved out a new sound in the global house community, bringing together the deepest underground textures with chunky-funky rhythms. The "San Francisco Sessions" showcases the best of this collective. The first series installment features Mark Farina. Twelve years of his musical experimentation, crossing the boundaries of soul, jazz, and electronic rhythms.



QUASI

Field Studies

One of the foremost purveyors of underground pop. Every element that made Quasi's previous albums widely acclaimed—condense songwriting, arching melodies, and dead on harmonies atop occasionally dangerous and always propulsive rhythms—is further developed on "Field Studies".



SLICK SIXTY

Nibs and Nabs

The debut full-length follow up to "The Wrestler" single, which received a rave review in *Melody Maker* and *NME's* *Vibes* Single of the Week. Infusing bass-induced melodies with big beats, tasty samples, scratch wizardry, and live horns to create a new dimension in trip-hop.



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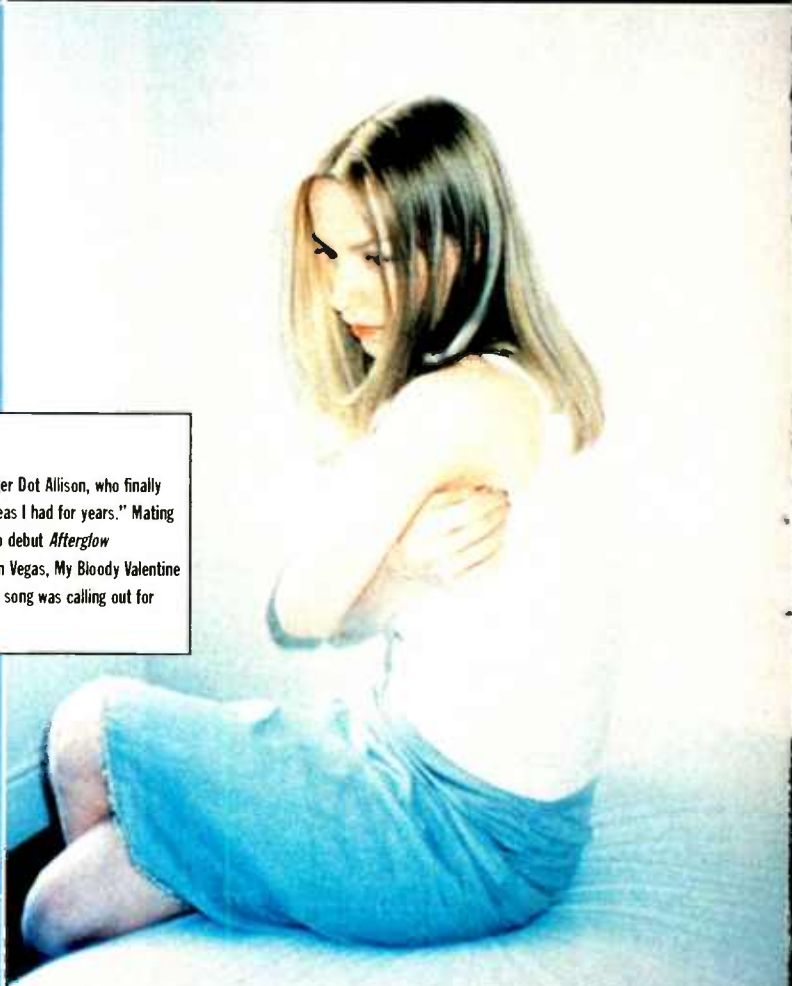
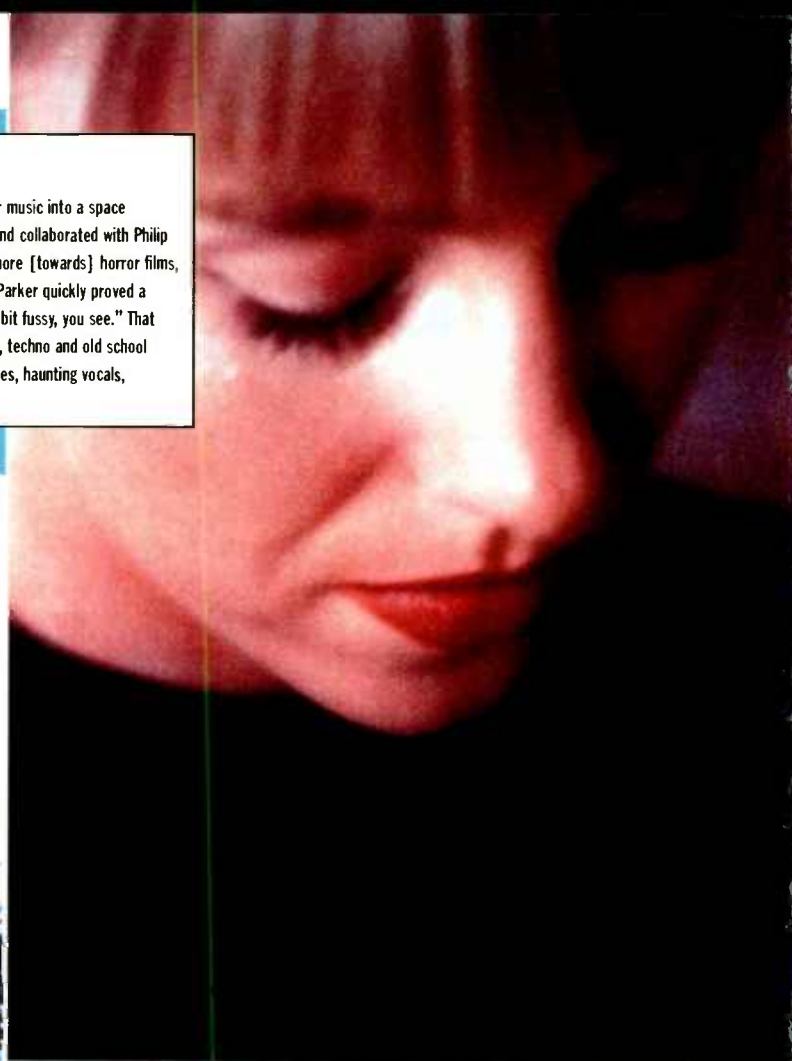
ANDREA PARKER

UK DJ/producer/cellist Andrea Parker reportedly owns over 3,000 sound effects albums. NASA incorporated her music into a space documentary and the Royal Ballet used a track in a TV commercial. She's remixed Steve Reich and Sakamoto, and collaborated with Philip Glass; could soundtrack work be next? "That's exactly what I'd like to do," she asserts. "I would love to veer more [towards] horror films, and frighten all the little children." Although she got her start singing anonymously on hardcore rave anthems, Parker quickly proved a restless spirit. "I thought, 'I just can't sing other people's music,'" she says. Now she does it all herself. "I'm a bit fussy, you see." That fussiness has paid off on her own volume of Stud!o K7's *DJ Kicks* series, an impressive cross-section of hip-hop, techno and old school electro, and her long-delayed debut *Kiss My Arp* (Mo'Wax-Beggars Banquet), an hour's worth of slithering grooves, haunting vocals, resonant bass and curious soundbytes guaranteed to unsettle kids of all ages. >>> Lydia Vanderloo



BILLIONAIRE

Well, that's certainly a galling choice of names for a band, isn't it? Hyper Billionaire frontman Marcus Tompkins knows it, though, and that silly grandiosity was exactly the point when his bombastic Atlanta rock quartet took it on. "It was very memorable and huge and... well, kind of obnoxious!" he laughs. "It was meant to be tongue-in-cheek, honestly. When we came up with it we thought that it was funny, and kind of the wrong thing to do so we said, 'Fuck it! Let's do it!'" But it's not entirely facetious, either, as the band's Slash-London debut, *Ascension*, with its explosive anthems and dramatic song titles (i.e. "Someday I'll Leave It All," "Never Going Back," "Never Get Enough") loudly proves. While Tompkins is quick to cite the huge presence of legends like The Who and Led Zeppelin ("giant, stadium rock kinds of bands") as inspiration, he throws open the window to Billionaire's sound when he describes his late-'80s adolescence: "I was always one of those guys that watched both *120 Minutes* and *Headbanger's Ball*. I was kind of caught in the middle." And so is *Ascension*, the perfect album for serious music fans with a soft spot for the giddiness of Reagan-era rock 'n' roll. >>> Cheryl Botchick



DOT ALLISON

Six years is an eternity in the UK music scene. But that's how long fans have waited for a peep from Scottish singer Dot Allison, who finally resurfaced last spring with a Sub Pop 7-inch, "Colour Me." "I never stopped writing," she claims. "There were ideas I had for years." Mating '60s pop song simplicity with enveloping, psychedelic arrangements and dubbed-out beats, the blonde siren's solo debut *Afterglow* (Deconstruction-Arista) picks up where her former outfit One Dove left off. Among the guests credited — Death In Vegas, My Bloody Valentine — there's one truly impressive name: Hal David (as in "Bacharach and..."), lyricist on "Did I Imagine You?" "The song was calling out for him." And what if he'd said no? "I just didn't think about it," she laughs. >>> Kurt B. Reighley



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UP MUSIC FOR

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JANET WEISS



QUASI: A DRUM KIT, A ROXICHORD ORGAN AND ONE DIVORCED COUPLE.

DOWN PEOPLE

STORY: RICHARD MARTIN PHOTOS: JOHN CLARK

For a young music fan, the release day of a favorite band's new album rivals any event short of the last day of school before summer vacation. The process itself can be exhilarating, from the agony of hoarding allowance to the thrill of the initial glimpse of the disc to the tension

SAM COOMES

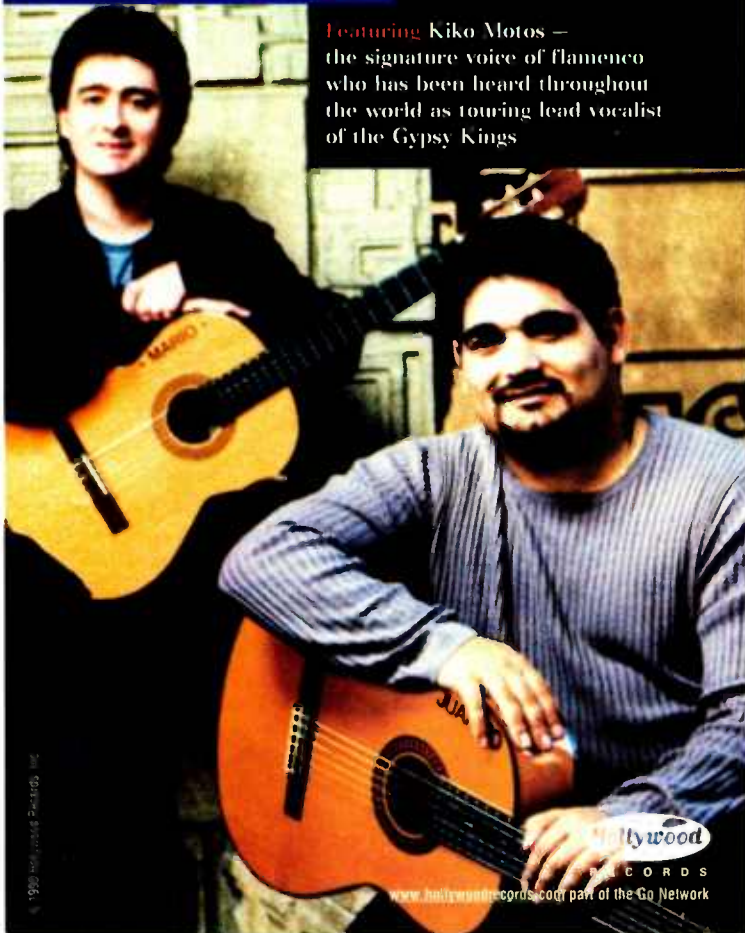


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of those first moments when the notes come ringing through the stereo—that instant when it's decided if the album rots or rocks.

Seated on a crowded patio of an Asian noodle restaurant in Seattle's trendy Belltown district, Quasi's Sam Coomes and Janet Weiss reflect on the first-day releases that juiced or goosed them. Weiss, the trusty, stylish drummer who splits her time between Quasi and the more high-profile Sleater-Kinney, remembers the joy of buying R.E.M.'s early records, and the anguish that sometimes accompanied being a diehard Replacements fan. "I was disappointed several times," she says with a trace of long-lingering bitterness.

Coomes, the wild-haired keyboard whiz and lead vocalist who's now in his mid-30s and the veteran of defunct bands like the Donner Party and Heatmiser, thinks back 20 years to his youth in Northern California and his early appreciation of Led Zeppelin.

"I would go down to Tower Records in El Toro and be there the first day," he recalls. "I remember doing that when *In Through The Out Door* came out and being like, 'Aw, this is not good.'"

Fans won't react the same way when they scurry off to the record shop (or log on to the online record store) to pick up Quasi's fourth album. *Field Studies* (Up) serves as a sort of sequel to the record that last year made this Portland, Oregon, duo one of indie-rock's great hopes, *Featuring "Birds"*, a lovable collection of darting pop tracks about love gone wrong and tiresome day jobs.

Coomes wastes no time reestablishing himself as an ace chronicler, capable of twisting mundane experiences into breathtaking little tales, then setting them to artful melodies bubbling with '60s pop accents. *Field Studies* hopscotches through 14 memorable and nearly flawless tracks, opening with a typically Coomes-ian statement of focused indifference, "All The Same" ("You can get out quick and clean or prolong the agony; whichever you prefer—it's all the same to me"). He's more direct on the terse, one-line, three-chord riff of "It Don't Mean Nothing," but he's usually as cagey and coy as a big cat, examining relationships from numerous angles and always approaching them warily.

This is one reason why the growing cadre of Quasi fans tends to be an analytical bunch. Bouncing along to the usually chipper songs is fun, but trying to discern the meanings of Coomes's Rubik's Cube-like logic creates a challenge. Back at the familiar theme of the tribulations of the 9-to-5, which he expounded on so eloquently on *Birds*, the former video store clerk sings of selling one's soul to the devil on *Field Studies'* longest song, the seven-minute, 40-second "A Fable With No Moral." Yet Coomes, perhaps aware that his followers exalt in interpretation, refuses to deem it a blow against working for the man.

"That's my small modernization of the tried-and-true Faust story," he says of "Fable." "The beauty of that myth is that everybody has their own devil, and it could be your boss at work, or the idea of work, or corporate capitalism. Or it could be anything—pick your devil. If you're thinking about work and that's what you think the song is about, then great. It's about whatever you think it's about."

Few bands today require that much intellectual interaction, and even fewer receive it. But Quasi's brand of bristling pop crossed with existential puzzles has attracted more and more devotees. A night prior to dining on Asian noodles in Seattle, Coomes and Weiss headlined a sold-out show in Portland, playing to more than 1000 hometown fans who hadn't even had a chance to purchase the then-

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"The beauty of the Faust myth is that everybody has their own devil. If you're thinking about work and that's what you think the song is about, then great. It's about whatever you think it's about."

unreleased new album. The ecstatic turnout can be attributed partially to the exposure Quasi gained by getting linked to Sleater-Kinney through Weiss (who joined S-K in 1996), and also to Elliott Smith, who brought in his old friends to be his backing band on a series of 1998 tours. But it's also due to Quasi's unimaginably weird rise to local prominence and to national attention.

The duo moved to Portland from San Francisco in the early '90s as a couple, and promptly tied the knot. Coomes, whose Donner Party foreshadowed the sinister yet ebullient pop of Quasi, decided that he needed to reexamine his childhood fixation with Led Zeppelin, and enlisted his new wife to play drums in a hard rock band called Motorgoat. "He dragged me down with him," Weiss recalls with a laugh.

After a few 7"s and some deafening live shows, the band broke up, and Coomes and Weiss morphed into Quasi—the idea being that this would be a pseudo-group, with Coomes on guitar and vocals, Weiss on drums, and various friends from Portland's rock community filling in on bass from time to time. Most of Quasi's first, self-released album, 1995's *Early Recordings*, was written and performed before Coomes had acquired what's become his trademark instrument, a '70s vintage Roxichord organ. The title, meant to be coy, almost took on an eerie tone shortly after the album hit the shelves, as the couple's personal relationship began to deteriorate. Quasi's future didn't look good: Coomes signed on as bassist in the disintegrating Elliott Smith-led band Heatmiser, and Weiss was enlisted by indie-rock's most upwardly mobile outfit, Sleater-Kinney, to join as the group's first permanent drummer.

Yet Coomes thrived on the turmoil, channeling his feelings into his songwriting and infusing live performances with a delicious tension, often taking out his angst by thrashing his Roxichord. The duo rallied and completed a second album in 1997, *R&B Transmogrification*, which attracted the attention of Up, the same label that kickstarted the careers of both Built To Spill and Modest Mouse.

Since then, Quasi's been in a groove. With the breakthrough *Birds*, and spectacular songs like "I Never Want To See You Again" and "You Fucked Yourself," it became the type of band that makes fans clamor for the next release. *Field Studies* comes through with more should-be hits, such as the unusually upbeat "Smile" and the waltz-like "The Golden Egg." And despite their ever more hectic schedules, both players pledge that they remember what it's like to be a fan waiting on a favorite group's new album. "When I was growing up, bands put out a record a year," Coomes says. "As a fan, every year I would wait for the new record. That's in my head now: Next year, another record."



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DAWNING ON

feature 2 |
breakbeat era

BREAKBEAT ERA MOUTHPIECE LEONNIE LAWES
STYLING: CANON FOR OLIVER PIRO INC. HAIR & MAKEUP: SUSANNA PERKS FOR BRADLEY CURRY
Leather Vest by CHOMPOL SERIMONT, Leather Pants by CARLA BEHRLE, Green top by SUZY WONG. NEXT PAGE: Top by GERALD TOMEZ.

F A NEW ERA



RONI SIZE FOUND A VOCALIST IN A MOTHER OF THREE FROM A '60s COVER BAND. IS HIS LATEST CHILD THE DRUM 'N' BASS RECORD THE REST OF THE WORLD WILL CATCH UP TO?

STORY: M. TYE COMER PHOTOS: JEFFREY APOIAN

"I haven't worked at *all* in my life, and this is the first opportunity I have to do it," says Leonie (pronounced "Lennie") Laws, alarmingly straight-faced, leaning into my personal space with an almost uncomfortable stare to ascertain that she has my undivided attention and complete understanding on this matter. "I've always just written words and music... with no practical end in mind, ever. I just did it for my own pleasure and I never took it seriously."

Most musicians will instinctively quip that the "overnight success story" is nothing but a media contrivance. They'll spin hard-knock tales of non-stop touring and being manipulated by "the man" to prove that success came none too easy. Not so for Laws. It's as if she relishes the fact that ridiculously good fortune has recently plucked her from obscurity to center-stage.

"I was given the advice years ago to never chase the [music] business," she continues. "If you're good enough, eventually the business will chase you. I just think I should grab the opportunity with both hands, especially since I seem to be naturally good at it."

Sophisticated and possessing a severe beauty, Laws exudes a level of bravado that's close to arrogance. But these days she has plenty to be confident about. It's not often that a free-spirited 35-year-old mother of two, who spent most of her life traveling the world with her acoustic guitar for kicks, is pursued by two of the most lauded drum 'n' bass producers to become the frontperson of their new ensemble. Yet Laws sits in the eye of a storm called Breakbeat Era, the newest outfit designed by drum 'n' bass maverick Roni Size and DJ Die of Size's lauded Reprazent crew.



What makes Laws's position most delicious—and quite uncommon—is the fact that until now, the idea of an individual fronting a group based on drum 'n' bass music was practically unheard of. Sure, the sultry vocal inflections of Diane Charlemagne (who crooned on Goldie's *Timeless*) and Reprazent's own Onalee enhanced the character of their collaboratives, but their contributions to the final product remained limited. The boys called the shots and garnered the attention while the divas remained nameless to those outside breakbeat's inner circle. But this particular diva is being purposefully pushed into the limelight. Size and Die refrain from being interviewed about the project and won't even appear onstage when Era performs. The boys from Bristol may carry the clout and the cred, but Laws is more than an equal conspirator of the dark and dangerous *Ultra Obscene*, the Breakbeat Era debut: She's the atom bomb of its onslaught.

Laws was born in Kenya, but this story really begins in 1989, the year she relocated to Bristol, England, the birthplace of the Rolls Royce and trip-hop. For years before receiving her calling, Laws lurked on the outskirts of the city's thriving dance culture, attending free parties where Size and Die manned the decks and mesmerized her ears with an audacious, vanguard style of breakbeat music that would eventually evolve into drum 'n' bass.

"[In] Bristol, we have kind of a beehive mentality," explains Laws. "The division between [different types of] music isn't that strong, so we just kind of jam about. Everybody in Bristol has essentially worked with everybody else."

Her affinity for Patti Smith, Janis Joplin and other great vocalists of eras past ("I did some stuff with a '60s and '70s cover band," she reveals, "but I'd only admit that if I were stretched over hot coals") didn't keep local producers from wooing Laws into the studio. She began laying down vocals with scene musicians "for fun," eventually meeting Size and Die, who were well into the recording of *New Forms* (the album that would eventually win England's esteemed Mercury Music Award in 1997, making Size's name as household as Goldie's). Soon after their introduction, the three entered a recording studio and emerged with Breakbeat Era's eponymous first single.

"We didn't have a clue what we'd done," says Laws of the troupe's debut collaboration, which first surfaced on the *Music Box* compilation (pressed on Size and Die's own Full Cycle imprint) under the moniker Scorpio Featuring Leonie. "We all just scratched our heads when we came out of it. Roni, Die and I are just very different people, and at the time, they were both very different from me. They just looked at me like, 'Jesus Christ, who is this [woman]?'"

But XL Recordings (UK home to artists such as Prodigy and Basement Jaxx) came calling, enchanted by the dichotomies that give *Ultra Obscene* its punch. While Reprazent wrapped complex rhythmic frameworks around languid hip-hop affectations—funky bass, soulful vocals, silver-tongued MCs—Laws's affection for punk and brazen singer/songwriters, mirrored by the music's darker nuances, gives the Era a slicker and more sinister edge than any other vocal-based group in the genre.

"You can't compare them," says Laws of the difference between her bandmates' old and new



"They're like sisters. One is a tall with like long blonde, curly hair—that's Reprazent—and then there's another short, punky one that's going, 'Fuck your mother!' That's Breakbeat Era."

endeavors. "They're like sisters. One is a tall with like long blonde, curly hair—that's Reprazent—and then there's another short, punky one that's going, 'Fuck your mother!' That's Breakbeat Era."

Ultra Obscene is certainly melancholy and futuristic in its sonic panache. Howling bass oozes over disjointed breakbeat rhythms and menacing musical backdrops, embracing and enveloping Laws's vocals, as she sings lyrics that could have been lifted from *The Bell Jar*. "All this charm is wearing thin/The maniac is loose and she's wearing my skin/Here's to another crap weekend/You lie to yourself and you shit on all your friends," Laws purrs on "Time 4 Breaks." Songs like "Rancid," "Bulletproof" and "Our Disease" echo the group's more daunting and devious approach.

Although Laws was initially brought in as a glorified session singer, the incredible chemistry the trio found in the studio soon united the musicians into a solid, synchronous unit with Laws pulling the same weight as the drum 'n' bass heavyweights.

"[It was] like a relay race," says Laws of the writing and recording of the album. "[I would] come in with the stick and run as fast as I could with it. Then I would get tired and... maybe Roni would come in and run a bit further with it. Then Die would come in and run a bit further. At the very beginning, it took a long time to actually finish the tracks. But as time went on, we started running. 'Sex Change' was finished in about 15 minutes. By the end of it, Roni would have his foot in the small of my back saying, 'Get in there' to record vocals before I was even done rehearsal. The snowball just started to roll down the hill so fast."

And she can only expect the momentum to increase. Advance tracks from *Ultra Obscene*, remixed for more dance floor oomph, have already been touted by many of the scene's most pivotal DJs, leaving a devoted drum 'n' bass audience wet with anticipation. But the album's stark rock orientation puts it in an ideal position to take the sound of breakbeats even closer to the forefront of US mainstream music. Laws, in typical form, is eager to tackle the challenge.

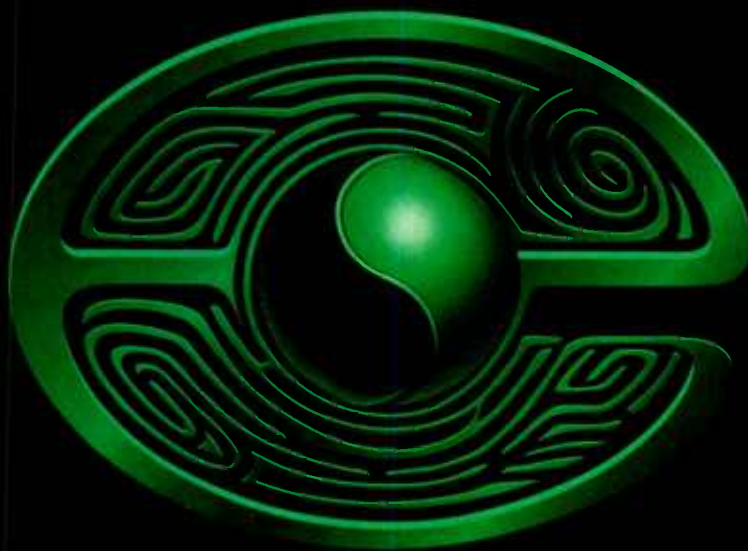
"I was very nervous when I started," Laws admits. "I had never really worked in a studio before. This all happened really fast. But every time I do a gig, every time I do a photo session, every time I do an interview, I get a clearer picture of what I'm doing. Suddenly I realize hey, I'm doing this and I'm getting intense pleasure out of doing it. I'm just becoming a leaner and meaner machine. I'm in my prime. [I'll] beat Madonna at her own game."

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feature 3 | automator

OPLE



DAN "THE AUTOMATOR" NAKAMURA, THE MAN BEHIND DR. OCTAGON AND NEW ALL-STAR COLLABORATIONS WITH PRINCE PAUL AND THE DUST BROTHERS, IS NOW READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP.

STORY: OLIVER WANG PHOTOS: MATT HARTENSTEIN

How to Get a Record Deal, The Automator Way:

On one of his many visits to New York, Dan "The Automator" Nakamura found himself cribbing free phone time from the offices of Tommy Boy Records. He's talking with fellow sonic visionary Prince Paul, and the two were sharing laughs over the "Handsome Boy Modeling School" episode of Chris Elliot's short-lived *Get A Life* sitcom when a Tommy Boy A&R rep walked in. "He heard us talking about 'Handsome Boy Modeling School' and asked, 'What's that?'" recalls Nakamura. Prankster that he is, Automator replied, "Oh, it's our new group, we're the hip-hop Chemical Brothers," and with Prince Paul busting up on the other end of the phone, the A&R guy took him seriously, and said "It sounds like a good idea, you should play something at a meeting." Nakamura refused to let a good joke go to waste so he upped the ante. "No, no, there's no demo. You just got to sign us," he proclaimed. Exit A&R guy, enter Tommy Boy's president, Monica Lynch, and 15 minutes later, Lynch said, "Okay, we'll sign them."

Considering the standard game of snakes and ladders that artists have to play to get signed, Automator's experience was as ridiculous as the joke that started it. Then again, this is the same man who kicked off his career in 1988 with *Music To Be Murdered By*, which looked every

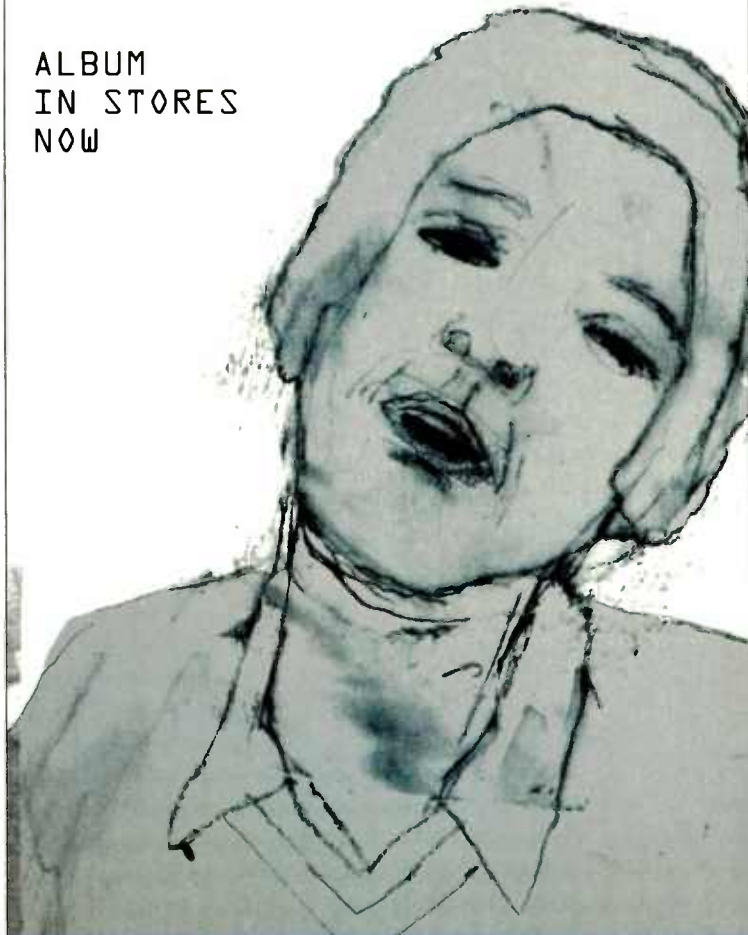
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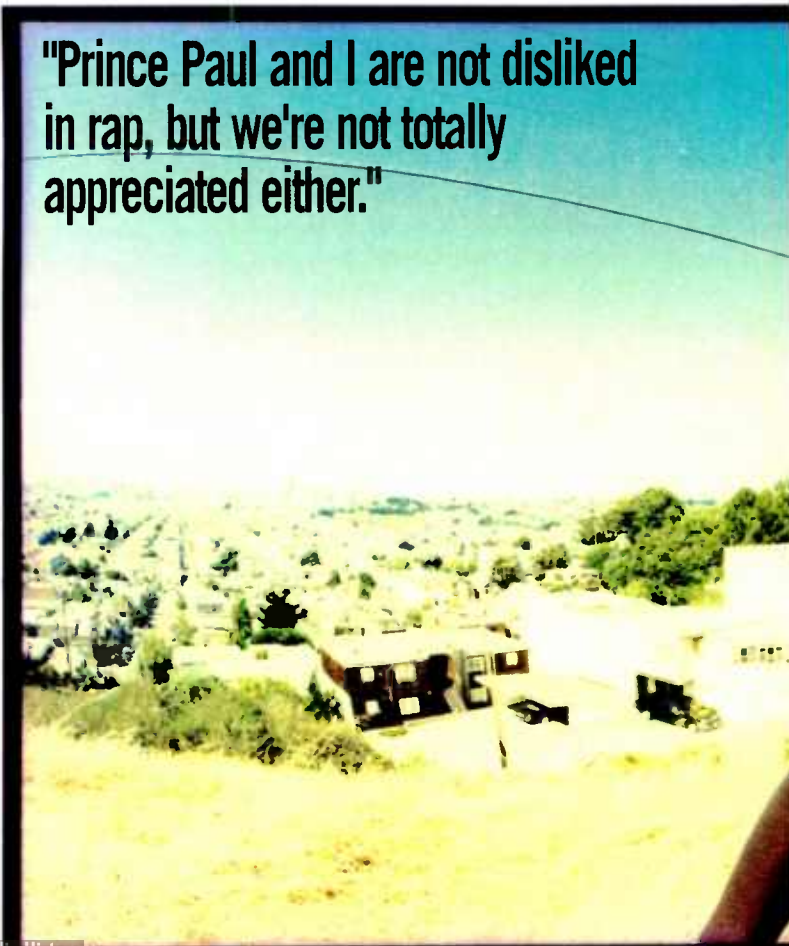
AUTOMATOR (Cont.)

bit like a campy horrorcore single from the outside, but hid a proto-DJ battle disc inside, years before words like "scratching" and "turntablism" would be tripping out of hipsters' mouths. And this is also the same man who then virtually disappeared for the next eight years until he resurfaced as one-third of Dr. Octagon, alongside hip-hop changeling Kool Keith and grandmaster DJ Q-Bert. The critical praise for Octagon's bizarre lyrical excursions and sci-fi soundscapes that immediately followed came from all sides, and Automator found himself getting jocked by fans in the hip-hop, alternative and electronic music crowd alike.

He admits that, "when I came out with my first record, I think I was still learning...advanced conceptually, but not really technically, which doesn't lend itself to making great records." But now this 32-year-old fourth generation Japanese-American finds himself with as much work as he could want, dabbling increasingly in the alt-rock world with projects for UK indie darlings Comershop as well as helping to oversee the *Bombay the Hard Way* compilation of funky Indian "Bollywood" film scores. Surprisingly, for a person who is quick to cite hip-hop as his fundamental guiding influence, Nakamura admits that post-Octagon and pre-Handsome Boy, he wasn't doing much work with rappers at all. Nakamura's blunt honesty makes it simple: "In today's current market, I'd rather do alternative records because there's way more creativity and interesting stuff going on... But I love hip-hop—that's where my whole sound comes from."

With Handsome Boy's new *So... How's Your Girl* album (Tommy Boy), Automator returns to the fold with an all-star hip-hop effort, a brilliant blend of quirky personalities (including the Hieroglyphics' Del Tha Funky Homosapien, Cibo Matto's Miho Hatori and DJ Shadow) with outstanding production done tag-team style by Nakamura and his East Coast counterpart Prince Paul. Nakamura sees Paul and himself as brothers of the same mind, largely because both have been partially ostracized from the conventional rap circles for being too eccentric. "[Paul and I] have parallel issues, where we've done a lot of cool, conceptual records that have a theme to them. We're not disliked in rap, but we're not totally appreciated either."

"Prince Paul and I are not disliked
in rap, but we're not totally
appreciated either."



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Automator sighs in slight frustration at the impression that many think of him as an aural architect of the strange and surreal. His musical approach may be iconoclastic compared to the rote formulas that other rap producers work with, but his intense barrage of pummeling low-end basslines, sample-heavy noise and dusted drum snaps fits in well with a lineage of hip-hop sonic science that extends back to '80s groups like Bomb The Bass and especially Mantronix. "I don't think I've ever made any records where I didn't know what I was going for," retorts Nakamura. "I didn't go, 'Okay, I'll go with this because it's weird.' I have a reason for everything I do."

In some ways, Handsome Boy is just a primer for another collaboration that Automator and Paul are working on, this time with the Dust Brothers' Mike Simpson, a DreamWorks project called The Good, The Bad And The Ugly. Like Handsome Boy's, this new album is producer-driven, with Nakamura, Paul and Simpson supplying the beats and a wide range of artists (including Cornershop, Nine Inch Nails and De La Soul) covering the vocal/verbal half.

Compared to more underground artists that Handsome Boy worked with, Nakamura explains, "With The Good, The Bad And The Ugly, we're using more established [artists], trying to bring out the best of these people. They trust the idea that we can combine them with someone else and they won't get tripped out on the combinations." Also in the mix is an album with Del called *Del-Tron*, an instrumental project with Company Flow's El-P, and a foray into the wild and woolly world of the Internet via www.fatbeat.com, a new interactive media site that Automator is taking part in.

Reflecting on his 10+-year career, Nakamura's mostly amused with the media bandwagon that keeps re-"discovering" him everytime a new album comes along. "You go through that time where people won't understand you and it really didn't matter," recalls Nakamura. "I made three or four records during the '80s and early '90s, none of them made money. I just wanted to make records. Then, five or six years later, everybody's asking, 'where did you get that sound from'...well, I had that sound for all these years...I was just developing it when nobody wanted to hear it."

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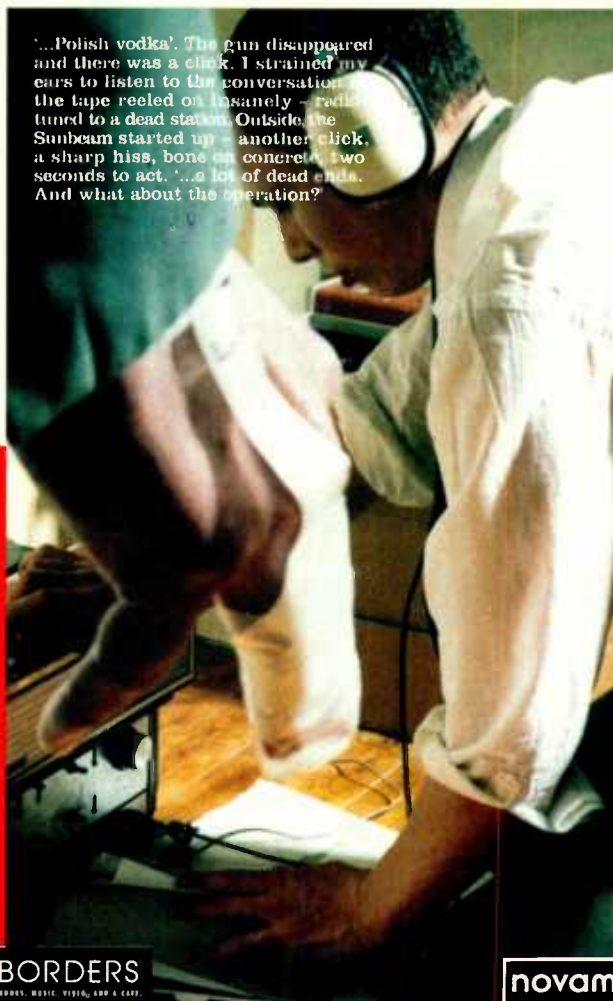
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l i v e

THE IMPORT BEIN

LIVE's Ed Kowalczyk is serious about the seriousness of his band's new album *The Distance From Here*.

STORY: MATT ASHARE PHOTOS: DENNIS KLEIMAN

Ed Kowalczyk is a serious guy. The 28-year-old singer and, as he makes a point of mentioning during our discussion, "lyricist and primary songwriter" in the band Live, takes his job very seriously. He takes life very seriously. And he takes himself very seriously. All of which makes him something of an anomaly in the age of irony, the cynical '90s, the decade which has seen even U2—one of Kowalczyk's favorite bands—crack a couple of smiles and stage a couple of elaborate farces. Kowalczyk knows all this—he does not lack self-awareness. And, yet, he's not interested in changing. In fact, as Live's new *The Distance From Here* (Radioactive) reflects, he and his band are currently on a mission to recover some of the idealistic innocence, passion, and spirituality that inspired their first two albums—1991's *Mental Jewelry* and 1994's multiplatinum *Throwing Copper*—and then began to dissipate as they struggled with the issues surrounding stardom and success on 1997's *Secret Samadhi*. Ed Kowalczyk is a serious guy.

"It's who I am as a person," Kowalczyk explains from across the table at an outdoor café in Manhattan's Columbus Circle, right across the street from the Trump hotel where he, bassist Patrick Dahlheimer, drummer Chad Gracey and guitarist Chad Taylor are currently staying. "I never had an interest in trying to separate that from being



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a rock singer. These are the things that occupy my days as well as inform the lyrics of my songs. What always impressed me about U2 and about Bono in particular as a songwriter is that what he was doing early on was writing lyrics that were obviously informed by a vision, to the point where people either could totally identify with U2 or not at all. I was inspired by that and by the spiritual love in their songs. That just totally rocked my world."

Right now Kowalczyk is trying his best to convey that *The Distance From Here* is a better album than *Secret Samadhi*, which was something of a commercial disappointment after the triumph of *Throwing Copper*. Which wouldn't be all that difficult if it weren't for the fact that he'd also like everyone to know that *Secret Samadhi* was also a very good album.

"We never thought that for a minute, 'let's get back to the sound and feel of *Throwing Copper* because it was more successful than *Secret Samadhi*.'"

"We're really proud of that record—we were when we made it and we still are. Looking back on it now, what that record was about for Live was transitioning from the chaos and wonder of *Throwing Copper*'s success into being a band that felt comfortable being... a 'big band.' It was a record we needed to make. We experimented musically on it a lot and with the lyrics. I went for more of an abstract kind of thing and stayed away from meaning and messages. With this new record, I think that process of becoming comfortable with the bigness of Live has brought a new happiness, a new energy, and a new hope is back in the band. I think Live fans will recognize it immediately as being more like the energy and the urgency of our first album and *Throwing Copper* rather than *Secret Samadhi*."

So, then, it was a conscious decision to try to recapture the feel and spirit of *Throwing Copper*?

"Not in the sense of 'let's get back to the sound and feel of *Throwing Copper* because it was more successful than *Secret Samadhi*.' We never thought that for a minute."



Okay, so it's something that just happened accidentally then?

"No. As the lyricist and primary songwriter in the band, I had a definite feeling about what kind of record I wanted to make for 1999, for this time and place. I was also going through this reenergizing period as a songwriter and I knew I wanted the record to be about love, it wanted to be a message of hope, it wanted to uplift people and jump out of the speakers and celebrate people rather than *Secret Samadhi*, which was like 'Come on into this little world, have a bottle of wine, and see if you can get it.' I mean this time we really went after energy in the studio. We rerecorded some things two or three times just to make sure that it was the most spontaneous, rawest performance we could get. And we nailed it."

Kowalczyk doesn't appear to sense that there's a certain irony inherent in performing a song over and over again until it sounds more spontaneous, but in all fairness, that's not really his job. His job is to reach deep into his soul and dredge up the inspiration and the sincerity to move his audience. And it's something Kowalczyk, who's been married now for two years, went out of his way to accomplish on *The Distance To Here*.

For example, when it came time to write new material for the album, Kowalczyk, who is the lyricist and primary songwriter in the band, left behind the comforts of home and went off into the wilderness. "I did a lot of man-and-his-guitar-in-the-desert camping," he admits. "Absolutely the antithesis of Ed from Live—like I was totally a nobody man out there doing it. I felt that was the extreme I needed to go to. I was all over the Southwest. Not for very long periods. The longest was two weeks and then people got worried. But that was where it kind of had to go."

All of which may go a long way toward accounting for the unusually large number of references to water on the new album—"The Dolphin's Cry," "Run To The Water," "Where Fishes Go," "Feel the Quiet River Rage." I mention that to Ed, and he gets the joke.

"I was in the desert and I was thirsty."

But, of course, there's also a much more serious explanation. "Putting my album on the psychiatrist's couch, I really think it has something to do with the fact that I went to a really elemental place emotionally for the record. A song like "Run To The Water" is about as open-chested a love song as I've ever written—that's as much as I've put into a song in that direction. I think now that I was just trying to use metaphors that were large and broad enough to express where I was at in my head."

Yes, Ed Kowalczyk is a serious guy.

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STORY: JAMES ROTONDI PHOTOS: CHARLIE GROSS

"No, no, no" groans Beck Hansen, his fingertips braced against his forehead, "It's too much. I thought we got rid of that stuff already." In a mixdown room at North Hollywood's NRG Studios, Beck, his engineers and co-producers are listening to a playback of "This is My Crew," an '80s-style electro-funk slated for the Japanese version of Beck's long awaited new album. The song's basic groove is tight and funky, but there are too many percussive effects cluttering up the mix, and Beck knows it.

"We need to get the bass up front, man" he tells engineer Michael Patterson with a hint of exasperation, as a table-lamp flickers on and off inexplicably. Above his head, the studio's vaulted, Moorish ceiling and silky Near-Eastern draping projects opiated langour. But nobody's chilling in this crib tonight.

Like the rest of his crew, Beck shows clear symptoms of the dreaded studio-head. Unshaven, hair messy, wearing gold Lennon specs, beach sandals, and a sweatshirt, he looks like he's been slaving over a term paper for nights on end. Only in this case, it's been six weeks of 18 hour days, and fourteen months of total work. And there are only three days left until a label deadline that's already been pushed back several times.

"If this album isn't done in time," says Beck, "spontaneous combustion will occur; people's flesh will start falling off." Co-producer Tony Hoffer, a reddish three-day stubble offsetting his deer-in-headlights eyes, says the studio atmosphere is becoming "an insane asylum," a hotbed of practical jokes and overtired tomfoolery. As he cracks open a hand-labeled CD case to play the album's first single, "Sex Laws," the normally genial Hoffer shrugs, "I don't know whether to talk to people or gnaw their arms off." Beck and bassist Justin Meldal-Johnson laugh, but only slightly.

The tension is understandable. The official follow-up to 1996's instant classic *Odelay*, *Midnite Vultures* shoulders the weight of both critical and commercial expectation, something Beck says he hasn't had to consider before. "I've had the luxury of being underestimated," he says tentatively. "In a way, I think this is the first time that people will be expecting more than I'll probably be able to give. *Odelay*

surprised a lot of people who had written me off. And *Mutations* surprised some other people because they assumed it was all cut-and-paste, a very artificial smoke-and-mirrors type of sound. I don't know what this album will mean to people."

It's hard to believe, but it's been six years since "Loser" one-upped "Smells Like Teen Spirit" to become the quintessential slacker anthem, six years in which a new generation of kids have begun putting their own spin on the hip-hop/rock nexus, while the Gen X'ers who grooved to "Loser" got married and took out mortgages. So who exactly is Beck selling to in 1999, and who's buying? With all the awards and magazine covers it spawned, folks might be surprised to learn that *Odelay* sold under two million copies. At 29, Beck's got the public profile of a Garth Brooks or an Alanis Morissette, but he's only sold a fraction of their mega-millions.

The timing is auspicious as well. But even with a release date just weeks before the century's end, Beck claims *Midnite Vultures* is not an

Inviting you aboard the "goodship menage-à-trois," Beck coos and caws like El Debarge at a porn convention: "Ooh, such a delicate thing. You make a garbageman scream."

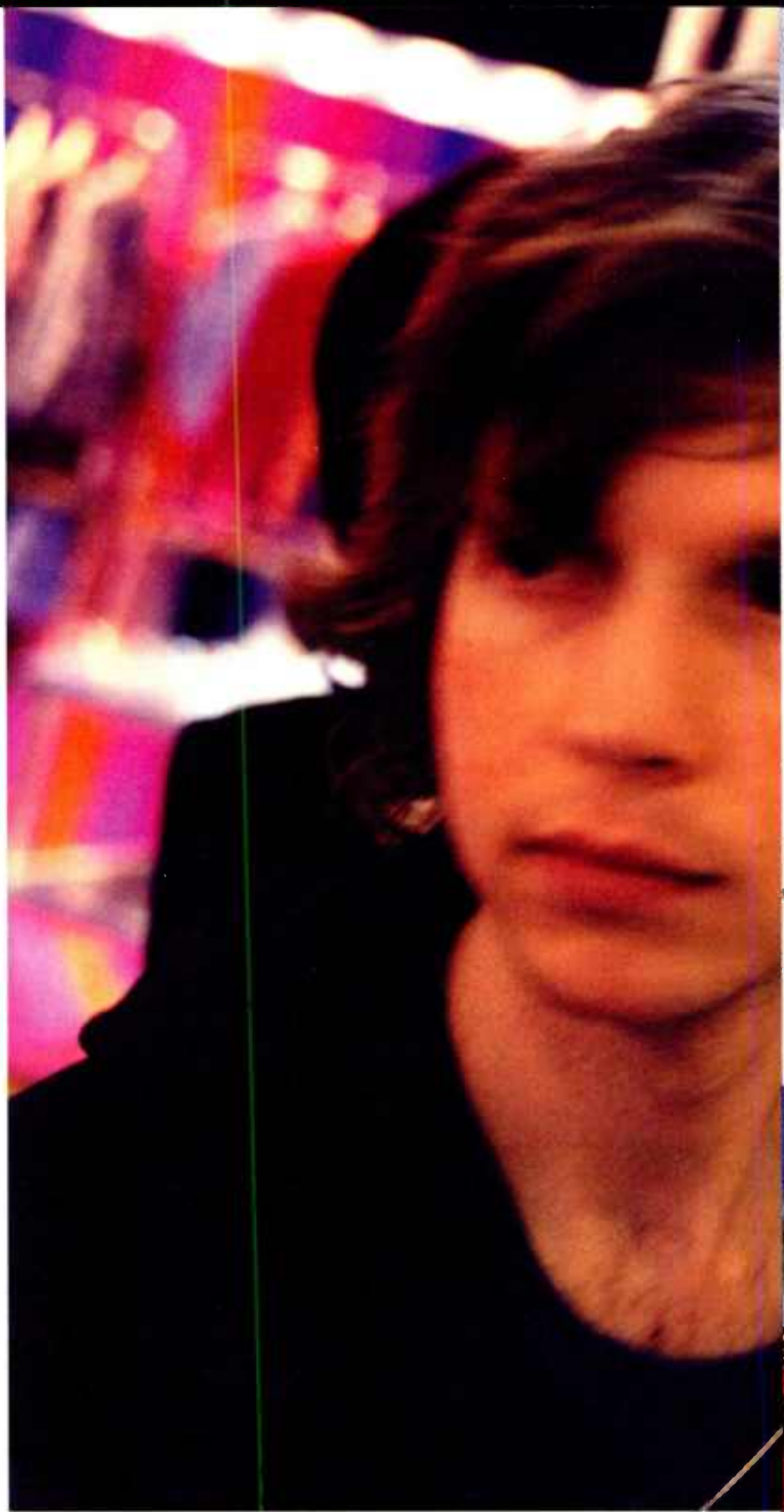
attempt at a millennial statement: "That's kind of redundant at this point—the whole decade's been a millennial statement." Voice of a generation or not, Beck says his mission was a simple one: "All I could do was let loose and try to create as much havoc musically as possible." In other words, Beck set out to make the freakiest party record imaginable. And what the exhausted faces and frayed nerves at the studio don't tell you is he's succeeded.

Midnite Vultures is a stunning state-of-the-funk magnum opus. Fleshed out with arty strings, arena-rock guitar blasts, and old school jams, the album presents a bodacious blend of electro-shock beats, brazen booty calls, and sly melodic seductions. Dusted with boho flavors, banjos and Beatleisms, many of the new songs have roots in the electric funk of Prince, Cybotron, Afrika Bambaataa and Cameo, and they revel in the steamy sonics of the Slo-Jam. Bean counters might question the album's accessibility, but to quote "Juicy Fruit" by Mtume: this joint's "joo-say!"

"Get Real Paid" opens with what sounds like the Alan Parsons Project being dry-humped by Karl-Heinz Stockhausen; wierd analog synth titters bullied by groaning industrial noise. And that's just the intro. When the groove kicks in, cheered on by crowd noises and driven by the stun-gun burp of an 808 bass drum, you're suddenly skateboarding down Electric Avenue, jerking your hips like the torso-less robots in Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" video.

Not all the songs recall Soulsonic Force and Aleem. The first single and video, "Sex Laws," is probably the closest cousin to the *Odelay* sound. A hustling Curtis Mayfield-esque hip-hop track driven by clavinet and horn blasts, it suggests the Beatles' "Savoy Truffle" and T. Rex's "Zip Gun Boogie." There's also the Stonesy "Mixed Business," the quirky fuzz-tone-meets-marimba jam "We're Out of Control," and the Prince-esque "Nicotine and Gravy," all of which exploit Beck's talent for borrowing the past to point to the future.

A diabolical brew of badass disco-era funk and arena rock anthem, "Milk and Honey" sounds like Pat Travers kickin' it with Cameo—that's before it segues into a moody outro, a bittersweet symphony topped off by a gorgeous guitar solo from former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr. Beck calls "Pressure Zone" "a Cars-style blueprint of an alternative rock song," though it also hearkens back to Gary Numan, and Meldal-Johnson's attempt to describe the still unmixed "Sweet and Low" produces the new musical category "spastic future funk."



Imagery combining food and sex is everywhere. The nasty "Peaches and Cream" uses Beck's Beefheart-y guitar intro as a springboard for a gutbucket cowbell groove reminiscent of the Jacksons' "One Bad Apple." Inviting you aboard the "goodship menage-à-trois," Beck coos and caws like El Debarge at a porn convention, exhorting the ladies to "keep your lamplight trimmed and burning." "Ooh, such a delicate thing," he shivers. "You make a garbageman scream."

Sure, bands from the Chili Peppers to Limp Bizkit have appropriated gestures and attitudes from funk and hip-hop, but rarely has a white artist channeled the oozing sexuality of modern R&B in such a disarming, fun and original way, without sounding artificially macho or just plain boorish. "It's long overdue," Beck says later, sitting Indian style in a metal chair outside by the studio parking lot. "It's not like hip-hop and black music hasn't had an impact on the alternative world, but the influence is



very narrow and specific: the white b-boy and what it's evolved into."

Hip-hop, argues Beck, isn't just about being aggressive. "The one thing alternative bands never get into is the sexiness of it," he says. "The slo-jams have this mixture of sensuality and earnestness, this unmitigated, full-on lust, coupled with a devout pledging of love. You just don't hear that in rock music. You don't hear that kind of humor and ambivalence. That's the one overriding element of this record." He stresses, "the embracing of sexuality in all its different colors, from fuchsia to chromium. We're going for it."

Now, maybe it's because Beck's the king of kitsch, the most emblematic pop star of irony-loving Generation X, but it's hard to accept everything he does at face value. When you hear him sing the over-the-top slo-jam "Debra," a big part of you wants you to laugh, to play along with what you assume is the song's clever condescension to the slick

R&B love ballad. And that can be a very uneasy feeling—are we mocking black culture here, paying it tribute, or simply trying it on for size? The point is, we've come to expect a hidden smart-alecky comment from Beck on the cultural cheese he recasts as pop art.

"Sometimes we'd spend 16 hours on four seconds of music."

But while the alternative crowd was banging heads to Pearl Jam in 1994, Beck insists he was listening—quite earnestly—to R. Kelly and Brandy, and he resents what he sees as the double-standard that's applied to contemporary, commercial R&B and older "classic" black sounds. "I realize that 'Debra' doesn't represent what we would like to

think ideal soul music is all about," he explains. Of course, you could make the same claim about R. Kelly, who spins out lines like "You remind me of my car; I want to ride you."

"Oh yeah, says Beck, "a lot of those lyrics are funny, just ridiculous. No matter how slick an R&B track is, you can always rely on the lyrics to be unique. Even when they're generic, you get lines like 'I want to lick you up and down/ make you real hot.' And that's what turns me on. "Debra" embraces the absurdity and trashiness of that." Ask a music connoisseur what soul music they like, suggests Beck, and the

"The one overriding element of this record is the embracing of sexuality in all its different colors, from fuchsia to chromium."

predictable answer is "classic" Al Green, not "cheesy" R. Kelly. "That's accepted as good taste. I mean, I love Al Green, but it's very easy to recognize the value in that."

"The slo-jams really expresses a culture and a way of thinking," Beck says, "and by rejecting that, you're rejecting a whole culture. When people like Alan Lomax went out to gather field recordings of country blues in the '20s and '30s, most people, including the musicians they recorded, thought they were nuts. 'What do you want to record us for? Our music is trash.' People like Robert Johnson and Blind Lemon Jefferson were street musicians. That wasn't perceived as music—it was junk. And the same thing is at play now."

Turning "non-art" into art is one of the key impulses of postmodernism, exploited by Dadaist Kurt Schwitters—a favorite of

Beck's—and pop-artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. Beck, who's arguably the keenest student of that tradition in pop music, has said that his forays into kitsch are less social commentary than an attempt to understand the culture, "to enter the mind of the beast, to enter the madness." In a way, Beck dissolves the line between irony and earnestness, producing a kind of ineffable Zen comedy that John Cage would have applauded.

That sensibility owes at least something to Beck's late grandfather, Al Hansen, a leading light of the Fluxus art movement of the Sixties, whose cigarette-butt sculptures, clipping-collages, and non-sequitur-laden "Intermedia" poems foreshadowed Beck's pop decoupage. The parallels were most clearly drawn at last year's exhibit at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, *Beck and Al Hansen: Playing With Matches*. The show, featuring Beck's artwork alongside his grandfather's, was concluded by a riotous Yanni/Hearts of Space spoof by Beck's band—titled "New Age Evisceration 1"—capped off by a man in a plastic dolphin suit fucking a computer.

Like Frank Zappa, Beck's satire is all-inclusive, equal opportunity. If Beck does have fun sending up the heart-on-sleeve dramatics of slo-jam soul, he has just as much guilty pleasure dressing in glam-drag like Mötley Crüe for the "New Pollution" video. Truth is, Beck's always courting cultural disaster to some degree, and part of his genius is that he's always on the verge of making a complete ass of himself. Second-guessing his motivations is not a luxury Beck allows himself. "The minute I start thinking that way," he says, "I might as well not make music. You can't edit yourself. If it comes out, it's something that's living inside of you. I sometimes think 'What the hell am I doing?' Sometimes I can be embarrassed by myself. But if you're going to be true, you've got to let it all come out."



The only caveat to that self-purging ethic is Beck's difficulty in drawing a straight line from his emotions to his lyrics. Even *Mutations*, the most confessional-sounding of Beck's records, keeps its emotional distance by abstracting the feelings it attempts to convey; the poetry is gorgeous, but what's being said? "My girlfriend's always giving me shit about that," Beck shrugs. "Just say what you feel! And I am, but I spend a lot of time conjuring the environment around the emotion. It's all an effort to translate an experience, but I definitely get sidetracked. I'm trying to simplify."

The road to *Midnite Vultures* was paved with good ideas, but it had its share of sidetracks, too. The process got under way in the early months of last year, after Beck and band came off a year-and-a-half tour in support of *Odelay*. Beck's first new song was lost in cyberspace, the victim of a hard drive crash. Disheartened, Beck looked at "the huge mountain I had to climb" in preparing *Odelay's* follow-up, and decided to wander in the foothills awhile, asking Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich to oversee the sessions for *Mutations*, a release positioned by artist and label alike as an interim effort.

The album's organic and open-sounding production showcased Beck's songwriting—with hints of Harry Nilsson, Syd Barrett, Gram Parsons and Caetano Veloso—but it also demonstrated the deftness and versatility of his band, largely the same core group that appears on *Midnite Vultures*: bassist Justin Meldal-Johnson, keyboardist Roger Manning (Jellyfish, Imperial Drag), drummer Joey Waronker (R.E.M., Walt Mink) and guitarist Smokey Hormel (Tom Waits). After finishing *Mutations*, Beck also enlisted *Midnite Vultures* co-producers Mickey Petralia, a longtime LA DJ, engineer and club promoter, and Tony Hoffer, a sound designer and guitarist who's been performing live with Beck since last year.

Sessions for *Midnite Vultures* began in earnest in July of '98, with tracking at Beck's home studio in Pasadena, and at the Dust Brothers' digs in Silverlake. From the start, Beck had ambitious designs. "I knew how much work it took to make *Odelay* and *Mellow Gold*," he says, "and I knew that the level of production and programming I wanted on the new album would be immensely time-consuming. It turned out to be that and then some." By late August of this year, Beck had tracked close to forty new songs—enough for four records—including the tender, melancholy "Beautiful Way," a duet with Beth Orton, and space-age hip-hop joints featuring Kool Keith and Money Mark.

Beck's dad, David Campbell, who so resembles Beck that friends call them "two peas in a pod," arranged and performed the album's rich string sections, notably on "Nicotine and Gravy," and tour stalwart DJ Swamp worked the wheels of steel. Though the Dust Brothers cut several tracks with Beck, only two of them—"Hollywood Freaks" and "Debra"—ended up in the final sequence.

Scheduled for a June '99 release, the album was pushed back to November. "This record is a two year project that we crammed into one year," Beck sighs. "It easily could have taken another year if we'd done it in a civilized manner, if we hadn't completely surrendered our lives. It was an awful lot to bite off."

Another reason why the task was so gargantuan was the sheer technical scope of the recording process itself. Instead of simply grabbing pre-existing drum loops off a sample CD, for instance, Hoffer and Petralia micro-edited infinitesimal fractions of beats, moving around tiny ticks on a computer sequencer's "tempo map" to create complex, multi-layered grooves. A lot of drum 'n' bass beats, those brittle, fractal snare hits and percussive smears, are programmed using the same fine-toothed technique, but rarely has extensive sound design met beat construction the way it has here. "Sometimes we'd spend 16 hours on four seconds of music," notes Beck. "I figured this was a chance to go that deep."

While cutting the live band tracks, Beck encouraged a spirit of

abandon and performance, says Meldal-Johnson: "It was really exuberant, and we all got wild. Everything was rendered in a really passionate way, and often the tracks were built from the mistakes we made." Though he's wary of being so loath to repeat himself that he forgets "what's good about what I do," Beck clearly wanted to turn over new ground, and to broaden the now-pervasive musical idiom—call it cut-and-paste, folk-hop, collage-rock, or what you will—that he'd helped create. After all, as imaginative a lyricist as Beck is, he says his top creative priority is "shooting for a sound that has its own identity and aesthetic."

"When I first started playing acoustic guitar over drum loops, I knew it was something fresh," he recalls, "It had roots in folk and hip-hop, and I knew it could create a new genre, in the same way R&B and country fused into rock. Now you hear that in Pepsi commercials—you hear it everywhere, and it's a total formula by now." Making *Midnite Vultures*, he concludes, was a matter of taking the production approach of *Mellow Gold* and *Odelay*, and ripping it inside out, chopping beats into milliseconds, and night-flying through musical hyper-space.

In addition to the technical concerns, there were other sidetracks. Beck recorded the song "Halo of Gold" for the Skip Spence tribute album *More Oar*, sang the duet "Sin City" with Emmylou Harris for the Gram Parsons tribute record, *Return of the Grievous Angel* and threw down vocals for an upcoming Melvins album, *The Crybaby*. Meanwhile, Meldal-Johnson and Manning toured for two months with French pop electro-ambient band Air.

On the business end, Beck sold the Pasadena home where he lived with his girlfriend Leigh, and moved back to Silverlake. And though the band members say they were hardly aware of it, Beck and his label,

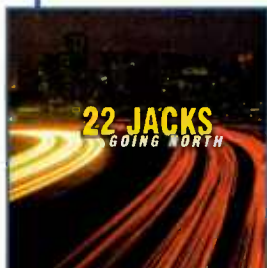
Geffen, spent much of the last year in a logjam of legal maneuvering and contractual dispute. In March of 1998, Beck's lawyers began attempting to renegotiate his royalty rate, but when Geffen was submerged into Interscope, the discussions soured, and reportedly, both of Beck's labels, Geffen and Bong Load Custom, sued the singer for claiming he was no longer contractually bound to them. According to reports, Beck countersued, claiming Geffen released *Mutations* without his permission, and failed to pay him for it. A spokesman at Geffen declined to comment on the negotiations, but both sides say the matter has been all but resolved.

Still, considering how exploitative standard record contracts are, it's not surprising that things finally came to a head. "Any musician on a record label believes they're not getting what they deserve," says Beck. "In my case, it was brought to my attention that it was grossly unfair. It was below what any musician off the street would be getting as far as a deal goes." The new deal gives Beck more points on his records, sources say, but makes it more difficult for Beck to release material on independent labels, a key provision of his '93 agreement. Beck plays down the affair, even suggesting that "suing" is too strong a word: "It was all perfunctory legal maneuvering, and in the end it worked itself out."

Back in the mixing suite of Studio B, even the tweaks to "This is My Crew" are finally bearing fruit. Bass and kick drum tightened up and fattened, Beck's vocal now leaps out of the mix. "This is my crew," he taunts over seething electro-funk, "Take ten steps back." The mood has lightened considerably, the table lamp has stopped flickering, and Hoffer's infectious grin is starting to spread throughout the studio.

"Now you're in the danger zone," the voice warns, "yellow turns to black." Suddenly the exotically adorned room does feel like an Eastern bazaar, swirling with a palpable energy that speaks directly to the superfreak in us all. As the groove reaches a kind of synergistic overload, the entire crew, some with fists pumped in the air, along with Beck: "It's ON!"

NMM



22 JACKS

Going North

Sideonedummy

The supercharged power-pop on *Going North* brings to mind early Face To Face punk with a side of Rancid ska. It's an accurate reflection of 22 Jacks' love of three-chord rock. But what separates this band from the dozens of other pop-punk outfits who have struck gold in the '90s is that 22 Jacks don't sound snotty, bratty, or immature, and never resort to the locker-room-sex-and-drinking humor of groups like Blink 182 and Lit. The album has a lyrical bent that seems a bit more serious than many of its peers; the

Jacks may talk about the perils of the dating and parental machines, but they say it in a more composed, more mature way. On the meat-and-potatoes romp "On My Way," lead throat Joe Sib recounts a break-up thusly: "We put it all together/Just to pull it all apart/Thinking that we're clever/But we're never that smart." Not a poetically stunning lyric, but it's honest and refreshing. Most of the songs on *Going North* stick to pop-punk's standard formula—brisk, bracing powerchords, raucous guitar solos and clear, crisp vocals. Tracks like "Slipping Down" and "11th Hour" simply rawk. The band occasionally varies the attack with a little dose of horn-powered ska, but there's not enough of that to earn *Going North* membership in the skacore club. >>> Amy Sciarretto

OUT:

September 7.

FILE UNDER:

Punk-pop with a purpose.

R.I.Y.L.:

Face To Face, MxPx, Shades Apart, Rancid.



BARCELONA

Simon Basic

March

Nostalgia for the '80s has brought some pretty awful things back onto the cultural radar: Twisted Sister's Dee Snider (as a modern-rock radio host); a Duran Duran reunion tour; the permanent addition of "Come On Eileen" to the wedding-band repertoire; a Bush running for president. But, at least the Washington D.C. twentysomethings in Barcelona find something good to salvage from the Reagan years on their debut CD, *Simon Basic*. The disc's main ingredients are Unrest's Factory-derived strum-and-

drone and the irrepressible melodic verve of Orchestral Maneuvers In The Dark. And they pull this off while paying honest, not ironic, tribute to the days of bulletin boards and Casiotones. The band's revved-up synth-pop numbers "Why Do You Have So Much Fun Without Me" and "Unreal" are catchy and heartfelt, and even the ballads about computer camp are somehow touching. On the occasions where Barcelona turns to boy-girl vocals, the effect is a little too chirpy and precious. But except for some occasional awkwardness, Barcelona's '80s homage is a stylish delight, and a dream for anyone who has ever raced around trying to collect all the songs on the *Sixteen Candles* or *Valley Girl* soundtracks. >>> David Daley

OUT:

June 22.

FILE UNDER:

Revenge of the '80s.

R.I.Y.L.:

OMD, New Order, Unrest.



ARCWELDER

Everest

Touch And Go

For years, Arcwelder has been the Ferris Bueller of the Minneapolis rock scene. Everybody loves them—the geeks, the freaks, the jocks, the punks, the burnouts, the downtown kids, the uptown kids, everybody. And with good reason. Over the years, the trio has done one thing and one thing only: tirelessly propulsive, rhythmic, catchy rock. The sound is distinctively Midwestern and now, almost old-fashioned in its untrendiness. Both in spite of and because of their dogged refusal to alter their sound, look-alike (but not twin) brothers Bill and Rob

Graber and Scott Macdonald haven't painted themselves into a corner; rather they've established themselves as the only practitioners of this style of rock that matter. *Everest* shows Arcwelder nearing perfection in its craft, easily reconciling their love of the Beatles and Big Black. The Grabers, interchangeable on bass and guitar, and drummer Macdonald continue to swirl together their sounds, making the band sound like one single, hard-charging instrument. Macdonald and Bill Graber handle all the vocal duties this time out, and though distinct from each other they share a lyrical tendency to approach life's emotional pitfalls with a clear mind and a stoic heart—so Midwestern! Arcwelder continues to be one thing that few bands can claim: reliable. >>> Mike Wolf

OUT:

August 28

FILE UNDER:

Fully operational Midwest rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Shellac, Tar, Husker Du.



DAVID BOWIE ★

Hours . . .

Virgin

There's something vaguely disturbing about the fact that one of the tracks on David Bowie's umpteenth album is co-written by one Alex Grant, winner of something called the BowieNet cybersong contest. I mean, isn't that taking Internet promotions just a bit too far? Grant, however, does seem to have as good if not a better idea of the kind of tunes Bowie should be doing at this stage in his career than Bowie himself does—vaguely new-wavish guitar rock that incorporates some of the Germanic stoicism of *Heroes* and pays no heed whatsoever to drum and

bass as anything more than two elements of a rock song. After surviving two decades as the rare artist capable of consistently riding the cutting edge without suffering a fatal splitting of the pants or losing his commercial viability, Bowie's main relevance in the '90s has centered around his finances, Bowie Bonds having made him a rich, rich man who really hasn't a reason in the world to ever tour or make another record again in his life (except, perhaps, to see if it really is possible for his current sidekick, Reeves Gabrels, to be Brian Eno and Mick Ronson). Maybe that's why, even when Bowie's trying his hardest to sound like a scary monster on this, the most Bowie of all of Bowie's '90s albums, it just doesn't ring true. I mean, as far as multi-billionaires go, Bill Gates is really much creepier. >>> Matt Ashare

OUT:

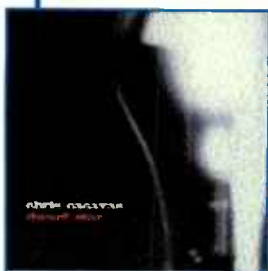
October 5.

FILE UNDER:

Living history

R.I.Y.L.:

Low, Heroes, Scary Monsters.



CHRIS CACAVAS & JUNKYARD LOVE

Dwarf Star Innerstate

Long skirting the periphery of adult alternative/country circles, Chris Cacavas has always garnered the acclaim of critics, if not large audiences. He disappeared for awhile to Germany—where they seem to appreciate things like Souled American, and Cacavas, a little more than they do stateside—and has returned home with *Dwarf Star*, an album overflowing with Americanisms. Seeming at first listen sort of hollow and light, *Dwarf Star* eventually proves its points through simplicity—and the pristine-sounding production of Giant Sand producer Eric Westfall. *Dwarf Star*

OUT:

September 14.

FILE UNDER:

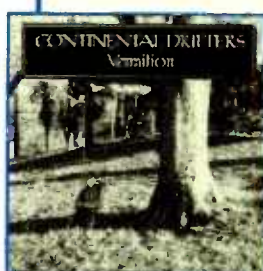
Midwestern countrified rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Uncle Tupelo, Jayhawks, Alex Chilton.

boasts easy-lazy country-rock charm built on full, intricate guitar (and a decent dose of piano, too) that spreads its wings wide when turned to high volume. "The Crying Shame" starts the album on a graceful, strummy, melancholy note that glides through the rest of the album, tempering even its wayward moments with a sort of careless charm. Cacavas's cover of Matthew Sweet's "Someone To Pull the Trigger" may not add another dimension to the song (indeed, it's sans the power guitar of the original) but it fits perfectly with *Dwarf Star*'s sweet/wry motif. If anything, the album only strains at its more theatrical/clever moments (the questionable pseudo-bonus piano track "Song 33" is one of them), but these are not terribly huge faults in what is overall an entirely pleasant album.

>>> Liz Clayton



CONTINENTAL DRIFTERS

Vermillion Razor & Tie

Uniting former members of the dBs (Peter Holsapple), the Bangles (Vicki Peterson), the Cowsills (Susan Cowsill), the Dream Syndicate (Mark Walton), Steve Wynn's band (Robert Maché) and the Bluerunners (recent addition Russ Broussard), the Drifters are a rock geneologist's dream. They are a true collective, with Cowsill, Peterson and Holsapple trading and sharing the singing and writing, but with a communal spirit infusing every song. It's porch music, after-hours speakeasy roots rock, music created by players sitting in a circle, and truth be told, it has only vague

OUT:

October 12.

FILE UNDER:

Casual and homey roots rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Whiskeytown, Lucinda Williams,

The Band, Silos.

connections to the members' former bands; rather than power-pop (dBs) or psychedelic rants (Dream Syndicate), the Drifters favor the rich simplicity of acoustic guitars, mandolins, and sparse drumming. After a first album defined by its choice covers, *Vermillion* (which was released in Europe last year) showcases the band's considerable writing skills. Together or separately, Cowsill, Holsapple, Peterson, (and in one case, Maché) write sharply detailed personal narratives, with a few electric roots rockers added for diversion; Lucinda Williams comes to mind, not only because Susan Cowsill possesses a similar voice. So comfy and casual, but also confident, that it must have grown naturally from informal sessions, *Vermillion* asks us to join a talented community, and we're fortunate to receive the invitation.

>>> Steve Klinge



COAL CHAMBER

Chamber Music Roadrunner

Coal Chamber is somewhat of a pariah in the metal community. The foursome's eponymous debut smacked of Korn, with down-tuned riffs and angst-ridden vocals similar to those of Jonathan Davis and company, and were unceremoniously dubbed "Korn Chamber." However, the spookycore outfit cultivated a loyal following at the same time. *Chamber Music*, the quirky quartet's sophomore effort, illustrates the benefits of endless touring and maturing musicianship. The album brims with blistering, low-end riffs, inflamed vocals that border on the verge of

OUT:

September 7.

FILE UNDER:

Spookycore.

R.I.Y.L.:

Korn, Orgy, Godsmack.

a nervous breakdown and deep bass rhythms. Once again, not all that different from Korn. There are a bunch of mosh-ready tracks, like "El Cu Cuy," "Tyler's Song," "Not Living," and "No Home." There's a cover of Peter Gabriel's "Shock The Monkey" that features a cameo by Ozzy Osbourne and is primed and polished enough to dominate the airways this fall. Give the Chamber a big "E" for effort and experimentation for the stunning "My Mercy," which features ex-Human Waste Project frontwoman Aimee Echo on vocals. The California foursome's experiments with samples and other electronica decorations, however, as well as the gothy, almost new wave-y bent of some tracks make it seem a bit too much like Coal Chamber are hopping on the synth-metal bandwagon; perhaps next year they'll be known as "Orgy Chamber."

>>> Amy Sciarretto



CHARLES DOUGLAS

The Lives Of Charles Douglas No. 6

In 1976, John Cale produced the debut from Jonathan Richman's Modern Lovers, one of the earliest, and best, of Lou Reed's acolytes. Now, Cale's V.U. bandmate Moe Tucker has her chance with a new disciple. Tucker produces Charles Douglas's solo debut, *The Lives Of Charles Douglas*, and Douglas, who under the name Alex McAulay led Vegetarian Meat, doesn't hide his debts to Uncle Lou. His self-deprecating tales of rejection—by girlfriends, by society, of self—and his flat, talky intonation recall early Reed's short, riffy songs,

OUT:

September 7.

FILE UNDER:

Sons of Lou Reed.

R.I.Y.L.:

Velvet Underground, The Modern

Lovers, Beat Happening.

and they're energetic with an edge of spiky urban alienation and Jonathan Richman-like wide-eyed wonder. Best of all, Douglas enlisted stellar musicians. Anchored by Tucker's tom tom-heavy drums, the band features a tag team of inventive guitarists having a great time slumming with steady, straight rock and roll: Ultra Vivid Scene's Kurt Ralske, St. Johnny/Grand Mal's Bill Whitten, Vegetarian Meat's Manish Kalvakota, and Douglas himself. "I know I'm crazy, I know I'm stupid, I know I'm never going to make it," Douglas sings in "Earlybird School." True, perhaps, but with songs as edgy and catchy as "Summertime" and "Baby Come On," Douglas has at least made a fun album of minimalist rock 'n' roll.

>>> Steve Klinge

HEATHER DUBY

Post To Wire

Sub Pop

When the shit hits the fan, there are those who run, hide, and if they're famous enough, end up with their own VH-1 "Behind the Music" special. And there are others who simply duck, cover, and wait for the crap to clear before reassessing the situation and getting back to business. Seattle-based producer Steve Fisk definitely falls into the second category. Back when grunge was peaking (and even before), he was no Jack Endino, but he did get plenty of work recording bands like Soundgarden and the Screaming Trees, and when major labels were still signing

indie-cult artists, Fisk's instrumental group Pell Mell inked a short-lived deal with Geffen. But as the grunge and indie years drew to a close, Fisk quickly reinvented himself as a techno auteur, playing Geoff Barrow to singer Shawn Smith's Beth Gibbons in the electro-pop partnership Pigeonhed. Unfortunately, Shawn's a guy, and these sorts of mixmaster/vocalist relationships seem to work best when the singer's a woman (Portishead, Mono, Everything But the Girl). Ergo *Post to Wire*, ostensibly the solo debut of a sweet and sultry young Seattle gal by the name of Heather Duby, but really a much more appealing continuation of Pigeonhed, with Fisk laying down the spare (sometimes too spare), synthetic, trip-hoppish backdrops and Duby multi-tracking her echo-laden angelic voice in homage to a good chunk of 4AD's '80s catalog. >>> Matt Ashare



OUT:

October 19.

FILE UNDER:

American dream pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Cocteau Twins, Portishead, Pigeonhed.

DUMPTRUCK

Terminal

Devil in the Woods



OUT:

August 10.

FILE UNDER:

Resurrection rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Let's Active, Guadalcanal Diary, Alejandro Escovedo.

always been a first-rate songwriter, a downcast storyteller who knows when a dour lyric needs guitars that bounce merrily around it and how to alternately create room for reflection. Living in Austin, a musician's musicians city, has only deepened his attention to craft. *Terminal* sounds colored by the work of professional singer-songwriter types who populate Austin and have created an environment where the work, not getting signed, is the main motivation. Tiven's soaring alto is both reedy and resonant on "Still Been Had" and "Long Ride"—he's never sounded better. And various members of the Austin community, as well as former Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, pitch in to turn Tiven's reflective material into rich, rootsy stomps that reflect much in the way of hard-earned maturity. >>> David Daley

FASTBACKS

FASTBACKS

The Day That Never Existed SpinArt



OUT:

October 5.

FILE UNDER:

Pop-punk rock opera.

R.I.Y.L.:

Buzzcocks, Generation X, Muffs, Big Star, Raspberries.

Concept albums should really be filed in the same bin as QuadraPhonic sound, 8-track tapes, Jello 1-2-3, and that guy from A Flock of Seagull's hair: Once popular ideas that were never really good in the first place. Leave it to the Fastbacks, a band whose members have no problem with filing the Archies, Amon Duul II, and the Adverts next to each other in their record collections, to decide that that's just what they'll do next. And pull it off. Then, they get the wacky notion their little opera should be about...(ahem!) a day that never existed. (Don't ask. It might hurt too much to explain.) Doesn't matter. If you ignore all that, it's a fine Fastbacks record. Which means crushingly beautiful guitar chords and breathless tempi shoring up vulnerable femme vocals singing lyrics about ordinary day-to-day angst. And at a time when melodicism in punk rock means athletic youngsters in big shorts blanding the influence of the Descendents into nada, the Fastbacks' meatier and more creative approach is much more necessary than ever. Now if only we could wean 'em away from these annoying Rick Wakemanesque tendencies...

>>> Tim Stegall



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FLIN FLON

Boo-Boo

Teenbeat

Always a master of the clipped phrase and pithy melody, ex-Unrest and Air Miami frontman Mark Robinson gets back to basics with his latest project. Back in the underground with Flin Flon, he loosens up on the trio's second long-player, almost to the point of having fun. Robinson's a Gertrude Stein for the indie-rock set, spitting out lyrics that almost make sense but that often double back or fall into an almost pathological repetitiveness; sometimes, he'll become obsessed with a number, as he does with 34 on the jaunty opener "Upper Fire." As enigmatic as this

aesthetic may get, it suits the stripped-down, almost minimalist punk-pop of songs like "Jumpers" and "Trinity," which coalesce around separated guitar riffs, basslines and drum parts. Flin Flon nearly matches the magic of Unrest on a few cuts, conjuring up an edgy intensity on "Mistaken Point" and "Virgin Arm." All this isn't to say that Robinson's lost his penchant for experimentalism, either musically or in the graphics department. *Boo-Boo* comes complete with a starkly designed booklet with liner notes translated into French and German, and the vinyl version offers entirely different remixes of the songs from the CD. Like a stubborn but talented little boy, Robinson sits in his corner with arms crossed and relishes his place away from the pack. Fortunately, he's willing to allow some of us to get close.

>>> Richard Martin

OUT:

August 31.

FILE UNDER:

Deconstructionist indie-pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Unrest, Wire, Sleater-Kinney minus the angst.



FRESHMAKA

I Am The Freshmaka

Moonshine

Bounding from your speakers with all the flouncey-trouncey kitsch and subtlety of an Old Navy commercial, *I Am the Freshmaka* is like the perfect partner for a one-night stand: attractive, energetic, and just out for some fun. The duo of Sam Freshmaka and Duke Mushroom will woo you with their sound, the sort of big-swanky-beats-meets-electro-funk that could serve rather humorously as the score for futuristic porno. The clever hip-hop-styled samples (notably "Lotta Love" by Nicolette Larson on the track of the same name, and Chubb Rock clocking in

for "The Freshest") and vocals provide a little edge, and at times, a faintly retro feel. On "Are You Happy," the sing-along vocal bits bounce around a muted horn riff to invoke the image of a coked-up Bacharach trying to craft a techno-pop hit at four in the morning. It's infectious and engaging, and there are plenty of similar moments throughout the disc. Of course, a fling is a fling because it lacks staying power, and seven or eight tracks into *I Am the Freshmaka*, you'll realize it's all starting to blur into a pastiche of clever bits and punchy basslines; the disc does not hold up well to repeated listenings. From one (CD) scammer to another: hook up, but leave Freshmaka at the party.

>>>William Werde

OUT:

October 5.

FILE UNDER:

Mentos techno.

R.I.Y.L.:

Daft Punk, Chemical Brothers, Herbaliser.

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GENTLE PEOPLE

Simply Faboo

Rephlex

The future of easy listening, said some hipsters, was captured in the Gentle People's fantastic and hard-to-find 1997 import, *Soundtrack for Living*. Filled with bubbly wordless vocals, spacey synth lines, French lyrics, bossa nova and other snazzy beats, it was the perfect fusion of three retro-cool genres: acid jazz, French pop and cocktail pop. On their new CD, *Simply Faboo*, the quartet revisits EZ territory, but ups the disco quotient with mixed results. In "Mr. Whiskey," a French chanteuse sings deliciously Da-Da-Da-like vocals over gurgles, swooshes, and

twitchy percussion. Slowed down, the band hits a different kind of feel-good vibe, best represented by the cyclical symphonic string section (is that a soap-opera theme?) weaving its way in and out of the catchy, corny chorus of "Groovin' With You." Fans of vocoder effects—essentially robot vocals—will enjoy the warped warbling in "Superstar" and "Gentle People Are Love." Unfortunately, the Gentle People sometimes devolve into the Bad-Disco People, as in "Shopping World," where swirling electronic pop smacks of early 1980s post-disco (think: Tears for Fears singing Thompson Twins). Or else they become the Sleepy People: Several songs indulge in instrumental excesses that push the eight-minute mark. All of which proves that Gentle music ain't always EZ.

>>> James Oliver Cury

OUT:

October 26.

FILE UNDER:

Post-modern easy-listening disco.

R.I.Y.L.:

Air, Dmitri from Paris, Tipsy, Fantastic Plastic Machine, Stereolab.

STRENGTH MAGAZINE

PRESENTS...

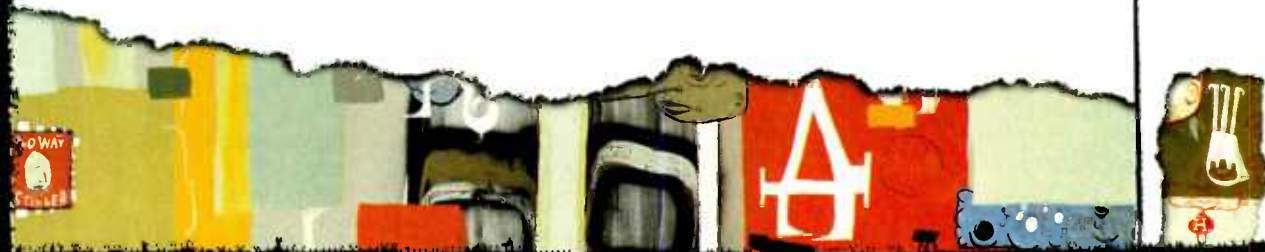
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ALEX GOPHER

You, My Baby & I

Solid-V2

He takes his name from a goofy Love Boat character. He played alongside the two members of Air in a long-defunct band called Orange. And he's released an album that's so irresistibly funky that it almost hurts not to dance. Alex Gopher's Stateside bow slides eloquently between sleazy grooves and slicked-up electro-pop, without resorting to dizzying barrages of whimsical allusions. Several key tracks feature crucial cameos: Parliament-Funkadelic's Michael "Clip" Payne infuses a gust of deep funk into the jazzy

'70s workout "Time" and the soulful, looped-up "Quiet Storm"; and Air's J.B. Dunckel kicks out the synth jams on the futuristic "Ralph & Kathy." Gopher sits at the controls, though, and he's a reliable pilot, steering the party away from the big beat bombast of Fatboy Slim. This Frenchman's a proponent of an electronica-meets-retro sensibility that few pull off with as much success. *You, My Baby & I* evokes darkened back-room romps, where glowing purple lights and soft velvet set the mood. And when Payne rejoins the action on the gleeful, disco-styled anthem "Party People," it becomes clear that Monsieur Gopher is throwing a soiree that we're all invited to.

>>>Richard Martin

OUT:

October 28.

FILE UNDER:

French fried funk.

R.I.Y.L.:

Air, Respect is Burning,

Earth, Wind & Fire.



HANG-UPS

Second Story

Restless

The Hang-Ups write such affecting and evocative pop songs that despite their relative obscurity, they've already landed two of the '90s' most romantic product-placements. The Minneapolis-based quintet's "Jump Start" provided the theme for Ben Affleck and Joey Lauren Adams' giddy first date in New York during *Chasing Amy*, and "Top Of Morning" regularly reflects joyous moments on *Dawson's Creek*. But their knack for distilling affairs of the heart into perfect pop has too often been subjected to slick production that robs their songs of the ability to be truly timeless

OUT:

September 28.

FILE UNDER:

Jangle-pop 101.

R.I.Y.L.:

Big Star's "September Gurls," the

Kinks' "Waterloo Sunset," earlier R.E.M.

and heart-tugging. On *Second Story*, however, the Hang-ups marry their beautiful melodies with the ideal production team, Mitch Easter and Don Dixon, who hadn't worked together since recording R.E.M.'s *Murmur* and *Reckoning* more than 15 years ago. They do for these songs precisely what they did for Athens' favorite sons: place the emphasis squarely on craft, give the melodies room to breathe, layer the guitars like a Byrds album, and add production flourishes (bells, organs, cheering crowds) that never get in the way of the songs. The twinkling harmonic convergences of "Caroline," the wonderfully wistful "Long Goodbye" and the gently touching "Parkway" build slowly and beautifully. The Hang-Ups have made a pop record for the ages, retro only in the attention to detail and how lovingly they've rendered this sound.

>>>David Daley

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HIGH LLAMAS

Snowbug

V2

The High Llamas make music for daydream believers. Over the course of an hour on a typical Llamas disc, the tempos and tones will vary only slightly, and the mix will be dominated by trebly instruments like flutes, glockenspiels, xylophones, plucked banjos, analog synth burbles, and Sean O'Hagan's intimate tenor. The results usually come across as the aural equivalent of a long, drawn-out mood, one that was pastoral and idyllic on 1996's string-laden *Hawaii*, cold and, well, bouncy on 1998's more electronic-leaning *Cold and Bouncy*.

OUT:

October 26.

FILE UNDER:

Pastoral pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Van Dyke Parks, Stereolab,

Steely Dan, Esquivel.

This time, colorful romantic visions of changing weather patterns and shifting seasons push *Snowbug* closer to the organic warmth of *Hawaii*, evoking the country comfort of a lazy summer afternoon. Back in the '70s, Steely Dan was adept at employing similarly innovative arrangements without sacrificing conceptual coherence. In fact, *Snowbug's* bossa nova flirtations and multipart vocals (which often rely on a little help from O'Hagan's Stereolab friends Laetitia Sadier and Mary Hansen) bring back unexpectedly fond memories of albums like *Aja*. It's music that encourages your mind to wander, but always to pleasant places, and never at the expense of appreciating the pop genius of tracks like the jaunty "Green Coaster" or the slyly layered "Go To Montecito."

>>>Steve Klinge



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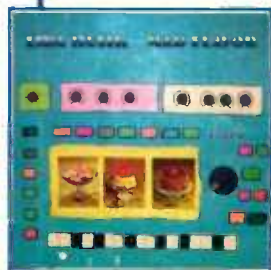
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LIDA HUSIK

Mad Flavor

Alias

Leave it to Lida Husik—the undisputed underdog of smart, somber, melodic women’s songwriting—to have refined the art of turning kitsch to spooky. *Mad Flavor*, Husik’s ninth album (if anyone’s keeping track), is another chapter in her recent-ish foray into the electronica venue, this time without digital co-conspirator Beaumont Hannant. Gliding over skips, loops, drum machines, organs (and the occasional organic-sounding sample), Husik croons her eerie vocals with a calm that contrasts with the austerity of her

OUT:

August 10.

FILE UNDER:

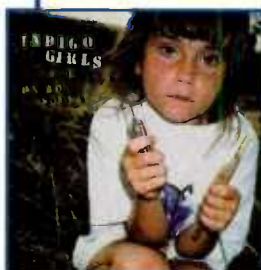
Techno-organic pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Magnetic Fields, Oval, IQU.

background like light on shadow. The moods of *Mad Flavor* range from cold-hollow “Trans-Europe Express” sensibilities to swirly pop to straight-up dancey clubbishness; from ambient to downright bouncy. Husik achieves her more sublime moments on the haunting keyboard refrain in “Jupiterstar” and on decadent, Stephin Merritt-esque lyrics like “We came to Calais to get out of reach” (in the wheedling “Glo Stick”). Not that Husik has anything to prove at this point in her fabulous career, but if she did, it’d be that she can do just about anything she damn well pleases — and very, very well. Her versatility is met with a depth of skill rather than of novelty — and it’s “electrical splendor” indeed.

>>> Lois Maffeo



INDIGO GIRLS ★

Come On Now Social

Epic

“Go,” the first song off the Indigo Girls’ seventh studio effort, sounds like it was born from the outtakes of R.E.M.’s hard-crunching *Monster*: With both Amy Ray and Emily Saliers slinging their axes with a flair that seems almost pointedly Buckesque, Ray mixes social-political history, personal frustrations and private anguish with an inscrutable intensity that would make Michael Stipe proud. Have the Girls taken a page from their Georgia brethren and decided to mix things up? Hardly. *Come On Now Social* succeeds on the strength of the duo’s folksy charm,

OUT:

September 28.

FILE UNDER:

Earnest folk-rock activism.

R.I.Y.L.:

Natache Merchant, Ferron, Leonard Cohen.

winsome melodies and fervent beliefs. “Gone Again,” an infectious 4/4 bluegrass-tinged romp, features The Band’s Garth Hudson and Rick Danko as well as fellow Lilith-mate Sheryl Crow; “Ozilline,” a throbbing number led by ringing mandolin chords and an incessant banjo; and the jangly, “Cold Beer and Remote Control,” are all highlights. Everything comes together on “Faye Tucker,” written in memory of the first woman executed in Texas since the Civil War. Combining ardent political activism with impassioned musicianship, the song, a dirge fueled by accordion and cello and featuring the haunting singing of Arabic vocalist Natacha Atlas, shows the Indigo Girls, almost a decade-and-a-half since they burst out of college with their hearts on their sleeves, still very much impassioned and still making great music.

>>> Seth Mnookin

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LE MANS

Aqui Vivia Yo

Elefant-Grimsey

It's hard to pick the most significant ingredient in Le Mans' signature sound: Ibon Errazkin's sexy, rippling guitar playing or Jone Gabarain's sultry, featherweight voice. This San Sebastian (Spain) quintet may have called it quits, but they've left behind an impressive repertoire of albums (this one is number four), most of which American audiences haven't had a chance to hear until now. The Massachusetts/Minneapolis label Grimsey has just issued *Aqui Vivia Yo*, 14 songs to siesta, snog and samba lightly to. Written by Errazkin and bass player Teresa Iturrioz,

OUT:
August 3.
FILE UNDER:
Spanish superfly.
R.I.Y.L.:

Kahimi Karie, Astrud Gilberto,
Francoise Hardy.

Le Mans' songs are based on the lite Brazilian fare of Antonio Carlos Jobim and his greatest interpreters, Astrud and Joao Gilberto. The lazy feeling one gets from hearing Le Mans also evokes such loungey songwriters as Burt Bacharach and Ennio Morricone, but this group's fare is slower and sadder. Where on previous recordings Le Mans seemed like an indie-pop Stereolab, on the newest release they explore everything from traditional-sounding Spanish music to (very light) drum 'n' bass, though it's all filtered through a samba/jazz/folk/pop sound. No, this isn't club music; it's bathtub music. The album's high point is "No Vino, Estaba Enferma O De Vacaciones," which has a hook that gently repeats until you're replaying it again and again. There may not be anything new about Le Mans, but they've built a lovely sound. >>> Gail O'Hara



LILAC TIME

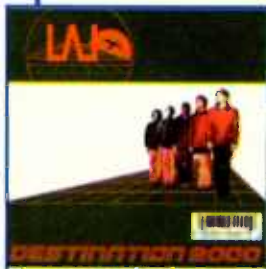
Looking For A Day In The Night spinART

OUT:
October 5.
FILE UNDER:
Folk implosions.
R.I.Y.L.:

Belle and Sebastian, Nick Drake,
Donovan.

Combining the prettiest of the Beatles' acoustic melodies, the gentle twang of the Byrds' C&W efforts and his own inimitable dollop of droll wit, Stephen Duffy returns with his first Stateside Lilac Time release in six years. Duffy is an infamous cult phenom: He did a brief stint in the earliest incarnation of Duran Duran before forming Tin Tin, a British synth-pop outfit that trucked with fellow travelers like XTC in the early 1980s. Over the past decade, he's traded his synths for acoustic guitars and been bounced from record label to record label. On *Looking For A Day In The Night*, Duffy uses those acoustic guitars and his biting wit to aim potent barbs, both pointed and circumspect, at a handful of the many conglomerates who have dropped him over the years. "Tomorrow I'll be dropped by BMG/It doesn't bother me," is one of the more literal examples in "All Over Again," an anthem for spurned musicians everywhere, reminiscent, in its defiant tone, of the disco tune "I Will Survive." Elsewhere, sweet-sounding music is offset by cutting emotional jabs. "You're so sweet/I won't cheat," he sings with a touch of venom on "A Day In The Night." "Or have you heard that one, pal?" Rife with slide guitars, the patter of hand drums and loping banjo lines, *Looking* is the prettiest bitter pill you're likely to swallow for some time. >>> Seth Mnookin





LOVE AS LAUGHTER

Destination: 2000 Sub Pop

Sam Jayne can't decide whether he wants to live in the future or the past. With Love As Laughter he seeks a union of the two. LAL's first release, *The Greks Bring Gifts*, was high on sci-fi and scrambled electronic messages, announcing a future where the aliens were nice, nerdy types. Last year's *#1 USA* was a trip headlong back to the past (Britain in the late '60's to be precise). The album's ripped up guitars and slurred vocals were pure Jagger/Richards. *Destination: 2000* finds Love As Laughter spinning the wheel on

its time machine again. There's lots of rock referencing, echoing the sleepiness of the Stones' *Let It Bleed* and Dylan-esque lyrics. The bleeps and bloops that accompany the rock swagger are futuristic, but it's an Atari future, which might just as well be the past. With its move from K Records to Sub Pop, LAL has grown from a trio to a five piece. The new line up plays leaner and cleaner chops, but sometimes clutters the view from Jayne's charmingly eccentric mind. The blaring synthesizers on "Freedom Cop" bury the vocals in what the liner notes promise is a "true story." This is pretty mild, as far as millennial statements go, but *Destination: 2000* is a decent crash pad while you wait for the apocalypse. >>> Lois Maffeo

OUT:
September 21
FILE UNDER:
Exile On Atari 64 Street.
R.I.V.L.:
Mocket, Beck, Lync.



MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA ★

The Lost Trident Sessions Sony Legacy

The Mahavishnu Orchestra, a pioneer of '70s jazz/rock fusion, spliced the atoms of ecstasy and overkill with the maddening precision of few other bands in popular music. Some argue the group's popularity was merely a sign of the times, its genre-bending excess a crusade to kill rock 'n' roll, just as *Bitches Brew* had done to jazz. But for those who maintain that more really is more, the 'Vishnu's flights of instrumental and spiritual fancy—led in most instances by the superhuman fretwork of John McLaughlin—are beyond compare. These recently unearthed recordings, from June

'73, will do little to consolidate these two camps, but with fusion currently enjoying a revisionist makeover from bands like Tortoise and Don Caballero, it's sure to find an eager audience. Mahaficionados will recognize the first three studio tracks on *Trident* from the band's live album *Between Nothingness & Eternity*, recorded in Central Park that same summer. Good authority has it the band canned the *Trident* sessions because it was unhappy with the performances, and it's true these recordings betray a touch of hesitation compared to their live counterparts. Worse, the three "new" songs on *Trident* find the group teetering dangerously close to the mannered wankery that dogged so many of its imitators. Still, one thing's for certain: If Geddy Lee never opened his trap, Rush might have sounded this good, too. >>> Matt Hanks

OUT:
September 14.
FILE UNDER:
Rocks in my fusion.
R.I.V.L.:
Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, Don Caballero, Dirty Three.

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OUT:

September 28.

FILE UNDER:

Hip-hop: the final frontier.

R.I.Y.L.:

Dr. Octagon, Tricky, Massive Attack, DJ Spooky, Prince Paul.

MATERIAL

Intonarumori

Axiom-Palm Pictures

Talk about one world under a groove. Over the past two decades, indefatigable bassist/producer Bill Laswell, under a myriad of guises, has made it his business to connect the dots between nearly every style of modern music he's ever come into contact with—ambient, dub, jazz, hip-hop, funk, spoken word, rock, world, etc. This ambitious global fusion aesthetic is best exemplified by his ever-evolving recording project Material. Previously focused on the hallucinogenic powers of ethnic sounds and rhythms, 1999's Material finds Laswell turning his interest

to the past and future of hip-hop. Pairing an eclectic cast of both new and old school rhymers and stylus-jugglers (DXT, Flavor Flav, Rammellzee, Kool Keith, Killah Priest, phonosycographDISK) with his considerably broad palette of mutated beats and tones, Laswell suggests hip-hop's future as only he could: a place where ghostly, alien sonic detritus replaces recognizable samples and soundbites; where the hard-hitting rhymes of the early '80s South Bronx hover over the buzzing sitars of turn-of-the-century Bombay; where spiritualism, science fiction and street-level philosophizing interconnect to create the new lexicon of culture. Yes, *Intonarumori* is really all that — a genuinely interesting sounding album with some head-turning cameos by a few of the genre's more eccentric talents.

>>> Colin Helms



OUT:

September 14.

FILE UNDER:

Patronage pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Serge Gainsbourg, Magnetic Fields, Kahimi Karie.

MOMUS

Stars Forever

Le Grande Magistery

Problem: A song on your previous record sparks a libel suit, leaving your label with \$30,000 in legal bills. **Solution?** Well, if you're Momus (a.k.a. Scotsman/cybercitizen Nicholas Currie), you use your website to invite fans to plunk down \$1,000 apiece for "a portrait in song." Well-heeled individuals and a few corporate entities (New York record emporium Other Music, label Minty Fresh) pony up, and less than a year later, out pops *Stars Forever*, a two-disc set of thirty songs immortalizing (and named after) the lucky subjects. One ("Shawn Kruger") is even a marriage proposal to a beloved Emily,

complete with typically perverse Momus twists ("I'm your sinister gorilla kissogram") and a chorus lifted from "We've Only Just Begun." The best moments (mostly found on Disc One) are thinly veiled variations on the singer's long-standing themes, from our relationship with technology ("Matsuko Tayama," sung by her strawberry iMac) to the nature of fame ("History remembers the names/Of those who reposition the frames"). Not every paying customer inspires Momus equally, while musically, the restrained electropop moments are more effective than his attempts at pastiche (spaghetti Western, Scottish reels). Still, this is a fascinating stunt that stands less on the worth of individual tracks than on having been executed at all.

>>> Franklin Bruno



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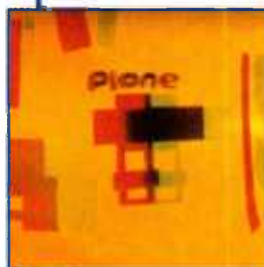
WILSON PICKETT
It's Harder Now Bullseye Blues-Rounder

"In The Midnight Hour" came out in 1965, "Land Of 1000 Dances" and "Mustang Sally" soon afterwards, but soulman Wilson Pickett is still around and as "Wicked" as ever. *It's Harder Now*, his first album in a dozen years, finds Pickett in fine shape, still sweating, leering, and reeling lascivious double entendres like the disc's title. He's found an able soulmate in bluesman Jon Tiven, who produced the album and co-wrote all the songs (with Pickett, fellow Memphis luminaries Don Covay and Dan Penn,

and others). Tiven also leads the band, which recreates the classic Muscle Shoals/Stax sound that made Pickett famous in the first place. And it works, even though some songs can't avoid clichés (especially in the horn charts) and the variety seems almost perfectly calculated to cover a range of Southern soul styles: a talky ballad ("It Ain't Easy"), a couple funky struts, a bluesy moan ("It's Harder Now"), and several groovy ass-shakers (but unfortunately, no contemporary correlatives to his iconoclastic covers of "Sugar Sugar" or "Hey Jude"). Gruff, given to sudden shouts and screams, his voice has deepened since his youth, but lost none of its power or subtlety. Pickett knows he's got soul, and it's a treat to hear him sharing it again.

>>>Steve Klingle

OUT:
September 14.
FILE UNOER:
Soul survivors.
R.I.Y.L.:
Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin,
Robert Cray.



PLONE
For Beginner Piano Warp-Matador

Two of electronica's grandpas, Perry and Kingsley, believed that the music of the future would be pop songs sung by computers, and their heirs have been following and/or fighting that contention ever since. Plone are, like the Disney Corporation, on the conservative side. They're quite fond of the old notion of Tomorrowland, though they do think it could stand a bit of tarting up, a little sophistication. So what we get on the Birmingham trio's debut are not electronic soundscapes or beat collages, but songs without words, better known

in the musical world as "instrumentals." They're all perky, straightforward compositions that on the surface, at least, seem like they'd be easy enough for a beginner to plunk out on a piano without too much strain. In fact, Plone are intentionally quite childlike: on the very Perry/Kingsleyesque "Bibi Plone," they might as well be playing penny whistles and kazoos. So where does the sophistication come in? Mostly in small touches like the vocoder/shaker duet "Plock," which whimsically evokes the image of a robot bartender. A deft, minimalist bassline sets the track "The Greek Alphabet" swinging, and the phantom chorus/verse/chorus of "Be Rude to Your School" rings remarkably true as a Beach Boys homage.

>>>Andrea Moed

OUT:
September 28.
FILE UNDER:
Retro-futurism.
R.I.Y.L.:
Arting + Cameron, Perry + Kingsley,
Aphex Twin.

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ROSE POLENZANI
Anybody Daemon

Singer/songwriters have been graced with more varied and lucrative opportunities in the wake of breakthroughs like Elliott Smith and Jewel. It's hard to imagine Rose Polenzani cynically exploiting the stripped-down woman-and-an-acoustic-guitar approach as a cost-effective avenue to bigger and better things, however. Polenzani is more a poetic storyteller than a songwriter, using guitar to provide rhythmic support to a voice that resembles a more forceful young Suzanne Vega. Her intensely personal character sketches demand rapt attention, and would likely

be lessened by much further instrumental embellishment. *Anybody's* eleven warm yet unadorned recordings were largely captured in Polenzani's apartment, with expressive violin added to two tracks by Andrew Bird and harmonies to another by the Indigo Girls (whose Amy Ray is the founder of Daemon Records). This Chicagoan convincingly adopts an Appalachian twang on some tracks, in keeping with their religious allusions and tales of romantic obsession. The fiery, rough-hewn "Angel" spews an intensity not far removed from P.J. Harvey's *4-Track Demos*, while more pensive tracks like "Omen" achieve an otherworldly quality that transcends musical categories, much like Rickie Lee Jones's early work. *Anybody* has me searching for Polenzani's self-released 1998 debut, *Dragersville*.

>>>Glen Sarady

OUT:
September 7.
FILE UNDER:
Acoustic storytelling.
R.I.Y.L.:
Kristin Hersh, early Suzanne Vega,
Beth Orton.





OUT:

FILE UNDER:

Ozzfest funk metal.

R.I.Y.L.:

Limp Bizkit, Korn, Rage Against
The Machine.

PRIMUS

AntiPop

Interscope

A little sympathy for Primus is due. In the couple years since its last proper release, *The Brown Album*, the Bay-area trio has had to watch as a bunch of other bands tagged as "funk-metal" dully thudded their way to superstardom. But bands like Korn and Limp Bizkit lack everything that set Primus apart: an eccentric sense of humor, and the musical skill to bring weirdness to life. A pity then that on *Antipop*, Primus merely embraces the knuckleheaded approach of the Family Values crowd. There are guests galore, including ex-

Police drummer Stewart Copeland, Metallica's James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett, and Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello, but you'd be hard-pressed to hear their influence because most of them contribute production help, many of them for the first time. (Even *South Park* conspirator Matt Stone produces a track—is this really a good idea?) There are spots where Primus's old flair comes through, but most often as, say, the intro to a song rather than an entire track. Les Claypool's intricate bass-wrangling, the band's hallmark, gives way to simple thumb-thwacking. The only identifiable contribution that works comes from Tom Waits on the Tom Waits-esque closer, "Coattails Of A Dead Man."

>>>Mike Wolf



OUT:

October 12.

FILE UNDER:

Indie-rock with roots.

R.I.Y.L.:

Wilco, Scud Mountain Boys,
Pavement.

PURPLE IVY SHADOWS

White Electric

Krave

It shouldn't be damning to say that Purple Ivy Shadows sound extremely earnest. Straightforward, no-bullshit songwriting, harmonies, indie-rock, country-rock, whatever—with all the blessings and curses that come with such a package. Replete with lush harmonies and intricate guitar work, they do indeed craft catchy melodies. But sometimes the results are merely pleasant rather than, say, captivating. None of which detracts from the sense that *White Electric* is a really nice and very listenable album. Showing a bit less space and swirl than

in the past and turning towards rootsier material, the band strives for a textured, sentimental kind of moodiness. The Codeine-esque (as in the slo-core band, though the analgesic applies as well) title track, the album's denouement, seems bizarrely incongruous, and a lot heavier, than all the folksy stuff that precedes it. The songs that succeed best are the dronier, more repetitive ones—the same spiraling structure that makes the "White Electric" so great is also what distinguishes the far more countryish "Along." Subtle and simple though it may be, *White Electric* is an odd package, but a promising one. Perhaps next time the band should apply its forthrightness more consistently to one of its split personalities.

>>>Liz Clayton

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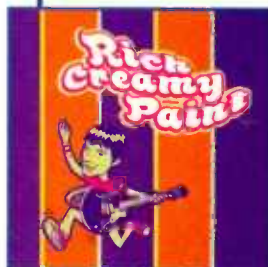
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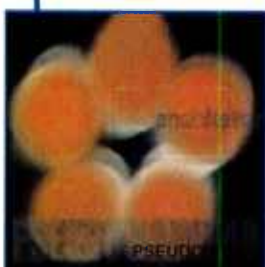
RICH CREAMY PAINT ★

Rich Creamy Paint Hollywood

Don't let the success of manufactured teen bands dash your faith in the future of bubble-gum pop. Put another way: For every 'N Sync or Backstreet Boys, there's a Rich Creamy Paint. Though he's only 19 years old, this one-man-band and Florida native (real name: Rich Painter) has been honing his craft for eight years, culminating in a fine debut CD produced by uncle/mentor John Painter (half of rock duo Fleming & John). Little Painter wrote all the songs, played nearly all the instruments, and has a better ear for hooks than most youth sensations. Imagine Superchunk singing the *Grease*

OUT:
September 21
FILE UNDER:
Sweet teenage indie pop.
R.I.Y.L.:
Superchunk, Matthew Sweet, Noise Addict, Ben Folds Five.

soundtrack and you'll understand how Painter's "You Make Me Laugh" can simultaneously sound catchy, modern and sappy in a "Summer Nights" kinds of way. Each of his three-minute sing-along gems combines adorably innocent subject matter with unexpectedly sophisticated arrangements and occasionally post-Nirvana guitar grit. A quick look at song titles and lyrics reveals he's mired in the usual teenage traps — "High School," "Hangin' Out," and "A.D.D." (he's got attention deficit disorder because she's always on his mind)—and that he's got a sense of humor. Polished but not over-produced, youthful but never immature, this is perfect alternapop—for anyone. >>>James Oliver Cury



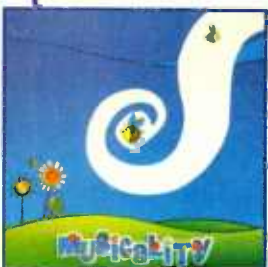
SNEAKSTER

Pseudo-Nouveau Bella Union

Way back in the early '90s, before anyone had thought of coining the term "electronica," Mark Clifford was at the helm of Seefeel. Seefeel's debut *Quique* bridged the gap between the waning moments of shoegazing and the first growth spurts of ambient techno with its prescient mix of guitar drone, odd loops, washed-out vocals and gentle beats. And it earned Seefeel several months of adoration in the British music press and the subsequent obscurity that usually follows such kudos. After several years as a remix specialist working with

OUT:
September 21
FILE UNDER:
Ambient groove pop.
R.I.Y.L.:
Cocteau Twins, Seefeel, Amp.

luminaries such as Autechre and the Cocteau Twins (on their bleep-and-bloopy *Otherness* EP), Clifford is back with a new band. Sneakster comes with the Cocteau Twins seal of approval — *Pseudo-Nouveau* is out on Robin Guthrie's imprint, and Simon Raymonde contributes bass to one track. And while classically-trained vocalist Sophie Hinkley may have taken a few cues from Liz Fraser with her trilling, swooping vocals, Sneakster isn't jumping the Cocteau's train. Instead of focusing on twinkly MIDI guitars, Clifford applies only a thin layer of cooing tape loops and celestial noises, leaving a bottom-heavy mix of dub bass and skewed, skittering hip-hop beats. But with Hinkley's vocals, *Pseudo-Nouveau* adds some lovely drama to the usual ambient techno tranquility. >>>David Jarman



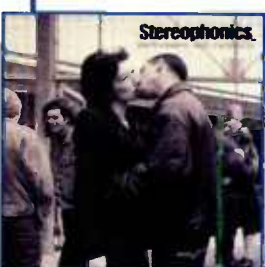
SALAKO

Musicality Jeepster

The four lads of Salako play with such exuberance and enthusiasm that they sound like a bunch of elementary school kids who've escaped math class for a long-overdue visit to the music room. Of course, their skills are far more advanced than a bunch of kids, but their unjaded happiness comes through in their unself-conscious pop music. *Musicality*, the sophomore album from this Hull, England quartet sounds like the British answer to the whimsical pop of Elephant Six bands such as Elf Power or Of Montreal. These 17 songs offer melodic, '60s-style orchestral

OUT:
September 21
FILE UNDER:
whimsical, eccentric pop.
R.I.Y.L.:
Elf Power, Beck, High Llamas, the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*.

pop with the '90s twists of samples and beats. Despite the fact that the boys recorded *Musicality* in "in a bedroom...on a beach, in a supermarket, in a newsagents and in a church" the production is surprisingly clear—acoustic guitar strums are warm, vocals are rarely muddied, flute and trumpet parts soar. *Musicality* is a concept album of sorts, about birds and bees on a magical journey, yet you don't have to buy into those tales to relate to the moving sentiments exposed in these songs—searching for acceptance, understanding your heart. Even the skeptical will be won over by the gentle beauty of "Look Left" as hand claps keep time with the unexpected chorus, "Follow the light of the Lord." Salako might be perplexing at times, but these young masters of eccentric pop have the power to convert nonbelievers. >>>Wendy Mitchell



STEREOPHONICS

Performance And Cocktails v2

Kelly Jones, the twentysomething frontman for the Welsh trio the Stereophonics, has been described as a former boxer and aspiring screenwriter. On his band's second album (already wildly popular in the UK), he seems to be influenced by both of these extracurricular activities. The screenwriter in him offers lyrics detailing more than a dozen unique scenes of malcontent, and the boxer in him throws some pretty spectacular vocal punches — yelps, whimpers, beefy cries for help. Jones waits so hard at times that you

OUT:
September 14.
FILE UNDER:
Brit-alt-pop.
R.I.Y.L.:
Oasis, Manic Street Preachers, Shed Seven.

expect to find a piece of his throat lining stuck in the corner of the disc's jewel case. The Stereophonics' first album, 1997's *Word Gets Around*, offered ruminations on working-class dramas. *Performance And Cocktails'* lyrics are more universal, but Jones's storytelling is still keen on songs about an underworld populated by con artist couples and aging strippers. Musically, the tracks alternate between angsty alt-rock numbers and pensive ballads that build into sing-along choruses. The Stereophonics clearly have a load of talent, so it's disappointing to see them run through a few generic tunes like "A Minute Longer." They're good enough to gamble a bit more, like they do on the spooky piano-driven closer, "I Stopped To Fill My Car Up."

>>>Wendy Mitchell



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SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE

Live Sub Pop

Sunny Day Real Estate has always harbored an inclination towards all things internal. The Seattle band's penchant for introspective songs armored in overwrought emotion and blended with biting guitars has helped them forge an identity wholly meditative but still underlined with masculinity. Perhaps that seeming lack of interest in the external is what makes the less-than-glamorous Eugene, Oregon as good a place as any to record the foursome's first live album, titled simply *Live*. Captured during a brief West Coast jaunt in support of their most

recent studio album, 1998's *How It Feels To Be Something On*, the eleven song collection centers around newer material such as the melancholy "Guitars and Video Games" and the trembling falsetto of "Every Shining Time You Arrive" while providing a few highlights of older material. Three tracks from the band's 1994 breakthrough album *Diary* surface including "The Blankets Were The Stairs," "Song About an Angel" and a shiver-inducing version of "In Circles." Ultimately however it is Sunny Day Real Estate's own introverted tendencies and spit-polished sound that sour *Live*. The band's militarily-precise delivery and utter lack of between song banter douse any spark of loose, live energy leaving behind a terrific collection of songs, but hardly an inspiring live performance.

>>> Jason Buhmester

OUT:

October 19.

FILE UNDER:

Emotion-laden post-hardcore.

R.I.Y.L.:

Promise Ring, Braid, Get Up Kids.



VELVET CRUSH

Free Expression Bobsled

Velvet Crush has a habit of enlisting their producer to join them as a band member for each album, and *Free Expression* is no exception. Longtime pal Matthew Sweet joins Paul Chastain and Ric Menck, co-writing a few songs, playing throughout, and providing his home studio for recording, just as he did for their first album back in 1991. And while last year's *Heavy Changes* rocked hard with an occasionally Stones-y crunch, *Free Expression* rocks harder but, uh, more sweetly. The typically pretty Velvet Crush harmonies—lots of "oohs" and "ahhs"—

and those choruses where the vocals leap into upper registers still remain as the band's trademarks in songs like "Going To My Head." But the high proportion of midtempo ballads and the prominence of keyboards make this one Velvet Crush's softest, least-powered pop album yet. Those keyboards bog down the potential euphoria of "Melody #1," but nothing impedes the pleasure of "Gentle Breeze" and "All Together." The band sounds more Byrdsy than ever, especially since Chastain's voice has developed some of Roger McGuinn's reedy twang. Plus, Greg Leisz's pedal-steel lends a distinct *Sweethearts Of The Rodeo* feel to several tracks. The album also overflows with Beatles allusions—a melody line here, a guitar figure there—but that's all part of the renaissance pop pleasure of *Free Expression*.

>>> Steve Klinge

OUT:

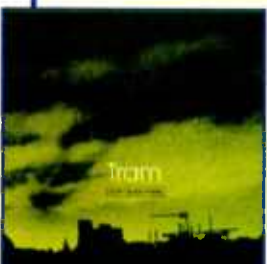
October 5.

FILE UNDER:

Sweet and sour '60s pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Matthew Sweet, Byrds, Three O'Clock.



TRAM

Heavy Black Frame Jetset

The first question that *Heavy Black Frame* brings up is will this album bring misery-loves-company solace to the chronically morose or just provide them with that final nudge over the edge. Tram's first full length is clearly intended for play after dark, preferably with the lights off. The first tune, "Nothing Left to Say," is an excruciatingly painful breakup song, with frontman Paul Anderson's tremulous voice conveying such intense hurt that it's a wonder he's able to prop himself up in front of the microphone. From then on, the tempos

scarcely rise above that of a dirge, a woozy, orchestral tone persists, and the dynamics remain in line with polite chamber music. "Too Scared to Sleep" recalls Mazzy Star, with its prominent twangy guitar cutting through the hazy atmosphere. Taken a song or two at a time, *Heavy Black Frame* is quite pleasant in a dreary sort of way. But the incessant and monochromatic melancholia grows a bit tiresome over the course of an entire album. Plenty of British vocalists have played the "woe is me" angle to reasonable artistic success, but Anderson's emotional frailty comes across as too self-pitying. He simply never makes his depression sound sinister or seedy enough to be appealing. Cheer up, Paul.

>>> Glen Sarvady

OUT:

September 28.

FILE UNDER:

Down syndrome.

R.I.Y.L.:

Timbersticks, The Auteurs, Smog, Low.



WESTBAM ★

We'll Never Stop Living This Way Mute

WestBam, a.k.a. Maximilian Lenz, has had one of the more remarkable and, in America, unheralded careers of any DJ. In Europe, he is synonymous with the prodigious Love Parade and MayDay festivals he helped to found (the former drew 1.5 million people to Berlin this past July), and he's one of the continent's top DJ draws. But he rarely appears as a live DJ in the US, and until now had yet to release an album on these shores. *We'll Never Stop Living This Way* corrects that omission with a bang—in fact, many bangs, of the relentless and metallic sort.

The disc compiles the work he's done in his native Germany over the last few years with some newer material. Purveyor of a sound he's dubbed "technolectro," Lenz is a musical descendant of the Bambaataa family of beats. He combines dark, soulless techno with trancey melodies to create an emotive maelstrom, topping it off with a hip-hop sensibility and occasional rapped vocals. Bambaataa himself actually checks in on "Agharta, The City of Shamballa" and "Beatbox Rocker." WestBam also gives the Run DMC classic "Hard Times" a memorable dancefloor update. Throw in the massive European hit "Sonic Empire" and this one should thoroughly appeal to technophiles and progressive hip-hop heads alike.

>>> William Werde

OUT:

September 21.

FILE UNDER:

BamBam booty beats

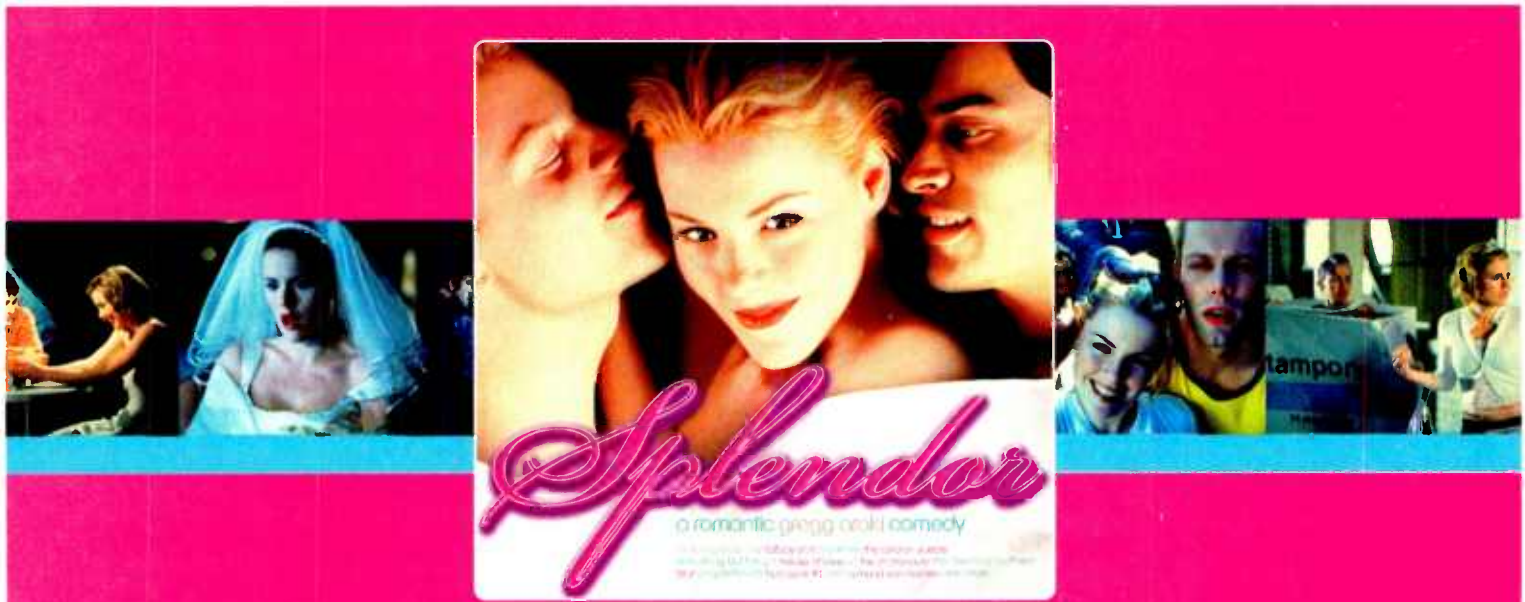
R.I.Y.L.:

Afrika Bambaataa, Josh Wink, Hardfloor.

New York's **DEEJAY PUNK ROC** doesn't know the meaning of the word "subtle." Everything this rising talent touches, from his own acclaimed productions to his energetic DJ performances, is an all-out aural assault. Wielding breakbeats like a weapon, he dips into the vibes of old-school hip-hop and electro and twists them into alarmingly futuristic frequencies devised to beat his audience into complete submission. His prowess on the 1200s makes him a welcomed addition to Mixmag's exalted series of DJ mixers. **Anarchy In The USA** (Mixmag-DMC) is as overt and adventurous as its title suggests. His amoebic mix ranges from the big-beat bounce of John Debo to the funkified house grooves of Lo-Fidelity Allstars to the slower, sassier hip-hop assault of 45 King (complete with lyrical overdubs courtesy of Stetsasonic). Fresh, fun and frilly, this 72-minute excursion is the piece of plastic to get the party started right... Every Sunday afternoon, as religiously inclined New Yorkers begin making their exodus from their approved houses of worship, a very peculiar and unique kind of worship service commences at Manhattan's club Vinyl. The name of this church is Body & Soul, and the commandments by which its faithful congregation governs itself include celebratory statutes such as "love thy neighbor," "free thy soul," and "shake thy ass." For the past three years, ministers of music **FRANCOIS K., DANNY KRIVIT** and **JOAQUIN "JOE" CLAUSSEL** have treated their mixed crowd with an assortment of spiritually uplifting deep house scriptures and diva-fueled prayers. The music and



atmosphere (there is never a guestlist) of this most unusual celebration makes B&S among the city's best-kept traditions and **Body & Soul Volume 2** (Wave Music) is the latest take-home souvenir of this pillar of Manhattan club culture. Staying true to the soulful hues that color the weekly event, the trinity of DJs mix up a continuous wash of enlightening dance tunes based on serene house and disco rushes not unlike those that fueled legendary venues such as the Paradise Garage. Artists as varied as Cesaria Evora, Innervation and Nuyorican Soul take you higher, pairing unrepentant house grooves with Latin rhythms, R&B wails, tribal-drum mysticism and the ever-present pulse of a mesmerizing, moving kick-drum... West Coast DJ **JOHN KELLEY** first made his mark as one of the recurring jockeys at California's full moon desert raves. There, his original funky breakbeat and techno unified the tribe and led legions of ecstatic ravers grooving straight into the sunlight. Since then, Kelley's star has risen due to numerous gigs across the globe and his well-received *Funkydesertbreaks* series of DJ mixes. **High Desert Soundsystem** (Moonshine), Kelley's fourth CD selection, gives his trademarked assortment of breakbeats a rest, focusing on more four-to-the-floor rhythms and techno-based textures. But Kelley loses none of his funk in the transition as standouts by DJ Dan, Jan Driver, Jark Prongo and others raise the roof with an arsenal of dance floor gems set to have your body moving well past daybreak.



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TEUTONIC BOOM

THE MINIMAL ELECTRONICS OF ARTISTS LIKE TO ROCOCO ROT AND KREIDLER GETS A COOL NAME FOR ITS COOL SOUND. BECAUSE PHRASES LIKE "GERMAN INVASION" TEND TO SCARE PEOPLE.



STORY: DYLAN SIEGLER

Teutonic Boom implies *big*. Explosions, entire races, generations of consequences. Perhaps it's too heavy a term for a handful of black-clad German musician-intellectuals producing drum tracks for local performance art shows.

But let that handful of musicians round up some friends, twiddle some more knobs, and make some albums. Let those buoyant bleep-bloop compositions reach the moniker machine of the UK's *New Musical Express*. And let us christen a new scene Teutonic Boom.

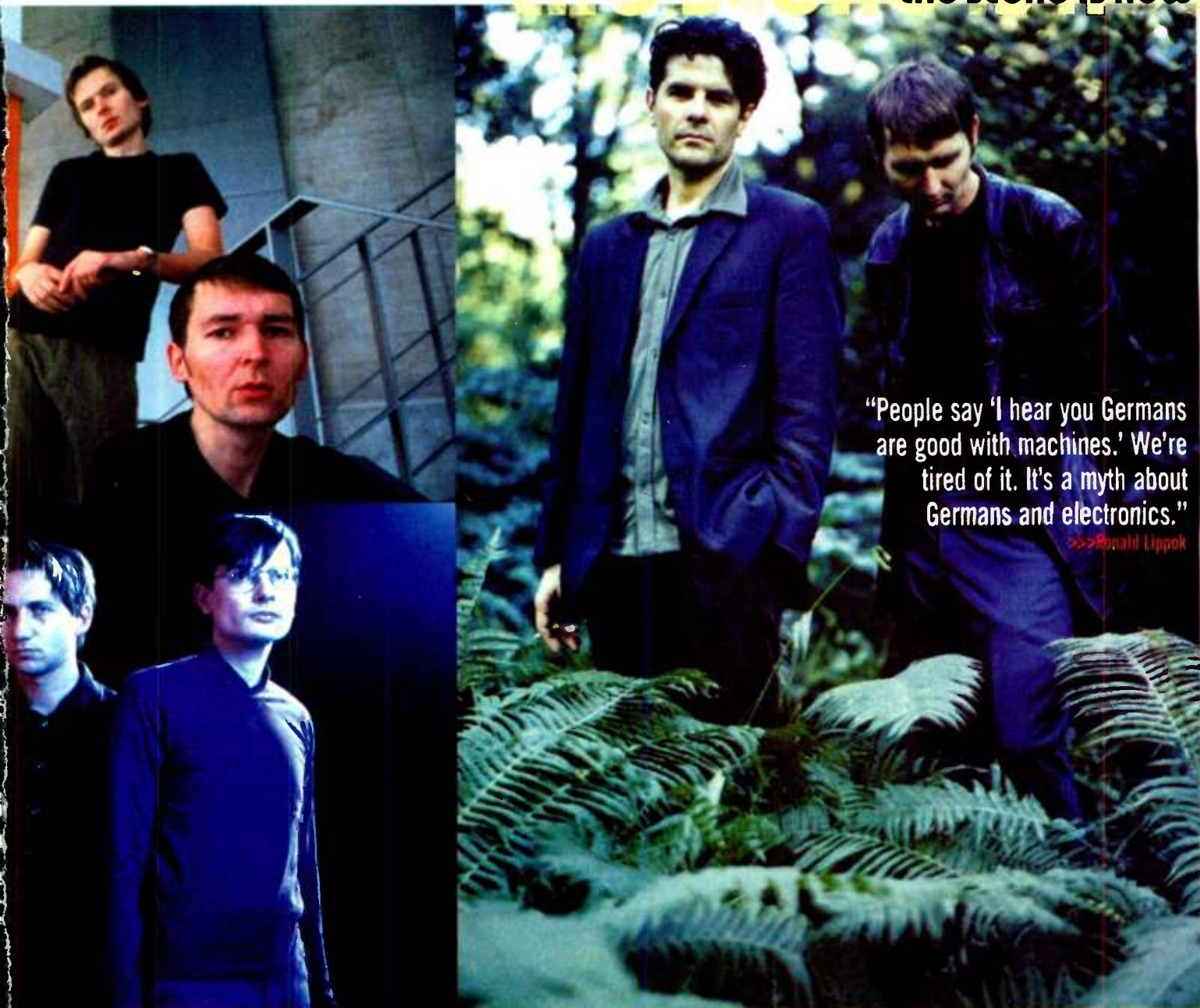
The British music press colonized these Germans—To Rococo Rot, Kreidler, Schneider tm, and Tarwater—long before Daniel Miller (head of transatlantic electronic label Mute) began to scoop them up last year. Described en masse by *NME* as “both clinical and humane, playful and serious, electronic and organic,” the epitome of the groups’ sound is a recurrent two-syllable sonic blip surprisingly similar to the ball-meets-paddle sound in Pong. Bok bok. Bok bok. Everyone notices it. One spin of To Rococo Rot’s track “Mit Dir in Der Gegend,” and you’re speaking bok bok with aloha-like versatility—as a friendly greeting, an affirmative response, a casual question. And all from a track with no vocals.

The four bands Mute licensed tend to include each other’s members, in the tradition of early Boomers Mouse on Mars (who along with Oval

begat Microstoria). And as with Tortoise and the Chicago front, member swapping helps cement a more unified sound. Sean O’Hagan dubbed the consolidated noise “cold and bouncy” and titled a High Llamas album as such in homage. But while such accolades flowed in Britain, Miller took a risk signing the whole lot for Mute America. Marketing wisdom dictates that it takes only three to make a trend, but would this tetrad of groups represent enough of a musical movement to make a dent? Would there ever be a “bok bok” heard round the world?

Perhaps not, without some serious promotional money. But with import music from other scenesters Laub, Kante, the Notwist, and Pluramon making its way across the ocean from labels like Payola, Kollaps, Kiff sm and Too Pure (and City Slang and Kitty-Yo licensing to Mute), there was at least a Teutonic Buzz. Underground American DJs began to spin the albums, whetting their appetites with Trance Syndicate’s early releases of To Rococo Rot’s work. Miller himself remixed Kreidler’s “Coldness.” The sum of the bands—despite their desire to be seen as separate entities—began to garner predictable comparisons to Krautrockers like Can, ambassadors from the last unified German musical wave most Americans can identify.

This tribe of artists doesn’t share Krautrock’s penchant for



"People say 'I hear you Germans are good with machines.' We're tired of it. It's a myth about Germans and electronics."

>>> Ronald Lippok

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: SCHNEIDER TM, TO ROCOCO ROT, TARWATER, KREIDLER

psychedelia or Can's visions of a new German folk music. However, as '70s Krautrock arguably existed quite apart from the funky American overtones of the time, the bok bok paradigm seems to have emerged from a vacuum as well. Members of Kreidler and To Rococo Rot may name hip-hop as an influence, but their sound remains more than a continent away from America's rap and R&B mainstream.

The "cold and bouncy" ones may not bounce like that, but Teutonic Boom acts do breathe anthropoid warmth into their mechanized melodies. Though only Tarwater regularly uses vocals, all the acts expertly create noises as expressive as words; hence bok bok. When Americans think of Germany, we just don't think about getting down, despite the fact that we can practically feel the bass from the German dance clubs where über-DJs hold court. Teutonic Boom acts don't change our minds, opting for a controlled tumbling together of taps and tones where a hissing snare drum and a swinging meter might have stood. This is not music for dancing.

Andreas Reihse of Kreidler (which also includes To Rococo Rot's Stefan Schneider) embraces that image. "With *Appearance and the Park*, we wanted to create a cold-pop model, to try to capture some of the mystery that's around with *The X-Files*, [filmmaker David] Cronenberg, etcetera," he explains. "I'm very interested in a certain pop

moment, and how you manage to enact tones and sounds to engender a certain universal emotion."

Others, like Ronald Lippok of Tarwater and To Rococo Rot, are less conscious of their ways and means. "We're called electronic, but the side of our music that has to do with technology is not a big thing to us," he says. "We just use everything we can to create the sound we want." Don't even utter "German engineering" in Lippok's presence. No Madison Avenue-perpetuated stereotype of Germans as thrifty, detail-obsessed, authority-minded technology cogs will be tolerated. "People say, 'I hear you Germans are good with machines,'" he seethes. "We're tired of it. It's a myth about Germans and electronics." (And no "Sprockets" jokes, either.)

The bottom line, according to Miller, is that "This music doesn't sound like anything anyone else is doing." Anyone besides, of course, the other Teutonic Boom bands? "I'm nervous about putting them together as a group too much. They're not really a genre, they're just interesting and all happen to be from Germany," he says. Lippok chimes in, "It's not a monolith thing. We don't see ourselves as a new German wave." But who wants to admit that they're part of a trend? Strap on that drum machine and get bok-ing. There are lots of scenesters still to convert.

NMM

SHAUN CASSIDY



During the years leading to junior high, my classmates wasted brain cells reading drivel by hacks like Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain. Fools! Me? I turned to the true classics, taking advantage of my school library's complete set of the Hardy Boys mysteries. *The Missing Chums. What Happened At Midnight. The Secret of Skull Mountain.* Read 'em all, some 50 in the collection. No surprise then that I wanted to be a Hardy boy: Frank, 18, dark-haired and responsible, or his more impulsive 17-year-old brother Joe, a blond. Well, being blond and impulsive myself—heh, heh—I soon fashioned myself after Joe Hardy. And why not? He had an internationally renowned detective father, a roadster, a speedboat called "The Sleuth" and, most important, a hot girlfriend. Frank dated Callie Shaw. (Frigid!) Joe kept company with Lola Morton, sister of chubby Hardy pal Chet. Lola was always described in the books as "slim and vivacious, with a really nice ass." (I could be wrong about that last part.) Even though I played the Hardy Boys in my parents' basement with my friend Chris (I was Joe—duh), there were only so many times we could solve "What Happened to the Tube Sock in the Dryer" and "The Secret Of Dad's Missing Six-Pack of Miller High Life."

True inspiration came Jan. 30, 1977, when ABC debuted *The Hardy Boys Mysteries*, starring Parker Stevenson as Frank and Shaun Cassidy as Joe—my Joe. But the TV Joe had a talent the book Joe didn't possess: He could sing. In what seemed like a weekly occurrence, the plot somehow involved Joe crooning before thong-clad 14-year-old girls who'd yell, "Take me Joe!" (Again, I could be wrong about these details.)

Soon, Shaun Cassidy became a cottage industry. Records! Posters! Book! Dolls! Being a trendsetter in my suburban Ohio hometown, I jumped on the best Shaun loot when it arrived at Buckeye Mart. And I was the only kid in my class who ordered *The Shaun Cassidy Scrapbook* from Scholastic Book Services.

However, nothing made a bigger impact than Shaun's music career. What a songwriter! He could compose some instant classics. Shaun's first album, released June 1977 and appropriately titled *Shaun Cassidy*, contained several Shaun originals, including the No. 1 smasher "Da Doo Ron Ron" and "That's Rock And Roll." How the singing

livened up the sleuthing in the Elsasser basement! After getting to the bottom of, say "Why The Basement Floods Every Spring," I would wrap things up by doing my rendition of "That's Rock And Roll" via my "sing-along with Shaun" microphone and speaker. (What this would fetch me now on eBay!) Frank, er, my friend Chris, was not impressed and eventually outgrew the detective work. (No loss—I was the brains of the operation. And he was simply jealous that he couldn't sing.)

My Shaun obsession now included buying copies of *Tiger Beat*, *Teen Beat* and, of course, *Young Celebrity Skin Beat*. One day, while hanging out with Steve, another classmate, I decided to let him in on my Shaun thing. I opened up the *Teen Beat* and sort of—jokingly—nuzzled the foldout Shaun poster. Being a sensitive sixth-grader, Steve told everyone in our class that I "got gay with a Shaun Cassidy poster." Sure they laughed, but they were the dorks who listened to flash-in-the-pan groups such as Kiss and Led Zeppelin.

At this time, Shaun was hitting the concert circuit. To my great despair, there was no place for Shaun to perform around town—he was far too much of an international pop sensation to play the Miami County Fairgrounds. Regardless, Shaun cranked out the music. In November 1977, he released *Born Late*, another rock masterpiece, complete with the rockadelic "Hey Deanie." Michael Lloyd, the visionary who also worked with Donny and Marie, produced Shaun's first two records. As Lloyd said in *The Shaun Cassidy Scrapbook*, "When you hear his records, you know it's Shaun because of his sound, just as you'd recognize Andy Williams or Elvis Presley." Amen, brother! Soon enough, Shaun and the show disappeared. I made new friends and reluctantly began liking other singers and bands.

To this day, I own all of Shaun's work, some on vinyl, some on eight-track. And every so often—when no one is around—I'll slip one in just to show those N'Sync lads how the master worked. Meanwhile, Shaun recently signed a \$6 million deal with the USA Network to develop shows. (In 1995, he created the short-lived *American Gothic* for CBS.) While I'm happy that Shaun has reinvented himself, I'm more curious about whether he'll do any singing on the soundtracks.

John Elsasser knows that the Crystals did "Da Doo Ron Ron."

BUCKETHEAD MONSTERS AND ROBOTS

Includes guest artists Les Claypool, Brain, Bootsy Collins, Bill Laswell, phonosycographDISK, DJ Eddie Def and XtraHd.

Featuring "The Ballad of Bucketehead."



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metal top 25

- 1 **MACHINE HEAD**
The Burning Red Roadrunner
- 2 **SLIPKNOT**
Slipknot Roadrunner
- 3 **SIX FEET UNDER**
Maximum Violence Metal Blade
- 4 **TESTAMENT**
The Gathering Burnt Offerings-Spitfire
- 5 **TYPE O NEGATIVE**
World Coming Down Roadrunner
- 6 **POWERMAN 5000**
Tonight The Stars Revolt! DreamWorks
- 7 **ICED EARTH**
Alive In Athens Century Media
- 8 **IN FLAMES**
Colony Nuclear Blast America
- 9 **DRAIN STH**
Freaks Of Nature The Enclave/Mercury-IDJMG
- 10 **CANDIRIA**
Process Of Self Development MIA
- 11 **STEP KINGS**
Let's Get It On Fantastic Plastic
- 12 **SEVENDUST**
"Denial" (CD5) TVT
- 13 **SNAPCASE/BOY SETS FIRE**
Snapcase Vs. Boy Sets Fire Equal Vision
- 14 **ARCH ENEMY**
Burning Bridges Century Media
- 15 **REVELLE**
Laced Elektra-EEG
- 16 **TODAY IS THE DAY**
In The Eyes Of God Relapse
- 17 **LIMP BIZKIT**
Significant Other Flip-Interscope
- 18 **MINISTRY**
Dark Side Of The Spoon Warner Bros.
- 19 **TRIAL**
Are These Our Lives? Equal Vision
- 20 **WITCHERY**
Dead, Hot, And Ready Necropolis
- 21 **INTERNAL BLEEDING**
Driven To Conquer Pavement
- 22 **MERCYFUL FATE**
9 Metal Blade
- 23 **HYPOCRISY**
Hypocrisy Nuclear Blast America
- 24 **ORANGE 9MM**
Pretend I'm Human Ng
- 25 **COAL CHAMBER**
"Notion" (CD5) Roadrunner

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

GAMMA RAY

Powerplant

Noise Records



as banal—not slow enough, not fast enough, not heavy enough, not emotional enough—can now be fresh because it has been ignored for so long. Bands like Gamma Ray never did forsake wailing melodic twin-guitar solos, and thick speed metal riffs at tempos slow enough to actually encourage headbanging. The uniquely geeky European precision of the band is self-illustrated on this album (their ninth!) via a cover of the turbulent Pet Shop Boys hit "It's A Sin." The jolly Germans in Gamma Ray don't even flinch as they wrap their histrionics around this amped-up gay club anthem. Yes, their sound is that close to camp anyway. Fans may try to convince themselves that metal evolution stopped with *Defenders of the Faith*-era Judas Priest, and only the studio technology became more sophisticated. It's healthier to simply respect the band's grandiose musical technique, and enjoy *Powerplant* as a generator of silly fist-banging fun.

>>> New releases sighted this summer from Dokken, Ratt, Great White, Def Leppard, Scorpions, Riot, Enuf Z'Nuf, W.A.S.P., and Metal Church. Surprised?... On the other hand, Brooklyn's **Candiria** are doing all they can to push metal forward. On their latest, *Process of Self-Development* (MIA) the quintet and guest bagpipe player never tire of demonstrating their trans-musical mastery of forms. They may have chosen chunky off-tempo, dissonant metal, but they insist on taking five whenever possible to play bebop, fusion, and hip-hop. It's a little tight-assed sometimes, but never stupid. They truly play circles around what passes for genre-hopping in New York City. On one plate, they've piled heaping portions of Human Remains, Chick Corea, Lester Bowie and Mobb Deep, and ultimately I'd like to see them mush all those delicacies together...There's something so wrong with Limp Bizkit that it makes me want to rally around middling bands like Rage Against the Latrine and Korn...In this post-Woodstock universe, the chunky anger rock of **Machine Head** all of a sudden sounds more

The resurgence of classic power metal is becoming impossible to avoid, what with the clean sweeps of Europe made by the likes of old guardsmen Manowar and '80s re-enactors Hammerfall this year. Ten years ago, the majority of metalheads cast a vote for progress, when they discarded the soaring vocals and fantastic premises of Iron Maiden in favor of the chaotic true grit of Napalm Death, Morbid Angel, and Cannibal Corpse (all of whom went on to sell roughly a million albums). These days, the unified and fun-loving European metal community is heavily into revisiting the crunch and circumstance of power metal. This resurgence makes sense. The metal message has steeped long and still in this genre, and what was once regarded

deserve real credit for improving. *The Burning Red* (Roadrunner) swings all over the place, from well-versed Biohazard stomps to Pearl Jam-style declarations of spirit. Ultimately, metal guitar sounds bad when contained within highly compressed repetitive groove packets, but as pop music this is a nicely abrasive spin... **Himinbjörg** may not be the second coming of Enslaved or anything, but their poetic opus *Where Ravens Fly* (Red Stream) will satisfy any thirst for evocative pagan black metal until the quirky aforementioned Norwegians decide what the fuck they're going to do next. This French troupe alternates between hellish noise and the Mixolydian modes of middle earth, creating something monsters and druids alike can enjoy during high solstice. Working very familiar terrain, Himinbjörg make more interesting acoustic choices than other acts of their caliber. It's enough to notch up expectations for the next raven-friendly CD coming from the band this November.

WARP¹⁰ INFLUENCES/ WARP¹⁰ THE CLASSICS 89- 92/ WARP¹⁰ THE REMIXES

Various Artists

Warp-Matador

This stellar anthology, celebrating British electronic indie label Warp's tenth anniversary, offers an occasion to survey the historical sweep of electronic dance music and the routes it has traveled. Two of this ambitious collection's most striking features are the *Influences* and *Remixes* albums, which offer, respectively, tracks from techno's earliest days and remixes of Warp tracks by a host of current artists. These LPs demonstrate the numerous ways in which the sounds of post-disco dance music traveled a non-linear path into the bedrooms, basements, and studios of Jim O'Rourke, Stereolab, Spiritualized, John McEntire and Mogwai, who on the *Remixes* collection, take on Autechre, Nightmares On Wax, LFO, and Link, respectively. Opening the *Remixes* album is Luke Vibert's spike-through-the heart rendition of DJ Mink's "Hey, Hey Can U Relate," which conjures up images of British kids breakdancing in concrete shopping malls in the mid-1980s. Edgar Farinas (a.k.a. Miami carpet bomber Push Button Objects) puts Boards Of Canada's "An Eagle In Your Mind" through a Miami sanding machine with kick drums as wide as the Panama canal, yet he never loses the original's pastoral beauty. More Miami vice is to be found in the nerve-wracking textures of Richard Devine's severe detuning of Aphex Twin's "Come To Daddy." Listening to this behemoth set causes a sense of vertigo, as if electronic music history is folding back into itself, pieces of electronic debris ending up lodged in the imaginations of artists light years away from their origins. Truly great endeavors such as this are a reminder that music is an art form without which we would hardly be human.



>>>Whenever electronic music seems to take a turn into a humorless, soulless void, along comes a record like **LES RHYTHMES DIGITALES'** *Darkdancer*, which recycles dance music clichés so thoroughly that they bear virtually no trace of the music they set out to parody. Last year, Jacques Lu Cont released the hilariously titled "Jacques Your Body (Make Me Sweat)," poking fun at both French house and the original house anthem "Jack Your Body" by Farley "Jackmaster" Funk. Anyone can lift a chord change or drum loop from the best of late '70s sequencer disco and '80s kitsch synth-pop, but to make something wholly original from those fragments is a different skill altogether. And that's just what Les Rhythmes Digitales have in abundance. Someone once called kitsch the murderer of authentic art, but Les Rhythmes Digitales couldn't care less... It was only last month that Californian laptop wizard **KIT CLAYTON** released a new,

groundbreaking record, and now he has a new seven-track EP, *Repetition And Nonsense* on the exciting West Coast electronic indie, Drop Beat. The title is truly self-effacing, but it's also a ready-made answer to those critics who use that term to refer to any electronic music that seemingly goes nowhere. Nothing could be further from the truth here. "Settler," which opens the EP, is a wondrous, panoramic piece with a crystalline skein of a melody running through the center of the mix accompanied by looming, operatic synth chords while squelched and flanged Morse code signals lose their way in the ether. Clayton is one US electronic artist unafraid to venture into the echo chamber, often to the point of no return. And when he does make it back, he brings with him some of the most ecstatic mind and body music imaginable. This essential EP will be followed by a full-length record to be released by Pole's -Scape label in the fall.

dance top 25

- 1 **CHEMICAL BROTHERS**
Surrender Astralwerks
- 2 **LAMB**
Fear Of Fours Fontana/Mercury-IDJMG
- 3 **BASEMENT JAXX**
Remedy XL-Astralwerks
- 4 **URSULA 1000**
The Now Sound Of Ursula 1000
Eighteenth Street Lounge
- 5 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
The New Latinaires Ubiquity
- 6 **JOSH WINK**
Profound Sounds Vol. 1 Ovum/Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRC
- 7 **ORBITAL**
The Middle Of Nowhere London
- 8 **µ-ZIQ**
Royal Astronomy Astralwerks
- 9 **MOBY**
Play V2
- 10 **CARL COX**
Phuture 2000 Moonshine
- 11 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Funk: This Is Jungle Sky Vol. 6 Jungle Sky-Liquid Sky
- 12 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Om Lounge 2 Om
- 13 **AUTECHRE**
EP7 Nothing-Interscope
- 14 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Cybonetix 1999 DSBP
- 15 **PLAID**
Rest Proof Clockwork Nothing-Interscope
- 16 **HAUJOBB**
Ninetynine Metropolis
- 17 **SQUAREPUSHER**
Maximum Priest (EP) Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 18 **FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE**
International Standard... Emperor Norton
- 19 **VELVET ACID CHRIST**
Fun With Knives Metropolis
- 20 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Torchbearers Risk
- 21 **SOUNDTRACK**
Run Lola Run TVT
- 22 **ABCESS**
Punishment & Crippled Reality Cashed!
- 23 **NEW MIND**
Deepnet Cashed!
- 24 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Teknoir Hymen
- 25 **MESH**
In This Place Forever Jarrett

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

hip-hop top 25

- 1 **GANG STARR**
"Discipline" Virgin
- 2 **MOS DEF**
"Next Universe" Rawkus
- 3 **EPMD**
"Right Now" Def Jam-IDJMG
- 4 **LAST EMPEROR**
"Echo Leader" Hi Rise-Interscope
- 5 **NOREAGA**
"Oh No" Penalty-Tommy Boy
- 6 **HIGH & MIGHTY FEAT. MOS DEF & MAD SKILLZ**
"B-Boy Document '99" Rawkus
- 7 **GZA/GENIUS**
"Breaker Breaker" MCA
- 8 **PHAROAE MONCH**
"Mayor" Rawkus
- 9 **Q-TIP**
"Vivrant Thing" Def Jam-IDJMG
- 10 **THIRSTIN HOWL III**
"Brooklyn Hard Rock" Rawkus
- 11 **LONE CATALYSTS**
"Due Process" Bucka
- 12 **PUBLIC ENEMY**
"Do You Wanna Go Our Way???" Atomic Pop
- 13 **JA RULE**
"Holla Holla" Def Jam-IDJMG
- 14 **LOST BOYZ**
"Ghetto Jiggy" Universal
- 15 **TRICK DADDY**
"Sweatin' Me" Slip N Slide-Warlock
- 16 **JEDI MIND TRICKS**
"Heavenly Divine" Superregular
- 17 **JAY-Z**
"Girl's Best Friend" Epic
- 18 **RAHZEL W/ERYKAH BADU**
"Southern Girl" MCA
- 19 **RAH DIGGA**
"Tight" Elektra-EEG
- 20 **THE SQWAD**
FEAT. LARGE PROFESSOR & NEEK THE EXOTIC
"Rhymemania '99" Replay
- 21 **DEL THA FUNKY HOMOSAPIEN**
"Phony Phranchise" Hieroglyphics
- 22 **MOBB DEEP W/ LIL' KIM**
"Quiet Storm (Remix)" Loud
- 23 **ROOTS**
"The Next Movement" MCA
- 24 **RUFF RYDERS**
"Scenario 2000 (Jigga My Nigga Remix)" Interscope
- 25 **WESTSIDE CONNECTION**
"Let It Reign" Priority

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

SONIC SUM

The Sanity Annex

Skypimps/Ozone-NuGruv



Smith's vocalese. Bassist and co-producer Erik Mo lays down musical paths over basic drum patterns, adding acoustic guitars, jazz fusion bottom tones and Middle Eastern, North African and Indian instrument samples. Their debut shows all these strengths and more, from the streetwise musings of "Downtown Maze" and "Eratika" to the gently abstract "Velour 80 Grit" and the cosmic Middle Eastern feel of "Sara-Inge." It's an album that goes easy on the ears but demands your full intellectual attention. *The Sanity Annex* will not only make you think about what Smith is saying, but will also make you reassess how many more faux-tough-guy, I'm-the-dopest MCs you should settle for.

Whether you're below the underground or on top of the pops, it still pays to be a hard-rock. It's a case of economy—it's just easier to connect with people if you fit into the stereotypes about rappers that the public already has (i.e. thugs who value their street cred more than their artistic cache). The greatest thing about New York's Sonic Sum is that it's not very economical. Group figurehead/vocalist/producer Rob Smith's lyrical lines aren't straight—they're elliptical. His flow is spoken rather than shouted. And his lyrical content is poetic—not in a pedantic, post-grad way, but poetry that makes you want to rewind and listen again to decipher what you've just heard. Musically the group is well matched to

>>> The Bomb Hip Hop label has been very busy on the production lines, releasing the new compilations **Revenge Of The B-Boy** and **Contents Under Pressure**, along with Atlanta-based **DJ T-ROCK's** *Who's Your Daddy?*. *Revenge Of The B-Boy* is the soundtrack to a yet-to-be-released film called *I Saw Your Mama Breakdancing*. *Bucknaked* and features producers, MCs and DJs from all over the globe. There's not a lot of originality with most offerings here, but breakdancers don't really demand the next shit to rock, pop and body-lock. And with tributes like Knights Of Bass's thick Egyptian Lover-ish "De M-Pire" and the excellent beat box and vocoder workout of Metabass's "Transform Gravity," you'll be busting out your Puma sweats and shell toes by the time it's through. *Contents Under Pressure* is a taste of hip-hop from some excellent up-and-comers, including Hydroponic Sound System (which has a Bomb full-length on the way), Freedom Of Knowledge, DJ Upperkut and 7th Plague, which drops the dope "The Grateful Dread." And on his debut, DJ T-Rock takes his obvious Invisibl Skratch Piklz influences and pushes them into a realm of his own, with choppy, well-executed and -choreographed soundslabs like "5th Dimensional Weirdness," "The Incredible Turntablist" and "Annihilator Robot."... Hip-hop compilations are flooding the shelves these days, and if they continue to be as good as **Strength Magazine Presents Subtext** (London), then there's no reason to complain. Featuring chiefly West Coast underground kings such as Aceyalone,★ Rasco, Dilated Peoples, Del and Divine Styler, it includes great exclusive cuts, such as Loot Pack's "Bone Marrow," DJ Design and Peanut butter Wolf's "Level Five," Aceyalone's "Rappers, Rappers, Rappers 12 For 10" and Kut Masta Kurt and Motion Man's "Clearing The Field." Rounding it out is Rob Swift and Gudtyme's slick and well-versed "Times Table Turntables" and the Beat Junkies' disjointed and hard-cutting "You Ain't Fresh."... From the Boot Camp comes **Duck Down Records Presents The Album** (Duck Down-Priority), a snapshot of what Brooklyn's finest are up to these days. From Black Moon, the Cocoa Brovaz and Heltah Skeltah to newer artists like Ruste Juxxmen, Sean Price, Illa Noyz and BDI Thug, this varied set is definitely worth a listen. Standouts include Black Moon's "Jump Up" and Buckshot and Rock's "Eye Of The Scorpio."... If you've been wondering what the clubs are up to down in the dirty South, look no further than **Get Crunk** (Tommy Boy), a collection of music that most Northerners and Midwesterners with diminutive subwoofers know very little about. More than anything, this stuff just sounds great played really, really loud.



"RAPPEERS, RAPPEERS, RAPPEERS 12 FOR 10" BY ACEYALONE APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD. november 1999 67

>>> Its biggest hits were its mid-'80s stabs at new wave, but from its '78 D.I.Y. punk origins onwards, **SCRITTI POLITTI** has always rolled with the moment; when the group was last seen, back in 1992 or so, it was just starting to turn ragga. Frontman Green took a long time off, and now he's apparently gotten deeply into hip-hop. The band's new single, "Tinseltown To The Boogiedown" (Virgin UK), finds him reinventing the band as a rap crew, of all things: The verses get handled by Mos Def and Lee Majors, Green shows up to drizzle his honeyed vocals over the chorus, and the instrumentation is spare and head-nodding in a way they've never been before. Psycho Les from the Beatnuts even turns up for a remix. Amazingly, it works just great—though it'd be nice to hear more of Green's own wordplay, he knows better than to rap himself, and he knows how to make hooks that are strong enough to catch the ear and subtle enough not to interfere with the MCs.

>>> **ALVA**'s records are all too few—the three women who make up the band are now scattered to the ends of the Earth, but they've come together for a deliciously weird 10-track, 15-minute EP, *Slattery For Ungdom* (Menlo Park). Loosely affiliated with the Elephant 6 collective, Alva has a mildly psychotic chamber-music vibe going on—its instrumentation usually consists of keyboards, violin, and some kind of wind instrument (melodica, saxophone), the women use their high, nervously intense voices as weapons when they use them at all, and their melodies seem like they've been reclaimed from some kind of long-vanished gypsy culture's animated cartoons. Parts of *Slattery* sound like they were impressed on recording tape by the vengeful ghosts of little girls, then turned up to be audible over the hiss; best of all is the one where they chant sweetly about wanting to kill everyone in sight.

>>> The **ROOTS** are perpetually generating stuff beyond what lands on their albums—reportedly, they recorded around 100 tracks for *Things Fall Apart*. Some of their overspill has ended up on a casual CD-single called "The Legendary" (MCA): a couple of live tracks recorded in Switzerland early this year ("Zurich is rock rockin' it!"), including a smoking version of *Things*' "The Next Movement," plus a third angle on the album's two-part "Table Of Contents" and a couple of inspired bits of Rahzel's human-beat-boxing—the "scratching" sound on "The Battlestar ?uestacula," on close examination, was made by his larynx, not a stylus and vinyl. Stick the disc in your CD-ROM



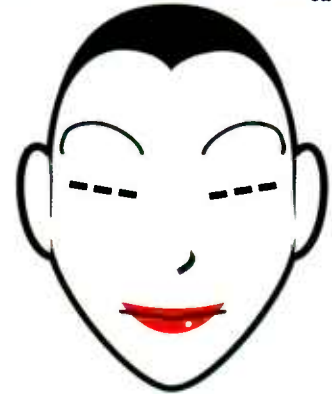
STEREOLAB & BRIGITTE FONTAINE / MONADE

"Caliméro"

Duophonic

For more than 30 years, the French singer Brigitte Fontaine has been collaborating with arty musicians to make records that tread the line between pure pop and pure avant-garde (*Comme A La Radio*, her collaboration with the Art Ensemble of Chicago, is an underground favorite). She's got some disciples in the rock world: Her pinched groan was a big influence on Kim Gordon's singing, and the folks in Stereolab have long been huge fans. Tim Gane and company have finally gotten to collaborate with her, and everyone sounds like they're having a great time. "Caliméro" is one of the band's multi-part suites, switching directions every minute or two, guided by a tricky brass arrangement by the High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan. Fontaine's voice is rougher and more weathered than anything that's usually heard among Stereolab's smooth, micro-managed chimes and hums, but that makes it exceptionally effective here, like a detailed figure drawn against a cartoony background. Since regular Stereolab singer Laetitia Sadier barely appears on the A-side, she gets the flip all to herself (well, almost: Gane and Mary Hansen help out) under her *nom de plume* Monade. "Cache Cache" is a feathery, contemplative sort-of-samba; it uses the 'Lab's usual clockwork polyrhythm construction, but its components are simple and clean, and Sadier's voice is the essence of calm.

stereolab & brigitte fontaine
caliméro



drive, and there's a bonus: the too-little-seen videos for "You Got Me," "The Next Movement" and "What They Do," the last a dead-on parody of rap video conventions.

>>> A few quick drops of the needle: **PET SHOP BOYS**' new one, "I Don't Know What You Want But I Can't Give It Anymore" (Parlophone UK), doesn't quite live up to its title—how could it, really?—though the epic disco production comes through, as always. And each of its import CD-single variations has something to recommend it: a creepy, lush video on the first, and a confounding digital-voiced cover of Serge Gainsbourg's "Je T'aime... Moi Non Plus" on the second... The latest discovery of the splendid retro-funk label Desco is the **MIGHTY IMPERIALS**, a band of New York teenagers who really want to be the Meters, very badly. Their debut 7-inch "Kick The Blanket," sounds like an outtake from the "Sophisticated Cissy" sessions—but that's high praise for their minutely beat-aware guitar playing and organ washes, and those looking for a new beat to sample could do a lot worse than the hi-hat-and-rimshot intro of the B-side, "Toothpick."... The Wabana label's Gun Court 7-inch singles series generally concentrates on punk bands of one

kind or another, but **KID-606**'s *Ruin It, Ruin Them, Ruin Yourself, Then Ruin Me* EP breaks the mold—up to a point. Kid is a breakbeat guy, and these tracks were all produced on computer equipment, but electronic music doesn't get any louder, messier or more aggressive than this. Highlight: "Kidrush," a ferally distorted beat concealing a plea to free jailed hacker Kevin Mitnick... **STEREOLAB** is on another 7-inch this month, too (on Luke Warm Music). The 'Lab's side is a perky trifle of instrumental filmish music called "Symbolic Logic Of Now!," played by Gane and drummer Andy Ramsay, and built around a couple of keyboard riffs and some bubbly dub sound effects. The Vassar-based **SOI-DISANT**, on the other side, contributes "Glitterati (Cruise)," another pretty instrumental that suggests that, well, they've listened to lots of Stereolab... And, while **IDA** continues to make us wait for that new full-length album, the NYC group has got a split single of its own (shared with **VERMONT**): the softly wrenching "Don't Get Sad" (Long Quiet Highway), on which guitarist Daniel Littleton gets to murmur his heart out for a change and Elizabeth Mitchell joins in for harmonies as pure as those of Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons'.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Raga Guide

Nimbus



Alright, unlike so many music pundits out there, I'll come right out and admit it—as much as I enjoy listening to Indian classical music, a fair amount of the time I don't really know what's going on musically even as I dig what I hear. It's true: While Indian classical music is something like jazz—unlike Western classical music, improvisation in Indian music is considered a virtue—and even as much as one might admire someone like Ravi Shankar, it's still difficult for an outsider to know where the original melody leaves off and where the improvising starts. Fortunately, Indian sitar music, like jazz, doesn't require a sophisticated ear for genuine appreciation. But then again, it wouldn't really hurt to learn more about such a complex and ancient musical form, now would it? Enter *The Raga Guide*, a four-CD box set and booklet designed to bring a greater understanding of the sophisticated world of Indian classical music to the average layperson. It explains what's happening and why, and offers selections from the major ragas of the Indian musical canon. It's not exactly like a college course or a study-at-home program, but spending time with this box set really does result in a greater understanding and appreciation for the music. I also wholly endorse this box set because the booklet features twenty-odd pages of wonderful full-color reproductions of Indian paintings from the 17th century.

>>> There's always good stuff in the bins from the always-groovy jazz reissue label 32 Jazz, but the company has recently put out some really noteworthy stuff from the catalog of Atlantic records. First, there's the sensational *Left Hook Right Cross*, a two-CD compendium of two **RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK** albums. *Volunteered Slavery* is a truly great album, one of the touchstones of Kirk's genius, a testimonial to the reasons his fans can be so devoted and intense in their ardor for the man. Then, if you're a fan of vintage synthesizers and old-school funk, you should definitely check out the reissue of **LES McCANN**'s 1971 album, *Layers*. The first 32-track recording ever, its premise was simple but ambitious: Les just went into the state-of-the-art Atlantic studios with an array of synthesizers and proceeded to go wild—as its title suggests, it's a richly textural, sensual, overdub-laden blend of beautiful and intriguing sounds. They simply don't make albums like this anymore.



>>> Fantasy has just released a never-before-heard recording of **STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN and ALBERT KING** performing together. *In Session* is actually pretty darn good for what seems like must have been a one-off, let's-just-show-up-in-the-studio-and-jam kind of setup. Stevie is in fine fettle, and it's interesting to hear him share the stage with a blues mentor who's not as flamboyant or mysterious, but nonetheless manages to hold his own.

>>> Under the aegis of Rhino records, the catalog of Bethlehem records, a classic and venerated jazz label from the 1950s, has recently begun to see the light of day. These are the kind of simmering, smoking jazz records that sound really good late at night or

when listened to in a dim room. With titles from **DUKE ELLINGTON, CHARLES MINGUS, ART BLAKEY** and **MEL TORME**, the reissue campaign is off to an impressive start. Of particular note is *The Jazz Experiments Of Charlie Mingus*, an early Mingus album that showcases the earliest germination of the composer/bassist's revolutionary take on jazz.

>>> The funk fanatics at Ubiquity records have unearthed yet another long-lost acid jazz gem. This time it's a rare album from electric saxophonist **EDDIE HARRIS**. Harris, who was granted immortality by being name-checked by the Beastie Boys on their album *Check Your Head*, was a quirky jazz performer who insisted upon plugging his saxophone into an array of electronic gadgetry—sort of the jazz equivalent of Peter Dinklage's talking wah-wah solo on *Frampton Comes Alive*, except Harris did it on almost every song.

>>> Among the mighty punk bands that stormed through the 1980s, few cut a mightier swath than Chicago's **NAKED RAYGUN**. The fearsome foursome's music becomes all the more important when you think of Raygun's ability to meld the edge of punk with the pop melodicism and songwriting of pop as a predecessor to Nirvana. Touch And Go has just released four of the group's seminal albums, including the massive, Steve Albini-produced *All Rise*.

IN THE BINS

Music Club label has just re-released the debut album from acid-jazz mavens the **BRAND NEW HEAVIES**, previously only available as an import... RCA Victor has released a collection from **LES DOUBLE SIX**, a wacky French jazz vocal group that was sort of like a silly '60s Francophone version of Manhattan Transfer. They scat and sing inane French lyrics like something straight out of a zany Blake Edwards movie. Oh, and Quincy Jones did the music... Look out for *Tropicalia Essentials* on Hip-O records, a collection of zany Brazilian funk and experimental music from the '60s and '70s. There's also a *Southern Rock Essentials*, if you're feeling that zealous, rebellious, hellraising spirit on a Saturday night. It's the perfect CD for an all-night drive to see the laser light show in Stone Mountain, Georgia... And last but not least, a funk-jazz record you've probably never heard before but can't go wrong buying: 32 Jazz has also reissued a key title from long-lost organ titan **SONNY PHILLIPS**, *My Black Flower*. Fans of funk jazz and B-3 should get an earful of this disc. If you dig Medeski, Martin & Wood, you'll love this CD.

1	GUIDED BY VOICES	Do The Collapse	TVT
2	MACHA	See It Another Way	Jetset
3	BIS	Social Dancin	Grand Royal-Capitol
4	SUPERCHUNK	Come Pick Me Up	Merge
5	AMERICAN ANALOG SET	The Golden Band	Emperor Jones
6	CHEMICAL BROTHERS	Surrender	Astralwerks
7	KRISTIN HERSH	Sky Motel	4AD
8	ROBYN HITCHCOCK	Jewels For Sophia	Warner Bros.
9	BLACK BOX RECORDER	England Made Me	Jetset
10	SUPER FURRY ANIMALS	Guerilla	Flydaddy
11	BELLE AND SEBASTIAN	Tigermilk	Matador
12	MR. BUNGLE	California	Warner Bros.
13	LUSCIOUS JACKSON	Electric Honey	Grand Royal-Capitol
14	SHEILA DIVINE	New Parade	Roadrunner
15	BETA BAND	The Beta Band	Regal-Astralwerks
16	FLAMING LIPS	The Soft Bulletin	Warner Bros.
17	MOBY	Play	V2
18	LAMB	Fear Of Fours	Fontana/Mercury-IDJMG
19	SELF	Breakfast With Girls	Spongebath-DreamWorks
20	G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE	Philadelphonic	OKeh/550-Epic
21	BASEMENT JAXX	Remedy	XL-Astralwerks
22	JOSH WINK	Profound Sounds Vol. 1	Ovum/Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
23	CIBO MATTO	Stereo Type A	Warner Bros.
24	LOS LOBOS	This Time	Hollywood
25	DOT ALLISON	Afterglow	Heavenly-Arista
26	BLUE HAWAIIANS	Savage Night	Coolsville-Interscope
27	MADDER ROSE	Hello June Fool	Thirsty Ear
28	URSULA 1000	The Now Sound Of Ursula 1000	Eighteenth Street Lounge
29	PORTABLE	Secret Life	TVT
30	GUITAR WOLF	Jet Generation	Matador
31	THOSE BASTARD SOULS	Debt & Departure	V2
32	GANG STARR	Full Clip: A Decade Of Gang Starr	N00 Trybe-Virgin
33	BIRTHDAY PARTY	Live 1981-1982	4AD
34	CAFÉ TACUBA	Revés/YoSoy	WEA Latina
35	TRICKY WITH OJ MUGGS AND GREASE	Juxtapose	Island-IDJMG
36	GAY DAD	Leisure Noise	London
37	HOT WATER MUSIC	No Division	Some
38	RED HOUSE PAINTERS	Retrospective	4AD
39	KOOL KEITH	Black Elvis/Lost In Space	Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
40	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Onda Sonora: Red Hot & Lisbon	Bar/None
41	FROSTED AMBASSADOR	Frosted Ambassador	Kindercore
42	FENIX TX	Fenix TX	MCA
43	SOUNDTRACK	Soul Ecstasy	Emperor Norton
44	AUTECHRE	EP7	Nothing-Interscope
45	HIPPOS	Heads Are Gonna Roll	Interscope
46	MARINE RESEARCH	Sounds From The Gulf Stream	K
47	OCTANT	Shock-No-Par	Up
48	EAST RIVER PIPE	The Gasoline Age	Merge
49	SQUAREPUSHER	Maximum Priest (EP)	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
50	PUBLIC ENEMY	There's A Poison Goin On....	Atomic Pop
51	LORDS OF ACID	Expand Your Head	Antler Subway
52	MXPX	At The Show	Tooth & Nail
53	LIMP BIZKIT	Significant Other	Flip-Interscope
54	FRAMES	Dance The Devil...	ZTT-Universal
55	MUSIC TAPES	1st Imaginary Symphony For Nomad	Merge
56	LYLE LOVETT	Live In Texas	Curb-MCA
57	WEEN	Paintin' The Town Brown: Live '90-'98	Elektra-EEG
58	THIN LIZARD DAWN	Go	RCA
59	MARKY RAMONE AND THE INTRUDERS	The Answer To Your Problems?	Zöe-Rounder
60	PLAID	Rest Proof Clockwork	Nothing-Interscope
61	PEOPLE LIKE US	Hate People Like Us	Soleilmoon
62	ALISON KRAUSS	Forget About It	Rounder-IDJMG
63	NAKED RAYGUN	Huge Bigness	Quarterstick
64	LIARS INC.	Superjaded	Foodchain/Columbia-CRG
65	µ-ZIQ	Royal Astronomy	Astralwerks
66	CLARENCE GATEMOUTH BROWN	American Music Texas Style	Blue Thumb
67	BARDO POND	Set And Setting	Matador
68	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Return Of The Grievous Angel	Almo Sounds
69	LUCKSMITHS	Happy Secret	Candle-Drive-In
70	SCHNEIDER TM	Moist	Mute
71	VITRO	Distort	American/Columbia-CRG
72	VARIOUS ARTISTS	The New Latinaires	Ubiquity
73	FREEDY JOHNSTON	Blue Days Black Nights	Elektra-EEG
74	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS	Californication	Warner Bros.
75	MUSE	Muscle Museum EP	Maverick



Guided By Voices
Do The Collapse

#1 GUIDED BY VOICES
DO THE COLLAPSE

FIVE YEARS AGO

1. REVEREND HORTON HEAT

LIQUOR IN THE FRONT (INTERSCOPE)

2. STEREO LAB

MARS AUDIAC QUINTET (ELEKTRA)

3. LUSCIOUS JACKSON

NATURAL INGREDIENTS (GRAND ROYAL-CAPITOL)

4. SEBADOH

BAKESALE (SUB POP)

5. MAGNAPOP

HOT BOXING (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM - PRIORITY)

TEN YEARS AGO

1. HOODOO GURUS

MAGNUM CUM LOUDER (RCA)

2. B-52'S

COSMIC THING (REPRISE)

3. POGUES

PEACE AND LOVE (ISLAND)

4. THE THE

MIND BOMB (EPIC)

5. PIXIES

DOOLITTLE (4AD-ELEKTRA)

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. Bald men really are better lovers...

NO MAYO, HOLD THE CHEESE

AN INDIE LABEL PUTS ITS MONEY WHERE ITS HEART IS: MUSIC EDUCATION.

STORY: GREG HELLER CLASS PHOTOS: MATT HARTENSTEIN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: JURASSIC 5, GRAMMIE BLACK EYED PEAS, STYVES OF BEYOND

Among en vogue charities, few can rightfully claim to be as chic as the drive to save the broke and dying music programs of America's inner city schools. Flip on VH1, and there's endearing footage of Lisa Loeb strumming "Stay" for wide-eyed youths; later, she'll sign and donate the exact same guitar. Meanwhile, to remind us that every day potential Charlie Parkers waste their chops exhaling crack smoke instead of sultry readings of "Confirmation," Gloria Estefan sports a gold saxophone brooch on her Vera Wang number. Happy that at least someone in need will see the stars' surfeit of cash, the public tolerates the attendant showbiz grossness. But celebrity-giving crazes come and go like Pokémon or 'N Sync. In a few months, Woody Harrelson will swing the charity spotlight to coke legalization or an equally worthy beneficiary, and the music capital will again run dry.

Hershel Berry, founder and head of San Francisco-based indie No Mayo, has an alternate vision of how to help, one with the potential to endure a little longer. Berry is testing mutualism's potential in the alt.music industry by offering blooming artists a label to call home, distribution, and tour support, provided they're willing to take a smaller royalty cut, so that a percentage of proceeds can go towards helping musical education programs. Artists needn't be social activists or protest singers, just talented and passionate; Berry wants the outreach aspect to take a backseat to the music. The idea is Matador-meets-Newman's Own, a consistently good indie with solid distribution, quietly (and without preaching) serving as a conduit to those in need: tough schools with unhealthy music programs.

(continued on page 78)



FILM BRIEFS

AMERICAN BEAUTY

(DreamWorks)

In an idyllic suburban community, 42-year-old Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey, never better)—the narrator of this saucy black comedy—is having one helluva mid-life crisis. “Look at me jerking off in the shower,” he tells us. “It will be the highlight of the day.” Indeed. His wife (Annette Bening) hates him. Ditto for his teen-age daughter. And he’s ready to get axed at work. For therapy, Lester buys a muscle car, starts lifting weights and—uh-oh!—gets the hots for his daughter’s va-va-voom friend. A provocative look at how people desperately grope for happiness.

>>> John Elsasser

GUINEVERE

(Miramax)

Sarah Polley (Go), one of Hollywood’s hottest young stars, considers herself somewhat of an activist. So why didn’t she protest this *film*? Polley is fabulous as Harper Sloane, the daughter of a socialite family, radiating conflict and emotion with every little tic of her face. But when she meets 40-ish photographer Connie Fitzpatrick (Stephen Rea) at her sister’s wedding, and is improbably wooed by his quixotic charm, the movie takes a nauseating turn; it’s akin to kissing Grandma and getting some tongue. Jean Smart steals the film as Harper’s fiery mom, who confronts Connie (“What do you have against women your own age?”) before verbally shredding him. It can’t bode well for a film when you’re rooting for the evil mom. >>> William Werde

THE STRAIGHT STORY

(Disney)

Sure, Disney is releasing David Lynch’s latest movie, and it doesn’t contain any brooding passages, grotesque head wounds, gratuitous nudity—things his fans have come to expect. But the lighter fare didn’t impact Lynch’s surreal imprint or push-all-the-right-buttons narrative. In this true story, 73-year-old Alvin Straight (Richard Farnsworth, destined for year-end accolades) putt-putts his way through Iowa on a riding mower to visit his recently hospitalized brother (Harry Dean Stanton). Meanwhile, Sissy Spacek, playing Alvin’s slow-witted daughter who builds birdhouses (a-ha! very Lynchian!), frets at home. A lovely departure for Lynch.

>>> John Elsasser



A DIFFERENT TUNE : GREG ARAKI IN ALL HIS SPLENDOR

Greg Araki is obsessed with music. You don’t have to watch more than a few frames of the writer/director’s films to get that picture. Aside from the visual cues—Ministry T-shirts, concert posters, and CD stores—there are the dialogue references. “I miss my records,” laments one character in *The Doom Generation*, while another is warned to “lay off the Joy Division” in *The Living End*. The soundtrack credits for his films scroll as long as the production ones.

“My films are all super music-influenced. The soul of them comes from music,” Araki says. “When I write my scripts I listen to music. [It’s] my major source of inspiration.”

Araki’s past work has centered around what he calls the “teenage apocalypse” and the “very carefully hand picked” music reflected that adolescent angst. Ministry, Skinny Puppy, Nine Inch Nails and Psychic TV have all lent their aggressive grind to Araki’s *Totally F**ed Up*, *The Doom Generation* and *Nowhere*. But fans that expect a certain pessimistic tone from the filmmaker are in for a shock. His new release, the screwball comedy *Splendor*, is his first film with a “happy ending.” (See review in Issue No. 74.)

“Movies to me are all about progression and evolution, and this one reflects where I’m at right now,” he explains. Evolution also played a role in how he abandoned the downward spiral of his previous musical influences. “I’m into this trance-y electronic kind of thing right now which is much more of a peace/love/happiness vibe,” says Araki. “There’s a new millennium optimism in this movie, which is really reflected in the soundtrack.”

Splendor also marks the first time the writer/director has commissioned music. Along with his music supervisor Howard Parr, he compiled a list of songs, including dream-pop rarities by Slowdive and Chapterhouse, to be remixed by various sonic manipulators. “The remix is so important in this genre of music,” Araki explains. “So we wanted to take those songs and have them remixed by more contemporary electronica-type folk. The hybridization of those two worlds was fascinating to me.” Tracks by Lush, My Bloody Valentine, and the London Suede also appear in radically reworked versions.

He enthuses like a star struck fan when recalling both Mad Professor’s and My Bloody Valentine’s involvement in the *Splendor*. “And the Lionrock remix of the Suede song was, I mean, I love that Suede song!” Araki energetically relates. “I’ve always loved that song and I’m really into Lionrock, too. Getting those two elements together was really, really cool!”

“It’s almost like I approach soundtracks in my movies as a collector,” Araki explains. “I don’t normally collect soundtracks unless there’s something on them that I really, really want. I always try to find things that are either super obscure or that a collector would want.”

“I approach my soundtracks as a consumer,” he concludes. “What would make me want to get this soundtrack? If I hadn’t made *Splendor* and saw the soundtrack in the store, I would go, ‘What is this? I MUST hear this!’”

>>> Steve Gdula

BOOK BRIEFS

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR: THE RETURN OF BILLY UPSKI

Youth and folly go together like water and balloons. Stealing cigarettes from Mom's purse, smashing bottles against a wall just to hear the echo—we've all done our share of regrettable things. Chicago native William Upski Wimsatt spent his teens hitchhiking and doing graffiti. But his real folly was something entirely different: He wrote a book.

In 1994, he published *Bomb the Suburbs*, a loosely constructed manifesto on hip-hop, race, and class that sold almost 25,000 copies. Among the book's interviews, remembrances and stories was "We Use Words Like Mackadocious," a controversial article about his fellow white hip-hop fans originally written for *The Source*.

In the wake of his underground success, the idealistic 21-year-old set up a community writers' center in his hometown. But when the tiny profit from his book ran out, the center shut down. "I went through a period where I hated *Bomb the Suburbs*," Wimsatt recalls. "I thought it was just so immature, and it didn't really do anything."

"But I actually really like it now," he continues with a laugh. "It's a fun read."

Wimsatt, now 26, recently completed his second book, *No More Prisons*, and his outlook—not to mention his audience—has matured. "The first book was like 80 percent hip-hop, 20 percent the rest of life," he explains. "This book is 20 percent hip-hop, 80 percent the rest of life. On the surface, people might say, 'Upski's getting older and whiter, and balding, and he's out of touch with hip-hop.' But to me, hip-hop is fun and safe. It's my background. That's too easy. The challenging part is to talk to the power structure, and to talk to the cool kids of the people who run things in America, and see if we can't do things a little differently, because it's not the hip-hop generation that's building the prisons."

Despite its title, *No More Prisons* isn't about prison reform; instead, Wimsatt considers the social disasters—criminalization of minorities, ravaged public education, suburban sprawl—that feed the \$100-billion prison industry. "We've given up on public life. We've given up on the idea that we're all one country and that the people around us are part of us," he laments. "I'm trying to do my part to bring that back."

One of the problems Wimsatt targets is well-meaning foundations that don't realize the potential impact of youth culture. Their misconceptions have forced a new generation of activists to build its own paradigms and coalitions. Wimsatt works for one such organization, the year-old project LISTEN (Local Initiative Support Training Education Network) which tackles problems in two Washington, D.C. neighborhoods. "It's very humbling in comparison to running around the country speaking and talking shit," Wimsatt admits. "The young people that I work with, they don't give a fuck about that stuff—they're struggling with everyday life."

Attempting to bridge the writer/activist's divergent audiences, his new publisher, Soft Skull Press, will market *No More Prisons* with a Raptivism Records compilation (see Hip-Hop in Issue No. 74) available together for a special price. "We're explicitly targeting the most disenfranchised people in society, prisoners and their families, and at the same time, the most powerful people in America—the richest, most educated, white power-brokers," Wimsatt explains.

It's his hope that today's "cool kids" will reclaim the word philanthropy from its current meaning, "giving away money," to its Latin root, "love of humanity." "What I really want to do," Wimsatt says breathlessly, "is build structures and institutions and support for young writers from the ghetto to be able to write their own damn books."

>>> Jackie McCarthy

THE RAT PACK: NEON NIGHTS AND THE KINGS OF COOL

By Lawrence J. Quirk and William Schoell (Spike/Avon)

As Chairman Frank Sinatra told Sammy Davis Jr. during the filming of the Rat Pack flick *Ocean's 11*, "The idea is to hang out together, find fun with the broads, and have a great time. We gotta make pictures that people enjoy. Entertainment, period. We gotta have laughs." Unfortunately, there are no laughs to be found in *The Rat Pack*, aside from in the unrelenting negativity and clumsy writing of authors Quirk and Schoell. Although they arbitrarily proclaim Davis a "genius" and acknowledge Dean Martin's independence, they dismiss Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop as mediocre hangers-on, they hate Sinatra's ego, and they don't convey the "great time" of the Pack's infamous indulgences. And they find all the films "forgettable." Why bother?

>>> Steve Klinge

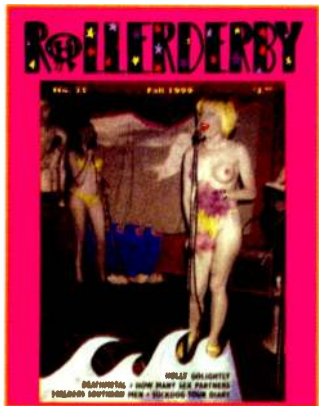
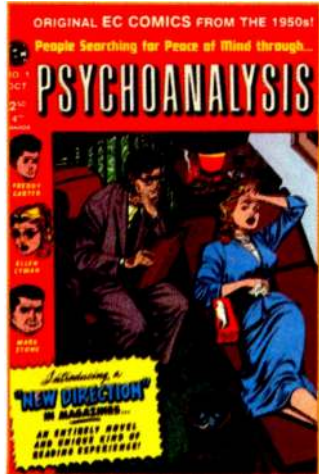
DRUM AND BASS: THE ROUGH GUIDE

By Peter Shapiro (Rough Guides)

A writer must have a death wish to write a definitive book on any genre—especially a reference aimed at the uninitiated and die-hard fans—but *The Wire* scribe Peter Shapiro attempts just that in this A-Z guide. Smartly splitting the book into two sections (drum and bass and its early precursors, and down tempo and big beat) Shapiro covers most of the bases, tipping his hat to proto-jungle pioneers like The Prodigy and the Shut Up And Dance label. In a project this wide-reaching, it's expected, but still disappointing, that Shapiro overlooks Kemistry And Storm, DJ Dazee and newcomers like Bad Company and Konflikt, and his section on American jungle is woefully thin. Shapiro falters, not in the factoids and trivia that he presents, but in his own colored assessment of the genre.

>>> Tricia Romano

LOSING MY MIND

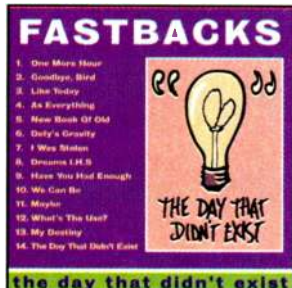
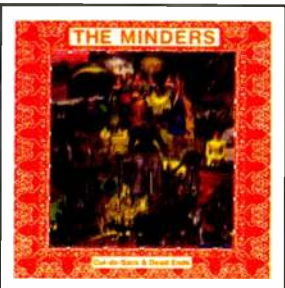


In the mid-1950s, there were congressional hearings about how comic books were corrupting America's youth; they were aimed more or less specifically at EC Comics, which published titles like *Shock SuspenStories* and *The Crypt of Terror*. The industry responded with the creation of the self-policing Comics Code Authority, which immediately forbade comics with words like "Shock" and "Terror" to be published. EC, desperately groping for something it could publish that was innocuous enough to get past the censors, came up with its "New Direction" line, which 86ed the company's expertise in war, horror and science-fiction comics in favor of new subject matter. Thus it came to pass that they published one of the weirdest comics ever to see print: **PSYCHOANALYSIS**, in which a nameless, pipe-smoking psychiatrist welcomes three people to his office's couch every issue and helps them to work through their problems in nine pages or fewer. Gemstone Publishing has been reprinting the entire run of every EC title, and they've finally gotten around to this one (strangely, it never caught on, and was cancelled after four issues). It's unclear whether *Psychoanalysis* represented a big fuck-you to the industry or a genuine attempt to break new ground, but it's bizarre as anything, from its sedate talking-heads art by veteran crime artist Jack Kamen to its "Id Bits" letter column, to its frantic contortions around mentioning sexuality in a context of classical Freudian analysis. Take the introduction to one case study, describing a "handsome and successful couple... suddenly cursed by this strange abnormality in their son. How did he get that way?... They'd have given anything to have concealed the dread secret of his activities." Which, as it turns out, consists of stealing a watch. There is perhaps no artifact that screams 1955 more loudly.

The most psychologically interesting comic being published in America right now, though, is a pretty unlikely candidate: **BLACK PANTHER** (Marvel Knights), a recent revival of a character who's the king of a technologically hyper-advanced African nation, and also a superhero. Though it's traded off artists nearly every other issue, the book's written by the brilliant Christopher Priest (of *Quantum and Woody* fame), who's got a master plan. The story is a complicated, heady political thriller and a meditation on the meaning of kingship, with the costume stuff thrown in to move the plot along. At the heart of it, though, are the shifting psychological and emotional alliances between a half-dozen cast members, and their smallest gestures often resonate more than the boldest action scenes. To add to the fun, Priest has the stories narrated by a goofy young American attaché, assigned to take care of the king, who's pathologically incapable of telling a story in anything like chronological order. (A dialogue with his boss: "Giant rats. Teenage Amazons. The client tossing drug dealers." "And Satan. You left out Satan. That's important." "And then you lost your pants." "Wrong. First we went for Chinese takeout. Then I lost my pants.") With every new issue, each earlier piece of the story becomes denser with hidden intrigue, and each character's hidden madness comes to light.

A gentler madness has finally come to an end. Lisa Carver's classic 'zine **ROLLERDERBY** has just published its final issue, #25 (\$3 from Box 474, Dover, NH 03821). It's as sex-crazed as ever, but Carver's gotten more interested in the ways that craziness affects the rest of people's lives, directly and tangentially. Asking a bunch of people how many partners they've had is one thing; including "and what does that say about you?" in the question makes it a different, deeper game. There's a piece by a man who interviews a friend of his about a woman who'd sent him borderline-stalker letters for many years, but Carver follows it up with a note criticizing the interviewer and interviewee. "What's pathetic is not someone dreaming about the unattainable; it's the person gloating over another person's pain and ridiculous position." And the lead article is Carver's diary of the farewell tour of her out-of-control alter ego Lisa Suckdog. There's almost as much chaos as she's ever had around her—drugs, onstage nudity, plugs pulled after ten minutes, dead chickens, stuck-in-a-van-with-weirdos trauma—but there's also the very real sense that nobody could do this stuff forever. And so she's quit while she's ahead. Good for her. **NMM**

spinART: the best music for your radio.



the minders
cul de sacs and dead ends
a compilation of their singles
plus 4 new songs! spart76

fastbacks
the day that didn't exist
new album from these prolific
Seattleites. spart79



the wedding present
singles 1995-97
their UK singles and mini album plus rare
and live tracks. spart78

the lilac time
looking for a day in the night
Stephen Duffy's folk pop acoustic feyness
is back to conquer the world. spart77

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HIDEOUS JABBERING HEADS OF STATE

Presidents and the Internet have never gotten along terribly well—maybe it's because Washington moves a little too slowly to get the good site names in time. Take, for instance, the **White House's** site: www.whitehouse.gov is the home of the cast you'd expect, including comprehensive documentation on everybody from Bill on down to Socks (one of whose official speeches is transcribed on a page of his own, www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Family/html/meowtxt.html). On the other hand, www.whitehouse.com is something... well... different. But, as a friend of mine points out, it's also very educational, in its way. Tiptoeing down the line between the two sites, www.isleptwiththepresident.com is strangely disappointing—its design is very 1999-looking, but there's practically no content at all, besides a handful of images with not-that-funny captions added.

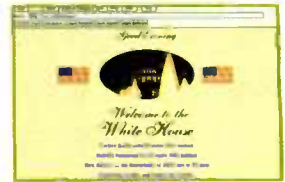
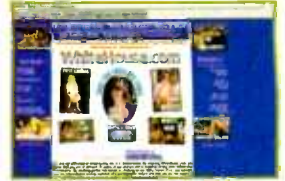
On the other side of the political-vice spectrum, **George W. Bush's** official site is the rather uninspiredly named www.georgewbush.com; his associates have bought up domain names including bushbites.com and bushsux.com, just so nobody else would get them. The pranksters of RTMark (the same people who funded the *Deconstructing Beck* CD last year), on the other hand, have slightly more inspiredly jumped onto www.gwbush.com, and launched a full-scale, ferocious, dead-on parody of Junior's real site. It replicates the original page's graphics very closely, though it adds a few things, like the decoration on the banner at the top: "DRUG-FREE FOR 25 YEARS!" They will, no doubt, continue to update the site as the campaign rolls along.

A different George who's already been president, though, has a much more fun project dedicated to him, especially if you have huge amounts of time on your hands. **Where's George?** (www.wheresgeorge.com), devised by Hank Eskin, is a money-tracking program, and not in the sense of keeping a budget. This is for finding out where your money goes for real. Enter in the serial numbers of the bills in your wallet; if somebody else enters in the same number later, you'll be notified of where your money has gone and whose hands it's passed through. To make it more likely that somebody will think of going to the site with your former dough, though, they suggest you stamp your bills with Where's George's URL. (Yes, the Treasury concedes, that's legal.) So far, they've got about a 3.5 percent rate of matches, and you can even get your own wheresgeorge.com email address.

Washington is one of the few presidents with a more-or-less untainted rep, but others have earned their taints. After *Dick* opened this fall (the web site is www.dickthemovie.com; in a reprise of the White House problem, the intuitive site name was already taken), it was only a matter of time until somebody came up with **Wak-A-Nixon** (www.superpants.com/wnix), a variation on the familiar Whack-A-Mole game and its increasingly familiar Java variant. But the Tricky One isn't the only president who's represented by multiple photos in the grid—you only score a point for whacking him, but you get two points if you bop Reagan one. Watch out, though—if you click on Carter's face, thinking he's a Republican, you lose a point!

Perhaps, by this point, you're wondering who might be best qualified to be America's next president, and concluded that it's probably not any of the usual suspects. Fortunately, the Internet's full of options: there are sites advocating presidency for **Mr. T** (www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Mansion/3141/), **Dave Barry** (www.herald.com/content/archive/living/barry/dave2k), *Star Wars* footnote-to-a-footnote **Admiral Ackbar** (www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studio/6290), and a hamster (home.clara.net/arlev/rodweek.htm). Ultimately, though, you may decide that you want to vote for nobody, nobody at all. That's why www.nobodyforpresident.com seems to exist. It's not quite an anarchist site, though: it's actually an advertisement for a band called "Nobody And The Running Mates." Nice try, guys.

Any questions about the political process—or anything else—remaining? Turn to **Ask The Hideous Jabbering Head Of Abraham Lincoln** (blackandcravey.com/lincoln.html), the advice column to end all advice columns. Granted, most of the contributors ask very, very silly questions ("Is the universe expanding? If so, does this mean I'm getting taller or shorter?"), but Honest Abe can sass right back like the top-hatted Jerry Springer prototype he was. There's even a form to submit your own question to our sixteenth president. Get emancipated!



THE SHEILA DIVINE
NEW PARADE NEW PARADE NEW PARADE NEW PARADE

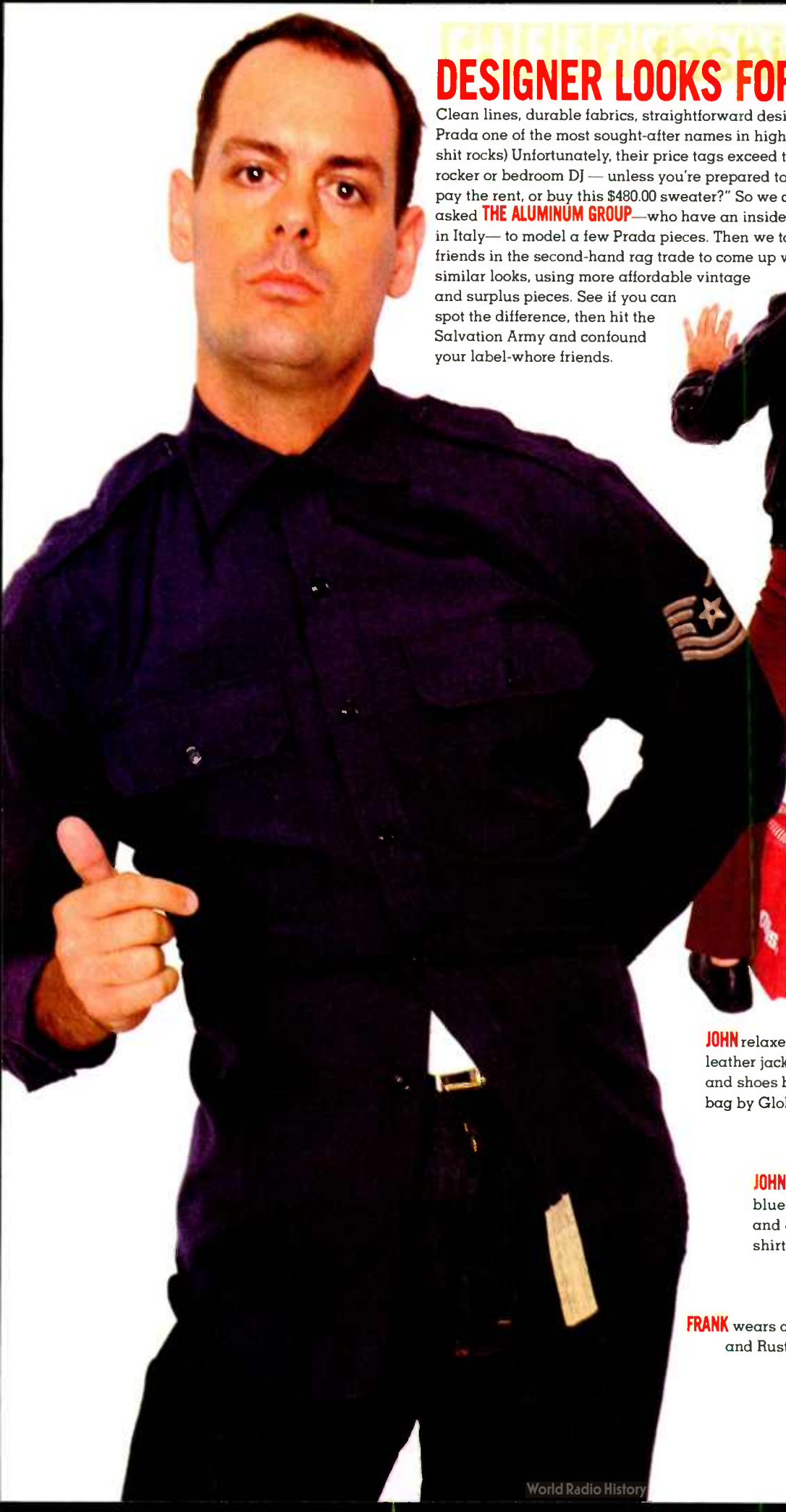
NEW PARADE
the debut album

*"Smashingly Melodic.
The Trio Testify
That Rock Can Go
Bang Beautifully."*
-The Boston Globe

THE SHEILA DIVINE
NEW PARADE

DESIGNER LOOKS FOR LESS: PRADA

Clean lines, durable fabrics, straightforward designs and quality tailoring have made Prada one of the most sought-after names in high fashion. (And with good reason—the shit rocks) Unfortunately, their price tags exceed the budget of your average indie rocker or bedroom DJ — unless you're prepared to ask serious questions like, "Should I pay the rent, or buy this \$480.00 sweater?" So we conducted an experiment. First, we asked **THE ALUMINUM GROUP**—who have an inside connection in Italy—to model a few Prada pieces. Then we tapped friends in the second-hand rag trade to come up with similar looks, using more affordable vintage and surplus pieces. See if you can spot the difference, then hit the Salvation Army and confound your label-whore friends.



JOHN relaxes in a vintage '60s leather jacket, polyester pants, and shoes by Clarke's; airline bag by Globe.

JOHN puts his best foot forward in blue gabardine cigarette pants and a black nylon and silk padded shirt, both by Prada.

FRANK wears a surplus uniform shirt and Rustler jeans from K-Mart.



MODELS: THE ALUMINUM GROUP IMAGES: BRITT CARPENTER STYLING: DAVID BROCKMAN AND PAUL HAYNES HAIR & MAKEUP: KOJI HIGASHINO

All vintage items courtesy of Honeymoon Antiques, 105 Avenue B, New York City, (212) 477-8768.

FRANK and **JOHN NAVIN**, alias **THE ALUMINUM GROUP**, are no strangers to style. Their Jim O'Rourke-produced third album, *Pedals* (out now on Minty Fresh), features polished pop arrangements that are equal parts Burt Bacharach and Pet Shop Boys, memorable melodies and smooth-as-silk vocals by the Chicago siblings.

FRANK features a red zippered gabardine suit jacket and cigarette pants, Both by Prada, and shoes by Prada Sport.

"That T-shirt costs how much?"
FRANK in a yellow vintage '70s cotton shirt, silver '80s tank top, and green cotton slacks.

NO MAYO, HOLD THE CHEESE (CONT.)



At a downtown San Francisco deli, Berry orders a turkey sandwich, hold the mayo (honest), and outlines his impetus for founding the label. "I didn't start No Mayo to be a martyr. It's not a charity. I really don't believe in charity. You can make a very compelling argument that charity doesn't really work anymore, that it died a long time ago. I thought this would be the way to do something gracefully."

In alliance with Pearl Jam guitarist Stone Gossard's Loosegroove label, No Mayo just released *The Funky Precedent*, a phat-ass compilation of principally LA-based hip-hop acts featuring new or exclusive tracks by Divine Styler, Ugly Duckling, Aceyalone, Black Eyed Peas, Dilated Peoples, Styles of Beyond, Ozomatli, the Jurassic 5, a phenomenal turntable review called The Breakestra, and five others. Though produced for pennies (relatively speaking), Berry freely admits that artists, producers and others were paid for, and will make money on, the project (all royalty points are donated through the first 15,000 units). It's all part of No Mayo's refreshingly non tree huggy approach to outreach, one that recognizes and accepts that nothing worthwhile is free. You gotta spend money to make money.

"Charitable projects are misinterpreted," Berry says. "There are no true benefits wherein everyone from A to Z donates, that's never gonna happen. No manufacturer or distributor (RED/Sony Music in this case) is gonna do anything for free. No record label will, or if they do, they might not have any intention of trying to sell it it's more a little political thing: 'Oh, we did something for the United Negro College Fund!' Lots of people are taking a cut on this album."

Equally unique are No Mayo's modest and honest immediate goals. Whereas larger nonprofits fly ambiguous, "Give us money and we'll change the world"-type banners, Berry targets proceeds at the specific needs of programs at three schools: Fremont High School and Manchester Avenue Elementary, both in gangsta-ville South Central LA, and San Francisco's Mission High. VH1's rock star-studded "Save The Music Campaign" seeks to eventually build a \$40 million music school in Detroit; No Mayo, thinking micro, just wants to help Mission High students stage *Little Shop of Horrors* in a few months.

Of the high-profile VH1 campaign, Berry says, "They have really good intentions, but they're not really thinking this thing through. It takes about \$10,000 a year to support a school's music program. Why build one school in Detroit for 40 million? With that much money you could do so much more.

"And providing musical instruments like you see in those PSAs? If anyone did any research, they would see that it goes way beyond that. It's not so simple," Berry continues. "Every school needs three fundamental things. They need uniforms, sound systems—one in-house and one portable—and they need transportation. They need all of these things more than they need instruments."

While Berry and No Mayo welcome corporate sponsorship and involvement, they remain fundamentally grassroots, directly overseeing allotment of all funds. As tangible evidence of the immediate good their money has done, Berry points to Mission High,

where Art Davis, the inspirational music teacher he calls "Mr. Holland without the cheese," has elevated a once-ailing music program to previously unthinkable heights. Besides handing Mission label proceeds from various releases, Berry convinced Sherman Clay to fork over a \$20,000 grand piano, and Old Navy to give thousands for new uniforms. Dollar-Rent-A-Car donated \$12,000 in transportation for Davis' kids to haul down to Los Angeles and kick 50 other bands' butts in a statewide school competition.

The Funky Precedent is No Mayo's highest profile release to date (a title previously held by last year's *Nutmeg Fantasy*, by LA horn-rockers Weapon of Choice). While Berry continually underscores his hope that people will gravitate to the album for its choice beats and dope rhymes, and not some (in Sally Struthers voice) "please help the children!" plea, he's not about to turn his nose up at your cash if you pick one up as a tax write-off. Therein lies the big difference between No Mayo and your average indie. Merge doesn't want the new Lambchop album to tank, but at least Mac and Laura won't be haunted in their beds by nightmares of rusty drum kits, crackling PAs, threadbare marching bands and—worst of all—withered dreams, if it does.

Berry's ace in the hole for *Funky* was L.A. producer Charles Raggio. In addition to helping select the beneficiary schools, Raggio assembled the contributing artists, appealing to their sense of giving while hyping to all that this compilation would be *the* definitive hip-hop manifesto for the LA underground.

"I didn't want this project to be stereotyped as 'hip-hop helping some South Central schools,'" Raggio explains. "I didn't want this to be 'hip-hop helping the black schools in the black communities.' But as we started looking at who needs the most help, stereotype or not, the neediest areas are in South Central."

"I wanted this record to tell the story musically," Raggio continues. "There is some dope shit going on down here, the standards for beats and the standards for production and the standards for MCing are incredibly high in Los Angeles right now."

High indeed. The smooth tongues, deep, ethnically-tinged beats and underlying spiritual vibe of the new Los Angeles scene have effectively toppled gangsta rap. With turntable chops honed at clubs like The Breaks (now Rootdown) at Pedro's Bar & Grill in Silverlake and Project Blowed at the Chaos Network in tiny but vital Leimert Park, the artists collected on *Funky* seem scant moments from blowing up nationwide. Foremost among the assembled are Jurassic 5 (they share turntable wiz Cut Chemist with Ozomatli), whose stoned vibe and old school delivery have made them the toast of indie rap, with a huge buzz building for their forthcoming major-label debut. In future retrospect, this might just be the seminal compilation that vaults LA beats n' verse from the underground into the stratosphere.

But Raggio underlines that, as eager as the groups were to give the world a tasty slice of what's next, they were equally keen to hop on the No Mayo tip. Many of those who dropped tracks on this record clearly understand the hardships of inner-city schooling and music's universal power as a soothing agent. Directly or indirectly, several cuts deal with the subject of music education, most notably Abstract Rude's "Musically Inclined," on which the gifted MC, who lives walking distance from both Fremont High and Manchester Elementary, raps: "It'd do so much for 'em/hopefully a schoolteacher can help show 'em/how to make a masterpiece of songs to calm the savage beast."

So while a few teachers sit and hope for money to show their students the power of a snare roll and the transcendent beauty of a smooth horn phrase, Berry monitors *Funky Precedent* sales and wonders what would happen if his Little Concept That Could—realistic, schmaltz-free giving with soul—should spread elsewhere in the market.

"Imagine a big name brand that actually did something, think about that. Imagine if Nike, with their whole 'Just Do It' thing, actually just did get involved with the community and did something, something not about self-promotion. It would be so romantic and powerful and important."

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DREAMCAST: WELCOME A WORTHY ADVERSARY

Most computer gamers are snobs. Mention that killer title you just snagged for the Playstation and you're likely to get a sneer from any PC gamer. Even as they eye your purchase, maybe even hoping it will get ported to the PC someday, they're thinking to themselves, "get a real game machine."

Console lovers, you have just been vindicated.

With the release of its Dreamcast system, Sega has raised the stakes in the computer vs. console war to the point where having both will be vital... if you want to consider yourself a hardcore gamer. In development for over three years, Dreamcast represents the cutting-edge in gaming technology, with a 128-bit processor four times faster than Intel's Pentium II, a state-of-the-art PowerVR2 3D graphics chip from NEC, and an audio processor "as powerful as some 32-bit game machines." No wonder Sony and Nintendo braced for Dreamcast's release by dropping their console prices to under a hundred bucks.

But as owners of the Atari Jaguar (the world's first 64-bit console) know all too well, systems are not sold on hardware specs alone. Availability of quality games will determine which system is hooked up to the big-screen television in the living room, and which is banished to the basement. Sony is the 800-pound gorilla here. It has an installed base of 55 million units, and continues to release great titles that sell consoles.

To ensure a steady supply of superlative new games, Sega selected Windows CE as its operating system to open up Dreamcast as widely as possible to first- and third-party game creators and developers, rather than for simple PC-to-Dreamcast porting of titles. "We have always said that Dreamcast would not be a port machine," notes a Sega spokesperson. "We have procedures in place to ensure that titles coming over from the PC take full advantage of the Dreamcast hardware, which is entirely dedicated and optimized for gaming. The issue here is ease of development. There are a lot of extremely talented PC game programmers out there. By giving them a development environment that they are familiar with, we make it simple for them to develop for Dreamcast. This increases the pool of talent creating software for Dreamcast."

Adam Doree, editor and designer of SegaWeb (www.segaweb.com), an IGN affiliated website, believes that title-availability woes won't be a problem, either. "A console has never had this many AAA titles in a lifetime before, never mind on the day of its launch, and it's near-enough unanimous in the [gaming industry] that the games are what will sell Dreamcast to the masses."

According to the weekly *Famitsu*, the Japanese launch of the latest *Soul Calibur* alone has boosted sales of the Dreamcast there. Despite a higher cost, it is now outselling the Nintendo 64 by two to one. While Sega has secured a number of must-have titles for the Dreamcast's release date, some of the most eagerly awaited are months away. One of the most impressive, the cinematic-RPG *Shenmue*, doesn't have an American release date yet. "This is a game unlike anything you've ever seen before—fully populated streets, you can talk to anyone and each [person] has their own back-story and personality. The facial expressions are flawless. The people respond to the time of day (in the evening, kids pick up their toys and go inside [while] parents hurry home from work). You can even go into a video arcade and actually play the classic Sega video games inside." Should the Dreamcast slip out of the gate—unlikely, considering Sega has had to halt pre-order sales at 300,000 in order to save some product for retail shelves—this title should do for Dreamcast numbers what *Final Fantasy VII* did for the Playstation.

As the Dreamcast brings computer and arcade game quality into the living room, there's little doubt that it poses a serious threat to the success of Sony's upcoming PSX2 and Nintendo's "Dolphin" systems by being the first next-generation machine on the market. The challenge will be keeping gamers interested with a constant supply of exciting software. Sega believes it's up to the task. "This is a company dedicated to gamers. We're not an electronics company that happens to also make a game console. By the time PSX2 hits shelves, we will be on our second generation of software. Having already been absolutely awestruck by the stuff developers are doing with the Dreamcast the first time around, I can't wait to see what they'll come up with next."

Computer gamers, prepare for battle. Your first worthy adversary has arrived.

>>> Aaron Clow

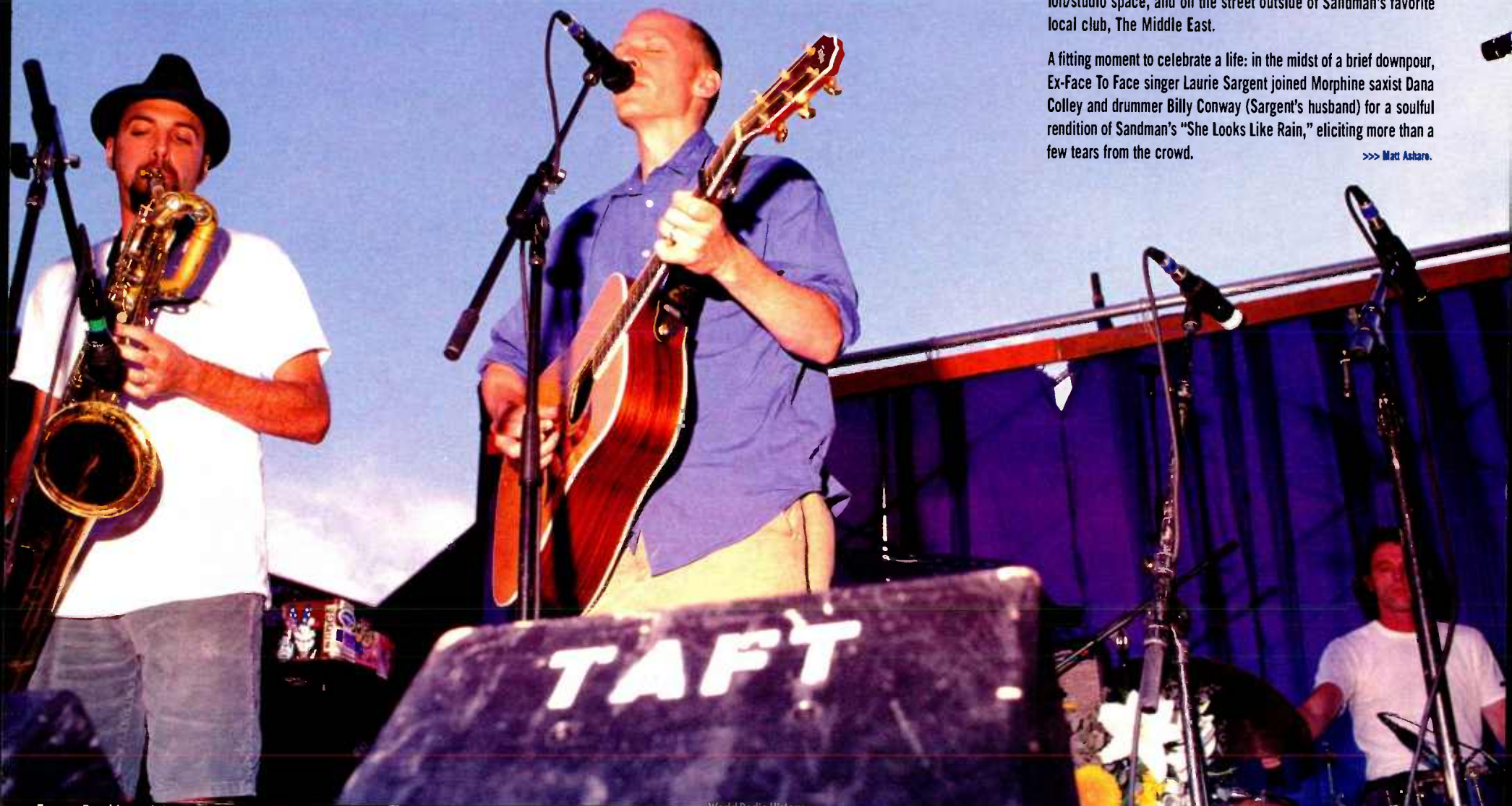


MARK SANDMAN 1952-1999

When Morphine frontman Mark Sandman died on stage in Italy on July 3 of this year, the world may have lost one great band, but Boston lost someone who'd been the nerve center of an entire scene of musicians. So it was fitting that many of those musicians came together on July 25 to pay tribute to Sandman in Cambridge's Central Square, less than a mile from Sandman's loft/studio space, and on the street outside of Sandman's favorite local club, The Middle East.

A fitting moment to celebrate a life: in the midst of a brief downpour, Ex-Face To Face singer Laurie Sargent joined Morphine saxist Dana Colley and drummer Billy Conway (Sargent's husband) for a soulful rendition of Sandman's "She Looks Like Rain," eliciting more than a few tears from the crowd.

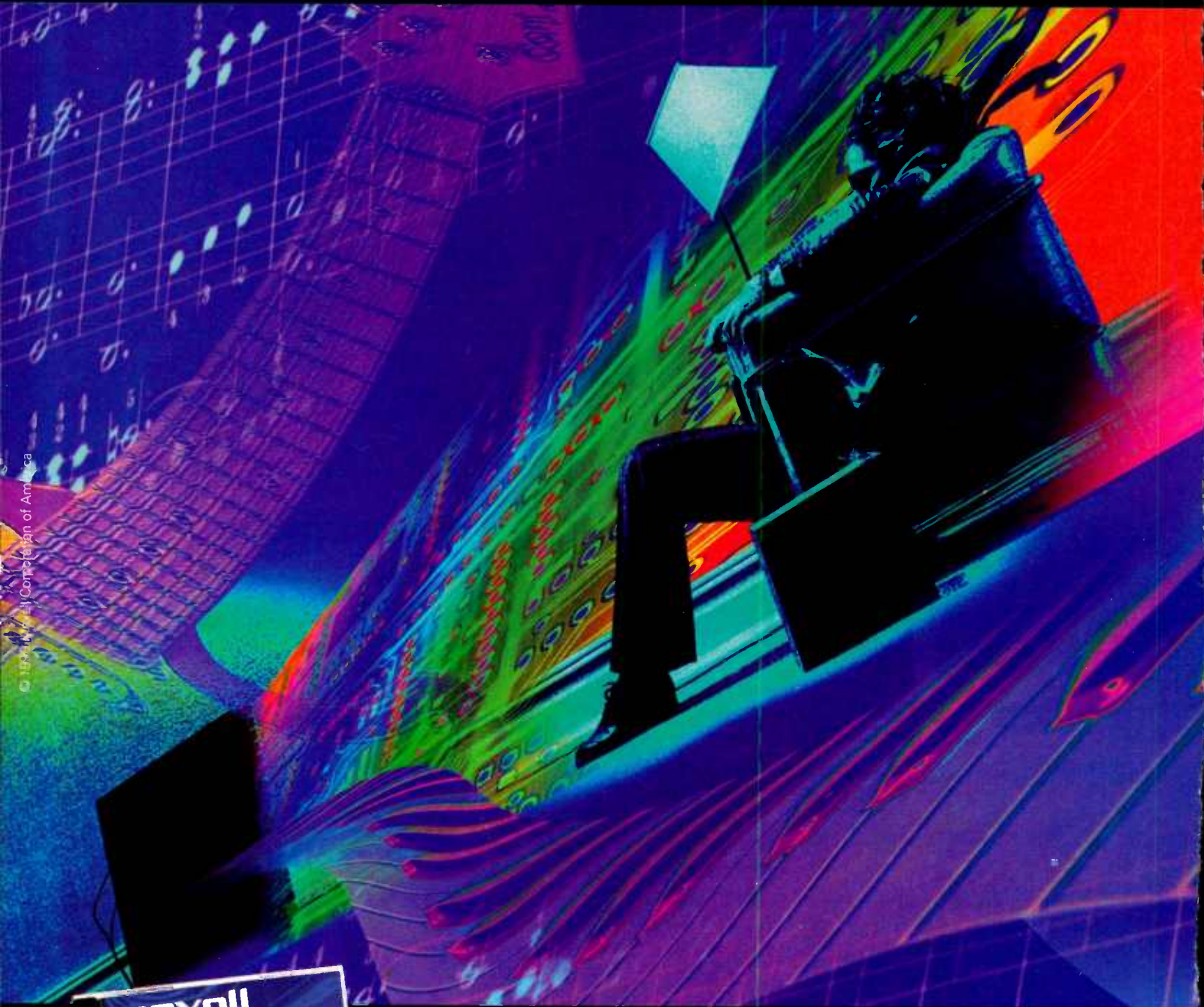
>>> Matt Ashare.



Former President of the United States of America guitarist Chris Bellew, who played with Sandman in an ensemble called Supergroup, joins Morphine's Colley and Conway.

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WESTBAM

"There's nothing like music," insists singer/songwriter **BIG KENNY**. "A song that tells a story is like giving someone candy. It's good, they'll graciously accept it and then want more." "Under the Sun" is from *Live A Little* (Hollywood), due in January of 2000. It is Kenny's testament to "a place where dreams come true." If you like it, there are literally hundreds more where it came from: while teaching himself to play guitar, the former Virginia carpenter would get up early and write ten to twelve hours every day! "When I was first looking for a deal, a lot of people told me that I was wasting my time," he recalls. "I refused to listen."

Does the name **ACEYALONE** sound familiar? Perhaps that's because in the September issue of *New Music Monthly* Neil Drumming pronounced his last album, *A Book of Human Knowledge*, "one of the most confounding records in hip-hop history," which "disrupted all the preconceived notions of what rap was supposed to be about." "I'm grounded in my element," says the LA rapper of his lauded workdays. "I'm trying to be all the way well-rounded." Rappers, Rappers, Rappers 12 for 10! *Wicks of Strength Magazine Presents Subterz (London)*, an impressive multi-arted compilation dedicated to the glory of skateboarding and hip-hop. (See Hip-Hip p. 67.)

"I'm a Bam admirer from back in the day," gushes **WESTBAM** of his collaborator on "Beatbox Rocker," old school hip-hop legend Afrika Bambaataa. "Although it seems like two different worlds, I always saw the relationship between the hip-hop culture and techno and house culture. It goes back to people like Bam." But the man born Maximilian Lanz isn't exactly a mere speck on the timeline, either. Hailed as a superstar overseas, the acclaimed DJ/producer WestBam founded the international rave holiday's Mayday and Love Parade. *We'll Never Stop Living This Way* (Low Spirit/Mute) marks his belated introduction to American audiences. (See Reviews, p. 60.)

"When I started the band I was the best musician in the rhythm section," says **FEATHERMERCHANTS** guitarist/bassist/player Pete Veni. "And there should be no band where that is the case. But now I'm where I should be—surrounded by great musicians." According to the band's other guitar/bassist/player, Jim Chapdelaine, they "got all sorts of different comparisons." With bouzoukis, lap steel and mandocello on top of the standard rock guitar/bass/drums instrumentation, it's hard to imagine what they'd get compared to. Veni can sum it up though: "It's turned into a Middle Eastern Sunday." "Judlow Street" is from their debut album. *Feathermerchants* (Innocent 12" Street).

"I'm a real honest guy," says Rich Painter, the man behind the curtain dubbed **RICH CREAMY PAINT**. "This album is my life up to a point." Hence the adolescent twists and turns on the 19-year-old's succinct lyrics. Well beyond that, the Jacksonville, Florida native began writing ditties at the age of eleven, and eventually got a professional leg up by enlisting his uncle John Painter of Fleming and John (and a Ben Folds Five alumni) to produce his self-titled debut (Hollywood). The welping of pop gems includes "You're A 10." (See Reviews, p. 58.)

What's up with the title *Come On, New Social* (Epic), the seventh full-length from Atlanta, Georgia duo the **INDIGO GIRLS? Amy Ray insists the reference is meant to entice with an air of mystery. "I beckons you, but you're not sure to what." Regardless, invitations were accepted by a variety of contributors: Joan Osborne, Sheryl Crow, Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson), Me Shell Medeiros, and Natacha Atlas, among others. Partner Emily Saliers conceived "Peace Tonight," a swinging Southern number augmented by imported New Orleans horns, as "just a feel good song" that producer John Reynolds took "in an AI Green direction." Arson. (See Reviews, p. 52.)**

CMJ NEW MUSIC

NOVEMBER 1999

"The intention [is] to take the disparate elements and try to get something new," cover boy **BECK** once told *The Rocker* about his aesthetic. "There are elements that could be perceived to be retro or kitsch, but I have a genuine love for that sound and that music, so by taking something that was disposable 30 years ago, you can turn around and show how disposable things are now, turn that tradition on its head." Previously released as the UK b-side of "Tropicale" and on the *More Far: A Tribute To The Slow Album* (Bridgman), "Sable of God" is another nod to Beck's 90s fashion, a cover of a tune by the original Jefferson Airplane drummer and founder of Moby Grape, Alexander "Skip" Spence. (See cover story, p. 38.)

"I want this to go as far as it can," insists Leslie Lamus of **BREKBEAT ERA**. "I want it to develop. I'm one of those musicians that actually have a few things to say. Sometimes you've got a few songs inside you, and when you've said them, the rest of it is just dross. And I've got my fingers crossed hoping that that doesn't happen to me." "Ultra Obscene," one of the first songs she wrote with collaborators DJ Die and Roni Size, is the title track to the group's debut (*KU/1500-48481*), and an indication that she hasn't start writing her hands just yet. "I get enormous pleasure from doing this." (See feature, p. 26.)

BILL LYNNAIRE are loud and catchy as hell, but, despite the implications of their moniker, they aren't precursors. "We're not trying to create wonderful pieces of art that are tidily righteous," insists lead singer/guitarist Marc Tompkins. "To me, that's not attractive. Rock 'n' roll isn't the place to do that. We're trying to give people something that's positive and uplifting... and most of all, something memorable." As keepsakes go, "Bill You're High," from *Ascension* (Slash-London) ranks a helluva lot closer to the top of the list than grandma's cameo. Hit the volume knob and hear for yourself. (See On The Verge, p. 20.)

"We have the music gods on our side," announced Brandon Boyd, lead singer and percussionist of **INCUBUS** a couple years back. A weighty but prescient pronouncement. Since dropping their debut full-length *SCIENCE*, the Calabasas, California quintet — including new addition DJ Khaled — has garnered assistance from such minor deities as Korn, Limp Bizkit, 311 and Sugar Ray, all of whom invited the group to play with them after taking a shine to their brand of funk, thrash and hip-hop. "Pardon Me" is taken from their sophomore set *Make Yourself* (Immortal-Epic), produced by Scott Litt. (*Days Of The New*, REMI).



BECK



BREKBEAT ERA



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SUPER FURRY ANIMALS



SOULWAX



BIG KENNY

10 What do the Muppets, Pet Shop Boys, Marlene Dietrich, Brian Eno and Trent Reznor share in common? DAVID BOWIE, who's collaborated with all of them during his four-decade career. This year, readers of UK newspaper *The Sun* voted him the biggest music star of the 20th century. But the former Thin White Duke hasn't been resting on his laurels, remaining active in film (he stars in the forthcoming *Exhuming Mr. Rice* and visual art, while simultaneously branching into cyberspace and high finance. He still finds time to make music, too. The new *Hours... [Virgin]*, featuring "The Pretty Things Are Going to Hell," is his 23rd solo album. (See Reviews, p. 44.)

11 For STEREO LAB, words unspoken and notes unsounded are just as important, if not more so, than what your ears immediately discern. "My lyrics don't come up with answers," says founding member Laetitia Sadier. "There are a lot of questions being asked, but no answers. I want people to come up with the answers. The same is true musically, in a good half of it, so people can fill in the gaps." Would that they'd left a few words out of the title of their otherwise delightful new album, *Cobra Phases Group Play Voltage In the Milky Night* (Elektra), from which "The Free Design" is culled. (See Best New Music p. 20 issue 74, October.)

12 In the '70s, MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA was the standard bearer for jazz fusion, mixing pyrotechnics, improvisation, and showmanship. So imagine archivist Bob Beldon's surprise when he came across an entire unreleased album by the quintet, languishing in storage since the dissolution of the original lineup in 1973. Over twenty-five years later, founding guitarist John McLaughlin is pleased with *The Lost Trident Sessions*. "I was very happy, actually, with the lost album," he reveals. Keyboard player Jan Hammer concurs: "The personal negatives that we were involved with are of much less importance than the actual music, which survives us. That's really all that matters." (See Reviews, p. 54.)

13 Look out Tom Jones—there's another hirsute Welsh wonder making a big noise: SUPER FURRY ANIMALS. Judging from their third LP *Guerrilla* (Fydaddy), including "Fire In My Heart," what their homeland lacks in vowels, it makes up in memorable melodies. Just don't pigeonhole the SFA under the setting sun of Britpop. "There were all these other bands talking about rock heritage and tradition, and we were listening to techno," recalls bassist Guto Pryce of their early days in the public eye. "People asked us about what we thought of Menswear and we were saying 'dunno, but we like the new Hardfloor record.'"

14 The sons of a famous DJ, guitarist David and singer Stephen Dewaele seemed destined for musical careers long before launching SOULWAX. "We grew up among thousands of records," recalls Belgian-based Stephen. "When we were at the age of getting interested in music, we discovered amazing things in our attic: the first Jimi Hendrix singles. The Beatles. The Small Faces have slept in our house. Stan Getz came to visit." In turn, the boys would grow up to play their rock/electronic fusion with everyone from Tracy Bonham to Einstürzende Neubauten. Produced by Dave Sardy (ex-Barkmarket), *Much Against Everyone's Advice* (Almo) is their sophomore release.

5 "'Complete Control' may be the most desperately heroic call to arms ever put to vinyl!" decreed *Rolling Stone* twenty years ago. Inspired by a dispute with their record label over the earlier track "Remote Control," this scathing number by THE CLASH was amended to the 1979 American version of their eponymous debut. Taken from *From Here To Eternity*, the first ever authorized live album by the punk pioneers, this 1981 recording is from the group's legendary stand at Bonds in New York City.

6 GUSTER percussionist Brian Rosenworcel—he of the mighty handclaps—gives producer Steve Lillywhite (U2, Simple Minds) the big thumbs up for perfectly capturing the trio's minimalist "two rubber bands and a bar of soap" sound on their third LP, *Lost And Gone Forever* (Sire). "The sincerity of this album stems from Steve Lillywhite and the artistic respect he had for Guster from day one. While other producers have told us Guster can't make a record without a kit drummer, Steve told us you can't make a Guster record with a drummer." (See Reviews, p. 41, issue 74, October.)

7 Wearing their '80s influences on their sleeves, Boston trio SHEILA DIVINE nearly called themselves Sloan Peterson, after the love interest in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. But somehow their current moniker seemed to suit the music—equal parts Radiohead, the Smiths, and Sunny Day Real Estate—better. "A 'sheila' is slang in Australia for guys that don't play sports or act tough..." says bassist Jim Gilbert. "I guess they're pussies. If you are going to be a pussy, you might as well be the very best." "Hum," from their debut *New Parade* (Roadrunner), is their very catchy condemnation of the one-hit wonders of contemporary rock radio.

8 "We were empowered to do all the things we had only dreamed about before," says Adam Beuhler, guitarist of Boston's SPLASHDOWN about *Blueshift* (Java-Capitol) the band's major label debut, featuring "Ironspy." "We like to think there's a lot going on in our music, that this is an information-rich album." Aside of their larger-than-life approach towards recording, and eerie, Portishead-esque sound, they do still try to remain grounded. "No matter how crazy we get in the studio, we won't do something unless we can play it on an acoustic guitar and piano."

9 *Temperamental* (Atlantic), the ninth studio LP from EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL features their most sophisticated grooves to date, but the UK duo would prefer not to see it classified strictly as a Dance record. "Whilst it draws on obvious areas of influence that you can point to—deep house, drum & bass—I want it to be more than the sum of its beats," says Ben Watt. "In the same way that Lauryn Hill's album is rooted in hip-hop, but ultimately it's a great, timeless R&B album." The jarring "Hatfield 1980" is a thumbnail sketch of a nocturnal episode from partner Tracey Thorn's teenage years. (See Reviews, p. 40, issue 74, October.)



GUSTER



SHEILA DIVINE



MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA

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VARIOUS ARTISTS Warp* Influences Matador
-One of three compilations commemorating UK label Warp's 10th Anniversary. The "Influences" comp features classic "bleep-bleep" tracks that influenced the start of the label with artists like Unique 3, Da Posse, Guy Called Gerald, 808 State and more. Four LPs or double CD.
VARIOUS ARTISTS Warp* The Classics 89-92 Matador
-Classics will feature early Warp tracks by the likes of Forgemasters, Nightmares on Wax, DJ Mink, LFO, and more. Four

LPs or double CD.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Warp* The Remixes Matador
-Remixes will feature bands remixing Warp hits. Remixers include Mogwai, Oval, Pram, StereoLab, Plaid, Labradford, Autechre, To Rococo Rot and many more. Four LPs or double CD.
ZEN MATIA RCA

OCTOBER 16

MODEST MOUSE Building Nothing Out Of Something Up

OCTOBER 19

KATHY ACKER Redoing Childhood Kill Rock Stars
...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD
 Madonna Merge
APPLIANCE Manual Mute
BASEMENT JAXX "Rendez-Vu" Single XL-Astralwerks
-Vinyl only
BILLIONAIRE Ascension London
JOHNNY BLAS King Conga CuBop-Ubiquty
-Trombone-heavy style is married with driving percussion and jazz compositions
BLUE OYSTER CULT Don't Fear The Reaper: The Best Of Sony Legacy
GEORGE CARLIN Boxed Set Atlantic
JOHNNY CASH At Folsom Prison Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks.
HARRY CHAPIN Story of A Life Rhino
-3CD definitive box set
THOMAS CHAPIN Knitting Factory
-8 cd box set
CHARLATANS UK Us And Us Only MCA
BOBBY CONN Love Songs Thrill Jockey
CYPRESS HILL Skull And Bones Columbia
DJ SPOOKY Subliminal Minded Bar/None
-EP
BRYAN FERRY As Time Goes By Virgin
FLEETWOOD MAC The Complete Blue Horizon Sessions 1967-1969 Sire
-6 CD Boxed Set
FOR STARS Windows For Stars Future Farmer
BENNY GOODMAN Live at Carnegie Hall Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks
MERLE HAGGARD Big City Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks
HANDSOME BOY MODELING SCHOOL So...how's Your Girl? Tommy Boy
-Dan the Automator and Prince Paul featuring guest Del Tha Funky Homosapien, DJ Shadow, Mike D, Sean Lennon, Money Mark, Alec Empire, Father Guido Sarducci, and many others.
HELLACOPTERS Payin' The Dues Sub Pop
THE HERBALISER 8ft. Agenda Ninja Tune
-Featuring Latyrx
JULIO IGLESIAS, JR. Under My Eyes Epic
IN MY EYES Nothing to Hide Revelation
JUNE OF 44 "In the Fishtank" EP vol 6 Konkurrent
KID LOCO DJ Kicks Studio K7
KING OF THE HILL The Album Elektra
-To kick off the show's 4th season
BRIGGAN KRAUSS Briggan Krauss Knitting Factory
YUSEF LATEEF Live at Peps, Volume 2 Impulse!
-Reissue
ARTO LINDSAY Prize Righteous Babe
LULLABY FOR THE WORKING CLASS Song Bar/None
JIMMY LUXURY A Night In The Arms Of Work
ELLIS MARSALIS Duke In Blue Columbia
SARAH MASEN The Holding BEC
MEL C Virgin
-Yet another former Spice Girl, sams the Spice
MILLENCOLIN Millencolin & The Hi-8 Adventures... Burning Heart
MOON MARTIN Victim of Romance-The Best of... Koch
-Doctor, Doctor, give him the news
WILLIE NELSON Stardust Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks.
NOBODY Earth Tones EP Ubiquty
-LA underground hip hop and downtempo jazz inflicted instrumentals collide.
TED NUGENT Great Gonzos: The Best of Ted Nugent Sony Legacy
ROY ORBISON The Big O: The Singles Collection Sony Legacy
OSKER Treatment 5 Epitaph
ANDREA PARKER Kiss My Arp Beggars Banquet
PRIMUM Antipop Interscope-Geffen-A&M
PURACANE Things We Should Leave Alone/12 Nights Remixes Ubiquty (12")
-New project from Skyjuice producer Dave Biegel and vocalist Ally Rogers. Electronic torch songs, breakup ballads + remixes by the UK's Heifer and The Underwolves.
MARCUS ROBERTS In Honor Of Duke Columbia
MARTY ROBBINS Gunlighter Ballads Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks
JIMMY RUSHING Everyday I Have the Blues Impulse!
-Reissue
SASHA Xpander EP Ultra
-New tracks from half of Sasha & Digweed duo, as featured on the Wipeout 3 videogame
SATINIC SURFERS Going Nowhere Fast Burning Heart
ELLIOTT SHARP Technotics 2 Knitting Factory
SHIVAREE Capitol
SMITHEREENS God Save The Smithereens Koch
SNOWBOY Casa Ubiquty
SOULWAX Much Against Everyone's Advice Alma
-Sophomore album featuring a string quartet conducted by Jason Falkner
RINGO STARR I Wanna Be Santa Clause Island
JOE STRUMMER Rock, Art, and the X-Ray Style Hellcat
-Former Clash member releases solo album, backed by the Mescaleros, a group featuring ex-members of Elastica, Black Grape, and the Happy Mondays.
SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE Live Subpop
SYD STRAW Surprise Koch
COYLE SHARPE Audio Visionaries Thirsty Ear

VARIOUS ARTISTS Give 'Em The Boot II Hellcat
VARIOUS ARTISTS Happy Christmas II BEC
VEGA Life On Earth Capitol
T BONE WALKER TBD Koch
TAMMY WYNETTE Stand By Your Man Sony Legacy
-Expanded edition reissue with bonus tracks
LESTER YOUNG The Complete Lester Young Studio Sessions on Verve Verve
-8CD box set
ZEN GUERRILLA Trance States In Tongues Sub Pop

OCTOBER 26

GEORGE ACOSTA Awakenings Ultra
LOUIS ARMSTRONG I've Got the World on a String and Under the Stars Verve
-2 CD reissue
BIG HEAD TODD AND THE MONSTERS Reprise
B-SWITCHED Epic
CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG Heartland Reprise
MILES DAVIS The Complete Miles Davis Featuring John Coltrane (6-CD boxed set) Sony Legacy
DEADSY Commencement Warner Bros.-Sire
DEEP FOREST Made in Japan (Live) S50
CELINE DION Hits S50
DUKE ELLINGTON The Duke: The Essential Recordings (1927-1961) Sony Legacy
-3 CD boxed set
BILL EVANS Further Conversations With Myself Verve
-Reissue
STAN GETZ The Steamer Verve
-Reissue
GHOSTFACE KILLAH Supreme Clientele RZA-Epic
BONEY M. Gold RCA
-Reissue
ALEX GOPHER You, My Baby & I V2
HIGH LLAMAS Snowbug V2
I-BORN Reprise
IMx Introducing IMx MCA
-Formerly known as Immature
JAZZYFATNASTEES The Once And Future MCA
KHAN Passport Matador
LUNA The Days of Our Nights Jericho
TARA MACLEAN Passenger Capitol
MAKE-UP Save Yourself K
MATEO & MATOS The Many Shades Of M+M Studio K7
MODERN JAZZ SEXTET Modern Jazz Sextet Verve
-Reissue
MR. LEN TBD 12" Matador
MR. SCRUFF Honey Dew Ninja Tune
SHAWN MULLINS The First Ten Years Columbia
NON PHIXION 12" Matador
CHARLIE PARKER Big Band Verve
PAVEMENT Slow Century (VHS and DVD) Matador
BUD POWELL, CHARLIE PARKER, DIZZY GILLESPIE Ultimate Bebop Verve
-Reissue
STONE TEMPLE PILOTS No. 4 Atlantic
TALKING HEADS/JONATHAN DEMME Stop Making Sense (VHS and DVD) Palm Pictures
THIN LIZARD DAWN GO RCA
TOAD THE WET SPROCKET TS: A Toad Retrospective Columbia
VARIOUS ARTISTS Hi-Fidelity Lounge: Vol. 1 Studio K7
-The 1st volume in a compilation series exploring the diverse spectrum of sounds emerging from the bars, restaurants and lounges of our planet's urban centers. Downbeat masters Jazanova, Ratner Truby, Paul Hunter, Thievery Corporation, Mighty Bow and more offer trip hop, jazz, funk, soul, swing and bossa nova.
VARIOUS ARTISTS A Rebel's Dream Island/Def Jam
-Lauryn Hill, Busta Rhymes, Steven Tyler, Erykah Badu and many other pay tribute to Bob Marley. This album features original Bob Marley vocals and music, rearranged by Marley's son Stephen.
VARIOUS ARTISTS Temple of Hip-hop Reprise
CAMILLE YARBOROUGH The Iron Pot Cooker Vanguard
NEIL YOUNG Reprise
-Boxed set

NOVEMBER 2

A FOREST MIGHTY BLACK Mellow Dramatic Studio K7
AMALGAMATION OF SOUNDZ Part Two Studio K7
THE BOLSHOI A Way (the best of...) Beggars Banquet
CAN Live Spoon-Mute
JOHN DIGWEED Bedrock Ultra
-A DJ mix from half of the Sasha & Digweed duo
DIVINE STYLER Atomic Pop
DJ SPOOKY VS. SCANNER DJ Spooky Vs. Scanner Beggars Banquet
ELLA FITZGERALD Something To Live For (American Masters) Verve
-A 2 cd reissue
SEB FONTAINE Prototype 2 Global Underground
JEWEL Christmas Album Atlantic
AMEL LARRIEUX Ruthless-Epic
LUV N'HAIGHT The Definitive Collection Luv N'Haight
-Compiling the best of their archive series, featuring funk, rare groove, soul and jazz.
MARCY PLAYGROUND Shapeshifter Capitol
NEBULA To The Center Subpop
LONGINEUX PARSONS Spaced: Collective Works 1980-1999 Luv N'Haight
-Ato-funk, Latin percussion and heavy jazz soloing fuse on Longineux music; unreleased tracks, new versions and a couple of remixes.
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE Epic
VERNON REID Epic
SISTER SONNY Love Songs Jetset
RONNIE SPECTOR 7" Kill Rock Stars
STARLET Stay On My Side Parasol
STEELEY DAN Two Against Nature Reprise
THRONES White Rabbit 12" EP Kill Rock Stars
JASON TRAEGER Mailorder Freaks 7" Kill Rock Stars
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USE YOUR MIND. TRUST YOUR EARS

(continued from page 90)

rockabilly Cramps. Operating on a lower scale is Aerial, a band knee-deep in shoegazer swirls and dreamy effects. Mixing bluegrass, klezmer and junk percussion, the Japonize Elephants whip up the best all-night parties. Stitching together disjointed rhythms, and scalding vocals that epitomize the Bloomington DIY scene, the Panoply Academy Corps of Engineers is capable of packing more people into a basement than a tornado. The Sissies' straightforward, catchy queercore is rapidly becoming a local favorite. If it's hardcore you're after, Race Bannon—with two vocalists who gurgle, beat box and sputter their way through songs—is the Midwest's best, hands down. And don't miss Scar of Indiana, an industrial percussion troupe featuring a gigantic blender and mechanical cow skeleton. Performances are rare but worth the wait.

Bloomington is also teeming with record labels. Assaulting hardcore can be found on the Ape imprint. The only label in town to garner slobbering *Maximum RockNRoll* reviews, Plan-it-X is synonymous with local activism and melodic punk by the Sissies and Operation: Cliff Clavin. For three years, Secretly Canadian has been combing for local and international talent, releasing albums by Songs: Ohia, June Panic, Dave Fischhoff and Suzanne Langille. In All Directions has dished up 7-inches by A Minor Forest and Intro to Airlift, and is preparing for Bright Eyes and Slingshot Episode releases. One particularly precious and little-known outlet is Archeophone Records, which specializes in CD reissues of wax cylinders. Other notable labels include Rags to Records (Slingshot Episode), Great Vitamin Mystery, Jagjaguwar (South, Monroe Mustang, Drunk) and Family Vineyard (Loren MazzaCane, Bruce Anderson). Even Indiana University gets into the record business yearly with *Live From Bloomington*, a benefit CD for the local food bank.

Music Stores & Radio

There really isn't much need for a car in Bloomington, but if you are cruising the drag, flip on **WFHB** (91.3/98.1 FM). This volunteer-staffed community radio station is the pride and joy of Bloomington. Although only six-years-old, fundraising and paperwork to launch the station began back in 1973! The free-form programming airs shows on health and social issues, Y2K perpetration and an endless barrage of musical styles from breakbeat and show tunes to experimental and Finnish. **WIUS** (1570 AM), IU's student station, is also worth turning into. More than 30 years old, the unpredictable programming keeps things innovative, and live bands are featured each Friday night.

In the recent past, Bloomington has suffered the loss of two independent record stores, leaving **TD's CDs and LPs** (322 E. Kirkwood Ave., 336-7677) and **All Ears** (401 E. 10th St., 336-6465) the best choices. Just one year old, All Ears is rapidly becoming a mecca for local and regional vinyl collectors. At TD's you can find nearly every new indie rock, world and jazz release, plus run into familiar neighborhood faces. For coffee, just walk next door to **Soma Cafe** (322 E. Kirkwood Ave.). On Fridays you can catch locals or the occasional troubadour performing in the back room. Other java joints worth checking out are **The Runcible Spoon** (412 E. 6th St., 334-3997) and **Cappuccino's** (301 E 3rd St., 333-2326).

Ephemera, Eats & The Printed Word

In general, almost everything you need, from bars to newsstands, can be found on Kirkwood Avenue, which begins at the gates of IU's campus and heads into "downtown." On your walk, you can stop at the **People's Park** (corner of Dunn & Kirkwood) for people watching, or visit **The Den** (514 E. Kirkwood Ave., 339-8831) for huge fifty-cent Cokes. One street over to 4th Avenue are two blocks teeming with ethnic restaurants, from Ethiopian to Mexican, even Tibetan from **The Snow Lion** (113 S. Grant St., 336-0355). You can satisfy your sweet tooth with freshly baked cookies, muffins and scones from **Red Chair Bakery** (411 E. Kirkwood Ave., 339-7797). **The Bloomington Antique Mall** (311 W. 7th St., 332-2290) is a converted warehouse with three floors of collectibles of all kinds. Used and rare books can be found at the packed-to-the-rafters **Caveat Emptor** (112 N. Walnut St., 332-9995). And right down the street is **Rockits Famous Pizza** (222 N. Walnut St., 336-7625), a small pizza parlor crammed with local music memorabilia. The best burritos in town are at **Laughing Planet Café** (322 E. Kirkwood, above Soma, TD's CDs & LPs and across from the Snow Lion) where servings are heavy on the salsa, pesto and beans. If you would rather buy groceries, head to **Bloomingsfoods** (419 E. Kirkwood, behind Runcible Spoon). A long standing co-op, Bloomingsfoods offers organic vegetables, natural foods and a deli with the best tofu rubeens in town.

To stay informed in Bloomington, you should pick up the weekly **Bloomington Independent**. The free paper keeps tabs on the arts and social issues in town as well as delving into the dark side of Bloomington with great investigative reporting. One of the town's greatest institutions is **The Flyer**, a 20-year-old monthly dedicated to film and political criticism. Also keep your eyes peeled for one-page zines **The Cracker Factory** and **B-town Underground**, **Sam-zine** and **Not Quite Israel**. The humor may be hard to grasp for non-locals, but it will give you flavor of what is happening around town.

All phone numbers are in the 812 area code.
Eric Weddle is currently working on an oral history of the Indiana punk scene (1972-1985) while running the Secretly Canadian and Family Vineyard labels.



WFHB



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ROCKITS



BLOOMINGSFOODS



SOMA

There is more to Bloomington than Bobby Knight and basketball. Nestled forty-five minutes south of Indianapolis, Bloomington is a cultural refuge smack-dab in South Central Indiana. With a long tradition of independent business and community activism, you won't find a more liberal or musical town in the Hoosier state. Trees line the boulevards and bike paths cut through streets in this home to Indiana University, where the population doubles to about 75,000 when students arrive.

Music History & Live Venues

In March of 1996, *Billboard* declared Bloomington a musical hotbed. Three years later, there have been no huge eruptions of what *Billboard* saw bubbling below the surface, just the continued evolution of a highly active scene that was well established way before the suits ever stopped by.

During the 1970s and early '80s, Bloomington helped kick-start the Midwest punk and new wave boom. The BRBQ and Gulcher labels released astonishing sides from MX-80 Sound, the Gizmos, Dow Jones and the Industrials, the Panics, Dancing Cigarettes and even Johnny Cougar. Gulcher's *Red Snerts* compilation, which features most of the aforementioned, is a defining moment in the Hoosier hysteria. For a quick education, get your hands on the *Blood Stains Across the Midwest* collection (featuring the Gynecologists, Dow Jones and the Industrials, the Gizmos and 13 other punk pioneers) and see what the fuss is about.

Bloomington's current music scene is innovative and extensive. The best place to catch a band is six feet under, in a basement. A quick glance of telephone poles on Kirkwood Avenue, the main drag

downtown, will offer some insight into subterranean weekend happenings. The cultivated basement scene at houses like 602, The Madison, 1102, and Devo House have created frequent stops for the Washington DC/Olympia, WA/Chapel Hill, NC axis. Not quite underground, **Second Story** (201 S. College Ave., 336-2582) is the bar to watch for noteworthy local bands and out-of-towners. **The Bluebird** (216 N. Walnut, 336-3984) hosts local bands on Tuesdays, while the rest of the week is cover bands with five-cent beers.

The John Waldron Arts Center (122 S. Walnut, 332-3183) is an art space-for-rent which has been filled recently with free jazz courtesy of local promoters **Beyond the Pale**. At the opposite end of the spectrum is *Jazz Fables*, an outlet for IU faculty and students, held each Thursday at *Bear's Place* (1316 E. 3rd St., 339-3460).

Artists & Labels to Watch For

There are literally 200 bands in Bloomington. The Mary Janes write memorable and often somber country odes driven by melody and violin. Their debut, *Record No. 1* (E Squared), flawlessly achieves everything the Cowboy Junkies ever tried to accomplish. Possibly the loudest band in town, Cadmium Orange has been known to cover Wire's *Pink Flag* album at the drop of a hat; their high-testosterone sound mixes equal parts Guided By Voices, classic rock and Gang of Four. With jagged and melodic songs rendered flawlessly by singer Sylvia Gubatan, *Slingshot Episode's* volume also wavers around eleven.

Still kicking up sand is local surf-music legend and Grammy winner Frankie Camero and his *Dragstrip*. New on the scene is the *Bikini Spiders*, an unsettling blend of *Dead Kennedys* and über-

(continued on page 89)

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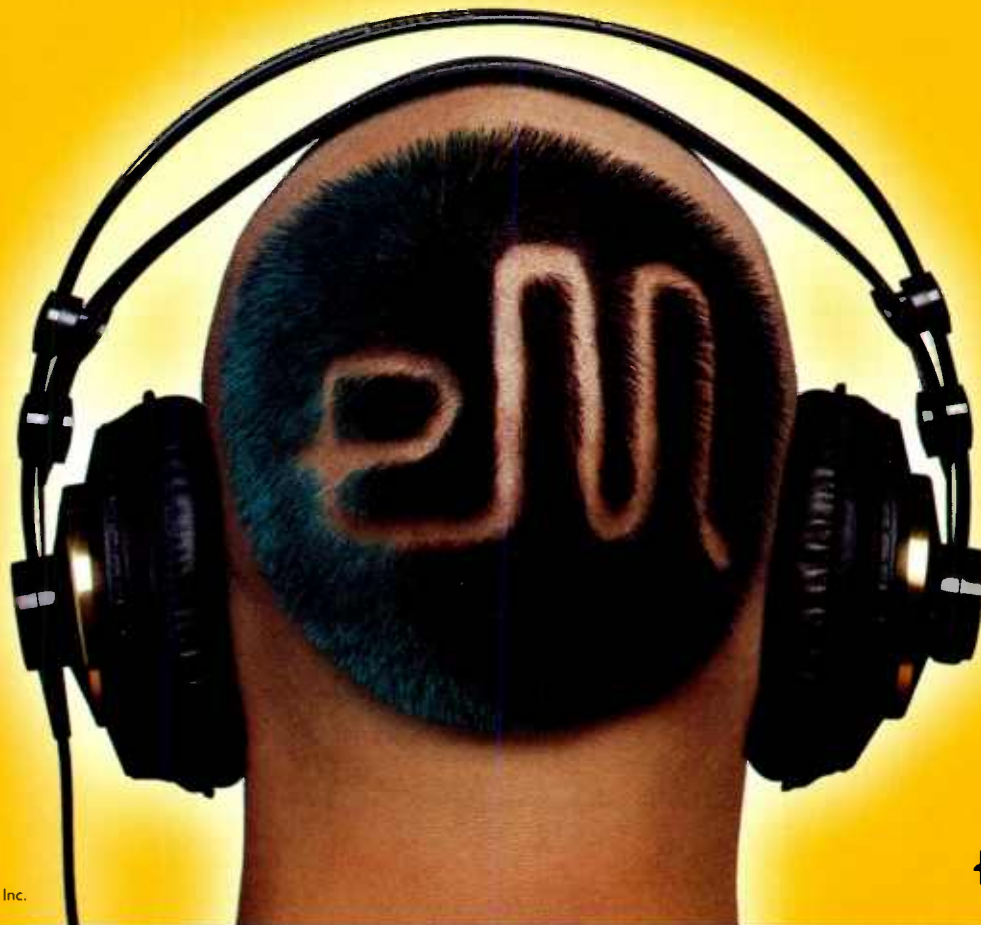
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