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CMJ  
**NEWMUSIC**  
MONTHLY

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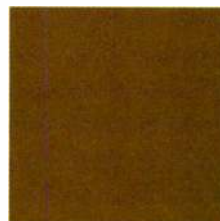
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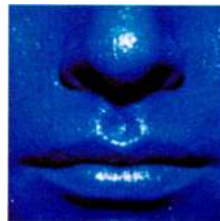
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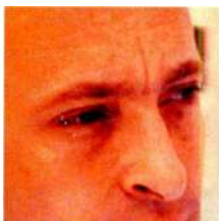
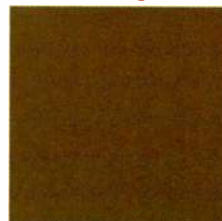
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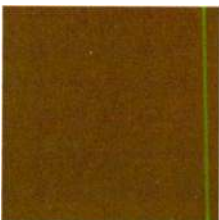
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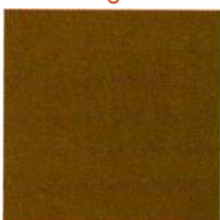
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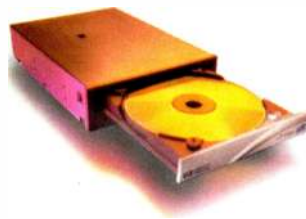


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## RAVE GRRRLS UNITE

Raves are progressive and fun partly because they've always been a great contrast to the typical meat-market club scene. They provide a haven where young women aren't objectified for their bodies (eg. the baggy, unisex clothes). So it's depressing enough that someone is bastardizing this one area of music culture that was free of the usual preoccupation with sex and naked women. But does *CMJ New Music Monthly* need to endorse Raverporn.net (April '00)? How exactly does it "reflect the rave scene's open-minded gender politics" to show a token man among "scads of young women?" For that matter, why would anyone reduce the mind-expanding experience of a rave to the purely physical, much less the pornographic? More power to the women who spit on those flyers!

Mary Heffner, New York, NY

*It turns out that being a token man among scads of women is actually just the personal fantasy of the story's writer, Bill "Ol' Werde Bastard" Werde, who tends to frame his craven desires in terms of rave's "open-mindedness." We don't openly endorse any pornography site, nor do we sanction the improper use of lollipops.—ed.*

## PISSY ELLIOTT

I read "Singing And Nothingness" in the May issue. I am just wondering who that artical [sic] was supposed to be about, Elliott Smith or the pretentious interviewer? I certainly couldn't tell.

Alanna Paully (LoungeVxn@aol.com)

*Pretentious!? C'mon, anyone who's read Sartre's essay on phenomenological ontology realizes this was just a couple of homies spittin' about the existential nature of the creative process—much like Fat Joe, Apache and Kool G Rap on "You Must Be Out Your Fuckin' Mind."—ed.*

## ADIEU, AUF WIEDERSEHEN, GOODNIGHT

While I have to thank you for six+ years of great articles and CDs, I also regret to inform you that I

will not be renewing my subscription. While I've put up with the "alternative" label, I liked it better when it was "college music" and no one liked it. I make no apologies that I miss the days when bands like The Pixies, The Replacements and Nirvana roamed the landscape. Now you feature white-trashy clowns like Limp Bizkit and Kid Rock who aren't original and are, quite frankly, music for 12-year-olds. You feel the need to feature a succession of DJs, each of whom is less memorable than the last. (Can't we just admit these folks just provide a soundtrack to do drugs to and move on?) Ultimately, however, I have to thank you. While it is no longer the magazine I used to rely on, it is still heads and shoulders above the rest.

Ryan Smith (ry\_smith@yahoo.com)

*Your letter sparked some spirited debate here in the office. No, not about our sliding credibility among the early-'90s college-rock faithful, but about when it was that music wasn't a soundtrack for people to take drugs to. Our best guess is that it was some time before the Archduke snorted snuff to keep from nodding off at the big Mozart show, but hey, if you can explain barber shop quartets any other way, more power to you.—ed.*

## COME OUT TO PLAY-YAY

In the media's defense over the ongoing dispute between Artists and Journalists, I would like to remind the reader that there is much more than meets the eye. In a time of one hit wonders and marketed "Jam sessions" which in reality are click track pop songs aching for radio, we the media must strive at great lengths to filter beyond the commercialized pinpoint arrogance of major distribution in order to reach the righteous advocates who drive the indie market. Can one really compare talent by dollars earned, units sold, sellout tours or television ratings? Or can we look beyond the scheme of marketing gimmicks and recognize bands who create genres, preserve culture and in essence devote their lively hoods [sic] for the love of the game. How can we

appreciate a secretary's dictation to art when bands like Pavement, Palace and Smog induce the diversification of the music industry while allowing other inspiring artists to participate in the opportunities they have created? Bands who maintain dignity, set new standards and develop their craft year by year. To my fellow Journalists who strive for substance, creativity and true talent, those who share all opinions, I applaud the [sic]. To the mainstream arrivistes who use the following thoughtless excuse time and time again, "They (the media) just can't appreciate the fact that I made it and they did not. It is out of jealousy, not logic. Most reporters/critics couldn't make it in this business, so they settle for the next best thing," keep this in mind, we may have not been blessed with all the talent needed to overcome the odds, but neither have you. You were simply in the right place at the right time.

Daniel Shirley, Kanata, Ontario, Canada  
(fnethert@ftn.net)

*Damn, it's just like in The Warriors when that gang The Orphans didn't know that there was the big gang confab up in the Bronx. Why didn't someone let us know that there was this big fight going on? We'd give those mainstream arrivistes what-for and show them what a lively bunch of hoods we can be.—ed.*

## DEAR CMJ

I am writing you to let you know.

Secret Agent X-9 Ed Furniture Co.  
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*Now you tell us. We applaud the.—ed.*



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### ART

Art Director/Designer: MERV  
Designer: BRENDAN MORAN

## CONTRIBUTORS

Contributing Editors:  
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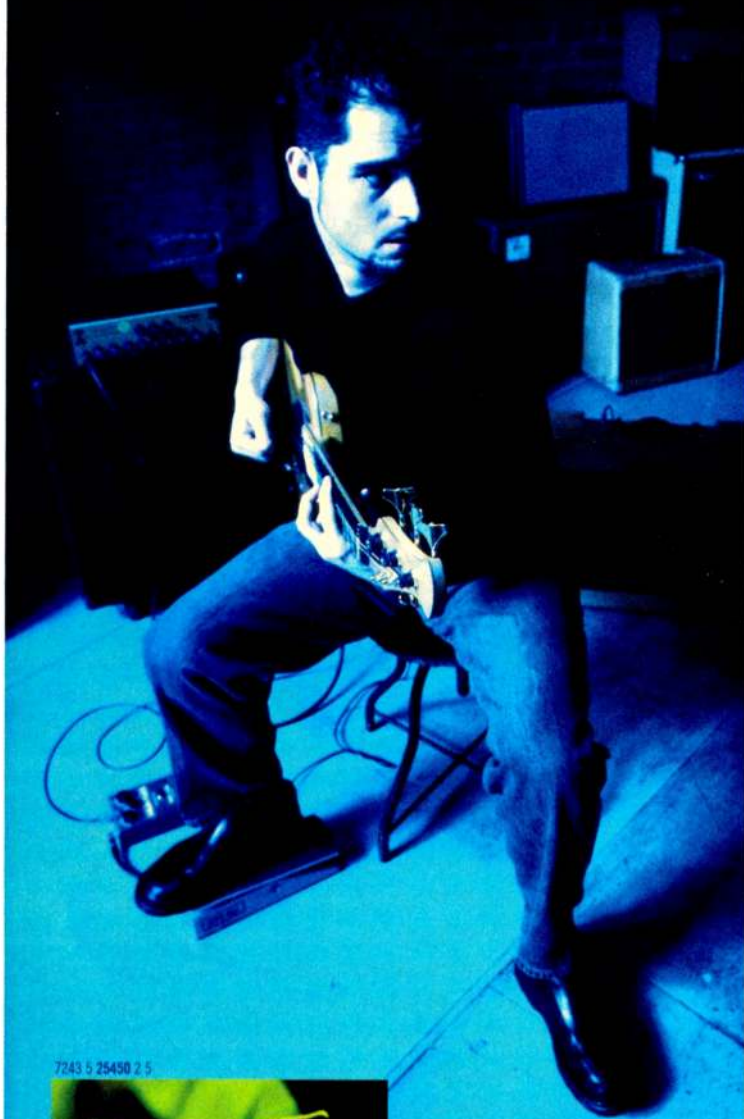
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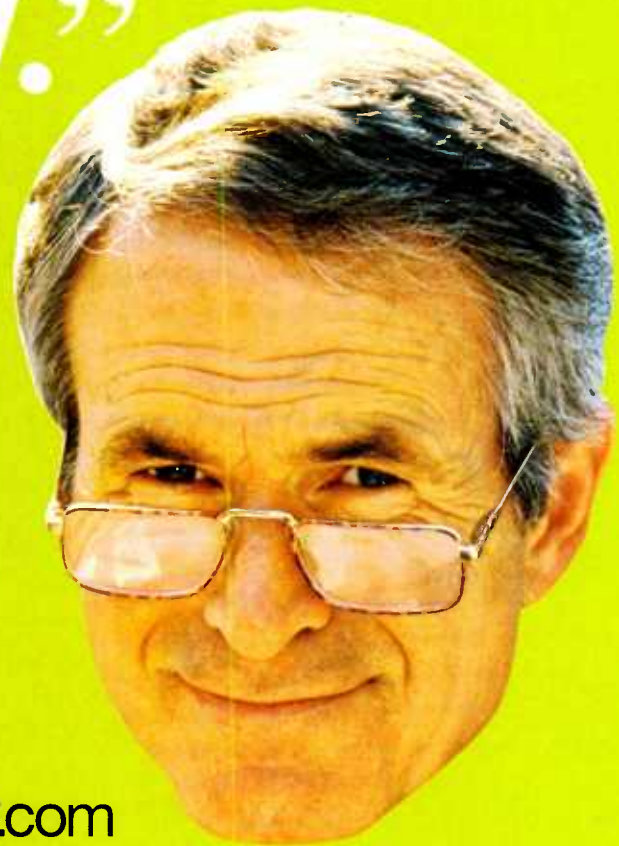
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Goofy, biting, offbeat and brilliant, the indie stalwarts of **Modest Mouse** take the major plunge.

**Modest Mouse's** Isaac Brock is misbehaving again, skulking around backstage at the Austin Music Hall, a can of Shiner Bock in one hand, a pungent bag of crawdads in the other. He thrusts the briny crustaceans through a crack in the door of The Delta 72's dressing room, where the band is rehearsing harmonies for tonight's big South By Southwest showcase. The Delta 72 guys ignore the intrusion, repeatedly singing, "If you wanna get up, get up/ If you wanna say yay-ah, say yay-ah." Brock rolls his eyes and seeks out more mischief.

Brock's antics and carousing have made him gossip-column fodder in hometown Seattle since he, bassist Eric Judy and drummer Jeremiah

tunes to make it feel like a story, instead of clumping all the really loud or mellow songs together."

Over the course of 60 minutes, *The Moon & Antarctica* sways between musical poles, with Brock bending notes on guitar and singing softly one minute, then surging into emo/jazz excursions the next. The tunes are grouped thematically and musically; expansive tracks featuring Joy Division-like guitar riffs rotate with more biting and propulsive fare. Brock sets up the struggle between nature and the modern world—one of his consistent themes, album to album—in lyrics like "I'm gonna look out the window on my color TV." While Modest Mouse can rock with the big boys,

## "I am the President of Antarctica."

Green emerged from their practice shed in the suburbs more than five years ago. But this bad-boy image contrasts sharply with the world-weary lyricist who distills disenfranchisement in lines like: "The malls are the soon to be ghost towns/ So long, farewell, goodbye."

Unlike Pavement-brand indie rock obscurantism, Brock cuts to the bone quickly, eloquently commenting on society and humans and nature while the band follows the arc of his emotions from subdued to enraged. These Walt Whitman-esque tunes are then sculpted by the three 20-somethings into lengthy, cohesive albums.

The most dramatic change on the band's third full-length, *The Moon & Antarctica*, isn't the music but the leap to major-label status. The trio signed to Epic after its indie records (on Up) and frequent tours established a nationwide following. Judy and Green, sitting beside each other on a ratty backstage couch, shrug at the mention of the major move—they're just happy to have more people hear their efforts. Brock, always skeptical of the powers that be, starts to rail against his bosses. "Epic rushed us a bit," he says, then pulls back. He's pondering whether *The Moon & Antarctica* is as cohesive an album as the previous ones.

"It's definitely about flow," Brock says, taking a drag on a borrowed Camel Light. "They've all been really long records, so in order to be able to make them listenable all the way through, you have to change

its secret weapon is showing emotion—something many young men can't do in life, let alone in music. On "The Cold Part," a violin wraps moodily around Brock as he sings about leaving the iciest part of the world.

"It's kind of a sad song," says the frontman, adding the cryptic footnote: "It's about the president of Antarctica." Is there a president of Antarctica?

"I am the president of Antarctica," he insists.

Brock's being mischievous again, but in a way that explains the lyrical approach that ties the ambitious new album together. Where the band's two previous records painted portraits of colorful folks like "Cowboy Dan" hanging out in bars and truck stops, the new disc floats somewhere between the earth and Brock's home, wherever that may be.

"It's a colder album," he offers. "It's less about people and characters and more about space. Not outer space, but space."

When the three go on at the Austin Music Hall, they show just how adept they are at translating this vague notion of space into sound: Brock's guitar stutters and bends, emphasizing the chords not played as much as the ones that are. A seemingly placid jam can explode. This precarious teetering between seriousness and absurdity makes Modest Mouse albums hilarious and fascinating—as when Brock walks to the front of the stage and hands out crawdads.

**NMM**



SD MY FRIEND WAS DRIVING HIS TRUCK, RIGHT? AND I SAID, 'YOU WANNA GO HOME AND WATCH LIFETIME?' AND HE JUST TOTALLY SLAMMED ON THE BRAKES.



Paul Chantrel

I WISH LE OLD BAG WOULD HURRY UP. I HAVE TO TAKE ZE LEAK.

## THE POWER OF BABEL

Guinea pigs, cartoon themes and puppets:  
Etienne Charry's pop-culture Esperanto.

Etienne Charry may sing exclusively in French, but he's fluent in damaged pop-culture miscellany—and like love, that language is universal. On Charry's first Stateside release, *36 Erreurs* (Kindercore), his musical Esperanto pays tribute to guinea pigs, homesick "moon citizens" and car-crash victims urged not to "go to heaven naked, or in pajamas." Appropriately, Charry's ironically beautiful musical smoothie is interpreted onstage by a homemade backing "band" of robotic arms, singing puppet heads and a video-animated drummer.

If this sounds like the setting for a Saturday morning kids' program, that's only appropriate. Charry's music juggles imagined cartoon themes, TV jingles, game shows, radio plays—in short, all things fit for the global pop playground. But it's not a *Negativland*-style news collage or a sampler-happy nightmare. Charry's medium is the indie-pop blueprint, and he scribbles all over it with guitar, bass, drums, carnival-inspired electronics, disco beats, eye-winking orchestration and his nonchalant, pleasant vocals.

"At the age of 12, I began to record radio programs with a small tape recorder," he says, phoning from his home near Paris. "I often didn't have the beginnings of songs, because I needed the first seconds to make my opinion, and I didn't have the end of the songs because there was always a guy talking. The sound quality was very crap. But all these elements have conditioned the way I make my music now."

Charry enlisted the help of 20 friends to make the record. But on tour, his companions take a decidedly less human form. "I wanted to make concerts, but I was not rich enough to pay real musicians," he says. "So I decided to make these 'automates,' which are as useful as they are decorative. Last but not least, they travel in the back of the plane."

What about when he travels via water? Charry's bio praises him as a former water-skiing champion. *Sacre bleu*, that's not true: "As a sport, I only practice some numchucks on stage and mowing the grass at home." »»»Andy Battaglia

## RING MY BELLE

An open letter to Belle & Sebastian

You may be known for lilting tunes about S&M and bible studies (and your moping skills rival The Cure at Christmas), but Stuart, Isobel, you have to admit it: Fascinating interviews aren't your *forté*, and you don't grant terribly many. Still, your new album *Fold Your Hands Child, You Walk Like A Peasant* (Matador) is filled with plenty of intrigue, sexual and otherwise. So if you're out there, we have a few questions for you. Feel free to e-mail your responses to [monthly@cmj.com](mailto:monthly@cmj.com). »»»Douglas Wolk

Which members of the band have slept with which other members—or perhaps it would be easier to ask which members *haven't* slept with each other? Which members of the band want to sleep with others, but haven't? Is this album your *Rumours*?

Your band has inspired more original poetry and fiction than any band since, maybe, The Smiths. What do you do to live down the shame?

For that matter, your band has been compared to The Smiths an awful lot. Could you list the top five reasons why Belle & Sebastian is not, in fact, The Smiths?

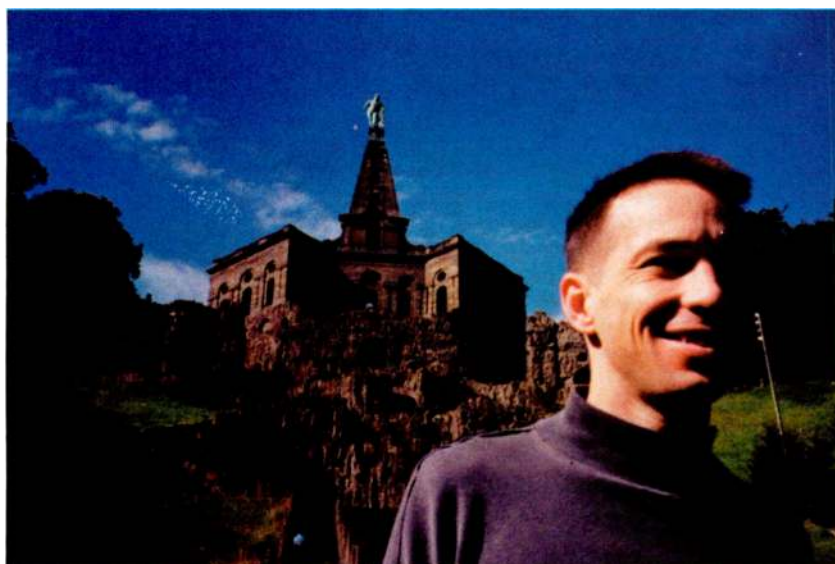
At least two songs on *Fold Your Hands Child*—"The Wrong Girl" and "The Chalet Lines"—allude to twisted sexual scenarios at the Bowlie Weekender, the festival you headlined last year at a seaside resort in the South of England. How much of the actual twisted sex that went on there were you privy to?

Is the "Lisa" who "learned a lot from puffing on a blindfold when she knew she had been bad" in "The Model" the same Lisa from "Like Dylan In The Movies" on *If You're Feeling Sinister*? What's she been up to in the meantime? Is she cute? Does she like music journalists?

How exactly *does* a peasant walk?

# ROADSIDE DISTRACTIONS

The Groovie Ghoulies' guide to retreats that rock.



KEPI AT THE HERCULES MONUMENT IN KASSEL, GERMANY.



KEPI IN THE "POD SHOWER," AT A MOTEL 6 IN EUGENE, OREGON.



AMY AT THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF AXL ROSE IN LAFAYETTE, INDIANA.



B-FACE WITH FORREST "FAMOUS MONSTERS" ACKERMAN IN HOLLYWOOD.



MUPPET AND PORNO VIDEOS SIDE BY SIDE IN A HOLLAND HOTEL ROOM.

**A**s the title of the Groovie Ghoulies' latest album, *Travels With My Amp* (Lookout!) implies, the Sacramento punk-pop vagabonds have indeed been there and done that. "The last two or three years we've pretty much spent on the road, touring," sighs squeaky-voiced frontman Kepi. "But while we're out there, we just try to see all this stuff and really make the most of our lives. We try to see it, live it, share it." For their honeymoon, he and Ghoulies guitarist Roach visited California's gravity-defying Mystery Spot, with a stopover at the spooky Trees Of Mystery on the way home. They've seen Jackalope Village, Canada's quirky Enchanted Forest and visited countless cemeteries, like the beachside plot in Hawaii where human bones protrude from ocean-eroded graves. Didn't see *that* listed in your *Fodor's*, now did you? But wait, says Kepi. The Groovie Ghoulies' guide to the world is filled with both frightfully weird and disturbingly normal escapades. **»»Tom Lanham**

**Best Roadside Americana:** "The biggest thing, I think, is Mount Rushmore," says Kepi. "It's on our record, it's just so amazing—even though its Hall Of Presidents and official Aquarium are now closed down. We saw an 80-foot Jolly Green Giant out in the middle of nowhere—you'll see a photograph of it on the record, I'm pictured right underneath him. It was weird—you're just driving along, and all of a sudden you see him from two miles away. I think it was in Blue Valley, Montana. And I have to say, Niagara Falls is just completely stunning. They have pictures of people who've attempted to go over it in customized barrels. And we went to an Anne Rice house last year, one of three properties she owns in New Orleans, and we got crazy stuff at her yard sale, like this talking Magic Eight Ball. You ask it questions, then pass your hand over it and it'll tell you the answers. Then there was the house of Forrest Ackerman [former editor of sci-fi mag *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*] in Los Angeles. We have a whole scrapbook of photos! We toured his house, met him, he's just the swellest guy in the world. You could go back for 10 more tours and still never see it all. You tour his house on Saturday afternoons, walk around for an hour, then everyone gathers in the living room and he tells you stories about Bela Lugosi, Vincent Price and Boris Karloff. Then he gives you free 'I visited the Acker Mansion' pens!"

**Best European Attractions:** "In England, we went to the London Dungeon—it's like an R-rated Disneyland, totally graphic. I think every Iron Maiden fan should go there. It's a very heavy-metal kind of place. They even spatter blood on you at the 'Jack The Ripper Trial.' We went to a couple of castles in Germany. We went to one called Hercules that was amazing. It's a giant spire with a fountain containing over 1,000 steps, and twice a week they pour water down it and it rushes down the side of the hill. Must've been some crazy emperor back in history, going, 'I vill build ziss big tower, und twice a week the vatter shall trickle!' We didn't hit it on trickle day, unfortunately."

**Number One Sight Yet Unseen:** "Coral Castle. It's this guy in Florida who built this giant statuary out of coral in his yard. It's kinda like the pyramids—people wonder, 'How did he move these 20-ton things all by himself?' Now *that's* something the Groovie Ghoulies have gotta check out!"



## UP, DOWN AND AROUND

After a devastating bout of depression, **Catherine Wheel** spins musical silk.

"Come on, Daisy, don't drown me this time," Rob Dickinson whispers in the opening to *Wishville* (Columbia), the latest from his group Catherine Wheel. It's corny, acknowledges Dickinson with a sigh and roll of his leonine eyes. "But 'daisy,' in this case, is a metaphor for depression." As he says this, the hotel bar waiter arrives to inform him that even though it's early evening, there is no happy hour at the establishment. Sorry. The singer chortles softly at this choice bit of irony.

"At least five of these songs are very, very personal, in terms of how I've been feeling for the past several months," says Dickinson. Sitting down to pen what would become *Wishville*, he was struck by a harsh reality: "After five albums, we weren't exactly where I thought we'd be—we had this odd major-label existence with no major-label success." Then, he adds, "I kinda spiraled down for a few months. I was sitting with a guitar on my lap in my little studio at home. And I ended up just staring out the window for two or three hours, doing nothing." Correction, he says. "Unable to do anything. And the thing is, everyone thinks that behavior like that is normal, everyone thinks, 'Well, I can't be that

different—I must be feeling just like all these other normal people.' But that's wrong."

Halfway through his tale, Dickinson, 34, catches himself and grinds to a quiet halt. He fears coming off like a whiny rock star. That was then; and after quite a bit of therapy, he's feeling much better, thanks for asking. So good, in fact, that "'confidence' isn't quite a strong enough word for it. I'm..." he pauses to scratch the little hairs of a nascent goatee, "bristling with optimism for this record, and for the band in general." He believes in *Wishville* so much, he's going city to city, hand-delivering their "Sparks Are Gonna Fly" single to alternative radio programmers. The Floydian combination of Brian Futter's regal, serpentine guitar textures and Dickinson's somber, ethereal pneumatics is worth crowing about.

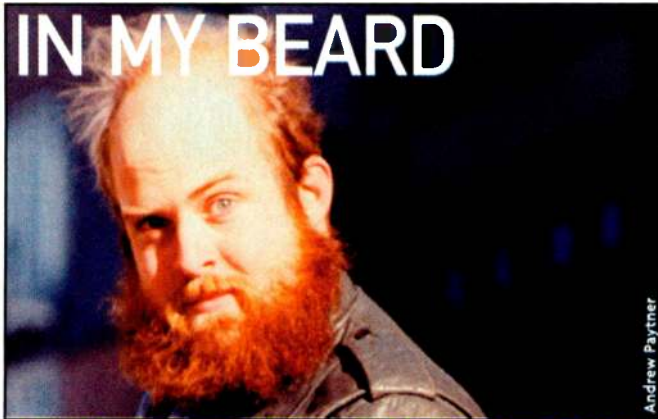
There was a time, Dickinson concedes, when the proud Catherine Wheel would never have stooped to such tactics. "I think this record is so strong, we can stand a bit of self-promotion. I've really come to accept what this band is, and what this band does well, and you know what? To hell with all the other bullshit!" **»»Tom Lanham**



ROB DICKINSON'S COUSIN IS THE SINGER FOR IRON MAIDEN. DO YOU THINK ANYONE IN THE FAMILY SAYS, "WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR COUSIN?"

brendan moran

## IN MY BEARD



Andrew Paynter

### TIM HARRINGTON of LES SAVY FAV

Les Savy Fav frontman Tim Harrington started shaving in the seventh grade. But when he put away his razor last summer, nothing could have prepared him for the transformation that would take place: Since then, the 26-year-old's unruly beard—complementing the thinning, flyaway locks atop his head—has helped earn him a cultish reputation that befits his eye-popping stage flailings and theatrical outbursts. On a given night, the crowd witnessing Les Savy's joyfully arty, hardcore-influenced assault must contend with the spilled contents of Harrington's acutely unpredictable mind. But even more confounding: What collects in his beard? >>>Dylan Siegler

**SNACKS** Sometimes it does hold trace pieces of food. I eat a lot of sushi, though that's bad, actually, when it's in your beard, because it doesn't keep. I'm obsessed with what the old man ate in *The Old Man And The Sea*: tuna and bonito. He had the huge fish on his line, and then he caught tuna and bonito with his toes. My food fetish is anything they ate in World War II or anything prisoners or survivalists eat. Anything you can carry around in your pocket...or your beard. When I read the *Maus* comic books, everything they ate made my mouth water the whole time—old stale bread, a cube of chocolate, a pickled egg. Those are my dream foods.

**FIRE** At a show at (New York's) Mercury Lounge, somebody threw burning toilet paper onstage and I caught it. I was afraid of setting my beard on fire. But it made me think of Blackbeard The Pirate, who put smoldering wicks in his beard so it would smoke. I don't know how that worked. He was an amazing pirate, famous for cutting a guy's ear off and making him eat it. Some say it was all a ruse, though, and that he never hurt anybody, that the smoking beard was just to scare you off.

**DANDRUFF SHAMPOO** I use a different shampoo on my hair, but someone in my house uses dandruff shampoo, so I use that in my beard. Otherwise sometimes it gets kind of musty or dusty. I want to try Beardsley beard shampoo, which is supposed to taste good if you get it in your mouth.

**POTENTIAL** Having a beard is like always having on a disguise. It's my potential energy. I carry a communist, a hippie, a bum, a poet...they're all in my beard. If I put on a tweed jacket and windowpane glasses, I'm a professor. On our fall tour, I wore beard-themed outfits two out of three nights. One was a sea captain with a plastic hook and a waistcoat, another was my "gentleman of peace" outfit, like a cult leader. We played a show in the back room of this co-op punker record store in Orlando, and I wore my captain's suit and this rubber Napoleon mask and acted like a real lunatic, bouncing and ranting and raving. I ended up on my hands and knees barking, and I chased this kid—and half the crowd—out through the front of the store. A beard is a totally rebellious thing. My beard is more rebellious than I am.

## SHTICK IT TO ME

If three more months is simply too long to wait for the next Man Or Astro-Man? record, *Spectrum Of Infinite Scale* (Touch And Go), perhaps you need an alternative band-on-a-shtick. Can you guess which of these theme bands are real, and which is, er, schlock rock? >>>Tony Ware

### Grand Moff Tarkin

Originally from a galaxy far, far away, Grand Moff Tarkin relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, to operate under the radar of the real Empire, LucasFilms. Led by Darth Vader, GMT features a StormTrooper on bass, two Royal Imperial Guards on guitars, a Death Star Guard on drums and Boba Fett on keyboards, not to mention slave go-go dancers Leia and Oola. The band kicks it into heavy metal hyperdrive with songs like "I'm Not The Droid You're Looking For" and "My Tie." Know the true power of the Dark Side at ([www.lynxus.com/members/~toastprd/tarkin](http://www.lynxus.com/members/~toastprd/tarkin))



### Rockbitch

Hailing from a French matriarchal sex commune, this seven-woman band takes rock's sexual rebellion ethos one step further. During Rockbitch concerts (which have been banned in many countries), the band performs in various states of undress, and tosses out a "Golden Condom" during each show. The audience member (of either sex) who catches the prize prophylactic gets sex with Luci The Slut for one song. ([www.tvamsterdam.com/rockbitch](http://www.tvamsterdam.com/rockbitch))

### Gabba

Bridging the gap between Brighton and the Bowery, English group Gabba—singer Anneky along with Geeky, Bee Bee, Abby and Bjoey (one of the tallest men in England)—pays homage to both the Ramones and ABBA on songs like "Hej Ho, Disco" and "The Pinhead Takes It All." The act's shtick is that they all met at Osaka Rock 'N' Roll High School. Visit Gabba's website ([www.gabba.co.uk](http://www.gabba.co.uk)) for Noos, Fotos and recordings of the band before its members discover the elusive fourth chord and ruin it all!



### Captured By Robots

San Francisco's soap opera-ish Captured By Robots features the mysteriously deformed musician and scientist JBOT and the bandmates he built: GTRBOT666 and DRMBOT 0110. The band's live shows are a scripted hour of ridiculousness with the two bots enslaving JBOT and forcing him to perform. JBOT controls the speech and instrument-playing of the bots with a modified keyboard controller he straps to his chest. A third bot, The Ape Which Hath No Name, is derided by his metallic brethren for spewing only happy thoughts. ([www.capturedbyrobots.com](http://www.capturedbyrobots.com))

### Battlestar Prophylactica

Equally inspired by failed television show *Battlestar Galactica* and the film *Flesh Gordon*, L.A.-based Battlestar Prophylactica consists of former porn stars Jack Hammer, as (Starbuck), on guitar; Rod Falstaff (Apollo) on bass; Phil Latio (Commander Adama) on vocals; and Hugh G. Rection (Boomer) on drums. Disillusioned by the lack of safe sex in the industry, the four tour for an Earth free from STDs and unplanned pregnancy. Their (in)famous encore consists of a cover of Devo's "Whip It," during which Cylon warriors storm the stage, copiously distributing rubbers.



### Ape Has Killed Ape

Bill Blake portrayed "Country Ape" in the '70s TV series *Planet Of The Apes* and seems to have grown attached to the role. Now he sits in with Ape Has Killed Ape during the act's free jazz, freak-out Moog and theremin explorations—if you own every record by Meco and Dick Hyman, you're still not prepared for this. Lines from sci-fi classic *Planet Of The Apes* are triggered and delivered by the group while Blake, in full ape gear, pantomimes.



Liar of the Pack: Battlestar Prophylactica



## HEAVEN CAN WAIT

Using one last tape, **Macha** keeps **Bedhead** from the great beyond.

**E**xchanging tapes through the mail has been the creative secret behind records by artists from Prince to Pavement. The reasons range from scheduling to geography, but as those remaining Beatles know, tape trading becomes particularly useful when you're duetting with someone dead. The m.o. isn't just for superstars, though—the new EP *Macha Loved Bedhead* is one band's tape-trading eulogy to another.

Okay, so Bedhead's Matt and Bubba



Kadane aren't actually dead. But the band did break up last year, leaving an unfinished collaboration with Athens, Georgia's Macha in its wake. The Kadanes have been friends with Macha's Josh and Mischa McKay since junior high in Wichita Falls, Texas, and the four dreamed of recreating the late-night garage jams that kept them sane during holidays home from college. When Macha and Bedhead toured together, they cemented the pact. "They had really initiated the move by sending us a tape with four building blocks for songs—some drums and guitars on an eight-track tape—in 1999," says Josh. So, they concluded, "The Bedhead/Macha project shall arise!"

A year later, Macha finally had time to complete the songs. How did Macha, whose songs revolve around dense Gamelan-style percussion, mesh with Bedhead's drowsy guitar strums? "Having those lovely Bedhead

guitar sensibilities in place made me want to be a little more spare and spacious with the orchestration," explains Josh. But it was the lyric writing that got him: "They really ended up meaning a lot to me," he says. "It was a whole sense of really longtime friendship, with Bedhead coming to a close, and that stuff had some influence on what I was thinking."

The record's not all mushy affirmations and downtempo melodies, though. Its most peculiar achievement is its closing track, an eerie, serial-killer cover of Cher's "Believe" accompanied by a touch-tone telephone. "I jokingly said, 'Let's take the song that ended the millennium like a nail in the coffin and give it, you know, the real funeral treatment,'" says Josh. "When I called our voice mail one day and realized our code was the tune to 'Believe,' it just seemed right." [»»Dylan Siegler](#)



## LABEL PROFILE:



LTJ BUKEM

Perhaps no label is as responsible for France's emergence as Kinetic. Long dedicated to the pretty melodies and driving, dancefloor rhythms of trance and progressive house music, Kinetic (backed by major label Reprise) turned Paul Oakenfold's *Tranceport* into a huge word-of-mouth success (more than 150,000 copies sold), offering mix CD installments by Dave Seaman and, soon, Sandra Collins. "It's a labor of love," says label founder and president Steve Lau, often spotted in NYC clubs, er, working hard. "I couldn't keep up the fight if I wasn't truly passionate about this music." For Lau, that fight includes an effort to get his music onto commercial radio stations traditionally uninterested in electronic music. "It's going to happen this summer," he says, offering the France-like productions of recent Madonna and Jennifer Lopez hits as proof. "It's just a matter of when, and who." Kinetic isn't all France—the imprint recently released LTJ Bukem's jazzy drum 'n' bass double LP, *Journey Inwards*, and will unleash the next Sasha & Digweed mix and the ravey *Groove* soundtrack (mixed by Wish FM) this summer. >>>Bill Werde



## 5 things you should know about MARC RIBOT

### He's not into being trendy.

Ribot was dismayed when his recent foray into Cuban music, *Los Cubanos Postizos* (The Prosthetic Cubans), coincided with Cuba mania. Ribot was recording an inspired tribute to overlooked composer Arsenio Rodriguez, whose mid-20th century *très* music Ribot considers "the punk rock of its time." The record led to a tour and a second record, the new *Muy Divertido!* (*Very Entertaining!*) (Atlantic). But Ribot's Cuba fling is over, at least until the Buena Vista dust settles.

### The roots of his eclectic career lie in suburban New Jersey.

Newark radio was a lifeline, says Ribot. "At night, they would play funky jazz: Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Smith. We would drive around in whoever's parents' car could be commandeered for the night and listen to some pretty cool stuff." Ribot's family befriended Haitian composer and classical guitarist Frantz Casseus. Casseus needed students, so they signed up 11-year-old Marc. "What makes you become a guitarist seems to be periods of social

maladaptation," Ribot observes. "While other kids are hanging out, you spend all your time playing guitar."

### Ribot liked Santana's music, then hated it, now likes it again.

To self-described "dumb 15-year-old" Ribot, classic Santana sounded like rock guitar music with a beat. But Santana's fat, singing guitar tone didn't cut it once punk hit. The punk esthetic set Ribot up to discover Latin music through the "vulnerable, naked" tones of Arsenio Rodriguez. Coming full circle now, Ribot admires the hard-hitting rawness of today's Santana. "I no longer need to hate my affinities of 1968," says a liberated Ribot, who has set aside his imitation Telecasters and picked up his old Gibson again.

### You won't find him on Broadway.

Ribot is acclaimed for his session work with Elvis Costello, Tom Waits, Marianne Faithfull, Peru's Susana Baca and Brazil's Marisa Monte. But the low point of his career as a sideman came the day he subbed in the pit of *Les Miserables* on Broadway. "I learned the whole score," he says, "One of the hardest books for guitar on Broadway. When the conductor raised his baton, I realized I'd never followed a conductor in my life. It was a hard day for me, the conductor, the orchestra, the entire cast and every audience member. Now I make detours around Broadway."

### MP3 sucks.

On a visit to Senegal, Ribot saw how rampant cassette piracy there undermines the recording industry and lowers the sound quality of the music people hear. That's what he sees MP3 doing worldwide. "We're trading in a world of high production for a world of total shit," says Ribot. "People will ultimately get what they pay for." >>>Banning Eyre



## WEIRD RECORD

Yes, you recognize the surname correctly. Orrin Bolton is the older brother of Michael, and on *Freedom*, he displays the same warm, worn vocal tone that made his kid sibling the Barry White to the very white. He also does a couple of his brother's songs, including one co-written with interim KISS guitarist Bruce Kulick. But Orrin is not content to follow in his brother's mack-daddy-to-the-menopausal footsteps, instead plying the vaguely bluesy white-guy soul that always seems like a made-for-TV version of whatever it's trying to be, and even trying his hand at rapping and reggae. While his dancehall toasting in the intro to his take on Curtis Mayfield's "She Don't Let Nobody" is scrotum-tightening, what's odder is the disc's cover, which like the logo to his own Rock N Hood Records, casts him as Che Guevara, beret and all. Only Orrin's head is cocked in a way that makes him resemble less the Cuban revolutionary leader than a confused terrier. Oh, brother. >>>Scott Frampton



Diane Collins

DO YOU SEE THAT EFFED-UP BUILDING DOWN THERE?

## DONE SLUMMIN'

After years of label struggles, Slum Village gets a ticket out of the underground.

Imagine performing a big Los Angeles gig and realizing that so many people in the audience know your lyrics because they've bought bootlegs of your unreleased tracks. Such was the bittersweet epiphany for Detroit's Slum Village at a recent House Of Blues gig. Rapper T3 recalls his mixed feelings: To know so many people appreciated his music was nice, but to know that record label struggles were keeping him from a wider audience and, of course, personal profit, was not.

The buzz around the decade-old group first began in the mid-'90s, when member Jay Dee passed Q-Tip a tape of his tracks backstage at a show. This led to work on A Tribe Called Quest's *Beats, Rhymes & Life*, and brought together Q-Tip, Ali Shaheed Muhammad and Dee as The Ummah production team. Dee's resume filled out with De La Soul's "Stakes Is High," Busta Rhymes's "Woo-Hah" and several tracks by Common.

"Jay Dee goes through phases," says T3. "He doesn't do one style. The Common joint is funk and soul. The Q-Tip joint is like techno. Different

producers have one set style—with Jay Dee, you don't know." The thread that joins all of Dee's work, including his Slum Village productions, is an appreciation of realistic, stripped drum patterns that may sound simple, but are complex in texture and process.

The trio signed with A&M in '98 just before the subsidiary label was phased out during the Universal merger. In the meantime, the influence of Baatin and T3's unorthodox delivery—bouncy cadences that often stutter-step and defy traditional rhythms—was cropping up in the throats of their peers, including Tip and Common. How does it feel to hear your influence on seasoned artists when your debut hasn't been released?

"We're all a big family," reasons T3. "It'd be different if he was someone we didn't know." And now that Slum Village's *Fantastic Vol. II* (Good Vibe-Atomic Pop-Barak/Virgin) is dropping, there's a chance for the group to be more than just a Motor City wheel in the underground machine. **»»Khary Kimani Turner**



FRANK GEHRY'S MODEL FOR THE EXPERIENCE MUSIC PROJECT.

## ROCK 'N' ROLL HALL OF FAME, PART DEUX

As recent federal rulings suggest, the folks at Microsoft think they can do things better than anyone else. So is it any surprise that Microsoft co-founder (and billionaire) Paul G. Allen has created a Northwest alternative to Cleveland's Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame? The Experience Music Project, his high-tech, architecturally daring rock 'n' roll museum (designed by Frank Gehry), opens in Seattle on June 23. While Allen's collection of Jimi Hendrix paraphernalia and '60s trinkets catalyzed the Project, the end result tilts toward punk, hip-hop and grunge. Among the many exhibits in the 140,000-square-foot space are Kurt Cobain's hand-written lyrics, Grandmaster Flash's turntables and videotaped oral histories from Henry Rollins, the Dust Brothers and Mudhoney's Mark Arm. The man whose "Touch Me I'm Sick" helped launch the grunge explosion predicts: "It's definitely gonna be cooler than going to a glass case and looking at Keith Moon's pants." For more info, check out [www.emplive.com](http://www.emplive.com) or call 206-770-2700. **»»Richard A. Martin**



## ?&A: PANTERA'S "DIMEBAG" DARRELL

The members of Pantera are a stubborn bunch of headbangers. They never wrote pop-friendly power-ballads, pierced their eyebrows or tried to hang with Puff Daddy. Over the course of two decades, four platinum studio records, a gold live record and two Grammy nominations, the Dallas quartet has stuck with southern-fried thrash. *Reinventing The Steel* (Asylum-Elektra), Pantera's first batch of new tunes in four years, will be road-tested all summer at Ozzfest. **»»Lorne Behrman**

**Pantera released its last new studio album, *Great Southern Trendkill*, in 1996. Did *Reinventing The Steel* take four years to write?**

Dude, Pantera is a fuckin' spontaneous machine. Since we played clubs back in the day, seven nights a week, three one-hour sets a night, every cover song under the sun—whatever came our way, we were up for it, whatever comes our way we're up for it. We just keep getting spontaneous offers to do tours. Shit, you don't turn down a reunited KISS or Black Sabbath. It took less than a year to write *Reinventing The Steel*.

**Besides touring, what did you do the remaining three years?**

During that time we put out the live album, *Official Live: 101 Proof*. We did a few songs for movie soundtracks (*Detroit Rock City* and *Heavy Metal 2000*). We met country and western legend David ("Take This Job And Shove It") Allan Coe and ended up jamming on some shit, a collaboration that goes everywhere from slow southern rock to hard rock to heavy metal. And if we can wrap that thing up, it will be out sometime shortly.

**Describe the evolution of *Reinventing The Steel*.**

With this one we just wanted a straight up ass-kicker, so we gave it the live-context thing. This time I was really, really loaded with riffs, over 200. I went upstairs to my 24-track studio and demoed a bunch of songs, and we chose from those. But whenever you get the four of us down in the studio there's a certain Pantera spontaneous magic that happens. We mean business: Get a couple shots of whiskey down us, get us in our mode, and here we go. Within 20, 30 minutes we usually have a song written.

**And what about The Clubhouse (the nudie bar owned by Dimebag and his brother, Pantera drummer Vinnie Paul)?**

Yeah, what about it?! It's the finest adult gentleman's bar in Dallas. All nude.

**This summer you're doing Ozzfest and touring behind your first record in four years, how do you think Pantera will be received in the current rap-metal climate?**

What we do is a pure form—it's not snippets, a little bit of metal, a little bit of this, shook up and then poured out. And for us and our fans, it never went away. I'm looking out the window right now, and I'm seeing kids of every age from 12, 13 years old all the way up to people that are wearing old *Cowboys From Hell* T-shirts who are ready to go. Everyplace we play is fuckin' sold out. And we sell a fuckin' million records every time—they're all platinum, brother. It's our connection with the fans and the live show. It's realistic. You can come see it and leave the fuckin' place living it. It's something to hold onto. And as a kid, what a strong thing to grow up with: a band that won't let you down.

HAIRSTYLE BY SCOTT FRAMPTON



## IN MY ROOM

BLIXA BARGELD of EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

Bored with the staid conventions of popular music, members of Berlin's *Einstürzende Neubauten* put down their guitars and picked up pneumatic drills, walkie-talkies and scrap metal in 1980. Perhaps bored discussing the just-released *Silence Is Sexy* (Mute), Neubauten singer Blixa Bargeld has been drinking wine for the last four hours. "It doesn't take a lot of work and knowledge to get pleasure out of," he quips of the record in a curdled German accent. Clad in a charcoal suit and a black shirt and tie, Blixa exudes a drunken, Dracula-like elegance. And this refined esthetic carries over to his apartment.

"Everything not moveable is white. Everything moveable is black. The floor is wooden. I don't have anything hanging on the walls. I feel disturbed by colors. I find it more mentally calming without them." **»»Lorne Behrman**

**TOOTHBRUSH** That's moveable, but it's very hard to get a black toothbrush. Most of them are see-through plastic...blue, red, green for different members of the family. Toothbrushes nowadays are composed in the same way as sport shoes or cars. A lot of moving vehicles remind me of my toothbrush. My toothbrush is the one with the indicator brushes that fade away after a while so to remind me to buy a new one.

**YORN UNDERWEAR** Of course I wear black underwear. See? [He pulls his underwear up over suit pants, pointing to the waistband.] 'Yorn.' Try and go to a shop and say you want something that hasn't got any fuckin' name written on it.

**2000 CDs** I stopped listening to music about 10 years ago, but it's more effort to go to the shop and sell them. Music to me, especially popular music, though it goes for other music as well, is a huge bowl of shit that is fired on a stove with a small flame so it keeps cooking. And I was just sick of this constant stirring of a soup of shit where there's nothing new—there's new spices, to overcome the taste of shit, but the basic substance of the soup is not changing. I would like to invent something like Agent Orange for music.

**1929 BAUHAUS SCISSORS** I cook a wonderful white mushroom risotto with fresh rosemary. I grow herbs outside my window and cut them with my 1929 Bauhaus scissors. But my specialty is black risotto. I cooked that on a television show. I come there in black, I cook the white risotto and it turns black, it's kind of an alchemist process. He [the host] knew this would happen, so he opens up the stove and says, 'Oh, and I prepared this salad,' and comes out with this orange and mint salad. Just because he knew, apart from that, the whole show would be black and white.

**FAVORITE MOVABLE OBJECT** That's a very interesting question. Maybe my bicycle, that's a movable object, but it's usually in the courtyard. It's a Dutch three-speed, a robust, urban bike. Indestructible. You can transport a fridge on the back of it.

## STAY TUNED

Even rock stars need a swift kick in their ratings.



It's that magic time of the year again, when anyone with even remote name recognition comes out of the woodwork for a TV guest appearance: when network programmers pull all manner of tricks in a desperate ploy to get you to watch their shows right before they decide how many *Dawson's Creek* knockoffs to order for next season. It's that time industry know-it-alls like to call "sweeps." Not to be outdone this season, progressive-thinking music execs have organized their own series of stunts, all to ensure that you get the most bang for your disposable-income buck and to keep you coming back for more. Look out for following events coming to a mall parking lot near you: **»»» Dave Itzkoff**

>Guided By Voices's Bob Pollard wows fans by constructing a 20-foot-tall "beeramid" from Pabst Blue Ribbon empties. Though the feat is nothing new for the GBV frontman, Pollard tops himself by leaping over the structure on a motorcycle.

>It's Gallagher vs. Gallagher vs. Gallagher when Oasis's Noel holds down his brother Liam while that zany '70s comic cracks open the snide singer's head like a watermelon.

>Rage Against The Machine guitarist and occasional *Star Trek* guest star Tom Morello returns the favor by recording a duet with Leonard Nimoy. The unlikely pair's effort, "Klingon In The Name Of," features the chorus, "F\*\*\* you, Kirk, I won't do what you tell me."

>Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan will apparently be killed off in a boating accident. Protests Kaplan, "This isn't how I wanted to leave the band," but a label spokesperson counters, "We're not definitively killing him. We're leaving the door open for him to return."

>Sitting in on the turntables with Basement Jaxx, it's pouty-lipped Golden Girl Estelle Getty!

>Beck and Moby refuse to partake in the escapades, but will continue their successful campaign of ironic angst.

>Ol' Dirty Bastard volunteers his services as a celebrity "phone friend" on the hit gameshow *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* Inexplicably, the Wu-Tang Clansman is only willing to answer questions on the subject of gardening, and then only in Welsh.

>Victoria Principal awakes to find Ricky Martin in the shower with Patrick Duffy, at which point we learn that the recording industry's previous year was only a dream.

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Canción Del Mariachi  
The Get Up Kids  
Close To Me  
The Clash  
Hateful  
Old 97's  
Crash On The Barrelhead  
Fear of Pop  
Kops  
Toots And The Maytals  
Sweet And Dandy  
Helmet  
Turned Out  
Das EFX  
They Want EFX  
Blindside  
As You Walk  
R.E.M.  
You Are The Everything  
The Velvet Underground  
Oh! Sweet Nuthin'

### Side 2

Nine Inch Nails  
A Warm Place  
Nine Inch Nails  
Eraser  
Space Raiders  
Song For Dot  
Pedro The Lion  
Slow And Steady Wins  
The Race  
Violent Femmes  
All I Want  
New Order  
Bizarre Love Triangle  
The Misfits  
Hybrid Moments  
DJ Shortee  
Sound Wars  
Bob Marley  
One Drop  
DJ Shadow  
The Number Song (Cut  
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Theme From Midnight  
Cowboy

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## WORKHORSE MOVEMENT

Having a label showcase with Roadrunner might make any band nervous. You want to play your best, look cool, be on time. "We got pulled over for speeding," remembers Workhorse Movement guitarist Freedom. "Everybody in back was smoking a fat joint. Smoke spilled out of the van when we rolled down the window. We thought we were fucked, but they let us go." That's not the first time the band's been so lucky. As Central Michigan University students, the bandmembers used themselves as guinea pigs for onstage "experiments" with LSD, prepared fresh in the school's laboratories by vocalist/chemistry major Myron. "There's something guiding this—we're not sure why—but everything always works out," figures Freedom. Since dropping out (of school) the six-year-old combo has taken its dueling-MC-driven, funk-reggae-rock rap-metal around the nation three times, sharing stages with everyone from Vanilla Ice to the U.S. Bombs and Sevendust. "We have just as many fans when we play biker bars in Northern Michigan with death metal bands as we do when we play rap concerts," adds Freedom. The band's mantra is "real beats for real freaks" and it carries over on its just-released Roadrunner debut *Sons Of Pioneers*. >>>Lorne Beltrman

★ ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

## SAVES THE DAY

For a bunch of spindly, babyfaced guys who play saccharine-sweet, melody-driven punk-pop, New Jersey's Saves The Day are surprisingly badass. Need proof? During a recent "bump in the road" (a.k.a. van accident) in Wisconsin, guitarist Dave Soloway broke his nose and lost some teeth, vocalist Chris Conley fractured his collarbone and the band's van was totaled. "We were back on the tour a week later," deadpans Conley. That same day, guitarist Ted Alexander broke his hand dancing during tourmate H2O's set. He was almost immediately back onstage, too. Such tough-as-nails attitude might not be expected from a quintet with lyrics like "I miss my mom," and "My heart is on the floor/ Why don't you step on it." But the guys are so dedicated to keeping things pure, they even turned down an offer to jump on a Blink 182 tour. Says Conley: "The circumstances weren't right, and we want to try and keep some integrity." Buoyed by the success of their addictive second full-length, *Through Being Cool* (Equal Vision), the band's just signed to powerhouse punk label Vagrant, and will be heading out for some Warped Tour dates this summer before ducking into the studio later this year. >>>Nicole Keip



## SPACE GIRL

For many of us *alter kockers*, performing classical music as a youth was tantamount to public excoriation. But for Space Girl, a classically trained pianist, acceptance of her craft came with trading the Steinway for the sampler. "I went to a hardcore rave in Brooklyn when I was a student at Julliard, and it just completely blew me away," she recalls. Space Girl attended the prestigious Moscow Conservatory before defecting to the States as a teenager and sailing through her Julliard entrance exam. "It was ridiculously easy," she says. As a nascent US citizen, she's taken the name Yana Demian ("from *Omen*, one of my favorite movies"), and regularly tours the States. Her hyperbolic live sets skim the rhythmic spectrum with paroxysms of 303-funneled energy bursts, flowery melodic refrains and toe-curling basslines. "I apply my knowledge of classical music, like sonatas, to my own tracks." That knowledge becomes sonic on her full-length debut, *Mission 0001* (Horabeat). "At first my parents didn't approve, of course—now they support me 100 percent." She laughs. "And, you know, it is so funny to watch my father dance to hard acid trance!" —**Madrienne Day**



PHOTO: JASON BLANEY STYLING: TANVA MALHOTRA

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KING SUNNY ADE



**OUT:**

June 6.

**FILE UNDER:**

Afro-pop royalty.

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

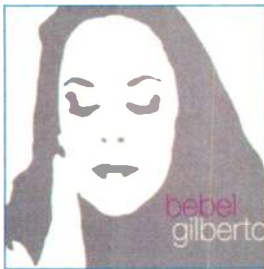
Fela Kuti, I. K. Dairo, Babatundé Olatunji.

# KING SUNNY ADE

**Seven Degrees North**

Mesa

Still the top act in Nigerian *juju* music, King Sunny Ade (and His African Beats) has never sounded better. The group's trademark sound—a dense, subtly textured assault of African percussion, guitars, keyboard and voices—has changed little over the years. Ade has more than 100 albums to his credit back home, but after garnering great success abroad in the '80s, he went a decade without releasing anything new in the US. What makes *Seven Degrees North* stand out is not really the songs or the band—both are strong as ever—but the vivid clarity of the recording itself; an important factor when you have some 20 musicians playing at once. During the all-percussion break on "Arlya," drums and bells chatter, clang and thump, while every voice takes its place in the rich circle of sound. The African Beats' signature pedal steel is overshadowed by Hammond organ on a number of tracks, but it emerges with force on "Ogidan O Ni Se Barber." The rhythm section kicks a little harder here than on past recordings, but this set's real achievement is making one of the most venerable African pop styles sound as fresh as the first time we heard it. >>>Banning Eyre



**OUT:**

April 25.

**FILE UNDER:**

Summer sambas and breezy bossa nova.

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

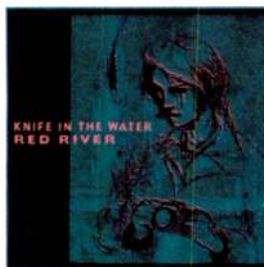
Caetano Veloso, Joao Gilberto, Arto Lindsay.

# BEBEL GILBERTO

**Tanto Tempo**

Ziriguiboom-Six Degrees

Bebel Gilberto's dad, Joao Gilberto, is more or less the godfather of Brazilian bossa nova, and his daughter follows in his footsteps on her *Tanto Tempo*, adding a contemporary pop imprint of her own. After a handful of releases abroad and guest stints with genre-hopping jetsetters like David Byrne, Arto Lindsay and Towa Tei, this golden-voiced singer makes her US debut with a magnificent collection of summer reveries. The Portuguese words melt from her tongue like wax down a candle, whether accompanied only by acoustic guitar ("Samba E Amor"), singing atop a flotilla of lush orchestration and piano ("August Day Song"), or riding gently pulsing electronic beats courtesy of Thievery Corporation ("Lonely"). A resident of London and New York, Bebel's as familiar with modern styles as she is with traditional bossa nova. Her soaring cadences in "Samba Da Bencao" suggest a warm night in Rio, while the song's skittering beats and scratchy-record production strike up retro dancefloor memories. A brief digression into jazzy funk is an unpleasant reminder that Bebel once stooped to rehashing "The Girl From Ipanema" with lite sax maestro Kenny G, but it's *Tanto Tempo's* only misstep. Otherwise, it's an album that sways with the past and swaggers into the future, particularly when Beastie Boys affiliate Mario Caldato adds postmodern polish to the Brazilian chestnut "So Nice (Summer Samba)." >>>Richard A. Martin



**OUT:**

June 8.

**FILE UNDER:**

Languid, pensive Texas tall tales.

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

Scud Mountain Boys, Richard Buckner, Handsome Family, Bedhead.

# KNIFE IN THE WATER

**Red River**

Overcoat

On its second album, Austin, Texas's Knife In The Water exhibits a flair for cinematic Americana that's nearly as artful as the Roman Polanski film the band is named after. Singer/guitarist Aaron Blount bitterly exalts in the existentialist peril inherent to traditional blues and country music, but moves his dark dramas forward into modern-day narratives rife with folks nursing ripped hearts and worried minds. Here, there, and everywhere, wounded pariahs seek revenge on their tormentors, real or imagined—and more often than not, they find it. Like Joe Pernice (Scud Mountain Boys, Pernice Brothers), Blount saves his tenderest voice for his most malevolent sentiments, thereby rendering the emotional, and in some cases, physical carnage all the more disturbing. Lyrics like "we'll show you just how it feels to be screwed by a friend" ("Party") and "I want to see the face of love before I blow that face away" ("Rene") are usually joined by taffy ribbons of pedal steel guitar and the languid pulse of a Hammond organ. As forlorn as KITW's dream-blasted desolation gets, however, solace occasionally shines on the horizon like a hard-earned hallucination. Even when Blount's convinced—as he is on "Sundown, Sundown"—that "there's no one in this world for me," he still manages to find beauty and comfort in that fading, fleeting light. >>>Jonathan Perry





## ANTHONY ROTHER

**The Age Of Simulation**  
Psi49net

**OUT:**  
June 1.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Cinematic electro.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Kraftwerk, I-F, Aux 88.

Most electro revivalists fit the profile of the bass-hungry mixmaster on a quest for Afrika Bambaata's perfect beat. Others, like producer Anthony Rother, are harder to pin down. Never content merely rehashing the past, Rother's previous work ranges from the dark futuristic statements of the *Sex With The Machines* EP to kinetic exercises like his by-the-numbers reworking of Kraftwerk's "Trans Europe Express." *The Age Of Simulation* is another unique work in which he emphasizes cinematic moods instead of focusing on rhythm. Lyrics are key this time around: "Bio Mechanics" finds him questioning man's reliance on machines against a tense synthetic backdrop of stiff robotic beats and sharp string swells. "Life is coded/ Feelings are generated/ Nature perfected," he intones, employing a Vocoder to accentuate the dispassionate, guttural texture of his thick German accent. Elsewhere, Rother overdoes it with excessive strings, undermining the serious mood and evoking an awkward sense of melodrama that makes *The Age Of Simulation* feel like an excellent idea stretched a bit too thin. But he's saved by lyrics that hit their mark with force. "In the machine world, money rules," goes one of the verses in "Machine World." "Man is a phase-out model/ Showing only virtual feelings." Evidently, Rother's future isn't dictated by the past. >>>Kuri Kondrak



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**The Unbound Project, Volume 1**  
Realized-Ground Control/Nu Gruv

**OUT:**  
May 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Conscious hip-hop collected.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Mike Ladd, Aceyalone, Blackalicious,  
Poor Righteous Teachers.

Current hip-hop looks like an iceberg. Ten percent—mainstream rap—is visible above the surface, where it floats safely with limited sounds, styles and subject matter. Meanwhile, 90 percent thrives beneath the surface—a dense mass encompassing everything from virtuosic old-school to abstract new flavors, usually delving into parts of life not involved with bringing pain, getting paid or getting laid. And just like the iceberg that sunk the Titanic, indie hip-hop compilation *The Unbound Project* proves it's the stuff hidden from sight that can fuck your shit up most. On its most basic level, *The Unbound Project* is a money-and-awareness-raising benefit for death row dissident/convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, so politics will largely determine who buys this disc. But on an artistic basis, these meditations on freedom—many of which don't mention Abu-Jamal—present a scenic view of hip-hop at its most accomplished: from Talib Kweli's complex discourse to Aceyalone's metaphors; from Blackalicious's rapid-fire wordplays to Jerry Quickley's wild-style poetics; and from Saul Williams's trip-hoppy spoken word to J-Rocc's revolutionary cut 'n' scratch. And the record's climax, "Mumia 911" (credited to the Unbound Allstars) unites mainstream stars (Rage's Zack De La Rocha, Chuck D, The Roots' Black Thought) with underground heroes for a massive posse cut. Here, with the top and bottom in solidarity, the synergy's enough to melt the polar caps entirely. >>>Roni Sang



## WEEN

**White Pepper**  
Elektra

**OUT:**  
May 2.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Anything-goes pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Beck, They Might Be Giants, Frank Zappa.

Pop artists with a sense of humor are rarely taken seriously as musicians, and adept musicians who genre-hop at will are often written off as technicians, not artists. But if ever there were a band that disproved both assumptions, it's Ween. Having dabbled in and mastered everything from lo-fi four-track home recordings to pop and rock genres as diverse as Gamble & Huff soul, Beatles-esque pop and even trad Nashville country (the dead-on *12 Golden Country Greats*), faux brothers Dean and Gene Ween are not easily pinned down. What's clear is that they have a wicked sense of humor and an affinity, talent and voracious appetite for an amazingly broad range of musical styles, all of which come to the fore on *White Pepper*. Most of the tracks here recall familiar sounds from the past. The tight-knit harmonies of Bread tumble out of "Stay Forever" and "Back To Basom"; the jazz-pop of "Pandy Fackler" sounds like a parody of Steely Dan outfitted with demented lyrics like "sucking dicks under the promenade"; and "Stroker Ace" and "The Globe" are both Sabbath slabs of molten metal. On one level, it's all a single elaborate inside joke perpetrated by a tireless pair of merry musical pranksters. But on another, equally valid level, *White Pepper* is nothing short of an intensely clever and artful display of singing, songwriting, recording, arranging and performance chops. >>>Rob O'Connor

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# INDIGO SPIRIT



a l l g a i t n u p

## Shannon Wright's one-woman band lights up the stage, one note at a time.

STORY: RONI SARIG PHOTO: FRANK MULLEN

**W**hen unassuming Atlanta pizza-joint waitress Shannon Wright hits the stage, she transforms into shannonwright, a self-contained indie-rock act capable of keeping the dreaded Lilith stereotype at bay with a single jolt of Wurlitzer dissonance. And if the unapologetically punk attitude of her guitar- and keyboard-based tunes (found on her spare, melodic new Quarterstick album, *Maps Of Tacit*), doesn't erase any visions of Jewel that might be dancing in onlookers' heads, Wright has some old-fashioned smoke and mirrors that will do the trick.

"I like the idea of playing acoustic instruments but still having a punk sensibility," explains Wright, 28. "The singer/songwriter title is something I don't feel part of, so I try any way to distract from it." So when sitting behind her electric piano, Wright plugs in her prized Key Note Visualizer, a vintage electronic piano diagram whose keys light up as Wright's fingers hit corresponding notes. Once used as a teaching tool, the Visualizer now works as Wright's hypnotic vintage light show.

"If someone comes up and plays guitar, that bores me," says Wright. "And even more, it bores me to do it." Audiences love the trusty light board. "If I don't have it for a tour, somebody always comes up and says, 'Where's the light thing?' It's very fragile, though; all my money goes into having it worked on. But I found a second one at some pawn shop. I played like I didn't know what it was and got it for \$30."

Ultimately, what keeps Wright from being mistaken for a Lilith fairy is her intuitive style and unusual combination of influences—the primal, Southern gothic of Jimmie Rodgers with the jagged patterns of post-punkers like Wire—distilled through the hands of a musician who, until age 20, had never played an instrument, and then within five years had released two albums as leader of indie cult band Crowdsell.

When Wright left the band in 1997, she intended to quit the biz entirely. But discovering she couldn't kick the songwriting habit, she made a tentative return with her quiet, pastoral solo debut *Flightsafety* (Quarterstick). Now with *Maps Of Tacit*, though recorded mostly at the same Alabama farmhouse as *Flightsafety*, the sound is much more brazen and emotional.

"The first record was really transitional, just a growing process," she says. "The new record represents me live. I really try to put myself out there with the audience, to be really honest and share what the songs are about. And I feel most comfortable playing that way, so I wanted to capture that."

*Maps Of Tacit's* most striking element is its lyrics, in which Wright uses adjectives as nouns and nouns as verbs ("Your mar hushes my frame/ You lid the envelope of monsoon") in a disorienting poetry that is all her own. "I try to use words on more of an emotional level," Wright explains about her dizzying lyrical Mad Libs. "I just like playing with words, using them in a different way, and seeing if others can catch the meaning."

NHM





still life  
with the mixmaster

BT paints intense images  
with bass and 303.



STORY: ADRIENNE DAY PHOTOS: JOE QUINTO

**L**istening to the warm, emotive vibe of *Movement In Still Life* (Nettwerk), you wouldn't expect its creator, BT (a.k.a. Brian Transeau), to be a chatty surfer dude with a shock of spiky blonde hair who likes to dress in bright colors and pepper his phrases with frequent Cartman impressions. But the music's mellow vibe, punctuated with throbbing basslines and the hum of a 303, only hints at its inspiration.

"The album reflects a period of intense chaos in my life, but also a whole period of intense liberation," says Transeau of his new work. "I was getting away from my managers, getting out of my record deal—and just trying to remain centered amidst all the insanity."

Breaking from the progressive house tradition, "Love On Haight Street" swaggers with dubbed-out hip-hop. Transeau lent his cords to the cause and enlisted M. Doughty (of Soul Coughing fame) and DJ Rap to provide finishing touches here and there.

It wasn't long ago that Transeau couldn't get a record deal, much less extricate himself from one. Originally from Rockville, Maryland, Transeau attended the Berklee College Of Music after demonstrating an early love for music, especially of the electronic variety. "I was like, 'get me immediately to whatever instruments are making those noises!'"

He moved out to L.A. after graduating and promptly failed to make waves in an industry that didn't understand a musical model outside of the guitar rock tradition.

"People were like, uh, and the drummer is...? You make disco records...?" So in '92 he moved back to Maryland and helped start up the Deep Dish label. Somehow, one of his early 12-inches, "Embracing The Future," made it overseas into trance guru Sasha's crate—who gave the artist his first real props with an encouraging phone call. "To be honest, I didn't know who he was back then," says Transeau, laughing. "But I was excited to have someone from another country expressing interest!"

With a little help from friends like Sasha, Transeau's career took off. He has produced two albums in the past five years—*Ima* and *ESCM*—and has remixed the likes of Madonna, Sarah McLachlan, Seal and Tori Amos (on the *Billboard* dance hit "Blue Skies"). He also scored the movie *Go!* and the upcoming flick *Under Suspicion* starring Gene Hackman and Morgan Freeman. ("I got to write for a 60-piece string orchestra!" he exclaims.) But such newfound *jouissance* required getting out of a contract on Perfecto, Paul Oakenfold's Warner-affiliated label. "Warner was like, you are the Progressive House Guy, so don't bring us any other music," he explains. "There was just a tremendous misunderstanding of who I was as an artist."

While *Movement* can be construed as the product of an artist exploring terrain that was previously verboten, it appears that Transeau is willing to change in other ways, too. "Some little kid came up to me in the airport and asked if I was the guy from Hanson," says Transeau of his formerly lengthy tresses, "I got a cut at the airport, right then and there. I shit you not!"

NMM

z i o n ' s





h o p e



FROM LEFT, ZION, AMP LIVE, KHALID.

## Oakland's **Zion I** is out to save the world by dropping science.

STORY: JON CARAMANICA PHOTOS: ERIK BUTLER

**"F**or black folks, it's rough right now. I'm not gonna get on the mic talking bullshit, because that's not the right thing to do," says MC Zion of Oakland, California's Zion I. "I used to teach elementary school, and these kids would be busting raps all day and still they couldn't read their books. There's a lot of empowerment taking place that folks aren't tapping into, and that's where we try to go with our music."

On "Trippin," from the group's debut album, *Mind Over Matter* (Nu Grov), Zion makes his mission clear, proclaiming, "I'm a rebel in a system that don't give a fuck/ Where CEOs feed you death to earn a buck/ A microcosm of a larger macro problem/ I sit with my pen and pad and imagine ways to solve them." Says producer Amp Live, "Music is so personal. Black people have always used music as a way of helping our spirituality, whether it's been the drums or chanting or singing. People use music as a way to soothe, and if hip-hop is a state of mind, then it'll just get wider to let us in."

Card-carrying members of the Bay Area independent hip-hop scene (where social awareness has always been a central tenet), Zion I—Zion, Amp Live and DJ K-Genius—also undermines traditional hip-hop music archetypes. Several tracks on *Mind Over Matter*, including "Elevation" and "Inner Light," channel drum 'n' bass, with "Metropolis" the most potent, fusing breakbeat science with a Mos Def sample.

**"I used to teach elementary school, and these kids would be busting raps all day and still they couldn't read their books."**

Yet redefining the musical playing field can sometimes be tough, especially at the end of a long week slogging away at the day job: Zion edits a newsletter for a non-profit group, Amp Live serves as a substitute teacher and DJ K-Genius works as an administrator at Clorox. All hope for the day when music becomes more than just the hobby that keeps their minds nimble and their fingers busy. "I love what I do," Zion insists, "but if this takes off, that's where I want to be. No question."

That the group titled its first album *Mind Over Matter* is no insignificant thing; together for five years, the members of Zion I are ace students in the school of patience. Victims of industry heartbreak in previous groups—Zion and Amp in the ill-fated Tommy Boy group Metu4 and K-Genius with lost Priority signees Socialistics—they've come to appreciate being independent again, naturally. "I give thanks for that experience," Zion confesses, "It was so humbling. When we got signed, my head got a little big. When we got dropped, though, my balloon got popped." K-Genius echoes Zion's sentiments: "Making it at 18, I was already kind of wild, not into anything too bad, but you lose perspective if you get large at that age. Now the music is totally not for me, it's for the people who need it."

NMM



A L L T H E R I G  
G R O O V E S



## Armand Van Helden doesn't set out to write chart topping, money making dance tracks. He just does.

STORY: KURT B. REIGHLEY PHOTO: DENNIS KLEIMAN

**E**ven if you've only been within spitting distance of a dance floor once in the past seven years, odds are good you've heard an Armand Van Helden track. Perhaps it was his 1994 techno-flavored breakthrough, the relentless "Witch Doktor," or last year's swirling garage gem "Flowerz." Maybe you inadvertently turned a twirl to one of his 50-plus remixes, often in service of acts so hopelessly uncool (Ace Of Base, The Rolling Stones, Puff Daddy) even your Mom's heard them. The New York denizen has topped England's pop charts twice, first with an epic deconstruction of Tori Amos's "Professional Widow" (1996), then again in 1999 with his own "U Don't Know Me."

In an arena where many DJs and producers hang their reputation on being identified with a specific sound, Van Helden brazenly makes diversity his *raison d'être*.

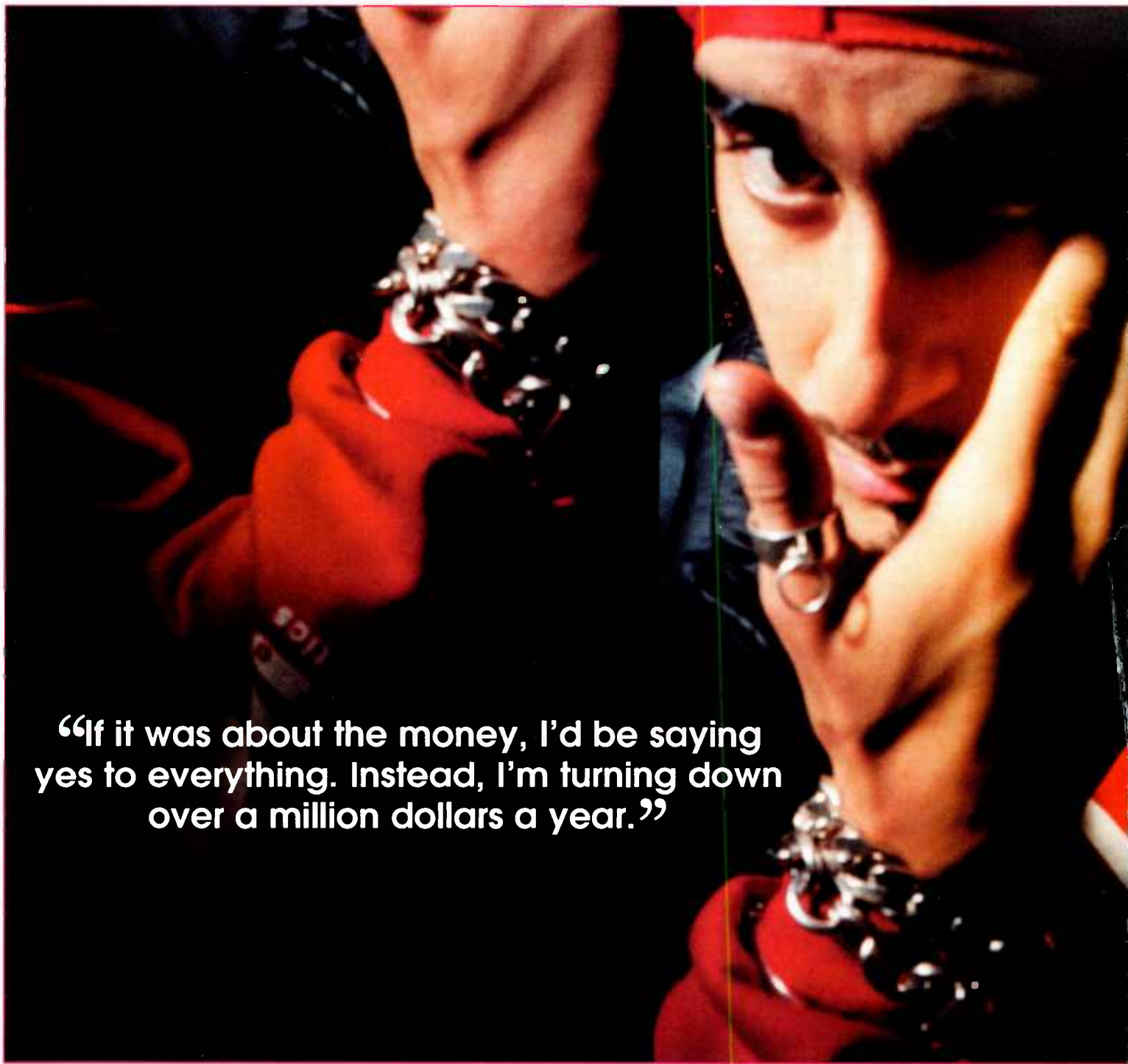
"I'm frustrated with dance music as a whole," he says. "And I've been that way since '93." Everybody—including him, he says—enjoys a 126 bpm house track with a soulful diva wailing away...sometimes. "But a whole night of that, just hours on end where everything sounds the same, has nothing to do with the human experience," he insists. "There are other things you can do with dance music."

His third full-length, *Killing Puritans* (Armed), puts his mixmaster mettle to the test. Rapper Common flows over the disco-funk of "Full Moon," while on "Watch Your Back," he grabs Basement Jaxx's kitchen-sink production style by the scruff of the neck and shakes it into submission with a little help from Herbie Hancock and N'Dea Davenport. If you can imagine Björk fronting the Scorpions, you're halfway to wrapping your head around the fiendish "Little Black Spiders."

*Killing Puritans'* first single, "Koochy," jacks a sample from Gary Numan's "Cars" up to monster truck proportions, with a fat slab of Detroit booty bass for high-octane fuel. On top, Van Helden lays down a rap about, well, female ejaculation. "I was just being comical when I made that," explains Van Helden, sitting in his spartan Flatiron District loft. "I enjoy comedy, and there's not nearly enough in house music. It's a little too serious and intelligent."

The ambitious scope of Van Helden's output reflects his own tastes. One minute he's praising the latest Buffalo Bunch track (the only new cut he took home from this year's Winter Music Conference), the next, he's waxing rhapsodic over "The Fez" from Steely Dan's 1976 LP *The Royal Scam*. "I like days where I don't do anything but go through old records," he enthuses. "I get emotional [over] certain records. I listen to 'em and get this [feeling] like, 'There's nothing on Earth I can do that's going to match these.'"

Since moving to New York in the early '90s, the former Boston B-boy has issued records under nearly 20 aliases (The Buddha Baboons, The Mole People, Pirates Of The Caribbean). Despite his sprawling discography, Van Helden swears he's not a workaholic. "I'm definitely not busting my ass to do everything. Living is more important to me. I never really stress." He enjoyed global success in 1999, yet characterizes it as his most unproductive year to date. "I just said 'No' all day." Instead, he hung out with



**“If it was about the money, I’d be saying yes to everything. Instead, I’m turning down over a million dollars a year.”**

family, and traveled with his crew, just in case there was any truth to the doomsday millennium scenarios.

“Let’s say that today I’m working,” he begins, illustrating his modus operandi. “Some friends come over. So we have a couple beers, listen to some old records—hey, that’s what happens. I don’t say, ‘Oh, y’all gotta get out of here—I’ve got to go back to work.’” His approach to collaboration in the studio is just as laid back; many of his recent co-stars, like Chicago’s DJ Sneak and Tekitha from Wu-Tang, are likely to be chilling at Chez Van Helden occasionally anyway. “I don’t have the fire to go out and hustle [collaborators]. Instead, we meet and hang out, and next thing you know, we’re doing a song. That’s how I work.

“I barely applied effort on this album,” Van Helden opines frankly. “If you listen, you can tell.” Regardless, *Killing Puritans*—like the best of Green Velvet or Todd Terry—strikes a resounding blow

against accepted conventions. “I’ve been making house music for so long, it’s frustrating for me to bring up a kick, a hat and a clap. This album was making a statement that I’m not looking for perfection. House music is too pretty. I wanted to bring back some grit, make it sound like fried chicken: dirty and greasy.”

Van Helden is also known to take the gloves off when it comes to money matters. “I’m not in it for recognition,” he states. “I’m not in it for money. My passion is simply going into the studio and making beats. That’s my happiness. Everything else that comes along with that is secondary.”

He admits that his manager plays hardball, but only because they’ve been fleeced in the past. “But if it was about the money, I’d be saying yes to everything,” he adds. “Instead, I’m turning down over a million dollars a year.”

Van Helden’s also walked away from major labels, opting to



release *Killing Puritans* and last year's *2 Future 4 U* via his own Armed Records in America. Although his tenure on Ruffhouse-Columbia a couple years ago was remarkably short-lived, the DJ/producer claims the Sony imprint dealt surprisingly well with his hip-hop "science project," *Enter The Meatmarket*.

"The only drama I had with [Ruffhouse-Columbia] was near the end. We basically told them, 'For what we do, we're wasting your time.' So we asked them to drop us." At first the label hesitated, and Van Helden feared he'd be locked into a situation where he couldn't record or release new material. Eventually, he was let go.

Overseas, however, Van Helden's still signed to the London Records subsidiary frr. Given the UK triumph of "U Don't Know Me" and "Flowerz" (a top 20 hit), the label's reluctance to lose him is understandable. Plus, his frugal nature actually works in their favor. "We didn't want them to do ads. They barely did any promotion. We

didn't let them spend any money, so they just made money. ["U Don't Know Me"] just sold itself," he says. Even when it came time to shoot a video clip, he kept costs in check, well aware that 50 percent of the budget was contractually obligated to come out of his own earnings. "That's why that video is so cheap. If I'm paying half, it's going to be a \$10,000 video. If you want to make it slick, you can eat the money."

A radio DJ muses on one of the new album's between-song snippets: "Armand Van Helden...that's a money name." His moniker may sound like "a cool two million," but Armand insists his interest in the bottom line has been overrated. He just has no intention of winding up another bankruptcy case on *Behind The Music*. "If you don't take the money, somebody else will. And you don't know how long you're going to last, so you better make sure that you find a way to invest whatever money you earn, so that when I'm old and have gray hair, I can still put my kids through college." **NMM**



# T H E S W E E T

## **Pearl Jam** is less commercially viable, and

It's not easy being Pearl Jam. Since the band emerged from the shadow cast by Nirvana in '91, there have been times when Eddie Vedder and his adopted Seattle family apparently couldn't help but make things hard on themselves, to appear dysfunctional even, like miscreants competing for a prime spot on the Springer show. Following the breakthrough of *Ten* (Epic), the band seemed stricken with a textbook case of Multi platinum Stress Disorder (MpSD), the common affliction affecting so many underground artists guilty about success. And the bandmembers had plenty of reason to bring on a nasty case: Guitarist Stone Gossard and bassist Jeff Ament built the band out of the wreckage of Mother Love Bone left by singer Andrew Wood's fatal overdose; Vedder was still painstakingly unpacking all kinds of baggage from a troubled youth imported from California; and it didn't help any when Saint Cobain decreed publicly that Pearl Jam were the

false prophets of grunge. A little self-flagellation was in the cards.

Pearl Jam isn't the first band to be angst-stricken as a byproduct of commercial success, to resist giving up its abstract ideals to the practical realities of the music business or, worse yet, turning them into yet another selling point. But what's remarkable is that Pearl Jam managed to survive those rocky early years to become the last of the original Seattle titans still standing. If Cobain was indeed crushed by the weight of a world where the forces of art and business often clash, then Pearl Jam is the band that proved it was possible not only to reconcile the tensions between creativity and commerce, but to actually scale back one's success to a more comfortable level while focusing more on simply making music and less on cranky activism.

In retrospect, it looks easy: stop making videos and granting interview requests; start a feud with the nation's largest ticketing



# S M E L L o f (moderate) s u c c e s s



## happier than ever. STORY: MATT ASHARE

agency that gets so blown out of proportion that it overshadows your music and makes touring next to impossible; cancel some of the tour dates that you are able to book and then, as the climactic anti-climax, have your singer contract food poisoning during a free show in Golden Gate Park. Ridiculous, right? But what if it worked? What if five or six albums into your career, the band's sounding better than ever, more confident, comfortable and cohesive than before? That would be pretty cool, right?

"I think that has everything to do, even thematically, with what happened with this record and even the last record, *Yield*," says Ament, referring to the fact that by the time Pearl Jam went into the studio to begin work on 1998's *Yield* the band had significantly reduced the size of its record-buying audience to, oh, a none-too-shabby couple of million. "I mean, I think if Ed's not on the cover of every magazine and

on MTV every 30 minutes, it makes his life a lot easier. I'm sure that that created a lot of resentment when it was happening, resentments that we just didn't know how to communicate to each other. So it would be like, you know, 'Ed's not talking to me right now, does he hate me?' And it gets to the point where people come up to you in a public situation and have a really intense opinion about you or someone in your band, and you end up having to defend yourself and your band when you're just trying to have dinner with some friends. So we did have a lot of conversations about scaling things back, and once we got some perspective I think we realized that all we're doing is making music. It's music that makes me feel good and it puts us in this great space and maybe it's even therapeutic. But, you know, in the grand scheme of things, it's really not that important. And I think when you come to terms with that, it's huge. It's like that's when you actually do open up



FROM LEFT, EDDIE VEDDER, JEFF AMENT, MATT CAMERON, MIKE MCCREADY, STONE GOSSARD.

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and relax and enjoy yourselves."

And that's the sense you get from the new *Binaural*, an album named for a special kind of microphone that the disc's producer, Tchad Blake, has championed. This in itself hints at the fact that five members of Pearl Jam have focused inward on their music—right down to the recording equipment they're using—instead of outward on problems (like, say, *Ticketmaster*) that aren't theirs to solve.

The disc, the first PJ recording to feature former Soundgarden drummer (and *Yield* tour sideman) Matt Cameron, opens with a trio of souped-up garage-rocking tunes that are as raw and muscular as anything the band's ever committed to tape (think "State Of Love And Trust" from the *Singles* soundtrack). And yet, in contrast to some of the punkier tracks on *Vitalogy* and *No Code*, which had a tendency to sound a lot like a band trying too hard to reclaim some alternative cred, there's nothing stilted or forced about "Breakerfall" or "God's Dice." Vedder also has a number of opportunities to exorcise some of his moody blues, in mid-tempo rockers like "Light Years," folkier pop numbers like "Thin Air" and psychedelic guitar workouts like "Nothing As It Seems." And the mix is rounded out by the stripped down, ukelele-based tune "Soon Forget," which features Vedder's somewhat humorous use of the word "Benjamins," as in "He's lying dead, clutching Benjamins/ Never put the money down."

"I'm pretty happy at this point," a shy Vedder admits, "because I feel like in this last record, every song absolutely feels like...I don't know if this makes sense, but every song feels like me. I think in the past, especially if it was like a third-person song, my voice would kind of mimic the emotion, or something like that. It was more mimicry involved on the third record or the second record. It was like, 'this is an angry song so I'm going to use the angry voice.' And that's changed for me. I haven't really addressed this before, but I think it's almost because there are a lot of singers I've noticed who are sounding like they're mimicking me mimicking. I hear a lot of that or people tell me about it. You know, they'll say 'I heard this song and I thought it was you, then the song sucked so I knew it wasn't you.' So that became a little strange for me, especially when we'd play old songs live and I felt like, 'oh man, this sounds like some other voice.' So I'm feeling pretty good about my singing. I think everyone's got their own voice, it's just a matter of going through the process to find out what that voice is. And I'll just be honest





and say that I'm pretty psyched because I think that I did that."

Ultimately, though, Pearl Jam's biggest recent gains have been internal ones. They're the elements that you don't necessarily hear on a recording, but without them you'd have to wonder how many more recordings there would be. But you can see it in the way Vedder, Gossard and Ament interact. "We communicate much better with each other now," Gossard explains. "We bring up issues instead of skulking away and leaving and not showing up for two days. Our fights are shorter..."

"...And filled with laughter and humor," Vedder interjects. "The tensions don't build up like they used to, which I think is the key in any relationship. I think we're all just a lot more..."

"...Old," Gossard jokes.

"Well, we're just more settled," Vedder continues. "You learn to pick your battles, and not to over-react before you know what the situation is. I remember there was one song we were working on—one that I wrote—and I was in the basement typing the lyrics and I had asked Jeff to just play really straight, just really straight, just kind of really thump your way through and keep it straight because that's what the bass needs to do. So I went down to the basement to type something and I could hear the bass and it was just crazy, like eight notes in two bars..."

"...The lyrics got more and more angry as he was writing them," Gossard adds.

"I was thinking 'what the fuck is he doing? Goddamn it, if I didn't look him in the eye and ask him to keep it simple,'" Vedder goes on, "I was just pissed and it was building up and building up, and I walked upstairs and they're playing back the track, and it was just this one little tag, this one little tag that he kept replaying. And I'm just so glad that I didn't run up there going, 'What the fuck?!' because the part was beautiful, you know, it was great."

When Ament hears that story later on, he laughs, claiming not to know which song Vedder's talking about. And then he stops to reflect: "So many people get into bands and get taken on that ride where you have to make videos, and have to do all this press, and you're going all over the world. Your personal life turns to shit, you end up having all these resentments toward each other, and then you break up." Pearl Jam opted for the road less traveled.

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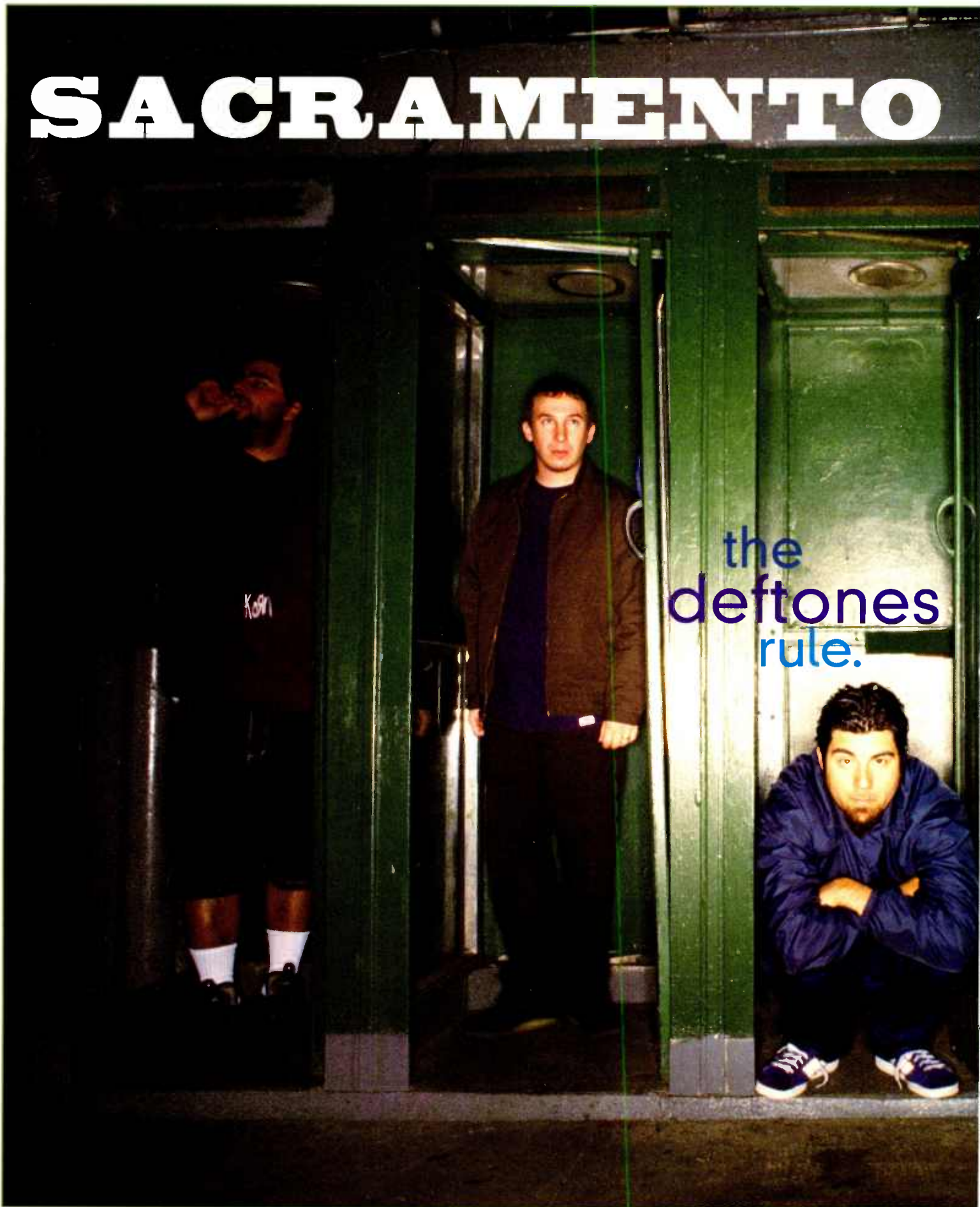
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# KINGS

TELEPHONE



**Who cares if they're the next big thing? Not them.**

STORY: JAMES ROTONDI  
PHOTO: CHARLIE LANGELLA

**F**rank Delgado is fucked up, and he just wants to sleep. By all accounts, there should be more than enough intoxicants in his system to let him pass out gracefully, even though he's alone in the spooky Hollywood Hills mansion—nicknamed “The Devil”—that he and the other four members of the Deftones are calling home while they record their new album, *White Pony*. But then he hears what sounds like screaming: bloodcurdling, muffled wails of terror that spring the bone-chilled DJ out of his bed and lurch him into the foyer just as guitarist Stephen Carpenter pulls into the Doheny Street driveway.

Carpenter's not buying it, but it's not the first ghost story he's heard. Singer Chino Moreno reported a moving phantom on the ceiling of his windowless room, drummer Abe Cunningham claims to have seen a white-robed apparition in the backyard and everyone's mentioned the “strange presence” in the first-floor bedroom. And then there's the house's other nocturnal visitors: Los Angeles party animals who

FROM LEFT, STEPHEN CARPENTER, ABE CUNNINGHAM, CHINO MORENO, FRANK DELGADO, CHI CHENG.

**“A lot of the writing was based around straight-up arguments.”**



routinely walk into the place uninvited at 3 a.m. expecting to “kick it,” as they did when the same house was rented by Orgy and Korn. It’s hardly an atmosphere conducive to work, and it’s taking its toll on the recording process, setting the schedule back and setting the band on edge.

Back in their hometown of Sacramento, California, a few months later, the bandmembers are downing some cold Dos Equis at their favorite Mexican joint, Caballo Blanco (which coincidentally translates to “white horse”), a homey restaurant lined with bullfighting photos and leatherette booths that’s just a stone’s throw from the working class neighborhood where Moreno and Carpenter grew up. It’s easy to laugh about the Devil house now. Band and label seem uniformly thrilled with the new record, and maybe Carpenter’s right when he declares “those guys were just trippin’” about his bandmates’ fears.

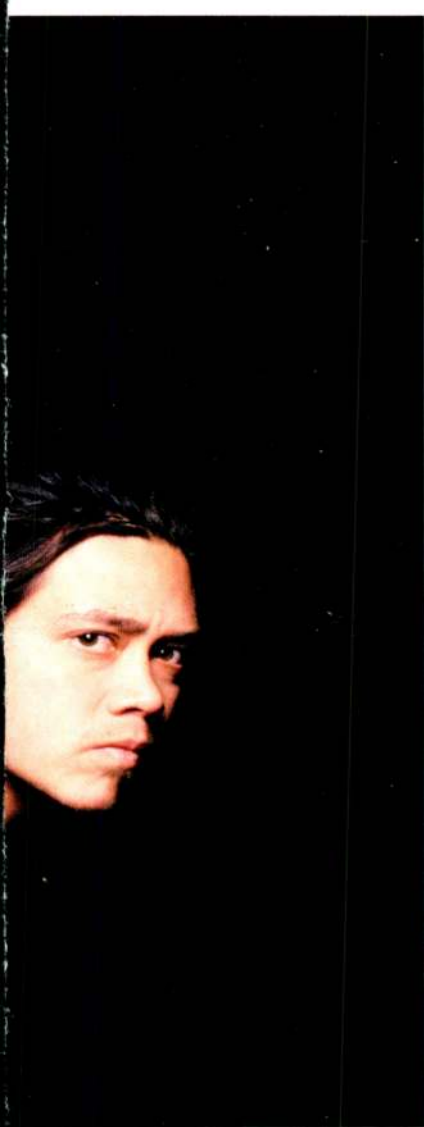
Since being signed by Maverick in 1994, The Deftones, without benefit of a hit single or a heavy-rotation video, have slowly and surely built a huge, demonstrably loyal fanbase—*Adrenaline* (1995) and *Around The Fur* (1997) both went gold—mostly through the heavy touring the band’s done on bills with everyone from Bad Brains to Black Sabbath. All of which makes the “next big thing” hype surrounding their new record a bit out of character, and their slow production pace—it’s been three years since *Around The Fur*—a bit more understandable.

“The whole time we were doing the record was pretty insane,” says Moreno, a relaxed, slightly aloof character who speaks with a liberal smattering of “like” and “n’ shit.” “And we realized after we were done that it had taken us a while. But we never felt like we had to hurry to get the album out there, even though there were definitely people saying, ‘You’ve got to get it out there! The radio’s playing heavy

shit now—you’re going to miss the wave! Fuck that shit! The radio wasn’t playing us anyway.”

It’s the Deftones boys’ defiance and increasing sense of independence that makes the idea of suddenly breaking it big seem so abstract and even suspect to them. And it partly explains why *White Pony* chooses to expand on the band’s idiosyncrasies rather than toning them down. “Because we haven’t had very much airplay, haven’t taken certain tours, and haven’t had so much MTV,” says Delgado, a mellow East L.A. native who joined the band a couple of years ago while DJing in a Sacto hip-hop club, “some people in the biz might have thought this was our last chance commercially—time to do what you’ve got to do and get it over with. But we don’t look at it like that at all. We feel all that shit has put us in the position to do whatever the fuck we want.”

Accordingly, *White Pony* is not exactly a departure from the moody groove-grunge the band waxed on *Adrenaline* and *Around The Fur*, but it’s deeper, wider and weirder: Moreno’s angsty Reznor/Robert Smith side is up, as is Delgado’s deft turntable tone-painting. The stylistic bridge is the opening cut, “Feiticeira” named after an erotic Brazilian game show in which contestants vie for the honor of drinking milk out of the foxy hostess’s bellybutton. Opening with a motoric guitar riff in 6/8, kicked in with shotgun snare blasts, the song hits its head-banging apex on the heels of a breakdown in which Moreno sets up a sinister scenario typical of his sense of drama: “And just before I got to the back of the car, she made me touch the machine, you murderer! Fuck it!” “Digital Bath” finds Moreno adopting his more seductive voice—like *Siamese Dream*-era Billy Corgan with a deeper chest cavity—over cleaner guitars and warbling turntable effects.



Moreno's vocals are fed through distortion boxes and filters on "Elite," a pummeling Helmet-style riff-riot with the memorable one-liner, "You're into depression because it matches your eyes." Two of the later cuts, "Passenger" (featuring a duet with Tool's Maynard James Keenan) and "Pink Maggot," clock in at more than six minutes, and are about as epic and high drama as anything the members of the Deftones have ever attempted. "Honestly, I was worried that maybe we got a little too self-indulgent on some parts of the record," muses Moreno, scratching his head. "I was thinking, 'Man, the label's not going to get this. They're going to be bummed that we didn't write these three-minute songs.' But they were crazy about it, and it seems like everybody is really on the same page."

The same can't be said of the harried production process, particularly the often contentious—and in L.A., haunted—writing period. "A lot of the writing was based around straight-up arguments," admits Carpenter, a cool, heavy set cheeba connoisseur and BMX bike enthusiast who built a half-pipe ramp in the band's rehearsal space. "We're all so different, and we pull in a lot of different directions." When it became evident that many of the new

songs were not in the same driving metal vein as much of their previous work, Carpenter weighed in with several heavier contributions, like the high-impact "Korea," probably the album's most hardcore moment. "It was just our perception that the album needed balancing," recalls Delgado. "We didn't realize what the big picture looked like until we started getting rough mixes—actually, it was all there from the beginning."

Their creative tension hinges on Carpenter's passion for Anthrax, Meshuggah and Faith No More, Moreno's taste for Weezer, Depeche Mode and The Cure, Cheng's reggae and roots music jones, Cunningham's Stewart Copeland connection and Delgado's 6,000-strong

**“It's nice to have people blowing smoke up our butts, but it doesn't mean a whole lot.”**

vinyl archives. Each element is melded into tracks like "Teenager," a droning love song anchored around a Brazilian-style nylon-string guitar sample and a drum loop that wouldn't sound out of place on a Massive Attack album. Or "Knife Party," a slanted, enchanted hybrid of Smashing Pumpkins, Jeff Buckley and the band's universal influence, Bad Brains, which shows up particularly in Cunningham's crisp snare drum attack and Moreno's throaty, soaring melodies.

"Oh yeah," laughs Moreno, "There's a melody on 'Knife Party' that's straight off a Bad Brains song. I thought, 'Damn, I came up with this cool melody,' and then I realized, 'That's straight up HR right there.' But that's exciting to me. That's one of the motherfuckers to be influenced by."

Going against the grain of most hip-hop-intensive metal, Moreno sings longer notes and phrases over Carpenter's shorter riff cycles, rather than adopting the percussive rap approach favored by singers like Fred Durst and Jonathan Davis. On the surging "Street Carp," Moreno says he "knew people would expect that almost-rapping style, so I chose to think of that driving riff as more of a wave that I would just ride on top of. I still did the more rhythmic stuff underneath—'Get it/ Write it down,' and," he shrugs, "that's the straight Mike Patton shit right there—I love the way he does that shit."

Producer Terry Date (Soundgarden, Pantera) captured Moreno's every twitch with a voyeuristic close-miked sound that mirrors all of the singer's breathy, guttural emanations. And there was plenty of angst to capture. In addition to playing guitar on several cuts, Moreno came up with a good 80 percent of the album's lyrics and melodies while in the studio, wearing a pair of headphones and facing the mike—and that's after most of the instrumental tracks were already in the can. "All the pressure was on me at that point," he says. "All I could think was that there were 15 songs ahead of me that still needed vocals and lyrics, and there were a couple times when I got stressed the hell out."

Just exactly what Moreno is singing about is another question. While "Teenager" is a relatively direct love song, try unraveling lyrics like, "Hear me spit on you wither I/ Remold into gold and bury I from sun" (*Adrenaline's* "Bored") or "I meant to come back to put out bliss/ But the style is crumbling covered canned" (*Around The Fur's* "Lotion"). It hardly seems to matter most of time: The meaning is in the way you feel hearing them, and after all, it's the singer, not the song, right? Still, as compelling as Moreno's lyrics can be on a visceral level, and as righteous with one-liners as he can be—"My knife is sharp and cruel/ Come sit inside my bones"—in some ways, he's still searching for his pulpit. "I'm still not able to just come out and say what I want to say," Moreno obliges, adding, "Well, there's really nothing I want to say. I always beat around the bush with any topic, just because that's the way I like to write. I don't like approaching anything from a straightforward standpoint."

While nobody expects Elvis Costello-style verses from The Deftones, plenty of newbies who pick up *White Pony* will be expecting another Korn or Limp Bizkit, but won't find the same explicit hip-hop homage. If there's anything hip-hop about the Deftones, it's purely their cultural assimilation: the way they wear their Pumas, Adidas and Black Flies, the way they say "'n' shit" and "tight!" and the way they casually carry off being a multi-cultural rock outfit without any hand-wringing about identity issues. That's largely a generational influence, and it's built into the California kid culture of the late '80s that they grew up in. But musically, their nods to hip-hop are about as subliminal as you can get—sure, the grooves are phat enough to support an MC, and they do have a DJ who lines up his table in battle position. But these guys don't need to prove they're down—at least not by fronting as rappers or having their DJ do a scratch breakdown in every tune.

"We run from that shit," says Moreno. "When we started using the turntables, it was really for another source of inspiration. The idea was for Frank to weave in and out of the music the way a singer would. A lot

of people don't even notice the tables as tables unless you point it out, and that's a good thing. It says DJ on paper, but it isn't like we have a DJ so we can be perceived as hip-hop guys. We don't want anything to sound like contrived hip-hop. Actually, the one thing on the record that irritates me is a little vocal thing on 'Korea,' in the breakdown. It's just this little breathy thing, but I know people are going to think it's a scratch." Staying away from the scratcher's lexicon was a conscious decision at the outset, but Delgado, whose records range from ambient to soul to modern classical, says, at this point, it's second nature. "It's just more about being a part of the band. I look at my turntable as if I were operating a real primitive sampler."

The primitive Deftones, though, were anything but cliché-free. The band first came together in 1988. Moreno and Cunningham met up in junior high while skateboarding and hanging out after classes in the amphitheater at the California Middle School. Moreno had already taken up drums himself—a kit he got by trading up from a pair of leopard-print Creepers—and he'd started jamming in Carpenter's garage where he kept his drums.

After hearing Cunningham play drums after school one day, Moreno decided to bring him over to Carpenter's garage. "Steph was sitting on his porch playing guitar with a wireless unit—total rocker!" chuckles Moreno, "and he had his amps in the garage with the door shut, so it was kind of muffled. He's out on the porch going, 'gu-gunk gu-gunk.'" Cunningham, a true music junkie who grew up watching his father and uncle play the blues, remembers Carpenter playing it almost too cool. "He said, 'The drums are in the garage.' So I thought we'd go warm up and jam, and he stays on the porch! What a fuckin' prick! I was like, 'Who is *this* motherfucker!" After Cunningham started drumming—what Moreno describes as "some Death Angel shit or something"—Carpenter excitedly whirled around and flew open the garage door, bellowing "Whassup! Damn! Let's make a band!"

It wasn't until a few months later that Moreno was asked to come back and play—this time as a singer, a role with which he had little experience. "Yeah, but Chino always had a Walkman on him," remembers Cunningham, "in class, in the hallways, and he was always singing to Metallica, Danzig, The Cure, so we knew he had it in him." The new group's first proper practice session was at a beat-up \$5-an-hour rehearsal studio called Mad Eric's. Chino's father was nonplussed about his son joining a band, but he gave him a lift to the studio anyway. "Right away Stephen was like, 'Alright, here's the songs we're going to play; here are the titles and what they're about, and here are the lyrics!'" Moreno recalls. "I didn't give a fuck—motherfuckers wanted me to be in a band! And Steph—that motherfucker's hilarious, dude—that shit was so hurting."

Inspired by the Bay Area funk-metal of Faith No More, Mr. Bungle and Fungo Mungo, early Carpenter-penned Deftones gems included "Butt Booty Naked," "The Vegetable Song," "Dope"—"as in the word, not the drugs"—and "Cold," fashioned from a modified Whitesnake riff and featuring Moreno doing his best impersonation of Glenn Danzig impersonating Jim Morrison. It wasn't until a dreadlocked kid named Chi Cheng joined the band on bass that the fledgling group began writing together in earnest. "I think the one thing we've kept from those days is the straight-up groove, the head-nod factor," says Moreno, "and that's really where the hip-hop thing comes in." Soon the newly christened Deftones were sharing their music with the world—or at least a neighborhood barbecue.

"Growing up in Sacto, you don't really expect to get signed or anything ridiculous like that," says bassist Cheng, an earnest poetry writer, Soto Buddhist and father of one. "There isn't that thing of trying to get a demo tape to your friend's cousin who's an A&R guy. You just play, try to score free beer and do little van tours. To a certain degree, we've been blessed by being from Sacramento and not a big city. It comes across musically; we've spent a lot of time in small rooms banging out ideas and figuring out where we're going." That time proved well spent in 1994, when the band was flown to L.A. for a private showcase by an upstart label, Maverick Records, whose lean roster included Candlebox and Alanis Morissette. "They stopped us after three songs," remembers Carpenter. "'That's all we need to hear.' I was kinda nervous at first—like, shit, maybe they don't want to hear no more 'cause we suck."

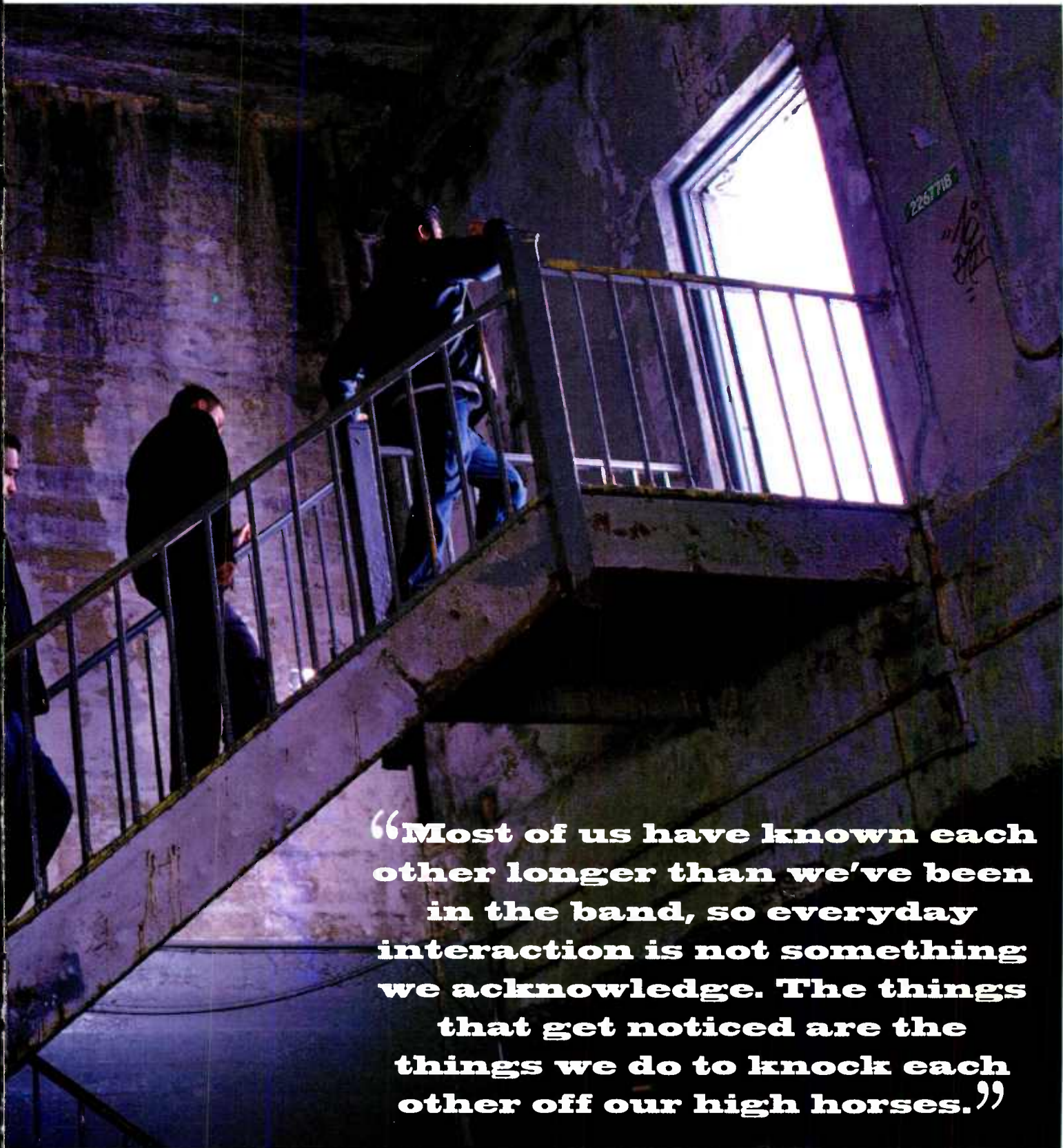
Six years and three albums later, a lot has changed. Four of the Deftones are married with kids, they've sold close to 1.2 million records, been third-billed on Ozzfest and are widely touted as the next big thing. But in their dealings with each other, you can still sense the same careful balance of camaraderie and competition you'd see at any neighborhood skatepark. "We're more like a family than a band," says Carpenter, who recently moved to L.A.—the only Deftone not still living in Sacramento. "Most of us have known each other longer than we've

been in the band, so everyday interaction is not something we acknowledge. The things that get noticed are the things we do to knock each other off our high horses." If *White Pony* proves to be the prize stallion the biz is betting on, there'll be even more high horses to heel, which makes the band's humble beginnings and built-in checks and balances even more important.



"It's nice to have people blowing smoke up our butts," says Cheng, "but it doesn't mean a whole lot. I'm sure we'll just keep doing what we've been doing for the past 11 years." With a few extra perks: Upon arriving in New York for a couple days of press recently, the band was greeted at the airport by a Hummer limousine, whisked into K-Rock (WXRK) for an on-air interview, and generally treated like

the bona fide millennium rock stars they're quickly becoming. Cheng's antidote to the hype is even older than his friendship with the other Deftones or the ritual of cold beers at Caballo Blanco: good old fashioned meditation. "Buddhism wants you to kill ego," he says, still incredulous about the limo, "and it does seem that the bigger we get, the better the challenge—the more I get to kill." **NMM**



**“Most of us have known each other longer than we’ve been in the band, so everyday interaction is not something we acknowledge. The things that get noticed are the things we do to knock each other off our high horses.”**



**AMAZING CROWNS** ★

**Royal** Time Bomb

On the version of "Good Rockin' Tonight" that inspired Elvis, Wynonie Harris delivers a rousing chant—"Hoy! Hoy! Hoy!"—in the break; you sometimes wonder if The Amazing Crowns hadn't misunderstood it as "Oi! Oi! Oil," igniting the inevitable lightbulb that's made them generation-Warped's flag-bearers for punkabilly. Fortify a Buddy Holly or Eddie Cochran number up 'til you can dance to it at an Agnostic Front show and you've got half of *Royal*, produced by veteran genre splicer Joe Gittleman (of the Bosstones). As on the act's roughshod debut, the *Royal* Crowns are still likely to strike you as the

**OUT:**  
June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Jerk Savages in the Meshpit.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Mike Ness, Electric Frankenstein, The Misfits.

kind of lapsed hardcore guys who never quite got, say, The Cramps, and their grasp of rockabilly remains tenuous (to say nothing of the pedal-steel-toed "country" tunes here, which are less Nashville than *Margaritaville*). But the good news is that technical command of one's roots—appropriated, secondhand, imagined or otherwise—has never been a prerequisite for a real fun time, which is what the Crowns offer up front and center. You won't need a pompadour to appreciate the metallic KO of "Mr. Fix It," a sing-along in the storied tradition of Question Mark And The Mysterians' "96 Tears" and Danzig's "Long Way Back From Hell." And "Chop Shop" reimagines Sweet's "Ballroom Blitz" as hillbilly speedmetal propped up on blocks in Boston's red light district. Amazing? Well, sorta. >>>Carly Carlioli



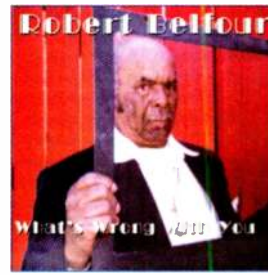
**BELLE & SEBASTIAN**

**Fold Your Hands Child, You Walk Like A Peasant** Matador

For years, Stuart Murdoch and his seven-member Glasgow-bred band wrote songs of innocence and its corollary, experience. Gradually those songs came to be less precious-in-a-twee-sense and more precious-as-gems. But even after they'd recorded acclaimed albums like *If You're Feeling Sinister*, a collection of teen anthems as exactly right, in their own way, as the ones on The Replacements' *Let It Be*, Murdoch worried. As he grew older, farther from the troubled youth his best songs celebrated (and from their solipsism, their daydreaming, their noble

**OUT:**  
June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
VH-1 storyteller pop for indie kids.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Elliott Smith, Eric Matthews, The Divine Comedy.

melodrama), would he someday have nothing to write about? Finally, though, the band made an album that opened with a song called "I Fought In A War." The song started out all quiet on the western front, then bloomed into something grand and sad, about how youth and loss are seldom sold separately. The 10 odes to seasons in the sun that followed, replete with bright Bacharachian strings, suffered in comparison. But many of them grooved like a fitter, happier Steely Dan-in-'72 (especially when Murdoch sang about how school didn't work out like he'd planned). And for a moment, even the people who believed B&S was just the new Stereoclab—coining its own retro-pop vocabulary, then foundering prettily—had to respect them a little. >>>Alex Pappademas



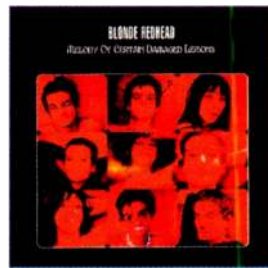
**ROBERT BELFOUR**

**What's Wrong With You** Fat Possum

There's been a voodoo shortage in the Mississippi hills since bluesman Junior Kimbrough died two years back. But Robert Belfour evokes some of the same dark, roiling spirits with the slithery guitar lines of "Bad Luck" and other numbers on *What's Wrong With You*, his debut CD. At times, especially when he's singing the Kimbrough-penned lament "Done Got Old," the resemblance is uncanny—right down to the lonesome bay of his voice and the mesmeric cadences of his playing. No wonder, since they grew up together before Belfour moved an hour north from Holly

**OUT:**  
May 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Mean-ass Mississippi blues.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Junior Kimbrough, R.L. Burnside, Lightnin' Hopkins.

Springs to Memphis in 1959. But here, the 59-year-old ex-construction worker sticks mostly to solo acoustic guitar, so he never achieves the juggernaut power of Kimbrough's recordings. On a few tunes, Belfour just seems unfocused—too distracted to maintain the hard-but-heartbroken edge he puts on "What's Wrong With You" and "Holding My Pillow." Nonetheless, Belfour's one-chord stomps and dusty-throated singing mark him as a genuine juke-joint dog with enough bite in his bark to satisfy fans of Fat Possum's outsider blues. Purists, too, since the only thing (short of genre-defining virtuosity) that separates Belfour's sound from that of country blues pioneers like Charley Patton and Son House is 70 years. >>>Ted Drozdowski



**BLONDE REDHEAD**

**Melody Of Certain Damaged Lemons** Touch And Go

After seven years together, New York's Blonde Redhead is moving away from being the cute little band with the identical twin Italian brothers, a Japanese expatriate and a major Sonic Youth fascination. However, where it's going is questionable. The trio has attracted some impressive proponents: SY's Steve Shelley produced and released the band's early work on his Smells Like label. Fugazi's Guy Picciotto is a big fan, and his co-production credit on *Melody Of Certain Damaged Lemons* may explain its newfound taut, percussive precision. With a clunky,

**OUT:**  
June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Art-punk psychodrama.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Sonic Youth, recent Fugazi, Unwound.

English-as-a-second-language charm, both Amedeo Pace and Kazu Makino focus their lyrics on raw-nerved ruminations of disintegrating romance, providing the disc's only hint of cohesion. Musical styles whipsaw aimlessly from electronic noodling to discordant guitar-driven aggression (usually on tracks sung by Pace) to a surprisingly bouncy synth-pop number over which Makino spins the third person but seemingly autobiographical tale of a woman who moves halfway around the world and finds her soulmates in two brothers, only to be spurned by one of them. In a wispy voice reminiscent of Kahimi Karie, Makino recites what amounts to a bohemian girl's anguished diary confessions. She finally cuts loose with some unintelligible Yoko Ono-level shrieks on the noise-jam finale "Mother," but as always seems the case with Blonde Redhead, it's the forebears who reign. >>> Glen Savady





## BRAZZAVILLE

**Brazzaville 2002**

Engine Group

Members of Beck's band take a leisurely vacation in Brazzaville. Named after the capital of the French Congo, Brazzaville conducts a dreamy tour of exotic ports of call through a blend of geographic references, both in terms of the lyrics and the music, with a home base in the Brazilian tropics. The sailor's tale "Shams" namechecks a dozen or so cities and layers African highlife guitar with house music piano chords and jazzy sax solos from bandleader David Brown. Although Brown, Beck's sax player, enlists some of Beck's other ace compatriots—guitarist Smokey Hormel,

**OUT:**

May 30.

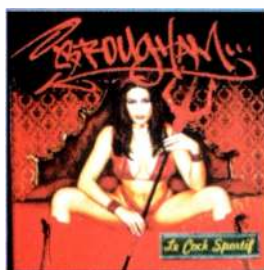
**FILE UNDER:**

Tropicália with a twist.

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

Arto Lindsay, Soul Coughing, Red Hot And Rio.

pianist Mike Boito, trombonist David Ralicke, DJ Swamp—*Brazzaville 2002's* tropicália isn't Beck's *Tropicália*: Brown's less interested in postmodern cut-and-paste than he is in cinematic mood music with seamless layering. In other words, Brazzaville owes more to Antonio Carlos Jobim than to Os Mutantes, and it's an album of quiet and precise details rather than broad strokes. In softly spoken but heavily filtered vocals, Brown spins yarns of foreign lands ("Sewers Of Bangkok," "Deng Xiaoping"), and sometimes adds verses in Portuguese ("Voce"). With Hormel's inventive guitar work and DJ Swamp's subtle turntablisms, there's plenty here to engage the ears and mind, but ultimately *Brazzaville 2002's* trip drifts by like a pleasant daydream on a breezy ocean shore. >>>Steve Klinge



## BROUGHAM

**Le Cok Sportif**

Warner Bros.

**OUT:**

May 16.

**FILE UNDER:**

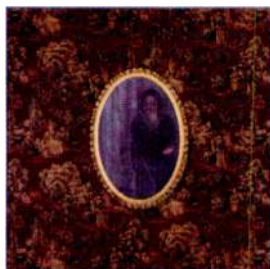
Beats, rhymes & power chords.

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

Sublime, G. Love & Special Sauce, Cypress Hill.

Up until now, most stoner rock/hip-hop hybrids emphasized the monster hook and shout-along chorus. Brougham tries to mess with the status quo, imparting a message amid the crazy loops, groovy beats and noisy guitars—sort of like if Bukowski fronted Sublime. The Palo Alto duo combines Luke Sick's mic skills with the smooth production and musicianship of Jason Slater (ex-Third Eye Blind), and the two purport to represent the wrong-side-of-the-tracks element of Northern California's thriving high-tech environment. They sound pissed-off and political on the opening "Don't Speak English," then channel their adolescence

and land some blows to the rich kids (the twangy, laid-back "7th Grade," the forceful, funky, not-really-about-basketball "Kareem"). On the less guitar-centric tracks, Sick rides the flow masterfully (the old-school hip-hop of "Main Chick" or the sinister "Bong Hits"), delivering sharp-tongued observations. But Brougham likes to party, too, and the band throws a hella cool bash on the Latin-tinged "Sangria." Brougham falters when dabbling with metal, however; "Murked Out" puts AC/DC, Cypress Hill and Aerosmith in a blender and hits "puree," while "I Can't Sleep It Off" is one midget short of Kid Rock. Such ill-advised excursions dilute Brougham's debut, turning a potentially witty collection into a jumble of trend-hopping stabs at a radio hit. All, that is, except for the unlisted eleventh track, a speed-metal-meets-jazz tangent that makes about as much sense as getting stoned while stuck in a broken elevator. >>>Richard A. Martin



## BRIGHT EYES

**Fevers And Mirrors**

Saddle Creek

Conor Oberst is one of those songwriters who puts lyrics first. Now 20 years old and on something like his sixth full-length album (counting the two he made with his old band, Commander Venus), he has words pouring out of him like something that's been shaken up until it's burst its container. *Fevers And Mirrors* is a superb album, articulate and powerful on the subject of teenage heartbreak and self-loathing, and played (by the latest batch of musicians Oberst has called Bright Eyes) with confidence and subtlety. "The Calendar Hung Itself," a post-breakup spasm of jealousy, finds room for a list of

**OUT:**

May 29.

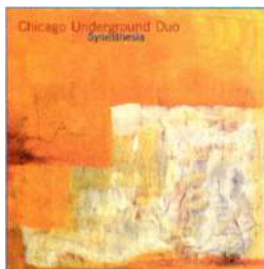
**FILE UNDER:**

Post-adolescent pop.

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

Leonard Cohen, Sunny Day Real Estate, Simon Joyner.

embittered questions, a series of visions that flirt with the idea of death, a couple of interpolated lines from "You Are My Sunshine," and a verse that starts "I kissed a girl with a broken jaw that her father gave to her/ She had eyes bright enough to burn me/ They reminded me of yours," all in less than four minutes. Oberst prefers the slow simmer to the blunt statement, but he's capable of incredible emotional intensity—"When The Common Girl Realizes She Is Under Glass" is nominally a piano ballad, but by its end he's screaming so hard his voice is fraying. Aside from a silly fake interview where Oberst feels obligated to explain his symbol-system, *Fevers* is overwhelmingly powerful, the breakout moment of a first-rate lyrical voice. >>>Douglas Wolk



## CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO

**Synesthesia**

Thrill Jockey

**OUT:**

May 2.

**FILE UNDER:**

Way outside jazz.

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

Tortoise, Gastr Del Sol, Beth Custer.

For artists who dare to bushwhack through the outer sonic edges and then set up camp there, the thin line between mesmerizing avant-garde music and annoying noise can be easy to miss. The members of The Chicago Underground Duo are part of the electronic and jazz fringe that is teeming in Chicago, a city that has long been friendly to musical explorers. On *Synesthesia*, drummer/vibraphone player Chad Taylor and cornet player Rob Mazurek shift from furious avant-garde jazz passages to serene ambient interludes, offering a blend that definitely swings in its own

distant, amorphous way. In the band's hands, a melody of childlike simplicity played on the vibes turns seamlessly into a robotic march on "Threads On The Face," while the duo uses found sounds sliced, diced and then julienne-fried into a scary piece of white noise on "Tram Transfer Nine." Mazurek is a thoughtful and technically adept horn player who recently turned away from straight-ahead bop to chase his muse, often with blistering flurries of notes but sometimes with Miles-like atmospheric. As often as not, Taylor's melodic percussion work leads the parade rather than supports it, in yet another way the Chicago Underground Duo, keenly aware of that thin line, subtly shifts the ground beneath listeners' feet. >>>Bill Kisluk



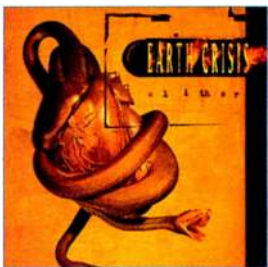
**RAVI COLTRANE**

**From The Round Box** RCA Victor

Yes, Ravi is the son of *that* Coltrane. But as he established on his RCA debut in 1998, *Moving Pictures*, he's his own man. That album, in its bold restraint and hard-edged interplay between the leader's saxophone and Ralph Alessi's trumpet, had more in common with the work of Ravi's former employer, Steve Coleman (who also played on the album), and even the no-piano minimalism of the old Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker quartet than with Dad's messianic fury. The new album is a bit looser. The arrangements favor open harmonies and free tempos, but they're

**OUT:**  
June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Chip off the old jazz block.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Miles Davis Quintet, Allan Chase, Joe Lovano.

limned by ingenious multi-part themes—Alessi's asymmetrical "Social Drones," the brooding, rough counterpoint between tenor and trumpet on Coltrane's "The Chartreuse Dream." When they tackle something familiar, like "Monk's Mood," they slow the tempo way down, and in Ornette Coleman's "The Blessing" they give the theme only passing mention. Credit the rhythm section of pianist Geri Allen, bassist James Genus and drummer Eric Harland for keeping the music focused even in the most intuitive, out-there passages, and credit Coltrane for making the kind of open-ended jazz record you don't hear much on major labels these days. In his brainy independence at least, he's a chip off the old block. >>>Jon Garelick



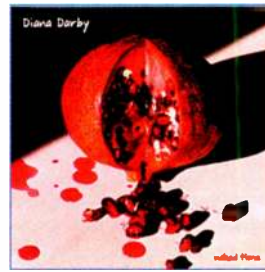
**EARTH CRISIS**

**Slither** Victory

It's hard to please the underground punk/hardcore audience, especially the straightedge vegan variety. Not only do these teetotaling herbivores hold their bands up to the most stringent anti-mainstream standards, but they're constantly scrutinizing them, looking for lifestyle contradictions. For eight years, Earth Crisis has upheld its stance on substance use and animal rights, but it finally made a major boo-boo when it switched from Victory to Roadrunner for its last album. Chastised by the faithful, Earth Crisis is back on Victory for its seventh offering, *Slither*. But diehard fans

**OUT:**  
June 20.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Angry vegans.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Agnostic Front, Korn, P.O.D., Rage Against The Machine.

will have a new bone to pick. The 13-tracker is wonderfully accessible. In addition to vocalist Karl Buechner's frothing-at-the-mouth bark, he's set his barbed PC-rants against beats and melodies. On the title track, he tastefully fits his rhymes over Earth Crisis's stiff-and-stuttering grooves—it's 1994's *Destroy The Machine* with some timely touchups. The beats get baggier on "Behind The Wire," where Buechner plays the dueling MC, playing off himself by dropping raps against rants. "Agress" could easily be a thug-metal hit, as jaggedly beautiful vocal melodies float around the pre-chorus, and then, yum, a Bizkit-lickin' good chorus. Well, there goes the neighborhood. >>>Lorne Behrman



**DIANA DARBY**

**Naked Time** Delmore

A pomegranate, cut open so that its seeds and droplets of scarlet juice are spilling out, adorns the cover of *Naked Time*. And it's the perfect visual metaphor for the emotional evisceration that takes place on Diana Darby's powerful debut. Child abuse, dysfunctional relationships and plain old despair are the subjects of her songs—Darby's idea of a "Sweet Conversation" begins with "Bleed me from morning 'til daybreak." Yet these disturbing images are projected against a deceptively pretty backdrop of atmospheric twang-pop, conjuring visions of a wounded mind running amok in a

**OUT:**  
June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Blood on the tracks.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Cheri Knight, Nick Drake, Gillian Welch.

flowing field of flowers. Darby's assembled a great cast of supporting players, including guitarist Mark Spencer (Lisa Loeb/Cheri Knight) and drummer Will Rigby (ex-dB's, currently with Steve Earle's Dukes). They provide the delicate setting for Darby's soft, bruised vocals. Sparse fingerpicking, brushes on a high hat and traces of guitar feedback lend creepiness to the Appalachian-style "Malcolm's Song." The subdued cry of a pedal steel underscores Darby's breathy delivery in "Amelia," where she sings "Well you dream that you are riding on a horse made out of glass/ And it shatters underneath you and you can't find your way back." Darby finally strikes back at her demons in the tough and tuneful rocker "She Won't Be Quiet," but by then, *Naked Time* has already proven that a whisper is, in fact, more potent than a scream. >>>Meredith Ochs



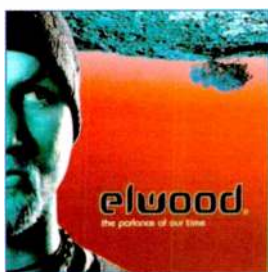
**EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN**

**Silence Is Sexy** Mute

"Sexy" isn't a word most would associate with Einstürzende Neubauten; neither is "silence." But after two decades of fetishizing the sound of machine-age collisions (or to borrow the translation of the band's name, collapsing new buildings), Blixa Bargeld's merry men have taken to redirecting the band's white noise into controlled extremes of cacophony and quiet, employing tension as it once did power tools on hunks of metal. *Silence Is Sexy* is the sound of the prototypical pre-Reznor industrial group adjusting to the rhythms of the digital age.

**OUT:**  
June 20.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Information economy industrial noise.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Throbbing Gristle, Harsher Nine Inch Nails, The Mütter Museum

The more tuneful (a relative but not inaccurate distinction) moments find the factory-floor clamor clicking along at a ones-and-zeroes pace. Much of what replaces the auto-compactor bliss is Blixa ladling his show-me-your-papers croon over the low hum of bass tones as a racket slowly builds at the song's edges. Even avant garde anti-artists eventually become institutions, and so when he does summon his cornered-rat screech, it's a lighter-raising moment for the Sprockets set. Which is significant. Neubauten is now as much a symbol as the primitive man logo it sported for most of these 20 years, easily recognized as a citadel in the outlying areas of contemporary music. Only now, instead of summarily beating wayward travelers, Einstürzende Neubauten is mugging them for their ideas. >>>Scott Frampton



**ELWOOD**  
The Parlance Of Our Time

Palm

Elwood, a former studio engineer taking his first star turn behind the mic, is conflicted about a woman who's suddenly appeared in his orbit. "I wonder what to do with this girl?" he swaggers over a springy, guitar-laced groove. "Should I push her in the bush? Should I take her downtown?" Just in case you don't understand his dilemma, he then repeats himself ad nauseam. "Bush," the song in question, is actually the least representative track on Elwood's debut, but it's such an aggressively obvious bid for the pimp-rock vote that it colors the rest of the set with an air of cold

calculation. Elsewhere, Elwood tries to make like Beck by way of G. Love by adding incongruous raps ("When I want to get busy/ Out of the hat comes a trick") to a warm, Laurel Canyon-style cover of Gordon Lightfoot's "Sundown." We then get blithe, smoothly produced Sugar Ray imitations and a few vaguely intriguing hip-pop hybrids that come too late in the album to make much of an impact. For the record, Elwood solves his "Bush" quandary by declaring he wants it both ways. Outside of the fantasy realm, trying to cover all the bases is generally the same thing as spreading yourself too thin. >>>Lisa Gidley

**OUT:**  
May 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Pimpin' ain't easy.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Eminem, Sugar Ray, Citizen King.



**FINK**  
Fresh Produce

NTone-Ninja Tune

Fink may hail from the trip-hop capitol of the world, but the playful mood of *Fresh Produce* stands in stark contrast to the grim aesthetic favored by Bristol's better-known electronic auteurs. That's not to suggest that Fink's music doesn't share some salient influences with Massive Attack, Tricky and Portishead. The opening cut, "Tubb Journey," clearly references dub specialist King Tubby's production, right down to the patented flying cymbals and underwater drums. But Fink eventually puts his own stylistic stamp on the track by stretching the beats and pushing the groove into muscular

electro territory. "Fink Vs. DJ Alicat" does pay tribute to Bristol-style trip-hop and jungle, but the overall feel of *Fresh Produce* is more in keeping with the irreverent outlook and mischievous cut-and-paste approach of *Ninja Tune*, Ntone's parent label. Like a pomo turntablist, Fink plunders his jazz collection for funky keyboard loops and spoken samples. The results are never short on humor or groove: Fink exploits the rhythmic possibilities of snippets of *Dukes of Hazzard* dialogue in "Celebrity Speedtrap," layering the results over steel guitar plucks and a smooth funk backdrop. And, in case that's not a clear enough indication of where Fink is coming from, there's even a track titled "We Are Ninja." >>>Kuri Kondrak

**OUT:**  
June 13.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Schizophrenic daydream beats.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Coldcut, Tricky, Chocolate Weasel.

**Jackpot**

*Weightless*

"Petty-meets-Pavement style of roots rock...  
...impressive follow-up to their 1998 debut *Bone-ville*." ---CMJ

for stars

**For Stars**  
"windows for stars"

"For Stars' dream-pop harmonies are as  
gorgeous as the night sky itself..." ---MAGNET

SO AQUINA

THE COAM AND THE FEEL

"The freewheeling acoustic  
unpredictability of the band  
really light up the campfire on  
alarmingly funny and aching  
brittle songs..." ---PUNCTURE

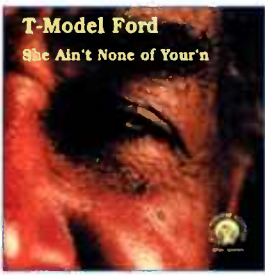
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**T-MODEL FORD**  
**She Ain't None of Your'n**  
 Fat Possum

Seventy-eight years old and irrepressibly horny, T-Model Ford is the Wesley Willis of dirty punk blues. Entire songs consist solely of rants like "so she axed me, so I told her, that is why that I'm here. Wah-ho!" over a two-chord groove. Then there's "Chicken Head Man," a kind of love song that keeps coming back to Ford's fondness for decapitated poultry. And "Junk," which could describe the raggedy, out-of-tune guitar spray that powers it, but instead reflects Ford's mantra-like declaration "Ain't nothin' but a junk." A highlight is the old-fashioned double-

**OUT:**  
 May 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Dirty-ass blues.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**

Paul "Wine" Jones, R.L. Burnside, Wesley Willis.

entendre "Wood Cuttin' Man," as in "I'll cut your wood so easy baby, 'til you can't help squeal and moan." On every tune, Ford grabs a single, hairy guitar pattern and squeezes it purple. The point is, Ford's no Muddy Waters, no matter how much he clouds the stream of traditional blues on his third CD. But he is the real thing, a white lightning-damaged soul who speaks from his own twisted memory and experience, unleashing a nearly unstoppable desire to rock the paint off the walls of every room he plays, be the absolute last man in the bar on his feet—or, in Ford's case, his crutch. Something this raw, bizarre and honest could only be the result of years of severe oppression and mild dementia—and a product of Mississippi. >>>Ted Drozdowski



**THE GETAWAY PEOPLE** ★  
**Turnpike Diaries**  
 Columbia

American pop culture's worldwide domination is so complete that it seems to have steamrollered all regional subcultures. Take The Getaway People. You might expect a quintet from Norway to sound (cultural cliché alert!) like a horde of war-whooping Vikings, or Goths screaming with Munch-like existential dread. But no, they taste as American as a Happy Meal. The group's sound—Boots's gritty vocal rasp, Race's shuffling bass, Stone's Memphis-y guitar, Honda's just-chillin' keyboard fills and Leroy's lazy hip-hop drum loops—is about as Norwegian as gravel caught in G. Love's

**OUT:**  
 June 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Pop, American style.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**

G. Love & Special Sauce, Beck, Elwood.

tire treads or phlegm Beck's hawked into a clean, fresh linen handkerchief. (And what's with these one-word monikers, which sound like translations of character names from a Japanese kids' adventure show?) Yes, the groove is road-tested (thus the title), suitable for getting stoned at parties anywhere. There are even a couple of pretty, out-of-left-field, Black Crowes-ish power ballads. But when, on its second disc, an act is already reprising its big hit ("She Gave Me Love") from two years ago, it's clear that it's run out of ideas. The Getaway People could look for inspiration elsewhere, if they could find anyplace on the planet that hadn't yielded to similar white boy funk pod people. >>>Gary Susman

**THE COMP PILE** (Our guide to compilation CDs)



|   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>TITLE:</b> Bossa Mundo... When Brazil Meets The World (Wave)   | <b>Exxxile On Main St. (Triple X)</b>  | <b>Ghost Dog: The Way Of The Samurai (Epic)</b>   | <b>Pop Artificielle (KK-Shadow)</b>   | <b>All That Glitters Isn't Platinum (Amoeba-Hip Hop Slam)</b>   |
| <b>CONCEPT:</b> Brazilian-influenced music for the progressive dancefloor.  | Label comp that runs the gamut from punk to goth to the genre-defying.   | Hip-hop-meets-Samurai film soundtrack produced, mixed and arranged by RZA.  | Electronic reconstructions of classic rock songs.   | Bay area insurgency: Indie record store (Amoeba) teams with indie label (Hip Hop Slam) to promote indie hip-hop.                                    |
| <b>TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC:</b> You can do a saucy two-step while keeping your Caipirinha in place.  | Your candle still burns for Lollapalooza.  | Disciples of the Wu-Tang Clan: hip, young grasshoppers and grass-smokin' hip-hoppers.   | Those who successfully transitioned from classic rock radio to classic rave anthems.  | Those who rail against "The Man," and like to do it to a good drum kick.  |
| <b>NAMES TO DROP:</b> Jazzanova, Salome de Bahia, Francois K.   | Jane's Addiction, Crown Of Thorns, Bo Diddley.   | Kool G Rap, Jeru & Afu Ra, Masta Killah.  | John Lennon, Mick Jagger, David Bowie (and the artists who reconstruct them).   | Goldie The Poet, Foreign Legion, Various Blends.  |
| <b>SUMS IT UP:</b> "Tres Bien" (Jazzanova).   | "Deeper Shade Of Soul" (Urban Dance Squad).  | "Samurai Showdown."   | "The Future" (Spiritual Surface Noise reconstructs Prince).   | "Come See Us" (KNT feat. San Quinn).  |
| <b>VERDICT:</b> Salome de Bahia provides an ambitious remake of Stevie Wonder classic "Another Star." Like the rest of <i>Bosso</i> , it clears a high bar. | Thirteen years after the label broke Jane's Addiction, you get lucky with this comp of fringe (occasionally seminally so) artists. | Strings, soul, raga and hard-edged, Clan-style beats show why the soundtrack was the true star of director Jim Jarmusch's feature film. | Like <i>Moog Cookbook</i> , this album succeeds by flavoring spacey electronic excursions with an essence of the originals, as opposed to legitimately covering them. | <i>All That Glitters...</i> is just the latest proof that Hip Hop Slam is a label name synonymous with provocative, purposeful independent hip-hop. |



## CHARLIE HUNTER

Charlie Hunter

Blue Note

**OUT:**

June 6.

**FILE UNDER:**

Groovy jazz.

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

Medeski Martin & Wood, John Scofield, Marc Ribot.

The career of guitarist Charlie Hunter is indicative of jazz's ongoing identity crisis—when he emerged from the San Francisco scene in the mid-'90s he was cast as part of the "acid jazz" scene, and more recently with the groove or jam-band crowd. If Hunter has pop-appeal, it has to do with his taste for funk, rock or African and Afro-Cuban rhythms, and his general avoidance of the dreaded ching-chinga-ching of swing-based jazz. But Hunter's triplet-based phrasing and his broad harmonic reach (enhanced by the "comping" he does for himself on the bass strings of his eight-string guitar) still land

him squarely in the jazz camp. On 1999's *Duo* he hooked up with phenomenal minimalist percussion man Leon Parker, and Parker is back for *Charlie Hunter*, along with tenor saxist Peter Apfelbaum, trombonist Josh Roseman and a couple of auxiliary percussionists. The grooves are there (the first tune's even called "A Little 6/8"), but so is the conversational chatter of the best small ensemble jazz. Roseman stutters and laughs, sounding especially good in his mute work, and Apfelbaum moans appealingly. Hunter doesn't cast the kind of extended lines that burn with forward momentum, but his laid-back restraint has its own kind of appeal, especially when he and Parker ride together on a riff, turning it inside out, telling each other jokes and letting us in on it. >>>Jon Garelick



## INDIGENOUS

Circle

Pachyderm

**OUT:**

May 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Next generation blues-rock.

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

Johnny Lang, Kenny Wayne Shephard, Stevie Ray Vaughn.

Twenty-something guitarist Mato Nanji never asked for the "future guitar legend" title he's been tagged with. He just happens to dig (and thus conjure) the blues-rock guitar greats: Stevie Ray Vaughn, Santana and Hendrix, to name a few. Nanji's playing not only sounds like these guys, it feels like it, as his style shifts homage from one artist to another (sometimes within the same song). With a tight band—consisting of younger sister Wanbdi on drums, brother Pte on bass and cousin Horse on percussion—and solid songwriting channeled through often powerfully soulful vocals, this Native

American family affair has everything in place to pull it off. For that extra-authentic punch, *Circle* was co-produced by former Stevie Ray collaborator Doyle Bramhall, who wrote two of the 11 tunes and contributed instrumentally to several more. Though a few songs, like "Stay With Me," offer a mainstream pop feel that made Hootie's "Hold Your Hand" catchy enough to sing along to, *Indigenous* has the legitimate soul that the Blowfish only wish they had. But while "Stay With Me" would be easy to slide into commercial radio, the band offers a more representative first single with the album's opening scorcher "Little Time." Full props for staying true to one's roots. >>>Robin A. Rothman



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**JULIANA HATFIELD**

**Beautiful Creature** Zoë-Rounder

**JULIANA'S PONY**

**Total System Failure** Zoë-Rounder

Juliana Hatfield has joined Guns N' Roses and Bruce Springsteen. Not on a "Haven't Been Heard On The Radio In A Decade" reunion tour, but in the ranks of artists who've released two rather different albums at the same time. *Beautiful Creature*, released under her own name, is a collection of ballads and lullabies, while her collection of raw stompers about sex and cars, *Total System Failure*, is credited to Juliana's Pony, a rock trio she fronts (featuring Weezer bassist Mikey Welsh and drummer Zephon Courtney of Milligram). Hatfield's made a career out of being rock's answer to Ally Sheedy in *The Breakfast Club*, the weird, angry, wry waif in the corner who would be so pretty if she would just brush the hair out of her eyes. Her flannel sensibility, feminine frankness, Boston pedigree, and sweet-and-sour combo of little-girl voice/crashing guitars clicked with mainstream tastes for a brief moment about six years ago. She proclaimed herself a superannuated virgin back when Britney Spears was a gleam in Mickey Mouse's eye.

That seems like an eon ago, and *Total System Failure* reveals a Hatfield whose sound has been preserved in Jurassic amber. Her energy and looseness are admirable, yet curiously dated. She's

improved upon her already considerable guitar skills, and her lyrical wit is also sharper than ever ("Did you learn to herd cattle in prep school?" she sings to a fashion victim in "Leather Pants"), but just because she's finally gotten in touch with her inner dominatrix ("Little white boy, will you be my slave?" she snarls on "Houseboy") doesn't mean anyone's lining up to be whipped. (Her last album, 1998's *Bed*, was similarly raucous and impeccable, and similarly doomed to be ignored.) *Creature*, though softer and more acoustic, is another easily tossed off batch of cookies iced with lemon frosting, all sweet, tart, and crunchy. The instinct is so ingrained in Hatfield that she could write hard little pop gems in her sleep. On *Beautiful Creature*, it seems she has. She moans about cool rock boys as if they weren't an extinct species. She wails (gorgeously) that a lover chooses drugs over her; a more current poet would have him addicted to day trading. Both records are lovely dreams crying out for a wake-up call, either for Hatfield or for the rest of us. >>>Gary Susman



FOR SOME OF US, THERE CAN NEVER BE TOO MANY JULIANA HATFIELD PICTURES.

**OUT:**  
May 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Hard and soft pop candy.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Blake Babies, Lemonheads, Veruca Salt.

**OUT:**  
May 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Slightly dated pop gems.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Aimee Mann, Tanya Donelly.



**JAZZ MANDOLIN PROJECT**

**Xenoblast** Blue Note

Following the path laid out by organ-groove trio Medeski, Martin and Wood, the Jazz Mandolin Project has parlayed an association with Phish and a swelling jam-band fan base into a contract with the granddaddy of jazz labels, Blue Note. *Xenoblast*, the trio's Blue Note debut, is the Jazz Mandolin Project's third release, and it portrays a band that has matured from a Deadhead novelty-act into an eclectic fusion group that has earned a place at its prestigious new home. Unlike earlier mandolin-jazz experimenters, like David Grisman or Sam Bush, both of whom have kept their bluegrass roots close at hand,

**OUT:**  
May 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Jam-band jazz.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Medeski, Martin & Wood, Phish, David Grisman.

JMP leader Jamie Masefield approaches this collection of Beatlesque ballads ("Jovan"), Mid-Eastern funk ("Dromedary") and modal jams ("Xenoblast") with a sophisticated harmonic and melodic vocabulary that is more downtown than down-home. Supporting his sprightly bebop runs and propulsive chordal vamps are bassist Chris Dalgren and drummer Ari Hoenig, who bring NYC jazz pedigree and tasteful rhythmic interplay to the bright-hued session. Moldy figs may raise their eyebrows at Blue Note's recent forays into neo-hippie territory, but as the esteemed label has noticed, the growth of exciting improvisational music outside of the hotel-bar circuit bodes well for jazz's future, not its demise. >>> Michael Endelman



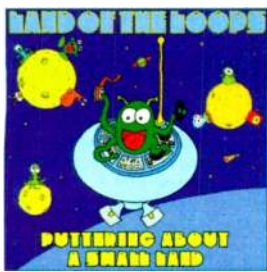
**KOTTONMOUTH KINGS**

**High Society** Capitol

Apparently all is forgiven between Michigan's Insane Clown Posse and Cali's Kottonmouth Kings. Back in '98, the Posse kicked the Kings off a supporting slot on the Juggulo Funhouse Supershow, but time (and copious bong hits) must heal all wounds. To wit: Here's ICP guesting on "Wicket Clowns," while Cypress Hill's Sen Dog throws verses elsewhere, arch California punk Jack Grisham of TSOL contributes a little sumthin'-sumthin' and the Kings celebrate the glories of cannabis ("It's an herb, not a drug," the group claims) in all its forms. *High Society* is, for the most part, a solid improvement on

**OUT:**  
June 27.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Stoned suburban skaters.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Cypress Hill, Insane Clown Posse, High Times.

Kottonmouth Kings' debut, *Royal Highness*. The new disc showcases proficient production and beats by DJ Bobby B, some cleverly blunted verbiage by Saint Vicious and D-Loc and strong party-for-your-right-to-fight antics. It still could've used some serious editing. Twenty tracks at 77 minutes? There's just not enough going on here to merit that kind of commitment. Musically, the group's sample-a-delic rap-rock-reggae is savvy, notably on "Face Facts" and "Here We Go Again," but some tracks still need help developing identity beyond mere influences, like the Rage Against The Machine-style "Daydreamin' Fazes." Too one-dimensional when it doesn't need to be, maybe *High Society*—like its herbal inspiration—is just too much of a good thing. >>>Mark Woodlief



**LAND OF THE LOOPS**

**Puttering About A Small Land** Up

Alan Sutherland, a.k.a. Land Of The Loops, has a knack for titles: His 1996 CD debut *Bundle Of Joy* was just that, and, alas, *Puttering About A Small Land* (lifted from a Philip K. Dick novel) nails a bull's eye, too, as Sutherland's sophomore offering fails to push the boundaries he previously established. The comic timing and intuitive hooks that distinguished the track "Multi-Family Garage Sale" are scant here, relegated primarily to brief interludes between tracks. (Perhaps what sounds suspiciously like bubbling bongwater on "How To Feed A See Monkey" offers a clue as to the condition of

**OUT:**

May 23.

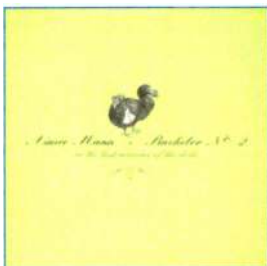
**FILE UNDER:**

Sample-centric indie rock.

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

Sulpatch, Takako Minekawa, Dub Narcotic Sound System.

Sutherland's muse?) Cobbled together from wet basslines, processed female vocals, lo-fi breaks and simple Casio melodies—and dotted judiciously with humorous samples—tracks like "Slumber Party" and "Automotive High School" rehash ideas explored more engagingly on Saint Etienne's early instrumental hodgepodes. On "Single Girl Summer Home," guest singer Takako Minekawa's contributions are buried low enough in the mix to render the lyrics inaudible, but not her mind-numbingly repetitive vocal melody. Ultimately, only a few standout tracks emerge from this muddle: The woozy trip-hop closer "Marshmallow Pillows" and two cuts that complement the assured delivery of LOL vet Heather Lewis with arrangements inspired enough to make disillusioned fans hold out hope for Sutherland's third turn at bat. >>>Kurt B. Reighley



**AIMEE MANN**

**Bachelor No. 2 Or, The Last Remains Of The Dodo** SuperEgo

If it's simplistic to say that the angriest songs on Aimee Mann's vindicating third solo album, *Bachelor No. 2*, are about her career, it's naive to think they're not. To an artist and woman like Mann, the music biz is like a seductive but psychotic boyfriend. Three great songs on this accomplished, appealing disc, including "How Am I Different" and "Nothing Is Good Enough," work both as cautionary tales about Mann's label troubles and failed attempts at intimacy with a selfish significant other. Mann's survival instincts allow her to absorb the blows

**OUT:**

May 2.

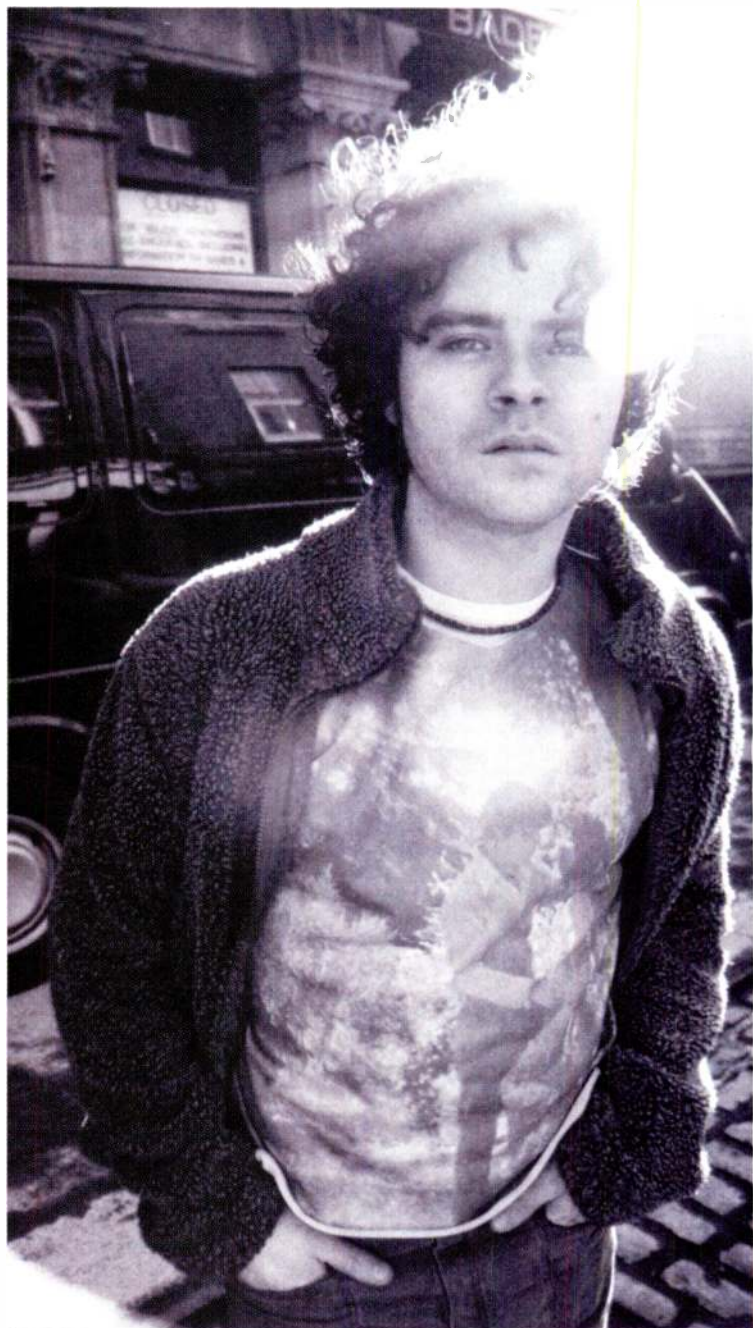
**FILE UNDER:**

Mature, moody pop.

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

Elvis Costello, Fiona Apple, Amy Rigby.

and punch back with fury and skill. Her singing's got a steely survivor's poise as she slings her poison arrows. Beatles-esque harmonies are underscored by the sweet-and-sour sting of guitar lines on loan from the George Harrison collection. Yet the melodic curves and relentless lyrical contortions echo Bacharach and David. It's no surprise to find Mann mentioning Bacharach (in "It Takes All Kinds") and writing "The Fall Of The World's Own Optimist" with Bacharach's recent collaborator, Elvis Costello—no slouch when it comes to bitter *bon mots*. Only Elvis should dare to rhyme "balustrade" and "passing trade"; Mann sometimes finds herself attracted to obsessive rhymes and overripe metaphors. But as with corporate callousness and boyfriend callowness, she'll get over it. >>>Wayne Robins



**PADDY CASEY**  
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**CHRISTY McWILSON**

**The Lucky One**

HighTone

Seattle-based singer Christy McWilson (the wife of Young Fresh Fellow/R.E.M. collaborator Scott McCaughey) evolves from the "grange" rock of her old band, The Picketts, into roots-pop for grown-ups on her solo debut, *The Lucky One*. Featuring cameos by Syd Straw, session steel guitarist Greg Leisz, The Old 97's Rhett Miller and R.E.M.'s Peter Buck and Mike Mills, the record opens with the title track, a wistful, folky ballad. "Why can't contentment stick around," McWilson sings, but producer/guitarist Dave Alvin's chicken pickin' on "Little Red Hen"

**OUT:**

June 20.

**FILE UNDER:**

Roots-pop for grown-ups.

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

Roseanne Cash, Cheri Knight, Lucinda Williams.

announces that this is no folk record. McWilson liberally borrows from the holy grails of alt.country, right down to her voice—a darker version of early Emmylou Harris with the phrasing of Lucinda Williams. She wears her influences on her sleeve, but they're impeccable: "Ship Song" echoes Townes Van Zandt's "Poncho and Lefty," "Someday" jangles like the Byrds' "Feel A Whole Lot Better," "Yesterday's Tomorrow" hums with a Sir Douglas Quintet-inspired organ, and "Fly Away" is an homage to Gram Parsons' "Sin City." Though McWilson's lyrics often mine both the restlessness and resignation that follow most folks into adulthood, *The Lucky One* reveals that expanding your musical horizons is one of the nicer things about getting older. >>>Meredith Ochs



**MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD**

**Tonic**

Blue Note

Medeski Martin & Wood have been grooving along for several albums now, conjuring an electrified keyboard/bass/drums sound that's drawn comparisons to everyone from fusion gods Weather Report to outta space cat Sun Ra. But the trio has a strong grounding in all manner of straight-ahead jazz, and Medeski in particular has long been recognized as an incendiary sideman. On *Tonic* (recorded live at the Lower East Side New York club of that name) the group returns to the acoustic piano-based approach of its first album, 1992's *Notes From The*

**OUT:**

April 25.

**FILE UNDER:**

Jamming Jazz.

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

Don Pullen, Horace Silver, Cecil Taylor.

*Underground* (Accurate). There's plenty of Medeski's Cecil Taylor-like windstorms of note-clusters, but this is essentially an unabashed homage to jazz roots. Coltrane ("Your Lady") and Bud Powell ("Buster Rides Again") get covered in the gospel-inflected "soul jazz" style, and Medeski does some percussive testifying on Lee Morgan's lilting "Afriqun." Even the original "Rise Up" pays homage to hard-bop tunefulness. Occasionally, a stretch of swing-jazz walking bass releases the tension of "grooving" cross-rhythms, and there's also a mellow "Hey Joe." Overall, it's a chance for MM&W's more recent fans to appreciate a different side of the band, and a treat for anyone looking for exciting piano trio jazz. >>>Jon Garelick

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**MURDER CITY DEVILS**

**In Name And Blood**

Sub Pop

The Murder City Devils is an ambient punk band—instead of going for the obvious power-chord presentation of its minor-but-catchy compositions, the group orchestrates them sparsely around a steel-girded rhythm section. These skeletal grooves are then haunted with interlocking surfi/space-rock guitars, a creepy Farfisa organ and a singer who sounds like Robert Kennedy throwing a temper tantrum. It's a sonic architecture the Devils blueprinted on their 1997 eponymous debut on Die Young Stay Pretty (a wait-and-see Sub Pop farm league label), and perfected on 1998's

**OUT:**

June 6.

**FILE UNDER:**

Garaged punk.

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

The Doors, Dead Boys, The Stooges.

*Empty Bottles Broken Hearts* (Sub Pop). *In Name And Blood* finds the Devils in "next album" mode. It's a natural progression with bigger guitars, bigger production and the biggest hooks yet (see "Press Gang"), but it all feels thumb-twiddlingly staid. Singer Spencer Moody covers the same outlaw-lover territory and the band backs him with the tried and true. Besides the Devilified cover of Neil Diamond's "I'll Come Running," there's nothing special here. Nothing as gripping as last album's "18 Wheels" or as uncharacteristically ass-shaking as the debut's "Boom Swagger Boom." It's just another Murder City Devils record—a dozen more sleazy tunes for those who liked the last 12. >>>Lorne Behrman





**MXPX**  
**The Ever Passing Moment**  
 A&M-Interscope

Best known for short, sweet, irresistible hits like 1996's "Chick Magnet" and 1998's "I'm OK, You're OK," Seattle's MxPx has a knack for scraping through the punk-pop crust to get its paws on new hooks and fresh melodies. As you might expect, only a couple of the 15 tracks on the band's fifth studio album pass the three-minute mark, but it's remarkable how consistently singer/bassist Mike Herrera, guitarist Tom Wisniewski, and drummer Yuri Ruley are able to marry upbeat, easy-to-relate-to sentiments to snappy tunes. *The Ever Passing Moment* opens with proof that they

**OUT:**  
 May 6.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Punk-pop for skaters and lovers.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 NoFX, Green Day, This Year's Model-era Elvis Costello.

haven't lost that particular skill, in the speedy sing-along "My Life Story." "Is The Answer In The Question" shows off MxPx's more sophisticated side, skirting along a clever melody girded with squeaky-clean guitars and clever rhythmic jerks. Even the usual teen anthem-style rave-ups here resound with increased musical and philosophical wisdom, as on the explosive "Misplaced Melodies"—the longest cut at 3:33. Not everything here is up to par: On formulaic romps "Responsibility" and "The Next Big Thing," the rush of guitars and the feverish drumming can't liven up the one-dimensional choruses. But even when MxPx's boys beg you to like them, they're still cool enough to pack their rapid-fire songs with choppy breaks and mind-rattling chord changes. »»Richard A. Martin



**NASHVILLE PUSSY**  
**High As Hell** TVT

Grammy nomination or no Grammy nomination, there ain't much money to be made in redneck motörpunk. Yep, Nashville Pussy's stock has undergone what Wall Street refers to as a "correction"—the band is now installed on TVT after being dropped by Mercury, but that was wishful thinking to begin with, no? Still, wishful thinking is what Nashville Pussy is all about: a fat, balding guy with a voice that makes Wolfman Jack sound like the Three Tenors, dreaming about moving like James Brown (he's better at it than Beck, though). Blaine Cartwright, flanked by the heaving

**OUT:**  
 May 30.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 R'n'R T&A.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Motörhead, Hellacopters, Tight Bros.  
 From Way Back When.

bosoms of his guitarist and fire-breathing bassist, also dares to suggest that rock 'n' roll is mostly a smoke-and-mirrors facade, a chronic loser's charade about attitude. It is also a simple and vicious assertion of self—that function which rock mostly ceded to hip-hop sometime last decade—best summed up in the lyrics to the mission-statement "Shoot First And Run Like Hell": "I'm still hungry, and I'm still here!" Me too, and everyone who whined that the least interesting thing about Nashville Pussy was the band's records is hereby sentenced to click on the Southern boogie anthem "Go To Hell," ride the "Struttin' Cock" (the Stones' "Satisfaction" by way of AC/DC, but so what?) and kiss that precious Swede-punk "Piece Of Ass" right there between the cheeks. »»Carly Caroli



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**'Til We Outnumber 'Em** Righteous Babe

**OUT:**  
 May 23.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Wholesome Americana.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Woody Guthrie, Ani DiFranco, Billy Bragg.

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**New Coat Of Pain—Songs Of Tom Waits** Manifesto



**OUT:**  
 May 30.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Unwholesome Americana.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Tom Waits, Lydia Lunch, The Cramps.

Woody Guthrie and Tom Waits don't come from different universes: Both have authored uncompromising songs about real people in less-than-ideal situations. Both are known to favor narrative over musical complexity. And neither has much patience for sentimentality. But on these two tribute discs, they may as well be of different species, as artists ranging from Ani DiFranco and Bruce Springsteen (on the Guthrie tribute) to Lydia Lunch and Screamin' Jay Hawkins (saluting Waits) play up the artists' stylistic quirks, often at the expense of the material. On the Guthrie disc, recorded live at a Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame & Museum tribute, it's the earnest intent that sinks the songs: Woody's son Arlo turns his father's plainspoken "Dust Storm Disaster" into a nasal whine, flattening each of the hard-luck ballad's verses into oblivion. The Indigo Girls mistake anemia for seriousness, nearly expiring during "Ramblin' Round" and the eight spoken-word tracks (out of 19 cuts) further disrupt the momentum. Only DiFranco, who summons her trademark acoustic ferocity for "Do Re Mi," and Springsteen, who tackles "Plane Wreck At Los Gatos," overcome

political rectitude to breathe life into Woody's legacy.

If the Guthrie artists substitute reverence for respect, then the Waits crew tends to fail in the opposite manner. Mistaking style for substance, they honor Waits's whiskey-and-barbiturate delivery rather than his songs. Nearly every number comes out as druggie cabaret: more mood than music. Some of these artists can pull off this self-conscious trick: Lunch's L.A. snarl cuts "Heartattack And Vine" into her own shape, and the late Hawkins's "Whistlin' Past The Graveyard" echoes with his haunted cemetery baritone. The Knoxville Girls add to the enjoyable decadence, managing a Cramps-like take washed in vintage reverb and garage-punk organ, on "Virginia Avenue." A few others, notably Lee Rocker (from Stray Cats) and Dexter Romweber (Flat Duo Jets), clearly know how to have a good time as well. But Carla Bozulich (of The Geraldine Fibbers) and Eleni Mandell both seem to nod out during their cuts ("On The Nickel" and "Muriel," respectively), and The Blacks don't sound much healthier. This may be an appropriate method-acting response to the material, but it makes the whole trip a lot less fun for the listener than a Waits tribute ought to be. »»Clea Simon



TOM WAITS FOR NO MAN

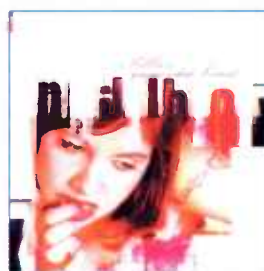


**NOFX**  
**Pump Of The Valium** Epitaph

Earlier this year, NOFX put out *The Decline* (Fat Wreck Chords)—a single peaks-and-valleys composition that's best described as prog-punk. The EP was new-school punk's boldest 18-minutes yet, and NOFX shone brightly because it was the band's chance to take the style it helped originate—metal-tight punk—to uncharted terrain. With the L.A. quartet's eighth Epitaph release, *Pump Up The Valium*, NOFX return to brisk, wound-up melodic blasts of punk that clock in at under three minutes a piece, which means the band now has to contend with a weighty 18-year legacy of similarly styled

**OUT:**  
 June 13.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Bad Religion, Pennywise, Blink 182.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Pop-punk on a metal edge.

songs. And that's not an easy task when you consider that it's a formula this band long ago perfected. Only the Cheap Trick pop-chugger "My Vagina" and the urgently catchy "Louise" manage to stand out from this otherwise solid—if somewhat routine—set. Fat Mike has written his most depraved lines yet—one locker-room highlight is, "My vagina has got lots of extra skin/ They took my outie and made an in/ Changing Donnie to Marie Osmond," from the transsexual testimonial, "My Vagina." Except for the occasional jazz or reggae interlude, the rest of the disc, with its heavily compressed guitars and intensely precise drumming, buzzes by innocuously. At least Fat Mike and the boys seem to know the score: the title of the disc's opening track is "And Now Something Completely Similar." >>>Lorne Behrman



**PILLBOX**  
**Gimme What I Want** NYC Records

It was shocking when a tattooed love boy showed Chrissie Hynde "what that hole was for," and it was titillating when Madonna justified her love. But by the time The Divinyls' Christina Amphlett touched herself, such risqué behavior was ho-hum enough to get Top 40 airplay. All of which leaves Pillbox frontwoman Susan Hyatt pretty much free to do as she pleases on her band's debut. Rather than boasting of sexual conquests, singer/songwriter Hyatt makes the "shocking" revelation that she's sexually self-sufficient on *Gimme What I Want*. On "Me And My Rhythmbox" Hyatt dismisses

**OUT:**  
 June 19.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
 Nasty girls with nasty guitars.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
 Nashville Pussy, early Pretenders, Cheap Trick.

her suitor and quite literally takes matters into her own hands. Similarly, in "Chronic Jack," Hyatt becomes her own best friend rather than pining over her empty bed. Hyatt seems to be asking "Who needs a lover when they all drive you crazy?" Especially when you can take care of business on your own. Musically, however, Hyatt does rely on her band to provide a suitable setting for her sassy snarl, one which generally sounds a lot like Chrissie Hynde's. And her band comes through by providing suitably down and dirty riffs that bring to mind both AC/DC and The Pretenders.

>>>Steve Gdula

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**POLE**

3

Matador

The third disc under the Pole name by vinyl mastering engineer Stefan Betke is almost identical to the first two—so close that it's nearly impossible to tell them apart. Betke's instrumental tracks are as deep as dub gets—their low, pulsing bass plays mechanically regular reggae patterns, and though there are snatches of guitar and keyboards, they're clipped or echoed until they seem more like ghosts than physical presences. Almost all of Pole's percussion comes from the sound of a single defective digital filter that provides a crackling-vinyl effect. The overall result is of erasure rather than

drawing: It's as if he begins with pedestrian full-on grooves and rips parts away from them until something interesting and suggestive is all that's left, sometimes no more than a little static and the vague suggestion of a rhythm. Any one Pole record is a palate-clearer, unlike anything else, pure and simple enough that it can dust away the cobwebs in tired ears. (It's especially great at high volumes, where the high frequencies of the static seem like hairline fractures in space and the ultra-heavy bass becomes a physical presence.) Now that Betke's established Pole's sonic identity, though, he seems unwilling or unable to move past it—he won't even give up that filter for a track. He's devoted to pushing a narrowly defined aesthetic as far it will go, but he may have hit its limit. >>>Douglas Wolk

**OUT:**

June 20.

**FILE UNDER:**

Ascetic defective digital filter dub.

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

Autechre, Augustus Pablo, Musimauze.



**OMARA PORTUONDO**

Buena Vista Social Club Presents: Omara Portuondo

Asylum-Elektra

The inclusion of singer Omara Portuondo as the lone woman in Ry Cooder's Cuban roots all-star outfit Buena Vista Social Club may have seemed like little more than a token gesture. But this classy set of 11 short tracks more than justifies Portuondo's oft-repeated sobriquet, Cuba's Edith Piaf. Her clear, low-pitched voice has neither great range nor force, but it's got all the smoky nuance these moody ballads and boleros require. Except for the crisp production values, you'd swear this music was recorded half

a century ago. Even more than other Buena Vista Social Club nostalgia projects, these songs seem to hail from a distant past. "La Sitera" glides in with shimmering strings and a muted trumpet. A chorus of men singing at near falsetto range answers Portuondo's deep, relaxed lead. Portuondo's accompanists and arrangements are almost distractingly good. Ry Cooder weighs in with vibrato-soaked guitar on "Canta Lo Sentimental," a smooth jazz-tinged ballad. And nonagenarian pianist Ruben González tickles the ivories eloquently on a few tracks. But Portuondo's distinctive voice remains a highlight throughout, whether she's singing a sassy mambo with tart horn blasts and pregnant silences ("Dónde Estabas Tú"), or presiding over a courtly country dance with tréas and flute ("Ella Y Yo"). >>>Banning Eyre

**OUT:**

May 9.

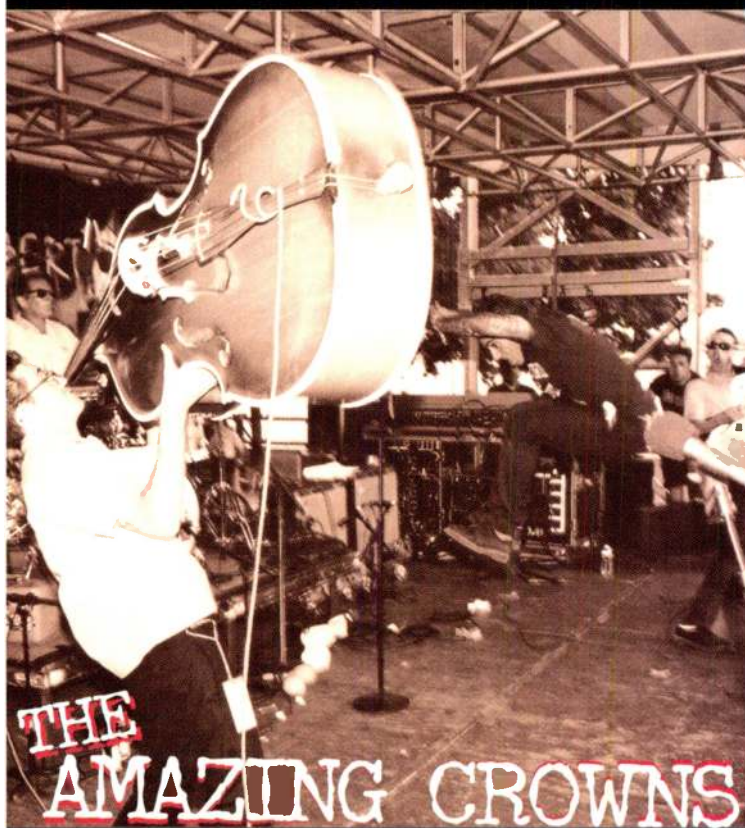
**FILE UNDER:**

Classy, classic Cuba.

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

Buena Vista Social Club, Ry Cooder, Edith Piaf.

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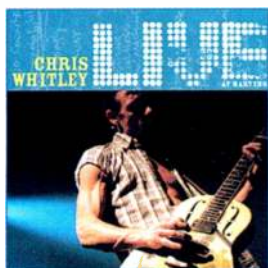
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**CHRIS WHITLEY**

Live At Martyrs

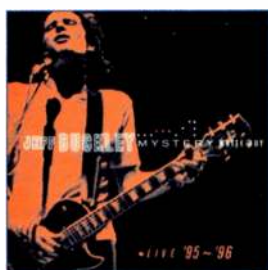
Messenger

**JEFF BUCKLEY** ★

Mystery White Boy

Columbia

Jeff Buckley was a singer/songwriter who, from the beginning of his relatively brief career in music to its end in the Mississippi River just a few years ago, seemed on the verge of transcendence: that elusive finish line you can't reach 'til it catches up with you. He had his demons, and they were palpable, haunting the edges of songs like "Last Goodbye" and "Grace." But they mostly took shape in the songs he chose to cover: Big Star's "Kanga Roo" rendered as a cross between Sonic Youth's avant dissonance and Led Zeppelin's bluesy bombast; Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," a hymn sung as such with a reverence that went beyond simple respect for the song itself. Perhaps more than any of his studio recordings (though not more than his promo-only debut EP *Live At Sin-é*), *Mystery White Boy*, a collection of a dozen tunes (including the above-mentioned covers) Buckley recorded live with his band between 1994 and 1996, captures the essence of what was still a work in progress. The sound quality is sketchy at times, and Buckley's band occasionally seems to be holding the singer/guitarist back. But it's part of what remains as evidence that Buckley, whose untethered voice here seems to be reaching for something just out of range, was on his



**OUT:**

May 9.

**FILE UNDER:**

Gone but not forgotten.

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

Tim Buckley, Elliott Smith, Richard Thompson.

way to achieving something transcendent before he died.

Chris Whitley's a singer/songwriter who sounds and looks like he's already been there and back again, like someone who only narrowly escaped an encounter with a reaper he no longer has to fear. His is a bluesier muse than Buckley's, one that finds expression in the scraping of steel slide on metal strings, the soulful rattle and open-tuned drone of his dobrow guitar and the bent-string solos that fill the spaces between the lines of his earthy-yet-mystical lyrics. As potent a player as he is (as captured here, solo at Martyrs in Chicago over three August nights in 1999), Whitley's reached that hard-to-pinpoint place Buckley seemed to be headed, a place where hard-earned transcendence comes as easily as a 1-4-5 blues. "There's a dirty floor underneath here/ To receive us when changes fail," Whitley sings against the warming buzz of a few skeletal chords in "Dirt Floor," acknowledging his intimacy with the other side of transcendence, the mortal side you often have to live hard enough to encounter before you find what you're really looking for. >>>Matt Ashare



JEFF BUCKLEY IS SO DREAMY.



**PROJECT 86**

Drawing Black Lines

Atlantic

**OUT:**

March 21.

**FILE UNDER:**

Loud for the Lord.

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

Snapcase, Helmet, U2.

Following in the steps of P.O.D. and MxPx, Orange County, Cali's Project 86 isn't about to let its love for Christ get in the way of its pursuit of secular punk-metal glory. And judging by the troubled lyrics and dark melodies on the group's major-label debut, *Drawing Black Lines*, singer Andrew Schwab's pain runs so deep it'll be hard to alleviate by faith alone. On tracks like the sickly dirge "Star" and the hardcore anthem "Set Me Up," Schwab and his band let off steam with the kind of grace and power usually associated with non-believers like Tool and Korn. When Project 86 does find time to proselytize in

"One-Armed Man (Play On)," Christianity takes a back seat to a spiritual code more in keeping with a punk-metal musical background: straightedge. That track is the strongest of several that utilize tuneful Deftones-style vocal hooks, and when he's not singing melodically, Schwab mercifully has the good sense to yell more often than he raps. Elsewhere, the band shows an arty streak in the noise-guitar meltdown of "Twenty-Three." Like most straightedged hardcore, *Drawing Black Lines* is a bit humorless, but Project 86 plays with such raging intensity it makes you wish more of its metal contemporaries would take themselves this seriously.

>>>Sean Richardson



**SLUM VILLAGE**

Fantastic Volume 2 Goodvibe-Atomic Pop

**OUT:**

May 16.

**FILE UNDER:**

Super-mellow rap.

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

Q-Tip, Roots, D'Angelo.

Slum Village's *Fantastic Volume 2* sounds an awful lot like the last Common record, which sounded way too much like the last D'Angelo record, which sounded entirely too much like The Roots. For artists tipped as radical reinventors of their medium, all these acts are way too low-key, and at some point they'll probably just merge into a big, super-mellow supergroup (?uestlove Brickell & The New Brohemians?). For now, though, the three Motor City mumblemouths who make up Slum Village get surprisingly frisky within their framework—selling aural incense, but with a snappy sales pitch—

and Slum ringleader Jay Dee's production has only gotten stronger since his stint as the saving grace of late-period Tribe Called Quest. Only a dude as handsome as Q-Tip could really pull off a collection of hooks this lite (Jay Dee oversaw Tip's pop-dude revitalization *Amplified*; compare "Eyes Up" here to Tip's "Higher"). But the really inspired moments—like when "I Don't Know" starts playing reverse Mad Libs with James Brown sound bites or when Jay Dee flows lush Moodymann-style ambience under a scratched four-count on "Once Upon A Time"—glow like black neon. >>>Alex Pappademas

**SNAKE RIVER CONSPIRACY** 

Sonic Jihad

Reprise

With its major label debut, San Francisco's Snake River Conspiracy welds sturdy pop hooks onto a techno-industrial framework that supports singer Tobey Torres' subversive sexuality. The disc's dark, gothic shadings bring to mind the obvious—Nine Inch Nails—especially when the alluring yet confrontational Torres frequently and fervently yelps "Fuck" amidst the emotional, distortion barrage of "Vulcan." Elsewhere, Torres and her partner, former Third Eye Blind bassist Jason Slater, work another one of their obvious influences into the mix by deconstructing The Cure's "Lovesong"



**OUT:**

June 13.

**FILE UNDER:**

Techno-industrial pop.

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

KMFDM, Garbage, Nine Inch Nails.

with drum 'n' bass breakbeats and cut-and-paste sampling, recasting it as a cleverly accessible slice of clubland pop. Slater clearly knows his way around the brave new digital world, but he cedes the spotlight to Torres, whose seductive voice is central to *Sonic Jihad's* appeal. Whether she's playing the breathy and vampish vixen in "Casualty," or the wistful and vulnerable waif in The Smith's "How Soon Is Now," Torres never fails to draw the listener into these not-so-ordinary tales of love, lust and running wild. And for all the sinister overtones and ominous shadings that color the typical Snake River Conspiracy song, *Sonic Jihad* is simply a well-wrought collection of modern pop gems. »»Linda Laban

**SONIC YOUTH**

NYC Ghosts & Flowers

Geffen-Interscope

As part of rock's permanent avant-garde, Sonic Youth has earned the right to not overwhelm us anymore as they go about refining past achievements. Having gone from less to more organized noise, then a tentative, even suspicious approach to recognizable songs and finally a more "mature" phase of noise-thickened rock numbers (*Goo*, *Dirty*) the band settles into a familiar formula here: A typical song's arc begins with a delicate arrangement of tart sonorities, then builds in intensity as Thurston Moore and Lee Renaldo's guitars start kicking over the sandcastle. Then,



**OUT:**

May 23.

**FILE UNDER:**

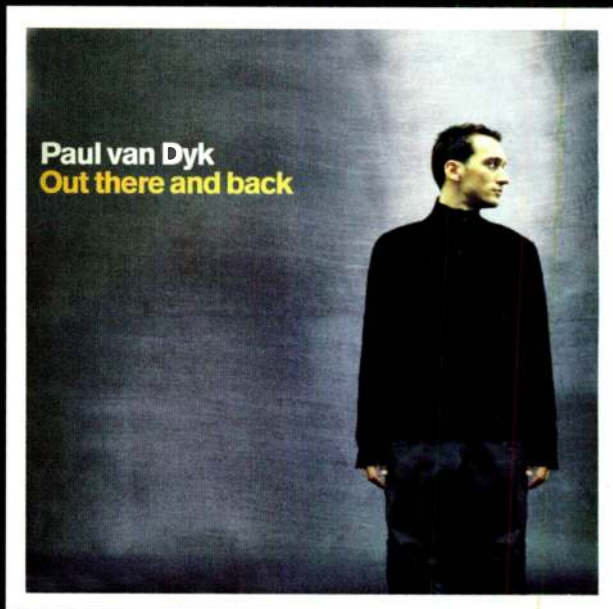
Once More Into The Breach.

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

Velvet Underground, Glenn Branca, Albert Ayler.

after a blurry peak, the track returns to the relative calm of the original thought. It may not be fresh, but it's still a satisfying trip, especially on the title cut and "Renegade Princess" where, with a burst of the old ruthlessness, the band doesn't even bother to return us safely home. Lyrically, the collage approach is as strong as ever, with the symmetrical snippets of the opener, "Free City Rhymes," setting the tone. Two main exceptions—the disembodied poetry reading on "Small Flowers Crack Concrete" and the first half of the title cut—sound like period pieces, skillful recreations of a moment long past. But then, neo-Beat poetry will always sound hokey in the context of a band whose main strength remains its ability to set up an intriguing concept and then blow it all to hell. »»Richard C. Walls

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**SAINT ETIENNE**

**Sound Of Water**

Sub Pop

Saint Etienne made an abrupt about-face on 1998's *Good Humor*, trading the house-based pure-pop the group pioneered for a mostly live approach. *The Sound Of Water* is equally introspective, despite being considerably more synthetic than its predecessor, thanks to the choice of German dub-twiddlers To Rococo Rot as producers. The resulting blend of acoustic instrumentation and remix-ready programming is a far cry from the prefab beats of Saint Etienne's early singles (and from singer Sarah Cracknell's slick pop solo disc *Lipslide*, recently released domestically). The danceable elements

**OUT:**

June 6.

**FILE UNDER:**

Electro-acoustronica.

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

Everything But The Girl, To Rococo Rot, Petula Clark.

are underplayed: "Heart Failed" bumps down a minimalist Autobahn, while the instrumental "Aspects Of Lambert" fades out just as the kick-drum gets cracking. "Downey, CA" and "Sycamore" filter nods to Bacharach through several layers of mid-morning haze, with Cracknell sounding less like someone singing on a record than someone singing along. The centerpiece is "How We Used To Live," a panorama of English daily life that rings numerous changes on its central hook, takes more than half of its nine minutes to reach its inevitably danceable payoff and reprises its main themes via a jazz trio. Trip-hop's answer to "A Day In The Life"? Maybe not; however, like all of Saint Etienne's best work, it's eternally lightweight but hardly disposable. >>>Franklin Bruno



**SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE**

**The Rising Tide**

Time Bomb

Formed in 1992, disbanded in 1995, and reconstituted two years later without founding member Nate Mendel, Sunny Day Real Estate put together some new material with uncomfortable results on its 1998 disc *How It Feels To Be Something On*. The Seattle band's first all-new collection since reuniting, *The Rising Tide*, which finds singer Jeremy Enigk taking over bass duties, is a better indication of where the group is headed. It bears few traces of Sunny Day's emo-punk roots. The youthful rush and odd, Fugazi-inspired song-structures of the early albums have been supplanted by minor-key riffing

**OUT:**

June 20.

**FILE UNDER:**

Modern melodramatic rock.

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

Live, Foo Fighters.

("Killed By An Angel" recalls "Ghost Rider In The Sky"), half-time heaviness and choruses for which "anthemic" is too weak a word. Lou Giordano's direct production and the band's musicianship are faultless, with drummer William Goldsmith (a former Foo Fighter) sounding particularly strong. But Enigk's vocals are as shrill and affected as ever; on "Disappear" they recall Yes's Jon Anderson, and ponderous lines like "I must break free from the prison I have made" don't help. Much better are ballads like "The Ocean" and the string-drenched "Rain Song," which have genuinely pretty tunes and textures, though the former flirts with bombast. There's no doubting Sunny Day's skill and sincerity, but this is the sound of a band growing extremely good at something that may not be worth doing. >>>Franklin Bruno

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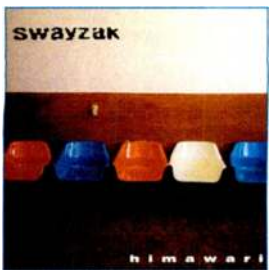
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World Radio History



**SWAYZAK**

**Himawari**

The Medicine Label

Swayzak has always been at the forefront of the British tech-house scene, a hybrid dancefloor subgenre combining the innate funkiness of house with techno's futuristic sensibilities. Beginning with a string of bleeding-edge 12-inch releases and moving on to a critically-acclaimed debut album, *Snowboarding In Argentina*, the London-based duo of James Taylor and Dave Broom has referenced everything from Jamaican dub pioneers Lee "Scratch" Perry and King Tubby to contemporary German experimentalists Pole and Basic Channel. For Taylor and Broom, the space between the beats and basslines has always been

**OUT:**

July 22.

**FILE UNDER:**

Tech-house.

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

Basic Channel, Larry Heard, Chris

Gray.

as important as the beats and basslines themselves. On *Himawari*, they build and extrapolate on the deep technoid rumble of *Snowboarding In Argentina*, mapping out more body-baffling sonic vistas with the electro shuffle of "Mysterons" and the quasi-drum 'n' bass "Pineapple Sponge Cake." They employ vocalists, including dub troubadour Benjamin Zephaniah ("Illegal"), voice of Orbital's "Halcyon," Kirsty Hawkshaw, for ("State Of Grace") and even a young Scottish boy reading poetry ("The Loch"). But for all the sonic undulations and explorations, Swayzak still knows how to rock—tracks like "Betek" and "Doobie" are destined for sweaty basement techno clubs the world over. Unlike too many electronic musicians, Taylor and Broom manage to maintain Swayzak's idiosyncratic intensity for the duration of the disc. >>>Kieran Wyatt



**SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY**

**Sto Cazzo!**

Southern

Chicago's Sweep The Leg Johnny racked up 145 live shows in 1999, and it shows in the ease with which the band negotiates the bizarre time signatures and hairpin dynamic shifts of the six labyrinthine selections on its third album. This brand of math-rock precision can have unpleasantly militaristic implications, but this crew is less like Navy SEALs than Bill Murray's troops in *Stripes*. Scott D. Anna's drums give the marching orders, but Christopher Daly's guitar and singer Steven Stosak's alto sax can't help but go their own way. At times, they fall out of formation completely: "The Fine Wrinkles;

**OUT:**

April 25.

**FILE UNDER:**

Chaos-theory math-rock.

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

The Contortions, VSS, Nation of

Ulysses.

We Have All Of Them," a burly work-out in 5/4, blurs into "That Than Which," gradually burying the band in backwards drums and clumps of truly atonal guitar. The sax is a welcome touch, lending several passages a piercing, no-wave edge; on the atypically subdued "Bloodlines," it alternates between overblown squawks and a line Peter Gordon might have played for Laurie Anderson. Stosak's singing is less remarkable; his lyrics have intriguingly gothic flashes ("White flesh/ This graveyard/ This pool"), but his post-Ian Svevoni (Make-Up) delivery is a bit played-out. It hardly matters; the success of *Sto Cazzo!* rests not with frontline charisma, but with the whole band's pitched battle between chaos and control. >>>Franklin Bruno

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**TARWATER**  
Animals, Suns & Atoms  
Mute

One reason groups like Portishead have more fans than textural innovators like Mouse On Mars or Oval is that trippers have vocals and more obvious melodies. On *Animals, Suns & Atoms*, Tarwater strikes a balance between the two, overlaying the structure of a trip-hop pop band—sultry grooves overlaid with noir vocals—with the burbling, popping melodic backdrops of Germany's latest wave of Krautrock bands. This second record from Bernd Jesträm and To Rococo Rot's Ronald Lippok is filled with slow and mid-tempo rhythms, peppered with soft-

**OUT:**  
May 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**

Kraut-hop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Portishead, Tortoise, Mouse On Mars, To Rococo Rot.

edged blips and bleeps and topped with even-toned vocals from Lippok. His delivery is a little like a lethargic, VU-era Lou Reed: "Noon" coasts above a somber piano loop and is elevated by the intertwining of his vocals with those of guest vocalist Justine Electra, whose soulful croon adds a sandpapery edge. "All Of The Ants Left Paris" engages a story line without making much literal sense, "The Trees" unfolds with a sly, cinematic feel and "Early Risers" has an almost-hip-hop bounce. It all adds up to an approach to Krautrock that's easy to grasp and groove along to, a relief to those wishing to stretch their horizons without jumping off the map. >>>Lydia Vanderloo



**TAHITI 80** ★  
Puzzle  
Minty Fresh

As with other Minty Fresh lozenges like The Cardigans and the Legendary Jim Ruiz Group, the four Parisian throwbacks in Tahiti 80 pay homage to the baroque '60s pop they adore (Kinks, Zombies, Bacharach) with ice-capped, breathy English lyrics and a curiously weak rhythm section. No highs, no lows, just 40 minutes of exceedingly pleasant, mildly gorgeous retroactivity, punctuated by Eric Matthews blowing a few flashy fluegelhorn flourishes. Tahiti 80's best songs are essentially self-referential tunes about the pop world of the past, which this band adores. "Hey Joe" is not

**OUT:**  
May 9.  
**FILE UNDER:**

French fried retro pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
The Cardigans, The Legendary Jim Ruiz Group, The Left Banke.

the millionth version of the standard Hendrix made famous, but rather an ode to '60s Irish pop star Joe Dolan. And the Kinks homage "Mr. Davies" is an uncommonly candid glimpse into how easily hero worship slips into jealousy for fan-practitioners like Tahiti 80 ("he's considered a songwriter and I'm not at this time"). Unfortunately, Tahiti 80 auteur Xavier Boyer is more like a curator than a songwriter, which doesn't give us a reason to listen beyond homage. There's something a little too complacent—if not reactionary—about the warm, ready-made blanket under which Tahiti 80's songs are tucked, a nostalgia trap that real pop easily leaps over at its messiest, incongruous best. >>>Kevin John

**"One Armed Man (Play On)"**  
**and**  
**"Me Against Me"**

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Resolver  
Beyond

Now that Veruca Salt's a one-woman operation, Louise Post is more Seether than ever. On the third album under the group's name—essentially Post's solo debut—she ricochets between huskily whispered declarations of defiance like "Disconnected" and howling rock 'n' roll rants like "Used To Know Her" and "Born Entertainer." On the latter, she pumps up the aggro and the volume with Angus Young guitarisms and the production of Filter/Nine Inch Nails vet Brian Liesegang. As the title implies, Post's been through some changes, and these 13 songs seem to document not only the end of her

**OUT:**  
May 16.  
**FILE UNDER:**

Estrogen-X.  
**R.I.Y.L.:**  
Geraldine Fibbers, Patti Smith, Catherine Wheel.

partnership with band co-leader Nina Gordon but also the finale of more than a few romances. Often, especially when she's screaming in blind rage and anger, this sounds like therapy. Even gently unspooling numbers like "Pretty Boys" and "Imperfectly" (Post's nod to Yo La Tengo and to Kate Bush) walk a knife-edge of personal tension. But for every slip of vulnerability there's a show of defiance in either the teeth-baring growl of the guitars or the snarling, fearless lyrics of numbers like "Born Entertainer" and "Best You Can Get," which flip-off limitations to charge gracefully forward. There's humor, too, and a pop heart at play in the stacks of yeah-yeah's and wry quotes from Cheap Trick and The Who. What connects it all is the pull of Post's most convincing instrument: her sweet 'n' strychnine voice. >>>Ted Drozdowski



The British dance community has long tried to tap the vein of the American listening public. And while artists from sub-genres like drum 'n' bass, techno and house have exported a diverse assortment of music and garnered their share of supporters, it's big beat vanguards such as **Fatboy Slim** that have become the new darlings of MTV and commercial radio, and trance DJs like **Paul Oakenfold** who now sell out venues across the country.

It's fitting, then, that Pete Tong—the BBC Radio One jockey whose "Essential Selection" show has fashioned the taste of UK clubbers for nine years—would sign on Fatboy and Oakie to trumpet the arrival of *Essential Selection Vol. 1* (ffrr-London/Sire), the first Stateside release of the long-running UK series. Like Slim's original productions, his 18-track *Essential* mix is a party pressed on plastic. His musical direction is more varied and adventurous when he takes to the tables, as his set weaves between disco-

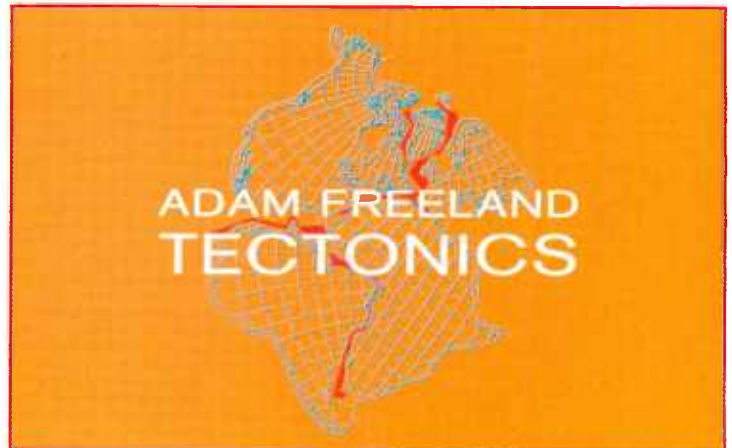


influenced hard house (Armand Van Helden's "Necessary Evil"), gritty acid-breaks (Major Forces' "Return Of The Original Artform") and foolproof crowd

pleasers by The Chemical Brothers and Underworld. Yet despite the fluctuation of influences and energies, the disc still boasts the catchy rock and hip-hop hooks that characterize Slim's studio work. Oakenfold's 12-track mix forgoes his usual assortment of hand-raising anthems in favor of cuts fueled by deep tribal grooves (Luzon's "The Baguio Track"), breakbeats (J-Jacks's "Perfect State") and erotic progressive house (ZZ's "I Want You"). It's a comparatively subtle and serene complement to Slim's booty-shaking contribution, wooing listeners with inviting melodies and hypnotic rhythmic undercurrents. The fact that the two discs vary in their overall demeanor and intent stands as its biggest asset.

Funky breaks, a popular staple of the American rave scene for

nearly a decade, usually takes influence from either James Brown-ish funk grooves or rock-riddled big beat rhythms. But in 1996, British DJ/producer **Adam Freeland** introduced an entirely new take on the sound with his UK-released *Coastal Breaks* mix. Embracing chunky and choppy grooves laced with the sub-bass frequencies and erratic rhythmic tendencies of drum 'n' bass, Freeland's adaptation was starker, darker and heavier than those of his cohorts and made him the leading figure of the British "nu-skoool breaks" scene. *Tectonics* (Ultra), his first US mix, fluidly presents 13 standout cuts from the emerging underground, including highlights such as Beber's "Juvenile Delinquent," 3 Mile Island's "Liposuction" and "Hip-Hop Phenomenon," a funky floor-filler penned by Freeland and US producer BT. The music veers from rough and raw to smooth and soulful, but Freeland's mastery allows him to cruise over the uneven audio terrain like a Lexus over cracks in the pavement. >>>M Tye Comer



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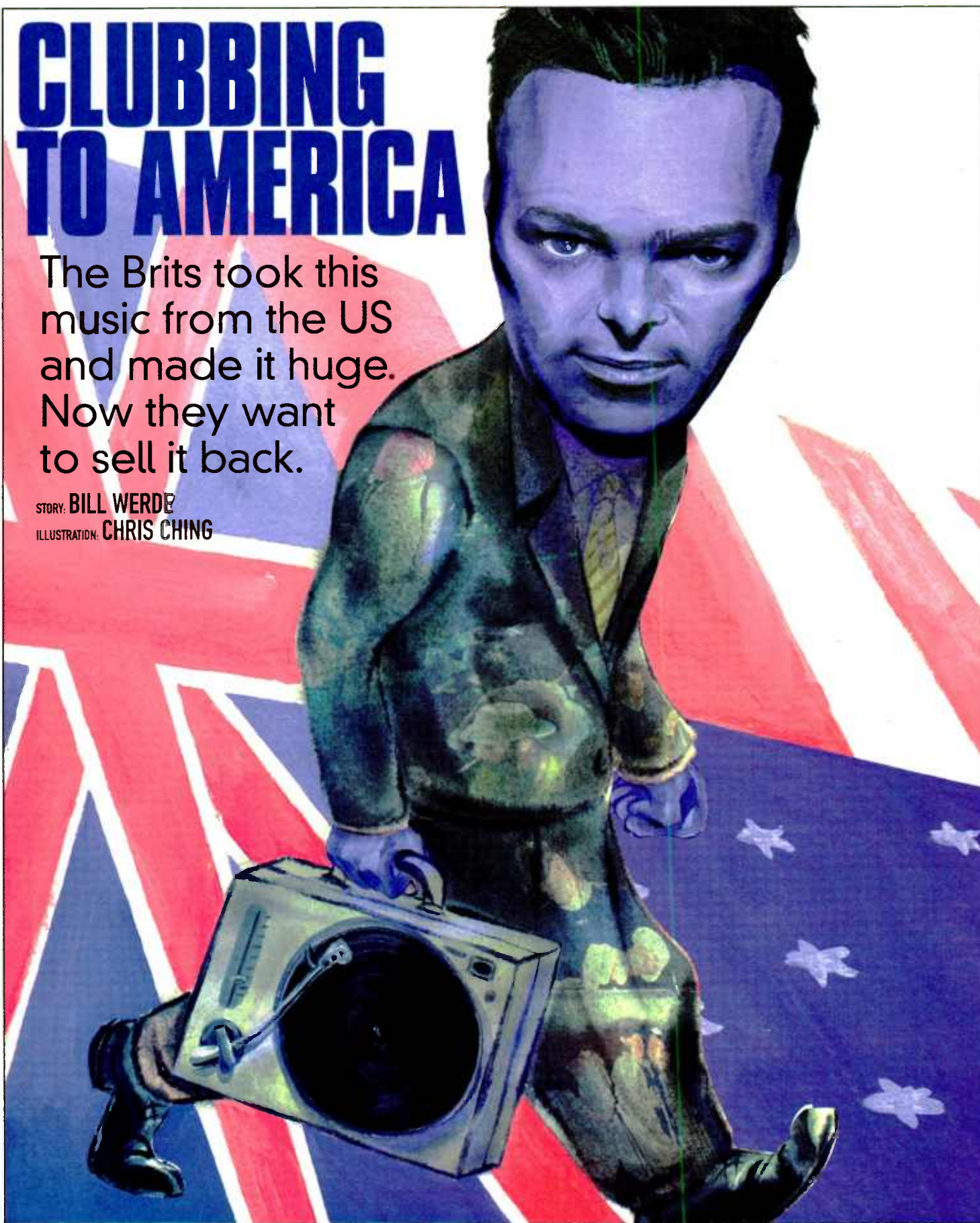
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# CLUBBING TO AMERICA

The Brits took this music from the US and made it huge. Now they want to sell it back.

STORY: **BILL WERDE**  
ILLUSTRATION: **CHRIS CHING**



PETE TONG GOES TO WORK.

The club scene in America has reached a benchmark, signified by the recent release of the Pete Tong-backed *Essential Selection Vol. 1* (ffrr/London-Sire) and the imminent arrival of Ministry Of Sound's *Trance Nation America* (Ultra). Tong, the BBC Radio One DJ and ffrr label director, and Ministry, a UK brand that endorses a successful nightclub, magazine, radio show and several top-selling compilations, represent a level of corporate exploitation that America's rave scene has long scorned and American clubland has long sought. That these two UK juggernauts are beginning to campaign in America—both launching tours, promoting Web sites, targeting US radio and scheduling additional compilation releases—is an acknowledgement of the maturation and commercial potential of the American club scene.

In the UK, clubbing is what most young adults do on the weekend, spurred in part by venues that serve alcohol well into the morning, as pubs call their last at 11 p.m. UK market-research thinktank Mintel released a survey in '98 that showed 52 percent of those aged 15 to 24 claiming to be "frequent visitors" of clubs. Tong and Ministry are central to that clubbing experience. Each Friday night, Tong broadcasts his *Essential Selection* show on BBC Radio One to a nation of club-goers readying for their night out. And when they leave their homes, Ministry—the London Club owned by the company of the same—is city kids' destination. It reaches its 2500 capacity every Friday and Saturday night, providing revelers with psychedelic lights, a pounding sound system and overpriced bottles of water. Ministry has since branched out, selling millions of compilation records (including 2.5 million of *The Annual* series), while *Ministry* magazine has become the top seller in a crowded UK dance press market.

Tong and Ministry are coming to America because they have determined it is a market ripe for the picking. In the past year, Moby's gold record, *Play* (V2), and Fatboy Slim's platinum *You've Come A Long Way, Baby* (Astralwerks) demonstrated that there is a healthy commercial audience for electronic music. Clubs and radio mix shows play the latest styles of house and trance in most major US cities. And the summer flick *Groove*, about San Francisco ravers, along with the UK club movie *Human Traffic* (Tong assisted with the soundtrack), are likely to further raise the profile of America's dance scene.

Yet commercial radio still largely ignores electronic music. Corporate sponsors—perhaps deterred by the clubs' corresponding drug cultures, but more likely short on market research that evinces the size of the demo—are wary of getting involved. Major labels like Warner and Virgin are just beginning to see some promise in the music, pouring more cash into subsidiary labels such as Kinetic and Astralwerks, respectively. Tong and the folks at Ministry look at the absolute commercial acceptance of club culture in the UK and believe they can get the US over the hump that divides the underground from the mainstream. "There's a big opportunity there," says Tong. "People like me, if we're smart, have got to use the 10 to 15 years experience we've had of being in a [country] where what we do is considered important."

The distinction between the club and rave scenes in America is important. The two increasingly cross-pollinate, but ravers tend to be younger, and harbor a lingering subversiveness. The underground regards huge commercial successes like Fatboy Slim and Paul Oakenfold with a disdain normally reserved for narrow pants. Meanwhile, the club scene, healthiest in major cities, is full of partiers who have discovered that taking a pill or three and dancing 'til sunrise is a great way to spend a night, and goddamn the underground.

While both Stateside debuts showcase the hot club sounds of the day—melodic trance and its less fluffy cousin, progressive house—they represent separate strategies. Tong's *Essential Selection* was released several months ago in the UK as a three album set featuring the talents of Tong, Fatboy Slim and Paul Oakenfold. The Fatboy Slim mix is identical to the UK version, but due to American licensing laws, Tong removed his own entry, and had Paul Oakenfold deliver a new batch of

tracks. Fatboy's disc delivers some of the rock-heavy big beat and mischievous personality that fans of his past albums will be comfortable with, plus the tried-and-true (and a little old) Underworld hit "Born Slippy." But the record also delves into hypnotic dancefloor trance, more than a fan of *You've Come A Long Way, Baby* might expect. Oakenfold drops a classic trance set, with atmospheric melodies and plenty of vocals. "It was smart for us," says Tong. "Fatboy Slim is a star in America, and Oakie tours in the US far more than I do."

While Tong tries to launch the *Essential* name behind superstar UK DJs with proven sales clout in America, Ministry is attempting a more organic approach, selecting L.A.-based trance DJ Taylor for one of *Trance Nation America*'s two albums, and NYC's Jimmy Van M for the other. Even in their home country, the two DJs can't hold a candle to the sales success and high profile of a Fatboy Slim or Oakenfold, but they're arguably the best and most established trance DJs that America has to offer. Van M has held the coveted opening spot for the three years of Sasha And Digweed's Twilo residency. Taylor has been a popular West Coast club and rave trance DJ for almost nine years.

Taylor says Ministry provided him with complete freedom to choose his tracks, which was important, as he felt the UK Ministry comps were too "over the top"—a not-so-subtle jab at UK trance, often thought to be cheesy by those raised on the grittier US house- and techno-fueled rave scenes. "I am mixing this like I would if it were for myself," says Taylor, speaking from a UK studio. Van M's mix is significantly harder and more minimal than the relatively sunny Oakie and Fatboy efforts; fans of Sasha And Digweed's darker moments will be pleased.

There are already plans underway for both brands to release August compilations. The next Ministry release will be *House Nation America*, with Erick Morillo and Derrick Carter the likely DJs. *Essential* plans to extend its brand further with *Essential Mix Volume 1*,

a series intended to promote up-and-coming DJs. Floridian breaks DJ Ikey, an expert in funky, sped-up hip-hop, has been tentatively announced as the selector.

For Ministry Of Sound and Tong, there is an expectation that US compilation sales will be just the tip of the glowstick. Both point to the high percentage of US visitors to their Web sites as potential evidence that the American population is underserved by its own media; Ministry claims that half of its 500,000 unique users come from the States each month, while Tong says that about a third of Radio One's Web visitors are logging in from America. "The Web seems to be a very natural place for dance music to evolve in America," says Tong. "Every town has its alternative station, or R&B and hip-hop station. Dance music seems to have really kicked in on the Web."

Tong is working with broadcast syndicator Bridge Media to land his *Essential* radio program on college stations, and developing partnerships for his [www.essentialselection.com](http://www.essentialselection.com). Ministry is servicing to commercial radio, and recently switched its URL from the [uk.co](http://uk.co) suffix to [ministryofsound.com](http://ministryofsound.com). There is a plan to host the site from American servers by year's end, resulting in faster connections for US users. Both plan summer tours: Ministry will likely package Van M and Taylor with some UK talent; Pete Tong will tour America for the first time in his DJ career, likely partnered with US counterparts.

It might seem that American DJs, who have been working to expand this scene for years, might regard both Ministry and Pete Tong as Johnny-come-latelies, and resent their attempts to cash in on a maturing scene. But at least one notable American DJ welcomes the high-profile newcomers. "The American major labels will see that this is a productive, growth-oriented market," says Josh Wink, one of the most successful DJs America has on the international scene. Wink, who was recently dropped from Columbia Records, says he can sell four to five times as many records in the UK: "I would love for anybody to come in here and kick the US market in the ass."

NMM

**Josh Wink: "I would love for anybody to come in here and kick the US market in the ass."**

|    |                             |                                    |                        |
|----|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | APPLES IN STEREO            | The Discovery Of A World...        | spinART                |
| 2  | REVEREND HORTON HEAT        | Spend A Night In The Box           | Time Bomb              |
| 3  | YO LA TENGO                 | And Then Nothing Turned Itself     | Matador                |
| 4  | EELS                        | Daisies Of The Galaxy              | DreamWorks             |
| 5  | CAT POWER                   | The Covers Record                  | Matador                |
| 6  | WEEN                        | White Pepper                       | Elektra                |
| 7  | GUIDED BY VOICES            | Hold On Hope EP                    | TVT                    |
| 8  | PATTI SMITH                 | Gung Ho                            | Arista                 |
| 9  | VARIOUS ARTISTS             | At Home With The Groovebox         | Grand Royal            |
| 10 | TRAVIS                      | The Man Who                        | Epic                   |
| 11 | SIX BY SEVEN                | The Closer You Get                 | Mantra-Beggars Banquet |
| 12 | ELLIOTT SMITH               | Figure 8                           | DreamWorks             |
| 13 | JOSEPH ARTHUR               | Came To Where I'm From             | Real World-Virgin      |
| 14 | PEDRO THE LION              | Winners Never Quit                 | Jade Tree              |
| 15 | DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE         | We Have The Facts And We're        | Barsuk                 |
| 16 | SMASHING PUMPKINS           | MACHINA/The Machines Of God        | Virgin                 |
| 17 | BLOODHOUND GANG             | Hooray For Boobies                 | Genre-Interscope       |
| 18 | RINOCEROSE                  | Installation Sonore                | V2                     |
| 19 | BLACKALICIOUS               | NIA                                | Djaneum Projects       |
| 20 | THE THE                     | NakedSelf                          | Nothing-Interscope     |
| 21 | BRAID                       | Movie Music Vol. One/Vol. Two      | Polyvinyl              |
| 22 | THE CURE                    | Bloodflowars                       | Fiction-Elektra        |
| 23 | SUPERGRASS                  | Supersass                          | Island                 |
| 24 | VARIOUS ARTISTS             | Songs For The Jet Set Vol. 3       | Jetset                 |
| 25 | BUILT TO SPILL              | Live                               | DreamWorks             |
| 26 | AIR                         | The Virgin Suicides                | Source-Astralwerks     |
| 27 | DIRTY THREE                 | Whatever You Love, You Are!        | Touch And Go           |
| 28 | L.T.J. BUKEM                | Journey Inwards                    | Kinetic                |
| 29 | MARY TIMONY                 | Mountains                          | Matador                |
| 30 | OASIS                       | Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants | Epic                   |
| 31 | ENJOI                       | Believe!                           | See Thru Broadcasting  |
| 32 | GIANT SAND                  | Chore Of Enchantment               | Thrill Jockey          |
| 33 | FISHBONE AND THE FAMILYHOOD | The Psychotic Friends Network      | Hollywood              |
| 34 | ROLLINS BAND                | Get Some Go Again                  | DreamWorks             |
| 35 | GOLDFINGER                  | Stomping Ground                    | Mojib-Universal        |
| 36 | CRACKER                     | Garage D'or                        | Virgin                 |
| 37 | JOHN SCOFIELD               | Bump                               | Verve                  |
| 38 | ESSEX GREEN                 | The Essex Green (EP)               | Elephant 6             |
| 39 | DELTA 72                    | DOG                                | Touch And Go           |
| 40 | LITTLE RED ROCKET           | It's In The Sound                  | Monolyth               |
| 41 | CATATONIA                   | Equally Cursed And Blessed         | Atlantic               |
| 42 | BRIGHT EYES                 | Fevers And Mirrors                 | Saddle Creek           |
| 43 | LOU REED                    | Ecstasy                            | Reprise                |
| 44 | KID KOALA                   | Carpal Tunnel Syndrome             | Ninja Tune             |
| 45 | VARIOUS ARTISTS             | Plastic Compilation Volume 03      | Network                |
| 46 | DAY ONE                     | Ordinary Man                       | Melankolic-Astralwerks |
| 47 | QUICKSPACE                  | The Death Of Quickspace            | Matador                |
| 48 | JOSH ROUSE                  | Home                               | Slow River-Rykodisc    |
| 49 | BUSY SIGNALS                | Baby's First Beats                 | Sugar Free             |
| 50 | MELVINS                     | The Crybaby                        | Ipecac                 |
| 51 | GALACTIC                    | Late For The Future                | Cascom                 |
| 52 | MORPHINE                    | The Night                          | DreamWorks             |
| 53 | FOR CARBINATION             | The For Carnation                  | Touch And Go           |
| 54 | STEP KINGS                  | Let's Get It On                    | Roadrunner             |
| 55 | MOUSE ON MARS               | Man Niggund!                       | Thrill Jockey          |
| 56 | MDFMK                       | MDFMK                              | Republic-Universal     |
| 57 | FATBOY SLIM                 | On The Floor At The Boutique       | Astralwerks            |
| 58 | LOIS MAFFEO & BRENDAN CANTY | The Union Themes                   | Kill Rock Stars        |
| 59 | MODEST MOUSE                | Building Nothing Out Of            | Up                     |
| 60 | WEE TURTLES                 | This Land Is Your Land             | Pitch-A-Tent           |
| 61 | VARIOUS ARTISTS             | Japan Not For Sale Vol. 3          | Sony Japan-Sony        |
| 62 | THE LAPSE                   | Heaven Ain't Happenin'             | Southern               |
| 63 | BOSS HOG                    | White Out                          | In The Red             |
| 64 | NO DOUBT                    | Return Of Saturn                   | Trauma-Interscope      |
| 65 | COMMON                      | Lake Water For Chocolate           | MCA                    |
| 66 | NERF HERDER                 | How To Meet Girls                  | Honest Don's           |
| 67 | JIMMIE DALE GILMORE         | One Endless Night                  | Windcharger-Rounder    |
| 68 | PAPAS FRITAS                | Buildings And Grounds              | Minty Fresh            |
| 69 | AUTUMNS                     | In The Russet Gold Of This         | Risk                   |
| 70 | SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE   | Supreme Beings Of Leisure          | Palm Pictures          |
| 71 | TREMBLING BLUE STARS        | Broken By Whispers                 | Sub Pop                |
| 72 | JAPANČAKES                  | Down The Elements (EP)             | Kindercore             |
| 73 | ASS PONY'S                  | Some Stupid With A Flare Gun       | Checkered Past         |
| 74 | ANNE SUMMERS                | Very Classy                        | Beatville              |
| 75 | MAKERS                      | Rock Star God                      | Atlantic               |



**#1** APPLES IN STEREO  
The Discovery Of A World  
Inside The Moone  
spinART

## FIVE YEARS AGO

### 1. PJ HARVEY

TO SING YOU MY LOVE (ISLAND)

### 2. MIKE WATT

WALL-HOG OR TUGBOAT (COLUMBIA)

### 3. MORPHINE

YES (COLUMBIA)

### 4. MATTHEW SWEET

100% FUN (ZOO)

### 5. ARCHERS OF LOAF

VEE VEE (ALIAS)

## TEN YEARS AGO

### 1. SINEAD O'CONNOR

I DO NOT WANT WHAT I HAVEN'T GOT (EDGEH-CHRYSALIS)

### 2. THE CHURCH

GOLD AFTERNOON FER (ARISTA)

### 3. MIDNIGHT OIL

BLUE SKY MINING (COLUMBIA)

### 4. THE CHILLS

SUMMERS BILLS (WARNER BROS.)

### 5. THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

FLOOD (SIRE-REPRISE)



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. Everyone thinks Nicole Keiper's repressed except her friend Mr. Squirrel.

TOP 25

- 1 PANTERA  
Reinventing The Steel ELEKTRA
- 2 ARMORED SAINT  
Revelation METAL BLADE
- 3 SHADOWS FALL  
Of One Blood CENTURY MEDIA
- 4 DISTURBED  
The Sickness GIANT-REPRISE
- 5 DIO  
Magica SPITFIRE
- 6 PROJECT 86  
Drawing Black Lines TOOTH & NAIL-ATLANTIC
- 7 WALLS OF JERICHO  
The Bound Feed The Gag TRUSTKILL
- 8 STEP KINGS  
Let's Get It On Again ROADRUNNER
- 9 DEMONS & WIZARDS  
Demons & Wizards STEAMHAMMER
- 10 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Victory Style 4 VICTORY
- 11 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Heavy Metal 2000 RESTLESS
- 12 THERION  
Deggjal NUCLEAR BLAST
- 13 POISON THE WELL  
The Opposite Of December... TRUSTKILL
- 14 A PERFECT CIRCLE  
"Judith" (CD5) VIRGIN
- 15 KRISIUN  
Conquerors Of Armageddon CENTURY MEDIA
- 16 DECEASED  
Supernatural Addiction RELAPSE
- 17 GLASSJAW  
Everything You Ever Wanted To... ROADRUNNER
- 18 CRADLE OF FILTH  
From The Cradle To Enslave EP METAL BLADE
- 19 STRATOVARIUS  
Infinite NUCLEAR BLAST
- 20 OLD MAN'S CHILD  
Revelation 666: The Curse Of... CENTURY MEDIA
- 21 CROWBAR  
Equilibrium SPITFIRE
- 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Power From The North: NUCLEAR BLAST AMERICA
- 23 SENTENCED  
Crimson CENTURY MEDIA
- 24 FLESHCRAWL  
As Blood Rains From The Sky... METAL BLADE
- 25 COALESCE  
0:12 Revolution In Just... RELAPSE

>>>Sixteen years ago, when **Mayhem** was content



**PICK!**

abruptly in a bouquet of subtle stereo effects. Among countless brave experiments, Mayhem rocks an 808 kick drum on the trippy opening of "Part III—Il Principe." *Grand Declaration* is a transformative allusion to metal; it's either a landmark album or a mighty catalyst that will change everything around it.

The French-Canadian grindcore band **Kataklysm** has spent the better part of five years recovering from the loss of its cryptic



mystical frontman Sylvain Houde. While still not ascending to the mountainous storms of the 1995 CD *Sorcery*, Kataklysm presents a welcome return to form on *The Prophecy (Stigmata Of The Immaculate)* (Nuclear Blast). The twin vocalists, hyperspeed mosh parts and melodic death metal guitar parts sound a little dated, but it all churns together in a formidable maelstrom that pushes through and validates the familiar traits... As a teaser to its latest Relapse Records CD, Virginia's **Deceased** has done two very Iron Maiden-like things. First, with the help of Outlaw Recordings, it's released a limited vinyl single with a non-LP B-side. Second, that song happens to be Maiden's "Two Minutes To Midnight." It's another great document of a long-enduring band that is always there for metal, and whose cultivated musical prowess always shows it... Upstate New York's **Earth Crisis** has been storming through the hardcore underground for 10 years. With noisy, balls-out metal and blood-raw, almost indecipherable, barked vocals, the band make its ultra-militant views in support of animal rights and the straightedge lifestyle clear, gaining occasional MTV and CNN notoriety in the process. *Slither* (Victory), the band's fourth studio effort, might surprise diehards. The requisite, stomp mosh riffage is present, but the message is softened and frontman Karl Buechner has added some vocal filters, abandoning his one-dimensional style of guttural growls in favor of songs and raps. *Slither* offers enough accessibility to put EC in a class with commercial aggro acts like Downset and Machine Head—for better or for worse. >>>Assistance preparing this column was provided by Amy Sciarretto.

with playing Metallica and Venom covers in a Norwegian barn, it must have been hard for the band to imagine it would weather the deaths of two main creative forces and still rise to create something as delicate and terrifying as *Grand Declaration Of War* (Necropolis). *Grand Declaration* offers parts two and three of a trilogy started with *Wolfs Lair Abyss*—the 1997 EP that debuted the new Mayhem. Where that release proved Mayhem could still kill with ferocious speed and arcane arrangements, *Grand Declaration* delivers a relentless reel of concussive aftershocks and tracer riffs. There are few obvious moments on the disc—some songs reveal the primary guitar riff once, then leave it implied for the duration. A thunderingly impossible drum roll by drummer Hellhammer trails into a guitar blitzkrieg, then gusts



ascending to the mountainous storms of the 1995 CD *Sorcery*. Kataklysm presents a welcome return to form on *The Prophecy (Stigmata Of The Immaculate)* (Nuclear Blast). The twin vocalists, hyperspeed mosh parts and melodic death metal guitar parts sound a little dated, but it all churns together in a formidable maelstrom that pushes through and validates the familiar traits... As a teaser to its latest Relapse Records CD, Virginia's **Deceased** has done two very Iron Maiden-like things. First, with the help of Outlaw Recordings, it's released a limited vinyl single with a non-LP B-side. Second, that song happens to be Maiden's "Two Minutes To Midnight." It's another great document of a long-enduring band that is always there for metal, and whose cultivated musical prowess always shows it... Upstate New York's **Earth Crisis** has been



NEWS



The hospital melodrama of **Death/Control Denied** founder "Evil" Chuck Schuldiner was one of this past spring's best-publicized bits of metal news, as even MTV was sucked into white-knuckled daily updates on his life-saving experimental surgery for brain cancer. Schuldiner appears to be headed for recovery, minus close to \$100,000 in medical bills; his royalties for *Scream Bloody Gore* (Loud) and other classic death metal recordings now belong to NYU Medical Center. Luckily, the revolving door of Death's lineup since 1984 means Chuck has lots of pals willing to pitch in for a Death tribute fundraiser CD. Ex-bandmates Gene Hoglan, James Murphy, Chris Reifert, Andy La Rocque, Kam Lee, Kelly Conlon and a host of sunburned Floridians have been contacted by France's *Metalian* magazine, and the project is taking shape.



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

## >>>For those not acquainted with the work of mastering

POLE  
3

engineer and electronic minimalist Stefan Betke, a.k.a. **Pole**, his third full-length, *3* (Matador) should convert you with one listen. Pole changes the contours of the snap, crackle and pop of his broken equipment, seeming to stop time and suddenly resume it, and making vast spaces seem claustrophobic with a turn of the edit block. The crystalline threnody that is "Rondell Zwei" seems held up by a house of cards that's ready to collapse with the slightest breath, and yet somehow still feels undergirded by resonant, tensile metal beams. Pole's sound emanates both a comforting warmth and a remorseless industrial cold. A strong rhythmic drive runs like a power surge throughout; this is clinical machine music that sends listeners into deep head nods while keeping a sense of unease. Pole's techniques have only become more refined on this album, replacing the anxious, dizzying moments found on the first two records with a newfound depth.

## PICK!

>>>It's rumored that the elusive electronic bad girls of Munich, **Chicks On Speed**, are being courted by some major labels in the U.S. This coincides with the release of their first album, *The Un-Releases* on their own Go label. Think of the mischievousness of maverick girl punk band X-Ray Spex armed with the menace of punishing drum machines, and you'll get some idea of what these Chicks are up to. There are no track titles here, but you'll catch on quickly enough when they start singing "She wears a feather bra/ And brushes her teeth/ Five times a day" from the previously released Euro-disco gem "Glamour Girl." On another early single, "Euro Trash Girl," Melissa, Alex and Kiki go off on Euro-trash everywhere, accompanied by a driving 4/4 kick drum...

The latest effort from the prolific **Beta Bodega Coalition** comes in the wake of the Coalition's successful party at the Winter Music Conference. It's being released on the Rice & Beans imprint and is titled *Psychological Operations In Guerilla Warfare*. Taking direct aim at US policies in Panama, these 11 tracks collect disparate electronic grooves from Takeshi Muto, Goem and TPM—all pseudonyms for artists such as Jake Mandell, Phoenecia, Stewart Walker and Push Button Objects. The packaging contains manifestos and colorful, elaborate maps depicting US incursions into Panama, while the album is packed with woofer-damaging analog experimentation. The music ranges from the mysterious **????**'s broken breakbeats and deep kick drums on the opener, to **Takeshi Muto**'s bubbling electro track and **Goem**'s scraping laptop sine wave piece. The quieter moments are found on **El Brujo Oscuro**'s lengthy, ambient track... There's dark, metallic, menacing drum 'n' bass, and then there are the nightmarish rings of hell evoked by Norwegian producer **DJ Teebee**, otherwise known as Black Science Labs. He's the Freddie Krueger of drum 'n' bass, going straight to the heart of your worst fears. Closer to black and death metal than he is to any of his peers, his debut full-length is a monstrous, frightening record that packs a groove so tight you'd need the jaws of life to pry it open.



CHICKS ON SPEED



DJ TEEBEE

## NEWS

One American to watch is analog studio surgeon **Kid 606**. Having released a dozen singles in the last 18 months on almost as many labels, his sonic homebrew is particularly toxic, like a less heralded and rawer equivalent to Alec Empire. His latest 7-inch, on cult British label V/Vm, cuts up NWA's infamous *Straight Outta Compton* in a lethal manner. Now the Kid is collaborating with Mike Patton (of Faith No More/Mr. Bungle fame) on a record called *Down With The Scene*, to be released on Patton's Ipecac label... Thrill Jockey is working on bringing **Mira Calix** to the States this summer. The group's first full-length, *Oneone*, is out now and spans a wide range of instrumental electronic sounds, from rainy day ambience to roughly hewn breakbeats underpinned by plaintive, distant melodies.

## TOP 25

- 1 LTJ BUKEM  
Journey Inwards KINETIC
- 2 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Brassic Beats USA SKINT (UK)
- 3 KID KOALA  
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome NINJA TUNE
- 4 KEOKI  
DJMixed.com MOONSHINE
- 5 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Plastic Compilation Volume 03 NETTWERK
- 6 RINOCEROSE  
Installation Sonore v2
- 7 FATBOY SLIM  
On The Floor At The Boutique SKINT-ASTRALWERKS
- 8 I:CUBE  
Adore VERSATILE-BIG RED
- 9 SYSTEM DER DINGE  
Fear Forms Function DSBP
- 10 COVENANT  
United States Of Mind METROPOLIS
- 11 CONSOLE  
Rocket In The Pocket MATADOR
- 12 SVEN VATH  
Contact ULTRA
- 13 DJ CAM  
The French Connection SHADOW
- 14 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
No Categories 3 UBQUITY
- 15 THUNDERBALL  
Ambassadors Of Style EIGHTEENTH STREET LOUNGE
- 16 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
At Home With The GrooveBOX GRAND ROYAL
- 17 MR. OIZO  
Analog Worms Attack MUTE
- 18 DANNY TENAGLIA  
Back To Mine DMC-ULTRA
- 19 SPRING HEEL JACK  
Treader THIRSTY EAR
- 20 APOPTYGMA BERZERK  
Welcome To Earth TATRA-METROPOLIS
- 21 AIR  
The Virgin Suicides SOURCE-ASTRALWERKS
- 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Om Lounge 3 OM
- 23 1.B.7  
The Cities Collection JUNGLE SKY-LIQUID SKY
- 24 MOUSE ON MARS  
Niun Niggung THRILL JOCKEY
- 25 GEORGE ACOSTA  
Awake ULTRA



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

## TOP 25

- 1 COMMON  
"The Sixth Sense" MCA
- 2 TONY TOUCH  
"The Diaz Brothers"/"The Piece Maker" TOMMY BOY
- 3 NON PHIXION  
"Black Helicopters" UNCLE HOWIE-MATADOR
- 4 ANTI-POP CONSORTIUM  
"Lif" 75 ARK
- 5 MASEO  
"Words And Verbs" TOMMY BOY
- 6 JAY-Z  
"Big Pimpin'" DEF JAM
- 7 DEAD PREZ  
"Hip Hop" COLUMBIA
- 8 A.G.  
"Weed Scented" SILVA OOM-LANDSPEED
- 9 KILLAH PRIEST FEAT. RAS KASS  
"What Part Of The Game" MCA
- 10 BLACKALICIOUS  
NIA (LP) QUANNUM PROJECTS
- 11 XZIBIT  
"Year 2000" COLUMBIA
- 12 AALIYAH  
"Try Again" BLACKGROUND
- 13 LOUIS LOGIC  
"General Principle" SUPERREGULAR
- 14 DEL THE FUNKY HOMOSAPIEN  
"If You Must" HIERO IMPERIUM
- 15 CALI AGENTS  
"The Good Life" GROUND CONTROL
- 16 JUNGLE BROTHERS  
"V.I.P." GEE STREET-V2
- 17 JERU THE DAMAJA  
"99.9%" KNOWNSAVAGE
- 18 DON SCAVONE  
"Willie On Glock" BLACK BUG-FRANCHISE
- 19 BLACK ROB  
"Whoa" BAD BOY-ARISTA
- 20 HIGH & MIGHTY  
"Dick Starbuck" RAWKUS
- 21 SISQO  
"The Thong Song" DEF SOUL
- 22 DILATED PEOPLES  
"The Platform" ABB-CAPITOL
- 23 RZA FEAT. KOOL G. RAP  
"Cakes" RAZOR SHARP-EPIC
- 24 CYPRESS HILL  
"Superstar" COLUMBIA
- 25 THE LOX  
"Ryde Or Die Bitch" INTERSCOPE



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

## >>> After a long quality drought, the hip-hop compilation



### PICK!

business is booming again. The tracks on **The Unbound Project Vol. 1** (Realized) are built around themes and musings on freedom (Realized's Frank Sosa gave this as the "assignment" for all submissions), but also address the absence of freedom and how it relates to Americans of all socio-economic stripes. The music on *The Unbound Project* runs the gamut, from hard cuts by turntablist J-Rocc of the Beat Junkies (three separate tracks), to word trips from spoken-wordsmith Jerry Quickley (over some excellent off-kilter jazz freakery) and a hazy, dreamlike offering from Saul Williams. In between those stylistic bookends are buckets of excellent beats and blue-ribbon rhymes from a nationwide talent pool: New York's Mike Ladd and Reflection Eternal; Trenton, New Jersey's Poor Righteous Teachers; the Bay Area's Blackalicious; and L.A.'s Rakaa (a.k.a. Iriscience of Dilated Peoples), Aceyalone and muMs The Schemer. The icing on top is the nine-plus minutes of "Mumia 911," an epic posse track featuring over a dozen rappers, from Chuck D to Rage Against The Machine's Zack De La Rocha (yup, believe it). Great ideas, even better music.

>>> It's encouraging to see a steady flow from the underground to the major labels. With *The Platform* (Capitol), Los Angeles's much-touted **Dilated Peoples** is the next act up to bat. The group, with the core duo of rapper/producer Evidence and rapper Rakaa (a.k.a. Iriscience), and full-time DJ Babu (of L.A.'s Beat Junkies), has been one of the most respected underground forces for the past couple of years. They've slicked up the sound on their nationwide jump, but they still preach intelligence and forward thinking in a way that is hard to fault. There are lots of guests here (producers Joey Chavez, E-Swift, T-Ray; rappers B-Real, Tha Alkaholiks, Aceyalone) but Dilated comes strongest when the duo is on its, as shown on "Service," "Years In The Making," "Triple Optics" and their underground hit "Work The Angles."... The brand-new ABB Records compilation **Always Bigger And Better** shows why this Oakland label can make and hold up such a boast. Like Dilated Peoples (who started on ABB), much of the label's groups sound like they could have just as easily sprouted from the streets of New York, with accomplished production and an always-intelligent edge. Many cuts feature in-house producer Joey Chavez (with MCs like Encore, Defari and Dilated Peoples). Singles like Dilated's "Global Dynamics," Superstar Quamallah's conversational "Sugar Hell No!," Planet Asia's "Place Of Birth" and mHz's "This Year" will have you gobbling up every ABB platter you can find from here on out... *Ego Trip* magazine was one of the funniest and best music magazines of all time, and it continues to haunt (and entertain) us after its sad demise, with its extensive *Book Of Rap Lists* and the accompanying soundtrack, **The Big Playback** (Rawkus). Decidedly demented and obsessively old school, *Ego Trip's* editors have chosen an amazing selection of underground smashes ("I'm Not Playing" by Ultimate Force, "Beat Bop" by Rammelzee and K-Rob, "Get Retarded" by MC EZ & Troup) and super-obscure oddities like the Bizzie Boyz's "Droppin' It" and MC Mitchski's "Brooklyn Blew Up The Bridge."



DILATED PEOPLES

### NEWZ



360HIPHOP.COM

Russell Simmons's previously reported RS1W.com Web site is now called **360hiphop.com**, and with a mid-June launch planned, it's still showing every sign that it will be a great rap resource on the Web. Rumor has it that Simmons and company offered the young man who owns the domain Rush.com (currently an unofficial fan site for the Canadian rock group of the same name) upwards of \$100,000 for its use, to no avail. Geddy Lee must be very proud... If you're going to be in the Bay Area on July 1, don't miss **Skratchcon2000**, a mammoth turntable festival with seminars and performances by pretty much every hot cut 'n' scratch DJ in the world: Invisibl Skratch Piklz, X-Ecutioners, Beat Junkies, DJ Cash Money, Steve D and many more. Check [Skratchcon.com](http://Skratchcon.com) for more info... Keep peeling the bins for El-P's new record label **Def Jux**, which will be putting out Company Flow's music from now on, in addition to

new music from Co-Flow collaborators and frequent tourmates Cannibal Ox and Mr. Lif.

>>>As the taste of American underground pop fans goes, so goes Mac McCaughan's taste—



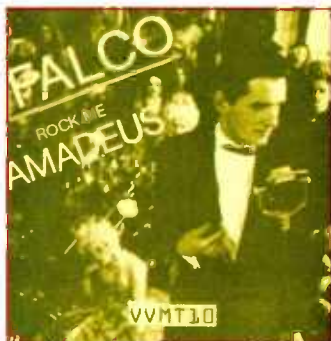
but he always seems to trump the rest of the subculture's enthusiasm. When indie rock was the flavor of the moment, he co-founded Superchunk and Merge Records; when low-tech home recordings came into style, he started his solo career as Portastatic; when his generation of hipsters discovered improvised music, he started documenting it with his Wobbly Rail

## PICK!

label. Now classic Brazilian pop is all the rage, and he's recorded a thoroughly charming **Portastatic** EP, *De Mel, De Melão* (Merge), with covers of five of his favorite Brazilian songs. To his credit, McCaughan doesn't try to duplicate the sound or arrangements of the originals, and he mostly sings them in Portuguese (though he leaves Arnaldo Baptista's "I Fell In Love One Day" in its original awkward English, and translates a verse of Caetano Veloso's delectable song about a language barrier, "Baby"). Still, you can tell that listening to the original artists' defiantly rule-breaking recordings has freed him up to be more playful and anarchic; his versions are filled with what-the-hell-let's-try-it effects, uncertain trumpet parts and clattery percussion. McCaughan's given up shouting, and the softer his singing gets, the more a nervous wobble in his voice appears—but his obvious adoration for these songs just makes his flashes of amateurism sweeter.

Phillipe Lehman is one of the founders of the Soul Providers and New York's Desco funk collective. He's recently struck out on his own with a new label, Soul Fire, whose first release is "Compin' & Smokin'," credited to **Calypto King & The Soul Investigators**. It's not calypso, that's for sure. With a label that looks like it belongs to an old soul micro-label, it's a guitar-vs.-organ instrumental that reaffirms his commitment to a golden age of hard funk, circa 1969—it could easily be a lost Dyke & The Blazers jam. The title of the flip side, "Damper Down Popcorn," is a tribute to the summer of '69, when nearly every member of the James Brown revue released something with "Popcorn" in the title; the song itself adapts the riff from Brown's "I Can't Stand Myself" into another relentless groove that itches to be sampled.

The most irritating-in-a-good-way record of the month is the British electro-pranksters **V/V/M's** double 7-inch "tribute" to Falco (V/V/M). Judging by the "Edgeley Edit" of "Rock Me Amadeus," V/V/M's idea of a cover is somewhere between a remix and a desecration—the group chops up the original into a million pieces, runs it through effects that make it sound like it's being chanted by bloodlusting robots, and kick at the resulting tape until it sounds damaged enough. Even worse is inflicted on "Vienna Calling" and



V/V/M'S TRIBUTE TO FALCO

"Coming Home," with the help of some like-minded pals: Rehberg &

Bauer, collectors of electronic errors, pervert "Ganz Wien" into "Ganz Vein" with the help of a fritzing Vocoder, and American gadfly Cock ESP comes up with an original called "The Kiss Of Kathleen Turner" that's practically dumb enough to be a Falco song itself.

V/V/M's label has also released a split 7-inch by Kid606 and Tigerboy (who are, in fact, aliases of the same guy). The A-side applies very similar mix strategies to Ice Cube's verse on "Straight Outta Compton"; on the other side, there's a blurry sequence of signal-processing that eventually resolves into a snatch of the Misfits' "Attitude."

### The Locust and Arab On Radar

may have set the all-time ridiculous/cool vinyl high-water mark with their new split single on puddle-shaped (and colored) vinyl (Gold Standard Laboratories). San Diego's Locust has five short, extraordinarily tight bursts of power-violence on their side; beneath the band's death-metal-style drumming and chokingly thick organ, there are some excellent lyrics screamed like they're being confessed under torture (song titles include "Spitting In The Face Of Fools As A Source Of Nutrition" and "Wet Nurse Syndrome Hand-Me-Down Display Case"). AOR, from Providence, Rhode Island, is a little more free-form than the band's been in the past, with multiple guitars rubbing against each other like they're trying to find novel orifices to penetrate.



### A FEW QUICK DROPS OF THE NEEDLE

**Residents** originally released the *Eskimo* album back in 1979, then followed it in 1980 with the *Diskomo* EP: a "disco" remix of its main themes, paired with "Goosebump," four creepy adaptations of nursery rhymes. It's just been re-released as *Diskomo 2000* (East Side Digital), augmented with three extra tracks, most notably "Diskomo 2000," which retools "Diskomo" into a hooting, pulsating crypto-Eurodisco track. There's also the previously unreleased "Diskomo 1992," a slow, Enigma-ish take on the same themes, and "Twinkle 2000," an underdone remake of a section of "Goosebump."... *Traceroute* (Ash International [R.I.P.]) is the first 12" single



by **UBSB**, and a startling intersection of high concept, groove and pure noise—it was generated by turning the digital data passing through a Scandinavian Web site into an analog sound file. The waves of bits, amazingly, form more-or-less regular beats, with little bits of noise interference skittering off them like sparks... **Guided By Voices** checks in once again with "Dayton, Ohio—19 Something And 5" (Luna Music), a live remake of a 4-year-old throwaway that's still not too compelling, backed by three brand new Robert Pollard solo throwaways. Not pointless, exactly, but not too heavy on the *raison d'être* either... **Red Stars Theory** has branched out with "Naima" (Suicide Squeeze), a subdued, glittery cover of the John Coltrane standard. The heavy echo on Seth Warren's violin (playing the solo part) is overdoing it—the melody's pretty enough already. The Scientific American remix on the flip, "North To Next Exit," is somewhat more effective, especially when it emphasizes the dubby pause-and-lunge of the rhythm section and lets hints of guitar wander in and out like cooking smells from next door.



>>>By all accounts, **Harry Smith**—

the man who put together the legendary *Anthology Of American Folk Music* in 1952—was an amazing dude. He compiled old blues and hillbilly 78s into one of the first-ever reissues, and the result became a



**PICK!**

touchstone of the last half of the century; helping spark the entire blues renaissance and influencing everyone from Dylan to Doo Rag along the way. So what's all the hubbub about this bearded beatnik and his dusty old blues records? For one thing, Smith was a bona fide beat soul who absorbed the world around him and refracted it in unusual ways. He was able to take something as distant and remote as 50-year-old blues and hillbilly records and make them speak in new ways to new audiences that the original performers could hardly have imagined. Without actually playing a note of music himself, Smith made the characters from songs and ballads like "Stagger Lee" and "John Henry" live and breathe to the point where they practically walk around the room. His somewhat bizarre presentation methods—like equating the thematic contents of his albums to the four classical Greek elements, or his brief, crabby commentary on the songs—made his work stand apart. He wasn't an academic, but he was intuitive, setting up links between concepts according to his own lights and navigating by his own star sightings rather than by pre-existing maps. Fifty years later, John Fahey's Revenant Records has at long last released the final "secret volume" in Harry Smith's *Anthology*: a fourth set Smith intended to release with the other three. It's a momentous event.

**Raymond Scott** was a visionary composer whose work is immortalized on the now-infamous CD *Reckless Nights And Turkish Twilights*, an ear-bending amalgam of '40s tangos, crazed cartoon music and his incredible *Soothing Sounds For Baby* LPs from the 1950s (which served as a sort of a precursor to today's ambient chill-out music). Basta records has released a two-CD set of Scott's music, *Manhattan Research Inc.*, named after the company he founded in 1946. This incredibly strange CD features performances on such idiosyncratic Scott-created instruments as the Bandido, the Clavivox, the Circle Machine and the Electronium (a slightly Orwellian device that appears to have been an early attempt to create a machine that could write its own music). In a weird postmodern twist, the CD even includes demonstration jingles Scott wrote to show commercial clients how diverse his music could be. When listened to today, the songs seem to be prefiguring the rapid-fire pace of today's extreme channel-flipping culture in the way they careen wildly from mood to mood.

**Paul Bowles** was not only one of the most famous expat writers to take up residence in Morocco, but the author (who penned *The Sheltering Sky*) was also a fan of Moroccan music, art and culture. Bowles privately taped artifacts of Moroccan music from the late 1950s on, and his estate has released an intriguing CD entitled *Sacred Music Of Moroccan Jews* (Rounder Select). Listening to Jews singing Egyptian-based songs is a world-clash experience that is positively electrifying. But it's just a start: One can only assume that in his more than 40 years in Tangiers, Bowles recorded other styles of Moroccan music like the Gnawa and Jajoukan musicians. Perhaps they too will eventually see the light of day.

Speaking of electrifying, Rhino has released a dynamo of a disc called *The Very Best Of Freddie King*. **Freddie King** was a fervid, histrionic bluesman who always brought down the house with his sweat-soaked testifying and blistering Texas-style guitar playing (check out *Live At The Electric Ballroom 1974* for a full view of Freddie

on a hot night). When one senses the piercing intensity of his performances, it makes it seem more tragic that he died at the age of 42, and more amazing that he even lived that long.

Even with more than 150 titles in print, **John Coltrane** CDs are still news. Impulse! Records has released four Coltrane albums of material from his later, most avant-garde period. The first three—*Ascension*, *Interstellar Space* and *Impressions*—have all been available before, but the hardest to find and most significant to deep 'Trane heads is the reissue of the minor work *Kulu Se Mama*, with Pharoah Sanders on board. Rhino is also re-releasing four early Coltrane albums recorded for the Atlantic label in the early 1960s, when the saxophonist was just beginning to soar to the levels of greatness that made his name legendary. Among the remastered titles are *Avant-Garde*, *Coltrane Jazz*, *Ole Coltrane* and *Coltrane Plays The Blues*. The latter includes the best selection of extra bonus tracks, but *Ole Coltrane* is one of the most underrated Coltrane discs; a breathtakingly beautiful sleeper of an album. At a time when jazz was experiencing a Latin craze (i.e. Miles Davis's *Sketches Of Spain*), Coltrane provided his own spin on "the Latin bit." The mesmerizing title track is not so much Latin as it is a hypnotic, drone-filled Arabic tapestry-ride, reminding listeners that Spain is, in fact, just as close to Morocco and Africa as it is to its European neighbors.



JOHN COLTRANE

Surprisingly, it seems that **Cat Stevens** is beginning to be considered hip. The bearded folk singer did have something going for him—not only did he provide the soundtrack for the perennial midnight-movie favorite *Harold And Maude*, his unique, cartoonish paintings (which often adorned his album covers) bring to mind Van Gogh. Three of his best albums have just been reissued by A&M-Universal: *Mona Bone Jakon*, *Tea For The Tillerman* and *Teaser & The Firecat* (the latter having also enjoyed fame as a children's book in the 1970s). If nothing else, Stevens is one of those interesting enigmas of personal taste: Some people like the warm, sturdy sound of his voice, while others are driven into seething rage by just the mere mention of his name. Another '70s folkie who can equally inspire both sighs of pleasure and howls of derision, **James Taylor**, has recently had a few of his older albums reissued by Columbia, including *Dad Loves His Work* and *JT*.

**NEWS**

Keep an eye on Internet auctions and disc-trading hotspots, because **David Bowie**'s classic catalog of albums was quietly reissued by EMD a while back—though with virtually none of the bonus tracks and extra packaging goodies that were found on the Rykodisc reissues of the 1980s... Not too long ago, Capitol rolled out a new line of **Beach Boys** classic '60s albums that dispensed with the wonderful liner notes and bonus tracks that had been included throughout the decade. Of course, the sad irony is that as basic CD prices have risen since the early '90s, record companies are charging consumers more money and giving them less. This is a pity, since the tracks are just sitting there, already mixed and mastered. Industry insiders speculate that the stripping-of-bonus-tracks phenomenon may have something to do with paying artist royalties, which are often higher for bigger name artists and computed on a per-song basis.



DAVID BOWIE

MAY 30

50 CENT Power Of The Dollar Columbia.  
 BONFIRE MADIGAN Saddle The Bridge Kill Rock Stars.  
 BILLY BRAGG & WILCO Volume 2 Elektra.  
 RICK BRAUN & BONEY JAMES Warner Bros.  
 BROUGHAM Le Cock Sportif Warner Bros.  
 CABLE REGIME Cable Regime Invisible.  
 CALI AGENTS How The West Was One Ground Control.  
 —Two-LP/CD set.  
 DADDY'S HANDS Tutankhamun Cargo-Headhunter.  
 DIANOAGH Battle Champions Southern.  
 EARTH, WIND & FIRE Best Of Volume II Columbia Legacy.  
 EDWIN Another Spin Around The Sun Columbia.  
 EN VOGUE Masterpiece Theatre Elektra.  
 F.A.T.E. For All That's Endured Warner Bros.  
 FOURPLAY Warner Bros.  
 SUE FOX Light A Match, Spark A Life Kill Rock Stars.  
 —Enhanced CD.  
 GATE CRASHER Disco-Tech Columbia.  
 MARVIN GAYE Midnight Love Columbia Legacy.  
 KID ROCK The History Of Rock Atlantic.  
 —Two-CD reissue set.  
 LIL MO Elektra.  
 BOB MARLEY ALL-STAR TRIBUTE One Love Palm Pictures.  
 —DVD.  
 MISTA Elektra.  
 MU Return To MU Sundazed.  
 NASHVILLE PUSSY High As Hell TVT.  
 NOFX Pods And Gods Fat Wreck Chords.  
 —7-inch.  
 NOT BREATHING Itchy Tingles Invisible.  
 THE O'JAYS Survival Epic Legacy.  
 OLIVE Trickle Maverick.  
 —Olive features ex-Simply Red trumpet and keyboard player Tim Kellelt.  
 PINHEAD GUNPOWDER 8 Chords, 328 Words Lookout!  
 MITCH RYDER Got Change For A Million; How I Spent My Vacation; In The China Shop; Live Talks; Naked But Not Dead; Red Blood White Mink; Smart Ass J-Bird.  
 —All reissues.  
 SIT 'N' SPIN Enjoy The Ride Cargo-Headhunter.  
 SPARECHANGE At First Sight Cargo-Grilled Cheese.  
 STRINGS The Black Widow Epic.  
 THE SUPERFINE DANDELION The Superfine Dandelion Sundazed.  
 MARTIN TAYLOR Kiss And Tell Legacy.  
 —US debut for renowned UK Jazz guitarist.  
 TURNING POINT 1988-1991 Discography Jade Tree.  
 U.P.O. No Pleasantries Epic.  
 BILL WITHERS The Best Of Bill Withers: Lean On Me Columbia Legacy.  
 ZION I Mind Over Matter Ground Control.  
 —Two-LP/CD set.

JUNE 6

AFU-RA Body Of The Life Force Gee Street.  
 —Jeru The Damaja's sidekick goes solo after two LPs with Jeru.  
 ALL Problematic Epitaph.  
 AMAZING CROWNS Royal Time Bomb.  
 MERRIE AMSTERBURG Little Steps Zoë-Rounder.  
 ASIA Heat Of The Moment: The Very Best Of Geffen.  
 IAN ASTBURY Spirit Light Speed Beggars Banquet.  
 BADFINGER The Very Best Of Capitol.  
 BBJAY Universal Concussion Jive.  
 BEAT HAPPENING Jamboree; Dreamy; You Turn Me On K.  
 —Reissues.  
 BEFORE DARK Daydreamin' RCA.  
 BELLE & SEBASTIAN Fold Your Hands Child, You Walk Like A Peasant Matador.  
 BILLIONAIRE Ascension Universal.  
 BLONDE REDHEAD Melody Of Certain Damaged Lemons Touch & Go.  
 JAMES BROWN Funky People, Volume 3 Polydor.  
 BT Movement In Still Life Nettwerk.  
 BUFFALO TOM Asides From... The Best Of Buffalo Tom Beggars Banquet.  
 CALIBRETTO 13 Enter The Danger Brigade Tooth And Nail.

CLAY IVEY "Six Drops Of Poison"/"Junkyard Funk" F-111.  
 ALICE COOPER Brutal Planet Spitfire.  
 DAVID COVERDALE AND WHITESNAKE Northwinds And Whitesnake Spitfire.  
 THE CULT Pure Cult Beggars Banquet.  
 DANCE HALL CRASHERS The Live Record Pink And Black.  
 DAN THE AUTOMATOR 75 Ark.  
 DARK LEAF VS. NOBODY Ubiquity.  
 —12-inch.  
 DEEP PURPLE Fireball Rhino.  
 JESSE JAMES DUPREE Foot Fetish V2.  
 —Former Jackyi singer goes solo.  
 DURAN DURAN Pop Trash Hollywood.  
 —Don't front: You know you get all warm and fuzzy when "Rio" comes on the radio.  
 STEVE EARLE Transcendental Blues E-Squared-Artemis.  
 FIVER Strings For Satellites Devil In The Woods.  
 GENE DEFCON Have A Good Time K.  
 —7-inch.  
 THE GETAWAY PEOPLE Turnpike Diaries Columbia.  
 —Features guest appearances from Rahzel and others.  
 GLUECIFER Tender Is The Savage Sub Pop.  
 THE GOLDEN GUINEAS Shit Or Bust Estrus.  
 THE GOSSIP Red Hot K.  
 —CD-EP and 7-inch.  
 THE IMPOSSIBLES Return Fueled By Ramen.  
 JODECI Love U 4 Life: Greatest Hits MCA.  
 JURASSIC-5 Quality Control Interscope.  
 KNIFE IN THE WATER Red River Overcoat.  
 LEATHERFACE Horsebox BYO.  
 LIVE HUMAN Elefish Jellyphant Matador.  
 LOZENGE Doozy Toyo.  
 JACK LUKEMAN Razor & Tie.  
 MAD CADDIES The Holiday Has Been Cancelled Fat Wreck Chords.  
 TAJ MAHAL Taj Mahal & The Phantom Blues Band Live Hannibal.  
 JAMES MICHAEL Inhale Beyond.  
 MIKE E Master Plan Capitol.  
 MING & FS God's Plan Liquid Sky.  
 —12-inch.  
 MIRAH You Think It's Like This But Really It's Like This K.  
 THE MURDER CITY DEVILS In Name And Blood Sub Pop.  
 BILLY MYERS Vertigo Universal.  
 PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS Question In The Form Of An Answer Om.  
 P.M. DAWN Best Of Gee Street-V2.  
 KELLY PRICE Mirror, Mirror Def Soul.  
 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE II Interscope.  
 ROYAL TRUX Pound For Pound Drag City.  
 SAINT ETIENNE The Sound Of Water Sub Pop.  
 SNOWBOY Afro-Cuban Jazz CuBop.  
 SOMETHIN' FOR THE PEOPLE Issues Warner Bros.  
 SOULDECISION No One Does It Better MCA.  
 MATT SUGGS Golden Days Before They End Merge.  
 SUPER FURRY ANIMALS Mwnv Flydaddy.  
 —Welsh language album featuring bonus disc with six tracks not available on the import.  
 SWITCH TROUT Cuttlefish Boogie Estrus.  
 —EP.  
 J.T. TAYLOR A Brand New Me Interscope.  
 THE TRAGICALLY HIP Music@Work Sire.  
 UNCLE CRACKER Atlantic.  
 —The DJ from Kid Rock's Twisted Brown Trucker band.  
 PAUL VAN DYK Out There And Back Mute.  
 VEGA Life On Earth Capitol.  
 ANGELA VIA Angela Via Lava-Atlantic.  
 THE VON ZIPPER'S Blitzhacker Estrus.  
 THE WORKHORSE MOVEMENT Sons Of The Pioneers Roadrunner.  
 ZEEK SHECK Zemag Daeh Toyo.

JUNE 12

AMEBIX Alternative Tentacles.  
 —Reissue.  
 FALSE PROPHETS Blind Roaches And Fat Vultures: Phantasmagorical Beasts Of The Reagan Era Alternative Tentacles.  
 —Reissue.  
 TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM Dub Voyage M.

JUNE 13

ALL Problematic Revelation.  
 ANALOG BROTHERS Pimp To Eat Ground Control.  
 —Two-LP/CD set.  
 BON JOVI Crush Mercury.  
 COACH Package Deal Doghouse.  
 —5-song CD-EP.  
 CONTROL FREQ Freq Show F-111-Warner Bros.  
 JUDITH EDELMAN Drama Queen Compass.  
 JAYO FELONY Hotter Than Fish Grease Def Jam.  
 —Scott Frampton is totally hotter than fish grease, and he loves when people tell him that. E-mail him and say, "Scott, you're hotter than fish grease." I dare you.  
 FLEETWOOD MAC Fleetwood Mac Snapper.  
 —Remastered with four bonus tracks.  
 THE GLANDS The Glands Capricorn.  
 KEVIN GORDON Down To The Wall Shanachie.  
 HANGDOGS Out There Shanachie.  
 PATTI LABELLE When A Woman Loves MCA.  
 CHRISTINE LAVIN The Bellevue Years Rounder.  
 LL COOL J The G.O.A.T. Island-Def Jam.  
 MAMMOTH VOLUME Noara Dance Music Cartel.  
 MASTERMINDS Underground Railroad Ground Control.  
 MODEST MOUSE The Moon And Antarctica Epic.  
 MOIST Mercedes Five And Dime Capitol.  
 OLIVER MTUKUZDI Paivepo Putumayo.  
 WILLIE NELSON Milk Cow Blues Island.  
 NEVE Neve Columbia.  
 NOFX Pump Up The Valium Epitaph.  
 SINEAD O'CONNOR Faith & Courage Atlantic.  
 ORANGE GOBLIN The Big Black Music Cartel.  
 PARENTAL ADVISORY Sexxx, Drugz, Money, Violence: My Life, Your Entertainment DreamWorks.  
 RIVER CITY HIGH River City High Doghouse.  
 RUNAWAYS Progress Ultimate Dilemma.  
 SHEAVY Celestial Hi-Fi Music Cartel.  
 SIN Noisy Pipes, Lively Noises Kock.  
 SIR MIX-A-LOT Bleepers, Benzos & Booty: The Best Of Rhino.  
 SIXTEEN DELUXE Spirits Take Me Make Me Never Forsake Me Sugar Fix.  
 SLUM VILLAGE Fantastic, Vol. 2 Goodvibe-Atomic Pop.  
 SMITH & MIGHTY Bass Is Maternal Stud!o K7.  
 SNAKE RIVER CONSPIRACY Sonic Jihad Reprise.  
 SOUNDTRACK Logan's Sanctuary Emperor Norton.  
 —Soundtrack to an imaginary sequel to Logan's, featuring songs by Jason Faulkner.  
 THE STOP & LISTEN BOYS Monkey Junk Upland.  
 TA-GANA Ta-Gana Hollywood.  
 DANNY TENAGLIA London Boxed-Global Underground-Stud!o K7.  
 TSAR Tsar Hollywood.  
 TURNTABLIST Super Duper Duck Breaks Stones Throw.  
 —7-inch.  
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Metroschifter Encapsulated Doghouse.  
 —Features Metroschifter covers from Joan Of Arc, Rye Coalition, the Promise Ring, Burning Airlines and others.  
 VAST Elektra.  
 VIGILANTES OF LOVE Audible Sigh Compass.

JUNE 20

12RODS Separation Anxieties V2.  
 KING SUNNY ADE Seven Degrees North Mesa.  
 ADMIRAL TWIN Mock Heroic Universal.  
 IAN ASTBURY Spirit Light Speed Beggars Banquet.  
 CAR 44 Platinum Holes Thirsty Ear.  
 JOHN COLTRANE AND DON CHERRY The Avant-Garde Rhino.  
 TINA COUSINS Killing Time Universal.  
 CURSIVE Domestica Saddle Creek.  
 DEADLY VENOMS Pretty Thugs

DreamWorks.  
 DEFTONES White Pony Maverick.  
 —Features Cypress Hill's B-Real and Tool's Maynard James Keenan.  
 DJ DB DJ DB Presents Higher Education Drum 'N' Bass Session F-111-Warner Bros.  
 BOB DOROUGH Devil May Care Rhino.  
 EARTH CRISIS Slither Victory.  
 EDWIN Another Spin Around The Sun Columbia.  
 EINSTURZENDE NEUBATEN Silence Is Sexy Mute.  
 —Fans of tall, drunk, scary German men, meet your record of the year.  
 FACE TO FACE Reactionary Beyond.  
 TOMMY GUERRERO Little Bit Of Somethin' Beggars Banquet.  
 HER SPACE HOLIDAY Home Is Where You Hang Yourself Tiger Style.  
 —Two-CD set with remixes of Duster, Bright Eyes, Aspera Ad Astra, Hyperspace, her space holiday and others.  
 JEGA Geometry Matador.  
 K.D. LANG Invincible Summer Warner Bros.  
 LTJ BUKEM Presents Earth Vol. 4 Earth-Good Looking.  
 JACK LUKEMAN Metropolis Blue Razor & Tie.  
 MASTER P Ghetto Postage No Limit.  
 CHRISTY MCWILSON The Lucky One Rhino.  
 MÖTLEY CRÜE New Tattoo Mötley-Beyond.  
 —Features new drummer Randy Castillo. So there's a new Crüe, a new Alice Cooper and a new Bon Jovi this month—it's a mullet-wearers dream come true. Which band would win in a brawl? Send your celebrity death match scenarios to monthly@cmj.com, and win some really bad metal CDs.  
 NATURE For All Seasons Columbia.  
 NEW LATINAIRES Ubiquity.  
 —12-inch.  
 OZRIC TENTACLES Swirly Termination Snapper.  
 WILLIAM PARKER TRIO Painter's Spring Thirsty Ear.  
 POLE 3 Matador.  
 JEAN-LUC PONTY The Very Best Of Jean-Luc Ponty Rhino.  
 BUSTA RHYMES Anarchy Elektra.  
 BRENDA RUSSELL Paris Rain Epic.  
 MARLON SIMON Rhumba A La Patata Ubiquity.  
 JEAN SMITH Kill Rock Stars.  
 SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE The Rising Tide Time Bomb.  
 —Second full-length after the reformation of SDRE.  
 TRAGEDY KHADAFI Against All Odds Gee Street.  
 ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK This Will Be Laughing Week 550.  
 THE URGE Too Much Stereo Virgin.  
 VARIOUS ARTISTS Bailemos Tango! A Century Of Tango On The Dance Floor Rhino.  
 T-BONE WALKER Blues Masters: Very Best Of T-Bone Walker Rhino.  
 KAI WINDING WITH JJ JOHNSON 'Nuf Said Rhino.  
 BETTY WRIGHT The Very Best Of Betty Wright Rhino.  
 —I know what you're thinking, but it's not the Golden Girl—that's Betty White. Her "Best Of" is coming out next month, and it kicks ass.

JUNE 27

AFU-RA Body Of The Life Force Gee Street-V2.  
 —Jeru The Damaja's sidekick goes solo after two LPs with Jeru.  
 DANIEL CAGE MCA.  
 CHICO CESAR Chico Cesar Putumayo.  
 KOTTONMOUTH KINGS High Society Capitol.  
 OVAL Ovalprocess Thrill Jockey.  
 QUASIMOTO The Unseen Stones Throw.  
 —Two-CD set.  
 RITA RIBEIRO Perolas Aos Povos Putumayo.  
 SWAY AND KING TECH Wake Up Show Freestyles Vol. 6 880.  
 —Two-CD set.  
 VIBROLUSH Vibrolush V2.  
 YOUTH EDITION MCA.

a m i  
b l u e ?

You've got to open wide and play hard  
to learn the ways of Blue Man Group.

STORY: NEIL GLADSTONE PHOTOS: CHARLIE LANGELLA

Scattered before me on a dressing-room table in the basement of the Blue Man Group's training facility are the tools of the trade: a bald cap, theater glue, cuticle scissors, Sea Breeze astringent, Q-tips, Lubriderm, and, of course, a couple of dishes of cobalt grease paint.

Infiltrating the blue brotherhood is not an assignment to take lightly; others have tried, but failed to understand the "nobility" (as one crew member put it) of the Blue Man. What nobility is there in playing surf rock on plastic instruments, spitting paint on a canvas and mocking modern art? That's why I'm half-naked in a room full of strangers—I want answers.

Last year, legions of young men responded to open calls for actors about 6 feet tall, modestly built and adept at drumming. For every thousand or so who audition, one makes the troupe, which now boasts over 30 members nationwide. Luckily, I pretty much fit the physical characteristics and though my downstairs neighbors might disagree, I can keep a beat.

The Blue Man Group's long-running show *Tubes*, which opened in New York 10 years ago (later adding productions in Boston, Chicago and Las Vegas), offers an exhilarating concoction of space-age world-beat music, avant-garde performance art and high-minded parlor tricks. In a series of vignettes, three bald and blue mute aliens attempt to comprehend the culture that created Twinkies, rock and modern art. In one scene, for instance, the blue men douse a member of the audience with paint and then make a painting by swinging the unsuspecting volunteer against a large white canvas. Over the course of the evening, Jell-O flies through the air, puréed banana streams out of actors' bodies and reams of crepe paper engulf the theater. It's a thinking man's slapstick circus, and who wouldn't want to be one of the ringmasters?

Transforming into a Blue Man isn't as simple as icing your face with makeup, though. The process usually takes eight weeks of learning how to drum Cap'n Crunch between your molars, catch paintballs in your mouth and play "Peter Gunn Theme" on plastic tubes. Thankfully, a childhood of gnashing sugarcoated cereal and drumming pencils has prepared me for this day, so my half-day crash course should almost bring me up to speed. The makeup to make a cast member bald and blue costs about \$50 (which may explain why ticket prices for the show are \$39 and up) even though I've already got a shaved head and arguably don't require the \$22 bald cap.

A stylist shaves the back of my skull to ensure that the glue adheres well and hands me a black bodystocking known as a mantard. "Is there supposed to be anything between me and my mantard?" I fret.

"No."

Though the other two men suiting up today, four-year blue man veteran Steve White and trainer Chris Bowen, ease into their second skin, I sheepishly duck into the bathroom. Wrestling with this spandex turns into something between experimental dance and a Nutty Professor taffy pull. And that word—mantard. It sounds like the TV adaptation of *Rainman* starring Bronson Pinchot.

Once wrapped in the human sausage casing, I begin interrogating cohorts about my new identity. "The Blue Man is interested in everything that happens outside of him," explains Bowen. White, who flew to New York from Seattle five years ago to audition, adds: "They must have a certain charisma and openness and an availability to what's going on around them and to have a presence about them even when they're standing neutral."

It's been years since I vlogged, so instead of showing off my chops, I follow White's instruction to brush a thick layer of opaque glue (that looks unnervingly like Elmer's) onto my scalp. The dresser assists in the intricate bald cap application ceremony. When it's done, I feel like I just got a facelift from a plastic surgeon who advertises on the subway. Doesn't getting bald



THE BLUE REVUE: PHIL STANTON, CHRIS WINK, MATT GOLDMAN.

and blue five times a week, year after year, ruin your skin? "Not at all," maintains White.

Mid-transformation, there's a knock on the dressing room door. In walk the three original blue men: Chris Wink, Phil Stanton and Matt Goldman. Wink's translucent eyes make him seem a bit otherworldly even without makeup. There's a wire extending from Stanton's jacket to an earpiece, supposedly for a cell phone, but it may be for contacting the Mothership. The round-shouldered Goldman could be David Brenner's younger brother (though Brenner is more *Love Boat* than *Mothership*). Goldman clutches my cranium and consecrates: "You have a great head, man." The Blue Pooba has anointed me. We will reconvene

when my instruction is complete so I may learn more about the Blue Man's latest creation, *Audio* (Virgin), an album of Blue music.

The grease paint must be applied in generous scoops since it will sweat off during training. In the meantime, everything I touch turns to blue—my tape recorder, notepad, backpack—like I'm some leper Smurf. After the eyeliner is applied and crevices filled in using Q-tips, my face doesn't appear as otherworldly as I hoped. My forehead isn't quite oval enough to pass as the Martian ambassador; I look more like Dr. Freeze.

"You're our burliest blue man yet," whispers the dresser as he hands me the black turtleneck and lederhosen that give the Blue Man a streamlined appearance. I think I know what he's implying: Cover up that mantard, pronto.

Upstairs in the white training room, three boxes of Cap'n Crunch are lined up on the floor in front of three "PVC Instruments" that could be pipe organs fashioned from gargantuan ziti. There's also a canvas on an easel, boombox, TV and a handful of chairs for members of the crew who want to see an outside agent naive enough to put himself through this theatrical hazing.

As in life, first I must learn to walk, and before I walk, I must learn to stand. Heels must be kicked out a little, so feet are parallel. Like a gunslinger about to enter a shootout, hands are at one's side and always at the ready. Mouth closed (it's the difference between a highly advanced telepathic being and Bobo The Blue Wonder Chimp).

"The Blue Man is always looking for something, so that's part of what informs us," explains Bowen. In the world of blue, stage directions sound more like philosophical tenets that were scribbled on the pyramid tomb walls when the brothers from another planet visited long ago. (Do you think it's just a coincidence that in Vegas the Blue Man performs at the Pyramid-shaped Luxor casino?)

"If a Blue Man is going to face someone, he's going to face him head on."

I turn, approximating the elk-like grace of my blue leaders. "There can be a smoothness to your movements," corrects Bowen. Okay, so I look more like Beck doing the robot than an ethereal creature whose body is just transport for his oversized brain. Stage director Randall Jaynes, still wearing the Blue Man jersey from the morning's softball practice, coaches me on the proper stance and mental state. "Very little of Blue Man is an introverted moment, everything is out here," he says, gesturing out to the great beyond about four feet in front of me. "You're not pondering."

The three Blue Men are often referred to as a pack of dogs, not only because they should be ever on the hunt, but also because they're supposed to be one creature with three bodies and therefore the three must always check with one another, no matter what they're doing. As the three of us walk together, slightly arched forward and intrigued, I wonder if the Blue Man is more like an interstellar detective or a Tyrannosaurus Rex with a pea-sized brain.

"What is that? What is that?" prompts Jaynes, our master. Like a pack of pointers, we glance at

Everything I touch turns to blue, like I'm some leper Smurf.

each other and then off into the unknown, and then back again. When navigating this foreign world, the Blue Man must be careful, because every decision is a matter of life or death. "It's like that moment when Indiana Jones has got the sandbag in one hand and the idol in the other," urges Jaynes. Instead of nabbing a priceless ancient artifact, I'm grabbing a box of Cap'n Crunch, er, a potentially poisoned box of Cap'n Crunch. "Ask the tough question with your look," commands Jaynes "Are you with me?" As much as I fear that I may momentarily be asked to pirouette, my mind becomes more centered, my posture straighter, my grease paint runnier from nervous sweat. For years I've been staring at people, dumbfounded; now I'm finally among others who stare right back, and we're all searching for something, but we're not sure what.

"We go through great pains to create something that's pretty subtle," Wink reflects later. "If you don't look carefully, you'll just think it's robotic. If you look carefully, you'll see something that's intensely human." Without language, it's as if all emotion is distilled into a binary code of intrigue and wonder that travels from the depths of my soul to the space between my eyebrows. And what better way to illustrate the depth of my soul than by swallowing paintballs? Here's where the high-minded parlor tricks come in.

In *Tubes*, one Blue Man tosses three paint balls to another one standing about 15 feet away. Each pigment package is then spit in a colored stream across a canvas in affectionate send-up of Jackson Pollack's drip paintings, which accentuate artistic intent over delicate brushwork.

"Now when you bite down on the paintball, you're going to taste something hideous in your mouth, but it doesn't matter because you're so focused on what you're doing you're not going to notice it," warns White, who'll be serving up a condom filled with non-toxic tawny. I flash back to my year playing Little League as a second string right-fielder. Pretty much the best I could do was stop the ball from hitting my face or watch it fly over my head—catching it was out of the question. I've done okay with the practice paintballs, but the real thing comes with the warning. "Okay babe, we drop 'em, they break." I shudder at the thought of a paint-splattered forehead, even though I'm soaked in grease paint. I give the pitcher a slight nod to let him know I'm set. Here's the windup. It's a highball...ooh, off the cheek. My only saving grace is that it doesn't break on the linoleum. The second chance, it's up, a fastball, closer, closer (does anyone else hear "Chariots Of Fire"?), it's in, it's good. I'm a spastic golden retriever with a Frisbee, not knowing what to do next. I bite down and suddenly there's a noxious yolk rolling over my tongue that tastes like it's made out of paste. I guess I'm not concentrating.

"Now you've got something, what are you going to do with it?" spurs Jaynes. I turn around, pick the canvas off the easel and let out a blast like Dizzy on a high-C. The result is a horrendous mustard stain on white tablecloth, yet I am ecstatic. The peanut gallery whoops and I triumphantly hoist my Grammy. I gulp 'n' spit two out of the next five tosses and my batting average has the stands on their feet.

Already running low on time, we quickly take position behind the "PVC Instruments." The original Blue Men got the idea for these *Battlestar Galactica* xylophones while watching an Australian musician whack the ends of two plastic



tubes. They developed that nugget into a two-octave instrument that creates pizzicato melodies resembling rubber bands stretched across the Milky Way. Mastering this celestial harp doesn't require decades of silent contemplation or severe brow-beating by a grey-haired sadist, just the loving tap of a flat rubber mallet. Within moments I'm smacking out "Peter Gunn Theme" in a musical Whack-A-Mole. Okay, so perhaps I'm not exactly a maestro—who knows how all of the notes are arranged—but if it's possible to get a cool surf tune out of an instrument with five minutes of "watch me," said instrument should best be marketed to FAO Schwartz (with a hefty profit margin). Alas, this is art, and each one of the "PVC Instruments" is crafted by hand. Tuning each note requires adding or subtracting just the right amount of tubing.

For the new album, *Audio*, several other instruments were added to the Blue Man's orchestra, including the 12-foot-plus "Tubulum," which bellows long, low, didgeridoo-like tones with the wallop of a drumstick. The "Drumbone" creates sliding notes and the boom of the eight-foot tall "Big Drum" makes Kodo percussion pale in comparison.

As heard on *Audio*, Blue Man music melds tribal, surf and industrial rock 'n' roll. The pliant tones of the Tubulum and PVC instruments fold into burbling, synthesizer-like repetitive motifs while the larger-than-life tom-toms add earthy rumbles recalling music from Africa and the Far East. The slightly more familiar scrappy and twangy ruminations of electric guitar and Chapman Stick distill the percolating, expansive mixture into exalted spaghetti-Western pop that could easily leap into service as the soundtrack for silver screen sword fights or drag races.

Wink describes their music as an expedition for the crossroads where the indigenous and industrial meet: "There's a tribal feel we're trying to get, but not literally."

In some ways, the music is so modern it could be mixed in with drum 'n' bass. Yet Wink figures the sweat gives it spirit: "Someone could use a home computer to make an album with sounds similar to what we're going, but you'll hear the difference, so for us it's still worth it to make these things out of cardboard and plastic."

Perhaps I'm just lightheaded from manically tapping tube tones with a bald cap glued on, but there's a primal joy and release in rapping plastic tubes as if they're bones assembled around a bonfire. I am one with the Blue people, sounding like Brian Eno or Phillip Glass jamming out a Gregorian version of Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit." In *Tubes*, the drug anthem invokes the specter of '60s art happenings that inspired the founders' early search for a bohemian community, which had all but disappeared by the time they came of age in the '70s. (Wink, Stanton and Goldman are all in their late 30s now.)

Once you have participated in the tone ceremony from the other side of the stratosphere, what else is there to understand, you ask? And the answer comes: The Ritual Of Cheese.

At the start of the toss, I'm not exactly sure why they call it cheese, since the practice seems to involve catching marshmallows in your mouth and then sculpting them into a cone using your lips (it's another modern art joke, alright?). I return to the catcher's stance and those marshmallows start flying rapid fire. Luckily, the gooey wads are easier to catch than paintballs.

When I don't get my lips around them, they stick to my face. As the white goo piles up in and on my cheeks, a gag reflex swells in the back of my throat as if I'm a reluctant participant in a hot dog-eating contest.

"You got plenty of room in there, butt brother," assures White. (Um, I hope the Blue Man isn't expected to fill any other orifices other than his mouth.) I realize the marshmallows are actually marshmallow-shaped bits of cream cheese and wonder if I should mention I'm lactose intolerant. Not much I can do, though, since any chunk of cheese within feet of me immediately sticks to my lungfish face. Once my jowls are packed as a foaming rabid chipmunk, "It's sculpting time!" I bend over a black pedestal and regurgitate a tower of cheese.

"Make a cone, make a cone," barks the crew. "Shape it, shape it." As my head bobs over the gloppy cylinder, I realize the pictures of this will probably wind up on a food fetish Web page.

The final test? A six-block walk from the training studio to the Astor Theater, where the Blue Man show has run for the better part of the last decade. Never have I been so happy to see two other bald and blue men as when I'm strolling down New York's Lafayette Street being photographed by tourists and, worse, ignored by too-cool hipsters. I am the dermatologically challenged freak, the boy in the blue skin bubble, the embodiment of an oxymoron: the successful performance artist.

"Hey, Blue Man!" shouts a delivery boy on a bicycle. Even with my eyes clouding over from the grease paint and the glue tugging my skin, the effects of blue boot camp are starting to seep beyond my epidermis.

As we're wiping off the layers of makeup, Bowen warns me "You never completely get all the blue off." Although I fear the troupe will circle around me and chant "One of us! One of us!" I wonder if he means that the blue people have a different view of the world.

## A stylist hands me a black bodystocking called a *mantard*, which sounds like the TV adaptation of *Rainman* starring Bronson Pinchot.

Upon rejoining the blue forefathers at the recording studio they built to make the new album, I ask about the blue credo, and the wise blue gurus turn the question back on me.

"What do you see that being?" wonders Wink.

"I'm not sure." I reply, "There seems to be an emphasis on communal effort, losing yourself

and certain phrases keep coming up like, 'Be curious,' 'Be forward,' 'Look at each other,' 'Depend on each other.'"

"When we first started the show, there were elements of Blue Man, but they weren't always consistent," says Wink. "People would come up after the show and say, 'I don't think Blue Man would have done what you just did.' Blue Man had its own inner logic. We just wanted to make sure we followed through and made it consistent."

When performers beyond the original three trained to be blue men, debate began about what the Blue Man would and wouldn't do.

"With all of that discussion about, 'Are you on the track or are we off the track?' we don't even know what the track really is. So, we're constantly trying to have discussions about what the track is."

This from former cater-waiters who used to spend their breaks at elaborate functions wondering things like, "What would it be like if waste came out of someone's chest onto the table?" Such notions evolved into metaphorical skits and these skits into an ad-hoc philosophy.

"I recently saw the new Sex Pistols documentary *The Filth And The Fury*," mentions Wink, "And there's one interview in which Johnny Rotten says, 'All we ever wanted to do was tell the truth.' That's all we ever wanted to do."

So, underneath the bald cap and blue paint, Blue Man is just a bohemian with a hippie heart looking for the punk rock "truth." Somewhere along the way, he found nobility. **NMM**





## SQUEEZE PLAY

Ever imagine there'd be a day when kids would headbang to an accordion solo, scratch the names of accordion players into bathroom-stall doors or dream about a wall of accordions? One day, they will. That is, if John Linnell's prediction of accordion dominance comes true. And he should know. He's been playing the bellowed box for more than 15 years in They Might Be Giants. "Obviously, it's not up there with the guitar, even now," Linnell allows. "Although, I guess the guitar is sort of fading in popularity, so maybe they'll both end up in the same museum of no-longer-cared-about things." Or perhaps all accordions will eventually end up in his New York apartment, which boasts an unknown multitude of them stashed away in various places. The Giant can name eight off the top of his head, counting the plastic toy accordion a fan sent him. Linnell's oldest piece is also the first one he bought, a bulky 1928 model made by the Walters company of New York. "I've never really considered myself a collector. In fact, some of them are in such bad condition that I've just sort of stuck them somewhere or given them away." They don't come cheap—an endorsement deal with Hohner only landed him half off a \$3,000 instrument. "New accordions cost prohibitively much. That's probably one of the reasons nobody plays them." It's best to buy used, he advises. His current favorite is the miniature-key Gretsch, a flea market find he used on his recent *State Songs* (Zöe-Rounder) solo project. Linnell's always on the lookout for the perfect accordion, although he probably won't find one that meets his criteria: "I'd like to find one that was large but didn't weigh anything." »»Patrick Rapa

THE GOOD, THE BROWN  
AND THE GNARLY







# SEE ME, WHEEL ME



**Pass The Pipe (above):** Daryl and Beck of Glassjaw pick up pointers on a backside 5-0 grind from 15-year-old skate wizard Lauren Mollica, who wears a Twinkle red cross wool sweater, Rookie skateboard cotton drawstring pants and a Gunda handmade leather bracelet.

**Mellon Collie And The Infinite Radness (right):** Infamous skateboarder Andrew Bautista—wearing an Infamous grey cotton hoody, Triple Five Soul jeans and E's sneakers—melancholys over Mollica. Lauren Mollica wears a customized Dina Bina black T-shirt over a Harley Davidson long-sleeved shirt with flames, Rookie Skateboard swain track pants, Young & Devine leather lightning-bolt wristband. She grips a Rookie skateboard.



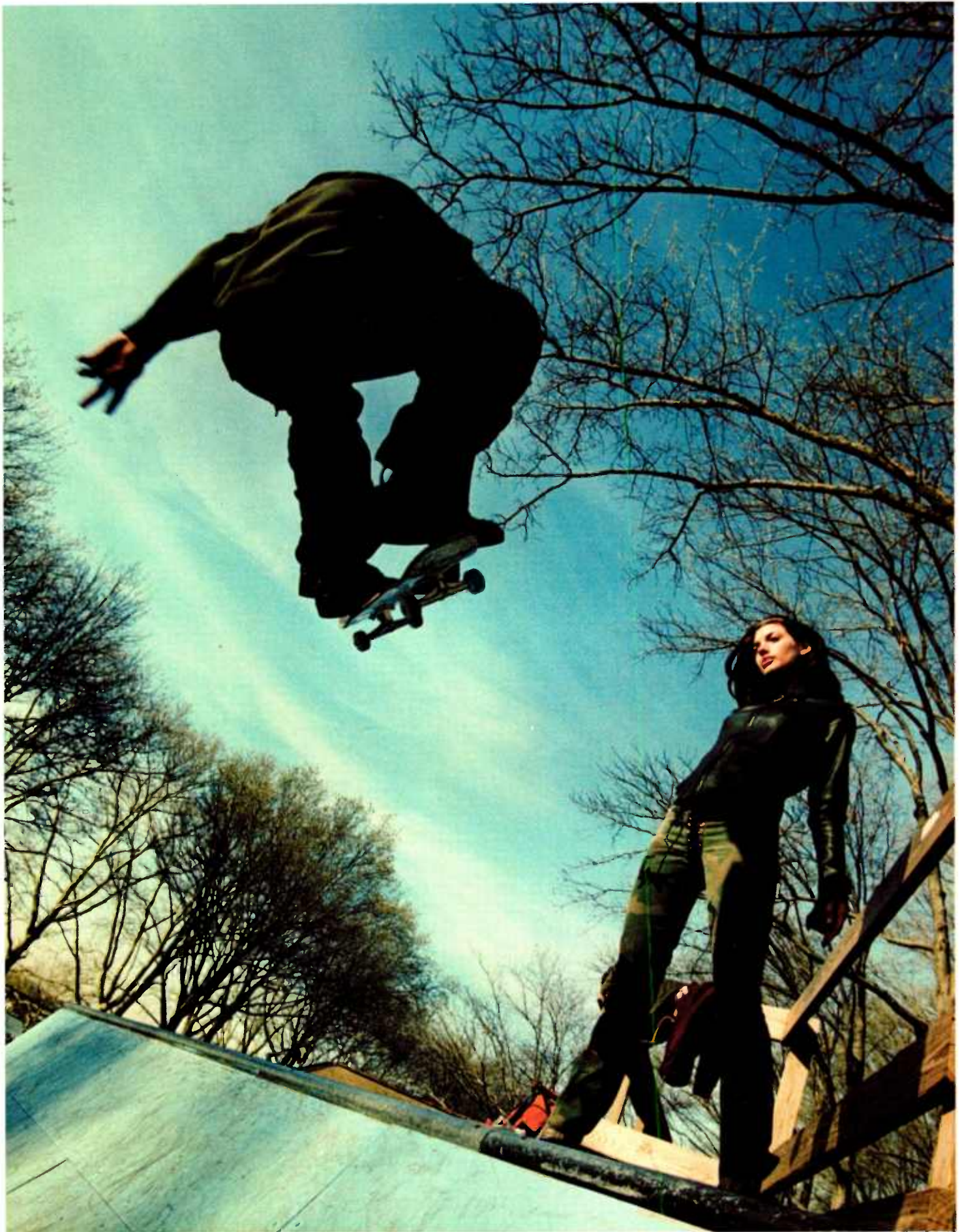


**In Infamy (above):** Geo Moya (sponsored by Infamous) kickflips to fakie on an Infamous board wearing an Infamous grey sweatshirt. For his zippered pants with detachable bottoms, he opts for Triple Five Soul.

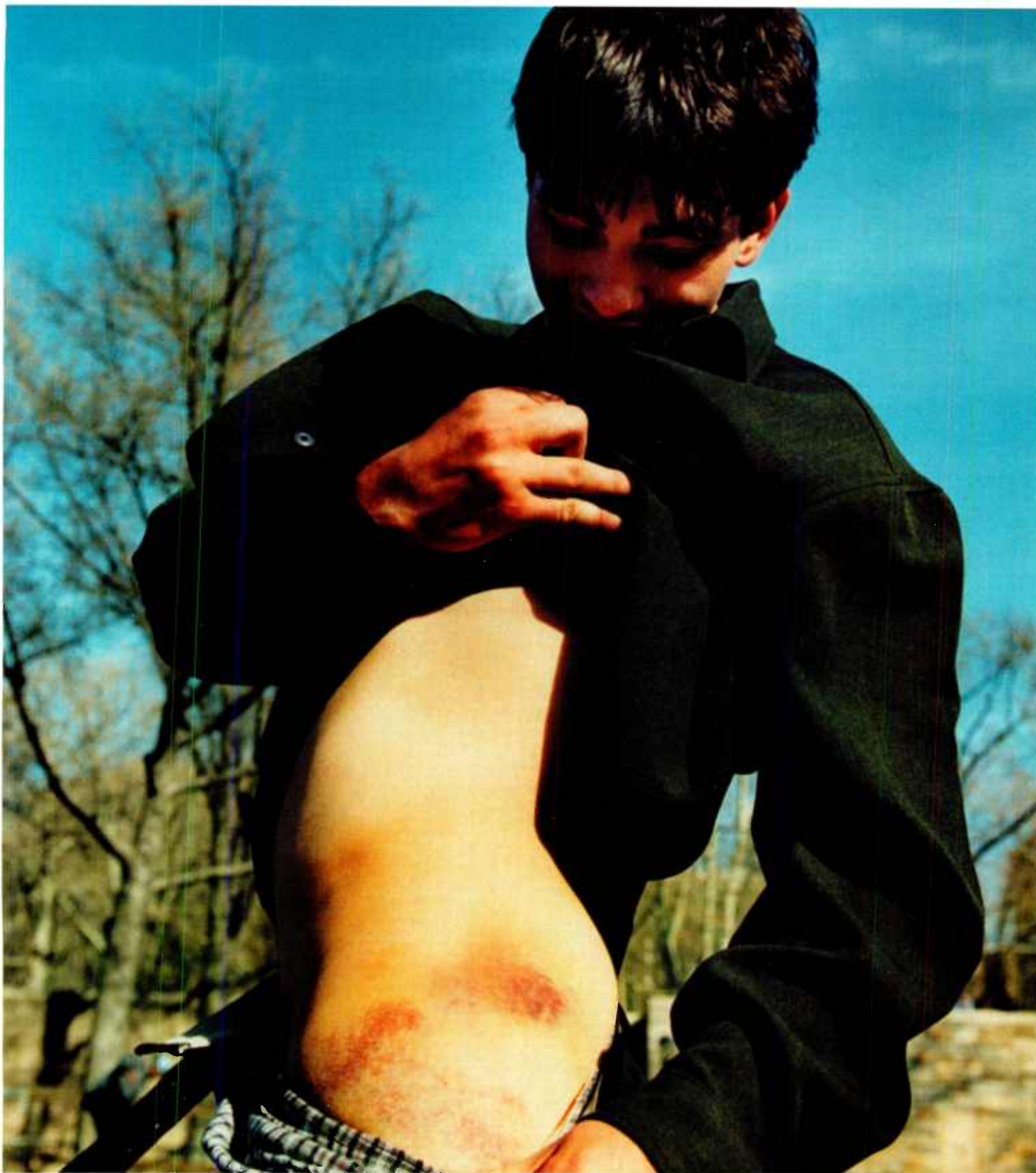
**Manhattan Transfer (right):** Andrew Bautista does an ollie transfer from quarter pipe to flat bank in an Infamous heavy-cotton hooded grey sweatshirt, Infamous skateboard, Triple Five Soul jeans and E's sneakers. Glassjaw's Beck—in a Triple Five Soul arctic parka—blesses the move with the international symbol for "Duuuuude."



Glassjaw's new album, *Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Silence*, is on Roadrunner Records.



**Air (Tod) Jordan (left):** Zoo York team rider Tod Jordan catches big air riding a Zoo York skateboard in a mélange double-face solid shirt by Quiksilver, and Triple Five Soul black pants. Model Aria Pullman—wearing custom-made camouflage pants by Agatha, deerskin black leather jacket and Chaloupe boots by Stephanie Kelian—wonders if she should take out extra health insurance.



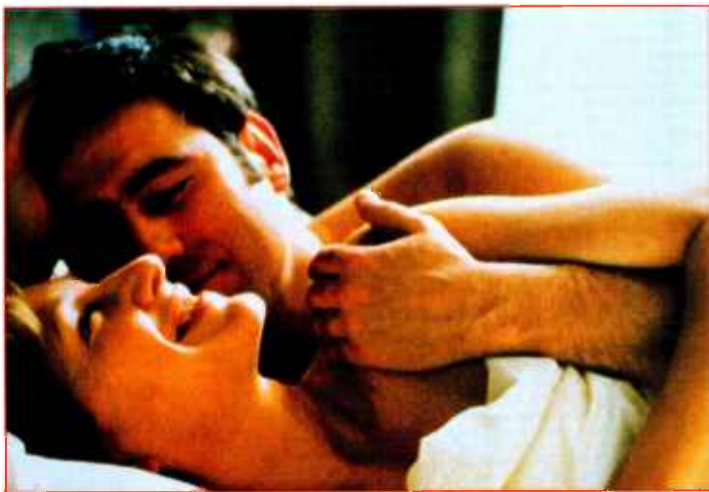
**Yesterday's Bruise:** Tod Jordan serves up his roasted rump in a mélange double-faced Quiksilver shirt and Triple Five Soul pants.

**The Roll Truth:** Osiris sneakers available at Blades (212-477-7350); Twinkle available at Steven Allen (212-334-6354); Triple Five Soul available at Triple Five Soul ([www.triple5soul.com](http://www.triple5soul.com)); Deerskin jacket available at Stephane Kelian Boutiques (212-925-3077); Infamous and skategear available at Supreme (212-966-7799); Rookie Skateboards at Stackhouse (212-925-6931); and Harley Davidson shirt available at American Dream Machine (212-343-2601).

All photos taken at Riverside Skate Park, Riverside Park, NYC. For video footage, log on to [www.cmj.com](http://www.cmj.com).

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## SILENCE IS SEXY AN AFFAIR OF LOVE PROVES MYSTERY IS THE GREAT TURN-ON.



One Thursday afternoon in an unnamed European city, a man and a woman meet in a café. She's nervous and chatty. He chugs a cognac to help extinguish his uncertainties. Then they're off to a nearby hotel to have sex.

There you have the start to *An Affair Of Love* (New Line), an absorbing French drama that provides plenty of fodder for post-film discussion. We don't know a thing about the pair (played by Sergi López and Nathalie Baye). They don't exchange any personal information, let alone their names. All we know is that she placed a newspaper ad seeking a partner to play out her sexual fantasy, which is never revealed. The two continue to meet every Thursday.

When asked for the back story, so to speak, director Frédéric Fonteyne maintains the mystery. "From the very beginning, we wanted to be abstract. We didn't need to know anything else—just a man and woman in a big city and what happens between them," says the 32-year-old Belgium native. "Normally you create background for the characters. We tried to do that early on, but we quickly realized it was not helpful." Fonteyne pauses and laughs while deflecting questions about the characters he and his screenwriter, Philippe Blasband, created.

As the film unfolds, the couple discusses the affair in separate interviews with an unseen inquisitor. Although they remember details differently, it's apparent that the relationship became something more than weekly sessions of fantasy role-playing.

*An Affair Of Love* creates an arousing story without sexy leads or nudity. "I wanted people who looked normal. I didn't want to make them glamorous, like an advertisement," Fonteyne says. "They're not perfect, but they are beautiful in their own way."

Fonteyne, meanwhile, is more forthcoming when it comes to discussing his inspiration for the film. "The real reason is that I was just out of a love affair myself. So I had to express something about it," Fonteyne explains. "Now I've made my film about love so I can do something else." Sounds therapeutic. "Very expensive therapy, but it worked," he says with a chuckle. "I feel better." **»»John Elsasser**

## HUMAN TRAFFIC

(Miramax)

It's Friday night and Jip (John Simm) is ready for anything. "The weekend has landed. All that exists now is clubs, drugs, pubs and parties. I've got 48 hours off from the world," he says in one of his many into-the-camera rants. Welcome to *Human Traffic*, a comedy that makes hedonism more inviting than ever. (No wonder it was a hit with English kids upon its summer 1999

UK release.) In the next bomb-diggity 99 minutes, Jip and his four friends—all post-teen ravers living in an industrial Welsh town—escape from their dead-end jobs with gleeful abandon. And of course they all learn something about life before Monday morning dawns. Brimming with game, cheerful idiocy, *Human Traffic*, by 25-year-old writer/director Justin Kerrigan, is an instant late-night (or early-morning) classic. **»»J.E.**



## CHUCK AND BUCK

(Artisan)

Gen X'ers have been accused of arrested adolescence—but how 'bout arrested pre-adolescence? When a gold-chained Jersey guy stumbles into the hotel room where 27-year-old Buck has set up shop, he shouts "It's like fuckin' Romper Room here. It's all kid stuff!" This is the tale of two childhood chums: Chuck, who has grown into a medium-slick L.A. record producer and Buck, who pines to relive homoerotic games from fourth grade. It's a creepy but good-natured piece that bends *Harmony Korine* and *Dogme 95* around *Happiness*. Buck is played by the translucently pale Mike White, the film's writer, who sulks pathetically through the movie, penning a goofy play and coming on to Chuck (a cool, restrained Chris Weitz) one too many times. Though parts of the film drag, and it risks becoming terminally precious, the digitally shot *Chuck And Buck* has dorky charm to spare. Indie rockers should keep eyes and ears open for appearances and songs by various members of the That Dog/Haden/Waronker crowd. **»»Scott Timberg**



## THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE

(Lions Gate)

Few figures have been more maligned in modern media history than Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker. While the Jessica Hahn-humping Jim went to the clink for the much-publicized scandals that rocked the PTL Club in the '80s, Tammy Faye got addicted to painkillers and was vilified in the court of public opinion. Those fat cat Christians got what they deserved, right? Well, you may change your mind after viewing *The Eyes Of Tammy Faye*, an unabashedly rah-rah yet enchanting documentary on The Queen Of The Eyelashes. ("Without my eyelashes, I wouldn't be Tammy Faye!") With narration by RuPaul, filmmakers Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey play up Tammy Faye's iconic kitsch value while recounting her life story. Camp aside, though, Barbato and Fenton paint her as a surprisingly sympathetic character. **»»J.E.**





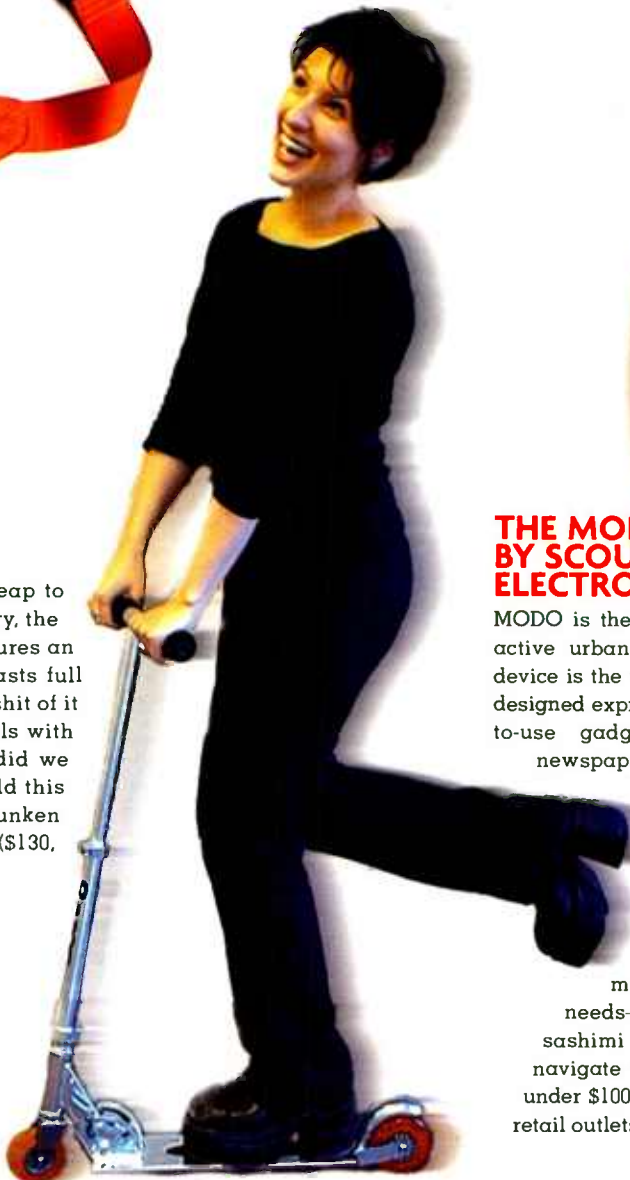


## T2 URBAN TOOL BELT

Although it appears as if the folks at Tumi are making an attempt to capture the elusive "fashionable construction contractor" market, the Urban Tool Belt is actually quite stylishly functional. The built-in pockets were engineered to store your cellular phone and palm pilot, while the pouch itself is a perfect dumping ground for cash, skate tools, an extra set of bearings or whatever variety of contraband you can dream up. The Urban Tool Belt is also made of heavy-duty textured nylon and is water resistant (which means your blunts will stay dry even in the heaviest of downpours). (\$65, 800-322-TUMI)

## RAZOR SCOOTER BY DLJ INTERNATIONAL CORP.

Ideal for the weekend barfly who's too cheap to take a cab after closing out the local boozery, the Razor weighs in at just over 6 lbs. and features an adjustable steering column. This baby boasts full alloy construction (Read: you can beat the shit of it and it ain't gonna break) and 100mm wheels with abec performance bearings to boot. And did we mention that a four-year-old child could fold this in seconds flat? Even in your worst drunken stupor it shouldn't take you much longer. (\$130, 800-659-9947 or [www.razorscooters.com](http://www.razorscooters.com))



## THE MODO BY SCOUT ELECTROMEDIA

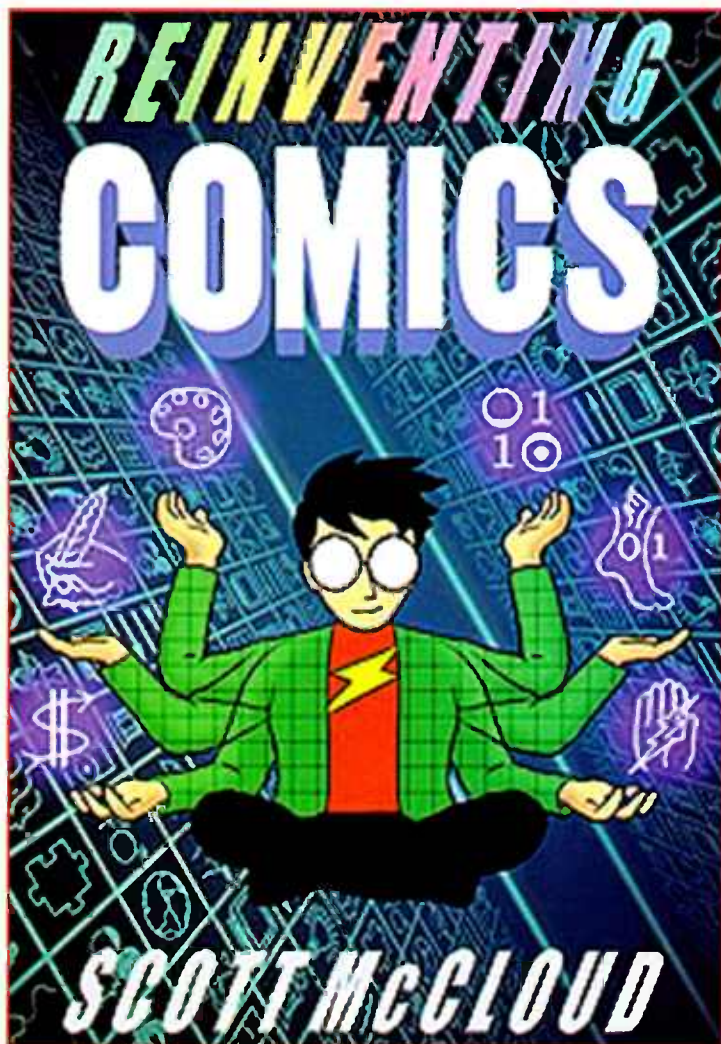


MODO is the perfect entertainment resource for active urbanites on the go. This pocket-sized device is the world's first wireless lifestyle gizmo designed expressly for the city-dweller. The easy-to-use gadget, like an electronic hipster newspaper, offers a variety of recommendations ranging from shopping, dining, arts and entertainment, as well as points of interest. Say your skate trucks just took a shit, or your deck managed to crack in half after a mishap on a railing at the municipal library. Whatever your needs—from skateboards to the best sashimi in town, MODO will help you navigate the concrete jungle with ease. (Just under \$100, available late summer at selected retail outlets.)



## STREETFLYERS

Remember Pop Wheels back in the late '70s? They looked like earth shoes but with the flip of a switch turned into rollerskates. Remember the horrible granite wheels that couldn't really roll on any surface, let alone hardwood at the roller-rink? Well, Streetflyers have little in common with those ancient artifacts, yet they operate on the same principle: Americans love hybrid technology. Or is it that we like to get two things for the price of one? At any rate, streetwear gurus Ike Tawil created these bad boys to eliminate the single biggest complaint of inline skaters everywhere—having to carry and change into street shoes where blading is prohibited. In addition, the durable wheels on Streetflyers were designed to perform on asphalt as well as concrete. Fight back! (\$150, 800-868-7870 or [www.streetflyers.com](http://www.streetflyers.com))



## THE COMIC CURE

**S**cott McCloud's 1993 book *Understanding Comics* has become the standard exegesis of how the visual and verbal language of comics works—and it's found additional lives in everything from academic film programs to visual-interface programmers' training. His new sequel, **Reinventing Comics** (DC), is prescriptive more than descriptive: It's McCloud's 240-page explanation of what can and should be done with the comics medium to realize its potential and make use of new technologies.

Naturally, McCloud presents his findings in comics form, and since he's one of the most gifted storytellers and explainers in *any* medium, his arguments are clear and even seductive. He breaks down his ideas and plans like a scientist—within the first 25 pages of the book, he's identified nine long-term goals for the art form and industry (creators' rights, public perception, diversity of subject matter and so on) and three technical revolutions, each of which gets its own simple icon. He categorizes the artistic innovations of the last seven years; he invents a taxonomy for the genres of the '90s; he illustrates every point he makes with perfectly chosen panels from great comics of the last century. And his analyses are, inevitably, airtight.

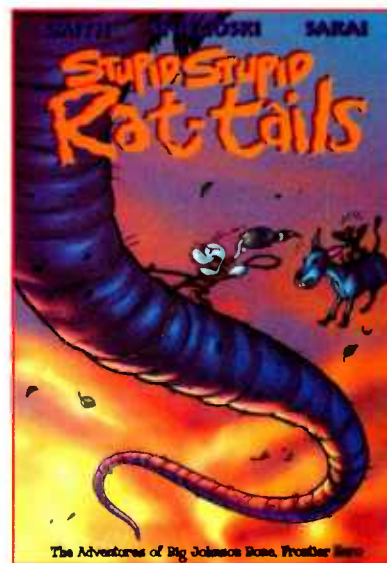
It's in the second half of the book, dedicated to his ideas about how the digital revolution might affect comics, that he runs into trouble. McCloud, more than almost any other well-known cartoonist, is devoted to electronic R&D (check out his site at [www.scottmcccloud.com](http://www.scottmcccloud.com)

for some amazing Web-based pieces, especially "My Obsession With Chess"). But *Reinventing Comics* keeps slipping into entertaining but not very useful descriptions of the origins of the World Wide Web, the uses of print media, the difficulties of electronic commerce, and so on. For a few fascinating pages, McCloud brainstorms about the narrative uses of electronic art effects, but the only other time he goes out on a limb is when he endorses micropayment for Web comics. And McCloud's most interesting when he does go out on a limb.

One of the jewels of the '90s comics revolution McCloud details is Jeff Smith's superb (if sporadic) **Bone** series, whose deceptively simple, cartoony style hides his mastery of the narrative techniques explained in *Understanding Comics*. (*Bone* has been translated into 13 languages and serialized in *Disney Adventures* magazine—not bad for a self-published indie series.) Smith's company, Cartoon Books, has published half a dozen paperback *Bone* collections, recently combined into a couple of boxed sets. On the surface, it's a kiddie version of *Lord Of The Rings*: a fantasy

set in and around a pre-technological village, starring a trio of Smurf-ish homunculi, a slew of cute talking animals and a teenage girl who's just found out she's actually a princess in exile. Look more closely, though, and *Bone* has the multi-level writing and artwork of the best Chuck Jones cartoons or early Disney movies. It's overflowing with subtext about conflicting philosophies of power, cultural imperialism and political responsibility—though not enough to get in the way of its silly fun. Smith is trained as an animator, and he's got an animator's grasp of shortcuts (one of his most ingenious creations, Ted The Bug, consists of five pen lines), but his real specialty is gigantic, beautifully orchestrated set pieces with zillions of characters running around.

*Bone* proper has been on hiatus for the last year or so while Smith worked on an animated version of it for Nickelodeon, but it's returning this summer with a giant-sized issue featuring contributions from Alex Ross and Frank Miller (both artists about as far outside Smith's idiom as imaginable). And there's one other new *Bone* book to tide the series' fans over: *Stupid, Stupid Rat-Tails*, two charming kids' fables about the ravenous but hilariously self-absorbed rat monsters from the regular series, one drawn by Smith and the other by the even loonier cartoonist Stan Sakai.



The Adventures of Big Johnson Bone, Frontier Series





## SADISTIC TEACHERS, SUICIDAL FITS AND THE SEINE

DAVID SEDARIS TAKES ON PARIS.

**F**or David Sedaris, the little things in life are lynchpins: menthol cigarettes, bowel movements, the moles on his face. "There was one below my eye that started out as a small red bump and kept growing," he says. "How did it know to stop, I wonder? Why didn't it bore right through my eyelid?" When a doctor removed the sentient growth, the 43-year-old writer taped it into his diary.

Sedaris has explored a variety of physical and psychic lumps in three collections of autobiographical essays culled from his magazine articles and readings on National Public Radio. One previous book, *Naked* (1997), remained on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for nine weeks and won the diminutive North Carolina native a devoted fanship, as well as comparisons to J.D. Salinger. Sedaris's new book, *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (Little, Brown), chronicles such diverse travails as an amphetamine-fueled flirtation with performance art, a confrontation with an unflushably large turd in a guest bathroom and a childhood speech therapy class to correct a lisp (learning to avoid sibilant words introduced him to the thesaurus).

The pithiest pieces center on the perils of being a maladjusted American in Paris—including the arduous French lessons that inspired the book's title—where Sedaris and his boyfriend, painter Hugh Hamrick, have lived for almost two years. *Me Talk Pretty One Day* is classic Sedaris—a mélange of acerbic sweetness, dry-ice wit and arch insights into humanity's talent for making a spectacle of itself.

Between promotional stops for his new book, Sedaris will also visit a dermatologist (corns and moles), a dentist (plaque), an optometrist (new glasses), a urologist (kidney stones) and a periodontist. "It's gonna be a bloodbath," he predicts of the latter. "They're going to do this thing where they take flesh from the inside of my cheeks and graft it onto my gums. I have a condition called pathological wandering. The bone has gone soft so my teeth wander around. I wake up in the morning and my mouth has changed. I'm very self-conscious about it. We must end that."

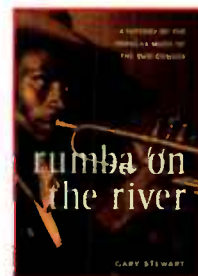
His European tenure has taught him more than the ins and outs of socialized health care. For instance, he can now say "collectible china" and "refrigerator" in German. But contentment remains elusive: The seven-month ordeal of writing *Me Talk Pretty One Day* proved so daunting that Sedaris claims he contemplated suicide.

"France is not a big gun country, so I mainly considered jumping out the window," he says, sneezing. "I'd go to a window and think, 'Okay, I'm going to kill myself.' Then I'd look down and think, 'Hmph, maybe I'll try to rewrite one more time.'" **—Neva Chonin**

## RUMBA ON THE RIVER

By Gary Stewart (Verso)

Civil war, coups, dictators, censorship—these have fueled the Congo's hot African jazz and lively soukous since the late '50s. Gary Stewart's passionate history of the river region's popular music does more than rattle off biographical details of the genres' stars; bubbling under his detailed tapestry of research and first-person accounts is a hot-blooded political thriller with a killer soundtrack. In the '60s, musicians felt the tight grip of government, with oppositional groups like Orchestre Bantou being slapped with restrictions as to their travel and content. Ironically, these troubles at home became a blessing for world music, as many artists (Papa Wemba, Tabu Ley and others) left for Paris to start a musical revolution. Perhaps the only thing missing from Stewart's book is the music itself, though he provides an ample discography to help you fill in the details. **—Steve Ciabattini**



## WATCH YOUR MOUTH

By Daniel Handler (Thomas Dunne Books)

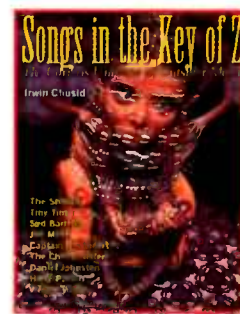
As lighthearted, fantastical incest comedies go, Daniel Handler's *Watch Your Mouth* is a winner. The opening plays like a suburban opera, with hero-by-default Joseph staying in the family house of his girlfriend Cyn as the two work at Jewish day camp. Joseph can't help but gape as his summer of wanton fucking devolves into a guessing game he plays at night in his hot attic room: Who in Cyn's family is dicking around with whom? Things get madcap with a Rabbi named Trouble, a doctor named Zhivago and the mythical Jewish Golem all entering from the wings. It's ridiculous, but with frequent nods to the audience, Handler (an occasional *Magnetic Fields* contributor) convinces us to stick around, like Joseph, to see how this wickedly comic satire wraps up. This quick read is just screwed-up enough to send a younger sibling into existential fits. **—Brian Howard**

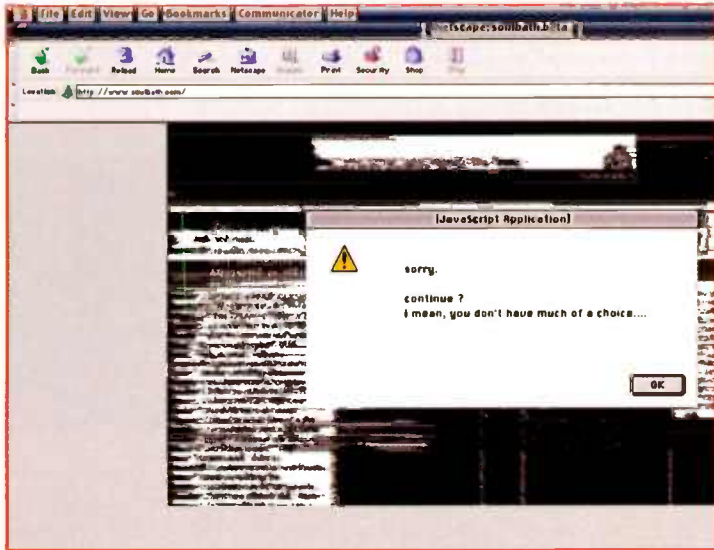


## SONGS IN THE KEY OF Z

By Irwin Chusid (A Cappella)

Irwin Chusid's guide to "outsider music"—composers and performers who are off in their own little worlds—features a few relatively well-known artists (Syd Barrett, Captain Beefheart) and even some who flirted with mainstream success (Tiny Tim and producer Joe Meek). The real value of the book, though, is its revelations about mindboggling unknowns like Swedish Elvis impersonator Eilert Pilarm, "human horn" Shooby Taylor and the legendarily horrid Cherry Sisters of vaudeville. Chusid's done extensive research, and his tone is equally tender and brutal (he describes Jandek as "neither 'rock' nor 'roll.' He's not even 'and'"). There's also a *Key Of Z* CD (Which?), which collects tracks by most of the book's subjects, several of which are enough to scar an unwary listener for life. **—Douglas Wolk**



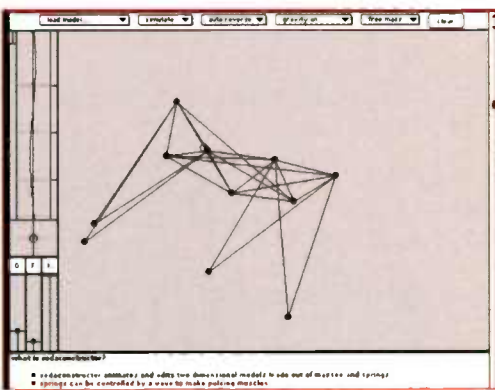


## RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

One of the alleged virtues of the Web is that you have more control over your engagement with it than you do with any other medium. That's usually true, but sometimes all you want to do is surrender control to something cruel and manipulative. Typing in [www.soulbath.com](http://www.soulbath.com) is the effective equivalent of admitting you have no power and turning yourself over to a higher authority. It requires Macromedia Flash; once you've done that, it simply seizes control of your browser and starts doing things that we're scared to describe here. ("Click here to continue," it announces at one point. "Of course, you don't have much of a choice.") After you've been played like a Muppet for a few minutes, it announces its true intentions: This summer, it will serve as a gallery for arty adaptations of ad banners. Clever, if a bit of a memory drain.

The corresponding act of contrition and surrender of control for programmers, on the other hand, is the **5K Competition** ([www.sylloge.com/5k](http://www.sylloge.com/5k)) held this spring—to design the most interesting possible Web page with a maximum size of 5120 bytes. As of this writing, it hadn't been decided, but we're cheering for War, a brilliant illustration of the futility of struggle.

The **Sodaplay** site ([www.sodaplay.com](http://www.sodaplay.com)), on the other hand, is where people who think they can control their Internet habits go. Pulling it up is tantamount to throwing away any hope of productivity for the rest



of the day—its chief attraction, Soda Constructor, is as addictive as Tetris and Windows solitaire put together. It creates dot-and-line models—like an erector-set spider—out of virtual "weights" and "springs," then sets them loose in a little onscreen cage. You can load in any of a dozen different basic forms (or build your own from scratch), modify their structure, mass and spring strength at will, turn gravity on or off, or alter the waveforms that control its motion. Then you can sit back and watch it, or tug at its masses to make it move

in an interesting way. There's just enough of a learning curve that you get incrementally better at it the more you play with it. Which, of course, makes you want to play with it just a little more. Before you know it, it's dark outside. Or light again.

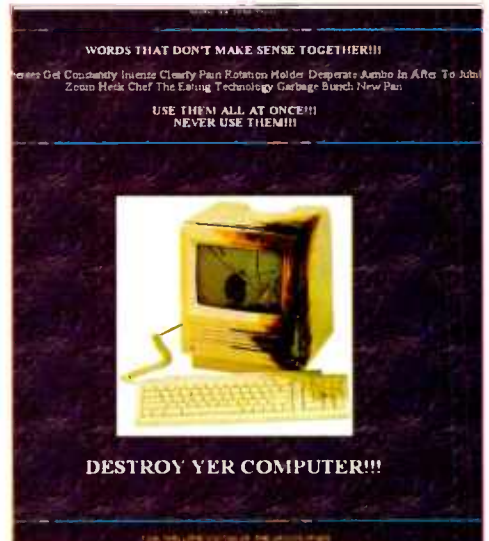
There are plenty of filters that will translate a Web page into the idiom of your choice, from Pig Latin to the Swedish Chef's speech patterns to considerably more offensive styles; then there's the infamous Ask Jeeves service, which you can ask any question and get suggestions for Web pages to answer it that, if you're lucky, will be vaguely related. The geniuses at **TheSpark.com**, though, have done them both one better with **Ask Jesus** ([www.askjesus.org](http://www.askjesus.org)). Simply feed Jesus a URL, and He won't just change most of its language to New Testament-ese—He'll totally rework its layout and replace all its images with little animations of Himself hauling a cross, wobbling his head, being offered a huge hamburger in the manger, and so on. There's also a question-answering Web-search service that yields even less reliable results than Ask Jeeves, but He always did talk in parables anyway.



Alternately, you might want to simply hand over your brain to the evil alien bandleader from Space Ghost Coast To Coast. **ZoRaK's PaGe** ([www.CartoonNetwork.com/spaceghost/cod/zorak/index.html](http://www.CartoonNetwork.com/spaceghost/cod/zorak/index.html)), capitalization and punctuation sic, is the most magnificent trainwreck of Web design to be found anywhere—an insane mishmash of hideous blink tags, exclamation points, instant contradictions, non sequiturs, clip-art from hell and random weirdness in the spirit of SGCTC. ("NEVER USE THIS WORD!!! USE IT NOW!!!") Check out the links to his "Zbay" section, in which he auctions off, for example, a diagram for clipping a vulture talon (initial bid: \$84,000.00). For an extra blast of no-comprende, run the whole site through Ask Jesus.

of

**RAISIN' HECK!!!**





## THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

(Eidos Interactive) PC

The latest adventures of Garrett, the gaming world's best-known thief, are more of an add-on pack to the original *Thief: The Dark Project*, than a completely new game. As expected, *Thief II: The Metal Age* offers a few more tools, enhanced graphics and new opponents, but the mechanics of each mission Garrett undertakes are much more complex than those found in the previous installment. There's still plenty of guard-whacking, but you also have to frame a government official, investigate a new religious order known as the Mechanists and reorient yourself often with your map, as *Thief II*'s worlds are as grandiose as its missions. There's a lot more to listen to this time around, as well. Particularly entertaining is an interaction between two pairs of guards on opposing rooftops who are too busy hurling insults (and arrows) at each other to pay attention to your scouting habits. Elsewhere, you'll have to hunker down in a dark corner and listen to conversations between characters to discover clues that will help you complete your missions. While *Thief II: The Metal Age* might be more of the same, more is precisely what *Thief* fans have been waiting for. »»A.C.

## SYPHON FILTER 2

(989 Studios) PSX

Secret Agent Gabe Logan returns in a hastily produced sequel to '99's popular *Syphon Filter*. As in the original, the player's mission is to guide Logan and his assistant Lian King through a series of action- and stealth-laced missions to discover the truth behind the mysterious Syphon Filter virus. Unfortunately, the characters and game mission aren't the only aspects of the original that return. In fact, the game's graphics, animation, voice-over and weapons options are practically

identical to the '99 version. And while play remains relatively the same (save for refined analog movement), many missions run from bland to boring. PS2 does feature a two-player death match mode, where gamers can go head-to-head on scaled-down versions of the one-player game, but the control and camera don't translate well to two-player mode. Fans may enjoy *SF2* as nostalgia, but the overt lack of improvement shows that 989 Studios was more concerned with getting this title on the shelf than building a better game. »»M. Tye Comer



## STAR WARS: EPISODE I RACER

(LucasArts) DC/Mac/PC/N64

There's nothing extremely complicated about *Star Wars: Episode I Racer*. It's a racing game, pure and simple. But it also happens to be the best racing game currently available on the Dreamcast. If you've seen *Star Wars: Episode I*, you know what the game is all about—grab a racing pod (a cockpit capsule suspended behind twin hovering rocket engines) and be the first to cross the finish line as other pilots try to bump you off course into boulders and walls. While *Racer*'s 21-plus tracks are full of shortcuts and excellent graphics, where the game really shines is in, well, its physics. More than a few beautiful-looking racing titles have been ruined by difficult-to-control vehicles. In contrast, *Racer* not only imparts the incredible sensation of pure speed, but also sports a sense of control and stability that allows you to handle that speed. When someone's trying to bump you off your game, the last thing you need is a steering mechanism that works against you. »»A.C.



## ARMY MEN

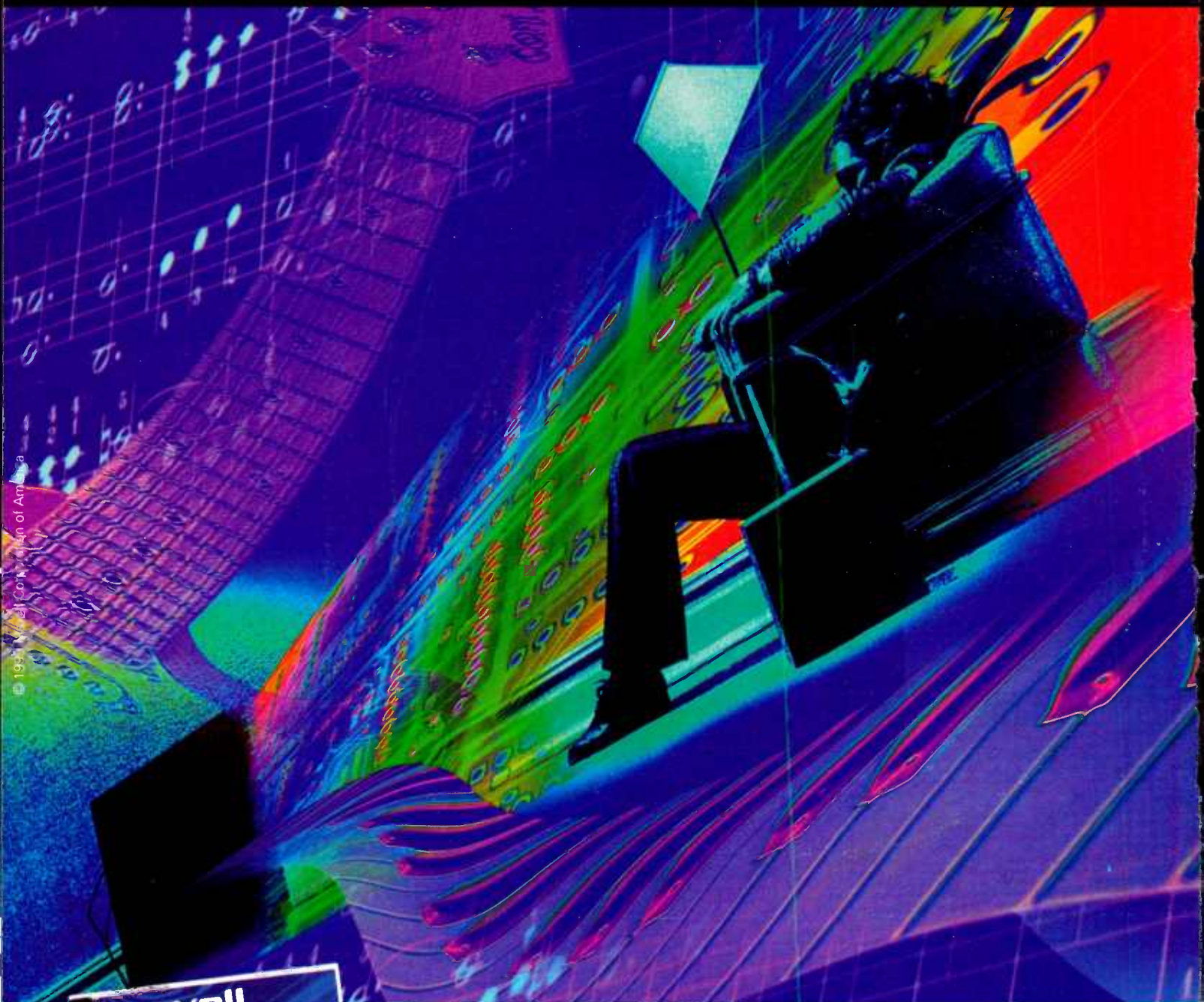
(3DO) Game Boy Color

Oh, shit. The little, green plastic soldiers you used to torture as a kid are back, and this time they're pissed. After invading the PSX, N64 and PC fronts, the little buggers have set their sights on Game Boy Color. Something big is brewing and the green army has sent Sarge to investigate. Hopping into the boots of this decorated war hero, you're outfitted with rifles, mortars, bazookas, grenades, flame-throwers, jeeps and tanks to bear against hostile tan forces. Mission objectives will be the last thing on your mind as you leave a trail of melted and dismembered bodies in your wake. Featuring more than 25 missions packed with strategic action, tactical challenge, and huge areas to explore, this title is a must for hyperactive players. Though the button-mashing can be hell on your thumb, the reward for your suffering is addictive play, digitized voice clips and hours of replay value. Consider this the only time it's good to be drafted. »»Scott Steinberg



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PADY CASEY

15 Dublin busker **PADY CASEY**, 24, recorded his debut *Amen (So Be It)* (Columbia) in eight days. The record went on to platinum sales and a slew of awards in Ireland. His songs—including the first single, “**Whatever Gets You True**”—combine elements of folk, rock, jazz, funk, electronics and even hip-hop. “When I first went in, it wasn’t even supposed to be an album,” says Casey. “I was just sort of fantasizing about all the different kinds of music I liked, and playing around with my songs in different styles.”

16 Los Angeles quartet **U.P.O.** doesn’t hide its confidence when describing the straight-up rock on its Epic debut, *No Pleasantries*: “[It’s] heavy, emotional, thought-provoking, inspirational, exciting and dynamic,” says guitarist Chris Weber. “It evokes a wide spectrum of emotions and moods, and we’re definitely proud of it.” Weber and the guys apparently like bluntness—they chose their drummer because he ran an ad that said, “I’m gonna kick your L.A. ass.” The first single, “**Godless**,” according to Weber, is “an incredibly pure song in every sense.”

17 “Rene” comes from *Red River* (Overcoat), the second full-length from the Austin, Texas five-piece **KNIFE IN THE WATER**. “Country is dangerous music,” says vocalist, guitarist and songwriter Aaron Blount. “Blues and country are dangerous because they sit on this existential point. For that music to work, for that kind of music to be convincing and sincere, it really has to feel death; you have to feel the death that person is singing about. It’s all about sex and dying.” (See Best New Music p. 25.)

CMJ NEW MUSIC

ISSUE 83 JULY 2000

1 “The idea of this being the *big* album is totally abstract to me,” says Chino Moreno, singer in the Sacramento, California melodic hardcore quintet **THE DEFTONES**, of his band’s latest full-length, *White Pony* (Maverick). “We’ve been signed for six years, and the work has never stopped; we like to work, and that’s what’s going to keep us around for a while.” *Pony*, the band’s long-awaited third full-length, features a guest spot from Tool vocalist Maynard James Keenan, and the track “**RX Queen**.” (See Cover Story p. 42.)



DEFTONES

2 “A lot of our songs are a lot mellower on our next album,” says **MODEST MOUSE** frontman Isaac Brock of the band’s newest, *The Moon & Antarctica* (Epic). “It’s a kinda complicated record.” *The Moon*—the Issaquah, Washington trio’s major label debut—features “**The Stars Are Projectors**,” and tracks called “Dark Center Of The Universe” and “3rd Planet.” Is there a point to all the celestial references? “It’s a colder album. It’s less about people and characters and more about space,” Brock says. “Not outer space, but space.” Guess not. (See Quick Fix p. 11.)

3 Seattle’s **SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE** has undergone a lot of changes, including singer Jeremy Enigk’s spiritual awakening and the band’s break-up and reformation. Now a trio (with Enigk on bass), the group’s fourth full-length, *The Rising Tide* (Time Bomb), shows a move towards the lush, orchestral sound of Enigk’s solo work on tracks like “One,” and a focus on some of Enigk and guitarist Dan Hoerner’s newfound beliefs. Says Hoerner, “I feel that the future holds a wake-up call for humanity in general. *The Rising Tide* is about burying your head in the sand and letting your life be lived for you by someone else.” (See Reviews p. 62.)



SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE

4 The original lineup of **ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK**—a four-piece, as opposed to the act’s current heavy-rock trio—was born in Manhattan in 1994, but didn’t last long. “We sounded nothing like we do today,” says singer/guitarist Bill McShane. “When the singer quit, I said, ‘Hey, what do you say I try singing and in two weeks we’ll go to record?’ That changed our whole sound, with my style of songwriting and my voice.” The Epic-550 release of UF’s second full-length, *This Will Be Laughing Week*, which features “**Tell Me What You Want (I’ll Be Anything)**,” comes after several tours supporting the album’s indie release last year.

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JEFF BUCKLEY



SNAKE RIVER CONSPIRACY



TAHITI 80

5 "Live performance activated the strongest elements of Jeff's gift," remembers Michael Tighe, guitarist in JEFF BUCKLEY's band. "And there was no place where he was more comfortable than on the stage." Following the singer/songwriter's tragic death in May of 1997, Columbia Records and Buckley's estate first released *Sketches (For My Sweetheart The Drunk)*, the full-length he was working on, and have now issued a live album: *Mystery White Boy* (from which "Last Goodbye" is culled). The album's tracks were recorded over the course of Buckley's tours from 1994 to 1996, and feature previously unreleased compositions, covers and songs from his debut, *Grace*. (See Reviews p. 60.)

6 "We started putting this album together back when Tori Amos and Jewel were whining all over the radio," says SNAKE RIVER CONSPIRACY's producer/songwriter, Jason Slater, of the band's debut, *Sonic Jihad* (Reprise), which includes "Breed." "All that 'poor me' bullshit was making me puke. The women I knew had way more balls than that and I wanted to give them a chance to prove it. That's when Tobey [Torres, singer] stepped up." Slater's also trying to bring the "naked aggression" of back-in-the-day MC battles back into the music world. "Music sucks," he says. "That pisses me off. That's what this is all about." (See Reviews p. 61.)

7 TAHITI 80 is four Parisians: Xavier Boyer singing and playing guitar, Mederic Gontier on guitar, Sylvain Marchand on drums and Pedro Resende on bass. Notably, they all play keyboards, and their kitschy, combiant take on pop—shown on the song "I.S.A.A.C."—comes through on their debut, *Puzzle* (Minty Fresh). "That's one of the great aspects of today; you can like Big Star and The Chemical Brothers. We like to think that, in a way, we go back to the beginning again, adding contemporary elements like electronic sounds and, I hope, some personality," says Boyer. (See Reviews p. 64.)

8 "Six Pacs" is the first single from THE GETAWAY PEOPLE's sophomore effort, *Turnpike Diaries* (Columbia), so named because it was inspired by the massive amounts of touring the band did behind their eponymous debut album in '98. "Each song relates to an experience we had on the road," explains frontman Boots. "Being on the road made us more aggressive. The record reflects everything we absorbed. It's more hip-hop, but it's also got more guitars—it's got more everything." (See Reviews p. 52.)

9 "The West Coast was just more experimental and that fit our vibe," says MC Zion of ZION I, who recently relocated to Oakland, California from Atlanta. Also featuring producer Amp Live and DJ K-Genius, the group is redefining hip-hop with drum 'n' bass beats for its socially conscious rhymes. "In Atlanta, it's a lot more groove-oriented. You have your bounce and your earthier sounds. That's where we were exposed to jungle, but the scene in Atlanta wasn't fostering any underground growth, so we moved out to the Bay. It was a cooler atmosphere." "Revolution (B-Boy Anthem) Featuring VinRoc" is from Zion I's debut, *Mind Over Matter* (NuGruv). (See Feature p. 32.)

10 "We ultimately strive to be a rock band because we all love the dirty sound of rock music," says Freedom, guitarist in THE WORKHORSE MOVEMENT. "I think we belong on stage with Led Zeppelin in '69 as much as we do with Limp Bizkit today." The quintet's members met while attending Central Michigan University, and self-produced and self-released their first album in 1995. The group's sophomore effort, *Sons Of The Pioneers*, is on Roadrunner, and features "Keep The Sabbath Dream Alive," (one of two tracks on the album referencing the bandmembers' inspirations). (See On The Verge p. 22.)

11 Rolling Stones drummer CHARLIE WATTS has been indulging his love for jazz during the past 15 years, forming a big band in 1995 and his Charlie Watts Quintet in 1991. Now, he's joined up with famed session drummer Jim Keltner for the deftly named *The Charlie Watts Jim Keltner Project* (CyberOctave), paying homage to the jazz legends who influenced him, on tracks that bear their names—including "Roy Haynes." "It's not got anything to do with them as players, it's more the feeling that I get off of them from just watching them play or hearing their records," says Watts. "And it's a tribute to them all."

12 "You don't often hear a song that's equal parts Sex Pistols and Mike Oldfield or Philip Glass and The Clash," says BLUE MAN GROUP's Matt Goldman about the group's mixture of avant-garde intellectualism and rock 'n' roll thunder. The track "Rods And Cones," from the Blue debut *Audio* (Blue Man-Virgin), travels between California surf, ecstatic Afro-Latin dance and rhythms of the Far East. Performance artists and musicians, the members of Blue Man Group build instruments out of plastic and cardboard that later become the basis for songs. "If we get one song out of each instrument, we're happy," admits Blue Man Chris Wink. (See Life/Style p. 75.)

13 ANTHONY ROTHER has developed a global following for his metallic electro tracks, at a time when electro is once again a hot sound in electronic music. His past work has ranged from a reworking of Kraftwerk's "Trans Europe Express" to his own *Sex With The Machines* EP. Rother most recently helped to produce Sven Vath's *Contact*, and also found the time to put out his own new full-length record, *The Age Of Simulation* (InterGROOVE), from which "Simulationszeitalter" is taken. (See Best New Music p. 26.)

14 "Our music is just greasy rock and roll," says Jason "King" Kendall, who handles vocals, maracas and "mayhem" for THE AMAZING CROWNS. "It's part punk rock, part rockabilly. Back in the '50s, rockabilly was punk rock. To us, it still is." The band's new full-length, *Royal* (Time Bomb), is the first release since it was forced to drop the "Royal" from its name—but what's not missing is the band's trademark energy on tracks like "Mr. Fix It." According to Kendall, the same goes for the Crowns' live show. "To us, if you're sweating up there—if you're givin' blood to an audience—that's what matters." (See Reviews p. 48.)



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STORY: JENNIFER BAUMGARDNER PHOTOS: DAN KOECK



**T**he Coen brothers knew when they made *Fargo* that the town was an enigma wrapped in a wind-chill factor. The sprawling burg is so unstudied, untapped and misunderstood (there's a reason the Midwest is known as "fly-over space") that the rest of America was shocked when *Fargo* was revealed to have a "culture." Now everyone knows that locals plug in their cars, the cuisine is all-you-can-eat buffet and we speak in an accent that fuses the diphthonged vowels of *uff-da* Norwegians with a cadence direct from the Indian rez.

Although the music scene wasn't documented in *Fargo*, that prairie town (with the help of its twin sister, Moorhead) bred the Nembutal-smoothness of blues grande dame Peggy Lee, fed the wit of classical clown PDQ Bach and nurtured the plucky cheese of '60s sensation Bobby Vee. And while it's fly-over space to some, it's stop-over space to musicians—what else is happening between Minneapolis and Seattle? Keep in mind, Fargo-Moorhead was the gig the Big Bopper, Richie Valens and Buddy Holly were heading to on the day the music died.

In Fargo, winter starts in September and it lasts 'til May, which sure sounds like the blues. That may be why Fargo is the hometown of two actual guitar prodigies in that reputedly expiring genre. **Jonny Lang**, who used to be Kid Jonny Lang until he got a major label deal and put away childish things in favor of opening for The Rolling Stones, and

**Shannon Curfman**, who is barely 15 and has a deal at Arista herself. Yeah, they're white and neither can get served in a bar yet, but damned if they're not bringing the tradition of Buddy Guy to the readers of *Seventeen*.

As in the movie, most roads out of Fargo lead to Minneapolis. The biggest talents move to the Twin Cities where there are more clubs, venues, artists, radio outlets and recording studios. Besides Curfman and Lang, other Fargo transplants to Prince's hometown include the excellent alternative a cappella act **The Blenders**. Having put out six records in a decade (the last on Universal), this dulcet quartet harmonizes like Boyz II Men and looks like part of the 90210 gang. Ani DiFranco has her Midwestern twin in the earth-pixie **Brenda Weiler**, a 22-year-old singer/songwriter who is a star in Fargo (she still plays there frequently) and is gaining popularity in "The Cities," as we call Minneapolis and St. Paul. When in town, Weiler plays at venues like **Zandbroz Variety** (420 Broadway), **The Fargo Theater** (314 Broadway) and **Atomic Coffee** (15 Fourth St. S., Moorhead), all of which host acoustic music.

The punk, rock and alternative scenes, whose acts don't play the huge FargoDome near the airport, are otherwise hobbled by the dearth of clubs. But the kids are resourceful. In the early '90s, local punk rockers made it possible for bands such as Nation Of Ulysses, Fugazi and Bikini



FOLKIN' UP ZANDBROZ VARIETY.



DOZER ROCKS THE BOWLER. ('YEAH, IT'S AT 11.')

Kill to play at **Fargo Eagles Club** (503 3rd Ave.) and the **American Legion** (505 Third Ave. N.). (Indeed, Kathleen Hanna still remembers fondly her Bikini Kill show at the Legion: A circle was drawn on the ballroom floor with the words "mosh pit" inside it.) These places continue to house live music, and provide a perverse stodginess that makes punks feel all the more rebellious.

A more consistent venue is **Bowler's Ballroom** (2630 University Dr. S.), a '50s-era alley where the 21-and-up set can check out garage outfits like **Dozer**, **S.O.P.** and **Ded Walleyes**. A new venue for live music in downtown Fargo is the **21st Amendment** (520 1st Ave. N), and there's also live music across the river in Moorhead at **Kirby's** (315 Main Ave., Moorhead), a dive of the comfy sort, with \$5 pitchers of Bud. Across the street at **Ralph's Corner** (23 4th St. S., Moorhead), punk bands occasionally play and it's definitely the place to survey the kids who make the F-M alterna-scene. The regulars comprise hard-drinking one-armed Vietnam vets and sullenly gorgeous hipsters. There is a decent jukebox and a couple of pool tables, but get there early—last call in Fargo-Moorhead is a chaste 1 a.m. Yet another reason why Jonny Lang sings the blues.

Jennifer Baumgardner grew up in Fargo and, while she doesn't have that accent from the movie, her parents and her entire graduating class do.



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## The Monkees

STORY: NICOLE KEIPER  
ILLUSTRATION: NICHOLAS MEOLA

December 28, 1984

Dear Diary,  
I love my toys.

July 18, 1985

Dear Diary,  
melinda is my #1 friend.

August 6, 1986

Dear Diary,  
The Monkees are my favorite rock group. I love them. Right now I am listening to "Daydream Believer." Davy and Micky used to be cute, but now they are ugly. I hope to meet them one day.

That snippet of impassioned prose was born of the tumultuous months that began my love affair with Micky Dolenz, Peter Tork, Mike Nesmith and—in particular—Davy Jones. Though I shudder now at most of my fourth grade loves (my favorite shirt boasted a cartoon bunny in sunglasses and I wanted nothing more than to have a bedroom designed like Punky Brewster's), Monkee love is the kind of love that never dies.

I became acquainted with The Monkees through the early-'80s Nickelodeon/MTV resurrection of the group's 1960s television show, and the boys sunk their hooks into my tiny heart immediately. I watched that show with a fervent passion I'll doubtlessly never experience again, ravenously savoring each precious Monkee moment. I'd sit in my living room each and every day after school for 30 blissful minutes; laughing, singing, crying—and falling hopelessly in love with Davy. I'd never seen a boy quite so dreamy: that hypnotic smile, that delectable singing voice, that accent! I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt as I watched that telltale eye-twinkle each episode when he met the girl of the day that those eyes would someday twinkle for me. In the coming months, I'd buy every Monkees album I could get my hands on, I'd learn every word to every song, and if I couldn't adorn everything I owned with "I ♥ Davy," I would die trying.

My own undying devotion wasn't nearly enough, though. Like a deranged mini-Mormon, part of my job, as I saw it, was to infect the neighborhood kids with my Monkee fever. Their resistance was futile. No human stood a chance against those gooey harmonies, those indelible hooks or those hopelessly contagious lyrics ("I'll be true to you, yes I will/ Every dream that you have, I'll fulfill/ I never promised this to anyone before/ But, I'll be true to you"). Before the eyes of our poor, Led Zeppelin-loving parents, a legion of Monkee-worshippers in knee socks and KangaROOS quickly formed—and I was their queen. Each day, in homage to our favorite band, we'd set up overturned buckets as drums and baseball bats or tennis rackets as guitars, and lip-sync to heavenly tracks like "Cuddly Toy," "I Wanna Be Free," "(I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone" and "Valleri." Our heshier parents even swallowed their pride and had the foresight to videotape it so we could "enjoy" our talents later on. I'm certainly glad to know that somewhere on Eastern Long Island, a tape of me mimicking the dance stylings of a short, spindly British man while mouthing the words "You're not the only cuddly toy/ That was ever enjoooyed, by any boy" lies in wait.



## Monkee love is the kind of love that never dies.

Surprisingly, the second coming of The Monkees spread beyond my neighborhood, and the newfound interest preteens like myself were taking in the slapstick songsters convinced someone to get a reunion tour on the road. And then it happened: Somehow in all my Monkee zealotry, I'd missed the fact that the show was filmed when my mom was nine, and that the four mop-haired heartthrobs were actually 30 years my senior. Could the figure beneath that wavy mullet be my Davy? Were those crow's feet on my dopey-but-lovable Peter? I was crushed.

After some therapy and a fairly lengthy Def Leppard phase, I managed to coast out of adolescence with almost enough indie-rock snobbery to cancel out the inherent dorkosity of a Monkees devotion. Loving The Monkees is like a possession that never fully gets exorcised, though, and just when you think you've kicked, they creep back into you like a dormant fever. Recently, when a friend made the mistake of wearing a T-shirt in my presence that had "Davy Is Fab" emblazoned beneath a picture of his smiling face, it took every bit of restraint I could muster to keep from mugging her for it.

I still might. I'm a slave to Monkee love.

Nicole Keiper may not be your steppin' stone, but she is Editorial Coordinator at CMJ New Music Monthly.



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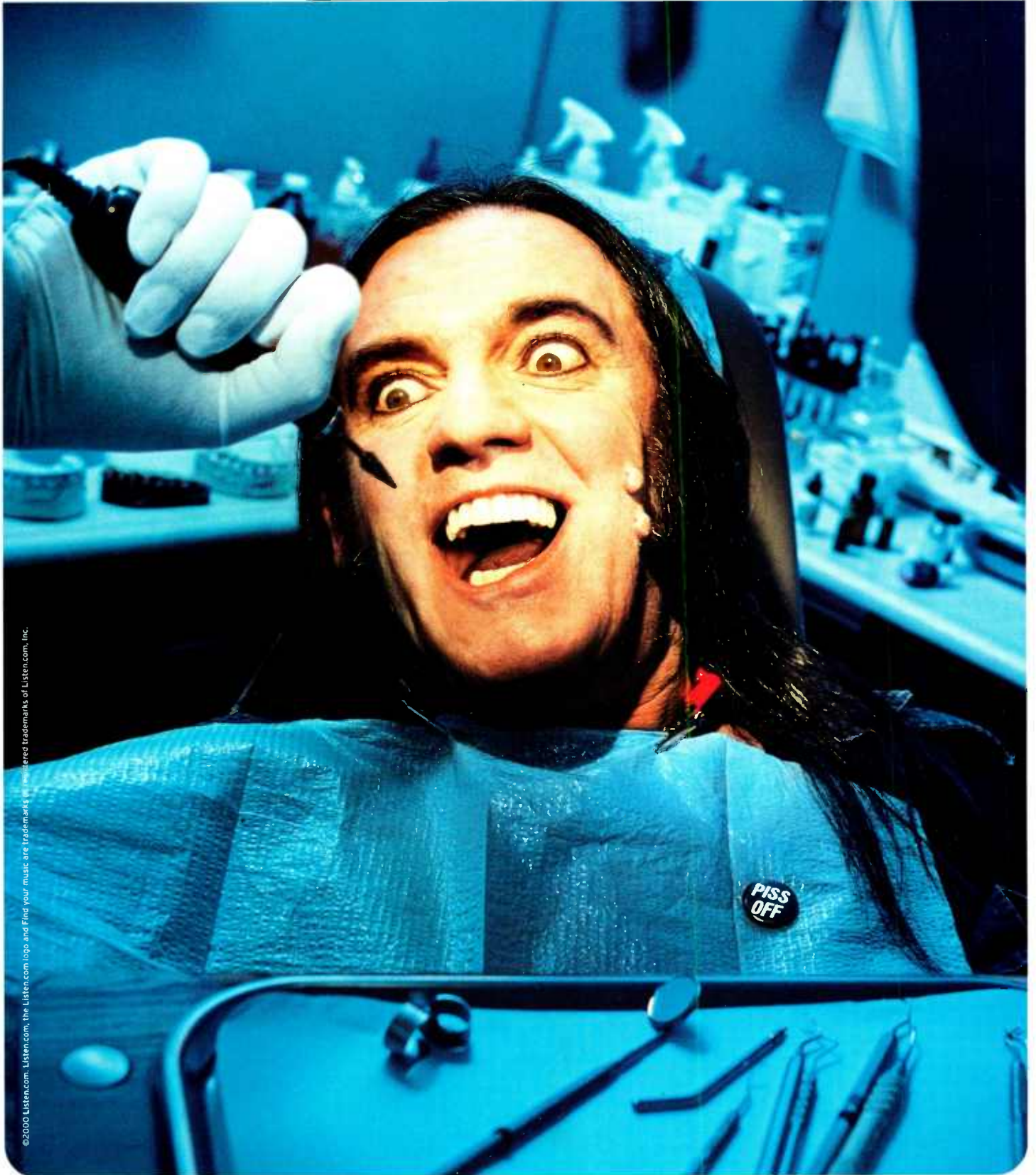


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