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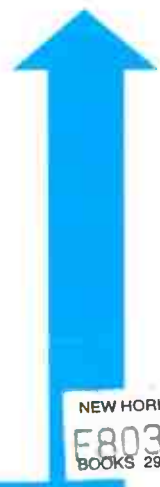
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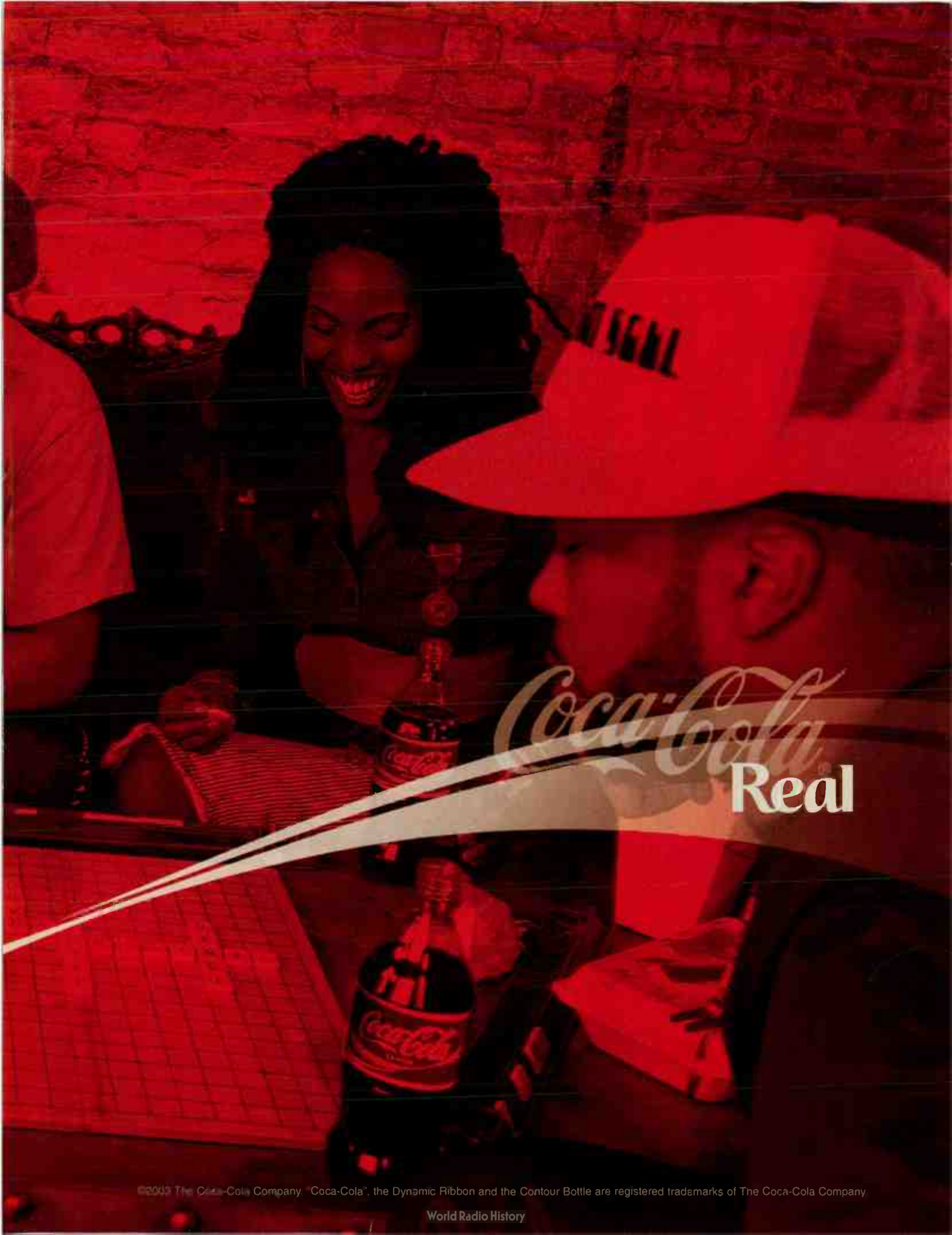
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BLUE MAN GROUP'S BIG TOOLS. ELECTRIC SIX. EVAN DANDO: STILL A NUTJOB. 49 REVIEWS.



wordsmiths



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CMJ ISSUE 113 • JUNE 2003

NEW MUSIC[®]

MONTHLY



VERBENA • NEW PORNOGRAPHERS • TOMAHAWK

NEW PORNOGRAPHERS 28

The laws have changed: The New Pornographers are rewriting the rules of pop music with hook-crammed songs that prove that catchy doesn't have to equal dumb. Scott Frampton watches them plug in their *Electric Version*.

TOMAHAWK 24

Mike Patton and Co. are as skilled at injecting life back into hard rock as they are at talking the pants off of drunken police officers. Tom Mallon spends a disturbing amount of time on every lurid detail.

VERBENA 26

After a few years of resolving personal and personnel issues, Verbena's back and ready to rock—and take the piss out of boy-band punk. Scott Frampton draws a flush.

24 HOURS OF THROBBING GRISTLE 36

What would you do for a free box set and a day off work? Christopher R. Weingarten takes the ultimate attention-span challenge: a nonstop 24 hours of legendary noisemongers Throbbing Gristle. This diary of a madman is all that's left; reading all 2,500 words of his ordeal should prove equally neuron-frying.

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Bands who hopefully won't quit and head back to the car wash days after we write about them like Damone: Earlimart, Electric Six, the Fever.

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New Pornographers, Granddaddy, Verbena, Whirlwind Heat, Ima Robot, the Ataris, Wakefield, the Red Hot Valentines, Idlewild, Gemma Hayes, O.A.R., Shamra, Ed Marcourt, the Escape Engine, Crash Radio, the Rogers Sisters, the Deathray Davies, the Pernice Brothers.

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Wire ages gracefully, Blue Man Group whacks their tubes while we watch, Evan Dando is still weird and has the artifacts to prove it, five records that Disco D'll be playing at the Booty Bar, Amy Rigby talks about sex and nursing homes in the same sentence, and *Songs Inspired By Literature* gives you a handy guide to which rock stars to beat up after school.

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New Haven, Connecticut will learn you a thing or two about pizza. Oh yes.

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COVER DESIGN BY AESTHETIC APPARATUS (www.aestheticapparatus.com)

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VERBENA: LEGG; NEW PORNOGRAPHERS: CHRIS BUCK; TOMAHAWK: JUSTIN RABIN

Flat, White and said all over

There has been a lot of writing about the White Stripes lately and I think you need to get the story straight, for the sake of honest journalism. Let it be known that Jack White stole his entire "act" from the authentic savior of garage rock, Dexter Romweber of the legendary duo, the Flat Duo Jets. The Jets now go under the name "The Dexter Romweber Duo," after the demise of their drummer. New CD called Dexter Romweber, *Chased By Martians! (Manifesto)* will be the surprise hit of the year. If you aren't already on it then you will be the last to know... again! Here is the punchline: The Dexter Romweber Duo opened for the White Stripes on Easter Sunday in Boston. How very fitting that on the holy day of resurrection, the rightful king of garage rock returns to claim his throne [sic]. Beware, for his fiery sword will be swingin'! I think you guys better be there with pen in hand to see the coming. Here is something to check out in the mean time [sic]. You can feel free to investigate the following information. It is all 100 percent true. (Oh, and by the way Jack White is not the seventh son of the seventh son!) The legendary Flat Duo Jets consisted of Dexter Romweber on lead guitar and vocals and a drummer named Crow. They were a huge influence on the resurgence of rockabilly, alternative country, and '60s style garage rock that have grown into the pop world of today. Bands like the White Stripes and Southern Culture On The Skids (and the list goes on) openly name the Duo Jets at the top of their influences for starting in the business.

Here is a quote from a recent e-mail the band received from Jack White:

"Dex, Let me first just say that you were a major influence on me, and as a teenager I was deeply in love with the flat duo jets, I have all of your albums and learned to play every song on *Go Go Harlem Baby* (the second Flat Duo Jets record) when I was 19. I used to listen to 'Safari' everyday, I had another two-piece band called Two Part Resin, and we did covers about 15 songs that the Flat Duo Jets did on that record, sort of the pre-precursor to the White Stripes."

PIGGY
mcjagger_102@hotmail.com

Caveat emptor: We can't verify that the above e-mail is real. If it is though, Jack White seems like a pretty swell guy. —ed.

Do The Retribution

The goal of this letter is to show that music is subjective and it should never be chastised. My motivation for penning this piece came after reading two consecutive anti-Pearl Jam letters printed in issue #110. Before I start, let me establish that I enjoy Pearl Jam and am submitting this rebuttal on their behalf. I feel it is needed especially since a certain magazine, who just two issues prior published a rather positive report on this band, had absolutely nothing to say in their defense. To begin, let's look at the word subjective: The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as, "Proceeding from or taking place within an individual's mind and being unaffected by the outside world." Damn that's a great word. Now, having quoted the definition let me pose a question to the two Pearl Jam hatemongers. If Pearl Jam had never made a hit song, had received no radio play, and had not been given MTV airtime, would you like them? Or try to imagine the above scenario with the addition of the band in question playing at hole in the wall clubs and gracing the pages of magazines such as *CMJ New Music Monthly* while being reported as "On the Verge." If you're being honest with yourself, then you should see my point. However, on the flip side, maybe you honestly still wouldn't be into them. OK, that's cool too. But it is a fact that if they were not popular I would not have had to listen to you two bitch. My point is this: Let your opinion be unaffected by the outside world, and don't bring others down for liking something you don't. It shouldn't matter if a band is mainstream or underground, good music is good music. People, in my opinion, need to YIELD to what they personally feel is good music. Giving your opinion is one thing. Criticizing with the intent of being hurtful or rude is another. And hateful and rude elements were found in both the letters of which I speak. Music is subjective, which means that only you the individual can decide what is palpable to your own self.

Eric Towler
liferocks@collegeclub.com
Cocoa, Florida

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World Radio History



ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT

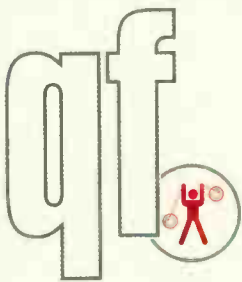
BOWERY BALLROOM, NYC 03.20.03

Remind us someday to tell you about the time our friend hung with Jimmy Page and Robert Plant at a Rocket From The Crypt show. Here, Speedo (a.k.a. John Reis) preaches another sermon on the restorative powers of rock 'n' roll on the human soul; his shirt testifies on the power of dry cleaning to remove sweat stains.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER OIIORIO

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THE MIX

TITLE: Malicious Stories

MADE BY: KonstantinL (also known as Darrin Frew), Glasgow, Scotland

1. **Midnight Evils** "Bad Machine"
2. **The Kills** "Pull A U"
3. **Venetian Snares** "Stairs Song"
4. **Aphex Twin** "Windowlicker (Acid Edit)"
5. **Gorky's Zygotic Mynci** "Lucy's Hamper"
6. **Melys** "Adrift"
7. **Dennis Brown** "Funny Feeling Dub"
8. **The Fall** "How I Wrote Elastic Man"
9. **Tijuana Hercules** "Like Siamese Twins"
10. **The D4** "Ladies Man"
11. **David Jack** "Linguine"
12. **Gregory Isaacs All Stars** "Leggo Beast"
13. **Iron & Wine** "The Rooster Moans"
14. **DJ Scud** "Jungle Warrior"
15. **Detroit Cobras** "Ya Ya Ya"
16. **The Rogers Sisters** "Calculator"
17. **Ann Peebles** "I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down"
18. **Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks** "(Do Not Feed The) Oyster"
19. **Biffy Clyro** "The Ideal Height"
20. **Schneider TM** "Reality Check"

With the help of a dull machete and The Mix forum on CMJ.com, you'll make sure they never laugh again! (Or at least, they'll go tastefully.)



Tough Love

Amy Rigby Over the course of four records, pop-Americana singer/songwriter Amy Rigby has made a point of being painfully honest. Like in the fifth song on her new *Till The Wheels Fall Off* (Signature), where she poses that ageless question, "Are We Ever Gonna Have Sex Again?" We were pretty sure she had the moxie to be brutally honest about your love lives, too. And lookeehere, we was right. *They kid because they love: lovelorn@cmj.com.*

I have a thing for older women—I'm 23, and haven't been attracted to someone my own age since I was like 17. The last woman I dated was 31, and now I'm completely obsessed with a woman who works down the hall, who's divorced and 39. I don't really know what it is, I just find older women more pleasant, less concerned with stupid things. But I'm worried about how my mom, who's only 43, would react to my dating someone she almost could've gone to high school with.

—Jeremy, New London, Connecticut

Face it, older women aren't more pleasant and less concerned with stupid things than young women. They just don't want to waste what little time they have left on this earth being miserable. I'm pretty sure your dear mother is merely waiting for you to set a precedent by dating someone her age. That way she knows it won't bother you at all when she starts going out with one of your friends.

Tell me the truth: Do bands on tour get laid as much as everyone says?
—Smally, Norfolk, Virginia

"Everyone" is an evil committee whose sole purpose is to make you feel inadequate. You can spend your entire life fruitlessly chasing all the fabled pleasures, wisdom, bargains on eBay and romantic happiness that "everyone" but you seems to have experienced. But then again, sometimes what everyone says is true.

I lost my virginity last week to my girlfriend of almost a year. Of course I'm happy about that, but I feel a little weird cause well I'm not exactly very experienced and I don't really know what I'm doing. I want to be good at it. What's the best way to learn without asking my older friends for advice? 'Cause I'm way too embarrassed to do that. Are there books? I've tried online but all I get is porn sites.
—Greg, Pella, Iowa

Try this: Fast-forward to a nursing home, say, 65 years from now. Your teeth are in a glass, your eyesight and hearing are gone and "hard on" is the answer to the question "What is winter to weather stripping?" There's a scene playing in your mind of a time when you were young and virile, and firm-fleshed women actually let you touch them rather than just changed your bedpan. Think about that and technique will seem like a moot point. Wait, now you're not in the mood anymore? Sorry!

Love, Amy

their first since 1996, produced by Andy Gill; Grohl drums + Killing Joke + Gang Of Four = salivating editors • **The Polyphonic Spree** and **Elbow** have both completed



BY VINCENT G. CURRY

In *Once Upon A Time In The Midlands*, we learn that England has a trashy middle-class element just like America's, filled with ugly clothing and seemingly even uglier people. One of the ugliest is Dek (Rhys Ifans, Hugh Grant's roommate from *Notting Hill*), a dweeb who has found happiness with his girlfriend and her daughter by a hoodlum ex (Robert Carlyle). This ends, however, when news of her rejection of his marriage proposal (on national television) brings the ex home to attempt reconciliation. We're supposed to feel for Dek, but Carlyle, in his jeans, black leather jacket and long hair, is an infinitely superior sight to that of anyone else in town. And their "showdown" provides no suspense, as—his looks notwithstanding—Carlyle is an obvious asshole. In fact, unless you like the idea of laughing at white trash or TV movie-level clichés, this has nothing to offer by way of comedy or drama... ♦♦♦ The definition of "indie," "alternative" and "quirky" all in one band, They Might Be Giants has survived for 20 years with little to no compromise, and only slightly more mainstream success. **Gigantic (A Tale Of Two Johns)** is a documentary that lovingly chronicles their history. And rarely is a band so defined by its fanbase. **If you're a TMBG fan, you don't get a lot of sun or work out, rarely have 20/20 vision** (thus the clunky black glasses) and listen to NPR. Let me put it this way: Janeane Garofalo shows up, as a fan. Even if you find their music incredibly annoying, the documentary is nonetheless compelling thanks to the genuine wit and charm of the duo themselves. God knows it's not the song about James Polk.

For more rants, go to www.angrygeek.com.

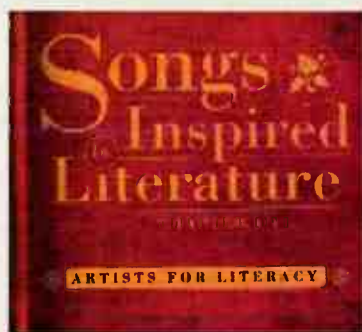
AMY RIGBY; BRYDGET CARILLO; ILLUSTRATION: GRAHAM BRICE

“Caught ya! What the fuck do you think you’re doing?”

—Madonna, in a series of MP3 spoofs designed to confuse the P2P networks, wants to know why you're downloading her new record, you grabass.

“This is what the fuck I think I’m doing.”

—The hacker who broke into Madonna.com days later and posted tracks from the new record on her website, obviously not happy with her tone.

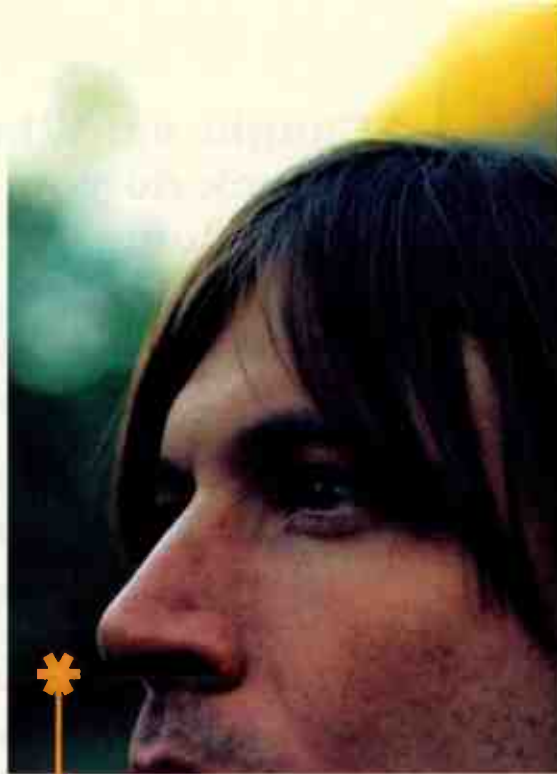


WEIRD RECORD

Illiterate

Judging by the characters we come across, it seemed musicians might make up a large percentage of America's 44 million illiterate adults. Imagine our surprise at *Songs Inspired By Literature Chapter One and Two*, 32 tracks that benefit the Artists For Literacy foundation and show rock stars for the bookworms they really are. Heavy hitters David Bowie and Bruce Springsteen rep high-school-English fare, with “1984” and *The Grapes Of Wrath*-inspired “The Ghost Of Tom Joad,” respectively. Others show wider range, like Aimee Mann's ode to Dan Clowes' *Ghost World*, or singer/songwriter Deb Talan's choice of hipster Brooklyn author Jonathan Lethem. Leave it to Doors legacy-destroyer Ray Manzarek to actually make the case *against* literacy with his *Waiting For Godot* tribute, though: “What's his schooling, where did he study, what does he do with his life?/ What's his profession, his occupation, I wonder if he has a wife?” Guess that's what comes of reading Jim's “poetry.” >>>CAM'RON DAVIS

work on their sophomore records • **Muse** slating their third record, *The Smallprint*, for fall release—maybe this one will actually come out in America? >>>



IN MY ROOM

Who: Evan Dando

Where: His apartment in Manhattan

Why: Dando's been relatively incognito since the dissolution of the Lemonheads; the new *Baby I'm Bored* (Bar/None) marks his full-fledged return to the studio.

One man's trash is Evan Dando's treasure

[I have a lot of] things I find on the sidewalk. I have a big old chunk of the main girder from the World Trade Center, because I live so close. I was there Christmas Day and I found a big piece, it looks like a big block of hash from Amsterdam, basically. It's maybe 7 inches tall and about 8 inches wide. I like collecting things off the sidewalk. My record cover, *Car Button Cloth*? I found that on the sidewalk in Glasgow. But they said I couldn't tell the truth 'cause I'd get sued. Like some guy would come for it and say, "It was mine."

Tapereads

I stockpile all kinds of cassette devices. I have about 30 dictaphone-type things. I lose so many, it's amazing how many are still in the place. I'm always recording stuff, cause that's my job, like sounds and stuff. I have tons of those in my house. [I've also] got the one with the cord, the one you used to use in school. All manner of dictaphones!

Ancient space-age polymers

I also collect guitars. I've got this new one that I'm particularly psyched about, it's from 1933, it was made by Gibson just for the Chicago World's Fair, and it's got a plastic fretboard. It smells amazing. It's so gorgeous. They call it "Mother Of Toilet Seat," the guys that sold it to me, because it's this amazing pearly plastic stuff. Because they were showing off like, "We can make plastic!"

Interview by Tom Mallon.



SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT GET DISCO D'S BOOTY IN THE BAR

1. Tiga, "Hot In Herre"

I'm not a huge Tiga fan (I prefer my electro ass-full, not ass-free) but Tiga's cover of Nelly's if-I-ever-hear-this-song-again-I'm-going-to-vomit [hit] is abso-fucking-lutely hilarious.

2. David Banner, "Cadillacs On 22's"

[Here] Banner's crooning over an acoustic guitar accompanied by heavy 808 bass and syncopated hi-hats. The lyrics are what gets me—"I know these kids are listening/ I know I'm here for a mission/ But it's so hard to get 'em with 22 rims all glis-tenin'." A pimp with a conscience!

3. Viktor Duplaix, "Looking For Love"

Man, this guy is the new Prince/Maxwell/Seal/take your pick. He goes between nu-jazz and smooth R&B without missing a beat, and has a voice like hot butter over mama's cornbread.

4. Panjabi MC feat. Jay-Z, "Beware Of The Boys (Roc-A-Fella remix)"

Indian-flavored beats mixed with the *Knight Rider* theme, Panjabi MC spitting in Punjabi, and Brooklyn's finest dropping anti-war rhymes. Mad props to Jay-Z for getting involved in something different, and for taking his political views to wax.

5. Disco D feat. Lola Damone & Helluva, "Keys To The Whip (Straight Pimpin' Mix)"

This is my favorite original on my new mix CD. It features up-and-coming Detroit rappers Lola Damone and Helluva, and my man Mocean Worker on the live bass tip. This track is a straight up war of words—Lola wants the keys and the cheese, and Helluva wants the ass for free.

Disco D's A Night At The Booty Bar (Tommy Boy) contains a song called "Fuck Me On The Dancelloor." No, it's not electroclash.

EVAN DANDO: JAN WELTERS; DISCO D: KAREEM BLACK; WIRE: STEFAN DE BATSSELIER

• After canceling a month of tour dates, a newly bassless **Liars** are back in the studio • **R.E.M.** to tour this fall in advance of a new record in early 2004; the September



WIRE'S Colin Newman on...

The never-ending parade of props

I've got piles of CDs that people send me with Wire covers—I will always acknowledge if someone does a good cover of a Wire song, but there are also some pretty fucking horrid ones. There are 100 covers of "Ex-Lion Tamer" that sound exactly like the original and I figure, why did they bother? The one that will change my life is if Fischerspooner ever have a hit with "The 15th."

Refusing to stick with the tried-and-true

The kind of person who's in their 40s and listening only to the same records they had at university, to me that's sad. Anyone of any age who's interested in being part of the bigger cultural dialogue is always hearing, seeing and being influenced by new things. That's my main interest in Wire, to be part of that cultural dialogue.

Satiating a rabid fanbase

In an ideal world we'd like to keep two quite separate streams. You want to know what Wire are up to now, you get the *Read & Burn* EPs, whereas people who aren't quite that obsessive but would still like to hear a Wire record every now and then can get the albums when they come out. It gives us the ability to address things on more than one level, to engage our audience in a constant dialogue. I don't think one should be rude about fans that show an interest in your music at whatever level, but you shouldn't be ruled by them, either.

Moving with the pulsebeat after 25 years in the business

I've been running a record company for 10 years now, and you can't do that without knowing what people in the underground

are interested in. When we played *All Tomorrow's Parties* in 2000, I could feel very strongly in the air that things were moving back in the direction of rock. But that cycle has already partly turned and we're looking at what comes after.

*Among the most influential bands to come out of punk, Colin Newman and his Wire bandmates add their latest rejoinder to the cultural dialogue on *Send (Pink Flag)*, the first full-length Wire release in 13 years.*

Interview by Glen Savady.

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IMMORTAL ENTERTAINMENT

Aron Espinoza got his *Behind The Music* drama out of the way early: After busting his ass with two albums, two EPs and exhaustive touring, Earlimart Mark I disintegrated; he lost all self-confidence and ended up homeless, sleeping on his studio floor. So when it came time to hit "record" again, you can't blame him for feeling a little reflective. "I still love all that stuff," he says of the Pixies/X hybrid of his old music, "but I just didn't feel like that this time around. I tried to go with what my stomach was telling me, and it was more melodic. I started playing piano and that always screws things up," he laughs. "Start playing piano and then everything's out the window." *Everyone Down Here* (Palm) is the result, brimming with rusty pianos, hushed vocals, cracked drums and sputtering keys, and occupying the uneasy territory of bands like Grandaddy (whose Jason Lytle produced two of *Everyone's* tracks) and Sparklehorse—on some songs, you can almost picture Espinoza hanging outside Mark Linkous' house during the recording of *It's A Wonderful Life*. But he's too busy contending with the people hanging outside his place, a sewing sweatshop turned recording studio in L.A.'s Eagle Rock district where he's recorded the likes of Elliott Smith and Folk Implosion. "There've been some wanderers coming in; they're [usually] harmless, just winos. This one guy was pretty scary: I was recording a band and we were smoking out front, and this guy came up; he was out of his mind. He told us he had just got out of prison, hours ago. And the next thing you know he pulls out a crack pipe and he's smoking crack right there," Espinoza says. "And I'm thinking like, 'Man, this is not so good for business.'" >>>TOM MALLON



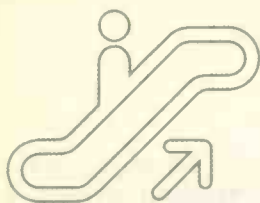
EARLIMART

ELECTRIC SIX

Fires can and do happen in public places, but it doesn't have anything to do with us," says comically emotive Electric Six frontman Dick Valentine of what he understates as "certainly a matter of bad timing." Just as their smash overseas single "Danger! High Voltage" hit the U.S., with its addictive tagline "Fire in the disco! Fire in the Taco Bell!" front-page nightclub disasters hit as well, in Chicago and at the now-notorious Great White concert in Rhode Island. Shaven-headed guitarist Surge Joebot, seated next to his chum backstage, dryly adds: "We weren't there that night in Rhode Island, and if we had been, we wouldn't have tried to set the place on fire. And actually, my main reaction was 'Great White's still playing?'" If the histrionic Jack-White-via-Jack-Black vocals weren't a giveaway, this isn't an irony-shy band, and so they're keeping the title for their synth-burbly debut disc, *Fire* (XL/Beggars Banquet). And before his recent bus-driving gig where he penned E6 songs in the downtime, Valentine indeed did work for Taco Bell, "driving around the country doing all the re-lighting, for Taco Bell's lighting contractors. And you'd be surprised just how many towns have a Taco Bell." So far, no complaints from the company about the namecheck, he adds. "I'd like to think that they'd view it as a positive, as an endorsement." >>>TOM IANHAM



PIETER VAN HATTEM



THE FEVER

Especially wanted to sing a song that was sung by a woman. When a guy sings a woman's song, there's a weird kind of tension about it." Jeremy Jasper, vocalist for the Fever, is referring to the cover of Sheila E.'s 1984 hit, "Glamorous Life," that his band has just finished recording for their debut EP, *Pink On Pink* (Kemado). "The lyrics are amazing," says Jasper of the widely held belief that Prince wrote the song. "That's actually what sold me; they're totally bizarre. Prince is great like that. He always combines these really strange, strange things and makes them incredibly sexy and bizarre. I'm still trying to figure out what the point of the song actually is." Formed in NYC, the Fever manifested itself when Jasper and songwriting partner Chris Sanchez grew tired of two years spent working on songs in a home studio and decided to reinvent themselves for the stage. The addition of Jasper's high school bandmates Achilles (drums) and Pony (bass), and Sanchez's brother J on keys, saw the pair transformed from studio boffins to one of New York's most dynamic live acts. "I'm happy about our sound now, because I feel like we totally avoid 'guitar rock,'" says Sanchez. "Even though there's guitar playing, it's almost isolated." "The thing that I think works is that they are songs, with melodies and hooks, but they have a certain rhythmic nature to them," agrees Jasper. "It's always about trying to combine those two, because we love both sides." >>>DOUG LEVY



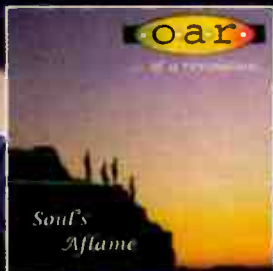
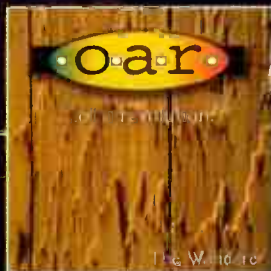
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I LOVE A MAN IN UNIFORM

Tomahawk's *Mit Gas* dresses up the corpse of hard rock.

STORY: TOM MALLON • PHOTO: DUSTIN RABIN

He was a cop," this love story begins, "and he was out on the street drinking whiskey." Mike Patton takes a long drag from a strawberry-flavored hookah. "And he was in uniform." As Patton eases back on the divan, likely of Turkish manufacture, a wistful look crosses his face like ripples in a pond.

"I said, 'Wow, I don't really see many cops throwing down like this; this is great.'" The rogue cop smiled back and Patton made his first move, asking for a shot. Unsure of where it would lead, our Bad Lieutenant obliged. The JD went down smooth, fueling the fire already exciting the butterflies in Patton's stomach. "I wish there were more cops like you," Patton offered coyly. The ice broken, he turned up the heat.

"I said, 'What would it take to get you out of those clothes, buddy?'" There's no small talk here: This is a man who knows what he wants, and will risk all to get it. Patton breaks from the story, pours another Courvoisier and lets the tension hang in the air. "He knew what I was talking about. I think he got a little turned on." The gamble, it seems, paid off. But the flatfoot had a price: "Get me a free ticket." So little to give, so much to gain—but Patton wanted more. "Well, you've got to strip right here in the street."

The cop flushed. Here, in broad daylight? A chill ran up his spine, mixing with the sweat running down it. He reached for the first button, knowing he must give all.

"He did a little striptease for me," Patton finishes. He exhales, sated. "He earned himself a ticket. It was fabulous." As the smoke dissipates along with the charge in the air, it's hard to disagree.

OK, fine, the basis is true—that's how Patton got the uniform he's been wearing seemingly nonstop for an entire year—but the rest is bullshit. Mike Patton doesn't own a Turkish divan. He wasn't sipping Courvoisier either, and since this was a phone interview, wist-

ful looks may or may not have crossed his face. He doesn't even smoke. But Mike Patton doesn't really talk about his personal life either, so if you want juicy details, you'd better make them up.

Besides, he probably doesn't even have a personal life. Who's got time for one when you're running a label, working on at least five different projects and cranking out records as perfect as Tomahawk's *Mit Gas* (Ipecac)? These 11 tracks of atmosphere-laced concrete should finally strike the words "Faith No More reunion" from the fanboy vocabulary; songs like these render personal details and former bands irrelevant. Hell, they render other people's current bands irrelevant. Linkin Park's ProToolled power chords sound even more toothless when stacked against the breakneck vitriol of "Rape This Day," and they do creepy-atmosphere-giving-way-to-rock-explosion better in the three minutes of "Capt. Midnight" than a Cold or Staind could in an entire career. People spending Sundays worshipping *Songs For The Deaf* for reviving rock should make room in their schedule.

Of course, having been in a band du jour before, Patton doesn't really care if people embrace them like the Queens. Tomahawk won't be bothering with a video (even though guitarist Duane Denison says Tool's Adam Jones offered his services), and they won't be doing the year-of-touring grind, either.

"We didn't want to find ourselves in situations like we had in the past, where you put an album out and you're on the road for nine months straight," Denison says. "When opportunities arise, sure we'll take it, but we're not gonna pimp ourselves out for a year straight just because we can."

The tour that they *will* do, however, is a special treat for loyal Ipecac fans: Patton's devised the Ipecac Geek Show, a traveling noisefest that brings some of his label's biggest (Tomahawk, Melvins) and hardest-touring (Skeleton Key, Dälek) bands together in a noise-rock mini-festival. As all members of Tomahawk's other bands had the pleasure of opening for bands with less-than-receptive fanbases—Melvins for White Zombie, Cows for Primus, Jesus Lizard for Ministry; experiences Denison likens to "being pro choice at a Bush rally and trying to make your point"—touring with home-court advantage should be great for fans and bands alike. Patton, who took perverse pleasure in Tool fans' bewilderment at Fantômas' avant A.D.D.-metal last fall, is more concerned with delivering the best show possible.

"More importantly, I was thinking of each night on this tour as a musical package," he says. "The flow of four bands is not easy to come up with. That's a lot of music; that's a lot of time to be sitting in some stinking-ass club with some guy puking in your purse."

Let's try that again: "That's a lot of music," Patton exhales, sated. "That's a lot of time to be sitting in some stinking-ass club with some guy puking in your purse." As smoke fills the room like the puke in your purse, it's hard to disagree. **NMM**



NINE PATTON DUANE DENISON, JOHN STANIER, KEVIN RUTMANIS

Out Of The Pink,



LES NUBY, SCOTT BONOY, NICK OAVISTON

Into The Black

Verbena's returned from the brink and would like to cut through the bullshit, please.

STORY: SCOTT FRAMPTON • PHOTO: LEGO

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

We're proud of the record," Scott Bondy says flatly of Verbena's *La Musica Negra* (Capitol). "That comes from having fun making the record. There were bad times, believe me. It's the theory that you have to get through some serious shit to get to a place where you're happy."

He pauses and his dark eyes hold contact. Those bad times in the four years between this record and the last, *Into The Pink*, include the band's contraction from a four- to a three-piece (goodbye, Anne Marie Griffin) and certain struggles of the chemical kind. But pride's no sin for Bondy; he's got too much of it to make promoting this new disc part of the recovery process, or vice versa.

La Musica Negra eases into its first track, "Way Out West," with a pretty little keyboard pattern that's summarily squashed by a big, fat glob of guitar. It's a heavy sound that's been driven into near irrelevance by the many grunge-lite bands that have taken up residence in commercial radio, but the track and the ones that follow don't suffer for it. The same with the lyrics' liberal splashes of guns and Jesus—the confidence it takes to make these most hoary of rock clichés work for and not against you adds to the record's laid-back swagger. It takes some stones to try to rescue mainstream rock from the hacks.

"We all have a better-than-average sense of musical history," Bondy says, waving an inclusive hand in the direction of drummer Les Nuby and "a lot younger than us" bassist Nick Daviston, "which is weird, because rock 'n' roll is supposed to, like, eschew the past and do something new, but how can you do anything new without these reference points, which are amazing? Like Chuck Berry, like any of the Mississippi Blues guys, Robert Johnson; any of those guys are completely revolutionary for their time. How are you going to be like, 'Fuck them, that's old?' and not incorporate anything?"

"It's like all these bands like Good Charlotte, any of that shit." He stops, then reaches a cultural analog. "You know that one thing in

When We Were Kings, where Spike Lee is talking about how Muhammad Ali was one of the biggest heroes of his time? So you have this generation of kids that don't know who Jackie Robinson is. They don't know who Martin Luther King is at some point, probably. So these bands are—like I saw Good Charlotte on TV one night, those two guys had some show, and they're like, "This next song's singer's parents are Cher and some guy from the Allman Brothers. I'm not an Allman Brothers fan, but they're like some dirty hippies with acoustic guitars, right? I was kind of mad, because they're so easily hateable and I just wanted a reason to dislike them. They've got their liberty spikes and all this shit and they're going to get on TV and have hip-hop breaks in their song."

Bondy's slight drawl builds to a snarl. "It's like that whole thing you hear, 'I only got in a rock band to get laid.' That's just retarded. That's so disrespectful. Like yeah, John Lennon wrote 'Imagine' to get laid. If he did, that's a lot of work just to have sex with somebody."

To stand for something in rock, you're so often supposed to be like one of those French guys standing on the pile of crap at the end of *Les Misérables*, waving a flag in defiance of all who oppose your righteousness. But there's something to be said for a band whose ideology is that you should respect yourself and what you do enough to not get caught up in all the little games rock plays on itself. Just doing things right, on your own terms with respect to what's come before, is enough of a political statement.

It's not as if the band is looking for a perfect world. That they've made a solid record and didn't succumb the pressures of numbing isolation of the studio, which Bondy observes, "is set up for people to be like children for the rest of their lives," is enough. Because striving is living.

"What do you do when you get everything you want? Nothing," says Bondy, waxing rhetorical. "You're miserable. There's nothing to do after that. What makes Madonna get out of bed every morning, except for the fact that she really wants to be Caesar?" **MMMM**

songs (Bejar contributes three of his eccentric gems) are as endlessly inventive as they are relentlessly hummable. "From *Blown Speakers*" comes in at only two and three-quarters minutes, but feels much longer—in a good way. There's just so much going on, and nothing in the usual way; chorus, bridges and verses are assembled like Frank Gehry making sandwiches for the grandkids. The rest of the songs work similarly, so bursting with pop goodness and embedded odd influences and ideas that listening to them is a treasure hunt.

"Maybe it's just trying to figure out what's good and what's interesting," Newman says, by way of explanation. "I think we tried not to make the songs boring. I think people may think that the record is a little over the top and too dense but that comes from just listening to it and going, 'Oh, the third verse has got to have something different that the other verses don't have.'"

More revealing is a discussion of picking singles for *Electric Version*.

"'Miss Teen Word Power' and 'All For Swinging You Around,' those are the singles," says Dahle, who saw some commercial success with his old band Limblifter.

Thurier: "Because they are obvious."

Newman: "Like, the two songs that bother me most."

Dahle: "So know you know how to pick the singles. The ones that bug you."

colors noticeably.

"I feel like I could dissect both records and let you know where everything came from. Definitely it's both," he says in the direction of his beer. "It's half and half."

"There is a lot of rehearsal that goes into the songs that get recorded," Collins adds. As the producer of both records, he knows as much as anyone about how the pieces fit together. "There is a force that the band has; we sort of do have a distinct sort of forward-moving sound. I don't know how to describe it. That happens, then there's some overdubbing and experimenting. So there's a combination of things involved. It wouldn't sound the same if there were no band involved. If it was Carl just throwing stuff down, it would sound different than the rest of us learning new songs."

"Yet, there are a couple of songs where it is just me throwing shit down," Newman replies, somewhere between confidence, apology and confusion.

Like most of us, Newman's best analyzing other stuff. It's trickier looking inward or at his own role in this. Whatever control freak is in him doesn't surface in conversation. He must know that Bejar and Case would only work with him out of deep respect, but he's practical about their contributions.

"Dan is such a great songwriter," Newman says of Bejar. "It just seems so great to have that available to you. Just call up your

"I've always believed that a lot of bands that are original, it's because they are just channeling their influences incorrectly." —Carl Newman

Newman: "'The Slow Descent [Into Alcoholism]' and 'Letter From An Occupant' [from *Mass Romantic*] kind of bug me. I thought they were so straight-ahead, but you know what? Oddly enough those are the songs that people like the most.

"That's the kind of song that was great, but you can't do too many songs like ['Occupant']," Newman clarifies. "It was a song built around too many hooks. It has two bridges. It's kind of a ridiculous thing to put into a song. There is the temptation to do that. 'The Laws Have Changed' is the closest thing to that on the new record. It's kind of like 'Letter From An Occupant,' but I kind of removed the big chorus. I think that's why I like it the best. Just screwing with the song formula."

Newman's built wiry, with wiry rust-colored hair and a lisp that does nothing to soften his already piercing wit. Much has been made of New Pornographers as a last gasp for him, rock-wise, but all involved consider it an overblown press angle. Working on songs and band ideas—in Thurier's case, films like his well-received *Low Self-Esteem Girl*—is a natural thing for everyone in this band. And so if Newman's former band Zumpano was in the early stages of breaking up, it stands to follow that he'd start working on a new kind of band for his songs. His solo work will be different still, just as Zumpano's Zombies-influenced pop was a distant cry from multi-guitar overload that was Superconductor. It's about saying things with different voices.

As much as he's the acknowledged central figure in the band, where the New Pornographers start and where Newman leaves off is hard to figure. When asked if the band's distinctive sound stems from his original concept or if it's the product of the individual creative forces within the band crashing together, he

friend and be like, 'You know how to write great songs, play me a song,' and be like, 'Yeah, now we've got a new song.' Plus, he can be manipulated in that way, which is handy. He's weird in some ways, but if I knock on his door and was like, 'You play me a fucking song right now,' he probably would. Thanks Dan."

As for [*Electric Version*], "The song 'Ballad Of A Come Back Kid' was found because I called him up to get some songs for the record and he was all, 'How about that tape that I gave you like three years ago?' It was before [*Destroyer's*] *Thief* came out. That was like 80 minutes of Dan demos. I didn't listen to it then. It's kind of hard to sit through 80 minutes of guitar and vocals from your friend. But I put it on and found that song. I really liked it and I went back to him and he went, 'Oh yeah.' He added some parts to it; I guess he didn't think it was prog enough for the New Pornographers, so he added an intro and a bridge," he adds with a wry arch of his eyebrows. "That was that song. 'Testament To Youth In Verse' I secured from him years ago. Back in like 1999, I saw him while I was really high. He played by himself and played 'Jackie' and that song. Then I realized, 'Man, these could be good New Pornographers songs.' The wheels were already turning in my head."

Back then, Newman also had in his head working Case's vocals into the band. In '99, Case hadn't long stepped out from behind the drumkit in Maow to pursue her particular vision of country torch songs, and so the scheduling problem of two touring bands working simultaneously wasn't a consideration. (Bejar isn't a touring member of the band; Todd Fancey has been added as a second guitar player and Newman has worked up a decent imitation of Bejar's otherwise inimitable vocals.) Unlike Bejar, however, Case is not so easily manipulated.



BLAINE THURIER, KURT DAHLE, NEKO CASE, TODD FANCEY, CARL NEWMAN, JOHN COLLINS

"I'm a bit of a control freak," Case says in a later phone call. "So I want to make sure that I know what's going on in this band all the time. But you know, then there's times where I have to go, 'Well I can't be there for the entire mixing session, so if something doesn't sound the way I want it to, I can't really get that mad about it,' you know? You have to relinquish control in a situation like this."

That doesn't stop her from asking, "You can actually hear my vocals?" in response to comments about her singing on the record. While not quite the mortar shell it is on *Mass Romantic*, Case's vocals are a big part of the new record, here with an almost girl-group sweetness.

"I think that's because they're doubling my vocal. I don't particularly like the girlish tone, personally," she says, chewing on the idea, then spitting it out. "I don't like it when women sing like little girls. In fact, I hate it. I hope I don't sound like that with every ounce of my being."

"Carl usually makes me sing at the top of my register, which is very high. And it's very poppy," she says after being assured she's no Betty Boop. "As long as I don't sound like a child."

Case responds like she sings, from the gut and with a lot of force. Not that she's ever anything other than friendly, here, or is anything less than admiring and complimentary of her bandmates' efforts.

"I'm not the most accomplished singer in the world, like I'm not a genius when it comes to harmony singing. They're very patient with me," she says, laughing. "Sometimes I'll be standing there crying, about to get my period, [mock-whining] 'I can't figure out the

note.' And they'll just wait 'til I'm done. They're very nice to me."

One of *Electric Version's* more delicious moments, in fact, comes when Case's harmony vocal extends past Newman's on the title track's chorus for a couple of beats. Case recorded some of her vocals in Chicago and mailed them up to Vancouver, where Collins and Newman pieced them into the songs.

"I love that, when the vocals don't quite match up," Newman says. "It's even better when it totally is an accident."

"She's singing a real early version of what became the song," Collins adds. "It's basically a rough draft, but the tempo is the same. It wasn't so much an accident, it's just basically her having free reign."

"What's funny about that is I don't think she knew what the lyrics were. On the record, she's often singing phonetically, and if you isolate her vocals she's not always singing the right words," Newman says, and true enough, Case did a couple of shows with the band at the end of last year reading from a lyric sheet. "But it works well enough. I'm still in that phase where my favorite rock trick is to add that vowel at the end: 'Out of the magnets-ah!' She added this extra long harmony to this pointless rock vowel that I put at the end. The funny part is putting this vowel at the end of words was directly influenced by 'Dreadlock Holiday' by 10cc. I did that in 'It's Only Divine Right,' too."

A good part of the above conversation, it should be noted, was interrupted by frequent diversions into pop-music history as prompted by the oldies station drifting out of the Marine Club's tinny PA. Vancouver oldies sound much like those in any American city, only with a liberal sprinkling of Anne Murray and

a few Canadian pop hits like "Which Way You Goin' Billy?" by the Poppy Family, Terry Jacks' group before he sold 11 million copies of "Seasons In The Sun" as a solo artist. This is the band in full rock-scientist mode, talking about Jacks as a producer, bringing up '60s Montreal garage band the Haunted (Dahle: "They had that song '1-2-5' that every garage band covers") and picking up choice parts in whatever old pop hit catches the ear.

"I think we have access to a lot of bizarre influences," Newman says. "I love those influences where even if somebody

The day after the Marine Club, Collins shakes the drizzle off his jacket to play early mixes of a record he's producing for a new Mint band called Young And Sexy. The tracks are loaded into his Mac, which is set up on an old pump organ in the corner of his apartment's living room—for now, the home of the roving JCDC studio that except for drum tracks on *Electric Version*, recorded both albums. Also loaded into the machine or one of its external hard drives are tracks he worked on for visual artist Rodney Graham and Newman solo songs "he probably doesn't want anyone to hear."

"I don't like it when women sing like little girls. In fact, I hate it. I hope I don't sound like that with every ounce of my being." —Neko Case

catches you on it, they can't blame you for it. Who is going to say, 'You fucking ripped off that drum lick from "Ant Music" by Adam And The Ants? [in "Mass Romantic"]?' Nobody would get pissed off. They'd go, 'Man, that was a good thing to rip off, 'Ant Music.'"

"I've always believed that a lot of bands that are original, it's because they are just channeling their influences incorrectly. I'm sure there are Sparks influences on us. We don't have a clue how to sound like Sparks. If there is no other reference point as to how to do the Sparks badly, it's the New Pornographers."

In pondering the next step, the things-are-so-different-now/things-are-so-the-same rock cliché rolls into view. The band can fuck with song forms and rethink the structure of a working band all it wants, but it can't avoid every critic's conceit. Like how they have a bright immediate future, including a proper U.S. release for *Electric Version* on Matador (*Mass Romantic* was only available on Mint as a Canadian import) and for the first time, assurances that the band will continue as that, a band. But they still have trouble forming a quorum, as a discussion of future plans illustrates.

Dahle: "Of course we need to record a new record somewhere."
Collins: "Evenings and weekends."

Dahle: "If we can just get the tracks done."

Collins: "We just need to have a practice, then we we'll be ready. We don't do it enough."

Newman: "There are usually different members there all the time. There are rarely five people there. There are rarely four."

Collins: "Emergency only."

Newman: "Lots of the practices for [*Electric Version*] were two, me and Kurt."

"The next record obviously is going to happen," Collins says in his muted baritone. "This record almost came by surprise in that it had to happen at some point. Suddenly it was like, 'Holy shit, this is going to happen and it's going to have a budget.' I couldn't believe it."

"I swear I have almost all of the next record ready to go," Newman says, eager. "I kind of see the next record being more rock band-like. I like pop bands and everything, but there are a few too many of them. I don't think there are enough rock bands with good songs, like the Who. The Who are an amazing pop band but they are a killer rock band. It's a good direction to go into, but not become like the Stooges."

Romance is always dispelled by either the harsh light of day or rain, and Vancouver usually has both in any given day.

We are to meet Thurier at Dahle's house before heading off to find a Korean place for dinner. Dahle's is a big place on the one good block in a dodgy neighborhood, rented cheap. It's decorated in pop-culture detritus and strewn with instruments and recording gear. A big Mac monitor sits in the entry from the living room into what would be the dining room, the screen loaded up with recording software and mixes of songs by another Vancouver band, the Organ. Dahle's the impish one, in the way that Collins is the tall, soft-spoken one. He bounds down the stairs to show off the low-ceilinged cellar where the band sometimes rehearses and the vintage music gear it's filled with.

After dinner, there's a stop to look in on Dahle's Neopolitan mastiff puppy before winding up at Thurier's smallish, neat apartment to see some edits of his movie, *Male Fantasy*, also on Mac. Newman sends his regrets; he's been at home all day working on a grant proposal to record his solo record.

The early line on why New Pornographers' songs stick with you was because there's something unknowable in them, mystery being one of things that keeps romance alive. But as Thurier edits Collins' scenes playing a rock show promoter in *Male Fantasy*, which stars Newman's ex-wife Cindy Wolfe, twin sister to Bratmobile's Alison, it occurs that it's all the complications. The songs, this band, they're complicated. Like life.

Earlier, before a group stumble down the Marine Club stairs, Newman recalls a conversation from the night before, about how coffee had a similar effect on the development of Seattle as air conditioning did on Houston: Caffeine compensates for a seasonal lack of sunshine in one climate the way AC mitigates the humidity in another.

"As I stared outside the window today at the gray depressing rain," he says. "I thought maybe we make this pop music because it's so depressing."

"But the history of Vancouver is like that too. It's so depressing," Dahle offers. "Think about it: All the harder-edged bands come from Toronto. Always, the bands from Vancouver have been more pop. I've always thought that, even as a kid."

Newman: "How does that explain all of the shitty hard rock that is coming out now?"

Dahle: "It comes from Alberta. Fucking Albertans."

Newman: "So blame it on the rain."

Dahle: "I do think there is a sort of bittersweet hope running through the songs. Kind of like wanting to be joyous and full of hope even when you feel like you shouldn't be. Some kind of faith." **MM**

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STEADY THROBBIN'

In 1979, politically charged proto-industrial noiseniks Throbbing Gristle released *24 Hours Of TG*—a box set that trumps even Pearl Jam's efforts to oversaturate the plains with dozens of hard-to-listen-to live recordings. Shaken and served cold in a black attaché case, *24* included 24 C60 cassettes that documented every single one of the ironic, inaccessible troupe's live performances to date. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of TG's Industrial Records imprint (the name of which supposedly spawned the movement), Mute Records reissued the monstrosity in a limited edition,

handmade case. And, man, did we want one.

An intrepid *CMJ New Music Monthly* writer volunteered to listen to all 24 hours of this tumultuous Goliath in one 24-hour sitting, unable to leave his cramped, claustrophobic apartment. His thoughts would be recorded in what would be either a) a rock journalism piss-take, b) a scathing deconstruction of the "underground," c) a study of sleep deprivation and horrific industrial clattering versus the ability to write coherent sentences, or, most likely, d) a chance to get a day off work and a free box set...

STORY: CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN • ILLUSTRATION: MARK FARINAS

Hour 1:

I.C.A., London, 10.18.76

After just five minutes of disc one—hearing some missive about the “post-breakdown of civilization” or some shit, followed by the monolithic chug of a speaker-shredding turbine—there is a slow realization that this is really not worth the effort.

If punk tried to spear and bury the bloated dinosaur of rock, then Throbbing Gristle tried to spear and bury the bloated dinosaur of *music*. If the Ramones knew three chords and Half Japanese knew one, then TG knew *none*. They had no drummer and used confrontational sounds as a symbolic representation of real rebellion. I bet if they were still performing, dickheads would yell “Freebird” at them.

And they are by far the best band of anti-fashion, anti-music ex-performance art misfits to ever name their band after Yorkshire slang for a boner.

Hour 2:

Winchester and Air Gallery, London, 07.06.76 and 08.21.76

The sap-going-down-a-tree metaphor has been done to death. As well as the like-escaping-from-tar-or-quicksand simile. This is like one of those boss anthropomorphic trees in *Lord Of The Rings* trying to pick sap off itself while escaping from a mixture of tar and quicksand.

Is two hours too early to get dizzy?

Hour 3:

Nag's Head, High Wycombe, 02.11.77

After a long, winding iron highway of metallic chaos, one of the Gristlers says: “I don't know if you guys noticed yet, but you'll notice for the next hour I'll play one string. I don't know why they ever build these with four.” This quote is notable for two reasons. One, it is a perfect representation of both their sardonic attitude and utilitarian approach. Also, it's funny that now a *CMJ* intern has to sit through a solid hour of hissing, pulsating waves of cacophonous sonic assault to fact-check one tossed-off line.

Hour 4:

Brighton Polytechnic, 03.26.77

Enter a new focus, *Wreckers Of Civilization*, the TG book by Simon Ford, which details how the pre-TG performance art troupe COUM Transmissions once deliberately showed up to a gig without their instruments—everyone from Papa Roach to Death Cab take note. Another fact: the story behind how Genesis P-Orridge got his name is not very interesting at all.

At the tail end of this performance, TG leaves the stage and hands their instruments over to audience members. Black Flag wished they could have blurred the lines between audience and artist that severely. Someone at a book-reading said Green Day did this recently. Sure hope someone was in the audience that night. Zing!

Hour 5:

Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, 05.07.77

I have bitten my fingernails to tiny, tiny nubs at this point. Coincidence?

Stuff like this is obviously a huge influence on contemporary sonic de/reconstructionists like Black Dice, Wolf Eyes, Russel Haswell, Forcefield et al. But watch some of these greasy

hipster-trucker-hat magnets play Brooklyn. The disillusioned tight-T-shirted slouchers in attendance don't yell “Off! Off! Off!” What the hell sounds would one have to make to thoroughly decimate an audience these days? The noizeitgeist will forever throb in reverse until a band can play a note that can make an entire audience shit their pants simultaneously.

Did my CD player just skip? Can't tell.

Hour 6:

Rat Club, Pindar, London, 05.22.77

Man, “Revolution #9” is a fucking cakewalk compared to this. That song never made me consider biting my toenails in a nervous fit, as this current high-pitched drone is doing to me right now. Anyway, Ford says, “Rather than translate popular forms into high art, as Warhol and the pop artists had done, TG transformed high art into popular culture.” Hmm, some say the same formula legitimized Yes. Either way, I'm busy transforming bad, pseudo-intellectual writing into a universally unread article... And slowly turning “making musical musings over this headache-inducing difficult mess” into “not caring.”

Hour 7:

Highbury Roundhouse, London, 09.29.77

TG brought high art to pop, but also questioned the values of high art. At one of their earliest shows (not the one I am currently being tortured by), they framed cheesecake pics of guitarist Cosey Fanni Tutti from her softcore porn modeling spreads—making a statement on the “prostitution” artists must face. It also questioned art-based-intentions (i.e. is this any less art because the model in question was making art, even though the photographers were clueless?).

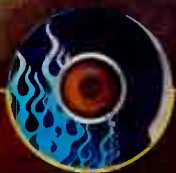
Which all brings us to an important question: *Why the fuck am I still listening to these pretentious fucksticks?* Just kidding, folks. No, the question is “What makes high art?” For instance, take this prattling incoherent nonsense that you are reading right now. Certainly it's achingly self-indulgent, but no more self-indulgent than anything else gumming up American rock mags. What if, instead of “bad, self-centered journalism,” I deemed it “brilliant, introspective art”? Hell, this article should be framed and hung in the Whitney! A new movement will spawn, of rambling journalistas listening to Cabaret Voltaire and Nurse With Wound! Even an ambitious young man who audaciously listened to all 50 CDs in the Merzbow box set in one 50-hour sitting held in a small wooden crate. Soon, the laddie mags will pick it up, with one tireless *Maxim* reporter watching the entire recorded output of Jasmine St. Clair in one weeklong stretch, armed only with beer, pizza and enough baby oil to moisturize a brontosaurus. Maybe in 25 years Mute will pick up the ball and republish these articles. But for now, we're not about profits, man.

I have taken to yelling.

Hour 8:

Winchester Art School, 11.11.77

Chainsaws. It sounds like fucking chainsaws. Thanks, guys. Anagrams for Throbbing Gristle:
Bolstering Bright
Blister Big Throng
Gerbil Birth Tongs



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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS GRANDDADDY ED HARCOURT IDLEWILD

Verbena • The Rogers Sisters • Whirlwind Heat

JUNE 2003 • ISSUE 113

13. **ED HARCOURT** "Watching The Sun Come Up (Single Remix)"
From Every Sphere
www.edharcourt.com
Ed Harcourt appears courtesy of Astralwerks.

14. **THE ESCAPE ENGINE** "A Lesson In Futility" *Celebrity Role Model*
www.theescapeengine.net
The Escape Engine appears courtesy of Fidelity.

15. **CRASH RADIO** "So What?" *Crash Radio*
www.crashradio.com
Crash Radio appears courtesy of Virgin.

16. **THE ROGERS SISTERS** "Dig A Hole" *Purely Evil*
www.therogerssisters.com
The Rogers Sisters appear courtesy of Troubleman Unlimited.
(See Review p. 58.)

17. **THE DEATHRAY DAVIES** "The Girl Who Stole The Eiffel Tower"
Midnight At The Black Nail Polish Factory
www.deathraydavies.com
The Deathray Davies appears courtesy of Glurp.
(See Best New Music p. 42.)

18. **THE PERNICE BROTHERS** "Baby In Two" *Yours, Mine And Ours*
www.pernicebrothers.com
The Pernice Brothers appear courtesy of Ashmont.
(See Review p. 58.)

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case



1. **THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS** "The Laws Have Changed" *Electric Version*
www.matadorrecords.com/the_new_pornographers
The New Pornographers appear courtesy of Matador.
(See Cover Story p. 26.)

2. **GRANDDADDY** "El Caminos In The West" *Sunday*
www.grandaddylandscape.com
Grandaddy appears courtesy of V2.
(See Best New Music p. 43.)

3. **VERBENA** "Way Out West" *La Musica Negra*
www.verbeband.com
Verbena appears courtesy of Capitol.
(See Feature p. 24.)

4. **WHIRLWIND HEAT** "Blue" *Do Rabbits Wonder?*
www.whirlwindheat.com
Whirlwind Heat appears courtesy of V2.

5. **IMA ROBOT** "12=3 (Here Come The Doctors)" *12=3 Here Come The Doctors*
www.imarobot.net
Ima Robot appears courtesy of Virgin.

6. **THE ATARIS** "All You Can Ever Learn Is What You Already Know"
So Long, Astoria
www.theataris.com
The Ataris appear courtesy of Columbia.

7. **WAKEFIELD** "Say You Will" *American Made*
www.wakefieldworldwide.com
Wakefield appears courtesy of Arista.

8. **THE RED HOT VALENTINES** "All You Get" *Summer Fling*
www.theredhotvalentines.com
The Red Hot Valentines appear courtesy of Polyvinyl.

9. **IDLEWILD** "You Held The World In Your Arms" *The Remote Part*
www.idlewild.co.uk
Idlewild appears courtesy of Capitol.

10. **GEMMA HAYES** "Back Of My Hand" *Night On My Side*
www.gemmahayes.com
Gemma Hayes appears courtesy of Astralwerks.

11. **O.A.R.** "Hey Girl" *In Between Now And Then*
www.ofarevolution.com
O.A.R. appears courtesy of Lava/Everfine.
(See Review p. 57.)

12. **SHAMRA** "Cutest" *Whatever Fits*
www.shamramusic.com
Shamra appears courtesy of Fum.

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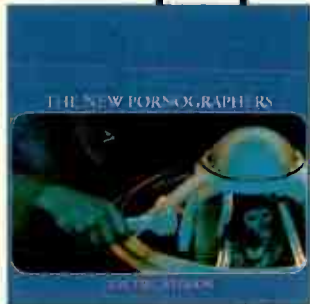


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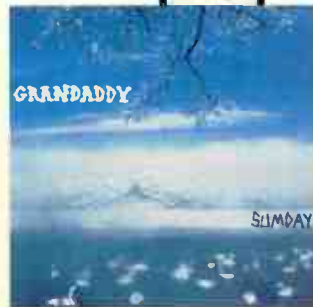
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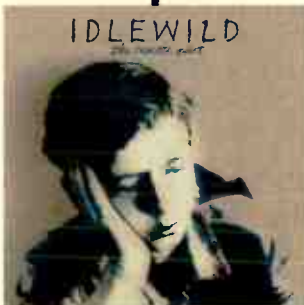
THE VOTES ARE IN*



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CD Central
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Lexington, KY 40508

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Washington, DC 20009

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Hour 9:

Rat Club, Valentino Rooms, London, 12.17.77

Cosey suggests that hardcore TG fans should immerse themselves in this box for a full 24 hours. I'm willing to bet there's people out there who like this band way more than the people in this band like this band.

Hour 10:

Brighton Polytechnic, 02.25.78

Coming to a slow realization. This guy used to cut himself with nails until he got blood poisoning, threw up and passed out. Oooh, and I'm staying up all night, listening to music and writing. How transgressive! How edgy! What do I have around here that I can cut myself with?

It's very possible to hum other songs in your head while TG is playing. Fun even.

Hour 11:

Architectural Association, London, 03.03.78

The most Kraftwerkian of the bunch so far. Kind of Cluster-meets-Stockhausen-meets-Suicide-meets-a-bunch-of-other-things-only-pretentious-fucks-care-about-anymore. Soothing, in that it's the first thing thine ears hath heard in 11 hours with any discernable pulse. But certainly nervewracking in that I'm pacing up and down the stairs looking for an escape hatch, or at least something to stimulate my twitching nerve endings. How shall I make my escape?

This song is like staring into the open mouth of a tender lion skyscraper. Maybe once I start to get sleep-deprived (rather than simply mildly irritated) I will actually gaze into the mouth of a tender lion skyscraper. Let's hope.

Hour 12:

Goldsmith's College, London, 05.18.78

Holy geegaws and gutterplugs! These guys is fuggin' visionaries! Who woulda thunk it? All them years ago in the pre-industrial daze, when abattoirs were the new orchestras and buzzsaws were the new guitars and the cold, clinical pulsating of the factories was the unconscious heartbeat of life. These cats spit it back atcha under satirical guises (marketing industry as art?! as pop?!). Enough with the academic jibberjabber, Weingarten, what the fuck were you so excited about? Ah, but you see, these anti-punk artkids in burning London were trying on Gary Gilmore's eyes and found it... 20 years before the fact! Shhh. Listen. Is it? It is! The sound of a modem connecting! O how they knew it then!

Can my room get cleaner? Oh yes, it can.

Hour 13:

Industrial Training College, Wakefield, 07.01.78

By this time I expected: hallucinations, haunting spectres circling my half-dead body, actual throbbing ear pain, uncontrollable shakes, epileptic tics, mild vomiting
By this time, actually: mild irritation, ennui.

Welcome to my glorified fuckin' LiveJournal.

Hour 14:

Film Makers' Co-Op, London, 07.06.78

Mental status: I'm perfectly fine, but the cat is flipping the fuck out!

Hour 15:

Cryptic One Club, London, 11.11.78

I could use a nap. Also, I think my stereo is frowning at me.

The only way to out-Gristle these guys: knowing negative one chord! Chew on that for a while.

Hour 16:

Centro Iberico, London, 01.21.79

One of the innocuous demi-military cardboard sleeves festooned with faux-facist imagery from the box set was precariously perched on the speaker. The vibrations from the piston-like churning awakes it from its slumber and it starts attacking. From its lofty perch atop the speaker, it pushes off, takes a triumphant leeeap. It lands on the intrepid journalist, trapped in a near-hypnosis state, and wakes him from his sonic-induced trance (read: freaks him the fuck out, making him yell in terror and leap across the cold, dirty, hardwood floor). Now, 10 minutes later, the guttural feeling of shock—you know, that ill unease in the heart/stomach area—is still lingering. The "music" (helicopter noises, followed by a circular-saw-raping-a-chalkboard) couldn't sooth the most calloused of nerves. Twenty-five years later, in another continent entirely, Throbbing Gristle managing to send the spirits of fractured sound waves via universal subconscious FedEx or something, shaking my foundation while in the confines of my own abode. Assholes.

Can my neighbors hear this shit? The cops will undoubtedly show up. Officer Greene will ring my doorbell, but I shan't hear it; I'm two stories above, attempting to divert my attention to reading, soaking in the sonic equivalent of an iron maiden. Knockknockknockopenup! I'm lost in ping-pong paranoia, the scuzz o' the streets circa 1979. Diverting my eyes to book, then stereo, then book. BLAM! The front door is knocked down. Could this be another blast of Peter Christopherson's synth wallop? BAMBAMBAMBAM! My bedroom door rattles. "WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING IN THERE, YOU CREEPY MOTHERFUCKER! OPEN THIS GODDAMN DOOR OR WE'RE GOING TO SHOOT YOUR FUCKING DEMENTED ASS!"

"Scott, wake up, dude, I'm in jail... Yes, jail... I don't know, Brooklyn somewhere... What? No, I didn't finish your fucking article."

Hour 17:

Ajanta Cinema, Derby 04.12.79

It's not just a name. It's not just an erection joke. Shit is throbbing in herre.

Hour 18:

Sheffield University 04.25.79

After 18 hours, the ears become disembodied, hearing what they want, ignoring what they want. Currently, two Pac-Man machines are engaged in a duel to the very death!

"The lovely Ms. Pac-Man shall be mine, and I vanquish any suitor who contests me!"

"You jaundiced, puck-jawed coward! The circular maiden is my rightful prize. And I shan't fight you, for I am a lover of all, even contemptuous ghost-chasing, donut-shaped rabble such as yourself."

"You cower before me? What are you, yellow?"

"Only in the literal sense, my friend."

continued on page 64



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World Radio History



New Haven, CONNECTICUT

STORY: DAVID T. LEWIS

Unceremoniously seen by more than a few as merely a gas stop between New York and Boston, Connecticut has grown by leaps and bounds since the spawning of the vibrant east coast hardcore scene in the late '80s/early '90s. Take a stroll through New Haven and its glorious surrounding treasures for proof.

New Haven, while splintered by the gentrification of its Yale-based wealth, still manages to maintain a life of its own. Townies can (and do) drown their sorrows in a variety of taverns, but Rudy's Bar And Grill (372 Elm St., New Haven, 865-1242) is the hands-down winner: cheap pitchers of Schaefer, a dark and cavernous back poolroom, and one of the best jukeboxes imaginable (from Nat King Cole to Sigur Rós and everything in between). Rudy's houses an occasional show or two, and nothing can compare to the pure bombast of 100 drunks (barely) standing in a dank room built circa 1920 while local favorite Ted Leo seethes through a Thin Lizzy cover.

If you're hungry after a long night of heavy drinking and failed flirtation, head down the street to Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant (85 Howe St., 562-8444), which stays open until 3 a.m. every night of the week. Amazingly cheap and fresh Middle Eastern food with complimentary mint tea is the perfect nightcap to any given evening.

You can't talk food and New Haven without getting into a heated debate about pizza, which apparently found its current (thin crust) incarnation in the Elm City. Everyone has their given favorites, but bound to show up on many lists is relative newcomer **BAR** (254 Crown St., 495-8924). Huge industrial ceilings give way to some of the best pie (try mashed potato with roasted red pepper) and in-house brews (gentlemen prefer the blonde). In addition to such fine dining you can also catch free live music every Sunday from the area's brightest (including but not limited to the Weigh Down, Low-Beam, Hotel, the Risley Dales and the Butterflies Of Love). If you finish in time, take a short walk through Yale's gorgeous courtyards to Willoughby's Coffee And Tea (1006 Chapel St., 789-8400) for a sobering (read: strong) cup of coffee. A few blocks away you find Cutler's Records Tapes And CDs (27 Broadway, 777-6271), where you can peruse their huge vinyl collection while feeling good about supporting one of the oldest independent record stores (est. 1948) in the country.



THE WEIGH DOWN

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD:

Scott Amore, **BUTTERFLIES OF LOVE, AM/FM, HOTEL**

"**MexiCali Grille** (320 Elm St.): potato quesadilla, mmm. Open 'til 1 a.m. (3 a.m. weekends), this place is no fucking joke! Some people are leery because of its Yale affiliations and Americanized Mexican food, but there are too few Mexican restaurants of worth around here, and it's cheap and open late...so quit your bitching. **Book Trader Cafe** (1140 Chapel St., 787-6147): extensive vegetarian selections and vegetarian/vegan soups every day. They have hokey literary names for the sandwiches (fake chicken salad = Tom Soyer), but they taste damn good if you can get past the embarrassment of saying it out loud."

Kyle Fischer, **RAINER MARIA** (www.rainermaria.com)

"I almost don't want to get into this at the risk of offending every resident of the city of New York, since I live there now. However, it's a well-kept secret that the very best pizza in the United States resides not in Manhattan or even in the outer boroughs but, in fact, not too far from the end station of the Metro North New Haven train line. New Haven boasts not only the oldest pizzerias in the United States but also the finest.

THE WEIGH DOWN: PHILIP DESLIPPE; RUDY'S: CARLOS WELLS; LOW-BEAM: M.GEMMA

For those in the know, there's one further point of contention: whether **Frank Pepe's** (157 Wooster St., 865-5762) or **Sally's Pizzeria** (237 Wooster St., 624-5271), in the heart of New Haven's Little Italy, has the best pizza in the U.S. At the risk of ending a decades-long cease-fire between two camps of pizza-loving New Haven residents, I'm going to go on record as saying there is no better pizza to be found in North America than at Sally's.

To illustrate: Rainer Maria's drummer, Bill, knows more about pizza than anyone I have ever met. He managed a pizzeria for years. He can explain to you, in detail, the stylistic differences between the major players in the pizza game in any number of major American cities, notably New York and Chicago. He can break down the pros and cons of various midwestern cheese suppliers. He can make a recommendation of NYC slices based on your professed individual preferences. So when he heard the rumors about Sally's, we made a special stop en route to a show in Boston to sample the wares. We waited in line, I shit you not, for two hours. When we were finally seated we ordered two of the biggest pizzas on the menu and a round of root beers. Bill ate in stone silence. As we left, Bill still didn't say a word during the three-block walk back to the van. Then he strapped himself into the driver's seat and, visibly moved, said simply, "That was the best pizza I have ever eaten in my life."



RUDY'S



LOW-BEAM AT BAR

Carlos Wells, MONKEY POWER RECORDS

(www.monkypowerrecords.com)

"Bring some of your friends to **The Anchor** (272 College St., 865-1512), one of New Haven's oldest bars; hole up in a booth, spin some 45s in one of Elm City's oldest jukeboxes, and let the staff help you forget just about everything, including your name. Around the corner, **Richter's** (990 Chapel St., 777-0400) offers up half-yards of some of the finer ales. When dealing with the half-yards, remember to tip the glass ever so slowly, or you'll wind up with a face full of beer. Across town, **Café Nine** (250 State St., 789-8281) is the ideal spot to drink heavily and check out local music. Every now and then, the Nine has open-mic nights, which is always worth checking out for the times when local nutjobs get up and share their 'interesting points about society.' Just remember that the Elm City doesn't come out of their caves 'til 10 p.m. and is cut off at 2 a.m., so drink like you mean it."

Rich Martin, LOW-BEAM (www.low-beam.com)

"A quick shot down I-95 is New Haven's sister city, New London. Our humble little city on the Thames (pronounced like it's spelled—a Bronx cheer from New England Yankees to the Brits) was the home of playwright Eugene O'Neill. You can have a beer and some pinball with Low-Beam at the **Dutch Tavern** (23 Green Street, New London, 860-442-3453), a bar that O'Neill drank and played cards at, owned by Peter Detmold of first-wave punk progenitors the Reducers, the city's de facto house band. Check out Casino Diablo at the **El 'N' Gee Club** (86 Golden St., New London, 860-437-3800) for rockabilly/punk, or **Hit Station 58** (58 Brainard St., New London, 860-443-5858) for hip-hop, R&B and the best local rock as well as film nights, jazz and poetry. **WCNI 91.1** (oak.conncoll.edu/wcni) provides the soundtrack to our lives and the **Mystic Disc** (10 Steamboat Wharf, Mystic, 860-536-1312) gives the vinyl/acetate release."

Matthew Thomas, THE WEIGH DOWN (www.theweighdown.com)

"Since the brass industry went bye-bye in Waterbury, it's become a sort of zombie town. Folks roam the streets looking for living brains to suck dry... but there are a couple places you can go to refill your empty skull. One is **Brass City Records** (489 Meadow St., Waterbury, 574-7805): You can find current and hard-to-find vinyl and CDs, but what makes this store so special is the free shows. Many local and well-known bands have played there over the years. I lived about two minutes from Brass when Sunny Day Real Estate came to town on the *Diary* tour. Of course, I didn't know they played until days later. I think I was in my apartment washing clothes or something. Across town at **Phoenix Record Shop** (384 Stillson Rd., Waterbury, 756-1617), you'll find everything from Van Halen to Van Dyke Parks.

From Route 84, you'll see a huge lit-up yellow cross with the words 'Ho land' in bright red lights. This is Holyland USA, complete with miniatures of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, replicas of Roman catacombs, caged angels, bible quotes, Noah's ark and plenty of bible-related statues, all slapped together with cement and chicken wire by a local lawyer/evangelist in the '50s, who claimed he received a message from God. It became a tourist attraction in the '60s and '70s, but over the years was destroyed. I'm guessing from neglect and drunk metal dudes playing Godzilla. It's huge, and between all the broken religious imagery and tales of satanic rituals and murders that supposedly go on up there, it's downright scary. If you're driving through, it's worth a look."

All phone numbers are in the 203 area code, unless otherwise noted.



BEST NEW MUSIC

THE DEATHRAY DAVIES

FOUR TET

GRANDADDY

MYSTIC

PLEASURE FOREVER

RADIOHEAD

GILLIAN WELCH

 = ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD **R.I.Y.L.** = RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE



THE DEATHRAY DAVIES

Midnight At The Black Nail Polish Factory Glurp

Dallas' Deathray Davies have spent the last few years churning out respectable garage-pop gems on carefree recordings that, while full of character, have left a little to be desired. With *Midnight At The Black Nail Polish Factory* they've finally managed to make a record whose production quality befits the superb songwriting, elevating the group to a pop superpower. The guitars are still fuzzy, but the organs and percussion come through with crystalline beauty, and the band's refined psychedelic edge has turned their songs, already strong with hooks, into fully realized three-minute epics. The more exploratory efforts prove that the Davies have opted to move beyond the garage-rock class of 2002, and when they do opt for a simplified rock number, they do it with gleeful confidence and some respectful nods to the late-'60s progenitors of the genre. Fortunately, they don't seem content to simply replicate their idols, and instead inject their summertime pop with enough new melodies and inventive noises to make their everyman tunes about love and ladies seem like a wholly original concept. At a time when everyone is looking to confound audiences by coming at them from some shocking new angle, the Deathray Davies are proving that distinguished simplicity can go a long way when it's treated as something more than a throwback novelty. >>>PETE D'ANGELO

Link

www.deathraydavies.com

File Under

Peerless pop, pure and simple

R.I.Y.L.

Kinks, Apples In Stereo, recent

Guided By Voices



FOUR TET

Rounds Domino

Buddhists call it "lightning zen," an event that provides a revelatory flash that instantly expands your mind past where you thought it could go. One minute and thirty-eight seconds into the second track of *Rounds*, Four Tet guru Kieran Hebden delivers such a flash for the ears and mind. Amid a snappy beat-box groove and the pluckings of what sounds like a Japanese koto, Hebden shatters the calm with a brusque, digital burr. In any other setting, it would sound like noise, a mistake. But in this setting, it's a statement, a challenge. The brilliance of what Hebden does as Four Tet often lies in those high-contrast juxtapositions where his tweaks and beats rub against pristine samples of "real" instruments, from plaintive piano to acoustic guitar harmonics. For *Rounds*, his third album under the Four Tet moniker (he also twiddles in *Fridge*), Hebden tends to lean upon aesthetics and influences from the Far East and South Pacific. "Spirit Fingers" pits the polyrhythmic frenzy of Javanese gamelan against a high-speed digital flutter. Very little is done to the speedy bronze chatter of the gamelan to make it fit into the mix; Hebden knows better than to mess with such a heady, primal and ritualistic groove. That funky South Seas shit is the original IDM, after all. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI

Link
www.fourtet.net
File Under
Volume. Contrast. Brilliance.
R.I.Y.L.
Howie B, Herbert, Tranquility Bass



GRANDDADDY

Sunday v2

Grandaddy's *Sunday* favors, slightly, the buzzy, Pavement-esque pop of 1997's *Under The Western Freeway* over the rambling narratives of 2000's *The Sophtware Slump*, and in many ways bests both of them. Few bands this side of the Flaming Lips so perfectly balance the whirrs and bleeps of analog synthesizers with the chugging and strumming of guitars, acoustic and electric. "El Caminos In The West" trots on a bed of acoustic guitars and summery doo-doo-dooos, but quaint synthesizers and tinkling keyboards provide the hooks; it rivals *Freeway*'s "Summer Here Kids" as Grandaddy's most direct pop song (and the similarly bright "Stray Dog And The Chocolate Shake," a suburban fantasy, may be the band's happiest). Leader Jason Lytle is as playful with words as he is with arrangements: "her drag-and-click had never yielded anything as perfect as a dragonfly"; "he's so drunk he's passed out in a Datsun that's parked out in the hot sun"; "it seems that I'm seasoned to be in the season of the old me." In comparison to *Sophtware*'s sci-fi futurism, *Sunday* is earthbound and human, with songs about the "Saddest Vacant Lot In All The World" and "The Go In The Go-For-It" and being "O.K. With My Decay." The latter is the album's thematic center: *Sunday* wrestles with decay and transformation in songs tinged with melancholy, colored with hope. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link
www.grandaddylandscape.com
File Under
Technophobe/technophile
cultural exchange
R.I.Y.L.
The Flaming Lips, Sparklehorse,
Mercury Rev, Pavement



MYSTIC

Cuts For Luck And Scars For Freedom...
(Learning To Breathe) DreamWorks

This version of *Cuts For Luck And Scars For Freedom...* adds five tracks to Mystic's original debut, released on GoodVibe two years ago. She's already garnered a Grammy nod for her song "W" (featuring Planet Asia), and critics praised the rapsinger's soulful, socially conscious sound, comparing her to artists like Lauryn Hill. The DreamWorks' re-release adds new producers Kanye West and Supa Dave West (De La Soul), and collaborations with Donell Jones and Mos Def, looking to add commercial viability to all that critical respect. The original *Cuts For Luck* was grassroots-raw courtesy of Bay Area beatmakers like Shock G and the Angel; the new tracks are smoother, appending tracks like the radio-ready single "Breathe (Better Days)." The difference? Let's just say if *Cuts For Luck*'s original single, "The Life," was Dilated Peoples, "Breathe" is 50 Cent. Likewise, the new "Here We Are" carries the rock crossover stamp, while 2001-issue tracks "Neptune's Jewels," "You Say, I Say" and "Girlfriend Sistagirl" remind why Mystic got so much attention in the first place. Whether in 2001 or today, the true value of Mystic's music is that she makes you think, subtly but surely trying to change the world with her words. >>>JESSICA KOSLOW

Link
www.dreamworksrecords.com
File Under
Big-hearted, poetic hip-hop
R.I.Y.L.
Lauryn Hill, Black Star, Floetry



PLEASURE FOREVER

Alter Sub Pop

Did 19th-century New Orleans brothels have house bands? (Yes, they invented jazz. —ed.) Pleasure Forever look the sordid part; wiry frontman Andrew Rothbard undulates over his keyboard like a marionette, drummer Dave Clifford pounds the lacquer out of his pompadour and guitarist Joshua Hughes is Angus in a ruffled prom shirt, jerking orgasmic, ritualistic thuds out of his axe. And we'll be damned if the moniker isn't the portrait of hedonism. Alter is a suitably exquisite velvet vessel to capture PF's hypnotic live presence, an album to experience in daylight only out of necessity. Opening thrusts "White Mare" and "Czarina" immediately set the table of excess, the former a throbbing, distorted power-chord stomp in which Clifford and Hughes rock out decadently over Rothbard's single sustained note. The segue to "Czarina" is eye-popping, a sudden, hip-buckling explosion of toms, then a boisterous piano lick that almost creates a swing vibe until Hughes retorts with nasty wah-wah. The black mass burns just as raucously throughout. Rothbard's lungs are as serpentine as Axl's, yet never affected, and often instrumental in the cacophony. "Wicked Shivering Columbine" temporarily reins us back to depressing ol' 1999 by title alone, 'til you realize the band's likely referencing the classic pantomime heroine. Simply delicious. >>>ANREW BONAZELLI



RADIOHEAD

Hail To The Thief Capitol

Ed O'Brien once said he thought the only way Radiohead could follow-up OK Computer was with an album of three-minute, effects-free guitar songs. The polarizing, digital tundra of *Kid A* and the slightly warmer *Amnesiac* turned out to be, of course, the complete opposite of that. So when he mentioned three-minute songs again last October, it was taken with a grain of salt. Surprise: *Hail To The Thief* is just that, the most concise set the band's made since *The Bends*. Don't use the words "return to form" though, as this isn't a step back, but rather a streamlining of the ideas on their last three records. If *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* were the sound of a band moving towards a new kind of rock, *Thief* is them arriving; here, the band integrates their electronic experiments with more traditional structures to create a nearly seamless electro-acoustic hybrid. "2 + 2 = 5" introduces Radiohead 3.0 with a blast of crashing drums, woozy synths, cutting guitars and a bile-spitting Yorke shouting, "You have not been paying attention!"; later, on the seasick "Myxomatosis," dissonant keys push just as much air as their fabled guitars of yore. The expected stops in heartwrenching territory are here but they break new ground as well—tracks like "There There" and "A Punchup At A Wedding" are imbued with a swaggering groove that they'd previously seemed incapable of. By making OK Computer's structure coexist with *Kid A*'s try-anything spirit, *Hail To The Thief* proves that they're not incapable of much. >>>TOM MALLON



GILLIAN WELCH

Soul Journey Acony

Back, baby, back in time/ I want to go back, when you were mine," drawls Gillian Welch on "Wayside/Back In Time," from *Soul Journey*, her fourth album of beautifully reactionary folk songs. Welch and her collaborator David Rawlings—he should really receive equal billing, since he co-writes, produces, and usually provides lead guitar and backing vocals—craft songs that are carefully and deliberately timeless. Sometimes so timeless that they verge on anachronistic: when "One Monkey" revives the old cliché "don't stop the show" and "Look At Miss Ohio" rhymes "oh me, oh my-o," Welch seems willfully archaic. No need to quibble, though. Welch inhabits these 10 songs (including two covers of traditional tunes) deeply, without a touch of irony, and she knows that she's working well-mined territory: "One Little Song" begins, "There's gotta be a song left to sing/ 'cause everybody can't have thought of everything." No one sings a slow song better than Welch, and with its variety of understated performances—mostly spare acoustic arrangements, but occasionally fleshed out with dobro, fiddle, harmonica, drums, and, on "Wrecking Ball," some electric guitar—*Soul Journey* is full of good songs, well-played, and there's nothing old-fashioned about that. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link
www.pleasureforever.com
 File Under
 Disoriented sex soundtrack
 of the year
 R.I.Y.L.
 Joy Division, Nick Cave, the Doors

Link
www.radiohead.com
 File Under
 Radiohead 3.0
 R.I.Y.L.
 Spiritualized, Neil Young's *Rust Never Sleeps*, Talking Heads,
 Pink Floyd

Link
www.gillianwelch.com
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 Journeys to the past
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 SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN
 TES
 THE TESTORS
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 TREBLE CHARGER
 WATCHERS



THE AMERICAN ANALOG SET

Promise Of Love Tiger Style

Should anyone get around to writing the history of drugs' influence on music, a few chapters will all but compose themselves. Psychedelics, obvious. Ditto for techno and ecstasy. Cocaine and the other Class A stimulants are conspicuous catalysts for rock's frank, sexualized bombast; after all, isn't rock ultimately music meant to grab you by the rhetorical balls and shake you (all night long)? Of course, many of rock's most adrenalized performers used heroin, too—but that was largely escapism, and no one really soundtracked the experience until the Velvets used layers of fuzz to

replicate heroin's wrapping around the senses. Their sound's trickle-down may have at last reached the end point of diminishing returns. It happens around the halfway mark of the pretty, competent but inescapably vague *Promise Of Love*, i.e., around the time you've either fallen asleep or forgotten it's on. What exactly is the point of making music that doesn't demand to be heard? American Analog Set are too good at muting the effect of the very things that initially grab you about their music. The suspense gathers with each stately repetition of those insinuating melodies and venomous guitar hooks—what's next? But that's the thing, there's nothing next. Only on the atypically fiery "Come Home Baby Julie, Come Home" is there a payoff for your patient attention; the rest of the album is all finely crafted zone-out. So you do. >>>MAYA SINGER



THE BLAM

The Blam Mootron

It's getting to the point in the current "rock resurgence" where every newcomer is met with a sidelong glance and skepticism to weed out the inevitable Bush-like bandwagon jumpers. (Bush, the band—this sound isn't the Commander In Chief's steez.) The cred alarm sounds at the first slightly dirty notes of "You're Making My Head Spin," the leadoff track from the Blam's self-titled debut, calling attention to the band's Brooklyn pedigree and use of that nearly ubiquitous three-letter article in its name. It quiets down quickly, however, and lets

guitarist/vocalist Jerry Adler lead the quartet through a half-hour of jangly pop that suggests they spent more time listening to Squeeze (the band, not the Velvet Underground's oft-derided final studio album) than their geographic counterparts. The buzzing instrumentation well serves Adler and bassist/vocalist Itamar Ziegler and their skewed takes on romance. Adler punctuates the chorus of "Some Marry For Love" by playfully boasting, "I married for money." Meanwhile, "In various disgraces/ And if I made a list/ You would be last," somehow comes across as a term of endearment in "Various Disgraces," an album highlight bouncing along atop Giddy Raz's ebullient keyboard. No one will pretend the Blam have reinvented the wheel here, but you've got to hand it to them for finding a fresh take on greasing it. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

www.tigerstylerecords.com

File Under

Eight things I haze about you

R.I.Y.L.

Mellow Yo La Tengo, Bedhead,

My Bloody Valentine

Link

www.theblam.com

File Under

Smart rock, sans pretense

R.I.Y.L.

Spoon, Badly Drawn Boy, Lilys



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TIM BLUHM

The Soft Adventure/Colts California

Tim Bluhm's band, the Mother Hips, like so many acts these days, has never basked in its fair share of the public's gaze, despite an emphatic fanbase in their home state of California and habitual praise from the critics. Luckily, this fact has never stifled Bluhm and Co.'s prolific offerings of consistently well-crafted melodic songs. A case in point is Bluhm's new disc, which includes two richly accomplished works on a single CD. On the front end, *The Soft Adventure*, a six-song EP of Bluhm's most recent recordings, rolls out in

Link

www.timbluhm.com

File Under

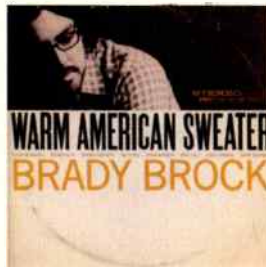
California cowboys

R.I.Y.L.

Gene Clark, Wilco,

Townes Van Zandt

fine Californian fashion, recalling some of the state's legendary musical artists; "Spying On Your Teen" opens with lush Beach Boys-ish harmonic oohs sung over a lilting piano line evoking the slow moving surf; "The Only Solution" is reminiscent of Gene Clark's classically simple balladeering. Following is *Colts*, Tim Bluhm's "lost album" from 1996, a more country-tinged offering recorded on a four-track. From the sublimely weary "Pick It Up (Requiem For The Rolling Machine)" to the harmonies on "Sadness Of The Masses," which recall the Flying Burrito Brothers, these songs are full of enough sweet yearning to fill up any Sunday morning. If you own some Wilco, Will Oldham, or any other alt-country darlings, you owe it to yourself to give this a listen. >>>KARL WACHTER



BRADY BROCK

Warm American Sweater Feel

Houston-born, New York-based singer/songwriter Brady Brock wants you to want him. For his second album, the follow-up to 2001's *I Will Live In You Where Your Heart Used To Be*, Brock recruited in-demand indie-pop knob-dialers Thom Monahan and Brian McTear to produce, convinced Califone's Tim Rutili and Bigger Lover Patrick Berkery to contribute and got himself to write 10 songs filled to bursting with sensitive-dude melancholy and lots of expansive guitar-band detailing. As new-school acoustic emo goes, it's an ambitious little disc, one

Link

www.bradybrock.com

File Under

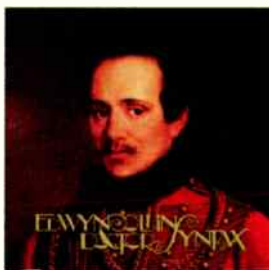
Threadbare threnodies

R.I.Y.L.

Guster, Dashboard Confessional,

Toad The Wet Sprocket

that attempts to move past young-man-screaming-about-infidelities with pluck and grace. Yet despite all of Brock's hard work (or maybe because of it), *Warm American Sweater* ends up too much like its title: overbearing, dull and a little embarrassing in front of girls. Brock gets all the signifiers right but never does anything with them, coasting on tired platitudes about telephone wire and humdrum melodies you'll be able to sing before he does; even "You Will Be A Skinny Ghost," a fired-up rocker with eerie, vindictive potential, devolves into treacly middle-school mush halfway through. *Sweater* might do in a blizzard with nothing else to occupy a frozen mind, but its charms are sadly threadbare. >>>MIKAEL WOOD



EDWYN COLLINS

Doctor Syntax Setanta

Though his career began in the '80s with Scottish jangle-kings Orange Juice, most Americans know Edwyn Collins through the Motown-worshipping "A Girl Like You" from 1994's *Gorgeous George*. At first, *Doctor Syntax*, his second album since then, seems bent on replicating that success. Most tracks tweak the formula that made "Girl" a global hit: A spare, slinking backing groove, topped by Collins' Elvis-Costello-via-Frank-Oz croon, and thickened by retro keyboards and multiple guitar tracks all played by Collins himself. (Almost: Suede founder Bernard

Link

www.edwyncollins.com

File Under

Self-reflexive Brit-soul

R.I.Y.L.

Lloyd Cole, Paul Weller,

Scritti Politti

Butler guests on one of three songs added to the U.S. release.) Ultimately, though, he seems more interested in art than the charts. A bed of synth-bass gives "No Idea" dancefloor potential, but what would most clubgoers think of its layers of sitar and (apparently) kazoo? The best songs break the mold entirely. "The Beatles" is an irreverent anti-tribute to the Fab Four, or at least their overexposure, complete with acidic guitar and "I Am The Walrus" quotes, while "Splitting Up" is a deceptively spry acoustic number about—what else—schizophrenia. New listeners may be mystified by several songs referencing the singer's previous work ("20 Years Too Late"), and most could run about a minute shorter, but when his studio wizardry doesn't obscure his songcraft, Collins is still a pop subversive to be reckoned with. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO



CRACKER AND LEFTOVER SALMON

Oh Cracker Where Art Thou? Pitch-A-Tent

Cracker's fish fetish first came to listeners' attention in 1992 with the release of their self-titled debut, its cover dominated by a peeled-back can of sardines. Now it appears David Lowery and his guitar-slinging sidekick, Johnny Hickman, have broadened their palates to include salmon—as in *Leftover Salmon*, Colorado's favorite (and only) "polyethnic Cajun slamgrass" band (the group's words, not ours). Despite the limited culinary possibilities the union implies, the two camps make the best of a potentially pointless collaboration. Recorded live in the studio, *Oh Cracker Where Art Thou?* loosens the lid on the airtight rockers "Get Off This,"

Link

www.crackersoul.com

www.leftoversalmon.com

File Under

Cracker comes down from

the mountain

R.I.Y.L.

The Gourds, Scud Mountain

Boys, New Grass Revival

"Low" and "Teen Angst" with a breezy, saloon-like ambience and nimble banjo, mandolin and piano/organ runs. "Sweet Potato" and "Lonesome Johnny Blues" benefit less from Salmon's tipsy hoedown approach, perhaps because the originals weren't all that compelling to begin with. "Euro-Trash Girl" and "Mr. Wrong"—both sterling examples of Lowery's knack for inducing double-wide grins with his snarky everyman musings—unfold with a carnivalesque flair, while "How Can I Live Without You?" and "Waiting For You Girl" manage to sound somber, surly and desperate all at once. A dubious experiment, but an engrossing one nonetheless. >>>HOBART ROWLAND



DEATH IN VEGAS

Scorpio Rising Sanctuary

With a name like Fearless, you either live up to it by trying any and everything, unafraid, or you end up looking like a fool. Death In Vegas's Richard Fearless is no fool, nor is his cohort Tim Holmes, for that matter. By throwing the rulebook out the window, the U.K. producers surpass the sonic gravity of their 1999 disc, *The Continuo Sessions*, once again finding the perfect synthesis between the music and their collaborators. Ethereal electronics harkening back to the height of the shoegazer era hack vocals from equally ethereal Woodbine singer

Susan Dillane on "23 Lies," but Adult's Nicola Kuperas receives the bass-driven minimal electro she needs to deliver her robotic, detached delivery on "Hands Around My Throat." When former Mazzy Star vocalist Hope Sandoval steps in on "Killing Smile," meanwhile, out come the acoustic guitars, along with strings composed by famous Indian violinist Dr. L. Subramaniam. Dot Allison and Paul Weller also make appearances, but the brightest point is the title track, a psychedelic rock odyssey featuring inspired vocals from Oasis's Liam Gallagher that underscores the fact that a great singer will only ever be as good as the material he's given to work with. And it doesn't get much better than this. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.deathinvegas.net

File Under

Zodiac killers

R.I.Y.L.

David Holmes, My Bloody

Valentine, Primal Scream



EARLY DAY MINERS

Jefferson At Rest Secretly Canadian

Yet another British Invasion is happening right here at home. Rancid and Green Day's English accents became accepted currency long ago. And now New York's Interpol, Chicago's Palaxy Tracks and Bloomington, Indiana's Early Day Miners are all building sonic templates that pay tribute to the ambient models of Brian Eno, the feedback-zombie drones of the Jesus & Mary Chain, the frosted alienation of Joy Division and the sublime melancholy heart of Trembling Blue Stars. In the Miners' case, their third album (recorded mostly live at chief songwriter Dan Burton's home studio) does so with

Link

www.earlydayminers.com

File Under

Pseudo-Anglo mope rock for the people

R.I.Y.L.

Low, the Jesus & Mary Chain,

Trembling Blue Stars

lyrics that, if you can decipher the mumble, detail not a broken heart in scattered glass but the post-Civil War American South. This is *alt-alt-country* in full effect, folks, and the kind of cultural revisionism that makes grad school semiotic classes all worth it. Well, let's not get too carried away. There's a brooding mastery to "McCalla," however, as Burton whispers over a time-bomb ticking beat, swelling keys and singularly polarized guitar line; a comforting swirl of *déjà vu* to the *Rollercoaster*-era Red House Painters guitar strum of "Wheeling"; and an elegiac finality to the slow, tremolo-ed notes that pace the five lonesome minutes of "Cotillion." So, if the South were to rise again, it'll apparently be doing so with the Union Jack flying proudly. >>>ROB O'CONNOR



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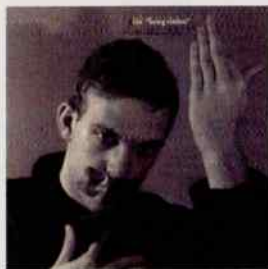
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Being Ridden Instrumentals

Temporary Residence



With his jokey name, his jokey Bowie-riffin' cover art, his jokey gold teeth and his jokey tightly-whitey-baring live show, it's kind of damn difficult to take Cex seriously... and *Being Ridden*, his umpteenth release in the past four years, ain't helping. Despite a career based on being a de-panted piss-take on oh-so-stodgy IDM, the pale, lanky Baltimore MC/glitchmeister sounds like he's been absorbing earnestness through osmosis, touring with indie rockers to soak in the sincerity. Accordingly, his flow has evolved from mediocre old-school hyper-kinetics to mediocre new-school emo-peripatetic, dropping loquacious S.A.T.-rockin' flows like: "Instead of making peace with my culture's obsolescence/ I've come to you for sympathy/ Convince me that

I'm necessary/ Inappropriate sense, this aimless rootlessness/ Trying to find a loop through the world's painful ruthlessness." Cavity-causing cake frosting for 19-year-old Dismemberment Plan fans with no real hip-hop records in their collection, but tech-degree-flaunting laptop jockeys know better. At a mere 21 years, the Tigerbeat6 co-impresario is certainly entitled to some growing pains, but his heavyhanded kvetching (stressing that his voice won't do what he wants, making out with his hands on "Signal Katied" and then bitching about indie rock/rap's recent emo turn *one track later*) comes off like flaccid scraps that a melted Eminem fan scrounged out of the Anticon dumpster. He even reverts to his Fruit-O-Tha-Loomed "your girl luvz Cex" shtick on "Stamina," making one wonder if "self-reflexive" and "self-doubting" were just ploys to get some indie chick to remove her "Okaloosa County Summer Volleyball Camp" T-shirt.

Not that the chin-stroking glitcherati doesn't need the piss taken out of them as much as a two-day-old catheter, but Cex-partner Kid606 works that angle with acrimonious songtitles and a-ha samples. A true soldier moves in silence, and on *Being Ridden Instrumentals*, Cex's gently distorted blip-hop tracks say more than his blog scribbles about seventh grade flower-eating marriage ceremonies could ever muster. Far less sporadic and epileptic than his usual instrumental c-c-c-clutter, *Instrumentals* swings like a laptop-savvy DJ Krush or a six-string wielding Dabrye. The guitar-driven "You Kiss Like You're Dead Instrumental" sizzles like a mildly funkdafted Postal Service package before imploding into a speaker-slicing letter bomb. Each track has a definable motion, moving from minimalist electro to Four Tet cut-uppery to irresistible squelch with the ease of a Baltimore water-taxi. "Earth Shaking Event Instrumental" owes as much to the Bomb Squad as it does to Thrill Jockey and Marumari; while "Cex At Arm's Length Instrumental" makes Detroit minimalist shizz cuddly enough for hip-hoppers and melancholy indie rockers. Please, let's have Cex quietly; the kids might hear you. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

www.rjyan.com

File Under

Silence is Cexy

R.I.Y.L.

Gold Chains, DJ Krush, Dabrye



THE EAVES

The Eaves *Ace Fu*

These days, old sounds have a way of becoming new again. The Eaves, whose self-titled debut missed certain immortalization by a little more than a decade, may just be in luck. Their sweetly shy, almost wounded contemplations draped over cold and distant guitars and hollow percussion hark back to the early-'90s, pre-grunge world of college radio, when gauzy, introverted female-fronted acts from Britain still mattered. *The Eaves* is more of a long EP than a full-length, but let's be honest, most of their influences never had more than about

seven good songs per album anyway. The trio pays homage to a page in the 4AD catalog without stealing from or defaming it. "Summer Gold" instills *Insides* with a little song structure. "Celebration" recalls Pale Saints at their best. "Top Drawer Man" reshapes Cocteau Twins to beautiful effect. Gone are the pointless meanderings that make the aforementioned bands at times unlistenable. Remaining are the swirling guitars and sleepy melodies, marked by the subtle shifts and occasional cascading keyboard that so distinguish the sub-genre. The bands that make this recording possible have yet to be reclaimed, recycled and repurposed into a next-big-thing sound, but the Eaves may make that an inevitable next step in moving forward while looking back. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

www.acefu.com

File Under

Circa 4AD

R.I.Y.L.

Pale Saints, Cocteau Twins, *Insides*, Lush



THE FLAMING SIDEBURNS

Sky Pilots *Jetset*

If you didn't know any better, you might think that the Flaming Sideburns are a parody band. In addition to the comical name, they count a guitarist called Johnny Volume and a bassist called the Punisher among their number, and their first U.S. release was enough to send irony alarms blaring with its title, *Save Rock 'N' Roll*. Plus, not only are they from Finland, but frontman Eduardo Martinez is Argentinian, meaning that when he isn't singing in heavily accented English, he slips into Spanish instead. A combination of guitar excess, boozey swagger and '60s garage groove, *Sky*

Pilots finds the Sideburns echoing everyone from the Stones to the Cult to similarly retro-minded contemporaries like *Soundtrack Of Our Lives* (especially in the hand clap-laced melodies of "Let Me Take You Far"). Meanwhile, in mirroring *Urge Overkill*'s 1993 single "Sister Havana" on "Since The Beginning," they deliver the revelation that if UO were around today, they'd be huge. A cover of mental garage god Roky Erickson's "The Interpreter" is also a standout, but it's as early as the album's lead song, which takes its title from the last release—when Martinez first wails, "Saaave rock 'n' roll!"—that you realize: Holy shit, these guys are for real. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.theflamingsideburns.com

File Under

Crossing the Finnish line

R.I.Y.L.

Soundtrack Of Our Lives, *Urge Overkill*, the Rolling Stones





FOG

Ether Teeth Ninja Tune

No matter how many layers of newly composed or found sound Andrew Broder (a.k.a. Fog) stacks, his music won't shake its desolation. *Ether Teeth*, his sophomore album, achieves Lynne Ramsay-type bleakness via an occasionally classical-sounding piano, gobs of static and sly turntables. Broder enlists insistent scratching in almost every track, often making his tables hum and moan like a theremin. Using them in the most un-hip-hop way imaginable, though, only makes Broder seem more down—his appropriation never misses and tinges his

tunes with flava. Sounding like Microphones' Phil Elvrum decked out in Ecko and indulgence, Broder is proud to be obtuse. The woozy "What A Day Day" breaks into a waltz bridge that feels like a fading epiphany before the song backs itself into an unrelenting trudge through lo-fi indie sludge. He shows off his apparent love of non-sequiturs in "Under A Anvil Tree," when he groans, "One day a dump truck will dump two tons of kittens on me." *Ether Teeth* is infuriating, gorgeous and often both simultaneously because of its wanky nature. In "No Boys Allowed," it sounds like he's singing "I'm totally fucking with you," though it's nearly impossible to tell as the song is so caked with different noises, it's practically off-white. It doesn't matter if he's confessing or not, though—fucking with you is what he's doing. Beautifully. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.fogtimewaster.com

File Under

Fear of an indie planet

R.I.Y.L.

The Microphones, Kid Koala,

Xiu Xiu



FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE

Welcome Interstate Managers S-Curve/Virgin

Dis their adenoidal singing voices, chuckle at their nerdy wardrobes or marvel at how easy they'd be to take in a fight, but do not make the mistake of thinking Fountains Of Wayne aren't clever. On *Welcome Interstate Managers*, their long-awaited third album, songwriters Chris Collingwood and Adam Schlesinger (who also plays bass in Ivy and moonlights as a producer and sideman) continue to document the sad, funny lives of every Tri-State nebbish they can create in zippy power-pop tunes that reveal new hooks with each listen. Evidently

Link

www.fountainsofwayne.com

File Under

Power-pop with brains

R.I.Y.L.

Joe Jackson, Brendan Benson,

the Cars

they've spent the downtime since 1999's *Utopia Parkway* bulking up, as a number of these songs throb with a hefty guitar buzz previously absent; "Bright Future In Sales" and "Stacy's Mom" (which sounds exactly like the Cars' "Just What I Needed") could satisfy welterweight garage-rock fans. But the Fountains are at their best here when they dial down the distortion and let their sharp writing shine: "Hackensack" finds a small-town schlub pining for a former classmate who's become a famous actress, and in "Hey Julie," a frustrated paper-pusher tries to explain to his girlfriend the "mean little man" who abuses him at work. It's familiar territory, but Collingwood and Schlesinger treat it with the care of the experienced. >>>MIKAEL WOOD

The John Scofield Band UP ALL NIGHT

Groove Never Sleeps

The follow-up to their GRAMMY®-nominated CD *überjam*, *Up All Night* is dense with sonic color and texture, weaving through funk, r&b, electronic, blues, and rock... never losing the groove.

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TOMMY GUERRERO

Soul Food Tacqueria Mo Wax/Beggars Group
 Now that skateboarding's firmly cemented itself into popular culture, it's only fitting that one of the artform-cum-sport's earliest heroes is getting some attention for his post-skateboarding career. Tommy Guerrero may no longer be tearing up the streets as an original member of the Bones Brigade, but his sublime brand of bluesy post-rock is warming up iPods and home stereos aplenty. *Soul Food Tacqueria* continues where his *A Little Bit Of Somethin'* left off, that being understated, meandering grooves built around simple guitar strumming, some keys here and there, rubbery

basslines and lo-fi beats, all written, produced and arranged by Guerrero himself. A noticeable addition to his repertoire on this album comes in the form of guest vocalists, namely Quannum's Lyrics Born, who you'd be hard-pressed to identify as the underground MC who works with Blackalicious and DJ Shadow, as he trades his rhymes for the gritty bluesman croon on "Gettin It Together." It's just this sort of earnest expression that makes Tommy Guerrero an artist worth listening to; he's not purporting to be supremely talented, and his stripped-down bohemian funk is all the better for it. >>>ROY DANK

Link

www.beggars.com/us/tommyguerrero

File Under

Boho funk
 R.I.Y.L.

Money Mark, Four Tet,
 Andy Votel



GUSTER

Keep It Together Warner Bros.

Guster can pen a killer melody seemingly at will. And melody is what lodges a pop song in your head and keeps a CD in your changer, for better or worse. Their fourth album, *Keep It Together*, is brimming with tunes as bright as the sun on your face; harmonies blossom like flowers on a spring day. Significant to *Keep It Together* is that the instrumentation has grown from the once-favored combination of acoustic guitars and light percussion into a reasonable approximation of a straight-up rock band. The problem is, Guster doesn't know the difference between sweetly satisfying and simply sickening—many of their songs are just plain dippy. To the band's credit, this album is much more bearable than the last. Madly infectious tunes like "Diane" and "Careful" are radio-friendly enough to steal airtime from John "For The Love Of God, Do I Have To Hear 'Your Body Is A Wonderland' one more time?" Mayer. "Amsterdam" is pure pop genius worthy of a million Matthew Sweet comparisons. Mostly, *Keep It Together* favors style over substance with middling results, though hidden track, "Two At A Time," with its sappy *Sesame Street* children's choir, should be avoided at all costs. Given a few more chances, Guster might pen the perfect pop album. But this isn't it. >>>NORM ELROD

Link

www.guster.com
 File Under

A mighty gust
 R.I.Y.L.

Toad The Wet Sprocket, Gigolo Aunts, Matthew Sweet, the Greenberry Woods



BUDDY GUY

Blues Singer Silvertone

After several years of indifferent albums, Buddy Guy revitalized his career with the pure, potent electric blues of 2001's *Sweet Tea*. After proving he can still amp it up, he's unplugged and taken it all back to the Delta where he was born. And this time out, as the title indicates, the emphasis is on his often-underrated voice, rather than his famous fretwork. And he does a fine job on classics like Smokey Hogg's weary "Bad Life Blues," Son House's "Louise McGhee" and others, putting real passion into his work—listen to "Black Cat Blues" and you'll believe in the power of

superstition. The rhythm section of drummer Jim Keltner, bassist Tony Garnier and second guitarist James Mathis (Squirrel Nut Zippers) is swinging and understated, giving Guy plenty of room. He leaves the fancy guitar playing to guests B.B. King and Eric Clapton, who appear on a couple of tracks (with Clapton smoking "Lucy Mae Blues" in a way he hasn't since the mid '60s). When he steps forward himself, he uses space as much as sound to play his blues, letting one note do the work of 10. It's subtle and daring in a such a stripped-down setting, but it works—even on a track like "Hard Time Killing Floor," where he's completely solo. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.buddyguy.com
 File Under

Real folk blues
 R.I.Y.L.

Muddy Waters, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Sleepy John Estes



NEILSON HUBBARD

Sing Into Me Parasol

Neilson Hubbard has been through some changes since his stint with Living Hand ended in 1996. He released the indie guitar-rawk album *The Slide Project*, then followed that with 2001's much darker, more introspective *Why Men Fail*. Now he returns with *Sing Into Me*, a collection of songs that explore the issue of religious faith. (At least no one can accuse him of being trendy.) The fact that Hubbard was born and raised in Mississippi may have something to do with the thematic concerns of *Sing Into Me*. It is, after all, difficult, if not impossible, to grow up in the Bible Belt and emerge untouched by religious thought and practice. Hubbard is a fine songwriter, and the tunes on *Sing Into Me* are certainly emotionally honest. He has stated that, "This is the most personal record I've ever made. I wanted to explore the personal and intimate side of faith." Those who are uncomfortable with the whole idea of religion can probably hear tunes such as "Nothing Without You," "You'll Be There" and the title track as love songs. On the other hand, "Jesus" and "Praise To You" are tracks that can't be taken out of context. The unifying factor is that these gentle songs are delivered very directly and sincerely, and that in itself should inspire some faith in Neilson Hubbard. >>>PHILIP VAN VLECK

Link

www.neilsonhubbard.com
 File Under

Testifying in slowcore
 R.I.Y.L.

Mark Eitzel, Josh Rouse, Elliott Smith



STEPHEN JONES

Almost Cured Of Sadness Sanctuary

Apparently, Baby Bird was a phoenix—Stephen Jones rises from the ash of his former moniker, only to fall into a ditch of despair. With the tragic earnestness of a homeless schizophrenic or an unpopular third grader, Jones wails in falsetto throughout *Almost Cured Of Sadness* and reaches his pathetic peak on "Friend," where he repeatedly begs, "Do you wanna be my friend?" His music, though, is far from being straightforwardly heartbreaking—Jones singsongs cloying melodies and pushes each of the eight tracks on his recorder to their maximum output. He

often sounds like he's playing with twice as many layers, giving the Avalanches a run for their sample-stacking. As with Eels frontman E (with whom he shares an interest in hip-hop and penchant for pep-free pop), even flashes of humor are less funny when their context is considered ("I wanna get rid of my moral conscience/ All of that old-school shit," he sings in the otherwise glum "Good Day In A Bad World"). That Jones is grappling for happiness makes his situation seem all the more grave, like he's destined for a life of teetering and near misses. However, he can take solace in the fact that the musical product of his condition is gorgeously unnerving, and as a meditation on discontent, totally dead-on. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.arthritiskid.com

File Under

Far from heaven

R.I.Y.L.

Eels, Baby Bird



KAITO

Special Love Kompakt

Although not the only instance of such doppelganging, the dripping aura of *Special Love* is remarkable for how close its tone and feel are to its pert house twin, 2002's *Special Life*. The spiritual antecedent here is Steve Hillage's post-Gong gig System 7 releasing two albums under the name System 7.3 in 1994, with *Fire* pounding out progressive techno and *Water* ambient noodling. Both *Special* discs are the product of Japanese DJ/producer Kaito (Hiroshi Watanabe), and both are as far away from the angular thrust of most

Link

www.kompakt-net.de

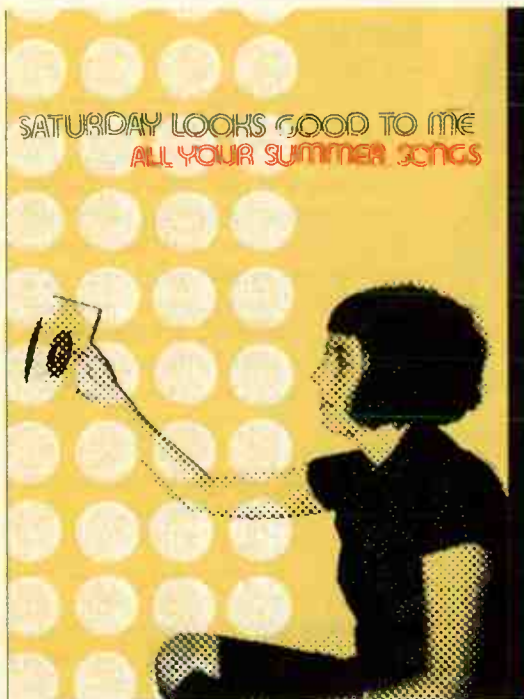
File Under

Okay—now, Kaito

R.I.Y.L.

L.S.G, Speedy-J, Burger/Ink

everything else on the Kompakt imprint. Kaito's received deck-level endorsement from Larry Heard, Gilles Peterson and Miss Kittin for *Special Life*, but *Special Love* is the trophy release, the thing to be savored for every perfect sound. *Special Love* pays homage to ambient techno's legendary releases, namely early Speedy-J and Global Communication (particularly *Pentamorous Metamorphosis*). Yet there's something contemporary in the fat analog synths and percussive, echo-laden arpeggios Kaito employs throughout "Intension" and "Air Rider," where a touch of Mike Oldfield's undulating, pointilist sound design pushes forward larger, atmospheric themes from miniscule synth sounds. *Special Love* plays as a whole, a complete and melodically original album as opposed to simple ambient rehashings of *Special Life*. As such, it's just as well to buy both at the same time and enjoy them in different moods. >>>HEATH K. HIGNIGHT



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World Radio History



MAMANI KEITA & MARC MINELLI

Electro Bamako Palm Pictures

Attempts to blend African roots music with the electronic aesthetics of club music tend to sound exploitative and gimmicky. If Mamani Keita (of Mali) and Marc Minelli (of France) succeed where others have failed, it's because Minelli slides a smooth layer of cooled-out jazz between Keita's wandering melodies and the restless sizzle of techno. It doesn't hurt that Keita's Bambara music background has strong natural affinities with blues and funk. From the opening notes of "N'ka Willy" with its lounge-y swing and underlying reggae feel, the sound

here has soul. Keita's voice is piercing and nimble, easily able to cut through the music even when it becomes dense. She also sticks to strong, clear melodies whether in the bouncy, sing-song mode of "Demisenoun," the closest thing to a hook-laden pop hit here, or the racing, expansive "Macary." Fast, brush-work drumming on tunes like the spare, guitar-driven "Abdoulayi Djodo" appear to be the work of a masterful jazz player, but the credits list no drummer. Programming? Sampling? Hard to imagine, but track after track, the "drummer" kicks. A few tracks like "Laydou," with its slow, funky feel and growling bassline, break the high-strung, techno mood. But there are no false steps here, just an inspired blend of fire and ice, roots and tech, Africa and Europe getting down together as never before. >>>BANNING EYRE

Link

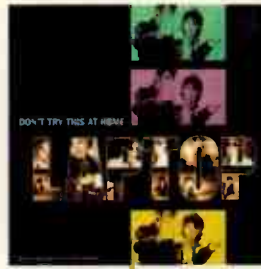
www.palmpictures.com

File Under

World clique

R.I.Y.L.

Frikiwa, Issa Bagayogo



LAPTOP

Don't Try This At Home Gammon

"Thanks to a deep recession/ There's no more gentrification," sings Jesse Hartman during one of the few moments on *Don't Try This At Home* that suggests that New York was a different place 20 years ago. Otherwise, Hartman's third album as Laptop is so rife with '80s references, it's like nothing's changed. *Home* is the purported soundtrack to a biopic based on his early struggle for fame (think *Glitter* but bitchy). The album is never as sleek or Pulp-y as it is on opener, "Want In?," wherein a guitar and keyboard pogo in unison like adoring fans at Mile End

Link

www.laptopic.com

File Under

Acerbic new new wave

R.I.Y.L.

Pulp, Gary Numan,

Human League

Stadium circa '96. Hartman's new new wave has less bounce to the ounce when it veers into heavily electronic territory, though. The skittery hi-hats of "Let Yourself Go" and the lumbering hip-hop drums of "Know It All" aren't primitive enough to convincingly echo the analog '80s, nor are they sufficiently forward-thinking to otherwise impress. Here, Hartman's showing cheapness without irony, but he might just be saving that for his lyrics—enviable vocab in tow, he sounds like David Bowie on his period. During the chorus of "So Funny," he gets all Pee-Wee Herman-y ("So funny I forgot to laugh," he vamps) before he laments, "I need to get my sense of humor back." Not even, Jesse—it's fine the way it is. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



CHRIS LEE

Cool Rock Misra



Link

www.chrislee.org

File Under

Pop romantic under the influence

R.I.Y.L.

Tim and Jeff Buckley,

Van Morrison, Ani DiFranco

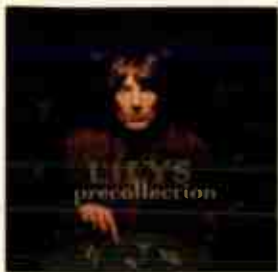
It's virtually inevitable that any singer who settles on a few chords and lets it blurt is going to draw comparisons to Van Morrison or the father/son Tim/Jeff Buckley combo. Those folks practically invented and mastered that rarefied space where the pop song subverts to jazz-inflected speaking in tongues. North Carolina-bred, Brooklyn-based Chris Lee started gathering musical notice as a member of the alt-country group Pine State Boys, contributed music criticism to *Wire* and *Spin*, and first went solo under the auspices of Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley, who contributes drums to two tracks here. *Cool Rock*, Lee's third solo album, boasts a delivery so smooth it borders on that dangerous adult-contemporary slickness where what's intended as soul inverts to soulless. Engineer Mark Nevers (Lampchop, Will Oldham) keeps things clean and simple—too tidy, perhaps. The airtight groove of "Cossacks Of Love" and the horn-powered soul of "(I Was A Teenage) Symphony To God" both nearly bland-out. Lee hits his stride with the sparse, slower numbers, where the notes drop organically and his voice roams freely. "Lately I Want You" ponders romance with a gently descending melody and the perfect backdrop of carefully picked acoustic guitar with percussion lumbering safely behind. "Say It Ain't Soul" walks a similar path of leisure. Great talent needs the room to explore. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

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tributes drums to two tracks here. *Cool Rock*, Lee's third solo album, boasts a delivery so smooth it borders on that dangerous adult-contemporary slickness where what's intended as soul inverts to soulless. Engineer Mark Nevers (Lampchop, Will Oldham) keeps things clean and simple—too tidy, perhaps. The airtight groove of "Cossacks Of Love" and the horn-powered soul of "(I Was A Teenage) Symphony To God" both nearly bland-out. Lee hits his stride with the sparse, slower numbers, where the notes drop organically and his voice roams freely. "Lately I Want You" ponders romance with a gently descending melody and the perfect backdrop of carefully picked acoustic guitar with percussion lumbering safely behind. "Say It Ain't Soul" walks a similar path of leisure. Great talent needs the room to explore. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

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LILYS

Precollection *Manifesto*

Kurt Heasley is one of those stylistically peripatetic geniuses who commands the loyalty of a devoted cult following. Across the '90s, Heasley's Lilys careened from the Stateside equivalent of shoegazer dream-pop to drone-heavy Krautrock to Kinks/Zombies-inflected Merseybeat, infusing each with a charmingly idiosyncratic twist. By 1999's unfortunately overlooked *The 3-Way*, whiffs of saxophone, banjo and samba beats hinted that the Lilys' British Invasion template was bursting at the seams. The rhythmically complex

Link
www.manifesto.com/lilys.html
 File Under
 My ever-changing muse
 R.I.Y.L.
 Julian Cope, Guided By Voices,
 the Chills, the Coral

Precollection finds Heasley's U.K. fixation intact (complete with a new-found accent from this longtime Philadelphian), and in many ways brings the Lilys' stylistic arc full circle. Heasley's current fascination seems to be Julian Cope—they might as well splice *Precollection's* stellar "Catherine" onto the next pressing of *The Teardrop Explodes' Greatest Hits*. The disc meanders a bit early on, as if Heasley is shaking off the rust of four years of relative inactivity. Yet from the sparse, trippy "Mystery School Assembly" forward, he and his sidemen of the moment uphold the Lilys' usual high standards. The predominant jangly, mid-'80s light psychedelia vibe doesn't preclude excursions like "Meditations On Speed," which churns with a "White Light/White Heat" insistence, adding an idiot-savant organ riff while Heasley chants "amphetamine" as if striving for a higher consciousness. He's reached it again, and fans are well advised to follow Kurt's lead. >>>GLEN SARVADY



THE LONESOME ORGANIST

Form And Follies *Thrill Jockey*

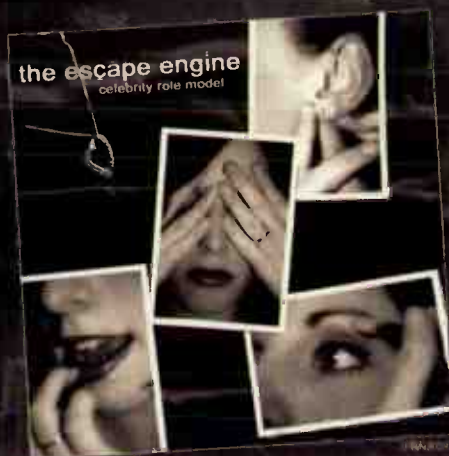
One reason this organist might be so lonesome is because his tastes are pretty freaky. A one-man band who appeared on the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's *Acme*, Jeremy Jacobsen careens through styles, from maniacal marimba-and-accordion trancescapes, to some bent metal and a few warped rhythm and blues numbers inspired by Sun Ra and his Arkestra's off-kilter early sides. As you might expect, the Lonesome Organist is all alone, playing guitar, toy piano, drums and much more, seemingly all at once. Or, as he asserts on one of his doo-wop ditties, "There's only one of me." On "The Moped," the Organist

Link
www.thrilljockey.com
 File Under
 Cryptic notes from the Chicago
 underground
 R.I.Y.L.
 Captain Beefheart, Euphone,
 Barnum & Bailey

grinds along like an overworked two-stroke engine, working in the ominous depths where Rick Wakeman would dwell when he wanted Yes to get all heavy. Jacobsen's vocals are reminiscent of a belting Bono, and he reveals some range in a few frantic, falsetto peaks of doo-wop passion. Befitting an artist set adrift from musical convention, his doo-wop tracks are not much about romance, and songtitles are Zappa-esque—"The Victory Of Sheila's Nap," and "Who's To Say Your Soul's Not Carbon?" Nonetheless, they somehow fit the short tracks, and the disc somehow holds together nicely. >>>BILL KISLIUK

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ELENI MANDELL

Country For True Lovers Zedtone

Insofar as she hails from L.A., it's inescapably tempting to liken Eleni Mandell to an actress. The comparison is apt, however: Like only those most disciplined and talented thespians, Mandell boasts the nearly unique ability to disappear into the roles she's written for herself in her music, and at the same time, exploit her own idiosyncratic personality to make the songs live. She's always herself, whether vamping like a Kurt Weill chanteuse, Broadway baby or lovestruck ingénue—the roles into which she's

most frequently cast herself on her previous albums. On *Country For True Lovers*, she's playing Patsy Cline, but if the strum and twang of the music represents a stylistic departure for the singer/songwriter, Mandell nonetheless remains recognizably and happily herself. On "Just Another Lonely Heart," the track that opens *Lovers*, she echoes Cline's vocal phrasing to a degree bordering on loving parody, but her take on the woebegone lyrics retains the noirishness and distinctively modern bite Mandell brings to all of her performances. Likewise, the upbeat rockabilly pop of "Tell Me Twice" could be mistaken for the Dixie Chicks, if not for the fact that Mandell sinks her chops into the tune with a measure of deadpan equal to her conviction. The album is country-to-the-hilt, but like the film *Far From Heaven*, *Country For True Lovers* is both knowing and sincere, and all the more moving because it knows—and yet remains sincere. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

www.elenimandell.com

File Under

Big city girl moves to the country
R.I.Y.L.

Neko Case, Cowboy Junkies,
Alison Krauss



ERIN MCKEOWN

Grand Nettwerk America

Erin McKeown comes up from the East Coast folkie circuit, but it seems that she is headed somewhere else. Her voice has the naturally rich quality of a Dar Williams or Natalie Merchant, but McKeown hasn't crafted a seamless piece of work like Williams' recent *The Beauty Of The Rain* or Merchant's *Ophelia*. Instead, she shows an appetite for a smorgasbord of styles: cabaret, power pop, '30s jazz, loungey hip-hop, and oh yeah, folk music driven only by her vocals and one of the stringed instruments she plays. The rocking "Cinematic" is perhaps the

most vibrant tune on the set, but she and producer Dave Chalfant (who was also on board for 2000's more somber *Distillation*) also cast a spell on the funky "Cosmopolitans" and "James!" McKeown has the healthy habit of drawing simple but unusual images out of the air. The problem with the relationship described in "Envelopes Of Glassine," where Williams' drummer James Galvani sets off at a stately trot, boils down to this: "I was Vegas, you were Rome." Maybe McKeown will settle down after a couple more years working out her influences, but it's more likely that the woman just has a bunch of different colors in her palette. >>>BILL KISLUK

Link

www.erinmckeown.com

File Under

Folkin' all over the map
R.I.Y.L.

Frou Frou, Joni Mitchell,
Judy Garland

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NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE

I Saw A Bright Light Daemon

On "She Takes Drugs," the brash opening track of Nineteen Forty-Five's second album, *I Saw A Bright Light*, Hunter Manasco and Katharine McElroy shout in unison, vocals mixing in fuzzy, urgent declamation: "Our love is like a style we'll keep then throw away." Track two, "Sylvia Plath" (neither the old Peter Laughner or Ryan Adams songs; this one's about a woman reading Plath in the sun) follows suit; it's similarly intense, with more unison vocals that call to mind indie-rock couples, conjugal or not, such as Thurston 'n' Kim and Black Francis 'n' Kim. Nostalgia for the

early '90s plays a large part in *Bright Light's* appeal. Manasco, who takes most of the vocal leads, has a raspy intensity as both a singer and a guitarist, and although the Birmingham trio slows down occasionally ("Glass Diamond"), Nineteen Forty-Five are at their best when they dig in and rock out. "Aurora Borealis" builds to a desperate climax, and the great "Make Out In The Dark" finds Manasco layering guitars—a tinny riff gives way to an anthemic hook edged with distortion—for a song that would segue nicely between Superchunk's "Slack Motherfucker" and the Breeders' "Divine Hammer." Sure, this sound had its heyday a decade ago, but in Nineteen Forty-Five's capable hands, it's still effective. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.nineteenforty-five.com

File Under

Nineteen Ninety-Two
R.I.Y.L.

Superchunk, Pixies,
Breeders, Verbena



O.A.R.

In Between Now And Then Lava

If the folky world music outfit Poi Dog Pondering were to persuade jam-band powerhouse Dave Matthews to join them onstage at a Reggae Sunsplash... well, that would be a mess. But that's a basic blueprint eclectic, reggae-ish roots-rock band O.A.R. (Of A Revolution) has been able to build from. Like a lot of jam bands before them, the members of O.A.R. attended University (Ohio State), playing shows on the weekends and summer breaks. Eventually they recorded four D.I.Y. discs that sold nearly 290,000 copies. With their latest release, *In Between Now And Then*, the band

Link
www.ofarevolution.com

File Under
Reggae frat rock meets *Daaaave*

R.I.Y.L.
Jimmie's Chicken Shack, Dave Matthews Band, Rusted Root, Poi Dog Pondering

finally felt it was time to make the leap into deeper waters, landing at Lava Records. Yet longtime fans need not buyer beware, O.A.R. is still rowing the same course, still blending their unique brand of anthem-like rock with workman-like reggae, often melding both into the very same song. Songs like "Revisited" and "Mr. Moon" start as earnest, heartfelt stadium rockers in the vein of Oasis, or the Dave Matthews Band, with chiming guitars, and heart-on-sleeve vocals, but at some point, many songs turn a corner, go sort of askew. And that may be the appeal of O.A.R. When this band leaves charted waters and begins meandering, that's where it's at its best, and where *In Between Now And Then* really sets full sail. >>>JEFF BROWN



PATRICK PARK

Under The Unminding Skies Badman

Patrick Park's songs lure you in like the remains of a torn love letter, laying out an intimacy you feel guilty peering at, but can't look away from. A chiseled former bouncer and bearer of a martial arts black belt, Park sounds surprisingly at home being vulnerable on his debut, *Under The Unminding Skies*, exposing his soul with unpretentious candor. The singer/songwriter made his way to Los Angeles from hometown of Morrison, Colorado in the late '90s, and only had one self-released demo to his credit (2002's *The Basement Tapes*) before befriendng producer Dave Trumfio (Wilco), who helmed this ruggedly pretty

Link
www.patrickpark.net

File Under
Strapping lad with a black and blue heart

R.I.Y.L.
Tim Buckley, Ryan Adams, Tim Easton

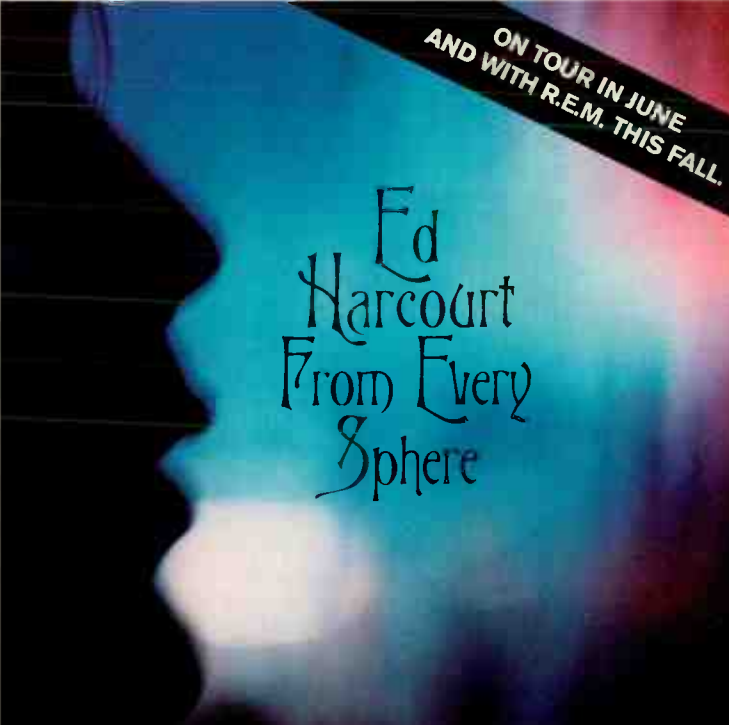
collection. *Skies* shelters four skillfully constructed original confessionals, a cover of Zombie Colin Blunstone's "Caroline Goodbye" and a burly, bluesy rendition of the Carter Family's "Will The Circle Be Unbroken." A few themes run wild, including scratchy dips into melancholy sensuality, nostalgic angst and rumination on the solitary life of the road. "Nothing's Wrong" takes cues from John Denver's wholesome vocal slant and Neil Young's unruffled folk, while "Untitled #1" balances gentle Nick Drake-esque strumming with stronger, raspy slices akin to Tim Easton and Ryan Adams. "Home For Now" rounds out the disc in brisk acoustic guitar and hearty meat-and-potatoes tenor croons. On the whole, *Under The Unminding Skies* is effortlessly beautiful. >>>ANTONIA SANTANGELO



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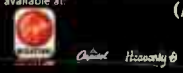

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THE PERNICE BROTHERS

Yours, Mine, and Ours Astmont

Since the Bacharach-on-a-shoestring stylings of *Overcome By Happiness*, Joe Pernice has gradually gravitated toward a lush, polished sound along the lines of Elliott Smith's full band work. Pernice tucks masterfully maudlin lyrics into his sweet melodies with an impossibly clear choirboy voice at odds with his craggy Northeastern looks. The former Scud Mountain Boy invests painstaking effort into words—his last project was a volume of published poetry—and songs like "Water Ban" are among a rare breed that look as good on the printed page as they sound. *Yours,*

Mine, and Ours offers more variety than 2001's *The World Won't End*, including the New Order hook of "Sometimes I Remember" and the deviously power poppy "One Foot In The Grave." Although every track is solid on its own, a mid-album mid-tempo run risks pulling *Yours, Mine, and Ours* into a pleasant-but-nondescript soft-rock haze. Fortunately, Pernice saves his tour de force for closer "Number Two." It begins with sparse strumming and a simple piano figure as Pernice croons, "I hope this letter finds you crying/ It would feel so good to see you cry," among other uncharacteristically vitriolic put-downs. His quintet then builds to the disc's most majestic crescendo, falling back for Pernice to close with "It would be so good to see you," and he's had his way with words again. >>>GLEN SARVADY

Link

www.pernicebrothers.com

File Under

Masterfully maudlin pop.

R.I.Y.L.

Trust-era Elvis Costello, later Elliott Smith, Aimee Mann, Lloyd Cole, Wilco's *Summerteeth*



BRITTA PHILLIPS & DEAN WAREHAM

L'avventura Jetset

EPs are luxury items for consumers and artists both. And who better to explore the form than the master of discretionary income himself, Luna frontman Dean Wareham. A one-off with Luna bassist Britta Phillips, *L'avventura* isn't technically an EP—11 songs clock in around 45 minutes. But it sure feels like one, with six covers sung by Wareham, leaving just two tracks to Phillips' breathy-sexy coo alone. It's a tribute at least to the spirit of the project that the two best cuts here are "Night Nurse" and "Ginger Snaps," originals where they make like the wisp-pop Sonny & Cher. And Tony Visconti's production allows the trebly tinkles and bowed strings to dissipate into the mix like waterworks. By the end, you're happy to get them a beer or rub their feet or anywhere else that needs attention (this is still rock 'n' roll, after all—check out Phillips draining another orgasm from her lovetoy on "Your Baby").

But at times you start to crave some reciprocity perhaps in the form of a motorvated beat. Even at his best, Wareham has been difficult to wake out of his luxuriousness (first song's chorus: "Sleep forever and a day") and a more popping bassist might pull some of the more indulged tracks out of the haze of a death-dry martini and a pack of Gitanes. >>>KEVIN JOHN

Link

www.jetsetrecords.com

File Under

Pale blue guys and gals

R.I.Y.L.

Luna, the Perfect Disaster, the Velvet Underground

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THE ROGERS SISTERS

Purely Evil Troubleman

With its two-color graphics and dot-matrix lyric sheet, the Rogers Sisters' debut has an appealing indie-samizdat feel, as if, for once, the message were more important than the medium. The packaging is only worth mentioning because the music inside has similar charms. The urgently sketchy greenhouse-effect scree "Zero Point" uses handclaps, hiccupy call-and-response breaks and no-tone guitar to create a low-rent companion piece to Afrika Bambaataa's "Planet Rock." *Purely Evil* never actually improves on this terrific opening salvo, but the Brooklyn trio's combination of nervous energy and snotty intelligence is effective throughout, especially when applied to the rock-scene snippiness of "Now They Know" ("See their faces in the NME") and the mock-apatetic title track ("It's a disaster/ As long as it's out of my hands").

Though their skittishness and sarcasm draw on the art-damaged feminism of such half-forgotten New York predecessors as Y Pants and the Cosmopolitans, they're lifted out of the neo-new-wave pack by Laura Rogers' surprisingly non-wooden drumming, and by the way guitarist/sibling Jennifer's potentially annoying chirp is undercut by bassist Miyuki Furtado's Cramps-inflected baritone. With only the vaguely Arabic jam and tea-party lyrics of "(I'm A) Ballerina" seeming tossed-off, these inspired not-so-amateurs have crafted a collection as danceable (and thoughtful) as any of their more-often-boroughmates. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.therogerssisters.com

File Under

Yeah Yeah Yeahs meet

'nyah-nyah-nyah'

R.I.Y.L.

B-52s, Erase Errata, the Gossip



ROONEY

Rooney *Geffen*

God bless new wave-era power-pop, those passionate post-punk guitar-based, keyboard-drenched slices of sugary perfection. Think of it as your parents' emo. Perhaps that's what Los Angeles-based Rooney has to do, for they are far too young to remember the '78-'84 salad days, where guitar-wielding geeks roamed the earth searching for true love and perhaps soundtrack placement in a John Hughes movie. Named for Ferris Bueller's Principal Ed Rooney, the band casts its musical eye to simple, heartfelt rocking goodness. Like Weezer before them, Rooney went

Link

www.rooney-band.com

File Under

Precocious power-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Phantom Planet, OK Go, Spoon, Weezer

to the retro source, tapping real live '80s producers Keith Forsey and Brian Reeves (Berlin and Billy Idol respectively) to record what's turned out to be a stellar debut. That old school know-how is put to good use on this warm, user-friendly rock record. Tracks like "Blue Side" handle power-pop the way Jellyfish used to, with velvet gloves and harmonies to die for. "Stay Away" is West Coast new wave 21st-century style, channeling Translator, the Plimsouls and a bit of Weezer-esque whimsy. Rooney are not merely retread retro: "Sorry Sorry" sounds like early Supergrass or perhaps a modified Spoon; "Popstars" is unclassifiable modern rock with a Brit-pop twist; and the rest of the album has that special upbeat charm that makes this kind of rock timeless, and simply demands repeat plays. >>>JEFF BROWN



ROYAL CITY

Alone At The Microphone *Rough Trade America*

Royal City, fronted by the considerable songwriting talents of Aaron Riche, spent roughly two years touring in fine underground rock guerilla style to support their auspicious lo-fi debut, *At Rush Hour The Cars*, and the fruits of their rugged efforts show on their majestic second offering, *Alone At The Microphone*. This re-release is the Ontario quartet's first CD released domestically in the States, and the gritty production of Riche's haunted songs brims with a fine pop sensibility that escapes the quotidian trappings of the post-alt-country landscape. Memorable

Link

www.threegutrecords.com/rc.html

File Under

Northern solitude

R.I.Y.L.

Palace, Mojave 3, the Band

melodies fill the disc, deftly accompanied by simple yet inventive arrangements. The songs "My Brother Is The Meatman" and "Spacy Basement" feature choruses so catchy you have to stop yourself from hitting repeat, while the ever-present banjo's hollow jangle perfectly underscores the songs' dark themes, although with titles like "Dank Is The Air Of Death And Loathing," you should really have known what was coming. Be forewarned, juxtaposed with the achingly tender music (which manages to sometimes simultaneously invoke both Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly), are Riche's filth- and squalor-filled lyrics—this is blood, shit and tears territory. But owing in part to the strength of that dissonance, *Alone At The Microphone* delivers an honest and refreshingly authentic musical experience with a staying power all its own. >>>KARL WACHTER



S PRCSS

MNML *Frenchkiss*

Eliminating vowels worked wonders for Primal Scream: Dropping pesky letters and amping up the electronics gave them 2000's *XTRMNTR*, one of their best and most varied records. Philly art-punkers S Prcss follow suit with their full-length voweless debut, *MNML*. These 12 tracks jump all over the place: frantic drumming, heavy basslines, fist pumping vocals and noisemakers like turntables and Moogs to round out the mix. Combining such eclectic elements and having them flow together seamlessly is difficult enough, but S Prcss take it a step further by adding blipping

Link

www.frenchkissrecords.com

File Under

Concordant consonants

R.I.Y.L.

Blonde Redhead, Joy Division, Atari Teenage Riot

textures for a feeling of fuzzy electro-warmth, resulting in an album full of (as the title suggests) minimal electronic bliss. Influences such as Joy Division being reborn into New Order are brought to the forefront in "Our Bikes Are Silver. Her Bed Is Hers," and the thumping bass loops and squiggles featured in "100,000 Runners" and "Spring Garden Drive-By" help to create two of the most club-friendly tracks on the album. Wallflowers and dancephobics can take refuge in "Five Boys," which demonstrates that the band can just as easily drop their samplers and pick up guitars. The talent and raw energy that exude from *MNML* provide even more proof that you don't need vowels to RCK. >>>CAROLINE BOROLLA



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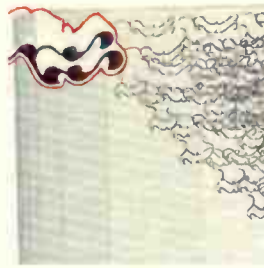
SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN

Let It Rest Saddle Creek

While Conor Oberst bawls and preens his way into the hearts of America's youth, sibling Matt keeps slaving away to little acclaim with Chapel Hill's Sorry About Dresden. (Both would bristle at suggestions of sibling rivalry; their bands have even toured together.) This is partly a matter of timing. If S.A.D. had appeared a decade ago, their traditionally formatted rock might have soaked up their homebase's next-Seattle hype; here and now, their combination of souped-up hooks, rootsy leads and impassioned vocals is deeply unfash-

Link
www.sorryaboutdresden.com
 File Under
Indie-rock without apologies
 R.I.Y.L.
Archers Of Loaf, Superchunk, Soul Asylum

ionable. Still, every song on *Let It Rest* packs these elements as tightly as possible, with inventive guitar interplay between Oberst and co-frontman Eric Roehrig ("The Approaching Dawn") and structural complications above the call of pop-song duty ("Beds And Lawns"). Although both guitarists are equally strong songwriters, Roehrig's singing often sounds forced. (He does get points for sheer desperation on "When You Cared.") Oberst's vocals, though, have an intense but comfortable relation to the music, often recalling Soul Asylum's Dave Pimer. (Told you they were unfashionable.) *Let It Rest* doesn't improve on 2001's *The Convenience Of Indecision*, which incorporated striking acoustic textures. But the band's song-by-song (even measure-by-measure) confusion about whether to be pop, punk or (forgive them) emo adds up to a more-than-solid rock album, though one most likely to be appreciated by Matt Oberst's younger brother's fans' older brothers. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO



TES

x2 Lex

Enter the 39th chamber—that's 36 for Wu-Tang plus three more for Pole's 3. Apt algebra for the (echo) chamber music on NYC MC/producer Tes' debut, x2 (on Warp's hip-hop subsect, Lex). His fractured beats echo, boom, double-back and reverberate like the RZA and Boom Bip playing dueling MPCs at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. With an equally idiosyncratic sing-song delivery (think Nelly and Dose One shotgunning a flugelhorn), Tes matches his Wu-hued sputter with dizzy patter (yeah, we should quote some raps here, but this kid is real hard to follow). While

Link
www.lexrecords.com
 File Under
IDMX
 R.I.Y.L.
Quasimoto, Buck 65, Ghostface Killah

Timbaland and Dre flirted with the hyper-skip percussion of bhangra rhythms, Tes would rather steal the drone, layering each track with a steady hummmmmmmmm, over which his backpacker-Cee-Lo nose-flute of a voice does contrapuntal backflips. On the claustrophobic "Fool Time," Tes loops either a doo-wop group or a gang of Buddhist monks with some slo-mo rattletrap snares, showing the whirr of the clock hands spinnin' round 'n' round 'n' round. On the highlight "New New York," Tes cribs an entire horn-bleatin', string-swellin' key change and vivisects it to fit his new mindstate—matching the song's quasi-triumphant post-9/11 subject matter. Giving new warmth to "grimy," Tes is the killa bee that flew too close to the bug zapper. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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THE TESTORS

Complete Recordings 1976-79 Swami

At first, it sounds like the set up to some elaborate musical hoax. The Testors' *Complete Recordings 1976-79* is a 37-track, two-disc retrospective of a New York punk band that released only one 7-inch throughout its entire career. And by the way: They're the best punk band you've never heard. Sure. But skeptical punks everywhere can rest assured that Testors' frontman Sonny Vincent was a real life punk pioneer, and a listen to this exhilarating and essential collection may convince you that the Testors are, in fact, the best punk band you've ever heard. At the time, Vincent himself

Link
www.swamirecords.com
 File Under
Punk's missing chapter
 R.I.Y.L.
Sonny Vincent, the Stooges, Elvis Costello

was one maladjusted motherfucker whose behavior earned him extended stays in the psych ward and behind bars. But he could sing, play guitar and write songs better than most punks who ever came near a stage. And these tracks, ranging in quality from basic live recordings to hi-fi studio work, prove it. Vincent's powerful voice drives each song home, recalling the low-larynx tones of Elvis Costello, minus the accent. And forget the three-chord cliché. Vincent knew plenty of chords, and the Testors—despite their punk rock aesthetic—made dynamically diverse music complete with melody, harmony and heart. The energy and urgency of this expansive set will undoubtedly demand repeated listens and perhaps earn the Testors their rightful place in the pages of punk history. >>>JASON KUNDRATH



RICHARD THOMPSON

The Old Kit Bag SpinArt/Cooking Vinyl

Richard Thompson is like a world-class soccer player—even when he's mediocre, he can still turn on little flashes of breathtaking brilliance to remind you of his remarkable abilities. And when he's really on form, he's unstoppable. *The Old Kit Bag* might not find him at the peak of 1991's *Rumor And Sigh*, but it's the closest he's come. Backed by the creative double bass of Danny Thompson, drums and a female singer, the sound is lean and rabidly hungry. Thompson immediately sets out his stall with "Gethsemane," a tale of broken spirits, spurred forward by some of his most

expressively stinging guitar work. His long experience helps him transform country ("Jealous Words") and blues ("I've Got No Right To Have It All") material into pieces that stand outside formula, and even turn in something close to a jangling pop song with "She Said It Was Destiny." To be fair, some of the songs—like "First Breath" and "Word Unspoken, Sight Unseen"—appear to be treading water, but when he nails it, as on the barbed-wire "Outside On The Inside" or the mandolin-led "One Door Opens," you know you're in the presence of a true master. There's no one quite like him, drawing music from the roots and bringing it into the sun. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.richardthompson-music.com

File Under

Yes, sensei

R.I.Y.L.

Richard Buckner, John Hiatt,

Lyle Lovett



TREBLE CHARGER

Detox Nettwerk America

Call it the curse of the nice guy next door. You know him, the one that's perfectly pleasant, well-mannered and even a bit good looking, but just too damn squeaky-clean get a good romantic spark burning. Treble Charger knows it well. For most of *Detox*, this Canadian foursome cranks out energetic, occasionally snarling pop rock with so much precision and sheen that its approach borders on formulaic—when it isn't downright mercenary. Trying too hard doesn't always equal an automatic ticket to the cut-out bin, but earnest gumption works a lot better if a band's

Link

www.treblecharger.com

File Under

More hot topics down at the mall

R.I.Y.L.

Eve 6, SR-71, American Hi-Fi

name sounds something like Creed or Nickelback and it trades in something other than chugga-chugga-fueled tales of bewilderment at the opposite sex. The buzzing guitars and Greig Nori's cloud-scraping chorus on "Tired Of It Anyway" seem custom-made for Top 40 radio's new-found love of pop-punk—at least until Nori inadvertently(?) disses Drive-Thru Records' bread-and-butter act by singing, "Can't exchange your new found glory/ Just because you say you're sorry." Yep, that's right. Treble Charger somehow manages what was once thought impossible, making mall-punk look in any way respectable and usurping its spot at the bottom of the rock-cred pecking order. >>>CHAO SWIATECKI



WATCHERS

To The Rooftops Gern Blandsten

They'll tell you, if you're going to rob a house, make sure it's the biggest one on the block. Whether you loot the rich or the less financially endowed, the penalty's the same, pretty much. Alas, Chicago's Watchers missed that lesson, it would seem. On their debut CD, *To The Rooftops*, they're found to be intrepidly thieving from such renowned chart-toppers as A Certain Ratio, Au Pairs and Josef K, proving beyond a doubt that they're not in it for the dosh. That established, this isn't a total exercise in solitariness, as there are a few white-boy Euro-funk blips on the current hipster

radar. But where the Rapture is like a car caught in a tornado, the Watchers are an 80-mph steamroller. More jazz-inflected than punk-propelled, their ferocious funk is as artfully precise as it is razor sharp, and feels rather dangerous as a result. The opening cut, "Gold Standard," finds them sounding like an epileptic Talking Heads; "Strays" is James Brown on no wave and meth; and "Follow Me Follower," a piece of music that is as discomfiting as some of PiL's early work, suggests the roaches of their groove savagery. It's not easy music, to be sure. But after all, these guys are willing to pillage the poor; they're not asking you to like them. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

www.watchersmusic.com

File Under

Funk off

R.I.Y.L.

Eno-period Talking Heads, the Rapture, A Certain Ratio

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7 CURSIVE The Ugly Organ Saddle Creek	32 THE ESSEX GREEN The Long Goodbye Merge	57 THE THERMALS More Parts Per Million Sub Pop
8 THE POSTAL SERVICE Give Up Sub Pop	33 BUZZCOCKS Merge	58 MULL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Us XL
9 BEN HARPER Diamonds On The Inside Virgin	34 NOFX Purgatorio Unconsciousness [EP] Fat Wreck Chords	59 SINGLE FRAME ASHTRAY Burr Burrto Arttest Already Gone
10 AFI Sing The Sorrow Nitro/DreamWorks	35 PLACEBO Sleeping With Ghosts Astralwerks	60 VENUS HUM Big Beautiful Sky MCA
11 THE STRATFORD 4 Love And Distortion Jetset	36 THE FAINT Danse Macabre Remixes Saddle Creek/Astralwerks	61 ESTER DRANG Infinite Keys Jade Tree
12 ANI DIFRANCO Evolve Righteous Babe	37 THE BLOOD BROTHERS Burn Piano Island, Burn ARTISTdirect	62 EL GUAPO Fake French Dischord
13 APHEX TWIN 26 Mixes For Cash Warp	38 BETTIE SERVEERT Log 22 Palomine/Hidden Agenda	63 BOY SETS FIRE Tomorrow Come Today Wind-Up
14 CAVE IN Antenna RCA	39 MC HONKY I Am The Messiah spinART	64 LIGHTNING BOLT Wonderful Rainbow Load
15 DEERHOOF Apple O' SRC/Kill Rock Stars	40 BLACK EYES Black Eyes Dischord	65 SONGS: OHIA The Magnolia Electric Co Secretly Canadian
16 SUPERGRASS Life On Other Planets Island	41 DRESSY BESSY Little Music Telegraph/Kindercore	66 THE NOTWIST Neon Golden Domino
17 ...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD The Secrets Of Elena's Tomb [EP] Interscope	42 PORTASTATIC The Summer Of The Shark Merge	67 TANGIERS Hot New Spirits Sonic Unyon
18 FISCHERSPOONER #1 Capitol	43 FEEDER Comfort In Sound Republic/Universal	68 BUDAPEST Too Good To Hear Republic/Universal
19 CALEXICO Feast Of Wire Touch And Go	44 THE PIECES The Pieces Benchmark	69 ADULT Anxiety Always Ersatz Audio
20 LONGWAVE The Strangest Things RCA	45 THROWING MUSES Throwing Muses 4AD/Beggars Group	70 THE REALISTICS The Realistics Catapult
21 THE ATARIS So Long, Astoria Columbia	46 DANIEL LANOIS Shine Anti/Epitaph	71 MAD CADDIES Just One More Fat Wreck Chords
22 BLACK KEYS Thickfreakness Fat Possum/Epitaph	47 SMOG Supper Drag City	72 THE MIRACLE OF '86 Every Famous Last Word Lakeshore
23 BLUE MAN GROUP The Complex Lava	48 FICTION PLANE Everything Will Never Be OK MCA	73 SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN Let It Rest Saddle Creek
24 THE KILLS Keep On Your Mean Side Rough Trade/Sanctuary	49 THE MINUS 5 Down With Wilco Yep Roc	74 VARIOUS ARTISTS Saddle Creek 50 Saddle Creek
25 FOLK IMPLOSION The New Folk Implosion Imusic/ARTISTdirect	50 TURIN BRAKES Ether Song Source/Astralwerks	75 GLASS CANDY Love Love Love Troubleman Unlimited

5 YEARS AGO

REVEREND HORTON HEAT *Space Heater* (Interscope)
BUFFALO DAUGHTER *New Rock* (Grand Royal)
PROPELLERHEADS *Decksandrumsandrockandroll* (Dreamworks)
NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* (Merge)
TUSCADERO *My Way Or The Highway* (Elektra)

10 YEARS AGO

BUTTHOLE SURFERS *Independent Worm Saloon* (Capitol)
FRANK BLACK *Frank Black* (4AD/Elektra)
BELLY *Star* (4AD/Sire/Reprise)
DINOSAUR JR. *Where You Been* (Sire/WB)
VELOCITY GIRL *Copacetic* (Sub Pop)

HIP-HOP TOP 10

1	MURS The End Of The Beginning Definitive Jux
2	TALIB KWELI Quality Rawkus
3	VARIOUS ARTISTS A Blow To The State Coup d'Etat
4	DJ KRUSH The Message At The Depth Red Ink
5	BEANS Tomorrow Right Now Warp
6	VARIOUS ARTISTS Under The Influence Mixed By Rob Swift Six Degrees
7	THE ROOTS Phrenology MCA
8	OMID Distant Drummer Beneath The Surface
9	COMMON Electric Circus MCA
10	T-LOVE Long Way Back Astralwerks

LOUD ROCK TOP 10

1	THE HAUNTED One Kill Wonder Earache
2	CRADLE OF FILTH Damnation And A Day Red Ink/Epic
3	OLD MAN'S CHILD In Defiance Of Existence Century Media
4	VOIVOD Voivod Chophouse
5	BLACK LABEL SOCIETY The Blessed Hellride Spitfire
6	STRAPPING YOUNG LAD SYL Century Media
7	SWORN ENEMY As Real As It Gets No Name/Elektra
8	THE BLOOD BROTHERS Burn Piano Island, Burn ARTISTdirect
9	EMPEROR Scattered Ashes, A Decade Of Empenal Wrath Candlelight
10	TERROR Lowest Of The Low Bridge 9

RETAIL TOP 25

1	GODSMACK Faceless Universal
2	THE WHITE STRIPES Elephant Third Man/V2
3	LUCINDA WILLIAMS World Without Tears Lost Highway
4	LINKIN PARK Meteor Warner Bros.
5	50 CENT Get Rich Or Die Trying Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
6	JAYHAWKS Rainy Day Music Lost Highway/American
7	YO LA TENGO Summer Sun Matador
8	LISA MARIE PRESLEY To Whom It May Concern Capitol
9	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me Blue Note
10	EVANESCENCE Fallen Wind-Up
11	COLDPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol
12	BEN HARPER Diamonds On The Inside Virgin
13	SEAN PAUL Dutty Rock VP/Atlantic
14	R. KELLY Chocolate Factory Jive
15	CHER The Very Best Of Cher Rhino
16	GINUWINE The Senior Epic
17	AUDIOSLAVE Audioslave Epic
18	SCARFACE Balls And My Word Rap-A-Lot
19	AFI Sing The Sorrow Nitro/DreamWorks
20	SOUNDTRACK Chicago Epic
21	LIL' KIM La Bella Mafia Atlantic
22	DIPLOMATS Diplomatic Immunity Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
23	FABOLOUS Street Dreams Elektra
24	JAMES TAYLOR Best Of Warner Bros.
25	VARIOUS ARTISTS Now That's What I Call Music! 12 Universal



#1 RPM
APEX TWIN
26 MIXES FOR CASH WARP



#1 LOUD ROCK
THE HAUNTED
ONE KILL WONDER EARACHE



#1 RETAIL
GODSMACK
FACELESS
UNIVERSAL

RPM TOP 10

1	APEX TWIN 26 Mixes For Cash Warp
2	P'TAAH Staring At The Sun Ubiquity
3	JORI HULKONEN Different PIAS America/F-Communications
4	WEEKEND PLAYERS Pursuit Of Happiness WSM
5	FUNKY LOWLIVES Cartouche Stereo Deluxe
6	FISCHERSPOONER #1 Capitol
7	DJ KRUSH The Message At The Depth Red Ink
8	JAGA JAZZIST Animal Chin [EP] GSL
9	BOBBY HUGHES COMBINATION Nhu Golden Era Stereo Deluxe
10	CODEC AND FLEXOR Tubed Emperor Norton

JAZZ TOP 10

1	BAD PLUS These Are The Vistas Columbia
2	DAVE DOUGLAS Freak In Bluebird/RCA Victor
3	WAYNE SHORTER Alegria Verve
4	MATT WILSON QUARTET Humidity Palmetto
5	SCOLOHOFO Oh! Capitol/Blue Note
6	CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE BAND Vertical Vision Warner Bros.
7	CHARLIE HUNTER QUINTET Right Now Move Ropeadope
8	SCOTT AMENDOLA BAND Cry Cryptogramophone
9	FRED HERSCH TRIO Live At The Village Vanguard Palmetto
10	STEVE TURRE One4J: Paying Homage To J.J. Johnson Telarc

JUST OUT

MAY 27

CALIFONE Deceleration Two *Perishable*
DECONSTRUCTION MADE SIMPLE Terror Stricken
Youth A-F
DIRTBIKE ANNIE Show Us Your Demons *Dirtnap*
ERASE ERRATA Dancing Machine (Remixes)
Troubleman Unltd
ESCAPE ENGINE Celebrity Role Model *Fidelity*
EX MODELS Zoo Psychology *French Kiss*
JOAN OF ARC In Rape Fantasy And Terror Sex We
Trust *Jade Tree*
KILL ME TOMORROW Skin's Getting Weird *Gold
Standard Labs*
LATIN PROJECT Nueva Musica *Electric Monkey*
LED ZEPPELIN How The West Was Won *Atlantic*
LIGHT THE FUSE/TRANSISTOR TRANSISTOR
Bullet Train Of Bad Ideas *Level Plane*
LIKE YOUNG Art Contest *Parasol*
LIMECELL It's Gonna Get Ugly *TKO*
MEA CULPA They Put You In A Mask *Empty*
PARTY OF ONE Caught In The Blast *Fat
Cat/Bubblecore*
NEIL PERRY Lineage Situation *Level Plane*
MEGAN REILLY Arc Of Tessa *Carrot Top*
STRIKER No Bear On The Tracks *Six Weeks*
U-ZIQ Billious Psth *Planet Mu/Bubblecore*
THE VANISHING Songs For Psychotic Children
Gold Standard Labs

JUNE 3

JOHN ARCH A Twist Of Fate *Metal Blade*
ARMOR FOR SLEEP Dream To Make Believe
Equal Vision
CANNED HEAT Friends In The Can *Fuel 2000*
DEAD MEADOW Shivering Kings And Others *Matador*
EELS Shootenanny! *DreamWorks*
ADAM C. FORKNER ((Version)) *K*
FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE Welcome Interstate
Managers *S-Curve*
FREDDIE FOXXX The Konexion *BBE/Rapster*
JUDY GARLAND A Star Is Born *Columbia/Legacy*
GARRISON The Silhouette *Revelation*
GIVE UP THE GHOST Background Music *Equal Vision*
RAY HEINDORF AND ORCHESTRA A Tribute To
James Dean *Columbia/Legacy*
JAMES KIRK You Can Make It, If You Boogie *Marina*
LAST DAYS OF APRIL Ascend To The Stars *Crank!*
CHRIS LEE Cool Rock *MISRA*
MARILYN MONROE Let's Make Love *Columbia/Legacy*
NONE MORE BLACK File Under Black *Fat Wreck Chords*
OUTRAGEDUS CHERRY Supernatural Equinox
Rainbow Quartz
PARADISE ISLAND Paradise Island *Dim Mak*
SAXON SHORE Four Months Of Darkness *Broken
Factory*
COREY STEVENS Bring On The Blues *Fuel 2000*
STRUNG OUT Live In A Dive *Fat Wreck Chords*
SUGAR RAY In The Pursuit Of Leisure *Atlantic*
THROW RAG Desert Shores *BYO*
UNSEEN Explode *BYO*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Liberation Songs To Benefit
PETA *Fat Wreck Chords*
VARIOUS ARTISTS sNOISsES: The Skateboarder
Sessions *Sessions*
VARIOUS ARTISTS sNOISsES Vol. 2 Sessions
VARIOUS ARTISTS Terminal Sales *Sub Pop*

JUNE 10

ATOMSMASHERS Drop The Bomb *Rip Off*
BABYFACE Essential Babyface *Columbia/Legacy*
THE BANGLES Essential Bangles *Columbia/Legacy*
CHARLIE DANIELS Essential Charlie Daniels
Columbia/Legacy
MILES DAVIS Love Songs 2 *Columbia Legacy Jazz*

DR. HOOK Essential Dr. Hook *Columbia/Legacy*
DAN FOGELBERG Essential Dan Fogelberg
Columbia/Legacy
GRANDDADDY Sunday V2
HEART Alive In Seattle *Epic/Legacy*
LPG The GadFly *Uprok*
SUSHEELA RAMAN Love Trap *Narada World*
REDBONE Essential Redbone *Columbia/Legacy*
SIEDAH Siedah *Omtown*
FRANK SINATRA Essential Frank Sinatra
Columbia/Legacy
JIMMIE VAUGHAN Essential Jimmie Vaughan
Columbia/Legacy

JUNE 17

BORN/DEAD Born/Dead *Prank*
BRAND NEW Deja Entendu *Razor and Tie*
CAPTURE THE FLAG Start From Scratch *Go Kart*
CLUB 8 Strangely Beautiful *Hidden Agenda*
COMETS ON FIRE Comets On Fire *Alternative
Tentacles*
CRITERIA En Garde *Initial*
DEAD OR ALIVE Evolution - The Hits *Epic/Legacy*
DEBASHISH BHATTACHARYA AND BOB BROZMAN
Mahima *World Music Network*
DUVALL Racine *Asian Man*
EASTMOUNTAINSOUTH Eastmountainsouth
DreamWorks
FASTS Fasts *Sound Pollution*
FROM MONUMENT TO MASSES From Monument
To Masses *Dim Mak*
GITS Frenching The Bully *Broken Rekids*
HELLA Bitches Ain't Shit But Good People
Suicide Squeeze
ILYA Poise Is The Greater Architect *Second Nature*
KADSPLOIT Cryonics *Level Plane*
MAD PARADE Bombs And The Bible *Dr. Strange*
MAGIC MAGICIANS Magic Magicians *Suicide
Squeeze*
MONEEN Are We Really Happy With Who We Are
Right Now? *Vagrant*
MR. DAVID VINER Mr. David Viner *Dim Mak*
WILLIE NELSON Honeysuckle Rose; To Lefty From
Willie; Willie Nelson And Family Live *Columbia/Legacy*
WILLIE NELSON WITH RAY PRICE San Antonio
Rose *Columbia/Legacy*
DIL Electric Tongue *Level Plane*
PAINT IT BLACK CVA *Jade Tree*
WILLIAM PARKER Scrapbook *Thirsty Ear*
PELE Elephant *Polyviny!*
PINBACK Office EP *Absolutely Kosher*
QUINTRON Are You Ready For An Organ Solo?
Three One G
SIGHTINGS Absolutes *Load*
SOUTH With The Tides *Kinetic*
STATISTICS Statistics *Jade Tree*
TELESCOPES As Approved By The The Committee
Committee To Keep Music Evil
THIS DAY FORWARD In Response *Equal Vision*
TORAI TORAI TORRANCE! Cynics Nightmare *Militia*
TOYS THAT KILL Control The Sun *Recess*
VACANCY Vacancy A-F
VIRUS NINE Blastin' Away A-F
VON BONDIES Take A Heart *Dim Mak*
WEIRODS We Got The Neutron Bomb *Frontier*

JUNE 24

BRIAN CULBERTSON Come On Up *Warner Bros.*
EXTOL Idiosyncratic Synergy *Solid State*
FIGURE FOUR Suffering The Loss *Solid State*
GRAND INCREDIBLE Gi-Gantic *Tooth And Nail*
HIGH STRUNG Adult Situations *Tee Pee*
JS Ice Cream *DreamWorks*
RAMSEY LEWIS/NANCY WILSON Simple
Pleasures *Narada Jazz*
THE LOCUST Plague Soundscapes *Anti*

Steady Throbbin' continued from page 38

Hour 19:

The Factory, Manchester, 05.19.79

Did I put on a copy of the Melvins' *Lysol* by accident? White noise is shaking hands with Black Sabbath. The intrepid journalist, however, is about to be shaking hands with Ralph.

Ah, invoking Fugs lyrics. Not really relevant past the whole boho-pomo art steez, but good for getting a kick over the fact that, at 23, I'm smart enough to spot Fugs lyrics.

Hour 20:

Guild Hall, Northampton, 05.26.79

This is the seventh version of "Hamburger Lady" I've sat through in the last nine hours. The lyrics are apparently about a burn victim described in a cryptic letter from an art-pal, but why not imagine this mysterious hamburger lady as some sort of meat-as-decay Upton Sinclair thing? Maybe just an ode to someone who really likes hamburgers? Maybe Clara Peller!

Hour 21:

Y.M.C.A., London, 08.03.79

Boy, they loved playing "Hamburger Lady."

Hour 22:

Butler's Wharf, London, 12.23.79

TG is playing a feed over the PA which sounds like a graphic one-way phone-sex conversation. Everything makes sense.

Hour 23:

Fan Club, Leeds, 02.24.80

I've convinced myself this project is art, because I call it "art." And soon you shall be reading about it, not just reading it, as it will surely catapult me into the upper echelon of rock-criticism. "Like Lester meets Hunter Thompson!" one adoring critic will shout! And I will casually reply, with a tactfully dry wit (employing only the appropriate amount of dryness, and of course lacquered with self-deprecation, as to not allow a window into the secret, unending confidence that fuels such easily fuckupable projects as this)... [Ed note: Where Weingarten would have casually replied something, he merely trails off.] Maybe dancing will help.

Hour 24:

Scala Cinema, London, 02.29.80

Intrepid journalist who spent last 23 hours writing many overly convoluted lines and using unnecessary vocabulary for last 24 hours—now reduced to literally drooling on self. Poetic justice?

The late hours leave me torn between self-deprecation and delusions of grandeur. Will anyone get the joke if I continue to use my own self-absorption as a parody of rock-writing's inherent self-absorption? Will anyone even read this far?

Press Release-May 1, 2028

In honor of the 25th anniversary of CMJ's landmark "Steady Throbbin'," Mute Recordings/Publishing/Vegan Cuisine is proud to announce the release of *What About Throb?: The Complete Enduro-Journalism (s)Crapbook*, a chronicle of the sleep-deprived writings of the late Christopher R. Weingarten, who brought a new dimension of arrogance to the already painfully self-centered and clumsy world of professional rock writing. (Weingarten, as you may recall, died in 2008, choking to death on his own bile and tears while reviewing *Bee Thousand-Million-Bazillion*, a 726-disc Guided By Voices retrospective).

Endnotes: The editors probably wanted to see more crazy antics, so the author humbly presents the following fictionalized account, perhaps for use in a drop-quote: "Oh shit. The fucking fridge is talking to me! No mortal should suffer such cruel, unyielding torture! What? No, I will not kill for you, fridge." **MMM**

If you'd like to read 1,500 more words of this sprawling twaddle, e-mail Christopher at cweingarten@cmj.com. He'd love to hear from you.

"Hottie coming your way."

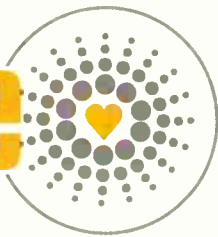
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Heart

STORY: KARA ZUARO • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

Aunt Casi's royal blue eyeliner pencil was poised centimeters from my pupil. I was in third grade, in the midst of a math unit on the metric system, and preparing to rock Central Boulevard Elementary School's student body out of their pre-pubescent minds. Casi, a 17-year-old '80s goddess, instructed me to stare at the ceiling and refrain from blinking as she dragged the pencil across the rim of my lower eyelid. I looked up at my slightly older, wiser aunt Erin for support. "Rock stardom hurts," she said.

My aunts and I loved MTV, and when we saw Heart's "Alone" video, I couldn't believe how much the Wilson sisters looked like my best blonde friend, Kerry, and me. My aunts wholeheartedly encouraged us to reinterpret the song at our upcoming lip-sync contest, even though we were but puny, spastic pre-teens.

On the night of the show, the efforts of Casi, Erin and our moms left us with wildly crimped elbow-length bouffants, eyelashes curled to our temples and baggy shirts cinched at the waist with thick, sparkly belts. I had bracelets over my sleeves and a silver chain around my neck thick as my arm. It was 1987, and my hot-to-trot aunts needed only remove these accessories from their own bodies to dress me.

We took our act seriously. We felt the seething misery of unrequited love, the thorny surrender of female independence at the hands of some elusive hunk. We knew the tense silence of the telephone, or at least were capable of imagining it. Kerry dropped her chin to her chest with every "Alone," and I closed my eyes and shook my head earnestly as we waited for a guitar crescendo and heart-wrenching scream to shatter the soft ballad. We threw each other a cautionary glance before jumping (almost) simultaneously, rushing to the edge of the stage, waving our hands in the air and collapsing to our knees, well-crimped manes bobbing upside down into the crowd. The weight of our lacquered hair made us both sure we'd fall, but we held on, just like Ann and Nancy would've.

Heart's breakthrough hits, "Magic Man" and "Barracuda," came out before I was born, but *Bad Animals* arrived just in time for

my early-onset angst. In my cruel little world, my teacher punished the time table-challenged by sitting them under her desk and threatening to push in the chair, my puppy had a lethal case of heartworms, and my friend Jennifer revealed that her mother gave birth to her infant brother through her butt, dispelling my fanciful notion that babies miraculously popped through their mommy's bellybutton with a sound akin to the pop-fizz of an opened can of Orange Crush. Everything I knew was wrong, but with *Bad Animals* on my Walkman, everything felt right.

"All I Wanna Do Is Make Love To You" came out in the spring of fifth grade, right around our gym teacher's girls-only sex talk. Our parents signed a waiver before we could attend, so I knew it'd be

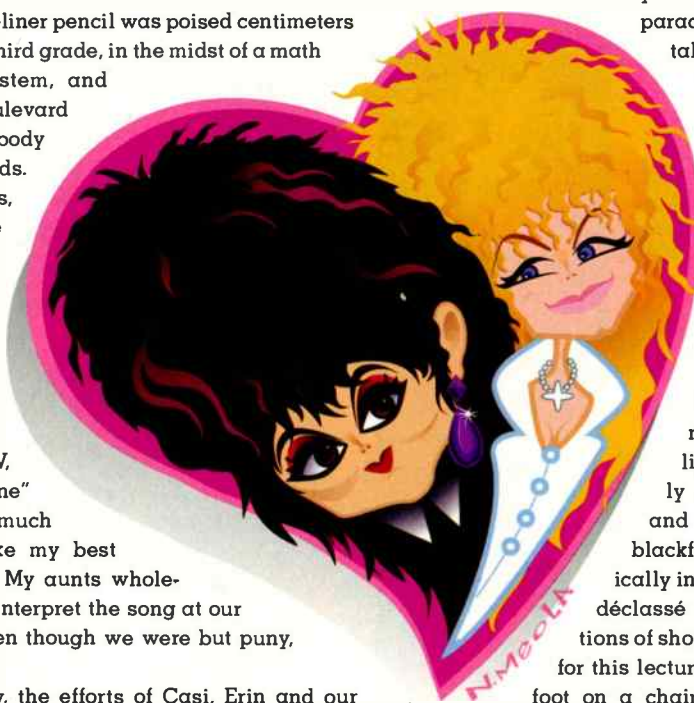
really freakin' good. Unfortunately, a pink-parachute outfitted middle-aged woman talking about "intercourse" wasn't sexy or fun. I retreated into my own secret world of rock 'n' roll and hoped that Kerry could hear the blast of "All I Wanna Do" in her head, like I did. The lyrics were cryptic at first, "I am the flower you are the seed/ We walked in the garden, we planted a tree," but paired with the slide-projected blue diagrams, it all started to make sense.

I was sitting near Jennifer, baby-birthing know-it-all. She'd nudged her way into winning every lip-sync contest to date—with a highly choreographed song from "Annie" and a Motown favorite performed in blackface (which was not only vastly politically incorrect, but obviously engineered by déclassé soccer moms). Her maudlin renditions of showtunes and oldies didn't prepare her for this lecture. As soon as Ms. Liebowitz put one foot on a chair in fully-clothed demonstration of what one does with those peculiar pink tubes called "tampons," Jennifer leaned her curly head out the emergency window, and spewed her guts down the wall of the building.

The tense classroom air unclenched with a collective sigh. Jen's vomit released our spiraling, TV-induced thoughts of oncoming alien transmutations: Boobs, pimples, PMS, that commercial where the lady says, "Mom, do you douche?" Sweet mother of Always Ultra Plus, what was about to happen to us? I wished for two tickets to NeverNeverLand, any anecdote to protect Kerry and I from the evil forces of puberty.

But, our soul sisters who'd been through it all before—Erin and Casi, Ann and Nancy—ended up looking way hotter than before. I hummed Heart's "Wild Child" as the janitors' ammonia-drenched mops rushed in, and amidst red-faced classmates making desperate efforts to conceal the box of Tampax getting passed around, I decided growing up might not be so bad after all.

Brooklyn-based freelance writer Kara Zuaro went from interning for CMJ to working with former president Bill Clinton. (Make your own fun with that one.)





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(Assuming your roommate
is ambitious enough
to write it down.)

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