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Fresh sounds for '99 from BETH ORTON and SLEATER-KINNEY, strummy stuff from VIC CHESNUTT and ROBYN HITCHCOCK, hip-hop/drum 'n' bass from HIVE, glam-styled punk from SHUDDER TO THINK, soul-funk-etc. fusion from LIQUID SOUL, twangy Brit-pop from SCOTT 4, melodic punk from 764-HERO, updated jazz from BRAD MEHLDAU, insurgent bluegrass from the BAD LIVERS and whole lots more.

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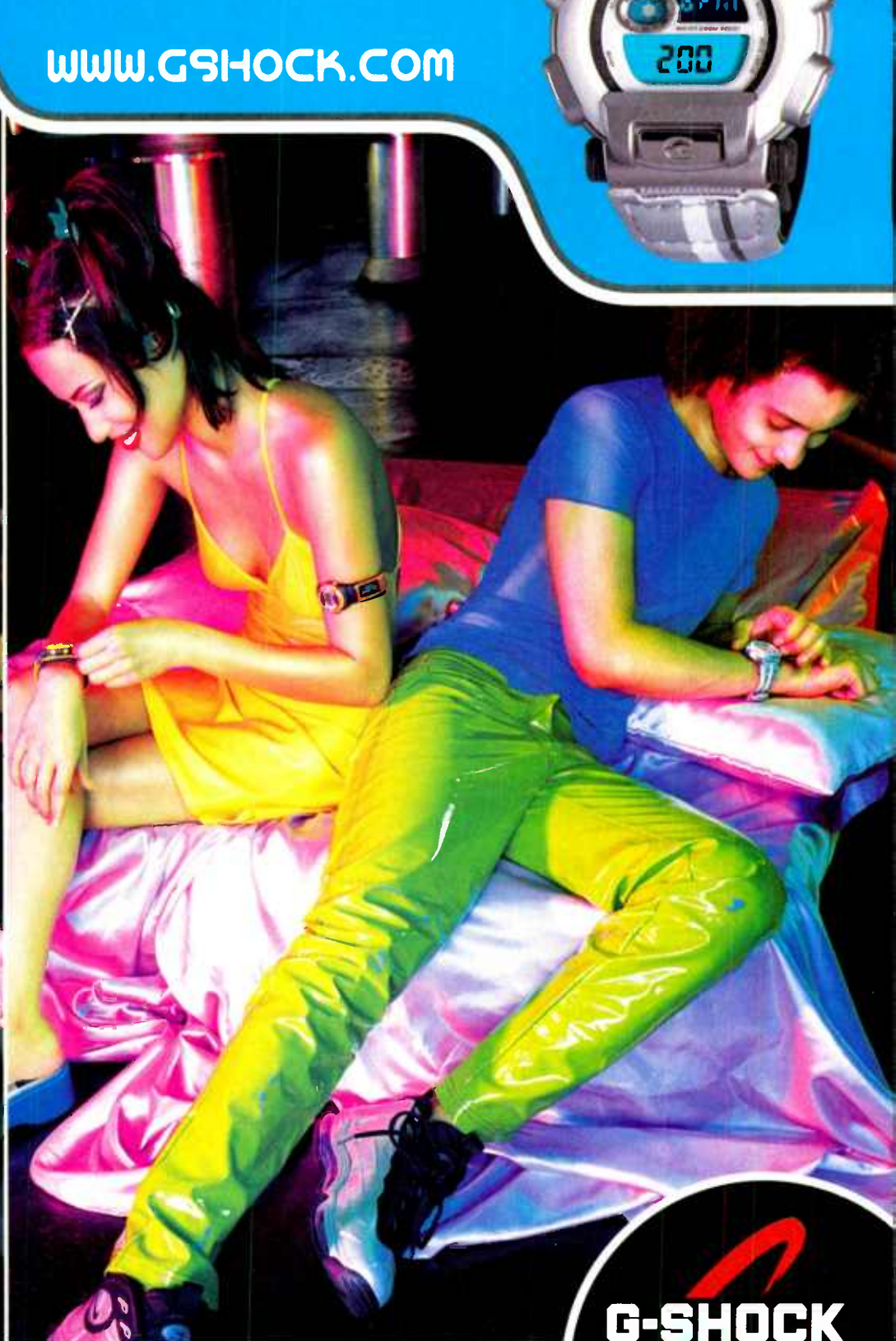
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HERE: BETH ORTON PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIRANDA PENN TURIN

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Correction: The photo of Marilyn Manson on page 56 of the December issue was taken by Zoren Gold.



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Diamanda in the rough

In your all-to-brief article on the incredibly noteworthy Diamanda Galás (*New Music Monthly* #62, October '98), Kurt B. Reighley notes the cover "25 Minutes To Go" as being a Johnny Cash tune. In fact, it's a Shel Silverstien number. I wonder what prompted Mr. Reighley to write such an incorrect statement when the liner notes clarify this so obviously. Hope you make mention of that in your "corrections" line, and that you think it's worth mentioning. Oh, and Rob Zombie on the cover? Yeah, uh, okay. Plus, you neglect to point out that there is indeed a haven for college radio fans [in San Diego] on commercial radio in your Localzine section. Sure, it's late on Sunday nights, but it's there. "Subject To Change" is its name and it resides on the 105.3 frequency, Sundays 9 p.m. to midnight. Hey, at least you found it necessary to point out the Andrew Cunanan/Heaven's Gate cult activities. What are you, *The Globe* or a music monthly?

Chuck P.
San Diego, CA

If Chuck found our writer, Mark Woodlief, referencing two of the biggest San Diego news stories of the past year in his *Localzine* profile of the city to be a shade too tabloid, how will he feel once we print my personal account and shocking expose, "I Went To College With Calista Flockhart And I Never Once Saw Her In The Dining Hall"? Just in case he plans to comfort himself in the minutiae of his favorite artists, let's clear up his initial point: Kurt B. Reighly, our esteemed editor-at-large, wrote that on her latest disc, Galás covers songs "popularized by Mahalia Jackson, Johnny Cash and even the Supremes," which isn't the same as saying that Cash or any of those artists wrote the songs Galás performs, only that the songs are most often associated with those artists.

>>> Ed.

Lusty letters

I've been listening to CMJ since '94, when the magazine was a bit bigger than the CD and looked a lot less slick. Next to the CD, I just after the letters page. The vitriol flows freely and the editor gives as good as he/she gets. Such unbridled rage, as some must print with their fist, punctuating their anger with "yer a bunch of fuckin' sell outs," or "you wouldn't know punk country if it came up and bit yer fat ass!" Being a mild and neutral Canadian, I must admit that I cringe a bit but there is a part of me that takes great vicarious pleasure from all this fury. All

these angry writers have done their research and have firmly staked out their cultural territory... let no ordinary mortal know more about emo, ska, flanged-out basement sofa punk, or electronica on her harmonica than they do. Being an old fart (45), I kinda watch from the sidelines. It reminds me of the arguments decades ago on the merits of Gentle Giant versus Keith Emerson's *The Nice*. Hearing Hendrix for the first time and thinking very few have sounded as fresh and unshackled since then.

Every month I get you in the mail and listen to the whole thing, and love 80% of what I hear. Pretty good batting average for the buck paid. The artists you review haven't sold out, hell in some cases haven't sold any product yet, but they will benefit from an airing on your CD. I figure anybody who can make room for both Willie Nelson and Chainsuck on the same disc can't possibly be accused of having their ears up their rectum. It's simply music, kind of like the ultimate democracy; you take what you like and leave the rest. Well I'm tired now, I must get some sleep to prepare myself for another bitter Canadian winter.

John Van Esch
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Thanks for the kind letter. But the *Barenaked Ladies* have left you all with a lot of explaining to do. >>> Ed.

Pull up to the Bumper

I never considered myself a fan of punk rock. While my musical tastes have always been pretty varied (Medeski, Martin & Wood, Pavement, Radiohead, Pharcyde, to name a few) I never identified with the "everyone's fucked 'cept me" sentiment or the redundant and unimaginative chord progressions. That is until your August issue's feature on Rancid piqued my interest and forced me to purchase the CD. Punk with a message above and beyond "fuck off!" and a myriad of musical styles and irresistible riffs. Wow! *Life Won't Wait* is one of the best albums I've ever heard and has to be considered a landmark album in the canon of punk rock (though as stated above, I know nothing of the genre). Thanks for turning me on... to good music.

Bumper Carroll
Chicago, IL

First the lust thing, and now that creepy ellipses after "turning me on"—what the hell's going on here? I knew that the mag was good bathroom reading, but gentlemen, please. >>> Ed.

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CMJ: The Year In Music: 1979

1. Elvis Costello & The Attractions
Accidents Will Happen
2. The Records
Starry Eyes
3. XTC
Life Begins At The Top
4. Patti Smith Group
Frederick
5. Marianne Faithfull
Broken English
6. Buzzcocks
Everybody's Happy Nowadays
7. Iggy Pop
Five Foot One
8. Lene Lovich
Lucky Number
9. The Boomtown Rats
Rat Trap
10. The Stranglers
The Raven
11. The B-52's
Rock Lobster
12. Blondie
Heart Of Glass

CMJ: The Year In Music: 1980

1. Madness
One Step Beyond
2. Ramones
Do You Remember Rock 'N' Roll Radio?
3. Pretenders
Brass In Pocket (I'm Special)
4. Gary Numan
Cars
5. The Teardrop Explodes
When I Dream
6. The Brains
Money Changes Everything
7. Gang Of Four
I Found That Essence Rare
8. Dead Kennedys
Holiday In Cambodia
9. Public Image Ltd.
Poptones
10. Devo
Whip It
11. The B-52's
Private Idaho
12. Ultravox
Vienna

CMJ: The Year In Music: 1981

1. Psychedelic Furs
Pretty In Pink
2. Adam And The Ants
Antmusic
3. db's
Big Brown Eyes
4. Black Flag
Rise Above
5. X
We're Desperate
6. The Specials
Ghost Town
7. Siouxsie And The Banshees
Spellbound
8. Grace Jones
Warm Leatherette
9. UB40
Tyler
10. Spandau Ballet
To Cut A Long Story Short
11. Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark
Souvenir
12. Laurie Anderson
O Superman (For Massenet)

CMJ: The Year In Music: 1982

1. Dexys Midnight Runners
Come On Eileen
2. Madness
Our House
3. XTC
Senses Working Overtime
4. The Jam
A Town Called Malice
5. Soft Cell
Tainted Love
6. Romeo Void
Never Say Never
7. Waitresses
I Know What Boys Like
8. Pete Shelley
Homosapien
9. ABC
The Look Of Love (Part One)
10. Haircut One Hundred
Love Plus One
11. Birthday Party
Nick The Stripper
12. Richard And Linda Thompson
Shoot Out The Lights

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BY TOM LANHAM

ROBINSON, THIRD FROM LEFT

STEP ASIDE

CHRIS ROBINSON AND THE BLACK CROWES RETURN TO SHAKING YOUR MONEYSMAKER

Wearing flared hip-hugging jeans, a tacky '70s shirt open to the navel, countless rings and lucky-charm necklaces, and huge wrap-around shades, Chris Robinson is looking every bit the hard-partying, decidedly old-school rock star this sunny Hollywood afternoon. But he's not onstage—this is what the showy Black Crowes frontman wears around his house on an average day. His actress gal-pal is cooking in the kitchen; his tubby pet tabby Lennie lolls around the back porch, swatting at the occasional insect. Robinson pads barefoot to a poolside table, clears away the books he's been reading (Ian Banks, a Baudelaire biography), and immediately dives into his pet peeve: bootlicking corporate toadies who have the audacity to call themselves rock 'n' rollers. To them, he growls, music is just another occupation.

"But this is not a job—this is my fuckin' life!" snaps Robinson, who—with his guitar-playing brother Rich—has just put the finishing touches on *By Your Side* (American-Columbia), the best Crowes disc to date and one of the nastiest rock records in recent memory. The album follows hot on the heels of *Sho' Nuff*, a Crowes box set featuring their four previous efforts, remastered, plus a

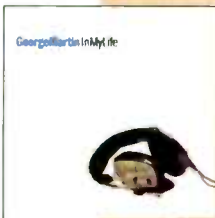
bonus live CD. "To me, success is not about fame and money," the shag-haired beanpole of a singer continues. "Game show hosts have fame and money, and who wants to fuckin' have dinner with them? It's about having the freedom to actually do what you want to do in one lifetime. People say 'Rock 'n' roll—what is there to rebel against?'" he sniffs dryly. "Every fuckin' thing! Whaddaya mean, 'What is there to rebel against?' Your fuckin' apathy, for even suggesting that! My band is my freedom, and when we were teenagers, man, we got together to make a sound that we liked. And the freedom was, no one could tell us what to do. And it still feels that way to us."

Robinson flails his bracelet-jangling arms so much on this rant that Lennie thinks it's playtime and saunters over for a workout. He gets scratched by his master's foot instead. The Crowe calms down for a minute. Like the Faces' *Nod Is As Good As A Wink (To A Blind Horse)*, or even the Stones' definitive *Exile On Main Street*, *By Your Side* slithers through mud-gooey R&B on its trailer-trash belly, taking a nip out of blues ("Only A Fool"), gospel ("Go Tell The Congregation"), and true-blue soul ("Welcome To The Good Times,"

(Continued on page 72)

WEIRD RECORD OF THE MONTH

Sir **George Martin** claims that *In My Life* (Echo/MCA) is his last record. The legendary Beatles producer may not have a choice after people hear what he's let happen to a dozen Fab Four classics. Past Beatles interpreters like



William Shatner have at least provided the world with humor, but *In My Life* is almost too syrupy sad to be funny. Among the tracks that add insult to infamy: Goldie Hawn singing "A Hard

Day's Night," the ubiquitous Celine Dion wispig her way through "Here There And Everywhere," and Sean Connery reading "In My Life." Aside from Martin's own arrangement of his "Pepperland Suite," perhaps the only other track that will keep Beatles fans from calling for his head is Jim Carrey's bold and loony take on "I Am The Walrus." Carrey is really the only star here who lets his hair down to entertain. Idea for future Weird Record: Carrey covers all of Shatner's *Transformed Man*.

>>> Steve Ciabattoni

LABEL PROFILE

His grandfather J. Paul Getty started an oil empire; Peter Getty—an avid record collector—just wanted a small label that put out eclectic new music, so he started **Emperor Norton** in 1996 in Los Angeles. "Look at groups like the Cardigans from Sweden or Pizzicato Five from Japan," says Steve Pross, label manager. "There is an undercurrent of pop music all over the world and he just wants to tap into it." Combining the enthusiasm for music of a traditional indie label with the capital clout of a major, Emperor Norton recently became a home for Japanese pop stars Fantastic Plastic Machine and Takako Minekawa, who released albums on the label last September and November, respectively. But, says Pross, "I think we'll be viewed as more of an international label," noting that upcoming releases include *Pop Romantique*, a covers album of French pop songs, and an album called *All In* from the Dutch easy listening/DJ duo Arling & Cameron. Visit the company's website at www.emperornorton.com.

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HERE COMES THE SON JESUS ALEMAÑY AND ¡CUBANISMO! BRING CUBAN ROOTS TO AMERICA

When a record like Ry Cooder's *Buena Vista Social Club* goes platinum, it's apparent that Cuban music is enjoying its highest profile since the mambo kings of the 1950s. ¡Cubanismo!, the group led by trumpeter Jesús Alemañy, has helped kick in the zeitgeist with three tremendous albums, the most recent of which is *Reencarnacion* (Hannibal/Rykodisc). His collective draws on old Cuban styles, most particularly son, the main song and dance form of Cuba, and the root of salsa, keeping it hotter than the Caribbean sun, both on record and on its frequent tours.

Alemañy trained at the conservatory in Cuba, but his real apprenticeship came when he learned the traditional styles from famed instrumentalist Lazaro Herrera, before going on to join Sierra Maestra, a young band that followed the classic traditions, at the age of 15.

"I started professionally with Sierra Maestra," Alemañy explains. "But eventually I had a different musical idea. I wanted to extend my possibilities as a soloist, and to have a band that could play any style of Cuban music." That was ¡Cubanismo!. "And so far it seems to have worked. In the last two years we've played together so much that the communication between us has grown. Basically, the band on this new album is the touring band. Not all, because there are 20 people on the record. [Pianist] Alfredo Rodriguez isn't with us any more—he's doing his own album—but we have a great young musician, Ignacio 'Nachito' Herrera. Every track is a different rhythm, a different concept, without losing the flavor and the typical sound of Cuban music."

Why, you have to wonder, is Cuban music enjoying such a resurgence at the moment? The popularity of swing has obviously helped, but that's not the only lure.

"People have the chance to hear it," Alemañy muses. "It's being promoted. You can read about it, hear it on the radio. And without that, most people aren't going to know anything about Cuban music. Secondly, there's the energy, and the soul, of the music. We feel it, we transmit it to our audiences, and all Cuban bands do. It's very powerful. There are also the rhythms, which are a very important part of our culture. People are looking for the roots of Latin music. There are rhythms that have been popular over the last 50 years—the mambo, the rumba, the cha-cha—and their roots are in Cuba. And the message we pass on, apart from educating people about our music, is that this is to be enjoyed, to dance and sing. Maybe it'll also help with Cuba's political position in the world, help reunite families and people."

>>> Chris Nickson

PLAY MY SONG

NOT EVEN A BROKEN NECK COULD KEEP NUMBER ONE CUP AWAY FROM AN ALL-STAR CHICAGO TRIBUTE TO ITS NEW RECORD

"When I was lying on the ice not able to move, I quickly started thinking about what I was going to miss if I wound up paralyzed," recalls Number One Cup guitarist Seth Cohen. "My first thoughts were about the band and how we wouldn't be able to tour to support this record. Now I can't wait to go on tour. I feel really bad that I delayed our plans by breaking my neck."

Cohen broke the third and fourth vertebra in his neck while playing hockey with his brother, and was released from a Connecticut hospital just in time to attend the record release party celebrating his band's new CD, *People People Why Are We Fighting?* (Flydaddy). Luckily, the band's inability to perform didn't ruin the event: It was in the plans all along for Seth, drummer Michael Lenzi, guitarist Patrick O'Connell and new bassist Kurt Volk to sit back, drink homemade beer, and watch a dozen notorious Chicago groups cover one song apiece from *People People*, in sequential order. "It's a pretty indulgent thing to sit there and watch all these other bands play your songs," laughs Seth.

Actually, this wasn't the first time Number One Cup had drawn on this idea. The band had done the same thing in 1995 for its first album, *Possum Trot Plan*. "We tried to think of something better, but we couldn't come up with anything," Cohen admits. "Besides, Califone was great and to see Eleventh Dream Day play one of our songs was quite a thrill. Casey Rice [as Designer] did a computer-based remix of 'Unison Bends' and that was really cool, too."

Number One Cup's novel record release party might attract some notice, but the guitar-based indie-rock ensemble, which has been together since 1993 and released four CDs of its off-kilter pop, earns favorable comparisons to everyone from Pavement to Superchunk and the Flaming Lips. And *People People*, its strongest release yet, is a strong vote of confidence that indie-rock will survive into the next millennium.

What distinguishes Number One Cup from the pack are its three distinctive vocalists and its focused, melodic songwriting. Lenzi's voice often sounds uncannily like Robert Smith of The Cure and the band occasionally employs strange instrumentation including noise generators and treated pianos. "Sometimes guitars can't get as weird as we want them," Cohen maintains, "so we have to turn elsewhere." >>> Mitch Myers

COHEN, THIRD FROM LEFT

TECHNICAL ECSTASY

UK DUO PLAID GIVES THE STATES A DOSE OF ITS MELODIC ELECTRONICS



"I think generally people didn't even know we were playing," says Andy Turner of his stint opening for Björk on her 1997 tour with his group Plaid, which he formed with Ed Handley after the pair quit electronic experimenters Black Dog. "Björk used one of the Black Dog albums for the house sound before the gig anyway. Then these two little white kids just sort of wander on stage and hide behind some keyboards. I'm sure the majority of the crowd just thought we were technicians setting up for the gig."

It was Plaid's mix of melodic textures and energetic breakbeats—imagine a less ornery Aphex Twin—that caught Björk's ear and scored the band the coveted opening slot on her tour. Turner is also being modest about Plaid's live show, which may have left some Björk fans unmoved, but not the Icelandic diva herself; after the tour, she lent her vocal talents—alongside similar contributions from Nicolette of Tricky fame and songstress Mara—to *Not For Threes*, the duo's US debut.

That Stateside release was a long time in coming, however. Difficulty with licensing agreements allowed the record to languish for a full year before Trent Reznor's Nothing Records label finally secured a deal with Plaid's label, Warp Records, issuing *Not For Threes* alongside recent albums from Autechre and Squarepusher. Now, as many Americans are getting their first taste of Plaid, the group is in the process of finishing its follow-up album, and expects it to be out in the UK in March.

"We're halfway through it," says Andy. "It's along similar lines. We're still experimenting with acoustic musicians and trying to incorporate that with the electronic stuff. *Not For Threes* was the first time we did that." The duo works under the principle that more can be done with sound when acoustic and electronic elements are brought together. But they prefer to make those introductions via a keyboard and sampler, and not on stage. Or, as Ed acknowledges, "In terms of performance, there's nothing really to see, particularly. I suppose we play... knobs."

That may be so, but it didn't seem to prevent the crowd from being sucked into Plaid's spacious sound during a rare performance in New York City last October. A crowd stood shoulder-to-shoulder forming an arc around Turner and Handley, casually moving to the beats, while towards the back of the room, a more energetic group cut loose and danced.

"We're just sort of live mixing and changing parameters on the synths and the effects units," agrees Andy. "So it's generally very small, undynamic movements."

"We like to try and take the crowd places with our sound," muses Ed. "But not in a 'running to the front of the stage with a synth strapped on' fashion. That Rolling Stones thing isn't really possible. And it's not what we're into."

>>> William Werde

IN MY ROOM



BAD RELIGION

Brian Baker

- **Squatweiler**
New Motherstamper
- **Tuscadero**
My Way Or The Highway
- **Truman Capote**
In Cold Blood (book)
- **Cracker**
Golden Age
- **22 Jacks**
Overserved



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a.k.a. Adam Dorn

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Psychedelic Experience
- **Pete Sims**
Turkish Women At The Baths
- **Ayn Rand**
Atlas Shrugged (book)
- **Anything by Lenny Bruce**
- **Anything and everything**
by Doc Scott

RANDOM QUOTE

"When I was very young
I used to practice a lot...
now I'm like a doctor.
When he's operating on
you, he's practicing.
When I go to my gigs,
that's my practice."

>>> **Jazz drummer Roy Haynes**,
on how to be a smooth operator

Q&A

U2'S THE EDGE

Ireland's most exalted musical export has released its first greatest hits collection, **U2: The Best Of 1980-1990 (Island)**, which includes such early U2 staples as "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "Pride (In The Name Of Love)" and "Bad"; a limited-edition double-CD set appends a second disc of hard-to-find B-sides. We took a look back on the group's nearly 20-year career with guitarist The Edge.

>>> Colin Helms

Q: Now that you've had a chance to look back over your first ten years of work, is there any particular U2 era that stands out as your favorite?

A: I'm very proud of the whole collection, [but] I'd have to say *The Unforgettable Fire* through *The Joshua Tree* was the most creatively satisfying for us because we really had set our sights on achieving certain goals as a band—in terms of songwriting, in terms of production and sonic experimentation—and we took quite a few risks. People at the time of *The Unforgettable Fire* really thought that we had made a major commercial mistake, telling us that we were poised, ready to conquer the world with the U2 sound of the *War* album. [They asked] what on earth were we doing running off with Brian Eno, this sort of art-terrorist who was going to ruin our sound? We put up with a lot of flak at the time, and I remember when the album came out it was not reviewed very well, but looking back on it now we really managed to create a special record with [producers] Brian [Eno] and Danny [Lanois]. That same spirit carried through to *The Joshua Tree*, by which time I think people were starting to give us a little more respect for knowing what might be right for us as a band.

Q: Is there anything from that time period that you're unsatisfied with?

A: I think—and I'm sure Bono wouldn't mind me speaking on his behalf—[that] he would regret allowing "Elvis Presley And America" to be released without having a chance to really finish it. It was one of those things where we had this quite remarkable recording of Bono improvising over some music that Brian and

Danny had put together—in fact, it was a slowed-down version of "A Sort Of Homecoming." They'd slowed it to half speed and they'd treated the guitars and basses differently so it sounded like a completely new track. Bono walked in said, "What is that? That is amazing. I've got some ideas—give me a microphone!" So he picked up a mic in the control room and he just did a vocal over that piece of music, which were stunning, beautiful performances. He was touching on some great melodies and ideas, and then occasionally he'd hit on some lyrics, but a lot of it was just

vowel sounds, syllables, but not really words. So at the end of the project we were faced with a choice of either releasing a mix of that remarkable improvisation, or to deconstruct the whole piece, rewrite it, put lyrics into it, decide on a final melody. Which we could have done, but it would have taken four or five days at least. So Bono somewhat reluctantly allowed the improvisation to go on the record, which I personally really like. And I remember at the time that Brian Eno was particularly adamant that it was such a special thing that it justified its place and that Bono shouldn't worry.

Q: Is there anything from those years you feel embarrassed about?

A: I think allowing Paramount Pictures to airbrush my stubble out of the promotional pictures for *Rattle And Hum*. That was actually the moment where I realized things might be going a little too far.

END

KEVIN DAVIES



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MIX TAPE By Martin Schmidt Kalispell, MT

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- Let My Baby Ride
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- Money Mark
- Maybe I'm Lead
- Railroad Jerk
- Bang The Drum
- They Might Be Giants
- Nightgown Of The Sullen Moon
- Screamin' Jay Hawkins
- Frenzy
- Phish
- Alumni Blues
- Jasper And The Prodigal Sons
- Sincerely Jasper
- Jane's Addiction
- Oi Course

Side Two:

- Elliott Smith
- Independence Day
- Screaming Trees
- Lying Days
- Supergrass
- Sometimes I Make You Sad
- Modest Mouse
- Karma Payment
- Cornershop
- Sleep On The Left Side
- St. Johnny
- Scuba Diving
- Southern Culture On The Skids
- Red Beans 'N' Reverb
- Thurston Moore
- Ono Soul
- Tori Amos
- Blood Roses
- Hayden
- Skates
- Moby
- Now I Let It Go
- Pizzicato Five
- Happy Birthday

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R.E.M.

Up

Warner Bros.



Confounding expectations has lately become R.E.M.'s trademark: personal when they could have been political (*Out Of Time*), quiet when they intended to rock (*Automatic For The People*), small when we asked them to be huge (*New Adventures In Hi-Fi*). But none of that change compares to the band's rethink on *Up*, the first R.E.M. album minus drummer Bill Berry. Challenging, often beautiful, *Up* was built over months in a meticulous effort to reimagine the band as a three-piece. It's synth-driven and labored, yet strangely organic and, for the band members, liberating: Peter Buck, whose elegant guitar recently powered *Automatic* and *Monster*, sublimates himself to keyboards, even shrouding his solos in electronic effects. Michael Stipe drops his old voices—*Murmur*'s mumble, *Monster*'s glam pose—for a clear, consistent croon. Mike Mills rarely sings backup, focusing on any instrument except bass. New influences abound: Brian Wilson, the Zombies, Yo La Tengo, and especially The Cure. Standouts like the heart-stopping "Walk Unatraid" build like classic R.E.M., but the absence of drums and other rock rudiments lends them a distinct grace. Even the conventional "Daysleeper" has a heartfelt brightness Stipe rarely entertains—not shiny-happy, purely hopeful. Just when everyone wonders if R.E.M.'s time is up, the band produces something timeless, with a future built-in.

>>> Chris Molanphy

OUT: October 27.

FILE UNDER:

Newer adventures in hi-fi.

R.I.Y.L.:

Yo La Tengo, The Cure, Beth Orton, Peter Gabriel.

KARATE

The Bed Is In The Ocean

Southern



Geoff Farina notices the little things—sensory details like the hum of a refrigerator, the rubbing of the fabric of a former lover's sleeping bag against someone else's floor, the "famous" sound that the snow makes under his feet after a snowfall too cold for a snowball, the significance of a "red" phone bill. And on his third album fronting the Boston trio Karate, he can't help but tell you about them in his plain-strained, unassuming voice because, when you stop to think about it, most of life amounts to an accumulation of little things like humming refrigerators and shut-off notices from the phone company. In a sense, Farina is an existential detective, dusting the surfaces of his life for traces of some deeper meaning, sifting through the ordinary to find some underlying connection, quoting Einstein ("god does not play dice" in "The Last Wars") and alluding to Dylan ("There is a hard rain where I'm walking and it's okay" in "Not To Call The Police") for moral support along the way. His roots are in the DC emocore of bands like Rites Of Spring and Embrace, except that with Karate, Farina eschews punk's over-charged guitars and brisk rhythms for a spareness—his clean, almost jazz-toned guitar figures, terse and somehow elegant, bolstered by the rhythm section's precise interlocking flow—that beautifully accentuates the songs' aching intensity.

>>> Matt Ashare

OUT: November 2.

FILE UNDER:

Post-emocore.

R.I.Y.L.:

Rites Of Spring, Codeine, Secret Stars.

SQUAREPUSHER

Big Loada

Warp-Nothing



Tom Jenkinson, a.k.a. Squarepusher, is to percussion what the hyper-verbose comic writer Mark Leyner is to prose. In a drum 'n' bass subgenre known for its complexity (if not always "intelligence"), Squarepusher's three most recent EPs took the electroshocked jungle aesthetic proposed by Aphex Twin and pushed those recombinant beats beyond mathematics and into emotions. Squarepusher's first domestic release compiles those records onto what feels like the artist's final word on the drilling, buzzing, cymbal-break-layering phase of his and the music's evolution. His tracks tend to follow a kind of arc, beginning with basic bleeps and beats and building toward a turning point at which a superstructure is revealed and the track becomes a song. Sometimes that point comes early, as when "A Journey To Reedham (7am Mix)" gathers its galloping hi-hats and keyboards around a simple pop melody line. Or, he'll put the moment off, rushing headlong toward an unseen point, only to stick in a distorted vocal break and change course. "Massif (Stay Strong)" achieves its transcendence through electrofunk; "Port Rhombus," via Latin stylings; others, by routes less easily traced. Cumulatively, they approach the expressive limits of drum 'n' bass, and hint at what might come next.

>>> Andrea Moed

OUT: October 6.

FILE UNDER:

Adrenalized percussion 'n' bass.

R.I.Y.L.:

Photek, Aphex Twin, Autechre.



VIC CHESNUTT

The Salesman And Bernadette

Capricorn

Vic Chesnutt fans treasure the Georgian singer/songwriter's craft like they would a valuable piece of American folk art, lovingly inspecting each new recording for the idiosyncrasies and offbeat charms that define his inimitable work. *The Salesman And Bernadette*, Chesnutt's seventh album (counting his 1995 collaboration with Widespread Panic called *Brute*), bears all the markings of his beautifully fractured style: a curious mix of the oddly comic and the self-flagellating, the rudimentary and the sublime, that ensures his utter lack of self-pity even in the most despairing moments. But unlike his previous efforts, which generally placed his fragile voice in front of his own simple acoustic guitar strumming, *The Salesman* employs Nashville chamber-folk ensemble Lambchop as his backing band. The group's gently swaying, old-timey instrumentation lends his tunes a newfound tenderness and subtle sophistication. A crisp brass section punches up the infectious "Until The Led" and adds a raunchy swagger to "Prick," but it's the gentle whine of a pedal steel and a soothing vibraphone that define the album's drowsy mood. On "Square Room," Chesnutt paints an uncharacteristically bleak picture of himself without even a hint of a smirk: "A tired old alcoholic waxing bucolic, shivering and homesick, staring at a wooden floor." While his songwriting continues to richen, he also seems to be taking a harder look at himself. >>> *Colin Helms*

OUT: November 10.

FILE UNDER:

Weary country-folk.

R.I.Y.L.:

Will Oldham, Victoria Williams, Cracker, Lambchop.



RANDY WESTON

Khepera

Verve

Pianist Randy Weston has made it his life's mission to find the underlying musical links between American jazz and its ancient African origins. But Weston is also cool for what he didn't do: When disco and easy-listening jazz rose to prominence in the late '70s and '80s, he headed off to Tangier, Morocco, where he ran a jazz nightclub while waiting for the music industry to get back to recording his kind of serious jazz. Perhaps you're familiar with the African-inspired jazz albums of the '70s by Pharoah Sanders, Herbie Hancock, Gary Bartz, Dollar Brand and others, where saxes seemed to evoke the winding river Nile, where electric keyboards loped like leopards or buzzed like Savannah insects, where bass players made their bass lines sway like majestic trees, and exotic percussion burbled like drummers beating messages on hollow logs. *Khepera* is similar, but even better, deepened and broadened by a lifetime of reflection and research in both jazz and African music. *Khepera* seems so perfect that Pharoah Sanders's reedy saxophone solo halfway through "The Shrine" seems like the proverbial ribbon on the neatly wrapped present. Weston has been honing these themes for a lifetime, and *Khepera* is the payoff, a chance to see the deepness of the roots as well as the majesty of the whole tree. >>> *James Lien*

OUT: October 6.

FILE UNDER:

Swaying African jazz.

R.I.Y.L.:

Pharoah Sanders, John Coltrane, later Duke Ellington.



RENDERERS

A Dream Of The Sea

Siltbreeze

Don't bother with the treble knob when you pop on *A Dream Of The Sea*. It's of little use. You can maybe dig a little deeper by beefing up the bass, but the Renderers' sound is so submerged already that to do so would be to bury deeper what's already buried deep enough. With the guitars tuned low and the constant cymbal-play a mere ghost roaming the basement, the Renderers make muddy rock, drenched and dark, and have been doing so in their native New Zealand for the past decade; they made their first Stateside appearance as a snapshot moan on *I Hear The Devil Calling Me*, the seminal *Drag City 7"* that played an essential role in drawing attention to the New Zealand vibe. Since then, the Renderers have become more aggressive and moody; for every smoldering dirge presented by vocalist Maryrose Crook, is a flat out explosion—just as bass heavy and tremolo crazy—sung by husband Brian Crook. Combined, the two approaches merge into a colossus of sturdy rock, as strong and raw as you're gonna hear anywhere **anytime**. Don't expect to prance around the apartment while *A Dream Of The Sea* is playing (except during the title track, which is one of the best rock songs of the year). Rather, white-knuckle the armrests of the couch and let a gust of pure tension rush through you. >>> *Randall Roberts*

OUT: October 5.

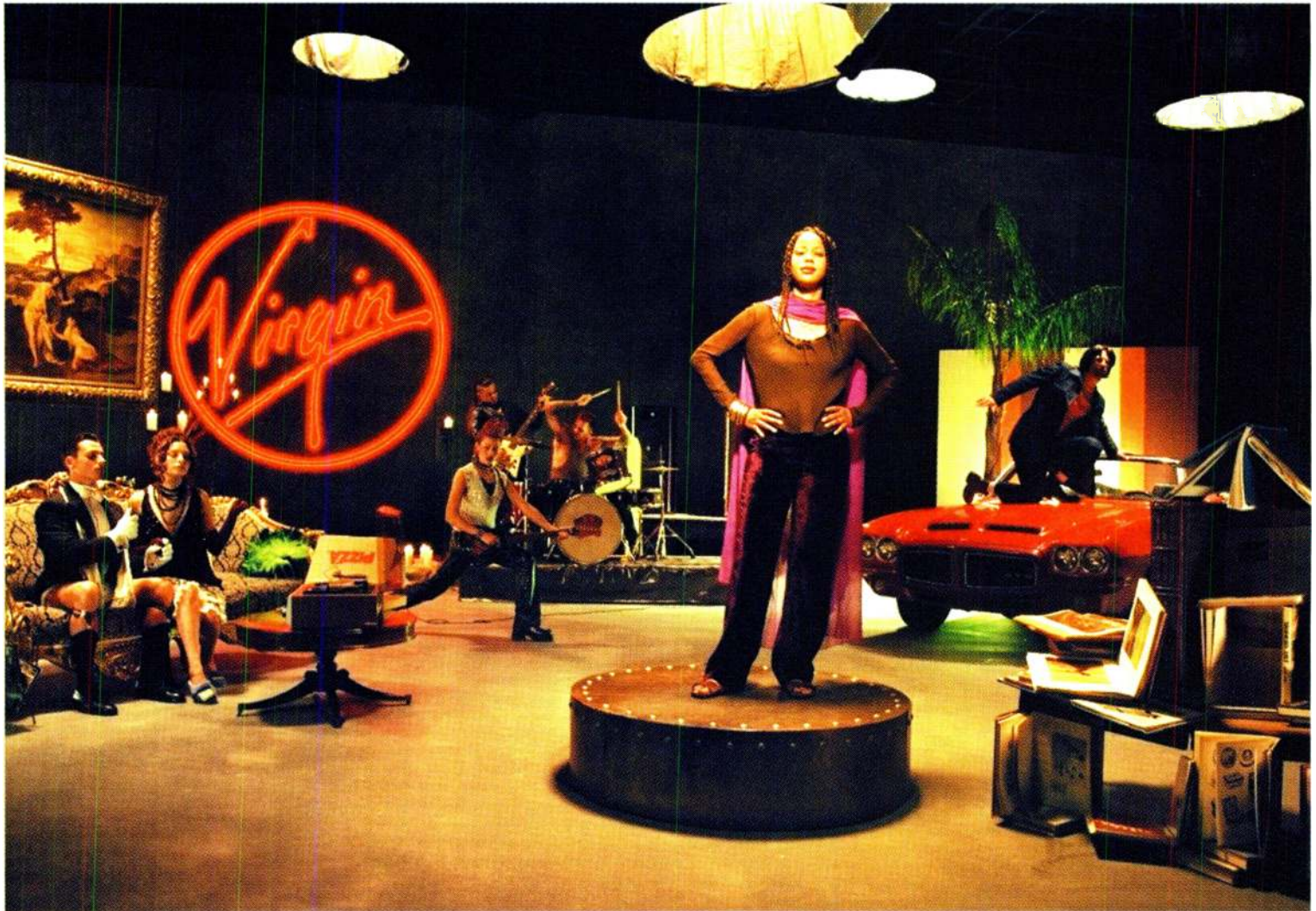
FILE UNDER:

Deep dark secrets.

R.I.Y.L.:

Come, Joy Division, Crescent.

Are you a minister, who likes lo-fi thrash punk?



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JAMES MUNCHILL

APRIL MARCH



MARCO GRUBER

764-HERO



CHRISSE PIPER

DISMEMBERMENT PLAN

dismemberment plan

"Mary J. Blige. TLC. And Brandy's had some amazing songs. The next record will sound absolutely nothing like any of them," says Dismemberment Plan's frontman, Travis Morrison, of his band's recent favorites. When you consider that both of the Washington, DC, band's records prior to its recent signing to Interscope were released by DeSoto Records, run by Jawbox alumni Kim Colletta and Bill Barbot, it's surprising to hear Morrison count hip-hop divas among his band's influences. But beneath the echoes of DC's punk rock scene that can be heard in the way the Plan toys with quiet-loud dynamics and dissonant, rhythmic guitar parts, there's no doubt that the quartet has some funk in its trunk. Much like Soul Coughing, which the band admittedly emulates, Dismemberment Plan hopes to make the sampler an integral part of its music. "Someone has to take the sampler into the garage," says Morrison. "Someone has to plug the sampler into an amp and make an ungodly noise and access that energy of the band." This past fall, the group released *The Ice Of Boston EP*, whose title track is insanely catchy, and finished recording its third long-player, which will be released in early '99.

>>> *Jenny Eliscu*

april march

When ace French student Elinor Blake was chosen by an exchange program to spend six weeks of junior high in France, she couldn't have known what the experience would portend. After a promising early career as an animator (Madonna in her "Who's That Girl?" video, *Pee Wee's Playhouse*), and stints with the honey-voiced NYC vocal trio the Pussywillows, Blake moved to LA in 1991 and began to sing in French under the pseudonym April March. Building on the French tradition of chanteuses such as Françoise Hardy and France Gall, March released a series of singles and albums, eventually catching the ears of famed LA producers the Dust Brothers, who signed her to their label. March's *Chrominance Decoder* (Ideal), out in February, playfully blends her chirpy, singsongy melodies with modern sounding, yet retro-styled arrangements crafted by her songwriting collaborator Frenchman Bertrand Burgalat, who was in her backing band on her recent US tour opening for suave French duo Air. March's music will appeal to Stereolab fans that could do without the Krautrock and Marxist tendencies, but that love one of Miss Blake's trump cards: crisply sung French.

>>> *Lydia Vanderloo*

764-hero

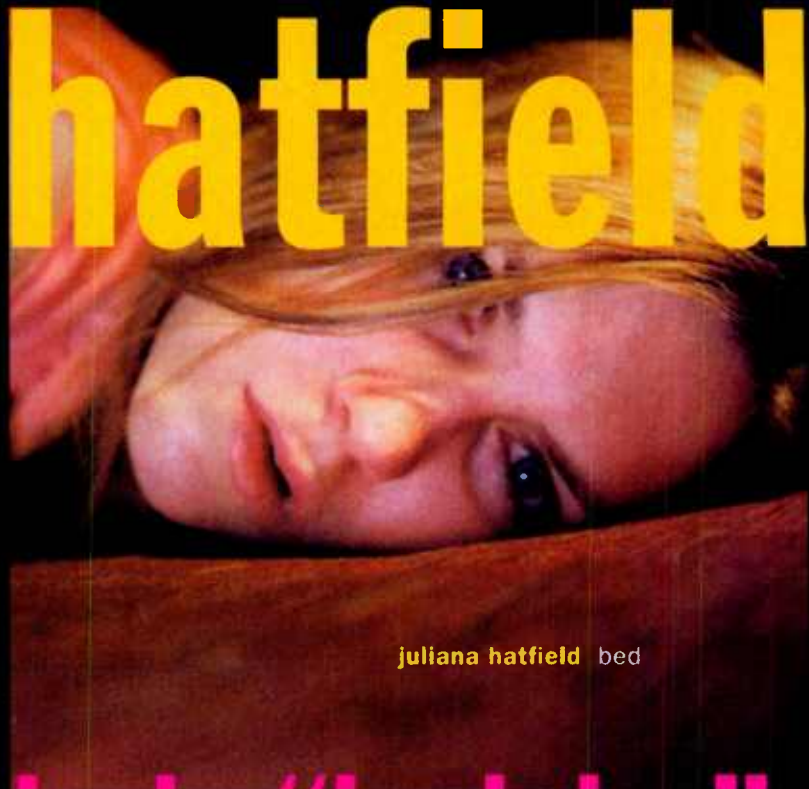
John Atkins's last band, the amazing emo trio Hush Harbor, left behind only one EP to hint at his potential as a songwriter. His new group, 764-Hero, finds Atkins living up to that promise. The band initially formed as a duo in 1996, with Atkins on vocals and guitars and Polly Dickinson on drums. Its first album was a passable effort, but marred by its lack of low-end heft to support Atkins's churning guitar parts and agonizingly passionate vocals. This past summer, though, Atkins and Johnson were joined by bassist James Bertram, who has played with Lync, Built To Spill (from whom 764-Hero takes more than a few of its cues) and his own band Red Stars Theory, and on Beck's *One Foot In The Grave*. "Me and Polly's practice method has always been get some coffee, smoke some cigarettes, talk about our days, 'How was work?,' then play a song, then talk some more, 'I heard this joke on *Rosie O'Donnell*,' stuff like that," says Atkins. "When James started, he had to learn all these songs right away, but he fit right into the 'how was your day' routine. He was already our friend, that was the biggest deal." Reborn as a trio, 764-Hero recently released its second long-player, *Get Here And Stay (Up)*, a beautiful collection of songs and a testimony to the strength of this new union.

>>> *Jenny Eliscu*

juliana hatfield

From the first wailing feedback of "Down On Me", *Bed's* cranky and self-affirming opener, to the fatalistic anti-materialism of the album's closer, "Let's Blow It All", Hatfield has once again demonstrated her keen ability to scrape to the bone of each emotionally-charged scenario.

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STING VS STING

Real Name: Steve Borden
Born in Venice Beach, California in 1959
Hulking, monstrous persona
Wrestles for WCW
Professional wrestler since 1985
Runs two gyms in Atlanta with Lex Luger

First group was called "Freedom Fighters"
Signature Move: Scorpion Death Lock
Undistinguished acting career
Beats his opponents senseless
His first partner's stage name was Rock
Previous career as a personal trainer
Traded punches with Bret "The Hitman" Hart in dressing room
Calls himself a "Dark Warrior"

-VS-
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Real Name: Gordon Matthew Sumner
Born in Newcastle, England in 1951
Played Dr. Frankenstein in The Bride
Records for A&M
Professional musician since 1977
Owns a yoga center in New York City with his wife
First group was called "The Police"
"If you love somebody, set them free"
Undistinguished acting career
"De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da"
His first partners' stage act was rock
Previous career as a ditch digger
Traded punches with drummer Stewart Copeland backstage
Calls his bass "Brian"

juice...

coffee...

Toast.



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COMING SOON

World Radio History

STORY: WILLIAM WERDE

it's the end

of the music business
as we know it,

and the MP3 feels fine.

is downloading digital files
music's future?

24

Gene Hoffman has established himself as something of a giant-slayer. At 20, he took on Internet marketers with Privnet, his first company, by developing software that could block advertisements from appearing on web pages, dramatically increasing surfing speeds. Now 23, Hoffman has started another company, Goodnoise, and managed the unthinkable: putting a scare to the \$12 billion music industry.

Goodnoise, the follow-through on a college idea from Hoffman's years at the University of North Carolina, is a publicly traded corporation predicated on the idea that soon—and sooner than you may think—music consumers will be getting much of their music from the Internet in the form of digital distribution, the transfer of files instead of vinyl, cassettes or CDs.

A growing black market of "pirates"—mostly college kids utilizing the high speed Internet connections provided by universities—has been downloading tracks and albums from top artists whose work is illegally copied, converted into a compressed sound file called an MP3, and uploaded onto websites for others to share. And while it's difficult to track how popular this practice has become, the Recording Industry Association of America reported that in one recent afternoon, it found some 80 MP3 sites, containing more than 20,000 MP3 files, virtually all of which were unlicensed. An AltaVista web search yielded more than 1.3 million matches for MP3.

"I can easily see downloadable music being responsible for 15 to 20 percent of music sales in five years," says Hoffman. "All new customers, everybody 13 to 25, is growing up knowing how to use the Internet, and knowing that this technology exists. All of your new music buyers, all the people who refocus the market and set new trends, are technology literate—in fact, more technology literate than the record companies. So every graduating class out of college is another million, two million kids who know, and want, music in MP3."

Major labels have refused to embrace downloadable distribution because—in addition to requiring a massive overhaul of their distribution, marketing and production systems—MP3 offers little copyright protection. Thus far, the MP3 tracks are largely unlicensed, illegal tracks from popular bands, or legally licensed music from bands unknown outside their close, personal friends. But that's starting to change. Goodnoise recently acquired a catalog of about 14 thousand tracks from an online group called Nordic, including gems from the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Louis Armstrong. And through a mutual friend, Hoffman landed the digital distribution rights to Frank Black's latest, *Frank Black And The Catholics*, and subsequently the catalog of indie label SpinArt, featuring the Apples In Stereo, Cinerama, Bill Fox and others. Steve Grady, a vice president at Goodnoise, believes that if an easy-to-use, central point for downloadable distribution is provided, people will pay to use it rather than spending hours trying to find the tracks they want free, illegally. Goodnoise hopes to fill that niche, and subsequently attract record labels that want to maintain control over their artists' digital distribution.

"If you are a major label, you have got to move towards digital distribution," says Mark Mooradian, senior analyst at Jupiter Communications, an online market research firm. "People are consuming pirated music, and there simply is no alternative right now. You're allowing people to understand that if they want to get digital music, pirated music is the only alternative."

In addition to the legal questions surrounding downloadable music, the other two issues that have kept it from catching on with the general public—technology and portability—are slowly being addressed. Cable modems and



other services offering faster Internet connections in the home are markedly reducing download times, and more consumers are on the Internet every day. Jupiter predicts that by 2002, approximately 10 million households will have broadband (high-speed) connectivity.

In October, the RIAA sued Diamond Multimedia Corporation—a direct partner of Goodnoise—to try and prevent it from releasing its Rio PMP300 portable music player. Whether or not the lawsuit is successful (it was still in court at press time), it's clear that the consumer electronics industry is not waiting around for major labels to get in the game. Those in the field see a growing market of technology-savvy people already numbering a few million customers, and they want to cater to it. The Rio is a little smaller than a pack of cigarettes, runs for 12 hours on a single

"I can easily see downloadable music being responsible for 15 to 20 percent of music sales in five years."

double-A battery, and costs less than \$200. Like a Walkman, the Rio makes music portable; unlike a Walkman (or Discman) there are no tapes to flip or discs to skip.

MP3 supporters—those using it, and those who stand to profit from its usage—are quick to argue that the RIAA is merely trying to buy time for major labels. "Clearly, it appears that the RIAA's lawsuit against Diamond is being driven by the interests of its largest members, the big five record labels, who are seeking to maintain their control of music distribution," says Ken Wirt, vice president of corporate marketing for Diamond. "Upcoming musicians, numbering in the thousands, are using the Internet to their advantage to create awareness in a cost-effective manner, which is clearly a threat to the major record labels' current distribution model."

"I think major labels are freaked out about it," says Jeff Price, CEO of SpinArt, which attained the physical licensing rights for Frank Black after Goodnoise obtained his digital rights. "This company Goodnoise—

(Continued on page 54)



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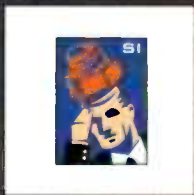
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the record to unite us all.



28

beth orton
queen of all ears

The time is probably right for a genre-bridger like Beth Orton.

Ten years ago, Bon Jovi had the #1 record in America, and similarly uninspired light metal owned the majority of the rest of the top 10. It was a time that made George Michael's *Faith* seem like a forward-looking LP, and nothing that couldn't be categorized into Sam Goody's thin racks stood a chance. Today, Jay-Z is in the top spot with a record that combines hardcore hip-hop with show tunes. Lauryn Hill is at #2 with a record that references Aretha Franklin and Bobs Marley and Dylan. And while Shania Twain (#3) mixes country with power balladry to the tune of five million sold, the Dixie Chicks, an all-female band whose members have tattoos and play good old country music in the style of the Lennon sisters, are at #10. Even if pastiche weren't the best route to the top of the charts, Orton can only benefit from the tide of goodwill that's lifting the fortunes of accessible female artists in Lilith Fair's profitable wake.

But like the music she makes, Beth Orton resists characterization. The Englishwoman's raspy tenor first crossed the Atlantic on the Chemical Brothers' backs, when she provided vocals for the song "Alive Alone" on their debut LP, *Exit Planet Dust*. Orton's second LP, *Trailer Park*, was her first to get a US release. It brought an electronic sensibility to live-band earthiness and sold 80,000 copies, helped in no small part by Orton taking part in last summer's Lilith Fair tour. Just don't lump her in with Natalie Merchant yet.

"I think a lot has been made out of the Lilith Fair," Orton says over the telephone, speaking from a friend's house in Norfolk, England. "It was just a concert, as far as I was concerned. I didn't look around and compare myself to the other acts, even though they were women." When pressed to name any artists on the tour she enjoyed playing with, she mentions that she "thought Jewel was incredible" and that Emmylou Harris was her "favorite out of everything." Then she immediately reiterates that to her, a gig is a gig.

And that she's not a folkie, a sobriquet that has followed her since *Trailer Park* was issued. It's not accurate, she maintains: "Maybe it's the sound of my voice—I'm quite lyrical. And also because people have to label you." She pauses to consider this last statement. "I grew up around a lot of folk musicians, if you like, but, then again, I grew up around a lot of blues people. I don't see that folk is anything outside of—I mean, Rolling Stones to me are folk, you know? If folk is music for the people, then, I don't know, I'm as much a folk-singer as the next person."

Beth Orton was born in Norfolk in 1970. Her mother worked in an arts center. "From about the age of eight," Orton says, "I was around that sort of stuff. Loads of my family are quite musical." But she's not exactly sure that her upbringing should

be characterized as "hippyish." "I suppose in some ways you could say it was hippyish," she says, laughing. "But you know, nothing's that black and white, is it? I could say to you, 'Yes, I had a hippy upbringing,' but that would completely discredit another part that was really authoritarian."

Orton went to school in Norfolk until she was 13, when she and her mother moved to London. She was always interested in performing. "I always wanted to act, I was always doing something like that. Every year my mum put on these sort of play things where all the kids would go in the summer when their parents were working in the holidays. And in the end you'd put on a play. So it was never really like professional as in big theaters or anything, it was like street theater and local fairs and stuff. I don't know, there's a different sort of thing in England, all the sort of hippy fairs—"

Hippy fairs?

"Yeah," she laughs, pausing to scream, "Bloody hippies!" at her friends, who have stolen her lighter.

In 1989, Orton took a play she was acting in to Russia. "We were going to have a grant so we could go and then it fell through, so I just went mad and started phoning up all the big companies I could and got us out there in the end." On the troupe's first night there, Orton says, "We were hiding in the corner of Red Square drinking a bottle of champagne in secret out of paper cups—you had to drink it really fast otherwise all the champagne dripped out of the bottom. It was just when Gorbachev was being overthrown and all that was going on." The play, which Orton characterizes as "this here-and-now method of acting where everything was cast-devised

beth orton

and cast-directed and there was no leader," was successful. When it returned to London, a man named Orbit saw Beth Orton act and decided to make her a star.

William Orbit is a seminal figure in dance music. Whether or not you've heard of him, you've heard him. As things are done in his milieu, Orbit records under many different names—Torch Song, Bassomatic, his own—and remixes everyone from Seal (he did the famous remix of "Crazy") to Prince. Recently, he produced Madonna's *Ray Of Light* record and Blur's next one. When he met Orton, he was upset about Virgin's handling of the last Bassomatic album and had decided to start a new band. "He liked the sound of my voice and he wanted me to do some spoken word on a record," remembers Orton. "I sang a Françoise Hardy song called 'Catch A Falling Star,' and he put a beat to it and just messed around with it and that's kind of how I found out I could sing, just by chance."

The band they started was called Spill, though they also put out records under the name of Strange Cargo (a song called "Water For A Vine Leaf"). "It kind of went on from there," Orton says. "There was just, you know, guitars in the studio and I'd just pick up a guitar when I was sort of sitting around and started learning guitar and just started singing melodies and writing words and just sort of went on from there. It didn't really stop once I started writing. I just kept writing, really." Spill split for unclear reasons (Orbit's website simply says that "the project failed"), and the album it made, *Superpinkymandy*, was released only in Japan, and with only Orton's name on it. It is out of print and virtually impossible to find. Orton describes the sound as "a lot of elements: electronic and band, just different instruments." In a lot of ways, the beginning of her sound.

After Spill, Orton guested on a couple of tracks, "Snapper" and "In Deep" with a band called Red Snapper, which was made up of most of Primal Scream, plus another producer/remixer extraordinaire, Andrew Weatherall. Growing gradually better connected, she came into contact with two DJs called the Dust Brothers, who were looking for someone to sing on the song that would close their debut LP. By the time the album was released, its makers had to change their name to the Chemical Brothers to avoid a lawsuit by a couple of guys in California. Orton had also put together a band of her own—two guitars, drums, keyboards, and double bass—and begun to make *Trailer Park* with Weatherall and Victor Van Vugt, who had previously produced records by Nick Cave and the Tindersticks.

Beth Orton's new record, *Central Reservation*, is due out in February on Deconstruction-Arista, and she took a year to make it. Not constant recording, mind you—rather what Orton calls "the ultimate sort of creative process." After some pretty extensive touring for *Trailer Park*, Orton went to see the American musician Terry Callier play in London. Callier's an interesting, quasi-mystical figure who grew up with Curtis Mayfield, sort of fell into the crack between folk and jazz music in the '70s and hasn't been too easy to find since. While he spent most of the '80s working as a computer programmer in Chicago, the '90s have seen him recording again and doing shows, mostly in Europe. Orton had been turned on to Callier by Red Snapper's bass player. "I listened to *The New Folk Sound Of Terry Callier* constantly for a year," she says.

After Callier's show, she went up to him backstage, "to literally ask for his autograph—'cause I'm that sad—and we just got chatting and someone said, 'Oh, Beth sings; you should hear what she's doing.' And he said, 'Yeah, send me a tape.'" After Callier heard and liked Orton's music, she suggested they sing a duet together. "It was just a mad suggestion, being cheeky really," she says, "but if you think about it, musicians like working with musicians—don't they? That's what we do."

The result of her "cheeky suggestion" was three songs, two of which were issued on Orton's 1998 EP, *Best Bit*. On it, she and Callier covered Fred Neill's song "Dolphins," most notably covered by Tim Buckley. "It just so happened that Fred Neill was Terry's all-time hero, someone he used to emulate and see play a lot when he was younger. It just sparked something in him and he came in and we sung together," she says. "Total beautiful twist of fate, really."

The third song, "Just Passing Time," is on *Central Reservation*, which Orton says was her toughest recording yet. "They say 'difficult second [album]' but I think it's 'really fucking hard third.' Part of me really wanted to get a total experience and then another part wanted to keep my music as good as possible. I must admit that the other day I sat down with my guitar and I realized I have learned. My guitar playing's a million times better." This is evident on the new record; what's surprising is that with as many chefs—Orton's original demos share disc-space with productions by Van Vugt and Mazzy Star's David Roback—*Central Reservation* sounds like it could have been recorded over the course of a month, rather than a year. Though it treads a lot of the same ground as *Trailer Park*, it's more proficient, more fleshed-out, more soulful.

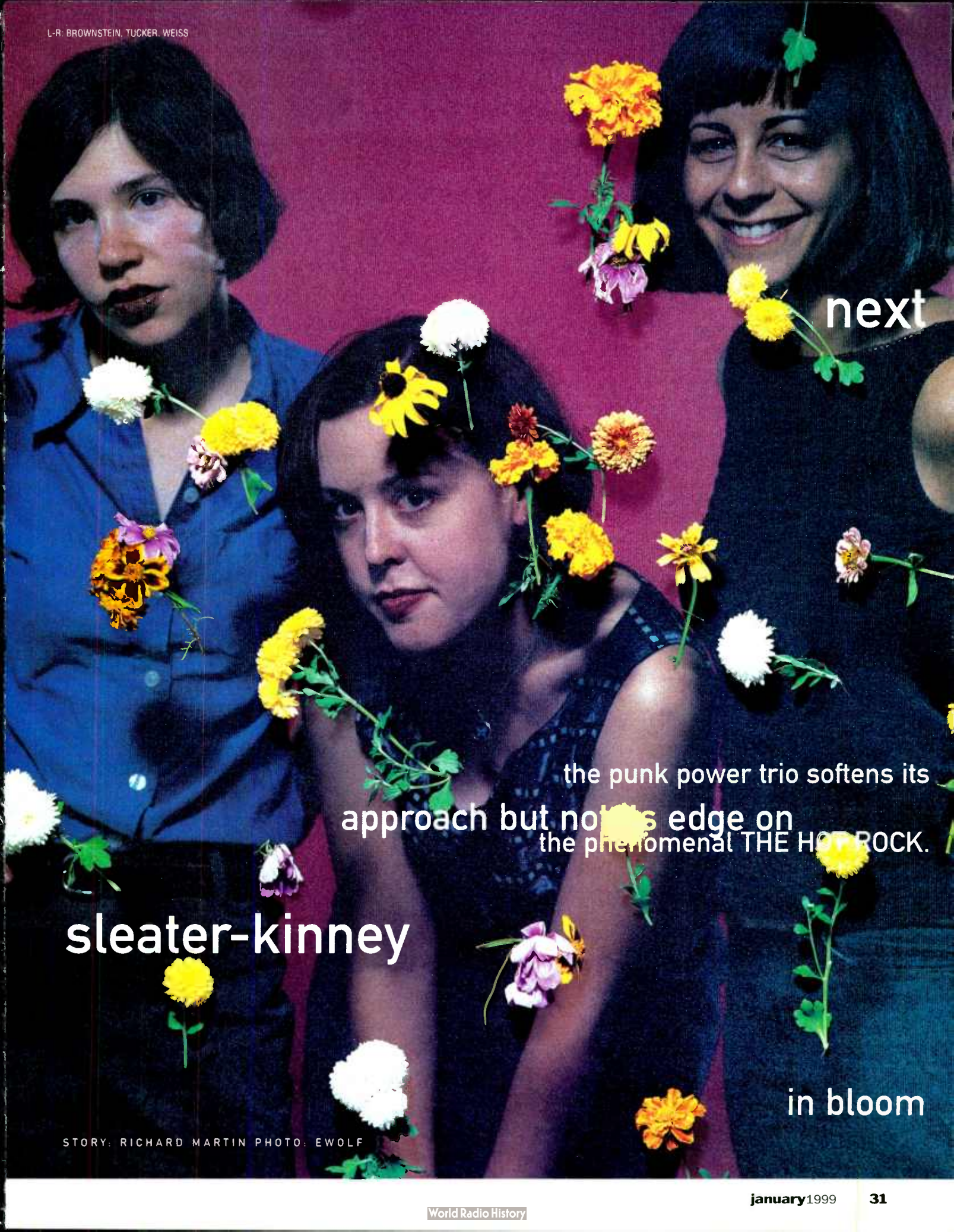
And compared to the crunchy chicks usually mentioned as evidence of the future of music being female, Orton's actually kind of edgy. Unlike, say, Jewel's, Orton's voice sounds as at home on a track by the Chemical Brothers (on whose second album she made a return engagement, with "Where Do I Begin") as it does on one of her own hazy, trippy, yet acid-jazzy numbers. But the woman who sang, "Once they've got you where they want you/They don't want to know," on *Trailer Park*'s "How Far" is not about to settle for any old definition of success. "My hopes are that it won't get completely [dissed]," she says. "My hopes? God, I hope that people like it. I think it's a winter—I don't know. Fuck it, I don't know. I think it could work in the sun as well. Listen, I don't know, I mean, my hopes are, obviously, that I'm not barking up the wrong tree."

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the punk power trio softens its approach but not its edge on the phenomenal THE HOOROCK.

sleater-kinney

in bloom

STORY: RICHARD MARTIN PHOTO: EWOLF

sleater-kinney



One night smack dab in the middle of the two-year lull between Sleater-Kinney's praised-to-the-hilt *Dig Me Out* and the band's anxiously anticipated fourth record, guitarist and vocalist Corin Tucker took a rare critical hit. There she stood, casually enjoying a beer in a hometown Portland, Oregon, rock club, when a male of the species *Patagonius Docmartenus* extracted her from a circle of companions and said something to the effect of, "Are you in Sleater-Kinney? My friend went to high school with you. He said you were an asshole."

Ah, fame. It's just one of the phenomena that Tucker, fellow guitarist-vocalist Carrie Brownstein and drummer Janet Weiss must consider as Sleater-Kinney's grassroots following spreads like a seeded field doused with Miracle-Gro.

"I don't want to be so famous that I can't walk to my car or go to the store," Tucker says, seated in a stately Italian restaurant a few hours before a matinee performance at the Minneapolis rock fortress First Avenue.

"Or to the mall," deadpans Weiss, who's doling out a leafy portion of insalata mista to accompany Tucker's pasta and salmon dish. "If you can't go to the mall, it's all over."

Of course, Weiss is joking; the stylish Sleater-Kinney gals would sooner be found assaying the racks at Betsey Johnson or an upscale vintage shop than at a Gap outlet. But they're dead serious about the effect of outside forces on this self-made, fiercely self-sufficient band.

Like the three albums that preceded it, Sleater-Kinney's *The Hot Rock* will bear the logo of a label run out of a tiny office in the indie stronghold of Olympia, Washington. After two mid-'90s efforts on Donna Dresch's Chainsaw label, including the breakthrough *Call The Doctor*, this trio forged its identity by sauntering through a maze of major-label offers, taking up residence in the Kill Rock Stars stable and releasing what many called the best record of '97, *Dig Me Out*.

"We want to project the image that we're successful," Tucker says.

"And we're proud that we've been able to do that from a tiny label," injects Brownstein. "We've been able to do it non-traditionally, and hopefully that's inspiring and encouraging to people."

The band's adherence to the increasingly rare DIY ethic is even more effective than its members can gauge: during the early supper, they giggle at the notion that they'll fill the spacious First Avenue. After all, it's been more than a year since their last record and it'll be nearly six months until their next. But where Sleater-Kinney once attracted girls seeking empowerment and the sensitive guys who love them, the trio is now more like an edgier alternative to the Lilith Fair's lady rockers. The increasing adulation indicates that Sleater-Kinney is following in the footsteps of another Northwest trio that blended punk and pop to secure a colorful niche in a paling rock landscape—Nirvana. Soon, even the type of straight-laced, Rolling Rock-swilling guy once threatened by Tucker's strong persona will embrace her as a hero.

"It's not even just the 'lookey-lous' who are growing," says Weiss, using a fun bit of slang to describe the curiosity seekers in their audiences. "More and more people want to meet us and talk to us and see us set up our instruments. They're really serious fans who take the music to heart."

When Sleater-Kinney arrives back at the club, nearly a thousand attendees from demographics as varied as hair clip-wearing teens to thirty-something professionals buzz about the room, exuding the type of expectant energy that's fueled Sleater-Kinney's feverish performances and catapulted them to the top of the indie world.

Dressed sharp in black mini-skirt and stockings and a glittery tanktop, Tucker plugs in her guitar and surveys the crowd with an earnest stare and slight grin. In a dark ensemble that's topped off with a crimson cowboy hat, Brownstein settles in stage right, her black-and-white Rickenbacker 'round her neck and poised for another assault. Behind the kit, Weiss fidgets with her sticks, readying the cue. And Sleater-Kinney's off, with a twin blast of title tracks—"Dig Me Out" and "Call The Doctor"—that gets the all-ages crowd percolating. A few songs into an hour-plus set that features material both familiar and fresh, it seems almost miraculous that this trio's members spent the better part of the summer apart, ensconced in varying personal and professional endeavors.

Weiss maintained a high profile, segueing neatly from Sleater-Kinney to the increasingly acclaimed indie-pop duo Quasi. She and Sam Coomes, her ex-husband, toured in support of their third record and backed longtime friend Elliott Smith on a couple of nationwide jaunts. Brownstein meanwhile retreated to Olympia, collaborating with her pal Lois Maffeo from time to time and enjoying anonymity after the media onslaught brought on by the success of *Dig Me Out*, which has sold 60,000 copies and counting. Tucker engaged in some extracurricular activities as well, writing and recording with roommate Sarah Dougher (of the Portland band the Lookers) as Cadallaca, and releasing a charming debut on K that was more reminiscent of '60s girl groups like the Shangri-La's or the Shirelles than '80s riot grrrl outfits like Tucker's seminal Heavens To Betsy or Brownstein's Excuse 17.

How did these side projects affect Sleater-Kinney proper?

"Everyone's looking at me," Weiss mutters with mock-guilt. "Quasi's really important to me, and these guys are super-understanding that I wouldn't be who I am without Quasi."

"We're all really different people," Tucker adds charitably. "Janet likes to play music all the time, and Carrie needs a lot of time away and some privacy. I'm somewhere in between. Cadallaca was something completely different than Sleater-Kinney. The songwriting is much less intense. We're just like, 'Let's write a song about a fire truck.'"

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Don't expect to hear anything so whimsical on *The Hot Rock*. Sleater-Kinney's stock in trade is, as always, bracing, emotional punk filtered through some of the slickest pop melodies of this generation. Rather than back off from their unusual dual-lead singer format, Tucker and Brownstein interweave their voices with an even greater acuity. Amid the elliptical guitar and drum swells of the surging "Hot Rock," for instance, Tucker tones down her signature intense quaver at the outset, with Brownstein assuming a smoky gloom in counterpoint. But Tucker revs back up in "The End Of You," her angry voice teetering on a tightrope until Brownstein balances things out with her earthier, almost naive-sounding croon. And so they go throughout *The Hot Rock*, creating tangential harmonies—particularly on the infectious "Burn Don't Freeze"—or juxtaposing to fit a given song's mood or theme.

The forthcoming single "Get Up"—which will spawn the band's first-ever video—exemplifies this trio's mythic capabilities, fusing Brownstein's playful, rippling leads with Tucker's searing staccato riffs and Weiss's jaunty, periodically punctuated rhythms; she strikes her drums with shoulders locked in a pendulum-like sway, her foot tapping the bass drum pedal in an exquisite balance of grace and fortitude. Tucker says the song is also indicative of the album's thematic structure. "It's more metaphorical and spiritual," she says. "It's not about one concrete thing; it's about searching for meaning and maybe finding it an unexpected place."

Where other songwriters develop a narrative or strive to convey imagery, Tucker and Brownstein select words that spring from their palates with the velocity and subsequent impact of bowling balls hurled from a five-story building.

To soften the blow and, they say, to alter the trajectory, Sleater-Kinney brought in producer Roger Moutenot, who's exhibited a more coloristic touch than career-long affiliate John Goodmanson, the Seattle engineer who typically works with heavier acts like Unwound.

"Every record that Corin and I have ever done has been with John, even before Sleater-Kinney," says Brownstein. "These songs warranted a different production, so we looked to other people."

They chose Moutenot primarily due to his knob-twirling on the textural and moody 1997 Yo La Tengo album *I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One* (incidentally, one of the records that rivaled *Dig Me Out* in nearly every year-end critics' poll). His predilection for making guitar and vocal sounds envelop the listener in something like a warm glow allows Sleater-Kinney to rhapsodize, reflect and linger where they once seemed resolved to shout and stomp. Brownstein hints that this evolution was calculated. "A lot of the songs have an eerie beauty," she says. *The Hot Rock* also features the first instrumental appearance from an outsider; violinist Seth Warren, from the Seattle band Red Stars Theory, adds spiraling, haunting figures to Tucker's solo turn in the sullen yet glimmering mid-tempo track "The Size Of Our Love" and the meatier "Memorize Your Love."

"There are more complexities and subtleties that we wanted to come across," Weiss explains. "We wanted the record to sound different than *Dig Me Out*, to make each song have a real strong personality."

If Sleater-Kinney's first three albums lacked any song-by-song distinctiveness, it didn't detract from the band's overall appeal. Tracks like "I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone" and "Call The Doctor" incited club-wide sing-alongs in a live setting, but also aroused critical discourse about Tucker and Brownstein's feminist philosophies.

"We're aware of that split," says Brownstein. "We're able to see the duality in the ways our songs are written, and also how they're interpreted. Live, it is visceral. It's more physical than the recording and the songwriting."

"But we take all that outside stuff with a grain of salt," says Tucker,

reeling the conversation back in. "When we play shows, we want people to react."

Yet Brownstein holds fast to her beliefs. "Personally, I maintain an enjoyment of our music by splitting it into two categories," she explains with budding sincerity. "One is fairly intellectual, and one is more primal and physical."

Tucker drives home the point. "We came from a really specific community of writers and artists and musicians who think critically about the world differently than, say, Guns N' Roses," she explains, evoking laughter from her bandmates. "That shaped how we see the world and how we write about it."

Despite the prevailing notion that young people don't respond to such political commentary, adolescent fans—girls in particular—have exalted Sleater-Kinney to the level of populist heroes. The band's messages began resonating from the start. Early shows in the Pacific Northwest attracted the type of enthusiastic, youthful audiences that now crowd into clubs nationwide and in Europe. At a Portland performance in 1995, Tucker couldn't contain the testosterone-induced moshing she'd been witnessing, so she invited any girls who felt threatened onto the stage. Soon, dozens of young women were shimmying along to Sleater-Kinney songs as the band members jockeyed for elbowroom. "That was a mistake," Tucker would say later. "We couldn't hear ourselves with all those girls up there."

Now, there are other spatial concerns, but ones more affiliated with the band's blossoming fame. If *The Hot Rock* succeeds in expanding Sleater-Kinney's nearly maxed-out fan base, even though they've eschewed a major-label jump, it may necessitate a step up from the club level to the decidedly less intimate realm of large theaters and arenas.

"We're in a bit of a dilemma," Tucker admits. "Our shows depend on the close-knit energy between us and the audience, and the bigger the places we play, there's a natural gap that occurs. So we're negotiating: Is it better to play a couple of nights in a smaller place?"

"We really want to be accommodating," she continues. "If we pull into a city, we don't want to have a hundred people who can't get into the show, and then we don't come back for a year."

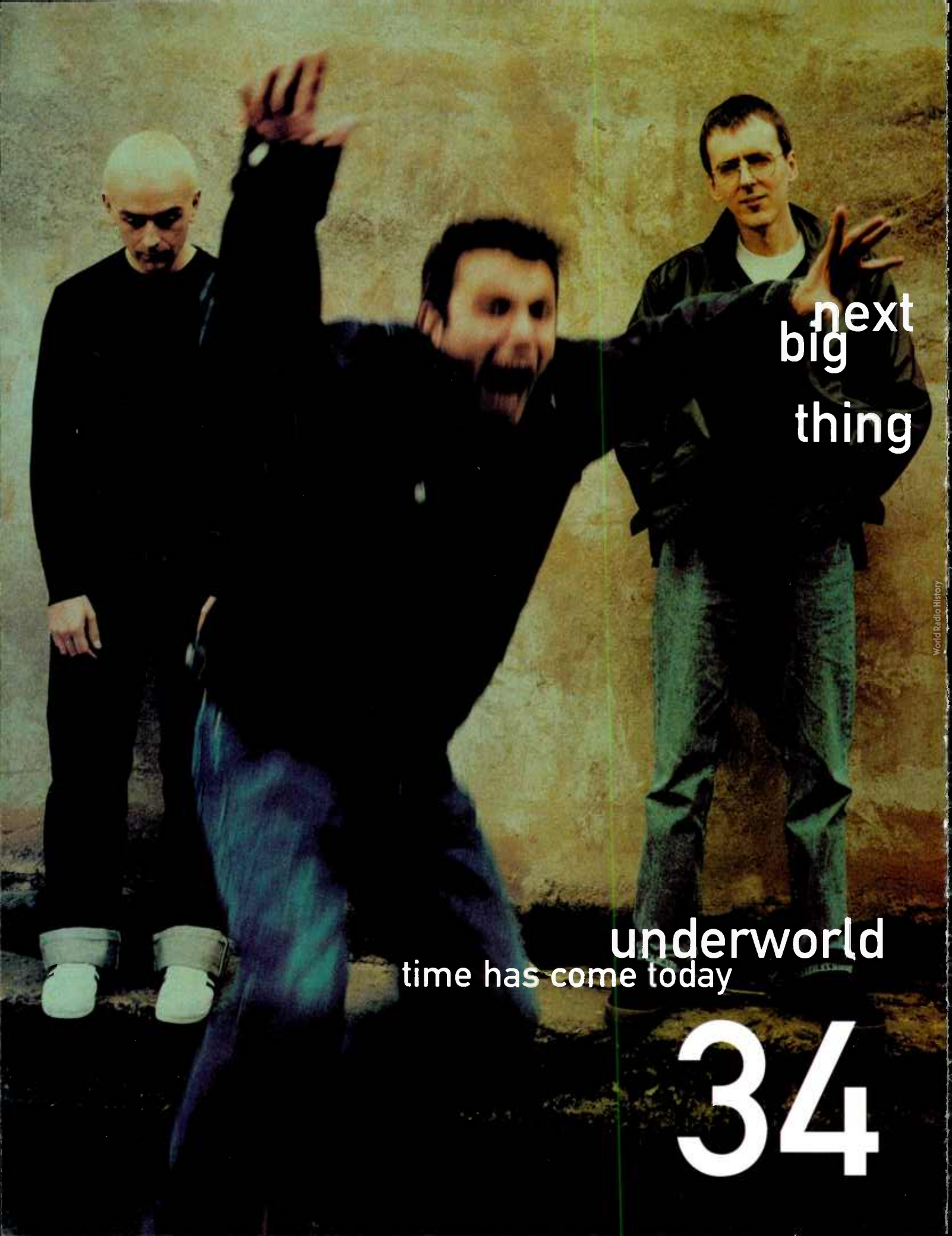
Tucker and Brownstein unconsciously testify to this anxiety hours after their performance at First Avenue. Across town at the 400 Bar, where fellow Pacific Northwestern group Hovercraft is playing a late-night set, the two overhear members of their tourmates the Hangovers talking about a friend who'd been denied entry to the sold-out Chicago show the previous evening. Tucker looks nearly distraught, and Brownstein asks, "Someone couldn't get into a show?"

Still, Sleater-Kinney didn't allow the threat of escalating fame to prevent the necessary evolution from its rawer origins to a more refined and potentially more mainstream sound. "[If] you try to go back and tap into what you perceived as your heights, that's when you can disappoint yourself and your fans," Brownstein says perceptively. "If we said, 'What were we thinking when we were writing *Call The Doctor*,' that'd be so dishonest. As long as we're tapping into something that's real and relevant, we're going to write good music."

"That's part of the reason that this record is coming out a little later than we may have wanted it to," Weiss adds. "The inspiration has to be there or we just wait. There's no timeline. There's no one breathing down our necks. It's all our own choices."

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underworld
time has come today

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a little research and development
makes a group that was once just a
footnote to the late '80s uk pop scene
the groove band of these times.

Cut to the late '80s. The Reagan/Bush/Thatcher years. Madonna is cool and Michael Jackson still vaguely resembles a carbon-based life form. But lurking beneath a seemingly stable business-as-usual façade are certain telltale signs of an impending crash. A swift proliferation of hair-farming metal bands in America has created an acute but short-lived shortage of spandex in the Western world. British synth-pop saturation has intensified to nearly toxic levels. Duran Duran has just spawned a side-project called Power Station.

"Ah, the curse of the late '80s," reflects Underworld's Karl Hyde in mock horror from his home base in the late '90s, the London building that houses Underworld's recording studio and the offices of the Tomato graphic arts collective he helped found. He's thinking, of course, of the days when he, then a singer/guitarist, and keyboardist Rick Smith were desperately seeking stardom as Underworld, a synth-pop band in the style of, oh, say, Heaven 17 or maybe Talk Talk. Having started the decade in an artier post-punk band called Freur, which issued two LPs on CBS, Hyde and Smith released two albums with Underworld on Sire, toured the US once, and broke up. "We started off with great intentions," Hyde points out. "But it somehow got watered down by the idea that there were systems by which you could become famous and make lots of money. And that just didn't work, at least not for us."

Cut back to the late-'90s. The Clinton/Gingrich/Lewinsky years, as they'll likely be remembered for generations to come. Madonna's still cool and Michael Jackson, well, let's just leave that one alone. The grunge, punk, and indie-rock that made moshing this generation's Twist have sucked every last bit of meaning from the word "alternative" and lost their relevance. Kids are dancing across the great divide that once separated the guitars of "Highway To Hell" from the techno grooves of Kraftwerk's "Autobahn." R.E.M. is using a drum machine.

The time, as they like to say, is right for Underworld. But, though Hyde and Smith are still at the helm, this isn't your older brother's Underworld. In fact, the two albums Underworld released on Sire in the late '80s aren't even mentioned in the group's official bio. Yes, the as-yet-untitled but completely finished new album Underworld will release on V2 in early 1999 will be promoted as its third full-length. But that's because Underworld mach 2—a trio also featuring DJ Darren Emerson—has already put out two CDs, *dubnobasswithmyheadman*, released in the UK in '93 and the US in '94 (Wax Trax!-TVT) and 1996's *Second Toughest In The Infants* (Wax Trax!-TVT). Indeed, when the trio toured this country behind *Second Toughest* it was billed as the group's first-ever swing through the

US, despite the fact that a band named Underworld and featuring Hyde and Smith had been Stateside back in '89.

"Yeah, well, it was really another band," Hyde explains. "We've brought some things along with us, but what we've become in the '90s is really a new thing. I mean, we had a couple of records on Sire as Underworld, and before that we had two records on CBS. But this was the one opportunity we had to do what we wanted to do. How many shots does someone normally get?"

Underworld got its second lease on life by plugging into what would become the post-grunge zeitgeist of the '90s early on, namely the DJ club culture that spawned everything from big beat sensations like the Chemical Brothers and Fatboy Slim, to junglists like Goldie and Roni Size, to rock cum techno acts like the Prodigy. As Hyde tells it, "When we started off we had a very specific idea: Rick wanted to work with a DJ. It had become very clear to us that over the years we'd been denying the fact that we were heavily into groove. In the '80s we would never dirty our hands by making music people could dance to. But it really became clear at the end of the decade that that's really what we'd always wanted to do, right from the beginning of Freur even. So Rick decided to work with a DJ and make music for the dance floor. And from that we could do our own market research, by having Darren play tapes and acetates on the dance floor when he was out spinning as a DJ. Then, we could go back and remix tracks ourselves, because fortunately Sire had left us with a recording studio when they dropped us, which was very nice of them. So we were very self-sufficient in that sense. We just wanted to make dance records—in the early '90s that was our greatest ambition. And then we just sort of seemed to make a career out of it."

A big part of what made possible Underworld's dance-music explorations, which have included forays

underworld

into everything from trance tracks to drum 'n' bass, is Tomato, the multi-media commercial arts collective Hyde and Smith created in the wake of the end of the first incarnation of Underworld. Tomato, which has grown to include nine members, has credits that include Nike television advertisements, a Rolling Stones album cover, various videos, and an art book titled *Mmm Skyscraper I Love You*.

"Tomato started off as a group of people who got together at the end of the '80s because we were either dropped from our labels or we had companies that were going bust or whatever," Hyde recalls. "It was based around a group of, for want of a much better term, graphic-based artists who were doing things like record sleeves and paper-based adverts. Then we moved on to doing TV commercials. Rick and I got involved in making the sound for the commercials. It helped us enormously with not having to compromise what we wanted to do musically with Underworld. You know, we could pay the rent quite nicely, run a company, and make the music that we wanted to with Underworld without having to worry about how it went over.

"So Tomato was very, very important in the formative years of Underworld. It helped us to do the things we really wanted to do rather than the things that we felt we should or needed to do to become pop stars. It's funny, as soon as we gave up trying to do well, we did well. Or, at least, as soon as we gave up trying to become famous and got on with the business of enjoying what we were doing with Underworld, we made our first profit and started to do well. I suppose it had a lot to do with taking on the attitude that it didn't matter how well Underworld did because as far as we were concerned we had a career with Tomato that we could earn nice money with. And I think it's true for a lot of people that as soon as you let go, that's when it starts to flow."

Two elements Underworld didn't entirely let go of when it took its '90s DJ plunge into a realm where synthetic-textured instrumentals are often the rule were Hyde's vocals and his guitar. Both lent a distinctly familiar flavor to the trio's first two albums, which helped blaze the trail for the sort of rock-techno fusions that have made the Prodigy such a hot commodity. "I think a lot of people who came to our concerts early on were coming to what was essentially a dance event for the very first time," Hyde hypothesizes. "They heard the *dubnobass* album, and they heard sounds on there that they could recognize from more traditional guitar-based music. And I think that opened a lot of new people up to dance music, simply because there was something familiar in the music for them to associate with."

The guitars, which have a much lower profile on Underworld's forthcoming CD, were and remain part of an equation formulated and then tweaked to meet the needs of the dance floor. "The truth of the matter is that, well, initially, what was great about having a DJ in the band is that he was instantly a sensibility that we had access to that we didn't understand," Hyde admits. "We felt groove and rhythms but we didn't understand what was happening on the dance floor. And we really didn't have the time to learn how to cut records and stuff. So, by having a DJ, we had someone to tell us what was going to work and what wasn't going to work.

"Then, as the years went by, having a DJ helped give us the confidence to do things that Rick and I might have steered clear of with a vengeance—things that might remind us too much of our past because they were too rock or too full of guitars. Darren would step in and tell us that it was really cool because he wasn't used to that sound. He was coming from a completely different background. His background was very old school hip-hop. That was very refreshing. He was a young guy who was giving us the confidence to mix up sounds that we would have just dumped.

"What's great about having Darren around now," Hyde continues, "is that outside of being in Underworld he's still DJing all over the world. He has something of an A&R-type vibe in that he can tell us what does and doesn't work on the dance floor. So if Rick and I are working on something we can check with him. Or we'll just give him a dub plate and he'll go play it at a club. And he can come back and tell you to leave it as it is, or to beef the kick drum up, or whatever. Basically, we have our own market research. We don't have to rely on a committee telling us what the kids want."

Of course, these days the kids want a lot of different things from a band, and reaching out to them entails doing more than just 12" dance singles. So Underworld has adapted and diversified, first by making albums that stand up as more than just singles collections, and then by putting together a dynamic live show that includes a fair amount of the sort of "playing" normally associated with more organic rock outfits. "There are really three elements to Underworld," Hyde points out. "We're a group that makes records for the dance floor very specifically; we're a group that makes full-length albums; and we're a group that plays live. And the music has developed to the point where live concerts are a big part of what we do."

Though you might not guess it from the synth 'n' beat-sequenced sound of the new tunes, which bring to mind the sort of rhythmically intense pop New Order was delving into back when it released "Confusion," Underworld's live shows were a big influence on the forthcoming CD, both in terms of how the tracks were conceived and how they were constructed. "Everybody in the crew is a live jammer, whether they're doing sound, lights, or whatever," Hyde explains. "Everything we do on stage is improvised. And that had a big impact on how we recorded the new album because we started the album after we'd just played a string of European festival dates. We set up our live equipment in one end of the studio and whenever we got stuck on an idea we'd just turn it on and jam. It's a lot of technology—a 56-channel mixing desk, vocoders, triggers, drum machines, samplers, and sequences—but it's accessible in a very live way. That allowed us to jam directly to the hard disk

(Continued on page 54)



next
big
thing

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VELVET goldmine

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THE CLASS OF '99

OUR LOOK AHEAD AT THE BANDS MOST LIKELY TO MAKE YOU FORGET HOW MANY TIMES YOU HEARD THAT PRINCE SONG ON NEW YEAR'S



SMOKE CITY'S NINA MIRANDA

SMOKE CITY

Does this seductive Euro-Latin cocktail have the rhythm to make the global village's hot spots sway?

"In Portugal they've really gone for it, because Portugal is right in the middle of what we're about," says Smoke City's Brazilian-born vocalist Nina Miranda. "We're based in London, with interests in Brazil. So we've got the Portuguese language, but it's the European spirit as well as the Latin spirit." Relying heavily on Brazilian rhythms and singing in English, French and Portuguese, Nina and her bandmates Marc Brown and Chris Franck fuse the warmth of Latin music with the cool of English trip-hop.

Although few in the US have heard *Flying Away*, the trio's enticing import-only debut, Smoke City is poised, both geographically and musically, to reach a wider audience in 1999. "We're just finishing our second album," continues Nina. "Apparently it's more mature, and it reflects the band as a whole. We've all had similar experiences this past year, leading like parallel lives, so when it comes to music, we're more intuitive, and it feels like all of our voices combined more."

Smoke City got a toe in the Stateside market last fall with an EP of remixes for its single "Underwater Love" (Jive), featuring reinterpretations by Aphrodite, Lionrock and others, followed by a track on *Red Hot + Rhapsody: The Gershwin Groove* and an appearance at the New York City concert in honor of the benefit record's release. "It was cool," recalls Chris of the trip. "We were very quiet, because we did something that was really acoustic. And we met up with our record company there, Jive, and [they] want to get behind this album more than the last one. We've just finished the



OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL

[new] album, but we're tweaking a couple of the tunes, which they want to release in America as well, and obviously they want them to be right for the market there. We might get a co-producer, just for two songs, so they can launch them in America and be happy with the sound."

No matter which producer is ultimately selected to satisfy Northern American ears, fans here will probably be drawn to Smoke City because of its effortless blend of styles, Nina's honeyed vocals and the seductive riptide of the group's Brazilian rhythms. "That's something that as far as me and Marc were concerned was very important," says Chris. "We'd both been to Salvador, in north of Brazil. Marc's been there to work with bands like Olodum and the kind of samba reggae, *afoxe*, tradition of there. And in that there's also samba, and bossa, and reggae, and all those things that combine through the more African traditions of rhythm, which we spend a lot of time individually understanding, trying to make sure that when we use the rhythms, we know what they're doing, rather than just throwing them together. But it is a really important part of Smoke City, because there's so much diversity in rhythm. It's such a deep thing. The more you get into it, the more exciting it gets."

"Feeling," Nina concludes. "[There's] so much feeling in [Brazilian] music, and the lyrics. It's music that gets to you under the hips and in the head, and in the heart." Just try resisting that.

>>> Lydia Vanderloo

OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL

This critics über-darling helped change the sound of indie rock. But are you ready for the next quantum leap?

If seeing the words "Elephant 6" on a record lead you to expect classically constructed songs and elaborate production on a shoestring budget, as on discs by Apples In Stereo and Neutral Milk Hotel, Olivia Tremor Control has a surprise in store. In February, Flydaddy will release OTC's *Black Foliage: Animation Music*, the experimental follow-up to the acclaimed *Dusk At Cubist Castle*. Throughout the album, the band's trademark bubble-gum psychedelia rubs up against thorny tape collages that combine whatever instruments were lying around the home-studio with contributions from the infamous "Black Swan Network" (in which listeners are encouraged to send in recorded descriptions of their dreams). It all culminates in "The Bark And Below It," an 11-minute mystery tour through a little-explored region between Pierre Henry and Raymond Scott.

Explaining the method behind his band's apparent madness from his porch in Athens, Georgia, OTC's Bill Doss says, "Experimentation is in the air around here; if you go and see a new band, it's as likely to be performance art as it is to be songs.

[Bandmate] Will [W. Cullen Hart] has been really into *musique concrète* lately, and while we were recording, he would sample bits of what we were doing and go home and make these compositions out of it. So everything on those parts of the record is sampled from the songs.

"The last album was the best of six or seven years of four-track recordings; this one is more cohesive. I think we're trying to dig a little deeper into the music, and into sound." And how will the Olivias do justice to this newfound depth on tour? "We've got big plans. We're going to try to learn how to play some of the collage parts, and intersperse them into the set. A lot of what Will did sounds like it could be in a '20s cartoon, so we're having our friend Joey Foreman make some films. We want to cut down on the stage banter; when someone has to tune, we'll show a film, and play some of the 'animation music', and then go into the next song. We want it to be one big experience."

However it translates to the stage, *Black Foliage* is certainly one big experience on record, and a challenging one to boot. It takes a careful ear to find the recurring elements (such as the xylophone theme that pops up in six versions of the title track), making for the kind of record that leaves much of the work of interpretation up to the listener. As Doss puts in the opening song, "In the blink of an eye you get several meanings."

>>> Franklin Bruno

MODEST MOUSE

Will these barnstorming indie heroes dance with the devil and sign to a major label?

Even as Modest Mouse's Isaac Brock is trying to figure out whether his band should sign to a major label or stay with its indie home, Up Records, he's got bigger fish to fry. Specifically, Satan.

"I was visited by the devil, I think three times, over the past couple weeks," he says, without a hint of irony. Later, it becomes clear that two of the three "visitations" occurred during Brock's sleep. "I think that [dreams are] just an easier place for that guy and his assistant to show up, because, you know, why should they bother making live appearances?"

"Who's his assistant?" I naively ask.

"His assistant's just this really nice guy," Brock explains, patiently. "He's pretty smooth, but a little too smooth. I was like, 'So how'd you get to be the devil's assistant?' and he was like, 'Well, I used to work for Merrill Lynch.'"

The wonderful thing about Brock's story is that he's not kidding. And the same imagination that conjured up a Lucifer with an investment banker as his assistant also conjures up amazing pop songs that are at once weird and irresistible. The

NEW YEARS REVOLUTIONS: DISCS TO SPIN IN '99

After releasing an album under his own name in '97 and a few singles since, Will "Palace" Oldham has acquired yet another alias, **BONNIE PRINCE BILLY**, for his 1999 album *I See A Darkness*, which will come out on his own Palace label. The disc is Oldham's most realized album since *Viva Last Blues*, albeit leaning toward the backporch sound of his earliest



BUILT TO SPILL

releases.... Longtime fans of **BUILT TO SPILL** can tell new initiates about the Boise, Idaho, group's proclivity for combining psychedelic guitar work with sweet pop melodies in ever-changing measure. What makes the trio's fourth album, *Keep It Like A Secret* (Warner Bros.), its best to date is that BTS has finally found the perfect proportions for those two ingredients.... A **DUST**

BROTHERS "greatest hits" disc will be released by the production duo's Mammoth-backed label. Ideal, in early summer. (Their Nicklebag label still operates, so when you call the office, they answer the phone "Ideal Nicklebag.").... "We are aware that things have obviously changed since we made [*Dig Your Own Hole*]." says **CHEMICAL BROTHERS'** Tom Rowlands of his group's highly anticipated next record, which Astralwerks expects to release in May. "More people are taking notice of what we do." He's not kidding. The duo's DJ-mix disc, *Brothers Gonna Work It Out*, debuted at number 95 on the Billboard album chart, which even more than Prodigy's #1 debut on the charts, is a significant harbinger of the electronic future.... Boasting a schedule that makes Henry Rollins look like a slacker, Irish immigrant DJ **DARA** ranks among the few statwarts most likely to break US drum 'n' bass at home. A leader on the NYC club scene since his arrival in the early '90s, he's got his finger in every pot. He co-owns the East Village record boutique *Breakbeat Science*, the first US store to specialize exclusively in the genre, he hosts *Velocity*, a live weekly Internet program, and he throws down his particular brand of hard, dark beats at clubs such as *Jungle Nation*. Meanwhile, his mellow, sexy originals are captured on his solo LP *Rinsimus Maximus* (Sm:)e Communications) and an imminent second album: he's also released mix compilations for *Moonshine* and *Rawkus* (the awesome *Renegade Continuum* series). Whew!... **FUNKY GREEN DOGS** Oscar Gaetan and Ralph Falcon, better known in house music circles as **MURK**, dropped a bomb on clubland in 1996 with their unstoppable *Get Fired Up*. Boasting the #1 Billboard singles "Fired Up!" and "The Way," the LP introduced the duo's stripped down sound to wider audiences than even their earlier smashes with *Liberty City* ("Some Lovin'") or their remixes for Madonna, Deee-Lite, RuPaul and Deborah Harry. The Dogs' follow up, *Star* (Twisted America), due in February, finds them delivering a consistently catchy program, with surprising twists and turns, but no gross concessions to the mainstream. "We wanted the end result to be something that all club DJs

could and would play," says Gaetan....

JOE HENRY writes the sort of songs—driven as much by the emotional states of his characters as his increasingly inventive way with a melody—that lead critics to claim that in a perfect world, he'd be famous. While global perfection is a long way off, Henry's is not: in March, Mammoth releases *Fuse*, which fully realizes the stylistic revelation of

'96's *Trampoline*, which eschewed his pensive country rock in favor of a more expansive, electric sound.... Twenty-year-old Jacques Lu Cont, alias **LES RYTHMES DIGITALES**, may not be quite as French as Air or Daft Punk (his parents are British, and he grew up in England), but his melange of new and old synth-pop sounds is catching on just as quickly. "I only got into the *Human League* about a year ago," he admitted to the UK press concerning his '80s fixation, "Heaven 17, New Order, Grace Jones—they were just getting to grips with this new digital era, and there's a naïveté and honesty to it that's been lost." Till now. If this spring's successor to his 1996 debut *Liberation* (*Wall Of Sound*) matches the exuberance of his recent single "Jacques Your Body (Make Me Sweat)," anticipate seeing skinny ties and

JOE HENRY



Seattle trio's tweaked pop sensibility is not a simple pleasure and its charms may elude you if you're looking for bright, bubbly tunes or Northwestern grunge rock. Its two albums find Brock's reverb-drenched, dizzyingly winding guitar parts buzzing alongside nasal vocals so punctuated that they would seem to defy melodicism—and yet they don't. There's always a hook hidden so cleverly in **Modest Mouse's** songs, snuck so stealthily inside the tangle of noise, that every time it pricks you, you'll curse yourself for not having found it sooner.

In less than three years, the group's unusual appeal has transformed it into one of the Northwest's most promising young bands. Its second full-length, *The Lonesome Crowded West*, has sold a healthy 27,000 copies since its release on Up near the end of '97. And with each successive touring loop around the country—and there were quite a few in 1998—Modest Mouse has become a stronger, more consistent live act.

"I went and played a college last night and I realized that I don't want to work for those people when I got older. And if something doesn't pan out, I'm going to be mowing their lawns or whatever. I doubt I'll be working for any of my deadbeat friends," says Brock, who has spent the past several months trying to figure out how he can make the music he wants and still pay the rent. So the question comes up: Will Modest Mouse sign to a major label in 1999? As the Magic 8-Ball might say: "All signs point to 'Yes.'" Which is not to say that, at press time, any ink had been leaked onto any dotted lines of any contracts with any of the music industry's big teams.

"They are pretty shitty. I mean they're corporations. But they could actually help me out quite a bit, I guess," says Brock, as if debating with himself over the subject, even as he claims to have made a decision. "I'm just going to make sure I get to do the exact same thing I'd be doing whether I'd be doing it with Up or for them. And I'm not going to sign with them if that's not the case. If it's going to affect the records that I get to put out, I'll get a job writing commercial jingles and still put out the records I want to instead."

But what of the devil? When Brock describes Satan and his assistant (the inspiration for a new Modest Mouse song, appropriately titled "Satan's Assistant") as "creepy guys in gray suits" who are a bit too schmoozy, I query whether it's possible that the devil represents the record label.

"That's been suggested," he says and pauses. "I don't know about that."

>>> Jenny Eliscu



MODEST MOUSE

PAT GRAHAM



BERNHARD VALLISSON

GUS GUS

Which will it be: listening to this nine-piece Icelandic conglomeration's music, watching its TV commercials or wearing its clothes?

Despite Iceland's proximity to the Arctic Circle, the long nights of Gus Gus' homeland seem to have no bearing on their productivity. When, or if, they ever sleep is anybody's guess. During the eight months the band has spent recording its sophomore album, tentatively entitled *This Is Normal*, the nine-member electronic ensemble also found time to remix other artists (Depeche

Mode, Blondie, Pizzicato Five, Björk), produce several television commercials (including a couple abroad for high-profile "hush-hush" clients), and even premiere a fashion line.

According to band member Baldur Stefánsson, *This Is Normal*—scheduled for an

early spring release on 4AD-Warner Bros., and preceded by the single "Ladyshave"—sounds "more mature. The production work and songwriting are getting warmer. The funky, soulful bits of Gus Gus are developing nicely."

Although Gus Gus's 1997 debut *Polydistortion* moved a modest 35,000 units in America, it set the stage for further inroads. "We didn't sell truckloads of the first album, but it was well received, especially among media, the industry, other artists, and people who are genuinely enthusiastic about music." Though reaching the general public would make life much easier, Baldur says that remains a secondary goal. "I would hope this record will be as well-received as the first one, but it's also more commercial than the first one."

Remarkably, the original nine-member line-up has remained intact. With two records under their belt, has the creative process gotten more streamlined? Apparently not. "It's chaos, complete chaos," he sighs. "There's no two ways about that."

>>> Kurt B. Reighley

GUIDED BY VOICES

Can Ric Ocasek's power pop production take Robert Pollard & Co. from the basement to your radio?

Robert Pollard is hoping that Ric Ocasek's production is just what he needs to finally become a pop icon. Ocasek's power-pop production smarts helped Weezer and Nada Surf score their four minutes of modern-rock radio fame, and Pollard, after nearly dozens of Guided By Voices records, wouldn't mind becoming a one-hit wonder.

"We've been trying to upgrade our sound quality over the last three years, and this is the final step in that process," Pollard says. "To tell you the truth, I'm perfectly happy just to bash the records out. That's fine with me. But we've gotten to the point in the evolution of GBV where we have this really hardcore fanbase, and we sell a certain amount of records. And it's gotten to be in the past few years that we sell that many records every time. It feels like we hit a wall."

So Pollard started playing the numbers. After decades of just pressing play and record on a basement four-track, on the forthcoming *Do The Collapse* (due in February on Matador-Capitol) Pollard and Ocasek recorded several radio-ready singles in a state-of-the-art, 48-track studio in New York City. And with a six-figure recording and promotion budget, Matador is banking that it can make one of those songs a hit.

If that doesn't happen, Pollard says it's fine with him. He would be content to stay at home in Dayton, Ohio, and make records just as quickly as he did when only his elementary school students knew his name. Nevertheless, he wanted one proper shot at pop stardom.

"If nothing changes, I don't see the point of trying to do it anymore and banging my head against the wall," he says. "We got Ric Ocasek to produce, and spent the money. If we do all these things and nothing happens, well, it's not going to happen."

Pollard says Ocasek helped slow him down. "I've always done the kind of recording where if it sounds good enough to me, I'll leave mistakes in there. We took the time to record everything right, to do vocals five or six times and choose the best one."

Do The Collapse has 19 songs, and 19 proper three-minute, hook-laden songs, he emphasizes—no cutesy experimental noise, no 30-second songs.

"I want to say that we gave it a shot. That we knew what we were capable of doing," says Pollard. "I've got Jim MacPherson (Breeders' *Last Splash*) drumming in my band now. He's got gold records on his wall. Well, I'd like to have one of those, too."

>>> David Daley



Fiorucci fashions on dance floors everywhere.... Those adoring Scottish cuties Belle & Sebastian will want to seek out the debut album from LOOPER, due out in March on Sub Pop. Looper, which released a 7" on Sub Pop last summer, is the project of B&S bassist Stuart David, the one who sings the talk-styled songs like "Spaceboy Dream" off *The Boy With The Arab Strap*. The ghost of Lou Reed never sounded so good.... In May, the MAGNETIC FIELDS will release their sixth album, an ambitious multi-CD set called *69 Love Songs* (Merge), with all of the tracks sequenced in alphabetical order (much like the bands in this column). To whet your appetite, in January, Merge will also be reissuing the group's lovely, and always hard to find, album *Holiday*, along with *The House Of Tomorrow EP*... Even elephants don't have gestation periods as long as



MAGNETIC FIELDS

MINISTRY's. It's been three years since the disappointing *Filth Pig*, which arrived four years after the release of *Psalm 69*. Typically, the duo of Al Jourgensen and Paul Barker was in the studio for over a year working on *The Dark Side Of The Spoon*, to be released in early spring on Warner Bros. The disc is said to feature Burroughs-like tape cut-up experiments and sample manipulation, but all involved claim that the "dark" sound will not even be on the same parade grounds as the electronica bandwagon.... The recording of *Evil Empire* almost caused the break-up of RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE. Can the group get through making its new, as yet untitled, record without raging at each other? All is suspiciously mum as the band works through its process of music first, then lyrics and then reworking the whole thing. The Brendan O'Brien-produced disc is tentatively scheduled for a March release on Epic.... SEBADOH initially earned its reputation for being one of this decade's weirdest and most inventive indie-rock bands. Hell, Lou Barlow virtually invented lo-fi. The band's past couple of records have seen it relaxing into a more mellow, pop-driven groove; on its new album, *The Sebadoh* (Sub Pop), look for terse pop songs from bassist Jason Loewenstein and weepy, lovelorn ballads from Barlow.... More than three years after the huge critical success of its debut album, *Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot*, Mark Linkous's SPARKLEHORSE will release its second long-player, *Good Morning Spider* (Capitol), in early February. The album, which has already seen much acclaim in England since its release last July, was recorded entirely in Linkous's 16-track home studio, where he played all of the parts (often on unconventional instruments like glockenspiels and toy organs) and labored over some tracks for as long as six months at a time.... Berlin quartet STEREO TOTAL is the band equivalent of Disneyland's "It's A Small World" ride, with members from France, Italy, Germany and Bohemia. On the group's eponymous 1998 US debut (on Bobsled), a compilation of its two European albums, the members sang in German, French, Japanese, Italian, sometimes even English. With elements of cabaret, new wave, garage rock and soundtracks informing its sound, *Stereo Total* is just as likely to launch into a Salt N' Pepa cover as one by Serge Gainsbourg. Purportedly, the band's April release, *Jukebox Alarm* (also on Bobsled), forsakes some of the scattershot eclecticism and focuses more acutely on *Stereo Total*'s slippery disco grooves. A US tour is scheduled for the spring, too.... Turntablist ROB SWIFT of the X-ecutioners has signed with Asphodel and will release his second album of turntable dynamics in February... Finnish funkster/urban streetwear designer JIMI TENOR, who released the irresistibly cheesy *Intervision* last year on Warp, will have his US debut released by Sire in February. Also keep an eye out for his nylon sweats and T-shirts: if the furry pink thing and gigantic glasses he wore at last winter's Warp Records Blech party in NYC is any indication of this one-man soul revue's fashion sense, color us intrigued!... VERBENA has made a powerful alliance since its debut album, *Souls For Sale* (Merge): Dave Grohl. The Alabama trio plied its scrappy, Southern-fried rock as an opening act for the Foo Fighters during that group's tour in the fall of '97, became labelmates with Grohl when it signed to Capitol this past spring, and hired him to produce its major label debut, which will be released in spring of '99.

END

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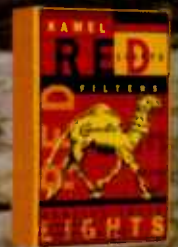


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AUTECHRE

LP 5
Warp-Nothing

Now that the dust is settling after the hubbub over electronica, a few auteurs have emerged as standouts. Along with Finland's Panasonic and the German nexus of Oval/Microstoria/Mouse On Mars, Britain's Autechre, a duo comprised of Sean Booth and Rob Brown, stands among those to have made genuine contributions to genre. Autechre's 1995 classic, *Tri Repetae*, set loose inhumanly metallic textures and beats so thin and sharp they nearly punctured the eardrums. The group's domestic return (last year's *Chiastic Slide* didn't receive US

OUT: October 6.
FILE UNDER:
Steely electronica.
R.I.Y.L.:
Aphex Twin, Mouse On Mars,
Panasonic, Oval.

release), *LP 5* bears the group's characteristic imprint. The opener, "Acroyear2," features frantically twitching shards of rhythm locked together to form an astonishingly complex mechanism. But, on the whole, the disc draws upon a broader palette than previous efforts and more clearly distinguishes the various sonic registers: rhythm, bass, harmony, and melody. The result is, oddly enough, less interesting, revealing that the pair's real talent lay in the intense exploration of a limited musical domain. Several tracks here come off as uninspired demonstrations of technical virtuosity. Tellingly, the record's highlights occur where the seams begin to show, as, for example, in the last few minutes of "Vose In," when the whole machinery falls apart and bits and pieces spin off in all directions.

>>> *Christoph Cox*



BAD LIVERS ★

Industry And Thrift
Sugar Hill

Are they slam-grass? Or y'all-ternative? These are trick questions. As the Bad Livers' aptly titled fifth full-length implies, Austinites Danny Barnes and Mark Rubin are simple, hard working, post-post-Dustbowl balladeers who put the country back in alt-country. Perhaps they're the Abbott & Costello (the lanky Barnes and the stout Rubin, respectively) of the Americana scene, but the Livers' vast charms remain intact as they infuse folk forms with ingenuity and verve. While they take a klezmer turn (the Rubin-arranged "A Yid Ist

OUT: October 12.
FILE UNDER:
Freshly mowed bluegrass.
R.I.Y.L.:
Beacon Hillbillies, BR5-49,
Flatt & Scruggs.

Geboren Inz Oklahoma") and offer an electric-blues rendering of the Flatt & Scruggs classic "Doin' My Time," the Bad Livers remain faithful to Merle Travis's "Cannonball Rag." Meanwhile, Barnes's nine originals maintain the depth, grace, and occasionally twisted humor fans have come to expect from him. *Industry And Thrift* delves into jazz turf (the untitled 13th track, the ragtime-y "Hollywood Blues"), understated beauty ("Anna Lee," "I'm Goin' Back To Mom And Dad"), tuba(!)-accented grinders ("Jalopy," "Lumpy, Beanpole & Dirt"), and straight-up pickin' mixed with deconstructionist skill ("Honey, I've Found A Brand New Way/It's All The Same With Me" and "I'm Convicted"). As talented and wily as ever, the Bad Livers continue to prove that American Gothic and the American garage band ethic go hand in hand.

>>> *Mark Woodlief*



BLOQUE

Bloque
Luaka Bop-Warner Bros.

To those whose musical interests seldom venture south of the Rio Grande, it will be refreshing to know that there's something out there besides Ruben Blades and José Feliciano and the parade of air-brushed, Chippendales-style male teen stars you see on Saturday afternoon Spanish-language television shows. That's what brings us to Columbian rock band Bloque. There's nary a syllable of English to be found on the group's American debut, but it's also one of the most sonically interesting albums to come out this year. Bloque blends a rich,

OUT: October 6.
FILE UNDER:
Latin-flavored psychedelic funk.
R.I.Y.L.:
Latin Playboys, Money Mark,
Os Mutantes.

dense mess of riotous guitars with crazed vocals (singer Ivan Benavides actually sounds a little like Cypress Hill's B. Real) and over-the-top percolating rhythms. "Nena" playfully turns the heavy descending chords of the Led Zepplin version of the Joan Baez/folkie chestnut "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" into an insinuating Latin romp, while "Majaná" sounds like the song Fishbone would cut after listening to a stack of African juju records. In one sense, Bloque could be the heirs to South American sounds such as legendary Brazilian psychedelic band Os Mutantes, or the lesser-known jazz-funk of Opa or Edu Lobo. And even in translation, a pun for a song title like "Daño En El Baño" (Damage In The Bathroom) is enough to cause the most jaded of English-only souls to crack a smile.

>>> *James Lien*



BLUETILE LOUNGE

Half-cut
Smells Like

Any musician will tell you—playing slow is hard. Think of how many times you've heard a singer or drummer count off, "One, two, three, four!" before launching into a song. Keeping the beat is tough work, but keeping it when it's moving glacially is nearly impossible. That is why groups like Bluetile Lounge work on more than the level of pure pleasure. Knowing that the members of this Australian band are in such clear mental union with one another and hearing the richness of detail that such telepathy affords is a reward in itself.

OUT: October 6.
FILE UNDER:
Slow and steady wins the race.
R.I.Y.L.:
Red House Painters, Low,
Codeine.

They give you the sensation of being lifted free from your anxieties—suddenly able to become the music itself. The cold washes of guitar give an expansive backdrop to the bass meanderings and tinny cymbal flourishes. A piano ripples through the guitar tides. The singing, though soft and gorgeous, may be the only less-than-stellar element of Bluetile's slow-rock formula. Daniel Erickson's voice is a dead ringer for that of Red House Painter Mark Kozelek (which is a nice thing), but it is buried so deeply into the mix that it always seems to be crawling out from beneath the song. It would be nice to be able to hear what these majestic, crystalline songs are about.

>>> *Lois Maffeo*



MARK BORTHWICK/ HOLLAND

Synthetic Voices Soundtrack
Darla

OUT: October 6.
FILE UNDER:
Pop fragmented into art.

R.I.Y.L.:
Early Guided By Voices, Holiday,
weirder New Order.

Mark Borthwick is a visual artist and photographer; hollAnd is a one-man band that's recorded with a handful of Washington, DC-area indie-rock types (including Tsunami's Jenny Toomey and Rob Christiansen of Eggs/Grenadine, who appear here). Their collaboration, made to accompany Borthwick's gallery shows, documents hollAnd's recent cut-up technique, the premise of which is that once you have a texture—a couple of little riffs, a hook, a synth sound—then you can

construct a simulacrum of a song out of it: something that's not quite an actual composition in the familiar sense, but can pass for it. That can mean a phrase or two repeated ad infinitum, or not-quite-lyrics twisted backwards and sideways, or a song condensed to a few slivers and rearranged around non-sequitural spoken-word interludes. It's as if hollAnd were suggesting that pop songs are too easy to make—that they're more interesting if you break them open and mangle them—but the variation and flow of *Synthetic Voices Soundtrack* make a good argument for it. As for Borthwick, his main contribution seems to be the four color photographs that come with the package, but they complement it as deliciously as Peter Schmidt's paintings fit Brian Eno's *Before And After Science*. >>> Douglas Wolk



CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO

12° Of Freedom
Thrill Jockey

OUT: October 20.
FILE UNDER:
Mild-mannered free jazz.

R.I.Y.L.:
Tortoise, Dirty Three, Other
Dimensions In Music, Art
Ensemble Of Chicago.

The voice of Martin Luther King calls out, "We're gonna win our victory for freedom" at the beginning of "January 15th," the standout track of the Chicago Underground Duo's debut album, *12° Of Freedom*. The message, with Chad Taylor's drums pulsing rhythmically and Robert Mazurek's subdued cornet about to crawl in, has as much to do with musical freedom as with human freedom. Whereas plenty experimental music can be overbearing, Mazurek and Taylor explore the more serene aspects of jazz without boring the listener. Both players are veterans of the Chicago jazz scene and members of the Chicago Underground Orchestra. The duo is actually at its best when it's a trio, when guitarist Jeff Parker (also of Tortoise, Isotope 217 and Chicago Underground Orchestra) sits in on three tracks. Parker's buzzing guitar makes tracks like "Lemon Grass" and "Waiting For You Is Like Watching Stillness Grow Into Enormous Wings" as interesting as their titles. While this group truly fits into the legacy of Chicago exploratory music, which includes Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Fred Anderson, Tortoise, Gastr Del Sol, NRG Ensemble and many others, Mazurek and Taylor forge their own identity and style.

>>> Daniel Piotrowski



CADALLACA

Introducing Cadallaca
K

OUT:
September 29.
FILE UNDER:
Aggressive girl group garage
rock.
R.I.Y.L.:
Sleater-Kinney, Scrawl,
Cold Cold Hearts.

Cadallaca teams Sleater-Kinney's Corin Tucker with Sarah Dougher and drummer "sts" of Portland, Oregon's Lookers, retaining enough of the S/K spark to reel in existing fans while leaving plenty of space to craft its own identity. Cadallaca dresses to the nines and adopts the stage names Dusty, Kissy, and Junior, but this is more than a kitschy girl group send-up. Although their '60s forebears provide a foundation and inspiration, Cadallaca imbues its songs with a dollop of '90s aggression grafted onto sentimentality and vocal richness not normally associated with riot grrrls. Dougher's Farfisa organ is the dominant

instrument, lending a vintage garage-y feel that meshes nicely with Tucker's familiar guitar sound. Tucker takes lead vocal duties on most of the disc's ten songs, and her powerful, distinctive voice emerges as the focus of attention. She's a rare example of a quality screamer who has actually benefited from voice lessons. Dougher is no slouch in the pipes department either, and the duo's interlocking harmonies accentuate some solid songwriting and provide several of the album's highlights. Many a side project has been forgotten within months, but *Introducing Cadallaca* has the potential to hold a spot on the CD shelf even after the new Sleater-Kinney album arrives this winter. >>> Glen Sarvady



DUB PISTOLS

Point Blank
1500-A&M

OUT: November 3.
FILE UNDER:
Electronic pastiche with an
attitude.
R.I.Y.L.:
Public Enemy, Beastie Boys'
Hello Nasty, Tricky.

If Fatboy Slim and the Propellerheads, with their high-energy, every-night-is-party-night riffs and arpeggiated beats, have come to define the breakbeat sound, then the Dub Pistols are their moody, more political cousins. On *Point Blank*, the group's domestic debut, the Pistols stake their claim as one of the preeminent electro-rock groups, with an edgy blend of dub reggae, rap, electro and hip-hop and, yes, breakbeats. Few bands are able to genre-surf as much as the Pistols do while still achieving a sense of cohesion. On the opening track, a Cypress Hill-inspired rap called "Unique Freak," frontman Barry Ashworth preaches anarchy in a laid-back tone above a cacophony of electronic sound. "Cyclone" merges ska with electronic sounds, and "Towerblock Trash" likewise introduces reggae into the sonic palette. "Westway," meanwhile, is pop for the next millennium, with its incendiary use of sampling, keyboard and breakbeat riffs, and bass lines that suck you in. By maintaining an energized chip on the shoulder throughout, the Dub Pistols appeal to the angst-ridden teenager trapped inside all of us. And by utilizing their musical influences as well as they do, they make *Point Blank* a groove bomb to be heard 'round the world.

>>> William Werde



EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

Ende Neu
Nothing-Interscope

OUT: October 20.
FILE UNDER:

Melodic convergence of man and machine.

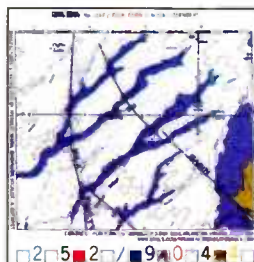
R.I.Y.L.:

Talking Heads' *Remain In Light*, Faust, Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*.

On *Ende Neu*, the original deconstructionist ethic of Germany's Einstürzende Neubauten has yielded to a softer, more seductive, song-first approach. The band's first domestic album in almost six years is filled with beautiful songs and endlessly interesting sounds made thought provoking with repetition and expansion. "Installation No. 1" recalls the Talking Heads' *Remain In Light* with its insistent circular layering of rhythms and percussive guitar riffs. Woven together with a string section culled from the Brussels Symphony

Orchestra, "Stella Maris" is a delicate, moving duet between EN vocalist Blixa Bargeld and singer-actress Meret Becker. As usual for Einstürzende, noises abound, but here they're never clangorous; for example, the band cleverly substitutes the sound of pencil-scratched cursive for a few verse lines in "Die Explosion Im Festspielhaus." The 11-minute masterpiece, "NNNAAAMMM" ("New No New Age Advanced Ambient Motor Music Machine"), wends around the chunking and pitch shifting of different motors running together. *Ende Neu* reveals Einstürzende Neubauten wielding musical smirks and arched eyebrows instead of frenetic, chainsawed excess. The result couldn't be more amazing.

>>> Anne Marie Cruz



FLIN FLON

A-OK
TeenBeat

OUT: October 12.
FILE UNDER:

Post-punk sexiness.

R.I.Y.L.:

Pylon, Scritti Politti, Pell Mell.

True Love Always drummer Matt Datesman rounding out its lineup, Flin Flon delivers post-punky, one-note-at-a-time tunes, with short lyrical declarations that expose sinister longings and racy moments stolen from commonplace days. The bass effects suggest England 1984 with their Shreikback-y circularity, the chicken peck guitar notes say Pylon or the early Rough Trade bands, and Robinson's words are as beautiful and messed-up as always. In "Odessa," the same song that states the desire to see someone undressed save for an ascot, he maintains, "Your parents won't object to me." (Unless they found out about the ascot game, I'd venture.) The ten songs of *A-OK* are all named for small towns in Canada and all (except the last) feature a dearth of chords. They are clean and utterly engaging to the point that you'll soon be saying, "Un-what?"

>>> Lois Maffeo



FAMOUS MONSTERS

In The Night!!!
Bongload

OUT: October 20.
FILE UNDER:

Bela Lugosi's beach blanket bingo.

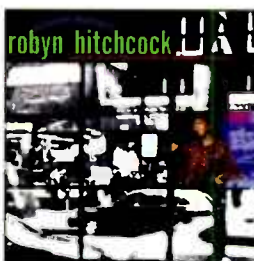
R.I.Y.L.:

Cramps, Demolition Doll Rods, Shonen Knife.

Technically, guitarist Sean "Devil Doll" Yseult (ex-White Zombie) is the only famous monster here, but that doesn't stop her and bandmates Katie "Vampire Girl" Campbell (guitar) and Carol "She-zilla" Cutshall (drums) from trashily delivering this reverb-drenched surfabilly collection. While former bandmate Rob "Zombie" Straker is under the impression that he's some goth-metal messiah, Yseult is letting her hair down with girl group-meets-The Munsters madness. With inspired—and slightly coy—amateurism, *In The Night!!!* celebrates bar culture ("Bloody Mary"), car

culture ("Outerspace Deathrace #13"), and beach culture ("Murder Beach U.S.A.") while paying homage to Cheap Trick (covering "Clock Strikes Ten") and Saturday morning cartoons like Groovy Ghoulies. Sure, the record's kind of a kitschy joke (is that a kazoo solo on "Hairy Eyeball"?). But get this straight: It's a good, rollicking, unpretentious joke that reaffirms Rock's First Principle—anybody can do this! From sexy Euro goo-goo-muck ("Oui Monstre, Oui") to Man Or Astro-man? homage ("Vampire Cosmonaut"), Famous Monsters thankfully understand that taking yourself too seriously is not the point. The point is to rock, and *In The Night!!!* certainly does.

>>> Mark Woodlief



ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Storefront Hitchcock
Warner Bros.

OUT: October 27.
FILE UNDER:

Musical and spoken streams of consciousness.

R.I.Y.L.:

Syd Barrett, Spalding Gray, Epic Soundtracks.

In December 1996, film director Jonathan Demme staged cult English songwriter Robyn Hitchcock in an abandoned building with his back to a NYC storefront window and filmed a series of performances. The soundtrack strips Hitchcock's Byrds-y psychedelic bent to simple guitar, electric or acoustic, with occasional help on violin or second guitar, so the arrangements replicate those on studio albums like *Moss Elixir* and *Eye*. But half—or more—of the charm of a Hitchcock performance comes from the between-song patter, and the darkly humorous and surprisingly cynical monologues distinguish this album from Hitchcock's others. On the CD version (there's an alternate vinyl one), his surreal vision connects minotaur, duct tape, gravity-resistant human projectiles, and subway panics in one two-minute narrative. He's preaching to the converted, though—not a good sign for someone who imagines churches filled with rotting carcasses and sadistic priests. The performances won't broaden Hitchcock's cult or reconfirm past brilliance, although the four new songs, including "1974," number among the album's best and hold promise for next year's Jon Brion-produced studio album. Otherwise, *Storefront Hitchcock* is a gift for fans, who won't mind something a bit shopworn from their beloved Robyn.

>>> Steve Klinge



JONNY L

Magnetic
XL

XL Recordings, the label that brought Prodigy—and with it, breakbeats—to global recognition, is now developing a prodigy of a different sort: the prodigious drum 'n' bass talent of Jonny L. But while Prodigy's *The Fat Of The Land* married dancefloor beats with shout-out choruses and an MTV-ready image to comfortably welcome alt-rockers to electronica, *Magnetic's* spastic bass lines and frenetic hi-hats reflect the sounds of UK dancefloors, and damn the mainstream if it's not ready. For the last few years, DJs

such as Grooverider, Goldie and Micky Finn have been spinning Jonny L's records for underground audiences, but here he is pushing boundaries. For example, "20 Degrees" is home to both Silvah Bullet's authoritative rapping and Jonny L's raw beats. On "Accelerate," the sensual tones of Deee-lite's Lady Miss Kier mix with urgent kick drums for a pleasure-pain dynamic DeSade might recommend. And when you listen to "Viper," a production tag-team with the revered Optikal, get ready to move the coffee table and mind those ceiling tiles, because you're gonna dance, and it ain't gonna be pretty. Push your treble levels up and get the bass even higher: If you think your stereo can handle it, *Magnetic* will take you for a thrashing good ride.

>>> William Werde



MOMUS

The Little Red Songbook
Le Grand Magistry

Momus (né Nicholas Currie) has always walked the fine line between clever and annoying, and this time he's ended up on the wrong side. The musical concept of *The Little Red Songbook* is "Analog Baroque," meaning retro Moog sounds topped off with way-retro synth-harpsichord—a cute idea, certainly. But here's the problem: The British songwriter's best work usually swings from some grand intellectual joke, but ultimately turns out to have dramatic emotional depth underneath its façade of

epater-le-bourgeois decadence. Here he goes for cleverness time after time, and never goes further. Some of his jokes are pretty funny the first time (e.g. M.C. Escher as "the impossible rapper.") But Mr. Currie is too busy zooming for the punch line to develop his lyrics any further, and when he starts a song, "What is the cultural meaning of coming in a girl's mouth," you just want to slap the guy. The melodies also fall short: The only tunes that rank with his best here are a couple originally written for the Japanese singer Kahimi Karie, including "The Symphonies Of Beethoven," whose words—the most fully realized here—conflate *A Clockwork Orange* with its soundtrack. It shows that his gifts are still intact, but too often here he takes them for granted.

>>> Douglas Wolk



MACHA

Macha
Jetset

A funny thing happened on the way to the global village. As rock fans continue their search for something new and unusual, indie rock has taken a shine to cultural imperialism. In some cases the results can't possibly be taken seriously (e.g. the Dub Narcotic Sound System); in others they are quite sublime. Enter Macha, a band that soars with ecstatic delight—when it doesn't sink under its own weight. Though the group's new self-titled album is a dense, indulgent affair, you still have to applaud Macha's editing skills. The band

takes the Sun City Girls' penchant for eastern mysticism, but leaves SCG's peculiar brand of "humor" behind. Likewise Macha slithers along with Tortoise-like sophistication, while dropping (most of) that band's muso pretenses. Macha's knack for unorthodox instrumentation—sometimes featuring vibes and hammered dulcimer as lead instruments—pleases as consistently as it surprises. And the between song noises—conversations, bird calls—add genuine dynamic breadth, where similarly employed segues have fallen flat so many times before. Macha's arrangements are a touch too mannered at times, but its psychedelic yearnings for new sounds, perspectives and modalities are sure to yield some pretty great results down the line.

>>> Matt Hanks



OFFSPRING

Americana
Columbia

Voice like a wood-champing power drill. Snotty me-versus-you attitude that—in his high school days—probably spelled countless afternoons of detention. A diabolical subversive wit that can unearth humor from the gravest of situations. Heck, what's not to like about loudmouth quasi-punk Dexter Holland and his college-educated SoCal outfit, the Offspring? Invite the guy to your next beer bash, and you'll have either one incredibly intellectual discussion or an all-out, tooth-loosening

brawl—there is no safe inbetween. But that's Holland's stock-in-trade—social commentary that's so cool and aloof it borders on jock baiting. And *Americana* offers more of the ornery same, songs that read like snippets from Ed Anger's "My America" columns in the *Weekly World News*: sensitive parental-blame Betty can't break free of her PC dysfunction ("She's Got Issues"); Gen-X slugs liberally salt themselves with it's-all-so-hopeless negativity ("Why Don't You Get A Job?"); suburban mall-rats spend hours emulating hip-hop street moves ("Pretty Fly (For A White Guy)"). The stories are set to power-chord clanging that's more AC/DC than it is Adolescents, and—after a couple of spins—you really hate Holland's pointedly uncool characters, while loving how he coldly dissects them. If the man's voice, attitude, and humor annoy you, good—his mission is accomplished.

>>> Tom Lanham



ORANJ SYMPHONETTE

The Oranj Album
Rykodisc

Do session players ever get the desire to bash the hell out of the long-established standards they so dutifully play? If Oranj Symphonette is any indication, a lot of their day-job time must be spent daydreaming of a loving revenge. The five members of Oranj Symphonette have a sterling resume between them (they met while recording Tom Waits's score to *Night On Earth*, and have backing-musician credits ranging from Bill Frisell and Club Foot Orchestra to PJ Harvey and Jewel), but *The Oranj Album* sees them gleefully taking a machete to their bread and butter.

Their first album (*Plays Mancini*) was purely devoted to Henry Mancini's compositions, but here they expand their range. *The Oranj Album* is a collection of famous film music from the '60s and '70s—by composers ranging from Burt Bacharach and more Mancini to Quincy Jones and Elmer Bernstein—contorted into groove-heavy avant-jazz extrapolations. Many tracks have a funky foundation or a surly twang, but each one has a slightly different flavor. And many cuts swirl a different taste into every bite—"Dreamsville" lurches fluidly from klezmer-meets-cartoon-jazz into a cello solo and then into cocktail jazz with occasional tango breaks. >>> *David Jarman*

OUT: October 13.

FILE UNDER:

Deconstructo-jazz instrumentals.

R.I.Y.L.:

Critters Buggin', Tuatara, Jazz Passengers.



PLASTIKMAN

Artifakts (BC)
M_nus-Novamute

Richie Hawtin produced a couple of the finest, darkest and most minimal techno albums of the last year in Concept 1's 96:CD (a collection of the singles he released under that name) and Plastikman's *Consumed*. The latter, especially, is sublimely creepy, with its beats and bass flickering around the surface of the mix like ghosts. So it's a little surprising that *Artifakts (BC)*—recorded before *Consumed*, and originally intended as an album called *Klinik*, the conclusion of the "trilogy" of Plastikman albums that started with

OUT: November 3.

FILE UNDER:

Stripped-down electronics.

R.I.Y.L.:

Panasonic, Concept 1, A Guy Called Gerald.

Sheet One and *Musik*—is so forthright about its rhythms. The beats and notes here are quick and skinny sounding, but they're not subliminal. "Hypokondriak" phase-shifts a simple drum pattern like an acid-house groove; "Rekall (TBC)" even has a few identifiable note patterns. Still, a few pieces experiment with mechanical repetition, especially "Skizofrenik," whose collapsing-plastic sounds gradually morph into swerving percussive crosstalk, and the open-the-pod-bay-doors-Hal bass of "Psyk"—but they loop, and loop, and then the track's done. Hawtin is capable of making records that sound like most of the mix is barely out of the range of perception, but too much of *Artifakts* just sounds unfinished. >>> *Douglas Wolk*



Mike Scott
Still Burning

The new album from the former leader of The Waterboys. Out now with four bonus tracks.



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RAE & CHRISTIAN
Northern Sulphuric Soul
 Sm:)e

As founders of the trendy Manchester Grand Central label, Mark Rae & Steve Christian have scored a healthy underground rep via their platinum production credits for the likes of Red Snapper, the Pharcyde and Natalie Imbruglia. *Northern Sulphuric Soul*, their inspiring album debut, fuses smoldering vocals and edgy raps with hip-hop rhythms, samples, and chunks of jazz, funk, and soul. Flexing its remixer muscle, the duo enlists the talents of a disparate posse of guest artists; the Jungle Brothers weigh in with cool old school rhymes, while

OUT: October 13.

FILE UNDER:

Acidic trip-hop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Soul II Soul, Massive Attack, Guru.

YZ's paranoid rap prayer segues unexpectedly into the dreamy vocals of Texas's Sharleen Spiteri. But it's the pair's collaborations with gospel-trained singer Veba that lifts this album to a higher plane. Her raw, intense delivery on "Fool" and "All I Ask" invite favorable comparisons with Shara Nelson of Massive Attack fame. Indeed, this album cops much of its trip-hop blueprint from those Bristol avatars. Unlike the landmarks *Blue Lines* or *Protection*, though, moments on *Sulphuric Soul*, particularly the weaker instrumental-driven tracks, fizzle lifelessly. Even so, treats like "Flip The Mic," on which Jeru The Damaja finesses full-force raps over mellow beats, show that Rae & Christian's star is clearly rising. >>> Sarah Pratt



SCARNELLA
Scarnella
 Smells Like

Carla Bozulich possesses one of the great cathartic screams in rock 'n' roll, but she restrains it in her work with Scarnella, her anagrammatically monikered project with Nels Cline. These sidelining Geraldine Fibbers offer a collection dominated by quiet meditations and gradually accelerating guitar improvisations; most of the pieces follow a loosely structured arc of spontaneous creation, both instrumentally and lyrically. "Snowy (About A Cat)," for instance, takes half of its 12 minutes to juxtapose sparse tones and feedback

OUT: November 5.

FILE UNDER:

Impressionistic improvisations.

R.I.Y.L.:

Geraldine Fibbers, Sonic Youth, Patti Smith.

before becoming an introspective ballad based on echoing guitar lines. Scarnella's music has a fragile beauty at its core even when it explores the sonic possibilities of tunings, feedback and effects. And Cline is a master innovator, avoiding flash while still emitting brilliance, whether with melodic acoustic patterns on the understated "Underdog" or with electric noises on "Death By Northwest." He's a perfect foil for Bozulich's edgy voice, which here favors a world-weary melancholy over moments of punkish joy (the Fibberish "Dandelions"). While Bozulich and Cline don't offer the catharsis mastered in their work in the Fibbers, Scarnella rearranges their signature elements into challenging interludes of moody tension. >>> Steve Klinge

OK he's in the jazz section, but don't hold that against him.

Critics and fans all say the same thing: Brad Mehldau is the man. He's been universally hailed as the most important jazz pianist to emerge in decades, working with the likes of Willie Nelson, k.d. lang, Scott Weiland and Joshua Redman.

Songs is all about truly visionary and unexpected musical choices, including Radiohead's "Exit Music (For A Film)" and Nick Drake's "River Man," plus a lunar version of "Young At Heart," where the trio is joined by a pair of wind-up music boxes.

BRAD MEHLDAU

Songs: Art Of The Trio, Volume Three

Brad Mehldau piano
 Larry Grenadier bass
 Jorge Rossy drums

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MIKE SCOTT
Still Burning
Steady

Fans of '80s college rock probably toss Mike Scott into the "Where Are they Now?" file. At one point, about 15 years ago, it seemed like his band the Waterboys was going to be the next U2, with their a mix of angry, introspective folk and arena rock theatrics: trumpets blared, chords rang out and the drums sounded like they were exploding. Then on the Waterboys' third album, *Fisherman's Blues*, Scott's infatuation with Celtic music took over and many fans abandoned ship. Somewhere along the line, the frontman also found

OUT: October 6.
FILE UNDER:
 Epic folk-rock.
R.I.Y.L.:
 Early Waterboys, Van Morrison, the Alarm.

God. It's hard to say if there's a direct correlation, but Scott's subsequent releases as the Waterboys and as a solo artist have been too corny to stand up with the angst-driven, early material. That is, until now. Yes, the "big music" is back. *Still Burning*, Scott's second solo album, features those heroic horns, sharp orchestra hits and thunderous build-ups just like you remember them. The lyrics aren't quite as clever or vicious as they used to be, but they still have some bite. In the album closer, "Since I Found My School," Scott sings: "I'm alone, I'm in bits/Got no home, got no hits/But it's cool." Just like that old pretentious college chum you run into on the street, he's older, wiser and just as lost as he ever was.

>>> Neil Gladstone



SCOTT 4 ★
Recorded In State
V2

Scott 4 takes its name from enigmatic English folk-pop crooner Scott Walker's 1969 LP, but this Brit band borrows its style from American new-schoolers trafficking in blues/hip-hop/country hybrids. Scott Blixen's world-weary raps lack the fluidity of his transatlantic counterparts, but his throaty baritone is malleable enough to set the tone for the vibrant mix of twangy shuffles, back-porch ballads and swaggering rockers on *Recorded In State*. As a band, Scott 4 is up to the genre-bending task, peeling off taut riffs that get

OUT: November 10.
FILE UNDER:
 Beatbox country blues.
R.I.Y.L.:
 G. Love & Special Sauce, Beck's *Mellow Gold*, Railroad Jerk.

swallowed into atmospheric shifts in "Deutsche LP Record," sauntering through folky swamplands in the downtempo "Aspirins" and juxtaposing acoustic guitar and drums with spiraling loops in "Kingdom To Dust." The disc's most memorable song, "East Winter," spins up a mesmerizing groove that dissolves into an offbeat chorus backed by a "yeah, yeah" response that sounds like it's induced from a group of bemused teens who were given a few shillings for their troubles. The song also contains Blixen's best performance, as he tunes into a frequency that crosses Beck with Tom Waits and barks out the line: "Maybe we could hit the road, y'know/But the car got broke several months ago."

>>> Richard Martin

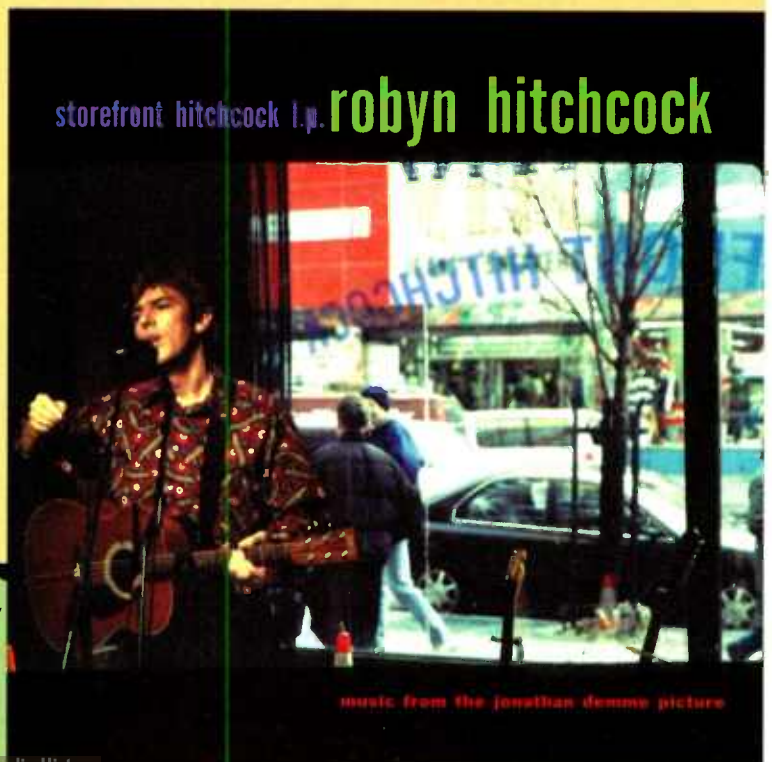
"Robyn Hitchcock is the Lewis Carroll of the Millennium." — Jonathan Demme

storefront hitchcock

music from the jonathan demme picture



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SPAHN RANCH

Beat Noir
Cleopatra

With Trent Reznor's gradual mutation into label-head and soundtrack guru, and most of industrial dance music's other standard-bearers' descents into break-up or bloat, the genre has fallen on some hard times. About all that's left is indistinguishable third-generation bands (Gravity Lives Westward?) using their vocoders, 4/4 beats, metal guitars, and samplers to create reasonable facsimiles of what's been done, minus the intensity and innovation. Lurking off to the side throughout the '90s, though, has been Spahn Ranch. This LA band doesn't exactly stand head and

OUT: November 3.

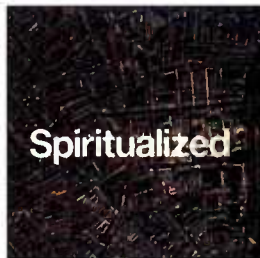
FILE UNDER:

Industro-pop with techno twists.

R.I.V.L.:

Front 242, Front Line Assembly, Underworld.

shoulders above the industro-rabble, but it has managed to keep its act unencumbered by teen-angstful post-Reznorisms. Spahn Ranch uses a stripped-down sound that might border on low-tech. Sometimes it draws on the pounding minimalism of recent hard-trance techno; sometimes it heads back towards industrial dance's new wavey early days—either way, the group stays very mindful of the genre's Kraftwerk-and-Cabaret Voltaire roots. Athan Maroulis's vocals are usually understated (he outright croons in a few places). Throughout *Beat Noir*, the focus isn't on ersatz bile and bad vibes, but (as it should be) on driving beats, surreal effects, and melody. >>> David Jarman



SPIRITUALIZED

Live At The Royal Albert Hall
Dedicated-Arista

Spiritualized has always been about rock 'n' roll excesses. Not the tabloid-worthy type reveled in by bands like Marilyn Manson and Oasis, but excesses in sound, stretching the edges of a song into outer space with the help of guitar effects, horns and strings, and lyrics equally suggesting drugs and spirituality. In fact, balancing the transcendent heights attainable through music and, uh, enhanced states of being with the grim realities of life in the '90s seems to be a major preoccupation for bandleader Jason Pierce (formerly of

OUT: November 10.

FILE UNDER:

Live in outer space.

R.I.V.L.:

The Verve, Radiohead, Mercury Rev.

Spacemen 3). Thus the extravagance of this beautifully recorded two-CD live set, on which the six-piece band is air-lifted by a string quartet, a brass section, a gospel choir and the pristine setting of London's crown jewel performance space, is fitting. Drawing heavily on 1997's *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*, Spiritualized drifts through the 15 songs like a cotton bud floating on a continuous breeze, billowed up when Pierce's ruminations become prayer-like, thrust downward when the guitar pedals start flapping and the volume escalates. And if you share Pierce & Co.'s sonic preoccupations, you'll find yourself happily immersed in these further developed, though not radically different, live renditions. >>> Lydia Vanderloo

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STEREOLAB

Aluminum Tunes
Drag City

Stereolab fans never have to wait long for another batch of fresh-from-the-Moog slices of sonic bliss. Besides the work of side projects like Turn On, the trend-setting band prolifically pumps out 7"s, compilation tracks and promo-only material, which is later collected for release in the "Switched On" series. The third such compilation, the two-CD *Aluminum Tunes*, would threaten to invoke Stereolab saturation if not for some notable inclusions. The first disc opens with six eloquent songs composed for a Charles

Long art exhibit (originally released as *Music For The Amorphous Body Study Center*); they're representative of the band's usual output, gleefully seesawing between laconic lounge pop and effervescent synth-phonies, with Laetitia Sadier singing in warmly monochromatic French, English and the internationally accepted "la la la." Since the remaining tracks cover the fruitful '94-'97 period, listeners familiar with *Mars Audiac Quintet* and *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* needn't wade through in search of dynamic departures. One exception: the delightfully exotic collaboration with flutist Herbie Mann on a pair of Jobim covers, which float along on a buoyant and bubbly electro-organic groove that explains why some folks anxiously await what's next from Stereolab.

>>> Richard Martin



TIED + TICKLED TRIO

Tied + Tickled Trio
Bingo-Southern

The rhythmic clang of an assembly line has been examined by musicians since the first widget dropped off the first conveyer belt. On the production line, human and machine morph into one organism, working in harmonic unison, faces, gears, arms and clamps interchangeable. Oh for one of the drones to break out in a song 'n' dance. The Tied + Tickled Trio create music for such situations. With robotic precision, the Trio (which is actually a septet featuring members of the Notwist and Village Of Savoonga) constructs

instrumental patterns, some bass-heavy, some tech-generated, that move forward with little variation or individuality. A melody follows along subserviently, and all runs smoothly until a pesky free-thinking thought arises, usually in the form of a saxophone or piano. Then, by osmosis, the idea transforms the nature of the entire composition. The music is tough to pin down, though, at times sounding like electronic music, at other repetitive drone rock, and at others, structured bop jazz. All of these masks, though, have at their heart a curiosity that roams through structured atmospheres, like a magician wandering through a bourgeois cocktail party.

>>> Randall Roberts

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nothing

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TRUE LOVE ALWAYS

Hopefully
TeenBeat

It's easy to hear why True Love Always caught the ear of TeenBeat's Mark Robinson: The trio's balmy strums and chilly drones, coupled with a conversational vocal style, diverges from Unrest's sonic floorplan by about five millimeters. (Robinson produced, so it's hard to tell where the band ends and his sonic signature begin.) To its credit, TLA makes the most of an admittedly limited palette: "Show & Prove" has a nifty backbeat, while "The Winter Months" pulses by on organ and brushed cymbals.

But what distinguishes *Hopefully* from the

indie pack is John Lindemann's unabashedly romantic but subtle songwriting. His lyrics occasionally get too cute for comfort ("I want to write a cookbook about you"), but more often move beyond the candy-coated crush into actual adult emotions. In one ultra-catchy song ("Spring Collection"), he rues a fling's limited half-life ("This won't last for fall or winter,"), while another tackles complicated relationships: "I know it's sick, but it's thick like cashmere." Best of all, TLA isn't too wedded to its signature sound to close with "Teenage Stonehenge," a gently distorted mock-anthem that advocates, of all things, growing up: "Tear the playground down... it's over." That's advice some of the group's cuddlier brethren might well heed.

>>> Franklin Bruno



SVEN VÄTH

Fusion
Ultra

Effective trance techno is like cotton candy. Both are pretty site specific, yummy yet without nutritional value, and deceptively simple in construction, leaving only a sweet aftertaste and gossamer memory after consumption. Because it favors shifting rhythms and isolated timbres over melodic or harmonic development, even critiquing trance proves slippery; minus lyrics or formal compositional conceits, it doesn't aspire to mean anything. And how it makes the listener feel depends largely on an individual's mood to start with. Using

that yardstick, the utilitarian *Fusion* marks a return to form for Germany's Sven Väth, complementing good or grumpy dispositions, providing stellar accompaniment for dancing, driving, even doing dishes. These ten concise tracks lean heavily on the Frankfurt titan's acclaimed DJ chops: Amidst ample doses of dark, minimal techno like "Augenblick" and "Schubdüse" (which opens with a drum pattern suspiciously reminiscent of Toni Basil's "Mickey"), Väth and longtime collaborator Ralf Hildenbeutel intersperse varied beats and textures. *Fusion* doesn't aspire to scale the grand heights of Väth's earlier albums, but it lands closer to the bull's eye, too.

>>> Kurt B. Reighley

RAMMSTEIN

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FEATURES "Rammstein", "Du Riechst So Gut", AND "Hierate Mich"

MP3

(Continued from page 25)

this upstart, punk-nose, who-the-fuck-are-they company—can show up and in a matter of a week be able to reach more people in their distribution than any major label currently can, and spend very little to do so. I can send an email, for free, to what? A few million people? So what if only a small percentage responds?"

Hoffman of Goodnoise wants to force the majors' hand by consolidating the music of all of the most prominent indie labels onto his site for distribution. "I think the indie labels are doing a better job of finding new artists than the majors are," says Hoffman. "Bush, Nirvana, Ben Folds... I see a potential here where the indies may become resurgent and gain more and more control."

Hoffman may also succeed in his bid to consolidate indies because, as Price says, "There's no downside in it for me. What am I giving up? It doesn't cost me anything, I get additional exposure, I'm part of a promotional campaign and it's an added source of revenue."

Very few major label executives are willing to speak about the issue of downloadable music, and the ones who will do so only on the condition of anonymity. "A lot of the effort behind the scenes," says a vice president who specializes in technology at one of the "big five" record companies, "is not to stop [downloadable distribution] so much as to figure out how this can be made a business, and how we can set standards for copy protection that are fair for everybody. You need some sort of standard that keeps the honest people honest, but isn't so complicated or expensive that it drives the cost of the album up, or is very unfriendly for a consumer in terms of all the work you'd have to do to get it."

The exec says that his company could be offering digital distribution as early as "sometime in 1999," but no major label will offer any concrete plans as to when or how it will be done. "Whether downloadable music really happens depends on agreements between consumer electronics [and] computer and music industries about what copyright flags will be read, encryption, decryption, watermarking... If we have the right kind of technology and agreements, we can have a system where it's clear what is authorized, or encrypted or watermarked, and can be played or recorded."

While he is forthright about his company's plans to move ahead with digital distribution, the exec is still skeptical as to its prospects for success. "We don't have our heads in the sand on this. All the people that think this is the hottest thing while it's free might find that it's tougher to develop when it costs money." He also wonders aloud if people would really choose digital files over traditional formats. "If you had to pay whatever the price is for the file, then all of a sudden you're saying, 'You know what? For two dollars more I'll get the CD and the package. Then I'll take a cassette and make a copy. I've got all these cassette players and all these CD players...'"

"The entertainment industry is generally technology-phobic," sighs Mooradian of Jupiter Communications. "[With] the advent of every new technology, it seems to [those inside it that] it's going to completely decimate their industry. Look at the film industry and video. The studios fought tooth and nail, they were dragged kicking and screaming into accepting video. Because, of course, nobody is going to go to movies once video exists, and that would be the end of it. Now video is responsible for about 60 percent of film studio revenues. Mooradian expects digital distribution to be a similar sort of boon to the music industry.

Grady of Goodnoise thinks the music industry should learn from its own history lesson: "It was argued that people would never switch from vinyl, because people were really attached to that medium, and there were all these record players out there, and people had that on their stereo systems, and they're not interested in going to a new medium, and they'll never re-buy stuff they've already bought... People always say stuff like that. They always say people won't change. But they do." **END**

Underworld

(Continued from page 36)

instead of sitting there for weeks cutting and editing and pasting."

All of which has Hyde now looking forward to the chance to take the new material out on the road in front of the expanding audience for electronic music—an audience that's less and less concerned with labeling it as anything other than just music. "We've consciously tried to stay away from movements and whenever it was possible for people to label what we were doing we would move on. When it was trance music we moved on, and when it was drum 'n' bass we moved on. When we went to the US in 1996, the idea of coming to a place where there was this 'electronica' label horrified us. But I have to say that we were really encouraged by what we found. New York was suddenly becoming like Glasgow, which is one of the best places in the world to play, a place where people were really turned on by the music to the exclusion of having to follow any trends or being chic or standing at the back of a club waiting to be impressed. It was like going back a couple of years to the formative period of this music in England. It was very exciting for us, like a big birthday party." **END**

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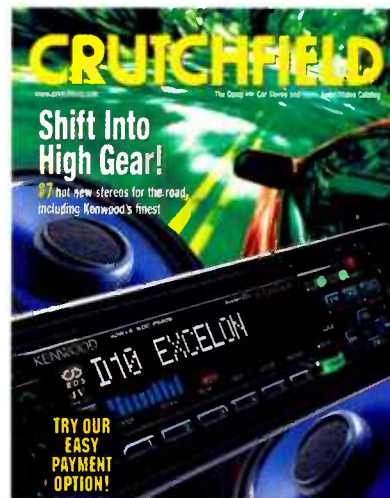
Producers/DJs Aston Harvey and Matt Cantor have been working together as the **FREESTYLERS** for a couple of years, drawn together by their common love for electro, breakbeat and old-school hip-hop culture. The UK duo, with its distinguishable style of rough, yet relaxed breakbeat hip-hop, has yet to make a splash on this side of the pond, but the overseas success of the Freestylers' debut full-length album, *We Rock Hard*, and their recent crowning as Best Band at the 1998 Muzik Magazine Saint And Sinners Awards (the Grammys of the international underground dance scene) hint that their wave will soon crash on domestic shores with considerable force. While their live and studio talents have been duly rewarded, **Rough Technique Vol. 1**



(**Freskanova**) is the first showcasing of the Freestylers' prowess on the decks. The collection features 18 well-blended cuts made in the duo's own image: thick, sexy breakbeats, reggae rhymes, rap cut-ups and jazz inflections executed with an all-consuming hip-hop attitude. Rolling from its chilled-out introduction to its furious big beat conclusion, the set moves from zero to 60 at a smooth, consistent pace. Included in the set are distinguishable cuts from like-minded label

artists, such as Mad Doctor X, Cut And Paste and Fat Buddhas, but the standouts are the Freestylers' original cuts, which are intelligently placed throughout the mix. *Rough Technique* not only gives listeners a glimpse of what the pair and its labelmates have to offer, but also introduces an intoxicating, energetic style of dance music yet to be embraced by many US scenes... Canada's **JOHN ACQUIVIVA** has been a full-time professional DJ for nearly two decades. During that time period, he started the lauded Plus 8 record label with fellow Canuck Richie Hawtin (a.k.a. Plastikman), performed at more than 600 clubs worldwide, and delivered his pounding techno and house sound to an estimated half million pairs of ears, proving to be an influential force in the development of modern dance culture. Known for spinning marathon sets lasting throughout the evening, the hour-long **Skills (Stud!o K7)** is not meant reflect the experience of hearing Acquiviva in a live setting. Instead, the disc allows him to highlight some of the new and classic house gems that have received heavy rotation on his decks over the years. Beginning with Fingers Inc.'s classic "Can You Feel It" a cappella, the set incorporates both old-school anthems, such as Phuture's "We Are Future" and recent floorfillers, like Laurent Garnier's "Colored City." *Skills* is an enjoyable, historical journey through the house music of the 1990s, and the selection of crowd-tested, hand-picked cuts means that it's a disc whose worth will only increase with age.

>>> M. Tye Comer



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Japanese Underground

It's seven o'clock on a Friday night in Osaka. A crowd has gathered in front of a graffiti-covered club called Fandango located in the heart of the red light district of Juso. There's an expensive hostess club next door where beautiful young women in skin-tight blue miniskirts attempt to lure in groups of drunk salarymen. The crowd out front did not come to Juso to pay for overpriced drinks, they've come to see the greatest rock 'n' roll band on the planet: Guitar Wolf. An employee of Fandango comes out and tells the crowd that the show is completely sold out. There is a collective groan. Then a young teenager in a Cramps T-shirt spots Guitar Wolf bassist Billy. "Please let me into the show," he begs in his thick Osaka dialect. Billy apologizes to the fan. "I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do." Billy speaks the gutter dialect of the back alleys of downtown Tokyo, straight out of some yakuza flick. It's as if they are both speaking different languages.

An hour later guitarist/singer Seiji comes bolting out the front door, guitar in hand, and collapses on the sidewalk. The hostesses next door are startled and scramble out of the way. Seiji is gasping for air and concerned fans rush to his aid, but he shrugs them off. Guitar Wolf has toured the world three times in the last two years and this is how every single show ends. This is rock 'n' roll the way it ought to be.

Tokyo and Osaka are two very different cities and for many years

Blackmore, then you were not taken seriously at all. Tokyo is the most expensive city in the world and club owners were not about to book some unknown band whose members could hardly play their instruments. That doesn't pay the rent. So they devised a system called the "norma" where bands had to guarantee a certain amount of tickets sold or else they had to pay to play. The norma system, which still exists, discourages unproven bands from getting shows, but the scene in Tokyo has caught up with Osaka. Some would even say that the scene in Tokyo is even more exciting than Osaka's now.

Osaka's music scene originally centered around a club/rehearsal space called Eggplant, which was affiliated with a couple of local labels. The norma system was nonexistent and the bands had tremendous musical freedom. There was also a tremendous camaraderie among the bands, and a common desire to make strange and interesting music. The possibility of commercial success was out of the question. The Japanese mainstream scene was (and still is) dominated by vapid teen idols and bland pop bands. There wasn't any room for bands that didn't conform to the standards set by the music industry.

There's a bootleg video of a very early Boredoms gig from 1988 that perfectly represents the Osaka scene at the time. The show is an absolute mess: The bassist is out of tune, the guitarist was subject to bizarre freakouts, the drummer would have failed an audition for the Shaggs, and the "singer," Yamatsuka Eye, screamed and growled an indecipherable language

that sounded as if he were disemboweling himself. It's amazing that such a haphazard band was able to get booked in clubs, but a few months later the Boredoms, with new drummer Yoshimi P-we, opened for Pussy Galore and put on a show that is still talked about to this day. Jon Spencer went home and told all his friends about this crazy band in Osaka and the rest, as they say, is history. A few years later the Boredoms signed to a major label, toured the US with Nirvana, and secured a coveted spot on the Lollapalooza tour. These days a



they both had very distinct musical scenes. For a while the Japanese underground scene was synonymous with Osaka. Osaka had most of the exciting bands: the Boredoms, Shonen Knife, Masonna, Solmania, Omoide Hatoba, Hijo Kaidan, S.O.B. and dozens more. Tokyo still had a lot of great bands like the Ruins, Fushitsusha and Zeni Geva, but the scene lacked the overall chaos and energy of Osaka. One of the reasons is that there was a tremendous emphasis on musicianship in the Tokyo scene. If you couldn't play like Frank Zappa or Ritchie

Boredoms show draws over a 1000 people in Japan, yet they have as much integrity as when they started out. Each member is still very active in the underground scene and is involved in countless side projects.

Ten years ago no one could have predicted that a band like the Boredoms would be successful abroad. Very few Japanese musicians had achieved success abroad. Japanese record companies spent millions of dollars promoting big stars like Matsuda Seiko, Nokko, and Kubota Toshinobu in America, but no amount of yen could help them. They all failed miserably, yet relatively unknowns such as the Boredoms and Shonen Knife were able to achieve some success.

The Japanese music industry was baffled. Music execs tried to sign up as many underground bands as they could. Mainstream magazines did features on the Japanese underground scene, highlighting many up-and-coming "indie" bands that the record companies wanted to promote, even though these bands had absolutely nothing to do with the scene. Eventually, most of the real underground bands got dropped for not selling enough records, while the "indie" bands, with their matching haircuts and designer clothes, became more and more popular, much to the delight of the record companies.

Not all the bands gave into major label pressure. Melt-Banana is a fine example of a band that stuck to its DIY roots all the way through. A few years ago Melt-Banana was one of the hottest new bands in Japan. It was a darling of the music press and courted by the biggest labels around. Melt-Banana released a couple of albums on indie label Skin Graft in the US and recorded a slew of singles for tiny labels all over the world, including places like Iceland. The group toured the US a number of times, played shows in Europe, and supported dozens of foreign punk and hardcore bands touring Japan. The band members kept in contact with all their fans and did interviews with the tiniest 'zines. Melt-Banana recently released its third album independently on a label it started called A-Zap.

As an aside, it's worth pointing out that Melt-Banana is led by a woman, Yasuko O, something that is quite common in the Japanese underground scene. Bands led by women include OOIOO (featuring Yoshimi of the Boredoms), Buffalo Daughter, Seagull Screaming Kiss Her Kiss Her, Coa, Yellow Machine Gun, Droop, Sekiri, Supersnazz, 5678's, C.C.C.C., Machine Gun TV and many others. It's a shame that no Japanese bands were ever invited to the Lilith Fair because they would have shown some of those women how to rock. Believe me, Alanis Morissette does not want to share the stage with a band like Droop.

What about the legendary noise scene in



Japan? Some people have the idea that noise is "big in Japan," when in reality it's probably the least popular genre. An average noise show draws 50 people at best. It's interesting how some people try to intellectualize noise or equate it with things like S&M or bondage, but the truth is that noise is simply entertainment, no different than professional wrestling. The most exciting of the noise lot is a skinny long-haired young man named Masonna (a.k.a. Yamazaki Maso), unquestionably one of the most frenetic performers alive. His only instruments are effects pedals and a contact mic that is attached to a metal canister of coins, which he shakes around violently to create noise. Masonna flails around the stage, wildly swinging the mic stand in the air. He leaps in the air and comes crashing down on a speaker while screaming at the top of his lungs. It's over in eight minutes, four if you're lucky. Masonna's performance has all the excesses of rock 'n' roll, with the actual music part stripped away. He's one of the finest opening acts you'll ever see. It's no wonder that artists like Beck and Sonic Youth have personally requested that Masonna open up for them in Japan.

In closing, it should be noted that the Japanese underground music scene today is actually made up of many different smaller scenes that often have nothing to do with each other. Many of the best bands remain completely unknown. But not for long. Recently an unknown band of high school teens called the King Brothers opened for Guitar Wolf in Osaka and blew the more established band off the stage. The members of Guitar Wolf didn't mind at all because they know punk rock is about being young and hungry and not having a clue, so they invited the King Brothers to open for them again. Maybe a couple of years from now fans will be begging to get into a sold-out show to see the King Brothers. And that would be just perfect.

END

Bryan Adams

The music editor at Rolling Stone thought I was kidding when I pitched a cover story on him. The guy at the Sunday New York Times sneered and said they wouldn't spill their august ink on such an inconsequential pop figure, not when there was another Mesopotamian flute quartet to chronicle. My writer friends think it's willful perversion, like my lack of love for Gram Parsons and Jon Spencer. My bandmates indulge me, but my co-workers won't stop teasing me. You'd think I picked Karen Carpenter over Keith Moon as rock's greatest drummer. Tough shit. I don't care what they think, and neither does Bryan Adams. "I can have a fabulous career and not get any press attention at all," he says with true indifference. "I don't think it's necessary. For me it's not about having some sort of image. Music does the talking."

My band Utensil performed a sloppy "Summer of '69" at my birthday party a few years back. I once made out during a Bryan Adams concert, and we expressly asked ex-Psychedelic Fur Joe McGinty to tinkle a lovely lounge version of "Heaven" at my wedding. (We did, however, demur on the judge's suggestion that "Everything I Do (I Do It for You)" would be a beautiful nuptial accompaniment. I'm a fan, not a patsy.)

Bryan Adams was nine in the summer of '69, so he probably *didn't* get his first real six-string at the five-and-dime in the age of Aquarius. (Silly me—it turns out the reference was metaphorical, using a sex act to connote Bryan's personal summer of love. That makes the "fingers bled" image a little more colorful, doesn't it?) But a little chronological subterfuge is fair trade for such a sturdy rock 'n' roll gem, a chunky road cruiser no self-respecting bar band should leave home without.

For all his contrived duets (who else could connect Barbra Streisand, Pavarotti, Sting, Anne Murray and Mötley Crüe?) and melodramatic ballads—hit-bound schmaltz which is still solidly crafted and emotionally pure—Bryan Adams has all the essential qualities of centerfield rock 'n' roll tradition. He's a small, unpretty Canadian with problem hair, bad skin, English teeth and few pretensions—an underdog who was lucky to find something he was good at. His dad was a diplomat, so he could have been Vancouver's own Joe Strummer. He's even recorded "I Fought The Law." But instead of the romance of revolution, he opted for the revolution of romance, the sedition of mainstream pop. Blame it on a childhood diet of Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, Jackson Browne and Elton John rather than the Stones and Stooges. He proudly recalls seeing Bowie on the Diamond Dogs tour in Ottawa in 1974, but I would be hard-pressed to find the velvet goldmine in "There Will Never Be Another Tonight."

It takes a little sifting through the Adams canon, but his best tunes have compact, concise guitar licks, choruses that feel good to sing, down-the-pipe beats and adequate old-school lyrics about chicks and life. And chicks. And stuff. Some of his ballads are, to borrow his word, sweet. And hummable melodies, which is Adams's religion, still count, no matter how un-Belle And Sebastian-stylish they might be.

If songs like "18 Til I Die" and "I Don't Wanna Live Forever" lack the dramatic desperation of a terminal case like Johnny Thunders, at least Adams means it, maaaaan. "I like the idea that we're here now and this is it, and let's make the best of it," he says with an edge of conviction. "There's a lot of people that always dream that things are going to get better, but life is about right now." That's agnostic enough for me!

He has the throwaway personal pose down pat, nicely juggled with a commercial consciousness that's by no means subtle. "I'm not really interested in being a star. I quite like the idea of my music getting out there, and the fact that every once in a while I can have a hit record. That suits me. A lot of people know my name, but they wouldn't know

me if I fell on them. That suits me as well. I've always been a bit of an anti-star."

So let me jam on the auto-repeat and sing along with "Cuts Like A Knife," "This Time," "Can't



DANNY CLINCH

Stop This Thing We Started" and the cheating classic "Run To You" until the cat is howling and my throat sounds as raspy as his. I'd never put him up against the great innovators of our time, the Dylans, Elvises, Townshends, Jesus And Mary Chains, My Bloody Valentines, Cheap Tricks, TV Personalities and Replacements, but there's a whole lot of wiggle room between godlike and just average. And Bryan Adams makes average brilliant.

END

BY IAN CHRIS TE

metal top 25

- 1 **SEPULTURA**
Against Roadrunner
- 2 **DEATH**
The Sound Of Perseverance Nuclear Blast America
- 3 **NOTHINGFACE**
Everyday Atrocity DCide-Mayhem
- 4 **SOUNDTRACK**
StrangelandTVT
- 5 **ROB ZOMBIE**
Hellbilly Deluxe Geffen
- 6 **KORN**
Follow The Leader Immortal-Epic
- 7 **FEAR FACTORY**
Obsolete Roadrunner
- 8 **BRUCE DICKINSON**
The Chemical Wedding CMC International
- 9 **EARTH CRISIS**
Breed The Killers Roadrunner
- 10 **BLACK SABBATH**
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- 11 **JUDAS PRIEST**
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Sewn Mouth Secrets Relapse

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

SEPULTURA

Against

Roadrunner

Whatever the personal cost after 15 years playing together, on a musical level Sepultura seems massively relieved to be rid of founding singer/guitarist Max Cavalera. Having taken his love of barking and simple loop-based song structures with him to Soulfly, he's left the trio of guitarist Andreas Kisser, drummer Igor Cavalera, and bassist Paulo Jr. room to innovate and breathe freely. Now, a few months after the split, the group has compiled an album that eloquently expresses heaviness through a broad global perspective. *Against* is the least ponderous Sepultura release in at least five years. Maybe it was the burden of having a frontman who also played rhythm guitar, but the Brazilian Beatles never lived up to the often-voiced promise that it would incorporate Latin rhythms and more accomplished songwriting into its streamlined death metal mix. Now the band has something to prove, and with American singer Derrick Green on the mic, it's twice as intense and fiercely assured of its creative tangents. The songs pile out in a barrage of production effects and textures, ranging from stadium-fillers to obvious basement dirt-core recordings. Besides the sitar, berimbau, and timbales that the band uses to fire its machine, there is a surprise appearance by Metallica's Jason Newstead on theremin (which doesn't have anything to do with anything, but it's funny). Instead of constantly pushing forward, the group takes time to reflect, and the music is more effective because of that. The final verdict is that Sepultura, beloved international superstars of thrash, is finally as good as we always wanted it to be.



>>> The handful of technically incredible death metal bands featured on **War Dance: A War Music Compilation** is suspected of not being as drunk as most of the other bands in the genre—the musicianship is just too sharp. Sweden's Naglfar and Ohio's stupendous Cryptopsy spit out nonsense perfection based on rapid traps and inflamed random gruffness. Cranial Forge goes bafflingly blotto as well, and you start to feel like the meticulously composed chaos of each song is somewhat equal to a full day of Dvorak. Not only is death metal not dead, it's earning a graduate degree here on the accelerated learning plan. Also featured, the up-and-coming paralysis sounds of Darkant, Armageddon, Dimension Zero, and In Thy Dreams... Hey, **GORE BEYOND NECROPSY** is pretty swell, too! The five-piece Japanese noisecore crew kick a full 59 tracks onto *Noise-A-Go-Go!!!* (Relapse), each laden diaper-like with references to pee-pee and caca. The sound is something of a morph between traditional grindcore like Brutal Truth and the searing sound torture of Hijo Kaidan. GBN has more dimensions to it than A.C. does, but all the dimensions relate to dead babies and other infantilism. The spirit of early Napalm Death, Doom, and Satanic Malfunctions lives in "Power Of Media Arrogant Mass Control" and other joyous blasts... Apparently, pioneer metalcore band **ENGLISH DOGS** had a guitar player graduate to the Prodigy, and so the outfit couldn't resist but leaping on the popularity of rave rock and pop punk to record a reunion album of sorts. Never mind that they never played pop punk in the first place; *All The World's A Rage* (Pavement) puts the E-Dogs in the same vile chicken coop as Attitude Adjustment, 7 Seconds, and a thousand other useless hardcore has-beens with two grains of credibility and a desire to cash out in 1998. After revisiting one of the group's old Combatcore releases for comparison, I'm thinking, you know, they were never really that good anyway.

FERENC

The Man From P.A.C.K.

Interdimensional Transmissions

Some of you may recognize the name Ferenc from a number of unique and bizarre electronic projects dating back to at least 1990, when he started the Bunker and Unit Moebius labels. Suffice it to say that he's no newcomer to the world of experimentation. His debut full-length record arrives at a moment when the electro revival is gaining strength, resuscitating the vibe of the period between 1983 and 1988, when the sound of the Roland 808 drum machine dominated the dancefloor. This album will leave many of Ferenc's peers scratching their heads as to how he conjures such mighty funk grooves from the barest essentials. I'm still trying to figure it out. When he released the vocoder-soaked single "Space Invaders Are Smoking Grass" in 1997, it wiped away a lot of apathy. This record will have the same effect. Why? Because it toys with electronic grooves and rigorous experimentation while maintaining a refreshing sense of humor and bass lines that disappear off the Geiger counter. Ferenc clearly has a record collection and mind that do not discriminate between Telex, New Order, Heaven 17 and Donna Summer, and though all of these are in his music, it sounds entirely distinct. Forget all you've heard about so-called "intelligent dance music." This is the most enjoyable and funkier electronic long-player released in some time.



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>>> Moving rapidly from the Netherlands to New York City, we find ourselves with a plethora of remixes of Whodini's stone cold classic "**The Freaks Come Out At Night**" (Jive Electro), the original version of which left many a dancefloor in tatters in the mid-'80s. The cast of characters brought in to rework this influential track includes Scott Weiser of Dynamix II, path-breaking Miami electro producers who never abandoned the artform. This collection of remixes serves as a highly enjoyable reminder that the word "electro" was always shorthand for "electro-funk."... I rarely include reissues in this space, but I'm compelled to mention the newly available collection of tracks from the long-running British television series *Dr. Who*, which has just been digitally remastered and issued as **The Doctor Who 25th Anniversary Album** (BBC Records). This will be of particular interest not only to those who have admired the series for many years, but also to followers of the analog electronics that have become the tools-of-the-trade of techno. Ron Grainer and his associates Dominic Glynn and Keff McCullough were, in many ways, the British counterparts to Kraftwerk, working in the basement of the famed BBC Radiophonic Workshop, an experimental soundlab and recording studio wherein all sorts of strange artifacts were produced. What's more, the original theme for the show has a wonderful, subtle groove to it, which wouldn't be at all out of place in an electro DJ's set... The latest installment in the highly regarded *DJ Kicks* series is executed by **KEMISTRY & STORM** (Studio K7), two British DJs who have kept Goldie's Metalheadz nights running for at least three years. Their set lists are revered worldwide as a guide to what the future of drum 'n' bass holds. In a male-dominated field, these women have established themselves the most progressive DJs working at the harder end of the drum 'n' bass spectrum, and this collection makes quite clear that ferocity and suspense are all that really matters. Anyone can spin monotonous two-step drum 'n' bass for four hours, but Kemistry & Storm ride the peaks and valleys like snowboarders, understanding exactly when to drop everything out of the mix and bring it thundering back in.

dance top 25

- 1 **DJ SPOOKY THAT SUBLIMINAL KID**
Riddim Warfare Outpost
- 2 **MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO**
Actual Sounds + Voices Nothing-Interscope
- 3 **UNKLE**
Psyence Fiction Mo Wax-London
- 4 **PHOTEK**
Form & Function Astralwerks
- 5 **SOUNDTRACK**
 π Thrive
- 6 **ALEC EMPIRE**
The Destroyer Digital Hardcore
- 7 **FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY**
Re-Wind Metropolis
- 8 **DEEJAY PUNK-ROC**
Chicken Eye Independiente-Epic
- 9 **IRRESISTIBLE FORCE**
It's Tomorrow Already Ninja Tune
- 10 **BOARDS OF CANADA**
Music Has The Right To Children Skam/Warp-Matador
- 11 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Untouchable Outcaste Beats Vol. 1
Outcaste-Tommy Boy
- 12 **1.8.7.**
Quality Rolls Jungle Sky-Liquid Sky
- 13 **WAGON CHRIS**
Tally Ho! Astralwerks
- 14 **FATBOY SLIM**
You've Come A Long Way, Baby Astralwerks
- 15 **BATTERY**
Momentum COP International
- 16 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Futronik Structures Vol. 2 DSBP
- 17 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Deeper Concentration Om
- 18 **FAITHLESS**
Sunday 8PM Cheeky-Arista
- 19 **60 CHANNELS**
Tuned In Turned On World Domination
- 20 **JAZ KLASH**
Thru The Haze World Domination
- 21 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Wall Of Sound Presents Bustin' Loose
Wall Of Sound-Ultra
- 22 **GALAXY**
Angel Blue Room Americas
- 23 **SI BEGG**
Commuter World Caipirinha
- 24 **DEEP DISH**
Junk Science Arista
- 25 **Q-BURNS ABSTRACT MESSAGE**
Feng Shui Astralwerks

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

BY BRIAN COLEMAN

hip-hop top 25

- 1 **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST**
"Find A Way" Jive
- 2 **MEDINA GREEN**
"Crosstown Beef" Rawkus
- 3 **LAURYN HILL**
"Doo Wop" Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRC
- 4 **PETE ROCK**
"Tru Master" Loud-RCA
- 5 **NOREAGA**
"Superthug" Penalty
- 6 **EMINEM**
"Just Don't Give A Fuck" Interscope
- 7 **ROOTS**
"Don't See Us" MCA
- 8 **CYPRESS HILL**
"Tequila Sunrise" Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRC
- 9 **BRAND NUBIAN**
"Don't Let it Go To Your Head" Arista
- 10 **OUTKAST**
"Rosa Parks" LaFace-Arista
- 11 **CAM'RON**
"Horse & Carriage" Entertainment-Epic
- 12 **CANIBUS**
"Get Retarded" Universal
- 13 **HELTAH SKELTAH**
"I Ain't Havin' That" Priority
- 14 **JAY-Z**
"Can I Get A..." Roc-A-Fella-Def Jam
- 15 **OUTKAST**
"Skew It On The Barbie" LaFace-Arista
- 16 **JAY-Z**
"Hard Knock Life" Roc-A-Fella-Def Jam
- 17 **JIGMASTAS**
"Last Will & Testimony" Tommy Boy
- 18 **RAS KASS FEAT. DR. DRE**
"Ghetto Fabulous" Patchwork-Priority
- 19 **DIGGIN' IN THE CRATES**
"Dignified Soldiers" DITC
- 20 **BRAND NUBIAN**
"The Return" Arista
- 21 **BLACK STAR**
"Definition" Rawkus
- 22 **GANG STARR FEAT. M.O.P.**
"1/2 & 1/2" Blunt
- 23 **CAHRLI BALTIMORE/CAM'RON/
NOREAGA**
"NBC" Entertainment-Epic
- 24 **BIG L**
"Ebonics" Flamboya
- 25 **KURUPT**
"We Can Freak It" Antra-A&M

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

A TRIBE CALLED QUEST

The Love Movement

Jive

It seems like it's been a million years since A Tribe Called Quest's last album. And now, right as the guys have settled into a dope new groove, they go and break up. Sometimes you just can't get it the way you want it. *The Love Movement* shows ATCQ in an even mellower mode than past boom shots, with a musical formula that never veers far from its center—a minimal drum beat, an amniotic bass pulse and assorted muted keyboards—but nevertheless grooves along, sounding fresh all the way through. The album's opening cut "Start It Up" is a great example of this patent-worthy sound, with Q-Tip rocking an updated version of his lyrical flow, and choppy pacing that jumps over and around the track. "Against The World" and "The Love" tread down a similar path. But there are also some vintage ATCQ bounce vehicles here, most notably "Da Booty," "Steppin' It Up" (with Busta Rhymes and Redman) and "Common Ground." *The Love Movement* isn't going to change the way you think about hip-hop, but it certainly is a nice return to the basics for Q-Tip, Phife and Ali Shaheed Muhammad. It'll also be a memorable parting shot, if it really is their final group effort.

a tribe called quest
THE LOVE
MOVEMENT



»»» Everyone's favorite bong-hitters **CYPRESS HILL** have also been gone for a while, and *CH IV* (Ruffhouse-Columbia) is a very welcome return, definitely one-upping 1995's *III: Temples Of Boom*. With Sen Dog and B-Real both back in place and ready to rock, *IV* is dense and intense all the way through, showing that Muggs and Co. haven't fallen off. Rather, they've adapted. The '98 Cypress Hill sound is worlds away from the raw, funk-inspired energy that the group broke out with in '91, but the newer aural space isn't any less appropriate for B-Real's and Sen's vocals. From the mellow, grooving "Audio X" and "Looking Through The Eye Of A Pig" to the more aggressive "Riot Starter," "Checkmate" and "Lightning Strikes," everything on Cypress Hill's fourth full-length works like a charm... The reunited Bronx-bred quartet **BRAND NUBIAN** (featuring rappers Sadat X, Grand Puba and Lord Jamar, with DJ Alamo) also returns with its new *Foundation* (Arista). Considering the group's well-deserved underground rep, one could only expect good



things from the regrouping of one of the new guard's most promising lyrical entities. While the lyrics throughout the album—especially those rocked by Sadat X, who always shines—will likely hold up to the exacting standards of Brand Nubian fans, the music on *Foundation* is generally less than impressive, making for a highly uneven and mildly disappointing return. While some tracks shine, including "Brand Nubian," "Back Up Off The Wall," "Straight Outta New Rule" and "Foundation," elsewhere the music just flat-out doesn't make the cut... The "official mix tape" biz rolls on, and the two-CD set **The World Famous Beat Junkies Vol. 2** (Blackberry) is one of the best that the worldwide underground has yet produced. Mixed by the Junkies' DJ Rhettmatic, the album is full to the gills with an impeccable selection of (mostly West Coast) underground killer throwdowns, topped off with some headspinning cut jobs and even some unreleased Beat Junkies rarities. Definitely worth digging for.

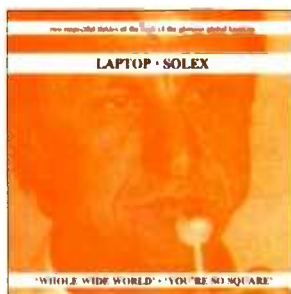


>>> Another San Francisco native, **PEANUT BUTTER WOLF** is best known as a hip-hop DJ and track-maker, and as the guy who runs the excellent Bay Area underground rap label Stones Throw. He's got a secret or two in his past, though, and a bunch of copies of *The Lost Tapes 7"* EP (originally released as a freebie with *Strength* magazine last year) have gone into general circulation to

expose them. The A-side, "Interruptions," is straight hip-hop featuring Grandmaster Zest, who trades off startlingly fast flows with PBW over his mercurial, head-nodding beats. And then there's the flip: a handful of short tracks from the days when Peanut Butter Wolf was the name of a hardcore band with a pre-teen singer, including a very silly theme rant, a sillier rant about Philadelphia, and an abuse of "Stairway To Heaven" that points toward the Wolf's later turntable tricks.

>>> **LOW**'s recent remix album *owL* is kind of dodgy, but the trio has just released a mix-ish project of its own: a 7" collaboration with the English group **PIANO MAGIC** and San Francisco's one-man guitar project **TRANSIENT WAVES**. "Sleep At The Bottom" (Rocket Girl) is actually performed by all three together, with Low's soft, fragile song augmented by an instrumental break featuring elegant curls of guitar from Transient Waves' Loren Jackson and subtle extra sounds by Piano Magic. It's a fine idea, neatly executed. The B-side, "Green Acres," is Jackson on his own, doing an Eno-ish instrumental with clean, ringing electric guitars layered on top of each other, and the best tambourine solo in living memory at the end.

>>> When an artist appears on the Fierce Panda label, it's usually a good sign of imminent stardom, and the label's latest release is a split single by two young electronic acts doing songs from back in



the electric era. The A-side is New York City's **LAPTOP** doing a rather mannered, static version of Wreckless Eric's "Whole Wide World," but the reason to track it down is the B-side, on which Amsterdam's **SOLEX** (a.k.a. Elisabeth Esselink) transfigures the old Elvis Presley chestnut "You're So Square (Baby I Don't Care)." Esselink keeps the original words and melody, but throws out all the original chords

in favor of a peculiar, lurching brew of unidentifiable samples and loops. As usual, she sounds like she's surfing on a wave of melted-down remaindered LPs.

>>> A few quick drops of the needle: Fans of **QUASI** should keep their eyes open for the duo's entry in Kill Rock Stars' Mailorder Freak singles club—two swell untitled songs that the duo was playing on its recent tour with Elliott Smith, one of which has a great line about lying among birds and an even better guitar solo,

BOREDOMS

Super Go///// > Shine In * Shine On
WEA Japan

Over the last few years, as Japan's Boredoms have been working on their *Super Roots* series of EPs and instrumental studies, they've been refining their craft and reconceiving the idea of the band. On their new album *Super ae*, they've turned into a deep, powerful trance-groove band, and "Super Go!!!!!"—which combines ideas from 1996's "Super Roots Go!!!!!" and the new album's "Super Going"—is mindblowingly dramatic and physically



enveloping. Over 17 minutes long, it has less to do with the Boredoms' old punk-through-a-kaleidoscope screech-and-blast methodology than with the sustained force and majesty of, say, The Who's "Underture" or Neu!'s "Fur Immer." After a lengthy instrumental introduction, a scream from Eye Yamantaka signals a minute of tapework that tunnels around the stereo field and finally explodes into two mammoth guitar chords that crash and echo like breakers, alternating endlessly, while the rest of the band builds up an assured, driven gallop and Eye folds in sparkling electronics. The words consist of the band chanting "shine in, shine on"—maybe a prayer to the sun, maybe an invocation of something else. It's bizarre and beautiful, and has at least three moments that can make hair stand on end. The only other track on the CD single is a very quiet instrumental with two gentle tones alternating, over and over; it's called "Super Punk."

The ultimate Boredoms record.

and the other of which is one of the rare numbers that drummer Janet Weiss (also of Sleater-Kinney) sings... **CUB** broke up last year, but the band's Lisa Marr and Lisa G have a new band, **BUCK**, whose debut single is "Hex Me" (What Else?). Their snarly rock-isms have completely obliterated Cub's cuteness, which is good news or bad depending on your perspective, but the over-mannered delivery of the B-side's "Was I Thinking?" and their excessive reliance on effects pedals mostly tip the balance in the wrong direction... New Jersey's **ALL NATURAL LEMON & LIME FLAVORS**, on the other hand, knows how to use effects correctly, and "That Familiar Look To You" (Hidden Agenda) is built around a series of lush keyboard-and-guitar eruptions that suggest A Flock Of Seagulls raiding My Bloody Valentine's equipment cabinet. Their sound is so big that it seems restrained by the vinyl pressing, but their enthusiastic pillaging of their favorite dream-pop records really works.

62

BY JAMES LIEN

>>> There was a brief period when I considered **BOOKER T. & THE MG'S** the most cosmologically significant band on the planet. There's something undeniably pure about the group's organ/bass/drums/guitar instrumentation, with its equilateral symmetry and its earth/air/fire/water perfection, not to mention its groundbreaking racial integration in the early '60s. As the house rhythm section for Stax Records, the MG's backed up Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Carla Thomas and a zillion others as Stax rode their good grooves all the way into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Fantasy has released the three-CD set *Time Is Tight*, a wonderful testament to the importance of this funky Memphis group. Even if the box set spends too much time in the '80s and '90s and not enough in the meaty mid-'60s, when the MG's were the hottest instrumental outfit on wheels, no other group on earth sounds so much like good soul food.

>>> Hey, good lookin': The impossibly skinny figure of **HANK WILLIAMS** cut a tremendous swath through the world of country music. In the space of barely six years Hank (we mean Sr., of course) wrote and recorded a string of untouchable country music anthems, leaving an indelible impression upon American music that survives to this day. In fact, you'd be hard-pressed to name one other American musician who has had so great an impact with a career so short. The lavish 10-CD box set *The Complete Hank Williams* (Mercury Nashville) presents everything Hank ever recorded, period, including live performances. Interestingly, the box also comes with a wonderful set of postcards painted by outsider artists including Howard Finster, Frank Pickle and Bob Gray.

>>> In this day and age, it's a little bit easy to take **BOB DYLAN** for granted. In fact, for those of us who weren't there, it's hard to fathom what a jaw-dropping effect the guy had on people back in the day. Sony-Legacy has just released *The "Royal Albert Hall" Concert*, the official version of a legendary bootleg that's been around for years. Historically, this 1966 concert documents a pretty famous event, as Dylan "goes electric" by bringing a brazen, amphetamine-crazed Canadian bar band onstage with him to bash out his controversial new hits such as "Like A Rolling Stone" and "Ballad Of A Thin Man." At times the crowd, expecting his familiar "folkie" persona, is outright hostile, and Bob for his part sounds like he's about to smash the mic and give them the finger any second. The times they were a-changin', and this release is a real eye-opener. That said, the acoustic solo "folkie" Dylan set on the first disc is really stunning, too.

>>> **BONGWATER** was one of the most beloved bands of the downtown New York scene in the 1980s. A collaboration between Kramer (ex-Shockabilly, noted producer, and Shimmy-Disc label founder) and vocalist/actress Ann Magnuson, Bongwater reshaped the '60s and mashed it together with the paranoid impending '90s in delightfully hazy fashion. The band has just released a box set on Shimmy that's noteworthy in that it brings together Bongwater's best albums (*Double Bummer*, *Too Much Sleep*) with many of the tracks that the group left scattered across the '80s indie-rock scene, including singles, Peel Sessions and compilation cuts.

>>> And after years of absolute silence, **XTC** has something new on the way, and of all things for the studio-bound group, it's a live box set. (An album of new orchestral, acoustic-based songs is due in January, to be followed by a rock album in fall '99.) These are live BBC radio recordings from XTC's early days, before stage fright compelled singer/guitarist Andy Partridge to forever retire from live performance in favor of the dim and lonely light of the recording studio. XTC was a great live band in its new wave days, but many people are still waiting for Partridge and his mates to dig into the wondrous treasure trove of XTC's home demo recordings, a few of which have surfaced as B-sides, compilations and bootlegs.



JOHN LENNON

Anthology

Capitol

When all is said and done, there are probably few more compelling stories in this century than that of one John Winston Ono Lennon. From the childhood of a sad, lonely dreamer to an adolescence galvanized by emerging rock 'n' roll, to the lofty, exalted heights of ludicrous fame and super-duper-stardom, Lennon achieved such absurd near-divinity status by the time he was in his mid-twenties that it's tempting to forgive him his later eccentricities and contradictions. And by the time his career as a Beatle ended, John Lennon was also a mirror of his generation, arriving in the world of 1970 lost, confused, disheveled and largely unprepared to deal with the consequences of the upheaval in the '60s, an uneasy feeling which shaped much of his music from 1968 on. A syndicated radio program about Lennon's unreleased music called *The Lost Lennon Tapes* was the genesis for this set, a sort of continuation of the Beatles' *Anthology* series, culled from thousands of hours of Lennon solo outtakes, home demos, recording sessions, experiments and archival tape material. To some degree, it presents the candid Lennon, private and unguarded, albeit always carefully filtered through the prism of Yoko Ono—some of the incredible moments that have survived on bootleg aren't here, including embarrassingly drunken outtakes from the *Rock 'N' Roll* sessions. It's been said before about the Beatles' *Anthology* series that a Lennon scratch vocal done off-the-cuff in one take was often better than what most singers give on a finished performance, and this set certainly illuminates that many times over.

63

1	SOUL COUGHING	El Oso	Slash-WB
2	BELLE & SEBASTIAN	The Boy With The Arab Strap	Matador
3	MERCURY REV	Deserter's Songs	V2
4	SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE	How It Feels To Be Something On	Sub Pop
5	PJ HARVEY	Is This Desire?	Island
6	DJ SPOOKY THAT SUBLIMINAL KID	Riddim Warfare	Outpost
7	UNKLE	Psyence Fiction	Mo Wax-London
8	AFGHAN WHIGS	1965	Columbia-CRG
9	MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO	Actual Sounds + Voices	Nothing-Interscope
10	ARCHERS OF LOAF	White Trash Heroes	Alias
11	LESS THAN JAKE	Hello Rockview	Capitol
12	BLONDE REDHEAD	In An Expression Of The Inexpressible	Touch And Go
13	CAT POWER	Moon Pix	Matador
14	SIX BY SEVEN	The Things We Make	Beggars Banquet-Interscope
15	FRANK BLACK & THE CATHOLICS	Frank Black & The Catholics	SpinArt
16	SON VOLT	Wide Swing Tremolo	Warner Bros.
17	CAKE	Prolonging The Magic	Capricorn
18	PROLAPSE	The Italian Flag	Jetset
19	ELLIOTT SMITH	XO	DreamWorks
20	HOVERCRAFT	Experiment Below	Blast First-Mute
21	NADA SURF	The Proximity Effect	Elektra-EEG
22	MINERAL	End Serenading	Crank!
23	JUDE	No One's Really Beautiful	Maverick-WB
24	JULIANA HATFIELD	Bed	Zoë-Mercury
25	JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION	Acme	Matador-Capitol
26	MUDHONEY	Tomorrow Hit Today	Reprise
27	HOLE	Celebrity Skin	DGC
28	LIZ PHAIR	Whitechocolatespaceegg	Matador-Capitol
29	MURDER CITY DEVILS	Broken Bottles Empty Hearts	Sub Pop
30	SAINT ETIENNE	Good Humor	Sub Pop
31	JULIE RUIN	Julie Ruin	Kill Rock Stars
32	BIS	Intendo	Grand Royal
33	BEASTIE BOYS	Hello Nasty	Grand Royal-Capitol
34	KNAPSACK	This Conversation Is Ending Starting Right Now	Alias
35	COMBUSTIBLE EDISON	The Impossible World	Sub Pop
36	KID ROCK	Devil Without A Cause	Lava-Atlantic
37	GOMEZ	Bring It On	Virgin
38	SEAM	The Pace Is Glacial	Touch And Go
39	JETS TO BRAZIL	Orange Rhyming Dictionary	Jade Tree
40	CRACKER	Gentleman's Blues	Virgin
41	IDAHO	Alias	Buzz
42	EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN	Ende Neu	Nothing-Interscope
43	VOODOO GLOW SKULLS	The Band Geek Mafia	Epitaph
44	MARILYN MANSON	Mechanical Animals	Nothing-Interscope
45	WILLIE NELSON	Teatro	Island
46	R.L. BURNSIDE	Come On In	Fat Possum-Epitaph
47	RIALTO	Rialto	Sire
48	PHOTEK	Form & Function	Astralwerks
49	HIGH LLAMAS	Lollo Rosso (remix EP)	V2
50	NOTWIST	Shrink	Zero Hour
51	MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD	Combustication	Blue Note
52	BUFFALO TOM	Smitten	Beggars Banquet/Polydor-A&M
53	SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS	Perennial Favorites	Mammoth
54	ALEC EMPIRE	The Destroyer	Digital Hardcore
55	FAITHLESS	Sunday 8PM	Cheeky-Arista
56	PROMISE RING	Boy + Girls (EP)	Jade Tree
57	A TRIBE CALLED QUEST	The Love Movement	Jive
58	KENT	Isola	RCA
59	BOB MOULD	The Last Dog And Pony Show.	Rykodisc
60	OOIOO	OOIOO	Kill Rock Stars
61	ZOOBOMBS	Welcome Back, Zoobombs!	Emperor Norton
62	EELS	Electro-Shock Blues	DreamWorks
63	WHALE	All Disco Dance Must End In Broken Bones	Hut-Virgin
64	SCREECHING WEASEL	Television City Dream	Fat Wreck Chords
65	CINERAMA	Va Va Voom	Spinart
66	LYLE LOVETT	Step Inside This House	MCA
67	FANTASTIC PLASTIC MACHINE	The Fantastic Plastic Machine	Emperor Norton
68	FUCK	Conduct	Matador
69	JACK DRAG	Dope Box	A&M
70	DEEJAY PUNK-ROC	Chicken Eye	Independiente-Epic
71	FLAT DUO JETS	Lucky Eye	Outpost
72	DAKTARIS	Soul Explosion	Desco
73	PUSHMONKEY	Pushmonkey	Arista
74	YATSURA	Slain By Yatsura	Sire
75	CADALLACA	Introducing Cadallaca	K

#1 Soul Coughing
El Oso

FIVE YEARS AGO

1. LEMONHEADS
COME ON FEEL THE LEMONHEADS ATLANTIC
2. NIRVANA
IN UTERO DGC
3. BREEDERS
LAST SPLASH 4AD-ELEKTRA
4. PEARL JAM
VS. EPIC
5. SWERVEDRIVER
MEZCAL HEAD A&M

TEN YEARS AGO

1. FEELIES
ONLY LIFE COYOTE-A&M
2. U2
RATTLE & HUM ISLAND
3. SIOUXSIE & THE BANSHEES
PEEPSHOW GEFFEN
4. COCTEAU TWINS
BLUE BELL KNOLL 4AD-CAPITOL
5. LET'S ACTIVE
EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY I.R.S.

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

LIFE/STYLE

David Cross & Bob Odenkirk

Mr. Show Me The Way

Because nearly everything in Los Angeles is larger than life, it shouldn't be so weird to see someone's portrait painted on the side of a building. As you drive over the hill on Sunset Boulevard into the Westwood section of L.A., there is little to prepare you for seeing a mural in which a face takes up five floors of an office building. Make that two faces—five floors each. More specifically, make that the faces of David Cross and Bob Odenkirk, the creators and stars of HBO's *Mr. Show With Bob And David*. Their mugs are plastered on the building to advertise their show, which is, flat out, the funniest thing on television.

Mr. Show With Bob And David is a sketch comedy series that was created four years ago by Odenkirk and Cross to showcase their many talents—writing, acting, thinking, giving orders, in short, being stars! They begin each show with a monologue that launches the episode's loose theme. As each sketch tumbles forth, a thread of thematic consistency emerges from each subsequent bit. In one episode, "Motion Lotion," a made-up song Cross has been caught by hidden camera singing in a toilet, becomes a pop hit in the next sketch and is hummed by the dial-a-porn caller in the third. This rapid and unrelenting delivery of sight, sound and cerebral gags is what makes *Mr. Show* so great. It's sort of like riding the Zipper at the state fair. You can't get off until the sadistic carny stops the ride, and even though your mind feels freaked upon, you're

(Continued on page 72)

L-R: CROSS, OENKIRK



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STORY: LOIS MAFFEI PHOTO: ALISON DYER/HBO



Hurlyburly

(Fine Line)

The darkly comical *Hurlyburly*, adapted from the 1984 Broadway play, is a slice-of-life look at several fringe Hollywood big-shots with a penchant for drug-induced chatter. The narrative unfolds "a little while ago" inside a swank Hollywood Hills home where Sean Penn, as a foul-mouthed, cocaine-snorting casting director, shares space with his sarcastic work partner Kevin Spacey. The house is a morality-free zone. Chazz Palminteri, a brutish, struggling actor (in the movie, of course), makes frequent visits to complain about his girlfriend and to ingest any available narcotic. Fellow player Garry Shandling drops off a teenage girl (*The Piano*'s Anna Paquin, all grown up) that he describes as a "little care package" for the gang's pleasure. Meanwhile, Penn and Spacey are sleeping with the same woman (Robin Wright Penn). Tension ensues as these men behaving badly reach critical junctures in their lives. Besides a few dull stretches and that feels-like-a-play-on-film vibe, *Hurlyburly* remains taut and terrific. The A-list cast, which also includes a slumming Meg Ryan as a stripper, makes it all worthwhile. Especially Penn, who portrayed the same character in the 1988 LA stage production and excels at the verbal volley and power plays. Sure, he has few redeeming qualities, but you'll be firmly entrenched in his corner the entire time.

>>> John Elsasser

■■■ AFFLICTION

(Lions Gate Films)

Time and time again, screen writer/director Paul Schrader has proven that he knows a little something about explosive characters. (Think: *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Cat People*, *The Last Temptation Of Christ*, *Light Of Day*, and *Patty Hearst*.) But *Affliction*, an intense drama based on a novel by Russell Banks (*The Sweet Hereafter*), turns the ready-to-blow element up a notch, leaving the audience feeling like it's holding a lit stick of dynamite. Set against a cruel, bleak New Hampshire winter, it starts with a suspicious hunting accident and a down-on-his-luck policeman/snowplower, Wade Whitehouse, who has lost his high school sweetheart, custody of his child, the respect of his peers, his temper, and his dignity. As Whitehouse starts digging up imaginary evidence, Schrader blindsides you with the real story of paranoia, destiny, familial violence, and the darkness that lingers in men's souls. Superb acting turns by Nick Nolte, James Coburn, Willem Dafoe, and Sissy Spacek makes this story seem so real, you'll feel sick to your stomach.

>>> Carrie Bell

■■■ THE GENERAL

(Sony Pictures Classics)

During his 20-year career, Martin Cahill filched more than \$60 million in daring robberies, making him one of Ireland's most notorious gangsters. In *The General*—Cahill's nickname—John Boorman (*Deliverance*) takes a stylish, tantalizing look at the reputed mob boss, played to perfection by Brendan Gleeson, best known as Mel Gibson's pal Hamish in *Braveheart*. With passion and precision, Boorman follows Cahill as he clashes with the IRA and brazenly eludes capture on the streets of Dublin, even while under 24-hour police surveillance. Jon Voight is the dogged Irish inspector who also holds a begrudging admiration for Cahill. To his credit, Boorman, who won Best Director for this black-and-white film last year at Cannes, doesn't glorify or condemn his subject. He offers a balanced examination of this iconoclastic character who has enough oddball mannerisms to make Brian Wilson seem pedestrian. (For instance, Cahill always covered his face with his hands when in public.) Bold, cheery moments—particularly when the gang plans for a heist—sit comfortably alongside scenes punctuated by spurts of violence. And, perhaps, the most admirable thing is that Boorman does all this in 139 minutes.

>>> John Elsasser

■■■ BLOOD, GUTS, BULLETS & OCTANE

(Lions Gate Films)

The next Robert Rodriguez? The bastard stepchild of Quentin Tarantino or Kevin Smith? Time will tell whether producer/director/writer/editor/actor Joe Carnahan earns a place in the indie-film pantheon, but he's taken the first step by making this watchable and even remotely memorable debut film at a cost of \$7,300, plus the Doritos and beer he used to bribe his friends to act in it. *Blood, Guts, Bullets & Octane* opens with a series of murders linked to a red '63 Pontiac convertible. That same automobile ends up on the bankrupt used car lot of Bob and Sid, two fast-talking, desperate salesmen who have been offered a giant wad of cash to watch the car for a few days without opening the trunk. The plot is a stretch, much of the acting is below UPN sitcom standards, and the gritty film stock is more exhausting than enticing. Funny how colorful conversation, a few witty cracks, a debate about Johnny Cash's sexuality and a quick pace help this valiant effort to turn your opinion right around.

>>> Carrie Bell

■■■ THE RUM DIARY

By Hunter S. Thompson

(Simon & Schuster)

Given last year's film treatment of *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* and the dubious tagline "The Long Lost Novel," *The Rum Diary* shows every sign of a publisher's ploy to cash in on Hunter S. Thompson, commodity; there's even a book-jacket rave from Jimmy Buffett. But the father of Gonzo journalism never shrinks from a chance to shock, and his first literary outing, penned when he was just 22, is a surprisingly satisfying read. Set in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the novel follows the misadventures of Thompson's semi-autobiographical hero Paul Kemp, a mercenary journalist who has drifted down to the island to take a reporting job at an embattled English-language daily. Kemp is a charismatic young man who balances his time between the typewriter and a seedy beer and burger joint called Al's, where he and his hack cronies scheme their escapes to more exotic locales. In a prose style that's more than a little indebted to Ernest Hemingway, Thompson evokes the topsy-turvy tropical setting with a flair that hints at his future greatness, and his characters become increasingly vibrant as their lives become twisted in a maze of youthful wanderlust, romantic escapades and career upheaval.

>>> Richard Martin

■■■ THE LAST ROCK STAR BOOK OR: LIZ PHAIR, A RANT

By Camden Joy

(Verse Chorus Press)

Readers looking for a quickie Liz Phair bio, replete with candid photos and interviews with her former Oberlin classmates, will no doubt be befuddled by *The Last Rock Star Book*. But if it's a rant you're in the mood for, you've come to the right place. Insurgent author Camden Joy—in the recent past, he's "protested" New York music festivals with strategically placed poster screeds now collected in books like *This Poster Will Change Your Life*—threads memories of teen delinquency and neighborhood bands, dysfunctional relationships and Midwestern alienation, plus a failed attempt at a quickie Phair bio, together in this passionate, elliptical novel. Joy's characters—ex-girlfriends, his inhalant-huffing teen miscreant buddies, the lame would-be publisher of the Phair book—are tragi-comically vivid, and his gauzy reflections on rock, snuck in here and there throughout the narrative, range from the cynical to the faithful (usually in the same passage). Despite its filmic, jump-cut rush of images, *The Last Rock Star Book* manages to hit its mark.

>>> Mark Woodlief

■■■ FOR THE RECORD: SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE, AN ORAL HISTORY

By Joel Selvin, Edited by Dave Marsh

(Avon Books)

Sylvester Stewart is one of the great enigmas of late-century American music. A singular talent cum rock 'n' roll hermit, he transcended genre, gender and race, only to vanish from public view. Unfortunately, Joel Selvin's book musters little more than a voyeuristic glimpse into Sly's prurient rock star excesses. He doesn't answer many of the questions surrounding Sly's public years—the challenges that a group of mixed race, mixed sex hippy freaks must have encountered in 1960s America, or the clandestine recording of Sly's dark masterpiece *There's A Riot Goin' On*. Perhaps it's a matter of format. As with all the books in the "For the Record" series, Selvin tells Sly's story through the hazy recollections of his friends, family, bandmates and henchmen. Selvin's research is thorough, but his choice of quotes merely bridges the gap between low-road sensationalism and tall-tale contrivance. For now, Sly the man and Sly the myth remain interchangeable.

>>> Matt Hanks

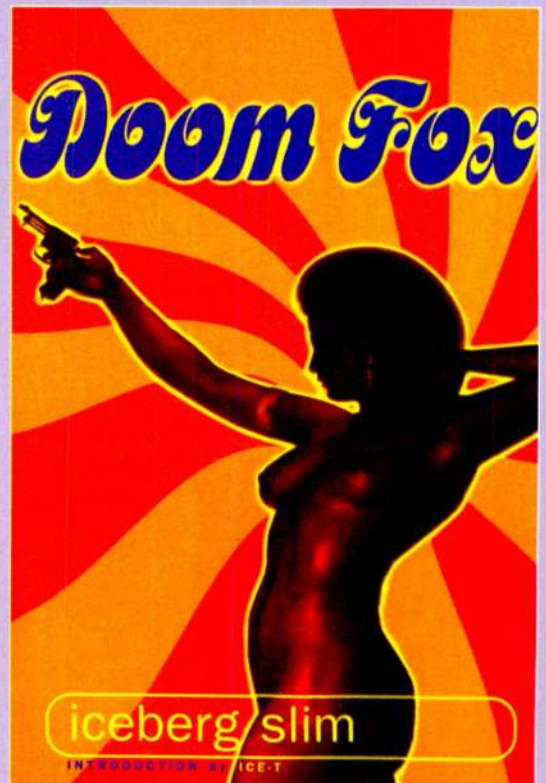
Doom Fox

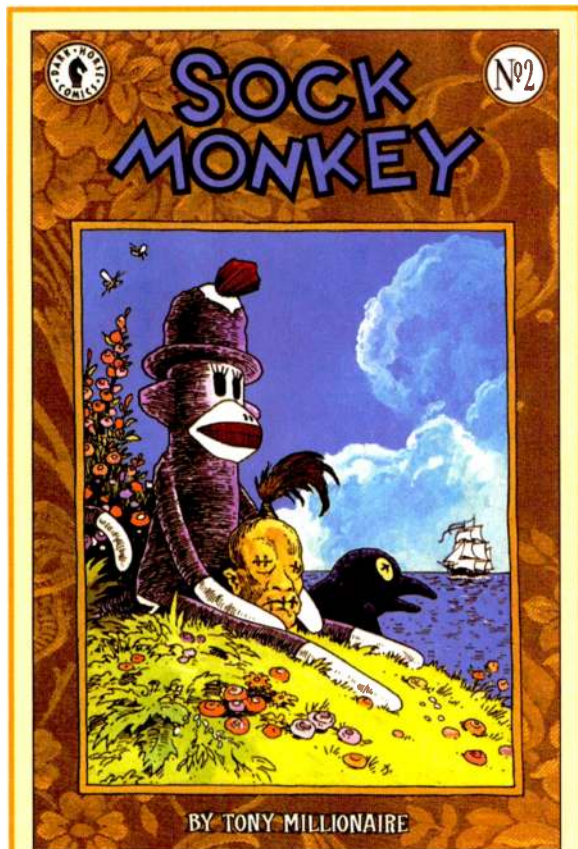
By Iceberg Slim

(Grove Press)

After 26 years as a renowned pimp and hustler on the streets of Chicago, Iceberg Slim (né Robert Beck) hung up his leisure suit, bought a typewriter, and wrote his first book, *Pimp: The Story Of My Life*. This street-wise, slang-riddled pseudo-autobiography, and the six novels that followed, stepped up the pace set by the black pulp fiction specialists—Chester Himes, Donald Goines, Clarence Cooper, Jr.—while prepping America for the gruesome hyperreality of gangsta rap. In fact, Ice-T (so named in honor of his hero) touts Slim as "the father of gangsta rap" in the introduction to the reissue of Slim's last and previously unpublished novel, *Doom Fox*. Iceberg Slim's true asset isn't what he tells, but the way he tells it. *Doom Fox* is an erratic, sin-drenched tale of amateur boxer Joe "Kong" Allen, his troublesome wife, and the sordid cast of ghetto characters that walk in and out of their life. Slim, who died in 1993, left behind a body of work that remains on the fringe of the traditional literary canon. Sure, his story lacks structure and cohesiveness, but for raw, sensual narrative, Slim's the O.G.

>>> Sam Cannon





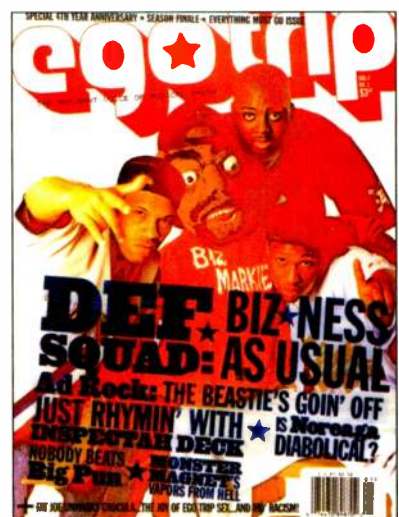
Sock Monkey

(Dark Horse)

Tony Millionaire is probably best known for his insane syndicated weekly comic strip, "Maakies," which combines the elegant design, playful drawing style and dual-tier layout of early-20th-century strips like "Thimble Theater" with the violent, despairing world-view of a suicidal alcoholic. So *Sock Monkey* is an unexpected treat: a weirdly innocent alternate-world version of "Maakies," with the two main animal protagonists represented by stuffed-animal equivalents in an upper-class house in Brooklyn, and the nautical scenes Millionaire loves to draw replaced by exquisitely rendered model ships. The series' layout and immaculately well-bred dialogue are heavily influenced by Winsor McKay's "Little Nemo" and "Dreams Of The Rarebit Fiend" comic strips and they can be deliciously funny (as when a parrot asks the sock monkey, "Could I trouble you for a cracker?"). Millionaire's stories proceed by the same kind of *delirium tremens* logic as his strip, and he's not above sudden, shockingly violent conclusions to his stories—this isn't a children's comic, it just looks a little like one.

The tenth issue of the NYC-area post-hardcore 'zine **NUMBER TWO** is out (P.O. Box 1764, New York, NY 10009), and not only is it unbelievably huge (squarebound and well more than 200 pages long), it appears to have been written almost entirely by one person over the course of a year and a half. It's pretty much unique among 'zines of its type in that, though the editor explains in a series of notes how he's tortured by the usual fear of ideological self-contradiction and incorrectness, it doesn't hold any kind of line—records tend to get judged on very subjective aesthetic criteria. And the mountain of (anonymous) reviews at the back of the issue is, amazingly, mostly worth reading: the editor is very deeply into the scene, but he's not unaware of everything that happened before the first Born Against record, and he's got a real knack for using a record as a springboard for a short, thoughtful essay. The interviews with Mark Perry of Alternative TV, the hip-hop group Dalek and Flying Saucer Attack provide some balance and contrast to the Ameri-core focus of the rest of the magazine, too. Sooner on the next one, please?... The seventh issue of **STOP SMILING** (P.O. Box 2038, Darien, IL 60561) is baited with a Silver Jews single (two tracks from their new album *American Water*), and there's also a weird assortment of pieces within: a piece about Geezer Butler, a couple of band features that don't necessarily involve interviews with the band in question, a chat with a sex-manual author, a clever *Star Wars* drinking game, and, of course, a billion record reviews... If you've been missing out on **EGO TRIP** (P.O. Box 218, Old Chelsea Sta., New York, NY 10011), you've been missing out on the best hip-hop 'zine ever published, and pretty much the best hip-hop magazine of any kind, period. Or rather, you missed out: the new Vol. 4, No. 1 looks to be the final issue. It's a damn shame. It wasn't just that *Ego Trip* snuck in underground rock coverage in ways that made perfect sense in a hip-hop context—and this issue's feature on the semi-legendary punk band the Nig-Heist is pure genius.

It wasn't just that they had brilliant takes on standard rap-mag routines—this time, they have Fat Joe interviewed by Count Chocula—yes, you read that right—and a hysterical parody of the "pictures of famous people at industry events" section that infests most mainstream magazines, as well as a fashion layout that's a parody of oversized rap-album ads. It wasn't just that they dared to run howlingly funny pieces no other magazine on Earth could have gotten away with, like a discussion of whether the lighter- or darker-skinned partner in famous hip-hop duos was more talented; conclusion: "Stand proud and walk tall because it doesn't matter what shade you represent within the wonderful, varied spectrum of humanity. (Unless you're the Devil.)" It was that *Ego Trip's* editors really, really cared about hip-hop, and it showed in every word and image.



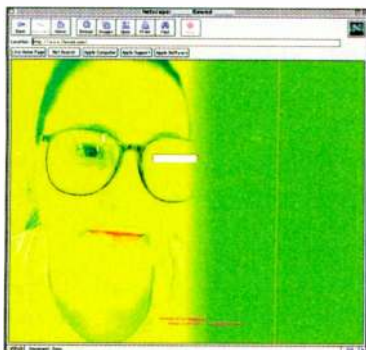
A few quick clicks of the mouse: Ambition is a wonderful thing in a web site, and **www.flawed.com** wants nothing less than to rewrite the dictionary, "one word at a time," as its creators put it. The idea is that you type in your favorite word. If somebody has already created an HTML tribute to that word, with some kind of elliptical, poetic definition or redefinition of it, you're taken to it; if they haven't, you're invited to create one yourself. A neat idea... Another kind of ambition is displayed by **www.theultimates.com**, a kind of meta-search engine, which has simultaneous links to the best white-pages, yellow-pages, email address finder and location-finder engines—meaning you type in your information once, and then you're only a click away from looking it up in each one... Annalisa Oswald's

personal site, **www.anaphase.com**, is a showcase for some extraordinary design and HTML work (think of the stuff that Vaughn Oliver used to do for 4AD Records), and also for her diary and personal writing, which is consistently harrowing and sad—very powerful stuff, and she declares that it's there for a sort of emotional voyeurism. Memorable click-here quote: "The last thing I heard was a click."... T. Jay Fowler's site **www.lowbrow.com** is another in the category of anonymous-personal-remembrance sites—weird moments

submitted by people who visit the site, randomly pulled up every time you reload the page. It's weirdly fascinating, not quite like overhearing true confessions because you can keep hitting "reload" for another one, like a mouse trained to hit a button for a pellet until it's gorged itself... In the department of truly amazing unnecessary lifestyle accessories, the PalmPilot—a little handheld digital assistant that keeps track of phone numbers, appointments, personal priorities, budgets and whatever else you want, pretty much—reigns supreme. And with a couple of free document readers, like AportisDoc, you can read text files on it. But what would you want to read? Well, how about the Black Panther Party's manifesto? The poems of Emily Dickinson? *Of Human Bondage*? The complete works of Shakespeare? You can find them all in free, downloadable, Pilot-friendly format at The Lending Library (**www.macduff.net/library.asp**), along with a few hundred other works of literature and philosophy. They've even got the Starr Report... Speaking of that fateful document, **www.indyworld.com/monica** exists—tremble, world.

>>>DW

www.flawed.com

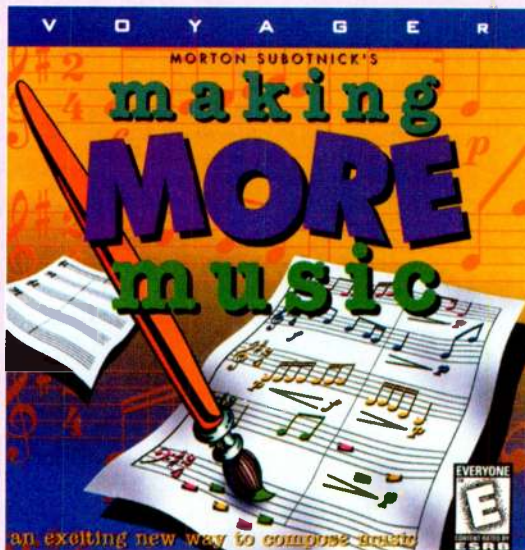


Making More Music

(Voyager)

Morton Subotnick is a fine modern composer, and the creator of *Making More Music*, a sequel to his *Making Music* CD-ROM of a few years ago. *MMM* is a very powerful, very weirdly limited music-writing program, packaged as a children's learning tool. Its instructions are limited to extended QuickTime movies within the program that kids may not have the patience to sit through—but if they do, a neat set of tools awaits them. The disc's most innovative feature is a melody-composing engine: You tell it how much rhythmic and pitch variation you want, and it comes up with a series of possibilities. Then you can pick one you like, tweak it, work out variations on it, orchestrate it, compose rhythms to go along with it, arrange it for multiple instruments (regrettably cheesy-sounding emulations), save your masterpiece and print it out as a score in conventional notation. There are a few extraordinary features, like "stretch" and "compress" paradigms that add or subtract beats in each measure; there are also no ways to get around some of the assumptions Subotnick makes about the kind of music you'll want to make. But the fact that the program generates entire musical passages to your personal taste and allows you to manipulate them in terms of their style, rather than note-by-note, is a real paradigm shift in terms of thinking about how to compose. And for a bright, patient kid who wants to learn the ropes of music, *MMM* can be a joy.

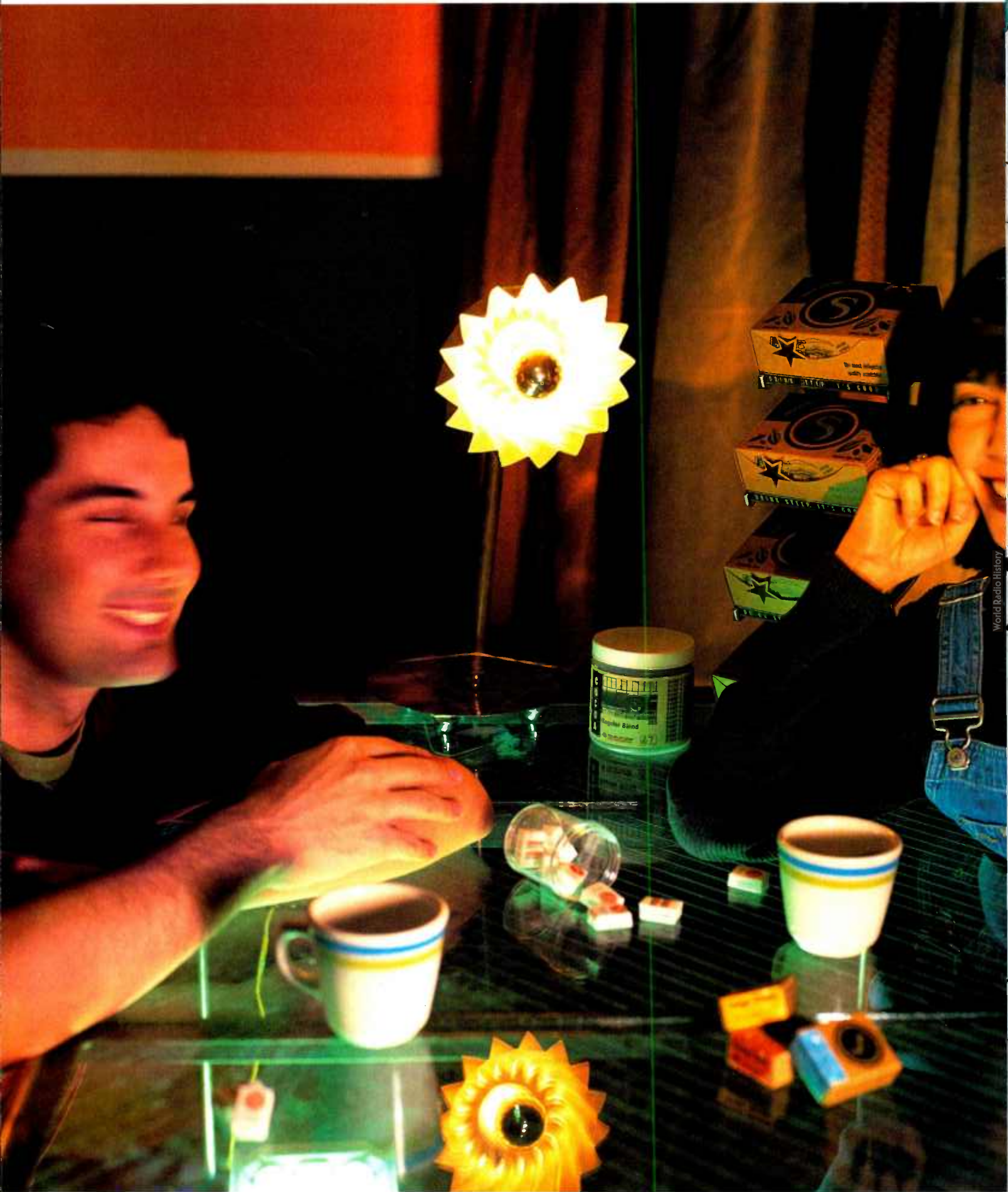
>>>DW



■■■ NHL '99

(EA Sports)

As of press time, it looks as though we might go months without seeing a single NBA game. All the more reason to work on your appreciation of ice hockey with the help of the single best sports simulation to come out this year: *NHL '99*. Versatile enough to allow a beginner to cross-check within minutes without fully understanding the game, powerful enough to enable a hockey nut to trigger line changes and coaching strategies on the fly—EA Sports seems to have put all of its research and development into this one title. *NHL '99* captures all the fluidity and intensity of the sport while icing the cake (no pun intended) with smart announcer commentary, intimate camera angles, and realistic player reactions. Throw in mind-boggling options and a short learning curve and you'll find yourself playing until the carpal tunnel kicks in and you're muttering Russian names in your sleep. With simulations like this, who needs the real thing? >>> Sam Cannon



World Radio History



steep

it's in the bag

Four years ago, when Jeff Piazza founded Steep, a small tea company based in Glastonbury, Connecticut, he could barely get any of the cafes in nearby New York City to let him finish his sales pitch before they showed him the door. Today, he proudly counts the chi-chi SoHo restaurant Balthazar—where the beautiful people are known to congregate—among his long list of customers. “Cindy Crawford eats there, and I’m just like, ‘She’s had the tea. I know it!’ She hasn’t called,” Piazza giggles, adding, “I don’t know if [folks are] passionate about their teas, but I kind of think they are.”

Piazza certainly is. Since 1995, he’s devoted all of his time, money and effort, often working late into the night cooking up new flavors, to sharing that passion with the world. “There are times when I really want to run out to the store to get Prozac,” Piazza admits. “It’s real tough. Like, my friends from high school and college that had no plans whatsoever, even they are like, ‘Well, I’ve got some of my money in the Parnassus fund’ and I’m thinking, ‘I’ve got none of my money in no fund.’ Like, I got nothing. So basically, I guess my money is the future of Steep. Sometimes that’s real cool. Sometimes it’s real scary.”

Like many young entrepreneurs, Piazza, a bright, bubbly 31-year-old, formed his company (with then-girlfriend, now-fiancée Karen Norton) after realizing that he just couldn’t fit into Corporate America. With an almost religious zeal, he tells of his pre-Steep appointment to take a well-paying position at a consulting firm as if it were a conversion tale: “I was supposed to start on a Monday. I called the woman up on Sunday and I said, ‘I can’t do this.’ I left it on her voice-mail, I was too afraid to talk to her. But it was really... you know, it was like that part in *It’s A Wonderful Life*, where [George] shakes hands with Potter and he goes, ‘Wouldn’t you like to have the biggest house on the street, George, and take your wife anywhere?’ And then he shakes hands with Potter and he just feels something and he goes, ‘No! No! No!’ And that’s what it was for me.”

So Piazza has been doing things unconventionally, running his company in ways that may seem counter to common logic and turning a profit nonetheless. For instance, rather than buy cheap, chopped teas and shove them into shoddy packaging, Steep bags only whole-leaf teas (in exotic flavors like Mojo Fruit Herb and Banana Green Tea) and puts each tea bag into its own cardboard “tea matchbox.” Not only are the teas of higher quality (and hence, more tasty) than those sold by big tea makers like Lipton or Celestial Seasonings, but the packaging is so intricate that it has to be put together by hand—a task that’s done primarily by Piazza’s retired parents in their Boston home.

Cups magazine described Steep’s design aesthetic as directed at “Generation X,” but Piazza is quick to argue with that appraisal: “It wasn’t ‘Let’s sell to Gen X.’ The thing was, I’m in college, I’m buying tea that has, like, tablecloths on it and teddy bears.’ This is in the same category as when your girlfriend says, ‘Can you get me some pads at CVS?’”

Whatever the reason for Steep’s appeal, it certainly has broadened in leaps and bounds during the past year. Since last Christmas, Piazza has filled large orders from MTV and Time-Warner, which bought \$30,000 in tea to give as holiday gifts to its employees. And he recently brokered a deal with the Armani Exchange, which is basing a promotional tea giveaway around a custom designed tea-matchbox.

END

Mr. Show Me The Way

(Continued from page 65)

already back in line to do it again.

For sadistic carnies, David Cross and Bob Odenkirk, aren't really such bad guys, but they do come on like gangbusters before the conversation even begins. "Country Music Journal," Odenkirk announces, "we're big fans!" (I know they know what CMJ is, but a correction would spoil the fun of this free show.) He plows on without pausing. "Travis Tritt! Boy, David loves him. He's from Atlanta, you know."

"Actually," Cross interrupts, "I like the Tritt Family Singers. Todd Tritt, the cousin."

When I finally get a word in, I ask the duo how, well, fucked-up it felt to see their faces plastered on a highrise. "First of all, miss," Cross sternly begins, "we do not appreciate your language."

Of the two, Odenkirk seems more awed by the moon-faced murals. "I took two photos. My wife and I passed it and we had to pull over. I couldn't believe how big it is. It makes our heads seem really huge."

The mural heralds the new season of *Mr. Show With Bob And David*, which airs Monday nights at midnight on HBO. After we speak, Bob and David will be going down to Los Angeles's historic El Rey Theater to hobnob at the launch party for their fourth season. They've asked Yo La Tengo and Superchunk to provide the entertainment for the evening and rumor has it that the bands will be teaming up for a grand finale of the Frampton classic "Mr. Show Me The Way." What can we expect from the new season? "There are some new faces this year," Odenkirk explains, "and two new emotions."

Cross adds, "We'll be doing more improv."

"Yes," says Odenkirk with no sarcasm, "David is not being given any lines. He has to improvise everything."

Like many television comedians, Cross and Odenkirk began their careers as writers. Odenkirk, who landed a writing job at *Saturday Night Live* soon after college, met Cross when they were hired by the late, lamented *Ben Stiller Show*. The Fox Network flattened the sketch series, but unwilling to write "temps at the *Ben Stiller*

Show" on their resumes, Cross and Odenkirk went D.I.Y. and began writing and performing a live show in a Los Angeles theater, which was eventually picked up for television by HBO.

Both Cross and Odenkirk cite *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as an inspiration for their brand of sketch comedy, but only Cross is willing to cop to the fact that he sat around with high school friends and recited bits from the show. "Totally. I was a complete Python nerd."

"Not me," counters Odenkirk. "I just watched it."

So what else is funny to guys who get paid in direct proportion to their jocularly? "*The Onion*," shouts David Cross in mad props to the satirical newspaper and website. "It's fuckin' brilliant!"

In contrast, Odenkirk takes an authentically serious tone when he speaks about comedy. "Most comedians despise themselves. They take all their hatred and turn it into something else." When Cross chimes in, "I don't hate myself!," Odenkirk ominously sighs, "Maybe you don't know yourself, David."

Black Crowes

(Continued from page 11)

the title track) as it slinks past. While brother Rich flexes his lead-guitar muscles for the first time, Robinson seems blissfully lost in the Paul Rodgers past, praising his girlfriend in "Heavy" and slamming a smack-addled friend in "Horse Head." Haven't heard those terms in a while? You haven't heard singing like this in a while, either. In "Kickin' My Heart Around," Robinson's rasp sounds so pained and passionate you can almost hear the mic dent under the emotive pressure.

And yes, Robinson sighs, *Side* is miles from their last jam-muddled document, *Three Snakes & One Charm*. "For *Snakes*, we were in a house in Atlanta, isolated, in the dead of winter, with a lawsuit on our hands plus a South American tour, all within four months, and everyone was a little too wasted, probably."

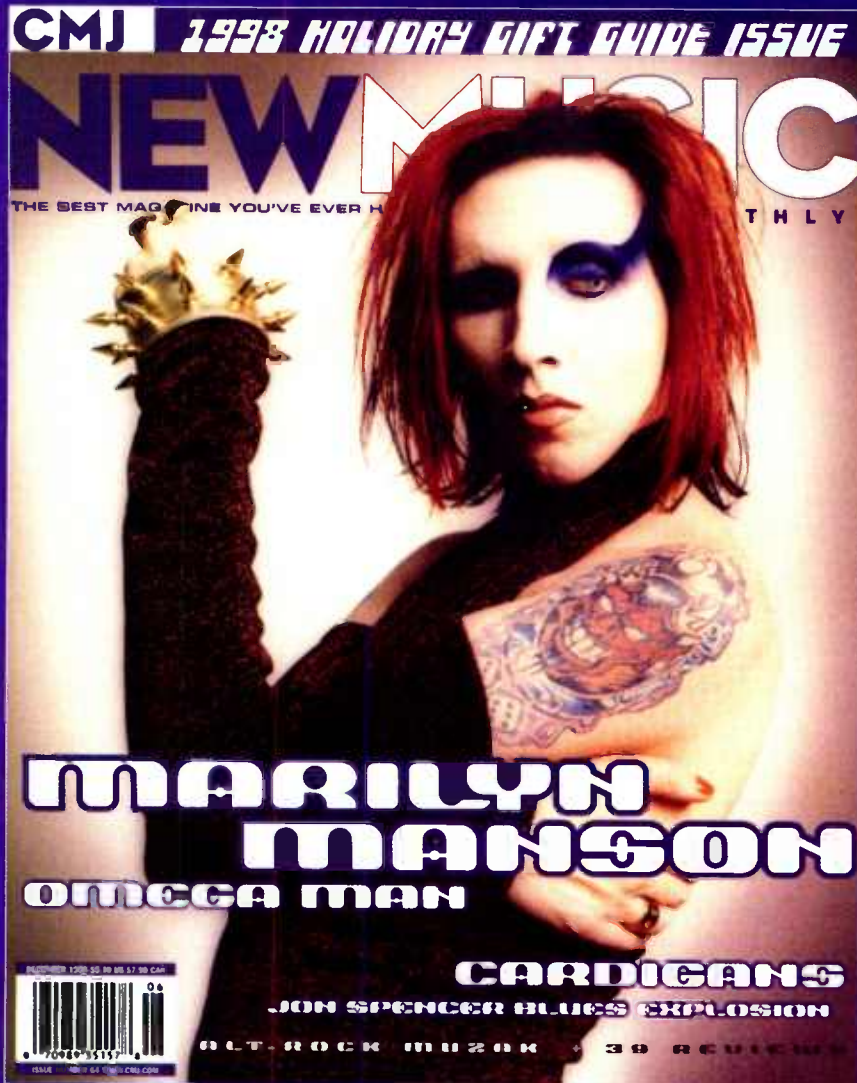
Since then, old members were sacked and new ones hired. And for *By Your Side* the self-mixing Crowes turned production over to an objective outsider, metal-friendly Kevin Shirley. "That meant we could focus more on the writing and the performance," Robinson adds. "And having a good time. The record has its bruises and scars, but that's wisdom to me. And the sessions were so easy and fun, and there was no negative shit around at all, which is very rare for us." The Black Crowes even did the unthinkable: They stopped partying and worked a strict business-day studio schedule. "So this record has a different energy, because we made choices to get there. And that's the whole sentiment of the album—yet another commitment to something we've been committed to since we were teenagers."

The Robinson siblings—once as fisticuffs-prone as the Kinks—are, confesses Chris, "much older now, so now if we fight it'd be like 'Fuck you!' 'Oh yeah? Fuck you!' And then we'll just go home and come back the next day and take care of it." Not very Oasis of them. "Oasis?!" Robinson spits disdainfully. "Ha! They wrote one song! How ya gonna coast on one song your whole career?" In Britain, them's fightin' words. The scrappy musician is undeterred. "Yeah? Bring it on! I'm 6'2". That Oasis guy is 5'3"! Plus, we're from Georgia, where there's no such thing as being afraid of anybody. That's the divine thing about being Southern," Robinson concludes. "You just don't give a rat's ass at the end of the day!"



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manu chao

15 MANU CHAO, former lead singer of Mano Negra, compiled various sounds he recorded while traveling through South America, Europe and Africa to produce his album, *Clandestino* (Ark 21), from which "Bongo Bong" is taken. "This album was recorded in so many different places. I would do the backing tracks for a song in Rio de Janeiro and then add stuff to it in Paris or Dakar. There are so many different layers of beats and collaborators that I myself can't really tell which sound is which anymore."



764-Hero

16 "One chilly night in April 1995, my partner, Michele Noach, and I were backstage, sitting upstairs between sets at a little club in New York state," writes ROBYN HITCHCOCK, explaining the genesis of his album *Storefront Hitchcock* (Warner Bros.), which is the soundtrack to the movie of the same name, and which includes the song "1974." "Suddenly a man burst into the room and pointed at the trapdoor. 'It's Jonathan Demme!' he yelled. 'He's coming up.' 'Oh I very much doubt that,' I said. Moments later, the trapdoor creaked open and Jonathan himself appeared." (See review, pg. 46.)

17 "There's a stigma, I hear 'emo' and I think of crazy 'aaagh,'" says 764-HERO's John Atkins, talking about the genre, emo-core, to which some say his band's music belongs. "There's definitely a place for that totally cathartic stuff. I would say that our music is emotional, but we don't hug our amps," he adds, laughing. "Stained Glass" appears on the Seattle trio's second long-player, *Get Here And Stay* (Up). (See On The Verge, pg. 20.)

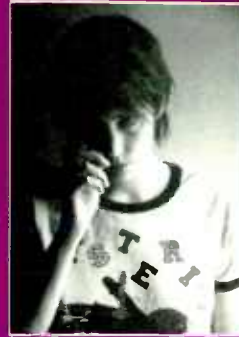


robyn hitchcock

18 New Zealand's RENDERERS ran into some trouble when, after recording their new album, *A Dream Of The Sea* (Siltbreeze), whose title track is heard here, drummer Greg Cairns and bassist Denise Roughan dropped out of the band before it left for its US tour. But vocalist Maryrose Crook and guitarist Brian Crook quickly recruited a new rhythm section (Richard Baker and the Dead C.'s Robbie Yeats) and joined Barbara Manning on her tour this past fall. Not only did the band open for Manning, but the Crooks served as her backing band. (See Best New Music, pg. 18.)

19 When he's not running his TeenBeat label or playing in FLIN FLON, Mark Robinson is a graphic designer. In addition to designing most of the packaging for TeenBeat albums, Robinson has crafted artwork for albums by the Make-Up and Godzuki, and for compilation records on Merge and Dark Beloved Cloud. If you've ever heard any of his other bands (Unrest, Air Miami, Olympic Death Squad), you know what to expect from Flin Flon. If you haven't, look for brisk guitar pop with off-kilter beats on *A-OK* (TeenBeat), the band's debut long-player, from which "Ukraina" is taken. (See review, pg. 46.)

1 "People keep asking me what it's going to be like, as if I had some master plan," BETH ORTON, told the *New York Times* about her new album, *Central Reservation* (Deconstruction-Arista), from which "Stolen Car" is taken. "But the only thing I know is that the music will continue to represent what I feel. There'll always be part of me that feels unworthy, and part of me that is incredibly optimistic. And that's what my music is about, trying to sort out the two extremes." (See feature, pg. 28.)



beth orton

2 "We have all these amazing opportunities because people have so much more power than they realize," SLEATER-KINNEY's Corin Tucker told webzine *Addicted To Noise*, talking about her band's staunch indie ethic. "[The music industry] creates this idea that you can only do things one way. And that's by signing a standard contract and giving up your power to this label, and not having ideas about how you want to play music, or create music—turning in to this industry that turns out plastic things for people to consume." "Get Up" will appear on the trio's fourth album, *The Hot Rock* (Kill Rock Stars), which comes out in late January. (See feature, pg. 31.)



r.l. burnside

3 "Some of my other recording sessions have been rather lonely endeavors," says VIC CHESNUTT, explaining what it was like to record with his good friends from the band Lambchop for his sixth record, *The Salesman And Bernadette* (Capricorn). "I love Lambchop, personally and musically, and I've always been envious of their close-knit family dynamic. There are over 10 people in Lambchop and I wanted these sessions to be a party and a true collaboration, organic and creative. And it was all and more than I had hoped for." "Until The Led" is the album's first single. (See Best New Music, pg. 18.)

4 "Those crooks at Fat Possum just don't understand, they don't know business," says R.L. BURNSIDE about how he convinced his label to allow him some creative room on his new record, *Come On In* (Fat Possum-Epiphany). "I tried to teach them, tried to explain what is cutting-edge and what isn't. I told them this: 'People have been dancing to the blues for a whole bunch of years from way on back. Adam and Eve were dancing to the blues. Blues is nothing but dance music.'" "Rollin' Tumblin' (Remix)" appears on the Tom Rothrock-produced record. (See review, pg. 23, Sept. issue; The Scene Is Now, pg. 58, Nov. issue.)

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Juliana Hatfield



The Nields



Hive

10 "I just, like, released the bone," says JULIANA HATFIELD, talking about the more laid-back vibe of her latest record, *Bed* (Zoë-Rounder), from which "Bad Day" is taken. "A friend of mine used to have an expression, 'Dude, release the bone!' He was referring to Pebbles in *The Flintstones*. You know how she had her hair up in a bone and it was really tight? I don't know, I just relaxed. I tried to let the songs have more of a groove—I wasn't so frantic about it." (See review, pg. 49, Oct. issue.)

11 "All the pieces have a sort of a song-like quality in terms of a simple melody and a short form," says jazz musician BRAD MEHLDAU about the songs on his latest album, *Songs: The Art Of The Trio, Volume Three* (Warner Bros.). "And to me a song is just that; it's about something sort of smaller, whether it's a Schubert song or it's a Beatles song—versus a big Duke Ellington suite or a Mahler symphony—it's something that's about a melody." Here, Mehl dau is heard doing his rendition of Radiohead's "Exit Music (For A Film)."

12 Sisters Katryna and Nerissa Nields learned to sing by crooning folk songs around the house with their father. "I knew I wanted to be a singer and songwriter from the time I was seven," explains Nerissa. "I remember I wrote my first song that I was really proud of when I was 13, and right away I had a harmony for it, so I dragged Katryna out of her room and taught her the harmony. It was instinct—I knew that my sister should be there." "Easy People" appears on THE NIELDS' new album, *Play* (Zoë-Rounder).

13 "We are the living culture, a mixture of pain and struggle, believing in our vast family who preaches her healthy madness," says Argentina's A.N.I.M.A.L., explaining the sentiment behind the funk-metal heard, *en Español*, on its third album, the Max Cavalera-produced *Poder Latino* (Warner Music Latin America). Over the past few years, the trio has become one of Latin America's most popular rock bands and has toured with the likes of Pantera, Biohazard and Suicidal Tendencies. "Loco Pro" is the album's first single.

14 "Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock—what those guys could do to jazz was like something alien, beyond human comprehension to me," said HIVE in a recent interview. "And how that developed into what Grandmaster Flash or Afrika Bambaataa did. Their work was so core to my understanding and appreciation of music. Now, I listen to Squarepusher or Richard James [a.k.a. Aphex Twin] and think completely new thoughts about production." "Ultrasonic Sound" comes from his debut LP, *Devious Methods* (Phase 4-London). (See review, pg. 63, Dec. issue.)

5 HONKY TOAST emerges from New York City's Lower East Side, where sneering guitar rock is as prevalent as vinyl pants and body piercing boutiques. The band, whose tongue-in-cheek approach to its music extends to even its pseudonyms (Eric J. Toast, Frank B. Butter, Richard Croissant and EZ Bake), was recently signed to 550 Music, which will release the group's debut album, *What'cha Gonna Do, Honky?*, from which "Shakin' And A Bakin'" is taken, in early February.

6 "I love how the gender and sexuality of the era were completely broken down," says Michael Stipe, who executive-produced the film *Velvet Goldmine*, which pays tribute to '70s glam. "For a while it seemed to really blur and question the hetero/homo/bi thing. There was no 'is-you or is-you-ain't'—everybody was, and was everything, or anything they wanted to be. It was almost required, and it was truly queer, in the original sense of the word." "Hot One" is SHUDDER TO THINK's contribution to the movie's soundtrack (London). (See Shudder To Think feature, pg. 73, Sept. issue.)

7 "It entirely comes down to whether you can accept that we do this countrified music as a tribute to the music we love," SCOTT 4's Scott Bixen told *NME*, defending his band's interest in American country music. "We're well aware that [the music is] coming through the filter of people who live in London in 1998 and not the Midwest in 1950. I like the fact that we step onstage looking like this and we are English," says the Stetson-wearing Brit. "Deutsche LP Record" is from the trio's debut album, *Recorded In State* (V2). (See review, pg. 50.)

8 In a recent interview, LIQUID SOUL bandleader Mars Williams described why he felt "acid-jazz" was too limiting to use to describe his ensemble's sound: "The thing about Liquid Soul is that we stress fun at our shows. We do a little hip-hop and jazz together, but we also do a little bit of Latin in there... a little funk, R&B. We have world music influences, we do some Eastern music sometimes. A little free avant-garde on top of a beat. We still stress fun and people dance." "Cabbage Roll" is from their current album, *Make Some Noise* (Ark 21). (See Quick Fix, pg.16, Sept. issue.)

9 "We're not a country-rock band," says BAD LIVERS' chief singer-songwriter Danny Barnes, beginning to explain the difficulties in describing his band's eclectic musical blend. "We're not a reggae band. We're not a ska band. We're not a blues band. If you're a blues band, you have labels and clubs already set up just for you. But I don't make my music so I can sell it—it's just what it is." "Honey I've Found A Brand New Way/It's All The Same To Me" is from the group's latest album, *Industry And Thrift* (Sugar Hill). (See review, pg. 44.)



Bad Livers



Scott 4



Liquid Soul

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DECEMBER 1

GARY MOORE Out In The Fields *Virgin*
MORCHEEBA Beats & B-Sides *China-Sire*
SOUNDTRACK Down In The Delta *Virgin*
Music from Chaka Khan, Janet Jackson, D'Angelo, the Roots, Keb' Mo', Luther Vandross and more
SOUNDTRACK If They Only Knew *Capitol*
SOUNDTRACK Little Voice *Capitol*
Includes Judy Garland, Billie Holiday, Shirley Bassey, Tom Jones.
SOUNDTRACK Psycho *Geffen*
Music from the Gus Van Sant-directed update of the classic Hitchcock thriller; includes previously unreleased tracks from Rob Zombie, Pet Shop Boys, Mono, Steve Earle, Lamb, Lionrock, Thievery Corporation, Howie B., James Hall and others

DECEMBER 9

CARPENTERS A Kind Of Hush (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Carpenters (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Horizon (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Made In America (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Now & Then (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Passage (reissue) *A&M*
CARPENTERS Ticket To Ride (reissue) *A&M*
DEUTSCH AMERIKANISCHE
FREUNDSCHAFT Die Kleinen Und Die Bosen (reissue) *Mute*
DEUTSCH AMERIKANISCHE
FREUNDSCHAFT Alles Ist Gut (reissue) *Mute*
DEUTSCH AMERIKANISCHE

FREUNDSCHAFT Fur Immer (reissue) *Mute*
DEUTSCH AMERIKANISCHE
FREUNDSCHAFT Gold Und Liebe (reissue) *Mute*
NAS I Am... The Autobiography *Columbia*
BUSTA RHYMES E.L.E. *Elektra*
FRANK SINATRA Lucky Numbers (compilation) *Reprise*
SOUNDTRACK Mighty Joe Young *Hollywood*
TWELVE CAESARS Youth Is Wasted On The Young *Minty Fresh*

DECEMBER 15

SOUNDTRACK A Civil Action *Hollywood*

DECEMBER 22

LYLE MAYS Street Of Dreams (reissue) *Warner Bros.*
LYLE MAYS Lyle Mays (reissue) *Warner Bros.*

JANUARY 5

SOUNDTRACK Hedwig And The Angry Inch *Atlantic*
The cast recording to an off-off-Broadway hard rock musical comedy, the tale of a struggling transgender East German rock singer

JANUARY 11

ARLING & CAMERON Speeding Down The Highway 12" *Emperor Norton*

VARIOUS ARTISTS Pop Romantique *Emperor Norton*

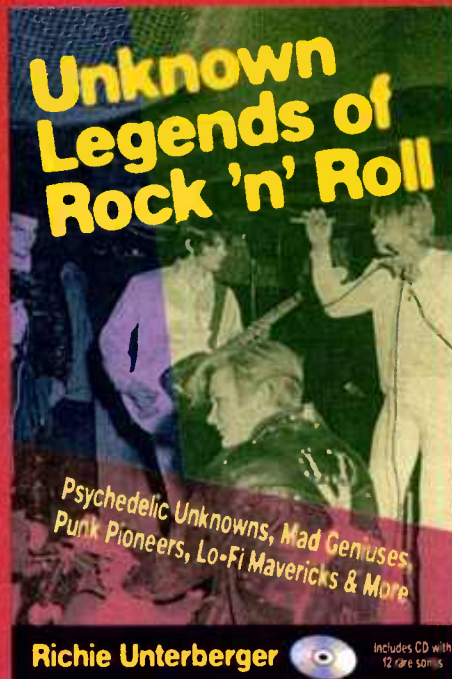
French pop songs covered by Magnetic Fields, Apples In Stereo, Sukia, Air with Françoise Hardy, Luna and more

JANUARY 12

III FRUM THA SOUL Black Superman *RCA*
BRENT ARNOLD 7" *Up*
ARSONISTS Backdraft 12" *Matador*
BLACK CROWES By Your Side *American-Columbia*
EDIE BRICKELL & NEW BOHEMIANS Best Of *Geffen*
TIM CARROLL Rock & Roll Band *Sire*
CUCKOO Breathing Lessons *Geffen*
GROOP DOGDRILL Half Nelson *Beggars Banquet*
LO FIDELITY ALLSTARS How To Operate With A Blown Mind *Skint-Columbia*
Pushed back from its original release date; see review in the November '98 issue
LONE JUSTICE The Best Of *Geffen*
MICROPHONES 7" *Up*
MOJAVE 3 Out Of Tune *4AD-Sire*
NEVERS The Nevers *Sire*
ROOTS MANUVA 12" *Ninja Tune*
SOUNDTRACK Another Day in Paradise *V2*
TAD 7" *Up*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Illuminati—Pastels *Remixes Up*

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Baltimore, Maryland

(Continued from page 82)

around. And the **Daily Grind** (1726 Thames St., 558-0399) and **Sacred Grounds** (1626 Aliceanna St., 276-6606) dispense the best joe. If you're looking to stalk a *Homicide* cast member, staking out the Grind isn't a bad idea—it's right across the street from the former fireboat station where the show is filmed. Meanwhile, the tiny, homey **Peter's Inn** (504 S. Ann St., 675-7313) serves up a half-dozen of the city's best, and most affordable, dinners every night from an ever-changing chalkboard menu—the only constant is the most garlic-y garlic bread on the Eastern Seaboard.

Just down the waterfront from the Point lies Canton, and fans of electronic music owe themselves a visit to this neck of the woods just for **Modern Music** (2919 O'Donnell St., 675-2172), a comprehensive CD and vinyl store for ravers, arm-chair listeners, and DJs alike. A visit to Modern Music is also the best way to get hooked into the city's resurgent dance music scene—if Ultraworld Promotions is pitching one of its massive events or if one of the Cloudwatch chill-out's is scheduled during your visit, drop everything else and check it out.

Federal Hill

South Baltimore is the land of the blue-collar corner beer bar and the spiritual home of a revved-up, chain-walleted-and-tattooed strain of local roots-y rock. I like to think of it as turbo-billy—the Glenmont Popes, the Twin Six, and Johnny Love And Speed are at the top of the current crop. Most of the bars in South Baltimore's Federal Hill neighborhood offer only a jukebox or karaoke, but local hangout **Mum's Tavern** (1132 S. Hanover St., 547-7415) sometimes has wild-ass garage bands on weekends and the venerable **8 x 10** (10 E. Cross St., 625-2000), a 200-capacity club crammed into a pair of row houses, has served as a launching pad for many of Baltimore's best-loved groups—from nationally-known funk-rockers Jimmie's Chicken Shack to up-and-comers such as "phat blues" act the Kelly Bell Band and omnivorous groove band Lake Trout.

The north side of the Inner Harbor is an officially sanctioned Planet Hard Rock tourist wonderland, but by far the best of the many attractions ringing the water resides in South Baltimore: the **American Visionary Art Museum** (800 Key Hwy., 244-1900). The three-story Visionary collects work from "outsider" artists from all over the country—think Howard Finster; now think of stuff that's even wilder. Every single-theme exhibit the museum has mounted so far has been truly inspirational—a riot of color, homespun creativity, and wacked-out imagination.

Hampden

When John Waters went looking for a neighborhood that would best capture Baltimore's urban, down-

home culture of for his latest opus *Pecker*, he chose Hampden. The joke is that the very forces of hipster cachet and commerce mocked by the film are in the process of transforming the Avenue (a.k.a. main drag 36th St.) into the most high-tone/low-brow boulevard in town. Despite the influx of swank cafes and shops, it's still one of the most "Baltimore" of Baltimore's 'hoods.

When you meet a woman of true-blue Baltimore stock, she may call you "hon," even if you've never met before. This endearing Baltimoreism provides the name and inspiration for the **Cafe Hon** (1002 W. 36th St., 243-1230). Some say the short-order cuisine isn't as good since the Hon moved into a tonier space, but it's hard to beat on griddle basics. If you're looking for something a little spicier, stroll down the street to Baltimore's newest and best Mexican restaurant, **Holy Frijoles** (908 W. 36th St., 235-2326). The colorful dining area is damn near microscopic, but the food is great and you'll be doing your part to support local music—almost everyone who works there plays in a band.

Mount Vernon

North Charles Street runs from the Harbor north all the way to the county line, splitting in half the old downtown shopping district and one of the city's most concentrated hip-young-urbanite neighborhoods. One two-block stretch just below Mount Vernon proper contains two great record stores perfect for vinyl scrounging—**Musical Exchange** (422 N. Charles St., 528-8327) and **Record Collections** (523 N. Charles St., 528-1616). A few blocks north of the peaceful green swards and stately statuary that make up Mount Vernon Place lies a haven for perversion and oddity: **Atomic Books** (1018 N. Charles St., 625-7955), the local one-stop shop for 'zines, comics, and other pulp ephemera. Smile while you're leafing through that issue of *Splosh!*—in-store surveillance cameras are beaming your red-handed image out to the worldwide web via www.atomicbooks.com.

Small Pockets Of Resistance

Not everything in Baltimore breaks down into neighborhoods—some things are just too unique. Hidden among the downtown office towers, the **Ottobar** (203 E. Davis St., 752-OTTO) is one of the smallest music venues in town, but it's probably the best. Almost anything with an element of rock gets a shot at its tiny stage, from touring acts like Mecca Normal and the Ruins to the excellent local bands that make it their second home, including the hooky, quirky part-rock trio Roads To Space Travel, the raging emo of Third Harmonic Distortion, and, on rare occasions, post-punk minimalists and local legends Lungfish.

The **Red Room** (425 E. 31st St., 243-6888) is also on the small side, but the donations-only, collectively-run space, located on the edge of the Waverly neighborhood, caters to one of the most vital scenes in town, as improvisers and musical experimentalists from around the corner and around the country blow minds with weekly performances. The Red Room shares its space with **Normal's Books And Records**, the epicenter of local secondhand culture and one of the best book and record stores anywhere in the state.



All phone numbers are area code 410. Lee Gardner is the music editor for Baltimore's City Paper.

Baltimore, Maryland

When people think of this industrial burg on the Chesapeake Bay, they tend to think of John Waters's drag queens and hair-hoppers or the tough cops and crooks of TV's *Homicide: Life On The Streets*. But my favorite media depiction of Baltimore came years ago on the old *Tracey Ullman Show*, when Tracey played a local gal, complete with a perfect "Baw'damoor" accent, who was making the big break and finally moving out of her father's row house. After much waffling and crying, she made her big flight from the nest—into the row house next door.

PHOTOS: JEFFERSON STEELE



PETER'S INN

Baltimore is the biggest small town in the world, or rather it's a collection of small towns—a patchwork of little neighborhoods, little communities, and little music scenes, all of which pretty well keep to themselves. While that keeps the things somewhat scattered, it means that each little area, each little musical subset—whether blue-collar rowdy or art-school sophisticated—holds onto its peculiar character. Provincial or charmingly individual? I'll just say that they don't call it Charm City for nothing.

Don't bother scanning the dial for good radio while you're here—there's very little, unless you live in the dorms at one of the many local universities. If you want to know what's going on off-campus, you could do worse than to consult *City Paper*, a widely circulated free weekly tabloid that also happens to be my employer. But the best way to experience such a neighborhood-oriented city is to visit a few choice neighborhoods.

Fells Point/Canton

Years ago, Fells Point was a seamy waterfront neighborhood—Billie Holiday used to turn tricks there before her singing career took off. Now bars, shops, and restaurants line almost every block and the Point boasts the highest concentration of decent music venues in town. The 200-capacity **Fletcher's** (701 S. Bond St., 558-1889) books good local bands of all stripes as well as touring acts ranging from the Melvins to Mixmaster Morris. Despite its location above an overgrown-frat-boy bar, it feels positively subterranean. The 500-capacity **Bohager's** (515 S. Eden St., 563-7220) has all the ambiance of a hangar lit with beer signs, but it is the biggest hall in town and the occasional touring group makes it worth a visit. The more intimate **Brass Monkey** (1601 Eastern Ave., 276-4395) and **Wyatt's** (1614 Eastern Ave., 732-8656) showcase bands from the city's power pop underground. Love Nut is the best and best-known name in the game; the group's second album *Baltimucho* recently came out on Big Deal.

The all-purpose **Sound Garden** (1616 Thames St., 563-9011) and the nuthin'-but-punk **Reptilian Records** (403 S. Broadway, 327-6853) are two of the best places to shop for tunes. The plimsoles-and-piercings boutique **Sticky Fingers** (802 S. Broadway, 675-7588) and the slightly more club wear-oriented **Bombshell** (1704 Thames St., 276-8881) provide the most outré fashions

(Continued on page 81)



P NYC

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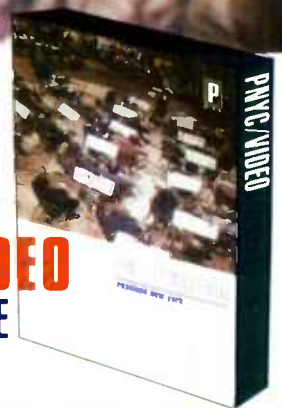
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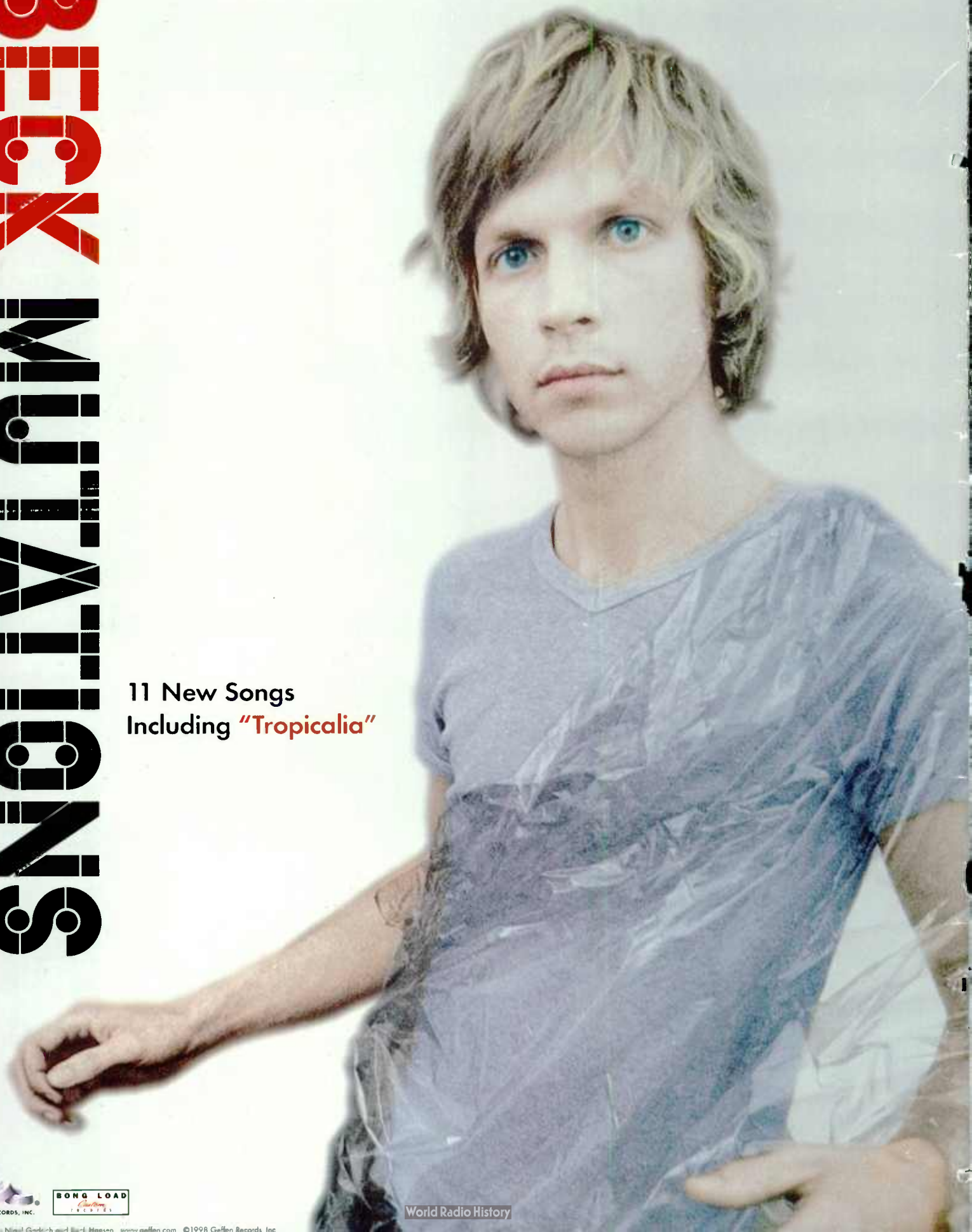
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