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making the universe safe for pop

THE RENTALS:

7 Minutes of Pleasure

DEPRESSION ROCKS:

Wilco's bumper stunner



INSIDE

WATER SPORTS:

Fountains Of Wayne

Chuck E's In Love With LA

GUS GUS!

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**BEN FOLDS FIVE:
A BRICK THROUGH A WINDOW 32**

"We weren't perceived as a sell-out after 'Brick' because people could see we were kind of sabotaging ourselves from being a big pop band." Ben Folds and pals muse over their radio hit, touring like demons, and their new record, *The Unauthorized Biography Of Reinhold Messner*. And they do it over beverages and baked goods in the cozy abode of Tom Maxwell, he of another North Carolinian chart-topping act, the Squirrel Nut Zippers.

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"We decided to work as a band, and make it sound more like a band—rather than some collected artists. I'm much much happier with this album than the first album. It's a little more pop, and I like that." Iceland's premier nine-piece artist collective explains to Jackie McCarthy how and why its new disc is *Normal*.

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"We actually [wrote] some songs for the sheer fact that we wanted to put distortion pedals on and make a racket." Not the first band to form with the goal of cranking it to 11, Scotland's fab five talks with Douglas Wolk about Glasgow's underworld and about how its new album came to be called *Come On Die Young*.

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Gus Gus photographed by Steph

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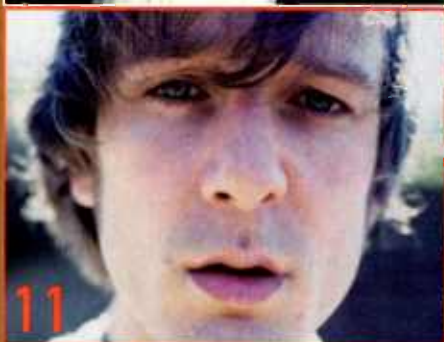
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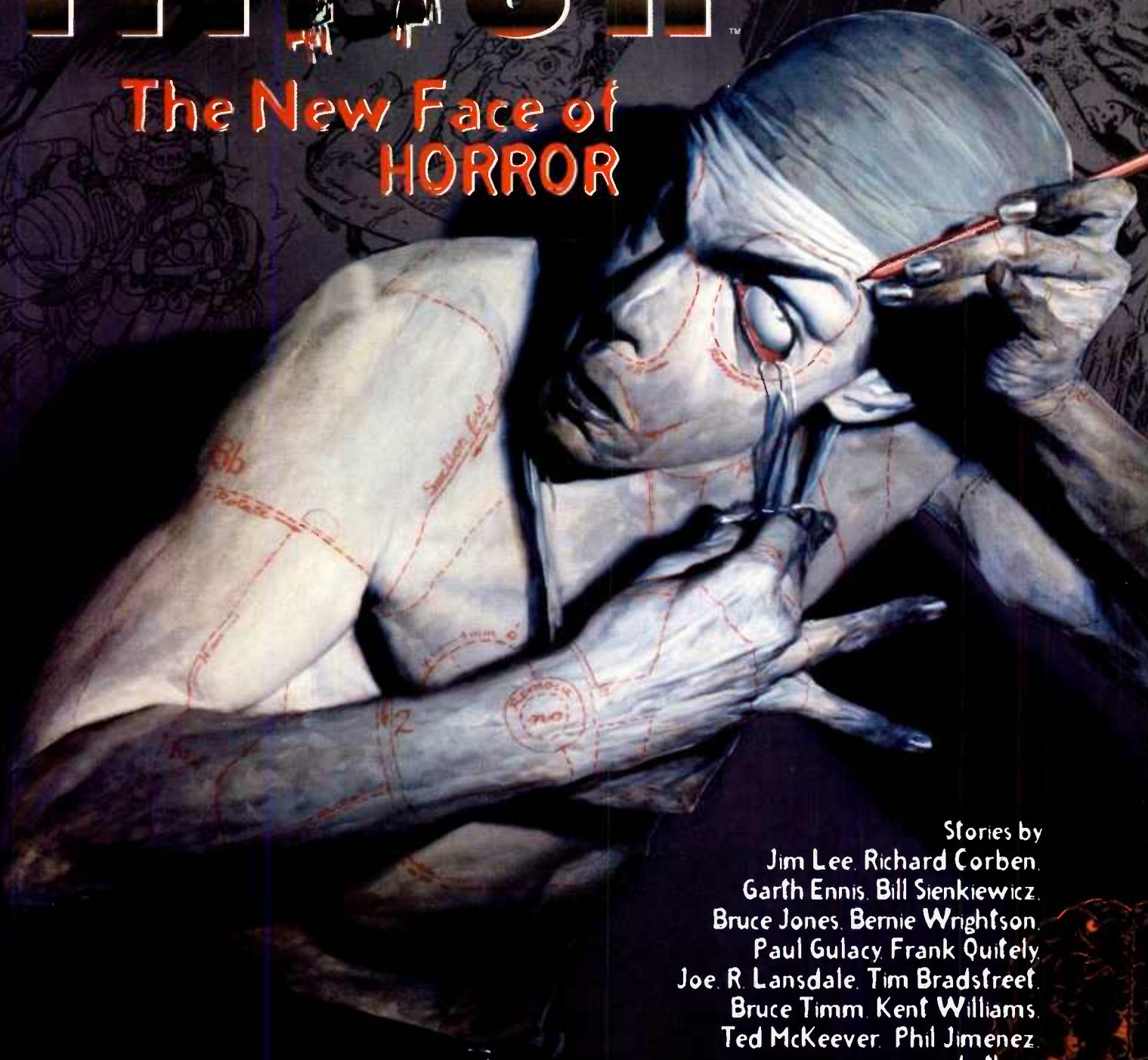


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fli~~nt~~ch

the vertigo HORROR anthology

The New Face of HORROR



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Jim Lee, Richard Corben,
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Bruce Jones, Bernie Wrightson,
Paul Gulacy, Frank Quitely,
Joe R. Lansdale, Tim Bradstreet,
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and others
THE SHOCKS BEGIN IN APRIL

COMICS FOR MATURE READERS

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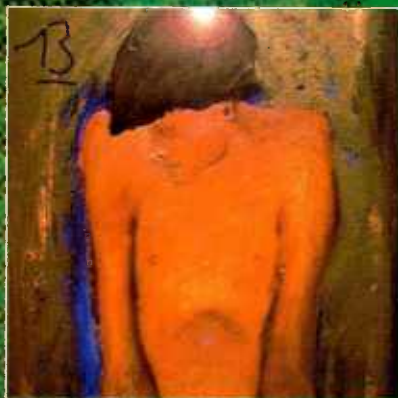
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world radio history

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the new album featuring
"Tender"

Julia Fordham

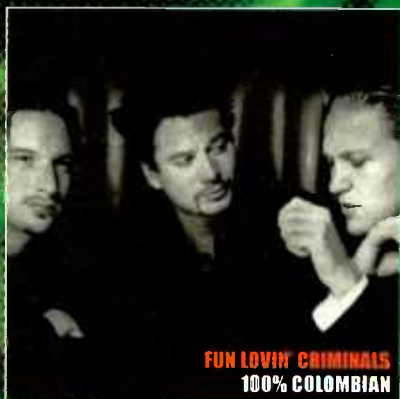


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12 year itch

I agree wholeheartedly with Michael Azerrad's description of the music industry since the advent of grunge—they have been looking for the next big thing without willing to invest anything in it. I also agree with the statement that the music industry moves in cycles, I just happen to think that they are 12-year cycles. Grunge hit in 1991, New Wave in 1979, folk rock and psychedelia in 1967, and rock 'n' roll in 1955. For some reason or another the public at large becomes more interested in music every 12 years thus propelling whatever is "happening" at the time into the charts (this could be a generational thing—we all want something special to call their own). Between these movements we are stuck with Backstreet Boys, Spice Girls, Creed and Third Eye Blind; or New Kids, C+C Music Factory, Poison and Warrant; or Bob Seger, the Carpenters and Boston; or Pat Boone, Frankie Valli and Dion... So wait until 2003 when the next big thing should hit.

Jeff VanderWerf
jp_vd_werf@hotmail.com

Is that a firmly extended finger in your pocket?

I am a loyal *CMJ New Music Monthly* reader, and I felt compelled to write after reading your article "The Day The Music Died." When are people going to realize that rock music did not rise and set with Nirvana and Kurt Cobain? I was never a Nirvana fan, but I am a big fan of "commercial alternative crap" like Everclear and Creed. I don't think that rock is in the sorry state it is in now because Kurt Cobain couldn't cope with being famous and ate a shotgun shell. Everclear and Creed have nothing to do with the decline of rock music either. I have been a fan of rock music for more years than I can count and personally I think Nirvana sucked. Please don't feel the need to insult the intelligence of real rock fans. I am not asking you to kiss the collective asses of Everclear and Creed, but as a fan of both, your article pissed me off! You can't see it, but my middle finger is firmly extended in your direction. I will continue to read your magazine, but I'm highly upset with your harsh view of alternative bands of today.

Suzie Ramone
Nehalem@webtv.net

Perhaps your perception of the text of the article was swayed by the large photo of Kurt Cobain on the cover. My piece did not place sole blame for the dire state of alternative rock on the fact that Kurt, as you so tactfully put it, "ate a shotgun shell." In fact, the article identifies, at length, at least half a dozen other significant contributing factors. As for your claim that "rock music did not rise and set with Nirvana and Kurt Cobain," that was my point exactly. But try telling that to your beloved Creed and Everclear. —Michael Azerrad

Last issue, last rites

Well, thank goodness my subscription expires in May. How in the world can any magazine justify yet another Cobain cover? The last cutting edge thing he did was commit suicide. Yes, his albums were colossal hits. But if you stick some guy's face on the front of every music magazine and play his songs once an hour on every radio station playing music created after 1985, mathematics would suggest that the more exposure one is given, the more likely his audience is to expand. Think about all of the credible musicians who continue to produce consistently; or better still, consider the acts who are justifying record contracts by improving on the sound that got them into the business. Don't you own any Lilys albums? Now there is a Kurt who deserves more attention than the one whose body is a mere memory. It took the Olivia Tremor Control years to complete *...Dusk at Cubist Castle*, and yet these quality living musicians get only occasional coverage. This is so eerily similar to the disastrous mistake *CMJ New Music Monthly* made by putting Fiona Apple on the cover and calling her "the next big thing." I have never seen her play a guitar or bass, or even a tambourine. Not because she can't, but because you people insulted me so much with that "big thing" remark that I deliberately ignore everything involving her. Wake up and hear the music, and stop pumping your pages full of critic's darlings.

Damien Taylor
Damienct@aol.com

My all-time favorite kind of letter is the I'm Mad As Hell That You Don't Correspond To My View Of The World type above, full of broad assumptions and written with the steadfast belief that the ideas about music it expresses are not rooted in matters of taste but are truths somewhere between the Platonic Ideal and Kantian logic. But I'm distracted from pointing out that Damien is castigating us for covering both music that we like (i.e. "critics' darlings") and music we think a lot of other people will like, too (i.e. Next Big Thing) because I love the idea of the latter working as some kind of operant conditioning. Think about it: He deliberately avoided Fiona Apple because we told him she'd be popular! Awesome! Pavlov did some good work with salivating dogs, but just think what we could do with Britney Spears. —Ed.

Correction:

Michael Azerrad's name is spelled, well, "Michael Azerrad," not with the extra "z" and missing "r" we printed it with throughout the March issue. Perhaps this is why he's taken to calling me an "asholle."

In the April issue, the text for the Peter Guralnick story (*Life/Style*, page 57) should have been credited to Grant Alden, the photos to Trey Harrison. —Ed.

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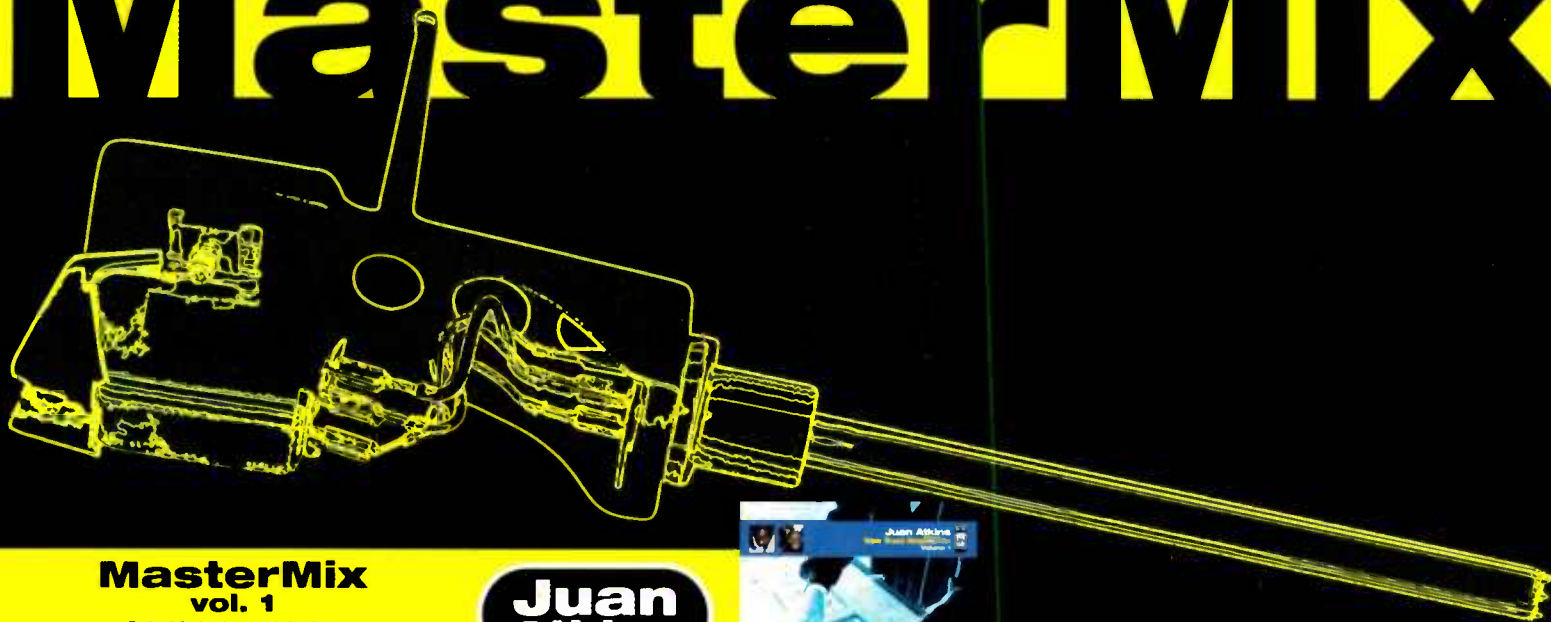
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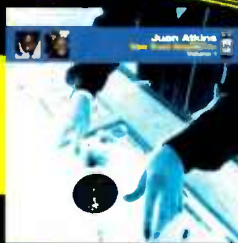
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BONUS TIME

Story: David Daley
Photo: Chapman Baehler

Don't tell ex-Weezer Matt Sharp that fame's clock is ticking on his Rentals.

Late night, Barcelona. Sometime in 1995. Again in 1996. And also throughout '97 and '98. The stringy-haired, tousled American wandering between parties with a glass of wine in one hand and a tape recorder in the other is the Rentals' Matt Sharp, carousing the countryside, capturing the celebratory Spanish spirit.

And why not? Sharp struck gold with the Rentals '95 debut, *Return Of The Rentals*, and suddenly the Weezer sideman lost the geeky tag and started hanging with new pals like Blur's Damon Albarn and Elastica's Justine Frischmann. Sharp left Weezer with some bitterness after '96's *Pinkerton*. It's not easy to go back to being the bassist when you have a hit single about being friends with Paulina Porizkova.

Now the sounds of Barcelona have inspired the Rentals' long-awaited sophomore effort, *Seven More Minutes* (Maverick), an album more cohesive and daring than their debut, but with just as much kitschy new wave fun. "I had a bunch of friends there, and it got to the point where if I had a week off, why not go to

Barcelona as opposed to being in California," said Sharp, sipping tea in his LA apartment. "If the choice is LA or Spain, why not Spain? It didn't seem to be that crazy a thought to me." His life there does sound a little crazy. Sharp so took to the Spanish schedule—dinner at midnight, cocktails at 3 a.m., full party-speed by five or six in the morning—that his American lifestyle seemed foreign to him whenever he returned home.

Indeed, *Seven More Minutes* sounds like a party. There are joyous contributions from friends such as Albarn ("Big Daddy C"), and brilliant guest harmonics with Miki Berenyi (Lush) and Petra Haden (that dog). "Getting By" opens the album with chants and cheers, the swirling synths of "Keep Sleeping" sound like a giddy Tubeway Army, and "Hello Hello" should replace "1999" as an end-of-the-millennium-psychosis-blues anthem.

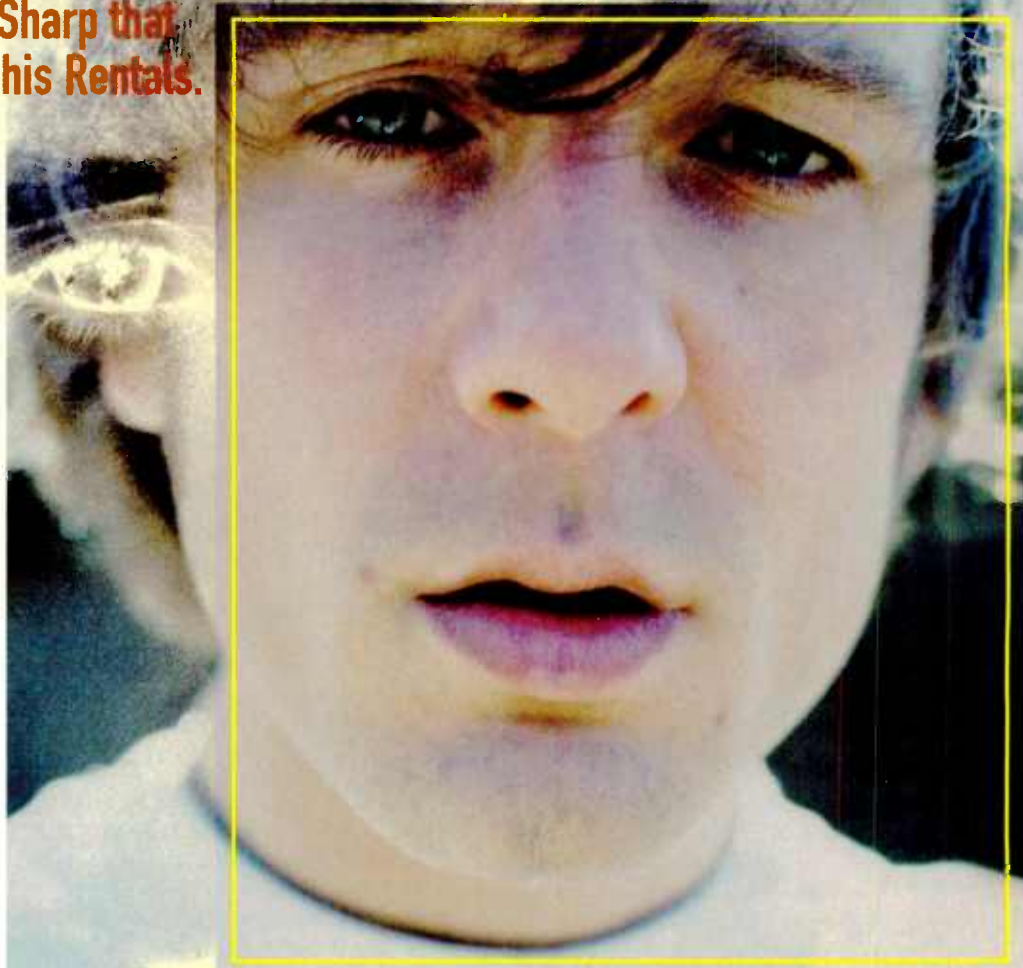
Sharp's return to the Rentals covers similar ground as *Return Of The Rentals*, but the new record sounds more confident and uses the synths and organs in a smarter, more subtle fashion. "There's probably more synths on this album. We used them in such an unashamedly new wave way on the first record, which is fine, but I didn't want to do anything that obvious on this record. I wanted to find some different ways to use them."

And while the production is vastly improved, a lo-fi instrument played an important role to the overall vibe. Sharp brought his tape recorder out with him every night, and would sometimes take his drink to a comparatively quiet corner to capture lyrics and hum melodies. That made him feel a little like Michael Keaton talking to himself in *Night Shift*. But no matter how strange he may have looked, it makes *Seven More Minutes* feel as if it were recorded in the moment, that the songs came in spontaneous, joyous bursts of life.

DWI—dictating while intoxicated—sometimes seems foolish and muddled the next day. But Sharp says that the themes on this album—the itinerant lifestyle, the simple happiness of being around friends, love on a rock star's wages—still hold true. When he tours this summer, he says it will be the first time he's playing songs that really still mean something central to his life.

That, of course, leads to the subject of his old band. Sharp is pals once again with Weezer's Rivers Cuomo, and they even co-wrote "My Head Is In The Sun," one of *Minutes'* central songs. It's an ironic turn, as Cuomo's lack of interest in sharing Weezer's songwriting duties with his bandmates led to considerable dissension during the *Pinkerton* days.

"It was good just to sit down and work with him. I think we'll continue to do stuff," says Sharp, who lived in Cuomo's Boston apartment while mixing *Seven More Minutes*. "He's a really great guy, and it was really easy to write with him—maybe because we're not bandmates anymore." No dissension here. On *Seven More Minutes*, everybody drinks together.



"GETTING BY" BY THE RENTALS APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD.

World Radio History

Label Profile



My, what big beats you have! Before the Chemical Brothers and Fatboy Slim took the dance floor sound du jour to prominence, there was the London-based label **WALL OF SOUND**. Owner Mark Jones—a fan of everything from hip-hop and funk to the Monkees and Led Zeppelin—was turned on to the party potential of electronic music while working the lights at seminal rave club Shoom. The label, named for Phil Spector's unique production style, pioneered the big beat sound in England, pushing artists such as Howie B and Kruder & Dorfmeister as early as 1994. The company scored its first top 40 hit three years ago with the Propellerheads' "Spybreak," and hasn't relented since. Now with international distribution and a roster that includes the Propellerheads, Les Rhythim Digitales and the Wiseguys (the latter two with albums due later this spring), the future is bright. Laughs Jones, "I just want to carry on releasing the most fucked-up pop music there is and trying to interfere with people's minds!"

Weird Record Of The Month



The premise of the commercials was funny enough: Four brawny, hairy-chested men dress in drag to get into "Ladies Night" at bars, and get their oafy selves some Bud Light, gratis. But we'll bet you didn't know that those oafs had formed a band. Since '94, the band, appropriately named **LADIES NIGHT**, has played a slew of shows and made numerous TV appearances. The Ladies recently released their debut album, *The Boys Night Out* (Kid), and a video to go along with its first single, "You Can Keep Your Boots On." (By the way, the homosocial subtext of the video would be enough to ignite Jerry Falwell's pants.) The album has some covers ("Mustang Sally," "Wild Thing") and some of frontgal Mikie "Agnes" Stanton's originals, but it's all pretty straightforward bar-ready rock. In case you're wondering when the Ladies' media blitz will end, don't hold your breath: Stanton recently inked—yipes!—a movie deal.

Random Quote



"They're welcome to all the stuff they've been able to milk thus far. I do know [Goo Goo Doll] John Rzeznik. We have a little pact that as soon as he's not famous anymore and everyone forgets him, I'll call him up and be a pal. That's when he's going to need a friend."
 >>>Paul Westerberg, on being graciously seminal

BUSY BUNNY



Jim O'Rourke hops from studio to studio, most recently releasing the stunning *Eureka*.

Even with our famously clipped attention spans, American underground music fans would have a hard time forgetting Jim O'Rourke. Whether in the credits to a CD or in a magazine, his name has been popping up with alarming frequency over the past two years. He's played on albums by Edith Frost and Smog, produced sessions with Sam Prekop and Bobby Conn, written arrangements for an Alan Licht/Loren Mazzacane Connors record, and released his last hurrah with Gastr del Sol. In his spare time, he's issued three solo full-lengths, including the new *Eureka* (Drag City).

Yet even with all this activity, O'Rourke fears he's fallen off the radar. "I'm convinced no one in the States cares," he says on the phone from London. "America's abstract to me now, because I'm never there anymore."

In England to record Stereolab's next record, O'Rourke giddily recounts his recent travels. He's toured Europe performing on computers with members of the Austrian avant-garde collective Mego; he's snuck into the States to collaborate with old friends from Chicago; and he's taken up part-time residence in Tokyo, where he recorded with underground Japanese artists, "because it's cool," he says.

As O'Rourke skips easily between music genres, his ubiquity doesn't place him in jeopardy of overexposure. A respected improviser in Europe, where he regularly performs to packed crowds, he's best known here for the lilting, complex pop he created with his ex-partner David Grubbs in Gastr del Sol—a relationship the mild-mannered O'Rourke speaks of with restrained bitterness. But his recent solo work showcases his range. On 1997's *Bad Timing*, the multi-instrumentalist sailed through four gorgeous guitar compositions that paid indirect homage to his hero-cum-friend John Fahey, the innovator whose Revenant label released O'Rourke's other outing that year, the guitar and hurdy-gurdy drone of *Happy Days*.

Then there's *Eureka*, on which he's backed by a host of Chicago musicians. By turns one of his poppiest and most offbeat records to date, it features a curtly mellifluous track with rolling piano figures ("Ghost Ship In A Storm"), an ambient jazz workout ("Movie On The Way Down") and a Burt Bacharach cover with backing vocals by Edith Frost ("Something Big").

O'Rourke discusses the album as if it's something that happened accidentally amidst the flurry of other projects. But he also mentions that he gauges when to release "solo" records against public perception. "Not that I'm trying to create any image," he says. "If anything, I like confusing people."

And confronting them, with ever more O'Rourke-affiliated music. After finishing with Stereolab, he'll move into another London studio to mix a High Llamas album, then hop back to the States to produce Superchunk, the Aluminum Group and Storm & Stress; he's also penciled in time for a new collaborative effort with Sonic Youth.

After that, he'll deserve a vacation, right?

"Oh no," he says, shrieking in near-horror. "I hate not working. It drives me crazy."

>>>Richard Martin

DOUBLETIME



DJ DB helped launch rave a decade ago with his NASA parties. Now he's boldly going where jungle hasn't gone before: Warner Bros.

Phisics is the new Thursday night party at Vanity, a club nestled about a dozen blocks north of Manhattan's Greenwich Village and all its trendy, beaten paths. Each week you'll hear blistering drum 'n' bass from resident DJs such as DB and Dara. Vanity is no warehouse: The undersized gin-and-gingers cost eight bucks and everyone is dressed to the nines in the latest clubwear. In the city, this is the evolution of the underground. And its sound—once relegated to the indie of indie labels—has found a home under the wing of Warner Bros. in the form of newly created subsidiary F-111.

"It's a dream come true, really," says DB, who's running the F-111 show along with Andrew Goldstone, former A&R man for Astralwerks. The two had fantasized about having a label deal for years. "We were friends and we were both a little... not frustrated, but knew the potential of this music and wanted to have some muscle behind us to promote it."

Now DB is using that muscle to promote the label's first LP, *Shades Of Technology*. It's a hard-edged mix album, blended seamlessly by DB himself, that highlights some top dance floor tracks, many of which he spins at Phisics. "What I really wanted to do—I know it's a bit of a cliché now—is create a journey," says the DJ/entrepreneur. "It peaks very quickly and then takes you gradually downhill and then back up, more aggressive, more aggressive until towards the end it violently slams you." Jonny L, Optical, Ed Rush and DJ Krust are just a few of the producers enlisted for the star-studded project.

The plan is to make F-111 more than a one-trick pony. The label has signed a digital rock group called Control Freq and a Philadelphia turntablist called J Smooth, who will be releasing a compilation of jungle tracks.

DB is pushing the frontiers of electronic music in the US just as he always has, since his days of introducing rave to the East Coast in the early '90s with his famed NASA parties. Asked if back then he could have anticipated his present situation, DB says, "I might have believed the jungle part, but I don't think I'd have believed the Warner part. To me Warner Bros. was a giant monolith that scared the shit out of me."

>>>William Werde

Tours We'd Like To See



Five-Day Forecast Tour:

Smog, Foghat, Johnny Thunders, Reigndance, Rain Like The Sound Of Trains, Rain Tree Crow, Storm & Stress, My Life In Rain, Lightnin' Hopkins, Lightning Seeds, Thunderbolt, Snowpony, Hail, DJ Hurricane, Texas Tornadoes, Psyclones, Clouds

Random Quotes



"Who's experimental anyway? Not the Prodigy.

They're bound by the restrictions of the big electronics corporations—it's Mr. Yamamoto building the new sampler who's doing the experimenting, not them. **The only real experimental band of the last five years have been Stereolab and who gives a fuck about them? I mean, I like them, but who really gives a fuck?"**

>>>Oasis's Noel Gallagher, wondering where were you when he was getting high



"About two months ago, Peter said something about how we're getting along like we used to, and the truth is we're getting along like we never did.

There's no room for babying in the band. **There's no room for people not carrying their own weight."**

>>>Kiss's Paul Stanley, on Gene Simmons's waistline

In My Room



TIN STAR
Dave Tomlinson

Cypress Hill
IV

Old doo-wop records

Adam F
Colours

R.L. Burnside
A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey

Martin Amis
(book) Time Zero



BANYAN
Stephen Perkins

Louis Prima
Collectors Series

Björk
Homogenic

Finley Quaye
Maverick A Strike

Morihei Veshiba
(book) The Art Of Peace

Woody Allen
(film) Manhattan Murder
Mystery



THE SEA & CAKE
Sam Prekop

Colin Blunstone
One Year

Nuno Canavarro
Plux Quba

Edith Frost
Telescopic

Wayne Shorter
Moto Grosso Feio

Plush
More You Becomes You

GENTLEMAN TAKES POLAROIDS

Twelve years since his last solo album, David Sylvian offers snapshots from a spiritual quest.

In a voice as thin and fragile as a centuries-old parchment, David Sylvian intones, over the gentle Fender Rhodes wash of "Wanderlust," "Travel light, don't think twice/We're leaving the shadows behind/It's given us this wonderful wanderlust." The track is featured on the experimental/experiential composer's latest essay, *Dead Bees On A Cake* (Virgin), the first solo album in 12 years from the former Japan frontman. And Sylvian means every heart-baring word.

"When I was younger, I traveled a lot around the world, exploring different cultures," says the 40-year-old, UK-bred singer, on a recent shopping trip to San Francisco from his new nearby home in Sonoma. "But since I've moved to the States, I've been traveling back and forth across America, which is what 'Wanderlust' refers to. We've started up this annual tradition of following our teacher, who arrives on the West Coast at the end of May and just travels across the country. Plus," he winks, stroking his nascent goatee, "I've always wanted to explore America by road." So he and his wife, former Paisley Park starlet Ingrid Chavez, pile their three kids into the family Jeep and off they trundle.

Now Sylvian understands and respects roadside Americana. He has yet to see the World's Largest Prairie Dog, he sighs, "but we've seen Prairie Dog Town, in South Dakota!" And the man who once crooned "Gentlemen Take Polaroids" (and even published a book of his own collage photos, *Perspectives*) admits that he still takes tons of Polaroids on these vacations. "And pictures and videos and all the rest, to document each trip. I tend to photograph the parts of the landscape that are more bizarre. It can be a very small thing, just a detail, or it can be an image of something that's repeated throughout the length and breadth of small town America. It can even be a giant green dinosaur statue, standing in the middle of some Western town."

No surprise, then, that *Bees* is his most organic sounding effort to date. Old Sylvian compadres like Ryuichi Sakamoto drop by, with new age-y cameos from Marc Ribot and Talvin Singh and guest vocals from Chavez and the aforementioned guru, Shree Maa. The lilting Bryan Ferry-ish opener "I Surrender" sets the introspective pace, to soft, Sakamoto-scripted strings: "Birds fly and fill the summer skies... the stars are all aligned and I surrender." He's talking about a "personal search," says Sylvian. "You can read as many books as you like, you can be intellectually well up on it all, the religions of the world, their doctrines. But if it's not put into practice in your own life, then you're not going to get any results. It's just a matter of knowing which questions to ask yourself—pull that first one out of the hat, and the questions never stop coming."

>>>Tom Lanham



INGRID CHAVEZ

PRODIGY'S LIAM HOWLETT

Q&A

STEVE GULLICK

Liam Howlett, 28, is chief songwriter for tech-rockers Prodigy. I rang him up at his Essex, England studio to ask about his new mix CD, *Prodigy Presents The Dirtchamber Sessions Volume One* (XL-Beggars Banquet), as Howlett was about to head to Canada for two weeks of snowboarding.

>>>William Werde

Q: So how did *The Dirtchamber Sessions* come about?

A: The whole thing started out as a radio session for a friend of mine who has a show on Radio One—Mary Anne Hobbes. She runs a show called "Breezeblock" which is on at 12 at night. She had DJ Shadow in there doing a mix and then she had Roni Size doing something so she phoned me up and asked me if I'd fancy doing something. I wasn't working in the studio at the moment and it sounded fun. So I produced the mix and sent it in to her, and once it had been played, it did actually get a lot of response. She'd phone me up and be like, "People want to hear this again!" So I was like, I'll duck into the studio for another week, fuck around and basically tidy up and put it together as an album. The idea behind that was to give an insight to Prodigy fans—a look inside my head to when I'm writing my music. Some of my inspirations, really. And also, having all those tracks in one album in sort of a B-boy style [makes it] quite a good party record, I think. It has the vibe of a mix tape you'd do for a friend.

Q: When will you be back in the studio as Prodigy?

A: When I get back [from snowboarding], I'll basically start to throw some ideas around and get some new tracks written.

Q: What is the dynamic of the Prodigy studio process?

A: I'm the main songwriter. Keith doesn't have any actual musical knowledge. You know, his first vocal thing was "Firestarter." But he knows the music, he knows what he likes, and just having him in the studio while I'm writing and throwing ideas around is a good backlash kind of thing. I'll come up with something and we'll both sit there and get a vibe off it and he might start writing some lyrics off of that. We're not in there with guitars and bass and trying to write lyrics and songs together. Hey, this is the '90s. This is the way songs are written these days.

Q: Just throwing some loops together and seeing what sounds good?

A: Yeah, that's basically the way it works. Everyone comes in and we all vibe, you know? I try to make our albums more song-based, where a lot of other people concentrate on making records for DJs to play. We don't really like the idea of relying on DJs to control our music. We make music for ourselves so we can play it live and perform, so we can step on stage and smash a rock band to bits with our heavy sound, and challenge that. I think, to me, that's what is punk rock about us.

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David Bowie
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Stone Cold Steve Austin
Hell Frozen Over
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Professor Booty
Public Enemy
911 Is A Joke
Rollins Band
Black & White

SIDE TWO:

Portishead
Sour Times (Nobody Loves Me)
Slayer
Raining Blood
Dr. Octagon
Technical Difficulties
Bis
Tell It To The Kids
Goats
Mutiny
O'Jays
For The Love Of Money
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Nine Inch Nails
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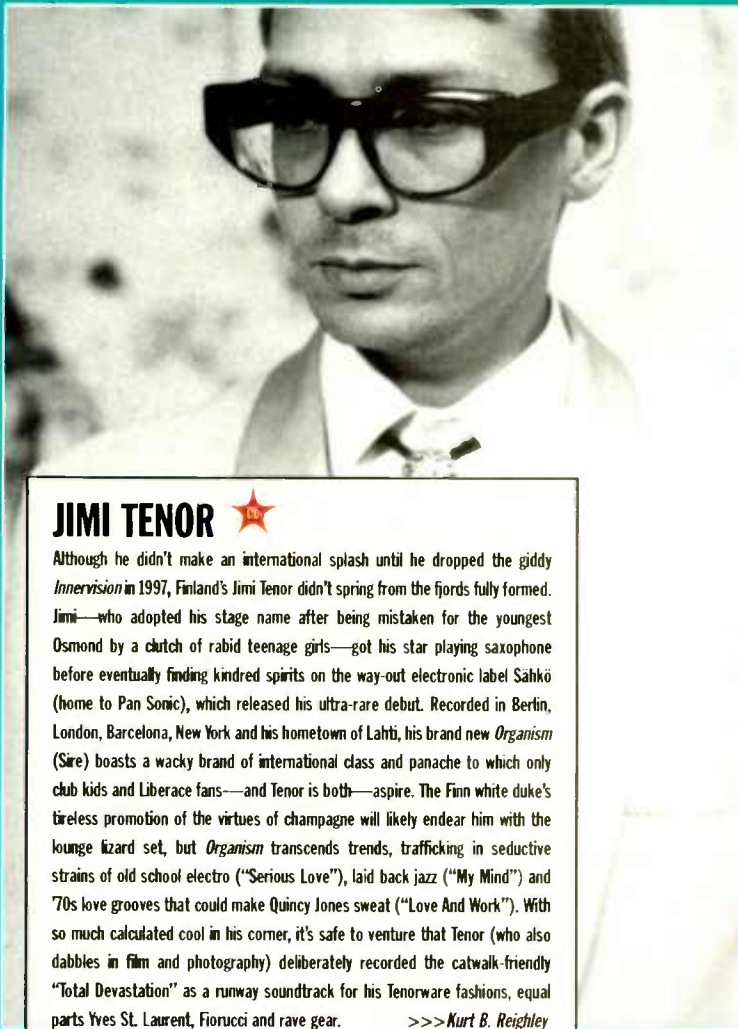
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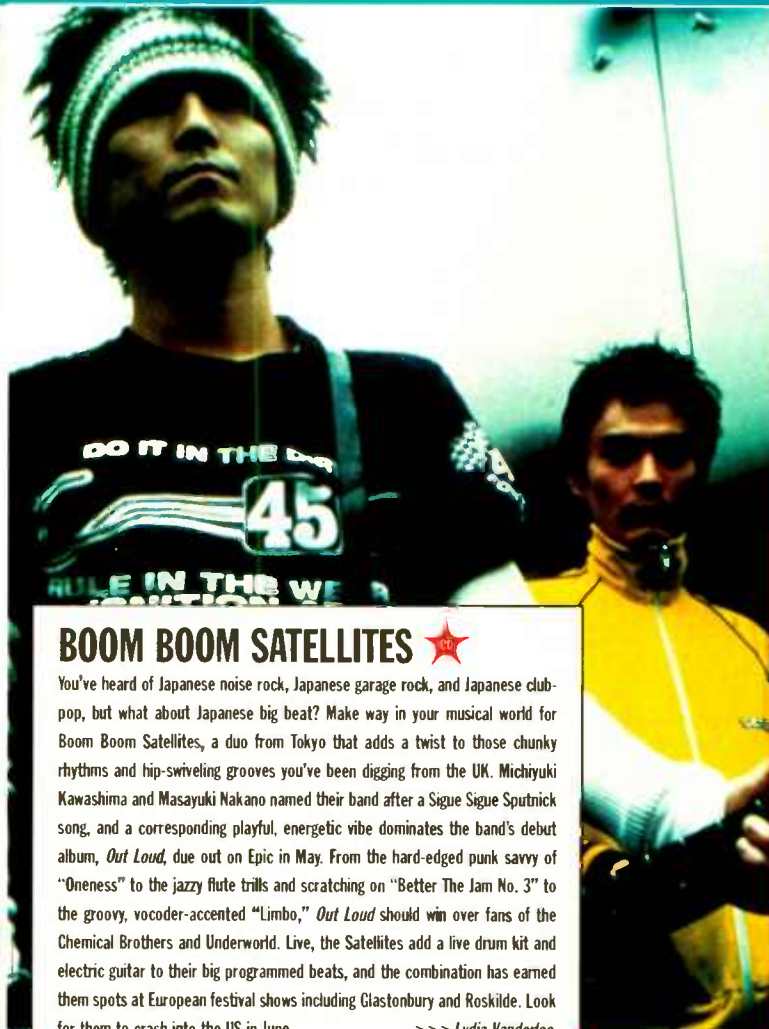
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JIMI TENOR

Although he didn't make an international splash until he dropped the giddy *Innervation* in 1997, Finland's Jimi Tenor didn't spring from the fjords fully formed. Jimi—who adopted his stage name after being mistaken for the youngest Osmond by a clutch of rabid teenage girls—got his star playing saxophone before eventually finding kindred spirits on the way-out electronic label Sähkö (home to Pan Sonic), which released his ultra-rare debut. Recorded in Berlin, London, Barcelona, New York and his hometown of Lahti, his brand new *Organism* (Sire) boasts a wacky brand of international class and panache to which only club kids and Liberace fans—and Tenor is both—aspire. The Finn white duke's tireless promotion of the virtues of champagne will likely endear him with the lounge lizard set, but *Organism* transcends trends, trafficking in seductive strains of old school electro (“Serious Love”), laid back jazz (“My Mind”) and 70s love grooves that could make Quincy Jones sweat (“Love And Work”). With so much calculated cool in his corner, it's safe to venture that Tenor (who also dabbles in film and photography) deliberately recorded the catwalk-friendly “Total Devastation” as a runway soundtrack for his Tenorware fashions, equal parts Yves St. Laurent, Fiorucci and rave gear. >>> Kurt B. Reighley



BOOM BOOM SATELLITES

You've heard of Japanese noise rock, Japanese garage rock, and Japanese club-pop, but what about Japanese big beat? Make way in your musical world for Boom Boom Satellites, a duo from Tokyo that adds a twist to those chunky rhythms and hip-swiveling grooves you've been digging from the UK. Michiyuki Kawashima and Masayuki Nakano named their band after a Sigue Sigue Sputnik song, and a corresponding playful, energetic vibe dominates the band's debut album, *Out Loud*, due out on Epic in May. From the hard-edged punk savvy of “Oneness” to the jazzy flute trills and scratching on “Better The Jam No. 3” to the groovy, vocoder-accented “Limbo,” *Out Loud* should win over fans of the Chemical Brothers and Underworld. Live, the Satellites add a live drum kit and electric guitar to their big programmed beats, and the combination has earned them spots at European festival shows including Glastonbury and Roskilde. Look for them to crash into the US in June. >>> Lydia Vanderloo



JIMMY EAT WORLD

“We’ve kind of grown up a little bit. I realized I didn’t know quite as much as I thought I did when I was 18,” says Jimmy Eat World’s Jim Adkins, with a slight chuckle, as he describes how his band has changed since its formation in ’94. The Phoenix foursome had released only a few singles and an album that Adkins says he’d rather forget when it was signed to Capitol, which released *Static Prevails* and its recent follow-up, *Clarity*. That album shows Jimmy Eat World to have achieved a level of sophistication uncommon among emo-core outfits. Combining the intensity of a typical guitar-driven quartet with unexpected oddities like bells, Farfisa, violin, cello and drum loops, the group doesn’t rely on bludgeoning the listener with brute displays of emotion. While dynamics play a part in the band’s style, the quartet relies more on varied sonic textures—the call-and-response between a piano and guitar part, the harsh clatter of a snare drum set against Adkins’s velvety voice—than on simple quiet-loud shifts. Adkins says he’d like to spend more of this year on the road than off, so the band recently embarked on a six-week US tour and hopes to travel to Europe after that. >>> Jenny Eliscu

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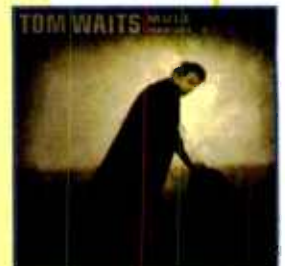
VERTIGO

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TOM WAITS ★
The Mule Variations

Epitaph

You don't just pop on a Tom Waits album; you waltz through a red velvet curtain into a dark, curious and tender world. Bells clang, doors slam, walls knock and the tick of a clock measures a stagnant, lost time. It's scary and old. On *Mule Variations* the growling man walks deeper into the cave he's been exploring his entire career, and with each successive album the echoes deepen and the light dims a bit more. His world is brown, but to color it as without hope is to ignore the heart he holds in his callused hands. For every lyrical dirge ("I sleep like a baby with the snakes and the bugs") is a gentle, heart-melting love song ("I'm gonna love you 'til the wheels fall off"). And because Waits's recent work has been so dark, these tender songs, ones that recall his young, innocent piano bar moans, are wonderfully jarring. He walks like he's seen it all, but with eyes still full of wonder. The result is vintage American music that mines the dirty blues, the combustible energy of a four-piece jazz groove and the magic of unparalleled lyricism that looks as impressive on the printed page as it does gusting out of his parched mouth. If you've never been a Tom Waits fan (I'd say you need a slap, but) *Mule Variations* won't change your mind; it's him. If you are, or are curious, rejoice: It's him. >>>Randall Roberts



OUT:

April 27.

FILE UNDER:

An imitable, treasured howl.

R.I.Y.L.:

Howlin' Wolf, Captain Beefheart,
 Kurt Weill.

LILYS ★
The 3-Way

Sire

Let's do this mathematically: *The 3-Way* clocks in at just over 36 minutes. Eleven of those minutes contain five ecstatic blasts of '60s British Invasion guitar riffs, *Nuggets*-style organ lines, and soaring layered harmonies, in the tradition of the Lilys' superb 1996 disc *Better Can't Make Your Life Better*. "Dimes Make Dollars" opens the album with a garage band riff, shared among fuzzy guitars and organ, that will tempt you to frug or pony or at least do the hand-jive. "A Tab For The Holiday" ends the album with a very Kinks-like jaunty jingle, complete with what sounds like banjo and toy piano. The three other two-minute treasures follow suit. Three pace-altering sweet tunes divide another 11 minutes. Brilliant enough. That leaves 14 minutes, and they're the kickers: "Socs Hip" and "Leo Ryan (Our Pharaoh's Slave)," seven minutes each, are mini-epics of mind-bending construction, chock-full of melodies and ideas that leader Kurt Heasley could have divvied among ten or 12 other songs. Stop-time tango movements, sitars, strings, a horn—anything could appear at any moment, and does. Like those ubiquitous Elephant Six folks, or like recent *His Name Is Alive*, the Lilys find grin-producing riffs and fragments from the past and recombine and rearrange them into thrilling new equations. >>>Steve Klinge



OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

The British Invasion, revisited.

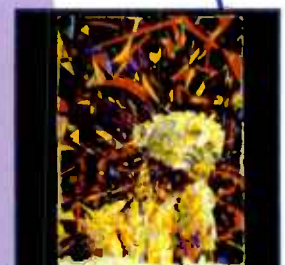
R.I.Y.L.:

Kinks, Olivia Tremor Control,
 Nuggets box.

JEGA
Spectrum

Matador

You can now buy synthesizers and computer software that house thousands of sounds, all at an artist's disposal, ready for harnessing. Some boing, some moan, some whisper and some pop. Who needs 'em all? Most don't, but Dylan Nathan, a.k.a. Jega, has a Jiffy Pop imagination, and uses synthetic sound with controlled abandon, pushing buttons and opening sounds with the fresh-faced wonder of a kid with his first Casio. On *Spectrum*, Jega combines the best of both cutting edge and classic beat-based electronic music—a touch of drum 'n' bass here, some old school techno there, and lots of Moog influenced meanderings—to create a record that transcends the flavor of the month until, by the time the disc ends, what's left is a nearly perfect instrumental electronic record. *Spectrum*'s not your average amalgam of seven-minute dance floor ditties compiled seemingly as an afterthought onto a compact disc. Rather, fully formed, tiny tunes sit next to more complex compositions, each containing at its heart a sticky melody that roams around the beat-based landscape. The result is fantastic, one of the most fascinating electronic records thus far this year (though it was released in the UK in '98), one that contains depth, inspiration and, most importantly in the often cold, cold world of electronica, warmth and emotion. >>>Randall Roberts



OUT:

February 9.

FILE UNDER:

Genre-blind electronic music.

R.I.Y.L.:

μ-ziq, Boards Of Canada, Bionaut,
 Kraftwerk.




BEULAH

When Your Heartstrings Break

Sugar Free

The Elephant 6 Recording Company has firmly ensconced itself among the likes of Digital Hardcore, Sarah, and Ralph Records as a seal of approval for devotees of a specialized sound. On its second outing, San Francisco's Beulah has unleashed a stunner of an LP that accentuates the best attributes of Elephant 6's core troika. Shining through *When Your Heartstrings Break* are the Apples In Stereo's peppy hit machine pacing, Olivia Tremor Control's knack for head-turning harmonies and irresistible arrangements, and the occasional nod to Neutral Milk Hotel's oddball instrumentation and obtuse, poetic lyrics. The package is tied together by a giddy love of music and the possibilities of pop's perfect minor moments. Beulah's debut evoked comparisons to Guided By Voices and Pavement; its breathtaking evolution now begs parallels to *Smile*-era Beach Boys. The central quintet (headed by mastermind Miles Kurosky) is augmented by no fewer than 18 guest musicians, most of whom contribute strings and horns that figure far more prominently than guitars. Pavement references still may not be farfetched, but only to the sunniest melodic moments spun by Malkmus's crew. At some point Elephant 6 risks saturating the market with its reconstituted '60s psych-pop. If bands like Beulah can maintain this high standard, that day is a long way off.

>>>Glen Sarvady



OUT:
April 9.

FILE UNDER:
'60s pop joyrides.

R.I.Y.L.:
Apples In Stereo, Olivia Tremor Control, weirder Beach Boys.


VINICIUS CANTUÁRIA

Tucumã

Verve

Named for a native Brazilian fruit, *Tucumã* is easily one of the sweetest picks in Brazilian music in recent years. Following the 30-year-old blueprints of the great Tropicalistas like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, Vinicius Cantuária infuses the innate beauty of bossa nova, samba and other languid acoustic styles with subtle innovations to produce songs of infinite seduction. While guest appearances from Laurie Anderson, Bill Frisell and Sean Lennon are signs that Cantuária is now a New Yorker keen on keeping his sound fresh and surprising, he often casts his most brilliant strokes with just a nylon stringed guitar and a gentle bed of percussion. The lilt of "Maravilha" is a simple bossa nova, but it's less simple to determine where its rhythm takes you. In lesser hands, the daubs of piano and smooth saxophone would transform it into a jingle for cheap perfume, but Cantuária never lets it get away. What do you care anyway? You and your date have tossed your wineglasses into the fire long ago and are now unzipping each other as fast as you can. But *Tucumã* is much more than cool sounds for the bachelor pad; it's an exquisite argument that the union of melody and supple rhythm trumps all.

>>>Steve Ciabattoni



OUT:
March 16.

FILE UNDER:
Artful Tropicalia.

R.I.Y.L.:
Gilberto Gil, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Arto Lindsay.


BADMARSH & SHRI

Dancing Drums

Outcaste-Tommy Boy

Drums? Try tablas, deep-dished stand-up bass, sitars, the odd flute and more tablas. These make up the errantly named *Dancing Drums*, a title that may sell the record in the UK but on these shores makes it sound like a scary field recording from an old Grateful Dead parking lot. Don't worry though, because the collaboration of London turntablist Badmarsh and Bombay-born, classically trained multi-instrumentalist Shri serves up some of the spiciest drum 'n' bass tracks and the most delicious grooves in recent memory. Though they're hardly the first to the tabla, the duo's ties to true Indian traditional music make it a standout, and the incorporation of Shri's live performances into the mix is palpable. You can almost feel his fingers massaging the drums on percussive treats like the roiling "Gharana" or the mellow album closer, "Salsa Gharana." Badmarsh spins samples of his friend's bass—plucked and bowed—and other instrumentation into the breakbeats that drive "Asian Detective" all over town; the bass-and-beat combo gets even sultrier in "The Air I Breathe," which adds sitar and Tina Grace's doe-eyed vocals. As for the title track, well, it turns out it's a remake of Bengali artist Ananda Shankar's 1975 song, though probably rendered unrecognizable by the dizzying collision of Shri's note-bending bass and Badmarsh's drummed-up undercurrent. Ah yes, drums.

>>>Richard Martin



OUT:
March 23.

FILE UNDER:
Bombay the bass.

R.I.Y.L.:
Talvin Singh, Bombay The Hard Way, Cornershop remixes, Untouchable Outcaste Beats.





jimi tenor 31043-2
ORGANISM



King of geek chic and lounge-lizard grooves, Jimi Tenor is a Scandinavian-funk-phenomenon.

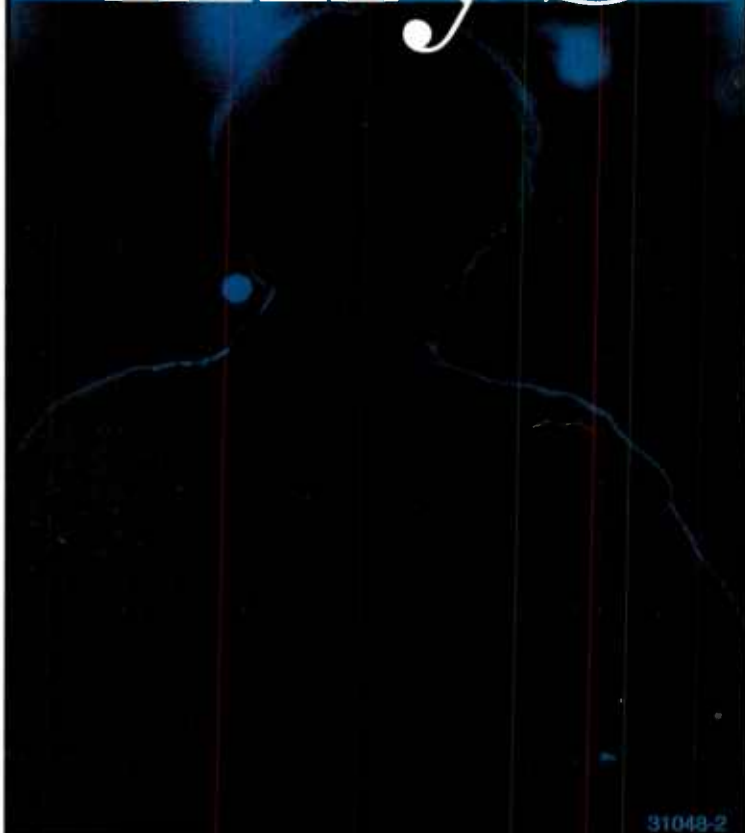
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JT99-YOTA
year of the apocalypse

"Total Devastation"
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Lilys



31048-2

The New Album
"The 3-Way"

"Dimes Makes Dollars"
is on this month's CMJ sampler.



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everyday people

Story: JACKIE MCCARTHY Photo: STEPH

GUS GUS

is a nine-piece Icelandic art collective that's just made a brilliant pop record. For them, *This Is Normal*.

Great art is sometimes driven by contradictions. Beethoven was deaf. Marcel Duchamp changed the face of modern art with a toilet. Aaron Spelling, a septuagenarian, invented the teenage soap opera.

So maybe it's Gus Gus's incongruities that make its techno-pop confections so affecting. The group set out to shoot an art film and wound up making a pop record. Its members transform sentence fragments into solemn slogans. Their healthy individual egos dissolve before the collective good. Most contradictory of all, though, is Gus Gus's music. It incorporates both the heart and the head; each song is somehow both dark and shimmering, like Iceland's weird gray twilight.

"Ladyshave," the first single from the ensemble's second album, *This Is Normal* (4AD-Warner Bros.), mixes heavy breathing, a Farfisa riff, and sassy female backing

be Gus Gus without the other seven: filmmakers Siggi Kjartansson and Stefan Arni, photographer Alfred More (a.k.a. Steph), former actor and drag queen Magnus Jonsson, computer programmer Biggi Thorarinnsson, DJ Herb Legowitz, and former political strategist Baldur Stefansson. Long on both charm and hyperbole, Stefansson functions as a kind of manager-spokesmodel, though his artistic contribution eludes most of Gus Gus's fans.

It's impossible to picture Americans with such different backgrounds sharing the same sofa (except perhaps on *Jerry Springer*) let alone spending weeks together in a recording studio. The members of Gus Gus have spent not just weeks, but four years together working in various permutations to generate the multimedia endeavors huddled under the Gus Gus umbrella.

The Reykjavik Nine coalesced in 1995, when they all signed on to a short film by

"'Ladyshave' is a dance. You would never think it would be some kind of a... um... kick to shave off pubic hair, would you?"

singers into a throbbing, sultry tune about a sexual fetish... or not. "I had a fantastic time doing *The Ladyshave*," says singer Daniel Agust. "That's a dance," he continues slyly. "You would never think it would be some kind of a... um... kick to shave off pubic hair, would you?" Well, no more than applying home-perms or popsicle-stick architecture.

Then there's the stoic stunner "Superhuman": Over spectral synth washes and a relentlessly slinky beat, singer Hafdis Huld icily delivers the big kiss-off: "It's not you/It's me/It's not hate/It's love for you... Leave now/You'll recover from that." According to Huld, though, these frosty lyrics aren't meant to indicate an emotional shutdown. "This character has gotten over all these emotional things, and just doesn't need them," she explains earnestly. "It's not in a bad way.."

"It's hard to say it in English," she concedes, fumbling for the right word.

Equally challenging to translate—and undeniably charming—is the notion of nine artists with divergent interests collaborating on a single pop artifact. Gus Gus is often compared to Andy Warhol's Factory, but the Icelanders make a much more egalitarian outfit. These aren't nine "stars" orbiting an enigmatic Svengali. Agust and the 19-year-old Huld may be the collective's most identifiable members, but Gus Gus wouldn't

Kjartansson and Arni, formerly music-video directors. Cinematographer More roped in Thorarinnsson and Legowitz (then working as an electronic duo called T-World) to provide the soundtrack. When filming was delayed, the cast and crew decided to make a record instead, naming themselves for a line in the 1973 Fassbinder movie *Fear Eats The Soul*. The resulting self-titled album, released in Iceland only, looped hypnotic 303 beats behind blue-eyed soul vocals, funk/lounge keyboards, and elliptical lyrics about driving naked and talking to Jesus.

Gus Gus soon drew the attention of the London-based 4AD label. Faced with the prospect of clearing international rights for Gus Gus's bold samples of R&B icons like Barry White, the group reworked it into 1997's international incarnation, rechristened *Polydistortion*. Ensuing tours of Britain and America resulted in Gus Gus joining Björk as Iceland's pop-music ambassadors, paving the way for up-and-coming fjord-dwellers like Moá and the Thule Records Collective. Not bad for a band that started as a lark.

As unexpected and refreshing as Gus Gus's international success is its working method. Agust and Huld describe meetings as integral to the band's sound. Gathering together around a large table with notes in hand probably isn't all that familiar to most

SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER



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FEATURES THE HIT SINGLE

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she's all that



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musicians, but "that's where we solve the problems," Agust insists. "It all comes through communication."

Not that these summits go off like clockwork. "Of course, there are nine opinions on everything," Huld points out. "When we disagree, and there's a big gap between the opinions, then we have to discuss it for hours until we find a way. In the end, we try to have something happening in every song that everybody likes."

It took "thousands" of meetings and nine months for Gus Gus to finish *This Is Normal*. Knowing where their music would end up altered the group's songwriting process, and the result is a more focused effort than *Polydistortion*. Listeners previously poly-disoriented by abrupt stylistic shifts and a musical-chairs approach to vocal chores should have little difficulty playing "Name That Band" this time out.

"The way we [collaborated] was quite different," Agust recalls. "We let everybody fathom the concept of each and every song, so that the outcome would be truthful to what the song was about. We did that the first time around, but it wasn't as conscious then." Huld ebulliently concurs. "We decided to work as a band, and make it sound more like a band—rather than some collected artists," she says brightly. "I'm much much happier with this album than the first album. It's a little more pop, and I like that."

These assurances (and the misleading title) aside, *This Is Normal* isn't without its sonic and atmospheric flip-flops. One of the most unusual segues carries the bouncy, vibraphone-filled dance track "Very Important People" into the string-swept love song "Bambi," which features orchestral arrangements by a 60-year-old cellist from the Icelandic symphony. Though Agust's breathless, smitten tone gives "Bambi" an exaggerated emotional quality, he claims there's no parody intended. "It's very sincere. It's about living the moment, and how, when you capture a great moment, it lives with you forever."

"Capture a great moment" should be one of the aphorisms Gus Gus projects behind the stage during its live multimedia extravaganzas. Amid hulking masses of electronic equipment and several screens of rotating photos and film snippets, the hyperactive parade of band members in Viking/sportsman/fairy-tale finery twirls, vamps, and somersaults across the stage. When the Gus Gus circus hits the road this spring with retooled visuals and text, maybe the members will consider loaning some of their slogans to the more inarticulate heads of state. If Ginger Spice can hang out a global-peacekeeping shingle, surely Gus Gus are qualified to advise world leaders. They could parlay their pithy pronouncements and collaborative skills into world domination, and international diplomacy would never be the same (though there'd definitely be many more summit meetings). "That's a really stupid idea," Huld exclaims. "No pop band should rule the world."

Agust, however, disagrees. "If Gus Gus ruled the world," he purrs, "it would be paradise on Earth."

They've obviously got more to discuss.

MMM



GO soundtrack features **no doubt**

lionrock

len

natalie imbruglia

philip steir

featuring **steppenwolf**

fatboy slim

jimmy luxury &

the tommy rome orchestra

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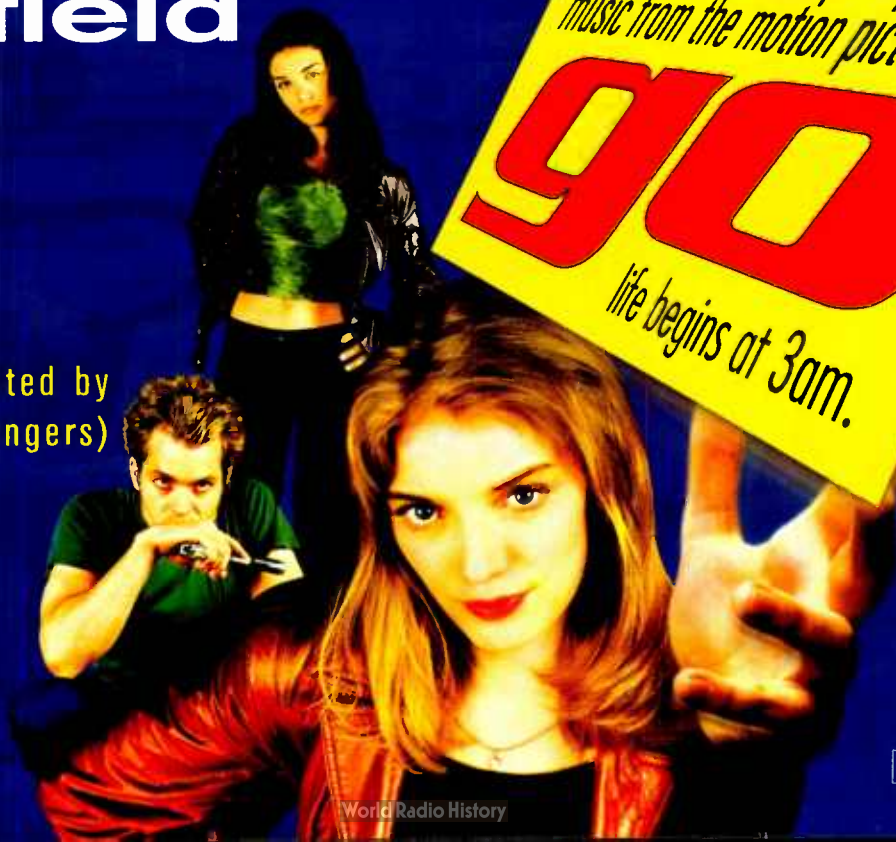
leftfield

music from the motion picture

GO

life begins at 3am.

film directed by
Doug Liman (Swingers)



WORK

SONY MUSIC
SOUNDTRAX

COLUMBIA
PICTURES

World Radio History



our gang

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BARRY BURNS, AITCHISON,
BULLOCH, CUMMINGS, STUART BRAITHWAITE

Story: DOUGLAS WOLK Photo: RUDOLPHO ARCHULETA

THE SCOTTISH SCOUNDRELS IN MOGWAI GIVE GLASGOW A GOOD NAME

Great rock bands tend to have a sense of place about them—a local cultural grounding and history that extends to the point where naming the place they're from brings up all sorts of musical associations. Think,

for instance, of the way Nirvana exemplified Seattle, or how Manchester has the Smiths and The Fall and New Order to answer for, or how Athens, Georgia, is the essence of R.E.M.

To this list you can add Glasgow, Scotland, home to a series of powerful, odd rock bands in the last decade, in a line running from the Stretchheads to Dawson, the Yummy Fur, Ganger, and now one that US audiences are more likely to hear, Mogwai. Formed in 1995 as a more-or-less conventional guitar-rock group, Mogwai has followed an increasingly individual path, gradually stepping away from vocals and exploring slow, icy, expansive patterns. It's a track that often runs parallel to the electronic underground's, and sometimes intersects it—Mogwai's biggest artistic breakthrough to date was last year's remix album, *Kicking A Dead Pig* (Jetset), on which the group's work was recast by the likes of My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields, μ -Ziq and Alec Empire, as well as homeboys and occasional collaborators Arab Strap. Mogwai has done its own remixes for David Holmes and, of all people, Manic Street Preachers, for whom they opened on a recent tour.

Throughout its evolution, though, the band has kept strong ties to Glasgow and its particular flavor, to the point of naming most of their records after local affairs. Last year, Mogwai responded to the city's new nightfall youth curfew by calling an EP *No Education = No Future* (*Fuck The Curfew*). The group's mammoth new album *Come On Die Young* (*Matador*) is named after a Glaswegian gang that new keyboardist/flautist Barry Burns used to know. "Or CODY for short," explains bassist Dominic Aitchison. "It looks really good written down. We're also really superstitious about what we call things now, because the only thing we've released that didn't have some reference to Scotland youth culture is *Kicking A Dead Pig*, and it sold fuck-all in Britain. *Mogwai Young Team* [the band's first studio album] is another gang slogan sort of thing. The actual gang culture of Glasgow isn't funny, but we just thought we'd use it 'cause none of us are involved in it at all."

But were any members of Mogwai ever in gangs in their youth? Aitchison and drummer Martin Bulloch answer simultaneously: "no" and "aaaaah—" respectively. Aitchison gives Bulloch a shocked look.

"Just a little."

"Ye big daftie."

"There was one called Young Himshie, which I thought was a tremendous name," explains Bulloch, a cheerful little guy with bright red hair. "They were all my friends I used to hang about with. I never fought anyone, but I used to get looked after pretty well—they'd keep an eye on me mum."

"The last gig we did in London, there was two people having sex in the audience."

Nowadays, Mogwai is more of a gang of its own, though the band members don't really use most of the nicknames (pLasmatroN, Demonic, etc.) that have turned up on their records. "We actually call John [guitarist John Cummings] 'Captain Meat' all the time, though," Aitchison says. "In fact, we've changed his name. He's got a tendency to go off with other people's girlfriends, and there's a phrase in Glasgow if you're trying to get with someone's girlfriend, it's 'cutting the guy's grass'—so he's the Lawnmower Man."

For all their goofiness, though, the guys in Mogwai get very serious when they start playing. Their compositions have gotten increasingly drawn-out and austere over time, sometimes barely more than a single arpeggiated chord or two evolving for ten minutes or more, whisperingly brutal in a way that recalls Slint more than any other band. *Come On Die Young*'s songs hold onto a moment and stretch it out, note by note, as long as they can; of its 12 tracks, only one, "Cody," has actual singing. "We have tunes that start out with a vocal, but we take it out if we realize it isn't needed," Bulloch says. "When we first started, all our songs had singing."

"Back then," Aitchison adds, "one of us would just write the song. That doesn't happen,

hardly, anymore. We actually had some songs for the sheer fact that we wanted to put distortion pedals on and make a racket."

"Now, it usually starts when somebody comes in with an idea," Bulloch says, "and we all join in and—I'll just try not to use the word 'jam,' 'cause I hate that word. We were talking to this wee girl in Copenhagen, and I was saying 'we just sort of jam about and—aaaaah! I can't believe I said that! I can't believe I fuckin' said that!'"


Still, Mogwai has learned to work more spontaneously. When the band recorded *Young Team*, it went into the studio with only about three songs finished, and somehow ended up with a ten-song album. And one of the songs on the resulting disc, "Like Herod," has become the closest thing Mogwai has to a standard—it's very often their show-closer. Twelve minutes long in its recorded version, it's double that length live: a foreboding, hushed riff that creeps forward one tender note at a time until it explodes into room-shaking white heat, then retreats to its original position and repeats the whole process. "It's longer now, and slower, and we do a lot of noise at the end," Aitchison says. "And now we've got Barry in as well, doing his Jethro Tull impression"—well, playing a flute, anyway. "That's one of the only times we get to put distortion on now."

"Aaah, we've gotta actually stop playing it, then," Bulloch grumbles. "People wait for it. They know what's coming—we sometimes get these characters going 'one! two! three! four!'"

Mogwai's audiences are devoted—there are already half a dozen websites about the band, including one that's got a bunch of MP3s of never-officially-released songs—and they get very into the music. "The last gig we did in London," Aitchison reports, "there was two people"—he stammers for a moment—"having sex in the audience."

"Makin' loov,'" Bulloch teases.

"Yeai. That was qui' unusual."

"We seem to be a cool band in London, which I don't know if I like or not. We're attracting some arseholes. Total poseur wankers who are just there to be seen, chat their way through the set and don't listen to a note. I find that quite disturbin', actually." Mogwai would rather play back home in Glasgow, where the crowd knows and loves the band. Some more than others: "All of our families come to the gigs," Bulloch says. 



L-R: SCHLESINGER, COLLINGWOOD

Story: MATT ASHARE Photo: KIM APLEY

For the record, neither of Fountains Of Wayne's two principal songwriters has a tattoo, owns a custom van, or ever remembers going to a rock 'n' roll laser show. Only one of them attended a high school prom, though he did go to two in one year. And Northampton, Massachusetts, is actually a rather quaint college town with nary a shopping mall in sight, the significance of which will all be explained in due course.

"Fountains Of Wayne revealed as liars on their new CD," deadpans singer Chris Collingwood, who's one of the band's two songwriters. Sitting across the table at a hippie coffee shop in Northampton, Fountains Of Wayne's other songwriter, bassist Adam Schlesinger, remains unfazed as he continues his discourse on one of the tracks he penned for the new album *Utopia Parkway* (Atlantic), the song "Laser Show." It's a little "Back In The USSR"-style Beatlesque ditty, full of bright hooks and harmonies, about friends packing into cars to hit the laser show at New York's Hayden Planetarium. It name-checks all the right places and people: a Pink Floyd album, several Connecticut towns, and each of the four members of Metallica. As it turns out, however, Schlesinger has no firsthand experience of such things.

"I've been to a planetarium, I think on a school trip, but I guess I've never been to a rock laser show," he finally admits.

Elsewhere on *Utopia Parkway*, Collingwood sings about taking the N train down to a Coney Island tattoo parlor over tunelessly buzzing power-pop guitars ("Red Dragon Tattoo"); about being 18 and in love on prom night, against a backdrop of flowing strings ("Prom Theme"), and about cruising around Queens in a custom van while dreaming rock 'n' roll dreams ("Utopia Parkway") against another melodic

FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE'S

poptopia is just a short drive away on *Utopia Parkway*.

went to two proms and I ruined both of them," he admits. "My girlfriend at the time lived on Long Island and I lived in New Jersey. So I went to one in each. Even at 17, I was too cynical to enjoy it. I wasn't actually strong enough to refuse to go, so I had to go and bitch about it the whole time and ruin it for her. She never forgave me. I guess that was the beginning of the end of that relationship."

These days, Schlesinger is happily married. In fact, he's technically still on his honeymoon, away from his apartment in NYC, spending a couple weeks at a house in the country the newlyweds recently purchased. Conveniently enough, it's only a half hour from Northampton, the college town Collingwood moved to after Fountains Of Wayne's first Atlantic album came out a couple of years ago. The two met at nearby Williams College a decade ago and have been playing in bands together ever since, more out of friendship and mutual respect for each other's songwriting skills and sense of humor than out of any need to collaborate, since both essentially write songs on their own. Schlesinger also plays bass in the NYC band Ivy, and a couple of years ago he penned the fictional hit for the fictional band in the Tom Hanks film *That Thing You Do*. He says he recently wrote a country tune he wants his publisher to shop around Nashville. "It's called, 'Put That Heart Away Before Your Hurt Someone,'" he says with a laugh. "I've been giving it to my publisher for six months now."

Not to be outdone, Collingwood, who actually used to play in a country band, chimes in: "How about my big country hit,

"I think this band is really more about having a forum for two songwriters than it is about four guys working on songs together," says Collingwood, steering the conversation in a more serious direction. "We don't jam as a band," Schlesinger adds. "Actually, nobody in this band even wants to play ever. Everybody is so over just playing their instruments. We like playing shows. But we don't like rehearsing very much. We get together to rehearse before a tour, and we get together to record, and that's really it. Otherwise, Fountains Of Wayne doesn't really exist."

What seems to keep Fountains Of Wayne grounded is Collingwood and Schlesinger's like-minded appreciation for classic pop songwriting, and their penchant for having fun with the form. Collingwood's "Valley Of Malls," for example, is an amusing tune about suburban shopping set, incongruously enough, to a haunting riff that brings to mind the Zombies, replete with cheesy organ fills. He says he wrote it after he moved from NYC to Northampton and had to start shopping at the mall, though I still haven't seen any malls in this neck of the woods. And Schlesinger's "The Senator's Daughter," a moody reverie about falling in love, actually started as something of a writing exercise.

"My songs tend to be so linear and narrative that I wanted to try writing something that was more of a non sequitur. Not to make a pretentious comparison, but I was kind of thinking of the medley on *Abbey Road*: none of those songs mean anything, but when you listen to them you're sure she

barrage of power-pop guitars. Each well-crafted tune is filled with the kind of comically poignant details that suggest at least some tie to reality. But, as Collingwood and Schlesinger confirm, it's all lies.

"No, we don't have any tattoos," confirms Collingwood, who also never went to a high school prom, "but I was thinking about getting one for the 'Red Dragon Tattoo' video. We could do a low-budget shoot of me getting a tattoo, just with a camcorder. There was another concept that Adam had, which is that we get a big guy in a dragon suit who goes to a tattoo parlor and gets a tattoo of a man."

Schlesinger, who wrote "Prom Theme," actually did have some real life experiences in that department, though they weren't nearly as lovely as the songs suggests. "I

"I really did write that country song and I asked my publisher to get it on a Garth Brooks album. Garth Brooks in that sentence refers to anyone who makes country records."

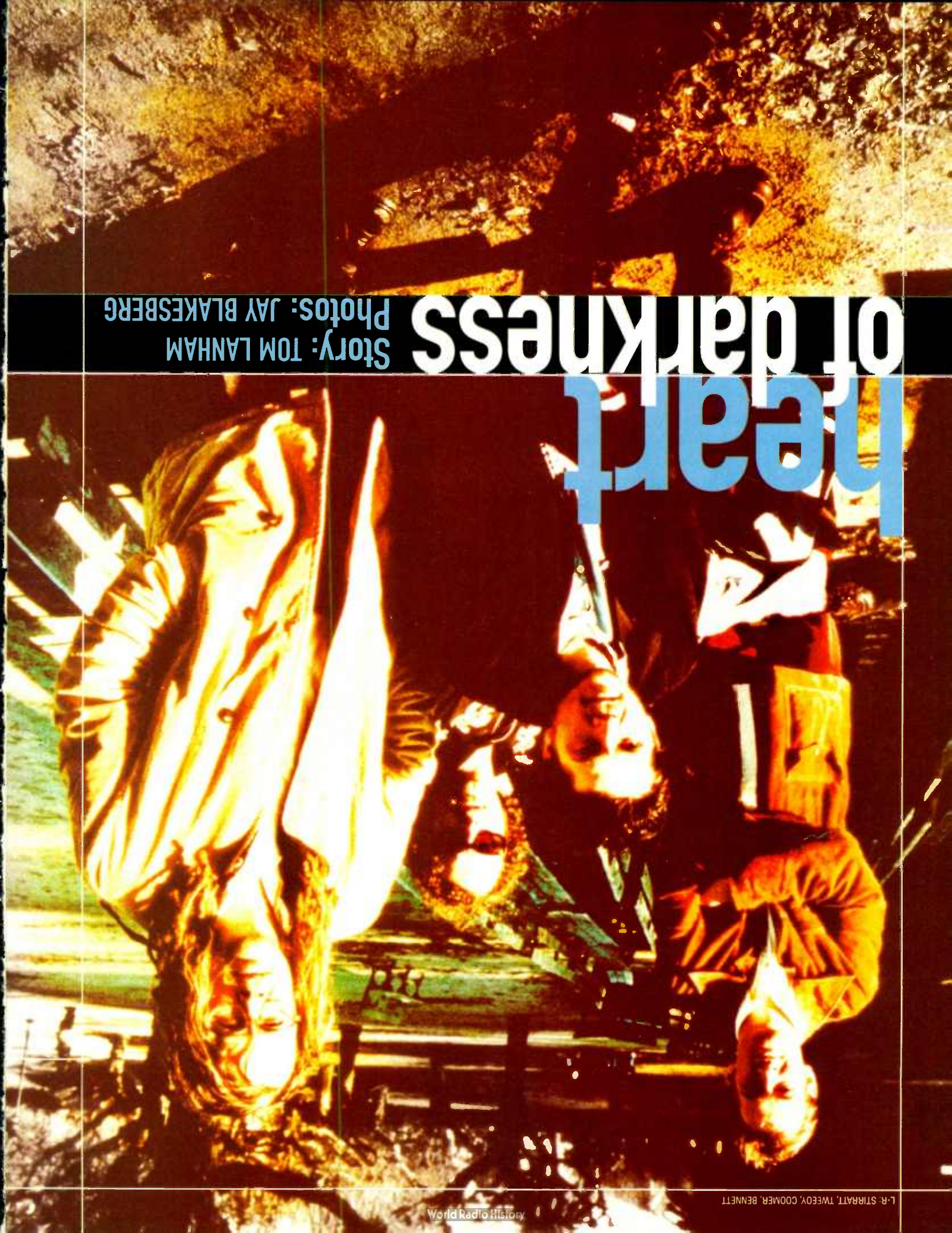
"Blow It Out Your Heart."

Now I'm beginning to doubt the existence of Utopia Parkway, even though Schlesinger assures me that it's an exit on the Long Island Expressway. "And I really did write that country song and I asked my publisher to get it on a Garth Brooks album. Garth Brooks in that sentence refers to anyone who makes country records."

did come in through the bathroom window, and Mean Mr. Mustard was in the yard. So 'The Senator's Daughter' is just kind of a stoner nonsense song. Not that I'm a stoner..."

"Fountains Of Wayne in no way endorses the use of marijuana," Collingwood interjects.

Needless to say, there is no Senator's daughter.



Story: TOM LANHAM
Photos: JAY BLAKESBERG

Heart of darkness

L-R: STRARATI, TWEEDY, COOMER, BENNETT

WILCO'S JEFF TWEEDY

finds the horror in life on the road, and puts it to song on *Summer Teeth*.

Jeff Tweedy knows he's on a tight schedule. Worse, he's made a concession to creature comfort by sleeping in until nearly noon—

a potentially deadly mistake with a day full of interviews ahead. But he'd been up late with his fellow members of the alt-twang super-group Golden Smog, so his first order of business is a no-brainer: locating coffee, cigarettes, anything with an eye-opening kick to it. His suitcase is already packed and waiting on the tiny twin bed; in just a few hours, this nomad will be off again, tooling down the tour-bus highway to the next port of call. As frontman for alt-country outfit Wilco, Tweedy typically logs more than 200 dates per year. "But at least my room is interesting," he chuckles, flopping into a creaky Tiki chair and pointing to a couple of Posada-grim engravings on the tacky Hawaiian-motif wall.

Mention the concert trail, and Tweedy scowls. "It's harder than it's ever been, and I feel like touring less than I've ever felt like touring. But I've learned how to do a few things to make it a little easier." He gestures toward the bulging Samsonite. "Like not even care about over-packing. I actually go ahead and bring my room, bring a room that I can live in and unpack it. Why live out of a bag? Set up your books, set up a little desk with a typewriter. Move from place to place, but take that time and energy to create your own environment. As opposed to dealing with your basic horrible hotel room." Still, when he finally crawls back, exhausted, to his wife and toddler son in Chicago, he says, "it always feels like you're coming home to someone else's house." Next time he returns, Tweedy jokes, Junior will probably be asking to borrow the car keys.

Ever since Tweedy formed his quartet (with drummer Ken Coomer, bassist John Stirratt, and axeman/keyboardist Jay Bennett) from the ashes of Uncle Tupelo, crowds have been clamoring for Wilco. Two critically acclaimed discs on—Wilco's '95 debut *A.M.* and the double-length follow-up *Being There*—and the man keeps chugging faster. In the three years since *Being There*, Tweedy has performed on two Golden Smog outings, collaborated with Billy Bragg on the music for recently unearthed Woody Guthrie lyrics on *Mermaid Avenue*, and found time to conceive and self-produce a genre-shuffling new Wilco record, *Summer Teeth* (Reprise). Naturally, it was both penned and recorded on the road. Musically, *Teeth* strays from the No Depression alt-country that Tweedy's Uncle Tupelo unwittingly gave a genre name to. It's often Beatles/Beach Boys chiming ("ELT," "Candyfloss," "I'm Always In Love"), and sometimes folk-pop neighborly ("She's A Jar," "We're Just Friends," "A Shot In The Arm"), with Tweedy loping lazily behind the beat in his conversational drawl, à la mid-period Frank Sinatra. Listen closely to what he's warbling, however, and the album reads like a Fodor's guide to Hades.

Want to know what it's really like on a Wilco tour? Here are a few of Tweedy's dark entries: "The way things go/You get so low/Struggle to find your skin"; "The ashtray says you've been up all night...You finally slept while the sun caught fire/You've changed"; "How to fight loneliness/Smile all the time/Shine your teeth 'til meaningless/Sharpen them with

I've been busy. But part of that has probably been out of fear of standing still.

"The darkest periods were probably in Europe, just touring in Europe. I have a little trouble sleeping to begin with, but I'd get off my schedule overseas and it kind of created this spiraling depression that feeds on itself, until I don't go out and see all these things that I know are out there, things I'd love to go see." Tweedy is now nervously working on his second cup of java, third cigarette. "I don't know how to explain it. It's just... rough. And I can't eat the kind of foods I really need to feel good—it's hard to find late-night food. And if I can't find food after a show, I can't sleep, so it just gets worse and worse. I lost, like, 30 pounds in Europe over five weeks."

One upside: Tweedy, metaphysical by nature, intellectually curious by design, used the sobering experience to unleash some cathartic, giddy anthems that leave Son Volt—the country-clinging brainchild of his old Tupelo partner, Jay Farrar—in the stylistic dust. "I think depression is very



"I think depression is very enlightening."

lies." And this cryptic passage from the dirge-like "Via Chicago": "I dreamed about killing you again last night/And it felt all right to me/Dying on the banks of Embarcadero skies/I sat and watched you bleed." Brrrr! Chilly stuff. And the person he's offing? Tweedy shifts uncomfortably in his seat. "Uhhh, it's more me. It was more of a suicide note. A lot of people have thoughts like that, but they're afraid to talk about it because they're worried everyone's going to go, 'Oh no! Don't do it!' But no, I'm not going to kill myself, I have no desire to kill myself, but people entertain the notion in a romantic way, especially singers, artists."

Tweedy almost opened *Teeth* with "Via Chicago." Instead, he chose the even creepier "Can't Stand It," which epitomizes what the 31-year-old terms "youthful, irrational pain, the perplexity of really dissatisfied youthful angst and hatred and all the darker stuff. There was an effort to work through all of that toward the lightest, or most hopeful things on the record." He sighs, then plunges into the depths of what he's really trying to say. "I've had probably the worst two years of my life, emotionally. It's been great times, musically, and

enlightening," he chirps in Confucian conclusion. "A lot of crisis situations end up being enlightening, because you live through it. And if you don't live through some stuff like that, then you have no appreciation for the good stuff. And that's about as clichéd as it gets, but it's what the world is built around, what religions are built around: accepting the good and the bad and letting them flow through you without judgment."

Tweedy says he's nearing that targeted state of grace. "And as I get closer and closer, I feel better. I know it's not theologically sound, to some people. But if you let yourself feel [the depression] as intensely as you think it is, somehow that makes it less scary."

a brick through



STORY: **Tom Maxwell**
Photos: **CHARLIE GROSS**



BEN FOLDS FIVE was a tough nut to crack. Could **TOM MAXWELL**, a **SQ** get the band out of its shell? Armed with only some muffins and a tape-recorder, he knew his **THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF REINHOLD MESSNER.**

the Window



BEN FOLDS FIVE

QUIRREL NUT ZIPPER by trade,
mission: scale this "Brick" wall of silence and get a read on

THIS STORY HAS NOT YET BEEN RATED.

If one wishes to gain insight into Ben Folds Five, a nice way to begin is by putting on the trio's new album *The Unauthorized Biography Of Reinhold Messner* (550 Music). "Narcolepsy" starts quietly enough; Ben states a simple, elegant melody on piano, a bit of elaboration, then the shit hits the fan.

The band comes crashing in on a wave of Who-like, full-on rock, Darrin Jesse's drums rumbling and thundering throughout. Meanwhile, a string section recalls the theme with a wobbly, mellotron attitude. Robert Sledge's fuzz bass asserts itself, propelling the whole thing into a giant, short-lived crescendo. Soon it's back to the quiet theme on piano and vocals—the singer thinks he should warn you he's narcoleptic—and the vibe is nothing more than the subdued tones of a Robert Wyatt record. "If I get upset or happy I go to sleep/Nothing hurts when I go to sleep... I'm not tired." The chorus is backed by a solo analog synthesizer—shades of Edgar Winter—and then back to a whopping vocal chorus crescendo and—yes!—a gong! before quietly ending: piano, voice and synth. The piece clocks in at 5:22—and that's only the first song.

The ultimate impression of *Messner*, and "Narcolepsy" (and the band, for that matter), is that many highly disparate styles and influences play a role, but they really only serve the emotional content of a given piece. Each song is thematically and musically cohesive and, for *Messner*, collectively serves a united whole. The band is perfectly willing to reference a musical gesture, subvert it, invert it, and make it its own. "If you're going to move around that much musically," says Ben, "you have to be that much more anchored in that space for what it is, because there's a million ways of looking at one point. But you can't look at a million different points one way. It's not that thematically challenging."

"We thought of this as a concept record," adds Darrin. "It just worked out that it started to be a theme about this guy's

life. 'Narcolepsy' seemed to be the weirdest one, so as a first song it lets you know what you're in for."

Perhaps a brief historical overview is in order. Band forms after individuals' perceived failure as musicians; practices in cloistered, embryonic fury; cuts its first record ('95's *Ben Folds Five*) without hardly performing. Record doesn't sell boatloads, although it's kickass, but this is not the goal anyway. A second record is released, *Whatever And Ever Amen*—perhaps you've heard of it—and a full year into its little life *Lady Fame* smiled and appeared with her attendant angels, *Radio Play* and *Mass Exposure*, holding her double-edged sword of Unit Sales and Endless Touring.

"We rehearsed like hell before we went out and played our first gig," recalls Ben. "Like real intense rehearsal where we

"We thought of this as a concept record. It started to be a theme about this guy's life. 'Narcolepsy' seemed to be the weirdest one, so as a first song it lets you know what you're in for."

decided that's what we were. Our first record you could call a rehearsal, too, 'cause that's what it was. The next time we rehearsed was when we made the second record, and we didn't rehearse again until the third record. And it kind of sucks

because we were out there working so hard, pushing the stuff we'd done. I always thought of myself as a person who wrote songs, but I kind of stopped about a year before this band got together and didn't write but a total of five songs before [writing] this new record. [After we stopped touring the last record,] I needed two or three months to find out if I could write another song." You could call this a typical story because it reads almost word for word like my experience with the Zippers. Typical, that is, if you're that fortunate.

All by way of bringing us to *Reinhold Messner*. Who is this chap, you might ask, that could inspire some of the most playin'-est and singin'-est sons-of-bitches to write a whole album about him? "Me and my friends in high school would use that name for fake IDs," admits Darrin. "All six of us. I thought someone had made it up but it turns out that he climbed Mt. Everest in 1987, so it makes sense that one of my friends had heard it." Yes, friends, the band only

L TO R: SLEDGE, FOLDS, JESSE



realized after completing the record that Herr Messner lives in a castle in Italy and was the first to climb Everest without oxygen. I didn't believe it, either, given the boys' propensity for elaborate practical jokes during interviews—like the one where they claimed to first meet in a gay bar—but was assured that it was true. I mean, the fake ID thing sounds more plausible, but then again, what high school kid would come up with *that* name anyway, and then be dumb enough to share it with five others when all were apparently trying to get into the same titty bar?

Of course, the band didn't believe that the decorative foil my wife Mel and I put on the carrot muffins we served was edible, either. "Do you want some more foil, Tom?" asks Ben later on, handing me the tin foil wrapper of his lunch. When I asked the guys if they had made some kind of connection between unwittingly naming their new record after an intrepid and obviously insane mountain climber while ostensibly referencing a high school m.o., silence ensued until Robert said something to the effect that it made them look like jerks.

And now we come to the nut of interviewing Ben Folds Five. They make a point, as a musical unit as well as individuals, to studiously avoid thinking or talking too much about what they do, as if it would jinx the project. Of course, getting most bands to talk about their music is like asking an adolescent to explain the finer points of masturbation technique. It seems somehow inappropriate, and for good reason, because music begins where words leave off, and if musicians could clearly explain what they were doing they'd turn into essayists. This sucks for the potential interviewer or essayist, however, because the music this group creates appears to be rigorously thought-out and performed. Surely one could divine their method of such intricate song writing and arranging by asking the right questions. This is how I fared:

On songwriting, Robert explains, "Someone puts a gun to Ben's head and he goes, 'By golly, there's a gun to my head!'" Ben agrees: "We go into the studio and it's like, 'Oh shit.'"

On songwriting, Robert explains, "Someone puts a gun to Ben's head and he goes, "By golly, there's a gun to my head!"

"It's become that way," Ben agrees. "We go into the studio and it's like, 'Oh shit.' One idea won't really feel like us but another one will, so I'll go towards that. Totally unexpected stuff happens all the time when Robert and Darrin work on a new song."

"It's weird," says Robert. "Caleb [Southern, the band's long-time producer/engineer] will come to me and say, 'Y'all's intuition is right on on this song,' and I'm like, 'That's good. We really just want to get to the end.' We want to find a point to all this playing!"

"The best things we have sometimes is when we just finish it and we don't even know we've got it," finishes Darrin. "When we go back into the studio we listen to it and go, 'Oh, that's it!'"

The band seldom listens to its own records. "Whatever is better than I gave it credit for," mutters Ben, grudgingly. "We were convinced that it was our worst album."

"When you tour until it doesn't mean anything anymore," says Darrin, "then you can't even hear it." The band spends no time talking about a future musical direction based on how things have been progressing. "We talk about how sick of where we are," says Robert. "On this record I just wanted to play real pretty and broad and nice." And he did, too.

The band didn't codify the arrangements on *Messner* by performing the songs live. "Some songs don't change for the better [after being performed live]," explains Darrin. "You get technically better at the transitions but the spirit behind the whole idea is lost. For us I think it works better when we do it really quick. I mean, we're a better band live. We go out and we make the songs bigger than they were in the studio. But they don't have the same heart.

There are some that you listen to and they're kind of naive and just getting their feet on the ground and they're probably at their best."

"I have a feeling maybe part of the charm of the band is trying to accomplish more than we actually do or can," says Ben. "It's not like we want to go back and change it. I don't. I don't want to get back into it."

This last statement might at first seem astonishing coming from the main songwriter of such an accomplished outfit, and naturally I would love to hear what happens when they actually attain their goal, but I believe that happens with each successive record. For a great band, perceived limitations or shortcomings are constructively used to set the bar higher next time. I ask Ben which song he thought they nailed on this record and he named "Narcolepsy." Robert is most proud of the rhythm track on "Lullaby." "There's something about us being able to stare at each other [while cutting a track live]," he says. "There's some serious ESP going on."

Perhaps this is what I've been trying to get out of them the whole time. Like Ben says later, Robert and Darrin "usually don't know what a song's about when we start working on it, but they know what it's about. If you had separate identical twins on opposite sides of the earth each writing songs, they'd be writing the same song with different titles."

ESP, however, doesn't write *CMJ New Music Monthly* articles, so I press further. I ask Ben to comment on the theme of assuming identities that he's used in a number of lyrics, including "Redneck Past" ("there's a hundred ways to cover your redneck past") and "Army" on this record, and the great "Underground" on the eponymous first record.

The singer on each is willing to search out and assume an identity in order to minimize social alienation. Ben stares blankly. "As far as being a chameleon, I don't know, I never thought of that. I guess

it makes some kind of sense," he says after a while.

"I thought it was a short attention span," offers Darrin.

I first saw Ben Folds Five at the Cat's Cradle in Chapel Hill a few years ago. My friend and bandmate Ken Mosher had their first record and told me all about them; I vaguely remembered sharing a bill with Ben in the early '90s when we were both drummers in our respective rock outfits. "I thought I was aging out of rock 'n' roll until we formed this band," he admits during the interview. Although the sound was terrible that night at the Cradle, I could tell the band was phenomenal. All of them were visibly perturbed, so I decided it was best not to go tell them how great they were after the show.

We shared our first bill with them when the Zippers played the Atlanta Midtown Music Festival in early '97. I went up and introduced myself to Ben, who was hunched in a chair in the corner backstage. We exchanged pleasantries, reminisced foggily about our old bands, and I retreated because Ben is a fellow who generally keeps his own company. I got to seriously hang out with the guys when we went out on the H.O.R.D.E. tour later that summer. I'll never forget hearing that they brought their own string section (truly balls the size of coconuts to do that), and seeing the majesty that is Ben Folds Five on some outdoor stage in some field. Imagine, if you will, a string quartet, talented and fluid, playing some weird-ass Folds arrangement, while Darrin displays some of the most beautiful and rock-steady drumming currently available, Robert, the human spring, leaping on his fuzz box, and Ben standing on top of the piano screaming "Motherfuckers!" in his best heavy metal falsetto. What entertainment value! The crowd practically swooned.

Meanwhile, the mainstream press dribbled out drive! about the new Elton John or Billy Joel or some crap, but a lot of us already knew



better. Time passed; I saw Robert or Darrin occasionally in town or on the road—pool games and refreshments ensued—and the shared bill idea enthusiastically supported by both camps never materialized.

Then this January I got a call to come up to New York with Ken and play horns on the new BFF record. It was snowing up there, probably the most beautiful time to be in the city. John the trumpet player acquitted himself nicely; Ken and I, as usual, largely faked it and got away with fraud, but the boys seemed to like it.

We got to see Caleb Southern again, a truly good man with big ears for getting the right sounds. I remember him from Chapel Hill, of course, doing excellent work on the Zen Frisbee record and a bunch of other stuff. He's since moved to New York, but it doesn't seem to be adversely affecting him. *Messner* might be his best work yet. The drums are beautifully recorded, with that big, remote-miked, tubby sound that so fits Darrin's jazz training.

The piano and vocals are warm, and the whole record has alternately an intimate presence and a hugeosity when required. The band likes Caleb because he tells them when to stop. We sat around after the right take and Caleb played us the rough mixes of the songs. One killer after another, frankly. In BFF tradition, there's musical daring and hard lefts, lush vocals and spare fuzz bass attacks, lyric and musical wit that at first seems to be a distancing joke but ultimately reveals itself to be a shared personality defense mechanism because, for no apparent reason, one so identifies with the nutty and conflicted characters that live in Ben's lyrics. "It's great," we said.

For the most part, Caleb lived in the control room, Robert and Darrin would go out on the town for refreshments after the session, and Ben would sit and talk quietly, work out chord voicings on his piano, before going home with his girlfriend. We were thrilled to be included.

The next month I was asked to write this piece. The guys came

over on a gray, rainy February day. Ken and his wife Beth were there, my wife Mel also, since it's our house. There was plenty of coffee and muffins. Ben preferred water over coffee, and later found out he had been dipping his pants leg in the salsa from his burrito. Basically, it was a good Southern hang-out session. Quite a bit of the interview was spent commiserating, talking about shared acquaintances and what's going on with so-and-so; I spent way too much time talking when there was silence after a question. Some of the answers on tape are cut short by quips from one of the guys. There was a lot of laughter.

After trying to gain insight on the process, I ask the guys if the success of their single "Brick" had caused them to think too much this time around in the studio. "The 'Brick' thing didn't have much at all to do with it," says Ben. "Like Garth Brooks sold 13 million of a double live album and I don't know a single person who has that. I think it's kind of like that when you have a

Ben Folds Five makes a point to avoid talking too much about what they do. Of course, getting most bands to talk about their music is like asking an adolescent to explain the finer points of masturbation technique.

hit, so maybe 150,000 people bought our record for that song, but I've never met any of those people. Who you do meet are the people who come to our shows, who are your friends. When we stopped playing 'Brick' live—and not out of any kind of point or anything, just because we weren't performing it very well—we had a lot of people come up to us and say, 'Man, I'm so glad you didn't play the "Brick" song. That's cool!' That's our experience, so going into the studio thinking we were going to pull that off again wasn't even a consideration."

That's okay, I countered, but weren't you perhaps considered a sell-out for having such a big hit? Robert picks up the thread: "We weren't perceived as a sell-out after 'Brick' because people could see we were kind of sabotaging ourselves from becoming a big pop band."

Ben elaborated, describing a surreal top 40 radio festival the band played. While most of the other acts were content to lip-synch

to their hits, our intrepid outsiders actually performed. "The people were just kind of listening," he said. "I remember I started talking about 'Brick' and how we'd been moved by a lot of Amy Grant recordings. And they were completely like 'Oh, Amy Grant!' And I could feel that connection between you and your audience, although I felt a little bad about it because it was just a joke!" At the end of the performance, Ben decided to fully take the piss out by extending a vocal line in an over-wrought, modern gospel sort of way. The crowd ate it up. "And then you know at that point if you think you have any kind of connection with the world or there's something you understand about the way it works when you put your song on the radio, you have no idea. I realized we were 'Walking In Memphis' the whole time 'Brick' was out there!" I have to admit at this point, even though it got a big laugh and I'm aware of the song, I have no idea what the hell Ben was talking about with that "Walking In Memphis" thing. He even referenced it again later, about his perceived failing on "Saturday Night Live."

The next day, when Darrin brought the advance copy by my house, the promise of the rough mixes was confirmed. Messner is a great album through and through by a confident, established band that feels it in no way has to prove itself. Many of the songs are hook

"Garth Brooks sold 13 million of a double live album and I don't know a single person who has it. Maybe 150,000 people bought our record for 'Brick,' but I've never met any of those people."

city—"Army" and "Redneck," for me in particular—and most are a tour-de-force in how to play the shit out of your instrument and work as a unit. Lyrical themes are mentioned in one song and developed later, musical themes are stated and reappear; for example, the bass part in the chorus of "Army" is much the same as it is in "Regrets," and similar changes also surface in "Hospital." The album, like the band, and like music itself, is a living entity to be glimpsed from different angles but never fully comprehended. Only much later in the interview did Ben offer insight into the process. "The true songwriting is realizing that it is a valid feeling to convey. That's the big picture. Then you have to establish a craft of how to extract that without taking it out of the womb in bits and pieces, you need to get the whole thing out so that it lives and breathes. That requires a lot of technique."

And, apparently, not too much thinking. Ben kept saying how perfectly good fragments would be over-produced in his head and become in danger of not getting realized into a song, or how he was "not dumping" on a certain track, but it "just didn't quite get there."

Towards the end of the interview I asked Ben if it was his father's voice on "Your Most Valuable Possession." The song begins with a robot-voice announcing an answering-machine message, and then an older Southern man says: "Good Morning, Mr. Ben. It's about 6:30, Winston Salem, North Carolina, laying here in the bed half awake half asleep, thinking about you. Um... I was um... wondering if you were looking after your most valuable possession... your mind." As drums, bass and swirling electric piano wander and muse on a melody behind it, the voice goes on with what is really a fabulous discourse about John Glenn's space flight and the relationship of mind and body. He concludes with "Anyway, hope everything is going all right. I might wake up here in a little while, [and] forget what I was thinking about." Ben confirmed that was indeed his father, and when Ben heard the message he knew he wanted to build a song around it. After all, it was practically already a song—it had a lyrical narrative and a structure with restated themes. Ben asked his dad for his permission to use it, which he gave. "Are you sure, Dad? I mean, a lot of people might hear it." "Sure," Mr. Folds answered. "What did I say?"

NMM

the new album by

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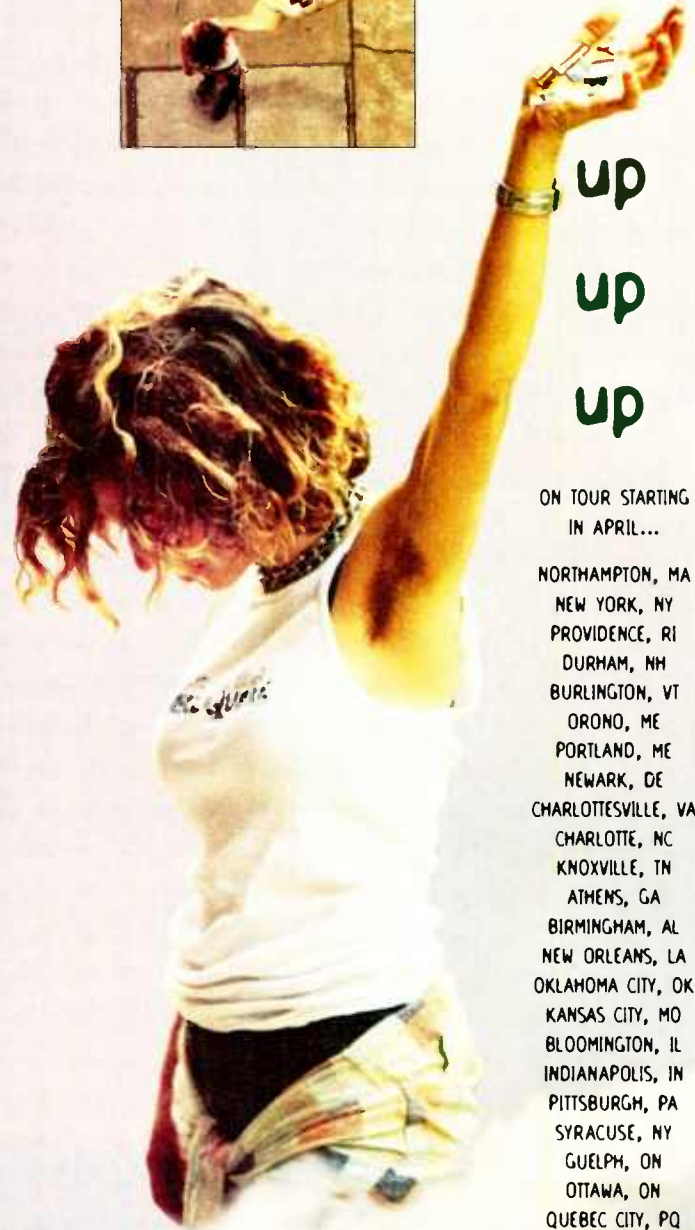
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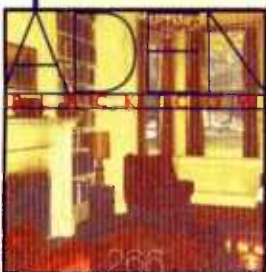
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ADEN

Black Cow

TeenBeat

Aden's Jeff Gramm captures the hollow moments best, those tender feelings of wistfulness, wonderment and lingering regret that sensitive boys seem to collect like Smiths singles. Gramm sings with a warm, heartfelt whisper about the sad grandeur of true love fading, the loneliness of new cities, the confusion of long-distance lovers changing and growing apart even while they desperately miss each other. *Black Cow* is an album of shy torment, of agonizing angst and teary-eyed introspection that's always

sincere and devastatingly heartfelt. Gramm's lyrics take a deceptively simple approach to heartache, describing the small details that lead to nervous butterflies and quivering will. But where Aden's first album, *Cause Of Your Tears*, seemed to stay too long in the same minor key, *Black Cow* has a newfound verve and pitter-patter bounce to the melodies—perhaps because Gramm's DC-based band now seems to have a steady lineup—that makes one wish desperate moments of heartache like "New Fast," "Why Can't I Make You Happy?" and "I Knew You Would Go" lasted even longer. Imagine Morrissey and Marr as University of Chicago grads recording for English fey pop label Sarah Records, and you'll be onto Aden.

>>>David Daley

OUT:

February 11

FILE UNDER:

Puffy eyed jungle pop

R.I.Y.L.:

Elliott Smith, Saturnine, Field Mice, Galaxie 500.



BADAWI

The Heretic Of Ether

Asphodel

Badawi is Raz Mesinai, a musical wanderer trained partly in the Middle East but known in his present home of New York as a veteran of DJ Spooky's illbient scene and the duo Sub Dub. A concept album about a traveler returning home, *The Heretic Of Ether* celebrates Mesinai's return to the traditional instruments and styles that he has studied all his life. Mesinai has embraced live playing with a vengeance, enlisting a violinist and a cellist to accompany his keyboard playing, singing, and drumming. The trio builds off his simple

compositions and embroiders them into long, flighty pieces tinged with the drama of epic movie music. The strings are most often front and center, archingly melodic on "Tired Soldiers," droning like hovering insects on "Entrance." When the music does turn beat-driven, it is accented by tambourines and bell-like sounds, as on the Material-esque "Enter The Heretic." Dramatic sequencing mediates between the two modes and gives Badawi a chance to justify his neo-traditionalism. In two well-placed interludes called "Fatal Confrontation," Badawi takes a solo on a drum that sounds similar to the Indian tabla. These performances capture Badawi's seeming intent throughout *Heretic*: that we notice the classical flourishes while still managing to lose ourselves in the groove.

>>>Andrea Moed

OUT:

February 23

FILE UNDER:

Middle East rooted trance.

R.I.Y.L.:

Material, Minsungam, Tahin Singh.



HOWIE B

Snatch

Palm Pictures

Chances are pretty good that there's something in your music collection that was produced or remixed by Howie B; he's worked with everyone from U2, Björk and Sly & Robbie to Ry Cooder and Robbie Robertson. He may be a studio whiz who has been mostly content to stay behind the scenes, but *Snatch*, his third full-length, sees him leaping into the foreground. *Snatch* seems a pastiche of several years' worth of production brainstorming and leftover ideas, terrific samples and eerie loops pasted together with throbbing bass lines and drum

programs. It's not so much an album of songs—none of the tracks feature vocals or even vocal samples—as of movements and mood pieces, spanning a wide reach across the electronic music spectrum. The tracks range from the uptempo and acid-jazzy to dour breakbeats laced with wheezing loops and quiet horns, and even an odd cut ("Black Oak") with a stuttering jungle beat slathered with outer-space effects and an almost Celtic-sounding melody. Without vocals, *Snatch* doesn't feel like it has much human presence, but Howie B isn't engaged in songcraft in its usual form. Howie B started out his musical career long ago assisting film composer Stanley Myers (*Dr. Who*), and with *Snatch*, it sounds like he's still making soundtrack music for short films playing only inside his head.

>>>David Jarman

OUT:

March 16

FILE UNDER:

Trip-hop y mini soundtracks.

R.I.Y.L.:

Barry Adamson, Tricky, Meat Beat Manifesto, DJ Shadow.



BOWLING GREEN

One Pound Note

Nothing

This album is supposed to synthesize electronica and glam rock, but if you didn't know that Micko Westmoreland (a.k.a. the Bowling Green) had a supporting role in the ode-to-glam film *Velvet Goldmine*, you wouldn't make the connection. Little of the guitar swoon of T. Rex or Bowie is in evidence on *One Pound Note*, but the band's debut can be called *glittery*. Kicking off with a chunky disco riff that may well be from a porn film, *One Pound Note* takes the usual rave ingredients—dialogue bits, sampled beats, odd keyboard effects—and serves

up a fairly unusual stew that resembles Kraftwerk's catchier moments or even disco. That's not to say the album is danceable, but it's a definite headtrip. The Bowling Green's songs start with the requisite atmosphere-setting spacey effects, and then a beat comes slamming in—or sneaking in, as on "Humans Feel Pain" and "Meanwhile Gardens," which shift from eerie sci-fi samples into cool, superfly bongos pit-patting at an unnatural b.p.m. Sound effects are Westmoreland's crutch: When he finds a squonk or a movie phrase he likes, he tends to overuse it. But clearly, his music is intended as more than an unintrusive backdrop. This may not sound like an endorsement, but by 2005, when you visit the video store, Debbie could be doing Dallas to something that sounds like this.

>>>Chris Molanphy

OUT:

March 2

FILE UNDER:

Glittery head music.

R.I.Y.L.:

The Orb, recent Love & Rockets, Kraftwerk.



CHAMBER STRINGS ★

Gospel Morning **Bobsled**

Kevin Junior, the leader of the Chamber Strings, comes by his Epic Soundtracks fixation honestly: He spent several years working with Soundtracks and his brother Nikki Sudden. So if *Gospel Morning* sometimes seems like a guitar-centric version of Soundtracks's *Sleeping Star*, that's okay: Soundtracks isn't around, so Junior may as well continue his mentor's legacy of fragile, introspective vocals and sweet, sad melodies—and title the album's lead track "Flashing Star." But there's more to the Chamber Strings than one-dimensional hero-worship. *Gospel Morning* conjures

ghosts of carefully constructed guitar-pop without becoming generic, and songs like "Thank My Lucky Stars" and "Everyday Is Christmas" have such perfect, lush melodies that they could be forgotten '60s classics. Kevin Junior's reedy voice echoes both John Lennon in ballad mode and *Sister Lovers*-era Alex Chilton, and lends a pleasing psychedelic tinge to "All Of Your Life" and "I Can't Lose." And the Chicago-based band even rocks out, favoring the occasional guitar solo with background horns; the group hits a Memphis groove on "Dead Man's Poise" and pays homage to the Faces and Stones (or maybe just Primal Scream) on "Cold, Cold Meltdown." Still, the Chamber Strings blend their influences artfully, and while *Gospel Morning* may recall soundtracks from the past, it still sounds swell in the present. >>>Steve Klinge

OUT:

March 16.

FILE UNDER:

Lush and fragile guitar pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Epic Soundtracks, John Lennon, Alex Chilton, Nikki Sudden.



DELGADOS

Peloton **Beggars Banquet**

Not every Glasgow band sounds alike, but even so, the city generates a brand of stately yet precarious pop that is rarely replicated elsewhere. The secret ingredient may be the regional Scottish accent that converts any lyric to arch melancholy. On their second album, the Delgados mine ragged pop turf similar to that of the Pastels, albeit with a more professional bent. Their chamber room approach conjures images of neighbors Belle & Sebastian, although the Delgados don't hesitate to crank the guitars amid the flutes, strings, and clarinets. Alun

Woodward and Emma Pollock trade vocal duties (with her sardonic delivery, Pollack recalls the Cardigans' Nina Persson), and hit the jackpot on the few occasions their voices intertwine. *Peloton's* first several tracks ride the yin and yang of loud guitars juxtaposed with genteel instrumentation and winning melodies to yield positively majestic results—which makes it all the more disappointing when the album thoroughly unravels by the end. Reportedly lead songwriter Woodward missed much of the recording due to the dangerously premature birth of his son. My guess is that the front-end loaded, fully baked material bears Woodward's imprint, and that his absence accounts for the abrupt loss of melodic touch and musical subtlety later on. The must-hear high points, however, are sufficient to warrant a thumbs-up for *Peloton*. >>>Glen Sarvady

OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Classy orchestral Brit-pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Pastels, Cinerama, Belle & Sebastian.



COMMONFACTOR

Dreams Of Elsewhere **Planet E**

Let's cut the crap, shall we? For all the sonic nuances to detail, and various synths to identify, it all really comes down to one question, at least as far as dance floor techno and house music is concerned: Does it groove, and if so, how hard? This is the sort of hard-nosed, bottom-line appraisal one might expect a producer for Detroit's Planet E label—home of techno luminaries Carl Craig and Kevin Saunderson—to appreciate. Now let's consider *Dreams Of Elsewhere*, the debut LP from Nick Calingaert, a.k.a. Commonfactor. Can I get a god damn?

Dreams Of Elsewhere unfolds like a formal ceremony at the UN: one anthem after another. Calingaert starts the journey gently with the spacey, almost-ambient "Reflections," gathering steam with the soulful "Positive Visual" and the funky "Get Down." The sonic pulses get more and more crisp and the hi-hats urgent; by the time "King" explodes from the speakers, you're careening through dark tunnels and the fear is strangely titillating. A skilled mental masseur, Calingaert lightens the pressure just as it borders on pain: "King" is followed by a three-track descent that eases you to a finish with the title track, all shadows and echoes with a drowsy, meandering beat. Light up a smoke when it's all over—*Dreams Of Elsewhere* is that intense an excursion. >>>William Werde

OUT:

March 30.

FILE UNDER:

Anthemic techno.

R.I.Y.L.:

Underworld, Plastikman, Hardfloor.



EUPHONE ★

The Calendar Of Unlucky Days **Jade Tree**

Ryan Rapsys is the former drummer of the punk band Gauge who went solo to explore his noodly side; Nick Macri is his newly recruited bassist. Together, they're the latest exemplars of the Chicago school of prog/jazz/rock, grooving on improvisational give and take, premised on a deep current of shared tastes. *Calendar* was produced by local fixture Casey Rice, and the familiar elements of other Chicago bands' records are all too recognizable here. The bubbly, clean bass lines and crackling snare drums of "Broken Gourd" make it an eerie Tortoise

sound-alike, and "Fallout"'s muted, slightly fuzzy keyboards recall the Sea And Cake. Euphone's instincts are hardly all derivative. *Calendar* opens on a quirky note with "Bought Then Sold," a one-phrase composition carried by bass and harmonica and punctuated by swooping keyboard counter-riffs. The second half also contains a couple of inspired oddballs: "Wickedness" takes their usual jam and retools it with new wave-era bass and percussion; "Needle And Crate" has a slow Latin vibe that suggests a geekier Steely Dan. On the whole, though, the new Euphone doesn't add up to a new take on the native jazz temperament. It's cool enough to fit in, but too breezy to stand out. >>>Andrea Moed

OUT:

April 20.

FILE UNDER:

Laid-back rhythm junkies.

R.I.Y.L.:

Tortoise, Sea And Cake, Calexico.



ROSIE FLORES

Dance Hall Dreams

Rounder

OUT:

March 2.

FILE UNDER:

Rockabilly filly gets serious.

R.I.Y.L.:

Wanda Jackson, Iris DeMent, Dwight Yoakam/Pete Anderson.

She's still enough of a rockabilly filly to cheer on the "original Blasters—go, Dave, go" in one song and reel off the entire Sun Studios roster in another, but Rosie Flores's sixth disc isn't quite the all-out twang-fest of her recent summit meetings with Wanda Jackson and Ray Campi. Instead, it finds her schizily split between delivering the 'billy goods ("59 Tweedle Dee"—that's a Cadillac, of course) and attempting to remake herself as a home-truth teller à la Nanci Griffith or Iris DeMent ("We'll Survive").

(A few songs fit neither mold: "The Man Downstairs" could be off any recent Bonnie Raitt record.) Flores's direct, tuneful vocal approach fits the new-folk material well enough, but the songs themselves are iffy. "Who's Gonna Fix It Now" (about a departed father), despite obvious sincerity and charming details ("King of the remote control/Giver of the Oreos"), doesn't quite escape sounding like a post-mortem answer song to "Butterfly Kisses." The real strength of *Dance Hall Dreams* is Flores's own remarkable guitar playing: On the gorgeous, aptly titled "Tremolo" and the slinky swinger "Bring It On," her fingers have all the eloquence her lyrics often lack. No sweat, Rosie—"Be Bop A Lula" wasn't about the words, either.

>>>Franklin Bruno



GARDENER

New Dawning Time

Sub Pop

OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Post-grunge hootenannies.

R.I.Y.L.:

Screaming Trees, Seaweed, Mike Johnson, Mark Lanegan.

The byproduct of a budding friendship between two titans of the Northwest grunge scene, Gardener feels a lot like a much-needed sabbatical for its principals, Seaweed singer Aaron Stauffer and Screaming Trees bassist Van Conner. If not quite polished enough to be a labor of love, *New Dawning Time* is at least the result of time spent in good company, which includes, on various tracks, Van's younger brother Pat (drums), Seaweed's John Atkins (bass) and Clint Werner (guitar), and a loose ensemble of bongo, flute, tabla, trumpet, trombone,

and sitar players. Gone are the woolly coats of distortion and mammoth guitars that helped define the sound of Screaming Trees, Seaweed, and a whole generation of Seattle rockers. Instead, Stauffer and Conner rely on little more than the loose jangle and strum of an acoustic guitar, trippy touches of Eastern-tinged psychedelia, and good weedy vibes to first embrace and then dispel the sense of melancholy that seems to hover over the proceedings. It's nice to hear Stauffer's husky, weathered voice in such an austere setting. And if some of Gardener's songs sound like they could have used a little pruning before being committed to disc, well just think of *New Dawning Time* as Stauffer and Conner's way of taking a working vacation from the business of making a polished album.

>>>Matt Ashare



FUNKI PORCINI

Ultimately Empty Million Pounds

Ninja Tune

OUT:

March 30.

FILE UNDER:

Funki electronica, not funky enough.

R.I.Y.L.:

Herbaliser, DJ Krush, UNKLE.

Flies buzz, Bob Barker announces a wicker chair, birds tweet, a drum instructor introduces the drums, a Hammond B3 gets funky, crowds roar, a singer introduces his "Rocket Soul Music" and jets land on the new sample-happy Funki Porcini album. And that's just the shit you can hear. Underneath, almost invisible, is all this stealth stuff serving as the underwater foundation, supporting the structural beats that are the centerpiece of *Ultimately Empty Million Pounds*. Funki Porcini is an anonymous

guy—he claims his real name is Funki—who has home-trotted through England, Germany, Italy, and America (in San Francisco, he apparently shared a flat with Snakeling and hung with the Residents) creating beat-based funky music and attempting to add some depth to the rhythms. On *Million Pounds Funki* succeeds only occasionally. He has set such narrow structural parameters for his music, and each cut relies so heavily on the success of a few samples and a beat, that if they don't make an impact, the entirety's DOA. The result is two dimensional, and sounds like an instrumental cut on a halfway decent hip-hop 12". When Funki succeeds, it's because he's unlocked the key to a sample, or the mantra and beats are engaging. More often than not, though, the results are pretty stale.

>>>Randall Roberts



GRAVEL PIT

Silver Gorilla

Q Division

OUT:

March 2.

FILE UNDER:

Fidgety power-pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Lyres, Jen Trynin, early Elvis Costello.

Boston-based foursome the Gravel Pit has an uncanny knack for writing songs with big, weighty hooks and sparkling melodies within its chrome-plated power-pop. The band's magnificent 1996 debut, *The Gravel Pit Manifesto*, was one of the most fat-free, high-energy pop-rock workouts of that year, coupling dazzling riffs with vocalist/keyboardist Jed Parish's resonating vocals. Some of the songs on *Silver Gorilla*—"Where The Flying Things Go" and "Millions Of Miles"—would fit in with those on *Manifesto*, but this time the group stretches itself

musically, experimenting with new, sometimes strange sounds. On the one hand, that means that *Silver Gorilla* doesn't pack the punch of its predecessor, but songs such as "I Climb (Up His Tree)" and the Costello-like "Favorite" prove that the group is capable of sucker-punching listeners with a raucous power-popper on command. The most engaging moments on *Silver Gorilla* come on cuts like "Bolt Of Light," with its repeating hook, use of flutes and the band's mature sense of harmony, and the beautifully bouncing "When Will Our Bucket Come Up Dry." On softer shots such as "Stumbling Sideways," Parish's voice just never sounds pretty—it's far too energetic and weathered to soften up—and you can hear it maxed out on "Free To Be Me And Thee," the album's knockout blow.

>>>Glen Sansone

**OUT:**

February 9.

FILE UNDER:

Top 40 queer pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Jill Sobule, Katrina And The Waves, Indigo Girls, Liz Phair.

MEG HENTGES ★**Brompton's Cocktail** Robbins Entertainment

Meg Hentges has been a Boy (a member of Portland, Oregon's early-'80s new wavers the Neo-Boys) and a Girl (guitarist in lezzy rockers Two Nice Girls), but now she's on her own with a solo record of pure polish and radio-ready pop. *Brompton's Cocktail* is a clean and effervescent beverage that sounds like "Walking On Sunshine" with a twist of queer power. It's a time machine back to the sounds of early MTV, but Hentges's version is out-of-the-closet and has better fashion sense. The '80s power pop flourishes of mechanical synth and super-produced melodies contribute to the

new wave atmosphere, but Hentges's low, unadorned vocals anchor the kite-spinning songs to terra firma. In "God's Lake" and "This Kind Of Love," Hentges meanders lyrically through memories of high school and family and the agony inherent in both. She is only marginally successful with the songs that she delivers in this talking sing-song style, but when she dispenses with the word-crammed soliloquies, she fires up the hit machine and comes across with the tunes from an imaginary Top 40. Hentges's two prior solo albums had solid songwriting, but this time she gets a makeover treatment from Ivy/Fountains Of Wayne tunesmith Adam Schlesinger, whose production errs on the side of high gloss. For a girl with big, chunky eyeglasses, Hentges has become big on glamour, even if it's just the aural variety. >>>Lois Maffeo

JOHN SIMS**Palomino****Bedazzled**

A group rather than a person, John Sims knows its Neu records backwards and forwards and has studied diligently at the feet of Stereolab; on its first stateside release, this Leicester, England-based quartet even covers a Silver Apples song. An impressive MO, for sure, but while JS proudly touts these influences on both sleeves, there's little on *Palomino* to suggest any furtherance of the electro-pop cause—or even a true understanding of its founding tenets. Here's the problem. The cold, Orwellian invocations of Kraftwerk notwithstanding, other early

'70s German electronic bands—Neu, Can et al.—were basically comprised of hippies. Though they'd grown leery of guitar-based rock, they aspired to create electronic music possessed of a similar visceral, organic quality. The inherent contradiction in such an endeavor, and their ability to overcome it, is what gave those bands their unique spark. John Sims lacks that spark, and thus, it rarely transcends the bedroom idol worship of so many bands like them. John Sims sounds stiff, paper-thin, detached from its art rather than immersed in it. There is promise here, in the slow burn of "Spread The Tikka" and the dubadelic closing track "Pale Flags," but ultimately, John Sims simply reminds us of the brilliance of its heroes, rather than giving us reason to take up new ones. >>>Matt Hanks

**OUT:**

February 23.

FILE UNDER:

Neu wave.

R.I.Y.L.:

Stereolab, Neu, Silver Apples.

Eternally Cool.

Photo courtesy of the John O'Neill estate.

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KITTY CRAFT

Beats And Breaks From The Flower Patch
Kindercore

Don't be fooled by the name and the *Wind In The Willows*-styled artwork. There's nothing twee or cuddle-core about groovy Minnesota diva Pamela Valfer. Her debut, *Beats And Breaks From The Flower Patch*, is an absolute delight, all gently-lopung loops, blissful drones, and slow-shuffling dance floor treats. Valfer's lo-fi indie trip-pop feels like Phil Spector remixing Portishead. Her vocals have that gauzy, '60s echo chamber feel, and there's a serene wistfulness to the chiming melodies. Blend that with the beats and breaks the title promises, and

OUT:

January 26.

FILE UNDER:

Trip-pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Cornelius, His Name Is Alive, Adventures In Stereo, Luscious Jackson.

Kitty Craft sounds contentedly lost in time, a fanciful old-soul marooned with a four-track, a sampler, and a stack of French pop records. It's special because it's simple. Its genius is how friendly and familiar it sounds. There's practically no production to get in the way, the acoustic interludes are uncomplicated, the strings are light and airy, and the beats break predictably enough so that any pretty fly white guy could move in rhythm. But every song positively shimmers and grooves, particularly "Inward Jam," "Alright" and "Down For." Valfer divides her tricks neatly among them, sprinkling antique horns here, slow-rollicking piano elsewhere. This is the kind of late-night comedown album that ought to come with a warning label: Will keep guests dreamy until dawn. Keep it secret unless you want brunch guests.

>>>David Daley



LOW

Secret Name

Kranky

Play Low for someone who doesn't "get it," and nine times out of ten, they'll respond, "Geez, that's depressing." Well, of course, but that doesn't mean Low is cornball goth melodrama or self-deprecating irony. Instead, Low is in a far rarer and more exceptional space, one that only a few artists from Patsy Cline to Leonard Cohen to Joy Division have managed to occupy: turning pathos into an edgy if not agonizing beauty. Low's music is built on shuffling tempos, gnawing melodies, and honest lyrics, but just as much of the trio's

OUT:

March 29.

FILE UNDER:

Slow-motion beauty.

R.I.Y.L.:

Galaxie 500, Rex, Red House Painters, Cowboy Junkies.

impact comes from the stillness and silences between notes. The spare production lays bare the smallest details—a sucked-in breath here, the fading echoes of a cymbal snap there. The basic Low idea hasn't changed at all on *Secret Name*, focusing on crystalline guitar, barely-there percussion, and the frail duet of Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker's quivering voices. *Secret Name* adds a few striking new touches, further elaborating on the strings first introduced on 1997's *Songs For A Dead Pilot* EP as well as piano and timpani, and including a crescendoing, Galaxie 500-inspired single, "Starfire." But this is still unmistakably Low: No one else out there is this fragile, achy, and yet eloquent.

>>>David Jarman



PETE KREBS AND THE GOSSAMER WINGS

Sweet Ona Rose

Cavity Search

It must have taken a certain amount of guts for Pete Krebs to use an image like "gossamer wings," both in a song and as the name of his new backing outfit. Because the absence of precious clichés like that (and the presence of a "fuck" or two) is usually what distinguishes reformed indie-punk folkies like Krebs and his pal Elliott Smith from the many singer/songwriters working the coffeeshop circuit. But like Smith, who also started his solo career on Cavity Search, Krebs has changed career paths without hedging his bets. The former

OUT:

April 6.

FILE UNDER:

Post-punk Americana.

R.I.Y.L.:

Elliott Smith, Hazel, Golden Delicious, Uncle Tupelo.

frontman of Portland, Oregon's punky Hazel, Krebs has lately been working beneath the *No Depression* umbrella, both as a solo dude with an acoustic guitar, and as the songwriting frontman of the roots 'n' country outfit Golden Delicious. *Sweet Ona Rose* splits the difference between the two, offering straight folk-pop strum-alongs and Southern-accented ballads and barnburners replete with slide steel guitar. "Analog" is one of the better odes to the days of the vinyl LP since Pearl Jam's "Spin The Black Circle," only cleverer. And "Pacific Standard Time" is the sort of well-crafted moody country blues that Krebs should probably try selling to some big-name Nashville act. Because, as good a songwriter as he is, Krebs still doesn't quite convey the tragic troubadour charisma that's turned Smith into a bankable cult hero.

>>>Matt Ashare



OF MONTREAL

The Gay Parade

Bar/None

Reportedly, Kevin Barnes (who is Of Montreal) came up with the idea for his latest concept album while staring at traffic. Depressed over unrequited love, he decided to cheer himself up by imagining the passing cars as beautiful floats topped with characters who all had their own story to tell. Barnes composes songs to correspond with all of these imaginary personalities. On paper, the concept has the potential to be as good as *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* or *The Who Sell Out*. Unfortunately, *The Gay Parade* sounds like an Elephant 6

OUT:

February 23.

FILE UNDER:

Sprightly ragtime pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Herman's Hermits, the Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, Neutral Milk Hotel.

album as imagined by Felix Unger's twerpy offspring. The tunes aren't so much psychedelic pop as rancorous, homemade ragtime numbers layered with barbershop melodies. Certainly, this brand of marching band music isn't new territory for Barnes. At first, these rollicking tunes have an offbeat charm. Yet, after a handful of songs, the unrelenting perkiness loses its charm and becomes annoying and maniacal. Cuts such as "Advice From A Divorced Gentlemen [sic] To His Bachelor Friend Considering Marriage" don't live up to their titles. *The Gay Parade* is a bit like an ultra-rich cheesecake: It looks tantalizing, the first few bites are mouth-watering, but you'll probably get your fill halfway through and if you attempt to eat the whole thing, you'll just be nauseous.

>>>Neil Gladstone

Music From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack

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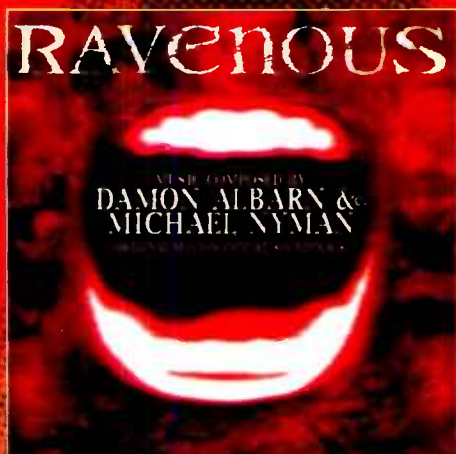


FEATURING

Placebo, Fatboy Slim, Blur,
Day One, Counting Crows,
Kristen Barry, Marcy Playground,
Skunk Anansie, Craig Armstrong
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ROBERT POLLARD



KID MARINE

OUT:

February 2.

FILE UNDER:

Breezy solo quickie.

R.I.Y.L.:

Guided By Voices, Sebadoh, old British Invasion stuff.

ROBERT POLLARD ★

Kid Marine Fading Captain Series

A true Guided By Voices fan will guess immediately that this solo project from GBV leader Robert Pollard is a quickie: Look at that album cover! It's got to be the least ornate of any GBV or Pollard album, with none of the usual cut-and-paste craftsmanship. Fortunately, *Kid Marine*—a time-marking album while Pollard finishes the delayed GBV opus *Human Amusements*—could best be described as breezy rather than half-assed. Famously prolific, Pollard says he spends a typical Saturday in his basement with a pot of coffee and a stack of vinyl, trying to write

as many ditties as the records will inspire in him. *Kid Marine* represents a solid batch: a few flashes of outright brilliance, nothing embarrassing, and plenty of warmth. Pollard's Brit-accented, '70s-prog-gone-indie-pop remains intact, as well it should—several GBV members, including Tobin Sprout and brother Jim Pollard, guest on the record, ensuring rich sound on tracks like "Flings Of The Waistcoat Crowd." Few of the song titles stand out the way Pollard's normally do, but "Far-Out Crops" recalls the out-there weirdness of GBV's *Bee Thousand*. Pollard has subtitled the album "#1 In The Fading Captain Series," but that's too self-deprecating; on recent albums, GBV may indeed have "faded" from the brilliance of its mid-'90s output, but *Kid Marine* shows Captain Pollard hasn't totally winked out. >>>Chris Molanphy

ROCK*A*TEENS

Golden Time Merge



OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Dark, sleepy rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Lambchop, Gum Club, Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds.

The rudimentary has rarely sounded as fine as it does on the Rock*A*Teens' *Golden Time*. Messy but direct, bouncy but stumbling, the Rock*A*Teens have woven only the most essential elements of intimate, emotional, thrilling music into an epic that dwarfs even the many charms of their previous three LPs. *Golden Time* plays as one long anthem—albeit a bizarre, rockabilly-goth anthem. The Teens' pop-punk is entirely unconventional (it's nothing like that of labelmates Superchunk, for instance), and the anguish of their songs plays as hopeful but

resigned—like they've worked past the bitterness already—somehow managing to convey so many of the stages in between despair and acceptance. While a lot of the lyrics fall by the wayside here, the music, and even the somewhat yelping vocal delivery, succeeds to such a high degree that it carries even the album's weakest points. When Chris Lopez sings about "that summer when I turned 23," it has so much more immediacy than when charming Euro malcontents like Belle & Sebastian recite similar confused laments. The Rock*A*Teens are smart, not prettied up (even with their magnificent organ), and potent—most stunningly on "Small Town Soap Opera" and "Love Is Boss." Less repeating itself than drawing out a fantastically long thread, *Golden Time* is gut-wrenching and addictive. >>>Liz Clayton



OUT:

April 13.

FILE UNDER:

Pensive but percolating post-hop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Morcheeba, Monk & Canatella, DJ Shadow.

PURPLE PENGUIN

Question Cup Of Tea-Studio K7

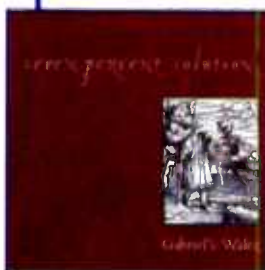
The sophomore full-length from England's Purple Penguin is driven by the frisson generated by underpinning laid-back grooves with hip-hop rhythms. Sound familiar? Admittedly, *Question* occasionally suggests modest parallels to celebrated contemporaries from this Bristol duo's tight-knit hometown scene. But DJ/producers Ben Dubuisson and Scott Hendy filter more sunshine and stardust into their low-key mix than the dour and brooding likes of Portishead and Massive Attack. The team's occasionally uneasy, but always affecting, marriage of sounds

toys with ingrained reactions to familiar musical figures; "Descendent" juxtaposes a disturbing piano riff with quiet psychedelic guitar fills and peppy beats and scratches, yet yields a surprisingly sprightly overall vibe. Glimpses of humor and an old school playfulness liberally dot *Question*—marimba fillips on "Western Interlude," the funky-ass bass line of "Closing Question"—climaxing on the single "Apollo," which fuses wah-wah guitar and a choir of AM radio angels with bass that begs to be pumped out at booty-shaking volume. Augmented with vocals from chanteuse Andrea Blythe and crooner Rudy Lee, *Question* proves more diverse than the pair's all-instrumental debut *Detuned*, and much more confident than its tentative title implies.

>>>Kurt B. Reighley

SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION ★

Gabriel's Waltz X-Ray



OUT:

March 9.

FILE UNDER:

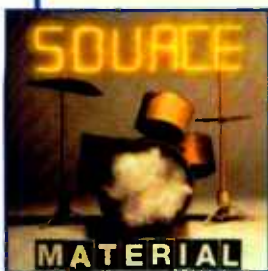
Narcotic/psychodelia.

R.I.Y.L.:

Flying Saucer Attack, Mercury Rev, Low.

Three years ago, in the form of a debut album called *All About Satellites And Spaceships*, Texas bedroom psych outfit Seven Percent Solution started beaming out nationwide signals: sluggish, droning pulses capped with distant-sounding vocals and swirling guitar sounds fed through banks of cheap effects. In the intervening time, the Austin quartet has kept a relatively low profile, doing scattered shows and releasing a 7" single; *Gabriel's Waltz*, the eventual sophomore album, indicates that the group hasn't significantly

altered its course since it spun out *Satellites*. In place are the soothing, somnambulant rhythms, guitarist Reese Beeman's groggy vocals and occasional bursts of six-string activity. The album was recorded at Beeman's home studio, and while it does boast a snugly, tucked-in feel, it never sounds amateurish or tinny. Instead it achieves a comfortable balance—familiar enough that you can imagine you're curled up on a couch in the band's practice garage listening to a private performance, but focused enough that you'd actually consider buying an extra copy for that special space-rocker in your life. *Gabriel's Waltz* won't replace your favorite albums by Flying Saucer Attack or Spiritualized, but the disc's sustained afterglow holds its spot on the short list of favored comedown records. >>>Lydia Vanderloo



SOURCE MATERIAL

Various Artists

Astralwerks

Move over Gene Hackman, the folks at Astralwerks are the ones with today's French Connection. Only it's not dope they're pushing, but brilliant music. In America, Astralwerks has defined a French music scene that is passionately bringing together technology and the dance floor with funk roots. As the American pipeline for French producers such as Air and Cassius, and compilations such as *Respect Is Burning* and *SourceLab*, the label is merely carrying on that tradition of quality with its latest, *Source Material*, released in its homeland on the Source label as *Source*

Rocks. While previous *SourceLab* comps were geared for the dance floor, *Material* is a bit of a departure. The electronic production methods are there, and to be sure, some of the 13 tracks will move your body, but not with thumping house bass lines. These songs have a lounge-y, funky feel, some heavier on the disco, some more atmospheric. Pay close attention to "Heat Wave," by Phoenix, whose retro-futuristic disco sound is upbeat and heavy on the bass (Phoenix is working on an album for Source). Also Oomiah, which gets some production help from Air to make a track that sounds strangely like the spacier moments on Peter Dinklage's vocoder-driven "Do You Feel Like We Do." There are so many standout tracks here, though: If *Source Material* is any indication, France is ready to emerge as a musical super-power. >>>William Werde

OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

The French electronica connection.

R.I.Y.L.:

Air, Daft Punk, Add N To X.



STATIC-X

Wisconsin Death Trip

Warner Bros.

OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Aggro, rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Korn, Dink, White Zombie, Ministry.

territory it is. These boys will win no prizes for sensitivity. A song called "Love Dump" compares a busted affair to, well, you do the math, and images of blood, destruction and brutality prevail. Static spent a lot of time in Chicago, where he briefly teamed with another native son, Billy Corgan. There's nothing Pumpkin-esque here, but the debt to Wax Trax founding father Ministry goes as far as an overt homage on "Fix." But Static-X is a lot less polished than Ministry, or even Korn. It's hard to downplay a line like "Take me on a Wisconsin death trip," but this group manages it. What it lacks in subtlety, it makes up for in sheer perseverance. Fans of earsplitting industrial metal will find much to enjoy here.

>>>Heidi MacDonald



TOBIN SPROUT ★

Let's Welcome The Circus People

Recordhead-Wigwam

With his two previous solo albums and his prior work with Guided By Voices, Tobin Sprout has proven himself a master of basement-bred lo-fi pop-rock. *Let's Welcome The Circus People* shows Sprout retreating a little bit further into the dark corners of his basement. Compared with the songs from his sophomore solo album, 1997's *Moonflower Plastic*, Sprout's new work is a bit less bouncy, with some more sluggish tempos and obscured vocals. Despite his darker and more

contemplative moments, Sprout still shows his affinity for melodic, British Invasion-inspired songs. *Circus People* also shows more experimentation lyrically, even though several tracks get stuck on a preoccupation with domestic life, offering references to bungalows, gardens and furniture. Sprout also shows consistency—a little too much—with his same-y drum tempos and tambourine patterns (fortunately Spoon drummer Jim Eno pitches in on a few tracks). While *Circus People* isn't as instantly digestible and inviting as *Moonflower*, there are a few golden moments to discover. "Digging Up Wooden Teeth," in particular, shows Sprout at his best: warm organ and sprightly guitar combined with poetic, sing-along lyrics ("It's electric to find a dream left behind on my pillow"). >>>Wendy Mitchell

OUT:

February 23.

FILE UNDER:

Pensive lo-fi pop.

R.I.Y.L.:

Robert Pollard, Richard Davies, Sebadoh.

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SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

Radiator

Flydaddy

"Hermann loves Pauline and Pauline loves Hermann," sings Super Furry Animals' cadence-coddling frontman Gruff Rhys at one point on *Radiator*. "They made love and gave birth to a little German." Ah, those wacky Welshmen. The quintet's second full-length record bubbles and scrapes through an unusual landscape of humorous odd detail, streamlined melodicism and jagged noise snippets. Oh sure, the Furry ones can deliver the pop goods, especially on relatively straightforward nuggets like "She's Got Spies," but their appeal lies in

the densely constructed, twisted composition that glides between guitar-strummed verses, "Ooh-oo" choruses and bridges that threaten to ride Cian Ciaran's keyboards toward the outer galaxies. On "The International Language Of Screaming" and "Play It Cool," for instance, the Super Furrys lure listeners into an irresistible Brit-pop booby-trap, then ratchet up the intensity with multifarious riffs and layered vocals. The complexity may detract from the immediacy on some tracks, but the swaggering "Demons" and the mid-tempo gem "Mountain People"—a touching ode to their fellow Welshmen—serve as the well-lit entryways to *Radiator's* labyrinthine tunnels. A bonus disc of B-sides and previously unreleased material provides further evidence of the Furry Animals' winsome experimental streak. >>>Richard Martin

CASSANDRA WILSON

Traveling Miles

Blue Note



OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Kind of blue.

R.I.Y.L.:

Joni Mitchell, Holly Cole, Nina Simone.

Miles Davis had little patience for playing with jazz vocalists, which makes Cassandra Wilson's success on her tribute to him, *Traveling Miles*, all the more remarkable. On her last two albums, Wilson seamlessly mixed Delta blues classics, surprising rock songs (from the Monkees to U2), and strong originals with arrangements dominated by acoustic guitar and sparse but prominent rhythms that highlight the resonant depths of her voice. Only a slightly different kind of blue, *Traveling Miles* continues solidly in the sensuous style Wilson's perfected.

Following one jazz tradition, she sets several of Davis's compositions to her own lyrics, and jazz geeks will love parsing the arrangements. "Run That VooDoo Down," which brackets the album in a boho-cool version and a funky duet with Angeliqe Kidjo, casts a magical spell, as does the witty arrangement of "Seven Steps." She also covers tunes that Davis covered: Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" is less surprising coming from Wilson than it was from Davis. And she's written songs "inspired by" Davis. (Damned if I can decipher a connection between the seductive and poppy "Right Here, Right Now" and Miles, but it's a great song anyway.) Because it's more about her compositional and vocal artistry than about worshipping Miles Davis, Cassandra Wilson's made an album I bet Davis could admire. >>>Steve Klinge

UGLY DUCKLING

Fresh Mode

1500

If you think that title of Ugly Duckling's EP *Fresh Mode* suggests that its sound is fresh, think again. It recalls those old school days when "fresh" was actually a new term and rappers were more interested in making clever references than spitting out words like a human Uzi. From the vinyl crackle of the opening track to name-checking silly pop cultural icons such as Depeche Mode and Chuck Norris, it's obvious that Ugly Duckling is more interested in making you laugh and think than busting out battle rhymes. There may not be much to differentiate

this Long Beach trio from a number of classic "Bohemian" rap groups, but the crew's laid-back and good natured verbal interplay set atop smooth jazz guitar lines, bouncy Rhodes electric piano and gospel records makes it stand out in the slick "jiggy" era. Reflective moments pop up here and there: "Get On This," for example, describes a young grandmother aging too soon and escaping ghetto blight with her faith in God. Most of the repartee from Dizzy, Andycat and Einstein, however, is more lighthearted. "Combustible, but we're adjustable like Craftmatics," jokes the posse in "Now Who's Laughin'." In "We're Here," they boast: "Like a Jheri Curl, I activate from state to state." Like few rap releases, Ugly Duckling's eight-track EP actually leaves you wanting more. >>>Neil Gladstone

STEVE WYNN

My Midnight

Zero Hour



OUT:

March 23.

FILE UNDER:

Days of wine and snoozes.

R.I.Y.L.:

Lou Reed, Lloyd Cole, Paul K.

Steve Wynn's latest effort finds him leading a quickly assembled band, wisely retaining Chris Brokaw from his recent collaboration with Come, and adding bassist Tony Maimone (Pere Ubu) and drummer Linda Pitman (Zuzu's Petals). Despite only five days in the studio, the band sounds surprisingly tight and dynamic, but that doesn't solve the central problem of Wynn's solo career: He's mistaken Having Been In A Great Band (the Dream Syndicate) for Being A Great Songwriter. The two-chord "500 Girl Moments" overcomes its singsong melody by sheer scale—at six-plus minutes, its

ungainly length becomes the point. But unmotivated production touches (horns, Joe McGinty's keyboards) can't salvage Wynn's soul pastiches ("Cats And Dogs," "My Favorite Game"), especially when coupled with mannered, mailed-in vocals straight off some forgettable '70s Lou Reed record. Lyrically, he's best with tossed-off rhymes ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarves/Product of a bad divorce") that mirror the disc's looseness, and worst when straining for significance ("Think of the flesh that feeds the worms that feed the dust"—no thanks, I just ate). The crack-up song "Mandy Breakdown" could be standard fare for Nico's *Chelsea Girl*, but Brokaw's fire-breathing guitar break is a keeper. And that's the story: The best passages of *My Midnight* come when the band gives the songs more than they deserve. >>>Franklin Bruno



Electronic dance music, like hip-hop in its earliest days, is largely a boys club: an underground scene that's so saturated with testosterone-driven artists, that when a female DJ/performer starts making waves, it's almost certain that she's packing the juice to justify the hype. Along with jungle divas DJ Rap and DJ Dazee, the London team of **KEMISTRY & STORM** has held massive respect in the drum 'n' bass community for a number of years. Kemistry & Storm's frenzied, aggressive frequencies have put their names alongside breakbeat's most elite DJs, including Grooverider, Doc

Scott and J Majik. The ladies have paid their dues and make an overdue Stateside splash with the most recent release in Studio K7's accomplished *DJ Kicks* series, which has highlighted the talents of Kruder & Dorfmeister, Stacey Pullen and Carl Craig, to name just a few. This installment's hand-picked array of music focuses on two producers who are keeping the devious vibes of dark, steppy d 'n' b alive, including bowel-churning tracks from Dom & Roland, DJ Die, Jonny L, John B. and others. But there's no denying that Kemistry & Storm, as the ringmasters of this post-modern circus, are the disc's main attraction. Beyond the obvious technical superiority the pair demonstrates, including smooth mixing and flawless beat-matching, the set progresses with the momentum of a freight train. Each track's taut drum kicks drive into your cranium while your ears are wooed by a mix of sluggish sub-bass rumbles, haunting vocal samples and dramatic soundscapes. And while the overall offering

may not be as purposefully ambitious as others in the *DJ Kicks* series, this edition stands out based on the sheer skill with which it was assembled, and the ominous weight of the music presented... Along the same lines, fans of the darker side of drum 'n' bass will be floored by **Absolute Friction** (Quantum Loop), an offering assembled by **E-SASSIN**. This 11-track mix blindsides you like a mugger in the shadows, pounding with unrelenting fury from the first beat to the last. Brutal, demonic cuts from Panacea, 1.87., Decoder and more pave this road to hell, as the rhythms become

more disjointed, the bass more enveloping and the sound frequencies more painful with each record E-Sassin introduces. Evil to the core and not recommended for the faint of heart... UK trance is known for its serene melodies and euphoric interludes, a fitting sound for the nightclub settings where it's traditionally presented. But here in the US, the music is based around, and structured for, one-off rave events where a harder, faster, and more driving energy is needed to keep the dancefloor bustling 'til daybreak. California's

CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE is one of the US's leading trance masters, and **Temptation** (Fragrant-City Of Angels), his second CD release, is a thrilling documentation of the American take on this popular sound. Endearing melodies and cosmic sound textures take the helm, but they're buffered by an array of militant rhythms and abrasive techno tweaks. A dozen artists are included in the mix, and Lawrence features some of his own self-produced material as he makes the logical progression from DJ to producer. An entertaining, emotional set that affirms the US trance king has no plans to relinquish his throne any time soon.



NMM

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THE REICH STUFF

The Minimalism Of Steve Reich

The Verve milked surprising mileage out of a Symphonic Rolling Stones LP, and most fools will gladly confess a soft spot for Falco's "Rock Me Amadeus." But as anyone who's ever struggled through Streisand's abominable Classically Barbra album can attest, classical music and contemporary pop rarely intersect effectively.

"Because of [serialist composer and noted academic Arnold] Schönberg, there was an artificial wall built when I was a music student, separating the pop world from the classical," laments Steve Reich. When this noted American composer emerged in the early '60s, this schism still remained firmly in place.

His early tape loop-based works *Come Out* and *It's Gonna Rain* established Reich as an artist whose appeal lay beyond the blue-haired benefactors set. But the former philosophy student didn't begin to appreciate how far the reverberations were being felt until later. "Cut to London, 1974," he recalls. "My ensemble and I are giving a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. And at the end, a guy with long hair and lipstick comes up and goes, 'How do you do? I'm Brian Eno.'"

Reich has made further strides since the ambient master (and later, David Bowie) first approached him. The Orb's 1991 single "Little Fluffy Clouds" borrowed directly from Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*. Since the group hardly seemed famous, "the record company and I didn't go after them for money," he admits. "That probably won us some points in the remix world."

Certainly more than just benevolence is feted on *Reich Remixed* (Nonesuch), nine new interpretations of his work by underground luminaries including Howie B, Andrea Parker, Mantronix, Ken Ishii and Tranquility Bass. Techniques pioneered by Reich remain central to dance music and electronica: emphasis on repetitive schemes and stasis; composition based on modular "cells" and layered canons; an economy of musical materials; and phasing (a trick often used by DJs with two copies of the same record), where identical sonic materials slowly slip out of synchronization.

"*Music For 18 Musicians* is my favorite piece of music," admits Matt Black. His group Coldcut tackled the 1976 milestone for *Reich Remixed*. Recently, he introduced a friend to



STEVE REICH



COLD CUT, BLACK, LEFT

the original. "I came in the next day, and he was playing it non-stop in the CD player. I said, 'Careful, you don't want to get bored with it.' And he said, 'I'm not sure it is possible to get bored with this,' which I agree with. The contrast between that, and the ephemeral, shallow nature of much of dance music, couldn't be more extreme."

One integral aspect of Reich's appeal to subsequent generations stems from his own development. Unlike peers introduced to musical tradition in the linear fashion of historical tutelage favored in conservatories, Reich immersed himself in records of all stripes as a youngster growing up in New York and California. Thus the composer, who purportedly discovered Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*, Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* and bebop jazz all via vinyl the same week, feels his re-absorption in the pop miasma is "poetic justice."

"In terms of American composers, Reich is among the most cosmopolitan," observes Paul Miller, alias DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, who reconstructed 1978's "City Life," a collage of urban samples with correlations to the "illbient" scene. In the '70s, Reich studied both West African drumming in Ghana, and the gamelan, the Indonesian tuned percussion ensemble; compositions like 1971's *Drumming* emphasize extensive, seductive polyrhythms.

"I always find any composer that's trying to deal with that stuff refreshing and idealistic," continues Spooky. "Two pieces—*Come Out* and *It's Gonna Rain*—were always big influences, how the music goes from recognizable sentence structure to tape loop to linguistic atomization." Looping short statements lifted from African American culture, a white, Jewish man wrought powerful statements about the nation's civil

unrest. "That pointed to the fact that people could make music that transcended a specific cultural situation," adds Spooky. "That's something I always look at and try to figure out: music as a universal code."

Reich's influence extends well beyond the realms of DJ culture. Chicago musician/producer Jim O'Rourke devoured the works of different minimalist composers in his adolescence, leaving a distinct impression evident throughout his catalog, including his new *Eureka* (Drag City). "Steve Reich was my hero," he reveals. "I was so into him. Reich was an enormous influence. The ideas, as well as his harmonic taste, definitely had an impact on what I liked. I still listen to Reich all the time."

"What was important about a lot of [these] folks is that they talked about the processes behind their music in an articulate and compelling way," O'Rourke continues, citing the sleeve notes on both *Music For 18*

Musicians and Eno's Reich-indebted phasing masterpiece *Discrete Music*. To curious consumers alienated by the academic rhetoric surrounding the harsh offerings of composers like Webern, Boulez or Stockhausen, such gestures surely seemed like an olive branch.

Reich's recent works, particularly his video opera collaborations with visual artist Beryl Kot, continue to display prescience. Recently, Coldcut's Black took in a London performance of *Hindenburg*, the first segment of Reich's trilogy *Three Tales*.

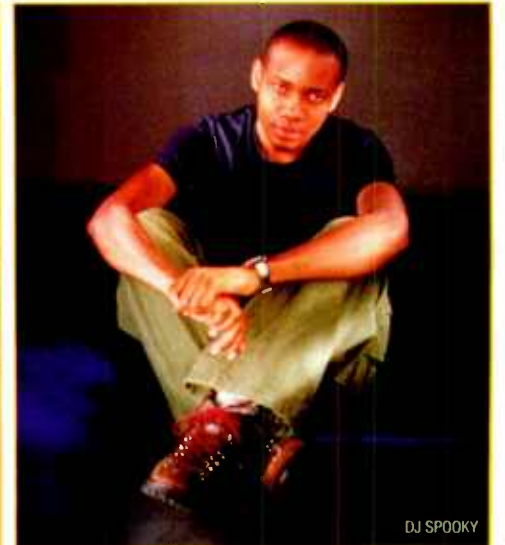
"To my delight and amazement, I found this was an audio-visual cut-up piece, so near to what we're doing," he reveals, noting similarities to Coldcut's VJamm A/V sequencing software (included on the Ninja Tune CD *Let Us Replay*). "A parallel evolution, using film loops of books being thrown onto bonfires, with sounds mixed into the ensemble, and the pictures shown on the big projection screen. He even had a drummer playing a sort of funky break beat, which the rest of the ensemble floated over, providing a hip-hop style bed to what was going on."

While Reich—the subject of a four-day concert celebration in New York this summer—readily admits he doesn't keep tabs on current music, he's glad his ideas haven't fallen on stony ground. Thanks to Reich, and contemporaries including Philip Glass, Terry Riley, John Adams and Arvo Pärt, "audiences can now go to a concert of contemporary music and enjoy it. And that is a good thing," he insists. "They may only enjoy it for a few years, but at least it's served some humane function. One wants to be a useful member of this world, or at least I do, and have some contribution of interest to people, whether that's for a week or a few hundred years."

NMM



JIM O'ROURKE



DJ SPOOKY

DEL AMITRI

It's all about being 17. That's how pop music should make you feel always, and whether it's the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Nirvana or the Spice Girls, nothing is more primal than the music you loved most when you actually were that age. For me, the only band that mattered was del Amitri.

But not *that* del Amitri. Well, not exactly. The del Amitri of the '90s is a smart, heartily soulful pop/rock outfit that falls somewhere between Crowded House and late Richard Thompson. The band's romantically cynical lyrics and impeccably constructed melodies

what the hell it means) actually began with a Lloyd Cole cassette my friend Heidi bought at London's Camden Market. The thoughtful bootlegger had included an interview with Cole taken off of a Scottish radio show, and when that segment was over the DJ went

and even classical, for the indie-pop songs that kicked into overdrive with Josef K tempos and Television dynamics. But the main thing was frontman Justin Currie. I suspect that while I remain charmed by his (and my) teenage romantic earnestness, it probably makes him cringe. Likewise his incredible wordiness.

But right from the start of "Hammering Heart"—"I suppose love lives in a dustbin behind the garden wall/You'd have to grovel on the ground/It'd be pretty disgusting to find it all"—we were wholly swept away by Justin's nonstop string of oddball imagery. And more than that, the specific emotions behind them, some of which are anything but teenage. "Deceive Yourself (In Ignorant Heaven)" is still the ultimate unrequited love song: In the last verse, both parties magically requite. "Former Owner" remains the perfect portrait of being in love with someone who's still in love with his past. "Keepers" is a half-serious, half tongue-in-cheek exploration of romance's cruel possessiveness which contains the still-immortal line "why am I picking holes in you when it's holes that we all come from."

But there's more to my del Amitri story. The handwritten letters from the band's manager Barbara, the grassroots American tour the following summer, my 10-hour train ride to Pittsburgh, the strange fact that our tiny little cluster of nationwide dels fans has produced at least three rock writers and several fairly accomplished recording artists. My only regret is that in the years between the first record and 1989's *Waking Hours* (which featured a new line-up and major stylistic changes), a pretty amazing double-album's worth of unreleased material accumulated. (Personal to Justin: If you're reading this, we're ready to fire up the CD-R drive anytime. "Tears And Trickery" deserves better!)

And, oh yes—the Record Cellar no longer exists. But for a very long time, whenever "Record Steve" brought in something to sell, the guys behind the counter would immediately slap it on the turntable. It never happened again. **NMM**



have earned them a quiet but steady career in the US, while in the UK it's been hugely popular, and therefore slagged by the British press as middlebrow musos. As it happens, I believe the del Amitri of the '90s is vastly underrated—even by me. But that's because I can't get over my feelings for the 1985 edition. The del Amitri that was on the cover of the *Melody Maker*. The del Amitri that was Glasgow's brightest post-Orange Juice, pre-Teenage Fanclub hope. The del Amitri whose 1985 self-titled album still holds up well next to similar discs from that era: *Springhill Fair* by the Go-Betweens, *Hatful Of Hollow* by the Smiths, *Rattlesnakes* by Lloyd Cole And The Commotions.

My discovery of this mystifyingly monickered Scottish combo (I still don't know

right into the hotly anticipated new del Amitri single. I might not have noticed this at all if not for the good folks at the Record Cellar, the place in Northeast Philly where I spent most of my money in those days. After one listen to "Hammering Heart," Craig, Neil and Pat went straight for the "D" rack, where, sure enough, they found an import copy of the album that had been traded in by a collector customer of theirs, a guy named "Record Steve" who bought one of almost everything.

In the year to come the Record Cellar would move almost 150 copies of *del Amitri*. Everyone flipped for Hugh Jones's shimmering production, for the dense web of chiming, ringing, piercing acoustic guitars, for the textural evocations of country, folk

metal top 25

- 1 **OVERKILL**
Necroshine CMC International
- 2 **PUYA**
Fundamental MCA
- 3 **ONE KING DOWN**
God Loves, Man Kills Equal Vision
- 4 **GRIP INC.**
Solidify Metal Blade
- 5 **SICK OF IT ALL**
Call To Arms Fat Wreck Chords
- 6 **MESHUGGAH**
Chaosphere Nuclear Blast America
- 7 **FLOTSAM AND JETSAM**
Unnatural Selection Metal Blade
- 8 **STAINED**
3 From Dysfunction (EP) Flip/Elektra-EEG
- 9 **FU MANCHU**
Eatin' Dust Man's Ruin
- 10 **SEPULTURA**
Against Roadrunner
- 11 **NOTHINGFACE**
Everyday Atrocity DCide-Mayhem
- 12 **SPINESHANK**
Strictly Diesel Roadrunner
- 13 **NEVERMORE**
Dreaming Neon Black Century Media
- 14 **SOIL**
El Chupacabra (EP) MIA
- 15 **PRO-PAIN**
Act Of God Nuclear Blast America
- 16 **ORANGE GOBLIN**
Time Travelling Blues Rise Above-TMC
- 17 **SINISTER**
Aggressive Measure Nuclear Blast America
- 18 **METALLICA**
Garage Inc. Elektra-EEG
- 19 **NEBULA**
Let It Burn Tee Pee-Relapse
- 20 **BLACK SABBATH**
Reunion Epic
- 21 **LOUDMOUTH**
Loudmouth Hollywood
- 22 **MINDSET**
A Bullet For Cinderella Noise
- 23 **SOLITUDE AETURNUS**
Adagio Olympic-Slip Disc
- 24 **GONEMAD**
Planet 9 896
- 25 **FEAR FACTORY**
Obsolete Roadrunner

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

DISSECTING TABLE

Life

Release



leading straight into a mechanized grindcore romp summoned from the eternal abattoir. The layers ultimately collapse in "No Future," a techno-noise ditty which could be Merzbow in a pachinko parlor. This coagulated glob is a lot less interesting than the carefully compartmentalized preceding tracks, as such fused abuse has already been done better by Merzbow. Dissecting Table succeeds when it acts as the next generation of the painful new wave birthed by Chrome and Big Black: a nightmare happening on a click track, goading tension into explosion as the timer trods steadily forward in carefully measured increments.

>>> Czech trio **KRABATHOR** is a super-efficient operation with a lot to be said in its favor. Following a dozen or so demos and albums, the band's *Orthodox* (Pavement) is world class death metal that manages to be oddly melodic, wonderfully crazed, rhythmically inventive, and even catchy. The twist is that with only three members, Krabathor can't afford the dense layered arrangements of Deicide or Morbid Angel. The band compensates in interesting ways, however, and sounds more live because of it. Guitarists Christopher and Bruno also alternate lead vocals, mixing up the batting order a little bit. Recommended.... **AFTERMATH**, a popular demo band from the late 1980s, apparently released an album titled *Eyes Of Tomorrow* in 1990, which immediately became as obscure and sought-after as the type of axe held by Tom Warrior on the *Hellhammer* EP. Now reissued by Greece's Black Lotus label, *Eyes Of Tomorrow* is a spirited and playful thrash metal record thoroughly saturated with progressive tendencies. Songs like "Being" are as alluring and mysterious as they are chunky and cool. Think the atmosphere of early Iron Maiden instrumentals with the propulsion of the first Exodus album. The real comparison is to latter-day Nasty Savage, the Florida thrash act that discarded a pro wrestling fascination in

If it were worth the time to compile an album of the freaky little electronic and experimental song intros composed by Celtic Frost, Morbid Angel, and Samael over the years, that product would serve as a good basis for understanding Dissecting Table. This music is part *Exorcist* soundtrack, part MIDI-based ritual music, but its ingenuity and narrative density far surpass the band's admittedly dumb name. On this release, four long tracks juxtapose noise and digital distress with utterly monotonous rhythms. Though halfway built on noise, the effort is meticulous and orchestrated, sputtering sound imagery relentlessly. It is dark culture, but the ambition and cleanliness of "The Needs Of The Body" and other tracks create suspense, rather than straight-out horror. One exception: the My Bloody Valentine-worthy sound walls of "Past"

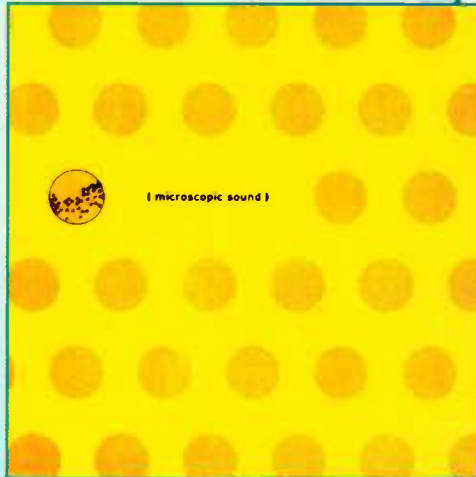
favor of classic surrealism.... Cradle Of Filth is a miserable enough reality to face. Now imagine the shame of finding oneself playing keyboards in an imitation CoF band and a third-rate copy at that. You have arrived at the unfortunate lot in life of **MYSTIC CIRCLE**, a lowly crew of Germans whose album *Drachenblut* (Pavement) includes a song with the same name as the most watery, cheap, pissy beer sold in America: "Rheingold." Not only are these unfortunates the most craven, unoriginal band in Ludwigshafen, but being from Ludwigshafen, they are further damned by the torpid melodic curse that has rendered most Germanic metal useless since the days of Lonesome Crow. Yes, underneath all the shopworn black metal trappings, Mystic Circle sounds like inspirational Euro-AOR tripe. To disguise his shame, the guy who sells them corpse paint is probably wearing a fake beard.... By the way, there is a Puerto Rican band running around called **PUYA** that, falling on the metal scale somewhere near 311 and Rage Against The Machine, is nonetheless doing some interesting things with Latin percussion and heavy guitars. Check out the over-produced *Fundamental* (MCA) for evidence, but then spend your money instead on the squelchy reissues of crazed hard rock by Japan's **HIGH RISE** on Squealer Records. Thank you.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Microscopic Sound

Caipirinha Productions

The meaning of the term "techno" has become so diluted these days that it can be taken to signify any of a myriad of styles, but it's meaning is sharpened by compilations such as *Microscopic Sound*, which will have technophobes leaping out of windows to escape its sonic clenches. Compiled by New York electronic underground mainstay Taylor Deupree, this collection is unapologetically insistent on bringing to the surface music that can only be termed ultra-minimalist computer music. You aren't going to hear this on a dance floor anytime in the near future, certainly not in any US metropolis. In the past three years, interest in the ultra-minimalist sound of the German underground has been growing. A country whose electronic music output was once largely characterized by endless repetitive and monotonous hard beats has become the site for the most challenging electronic music in Western Europe. The album opens with a track from what is certainly the most extreme minimalist label in Germany: Rastermusic. This is electronics taken to a practically inaudible level, almost at the level of a dog whistle, at a frequency beyond the capacity for human hearing. At first, the hypnotic, elliptical threads of "Noto.Crystal 2" by Carsten Nicolai sound linear and unchanging until you realize at track's end that it sounds completely different from how it began. Japanese sine-wave engineer Ryoji Ikeda's "Zero Degrees (3)" has a groove that won't go away. A group of prolific producers clustered around artists Mike Ink and Jorg Burger and their tiny record shop in Cologne are placing the city at the center of electronic strangeness par excellence. One need only listen to Thomas Brinkmann's spooky variations on "Studio 1" or Wolfgang Voigt's "Digital Rom" to realize that just as late '70s/early '80s disco producers Walter Gibbons and Arthur Russell could make a dance floor move to the simple sound of a high hat or glockenspiel, Brinkmann and Voigt can do the same with the most subtle changes in tempo and percussive play. This is a highly compelling introduction to a growing international electronic underground born out of the broken heart of a post-rave culture.



>>> In the past five years, the sound of '70s Jamaican music has made a return, haunting contemporary electronics like a specter. Two new records from disparate locations make that clear. The follow-up to the landmark *CD1* by **POLE**, a.k.a. Stefan Betke, is the *POLE2 EP* (Matador), which takes Betke's unsettling grimy aesthetic to another dimension. Reproducing the crackles and pops of early Jamaican dub—which often occurred because someone in the mastering studio would accidentally drop ash onto the dub plate, forever sealing the imperfections—Betke works with imperfect, broken instruments and eschews percussion altogether. He's sending out iridescent, melodic distress signals from the nighttime world of Berlin, and they've never sounded better. "Fahren" exemplifies that

tendency, with its strung-out, decayed intro under which he slides a thick chest-caving bass line and a reedy, shaking melody. Mark Nelson of Labradford released a highly acclaimed EP as **PAN AMERICAN** last year, and the only track we now have from him until his full-length surfaces this summer is the breathtaking "Both Ends Fixed" 12" (Fat Cat), clocking in at over 11 minutes. The continuities between Pole and Pan American are hardly coincidental. Both seem to understand that dub and its skeletal melodies are merely the stepping off point for a whole range of sonic experimentation that utilizes the instruments of sound to a surreal degree. Nelson is more prone to lonely, acoustic guitar forays, which he nonetheless soaks in an echo wash that disappears into the horizon.

dance top 25

- 1 **CASSIUS**
1999 Astralwerks
- 2 **AUTECHRE**
Peel Sessions Warp/Nothing-Interscope
- 3 **SLY AND ROBBIE**
Drum & Bass Strip To The Bone Palm Pictures-Rykodisc
- 4 **COLDCUT**
Let Us Replay Ninja Tune (Canada)
- 5 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Together As One Moonshine
- 6 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
DJ Kicks: Kemistry & Storm Studio K7
- 7 **KRUDER & DORFMEISTER**
The K&D Sessions Studio K7
- 8 **BOWLING GREEN**
One Pound Note Nothing-Interscope
- 9 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Tribes Of Da Underground INFRAcom!-Studio K7
- 10 **HATE DEPT.**
"Release It" (CD5) Restless
- 11 **PAN SONIC**
A Blast First-Mute
- 12 **FATBOY SLIM**
You've Come A Long Way, Baby Astralwerks
- 13 **JEEP BEAT COLLECTIVE**
Technics Chainsaw Massacre Bomb Hip-Hop
- 14 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Paris Is Sleeping: Respect Is Burning Astralwerks
- 15 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Digital Empire II: The Aftermath Cold Front-K-Tel
- 16 **GROOVERIDER**
Mysteries Of Funk Higher Ground/Columbia-CRG
- 17 **PAIN STATION**
Disjointed Cop International
- 18 **HIVE**
Devious Methods frrr-London
- 19 **SUICIDE COMMANDO**
Construct Deconstruct Possessive Blindfold
- 20 **FRONT 242**
Headhunter 2000 Metropolis
- 21 **PAUL OAKENFOLD**
Tranceport Kinetic-Reprise
- 22 **DJ SILVER**
Don't Panic! Liquid Sky
- 23 **ARLING & CAMERON**
All-In Emperor Norton
- 24 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
World Dance: The Drum & Bass Experience
Mutant Sound System
- 25 **MOCEAN WORKER**
Mixed Emotional Features Palm Pictures-Rykodisc

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

hip-hop top 25

- 1 ROOTS
You Got Me MCA
- 2 NAS
Nas Is Like Jivehouse/Columbia-CRC
- 3 EMINEM
My Name Is... Aftermath-Interscope
- 4 KRS-ONE
5 Boroughs Jive
- 5 DEFARI
Likwit Connection Back Label
- 6 ROOTS
Adrenaline MCA
- 7 NAUGHTY BY NATURE
Dirt All By My Lonely Arista
- 8 OUTKAST
Da Art Of Storytelling Arista
- 9 RZA
NYC Everything Gee Street-V2
- 10 PETE ROCK
The Game Loud-RCA
- 11 SAUCE MONEY
Middle Finger U MCA
- 12 PRINCE PAUL (W/BE LA SOUL)
More Than U Know Tommy Boy
- 13 TIMBALAND
Lobster & Scrimp Background-Atlantic
- 14 RAS KASS
Rassassination Priority
- 15 BAD MEETS EVIL
Muttin' To Do: Game
- 16 GHOSTFACE KILLAH
Mighty Healthy Epic
- 17 BUSTA RHYMES
What's It Gonna Be Elektra-EEG
- 18 ZION I
Inner Light Ground Control
- 19 BUCKSHOT/SFT/EVIL DEE
Onslaught Back Down-Priority
- 20 LAURYN HILL
X-Factor Jivehouse/Columbia-CRC
- 21 JUVENILE
Ha Cash Money-Universal
- 22 INSPECTAH DECK
R.E.C. Room Loud-RCA
- 23 BLACK STAR
Respiration Rawson
- 24 CHARLI BALTIMORE
Stand Up Entertainment-Epic
- 25 RAS KASS
It Is What It Is Priority

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

RUBBERROOM

Architechnology

3-2-1-Zero Hour



Of all the hip-hop scenes in this country, Chicago's stands head-and-shoulders above the rest as the most tragically ignored. The Windy City has been producing impressive talent for years, but has inexplicably kept it to itself. Hopefully, the expected success of Rubberroom's debut album will mean that more Chicago artists will catch their due in the coming years. *Architechnology* is the culmination of over a half-decade's work by this four-member crew: Meta Mo, Lumba, Isle Of Weight and Fanum, who have gone out of their way to represent their hometown by including 13 guest DJs and numerous Chi-town MCs. Things kick off hard with "Born" and "Smoke," two in-your-face head-bangers that breathe down the back of M.O.P.'s collective neck. "Lockjaw" and "Bleach" lose none of the musical or lyrical intensity of their predecessors, using more minimal beats for flow undertow. The hard-times tale "Acid" and the posse cut "Style Wars" (with DJ Rude One and MCs Juice, Pathfinda and Kenny Bogus) utilize more ominous aural backgrounds to achieve their means. And just to make sure you're paying attention the group pulls a plot twist and gets Medieval on your ass: the Nosferatuean female spoken word tale "Offering 1366" (featuring Verb) is followed by "Trial Of The Vampire," where the group puts the live-undead perp to rest (for now).

>>> The **VISIONARIES** are a six-member, LA-based, underground hip-hop group that's been around for years. *Galleries* (Up Above) is their debut full-length, and further proof of the West Coast underground's endless talent pipeline. The album's production is handled by Key-Kool and Rhettmatic (with guest shots by Evidence and DJ Babu); the former comes to the table with a unique minimal style, and the latter (a member of the World Famous Beat Junkies) with some excellent cut-and-beat centered beds. The crew's flows are somewhat uniform, and it favors straight-ahead and laid-back methods akin to those of its brethren in the NYC underground. But thematically, the Visionaries run the gamut, from religious-and-proud LMNO (on "Rejoice And Praise," "Live Life" and "Hands In The Sky") to 2Mex's anti-papal sentiments on "Pope Mobile."... From the dark heart of the planet Brooklyn comes **METABOLICS** (featuring Prince Paul protégés Mr. Dead and Big Pat), a schizophrenic duo that shows all sides of its multiple personality on *The M Virus* (WordSound). For every slick underground joint like "Last Rites" and "Lyrical Chemical" there is an offering like the amusing "Panty Party With Pimp Daddy Shrimp" and the low-budget R&Beatbox of "Do I Make You Horny." And for the deepest and most demented, turn to the eerie "Tearz Of A Clown" or "Issues" (with God Albino and Fly

Bot Van Damn). It's hard to tell which side they're most comfortable with, but as they say, it's all good... For a change of pace, check out **ROOTS MANUVA's** *Brand New Second Hand* (Big Dada-Ninja Tune). The album is an interesting mix of next-level hip-hop production with a sprinkle of reggae/dub seasoning and unique vocal finesse, with producer/rapper Rodney Smith's patter falling somewhere between Jamaican toasting legend I-Roy and Long Island rapping legend Rakim. It's offbeat at first listen, but once you wrap your ears around the space-rap sounds of "Clockwork," "Sinking Sands," "Motion 500" and "Movements," you'll find yourself nodding to the beat of a different drummer... And from the musical streets of Philly that nursed Schoolly D, Jewel T and the Roots come **SEEDS OF EVOLUTION**, who show some definite skills with their eponymous debut (Sonar Recording Co.). Mic-controlled and led by Shaun Abu Balthazar, the sonic universe explored by S.O.E. is a dark and abstract one, favoring distorted vocals, fuzzed-out samples and blunted beats over the crisp snaps of the overground. Balthazar's lyrical attack coozies up nicely to the beats around him, recalling the best of steel-voiced vocalists such as Big Daddy Kane, Chuck D and Paris on his early recordings. A great underground manifesto, and a platter well worth tracking down.

►►► The split single seems to be making a little comeback this month, with four of its traditions represented by new releases. The first and simplest kind of split 7" is one where the two



bands don't really have anything to do with each other; the example at hand is the **DONNAS'** first wholly self-written, self-produced, self-directed

song, "Get You Alone," backed by NYC tranny-punk ensemble the **TOILET BOYS'** "You Got It" (Lookout). The Donnas' side is the clear winner, an overheated, horny riff as simple as they come that takes after the Ramones' inspired dumbness without copping their stylistic moves outright. (But does anybody else think they're, uh, not nearly as young as they pretend to be?) Split type #2 is the kind where there's some kind of principle that unites the two sides: for instance, **NEKO CASE & THE SADIES** and **KELLY HOGAN & THE MELLOWCREMES'** Loretta Lynn tribute single (Bloodshot). Case takes on the delicious "Rated X" and has a blast, taking after Lynn's wail, hiccup and glide, and obviously grinning like crazy all the way through. Hogan's version of "Hanky Panky Woman" isn't quite as faithful, but its ragged rockabilly backing cuts nice and deep, and Hogan's got those high notes in the chorus to treat herself to. The third type, and one that hasn't been seen much lately, is the kind where the two bands on the split cover each other's songs. **MARINE RESEARCH** is the new band with most of the members of Heavenly, and on its debut single the group covers Built To Spill's "Sick & Wrong" (K). As uncharacteristic as it is to hear Amelia Fletcher sing "get your shit together," she makes the most of its weedy little melody, and her voice goes surprisingly well with the song's floor-rattling beat. On the other side, **BUILT TO SPILL** reaches back to Heavenly's "By The Way," and Doug Martsch's guitar doubles the drama in its heart-tugging chorus. (One caveat: The single is mastered very badly, with lots of irritating distortion.) Finally, the fourth kind of split is a very rare one (the only example I've seen before was the Wesley Willis/Frogs single a few years back), on which each band plays a song about the other. **ASHTRAY BOY'S** "Holiday" (Third Gear) mocks that twee-est of bands mercilessly ("band from Yale" rhymes with "toured the country and left a gory trail"), with a heavily whacked whammy bar making a simple



Holiday-style riff seasick and uneven. **HOLIDAY'S** "Ashtray Boy" is simpler and kinder, cast as a love song, though not quite to the band: "If we still lived in Antwerp, we could take our time/Ashtray boy, you never will be mine." ►►► The debut 12" EP by the **RAPTURE** is called *Mirror* (Gravity), and it draws pretty heavily on Velvet Underground iconography—the record's sleeve is based on a famous Velvets bootleg, there are repeated references to mirrors and "Maureen," and the best chorus on the disc goes "I'm taking notes on the underground." (That cheerfully Dostoyevskian song appears twice—the second time in a remix by San Diego electronic troublemaker Kid-606.) For the most part, though, it's where the post-hardcore underground goes new wave. Despite a couple of passages of grubby whirring of the kind we've come to expect from the label, and the kind of rhythm-section brass knuckles that never really made it to MTV, the band's got a serious Cure-circa-*Pornography* thing going on, especially in the half-sob of guitarist Luke Jenner's voice. ►►► "The Majestic" (Merge) is the first new song we've heard from **SUPERCHUNK** in a few years, and there's something about it that sounds faintly anachronistic right now: big anthemic chords, big anthemic drumming, big anthemic guitar solos, Mac McCaughan yelling as lustily

SILVER JEWS

Hot As Hell: Live 1993

Sea Note

Back in 1970, the Rolling Stones were trying to get out of a contract with Decca Records that had one single left on it. They delivered the master for "Cocksucker Blues," a Jagger/Richards original (with roots in much earlier dirty blues) that was obviously completely unreleasable, and has been available only on bootlegs. In 1972, Robert Frank made a documentary of a Stones tour with the same title; its release was blocked by a lawsuit, but the settlement was that it could only be shown in public once a year, and only with Frank present. A live show by the Pavement spin-off band Silver Jews is the same kind of once-in-a-blue-moon affair—in seven years of existence, they've played in public fewer than five times—so it's amusingly appropriate that this 7" document of their set at 1993's Drag City Invitational has the band's cover of "Cocksucker Blues" as its A-side, and that it's appeared on Drag City's barely-ever-active imprint Sea Note. As it turns out, it's a pretty indelible little song, and the band's delivery of it is even more spaced-out and dissolute than the Stones'. The B-side, "The Walnut Falcon," continues the band's lyrical brushes with *Star Wars* iconography, and its music is the sort of half-tuned groping-toward-the-light slow blues that characterized a lot of Pavement's inspired throwaways from the same period.



as ever. Give it a couple of years, though, and it'll fit right in with the rest of their singles—not better, not worse, just a band ploughing the furrow whose ground it broke long ago. The B-side, "Reg," has some nice playing, but it seems a little unconvinced, as if they're trying too hard to make a huge, bold noise.

►►► And **SPARE SNARE** has finally released another single in America, "Bruising You" (Third Gear). Leader Jan Burnett has a persistent habit of recycling songs, and in fact this one originally appeared on a British compilation a year or two ago. It makes no difference: The melody is fragile and fragrant enough that it seems like it could be easily bruised itself, but it flutters through the band's clattering, boxy rhythms and Burnett's sheets-of-hiss guitar with scarcely a nick. The other side's "What You've Done" is played by Burnett solo on his infamous two-stringed guitar, and is oddly retro-sounding for a good reason: it was written by his father.



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CAN
Can Box

Mute



later this year, but they're not actually reuniting; instead Holger Czukay, Jaki Liebezeit, Irmin Schmidt and Michael Karoli will all perform solo sets.

The group of esoteric German art-rockers known simply as **Can** was one of the most influential bands on the planet. **Can** formed in Cologne in 1968, when there wasn't any other music anywhere that was remotely like its sound: jagged, angular rhythms, trance-like repetition, mock world music influences, Dadaist lyrical fragments. It was challenging, sometimes chaotic, and always ahead of the curve. The list of bands influenced by this trail-blazing group is too long to even discuss, ranging from Sonic Youth to Stereolab, Komeda, the Orb, and the Sun City Girls. No mere retrospective (the excellent *Cannibalism* comps already tell the group's story), *Can Box* is a lavish multimedia celebration of the band's 30th anniversary. It includes a double-CD of unreleased live recordings (collected by fanatical **Can** follower Andy Hall), a thick, trilingual book of interviews, historical accounts, reviews and photos, and a full-length video featuring live footage from a 1972 concert and a documentary with unreleased archival material. Ever the iconoclasts, the band plans to tour Germany

>>> We're talking about the birth of rock 'n' roll here: For many years, **ELVIS PRESLEY**'s original Sun recordings were available as a vinyl album; it ran about 38 minutes and included such transcendental rockin' moments as "Mystery Train," "Good Rockin' Tonight," "That's All Right" and "Blue

of one Liam Hayes, a Chicago musician who's been part of the infamous wrecking crew of players who contributed to most of Drag City's mid-'90s recordings. In 1994, he and his band tramped into a Chicago studio and emerged with two songs released on a vinyl 7" that offer up a little glimpse of immortality: "Three Quarters Blind Eyes" could be a lost Badfinger gem, driven by Hayes's world-weary voice, while the B-side, "Found A Little Baby," is a wonderfully weepy orchestral gem, the kind of record you put on when you simply can't cry any more. The almost freakish cult of whispered adoration and worship that sprang up around this single in no way diminishes its beauty and simplicity, and now it's finally available on CD. Like *Peanuts* character Linus once, "Happiness is a sad song."

Moon." Now RCA has put together the definitive edition of Elvis's early days in a nifty two-CD set called *Sunrise* that includes four original demos, live recordings from 1955, and—of course—one never-before-heard song, "It Wouldn't Be The Same Without You." The set's liner notes are provided by Peter Guralnick, the author of the excellent two-volume Elvis biography. In fact, this release is almost like a companion piece to the biography's first volume, *Last Train To Memphis: The Rise Of Elvis Presley*, which traces his life up until he left for the Army in 1958. Pick up both and have yourself a little mini-Elvis festival.

>>> Sometimes music really does have the power to change lives. And once in a great while, even a tiny little 45-rpm record can wield that influence. This is the story of **PLUSH**, the band

>>> Blazing out of the barrooms and roadhouses of Texas, **STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN** really did have a magical, mystical connection to the blues. In March, Sony will reissue the first four albums from the late great Texas guitar slinger's catalog—*Texas Flood*, *Couldn't Stand The Weather*, *Soul To Soul*, and *In Step*—as expanded editions that will make blues fans salivate. The discs feature all-new liner notes, rare photos, and bonus tracks. And as if that weren't enough for Vaughan fans, a box set is also on the boards

for release later in the year; it will feature copious unreleased live material from recordings of Vaughan's often-phenomenal live sets. Long overdue, if you ask me.

>>> The three-sister act the **SHAGGS** formed in Fremont, New Hampshire, around 1967 and recorded their debut album *Philosophy Of The World* in '69. One of Frank Zappa's favorite albums, it's a ragged, delightful mash of misfit teenaged music, a form which one writer termed "aboriginal rock." It's also one of those freakish records that, although it's been in and out of print for most of the last decade, remains a touchstone record that has been vastly influential to '80s/'90s indie rock in a way not unlike the Velvet Underground is. On the one hand, it's the precursor to do-it-yourselfers from Daniel Johnston to Ween, on the other it's simply three kids making exuberant, joyful music just for the fun of it, which is wonderful on its own even without the jaded commentary. Most recently, RCA Victor reissued the album in all its glory, with new liner notes from Irwin Chusid.



>>> When one talks about Latin music, the name of **MONGO SANTAMARIA** looms large in the discussion. The conguero and bandleader led some of the most sizzling bands to ever don matching outfits, scoring a big hit in the '60s with a version of Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man." Rhino has just released *Skin On Skin: The Mongo Santamaria Anthology*, a whopping two-CD set of Mongo's most sizzling grooves. The set features 34 tracks that span from the '50s to the '90s, and includes some never-before-reissued tracks from Mongo's funky '70s recordings.

>>> In the tradition of box sets celebrating soul labels such as Stax and Motown, Malaco Records has unveiled a new six-CD box set called *The Last Soul Company*. Since it was founded in the late '60s, the Jackson, Mississippi-based Malaco label has been home to some of the most down-home and authentic blues and soul music going. In fact, long after the blues had its heyday, Malaco still recorded core blues artists like Z.Z. Hill and Johnnie Taylor, achieving a thriving business with the blues at a point when many bigger national labels felt the genre was passé. The label celebrates its 30th anniversary with this box set, which features plenty of the great down-home blues and country soul that has made Malaco famous, by artists such as Lattimore, Little Milton, Dorothy Moore, Z.Z. Hill, and Rock And Roll Hall Of Famer Bobby Blue Bland.

1	BUILT TO SPILL	Keep It Like A Secret	Warner Bros.
2	SEBADOH	The Sebadoh	Sub Pop-Sire
3	ANI DIFRANCO	Up Up Up Up Up Up	Righteous Babe
4	JASON FALKNER	Can You Still Feel?	Elektra-EEG
5	IMPERIAL TEEN	What Is Not To Love	Slash-London
6	TAKAKO MINEKAWA	Cloudy Cloud Calculator	Emperor Norton
7	APRIL MARCH	Chrominance Decoder	Ideal-Mammoth
8	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Songs For The Jet Set Vol. 2	Jetset
9	MOJAVE 3	Out Of Tune	4AD-Sire
10	POSTER CHILDREN	New World Record	spinART
11	LAGWAGON	Let's Talk About Feelings	Fat Wreck Chords
12	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Pop Romantique	Emperor Norton
13	JIMMY EAT WORLD	Clarity	Capitol
14	PASTELS	Illuminati	Up
15	SPARKLEHORSE	Good Morning Spider	Capitol
16	SAM PREKOP	Sam Prekop	Thrill Jockey
17	BOO RADLEYS	King Size	Creation-Never
18	DON CABALLERO	Singles Breaking Up Vol. 1	Touch And Go
19	KITTY CRAFT	Beats And Breaks From The Flower Patch	Kindercore
20	FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	100% Colombian	Virgin
21	LO-FIDELITY ALLSTARS	How To Operate With A Blown Mind	Skint/Columbia-CRG
22	MXPX	Let It Happen	Tooth & Nail
23	BETA BAND	The 3 E.P.'s	Astralwerks
24	PAN SONIC	A	Blast First-Mute
25	LIVING END	The Living End	Reprise
26	PINEHURST KIDS	Minnesota Hotel	4 Alarm
27	VARIOUS ARTISTS	YoYo A Go Go: Another Live Compilation	YoYo
28	CREATURES	Anima Animus	Instinct
29	GIGOLO AUNTS	Minor Chords And Minor Themes	E Pluribus Unum
30	DOVETAIL JOINT	001	Columbia-CRG
31	BOWLING GREEN	One Pound Note	Nothing-Interscope
32	ADEN	Black Cow	TeenBeat
33	PORTABLE	Portable	TVT
34	GLORIA RECORD	The Gloria Record (EP)	Crank!
35	1000 CLOWNS	Freelance Bubblehead	Elektra-EEG
36	SMOG	Knock Knock	Drag City
37	MUSLIMGAUZE	Hussein Mahmood Jeeb Tehar Gass	Soleilmoon
38	FATBOY SLIM	You've Come A Long Way, Baby	Astralwerks
39	AUTECHRE	Peel Sessions	Warp/Nothing-Interscope
40	BURNING AIRLINES	Mission: Control!	DeSoto
41	SLEATER-KINNEY	"Get Up" (CD5)	Kill Rock Stars
42	SUGAR RAY	14:59	Lava-Atlantic
43	MARVELOUS 3	Hey! Album	HiFi/Elektra-EEG
44	AERIAL M	Post Global Music	Drag City
45	CAUSEY WAY	WWCD	Put It On A Cracker
46	PUYA	Fundamental	MCA
47	JOHN MCENTIRE	Reach The Rock	Hefty
48	PEECHEES	Life	Kill Rock Stars
49	SATISFACT	The Third Meeting At The Third Counter	K
50	ROOTS	Things Fall Apart	MCA
51	BECK	Mutations	DGC
52	BIG RUDE JAKE	Big Rude Jake	Roadrunner
53	GODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR!	Slow Riot For New Zero Kanada (EP)	Kranky
54	JOHN COLTRANE	The Classic Quartet	Impulse!-GRP
55	HI FI KILLERS	Jamaica	Loosegroove
56	COLLECTIVE SOUL	Dosage	Atlantic
57	SNAKEFARM	Songs From My Funeral	Kneeling Elephant-RCA
58	LOWER EAST SIDE STITCHES	Staja98L.E.S.	Ng
59	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Bombay The Hard Way: Guns, Cars & Sitar	Motel
60	QUINTRON	These Hands Of Mine	Rhinestone-Skin Graft
61	OFFSPRING	Americana	Columbia-CRG
62	TOBIN SPROUT	Let's Welcome The Circus People	Luna
63	STEVE EARLE & THE DEL MCCOURY BAND	The Mountain	E-Squared
64	XTC	Apple Venus Vol. 1	Idea-TVT
65	CROSS MY HEART	Cross My Heart	Deep Elm
66	ARLING & CAMERON	All-In	Emperor Norton
67	CASSIUS	1999	Astralwerks
68	GROOP DOGDRILL	Half Nelson	Mantra-Beggars Banquet
69	GAZE	Shake The Pounce	K
70	SEAWEEED	Actions And Indications	Merge
71	BOREDOMS	Super Are	Birdman-Reprise
72	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Anti-Racist Action Benefit	Asian Man-Attitude
73	KING RADIO	Mr. K Is Dead, Go Home	Tar Hut
74	VARIOUS ARTISTS	In My Living Room	Kimchee
75	DIRTY POODLE	Dirty Poodle	Put It On A Cracker



#1 BUILT TO SPILL
Keep It Like A Secret

FIVE YEARS AGO

- 1. NINE INCH NAILS**
THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL (NOTHING/TVT-INTERSCOPE)
- 2. GREEN DAY**
DOOKIE (REPRISE)
- 3. TORI AMOS**
UNDER THE PINK (ATLANTIC)
- 4. JAWBOX**
FOR YOUR OWN SPECIAL SWEETHEART (ATLANTIC)
- 5. SOUNDGARDEN**
SUPERUNKNOWN (A&M)

TEN YEARS AGO

- 1. REPLACEMENTS**
DON'T TELL A SOUL (SIRE-REPRISE)
- 2. ELVIS COSTELLO**
SPIKE (WARNER BROS.)
- 3. LOU REED**
NEW YORK (SIRE-WB)
- 4. VIOLENT FEMMES**
3 (SLASH-WB)
- 5. NEW ORDER**
TECHNIQUE (QWEST-WB)

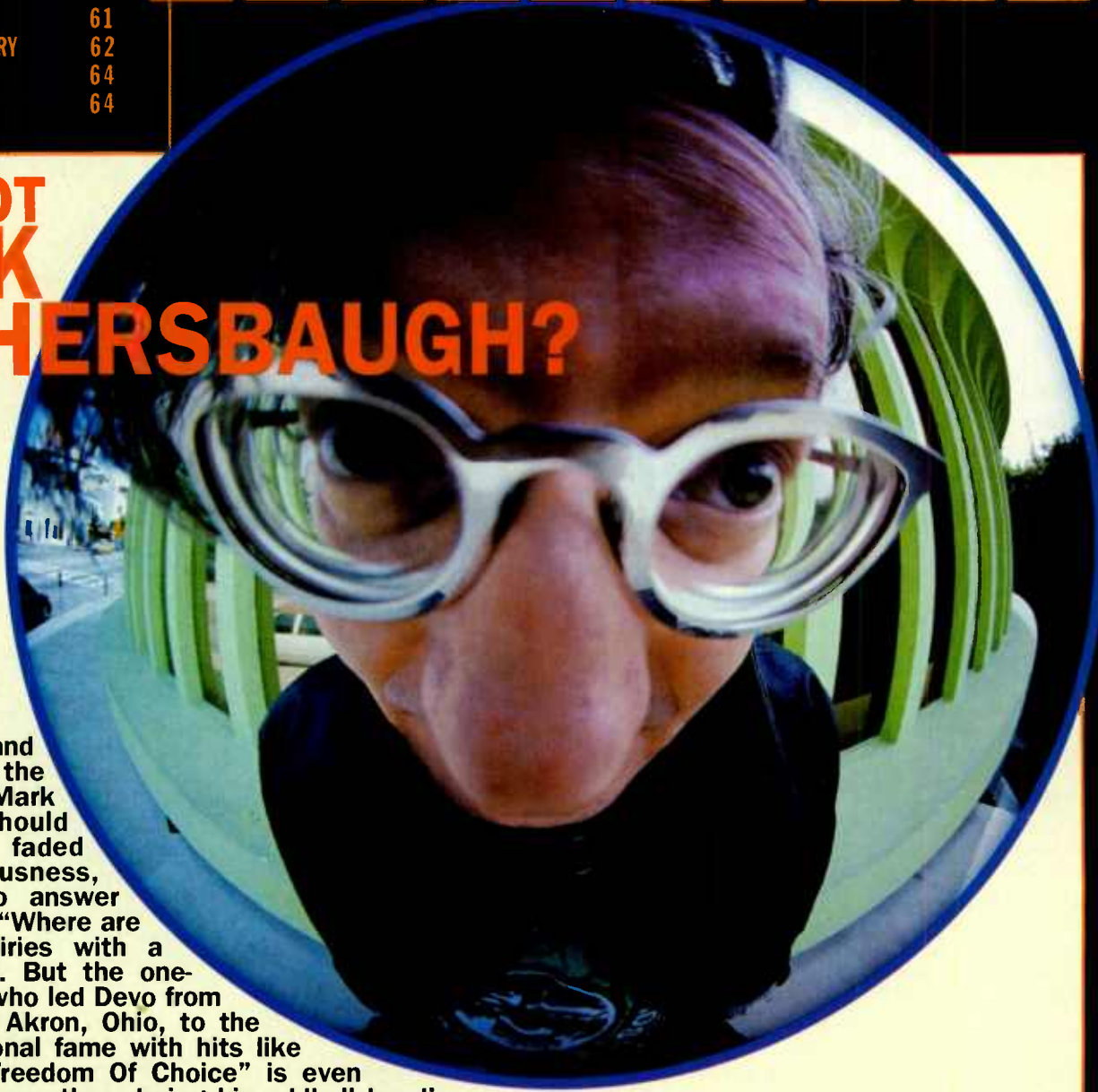
Chart data culled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Top 200 radio chart, based on combined airplay of approximately 500 college, non-commercial and commercial radio stations reporting their top 30 most played releases that week.

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GAMING	64

IS HE NOT MARK MOTHERSBAUGH?

story:
richard
martin

photos:
chapman
baehler



Like most '70s and '80s pop stars in the post-big hair era, Mark Mothersbaugh should have long ago faded from consciousness, surfacing only to answer some magazine's "Where are they now?" inquiries with a disgruntled shrug. But the one-time "Spud boy" who led Devo from the small-time in Akron, Ohio, to the peak of international fame with hits like "Whip It" and "Freedom Of Choice" is even more of a player now than during his oddball band's heyday.

The main difference is that where Devo subverted the corporate mentality by wearing futuristic uniforms and playing skewed new wave music, Mothersbaugh now scores TV shows and movies for major Hollywood studios. On the phone from his office in Los Angeles, he insists that working within the system is unavoidable. "You always are," he says. "Even the punks. That's the thing that they should have learned from the hippies. Rebellion is obsolete. You get co-opted. The more you think you're not, the easier it is to co-opt you."

But if such a thing is possible, the 48-year-old, self-proclaimed "washed-up ex-pop star" has been co-opted on his own terms. He now runs Mutato Muzika, a company that he started in his house in the West Hollywood hills, but which has since moved to a circular Sunset Strip building that he describes as a "cross between a hovering space ship and a miniature version of the LA Forum." There, he and the other four members of Devo work long hours writing, recording and producing music for children's programs like Nickelodeon's *Rugrats*, popular video games such as the *Crash Bandicoot* series, and an endless stream of commercials. Mothersbaugh himself has become an in-demand film score composer whose recent credits include *Rushmore*, *Dead Man On Campus* and *The Rugrats Movie*. He credits another left-of-center character, Pee-Wee Herman, with helping him make the transition from rock musician to his current profession when Mothersbaugh signed on to create the music for the innovative *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*.

"The truth is I didn't know what I was doing when I started making soundtracks," Mothersbaugh says. "I never was schooled in scoring. But *Pee-Wee's Playhouse* was a perfect way to break into it, because Paul Ruebens was very supportive. His only directions were, 'If it calls for a scary moment, make it really scary, and if it calls for a sad moment, go over-the-top sad, and if it's supposed to be happy or stupid, make it incredibly happy or stupid.'" The simple advice has served Mothersbaugh well over a dozen years of working on more than 30 TV show scores and nearly as many films.

In a business that doesn't afford its stars many second chances, Mothersbaugh's is a remarkable story. After spending the late '60s and

(continued on page 65)

SIX WAYS TO SUNDAY (Stratosphere Entertainment)

Harry Odum loves his mother. After all, she feeds him, tells him stories, dresses him, tucks him into bed, and bathes him. The problem is that Harry is 18 and mom's devotion borders on psycho. As a side effect of his Oedipal dilemma, this '90s Norman Bates has a lot of pent-up anger and a suave bad-boy alter-ego with a mean streak—which makes him an ideal hitman. Norman Reedus (a mix of Leonardo DiCaprio, Eddie Izzard, and Ewan McGregor) wavers brilliantly between guy afraid of his own shadow and womanizing cold-blooded killer. Two distinct filming techniques (one smooth and one haywire) help convey his split personalities. Deborah Harry delivers a dead-on portrayal of the ex-siren/overly possessive mother and Isaac Hayes aptly plays a crooked cop. Adapted from a 1962 Charles Perry pulp novel and directed by Adam Bernstein, *Six Ways* tells a simple story in the simple style of '40s or '50s crime dramas. But, at the same time, this black comedy is dripping with quirky humor, film noir vibes, and queasy subtext.

>>>Carrie Bell

THREE SEASONS (October Films)

In case you don't pay attention to these kinds of things (and why should you?), *Three Seasons* won the Grand Jury prize for drama at the most recent Sundance Film Festival. In addition, the movie nabbed the coveted Audience Award and Cinematography Award. Woo-hoo! Can it possibly live up to the hype? Indeed. The first full-length feature by 26-year-old Tony Bui, born in Vietnam but raised in California, weaves four separate stories in contemporary Saigon. The characters, including an honorable cyclo driver, a not-so-happy hooker, and a young peasant woman, are trying to survive in a country becoming consumed by Western influences. In addition, there's a former GI (Harvey Keitel, who also serves as executive producer) searching for the daughter he left behind after the war. Despite several trite plot developments, there's an abundance of admirable qualities here. Aside from seamlessly intertwining multiple story lines, Bui's strength lies in framing visually stunning scenes, such as of the young peasant woman singing while working in the majestic lotus ponds outside the city. An admirable debut for a novice filmmaker.

>>>John Elsasser

MIGHTY PEKING MAN

(Rolling Thunder Pictures)



Mighty Peking Man—a serious attempt at aping *King Kong*—is the latest Midnight Movie, uh, classic unleashed by Quentin Tarantino's Rolling Thunder Pictures. First released in Hong Kong in 1977, this gut-bustingly funny cheese-orama features a giant ape—"ten stories tall!"—livin' large and squashin' natives in the Himalayas. So greedy Hong Kong promoters send dashing, polyester-loving explorer Johnny Feng (Danny Lee from John Woo's *The Killers*) into the brush to subdue the beast and bring him to the city. Unintentional hilarity ensues. In the sticks, Danny meets the hooterish, loin-cloth-clad Samantha (Evelyne Kraft). She also happens to be pals with

Mighty Peking Man, who up-close, resembles the gorilla-suit-wearing Dan Ackroyd from *Trading Places*. Where do we begin? There's so much to delight in, from the dime store special effects, which make *Land Of The Lost* look like *Jurassic Park*, to the poorly dubbed English dialogue. As Danny's pal enthuses: "You've got it made. All you have to do is catch the monster and you'll be able to get any girl in the world." You betcha! Many choice cornball moments involve Samantha, who spends the entire movie wearing a dollar's worth of \$30-a-yard animal skin. After making whoopee with Danny, Samantha dances—captured in slo-mo, naturally—while swinging a leopard. (Sounds like another night at the Limelight!) Go and enjoy the sheer incompetence of it all.

>>>John Elsasser

COOKIE'S FORTUNE (October Films)

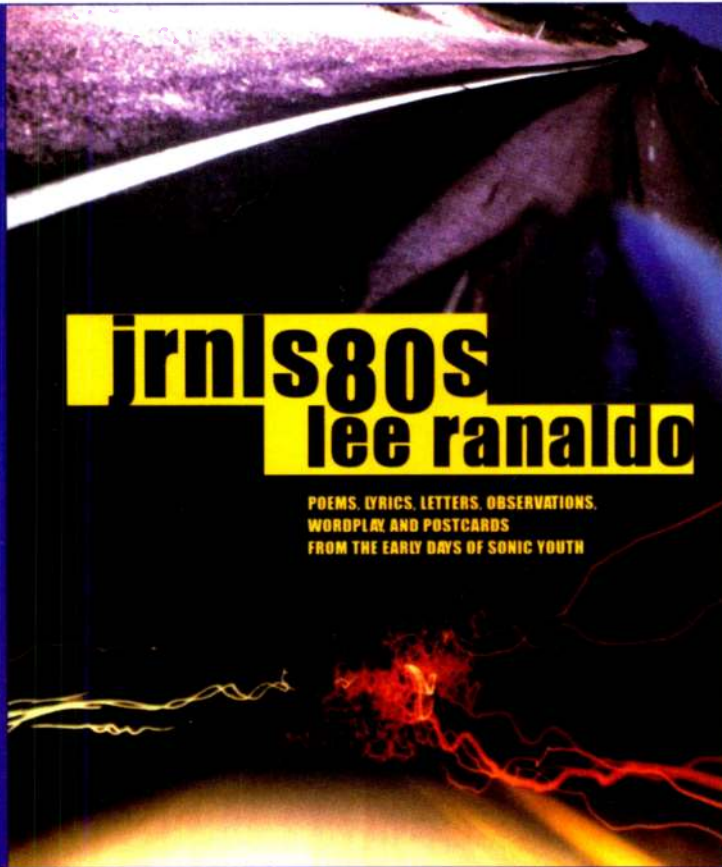
Yeah, yeah, we know that Robert Altman's recent work—*The Gingerbread Man*, *Kansas City*, *Ready To Wear*—doesn't favorably compare to his glory days of, say, *Nashville* and *M*A*S*H*. Regardless, even a routine Altman film rates better than the recent piffle doled out by Hollywood. There's a real front-porch cordiality in Altman's latest, the flawed but colorful *Cookie's Fortune*. This Southern comedy of (bad) manners, set in Holly Springs, Mississippi, uncovers the legacy of Jewel Mae "Cookie" Orcutt (the

splendid Patricia Neal), a feisty thing who shares her sprawling home with dedicated handyman Willis Richland (Charles S. Dutton). Things get interesting when Cookie turns up dead. Was it suicide? Or murder? If that's the case, will poor Willis take the rap? Meanwhile, about a gazillion name actors, including Glenn Close, Julianne Moore, Liv Tyler, Chris O'Donnell and Lyle Lovett, orbit the proceedings. Altman has always excelled at juggling plentiful characters and plot lines. Aside from Lovett, underused as the local catfish supplier, everyone helps add to the sturdy sweetness of *Cookie's Fortune*.

>>>John Elsasser

JRNLS80S

By Lee Ranaldo (Soft Skull Press)



JRNLS80s was stitched together from journal entries, postcard scribbles, and poetry written by founding Sonic Youth member/guitarist Lee Ranaldo. As rock memoirs go, there's little in the way of gossip, name-calling or even much drug abuse. But as a window into the mind of an important artist—and I know that sounds corny—it's indispensable. Who knew that he was so obsessed with earthworks pioneer Robert Smithson, that he visited Raymond Carver just weeks before his death, that "Eric's Trip" quotes from the acid sequence in Warhol's *Chelsea Girls*? His friends knew all that, and after reading this, you sort of feel like you're his friend, too. Arranged chronologically from 1980 to '89, the book opens on a confused, broke, yet committed 24-year-old former art student who has these big bouts of self-doubt. The middle of the book is a blur of landscape passing by, vans busting down, beautiful girls glimpsed for a minute or two, equipment gone missing, and shows that either sucked or opened a new hole in the sky. By book's end, the author is a parent (the letter to son Cody where he tries to explain "what it is yr dad does for his living" is priceless), has made some phenomenal noise, and is on the verge of financial stability and a different kind of life.

>>>Mike McGonigal

these fallen figures are so compelling, or what the allure of a dead young rock star could possibly be. Other than a few juicy details of particular rockers' death tableaux that might have otherwise escaped notice, there's really not all that much here. But as a walking tour of the rock 'n' roll cemetery, it's comprehensive and a fairly interesting read. >>>James Lien

EUGENIE SOKOLOV

By Serge Gainsbourg (Tam-Tam Books)

Like the songs he penned for Brigitte Bardot, Jane Birkin, and himself, this novelette by French singer/provocateur Serge Gainsbourg (who died in 1991) is infantile, shockingly frank, and extremely clever. First published in 1980 but previously unavailable in English, *Eugenie Sokolov* is the fictional autobiography of the uncontrollably flatulent title character, an artist who makes his distinctive drawings ("gasograms") by letting his hand move while passing violent wind. Hiding his condition by publicly blaming the inevitable sounds and odors on his bulldog, and artificially inducing it when it mysteriously vanishes, Sokolov climbs to the pinnacle of art-world success before his untimely end. This is not a book for the easily nauseated, but there's more substance than the one-joke premise suggests. Gainsbourg's book is a scatological allegory for the dangers facing artists, like the author himself, who turn their own internal pathologies into public spectacle.

>>>Franklin Bruno

HOW I GOT TO BE THIS HIP

By Barry Farrell (Pocket Books)

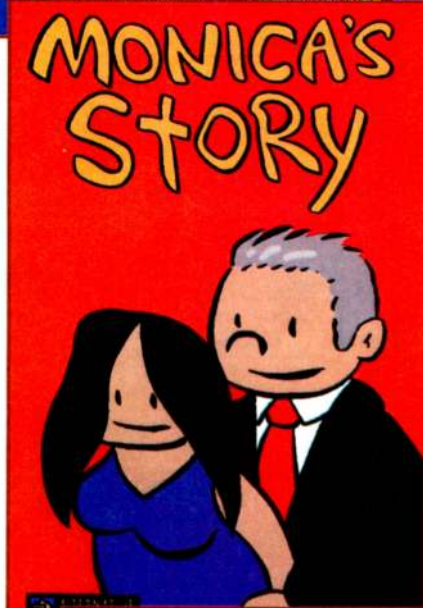
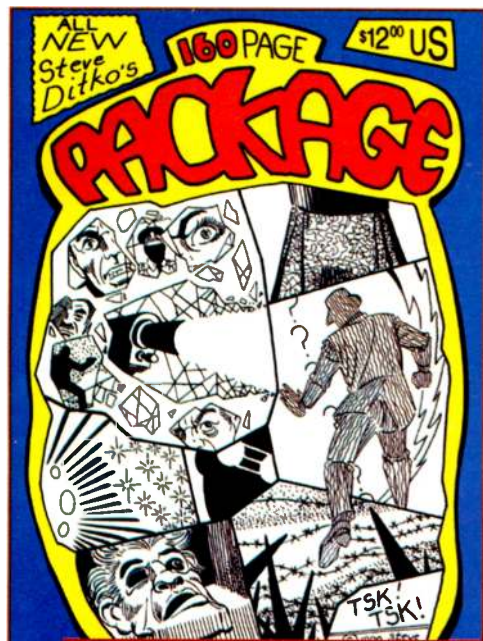
"I have a dog of dreams... I have a sailboat of sinking water..." This is a line of grade schooler's poetry that American culture-journalist Barry Farrell received one day in 1970. "I felt sabotaged by my education," wrote Farrell in an essay recounting his experiences visiting a classroom of responsible authors. "Crippled for life by all the rules and manners I'd learned." A discussion of poetry and life makes the perfect opener for *How I Got to Be This Hip*, Farrell's collected essays from publications including *Time*, *Life* and *Harper's*. Whether he wrote about kite flying, pimps or murderers, Frank Sinatra or Gordon Liddy, Farrell delivered 200-proof human essence in glorious prose. *How I Got To Be This Hip* looks unflinchingly at a generation's best and bleakest moments. Farrell died too young in 1984, and while Johnny Depp might never bring him back to life on the big screen, Farrell's own words—succulent insights and uncanny observations about big names and small moments—breathe vitality into 20-plus years of history and humanity.

BETTER TO BURN OUT: THE CULT OF DEATH IN ROCK 'N' ROLL

By Dave Thompson (Billboard Books)

You could say that rock 'n' roll is driven almost as much by death as it is by sex or rebellion. The list of rock icons who have gone to an early grave is surprisingly lengthy, and the pantheon is filled with cults of worship surrounding various deceased deities: Jim Morrison, Buddy Holly, Janis Joplin, Otis

Redding, Ian Curtis of Joy Division, and most recently, Kurt Cobain. Dave Thompson, author of *Never Fade Away*, the Kurt Cobain biography, seeks to pull together the threads by dedicating a whole book to the untimely endings—including more obscure ones like Darby Crash and Wally Whyton—that are sprinkled through rock 'n' roll history. The only trouble is, the book as a whole lacks depth, and ends up being basically a compendium of brief thumbnail sketches about famous dead people—Thompson never really explains why



WHO SAID LOVE AND POLITICS MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS?

Steve Ditko is one of the most original, brilliant artists comics have ever seen, and just about the worst writer ever to grace a comic book page. He's a master of page composition and character design—back in the early '60s, he created the look of Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, the Question, the Creeper and others. Since then, he's alternated between solid hackwork for the big comics companies and his own self-published material, which is mostly allegories to explain his philosophy—a sort of half-digested mass of Ayn Rand, libertarianism and crochety-old-guy-hood—and mostly about as subtle as a Scud. **STEVE DITKO'S 160 PAGE PACKAGE** is just what it says it is, a big paperback collection of new work, published by his longtime collaborator Robin Snyder (2284 Yew St. Road #B6, Bellingham, WA 98226-8899). If you're in the mood for giggles, you can scan it for examples of Ditko's hilariously awful dialogue ("I will read, study, this material. My mind is starved for its cognitive fuel, energy." "If she... if I... #... expect what from a spiteful broad? If... then... yah! Yah!"), or for the latest targets of his wrath (taxation for public works, bad customer service, moral relativism). Look at the pictures, on the other hand, and all of a sudden Ditko's a genius again. His line is looser and wobblier than it used to be, but nobody's his equal for capturing body language, or for making a point with images alone. A couple of stories in the *Package* are pure line drawings—no black areas, not even crosshatching—and it's amazing to see him stretching out after more than 40 years in the business. And "Lift My Veil," a horror story with no particular political point, is one of the most unnerving pieces he's ever done.

There are other kinds of politics, of course, and sometimes they intersect with romance—as in the *Starr Report*, which has, inevitably, been adapted into a comic book. Fortunately, **MONICA'S STORY** (Alternative Comics) is a lot better than it might have been. Adapted by an anonymous comics pro, and drawn by James Kochalka (in his quick-and-cute "bigfoot" style) and Tom Hart (of *The Sands*), it's out-and-out adorable, a document of the decade's most infamous couple presented as a sort of romance from Monica Lewinsky's point of view, starting with the thong incident and going up to their final meeting in the Oval Office. Let's just say Bill Clinton looks a lot more charming with two dots for eyes, a half-circle for a nose and a line for a mouth, and it's amazing how well Kochalka captures Monica with about four lines. It's all about as innocent-looking as it could get, considering the material, though a cigar is covered up in one crucial panel by the official seal of the President of the United States. And the one-shot issue is also a benefit for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

Love seems to be in the air in comics this month, actually, and while Vertigo's mini-series **HEARTTHROBS** has included some cute material, the real action is in the black-and-white underground. **TOXIC PARADISE: LOVE & ROMANCE** (Slave Labor Graphics) is an anthology with a bunch of sardonic takes on the topic. Andi Watson (of *Skeleton Key* and the *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* series) is the biggest name here, with an inventive, wordless seven-pager drawn in a retro John Kricfalusi-ish style, but lesser-known talents contribute some of the best material. Ariel Schrag's "One Night" is a slyly hysterical take on morning-after phoning-the-best-friend play-by-plays, and Jim Hill's "Warming Up Antarctica" has a very '90s ain't-it-cool look about it but a stinging poignancy in its words. Best of all is Stephanie Gladden's "True Wedding Funnies": Gladden, who's been drawing Warner Bros. kiddie comics for a while, adapts the same delightful style to her autobiographical story of how she met her husband and got engaged.

Modern underground romance comics—from the '70s' *Bizarre Sex* to the late, lamented '90s series *Real Girl*—tend to be anti-romantic, though, and this year's edition of writer Steve Darnall's annual **EMPTY LOVE STORIES** (Funny Valentine Press) twist the genre's clichés until they whimper for mercy. (Thought balloon from page one: "Oh, Ted... it seems there's always time to maim and kill poverty-stricken dissidents... Will there ever be time for... love?") Darnall made something of a mainstream splash with his *Uncle Sam* mini-series this year, but his artistic friends from the underground back him up here, notably Greg Hyland, who draws a boy-meets-girl-after-thermonuclear-apocalypse tale, Colleen Doran, who's got the wistful facial expressions of vintage romance comics down to a science, and Mitch O'Connell, who contributes an ad for "Oh, Nice Going, the home pregnancy test kit made especially for men." Bonus points to Darnall for using the phrase "Why, you silly little goose!"

NMM

>>> by douglas wolk <<<

THEY DIDN'T EVEN LET OUT A PEEP

Nothing goes better with a computer screen than a big basket of snacks, so it's only natural that a select group of geeks have come up with sites about playing with your food—though not exactly in the normal ways.

Springtime is the time when Peeps come out of hiding—the little chick-shaped marshmallow candies, made by the Just Born company and dyed all sorts of festive colors. Works of art in themselves, they've inspired some serious young people to come up with artwork involving them. **The Peep Gallery** (www.critpath.org/~tracy/gallery.html), updated annually for Peep season, has a wide variety of Peep-based sculptures and dioramas. This year's crop has started small with a Peep wedding, but 1998's is the killer, with photographs of "Identity Crisis Peep" (a fluffy yellow peep looking a little out of place next to three rubber duckies), an "Office Peep" (impaled on a paper spindle) and, of course, "Peeps Playing Poker," in the pose made famous by the dogs. There's also RealVideo of the 1996 PeepFest.

There's a dark side to Peep worship, though. The little sugarcoated cuties are so adorable and innocent that a few website makers have invented unique ways of torturing them. The science-minded folks behind **Peep Research** (www.learnlink.emory.edu/peep/index.html) decided to test Peeps for their reactions to extreme heat, extreme cold, smoking and alcohol, low-pressure environments and solvents, and they've documented them all with photographs and learned-sounding descriptions of exactly how the experiments were carried out. ("Before any testing begins, all Peep subjects are thoroughly examined and sign a disclosure form explaining the potential risks of their volunteer service," the hosts explain.) The solvent check is the most interesting: Peeps fail to dissolve in water, acetone, or sodium hydroxide, and even a subcutaneous injection of sulfuric acid doesn't do much. So they drop a Peep in the very nasty organic solvent phenol; after 65 minutes, it has dissolved altogether—except for its little black eyes. Spooky.

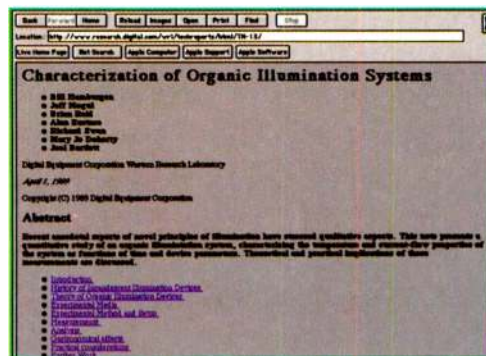
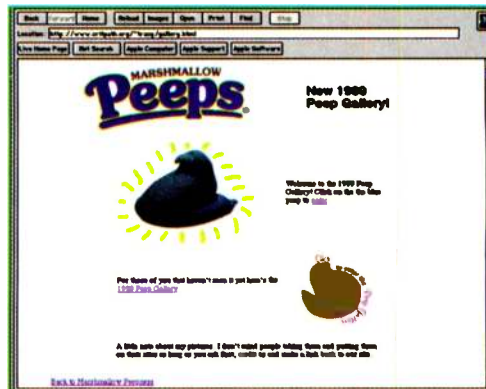
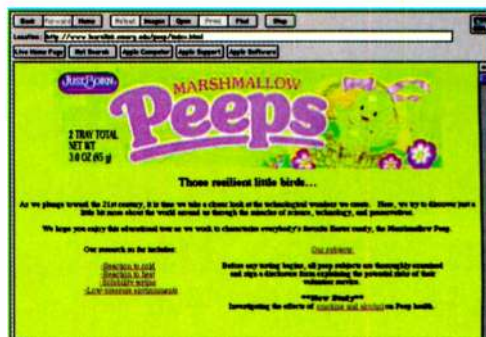
The Peep experiments were pretty clearly based on similar work done a few years earlier with Twinkies by some enterprising students, and now permanently archived at **twinkiesproject.com**. In each case, they test one Twinkie—for electrical resistivity (by running 110 volts through it), gravitational response (by dropping it off a six-story building), maximum density (by liquefying it in a blender), and the like—and compare it to a second, "control" Twinkie. After documenting the results in fairly disturbing-looking photographs, they eat the second Twinkie, so that it can't be re-used by accident. The best experiment is running a Turing test on a Twinkie—the test used to determine if a computer approximates human thought processes closely enough that an observer can't tell which is the person and which is the machine. ("After the test was over, our human subject was allowed to eat the Twinkie subject.") A second group of students decided that the electrical resistivity test of the Twinkies Project wasn't rigorous enough; at their site (tarsier.domain.net/twinkie), they demonstrate what happened when they attached electrodes to a Twinkie and sent 1,800 volts through it. It emitted a blinding white light, as it turns out.

That light, in fact, demonstrates a useful property of many foods: luminescence. In a paper entitled "**Characterization of Organic Illumination Systems**" (www.research.digital.com/wrl/techreports/html/TN-13), put together by a team at DEC's Western Research Laboratory, three types of pickles, a mandarin orange segment and a piece of bok choy are tested for their ability to give off light when they're attached to electrodes. There are extensive graphs and tables documenting their size and type of arc: the results demonstrate that the high salt content of the dill and kosher pickles helps to conduct electricity, but the mandarin orange "never really lit up." They also analyze the potential applications of the technology. ("The primary advantage of pickles as light bulbs is that they can be eaten, either before or after providing illumination. Thus they are to be preferred for long sea voyages.") Some other employees of DEC later determined (www.tiac.net/users/reilly/levd-page.html) that Korean kimchi can be used as a light-emitting diode—it conducts only in one direction, and only at voltages greater than 90 volts.

But snack food isn't just good for light—it can be used for heat, too. Working from columnist Dave Barry's assertion that strawberry Pop-Tarts left in a toaster long enough could work "like a blowtorch," a group of young scientists decided to document the effect (gearbox.maem.umr.edu/personal/cottrell/poptarts/poptarts.htm). The time-series photograph of the flaming Pop-Tart has to be seen to be believed.

And, of course, food can also be used for entertainment in a slightly more conventional way: eating it. Princeton University's band has an annual **White Castle "Meat Product Tolerance Marathon,"** whose results are preserved for history at www.princeton.edu/~puband/white-castle.html. Competitors get one point per burger, and extra "style points" for chugging the White Castle, for onion rings, for clam strips, and, in one case, for eating burgers while juggling them. The reigning champion has 31 points. Now *that's* scary.

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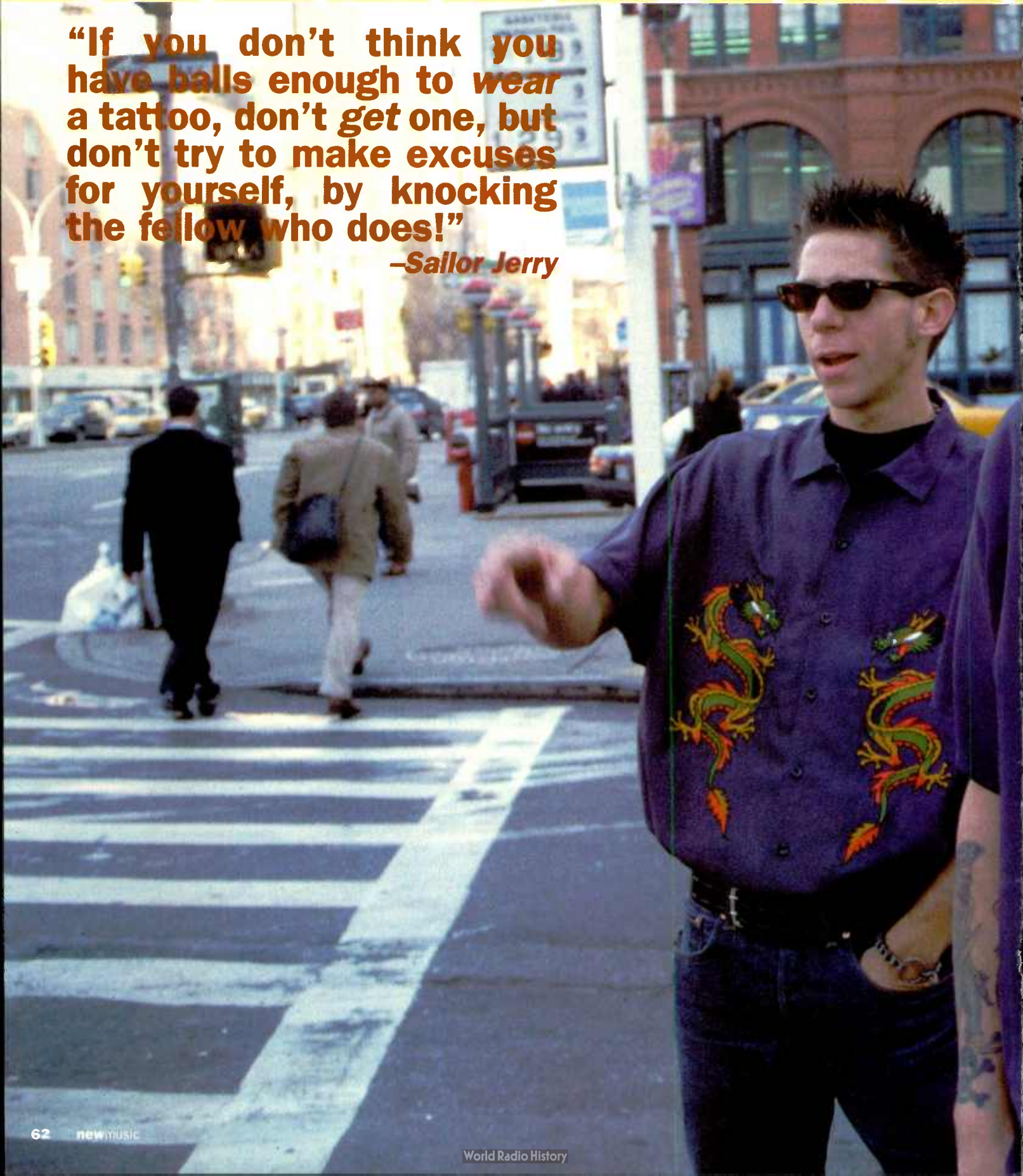


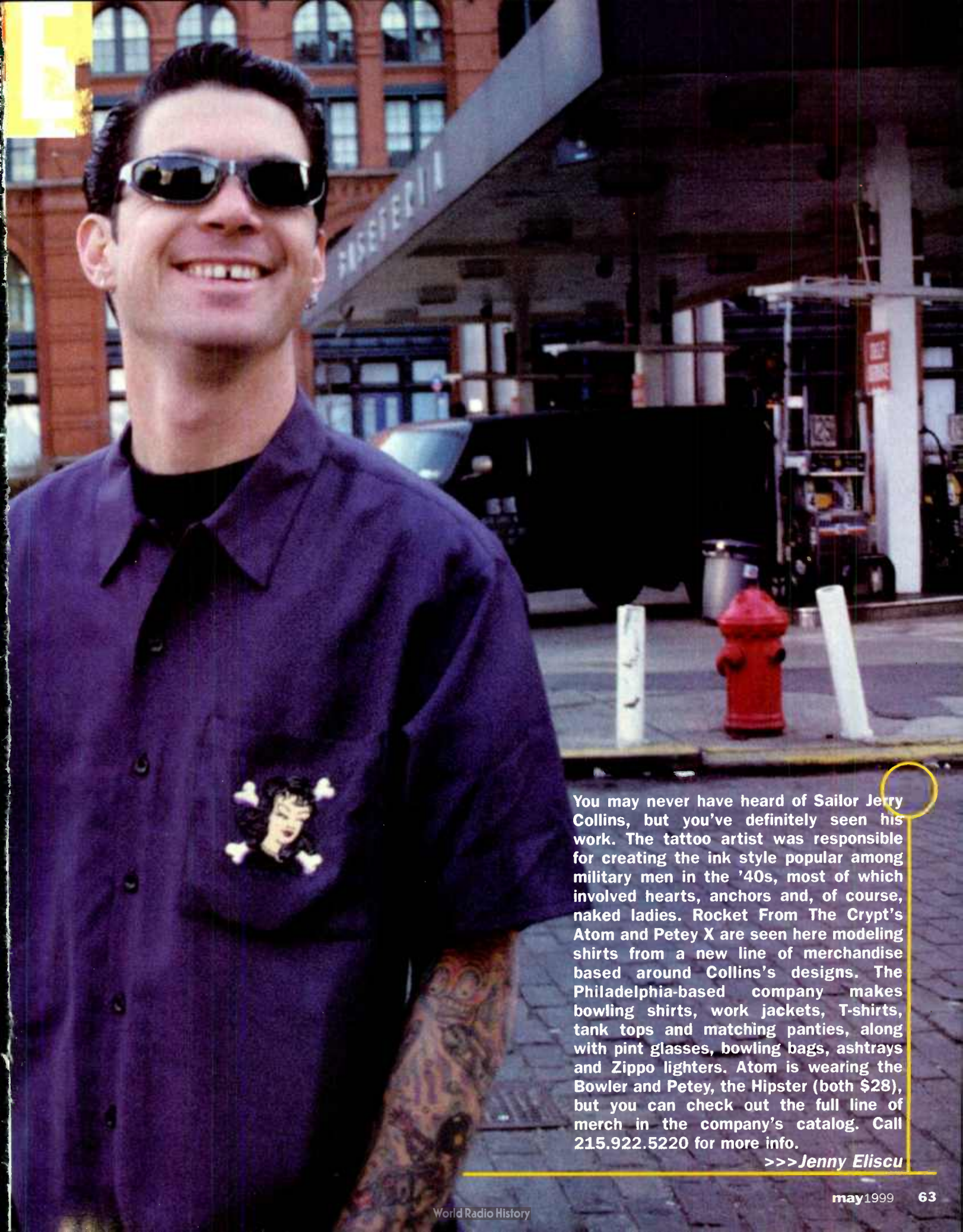
SAILOR JERRY: TATTOO YOU

PHOTO: Kim Apley MODELS: Atom & Petey X from Rocket From The Crypt

“If you don’t think you have balls enough to wear a tattoo, don’t get one, but don’t try to make excuses for yourself, by knocking the fellow who does!”

—Sailor Jerry





You may never have heard of Sailor Jerry Collins, but you've definitely seen his work. The tattoo artist was responsible for creating the ink style popular among military men in the '40s, most of which involved hearts, anchors and, of course, naked ladies. Rocket From The Crypt's Atom and Petey X are seen here modeling shirts from a new line of merchandise based around Collins's designs. The Philadelphia-based company makes bowling shirts, work jackets, T-shirts, tank tops and matching panties, along with pint glasses, bowling bags, ashtrays and Zippo lighters. Atom is wearing the Bowler and Petey, the Hipster (both \$28), but you can check out the full line of merch in the company's catalog. Call 215.922.5220 for more info.

>>> *Jenny Eliscu*



MICHAEL NESMITH

Over the past three decades, Michael Nesmith has built an impressive and rather unique career in the arts, with successes as a country rock musician and songwriter, a music video pioneer, a screenwriter and producer of films such as *Repoman* and *Tapeheads*, and a founder and CEO of communications company Pacific Arts. But for all the hats he's worn in his 56 years, he's best

known for the ridiculous green knit one that he wore for two years as Mike Nesmith the Monkee.

Time marches on, though, and now Nesmith can add "novelist" to his resume. The release of his first novel, *The Long Sandy Hair Of Neftoon Zamora*, a mythical adventure set in the Southwest and driven by the spiritual journey of its protagonist, is not far ahead of the completion of his second. Based on Nesmith's theory that the life of all Americans mirrors Elvis's—a journey from Tupelo, Mississippi (young, sexy and cool) to Las Vegas (lost, bloated shadow of former self)—*The America Gene* should be rife with the dry humor that Nesmith brought to *The Monkees*. In a recent interview, though, Nesmith also revealed his thoughtful seriousness about his first love, music.

>>>Cheryl Botchick

Q: Do you still listen to music much?

A: I listen to it all the time, but I tend to listen to my own kinds of music—things that I come upon or find. When I find music that I like I really pay a lot of attention to it. Over the last three months what I've been wrapping my head around are the 1937 Carnegie Hall concerts from Benny Goodman—sort of the beginning of the Big Band era. And really getting to understand and love Johnny Mercer, and understand why guys like Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters were who they were. In it all, it's been kind of an interesting discovery to find that the popular voices of the time sounded like instruments of the time. So that Bing Crosby sounded like a trombone, and Martha Tilton sounded like a trumpet and the Andrews Sisters—their arrangements were like those of horn sections... I also was noticing how rhythmic underpinnings mark major changes in music, which is why rap and hip-hop are probably a lot more important than people think. So right now, I'm listening to everything Gene Krupa played on the drums and thinking, "Here was the statesman of the rhythm of the time." And it didn't change until rock 'n' roll came along and Ringo Starr and that strange rhythm that he did on the drums sort of reset the whole rhythm there. And then that all stayed the same until the rap and the hip-hop came off with this new kind of strange mixture between boogie-woogie and swing and rock 'n' roll. So I'm fascinated by all that stuff, but as you can tell I don't listen to it just as background music! I get very heavily into it.

VIDEOGAMING

>>> by aaron clow <<<



THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT

(Eidos Interactive)

Remember the feeling of playing hide-and-seek as a child? Remember the sense of terror you felt as the "seeker" slowly walked past your hiding place? We're betting you didn't pop out of the shadows and crack your buddy upside the head with a blackjack, but if that sounds like fun to you, check out the medieval-flavored *Thief: The Dark Project*. *Thief* uses the familiar first-person shooter perspective, but there is one big difference. Here, storming into a room brandishing a weapon will usually get you killed by a couple guards. As a thief named Garrett, your objective is to go through each mission—usually stealing some prized item from the nobility—without being seen. The Guards are always

listening and watching. To be successful you'll have to find a dark spot, pay attention to their conversations and analyze their patrol routes. Make a sound, and a passing guard might stop to investigate. If you're hidden well enough, he might just mumble to himself and keep moving. Then you can sneak up behind him and crack him one! This is undoubtedly the most conceptually original first-person game released to date. Its scenarios, fantastic sound and eerie levels (catacombs, ancient cities and more) will keep you on the edge of your seat for many, many hours.



HALF-LIFE

(Sierra)

If you feel that story line is something that's been lacking from the latest slew of beautiful-but-vapid PC games, track down *Half-Life*. Featuring exquisite cinematics and a totally engrossing environment, as well as levels of user interactivity unseen in any video game to date, *Half-Life* goes to great lengths to make sure you feel like you're actually in the game. Your character is a government research assistant named Gordon Freeman. One day he's working in the underground, top-secret Black Mesa Research Lab when an experiment goes very, very wrong. An explosion tears through the complex, causing some kind of unexplained universal time and space rift. Next thing Gordon knows, half the lab's employees are dead and those left alive are potential meals for grotesque monsters that have emerged from god-

knows-where. Guess whose job it is to go get help? To make matters worse, the government has sent in the Marines to make sure nothing gets out of the complex alive. If this sounds like a wonderfully chilling movie plot, trust me—it plays like one as well.

(continued from page 57)

early '70s at Kent State University, where he was on campus during the notorious conflict between Vietnam War protesters and National Guard forces that left four dead, he and his brother joined with the Casale brothers and one other member to form Devo in the mid-'70s. "We were hearing music that didn't relate to us or to what was happening in the world, so we tried to make our own

the mid-'80s, Mothersbaugh immediately rebounded. He won awards for his quirky score to a Hawaiian Punch commercial, and in 1986 composed the theme to Pee-Wee's *Playhouse*. In the early '90s, a contract with the Disney Channel to produce 400 original songs and 100 scores for its *Adventures In Wonderland* series got Mutato Muzika off to a solid start, and the company's acclaimed work

two-minute segment—and I had no idea who Pat was—where this fat person was running around in terror and showing up at a Ween concert and getting de-pantsed. I thought, "This is kind of nuts."

Mothersbaugh's scoring style is well suited for the kind of frenetic scene he describes in *It's Pat*, and in the ceaselessly sarcastic and free-spirited *Rushmore*. As



music to fit that need," he recalls.

Their neighbors in Akron, content to thrust their fists in the air to the latest Foghat single, didn't take kindly to Devo's synthesized, deconstructionist take on rock. The band headed out to Los Angeles, but even those in the cultural center were flummoxed by these weirdos and their vaguely socialistic message, who used "spud" as a code name for the proletariat. Pretending to be Devo's managers, Mothersbaugh and Jerry Casale once took a demo to Frank Zappa in hopes of procuring a record contract, but rock's king of freaks immediately sent them packing. "When we played him a tape, he goes, 'You say these guys rehearse in a garage? Good. That's where they belong,'" Mothersbaugh remembers.

But two other famous musical misfits saw promise in Devo. Brian Eno and David Bowie were so impressed that they brought the quintet to a studio in Germany and recorded what would become *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo*, eventually earning the band a deal with Warner Bros. The album yielded hits like "Uncontrollable Urge" and a skittering cover of the Stones' "Satisfaction," and helped usher in new wave; the band's self-produced videos meanwhile became some of the first to appear regularly on MTV. Two more successful albums followed, including the 1980 smash *Freedom Of Choice* and its classic song "Whip It," but the band then began a long, steady decline.

When Devo bottomed out and broke up in

on Nickelodeon's popular *Rugrats* attracted a flood of interest. In the years since, Mothersbaugh has scored hit films like *Happy Gilmore* and *The Birdcage*, and indie favorites like Wes Anderson's feature debut *Bottle Rocket* and his recent follow-up *Rushmore*.

"He's one of the more hands-on directors I've worked with," Mothersbaugh says of Anderson. "He really likes to be in the room and run you over budget. Like after you record something and everybody goes, 'Great!' he'll go, 'What would that sound like with an acoustic guitar instead of an electric?' And it would mean one more take. But I like his musical taste and we complement each other."

Not all of his relationships have come so naturally. Mothersbaugh's credits list several stints writing music for movies starring *Saturday Night Live* cast members, but he insists that he never watches the TV show. He sounds particularly apologetic about the Julia Sweeney vehicle for her annoying androgynous character, *It's Pat*.

"That I got talked into because the director, Adam Bernstein, was such a nice guy," recalls Mothersbaugh. "And because I thought it was an art film. Ween was in the movie, and I'm a big fan of Ween. I saw this

you'd expect from one of the masterminds behind Devo's aggressively up-tempo songs, his movie music tends toward the playful, with guitar riffs and synthesizer runs that flit about like bees drunk on honey. But he's been known to add jazz sections or mariachi moments and, occasionally, intense orchestral swings; Mothersbaugh sounds humbled as he recounts his experiences scoring *The Rugrats Movie*, of all things. "It afforded me the chance to work with a 100-piece orchestra," he says. "Who would have guessed?"

Then again, he sounds humbled—and a little thrilled—by his work in general. Scoring a film or TV show may not be as glamorous as the rock star lifestyle, but Mothersbaugh has already been there. Now, he's content to drive the two miles down from the hills to Mutato Muzika and work every day with his longtime friends as one of Hollywood's most respected musical teams.

"We did seven tours with Devo," he says. "We've been everywhere. That turned into Spinal Tap after a while. I'm in a place now where I can take a breather because I've got the company up and running, and the building's taken care of. We're in a pretty nice place."

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MEG HENTGES



SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION



PETE KREBS

16 SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION's second record, *Gabriel's Waltz* (X-Ray), from which "Bruise" is culled, finds the Austin, Texas, band trying to do things a little bit differently than on its debut. Frontman Reese Beeman says that this time around, the group's sound was "a little shorter, more direct, more pop oriented. It still has all the freaky stuff in it, the psychedelic, we are just trying to be a bit more friendly." Agreed guitarist Julian Capps, "We're really down on moshers right now. Like Gwar fans." (See Reviews p. 44)

17 Seeing the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* changed ROBERT POLLARD's life. "I was maybe six or seven and saw that and freaked out that there were bands like that," he recalls. "I started practicing in the mirror to be like a Beatle, and I got some ambition that maybe someday I'll do it. [That's] the thing that inspired me and made me start writing songs. I started writing my own 'Beatles songs' because I couldn't get enough of the Beatles. Plus, the thought of four long-haired guys being chased by girls was pretty appealing to me." "Submarine Teams" is from *Kid Marine* (Fading Captain Series), Pollard's third solo effort apart from his regular band, Guided By Voices. (See review, p. 44.)

18 Before the release of his first solo record, back when he was still a member of Guided By Voices, TOBIN SPROUT had few opportunities to get his song ideas on tape. At the time, he said, "With GBV, Bob [Pollard] is in charge of the songs, the album covers, everything." It was a stark change for Sprout, who had had creative control over his previous band, Fig. 4. These days, he's no longer a member of GBV, and has regained his creative freedom. On his second solo album, *Let's Welcome The Circus People* (Recordhead-Wigwam), from which "And So On," is taken, Sprout plays all of the instruments, aside from some drum parts. (See review, p. 45)

19 CHAMBER STRINGS is the latest project of singer/songwriter Kevin Junior, who previously played in the Mystery Girls and the Rosehips. After the 'Hips split up, Junior relocated to the UK, where he embarked on a three-year-long collaboration with the late Epic Soundtracks. That partnership provided the impetus for Junior's new project, which features another former Soundtracks collaborator, Anthony Illarde. "Telegram" is taken from the Chamber Strings' debut album, *Gospel Morning* (Bobsled); look for the band to tour the States this summer. (See review, p. 39.)

20 "If you look at people who have become successful from Portland, [Oregon,] they're not your average rock 'n' roll stars," PETE KREBS recently told Seattle paper *The Rocket*, referring to artists from his hometown, including Dandy Warhols, Elliott Smith, Sleater-Kinney and Quasi. "Portland has always been the kind of place that gives you the time and space to nurture your weirdness, and I guess it's true, we do seem to make our decisions at a slower pace. I mean, you can still ride your bike around town, for Chrissakes." "Sweet Ona Rose" is the title track to Krebs's third long-player (*Cavity Search*), which is his first with his new backing band, the Gossamer Wings. (See review, p. 42.)

cmj new music

1 "I listened to the radio when I was little: whatever was on the radio at that time," says BEN FOLDS FIVE frontman, Ben Folds. "Elton John was on the radio all the time, but there was a lot of Neil Sedaka for that matter. I had a couple of Neil Sedaka records from when I was a little kid because he published his first songs when he was 13 years old. I saw an HBO special on him when I was 13 and thought I'm 13 and I don't have a published song." "Army" is from BFF's third long-player, *The Unauthorized Biography Of Reinhold Messner* (\$50 Music). (See cover story, p. 32.)



BEN FOLDS FIVE

2 "When I left LA, there was this cynicism and sarcasm that you just couldn't escape," says RENTALS mainman Matt Sharp about his temporary relocation to Barcelona, Spain. "It was like people were having a difficult time having fun. They would dance only to say 'look how stupid I look.' Nobody could laugh for fear people would think they were really enjoying themselves. I just want to be able to say I'm fucking happy and I don't care what you say. A lot of this album was written during the most celebratory time in my life." The former Weezer member is referring to the Rentals' second album, *Seven More Minutes* (Maverick), which features the track "Getting By." (See Quick Fix, p. 11.)



RENTALS

3 I have no interest in any other kind of music [than pop]," says FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE's Chris Collingwood. "I know that's a really anti-intellectual thing to say, but I can't stand, like, jazz music. I can't stand anything that isn't melodic, instantly hummable and memorable. Everything should be a pop song," he proclaims. Collingwood and bandmate Adam Schlesinger (who also plays in the trio *hy*) have just released their second long-player, *Utopia Parkway* (Atlantic), from which "Denise" is taken. (See feature, p. 28.)

4 Sibling rivalry is a foreign concept to the brother/sister team—the pseudonymously named Burgerpimp and Lady Silver—that comprises the core of Toronto four-piece LEN. Burgerpimp, who used to run a skate magazine called *Vice*, also has his own hip-hop label called Four Ways To Rock. "Steal My Sunshine" is the first single from the band's debut album, *You Can't Stop The Bum Rush* (WORK), and also appears on the soundtrack to *Swingers* director Doug Liman's new movie, *Go*.



FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE

5 "Ask any of our old drummers, they'll tell you what a complete cocksucker I was, and have the ability to be," says LILYS mastermind Kurt Heasley. "I give people choices: If they want to go on the shit slide to hell with me, fine—flush. But some people don't have the ability to come back up. Because a fuck-you attitude gets you nothing but a fuck-you attitude. It's what got me into the one-man band thing. No one liked me." "Dimes Make Dollars" is from the Lilys' latest offering, *The 3-Way* (Sire). (See Best New Music, p. 19.)

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TOM WAITS



EUPHONE



JIMI TENOR

11 Until recently, EUPHONE was just Ryan Rapsys's solo project. The Chicago musician started the percussion-based outfit in '94, and over the next few years, he began playing live shows (with just a drum kit, sequencer and keyboard) and released his debut album. Today, Euphone is a duo, comprised of Rapsys and new initiate Nick Macri, who also plays with Rapsys in Heroic Doses. The band will tour during the spring with *Lets To Brazil* and the summer with Joan Of Arc. "Fallout" is from the duo's new album, *The Calendar Of Unlucky Days* (Jade Tree). [See review, p. 39.]

12 "We don't want to be the band up the block. We want to be better than the band up the block," says BEULAH's Miles Kurosky. Kurosky met principal bandmate Bill Swan when the two were working in the mailroom at San Francisco's Transamerica Building, where they bonded over their shared love for the Beatles. The two parted ways when Kurosky left the job, but began their musical collaboration a year later, after Kurosky called his former co-worker in hopes of borrowing a four-track. "If We Can Lead A Man On The Moon, Surely I Can Win Your Heart" appears on Beulah's second full-length, *When Your Heartstrings Break* (Sugar Free). [See review, p. 20.]

13 MEG HENTGES has been kicking around her song "This Kind Of Love" for nearly four years. She first recorded it in '92 after the break-up of her former band, Two Nice Girls, and it appeared on her first EP, *Tattoo Urge*. Hentges says the song was "written as a tribute to Lou Reed, the Rolling Stones, Tom Robinson, and other musicians who made me believe that there was another world outside my high school where I would fit in." The song was re-recorded for Hentges's second full-length, *Brompton's Cocktail*, and is that album's first single. [See review, p. 41.]

14 "I think that within a one-block radius of our rehearsal space, every single ethnic group is represented," said Chris Scianni, lead vocalist for DANGERMAN, referring to the band's lower Manhattan spot. "We were exposed to a ton of different kinds of music, especial Latin music. [We bought] a three dollar tape of Willie Colon. We listened to it over and over and eight hours later we'd written and recorded the demo of 'Let's Make A Deal.'" That track eventually wound up on the group's eponymous debut album (550 Music).

15 Composer Jonathan Elias drew his inspiration for the all-star collaboration PRAYER CYCLE (Sony Classical), featuring artists such as Perry Farrell, Alanis Morissette and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, from his wife's pregnancy. "With all this wonderful advancement for mankind," he said in a recent interview, "it is painful to also acknowledge the other defining characteristic of this century... Is man's inhumanity to man as common to our nature as other forms of survival? With these thoughts and concerns, I began to write [the album]. "Compassion," featuring Khan and a Latin chorus, is heard here.



GRAND MAL



VINICIUS CANTUÁRIA



BOOM BOOM SATELLITES

6 "I was seeking to make blunter, more brutal music," says GRAND MAL frontman Bill Whitten, explaining his musical intentions after the dissolution of his former group, St. Johnny. "Something like 'Walking With A Mountain' by Mott The Hoople or 'Pirate Love' by Johnny Thunders And The Heartbreakers. I've always been obsessed with all things New York, especially the music of the '70s. I think that's fairly obvious." "Whole Lot's Rocking" is from the NYC band's debut album, *Maledictions* (Slash-London). [See Best New Music, p. 18, Apr. issue.]

7 Post-bossa nova Brazilian musician VINICIUS CANTUÁRIA just released *Tucumã* (Verve), from which "Aracaju" is taken, and he had some help: Bill Frisell, Sean Lennon and Arto Lindsay, among others, make guest appearances. Cantuária says it affected the music. "Tucumã is totally fresh and totally different in its approach to melody, rhythm and orchestration," he explains. "When I invite people like Bill Frisell and Sean Lennon to play with me, it moves the music in different directions." [See Best New Music, p. 20.]

8 BOOM BOOM SATELLITES is a Japanese duo: Michiyuki Kawashima (singer, guitarist and lyricist) and Masayuki Nakano (who writes all the music). Together they create a maelstrom of electronic breaks and beats, but don't confuse them with Fatboy Slim: "Big Beat? Yeah, Big Beat, but we don't like labeling of our music," said Kawashima in a recent interview. "We want to be dead smack in the middle of rock and techno music. We enjoy the rebirth of music when rock and techno elements combine." "Push Elect" is from their debut, *Out Loud* (Epic). [See On The Verge, p. 16.]

9 Stop reading, Nancy Reagan: "Total Devastation" is about sniffing glue. "I actually didn't sniff glue when I was a kid," explains JIMI TENOR, Finland's electronic loungecore king, "but this friend of mine, Mikov from Panasonic [now Pan Sonic], did. And he was always telling me about this sort of glue buzz he used to experience. This sort of three-dimensional spiral of sound that he used to get before blacking out. I always thought that was kind of cool." The track is from *Organism* (Warp-Sire), Tenor's first domestic long-player. [See On the Verge, p. 16.]

10 When asked about the startling sound at the beginning of "Big In Japan," the opening track on *Mule Variations* (Epitaph), TOM WAITS had this to say: "I was in Mexico in a hotel, and I only had this little tape recorder. I turned it on and I started screaming and banging on this chest of drawers really hard till it was kindling, trying to make a full sound like a band. And I saved it. That was years ago. I had it on cassette and I used to listen to it and laugh." [See Best New Music, p. 19.]

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 —Former New Kid makes solo debut
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UGLY DUCKLING Fresh Mode (EP) 1500-A&M
 —Precedes the forthcoming debut LP from Long Beach, California, hip-hop group
VARIOUS ARTISTS Fish-Tree-Water Blues Bullseye Blues
 —Benefit album for the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund featuring performances by John Lee Hooker, Ani DiFranco, Keb' Mo' and others
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APRIL 9

JAD FAIR AND JASON WILLET Enjoyable Songs Alternative Tentacles
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MAY 4

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(continued from page 74)



HIGHLAND GROUNDS



LIZ'S ANTIQUE HARDWARE



HOLLYWOOD HILLS COFFEE SHOP

(8909 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, 310-652-3100). "I used to go to Duke's every day for breakfast, but it was so far from where I lived, I said, 'Why don't I just move into the hotel?'" (Duke's was in the now-demolished Tropicana Hotel.) So he did. "It was home to a lot of retired people and weirdos. I think it was the oldest motor inn in the United States," Weiss recalls. "Sam Sheppard lived there, and so would William Burroughs when he was in town, as did Blondie, the Ramones and the Dead Boys, then (Tom) Waits moved in about six months after I did. It was like a DMZ zone." Duke's is now next to the Whisky on the Sunset Strip.

A resident of the Hollywood Hills area for a dozen years, Weiss indulges in one atypical Angelino move: He walks in his 'hood. "I'm more interested in the buildings and animals than the people. I like animals better than people, though that changes from time to time," Weiss admits. "I own cats and turtles. I have three cats, Milo, Methos and Sweetie, and I go to two vets, Dr. Roger Valentine and Dr. Pleckner; they're both allergists. Sweetie has hormone shots every week or two and she's also deaf as a post. Valentine actually comes to your house, he makes house calls." (To have Dr. Valentine visit your feline friend, call the good doctor at 310-450-2287.)

On walks in his neighborhood, Weiss has a favorite house. At the corner of Vine St. and Ivarene in the Hollywood Hills sits a decrepit, if super-cool old abode. "It looks like one of those houses you would order from a Sears catalog, from the '20s or '30s," he enthuses. "I talked to the owner, and she told me that house was moved sometime in the '40s. She works in the yard every day, and she looks like she's 80 or 90. I bet there's a player piano and old wind-up Victrola in there!"

A few minutes Southwest of Weiss's neighborhood lies the Sunset Strip, where, for more than a decade, Chuck E. Weiss and his band the Goddamned Liars were the house band at the Central, which became Johnny Depp's infamous **Viper Room** a few years ago (8852 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, 310-358-1880). Everyone from Pearl Jam to Michael Hutchence to, of course, Mr. Weiss has graced the small stage.

Though you won't find one in the Viper Room's latrine, Weiss confesses that "nothing makes me happier than a Deco toilet." And he cops to a slightly odd fixation: "One of the obsessions that I used to have, which I no longer have, but I could easily get it back, is an obsession with Bakelite knobs for cabinets or doors. And extension cords... and Deco underwear," he adds with a grin. His obsession can be quelled by a visit to **Liz's Antique Hardware** (453 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, 323-939-4403). "This place has it all, sometimes in the original package, other times they're used. I try to keep my place original," explains Weiss of his home. "I also like some of the stainless steel doorknobs."

Knobs and otherwise, collecting used to be Weiss's middle name... then he changed it to E. "I've been collecting since I was a kid," says the singer, who has many of his albums stored at his parents house. "Of course, many of the early singles were Bakelite," he explains. Of course. At **Aron's** (1150 N. Highland Ave., Los Angeles, 323-469-4700), one of his favorite LA independent record stores, Weiss notes that "you get a lot of personal service there... but it's always crowded!" For the record, Weiss flips through LPs two at a time when he's browsing the bins.

Thirsty after satiating your vinyl fetish? Head a few blocks South from Aron's to **Highland Grounds** (724 Highland Ave., Los Angeles, 323-466-1507), a coffeehouse as opposed to a coffee shop. Weiss calls it "a great place to hang. They have great coffee and great food, and I used to play there... I still do occasionally. I just like it, man. There's only two coffee houses in LA that actually have coffee. All the other places have espresso, and when you order coffee, they just water the espresso down!" Plus, there's an outdoor patio for smoking. Two thumbs up from Mr. Weiss!

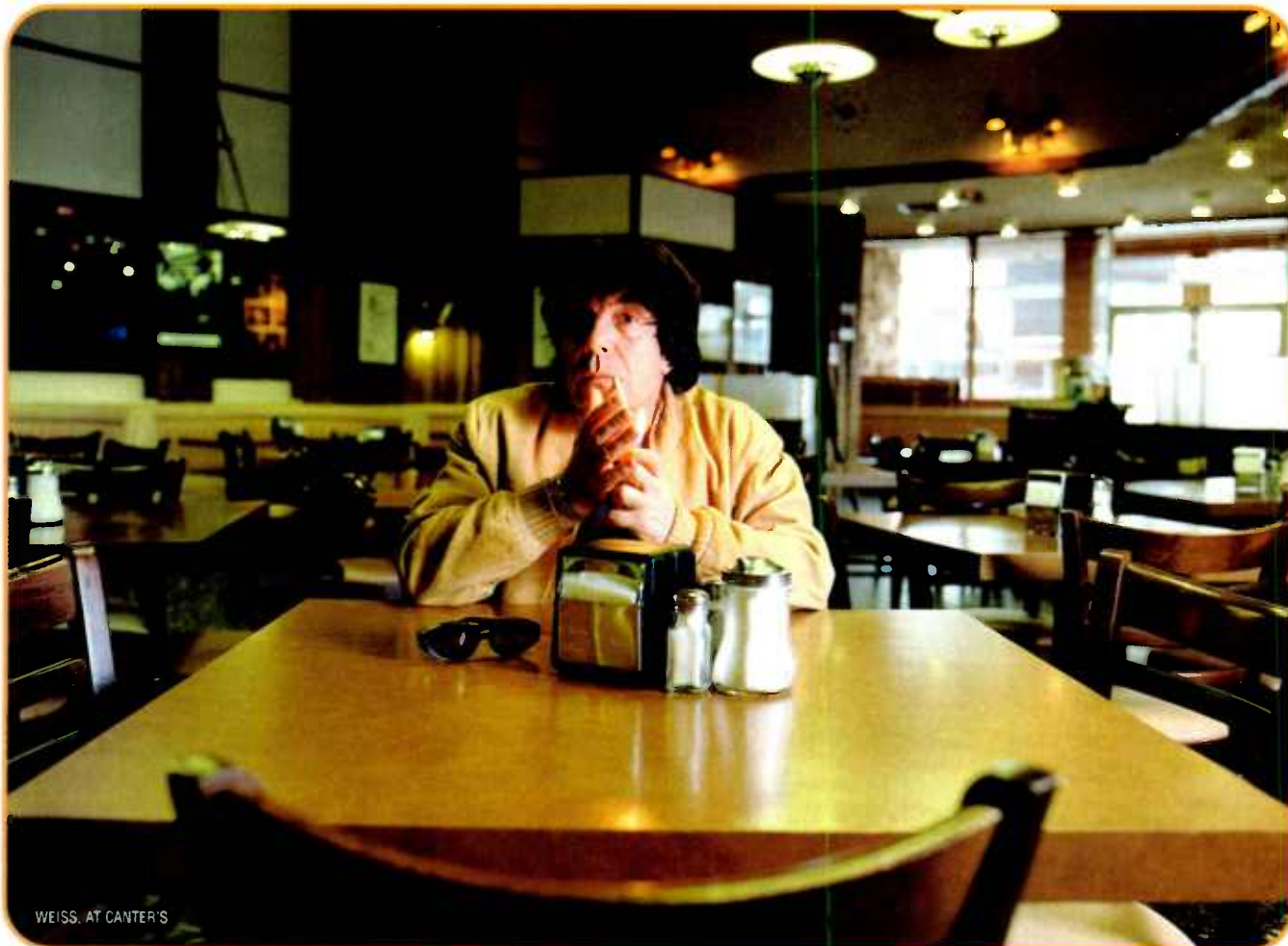
Hard to believe, but the "extremely cool" city of Los Angeles does have its share of detractors. When Weiss is asked why he lives in LA, surrounded by crime, smog and traffic, he replies, "that's why I live here!" So would he take the City of Angels over the Big Apple, with its liberal smoking laws and streets made for walking? Weiss grins, lighting another cigarette. "Any time."

Katherine Turman is a Los Angeles native who drinks Jack Daniels and lives with her cat, Snugs, in the Hollywood Hills.

NMM

Chuck E. Weiss's LOS ANGELES

story: KATHERINE TURMAN photos: CHAPMAN BAEHLER



WEISS, AT CANTER'S

He was born in Colorado, has a New York coffee-and-cigarettes vibe, has been a proud Los Angeles resident for the last 20-some years and plays the blues like a Mississippi sharecropper.

His name: Chuck E. Weiss—yes, the man about whom Rickie Lee Jones wrote “Chuck E.’s In Love.” His new record: the amazing *Extremely Cool* (Rykodisc), which was produced by Tom Waits, features a plethora of LA talent, and even includes songs about Los Angeles people (“Jimmy Would”) and places (“Rocking In The Kibbitz Room”).

Like his music, Weiss is a wonderful enigma, as shown by his choice of favorite spots to hang and eat in the City of Angels. Interested and interesting, Weiss generally spends some time each day at one of the city’s numerous cool coffee shops; the black-haired musician’s a frequent denizen of many a vinyl booth. “I have to have coffee every day,” Weiss confesses. “But I have to have coffee to get coffee, so I start at home.”

He recalls the great coffee shops of yore, including Dolores’, Tiny Naylor’s, Ben Franks, Ships and the late, legendary Schwab’s. “I used to go there all the time. That closed in the mid-’80s. It became a vintage shop,” Weiss sighs. Now it’s a Virgin Megastore.

Ensnared at the **Hollywood Hills Coffee Shop** (6145 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, 323-939-4403) in the Best Western Hotel, Weiss notes, “This has been here for at least 50, maybe up to 70 years, though the owners have changed. The current owners are Susan and Michael Moore. It’s become trendier in the last four

years, as has the neighborhood. Before the new owners, to be safe, you could only order coffee. Everything else was a risk. Although they shot a lot of the movie *Swingers* here, the increase in trendiness came before that. There’s celebrities in here every day, but I’m not impressed by celebrities.”

Weiss is such a regular at one eatery that the infamous artist was presented with a plaque, installed at “his” booth at **Canter’s** famous deli (419 N. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles, 323-651-2030), located in the city’s colorful Jewish district. Late ‘80s-early ‘90s, you’d check the booth at 5 a.m. on a Monday and Weiss was usually there, holding court, eating kishka or kreplach and winding down from a Sunday night gig. “When *Rolling Stone* started doing stories about the scene at Canter’s, which had been going on for 50 years, it became really jammed for a while,” Weiss recalls. In addition to the deli, open 24 hours, the music scene was (and is) at the attached Kibbitz Room/bar, which inspired Weiss’s “Rocking In The Kibbitz Room.”

“This is where Lenny Bruce and those guys hung out,” informs Weiss. “Before that it was Jack Benny, all the comedians. And all the strippers, hookers, bands and the people who worked in the clubs came to Canter’s. And in the ‘40s, it used to be a movie theater.” However, warns Weiss, “you can’t smoke there anymore, so I’ve been forced into having favorite places that still allow smoking.” (For the record, the city of Los Angeles now bans smoking in all bars and restaurants, but not all venues enforce it.)

More good ‘n’ historic eats can be found at **Duke’s**

(continued on page 73)

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