

# CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

Curve

Mono

Air

Sixteen

Horsepower

# BEN FOLDS FIVE

could care less

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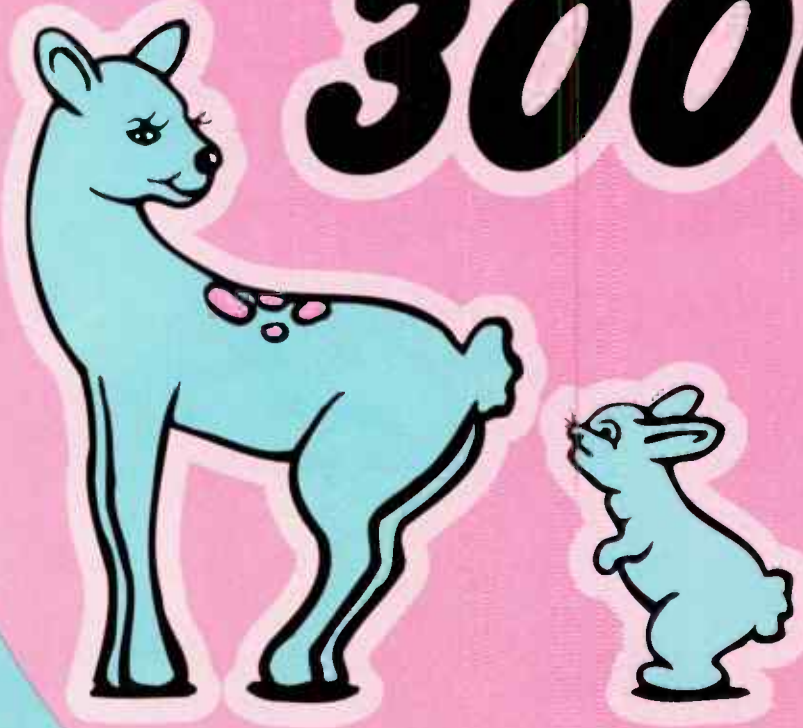


ISSUE NO. 55 | WWW.CMJ.COM

TURNTABLISTS | RYUICHI SAKAMOTO | 47 REVIEWS

World Radio History

# Bran Van 3000



glee

featuring "Drinking In L.A."



## features

**16 AIR** "We use all kinds of instruments, including a sampler. I hope we will be sampled ourselves, though. That would be a mark of respect, I think." —*Interview by Chris Nickson*

**18 ROBERT WYATT** "I don't really choose [players] by instrument. I choose people by character, whether they'd be good company, and I'm not bothered by style. I'm interested in those human qualities—whether they're brave, whether they can tell good jokes." —*Interview by Chris Nickson*

**20 MONO** What's the biggest misconception about trip-hop duo Mono? "That we get on." —*Interview by Douglas Wolk*

**22 SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER** "Bands that have an American sound don't do very well in America. People don't want to talk about the Wild, Wild West. They don't want to talk about how we slaughtered all the Indians and enslaved all the blacks and made the Orientals build the railroads." —*Interview by Jeff Stratton*

**24 CURVE** "[We received] a bevy of letters from people saying 'Oh my God! We're going to die without Curve putting out records!' I was thinking 'Well, if we continue putting records out, we're going to die.'" —*Interview by Tom Lanham*

**26 BEN FOLDS FIVE** "I don't want to sound like I was Jerry Falwell. I wasn't going, 'God, why did you ask me to do this? Why did you give me this gift, then relegate me to off-Broadway?' I felt like I was making my offering to the music gods." —*Interview by David Daley*

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**on the cover**  
BEN FOLDS FIVE  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
MICHAEL HALSBAND

## So we're enabling him

I'd like to respond to Mr. Letting Off Steam [Letters, Dec. 97], a.k.a. Mr. No Balls, since he is ashamed to even use his real name. (I would be too if I wrote such a lame letter.) First of all, techno is crappy, very crappy, and has nothing to do with anything remotely musical. Also, if you think you're upset now, that's nothing compared to what you would have felt if *New Music Monthly* had the balls to publish my full letter instead of snipping out only the one solitary sentence you read. I don't know what goes on in the frozen wasteland of a state you call Minnesota, but in the real world, the overwhelming majority of techno listeners use drugs and a lot of them.

Matthew Savidis  
Boca Raton, FL

*There's this guy in my neighborhood obsessed with the New York Rangers. He wanders into every shop and recites his extended apostrophes to the team to anyone mistaken enough to be drawn in by his childlike diction. This letter just reminded me of him.* —ed.

## A lovely bunch of Kokonas

I'm a "lonely Canadian." [see Letters, Dec. 97 —ed.] Hey, we enjoy the space. And the only reason we might get excited at the prospect of nipple sightings is because we get excited that Americans might toss their stuffy, tight-ass morals to the side and show a little flesh for titillation. I like the new format by the way. It's now the same size as the rest of the magazines I buy so the top doesn't bend. Although I will admit that since the magazine is mostly trash, I toss it right away.

Joanne Kokonas

*Hey, we appreciate Joanne's eye-for-three-quarters-of-an-eye retributive missive. But tight-ass? At least try to make your stereotypes stereotypical of something. Hey, we live in New York City, where the only tight-ass people are those advertising themselves as such in the Village Voice personals. This is not to say that our reference to an earlier letter was meant as a slight to all Canadians, only those hoping to get a rise out of obdurate editor types by insulting their magazines.* —ed.

Corrections: The photo of Atari Teenage Riot in the Dec. issue was taken by Hal Miller. Also, Din Pedals were mistakenly referred to as Din Petals on February's CD face and sleeve.

## Color, me bad

Now you've done it. *What* could you have possibly been thinking when you chose to use Valentine colors on the cover of the January issue? *Red* and *White* are *February* colors! Color misuse like that disrupts my well being; I'm not going to get a decent night's sleep until I get the next issue. Also, please give some consideration to using brown & orange for November, red, white & blue for July, and red & green for December. Thanks.

Ron

*And a big hello to our old art director, Alley Rutzel, so far away in Seattle, who's no doubt having a big laugh at our expense.* —ed.

## Sweet mystery of life

Finally I have found the magazine that I have seen in my dreams. A mag that gives you music and info about what we want to know. I only have one question: what does "CMJ" stand for?

JMI Parker

*CMJ = College Media Journal, the name of one of our illustrious publisher's earliest ventures, and a name we borrow from our sister magazine, CMJ New Music Report, a college radio tipsheet. Nearly five years into this thing, we're not any more or less college than any other music magazine, but still hold on to the initials as something of a family name.* —ed.

## Breathless critics, cool.

Even critics wait breathlessly for the next big thing. The weight of the commercial world makes it hard to resist such an idea, but does that mean we have to resemble those generals who thought WWII could be fought in the trenches? Our concepts of musical revolution won't prepare us for changes that may not conform to outmoded ideas forged in old wars. The "next wave" will hit us upside our faces if we insist on looking in the wrong directions.

James Hopkins.  
Larchmont, NY

*Wait, does resembling those generals mean I have to wear jodhpurs? 'Cause I didn't sign up for that.* —ed.

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# the DERRAILERS

NEW ALBUM *Seven's Deluxe*

**DON'T MISS THEM ON TOUR ACROSS THE U.S.  
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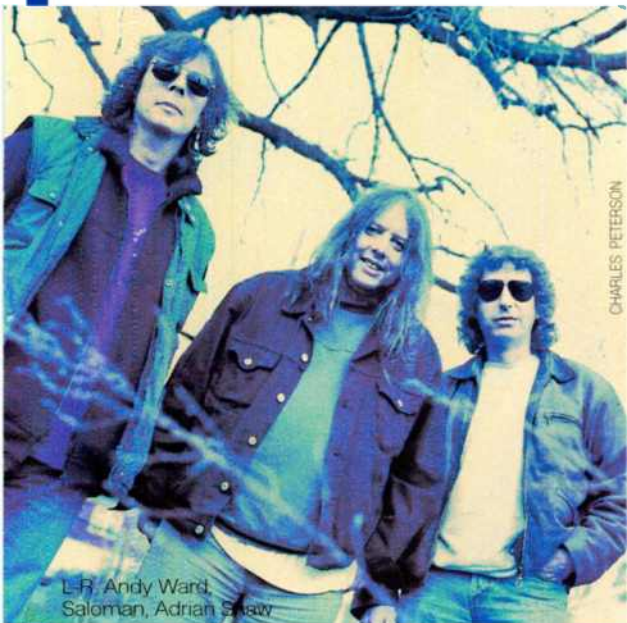


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World Radio History

“I agree with whoever said they’re soft porn. They’re the Antichrist. I don’t want any part of it, and if I had kids, I wouldn’t want them to have any part of it, either. I’d move to an island where you can’t get hold of any Spice Girls stuff.”

—Radiohead’s Thom Yorke, on *Ginger, Baby*, Scary, Sporty and Posh



CHARLES PETERSON

L-R: Andy Ward, Saloman, Adrian Shaw

## BEVIS FROND

### Just A Middle-aged Hippie

Nick Saloman hardly looks like the psychedelic guru he’s made out to be. Judging by the flower-power melodies and acid-rock jams this one-man band releases under the Bevis Frond moniker, you might think he’d be done up in a Nehru suit or flowing caftan. But his threads are decidedly low-key. Sporting a purple T-shirt and faded blue jeans, he could be mistaken for the doorman of this Philadelphia club rather than the evening’s featured act.

The Bevis Frond’s set begins with “Stars Burn Out,” a strummy, bittersweet ditty from the new album, *North Circular* (Fly-daddy), that wonders why legendary songwriters like Pete Townshend and Ray Davies have turned into second-rate hacks

over the years. It’s a gutsy choice of subject matter coming from someone who was dropped by the now-defunct Reckless Records in 1992 for submitting tracks that were considered below par.

“What a cheeky bunch of bastards!” shouts Saloman, chatting about the label’s decision between numbers. Not only did he disagree with Reckless’s assessment, he decided to release the material himself.

During the past decade, he’s averaged more than an album a year. With *North Circular*, the 12th Bevis Frond album, Saloman adds 26 more tracks to his already impressive canon. As expected, the cuts are a mix of introspective anthems, arena stompers and extended solos. With such a voluminous output, you’d think the 44-year-old London native would be afraid of burning out himself. He started writing songs in the late ’60s, when he was a teenager. “In my own minor-league conceited way, I think I’ll know when I can’t write anything anymore,” he says after the show.

That’s not to say Saloman believes every song he comes up with is a winner. He only

head in,” he notes. “What am I? Just a middle-aged hippie, really.” —Neil Gladstone

## in my room

ARTISTS’ PERSONAL PICKS



SPINANES  
Rebecca Gates

- Sea And Cake  
The Fawn
- Nina Simone  
Let It All Out
- Rolling Stones  
Sticky Fingers
- Aretha Franklin  
Lady Soul
- Hanan El-Shaykh  
(book) Women of  
Sound And Myrrh

## random fact

If you thought his role in the ill-fated *Moonlight And Valentino* was only a fluke, consider this: By the end of March, Jon Bon Jovi will have appeared in four different independent films during the past six months: *The Leading Man*, *Little City*, *Homegrown* and Ed Burns’s latest, *Long Time, Nothing New*.

keeps about 25 percent of his output. If a tune doesn’t come together in a couple of hours, he tosses it out. If it does, he usually records it immediately in his home studio on a digital eight-track.

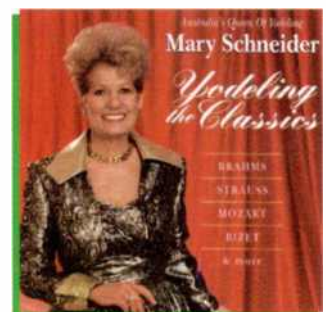
Because he’s never tried to hide his love for late-’60s rock, many fans consider him the torchbearer for old-school psychedelia. And many came out in support for his ’zine, *Ptolemaic Terrascope* (dedicated to writing about mind-altering music), at last year’s Terrastock, a three day benefit concert held in Providence, Rhode Island.

Yet Saloman is wary of being deemed a revivalist and makes a point of noting that a lot of his songs are nothing more than straightforward pop numbers. Even so, he admits that the artists he listened to in his teens, like Jimi Hendrix and Fairport Convention, are probably the nearest to his heart.

“Psychedelia was about changing peoples’ perception of what was acceptable. I still think peace and love are better than kicking someone’s

## weird record

Yodeling has come a long way since Kenny Hill And The Pinetoppers and Tex Ritter. Mary Schneider is “Australia’s Queen Of Yodeling,” and her *Yodeling The Classics* (Interworks-Ichiban) is, as it’s touted twice in the CD liner notes, “where the fascinating art of Yodeling meets the beauty of the Classics.” This means listeners are treated to selections from Bizet, Brahms, Mozart and John Philip Sousa, yodeled. Since yodeling the “William Tell Overture” makes a painful kind of sense, it’s the treatment of Sousa that’s ultimately the strangest, because where Schneider isn’t yodeling, she’s singing “what Sousa might have said had he himself written these lyrics.” In case you were wondering what an Australian view of American patriotism is, try singing this to the tune of “Washington Post”: “To tyranny and despair let’s say farewell/Freedom has been our goal you know darn well/Raise America’s flag and ring the Liberty Bell/And let’s declare our independence!”



## SIXTEEN DELUXE

### TV Party Tonight

It's December in Austin, Texas, and in the home of Sixteen Deluxe drummer Steven Hall, *Party Of Five* buzzes away at low volume as he and bassist Jeff Copas await the return of guitarists/vocalists Carrie Clarke and Chris Smith from a Taco Bell run. "Do you mind if we watch this?" Hall asks. Apparently he is a serious Neve Campbell fan, a predilection underscored by the Neve candle displayed atop a stereo speaker in his living room. "A friend of mine found it for me in San Francisco when we were recording the album," he beams. "I had to have it."

Clarke and Smith return, carryout bags in hand. "Did you want a burrito?" one of them asks. When the Ramones' "Merry Xmas (I Don't Want To Fight Tonight)" starts wafting out of *Party Of Five*, inducing fits of headbanging all over the room, it's decided the show should remain on the set.



L-R: Smith, Hall, Clark, Copas

By now, you might be wondering what in the name of Kevin Shields *any* of this has to do with the swirling, effects-laden stomp of the four-year-old Austin band or its Warner Bros. debut, *Emits Showers Of Sparks*. Well, for all the rave reviews for prior releases on indie Trance Syndicate Records, some minor MTV play, and tours with bands such as Luna, Sixteen Deluxe still embodies the root component of the rock 'n' roll equation: being music fans. The very reason the band's members do what they do is rooted in their fandom, shaped by witnessing *Loveless*-era My Bloody Valentine redefine pop music at ungodly volume, and seeing the multi-media mind-fuckery of live Butthole Surfers and Flaming Lips gigs over the years. The three longtime members at Sixteen Deluxe's core (Hall has occupied the drummer's throne for only a little over a year) decided they'd like to see such shenanigans on a local level more often, and since no one else appeared to be taking up the slack, they concluded that they'd have to be the ones to form that band.

Until now, it's been entirely too easy for lazy journalists to attach the "My Bloody Valentine Jr." tag to Sixteen Deluxe, although the band doesn't entirely deny it. "Hey, if Kevin Shields doesn't want to make another album, we can," blurts Smith. Still, an overall swirliness and love for tap-dancing

across foot switches does *not* a Shields clone make. "Yes!" they all scream in unison. Smith concedes they pile on the effects, "but it's all three-chord rock underneath."

"Most of my songs are written on acoustic guitar," adds Clarke, "and the root of what we do is the barre chord." Later on, Smith and Clarke decide to add whatever flavors the engineers at Electro-Harmonix or Roland have developed. Smith does note,

however, that there are far more "naked parts" on *Emits Showers Of Sparks* than on previous 16D records, due to producer John Croslin's insistence on adding the effects in the mixdown, rather than during recording. Once the band heard how the songs sounded minus electronic seasoning, it was decided some tunes didn't need it.

But it's still December. The album won't see release for another month, the band members are retaining their day jobs at the Wheatville Food Co-Op until they leave for the road, and Copas worries

jokingly that they've already prepared 12 new songs even before these 12 older ones see release. Meantime, *Party Of Five* dissolves into a *Simpsons* rerun, and the interview is over. When you're dealing with fandom as strong as Sixteen Deluxe's, there's no way the antics of Homer and family will succumb to the promotional grind.

—Tim Stegall

“Tattoos used to be cool. When I got mine back in the mid-'80s, it was really rebellious, and I got piercings then too. Now I have 16 year olds come up and tell me, 'I got my dick pierced.' Great. You're 16, and you have to pee sitting down. That's cool.”  
—Everclear's Art Alexakis, on youthful rebellion

### in my room

ARTISTS THIS MONTH



JONATHAN FIRE EATER

Matt Burlick

- Radiohead
- Oil Computer
- (film) Hate
- James Baldwin (book) Giovanni's Room
- Sam Cooke
- Franz Fanon (book) The Wretched Of The Earth

■ When Dublin native Keith Cullen started **Setanta Records** out of his London council flat in late 1989, he was initially concerned with "Irish bands that couldn't get a release in England or in Ireland," according to Chris Metzler, who oversees the label's international affairs. Setanta achieved instant international prominence when its first non-Irish artist, Scotsman Edwyn Collins, became a global hit with the single "A Girl Like You" from the 1994 album *Gorgeous George*. In fact, Cullen had initially rejected the song as a single, but has since reaped the rewards of Collins's success. Setanta's London office has expanded to meet the needs of its increasingly popular artists, including the Divine Comedy, A House, and the Frank And Walters, and Cullen now oversees a US office. This year will see new releases from former House Of Love frontman Guy Chadwick, a Brit, and the Irish groups Pelvis and Catchers. Visit the label on the Web at [www.setantarecords.com](http://www.setantarecords.com).

# SETANTA

Label profile

## RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

### What Does Salvation Mean To You?

Ryuichi Sakamoto ranks among the world's most prominent musicians. The influence of his '70s band Yellow Magic Orchestra on electronic music is rivaled only by that of Kraftwerk. He has collaborated with Brian Wilson, Iggy Pop, David Sylvian and William S. Burroughs. His 1987 score for Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* won an Oscar and a Grammy.

But "untitled 01," a work for orchestra, piano, guitar and turntable, featuring contributions from guitarist David Torn and DJ Spooky, is the first full-length symphonic work in his 20 year career. Composed of four movements, it was recently previewed in Japan, and makes its international debut in February in New York City. A recorded version is also available on the Sony Classical release *Discord*.



Sakamoto (who holds degrees in composition and electronic and ethnic music) cites Beethoven, Debussy, Ravel, Boulez, Stockhausen and Steve Reich among his "classical" inspirations; for "untitled 01," "the main influences were Wagner's 'Parsifal' and Mahler's adagio pieces," he reveals. But Sakamoto's piece is by no means traditional.

"I was not interested in conventional classical forms," says the composer. The movements are entitled "Grief," "Anger," "Prayer" and "Salvation." "I usually write music first and then I [assign] titles after," he expands.

"But for this piece the titles came first, [inspired] by the emotions. Then I wrote the melodies and stuff."

Some sections are fairly traditional in sonority and structure. "Grief" is built from elongated themes introduced by strings. "Prayer" explores haunting motifs in the bassoon and other woodwinds. But "Anger"

is jarring even by 21st century concert hall standards, juxtaposing a cacophony of brass and percussion with wholly improvised contributions from the soloists.

"I printed one of our performances to vinyl and mixed different sections of orchestra in against their 'live' counterparts," explains DJ Spooky of his role. "I also added what I call 'gestural textures' that you get when you slow down or speed up the turntable: low bass frequencies from slowing it down, the rising 'bleep' from slowly speeding up the record."

Most arresting is the fourth movement, in which Sakamoto incorporates recorded answers from famous colleagues like Sylvian and Laurie Anderson to the question, "What does salvation mean to you?"

"I got the whole idea for 'untitled 01' when I was very frustrated with watching the news of starvation in Africa in '95," says Sakamoto (all proceeds from this project will go to War Child, which aids children who are victims of circumstances of war around the globe). "I felt there was a new crisis not to be able to save each other. So I asked myself what was salvation to me. Naturally, I didn't find the answer. But I wanted to hear what the people I admire would answer to the same question." He also entertained dreams of asking the Dalai Lama, international policy makers, and such.

"It's a truly, profoundly important question for our generation," DJ Spooky concedes. "My first response was silence." —Kurt B. Reighley

## in my room

ARTIST'S FAVORITE ALBUMS



### STEREOPHONICS

- Ely Jones
- Playing soccer
  - *Jack Kerouac Into The Wild*
  - (film) *Diabolique*
  - AC/DC *Back In Black*
  - Going home and seeing friends after touring

## random fact

Rod Stewart, who for years has kicked soccer balls into the audience during his concert performances, is currently the subject of a lawsuit brought by a woman claiming to have suffered unspecified neck, head, face and mouth injuries after being struck by such a ball. Her husband is also seeking damages, claiming loss of companionship as a result of her injury.

## albums we'd like to see

### GOIN' OUT OF MY HEAD

Bad Brains, Smart Went Crazy, Insane Clown Posse, Birdbrain, Bunnybrains, Braindead Sound Machine, Crazy Alice, Crazy 8's, Crazyhead, Insane Jane, Psychorealm, Psychotic Turnbuckles, Psychotica, Bark Psychosis, Cosmic Psychos, Psychotribe, Straitjacket Fits.

**MATH ROCK** Although it has come to describe the indie-rock descendants of Louisville, Kentucky's Slint and their like-minded Chicago brethren, the term originally referred to the kind of icy, precise rock of bands like King Crimson. The form relies upon technically intricate time signatures and guitar playing, requiring an acumen beyond the reach of most three-chord rockers. Richmond, Virginia, has spawned its fair share of math rock bands, including Breadwinner and Confessor, but New York City's Helmet and Pittsburgh's Don Caballero also fit the bill.

## BUZZ WORDS



# KEITH RICHARDS



## Q & A

For the past 25 years, whenever Keith Richards wasn't churning out Rolling Stones guitar riffs, he would often relax in Jamaica playing impromptu music in the living room of his villa with an ad hoc group of Rastafarian musicians. Recently, Richards produced and played on *Wingless Angels*, an album of Rastafarian nyabingi drumming and chanting. I caught up with Richards in a four-star hotel along the tour route, and somehow resisted the temptation to ask him about heroin, about Margaret Trudeau, or whether he was lying down or sitting up when he wrote the riff to "Tumbling Dice." Instead—perhaps because it was only an hour past sunset—I got a candid conversation about Rastafarianism, Jamaican music and how time's on his side. —James Lien

**Q:** So what is it about Rastafarian that you embrace?

**A:** To me, Rastafarianism, you don't have to think about it. You just go to this place. It's in the moment. When I'm with the brothers [in the Wingless Angels], it's just blessings and I and I [makes hugging motion], and it's no you and me. There's an old Rasta saying, "To think it to stink," you know. "To feel is everything." And that's how it is.

**Q:** What can you tell us about the actual drums themselves that the Wingless Angels play?

**A:** The guy that made the drums for me, I had a new set made in 1975 by a guy named Bongo, down in Kingston. Great old Rasta, and he made these drums for me. He said, "These are very good drums, but they won't reach their real sound for 20 years." I thought, "Well, that's a long way, but they sound pretty good now." And you know what, right on the button, [Wingless Angels] was recorded in 1995! The drums have always sounded good over the years, and always gettin' to sound better every year. That was another reason I had to wait [to make the record]—the drums weren't ready!

**Q:** Why is this record so special to you?

**A:** It took 25 years to make it, I realized. To actually make the record was only a few months, but I realize that the whole process of how it came about was started in 1972. And that's the longest project I've been in, except the Rolling Stones!

# The Maxell Mix Tape

We all MAKE UP TAPES of our favorite songs. They're driving companions, records of ill-spent summers, letters to girlfriends or boyfriends, whatever.

What's your favorite mix?

Tell Us. And if we pick your entry, the kind folks at Maxell will send you a bunch of goodies

and your name will be in

**It's Mat Trotman !!**

Casar, NC

### SIDE 1:

Combustible Misan  
Theme From "The Tiki Wonder Show"  
Velvet Underground  
Waiting For My War (Live 1972)  
Portishead  
Wandering Star (Live)  
Sonic Youth  
Anagram  
Beck  
Jack-Ass  
Neil Young  
Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere  
Centurians  
Intoxica  
Patti Smith  
Free More  
Pumo For Pyros  
Kimberly Austin  
Sebadoh  
willing To wait  
Otis Redding  
I've Got Dreams To Remember

### SIDE 2:

Future Bible Heroes  
Real Summer  
U2  
Some Days Are Better Than Others  
Velvet Underground  
Sweet Jane  
Otis Redding  
Security  
Luna  
Great Jones Street  
Django Reinhardt & Stephane Grappelli  
Swing Guitars  
Trashmen  
Sartin' Bird  
Fite Hawks  
Chicken Grabber  
Velvet Underground  
Fock 'N' Roll  
PJ Harvey  
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Mix it up!

ONJ NEW MUSIC



# maxell



### NASHVILLE PUSSY

Let Them Eat Pussy — Amphetamine Reptile

For years, Athens, Georgia, has meant sub-Byrds guitars and a mumbling, obtuse lyricism. Then along comes Nashville Pussy and you'd think Gen. Sherman had reanimated for one last bloody stomp across the boyhood homes of Buck and Stipe. Nashville Pussy is named for a Ted Nugent one-liner and famed for its potent, in-person mix of sex, fire and volume. A solid year of touring has made the

band and its Southern-fried take on Motorheadisms the most potent live act on the modern day punk circuit. With *Let Them Eat Pussy*, the quartet's debut long-player, Nashville Pussy proves it can harness and sustain that live ferocity in a sterile studio environment. Tracked at Seattle's Egg Studios under the able hands of Fastbacks genius Kurt Bloch, *Let Them* finds the band making speedy, trashy, punk-informed rock 'n' roll out of highly suspect source material: '70s eight-track Camaro rock. But the results are so right, they're hard to deny. The secret weapon is guitarist Ruyter Suys, whose crazed fretboard dexterity makes her this decade's first true heir to the James Williamson demon guitar god throne. Single-handedly, Nashville Pussy has redefined the idea of "Southern rock." And lemme tell ya, I'll take this version of Confederate boogie over Lynyrd Skynyrd's any day. —Tim Stegall

DATALOG: Released Jan. 20.

FILE UNDER: Dixie-fried, metallic speed punk. R.I.Y.L.: New Bomb Turks, the Damned, Blue Cheer, the Lazy Cowgirls

### NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL

In The Aeroplane Over The Sea — Merge

Neutral Milk Hotel is the brainchild of Jeff Mangum, a Louisiana-born aural auteur with a precocious sense of harmolodic discord, which he applies with an almost childlike curiosity to his lo-fi creations. He's also a bit of a visionary poet, which is what distinguishes NMH from the brainier and more self-conscious retro of fellow Elephant 6 groups the Apples In Stereo and Olivia Tremor Control. Mangum got by with a little help from his friends on NMH's 1995 debut, *On Avery Island*, which sounded like a young Bob Dylan taking a ride on the Beatles' Yellow Submarine. It was that good, and so is *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*. Having built NMH into a full-time foursome, Mangum follows his restless muse back beyond the Sgt. Pepper '60s to the '40s and '50s, which is where he says the album is "set." There, against a surrealist backdrop of nervously



strummed acoustic guitars, fuzzed-out bass, ominous organ drones, and the occasional trumpet solo, he encounters "The King Of Carrot Flowers" having teenage sex in a broken home; the ghosts of "The Communist Daughter" born in 1929; and his own uneasy faith, shaken and stirred by fractured images of beauty mingled with tragedy. "Soft silly music is meaningful, magical," Mangum sings on "Oh Comely," and I can't think of a better way to describe the effect of this disc. —Matt Ashare

DATALOG: Release date: Mar. 3. Website at [www.btc.gatech.edu/neutral](http://www.btc.gatech.edu/neutral).

FILE UNDER: Lo-fi psychedelic pop. R.I.Y.L.: Apples In Stereo, Olivia Tremor Control, Yellow Submarine.



### KRISTIN HERSH

Strange Angels — Throwing Music/Rykodisc

Kristin Hersh is one of those rare songbirds who never quite seems to fit in—a true outsider artist who's had the power and perseverance to create an idiosyncratic pop universe with its own skewed rules of melodic structure and narrative logic. As the leader of the now defunct Throwing Muses, she staked claim to a narrow yet deep segment of the indie-rock world, where she blossomed into a kind of modern day Emily Dickinson with a guitar: adored and obsessed over by a devoted cult following, consistently respected by mainstream critics and artists, and possessed of a way with words and undulating chord patterns that nobody ever really managed

DATALOG:

to emulate. None of that's changed now that Hersh has gone solo, other than that for the time being, she's sticking to the stripped-down setting of acoustic guitar and voice that she began to explore on 1994's *Hips & Makers*. Without the distraction of bass and drums, Hersh's voice becomes an object of fascination, with its hard, muscular midsection, and supple, shapely edges; it has the uncanny ability to frame abstract-expressionistic fragments of everyday life so matter-of-factly, yet with such unblinking intensity. As hard to describe as it is to ignore, Hersh's siren-like appeal only seems to grow the deeper she burrows in her own cozy little world as mom, wife and songwriter.

FILE UNDER: Meandering acoustic pop. R.I.Y.L.: Throwing Muses, Victoria Williams, Nick Drake.

—Matt Ashare



**ANI DIFRANCO** CD

Little Plastic Castle — Righteous Babe

Twelve albums and 15 years into her career, Ani DiFranco is an untouchable. By refusing to try to fit her square peg into the music industry's round holes, DiFranco has proven herself an artist with integrity, imagination and business savvy. With each successive album, the gap between the strength of her songs and the strength of her voice has closed more and more, and with her latest effort, *Little Plastic Castle*, she has all but paved over the fissure. The brown-paper exterior of her folk songs belies a real sophistication. On "Gravel" (which also appeared on last year's collection of live performances, *Living In Clip*), her skittish picking seems to make "the sound of your bike as your wheels hit the gravel" that her lyric describes. DiFranco rarely belts out her vocals, instead exuding a warmth and sensuality that says so much more. The beauty in DiFranco's music lies in the sounds of the words she strings together, the way she lingers on one syllable like it is crawling up from the depths of her soul and slithering out from between her lips, or skips, nearly scat-singing, over another. Perhaps the tracks that combine music with spoken word ("Fuel," "Little Plastic Castle") suggest where she's headed, but whatever her next step, it will be exciting to watch her take it. —*Jenny Eliscu*

DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 17.

FILE UNDER: Folk music's most righteous babe.

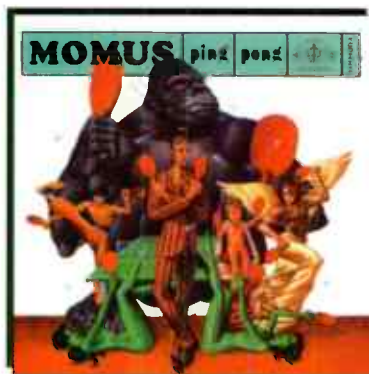
R.I.Y.L.: Bob Dylan, Indigo Girls, Bikini Kill.

**MOMUS**

Ping Pong — Le Grand Magistry

Songwriters who issue pronouncements like "all pop music is parody longing to become authentic" should be approached with extreme caution. In the promotional materials for *Ping Pong*, Nick Currie (a.k.a. Momus, for like many seasoned criminals, he performs his nefarious deeds under an alias) even shares his patented blueprint for how to commit your own trespasses in the Momus fashion: "The music should be melancholy and European, or it should be a pastiche of aggressively commercial chart music." His 12th solo LP showcases sinister drawing room dramas, locked in the passionate yet fickle embrace of a dazzling array of styles, from narcoleptic disco ("Professor Shaftenberg") to a video game theme. Name any predilection, practice or prejudice that irritates or enflames you, and Momus celebrates it. He attributes his rampant perversions to multiple-personality disorder, moons over nubile Japanese maidens, answers ancient religious mysteries, runs interference for the beloved Tamagotchi, and savages infants. Authentic cabaret songs (as opposed to the two-drink-minimum and "New York, New York" drivel that most often masquerades under that banner) ideally mix the personal and political in intoxicating proportions. The bountiful sniffer of the heady stuff Currie pours in your ears should set you dancing on the table, and stumbling over your own libido, in no time.

—*Kurt B. Reighley*



DATALOG: Release Feb. 9. Website at [www.demon.co.uk/momus/](http://www.demon.co.uk/momus/)

FILE UNDER: Electronic age bard.

R.I.Y.L.: Sarge Gainsbourg, the Divine Comedy, Pet Shop Boys.

**GOLDIE**

Saturnz Return — frrr/London

When his debut album *Timeless* came out, Goldie took some hits in the then-fledgling drum 'n' bass community for making such a soft, poppy record. In fact, what he'd done was reach out in all directions from a starting point of jungle, and with the double-disc *Saturnz Return*, he broadens his reach farther. *Much* farther. The opening track, "Mother," is just over an hour long, and the beats that show up more than halfway through it are almost incidental, implied by the orchestral eddies and ripples of the track. Elsewhere, Goldie tries his hand at smooth R&B (which isn't terribly useful: he's a texturalist, not a melodist), at hip-hop (much better, partly because he's assisted by KRS-One), and at using live rock instruments in the context of breakbeat. "Dragonfly," in this last category, is the album's highlight, 16 minutes of murmuring guitars braided into a three-chord helix while pattering beats both keep time and bend it. Goldie has kept up with formal developments within drum 'n' bass, but his beats still seem to be drawn from the same three or four classic sources, which gets wearying over two and a half hours. His interests, though, aren't in reinventing his form's rhythms, but in figuring out how many ways its elements can be used to recreate a single ideal sound. —*Douglas Wolk*

DATALOG: Released Jan. 27. Website at [www.1.mh.v.net/hmcgowan/saturn.htm](http://www.1.mh.v.net/hmcgowan/saturn.htm)  
FILE UNDER: Epic post-dance music  
R.I.Y.L.: Roni Size, Material, electric Mills Davis





## FRETBLANKET CD

When Fretblanket released its debut album, *Junkfuel*, in 1994, critics couldn't help but note how much it sounded like the work of flannel-clad Northwesterners. No one would have guessed that the band hailed from the small English suburb of Stourbridge. The four Brits were barely out of their teens when that album's anthemic single "Twisted" became a hit in the UK and was named Single Of The Week by *NME*. Four years later, the band has released its second long-player, *Home Truths From Abroad* (Polydor-A&M), which promises to perk up Stateside ears. After all, Bush's blockbuster success has left the door open for other grunge-inspired English groups; the fact that Fretblanket's Will Copley sounds a lot like Gavin Rossdale doesn't hurt either. Alongside Copley's tortured groan, the band cranks out mildly dissonant, muscular guitar rock tunes like the new album's first single "Into The Ocean," which already has the makings of a hit: Late last year its video was given the highest score yet by MTV's *12 Angry Viewers* and was thrown into heavy-rotation months before the album's release. Look for the band on tour this spring. —*Jenny Eliscu*

a film actress, appearing in such movies as *The Visitors* and *Sabrina*, has just seen a domestic release for her elegant debut LP, *Chante* (March), which boasts lovingly crafted songs complemented by pristine production from noted arranger Bertrand Burgalat. Together the two make sophisticated music that looks both to the future in its tasteful electronic flourishes and to the past by recalling Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin and the heyday of mid-'60s Parisian pop. Nowhere is this more apparent than on "95C," the album's first single, which blends synthesizers and strings with Lemercier's Birkin-like strain, as she reaches for notes just slightly out of her reach. —*Tom Capodanno*



## PROPELLERHEADS CD

While the big beat sound of Chemical Brothers, Prodigy and Crystal Method may pack enough heat to get young fists pumping in the air, UK duo Will White and ex-Grid engineer Alex Gifford, a.k.a. Propellerheads (the name is slang for computer geeks), trade in a sexy variation that ignites the fire down below. Test drive "Backseat Driver," their bracing collaboration with composer David Arnold in the recent James Bond flick *Tomorrow Never Dies*, or their interpretation of the only instrumental Bond theme, "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (from Arnold's *Shaken And Stirred* album), which recently scaled the charts overseas. Following a string of singles (including "Spybreak!"—these fellas love espionage) on the Wall Of Sound label, the pair preview their US debut *Decksanddrumsandrockandroll* (DreamWorks) with a five track EP featuring the white-knuckle ride "Bang On." —*Kurt B. Reighley*

## VALERIE LEMERCIER CD

One of the side effects of the 'loungecore' revival is that indie rock hipsters are beginning to embrace artists whose musical aesthetic doesn't rely on mounds of distortion or a lo-fi/DIY ethic. Leading the way in this new wave of well-produced, stylish pop are artists like Japan's Pizzicato Five and Kahimi Karie and their French counterparts such as Katerine and Valerie Lemercier. Lemercier, who's already well established in France as



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CMJ sampler enclosed  
in this issue.



# AIR



## space is the place

**a**ir features heavily in our imaginations—walking on it, building castles in it. So why not a band called Air, one that takes the things of your dreams and makes them into music? That's exactly what the French duo of Nicolas Godin and Jean Benoit Dunckel does with its burbling blend of *au courant* electronica shot through with a groovy '70s vibe. However you label the hybrid the band exhibits on its full-length debut, *Moon Safari* (Source-Caroline), it is a breath of, well, fresh air. "JB and I were at school together, and we formed a rock band," says Godin. "Then we went to college [Godin trained as an architect and Dunckel became a math teacher], and after that, seven years later, we decided to make more music."

And so Air came into existence in the summer of 1996. "We signed the contract in October [1996], and finished the album the next July," Godin continues. In between they also released five singles, collected on the *Premiers Symptomes* CD, including "Modulor Mix," which might be the only piece of music inspired by Le Corbusier's design for living. They quickly put together quite an impressive body of work. "If you add the remixes we've done, and the new songs that will be on the American singles [including one with vocals by Françoise Hardy], we've done 20 songs in the last year. But now we're finished, and we want to move on—to do soundtracks, write for other people, to have our own studio and keep on working, working, working."

Air's overall sound hearkens back to the instrumental work of a few decades ago, where substance and style happily coexisted. Burt Bacharach has been cited as an influence by some critics, but Godin disagrees: "We were more inspired by Ennio Morricone or John Barry. We only discovered Bacharach when lounge music became fashionable a couple of years ago." And there are also more than a

few traces of inventive early '70s bands like Soft Machine, where the music could flow and change within a single piece. "Soft Machine, yeah!" Godin enthuses. "When we DJ in December, we're going to be playing a lot of them. Our music is very pure, and very logical, like in an equation or a plan. If there's a good balance, there's a flow."

So what, other than invention and delicacy, separates Air from any number of other groups mining similar furrows? Well, in this age of sampling, the duo is that rarity, or anachronism, in that the two play the instruments themselves: Godin is a guitarist and Dunckel is classically trained on the piano. "We use all kinds of instruments, including a sampler. We don't turn down anything before trying it," Godin

insists. "I hope we will be sampled ourselves, though. That would be a mark of respect, I think." The album even uses real strings. "They were arranged by David Whittaker.

He's English, about 60. He worked with Serge Gainsbourg years ago, and did the original arrangement of 'My Way.' He lives in a village near Oxford, in England. One of my favorite *Avengers* episodes was filmed there; I thought that was a sign to work with him."

*Moon Safari* isn't, however, completely instrumental. Some of the tunes do utilize vocals, the singing of American expatriate Beth Hirsch giving them a decidedly cosmopolitan flavor. "We composed some things and the voice came naturally to them; we knew they needed them," Godin explains. "Beth was a friend of a friend in Paris, where we all live, and we teamed up with her."

The pair is planning to make some live Stateside appearances soon, but not right away. "We want to find a new concept, to play in small places," explains Dunckel. "We'd like people to be able to sit down or lie down, to have a dreamful experience. We haven't found that concept yet. But we want to see who's buying our music. We don't know if it's young people, older people, or what." **CMJ**

BY CHRIS NICKSON

DAN BERN  
ELVIS COSTELLO  
JAMIROQUAI  
NICK CAVE  
AND THE BAD SEEDS  
MARY LOU LORD

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World Radio History

**"Robert Wyatt is one of a kind. No one sounds like him, thinks like him, or writes songs like him." —Brian Eno**

# Robert Wyatt

## Counting Shleep

by Chris Nickson



Records from Robert Wyatt come along about as often as blue moons—the last, *Dondestan*, was seven years ago—but each one is

about as precious. For 30 years his work has stood outside of time and trend, with his gorgeous, frail, instantly recognizable voice. Each album lands like a gift you hadn't expected, but that you're overjoyed to receive, and his newest, *Shleep* (Thirsty Ear), is no exception. There's plenty of talent to help out (Brian Eno, Paul Weller and Phil Manzanera are among the more obvious names), but this is undoubtedly a Wyatt disc, open and oblique at the same time, and full of trusting honesty.

"I'm still fairly surprised there's a new record, to be honest," he admits. "I have bits of music I work on at home, and when I have a coherent set, I try and pull it into shape. I put music to some of Alfie—my wife's—poems, and that was the start of it."

Studio time was donated by Manzanera, and Wyatt produced everything except the opener, "Heaps Of Sheeps," which was overseen by Eno, putting together what might be the sprightliest song ever about insomnia. It sounds as if it could have dropped off *Here Come The Warm Jets*. "I've always liked his approach," Wyatt says of Eno. "He's responsible for the way it sounds, the brightness of it. And he insisted on that Debbie Harry touch, which wouldn't have come otherwise! I'd have probably done a slower, more mumbly-grumbly version. When he saw Alfie's words, he laughed, and he was very helpful in seeing it through."

Two tracks feature Weller, playing with more fire and vigor than he's managed on his recent albums. "There are three or four guitarists on this record—I've never worked with so many guitarists," Wyatt says. "I don't really choose by instrument. I've got my own thing I do when I'm making records, and it's what I do. I virtually do a solo album, and then I beef it up and fill it out with guests—or sometimes I don't. I choose people by character, whether they'd be good company, and I'm not bothered by style. I have no allegiances

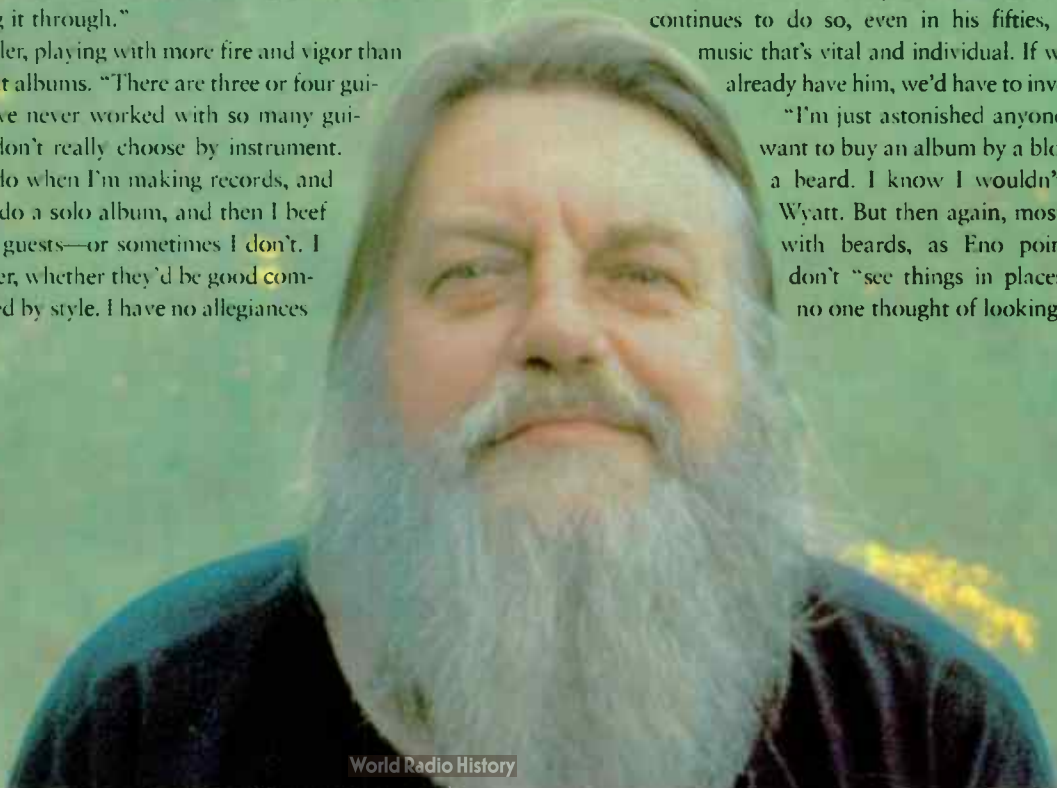
to style. I'm interested in those human qualities—whether they're brave, whether they can tell good jokes. So Paul Weller fits in. He's a brave lad. He's tough, and he's curious. I didn't pay him or Brian Eno. They had some spare time and came along and did it, which is wonderful for me, since I don't live in the income bracket where I could pay these people as they deserve."

They're there—as is everyone else—because, as Eno notes, "Robert Wyatt is one of a kind. No one sounds like him, thinks like him, or writes songs like him." And that's quite true; what seems deceptively simple is actually strangely complex. But with a love of jazz and a background that covers music that defies description (*Soft Machine*, *Matching Mole*, his own records), that's hardly surprising. And it's one reason why he stands outside the conventional 'rock' framework.

"I don't normally work with rock musicians. It's partly because of the harmonic thing I do. Although my songs are rather like nursery rhymes, they tend to be a bit slippery harmonically and rhythmically, and rock musicians lose their footing on them. So I tend to work with jazz musicians on the whole, although I don't make jazz records."

So where does Robert Wyatt fit in? Nowhere, exactly. Ultimately, however, it's not that relevant, because the bottom line is that the man is a treasure, someone who has continually gone his own way, and continues to do so, even in his fifties, making music that's vital and individual. If we didn't already have him, we'd have to invent him.

"I'm just astonished anyone would want to buy an album by a bloke with a beard. I know I wouldn't," says Wyatt. But then again, most blokes with beards, as Eno points out, don't "see things in places where no one thought of looking." **CMJ**





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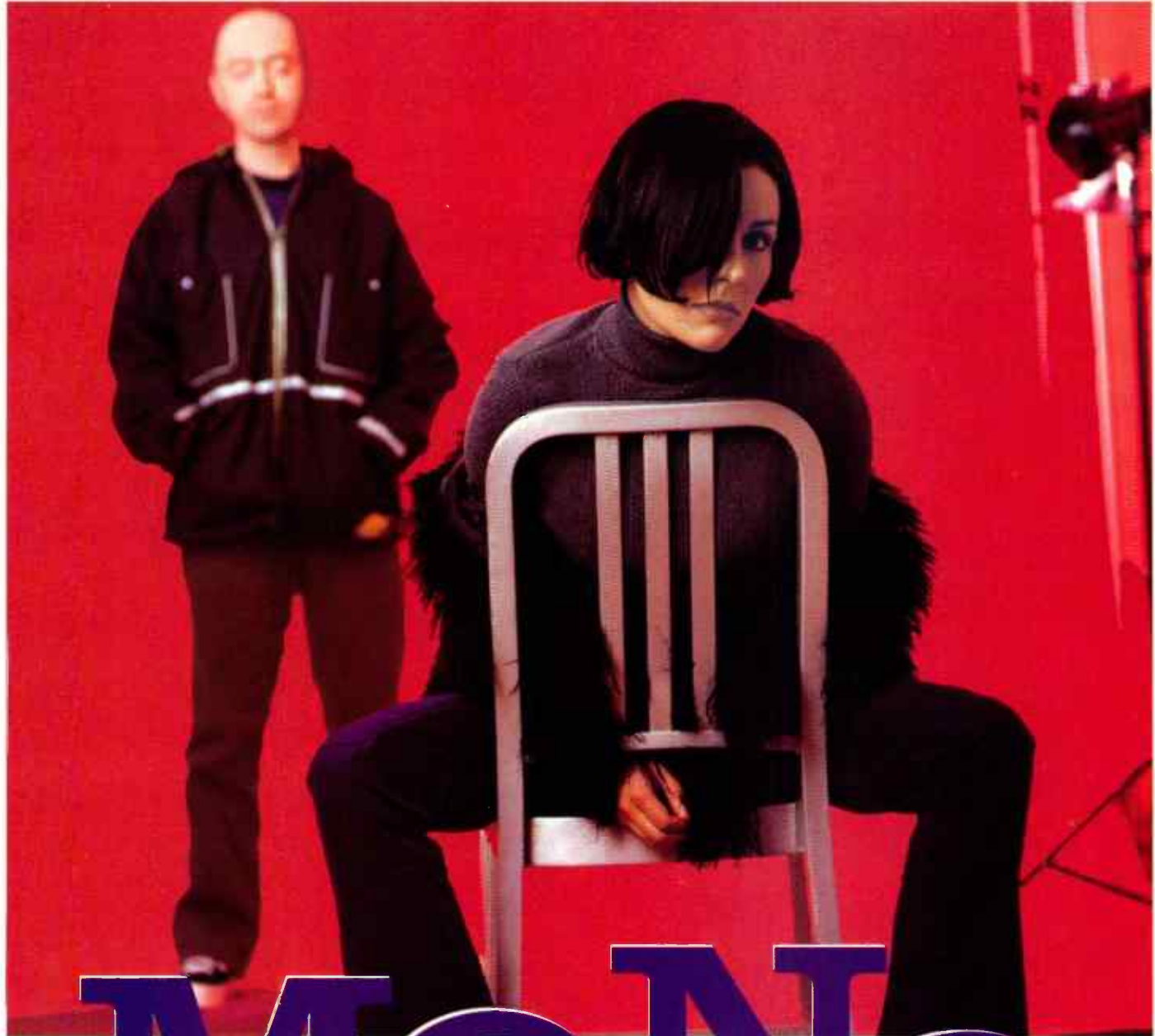
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World Radio History



# MONO

## KNOWS THE WAY TO SAN JOSE

**AS BEFITS A TRIP-HOP DIVA**, Mono's singer, Siobhan De Maré, has some dark secrets in her past, but at least she's forthright about them. Which takes some courage, given that her closet has the skeleton of really, really bad techno-rap in it.

"My first record that came out was a rap record," she admits. "Under the name of Chevy D. 'Trains Keep Steaming,' it was called." She twitches her head a bit and transforms herself into a hyperactive dance-record automaton: "'Trains keep steamin', dut da-dut, dut da-dut/There's a funky jam groove in the front of the house

/There's a def beat out the baaaack!' It was like that. I heard it and went, 'Oh my God.' It came out on white label and sold seven copies. And they were family members. A friend of mine recently got hold of a copy and threatened to re-release it. Which was *really* embarrassing."

Her partner in Mono, multi-instrumentalist/sampler whiz Martin Virgo, has a more illustrious background: He's worked with the likes of Björk (on "Human Behaviour"), Shara Nelson and Massive Attack. Two years ago, he and De Maré were introduced through a mutual acquaintance for a studio date. They came up with songs that blended classic '60s pop sonics

—indelible melodies, rich wall-of-sound production—with rhythms and textures that owed something both to the Bristol sound of Massive Attack and Portishead and to the time-warping hyperbeats of drum 'n' bass. In no time, they were being courted by labels, and they didn't even know each other's last names yet.

Formal introductions, three British singles and a record-bin full of remixes followed, and they've just released their first album, *Formica Blues* (Mercury), along with a 12" of Propellerheads remixes of their first single, "Life In Mono." They've had adoring press back home, though they say they've had to deal with any number of misconceptions. Like what, for instance? De Maré answers instantly: "That we get on." No kidding. They mention a few times that it's all in fun—"we're quite close, in a funny way," she says—but they don't miss a chance to take little catlike swipes at each other.

Virgo has a vehement answer of his own: "People are convinced that I like James Bond. I'll state here and now for the record that I don't like James Bond."

Now where could that idea have come from? Maybe from the fact that "Life In Mono" prominently features a sample from John Barry's theme from *The Ipcress File*. Not to mention a chord progression in its intro that's commonly associated with watching Sean Connery turn and shoot at a closing camera lens. "That is *not* from John Barry!" Virgo insists, indignantly. "That is from Wagner. It's the opening of the overture of *Tristan Und Isolde*—that's where John Barry ripped it off from—and if anybody wants to sue me, *come on!* I love John Barry. Love the guy. I just don't like James Bond. John Barry didn't even write the theme! Monty Norman wrote that guitar theme."

Obviously, this is a man who knows his music history. *Formica Blues* is a hot-rod cannibalized from 35 years of records: Brian Wilson-style arrangements and '80s synths bump elbows with Phil Spector production tricks and Can-style drums. A single track has samples from both jazz arranger Gil Evans and dreampop experimenter David Sylvian. But Virgo pays the greatest homage to, of all people, Burt Bacharach. Mono's long, swooping melodic lines could come straight from the Bacharach songbook, and go surprisingly nicely with the band's breakbeats. That's "because of the tempo of d 'n' b," Virgo says, "because it's either very slow or very fast, you can scan long melodies over it quite easily." For that matter, their most recent British hit, "Silicone," is built on a piano riff from Isaac Hayes's version of "Walk On By."

Bacharach, of course, wasn't just a pop tunesmith, Virgo notes; he was classically trained, and studied with Henry Cowell and Darius Milhaud. "Bacharach wrote a sonata for piano and flute in the '60s, at the height of modernism. He took it to Darius Milhaud, really embarrassed about it, and Milhaud said 'Burt, never be embarrassed about a good melody.' That's what inspired him to do what he did."

Virgo is also effusive about Bacharach's partner Hal David. "I love his lyrics," he enthuses. "They're fantastic, the way the words

work with the melody, and the sound of the words is more important than the meaning. 'Slimcea Girl' is a deliberate Hal David pastiche." The hook from "Life In Mono" plays chicken with a classic David lyric, as well: "I just don't know what to do—ingenue!"

Other than the first few singles, which were written solely by Virgo, Mono's lyrics are penned by the two of them collaboratively...somehow. "Sometimes I'll start writing something," De Maré says, "and then he'll take lines out and stick his own stuff in 'cause he's worried that I'll get more publishing—"

"I deny that," Virgo mutters.

De Maré charges on ahead: "Sometimes he tries to do it on its own, but it never works, they always sound like a pile of shit—"

"What, like 'Slimcea Girl'? And 'Life In Mono'? And 'High Life'?"

"Yeah. The embarrassing ones. There's never any real format, is there? They just come about, the lyrics... Isn't that true?"

"Well, the ones we do together, yeah. But the ones I do on my own I write very specifically."

De Maré, the soul of frostiness: "Do you?"

A few tracks on *Formica Blues*, like the

near-instrumental closer "Hello Cleveland," suggest that Mono is heading away from pop and into more raw club music, and so

does the stream of instrumental remixes that have been released over the last year or so. "I'm actually starting to prefer that, in a way," Virgo says, "moving away from the whole fusion thing into a more pure form. I like to hear just a distorted bass drum and James Brown at 160 BPM."

De Maré, of course, disagrees. "I can't listen to that. I prefer a vocal melody, a song going through it, or I can't get my head around it."

"I like things in their purest form, she likes to hear things at a more sophisticated level."

"Because we are"—De Maré pauses dramatically—"glam 'n' bass. I thought of that yesterday."

This year, Mono has already appeared on the soundtrack to *Great Expectations*, and will be working on material for a second album and, surprisingly for such a studio-based group, touring. As a live band, Mono has played a dozen times or so in Europe: "drums, bass, guitar, keyboards, vocals, and we work with an ADAT as well. It's sample-based music, so we don't want to lose that," De Maré explains.

And in their time off? Martin is the club-hopping type: "My favorites are in Brighton—a club called the Zap Club, and Enlightenment. In London, I like to go out to a club called Circle Children, a techno trance club." So, naturally, Siobhan

doesn't prefer the nightlife: "I don't like clubs. At all. I just prefer to have loads of friends 'round and have brilliant music, and then go out and do something. Otherwise it's quite anti-social. I like to talk to people, and hear music, rather than ignore people and be off my face staggering around. That's where we differ. We are the complete opposite." **CMJ**

**“WE ARE GLAM 'N' BASS. I THOUGHT OF THAT YESTERDAY.”**



**BY DOUGLAS WOLK**

**PHOTOS BY CHRIS TOLIVER**



# SIXTEEN

When genre genealogists begin cutting branches and twigs of the rock 'n' roll family tree to count rings and uncover connections, Sixteen Horsepower will no doubt be identified as the missing link between Joy Division and Hank Williams, for within the Denver band's flirtation with frontier justice and high plains drifting dwells a dark and ominous heart.

The starkly compelling presence of leader David Eugene Edwards immediately indicates that this haunted four-piece is no ordinary mercenary unit. Even with his sickly saffron-lensed glasses, horseshoe choker chain, tattoos and fiery orange hair, it's little surprise that Edwards is the son of a son of a preacherman. His paternal grandfather was a fervent Fundamentalist who ministered to parishioners in various small towns along the eastern and southern expanses of rural Colorado and raised his grandson to follow the path of righteousness. Old West and Southern Gothic imagery set the scene for Edwards's tales, but the constant battles between good and evil along that path are what form the cornerstone to Sixteen Horsepower.

Even a casual listen to "Brimstone Rock," which kicks off the band's second full-length, *Low Estate* (A&M), suggests what dan-

gers to the mortal soul lie ahead, as Edwards begins the track with the proclamation, "Listen closely to me now, my darling girl/There's one who's out to have you and just one breath will burn your curls." Edwards isn't concerned, however, if his words and beliefs, often cloaked in symbols and allegory, are taken at face value, nor is he necessarily interested in making conversions. "I don't have things I riddle up and then you're supposed to figure out what it is," he mutters as he picks his nails and stares at his coffee. "People take it for whatever it is, and if it's literally, then that's good. I mean, I don't expect them to know what the hell I'm talking about. What they get out of it is what they get out of it, and I'm not that pompous to think that they should understand the symbolism. It's basically a struggle between good and evil inside myself. The problems are evil; they're just manifested in spiritual ways."

The band's instrumentation sets it apart as well. Edwards favors the bandoneon, a button accordion, as his instrument of choice. Instead of the nocturnal smoothness of Astor Piazzolla, the Argentine tango maestro considered the instrument's premier player, the tones Edwards generates are as eerie and plaintive as the distant cry of a mountain lion. But as the band fleshes out its



# HORSEPOWER

## BRIMSTONE AND TREBLE

BY JEFF STRATTON

once-skeletal lineup, the bandoneon has become less of the group's centerpiece—for that is surely occupied by Edwards's hollow eyes, sunken cheeks and sheer ghostliness—and is now more like another musket in the bag. "It's more of a special thing when it happens now," explains Edwards, who recently had to replace the octogenarian original he picked up on the cheap at Sixteen Horsepower's birth, once it became obvious that its breath had been squeezed out one too many times. "When I pick it up to play a certain song, I like it to be more of an occasional thing, because we have so much other stuff."

That "other stuff" has always included Appalachian and Cajun strains culled from Library of Congress recordings, but now the band has augmented its sound with bassist Pascal Humbert, who joins drummer Jean-Yves Tola as the band's second Parisian ex-pat, and Jeffrey-Paul Norlander, former leader of the Denver Gentlemen, who adds a spooky vibe with his fiddle, organ, cello and guitar. Tola's galloping drumbeats are like a procession of horses, driving each song toward a shadowy fate. That he and Humbert spent a half-decade together in the LA-based group Passion Fodder completes Sixteen Horsepower's incestuous make-up: Back in the early

'90s Edwards and Norlander were both in a prototype of the Gentlemen, a band that traded in gas-light and cobble-stone imagery. Even then, it was clear from his music that Edwards pined for the "simpler" times of a hundred years past.

After a short falter where the band's lineup became unstable, Sixteen Horsepower is now saddled up and ready to ride again, though truth be told, most of its missionary conversions have been on European shores. Last summer, the group charted well in Norway, Holland and Belgium, and played huge outdoors European rock festivals like England's Reading Festival in England and Pukklepop in Brussels. "There's a history of bands like us doing well over there," says Tola. "A lot of people are talking about the revival of country, rootsy Americana, but I've never heard anything that sounds like this."

"Bands that have an American sound don't do very well in America for some reason," adds Edwards. "Over here people are over that; they don't want to talk about the Wild, Wild West. They don't want to talk about how we slaughtered all the Indians and enslaved all the blacks and made the Orientals build the railroads. They don't want anything Southern" *continued on page 47*



# ben folds five

## another brick in the wall

It's 6 p.m., the week before Christmas. Smell of cold, New York is freezing. Times Square is alive with last-minute shoppers, and Ben Folds is high above it all, finishing a soundcheck for *MTV Live* under the watchful eyes of Ken Griffey Jr. and Andre Agassi, from the All-Star Cafe billboards across the street.

"Take this job and shove it/I ain't working here no more," Folds sings, launching into Johnny Paycheck's famed country kiss-off, bassist Robert Sledge and drummer Darren Jessee sliding in neatly behind him. Just four years ago, in this same city, Folds really meant

those words. The only gig he could get in New York was in a way off-Broadway production of *Buddy*, the Buddy Holly musical. He moved back to North Carolina thinking about quitting music altogether. Now, in just the last three days, Ben Folds Five has not only played *MTV Live*, but appeared on the *Late Show With David Letterman* and taped an episode of VH-1's *Crossroads*. In three weeks, the band will return to Manhattan as *Saturday Night Live*'s musical guest.

**by david daley**

"Got Ben Folds on the radio," sings the Counting Crows' Adam Duritz in *Recovering The Satellite's* "Monkey," and suddenly he's not the only one. "Brick," the contemplative ballad from BFS's second record *Whatever And Ever Amen*, seems poised to become 1998's first major crossover hit. Recorded in Folds's Chapel Hill home and released last spring, the album has built so slowly and steadily that there are now visions of platinum records and Grammy nominations. They imagine all-ages crowds populated by both the under-21 crowd and their parents.

More Tin Pan Alley than Independence Avenue, Ben Folds Five's rollicking, piano-driven songs have had a rocky relationship with the musical elite. Openly disdainful of college radio pomposity, the three band members seem to live in Chapel Hill just for the abundance of irritating trendy people to puncture in their songs. "Underground," from their first record, skewers the dull cutting edge in a Queen-styled operetta. The more recent "Ballad Of Who Could Care Less" fires this salvo at the world-weary slacker set: "I've got your old ID/And you're all dressed up like the Cure." The underground fired back a two-word epithet: Billy Joel. Then another: Elton John. With "Brick," those wars might become a thing of the past. Yet despite sounding like the ideal crossover hit, a gentle ballad about a young couple growing lonely and apart, it's not that simple. It's actually a song about the complicated emotional aftershocks of abortion.

"Yeah, I'm kind of surprised it's on the radio," says Folds, laughing nervously. "We're not making it an issue. You get the occasional person you have to tell, 'I'm not going to answer that question.' But yes," he concedes, after only gentle probing, still not uttering the word "abortion." "It's the story of my senior year of high school, basically. More so, it's about the fact that it happens and there are emotional byproducts. There's a reason why it's a big political issue—because it damages lives. You might as well show the lives. Here's the human part of a situation, which I think is more something to focus on than the political part.

"It's not me to go stand on the street and scream about an issue," he adds. "I actually really do like Fiona Apple a lot, so I'm not ragging on her. But I think it's a really immature thing to do to put stuff like that way up front. It sells records, and you're adored for it. You can be a spokesperson and hear yourself talk. I understand how that would be fun. But you don't think twice when someone stands up on a pulpit screaming at you."

It's a moving song, and a moving story. Indeed, Folds's own biography is filled with the kind of disappointments, frustrations and wanderlust usually seen only in country songs—which means he appreciates this new success, but also doesn't take it too seriously.

"My family lived in 15 houses before I graduated high school. I switched girlfriends, switched majors, switched houses, switched towns. I couldn't stick with anything at all," Folds says. "My high school advisor actually told me he thought I'd never be able to stick with anything. It almost upset me enough to cry in the motherfucker's office. It really hit home. I didn't think I could.

## photos by michael halsband

"I got married when I was 20 years old, was married five years then divorced. I got married again, a second time, and still couldn't do it. I moved to Nashville, to Michigan, toured Europe with a wind ensemble. I moved to London with a girlfriend, but I got there before she did, and decided to break up with her, so I told her mother. The fact I've been able to stick with this band is the ultimate. I've wanted to quit this band more than anything I've ever wanted to quit before. This has driven me up the wall so many fucking times. But we stuck it out. It's interesting that this is the only thing I've ever been able to stick with."

**"I take a good swing at all of my dreams/They pivot and slip... Ambition has given way to desperation."  
—Ben Folds Five, "Boxing"**

Not long ago, Folds practically gave up. He left Nashville and arrived in New York in 1993 as a failed publishing



since they proceeded to cart the piano around the country and set up in punk rock clubs in support of their debut *Ben Folds Five* (Caroline). Folds had it down to a science: He could get the piano off stage just four minutes after their set ended. That still didn't stop the titters.

"Other bands we were opening for would come out and laugh at us and make jokes," remembers Jessee.

"It used to piss me off so bad I'd feel my face turn red," says Folds. "It would happen constantly. Guys wouldn't say 'You're stupid for doing this.' They'd sneer, 'We'll see you a year from now.' That's a big hearty, Southern 'Fuck you.' I love that it's four years later and those guys have to kiss our ass."

Adds Sledge, "At the time we were taking shit from, I don't know, Archers Of Loaf fans. We're coming from the same place. We were on a small label like them, playing the same kind of clubs they do. So really what you're doing is pretty damn punk rock. You're humping your gear like everybody else, you practice in the same shitty environment. You're just not going to have hardcore people coming to your show looking to get off in a major way."

Folds once called it punk rock for sissies—punk for people who played in the high school marching band, who will admit they listened to Men At Work, not Black Flag, in 1983. Folds loved The Clash and Elvis Costello. But he, Sledge and Jessee also grew up with a love for pre-MTV Elton John, not to mention other piano faves like Randy Newman. An artist he actually *didn't* listen to,

however, is the one he draws the most comparisons with: Billy Joel. "I didn't have a single one of his albums when I was growing up," says Folds. "I heard it on the radio and I liked it. Now I have them, and I think they're really cool. Well, they're not cool, but they're really great records. He didn't make bad records. I was much more

**"I'd like to be as flamboyant and out there as Elton John—but there's just no fucking way."**

inspired by Elton John. He captured much more imagination. I have much more personally in common with Billy Joel, because he's a musician who writes his own words. Elton John is so flamboyant and out there. He captures your imagination. I'd like to be like that—but there's just no fucking way.

"It's just classic songwriting to me. I'm very old-school in that way," he says of his appreciation for old-time piano men. "I'm particularly into the cadencing of things. Obviously all of those people are monsters at that. But so is Motown, black R&B, Stevie Wonder, Carole King. Being such a nerd about it at such a young age, I didn't like bands that sounded like they were all technique and no message. So Costello was a blast. He was conveying something in a real raw way. For me, Costello, Randy Newman, Joni Mitchell and Rickie Lee Jones are much more of a blueprint."

Truth be told, both the Joel and John comparisons are lazy. Parts of the first record do have the flavor of Joel's root beer rag. But especially on *Whatever And Ever Amen*, the closest touchstone might be Joe Jackson—in the nimbleness of the band, its willingness to try new things, Folds's biting lyrics, and his vocal style. "We really learned how to play on the second record with each other. On the first record we got really good at playing aggressively and

earnestly together. We just tried to stretch the dynamic as much as possible, both in terms of irony, straight literalness, complete sorrow," says Sledge.

"I'd like to have a style," says Folds. "I got to talk to Todd Rundgren for like 45 minutes. He was interviewing me—dig that—and he said, 'You've got a recognizable style at this point. You can tell a song is yours.'" Folds gasps. "I was like, 'Really?' That's pretty cool.

"My singing used to be awful," admits Folds. "I don't have Jeff Buckley's voice. I don't write songs as an excuse to hear myself sing. It's the other way around: I sing so I can hear my songs. It can be kind of scary. You're on the radio next to—well, on the shelf next to Jeff Buckley. We're in the B's. People can flip through and pick up his record instead and hear a lot better singer. He has that knack. I've had to really work at it. Of course, he probably doesn't play piano as well as me. I'm not going to get all competitive with the guy because obviously he's not doing so well these days."

**"If you really want to see me/ Check the papers and the TV/ Look who's telling who what to do/Kiss my ass." —Ben Folds Five, "One Angry Dwarf And 200 Solemn Faces"**

Revenge of the nerds? No, says Folds, who will simply admit that the song's first line is true—he actually was 47 inches high in September 1975. But even though "Brick" is starting to soar even higher, Folds has been around music long enough to have seen too many of his dreams deferred to get overly excited now. He sounds just as interested in getting off the road to finish his experimental side-project, Fear Of Pop, with BFF producer Caleb Southern, and starting the band's third album, as basking in success. "God bless Jewel for touring 17 years on one record, but not me," he quips.

"The song's up there on the charts with these big names. It's fun just to watch and see what it's going to do," says Sledge. "We don't really have an agenda or anything to champion. I guess if you're Sleater-Kinney you have a cause. For us, it's a little undefined. It's just like everyman's music." **CMJ**







**EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT**



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** Sharp-edged indie-pop, *en Français*.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Stereolab, Beth Orton, Ivy.

### AUTOUR DE LUCIE

*Immoble* — **Netzwerk**

■ There was a lot to like about Autour De Lucie's self-titled 1996 debut, but its guitar-pop and orchestration was so wispy that even the mellowest of mistrals—the windstorms that sweep through the south of France—could have blown it away. The Parisian band takes an assertive step forward on its second album, exhibiting more complex song structures, punchier guitar work and confident vocals that never lapse into the cloying, sultry whisper that plagues so much French chanteusery. Valerie Leuillot sings of romance and heartbreak with a dose of attitude, delivering lines like “Je me suis perdue parfois”—“I’m lost sometimes”—in a believable, less wan tone. Musically, Autour De Lucie counteracts Leuillot's strummy acoustic guitar with Jean-Pierre Ensuque's driving electric leads and Johnny Marr-inspired riffs, pushing songs such as “Les Promesses” and “La Verité” toward a galloping, mid-tempo stride. Subtle samples and loops augment some of the 13 tracks and dominate the bonus remix of *Immoble's* poppiest song, “Chanson Sans Issue.” Besides its sturdiness, the album also shows off a greater depth and cohesiveness, with more pronounced rhythmic shifts and nifty touches like the piano-and-percussion instrumental “Sagrada Familia,” which sounds like something from the *Diva* soundtrack. Leuillot's vivid lyrics are best appreciated by French speakers, but Autour De Lucie's increasingly crisp and artful arrangements make *Immoble* a worthwhile listen even for non-Francophones. —Richard Martin

### BLACK GRAPE

*Stupid Stupid Stupid* — **Radioactive**

■ What is it about this band that makes it easy to tolerate, to even fete attributes that one wouldn't put up with in one's own social

circle? Is it the thrill of knowing what the bad kids are talking about, of recognizing a few words of Thieves' Latin? Whatever. When Shaun Ryder, whose idea of inspirational verse is “Gotta keep striving to get higher,” sings “I snuck into her bedroom/ And stole a fucking grand,” my head says no but my butt says yes. *Stupid Stupid Stupid* is one hell of a funky document, the kind of record that banishes the swivets of modern life to the furthest corner of the discotheque. The opening song, “Get Higher,” turns an expertly edited patchwork of Ronald Reagan speeches into a pro-drug spiel (“And another thing—Nancy and I are hooked on heroin”), which would burn lesser fingers. The party-in-the-studio patina Ryder's been perfecting since he was in Happy Mondays is now fully realized—anyone who gets remotely near this album will become a slave to Black Grape's impossible funkiness. Whether he's celebrating growing up with a father whose first name



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** 24-Hour Party People's Republic.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Sly & The Family Stone, Space Monkeys, Stone Roses.

might as well be “alleged” (“Dadi Waz A Badi”) or turning *Exile*-era Stones-type music on to Ecstasy (“Lonely”), there are simply no low points on the record. Even when Ryder and co. are singing about the double and triple bummers of council-estate life (“I saw you sell your kidney for a stone”), they manage to turn a chorus of laments into a celebration. Which, come to think of it, we used to call the blues.

—Andrew Beaujon

### CIAO BELLA

1 — **Endearing/March**

■ No band may be an island, but Ciao Bella, which hails from Alameda, California, a man-made atoll off Oakland's “coast,” might as well have been shipwrecked 20 years ago with nothing but records by T. Rex and the Sweet to entertain them. Mario Hernandez and Jamie McCormick, the band's



**DATALOG:** Released Dec. 15.  
**FILE UNDER:** Back to mono.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Raspberries, Big Star, T. Rex.

only members, have bubble gum in their veins, allowing them to meticulously craft snotty, clap-along pop with a glammy, androgynous edge (so much so that when I first heard the band's amazing song “Mens Lips” on a Darla compilation, I thought it was a girl band; cue my personal *Crying Game* scenario). It's unfortunate that there just aren't enough convertibles in the world to let people properly hear Hernandez and McCormick's teenage symphonies, which owe as much to Chris Bell as to Eric Carmen (especially the gorgeous “I've Should I?”). “Astronauts In Love” is a “Dreamweaver” for the barrette set; and though the band's given to singing lines like, “I'll be your personal Jesus,” Ciao Bella generally opts for stompy, AM-radio-ready confections that are as far from Depeche Mode as one can get. And since Ciao Bella has squeezed 14 of your new favorite songs into 37-odd minutes, the only real problem with this band is that it says goodbye too soon. —Andrew Beaujon

### GERALD COLLIER

Gerald Collier — **Revolution**

■ On his major-label debut, Gerald Collier proves that you don't need a reedy twang to evoke the Western experience. The former Best Kissers In The World singer and guitarist went solo on 1996's *I Had To Laugh Like Hell*, performing his evocative tunes to stripped-down accompaniment. With this self-titled follow-up, the Seattle singer/songwriter introduces bass, drums and lap steel to



**DATALOG:** Release date: Mar. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** Heartfelt barstool laments.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Richard Thompson, Pete Krebs, John Hiatt.

the mix, sidestepping the alt-country tag with honest expressions of a painfully lonely existence that might sound bleak if not for his bold, bright vocals. On ballads like "Dark Days," "Don't Discard Me" and "Hell Has Frozen Over (On Who I Used To Be)," you can almost picture Collier in a battered cowboy hat, one hand wrapped around a bottle of Bud that's resting on the bar. His alienation reaches its peak on the mid-tempo "Truth Or Dare," a bitter, hook-filled song that segues neatly into a faithful, albeit slightly more cheery, cover of Pink Floyd's "Fearless." Collier's at his best leading the quartet through the melodic paean to solitude "Rumpled Up," which features a full-on rock guitar solo and a rollicking rhythm that makes it better than anything he did with Best Kissers and a vibrant example of his songwriting prowess. —Richard Martin

## COME

Gently, Down The Stream — Matador

■ In the right hands, there are infinite ways to tackle the immense guitar chords and screaming emotions of Big Rock, and Come has once again taken a huge step, producing huge music. *Gently, Down The Stream*, the fourth record from Thalia Zedek and Chris Brokaw, sees them stretching out once again after contracting on *Near Life Experience*. Songs expand to the five- and six-minute mark; the guitars, which have always been



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** ROCK.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Bluesy Stones, Beasts Of Bourbon, Geraldine Fibbers.

fat and wrangly, are even more so, and Zedek's smoke-stained voice is still perhaps the most emotive, flat-out rock throat out there. But those aren't really surprises; you expect all that from a Come record. The sense of pure drama inside these songs is what's so dazzling about *Gently*. Each seems to be constructed on the edge of a cliff, and they perpetually teeter there, at

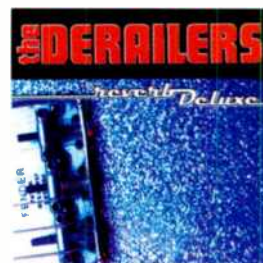
times stable and at others nearly tipping over the side, like massive anvils wobbling. In every song there's a moment of cathartic climax—usually it surrounds *that voice*—and the listener is pulled inside the mess like dust in a tornado, until the song abruptly winds to a close. This is a king-size record from a colossal band; those who like hard rock and have never heard Come are missing out.

—Randall Roberts

## DERAILERS

Reverb Deluxe — Watermelon/Sire

■ Not all records' charms are readily apparent; sometimes you get a better read on a disc once you've spent more time with it. Such is the case with the Derailers' *Reverb Deluxe*, though it doesn't take long—15 seconds to be exact. That's the time between when the last listed track, "Come Back," ends and when the hardcore honky-tonk band rips into "Raspberry Beret." Aside from the particular genius it takes for a Bakersfield-style country band to fly through one of Prince's perfect pop songs without a single tongue in cheek, the song points to the Derailers' essential appeal: namely, that the band's songs have as much to do with Boyce & Hart as they do Buck Owens. It's a modern approach to going retro, one which walks a fine line between style and substance. What ultimately makes this band more than four guys donning snazzy vintage suits and hair pomade are songs like "Dull Edge Of The Blade," which is a classic Roy Orbison-style heart-render that, just like Roy, perfectly splits the difference between country and rock 'n' roll. This isn't to say that the Derailers sound like Roy Orbison or Buck Owens, or exactly like any



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** The Streets Of Bakersfield.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Dwight Yoakam, the Blasters, The Sun Sessions.

Thalia Zedek's smoke-stained voice is still perhaps the most emotive rock throat around.

of the classic country influences that surface on *Reverb Deluxe*, but that the band invites you to share its love for those sounds by creating an original one of its own. The idea isn't so much authenticity as sincerity, and you don't have to be a honky-tonk angel to appreciate it. —

Scott Frampton

## DJ VADIM

USSR Reconstruction — Ninja Tune

■ DJ Vadim is a practitioner of experimental hip-hop, that ineluctable genre of hazy, blurred-edge music that's emerged over the last two or three years and is perhaps best epitomized by the *Headz* compilations on Mo Wax. Like most of the music's practitioners, Vadim is a pretty busy guy: In addition



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 15.  
**FILE UNDER:** Experimental hip-hop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Mo Wax's *Headz* compilations, DJ Cam, Coldcut.

to recording for the influential Ninja Tune label, he also helms his own label, Jazz Fudge, and has collaborated with Techno Animal (Kevin Martin) on an obscure, but utterly worthwhile, record called *The Bug*, on the Brooklyn WordSound label. The hallmarks of his style are by now familiar: a clipped, sinister beat, a dark bass line, a few found vocal samples and keyboard fills, with other samples and manipulated elements laid on top and then removed. On *USSR Reconstruction*, Vadim subjects his creations to the scalpels of mixologists such as the Prunes, DJ Krush, Kid Koala and the Silent Poets. The music isn't quite as dank or nocturnal as Portishead or Luke Vibert's Wagon Christ persona, but it is intriguing nonetheless. *USSR Reconstruction* (the title refers to Vadim's Russian origin) works best as a sonic backdrop, although if you pay strict attention, there isn't really all that much there. —James Lien



**DATALOG:**  
Released Nov. 28.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Gentle strangeness.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Cul De Sac, Pell Mell, the Whitefronts.

## DOUBLE U & GLANDS OF EXTERNAL SECRETION

The Double U & Glands Of External Secretion — VHF

■ The Double U isn't quite an instrumental band, but it could pass for one. The San Francisco outfit's songs are geared so much more for group dynamics than for carrying a melody, and the soft, gargly vocals used so much more for sound than for words, that it's easy to forget that someone *is* singing. The 11 brief, gently kinetic pieces the band plays on the first disc of this two-CD set (including a version of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" so devolved as to be unrecognizable) are restrained and meditative: Undistorted guitars and bass make room for one another, with keyboards occasionally wandering in. The Glands Of External Secretion used to be *Bananafish* editor and noise aficionado Seymour Glass's duo with songwriter Barbara Manning; at this point, it's a solo project of Glass, but he still thrives on collaboration. The second disc is Glass's "demix" of the Double U's recordings; rather than playing with the components of their recording, he augments them with noise, echo, rearrangement, all kinds of sound effects and, in one case, a blating tuba part, adding mild interference to every track, which makes their centers more fun to get at. But Glass honors the essence of the songs he's coating with gunk, even as he thumbs a nose at the purity of their original presentation. —*Douglas Wolk*

## FASTBACKS

Win Lose Or Both — PopLlama

■ Other punk-pop bands come and go; the Fastbacks are, or should be, forever. The scrappy, endlessly energetic, four-chord-friendly Seattle quartet predates grunge by a decade, and shows every sign of outliving it now. This "EP" joins four new (studio) songs to nine live (and older) ones, recorded on a 1997 tour with Pearl Jam. The new

ones are catchy, rear-end-kicking protests against everyday frustrations, in sync with the best traditions of aggressive, trendless, big-guitar pop. "Book Of Revelations" charges from Kim Warnick's sung list of everything she won't believe into one of Kurt Bloch's arpeggiated, doodly riffs, and then makes way for the rocking, endlessly sympathetic, "Used To Be," in which Bloch and Warnick joyously crush a sad friend's troubles under power chords. The concert tracks are not the strongest of



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Rocket-propelled rock 'n' roll.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Ramones, Buzzcocks, Foo Fighters, Joan Jett.

the Fastbacks' many live recordings, but they show how Bloch's songs and shotgun guitar might enthuse any rock crowd with a heart, and how Warnick's throaty, excited singing could sound out-of-tune only to infidels. Included are demolition-strength versions of shoulda-been number-ones like "On Your Hands" and "In The Winter"; guitar tricks that whizz by like short, cool, amusement park rides; and ridiculous live banter ("Now we're gonna get really good"), proving that too much rock 'n' roll from the Fastbacks is never enough.

—*Stephen Burt*

## FEEDER

Polythene — Elektra

■ Some bands sound so pre-packaged for MTV consumption that a video pops into your mind as soon as you hear them. For Feeder, you'd probably need plenty of overwrought glamour shots to complement the



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Strummy, post-punk pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Smashing Pumpkins, Silverchair, Veruca Salt.

Other pop punk bands come and go. The Fastbacks are, or should be, forever.

band's over-produced songs. The distortion on Grant Nicholas's guitar has been compressed into such a small bandwidth that the rage and fury has been all but drained out of the

fuzz. Lean verses give way to saturated choruses with only a slight change in intensity. It almost seems like this English trio's debut, *Polythene*, was mixed for a three-inch TV speaker, which is kind of a shame, because Nicholas writes memorable, sway-along melodies. His breathy, candy-coated vocals have just enough intonation to get your head hopping. Jon Lee's polyrhythms give depth to the strummy guitar parts. Then along comes a refrain like: "I'm going out for a while so I can get high with my friends" and the big-production video reappears. Doors slam in slow motion and some moody brawler is shaking his shoulder-length, moussed hair. Here's the fiery buildup and the flickering neon signs. Does anyone over the age of 10 think this is rebellious anymore? —*Neil Gladstone*

## FLUORESCINEIN CD

High Contrast Comedown — DGC

■ Okay, I know everyone is sick of hearing about Los Angeles's Silver Lake "scene"—Beck, the Dust Brothers, blah blah blah. The truth is, it's just a neighborhood full of musicians who were weaned on the Beatles and teathed on Black Flag. Exhibit A: Fluorescein.



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Silver Lake power pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Lutefisk, Cake, Foo Fighters.

rescein. Named after a stain for eye tissue, Fluorescein is led by Greg Mora, formerly of Lutefisk and a regular around you-know-where. (Lutefisk drummer Quazar sits in on many of the tracks.) Mora's songs nicely combine the required punk and pop influences, with a focus on psychology that shows he must have listened to Suicidal Tendencies' "Institutionalized" quite a bit, as well. On the pop side, there are tight vocal

# ANI DI FRANCO

## LITTLE PLASTIC CASTLE

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harmonies (“Donuts And Sharks”) and manic tempo changes (“Crazy Eights”). On the punk side, you get big bass lines (“Cathy’s On Crank”) and furious vocal outbursts (just about everywhere). Mora looks at life from an emotional ground zero with songs like “This Time,” a passive-aggressive outburst over a disintegrating relationship: “This time it’s all for you... this time there won’t be a next time.” “Cathy’s On Crank” captures the mingled cattiness and concern that follow when a friend starts losing it. In “Stoned Cold War,” things get even worse. Angry but insightful, Fluorescein would sound just as good if it had come from Sheboygan. —Heidi MacDonald

**Bill Frisell has always been about exploring what happens when he tries new things.**

occasional string section or piano-based ballad makes for some variety, mostly on weaker tracks like the maudlin “Lately” (“Help me to understand/All of my fellow man”). Though the band’s earnestness is refreshing among the irony and loudness of current British rock, it would be more so if the music were more exciting in its own right. —Franklin Bruno

## BILL FRISELL

*Gone, Like A Train* — Nonesuch

Over the past 15 or so years, Bill Frisell has quietly and unobtrusively created a repertoire that stands alone in contemporary music. The contemplative guitarist has always been about exploring what happens when he tries new and untried things, giving himself unusual challenges and placing his distinctive guitar sound into unexpected settings—a country album, John Hiatt covers, an album of film soundtracks to silent movies. It would be a little pedestrian to say that now he’s decided to rock, but much of *Gone, Just Like A Train* does carry with it



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 6.  
**FILE UNDER:** Cerebral six-string.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Ginger Baker Trio, John Scofield, John Zorn’s Naked City.

a bit of the exuberance of jazz/rock fusion. While he doesn’t exactly crank the knobs and wail like a snowboard commercial—you won’t see the bespectacled guitarist diving into any mosh pits—his usually muted, twangy electric guitar has a bit more distortion on it and flexes a bit more muscle. Best of all, it’s surprisingly accessible to even non-jazzheads or casual acquaintances with Frisell’s music. People often refer to artists like Frisell as a musician’s musician, but *Gone, Just Like A Train* is really an album by a listener’s listener, made to be heard and enjoyed by a wide range of interesting people. —James Lien

## FRANK & WALTERS

*Grand Parade* — Setanta

Several albums on, the Frank & Walters (no, there’s no one named Frank or Walter on the record) are still mining a somewhat colorless brand of jangle that pre-dates the currently lauded batch of Brit-poppers by half a decade. (Remember Ned’s Atomic Dustbin?) Sometimes coming off as a less classy Wedding Present, the Irish band has established a signature style featuring brightly ringing guitars, rapidly strummed acoustic underpainting, and distortion in the “big” choruses, topped by Paul Linehan’s working-class accented vocals. It’s a shame that the group’s approach is so dry and controlled, as most songs are well crafted, occasionally broaching odd themes with warmth and compassion. “Russian Ship” comes from the point of view of a Soviet émigré witnessing the fall of that empire, while “Colours” has a joyous, open sound that belies its bitter equation of a woman’s ever-changing clothes and moods. The



**DATALOG:** Release date: Mar. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Sincere, somewhat anthemic Brit-rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Modern English, the Icicle Works, Chameleons.

## SUE GARNER

*To Run More Smoothly* — Thrill Jockey

Sue Garner has been the resident old soul in a series of thoroughly modern bands. The post-no-wavers Fish & Roses, the post-punk girl group the Shams and the galvanized art rockers Run On have all been vastly enriched by Garner’s graceful lyricism, which is rooted in her affinity for country ballads and ’50s rock ’n’ roll. On her first solo record, Garner makes it clear that her ensemble experience has influenced her just as profoundly. She takes a holistic approach to her songs, writing simple, sensually charged lines and letting instrumen-



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Traditionalist art-rock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Yo La Tengo, Run On, Sandy Denny.

tal textures complete the picture. Working with longtime collaborators and friends such as Run On bandmates Rick Brown and Katie Gentile and Yo La Tengo’s Georgia Hubley, Garner moves easily from the sweet and wistful mood of “Nightfall,” to the more robust “Glazed,” to a cover of “Silver Wings” by Merle Haggard, whose morose spirit she nails perfectly. Two songs written collaboratively with Brown shift the mood in the second half, with Garner singing hauntingly over a backbone of rhythm à la Fish & Roses. Finally, she revisits her past in a different way on “Continuous Play,” originally recorded with the Shams. The song would be gorgeous no matter what, but this version is especially vivid and tender, a distillation of what she has learned from the pop music she clearly loves. —Andrea Moed

## GOTHIC ARCHIES

*The New Despair* — Merge

“Bubble gum goth” seems the ideal platform for indie rock’s favorite curmudgeon, Stephin Merritt, the Magnetic Fields frontman who maintains a public persona so



**DATALOG:**  
Released Nov. 25.  
**FILE UNDER:**  
Bubble gum goth.  
R.I.Y.L.: Magnetic  
Fields, Future  
Bible Heroes,  
Long Hind Legs.

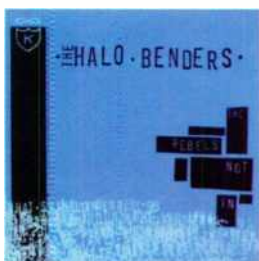
dour he makes Ian Curtis look like Hayley Mills in *Pollyanna*. Yet on a cursory first listen, *The New Despair* feels lacking, especially in dramatic presence.

Nobody is likely to mistake Merritt's deadpan baritone for the Mission's Wayne Hussey (although he occasionally suggests a kinder, gentler Andrew Eldritch), and the Gothic Archies' music lands closer to the "loop songs" from *The House Of Tomorrow* EP by the Magnetic Fields than Bauhaus's *In The Flat Field*. But after a couple of spins, the other half of the creative equation kicks in. Not only are these seven tracks damnably catchy (especially "City Of The Damned" and "The Abandoned Castle Of My Soul"), but they're distinguished by a brevity that would make the members of Ohio Express gnash their teeth with envy. Merritt remains an incisive lyricist, tailoring his tone as befits this genre exercise. One doubts Christian Death's Rozz Williams could whip off a couplet like "Charmed like sleepwalkers on a precipice/Dreaming as one inside our chrysalis" ("Ever Falls The Twilight") with such effortless aplomb. Love him or hate him (or both), Stephin Merritt has made yet another stellar record. Damn him to Hell. Oh wait... he's already there. —Kurt B. Reighley

## HALO BENDERS

The Rebel's Not In — K

■ The nature of collaborations as an evolving force is undeniable, but the offspring of Built To Spill's Doug Martsch and Calvin Johnson (of Beat Happening and Dub Narcotic) always leaves me wondering what their motivations were each time around. Is it their pop-song outlet now that they're both doing more experimental work with their other bands, or is it their experimental outlet since they both seem deep down to like pop-song folk? *The Rebel's Not In* straddles both axes, but more often than not the collaboration sounds less like two gears clicking into place and more like someone just tried to jam a stick in between them. The most perplexing moments occur in songs like "Do That Thing," plodding stuff which seems to suggest that just because they have a violin, all their stabs at dreariness will cohere. Naturally, it falls apart along the way. That song's antithesis, "Turn It My Way," is the album's highlight —very Beat Happening-ish but wonderfully cluttered with swirling organ. "Virginia Reel Around The Fountain" and "Foggy Bottom" may be the most



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Indie-pop experimentation.  
R.I.Y.L.: Built To Spill, Beat Happening, Modest Mouse.



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unified pieces, best expressing the collaborators' love for odd juxtapositions; they are pleasures worth much in themselves, but weak counterbalances against a record whose goals of sloppiness have overridden much of the rest. —Liz Clayton

## TED HAWKINS

The Final Tour — Evidence

■ Ted Hawkins was an American treasure—a gutsy, soul-voiced folk singer who was as true and real as they come. When he was discovered by DGC Records earlier this decade, he was plying his trade on the Venice Beach boardwalk in Los Angeles. On his right strumming hand, he had one long fingernail



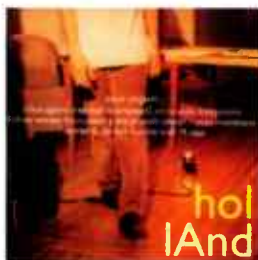
**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 13. Also just out, a Ted Hawkins best-of on Rhino.  
**FILE UNDER:** Otis Redding unplugged.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Taj Mahal, Guy Davis.

horrendously lacquered up to make a human pick, while on his left, he wore a leather driving glove, which enabled him to play guitar for hours on end without cutting his fingers. In addition to covering older songs, he wrote timeless originals that could have been sung by Otis Redding, Curtis Mayfield or Sam Cooke. After signing to DGC, he spent his last years touring nice clubs and small halls, and it looked like his star was finally on the rise, when he suddenly died of a stroke on New Year's Day 1995. The recordings on *The Final Tour* come from Hawkins's shows of the period, his galvanic voice and resonant guitar strumming taking center stage. Whereas Hawkins's one album for DGC, *The Next Hundred Years*, features backing musicians, this solo set is just Ted the way he performed live, which makes it less a posthumous archival release and more of a true representation of his spirit. —James Lien

## HOLLAND

Your Orgasm — Darla

■ The one-man band formerly known as Sea Saw and Magnetophone would now like to be called Holland. It's his way of showing that his music is headed in a new



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Lo-fi synth pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Gary Numan, His Name Is Alive, Holiday.

direction, one that's guided by the hum of a vintage analog synthesizer and the editing capabilities of a hard-disk recorder. What do you get when you combine technology from the '70s and '90s? Early '80s synth-pop that sounds like it's being played on a Casio keyboard. As cheesy as that description might seem, these little ditties have a hushed intimacy usually reserved for lo-fi wunderkinds who capture their personal ruminations on worn-down four-tracks. At first, the buzzing chords and cold bleeps evoke a retro kitsch that's all but lost its novelty. Then Trevor (uh, that's Holland's given name) begins to sing and these odd, artificial tones take on a new air. It's like the president of the computer club is pouring his heart into surprisingly catchy songs. He weaves stiff keyboard progressions and curt melodies through primitive drum loops and powder-puff harmonies, and he delivers obtuse lines like "I don't mind needles in my eye, with my face against your thigh," with a bubble gum levity. If only that '80s high school sitcom *Square Pegs* was still on the air, Holland would be assured a reoccurring role. —Neil Gladstone

## HOME

13:Netherregions — Jetset

■ On *Netherregions*, Home sounds something like a group of aliens who crash landed on earth and decided to start a twangy indie-rock band. Since its last full-length, *Elf::Gulf Bore Waltz*, the NYC-by-way-of-



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** Prog-dusted space-folk.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Palace, Sebadoh, Damien Jurado.

Florida group has gone through three drummers before settling on Catherine Oberg. Now Home's songs are a little more focused and less concerned with gurgling synthesizers. That's not to say this quartet is churning out rote pop tunes. Hardly. "The Boogeymen" gently implodes as if drifting off into a black hole. Then a wash of plucked notes flows by, gentle tones that could be coming as easily from a harp as a guitar, and segues into a pining vocal melody and a patch of trash-can funk.

**Ted Hawkins was an American treasure.**

These soundscapes have the same effect as lying on your back and staring at the stars in the wide-open country: It's hard to pin down exactly what you're focusing on because everything seems so expansive. There's the meditative piano part and the hovering cello twinkling in the distance. All of a sudden some fella is playing a quiet campfire ditty. Perhaps the mothership will come to rescue these otherworldly beings one day, but for right now the music of the heartland seems to be helping them through the tough times. —Neil Gladstone

## JAMES IHA

Let It Come Down — Virgin

■ On his first solo project, Smashing Pumpkins guitarist James Iha handily sidesteps the overpowering influence of Billy Corgan. *Let It Come Down* takes a



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 10.  
**FILE UNDER:** Sweetie-boy pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Ivy, Holiday, Fountains Of Wayne, Van Dyke Parks.

sliver of the Pumpkins' sound—baroque pop—and builds an entire album out of it, as Iha moderates his normally aggressive guitar attack, frequently going acoustic. The album's success derives from Iha's obvious love for his subject and, more important, its modest goals: Iha is no closet folkie, and he's not out to do another *Pet Sounds* homage. Despite featuring a slew of guests (from Pumpkins bassist D'arcy



and Fountains Of Wayne/Ivy tunesmith Adam Schlesinger to Veruca Salt's Nina Gordon), *Come Down* is a model of musical simplicity, its songs melting from light folk-pop to plush ballads, with nary a dilettantish noise experiment among them. Iha's singing voice offers no great surprises, proffering a dreamy purr that has its roots in Corgan's loverboy croon—all the more reason for him to avoid rocking out. If it's airy and too mild by half, it is also warmly produced and ardently romantic. "Silver String," a piano-based elegy punctuated by viola, offers a lyric so fanciful you don't question it: "We're lovers dear/Yeah, we're honestly/ Together somehow/And tied with silver string/We'll live forever and ever."

—Chris Molanphy

## KAIA

Ladyman — Mr. Lady

■ As a former member of Team Dresch, the outpunk supergroup that seems to have no secrets, Kaia has dedicated her solo career to sharing even more of her emotional world, exploring what it means for an introspective person to be out,



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 7.  
**FILE UNDER:** Quiet riot grris.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Lois Maffeo, Team Dresch, Spinanes.

while showing her folkier side. *Ladyman*, her second album, is a collection of deeply intimate songs, some yearning and some filled with rage—quiet rage, that is.

The most striking of these is "That's Mr. Baby To You," a ballad of resentment so acidic that it could only be a soliloquy. "Please assume this song's about you," she sings to a former lover who was so vain, "What were you thinking every time you called me dumb?" As if to diffuse the tension, the song is followed by a synth-pop instrumental "Intermission." ("You probably can't dance to this but you can try," say the liner notes, correctly.) When she's not plumbing the extremes of passion and dispassion, Kaia is haunted by the specter of lost commitment. "Little Brave One 97" is the lament of someone abandoned; "Disappear Without A Trace," the plaint of someone else about to leave. Here, as on much of the album, the weight of Kaia's words seems to overwhelm her simple, strummed melodies. The few upbeat moments (indeed, the few songs with drums) come to feel like a release of Olympian proportions. —Andrea Moed

## TOMMY KEENE

Isolation Party — Matador

■ You can't blame Tommy Keene for forging ahead with the power pop banner. The man's undeniably talented, and with *Songs From The Film*, he made one of the classic power pop albums of the '80s. *Isolation Party* finds Keene mining the territory he's claimed as his own: instantly memorable melodies supported by layered ringing guitars, chugging

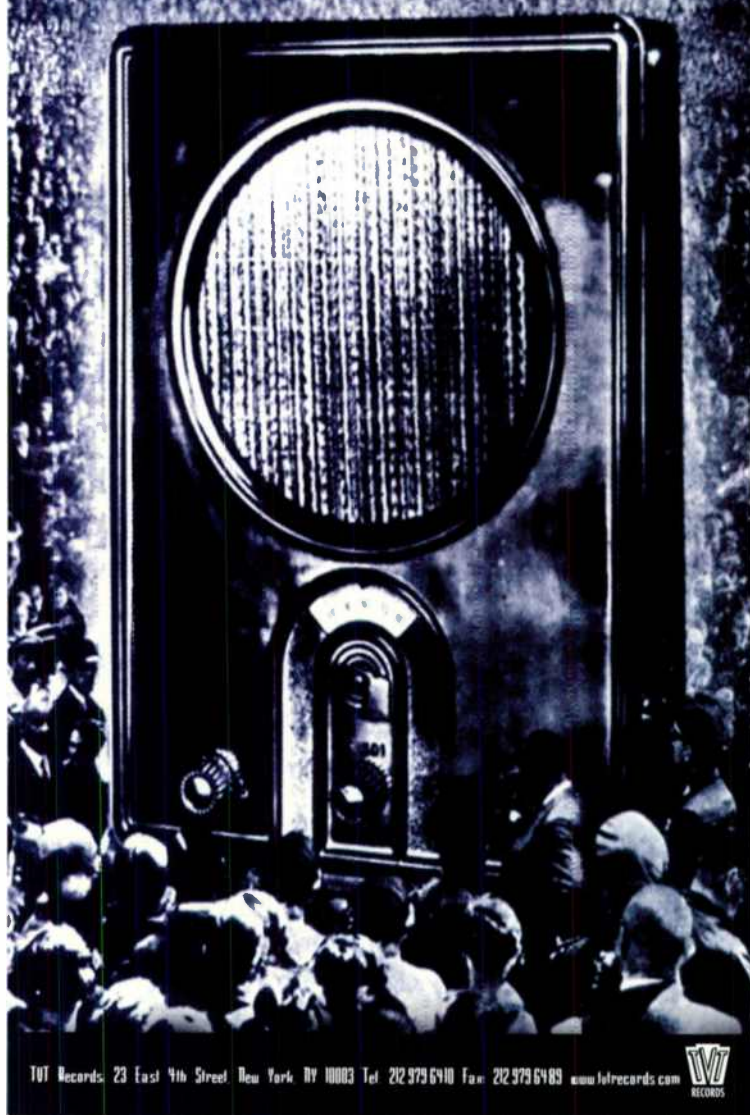
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rhythm guitar and subtle extras—a hand-clap here, an organ there, hooks everywhere. If at times the album produces a *déjà-entendu* effect, it's more a result of seamless songwriting than of quotes or pilferings from the past, unless the past is



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** Undiluted power pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Replacements, Matthew Sweet, Velvet Crush.

his own. Keene worked recent stints with Paul Westerberg and with Velvet Crush, and "Long Time Missing," at least, shows some of the after-effects; the song touches on pop euphoria, and the joy Keene finds in the chorus is infectious. In the same vein, "Tuesday Morning," like a perfect 45, ends so quickly that one's tempted to listen again. On the flipside, though, some of the longer songs lose the power of their pop and the focus of their audience. While the cumulative effect of *Isolation Party* may be a bit numbing, Keene's singular talent for writing choruses that carry the listener to moments of pleasure remains undiminished. —Steve Klinge

## NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN & MICHAEL BROOK: REMIXED

*Star Rise* — RealWorld

■ Remix albums often recall a staple scene from Hollywood romantic comedies, where the hero or heroine needs new togs for a special event, and models various outfits in front of a showroom mirror. Some of the ensembles are silly, others too grand and



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** The bridge on the raver Qawwali.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Bally Sagoo, Ofra Haza, Anokha: Soundz Of The Asian Underground.

maybe, just maybe, a couple are stunning. *Star Rise*, on which second generation Asian artists reinterpret tracks from two of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's collaborations with guitarist Michael Brook, faces other challenges and considerations, too: the cultural stature of the Qawwali giant, the religious content of his music, the fact that he was still alive when the project was taking shape. Consequently, in the pursuit of reverence, too many of these nine

tracks compromise the identity of Nusrat and the individual reconstruction crew. The exceptions come from the remixers that aren't afraid to smudge some dirty fingerprints all over the master, most notably Asian Dub Foundation's pounding "Taa Deem" interpretation and the Dohl Foundation & Fun^Da^Mental's revamp of "Nothing Without You/Tery Bina." *Star Rise* isn't a bad album, just a disappointing one that fails to truly embody the ecstatic rapture both Nusrat's voice and finely crafted dance grooves can generate under ideal circumstances. —Kurt B. Reighley

## LABRADFORD

Mi Media Naranja — Kranky

■ Labradford's music has always been about desolate scenery and empty vistas. The group's wide and minimal guitar compositions roam and examine stretched, instrumental structures and slow, methodical ideas. Rarely, though, has the band given the listener much to firmly latch on to—a melody here, an oblique bridge there, but those have always taken a back seat to the overall breadth of a song. With *Mi Media Naranja*, though, something concrete and a tad tangled appears for the first time. Perhaps it's in the

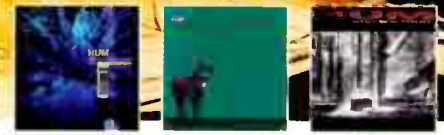
**Star Rise isn't a bad album, just a disappointing one.**

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**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** Soundtracks sans films.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Flying Saucer Attack, Ennio Morricone, Skylab.

growing role of violins and pianos, or the group's expanded use of beats, albeit subtle, empty ones. But more likely it comes from the guitars that wrap more melody into the fold than in the past. Whereas Labradford's music once focused on the careful examination of a singular idea, on *Naranja* the band allows melodies to meander and morph gently into others, creating an increasingly complicated landscape. This jagged path toward concrete forms creates subtle music designed more for the mind than the body. Be forewarned: This isn't party music by any means; it needs an attentive mind and ear to be fully appreciated. —Randall Roberts

## JON LANGFORD

Skull Orchard — Sugar Free

■ Not content as a 20-year veteran of the Mekons (who have an album due later this year) and a full-time Waco Brother, "Jon-boy" Langford has released his first solo album of original tunes, and it's a good one. *Skull Orchard* finds him in his rock 'n' roll

mode—as opposed to his country mode, or his punk mode, or his art-theorist mode. Classic Langford guitar riffs dominate, with roots in T. Rex glam, in Clash anthems, even in Johnny Burnette anarchic rockabilly. But it's not solely a stripped-down affair, nor does it have the feeling of a side-project diversion, partly because of the several cameos from Sally Timms and the scatterings of fiddle, horns and piano. Although the songs often look to Langford's homeland of Wales or to the sea (with a submerged *Moby*



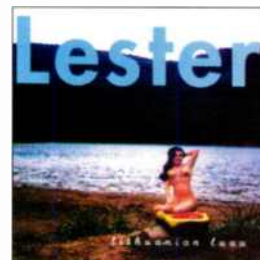
**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 27.  
**FILE UNDER:** Rock 'n' roll rallying cries.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Mekons, Three Johns, Shane MacGowan.

*Dick* theme), they're very American, in the way that the Rolling Stones in the late '60s were American. Some of the best songs here—the rallying cry of "Penny Arcades," the undiluted rock of "Trap Door"—could be outtakes from 1989's *The Mekons Rock-'n'-Roll*, which is high praise indeed. It may be idealistic to think that *Skull Orchard* will win Langford new converts, but if political revolutionary writer Dario Fo can win the notice of the Nobel-giving establishment, anything's possible. —Steve Klinge

## LESTER

Lithuanian Luau — Lost

■ Listening to *Lithuanian Luau*, you may wonder where you've heard that mix of circus-style organ and surfish guitar, that curiously shambling meter and easy swing. That would be none other than the seminal '80s (and still-chugging '90s) band the Scene Is Now. Lester is TSIN keyboardist Phil Dray in overdub land with a full complement of gear. He seems to have had great fun making this relentlessly lighthearted, all-instrumental album, with toe-tapping rhythms and melodies that tempt you to make up your own lyrics. Though no one would take Lester for electronica (with those *real* handclaps? Come on!), there's a bit of Aphex Twin or Third Eye Foundation in Dray's flair for mating odd sounds. However dense the mix, that last bell or maraca always slides effortlessly into place. Another trait Dray shares with some electronic music types is his tendency to compose fantasias on genre themes. There's a loose, lurching tribute to "Those Incredible 'No Wave"



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 22.  
**FILE UNDER:** Space age wurlitzer of love.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Moondog, Topsy, They Might Be Giants.



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Nights at Max's Kansas City, 1977-78" that is evocative, if not quite no wave, and "Cubano," a riff on the cha-cha revved up by a buzzing guitar. There's something about Dray's whimsical tunesmithing that prompts that old vanguardist question: Why isn't instrumental synth-pop the music of everyday life, of supermarket checkouts and airport bars? At the very least, we should demand that a copy of *Lithuanian Luau* be licensed to every carousel operator in the country. —*Andrea Moed*

## LOFTUS

### Loftus — Perishable

■ Sometimes the story behind an album is at least as compelling as the music on it, or in some crucial way inseparable from it. Such is the case with this debut by the Loftus project, a collaborative effort that brings together Chicago's art-damaged blues-rockers Red Red Meat, Brooklyn's obsessively spare 'n' moody Rex, and the talented Chicago player/producer Bundy K. Brown. The disc settles into exactly the kind of quietly noisy deconstructed country and blues grooves you'd expect from this cast of



DATALOG: Release date: Feb. 2.  
FILE UNDER: Fractured blues abstractions.  
R.I.Y.L.: Rex, Red Red Meat, Codeine.

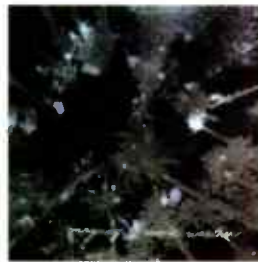
marginal musical characters, with tinny junkyard drums banging up against mumbled twangy vocals, wheezing slide guitars and rubbery bass, and Brown adding a touch of post-rock dub magic to one of the more adventurous instrumental passages. (Note: You might as well consider this an all instrumental album, since the few lyrics that are actually decipherable are also cryptic as hell—vocals are just another layer of texture to these boys.) Fans of Rex and Red Red Meat will be more than pleased. Period. But there's more: According to the band's publicist, *Loftus* was originally commissioned by A&M, who'd seen the band live and signed it. After the record was recorded, the label evidently opted not to release it and sold it back to the band. And somehow, merely

imagining the conversations that might have transpired inside the walls of a major label upon first hearing *Loftus* doubles the pleasure of listening to this artfully skewed collection of abstract jams. —*Matt Ashare*

## MAGNOG

### More Weather — Kranky

■ If you piloted your spaceship to the distant end of the universe and stuck your head out the window... well, you wouldn't hear anything, because sound doesn't travel in a vacuum. But if it could, what you'd hear might well sound like Magnog—formless whoosh-



DATALOG: Released Nov. 24.  
FILE UNDER: Space cowboys.  
R.I.Y.L.: Flying Saucer Attack, BarDO Pond, Hawkwind.

ing, throbbing noise that seems to fade on into infinity. Call it "space rock" if you will, but there's not much rock in Magnog's world. The band uses the standard guitar-bass-drums set-up to create its music but steers clear of any formal song structure or even of the semi-organized grooves of early voyagers like Can. Instead, the rhythm section is in a constant state of jazzy breakdown, pleasantly buried underneath Moog drones and towering waves of abstract guitar effects. (Delay and Echoplex are essentially Magnog's lead instruments.) *More Weather's* two CDs contain over 140 minutes of home-recorded music, all of it instrumental demos pre-dating last year's debut album. Most of the material seems improvised directly to four-track, with others lasting one minute, some songs riding the same jam for half an hour. It rarely coalesces, staying nebulous (some might say "aimless"); it's a long and unearthly journey, for those looking to take the trip. —*David Jarman*

## CHRIS MILLS

### Every Night Fight For Your Life — Sugar Free

■ Chris Mills's debut full-length will probably be the only alt-country record this year that uses the phrase "keep it on the down



DATALOG: Released Jan. 27.  
FILE UNDER: Intro-spective alt-country.  
R.I.Y.L.: Will Oldham, Uncle Tupelo's Still Feel Gone, Jule Brown.

low," and manages to sound sincere. In fact, this 23-year-old Chicago songwriter sounds heartbreakingly sincere throughout *Every Night*; even when he builds songs around catch phrases and clichés ("I'm on fire for you"), he claims them as his own. Mills's voice has an unpolished desperation similar to Will Oldham's or Jeff Tweedy's, and he knows how to channel his desperation in myriad ways. On the boisterous "The Fresh Young Mouth," he bursts in through the front door, boldly growling about his burning passions. But on quieter gems like "Take Me Down" and "Stakes Is High," he retreats out back with his guitar, content to explore his loneliness and heartbreak. Like his moods, the sound can't be pegged into any one style, moving from stripped-down

The story behind *Loftus* is as compelling, and inseparable from, the music on it.

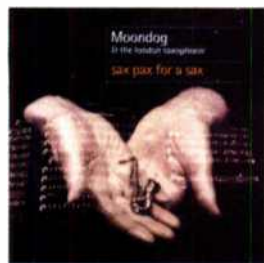
acoustic folk to more raucous rock. Producer Brian Deck of Red Red Meat, Edith Frost, Lambchop's Deanna Varagona, and other notable friends help fill out the mix, but Mills sounds powerful enough on his own. Although a song or two sound more like sketches than fully fleshed-out ideas, *Every Night's* unrestrained passion makes for a startling debut. —*Wendy Mitchell*

## MOONDOG

### Sax Pax For A Sax — Atlantic

■ Perhaps you've heard Big Brother And Holding Company or Love Child cover Moondog's "All Is Loneliness," or you're familiar with Moondog as that "former homeless street composer" with the long white Santa beard. Whatever. Moondog is Moondog, a free-minded musician whose recordings stretch back to the late '50s and sound as fresh and baffling today as they

did then. *Sax Pax For A Sax* is a new (!) recording, composed for multiple saxophones. As on his recordings for Prestige and Columbia, Moondog, along with the Apollo Saxophone Quartet, quickly jumps in and out of musical thought; these compositions last a few minutes each—just long enough to examine one specific melody before moving on to the next. Moondog himself appears above and below every composition: He's underneath, thumping on the bass drum, quietly providing the heart-beat; he's there towering over his composi-



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Stealth innovators.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Sun Ra, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Kronos Quartet.

tions, gently directing the tiny, tightly constructed brass arrangements. Those with the bass-guitar-drum or breakbeat/sampling blinders on, who consider those standard forms of musical rebellion to be the only path to true musical innovation, should wake up and check Moondog. His sense of harmony and curiosity is universally adventurous, and this extremely well crafted music is so odd and inviting that it's tough not to be completely enraptured by it.

—Randall Roberts

## MARK MULCAHY

*Fathering* — Mezzotint

■ Mark Mulcahy, the lead singer of Miracle Legion, could use a breather from whatever baggage the band has been carrying ever since the Morgan Creek label up and folded. On his solo album, *Fathering*, Mulcahy briefly acknowledges those disappointments over the swaying melody of “I Woke Up In The Mayflower,” wondering



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 18.  
**FILE UNDER:** Quiet, heartfelt tunes.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Miracle Legion, the Feelies, introspective Van Morrison.

somewhat ironically, “Could I make a comeback/Based on what I have done?” But *Fathering* isn't a defensive stab at regaining credibility, it's a respite from all the outside noise.

Taking on all the instrumental and vocal duties, Mulcahy sings with a poignant and comfortable wistfulness, and his shimmering guitar matches the warmth of his inimitable voice. Aside from the title track, which is a troubled declaration of paternal responsibility by an accidental parent, Mulcahy's conversational musings are gentle and reassuring. Where he could be bitter, he softly chides; he seems serene, not guarded or unsettled. Little things like his playful phrasing of “I think I have a fever/ It's incurable/But perhaps you can bring it on down” in “Hurry, Please Hurry” make the album a gem. *Fathering* is all about finding solace in the quiet unfolding of time and its cadence of love, temptation, regret and loss. On “In the Afternoon,” Mulcahy promises, “There's nothing you can say/To make me go away.” Thank goodness for that.

—Anne Marie Cruz

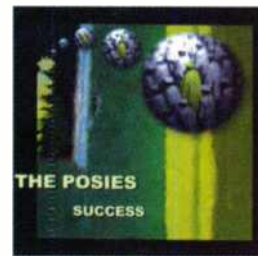
## POSIES

*Success* — PopLlama

■ The Posies bid farewell with *Success*. After beginning its career in 1988 with *Failure* on Seattle indie PopLlama, the band returns home with its valedictory pure pop album. *Success* divides not so much between Jon Auer's and Ken Stringfellow's alternating lead vocals as between heavy and light pop—occasionally within the same song—and the light fares better. When the songs use the spaces between the harmonies and let the guitars support rather

**Fathering is about finding solace in the quiet unfolding of time.**

than dominate, *Success* brings bright and seductive pop pleasure. Opener “Somehow Everything” doesn't disappoint with its catchy chorus, Hollies-esque harmonies, and multiple hooks, and then “You're The Beautiful One” nearly equals it with a slow-march drum track and sweetness and wit in the chorus. But when the Posies turn to the electric guitars and try to put some weight behind the melodies, as on “Looking Lost,” the charm disappears and the songs lose character and momentum. Several songs sound like demos (“Every Bitter Drop,” “Fall Song”), and



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Pure pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Matthew Sweet, the Hollies, Fountains Of Wayne.

autour de lucie

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they're all the better for it; almost GBV-like, the pleasure lies in hearing the possibilities. Though the band has its pockets full of bliss, too often the songs get weighed down with unnecessary muscle. When *Success* reaches too far, it falls short, but when it eases back, it succeeds. —*Steve Klinge*

## PORCUPINE TREE

Signify — Ark 21

■ Steven Wilson has been making prog-rock in the back room of his parents' house for the last decade. If your first reaction is "Uh oh," you may still want to trust that instinct, but Wilson isn't quite your average acid casualty living a Dungeons & Dragons existence. Unlike other basement dwellers, Wilson does seem to get out from time to time, and he's well aware it's the '90s. *Signify* is crammed with nifty production details: samples, noise loops, distant sound effects, percolating and colliding keyboards. The louder songs are offset by quiet and contemplative ambient (more in the original sense of the word) passages. On the other hand, there's no particular experimentation with beats—the live drum-



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Prog-rock with '90s twists.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** King Crimson, early Genesis, Legendary Pink Dots, Sky Cries Mary.

mer provides a standard rock thud—and much of the guitar playing is from the turgid and overproduced school of AOR/fusion-jazz noodling. Still, it's refreshing to hear prog that's mostly built around simple songwriting and studio innovation instead of virtuoso wanking. *Signify* may not be a terribly fashionable album—but I trust the *New Music Monthly's* readership to know the difference between fashion and ambitious, well-made music. —*David Jarman*

## SIMON RAYMONDE

Blame Someone Else — Bella Union/Setanta

■ Taking full advantage of a band hiatus, the least well-known member of the Cocteau Twins—soundsmith Simon Ray-

monde—has branched out on his own to create a divine solo debut. Although a trace of Cocteau-esque spirit remains, this is a much more accessible endeavor. It sucks you in from the outset with the balmy slide guitar and hushed harmonies of "It's A Family Thing." What distances Raymonde's efforts most from Cocteau Twins offerings is that for the first time we hear him singing. The



**DATALOG:** Release date: Feb. 24.  
**FILE UNDER:** Dream pop.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Prefab Sprout, Cocteau Twins, Brian Eno

outcome, surprisingly, is quite nice. Raymonde takes his cue from the likes of Scott Walker, particularly on his admirable cover of Walker's defining "It's Raining Today." Raymonde's vocals are warm and inviting, the pivot that shifts the mood seamlessly from the floating aura of "Love Undone," with its solitary trumpet strains, to the electronic groove of "Supernatural." Each multi-textured melody soothes, like rays of sunshine on a frosty day, and this calming momentum culminates in the 12-minute ambient epic "Tired Twilight." Despite guest appearances from fellow Cocteaus Elizabeth Fraser and Robin Guthrie, *Blame Someone Else* is strictly a Raymonde affair. Finally and deservedly, this songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist gets to take all the credit, as all fingers point to him. —*Sarah Pratt*

## ROBIN RIMBAUD

The Garden Is Full Of Metal: Homage To Derek Jarman — Sub Rosa

■ It's appropriate that for this endeavor, UK sonic scavenger Robin Rimbaud operates sans his Scanner alias. Because rather than placing plundered snippets in new contexts, here Rimbaud is concerned with fashioning a specific portrait of a colleague. British visionary Derek Jarman (who died from AIDS in 1994) was noted for his



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 19.  
**FILE UNDER:** Angels in the architecture.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** "Ambient" Brian Eno, Barry Adamson, Microstoria.

refusal to compartmentalize his art, blurring the distinctions between painting, cinema, music video and other media. Rimbaud echoes this by treating all sonic components as fair game, from interview segments to passages that evoke the wet caverns of the body ("Fravaer"). Compositions draw on recordings made in spaces that Jarman "inhabited or experienced," from the streets around his busy London flat to

his idyllic seaside cottage.

These tracks are more concerned with evoking a sense of place than with depicting a specific locale, reflecting the deceased's own aesthetic as expressed in his landscapes, and films like *The Garden*. While a comprehensive knowledge

of Jarman's accomplishments enhances this aural experience, it is a credit to both the artist and his subject that such knowledge is not a prerequisite. Challenging concepts of how we listen to recorded sound, what constitutes "music," and the function and nature of memory, *The Garden Is Full Of Metal* is Rimbaud's most moving release to date. Because this time it's personal. —*Kurt B. Reighley*

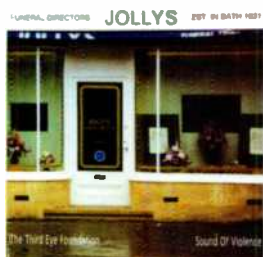
**Simon Raymonde, the least well known member of the Cocteau Twins, has branched out on his solo debut.**

## THIRD EYE FOUNDATION

The Sound Of Violence (EP) — Merge

■ Matt Elliot (a.k.a. Third Eye Foundation) started out as a supporting member in Bristol's drone-rock innovators Flying Saucer Attack, wielding a guitar and a pile of distortion pedals. Third Eye Foundation was initially his attempt to wed celestial guitar noise to jungle beats, but starting with 1997's *Ghost*, he has steadily moved to de-emphasize the guitar. *The Sound Of*

*Violence* sees him more or less jettisoning the instrument altogether, or at least relegating it to the status of feedback-generator, one potential noise source for his collage of samples and snippets. Instead, the aptly named *The Sound Of Violence* emphasizes spastic, slamming drum 'n' bass beats. On top of the beats is a thin layer of droney loops and sickly synthetic squeaks—vaguely musical noises re-contextualized into something sounding wholly inhuman. Maybe



**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 25.  
**FILE UNDER:** Jungle cacophony.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Aphex Twin, µ-Ziq, Photek.

it's unfortunate that Elliot has seemingly lost interest in trying to pioneer the juncture of guitar abstraction and electronic under-

pinnings, but his new face is just as interesting. He has adopted the mix of rhythmic and avant-garde sensibilities of the most cerebral members of the techno set, and made it sound even more extreme. —David Jarman

## THOMAS JEFFERSON SLAVE APARTMENTS

You Lookin' For Treble? — Year Zero/  
Vinyl Retentive

■ Since 1990, Columbus, Ohio's Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments have married well-read angst and production values that are the aural equivalent of the dredgings of last-night's keg. This collection of impossible-to-find singles (and a 300-pressing EP) from '90-'92 documents their early attempts to balance post-punk smarts and bulletheaded garage rock. Drummer Nora Malone (one of three on these tracks) is a key player, her utterly wooden intro to "Please Hear My Plea" the perfect foil for singer Ron House's impassioned yawp and Bob Petric's rapidly developing take-no-prisoners guitar style. Petric has since become quite the soloist (especially live), but here, he's forced by the minimally qualified rhythm section to hold the songs together. Even so, the near-metal riffing of "Spasm Of Morality" and the newly unearthed "Five Year Plan" contain the seeds of later greatness. As for House, he sounds, as ever, like some lobotomized grad student, veering from the mic-overloading "NO" of "You Can't Kill Stupid" to *aperçus* like "marriage is tragic/ death is comic." On their two subsequent albums, the Apartments cleaned up their act (a bit), but *Treble*, complete with basement-rehearsal banter, reveals a band in its first flush of self-destructive glory.

—Franklin Bruno



Thomas Jefferson  
Slave Apartments  
you lookin' for treble?

**DATALOG:** Released Nov. 11.  
**FILE UNDER:** Ohio rock, roughly.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Gaunt, Prisonshake, the Mummies.

The UK dynamic duo **SASHA AND JOHN DIGWEED** have been heard and heralded on this side of the Atlantic more over the last 12 months than at any other point in their lengthy and lofty careers. The overflow of attention rides the wave of a justifiable hype centered around the pair's monthly gig at New York City's Twilo club—making them the first British DJs ever to hold a NYC club residence—and the release of their groundbreaking **Northern Exposure** double CD set last year. Fusing live turntable talent with an abundance of studio wizardry, the discs both challenged and redefined the role of the DJ CD by blending records in intriguing ways impossible to duplicate with mere decks and mixers. The newly released **Northern Exposure 2 (Ultra-Ministry Of Sound)** picks up where the first collection left off, utilizing similar means to



reach its dramatic breakbeat and epic house ends. While this second **N.E.** offering was available as a double CD in the UK, the set has been separated into **East Coast** and **West Coast** volumes for American audiences. The East Coast disc draws on a smooth and sensual breakbeat vibe, highlighted by scattered ethereal vocals, varying levels of erotic energy and a non-stop layering of cuts by GusGus ("Believe," "Purple"), Uberzone ("Botz") and Violet Vs. Mantronik ("Burn The Elastic"). While this disc settles into a gorgeous groove appropriate for introspective, at-home listening, the West Coast edition is a full-on dancefloor assault of epic house and melodic trance euphoria, complete with uplifting acid house melodies and powerful rhythms. Featuring standout tracks by Speedy J ("Fusion"), Sven Vath ("An Accident In Paradise") and LSC ("Netherworld"), this disc is more representative of the live Sasha and Digweed experience. Like their forerunners, these new **Northern Exposure** discs rely on both well-known tracks whose staying power has been proven on the dancefloor as well as lesser known cuts, resulting in a timeless wash of mesmerizing sonic energy destined to outlive the changing fads and fashions of electronic dance music. —M. Tye Comer



**DATALOG:**  
Released Oct. 28.  
**FILE UNDER:** The crest of ska's third wave.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Specials, the Stubborn All-Stars, the Scofflaws.

## TOASTERS

**Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down — Moon Ska**

■ *Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down* doesn't sound as much like a follow-up to last year's *Hard Band For Dead* as a companion, with many of the same joys, from the 2-Tone-ish title track to the autobiographical "Devil And A .45." If there's one real progression, it's that the Toasters seem to delve a little more deeply into the R&B that was one of ska's original godfathers. The cover of the Spencer Davis Group's "Gimme Some Lovin'" makes for especially interesting listening, given that the inspiration for the original came from ska singer Jackie Edwards (who'd written Davis's big hits); now the circle is completed, as it's skankified. Toasters' singer Bucket might not be able to wail like a young Steve Winwood, but his vocals offer a warm presence, and throughout there's a real passion to the music. Like too few bands, the Toasters play as if they actually *care*, whether it's in the horns, the toasting, or a rhythm section that seems to have four-wheel drive. The Toasters have spent a decade and a half paying dues, playing ska when no one cared, and now, finally, they sound their best just as the music takes off, which is only justice. —Chris Nickson

## UNWOUND

**Challenge For A Civilized Society — Kill Rock Stars**

■ Never ones to flinch at a repetitive, bludgeoning sonic assault, the sober structuralists in Unwound turn the volume up another notch on their sixth album. Given their relentless mining of sinister riffs and dark-hued rhythms in the past, you get the feeling that Justin Trosper, Vern Rumsey and Sara Lund truly mean to present a *Challenge For A Civilized Society*. The Olympia, Washington, trio doesn't preach the usual punk anarchy, however. Lund's staccato drumming, Rumsey's loping bass lines and

Trosper's guitar spurts and curt proclamations unfold methodically. Morbid analysis of the communication age lurks behind a wall of noise on "Data," the artfully angular "Laugh Track" is anything but funny, and "The World Is Flat," with its creeping rhythm and power-chord guitar, has less to do with Columbus than youthful disenfranchisement. Not that Unwound is all gloom and doom. The instrumental "Sonata For Loudspeakers" showcases the trio's vast



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 13.  
**FILE UNDER:** Groove-laden prog-punk.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Fugazi, Sonic Youth, Karp.

sonic range and predilection for jazzy excursions, drifting through a series of spellbinding segments into a trumpet-led finale, while on "Lifetime Achievement Award," producer Steve Fisk's organ swells lighten the mood. The tone on most of these ten tracks remains foreboding, but this consistent, inventive band rewards those willing to accept its Challenge. —Richard Martin

## VIVA SATELLITE

**Extra Eye — TeenBeat**

■ *Extra Eye* is a brief, but complete, rock musical, telling the story of Benz (sung, a bit whimsily, by Dan Morrissey), a "two-eyed boy from a one-eyed place" who escapes to Earth and finds love in the guise of reporter Bridget (the sultry Paige Smith). Rounding out the cast are Rob Christiansen (of Eggs and Grenadine) as Bridget's father, and Ian Jones as her editor. If the conjunction of "rock" and "musical" conjures visions of *Rent*-style bombast, rest easy—Viva Satellite plays the combination strictly for laughs. The narrative proceeds by romantic comedy's time-honored



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 19.  
**FILE UNDER:** Indie-rock summer-stock.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** The Coolies' Doug, Styx's Kilroy Was Here, Pippin.

conventions, including a misunderstanding that jeopardizes true love's path (appropriately titled "Three's Company") and, of course, a happy ending. The music, meanwhile, is under-produced (with cheesy synths standing in for strings), but cleverly constructed, as sung dialogue alternates with more melodic strains. For every forced rhyme, there's a witty one, such as "It's A-OK/If my baby has alien DNA." Between *Extra Eye* and Mike Watt's latest, the rock musical may redeem itself yet. —Franklin Bruno

## VICTORIA WILLIAMS

**Musings Of A Creekdipper — Atlantic**

■ Most musicians develop over the course of a career, while a few have their peculiar vision before them from day (or album) one. Victoria Williams falls squarely in the latter camp—the rubber-band voice and spiritually-tinged songcraft were as uniquely her own on her first studio album as they are on her fourth. As expected, there are rural epiphanies ("Kashmir's Corn"), nostalgia ("The



**DATALOG:** Released Jan. 13. Includes a cover of Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy."  
**FILE UNDER:** Sincere country-folk naïveté.  
**R.I.Y.L.:** Vic Chesnutt, Giant Sand, Van Dyke Parks.

Train Song," which laments the "demise of the caboose"), and a general air of benignly Christian unworldliness. Occasionally, the results are forced. "Allergic Boy," a tale of a kid who can't play with dogs or drink milk, piles on the sentiment awkwardly, though the music (sparse, loose string bass and drums) is lovely. To her credit, Williams rarely relies on standard folk/country chords and arrangements, preferring an impressionistic palette of piano and strings. And when she stretches a bit, the results can be wonderful. The elegiac "Grandpa In The Corn-patch,—also sentimental but weightier—is more like a suite of mini-songs than a verse-chorus-verse exercise. She's done this trick since "Happy Come Home" on her debut, but like Williams herself, it's too unique to wear out its welcome anytime soon.

—Franklin Bruno



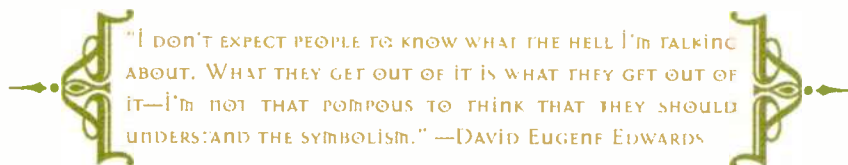
or Western unless it's like a Harlequin Romance. Other than that, they want to get away from it and not think about it."

It's almost difficult to picture the alabaster-pale and gaunt Edwards, clad in a long undertaker's coat, and his crew cavorting in a Denver rail yard for the creation of what's called an



L-R: Jeffrey-Paul Norlander, David Eugene Edwards, Jean-Yves Tola, Pascal Humbert

"electronic press kit." Because they favor using period instruments (the banoneon, along with 1940s-era electric guitars and battered banjos) and old sepia-toned wanted-poster artwork, they seem positively out of place in the digital domain. "We're not media-friendly at all, and we are still very small," says Tola as the EPK shoot session is abruptly canceled. "So



"I DON'T EXPECT PEOPLE TO KNOW WHAT THE HELL I'M TALKING ABOUT. WHAT THEY GET OUT OF IT IS WHAT THEY GET OUT OF IT—I'M NOT THAT POMPOUS TO THINK THAT THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE SYMBOLISM." —DAVID EUGENE EDWARDS

we're doing it word-of-mouth and one country at a time." But Sixteen Horsepower's members also realize that the time is nigh they made a connection back in the US, and have elected to do so with *Low Estate*, produced by PJ Harvey affiliate John Parish, which consistently strikes more urgently than the songs on the band's 1995 debut, *Sackcloth 'N' Ashes*. "When we wanted the music to go somewhere, we just went there all the way," offers Tola.

"It's a matter of figuring out where we're wanted," Edwards adds. "We'll tour America and then we'll have a better idea of where we should be. Maybe it's in Europe. But I just feel like I belong here," he says of the older Denver neighborhood where he and his high school sweetheart (and now wife) have long made their home. "People like to talk about us," he confirms. "But that doesn't mean they'll buy our records." His glum turn indicates that he and his bandmates are more than ready to reclaim their home turf, which has been all but ignored after successful opening slots in 1995-96 with the Innocence Mission and Shane McGowan, which first turned American crowds on to their eerie, supernatural appeal. In fact, *Low Estate* has only just seen domestic release, despite being available overseas since last October.

"We're in the right place, and we really want to do over here what we did in Europe," says Tola. "We want to get all the people back, because they're wondering what happened to us. You know, there's a lot of people who aren't happy with what's going on in the mainstream. They want something else, and that could be us." **CMJ**

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE" BY SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD



in Vancouver, he never had an opportunity to see any of the great DJs live when he was perfecting his style. But he cites a 1989 blink-and-you'd-miss-it TV clip of Philly's DJ Cash Money—another pivotal DJ from rap's early-to-middle years who is still very active—as his greatest early inspiration. "It was on a music channel," he recalls, "and I just caught the end of it. I saw him for 10 seconds and I was like—what?! That was all I needed." Inadvertently, a torch had been passed.

With the popularity of compilations like *Return Of The DJ Vols. 1 & 2*, *Deep Concentration* (Om) and *Altered Beats* (Axiom), it's clear that this is the era of the DJ's return, at least in terms of popular notice and worldwide visibility. Upcoming debut albums from the Invisibl Skratch Piklz (Asphodel), Kid Koala and DJ Faust (Bomb) will pave the way for under-recognized turntablists like Disk, Apollo, Swamp, Radar, Z-Trip, Wax Fonder, Rectangle, Shine, Craze, Kool DJ EQ, Professor Flod, Dibbs, Babu, J-Rocc, Peanut-butter Wolf and Fanatik to take the form to an even higher level.



What will happen next is, of course, anyone's guess. But the unlimited possibilities of the form are what keep the scene going. The Skratch Piklz's Yoga Frog puts it like this: "If you're playing hockey, others try to go where the puck is. We try to go where the puck is going." Welcome to the game. ■

## Wouldn't You Like To Be A Pepper Too?

By Matt Hanks

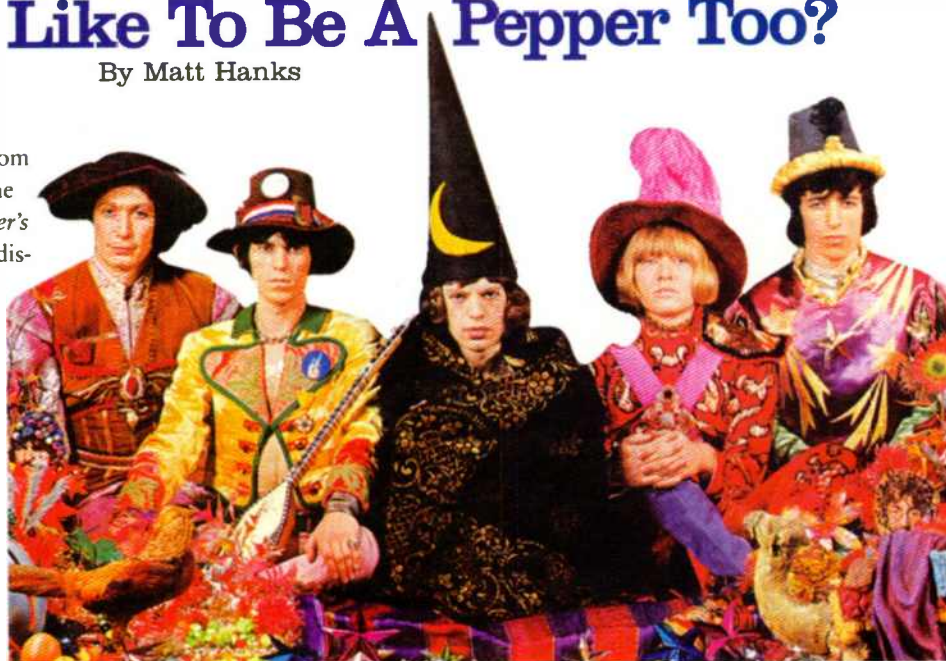
When you survey events and artifacts from the months immediately following the June 1967 release of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, it's difficult to discern what that album *didn't* influence. It was hailed by the *London Sunday Times* as "a decisive moment in the history of Western Civilisation," and nothing seemed to escape *Pepper's* grasp.

As critics and fans scurried to articulate the implications of *Pepper*, musicians reacted differently. Some were threatened, even crippled, by the Beatles' magnum opus, but a surprising number took *Pepper* as a challenge—and rose to it. Suddenly, the healthy competition that had always characterized Lennon and McCartney's partnership spread amongst their peers. For 12 glorious months (give or take) artistic pretense blossomed and scores of self-respecting (and yes, self-important) bands felt compelled to create their own masterpieces. The era of *Pepper* knockoffs was given hasty entrance.

Purists have always taken a dim view of this year of creative conspiracy, placing blame squarely on the Beatles' shoulders, but the Beatles are no more responsible for prog-rock than a cow is for cholesterol. A few of *Pepper's* progeny are woefully ill-conceived—such as the Moody Blues' *In Search Of The Lost Chord* and the Hollies' *Evolution*—but a surprising number of them are very, very good; in a few cases constituting a real pinnacle for the groups that recorded them.

Ultimately, it's a matter of who "got it" and who didn't. *Pepper* isn't about professionalism. It isn't about flowers or peace or love either. Its message is actually quite bleak. Lennon-McCartney's depiction of work-a-day blokes, wife beaters and meter maid whores is as strong an indictment of modern life as anything the Sex Pistols ever committed to posterity. *Pepper's* remedy for this bleakness is escapism. Other records take a different tack, and suggest their own solutions. But the cream of the *Pepper* crop—Love's *Forever Changes*, the Zombies' *Odessey And Oracle*, The Who's *Sell Out*, the Rolling Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request* and the Small Faces' *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*—have one thing in common: They all recognize the emptiness and futility of their surroundings. And I love the lot of them for it.

Most of these records aren't in need of exoneration. Only the most obstinate fan would argue *Forever Changes's* or *Odessey And Oracle's* supremacy in the canons of their respective bands. But a few of them have consistently received a bum rap. *Their Satanic Majesties Request* is definitely the runt of the litter. The album was universally lambasted upon release in December '67. Even *Rolling Stone* editor



Jann Wenner, a man who turned fawning over the Stones into a full-time profession, wrote that *Majesties* embodied "all the pretentious, nonmusical, boring, insignificant, self-conscious, and worthless stuff that's been tolerated during the past year." Not to these ears. With the possible exception of the Rolling Stones' *Now!*, which is great for a whole different set of reasons, I think *Majesties* was the band's best record up to that point. It's not without its indulgences, but tracks like "She's A Rainbow" and "2000 Light Years From Home" are madly ambitious, and the album's true gem, "2000 Man," is probably the most humble song Jagger-Richards ever penned. That humility proved to be a trait unbecoming of the Stones makes me all the more thankful for this song's existence. A rare glimpse indeed.

*Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* is another easy target. The most common criticism of this wonderfully silly, relentlessly rocking album is that it's "too British," but that misses the point entirely. Like the Beach Boys' halcyon visions of the California coast (although by the same logic, the Boys would be considered "too American," I guess), *Ogdens* is a wide-eyed chronicle of the British adolescent experience. We Yanks may not be able to decipher a word, but the thick-tongued alcoholic musings of *Ogdens'* cockney narrator are priceless. The Beatles have to insert a laugh track for comic relief on *Pepper*. The Small Faces give us a virtual stand-up routine. In fact, *Ogdens* transcends the bleakness that informs it more completely than any other *Pepper*-inspired record. Though it also resorts to escapism—in the form of fond nostalgia—it doesn't carry a trace of the disillusionment that marks its contemporaries.

Eventually though, the bleakness became too strong to ignore, and by mid-'68 *Pepper's* moment had passed. Records like Dylan's *John Wesley Harding*, the Stones' *Beggars Banquet* and The Band's *Music From Big Pink* urged us to confront reality rather than run from it. A more admirable path to be sure, but not nearly as fun. ■

by Ian Christe



## metal top 25

- 1 **DEICIDE**  
Serpents Of The Light / Roadrunner
- 2 **DEFTONES**  
Around The Fur / Maverick/WB
- 3 **JUDAS PRIEST**  
Jugulator / CMC International
- 4 **MISERY LOVES CO.**  
Not Like Them / Earache
- 5 **ENTOMBED**  
To Ride, Shoot Straight And Speak  
The Truth / Music For Nations/Silverton
- 6 **OVERKILL**  
From The Underground And Below /  
CMC International
- 7 **METALLICA**  
Reload / Elektra-EEG
- 8 **CRISIS**  
The Hollowing / Metal Blade
- 9 **HATEBREED**  
Satisfaction Is The Death Of Desire /  
Victory
- 10 **OZZY OSBOURNE**  
The Ozonian Cometh: Greatest Hits / Epic
- 11 **KMFDM**  
KMFDM / Wax Trax! TVT
- 12 **TESTAMENT**  
Demonic / Mayhem-Fierce
- 13 **FU MANCHU**  
The Action Is Go / Marmalade
- 14 **SOUNDTRACK**  
Mortal Combat: Annihilation / TVT
- 15 **BRUTAL TRUTH**  
Sounds Of The Animal Kingdom / Relapse
- 16 **HYPOCRISY**  
The Final Chapter / Nuclear Blast America
- 17 **SIX FEET UNDER**  
Warpath / Metal Blade
- 18 **WILL HAVEN**  
El Diablo / Crisis-Revelation
- 19 **SHAI HULUD**  
Hearts Once Nourished With Hope  
And Compassion / Crisis-Revelation
- 20 **DAY IN THE LIFE**  
dayinthelife... / Building-TVT
- 21 **SOUNDTRACK**  
Gummo / London
- 22 **DISEMBER**  
Death Metal / Nuclear Blast America
- 23 **INCUBUS**  
S.C.I.E.N.C.E. / Immortal-Epic
- 24 **MESHUGGAH**  
The Tree Human Design (EP) / Nuclear  
Blast America
- 25 **TODAY IS THE DAY**  
Temple Of The Morning Star / Relapse

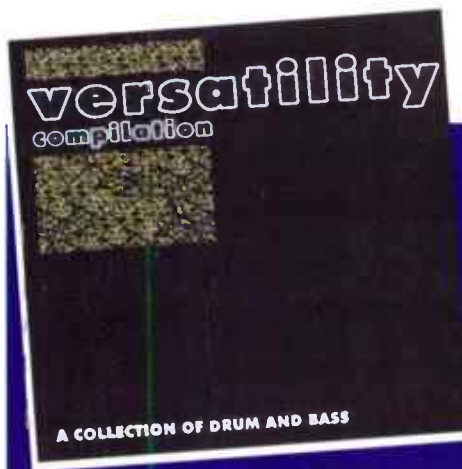
Compiled from *Q* Magazine's *Rock On!* weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from *Q*'s pool of progressive radio reporters.

✠ Until now, the most fearsome aspect of **Incantation's** nearly 10-year history had been the Ohio-based band's inability to keep a line-up together or win the support of any of its various record labels. Now, reunited with original vocalist Craig Pillard and its former foes at Relapse Records, the band has triumphed with its new gob of gore, *The Forsaken Mourning Of Angelic Anguish* (Relapse), which has four bonus live tracks added to Repulse Records' original import version. Informed by the gurgling rage of Necrovore and Terrorizer, this new Incantation is probably the only classic death metal record of last year not to be mangled by the curious production hand of Scott Burns. Instead, the deft guitars are clear and light, the intense vocals have the appropriate earth-shoveling growl, and tracks like the Death cover "Scream Bloody Gore" actually establish something of a Satanic mood. John McEntee is playing most of the instruments, so it's not like the band is stable or anything, but at least Incantation has something to stand on until it eventually gets its act together. There's always room in this world for a band good enough to back up song titles like "Twisted Sacrilegious Journey Into Our Darkest Neurotic Delirium."... I have a warm spot for surviving '80s-style power metal bands, mostly because they are reviled within in the metal community and have no chance of acceptance outside that world. Manowar, despite being dropped by Geffen this year, is going strong, but best wishes go out to **Jag Panzer** and **Exciter**, which have both recently put out new records. The Jag Panzer release, *The Fourth Judgement* (Century Media), doesn't charge with the same intensity as the band's classic self-titled debut record. It's a mid-tempo album of fierce melodic metal, featuring a couple of new members and a lot of new songs. Only guitarist John Ricci returns from the famous Exciter line-up, but on *The Dark Command* (Osmose America) the Canadians pick up where 1984's *Long Live The Loud* left off—a wall of guitar fuzz, fast chunky drumming, and loads of lyrics about abstract forces. The new lead vocalist is a big, chunky boy, but he's got one of the weakest deliveries and falsetto screams in the history of metal. Exciter's *Heavy Metal Maniac* may seem ridiculous in hindsight, but not even Metallica or Slayer were that heavy back in 1980. These days, Exciter is more reminiscent of Doom and Discharge. Unfortunately, whenever it starts to seem like an updated version of Exciter is a good idea, the singer opens his mouth and all hope is lost.

## Sleep Jerusalem

After praising the new Sleep album in the December '97 edition of this column, I'm surprised to learn that London Records will not release what would surely be the longest single song ever issued on a major label. In a scarcely unbelievable turn of events, London has pulled the plug on the much-anticipated 52-minute *Jerusalem* project (the original working title of which was *Dopesmoker*), and it would certainly be my guess that Sleep's lack of interest in touring or promoting the album in that decision. Word is that Sleep has now broken up, though whether the band's disagreements with London prompted the split or vice-versa is not known. This is not the beginning of Sleep's mysterious misfortunes in the music business. The Californian burnouts are rumored to have escaped their earlier

contract with Earache Records by virtue of being underage, and thus not tightly bound to the contracts they signed as minors. In any case, I suspect it will probably be some time before *Jerusalem* is released in any form. It's a shame, because this record is an unprecedented excursion into long-form heaviness. The band has created a metal myth akin to Prince's *Black Album*, an experimental hallmark that was recorded in the late '80s but didn't see the light of day until Warner Bros. finally released it in 1994. Anyone affected by the singleness of purpose of the previous two Sleep records surely needs to hear the band's deafening, Bible-influenced mass at its most uninterrupted. The Sleep-starved might try rummaging around the used bins for rare copies of the disc. All this as interest in Sleep is at an all-time high; two songs from Sleep's *Holy Mountain* are featured prominently on the soundtrack to *Gummo*.



## Versatility Various Artists Independent Dealers

London is no longer the capital city of England. That distinction has been ceded to Bristol, a city in which it appears that every citizen has recorded at least one single. If Roni Size's *New Forms* isn't a triumph of art over commerce, what is? In that spirit comes this collection, which demonstrates that drum 'n' bass is constantly moving on to encompass new sounds and contexts. This compilation gathers unreleased tracks from producers all over the city, and it'll knock you sideways. Opening with Size's ricocheting

"Saturday," this collection never relents. Flynn & Flora, whose bebop sensibilities have always avoided the "lite jazz" nightmare of so much contemporary d'n'b, provide the flowing "Caramello," a monster jam that sneaks up on you like a thief in the night, as well as the deceptively gentle "Surprise," which builds levels of suspense that are nearly unbearable. The disorienting and cacophonous "Jigsaw" by DJ Die is fast enough to get a hefty speeding ticket. What makes *Versatility* absolutely unforgettable is the welcome return of the More Rockers collective. "Bongo Music" is a marriage of roots reggae and d'n'b that makes you feel all warm and fuzzy. With its ringing melodic chords and a bass line that's off the Richter scale, it's bound to get a lot of attention. More Rockers' "Saying" is equally powerful. I really cannot recommend this compilation strongly enough. Don't let the success of d'n'b make you cynical; it's still some of the most challenging and demanding electronic music being made, and *Versatility* makes that quite clear. ♡

There has been an exhumation in the world of dance music: disco. Having died a premature death in unfortunate circumstances, it's being reanimated by **Moodymann**. His early EPs were masterpieces of control and restraint, reinvigorating the disco-house sound, which was pretty much on life support. Moodymann constructs his tracks organically, from the inside out. So instead of taking a rhythm track and throwing a sampled disco bass line over the top, he understands disco's ability to impart structures of feeling into what sounds like a live setting, producing such gems as "Misled," from his debut LP, *Silentintroduction* (Planet E). The spoken-word introduction to the beautiful "I Can't Kick This Feeling When It Hits" echoes the LP's liner notes, which I recommend you read closely, because Mr. Dixon really breaks it down, speaking for a lot of people unable to voice their feelings elsewhere. This entire record is made with an unusual intelligence and passion, really giving me hope for the future... Dub is playing an increasingly central role in this column, which is merely a reflection of its vast influence throughout the dance music genre. Thus, **Dubmission 2: The Remixes** (Quango) arrives at a perfect moment, presenting a wide array of roots reggae versions remixed by some of the most in-demand downtempo producers working today. The Thievery Corporation's wistful retooling of Gregory Isaacs's mythic "Night Nurse" is but one instance. Fila Brazillia performs some incredible sonic acrobatics on Black Uhuru's "Boof n' Baff n' Biff," while Kruder And Dorfmeister also rework "Night Nurse," pushing it even further into the echo chamber. This collection is nothing short of brilliant.

## dance top25

- 1 DAVID HOLMES  
Let's Get Killed / Our Next 500 Miles
- 2 FATBOY SLIM  
Fatten 'Em Up Through Chemistry / Ashtray's Caroline
- 3 APHEX TWIN  
Come To Daddy (EP) / Warp-Sire
- 4 RONI SIZE REPRZENT  
New Forms / Talkin' Loud-Mercury
- 5 NUBS  
Blood Meridian / Metropolis
- 6 DJ KRUSH  
Might / Mr. War-The London
- 7 LUKE SLATER  
Freaky Funk / NovaMoto-Mute
- 8 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Dip Of The Record: Another Compilation / Dip Of The Iron America
- 9 COMPUTER  
The Night Of Tomorrow / Mute
- 10 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Resonance / Debut
- 11 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Cellphone Press II / 123rd Circuitry
- 12 EAT STATIC  
Science Of The Gods / Planet  
Deep Shyness
- 13 MEDICINE DRUM  
Temperature / 123rd
- 14 VELVET ACID CHRIST  
Church Of Acid / Pentagram
- 15 INDEX  
Faith In Motion / GDF International
- 16 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Smelling The Future / Truize
- 17 BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE  
Bentley Rhythmic Acid / Adrenaworks-Capitol
- 18 COLD CUT  
Let Us Play / Nova-Tune-Corpus
- 19 PORTSHEAD  
Portshead / Our Next London
- 20 MOB  
I Like To Scam / Enigma-EEG
- 21 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Where Bad We 1 / GDC
- 22 RONNIE AND CLYDE  
The Glorious Mack And Blue / Swamp
- 23 JEFF MILLS  
"Shampoo" 12.3 / Purpose Maker
- 24 FLUKE  
Ripple / Adrenaworks-Capitol
- 25 SONS OF SILENCE  
Stretch FM / Leaf

Compiled from DJ & New Music Report's weekly RPM charts collection from May 2000 to December 2000.





## hip-hop top25

- 1 **BUSTA RHYMES**  
When Disaster Strikes... / Elektra-EEG
- 2 **RAKIM**  
The 18th Letter / Universal
- 3 **THE FIRM**  
The Album / Interscope
- 4 **LL COOL J**  
Phenomenon / Def Jam-PG
- 5 **2PAC**  
R U Still Down? (Remember Me) / Amaru-Jive
- 6 **EPMD**  
Back In Business / Def Jam-Polygram
- 7 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
In The Beginning There Was Rap / Priority
- 8 **MASE**  
Harlem World / Bad Boy-Arista
- 9 **GRAVEDIGGAZ**  
The Pick, The Sickie And The Shovel / Gee Street-V2
- 10 **COMMON**  
One Day It'll All Make Sense / Relativity
- 11 **COMPANY FLOW**  
"The Fire In Which You Burn Slow" / Official-Rawkus
- 12 **WYCLEF JEAN/REFUGEE ALL-STARS**  
Presents The Carnival / Ruffhouse/Columbia-CRG
- 13 **JAY-Z**  
In My Lifetime, Vol. 1 / Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam-Priority
- 14 **UNSPOKEN HEARD**  
"Cosmology" / 7Heads
- 15 **DJ KRUSH**  
Milight / Mo Wax/frr-London
- 16 **LUNIZ**  
Lunitik Muzik / Noo Trybe-Virgin
- 17 **MILITIA**  
Burn / Red Ant
- 18 **FUNKDOOBIEST**  
The Troubleshooters / Buzztone-RCA
- 19 **MASTER P.**  
"Make U Say Uggh" / No Limit-Priority
- 20 **NOREAGA**  
"Blood Money" / Tommy Boy
- 21 **VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
100% Pure Funk / C&S
- 22 **SOUNDTRACK**  
Soul In The Hole / Loud-RCA
- 23 **DJ SHADOW**  
High Noon (EP) / Mo Wax/frr-London
- 24 **DIAMOND**  
Hatred, Passions And Infidelity / Mercury
- 25 **KILLAH PRIEST**  
Cross My Heart / Noo Trybe-Virgin

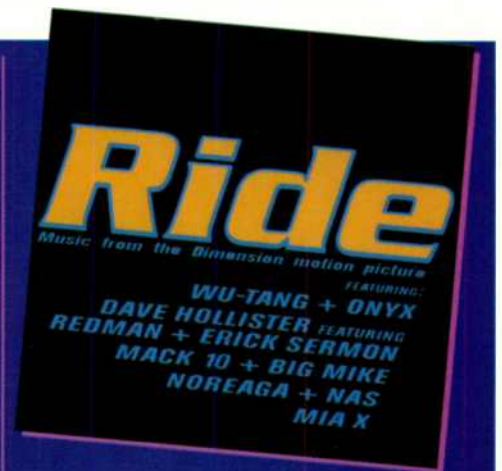
Compiled from CMJ New Music Report's weekly Best Box charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

✦ The return of old-school legends is thankfully occurring more and more these days, and **Big Daddy Kane's** new *Veteranz Day* (The Label) should be added to the list of joints you should check out. Although the music tracks he's using these days aren't really akin to the mind-bending brilliance of Marley Marl's work for him back in the day, Easy Mo Bee and Kane (who produces as well) let several gems here shine. From smoother, funkier throwdowns like "La-La-Land," "I Get The Job Done" and the posse cut "Whodatattador?" to less poppy cuts like "Terra N Ya Era," "Shame" and the West Coast groove of "Unda Presha," Kane's voice and mind are as sharp as ever...Cypress Hill family member **Funkdoobiest** is also back with *The Troubleshooters* (Buzztone-RCA), the group's best effort to date. Although production godfather DJ Muggs isn't involved with this new offering, producer DJ Ralph M has learned much from the master, taking the Cypress Hill production aesthetic in different directions while still keeping things close to the group's roots. Of particular note here is Son Doobie's engaging rap style, which complements his distinct vocal timbre and the mix of music. From the grooving, almost waltz-like "Papi Chulo" to the manic, off-kilter "I'm Feelin' It" and the angry "Five Deadly Indians," there's nothing typical about Funkdoobiest, and it remains one of the more interesting crews to rise from the Left Coast this decade... Ravid **Ultramagnetic MC's** fans will likely be the only people to flip over their *B Sides Companion* (Next Plateau). It's chiefly comprised of less-than-engaging remixes of songs that Kool Keith and Ced Gee blew minds with a decade ago, including "Ego Trippin'," "Watch Me Now," "Funky" and "A Chorus Line." Previously unreleased madness like "I'm On" and "Kool Keith Model Android #406" will please Ultra completists and "Live At Tramps," recorded at the group's long-awaited reunion show earlier this year, is also well worth a listen.

## Ride

### Soundtrack Tommy Boy

The soundtrack tie-in business has gotten pretty out of hand lately. Just five years ago you would never have thought of buying a soundtrack unless you had seen, and presumably loved, the movie. The music used in films was marketed almost exclusively as an afterthought, so that listeners could relive their theater experiences in the privacy of their own homes. But things have changed. I have no idea what the movie *Ride* (formerly called *I-95*) is going to be like, but I can tell you that you don't have to see it to be impressed by this juicy soundtrack. The set combines rap and R&B in equal doses, and its vibe, tempo and groove are mixed just right. The artist collaborations here are on the money, too: Wu-Tang Clan and Onyx ("The Worst"), Mack 10 and Big Mike ("The Game"), ex-Blackstreet Dave



Hollister with funk lords Erick Sermon and Redman ("The Weekend"), Queensbridge Kings Noreaga, Nas and Nature ("Blood Money"), and No Limit soldiers Mia X with Fiend and Mac ("Soldier Funk") all join forces for some strong musical and lyrical work. Solo shots from Rufus Blaq, Section 8, Something For The People, Black Ceasar and Amari round out one of the most enjoyable soundtracks of the last couple of years. ✦

◆ **Adventures In Stereo's** medium of choice seems to be the four-song EP; their most recent one, "A Brand New Day" (Creeping Bent), is the Scottish duo's most straightforward disc to date. Its minimalist pop loops have bloomed into still-tiny but more expansive songs, with more live instrumentation—they even go so far as to cover Vic Godard's "Nobody's Scared." There's also an American version, on Bob-sled. It substitutes a lesser AIS track for the British disc's gorgeous a cappella "God Save Us," but it's on stunningly pretty multicolored vinyl.



◆ **Lesser** used to be a rock band, and it may still be, but the 12" *Welcome To The American Experience* (Vinyl Communications) is a way-out-there stab at drum 'n' bass. Its two very long tracks are presented as listening music, not dancing music—the beats get so fast and scrambled that they don't really keep to a particular meter. The B-side, "Markus Popp Can Kiss My Redneck Ass," nods to Popp's abstract electronica (in the groups Oval and Microstoria), if sending it into a meat-grinder can be called a "nod": At one point, the timbre of the beats changes in a way that suggests waving a

hand back and forth in front of the speaker, and it incorporates Oval's ascetic skipping-CD effects along with lots of peculiar samples and random noise.

◆ Speaking of Oval, that group has done one side of the latest **Pizzicato Five** remix 12", "Happy Ending" (Mata-dor). For its first few minutes, it sounds like, well, an Oval record, slurring and blurring bits of P5's cheery timbres into its usual rubbed-bell tones. Then Oval starts playing with recognizable bits of P5's sunny scat singing, looping them in front of a thickly-layered wash of sound more faithful to the original song than Oval has ever been on a remix before. On the other side, John Oswald, the mad scientist behind the cut-and-paste project Plunderphonics, rearranges "It's A Beautiful Day," basically by sending its bouncy instrumental track a tiny bit out of pitch-phase with itself, then burying it under what sounds like 37 simultaneous drum solos. Very strange, and awfully entertaining.



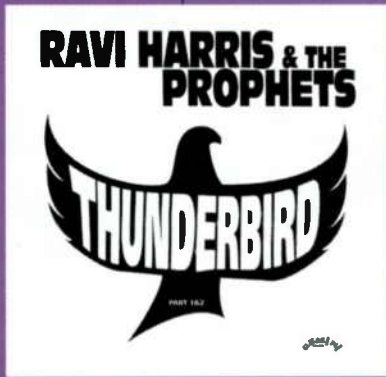
## hiss&crackle

◆ A few quick drops of the needle: The first in a series of *Free To Fight* singles (Candy-Ass), a follow-up to the women's self-defense compilation of a few years ago, features **Sleater-Kinney** and **Cypher In The Snow**, as well as a couple of spoken-word pieces and a booklet on the subject of girl-on-girl violence. The magic words there are Sleater-Kinney—whose song, "Big Big Lights," is perfectly adequate but sounds like it could have been written by a Sleater-Kinney-Tronic computer program designed to turn out something exactly like their other songs... **Canger's** "Trilogy" (Soul Static Sound) is a series of three untitled 12" singles, remixed into unrecognizability by D, Two Lone Swordsmen and the Underdog—it's unclear what, if any, elements actually come from the Scottish neo-Krautrock band's recordings. (D's is the best, an intriguing series of echoing pings that ripple like a lake beneath skipping stones.) The B-sides feature additional remixes—beneath "etchings" by the mixers that effectively make them unplayable... **Will Oldham's** single of the month is a tribute to the great country songwriter David Allan Coe (Palace). He yowls his way through "In My Mind," backed up by his brother Paul's band Rising Shotgun. On the other side, RS does "Spotlight," with assistance from Will. Secret weapon: David Pajo, of Aerial-M, who plays on both.

### Ravi Harris & The Prophets

#### "Thunderbird" Gemini

The thing that nearly everyone claiming to make funk records in the last 20 years seems to have forgotten is that funk is slow. The instrumental "Thunderbird" creeps like a mofo, slowing its tricky beat and feather-light JB's-style guitars to a hazy crawl; after it's built up some momentum, a baritone sax solos a bit, for a nice raunchy '50s R&B effect. Fine—and then the beat curls around like a cat, the song goes into 6/4 time, and the sitar comes in. Bill "Ravi" Harris is the greatest and only funk sitarist around right now



(track down his album Funky Sitar Man), amalgamating the sounds of Indian classical music and "Hot Pants Road." As it turns out, they're made for each other: Classic funk's exploratory vamps on a single chord (the bassist on "Thunderbird" never strays from his first note) and the classic sitar principle of improvisation in a single key go nicely together. As befits the form, "Thunderbird" is split into Part 1 and Part 2; near the end, when that rock-bottom saxophone comes back in and everybody's funkily droning on a single tone, it's a great moment, and that's followed by a drum break that's just begging to be sampled. ◆

★ **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** was a musical genius and visionary who heard music in his dreams and tried to replicate those sounds when he awoke by playing three horns simultaneously. Some dude named George Bonafacio amassed a phenomenal stash of live Kirk tapes (I envision a guy living in a creaky house stuffed with old reel-to-reel boxes and pictures of Kirk with the three horns in his mouth taped to the refrigerator). Joel Dorn, a producer and longtime Kirk friend and fan, tracked this guy down, and together they've culled the best moments from Bonafacio's collection on the three-CD set *Dog Years In The Fourth Ring* (32 Jazz). Kirk was doing this wild stuff in the early '60s, when things were still a lot more square and a lot less hip than they would be later in the decade. The third CD is Kirk's incredibly weird 1971 LP *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata*, which has the distinction of being the worst selling and rarest of Kirk's Atlantic albums. It's largely just him in the studio alone, wearing bells and percussion on his clothing, dancing and jumping around, blowing into his horn. Kirk plays an array of instruments, including tenor sax, piccolo, flute, E-Flat clarinet, timpani, gong, music boxes, something called a "sock cymbal," and an instrument listed as "black mystery pipes." This set is not just for collectors; it's possibly the most important jazz reissue of the last year or so. It's that cool.

★ Another hot reissue is Rhino's celebration of **Curtis Mayfield's** famed soundtrack to the 1972 movie *Superfly*. Released in a lavish deluxe edition, the new *Superfly* is even more super. The word "genius" really does apply to the music Mayfield made to go with this movie about drugs, desperation, crime and, ultimately, self-determination. True story: Years ago I met a bartender who, when "Freddie's Dead" came on the jukebox in the near-empty bar, leaned over and confessed that he had once tried heroin. Whilst he was high, the only tape he could find that appealed to him was *Superfly*. Inside his drug-distended consciousness, the album became larger than life—the songs all seemed 20 minutes long, each a ghetto epic full of throbbing bass, sinewy fuzzed-out guitar, echoing conga drums, and Curtis's sweet vocals, which seemed to be whispering directly in his ears. It scared the bejesus out of him. He wound up crying when the album ended, and never touched the stuff again. So Curtis, wherever you are, ya done good.



## Esquerita

Vintage Voolah

Norton

They don't come much loonier than Esquerita, who came along back in the early rock 'n' roll days of the '50s, with his high falsetto whoop and outrageous conked pompadour. The parallels between Esquerita and Little

Richard are well documented: Both men wore outrageous clothes, Marge Simpson-esque hairdos and sequined rhinestone cat-eye shades; both played the chitlin' R&B circuit at the same time, and both shared the same operatic falsetto whoop. The who-came-first debate regarding Little Richard and Esquerita will always be one of those unsolvable chicken-and-egg conundrums, but who cares? The fact that both men were essentially insane is all that really matters. Norton Records has just reissued the landmark *Vintage Voolah* on CD, which contains wild alternate takes and early recordings by one of my all-time favorite heroes. This is some of the craziest rock 'n' roll ever, in lo-fi glory that Jon Spencer would die for. Whoool! ★

★ Rhino has also released a single disc anthology documenting the late, great soul/folk singer **Ted Hawkins**. (Evidence recently released a live CD from his last tour, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.) Hawkins was a street musician who plied his trade on California's Venice Beach boardwalk for years, playing covers of Sam Cooke and Otis Redding tunes along with his own distinctive originals. His voice was incredible, a gravely husk that could sing blues, soul and country, and make it all sound genuine and real. For most of his life, Hawkins never really got it together as far as recording or touring is concerned: He made one major-label album a year before his death, and a few earlier records for various independent labels. Now Rhino has released this well-selected anthology, which culls many of Hawkins's most shining moments.

★ Anyone who remembers when XTC dressed up in Sgt. Pepper costumes and recorded as the Dukes Of Stratosphere, or anyone of the Ptolemaic Terrascope persuasion, might want to experiment with the rerelease of **Sagittarius** on Sundazed. *Sagittarius* was an ad hoc band from the '60s that included Gary Usher, Glen Campbell, Beach Boy Bruce Johnston and a bunch of West Coast session musicians and scenesters. "My World Fell Down" is a long-lost psychedelic gem, and many of the other songs capture a certain hippie naïveté that vanished in the wake of Altamont, Manson and the roll-call of dead rock stars at the turn of the '70s.

in the bins

compiled by  
Douglas Wolk

## ALTAVISTA TRANSLATOR

([babelfish.altavista.digital.com](http://babelfish.altavista.digital.com))

AltaVista may not be the best search engine around any more, but it's added on a few new features, of which this translating URL is the most fun. Given a batch of text or a web address, it'll translate it—rather crudely—to or from French, Spanish, German or Italian. Obviously, it's mostly meant to help 'Net surfers get the gist of



pages in languages they don't read (at last, you can read German tourists' diaries of their experiences at Burning Man), but it's fun to play with making it translate Voltaire or Cervantes, too. Just don't rely on it for accuracy: It tends to stumble over anything

**netstuff** tougher than Dick-and-Jane level. Still, it's nice to see how "colorless green ideas sleep furiously"—Noam Chomsky's classic example of a sentence that's syntactically correct but meaningless—can mean just as little as "las ideas verdes descoloridas duermen furiosamente." —DW

## DEPT. OF GOD SAVE US ALL

Russ Meyer is reported to be planning a remake of *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, reusing the original script and locations, and changing only the cast.

## NIL BY MOUTH Sony Pictures Classics

Gary Oldman can't seem to live down his first starring movie role as Sid Vicious. For years, he's been saddled with constant references to his portrayal of the legendary punk rocker, and now in his debut as a writer/director, he's traveling a similar road. Instead of fleshing out the character of a snarling junkie with facial ties and sullen stares, he's fleshing out the character of a snarling junkie with witty dialogue and close-up camera angles. Oldman draws on his South London childhood for this story of a working-class South London family with a son (Charlie Creed-Miles) addicted to heroin and a brawling father (Ray Winstone) who beats up a pregnant, chain-smoking mom (Kathy Burke of *Absolutely Fabulous*). Oldman uses thick English slang to speak volumes for his yin-and-yang characters—apparently he loves the wife-beating dad despite it all. He refuses to sentimentalize the story too much, though, making it believable and shocking. Eric Clapton adds an electric blues score to complete a film that people are sure to be talking about this spring. —Tom Roe



## movies



the great lost photographs of

# Eddie Rocco

**KICKS MAGAZINE ROCK 'N' ROLL PHOTO ALBUM #1: THE GREAT LOST PHOTOGRAPHS OF EDDIE ROCCO**  
Kicks

**books** The dimly lit netherworld of R&B and early rock 'n' roll attracted all kinds of hustlers and shady figures who practiced all manner of vices. There was no telling who might slink into a red velvet booth at one of these clubs, or what wickedness might take place. Often the "entertainers" on the bandstand were the craziest of the lot. Eddie Rocco was house photographer at various Los Angeles R&B haunts of the mid-'50s and early '60s, and he worked freelance for various magazines of the period, including *Rhythm & Blues*, *Ebony*, *Song Parade*, *Hep and Jive*. When Billy Miller and the Norton Records crew tracked him down, he produced a stash of unpublished, previously unseen shots from this bygone era. This book features incredible sepia-toned photos of Esquerita (see Flashback, pg. 53), Ruth Brown, Johnny Otis, Jackie Wilson and other soul giants in full '50s zoot suit regalia, as well as shots of Roy Orbison that are downright eerie. Plus, you get to see some of the '60s' big names early on in their careers, as wide-eyed teens getting their first taste of the nefarious underworld that is the music business: the Byrds, the Beach Boys, the Yardbirds and Dion as fresh-faced pin-ups, a far cry from the bloated, hedonistic excess of their later years. —James Lleon



**FILM THREAT WEEKLY** There are lots of regular entertainment newsletters that you can get by email, but most of them are just too nice to their subjects. Not **Film Threat Weekly**. The electronic version of the long-running film 'zine is well informed, catty as anything, and very, very funny. Beyond the irreverent film reviews and even more irreverent news, it's got box-office charts, smartass reviews of movie-related (and -unrelated) web sites, and the occasional extra feature. One recent issue had unsolicited advice for George Clooney on how not to turn into "the Steve Guttenberg of the '90s": "Stop bobbing your head when you talk. It's annoying." Excellent. (To subscribe, email [FilmThreat@aol.com](mailto:FilmThreat@aol.com).) —DW

netstuff

## RETRO HELL

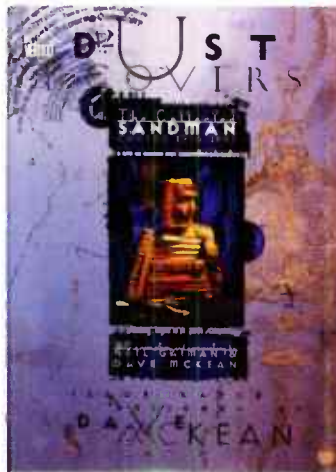
by the editors of *Ben Is Dead*  
Little, Brown

Every slacker café in America should keep a copy of *Retro Hell* on hand as a reference guide for its customers' childhood memories. The book summarizes and alphabetizes kitsch of the '70s and '80s; each entry is a combination of trivial facts and cloudy recollections. Look up "Koogole" and you'll get not only the straightforward low-down ("It was a line of flavored peanut butter-type spreads with a wacky Kool-Aid mascot"), but also the goofy details

("The Koogole Monster often hung out in odd locales shouting 'Foot-footio-fow!' and hassling the kids with the hard sell"), as well as a personal spin: "My brother and I couldn't con our very food-conservative

mother into forking over the cash for such a frivolity." Few 29-year-olds will be able to thumb through the book without finding a handful of guilty pleasures to giggle about—Ray Jay Johnson, Bob McAllister, Suzi Quatro... How come no one's bringing back the urban cowboy look? Fans of *Ben Is Dead* probably realize that this book isn't much more than a compilation of the "Retro Hell" issues of the magazine. But anyone else with a chronic case of Pac-Man Fever might want to track down *Retro Hell*.

—Neil Gladstone



## KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR...

**Dust Covers** (Vertigo), a gorgeous hard-cover collecting the even more gorgeous multimedia pieces that Dave McKean did as the front covers of every issue of *The Sandman*. It also includes explanatory notes for each piece, as well as a new collaboration between McKean and *Sandman* writer Neil Gaiman.

## LACKLUSTER

Punk rock 'zines have long chronicled the exploits of those cockeyed aesthetic obsessives who make and record their own music despite having neither formal training nor real budgets. Consider how much harder it is, with the same zeal and limitations, to build your own house. You work on it for years, scavenging for materials while exposing yourself to ridicule from your neighbors and harassment from local authorities. Succeed, and you become that weirdo who lives in the house made of old bottles or in the form of a 50-foot-high naked chick. Now, thanks to **Lackluster**, you might also wind up in a fanzine—it's an unpretentious examination of unusual buildings and opinions about building. Issue #2 is a celebration of DIY architecture from Brooklyn to Tijuana, including well-known sites like the Winchester Mystery House and out-of-the-way oddities like the Forestierra

'zines

**Underground Gardens**. The publication itself is unusually low-tech for a shelter magazine, with black-and-white photocopied pages instead of glossy color. But **Lackluster's** pleasures are in the lengthy, candid interviews with the houses' builders and caretakers. One builder shares his idea for the "Toiletarium," a new concept in plumbing. Another is remembered thus: "People would ask him... 'How'd you do it?' and he'd say, 'Brute force and ignorance.'" Which is about as punk rock as architecture gets. (**Lackluster**, c/o Amy Balkin and James Harbison, 456 14th St. #8, San Francisco, CA 94103 [lacklstr@sirius.com](mailto:lacklstr@sirius.com)) —Andrea Moed



## The Cimarron Weekend

#000001

### Inside this issue:

Is Indie Rock the dumping ground for the socially incpt?.....p.98

How to make your MOR hip hop instantly credible. (non-fiction by Notorious B.I.G.).....p.345

RAVEN, SAXON, and HELIX- the athletic metal triumverate.....p.56

Post-Rock, you've gone too far. (the Kris Kross remix project).....p.89

My space-rock band sounds like the Alan Parsons Project.....p.0U812

## THE CIMARRON WEEKEND

Here's a short and sweet music 'zine that bucks some annoying late-'90s fanzine trends: Not only does **The Cimarron Weekend** avoid a \$9 price tag and a "free" CD compilation, it actually comes out every couple of months. And even with its small number of stapled-in-the-corner pages (issues #1 and #2 are a mere ten pages and six pages, respectively!), it's got earnestly written, fun-to-read, and right-on-target music criticism. Editor and sole writer Andy Earles doesn't bother with interviews, pictures, ads or eye-catching layout; he just spills forth humorous, well-informed and candid observations about the latest shows seen and the latest records bought. Like the best old-school music 'zine editors, Earles strikes an appropriate balance between insight and insult, exercising both his open mind and his bullshit detector. Best of all, until that inevitable day when **The Cimarron Weekend** grows into something a bit larger and more "marketable," it's free. Issues #1 through #4 are now available by sending stamps to P.O. Box I2206, Memphis, TN 38182. —Tim Ross

## 'zines

## THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF GAME SHOWS!

([www.fas.harvard.edu/~ilagan/wwg.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ilagan/wwg.html))



## netstuff

Are you ready to test your wits? Then stop by The Wonderful World Of Game Shows!. Your host, Harvard economics major Mandel Iligan, admits he has a fetish for giant title signs, but that's just the beginning of his obsession with TV's hokiest genre. He reviews all of your favorite shows, from *Card Sharks* to *Match Game*, and others that you'd probably rather forget, like *Treasure Hunt* and *Pitfall*. Everything from theme songs to set design is examined closely. The late Ray Combs, former host of *Family Feud*, gets slammed for his "TV evangelist"-style vocal inflection. John Davidson was a "dreadful" choice to replace Dick Clark on the *\$100,000 Pyramid*. "The Alex Trebek Bushy Hair Page" is this site's surprise bonus. It follows the curly-haired host from his Harpo years on *High Rollers* through the chrome-dome days of Reagan-era *Jeopardy!* Iligan also explains why Susan Stafford (*Wheel Of Fortune's* original letter-turner) would kick Vanna White's ass in a letter-flipping contest. Reason #8: "Susan does this little knee hike and a 'Yes!' tug with her fists after turning the letters." —NG

## QUANTUM AND WOODY Acclaim

The premise is silly—through a series of events too pseudoscientific to describe here, childhood friends from opposite sides of the tracks, Eric "Quantum" Henderson and Woody Van Chelton, become a costumed team who will die if they spend more than a day apart—but the execution is great. Writer Christopher Priest and artist Mark Bright have been working together on various projects for more than ten years, but with **Quantum And Woody**, they've hit a tone that neither they nor anyone else has really caught before; over the last year, it's been picking up a well-deserved cult following. Priest is as idiosyncratic as comics writers get, but his decision to present the series as blackout sketch comedy, even at its most serious, works brilliantly. He's dealing with issues of race, class, friendship and moral culpability, but he's also dealing with slapstick, classic repartee, and a goat who wanders around eating anything in range. And Bright has found his style, a bold, crinkly sense of design that lets the jokes flow smoothly. There's a new paperback with an expanded version of the first four issues, **Quantum And Woody: The Director's Cut**. Start there, and prepare to giggle. —DW



comics

## Labels of artists who appear in this issue

**550**  
350 Madison Ave.  
New York, NY 10022  
www.550center.com  
516Center@550550.com

**A&M**  
1415 N. La Brea Ave.  
Hollywood, CA 90028  
www.americanrecords.com

**Amphetamine Reptile**  
2545 First Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
www.amphetamintone.com

**Arista**  
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New York, NY 10019  
www.aristarec.com

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14724 Ventura Blvd.  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403  
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**Bobland**  
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Aurora, IL 60508

**Candy-Ass**  
P.O. Box 4209  
Portland, OR 97222  
www.hobnob.it.com/candyass

**Caroline**  
104 W. 29th St.  
New York, NY 10001  
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**Century Media**  
1453A 14th St.  
Santa Monica, CA 90404  
www.centurymedia.com

**Classified**  
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Burlingame, CA 94010  
www.classified.com

**Creeping Bent**  
P.O. Box 3145  
Dillingham, AK 99571

**Darla**  
125 Scott St.  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
www.darla.com

**DreamWorks**  
100 Universal Plaza  
Universal City, CA 91608  
www.dreamworksmusic.com

**Elektra**  
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New York, NY 10019  
www.elektra.com

**Epic**  
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New York, NY 10022  
www.epicenter.com

**Evidence**  
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Carlisle, PA 15428

**Flydaddy**  
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www.olympiafunkjunk.com

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120 NE State St.  
#418  
Olympia, WA 98501  
ARSPhoenix@aol.com

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krunky@interaccess.com

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New York, NY 10003

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New York, NY 10012  
www.netwerk.com

**Next Plateau**  
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New York, NY 10012

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Canada  
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## february 10

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COLDCUT  
COME  
DJ SPOOKY  
WILLIAMS FAIREY BAND  
FRETBLANKET  
GAZE  
HALO BENDERS  
KARL HENDRICKS TRIO  
LYNNS  
MAGICAL POWER MAKO  
NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL  
NRBQ  
PRIMAL FEAR  
RAPOON  
SHELLAC  
SUPERNOVA  
THANKS TO GRAVITY  
TO ROCOCO ROT  
VARIOUS ARTISTS  
ARMAND VAN HELDEN

Halim  
Transaction De Novo  
Complete Victor Recordings Vol. 7  
Timber  
Gently, Down The Stream  
Synthetic Fury (EP)  
Acid Brass  
Home Truths From Abroad  
Mitsumeru  
The Rebel's Not In  
Declare Your Weapons  
The Lynns  
Low Pop Diamonds  
In The Aeroplane Over The Sea  
Tapdancin' Bats: The Anniversary Edition  
Primal Fear  
The Fires Of The Borderland  
Terraform  
3, 2, 1...Wait A Minute!  
Start  
Paris 25 (EP)  
Classic Elements (EP)  
Enter The Meat Market

Beggars Banquet  
Trance Syndicate  
Rounder  
Ninja Tune  
Matador  
Asphodel  
Blast First-Mute  
Polydor-A&M  
K  
K  
Merge  
Reprise  
Atavistic  
Merge  
Rounder  
Nuclear Blast  
Release  
Touch And Go  
Amphetamine Reptile  
Capitol  
Emperor Jones-Trance Syndicate  
K  
Ruffhouse-Columbia

## february 17

BLUETIP  
CHOCOLATE WEASELS  
ANI DIFRANCO  
DIMITRI FROM PARIS  
FRIEND & DOKTOR KOSMOS  
KAIA  
BILL LASWELL  
MR. REVIEW  
SOLARUS

(7")  
Music For Body Lockers  
Little Plastic Castle  
Sacrebleu  
Friend & Doktor Kosmos  
Ladyman  
Panthalassa: The Music Of Miles Davis  
One Way Ticket To Skaville  
Crystalized

Dischord  
Ninja Tune  
Righteous Babe  
Atlantic  
Minty Fresh  
Mr. Lady  
Columbia  
Moon Sha  
Release

## february 24

CRAIG ARMSTRONG  
BLACK GRAPE  
CLIFFORD BROWN  
CALIFONE  
CHINA DRUM  
COLA  
MILES DAVIS  
GASTR DEL SOL  
GREEN APPLE QUICK STEP  
JANIS JOPLIN  
TOMMY KEENE  
KILLAH PRIEST  
LHASA CEMENT PLANT  
LIQUOR GIANTS  
MORTICIAN  
LIZ PHAIR  
OSCAR PETERSON  
POLARA  
BUD POWELL  
PUSSY GALORE  
PUSSY GALORE  
PUSSY GALORE  
RED CRAYOLA  
RENTALS  
DAVID RICE  
RYUICHI SAKAMOTO  
SWERVEDRIVER  
TRAINING FOR UTOPIA  
VARIOUS ARTISTS  
VOCOKESH

The Space Between Us  
Stupid Stupid Stupid  
Ultimate (reissue)  
Califone (EP)  
Self Made Maniac  
Whatnot  
Quintet (box set)  
Camofoeur  
New Disaster  
Live At Winterland 1968  
Isolation Party  
Heavy Metal  
Live At Terrastock  
Every Other Day At A Time  
Zombie Apocalypse  
  
Ultimate (reissue)  
  
Ultimate (reissue)  
Dial M For Motherfucker (reissue)  
Right Now! (reissue)  
Sugar Shit Sharp (reissue)  
Live In The 1960s  
  
Greenelectric  
Anger & Grief (remixes)  
99th Dream  
Plastic Soul Impalement  
NY Beat, Breaking & Entering  
Paradise Revisited

Melankolic-Caroline  
Radioactive  
Verve  
Flydaddy  
Beggars Banquet  
Interscope  
Columbia Legacy  
Drag City  
Columbia  
Columbia Legacy  
Matador  
Geffen  
Flydaddy  
Matador  
Relapse  
Matador  
Verve  
Interscope  
Verve  
Matador  
Matador  
Matador  
Drag City  
Maverick  
Columbia  
Ninja Tune  
Zero Hour  
Solid State-Tooth & Nail  
Moon Sha  
Drag City

## march 3

BEVIS FROND  
JASON AND THE SCORCHERS  
PURE  
VARIOUS ARTISTS

North Circular  
Live  
Feverish  
Rumours Tribute

Flydaddy  
Mammoth  
Mammoth  
Atlantic

# TOP 75 ALTERNATIVE RADIO AIRPLAY

	artist	title	label
1	MODEST MOUSE	The Lonesome Crowded West	Up
2	JULIANA HATFIELD	Please Do Not Disturb (EP)	Bar/None
3	PORTISHEAD	Portishead	Go! Beat-London
4	COMPUTER	The World Of Tomorrow	Mute
5	DJ KRUSH	Milight	Mo Wax/ffrr-London
6	KMFDM	KMFDM	Wax Trax!-TVT
7	THE VERVE	Urban Hymns	Virgin
8	BJORK	Homogenic	Elektra-EEG
9	G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE	Yeah, It's That Easy	OKeh-Epic
10	APHEX TWIN	Come To Daddy (EP)	Warp-Sire
11	CONGO NORVELL	Abnormals Anonymous	Jetset
12	MOGWAI	Young Team	Jetset
13	BAIRYBIRD	Ugly Beautiful	Atlantic
14	FLYING SAUCER ATTACK	New Lands	Drag City
15	BARDO POND	Lapland	Matador
16	DEFTONES	Around The Fur	Maverick-WB
17	PIXIES	Death To The Pixies	4AD/Elektra-EEG
18	GET UP KIDS	Four Minute Mile	Doghouse
19	LABRADFORD	Mi Media Naranja	Krunky
20	MURIA ABU JAMAL/MAN IS THE BASTARD	Spoken Word With Music	Alternative Tentacles
21	HIS NAME IS ALIVE	Nice Day (EP)	4AD
22	ELF POWER	When The Red King Comes	Elephant 6-Arena Rock
23	MOEY	I Like To Score	Elektra-EEG
24	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Great Jewish Music: Serge Gainsbourg	Tzadik
25	IVY	Apartment Life	Atlantic
26	NOFX	So Long And Thanks For All The Shoes	Epitaph
27	FREE KITTEN	Sentimental Education	Kill Rock Stars
28	VARIOUS ARTISTS	Tibetan Freedom Concert	Grand Royal-Capitol
29	MOWIE TONE	Day And Night	Drag City
30	DAVID HOLMES	Let's Get Killed	Go! Beat/1500 A&M
31	FATBOY SLIM	Better Living Through Chemistry	Astralwerks-Caroline
32	ISOTOPE 217	The Unstable Molecule	Thrill Jockey
33	FLICK	Flick (EP)	Columbia-CRG
34	RONI SIZE/REPAZENT	New Forms	Talkin' Loud-Mercury
35	STEVE EARLE	EJ Camazón	E-Squared WB
36	PELL MELL	Star City	Matador

TOP 75

# RAMMSTEIN

SEIT UNSUCHT

THE DEBUT ALBUM IN STORES NOW





- 37 HOLIDAY
- 38 QUICKSPACE
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- 51 PROMISE RING
- 52 HELIUM
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- 63 JANE'S ADDICTION
- 64 BUTTERGLORY
- 65 X
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- 69 FU MANCHU
- 70 VARIOUS ARTISTS
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- 72 SOUNDTRACK
- 73 VARIOUS ARTISTS
- 74 AN APRIL MARCH
- 75 PATTI SMITH

- Café Reggion
- Quickspace
- Cup Of Tea Records: Another Compilation
- When It Was Borr For The 7th Time
- Dots And Loops
- I'm Not Following You
- Communication Breaks
- Wolf Songs For Lambs
- The Fall Of Richmond
- A Life Less Ordinary
- Sounds Of The Satellites
- Honky-Tonk Operation E.P.
- The Fury Of The Aquabats!
- I'm Afraid Of Americans (EP)
- Nothing Feels Good
- The Magic City
- Plastic Seat Sweat
- Jaal Ab Dullah
- Your O.gasm
- Bentley Rhythm Ace
- Planet Of The Wolves
- All Over The Land
- Big Beat From Badsville
- Mortal Kombat: Annihilation
- Let Us Play
- Nenette Et Boni
- Kettle Whistle
- Rat Tat Tat
- Beyond And Back: The X Anthology
- Mistaking Airplanes For Stars
- Casanova
- The Man, The King, The Girl
- The Action Is Go
- Double Agent 1980: A Tribute To The 1980s
- Songs From The Capeman
- The Jackal
- Flaming Burnout: An Estrus Benefit Compilation
- It Goes Without Saying
- Peace And Noise

- SpinArt
- Kitty Kitty-Slash
- Cup Of Tea-Iron America
- Luaka Bop-WB
- Elektra-EEG
- Setanta-Epic
- DYSP-Sub Pop
- DreamWorks
- Lookout!
- London
- Too Pure-Sire
- Slabco
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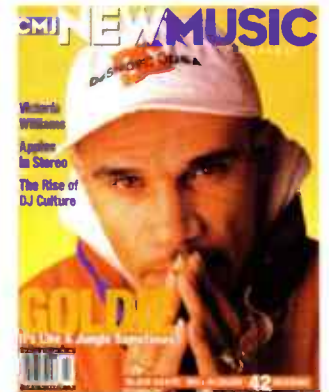
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## Miami, Florida

Miami's reputation as a tourist destination may have suffered due to stories of foreigners who make a wrong turn into a bad neighborhood and aren't heard of again until the blood beat on the 11 p.m. newscasts. Sylvester Stallone says he's leaving Miami because it's not the place to raise children, and many visitors still wonder if the city is anything like *Miami Vice*. But to appreciate the city is to enjoy its spectacle. Strolling down Miami Beach's Art Deco district, you can find

tourists standing in line to take pictures on the infamous steps of the late Gianni Versace's house, before they get shooed off by an around-the-clock security guard. Beyond the scandal and neon, however, Miami boasts a distinct culture, comprised of scrumptious, Latin-influenced cuisine, an array of record stores, and a wide variety of bands playing a number of interesting venues. Be prepared to rent a car and go with a friend who knows his or her way around the city, as any faith put in the city's public transportation is ill considered.

### food

There is a growing number of restaurants that reflect the rich heritage of Miami's varied Latin community. For breakfast, try the Cuban-style **Oscar's Cafeteria** (410 W. 49 St., 826-7607). The Hialeah restaurant's interior looks like Disney's version of a Cuban countryside town. You can dine in rooms decorated like small schoolhouses or barns. It's worth a trip to the Bayside Marketplace location of the costly Nicaraguan restaurant **Los Rancheros** (401 Biscayne Blvd., 375-0666) for both the excellent meat and the scenic view, which allows you to watch the big cruise ships depart from the nearby Port of Miami. If you prefer low prices over ambiance, try **Fritanga Monimbo** (7173 SW 117 Ave., 598-9040), located in the heart of the Kendall suburbs. Be prepared to stand in line at this "Nica kitchen," as most everybody in the area knows the hearty \$4 meals kick the meat out of any Burger King combo. On the European Latin tip, be sure to save room for **Las Rías Gallegas** (804 Ponce de Leon Blvd., 442-9058) and its decently priced paella, a classic Spanish seafood and rice dish.

### radio

Most of the radio stations in Miami have been monopolized by Paxon Communications and either duplicate MTV's heavy rotation or feature the same dreck you've been hearing for the past 20 years. Tune into The Beast and Baker's show on **WAXY** (790 AM), Saturdays at midnight, to hear a variety of alternative music and rants against Buddy Paxon's "media industrial complex." The only college or alternative station on the FM dial here is the University of Miami's

Yesterday And Today Records

**WVUM** (90.5 FM), which sometimes plays local music in between its heavy rotation of songs by artists like Stereolab, Yo La Tengo and Spiritualized. You'll be lucky to catch any of the aforementioned bands touring through Miami, though, since most groups don't make the 800-mile drive down from Atlanta.

### music shops

**Blue Note Records** (16401 NE 15th Ave., 940-3394) has the greatest selection and variety in town, ranging from jazz and R&B to alternative and classic rock. There's even a coffee bar and a stage for in-store performances that has hosted artists ranging from the jazz group the Yellow Jackets to indie hero Sebadoh. For rare vinyl there's **Record Liquidators** (1376 NE 163 St., 945-4700) just a few blocks away, but expect to pay higher prices. A few miles south, vinyl that's cheap, and sometimes just as rare, can be found at **Red White & Blue** (12640 NE 6th Ave., 893-1104). If you're in the South Miami area, **Yesterday And Today Records** (7321

SW 59 Ct., 552-1011), located in a brightly colored, paneled house, is worth a visit for

those in search of obscure Goth, punk and experimental records. Y&T has a companion store called **Y&T Dance** (1614 Alton Road,





Extremes Music & News

534-8704) in Miami Beach, which features a wide variety of 12" vinyl sought out by DJs and collectors. Miami Beach also has a used CD store/potpourri boutique called **Uncle Sam's Musicafe** (1141 Washington Ave., 532-0973) that's worth a visit. Another notable record shop in Miami Beach is the alternative/indie store **Extremes Music & News** (513 Lincoln Road, 534-1040), which is particularly well stocked with Goth.

## live music and clubs

You'll have to compete with the beautiful people of South Miami Beach to get into the trendiest nightclubs, since "SoBe" is home to many international modeling agencies. If you've got the looks and the desire to grind the night away to the current dance hits, stroll up Washington Ave., from 6th St. to 14th St., a strip which features at least three nightclubs on every block. Earlier in the evening doormen will be begging you to come in, offering free entry and complimentary drinks, but after midnight, expect to compete for admission.

If you're not up for the snobbishness of the Miami Beach dance clubs, stop in to one of the few, comparatively humble, live clubs. In addition to the alternative pop and rock of most local bands, you'll find a proliferation of Latin culture in Miami's music scene. **Rose's Bar And Music Lounge** (754 Washington Ave., 532-0228) and **The South Beach Pub** (717 Washington Ave., 532-7821) hold evenings of *rock en Español*. Bands like Tereso, Enemigo Sol and Volumen Cero are well worth checking out, even if you don't understand the lyrics. If you're looking for even more eclectic hybrids, check out some of the area's Afro-Cuban artists. Nil Lara offers up roots-rock infused with traditional Cuban sounds, and Khadir injects funk into its conga-propelled Afro-Cuban rhythms. Both are regulars at Rose's and the Pub.

South Miami is the home of **Space Cadette** (4360 SW 74 Ave., 261-7585), a multi-media record shop, recording studio, rehearsal space, live venue, record label, and art gallery. This unique venue brings in obscure bands from across the nation that wouldn't otherwise visit Miami, and features regular performances by young, local progressive rockers like Ed Matus' *Struggle* and *Swivel Stick*. The space is all-ages, too—a rarity in the area. There's no bar, so it's strictly bring-your-own.

In Little Haiti you'll find **Churchill's Hideaway** (5501 NE Second Ave., 757-1807), a 15-year-old live institution run by an English ex-patriot. Churchill's is home to the noise band the Laundry Room Squelchers, Rat Bastard's latest project (he's the man of *Scraping Teeth* fame—the first band heralded by *Spin* as the worst band in America). Rugby and soccer on a big screen TV draw in the afternoon crowds, and punk and noise are the main attraction in the evening. Harry Pussy lived and died here, and you can regularly catch disheveled punk rockers like the Feebles, Cavity and Monotract, plus the many upstart bands of all stripes debuting on Churchill's stage.

Another worthwhile place to go is **Tobacco Road** (626 South Miami Ave., 374-1198) in downtown Miami. Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald used to hang out at this 85-year-old historical landmark, which draws in blues artists from across the nation and hosts a variety of local acts. Regulars worth looking out for include the whimsical, experimental pop of the Curious Hair and the quirky songcraft of Amanda Green.

For information on where any of the above-mentioned bands are playing on a particular evening, check out the free, ubiquitous *New Times*



Churchill's Hideaway

(which I write for), offering current information on the entertainment scene, as well as an extensive guide to local eateries. Also, the *Miami Herald's* Friday "Weekend" supplement features a two-page spread on the trendy nightclubs, including info on which celebrities are going to which clubs.

All phone numbers are in the area code 305. Hans Morgenstern once peddled records at *Yesterday & Today*. He's a freelance music writer for *Goldmine* and *Miami's New Times*.

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