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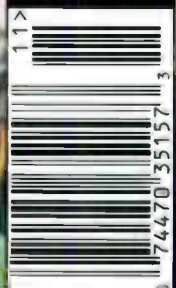


SPECIAL ISSUE

ON the VERGE:

THE MUSIC **THRICE**
THE STREETS **RJD2**
SONDRE LERCHE **THE RAPTURE**
KOUFAX AND MORE

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World Radio History



ON the VERGE SPECIAL ISSUE



RJD2

THE BEES



KOUFAX



THE STREETS



THE LOCUST

SIGUR RÓS 46

Fifteen record labels battled for the rights to bring Iceland's Sigur Rós to the USA. MCA won, and for their effort they've gotten an album with no title filled with 11-minute songs about nothing, sung in a language only the singer understands. Meanwhile, their fanatical audiences are bursting into tears and passing out in the middle of their shows. Neil Gladstone cracks the code and finds out everything is just eel sa-da-lo, thanks.

NOISE ROCK 52

You know, sometimes rock 'n' roll *is* noise pollution. The Locust, Arab On Radar and Lightning Bolt are leading the charge to destroy music, one 43-second blast at a time. Christopher R. Weingarten chronicles their legacy of brutality.

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Isn't it about time you stopped bumpin' that White Stripes record every 10 minutes? You need some new bands to obsess over, and this batch fits the bill. Get on board now, so in a year you can say, "They were better on their first 7-inch," and *mean* it.

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QUICK FIX 12

Sift the wheat and the chaff of the NYC hype harvest, spoon with Hot Water Music, examine the unholy powers of Buffy's rack, get advice on how to deal with your X from John Doe, experience the otherworldly sounds of singing Liberian congresswomen, get footloose with Porcupine Tree, take a *Scarlet's Walk* with Tori Amos and go ape with Eyes Adrift's Curt Kirkwood.

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We're not in Lawrence, Kansas anymore. But we were.

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Frank Mansfield settles in for a big slice of Meat Loaf.

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Age of plastic

Hey there. I've been a subscriber since around issue #3 or so, and I know you've gone through some various styles of CD sleeves throughout the years. It seems for now you have settled on the durable clear plastic sleeves. While these do a pretty good job, I have to express my dissatisfaction with them. My main complaint is that they are difficult to write on. Being a subscriber for so long, I have hundreds and hundreds of songs on these CDs and it's hard to keep track of them all. So I like to write little notes on the sleeves so I can look back and see which ones I really liked, which were crap, etc., and regular ol' ink pens don't work so well on the plastic. I've even tried painting White-Out on the sleeve and writing on it, but...that just sucks. Secondly, when you open the sleeve, the perforation marks make little jagged points on the slit and make it pretty easy to scratch the CD. I've scratched CDs worse on the plastic than I ever did with the old paper sleeves. Lastly, the "lingering" plastic attached to the magazine is annoying when folding the pages back to read, and it's difficult to remove. If you are set on keeping the plastic sleeves, can I at least suggest some sort of strip along the side for note taking?

Matt
powerslave_666@yahoo.com

As many sharp-eyed readers have noticed, there are always lots of little extras in the magazine, from messages in the indicia to the irreverent quotes on the binding. Matt's pointed out a few more, to wit: The jagged shard of plastic emerging from the binding after you cut out the CD sleeve, the one that threatens to slice through your wrist like a razor blade in the hands of a college poet in a Joy Division T-shirt, is there to remind everyone of how sometimes all this bullshit makes us feel like... a college poet in a Joy Division T-shirt. Oh, and try a fine-point Sharpie. —ed.

The editor always rings twice

Would you please try to have your magazine land in my mailbox following some type of schedule that is discernable? Each month my husband's anxiety and agitation increase from the 5th until whenever your magazine happens to arrive. Sometimes he accuses our children or me of hiding his favorite magazine. It is irresponsible to develop a fanbase and then treat them poorly. Anyway, he does love your magazine, so continue the good work with the content.

Connie Cohen-Nelson
Sioux City, Iowa

Connie, my pet, let us not be coy. In an effort to reduce cash outflow, the editorial staff has taken to hand-delivering copies of CMJ New Music Monthly. My beat covers the Midwest, where I've found America's heartland to be very loving indeed. Now, if your husband is not at home to receive that month's issue, and in the process of your taking receipt of the magazine, the issue becomes, shall we say, disheveled, and a replacement issue is required as to not raise suspicion... of course the delivery schedule would seem somewhat erratic. And while I do not wish to injure your most beautiful affections, please recall how on that first beautiful morning I explained that your well-kept Sioux City doorstep is not my only call. Demands on my time are great, and you know how passionate I am about customer service. Some things cannot be rushed. Yes, copy can be put through rounds of editing like a sapling through a woodchipper, and the rustling under the pile of press releases and set-copy corrections has led me to believe that a family of rodents has taken up residence in my office—unsettling, but at least they're working on nibbling away the glue on the sealed Pearl Jam and Audioslave Sony Discmen. But I always have time for those moments when time stands still, the editorial calendar melting away like the wax of a candle flickering the room's only light. Unless the kids are due home for soccer practice or something, in which case I've got to get outta Dodge. —ed.

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WILCO

: AUSTIN CITY LIMITS FESTIVAL, 9.02
: What Elvis was to the white jumpsuit, Jeff Tweedy is
: to the untucked red shirt. Here, Tweedy leads Wilco
: in rousing the 75,000 fans at the inaugural Austin
: City Limits Festival in the Texas capitol's Zilker Park.

: **Photo: Scott Newton**





World Radio History



THE STROKES

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL, NEW YORK, 8.02
Can't stand the Strokes? Well, here's a Stroke who
can't stand. Despite a knee injury that forced his
band to cancel a few tourdates, Julian Casablancas
took the stage (or took a seat, as it were) for his
band's Radio City show with the White Stripes. Both
bands, reportedly, will be saving rock 'n' roll.

Photo: Christopher Diiorio

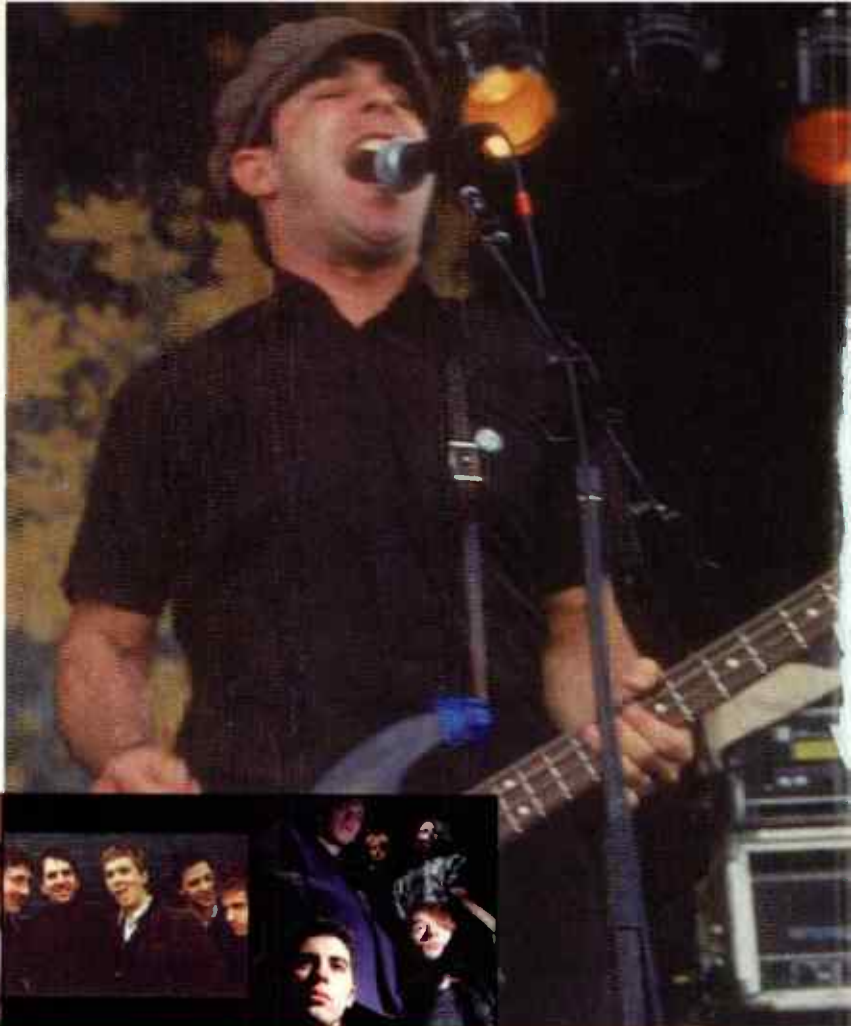


quickFIX

Don't believe the hype, it's a sequel.

The Strokes escaped from New York, but do any of these new New Hype City bands stand a chance of mattering west of the Hudson?

STORY: AMY PHILLIPS



YEAH YEAH YEAHS



LIARS



THE WALKMEN



SOVIET



RADIO 4

	YEAH YEAH YEAHS	LIARS	THE WALKMEN	SOVIET	RADIO 4
The Sound:	Think Lydia Lunch fronting the White Stripes: Southern-belle-gone-to-hell vocals over raw, sexy garage rock.	Bass-heavy funk-punk meets spastic no wave. Like ESG (whom they sample) gettin' it on with the Contortions (sans sax) in a dirty back alley.	Moody, atmospheric indie with spooky piano lines and melodramatic vocals. Almost goth, but goth as in Joy Division, not Marilyn Manson.	Swoony New Romantic synth-pop à la Duran Duran taking a bubblebath with Kraftwerk.	Black-clad hipsters whipping up dancefloor-friendly post-punk. Their latest album, <i>Gotham!</i> (Gern Blandsten), was produced by white-hot electro deconstructionists the DFA.
The Hype:	With her wild anti-diva performance style (dousing herself and the crowd in beer, kicking and prancing like a chorus girl), and her outrageous shabby-chic/early-Madonna outfits, frontwoman Karen O is queen of the scene—and her band's only released a five-song EP!	Despite having a gigantic, moustached-and-mulleted singer and a creepy, balding bassist, Liars are the coolest band outta Brooklyn since, um, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Insane live shows keep the punk spirit alive with stage-diving and dancing like grade-schoolers with ADD.	Three members of the Walkmen were in Jonathan Fire*Eater, a mid-'90s buzz band axed by DreamWorks. Having learned their lesson, these clean-cut Washington, D.C. transplants are keeping it real with stripped down, D.L.Y. recordings. Gops—is that their video on MTV?	The '80s ruled! Asymmetrical haircuts and strap-on keyboards represented the pinnacle of human achievement. So let's all be fashionably fabulous and pretend like Nirvana never happened.	<i>Gotham!</i> is a breakthrough concept album with a compelling premise: In pre-Strokes, pre-9/11 NYC, evil mayor Giuliani won't let the kids dance. Only five indie rockers, armed with guitars, synths and an unhealthy obsession with Gang Of Four can save us now!
The Lowdown:	If you're under 25 and you haven't heard "Our Time" yet, you're missing out on your generation's theme song. Submit to the mighty Yeah Yeah Yeahs and rejoice.	That mullet is not ironic—Liars are as unpretentious and rockin' as it gets. Prepare to have your brain scrambled by their debut album, <i>They Threw Us All In A Trench And Stuck A Monument On Top</i> (Mute-Blast First). (Only skip the last track, unless you dig listening to a droning groove over and over half an hour.)	Admit it guys, you love the limelight. Quit your depressed-grad-student shtick and learn some boy-band moves. Oh, and one more thing: Just because you've got a good record collection doesn't mean you're not a boring preppie.	The '80s sucked. Someone aping Morrissey with a crew of dour friends making new-wave-by-numbers is the worst bit of revisionism since Kevin DuBrow's hairpiece.	Yeah, they shamelessly rob Gang Of Four, and yeah, they think the city's Cabaret Laws are wack (and rightfully so). But the hooks are crunchy and the beats are irresistible, so why should we care?

YEAH YEAH YEAHS: ANGELA BROWN; LIARS: JOE DILWORTH; THE WALKMEN: ANNA LEITHAUSER; SOVIET: CHARLES ROXBURGH; RADIO 4: BRENDAN MORAN

NEWSFEED: The Roots to release their endlessly delayed *Phrenology* November 26, with guest spots from Talib Kweli, Jill Scott, Nelly Furtado >>>>

Rack 'Em Up

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
(ELECTRONIC ARTS FOR XBOX)

No more dancing in front of the mirror, *Silence Of The Lambs*-style for you: Electronic Arts' **Buffy The Vampire Slayer** satisfies both your bloodlust and your perverted urges to wear Sarah Michelle Gellar's clothes. As our well-endowed hero, wreck undead ass through 13 (ooh, scary) interactive levels, tossing vampires in front of trains and staking them with literally every single piece of wooden furniture that gets in your way. Beautiful graphics, voice acting from the actual cast (minus Gellar, oddly) and excellently animated cut scenes give the game everything you like about the television show, even down to Charisma Carpenter's tremendous... uh, acting ability. >>>TOM MALLON



Hot Water Music's Jason Black drops a line after their tour supporting *Caution* (Epitaph), and lets us know he got home okay.

One From The Road: Hot Water Music

Where are you right now?

Sitting in my bedroom fruitlessly trying to recover from the 32 hours of travel it took to get home from Australia yesterday. And trying to wrap my head around the fact that it's 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in Gainesville and 6:30 a.m. Wednesday in my brain.

What were last night's accommodations?

Last night's were my room, but the night before we were in Adelaide in these wonderful serviced apartments we stayed in while we were in Australia. Much better than anything here when taking cost into consideration: two bedroom, washer/dryer, dishwasher...the works. Australians do it right!

How are you traveling (bus, van, etc.)?

We're pretty much a van band unless the situation dictates a bus (e.g. Warped Tour). It pretty much costs the same to rent a bus for six weeks as it does to buy a brand new van. You do the math.

Who in the band has the most annoying sleeping habits?

Chuck [Ragan, vocals/guitar] tends to snore loud enough that no one else will sleep in the same room as him. He likes to hug in his sleep, too.

What's currently being played on the tour vehicle soundsystem?

The new Guided By Voices record has been getting pretty solid airplay.

What rituals do you have that are part of every tour?

Beer.

What song request are you most tired of hearing?

Pretty much most of the old stuff people request drives us a bit batty. It gets pretty mundane playing the same freaking songs for seven years, you know?

What do you miss most about being away from home?

We're on the road so much that I think we go through Super-8 withdrawal more than withdrawal for anything back home.

What do you do during the day to occupy your time?

Smoke and read.

What's been the best show of the tour thus far?

Our headlining gig at the Arthouse in Melbourne was absolutely great. Setting the house record for attendance in the Southern Hemisphere is pretty damn keen.



and more • **My Morning Jacket** signs with Dave Matthews's ATO label • **Basement Jaxx** considering roughly 30 songs for their next full-length, due in spring 2003 >>>

Tough Love



JOHN DOE You want experience in dealing with the vicissitudes of the heart? Turn your lonely eyes to John Doe: He toured, wrote and recorded with the woman who put the "ex" in X, keeping the band together even when they couldn't do the same with their marriage. Musical heartbreak experts like Juliana Hatfield and Aimee Mann even back Doe up on his new *Dim Stars*, *Bright Sky* (iMusic), for chrissakes—how much more proof do you need? *Seriously, they're not breaking up with you because you're too good for 'em. Get help: lovelorn@cmj.com.*

I have a bunch of friends (guys) who're totally afraid of breaking up with girls. They don't really like these girls that much, but because they're afraid that without a "fall back" they won't have the confidence to meet any new girls, they stay in bad relationships and just cheat. This seems totally stupid to me—is this a common behavior?

—Rparis, Portland, Ore.

It's a very common behavior among young men who love football.

My gay best friend has been swooning over this straight guy for months... suddenly they've started fooling around. This guy lives more of a sex life than anyone I know (poles, harnesses, pina colada-flavored smoke machines) and is quite proud of his constant bedding of ladies. He refuses to acknowledge my friend as anything but a semi-distant relation around girls, but whenever he can't convince a girl to come home with him he comes a'callin. How do I convince my buddy (who sincerely thinks there's potential to win this guy over) that he's just second-string play?

—NankerPhelge, Savannah, Ga.

Your friend should immediately remove himself from this very unhealthy relationship. Most likely, he'll get hurt. If he doesn't, the most unhealthy aspect is one you already recognize—the fact that he's being used as a replacement and

even worse, he's replacing other superficial relationships. By continuing this he may not be available for the real thing if it comes along. Make your feelings clear to your friend and continue to badger him until he realizes how potentially dangerous the situation is. Can the other guy be that hunky?

I finally met someone who could be a lot of what I'm looking for...but I'm gunshy. I'm trying to heal from a love affair I very much wanted to work and I know it's going to take me a long time, but I'd like to get to know this guy. I feel like I have the personality of a straw when I'm with him so that he doesn't like me... But I also don't want to feel like I'm coming on strong by showing interest.

—Charli, Chicago, Il.

You should develop a friendship with this person and not a relationship, not yet. If the friendship can be strong, once you've found out who you are without somebody, then you have a chance of being good with someone new.

Why do women in bars stop talking to me when I tell them I'm in therapy?

—Sketchy, near London, U.K.

Women stop talking to you because they're in therapy and don't need to get mixed up any more than they already are. (Is that the first thing you tell them?)

Love, John

WEIRD RECORD

Blow Up The Outsider World



Music historian Irwin Chusid is the Alan Lomax of fucked-up shit, compiling "outsider music" performed by folks so musically damaged—whether through drugs, DNA or naïveté—that they make Wesley Willis sound as polished as a Diane Warren ballad. On *Songs In The Key Of Z: The Curious World Of Outsider Music, Vol. 2*, elderly Liberian Congresswoman Malinda Jackson Parker half-sings about mosquitoes over Rachmaninoff's "Prelude In C# Minor" (for almost eight minutes!), Tangela Tricoli (one of the first female jetliner pilots) proves her concept of melody is somewhere in the clouds on the folk-meets-aeronautics "Jet Lady," and some unknown Southern belle assertively sings (and yells) about removing her pantyhose for some lucky(?) leg man. Plus, more homeless people and dishwashers than a Bad Company reunion tour! >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Prodigy's Keith Flint at work on a solo record • R.E.M. busy writing the follow-up to *Reveal* • After the settlement of the dispute between Courtney Love and Dave

“There’s tons of girls that want to go with Jack because of who Jack is. He can have sex whenever he wants, he can get a blow job whenever he wants.”

—Sharon Osbourne, describing some real Book of Revelations, apocalypse-bringing-type shit.

MY FAVORITE GEAR:

Porcupine Tree’s guitar wizard delivers some fancy footwork.



Remember Emerson Lake & Palmer’s fortress of keyboard solitude? Cram the four keyboards and fancy swiveling stool into a single guitar player and you have something approximating Porcupine Tree guitarist Steven Wilson’s setup. Bringing the dense, ever-shifting prog-metal of *In Absentia* (Lava) to the stage is an organizational nightmare, requiring a labyrinth of effects units, pedals and multiple amplifiers. In lieu of growing extra feet, Wilson ties it all together with a Custom Audio Electronics (www.customaudioelectronics.com) switching system, a MIDI-driven pedal the size of a briefcase which bears a 747 cockpit-

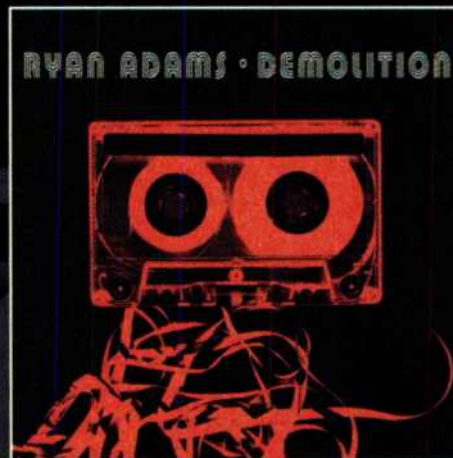
rivaling number of switches and buttons. “It’s not like I’m switching one pedal on or off at a time,” Wilson says. “The music [could go] from a real heavy sound to an ambient, textural sound, and I have to be able to switch compressors, distortion boxes, delays, reverbs, phases, all at the touch of one button within the space of a split second.” That split second leaves plenty of room for error, though. “There’s been times where I’ve called out completely the wrong bank,” he says. “So patch number one should be a beautiful clean sound, [but it comes out] a heavy, distorted sound.” Wilson’s solution to his hi-tech problem is decidedly lo-tech: “I have lots of paper stuck all over telling me what’s what,” he laughs. “It’s not easy.” >>>TOM MALLON



PORTRAIT: GARY GERSHOFF; GEAR: RICHARD ALLEN

Grohl/Krist Novoselic, the **Nirvana** greatest hits disc will drop November 12, but fans will have to wait until

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ANGRY GEEK AT THE MOVIES

► **BY VINCENT G. CURRY** Imagine a documentary

on Charlie Watts where neither Mick Jagger nor Keith Richards is interviewed and Ron Wood only shows up in archival footage. That's the feeling you get when watching the surprisingly engaging, very interesting and sometimes heartbreaking *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*. Based on a book of the same name, the documentary is about the Funk Brothers, the skilled backing musicians who actually played the music on all those Motown hits. Oddly, Berry Gordy and Smokey Robinson are only seen in photographs and never, ever heard from, and Stevie Wonder, who learned the piano from one of the Brothers, is only seen in a decade-old television interview. That's pretty unusual, not to mention a sad hint as to how little these men were and still are regarded. Still, while you feel bad that the Funk Brothers never got their due—they're as responsible as anyone for The Motown Sound—no one made them stay there in the shadows. These former jazzmen (the list of greats they played with reads like a jazz who's who) could have left and joined any real band anytime they wanted, and the film never questions why they didn't. Joan Osborne, Meshell Ndegeocello and Chaka Kahn all show up to do spirited renditions of Motown classics accompanied by the reunited surviving Funk Brothers. Only Ben Harper is surprisingly stiff; **he needs to stick to his own music or pull that board out of his ass...** ♦♦♦ For better or worse, it seems every director has to make at least one coming-of-age film. Leaning towards the worse is *Blue Car*, the first feature from writer/director Karen Moncrieff. Despite good performances from her cast, **teenage-girl poetry is what composes the Third Level Of Hell, and this movie is just as humorless as any *Bell Jar*-reading adolescent can be.** Granted, the main character has a difficult life, but you know things are bad when the only levity comes from a sociopath who rips our heroine off. Still, Moncrieff gets points for her downbeat attitude by bucking a movie trend and insisting that sleeping with an older man is usually a horrible experience, best left to fantasy.

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



IN MY ROOM

Who: Curt Kirkwood of Eyes Adrift

Where: His home in Austin, Tx.

Why: As head of the Meat Puppets, Kirkwood introduced punks to the heartland; now he's aiming for everyone else with Nirvana's Krist Novoselic and Sublime's Bud Gaugh as Eyes Adrift.

Animal kingdom

I just kinda like animals. I have a bunch of cockatiels, I have five of them. I have a cat, and you know, with the cockatiels you've gotta keep them in check. They breed like chickens. When they're going, they go fast.

Glass menagerie

I've got some cool glass stuff that I've been collecting—stained glass, lampshades and stuff. There's this girl here in Austin that's made the majority of it, and it's pretty unusual. A little bit of the not-quite traditional stained-glass stuff, more like stained glass combined with seashells, pieces of agate.

Hey, hey, he's got monkeys

I've got a bunch of masks, animal masks like giraffes, pigs, gorillas, lots of monkeys.

They're mostly cheap Halloween masks, but I'm kinda into monkeys. I wind up just getting monkey stuff now and then on the road. I have some wind-up monkey toys, and some stuffed monkeys, stuff like that, but my daughter likes monkeys too. Maybe it's an in-the-blood thing.

The mystery of why four out of five In My Room guests own some sort of monkey or pig memorabilia will most likely not be explained by Eyes Adrift's self-titled debut (spinART). But if you find it, let us know.

Interview by Tom Mallon.

OF GREAT IMPORT

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A CAMP A Camp Stockholm



What it is: The debut solo album from Cardigans frontwoman Nina Persson, establishing her alter ego with the help of Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous in the producer's chair.

Why you want it: With the Cardigans taking a break following their metamorphosis from spritely pop emissaries to icy-dark technocrats on 1998's *Gran Turismo*, Nina Persson found herself with the time to craft this collection of songs rivaling the best work of her longtime band. Here, she's free to explore everything from woozy alt-country to

beat-driven futurism to '60s pop balladry, while Linkous's skilled superintendence makes natural neighbors out of tracks as disparate as the bittersweet lament "I Can Buy You" and the menacing, effects-laden "The Same Old Song." Persson's haunting cover of "The Bluest Eyes In Texas," originally featured in *Boys Don't Cry*, is also included, highlighting the fact that these songs represent a variety of places, times and collaborations—hence the name. Rest assured, all are worth an extended visit. >>>DOUG LEVY

2004 for the box set • Foo Fighters, Queens Of The Stone Age, Deftones, PJ Harvey and Wilco among performers for 2003's **Big Day Out** fest • Starsailor, Badly >>>>

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Answer Me

Frankly, **Tori Amos's** alter ego **Scarlet** gives a damn about saving America's soul.



No, says ethereal enchantress Tori Amos, her latest 18-track magnum opus *Scarlet's Walk* isn't exactly a game of Clue. But it is every bit as elaborate, and something of a metaphysical whodunit as well: Who or what killed America? Amos took the country's pulse traveling by tour bus across the United States last year. Was she, adopting the titular Scarlet as an autobiographical avatar, able to tap into the zeitgeist? Amos's Clue-clever detective work just might surprise you. »TOM LANHAM

So *Scarlet's Walk* was a real journey?

Well, it's taken me 10 years, I think, to take this trip. And the album is a continuous trip, the story, and it started to come to me when I was on the road last year. It was in the wake of the Twins going down. Especially being in different cities while the masks were down and people were talking about America. And I spent a lot of time observing—I'm much more comfortable observing than anything else. So before I realized it, the record was writing itself, the songs were coming and the characters are based on real people, and the events are based on real events. And it starts on the West Coast with my character Scarlet. And I can hide in Scarlet, and I can have many lovers as Scarlet. But she is me, and I am she. She's propelled to find this being that we call America, what her soul is, not how she's been pimped out by our leaders over the last several years... What she—we,

us together—are finding on our travels, and we talk about it on "Wampum Prayer," is that to really find what America's soul is about, you have to go back to pre-contact times. And that's where the Native American idea of being a caretaker comes from, or the spirit of the land, giving back everything that is taken. And as she follows that history and goes to places where the events occurred and learns about them—well, she knew of it, but didn't know the details.

Like *Wounded Knee? The Trail of Tears?* [Amos is part Cherokee.]

Yes. My great, great grandmother escaped the Trail of Tears and hid out in the Smoky Mountains, and the stories came down through her. And I think that was kind of propelling me to ask some questions—I needed to know what it is I believe. A Native American woman came to see me on the road. I mean, she was an older woman, she wasn't there for the concert, but once she made her way back she said, "I have a message for you. You're going to tell America's history, but not his story, you must tell her story. Because it's time for the people who hold the land and the people who own the land to come together for her survival." So these people who've held the secret to her soul and loved her are questioning, "Are we as a whole, as Americans, really realizing the crossroads that we're at?" I mean, we've been attacked—what is it going to take for us to see that we have to take action and see exactly what our leaders are doing in our name? This is the time for the torch to be lit in the ones who are going to be left with this place in 20 years. They're in universities now, but this is the time for them to ask their own questions, to take their own road to see what they believe in. And Scarlet is a thread for them, really. That's all she is.

Plus I hear that *Miss Scarlet* committed the crime in the billiard room with a wrench.

Ha! I was always a Professor Plum person, myself!

5 SPOT

FIVE RECORDS THAT MOVE THE ANIMAL IN PRODUCER/SIDEMAN EXTRAORDINAIRE JOHN PARISH (PJ HARVEY, EELS).

1. Sonic Youth, *Murray St.*

Not their "best album since *Daydream Nation*," not their "classic rock record," just another great Sonic Youth album. As if that's not enough... Fantastic sleeve too. As usual.

2. T.Rex, *Electric Warrior*

When I'm working...I like to have a few of the records that are most important to me, which I periodically stick on to remind myself just how good records can be. And [to remind myself] that if I'm going to contribute further to this massively overstuffed candy store, I have a duty to at least try and make something as sweet and irresistible as this.

3. Thou, *Elvis Or Betty Boop*

Thou are from Gent, Belgium. Their previous album, *Put Us In Tune* (which I produced), came out in the U.S. on See Thru Broadcasting. This record (which I didn't produce) is made to be blared out of car radios on sunny days, of which there are considerably more here in California than there are in Gent or Bristol, England, where I normally reside.

4. Wilco, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*

A rare example of a record that lives up to the hype surrounding it. I'd always been a little ambivalent about Wilco in the past, but this album is really something. Funny, sad, beautiful, exhilarating. Brilliantly arranged, recorded and mixed. Who could resist it? Oh yeah...their old label. And people wonder why the music business is in a state.

5. Howe Gelb, *Hisser*

Because I always have something by Howe or Giant Sand close to the stereo. Probably the only true genius currently making records.

John Parish's How Animals Move is out now on Thrill Jockey.

TORI AMOS: KURT MARKUS; JOHN PARISH: MARIA MOCHNACZ

Drawn Boy, Muse and more to appear on *NME's* second War Child benefit disc... the disc will also include **Jimmy Eat World** covering Prodigy's "Firestarter" * * * * *

LISTEN UP

50

MADE THE FIRST CUT

10

COMPETE IN NYC

3

GO HEAD-TO-HEAD IN L.A.

1

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ON THE VERGE

There are no set criteria for what makes a band or artist On The Verge. Hell, we couldn't even come up with an even number. So behold, 11 things that matter.



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CANYON

Noodling on a lap-steel and crooning like Neil Young with neck tattoos, Canyon's Brandon Butler draws a varied crowd. Frat boys bite their lips and raise their fists, while folks old enough to be his parents reminisce about Woodstock. "Last week this older couple told me that our show reminded them of shows they'd seen in the '60s—Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Crosby, Stills & Nash," explains Joe Winkle, the Washington, D.C.-based five-piece's guitarist. "Meanwhile, there were kids there that were so young they had to sneak into the bar. They were stoked, even though they don't know who our influences are." When Butler and Winkle were teens themselves back in Kansas City, they probably wouldn't have

recognized the classic-rock inspiration, either. Listening to Canyon's sophomore effort, *Empty Rooms* (Gern Blandsten), which is rife with lush, atmospheric arrangements and vocals bearing the raw subtlety of Nebraska-era Springsteen, it's hard to believe that the founding members were once in a high school band that rode the first wave of the emo movement. They'd prefer that Boys Life never got mentioned again, but it shouldn't go unmentioned that their transformation was on the level of Dashboard Confessional turning in his tear-stained hankie to join Crazy Horse. "What we're trying to do now," Winkle asserts, "is make records that, 30 years later, don't sound old, aren't dated, and are still relevant." >>>KARA ZUARO

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KOUFAX

A little band from the Midwest releases an album called *Social Life*; it's a big-time slice of Hall & Oates boogie, leaning heavy on jumpy guitars and jaunty keyboards. They've got an organ player, even. Said band is also on Vagrant Records, home of emo princesses Dashboard Confessional and Saves The Day—something's not quite right here. "Everyone thinks [Vagrant's] kind of like the corporate emo label," Koufax singer Rob Suchan explains. "So everyone associates us with those bands. But I don't think our band is really that inaccessible [to people outside that scene]—like, if people have never heard an electric piano in a band, I don't think that it's much of a threat." *Social Life* finds Koufax

wearing their loyalties square on their sleeves: The opening track, "Let Us Know," is like H&O's "Maneater" with punched-up guitars; "Break It Off" shuffles like Joe Jackson; "Adultery" is a pop-perfect version of Elvis Costello's pairings with Burt Bacharach. And Suchan belts 'em all out like Fabert Smith sans mascara. The whole thing flies in the face of Dashboard's dirge-like soulbearing, and can only help to change people's perception of the Vagrant empire. "If someone showed up at a show holding a grudge against Vagrant, I would just do what we do, and hope those people would just get hip to it," Suchan says. "But part of me would also say that I wouldn't really care to appeal to people like that." >>>JAMES MONTGOMERY



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BLINDSIDE

From the Hives' garage-core to the melodic death metal of In Flames and Entombed, if it rocks, it probably came from Sweden. Add Stockholm quartet Blindsight to that list of Nordic notables: *Silence* (Elektra), a passionate batch of adrenalized post-hardcore, has set them up with high-profile tours, late-night TV slots and commercial radio love. The band got an early liftoff from independent Christian label Solid State—a fitting start, since faith plays a big part in their lives, according to guitarist Simon Grenehed. But he maintains that they have no desire to “shove [that] down anyone’s throat in the music.” Being spiritually minded has helped Blindsight, regard-

less: *Silence* will be the first release from fellow believers P.O.D.'s imprint, Three Points. The attention is new to the young band, but they're enjoying it as much as they're enjoying the Stateside weather while on tour with Hoobastank. “We’re totally digging the heat,” laughs Grenehed. “In Sweden, it gets warm but for a very short period of time.” The band hasn’t come to the U.S. just to take in the sun, though—they’ve been working hard to amass converts. “We’re the only Swedish band ever to sign with a major label in the United States without a connection to a Swedish company,” Grenehed says. “We’ve got to tour the States and build a fanbase over here.” >>>AMY SCARRETTO



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RJD2

Deep within the squalling mindfuck of the Def Jux roster, there's a dirty little secret: pop songs. This lone oasis of accessibility comes courtesy of RJD2's *Deadringer*, a melting pot of gritty breaks and lo-fi soul and classical samples that's already taking hold of listeners locking for the second coming of instrumental hip-hop. "I'm the sellout on Def Jux," RJ jokes. "I'm trying to make accessible songs, I'm trying to work within the traditional pop song structure... I think the only difference between what I do and what Puffy does is that he's resting on records that have already moved platinum units, on Hall And Oates and Grandmaster

Flash records, and I'm resting on shit that nobody's ever heard of." RJ's use of found vocals have earned him comparisons to heavyweights like DJ Shadow and Moby, but it's what he surrounds those vocals with that sets him apart: Soul horns peacefully coexist with plucked acoustic guitars, lonesome gospel vocals segue into beds of tense, Hitchcock-ian strings. As for where he digs up that special blend, RJ's an equal opportunity sampler. "It's not in any one place... you just have to keep your ears open," he says. "I'm not exaggerating. I've jacked breaks off '68 funk 45s, and I've jacked breaks off of Kentucky Fried Chicken commercials." >>>TOM MALLON

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

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THRICE

Thrice's latest album, *The Illusion Of Safety* (Hopeless), begins with the plea, "Can we kill each other quickly?" and ends with a song about "true friends...stabbing you in the front." In between, there's plenty of blood, a drowning, a poisoning, some broken bones, a cheery little number called "The Red Death," a televised funeral, gratuitous dagger usage and one weary piano solo—all within a brief, bludgeoning 38 minutes. Uplifting, no? "A lot of people say that they see hope in my lyrics," says lead singer Dustin Kensrue, in a speaking voice which, despite his screamo heroics on the record, is as hushed as if he'd wrapped a comfy turtleneck sweater around his mouth. "I don't know if I

put hope there. I don't know if I could." All this doom and gloom is paying off: The band recently inked a deal with Island, who'll release the follow-up to *Illusion* early next year. And in case you were wondering, no, they don't feel guilty about the major-label exposure. "I think anytime there's a chance to get something new on the radio, it's a good thing," opines Kensrue. "I'd rather have bands like us on there than some other things. I'm hoping that this whole nü-metal thing is on the outs; it's a heartless medium, it's tough-guy music." Could Thrice be the band to bring heart and emotion back to the radio? Kensrue shrugs. "If I read poetry, does that make me emotional?" >>>JAMES MONTGOMERY

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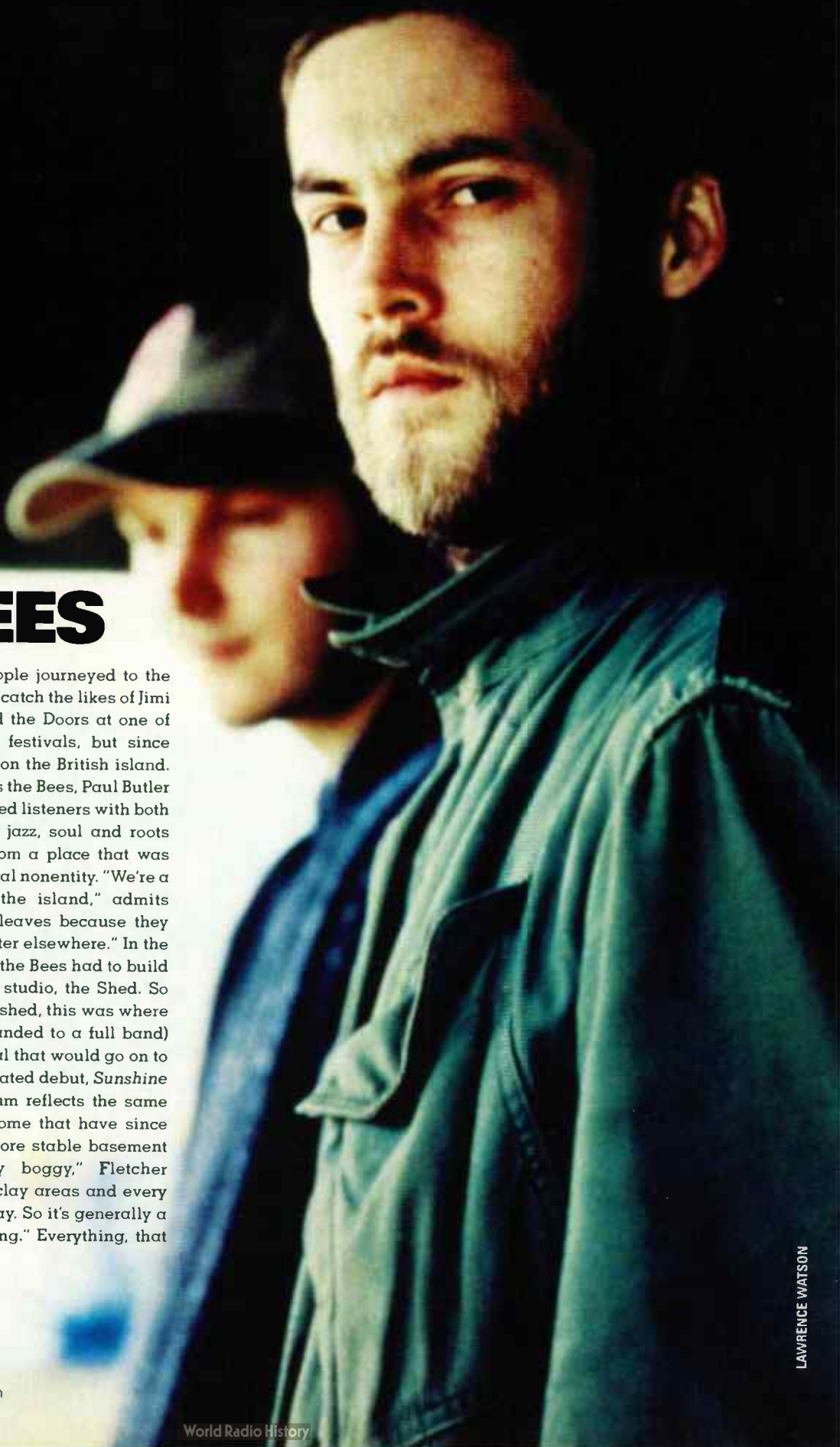
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**IN STORES TUESDAY,
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THE BEES

Over a half million people journeyed to the Isle of Wight in 1970 to catch the likes of Jimi Hendrix, the Who and the Doors at one of history's most notorious rock festivals, but since then, it's been relatively quiet on the British island. That is, until the buzz began. As the Bees, Paul Butler and Aaron Fletcher have stunned listeners with both their imaginative mix of folk, jazz, soul and roots music and their emergence from a place that was previously regarded as a musical nonentity. "We're a phenomenon, especially on the island," admits Fletcher. "Everyone normally leaves because they reckon it's much better and faster elsewhere." In the absence of a real music scene, the Bees had to build their own—starting with their studio, the Shed. So named because it literally is a shed, this was where the duo (which has since expanded to a full band) wrote and recorded the material that would go on to form their Mercury Prize-nominated debut, *Sunshine Hit Me* (Astralwerks). The album reflects the same mutable facets of the pair's home that have since forced them to relocate to a more stable basement studio. "The island's really boggy," Fletcher explains. "There's marsh and clay areas and every year, bits of the island slip away. So it's generally a loose place. Everything's sinking." Everything, that is, except the Bees. >>> **JOE LEVY**

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*Jerry Douglas appears courtesy of Sugar Hill Records

World Radio History



THE RAPTURE

As always, there are stars in the making in New York City. This time, though, we're talking double-threat. While NYC art-rock combo the Rapture seduces the international music world with its deft fusion of dance grooves and electrified punk, DFA, the group's label/production team, has developed an enviable reputation of its own—all before either of them even released a full-length. "We were both really interested in dance music," says Rapture frontman Luke Jenner of his band's initial meeting with the producers. "So that was a good way for us to come together and do something. I don't know if we would have jumped into it as much, or as easily, if we hadn't known them." It's a good

thing they did, because the result of that meeting, the Rapture's appropriately rapturous "House Of Jealous Lovers" single, became an international hit, equally winning over dance and rock crowds in the U.K. It wasn't long before folks in their hometown caught on, and the already familiar post-punk comparisons abounded again. Meaning that, with their highly anticipated DFA debut album, *Echoes*, on the way in early 2003, the decidedly modest Jenner has only one concern. "I think it could get annoying if people are still comparing us to Gang Of Four in five years," he reflects. "But right now, it's okay. It's just nice to have people actually care about your band for a change." >>>DOUG LEVY

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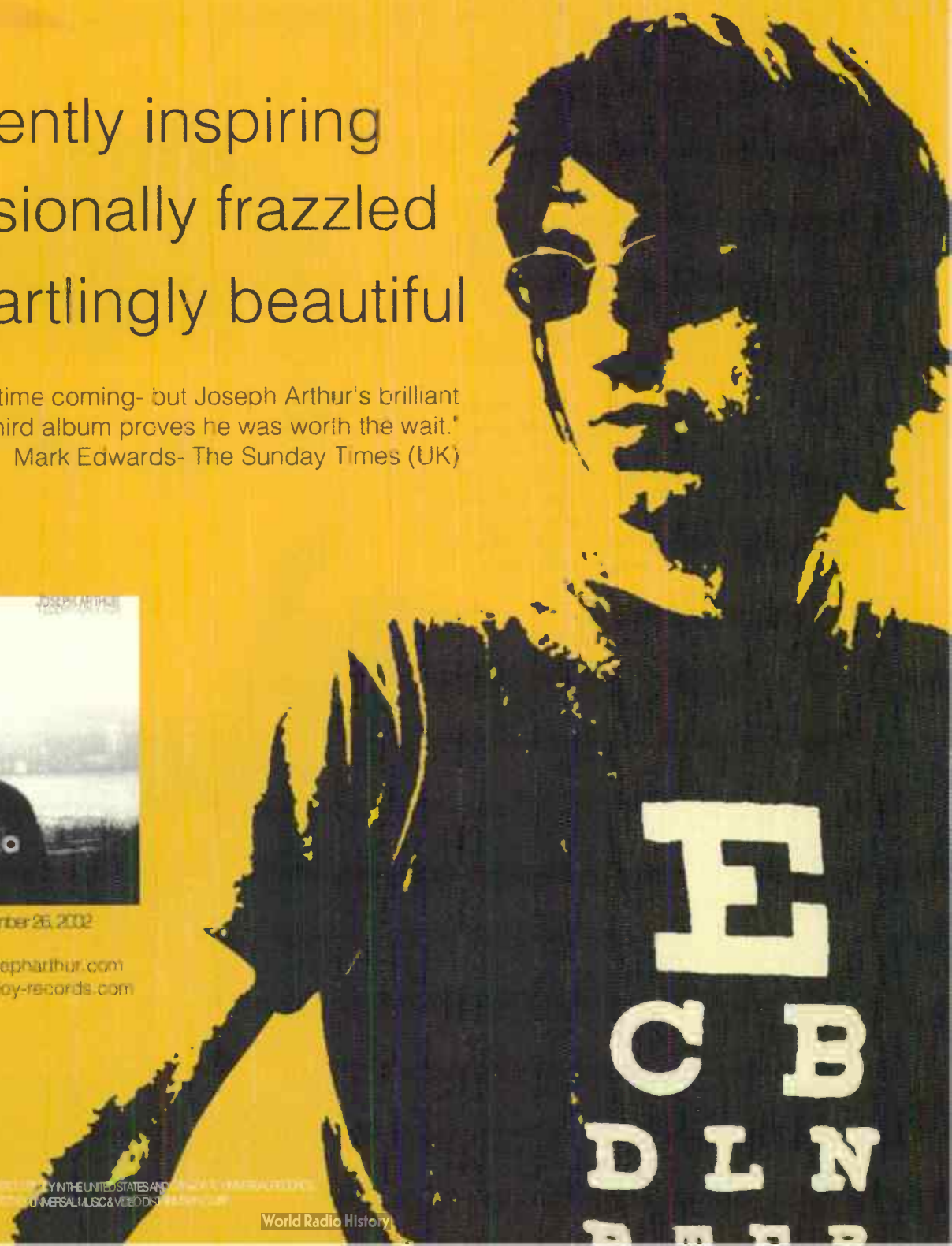
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World Radio History



THE STREETS

Birmingham is very real," says 22-year-old Mike Skinner about the English industrial town where he spent his formative years. "You could stand in the middle of the street and spray-paint a lorry green in London, and if you got enough people to be interested in it, that could be art. You go to Birmingham and spray-paint a lorry green, they say, 'What the fuck have you done that for?'" Skinner is the Streets, an amalgam of U.K. hip-hop and garage that keeps it real (as in *real British*—it's "geezer" not "dude," "birds" not "bitches," and "lairy" not "all crunked up"), and has garnered almost hyperbolic praise for his Mercury Prize-nominated, gold-in-the-U.K. debut *Original Pirate Material*. With an amorphous-at-best foothold in any sort of class standing, everygeezer Skinner rocks the voice of both decay and privilege like a two-steppin' Rolling Stones. "I think we don't really have the segregation that you guys do in America," Skinner hypothesizes over his genre/class-hopping. "Living in the city in England, you will mix with a lot of different people." Spinning tangled yarns about PlayStation, junk food and weed, Skinner's bag is urban boredom—but can he still spit ennui after he blows up? "Essentially, the backdrop changes. I'm the same person," says Skinner. "We might be in Copenhagen or Paris or something, but we're still like, 'Where's the pub?'" >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



RUVAN



SONDRE LERCHE

Youth isn't wasted on the young in the case of Sondre Lerche, the Norwegian whiz kid who's made the most of his gifts on *Faces Down* (Astralwerks). "People do get hung up on the age thing," says the 20-year-old from his home in Bergen. "But it's unavoidable because before you get to know the music, you're saying, 'Ooh, he's so young.' But hopefully my music's more interesting than my age...or my sex, or whatever." If you want a pop prodigy comparison, you could say Lerche's songs are like Ben Lee's had Lee gone to finishing school with Rufus Wainwright. His songs are jeweled pop/rock treats that show a wide range of influences. "I had a growing interest in music early on. If I got into one artist I'd

want to know what that artist was inspired by," he explains. "For example, Beck mentioned Elvis Costello and then I really liked Elvis Costello, and then he talked about Burt Bacharach who then talked about Brazilian music and those discoveries were really important to my songwriting." He's also learning how to handle playing to larger and larger crowds. "I opened for [Norwegian legends] a-ha at this 25,000-person venue in Oslo. So trying to fill the arena with my little songs on top of opening for a-ha was really strange, because it's not like stadium rock, what I do," he confesses. "The audience was polite, but they were probably more interested in seeing Morten Harket's bare chest than hearing my songs." >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



THE MUSIC

Although the four boys that make up northern British band the Music are still teenagers, *NME*'s already claimed that they're "potentially the most important British band since Oasis." That's a lofty expectation to live up to, but the bandmembers—guitarist Adam Nutter, bassist Stu Coleman, drummer Phil Jordan and guitarist/vocalist Rob Harvey—haven't yet let it go to their heads. "It's fun, but it's weird too," Nutter confesses. "You find yourself thinking, 'I'm only 19, what am I doing in Japan!'" Reviewers have compared the Music's atmospheres and intense, groove-based rock soundscapes to Led Zeppelin and the Stone Roses—also heavy claims—but Nutter disavows that retro tag. "We don't consciously want to sound like something in

particular, we just make noises together," he explains. "I was never into the Roses, and the only reason I'm into Led Zeppelin now is because so many people have said we sound like 'em." The band's as-yet-untitled debut LP will see Stateside release on Capitol in February, but in the meantime, the band is heading overseas this fall for an inaugural U.S. gig at the CMJ Music Marathon, before starting a late-2002 tour with labelmates and buzz-bin posterboys the Vines. And that globetrotting schedule suits the young band just fine. "It's exciting, it's like a family. There's the band and the crew and we go around the world playing and just have a laugh," chuckles Nutter. "I wouldn't want to be doing anything else!" >>>ANGUS BATEY



METRO AREA

There's no answer that reads well in print that's like, 'Leave us the fuck alone, we have nothing to do with electroclash,'" says Morgan Geist, one half of Brooklyn's Metro Area. "[Electroclash producers] have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. They know what worked and what didn't, so they can play around with what didn't and be ironic." Geist and his partner Darshan Jesrani form a counterpoint to a scene steeped in superficiality—they cull their influences from what did work in the past 25 years of dance music and filter them into smooth robo-funk with nary a smirk. "I feel like what we do is techno in philosophy, not in sound," says Geist. "Something made with a techno attitude is way

more techno than something in the techno section of a corporate record shop." The pair united via a mutual love for dance music, and have been releasing 12-inches on Geist's Environ label since 1999—they've only just now jumped into the digital world with their self-titled debut CD. Though Geist and Jesrani prefer the simplicity of issuing vinyl, the boys can relate to electronic music neophytes with limited access to wax. "We experienced our [urban] influences outside of a traditionally urban setting," says Jesrani, who grew up in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. "We want this CD to be something that you can take away from a dance context and enjoy just as a piece of music." >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



Lawrence, KANSAS



Some of those pre-conceived notions you likely have about Kansas—endless flat plains, rodeos, tractor pulls—may very well apply. But Lawrence, a town swelling with culture, a rich architectural history and a booming music scene all set amidst hills, valleys, rivers and lakes, will easily dispel any *Wizard Of Oz*-scene assumptions you have about the Sunflower State.

Indie-pop quartet THE BILLIONS live right on the edge of Lawrence, and will be more than proud to shed some new light on their hometown.

When we're on the road and we tell people we're from Kansas, we usually get the same response: "Do you live on a farm?" (with a little chuckle for emphasis). Actually, we do. But Kansas breeds more than just crops: Lawrence is the original stomping grounds of the Get Up Kids, Appleseed Cast and the Anniversary, among others. If you want a heavy dose of 100-percent-pure Lawrence culture, look no further than downtown. Most of the spots we'll mention here are on or not very far from Massachusetts St., right in the middle of that part of town.

Pinball Wizard? Stop by the **Replay Lounge** (946 Massachusetts St., 749-7676), a tiny place that's home to both a dozen pinball machines and some great underground shows. Captured By Robots played the Replay recently—robots and all, crammed into the pint-sized lounge with 100-plus showgoers. The **Bottleneck** (737 New Hampshire St., 841-5483) is another cool place to catch great shows, having hosted everyone from the Flaming Lips to Radiohead. It's our favorite place to play in Lawrence: The staff is great, and we've never had bad sound there (a rare thing these days). The club also offers a loft with a futon and a toilet for the bands to hang out before and after the show—bonus!

There are some bigger clubs in Lawrence, like the **Granada** (1020 Massachusetts St., 842-1390), an old movie theater renovated to host some serious rock shows (Tortoise was a highlight for us). But the Granada seems to be evolving into a regular nightclub with DJs spinning tunes nearly every night. We hear they now have a weekly '80s dance party, so don't forget your off-the-shoulder sweatshirts and Fonda-esque leggings, ladies! **Liberty Hall** (644 Massachusetts St., 749-1972) was destroyed by fire and rebuilt as a beautiful opera house in 1911. It's Lawrence's only independent movie theater, and they even rent videos on the side. Gov't Mule, Dashboard Confessional and Sigur Rós are all scheduled to

appear at Liberty in the near future.

The best radio station around town is **KJHK 90.7 "The Sound Alternative,"** which broadcasts college rock at its best from the University of Kansas campus. This is the spot on the dial to hear Neutral Milk Hotel played back-to-back with some classic ABBA. And don't miss the rowdiest show on KJHK, Jason Barr's "Rock 'n' Roll Safari" every Wednesday at noon. Claim to fame: KJHK was the first radio station in the world with a 24-hour live feed on the Internet. It doesn't get any better than this on the radio (at least around here).

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD

The boys in THE BILLIONS show you Lawrence's hot spots.

Guitarist Sam Billen: "The best way for me to relax around here is a good game of ping-pong at the **Kansas University dorms** (McCollum Hall in particular, 1800 Engel Rd., 864-4860). A friendly exchange student can always be found waiting to give it a go. Or you can find me meditating over a good book or writing a haiku in the **Japanese Rock Garden** (1037 Massachusetts St.)."

Guitarist John Jared Bowes: "I like working at the **Lawrence Paper Company** (2801 Lakeview Road., 843-8111). It's a great factory and I'm proud to call myself a temporary employee. My bandmates Ken and Sam work with me as well. Packaging women's perfume has never been so much fun!"

Bassist Dan Billen: "There are several vintage clothing shops in Lawrence, but **Sugartown Traders** (918 Massachusetts St., 331-2791) has always been my favorite spot for finding the perfect pair of old Levi's jeans or that crazy pair of polyester slacks. They have everything from dozens of Beatles boots to a big selection of vintage T-shirts. The other day my friend scored a Bob Seger World Tour shirt from 1980! Buy, sell or trade—just have fun. If you're hungry, I recommend **Rudy's Pizzeria** (704 Massachusetts St., 749-0055)—you won't be disappointed. They have cheap daily specials and a really cool location (they're down in a cellar). We have a ritual of going there before shows and seriously chowing down until it's almost impossible to perform. I recommend it."

Drummer Ken Komiya: "Just west of Lawrence, **Clinton Lake** has a secret secluded beach that I found my freshman year at K.U. There's a long stairway down to the shore under a tunnel of trees. It's

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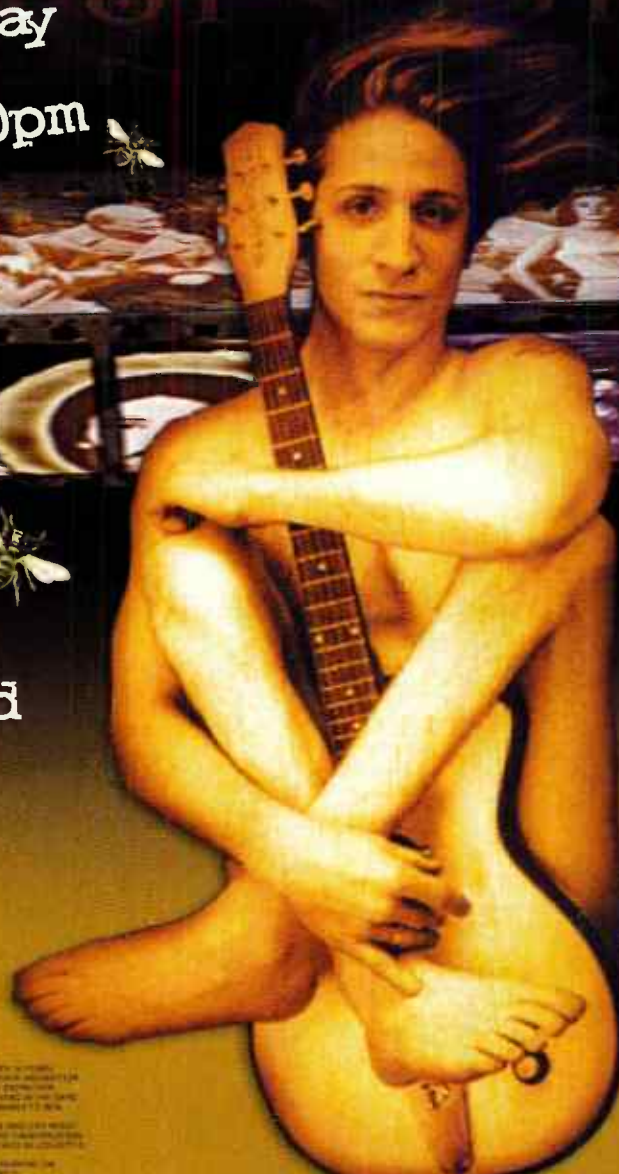
"Like The Beatles' Rubber Soul and Sgt. Pepper's, or David Bowie's
Hunky Dory, the songs on the Guns' new album, Blown Away, will
stick in your head and the smart lyrics will make you think."
-- Brad Filicky, CMJ New Music Report

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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

SIGUR RÓS

RYAN ADAMS

Matt Pond PA

THE STREETS

RJD2 • Röyksopp

NOVEMBER 2002 • ISSUE 107

14. **JULY FOR KINGS** "Normal Life" *Swim* (MCA)

Lest you question the credibility of these Ohio emo boys because they're on MCA: July For Kings released two independent albums before *Swim*, their major-label debut. And they probably slept in their van a time or two and even skipped some showers.

15. **LONGWAVE** "Everywhere You Turn" *Day Sleeper EP* (Fenway)

Where do you go after supporting both the Strokes and the Vines on tour? You crank out the misleadingly named *Day Sleeper EP*, which wakes you up to retro-rock and graceful jangle-pop akin to, well, the Strokes.

16. **THE STREETS** "Let's Push Things Forward" *Original Pirate Material* (Vice)

With U.K.-flavored rhymes, and genre-flipping beats like a backpacker Timbaland, you'd best be willing to let 22-year-old Mike Skinner, a.k.a. the Streets, push things forward. (See *On The Verge*, p. 36.)

17. **RJD2** "The Horror" *Deadringer* (Definitive Jux)

RJD2's instrumental-heavy compositions challenge all you know about hip-hop. Some jazz? Hot breaks? True soul? Strings? RJD2 delivers these and more. (See *On The Verge*, p. 28.)

18. **LUCERO** "Sweet Little Thing" *Tennessee* (MADJACK)

Is it possible to mix Nirvana and My Morning Jacket without making a mess? Lucero's combination of alt-country storytelling with raspy rock vocals and haunting instrumentals comes together in a beautiful and cohesive package.

19. **ANNIE MINOGUE** "Love Parade" *Love Parade* (Minogue Music)

Annie Minogue bears no relation to Kylie, or that "La-la-la" single: Her modern rock singer/songwriter style more resembles Melissa Etheridge—but, like, in a good way.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case

 **TDK**

1. SIGUR RÓS "Untitled" () (MCA)

Icelandic atmospheric Sigur Rós convey much by saying little: Their intention in using made-up-language lyrics was to keep focus on the music. They focus that further on their second album, by refusing to title it or any of its warm and magical soundscapes. (See Cover Story, p. 44.)

2. RÖYKSOPP "Poor Leno" *Melody A.M.* (Astralwerks)

Don't let the evocation of a tragically unfunny talk show host's name turn you away: This Norwegian duo float chimey synths and soothing vocals over chill-out grooves that are decidedly more dignified.

3. BIC RUNGA "Get Some Sleep" *Beautiful Collision* (Columbia)

The aptly titled *Beautiful Collision* is a harmonious blend of uncluttered pop musicianship, wrapped gorgeously inside the powerful and passionate vocals of Ms. Runga.

4. JOSEPH ARTHUR "Let's Embrace" *Redemption's Son* (Enjoy)

Peter Gabriel prodigy Joseph Arthur shows an uncommon yet powerful take on the acoustic singer/songwriter, assaulting that style's norms with samplers and noisemaking contraptions.

5. RYAN ADAMS "Nuclear" *Demolition* (Lost Highway)

After repeatedly threatening to release four LPs of new material to follow last year's *Gold*, ladykilling songsmith Adams thought better of it, and whittled the output down to *Demolition*, a one-disc collection of his many demo tracks from the past few years.

6. CORY BRANAN "Miss Ferguson" *The Hell You Say* (MADJACK)

Darting from jangly country-pop inspired by John Prine to passionate, folkish tunes, Branan is always sure to showcase his girl-centric tongue-in-cheekiness.

7. MATT POND PA "Fairlee" *The Nature Of Maps* (Polyvinyl)

The best thing about MPPA's chamber-pop output is that there's so damn much of it: Pond and Co. have released two irresistible LPs in as many years, both filled with lush strings and percussion meshing with Pond's sweetly strained vocals. (See Best New Music, p. 57.)

8. THE CORAL "Skeleton Key" *Skeleton Key EP* (Columbia)

Expect some bizarre Beta Band-esque chaos from this psychedelic band of Liverpudlians: Banjo-playing skeletons, a dolphin jumping from a crown—and that's just the album cover.

9. SIMIAN "La Breeze" *We Are Your Friends* (Astralwerks)

Simian balances skillfully between art and accessibility, one foot grooving in the electro camp, and another tapping along to some Paul McCartney-penned pop.

10. GARAGELAND "Superstars" *Scorpio Righting* (Foodchain)

Garageland's Pixies-inspired rock has made them veritable "Superstars" at home in New Zealand—their last album was certified Gold there. That's a distinction the band's working to mirror Stateside, with the U.S. release of their third LP.

11. FINGERTIGHT "Speak In Tongues" *Fingertight* (Columbia)

Depending on where you look, San Francisco's Fingertight might be compared to James Brown and Santana, or Primus and the Deftones. Suffice it to say, they craft an eclectic equation of volume and density.

12. BEFORE BRAILLE "Twenty Four Minus Eighteen" *The Rumor* (Aezra)

Arizona quintet Before Braille cite the brash and passionate hardcore and post-hardcore of Fugazi, Cursive and Rocket From The Crypt as inspiration.

13. HEAD ON "Nice To Meet You" *Inside* (Columbia)

Head On frontman Lawrence Renault taught himself to sing by annoying his parents, bleating along with Sabbath records. Some young aggro-rockers will surely annoy their parents (and maybe you!) singing along to his Chicago quartet's radio-ready riff-rock.

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like a secret portal to the ocean in the middle of Kansas. When you find this spot look for my initials (K.S.K.) carved in the old oak tree on the east bank. Take seven paces due south and start digging.”

LOCAL LOGIC: LAWRENCE'S BEST

Hot-in-the-wall music shop that doubles as a time machine: **RICHARD'S MUSIC CO.** (716 1/2 Massachusetts St., 842-0021) is the place to find that great guitar of yesteryear. They keep the real freaks of nature behind the counter, so if you ask politely we're sure they'll pull something out for you to marvel at.

Best corporate burrito: **CHIPOTLE MEXICAN GRILL** (911 Massachusetts St., 843-8800) delivers the most high-quality burrito, in both ingredients and size, in town. So they're under the chief command of the Golden Arches—it's hard to think logically when you're starving.

Quickest way to get to the hospital: **THE SKATE PARK** (600 Rockledge Rd., 832-3450). Sometimes we hang out and watch skaters risk their lives. Skate or die, dudes (literally)!

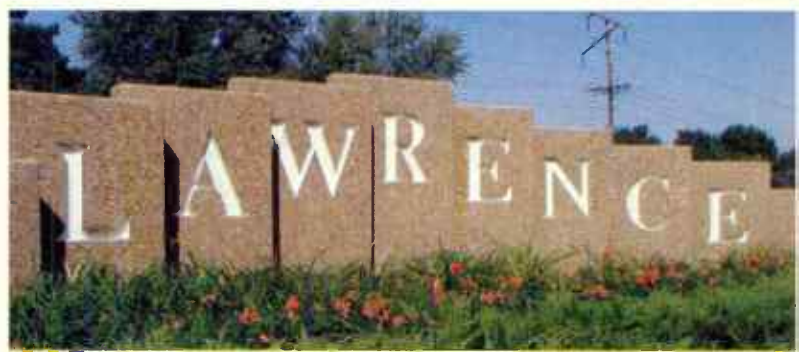
Best place for a date: the upstairs theater at **LIBERTY HALL** (644 Massachusetts St., 749-1972). Always cool movies, real comfy chairs, and when the lights go down the ceiling illuminates with a bunch of little twinkling stars. Very romantic.

FOR THE RECORD

A music-hunting cribsheet from Jeff Brown, a.k.a. onebrownjeff, one of our www.cmj.com bulletin board community pals.

Lawrence is a fertile oasis of art and culture in a somewhat barren world of hayfever-inducing haystacks and flat prairie land. But the town rewards us faithful flatlanders with cheap rent, cheaper drinks and a decidedly welcoming Midwestern sensibility towards live music.

Take for example the town's long tradition of house parties. Every college town worth its weight in Jell-O shots has houses known for their super jammy-jams, but the denizens of this burg are decidedly different. Since the groundbreaking days of the Pirate House (R.I.P.), to the new school of grassroots D.I.Y. venues, Lawrence's rental properties beat most towns' live venues with all-ages D.I.Y. living-room and basement bashes complete with



merch tables in the kitchen, sound guys who actually care about the sound and a full schedule of indie talent to choose from. Recent **Halfway House** (1247 1/2 Kentucky St., 838-3723) shows like Q And Not U, Tora! Tora! Torrance and the Paper Chase still have people talking. And the **Pink House** (1131 Tennessee St., 832-2736) has hosted the likes of Saddle Creek stalwarts Son, Ambulance as well as local up-and-comers Ghosty, Salt The Earth and Getaway Driver. Both houses' irreverent itineraries can be found at www.lawrencerock.com, a top-notch site run by a Pink House resident highlighting all kinds of life in this sleepy Midwestern town.

If you're looking for a sweet '60s soul groove on vinyl, a small independent release or a hard-to-find import, Lawrence has two great music stores ripe for crate-diving. **Kief's Downtown Music** (823 Massachusetts St., 843-9111) has been around since the '60s, and is a good place to rub elbows and asses with locals and college students alike, as its cramped space makes it hard to maneuver between each of its rewarding stacks.

Love Garden (936 1/2 Massachusetts St., 843-1551) has an equally impressive collection of interesting records and compact discs to peruse, a few friendly felines that seem to like listening to the same music you do and a staff that will go way out of their way to find exactly what you're looking for.

All phone numbers are in the 785 area code.

The Billions' new Never Felt This Way Before—an irresistible blend of Pinback and the Beatles—is available on Northern Records. Visit www.thebillionsband.com or www.northern-records.com for more information.



JONSI BIRGISSON, ORRI PÁLL OYRASON, GEORG HOLM, KJARTAN SVEINSSON

THE SECRET ● LANGUAGE OF

Sigur Rós

The Icelandic band's chilly arias have no real lyrics or titles, so why are people crying and passing out over them?

STORY: NEIL GLADSTONE
PHOTO: YOSHIKO HORITA

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

No tour bus idles in front of the London club 93 Feet East. No furtive groupies crane for a glimpse. Even the Londoners gulping down pints at the bar are unaware that the Icelandic band that's taken over the back auditorium makes people weep and faint, that rivers of ink have been spilled in naming them the Next Big Thing. Then again, even a drunken stumble into the makeshift rehearsal space full of whistling drones wouldn't have revealed much. Sigur Rós seldom does.

The four pale young introverts onstage are and aren't a rock band. All in their mid-20s, they play the standard-issue stuff: guitar, bass, drums and keyboard. The result, though, borders on operatic. Singer/guitarist Jón Thor "Jónsi" Birgisson often takes a violin bow to his guitar and finesses a volume pedal to make his six-string sound like a string section. He's the de facto frontman, but hardly looks or plays the part. His almond-brown hair forms a wedge down the middle of his head, something of a pillow-made mohawk. While performing, he tends to squint and collapse his chest, as if fighting off a nightmare with his luminous swoon.

Still, the buzz has blared for this peculiar concoction. Over the past two years, critics have gushed, calling Sigur Rós "enthraling" and "achingly beautiful," and at least 15 Stateside record labels have courted the band.

"A lot of ass-kissing," recalls drummer Orri Páll Dýrason, chuckling about American representatives who told the bandmembers they were wonderful, bought them drinks and dinner and told them they were wonderful again.

All of which is a little surprising for a band without MTV-ready looks or hooks. Sigur Rós's songs can easily stretch seven minutes or longer, and are far from radio-friendly—the lyrics aren't even in English, or Icelandic for that matter. They're a jabberwocky devised over the past eight years by Birgisson, a dialect he refers to as "Hopelandic."

"Eel sa-da-lo," exhales Birgisson into the microphone. His angelic falsetto coasts like a hang glider riding the breeze to the edge of the sea. Kjartan Sveinsson massages a few pulsing tones from an electric piano. He's the only classically trained member of the band and the

one who most tends to brood, often staring into the floor and tugging at his patchy, brown beard. Georg Hólm muddies the nether regions with a progression of bass chords. Dýrason heats the drums to a simmer and Sigur Rós erupts into the first track from (), the band's new album.

That's no typo; the title of the new record is just two parentheses with an empty space between them. And none of the new songs have titles, either. The bandmembers decided that the best way to keep the music "pure" was to leave it untitled. You can just imagine the looks around the conference-room table when the representatives at MCA, the American label that finally won the heated bidding war over the band, were delivered a product with no title that's about nothing.

Plenty of musicians these days have little to say. Even the ones who weren't pre-packaged by some pop svengali or manufactured out of a reality-TV series come off as formulaic. If Sigur Rós's lyrics are meaningless, is the music pointless?

The Icelandic band's amniotic ballads are not only able to elicit emotions from audiences, but strong physical reactions. The Sigur Rós sound envelops a room in such a symphonic cloud that even the smallest rustling of plastic or glass pierces the hypnotic calm. Beyond the wailing and wooziness, one woman told the bandmembers that their icy arias had rattled her soul so strongly her stomach responded in kind and erupted.

"It's a big compliment, not that I wish that upon anybody," says Hólm. In early 2001, around the time MCA domestically released the band's second album, *Ágætis Byrjun* (which had already hit number one in Iceland and sold 20,000 copies in America on import), the band played a gig in New York where eight or so audience members reportedly passed out. You're probably wondering how cheap the beer was that evening or how crowded the room was. But Enrique Lavin, one of the people who didn't make it through the entire show conscious, insists Sigur Rós's music tunneled into his nervous system that evening.

"I hadn't been in a church since I was little and this was the closest thing to a pure religious experience I had had in years," recalls Lavin. "You can attach your own storyboard to the music and it can be very uplifting. I followed the swaying motion of Jonsi's elbow as he bowed the guitar, which rose up to the string section behind him and then I followed it into a vanishing point, into a keyhole to nothingness."

Studies about music's communicative abilities have proven certain cues can trigger psychological responses, even in children, suggesting that our brains may be hardwired to respond to certain tempos, sound levels and timbres. In the academic text *Music And Emotion: Theory And Research* (Oxford University Press, 2001), Professor Patrik Juslin describes several studies that requested listeners to associate basic emotions such as anger, fear, tenderness, sadness and happiness with melodic passages. Musical elements that can be heard in Sigur Rós's work, such as legato articulation and slow vibrato were typically aligned with sadness and fear.

Granted, scientific research isn't required for the average listener to realize that Jonsi's pining sighs appeal to the maudlin side of one's personality, but it all underscores the passionate experience of these listeners (except for vomiting, the jury is still out about that). Each tone of an arrangement can theoretically cue a slightly different trigger in one's brain, suggesting a very complex reaction overall. And although he refrains from discussing it much, Birgisson considers his voice a musical instrument with an emotive intent.

"It was the closest thing to a pure religious experience I had had in years. I followed the swaying motion of Jonsi's elbow as he bowed the guitar, and then I followed it into a vanishing point, into a keyhole to nothingness."

The members of Sigur Rós have heard many stories about the personal impact their band has had on fans' lives. One listener said he was about to join the army, but changed his mind after listening to *Ágætis Byrjun*.

"I think our songs are emotional at times and everyone has their own interpretation of them," explains Hólm, while strolling past the shops of London's Soho section. His close-cropped hair and twice-wrinkled short-sleeve, button-down shirt make it easy to imagine him as the electrical engineering student he once was. "They get a mental picture in their head. They get a certain feeling or remember something that happened to them when they were younger, or they have plans for the future and decide, when they're listening to us, 'That's it.'"

Over the past few years, Hólm has come to think that the lack of lyrics enables such individual responses. You can approach the music the same way as an abstract painting, figures Dýrason, they're just colors, but you still get a feeling from them. The concept behind the title is that the listener will fill in the blank between the parentheses. Plenty of blank space will be available in the CD booklet for fans to write in their own interpretations of the lyrics.

This past summer, the band's semi-official fansite, *Eighteen Seconds Before Sunrise* (www.sigur-ros.co.uk), organized a contest for surfers to author in their own interpretations of the lyrics of a new passage of Sigur Rós's music, the prize being one of Birgisson's broken bows. For the new album, the band plans to build a database of fan interpretations of Birgisson's enunciations that will be sifted together for the "final" lyrics.

Still, it's hard not to wonder if the bandmembers are asking the audience to finish their art because they consciously opted against lyrics, or if they're just rationalizing after realizing they don't have the wherewithal to write them.

It's not that the four don't have plenty of opinions. They will spew about everything from NATO's military presence in Iceland ("Do we really need an outside army—who's going to invade Iceland?") to coffee ("There's only one place that makes it strong enough, and it's in Reykjavik"), to whaling ("The laws against whaling have upset the balance in the waters around Iceland").



Sveinsson appears infatuated enough with María Sigfusdóttir, who leads the string quartet that accompanies Sigur Rós on the new album and on tour, to write an album's worth of odes.

During dinner at an upscale Indian restaurant the bandmembers say they can only afford because they signed with MCA, a man comes from another table and asks for help settling an argument he's having with his wife: "Who had the greater influence on pop music: the Beatles or Michael Jackson?" After the table and the questioner agree on the Beatles, the visitor realizes he was speaking with Icelanders.

"Did you hear that?" he yells to his wife. "Even people from motherfucking Iceland think it's the Beatles."

"Motherfucking Iceland," Sigfusdóttir repeats under her breath. Imagine such a phrase coming from the mouth of a person who has the rosy cheeks and honey-blond hair of a porcelain doll.

After the man returns to his table, he continues the conversation with his new Icelandic acquaintances: "Y'know, Björk was really good when she was in the Sugarcubes, but ever since she left she's been shit."

Sigfusdóttir waits a moment and quietly comments, "Six or seven years ago you never got the Björk comments. Now, it's all you get. It's like we're a country of Björks."

The U.S. Army first imported rock into that country. Yanks defended the strategically located island during World War II and later established a base there. When rock hit in the late '50s, servicemen were the first to crank the music for a community best known for its medieval chants, Lutheran hymns and folk songs.

"It would have come eventually, but it came a bit early," Birgisson notes with a resignation borne out of living under a government that rubber-stamps America's political requests.

But you won't find any such subtle commentary in his band's music. Instead, the band and string quartet invoke the collective muse with a Ouija-board approach, jamming and noodling—sometimes on the same riff for hours—while waiting for inspiration to hit. Not a lot of talking goes on, but the four members know if the spirits are being channeled. When things aren't clicking, the group takes a smoke break (everyone in Sigur Rós smokes, except for Birgisson, and he used to) or go home.

Verses and choruses don't really exist in Sigur Rós songs. The composers take delight in flaunting pop conventions. "One time we might say, 'Let's do a part for three times and the next two and a half,'" explains Hólm. But if there's no defined structure, how do the musicians know when a song is finished?

"You just know when it's complete."

() took three years to finish, mainly because the band has been touring so much since the release of its previous album. "It's very Icelandic to do everything at the last minute, under pressure," adds Dýrason. His matted blond hair makes him look almost like a surfer. Much of () was finished up over the spring and summer of this year and the band had to cancel a summer festival tour to focus on studio work.

Regardless of when Sigur Rós committed this music to tape, the result is not a summer album but a collection that sounds as if it could have been recorded on the moon. The elfin vocals, violin

streams and keyboard swirls sound as if they were recorded in a crater. (The band converted a swimming pool into a studio cutting room for the new album.) A sprinkling of dust and distortion makes this zero-gravity stratosphere sound a little more lived-in. It's easy to hear why avant-garde choreographer Merce Cunningham commissioned the group to compose music for his dance troupe. Sigur Rós's dynamics are both quietly poetic and wide-screen epic.

Reviewers often point to the frozen tundras of the band's native landscape as a main influence on the stark vistas it creates.

"The conversation that we're influenced by nature has just gone over the top," responds Hólm. "But just as if you were in Berlin and making techno music it would probably sound like Berlin tech-

self-mockery. While the gauzy, distorted images of the backdrop are more or less what you might expect from a band that composes flocks of sound, Sigur Rós's videos solidify the musicians' ability to articulate a clear vision.

For the visual interpretation of "Sven-G-Englar" (from *Agætis Byrjun*), the band instructed a crowd of young adults with Down Syndrome to dress up as angels and dance on the plateau of a lush green mountain. It is both shocking and beautiful, and the piece suggests that human life should be celebrated in all forms. Critics have said the piece takes advantage of the people with Down Syndrome. However, few viewers realize that the mentally challenged adults are actually an acting troupe. Sigur Rós first

"I think everything is better slower."

no, I don't think you can tear away your roots."

Contract negotiations, of all things, unexpectedly swayed the group's compositions. After the members of Sigur Rós informed the 15 interested labels what they wanted in their contract—just a two-album deal and complete creative freedom—only three labels made offers.

"Signing a deal for seven or 10 records for a band is ridiculous," says Hólm, referring to the typical record contract. "It's so long. What if you want to do something else? You're stuck... I shouldn't actually be talking about this [he laughs], but we got total independence from a major label." To ensure that independence, the bandmembers carefully read and re-read MCA's paperwork, teaching themselves the "bullshit" legal terms along the way.

The tiring frustration of the contract negotiation raised tensions in the band, which can be heard on the second, darker half of the album (that was actually written first). On those four tracks, the drums pound and fuzzboxes are cranked. The white noise blasts more ominously. And the piano notes seem to stretch out into the next galaxy where they disappear into a black hole.

Wedding to the corporate world wasn't easy for people whose lives are driven by intuition. Birgisson became a vegetarian and Hólm recently relocated to Catalonia because "it just kind of happened." Even the name Sigur Rós (which means "victory rose" in Icelandic) was borrowed on a whim from Birgisson's little sister, who had been born just before the band formed as a trio almost nine years ago. Sveinsson joined a few years later and Dýrason replaced the original drummer after the release of *Agætis Byrjun*.

All four members contend that the creative formula doesn't work properly if everyone isn't present, which means Hólm doesn't get to spend too much time in his adopted home. Even when the band edits the film that will serve as a backdrop for the upcoming show at London Royal Festival Hall, one member works on the computer while the other three stand nearby and make suggestions. There's a group personality that's different from their separate ones. As if Sigur Rós were some kind of Borg, none of the four seems to be the leader or visionary and each asks for the other's opinion.

"We know each other well enough not to get on each other's nerves," notes Hólm. The four are dedicated enough to their artistic cause to sit in their hotel room editing on a Saturday night when most other bands would be carousing through swinging London. For the backdrop film, the members blur and distort images they've captured with a digital video camera, such as children walking, and then layer them over one another so the original subjects are barely discernable. Birgisson has a penchant for decreasing the film's speed.

"I think everything is better slower," he explains, with a bit of

saw them perform in a Christmas pageant.

"Some people think we're horrible for 'using' Down Syndrome people in our video. I get really angry when people say that," says Hólm. "We really wanted to work with the acting troupe and knew we wanted to do a video with angels in it, and we thought, 'Who would be good to portray the angels?' And we decided on them because they are really sincere people. They are really beautiful, loving and giving. Probably the closest thing to angels we'll get on Earth."

The storyboard for Sigur Rós's second video, "Vidrar Vel Til Loftarasa," is even more pointed. Two teenage boys on opposing soccer teams wind up falling in love and kissing after one scores the winning goal at a game where the two are pitted against one another.

"We just thought it was a beautiful image," offers Hólm at first, downplaying that image's social commentary, which earned the band plenty of controversial notoriety in Italy. The Roman-Catholic community was probably less than thrilled to see the scene where a priest stands mortified by the boys kissing. ("Religion is just a way from keeping people from evolving," opines Hólm. "And living with blinders on.")

The bassist contends the video is about contrasts, the machismo world of sports and the tenderness of kissing. Of course, many fans will see it as a statement about Birgisson being gay, a detail which the singer has no problem acknowledging.

"There was a big discussion [on the Sigur Rós website] when people realized that Jónsi is gay," remembers Hólm. "Some people got really angry, saying things like, 'Why didn't they tell us?' and somebody else asked the question, 'Does it really matter? Will you stop liking the music because Jónsi's gay?'"

For the most part, the members shy away from discussing their personal lives. This desire for privacy may also fuel the murkiness of the lyrics.

When the computer must be left alone to render edits for the next show's backdrop, the members head out for a drink. We try one nightclub, it's too crowded, the next charges a cover.

"Finding a bar with these guys is so hard, they're so picky," jokes Sigfusdóttir. Finally, Goldie Lox and the four mercurial bears settle on Time Bomb, a gay club that Birgisson has the most interest in.

Hólm, Dýrason and I chat. Birgisson spends a portion of the evening checking out the crowd. Sveinsson drinks and mopes, staring at the walls and the floor, lost in a bit of spell. He occasionally flirts with Sigfusdóttir and then returns behind a glaze. Of the many things that Sigur Rós may be suggesting in their music, his body language nearly says them all. **NMM**

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THE LOCUST

INTERNATIONAL

NOISE CONSPIRATORS

The Locust, Lightning Bolt and Arab On Radar drive on an expressway to yr skull with a new breed of noise. Somewhere along the way, people got amazed and confused.

STORY: CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN • PHOTOS: DENNIS HO

How's that smell today, Gabe?" asks Jeff Rosenberg, manager of Oops! The Tour and the "Brown" half of costumed sonic terrorists Pink And Brown.

"It's pretty bad," replies Gabe Serbian, drummer for imminently infamous antipunks the Locust, as he lovingly places a green quasi-ninja mask on some pipes while backstage at Brooklyn's Northsix. "The sweat soaks into this shit and I don't wash it. And it's wet from the previous night. And it just sits there. It gets warm on its own from a chemical reaction. It's pretty brutal."

"Yeah, my Brown suit would go from smelling like cheese to smelling like vomit, and then it would somehow graduate into the realm of the ocean and start

smelling like marine water."

The bands on Oops! The Tour—last summer's Lollapalooza of brainy, cacophonous mindfuckery—love their uniforms. The Locust has dystopian ninja/boy-scout gear, Arab On Radar sport stately black suits and Lightning Bolt are rarely seen in the press without spandex-looking things obscuring their visages. But costumes may—or may not—be where the similarities end.

The Locust, Arab On Radar and Lightning Bolt are all torchbearers in a new breed of musical deconstructionistas, mixing mind-melting abrasiveness with punk's calculated aggression: avant-rock made by cerebral high-art-cum-punk-lovin' dudes who probably keep their

Black Flag records stashed near their Stockhausen. Like the "pigfuck" bands of the '80s (Pussy Galore, Butthole Surfers, Sonic Youth), each band is a completely different animal—the Locust's art-grind, Arab On Radar's unbalanced slash and Lightning Bolt's arena-sized prog-throb. And the lake is big enough for the Boredoms-influenced Brooklyn bombast of Black Dice, the free-jazz-inflected skronk-metal of Flying Luttenbachers, the dual-scissors guitar mutilation of Pink And Brown and the no-wave clatter of Erase Errata. But unlike the sonik youths of the mid-'80s, these bands claim a post-hardcore bent that makes pigfuck seem downright tender.

"We're living in some pretty harsh times right now and music tends to reflect the cultural state of things," claims Joey Karam, Locust keyboard-smoosher and co-screamer. "George W. is a fucker, but he's gonna do a lot of good for music."

"It's just evolution," adds drummer Serbian. "Twenty years from now, what we're doing is gonna probably sound like what you play to your kids when they're going to sleep."

The Locust hates Florida. Bassist and co-yeller Justin Pearson frequently calls it the "wet dick of America." And, if the Locust's last show in the state is any indication, the feeling is quite mutual.

"We had people waiting for us with bear mace. There was a bunch of people that wanted to kill us. And then we played the show and got chairs thrown at us," says Serbian. "Right before we start the first song, a bottle whizzed by my head and exploded behind me on the brick wall."

The Locust is quite possibly the most derided band in the underground. Real "punks" scoff that their concise sound blurts are a grindcore piss-take, that the jet-black hair of the "Locust Kids" that supposedly swarm their shows is "fashion-core," that the colored vinyls, slick belt buckles and compact mirrors on their merch table are bourgeoisie. "What's more punk than that?" asks Serbian. "Pissing off a bunch of punkers!"

The Locust has seen fireworks thrown at them in Ohio, smelly meat-filled danishes hurled at them in Arizona and slashed tires in South Carolina. They're the band people love to hate. "It's like a tradition to go to the Locust show and talk shit," says Serbian.

"I don't know if that's just a reaction to the music being so aggressive," supposes Karam. "Hey, we'll just be hostile back!"

And aggressive it is. Tiny blasts of screeched insanity, usually well under a minute, with reference points everywhere from Devo to Napalm Death to John Cage to Gravity Records to the Residents. "Maybe that's why it creates all this controversy and shit-talking," says Pearson. "Because people are upset that they can't figure it out."

But the lightning-fast sci-fi-grind is more familiar than one might think. Despite—or possibly because of—the controversies, the Locust managed to peddle over 25,000 copies of their 1999 self-titled debut, an album made up of confounding 50-second blasts of Moog-core. Their latest EP, *Flight Of The Wounded Locust* (Gold Standard Labs), crams a blistering 12 songs into a mere 10 minutes

The appeal must be something more pri-



ARAB ON RADAR, LIGHTNING BOLT (RIGHT)

mal than punk. "I'm trying to somehow capture a certain type of pattern that brains work in. Kind of mimicking a synapse by sound," says guitarist and co-screacher Bobby Bray. "Trying to document the undocumented. The particular sound we have—lots of tempo changes, all kinds of rapid changes—it goes along with the way my brain works. To exist on this planet, it's almost as if you have to jump from one thing to another immediately. That's why we write the songs we write."

Watching Providence, R.I. bass-and-drums duo Lightning Bolt is like witnessing a tumultuous Felix-and-Oscar in punk tatters. Brian Gibson, shaggy-haired and coy, stands perfectly still and calculatedly nurses notes from his bass with a surgeon's precision... through 2,400 watts of amp. Brian Chippendale, sleek and extroverted, flails like a drunken octopus on his ragged drum kit, screeching into a microphone fashioned from a Salvation Army telephone receiver and affixed to his mug with frayed rags. And the offstage banter of this odd couple isn't too far removed from their opposing dynamics onstage.

"I think we're abrasive on many levels," says Chippendale of Bolt's high-decibel body music. "We're a hell of a lot more abrasive than Arab On Radar"

"I'm not trying to project something that's gonna be abrasive to the audience," retors Gibson.

"Yeah, but you've got how many watts of..."

"I just don't think 'abrasive' is a good word for what I'm doing. I just think we're explosive."

"But isn't it true that the volume of your speakers could deafen someone? My drums are loud and your bass is loud—which is primarily so you could be heard over the drums. I mean, I've had periods in front of your speakers where my eyes have crossed and my vision is going w-o-o-o-o-o-o."

These fabled woofers have garnered Lightning Bolt plenty of acclaim for *Ride The Skies* (Load Records), their latest freak-out of distorted bass hammer-ons, sputtery drum pummel and prog rhythms. Their release on DVD, of all things, *The Power Of Salad*—a tour documentary showing the Brians rocking a kitchen in Texas and cuddling up to some cute kittens—sold out of its first run in less than a month.

The kids feel Lightning Bolt. The kids have no choice but to feel Lightning Bolt. Their show (always set up on the floor, mind you, not the stage) is so visceral, so explosive, so goddamn loud even the dreairest hipsters spazz out in epileptic ecstasy. They claim it's all part of attempting to find spiritual energy through their hypnotic bombast.



“To exist on this planet, it’s almost as if you have to jump from one thing to another immediately. *That’s why we write the songs we write.*”

“Every single song that we have doesn’t quite have an ending,” says Chippendale, “they all...”

“...are vehicles for getting to...,” adds Gibson, obviously on a identical mental plane, one as unspoken as the musical-cue hand signals they give each other onstage.

“Yeah. We’re definitely trying to reach something,” says Chippendale. “The best shows are when we get to some weird level where we’re both really psyched. All our stuff is a way to get us to something that’s maybe a new part of something musical. Or just this feeling of, ‘I’m not gonna stop, I’m gonna keep drumming for as long as I can.’”

Arab On Radar blend into the background of a pricey Brooklyn café—far removed from the Locust’s colorbursts of tattoos or Lightning Bolt’s paint-spattered vestments. The Rhode Island four-piece (like Lightning Bolt, a part of the Fort Thunder collective, a Providence artist commune/junkspace that loves art-rock, hates bullshit and once pelted falsetto

provocateur Bobby Conn with rotten fruit) smiles and laughs in button-down shirts, inkless arms and adult demeanors.

The opening lyrics to the Arab On Radar tune “My Mind Is A Muffler” are read aloud: “Sometimes I just gotta jerk off/ My nuts are a pressure cooker.” Everyone smiles and titters except vocalist/lyricist Eric “Mr. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” Paul. Like the Locust, people frequently misinterpret the intentions of Arab On Radar—and this is serious shit.

“There’s some serious, serious subject matter in what I’ve wrote and addressed in the music,” explains Paul, who compares his compulsion to create with the cathartic art of Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud. “I tend to have put a twist to it a little bit, so it has some sort of satirical quality or humorous quality. And I think that’s because it’s my own way of actually coping with life.”

“The funniest jokes I ever told were at my father’s wake,” adds drummer Craig “Mr. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” Kureck. “I was fucking on top of my game. People

sometimes can’t accept humor as a way of presenting serious issues and that’s where a lot of the confusion comes in.”

Yes, people have been confused by Arab On Radar. Not only by their music—their second record *Yahweh Or The Highway* (Skin Graft) is a churning gutter-smash punctuated by atonal dentist-drill guitars and profane poetry—but by everything else. According to guitarist Steve “Mr. Type A” Mattos, their suited look has had them called “fascists,” their now-topical name has had them called “racists,” and their pottymouth lyrics have been dubbed “homophobic” and “sexist.”

“It’s very face-value judgments,” says guitarist J. “Mr. Clinical Depression” Schneider. “People who haven’t thought about what we’re doing. [They] see guys in Dickies and that’s bad. It almost scares me.”

Sex-talk, satire and confrontation are no strangers to Eric Paul, who previously tackled sex and mental illness in his book *Pussy Pow Wow*. His onstage convulsions and rhythmic ejaculations look like sexual repression defined, the singer even dropping the mic and clutching his nuts like a demented Mick Jagger escaping a chastity belt.

“A lot of people have labeled it as sexual repression, but I get an awful lot of sex. I don’t know, maybe I’m just not getting enough of the right kind of sex,” explains Paul. “I think Mick Jagger exudes sex appeal, I may exude a very bizarre aspect of sexuality. Sometimes healthy, sometimes unhealthy.”

Five days after the Brooklyn show, Eric Paul picked apart his sexuality over the air conditioner’s hum on the muggy summer night that *Oops! The Tour* rolled into Florida. While the hip Gothamites who swamped Northsix and decimated Lightning Bolt’s drums were a melting pot of styles and personalities, Tampa was swarming with the fabled “Locust Kids.” If it had rained, the streets would run black with the hair dye of the devoted. Thankfully, the dour Floridians didn’t hurl beer bottles, only insults (“Go home, pussies!”) and anti-insults (“I bought your shirt because I hate you!”) at the flailing bug-ninjas on stage.

As Arab On Radar quietly packed their suits, the Locust’s Justin Pearson ran back-stage, sweat still in his bleach-streaked hair, lamenting that, once again, their tires were slashed. America’s wet dick still had a hard-on for the Locust. But it was probably just confused.

Serbian utters some imagined fan dialogue: “I hate you. When’s your next record come out?” **MMM**



HOT HOT HEAT

Make Up The Breakdown

Sub Pop



Link

www.subpop.com

File Under

Hot hot hooks

R.I.Y.L.

Radio 4, the Strokes, early Faint

Victoria, B.C.'s Hot Hot Heat came out of the woodwork to show some major promise on their last few releases, and with *Make Up The Breakdown* they've made a record that even their staunchest supporters might not have seen coming. With futurist retro-rock that's undeniably in vogue yet surprisingly free of the seemingly requisite emotional vacancy, Hot Hot Heat's hook-laden keyboard pop manages to stumble graciously through 10 new tracks of carefree and groove-heavy tunes that actually stick in your head after a single listen. The steady downbeat of "Get In Or Get Out" backs Steve Bays's fist-pumping vocals and simple but distinguished keyboard lines with triumphant results, and for as much as the Strokes are an easy backlash target, the unforgettable "Oh, Goddamnit," truly succeeds in one-upping their notorious sound. There's ample technology underneath all of the tracks, but the synth undercurrents are secondary to finely crafted melodies that are sure to get the kids dancing in no time. *Make Up The Breakdown's* greatest strength is the pure joy that it exudes; in draining the "too cool to smile" image that has plagued rock's class of 2002, Hot Hot Heat have made their strongest set of songs to date, and it shouldn't be much longer before they're blowing last year's icons off the stage. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

IKARA COLT

Chat And Business

Epitaph

One story circulating about Ikara Colt's name has it originating from two makes of handguns. This is a fitting explanation, since the London foursome exhibits the same machine-gun etiquette as its forebears the Damned, splattering guitar mayhem indiscriminately. Ikara Colt's throbbing double-time bass riffs and three-chord blasts owe a clear debt to late-'70s punk, but their layered effects and odd tunings betray headier ambitions. An obvious reference point is Sonic Youth in its straight-ahead rock phase circa *Daydream Nation* or *Goo*—Ikara Colt seems to have taken particularly good notes during "Silver Rocket." Paul Resende's vaguely detached sing/talking echoes Thurston Moore's, and the cadences of his occasional rants resemble an unusually animated Mark E. Smith. Aside from a few effective shout-alongs by guitarist Claire Ingram (as on the sinister yet catchy "Belgravia") and some rudimentary synth squiggles, *Chat And Business* varies little from its simple but successful formula of adrenaline and melodic noise. One exception is the sparse, slower paced "City Of Glass," on which Resende delivers an art-boy rap amid a heavier vibe reminiscent of Sonic Youth's "Kool Thing." Another rumor ties Ikara Colt's moniker to two equestrian breeds. The band may prove to be a one-trick pony, but so far it's riding the right horse. >>>GLEN SARVADY



Link

www.ikaracolts.com

File Under

Old-school art-school punk

R.I.Y.L.

Sonic Youth's *Daydream Nation*,

early Damned, Swervedriver,

At The Drive-In



MATT POND PA

The Nature Of Maps

Polyvinyl

Those who understand the true nature of maps know major landmarks often unfairly overshadow lesser known, yet equally important surrounding locales. Accordingly, Matt Pond doesn't want his band's name to mislead you. Through three albums and two EP's since 1998, Matt Pond PA's lead man has encouraged the involvement of his ensemble, pushing them consistently closer toward his soft spotlight. In fact, with *The Nature Of Maps*, MPPA sounds more like a collective than ever before, much to their credit. Pond's strained-yet-sweet voice still stands out, but the true emotion of MPPA's brand of chamber pop derives from the rich orchestration expanding on Pond's creations. Switching regularly between mid-tempo pop and modern day lullabies, the lush stringed chords and lonely plunking vibraphone slowly push the melodies along, giving a visual of close friends playing privately, and for their enjoyment alone. This gives *The Nature Of Maps* an intimate feel, accentuating the fully fleshed-out arrangements, seen notably in the standout "Summer Is Coming." After playfully opening with light instrumentation and bombastic drums, the vocals soon circle in, creating a haunting field of precious but powerful orchestral sound and harmony. This song is like the album itself: From afar you think you've seen it before, but the real beauty is found only upon closer inspection. >>>ROBBIE CHAPLICK



Link

www.mattpondpa.com

File Under

Map quest

R.I.Y.L.

Elliott Smith, the Frames,
Lullaby For The Working Class

MOUNTAIN GOATS

Tallahassee

4AD



Link

www.themountaingoats.net

File Under

Luddite indie-folkie
turns to technology

R.I.Y.L.

Neutral Milk Hotel, acoustic Robyn
Hitchcock, Smog, Raymond Carver

On the indie fringe, it's a development as shocking as Dylan going electric. John Darnielle, whose decade-long output as the Mountain Goats has been recorded largely on a Panasonic boombox, checks into a proper studio and emerges with a pristinely recorded disc. The Mountain Goats still traffic in literate folk centered on acoustic guitar and Darnielle's reedy voice, which in this tidier setting transforms from an acquired taste to a powerful emotional vehicle. Without the omnipresent tape hiss that lent past releases an air of rustic authenticity, occasional flourishes of piano and cello (and on the atypically raucous "See America Right," a full-band attack) render such esthetic crutches unnecessary. *Tallahassee* documents the travails of a dysfunctional married couple Darnielle has revisited intermittently for several years, instilling his characters with a depth more commonly found in short stories. "Our love is like the border between Greece and Albania," he earnestly coos on "International Small Arms Traffic Blues," proceeding to support the analogy in poetic detail. It's Darnielle's storytelling skills that separate him from standard-issue coffeehouse folkies. Like an episode of *Jerry Springer*, we laugh uncomfortably at the couple. Like a David Lynch film, we empathize with them yet can't take our eyes off the trainwreck. >>>GLEN SARVAOY



SHIMMER KIDS UNDERPOP ASSOCIATION

The Natural Riot

Hidden Agenda



If there were a Shimmer Kids drinking game in which you had to chug a beer for every overt musical reference, listeners all over the country would be in booze-induced comas before *The Natural Riot's* third track. But then again, *Riot* could make even the most sober times feel woozy. The San Francisco-based outfit haphazardly bumps around pop experimentalism that imagines what the Flaming Lips would sound like were they produced by Phil Spector (conducted by Jason Pierce with their vocal harmonies arranged by Brian Wilson). Like *Summer Hymns* or *Snowglobe*, the Shimmer Kids aren't Elephant 6 wannabes but certainly are admirers of that cultish pop collective. The band adopts E6's blissful, occasionally cloying psychedelia, but replaces dogma with wild divergence. The album whips open with "Model Kit," a frenetic spin through the garage that, after less than three minutes, slips into "Like Candy, Like Poison," a plaintive doo-wop rock ballad, punctuated by a half-celebratory, half-sleepy horn section. Though intent on proving that derivative is the new new, Shimmer Kids' songwriting shines brighter than any ideals. "Burning Bridges," then, is the album's highlight, as it manages lay back in a subtle, twangy grind, while burrowing itself into the brain. Marks as indelible as this aren't to be taken for granted, even when they're floating in a lysergic, choppy sea. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.underpop.org

File Under

Derivative is the new new

R.I.Y.L.

Snowglobe, Summer Hymns,
Elephant Six bands

SPRING HEEL JACK

Amassed

Thirsty Ear

In 2001, British digital duo John Coxon and Ashley Wales (d.b.a. Spring Heel Jack) were busy dicing and distressing the improvisations of free-thinking jazzmen for the adventuresome *Masses*. They're at it again with *Amassed*, which leans heavier on U.K. musicians (saxophonist Evan Parker, drummer Han Bennink, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler) who collude with Matthew Shipp, the sole Yank. Shipp's electric piano prowls the dark, spacious fusion of "Wormwood," a track that suggests Miles Davis is still the most influential musician in the world. However, the boldest catalyst in SHJ's latest alchemic aims is Spiritualized's Jason Pierce, who treats the electric guitar as a strange mechanical box with strings, knobs and wires that can be scraped, shaken and plinked when it's not busy making low, rumbling riffs. It's a performance that's as visceral as it is audible, since SHJ are always creating contrasts to highlight each performer's relative ferocity or grace. For "Lit," an elegant, fog-clearing solo by Wheeler is mixed equally with the sound of thick sheets of paper being torn and crumpled. The first reaction to this is that it's an obvious mistake, a mic left open in the control room, until you realize the distraction is there to make you listen even closer to how fucking beautiful Wheeler's lines are. >>>STEVE CIABATTONI



Link

www.thirstyear.com

File Under

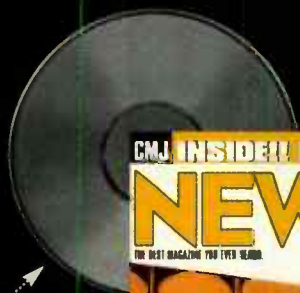
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CASH



JOHNNY CASH

American IV: The Man Comes Around

American-Lost Highway

Under the bare-bones direction of bizarre rock impresario Rick Rubin, Johnny Cash's *The Man Comes Around* nestles brilliantly between the esthetics shown on his previous trio of American Recordings. The inaugural disc showcased, in minimalist fashion, the man, his guitar and a microphone. Tom Petty's Heartbreakers supported Cash on *Unchained*, while *Solitary Man*, with its eclectic ensemble, most clearly pre-saged this latest outing. Although illness and age have added a weathered, autumnal thread to Cash's warm baritone, there is a resolutely transcendent

poignance to the cast of songs on this fourth disc. The selections are consistently well thought-out: ranging from Nine Inch Nails' downward-spiraling "Hurt," through the unwavering devotion of Simon And Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (dueted with Fiona Apple), and Hank Sr.'s lament "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" (with Nick Cave). The incorporation of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus," though, is a slightly uncomfortable fit, and it's unclear if Cash has divested the lyrics of irony, delivering them with conviction, or if his intention is more equivocal. Perhaps therein lies the beauty. Sting's "I Hung My Head" is eerily incandescent in Cash's hands. His extraordinary gift is of musical transubstantiation, and that magic has never been more evident than now, in the September of his years. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

Link

www.johnnycash.com

File Under

Ladies and gentlemen,

Johnny Cash

R.I.Y.L.

Hank Williams Sr., Nick Cave,
Merle Haggard's *Roots, Vol. 1*

CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN

Cigarettes & Carrot Juice - The Santa Cruz Years



Link

www.sharkattackmusic.com

File Under

When you can't get out of bed

R.I.Y.L.

Yo La Tengo,
Spiritualized, Ride

CHARLENE

Charlene SharkAttack!



Heavy-hearted, molasses-slow indie pop has been done to death, but when it's artfully executed it can still elicit a good hour of gloomy introspection on the sofa, and that's exactly what Boston band Charlene accomplishes on its striking self-titled debut. Combining the guitar whirl of the Jesus and Mary Chain with the near-whispered vocals of Yo La Tengo, the trio evokes the sad, pretty buzz of Spiritualized minus the gospel groove. Informed by shoegazer droning (their Pumas are so firmly planted in 1993 they even toss out a reference to Mazzy

Star on "Stunner"), '80s synth-pop and snip-and-paste orchestrations, the band embroiders the usual instrumentation—guitar, bass, drums—with various electronic samples and other found sounds, resulting in hypnotic, wide-open compositions that only give the illusion of being minimalist. Songs are about lazy hours spent waiting, and knowing that relationships fall apart ("Ripoff"), that the future is uncertain ("Still"), that valuable time has been wasted ("Shoot Yr. Life"). There's enough remorseful examination here to provide a life-in-turnaround soundtrack. Sometimes the songs drag on and sound too similar, but overall this lethargic collection has a raspy sincerity that will resonate with the down and the dumped for heartbreaks to come. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK

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JULEE CRUISE

The Art Of Being A Girl Water Music-Universal
Genuine cool, if it's inherent (i.e. Bowie, Catherine Deneuve), is impossible to shake. Julee Cruise, of course, held a particular mantle of coolness that resulted from proximity to David Lynch during his creative zenith; it was an irrefutable, if freakish sort of cool. But with the *Blue Velvet/Twin Peaks* aura having receded into the distance, Cruise is now left, essentially, to her own devices as a singer. No problem—she carries her brand of tawdry elegance remarkably well, leading one to believe that she was a greater piece of *Twin Peaks*' esthetic than it was of

hers. This new record strays only a bit from her spooky torch singer vibe, adding a few nods to contemporary dance culture. Curiously enough, she's become accidentally au courant, her sensual lounge stylings landing her aside the likes of Thievery Corporation, only with a lascivious underpinning. In places, she somehow manages to simultaneously evoke Bebel Gilberto and Ennio Morricone, and elsewhere, Nick Cave and Massive Attack. Of course, all the while, her breathy, childlike voice conjures a Patsy Cline-ish sense of melancholy and yet possesses an alluring, pernicious come-hither prurience. The art of being a girl, indeed. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

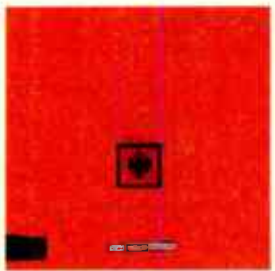
www.juleecruise.net

File Under

Bluer velvet

R.I.Y.L.

Twin Peaks, Bebel Gilberto,
Elysian Fields



CYNTHIA DALL

Sound Restores Young Men Drag City

Though it's been over six years since her Drag City debut, *Untitled*, Cynthia Dall quickly invites us back into her world on her haunting new *Sound Restores Young Men*, insisting over a single melancholy electric guitar, "You never have to be brave/ To touch me" ("Be Safe With Me"). Bravery aside, it may still take some faith and several listens to appreciate the fragile beauty of Dall's work. Co-produced by Tim Green (the Fucking Champs) and Jim O'Rourke (Sonic Youth), *Sound* is not an album that delivers in neatly crafted hooks, but rather, in its ability to slowly envelop the listener in its distinctive, dreamy spell. Droning pedal tones and

slow pulses run throughout the length of many tracks; tempos and notes tend to waver, and even the most dense structures hover on the edge of collapse, melody giving way to dissonance. But Dall's voice—ghostly, childlike and oddly beautiful—is impossible to ignore. The arrangements range from delicate piano ballads ("God Made You") to swirling shoegazers ("Not One"), and each showcase a subtle shade of Dall's vocal palette. Her tone remains affecting and genuine while conveying only minimal emotion. *Sound* is alternately blissful and disturbing; after the spell is broken, you still can't shake it. >>>JASON KUNDRATH

Link

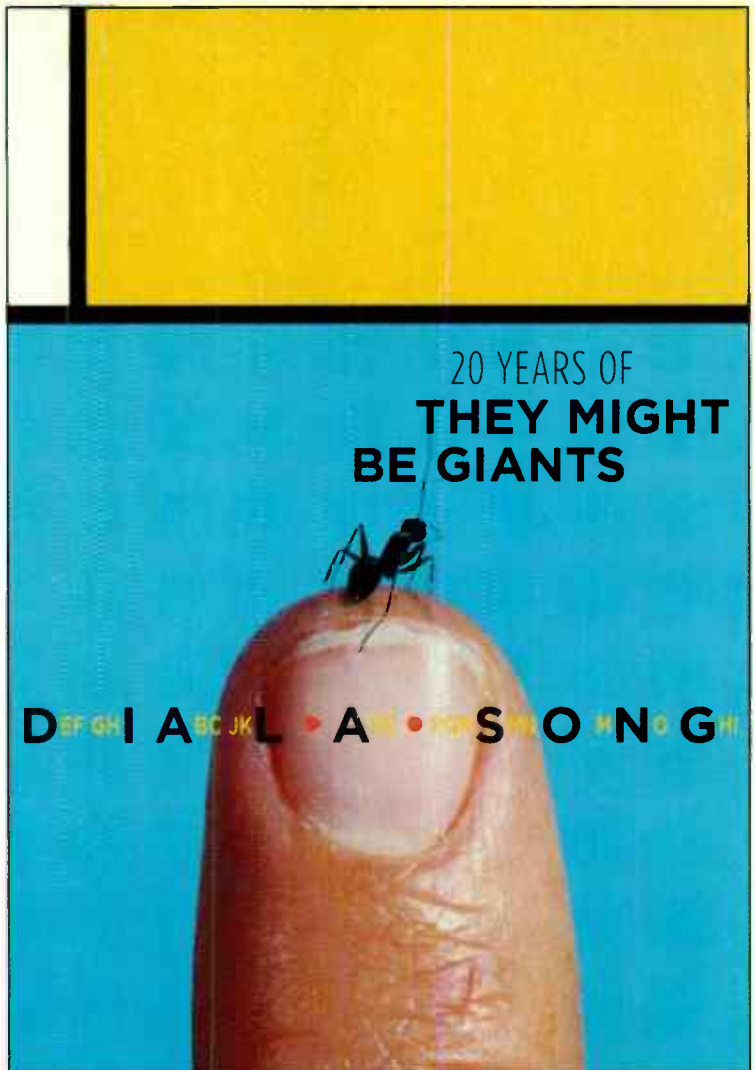
www.dragcity.com/bands/dall.html

File Under

Kinda crazy with a spooky little
girl-like croon

R.I.Y.L.

Sonic Youth, Low,
My Bloody Valentine



A comprehensive 52-song anthology, spanning the entire career of one of rock's most innovative bands. Includes *Don't Let's Start* and *Birdhouse in Your Soul*, plus *Dr. Evil* (from **AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME**) and their recent Grammy-winning song *Boss Of Me* (theme from **MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE**). Includes a full-color booklet with an original essay from **THIS AMERICAN LIFE**'s Sarah Vowell.



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DESTROYER

This Night Merge

Roughly a zillion songs have been offered up to the darkest part of the day, but Vancouver's Destroyer gives nighttime nearly an entire album's worth of lip service with their fourth full-length. And just as music's file of Odes To The Night is diverse and manic, so is *This Night*. Although the theme runs strong—almost all of the songs mention post-sunset hours—every line on the record could, and probably will, be interpreted differently. Dan Bejar, Destroyer's auteur, is a David Bowie-loving dreamer who eschews conventional phraseology in favor of the kind of tangential, elliptical tales that are as keen and cutting as

Link
www.mergerecords.com/bands/destroyer

File Under
 Uneasy-listening for
 uneasy evenings

R.I.Y.L.

Hunky Dory-era David Bowie,
 the New Pornographers

they are confounding. *This Night* is not easy listening. If you think Morrissey has a peculiar way with words and an affected falsetto, wait till you hear Bejar. While the frequent cooing of back-up vocals (when was the last time you heard someone sighing, "Shooby doo wah wah wah?"), the hum of the E-Bow across guitar strings and the affable air organ provide relief from the otherwise heavy load, the songs are easily twice as weighty as last year's *Streethawk: A Seduction* (Misra). Pop fans looking for an easy fix might find the disc a bit too much to, but if you're looking for company on the long night's journey into day, you could do much, much worse. >>>LAURA CASSIQUY



THE FLAMING SIDEBURNS

Save Rock 'N' Roll Jetset

If nothing else can be said about the rock revival stampeding out of Scandinavia these days, there's certainly no shortage of self-confidence. Sweden's Hives claim, with tongue dubiously in cheek, to be the best band in the world. Their countrymen, the Soundtrack Of Our Lives, seem to suggest that they're the...well, you get it. And now, as if we weren't already in capable hands, Finland's the Flaming Sideburns *Save Rock 'N' Roll*. Well, they genuinely try anyway, mostly by eating all your favorite classic punk/rock records and going off to the toilet to squeeze out one

shiny little disc. If you listen closely, you'll notice the New York Dolls and the Sonics bubbling over; if you don't listen particularly closely, you still won't be able to ignore the Stones and the Stooges trying to bust out. You'll even hear some familiar phrases floating by occasionally, like "crosstown traffic" or "Mr. Cab Driver" ("Flowers"). Still, most of the songs here thunder with the energy and swagger of the aforementioned godfathers, thanks mostly to Eduardo Martinez's screaming jumping-bean vocals and Ski Williamson and Johnny Volume's scathing riffs. "World Domination" could be a *Raw Power* throwaway, "Stripped Down" a *Tattoo You* B-side. And soulful rockers like "Lonesome Rain" and "Sweet Sound Of L.U.V." suggest that the Sideburns might find a distinctive sound yet. This time around, they may have bitten off more than they could chew. >>>MATT OSHINSKY

Link
www.jetsetrecords.com






File Under
 Swedish meatheads

R.I.Y.L.

The Stooges, late '70s/early '80s Rolling Stones, the Hives

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THE COMP PILE (OUR GUIDE TO COMPILATION CDS) BY ROBBIE CHAPLICK

					
TITLE	Music Inspired By BaadAsssss Cinema (TVT)	Maybe This Christmas (Netwerk)	Live From Bonnaroo (Sanctuary)	80's Vs. Electro (Ultra)	I Hear Voices (Source-Astralwerks)
CONCEPT	Bringing both the noise and the funk from some ghetto-fabulous '70s films	Christmas-friendly, down-tempo pop tunes for any denomination	A live double-disc taste of the jam-band event of 2002	Blending '80s new wave and today's next wave, while remaining eerily homogenous	To exploit the fact that French vocals are infinitely sexy
TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	You bought <i>The Mack</i> on DVD	Mellow revelers by the fireplace, eggnog in hand	Barefoot, scraggly haired, herb-toking frat boys	5% Nation of Casiotone	Those looking for 'l'amour romantique' at the discotheque
NAMES TO DROP	Isaac Hayes, Curtis Mayfield, James Brown	Coldplay, Ron Sexsmith, Ben Folds	Trey Anastasio, String Cheese Incident, Soulive	Chicks On Speed, Tears For Fears, Röyksopp	A Visible Boy, Hypno-Love, DSL
SUMS IT UP	"Coffy Is The Color" (Roy Ayers)	"Blue Christmas" (Bright Eyes)	"Ain't Nothin' But A Party" (The Dirty Dozen Brass Band)	"1982" (Miss Kittin And The Hacker)	"Voulez-vous danser?" (Thomas Winter)
VERDICT	Well, slap ma fro! Someone find the URL for that "jive translator" site.	Who knew Jesus was so chill? Fresh modern takes, plus no Mariah Carey or Jingle Dogs.	Good for live bootleg traders, novice jammers or those who were too wrecked to remember the show.	After a boatload of suggestive whispers and never-ceasing Kraftwerk-y samples, breaking into the Robot is sadly inevitable.	Makes you wish for a simple <i>Amelie</i> -style ditty, no strings (or synths) attached.

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FOO FIGHTERS

One By One RCA

Clearly, one of the greatest risks a successful artist runs is stagnation. When a group no longer has that new-band smell, it can become difficult to get anyone other than the diehard fans to keep coming back. As such, Dave Grohl never made a better move than hooking up with Queens Of The Stone Age—not only did he help make their new album their best yet, he also picked up a wealth of ideas for his own band's latest. The Queens' influence is immediately obvious in the sinister guitar crunch and subtle vocal threat of opening track/first single "All My

Life," and then again on the fuzz-drenched "Low." It returns throughout the record, from "Have It All," which bears the guitar mark of QOTSA's "Monsters In The Parasol," to the slow burn of epic closing track "Come Back," which, at nearly eight minutes, is just about the most elevating, ambitious song Grohl has ever turned out. Invoking the spirit of Alice In Chains along the way, the track slows to a near-halt halfway through to make you think it's over, only to work its way back into full-blown rock mode. There are quieter moments on *One By One*, and poppier, more Foo-familiar ones, as well, but overall, it's rock that rules the roost this time around. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.foofighters.com

File Under

Survival of the fittest

R.I.Y.L.

Queens Of The Stone Age, Nirvana, Burning Brides



PETER GABRIEL

Up Goffin

When you haven't given your fans a studio album in 10 years, you'd better have something really special for your return. With that in mind, *Up* pushes Peter Gabriel closer to the edge than ever before—quite impressive for a career that's now over 30 years running. There are occasional signposts to the past ("No Way Out" has faint echoes of "Red Rain," for example), but the disc pushes ever forward, from the claustrophobia of "Darkness" and "Growing Up" through to the trembling optimism of "Sky Blue" and the catharsis of "I Grieve." It's an intense, disturbing record (interrupted

only by the cheap-laugh, throwaway single "The Barry Williams Show"), marked by the reflections and uncertainties of a man entering his second half-century. The stark, Lennon-esque isolation of "My Head Sounds Like That" builds gradually to the epic scream of "Signal To Noise," with its stunning Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan vocal filigree (possibly Gabriel's best composition to date, and incidentally, the closest this album gets to world music) before gradually fading on the quiet hope of "The Drop." Even some relatively high-profile guests (Blind Boys of Alabama, the aforementioned Nusrat) are subsumed by the power of the songs, their typically inventive rhythm tracks immersing them in Gabriel's world. Getting older doesn't necessarily mean blanding out; instead, as Gabriel shows, it can bring a sharper focus, and an artist's desire for truth. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

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www.petergabriel.com

File Under

Fortitudo Dei

R.I.Y.L.

John Lennon, Daniel Lanois, Brian Eno

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WHEREHOUSE MUSIC



DARREN HANLON

Hello Stranger Drive-In

Like Billy Bragg's apolitical little brother, Darren Hanlon is a first-rate wordsmith whose cheeky lyrics suggest that he owns much stock in wit and puns. His debut album, *Hello Stranger*, is packed with great lines that occasionally flirt with being too clever. Hanlon's happy-go-lucky disposition, though, is ultimately winning, especially on lines like, "A thousand ideas I try to tell crossword girl/ How do I get one across when you're always too down?" in the album's jangling opener, "Hiccups (How To Cure Them)." Often resembling what his buddies the Lucksmiths would sound like if they

were shrunken to a single singer/songwriter setup, Hanlon turns out tight, simple guitar pop that's kissed with tweeness. Narratives are the fields where his words play, and Hanlon fixes his gaze on life's minutiae, saluting telephone operators, serenading punk-rock flatmates, and waxing ecstatic about kickstands. Solo electric and absurdly infectious, "Kickstand Song" is, in fact, *Hello Stranger's* most telling track. Not only is the tune's very existence a feat unto itself (who thought we needed a song about standing bicycles up?), but it's also a metaphor for Hanlon's own musical invention. Like the song's subject, *Hello Stranger* isn't a revolution, but it is a sturdy record that reminds us that life is nothing without its little charms. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

members.optusnet.com.au/~sofie/darren.html

File Under

The wordsmith of Oz

R.I.Y.L.

The Lucksmiths, Billy Bragg, the Steinbecks, Ben Lee



ISIS

Oceanic Ipecac

Isis are firm believers that water is just sludge without any dirt in it. The Boston five-piece peels away a thick layer of grit from the dripping-sap-slow pummel of sludge-metal, leaving expansive tracks that find some moody middle-ground between the acidic squall of Neurosis, the trance-inducing math-rock of Slint and the spacious ambience of Sigur Rós—leaving the metalhead equivalent of Brian Eno's *Music For Airports*. Like the title suggests, Isis is oceancore: making mood music for the darkest abyss, sloooooooooooooowly gaining momentum, crashing against the bitter

Link
www.ipecac.com
File Under
Spraaaaaaaaawwwwwwwling
post-hardcore
R.I.Y.L.
Cave In, Neurosis, Eyehategod,
Swans

wind and quietly dissipating into the surf. With most tracks easily eclipsing the seven-minute mark, listening to the entire album is a lot like drowning in quicksand. "Weight" is a damn-near-11-minute lost-at-sea adventure. Isis slowly discovers their bearings through ultra-minimalist ambience and a lethargic drum build. Some femme-cooing (possibly a siren?) beckons as the ship sails into harbor and an indecisive guitar spends an eternity building from hesitant jangle to confident crunch to triumphant chug. Isis is a walking crescendo and decrescendo factory, with the seven-minute "False Light" rising and sinking in slo-mo like Tortoise bent on Coalesce riffs. Melodies take eons to evolve and atmospheric bridges tranquilly float like they're trapped in the eye of a hurricane. Dramamine is highly recommended for the eventual seasickness of sailing the Isis Ocean. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



IVY

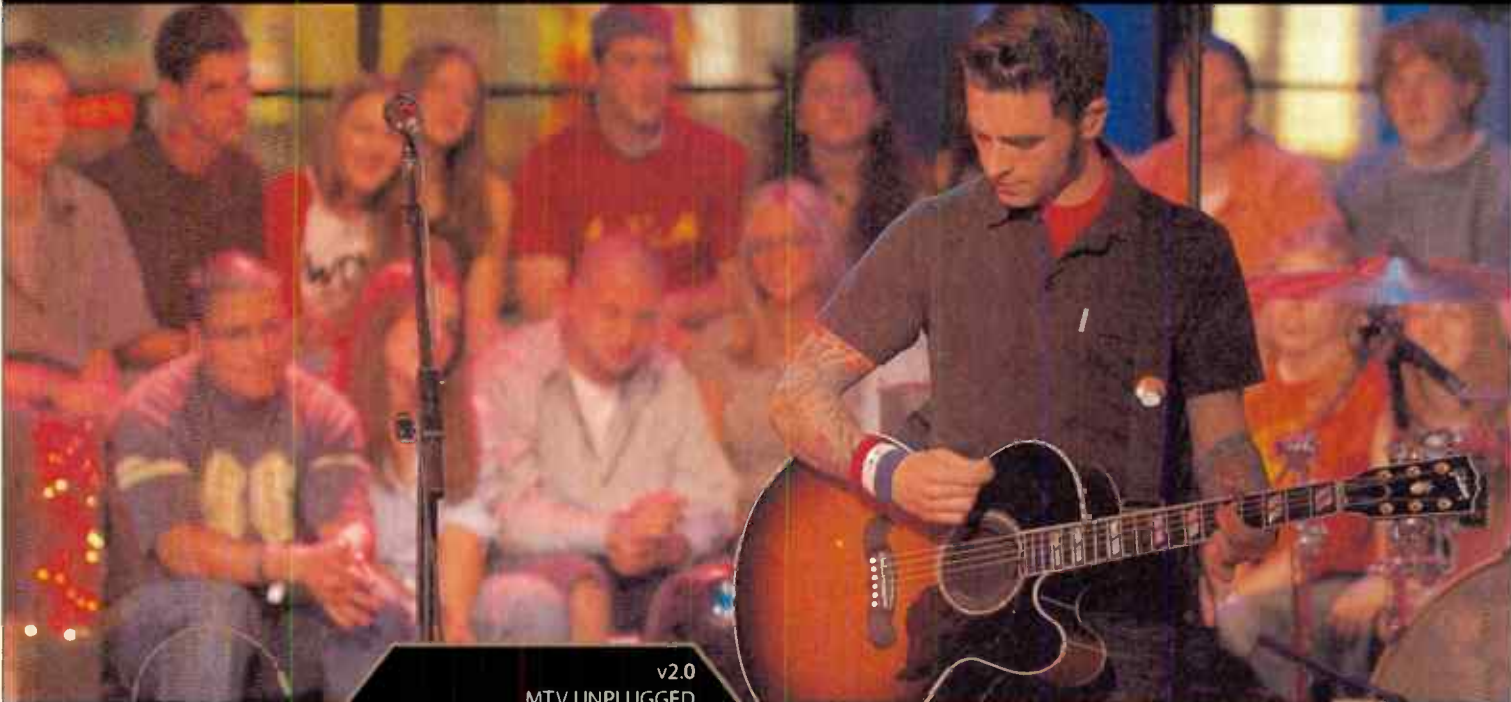
Guestroom Minty Fresh

Ivy, purveyors of bittersweet pop moments, not only taste good, they also have good taste. Sure, the self-indulgent horror that is generally the outcome of anyone's, er, brilliant idea to do an all-covers record, makes one infinitely wary of such outings. But it wouldn't be a stretch to say that Ivy's *Guestroom* is the most perfectly realized of them all. Firstly, they choose sublime songs, by an unusual, though not un-connectable selection of artists. Secondly, they bend the songs into their stylistic realm, rather than mimicking the originals. Finally—and

Link
www.thebandivy.com
File Under
Songs of faith and devotion
R.I.Y.L.
Auteur De Lucie, Aztec Camera

here's the clincher—Ivy make magic of everything they touch, bless them. To wit, the Cure's eerie psychological drama, "Let's Go To Bed," is made all the more odd when Dominique Durand's sweet voice replaces Robert Smith's desperate wowl; the Ronettes' exuberant "Be My Baby" becomes haunting and languorous; and Steely Dan's "Only A Fool Would Say That" is yanked backward towards Burt Bacharach, and forward towards Stereolab. Other choices prove Ivy to be painfully hip—the Blow Monkeys' "Digging Your Scene," Serge Gainsbourg's "L'Anamour"—and admirably affectionate towards talented, like-minded artists—Orange Juice, House Of Love, Nick Heyward—that, sadly, no one cares about anymore. Esthetes rejoice. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

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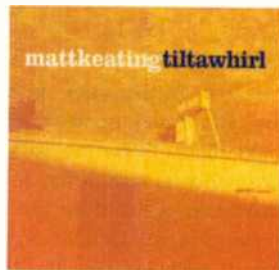
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World Radio History



MATT KEATING

Tiltawhirl Future Farmer

Complaints about all the great artists who don't get the attention they deserve, who suffer in label limbo while their small masterpieces go unheard, etc., are one of rock's enduring clichés. The same old bitch-and-moan doesn't do Matt Keating justice—better to let the music make the case for itself. *Tiltawhirl*, his first Stateside release since 1997's *Killjoy*, is a delicate folk-pop gem full of songs so well-crafted they seem effortless. He works with just an acoustic guitar on most tracks, plus the occasional plugged-in rock 'n' roll

accompaniment, but Keating's subtlety of arrangement and his masterful melodic sense shade each song with its own tone and personality. The elegiac, minor-key "Jacksonville" might be about love, God or running from the law (or all three), while the equally Spartan "Executioner" hints at a haunted Johnny Cash slow burn as Keating gets inside the head of the man who flipped the switch on Karla Faye Tucker. *Tiltawhirl* is also that rare album that manages to reveal more and more depth with every spin. This is due in no small part to Keating's lyrical skill—he has a poet's knack for seizing on the important, specific detail, and for finding the metaphor that shakes out the emotion in an abstract idea. The songs seem so very, very simple, but they are so very, very rich. >>>MAYA SINGER

Link

www.mattkeating.com

File Under

Exceptionally well-crafted folk-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Chris Mills, Mark Eitzel,
Neil Halstead



J. MASCIS + THE FOG

Free So Free Ultimatum

Free So Free exhibits all the traits one expects to find in a J. Mascis album, Dinosaur Jr. or otherwise: his wry, half-lidded crowing, the stinging leads, the billowing sheets of noise riffing and a tremendous knack for songcraft. But *Free So Free* has a more soaring tendency, owing its verve—according to Mascis—to J.'s recent introduction to skydiving. He actually claims that some of these tunes were birthed mid-air, pouring forth in a batch of adrenaline and reverb-drenched chords and phrases. It certainly sounds the case; there's a lot of punch

Link

www.freakscene.net

File Under

Rip chords

R.I.Y.L.

Dinosaur Jr., Neil Young

on this album. As with 2000's *More Light*, there's an occasional laconic folk touch, but mostly, it's J. blasting out some of the loudest, most affecting riffs this side of Neil Young storming through "Powderfinger" with Crazy Horse, a tangle of hair and amplifiers behind him. And what grants *Free So Free* its absolute lack of constraint is J.'s sense of meter. Almost invariably, when the guitar is in overdrive—for example, the opener "Freedom," or "Bobbin"—the tempo quickens proportionally with the heightening of emotional and musical tension. As each successive chorus soars onward, any notion of click-track precision is jettisoned from the plane's exit door without a parachute, and thankfully so. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY



Sondre Lerche

Faces down

Creating evocative pop music at once modern and classic, 19-year-old singer-songwriter Sondre Lerche is one of Norway's most exciting exports.

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NEW ORDER

Back To Mine DMC

One could argue that by now Sonic Youth should have updated their moniker to Sonic Parents; as well, New Order should probably now be known as Old Guard. And, much as they may have birthed modern dance culture with their own music and with the infamous Hacienda club in Manchester, it's hard to picture any of the members of New Order inviting you back to their respective flats (er, make that mansions) these days for some post-club partying. But if you don't take the *Back To Mine* concept too literally, this does offer a keen glimpse into the mad genius of their musical psyche. They've certainly not chosen a stale batch of chill-out anthems and soul classics; instead, it's a fascinating collection of tunes that, taken together, is almost disorienting, in a fun sort of way. Opening with Captain Beefheart's whacked-out "Big Eyed Beans From Venus," it moves curiously on to Primal Scream's 1991 acid-house masterwork "Higher Than The Sun." And though this was surely not intended, the seamless segue into Missy Elliot's "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" shows the venerated rapper to have been about 10 years behind Mr. Gillespie and crew. Oops. Also featured amidst the eclecticism are Roxy Music's "In Every Dream Home A Heartache," Donna Summer's "I Feel Love" and Can's "Mushroom." Zowie. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

www.neworderweb.com

File Under

After-hours party people

R.I.Y.L.

24 Hour Party People,
DJ Kicks, everything that
New Order touches

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



NOAHJOHN

Water Hymns Killdeer

NoahJohn combines throbbing slow-core intensity, a little country twang and singer-songwriter Carl Johns's hallucinatory American storytelling to weave a fairly enchanting musical fabric. The problem is, Johns doesn't sing very well. Granted, that never stopped Gram Parsons and hasn't slowed former Jayhawk Mark Olson. Nonetheless, it is the notable and perhaps only downside to the exquisitely weird stuff on the band's third disc. Maybe it's all for the best, though: It seems unlikely that anyone but Johns could give a proper reading of his dreamy sketches of love ("First

Communion") or tragedy ("Ballad Of William Roy"), which would make quicker sense read aloud than they do dropped down the rabbit hole of NoahJohn's soundscapes. Lisa MaeRae Hinzman's saw adds an extra-erie layer to the arrangements grounded in the semi-psychedelic work of Eena Ballard (viola, guitar), Stephen Burke (guitar, lap steel) and drummer Peter Roy Kaesberg. The Madison, Wisconsin-based quintet has a loose sort of cohesiveness that is harder to come by than it might seem, whether they are moping along on the lyrically heart-warming "Personal Best" or creating an ominous wave of noise on "They Will Call." >>>BILL KISLIUK

[Link](http://www.killdeerrecords.com)

www.killdeerrecords.com

File Under

Space cowboys

R.I.Y.L.

Cowboy Junkies, Wilco, Mark

Olson And The Original

Harmony Ridge Creek Dippers



ONEIDA

Each One Teach One Jagjaguwar

In the right hands, noise can be an effective tool for making music, able to stimulate the mind and weigh on the heart. But noise intended as music just as often gives the listener a throbbing headache. The line between odd beauty and sheer agony is razor thin. Oneida doesn't bother to walk this line—they trample it, kick the dirt around and gouge their own line. Their latest sonic exclamation, *Each One Teach One*, previously released as a limited-edition vinyl, is a challenging listen. These Brooklynites forsake typical melody and song structure for intricate yet volatile explorations of sound ("Antibiotics") and mind-numbing exercises in repetition ("Sheets Of Easter"). Harsh, dense textures and distorted, atonal vocals (à la Mercury Rev or Flaming Lips) abound. Oneida wanders through this musical terrain like Aphex Twin recast as a doped-up '70s classic rocker. But sometimes their search for an end or a point to all this madness gets mired in layer after layer of dense, disjointed psychedelia, leaving *Each One Teach One* feeling cumbersome. Moments of brilliance do exist ("Number Nine"), but the difficult juxtaposition of ideas can make these moments hard to appreciate. What flies from the speakers is sometimes astounding, but keep the remote control and aspirin within arm's reach. >>>NORM ELROO

[Link](http://www.jagjaguwar.com/)

www.jagjaguwar.com/

[jagjaguwar/oneida](http://www.jagjaguwar.com/)

File Under

Bring the noise

R.I.Y.L.

Brainiac, Girls Vs. Boys,

sound-induced trips and

headaches

tion ("Sheets Of Easter"). Harsh, dense textures and distorted, atonal vocals (à la Mercury Rev or Flaming Lips) abound. Oneida wanders through this musical terrain like Aphex Twin recast as a doped-up '70s classic rocker. But sometimes their search for an end or a point to all this madness gets mired in layer after layer of dense, disjointed psychedelia, leaving *Each One Teach One* feeling cumbersome. Moments of brilliance do exist ("Number Nine"), but the difficult juxtaposition of ideas can make these moments hard to appreciate. What flies from the speakers is sometimes astounding, but keep the remote control and aspirin within arm's reach. >>>NORM ELROO

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Pele

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OUT HUD

S.T.R.E.E.T. D.A.D. Kranky

Out Hud is the new Brooklyn post-punk scene's answer to early-'80s NYC funksters Liquid Liquid: Where the Rapture aims to revive fashion-circuit goth-rock and Radio 4 is concerned with making leftist politics groove, these recent Sacramento transplants just want to see you sweat. On their long-awaited debut album, *S.T.R.E.E.T. D.A.D.*, they encourage that with a propulsive, bass-heavy fusion of quick-silver guitars, zigzagging synths and a multilayered percussive attack as deep as the East River. It's a staggeringly kinetic sound, and what's especially

Link
www.brainwashed.com/kranky
File Under
Hedonism for hipsters
R.I.Y.L.
PiL, Liars, Fugazi's
Red Medicine

cool about the record is how ably it relays the energy of Out Hud's live show, a footloose free-for-all that often climaxes in an audience-inclusive jam. Yet the band also takes the opportunity here to show off the nuances in its music, slowing things down on opener "Story Of The Whole Thing" to make room for a moody cello line and dropping some cavernous mixing-desk reverb into "This Bum's Paid" that draws a line back to the Jamaican dub pioneers so many of these new-school art-punks claim to idolize. And even if they don't feature a herky-jerky singer out front spouting the inner-city blues, *S.T.R.E.E.T. D.A.D.*'s magnificently titled songs speak volumes about where these kids' heads are at—watch out for "Dad, There's A Little Phrase Called Too Much Information." >>>MIKAEL WOOD

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PLATE TECTONICS AND SENSATIONAL

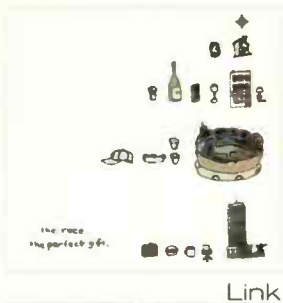
Plate Tectonics And Sensational Tapes

Since noise-rocker racket is finally in vogue amongst Daleks and Cannibal Oxes and Techno Animals, ain't it time hip-hop gave something back? Plate Tectonics are the remaining members of defunct Brooklyn electro-art-noise troupe Pixeltan, and on these onstage improv recordings, their ear-shredding Boredoms-inspired metallic throb, fuzz, buzz 'n' scuzz makes strange bedfellows with one-time Jungle Brother and lo-fi-hip-hopper Sensational. In the two N.Y. freestyle sessions documented here, tinnitus-inducing noise rides minimalist

Link
www.tapesrecords.com
File Under
Beefheartian B-boying
R.I.Y.L.
Pixeltan, Black Dice,
Cannibal Ox, Out Hud

funk rhythms into dance-oblivion like Liquid Liquid interpreted by Steve Reich. Drummer Adam Autry (of the ever-bent Olneyville Sound System) tears pages from the Def Jux songbook, ending his phrases with pauses that painfully retard the ass-end of the beat—out-glitching the glitchiest CanOx or RZA with pure organic dementia. Then, like a voice drifting from another planet entirely, Sensational starts ripping fucking *battle rhymes*. While his freestyles are decidedly, um, less-than-sensational (falling apart somewhere between Biz Markie free-form and Missy Elliott party rhymes), his presence is gigantic—especially since he's fighting to be heard over some twisted robot dub group blurring out onomatopoeic screeches. Little jells in these meandering jams, but the tension between the disparate elements makes the whole batch more engaging, pouring two underground movements into a blender and dancing to the whirring blades. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

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



THE RACE

The Perfect Gift Flameshowel

The Race's name is a bit of a misnomer: Listening to *The Perfect Gift*, you can't imagine them racing towards anything. This is music to be listless to, the sound of I-must-escape-my-life-by-any-means-possible boredom condensed into a single CD; this is the soundtrack to sleeping until 2 p.m. because you can't think of a good reason not to. As much of a downer as it is, this Chicago duo presents a compelling take on all-encompassing malaise. Think Pinback with a chemical imbalance: Each track is brimming with intertwined, meandering guitars, tasteful blends of

electronic and live drumming, and subtle production flourishes not usually found on such an indie release (see the chopped-up, disorienting cymbals of "Miles Inside Your Shoes" for a taste). The songs tend to stand or fall on the relative strength of Craig Klein's vocals, which vacillate between solid, emotive croons and wavering, emo-tive moans. At its best, as on the opening "The Switch Switched," the Race achieves almost Radiohead-y levels of well-orchestrated ennui; in the rough spots, such as "It Looks Like A Circle But It's Really A Spiral," Klein's voice approaches warbly excesses that would make Robert Smith blush. Luckily, *The Perfect Gift* has more of the former than the latter; it's a promising effort from a band that could do great things with a little more polish. >>>TOM MALLON

Link

www.theracemusic.com

File Under

Miserablist manifesto

R.I.Y.L.

Pinback, National Skyline,

Conor Oberst at his most warbly



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Red Hot + Riot MCA

The late Fela Kuti was a constant thorn in the side of Nigeria's corrupt politicians up until his death from AIDS in 1997. The father of Afrobeat used his music as a weapon to shout out against injustice, and in return he was often beaten and imprisoned. But he never shut up. That's a lot to live up to; the amazing thing is that this long-promised tribute record, which brings together Africans and African-Americans, hip-hoppers and jazzbos, succeeds so perfectly. It doesn't try to imitate Fela, but uses his words and music as a springboard and inspiration—"Shuffering And Shmiling," for example, resembles the original only

in its killer groove, but Dead Prez's rap takes Fela's attack on Christianity in Africa two steps further. On "Zombie," trumpeter Roy Hargrove blows up a killer storm with Nile Rodgers, and Senegal's Cheikh Lô puts Senegal firmly in the house on "Shakara/Lady." Fela's son, Femi, raises his father's torch, and Tony Allen, Fela's brilliant drummer, is everywhere at once on "No Agreement"; Taj Mahal and Baaba Maal take it out gently on "Trouble Sleep Yanga Wake Am" over Kaouding Cissoko's harp-like kora. This record's ambition could easily have made it a sprawling embarrassment—instead, it's one of the most vital and incisive records of the year. Fela would be proud. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

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www.mcarecords.com

File Under

The revolution won't be

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R.I.Y.L.

Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, Gil

Scott-Heron, Antibalas

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CHRIS ROBINSON

New Earth Mud Redline Entertainment

Chris Robinson possesses one of the most immediate voices in rock music today. Before *New Earth Mud*, while Robinson was fronting the Black Crowes, those pipes were merely part of a greater whole; on his solo debut, Robinson shines front-and-center with a stripped-down band and an intensely melodic approach. Sure, there are times on this 12-track collection where he belts it out—check the uptempo outro on "Could You Really Love Me?"—but more often than not Robinson gets moody. "Untangle My Mind," "Silver Car," "Kids That Ain't

Got None" and the love ditty "Katie Dear" are stellar examples of how the revamped Robinson pours emotion into a song rather than just belting it out. And the inference there is not that the Crowes were tired before they went on hiatus, just that Robinson proves to be an able musician without the band's support. (Robinson wrote all but four of the songs himself with the help of producer Paul Stacey.) Crowes keyboardist Ed Harsch assisted on "Silver Car" and "Kids That Ain't Got None," while "Sunday Sound" was written with former Crowes guitarist Marc Ford, and Stone Temple Pilots' Dean DeLeo gets a co-writing credit on the psychedelic "Better Than The Sun." All in all, though, *New Earth Mud* is the Robinson show, and a good one at that. >>>DAVID JOHN FARINELLA

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www.newearthmud.com

File Under

Stripped down, polished up

R.I.Y.L.

Ryan Adams, the Grateful Dead, Freedy Johnston

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SIMIAN

We Are Your Friends Astralwerks

The second album from Manchester's Simian is, in many ways, a report on the state of the art of British rock: grounded in the boisterous psychedelia of Love, the Beatles and the Beach Boys, *We Are Your Friends* is embellished with the springy beats of contemporary R&B and the fidgety textures of electronic pop. But despite the indulgence in artifice, the album rocks as hard as any new garage banger, suggesting rock 'n' roll's ability to fold in wide-reaching influences without losing its essence. Simian may be your friends, but that won't keep them from playing the trickster—

even the tease. Just listen to the first few seconds of the opening song, "LA Breeze." A demure guitar figure gives way to four building bars of Sgt. Pepper-styled stomp; "Here it comes," they sing, and then the bottom drops out and the song starts from scratch all over again. Simian loves to monkey around, and the irreverence keeps the album lively. They even speak in tongues, channeling sounds and vocal styles from Depeche Mode to Beck. For a rock record, it's not all so raucous: "She Is In Mind" is a delicate number brushed with classical acoustic picking, ghostly cooing and vocal harmonies that would have Queen rushing to brush up on their own barbershop act. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

www.wearesimian.com

File Under

Doctor Zaius's Lonely Hearts

Club Band

R.I.Y.L.

Beta Band, the Bees, Primal Scream

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RONI SIZE

Touching Down Full Cycle

Roni Size has described the relationship between the two albums he recorded with his Reprazent crew as one of flesh and bones. 1997's *New Forms* laid down the skeletal prototype for a drum 'n' bass full-length, which may explain how it got overpraised and went on to win England's esteemed Mercury Music Prize. But the rough-and-tumbling *In The Mode* from 2000 put some flesh on those bones in the form of a disparate array of vocal talent and a beat that rocked more than it skittered. Now Size has gone solo with this continuous DJ mix

Link

www.fullcycle.co.uk

File Under

Stranded in the jungle

R.I.Y.L.

Aphrodite, Goldie, LTJ Bukem

of original, mostly new material and, for some ungodly reason, the flesh has been stripped away again. With no rappers or toasters on board to double up as rhythmic elements, the scant sound effects are almost all that's left to help push the beat forward. This works on the opening cut, "Sound Advice," where a soothing harp hook slowly spirals out of control to keep up with the furious funk below. But most of the time, the hooks sink into the beat when they're not administering a wet willie in your ear as on the irritating "Vocoda Funk." It's the eternal top/bottom problem of electronic, and while Size still rocks harder than most junglists, he rarely vaults over the genre's limitations here. >>>KEVIN JOHN

SKILLZ

I Ain't Mad No More Rawkus

"Walk like a pimp, talk like an emcee," Skillz—formerly Mad Skillz but he ain't mad no more, got it?—swaggers on "On The Good Foot," ushering in his new gangsta soul sound. The track serves as an intro to Skillz' first full length; after continually 12-inching his fans, he's finally put together a long-player that, as its very first release, the all-new MCA-distributed Rawkus can be proud of. The underground vet turns verbal tricks over perfect party tracks like the old-school "Full Cooperation" and "Crew Deep," (also included on *Soundbombing III*), featuring Missy Elliott and former Xscape member

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www.mcarecords.com

File Under

Lickable lyrics soundbomb

your ears

R.I.Y.L.

Royce Da 5'9", Ice Cube,

Cam'ron

Kandi Burruss. He also reveals a sensitive side, like on the slow jam with Aaries, "Only Get One," dedicated to his mama. He lives up to his boast "Ya'll rappers I respect you a lot/ But I don't need none of ya'll to make my album hot"—most of his guests are soulful singers like Musiq and Cee-Lo, who is featured over funky drumming on the Neptunes-produced "Suzie Q." While Missy, Timbaland, the Neptunes and Clipse are repping for Virginia these days, Skillz has been around for a minute, and he's finally soaking up some o' that love from VA and beyond. >>>JESSICA KOSLOW

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hayden live at convocation hall



Hayden
Live At Convocation Hall

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Lanterna
Sands

Lanterna returns with a new album featuring 10 crystalline instrumental tracks to help you make it through the rest of 2002. "The Lanterna sound is ideal for a drive down some lonely highway late at night. It's a guitar sound that conveys to the soul of the night, not in a spooky way, but in embracing nighttime's quiet and empty spaces" - *Amazon.com*



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Maladies

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THE SOFT BOYS

Nextdoorland

When the Soft Boys reconvened to celebrate last year's 20th-anniversary reissue of their neo-psychedelic classic *Underwater Moonlight*, Robyn Hitchcock, Kimberley Rew, Matthew Seligman and Morris Windsor discovered they still had some creative juices left. *Nextdoorland* is the result, and while there's nothing here as rousing as *Moonlight's* "I Wanna Destroy You" or "Kingdom Of Love," the album certainly rocks more than most of Hitchcock's recent solo work. Actually, *Nextdoorland* sounds as reminiscent of Hitchcock's late '80s work with the Egyptians (which included drummer Windsor) as it is of

Link

www.thesoftware.com

File Under

Surrealistic fellows,
nostalgia division

R.I.Y.L.

Robyn Hitchcock And The Egyptians, the Byrds, Syd Barrett

Invisible Hits or other Soft Boys cult faves. Hitchcock's loopy surrealistic tales sometimes seem like shtick after all these years, although he's still capable of double-edged zingers like "I wish that I was just paranoid" and comic absurdities like "Take your partner by the middle/ Like a burger in a griddle" (both from the trippy, anti-war rumination "Strings"). One could wish for songwriting contributions from Kimberley Rew, who, after all, wrote the perfect single "Walking On Sunshine" when he was in Katrina And The Waves. But Rew and Hitchcock work up some serious guitar steam on the instrumental "I Love Lucy," the rocking "Unprotected Love" and the psychedelic, Byrds-y "Mr. Kennedy." It's a treat to discover that the Soft Boys haven't gone limp yet. >>>STEVE KLINGE



STEREOTYP

My Sound

The Viennese do love their dub: Kruder and Dorfmeister have built a minor empire out of reconfiguring dub's throb and ping into a suave sort of parlor music. Stefan Moerth, a.k.a. Stereotyp, records for K&D's label G-Stone, but his sound is a very different beast, equal parts roots and radical. If his bosses' smooth downtempo can seem a bit dandyish, Moerth comes off like a very rude bwoy indeed, grounding many of his tracks in the angry fidget of contemporary dancehall, filtered through the fragmented lens of West London broken beat. On track

Link

www.g-stoned.com

File Under

Hapsburg meets rockers uptown
R.I.Y.L.

Rhythm & Sound, Riton,
Ms Dynamite

after track, sub-bass waves roll out with slow, devastating force, like depth charges dropped into the La Brea Tar Pits, while awkward, angular riddims cribbed from snare, hi-hat, and rimshot chatter and clash like the heads of a self-hating Hydra. It's ominous, intense stuff. Occasionally, Moerth morphs his sound into something closer to R&B, as on the laidback groovers "Tell Me" and "Don't Funk With Me;" on the latter, vocalist Cesar's pained falsetto sounds like a lovesick D'Angelo, giving Moerth a chance to show the sensitive side of his own productions. If dub is the heartbeat, Moerth's guest vocalists are the breath of these songs. The clear standout is Tikiman, known for his work with Germany's Chain Reaction collective, who graces three tracks with rippling patter and Moebius-tongued flow. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

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



FRANKLIN BRUNO
A Cat May Look At A Queen
Absolutely Kosher

JENNY TOOMEY
Tempting *Mira*

Franklin Bruno writes pop songs like the English Ph.D. candidate he is; the Californian packs more pithy bon mots and head-turning couplets into a four-minute tune than anyone this side of Stephin Merritt. "I calculate trajectories at which the car could veer/ So that the impact would consume him, even as we are thrown clear," he grouses about a romantic rival sharing a roadtrip in "Dashboard Issues." On his *A Cat May Look At A Queen*, Bruno opts for a cabaret vibe over the indie rock of his band Nothing Painted Blue, with upright bass and brushed drums providing much of the accompaniment. Calexico's Joey Burns, once in Nothing Painted Blue, rounds out a nimble quartet with tremolo-heavy guitar. Bruno has a rich, vibrant voice, but it's often a touch off-key and not quite up to the challenges of the intimate setting. Only on the tango-based title track does he spike his lines with enough camp to shield his vocal limitations. The most successful efforts are the handful produced by

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Lloyd Cole, mellow Elvis Costello, Magnetic Fields'
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Winning vocals upping the ante
R.I.Y.L.
Neko Case, Aimee Mann,
Rebecca Gates

Dave Trumfio (Pulsars, Mekons), who drops Bruno's voice further into the mix, creating space for bouncier arrangements, such as the dense, keyboard-driven "Threadbare." Despite strong playing and ace writing, Bruno's shortage of vocal chops renders *A Cat May Look At A Queen* a near miss.

Enter Jenny Toomey, whose stunning 2001 disc *Antidote* proved the cure for her renown as a D.I.Y. impresario and Executive Director of the Future of Music Coalition surpassing the notoriety as an artist she achieved, mostly, with the groundbreaking D.C. band Tsunami. For *Tempting*, she's recorded a mix of old and new Bruno compositions, cementing a connection that began when her Simple Machines label released an early Nothing Painted Blue disc. *Tempting's* approach is similar to the grown-up songstress turn of *Antidote*, and closer yet to *A Cat*. Bruno himself contributes guitar and piano, and Burns is joined by his Calexico cohort John Convertino, most identifiably on the mariachi treatment of the stellar opener "Your Inarticulate Boyfriend." Toomey's voice is smooth yet saucy, letting words roll around in her mouth like a latter-day Dusty Springfield, bringing a needed dexterity to these sophisticated interpretations. There's nary a trace of rock dynamics to be found until the rousing closer "Every Little Bit Hurts," which plays like a Neko Case nugget. "Cheat" is the sort of clever, modern age come-on ("Why don't you cheat with me?! You and I both know you've done it before/ It sounds so sweet to be/ Seeing you less but enjoying it more") that could add spice to Rainbow Room sets for years to come. Although Bruno's metaphor runs amok on "Unionbusting," his informed wit and Toomey's delivery make the parallels between romance and labor strife worth our indulgence. >>>GLEN SARVADY



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THE SUGARMAN 3 & CO.

Pure Cane Sugar *Daptone*

Tenor player Neal Sugarman and his Brooklyn-based cohorts deliver seriously greasy soul grooves à la James Brown and the leanest Hammond B-3 soul jazz combos of prior generations (Shirley Scott with Stanley Turrentine, "Brother" Jack McDuff with Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson, Jimmy Smith with most anyone). So devoted are they to the cause that they and other labels in the Daptone family put most of their stuff out on 45s. The packaging of the band's third CD unrepentantly recalls blunt, cheesy King Records album sleeves, and the tunes have promising but nonsensical names

like "Honey Wagon" and "Funky So-And-So." Frills aside, Sugarman, B-3 player Adam Scone, guitarist Al Street and drummer Rudy Albin are drilling straight to the heart of the groove on these mostly instrumental tracks. All have served time with funk and soul jazz heavyweights such as Lou Donaldson and Jimmy McGriff, and it shows. Street has those repetitive riffs down cold, building to a dizzying wah-wah frenzy on "Take It As It Come." Guest vocalists Charles Bradley and Lee Fields channel Soul Brother #1's gritty vocal energy on their cuts. The horns punch, duck, and punch again. Funk percussion legend Bernard "Pretty" Purdie graces one track, and yep, they even remember to give the drummer some. Outta sight. >>>BILL KISLIUK

Link

www.daptonerecords.com

File Under

BBQ sauce

R.I.Y.L.

Soulive, Maceo Parker, Shirley Scott



AMON TOBIN

Out From Out Where *Ninja Tune*

On his fifth album, post-jungle producer Amon Tobin discovers that technology is a double-edged sword. For back in 1996, when the London-based and Brazilian-born artist released his first album, Tobin's blistering drum 'n' bass spray—bursting with jazz-like fluidity and jaw-dropping virtuosity—seemed like a great leap forward. Six years later, the electronica market is oversaturated with speaker-freaking, Pro-Tools wankery—except now they call it IDM. The result is that Tobin's *Out From Out Where* sounds sort of quaint: His meticulous drum programming is still

impressive, but it sounds tame compared to the new-school of punk-ish knob-twiddlers. Sadly, Tobin's attempt at keeping up with the new Kid606s on the block doesn't help his case: Shuttling away the playful jazziness and sprightly melodic sensibility of his earlier work, *Out From Out Where* emphasizes a darker, industrial tone that wears after the halfway point. That's not to say that the album completely misses the mark. In fact, Tobin still produces massive, Brobdingnagian beats—"Back From Space" proceeds with a giant stomp that would scare Godzilla—better than anyone around. And if Hitchcock were still alive, the suffocating strings and ominous rumble of "Searchers" would be perfect for his next thriller. But, in the hyper-accelerated world of electronica, last year's model is one step from the trash heap. >>>MICHAEL ENOELMAN

Link

www.amontobin.com

File Under

Post-jungle fry and fizzle

R.I.Y.L.

Squarepusher, Coldcut, Meat Beat Manifesto

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THE WACO BROTHERS

New Deal Bloodshot

The Waco Brothers are a force of nature, charging through album after album, each with only slight stylistic variances from the last. And that's why we love them. Jon Langford (Mekons, Pine Valley Cosmonauts), Deano Schlabowske, Tracey Dear and their Chicago-based brethren rollick through twangy, rootsy songs with the reckless abandon of a juiced-up bar band, performing with a mix of affection and humor, turning country conventions back on themselves in service of leftist politics or satiric character sketches. *New Deal* falls squarely in the Waco tradition. It's got jokey shuffles

[Link](#)

www.bloodshotrecords.com

[File Under](#)

Alcohol, freedom and a country song

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

The Mekons, Old 97's, Johnny Cash

(“Better Everyday,” “Johnson To Jones”), bluesy diversions (“New Moon”), self-referential drinking anthems (“AFC Song”: its chorus of “Alcohol, freedom, and a country song/ I’ve been waiting way too long” could be the Wacos’ motto) and lots of meat ‘n’ potatoes—make that BBQ and potato salad—rock ‘n’ roll. While “Poison” brings in horns, piano, fiddle and Stacey Earle on backing vocals as reinforcements for its condemnation of conservative politics (“You’ve got a one-party state of mind/ It’s your party but I don’t want to go,” sings Langford), the Waco specialty is mixing rousing rock guitar with pedal steel, mandolin and other country-styled accoutrements—“alt-country” epitomized. *New Deal* may be the same as the old deal, but there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that. >>>STEVE KLINGE



WEIRD WAR

Weird War Drag City

Ian Svenonius, as he’s done from his days in Nation Of Ulysses through the Make-Up, challenges the notion that one can extricate music and art from sociopolitical concerns, and decries rock’s right to shirk accountability and simply shake it onstage. *Weird War*, naturally, has a platform, a dictum, a manifesto or whatever—check the CD insert for details. It’s an arrogant, obtuse wrench in the works, but there are no breadcrumbs that lead it to the music, or vice-versa. Strange. So after cutting through the paeans to the oppressed classes and the Francophilian screeds against un-

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East Coast scenesters team up, write manifesto, play music, in that order

[R.I.Y.L.](#)

Royal Trux, the Make-Up

checked musical colonialism, what we are left with is a rock album by a rock band called *Weird War*, whether they like it or not. It’s a fairly decent disc of loosely knit rhythms, with Neil Michael Hagerty’s (Royal Trux) warped, trashy guitar work shot through with a floor-full of effects, and Svenonius’s faux-gospel shtick. The album’s finest track, the opening “Baby It’s The Best,” recalls the Lower East Side sleaze-rock of the Velvet Underground’s *Loaded*. After that, the rock tends to roll downhill; *Weird War* soundchecks a funky, greasy psychedelia that’s just a little less nasty than the Troggs. Sometimes it grooves as frantically as it purports to, and alternately, it flags under the dead weight of dead riffs, meandering improvisation, and sheer lack of power. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY



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TOP 75

#1
SLEATER-KINNEY
ONE BEAT
KILL ROCK STARS



1 SLEATER-KINNEY One Beat Kill Rock Stars	26 LIARS They Threw Us All In A Trench And Stuck A Monument On Top Mute	51 SNAPCASE End Transmission Victory
2 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE Songs For The Deaf Interscope	27 BOY SETS FIRE Live For Today EP Wind-Up	52 MCLUSKY Mclusky Do Dallas Beggars Group-Too Pure
3 INTERPOL Turn On The Bright Lights Matador	28 SPARTA Wiretap Scars Dreamworks	53 FAULTLINE Your Love Means Everything Elektra
4 SPOON Kill The Moonlight Merge	29 OK GO OK Go Capitol	54 COMMON RIDER This Is Unity Music Hopeless
5 COLOPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol	30 Q AND NOT U Different Damage Dischord Records	55 SLUM VILLAGE Trinity (Past, Present And Future) Barak-Capitol
6 LOW Trust Kranky	31 IVY Guestroom Minty Fresh	56 SILVERCHAIR Drama Atlantic
7 LADYTRON Light And Magic Emperor Norton	32 THE PATTERN Real Feelers Lookout!	57 THE MERCURY PROGRAM A Data Line The Language Tiger Style
8 SAHARA HOTNIGHTS Jennie Bomb Jetset	33 TEGAN AND SARA If It Was You Sanctuary-Vapor	58 VICTORY AT SEA The Good Night Kimchee
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13 THE FLAMING LIPS Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots Warner Bros.	38 RJD2 Deadringer Definitive Jux	63 RILO KILEY The Execution Of All Things Saddle Creek
14 BECK Sea Change DGC-Interscope	39 THIEVERY CORPORATION The Richest Man In Babylon Eighteenth Street Lounge	64 MATT SKIBA AND KEVIN SECONDS Split CD Asian Man
15 OF MONTREAL Aldhis Arboretum Kindercore	40 BRIGHT EYES Lined Up The Story In The Sun, Keep Your Eye To The Ground Saddle Creek	65 BETH ORTON Daybreaker Astralwerks-Heavenly
16 RYAN ADAMS Demolition Lost Highway	41 VARIOUS ARTISTS Peanut Butter Wolf's Jukebox 45s Stones Throw	66 NIGHTMARES ON WAX Mind Elevation Warp
17 DIVISION OF LAURA LEE Black City Burning Heart-Epithaph	42 THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES Behind The Music Universal	67 CKY Infiltrate, Destroy, Rebuild Island Def Jam
18 PULP We Love Life Rough Trade-Sanctuary	43 IRON AND WINE The Creek Drank The Cradle Sub Pop	68 JASON MRAZ Waiting For My Rocket To Come Elektra
19 STEVE EARLE Jerusalem Artemis	44 THE MICROPHONES Song Islands K	69 THE USED The Used Reprise
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21 NEKO CASE Blacklisted Bloodshot	46 THE VANDALS Internet Dating Super Studs Kung Fu	71 MORCHEEBA Chango Reprise
22 UNDERWORLD A Hundred Days Off JBO-V2	47 WIRE Read And Burn Pinkflag	72 THE LES CLAYPOOL FROG BRIGADE The Los Claypool Frog Brigade Presents Purple Onion Prawn Song
23 NO KNIFE Riot For Romance Better Looking	48 BOOM BIP Seed To Sun Lex	73 DRUMS AND TUBA Mostly Ape Righteous Babe
24 RHETT MILLER The Instigator Elektra	49 THE JULIANA THEORY Love EP Epic	74 THE MEKONS Oooh! Quarterstick
25 SONIC YOUTH Murray Street DGC-Interscope	50 MUDHONEY Since We've Become Translucent Sub Pop	75 TSUNAMI BOMB The Ultimate Escape Kung Fu

5 YEARS AGO

STEREOLAB *Dots And Loops* (Elektra)
CORNERSHOP *When I Was Born For The 7th Time* (Luaka Bop)
TANYA DONELLY *Lovesongs For Underdogs* (Reprise)
BJÖRK *Homogenic* (Elektra)
SUPERCHUNK *Indoor Living* (Merge)

10 YEARS AGO

SUGAR *Copper Blue* (Rykodisc)
SONIC YOUTH *Dirty* (DGC)
SUZANNE VEGA *99.9 F°* (A&M)
NINE INCH NAILS *Broken* (Nothing-TV-Interscope)
SCREAMING TREES *Sweet Oblivion* (Epic)

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4	PROJECT 86 Truthless Heroes Atlantic
5	DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN Irony Is A Dead Scene [EP] Epitaph
6	BOY SETS FIRE Live For Today [EP] Wind-Up
7	STONE SOUR Stone Sour Roadrunner
8	NILE In Their Darkened Shrines Relapse
9	SIXTY WATT SHAMAN Reason To Live Spitfire
10	SEPULTURA Under A Pale... Roadrunner



#1 LOUD ROCK
SHADOWS FALL
THE ART OF BALANCE CENTURY MEDIA



#1 JAZZ
BRAD MEHLDAU
LARGO WARNER BROS.



#1 RETAIL
BECK
SEA CHANGE DGC-INTERSCOPE

RPM TOP 10

1	UNDERWORLD A Hundred Days Off JBO-V2
2	ORBITAL Work 89-02 FFRR/WSM
3	THIEVERY CORPORATION The Richest Man... Eighteenth Street Lounge
4	SWAYZAK Dirty Dancing !K7
5	NIGHTMARES ON WAX Mind Elevation Warp
6	BOOM BIP Seed To Sun Lex
7	LLORCA New Corner PIAS America
8	VARIOUS ARTISTS Fluid Ounce: Unmeasured Ubiquity
9	SASHA Airdrawdagger Kinetic
10	LADYTRON Light And Magic Emperor Norton

JAZZ TOP 10

1	BRAD MEHLDAU Largo Warner Bros.
2	BEN ALLISON Peace Pipe Palmetto
3	PATRICIA BARBER Verse Capitol-Blue Note
4	KAHIL EL'ZABAR TRIO Love Outside Of Dreams Delmark
5	DAVE HOLLAND BIG BAND What Goes Around ECM
6	ANDREW HILL A Beautiful Day Palmetto
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9	KARL DENSON'S TINY UNIVERSE The Bridge Relaxed
10	JOSHUA REDMAN Elastic Warner Bros.

RETAIL TOP 10

1	BECK Sea Change DGC-Interscope
2	WEEZER The Lion And The Witch EP Geffen
3	PETER GABRIEL Up Interscope-Geffen
4	DISTURBED Believe Reprise
5	ELVIS PRESLEY 30 #1 Hits RCA
6	RYAN ADAMS Demolition Lost Highway
7	INDIA.ARIE Voyage To India Motown
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NOVEMBER 5

3D5SPD Fever In The Ice Age *Two Sheds*
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GLIFTED Under And In *Martians Go Home*
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NOVEMBER 12

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NOVEMBER 19

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DRIVE LIKE JEHU Yank Crime *Swami*
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MINUS THE BEAR Highly Refined Pirates *Suicide Squeeze*
CHRIS MURRAY Raw *Asian Man*
BOB OSTERTAG DJ Of The Month *Seeland*
DWEN No Good For No One Now *Polyvinyl*
PIANO MAGIC Writers Without Homes *4AD*
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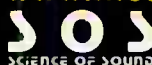
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ETHAN DANIEL DAVIDSON HAS NO FRIENDS



Meat Loaf

STORY: FRANK MANSFIELD • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

My preadolescent life was marked by a fervent uncertainty, but this much I knew: I wanted to be barely 17 and barely dressed, losing my virginity under the dramatic automotive interior lighting.

To be honest, at that point, I wasn't entirely sure of all that would entail, but I had a deadline to meet, and those details could be determined as the time approached. To get there, I studied the available source material, Meat Loaf's everywhere-in-1977 album *Bat Out Of Hell*. The record, or tape as it was, played repeatedly in my sister's pre-IROC Camaro, certainly had enough to tickle the imagination of a boy on whom testosterone was first starting to exact its demands, casting its hero's affairs of the heart in imagery straight out of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. I mean, I appreciated the sentiments of "Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad," especially since it pointed to the bell curve's application in male-female relations, a relief given my so-far failing grades in the subject. But shit like "Gonna hit the highway like a battering ram on a silver Black Phantom bike"? Whoa. Add to that the *baseball* play-by-play in "Paradise By The Dashboard Light," and it was almost unfair, an infernal design to play upon my confused mind.

Since legitimately vying for the affections of girls exchanging Judy Blume's *Forever* for *The Bell Jar* was still in the indeterminate future, baseball was my primary romance, and growing up outside Philadelphia, the cruel bitch in my life was the Phillies. They'd eventually win the World Series in 1980, and subsequently be replaced by the girl with the cute laugh in homeroom, but through the '70s they were just good enough to tease poor impressionable me into visions of all being right with the world. I didn't get why "Paradise" had Phil "The Scooter" Rizzuto doing game call on what

seemed like a series of impossibly close plays at every base—maybe they had the game on while they were tussling in the car. Man, wouldn't that be cool. Slowly, I got the metaphor, though, and my brain started tumbling like a 12-sided die.

My 17th birthday wasn't too far behind me when adolescence started finally paying off with an added four inches of height picked up over the summer, making my old beater's vinyl bench seat in front and copious room in back a suddenly viable option. Even after punk records started kicking the hell out of old, bloated favorites and I had long forgotten the specifics of the "Paradise" plan, the image remained lodged in my imagination, to the point where the faint green glow from the Buick's instrument panel on a date's features was disturbingly arousing. Because, as you well know, Meat Loaf was a fat fuck, and if he was drenching some willing nubile with all that sweat, my scrawny self getting some wasn't beyond the realm of possibility. Right? Right?

Ahem. One of the problems with Sylvia Plath-reading high-schoolers is that they tend to say things, upon their sudden nudity, like, "If I get pregnant I'll kill myself." This, if you were wondering, dampens the mood considerably. It was a very modern spin on the "will you love me 'til the end of time" ultimatum from "Paradise," but one that put an entirely different spin on the Scooter's "Holy Cow!" at what was to be the climatic moment. The appropriate soundtrack would not be the baroque, stagy Jim Steinman-penned melodramas of *Bat Out Of Hell*, but the sound of a record needle tracking through the run-out groove and bouncing off the label.

In the next chapter, our hero attends college, where prospects are considerably brighter, as are the girls he romances. There are dorm rooms and roommates gone for the weekend and votive candles as my dashboard concessional. No more shall Steinman's overwrought epics affect me. Right? Right?

Of course it all came flooding back, because that's what memories of youth do when you're not that young anymore. So I got the remastered *Bat Out Of Hell* for shits and giggles, and found it, well, both shitty and giggly, but I also found that I still loved Todd Rundgren's production and in particular his guitar sound. Much to the wife's dismay, I loaded the disc to test out a new set of high-end speakers. Man did it sound good. I mean, it was awful, but it sounded great, in that production-geek way. Try it sometime. I'm serious.

After "Paradise" played through, I looked over at my (now ex-) wife, who, reading my intentions as well as those high-school girls did, returned a flat stare that said no dice, no matter how many sides they have, geek boy. And therein lies the enduring lesson of *Bat Out Of Hell*: Meat Loaf isn't getting anyone laid but himself.

Freelance writer and investigator Frank Mansfield is still glowing like the metal on the edge of a knife.



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