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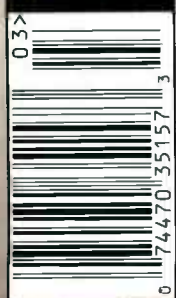
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SUPERGRASS

BEN HARPER 30

Ben Harper's worried about you. He wants you to be happy; he wants you to be enlightened. And with the spiritually minded *Diamonds On The Inside*, he wants to free your mind, your ass and your soul. Tom Lanham gets religion.

SUPERGRASS 22

When you hear "brothers," images of *Springer*-esque onstage fighting and bitter breakups spring to mind: Davies, Robinsons, Gallaghers, Reids, etc. Supergrass' Coombes will have none of that; they're getting along just fine, thanks. Doug Levy sits in on a family dinner.

ONEIDA 24

Oneida was Brooklyn before Brooklyn was "Brooklyn," but now that Brooklyn is "Brooklyn," Oneida's changing the meaning of the word. If you can wrap your head around that, their 14-minute psychedelic freakouts should be a piece of cake. Dylan Siegler sorts it all out.

FOLK IMPLOSION 26

Lou Barlow doesn't really care for acting, playing other people's songs, being interviewed or major-label antics. He does like pushing boundaries, though, and with a new lineup he's overhauled the Folk Implosion sound. Maggie Overfett looks at this year's model.

ON THE VERGE 18

Almost 100 percent plural: Blood Brothers, the Libertines, the Datsuns, Via Tania.

ON THE CD 35

Ben Harper, the Datsuns, Fiction Plane, Ben Kweller, Folk Implosion, Ani DiFranco, the Streets, Faith No More, Switchfoot, Rainer Maria, the Rocket Summer, Jesse Malin, Tim Easton, Crooked Fingers, the Holy Ghost, Phaser, Vendetta Red.

QUICK FIX 10

Dismemberment Plan reassembles their songs before firing up their detachment kit, we be clubbin' with Paul van Dyk, we just couldn't say no to teenage Russian lesbians, Johnny Marr takes you into his Morrissey-free zone, Atom explains the mysteries of his package, and *Xerophonics* delivers a new kind of metal machine music.

LOCALZINE 40

In addition to very tasty fingers, Vienna has dance music. Lots of it.

GEEK LOVE 66

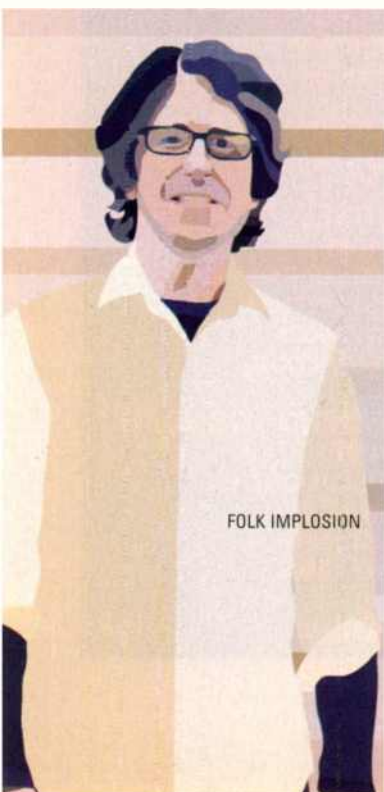
Cam'ron Davis goes humpin' around with Bobby Brown.

REVIEWS, CHARTS, SERVICES

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FOLK IMPLOSION



THE LIBERTINES

Vs.

I don't know how this could happen, but the cover of my *CMJ New Music Monthly* magazine has Pearl Jam on the cover! I have been a faithful subscriber of your magazine since way back in the day that the CDs didn't even have the year indicated on them. Your CDs have always had a great variety of new music to listen to and you always introduce me to great new bands that haven't been overlaid yet on the radio. That's why I have subscribed to your magazine since your first year in business, and I hope to be able to continue to do so until I'm old and decrepit. That's why I'm so confused as to why in the world you would actually not just put the most overly played band on my CD, but you've put them on the cover and you've placed the selection on the first track of the whole CD. I really hope you're not doing this as a sellout to the masses (do the masses even still like Pearl Jam?). I know that the magazine has had a troubling year and a half, but this is not the way to go. The Pearl Jams of the world will just take away your current audience, it won't add to your audience. The bands that people have heard of are easily available as downloads; these people won't buy from you. You need to keep providing us with this new stuff that we go to you for. You need to keep being the "source" for our addiction. I'm no longer in college, I'm 30 now but my musical tastes haven't changed, I still like the new stuff, the unknown bands, the bands who still play the small clubs, and the ones who might even make it big one day. When people ask me what kind of music I'm into, my answer has always been "stuff on *CMJ* magazine." I really love your magazine; I open my mailbox and can't wait to drop everything I'm doing just so I can hear songs from a dozen or more new bands. Just tell me this was an oversight, a mistake, and that you'll never ever let it happen again. I expect that a few of the songs each month will suck, that's the beauty of the discovery. Where does Pearl Jam fit into this?

Andrea Goguen
whyarentyou@hotmail.com

Vitalogy

"Now more than ever?" Pearl Jam? Are you nuts? More than anything Pearl Jam represented a regression, a wholesale dragging of rock kicking and screaming back to the good old days of the Grateful Dead, Led Zeppelin and Grand Funk. Remember, the '90s started out with a modicum of promise, only to end with

vibrant rock 'n' roll all but vanquished to the deep underground and the word "alternative" reduced to nothing more than a shiny new marketing buzzword for corporate radio and the shit-merchants in the recording industry. Of course it's unfair to lie this all at Pearl Jam's feet. And I suppose they can't be blamed for their own incomprehensible popularity (god, they're boring). But they did make jam rock OK again and are thereby at least mostly responsible for the Dave Matthews Band and Matchbox Twenty. There are signs in the industry today that give us rock fans hope for the future of the genre. The last thing we want to see is a dinosaur like Pearl Jam resurrected and once again hyped beyond all reason as its "saviors." How about this? Pearl Jam: Irrelevant. Now more than ever.

Mike Corrigan
Spokane, Washington

No Code

I wrote to *CMJ New Music Monthly* a few weeks ago for a request for me to share a magazine article with Shirley Manson. I am the secret muse for Todd Lewis, the lead singer for the bands Toadies and Burden Brothers. I think that Shirley Manson knows who I am, since both Todd and Shirley were on Interscope Records. I was hoping that your magazine would agree to publish a magazine article where Shirley Manson would give me credit for being Todd Lewis' muse, and also for Shirley to be able to promote her new music in this same magazine article. Enclosed in this letter is an article about the Burden Brothers. I think that most of this article should be about Shirley Manson.

Bijou Shell
Dallas, Texas

Signing off. —ed.

In the Jan/Feb issue, we ran the incorrect artwork for Sole's Selling Live Water. The appropriate persons have been flogged. Please note the correct artwork below.



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TechTV
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- Scott Colburn
Tape Op Magazine
September/October 2002

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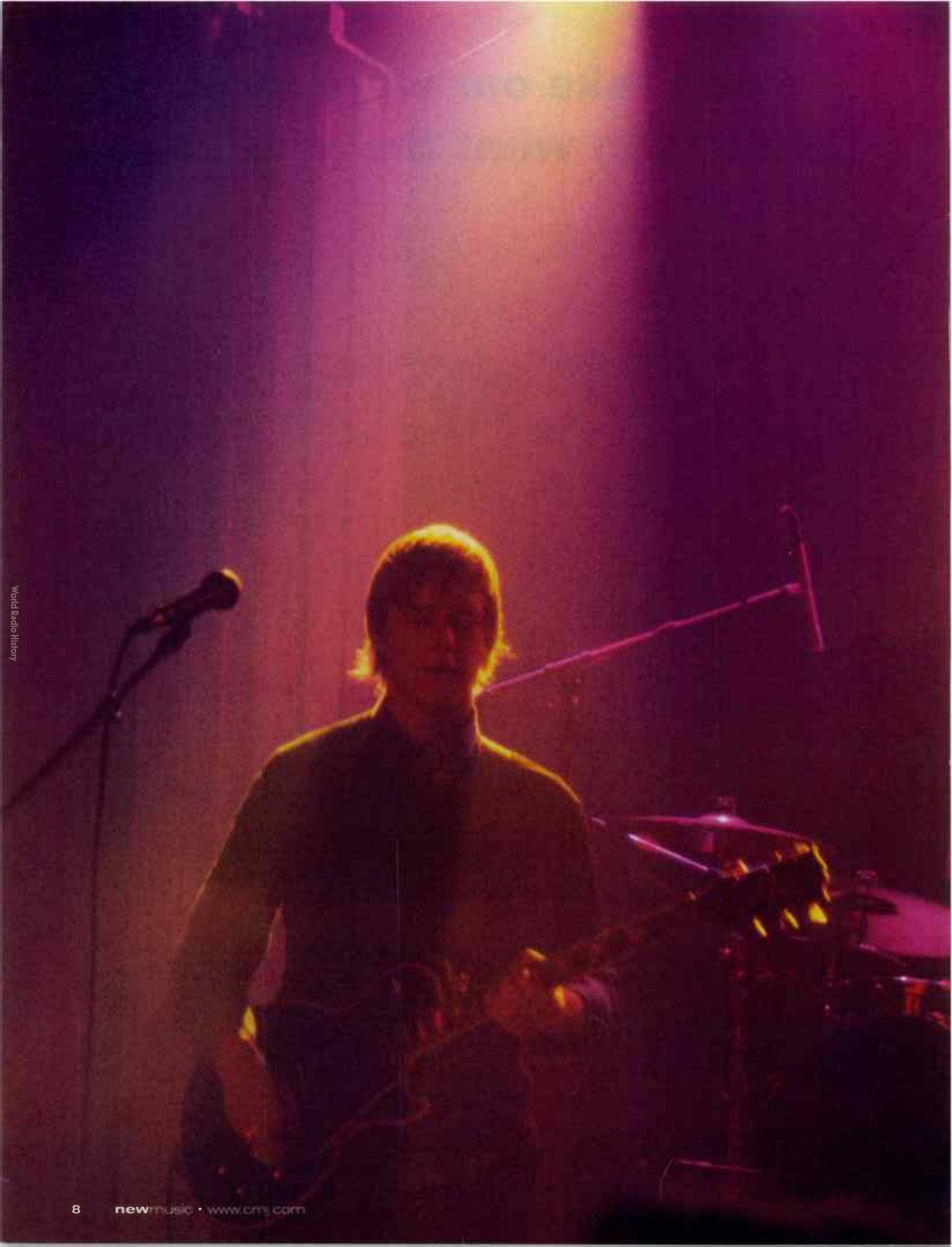
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INTERPOL

THE MUSIC FACTORY
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ZZ Top's theories about sharp-dressed men notwithstanding, we prefer to think Interpol succeeds on their own merits. Here, we caught them looking sharp indeed on the Columbus stop of their seemingly unending tour for *Turn On The Bright Lights* (Matador).

PHOTO: MILLA ROSENBERG



AROUND THE WORLD IN A DJ

The superstar DJ era is winding down, so we suggest a memento: Paul van Dyk's new DVC, *Global*. The collection pairs PVD's greatest trance anthems with touristy, street-level (and dance-floor) footage from cities such as Tokyo, Miami and Bangkok. When the crisp synth strain of "For An Angel" wafts from your speakers in Dolby surround and your living room is filled with the image of a million people dancing at Berlin's Love Parade, the chills will come. For the serious clubber, the sort who's seen the work a few speakers at a time, this is your yearbook. >>>BILL WERDE

NEWSFEED: The Vines have taken a break from their busy breaking-things schedule to work on their second album • Iggy Pop loses mind,

Answer Me

Dismemberment Plan s Travis Morrison Diddies with his songs as they prepare to dismember for good.



Why release a remix album over a disc of new originals?

Since the CD is being done by other people, it isn't exactly work-intensive. I like this whole thing of sitting back and letting other people do the hard creative labor. It gives me more time to wax my Lexus.

Does it maintain the Plan's tendency to keep changing?

Honestly, if we were on a major label, or [weren't] perceived [as coming] from a particular cultural place, we would be perceived for what we are, which is a band with eccentric, eclectic leanings that tries a lot of different stuff. We'd be allowed into the Blur/Talking Heads/Beatles/Radiohead tradition of stylistically ambitious groups. But that isn't available when people presume you represent a particular subculture. No one hears the John Lennon, Queen or go-go influences on Fugazi songs, they "hear" five-dollar ticket prices and a no-merchandise policy. That's just how it goes. So to me, this just seems like another crazy little project that my crazy little band has a history of trying. I'm sure some people will say, "Aren't they emo or something? Why are they making a remix CD?" I could let that drive me crazy, or to a Zen monastery, but I refuse.

What's the value of a remix to you?

My favorite ones pick up on a part of a song and say, "Hey, why is this just over here in a corner? I think this is a better hook than the chorus," and almost make a new song out of the available material. As a songwriter, it's really important to me that these songs can stride out into the world and live their own lives. Like children that are raised well, you don't want to hobble them so they're dependent on you. So if people can take the sonic ingredients and find a different perspective or angle on it, it's a really good feeling. It's like going back in time and raising that kid different. "If I'd sent him to Montessori school, would he still have ended up smoking dope in my basement until he's 39? How about cello lessons?"

What about the stigma attached to remixing, with Puffy and Fred Durst leading the downward spiral?

I had no idea there was a stigma. So far, copying P. Diddy and Fred Durst has brought us nothing but success, so why stop now? Did I mention my Lexus? >>>ROBBIE CHAPLICK



Life Or Something Like It

THE SIMS (ELECTRONIC ARTS FOR PS2)

"Learn to use the hot tub strategically" isn't advice you'll find in your average Frodofied adventure. Of course, throwing parties and getting laid aren't part of those games either. *The Sims* lets you do everything you haven't gotten around to in real life: moving out of your mom's house, getting a job, meeting people, etc. This new PS2 version improves on the PC bestseller by adding new goals, levels, beautiful 3D graphics and new items like strip poker tables, vibrating beds and monkey butlers—but you'll just spend the entire time trying to get the characters to do it. (Don't even try to pretend you won't.) >>>TOM MALLON



collaborates with **Green Day** for his next record • **Coldplay** announces plan to donate 10 percent of its earnings to charity • **Sonic Youth's** *Dirty* to be reissued >>>



IN MY ROOM

Who: Johnny Marr

Where: Wherever he shall roam (the guy's on tour and hasn't been home for awhile)

Why: Since the break-up of the Smiths, Johnny Marr has played with the sort-of supergroup Electronic and The The, keeping fans of his shimmering guitar work pining for a solo disc. *Boomslang* (iMusic), with his band the Healers, is finally that—a relaxed pop take on northern soul.

Pod Person

I have my iPod with me all the time. A lot of people I know are getting into them. Four thousand songs—it's pretty incredible really, although it makes me even more indecisive sometimes.

Food for thought

An anthology and collection of theological teachings put through Aldous Huxley's beautiful intellect: *The Perennial Philosophy*. A genuine work of genius.

Chewable narcotic

My addiction to Airwaves gum knows no bounds. I have wholesale boxes in my guitar racks that I've brought over from the U.K. It has a full-on blast of eucalyptus that can spin you out for a second or two if you're a novice. Two of these babies taken whilst snowboarding is the new D.M.T.

A good knight

James Doviak [guitarist and keyboard player with the Healers] has only been with us for a few months but he's already become indispensable. He soups up the laptops, amps and DVD players on the bus. I think he's a Jedi.

Operation: Desert Boot

I'm now on my fifth pair of Birkenstock Desert Boots—absolutely essential for gigs and crucial to the trouser hem to shoe axis. I've been told that Birkenstock have stopped making the desert boot. This is a personal and cultural disaster and I will be organizing some demonstrations in protest.

MY FAVORITE GEAR:

Atom And His Package

lets us peek inside his box.

The small box next to Adam Goren, "Atom" of one-man synth-punk science-fair project Atom And His Package, blinks incessantly as he rocks quirkily. With its bent levers, epileptic flashes, errant wires and militaristic screws, it looks like a *Forbidden Planet* throwback—wait, what the fuck does it do again? "The box doesn't actually do anything," says Goren. "It looks really stupid when I play from a MiniDisk player, so a friend of mine felt sorry for me and made this really cool box that looks like its really hard to operate." While the box rocks, "the Package," the myriad sequencers used to create the new *Attention! Blah Blah Blah* (Hopeless) sit comfortably at home, safe from roving thugs. "I tend to be a worrier," says Goren. "I'd pretty much be constantly thinking about [the sequencer] in the car, wondering about the gang of thieves—who are, of course, following me around and waiting for me to leave my stuff unattended. Even though it looks like a piece of garbage in a cardboard box, the thieves know." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



in March, with a bonus disc of unreleased material • **Cave In's** major-label debut, *Antenna*, due March 18 • Add **Al Jourgensen** to the list of people slumming it on the



LENA KATINA At the risk of sounding like we're ghostwriting for a lad-die mag, honestly, whom would you rather talk to about your love problems? Some flaccid Freudian with so-called "degrees" or a jaw-droppingly gorgeous 18-year-old Russian redhead who sings about lesbian love, mouth-kisses her 17-year-old band-mate in videos and possesses only a limited command of English? Don't raise your hands all at once, boys. Um, t.A.T.u.'s sultry new pop-electronica record is called *200 Km/h In The Wrong Lane* (Interscope). Dude, after you take a cold shower, Dr. Rock shalt attend to thine dilemmas: lovelorn@cmj.com

>>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Do musicians ever date their fans? I met a singer in a band who I won't name at a show recently, and we hung out talking for a while and I really think there was some chemistry there. I'm not a dumb groupie, but I don't know, I felt a connec-

Tough Love

tion... maybe I'm just being naïve.

—Susan, New York, New York

Lots of fans in Moscow, they love us. And some of them even came to our flats and we started not to be like actress and fan, we're just friends now. And they always come to our flats and they give us presents or we just talk to each other. I think, if she likes him, she has a chance. If she is really strong girl, she'll go through this and she'll go straight ahead—if she really loves him—to do everything to be with him.

I tend to be really straightforward and blunt. My girlfriends usually complain, as we're breaking up, that I'm not romantic enough. What's wrong with just saying what you mean? And if they don't want to know the answer, why do they ask us if they look fat in those jeans?

—Pete, Brooklyn, New York

How to explain? He should control the situation. And sometimes a boy should say something what girls want to listen. But anyway, he shouldn't be really like this all the time. All these situations, they are really very serious and not really serious. And he could joke. I don't know how to answer

because in this situation, if somebody will ask me, "Am I fat in these jeans?" and if I were a boy, if she's really fat, I will say, for example, "Maybe we'll go to gym next week" or I will say, "Of course not, my dear, I love you so much. It doesn't matter if you're fat or not." Or I will say, "Of course! So fat! So fat!" if she is really very thin. "So fat! You wouldn't believe. You are very fat."

I kissed a guy at a party at school a few months ago. Which would be fine except for I'm a guy too. Now everyone knows me as "the gay dude," even though I'm not... I was just experimenting I guess. How can I shake this reputation?

—Jay, Syracuse, New York

He should decide whom he's prefer, girls or boys exactly. But, if he's a bisexualist, it's not really bad thing. It's quite good, it's quite normal. So, if he has a girlfriend, it will be quite painful for her, but if he likes boys better, he should follow his heart. Every person should be free and it doesn't matter whom he loves. If they have such a feeling in their heart, I think they are already happy, just know what it is to love.

Love, Lena

WEIRD RECORD

He Watch Channel Xerox

For fans of the industrial din of Cabaret Voltaire, the glitchy atmospheres of Fennesz or the familiar grind of the Canon imageRUNNER 210S, Xerophonics should set up a cubicle near your ear. *Copying Machine Music* (Seeland), the brainchild of one Dr. Stefan Helmreich, transforms the incessant chugs, hums and churrs of various copy machines into a surprisingly danceable coffee-break disco for detached office drones. The good doctor attempts to "transpose the visual logic of copy art into an auditory register" (or something), using sounds that heretofore went unappreciated by everyone but creepy, mustachioed repair guys with toner-black fingers. Carbon paper never rocked this hard. Heeeeey! Xerophonics! Makin' copies! >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



new **Limp Bizkit** album, which already includes Page Hamilton and Rivers Cuomo • Epitaph to issue posthumous **Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros** disc in May >>>

One From The Road: MATT SHARP

The ex-Weezer bassist turned singer/songwriter waves hi from the tour supporting his as-yet-untitled first solo release.

Where are you right now?

I'm touring 'round the U.S. doing really low-key shows with Josh Hager. The shows are real stripped-down, just me and an acoustic and Josh does a little of everything (ambient stuff, guitar, harmonica and lap steel) around what I'm doing. We're previewing songs from [the record], and just started talking with labels and trying to figure out where the best home for us will be. Meeting people who won't judge us strictly on the music I've done in the past, but what we're doing now. This tour and the new record are a real departure from the Rentals thing. The songs are very slow, sparse and kind of somber.

What were last night's accommodations?

I don't know about last night, but a delusional overweight 5'5" security guard, who was actually from *The Twilight Zone* but thought he was starring in an episode of *Cops*, kicked us out of our rooms in the Sundowner Casino in Reno for a reason I'll never know. All I remember is him saying, "This is the last time you'll make a mockery of this hotel!"

How are you traveling?

Astro Van all the way. During the Texas ice storms I blew out a tire, went hydroplaning, did a couple of 360's, nearly flipped, but ended up without a scratch in the median strip.

Who in the band has the most annoying sleeping habits?

Me. I have a neverending ongoing lifetime battle with insomnia whenever I'm at home, but I've recently discovered that when I'm on the road I'm out like a rock, like a wee baby, and I have a feeling that little bonus of deep sleep on the road is going to keep me [on the road] 90 percent of every year for a long time to come.

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

One of the great things I've found about performing again is being exposed to so much new music. Every night people turn us on to things I hadn't heard before. Right now I've been looping: Departure Lounge, Hope Sandoval, Low & Dirty Three, Bright Eyes, John Phillips, Sinatra, Stars Of The Lid, that Sigur Ros & Hilmarsson thing (track #16 especially) and a lot of Josh's ambient music (he's currently working on).

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

Fixing all the broken Christmas lights.

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

When Greg Brown was out with us it was, far and away, Seattle. Everything came together perfectly, the audience was amazing and we finally figured out what it was we were trying to do after being out for over a month. When it's been just Josh and myself, I'd say Chicago, it was packed on the inside and snowing on the outside.

What song request are you most tired of hearing?

Hell, I don't know. I'm just getting started, frankly, I've been away so long that I'm just glad there are people still around interested in listening to me at all.

What do you miss most about being away from home?

Getting lit on cheap wine, throwing on a kimono and turning up Gainsbourg's *Comic Strip* and then chasing my little Amalee all over Silverlake.... oh yes, and Allegria's mexican food on Sunset Blvd.

What is your personal "Code Of The Road"?

To make sure the shows are as intimate as we can get 'em, to have as many people from the audience sit on the stage with us as possible, so we're right on top of each other, so there's a minimum of b.s. between us and the crowd.



A decade later, DNA evidence has finally led to an arrest in the murder of **Gits** singer Mia Zapata • Not one to mess with success, **Method Man** will follow *Tical* and *Tical*

5 SPOT



FIVE RECOROS BRIAN MCTEAR LISTENS TO WHEN HE'S NOT WRITING HIS OWN OR HELPING OTHERS PUT THEIRS TO TAPE.

1. Talk Talk, *Spirit Of Eden*

This is gorgeous. Surprisingly dense and simple at the same time. It should remind us all that great music can come out in even the darkest of times.

2. The Photon Band, *Oh, The Sweet Sweet Changes*

The Photon Band rocks like no one else, but like the older brother and teacher he is to all here in the Philadelphia music scene, Mr. DiFuria also teaches us the importance of singing real songs with real meaning.

3. Spoon, *Kill The Moonlight*

Every record they make makes me wish I had more style, a deeper voice and was a better engineer.

4. Stereolab, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*

Right now is a good time to honor the unmistakable greatness of the recently

departed Mary Hanson. I truly love this record. She is already sorely missed.

5. Califone, *Quicksand/Cradlesnakes*

I recently had the pleasure of seeing Califone open for Wilco where I got a sneak peak of this record. Tim Rutili is one of those singers from whom I really believe every word (even when I can't tell what they are).

As Bitter Bitter Weeks, McTear recently released a stunning solo debut on My Pal God, and has recorded the likes of Burning Brides and Matt Pond PA at his Philly-based Miner Street Cycle Sounds studio.

Interview by Mike Conklin.



BY VINCENT G. CURRY

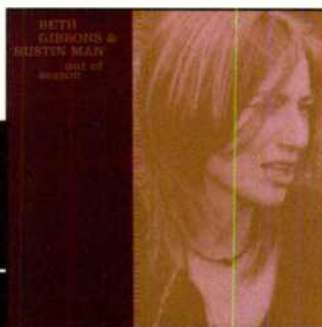
There are two types of movie bad: indie bad and mainstream bad. Of the two, indie bad is worse, because at least mainstream bad is trying to appeal to you in some way. Indie bad is just someone whacking off under the guise of art and charging you to watch. Robert Duvall has done mainstream bad, but with *Assassination Tango*, a film which he wrote, directed and stars in, he achieves the ultimate in indie bad. Pure celluloid masturbation—essentially an excuse for Duvall to tango dance with his sullen-faced, one-third-his-age-girlfriend, *Tango* is about a hitman from Brooklyn who becomes caught up with dancing in Argentina while waiting for his target to show up. Name every way you can think of for a movie to be bad and this movie hits it: The writing is abysmal, the acting sub-par (Duvall just hams it up) and rush-hour traffic is better directed. It doesn't help that Francis Ford Coppola produced, because that means there was no one to save Duvall from indulging his worst possible instincts. "Non-actors improvising dialogue? That's great, Bobby. Wish I'd done that in *Godfather III*." ♦♦♦ Indie good, on the other hand, is something special because you get a unique film experience. *The Safety Of Objects* is indie good: Based on short stories by A. M. Homes, director and screenwriter Rose Troche has created a rich tapestry of a film. In following the lives of various residents of a middle-class California suburb over a 24-hour period, we find how their lives are all tied to a past tragedy and how it continues to affect them. Not exactly scintillating material, but headed by an all-star indie cast (Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Patricia Clarkson, Timothy Olyphant and, yes, *Dawson's Creek*'s Pacey himself, Joshua Jackson), it's nonetheless compelling. Thankfully, there are doses of humor to ease some of the heavy drama—especially the storyline about the 12-year-old-boy dating a Barbie doll, who talks to him and, later, deflowers him.

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

OF GREAT IMPORT

Get it from over there, 'cause you can't buy it here.

BETH GIBBONS AND RUSTIN MAN
Out Of Season Go Beat (U.K.)



What it is: Portishead singer Beth Gibbons steps away from the beats to explore her multiple personalities with ex-Talk Talk bassist Paul Webb, a.k.a. Rustin Man.

Why you want it: Five years without any new Portishead music, and fans have become rabid for a taste of the sultry grooves with which the Bristol-based duo made its name. It would be a mistake to call *Out Of Season* the "next best thing," however, as this disc is as good, if not better than much of the Portishead back catalog. Mostly abandoning the beats and samples in favor of acoustic folk, smoky jazz, lounge and soul, Gibbons, assisted by Webb and Portishead guitarist Adrian Utley, inhabits nearly every track here

with a different persona. "Drake" could be exactly the lost Nick Drake number its title implies, "Romance," if we're to believe it wasn't actually recorded in the 1920s, would fit nicely in Erykah Badu's repertoire, and "Resolve" quietly and arrestingly reflects in Joni Mitchell mode. Despite the comparisons, though, Gibbons' voice, in all its incarnations, remains beautifully, undeniably her own. Lead track "Mysteries" begins reflectively, "God knows how I adore life"—not quite the dark sentiment Gibbons has always been known for, but equally enchanting. >>>DOUG LEVY

LINK: www.bethgibbons.com

R.I.Y.L: Portishead, Norah Jones, Joni Mitchell

2000: *Judgment Day* with the cleverly titled *Tical 0: The Prequel* • Idlewild's *The Remote Part*, out since July in the U.K., finally sees U.S. release March 25 *****

MOE LOUGHRAN. MANY TRIED. ONE SURVIVED.



MOE LOUGHRAN AND BAND CELEBRATE WITH DICK CLARK BACKSTAGE AT THE AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS (L-R): Roger Nichols, Moe, Dick Clark, Elisa "Six" Lee, Corey S. Eggle.

A fiery singer/songwriter from Nashville outlasts over a thousand unsigned acts to win the second annual "The American Music Awards® Presents The Coca-Cola New Music Award."

Story by **Steve Ciabattoni**

Photos by **WireImage.com**

Michael Caulfield, Lester Cohen and Steve Granitz

Moe Loughran performs on the 30th Annual American Music Awards.

The second annual "The American Music Awards® Presents The Coca-Cola New Music Award" competition came to an exciting peak on January 13. Thousands in attendance at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles and millions of television viewers worldwide saw winner Moe Loughran take her place on stage and perform her song "Anymore."

The American Music Awards, The Coca-Cola Company, dick clark communications (dcc) and CMJ partnered once again this year to recognize the importance of emerging artists and to honor the best unsigned musical talent in America. Last summer, Moe was just one of over 1,000 unsigned artists and bands that submitted music through www.newmusicaward.com. CMJ writers and editors whittled the field down to 50 in September. Ten of those acts were then selected to perform at the 2002 CMJ Music Marathon in November where three finalists were announced. Fronting the bill for Phantom Planet, the three finalists (Moe, smooth R&B singer Terell and multi-media rockers Honeycomb) played at a showdown at Los Angeles' El Rey Theatre just days before the AMA telecast. AMA founder Dick Clark, CMJ CEO Bobby Haber and Santa Monica, California radio station KCRW's Nic Harcourt made the final call, naming Moe Loughran the victor.

Before winning the award, the Nashville, Tennessee singer/songwriter had played Woodstock '99, performed at clubs and college gigs around the U.S. and was part of an Armed Forces Entertainment tour in Europe last year. But nothing could compare to the spectacle of the AMAs.

"I don't think you can get much higher than this," Loughran said the morning after the big event, contrasting it to some less-than-glamorous places she's played in the past. But having paid her dues around the globe, Moe and her road-tested band were more than prepared. "I wasn't really nervous. It's the after stuff and the before stuff that makes you nervous. When you have a really great band that you know is going to be there, then the vocalist is allowed to float."

Although it seemed as if her moment in the grand spotlight went by in a flash amid the frenzy and glamour of the broadcast, Loughran took the time to learn as much as possible from the experience. "You're meeting people at the AMAs that you've listened to and respected for years, like Sheryl Crow and Missy Elliot. And you're in awe because these are the pros," she says. "They're totally seasoned and they are *on*, they are at the level you want to be at, so you watch and you learn. Plus, I learned so much from the people at dcc and Coke about planning and relationships and radio and programmers and what's the next step. I got a four-year education in three days."

While expectations may be higher for Loughran now, her main goal remains very much the same: to play music that reaches people in a very "real" way. "This award was such a gift and I'm hoping this'll help my career, but either way, it was the most amazing ride," she says. "All I can do now is make the right decisions and make the best music. Make songs that are real and true and that have soul," she says. "You write because you've gone through things in your life. You know, I've been every kind of girl, the fat girl, the geek, the popular girl and the wild child. You go through those things in your life and put that in your music and hopefully people can identify with it."

THE AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS® PRESENTS THE COCA-COLA NEW MUSIC AWARD



MOE LOUGHRAN WITH THE JUDGES ON STAGE AT THE FINALIST PLAYOFF EVENT.
(L-R): CMJ CEO Bobby Haber, Roger Nichols, KCRW's Nic Harcourt, Corey Siegle, Elisa "Six" Lee, Moe and AMA Founder/Executive Producer Dick Clark.



MOE AND HER BAND GIVE IT THEIR ALL ON STAGE AT THE AMAS.

For more information, free downloads and exclusive behind-the-scenes photos and videos, check out: www.newmusicaward.com



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BLOOD BROTHERS

We blew him off for a while, just because we didn't even realize who he was," says Blood Brother Johnny Whitney, about the hot-shot producer who was trying to contact his band for a month and a half. "None of us are really big At The Drive-In fans... and obviously none of us are Korn fans. So, we thought it was a prank." Eventually Ross Robinson—knob-twister for the punishing slab o' Brotherly love *Burn Piano Island, Burn* (ARTISTdirect)—got in touch, got the Seattle-based boys signed and got them in the studio; the resulting disc is a staggeringly obtuse assemblage that ejaculates like San Diego hardcore, references proto-avant composer György Ligeti and abuses piano strings with drumsticks. The "70-to-80 percent" of lyrics Whitney writes are a perverse and abstract post-Napalm Death version of William Burroughs, (Ex. 1: "Ambulance Y imprisons the sigh of the recent amputee and dumps her in the xylophone trees"). "This girl that lives around here threw this party, and these guys came over and trashed her house and pissed all over her bed," says Whitney of a possible-urban-legend that spurned Piano's "Fucking's Greatest Hits." "That emotional poverty is something that I find very interesting, but at the same time very sad and awful. And that's where the macabre elements come out." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

BLOOD BROTHERS: MARTYN ATKINS; VIA TANIA; ANDY MUELLER



VIA TANIA

Tania May-Bowers, a.k.a. Via Tania, wasn't attempting prophecy when she wrote the verse, "Sometimes it's hard to move back again." But a year later, her words materialized. "I wasn't writing about moving back to Australia when I wrote ['I Dream Again'], but I guess now I was," the 27-year-old singer/songwriter/producer says. "Sometimes you'll write something fictitious just because you think it sounds good, and it'll come true." That song appears on her full-length debut, *Under A Different Sky* (Chocolate Industries), a product of the Aussie native's three-and-a-half year stint in Chicago. While there, she recorded with collaborators including Tortoise and Prefuse 73 and married Casey Rice, who co-produced *Sky*. The folky collection is alternately layered and stark, with Bowers often sounding like a sweeter, tech-savvy Chan Marshall. Bowers spent seven months toiling in the studio, but her songwriting process was a much less calculated affair. "Move the ego aside and you're just there and the song is happening," says Bowers. "It's your hand that's writing the words or playing the chords, but it's just via you that it's happening." Bowers, who's preparing to return to the States for a tour, rolls with similar punches when it comes to listeners' perception of her music. "The other day, someone said to me, 'I didn't realize you made commercial pop music,'" she laughs. "It was this hardcore dude that said it and it made me realize that it's all about the person who's listening. It's got nothing to do with me." >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



It seems like the media has decided that rock 'n' roll is the cool thing now," sighs the Datsuns' Dolf De Borst, nodding to the proliferation of Hives, Vines, Strokes and Stripes, "even though there have been bands around making great rock music for years." The long-haired bassist/vocalist and his New Zealand high-school buddies have been kicking out sloppy AC/DC-meets-Deep-Purple jams as the Datsuns since 1995. The band's eponymous V2 bow rocks, to borrow one of its songtitles, like a "Motherfucker From Hell," and it just landed De Borst (a.k.a. Dolf De Datsun) at Number 3 on NME's picked-to-click Cool List 2002. Not what he was shooting for when the band formed in dinky Cambridge, he swears. "We just wanted to have fun, we couldn't even play our instruments when we decided we were a group, and whatever we could make sound good initially was a song." But the Datsuns got support from a surprising source: ex-Split Endz/Crowded Houser Neil Finn, who, De Borst reveals, "kept saying 'Fuck 'em, fuck what they say about you at home—just get out in the world and show people what you do,' because nobody else ever really appreciated what we did." Until now? This Datsun is in neutral: "The whole 'scene' and the 'in-crowd' has got nothing to do with us. We try to stay away from it any cost." >>>TOM LANHAM

THE DATSUNS

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

THE LIBERTINES

The Libertines are doing for London what the Strokes did for New York City. Blending big-city cool with reckless abandon, the four-piece band delivers punk 'n' melody-laced rebel rock with a double-front-man kick, courtesy of vocalist/guitarists Carl Barât and Pete Doherty. Given the timing, it's difficult not to recall another London band that used a similar approach to win over the world 20 years ago—especially considering that

Clash legend Mick Jones produced the Libertines' debut album, *Up The Bracket* (Rough Trade). Barât only strengthens the tie by revealing that his sister actually used to babysit for the late Joe Strummer's daughter. But it isn't like you might think: "I didn't really know much about Mick," admits Barât. "I knew the Clash, but I never really thought much about them. After working with him, he was quite keen for us to hear their stuff, though, so I think they became heroes pretty quick for us." As for the comparison itself, "It's like comparing oak with cheese," Barât decides. "Or comparing a bus with motherly love. Maybe other people wouldn't really see it like that. It is a compliment. So thank you very much." Weaving a path to success reflected in the "scrapbook meets journal meets manifesto" that the band has dubbed "the Books Of Albion," the next stop for this sex-drugs-and-rock 'n' roll juggernaut is our own inviting shores. "Either we'll go tits up," says Barât, nonchalantly, "or we'll go sailing on into New Albion, which I believe is America." >>>DOUG LEVY



ROBERT SARGENT



turfwar

Actually, we only wish that Supergrass' brothers fought like Oasis. 'Cause that shit's funny.

STORY DOUG LEVY • PHOTO BEN HAWLEY

Before this, I was at university. I had just got a degree in astronomy and physics and I was about to go into the research field—analyzing the spectra of stars. Then this offer came up to come and play piano and tour with the band. I just thought it would be nice to do for a year, before I spent the rest of my life working. But, yeah, six years, seven years later, I'm still doing it."

Rob Coombes has been touring and playing keyboards with Supergrass since its 1997 sophomore album, *In It For The Money*, but it's only now, two albums later, that he's officially been inducted as a card-carrying member. Which means that the band's latest release, *Life On Other Planets* (Island), not only sees him returning to the stars, but also the appearance of his face on an album cover for the first time. Considering his brother, Supergrass frontman Gaz, has been the one in the spotlight since the band's 1995 breakthrough debut, *I Should Coco*, one would imagine the Coombes clan is feeling quite proud these days.

The boys themselves have a lot to feel good about right now, as well. With *Planets*, they've seen to it that songs like "Seen The Light," replete with sunny back-

ground vocals, analog synths, Elvis impersonations and farm-animal noises, and "Prophet 15," a psychedelic journey detailing visitations from a series of deceased celebrities in an apparent near-death experience, sit comfortably together on an album that also mixes computer squawks with punk frenzy ("Never Done Nothing Like That Before") and generally combines an amazing array of vintage sounds into something completely modern.

Of course, now that Rob and his little brother are both representing Supergrass, along with bassist Mick Quinn and drummer Danny Goffey, there's bound to be some of that unavoidable sibling rivalry at work within the ranks.

Or not.

"We don't fight at all, actually," says Rob. "We're really boring brothers. We're just really nice to each other all the time. It doesn't sell many records, but it's nicer for us that way. And in a way, we're all a bit like brothers, so it's not so noticeable."

"We're all quite patient with each other and, boringly, have managed to sort out any personal problems over the years," agrees Quinn, genially.

Fortunately, what all this brotherly love and lack of drama has done is allow Supergrass to focus on what's important—developing their music. Having emerged during the rise of Britpop, the band scored a massive U.K. hit with "Alright," a single lifted from their debut album that also happens to be the poppiest thing they've ever done. Far from allowing themselves to be pigeonholed, however, they went on to release two more defiantly diverse albums, *In It For The Money* and 2000's *Supergrass*. While other bands from the

Britpop era either fell apart, stagnated or took a radical change of direction, Supergrass have endured, and with *Planets*, improved their already can't-miss songwriting, without sacrificing their devotion to melody-driven guitar-oriented rock.

"We were one of the bands that helped to define Britpop," admits Quinn, "but Britpop did not help to define us. We've always just been Supergrass, exploring our own strangely lit universe. In 1994, I remember being described as part of the 'New Wave of New Wave' for six months. I can't remember exactly when Britpop died, but certainly a long time before we started writing *Life On Other Planets*."

"I think that it would be untrue to us if we went and wrote a jazz album, or a dance album," says Rob. "I'm sure it would get us on Saturday morning TV in the U.K. if we wrote a dance album, and it would probably make us all shitloads of money, but we wouldn't be happy doing it. It's fair enough changing, as long as it's a change that you're happy with. But it shouldn't be a change that's contrived."

"Musically, we're still trying to find a sound that describes what we feel and what we want to feel," concludes Quinn. "It can be a right old struggle, usually accompanied by arguments and fisticuffs in the studio, but it can also be a joy to behold. We were pretty close on the record, but we're getting even closer with the live set—and we ain't giving up just yet." **NMM**



Don't Go Home With Your Heart On

STORY: DYLAN SIEGLER • PHOTO: TOBIN

Now that the hipsters have followed **Oneida** to Brooklyn, will they be able to follow the band's latest reinvention?

Oneida remembers when you couldn't name two bands from Brooklyn, let alone a dozen. A time, say, two years ago, before Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Longwave, Liars, Interpol, Mink Lungs, Les Savy Fav and venues like NorthSix and Warsaw made "Brooklyn rock club" a destination, not a punchline.

When Oneida came together in 1997, not only was rock dead and electronica the future, but the only Brooklyn "scene" was something they invented to impress out-of-town interviewers. The band played Brooklyn loft parties mainly because, as drummer Kid Millions puts it, "we couldn't get fucking shows in Manhattan." So now that tourists have been arriving in New York asking how to get to the Williamsburg neighborhood around which much of the scene is based, you'd think that acclaim would also fall to Oneida's aggressive, keyboard-drenched psychedelia, a drugged-out experimental excessiveness girded with a Kraut-rockish backbone. Right?

Maybe not. Chipping away at a six-pack of Brooklyn (naturally) IPA in Kid's ramshackle walk-up in the Fort Green neighborhood, he and keyboardist/guitarist Fat Bobby (bassist/singer Hanoi Jane is away recovering from knee surgery) are quick to wave off any ill feelings that they've been overlooked, comparatively. "Maybe I can be a grumpy old man and say, 'I paid four years of dues, they only

paid two years!' But that's retarded," says Bobby. "The Liars and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, for instance, are really good bands who I know and like." As if to prove the point, Oneida released a split EP, *Atheists, Reconsider* (Arena Rock Recording Co.) with the Liars in December, which includes the Liars covering Oneida.

The exposure to Liars-lovers can't hurt. But listening to their most recent full-length, *Each One Teach One* (Jagjaguwar), it becomes easier to see why Oneida doesn't fit so neatly with the other next big things. Being a step and a half ahead of your time can make for tough sledding. The new disc starts with "Sheets of Easter," a 14-plus-minute assault of a single repeated riff that, although it's played live by the band, sounds like a loop. Bobby and Kid relate that as a live-show opener, the song has provoked anger, dancing, vomit and head-butting, though they admit those last three responses have only been exhibited all at once by a single Canadian showgoer.

"People always assume that we're trying to be difficult," Kid says, clearly disappointed by the misinterpretation of those who think the band is intentionally trying to be off-putting, or is fishing for reactions rather than just entertaining. "One guy asked us, 'Are you trying to be perverse?'" "It's like, yes," Bobby adds, "but not mean perverse. Ecstatic perverse."

An increasing constant in Oneida's

work is that use of repetition as a stylistic tool. Kid and Bobby attribute it, on their parts anyway, to the influence of dance music; Brooklyn's wealth of drug addicts selling stolen DJ records on the street is another reason the borough is fertile ground for the kind of music Oneida makes. "For me," says Bobby, "the thing has been finding grooves out of chaos, all this different shit that becomes one little organic interlocking thing that just goes and goes. I'm interested in music that has an effect on you that changes over time, even if it's the most locked-in, sequenced thing, even if you can drop the needle anywhere on the record and it doesn't sound any different."

That said, Kid and Bobby harbor an only vaguely ironic love of the Grateful Dead—a stuffed Jerry doll sits atop Kid's stereo—a crunchier influence that has shown up in their music almost as much as electronic has. But whether or not Jerry is the cause, Oneida has spent five albums and several EPs and singles defying definition; this unpredictability is as much a reason for their fringe-iness as anything. In contrast, other notably "challenging" New York bands, like Black Dice, are easier to pin down. The Southern-sounding boogie and "all-out cock-rock," as Bobby says, of 2000's *Come On Everybody Let's Rock* was followed by 2001's melodic, organ-aided *Anthem Of The Moon*. And fans able to make the leap between those two records might still be utterly perplexed by *Each One Teach One*.

"There is no logical progression," confirms Bobby. "We have a million things we want to do and say and put down on record, and we can't do it fast enough that people understand that we have this broad field of vision, so you put down a couple of things and people think, 'Oh, Oneida is this.'"

Bobby pauses and glances over at Kid, then cackles, "Wait 'til Jane hears we did a whole interview about dance music and the Dead!" **NRN**

EXCITING



AND



Lou Barlow has a few things to unveil: A new sound, new lineup—a new **Folk Implosion**—and their feature-film debut. Come aboard; they're expecting you.



NEW

STORY: MAGGIE OVERFELT • PHOTO: JEFF GROS

ILLUSTRATION: THE BROTHERS CHAPS

TAKEN FROM THE VIDEO FOR "BRAND OF SKIN"

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

Lou Barlow

, the 36-year old songwriter of Sebadoh/Sentridoh/Folk Implosion fame, hates singing what other people have to say. He dislikes performing, unless it's in front of a small audience that's hushed to one of his own heart-pulled songs. And as for participating in all that comes with being a well-known musician, he likens the process of being interviewed by 'journalist types' to his newly experienced role of movie star: "I don't really get off on being the center of attention in that, 'Wow! Look at me, I'm acting!' kind of way," he says. "I'm not really comfortable in my own skin, in that sense."

So it seems a little odd that besides a new, nine-song album under the Folk Implosion moniker, Barlow's other offering for 2003 is his band's big-screen debut in a star-packed film, *Laurel Canyon*, hitting theaters this March (it's already had its run at the Toronto and Sundance Film Festivals). Folk Implosion, along with actor Alessandro Nivola, portrays a British band trying to come up with their first hit single. "The producer of the flick—a Folk Implosion fan—originally asked us to compose the music for it," Barlow says. "But I wasn't into it at that time. A few months later, he asked us to come down and try out for the part of the band, and we all laughed! Like we can act! But we decided we could all use the money, not like we'd ever get the part..." Characteristic self-deprecation aside, Folk Implosion ended up landing the gig and spent the last months of 2001 perfecting British accents instead of working on a new album, which Barlow had already started composing for. "I guess I liked seeing the other side of the lights," says Barlow, who found himself befriending more of the camera crew—all part-time musicians—than the cast. "But look, I'm in my mid-30s, out of shape and doughy. I personally found being in front of the camera terrifying—and above all, I just have no interest in playing other people's songs."

The simplistic music in the movie, a cross between Radiohead and Coldplay ("we called it 'Radioplay'"), was written by Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse, and often Barlow would find himself tuning out under the lights, losing his place in the two-chord songs. "I just can't get out there in the performance vein of Marilyn Manson and whip it out. That's not where I came from," says Barlow, listing the groups he grew up with and drew from: Dead Kennedys, Minor Threat, the Ramones. "I grew up with hardcore punk and indie rock—people who held a complete disdain for anything exuding 'showmanship.'"

Once Barlow left Dinosaur Jr., the group he founded with J. Mascis, his musical ventures—ranging from one-man performances under the name Sentridoh, to influential indie-rock band Sebadoh to his partnership with John Davis as Folk Implosion—often overlapped. He became known as one of the most prolific songwriters of his genre and his generation, as likely to be respected for his versatility than the actual sound and feel of his music. Then, Folk Implosion's "Natural One," from the soundtrack to underage-decadence film *Kids*, became one of the more unlikely Top 40 hits in recent years, hitting Number 29 in early '96.

That newfound commercial viability led to Folk Implosion signing to Interscope, which in 1999 released the band's *One Part Lullaby*, the proper follow-up to "Natural One," after the more downscale *Dare To Be Surprised* (Communion) in '97. But three-plus years removed from a hit many regarded as a fluke is an eternity, and there was no love to be found at radio. The band was dropped; Davis, who was never really that comfortable with the touring musician lifestyle, quit in 2001.

"I attempted to continue Folk Implosion—in the same direction we had been moving in—without John," says Barlow, slowing down his words to describe how he worked off of samples, layering vocals on top of instrumentals. He ended up with 12 songs, all of which he later scrapped. "The truth is, in my heart, I was sick of using samples—I wanted to strip things down, produce more simple, straight-from-blood songs while still holding onto that basic Folk Implosion manifest of pushing the style of music found on one album," he says. "But my confidence was really shaken, with all that had happened."

What happened, Barlow says, was that he finally came to terms with about four years' worth of "crap" and was able to transform it—moving to L.A. from the east coast, losing a band partner and getting used to new ones, getting kicked off Interscope, losing music time to filming a movie—into something positive. The resulting album, *The New Folk Implosion* (iMusic), is riddled with dark, melodic ballads, all lyrically potent stories that reveal how Barlow has resolved each battle. They range from "Pearl"—a painful country-western analysis of a former breakup—to "Fuse," Barlow's reaction to September 11th. "I was touring at the time, and suddenly I was watching the world go crazy," says Barlow. "The only thing I could think of was that if this all was going down and we were going to die some fiery death, that I would like to be home with my wife."

The album, then, is less an extension of the old band than a nod to Barlow's ever-growing versatility: "In the last year or two, I've had no interest in sitting down and masterminding anything," Barlow says. "There have been times in the past where I have been so incredibly confident from the point of view of 'I'm going to do this!' This time, I decided I wouldn't try and control anything. I just waited for whatever was swimming around in the bottom of my brain to fight its way out."

Helping him with the process—and undoubtedly an influence on the band's recent sound—was Folk Implosion's new guitarist, Imaad Wassif, who Barlow toured with in early 2001 and is in Alaska with Sebadoh/now-Folk Implosion drummer Russ Pollard. "I could talk to him," Barlow says. He credits Wassif with being able to pick up on a raw tune from one of Barlow's many musical buckets and turn it into something that resonates perfectly as a Folk Implosion track. "I sensed a spirit about him," says Barlow, who prefers to think that Wassif matches and extends the old sound of Folk Implosion more than anything else. "And when I sense that about somebody, I find myself grabbing onto them to keep them a part of my life."

The story of whether or not such a person stays in Barlow's life makes great fodder for his songwriting, which seems just a little less experimental—more tame—than it used to be. How does he feel this will affect his fans, both new and old? "It's precarious worrying about how your fans will take your new work, especially when you're working on it," he finally says. "As I become older and have to worry about making mortgage payments, whether or not they like it becomes a terrifying threat to my lifestyle. It's scary, but I guess the bottom line is that if you're going to be a musician and you're going to be creative, security is never an option." **NMM**



“The bottom line is that if you’re going to be a musician and you’re going to be creative, security is never an option.”





WORLD

of

TROUBLE

BEN HARPER

He's traveled around the globe, and doesn't like what he sees. But sometimes, as on his new *Diamonds On The Inside*, hope is an act of defiance.

STORY: TOM LANHAM • PHOTO: WARREN DARIUS AFTAH

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

It's all business this particular morning at a bustling Hollywood café, waitresses scurrying to and fro, no time for chit-chat, barking out orders to an overtaxed chef while patrons robotically gulp, gobble and go. All check-please and thank-you-ma'am. But a funny thing happens when Ben Harper strolls in for his usual catfish 'n' eggs breakfast.

All the workers—no matter how harried—stop to wish the regular a warm hello. And, as soon as time allows, stop by his corner booth for a quick conversation. The affable artist has something urgent to impart to almost every waitress. That stack of posters promoting his new disc, *Diamonds On The Inside*? Don't worry, he assures one girl, he's signed every last one of them for her and will deliver them by tomorrow, at the very latest. Another employee squeals with delight when he informs her that he not only adored her exotic homemade jewelry, he'll be sporting it on an upcoming photo spread. A third foodserver is happy just to take his order and inquire after his Missus and three children. Laura (as in Dern, the actress) is doing fine, he reports, as is their year-old son and his two kids from a previous marriage (a boy and a girl, six and three). In fact, he adds, he'll be picking up those same whippersnappers in a matter of hours for a fun-filled family night on the town.

Mainly, though, Harper listens. Listens intently to what the waitresses have to say about their own lives, how things have been going for them in the week since they've last seen him. It's a rare gift; you can see that he genuinely cares.

"So let's acknowledge the burden of being a human being," he says later, after all his respects have been paid. "We're the one species that can actually effect change—we have the most mind power, the most brain power. But it's turned into a hazard. It's just so dangerous to be a human being nowadays, because, collectively,

we are the one animal that can end the existence of all other animals. And the main problem is, when someone offers a strong opinion for peace or the betterment of humanity on this planet, cynicism has become such an American virtue, the idea is never taken as seriously as it needs to be for there actually to be a change."

And Harper should know. Kicking off with '93's bare-knuckled *Welcome To The Cruel World*, he's peppered his six-album catalog with social commentary, from the simple legalize-it anthem "Burn One Down," through political jabs like "Excuse Me Mr." and "People Lead," to race studies "Oppression," "Like A King" and "How Many Miles Must We March?" And he's no different on *Diamonds* (Virgin); the album opens with an "Exodus"-era reggae cut that's pure upbeat humanitarianism, "With My Own Two Hands": "I can change the world with my own two hands/ Make it a better place," Harper warbles in a neighborly Everyman voice that's equal parts sincerity and determination. "I'm gonna make it a brighter place/ I'm gonna make it a safer place/ I'm

"THIS IS ME! THIS IS ME, SAYING I WANT CREDIT!"

gonna help the human race/ With my own two hands." Does he believe every word he sings?

Harper nods. "I have been born an optimist, bottom line. And you know what? I can be cynical, too—it's a cynical time in history, with good reason. But at the same time, I will not be dissuaded, and I refuse to give up. I refuse to allow someone else's disposition or imposition to become my own in any way." A quick bite of catfish, then a proclamation. "I'm clear in my voice, and I'm clear in what I want to accomplish with it."

And it's right about then that the tattoos begin to show.

Unzipping his jacket and tossing it next to him in the booth, Harper, 33, rolls up his long T-shirt sleeves to really tuck into that catfish. In doing so, he unveils an elaborate web of inkwork snaking up both sides of his forearms to his shoulders and, he explains, all over his back. No ordinary markings, these—they're all of Maori design, painstakingly needled in New Zealand, and extremely spiritual. "I won't go into the details of every tattoo," Harper says, pulling the sleeves up further for a fuller display. "But everything about them—from their direction to the position of where things rest on the arm—is a lifeline.

"See how these near my wrist are feathers? I travel so much, they're to keep me safe in flight. The red colors represent the blood of every ancestor of mine that it's taken to bring me to the place where I am, and it also represents the flame." Harper pauses, the first of many minute-long lulls, allowing his points to sink in. "The flame, as in, I make a music that's of a tradition, and this is keeping the flame alive in it, so that it goes and goes and goes. The Maoris feel that this is already under your

skin, and they're just bringing it out. They don't draw a design on your skin first—they just take the gun and go."

But this is only the first stop on Harper's vision-quest itinerary. A gold Lion Of Judah ring adorns his hand, echoing his affinity for Rastafarian culture. With a Native American friend, he's attended traditional sweat lodges which, he notes, "are the real shit—they're not windows, they're doors to a sacred place in everyone's heart, those sweats. And they're all about just allowing yourself to be open to the experience." Ditto, he adds, for all the other consciousness-expanding trips he's taken, "which is a list a mile long, man. I've been to a place of worship in probably 25 different countries, from Berlin to Turkey—to Istanbul and the Blue Mosque—all over the place. And again, I'm just trying to live by the voice that we all have that guides each one of us." Pause. "I'm trying to be true to it and nurture it and have it grow to be a guide. Not a place to hide."

This is perhaps what the café waitresses—and Harper's cult-loyal following—have picked up on. The man's true-blue devotion to higher ideals, to finding his place in life's big picture by scrutinizing the spiritual details and then making music that distills those truths. "Not that I know a lot," he sighs. "That's why I treasure wise people's opinions—to me, elders are like gods or saints. And next to them, I don't know shit."

Harper, who favors a dulcet-toned acoustic slide guitar called the Weissenborn, delivers his messages in a genre-jumping, spoonful-of-soulful-sugar style. Circa *Diamonds On The Inside*, this includes the stomping slide blues of "When It's Good," the booty shake of "Bring The Funk," the military Hammond-wheezed march of "Everything" and a disarming wall of heavy noise dubbed "So High So Low." Beneath the music lie cautionary tales of dependence ("Temporary Remedy") or the rhetorical questions of the title track, "Tell me why the first asked is the last to give every time/ What you say and do not mean follows you close behind." Harper's voice floats through the music-box melody of "When She Believes," intoning, "I have heard the wisest of wisdom and I have dined in palaces and kingdoms/ But nothing is as beautiful as when she believes in me." And, accompanied by the vocal lilt of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, meditates on "Picture Of Jesus": "It hangs above my altar like they hung Him from the cross/ I keep one in my wallet for the times that I feel lost." A gently plucked "Blessed To Be A Witness" is a variation on the same theme.

Why does *Diamonds* rely so heavily on Christian imagery when Harper's belief system is clearly so much broader? "To me, spirituality has no name but one, and it has three letters," he answers, cryptically. "It's not anything confined or defined by man, and it comes from a higher place than man could define with his words. It's about the soul and the spirit in your heart, about each movement, each breath. It's enlightenment, day by day. And that's the problem—people are so cynical, they want everything now, now, now. But you're not gonna get sober in a day, you're not gonna change the world in a day, and you're not gonna change the world with a song, per se. It's a collective effort, something to be built on over a span of years."





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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY

BEN HARPER

Folk Implosion

ANI DiFRANCO

RAINER MARIA

The Datsuns • Crooked Fingers

MARCH 2003 • ISSUE 110

12. **JESSE MALIN** "Queen Of The Underworld" *The Fine Art Of Self-Destruction* (Artemis)
It might've surprised some folks that former D-Generation frontman Malin eschews his punk-rock roots for more alt-country states of mind on his solo debut. But his much-publicized pal-dom with Ryan Adams (who produced this record) likely tipped everybody off.

13. **TIM EASTON** "Poor, Poor L.A." *Break Your Mother's Heart* (New West)
Singer/songwriter Easton mixes bits of country, bluegrass and folk, earning him comparisons to John Prine and Bob Dylan. But what's more interesting is that he was once in a band called Kosher Spears (there's a joke there involving gefilte fish and "Oops, I Did It Again," but we'll spare you).

14. **CROOKED FINGERS** "Big Darkness" *Red Devil Dawn* (Merge)
Former Archer Of Loaf Eric Bachmann is known for creating disenchanting ballads and anthems for the lonely. On his third LP as Crooked Fingers, he's added some more polish and infused a more hopeful mood—the results are stunning. (See Best New Music, p. 43.)

15. **THE HOLY GHOST** "Color Sympathy" *Color Sympathy* (Clearly)
Brooklyn's Holy Ghost craft art-rock with catchy riffs, frantic vocals and concrete-solid drums. Somewhat akin to Cursive's Tim Kasher fronting the Teardrop Explodes, which is pretty sweet in our book. (See Review, p. 51.)

16. **PHASER** "Life & Illusion" *Sway* (Emperor Norton)
Washington, D.C. is well-known for a vibrant hardcore and punk scene. But somewhere behind all that dischord, Phaser, a crew of kids more influenced by the likes of Spiritualized and the Verve, were hiding. (See Review, p. 57.)

17. **VENDETTA RED** "Shatterday" *Between The Never And The Now* (Epic)
Since this month's disc brings emo flavors from the Northeast and the Midstates, it only makes sense that we'd offer you a sampling of Northwestern-bred sweater-rock as well. Catchy hooks, hardcore-influenced vocals, adrenalized drumming—you know how they do.

cut along dotted lines, fold and insert into jewel case



1. **BEN HARPER** "With My Own Two Hands" *Diamonds On The Inside* (Virgin)
Usually the phrase this song takes its title from immediately follows, "I'ma kill you..." But here, we think singer/songwriter Ben Harper is referring to what he wants to fix in the world, not what he wants to break. (See Cover Story, p. 30.)

2. **THE DATSUNS** "In Love" *The Datsuns* (V2)
New Zealand's the Datsuns like to rock hard, loud and with serious attitude—it logically follows, then, that the quartet's fast becoming a major player in that garage-band revival you hear so much about. You know, if the "the" in the name didn't tip you off first. (See On The Verge, p. 20.)

3. **FICTION PLANE** "Everything Will Never Be OK" *Everything Will Never Be OK* (MCA)
Stateside, London's Fiction Plane has shared the stage with Something Corporate and the Juliana Theory. But while the band works that heartfelt personal lyrics/driving basslines/plinky guitars thing, they come off a little more anthemic than eem.

4. **BEN KWELLER** "Commerce, TX" *Sha Sha* (ATO/RCA)
Young Ben Kweller pays tribute to his home state with "Commerce, TX," one of the catchiest, dirtiest indie anthems to pop up in ages. He grew up in Greenville, but perhaps moving to the hipster mecca of Brooklyn inspired thoughts of Commerce.

5. **FOLK IMPLOSION** "Brand Of Skin" *The New Folk Implosion* (iMusic)
This time around, everything about Folk Implosion is new: lineup, direction, mood... hence the album title. But as is his way, Lou Barlow's managed to shift his band into an equally delectable indie-rock persona. (See Feature, p. 26.)

6. **ANI DIFRANCO** "In The Way" *Evolve* (Righteous Babe)
"In The Way" may sound familiar to diehard Ani fans—it appeared on last year's DVD/VHS release *Render*. But for those who're new to it: The song shows that DiFranco is as feisty and passionate as ever. (See Review, p. 48.)

7. **THE STREETS** "Let's Push Things Forward" *Original Pirate Material* (Vice)
British rhymesayer Mike Skinner (a.k.a. the Streets) approximates what'd be born if you patched Slick Rick with U.K. garage—bursting with intelligent lyrical hooks and anchored by erratic and driving beats.

8. **FAITH NO MORE** "Epic" *This Is It: The Best Of Faith No More* (Rhino/Reprise)
We know, the only way you didn't hear this song a million times in the early '90s was if you were dead, or a Quaker. And rap-rock is pretty much FNM's fault. But that doesn't change the fact that "Epic" kicks ass; its appearance here and their new *Best Of* are meant to remind.

9. **SWITCHFOOT** "Meant To Live" *The Beautiful Letdown* (Red Ink)
Mixing powerful beats and contemplative lyrics about change and letting go, San Diego's Switchfoot aren't your typical Christian rock band. Made more clear by the fact that their music appeared in the profoundly unholy Mandy Moore vehicle *A Walk To Remember*.

10. **RAINER MARIA** "The Double Life" *Long Knives Drawn* (Polyvinyl)
Weird thought: Now that emo's the new grunge or whatever, being around since 1995 essentially qualifies N.Y. trio Rainer Maria as "classic emo." We can barely wait the few years it'll take to get to "post-emo" and "nü-emo." On their fourth LP, RM make like *Zeppelin IV* and do it up one step better.

11. **THE ROCKET SUMMER** "Skies So Blue" *Calendar Days* (Militia Group)
Nineteen-year-old Texas native Bryce Avary makes up one-man-band the Rocket Summer, a surefire shoo-in for the next emo it-boy award. The bubblegum appeal of "Skies So Blue" could very well propel him out of that niche, too.

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THE HOLY GHOST • PHASER

VENDETTA RED

*As selected by our panel of
fine retailers listed below

 <p>Atomic Records 1813 E Locust St. Milwaukee, WI 53211</p>	 <p>CD Central 377 S Limestone St Lexington, KY 40508</p>	 <p>Graywhale CD Exchange 248 So. 1300 E. Salt Lake City, UT 84102</p>	 <p>Good Records A Division Of The Geant Umbrella 617 N Good Latimer Expy Dallas, TX 75204</p>	 <p>Music Millennium 3158 E. Burnside Portland, OR 97214</p>	 <p>Record Archive 1880 East Avenue Rochester, NY 14610</p>	 <p>Rock-A-Billy's New And Used CDs 8411 Hall Rd Utica, MI 48317</p>
 <p>Boo Boo Records 978 Monterey St San Luis Obispo, CA 93401</p>	 <p>Criminal Records 466 Moreland Ave NE Atlanta, GA 30307</p>	 <p>Graywhale CD Exchange 256 East 12300 South Draper, UT 84020</p>	 <p>Jackpot Records 3736 SE Hawthorne Blvd Portland, OR 97214</p>	 <p>Music Millennium 801 NW 23rd Portland, OR 97210</p>	 <p>Record Archive 1394 Mount Hope Avenue Rochester, NY 14620</p>	 <p>Shake It! 4156 Hamilton Ave Cincinnati, OH 45223</p>
 <p>Boo Boo Records 1800 Grand Ave., Suite O Grover Beach, CA 93433</p>	 <p>DCCD 2423 18th St., NW Washington, DC 20009</p>	 <p>Graywhale CD Exchange 3843 West 5400 South Suite D Keams, UT 84118</p>	 <p>Jackpot Records 203 SW 9th Avenue Portland, OR 97205</p>	 <p>Park Avenue CDs 528 Park Avenue South Winter Park, FL 32789</p>	 <p>Sonic Boom Records 3414 Fremont Ave N Seattle, WA 98103</p>	 <p>Twist And Shout 300 East Alameda Ave. Denver, CO 80209</p>
 <p>Boogie Records 3301 W Central Toledo, OH 43606</p>	 <p>East Alley Records 336-B Main St. Rochester, MI 48307</p>	 <p>Graywhale CD Exchange 852 West Hillfield Road Suite C Layton, UT 84041</p>	 <p>Let It Be Records 1001 Nicollet Ave Minneapolis, MN 55403</p>	 <p>Park Avenue CDs 2000 Gulf To Bay Boulevard Clearwater, FL 33765</p>	 <p>Sonic Boom Records 514 15th Avenue East Seattle, WA 98112</p>	 <p>Waterloo Records And Video 600-A North Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX 78703</p>

“EVERYBODY'S GOT THEIR WEIGHT, EVERYONE FEELS A CERTAIN WEIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

Harper confesses that he does attend Sunday services from time to time. “But to me, every step is a church. My car is a church. My mind in which I worship is a church. But what is church? I think the reason people look to entertainers for guidance, canonize them in a saintly fashion, is because religion is so empty these days, you’ve gotta find it somewhere.” He then launches into a lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of Catholicism, and how the Cardinal Law-defamed church can regain respectability. “That said,” he concludes, “I think there’s as much truth to the stars, horoscopes, as there is Christianity.” And he’s a Scorpio.

For all his candor, Harper becomes unusually cagey when asked to explain certain lyrics. Is “When She Believes” written about Dern? “I don’t wanna put a face to it,” he murmurs after a protracted pause. “I like songs to be defined by the listener, not the artist.” His significant other, he adds, is “just the best—she’s so special, I can’t even talk about her. And it’s not about privacy. It’s about her being so special that I can’t even say it, I can only sing it for it to be true.”

It’s no surprise that the Claremont, California-bred Harper would suddenly close ranks when it comes to family. He’s protective of those closest to him because he’s had to be, he says. He was born into a creative family, but also saw that self-expression often has its cost. Grandparents Charles and Dorothy Chase opened their Folk Music Center in 1958, where as a kid, Harper was drawn to old Delta blues 78s and an instrument, after a flirtation with lap and bottleneck slide, he’d watched many a famous folkie pluck: the Weissenborn. Brothers Joel and Peter went on to become a poet and sculptor, respectively, but Ben was soon working the coffeehouse circuit, developing the blues/jazz/R&B/soul/rock hybrid that would soon be his signature sound. But politics were naturally part and parcel of a Folk Music Center upbringing, and Harper recalls that “my grandpa couldn’t work for a decade—he was blacklisted, someone dropped his name. He got chased by the existing government or its principals across the country, questioned, interrogated. And when my Mom walked to school, she was followed by the CIA or so-called ‘intelligence.’ So when you’re followed by a government that’s supposed to be structured to support and protect you, well...” It definitely left an emotional scar, put it that way, Harper sighs. Which came first—political awareness or a desire to play music? “They were one and the same, because I’m from a family of protest music as well as soul music. So one day it’d be a Woody Guthrie album, one it’d be an Otis Redding album—that’s my upbringing. So to me what sounds cohesive may be all over the map to someone else.”

Harper still has vivid dreams about his late father, whose radical views served to further sharpen his own focus. And when your parent passes, Harper says, “his work becomes yours. And my Dad was a freedom fighter whose voice was never heard, but should’ve been—he could’ve been Martin Luther King. He had a Panther mentality, but with a worldview, and he had a way of

making black militancy highly intelligent and multicultural.” One of Harper’s key concert numbers is “Don’t Take That Attitude To Your Grave.” “And I got that from my Dad—that’s something he always said to me as a child. He saw right through everyone and everything. My Dad saw something in everyone that you didn’t want him to see, the kinds of things that need to be seen.” Pause. “But he just couldn’t see it in himself.”

Periodically, Harper reaches into his coat pocket, pulls out an ornate metal pen that resembles some weapon from *Dune*, and jots memos to himself on a tiny notepad. That’s how he always writes, he admits—spur-of-the-moment, when the idea first strikes him. But don’t call him scattered. Too many detractors have before. “Instead of hearing my music and saying, ‘This is what he does, and he’s doing it all,’ people have said, ‘Oh, this is what he does and it’s so strange!’” he growls. “No one ever gives me credit.” Suddenly a tattooed forearm darts across the table and grabs the cassette recorder, fast as a cobra. “This is me!” Harper barks into the microphone. “This is me, saying I want credit!”

Quietly, he’s amassed quite a stockpile of credit lately. He appeared in the *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown* documentary, on recent records by Blackalicious and the Blind Boys Of Alabama, just issued a feature-length DVD (the Danny Clinch-directed *Pleasure + Pain*) and even launched his own vanity imprint, Inland Emperor Records, with first signing Patrick Brayer.

Then there’s his brand-new baby boy, which accounts for a good percentage of his sunshine-y attitude these days, he grins. “Being a parent gives you no choice but to be an optimist,” declares Harper, buoyantly. “It ages you in a way, but it counterbalances that by insisting you stay young. I mean, I’m on my knees with these kids, man. Their snot becomes my snot. And people say, ‘Oh, isn’t it magic?’ But don’t allow anyone to make having kids sound romantic. It ain’t romantic. You’ve gotta be ready to work harder than you’ve ever worked in your life, you’re gonna have shit and diarrhea all over your hands, and you’ll wind up seeing *Ice Age* at least 10 times.” Nothing special. Just common everyday duties when you become a dad.

“But everybody’s got their weight, everyone feels a certain weight of the world,” Harper concludes, doling out an especially large tip for his favorite waitress. “Whether you wanna transfer it into different levels of consciousness or bring it into your daily struggle or job doesn’t matter. It’s still there, it exists. Some turn it into art, some don’t. But me? I just can’t help it—I take mine and do with it what I feel.” **NMM**



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Vienna, AUSTRIA

STORY AND PHOTOS: PHILIP SHERBURNE

Any self-respecting techno tourist could do worse than to spend a few days in Vienna, Austria. Home to labels like **Cheap**, **MEGO**, **G-Stone**, **Couch**, **Klein** and **Sabotage**, and artists like **Kruder & Dorfmeister**, **dZihan & Kamien**, **Pita**, **Fennesz**, **Gerhard Potuznik**, **Patrick Pulsinger**, **Radian**, **Madrid de las Austrias**, among others, Vienna is one of Europe's undisputed electronic music capitals. Overshadowed by its Teutonic neighbor, Austria's German-language music industry languished in the '70s and '80s, but the advent of rave culture in the early '90s had Viennese musicians taking the D.I.Y. ethic to heart, recording minimalist electronica in their bedrooms and, with the language barrier made moot, launching their products into the international sphere. Home to generations of the world's greatest composers, Vienna has long been a crucial stop for classical fans, but there's much more than **Mozart** today. In schnitzel: The presence of dozens of artists, labels and venues has made the city a must-see for anyone interested in electronica.

When you arrive, start with the city center, or **Innere Stadt**. The winding streets and sprawling plazas will remind you a) that Europe is, like, really old (the **Stephansdom Cathedral** dates to the 15th century) and b) that age is, sadly, no match for American-style capitalism. Vienna may be the center of European café culture, but there's still a Starbucks right on the main drag of Kärntner Straße. Still, packed with churches, coffee houses and innovative updates to Baroque architecture, the area promises plenty of sights, and fashionistas can always get a fix at **Helmut Lang** (Seilergasse 6, 513-25-88), Vienna's most famous sartorial export.

Despite the city's circular layout—the Innere Stadt is bounded by the circular Ringstraße and the Donaukanal, a canal of the Danube, with major streets and streetcar lines running out like spokes—Vienna's layout isn't necessarily logical, but fortunately it's eminently walkable. A tour of the city's record stores is a great way to get a sense for the place. Starting at the center, be sure to visit **Audio Center** (Judenplatz 9, 533-68-49), where the staff's somewhat too-cool attitude (a typically Viennese trait, it must be said) is offset by their excellent collection of rare and reissued jazz and soul LPs and CDs. Their prices aren't cheap, though, so stop at the

nearby **BIGNET** cyber café (Hoher Markt 8-9, 533-29-39, one of several in the city), to doublecheck the going rates on eBay before you drop down those hard-earned Euros. Don't weigh yourself down with too much rare, Hungarian big band: You'll want to save some room in your pack for the massive haul you'll pull in a quarter-mile away at **Black Market** (Gonzagagasse 9, 533-76-17), widely agreed to be the city's best shop for dance vinyl. A front room chock full of CDs opens up into a crate-digger's dream, rack upon rack filled with new and used vinyl ranging from house and techno to nü-jazz, hip-hop and beyond. The five listening stations are entirely inadequate to handle the load, so be sure to enjoy an espresso—or a pint of beer—from the in-store bar while you wait. (If that's not enough to convince you that you really are in Europe, the ashtrays next to each turntable should clinch matters.) Expeditions to **Rave Up** (Hofmühlgasse 1, 596-96-50) and **Ton um Ton** (Lindengasse 32, 524-67-15) are a good excuse for exploring the younger, hipper 6th and 7th districts. The former, where MEGO's Pita Rehberg once manned the counter, is a goldmine of indie and electronic records and CDs, while the latter—kitty corner from the Couch Records offices—offers a sprawling basement

packed with rarities from the '60s through to the present. Also in the 7th, the upstart **Substance** (Westbahnstrasse 16, 523-67-57) is especially strong on minimal techno and electroclash, with an unbeatable indie selection to boot.

Grab a kebab or some sushi at the open-air **Naschmarkt** (Wienzeile between Kettenbrückengasse and Karlsplatz U-Bahn stations) and then high-tail it to **MICA**, the Music Information Center Austria (Stiftgasse 29, 521-04-0). Primarily a resource to link Austrian musicians, labels and grant money, the center also provides a wall-long listening station



SPOILER

loaded with local CDs, and can point you to everything from dance parties to art installations. You're sure to find flyers for shows at must-see venues like **rhiz**, **Flex** and **Porgy & Bess**. **Rhiz** (Lerchenfelder Gürtel, Stadtbahnbögen 37-38; 409-25-05) is one of Vienna's legendary experimental venues, with frequent appearances from MEGO-affiliated types and a jukebox crammed with difficult listening. Like the more conventional **B-72** a few blocks away (Hernalser Gürtel, Stadtbahnbögen; 409-21-28), rhiz is lodged an arch beneath the raised railroad. **Flex** (Donaukanal at Augartenbrücke, 533-75-25) has even more unconventional housing: It's built into the canal embankment itself, where a lively patio scene makes the summertime vibe



BLACK MARKET

seem positively Mediterranean. Inside, the bunker-like club—home to **Sugar B's** legendary **Dubclub** parties, a wealth of punk shows and sundry events from Cheap, G-Stone and others—boasts Austria's best soundsystem, essentially a subwoofer-within-a-stage that'll blur your vision if you stand on it. **Porgy & Bess** (Riemergasse 11, 512-88-11) is a considerably more upscale affair, hosting frequent jazz performances as well as Couch Records' regular parties. When dZihan & Kamien premiered their new album, *Gran Riserva*, they filled the jazz lounge with the sounds of a live string and brass orchestra flown in from Istanbul, bringing together the sweep of recent Austrian musical history—including jazz, dance music and immigrant traditions—under one sumptuous roof.

No Vienna visit is complete without spending a half-day at the **MuseumsQuartier** (Museumsplatz 1, www.mqw.at, 523-58-81), a former palace

stables that now houses the museum of modern art, the **Leopold Museum's** Klimt collections, dance and theater venues and several excellent cafés. **Quartier21**, within the MQ, houses **Spoiler**, the Cheap label's outlet for local electronica and design, as well as rotating exhibitions and studio spaces for the likes of improv group **Polwechsel**, fashion designers **Wendy & Jim** and art-pranksters **Sabotage** and **Monochrom**.

LOCAL LOGIC: VIENNA'S BEST

Place to step on a Nazi relic: The **ESTERHÁZYPARK** flakturm, or anti-aircraft tower (Gumpendorfer at Amerlingstraße) was built to shoot down Allied bombers; today it's been turned into a nine-story climbing wall, complete with ropes and artificial grips. The interior of the cement monolith is even weirder: it houses the **Haus des Meeres**, an indoor aquarium.

Place to vibe on a building: The **MUSEUM MODERNER KUNST STIFTUNG LUDWIG WIEN (MUMOK)** in the MuseumsQuartier (Museumsplatz 1, www.mqw.at) is built of grey stone tiles that ring like a xylophone when struck. Bring friends and mallets and try dancing to architecture.

Venue to see history turned inside out: The British sculptor Rachel Whiteread's **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL** (Judenplatz) presents a stone cast of a library interior, solidifying absence in the shape of a mausoleum.

Way to drink wine without getting drunk: For two or three weeks in September or October, cafés sell *sturm*, a pre-fermented draught of young wine. Buy a bottle in the open-air **NASCHMARKT** and

drink it in one sitting—then congratulate yourself on your newfound tolerance.

Place to get chocolates and condoms at 3 a.m.: Once the wee hours hit, there's nothing resembling a corner store in sight. But **SHOP 24**, a wall-sized vending machine, sells refreshments and toiletries, and even bread and milk, in the **KARLSPLATZ U-BAHN** station. **Bug's eye view of things:** The **LOMOGRAPHY SHOP** in the MuseumsQuartier is the retail outlet for Lomo cameras and a range of unique design objects. Lomo, formerly a Russian brand, has become Europe's hippest accessory since a Viennese company bought it out and released several generations of multi-lensed cameras, which render the world in quadrophonic vision.

OUT WITH THE IN-CROWD:

STEREOTYP (G-Stone Recordings)

"If you like excellent food and wine in a private little restaurant, you gotta go to **Puglia** (Währingerstrasse 170A, round my corner)—the best south Italian food and great fish. Go and check on the **Wiener Wald** (Vienna forest) if you need some nature. The **Dubclub** at **Flex**: bass, bass, bass, killer soundsystem, nice people. Go get a nice coffee at one of the coffeehouses, and go to the **Naschmarkt** for all kinds of fresh food and a flea market on Saturdays."

STEFAN NEMETH, Radian

"**Kunsthalle Café** (Karlsplatz) is the catering section of an exhibition space for contemporary art. It's popular among young urban and fashion-orientated clientele—designed in a glass and steelbox outfit and featuring a beautiful terrace. Music-wise it's mostly a smooth and mellow selection of soul, house and hip-hop. And nice food! **Tanzcafé Jenseits** (Nelkengasse) is a weird place in a nightclub outfit: red plush, chandeliers and a disco ball. You have to ring at the door; a little overpriced drinks. **Glammy! Future Garden** (Schadeggasse) is a bar closely related to the **Kunstbuero**, a small gallery. A perfect place to meet friends, because the music is never too loud and the atmosphere is friendly. It's hard to tell what's so special about it—maybe it's the fact that you have the feeling that everything is a little bit improvised and not overdesigned."

All phone numbers require the 011-43-1 dialing code.



ESTERHÁZYPARK FLAKTURM



ANGELS OF LIGHT

Everything Is Good Here/Please Come Home

Young God



Link

www.younggodrecords.com

File Under

Songs to learn and lacerate

R.I.Y.L.

Sigur Rós, Godspeed You!

Black Emperor, Johnny Cash

The title of the third album from M. Gira's Angels Of Light rings with uncharacteristic optimism, even wrapped, as it is, within a shell of desperation. Who would have expected Gira, who fronted the notoriously gloomy Swans throughout the 1980s and '90s, to express something as upbeat as "Everything is good here"? After two previous Angels Of Light records full of surging despair, Gira has achieved his widest emotional range yet, from worshipful bliss to seething rage to caved-in submission. Thanks to his arrangements of organs, acoustic guitars, rippling percussion, sourceless drones and, of course, his own weatherbeaten growl, it's also one of his most brutally, apocalyptically beautiful albums ever. Listening to *Everything* is a bit like trying to stare down the sun, and the colors that explode in the blindness are more vivid than anything seen by the naked eye. A consummate storyteller, Gira weaves a tale with every song, and no matter how well-worn the themes—love, power, abandonment—he brings each one to life anew with hidden signs that burrow into your mind and wait to release their secret. Musically, Gira's roamed more widely than ever; someday, he'll be recognized as the saint of American gothic folk that he is. For now, believers and novitiates alike can marvel at his latest, and perhaps greatest, miracle. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

BEANS

Tomorrow Right Now

Warp

Months after the swan song of glitch-hop arrhythmists Antipop Consortium, shiny-domed MC Beans releases the first APC solo click 'n' pop fest: a tinny, sputtery IDM/hip-hop concoction with a touch of avant-bling. Unlike the lush electroacoustical Edgard Varèse-isms of APC, *Tomorrow Right Now* is 14 tracks of Prince's "Ballad Of Dorothy Parker"—all robot-shuffle, five percent nation of CasioTone and post-teenage Atari rioting. Despite a distinctly vintage steez, the beats are strictly Now School, shuffling through both grating IDM and post-Timbaland mainstream hip-hop with the same reckless abandon. "Phreek The Beet" is as sing-songy and music-box-heavy as anything Swizz Beats rocks on MTV, but is full of punched-in Autechre noize and the same poetry-slam musings that made APC a fave amongst both *Wire* readers and backpackers alike ("Alter the game like the length of a skirt/ So join my fest of jubilation upon discovery/ When you stop to taste my world"). "Hot Venom" could be mistaken for one of those Timbo-biting Busta Rhymes songs from a few years back and "Toast" has an odd Method Man circa '94-meets-Anticon vibe. But still a noisemaker in spirit, Beans freaks some Oval and Pole electro-dub on "Rose Perriwinkle Plum" and "Xon" respectively. See... Beans really are good for your heart! >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Link

www.warprecords.com

File Under

Antipop... mostly

R.I.Y.L.

Antipop Consortium, Boom Bip,

Vladislav Delay, Cex



CROOKED FINGERS

Red Devil Dawn

Merge

Through sheer force of will, Eric Bachmann has pulled off an impressive reinvention: No longer does his name instantly conjure images of '90s indie-slacker wunderkinds the Archers Of Loaf. Bachmann has loosened this association in part through repetition—*Red Devil Dawn* reprises the economical orchestral flourishes of Crooked Fingers' eponymous debut, and revisits the gently plucked guitars and lap steel of 2001's more somber, monochromatic *Bring On The Snakes*. However, on *Red Devil Dawn* the strings sound sweeter (even as the upright bass buzzes like a hornets' nest), the pacing more fluid, and the melodies more memorable. In a low, raspy voice akin to Will Ferrell's Neil Diamond taking vocal lessons from Tom Waits, Bachmann crafts vignettes of haggard souls on society's fringes. The trumpets on "You Threw A Spark" are chipper enough to give the Tijuana Brass a run for their money, but Bachmann grafts them to a vitriolic putdown of an inert lover. The drunken singalongs of the Pogues remain a reference point. Bachmann's muse, however, is more aligned with the '70s country pop of Kris Kristofferson, whose "Sunday Morning Coming Down" Crooked Fingers tackled on 2002's *Reservoir Songs* covers EP (which gave props to Diamond, as well). After a giant creative leap following the Archers' demise, Bachmann has opted for subtler, incremental growth—fine, since he's polishing an already sparkling creation. >>>GLEN SARVADY



Link

www.crookedfingers.com

File Under

Sensitive music historian commandeers drunken beer hall

R.I.Y.L.

Tom Waits, Pogues,
Kris Kristofferson

NICOLAI DUNGER

Tranquil Isolation

Overcoat



Link

www.nicolaidunger.com

File Under

A cowboy in Sweden

R.I.Y.L.

Ryan Adams, Jeff Buckley,
Red House Painters

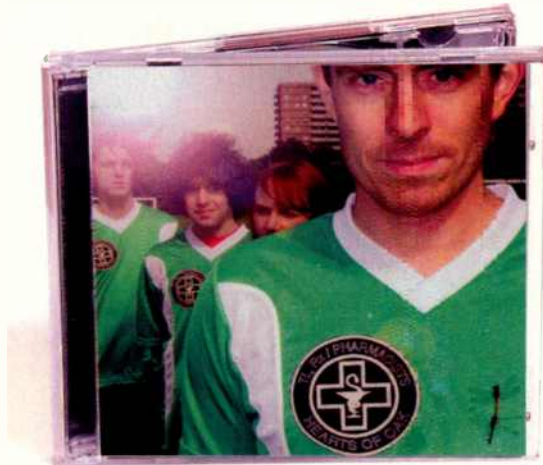
Usually when a sports star pursues a music career, the results end up in the \$3.99 bin at the local Record Explosion. (Think of Shaq rapping or Oscar de la Hoya crooning *en espanol*.) Hopefully that fate will never befall Nicolai Dunger, a Swedish ex-professional soccer player turned indie-rock singer-songwriter. Recorded in Louisville, Kentucky with the help of the Oldham brothers, Dunger's official U.S. debut (but sixth full-length) combines elements of folk, country, jazz and blues into a pretty, roots-inspired collage that crackles with authenticity. A brooding Swede riding the Americana bandwagon may seem a bit bizarre, but it's no more unusual than a blue-eyed Irishman singing soul. Like Van Morrison, Dunger's vocals possess an elastic quality more suited to jazz. His emotive, slurry delivery borders on ecstatic and sometimes renders the lyrics incomprehensible, but the songs are stamped with the same deep-down agony that courses through Morrison's best work. Dunger sings about how ol' lovers keep rocking his soul ("Ol' Lovers") and how he needs to exchange his love for drugs because the days are dark and dull ("Hundred Songs"). In the end it's Dunger's ability to express feverish sentiments over artful arrangements that makes *Tranquil Isolation* an album of considerable grace and emotion. >>>MICHELLE KLEINSAK



TED LEO/PHARMACISTS

Hearts Of Oak

Lookout!



Link

www.lookoutrecords.com

File Under

Academic punk rock meets
firebrand dance-pop

R.I.Y.L.

Chisel, Thin Lizzy,
Elvis Costello, the Clash

Inspired by images of solidarity and triumph—like Ghanaian soccer champs, interracial ska bands, and sea chanteys—Ted Leo/Pharmacists' *Hearts Of Oak* pushes the limits of high-voltage and high-vocabulary punk rock. The Celtic folk-inspired opener, "Building Skyscrapers In The Basement," picks up where the dense, melodic pop of 2001's *The Tyranny Of Distance* left off, and plunges into the more difficult territory of post-9/11 America. Without preaching or weeping, Leo pounds out politically charged anthems and proves that there's still a place for conviction-driven rock 'n' roll. Leo's Curtis Mayfield-like falsetto is at its most soulful on "First To Finish, Last To Start," but on "The Ballad Of The Sin Eaters," his high notes hit a level of nervous energy that rivals David Byrne's trademark high-pitched anxiety. Still, the vibe of the record is far from gloomy. Dressed up with expert hooks and Dorian Garry's glowing back-up vocals, the upbeat title track is a refreshing pep talk addressed to some of Leo's female friends in the male-dominated punk scene, and the record is as much a political wake-up call as it is a call to the dancefloor. Once again, the Pharmacists deal out their poison in a pill that's too pretty to resist. >>>KARA ZUARO

LOOSE FUR

Loose Fur

Drag City

Somewhere between a side project and a supergroup, the devilishly named Loose Fur teams Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and Glenn Kotche with post-rock veteran Jim O'Rourke, who mixed Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and was recently conscripted into Sonic Youth. As one might expect, Loose Fur raises the post-rock quotient in *YHF*'s experimentalism, although not by much. "You Were Wrong," the album's shortest track at 3:34, could be a *YHF* outtake, with its "You were wrong/ To believe me" chorus and strummy acoustic guitar—though O'Rourke's discordant, chiming keyboards, intrusively prominent in the mix, cry: This is not a conventional pop song. The album's other five tracks stretch between six and nine minutes, and most mix tuneful beauty with gently abrasive dissonance—some skronky guitar here, some clanking percussion there. "Laminated Cat" opens the album with Tweedy singing a tale of reclusive misanthropy ("Hiding from your close friends/ Weeding out the weekends") to an insistent, swampy groove that gradually goes haywire; it's an exciting trip, not the least part due to Kotche's hypnotic drumming. Tweedy possesses a great rock 'n' roll voice, at once exhausted and thoughtful and urgent; if O'Rourke's two vocal turns can't help but sound thin in comparison, it just enhances the collaborative intimacy of the project. Loose Fur is part stopgap, part artsy indulgence and part exciting exploration. >>>STEVE KLINGE



Link

www.dragcity.com

File Under

Accessible journeys in post-rock

R.I.Y.L.

Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*,
Jim O'Rourke, Califone, Tortoise

SADDLE CREEK

NEW RELEASES

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(LBJ-51)
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Various Artists

50
(LBJ-50)
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Rilo Kiley

The Execution of All
Things (LBJ-47)
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Bright Eyes

LIFTED or The Story is in
the Soil, Keep Your Ear to
the Ground (LBJ-46)
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* A two disc sampler featuring one previously released track as well as one new and exclusive track from Arera Ray, Bright Eyes, Cursive, Disparapades, The Faint, The Good Life, Rlayday, Now It's Overlind, Sire Amakulung, Sorry About Dresden, and Rilo Kiley. 22 Songs on the CD. 11 Songs on the LP.

Note: Vinyl version only has the 11 new songs - it does not contain the 11 previously released tracks.

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 PAUL WELLER
 IANNIS XENAKIS



A BAND OF BEES

Sunshine Hit Me Astralwerks

A Band Of Bees hail from the U.K.'s Isle of Wight—tourist-drawing holiday spot when the sun is out, ghost town in the off-season. If you actually grow up there and develop aspirations of a musical nature, your choices are limited. You can escape the island for big-city bluster, or you can lock yourself in a shed with your best mate and give new meaning to the term "field recording." In choosing the latter, Aaron Fletcher and Paul Butler birthed not only the Bees, as their duo (since expanded to include a full band) is known everywhere but America, but also a magnificent debut

album that indeed sounds like it was recorded on an island, albeit one of a far more tropical nature. Taking their cues from classic reggae, funk and folk, the pair incorporates masterful harmonies into songs driven by their multi-instrumentalism, mixing keys, horns and endlessly varied percussion with sunny falsetto-laden vocals. These Bees offer up everything from the chilled-out bliss of lead track "Punchbag" to the old-skool island jam of "No Trophy," a track that could just as easily have been recorded 50 years ago. Throw in a fantastic cover of Jorge Ben's "A Minha Menina" for good measure, fade out with the dreamlike "Sky Holds The Sun," and you've got a strong case for the inspirational qualities of isolation. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link

www.thebees.info

File Under

Island hopping

R.I.Y.L.

The Beta Band, the Coral,

Badly Drawn Boy

AEREOGRAMME

Sleep And Release Matador



Link

www.aereogramme.com

File Under

Sybil wars

R.I.Y.L.

Muse, JJ72, Mineral,

Sunny Day Real Estate

Aereogramme suffers from acute multiple-personality disorder. Do they want to be Muse-worthy bombastic prog? Or is it quiet balladry? Would they rather be slow and heavy Swanscore? Nobody knows, least of all them—the impressive but scatterbrained *Sleep And Release*, the Glaswegians' second disc, runs through those three and more, coming off like Mr. Bungle for the U.K. sensitivo set. "Older" is the perfect example: It starts off with a stoner-metal riff, mutates into an organ dirge, devolves into straight-outta-grindcore screaming, and then ends in a hail of distorted drums and

evangelical samples. The approach makes for results as varied as their genres. When the band nails it, they're powerful enough to outshine their peers: The "My Name Is Jonas"-style opener "Indiscretion #243" is a finer slice of emotional rock than Rivers has done in almost a decade, and "In Gratitude" could show Travis a thing or two about delicate ballads. Unfortunately, every win is countered by a loss: The tasteful "In Gratitude" has to contend with the maudlin "Black Path"; the beauty of the orchestra-with-Boards-Of-Canada-beats exercise "A Simple Process Of Elimination" is balanced out by the over-the-top untitled closer, which swaps the regular orchestra for a near-Trans-Siberian one. Aereogramme should be given credit for having the balls to not hold anything back, but *Sleep And Release* is a reminder that a little restraint goes a long way. >>>TOM MALLON



AIRLOCK

Drystar One Little Indian

In these days of commercial radio monopolies and dwindling playlists, some bands find it easier to get their music heard in commercials—witness Mitsubishi-made hits for the Wiseguys and Dirty Vegas. Airlock reverses the process. The group came together to do commercial work, but the chemistry between the four was such that the tracks for *Drystar* began to take shape. With the help of Wire/Dido producer Pascal Gabriel, those tracks were finally pieced together into a full-length debut some two-and-a-half years later. Cult film director Olivier

Link

www.airlock.be

File Under

New adventures in trip-hop

R.I.Y.L.

Dido, Portishead,

Massive Attack

Van Hoofstadt was so impressed with what he heard that he convinced the band to contribute music to the soundtrack to his films *Keo*, *Face Down* and *Parabellum*, and it's easy to hear why Airlock's music would appeal to filmmakers. The creepy undertones and driving basslines give the title track a sinister tone that would be the perfect soundtrack to a tastefully done horror film. The sparse turntable manipulations and jazzy hi-hat tapping of "On The 2nd Floor" breathe new life into left-for-dead trip-hop and demonstrates Airlock's strength in combining electronic elements with infectious melody. Let's all be happy that Airlock wasn't satisfied just writing music to sell cars. >>>BRAD FILICKY



AMERICAN HI-FI

The Art Of Losing Island

Sum 41 have an exclusive hold on feisty mall punk with a deep affection for all things mullet. Foo Fighters are a once-in-a-lifetime Cinderella story: goofy drummer kicks kit aside to blossom as dashing, iconic hard-rock frontman. So where does that leave American Hi-Fi, the glam-via-*Hot Topic* quartet fronted by boy bombshell Stacy Jones, ex-time-keeper for the underrated Veruca Salt and Letters To Cleo? The likely destination is one-hit wonderland, unless the kids regard the familiar, staccato machismo of "Breakup Song" as more than an almost identical sequel to their 2001 breakout "Flavor Of The Weak." To its credit, *The Art Of Losing* (do these

Link

www.islandrecords.com/americanhifi

File Under

Sweating to the corporate-

rock newbies

R.I.Y.L.

OK Go, Cheap Trick, Blink-182

dudes have a knack for self-fulfilling prophecies, or what?) is certainly a grittier affair than its spit-shined, radio-ready, self-titled predecessor. Jones' power-ballad croon is unbearably nasal and, thankfully, we get less of it. His wicked, affected sneer of "what a beautiful dis-as-tahhh" and even a few Ramones-caliber "one, two, fuck you!" bombs on the title track nearly make one forget how little he has to say ("you trade fashion for passion," "I kick it like Jackie Chan," etc.). Not quite novel enough to qualify as a guilty pleasure, but your little brother could spend 20 smackers on far worse. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI



APPLIANCE

Are You Earthed? Mute

When Appliance buzzes, ticks and spits synthetic noise in every direction, the band is building itself up, not breaking down. The English trio's third album proper, *Are You Earthed?*, sits at a sonic midpoint between its guitar-heavy debut and its electronics-obsessed sophomore disc. Echoes of the Charlatans, Primal Scream and Spiritualized and especially the Stone Roses imbed themselves in Appliance's sound. Singer James Brooks adopts a multi-tracked, Ian Brown-ish snarl when singing lines like "If you want to jump, let's jump together" in the menacing

Link

www.appliance-music.co.uk

File Under

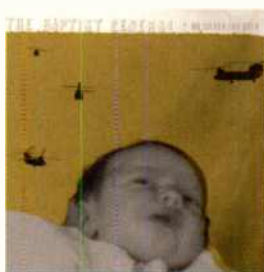
Britpop gets a system upgrade

R.I.Y.L.

Doves, the Stone Roses,

Primal Scream

"Fruits Of The Sea." As Brooks is suggesting, sometimes what's most appealing is what goes on under the surface and that's certainly the case on *Earthed*. The tunes the band crafts are thick with sound, dense and ambient without being messy. A solid wall of Velvet-y guitars lines the loops and bubbling of the dancey "As Far As I Can See." The instrumental "The Blue Rider" is an exercise in tension and release, as it repeatedly expands with reverb and far-out whirling (via the band's homemade instruments) and then tightens into slick, streamlined dance-rock. For all the sound-sculpting and collage-like inventiveness of the songs' layering, though, *Earthed* can't live up to the hook-filled predecessors it invokes. Stripped of their bleeps, these songs would lose their life force. But then, who has use for an unplugged appliance, anyway? >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK



THE BAPTIST GENERALS

No Silver / No Gold Sub Pop

You could list a myriad of bad times to receive a call on the ol' cell phone: at a funeral viewing, while being cross-examined, fleeing a burning building, etcetera. Poor Chris Flemmons, vocalist and guitarist of the Baptist Generals, received a call during the recording of "Ay Distress," the opening track on his band's first full length *No Silver / No Gold*, and though you wouldn't think it would be as distressing as any of the above examples, you wouldn't know it by the man's violent reaction in the garage in which he was recording. In a way, Flemmons' caustic

Link

www.baptistgenerals.com

File Under

Baptism by pyre

R.I.Y.L.

Neutral Milk Hotel,

the Mountain Goats

outburst is a perfect setup for the fragile and emotionally frayed tracks that follow it. Recorded in the lowest of fidelity, Flemmons, drummer Steve Hill and multi instrumentalist Jeff Helland stagger through a set of plaintive acoustic ballads and cacophonous acoustic dirges short on melody and long on Flemmons' ear-splitting mantras. On the former side, the Baptist Generals make a haunted home comfortable, with dispossessed theremin, cello and percussion acting as unseen bumps in the night. Purposefully lo-fi recording only exacerbates Flemmons' acquired-taste vocals on *No Silver / No Gold*, so it will be those listeners with an ear for torched vocals that will mine this record for its covered riches. >>>MAT HALL

richard buckner



RICHARD BUCKNER

Richard Buckner *Overcoat*

Originally available as a tour-only item, *Richard Buckner* makes widely available what might have been the peripatetic singer-songwriter's sophomore album, had he not been snapped up by MCA soon after committing these solo guitar-and-vocal performances to tape in 1996. (Last year's self-produced *Impasse* marked his return to indiedom.) Buckner's two JD Foster-produced major-label releases intensified his hard-traveling poetry and knotty sense of melody rather than diluting them, which makes some of these early versions of songs he later

reworked feel less than definitive. For example: On *Since*, "Boys, The Night Will Bury You" was a wracked a cappella field holler; the folkier rendition here is less effective. On the other hand, it's good to hear "A Goodbye Rye" and other key cuts from *Devotion & Doubt* as Buckner performs them live to this day, free of a rhythm section's straightening (even if the rhythm section was Calexico). The best readings here have a vulnerability and freshness that only comes when a song is brand new. When Buckner comes to the strongest, strangest lines in "Figure" ("The words are done/ And the silence smokes on through"), his booming bearhug of a voice backs off slightly, as if noticing, just then, how powerful its owner's writing had become. >>>FRANKLIN BRUNO

Link

www.richardbuckner.com

File Under

All-country basement tapes

R.I.Y.L.

Mark Eitzel, John Gorka,
James McMurtry



THE DAMNWELLS

PMR + 1 *In Music We Trust*

Not quite twangy enough for alt-country racks, too honed and devoid of irony for today's indie-rock squares, NYC's Damnwells amble the familiar median between the two—a commercially perilous place littered with the wholesome bits of the band's influences, from the Replacements to Whiskeytown (Damnwells drummer Steven Terry is a former 'Townie). *PMR + 1* has hooks and then some, only they rarely announce themselves with an overtly catchy flourish. The seven tracks on this "poor man's record" ("PMR" for short) take their sweet time getting under your

skin, but when they finally do, they set up shop for the duration. Best are the album's bookends, "H.C.E." (a.k.a. "Here Comes Everybody"; didn't anyone ever tell these guys acronyms are a no-no on first reference?) and "Everybody Knows," which find passion through simple chords and strummed friction, building slowly—predictably, even—to the inevitable sweat-drenched boiling point ("I never kissed a boy but I've hit a girl") and subsequent meltdown/reality check ("You don't have to lie 'cause everybody knows about you"). With their earnest evocation of a not-so-distant past, the Damnwells know damn well they're not reinventing the wheel. But they'd be more than happy to grind it down to the rim. >>>HOBART ROWLAND

Link

www.thedamnwells.com

File Under

More-meat-than-potatoes rock

R.I.Y.L.

Tim Easton, Stobberbone,
Ryan Adams



DAMONE

From The Attic *RCA*

If we take anything positive from the last two Donnas albums, it's the cautionary lesson of how ugly things can get when a band staggers over the not-always-fine line separating a smart kiss-off breakup song from self-victimizing schlock. That lesson learned, it's hard not to groan when Damone's *From The Attic* starts with chugging power-punk guitar and singer/guitarist Noelle announcing, "I'm rockin' a BMX bike! I'm rockin' a musclehead car!" It sounds like they're barreling straight into a wall of boys-booze-fast cars clichés—until a few seconds later when

"Frustrated Unnoticed" explodes into an "I Will Survive" declaration of independence, framed by razor-sharp guitars and "whoa-oah!" choruses. The rest of *From The Attic* follows suit with 30 minutes of the kind of driving alt-pop that sadly fell from the airwaves about the same time Shannon Doherty exited *90210*. The themes here (romance, loss, revenge, etc.) are Aaron Spelling-simple, but they let guitarist/songwriter Dave Pino's characters into endearing romantic tragedies. The mid-'90s territory it mines might never even manage to surpass disco's heyday for musical creativity, but *From The Attic* is great for reaching beyond its sonic touchstones and trading in simple, hooky-as-hell tales of hearts we hope keep getting broken and put back together again. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

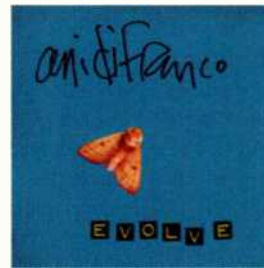
www.damone.net

File Under

At the mall in 1994

R.I.Y.L.

Letters To Cleo, that dog.,
Foo Fighters, the Donnas



ANI DIFRANCO 

Evolve *Righteous Babe*

Recent years have found Ani DiFranco piling a myriad of instruments onto her tunes with the intensity of a senior citizen turning back the years by applying make-up. She hasn't yet completely abandoned density, but on *Evolve*, she's finally showing restraint—her backing instruments now feel less gaudy and more like elements of style. That said, her 13th album in as many years is her least immediate release. For a songwriter as in-your-face as DiFranco, this doesn't initially bode well. Further listening, however, reveals a sturdy album as scattered as the ones she

made in her early glory days. The rocker "Slide" includes a DiFrancoism that will make fans drool ("My pussy is a tractor and this is a tractor pull"), but the song's climax demonstrates her true strength as a writer. "The pouring rain is no place for a bicycle ride/ Try to hit the brakes and you slide," she sings, inverting clichés and rendering the mundane captivating. DiFranco goes solo on the title track and "Serpentine," revealing a musical leitmotif of desolation that permeates *Evolve's* lyrical content. "Just give me my Judy Garland drugs and let me get back to work," she moans after she's spent most of the album showing and telling that she's "trying to evolve." She's pleading here with an uncertain urgency many suspected she'd long forgotten. By reaching back, the quality of her music only progresses. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.righteousbabe.com

File Under

DiFranco does desperation

R.I.Y.L.

Joni Mitchell, Billy Bragg,
Suzanne Vega, DiFranco's *Dilate*



DIRTY THREE

She Has No Strings Apollo Touch And Go

As languid as it tense, *She Has No Strings Apollo* resonates with sleepy, oceanic melancholia and storminess, a measure-to-measure sea-change the Dirty Three have stamped on their craft for over a decade. And though Mick Turner (guitar) and co.'s brand of instrumental rock is evocative and atmospheric, it avoids the ponderous mountain air of Wagnerian *sturm und drang* by virtue of its instrumentation and open-ended construction: One player rages or narrates softly while the others drift and pine in laconic quietude. (And at any rate, the aural

landscape is more antebellum American South than Goethe's black forest.) The Dirty Three hurl their tremendous dynamic range around this disc effortlessly, and their innate sense of one another allows them to play with telepathic surefootedness, as the current of the song rises and falls in volume, pitch and intensity. Violinist Warren Ellis bears primary responsibility for the weepy texture of the tunes—he does play, after all, a violin. And though Ellis uses it classically, his violin is equally dipped in acid, raging with discordant sheets of free-jazz, and Hendrix-ian fire during the album's more violent passages. Like fellow Australian Nick Cave (Warren Ellis is an occasional Bad Seed), the Dirty Three capture and sublimate the nuances of a somber mood, of loss, mourning and of returning to a small room alone on a cold night. >>>PATRICK KENNEDY

[Link](#)

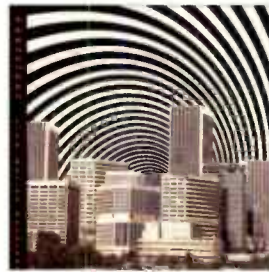
www.dirtythree.com

File Under

Sweeping folky art-rock

R.I.Y.L.

Nick Cave, Blonde Redhead, Slint, Sonic Youth



EVERCLEAR

Slow Motion Daydream Capitol

After all the talk of Art Alexakis going solo back in 2000, when the ambitious post-grunge rock auteur indulged in a concept album orgy that yielded two loosely connected CDs—*Songs From An American Movie, Volume 1* and 2—the band hardly seems to have missed a beat on *Slow Motion Daydream*. Indeed, their sixth offering doesn't mess with the Everclear formula of aggressive rawk guitar hooks, topical lyrics ("Volvo Driving Soccer Mom" is the coup d'grace here) and Alexakis' confident delivery—tender and empathetic one minute, harsh and accusatory the next.

[Link](#)

www.everclearonline.com

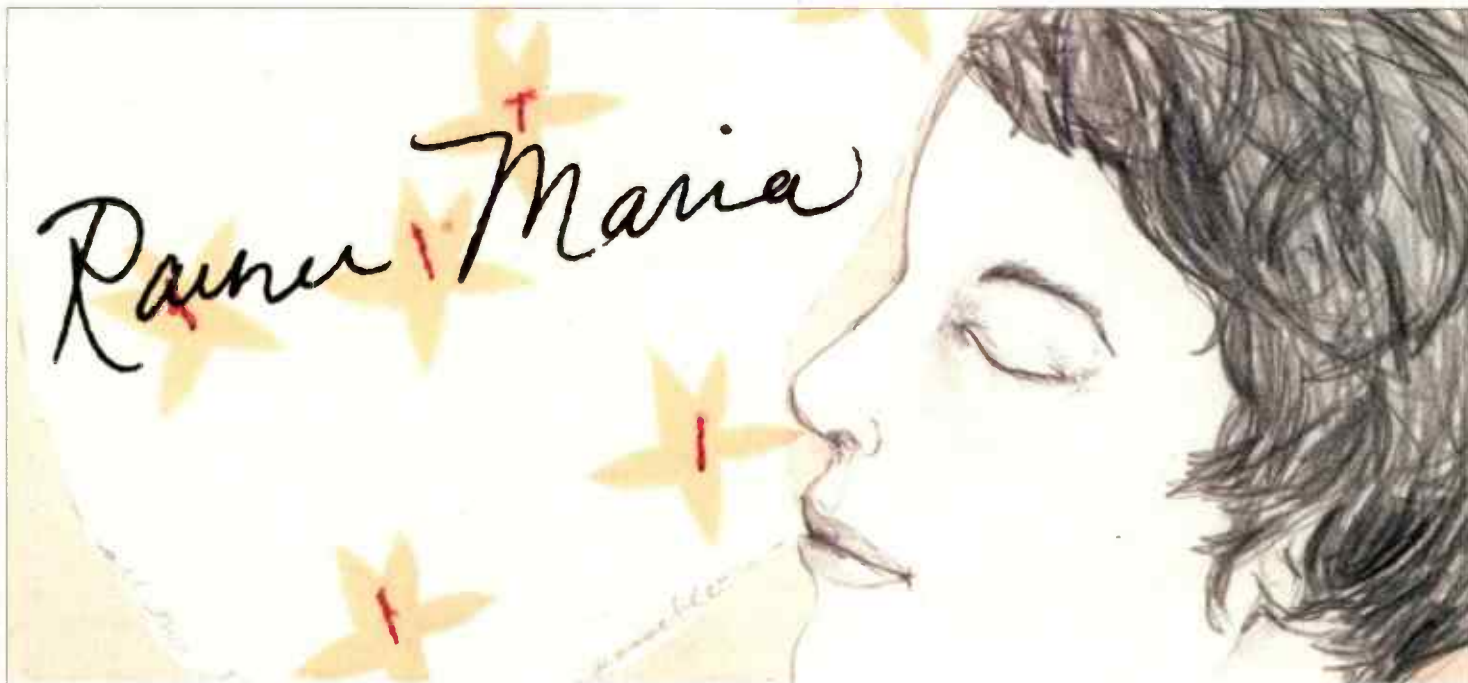
File Under

Songs for an American teenager

R.I.Y.L.

Nirvana, American Hi-Fi, the Replacements

Hell, except for a few horn charts, some keys and a couple samples, neither *American Movie* disc was a major musical departure either. There are strings on *Slow Motion Daydream*, notably on the melancholy "Science Fiction," which finds a reflective Alexakis reassuring the world's broken souls that "Life is always getting better" while making the keen observation that TV news is "like a bad B-movie." Of course, that's Alexakis' real gift—like Bill Clinton, he's a great communicator who feels your pain. And if he occasionally panders to the lowest common denominator, well, that's the price you pay for high approval ratings. >>>MATT ASHARE



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THE GO-BETWEENS

Bright Yellow/Bright Orange Jetset

Reunions can be sad spectacles, either pale attempts to imitate youthful creativity or economically driven trips down memory lane. But sometimes they work. When Grant McLennan and Robert Forster reunited for 2000's *The Friends Of Rachel Worth*, they recaptured the magic that made Australia's Go-Betweens one of the best-loved and quietly influential cult bands of the '80s (one rumor has it that Belle And Sebastian formed through a shared love for the band). Their charming, literate, sharply observant songs were always wise beyond their years, and *Rachel*

Worth picked up where the band left off in 1988. While *Bright Yellow/Bright Orange* doesn't boast a track as joyous as *Rachel Worth*'s "Going Blind" (though "Make Her Day" comes close), it's a more mature, focused album, and it solidifies the Go-Betweens as a vital, contemporary endeavor. Alternating McLennan's chiming pop with Forster's darker, artier ruminations, *Bright Yellow* relies primarily on strummed acoustic guitars and understated arrangements. Melancholy keyboards add color inside "Crooked Lines," strings and organ haunt "In Her Diary," and throughout the album, lyrics return to wistful themes of nostalgia and aging. From the easygoing country shuffle of Forster's "Too Much Of One Thing" to the coy "Sweet Jane" allusion in McLennan's "Mrs. Morgan," *Bright Yellow/Bright Orange* is another welcome update from some old friends. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.jetsetrecords.com

File Under

Literate guitar pop

R.I.Y.L.

Lloyd Cole, Belle And Sebastian, the Lucksmiths



GRADE 8

Grade 8 Lava

First things first: Grade 8 certainly isn't reinventing the rap-rock wheel. Which begs the questions, does said wheel even turn anymore, and in any case, would we want it reinvented? Indeed, the signposts are loud and clear: rap-tinged nu-metal has worn out its welcome. But after listening to Grade 8's eponymous debut, you'll understand why that wouldn't stop this Los Angeles foursome: This album seeps braggadocio from every pore. There is an almost suffocating level of cockiness, bravado and confidence in every down-tuned chord, every hip-

hop beat, every rapped lyric; you can't help but think that these guys do not give two shits what anyone thinks of their music. Singer Ryan Tooker resorts to rapping on every track, but he's also in possession of a venomous, whiskey-drenched howl, similar to that of Soil's Ryan McCombs. Most of the low-ended riffing on *Grade 8* will rattle your teeth loose. You won't find answers to life's most poignant questions on this album, but that's not the intention. Tooker serves up slices of his life in his lyrics, but prevents the bluesy "Chances Are" and the bottom-heavy "Brick By Brick" from being I-hate-my-dad anthems. Grade 8 is definitely better than your average mooksters. >>>AMY SCIARRETTO

Link

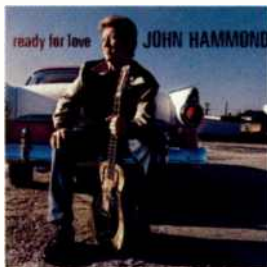
www.grade8music.com

File Under

New nu metal

R.I.Y.L.

Soil, Machine Head, Snot



JOHN HAMMOND

Ready For Love Pointblank-Virgin

John Hammond is the living definition of the professional musician: a career in music for nearly 40 years, 29 albums and a missionary's zeal, bringing blues music to people in the most remote parts of the world. The résumé is a lifetime achievement award in itself. He's collaborated with an eye-popping list of musicians from Michael Bloomfield to Duane Allman to Tom Waits. His choice in covers is impeccable. But there's also always been something distant about Hammond; there were moments on 2001's *Wicked Grin* where he found something in himself and seemed more

than amused with what he uncovered. With Waits producing and a group of seasoned vets behind him, Hammond entered and embraced Waits' alternate universe. The road band that finessed those tunes backs Hammond for this collection (keyboardist Augie Meyers adds thrilling color throughout) and the same electricity comes to pass. "Slick Crown Vic" is notable as Hammond's first songwriting credit, but the real gems are Hammond's soulful crack at Freddie Hart's "Easy Lovin'," two additional Waits songs ("Gin Soaked Boy," "Low Side Of The Road") and two George Jones numbers ("Color Of The Blues," "Just One More") where Hammond stretches his voice to the breaking point. Unbelievably, it's as if Hammond is only now getting started. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link

www.johnhammond.com

File Under

Twisted roots

R.I.Y.L.

David Bromberg, Hightone Records, Duke Robillard



HOLOPAW

Holopaw Sub Pop

When word got out that some of the tunes on Isaac Brock's *Ugly Casanova* were co-written and sung by John Orth, fans began anticipating some Deep South magic from Holopaw, his band out of Gainesville, Florida. Now that their self-titled debut has arrived, we are suitably rewarded with an inspired collection of haunting melodies and superior instrumentation. Subtly quirky arrangements abound: "Short-Wave-Hum (stutter)" sports a Styx-type synth-a-thon followed by some unexpected, expertly harmonized whistling; "Hula-La"

Link

www.subpop.com

File Under

Magnificent melancholy

R.I.Y.L.

Bonnie Prince Billy, Ugly Casanova, Whiskeytown

winds down into layered bottleneck guitar riffs; and the chorus of "Abraham Lincoln" is accented by a Morse-code pulse of electric tones. Orth's vocals, reminiscent of Will Oldham's more robust offerings, paint affecting tales of tangled horses and weeping songbirds, and deftly honed harmonies are used sparingly but to great effect throughout the record. While tracks like "Igloo Glass" and "Pony Apprehension" are steeped in Southern roots music, other songs, like "Hoover" and "Cinders," juxtapose catchy modern riffs against the melancholic sweetness. The CD winds down with the searing, minimalist "Mammoth Cave," which begins with simple strumming, is soon enveloped in pedal steel and accordion, and then just as quickly drifts back into the silence the music seems to stem from. >>>KARL WACHTER



THE HOLY GHOST

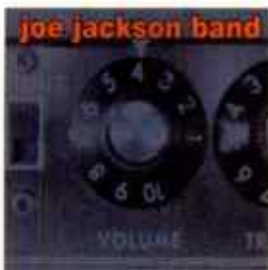
Color Sympathy Clearly

The career arc of most young bands follows a standard trajectory: Early days mesh the musicians' playing, mostly, songs bearing influences more obviously than they should; some time passes, and their own personality struts. Akin to the teenager who, in finding their own voice, wears the clothes of their heroes. Brooklyn band the Holy Ghost's debut, *Broken Record*, was a great exercise in angular post-punk—swaggering, sneering, filled with passion. But it didn't yet bear the stamp of a clearly found persona: They were searching, and came damn close,

Link
www.clearlyrecords.com
File Under
Congratulations on reaching
Confirmation
R.I.Y.L.

Echo & The Bunnymen, Cursive,
the Teardrop Explodes

but the voices of their forebears (some Television, Fugazi) poked from not-quite-tucked sleeves. Its follow-up, *Color Sympathy*, is the band's coming-out party. Influences still figure, but they're more broad, diluted in a wash of Holy Ghost that's made the attributes wholly their own. The title track is a propelling piece of new wave-inflected rock, Kent Heine shoving the verses around with a jagged bassline and brother Christopher's rasp making like someone swapped Robert Smith's mope with anger. Elsewhere the band gets contemplative, working piano flecks and digital plinks and squalls into the mixture, guitarist Alec Ferrell consistently taking unexpected minor-key turns. Each of the record's eight tracks, too, bears its own distinct voice—the mark of a band that's found its footing. And a strong one, at that. >>>NICOLE KEIPER



JOE JACKSON

Volume 4 Restless-Ryko

Joe Jackson hit the big time by venting his spleen. But, after his initial success, rather than continuing to spit lyrical vitriol, he simply fucked off the establishment by making neo-classical records and such—goodbye, pop charts! But perhaps sensing a creeping marginalization, he recently wrote an absorbing autobiography, *A Cure For Gravity*, recorded a sequel to his hit *Night And Day* album, and then got his old skinny tie brigade back together. Thus, *Volume 4*, a fourth album with the lineup responsible for the first three. The results are nearly flawless,

Link
www.joejackson.com
File Under
Still the man
R.I.Y.L.
Early Joe Jackson, Elvis
Costello, the Jam

if a bit out of step. In fact, the frenetic piano riff on the opening cut, "Take It Like A Man," is literally the stuff of legend. Elsewhere, Jackson and cohorts reach back and effortlessly rediscover their old anxious energy. Songs like "Fairy Dust" and "Little Bit Stupid" are astonishingly bang-on recreations of their new-wave pop mannerisms, complete with snotty lyrics. Even better, "Thugs Are Us" is a masterful bit of old-skool white-boy ska. Not that it's all snarl and sneer; indeed, "Love At First Light" is an aching ballad, awash in ageless confusion and cynicism. It's almost as if he's finally introduced his current self to the angry young man he used to be. And they're getting along just fine. >>>KEN SCRUGATO



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alpinestars



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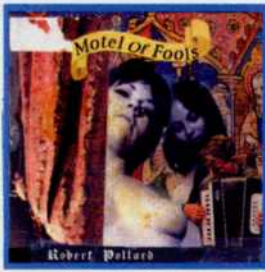
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ROBERT POLLARD
Motel Of Fools Fading Captain

CIRCUS DEVILS
The Harold Pig Memorial Fading Captain

Give a thousand monkeys a thousand years and a thousand typewriters, and they still won't come up with as many songs as Robert Pollard. After 2000's hundred-song *Suitcase*, and the two *Guided By Voices* albums (and associated B-sides) released since then, any sane person would rest on their laurels, or at least their empties. But not Dayton, Ohio's gift to logorrhea: In recent years, he's shredded a daunting volume of word salad onto various collaborations, one-off bands, and (often pseudonymous) solo projects, releasing the results via his inhouse Fading Captain imprint (with help from Indianapolis distributor Luna Music).

For sheer incoherence, salvos #25 and #26 don't match last year's *Tropic Of Nipples*, a battle of the ids with rock scribe Richard Meltzer. But *Motel Of Fools* comes close. Beginning with a cryptic testimonial ("Truly I saw/ The quail and the quasar") and ending



Link
www.gbv.com
File Under
Scraps from the captain's table
R.I.Y.L.

Pollard: *Guided By Voices*,
Jim Shepard/V3, *The Last
Lennon Tapes*
Circus Devils: *Gem*, *Captain
Beefheart*, *Gabriel-era Genesis*

with someone (not Pollard) screwing up the words to "He's a jolly good fellow," this is a barely-guided tour though the darker corners of one man's mental broom closet. Some of the parts? Studio-quality recordings of poorly-tuned guitar duets, Lennonesque piano-pounding, a jarring four-song collage-suite and a few band-backed numbers that wouldn't shame an actual GBV release. (A number of past members make brief appearances.) The sum of the parts? Well, a Pollard scholar'd have some theories, but the disc's clearest through-line is a gradual movement from prog-fantasy territory ("The caterpillar's destiny/ The cloakmaker learns his size") to the earthbound concerns of "Harrison Adams," with its to-die-for chorus: "You're not happy with me, and I know it." For all its fragmentation, the whole 32-minute trip is satisfying, and curiously complete.

The Circus Devils' disc employs Pollard's favored collaborative method, letting others record music and later vocalizing over the results. The enablers this time out are current GBV bassist Tim Tobias on guitar, and brother/producer Todd Tobias (both of Cleveland's underappreciated 4 Coyotes) on everything else. Their interaction on these 22 tracks is both sharp and varied enough to seem distinct from both the 'real' band and Pollard's solo material. As for content: *The Harold Pig Memorial* is allegedly a concept album revolving around a Vegas biker's funeral, but tracking a narrative through these violently compressed lyrics ("You get the dirty world news/ Mainly/ Daily/ Got in on/ No/ Me") is like reading *Finnegan's Wake* without a Jesuit education. The MOR-styled "Soldiers Of Love" and the tightly wound "Last Punk Standing" stand on their individual merits, but the production of gemlike pop songs isn't the real point here. If the outer limits of Pollard's hypercreativity seem worth exploring, either release offers plenty to chew on. But casual fans might consider waiting for another full-scale *Guided By Voices* album—after all, it shouldn't take long. >>>FRANKLIN BRUND



JOAN OF ARC
So Much Staying Alive And Lovelessness

Jade Tree

Joan Of Arc's resident conductor Tim Kinsella is back at the helm of his ever-confounding band, but at least he's starting to make some sense again. Far from the computerized word jumbles that took up the last few JOA efforts, *So Much Staying Alive And Lovelessness* features actual bands playing actual songs. It also sees a triumphant return of the unexplainably irritating yet wildly compelling vocals of Kinsella, whose nursery rhyme tales of pain or possible profundity are the heart of the record. With back-up bands credited as Joan Of

Link
www.jadetree.com
File Under
Look: They're good again
R.I.Y.L.
Owen, Ghosts And Vodka, Owls

Arc II, the Sam Zurick Band and Friend/Enemy, and guest appearances from folks like Chicago Underground Duo's Rob Mazurek, it appears that Joan Of Arc now encompasses a good number of the musicians in the Chicago area. It also makes for a brilliant return to form. Cascading guitars, drunken pianos and a wall of other beautifully recorded acoustic instruments are now the forefront of the sound, and the bands involved come off much tighter than some of the past ensembles that worked with similar material. The cohesive (yet still staggeringly hard to anticipate) arrangements are stripped down to a point that finally makes sense, and now that the overkill resulting from Kinsella's ugly addiction to Pro Tools is over, he's made a record capable of reminding us what this band had to offer in the first place. >>>PETE D'ANGELO



**DANIEL JOHNSTON FEATURING
MARK LINKOUS**

Fear Yourself Gammon

If Dashboard Confessionalist Chris Carraba and heartbreaker/heartbreakee Ryan Adams rock their hearts on their sleeve, then on *Fear Yourself*, Daniel Johnston is wearing his heart as a damned hat. Calm down, kiddies, that wasn't a crack about his well-documented struggles with mental illness, it's a symbolic statement claiming thus: One would be hard-pressed to find a more stripped-down, honest, innocent and confessional musical document of loves both found and lost. *Fear Yourself* shows that love is a proverbial battlefield for Johnston and—thanks to the tympani swells, theremin warble and alien keys of Sparklehorse rider Mark Linkous—the battle sounds like it's being fought by Yoshimi and those cursed robots. While *Fear Yourself* is easily the "biggest" sounding work in a career christened on recordings made on a \$59 Sanyo (Linkous is a decidedly more bombastic collaborator than, say, Jad Fair or Butthole Surfer Paul Leary), Johnston still sounds poignantly vulnerable when drowned in the indie-orchestral of "Forever" or the Pavement-con-keyboards "Fish." Johnston screams his fidelities via heartrending similes and his trademark naked shiver. "Tears fall left and right/ No hope in sight/ Like heavy syrup/ For some pancakes so flat," Johnston sings on "Syrup Of Tears," exhaustedly closing with the ballsy refrain "I love you more than myself." Emo sans pretension, Johnston's so stripped that his aorta is showing. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link
www.hihowareyou.com
File Under
Sgt. Johnston's broken hearts
club band
R.I.Y.L.
Syd Barrett, Jad Fair,
Sparklehorse, Jonathan Richman



DAMIEN JURADO

Where Shall You Take Me? Secretly Canadian

So, where is Damien Jurado taking us this time? Back down the dark end of the street, where the bleakest and finest moments of his past albums dead-ended in the romantic flameouts of characters beaten by life, hanging on to the vaguest traces of hope. Jurado finds no greater catharsis than exploring these sorrowful points of human struggling and injecting them with a sense of heroism. Bloodshed, alcohol, bad decisions, angry children, desperate men and lonelier women, nothing resonates like tragedy on a personal scale. The barren drone that perme-

ates "Amateur Night," the sparse notes that decorate "Omaha," and the doom-laden, centuries-old melody that anchors "Abilene" create a stunning opening sequence. Jurado sneaks in a few errant rays of hope, from the childlike pop bounce of "Matinee," where you have a friend sneak you into the movies for free or at least save a buck, to the spiritual calling of "Window," featuring an old-time religion duet with Rosie Thomas. Mostly, however, this is one dark ride. His backing band, Gathered In Song, never get up much speed. Unlike last year's *I Break Chairs*, where the harder rock forced Jurado to bellow in a voice most Bob Mould-like, here Jurado's voice relaxes, breaking off notes in quiet resignation. It's a beautiful thing. >>>ROB O'CONNOR

Link

www.damienjurado.com

File Under

Modern folk spirituals

R.I.Y.L.

Rosie Thomas, Palace,

darker Springsteen



KINSKI

Airs Above Your Station Sub Pop

It's all about the payoff. Rather than wander majestic lands of tension and buildups while waiting for an all-too-skimpily rock cash-in, Kinski have busted out of the Mogwai/Godspeed You! Black Emperor mold and realized that going straight to the meat of the song isn't necessarily a bad thing. Guitars blazing, and psychedelic ideals out on display, the third effort from this Seattle quartet should easily establish them as a "band to watch," even if they still can't resist smirking through Sonic Youth tributes like the scorching Kim Gordon-esque "Rhode Island Freakout."

Unruly track times still point to a certain amount of unnecessary bravado, but Kinski pace themselves well and even when they're pushing the same theme for ridiculous periods of time, their penchant for near trance-inducing waves of noise constantly brings a sense of renewal and musical progress. Because they play a bit heavier than most of their peers, the element of dynamic surprise is a major asset to *Airs Above Your Station*, and while it isn't always jarring, Kinski's playing resonates with a little more urgency than what their cverly artistic post-rock brethren ever put on display. There are moments of true beauty all over the disc, but the vicious counterpoint of syncopated noise swells in tracks like "Your Lights Are (Out Or) Burning Badly" is what makes the record memorable and distinguishes Kinski from the crowd. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

Link

www.subpop.com

File Under

Intelligent instrumentals that rock

R.I.Y.L.

Mogwai, Yo La Tengo,

Bardo Pond

"the music industry mafia
is pimping girl power
sniping off their
sharpshooter singles
from their styrofoam towers."

- a.d.

ani di franco

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THE LEVELLERS

Green Blade Rising Eagle Rock

"There's only one way of life and that's your own" went the chorus of the Levellers' "One Way." It seems that in the eight years since the band's had a record out in the U.S., however, they've grown up a bit, shaken the crust off their boots and realized not everything's so black and white; the result is their best album since '92's *Levelling The Land*. *Green Blade Rising's* burn is focused and steady, less subject to the brief rages of yore. The rock's a little harder on songs like "Pretty Target," while on "Come On" fiddler Jon Sevink offers rousing Celticisms that push the

song along. Of course, their hearts are still firmly pinned to their sleeves, but there's something heartening about the lack of cynicism in songs like "Wild As Angels," with its smiling jauntiness. Mark Chadwick has come a long way as both singer and songwriter, although much of the album is unnervingly reminiscent of vintage Waterboys. And while many of these songs focus on relationships, it simply wouldn't be the Levellers without at least some political vitriol, and they pour it into "A Chorus Line." In an age when machines seem to rule music, having something handcrafted by ex-hippies makes for a refreshing, organic change. >>>CHRIS NICKSON

Link

www.levellers.co.uk

File Under

Crusties get mortgages

R.I.Y.L.

Waterboys, Oysterband,

Billy Bragg



LONGWAVE

The Strangest Things RCA

Backlash or not, don't hold their Strokes connections against them. Longwave come by the similarity honestly: They've toured with their fellow New Yorkers, and they share a penchant for well-crafted, retro-tainted rock songs. But Longwave aren't just Strokes wannabes. They trade in British shoegazing dream pop, copping from Ride, early U2 and *Bends*-era Radiohead (instead of Velvet Underground and Tom Petty); this is not a bad thing. *The Strangest Things*, their second full-length, revives the big guitar sounds of their '80s idols (they lean heavily on Edge-y delay pedals)

and manages to sound anthemic without sounding pretentious—no mean feat—on taut tracks such as "Tidal Wave" and "Wake Me When It's Over." Producer Dave Fridmann (the Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev) wisely limits his penchant for flourishes of strings and electronic bumbles to the brief "Can't Feel A Thing," but his decision to filter all of Steve Schlitz's vocals is questionable; on "Pool Song" and "Everywhere You Turn" Schlitz sounds disconcertingly like the Strokes' Julian Casablancas. Still, those are two of the disc's best songs, along with the instrumental "Day Sleeper" and the guitar freakout "Exit." Longwave may have trouble crawling out of the shadow of their famous brethren, which would be a shame, since *The Strangest Things* is full of compelling slices of stately dream pop. >>>STEVE KLINGE

Link

www.longwavetheband.com

File Under

Different Strokes

R.I.Y.L.

Ride, the Walkmen, early

Radiohead, U2

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break your mother's heart

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MAE

Destination: Beautiful Tooth & Nail

The cryptic, if cliché, homepage asks the question, "whatismae.com?" If this all-male Virginian quintet christened itself after the indelibly curvaceous Ms. West, the moniker is fitting. These are—to borrow from Sleater-Kinney—ballads of ladymen, modern alt-emo hybrids with zero testosterone but effortless erotic excess. Singer Dave Gimenez's limp, letter-perfect "sad boy" delivery is familiarly, um, ovarian, but the often arresting movements that he and drummer Jacob Marshall have constructed bravely buck the crybaby tide. The band has seizures of emonic giddiness ("All Deliberate Speed" and "Soundtrack For Our Movie") that make Justin Timberlake look like Ian MacKaye, but just as often unveil contortions rife with soul-crushing, downtrodden grace (the solo piano postscript to "Sun" recalls the unpredictably poignant finale to *Two Girls And A Guy*). It would be easy to suggest that this is Tooth And Nail's free-agent answer to *Saves The Day*, but Mae is more than hired 98-pound weakling, er, muscle. Every track on *Beautiful* is just that, infinitely listenable, pushing all the right aural pop buttons, even as they're throttled by Gimenez's eunuch relationship narratives. Mae is a rarity among this increasingly accessible generation of "post-" players, prostrating before the same old dashboard confessionals, but exhuming all the right intangibles from the ashtray. >>>ANDREW BONAZELLI

Link

www.whatismae.com

File Under

Processed pretty-boy emo...

that's glorious

R.I.Y.L.

The Juliana Theory, Third Eye

Blind, Sunny Day Real Estate



MAJESTICONS

Beauty Party **Big Dada**

B.Y.O.D. (bring your own dogma), 'cause its a Mike Ladd party! It's true, the hip-hop poetry slammer behind such audaciously didactic tunes as "I'm Building A Bodacious Bodega For The Race War" can get jiggy with the best of 'em—albeit in an post-crunk, pseudo-ballin', après-bling kind of way. In the tradition of Funkadelic's comic operas, Ladd deconstructs economic stratification through hyperbolic satire and elaborate musical theatre. *Beauty Party* is the second installment in his Infesticons vs. Majesticons trilogy, here playing the Majesticons—

Link

www.bigdada.com

File Under

Agit-hop

R.I.Y.L.

Mike Ladd, Roots Manuva, your
Marxism professor

stock-trading, champagne-guzzlin' fashion-bots going from Roc-A-Fella bling to Rockefeller bling. The 'Cons chill with the Kennedys and shop in the Peterman catalog; one "used to read *The Nation* 'til I changed my mind/ Used to study Marx now I'm studying wine"—all over caviar-ready beats that sparkle like British garage bangers filtered through an ironic electroclash sieve. Guest Def Jukies El-P and Vast Aire bomb the suburbs by rocking khakis, chilling in Ikea and banging NPR on "Suburb Party" and on "Majestwest Party," Murs vows to "keep it Top 40!" Elsewhere, a neo-soul diva brags about bisexual adventures on the Pac-Man funk of "Prom Night Party" and Ladd gloats he's "Rites Of Spring and you Hasselhoff" over the minimalist twerk of "Volvo Party." Rock to this while rappers still brag about regular crime, not corporate crime. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



MICKEY AND THE SOUL GENERATION

Iron Leg: The Complete Mickey And The Soul Generation **Cali-Tex/Quannum Projects**

Thank god for DJ Shadow's record-collecting obsession. Not only has he scoured bins of vinyl to provide fodder for creative masterstrokes such as *Endtroducing...* and *The Private Press*, but he's also "discovered" San Antonio's Mickey And The Soul Generation. In the booklet accompanying *Iron Leg*, DJ Shadow recounts how he stumbled across a Soul Generation song on an obscure British compilation, which prompted a quest to find more tracks, which turned into a quest to find the band itself. It was worth the trouble.

Link

www.quannum.com

File Under

Right about 1970, the

funk soul brothers

R.I.Y.L.

The Meters, James Brown instru-
mentals, Booker T. and the MGs

Mickey And The Soul Generation were a six-piece, mostly instrumental funk band popular in southern Texas in the late '60s and early '70s, and *Iron Leg* collects their complete oeuvre: singles, tracks from a previously unreleased album, and, on a second CD, a live set. The Soul Generation weren't groundbreaking; instead, they stole from the best and made something of their own. You can hear the Meters in "Iron Leg," James Brown in "Football," Booker T. And The MGs in "The Whatzit," *Shaft*-era Isaac Hayes in "Mystery Girl." Within each song, the focus shifts among Mickey Foster's organ, Emil Carter's tenor sax, Andrew Gordon's impossibly funky drumming and George Salas' wah-wah guitar, and true to the members' blend of Latino and African-American cultures, the Soul Generation mixed Tex-Mex exuberance with deep funk grooves. Start your next party here. >>>STEVE KLUNGE

Jesse Malin **The Fine Art of Self Destruction** Produced by Ryan Adams

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★★★★ Q Magazine (UK)

"Malin writes vivid songs with killer tunes and sings them with scary conviction."
★★★★★ London Times (UK)

"...beautiful heartbreaking tunes and elegant twists..."
Village Voice



MURS

The End Of The Beginning *Definitive Jux*

A member of the revered Cali crew Living Legends, Murs pulls no punches on the comfortably conflicted "Got Damned?," admitting he's "too street for the sheltered underground fan, too intelligent for play on your FM band." Venting plenty of frustration over equally frustrated piano tinkles, Murs seems to miss the glaring reward in the contradiction: that the most versatile MC on the Def Jux roster just may cross over because he marries streetwise lyrics with backpacker-friendly delivery. Murs is just as comfortable rapping about gang warfare and gunfire close-calls ("Last Night") as he is discussing the politics of organized sports vs. the independent catharsis of skateboarding ("Transitions Of A Rider"). Somehow constantly straddling the line between the heady schemes of introspective indie-hop and the languorous gait of a Too \$hort-addled Cali heritage, Murs is constantly changing colors for a bevy of producers: Anticon's Eno-esque Ant, Aesop Rock's skeletal Blockhead, Living Legend Sunspot Jonz and Digital Underground's wearer-of-faux-proboscidies Shock G (who guests with alter ego Humpty Hump on the hilarious party-crash yam "Risky Business"). Even the scuzzy grind of El-P can't keep Murs from spreading only the smoothest of peanut-butta flows ("The Dance"). If somehow the ever-conceptual Freestyle Fellowship and the slippery E-40 crashed tour vans on the I-5, maybe the divergent, diverse, chameleonic world of Murs would be easier to explain. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link

www.lcrew.com

File Under

Chameleon and on and on

R.I.Y.L.

Lootpack, Atmosphere,

Living Legends, DJ Quik

Johnny Temple of GvsB are taking NWK pretty seriously, and *This Is The Glamorous*, a full-on concept album, confirms their intent. Lyrically obsessed with all things glamour—from the cigarette you smoke to the players you hate—the album is all posing about posing; McCloud punctures beautiful people and hipsters while acting cool and hipsterish himself: "In a world of Jordache/ In a world of techno and whisky... My baby is for real." What keeps the idea grounded is NWK's languid groove, a spooky, dirty rumble that lounges lazily in the background. Charles Bennington may be the key ingredient. After the untimely demise of Morphine, if there's still such a thing as an indie sax sound, it's his, and he turns "Nothing You Can Say" into a jazzy lament and "Bad Things" into an irresistible come-on. >>>CHRIS MOLANPHY

NEW WET KOJAK

This Is The Glamorous *Beggars Banquet*

From their name to their playful urban rock, New Wet Kojak sound like the proverbial next phase—an arch version of something that was sly to begin with. The band is itself a side project, an offshoot of sardonic indie rockers Girls Against Boys. Except New Wet Kojak might just eclipse the band that spawned them; with their late-night, bleary-eyed sound, NWK takes GvsB's wiry aggro-rock and chills it out, throwing sax, techno beats and drollness into a cocktail mixer and shaking. After four albums, it's safe to assume that singer-guitarist Scott McCloud and bassist

Link

www.newwetkojak.com

File Under

Post-digital post-punk

R.I.Y.L.

Morphine, Interpol, Suicide,

Girls Against Boys

Link

PAPER LIONS

The Symptom And The Sick *Kindercore*

The Paper Lions offer an interesting twist to the rapidly crowding field of refracted-mirror retro rock. Like Radio 4, they emulate a bevy of early '80s British punk bands who themselves were looking back across the water to incorporate the urban rhythms of New York City. As an essentially reconstituted version of the Atlanta D.I.Y. punk outfit Some Soviet Station, however, Paper Lions bring their more metallic roots to the party. The "Hey! Hey!" rugby chants punctuating the opening seconds of "He Commands Commandments" serve as a hardcore statement of

Link

www.papertions.com

File Under

The New Rock thing, with

hardcore teeth

R.I.Y.L.

Fugazi, Radio 4, the Clash

intent. Piercing dual guitars and a danceable low-end recall *Sandinista*-era Clash, and when his vocals are restrained to a rhythmic speaking voice, Jesse Smith even sounds a bit like Joe Strummer. The staccato guitar bursts of "Graduation Prize Prize," wed to martial drumming and tactically placed melodica, clearly nod to Gang Of Four. The quartet doesn't ape the specific melodies of its forebears (notwithstanding several rolling basslines that threaten to break into Fugazi's "Waiting Room"), but neither have they honed the songcraft to tie these component parts into a concise, compelling package. Although *The Symptom And The Sick* has a bracing sound and impressive energy, the Paper Lions need to nurse along some more distinctive tunes. >>>GLEN SARVAOY



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PHASER

Sway Emperor Norton

With Sway, Phaser has crafted one of the finest British debut albums in years—despite hailing from Washington, D.C. The band's heart is quite clearly rooted on the other side of the Atlantic; crossing the soul-searching rock of Spiritualized with the brooding, multi-layered soundscapes of the Verve and adding such disparate elements as otherworldly synths and bluesy piano riffs, Phaser repeatedly invokes its own name by literally phasing into different incarnations as the disc progresses. The high point is the epic "Would You

Link

www.phasermusic.com

File Under

The best of the Anglo-file

R.I.Y.L.

Spiritualized, the Verve, Ride

Believe," which revels in searing layers of guitars and darkly melodic vocals, inviting use of the word "transcendent" in the same way the Verve's own "Weeping Willow" once did. Tellingly perhaps, it's difficult to find information on Phaser, beyond the names of its members (including ringleader brothers Siayko and Boris Skalsky) and that there was an EP called *Skydive* released in 2000 that you'd be damn lucky to find today. Which begs the question: In a city where post-punk reigns supreme, in a country where soaring, epic rock is mostly left to post-grunge blowhards, where the hell did these guys come from? The answer: Who cares? An album this good doesn't need an explanation. It speaks for itself. >>>DOUG LEVY



THE POSTAL SERVICE

Give Up Sub Pop

For all of its warm, analog-esque keyboards and basslines, crackling breaks and loopy, faux-strings, the sound that marks *Give Up* most is that of compromise. The Postal Service's first record is a full-length follow-up to "(This Is) The Dream of Evan And Chan," the collaboration between Death Cab For Cutie frontman Ben Gibbard and Jimmy Tamborello (a.k.a. DNTEL) from the latter's *Life Is Full Of Possibilities*. Listeners expecting the ballistic song tangents of the DNTEL records, or even the static-filled beauty of "Dream," will be sobered to find a fairly straightforward dance record full of thumping house. But if the beats take the "I" out of DNTEL's IDM, Gibbard's lyrics and songwriting elevate the project to a level of accessibility that Tamborello's never even hinted at. The contagious melody of "Such Great Heights" is only made more invigorating by Gibbard's deft wordsmithing when he sings, "I am thinking it's a sign/ That the freckles in our eyes are mirror images/ And when we kiss, they're perfectly aligned." The love that Gibbard rhapsodizes about throughout the album is tangible, creating a hearty juxtaposition with the synthetic nature of his backing track. Leave it to minds like Gibbard's and Tamborello's to have what many of their fans will consider a "lesser" genre of music come off simultaneously risky and gorgeous. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

Link

www.subpop.com

File Under

Rain, bleep or snow...

R.I.Y.L.

Lali Puna, the Notwist, DNTEL, Death Cab For Cutie

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PULSEPROGRAMMING

Tulsa For One Second *Aesthetics*

The first thing you will want to do upon purchasing Pulseprogramming's fourth LP, *Tulsa For One Second*, is carefully unfold the packaging's many panels and contort it into its cute paper house shape—and place it in front of you. Then play the CD through once, and realize you've just heard one of this year's most charming sleeper hits. Pulseprogramming is a Chicago-based collective of musicians (Joel Kriske and Marc Hellner), visual and video artists (Eric Johnson, Hans Seeger, and John Schachter) and a poet (Joel Craig), but instead of vaunting aggressive politics or other twaddle like

so many other collectives, they produce beautiful, dreamy electronic pop *par excellence*. And not the radio-gearred electronica of Sneaker Pimps, either; *Tulsa For One Second* is solemnity and sublimity roving free and unfettered by the constrictions of pop's more typical stylistic constructions. From the get-go, Pulseprogramming crafts the quiet anima to the atmospheric pop animus of groups as varied as Sigur Rós and Joy Division, where the quaint vocal-synth dance of "Blooms Eventually" and the tense, silken climbing chords of "Here Give It Here I'll Show You" at once feel full of heart-wrenching sound yet leave no emotional hang-over. They are complete musical thoughts, a mixture of understated vocal tracks and luxurious instrumentals so wonderfully produced by Telefon Tel Aviv's Charlie Cooper (a reincarnated Martin Hannett?) that they can aurally guild a rainy day. Just beautiful. >>>HEATH K. HIGHNIGHT

Link

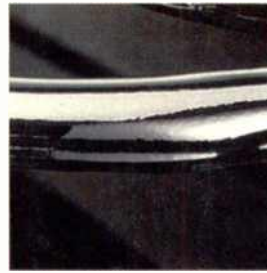
www.aesthetics-usa.com

File Under

Dreamy electronic
pop *par excellence*

R.I.Y.L.

Slowdive, Boards Of Canada,
Casino Vs. Japan



PURETONE

Stuck In A Groove v2

Stuck In A Groove, the U.S. debut from Puretone (a.k.a. Josh Abrahams), plays like pro-dance music propaganda. In the self-referential tradition of dance music, Groove's lyrics often celebrate their musical milieu (singer Amiel Daemion tingles as she relates, "Your bassline's shooting up my spine," in "Addicted To Bass"). But Abrahams throws his eager-to-initiate stone even further, genre-skipping with the heedlessness of hyper girls playing hopscotch. At first, the results are exactly what you'd expect from the man who teamed up with Baz Luhrmann on "Everybody's Free To Wear

Link

www.puretoneonline.net

File Under

Ass-shaking agitation
R.I.Y.L.

Alex Reese, A Guy Called
Gerald, Carl Craig

Sunscreen." Groove lumbers in with dated funky breaks, quasi-trip-hop and standard jump-up jungle within its first few tracks. While Daemion's hooky songwriting elevates the songs to a palpable pop level, it initially appears that Abrahams' musical knowledge is more vast than deep. Things begin to ascend once the record reaches "Lift Me Up"—with Dan The Automator co-producing, the sunny track simultaneously recalls early '80s boogie and early '90s R&B-dance radio staples. Even better is "Breakup Song," which finds Daemion in top melodic and lyrical form, the tune's bittersweet theme underscored by distorted beats meshing with gentle keyboards. Further along, Abrahams works hip-hop and acid jazz track into the mix. Groove excites because it sprawls, not only over the course of its tracks, but within them, suggesting that Abrahams is anything but stuck. >>>RICHARD M. JUZWIAK

A BAND OF BEES

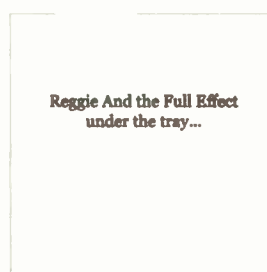
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Reggie And The Full Effect
under the tray...

REGGIE AND THE FULL EFFECT

Under The Tray *Vagrant*

Aside from playing drums for Coalesce and hammering keyboards for emo icons the Get Up Kids, the talented James DeWees is also responsible for perpetuating the myth of Reggie And The Full Effect. The official story has something to do with a suspicious fire, Reggie's disappearance and some lost tape reels ending up on Vagrant's doorstep. *Under The Tray* was supposedly recorded from Reggie's prison cell. But by now, we know the truth is that DeWees likes to fuck around in the studio and Vagrant likes to release it. The sound is a mix of moog-happy emo-pop

Link

www.reggieandthefulleffect.com

File Under

Emo without the emotion
R.I.Y.L.

The Get Up Kids, Coalesce,
Jackass: The Movie

interspersed with electronica, metal and assorted clips of drunken trailer trash. While this formula worked wonders on 2000's *Promotional Copy*, this time DeWees forgot to pen enough songs worth writing home about. Although fans praise Reggie as emo free from its whiny tendencies, DeWees takes this license and dives headfirst into the shallow end. Instead of songs about broken hearts, we get songs about... well... nothing, and the effect is hollow. Sure, "Happy V-Day" achieves the perfect balance of kitsch and earnestness, and "What Won't Kill You Eats Gas" recalls classic Weezer, but parodies like the hardcore metal of "Linkin Verbz" are infuriating. DeWees means no harm, but much of *Under The Tray* comes off like an inside joke in stereo. Guess you had to be there. >>>JASON KUNDRATH



THE SCENIC

The Acid Gospel Experience

Hidden Agenda/Parasol

With its first full length CD since '96's *Acquatica*, the Scenic returns in atmospheric splendor with *The Acid Gospel Experience*, a sprawling journey through intergalactic ambient wavelengths. This instrumental supergroup is the brainchild of Bruce Licher, and includes former members of Savage Republic and Shiva Burlesque. While previous efforts fixated on grafting textural music onto geographic phenomena, the new disc leaves land behind with an unwavering focus skyward. The seamless

Link

www.parasol.com

File Under

Caution: weightless conditions

R.I.Y.L.

Brian Eno, Ennio Morricone,

Savage Republic

song cycle features a precise rhythmic groundwork of percussion over which all manner of instrumentation is layered, from meditation-inducing sitars, to an array of Moog and synth patches, to the occasional glockenspiel riff. "Skylight," with its eerie guitar arpeggios, is reminiscent of Meddle-era Pink Floyd, while "The Acid Gospel" lays a repetitive guitar and bass riff over an ethereal soundscape that slowly grinds its way to a hypnotic pitch. Pianist and legendary ambient maestro Harold Budd provides the ghostly keyboard meanderings on "Under A Wing." The disc is punctuated by an 18-minute-plus finale that could easily double as an alternate soundtrack for your 2001 DVD. This is music for when you feel like hovering, say, a mile or so above cloud level, just hanging out and reminiscing over one or two of your past lives. >>>KARL WACHTER



THE SHIPPING NEWS

Three-Four Quarterstick

The drab, boxy production values and sketchy, half-written compositions that dominate the Shipping News' latest release don't make a whole lot of sense unless you happen to know the nature of the enterprise: *Three-Four* collects three limited-edition EPs released in 2001-2, along with a few tracks that didn't make the cut the first time out. Each of the self-distributed "RMSN Series" collected one solo recording by each of the band's multi-instrumentalists (Jason Noble, Kyle Crabtree and Jeff Mueller), made by their own admission "within a limited time frame and nearly in secret." This experiment would hold

Link

www.southern.com/southern/

band/SHIPN

File Under

Remedial math-rock

R.I.Y.L.

Slint, Rachels, Jandek

more interest if all three didn't share similar ideas about texture and structure, as well as the colorless singing style once considered obligatory by serious indie-rockers. (On Mueller's "Dogs," Chris Higdon of Elliott supplies the disc's sole memorable vocal hook.) The most satisfying tracks (Crabtree's "Haymaker," Noble's "The Architect In Hell") manage intricate feats of one-man power-trio-ism, but others wander aimlessly into inchoate acoustic-backed moaning ("Sickening Bridge Versus Horrible Bed") or 'what-does-this-slider-do?' synth oscillations (the revealingly titled "We Started To Drift"). Is it churlish to complain that this arty side-project doesn't have the concision or attention to detail of one of the Shipping News' 'real' albums? Only if you don't have to listen to it. >>>FRANKLIN BRUND



SONGS: OHIA

The Magnolia Electric Co Secretly Canadian

After years of recording stripped-down, Smog-like mope-alongs, Songs: Ohia's Jason Molina finally put a little muscle where his mouth was on last year's *Didn't It Rain*. *The Magnolia Electric Co* stays this course, likewise employing the vocal talents of Jennie Benford (of Jim And Jennie And the Pinetops fame, relatively speaking) and submitting Molina's angst-ridden Southern rockers to the knob-twiddling discipline of his Windy City colleague Steve Albini. So even in the context of the Songs: Ohia canon, the new disc isn't exactly revolutionary; pan back a little further and it also sounds a lot like Molina's friend

Link

www.secretlycanadian.com

File Under

Blue-collar rock with an

existential crisis

R.I.Y.L.

Will Oldham, *On The Beach*-era

Neil Young, Allman Brothers

and spiritual twin Will Oldham's recent output under his Bonnie Prince Billy shingle. Both take aim and hit, squarely, the exact moment in rock history when the hottest shit at the end of the FM dial was a lap steel strapped to a rock beat and pushed to 11. But at a time when rock of every microscopic mini-genre is a reflection in a retro hall of mirrors anyway, Molina-penned numbers like "The Old Black Hen" and "John Henry Split My Heart" boast at least the genuine conviction of craft and a refreshing lack of self-consciousness. And at best, as on album bookends "Farewell Transmission" and "Hold On Magnolia," the songs' eerie, blues-soaked beauty allows Molina's musical ghost ship to float down a Mississippi that sounds brand new. >>>MAYA SINGER

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SNOWY

Lilywhite PVC Lotus

Lilywhite's liner notes credit former Rain Parade-er Steven Roback as a producer and collaborator, but another Roback, Mazzy Star's David, comes to mind at the first frosty hum of Snowy's debut. That the brothers share more than claims to California's Paisley Underground movement becomes obvious a minute into opener "Three a.m." as vocalist Bonni Evensen floats in over a foggy bed of accordion, drums and piano that could have ably framed Hope Sandoval's pathos in the mid-'90s. There's an icy calm here—you could play *Lilywhite* at high noon

in Ecuador in the middle of July and, El Niño or not, the sky would darken and the temperature would drop at least 10 degrees. But in a welcome shift, Snowy lets glints of hope escape from the ether. Optimism comes from Evensen's we'll-get-through-this vocals: On "Pills" she urges, "All the pills that make your day a ball of tangled twine, will melt away in the sunlight." But darkness—Roback's languid backup vocals and American Music Club vet Tim Mooney's buzzing samples—always creeps back in to envelope Evensen's sultry croon, which comfortably lingers far enough above the fuzz to beckon toward a world where night is just as fun as light. >>>CHAD SWIATECKI

Link

www.snowymusic.com

File Under

Smoldering grooves

R.I.Y.L.

Mazzy Star, Morcheeba,

Portishead



TOSCA

Dehli 9 IK7

Richard Dorfmeister, of swanky down-tempo-temptors Kruder & Dorfmeister and Tosca, has done much to Vienna on the world atlas of electronica. Listening to *Dehli 9*, the new long-player from Tosca, his collaboration with Rupert Huber, it would be easy to believe that his city is all soft edges and curved surfaces. Every muted bassline, echo report and drowsy chord curves, slopes, or bends; even the marching-drum snares of "Me & Yoko Ono" sound like they're packed in cotton balls. As lounge music goes, it would be hard to find more horizontally inclined harmonies. But there's more to life than lounging, and Vienna downtempo's dubby blowback and vaguely Eastern-tinged melodies have become almost cliché, with even Kruder & Dorfmeister caught in a vicious cycle where they seem to be endlessly remixing themselves. Not every song here makes it out unscathed: "Gute Laune," featuring MC Tweed of the Different Drummer Sound System, offers two-chord dub and pitter-patter chat that's largely indistinguishable from any number of likeminded tracks. Where Tosca succeeds, oddly enough, is in injecting its music with a healthy dose of pop: The elastic bass and flourishes of acoustic guitar on "Oscar," for instance, are lovely enough, but it's the lilting melody, breathily cooed by Anna Clementi, that pushes the tune from dub to delirium. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

Link

www.g-stoned.com/acts/tosca

File Under

Music for waterbeds

R.I.Y.L.

Kruder & Dorfmeister, dZihan

& Kamien, Boozoo Bajou

But there's more to life than lounging, and Vienna downtempo's dubby blowback and vaguely Eastern-tinged melodies have become almost cliché, with even Kruder & Dorfmeister caught in a vicious cycle where they seem to be endlessly remixing themselves. Not every song here makes it out unscathed: "Gute Laune," featuring MC Tweed of the Different Drummer Sound System, offers two-chord dub and pitter-patter chat that's largely indistinguishable from any number of likeminded tracks. Where Tosca succeeds, oddly enough, is in injecting its music with a healthy dose of pop: The elastic bass and flourishes of acoustic guitar on "Oscar," for instance, are lovely enough, but it's the lilting melody, breathily cooed by Anna Clementi, that pushes the tune from dub to delirium. >>>PHILIP SHERBURNE

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TURIN BRAKES

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To everyone who helped put Coldplay at the top of the charts: Listen closely. If you missed out on Turin Brakes' 2001 debut, *The Optimist LP*, go buy it immediately, let it consume you completely, change your worldview and generally make you a better person... Now read on. With their sophomore album, former choirboys Olly Knights and Gale Paridjanian go beyond the sparse instrumentation of *The Optimist* to widen the playing field considerably. The two-man acoustic guitar setup still works perfectly for their unique blend of revelatory folk-rock, driven by Olly's

Link

www.turinbrakes.com

File Under

Anti-schlock brakes

R.I.Y.L.

Coldplay, Radiohead, Doves

astonishing vocals coupled with Gale's harmonies and six-string virtuosity, but the addition of more percussion, electronics and a filled-out backing band enables them to go to some exciting new places. Acoustic wonders abound as before—on tracks like the jaunty "Self Help" and understated beauty "Stone Thrown"—but travel in new electronic and psychedelic directions finds them simultaneously rivaling Radiohead with tracks like "Falling Down" and "Little Brother" and getting downright dark on "Panic Attack," a startling divergence that wouldn't sound out of place on *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Stack that up next to a single like feel-good-hit-of-the-winter "Pain Killer," complete with flourishes of flute, and you have a disc with enough diversity and intensity to keep your blood rushing throughout your entire body, instead of just to your head. >>>DOUG LEVY



COSMO VITELLI

Clean Astralwerks

Borrowing his nom de DJ from the anti-hero of John Cassavetes' masterpiece *The Killing Of A Chinese Bookie*, Cosmo Vitelli (né Benjamin Boguet) is the latest house music sensation to float westward from Paris. He lit some butts a few years back with the electrosappy "We Don't Need No Smurf Here," which Afrika Bambaataa has remixed, and no doubt fulfilled a boyhood dream when he subsequently recorded with Jalal of the Last Poets. Add a couple of globetrotting star DJ gigs to the bio and it was only a matter of time before he unleashed the typi-

cally uneven debut album on us. Like buckets and buckets of similar vanity projects, *Clean* only works in fits and starts. Vitelli has employed Chicago-based vocalist Harrison Crump, who's worked with Felix Da Housecat, on several cuts, the idea being that Crump's soulfulness will provide tension against the cool, sequenced beats. On "Party Day," the first single, the mournful combination works like autumn leaves sprinkling down on a summer beach. And "Come On, Generation Clone" juices more blood from the Simple Text computer voice module than TLC managed. But too often, the fever hits only George Michael or Paul Young degrees, jettisoning the tension throughout. And besides, the best dance artists never did give nothin' to the Tin Man that he didn't already have. >>>KEVIN JOHN

Link

www.astralwerks.com

File Under

House music tout le soir!

R.I.Y.L.

Daft Punk, Stardust, Cassius



PAUL WELLER

Illumination Yep-Roc

Brit-pop juggernauts like Oasis have spent the past decade in a surly mood over the difficulty they've had breaking through in the U.S. But nobody has a bigger cross to bear than Paul Weller, the former leader of mod-punks the Jam and suave pop stylists Style Council. For 25 years Weller's racked up Brit hits—57 Top 40 singles in all—without making a dent in the U.S. *Illumination*, his first solo disc to see proper Stateside release in six years (not counting last year's live *Days Of Speed*), hit number one back home, and it's a perfect indication of just how

far out of step Weller is with the American mainstream. Sure, his major touchstones are American—classic soul and R&B have been the warm heart beating beneath the sometimes prickly, often gutsy and usually romantic surface of his songwriting all along. But Weller's blue-eyed soul has a distinctly British veneer, and he's given to the occasionally folksy moment that echoes with the ghosts of Celtic bards past. *Illumination* brings all of these ever-changing moods together, from the punkish protest of "A Bullet For Everyone," a salvo he delivers with guitars blazing, to the old-school Who-style coming-of-age pop of the harmony-filled "Leafy Mysteries," to the gentle acoustic fingerpicking of "Who Brings Joy." It confirms Weller's status as an English hall of famer who simply can't get in the game in the U.S. >>>MATT ASHARE

Link

www.paulweller.com

File Under

Middle-aged blue-eyed soul

R.I.Y.L.

The Jam, Style Council,

Steve Winwood



IANNIS XENAKIS

Persepolis + Remixes—Edition | Asphodel

Name-dropped in Lester Bangs' pioneering *A Reasonable Guide To Horrible Noise*, Iannis Xenakis was a major 20th century composer whose knack for carpetbombing noise put most outer-limits rock to shame. In 1971, Iranian dictator Muhammad Reza Shah commissioned Xenakis, who died in 2001, to compose a work for an event commemorating the 2500th anniversary of Iran's founding by Cyrus The Great. Blasted out of 59 speakers, the resulting hour-long *Persepolis* must have indeed been a monumental mind-scramble to all who witnessed its light-bathed per-

formance. But on disc here, its "rising waves of intensity" fail to materialize. To most ears, it's just one long furnace blast of noise, like sticking your head up a space shuttle's ass. A second CD of remixes from such disciples as Otomo Yoshihide, Merzbow and Francisco Lopez has been added to somehow offset the uneasy fact of Xenakis's association with a dictator. But, if anything, these supposedly less-politically fraught commissions are more like varying degrees of intensity rather than actual reworkings. So it hardly matters that Ryoji Ikeda's take is an Atari 2600 game rotting from the inside out and Ulf Langheinrich's is a comparatively soothing industrial moan—it all functions nicely enough to rearrange our stressed-out brain molecules. >>>KEVIN JOHN

Link

www.asphodel.com

File Under

Noise annoys

R.I.Y.L.

John Cage, Black Dice, Mars

the
go betweens

bright yellow
bright orange

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CMJ

NEW MUSIC REPORT



TOP 75

#1

JOSEPH ARTHUR
REDEMPTION'S SON
ENJOY-REAL WORLD-UNIVERSAL

1 JOSEPH ARTHUR <i>Redemption's Son</i> Enjoy/Real World/Universal	26 HAR MAR SUPERSTAR <i>You Can Feel Me</i> Record Collection/Warner Bros.	51 ATOMIC 7 <i>Gowns</i> By Edith Head Mint
2 PRIMAL SCREAM <i>Evil Heat</i> Epic	27 KINSKI <i>Airs Above Your Station</i> Sub Pop	52 DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE <i>You Can Play These Songs With Drums</i> Barsuk
3 SIGUR ROS () Fat Cat/PIAS America/MCA	28 AUDIOSLAVE <i>Audiotape</i> Epic	53 BECK <i>Sea Change</i> DGC/Interscope
4 CALLA <i>Televise</i> Arena Rock Recording Co.	29 JURASSIC 5 <i>Power In Numbers</i> Interscope	54 THE ROGERS SISTERS <i>Purity Evil</i> Troublemaker Unlimited
5 THE RAVEONETTES <i>Whip It On</i> Orchard/Red Ink	30 CAT POWER <i>History Advance</i> [EP] Matador	55 PRETENDERS <i>Loose Screw</i> Artemis
6 THE ROOTS <i>Phrenology</i> MCA	31 DRIVE LIKE JEHU <i>Yank Crime</i> Swami	56 PHISH <i>Round Room</i> Elektra
7 RICHARD ASHCROFT <i>Human Conditions</i> Hut/Virgin	32 VARIOUS ARTISTS <i>Almost You: The Songs Of Elvis Costello</i> Garp	57 LITTLE WINGS <i>Light Green</i> Leaves K
8 ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT <i>Live From Coast X-Ray</i> Vagrant	33 THE DATSUNS <i>3-Song Sampler</i> Hellsquad/V2	58 KOUFAX <i>Social Life</i> Vagrant
9 THE DONNAS <i>Spend The Night</i> Atlantic	34 WE RAGAZZI <i>The Ache</i> Self-Starters Foundation	59 THE STITCHES <i>Twelve Imaginary Inches</i> TKO
10 THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY <i>Biggie Cakes</i> [EP] Burning Heart/Epitaph	35 THE BLOOD GROUP <i>Volunteers</i> Le Grand Magistry	60 OPEN HAND <i>The Dream</i> Trustkill
11 BADLY DRAWN BOY <i>Have You Fed The Fish?</i> BMG/ARTISTdirect	36 BOARDS OF CANADA <i>Twison</i> Music 70/Warp	61 GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR <i>Yangu</i> U.X.U. Constellation
12 THE STREETS <i>Original Pirate Material</i> Vice/Atlantic	37 PAS/CAL <i>The Handbag Memoirs</i> Le Grand Magistry	62 JOHNNY MARR AND THE HEALERS <i>Breathless</i> [Sampler] ARTISTdirect/Music
13 CROOKED FINGERS <i>Red Devil Dawn</i> Merge	38 THE CLEAN <i>Anthology</i> Merge	63 THE SADIES <i>Stories Often Told</i> Yep Roc
14 DAMONE <i>From The Attic</i> RCA	39 KID DAKOTA <i>So Pretty</i> Chairkickers' Union	64 ADD N TO (X) <i>Loud Like Nature</i> Mute
15 TORI AMOS <i>Scarlet's Walk</i> Epic	40 PS <i>PS</i> [EP] Speechless	65 TONY ROMANELLO <i>Counting Stars</i> Engine Shed
16 SMASHING PUMPKINS <i>Earphoria</i> Virgin	41 MINUS THE BEAR <i>Highly Refined Pirates</i> Suicide Squeeze	66 LIARS <i>Fins To Make Us More Fish-Like</i> [EP] Mute/Blast First
17 BJORK <i>Bjork's Greatest Hits</i> Elektra	42 THE CORAL <i>Skeleton Key</i> EP Deltasonic/Columbia	67 ONEIDA/LIARS <i>Atheists, Reconsider</i> [Split] Arena Rock Recording Co.
18 DJ ME DJ YOU <i>Can You See The Music?</i> Ennie Meenie	43 THE MOUNTAIN GOATS <i>Tallahassee</i> 4AD	68 BOOKS ON TAPE <i>Throw Down Your Laptops</i> Deathbomb Arc
19 IKARA COLT <i>Chat And Business</i> Epitaph/Fantastic Plastic	44 RIDE <i>Ox4 The Best Of Ride</i> The First Time	69 FOO FIGHTERS <i>One By One</i> Roswell/RCA
20 CREEPER LAGOON <i>Remember The Future</i> [EP] Arena Rock Recording Co.	45 JEFF HANSON <i>Son Kill</i> Rock Stars	70 GEORGE HARRISON <i>Brainwashed</i> Capitol
21 HELMS <i>McCarthy</i> Kimchee	46 THE DELGAOOS <i>Hate</i> Mantra	71 ZWAN <i>Honestly</i> [CD5] Reprise
22 HOLOPAW <i>Holopaw</i> Sub Pop	47 HOT HOT HEAT <i>Make Up The Breakdown</i> Sub Pop	72 USELESS I.D. <i>No Vacation From The World</i> Kung Fu
23 DAVID GRAY <i>A New Day At Midnight</i> ATO/RCA	48 BRAND NEW <i>Your Favorite Weapon</i> Triple Crown/Razor And Tie	73 JETS TO BRAZIL <i>Perfecting Loneliness</i> Mordam/Jade Tree
24 JOHNNY CASH <i>American IV: The Man Comes Around</i> Lost Highway/American	49 SIMIÄN <i>We Are Your Friends</i> Astralwerks	74 BOB DYLAN <i>Live 1975</i> Bootleg Series, Vol. 5 Legacy
25 PAUL WELLER <i>Illumination</i> Yep Roc	50 THE BLAM <i>The Blam</i> Self-Released	75 THE SEA AND CAKE <i>One Bedroom</i> Thrill Jockey

3 YEARS AGO

BECK *Midnite Vultures* (Geffen/Interscope)
ANI DIFRANCO *To The Teeth* (Righteous Babe)
FOO FIGHTERS *There Is Nothing Left To Lose* (Roswell/RCA)
JOE STRUMMER... *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style* (Hellcat/Epitaph)
SUICIDE MACHINES *The Suicide Machines* (Hollywood)

10 YEARS AGO

KING MISSILE *Happy Hour* (Atlantic)
NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN *Are You Normal?* (Chaos)
THERAPY? *Nurse* (A&M)
VARIOUS ARTISTS *Tannis Root Presents: Freedom Of Choice* (Caroline)
10,000 MANIACS *Our Time In Eden* (Elektra)

HIP-HOP TOP 10

1	THE ROOTS Phrenology MCA
2	GZA/GENIUS Legend Of The Liquid Sword MCA
3	NAS God's Son Columbia
4	TALIB KWELI Quality Rawkus
5	COMMON The Electric Circus MCA
6	JURASSIC 5 Power In Numbers Interscope
7	LARGE PROFESSOR 1st Class Matador
8	MR. LIF I Phantom Definitive Jux
9	MC PAUL BARMAN Pauelleujah! Coup d'Etat
10	THE STREETS Original Pirate Material Vice/Atlantic

LOUD ROCK TOP 10

1	OPETH Deliverance Music For Nations/Koch
2	AMON AMARTH Versus The World Metal Blade
3	LACUNA COIL Comalies Century Media
4	BLOODBATH Resurrection Through Carnage Century Media
5	MUDVAYNE The End Of All Things To Come Epic
6	RAMALLAH But A Whimper Bridge Nine
7	AUDIOSLAVE Audioslave Epic
8	NAPALM DEATH Order Of The Leech Spitfire
9	PISSING RAZDRS Live In The Devil's Triangle Spitfire
10	BEYOND THE SIXTH SEAL Earth And Sphere Lifeforce

RETAIL TOP 25

1	NORAH JONES Come Away With Me Blue Note
2	SOUNDTRACK Chicago Epic
3	COLDPLAY A Rush Of Blood To The Head Capitol
4	MISSY "MISDEMEANOR" ELLIOTT Under Construction Elektra
5	AVRIL LAVIGNE Let Go Arista
6	CHRISTINA AGUILERA Stripped RCA
7	QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE Songs For The Deaf Interscope
8	AUDIOSLAVE Audioslave Epic
9	NAS God's Son Columbia
10	SOUNDTRACK 8 Mile Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
11	THE ROOTS Phrenology MCA
12	BECK Sea Change DGC/Interscope
13	EMINEM The Eminem Show Shady/Aftermath/Interscope
14	2PAC Better Dayz Interscope
15	JENNIFER LOPEZ This Is Me... Then Epic
16	AALIYAH I Care 4 U Blackground
17	JOHN MAYER Room For Squares Aware
18	THE ROLLING STONES Forty Licks Virgin
19	JA RULE The Last Temptation Murder Inc./Def Jam
20	THE FLAMING LIPS Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots Warner Bros.
21	KID ROCK Cocky Lava-Atlantic
22	THE STREETS Original Pirate Material Vice/Atlantic
23	GODD CHARLOTTE Young And The Hopeless Epic
24	THE DIXIE CHICKS Home Open Wide/Sony
25	INTERPOL Turn On The Bright Lights Matador



#1 LOUD ROCK
OPETH
DELIVERANCE MUSIC FOR NATIONS/KOCH



#1 JAZZ
MATTHEW SHIPP
EQUILIBRIUM THIRSTY EAR



#1 RETAIL
NORAH JONES
COME AWAY WITH ME BLUE NOTE

RPM TOP 10

1	FC KAHUNA Machine Says Yes Netwerk
2	CUICA City To City Ubiquity
3	TIGA DJ Kicks IK7
4	RONI SIZE Touching Down Full Cycle
5	THE STREETS Original Pirate Material Vice/Atlantic
6	VARIOUS ARTISTS Dub Selector 2 Quango/Palm
7	BOARDS OF CANADA Twoism Music 70/Warp
8	TINO'S BREAKS VOLUME 4 Mambo TinoCorp
9	AMON TOBIN Out From Out Where Ninja Tune
10	RICHIE HAWTIN AND SVEN VATH The Sound Of The Third Season Mute

JAZZ TOP 10

1	MATTHEW SHIPP Equilibrium Thirsty Ear
2	JOHN COLTRANE A Love Supreme Verve/Impulse!
3	DIANA KRALL Live In Paris Verve
4	HUGH MASEKELA Time Columbia
5	JACKY TERRASSON Smile Capitol/Blue Note
6	WADADA LEO SMITH'S GOLDEN QUARTET Year Of The Elephant Pi
7	ROSCOE MITCHELL Song For My Sister Pi
8	BEN ALLISON Peace Pipe Palmetto
9	ORRIN EVANS Meant To Shine Palmetto
10	JIMMY MCGRUFF McGruff Avenue Milestone

JUST OUT

FEBRUARY 11

ABSINTHE BLIND Rings *Mud-Parasol*
THE AISLERS SET How I Learned To Write Backwards *Suicide Squeeze*
ALL NIGHT All Night *Tea Pee-Rubric*
ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE Attention! Blah Blah Blah *Hopeless*
AZITA Enantiotropia *Drag City*
BAD TIMES Bad Times *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
MICKEY BAKER Wildest Guitar *Sepiatone*
BAKA BEYOND East To West *Narada World*
BREAST FED YAK Get Your Greasy Head Off The Sham *Birdman*
BLU CANTRELL Bittersweet *Arista*
CANYON Canyon *Gern Blandsten*
CHAINO New Sounds In Rock 'N' Roll (Jungle Rock) *Bacchus Archives*
CDUNT THE STARS Never Be Taken Alive *Victory*
DAZE ALONE Good Music For Bad People *Daze Alone*
DOWNBEAT 5 Ism *Sympathy For The Record Industry*
FABULOUS DISASTER Panty Raid *Pink And Black*
FDRCEFIELD Roggaboggas *Load*
FURTHER SEEMS FOREVER How To Start A Fire *Tooth And Nail*
JEFFREY GAINES Toward The Sun *Artemis*
GENERATORS From Rust To Ruin *TKO*
GOODWILL That Was A Moment *Negative Progression*
JOHN HAMMOND Ready For Love *Back Porch*
HOLLAND Photographs And Tidal Waves *Tooth And Nail*
JFA We Know You Suck *Alternative Tentacles*
JR EWING Ride Paranoia *GSL*
KISSING CHADS Enter With A Bullet EP *Fueled By Ramen*
PATTY LARKIN Red=Luck *Vanguard*
TED LEO/PHARMACISTS Hearts Of Oak *Lookout*
CHRISTIANA MCBRIDE Vertical Vision *Warner Bros.*
MASSIVE ATTACK 100th Window *Virgin*
MEN AT WORK Business As Usual *Columbia-Legacy*
MEN AT WORK Cargo *Columbia-Legacy*
NUMBERS Death *Tigerbeat 6*
ORCHESTRA SUPERSTRING Orchestra Superstring *Dionysus*
DZZY OSBOURNE The Essential Ozzy Osbourne *Epic*
ERLEND DYE Unrest *Source-Astralwerks*
PACIFIER Pacifier *Arista*
PASCAL The Handbag Memoirs EP *Le Grand Magistry*
PITCHFORK Eucalyptus *Swami*
PLEASUREHORSE Bareskinrug *Load*
RED HOT VALENTINES Calling Off Today EP *Polyvinyl*
TONY ROMANELLO Counting Stars *Engine Shed*
RODMFUL DF BLUES The First Album *Hyena*
RUINERS How's That Grab Ya? *Disaster*
SOCIALBURN Where You Are *Elektra*
DWAYNE SODABERRK Partying Without Inhibition EP *Tigerbeat 6*
STALAG 13 In Control *Dr. Strange*
MIRIAM STOCKLEY Second Nature *Narada*
SUPERGRASS Life On Other Planets *Island*
TEEN IDOLS/SQUIRTGUN Dysfunction *Shadowman EP Asian Man*
THIRD EYE BLIND Crystal Ball *Elektra*
TOSCA Deh!9 *G Stone-1K7*
TROIKA Kingdom Of The Sun *Enso*
PAUL VAN DYK Global *Mute*
TOWNES VAN ZANDT For The Sake Of The Song *Tomato*
TOWNES VAN ZANDT De'ta Momma Blues *Tomato*
U.S. BOMBS Covert Action *Helicat*
VARIOUS ARTISTS The American Song-Poem Anthology *Bar None*
VARIOUS ARTISTS African Express *Shakti*

VARIOUS ARTISTS Buenos Aires Cafe: Instrumental Tangos *Narada World*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Carnivals, Cotton Candy And You *Orange Sky*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Dirtnap Across The Northwest *Dirtnap*
VARIOUS ARTISTS F Com Classic And Rare: La Collection Chapter 3 *F Com-PIAS America*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Oil: Chicago Punk Refined *Thick*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Riddim Driven - Diggy Diggy *VP*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Riddim Driven - Wash Out *VP*
VARIOUS ARTISTS We're A Happy Family: A Tribute To The Ramones *DVB-Columbia*
VEKERS Vekers *Ace Fu*
CDSMO VITELLI Clean *Astralwerks*
ERIC VON SCHMIDT 2nd Right, 3rd Row *Tomato*
DDN WATSON Then And Now *Tomato*
WILCO Kamera EP *Nonesuch*
YANNI Ethnicity *Virgin*

FEBRUARY 18

AEREOGRAMME Sleep And Release *Matador*
ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY Constellation *Relapse*
ALWAYS Looking For Mr. Wright *Le Grand Magistry*
ANTIPOP CONSORTIUM Antipop Vs. Matthew Shipp *Thirsty Ear*
BDRN AGAINST 9 Patriotic Hymns For Children *Kill Rock Stars*
BDRN AGAINST The Rebel Sound Of Shit And Failure *Kill Rock Stars*
BRAID Frame And Canvas *Polyvinyl*
CALEXICD Feast Of Wire *Quarterstick*
CANYON Canyon *Gern Blandsten*
CAT POWER You Are Free *Matador*
JAMES CHANCE Irresistible Impulse Box Set *Tiger Style*
JOHNNY COPELAND Ghetto Child *Castle*
THE CDRAL The Coral *Columbia*
DETROIT EXPERIMENT Detroit Experiment *Ropeadope*
DIRTY THREE She Has No Strings *Touch And Go*
LINDA EDER Broadway My Way *Atlantic*
EMBALMER There Was Blood Everywhere *Relapse*
STACE ENGLAND Lovey Dovey All The Time *Gnashville*
FLARE Hung *Le Grand Magistry*
FABDLUS Street Dreams *Elektra*
GO-BETWEENERS Bright Yellow, Bright Orange *Jetset*
GRAY MARKET GOODS Gray Market Goods *Thrill Jockey*
KINGS OF LEON Kings Of Leon EP *RCA*
MC LYTE Da Underground Heat Vol. 1 *iMusic*
MINISTRY Animositisomina *Sanctuary*
MDRPHINE The Best Of 1992-1995 *Rykodisc*
MDUSE DN MARS Best Of *Beggars Group*
AARON NEVILLE Orchid In The Storm *Hyena*
DRNA The Very Thought Of You *A440*
DWL AND THE PUSSYCAT Owl And The Pussycat *Kill Rock Stars*
JERRY PORTNOY Home Run Hitter *Castle*
PDSTAL SERVICE Give Up *Sub Pop*
PRAM Dark Island *Merge*
PRODF Searching For 4 Jerry Garcia *I.F.*
REGGIE AND THE FULL EFFECT Under The Tray *Vagrant*
RYE CDALITDN Jersey Girls *Tiger Style*
THE SHIPPING NEWS Three-Four *Quarterstick*
NDBUKAZU TAKEMURA 10th *Thrill Jockey*
THE END Transfer Trachea Reverberations From Point *Relapse*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Survive And Advance, Vol. 2 *Merge*
T-BONE WALKER Back On The Scene *Castle*
PAUL WELLER Illumination *Yep Roc*
DAR WILLIAMS The Beauty Of Rain *Razor And Tie*
ZION I Deep Water Slang 2.0 *Raptivism*



PHASER

FEBRUARY 25

A18 Forever/afternothing; *Victory*
MINOI ABAR It Just Happens That Way *GRP*
CLONE OF BEES Sunshine Hit Me *Wait Of Sourp-Astralwerks*
ALPINE STARS White Noise *Astralwerks*
AMERICAN HI-FI The Art Of Losing *Island*
ANTISEEN Here To Ruin Your Groove *TKO*
APHEX TWIN 26 Mixes For Cash *Warp*
AQUEDUCT Power Ballads *Popular Music*
RICHARD ASHCROFT Human Conditions *Virgin*
ATARI STAR Dispelling The Myth Of Accurate Maps *Johann's Face*
BLEU Redhead *Columbia*
BIG VS. RODTSMAN/DJ RUPTURE Split EP *Tigerbeat 6*
CARPETTES Early Tapes '77-'78 *Overground-Surefire*
CINDER Break Your Silence *Geffen*
CLONE DEFECTS Shapes Of Venus *In The Red*
CLUE TO KALO Come Here When You Sleepwalk *Mush*
COUNT THE STARS Never Be Taken Alive *Victory*
CURSED One *Deathwish*
DARKNESS REMAINS Lamia *Tribunal*
DEATH BY STORED Into The Valley Of Death *Epitaph*
D.D.C. Deuce *Silverback*
DREAM IS DEAD Taking Friendly Fire *Escape Artist*
VICTOR DUPLAX International Affairs V. 2.0 *Hollywood*
ECCHOBY Giraffe *Mute*
FISCHERSPOGNER #1 *Capitol*
F-MINUS Wake Up Screaming *Helicat*
ONALD GLAUDE Mixed Lve: 2nd Session *Moonshine*
JEFF HANSON Sor *Kill Rock Stars*
JON HASSELL Earthquake Island *Tomato*
HOLLYWOOD HATE Product Of Dur Environment *TKO*
IN CONTROL The Truth Hurts *Indecision*
IN OUT II Dtic And Other Gestures *Emperor Jones*
INTROSPECT Introspect *A-F*
INVENTING EDWARD We've Met An Impasse (By Midnight We'll Be Naked) *Substandard-New Red Archnus*
LEROY JENKINS Spac Minds, New Worlds, Survival Of America *Tomato*
DANIEL JOHNSTON FEATURING MARK LINKDUS Fear Yourself *Gammon*
KAADA Thank You For Giving Me Your Valuable Time *Ipecac*

JEANNIE KENDALL Jeannie Kendall *Rounder*
MARA'AKATE Mara'akate *One Day Saviour*
MDHAMMAD SHARIF KHAN The Music Of Pakistan, Volume I *Rounder*
LIGHTHOUSE The Best Of Lighthouse: Sunny Days Again *True North*
LIGHTNING BOLT Wonderful Rainbow *Load*
JEFF LORBER Philly Style *Narada Jazz*
MAE Destination: Beautiful *Tooth And Nail*
THE MINUS 5 Down With Wilco *Yep Roc*
MDUNTAINERS Mountainers EP *Mute*
MURS The End Of The Beginning *Definitive Jux*
THE MUSIC The Music *Capitol*
SEVARA NAZARKHAN Yoi Bolsir: Real World *Real World*
NDTWIST Neon Golden *Dominio*
PAPER LIONS The Symptom And The Sick *Kindercore*
BIG MATT PETTY The Last DJ Live At The Olympic *Warner Bros.*
PHASER Sway *Emperor Norton*
PLAYING ENEMY Ephemera *Escape Artist*
PUNCHLINE The Rewind EP *Fueled By Ramen*
RAW POWER Still Screaming (After 20 Years) *Six Weeks*
ROCKET SUMMER Calendar Days *Militia Group*
ADRIAN SHERWOOD Never Trust A Hippie *Real World*
SDULO Man, The Manipulator *Plug Research*
SPIV Don'tcha Know *Pop Sweatshop*
TDBIN SPROUT Lost Planets And Phantom Voices *Luna*
SPYRO GYRA Original Cinema *Heads Up*
SWINGIN' UTTERS Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass and Bones *Fat Wreck Chords*
SDNNY TERRY ANO BROWNIE MCGHEE Sun's Gonna Shine *Tomato*
TEXTBOOK TRAITORS You Pull The Strings That Make Us Dance *Magic Bullet*
TREBLE CHARGER Delox *Virgin*
VARIOUS ARTISTS African Express *Shakti*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Great Tomato Singer/Songwriter Collection *Tomato*
VARIOUS ARTISTS Louisiana Piono Rhythms *Tomato*
VARIOUS ARTISTS That Trance Mix 2 *Moonshine*
NICK WARREN Global Underground. Reykjavik *Global Underground*
WILLIE AND LDBD Manana *Narada World*
MATT WILSDN QUARTET Humidity *Palmetto*



Bobby Brown

STORY: CAM'RON DAVIS • ILLUSTRATION: NICK MEOLA

I looked my mother square in the face and went in for the kill. "Mom, it's my prerogative," I said flatly. "I can do what I want to do."

It was a standoff, a 12-year-old me versus my 40-year-old mother. The issue: my future schooling. My plan was to head to the local public school with "the cool kids." She had different ideas involving a private prep school, packed with long ties and short buses. This was to be the last in a series of living room-clearing battles—and I was going to end it all with an ironclad line from Bobby Brown's me-against-the-world statement of purpose, "My Prerogative." The deathblow delivered, I coolly folded my arms and waited for surrender.

Four months later I was in the back of a 12-seater wearing a tie and a blazer with a "Hello, my name is CAMERON" tag covering up a froofy crest, complete with noble griffin standing proudly against a coat of arms. Bobby wouldn't have put up with this. This was not how the New Jacks...er, swung.

Bobby first commanded my attention with the video for "My Prerogative." Bobby kickin' it in his black jumpsuit, drive-thru headset cocked to the right, flanked on either side by a hot girl playing a key-tar over a truly sinister bassline—it didn't get better than that. Deep down, I knew

my total lack of coordination would keep me from ever matching Bobby's style, but that never stopped me from trying, thrusting my prepubescent pelvis every which way and endangering furniture and pets alike.

When I finally saw past his style and dug into his substance, "My Prerogative"'s moral hit me like a ton of spandex. "They say I'm crazy, I really don't care—that's my prerogative," Bobby opined. "They say I'm nasty, but I don't give a damn—getting girls is how I live."

I knew nothing about getting girls but I knew defiance when I heard it, and I was hearing it in Bobby. I pictured him as a man on the edge, fighting a near-impossible battle against those who would force him to change. Moments later Bobby confirmed that this was indeed the case: "Not long to go," he assured me, "before I win this fight."

My fight may have been lost, but with Bobby's help I was going to make the best of things. I tore off the nametag and loosened the tie, because that was my prerogative. When the priests threatened detention, I was ecstatic. They were saying I was nasty, but I didn't give a damn—loosening ties was how I lived.

After two hours of detention and a week's grounding, both tie and tag were back in place, along with the first inklings that perhaps Bobby's philosophy didn't jibe with everyday life. Bobby's prerogative failed to get me out of gym class or group projects, and made no headway against Sunday Mass or English papers. I resisted, in an English-lit essay on Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," comparing the lazy clerk's "I would prefer not to" to Bobby's mission statement. Seeing how well our worldview had gone over so far, it didn't seem like Bartlebobby Brown would be a hit. (The fact that Bartleby's attitude lands him in a mental institution didn't help Bobby's cause either.)

By the time I had noticed girls, the "Humpin' Around" video had hit the airwaves, but I had already learned not to trust Bobby. Good thing, too: This video portrayed Bobby as such a dog that his lady was attempting to hack into his electronic little black book to make sure she was the only one—which, in her heart, she knew she wasn't. Whitney Houston had no idea what she was getting herself into. I did, though, and unlike her, Bobby and I were through.

Years later, I flipped past *Primetime Live* and saw my former idol squirming beneath Diane Sawyer's incisive questioning. It seemed the prerogative had worked out just as well for him, as he made excuses for his very public marital and drug troubles, nervously fidgeting and sweating like a Christmas ham. This was a man defeated; Bobby would hump around no more.

After turning off my former mentor, I fished out my copy of *Don't Be Cruel*, sampled that sinister bassline and served it up as a tribute to Bobby at my band's next show. It bombed. The crowd thought it was nasty. Summoning what was left of Bobby's spirit, I didn't give a damn.

Cam'ron Davis is a regular contributor to CMJ New Music Monthly and a member of Hoboken, New Jersey's Altered Egos crew.

LISTEN UP

50

MADE THE FIRST CUT

10

COMPETED IN NYC

3

WENT HEAD-TO-HEAD IN L.A.

1

DREAM BECAME A REALITY

**MANY TRIED.
1 SURVIVED.**

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