

InterMixx
Webzine
Online Edition

December 2001 • Issue #87 • FREE!



Have a
HAPPY
Holiday
with
Jennifer
O'Hara
and
KUDRA

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KUDRA

by Noel Ramos

Jennifer O'Hara is far from your typical musician, which explains at least partly why she ended up in a band that is far from typical. **Kudra's** music has been unsuccessfully described as "progressive," or hard rock, or "alterna-rock," but it has continuously defied those descriptions. Jennifer herself has also defied typical descriptions as a musician. I can count the female drummers I know on one finger, and Jenn is it. She also bucks the trend as so few drummers have, by being an active spokesperson for the group, and as our front cover photo illustrates, a likely visual icon. Replacing drummer Justin Piccorillo just over a year ago, Jenn is fast becoming a recognizable figure. Despite her Gwen Stefani-like allure, Jenn makes it clear that her beauty and charm do not overshadow the teamwork of the band.

Formed in 1999, by former members of **Red 40 Lake**, Joe Pisko and Mike Bibeau, Kudra has been tweaking its line-up and metamorphosing into one of Connecticut's most influential groups in their genre. Well, that's assuming they fit in a genre, but as I said, they definitely have been making a mark on the local scene. With their recent entry into the ranks of InterMixx membership, Kudra has now embarked on a mission to expand that influence to a national level.

As members of the internetwork, the band plans to perform in various InterMixx showcases around the country. These performances will bolster additional efforts by the band that have already resulted in national airplay for their songs on over 600 radio stations around the US. Their online efforts have also reaped rewards, with their web site <http://www.kudraband.com> seeing over 100 unique visitors per day. Not bad for a band that elicited the bittersweet response, "They were not really suited to the cozy pub atmosphere of the Baggot Inn." This writer predicts that it won't be long before Kudra has generated enough sheer force around themselves that they will fit in wherever they damn well please.

Founding members, Joe Pisko and Mike Bibeau handle lead guitar and bass respectively. The sound they produce is rich and diverse, at once transporting you aloft and simultaneously slamming you back to earth again. The juxtapositions that Kudra employs musically, lyrically and stylistically work as well as so many of your very favorite foods that combine contrasting tastes with surprisingly delicious results. Odd meters and exotic modes are just the beginning of the Kudra treatment. By the time they get done creating a song, they have most assuredly made it uniquely their own, an impressive achievement unto itself.

Of course comparisons can and will be made. As I listened to their self-titled CD (available at <http://www.IndieGate.com>) I heard tinges of Marillion, smelled whiffs of Roxy Music, tasted hints of Jethro Tull, and felt a bit of Elvis Costello's spirit. Others have drawn comparisons to NIN or Tool. As mentioned earlier, these comparisons ultimately fail and Kudra stands alone, which is exactly as they intended it.

At press time, the band was in the cocoon once again, hoping to emerge soon with a brand new lead singer. If you have consummate musical skill and wish to make an original mark on any scene you invade, I suggest trying out for this band.

Kudra is back at Splonedog Studios recording their next CD, due to be released in 3 or 4 months. Watch for it at the IndieGate!



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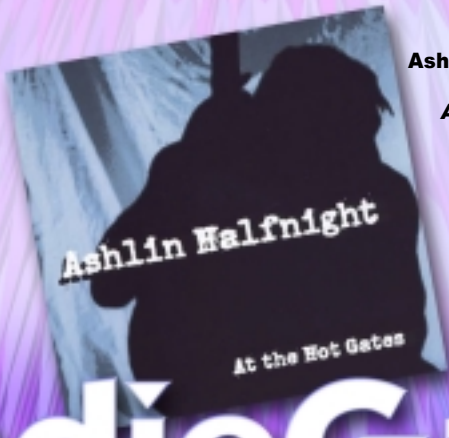
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Folk Beat

By Steve Bornstein; photos by Barry Tenin

FolkBeat is traveling far afield this issue, dealing with matters far more weighty than its usual musical concerns. Throughout this magazine's 13 year history we have struggled through any number of obstacles in order to publish. Even last winter's crippling blizzard, which caused the government to close the highways for two days, didn't keep us off the roads or away from the printer. But the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and The Pentagon, these atrocities against humanity, shook our faith and will to the core. I personally found it increasingly difficult to continue my daily routine in the face of such devastating uncertainty. This and other pressing matters led me to reevaluate what I am doing with my life. It seemed to me that I did not have enough time each day to accomplish my goals. Ultimately I decided to leave the cushy safety of my day job to dedicate myself to what I feel is my purpose in life, my reason for being here in this lifetime, namely, music: writing it, writing about it, playing it, listening to it. Life is too short and unpredictable to do less than devote oneself to what one should be doing with it. I intend to make a difference with what I have to offer to the cultural community, and hope to inspire others to do the same in whatever circles they move in.

The events of September 11th affected so many people in so many ways, both obvious and unforeseen, that it is impossible to fully address these issues in this brief space. My personal experiences are hardly worth mentioning, as they pale in comparison to the actual events and their effect on those more directly involved. Even so, I would like to share a few with you. Can you handle a little more disillusionment than you've already had to cope with? Because the only way this tale can be told is with the understanding that everybody is human, even famous people, even talented people, even people you have only heard of and can't imagine meeting, but are just like anyone else in so many ways.

Let's back up a bit. The day before our world changed forever, Monday, Sept. 10th, **Lucinda Williams** played at The Schubert Theatre in New Haven. An amazing array of the area's music community showed up for this concert, more than I've ever seen in one room at one time, too many to list here. I had taken it upon myself to bring **Eric Von Schmidt**, renowned folk/blues musician, illustrator, and raconteur to this event, as he is something of a mentor for Ms. Williams. An album project he recorded with several others back in the early 60s called "The Blues Project" introduced her to the blues when she was just learning about music.

Boston's **Franz Graham** opened, her reedy voice perfectly balanced by the inclusion of a DJ scratching on a couple of numbers. Before and between sets the sound tech played Bob Dylan's new album, as it was to be released the next day. Lucinda turned in a fine set, capped by a four-song encore. The house turned up the lights too soon, as she was ready to come out and do a few more (she usually does) - patience is a virtue! After a post-show meet and greet, I drove Eric back to his home in Fairfield County and stayed over, as it was quite late.

The next morning I drove to my day job, feeling pretty good about life in general and the previous night in particular. The brilliant blue sky and blazing sun seemed to hold glorious promise for the future. This sense of well-being was quickly shattered soon after as the attacks were reported. This was one of the most surreal days I've ever lived through. It ended with me voting in the local primary, and also signing up to donate blood. I felt like a real citizen.

That Sunday **Patti Rothberg** and **Freddie Katz** came up to Westport for a family function. One of the blessings of my recent life has been becoming friends with these very talented artists and wonderful human beings. I drove down to visit for a while afterward, just to connect with these dear friends for whatever comfort and commiseration we could provide each other. Although this was several days later, we were still in shock, and couldn't seem to decide on where to go or what to do. It came out that when they got back they were going to go to Washington Square Park in the heart of Greenwich Village and make some music to help heal the shell-shocked people who were congregating there. I was indeed curious to see New York for myself, but hadn't been able to find the time. But I got to thinking, where we were was only an hour away from the city, this was a good time as any to go - in fact, better than most - and, as Patti pointed out, teasingly, I'm forever going on Adventures in Driving and Music. So, on the spur of the moment, I turned the car onto the highway and drove on in.

Whenever I go into the city I hit traffic, and have to take alternate routes. This time the traffic stayed good all the way, as if we were being led in, and we did actually get there in an hour. We stopped at Freddie's place to get his guitar and headed down to the park.

We got to Washington Square Park a little after 11 PM. Driving down 5th Avenue we could see the arch at the north end of the park and, in the distance, a cloud of smoke hanging in the air where the towers used to be. The arch was fenced off, and all the way around it people had hung sheets and large pieces of paper for people to write on. These were covered with messages, and I was happy to see they were mostly positive. There was some verbal vehemence, to be expected, and I am grateful that most of these advocated revenge on terrorists not genocide (unlike the pickup truck we had seen in Connecticut that was covered with signs that said "Nuke bin Laden" etc.). But the overwhelming majority were prayers, remembrances, and pleas for peace.



There were plenty of flags affixed to the fence, and they had been written on too. Nearly every available surface had been filled, and people had had to hang more paper on the handrails along nearby walkways. People wrote in many languages besides English. I saw French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Chinese, Armenian, and Arabic. There was one from Ireland - "You've seen us through a lot, we'll see you through this." The saddest one I saw said "John - Diane said you flew like a bird. God grant us peace." I can only think that is from a widow talking about her daughter. There were many drawings of the towers, ranging in size from postcard to placard. Particularly poignant was a cute caricature of the towers with angel's wings.

The pavement on the park side of the fence was strewn with hundreds of candles, and also flowers, photographs and xeroxes of loved ones, and other mementoes. There were some large handmade construction paper greeting cards expressing sympathy, put together by classes of schoolchildren. Someone had left unlit candles for people who wanted to light one, and there were bowls of magic markers for anyone to write with. This made a silent, powerful testimonial to the indomitable spirit of New Yorkers and sympathizers - New Yorkers in spirit. My contributions were "Shalom = Salaam" and "Peace for all peoples," and some candle repair. Patti left some flowers in which she stuck a homemade flag with a peace sign in the blue field.

A few people were playing guitars, sounding distracted or like they were taking a break. One of them, Scott from New Jersey, seemed to know Patti and Freddie and her songs. They quickly got going on some of them: "Flicker," "Late Late Show," "Pirate Radio" (a funny rarity that showed Scott's eclectic taste). Sad to say, since we had left directly from Westport, I had decided not to make the 1-1/2 hour trip back home to get my mandolin. I borrowed someone's guitar and played bass lines on it, and occasionally used a guitar case as a hand drum.

There were about thirty people in the vicinity, and some clapped and made requests. A lot of these were fulfilled: "Stairway To Heaven," "Into The Mystic" - a very cool request, even cooler that someone knew it. At one point the cop car stationed nearby drove over. We thought there had been a noise complaint (it was about 1 AM then), but they said they drove over just to hear the music better. One officer even requested something by Elton John. He wanted "Tiny Dancer," but Scott came out with "Someone Saved My Life Tonight." He and Freddie also got into some cool double leads on "Reeling In The Years." We did "Wild Horses," "Sweet Home Alabama," "All Along The Watchtower," "Stop Dragging My Heart Around," "Roll Over Beethoven" - all over the map, and a lot of the usual suspects, to be sure, but I could feel people coming together, leaving behind their troubles for a little while, and connecting with each other.

A couple of guys were into singing harmony, working out parts like pros, and I joined in as best I could. I also sang lead on "Wild Horses," one of my faves. Being without my usual instrument

forced me to find other ways to contribute, and this was both liberating and adventuresome. I got so into playing ersatz bass that I got a blister on my thumb. Somewhere in the middle of this I realized I was concentrating so hard on what I was doing that all my fears and concerns had left me, at least temporarily. I can't believe I stayed as long as I did, but I'm glad I did. This not only satisfied my curiosity to some extent, but also afforded me an opportunity to reconnect with humanity, in the form of two dear friends and a bunch of strangers who became friends as we spent more time together.

I was really impressed with people's attitudes - down and subdued, yes, but also resilient and open and a little proud. I could tell they felt that it was going to take more than that to get New Yorkers down. A good amount of the written messages expressed civic pride, sort of verbally sticking their chins out, as if to say, "We can take that and more."

Around 2:30 AM we were getting ready to leave. Freddie noticed four young people lying down to one side of the arch, right on the concrete, and engaged them in conversation. He told me later that when he was in high school in the late 70s, he would come into the Village (he's a native New Yorker) and sometimes do the same thing, in the same spot. And here were these late teens/early 20s girls and guys, in hippie clothes, with long hair and beads and bright beaming faces, doing the exact same thing, so many years later. I said that was like a tradition, that people tap into that vibe, the vibe that sustained The Grateful Dead and the Dead Heads for so long. And the people from back then, who finally cut their hair and got jobs, a lot of them still feel the same way about the world. And there are still people who are living the way we envisioned back then - living in peace and harmony with nature and other people - but we never hear from them because they have just gone their own way and are living their dreams apart from "normal" society. Seeing these young people, willing to be so uninhibited as to curl up on the sidewalk and lie on their backs and gaze up at the stars in the heart of this city with so much grief so nearby, I felt a real hope for the future.

Just one more thing. Now and then I would look downtown to the cloud, which would change its shape and be lit differently as its density shifted. This was not an overpowering image by itself, but what it represented was chilling. One time I noticed a vertical line in the middle of it, a little darker charcoal grey than its surrounding area. I looked away and looked back a few times; it was really there. A couple of people told me later they saw it too. It looked to me like a ghost of a tower - aren't ghosts supposed to be visible in smoke? - or the spirit of the tower still inhabiting that space. Maybe it means the spirit is going to stay there and wait for its body to be built again.

I do hope so. OK, one more thing. On my way out of town I stopped at a deli. It was well after 3 AM and I was facing a one-hour drive to the rest area where I was planning to sleep a little, so coffee was in order. Behind the counter was a slight man who clearly could trace his ancestry to either the Near East or the Indian subcontinent (I am not good at making finer distinctions; I must learn). The menu featured Greek, Indian, Near Eastern, and American foods - all these cultures coexisting on one menu. I couldn't figure out which was the dominant cuisine, but the spinach pie looked good, and I also got a couple of vegetable pakora, an Indian snack of curried vegetables in folded-over dough and deep-fried (I passed on the baklava, though). This and a large coffee cost all of \$3.50 - a bargain, in pricey New York and in the dead of night. I thought about wishing the deli guy peace - "Salaam aleikim" - but I didn't, for several reasons. I'm as unsure of the pronunciation as the spelling, and didn't want to inadvertently offend; I wasn't sure of his nationality anyway; I'm still kind of shy; I don't like putting people on the spot. But the main reason is I didn't feel ready to reach out to someone who very likely belonged to an ethnic community that enabled terrorism to grow to such an extent and cause so much grief. I know this is prejudice, and guilt by association, quite irrational and unfounded, but these feelings were real and raw. I felt it best to just underplay this little drama. I looked him in the eyes, we shared a silent nod, and I took my multi-ethnic meal and left.

I felt disappointed with myself that I couldn't get past my emotions. Then again, expressing one's emotions is often a self-serving act, and the deli guy very likely didn't want to be bothered at this hour with any of this. I hope I can find my way through these feelings to a place where I can accept and respect people from all cultures. My faith in humanity has taken a real beating, but some of the experiences I had this night are leading me back and

restoring my belief in a world where we can all live together, if not in peace and harmony, then at least in acceptance of cultural diversity. As Rodney King put it, "Can't we all just get along?"

Well, we do have to get along, somehow. We can't dwell on the past, but we must learn from it. And we should also dedicate ourselves to making this a better world. There is nothing funny about peace love and understanding - OK, love can be pretty funny sometimes - but these are very real, very serious considerations. And while I may be involved in relatively inconsequential aspects of modern culture like music and such, even these can provide people with solace and hope for the future. To that end, let us continue with some concert reviews.



Gandalf Murphy And The Siambovian Circus Of Dreams rolled into town one warm summer's eve. These delightful pranksters have one of the most unique sounds I've encountered the last few years: acoustic guitar, electric guitar and mandolin, accordion, drums, occasional cello, and no bass. They hold down the bottom end by emphasizing the low strings of the acoustic rhythm guitar and the baritone range of the lead singer. Their music and demeanor were a perfect match for the old-timey ambience and aged wood acoustics of The Puppet House Theater in the Stony Creek section of Branford CT.

Opening were local faves **Rick Frost** and **Jen Sherman**. Imagine a 40-something hippiesque guy playing rhythm and singing and a 20-something gal playing burning leads, and you're getting close. Their sound seems to derive from Neil Young's early solo career, with long swooping instrumentals linked to fuzzy chord structures. If they were to add bass and drums, they would sound pretty enormous. As a duo, they present a unique though recognizable rock-solid approach.

The instrumental core of Gandalf Murphy also performs as a duo occasionally. Joziyah and Sharkey (rhythm guitar/harmonica/lead singer, lead guitar/mandolin/harmony singer) have worked together so closely for so long that they have evolved a symbiotic dynamic that enables them to improvise simultaneously.

It was in this configuration that they opened for **Dar Williams** at Stamford's Palace Theatre. One would think this an odd pairing, and perhaps so. But there's an explanation for this. Several months previously, The Circus played an early morning on-air gig at WDST, the FM station in Woodstock NY, and Dar was scheduled to do the same in the following hour. She tuned in the station while driving in, liked what she heard, and made tentative plans with them. True to her word, she had them (the power duo) open for her on this date.

Dar has grown much more confident over the years, as if by playing out so many times she has overcome her shyness and become accustomed to the emotional rollercoaster that opening up to an audience can become. Her set at The Palace was as from a seasoned pro, confident yet vulnerable, poignant yet humorous. She engaged the audience through anecdotal musings as well as with her cleverly written songs and heartfelt singing. A few months later we saw her again at Fairfield University's Quick Center For The Arts, soon after the release of her first live album. **Jeffrey Gaines** turned in a solid opening set, his full-bodied voice a powerful, moving instrument. In yet one more circle, the first time I had seen him Gandalf Murphy was the opener. Funny how the game of Gig Leapfrog gets played.

Some upcoming shows for The Circus include The Towne Crier in Pawling NY Friday, December 21st and The Acoustic Cafe in Bridgeport CT Friday, January 11th. They are one of the most engaging live acts in the area, well worth making an effort to experience them in person. They also landed a booking for the 2002 Clearwater Festival, hopefully just the start of what should be a long reign on the festival circuit.

In the Life Goes On Department: **The Nields** have semi-retired as a full band, due to financial and scheduling constraints. They will still play a few festivals in the summer, but the costs of touring have grown prohibitive. **David Nields** has returned to teaching drama (his first love); **Dave Chalfant** has grown more involved in recording and producing other artists (most notably **Erin**

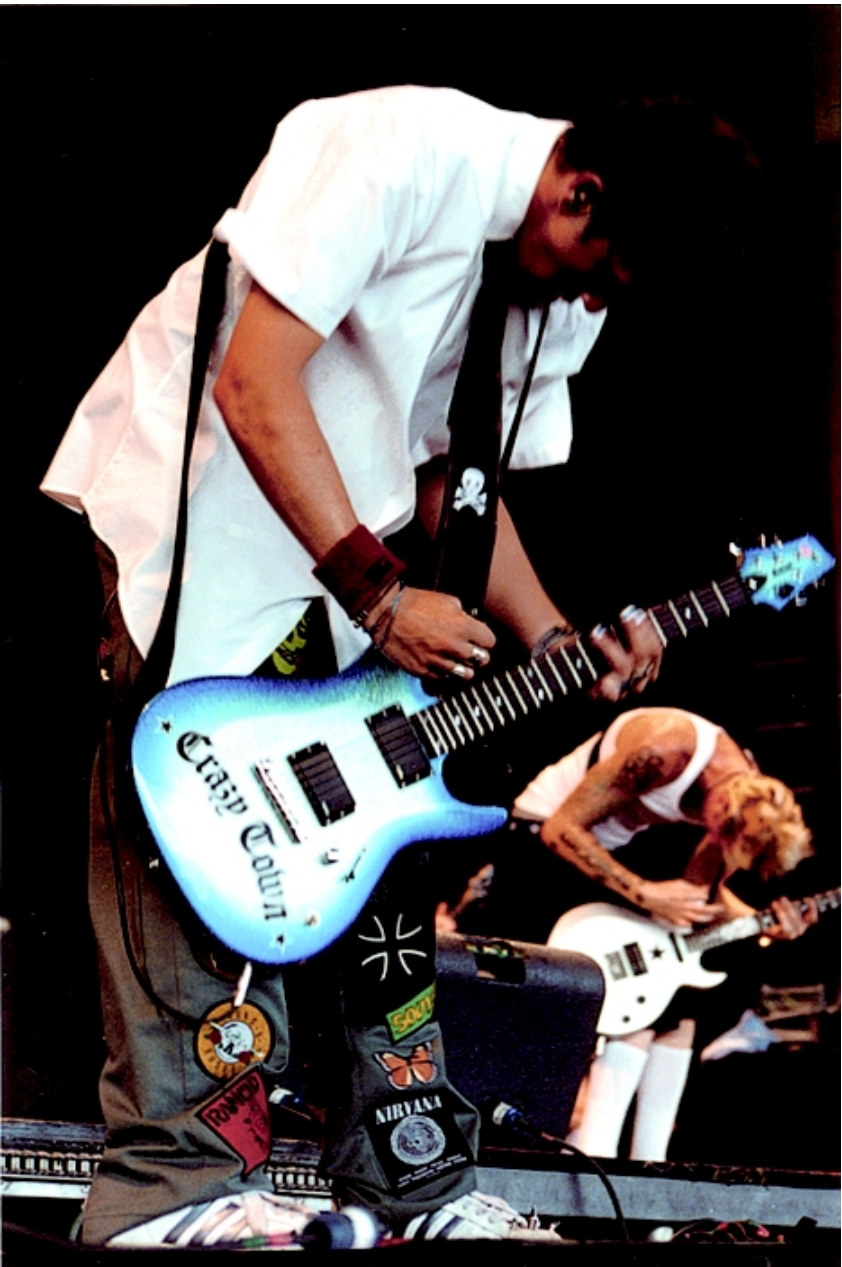
Cont'd on Page 12



Singing their hearts out while tearing their throats out - clockwise from above: The Union Underground's Bryan Scott; Marilyn Manson; Coby Dick from Papa Roach; Linkin Park's Chester Bennington (twice); Dave Williams from Drowning Pool; and left, Shifty Shellshock from Crazy Town



Squirrel from Crazy Town (below) - Somebody get this guy a shorter strap!



Patrick Kennison from The Union Underground gets it done, with style (below)



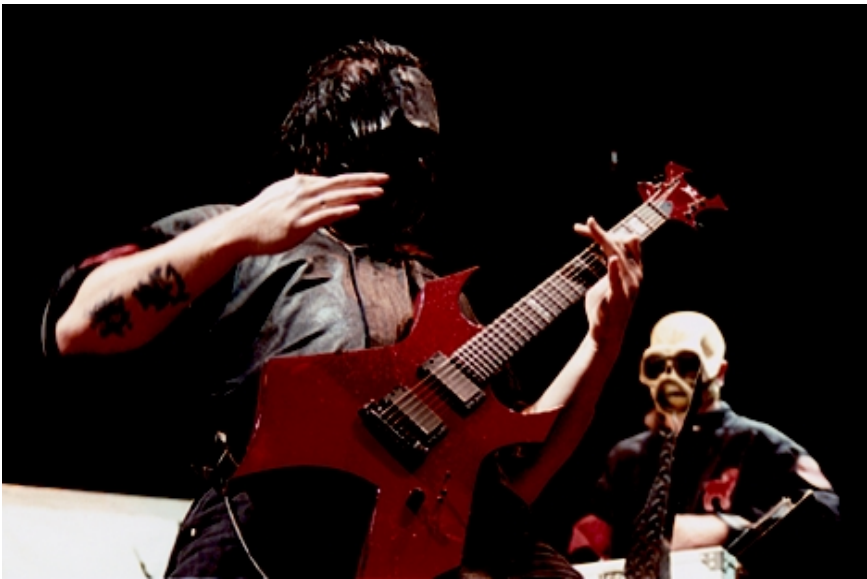


David Driman from Disturbed keeping an ear out for the future, perhaps (right)



Mudvayne made quite an impact, both visually and musically. That's Kud on vocals (above left) and Gurr on guitar above (right)

Ozzfest roared into The Meadows Music Theater in Hartford on a blazing August afternoon. Metalheads got a year's supply in one day into night of driving rock 'n' roll to theatrical metal. Much of the best music came from newer bands on the two side stages, where it was as hot in the stands as it was onstage. (Ed. note: No pix of the festival's namesake were allowed, as Mr. Osbourne did not appear as a solo performer but as part of a very tentative Black Sabbath reunion.)



Slipknot made a dramatic appearance. That's Corey Taylor belting it out (right) and Mic Thompson or James Root - we really can't be sure which - whaling on his guitar (left)



OZZFEST

Photos by Victoria Chandler



Give the bass players their due. Holding down the bottom are John Moyer from The Union Underground (below), Steve Benton from Drowning Pool (above), and Mudvayne's RyKnow (opposite)



NewReleaseNoize

By Christopher Marz

the alan marcus blues project



The Alan Marcus Blues Project - Kicked Around Blues 10 song CD

Mostly guitar-fronted and -based classic blues, these ten songs also incorporate a little jazz, some funk bass, and some rock. There are five instrumentals and five songs with lyrics all in some variation in a classic blues vein. Alan Marcus often heats it up with tasty guitar licks. This is not too out of the ordinary, but it is expertly done and very easy to listen to. The production is smooth and blended, and even makes for easy, relaxing background music. With that said, if you like rock-based blues you should like this.

Alan Marcus, vocals/guitar/slide guitar; Jerry Ellis, bass; Dave Maxwell, drums. Contact: www.alanmarcusblues.com marcus2@javanet.com

Almost Speechless - 3 song demo CD

Still a little rough but also very confident and veteran-sounding, contrasts merge on this three song demo. This is only a glimpse into what seems to be the right mix. Having to judge from just three songs could paint the wrong picture - like seeing a girl from behind and then she turns around. Well, anyway, at least they knew which three songs to put on this disc. The first song, "Misplaced," has a nice acoustic guitar strum and great chorus - intelligent modern rock with all the right moves. The first time I listened, I thought I had heard this before. Since the band has been only a year in the making, that's not possible. This is definitely radio-friendly modern pop/rock yet nothing is sacrificed. It's got it all - clean singable chords to back up the good lyrics, strong leads, funky bass, and nice drumming. Song two, "Dinner At Rene's," is as radio-ready as they come, and the chorus, "Good-bye my friend good-bye," is as singalong as they get, too. The last song, "Run," is also good, showing some range.

I'd like to see if they can keep this up for a whole CD. I would be surprised if this band doesn't see some form of success, Jay Cohen, guitar; Mike Wondolowski, bass; Pete Maserati, guitar; Justin Chechile, drums; Gabe Lopez, vocals/guitar. Contact: www.almostspeechless.com Prat Productions, PO Box 66036, Auburndale MA 02466



The Basals - Kingpin 11 song CD Ripe Records

Starting out with the title song "Kingpin" the singer of the Basals had my attention. Holli's voice has a familiar uniqueness, reminiscent of Christina Amphlett from The Divinyls, with a calculated yet animated style. The guitar work has a bright tonally colored warmth that complements Holli's vocals and lends itself to creating a listener-friendly group of tunes that hits the mark of off-center pop. With nice rhythms, steady pop beats and intelligent lyric hooks, the songs also show a lot of diversity within the genre. Some recommended tracks are "One Word," "Around Again," "Timebomb" (which has some hot funky guitar!), and as I mentioned, "Kingpin." Actually, the songs are all pretty good and all worth a listen. Holli, vocals; Mike, bass; Tom, guitars; Abbo, drums. Contact: www.thebasals.com

BE - Thisstupdream 10 song CD

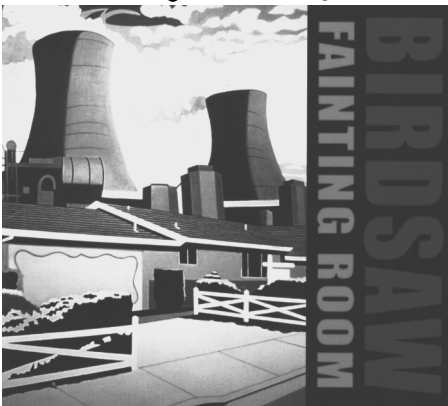
The sound is tight, polished and easy. The sound is dark, rock, rooted in history from The Beatles to REM. It's thoughtful, rhythmic and comes in layered waves. It's classic, it's new, it's original and haunting. It's good songwriting, it's good arranging, it's good playing, it's full - you get the picture. BE is three brothers and a drummer from Dallas. There are a lot of dynamics going on and on many different levels, both direct and subtle. The only thing missing from this release are any openly happy songs. There are a lot of



hues but the reds, oranges, and yellows aren't among them. Lots of blues and grays, maybe some dark greens. Great band though! I wouldn't be surprised to see big things in their future.

Duke Boyne, drums/percussion; Mark Summerlin, guitar/keyboard/percussion; Paul Summerlin, bass; Tally Summerlin, vocals. Contact: BE@besongs.com, www.besongs.com P.O. Box 140935 Dallas, TX 75214

Birdsaw - Fainting Room 10 song CD



Birdsaw puts their best foot forward with Robin Coomer, belting out vocals with tremendous force or bringing it down to a bluesy whisper. The band has a solid sound, and it's clear there is a lot of potential. The CD starts out with some nice guitar harmonics in a song called "Guardian Circuitry," and throughout the CD guitarist Dan Laks utilizes a lot of styles. I was a little disappointed that there are no blown-out fast paced rockers, but they still have that bluesy Zep-like feel. The lyrics are often very interesting but they are a little rough around the edges. With a little more work this band could be great. Robin Coomer, vocals; Dan Laks, guitar; Mark Pino, drums; Tom Jordan, bass. Contact: www.Birdsaw.com Ruby@Birdsaw.com

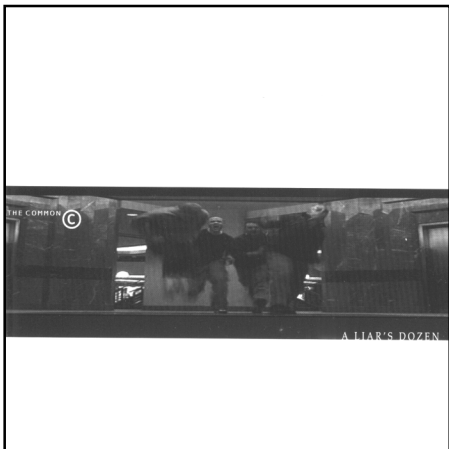


Colleen Coadic - The Opposite Only Better 11 song CD

Though the sound is pretty poppy, it's a little too deeply personal to be written off as pop. Often witty, at times poetic and even philosophical, Colleen puts melodies together that musically fall into the pop genre. All the songs are tight and well recorded and vocally strong, confidently delivered without wavering. The fact that she has so much to say makes the included lyrics in the sleeve a must. The song "Flakes" is the perfect example of this word cramming - one line to the next without stopping for a breath. Lyrically some songs are colored with a

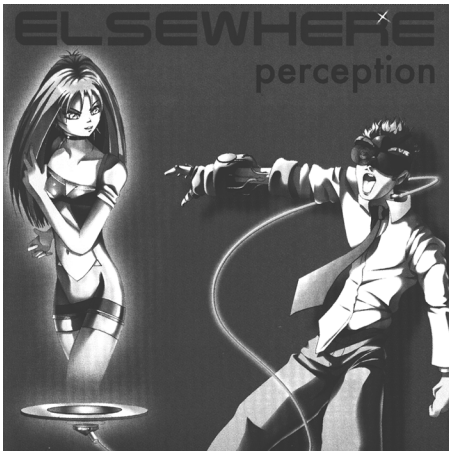
bit of anger, particularly "Flake," "Velvet Rape," and "Tonic." At eleven songs, this album is a bit novel-ish as it offers a blue window into the World of Coadic. One of my favorite songs on the CD would have to be "Driven" - GREAT song and a testament to Colleen's talent.

Colleen Coadic, vocals/guitar; Sean Cobb, bass/guitar/sitar; Rob Kurzreiter, drums; Dennis Lind, 12 string guitar; Bart Boggan, electric guitar. Contact: www.colleen.org, colleenc@gci.net P.O. Box 190516, Anchorage, Alaska 99519



The Common - A Liar's Dozen 11 song CD Electric Hound Records

At first I thought to myself "another Green Day knock-off" but as always I try to listen to the whole CD. I'm glad I did because the music is more Stones than Green Day, more classic than modern. Though I like both classic and modern, there's already a Green Day and I don't like clones. Changes and trends are needed, 100 Green Days are not. That said, The Common are a modern/classic pop group doing the rock thing with fresh choppy guitar rhythms and just enough of an under-produced sound to give them a refreshing unripened crispness. Sounds like a salad, huh? Well I guess they're still unspoiled from overproduction - Ha! But it is very clear for the type of material they're doing that they really don't need it. Their sound is very straightforward and catchy. There's a lot of energy in the fast-paced drumbeats, nice guitar leads and unrefined vocal harmonies that are done just enough, not overdone. The Common are a little punk-y, a little Stones-y, but original. Jimmy Sizemore, guitar/vocals/percussion; Ryan Roberts, drums/percussion/vocals; Mike Hayes, guitars/vocals/percussion/claves; Steven Hayes, bass/vocals/percussion/harmonica/keyboards. Contact: www.thecommononline.com



thecommon@mindspring.com Elsewhere - 7 song CD Rogue Records

After tossing so many CDs into the recycling bin because they were either Dookie (Green Day) knock-offs or just plain dookie (you know), I found a couple of CDs that I could actually listen to. This is one of them. There were some problems I had with this CD as well but overall it was OK! My first problem was with the bio. It states, "A progressive punk trio from Boston, with corporate day jobs." Now, you tell me! Is this what we've become? The early punk anarchists would be turning in their graves! OK, the music was somewhat progressive and held my interest - a little like a milder Rush with a lot of restrained high



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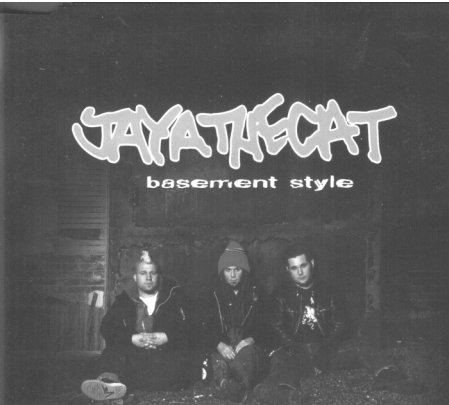
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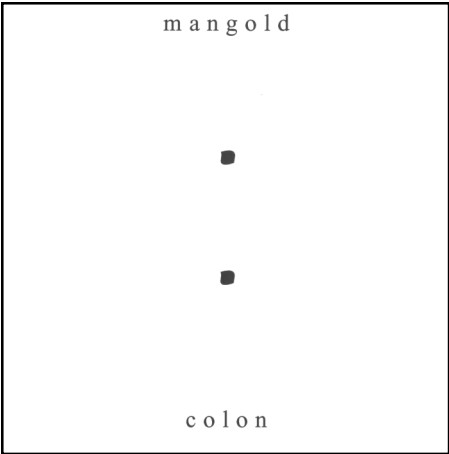
energy, nice punchy bass lines and guitar work, and tight drumming. The vocals were different from all the Dookies - unique in style - but still lacked a certain depth and range. There was also a lot of repetition that could have been left out. If it sounds as if I didn't like it, the truth is I wouldn't have even written about it if I found no redeeming qualities at all. It was actually all very easy to listen to but progressive punk it ain't. Progressive modern would be more appropriate. Mike Aroian, guitar/vocals; Craig Morrison, drum; Marc Ubaldino, bass. Contact: <http://elsewhere-band.com> ubaldino@mitre.org



Jaya The Cat - Basement Style 18 song CD Gold Circle Records

This band from Boston calls its style "punk rock reggae," a good enough description for me. Unlike a lot of bands, it was very easy to come up with an opinion on the very first listen. True to the rebellious nature of rock, Jaya starts out with some short tunes that have an anti-establishment philosophy with a twist of humor. These speak very matter-of-factly of and to the sub-culture that embraces the rock 'n' roll life-style. Most of the songs are geared towards partying. Don't get me wrong though - the music is streetwise and first-hand. It's what goes on in the real down-to-earth of some! Apart from the words the music is a combo of reggae, ska and punk. It's always moving, and vocal choruses which are more like singalongs really add distinction. It's just good time music, not to be taken too seriously. Toward the end the songs become more aggressive and punk, which, mixed with the reggae, is a little odd but gives the CD variety.

Ben, bass; Geoff, vocals/guitar; Dave, vocals/guitar; Jan Kelly, turntables; O'Connell, drums. Contact: Gold Circle Entertainment, 1544 20th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404 www.jayathecat.com

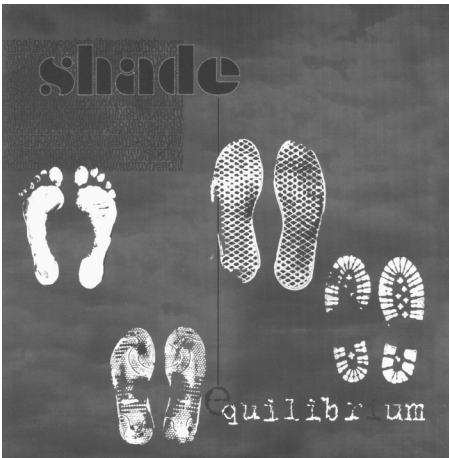


Mangold - Colon 12 song CD

After the first tune on this CD, I had an opinion but waited till the last song to write a review. First off, I don't know what in Mangold's life caused him to be so cynical but what's done is done. So that's it, a cynical/comical opinion on everything he chooses to write about. Backed by some phenomenal musicians with enough firepower to be the envy of the mediocre. The CD is done in the style of Zappa. I've said it before and I'll say it again and though Mangold has some impressive credits, "I don't know if there's a market for this type of music anymore." I liked it though! Being a home-boy from the hood of Greenwich, CT, I could identify with a lot of his songs. "Greenwich Pie" was cool! His views and his way with words on all his subjects like "Homedad," "Boysgroup," "Red Garbage Bay" (another song about Greenwich) and others is hysterical. The song "Songwriter," is not only funny but sadly enough, fairly accurate. The lyrics are done to a mixture of jazz and progressive rock. So if you want funny, we got funny. Contact: www.projectmangold.com

Shade - Equilibrium 13 song CD

Well, is it another modern rock band or are they pop/rock? Well, I guess it's a matter of opinion. The group fronted by Beth Purro is



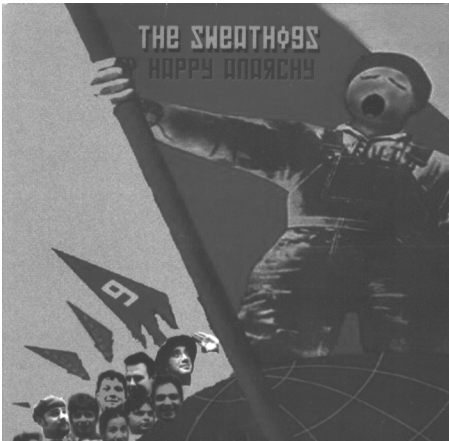
another smooth blend, made so by Beth's low-key vocal style. Turns out once again I was on the mark when I thought I heard U2 chord technique too! One of their influences. So you now know how smooth the guitar sound is. Unlike U2 however it's another band who never pushes the edges of the envelope. The music is notched firmly into a groove from beginning to end. It's fine work backed nicely by the bass and beats and they are definitely sitting on solid ground. I say it's modern rock and it's well done! Beth Purro, vocals/rhythm guitar; Travis Cohee, lead guitar/vocals; Rae Goldring, bass; Michael Hayden, percussion. Contact: Shade, 305 W. 55th St., Austin, TX 78751 www.shadetheband.com shadetheband@hotmail.com



Sterves Of Neil - 5 song CD

I have listened to many core bands in the past weeks looking for anything of interest beyond the standard growling. Well, although I don't think Sterves Of Neil are primarily a core band, they are definitely core influenced. Beyond the growling though, singer Chris Sheidel can actually sing. Being a rough recording and not seeming to have mastered the overdub, it's a good effort. On the song "Corporate Victim" he sounds a little like Zach de la Rocha (Rage Against The Machine). I'm more interested in differences than similarities when I listen to music. What makes a band stand out? Being different! All the tunes are pretty good. I especially like song three "Simple" which has a sort of U2 guitar sound and catchy wording. They have good beats and rhythms and have that difference. Starting with "Machinery" it's immediately noticeable. Also being a rough mix makes it noticeable that the sound is not contrived. So for what it is, it's apparently the roughness that gives the recording a certain charm. I would like to hear a finished product from the local group out of New Haven, CT.

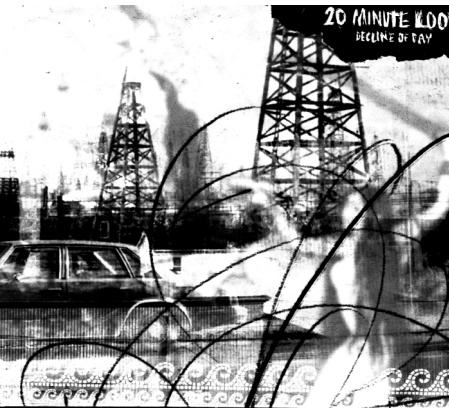
Chris Scheidel, vocals; Chris Bjorklund, guitar; Jeff Craig, bass; Michael Conlin, drum. Contact: CMV Productions, 76 Hubinger St. New Haven CT 06511 www.stervesofneil.com



The SweatHogs - Happy Anarchy 4 song CD

The band starts right off with a high impact punch that is rich in content but never fits a niche. There's the horn section, there's the Meatloaf-style vocals in "Happy Anarchy,"

there's the airy epic "Glass." But being done well sometimes is just not enough. If you make music just for the pleasure of it, then you don't have to concern yourself with the product. If however you're making a product then there has to be a market unless you hope to make a market too! As a product this would be hard to slot. The last song "Whatever" is a funky type of swing song if that helps any. Well, the vocals are OK, the lyrics are good, the music is tight, and this would be something you'd have to listen to yourself. But I suppose the title "Anarchy" fits them perfectly. Tom Bauer, saxophone; Tim Boylan, trombone; Lance LoConti, trumpet; Vin Lanza, drums; Joe Pecora, vocals/guitar; Andy Graziano, bass; Matt Ryan, vocals; Keith Wagner, guitar; Frank Williams, Rhodes piano. Contact: 630 Lamont Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10312. sweathogs9@aol.com www.thesweathogs.com



20 Minute Loop - Decline Of Day 12 song CD Fortune Records

Though at times the tempos seem to drag along at a brooding snail's pace, their basic sound holds so much promise for this group. The CD starts right off with what could become their trademark sound in "Jubilation." What follow are a lot of him-and-her vocal leads and harmonies, slow instrumental progressions and buildups, fleshed out with keys and other instruments and a lot of Nirvana-styled chord changes. Most of the music is artsy, what the band calls "freak pop." It is very good, very purposefully written, very different from most of what you're going to hear in today's music. Other songs I really liked were "Mechanical Angels" and "Mompha Termina." Not an uplifting CD, but it is tangible and credible!

Greg Giles, vocals/guitar; Kelly Atkins, vocals/keys/organ/flute/xylophone/samples/optigan; Joe Ostrowski, electric guitar/vocals; Ethan Turner, drums/percussion; Dan Jones, bass. Contact: www.20minuteloop.com Fortune Records, P.O. Box 11302, Berkeley, CA 94712

www.InterMixx.com

Tune in next issue for our Best Of The Year features, Mixxclusive interviews with Patty Larkin and Sue Foley, some new features, and more of the usual suspects

The InterMixx Webzine for December 2001 Offline Edition was brought to you by: InterMixx.com, Inc.

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EDITOR: Steve Bornstein
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LAYOUT & PRODUCTION: Noel Ramos, Steve Bornstein, Bobby Torres, Robert Sodaro
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Dan Hott, Victoria Chandler, Jean Sapula, Bobby Torres
WRITERS: Steve Bornstein, Christopher Marz, Noel Ramos, Robert J. Sodaro
DISTRIBUTION DEPT: Steve Bornstein, Bobby Torres, Tito Ida, Jean Sapula, Victoria Chandler
InterMixx IndieGate Design & Maintenance: Noel Ramos, Michael Fleet

The InterMixx Webzine is published monthly as a print magazine and online PDF document. It is a member-focused publication which is distributed throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, Southeastern New York, Boston, and on the world wide web as an Arts & Entertainment guide. Authors' opinions are their own, and acceptance of an ad does not constitute an endorsement by InterMixx.com, Inc. Any solicited or unsolicited submissions become the property of the publisher. No portion or portions of the InterMixx Webzine may be altered or reprinted, as this would violate Federal Copyright laws *and* piss us off!

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mixx flixx

by Robert J. Sodaro, Dylan J. Sodaro, and Kayla Rose Sodaro

Here we go again folks. As a rule, the contributions of my lovely daughter, Kayla Rose (KRS), run first, followed by those of my delightful son Dylan (DJS), with my own comments (RJS) running last. Following our family section, there is - as always - a section of reviews that are all written by me. Got it? Cool. Then let's go.

Movie List w/Kayla Rose & Dylan



Cats & Dogs Rated "PG"
In this movie cats and dogs could talk because they were from other planets. They were fighting each other, but the people didn't know it. The cats kidnapped a human family and the dogs had to rescue them. I liked this movie because I like dogs, even though I don't have one. I have a kitty cat, and his name is Mookie. (KRS)
This movie is about cats trying to take over the world and dogs trying to protect us. Even though my cats don't try and take over the world. (DJS)
I'm all for cute flicks where animals can talk. If only this were one. Perhaps a good idea on paper, its execution turned out just plain bad. If you are interested in seeing a talking animal flick, go see *Dr. Dolittle 2*. (RJS)



Corky Romano Rated "PG-13"
This is about Corky's poppa who is a bad guy. Corky's brothers want him to get the evidence against his poppa from the FBI. Corky had to arrest a bad guy, and Corky had a gun and was trying to shoot him and the gun went wild, and the other guy's gun was fake. And the FBI thought that Corky was talking about the gun he was shooting. This was a funny movie. At the end everybody was pointing their guns at someone else's head, and it was funny. (KRS)
This movie is about the Romano crime family and their one brother who is softhearted. They send him in to destroy all of the evidence on Pops Romano, because somebody inside Pop's organization set him up to take a fall. Corky, Pop's son, fools the FBI into thinking that he is a brilliant crime fighter when he is really a doofus. I really liked this movie, it was really funny. (DJS)
SNL player, **Chris Kattan** plays his goofy self as the oddball son of a Mafia Don. Only his dad isn't one of those "bad" Mafia chieftains that kills, runs drugs, or forces young girls into prostitution. He just runs numbers and steals stuff - you know, the "good" crimes. Meanwhile someone has turned state's evidence against him in a killing, so he needs someone to "go undercover" into the FBI and steal the evidence. Enter the Corkster.
Needless to say, this kid is so wacky that when he gets into the FBI HQ, they interpret his ineptness and bumbling as the quirkiness of genius, and he keeps "solving" crimes. Needless to say, all proceeds apace with a *Police Academy* goofiness, until we learn what is really going on. Not high comedy, but not truly screwball antics either. Just okay. (RJS)
Max Keeble's Big Move Rated "PG"
Max was being picked on by everybody



in his new school, and then his father said that they had to move, so Max thought that he would get even with everyone. Only after he did, his dad said they didn't have to move after all, and now Max was in big trouble because everybody was going to get Max back. When they were in the cafeteria, Max threw food, but said it was somebody else, and then he called "Food Fight!" The principal came in and everyone got in trouble. This was a real funny movie. (KRS)
It's about Max getting back at all the bullies that have picked on him over the years because his family is moving. But it ends up that Max is not moving so his friends take the punishment for what he did. I thought that this movie was okay. Try to go see it if it is still in the theaters. (DJS)
Sort of a junior grade *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, except that instead of taking a day off from school, Max is out to get everyone who has wronged him by pulling all sorts of pranks. Only once all the pranks have been pulled, Max learns that his Dad's transfer didn't happen, and they aren't going to move after all, and now he has to face the music. The *Ferris Bueller* comes from the interplay between Max (**Alex D. Linz**), and the school's principal (**Larry Miller**, who is essentially reprising his persona (if not character) from **Eddie Murphy's Nutty Professor** flicks). Also, the presence of **Amy Hill** as the school secretary recalls **Edie McClurg's** role in *Ferris Bueller*.
A cute film, take the kids, but be aware that films like this may inspire your kids to think that food fights and trashing the principal are just fine during school hours. (RJS)



The Princess Diaries Rated "G"
This movie was about a girl who was living with her mom. Then she found out that her dad was a king, but he died, so her grandma came over to tell the that she was the new princess. But she didn't really know how to be a princess and didn't want to be one anyway. (KRS)
I saw this movie, but it is really a girls' movie. (DJS)
Here's a cute fairy princess tale that takes place in the "real" world. Mia Thermopolis (**Anne Hathaway**) lives in San Francisco with her single mom (**Caroline Goodall**), a West Coast free spirit who still lives an eclectic life. Mia's ordinary life swiftly begins to unravel when she learns that her grandmother, whom she has never met, is stopping by. What's more, she is queen of a small European nation and has come to inform Mia that the young girl has ascended to the throne due to the untimely death of her estranged father. Talk about startling revelations. (RJS)

Rat Race Rated "PG-13"
This was about a bunch of people who had a race to a certain place and whoever got there first got a lot of money. One guy kept falling asleep and everybody laughed at him. Silly things kept happening to the people during the race. (KRS)
This was a really funny movie. Actually the closest person to getting the money was the idiot. Try to see it in the theater or rent it at your nearest Blockbuster. (DJS)
For those of us old enough to remember the classic *It's a Mad Mad Mad World*, this bit of nonsense is merely an updated, left-handed



remake of that flick - but what a wonderful job they've done with it. I quite honestly don't remember laughing this hard, all the way through a movie, as I did with this flick. I could spend the rest of the column talking about all of the silly, winkie bits, but let's leave it with just this one. At one point a group of characters happen on a Barbie museum, only to learn that it isn't Mattel's Barbie, but Klaus. Nazis haven't been this entertaining since the original *Blues Brothers* movie. This movie is truly side-splitting funny. I highly recommend it. (RJS)

Movie List w/Dylan



Iron Monkey Rated "PG-13"
This was a movie about a big iron monkey at the zoo... no, really it wasn't. It was like Robin Hood in China, with Chinese people talking Chinese with subtitles. The Iron Monkey was a masked hero who stole money from the rich, nasty governor, and gave it back to the poor people. This is a Chinese film that was made back in 1993, but we are just seeing it now in the U.S. I really liked this movie. You should go see it. (DJS)
The popularity and Oscar-winning success of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* have helped bring more and more Asian films to our screens. This recent import (complete with subtitles) of a 1993 Chinese film is a quantum leap for martial art mayhem flicks. The fight moves are pure artistry with an almost lyrical quality. Unlike the more highbrow legend of *Crouching Tiger*, *Iron Monkey* is a straight-up action flick. The Iron Monkey is a masked hero intent on harassing the corrupt governor, stealing from him and passing the money over to the locals. A truly outstanding action flick. Hopefully more of this genre will continue to



arrive on our shores. (RJS)
The One Rated "PG-13"
This movie is about a criminal named Yulaw (**Jet Li**), who kept switching dimensions to kill off other incarnations of himself so he would become powerful. He killed 123 of his other selves, and now he had to go up against Gabriel (the one from "our" world) who had the same exact powers on the same level. If you really liked the special effects of *The Matrix*, you should see this movie. (DJS)

Since arriving here in the U.S. Jet Li has certainly risen in the ranks of martial artists to watch. With *The One*, he has successfully combined the best of Hong Kong martial arts action with western "Matrix-style" SPFX. In a riff that is *The Matrix* meets *Highlander*, Jet Li's character is on a jag to kill off all of his other selves, absorb their energy, and become the one ("There can be only one"). This culminates in an all-out fight scene between both Jets that was fabulously choreographed. (RJS)
Pearl Harbor Rated "PG-13"
I really liked this movie even though it was three hours and 10 minutes long. If it is still playing in the theater you should go see it. If not, rent it at your nearest Blockbuster. (DJS)
Overwrought if mostly accurate, if you are looking for a top-notch Hollywood account of December 7th, rent *Tora, Tora, Tora*. (RJS)
Rush Hour 2 Rated "PG-13"
I liked this movie so much that I went back and watched the original film. (DJS)
Personally, I can't stand **Chris Tucker**, but you have to put up with him if you want to watch **Jackie Chan** do his stuff. Serviceable at best, and I prefer Chan on his own. (RJS)

Bob's Movie List



America's Sweethearts Rated "PG-13"
As I watched this very enjoyable date flick, I couldn't help but wonder what Eddie Thomas (**John Cusack**) saw in Gwen Harrison (**Catherine Zeta-Jones**) as she was such a first-class bitch. Yeah, yeah, I know that the premise of this flick was that Thomas and Harrison were everybody's favorite on-screen couple. But other than a killer bod, she had absolutely nothing going for her (but that could just be me). Having said all of that, **Billy Crystal** has put together yet another winning movie. **Julia Roberts** is wonderful as the put-upon sister of the star who is forced to wait hand and foot on her sister. Fun stuff.



American Pie 2 Rated "R"
OK, OK, I get the joke. Watching novices trying to get laid is very funny. While AP2 was funny (in small doses), the biggest problem with this flick is that it relied too heavily on the audience's ability to (a) remember the previous film; (b) remember who was who; and how they were all related to each other, and (c) care. As I was unable to fully complete (a) and (b), I passed on (c), and sat back, relaxed, and let the whole thing wash over me. Then went home and took a shower. I can only hope that **Don McLean** sues them over disgracing the name of his song.
Bandits Rated "PG-13"
Watching **Bruce Willis** and **Billy Bob Thorton** mug their way through this amiable bank robber flick is fun enough. What they are doing, essentially, is modernizing *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*. Given how good they are at it, you can forgive them, and just enjoy the show.



Don't Say a Word Rated "PG-13"
Michael Douglas is excellent as Dr. Nathan Conrad, an everyman psychologist from the Upper East Side. He takes on a *pro bono* case for a buddy, only to have it blow up in his face when his young daughter is kidnapped by several desperate men. They need to know the number that this obviously distraught girl has had locked inside her head for the last decade. As Conrad delves deeper in the case, he learns more and more about the horrible events that drove this girl to her desperation. Driven by his need to find and protect his daughter, Conrad, his wife (**Famke Janssen**), and daughter (**Skye McCole Bartusiak**) all find the inner strength to fight against the unthinkable events that have transformed their picture-perfect lives.



The Fast and the Furious Rated "PG-13"
Fast cars, loud music, **Vin Diesel**, and a nearly incomprehensible plot. You just know there is going to be a sequel.

From Hell Rated "R"
Adapted from the Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell comicbook series of the same name by Albert Hughes and Allen Hughes (*Dead Presidents*, *Menace II Society*), this gives a fictional accounting of Jack the Ripper and London Yard's detective Fred Abberline (**Johnny Depp**) attempt to make sense of his monstrous crimes. In his search for the killer, Abberline happens across prostitute, Mary Kelly (**Heather Graham**). Gripping material in both incarnations.

The Glass House Rated "PG-13"
No, this isn't Henrik Ibsen's play, but it does star **Leelee Sobieski**, and she does appear in one scene in her bikini. So while it isn't high literature, it is, in some parts, entertaining.



Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back Rated "R"
You either are or are not a fan of Kevin Smith's "View Askew" universe. If you are, then you've already seen this fab flick. If you are not, nothing I can say will get you to see it. In either case, who cares - I'm going to talk about it anyway. Jay and Silent Bob have wandered aimlessly through the other films: *Clerks* (1994), *Mallrats* (1995), *Chasing Amy* (1997), and *Dogma* (1999). They come into their own as leads in this foul-mouthed fun-fest when they realize that their lives have been appropriated in an unauthorized film based on them. Smith is killingly funny, and truly gets the joke. Thankfully, so do we. As for the rest of you, suffer!

The Last Castle Rated "PG-13"
Robert Redford plays a three star general who has been court-martialed for disobeying a direct order and losing eight men under his command. Even incarcerated in a hellish prison, he is still a leader of men. Eventually he comes to challenge the authority of the prison commander (**James Gandolfini**). Compelling and thoroughly watchable.



Legally Blonde Rated "PG-13"
Reese Witherspoon is Elle Woods, a clueless blonde who figures out how to not only get into law school, but pass the bar and become a lawyer. Yes, Shakespeare was right, we should first kill all the lawyers. No surprises here; everything turns out as it does in these types of Hollywood flicks. Fun, brainless entertainment. Check your brain at the door and enjoy. I did.

O Rated "PG-13"
Shakespeare's *Othello* as reimagined in a modern day high school. This was held back for two years because of the violence contained within (the producers wanted to keep a wide berth from the shootings at Columbine and other schools). The story is chilling as it is gripping. I highly recommend it, but give yourself time to back down from it after you've watched it. You'll need it.



The Others Rated "PG-13"
This is the first film by **Nicole Kidman** since *Dead Calm* (1989) that I have found watchable. I was very surprised. Apparently she has rediscovered how to act. I'm so pleased.



Serendipity Rated "PG-13"
Cute, silly fun with **John Cusack**, who proves that he truly is America's Sweetheart. Jonathan Trager (Cusack) and Sara Thomas (**Kate Beckinsale**) accidentally met one Christmas season in New York City while shopping for gloves for their respective lovers. There was magic in the air, but Sara put the brakes on it with her desire to test the fates, which resulted in the pair being separated for nearly 10 years. Then on the eve of both their weddings to their respective fiancés, Jonathan tries one last time to find Sara, and very nearly does, several times. Watching their lives "almost" happen sounds like it could grow old very fast, but it doesn't, and the fun is pure. Enjoy yourselves.

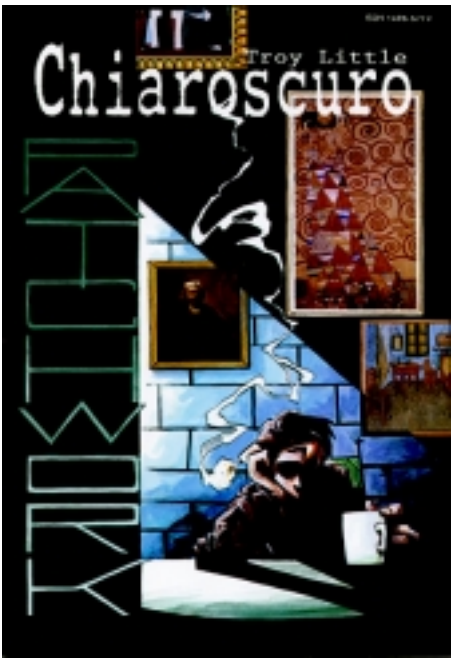


Training Day Rated "R"
A bad cop in LA (**Denzel Washington**) trains an idealistic one (**Ethan Hawke**), much to the dismay of both men. Very compelling and frightening at the same time. I highly recommend it.

funnybook

by Robert J. Sodaro

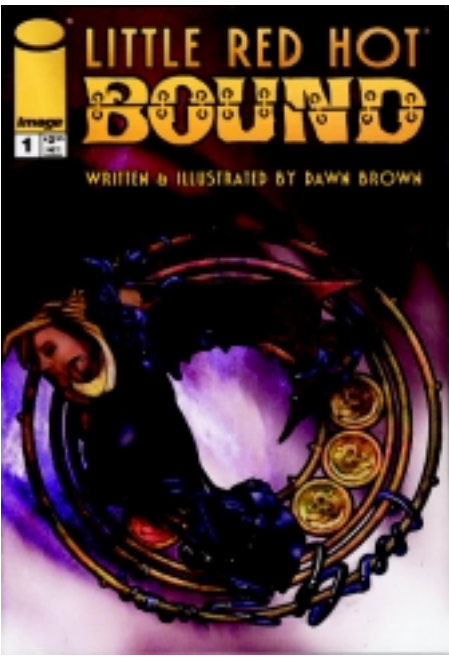
City



I came across a couple of truly fabulous self-published comics this time out and I'd really like to share them with you. First up is **Chiaroscuro** (\$2.75 U.S. / \$3.80 Can., B&W, **Troy Little** writer/artist, published by Meanwhile Studios, Inc. P.O. Box 39040, 2269 Riverside Dr, Ottawa, Ont. K1H 1A1, Canada). This story seems to be an exercise in self expression, and the author is expressing himself through the main character. Troy may be a novice, but he certainly doesn't conduct himself like one. He exhibits a real command of the form, constructing a story that is not going to be told in short 22-page segments. Instead he is building himself a true novel in the form of graphic illustrated fiction. I wish him all the best and urge you all to go out and buy up multiple copies of his book.

Next up is **Little Red Hot Bound** (\$2.95, Image, Color, written & Illustrated by **Dawn Brown**). I'm not entirely sure what is going on here (as this is a first issue, I don't think that you are supposed to), but it seems as if this gal is some sort of ex-agent who may or may not be possessed by a demon. She is being chased by other agents who want to enlist her powers and abilities to aid in locating a missing child. There is something mysterious going on (isn't there always?) in that she won't use her powers to fight back or kill her opponents, as it will bring forth her demon self or something. Nevertheless, it all proved to be very intriguing, and has made me want to keep up with the series. I suggest that you all do the same.

I also got my hands on another batch of **Avatar** comics which are always mostly entertaining as they seem to always center around scantily clad women, demons, and people getting dismembered. (This time the batch included comics with **Coven**, **Demon Slayer**, **Razor**, and **Avenge Gelyne**) Still the best of the batch is as always from the pen of **Warren Ellis**. His **Bad World** is a collection of the usual sorts of absurdities that find their way into his circle, and as always prove to be frighteningly entertaining. Avatar can be found at 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana IL, 61802.



Also in this batch is an older booklet from **Kitchen Sink Press** entitled **100 Graphic Novels for Public Libraries**. I'd like to recommend it, but I can't completely. The author, **Stephen Werner**, only seems to know what he is talking about. He continually refers to Spider-Man as "Spiderman" (and his comicbook editor never caught it), and he lists all the graphic novels by the writer alone, never mentioning the artists. Children's picture books always list both the writer and the illustrator; a book purporting to be about graphic novels should do no less.



Finally, I'd like to mention **Magazine Comic Book Artist**, especially Issue #14. It features a magazine-length series of articles about **Wally Wood's** T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Well-researched and very thorough, it wends its way through the entire history of the Agents (and even spends part of a chapter describing your humble columnist's experiences with the Agents and current owner, **John Carbonaro**). It makes for good reading. You can find the publishers at www.twomorrow.com.



Mixx Pixx

The Mixx Photogs give you a taste of the area's hottest shows!



Matchbox 20 's Rob Thomas is one of the most commanding male vocalists around these days (left, below)

Photos by Victoria Chandler



Janet Jackson brought her multimedia extravaganza to the Hartford Civic Center Saturday August 11th. The lights went down, the lights came up, and there she was, atop a fifty foot high pedestal (who put her there, I wonder?) that slowly descended as she writhed and sang until she reached the stage and then she danced off. Two enormous video screens were used to good effect, turning JJ and her dancers into totemic emblems, like animated Babylonian bas reliefs. Much attention had been paid to the sets, costumes, choreography, and lighting - but they forgot about the music. The sound was tinny, and the vocals were nearly indistinguishable. But this was showbiz, and very entertaining on its superficial level. Even so, I expected more from a major star like Janet, who has produced some smoking vocals in the studio. How odd for a Jackson, raised in the middle of the R 'n' B universe, to turn in a vocal performance almost utterly devoid of soul. She still looked good.

Photos by Victoria Chandler

Another top singer is Train's Pat Monahan (far right). Guitarist Jimmy Stafford is a big part of their big sound (right). These are from their gig opening for Matchbox 20 at The Meadows Music Theater in Hartford CT August 18th.

Photos by Victoria Chandler



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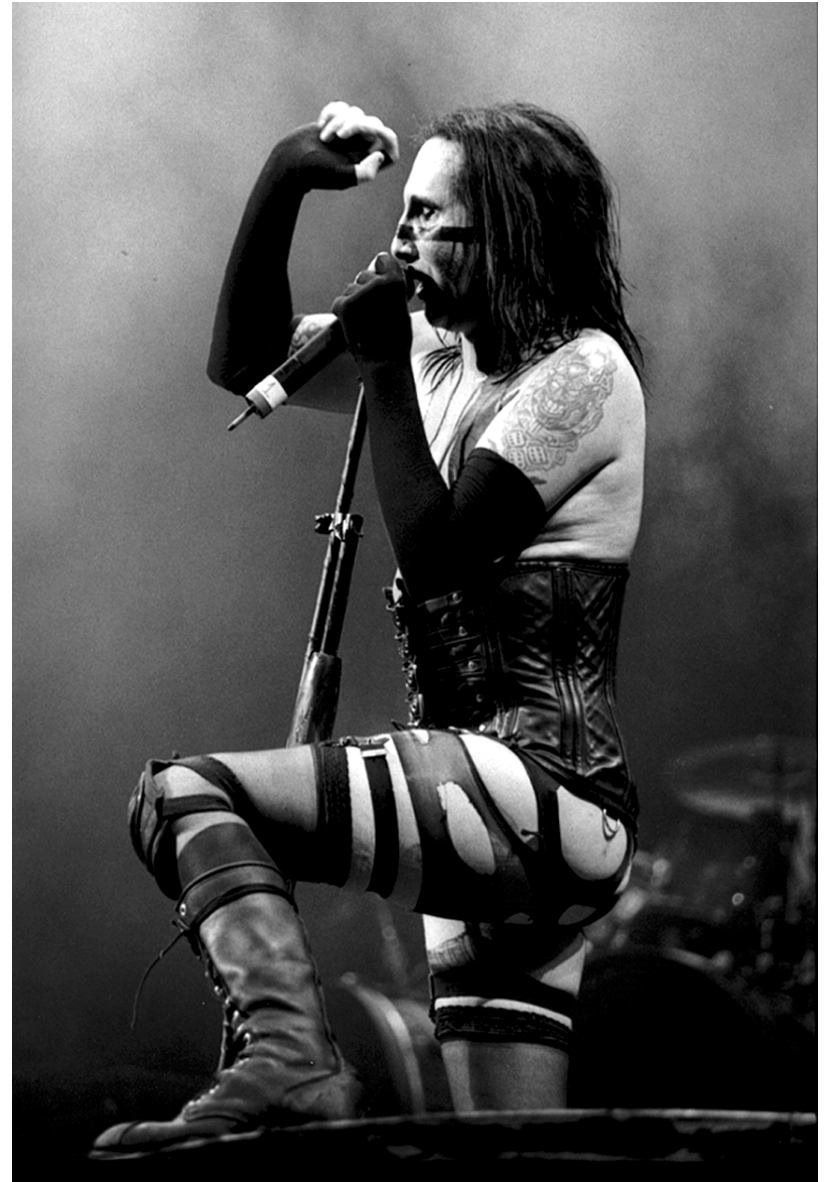
Mixx Pixx

The Mixx Photogs give you a taste of the area's hottest shows!



Counting Crows played a students-only gig on the Old Campus as part of Yale's Tercentenary Celebration that we were fortunate to attend. Lead singer Adam Duritz was in strong voice (left) Openers Actual Tigers were also very good, even better in some ways. They are from Seattle and well worth checking out next time they come around.

Marilyn Manson in his glory at Ozzfest (right)



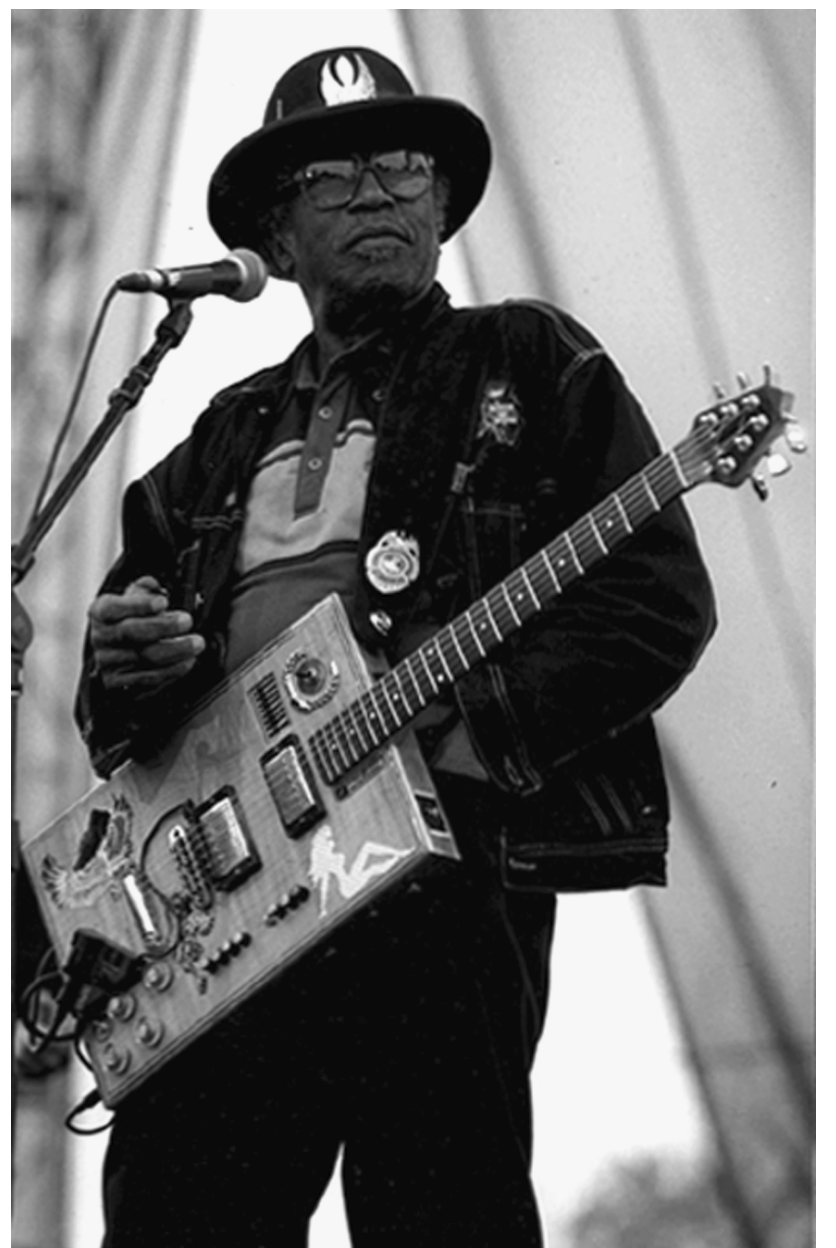
Bo Diddley at The Durham Fair (bottom right) He made much of having driven up from warm sunny Gainesville Fl, only to be greeted by cold, grey, damp conditions in New England. That didn't keep him from heating up the place. *Photos by Dan Hott*



(Ed. note: We are running this picture of Juliana Hatfield (left), not only because she's one of our favorites, but also in honor of Jean Sapula, who has moved on to greener pastures - Green Mountain pastures anyway. We wish her all the best in all her endeavors. We will miss her readiness, dedication, and breezy, no-nonsense disposish. I hope that she will find time to contribute again, keeping us informed on doings up north. She has a nice natural touch.

This is a couple of years old, with JH singing on a bed set up in Apache Studios in Cambridge to announce the release of her album "Bed." I've always liked this shot, but we couldn't fit it in somehow at the time. Any time is a good time to run a picture of Juliana. Now seems as good a time as any.)

Photo by Jean Sapula



GEORGE HARRISON, STUART ADAMSON, R.I.P.

By Steve Bornstein



John Lennon (left) and George Harrison, in India, 1968 (courtesy of Time Magazine)

There seems to have been an awful lot of death lately. Death is a part of life, a rather mysterious, disconcerting, and unavoidable one. The lives sacrificed on September 11th continue to resonate within their remaining relatives and loved ones, even though they were not famous. Famous people have an effect on so many others that their loss seem magnified, though the only difference is that more people knew them than they knew in return. Their legacy is their accomplishments and the memories that live on in those who live on. Two such have recently departed, and it is well to remember them and recount their deeds.

So much has been written about **George Harrison** that I doubt anything I say will be new. Just by being a member of The Beatles he had a profound and enduring effect on popular music. He also helped expand music's horizons, introducing Indian music and the sound of the sitar to Western sensibilities. As a humanitarian, he incorporated a sense of social responsibility into that irresponsible rebellious rascal rock 'n' roll by creating the concept of a rock benefit. The Concert For Bangladesh in 1971 was a model for all that have followed. Long known as "the quiet Beatle" or "the serious Beatle," he actually had quite a spirited sense of fun, and really lit up whenever he played guitar. Inasmuch as The Beatles disbanded in 1970 and **John Lennon**'s death at the hands of an assassin in 1980 rendered a true Beatles reunion impossible, George's death from cancer at 58 Nov. 29th put to rest any such notions. But George had moved on long ago; the rest of us must now follow in kind.

RIP Big Country

OK, it's actually **Stuart Adamson** who has died, but with him also dies any chance of Big Country getting back together again. He was the band's founder, chief writer, lead singer, and creator, with **Bruce Watson**, of their signature sound. Without him, any attempt to resurrect the band would be just that, an impossible miracle. The band broke up last year after what surely must have been a frustrating run. After twenty years and over a dozen albums with a unique and memorable sound, outside of their native Scotland they were still known mostly for

their first single, "In A Big Country." It's a good thing they included the name of the band in the song title or else no one would recognize it.

If I sound angry and bitter, it's because I am. When someone you revere dies, part of you dies as well. When someone you revere goes missing, very likely on an alcoholic binge, and winds up five weeks later hanging himself in a Hawaii hotel room Dec. 16th, you want to knock some sense into him - but it's too late. Suicide is a most selfish and uncaring act. It may be a final solution for the person in question (though I've heard such souls are left in limbo until they complete unfinished business in this life), but it leaves behind in its wake countless people who are hurt, confused, frustrated, angry, sad, grieving, and riddled with doubt, as if cursed by a wizard who has died and cannot remove the curse. You can't help but wonder why the self-destructive impulse was so strong, and what could have been done to thwart it. But it's too late to do anything, except remember what the truncated life amounted to, and try to learn something from how it ended. From now on Beethoven's birthday will be bittersweet for me.

The hallmark of Big Country's sound was a twin guitar attack quite unlike any other. Far from the typical blues-based riffing one so often expects to hear, they went for ethereal, atmospheric harmonies, echo-laden and dreamy, with the most effective use of the E-bow I have ever heard. This battery-powered device is held in the right hand and passed over the strings. It creates a magnetic field which causes the string to vibrate without being touched, thereby producing a soft attack like using a volume pedal. In the hands of these masters the eerie sound was transformed into an endless variety of effects, including making the guitar resemble bagpipes. Even if Stuart grew to loathe such comparisons, they worked.

Stuart and Bruce would also create walls of sound with repeated figures such as crosspicking on one guitar, while the other played melodic lines. Their strings swooped low and soared high, with imaginative arrangements that bespoke a real mastery of all of their elements. The rhythm section was more prominent than such a common appellation implies. Drumming styles ranged from parade rhythms, all snare and bass drum, to atmospheric washes of cymbals and tom-toms. **Tony Butler**'s bass locked in with **Mark Brzezicki**'s drumming as a rhythmic counterpart, an approach that recalled what Noel Redding did for Mitch Mitchell in the Jimi Hendrix Experience, albeit completely different stylistically. Big Country was one of a very small number of bands who devoted themselves to making melodic rock with an aching sense of beauty, concentrating on the high notes - and still rocked. To my mind, only The Grateful Dead spent as much time as they did on the high end.

As intriguing as the music was, it supported lyrics with an almost surreal poetic sense. They rarely touched on typical mundane subjects like love, lust, or the lack thereof. More often the subjects were class struggles, restless yearnings, apocalyptic battle scenes and other dire



Big Country, 1993: from left, Bruce Watson, Stuart Adamson, Mark Brzezicki, Tony Butler (photo by Paul Cox)

imaginings. These were written by people who clearly had a lot on their minds but who also took their songwriting craft seriously. Even if it is often difficult to determine exactly what they are talking about, the images conjured by the words are so vivid, and are sung by voices so passionate, that one gets swept along in their fervor. The lyrics speak to the heart and mind, the music to the body and soul. Listening to them is a complete musical experience, an achievement quite rare in its own time and even more so today, as more and more predictable music and prefab entertainment squeeze out what little artistry remains in popular music. Big Country is one of my favorite post-psychedelic era bands, right up there with Little Feat and The Nields, one of the very few to live up to the creative promise of that freewheeling era.

They made quite a big splash in their native Scotland, and sure looked like the likely band to put Scotland on the map of the rock and roll world. Their fame spread to America about the same time as U2 from Ireland, and also The Alarm from Wales - a non-English British invasion, if you will. I had the great fortune to see The Alarm open for U2 back then, on the War tour in 1983 (Marshall Crenshaw was sandwiched in between these hair bands with their driving martial beats, and still acquitted himself well). But Big Country eluded me. They were scheduled to play at the New Haven Coliseum, opening for Hall and Oates, but either Daryl or John got sick and cancelled the gig. And I was willing to pay Hall and Oates prices just to hear Big Country's amazing sound live. I would have to wait until they played at Toad's Place in 1996. While it was great to finally hear them in person, I knew they had changed, toned down the airy stuff and gotten more gritty. But even so, when I look back and think of all the bands I've wished I could have seen, at least I can say I hadn't missed them.

And now I find myself missing them more than ever. Whatever kept them together for so long, whatever sustained Stuart while his demons scraped away at his soul, there suddenly was no more room in the world for Big Country. A Beatles reunion will never take place, The Grateful Dead will never tour again, and Big Country has found its page in rock 'n' roll history. Stuart Adamson, 1958-2001, Big Country, 1981-2001, RIP

"FolkBeat" Cont'd from Page 3

McKeown, with whom he also tours) through his own studio, Sackamusic; and **Dave Hower** - well, in addition to doing occasional gigs (including with Erin also), I heard he had fallen in love. Good for him. The sisters **Nerissa** and **Katryna** continue to tour as a duo, a much more economically feasible approach. This means that some songs have been shelved and others restored to performance, as befits the slimmed-down arrangements. Indeed, with emphasis placed more pronouncedly on the harmonies and the songwriting craft itself, there is much merit to the argument that the songs are better served this way.

An appearance on October 19th at New York's Fez showed they have lost none of their appeal in this process, as the house was packed. This was their first show in the city since they played at the World Trade Center Plaza August 15th. Katryna's baby Amelia made an appearance, though she was so demure she easily escaped notice. The proud mommy regaled her from the stage with short funny novelty ditties like "Amelia's Little Red Dog," an ode to a favorite stuffed toy. She also goaded Nerissa into composing a song on the spot about appearances, possibly called "You Shouldn't Judge Other People." A few REAL new songs were performed, including "Love And China," "Love Me One More Time," and "The Sweetest." My biggest delight came when they ripped into "James," one of my favorites, a former concert staple that was retired two years ago. Add other classics like "Best Black Dress" and "I Know What Kind Of Love This Is," and more recent "classics" like "Snowman", "Easy People," and "This Town Is Wrong," and you've got a good solid show - and that's just over half of the set list! If they aren't famous yet it's not for lack of talent.

Another show worth the trek into the city was **Lucinda Williams** at The Beacon Theatre November 10th. She got off to a rocky start, stopped the opening song to complain about the sound on stage, then started over. After two more songs she spoke to the audience again, making a wisecrack about how now she's going to get bad reviews. "Fuck 'em" she said defiantly. Then she launched back into it and never looked back. After a few more songs she really hit her stride, and the second half of her set rocked the joint. She came back for seven encores, ending the night with Dylan's "Masters Of War," which she knew by heart, singing without the help of her ubiquitous journal. Any reviewer who did not stick it out beyond the first few songs, especially to the finale, did not get the complete picture.

Still, the same thing occurred the following Wednesday when she played at The Warner Theatre in Torrington CT. This majestic venue is almost completely renovated, and provided warm, near-perfect acoustics. Again she stopped the band in the first song, this time going on a bit about being distraught over a relationship, and being exhausted. She likened her situation to Loretta Lynn's before that overworked star's onstage collapse. Maybe if the audience's bemused response helped bring her back; maybe it was the band starting to kick into the next song. But I wondered if the future held in store for her something like what happened in the movie, "Network." In that scathing satire, Howard Beale's emotional anguish ("I'm mad as hell and not going to take it any more") became co-opted and turned into sthick, the catch phrase for a game show. Can you imagine Lucinda's case of nerves being turned into a similar routine, as in going to a Las Vegas casino to see the daily meltdown? I will never understand why some performers get pushed to the edge like this. It doesn't do anyone any good, and it seems so unnecessary. Still, in the present, her torment was palpable, as each song seemed to touch on one aspect or another of heartbreak, and each seemed difficult to get through.

I mention this not to reinforce what seems to be a commonly-held attitude about her, but to convey some understanding of the forces at play behind the perception. Furthermore, I want people to grasp that even well-respected artists have to deal with everyday concerns the same as anyone else. These may get magnified because they are in the public eye with spotlights, paparazzi, and overly expectant fans following their every move, but otherwise they are just the same as you or me. I do hope she gets the rest she so clearly needed, and soon. We've already lost too many good'uns to these pressures.

I could use some rest myself. I think the country needs a break, too, from the horror and its repercussions. As time goes on, and as the war in Afghanistan progresses past its first stage, people's spirits are slowly lifting. I hope that by next issue life normalizes to the point where we can just go on with our regular coverage of musical and other cultural events, and have that be enough.

I do hope so.

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