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FILTER *mini*



Snow Patrol

Defining Our Year

ISSUE #3
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FROM THE EDITOR:

Welcome to Issue 3! *Filter Mini* is a sister publication of *Filter Magazine*—or *Filter Biggie*, as we like to call it now (kidding). Why another magazine? Well, because there's just so much good music out there to write about. That, and we like the idea of having something free to hand out to our friends. So if *Filter Magazine* is a perfect fit for your coffee table (and it is), then *Mini* was made for your pocket. Think of it as your *Filter* field guide. And, as always, Good Music Will Prevail.

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FILTER *mini*

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THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2004

Dear *Filter Mini* Reader,

Welcome to our third issue and the final transmission from *Filter* for the year 2004. The past 12 months have been kind to us. We've seen a lot of our favorite artists—many of whom have graced the pages of *Filter Magazine* (*Filter Biggie*, that is)—come into their own on their own terms, spread their wings to take graceful flight on a subtle breeze of musical notes, radio waves and glossy pages...get all growed up 'n' shit, basically. We've watched with dirty grins as the power's shifted in little bits—to our labels, our musicians, our record stores, our publications—as the industry works to catch up with the independents rather than the other way around. Sure, the frat kids are listening to Modest Mouse now, but isn't that, like, some kind of brilliantly ironic dream come true anyway? We think so. And finally, in this rather auspicious Year of the Monkey, we've expanded our close-knit family to include two new additions: our very own record label (*Filter US Recordings*), and the little pocket-sized bundle of joy that you're holding in your hands right now. Gurgle, gurgle.

What follows is *Filter's* top ten albums of the year list, with commentary from some of the people who helped us compile it. As always, this end-all, be-all statement is pieced together from charts submitted by the publishers, editors and marketers of *Filter Magazine* and—for the first time—*Filter Mini*. Ours is a democratic process that never fails to yield some very interesting results, so read on and take careful notes—your Christmas lists and barstool conversations may never be the same. Be enthralled, be appalled, but most importantly, be entertained. We did this for you. Because we love you, and we know what's best.

With love,
Chris Martins
Editor-in-Chief, *Filter Mini*



#1



The Arcade Fire
Funeral
Merge



The Arcade Fire

It was like trying to hold a puff of smoke in your hands. You grabbed at the air to keep it nearby, but every swing of your pale arms made it worse. It blew you away, you blew it away, and eventually everyone caught wind of it. What a special thing this *Funeral*, the first debut in a long while that kept its secret between its sleeves all the way until you actually played the thing. It was fun to watch us all catch up as fast as we could, all of us surprised at once, scrambling to claim it as our own because no one tipped us off to it but the Arcade Fire. It's a mysterious and melancholy pop-laced suite in 10 parts, not only a fitting accompaniment to this nameless decade at its halfway point, but maybe its first bona fide classic.

GREGG LAGAMBINA



#2



Wilco
A Ghost is Born
Nonesuch

Wilco

In these times of turning red when someone brings up the red, white and blue, we need a band that can make us proud to stand up and salute...one that embodies the American spirit. We need a band that has overcome, a band from the heartland. Quite simply, we need a band like Wilco. And this year, when we needed their music most (and, incidentally, they also needed their music most), they delivered. *A Ghost is Born* is an American album, drenched in amber waves of sound and fueled by that true blue U.S. of A. constant: grit. Jeff Tweedy's land is our land, from the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters, and all the way to *Mermaid Avenue*.

PAT MCGUIRE



#3



Elliott Smith
From a Basement on the Hill
ANTI-

Elliott Smith

Forget the acoustic laments of *Either/Or* and the svelte majesty of *XO*. Well, don't totally forget, but at least be not opposed to this realization: *From a Basement on the Hill* is the late, great Elliott Smith's most complete work. Period. Because no other album so perfectly captures Elliott in all his tortured, tattered brilliance. And nothing else is more worth remembering than that.

CHITUNG



#4



Franz Ferdinand
Franz Ferdinand
Domino

Franz Ferdinand

These Scotts' self-titled debut not only reminded us why an accent makes you both a) smarter and b) surprisingly attractive despite questionable oral care, but also that you can be intelligently cynical while still dancing your ass off. Plus, "Take Me Out" pulled off what's possibly the best mid-song transition of all time. Show me a booty that did not shake, and I'll call you a dastardly liar.

LESLEY BARGAR

PHOTO: HILARY LEFTICK

WILCO PHOTO: ANTON CORBIN, ELLIOTT SMITH PHOTO: AUTUMN DEWILDE, FRANZ FERDINAND PHOTO: MARIUS HANSEN



#5



The Killers'
Hot Fuss
Island

The Killers

Some bands are exceptionally influential and other bands are exceptionally good at being influenced. We laud the first (holding vigil, speaking in hushed tones), but where the rubber meets the road, we actually listen to the second. Somewhere between Duran Duran, Morrissey, the Cure, and Dead or Alive, the Killers hit on something dramatic, musical and undeniably catchy with *Hot Fuss*. And though they may not be the most influential band of 2004, they were certainly the most inspired.

MIKEL JOLLETT



#6



Secret Machines'
Now Here is Nowhere
Reprise

Secret Machines

Secret Machines have never had to fake it, and why would they? Grandiose space rock isn't exactly paying too many people's bills these days. Thankfully, this trio of Texan transplants (they call NYC home these days) are too loud and too good to be ignored. *Now Here is Nowhere* is huge enough to accommodate the best of the 1970s and then some. This is rock 'n' roll—confident, filthy and positively deafening.

JACK MCGRUE



#7

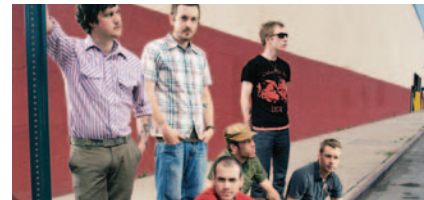


M83
Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts
Mute

M83

The American debut from a (once) pair of Frenchmen collectively named after a far-off galaxy, *Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts* is like the long lost DOS map for My Bloody Valentine's shattered rainbows of fuzz. An electrical storm in heaven, M83's mangled starlight and phantom drones swoon where prior mopheads only shoegazed.

BERNARDO RONDEAU



#8



Modest Mouse'
Good News for People Who Love Bad News
Epic

Modest Mouse

There's no question that 2004 will be remembered as the year that "indie" broke (i.e. the Shins, the Postal Service, and certainly the cultural cherry-picking of *The OC*). The hallmark record for this drastic shift, *Good News* proved that major labels don't have to release crap to turn a profit. Throw in Isaac Brock's comforting, newfound optimism and it's starting to feel like the future of music may not be so doomed after all.

STEVE LECKART



#9



Madvillain'
Madvillainy
Stones Throw

Madvillain

The hottest dementia to come out of hip-hop since our man ODB—God rest his soul—*Madvillainy* is precisely what happens when the drugs *do* work (my apologies to the Verve). It also helps when there's a Madlib around to put the "F" in funky and a Mr. Dumille (aka master lyricist MF Doom) who never saw an obscure turn of phrase he didn't like—or absolutely milk the shit out of.

CHZA



#10



Razorlight'
Up All Night
Universal

Razorlight

While taking the "New York" out of something quintessentially "New York" would make for, say, a rather bland hot dog, or a tan, well-medicated Seinfeld, when it comes to the city's new millennium sound, it results in all the cool with zero apathetic side effects. Razorlight's British debut champions all that we love about the "the" bands, but adds some pianos, anthemic pop and a frontman gifted with both passion and the ability to actually sing, and sing well.

LESLEY BARGAR

Honorable Mentions.....

Because it's been such a swell year, we couldn't help but include an additional list of folks who've helped make 2004 the year for Good Music that it was. Be sure visit www.filtermini.com to see some of our individual Top Tens. Honorable mentions go to (in alphabetical order): Autolux, the Black Keys, the Concretes, Earlimart, Elbow, Embrace, PJ Harvey, Interpol, Magnet, Morrissey, Muse, Rogue Wave, TV on the Radio, the Veils, the Velvet Teen, and the Zutons. **F**

THE KILLERS PHOTO: COLIN LANE, SECRET MACHINES PHOTO: PIPER FERGLISON, M83 PHOTO: DAVID BLACK, MODEST MOUSE PHOTO: BRIAN TAMBORRELO, MADVILLAIN PHOTO: ERIC COLEMAN, RAZORLIGHT PHOTO: SCARLETT PAGE



The Crooked Spiral

Re-Bringin' In the Rain with Pavement's Scott Kannberg

by Pat McGuire

The second time around is an important concept. The newness of the maiden effort hasn't worn off, yet you have even more to prove. You've examined and learned from your previous effort, and implemented changes, but there's still fun to be had. And, of course, it just doesn't hurt as much. In 1994, hot on the heels of the even-then-classic, indie Holy Grail, *Slanted and Enchanted*, Pavement lost and gained a drummer, moved to New York City, recorded an album in a studio apartment, and became a band for the very first time. It was an era worth revisiting. Thus Matador is re-releasing the masterful and beloved *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain*—the band's momentous second album, and their second deluxe reissue containing previously unreleased gems, glimpses of the now-past future, and a lovingly put together booklet with notes, art and inside jokes from the major players. *Filter Mini* caught up with founding member Spiral Stairs (aka Scott Kannberg) in stormy Seattle to discuss the making of the *CRCR* original and reissue, where to start a Pavement rookie, and the inevitable future reformation of the band (well, for a nostalgic ski chalet getaway weekend at the very least).

If a person doesn't know anything about Pavement and wants to learn, someone almost always starts them out with *Crooked Rain*. Where would you start?

Actually, with the first stuff: *Westing* or *Slanted*. But it's kind of weird because in a lot of ways *Crooked* is the start of Pavement—we had a different drummer and the songs were a lot different and we were more of a live band than before.

In the liner notes it says that you think of this record as a New York record. Which parts specifically?

Well, not in the lyrics or in the music. Both those things are very California. It was very much how we were a California band recording in and experiencing New York...but I can't really pinpoint it. It's more of the feel of it, you know? Like Echo and the Bunnymen's *Ocean Rain*—you think of that record as very English and dark and yet it was recorded in Paris.

How were the songs brought to the original sessions?

Stephen probably had half the songs already written when he was in California. Then he went back to New York and practiced with Steve West [the second drum-

mer]. So when I came out to record, they already had these songs together. We all just started rehearsing. **In that crazy little apartment studio, right?**

Yeah, this guy's bedroom. Talk about claustrophobic. **See, that's the charm of your band. You didn't need fancy studios, just each other.**

That's the thing. We were always pretty comfortable in those kinds of spaces, making do with what we had. It always confounds me how people think they need to go into the best studio possible. That would suck all the energy right out of us. We never did that. Well, except for the last record. [Laughs]

Well, we're not gonna go there yet. You've got another, what, five years before the *Terror Twilight* [the fifth and final proper album] reissue? Do you have a favorite record or period from Pavement?

I like to think of it as two different phases, you know, the Gary [Young, the first drummer] phase and the West phase. I was really proud of *Slanted* and that era, and I think *Brighten the Corners* [their fourth] was our most together record in the second phase—we all were there from the beginning and it just jelled.

Do you like that the band has such a huge legacy? Oh sure I like it! [Laughs] But on the other hand it's not something that I dwell on...I rarely think about Pavement. The only times that I have recently were in putting together the reissues. When people come up to me and say, "I love Pavement," I totally understand how they could, you know—I thought we were a good band—but I don't dwell on it.

PHOTOS: GAIL BUTENSKY

What are the other guys from the band up to?

You know, I haven't talked to Bob [Nastanovich, the utility man] in a long time. I think he's still in Kentucky, involved with horse racing. Steve West has two kids now and he's in Virginia. And Malkmus, I heard he was moving to New York but I haven't talked to him in a while either. [Bassist Mark] Ibold still lives in New York City and he's doing well.

So there's no annual family vacation to the Catskills?

That'd be fun. It'd be like, "Hey, remember this!" the whole fucking time. We had fun while we were together, so I don't see why we wouldn't have fun now.

Have you talked about it at all? Reforming or doing a one-off show?

No, we haven't talked at all. I'm sure it'll come around. I'm sure if the opportunity presents itself, it'll happen. It always happens to everybody right? **F**

Wowie Zowie!.....



Fans of the *Shady Lane EP* rejoice: they're on pace to give just about every Pavement record the ten-year touch-up.

Mini: Is there more stuff sitting around for another reissue?

Spiral: Well, the *Wowie Zowie* reissue is gonna be a big one. I was trying to think about that the other day...where do I start? It was the one record that we just kinda disagreed on. I used to always say that it was a great record and it's B-sides. [Laughs]

Mini: I know Malkmus said he'd mispicked the singles on that record. Did you or the band have any others in mind?

Spiral: I just don't think that there were any singles on the album. They were good songs but they just didn't catch people. Matador had done a little deal with Warner Brothers and we had a big meeting with the president. We were playing the record for him and you could just see his by his face that he wasn't hearing anything in it at all. [Laughs]

Mini: Had he heard your music before?

Spiral: Yeah. I think they were thinking, "Okay, this band's gonna bring us another *Crooked Rain*, with hummable songs." Then they hear "Rattled by the Rush" and they go, "Oh God!" But for us it was funny as shit. That was the last meeting we ever went to.



Snow Patrol

Defining Our Year

by Lesley Bargar

On just about this exact date last year, Gary Lightbody was busy scraping scum off of his jeans in a dressing room under a flickering fluorescent tube that shed just enough light to raise all kinds of questions about sanitation. The mystery schmutz could have come from any part of the outside-London “strip club by day/concert venue by night” where his band Snow Patrol just finished playing a show to 15 people—13 of which were on the guest list, and the other two, well, they were naked.

A few days from now (or, for you, probably a few weeks ago) Gary Lightbody will be wiping the sweat off his brow with a cool towel after playing to thousands of fans in Los Angeles at the KROQ Acoustic Christmas concert. Girls will be crying. Boys will be singing along. Lighters and cell phones will be illuminated high in the air, and Gary and his bandmates will be at the center of it all. What exactly falls between these two events has been for Snow Patrol—and you—the year of 2004.

But over-year success stories ending in the word “KROQ” are nothing new—and they usually involve a lot of hair dye—so what you have to understand about Snow Patrol is that, though 2004 was where the success

part finally came into play, this has not been a rags-to-riches year for Ireland’s new favorite sons. It’s actually been like, ten.

“Nearly a decade of disappointment makes you realize what’s true and what’s actually important,” Gary says in a lilt that adds an uplifting urgency to every other word, “and I’ve come to grips with everything well before this year. So, it has all come as a pleasant surprise rather than a massive, life-altering experience.”

Years went by when one couldn’t even find a copy of the first Snow Patrol record in the band’s hometown of Belfast, aside from in Gary’s living room. Their albums struggled to break 8,000 copies sold, and it was only through extensive touring and side-projects like the Reindeer Section (a 27-member, mostly Scottish supergroup featuring members of Mogwai and Belle & Sebastian, among many others) that Snow Patrol were able to survive as musicians. And that’s why Gary Lightbody is still humble enough to talk to a journalist for two hours at 1:30 in the morning. And why he genuinely keeps insisting on “just five more minutes” each time his publicist interrupts the call. And why we should all look a bit closer and longer at the band that’s been dubbed “the darker Coldplay.”



“Nearly a decade of disappointment makes you realize what’s true and what’s actually important.”

In October of 2004, Snow Patrol came close to being destroyed in a hurricane. Scratch that—several hurricanes. They were on one of their first trips to the U.S. in support of their ambitiously grand breakout LP, *Final Straw* (produced by Jack Knife Lee of U2 fame), and had just walked off the sound stage of *The Late Show with David Letterman*. Their next stop was to be Florida, which, unfortunately, was also the next stop for three hurricanes that apparently had top billing. This was Snow Patrol’s first big welcome to the United States, and not a bad metaphor for a lesson Gary and many others have learned the hard way—that attempting to break into the U.S. can easily break you.

“It’s like, ‘We’ve got our own music! We don’t need anything else,’” says Gary of the general American mentality present since the British Invasion sputtered to an unceremonious halt. So why have we suddenly, this year, been so willing to have our ears conquered by bands like Franz Ferdinand and the Thrills and Muse and, well, Snow Patrol? Gary’s initial explanation for his band’s ability to transcend this cultural barrier is, of course, hard work. And he and bandmates Johnny Quinn, Mark McClelland and Nathan Connolly have done a lot of it. (The KROQ festival marks their fifth Stateside expedition of the year.) But it’s more than just that; eventually it comes down to the fact that music this year—from *everywhere*—was so undeniably good, no one was given the opportunity to pick and choose where the soundtrack to their lives was going to come from.

“Music is coming from every direction now; you just can’t stop it,” Gary says in breathless spurts. “It’s just a

wonderful Ganges of energy and force and drive, and if you are standing in the way, you’re just swept along with it. It’s really invigorating...I’ve been following everything. Every week there are like 20 albums, and they’re all great. I was a music fan before, but I’m totally immersed in it right now.”

Which is really why the impact of Snow Patrol somehow goes beyond the epic, shadowy ballads they create, and why he was able to spend half of the interview talking about every band from Sufjan Stevens to Feist to the Earlies to Death Cab for Cutie without even touching upon his own band’s achievements. Because Gary Lightbody is first and foremost a music fan, and as a result an expert on exceptional music. It’s his enthusiasm, his fucking blatant, sappy, manic love of music, that suddenly makes an album like *Final Straw*—powerful in scope but heartbreakingly personal in content—seem so possible. Only a person like Gary, who has allowed himself to be so completely dominated by certain songs, could write one like “Run,” the epic centerpiece of the album and easily one of the most recognized songs of the year. With its motivating refrain, “Light up, light up,” interspersed among subtle upsurges of guitars and strings and drone and emotion, the song just *feels* important.

“Run’ definitely connects on a different level, a spiritual level,” says Gary, a bit embarrassed to have used the “S” word in describing his own music. “People are being married to it; people are being buried with it; people are being born to it. I mean Christ! It always seems to connect with these momentous occasions in

people’s lives. I don’t even sing the last refrain anymore live—it becomes the crowd’s. Everybody just takes over and they sing it so passionately it gives me tears.”

So “Run” has become a graduation slide-show song, and the background anthem for romantic WB dramas and “great moments in sports” montages alike. But for Gary, that’s the whole point: to lose ownership of a song to a sea of listeners. Avoiding any cringe-inducing images of Chris Carrabba sing-alongs, it’s those joyously tearful moments that validate Snow Patrol’s appearance at huge festivals and alongside late show hosts, and why they won’t be excluded from discerning magazine covers. Because Gary and his band have written a song—made a record—that’s genuinely and honestly done what all of our favorite records have done, they’ve *defined* our year. They become ours and they become us. And so while it’s been said that 2004 is the year that *made* Snow Patrol, for thousands of people around the world, 2004 is really the year that Snow Patrol made, for us.

On this night last year, Gary Lightbody was still up in the wee hours of the morning, possibly waiting for his sullied pants to come out of the drier. Alone in his house, he sat with his eyes closed and listened to record after record in a fit of insomnia. Tonight, I guarantee that he’s doing the exact same thing.

“We’re just sort of still plodding along,” Gary says, “almost laughing at the chaos of that’s passed us in this...this hurricane of a year.” **F**

Rufus Wainwright

The Man Who Knew Too Much by Chi Chung

Oh, what a world we live in today. Where once stood a mountaintop of singularity, swagger and unabashed, fuck-all vanity, now remains a sad, misshapen (e)mole-hill. Gone are the lusty, Phil Spector-ed, Technicolor blasts that made our hearts swoon and our stomachs churn (in that really nice, too-much-ice-cream-on-a-hot-summer-day sort of way). Gone are those gospel choirs and perfect-fourth, perfect-fifth harmonies. Everything's all toughened up, dialed down and made slightly, deliberately off-key in the hopes that you, the practitioner of good taste, won't notice that the lyrics don't actually *say* jack shit. Except that love hurts. And that talking about it with nauseatingly hand-wringing, ashes-to-ashes, dust-to-dust solemnity makes for brilliant coffeeshop musings, but not much else.

Rufus Wainwright knows this. Sure, he's had his share of "look at me prance and preen while I show you my octaves" moments. And okay, if all things in moderation is your calling card, then Rufus used up his minutes a long, long time ago. But after speaking to him, you can't help but take the man at his word. Especially when you know the man is an unquestionable authority on the one subject all your fancypants music scholars (and writers) are flunking. Yes it's true—nobody knows Rufus Wainwright quite like, well, Rufus Wainwright.

"What worries me most is the outside world and what's going on in the United States," he softly purrs, that thick-as-molasses baritone marinating in serious thought. "Specifically the rise of the Right Wing and the religious fanaticism that's occurring. Sometimes I'm worried about my own safety, in terms of what my rights will be as an American citizen."

And here you were, leaning on the edge of your seat, waiting for him to say something Vaudevillian, Shakespearian, or anything, just anything having to do with classical virtue. And he does—when he talks about

his infatuation with all things baroque ("The opera virus," he jokes) and his relationship with female fans and straight men alike ("It has nothing to do with the fact that they wanna fuck me...but it's the sexual tension that keeps it going," he states rather bemusedly). Right now, however, he waxes not poetic, but humanistic, a far cry from the Miltonian allusions or Shelleyesque imagery which sprinkle his verses like rain in Spain. Right now, he is earnest and—gasp—*responsible*.

"I do think that we have gone across the line where it is up to the individual to be more educated and to be more of a citizen—to make a difference." He ends with a flourish: "To improve their lives."

I know what you're thinking. That we should leave politicking to Brucey and U2 and Bright Eyes. And that furthermore, what's a gay—presumably liberal—man who rhapsodizes about being drunk in flip-flops on 5th Avenue (which c'mon, you have to admit, is such an enviable condition regardless of what team you play for) doing reading you your God-given rights? The answer: he's doing it because he can. And because well, he wants to. Both have come to be his MO's—he *can* croon in Latin. He wants to croon in Latin. So when he urges you to exercise a little bit of gall in your own decision-making, it's only because you've asked the same from his art-making process.

Bringing us to Exhibit A: *Want Two*. Much like everything else he's done, it's cocksure. A little bit *Carmen* (the opera, not Electra), a smidgen of Randy Newman and a whole lot of cigarettes and chocolate milk. That is to say, it's all the things your momma cautioned against: not finishing your vegetables before moving on to dessert, chewing with your mouth open, putting on airs. In addition to the aforementioned Latin hymn (album opener "Agnus Dei"), there's an ode to his art teacher, a tribute to kinky aphrodisiacs ("An Old



PHOTOS: ANDY EARL



teacher, a tribute to kinky aphrodisiacs (“An Old Whore’s Diet”), and a significant first—a stupendously over-the-top glorification of his iconic status called “Gay Messiah.” Ok, so maybe it’s not a first. Or a second, or a third...err, you get the point—he talks about himself. A lot. Which, I guess, makes him kinda like, the first gay rapper/singer/songwriter. But can you imagine Jay-Z or Nas ever baptizing themselves in, ahem, bodily fluids? Or “wearing tubesocks with style”? Methinks not. Besides, Rufus is well aware that bald-faced narcissism can be a double-edged sword. As is sticking readymade labels onto an artist’s persona.

“I don’t necessarily want to be considered someone who will save the gay culture,” he permits, weighing each word steadily and conscientiously. Then suddenly, the walls come down. “I have a lot of beef with the gay culture. Because they’re very, very fickle. They also have very bad taste in music a lot of the time. And they’re in denial about a lot of things that are going on.”

It’s interesting, isn’t it? Segments of the counterculture being in fact, counterproductive. Perhaps this is why Rufus has trouble paring off the excess weight. And why we, the adoring fans, shouldn’t ask him to. With

each added derring-do and decadent, might-as-well shrug, he forms a bigger picture and thus, a less cluttered one. It’s a case of more actually being more, whether it be sound, sense of self, or simply expressive control. Exhibit B: *Want One*, the decidedly more accessible prequel released last year—although “accessible” in Rufus terms can be a slippery slope. Let’s just say, then, that the harmonies are brighter, but the stakes lighter, with the predominant theme being, to put it crudely, material-boy-living-in-a-material-world. On the other hand, *Want Two* has no such illusions. Though cut from the same cloth (both albums were a result of one enormous studio spree), it celebrates romance as being foreboding as well as a kind of sadistic spectacle. In other words, for Rufus, the motherlode of all comfort zones—a fact that he freely admits.

“I have no complaints about where I am. I’ve definitely hit the top of my 30s at the top of my game,” he exalts. Oh, what a world we live in—where the best golfer is black and maybe, just maybe, the biggest, baddest emcee is a gay Canadian who spits his bars (at least occasionally) in Latin. Agnus Dei, mawfuckas. **F**

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Elefant's Guide to New York City's Chinatown

by Erin Broadley

Ever since Elefant stomped onto the dance-rock floor in 2003, it seems all that journalists can prattle on about is crooner Diego Garcia's Argentinian good looks. But forget all of the "Sexiest New Yorkers" lists he's made, the ladies and limos and red ropes; these days the newly domesticated and self-described "hermit" doesn't get too excited about such ephemera. When he's not conversing about his band's music (their debut *Sunlight Makes Me Paranoid* was just re-released on Hollywood/Kemado), lately all Garcia seems to get really excited about is food. He really, *really* loves food. So when *Filter Mini* asked him to talk about New York City's Chinatown, it came as no surprise that the singer maneuvered nearly every question into a chat about good eats. Next time you're in Elefant's neck of the jungle, you'll know where to find Diego...and a full meal.

The Best.....

...late night grub?

A place called N on Crosby Street that serves Spanish dishes. You can get little sausages, tapas, little shrimps and the cheese with all the little fruit things. And then there's Lucky Strike on West Broadway and Grand. They have good steak.

...venue for live music?

The Bowery Ballroom is incredible. That's my favorite room in the city and we play there often. It's about three blocks from my house. It's funny to roll out of bed and into a venue—a home away from home. I've had some incredible learning moments there.

...deals on band gear?

I sing so I don't have to bother with that shit. All the guys who work at those places are pricks so I don't want to plug their stores. They're the most pretentious, miserable people and I don't know why. You can print that. I think it's funny. We get equipment directly from companies now.

...tourist trap to avoid?

The San Gennaro festival every year on Grand between Mulberry and Baxter. The festival lasts for about 10 days but feels like three months. Everyone from New York City, New Jersey, Long Island and all the tourists converge on the four little blocks where I live. It's horrible. They have rides and freak shows, like the world's smallest woman or the girl with two heads. And there are

sausages everywhere. You can get a good sausage sandwich but it's frightening. There are all these really huge people walking around, eating—it's a scary sight. Chinatown is just so chaotic. One block down on Canal Street is where people go to buy the fake purses. You'll be walking and you'll see, like, 10 women from Texas buying fake Prada bags. You want to avoid that.

...spot to people watch?

There's a table right against the window at Café Habana on Prince Street. It's great to sit against the window and watch girls walk by. The food there is amazing. They have a steak sandwich that is probably the best in the world. And they also have this corn that's incredible.

...escape from the craziness of the city?

An Italian restaurant called Va Tutto with a garden in the back that's incredible. During the summertime it can be like 105 degrees on the streets, but in the garden...the way the buildings are aligned creates a wind tunnel so you have a fresh breeze that gently floats by you while you're eating. It feels like Tuscany.

...place to read about yourself in *Filter*?

The store Universal News on Broadway. I spend so much time there. It has magazines from all over the world. I know it sounds nerdy but there's nothing more fun for me. They have a little café there so you can get a bite to eat and read magazines for free. **F**

PHOTO: PEROU



On the Road (For the Last Time) with Guided By Voices

by Pat McGuire

Somehow, when you go into something you've done a million times knowing that the present effort will be your last, you tend to savor the remedial parts a little bit more. You dwell on the little things; you "suck the marrow" out of the journey. For the last 21 years, Robert Pollard and Guided By Voices have been there and back again, but this Fall marks the final time he'll be traversing the trails with the GBV moniker. It's a final hurrah for the drink-inest, rockinest, fist-pumpinest band Ohio has ever produced. "Chariots of Fire" no doubt accompanies this final ramble across the States, replaying over and over in the heads of the band. That, or "Come Sail Away." *Filter Mini* talked to Bob about nearly half a life well-spent on the road with mice, men and cheese steaks.

In all these years of touring, what has changed beside gas prices?

The size of fast food hamburgers. Has anyone besides me noticed that McDonald's hamburgers—including the bun—are getting smaller? How long do we tolerate this?

What are some of your favorite GBV songs written on tour?

Well, I wrote most of the titles for the songs on *Alien Lanes* while driving from Memphis in an ice storm. I was with my brother and Mitch Mitchell, we had just gotten stoned, and the titles started flying: "Blimps Go 90," "Pimple Zoo," etc. And then we started sliding off the road and so did the creative mood.

Whose version of a road trip is more accurate: Kerouac or Steinbeck?

I would say Kerouac's, but I have had my fair share of Lenny's.

What is your road trip theme song?

"I'm Sailing Away" [sic] or "We Are the Champions."

Truckers: friends or foes?

Personally, I have some trucker friends, but out on the road they are the enemy.

Do you have a favorite roadside landmark? The world's largest non-stick frying pan in Kansas?

I do like the huge statue of Jesus Christ coming up out of the water raising his hands to the sky between Dayton and Cincinnati. I also like the sign that says "XXX NUDE GIRLS FREE FOOD FREE POP" in western Pennsylvania.

Are hangovers on the road worse than normal hangovers at home?

Hangovers choose no geographical preference.

Cities are now declaring GBV days. But are you banned from any of them?

We're not banned from any cities or venues, but I am banned from a few bars and restaurants in Dayton. I've been kicked out of three bars for singing [the Animals' anti-war paean] "Sky Pilot." When we're

bored at a bar my friends will tell me, "Hey Bob, sing 'Sky Pilot.'"

I heard your recent "Fuck Willie Nelson" tirade at the L.A. show. Do you hate the song "On the Road Again"?

It has nothing to do with his songs; it's more to do with what he said. He said the guy from Matchbox 20 had restored his faith in songwriting. Someone needs to turn Willie onto some music. Jesus Christ!

What's your favorite town to break down in?

Any Indian reservation.

Is Dayton still your favorite place to be? What is the first thing you do when you get home after a tour? What is the last thing you do before you leave?

Yes it is. I get a Marion's pizza right when I get home and I get one right before I leave.


What will you miss most about the road?

I am not finished with the road. I will however miss my bandmates from GBV. **F**


PHOTO: JEREMY BALDERSON

One-Liners: *A miniature take on selected Filter Magazine reviews*


(Go to Filter-Mag.com or pick up *Filter Magazine's* Holiday Issue for full reviews.)



Brian Wilson
SMiLE
Nonesuch **95%**
The long-awaited "teenage symphony to God" comes with classic piano ballads, swirling strings, and an ode to "Vega-Tables." And people thought he was crazy.




...Trail of Dead
Worlds Apart
Interscope **92%**
...TOD drops one of the best melodic hardcore albums ever made, leaving us dazed, dumb-founded and thoroughly bloody.




The Futureheads
The Futureheads
Sire Records **89%**
A cappella vocal harmonies + punk inspired guitar hooks = really good record? Uh, apparently yes. Who knew?




Dosh
Pure Trash
Anticon **89%**
Inspired by his baby boy, Dosh loops organics to create something warm, squishy, and leak-protected.




Ted Leo/Pharmacists
Shake the Sheets
Lookout! **88%**
Leo and his Pharmacists bring their usual wit and falsetto flourish to a record that falls perfectly in line with everything these guys do. Except that it's even better.




The Dears
No Cities Left
SpinART **88%**
Orchestral and sweeping pop from the most British-sounding Canadians ever; one more reason to head for the border.




Wu-Tang Clan
Disciples of the 36 Chambers
Sanctuary **87%**
Wu's first show in five years has turned into one of ODB's last living performances—reason enough to overlook a few vocal slip-ups.




U2
How to Dismantle...
Interscope **86%**
U2's latest is just as good as you'd expect; not much more, not much less. Which, considering they're U-fucking-2, still means a lot.




Chicks on Speed
99 Cents
Chicks on Speed Records **84%**
COS pound the synths to show they don't give a shit about electroclash's coolness, and thereby shed light on their own.




Mos Def
The New Danger
Geffen **84%**
Mos Def uses his penis (yep) as a vehicle for social commentary, standing up for some things and falling limp over others.




Silkworm
It'll Be Cool
Touch and Go **83%**
Silkworm's latest dissonant work is like a good cheese: with a little time and patience, you'll discover something grandly funky.




The Music
Welcome to the North
Capitol **83%**
Brit brats lay off the pot in favor of thought, and come back even cockier and rockier.



Unkle
Never, Never, Land
Global Underground **80%**
Spacey paranoia abounds when Lavelle ditches the high profile guest appearances of *Psyence* in favor of...slightly lower profile guest appearances.




Duran Duran
Astronaut
Epic Records **74%**
The '80s new-wave heroes sniff around their old glory, but apparently missed the vital "New Age proselytizing just ain't cool" memo.



R.E.M.
Around the Sun
Warner Bros **53%**
Plodding folk ballads that lack any semblance to the R.E.M. we fell in love with. It's time we began seeing other bands.

FILTER ALBUM RATINGS	91-100% → a great album
	81-90% → above par, below genius
	71-80% → respectable, but flawed
	61-70% → not in my CD player
	Below 60% → please God, tell us why


CD Reviews



Ace Rock
Fast Cars, Danger, Fire and Knives
Def Jux Recordings **88%**

Aces are wild, and so is Ace Rock's new EP, *Fast Cars, Danger, Fire and Knives*, which stacks the chips on all them joker emcees. The flow? Off the hinges. The beats? Like Dr. Octagon meets Timbo meets Cannibal Ox. Def Jux has suffered a bit of a recession as of late, and nobody is better primed to turn things around than our bazooka-toothed Ace in the hole. Your move, El-P.

CHZA



Entrance
Wandering Stranger
Fat Possum **86%**

Entrance is one of those blues kids who took more than just a passing fancy for Robert Johnson. I bet you a plate of grits to a loaf of cornbread Entrance has that famous picture of RJ with the cigarette hanging over his mantle. But rather than sell his soul at a dark and foreboding crossroads in order to mimic the great one, Entrance counters with his own electric-glam whitewash to splash over those still on the fence about the state of modern blues.

PAT MCGUIRE



The Golden Republic
The Golden Republic
Astralwerks **82%**

2004 had/has a huge identity crisis. Apparently it's much easier (and far less subject to criticism) to mix up what everyone loved about previous decades than it is to create any unique sense of self—a cultural greatest hits of sorts. The Golden Republic's debut is exactly in line with this 2004 neurosis. Granted, it's good—vintage poppiness, backing harmonies, garagey stuff, glam and sass—but it's all there. Again. Guilty pleasure perhaps, but ironically, the whole schtick may end up being too dated.

LESLEY BARGAR




Magnolia Electric Co.
Trials & Errors
Secretly Canadian **89%**

While it may be difficult to keep track of Jason Molina and the Company that he keeps, it ain't that hard to recognize some damn soulful Midwestern greatness when it walks right up and punches you in the heart. This live LP documents Songs:Ohia only months after the Magnolia switch, live in Belgium and as

inspired as ever—Molina's Young-meets-Haggard croon rings dirtier than dirt in the band's reverb. Leave the heartstring plucking for the emo boys; this is Americana for the hardened.


LOUISVLACK



Her Space Holiday
The Young Machines Remixed
Mush **75%**

Bay Area bedroom melancholist Marc Bianchi (aka Her Space Holiday) offers up last year's *The Young Machines* long-player for a track-by-track remix by a predictable cast of collaborators. Need-not-apply bringdowns the Album Leaf, Dntel, and Arab Strap barely dent the G4 mold. Super Furry Animals manage to dress Bianchi up as a stoned robotic cowboy while Matmos tangle up his dewy-eyed balladry in modulating blue strings. The sole indisputable gem, however, is Stereolab's serialization of "Girl Problem" into transient random Morricone bursts.

BERNARDO RONDEAU



Galt MacDermot
Galt MacDermot in Film
Kilmarnock **89%**

Your parents know Galt MacDermot as the composer of *Hair*, but beat junkies and crate diggers revere him for the funk riffs he lent to numerous '70s-era projects, including several obscure film scores, which are explored here. MacDermot's tracks whip up Curtis-Mayfield-style R&B-funk, laced with jazz, gospel, Tin Pan Alley, and even psych; his impeccable taste in sidemen sets the whole platter to boiling, with Bernard Purdie delivering untouchable boom-bap behind Jon Faddis and other street-legal players.

PAUL GAITA



Neon
Neon
V2 Records **85%**

Power-pop at its most fluorescent, Neon is all three-minute sing-alongs and monster guitar riffs. Which means, yep, welcome back Fountains of Wayne. Or, at the very least, Imperial Teen. Lead single-to-be "A Man" is the brightest of the bunch, but mid-tempo head-nodder "Friend" and the Byrds-like "Summer Rain" jingle jangle so effortlessly you have to wonder—is the Australian sun really that humid? And—whatever happened to Imperial Teen?

CHITUNG



Abba Roland
Lucky Moon
self-released

88%

Abba Roland's soaring poetics don't disappoint, but it's her stunningly unique voice that truly resonates throughout the tracks on *Lucky Moon*. Her subtle approach to melody craft (see the elementally titled songs, "The Sea" and "The Wind") brings to mind 4AD staples Kristin Hersh and Lisa Germano, or even Kate Bush when Abba's stars are aligned. *Lucky Moon* is a beautiful exploration of the sound of one's soul, that actually transcends the nagging temptation to make cheap references to a certain wholesome Swedish pop powerhouse.

SEBASTIAN NALSTER



The Upsetters
Scratch the Upsetter Again

89%

Trojan

This 1969 reissue finds Jamaica's favorite crazy uncle, Lee Perry, at a crossroads—he'd proven himself as a hitmaker, but was still years away from emerging as dub's most unbridled creative force. But as these mostly textbook instro-reggae tracks indicate, he was beginning to explore uncharted waters—hence the dreamier, Ur-dub rhythms and Protean arrangements. Scratch obsessives will want *Again* for the 12 unreleased cuts; others will dig the propulsive R&B grooves and gorgeous Shirelles cover.

PAUL GAITA



The Dears
Protest
Ace Fu

85%

Like a drunken girlfriend who caught you "playfully" talking a little too closely to her best friend/roommate in the hallway, *Protest* is a four-song mini opera that starts out with poignant, militant organ blasts, then gets all preachy and emotional with a nagging chorus and ends with several minutes of swirling white noise before passing out. It's no coincidence that "Summer of Protest" rips the "Psycho Killer" bass line. Seriously, dude, you need to dump that crazy bitch.

PAT MCGUIRE



Joy Zipper
American Whip
Mercury

86%

Welcome to the Joy Zipper sandwich—hidden among the sugary, jelly-like glaze of supersweet music and vocals are little, bitter, otherwise hard-to-swallow nuggets of lyrical gloom. At its most derivative (and still rather good), *American Whip* sounds like something created by an unplugged My Bloody Valentine covering a lost album of Beach Boys songs about death. At its

best, JZ's music is lush, psychedelic, slyly deceptive and unexpectedly packed with nutritional value. Yum.

JULIAN WASS



Pedestrian
Volume One: unIndian songs

87%

Anticon

Anticon's poet laureate and resident musician pedestrian gives new meaning to the term "conscious rap"—he's pretty much conscious of anything and everything that's ever happened. Period. His long-delayed, long-playing debut is a daunting collection of (mostly) rapped sermons that manages to pull together three decades of hip-hop music, 40 plus years of world politics, and a century of American poetry. The best tracks feature pedestrian on his highest soapbox, working a range of styles over an old school bounce. Know-it-allism never sounded so crunk.

LOUIS VLACK



Richard Buckner
Dents and Shells

84%

Merge

Listening to Richard Buckner's gruff, throaty voice, you get the feeling that this guy could easily kick your ass—lasso in big, weathered fist—but instead he'd rather sit on the porch, whittling wood over some watery-eyed conversation. His latest is a characteristic blend of dissonant twang, opaque lyrics and a few full-band numbers that subtly reek of top 40 country. Ultimately, his folksy sentimentalism makes you realize that it's by having the strength to not whup your candyass that you appreciate his whittling even more.

LESLEY BARGAR



Cream
Disraeli Gears (Deluxe Edition)

95%

Universal

For its 1967 sophomore album, Brit-rock monolith Cream swaps blues-purist jones for a heady electric soup of psych, pop and jazz. The result: some of their best-known material, including the monster-riffed "Sunshine of Your Love" and the epic (natch) "Tales of Brave Ulysses." Uni's double-disc reissue features *Disraeli* in mono and stereo versions, as well as outtakes and demos (Clapton sings on "Lawdy Mama," which begat "Strange Brew"), and eight tight live performances for the BBC from 1967-68.

PAUL GAITA



Montag
Alone, Not Alone

86%

Carpark

Onetime M83 labelmate, Montag (Montreal's

Atoine Bedard) picks up the intergalactic flight path long detoured by fellow Francophone amateur 'nauts Air. Surfing the ionospheric waves, Bedard crosses cosmic paths with Joe Meek's homemade Telstar and Broadcast's twilight frequencies on his beatific ascent. Lingering pop warps from beyond the blue planet, *Alone, Not Alone* may lack a proper closing theme, but its gentle starlit soar is still a fantastic voyage.

BERNARDO RONDEAU



Coachwhips
Peanut Butter and Jelly Live at the Ginger Minge

80%

Narnack

What's that sound? It's the Coachwhips kickin' down your garage door. Hard. Which, incidentally, is how garage oughta sound anyway—balls out, with body and brains not far behind. (See "Body and Brains," which encapsulates the entire record in one fell swoop: "I wanna peel your skin, and let the fun be pain.") Frontman John Dwyer treats distortion like his last supper, barking out the kind of questions that would scare Norah Jones silent—"Did you cum?"

CHITUNG



Sam Roberts
We Were Born in a Flame

86%

Lost Highway

Sam Roberts sounds like a Wings-era Paul McCartney. Although, truthfully, I've never listened to Wings. I mean, has anyone? You say that someone sounds like a Wings-era Paul McCartney when they do indeed sound like Paul McCartney but they aren't quite good enough to receive the full-on comparison. *We Were Born in a Flame* is fun, poppy, rootsy and destined to be played to 4 million Bonnaroo stoners. (You could even convince some of them that they were at a Wings show. They wouldn't mind.)

PAT MCGUIRE



Gibby Haynes and His Problem
Gibby Haynes and His Problem

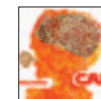
86%

SurfDog

Though the Butthole Surfers' recent albums seem to indicate that their psychotic toilet fury has burned out, their frontman, Gibby Haynes, proves that he's still down with brown power on his first solo CD. The freak vibe here is gentler than the intense id explosion of, say, *Psychic...Powerless...Another Man's Sac*, but Gibby still unleashes a handful of headswirlers, most notably the Zeppelin goof "Charlie" and the aptly titled "I Need Some Help." Surfer Paul Leary mixed five

tunes, and garage legend Augie Meyer lends spookhouse keyboards to "Letter."

PAUL GAITA



Can
Tago Mago
Mute

97%

Ege Bamyasi
Mute

95%



With *Tago Mago* and *Ege Bamyasi*, kraut-rock legends Can hit their diametric stride, first as the ancient and lumbering gods of musical improvisation that modern jam bands are too scared to pray to, then prancing forward as the deranged funkateers who confound listeners as much as they contort them. The spacey, explorative *Tago Mago* centers around a trinity of near-20 minute jams that showcase Can at their creative, lengthy best. And somehow in the process, the band manages to predate both punk and ambient electronica. On the equally excellent, though considerably shorter, *Ege Bamyasi*, Can trades some of the dark mysticism of *Tago Mago* for rhythm, the result of which is, well, downright funky. The sharp drum breaks on "Vitamin C" rival anything pilfered from the James Brown archive. Both albums, along with two previous Can efforts, have been re-mastered and reissued with expanded notes—a welcome move by Mute, as the SACD format is ideal for Can's one-of-a-kind, still ahead-of-their-time sound.

JULIAN WASS



Koushik
Be With
Stones Throw

83%

The debut album from funky symphonist Koushik Ghosh trips through incidental bliss-out blending pastoral acid-folk, cocktail jazz breaks, ethereal exotica and stereoscopic psychedelia. With its fetishized acetate sizzle and tape pops suffusing every song with bin dust, *Be With* blurs the distinction between crate-dug samples and original, albeit expertly grubbed, overdubs. A come-together comedown, Koushik's basement transmissions are pure afternoon audiophile delight.

BERNARDO RONDEAU



Rondo Brothers
No Time Left on Earth

68%

Coup De Grace

Ever imagine what a bunch of Beck circa *Mellow Gold* outtakes would sound like if you were at a frickin' Hawaiian luau? No? Frankly, me neither,

Hawaiian luau? No? Frankly, me neither, although it appears that I can't speak for the Rondo Brothers. The upside? Those exotically weird harmonies and bend-it-like-Beckham-breakbeats aren't half-bad. And there's a song titled "Ukulele Poo-Poo Platter." The downside: kitsch is soo not the ish. Besides, there's a song titled "Ukulele Poo-Poo Platter."

CHI TUNG



Mekons

So Good It Hurts
Quarterstick

77%

Like the similarly named sci-fi comic book-themed rockers the Zutons, the Mekons are a mulligan stew of members, styles and influences. The major difference is that the Mekons have been doing their thing for 25 years, which is longer than any Zuton has been alive. This reissue of 1988's *So Good It Hurts* finds the band dipping into more dub and reggae while still maintaining their countrified anti-Reagan/Thatcher roots-rock. It's not so good, but then again, it doesn't really hurt.

PAUL MCGLUIRE



Tift Merritt

Tambourine
Lost Highway

88%

Tift Merritt is looking for a "Good Hearted Man." It's a worthy quest, but hey, who isn't these days? Thankfully it's the search and not the find that best inspires the mix of blues, soul, country and rock found on her sophomore effort, *Tambourine*. With a voice like hers—crisp and flawless, with just a touch of breathy whisper—Tift has no problem exploring the musical landscape of the American South. Maybe she'll find that man after all.

LOUIS VLACK



Books on Tape

The Business End
Greyday Productions

87%

Remember Mortal Kombat and how much it fucking ruled? I'd always just mash my fingers into the buttons spastically until the joystick handlers beside me lost—they'd get pissed, but I'd win. So I wonder: are other electronic musicians all heated because Todd Drootin (aka Books on Tape) has adapted this very technique of awesomeness to his bizarrely contagious knob twiddling and created yet another "Fatality"-worthy record of bleeps, buzz and all-around synthesized madness? Probably, but those "strategy" guys were all nerds anyway.

LESLEY BARGAR



Kaada/Patton

Romances
Ipecac

82%

Ipecac's proprietor, erstwhile Faith No More vocalist and prolific collaborator on all fronts of avant sonic combat, Mike Patton lends his elastic throat to Norwegian composer John Kaada for a cinematic nocturne of computers and corpses. *Romances'* deepest reds and gray velvet gloom replicates the finest vintage of Gialli soundtracks and space-age radiophonic workshops, though such hi-fi spookiness is clearly the product of fanboy adoration. Kaada/Patton just barely skirt kitsch disposability with their phantom suites and haunted carnie waltzes.

BERNARDO RONDEAU



Eric Clapton

461 Ocean Boulevard (Deluxe Edition)
Universal

89%

The pensive, back-to-basics vibe of Clapton's first solo CD carries over to his second offering from '74; Tom Dowd's production is spotless, and Clapton's playing is exceptionally tight and focused, even as the material (which includes his hit cover of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff") pushes the boundaries of his blues foundation. An excellent snapshot of Guitar Hero in Repose, Universal's two-CD reissue includes several outtakes (including two sprawling blues jams) and an agreeably restrained concert from '74.

PAUL GAITA



Boom Bip

Blue Eyed in the Red Room
Lex

78%

Cincinnati-based beat proprietor Boom Bip eschews breaks for melodious strains of crunched-pixels on his latest offering. Like Boards on Canada on a sugar high, *Blue Eyed in the Red Room's* crisp dings and glassy fillips get dangerously close to faceless prime-time interstitial music. Thankfully, Super Furry Animal Gruff Rhys manages to get mantric on "Do's and Don'ts" before the song transforms into an extended quotation of pre-android Kraftwerk at their most swirly. Sadly, the rest of the record is uneven eclecticism sheathed in titanium.

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THE MINI MIXTAPE

For those who love to collect 'em all, we'd like to suggest the *Filter Mini* Mixtape—a DIY compilation (as in, you do it yourself) of the best of our reviews section. So empty your wallet at your favorite record store and stock up on cassettes (or download), because we've got the soundtrack to your next demolition party.

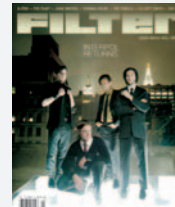
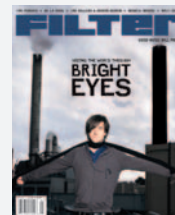


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- #10 PJ Harvey**, The Stone Roses, Jim Jarmusch, The Streets
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Life of (Jon) Brion

by Julian Wass

You may not have heard of Jon Brion, but you've definitely *heard* Jon Brion. If God was a deceased Italian director named Frank Capra, and Brion was Jimmy Stewart, and this article was the film *It's a Wonderful Life*...well, let's just see what a world without Jon Brion would be like. For one, giant Dr. Seuss hats may have never caught on as a fashion statement (well, the band Jellyfish never would have happened, and no one would have *tried* to push those damned hats on us as a fashion statement). And of course, the Grays—another band that featured Brion's exceptional and often experimental guitar and vocal abilities—couldn't have existed. Devoted fans of Fiona Apple, Beck, Aimee Mann, Rufus Wainwright, Eels, and Elliott Smith might not be so devoted, as each has employed the same secret weapon to hone their sound: producer and multi-instrumentalist Jon Brion. And let's not forget the droves of movie geeks whose favorite Paul Thomas Anderson, Michel Gondry, and David O. Russell films would be stripped of the powerful and distinctive scores that gave them so much texture (see *Magnolia*, *Punch Drunk Love*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and *I Heart Huckabees*). Indeed, a world without Brion would be a less beautiful place (err, except for the hats). Thankfully, *Filter Mini* can confirm his existence.

So, was it always music for you?

No question. It was pretty much constant, listening to records, watching people play music, playing music. When I was in school, I was just drawing pictures of instruments and recording devices. I was obsessed with guitar, piano and drums.

Did you ever take lessons?

I tried briefly, but they were just so fucking boring. I avoided "practicing" at all costs, but I played all the time. To me I was just having fun. I'd play along with records on drums for three hours until I was just exhausted and then I'd play piano for two hours. It was just a cumulative thing of doing that for years and years, and eventually I learned a couple of things, almost by accident.

During that time did you have any idea of all the different areas you wanted to contribute to musically?

Oddly enough, there were a lot of things I knew I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to perform, I knew I wanted to record. I also knew I wanted to compose songs, and I wanted to compose odd music.

What about film scores?

No, I never really knew that as a place where people made music and I never understood that as a creative medium growing up. I didn't even notice music in films except for something like the *Wizard of Oz*. It just completely escaped me. I had so many things to be obsessed about: rock and jazz and avant-garde music and electronic stuff...My dad happened to know this band called Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company. They were kind of the first Moog ensemble.

I remember being a kid, coming out into the living room and there were three Moog Modulators set up. I've heard stories about my parents getting up in the morning and finding me asleep on top of a keyboard wearing headphones.

What were you listening to then?

The Beatles, the Monkees and the Jackson Five. That was the gold standard. The Beatles are just impossibly great. Most people who hear it can appreciate that it's well-spirited at the very least, and the rest of us just shake our heads and go, "Those fucking assholes!" It's almost a drag as an artist, because we're all living under the shadow of the Beatles.

Is there a distinct Jon Brion sound?

I hope my works are *distinctive*, opposed to having a distinct sound. I don't like producers who have a thing. There are any number of people who immediately jump to mind, you can start with Phil Spector and work your way out. I never liked that. My favorite record producer is Chris Thomas (the Beatles, Roxy Music, Pink Floyd, Sex Pistols, INXS, Pulp). All the artists he produced sound like themselves. You can hear their personality.

How is your approach to film music different?

Film music is weird because it's secondary; the music is merely a component of a multimedia experience. For the most part, people don't listen to a soundtrack record.

I actually know a lot of people who listen to your film score records.

[Laughs] You should talk to those freaks. **F**

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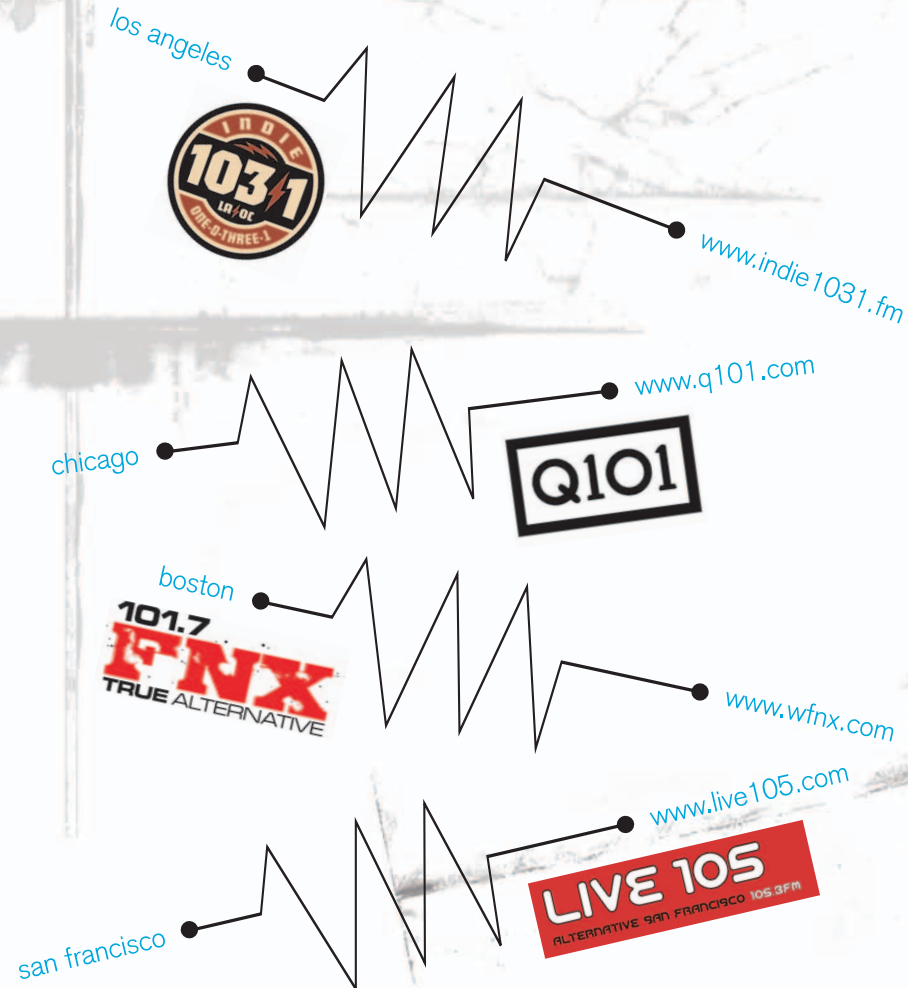


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