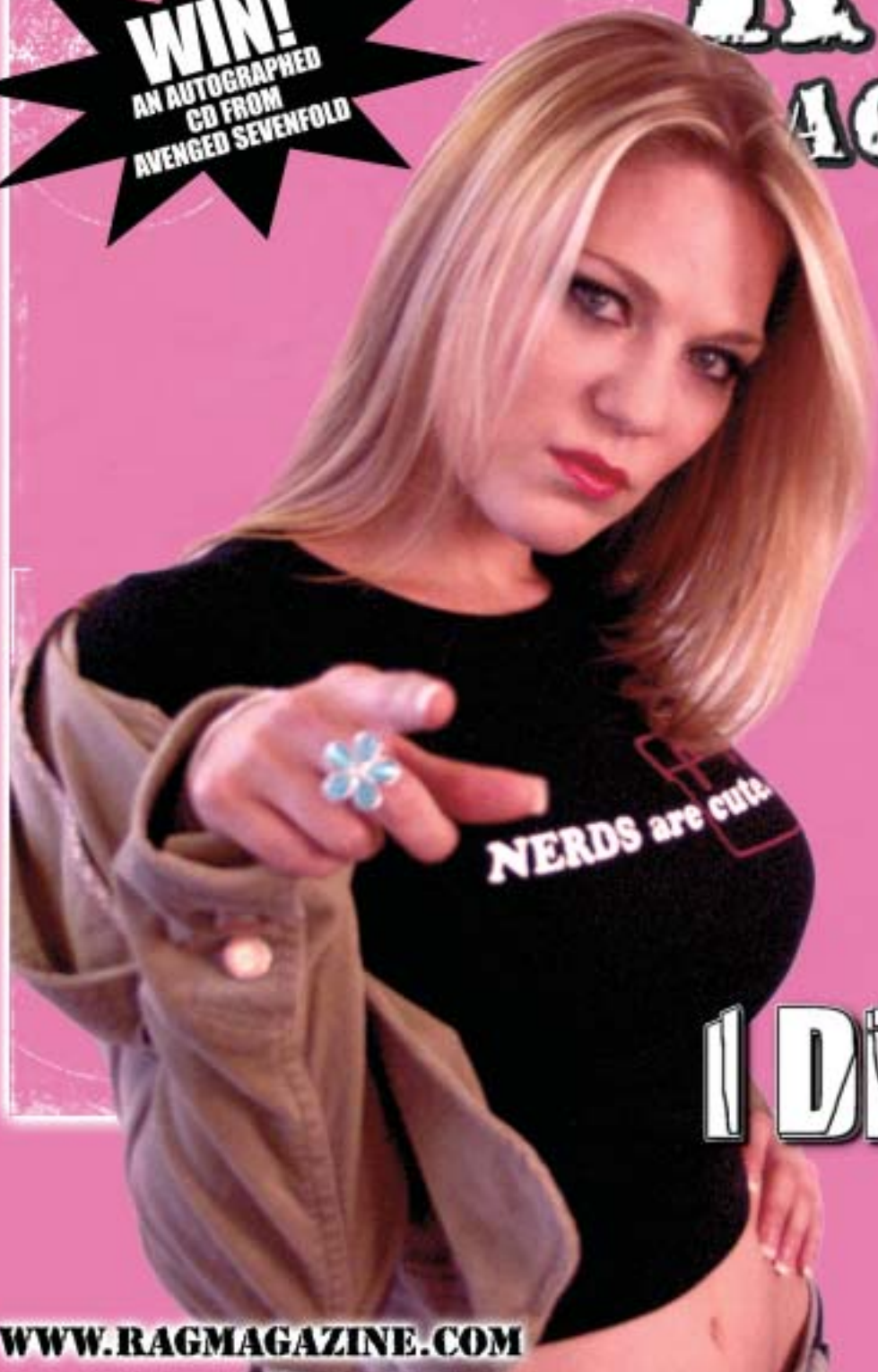


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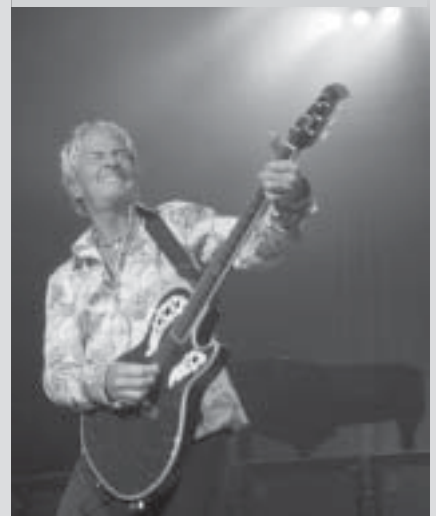
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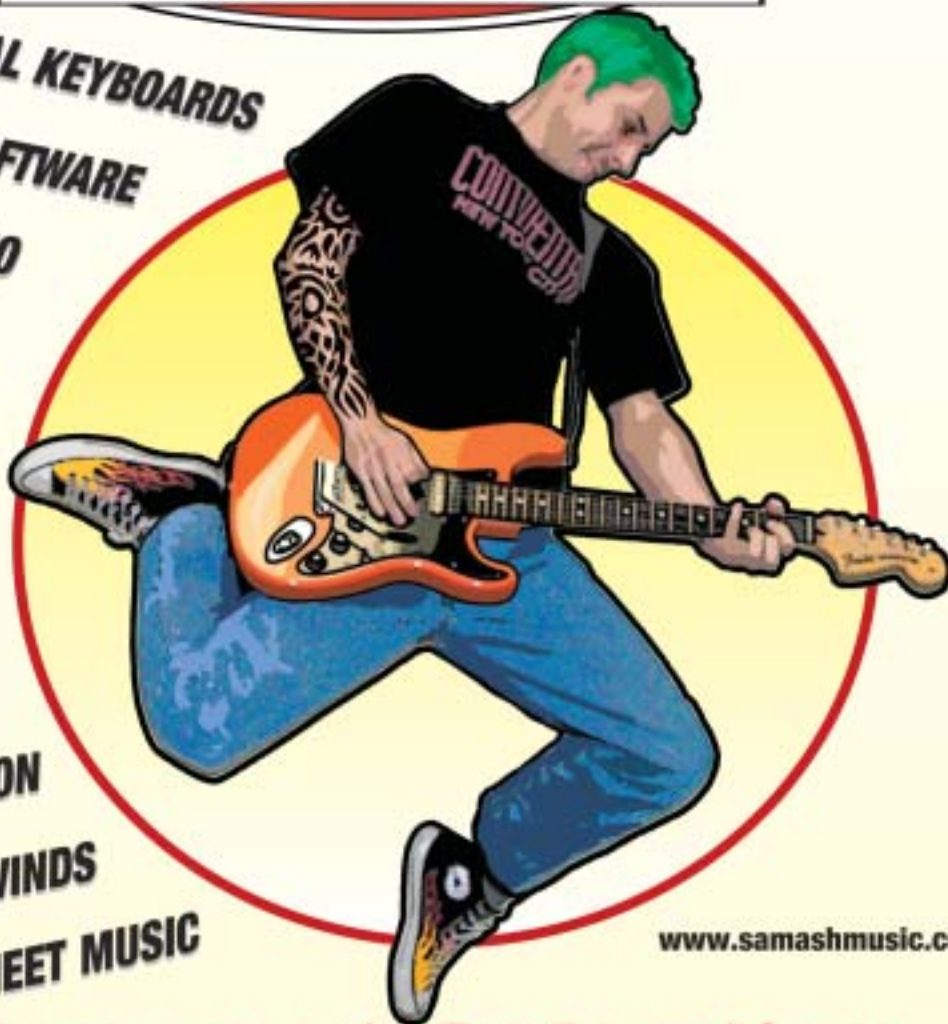
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**Sleater-Kinney**  
**The Woods**  
**Sub Pop**

Sleater-Kinney has had the luck of being one of the great rock bands of the past decade with their uncompromising, take-no-prisoners attitude. Their seventh album, *The Woods*,

finds the band entering a new chapter in their career adding new depth and a psychedelic feel in part to producer Dave Fridmann, best known for his work with the Flaming Lips. Singer/guitarist Corin Tucker's shrilly soulful vocals along with her and fellow singer/guitarist Carrie Brownstein's buzzsaw guitar attacks and Janet Weiss's Moon-esque drumming make it a dynamite album.

Tucker's voice almost comes off as a cross between Grace Slick from the '60s psychedelic band Jefferson Airplane and Rush's Geddy Lee in some intervals, beginning with the ripping opener "The Fox," before sliding into the rapid boogie of "Wilderness." Brownstein's guitar is as abrasive and powerful as ever on this record as displayed on the percussion-driven "Entertain" and the sharp "Rollercoaster" that reminds you, in spirit, of The Who's classic "My Generation." The jangle-rock of "What's Mine is Yours" strongly captivates thanks to Tucker's soulful shrill and Weiss's drumming. The band can also be subtle, as evident on the melodic "Modern Girl," with harmonica melting in the backdrop.

The band is at their very best with *The Woods*, playing with remarkable fervor and versatility. Few bands can match their unbridled intensity, something fiercely proven with the 11-minute epic "Let's Call It Love." The track brings the album to a full-tilt climax between Brownstein's magnetic soloing, Tucker's soaring vocals and Weiss's explosive drumming. It's a spectacular showcase of a band at the peak of their powers, showing why they're still here 10 years since their debut album. — **Jeff Noller**



**Coldplay**  
**X&Y**  
**Capitol/EMI**

No one expected Coldplay to have a massive hit with their 2002 sophomore release, *A Rush of Blood to the Head*. The three years between that and their new album,

*X&Y*, had been full of expectations and hype thrown onto the band's shoulders.

Vocalist/keyboardist Chris Martin had said, while working on the last album, that it would be their last album because they had nothing more to give. That proved not to be the case, as the band still remains one solid foundation, their third album musically an uplifting opposite to the melancholy that surrounded *AROBTTTH*.

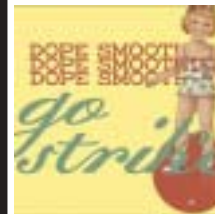
There are two points to make clear regarding *X&Y*: This is no *Sergeant Pepper*, as many critics and people at EMI claimed, talking of it being a trailblazing record. On the same token, it should be noted that this is a tour de force that shows Coldplay as one of the world's formidable and exciting rock bands. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? The truth is that *X&Y* doesn't open any doors that haven't been opened before, but this doesn't keep it from being one great album.

*X&Y* doesn't disappoint — as with the charging opener "Square One" and the lush landscapes of "What If." Martin is fine vocal form with his piano and keyboards adding dimension to songs such as "Fix You" and "A Message." "The Hardest Part" stands out as one of the band's finest compositions with a great guitar lick by Jon Buckland.

At times, the album feels too similar to the last album, as with the "Clocks"-sounding "Speed of Sound," the band's first single. Will Champion's drumming proves this point, but not negatively; and musically, it's the contrast in feel to the aforementioned track.

The main difference between *X&Y* and *AROBTTTH* is that Coldplay's U2 influences have never been as apparent. Besides the fact that many critics have hailed Coldplay as U2's successors, musically Coldplay does echo the rock'n'roll hall of famers, particularly with Buckland's soaring guitar licks on the brilliant "White Shadows" and "Talk." However, this similarity can feel overbearing, as on "Low," which could be mistaken for a b-side off U2's seminal 1991 *Achtung Baby*.

Regardless, Coldplay pull off a great album. Ignoring the critics and their label, only paying attention to their own whims. They continue to deliver with every record they make. After three years, the wait's been worth it. — **Jeff Noller**



**Dope Smoothie**  
**Go Strike**  
**Elitist Low Brow**

If you have never heard of Dope Smoothie before, you might think that mainly because of their name that they're going to be a super-cool band. Sure, some songs are good,

but they do not live up to their name on this record.

*Go Strike*, a follow-up to their 2002 debut, *For Milking*, sounds like a cheap imitation of an urban-cowboy version of Kurt Cobain. Dope Smoothie, which hails from the birthplace of grunge-rock, Seattle, WA, milks that sound to its core.

The 4-piece band, which features Josh Bate, Zachery Clements, John McCallum and Dan Katzer have not been on the scene very long. The band, which wasn't even in Seattle for the grunge movement, concentrates their roots on bands that were major players in that period.

It doesn't help that many of the lyrics on *Go Strike* are also not the most intelligent either such as "Soft Gel," which is about getting "good head from a spicy vagina." But, that doesn't mean that all of the songs lack depth and variety as on songs like "Feebtro" and "Get Absolutions" that make the record worthwhile.

All in all, *Go Strike* is not an album worth buying for \$15 or even \$10 on iTunes unless you find it in the giveaway bin for 25 cents. If you are looking for a trip back down grunge-memory lane then this is your anthem. But if you are looking for an original, groundbreaking album then you have steered down the wrong path. — **Catherie Marie Holt-McCluskey**

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**The Lawrence Arms  
Cocktails and Dreams  
Asian Man Records**

*Cocktails and Dreams*, the newest album by punk rock Chicago trio The Lawrence Arms, is comprised primarily of songs that really aren't new at all. But that doesn't stop it from being amazing.

The band's newest album contains 16 tracks, but only one new song. Nine of the others are remastered from two splits the band did with The Chinkees and Shady View Terrace. One track, "Necrotism: Decanting the Insalubrious (Cybor Midnight) Part 7," was on the *Rock Against Bush Volume 2* compilation. Another track, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," is an oldie that never appeared anywhere. And finally, two songs from their second album, *Ghost Stories*, and one song from an EP have been rerecorded.

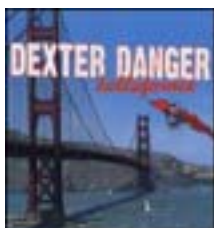
Though this is far from being a "Best of" album, nearly all of these songs demonstrate the band's superb ability to perform good music at varying speeds with great lyrics delivered by two different singers. Bassist Brendan Kelly, who sings nine of the songs, has a high, raspy voice and his songs tend to be faster paced. Guitarist Chris McCaughan, on the other hand, has a much smoother voice and his songs are usually slower and more melodic.

The album begins with "Intransit," the one song new song on the album. Sung by McCaughan, the song conveys the band's unique ability to create catchy, complicated guitar lines, awesome drum beats and fills (by drummer Neil Hennessy) and harmonizing backups, made even better by the differences in the singers' voices.

Other greats on the album include the rerecorded version of "Overheated," which was first featured on *Fat Club Seven Inch*, a three song sampler on the band's label, Fat Wreck Chords. For those who have heard the original, the improvement is outstanding. Then there's "Nebraska," "Quincentuple Your Money" and "Another Boring Story," which are arguably the best songs from their old splits (not that any of the others are half-bad).

One problem, though, with the remastering of the tracks off the old splits is that the high hat is a bit too loud. However, while on some songs this may be annoying, on others it's only noticeable if it's being listened for.

Each song on the album contains a catchy, punk rock melody laced with brilliant guitar lines and drumming as well as excellent lyrics. For those who've never heard anything by the band, *Cocktails and Dreams* is an excellent starting point. – **Jacob Nelson**



**Dexter Danger  
Hellafornia  
Phantom**

Though one would be hard-pressed to find originality in San Francisco band Dexter Danger's newest album, *Hellafornia*, the quartet does manage to raise the level of energy needed for a successful pop-punk album.

While at this state in their career they fail to distinguish themselves from the mass of emo-punk bands that have risen in the wake of their predecessor, Green Day; they do lay a solid foundation from which to improve and explore their creativity. Though they may fall short lyrically, their melodies

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and choruses are infectious, and will appeal to the younger Warped Tour crowd. Anthems such as "No Disgrace Like Home" create the connection between band and audience that only occurs with the strength and immediacy of punk rock. *Hellafornia* tears through twelve tracks without hitting a dull spot, and compensates for its flaws with its momentum. Though they have yet to discover their own unique sound, Dexter Danger has created a worthwhile addition to any pop-punk collection. – **Karla Yvette**



**Mutant Radio  
Crash n Burn  
Independent**

Detroit band Mutant Radio's debut album, *Crash n Burn*, fuses hip-hop and rock in the tradition of the Chili Peppers and Sublime. Few bands are up to the challenge of filling the

shoes of these monsters in rock-and-roll history, but Mutant Radio manages to live up to the reputation of their predecessors, all the while conveying an unrelenting positivity and optimism in their lyrics. *Crash n Burn* was completed in a mind-boggling 28 days, and the results are audible in their music. The dynamics are frenetic, tight, and the energy does not falter throughout the ten tracks. Stand-out tracks include the soulful "Normal Child," which combines rap, groove-metal, and a stylistic trumpet interplay that adds a new dimension to their sound. Mutant Radio is a socially-conscious band who have distinguished themselves with their creativity and diversity, and who will go far if their following albums match *Crash n Burn* in these aspects. – **Karla Yvette**



**13 Stories  
FunkyPopSexyHouseRap  
Onethree**

Though their sound is definitely unique among Atlanta's hard rock scene, 13 Stories' album *FunkyPopSexyHouseRap* falls short of expectations. Attempting to

take after Gwen Stefani's newest dance album, 13 Stories' funk-pop fusion does not quite hit the same level of hyper, infectious energy. The lyrics are cheesy, at best, and the beats are often irritating as opposed to contagious. Fans of Aqua's bubblegum pop might find *FunkyPopSexyHouseRap* enjoyable, however this album seems far better suited for a discotheque than any stereo. – **Karla Yvette**



**INDIE  
RELEASE**

**Far From Gone  
Far From Gone  
Independent**

Far From Gone's self-titled debut displays a fire and maturity not seen from most South Florida metal acts.

With tight compositions containing stop-and-go rhythm progressions, Far From Gone convey a sound

influenced by the likes of Slayer, Tool and Rush. Whereas most metal debuts tend to be generic, Far From Gone plays music that's fresh but ever-evolving — from Aaron Herman's sonic guitar riffing to James Silvestri's precise drumming to Greg Nocella's innovative bass playing, which adds depth and substance to every track. Vocalist Jeff Irving sings with much fervor and feeling, recalling Live's Ed Kowalczyk without mimicking it.

From the album's storming opener "Thorny Crown," *Far From Gone* engages the listener, this intensifying with the classic "PJ," which hears each member bringing something to the table. It's clear this is a band of equals; the whole being greater than any of its parts alone and each part being necessary to attain the final product. The band doesn't lose momentum throughout the record, as evident on tracks such as "Fellowship," "Water Rushes In" and "Chapter One."

Most bands tend to have one or two musicians with a propensity to dominate on the production aspect of the album. *Far From Gone* is one of the few out there who are the exception, all four members contributing to the birth and fruition of each song. After all, the album is self-produced, the band handling all the arrangements, one of the few democracies that actually does work. Leave it to a rock band to prove this correct. — **Jeff Noller**

## INDIE RELEASE

### Wydown *Message from the Yes Man* Independent

The catchy moments throughout don't save Wydown on their first EP, *Message from the Yes Man*.

It seems like the main problem with Wydown is they seem more concerned with being distinguishable than with being good. Their music tries too hard to be unique, but not in ways you might imagine. No weird instruments are used, just weird progressions and singing patterns. The singer's voice seems almost operatic, which sometimes works, but usually does not.

Just listening to the first track is enough to both impress and annoy any listener. I was impressed by the quality of singer's voice during the song's chorus, but annoyed by just about everything else the song offered. With its repetitive guitar line and the overly-paused out way the verses are sung, the song is very frustrating. What's even more frustrating is that the chorus is really good. After hearing the singer yell, "There's a new day formed out loud" in such a catchy, melodic way, I really wanted to like the rest of the song. But I just couldn't. The verses were still too dull and the progression too repetitive.

Track two is similarly frustrating, though more moderately so. The verse is a little less annoying, but, at the same time, the chorus is a little less catchy. So, on the whole, the song is more solid, but still only average. Another plus to this track is that the tone of the lead guitar is very smooth and very distinguishable, something noticeable in the intro.

"Wasted Energy" has a guitar riff similar to the slow verse riff in track one, only more boring. However, this track also has a catchy chorus, which again saves the song from being completely dull. The only difference is that the singer doesn't yell in the chorus of this one as he does in the first two songs, and that yelling really improves the music.

Tracks four and five seem very different from the first three songs. While the first three are melodic, these two are funky. It seems the band couldn't decide on which kind of sound they wanted to have so they pursued both.

If the band could just isolate those few ideas that really work for their music, and used them to replace every other mediocre sound they had, then they'd really be something special. Until then, they'll just be a band with only their hearts in the right place. — **Jacob Nelson**



### Paramore *All We Know is Falling* Fueled By Ramen

Paramore is mopey emo (wait, that's redundant) as crafted by a quasi-metal head Avril Lavigne (Hayley Williams) and three male adolescents. They're a ball of tremendous energy — vibrant Williams, Josh Farro and Jason

Bynum's distorted guitars, John Hembree's steadfast bass lines and Zac Farro's iron drums. Paramore palpably overflows with talent — and these kids are all under 18.

Paramore's emo bubbles with effervescence, courtesy of 16-year-old Williams's flawless vocals. It is this songstress's remarkable vocal power (reminiscent of Nina Gordon's in Veruca Salt but with a more striking range) that gives the band its distinctive quality. The music itself is not terribly original, if made by talented musicians. Williams takes the cake by projecting her gargantuan voice with resilience, effortlessly hitting all the notes gracefully time and again, impressing the hell out of the listener. Petite, red-headed Williams would tear down Miami's Churchill's Pub (or any similarly-sized venue) with her sweet, massive voice alone before the first song were over; her band mates would only be making background music.

Author of all the lyrics, Williams sings from personal experience. Keeping both this and the fact that Paramore is an emo band in mind, one can't help but expect whiny love songs. Truth be told, teenage woes are evident in these songs, but in most the woes are ageless — and in all whining is fortunately absent.

In the title track Williams laments "This isn't what you wanted / All we know is falling..." Paramore embodies the epitome of American emo — the band is even comprised of 100 percent teenagers. Manic guitar picking supports the über catchy chorus on "Pressure" as Williams promises "I can feel the pressure / It's getting closer now / We're better off without you." Drenched in distortion, "Emergency" sees Williams's voice take on vast proportions — live this song would make any venue's walls tremble.

The first single, "Here We Go Again," is not one of the heaviest tracks on *All We Know is Falling*. "Can't say I'm sad to see you go / 'Cause I'm not," Williams triumphantly admits in the chorus. J. Farro and Bynum's guitars stand out significantly on this track, perhaps due to Z. Farro's drumming consistently complementing the formers' sliding chords. "Never Let This Go" reminds us that relationship foibles are ultimately always the same, whether you're 16 or any other age: "I'll never let this go...I don't want to be alone / But now I feel like I don't know you."

"Franklin" starts with Z. Farro raining drums on us, and continues with Williams's band mates softly singing in the background. One of the more melodious tracks, it's an example of the variation of musical styles on the album. Closing "My Heart" includes moderate croons and crass screaming male vocals à la Fred Durst intermittent over Williams's crisp wails. Paramore has restored my respect for emo. Having said this, the more I expose my critical ears to Paramore, the more I enjoy their emo-ness. — **Natalia Real**

**Alanis Morissette**  
**June 24, 2005**  
**Jackie Gleason Theater**

The elaborate backdrop should have been the first indicator of how this evening would transpire. Antique couches, tables, lamps, framed pictures hanging on walls, and even a coat rack, gave the impression that Alanis Morissette was performing in some sophisticated living



room, rather than a theater. With her was a team of musicians. What was advertised as a lighter fare VH1-Storytellers sort of arrangement was actually a pretty big deal production. Not that that's a bad thing. It's just that when the show was billed using the word "acoustic," that somehow implied that things might be kinda sparse. But the most stripped-down feeling of the night was during the opener, "Your House," *Jagged Little Pill's* haunting hidden track that portrays an angry

chick who sneaks into her ex-boyfriend's place and goes ape-shit.

Ten years after the release of *JLP*, Alanis still has the same fervor and digs her claws into the vocals with finesse and purpose. She bathed in the audience's applause throughout the set, which was expectedly-loaded with hits – "Not the Doctor," "Uninvited," "Perfect," "Right Through You" and "You Learn," among many. During "Hand In My Pocket" peace signs sprouted from the crowd at the appropriate line. Alanis also announced she was already engaged when a fan shouted his proposal from the audience. The Canadian was definitely gettin' some South-Florida love.

Yes, Alanis is extremely talented. Yes, she's smart and rebellious. But here's the part that is remarkable. Alanis has done something that few in her genre (read: Fiona Apple, Tori Amos, Jewel, Shirley Manson) have. She has managed to convince us that she is pretty damn sane, so we gladly embrace her vengeful choruses and notions that may (or may not) involve tormenting ex-boyfriends by dumping salt into their milk, breaking and entering into their homes, bugging them in the middle of their dinner – well, you get the idea. But Alanis also knows how to chill out – convincing us to walk around naked in our living rooms and telling us that everything is gonna be fine, fine, fine. She even made up her own definition of "ironic," and we bought into it. (Flies in chardonnay are not ironic, folks.) This performance felt like making peace with screaming-at-the-top-of-your-lungs past frustrations. But like Alanis, this audience had grown up a bit. The tone seemed appropriate. Nothing articulated this quite as much as hearing "You Oughta Know" in a soft, lower-power realm. It was also clear that we oughta know that if Alanis wants to throw a bigger-than-acoustic hoorah for her album's 10th anniversary, she damn well can. And if she can change the meaning of "ironic," then she can also redefine "acoustic." We didn't mind her Webster-crimes then, and it doesn't seem to be a problem now either. – **Monica Cady • Photo: Trey Cady**

**The Bravery**  
**July 18, 2005**  
**Culture Room**

There was once a band called the Bravery, who had mastered neo-post-punk and could be heard all over the clubs. There was once also a venue in Fort Lauderdale called the Culture Room, and when this fashionable group played there, fans were so enthused they made the show sell out. 'Tis the story of the Bravery's first South Florida show.

Three hours after the venue's doors opened, New York quintet the Bravery hit the stage amid a frenzy of clapping and screaming forthcoming from their numerous fans. The stage lights shone fancifully around the stage and various members of the audience around the venue took out their camera phones and digital cameras to capture the moment with a flash. The air by then murky from cigarette smoke, it was all like an old music video. Singer/guitarist Sam Endicott

grabbed the microphone stand and swung it around in a seemingly drunken daze as he stumbled across the stage clad in a black suit, his face pallid like a drug addict's.

The crowd didn't really get into the performance until the fourth song, "Give In." Next came "Public Service Announcement," one of the Bravery's more contagious songs (which coincidentally sounds a lot like the Strokes) with the terribly



catchy chorus "Stop, drop and roll / Stop, drop and roll ...You're on fire." Soon after, most everyone began clapping along to the beginning of the much-loved "An Honest Mistake," in honor of which the more adventurous on the dance floor created a quasi-mosh pit, while others danced and yet others cheerily screamed along.

The band members looked like they were putting sincere effort into getting the songs right, as they appeared under the influence of some hazardous substance or other. Perhaps the only clean one that night was drummer Anthony Burulcich, who appeared soberly focused during the entire set.

Endicott once more put on his duct-tape decorated guitar, this time for "No Breaks." By this part of the show, the vocals weren't as clearly audible, having become rather faint and rough. At this point the band followed with "Black Cat," Endicott's tribute to his favorite band, U2.

The Bravery closed off the set with "Ring Song" and "Unconditional," one of their singles, at midnight. They soon returned to a moderate amount of whistling and yelling to do a two-song encore before bidding their ardent fans good night and vanishing amidst a show of vibrant multicolored lights. – **Natalia Real • Photo: Sean McCloskey**



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## DADA

DADA, the hidden treasure downtown Delray Beach, is definitely worth the journey, located just off Atlantic Avenue, on Swinton Avenue across from the Crest Theatre. This landmark two-story house was turned into an upscale restaurant, drawing a diverse crowd seven nights a week. While some go for the chic ambiance, others are food connoisseurs; yet others merely appreciate DADA's live entertainment.

Too often in South Florida, sweets grown common lose their dear delight. Therefore, DADA prides itself on being far from an ordinary venue. There is always a wide variety of patrons, consisting of assorted ages and backgrounds. The spot is full of artistic

sculptures, paintings and plush sofas, with giant trees in its picturesque courtyard. Critics can feast on treats ranging from mahi-mahi to chocolate fondue, and chase it down with an Irish Car Bomb or a Mango Mojito.

Music lovers gather in the homey atmosphere for viable amusement, including eye-catching fashion shows and bathing suit expeditions. Every Monday consists of DADA's award-winning "Best Open Mic Nite." On Tuesday nights, poets read original verses and compete for prizes. Spectators can catch stand-up comedy every Wednesday evening. Thursday and Friday nights are reserved for live indie music, such as the passionate Lefty Lucy, and Saturday's performances consist of local and national acts, as well as the occasional DJ who spins into the wee hours of the morning.

Mondays are the most special to local musicians. DADA's open mic is an unsurpassed opportunity for South Florida's talent to let their personal work be shared with no pressure or expectations. Performers present three numbers each, rarely including covers. "The weekly event ties in quite well with the spot's laid back, comfortable environment from 10:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.," explained agile guitar player Nicole.



One regular band on Mondays is a brother duo known as Dish. While an acoustic player serenades the room, the other artist bangs kitchen utensils as his percussion, reminiscent of musicians heard on the Brooklyn subway.

Chris Cimaglia, a 29-year-old musician from Boca Raton, has been playing every Monday for the past couple of months. "It did take a minute at my first open mic night, up there alone," Cimaglia said. "But once I felt the audience following my guitar, I felt right at home on stage." Despite one spectator's continuous pleads for "Freebird," the only cover heard so far has been a Beck single. Chris has been thinking of bringing his sax or harmonica to the DADA stage in the near future, but will still refuse any requests to perform Skynyrd.



DADA allows great exposure for South Florida's unsung music. Young artists get a live audience's reactions and feedback. Soloists can hear, support and mingle with other players possessing similar ambitions. In a sense, DADA's Open Mic night creates a family of South Florida's virtuosos. It is extremely difficult for local talent to earn a living by playing their own material, as fewer and fewer venues are willing to gamble on unknown musicians. Undoubtedly, featuring original acts is what makes Miami's Tobacco Road, Fort Lauderdale's Culture Room and Delray Beach's DADA distinguished. For fine dining, eye candy and the area's most obscure artisans, DADA strikes gold seven nights a week. - **Todd McFliker**

## A Special Father's Day Weekend at Tobacco Road with the Dharma Bomb



Under the guidance of the Dharma Bomb, the fourth annual CRAP Fest was hosted at Miami's 87-year-old emporium, Tobacco Road, on June 17. A mixture of country, rock, alternative and pop music (hence CRAP), were all thrown together for the annual festival. While hundreds filled the venue upstairs, another local band was performing outside in the horrific humidity. Spectators sweated bullets under the city's picturesque skyscrapers and spaghetti highways. Colin Farrell showed up and partied with the bands for what was undoubtedly the best Father's Day weekend in Dharma singer Todd Thompson's career.

Todd has been the lead singer and songwriter of the Dharma Bomb throughout its seven-year history. Like his father, a professional opera singer, Todd has a talent for the piano as well as the guitar. During the day, he teaches music engineering at Miami-Dade College. Turning 38 this month, the 6'4" musician looked more grunged out than at past shows, sporting a grown full beard. Bass player Brad Berman grew his hair longer and exhibited a trifling beard. Drummer Ari Schantz has put meat on his bones, while guitarist Sean Edelson appeared the same. Sean claimed it was amazing for Dharma to finally perform together on their home turf, as it had undoubtedly been too long. "The Dharma Bomb brings a very positive attitude and spirit along with Great Americana-based original rock 'n' roll to Tobacco Road," explained Cosmo Ohms of Anamaze Booking Agency.

The Dharma Bomb started CRAP Fest in 2002 with bands that they loved playing with and it has become an annual affair. "I just couldn't imagine not doing the festival because it is one of the only shows all year where a handful of like-minded friends get together to jam." Joining Dharma for this year's festivities was The 18 Wheelers, who has been a part of every CRAP Fest as well as and The Downhome Southernaires and Clambake. Each of the bands has blended into South Florida's culture. "Coconut Grove is my home. It is part of my music, my life," contests Todd. "Miami is where I want to raise my son."

Having a child, Oscar James, born February 7, has changed Todd's motivations within the band's career. His primary concern is no longer making money but his family's well-being. Dharma is no longer pursuing gigs. They claim to be writing better material these days and they're having more fun doing it. Todd explained, "The desire to tell clubs and radio station program directors how good you are is replaced by the urge to simply get back to *playing music*."

South Floridians also got the opportunity to catch the Dharma Bomb in Fort Lauderdale when the boys performed at Cheers on July 28. When asked about Dharma's future, Todd responded, "I've learned that plans don't mean shit, so why bother? Life is so much more exciting when you figure it out day by day." - **Todd McFliker**

## Big Leg Emma Hollywood Beach Broadwalk

Trekking up and down both American coasts, the six entertainers that comprise Big Leg Emma usually perform on college campuses and have accumulated a following along the festival circuit by sharing the stage with 10,000 Maniacs and Rusted Root's Mike Glabicki. Combining reggae and Latin American sounds into its rapid tempos and jazz-like improvisations, their energy and passion is reminiscent of the Eagles, Emerson Lake and Palmer, as well as Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young.

Under South Florida's vivid sunset, Big Leg Emma performed a free show in the picturesque Hollywood Beach Theater on June 15. The jam band out of Jamestown, New York also created a warm and loving atmosphere in Miami's Tobacco Road and the Bamboo Room in Lake Worth, as well as in their two gigs in the Keys.

Big Leg Emma is not a single person. In fact, they borrowed their name from a



Frank Zappa tune and were born in 2001 in sophisticated New York. The band originated from bluegrass, featuring Amanda Barton on the fiddle. Amanda has been jamming with her parents since she was eight. Inspired by timeless rock and roll greats, Dan Warmbrodt fingered the bass and Charity Nuse stroked her mandolin. Versatile guitarist Kevin Rowe was influenced by yesterday's classics, such as the Allman Bros. and Phish, while Steve Johnson's guitar stemmed from country folk artists John Ryan and Bob Dylan. Geno claims that his drumming has

been ripped off and balanced out from every mode of the business.

Each member of Big Leg Emma has descended from a different musical derivation. When tossed together onstage, they successfully blend genres such as jazz, blues, bluegrass, country, reggae, pop and funk. The ensemble draws from each contrasting style, accommodating a variety of listeners with thoughtful lyrics and danceable grooves. The ages of the musicians range from 22 to 38 and five of the six contribute to writing the songs. Along with some new singles, Big Leg Emma has performed material from their two albums. A few years ago, the band threw a giant fiesta with a handful of fans and recorded it. Here the *Gramma Don't Like That!* CD was created. And at the end of 2004, Big Leg Emma entered the studio and laid down *The Color of Wind*. The diverse backgrounds equaled a smorgasbord of talent when they got together onstage.

"Big Leg Emma is Electric Hoedown music that makes you want to get up, dance, forget your worries and enjoy the wonderful moments at hand. Their sounds are sweet, melodic and uplifting," said Cosmo Ohms of Anamaze Booking Agency. "Big Leg Emma is the kind of band you would not mind traveling several hundreds or thousands of miles to see, hear and experience."

The group contests that South Florida is fantastic, even if the humidity is unbearable and Hollywood's crowd was a bit old for a jam band. However, the locals have treated Big Leg Emma with the utmost respect, as listeners seemed to get hooked immediately on their tunes.

In the next six months, Big Leg Emma has no plans to record their original fusion of genres again. Rather, the band hopes to push the envelope with their new harmony-laden tunes on the road, performing to targeted audiences and venues in each corner of the nation - **Todd McFliker**.

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**Def Leppard**  
**July 22, 2005**  
**Seminole Hard Rock Live**

Seconds prior to exiting the stage for the second and final time of the evening to the packed audience at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, sweaty Def Leppard singer Joe Elliot issued one more request to them. "Hey, Hollywood," he smiled. "Don't forget us and we won't forget you." It was by all means a fair appeal, but one that begged an important question. Had Def Leppard, a band well into its' 25<sup>th</sup> year of recording and touring, delivered South Florida an experience worth remembering?

Forty minutes earlier, while striking a classic pose worthy of a true showman, shirtless guitarist Phil Collen provided the answer. In fact, just two simple chords from 1983's "Photograph" were all it took to set the entire venue into a mad frenzy of dancing and singing. As it turned out, Hollywood still liked its' Leppard old-school, and lucky for us, the kings of the monster chorus did not disappoint as they delighted all in attendance with a storming set featuring all their massive hits and then some.



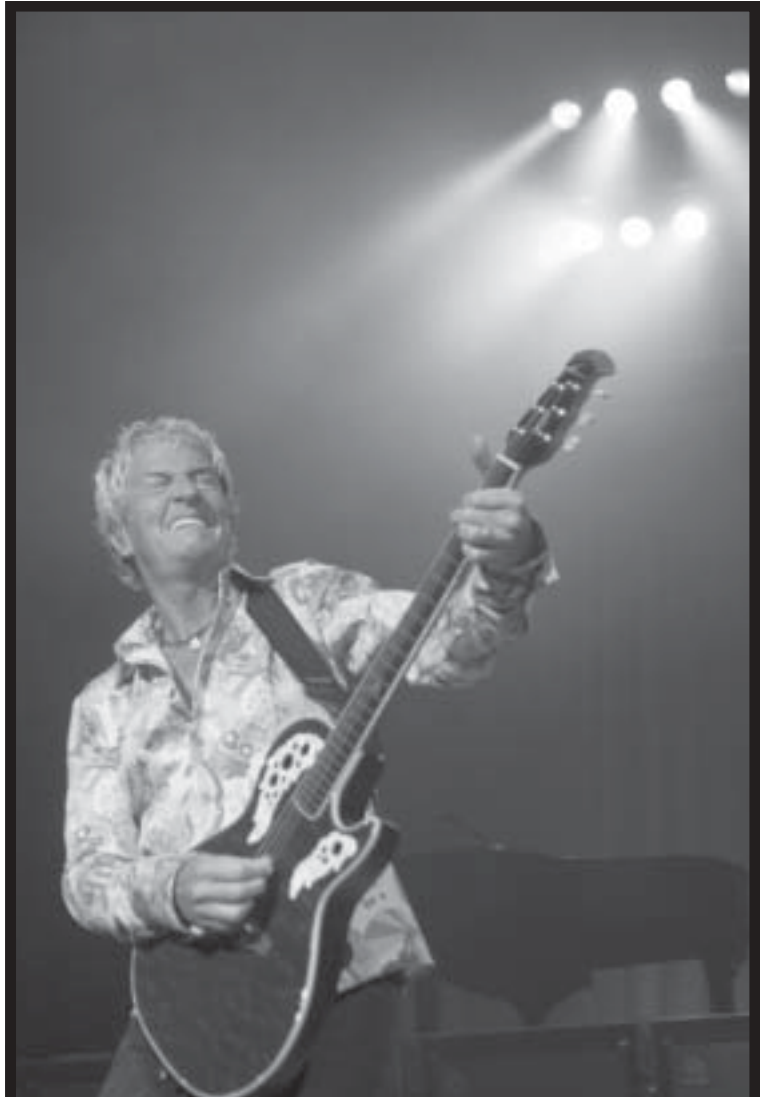
Fittingly opening with the excellent rocker "Action! Not Words!" the band immediately crushed all doubts as to whether or not they still had it in them to put on a show worthy of their larger than life sound. Def Leppard has made a living out of feel good, sing-a-long, fists-in-the-air anthems, and on this night, it was abundantly clear why. Older numbers such as "Rock of Ages" and mega-hits like inevitable show closer "Pour Some Sugar On Me," off of the landmark 1987 effort *Hysteria*, were met with equally rapturous response, every word being perfectly sung back to the band by the jubilant crowd. Only the occasional forced high note and visibly emerging wrinkle or two served as any indication that it wasn't smack in the middle of 1988, and Leppard the biggest band in the world.

Unlike fellow '80s veterans Motley Crue, who's recent showing at the Toronto leg of the Live 8 festival was mediocre at best, this was not a band desperately trying to cling to the remnants of a once proud career. Def Leppard proved that they still possess both the chops and the tunes to go head to head with any of today's acts. And while we can only hope they remember us the next time around, we'll be hard pressed to forget the taste of adrenalin that still lingers. – **Craig Mandell** - **Photo: Sean McCloskey**



**HOT TUNA**  
**REVOLUTION**

Photo: Tom Craig



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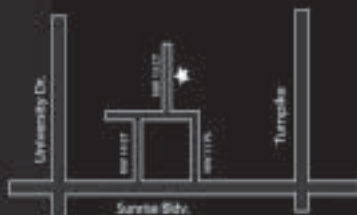
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# I DIGRESS

Story: Monica Cady

**SERVING "JUSTICE"  
ONE DAY AT A TIME**



Layout and Design by I Digress Productions - Photography by EnterAvalon.com



The guys in khaki pants and white button-down shirts almost spill their vodka tonics as Sheyenne saunters around the tables at Fort Lauderdale's Blue Martini. She seductively belts out the chorus of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary." It's not the guys' fault that they can't stop gawking. Wearing satiny black pants, a rhinestone belt-buckle and a black T-shirt that reads, "I Sold My Soul to Rock and Roll," 23-year-old Sheyenne has a presence that commands attention. Her appeal is a tough contest between pinup good looks and a sexy, steady voice – a mix of Shakira heat and Jewel good-girl brightness. Tossing her sandy blond locks, she prances, shimmies and entertains the crowd like we're in a cruise ship casino, and the band powers up the small stage behind the bar like this is a serious rock show.

The band is saturating the scene with melodic light rock, and the crowd is vibing with them. But I Digress say that aside from their My Space page and Web site, they don't advertise performances such as this. That's because tonight's show isn't their typical headliner event. The songs are softer; many are covers. It's the kind of gig that many bands frown upon, but I Digress consider these shows an important vehicle for making their name known – not to mention that it's the way they make a living.

"Other bands ask [us], 'Where else do you work?'" says Sheyenne. "It's not even a question of 'Do you work somewhere else?' It's 'Where else do you work?' And [for us, playing music is] the only way [to work]."

"None of us have day jobs. I don't leave here and then go work at Starbucks. This is what we do," says bassist Mark Caldwell, a clever-looking brunette with spectacles. "We'd rather do this than get a job at Abercrombie & Fitch. [These smaller club gigs] are what pay our bills, so we'd rather [make a living] playing music."

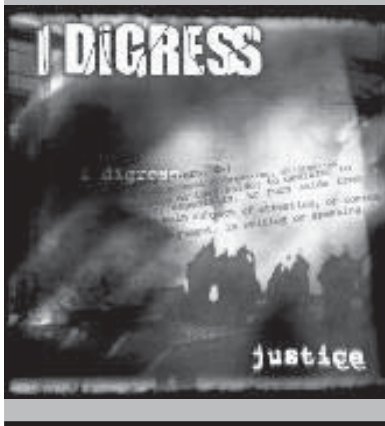
It sounds like risky business for an artist at any age, but especially when you consider that the members of I Digress are from 15 to 26 years old. When you see the professionalism, driving focus and maddening conviction all these players have, their commitment to music is evident. All the members have stories of die-hard devotion to this band. For example, the youngest member and drummer, Matthew Barrios, is 15. His parents homeschool him so he can tour, play late-night shows and basically be on-demand for the band.

Guitarist Jeff Cunningham's family and girlfriend live in Ohio. The only reason he's in South Florida is for I Digress. Today the Owen Wilson look-alike has shown up for our interview in a suit, and says he had a nice dinner with his girlfriend before hoping a plane to make tonight's show. Cunningham racks up his frequent flyer miles making trips to Ohio every time the band has a few days off.

Though they are intensely serious about this job, I Digress aren't serious in a stuffy-musician way. In fact, they goof around with each other like any other band. When cover songs are mentioned, they smirk at the notion. This is not the part of their craft that they covet the most, but it has gotten them where they are and they recognize that. They joke about the simplicity of learning these songs, and how Top-40 numbers can often contrast to their real musical style.

In a comical "It's-not-me-it's-them" sense, Cunningham blurts out, "They knew like 40 some-odd songs before I joined the band. I learned songs I would have never learned growing up. I would never have learned Dixie Chicks." He and Caldwell chuckle about learning songs by Hoobastank and Green Day. But even when playing the songs of other artists, I Digress make things interesting by adding their own creative spin.

**"[The album] ended up being pretty much rock," says Sheyenne ... "There's pretty much no other way to describe it. It's rock 'n' roll, for sure. It depends on what kinds of rock. And that's where our band name comes into play – you can go back and forth in between styles, and still not go too far away from home."**



"We like the cover gigs because we get a chance to play, but it's not real hard stuff. We want to play our own stuff. It's tough because people come out and are like, 'Oh, you're a cover band.' No we're not," Caldwell sternly adds, adjusting his glasses.

I Digress find ways of incorporating their original music into the covers set list. "We definitely try to play our entire album. No one minds. They always ask for it. But our first set has to be pretty mellow. And honestly, [at these bars] they are used to jazz and blues bands. We are one of the only rock bands," says Sheyenne.

While the band tease and downplay the significance of these shows, they know they have a special opportunity. In fact, they are building a network all over Florida. "[The restaurant chain] basically took a risk with us. They thought we were going to be too loud, because most rock bands are. It's a real big deal for us to get on a circuit like that. We had over 300 gigs last year," says guitarist John D'Angelo.

The band's reputation also recently earned them the VIP stage at Tori Amos' August 10 performance at Sound Advice Amphitheater in West Palm Beach. But I Digress can just add this honorable affair to their growing list of more than 50 music awards (and that's just over the last six months) from various Web sites that showcase unsigned talent. "Best Female Vocals," "Best Melody" and "Best Production" are some of the regular honors. I Digress is also sponsored by the Budweiser True Music Program in Florida and has been featured on E!, in addition to a long list of similar accomplishments.

Obviously, a relationship with covers has been a smart business partnership for I Digress. They pay tribute to the idea by having Bananarama's "Cruel Summer" on their debut album, *Justice*, among 11 other original tracks. Released in 2005, *Justice* is a symbol of pride, direction and motivation for the band. It represents an achievement – realizing dreams that had been discouraged by many around them. From the simple idea of "making it" as a band, to the diverse sound of their music – I Digress faced a wall of opposition during *Justice's* development. Having been together for two and a half years, the current members have gone through a number of experimental sounds to become the rock band they are today. (For their full history, read the band's "Long Road" feature on their Web site: [idigresstheband.com](http://idigresstheband.com).)

"[The album] ended up being pretty much rock," says Sheyenne, of the band's evolution from easy listening to R&B to rock. As one of the key songwriters and the oldest member at age 26, D'Angelo agrees, "There's pretty much no other way to describe it. It's rock 'n' roll, for sure. It depends on what kinds of rock. And that's where our band name comes into play – you can go back and forth in between styles,

and still not go too far away from home. We do digress a lot in the music. We're not afraid to go from a hard rock song to another song that isn't about something bad in life. So, why write a song in all minor, and all heavy and throw in the distortion just because your previous song was? A happy song doesn't call for that, so why do it? In that way, we are pushing the envelope. That's another reason why the album is called *Justice*, because we have been told that that's impossible, you can't do that."

"[We were told that] every song on the album has to sound the same. We don't agree with it," says Sheyenne. "We've been getting a lot of good response because it is so varied. I think a lot of music that is being produced by big record companies is all kind of sounding a little bit the same. You know, you get an artist and you know what they are going to sound like, and that's it. Their album doesn't go in different areas."

The band describe *Justice* as a rollercoaster ride of emotions. It jerks into a full-force dive with the opening song, "Compass" – a heavy guitar rush about confusion and loss of direction. It's a world away from the buzzing lightness of "Letting Go," an airy goodbye to someone. *Justice* involves everything from throbbing modern rock to mellow adult contemporary sounds – and everything between these two genres of mad-loud and lovey-soft.

The varied musical interests of the band members can explain the artistic range of the album. But how can heavy rockers hang with airy romantics? Well, the first thing you notice about I Digress, other than their professional creed, is their unusual bond and distinct personalities. They finish each other's sentences, bust each other's balls and sometimes allow a courtesy pause for a consensus before giving final answers to

questions. It's easy to see that this commoradory is one of the main reasons their sound is so varied, yet cohesive.

Personality-wise, let's use breakfast cereals to describe the five members: D'Angelo is Cap'n Crunch (serious, a staple, natural leader with flair), Sheyenne is Special K (red-hot sexy, smart, light-hearted, spunky), Caldwell is Cocoa Krispies (sweet, quick witted), Cunningham is Cocoa Puffs (silly, jokester) and Barrios is Rice Krispies (not a showy guy, but adds his own snap, crackle, pop – on the drums).

"We all try to introduce something different so it doesn't become too repetitious. If I'm always doing the same thing, then [someone in the band offers something new]. So we also help ourselves evolve. We're not afraid to tell each other. We all try to keep ourselves in check," explains Caldwell.

D'Angelo agrees, "I'm really thankful that we are all surrounded by musicians who are capable [of handling it] when you say, 'No you don't need that.' The musician doesn't just hit a brick wall, and say well, 'That's it. That was my thing.' You know, [Barrios'] influences are bands like Dream Theater and Thrice, and all these bands have incredible drumming techniques, and there are times for that in our music. You can hear it on "Drained" and other songs. But



when the band would turn to him and say, 'Let's try something else.' Just like that, he turns it off and tries something else. I think that's cool. And all of us do that really well."

Together these artists support and encourage each other to take creative risks. "We always challenge each other. We say, 'Ya know, that's cool, but let's try something else, and if that doesn't work, we'll try something else,'" Sheyenne explains. Caldwell attributes his artistic growth to the band's open-dialogue style. "They will help me do something in a way that I would have never thought of before, so it basically all the parts together create a whole that would not be possible unless we were all involved," he says.

"None of us smoke. We barely drink. We don't do any kinds of drugs," points out Caldwell. Sheyenne chimes in, "None of us have tattoos. We're not a rock band." They get a kick out of their surface "unrockness." Sheyenne confesses that as the only female, she wasn't sure how things would work. But she claims things have been just fine because she grew up a tomboy, and the entire band have the same sense of humor – of which hers is the sickest – or so *the band* tell me. But then Sheyenne laughs and agrees with them.

With a little luck, unusual determination yields unusual results. This has been the case with I Digress' live performances. The overwhelming success of two recent shows is still fresh in their minds. The first was their slot at New York City's famous CBGB, where more than 40 fans traveled from Florida and other states just to see I Digress. It was an awakening to their widespread reach.

D'Angelo recalls the experience. "We were like 'Whoa, my God!' It was a really a weird evening for us because we thought we were literally driving 22 hours to play for half

an hour, and then drive back and it was all an expense. And we were thinking, 'Oh God, if something happens and it gets cancelled, then we're out all this money.'

"Our following was a real shocker. We had no idea that we were going to amass a following like we did in such a short amount of time. We thought it was going to be much more difficult. I mean don't get me wrong, it's difficult. But I heard statistics that a band would sell 40 CDs a month, and that's good. We're out of the box in five months, selling over 250 a month, and we're thinking to ourselves, 'Now we actually need to push and get marketing to take it to that corporate level,'" D'Angelo says with bright open eyes.

The second show that shook the band to realize the reality of their fan base was in June 2005. "We played this place called Legends at Hard Rock, and that was nuts. We were really worried about marketing and promoting that performance because there was no one else on the bill. So if there were two people there, there was no one to blame. We had 345 people show up, and no other band on the bill, and we're looking at each other going, 'This is weird. This is supposed to happen a year from now – not now!' Sheyenne nods and says, "Sometimes you have to create energy. But it's amazing when it's already there. It's like shoving a pre-cooked pizza into the oven."

From this conversation, it seems that I Digress is pre-cooked and ready to take on the scorching heat of the music-industry oven. "I can definitely say that all of us have put so much time, so much energy and money into this," Sheyenne tells me in a most serious tone. "My parents have said, 'Why do you do this? [Music's] not stable. I don't want you to have to suffer.' But, [I am] keeping myself going because this is what I set out to do and I believe in what I'm doing. If the project was at a point where I didn't feel motivated to get up every morning, and I'm really not loving what I'm doing, then I wouldn't do it. But everybody [in the band] takes this so seriously and everybody is driven – so it keeps everybody in on it."

While his band mates laugh among themselves at some inside jokes, D'Angelo looks at me, and with one off-handed comment he unknowingly sums up everything this interview has proven. "There is just something about what we're doing right now that makes us all feel it's worth putting our lives into," he says. That statement clearly expresses every aspect of I Digress – a band whose name by definition couldn't be further from the true meaning of its parts.

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Avenged Sevenfold is a band oftentimes judged — whether for their exceptional taste in fashion or their incredible musicianship, generally mistaken for arrogance. Fortunately, though, the band has never let such prejudices get in the way of their hard work, which seems to be paying off quite well.

After gathering an impressive legion of fans with their sophomore release *Waking the Fallen* on indie label Hopeless Records, major record companies couldn't help but turn their heads and give the SoCal band the attention that was well overdue. And so Avenged Sevenfold released their anxiously-awaited third album, *City of Evil*, on major label giant Warner Brothers.

But these guys are hardly concerned with all the big label nonsense. Their focus is on much more important things, namely rock 'n roll — and in their case, making it better and louder than anything else already out there.

Having been on the forefront of the whole screaming trend, Avenged Sevenfold is again leaving followers trailing in the dust. *City of Evil* is an astounding record exemplifying what it is to truly be a rock 'n roll musician. The album showcases 11 epic songs comprised of insanely heavy riffs, intricate melodies, guitar harmonies that are simply orgasmic and solid vocals reminiscent of the good ol' "classic rock" days — when lead singers actually sang. And while such an album comes off as decadent and overdone to some of their peers, Avenged Sevenfold shrugs their shoulders and gives them the old "fuck you" — keeping in line, of course, with everything rock 'n roll.

Rag caught up with Avenged Sevenfold's guitarists Zacky Vengeance and Synyster Gates and bassist Johnny Christ at this year's Vans Warped Tour, where they will be playing the main stage for the entirety of the tour. Judge all you like, these guys have their own opinions — and they're not shy about them either.

**RAG: What are you looking forward to most this year on Warped Tour?**

Zacky Vengeance: Oh, definitely playing. Playing new songs for as many kids as possible and having fun doing it.

Johnny Christ: Yeah, having fun on stage and making everything bigger and better.

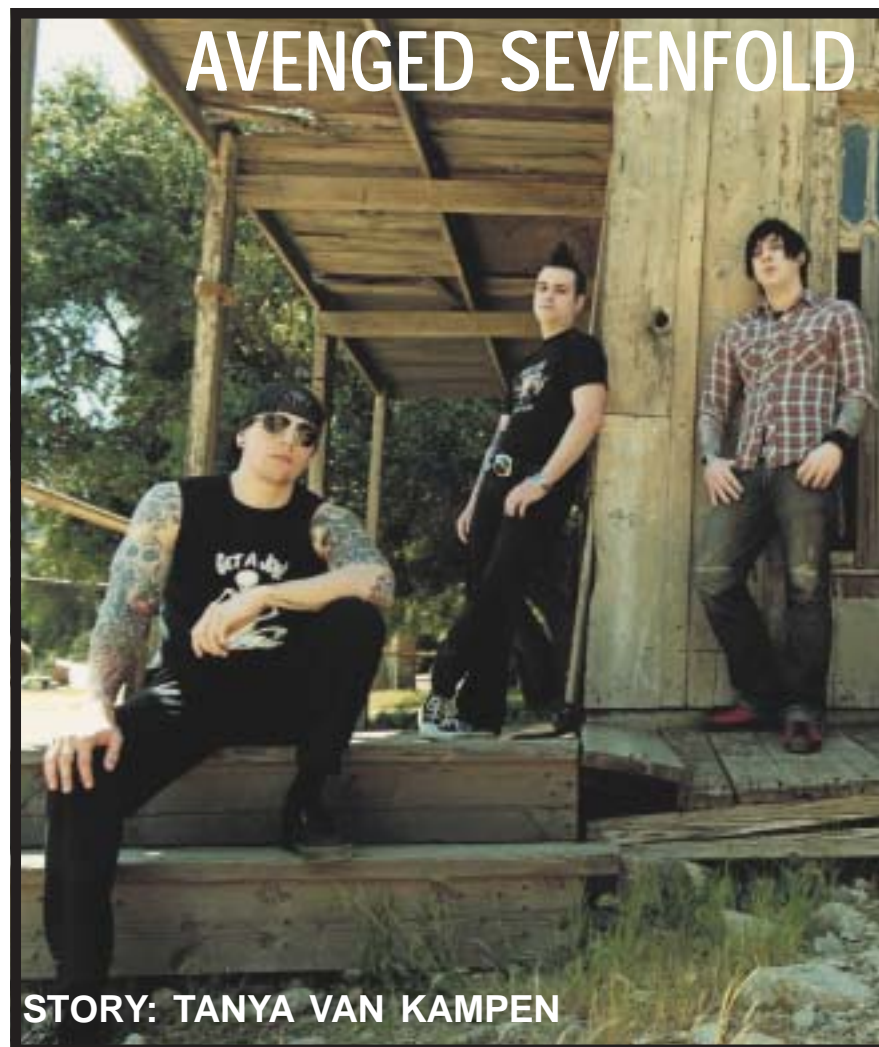
**R: How do you decide what songs to play on Warped with the sets being only 30 minutes long and your songs being longer than the average three-to-four minutes?**

ZV: For this tour especially it's hard with the set being so short. Basically, two weeks ago, we were flying home from Germany and me and Matt (Shadows, vocals) were sitting on the plane next to each other thinking about what songs to play on the long sets (Energizer sets) and the shorter power sets. But one thing we really wanted to do was make sure we mix it up every day, to have a different set with different songs so that every city can see a different set.

**R: Did you come out to see Warped Tour as kids?**

JC: Totally ... I went a couple times with my older brother and saw bands like Lagwagon. Warped Tour has always been cool for going out and seeing a good punk show, which is starting to change now. They're opening up to other bands.

ZV: There's always been a lot of different bands. I know the Reverend (drums) saw the Deftones play on the small stage. I always went to Warped Tour and I even remember



seeing the flyer from the first year — No Doubt and Sublime. It was really really cool going to see it and now playing it. It's awesome.

**R: What would you say is the biggest difference from that first year and what the tour is now?**

ZV: Wow. All the bands scream now (*laughs*) ...

JC: It's the screamo tour.

ZV: ... But we don't; we used to. We always gotta be a step ahead of the game. I mean every year it's (Warped Tour) growing. For as long as it's been going I just remember it as this huge thing coming around in the summer and it's still doing that, which is amazing 11 years after it started. And I still think it'll keep getting bigger 'cause it's just so much fun. Even if you hated every single band you can still go and just have a blast.

**R: What do you think you're bringing that's new to the tour?**

ZV: Wow. I'd have to say we are the first band in Warped Tour history to have a full stage production. I'm not gonna give away all our tricks but we have a full stage production which has never even been allowed before. They let us do it last year on one date and it went over really well. We brought in our nighttime show from our club tour into the daytime. No one does it and that's what makes Warped Tour unique, but when it's just every band going up there and playing, let us do what we do ...

**R: 'Cause all the sets are just so stripped down.**

ZV: Totally, and that's what kids like but I don't think that's what Avenged Sevenfold fans like.

**R: Is there any band you're excited to see or tour with?**

ZV: Yesterday we were doing a signing and I was listening to the Offspring and it was fucking really cool. They sounded really great which is awesome 'cause I grew up listening to that band. Dropkick Murphys — I saw them two years ago when we were on the tour and they put on a really good show. My Chemical Romance — I love those guys.



We got to see them grow from being a small band to blowing up. It's so cool 'cause those guys have still maintained their integrity and they're still such really nice guys.

**R: Each Avenged Sevenfold song is an epic of its own — they're all so musically complex. How much time usually goes into writing a song?**

ZV: We'll just work with ideas and then sometimes they'll just lie there. I mean we still have riffs from *Waking the Fallen* that we've never used just because we couldn't figure out the right way to use them in a song. Sometimes a song could happen in a day and then throughout the next week we just tweak it and stuff. Sometimes a song will develop from a bunch of different songs so it's really hard to say. It took nine months to completely write and have the album (*City of Evil*) recorded ... working every day.

**R: Did you go in with the intention of making it (*City of Evil*) sound completely different from *WTF*?**

ZV: Yeah, I mean we've definitely maintained Avenged Sevenfold — you can definitely still tell it's Avenged Sevenfold, but we

didn't wanna make *WTF* part two.

JC: We just wanted to make the best album we could and that was the natural evolution.

**R: Was it also the intention with the vocals, cutting out all the screaming?**

ZV: Yeah, definitely. Matt's a great singer. And with the screaming, we started the band six years ago and there weren't too many bands screaming so it was cool at the time, but now every band screams. A lot of bands forget the element of singing. They just scream and then they'll holler some words, and that's every band and so there's nothing unique about it anymore. So let's do something they can't do.

**R: So was it more of a challenge for him vocally or not? 'Cause he actually sounds a lot more confident and secure with his voice now.**

ZV: Definitely; he's always had an awesome voice even before he was in the band and we used to play in other bands in high school and stuff. When I first met him in the other band he was only singing. He really worked hard to bring out everything he has in his voice, which is awesome. I think the kids appreciate the fact that we're out there. I mean all the bands that we love sing. As far as bands singing, we were trying to do something different by screaming but now everyone in the world is doing that.

**R: Do you feel that Avenged Sevenfold is kind of bringing it back to the basics in a sense?**

ZV: Yeah, totally. Just heavy music that kids can relate to.  
(Enter Synyster Gates)

**R: Is there any song on the album that you're particularly proud of?**

ZV: Well, I like them all but right now I think my favorite song is "MIA."

**R: Who came up with the flamenco guitar stuff ("Sidewinder")?**

ZV: Oh, that's this guy. (Points to Synyster Gates)



SG: I did. I had a little something to do with that.

ZV: Spanishster Gates.

(Laughs all around)

**R: What does Warped Tour represent for you guys?**

JC: Good times.

ZV: Just a lot of fun and a chance to play in front of a lot of kids who might not have ever heard us; and a nice healthy rivalry with other bands. It's good for everyone.

**R: Do you notice a lot of kids who are maybe a little curious at first and aren't really sure of what to make out of you guys and then by the end they're totally won over?**

ZV: Totally. I think Warped Tour has been a huge part of our success up until now. From the time we started out on the smaller stage and moving up every year. I think every year we gain a few more fans and this time on the first day of the whole tour, it was fucking unbelievable — an unbelievable reaction. I mean, Columbus, Ohio is a place we didn't expect ... we expect it to be awesome everywhere 'cause kids have been really cool but it was just way cooler than I could've expected.

**R: What was it like when the band got re-invited not only to play the main stage again but the whole tour as well?**

ZV: It was like, "Fucking finally!" (Laughs with SG and JC.) It felt good 'cause we know we earned it and we know we worked hard for it, so we're definitely happy.

**R: And it's nice to see the outsiders having gained that kind of respect.**

ZV: Totally. When we first started Warped Tour we were the only band screaming and now that we're finally full circle touring the main stage on the whole tour, we're the only band not screaming. (Laughs)

**R: And the only band with six-minute songs.**  
(Laughs all around)

SG: Yeah, forget six-minute songs — we've got 10-minute songs.

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# THE MURDOCKS

Story: Joseph Vilane

The rock and roll they crave comes from a place where yowling angst co-exists with pristine three-part harmony. The Murdocks have found their form of expression in past and present day garage and rock bands. Asked to name a few inspirational bands, lead singer and guitarist Franklin Morris answers without hesitation; “Blondie, Bikini Kill, the Jesus Lizard, Le Tigre, Liars, Melvins, Misfits, the Muffs, Mummies, Nirvana, Ramones, and the Sex Pistols.”

Having a great respect for indie-rock bands and do-it-yourself music, the Murdocks have retained elements of grind core and alternative rock with their latest offering *Surrenderender*. Given the chance, they’re allowed to evolve naturally, independent of commercial pressures and various media trends.

Formed in the winter of 2001 in Austin, Texas, the Murdocks paved their music around two of rock’s most significant decades: the sixties and the nineties –which history may well come to regard as the alpha and omega of rock and roll. Because it takes place in such a broad swath of time, Morris’ musical vision has breadth of scope. By sticking mainly to the landmarks of both his favorite decades, one might say he has avoided geeky obscurantism.

“It’s a broad range of songwriting,” asserts Morris. “It kind of goes through different styles and stuff, it doesn’t all sound the same, all of the songs are slightly different stylistically. Some songs are like punk songs, some are super screaming rock songs and some are slower dirtier songs.”

There’s a sense of purity in the often nonchalant, sometimes sarcastic musical outlook of Morris. But just like Kurt Cobain, he derives inspiration from what comes natural to him, never second guessing his compositions, allowing the music to speak for itself. The Murdocks (Morris, bassist Robert Houghton, and drummer Tim Dittmar) spoke volumes as I interviewed them last month via telephone. There was an incessant surge of energy that came through the lines as they discussed their creative progress enthusiastically, never straying far from the omnipotent source of their inspiration.

The Murdocks juxtaposed a yin-yang combination of the raw and uncanny aggression of grunge with the sunny bliss of guitar pop and psychedelia, on their debut release *Surrenderender*.

“This is our first actual full length release,” says Morris. “Everything else has just kind of been a compilation of different songs. I guess the record is kind of in a way a compilation songwriting wise because of songs like “Easter Moon,” which was written years and years ago as well as “The June Sonata” (a ballad written for his unborn child) up to most recently with “Saddest Star” and “Segue” which we wrote actually while we were in the studio recording.”

Morris, the band’s main songwriter makes his strings slash like broken glass. He uses his instrument to call down warbles of shimmer straight from heaven. It’s his keen sense of humor that categorizes the band’s potential as a whole, in the sense that they’re smart enough to only take things seriously to a certain extent.

“You just can’t take it all too seriously,” says Morris. “We’ve played with these bands that shall remain nameless that were all dressed up in leather jackets and looked like Keith Richards. They were wearing like tight girl pants and boots and looking all cool. It’s just kind of like they have to do that to over compensate for lack of talent.”

The Murdocks haven’t fallen into the trap of success with the pressure that’s involved. Their approach to music is therapeutic in a sense that they haven’t fallen shy of a musical breakdown because they still have their original vision well intact. It’s all about the love in creating music, writing songs that describes some of the most memorable as well as satirical moments of their lives.

“Usually Frank originally starts off with the riff and the melody and then we’ll work it out,” says Houghton. “Some songs he brings in full formed, some songs he brings in which are like a verse and like some sort of vocal melody, and I just hammer it out and go over the chorus and stuff.”

“Saddest Star” is the most recent song that the band wrote, it’s more similar along the lines of what the band have currently been writing. “Death of a French Whore,” with its rather contemplative title is a straight-ahead rock song, along with Morris’ pre-chorus screeching vocals; the melodic formula provokes concert goers to dance. The fore-mentioned “Easter Moon,” which the acoustic yet controversial track was rumored to be about the tragic death of JonBenet Ramsey.

“It kind of was and kind of wasn’t (about Ramsey)” says Morris. “It started off with that but sort of went off in a different direction. It’s not really a narrative about that, but it sort of varies a resemblance to the story I guess, an undeniable resemblance. I tend to write a lot of narrative type songs, and that’s just one of them I guess.”

*Surrenderender* has been met with critical acclaim and national recognition from both press and radio stations abroad.

“I was looking at a street called Surrender Lane,” says Houghton, “and I thought we should call the album surrender. And then I realized that it was a Cheap Trick song, so I decided to call it *Surrenderender*, and that was it.

Houghton had been in the band for two years when he first came across Morris’ enthusiasm with this project. He was also immediately intrigued.

“It’s always been something I thought I would like to do, being in a band for a living,” asserts Houghton. “I never really envisioned it as being profitable till now. It’s Frank’s vocals and songwriting that made me want to be in the band. A big part of it as well is to get out of Houston. It was like an initiative to move to Austin, Texas, instead of just for junior college.”

As they geared up for their 6th national tour and CD release, the Murdocks recruited Dittmar (formerly of Bo Bud Greene). Dittmar had a hand in recording the band’s last two records, *The Murdocks EP* and *Surrenderender*. Dittmar went from behind the scenes to now playing at the forefront of this promising ensemble.

“Well they fired their drummer,” states Dittmar, “and I’m a drummer that’s my main thing. I’ve been playing in bands for the last ten years and they said, ‘Hey you probably know the songs better than anybody because you worked on the last couple of records, do you want to play drums at our CD release?’ And that was how it started. A couple of weeks later we went on tour and I’ve been playing with them for three or four months.”

Guitar pop splendor reins supreme, although it’s the strong mixture of rage and poetic ambiguity in Morris’ songwriting structure that will essentially grab your attention. Nearly every conceivable youth culture is represented in the





Murdocks' anthem song, the aforementioned "Death Of A French Whore." Judging by its title, you might call it schizophrenia, but for these guys it's just a kind of balance. Although they may not be willing to take over the world quite like Cobain once did, they are more than willing to make an indelible impact throughout the underground scene of rock and roll.

"In a lot of times I don't really think the song titles really reflect the songs," says Morris. "The sense of humor comes across a lot in the song titles, "Dance the Vomit Shakes" is an example; it's a sort of poppy song and the title maybe suggests that it's darker than it really is. And with the heavy songs like "Horse Gore" and "Bloody Murder" you kind of know what to expect. Whenever we come up a song title we try to have something that's a little bit corky and at the same time interesting to us so we wont mind saying over and over."

It's not only the lyrics, but it's the music that helps the Murdocks express themselves in a unique fashion. Morris' electric guitar grinding against the hard thundering beats of his colleagues suggests a strong feeling of empowerment that's shared as a unit.

What makes the Murdocks sound very interesting is some of their more obscure influences: Neutral Milk Hotel, Operation Ivy, Seagull Screaming, Kiss Her Kiss Her, Solex, and the Shins. There are a lot of different bands that some people have never heard of, and the Murdocks intend to bring these bands back to the forefront in their never ending quest for musical revival. Dittmar elaborates on the bands potential.

"The band that I played with for a long time (Bo Bud Greene,) even though we were signed to major labels and did the whole deal, I always thought The Murdocks had way more potential than we did, just because they're way more acceptable in the fact of their pop structure and [Morris] is very melodic and a good singer."

Having turned down major record label deals, the Murdocks have managed to stay true to their goals and ethics, unwilling to compromise their musical integrity.

"I guess when I first started it, I don't think I really had an accurate idea of how the record industry worked, how big it was or what bands were big in making money and what bands were small and not making money," Morris explains. "I was kind of naive about the record industry and how it worked. Maybe I still don't have an accurate idea of exactly how much of a beast the record industry is. If I did, I'd probably quit."

But their loyal audience knows what they want to hear, and the Murdocks want to leave the crowd wanting more, and they are more than prepared to give an encore. The show is never over as far as they're concerned, it has just begun.

# LEFTY LUCIE

Photos and pen by Todd Mcflier

Lefty Lucie is four diverse and passionate men led by one captivating maiden. Frontwoman Lucie Wood possesses a voice like Janis Joplin's, with an arousing sex appeal of her own. Fusing an eclectic mix of jazz, rock and soul-stomping melodies, the band was scheduled to perform in Oakland Park's Rose & Crown Pub on July 1 when a fire shut down the bar. They got to play in their favorite venue, the exquisite DADA in Delray Beach, along with an appearance in Oakland Park's Alligator Alley the following week. Given the opportunity, a lusty Lefty Lucie performance will win you over.

Lefty Lucie has been expanding and experimenting with new musical ideas since their inception in July 2003. Drummer Mike Nasti and acoustic guitarist Russell Gazzana have been in three different bands together in the past few years. Russell had the concept for a female-lead rock band. He contacted an old friend, Lee Zoumas, to add tasteful guitar riffs to their evolving idea. The three musicians then ran an ad looking for a vocalist to complement their sound. With time, Lucie Wood stepped up to the vocals. To complete the lineup, they called an old friend, Tom Pierro, a talented musician from local funk band Jenga, to handle the rhythm section with a bass.

The band has earned a small but loyal fan base; the band plays regularly in different venues stretching from Miami to St. Augustine. Their influences are as broad as Lefty Lucie themselves, ranging from Jefferson Airplane and Lauren Hill to Bob Marley, the Beatles and the Chili Peppers. The five members of Lefty Lucie range in age from 26 to 33 and live in Boca Raton, not including Russell who stems from Fort Lauderdale.

Along with other endeavors, Lefty Lucie has been working on a full-length album. They have finished recording three numbers, *El Guapo*, *This Silver Moon* and *It Takes A Little Time*, but are waiting to master another seven. Nothing is official yet, but the working title for the CD is *The Bird and the Bees*. Decisions are made democratically, the band organizing everything around Lucie's vocal pattern. The numbers are all penned by the singer herself, who has been writing creatively her whole life; the boys develop the melodies first. When they start playing out their new ideas, the educated poet goes into a corner and starts formulating the lyrics. Her talent for writing songs so quickly blows the rest in the band away.

No one in Lefty Lucie is earning a living with their music, as they each have full-time day jobs. Yet they are very persistent on staying true to themselves, as the band refuses to perform any covers, and they will continue to carry on this way. Sometimes the fish will bite, it just takes a little time. The bird and the bees want to keep writing music and more original songs.

Spectators should catch Lefty Lucie let loose in South Florida's local scene, from Fort Lauderdale to downtown Delray, and when the band headlines *Scream Fest* on October 16 in the Coral Springs Marriott. After all, Lefty Lucie is meant to be experienced live.







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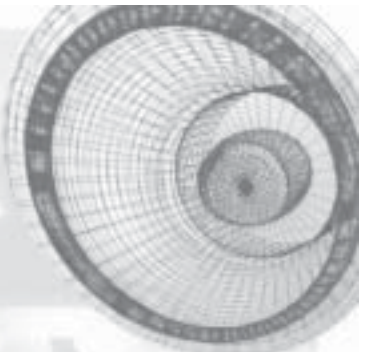
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# COURTNEY JAYE

Story: Monica Cady

Love fails. People pass away. It's the kind of pain that inspires sad country songs or raging Alanis-Fiona-style choruses. But instead, singer-songwriter Courtney Jaye's broken heart and friend's death sparked a series of optimistic pop tracks. The words make reference to these unsettling emotions, but Jaye's ray-of-light approach is what gives her numbers an upswing.

*"If you feel it, you might as well reveal it. 'Cause this is the day. Tomorrow could all be taken away."*  
— "This is the Day," *Traveling Light*

Airy guitar rhythms and heart-shaped poetry make Jaye an easy comparison to Jewel and Sheryl Crow. The addictive single "Can't Behave" from her (June 2005) Island debut, *Traveling Light*, has already earned lots of radio time and is a favorite at beachside bars, but most folks probably think it to be Jewel's latest happy-girl release. It's sort of a surprising sound,

considering that Jaye is a Grateful Dead and Ani DiFranco fan. (Once, she even shaved her head like DiFranco.) After a more focused listen, it's obvious that Jaye has more guts than delicate-coffee-and-eggs Jewel hums, and more Ms. Brightside energy than carwash-barstool Crow hooks. Though Jaye has a free-spirit edge and jam-band-hungry soul, now, she is more interested in being concise. She learned to appreciate the directness of a pop song, and her creative forces ran wild.

*"All my life I'm traveling light, been living in the sky. I'll float. I'll fade. I'll carry away 'til you pull me down and you think of me some time."* – "Traveling Light," *Traveling Light*

The brunette's album title couldn't seem more appropriate. Twenty-seven-year-old Jaye has already lived in enough cities to write her own Fodor's guide. Some places she has called home: Austin, Texas; Los Angeles, Calif.; Athens, Ga.; Atlanta, Ga.; New York City and Kauai, Hawaii. While bartending at the Boar's Head, a college dive in Athens, she fell in love with a guy. The two got engaged and moved to Austin. When the relationship didn't work out, Jaye had lots of emotions for songwriting – songs that dominate her record.

*"I used to dim my light so you could shine. ... I gotta start putting me first. It's killing me the way it is."* – "Mental," *Traveling Light*

At the moment, Jaye says she doesn't have a home, making her *Traveling Light* theme quite a literal assertion, and a way of life that would make most people uneasy. Not Jaye. She carries a laidback, convivial energy – giving the sense that she is at home everywhere. She has an easygoing, adventurous attitude, and seems like the kind of person who hikes mountains by day and has a beer with close friends by night. Jaye says she is an "earth lover" and is most inspired when connected to nature. Her artistry gives the impression of drifting through flowing waterfalls and daisy fields, but her wit drives with the fast-paced purpose of taxicabs.

From the mountains of Vermont, Jaye takes some time away from hanging with her girlfriends to chat with *RAG Magazine* about what's on her mind and why she feels so wonderful.

#### **What are you most focused on right now?**

I am actually relaxing for the first time in like a year. So, my head isn't in too many places. Obviously, with the record just coming out, I am focused on just kind of getting out there, developing a fan base, just playing as many shows as I can. Writing the songs and making the record has just taken me years, and it's like I almost forgot, "Oh yeah, I'm going to actually be performing these songs live one day." So it's nice to finally be at that place. But relaxing for me is like me being on my computer for two hours a day (laughs), instead of a lot more.

#### **You were really inspired to write songs after two losses in your life. Surprisingly, your album is really upbeat. Do you find that these kinds of emotions are easier to express or write songs about?**

Well, absolutely, because it's those moments that I am accessing just certain parts about being a human being, ya know. Loss is something that I haven't had much experience with in my life. I haven't lost too many people, and when I feel that, it's really a deep emotion. It's like the least I can do is write a song about it. Like I wish I could do more. But the least I can do is put my perspective into a song. Those experiences motivate me more because I really feel like I'm living in those moments. I'm grateful to be alive, as cliché as it might sound. Those are the moments that make me think the most and the hardest.

#### **"This is the Day" is really one of those songs that stresses the importance of being in the here-and-now and appreciating where you are.**

And it's so true. I think that, for me, I wanted to write something positive – especially with that song. I have a hard time with songs that are kind of like preachy. I just really wanted to balance that fine line writing that. I wanted to say, "Hey, this is my experience. This is what I'm learning how to do every day. I'm not 100 percent at it, but I'm learning." And that's what it's about.

#### **What is most of your album is about?**

I would say it's kind of like a chronicle of the past three years of my life. It's pretty much all out there. Obviously all of these songs are very personal to me. But it didn't hit me that I was putting so much out there until like a week before the record came out. And it was like, "Wow!" It's a really scary place, but it's exciting as well. [The album is] definitely written around a relationship that I had. I was engaged to be married. [The record] kind of takes you through the emotional rollercoaster that that relationship was.

#### **Does this person know that the album is about them?**

I think he does. Unfortunately, we don't talk. So, I would imagine that even if he's going to listen to the record that he knows. Yes, he probably knows.

#### **That must be the ultimate release to tell someone how you feel.**

For me, it has been my therapy. Everybody always asks me if he knows that the record is written

about him. And I'm just like, "Oh, I don't know." (sheepishly laughs) And for me, being a songwriter is so interesting because one of the things that I am working on, just in my daily life, is to be a better communicator. And in relationships, particularly that one, I found that I was just really terrible at communicating. Writing songs was the only way that I could communicate my feelings.

#### **I know that you traveled a lot, and the album is called *Traveling Light*. Can you tell me a bit about the significance of the name?**

I don't have a home right now, so I'm traveling light in that sense. I don't own a lot of things. I don't own a car. I don't own a television. I don't own a bed. I'm extremely out there – kind of floating around. The deeper meaning is also referring to where I'm at right now, emotionally. During the writing of the record, over the past three years, I just came to this precipice, this new place, this new chapter for me. It's exciting. It's scary. It's fun. It's all these wonderful emotions. I'm very able to feel all those at the moment. I felt like touching on the fact that I am open to anything.

#### **It seems like most people only dream of living in all the places that you have. How did the physical locations affect your writing? Were all of the songs written in the same location?**

Yeah, when I was living in Hawaii, I was writing. But [the album] has been such a work-in-progress. I started writing songs when I was 17. There are songs that I look back on and I can still listen to, but I don't sing (laughs). It's just like a different time, a different place. I wrote most of the songs when I was living in between Austin, Texas, and Atlanta, Ga. But I was also traveling a lot out to Los Angeles to write songs, too.

#### **You worked with some great people on this album. What are some of the standout memories or things you learned?**

One of the coolest experiences for me was to work with Taj Mahal. He's on that song "Hanalei Road." I saw him for the first time when I was in Flagstaff and I was about 18. He just has such a soul to him. He just exudes this old soul mentality. I remember thinking, "When I make a record one day I really want to have him on it." And I wrote a song about Kauai, which is somewhere I am still sort of living now. I know he lived there. He lived there for like 20 years. And I thought, "Wow, I've really got to get him on it." We ended up recording at this house in Kauai. He is just a walking piece of soul. The man has so much soul. I am just so inspired by that.

#### **How would you describe the music you were writing before you adopted more of a pop sound?**

It was very singer-songwriter – lots of lyrics, long songs. What I was learning about, especially pop songs, is just how much of a challenge it is to just get to the point and say what you want to say, in fewer words, but to make it more impactful that way. I was drawn to that challenge. I started to develop my love for writing those pop songs. My definition for pop songs is just that – very melodic, hooky, something that can grab me, but is substantial as well. I just like getting to the point. I feel like I have a tendency to just bullshit and I just want to say what I want to say and move on.

# SECRET MACHINES

Story: Monica Cady



A kick-ass rock show should scare the shit out of you. At least the life-altering ones should, according to Josh Garza, drummer for the Secret Machines. He says the best shows force audiences to decide: are they in, or are they out?

Garza remembers witnessing at least two concerts that were of life-shaking intensities for him. One was a Butthole Surfers show in the 1980s. "I remember thinking to myself that there was a point in the show where I was like, 'Whoa, this is kind of freaky. It's really loud. There's some weird shit happening. The people around me are freaking me out.' And you have to make a choice. In that show, at that moment, it was like, 'You know what, I leave now, or I'm in.' I made that decision [to stay], and that always stuck with me.

"[In the '90s], I saw the Flaming Lips and that [show] did the same thing [to me]. It was the most loud, rockin'est (sic), intense show I had ever seen in my life. Something caught on fire, but they didn't even stop playing. And somebody got the fire extinguisher, and that kind of cut out the oxygen. So I was like, 'It's loud. There's smoke. I can't breathe, and [the band is] not stopping.'"

Now that he has his own band, Garza has his chance to break into the consciousness of listeners and show them some mind-blowing rock with glorious shades of fear and pleasure. This kind of shake-the-world attitude is carried into the Secret Machines' musical approach and the

live-show sensation that they want to provide viewers.

Secret Machines are three guys who bang out rock songs kinda like it was done in the prime years of Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. But the Machines make it sound like a fearless freefall into something startlingly fresh and energizing. They capture the monumental power and zone-out meditation bong of Floyd while thrusting with the bold, sweaty guitar-chord force of Zeppelin. Mashed in the swarm of indie rock and Brit poppers making a buzz in the music scene, Secret Machines deliver something with more depth.

It's like the Machines *know* they stand out. "Blowing all the other kids away" is chorus of the title track of their recent EP *The Road Leads Where It's Led*. And not to sound like their proud mother, but that's damn well what they are doing – not in a fucked up Columbine sense of blowing away some bullies, and not exactly in a smashing-hit Billboard-chart way either. (As far as mainstream appeal goes, the band really does live up to their "Secret" name.) But as far as sound is concerned, they're penetrating some seriously interesting territory and blowing away lots of newer bands in the rock/indie-rock genre right now.

Secret Machines really started making things happen for themselves in 2002, when they ditched the Dallas, Texas, scene for New York. Garza and Curtis brothers, guitarist Benjamin and bassist/vocalist Brandon, toughed it out in a tiny Brooklyn apartment while they worked to make

their rock-star dreams a reality. Their *September 000* EP was released in 2002, but the band's first major mark was with the 2004 album *Nowhere is Now Here*. The record is an ethereal experience with lots of heavy references to music's past. Critics and rock scenesters welcomed and praised the band's ambition and deliberation with sound.

With less hoopla than *Nowhere*, the Machines released *The Road Leads Where It's Led* in 2005. Here, they added versatility to their portfolio by including two original songs and four covers. And what the Machines may have lacked in originality with this offering, they made up for in courage. Covering Van Morrison and Bob Dylan isn't something any band should take lightly, and the Machines didn't. However, critics found a way to smash the band's daring, different direction, calling the songs longwinded and bland.

But forget all the media hype, or lack of, rather. Secret Machines are chins-up, looking ahead to their next full-length work. Today, Garza is taking a break from their session at the mountainside Bel Aire Studios in upstate New York. He is either *really stoned* or *really laidback* because he speaks slowly in a real surfer-stoner, coffeehouse-beatnik kind of way. He seems optimistic, focused and calm.

"This is our last week in the studio and we are just kind of wrapping up the tracks for the next record. It's very cool. It's going very well. We figured we are going to be very busy all summer, so any time off we had, we would come up to the studio and finish [the new album]. We are doing a big tour with the Kings of Leon."

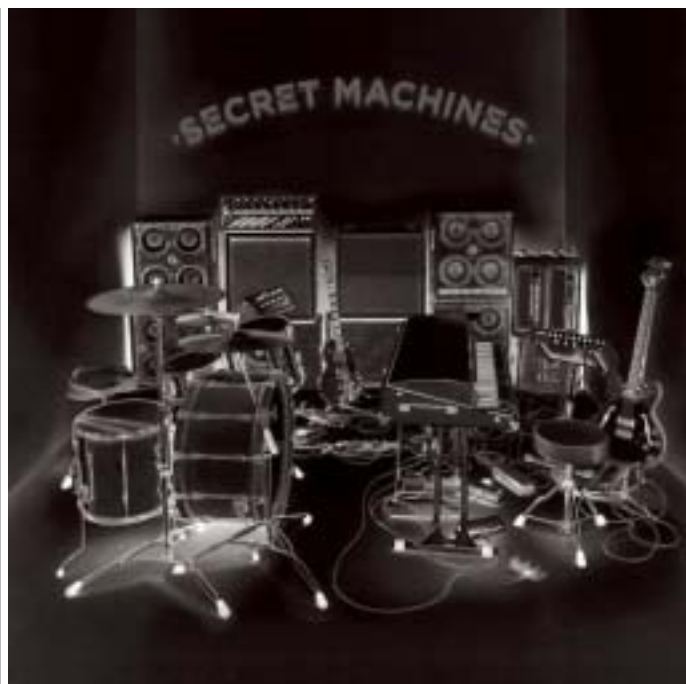
The band also hope that recording *now* will afford the label its necessary playtime, as far as mixing and arranging for the proper promotional plan. For artists, this label playtime means a frustrating delay period between the initial recording and when the album gets into the hands of listeners. In addition to the aggravation of waiting on the label, Garza says that timing a release is critical. It can mean the difference between major media recognition and big album sales, or being completely ignored.

"I think we were feeling a little weird [recently] because we were thinking, 'Okay at this point we have an EP out, and how come we're not seeing it in reviews of magazines and stuff?' [Reprise] postponed [the EP] like a month, and then they released it like the same time as Coldplay and the White Stripes, and big-act names. And it was like, 'Wow, you could have just released it during Christmas because it would have been just as overlooked, you know?'" Garza is hopeful about the release date for the band's new, untitled record. "We're leaning toward January, but knowing labels and how it usually works out, it will probably be March," he says with slight frustration.

Garza asserts that the songs on the forthcoming album aren't simply leftover tracks from earlier recording sessions. "I think there are a few ideas [on the album] that were floating around [at earlier sessions] that just didn't come to fruition. I think the difference between this record and our first is significant. If you put on the first original EP, and then our first record, you can hear that there is sort of an evolution there, but it is still the same band. And I think that is what we're doing now, especially with the EP that was just released. There was less of a need to be longwinded. If you hear it, you are going to go, 'Yeah, that's the Secret Machines.' But it's definitely not part two of the first record."

At shows, audiences will get samples of the forthcoming album. On average, the Secret Machines plan to present three or four unheard songs, as well as mostly newer material. "It seems like some of the songs off the first record, we hardly play any more. It's not because we don't like them, but now we are just a little more excited about the new stuff."

Garza and his mates will soon have to do a 180-degree mental transition – from working in the creative confines of the studio to the hectic vagabond world of touring. For Garza, this is just fine, and he finds both aspects of his job equally appealing. "It comes from the



same part of your soul. And for us, we are fans of the straight-ahead, in-your-face rock band. But we're also fans of like Sergeants Peppers, where they were meticulous and they experimented. You know, they really worked on songs. We're trying to definitely find that balance, and I think that's where a lot of people might accuse us, [and say] 'Oh you're better live, or your records are better.' And it's like, 'Well, yeah, they're gonna be slightly different, and neither one is supposed to be a replica of the other.'

"I feel like the one advantage that we have over our fans is that we have never gotten a chance to see us. So we're not having to record in accordance to what we are supposed to be sounding like. And I think that's an advantage and that's why our record and our live shows will always complement each other. But I don't think either one will be the definitive version of us. The EP presented a different side of us that we are fans of, which is far-out ambient soundscapes. And you know, we are doing covers of bands that we love – not just songs that we love. We are just wanting to incorporate things that people are used to and put it in a way that is more experimental, but yet, not boring, not gratuitous. And that was really hard. How can you say Dylan's nine-minute version of "Girl from the North Country" isn't gratuitous? It was really hard," he says with a laugh.

Though he envisions a creative balance between writing and performing music, it is obvious that audience response is critical to Garza. "That is the goal, to live and be in the moment so intensely that [the audience] feels it. I think what we do live, and the light show that we have, brings back that intensity [of classic rock shows]. I really feel like bands should make you feel like you are *with* them or *against* them."

The Secret Machines' song "Pharaoh's Daughter" has been compared to Floyd's "Us and Them," and maybe their mentality bleeds through into this thinking, too. After speaking with Garza and hearing his excitement for the new album and his thoughts on creating a vivid experience for audiences, one thing is clear: the Machines' "Us" crowd is in for something spectacular and mind-altering.

**You can see Secret Machines live with the Kings of Leon at Revolution on August 16th**

# FAR FROM GONE

Story & Photo: Jeff Noller

Hanging out with progressive metaloids, Far From Gone is definitely not what you would call your average garden variety experience. You wouldn't picture a metal band that consists of a straight edger, an independent financial consultant, a music engineer and a wild-haired drummer who does a wicked good Chewbacca impersonation in James Silvestri.

"We had him running down the street, scaring these kids away this one time (doing Chewbacca)," says vocalist Jeff Irving. "We were going to go record something, waiting for the guy to show up to open up the studio, so we can bring our equipment in," recalls Silvestri. "One of the guys goes, 'Look! There's a couple of kids coming down the street. Do that Chewbacca thing.' So I just took my hat off and messed my hair up and everything and just went 'ROARRR!' jumping up and down. And these three kids ran down the street as fast as I've ever seen anybody run, never seen someone jump the way and climb a tree the way they did."

Within the cramped but surprisingly cozy rehearsal space packed with Marshall amps, a makeshift stage for a drum kit, a little work refrigerator and a desktop computer, the band pumped out songs with panache from their self-titled debut that are as tightly orchestrated as any established act out there; songs such as "PJ" and "Chapter One" as well as a couple of new tunes.

Their sharp compositions don't sound like those of a band that initially came together a year-and-a-half ago, the complete opposite of a typical start-out band that usually spends more time trying to tune and not sound like shattered glass. The band members each have roughly 15 years worth of musicianship and it shows with an unrivaled intensity. Far From Gone is indeed a stellar band, honing a metallic sound that's a mixture of Slayer, Tool and Rush with a vocalist with a voice reminiscent of Live's Ed Kowalczyk.

"I liked Live a lot for a while because of the singer's voice," says Irving. I didn't try to copy him, but I did a lot of listening to him sing. Listening to his breathing technique and where he was breaking and going back in, and he just has an amazing voice."

Irving was born in West Palm Beach, initially finding music after having an argument with a high school friend over what was tougher: martial arts, which Irving had practiced for years, or playing drums.

"He made me come over to his house to play drums and I got addicted

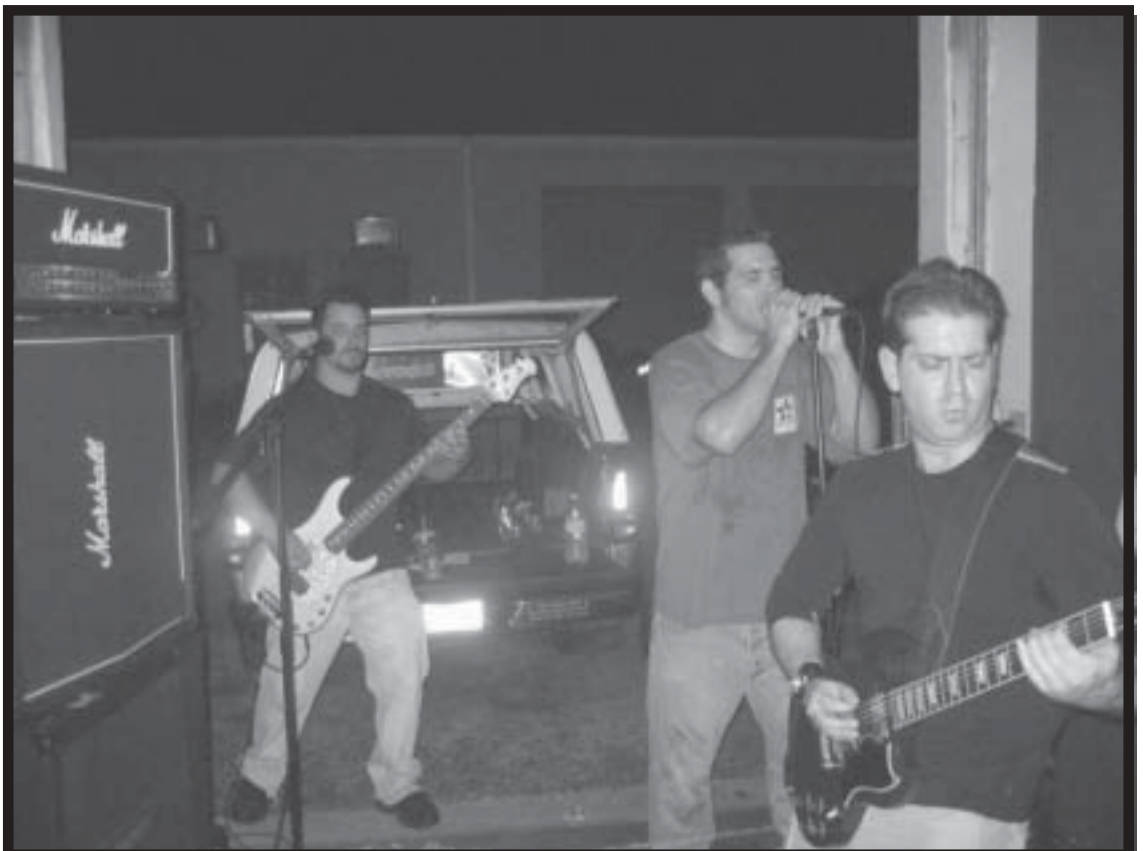
and sat there and played for hours," says Irving before laughingly adding, "He got pissed off and finally kicked me out of his house."

After taking some drumming lessons and finishing high school, Irving played in some bands, such as Roosevelt. He is influenced by metal and straight-edge hardcore acts such as Farside, Split Lip, and his brother's band, Red Roses for a Blue Lady. Irving was particularly influenced by Dave Lombardo of Slayer.

"He was my first musical hero. I had to learn to play like him, so I sat there for hours, playing double bass. But there aren't a lot of bands out there that play to that kind of drumming, so I was in a lot of bands that had a far more mellow sound. Drums were fun, but it couldn't help express what I wanted to say, despite keeping me in good shape. I took up the guitar, bought an Eagles book and started learning chords. I was pretty horrible at first, and one day I was in the back seat of a car and was singing along and someone went 'Hey! You can sing.' So I gave it a shot and here I am."

Irving sang in such bands as Hero and Flat Earth, which by Irving's admission never went anywhere before he joined At-Water. In that group, Irving wrote all the music and lyrics and particularly connecting with Silvestri, who drummed in that group.

"I grew up in Miami until I was 15 through the whole hip-hop scene, all the breakdancing stuff," remembers Silvestri. "I had a lot of friends in the scene. I always liked how the drum beats came out. I remember when I was six or seven coming home and pounding on all the pots and pans."



"When I moved up to West Palm Beach when I was 15 with my mom and brother, I met this guy Ritchie Beach who was in this band called Revelation. He was absolutely amazing to watch, and helped me into the rock scene. I had never been into that, so that was an out of sight, out of mind thing. Then I got into a lot of guitar, bass and singing sounds more than the hip-hop, so now everything was totally heavy."

Silvestri obtained his first set of drums at 16 before being kicked out of the house at 17 for playing so much. Despite this, Silvestri kept going because he saw a dream that he wanted to achieve.

"Then this band just popped out in front me: Tool. I listened to *Undertow* hundreds and hundreds of times a week, and just went 'Listen to how that guy plays the drums!'"

It was Danny Carey, Tool's drummer, who had the biggest impact upon Silvestri. From then on, Silvestri was determined to play the music he wanted to make, and as a result went from one band to another, never staying too long due to musical differences.

"People want me to play jazz, they want me to play funk, they want me to play flamenco, and all these different kinds of stuff that I was not into ... then I met this psycho," Silvestri deadpans referring to Irving. "With him and this guitarist Will Reed from the band Seventeen, they taught me to have feeling when I played. Because I never had feeling, it was all about 'How hard can I hit this, how fast can I hit that, how can I make this sound more rhythmic,' and not showing more feeling in my playing. So I started doing that instead of seeing how much I could make a girl jump or shake her ass or a guy punching somebody. I wanted 'Holy cow, this feels good.' I started playing different."

After At-Water disbanded, Silvestri hooked up with Nocella and Herman in the band Sound Stone. The two Long Island transports had known each other since childhood. Herman was born in Brooklyn at Coney Island Hospital before moving to Port Jefferson station at the age of 10 where Nocella were born. The two recall playing sports such as baseball and football and rode BMX bikes as well as taking up guitar and bass. They didn't necessarily perform in bands as much as they played together at home.

"It was hard to find other musicians that could play and also our abilities were getting better," adds Nocella. "It took us a while for us to get to where we wanted to be. We did some recording of some of our material. Original riffs, stuff like that."

"We loved Priest, Maiden, Metallica, Rush; every summer we go on the road and see shows," says Herman. "See a band three or four times that summer, travel around and follow them. Every time, you have a band like that you love, we just couldn't wait to go back and practice and be inspired."

After moving down to Florida in 1990, Herman obtained his Associates Degree from Miami-Dade College before becoming a stock broker, and continued to do that for 11 years before going independent as a contractor and joining up with the band.

"[What we did in high school] was never anything serious until '99, when Greg moved down for the second time to South Florida to South Beach. I moved down to Florida for the first time in '91," says Nocella. "We started working on projects; we were around 21."

Nocella attempted studying at a music/video business school in South Beach before transferring to the Art Institute. After not liking the program, Nocella moved back to New York to study business at Five Towns College, where he also worked at the Hit Factory as well as Warner Chappell before getting a job with PolyGram Records in the royalties department.

"It was more of an accounting position," reflects Nocella, "but it was interesting material that we were going over. I was trying to get into the creative end of the business, but once you're in accounting it's hard to get out."

After leaving PolyGram, Nocella moved back to Florida in 1999, where Herman still lived, and began playing again, starting Sound Stone which Silvestri inevitably joined. By the latter's account, it was a different feeling than all the other bands he had played with.

"Something was there," says Silvestri. "The lead singer at the time called me saying they needed a drummer for a gig. I came on and it was awesome, and it's been that way ever since."

Following that lead singer's departure from Sound Stone before they were scheduled to play a gig, Silvestri contacted Irving, who wasn't in a band at that time, asking if he would be interested in playing. The four gelled immediately.

"Everyone in the band has been playing for a long time, and we've been a group for a year and a half now," says Nocella. "It's like a family, like a fraternity."

"It's great because in this group, everyone contributes," says Irving. "No one is allowed to write by themselves."

"It starts with a riff and then Jeff and I will start do something or James and I will start do something or Aaron and James will start do something and we'll all find our place in it somewhere," says Nocella. "We'll write what we want to do, and if Jeff's feeling it, the song will come about quickly. He'll hear the melodies that he wants to sing and come up with words and usually the song will come up real quick."

"Some of the songs take as long as, for me to write vocals, a month because in the past I've settled for words ... It takes a while to find exactly what I need to say for words ... everything that I write comes from my life except for 'Fellowship,' which was inspired by the Dark Tower series (by Stephen King)."

Silvestri came up with the name Far From Gone as a response to something one member in a previous band that the drummer had been in said that they would never be able to continue without him.

They recorded their debut in Silvestri's home outside of Jupiter over a three month period. Silvestri's quick to point out that the band has had a lot of help from many friends, such as his wife, Susana, their close friend Heidi Vargas and Damon Ware from Be-Ware Production, who is also head engineer for 102.3 Jamz, and who handled the pressing of the records and placing the bar codes on the jewel cases.

"He's been a major factor in the progression of the album, and he predominantly does hip-hop so that's a major deal to us. We wouldn't be where we are now without him."

The band has honed their sound since starting, rehearsing three times a week at their Delray Beach warehouse. Each member displayed what he was musically capable of, as Irving will point out regarding the time when they went from a five-piece to a four-piece with the dismissal of a second guitar player four months into the band's existence.

"When that happened, we got to see what Greg could do because he opened up musically, since he felt constricted as to what he could do and didn't want to muddy anything up. I was impressed with what I heard. Aaron does a lot of stuff with the effects as well that I've never heard before. He's one of the best guitarists that I've ever worked with. Greg — same thing, they're both dynamic musicians; and James is a fucking monkey on drums! He's nuts and it's great to watch."

# FILM

## STEALTH

JOSH LUCAS, JESSICA BIEL, JAMIE FOXX & SAM SHEPARD  
DIRECTED BY ROB COHEN

Apparently, there are at least four agents in Hollywood that neglected to tell their talented clients that they had each just signed on for the summer's biggest bust! Seriously, I can't imagine what mumbo-jumbo could have been written in a script



or proposal that could have made this "vehicle" seem remotely appealing..."Yeah, um...well...we were kinda thinking it would be like K.I.T.T. from Knight Rider meets Hal 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey! But then...wait for it... there will be a talking *stealth* jet! People will love it! C'mon, you'll be summer action stars! [Insert sound of above actors' checks cashing.]

For what it's worth, the four lead actors [Shepard, Lucas, Biel, and Foxx] give remarkably

credible performances and it's this aspect of artistic dedication that keeps you from walking out of the movie -though I must admit, the eye-rolling is hard to keep at bay. In fact, it's actually quite sad that the "plot" of the movie wastes the actors' time and talents, not to mention the paying audiences' dime and time. But then again, c'mon, the "movie-stars" had to have seen the dailies of this talking-jet mess. In the end, Foxx winds-up as the film's big winner, if only for the simple fact that his required shooting schedule appears to have been much, much shorter than the rest of the cast. Therefore, here's my take: if you want to see a killer movie about fighter jets, buy Top Gun. If you want to see a larger-than-life, popcorn-crunching summer movie, buy Armageddon.

Now, if you want to see a hilarious summer movie that is out right now-run, heck, fly over to the next theater showing Wedding Crashers! - Crystal Clark



## CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

JOHNNY DEPP, FREDDY HIGHMORE  
DIRECTED BY TIM BURTON

We begin with five golden tickets, like five lucky strikes of lighting, ready to strike without notice at any part of the map. Rather than a sequel modeled after Roald Dahl's *Great Glass Elevator*, Tim Burton remade director Mel Stuart's 1971 classic starring Gene Wilder, Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.



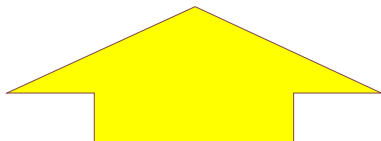
This summer's Charlie & the Chocolate Factory stars Johnny Depp as the eccentric candy man. Willy descends Wankamania upon the world by hiding five golden tickets inside candy bars that grant entrance into his top-secret factory. The theme is simple, family values and honesty. While comparing Burton's Wonka to 1971's fantasy film is a disappointment,

the venture is still worth the trip.

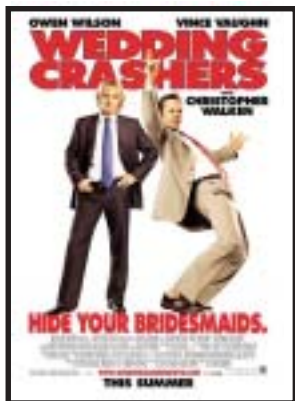
Proud the locals of Jugenheim were when Augustus Gloop thrust the city into prominence, becoming the pride of Western Germany, after finding the first golden ticket. Other lucky winners include the ever-whining Veruca Salt, along with television and video obsessed techi, Mike Teevee. Violet Beauregarde is an obnoxious gum chewer whose skin eventually turns violet. Underprivileged, but lucky last ticket-finder Charlie Bucket, escorted by his Grandpa Joe, is the last man standing as the other children are picked off in a familiar fashion.

Draped in a purple top hat, giant sunglasses and Chiclet teeth, Depp is comical in the slightly different Burtonesque structure. The gothic-styled candy man certainly doesn't have the clever one-liners that Wilder possesses when talking to the mumbling children. Incorporating a childhood for Willy, Depp reunites with his dad, an anti-chocolate dentist. In fact, Wonka has trouble pronouncing the word "parent" prior to the reunion. Burton's greatest alteration is Violet's mother, a hilarious silicone queen possessing a plastic tan and face. Unfortunately, the film's only singing comes from the Oompa Loompas, one midget, digitally cloned 165 times. Yup, that means there's no "Cheer Up Charlie." – Todd McFlicker

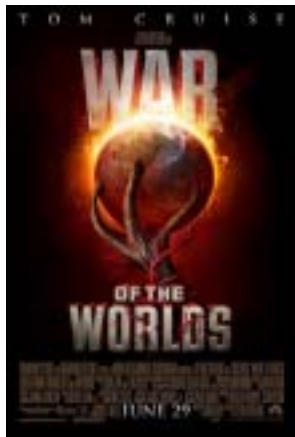
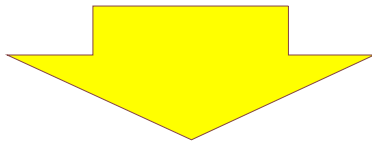




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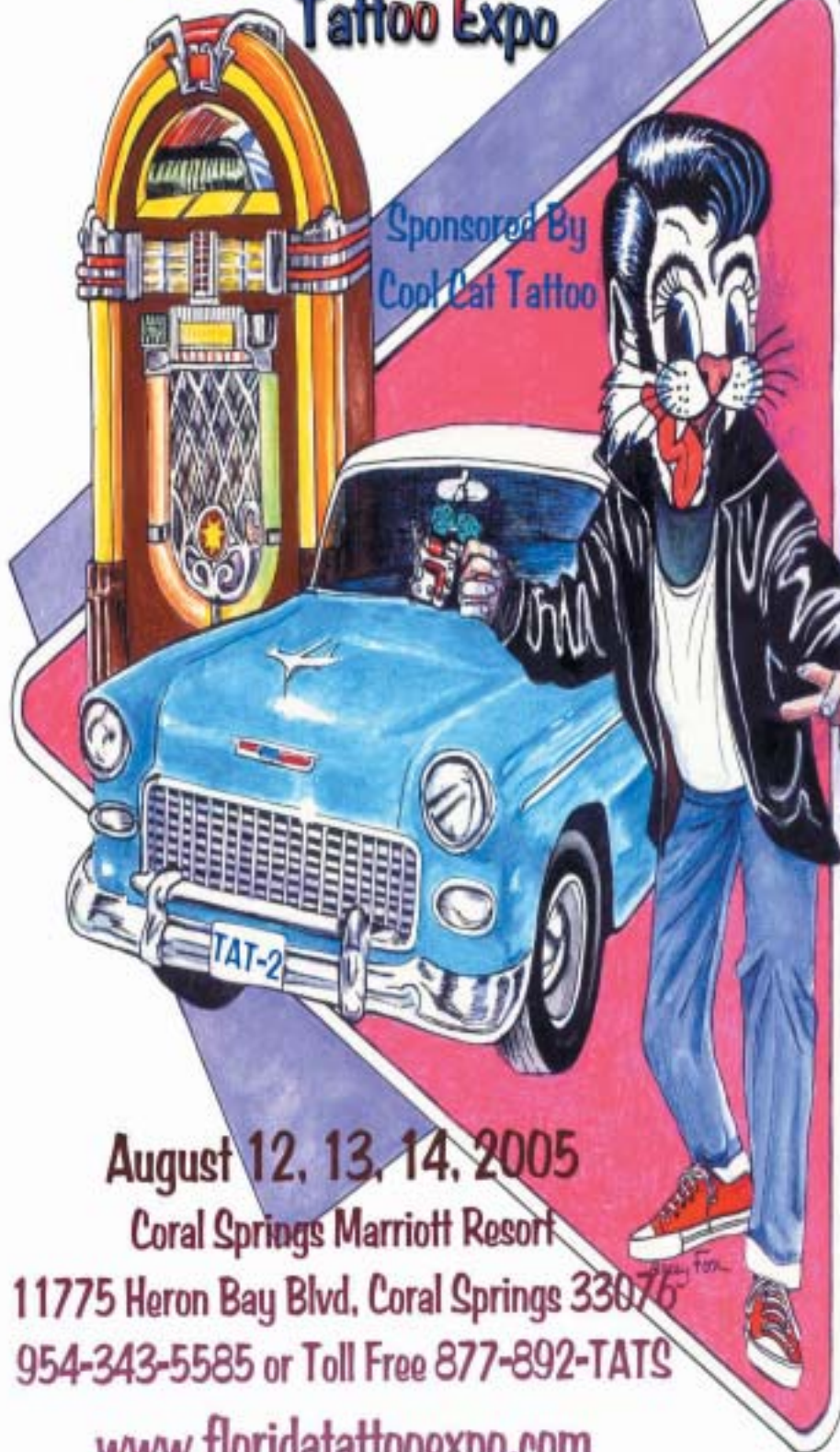
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## BAND SCHEDULE

**Friday, August 12th**

7:00 - 7:45 Soulicide

8:00 - 9:00 Skunk Ape

9:30 - 10:30 Rambler

11:00 - 12am Hep Cat Boo Daddies

**Saturday, August 13th**

12:30 - 1:30 Zebra Three

2:00 - 3:00 Creepy Tee's

3:30 - 4:30 Breakline

5:00 - 6:00 Chicken for Chico

6:30 - 7:30 Soul Switch

8:00 - 9:00 Kramer Goes Berserk

9:30 - 10:30 Hep Can Boo Daddies

11:00 - 12am The Mary Tyler Whores

12am - 1:00am Crease

**Sunday, August 14th**

12:30 - 1:30 Hat Trick

2:00 - 3:00 Helldorados

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# DVD

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## DEAR FRANKIE

Emily Mortimer, Gerard Butler, Sharon Small  
Directed by Shona Auerbach

Dear Frankie reveals the incredibly touching story of a deaf little boy named Frankie, and his unbelievable desire to meet his father -for the first time. However, we soon learn that it was Frankie's own mother, who had been secretly writing letters to him-only pretending to be his father. Frankie's mom then finds herself hatching a plan once she realizes that -the "fictional ship" the absentee father is supposed to be on -is actually scheduled to arrive in port in their city. Now Frankie is certain that he will lay eyes on his father's face. Dear Frankie's



emotional ride is palpable to the point that it almost grabs you by the throat. It's a very sincere film, indeed, with DVD extras that include deleted scenes with optional director commentary, the story of Dear Frankie, and a featured commentary and interview with the film's director, Shona Auerbach. - Crystal Clark

## PROZAC NATION

Christina Ricci, Jessica Lange, Jason Biggs  
Directed by Erik Skjoldbjarg

After being "shelved" for the past three years, Prozac Nation finally surfaces-albeit not on the big screen- but to DVD (hey, at this point, we should not be picky). Based on the best-selling novel by Elizabeth Wurtzel and boasting a cast the includes the under-appreciated Christina Ricci and the marvelous Jessica Lange, as well as Jason Biggs and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, Prozac Nation's birth seemed destined for great heights. Fast-forward to present day and while Prozac Nation may not have gotten the chance to rack up some box office clout, it

is definitely a movie worth watching. The story itself is not an easy sell-but then again this is some serious subject matter- yet the solid performances and a tight script makes Prozac Nation's three-year journey well worth the wait. - Crystal Clark



### August 2

Alexander: Director's Cut  
After Image  
Cosby Show: Season 1

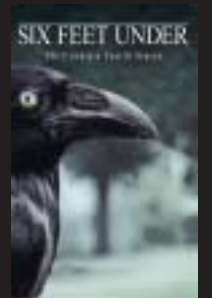
### August 9

Because of Winn-Dixie  
The Muppet Show: Season 1



### August 16

The Ballad of Jack & Rose  
The Office: Season 1  
The Simpsons: Season 6  
The Wedding Date  
Sin City  
My Left Foot: Special Edition



### August 23

Alf: Season 2  
Boy Meets World: Season 3  
Six Feet Under: Season 4  
A Lot Like Love

### August 30

Curb Your Enthusiasm: Season 4



# MUSICIANS WANTED

Electro-pop band, Northern Mars, seeks additional keyboard player and / or programmer. Northern Mars has been likened to Depeche Mode and Berlin by the music press. To hear audio samples of their debut CD, please visit [www.northernmars.com](http://www.northernmars.com). Pete 754-264-2674. 18-35 YOA please.

Metal/hardcore drummer needed ASAP! Madsic has shows lined up, management, a new CD and DVD release in the works, and our drummer has left us! We are auditioning drummers with the gear and the hunger to make it. Must be "double bass proficient". Band is based in Fort Lauderdale. Influences - Pantera, Soulfly, Mudvayne, Korn, Hatebreed, Chimaira, Sepultura, Godforbid, Fear Factory. Need to know your instrument, no drugs, need reliable transportation. If interested (SERIOUS INQUIRIES ONLY PLEASE) contact Evil at [evilonek@hotmail.com](mailto:evilonek@hotmail.com) or 954-630-9842. Feel free to check us out at [www.madsic.com](http://www.madsic.com).

Heavy original band needs drummer. Experienced player who is able to record, play live and commit enough time to be tight please reply. Call Dennis 954-592-2544 or Chad 561-305-3485

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