ANATOMY OF A MUSIC NERD

- General unkempt appearance
- Horn rims
- Slight odor
- Vintage tee for obscure band with mostly cult following
- iPod/cassette player fed into one ear for perpetual music listening
- Pinstripe blazer - two sizes too small
- Jeans worn in by weeks of consecutive usage
- Pant legs rolled up just because.
- Chuck Taylors - duh.
You know in movies, how characters have that perpetual sound track that fits so perfectly into their world? That’s my life. I walk around campus with my head in the clouds, not really perceiving the things around me, rather listening attentively to my background music.

You’ve seen us, I’m sure; we’re the kids who walk around campus with their iPod’s in walking around with out a care in the world. Strange as it sounds, this stream of music dictates my walk, my attitude and my general demeanor. I wish that the people around me could hear the music that is in my head; I would be much less of a mystery. Music has been and will always be an essential part of my life; I can no longer function without it. I know that true music junkies know exactly what I am talking about, and perhaps you’ll give it a try as well.

Hence, Listen, a magazine that’s predominantly music related. This issue is our first, with a new staff, and will be our last issue as Listen, rather we will be changing our name and goal, and we will become more of a general arts magazine. This issue represents not only Emory students but students from all over. So enjoy, send in comments, concerns, articles, and art.

— By Editor-in-Chief Maanasa Reddy

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BY VALERIE GAIMON

I’ve often been told, “College was the best time of my life.” The transition to responsibility and self-sufficiency — while still supported by parents — is probably very liberating and exciting when undergrads have sufficient free time to explore the world.

But this is not the case for students at Georgia Tech.

Luckily, I had friends at Emory and friends who were getting me into music. Any music. They all shoved their favorites at me, from Nickelback to The Ramones to The Apples In Stereo. I was unhappy, and it was decided I needed a major musical education to boost my spirits. I entered college with probably fifteen oldies and show tunes CDs. And while the Beatles are still my favorite band, exposure to the rest of what was out there was exactly what I needed. Everyone burned music for me and sent songs through instant messenger because with the enormous amount of work Tech students are faced with, studying with good background music is a key element of retaining sanity.

By sophomore year, Belle and Sebastian’s “Get Me Away From Here, I’m Dying” had become my theme song. Every night before bed I listened to Liz Phair’s “Perfect World,” and when I went for a run each night, The New Pornographers, Beck and Better Than Ezra ran with me. When my first boyfriend broke up with me, I pathetically listened to Letters To Cleo’s “I Want You to Want Me” for hours until I was empowered to disagree and yell at the CD. I drove around town with Beulah’s beautiful Yoko for months. When my Tech friends and I took a rare night off and left the city to stare at the stars, we sang along with Weezer and Jack Johnson on the way. Elliott Smith serenaded me through breakfast, Sigur Rós calmed me through yoga, and my friends The Softies, Mazzy Star and Norah Jones nurtured me when I was sick. I obsessively added and deleted songs from my playlist, and my CD collection slowly exploded. Music was more than a hobby, more than a concert on the weekend or background to my Statics homework. Music was my foreground, my foundation. Pedro the Lion and the Eels consoled me with the idea that others were unhappy, and Katrina and the Waves reminded me some people are “Walkin’ on Sunshine.”

I decided to be one of the latter, and I left Belle and Sebastian’s theme behind and transferred to Emory. It may sound cliché, but for three years, music saved my life.

For that I offer a humble thanks. I hope working on this magazine for the past two years has in some way given back to all the artists who reached out to me.

—Valerie Gaimon is the former Editor of Listen
Little Miss Can’t Be Wrong

BY MATT MCGILL

Ever been on one of those painful family roadtrips? “Little Miss Sunshine” is a heartbreakingly funny film about a dysfunctional family on a roadtrip from Albuquerque, New Mexico to the Little Miss Sunshine Beauty Pageant in Redondo Beach, California.

A quirky cast of Olive Hoover, a little girl with aspirations of being a beauty queen, along with her oddball family members such as her heroin addict grandpa, her suicidal-homosexual uncle Steve, her Nietzsche-obsessed brother Dwayne, her failed-motivational-speaker father, and her somewhat-mentally-unstable mother, trek from their home in New Mexico to Redondo Beach, California in the family’s ancient Volkswagen bus.

The Hoovers are in fact dysfunctional, but in the most real way I’ve seen in film. The way the characters approach and handle certain situations — such as the hilarious, all-too-familiar family dinner — is reminiscent of many of our own family gatherings. These events allow the audience to re-live some of those awkward and emotional moments that we’ve all experienced at one time or another.

Not only that, but the awkward situational comedy provides plenty of comedic relief after a tough scene, such as how the family handles an unexpected death.

This movie is already setting new standards for the “low-budget indie film” genre, raising the bar for acting and screenwriting. The film has won the Best Feature - World Cinema Audience Award at the 2006 Sydney Film Festival. It is rare to see a movie so touching and well made anymore.

I insist that you drop your multivariable calculus book, and get to a theater — pronto. Hell, I’ll even drive you there, and, no worries, I don’t drive VW bus.
Originally of San Francisco’s Alive Records and currently distributed by Saddle Creek; over the past four years, the only home that Adam Stephens and Tyson Vogel, the creative minds behind Two Gallants, have known has been the road.

Since their beginnings as Two Gallants in 2002, the duo have toured constantly, rarely stopping for more than a few weeks at a time to record and recuperate; however, during those brief spurts of R&R they have released some truly brilliant Americana. Relying on a base of delta blues coupled with punk chord progressions, the duo incorporates elements of country, rock and roll, folk (lots of this), and virtually every other form or genre of music that involves a man and his guitar. It’s difficult to classify Stephens’ and Vogel’s musical style, and frankly, doing so would insult the eclectic nature of their music.

The intricacies of music are, frankly, beyond me. I know what I like and what sounds good to me, and I can certainly tell a good song from a bad one, but beyond being able to tell the difference between shit music and quality sounds, I’m pretty ignorant. Lyrics are what I listen for, and that is, perhaps, why Two Gallants appeal to me so much.

It’s the way that they weave words and songs together that make them such a fine band. The music they make and the words they sing out intertwine perfectly — their songs are more than just stories put to tune, they are portraits of Americana painted with sound. With vocals that span from screams of passion to melodious yet raspy verse, Stephens and Vogel capture the ears of their audience. The lyrical content is consistently mournful, though at the same time, it offers hope — a common theme in their songs is the victory for the underdog — an aspect to their music that could perhaps endear them to the general public given enough time and exposure.

As far as I am concerned, Two Gallants have the potential to become the next Elvis Presley, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, or Bruce Springsteen; musicians that despite their pop status still manage to stay true to their roots — the soil.
Yesterday, I experienced one small mishap after another, and since I was alone for most of the day, these things led me to constantly re-evaluate myself. I won't get bogged down in the pointless details of how miserable each event was, but, trust me, it sucked.

Thank God for Tilly and the Wall. As I pulled up to the Bottleneck, feeling excruciatingly self-conscious, fortune finally noticed me. Right as I walked in the club, I see Pat, a friend and a promoter with “connections.” He catches me right before I pay the cover, and asks the door guy to let me in on the guest list. The relief of something going right was easily worth more than the ten dollars. Turns out his sister’s band, Boo Hiss, was opening for Now It’s Overhead and Tilly. Pat and I hung out a bit, played half a game of pool, and sweated like we’d just gone for a refreshing dip in the Earth’s molten core.

He left after his sister’s band finished, and I awaited Now It’s Overhead. They were about what I expected. I mean, they were great mostly because of the lead guy’s spirit, energy, and that mystical undefinable characteristic of “stage presence.” They played their songs as they sounded, and the rest of the band, aside from the lead vocalist, was just the background. They proved entertaining, interesting, even great— but not amazing.

Then Tilly started to set up. There were glittery palm-tree streamers, strings of flowers wrapped around the mic-stands, balloons passed out and filled, and the smile on my face widened in a “wait a second, what’s all this now?” sort of way.

I had only heard maybe a song or two from Tilly before, and only once, and over a year ago. I remember not being impressed, but I was less open back then. Oh yeah, it was also a song clip on a computer. I have often underestimated bands based upon computer-speaker song clips. I kept hearing how good they were from people whose opinions I trusted, and from people who had seen them live, and everyone, kept mentioning how cool it was that they have a tap-dancer on stage as percussion.
Basically, though, I had no idea what to expect from their show.

The show kick-started with an understood “hurrah!” Balloons were flying, people were jumping; the entire band was singing the songs with smiles on their faces. It was so invigorating that, as cautious to be happy as I was last night, I could not help myself. They loved being there, they loved their songs, and they especially loved playing them for everyone to such a warm reception. I used the money I saved at the door to purchase both albums.

They were funny between songs, and every one of them was as charming and as nice as your grandmother before she went senile. When I got home and fired up the internet, I discovered that their lyrics are full of substance, and that they have a well balanced contrast of joy and hope to melancholy. Their songs prove to be imaginative yet simple, with a lot to say, seemingly like the band itself.

They closed their encore with “Nights of the Living Dead,” but the highlight might have been when they were stalling, waiting for an amp to be fixed, and they played “Patience, Babe,” a nearly a cappella track, featuring their chorus of flowing voices. I believe the keyboardist was the only accompaniment, using a trash-can lid to toss a handful of either rocks or coins into the air — the delay between each of them smacking the thin metal slightly different upon each catch. The perfect accompaniment: the subtle insert of something both planned and irregular at the same time, providing a mixture of rhythm and spontaneity. It’s strange to look back on it while realizing how inspired I was and how inspired I continue to be, I guess. Live music, when used correctly, transfers more energy than anything else. To me, it is love; it keeps expanding, and we keep falling into it.

Our Teacher is on Crack

BY MAX FISHER

Half Nelson tells the story of a young teacher named Dan Dunne (Ryan Gosling) who simply can’t get a hold of his life and aspirations. His struggles are apparent as he tries to teach advanced historical philosophy to his dumbfounded inner city junior high class. He starts of the film as a coke addict but quickly turns into a base head as everything in his life seems to go wrong. The only connection he can make is with one of his students, Drey (Shareeka Epps), who finds him smoking crack in the girl’s locker room.

It’s frustrating to watch Dunne try to do so much good when really he can get nowhere in life. He coaches a basketball team that always loses, he teaches college material to his students, he can’t make things work between old or new relationships and he can’t shake his dependence on crack.

Dunne struggles to hold on to the only real relationship he has, which is with Drey. Drey’s only other paternal figure is that of the drug dealing Frank (Anthony Mackie). Frank and Dunne find themselves competing over Drey, both seemingly wanting to hold on to her innocence. Half Nelson does an excellent job at making the audience question who’s a good guy and who’s a bad guy, but in the end, it’s nearly impossible to tell.

The film isn’t simply about this one man’s struggle though. The whole story parallels the civil rights movement as students from Dunne’s class present topics to the audience. Racial tensions are present but never really brought to the forefront like in Crash. Half Nelson makes the audience decide where the problems actually lie.

Gosling gives an excellent performance as a man who can’t seem to do anything right though his intentions are admirable. Mackie proves himself to be a powerful player and will hopefully emerge in more roles. The film’s bleak mood and subtle tensions lead to a very thought provoking experience that is well worth your time.
My hometown in Kansas is centered by U.S. highway 59, two lanes each way, with a speed limit of forty-five. I am surrounded by fields and nothing else. I live on a virtual island.

Atlanta, however, is a different story. The city is centered by the intersection of a few major interstate highways, skyscrapers and stadiums. You are surrounded by so much suburbia that it is difficult to tell where your city ends. However, having driven many times between the Midwest and Southeast, I know there is something about our scenery which not only relates us, but connects us: bad weather.

Yes, the faithful anchor of small talk across the world gives us something in common, especially during the spring. I’ve had it rain on me the entire way from Kansas to Georgia, so it comes as no surprise to me that the Midwest and Southeast happen to lead the U.S. in thunderstorms. Since we’re both familiar with this sort of tornado weather, I ask you this question: As lightning strikes, thunder booms, the lights flicker and the power shuts off, what do you listen to on your iPod?

At first this notion is sad- because we become more aware that the backlight of our mp3 players has become the modern-day candle (real candles aren’t even allowed in dorms now anyway), and all the good books we might have been reading by candle-light mostly just gather dust. But I suggest we make the most of our disgustingly fast-paced, entertainment-driven modern world (which we all secretly love) and indulge in some music that best accompanies those destructive storms we know so well.
The only band you will need is actually a band which is not from the Midwest or Southeast, and is ironically named after an arid region: Desert City Soundtrack. They are yet another band to come from the Greater Northwestern region of our country; a region which has continued to churn out one quality band after another for over fifteen years now. Their first album, Contents of Distraction, was released in March of 2003. Their follow up, Funeral Car, came quickly that September. And then their third and most recent album, Perfect Addiction came in the fall of 2005. Various split EP’s and split seven inches have also been released during their three year existence.

For all three years, they have continued their heavy and haunting sound with the lightweight arrangement of only a guitarist/vocalist, a pianist/vocalist, and a drummer.

I will not attempt to explain their sound much more than this, because that has already been done in many well-written reviews of these previously mentioned releases. (You can read these great reviews at deepelm.com).

Instead, I am going to attempt to explain why the wavering intensities of their songs mesh perfectly with a thunderstorm. As the piano frantically chases the rolling drums, the screams entwine with the distinct and well-defined pounding of the song’s beat, and it creates an intense climactic explosion, not unlike that of thunder and lightning. And like the storm itself, these moments rise and fall, waver, come and go.

The volume of the vocalists’ voice follows a similar pattern, as if creating imaginary distances between you and what you are listening to. Some songs play quieter, more like steady rain, and instead of screaming, they contain a lifeless, down-trodden voice which has already seen too much rain itself.

But they are not the perfect “thunderstorm band” simply because they mimic one. In poetry, for instance, one is taught (or should be) that form mirrors, and is an extension of, content. So, if music is poetry — and when Desert City Soundtrack is concerned, it is — the song shouldn’t only look like a thunderstorm, it should feel like one. It should be listened to during that thunderstorm for the same reason Marvin Gaye has been listened to in dimly lit bedrooms. It feels right. It matches the mood, strengthens it, and makes that moment stand out as an experience instead of just another hour spent killing time.

This is exactly how I fell in love with this band in the first place. One night I was driving home slowly into a storm, squinting to stay within the yellow lines. I don’t know whether it was rain or hail, but it was loud, and I couldn’t really see much besides it and the darkness. Every ten or fifteen seconds that would change, as lightning split the sky, reaching from the horizon up through the highest clouds. But it was only a tease of vision, a frightening distraction. Thunder followed too closely for comfort. Meanwhile, Desert City Soundtrack playing through the speakers, I turned up the volume bit by bit. I listened to each song competing with storm. The assault of hail and sheets of rain left no room for silence, as it tested the endurance of my windshield. The music matched it pound for pound. In each song winds swirled. In each song I was left dark, wet, and heavy. My blood felt hot. My heart raced. I was in that storm, and I couldn’t have been closer. My eyes were wide and I couldn’t help but smile.

— Chris Beard is an undergraduate at Kansas University
The Rebel Alliance

How three students single-handedly revived Emory’s music scene.

BY ANDREW SWERLICK

On a sunny Wednesday afternoon last spring, the stone circle in front of the DUC was covered with a tangled mess of wires, speakers and musical instruments. A bright extension cord stretched across the walkway leading back into the building, drawing megawatts after megawatt of power. Three bands jammed during the course of the afternoon, drawing the attention of passersby, many of whom took the time to lie down on the grass and listen.

The moment marked a major transition for the music community on Emory’s campus. It was the first highly visible event of the newly formed Emory Musician’s Alliance. What had once been a fractured collection of isolated musicians was poised to become a cohesive community where artists could come together, form bands, trade advice and make connections. As sudden as the transition seemed to outsiders, it did not happen overnight. However, the speed of the change was still remarkable considering what the music community on campus looked like no more than a year or two ago.

 “[Prior to the EMA] there was no community at all” says David Ogles, college senior from Carrollton, GA and one of the founding members of EMA. “Most musicians I met were at random parties . . . All the musicians I talked to were like ‘You’re the first musician I’ve met so far.’” Apparently the history of rock bands in Emory isn’t particularly auspicious. As far back in the early ’90s when EMA’s faculty advisor, Susan Tamasi of the Linguistics Department, attended Emory, campus support for the college rock scene was sparse.

The winds of change began to roll through campus spring semester of 2005. A sophomore drummer named Andrew Foster began to put together a group enigmatically named Cars With Hood Ornaments. It’s goal? To bring Emory back to life, one concert at a time. However, despite a great deal of effort by Foster, the group never got much farther than the one concert. After a stunning spring show that drew nearly 500 people the group foundered.

Ogles and David Feldman, an EMA co-founder, attribute Cars with Hood Ornaments’ failure to Foster inability to garner support from the other members of the club. “Andrew did a lot of the work himself, so a lot of the other people in the club never took ownership of it,” Ogles said, adding “It
was kind of like him doing things for other people not seeing any benefit of it and them just kind of taking advantage of him. There was a huge freeloader problem.” Feldman adds, “He [Foster] had a lot of good ideas but I mean he started a fraternity as you know, he started Kappa Sigma so, he had a lot on his plate.” Towards the end of the spring of 2006 David Feldmen approached Foster, curious about the status of Cars With Hood Ornaments. According to Feldman, Foster replied “I think its defunct, nothing’s really going on.”

It could of ended there, but luckily for the Emory music scene, it didn’t.

David Feldman was disappointed in the failure of Cars With Hood Ornaments. His own band, The Tyrant Revealed had excitedly joined up at the very start. Determined not to let things come to an end, David began working to put together another student band concert. As he considered the logistics of another show a thought occurred to him. As he says, “I was thinking if we host an event with musicians, we’ll need help. We’ll need people producing it, we’ll need people moving equipment, we’ll need people advertising it. So I said why not turn this into something bigger and try to start up Cars With Hood Ornaments again but with a different perspective on it.”

He arranged a meeting at the Panera in Emory village with his good friend and WMRE’s General Manager, David Ogles. There he talked with Ogles about the notion of creating a real Emory music community, a group interested in more than just putting together one concert at a time, but instead interested in fostering relationships between musicians. “I was kind of skeptical at first,” says Ogles. “But after while he convinced me. It was a really good idea.”

Then the two Davids began recruiting other friends and musicians to make it happen. Early on they pulled in both David’s roommate Ray Hu, and Sean Hallerman, a mutual friend who Ogles and Feldman knew through WMRE and SPC respectively.

Once they had recruited about ten members, the newly formed EMA launched into action, putting on two shows in the course of a couple weeks, the first held in the DUC down under, and the second the aforementioned Wonderful Wednesday show. Everyone in the EMA considered the shows a major success. On the Wednesday show Feldman says, “It was so cool cause there were tours walking by and I’m sure everybody who was on campus visiting that day, got a really good image of our group.” These two events, along with a front page article in the Emory Wheel helped the EMA increase its size by over 500% before then end of last semester.

The EMA’s founders didn’t let summer break sap any of their momentum. Instead of resting easy they began putting in the grunt work required to ensure the club’s future success. “This summer we basically just worked on the administrative aspect of it [the EMA],” says Ogles. “We really want to become permanent, get a permanent charter.”

Not that they’re worried about it. The club is only one meeting away from getting a temporary charter. After that Ogles believes that acquiring a permanent charter will be no problem. “We’re pretty much there in all but name. We’re on our way.”

In general the founders of the EMA are not concerned with the juggernaut of Emory bureaucracy. Why? Because they’ve got the connections to easily circumvent it. Both Feldman and Hallerman serve on the SPC, along fellow EMA member and SPC president Greg Cohen. The group’s strong ties with Emory’s radio station, WMRE, gives them easy access to most of the equipment they need. Even many of their purely social connections are in their favor; Feldman is in ATO, the same fraternity as now SGA president Ryan Paddock.

However, there has been one issue that even these connections have so far not been able to overcome; a lack of practice space. Despite constant discussions with the campus architect, the EMA has yet to make a breakthrough. As Feldman says, “I kind of feel like the campus has a plan with what they want to do with every building and piece of space. So its really hard to convince them of anything.” But instead of letting this stop them, the EMA is doing their best to work around the problem. “We’re trying to overcome the practice space issue] by just having acoustic shows for bands that can’t practice with a full band setting,” says Feldman.

Despite the issues with practice space, the administrative leg-work that Feldman and his crew put in over the summer has really paid off. After a successful recruitment drive at the Student Activities fair, the count of subscribers on the EMA LearnLink conference skyrocketed to nearly 200 people. “It was that day that I realized we had created a monster,” says Feldman jokingly. With such a large base of interested people, the EMA exec board is now looking to start distributing the workload and responsibility. “We’re only going to do as much as the club will support,” says Ogles. In this way they hope to avoid the freeloader problem that contributed to the downfall of Cars With Hood Ornaments.

Not that this means they aren’t planning big. Some of the
ideas that have been thrown around are a song writing competition, with judges including Emory music department and potentially Eddy from the venue Eddie’s Attic, a twenty-four hour music festival with anyone-can-join-in drum circles, an Emory band night at an Atlanta venue like the Masquerade and, of course, numerous on campus concerts.

Both Feldman and Ogles also want the make the EMA a resource for musicians looking to break into the industry. As Ogles says, “We’re going to try to bring professionals in the industry and people who run clubs and stuff and have them say ‘Well the bands that impress me do this’ like they have a press kit or they have a really slick demo, or maybe you don’t need a really slick demo for us ... kind of like teach people how to get started. Cause you know a lot of people do the guess and check method, which is okay but at the same time you’re going to waste a lot of time.”

But the biggest goal its founders have for the EMA is not related to practice space, or concerts, or high profile speakers. As Feldman says “[10 years from now] I want everybody to know what EMA is.” Ogles echos him, saying “When [College Council members] say we need a performer, EMA bands would be on the list with like Rathskellar and No Strings attached.”

Hallerman wants not just for the EMA to be visible on campus, but for individual performers and bands to get much deserved recognition as well. “If you said, Resident Manifesto or Tyrant Revealed on the Emory campus, I don’t know how many would know [who they were]. I mean a fair amount would, but not the majority, I think. And I would like the majority of campus to be aware of the music that goes on at Emory’s campus”

As inauspicious as this goal sounds, it may be the EMA’s most formidable. Emory is well known for a culture of apathy on its campus. But even the most casually indifferent Emory student will have trouble avoiding getting swept up in the toe-tapping beat that Feldman and his crew march to. With any luck, when the EMA begins to play, Emory will want to be in that number.

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La Musique du Club en ATL

BY MAX FISHER

Paris is usually associated with great food and fine art, but the cosmopolitan city is rarely recognized for its impeccable underground club scene. For one night, Atlanta imported this scene when DJ Feadz and his protégé, Uffie, performed at the Drunken Unicorn.

Feadz is a predominate act in the Paris underground for the hot electronic and hip-hop label Ed Banger Records. Ed Banger started out as a management company for popular French electronic acts like Daft Punk, but later evolved into the leader of the underground club scene.

Uffie is a harder act to define. If M.I.A. and Peaches had a daughter, this is the music she would play. She hails from Miami and somehow ended up as a rapper in Paris. She looks and sounds like she’s fifteen, but has the bite and subject matter of a very experienced woman, if you catch my drift. She likes to keep it dirty but swears that she’s doing it for the ladies. Her rhymes may seem whack at first, but her persona, with help from Feadz, makes her very fun to listen and dance to.

The show started with some local DJs spinning to a small and uninterested crowd. Eventually more people stumbled in just in time for Feadz and Uffie to perform. Uffie is a fairly new artist with only a five songs repertoire, so she only performed those five songs. It was a fun albeit short performance.

For a short white chick, she was full of energy and commanded the crowd well. She proved that she was ‘here to pump up the feminine’ by finishing her act by inviting all the ladies in the club to dance on stage. Honestly, Uffie wouldn’t be much without Feadz electronic beats. On the other hand, however, Feadz would just be another Diplo if it weren’t for Uffie. Uffie is definitely a very ambitious force to be reckoned with. More tracks should be released soon probing that this duo is definitely worth keeping an eye on.
Learning can be effortless or painful, based on the source. You may learn volumes from a beloved professor or very little from a despised one, even if that professor is sovereign of an otherwise fascinating subject. The same principle applies to other people in your life. Love them or hate them, they still might have something important to teach you. That was one of the many things I learned my freshman year at Emory. My first year at Emory was accompanied with the roommate from hell. Maybe that is a bit harsh, but he certainly was the most irritating person I’ve ever had to live with.

Matt and I were polar opposite personalities. I went to sleep early, while he went to bed late. I was a social extravert, while he was a shy introvert. I was a jock, while he was a sedentary musician. One of the only things we shared was a passion for music. Unfortunately, however, we didn’t tend to share a passion for the same kinds of music. Matt was a pretentious member of the alternative rock vanguard. On the other hand, I was a devout patron of a wide range of popular music.

When the roommate tension hit critical mass the ensuing hostility manifested itself in a very peculiar manner. It came in the form of a battle of the bands. With the cruelest intentions I would blast Dave Matthews, with the desired effect of Matt’s howling and demanding that I turn off the “vulgar noise”. Then it was Matt’s turn. He would blast the Pixies and I would grimace and smother myself with a pillow to drown the sound. Eventually Matt invested in new speakers more powerful than my own. Consequently, for several months the Pixies ruled supreme. During that period he designed musical playlists to demoralize my every aesthetic preference. He would lean back, smile at my misery.

Thankfully Matt’s sadistic game backfired on him. Somewhere along the way, I had a musical epiphany. The music wasn’t bad. It was my roommate that was bad. The music was actually pretty magnificent. My eyes and ears were open. While I feigned horror at the musings of Matt the maniacal DJ, I was really leaching off Matt’s literacy in the world of alternative rock. I secretly added The Pixies, The Velvet Underground, Interpol, Lou Reed, The Smiths, The Clash and many more to my own library. In the process it wasn’t just my library that benefited, but also my ear for music. I realized for the first time that just because you do not hear the majesty of a track that does not mean you couldn’t grow to appreciate its value with a little effort.

Over the next four years I began voraciously exploring the genres in which I was poorly versed. In spite of how useful and enjoyable dialoguing with other students was in expanding my musical consciousness, as with everything else in our generation, convenience and expedience took my pursuit of musical enlightenment online. I discovered NPR’s All Songs Considered, one of the best online catalogues of music out there, with sparse but interesting commentary to educate the listener. Then came iTunes networks and ourTunes software, which made it even easier to search, listen and download music from every electronically savvy person on campus. My hard drive overflowed with MP3’s and my mind swam in a sea of sound with ever-changing currents. It was auditory bliss.

There isn’t much room for debate; by conventional standards Matt was not a good roommate. Yet where would I be today if it weren’t for him? I wouldn’t choose to live with a character like Matt again, but I’m grateful to have had the experience. So here are some parting words of wisdom for all the freshmen out there: stay open minded. Be prepared to listen to something old and hear something new. Above all else, invest in good speakers.
The film is 100% tacky — from the script to the acting to the filming to the editing. If you’ve ever seen the green, distorted vantage of “snake vision” before you’ll know precisely what I’m talking about. Adding to it all, the emotional connections are so utterly vacant as to be humorous; nobody really cares that other people are being killed.

Ultimately, the cynical mind will delight in the number of death scenes at which to laugh; this is a B-movie for the 21st Century.

Bottom line: if you’re looking for some good fun with a twist of cynicism, watch this movie; do not expect to be dazzled because it belongs on a double feature. If you’ve got the bootleg copy from Asia, fast forward once you are exhausted by all the fanciful ways snakes “apparently” can kill until you get to the final showdown in the cockpit.
THE DIAL IS DEAD

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Don’t Call it The Idiot Box

BY LISA GOULD

No one ever said television had to be real. It’s entertaining, it’s convenient, it can even be educational, but at its best it is also fictional. For more than fifty years, television has given Americans an outlet to lose themselves in their favorite characters every week. Audiences laugh, cry, and learn with these people, all the while realizing they are simply relating to a well-conceived story. In fact, story telling has allowed human beings to communicate their thoughts, dreams and fears for thousands of years. Although the characters and events are fictional, the messages are genuine. Times do certainly change, and unfortunately, we rarely gather around the fire to share our favorite stories anymore. However, it is perfectly acceptable to admit that television is our main source of entertainment. With that being said, why are we spending such a large portion of our TV time watching “real” people engage in meaningless activities?

When a writer sits down to write any story, whether it be a novel, a play, a movie or an episode of a television show, they are writing in order to convey a message. They put thought into the characters and they create intriguing plot points for their stories. Is it really fair that they must compete for ratings with shallow programs where multiple of women compete for one bachelor’s attention or where an entire house of people spread rumors about each other for sport? Why are Americans more entertained by mediocre “reality” than by brilliant fiction?

Some might argue that most Americans do not have access to the most brilliant television around: HBO. While HBO has continually produced true art in the form of television, the other networks are beginning to legitimately compete. In the last couple of years ABC has improved exponentially with the dawn of “Desperate Housewives,” “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Lost” just to name a few, and even Fox has some gems other than the ridiculously infamous “American Idol” such as “24” and “House.” Unfortunately, Fox had to say goodbye to a superbly written sitcom about a wonderfully dysfunctional family when they canceled “Arrested Development.” “Arrested Development,” offered the appeal of a family show (which we essentially lost in the early 90s) combined with a sense of humor and edge for the new millennium. Meanwhile, shows such as “Being Bobby Brown” and “Supernanny” were thriving.

At this point, we have a choice. We can either keep watching meaningless footage of “real” people and allow Lucille Ball and Jackie Gleason to continue rolling over in their graves or we can embrace our favorite form of entertainment, and watch the shows with substance.
Thread Zeppelin is a cleverly named second-hand clothing store in East Atlanta. It’s also a microcosm of a disturbing trend in American fashion – the faster-than-ever closing retro gap.

The last time I walked in this fairly reasonably priced shop 6 months ago, I was wearing a ringer T-shirt and noticed a wealth of bell-bottom pants, afro-wigs, and polyester bowling shirts. A few days ago, nothing but flannel and button-downs. “What’s the deal?” I ask confusedly. The clerk/owner proudly proclaims that “grunge is in,” adding that flannel shirts are her hottest selling items.

Now don’t get me wrong, flannel kicks ass. But I really wish it could have stayed just flannel, instead of being subjected to popular fashion twice in 15 years. First the dude from Soul Asylum, now the guy from Clap Your Hands Say Yeah (comparison intentional)? No material really deserves the fate, and especially not one as near and dear to my heart as good ol’, homemade, wholesome flannel. Just a few days ago, I could imagine myself wrapped up in a huge blanket and taking a cool autumn nap in the falling leaves. Now, all I can picture is being smothered in checkered irony by bitter, raging hipsters. What happened?

Social scientists have not given much attention to this problem, but a none-too-careful recap of my completely anecdotal evidence shows that the retro cycle is out of wack. When the 60s came back in style back in the early 2000s, popular theories at the time stated that these things follow a 40 year cycle, kind of like volcanoes and patriotism. But recent data shows that the retro cycle is not following a linear scale, rather it is accelerating at an exponential rate. The 60s were in 5 years ago. The 70s were in 3 years ago. The 80s have been in for longer than a year.

But the early 90s? We don’t even get to spend two years on the 80s? Does this mean in six months we’ll re-visit the nu-metal look? If the trend continues, we’ll be revisiting style from 3 months ago. And what happens when that gets old and becomes stale? Is it possible to retro the future? What happens when we’ve run out of things to be ironic about? Will we just mock everything that could possibly be? Is this VH1’s fault somehow and if so can we please punch that fucker Hal Sparks in the mouth (Sweet Jesus! Hal, you’re not funny. Please stop.)?

I see only two solutions. Our generation could actually create its own unique style. But that’s a lot of hard work, and recent experience suggests it would just be subjected to ridicule by future twenty-somethings in tight pants. What’s the point of prolonging the inevitable collapse of the fashion industry?

The second and more likely option is for us to non-ironically embrace the uncool trends of the past. Waist-high jeans? On second thought, they really accentuated those gigantic 80s hips! Hypercolor t-shirts? Seriously, who really wants their clothes to always remain the same color? The key to getting these new fads off the ground is the non-ironic embrace. Of course, Urban Outfitters will come out with hypercolor T-shirts that manage to create new slogans every time you touch them – Beck will sport one in his new lo-fi music video and a 1-month long “remember how ridiculous people were back then?” trend will be born.

But why even play that game? Its going to get really expensive to buy new clothes each week after nu-metal goes back out of style, so you may as well just start always looking stupid now and make yourself believe that you are in style rather than try to keep up. The retro gap is rapidly closing, secure a unique standing as that weird dude in the powdered wig before the Gap decides its a good idea to roll out its “Founding Fathers” line in time for Christmas ‘08.

— David Ogles is the General Manager of WMRE
Some may not like Conor Oberst’s voice. He may have some songs from five or ten years ago which are too melodramatic and whiny for most people’s tastes. And, yeah, some songs off of his album *Fevers and Mirrors* could easily be classified as “that emo crap” that so many rock critics are quick to write off and deride.

However, I maintain that upon giving the right songs a chance, and listening to the lyrics, anyone would at least feel obligated to admit that Bright Eyes has some talent, and is a quality musician. Even the snobbiest of music listeners — even if they don’t necessarily like it themselves or want to listen to it — wouldn’t put you down for listening to Bright Eyes if they heard the right mix of songs. I have tried to compile this list. While “Trees Get Wheeled Away,” “Lover I Don’t Have To Love,” and “Amy In the White Coat,” all deserve honorable mentions, I believe the perfect 80-minute CD which serves this exact function is the following:

Good luck converting that Bright Eyes hater nearest you.

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**Listen’s Bright Eyes Anonymous**

1. “Well Whiskey” – *Lua*
2. “Train Underwater” – *I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning*
3. “One Foot In Front Of The Other” – *Saddle Creek 50*
4. “Spent On Rainy Days” – *Home IV: Post-Parlo Records Split Series*
5. “Loose Leaves” – *There Is No Beginning To The Story EP*
7. “Poison Oak” – *I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning*
8. “The Calendar Hung It self…” – *Fevers and Mirrors*
9. “Make War” – *Lifted*
10. “When The President Talks To God (live)” – *Motion Sickness*
11. “Sunrise, Sunset” – *Fevers and Mirrors*
12. “Napoleon’s Hat” – *La gnaipe: A Saddle Creek Benefit For Hurricane Katrina*
13. “First Day of My Life” – *I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning*
14. “Road To Joy” – *I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning*
SEBASTIEN SCHULLER — HAPPINESS

Swooping electronic melodies and an interesting voice reminiscent of Thom Yorke characterize the music of Sebastien Schuller, and Happiness his first release. Starting and finishing with two very lush instrumentals, and filling the rest in with gems such as “Tears Coming Home,” the album flows from start to finish. Mr. Schuller’s songs are honest, melodic, and peaceful. While the album title might be somewhat ironic, its smooth melodies and sometimes-upbeat tempos are relaxing and uplifting. Expect to see this in stores September 26. — By Matt McGill

TV ON THE RADIO — RETURN TO COOKIE MOUNTAIN

Ok, so let’s be honest. You’ve probably had this record for a while. When did this record leak, like in January or something? Well, there’s a reason this album leaked: it’s the first classic record released this year. That’s a bold statement, I know, but Return to Cookie Mountain is a bold record. The band unblinkingly stares the anxieties and alienation of contemporary society in the face, and the end result is a record that is as relevant as it is progressive. Sonically, the album falls somewhere between Isn’t Anything and Psychocandy. — By David Marek

M. WARD — POST-WAR

M. Ward’s new album, Post War, is about the three questions: “What do you do with the pieces of a broken heart? How does a man like me remain in the light? And if life is really as short as they say then why are the nights so long?” Ward reminds us why we ask them. He does so with his characteristic breathy vocals, simple lyrics, powerful repetitive phrases, and under your skin melodies. But ultimately what makes Post War such a gripping album is Ward’s ability to paint compelling characters. — By Andrew Swerlick

RX BANDITS - …AND THE BATTLE BEGUN

Three years after their phenomenal album The Resignation, Rx Bandits have dropped their latest disc, ...And the Battle Begun. Moving further away from their skacore roots, their newest effort is a progressive rock romp that still maintains noticeable influence from bands like The Police. While combining frequent time signature changes, varied melodies and some wicked instrumental solos, ...And the Battle Begun doesn’t quite live up to its predecessor but manages to be a fantastic album that showcases Rx Bandits’ continual growth. — By Rueben Medina
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