Dear Readers,

I hope your fall semester has been better than mine. I apologize, that was quite a dour note to start off with! I hope it has been fantastically better than mine (isn’t that better?) It is hard to believe that my senior year has almost passed me by, hallmarked by yet another issue of the zine. Two more to go, and then I am out of here. Thus begins my countdown, my sad and despairing countdown, to when I will leave the zine and head out into the real world where there will be no fun graphics to design, no centerfolds to shoot, and not even any places for me to write dour letters from the editor. However, I regret nothing, especially not the afrin.

Despairingly yours,
Laura Ingram
Editor-in-Chief

p.s. write for the zine! email me at leingra@learnlink.emory.edu

There is something unique about seeing a band in which you have no idea what to expect. Old Time Relijun is that kind of band. Even though I had purchased one of their albums before seeing the band, I was still unsure of what kind of show I would be witnessing. Old Time Relijun’s musical style lies in some other dimension in which sound can collapse in on itself at any time. A bizarre mix of many musical styles including blues, no wave, folk, and punk together form a totally unique sound. While comparisons to Captain Beefheart are warranted, mayhem is to be expected.

So when November 15 rolled around and a journey was made to Lenny’s to see Old Time Relijun, I couldn’t help but wonder if this show was going to be great or end up causing your humble narrator vast torment at the hands of those he had convinced to go with him. Thankfully, Old Time Relijun pulled off an excellent show. With a manic pace that recalls the music of the Birthday Party or the Contortions, Old Time Relijun launched into their set. The band consisted of Arrington DeDionyso on vocals and guitar, a fellow on stand up bass, and of course Rives on drums.

Instead of just being an hour or so worth of noise, Old Time Relijun were able to create a very danceable sound that was hard not to enjoy. Needless to say, it was worth it to get out and take a risk on this band. I suggest you do the same and pick up one of their many albums on K records.
Far from the comforting honky tonk hardwood floors of my normal Texas venues, October found me deep in the mouth of the New York City club scene, trading my comforting world of burnt-out classic rockers and drunken cowboy singers for a world of hard rockers. But deep in the cramped Brooklyn club, the sweet sounds of a Swedish accent and the bombshell looks of a blond singer awakened me.

The band's name was The Sounds. Their sound seemed very similar to Blondie, only more modern and even more danceable, with the extra twist of being sung with the Swedish accent of the band's homeland. It is easy to hear the 80's style inspiration in their songs. But thankfully, the music they played was not just a flashback to the 80's. It has a very unique style and feel to it, making it totally different than any type of music you hear today. There are some techno beats to it, strong rock guitar and drums, the energy of a punk band, and all this with good poppy lyrics; the hooks alone will leave you singing long after the music has ended.

The stage energy of lead singer Maja Ivarsson, the lead singer, carries over into Living In America, their debut CD. Every track (and I say that confidently) is worthy of a good listen. Even after hearing all the songs only once apiece, I was immediately hooked. The songs “Seven Days a Week,” “Dance With Me, Hit Me!” and the title track “Living in America” are ridiculously catchy, and if you are like me, you will be singing along with them before they are even done playing. As if the twelve good music tracks were not enough, there are also music videos of three of the songs included with the CD. I cannot say enough good things about this band. I strongly recommend checking out The Sounds in all their Scandinavian glory.

A few “tropical drinks” and some Chinese food later, The B-52’s were born. Athens, Georgia’s premiere new wave band, The B-52’s formed in 1976 by recording jams at a friend’s house and have (mostly) stuck together ever since. The band’s most distinctive feature is their trademark vocals, supplied by campy frontman Fred Schneider and the pair of sirens, Kate Pierson and Cindy Wilson. Backed by Cindy’s brother Ricky on guitar and Keith Strickland on drums, the quintet self-released their first single, “Rock Lobster,” and hit the club circuit.

Soon signed by Warner Brothers, the band recorded their self-titled debut album in 1979, featuring a rerecorded “Rock Lobster,” which became an underground hit, as well as the atmospheric “Planet Claire.” One year later, they released Wild Planet, which spawned the hit “Private Idaho” and the Cindy Wilson showpiece “Give Me Back My Man.”

The B-52’s momentum soon sputtered, however, as David Byrne (of Talking Heads fame) produced, and sucked the life out of, their next EP, 1982’s Mesopotamia. To compensate, the band went overboard into electronic territory a year later with their next album, Whammy!. It added “Legal Tender” and “Song For A Future Generation” to the band’s repertoire, but they were still miles away from their early peak, and the worst was yet to come.

In late 1985, Ricky Wilson died of AIDS, and the band took it hard. After 1986’s lackluster Bouncing Off The Satellites, Strickland moved to guitar, but The B-52’s remained silent for nearly the rest of the decade. Surprisingly, they made a huge comeback in 1989 with Cosmic Thing; “Love Shack” devoured the charts, giving the band their first Top Ten hit, and “Roam,” “Channel Z,” and “Deadbeat Club” kept the album in the Top Ten as well.

In 1991, Pierson joined fellow Athenians R.E.M. to share vocals on their hit “Shiny Happy People.” However, The B-52’s fortune fell off the peak into another valley. Wilson took off, leaving just three 2’s for 1992’s Good Stuff, which wasn’t. They also contributed the theme song to the first Flintstones movie as The BC-52’s but then fell silent again for a few more years.

The 1998 greatest hits CD Time Capsule renewed interest in the band, and with Wilson back in tow, they recorded two new songs, “Debbie” and “Hallucinating Pluto,” for the disc. They’ve toured ever since, most recently releasing the anthology Nude On The Moon for their 25th anniversary. New B-52’s studio material, however, proves elusive. Wilson, Schneider, and Pierson have also hammered out solo careers.

Catch The B-52’s and other new wave bands every Saturday from 2-4 p.m. and every Monday from 8-10 p.m. on WMRE’s The Vault. (http://vaultradio.cjb.net)
All right. I said previously that I found rock and roll through Ween, and all that. Not to degrade Ween, but I found it again! (I think I should be a rock and roll bounty hunter) This time, I found it at a sparsely populated Variety Playhouse being filled out by the sounds of Guided By Voices.

Before I go further, I’m going to write quickly about what I hate about rock and roll these days. Most people are so damn afraid. Like Michael Moore said in Bowling for Columbine, our culture has become fearful. This attitude has seeped into America’s most blessed creation. I listen to the radio, I go to the shows, I buy the CDs, and what do I hear – I hear bands that don’t fuck off – I hear bands that have paid a producer way too much – I hear bands with an “image”.

And then there’s Guided by Voices. They’re old. They’re ugly. They’re way too drunk. They cover random Breeders’ tunes, they break guitar strings and amps and sit out the next song because they have to fix the problem themselves and the band doesn’t want to stop, they put out box-sets filled with crackly four-track recordings instead of re-recording the songs they’ve already captured. Despite these “setbacks”, there is still something so captivating about all of it.

It dawned on me, as they hit the stage again for their encore, that they’d rocked the hell out of a venue that was maybe a quarter full for about two hours, yet were back for more. Most other underground bands with similar name recognition and years in the scene would have been offended, or at least off-put, by seeing a mid-sized venue in a large city not even a fourth full. But it appeared that they genuinely did not give a shit – they kicked it old school like Gandhi! Amazing.

The show had all the wonderful clichés imaginable. Bob Pollard, the singer-songwriter and mind behind the group, was the definition of rock and roll. Through the entire show, he was never without his beer bottle and cigarette. He had all the poses, but somehow it wasn’t cheesy, even when he did the mic spin. You know, where you spin the mic, on the cord..... He made Mick Jagger look sad and geriatric. Truth be told, that was the most amazing aspect of it all for me – so many older rock and roll bands seem like they’re trying to hold on to some of their youth through the music. There was none of that here– Guided By Voices were doing what they loved, and playing for that reason alone–no bid for glory, no reason to fake it. For them, it seemed like there was nothing worth really holding on to other than the music.

All in all, it was so good that I waited alone outside after the show to shake the band’s various hands, but they took too long to appear and I got all nervous about being a corny fan – so instead I left a corny note on their van that said, and I quote, “Kickin’ rock and roll show! Peace.” (I write “Peace” at the end of things because I currently have long hair).

I have only this left to say: Guided by Voices – it’s rock o’clock, and with time travel this clock never has to stop!

Peace.
Nalini Abhiraman would be James Brown because she is short, packs a punch, and has black soul oozing from her confused Indian pores.

Sarah Murphy would be Tupac Shakur because she is a savvy social critic underrated in her time, and is a marvelous sight to behold when people get sketchy and she gets outraged.

Chris Rodriguez would be Shakira, because that would be the next best thing to being with Shakira.

Scott Goldstein would be Madonna because he has an English accent, but only when advantageous.

Raul Gonzalez would be Coco the Electronic Monkey Wizard from Man... or Astro-Man?, because he’s silly, Hispanic, full of both good and bad ideas, fond of random sci-fi stuff, amused by Theremins, and unable to sing. Plus, he’d enjoy setting himself on fire for audience amusement.

Laura Ingram would be Nico because she likes to write songs, has hair yellow like a German cornfield, eyes blue like a German cornflower, and had a thing with Lou Reed, I think.

Nick Campbell would be David Crosby because he sings pretty vocal harmonies, he’s crazy, he’s handsome, he’s prone to freaking out squares, and he will likely impregnate a lesbian.

Will Evans would be Brian Johnson, lead singer of AC/DC, due to his spunkster attitude, small stature, and womanizing ways. Plus, we don’t think he changes his clothes very often.

Howie Day waltzed his way into Atlanta and the Variety Playhouse on November 7th, riding the success of his newly-released sophomore album, Stop All the World Now, and its hit single (though of course “hit” being so relative with our Clear Channel and Infinity Broadcasting overlords calling the shots on radio), “Perfect Time of Day”. The last time he set foot in Coke Land was in November of 2002, opening for Tori Amos and wowing audiences with his calling card, the Line6 Digital Delay stompbox, and its potpourri of wonderfully-nutty effects.

Much has changed since riding shotgun with Tori, however. The most noticeable alteration has to be the addition of a full backing band to Howie’s live performances. Whereas in the past, Howie fashioned a full-band sound using only his effects pedals and some creative guitar work, his current sound is aided by the talents of a drummer, bassist, and lead guitarist/keyboardist. And to be honest, Howie has never looked happier while performing.

That’s all well and good, but it does nothing to decrease the suckage of the resulting music. I watched Howie’s entire performance just thinking, “Dammit, get rid of these wankers and use your effin’ pedals, you tool!” For you see, after witnessing the new avatar of Howie as Mr. Day, Band Leader, I came to the realization (shared by many others, as I’ve become aware) that the allure and raw emotional impact of Howie’s old solo shows came about as a result of his actually having to create music by himself. In doing this, he consistently willed his creative powers to new heights, adding new harmonies in one song or new outro verses to another, as his songs matured to gorgeous works of art over time. As it stands now, however, all he has to do is stand there and strum his guitar. All the beauty, all the fire, and all the soul of his old songs have been stripped away in favor of Howie thinking that he’s “evolving” as an artist. Whatever, dude.

The disappointment I felt in Howie’s performance, however, was alleviated a hundred thousand-fold by the performance of his opening act, Matt Nathanson. Though I’m probably biased in his favor (well yeah, I pretty much am), I don’t see how anyone else could feel differently. Matt produces the most genuine music I’ve ever heard, a clear reflection of his truly remarkable warmth and generosity as a person. On the night of the 7th, he and his god-of-the-cello accompanist, Matt Fish, rocked all that is rockable and then some. Tearing through songs old and new (buy his new album, Beneath These Fireworks, or some serious shoe-beatings will commence), Matty N put on a clinic of how to perform for a live audience.

If this were a just world, Matt Nathanson would be enjoying the wealth, fame, and acclaim into which fellow singer-songwriter (and former touring partner) John Mayer has poppified himself. Instead, he’s stuck opening for confused children like Howie Day, who really needs to get his scheisse together and go back to creating the music he’s too lazy to create now.
Panama. What exactly is Panama? Is it a country in Central America? Is it a city in Florida where the girls are notoriously easy and inebriated during that one lovely week in March? Is it home to one of the greatest canals of the early twentieth century? I suppose that you could say it is all of these things, yet you must realize that it is so much more. “Panama” is perhaps THE GREATEST Van Halen song ever written. I mean sure, you can argue for “Jump,” but at the end of the day “Panama” will always be there for you.

Think about it for a second. You hear part of “Panama” once, and it’s worked its way into your head for the next week. This is because it rules so much. You could lock me in a room for three days with just “Panama” on repeat, and at the end of it I’d be fine and have no problem listening to “Panama” some more. You know you feel the exact same way. So what makes “Panama” the masterpiece that it is? I’m not sure exactly. It just fits. You’ve got the 80’s rock being brought hard by the band, and then, just when you think it can’t get any better you’ve got Diamond David Lee Roth letting you know what’s up. What is up? I’ll tell you what’s up. “Panama, Panama, oh Panama!! Oh, and no, it’s not about any of those other subjects listed above. Well, maybe the second one to an extent. ROCK AND ROLL.
For the first time in my recent memory, Grandaddy, on Monday, September 29, headlined a show at the Roxy. To Jim Fairchild, bass guitarist, it was a welcomed change.

“Well, it definitely feels good to be headliner. When we opened a show for another band, we feel like they (the audiences) are not as informed on the details and things... and are not as musical as people who would typically come to our show,” he said.

Grandaddy has opened for Coldplay and Pete Yorn in the past.

The performance that night was invigorating but mediocre. Many critics complain that Grandaddy’s new CD, _Sunday_, was a regression from their previous album, _Sophtware Slump_; a change from stellar to awesome (hehe). But equaling this regression was the band’s on-stage performance during the show.

With animated film projected illuminating the background of the stage, it seemed the band ultimately revered the audience’s attention from their music to what was playing on the screen. It was unusual, but maybe the band was going for that appeal. Certainly, at this show, I felt they O.D.ed on the animatics, which they’ve used sparingly in the previous shows, but as the headliner, I guess you get to do whatever you want.

Some of Grandaddy’s whimsical touches didn’t change, however. Lead singer Jason Lytle’s beard was back (after he shaved it over the summer), trucker hats were still donned, and the porcelain cat tour mascot still perched on the edge of Lytle’s rickety keyboard.

The audience was treated to an hour and a half performance of songs from _Sophtware Slump_, and _Under the Western Freeway_. The band’s childlike and light-hearted behavior made it hard for anyone in the audience to hate them. They have retained their nature-rules, woodsmen appeal. Grandaddy performed classic _Sophtware Slump_ hits like “Broken Household Appliance...” and “Crytal Lake.” Especially touching were Jason’s emotive vocals during “Hewlett’s Daughter,” paired with the home video of the band.

From the new CD, _Sunday_, the band performed hauntingly sad songs masked in upbeat tempos like “Im on Stand-by” and “O.K. With My Decay.” Fairchild said that Lytle had intended to write “happy” songs for the CD, but inadvertently slipped into his usual reflective mode, producing the bittersweet melodies coated in candy pop goodness.

Overall, the show was an enjoyable one. It’s always nice to see fans lip excitedly singing along to the songs. It definitely reflects the band’s high caliber and enormous popularity. Next time Grandaddy headlines another tour, perhaps they should dress in furry animal costumes so that I can be entertained more than I was at the Roxy.

-Lillian Lee-

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As Grandaddy’s favorite band to tour with ought to the, the Super Furry Animals lit up the stage with their synthetic rockin’ sounds and their innovative approach to music. Lights were flashing and swirling about with big fog machines adding to the man-made ambience, creating the ultimate SFA-friendly atmosphere. Afterall, if you can’t enjoy the Super Furries during a chemically-induced allergy attack, when can you?

I and my fellow WMRE zinester, Julia Nawrocki, were lucky enough to meet with Gutto, the short yet spry bassist for the Super Furries, before the show for an interview. We discussed the new album (what interview can’t?), Welsh linguistics, and the movie _Notting Hill_. Needless to say, it was a jolly good time.

The Super Furry Animals joined forces some years ago, but with almost a completely different line-up. Throughout the years, one member would drop out, another would join, and this aspect really kept the music and the innovation alive, Gutto explained. When asked the classic faux pas question about the acquisition of the band name, Gutto promptly asked in return, “Have you seen the movie _Notting Hill_?”

At first I wondered how the romantic comedy starring the hottest British man ever could possibly inspire the band name Super Furry Animals, but then Gutto noticed the quizzical look upon my face and quickly explained. “See, one of our original members was in that movie...” but before he could continue, my brain was rushed with the image of the Welsh roommate to Hugh Grant, running around in his skivvies.

“The one that makes all the masturbation jokes??” I eagerly interjected. “Yes! Exactly, that’s the one. He’s really like that in real life, too,” Gutto said, nodding emphatically. “He thought of it. We really wanted a band name that had more than one syllable. Before the show for an interview. We discussed the new album (what interview can’t?), Welsh linguistics, and the movie _Notting Hill_. Needless to say, it was a jolly good time.

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One of the best albums SFA ever released was early on in their career, an album done in entirely in the Welsh language. When asked if the band would take on a similar project in the future, Gutto replied, “Yeah, we really want to. Sometimes you just have ways of saying things in Welsh that don’t translate into English. Like this one Welsh saying translates into ‘Let’s put the violin in the roof,’ It makes no sense in English, but it’s perfectly understandable in Welsh. The language just adds a different element lyrically and sonically.” I personally am looking forward to this endeavor. Any language that gets by without the use of any vowels is definitely one I want to hear more of.

Before we left the backstage dressing room of the Roxy, I asked Gutto about the differences he perceived in his American and British audiences. He replied, “Probably the only difference I have noticed really is that the kids are all drunk and yelling at you at home. More sobriety here, I have noticed."

“Really?” It always seems to me that there are at least a few of the annoying drunks through beer bottles on stage and whatnot, yelling and being loud here, at least, at all the shows I see.”

Gutto laughed, and said with an air of nostalgia, “Yeah, there just tends to be more of them at home!”

Gutto and the rest of the Super Furries went on to play a riveting show (with furry animal costumes) which I really enjoyed despite the fact that Grandaddy was coming on next, my most favoritest band in the whole world! Everything fell into place, the lights, the sound, and the crowds cheering all the while. Suffice to say, there is much more I could tell you about from my lovely meeting with Gutto, but lack of space and good ear for interpreting a Welsh accent is preventing me from more. Great show, great band, great time, and the rest is lost in transcription, shall we say?

-Laura Ingram-
Chance was amazed. The show had floored him, not least because of the hottest girl he’d ever seen rocking the skins. He looked around for Spraker, saw a yellow t-shirt disappear into the back where the bathrooms were, and shook his head, knowing that some poor porcelain god was about to get a sacrifice of Guinness and bile.

Then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw her, leaning on a stool by the bar. She was slowly and sensually sipping beer from an icy bottle, while chatting with one of her band mates. Shining dark hair tumbled past her shoulders, and she leaned forward as she talked, her tank top exposing one terrific rack. Chance imagined his face between them, and his hands…..perhaps somewhere else.

They say that men think about sex once every two minutes, but the specifics of the moment Chance inhabited skyrocketed this ratio from normal to extreme, animal lust. Walking over, as he had instantly decided to do, his stomach fluttered as he thought of all the ways he’d like to nail her. Hopefully, this would turn out well. He felt nervous, but tried hard to go for an exterior look of “calm enough.” He hoped all the rocking out he’d done during the show hadn’t collapsed his hair, which had been walking that perfect line between edgy and fashionhawk, and that that his favorite t-shirt, which said “Got a Sister?”, didn’t reek too much of the Parliaments that Jamal had been smoking next to him all evening long. His looks had never failed him before, but this was no ordinary girl. Oh god, there she was, two feet away. Her back was turned, but luckily enough, she turned around suddenly, eyebrows raised. A good sign: now he wouldn’t have to tap her on the shoulders like a massive tool.

“Hey. I just wanted to say that you were unbelievable up there tonight,” Chance blurted, instantly groaning at the been-there-said-that line.

“Thanks,” the girl said coolly, starting to turn back to her band mate. A pang of wild panic shot through Chance, stunning him. He’d been shot down once before, but only once, and he’d shrugged it off. This was something different. As she tossed her long hair over her shoulders, Chance had a different fantasy altogether; one involving French toast in the mornings, holding hands in the park, and a million other tiny scenes that had never mattered to him before. It pushed him over the edge. He had to win this one. There was just something about her that he knew he needed.

“Kate, I gotta run. Don’t let Don Juan over here steal you away from us,” Kate’s band mate broke in, rolling his eyes and hopping off the bar stool.

Kate turned to Chance, already loaded with rejection ammo, including her favorite, “No thanks. My philosophy is that guys are like parking spaces. All the good ones are either taken or handicapped,” but she froze as she looked, really looked at him for the first time. Dear God, those eyes. Those hands. She could imagine kissing those fingertips in the morning, could imagine them tracing the line of her hips all night long. She took the cold beer from his hand silently—her hand slightly brushing against his, and shocking her with a slight static zap. It was her turn to say something, and they both knew it.

“I’m Kate. Thanks for the beer. How’d you know I like Lowenbrau?”

Chance realized that the ice was breaking between them, and rejoiced.

“I’m Chance, and guessing right is a hobby of mine.” He leaned in closer, his breath stirring the top of her bangs: it was warm, but Kate could feel her nipples go hard.
The Wrens – the Meadowlands
Seven (!) years after their near-legendary album ‘Secaucus’, the elder statesmen of indie return with this downer of a record. I really, really wanted to love this, but it’s more of the same solid and predictable rock we’ve all heard too many times before. Having said that, these guys absolutely know what they’re doing and the album has some seriously high high points. ‘Everyone Chooses Sides’ is one of my favorite tracks of the year; I just wish the others didn’t put me to sleep.

The Rapture – Echoes
Disappointing and late major-label debut from the band that was the future of rock and roll a couple years ago. Anyone who cares has already heard these songs, and the stripped-down version of ‘Olio’ that opens this record can’t hold a candle to the one that appeared on ‘Mirror.’ In case you didn’t get sick of hearing ‘House of the Jealous Lovers’ during summer 2002, a newly marketable 5-minute version is here. This is a great band. Hopefully Universal lets them do better next time.

Jay-Z – the Black Album
You’ve heard all the hype: Jigga might be the world’s best MC, it’s his seventh and (supposedly) final album, and the list of producers reads like an all-star roster. The record delivers. Sure, the Eminem-produced ‘Moment of Clarity’ sounds like everything else Mr. Mathers has ever done, and Timbaland’s ‘Dirt Off Your Shoulder’ is a surprising disappointment, but the whole album is just one giant hit after another. I’m sure we’ll be listening to all these songs on the radio until about 2019.

South – With the Tides
Take every Britpop band you’ve ever known and loved. Dissect them, glue the pieces back together like papier-mache, and you’ll come up with South. Wholly derivative, but that doesn’t mean it’s not fun to listen to. RIYL Radiohead, Oasis, Blur, Suede, and other bands of that ilk.

Belle & Sebastian – Dear Catastrophe Waitress
Belle departed a long time ago, but Sebastian and company are still cranking out the super happy, bouncy pop songs that fans of this band inexplicably never seem to grow tired of. If you like sunshine, unicorns, rainbows and cotton candy, you should be all over this.

Elbow – Cast of Thousands
Lush, layered and ambient, these Mancunians’ sophomore album picks up right where ‘Asleep in the Back’ left off. Slow, mostly quiet, pretty music with smoother-than-silk vocals; the kind of thing that you want to hear first thing in the morning while the coffee brews.

Mates of State – Team Boo
He plays guitar, she plays vintage organs, they both sing, and the best part is, they’re married! From the dueling male-female vocals to the pictures of them being an adorable couple in the liner notes, this is so fucking cutey it makes me want to kill them both.

The Shins – Chutes Too Narrow
If you’ve heard this album, you’re more than likely already in love with it. And to be perfectly honest, if you’re even a tiny bit interested in indie music and you haven’t heard this album, you’re blowing it. Everyone whose eyes cross this page should at least download a track or two (or run out and get the album, preferably), and I’m willing to put money on the fact that almost anyone would like this – even my mom is into it.

The Raveonettes – Chain Gang of Love
Straightforward, old-fashioned rock songs, plenty of Jesus and Mary Chain influence. All the songs sound the same (being that they’re all in the same key and use the exact same instruments), but they’re catchy, well-crafted, and flawlessly executed. The lyrics? Exactly what you’d expect from Danes who grew up on American rock and roll: simple, not always grammatical, and all about sex, rock, and black leather.

Denali – the Instinct
Start with Engine Down, add some synthesizer and drum machine beats, take out some of the rock, and replace the rather whiny (and possibly annoying) male vocals with rather histrionic (and possibly annoying) female vocals. Then dumb down the lyrics a little, and you’ve pretty much got Denali. This album is richer and warmer than their first. If you liked them then, this one’s for you.
By Dan Ouyang

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I begin this article by setting Rock and Roll, Ryan Adams's new CD, into my stereo. This is Ryan's fourth solo release since splitting with alt-country boozers Whiskeytown. I'm a big fan of his first three CDs, but I'm hesitant to press play with Rock and Roll. Fitting that a disc with such a title will make or break this thesis for my doctorate of rock and roll...

For whatever reason, rock and roll musicians have a tendency to release horribly disappointing fourth studio albums. This trend doesn't apply to all musicians – there are a few specifications a band must fill before they need to fear the fourth album curse:

1) They need to be great immediately – all musicians succumbing to the curse released monster debut albums and got only marginally better (if at all) on their subsequent releases.

2) They need to be rooted in rock and roll. All cursed musicians create music one might hear on a popular “rock and roll” radio station. I hope Eminem's fourth release won't disprove this exception.

3) Since the curse is on fourth original studio releases, live releases and cover CDs don't count towards the curse.

The curse of the fourth CD originated sometime in the eighties. The plethora of shit being released and coddled by the decade's rock and roll culture made it difficult to pinpoint the beginning, but all data suggests the curse started with Guns 'n' Roses. Why the curse began, this humble rock doctor knows not. My intuition leads me to believe that Axl Rose made some pact with the devil.

As you know, or should know, Guns 'n' Roses debut release, Appetite for Destruction kicked quite a bit of ass. While other permed sissies were whining “We're not gonna take it” and calling themselves cowboys (yeah, I'm talking about you Jon B.J.– you, too, Bret Micheals), Axl and company ejaculated out a record with enough raw power and emotion to gut the industry. On Appetite..., Axl howled and orgasmed, Slash ripped and shredded, and the rest of the band lived up to their spectacular rock names (e.g. Duff and Izzy) playing songs about the ghetto, cocaine, broken families, violence, and sex.

Lies and the Use Your Illusion CDs were respectable follow-ups, but the fourth CD was painful. They slopped together a bunch of uninspired punk and garage covers and called it the Spaghetti Incident. I hope for your sake, you have never heard this CD so you can remember GNR as a bullshit return to sex, drugs, anarchy and rock and roll rather than as a no-talent, spineless cover band. GNR broke up after the Spaghetti Incident and has yet to pull together a subsequent studio release.

Pearl Jam – yet another cursed child of rock. Ten is the best CD of the 90's. Pearl Jam crossed teen angst with the Kesey acid nightmare to create their masterpiece. By the time “Oceans” rolls in, you're trapped in a psychotic hallucination –orange suits, concave pink walls, big white nurse, and a giant Indian who never speaks but for the love of Allah won't stop sweeping – which climaxes during the disc's conclusive track, “Release”. Vs. and Vitology were solid follow-ups. No Code, their fourth CD, wasn't terrible, but with the exception of “Off He Goes” it was boringger than a grammar lesson. The fury Pearl Jam captured in Ten has given way to apathetic discontent. Uh, we should like vote, or something, to make things better, cause I feel angst, man. While Pearl Jam's fifth disc Yield showed marginal improvements, the band has been unable to write an entire CD of new, good songs.

I thought Counting Crows might be able to slip past the curse. After all, their songs all pretty much sound the same: the 4/4, four-chord formula that's sustained Bob Seger and Tom Petty since 1970. August and Everything After and Recovering the Satellites and This Desert Life are majestically crafted combinations of poetry, depression, and rock and roll.

Hard Candy, the Counting Crows fourth studio CD, is so bad it makes their earlier CDs worse. It sounds like it was created in a marketing lab. Adam Duritz's images are bland and boring, Oh, American Girls. It sounds like someone finally prescribed him some Prozac, but he still wants to sound depressed, cause that's the only topic he knows how to write about. Someone hide Adam's Prozac so he can return to writing about something more soulful then winter weather on Long Island.

I've always said you shouldn't judge Dave Matthews Band by their fans. (A DMB concert parking lot is a lacrosse playing, yuppie-filled, Abercrombie and Fitch wearing frad1 haven. Oh yeah, and lots of screaming teen girls.) Somehow the band managed to attract a fad-prone audience while making legitimate music. Aside from an occasional slip of meaningless waste, e.g. “Satellite”, The Dave Matthews Band's first three CDs were chalked full of catchy, funky, trippy, chill, quirky, and occasionally introspective songs with some of the best drumming in the last decade.

Dave Matthews' intended fourth CD is spectacular, full of drunken depression, fatalism, theological skepticism, and loneliness. But someone at the record company decided that the CD wasn't commercial enough, so Matthews, either spineless or really stoned, shelved the disc, which became known as The Lillywhite Sessions after its producer Steve Lillywhite. Instead the record company released Everyday. Now when people tell me that DMB is just some trendy, sucky band, I have to agree.

I downloaded Everyday off of Napster (those were the days!) with the full intention of burning them onto a CD, but after listening to the songs a few times, I realized that owning a CD as terrible as Everyday could get me disbarred as a doctor of rock and roll. The songs sound forced. (I wonder why?) . Many of the songs from the shelved Lillywhite Sessions CD were released on their fifth CD, Busted Stuff, making the Dave Matthews Band the first to be able to rebound, at least in part, from the curse of the fourth CD.

Rock and Roll just ended and has left me with mixed emotions. On one hand, I am glad that my thesis held and passed this final test. On the other hand, I'm pissed because the CD sucks. I'm hoping that since this was my first time listening to the disc, Rock and Roll will grow on me in time, but if history is any indication of what is to come, then Rock and Roll will remain a disappointment and we will be lucky if Ryan Adams ever writes another good studio CD.

More cursed bands: Stone Temple Pilots, Rage Against the Machine, Sublime...

(Footnotes)

1 Hipster term loosely translated as a guy who thinks and acts like he's much cooler then he actually is. There's a lot of them here at Emory.
this month’s dj centerfold
featuring matt mathias and andrew debenedictis
of
The Electric Hour
sun 12-1 p.m.

Turn ons:
M- Buttons that beep when depressed, irony, cool penmanship, and pomo
A- My reflection, beautiful girls that talk to me, uh1, and social tolerance.

Turn offs:
M- Absolute truth, mesh-foam hats, and asymmetry.
A- Vain people, paparazzi mistaking me for Christian Slater, and daylight savings.

makin’ ya moist
sun 1-2 p.m.

Goals:
M- No need.
A- To annex manitoba, and create my perfect world inhabited solely by me, matt, and the other six people that are almost good enough to talk to us.