SOUNDBITES

Lou Reed
Magic and Loss

What a long, strange trip it's been for Lou Reed. After being one of rock's most deviant characters with the Velvet Underground in the late '60s and on his own in the '70s, Reed has transformed himself into a social commentator and keen observer of the human condition.

Reed's new album, *Magic and Loss*, makes a powerful statement about mortality. Inspired by the loss of two friends to cancer, Reed has come up with a series of songs with gripping emotional content. *Magic and Loss* is as literate as anything he has written. He strikingly articulates his sense of grief and feeling of loss, and tempers both with typical Lou Reed irony and humor.

The music on *Magic and Loss* is as strong as the lyrics. Reed's minimalist guitar playing is characteristically smooth, and Rob Wasserman's bass playing may be the best anywhere. And despite the weightiness of the theme, Reed manages to avoid being overbearing. Most of the songs are delivered matter-of-factly, and rarely hit the listener over the head with gloom.

Loss is never easy, particularly the absolute end of a relationship. Reed, while driving home exactly how hard it can be, is able to throw in some magic to even things out. ■ Jeffrey Bukowski, *The Diamondback*, U. of Maryland

U. College Radio Chart

1. **Lou Reed,** *Magic and Loss*
2. **Enya,** *Shepherd Moons*
3. **Teenage Fan Club,** *Bandwagonesque*
4. **Various Artists,** *I'm Your Fan, Songs of Leonard Cohen*
5. **Big Wheel,** *Holiday Manor*
6. **The Verlaines,** *Ready to Fly*
7. **Love Battery,** *Dayglo*
8. **Uncle Tupelo,** *Still Feel Gone*
9. **Shonen Knife,** *712*
10. **Lush,** *Nothing Natural*

Chart solely based on college radio airplay. Contributing radio stations: KASR, Arizona State U.; KALX, U. of California, Berkeley; KLA, U. of California, Los Angeles; KUCB, U. of Colorado; WXDU, Drexel U.; WUOG, U. of Georgia; WIUS, Indiana U.; WXJM, James Madison U.; WRFL, U. of Kentucky; WLOC, Loyola U.; WVUM, U. of Miami; WCBM, U. of Michigan; KCOU, U. of Missouri; WNYU, New York U.; WXYC, U. of North Carolina; KTRU, Rice U.; WIDB, U. of Southern Illinois; KTSB, U. of Texas; WTUL, Tulane U.; WAKE, Wake Forest U.; KCMU, U. of Washington

They Might Be Giants
Apollo 18

On the map of pop music, They Might Be Giants occupies a country all to itself. The band consists of two guys from New Jersey named John (Linnell and Flansburgh, for those of you keeping score at home) with nasally voices and a keen sense of the absurd in life.

On their past three albums – particularly 1990's *Flood* – the pair has taken traditional pop song structures and turned them inside out. The result is a collection of songs with impossibly catchy lyrics, well, lyrics which offer a world seldom seen. The ridiculous masquerades as the sublime.

Now maybe it's the recession, but They Might Be Giants' newest release, *Apollo 18*, is somehow more serious than its predecessors. A band which was previously singing delightful nonsense about puppet heads and birdhouses is now crooning about graveyards ("Turn Around") and killing one's mother ("I Palindrome I").

Not that the band has waxed completely philosophical. They Might Be Giants' same quirky, tongue-in-cheek approach still pervades all 18 bite-sized tracks, each of which is under three minutes. *Apollo 18* should thus satisfy the most faithful fez-wearing fans. Those wishing just to try the band out, however, might want to start with the more accessible *Flood* before moving up to 1992's spacier endeavor. ■ Heidi Strom, *The Tulane Hullaballoo*, Tulane U.

Social Distortion
Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell

Social Distortion, a living relic from the late '70s Los Angeles punk laboratory, is like a refurbished fin-tailed automobile rolling down boulevards of old glory, police surveillance and busted statues. Having weathered the onslaught of Southern California's early to mid-'80s hardcore digression daze, singer-guitarist Mike Ness has since restyled his spikey bangs into a delinquent pompadour, signalling his return to roots rock'n'stroll.

The bopping p-rock anthems that roamed their *Mommy's Little Monster* album, released more than a decade ago, were remodeled by more sober and retrospective tunes of urban cow-spunk nature in the *Prisonbound* LP of 1988 and 1990's self-titled re-debut.

Now, with *Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell*, Ness proves to himself that there is a bunk in between rock and a hard place. Included are the regular up-tempo garage-style rockers. But the songs that preserve the Social D. sound are those that show Ness' ability to retread country-based chord progressions into catchy, likeable pop tunes.

Ness once said that seeing his heroes, the Rolling Stones, in concert was cool, but "the novelty wore off after a couple of songs." With *Between Heaven and Hell*, Social D.'s novelty is on the rise and taking form. ■ J.W. Lim, *The Daily Athenaeum*, West Virginia U.

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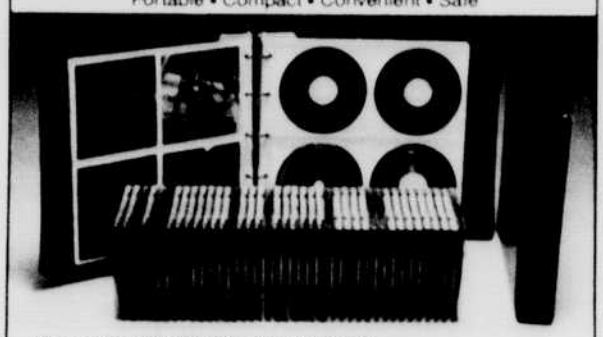

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