

# Rock

BY GLENN McDONALD

## Pocket Band

### Maggie, Pierce and E.J.

In the tradition of Peter, Paul and Mary and Crosby, Stills and Nash come Maggie, Pierce and E.J. — three scrappy musicians making a case for folk in the cynical, post-grunge '90s.

"Rock is the term we've come up with," says E.J., who handles bass duties both vocal and instrumental. "You know, part rock, part folk — whatever."

It's the whatever part that distinguishes Maggie, Pierce and E.J. There's a sense of freedom and playfulness on their eponymous debut CD that makes every song an adventure. Oddball left turns dominate — from soaring three-part harmonies to screechy guitar rave-ups to Death Valley bass runs and back again.

"We definitely don't want to be pigeonholed into one sound," says vocalist-guitarist Pierce. "That's instant death."

He knows whereof he speaks. Pierce and E.J. logged in two albums with the tripped-out hip-hop band The Goats before music business pressures drove them out.

"It's amazing how you can be manipulated by a record company," E.J. says wearily. "They can literally say, 'We don't want this track on the album,' or 'Sound like this,' you know. But [with the trio], we don't have anyone to please but ourselves."

"We just do whatever we want," guitarist Maggie says. Which is why the folk approach works so well for them.

"Folk by definition is music by the people," says E.J. "So that can be anything — even grunge is folk."

"But there is a difference," Pierce says. "Folk has always been around. Something like rap, I'd say, will always be around. But grunge — grunge is like disco. It'll pass."

For more information, call the MP&EJ hotline at (610) 527-8597.

When PM Dawn debuted in 1991 with "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss," they seemed to be treading the De La Soul territory of hip-hop flower children bugging on peace and love. Whereas De La have since rejected the hippie-hop tag, PM Dawn have embraced it — and expanded their smooth R&B into a deeper shade of soul.

On *Jesus Wept*, PM Dawn build on the remarkable confidence and depth of 1993's *The Bliss Album*. From the propulsive radio pop of the opener "Downtown Venus" to the audacious closing covers of Prince and Talking Heads, *Jesus Wept* explores the nooks and crannies between pop, soul, hip-hop and psychedelia.

Prince Be's melodies are often submerged in waves of ethereal harmony, yet the production remains lucid — a testament to the maturity of this exciting and underrated band.

### Love Jones Powerful Pain Relief

ZOO/BMG

★★★★

Love Jones is not a band I'd want to market. First, they follow their croonfest debut (1993's excellent *Here's to the Lovers*) by touring in matching smoking jackets — then they balk at being lumped into the lounge revival trend. Next, they release a crystal-clear batch of shimmering pop gems that, unfortunately, has absolutely nothing to do with anything currently happening in music. Anywhere.

Ah, well. Such is our lot. Just be grateful that LJ love us enough to share their weird-ass world of funk, swing, retro-pop and doo-wop. *Powerful Pain Relief* never captures the *joie de vivre* of *Lovers*, but it does elevate their sound to breezy new heights. "World of Summer" is the standout, a heartfelt paean to the salad days of youth so

## Rating system

- ★★★★★ *Dracula*
- ★★★★ *Frankenstein*
- ★★★ *Wolfman*
- ★★ *The Mummy*
- ★ *Swamp Monster*

### PM Dawn

*Jesus Wept*

Capricorn/Island

★★★★



light and blithe it's likely to float right out of your CD player.

One last tip — you'll never be able to fully appreciate the delicate ego of an LJ recording until you've witnessed the savage id of their live show. Check your local listings.

### Rare on Air

Vols. 1 and 2

Mammoth

★★★★

These two *Rare On Air* compilations feature 30 live-on-air performances from artists on *Morning Becomes Eclectic*, the syndicated N.P.R. music show out of Los Angeles. Performers include The Cranberries, Jackson Browne,

Tori Amos, Beck, Natalie Merchant, MC 900 Foot Jesus, Los Lobos, Phillip Glass (!) and Evan Dando with Juliana Hatfield. Among lots of others.

The immediacy of live broadcast, together with the intimacy of a radio studio, creates a unique vibe here. The sound quality is superb, allowing the more delicate numbers to shimmer (Tanya Donnelly, Joni Mitchell) and fuller songs to really stretch out (World Party, Bettie Serveert). *Rare on Air* is also good for you, in a karmic eat-your-vegetables way — proceeds go to N.P.R. flagship station KCRW.

### Eve's Plum

*Cherry Alive*

Sony 550

★★★★

Another poppy post-punk band with a female singer. Owes a lot to R.E.M. and Sonic Youth. Name is a campy '70s reference. Still, I can give you seven good reasons to dig Eve's Plum.

One: The ace musicianship on *Cherry Alive* is to be heralded and applauded (let's see Veruca Salt try these riffs). Two: Like all the best bands, they remember that rock and roll was originally a euphemism for sex. Three: Sometimes, sweat to God, they sound like E.L.O. Four: They have a song called "Jesus Loves You (Not as Much as I Do)." Five: They like to do cool Thurston Moore outer-space things with their guitars. Six: No matter what your sex or persuasion, by the end of the album you will have a mild crush on singer Colleen Fitzpatrick. Seven: No ballads!

More reviews, more releases, plus sound bytes at <http://www.umagazine.com>

## RADIO, RADIO

1. Primus, *Tales from the Punchbowl*, Interscope
2. Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, *Experimental Remixes*, Matador
3. Superchunk, *Incidental Music 1991-95*, Merge
4. Boredoms, *Chocolate Synthesizer*, Reprise
5. Luna, *Penthouse*, Elektra
6. Southern Culture on the Skids, *Soul City*, Geffen
7. Natalie Merchant, *Tigerlily*, Elektra
8. Catherine Wheel, *Happy Days*, Mercury
9. Steel Pole Bath Tub, *Scars from Falling Down*, Slash/London
10. Foo Fighters, *Foo Fighters*, Capitol

Chart based solely on college radio airplay. Contributing radio stations: KRNU, U. of Nebraska; KTRU, Rice U., Texas; KUCB, U. of Colorado; Boulder; KWVA, U. of Oregon; WCBN, U. of Michigan; WFAL, Bowling Green State U., Ohio; WUTK, U. of Tennessee; Knoxville; WVUT, Virginia Tech; WVU, West Virginia U.

The U. Radio Chart is sponsored by

## VIBRANCE

### ORGANIC CARE

## Morrissey

*Southpaw Grammar*

Reprise

★★

On the 11-minute opening track of Morrissey's latest offering, the British pop icon croons, "To be finished would be a relief." Never did such a concise lyric so appropriately sum up an entire CD worth of material.

Although his solo efforts have always been hit-or-miss affairs, last year's *Vauxhall and I* masterfully explored lush pop melodies with uncalculated lyrics. *Southpaw Grammar*, unfortunately, takes the opposite approach.

Overblown instrumentation and extended guitar and drum solos turn many of the eight songs collected here into would-be rock anthems. Even veteran producer Steve Lillywhite (who also produced *Vauxhall*) couldn't save these songs from becoming Morrissey's most lyrically pretentious and musically inconsequential. What was conceived as a "band project" sadly comes across as a misguided journey to a rock-and-roll graveyard.

Rob Hooper, U. of Southern California



## Rapid Fires



### Bugs and Friends Sing the Beatles

Rhino

When cross-marketing and nostalgia meet, Bugs sings the Beatles. Still, it's awfully cool for obvious reasons, so settle in with some good sugary cereal and roll with it.

### Clannad Lore

Atlantic

Deep, rich production on their latest outing facilitates Clannad's successful blend of traditional and contemporary Celtic folk. Van Morrison wishes he was still this relevant.



### Notes from the Underground

Priority

Generally on the ass-kicking

side, this two-volume compilation is full of angry young people with guitars. Which is good if you feel you're losing your punk-rock identity. (And you are.)



### House on Fire: An Urban Folk Collection

Red House Records

For 10 years, Red House has been signing and promoting all those urban folksters we see

at coffee-house gigs and say, "Damn, I should check some of this stuff out."

Now's your chance.



### Electrafixion Burned Sire

Before they started believing their own hype,

Echo and the Bunnymen made the pissiest Brit music of the '80s. Bunnymen Ian McCulloch and Will Sergeant reunite here to revisit much of the original glory.