

Rock

BY GLENN McDONALD

Pocket Band

Pain

Harmony. Humor. Horns? Surprise is the typical reaction people have to the many idiosyncrasies of the Tuscaloosa, Ala., band Pain. But what else should be expected from "music with a wang to it"?

Comprising "six dumb white males, one voluptuous white female and a drummer," Pain prefer to provide pleasure by laying down a groove and expanding horizons.

"Our name means pain in a derisive, elementary school sense, like when someone kicks you in the lunchroom and you lose your milk," bassist Mark Milewicz says.

Musically and lyrically, Pain evolved out of a love for the melodic music of '80s groups such as Oingo Boingo. The horn section just seemed a natural progression.

"It's difficult for only a guitar to carry a note pattern that a horn can," Milewicz says.

Pain cites giddiness-drenched influences such as *They Might Be Giants* and the *Mighty Mighty Bosstones*. They try to inject as much irreverence as possible into their music and their live shows.

During the past year, Pain have been recording in Montgomery's Zero Return Studios for their second CD, *Midgets With Guns*, which was released in April.

However, Pain wouldn't mind moving to the majors as long as no one tells them what to do. Milewicz says they could do away with "lots of stupid paperwork and high phone bills." What a Pain in the neck.

For info on Pain and tour dates: <http://www.indieweb.com/pain/>

Goggins Records, P.O. Box 2112, U. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486

Tony Ware, U. of Alabama.

Rating System

- ★★★★ Lake Titicaca
- ★★★★ Lake Michigan
- ★★★ Great Salt Lake
- ★★ Lake Havasu
- ★ Ricki Lake

Paul Westerberg

Eventually

Reprise
★★★★

If Bruce Springsteen is the Boss, then Paul Westerberg is the Bard — a dusty, road-weary troubadour with a knapsack full of stories and songs for your consideration.

Westerberg writes the kind of music you take personally — these are the songs you'll be singing into your beer after your 19th nervous breakdown. *Eventually* opens with "These Are The Days," a sterling example of Westerberg's post-Replacements pop sensibilities. In the vein of his work for the Singles soundtrack, this and a handful of other power-pop gems on *Eventually* are Westerberg's trump cards. The man can still put a lump in your throat, though — check "Hide and Seekin'," a sadly beautiful ballad about growing old alone, and the oceanic closing track, "Time Flies Tomorrow."

Westerberg is less successful with the conspicuously harder rock songs — "You've Had It With You" comes across a bit forced and pretty much recycles the "Down Love" guitar riff from his last album. Even if he's lost a step on the rockers, Westerberg's voice is only getting better with age, and his wry word play has never been stronger.

Steve Earle

I Feel Alright

Warner Bros.

★★★★

For a few shining moments in the early '90s, Steve Earle made country dangerous again. His full frontal assault on Nashville's homogeneity peaked with the insanely great *Guitar Town* album, an unholy alliance of traditional country and outlaw hard rock



that kicked ass like no one since Hank Williams. Sadly, booze and drugs got the best of Earle (as they did Williams), and he spiraled into irrelevance, poverty and finally rehab.

Back and purportedly clean, Earle makes a strong case for himself with *I Feel Alright*. Although occasionally tentative, the album proves the undeniability of Earle's raw talent. On "Valentine's Day," for example, he takes country's oldest "cheatin' heart" template and makes it interesting one last time. The back-to-back pairing of "The Unrepentant" and "CCKMP" finds Earle raging against his demons, chemical and otherwise, through hard rock and old-school country, respectively. If you've never liked country music, Steve Earle is your man. He's never liked country music either — at least the kind of anemic "new country" that's been boring us all silly for 10 years. Check him out.

Goodie Mob

Soul Food

BMG/LaFace Records

★★★

The debut album from Atlanta's latest Big New Thing kicks off with the neo-gospel "Free" and the lyrically dense "Thought Process," two tracks so unexpected and arresting that they make you wonder if you put the right CD in the player — major label rap these days doesn't exactly inspire confidence. But sure enough, Goodie Mob are the real deal and one of the most promising voices in hip-hop to drop this year.

On "Dirty South," one of *Soul Food*'s standout tracks, Goodie Mob spin a lengthy and unflinching tale of hustling "back in the day" on Atlanta's mean streets. While the story's nothing new, the song reveals a staunch descriptive style, one that carries through most of the album. *Soul Food* is packed with dexterous rhymes and engaging stories, and these four MCs can hold their own against anyone making records right now. The beats, on the other hand, are almost uniformly weak, and that's going to keep Goodie Mob from really blowing up. Still, another album, another producer, and who knows?

Butthole Surfers

Electric Larryland

Capitol

★★★

The Butthole Surfers have always walked the thin line between inspired lunacy and just plain



RADIO, RADIO

1. Lush, *Lovelife*, 4AD
2. Possum Dixon, *Star Maps*, Interscope
3. Cibo Matto, *Viva La Woman*, Warner Bros.
4. Frank Black, *Cult of Ray*, American
5. Grifters, *Ain't My Lookout*, Sub Pop
6. Afghan Whigs, *Honky's Ladder*, Elektra
7. The Spinanes, *Strand*, Sub Pop
8. Cardigans, *Life*, Minty Fresh
9. Butterglory, *Are You Building a Temple in Heaven?*, Merge
10. Silkstorm, *Fire Water*, Matador

Chart based solely on college radio air play. Contributing radio stations: KNEU, Northeast Missouri State U.; KNSU, Nicholls State U.; KRNU, U. of Nebraska, Lincoln; KTRU, Rice U., Texas; KUOM, U. of Minnesota; KWVA, U. of Oregon; WFAL, Bowling Green State U.; WRAS, Georgia State U.; WSBV, Saint Bonaventure U.; WXJM, James Madison U.

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lunacy. When inspired, they're fearless, funny and unspeakably, unknowably weird. When they're not so inspired, they tend to come off as a bunch of demented, acid-head maniacs, which they are.

Electric Larryland, the band's sophomore release for major label Capitol (and 13th overall), finds the band mostly inspired once again. Much of the Surfers' appeal depends on how far you're willing to follow them into their twisted world of drugs, weird sex, hard-core guitars, stupid in-jokes and anatomical fetishes. "L.A." is a full-bore rocker and probably the best song on the album. "Let's Talk About Cars," on the other hand, features a monotonous backing track and a six-minute conversation in French. It's testament to the Surfers' durability that they haven't run out of weird ideas yet ("The Lord is a Monkey" is deeply twisted and truly sick. You'll love it). *Electric Larryland* suggests they're going to be creeping us out for years to come.



It's all music all the time on U.'s music page: <http://www.umagazine.com>

Our Picks



Various Artists
Youth Gone Wild: Heavy Metal Hits of the 80s
Rhino

Pour yourself into those neon leopard-skin pants. Spackle on the fuchsia eye makeup. Wag your tongue with a crudely seductive flicker. Thrash your teased-to-the-limit head of hair until it hurts. Crank up that bitchin' stereo system, and prepare yourself for the ultimate '80s metal compilation. Where else — besides the crusty used-tape bin — could you possi-

bly find the one-hit wonder Poison and their one hit, "Talk Dirty To Me"?

Betty Limboland
Intersound

The three lovely ladies of Betty (none actually named Betty) have put together a poppy, dance-friendly mix. They effortlessly harmonize their way through *Limboland*, which runs the gamut from breathy ballad to dynamic dance. From heartaches to heart attack. It's kind of like Betty ran into Wilson Phillips one day and decided to kick their ass, steal their sound, make it hip and leave the out-of-touch trio in a pile of Betty rubble.

Magnapop
Rubbing Doesn't Help
Priority

If Magnapop conjures images of

punk-inspired fast guitar pop, then the name works. That's exactly what *Rubbing* is. Linda Hopper promises to leave her name right alongside the many other successful frontwomen of late. Hopper's huskily sung and deeply personal lyrics team with the nonstop guitar force to offer a solid effort from this two-guy, two-chick quartet.

Laika & the Cosmonauts
Zero Gravity
Upstart

Hovering somewhere between Gidget and 007, *Zero Gravity* is instrumental go-go juice for the retro set. Although some tracks on this fab CD sound like Muzak (read: kitschy), "Baja" and "Surfs You Right" will make you wanna smear Zinka on your nose and hit the

waves on your long board. Others, like "Fugitive" and "Fear," will have you craving Octopussy for dinner.

Cindy Lee Berryhill
Straight Outta Marysville
Cargo

Cindy Lee puts forth a charming blend of clever lyrics about life struggles and tight acoustic jams that will make anyone say, "Yeah, I've had days like that." Her sound is like Alanis unplugged, without the uptight edge. The wry sense of humor implied in the album's title is peppered into almost every track, but you have to be on the lookout for it.

Each month, asst. editors Rob, Col, Shad and Tricia listen to lots of lousy CDs just to find you a few gems like these.