Rock

BY JAMES HIBBERD

Rating System

★★★★★ Twilight Zone
★★★★ X-Files
★★★ Star Trek
★★ Babylon 5
★ Sliders

Pocket Band

Superman Curl

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's Superman Curl. By day they hold regular jobs and attend medical school. By night the quartet instills its own brand of justice by rocking Minneapolis.

Bruce Hanson, Chris Banick, Joel Reiss and Chris "Doogie" Schoonover formed the band three years ago to use their "cool band gimmicks." Current ploys include a guitar-shaped fly swatter and a travel toothbrush. They've also been known to send vandalized Elton John records.

All joking aside, Superman's self-titled debut has earned comparisons to the Replacements, Violent Femmes and Jonathan Richman. Superman have that loud, guitar-heavy, lyric-simple, garage sound we've come to love.

"I get warm all over when they say we play passionate, spirited music," Reiss says.

The others set sights on bigger comparisons. "The best compliment is to be compared to Joel [Reiss]. He gets all the chicks," bassist Banick says.

Superman Curl hope this inspiration will lead to an out-of-town gig. Meanwhile, they'll keep using 3M products, peppering conversation with "you betchas," playing rants and avoiding kryptonite.

For info or CDs, call (888) 635-CURL.

Carrie Bell, Assistant Editor

Various Artists
Mushroom Jazz
OM

★★★½

IMAGINE YOURSELF A CHARLIE Parker? Or perhaps a Miles Davis? Well here's your chance to prove to the world just how hard you blow. The *Mushroom Jazz* double-CD set contains one disc of continuous trip-hop jazz grooves and one CD-ROM for mixing your own tracks.

On the music disc, Chicago DJ Mark Farina takes 11 electric jazz pieces by various artists and remixes them into 45 minutes of seamless, moody funk. Artists such as J Live, Blue Boy and Groove Nation contribute tracks for Farina's reconstruction.

The CD-ROM puts you in a mixing station, where you can create your own vibes by using the groove lines taken from the audio CD and editing them for your own sound. The station also allows you to add up to three layers of your own recorded samples.

With a $16.99 price tag, *Mushroom Jazz* is worth the cost as tunes, toy or both.

RADIO, RADIO

1. **Sublime, *Sublime*, MCA**
2. **Sebadoh, *Harmacy*, Sub Pop**
3. **Soul Coughing, *Irresistible Bliss*, Slash**
4. **Butter 08, *Butter*, Grand Royal**
5. **Dirty Three, *Horse Stories*, Touch & Go**
6. **Descendents, *Everything Sucks*, Epitaph**
7. **Sue Foley, *Walk in the Sun*, Discovery/Antone's**
8. **Cardigans, *First Band on the Moon*, Mercury**
9. **Les Claypool, *Highball With the Devil*, Interscope**
10. **The Chubbies, *Play Me*, Sympathy for the Record Industry**

Chart based solely on college radio play. Contributing radio stations: KFSR, California State U., Fresno; KJHK, U. of Kansas; KLAX, U. of California, Berkeley; KLSU, Louisiana State U.; KRC, San Diego State U.; KTEK, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; KTRU, Rice U., Texas; KVRX, U. of Texas, Austin; KWVA, U. of Oregon; WCBN, U. of Michigan and WNYU, New York U.

Get the groove on *U.*'s music page: http://www.umagazine.com/rocks

Chainsaw Kittens
Chainsaw Kittens
Mercury

★★

"And sometimes it just gets too dramatic," sings vocalist Tyson Mead on Chainsaw Kittens' fourth full-length release.

You can whine that again.

From the not-as-twisted-as-you'd-think *Wizard of Oz* homage, "Dorothy's Last Fling," to the six-string scratching on "Speedway Oklahoma," this self-titled disc provides some listenable alterna-punk for those who can't wait for that new Violent Femmes album.

Although most of the tracks are short (three and a half minutes, max), the 14 songs begin to blend together, and Mead's Morrissey-on-helium voice begins to grate. Chainsaw Kittens is one of those "Well, if you like that sort of thing..." bands. Some dig 'em, but some like going to the dentist, too. It doesn't make it a recommendable experience.

Ugly Americans
Stereophonic Spanish Fly
Mercury

★★★

After years of impressing inebriated students on the college-club circuit, the Austin, Texas, band proves it can also rock sober ears with its major-label debut. *Stereophonic Spanish Fly*, a collection of the songs that consistently provoked the most head-nodding and dancing at their shows, showcases the band's talent for providing tight party rock with a little something for everyone.

Chameleonic vocalist Bob Schneider leads the cheerful sextet in demonstrating a range of rock styles from grunge ("White is the Wine") to pop ("You Turn Me On") to funk ("Vulcan Death Grip") to bluesy power ballad ("Find Me") — all while staying rooted in their own Ugly sound.

Lyric-wise, some of Schneider's lines should have been saved for the starry-eyed coeds ("You drive me crazy, when you whisper to me, you know I love you baby"), but most serve adequately, and a few even have a bona-fide star quality to them.

Marden Hill
Hijacked
Stepping Stone

★★★

Morcheeba
Who Can You Trust?
Discovery

★★★

Sex music. Some like Prince, others prefer the ambiance of Sade. Whoever graces your CD during those Taster's Choice nights, chances are they're not British. But two new releases from English bands might change that. Morcheeba and Marden Hill's new releases provide groovy backdrops for those bedroom/fireside/kitchen floor encounters when not just any CD will do.

Morcheeba is a funkadelic trio led by British vocalist Skye Edwards, whose sensual crooning is laid across jazzy riffs. And *Hijacked* is an acid-jazz disc that'll bring out the soul in even the most stoic of lovers. *Hijacked* is short on lyrics and heavy on bassy rhythm. Perfect for getting in the mood.

Our Picks

Belizbeha
Charlie's Dream
Sojo

You shall proceed to the next sure-thing, waiting-to-be-discovered urban collective this side of Arrested Development. Even though they're from chilly Vermont, they've got phat beats, fab vocals and energetic, very likable personalities to make you groove 'til you sweat. If you like Jamiroquai, Brand New Heavies or Digable Planets, you'll think Belizbeha has got the funk, too.

The Mother Hips
Shootout
American

The country-influenced rock and roll songs from this tight little band ooze fun and warmth and provide the perfect backdrop for the classic American road trip. Sing along to and smile at the smart, cozy tunes on this third release from a tour-crazed band. They've spent 30 of the past 36 months on the road!

Squirrel Nut Zippers
Hot
Mammoth

Swing is back, and the Squirrel Nut Zippers are leading the resurgence with their reinvented jazz sounds. The six-member band resurrects the ghosts of a 1920s Louisiana speakeasy or a lavish party at Jay Gatsby's. From saxophones, clarinets and the string bass to the banjo, fiddle and baritone ukulele, the Zippers are swanky, never stale.

Various Artists
Modern Rock 1986-88: Hang The DJ
Rhino

We may all live in an alternative nation now, but modern rock's founding fathers were quarantined to the small state of college radio, fanzines and *120 minutes*. These three volumes are a great start at chronicling some of the genre's most influential bands, like R.E.M., X, New Order, the Smiths and Jane's Addiction, as well as some lesser-knowns like Guadalcanal Diary and Transvision Vamp. Even if you don't recognize the names, you'll know the words, and a sing-a-long will ensue.

Various Artists
Andean Legacy
Narada

If we said you could plan a trip to South America's Andes for only $15, would you believe us? It's no joke — this CD is almost as good as being there to hear the traditional music of Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia's mountain villages. This collection of 14 instrumental and spiritual pieces is bound to make the mortal — and immortal — dance.

After years of listening to Barry Manilow, the Beach Boys and Debbie Gibson, assistant editors Amos, Jamis, Mel and Bell have finally acquired some taste.