

Rock

BY LYNDA TWARDOWSKI

Pocket Band

Mustard Plug

A name like Mustard Plug



doesn't exactly conjure up images of high-falutin', limousine-ridin' rock

stars. A crusty chunk of brown goo peeking through the nipple of a condiment bottle, maybe. But highfalutin', limousine-ridin'? Never.

And Mustard Plug's lead vocalist Dave Kirchgessner will be the first to tell you that.

Calling from his temporary office — a roadside phone booth in Durham, N.C. — the modest and severely polite boy next door from Grand Rapids, Mich., is quick to expound on the virtues that make Mustard Plug the hardest workin' band in show business.

Years before their first CD, *Big Daddy Multitude*, broke out of their Michigan basement playgrounds, the six-man band spent the whole of their post-puberty years trying to convince the nation of a hunch they knew to be fact: Ska would rule. And of course, the Plug would be king.

With the backing of a growing royal following, the band committed themselves to the velvet walls of their trusty tour van and set about winning the hearts of millions doing what they do best: touring.

Their efforts have paid off. They've recently released what they like to call, "12 skankin' anthems guaranteed to get you off your ass" — their sophomore full length, *Evildoers Beware*. From the sounds of it, the album is a sure-fire ska success, and so is their current tour.

"When we started out, we were staying at the Motel 6," says Kirchgessner. "Now we're hangin' at the Super 8."

Next stop? The Beverly Hills Hilton. Or at the very least, the Holiday Inn.

Rating System

★★★★★
Alex Trebek
★★★★★
Bob Barker
★★★★
Pat Sajak
★★★
Monty Hall
★
Ken Ober

Dance Hall Crashers

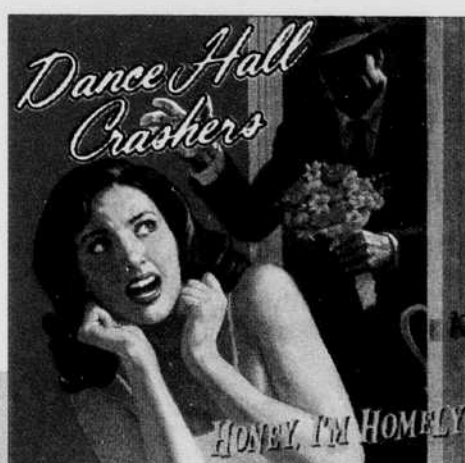
Honey I'm Homely

MCA Records

★★★★★

A LITTLE PUNK. A LITTLE ROCK. And a lot of swinging guitar loops folded into a barrage of palpitating drum beats and peppered with searing female vocalists.

Whattaya got? Dance Hall Crashers bringing down the house, then having a bonfire with the pieces. The Berkeley-born band has been blowing



their ska sounds all over America since 1989 — with only a rabid cult following and a sketchy stack of break-ups and make-ups to show for it. *Honey I'm Homely* clears the record and signals an in-sync solidarity not obvious on their recent *Lockjaw* CD.

Honey I'm Homely showcases a newfound mastery of their spunky style, with power hits like "Next to You" and "Cold Shower" giving a first-aid lesson to listeners drowning in the ever-hip ska wave.

Well, founder no more young followers, you're rescued.



the Mr. T Experience

revenge is sweet and so are you

Lookout! Records

★★★★★

Northern California's little-known but buzz-generating pop 'n' punk trio, the Mr. T Experience, is getting better every year. And after a decade's worth of nickel-budget skater-magazine ads and a slew of low-tempo, mid-tempo and master-thrasher CDs, they've got the album to prove it.

It's too mean to be trite, too peppy to break out the razor blades, and far too entertaining to be locked under that kitschy happy-medium label. *revenge is sweet and so are you* finds the band a well-deserved niche of its own on the effervescent pop/punk scale o' tunes.

Mr. T could do without the repetitive hyperhooks in "She's Coming (Over Tonight)" and "Love Is Dead," but the high-cafeinated, pop-punk drills like "The Weather is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful" more than make up for it.

A more compartmentalized box of self-fulfillment you will not find.



lincoln

lincoln

London Records

★★★★★

Quirky pop. These two words are the music industry's

equivalent of every catch phrase Forrest Gump ever mumbled. It's on the lips of every record rep from New York to Los Angeles as the most definitive promotional term since "Show me the money." It's got kick, it's got appeal, it's got our attention — but is it accurate? Rarely.

That is until lincoln, the pinnacle of all things pop and quirk, busted onto the scene. The New York-born band of four couples rippling beats and twangy vocals to lick at your soul and tickle your spine into some serious butt-bouncing, head-bobbing fun.

Any song is a gratifying experience but the slow-grooving flow and textured rhythms of "stop" are a must-hear. A perkier but equally funky favorite: "basketball."

If you've got any sense at all, you'll run to the friendly record dealer, put this CD on the counter and show them the money.

RADIO, RADIO

1. Yo La Tengo, *I Can Hear the Heart Beating as One*, Matador
2. Spiritualized, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, Dedicated
3. Guided by Voices, *Mag Earwhig*, Matador
4. Joan of Arc, *A Portable Model of*, Jade Tree
5. Ben Harper, *The Will to Live*, Virgin
6. Prodigy, *Fat of the Land*, Maverick
7. Bis, *The New Transistor Heroes*, Grand Royal/Capitol
8. Lifetime, *Jersey's Best Dancers*, Jade Tree
9. Chisel, *Set You Free*, Gern Blandsten
10. Lee "Scratch" Perry, *Arkology Sampler*, Island

Chart based solely on college radio play. Contributing radio stations: KALX, U. of California, Berkeley; KASR, Arizona State U.; KTRU, Rice U.; KUOM, U. of Minnesota; WCBN, U. of Michigan; WRUV, U. of Vermont; WUSM, U. of South-eastern Mississippi; WXJM, James Madison U.

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



The Refreshments

The Bottle and Fresh Horses

Mercury

★★★★

Maybe it's their name, maybe it's their sound, but random spins of The Refreshments second album invariably hint at a Replacements influence: Both groups lean toward lyrics of the free-association-emotion kind, both pinch off their melodies two stops short of noise and both begin and end with the same suffixes and prefixes.

But that's where similarities end — and it's for the worse. *The Bottle and Fresh Horses* occasionally gets caught up in a big-hair rock 'n' roll sound that bounces between Def Leppard's whining guitar vibratos and the Counting Crows' wailing vocals. Cases in point? The painfully potent trash tunes "Good Year" and "Buy American."

Don't give up though. The infective arrangements of "Birds Sing" and wallowing pub chant "Horses" offer listeners salvation. If only for a little while.

Our Picks

Ben Harper
The Will to Live
Virgin



Harper sidles up to a harder edge this time around, barreling along with an unwavering intensity from track one to track 12 without compromising a split second of passionate Harper-esque monologue, chilling ballads or electric-orchestral achievements on the part of his band, the Innocent Criminals. The result? Fifty-three minutes, 27 seconds of pure, unadulterated talent.

Michelle Malone
beneath the devil moon
Velvet

Deep and throaty, wild and free. Michelle Malone is like a beer commercial without the bikini. She takes a vocal cue from her sound-alike Georgian pals, the Indigo Girls, then adds a more raucous guitar and some shivering harmonica jams to spice up her solo sound.

Various Artists
Golden Throats 4: Celebrities Butcher the Beatles
Rhino

For a Beatles nut, few albums can provide more solid laughs than this novelty item, an anthology of truly awful warblers trying to make sense of John and Paul. Need a pick-me-up? Try George Burns' "With a Little Help From

My Friends," Mae West's "Day Tripper," or, in a version that's even stranger than it sounds, Joe Pesci rollicking through "Got to Get You Into My Life." True, it gets stale after one or two listens, but hearing William Shatner go psychedelic on "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" is worth the price of any admission.

Radiohead
OK Computer
Capitol

A concept album that not only works, but will go down in the annals of '90s music history with Nirvana's *Nevermind* and Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* as a revolutionary sound-definer. Even if you loved *Pablo Honey* and *The Bends*, there's nothing to prepare you for this masterwork. Gets better with each listening.

Chopper One
Now Playing Restless

Come on baby, touch my fuzz. Listen to track two on Chopper One's debut album and you'll understand. Lead guitarist Jason Cropper, an original member of Weezer, joins forces with Amy Cropper (his wife) on bass, drummer Tyrone Rio and touring guitarist Steve Garvy to bring the kids some pure guitar-driven pop — just alternative enough to suck you in — but rock enough to be real. Goody harmonies and sing-along lyrics round out the fun on this album, which promises good teenage times for all. See them live, and you'll be begging for more.

With CDs like these, it's easy to please. The rest were a snooze, worth nothing but boos. But these five really jive.