

THE SEA AND CAKE
Oui
[*Thrill Jockey*] This Chicago collective, featuring ex-members of Shrimp Boat and the Cocktails, has reunited after a three-year hiatus. As on their previous efforts, their mid-tempo guitar noodlings waft by—thanks to slurred melodies and a jazzy but restrained rhythm section. The addictively dreamy effect is a pleasant, turbulence-free flight to Mellowville.
A- —*Michele Romero*

BJÖRK
Selmasongs
[*Elektra*] Like most movie plots, the idiosyncratic Icelandic chanteuse's expansive, experimental soundscapes veer toward the melodramatic. So it's no surprise that her soundtrack for Lars von Trier's film musical, *Dancer in the Dark* [she also stars

in *Dancer*, and won the Best Actress prize at the Cannes film festival], is fantastically cinematic in scope. Whether it's the classically grand orchestration of "Overture," the clitter-clatter rhythms of "Cvalda," or the gentle music-box melody of "Scatter Heart," Björk's bold vision is custom-made for the big screen.
B+ —*Laura Morgan*

FASTBALL
The Harsh Light of Day
[*Hollywood*] The Austin, Tex., trio who hit a home run in '98 with the No. 1 single "The Way" blast off their third album with plenty more irresistible fare. Songs like "This Is Not My Life," a rootsy slice of pop-rock, and the breezy winner "You're an Ocean"—with '60s survivor Billy Preston piano-pounding—expand the band's eclectic-

TINY DANCER
Björk goes Hollywood—sort of



FORWARD SPIN NEW upcoming releases

kitsch sound while still saluting the masters (Bacharach, the Beatles, Costello). Okay, the "meaningful" love ballad "Vampires" deserves an eye roll. But Fastball deliver grown-up power pop—no bare navels or choreography needed.
B+ —*Beth Johnson*

PHOENIX
United
[*Astralwerks*] It's hard to believe this band is from France. These Franco-friends of Air and Daft Punk have created a debut album that sounds remarkably like a K-tel collection of American Top 40 radio circa 1983. Each

track is a lovingly tweaked homage to artists like Van Halen, Michael Jackson, and AC/DC. And there's even an up-tempo cut called "If I Ever Feel Better" that's so sincerely woeful, it could jerk a tear from Casey Kasem. B+ —*MR*

RADIOHEAD
Kid A
[*Capitol*] On the title track, Thom Yorke might as well be delivering a monologue into a black hole. His vocals are creepily distorted, like an alien distress call. On "Treefingers," any evidence of human imprint is scrupulously shrouded in a sci-fi-inspired aural at-

mosphere. But for all their automated tinkering, Radiohead are indeed a band of flesh and blood. While this challenging record is full of sterile soundscapes and surreptitious intonations, it's also brimming with messy emotions—though it's questionable whether *OK Computer*'s heads will commit to the multi-listens required to find them. B —*LM*

STEW
Guest Host
[*The Telegraph Company*] Stew [né Mark Stewart], the majordomo behind one of the L.A. pop scene's best-kept se-

crets, the Negro Problem, steps out and strips down. "I'm still fascinated by the mask behind the mask," he sings on the ethereal "Ordinary Love," and on this lovely, pensive album, he removes mask after mask to stand revealed as one of the millennium's most arresting nouveau troubadours. TNP's wiggly sensibility still peeks through (cock an ear to the '30s music-hall pastiche "Man in a Dress"), but this is the sound of an artist finding his true voice—a rare and wondrous event, and one to be savored.
A —*Trigritto Vega*



Radiohead

poor dad unable to get tickets for his favorite little princess.... **Where** *Where aren't they playing?* **When** Through Oct. 19 **Why** So you can find out if "Say My Name" sounds as good with only *three* voices: After missing several performances and a trip to Australia, singer Farrah Franklin was given the boot.

THE BANGLES

More than a decade after splitting up (due to internal strife following the success of 1989's chart-topping and, in retrospect, ironically titled single "Eternal Flame"), the newly reunited Bangles are taking their show on the road. In addition to fan favorites, the band will likely play some songs

from a new album it plans to release sometime next year. **Where** California, Chicago, New York City, Las Vegas, and Toronto **When** Ten shows through the end of September **Why** If for no other reason, just so you can enjoy the spectacle of middle-aged people trying to walk like an Egyptian. ●●●