

All hands on the baddest one: Sleater-Kinney, best U.S. rock band

Day-o, fair readers. The sun is shining, the hot dogs are roasting, the fireworks are blasting outside the Emerald office, and it's got Mr. Lang in a downright good mood. So after last week's column filled with some rather frightening musical tidbits, it's time for only the warmest, fuzziest news to both brighten and enlighten.

And boy do I have some sunny news to report. All hail to the queens of rock and roll! This week's issue of Time Magazine features an "America's Best" segment that picks Oregon/Washington riot grrl sensation **Sleater-Kinney** as our great nation's best rock band. Yeah, Time. In the article, the bandmates recall a time when they were recording in the same studio as **The Backstreet Boys**, and BSBer Kevin — who, by the way, is pushing 30 — mistook the trio for fans instead of musicians.

Of course, there is a good chance the pick would be different had **Radiohead** not been born on the British Isles. But even if both Radiohead and SK — truly two bands that receive all of Mr. Lang's adoration — hailed from this side of the pond, the ladies should still beat the boys. Sure, Radiohead secured impressive, massive outdoor venues. But for my money, nothing is more rock-and-roll than being in the club watching SK's Carrie Brownstein turn her guitar neck horizontally to hit the riff and give a leg kick toward the audience in the process. The only real difference is the band's reluctance to sign with a major label. Of their five major albums, three have been released on the Kill Rock Stars label, which was also **Elliott Smith's** first home. If the band had exposure outside the Northwest, college radio and stunningly productive word of mouth, the girls could challenge the Brit boys to a battle of the bands for the ages.

Other music notables include **The Roots** as best rappers, **Cassandra Wilson** as best singer, **Lucinda Williams** as best songwriter and DJ **Craze** as best DJ. The second color in this week's rainbow: new releases. On Sept. 11,

the now-defunct **Ben Folds Five** will re-release the album that sparked their national success, "Whatever and Ever Amen," with four bonus unreleased tracks. Bassist Robert Sledge wrote and sings one of the tracks, and drummer Darren Jessee wrote another. The re-release will hit stores the same day as Folds' solo debut, "Rockin' the Suburbs."

Although current rumors that **Weezer** will record a new album in the next two months are false, the band has written a number of songs, which they describe as being more rock 'n' roll than some of the tracks on "Weezer II," a.k.a. The Green Album. The news is a promising sign that fans will not have to wait another four or five years for the next record. The boys did have to cancel two European shows to film the video for The Green Album's second single, "Island in the Sun," but the oh-so-nice gents plan to make up the shows ASAP.

Dreamy Washington indie rockers **Death Cab For Cutie** are set to release the follow-up to their smashing "We Have the Facts and We're Voting Yes" album sometime this fall.

Speaking of the Pacific Northwest, **Built to Spill's** new album drops on Tuesday, and Sam-and-Janet duo **Quasi** will release "Sword

of God" on Aug. 21. Also, shows! Most people have probably heard about former Soul Coughing leader **Mike Doughty** at Taylor's on Sunday and **Ani DiFranco** popping by Cuthbert Amphitheater on Monday. But the action doesn't stop there. Lesser-known group **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club** will be a sure-fire hit at the Hollywood Taxi in Springfield on the 12th. Our lovely neighbor to the north, Portland, will also host a number of worthy acts, including **G. Love and Special Sauce** on Tuesday and **The Reverend Horton Heat** on the 19th. The Reverend is scheduled to stop by Eugene later this summer.

For those who worry that punk might be dead, "Scottish" punksters **The Real McKenzies'** show on July 1 in Corvallis quickly dispelled those fears. Be-In correspondent Punk Rock Darren reports that a scant three songs into the band's set at AJ's bar, lead singer Paul McKenzie spewed forth the liquor and other stomach contents in an impressive stream of vomit onto the stage. Confused, he looked at his mess and demanded to know which "punk bastard" puked on his stage. Suddenly realizing he had nobody to blame but himself, McKenzie continued the set for another hour. "After all," he said, "If you can't stand on your own puke, what can you stand on?" To which bassist Jamie Fox replied, "My puke."

Finally, take a look at all the rock on the charts. Sure, some of it is uninteresting bands such as **Staind** and **311**, but the latest efforts from **Stone Temple Pilots**, **Tool**, **Weezer** and **Radiohead** are all still holding on the top 30 of Billboard's chart.

So, all in all, things aren't that bad in the world of music. But before departing the office to catch the last of the bombs bursting in air, Mr. Lang must deliver the skinny on the new **Tori Amos** album, "Strange Little Girls," due out Sept. 18. Amos, known for being eerie and performing covers during concerts, has combined her two qualities into an album of covers by male artists, ranging from **The Beatles'** "Happiness is a Warm Gun" to **Eminem's** "97 Bonnie and Clyde" and **The Boomtown Rats'** "I Don't Like Mondays." Sheesh.

Best bet concert for the week: **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club** at the **Hollywood Taxi** on the 12th.

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Jeremy Lang
The Be-In

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (July 5). One phase is drawing to a close, and another is about to begin. Don't hurry. Take each item one step at a time, and make sure everything is done right. You'll soon be ready to take on new challenges. You'll know when. Savor each part of this process. It's all part of a job well done.
To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.
ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is a 6 — Your biggest challenge is setting priorities. Time management is challenge No. 2. Sign up for a class, or read a book on it. You need to advance, but you want to retreat. It's healthiest to do both.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is an 8 — Take your sweetheart out to dinner at a fancy foreign restaurant. Bring along a special gift you recently purchased, just for the fun of it. It's hard for you to talk about love sometimes. You'd rather show it, and you can do so by sharing your winnings with the one who most empowers you.
GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 6 — You'd rather talk about ideas than dollars and cents, but you can do it if you must. Be careful today. Watch the bottom line, or you'll be talked out of more than you bring in. Your luck is changing for the better, but don't rely on your luck just yet.
CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 7 — Complete a project and tie up loose ends. Don't start another project. You'll have to do some cleanup and then some research to determine how to proceed. The important thing now is to make sure the last job is finished perfectly. Double-check for errors.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 6 — Meetings should go well if you can avoid getting sidetracked. There's so much to talk about, you could use up all your time before you get to the important stuff. Set priorities and create an agenda. Give everybody a copy.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is an 8 — An older person is quite demanding, but

your thoughts and prayers are with somebody else. You want to help someone who's struggling. A little boost is all it will take, but time is short. Talk the demanding older person into helping, too.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 6 — Although you're generally cheerful, today could be perplexing. How are you going to be in two places at once? Reschedule something. Setting priorities is hard for you, because you see some value in everything. Here's a clue: This evening will be better for love.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 7 — You're a person who does well with investments, aren't you? But natural talent isn't always enough. Combine it with additional education. The world needs more stock-market millionaires.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 5 — Working together can be a romantic activity, as you already know. After doing that for a while, a deeper partnership develops. This should be happening now, not only in your love life but also in your job. Relax and enjoy it.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 7 — If you've chosen the right partner, you'll see a lot of each other over the next few days, because you'll be working together. If you're partners in life as well as in business, you're doubly blessed.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is a 6 — You're rarin' to go, but you can't quite yet. Keep making plans, setting priorities and working on your schedule. A romantic interlude this weekend would be perfect, and it's one of the things you should be planning.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is a 7 — Have you invited a lot of people over for tonight, tomorrow night or both? If you haven't, why not? Think of good reasons why you should. Everybody would have a great time, especially you.

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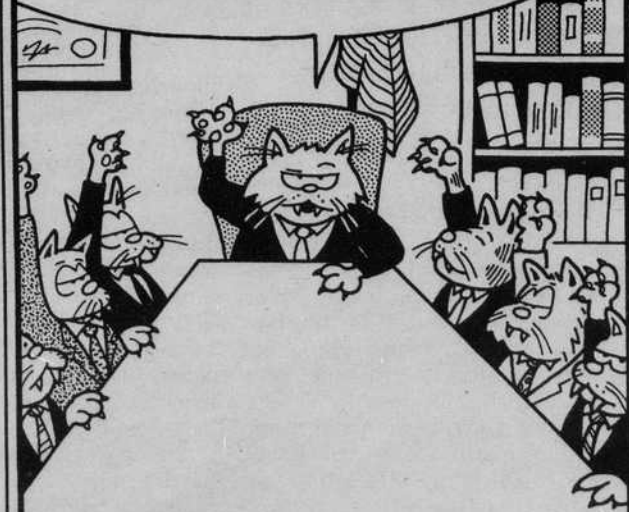
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