

DUCK THIS!



Peter Utsey Emerald

Lou's 'Magic Record Store' hides in Southern California

I have a very dark secret to share with the readers of this newspaper, and I can only hope that people continue reading past the next paragraph.

I'm originally from California. Yes, it's true. I'm one of "them." And I'm not even from a cool place like Arcadia or Weed. Sadly, I am the worst kind of Californian — having been born in San Diego, I'm one of those dreaded Southern Californians.

In all fairness, it's been a long time since I lived in California, and I try to make it down there at least once a year. This trip usually takes place during spring break, and last week was no exception.

During a trip to San Diego a few years back, I discovered the greatest record store on Earth. I'm not exaggerating here. I've been to hundreds of record stores in my life, but Lou's Records in Encinitas (about 30 minutes north of San Diego) is the best. In fact, I refer to Lou's as the "Magic Record Store" when I'm talking about it to my friends, because it truly is an enchanting place.

At first sight, Lou's is decidedly unimpressive. It's right on Highway 101, looks kind of run down, and the inside is cramped and dark.

However, after about five minutes of browsing, it suddenly occurs to you that Lou's has the best selection of new and used music ever encountered. Literally, any album you could ever want is present somewhere within its four walls.

And that leads me to the best thing about Lou's: Not only does the store carry pretty much every album by every artist; it also has tons of rare and imported music that you can't normally get on these shores.

Last week Lou's came through for me in spades, and I was swathed in so much wonderful new music that I found it hard to tear myself away from the stereo and actually enjoy the California sun. In truth, there's too much to write about, but two of my purchases are worth mentioning because any person with a hankering for good music needs to own these albums.

Despite having an unbelievably stupid name, Welsh rockers Super Furry Animals can lay claim to having released what will possibly stand as the most mind-blowing album released all year long. "Rings Around the World" is almost impossible to describe, but I'm going to give it a shot.

Imagine that Radiohead, while recording "OK Computer," was forced to take Prozac, given psychedelic mushrooms, and forced to listen to nothing but Aphex Twin and the Beach Boys. "Rings Around the World" would be the result.

No two songs on the album sound even remotely the same, but

many of them employ a similar feel: Songs start out sounding at least somewhat normal, but are then utterly metamorphosed into genres of music that haven't even been invented yet.

My friends are sick of me talking about how great this album is, and I probably should have devoted an entire column to its majesty. All I will say is that it must be bought immediately (as of the last few

weeks, it is finally available in the United States, though it was released in the United Kingdom last year). I still can't stop listening to it.

My most satisfying find at Lou's this time around was the new album by Pulp. Ironically titled "We Love Life" (Pulp is a notoriously dour band), it came out everywhere in the world except for the United States this past September, and I've

been dying to get my hands on a copy since then.

Pulp is one of the great "Brit-pop" bands, and possibly the most idiosyncratic of the bunch. The ability to meld witty, working-class lyrics with lush pop music is its trademark, and although it hasn't hit it big on these shores, these musicians are positively huge overseas.

"We Love Life" is notable because Pulp dumped its longtime producer and brought in reclusive '60s pop icon Scott Walker to man the boards. The sonic difference is immediately appreciable, as Walker has added quite a new palate of sounds to the Pulp stew. String sections, harps, choirs and even ocarinas bring a refreshing and often gorgeous aura to the already stately songs.

It's rumored that "We Love Life" will be released domestically within the next month or two, and it gets my highest recommendation.

And if you can't wait that long, there's always Lou's.

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Dave Depper
In Stereo

Today's crossword solution

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ARID	LOUIS	SNUB
RATH	SKELLER	VCR
ATEST	EUREKA	
HEFTED	REDDER	
ALI	TOYS	EASTS
HARPSO	CARDIAC	
ANSEL	TEEN	NBA
TRIPOD	AIRGUN	
SENECA	ASPCA	
ARI	EINSTEIN	NIUM
FIGS	RENES	COKE
ECHO	EVERT	OWES
RATS	DARNS	RASH

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