

■ In my opinion



RYAN NYBURG  
BUDGET RACK

## Whiny music fans make art grow stagnant

Well, looks like I'm still here. Despite my graduation, I've come back to do the only thing I've ever been any good at doing. Kind of pathetic, isn't it? Like those high school football champs who end up hanging around the field, going bald and developing beer bellies as they talk about the passes they threw/caught back in '85. But let's move on to a slightly less depressing topic.

Here's something that has recently gotten my dander up. Two bands have recently released albums remarkably different from anything they have done before. The first is the White Stripes' "Get Behind Me Satan," which is more eclectic and fractured than anything else they have ever released. The second is Sleater-Kinney's "The Woods," a sprawling, distorted, psychedelic mess of an album that completely breaks away from their riot grrl past.

My problem is not with the albums, however, but rather with the fans. Check out just about any message board online and you will read die-hard fans wailing about these albums and how abysmally terrible they are. Adjectives such as "pretentious," "difficult," "shallow," even "sell out" have been banded all over the net.

WTF? There is nothing seriously wrong with either of these albums. "GBMS" lacks the focus of the Stripes' earlier work, but makes up for it with a sense of expansiveness that was lacking in the blues/garage rock lockstep. It's a transitional album, and a good one at that.

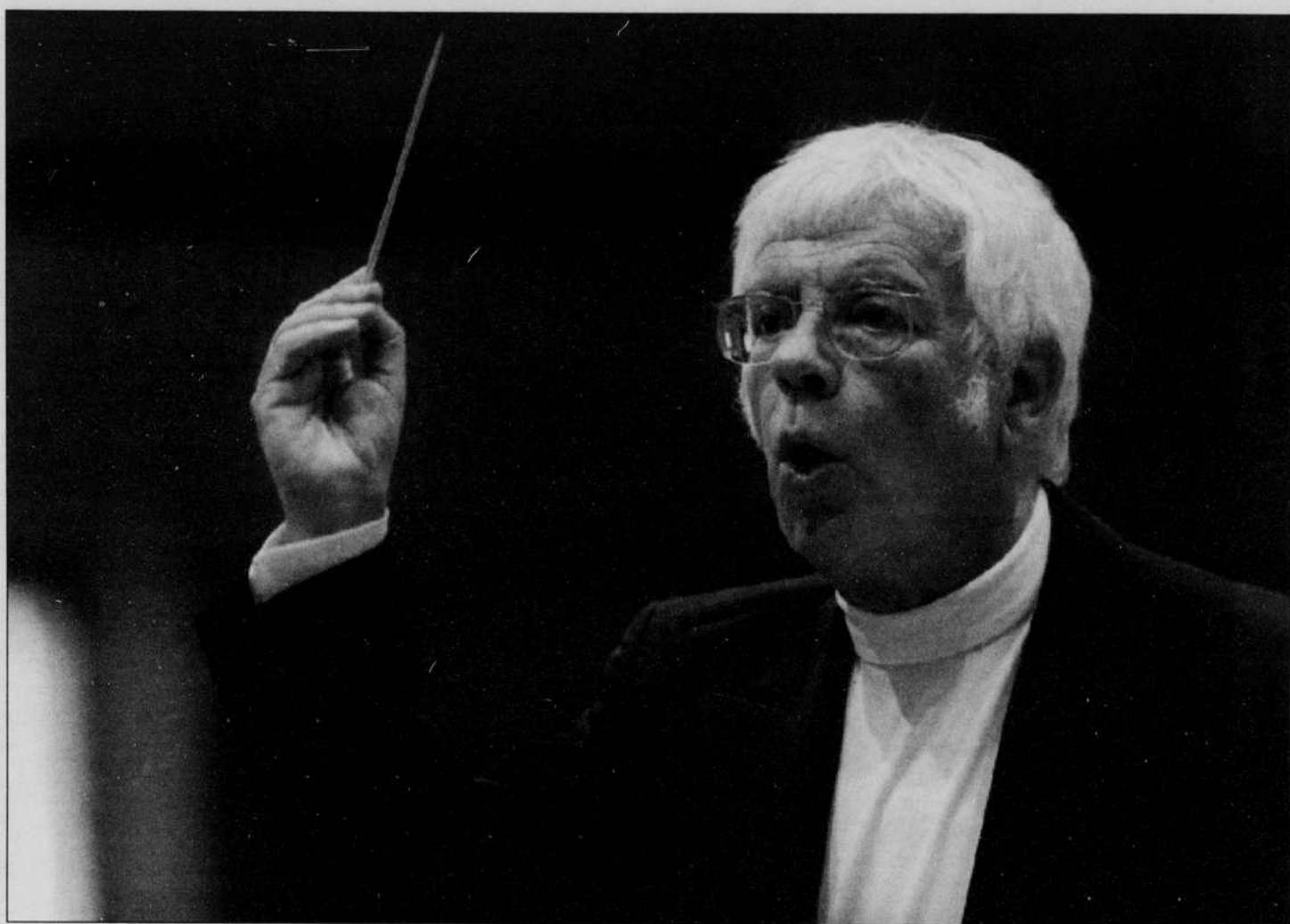
As for Sleater, they've gone and released a bona fide Northwest psychedelic classic in the traditional 1960s sense. The album is weird, spooky, distorted and a hell of a lot of fun to play really loud. Yet listening to some of these fans and you would think the band sat around farting into microphone and released the results as an album.

Let me address these people directly: You all are the worst sort of pop culture fascists. You are the reason art grows stagnant. Your endless demand for consistency suffocates everything you praise. Frightened by what is new and different, you howl and wail, act as if you have been betrayed and demand that all artists continually create variations on the same themes you have grown comfortable with. You people are sick and your opinions are like a pile of steaming dog shit in my salad.

But sometimes it's good for a band to lose its popular fan base, or even popular critical support, if it means the band will grow artistically. Rolling Stone slammed Weezer's "Pinkerton" as one of the worst albums of the year when it came out, for no reason other than it didn't sound like their first album. They did the same to the Liars sophomore effort, once again unjustly. Both bands were better off. Pearl Jam stopped making hits when it stopped playing along with the rock press and stopped being so anthemic, thus losing favor with both fans and critics. Since then Pearl Jam has released some of the best music of its career, not that anyone has noticed.

So leave these bands alone. You can't expect Sleater to release another version of "Dig Me Out." One was enough. And who would want to listen to a dozen new copies of "Fell in Love With a Girl"? There's been enough of that already. These albums might not be the best of either band's career, but they're not the worst either. Not by a long shot.

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COURTESY

Oregon Bach Festival Artistic Director Helmuth Rilling ushers the festival into its 36th year with a wide range of performances.

# The new face of classical

The 36th Oregon Bach Festival has crossover works to attract young listeners as well as old classics from composers, such as Mendelssohn

BY RYAN NYBURG  
PULSE EDITOR

The biggest music festival in Eugene doesn't involve trippy-hippy jam bands or distorted post-modern rock angst, but rather the more cerebral joys and symphonic excesses of classical music.

The Oregon Bach Festival begins its 36th year today, opening with a preview of "La Pasion Segun San Marcos," which translates "The Passion of Christ According to St. Mark" as a South American street festival. The complete work will be performed tomorrow at 8 p.m.

"This is by far the biggest performance the festival has ever done," Bach Festival Executive Director H. Royce Saltzman said. "We're bringing in the Schola Cantorum Choir of Venezuela and the Brazilian jazz singer Luciana Souza. This is an important work in terms of cross-cultural art. One of the biggest

challenges we face is an aging audience. It is through crossover works such as this that we hope to attract younger listeners. Otherwise in a few years we're not going to have an audience."

"La Pasion" was composed by Osvaldo Golijov on a commission from festival artistic director Helmuth Rilling and was originally performed in Stuttgart, Germany in 2000. This will be its first, and probably only, performance in the Northwest.

Another major event in this year's festival is a performance by the Kronos Quartet on July 1. One of the most influential and popular quartets of its time, Kronos will be performing a wide range of works, ranging from compositions by Alexandra du Bois to Sigur Ros. The entire second half of the set will be devoted to arrangements by Golijov.

"Osvaldo Golijov is one of the quartets favorite arrangers," Bach Festival Director of

Communications George Evano said. "Which is part of the reason we were able to get them for the festival."

Of course it wouldn't be a Bach Festival without an obscure work from one of the classical composers. This year brings the American premiere of Mendelssohn's "The Uncle From Boston," a comic opera written when the composer was 14 and performed only once, in his home, on his 15th birthday. The work was forgotten for 180 years until Rilling uncovered it and premiered it in Stuttgart. Rilling, when describing the work, said it's "the usual opera silliness, but the music is fantastic."

Other festival highlights include performances of Bach's "Sing Now of Triumph," Handel's "L'Allegro" and a night devoted half to various compositions by Mozart and half to Mendelssohn.

Ticket and schedule information can be found at [www.oregonbachfestival.com](http://www.oregonbachfestival.com). The festival runs through July 10 and closes with Haydn's "Creation."

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■ CD review

## A look back at the year's most worthless CDs

BY RYAN NYBURG  
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Even the best years in music have their low points. For every good album released, there is always a slew of forgettable commercial music units. Here are a few of them from the past month or so.

First up is a possible entry for the Most Useless Album of the Year Award, Alanis Morissette's acoustic re-recording of her 1995 breakthrough release, "Jagged Little Pill." The album doesn't share all of the original work's merits but makes up for a few of its faults, leading to an even sum game and a rather pointless run-through of songs that has

"fan only" written all over it.

While the intervening 10 years have been good to Ms. Morissette's voice, she's lost some of the defiance and strength of her younger years. The arrangements have been retooled to fit the acoustic format, but they still manage to feel a tad overdone, and often it seems as though a more radical take on the material would have led to a more interesting listen. Not bad, just not worth the bother.

Here's a common story: A young singer/songwriter generates some buzz in the mainstream music press and gets a few "artist to watch" notices, then releases an album of mildly folkish and/or smooth jazzish songs

with lyrics vague enough to be interpreted as deep. The album gets a little press, goes on heavy Starbucks rotation and maybe wins a Grammy or two.

The singer/songwriter is then promptly forgotten about, left on the wayside while the press and the populace go after the next hot young thing. The artist's music disappears into the cultural ether from which it came and we all get on with our lives. This is the story into which the debut from Missy Higgins, appropriately entitled "The Sound of White," fits perfectly. Nothing more needs to be said.

The major label debut from Chicago's