

TOP 10 CDs of 98

THE HOTTEST SELLING CDs BY YOUR FAVORITE ARTISTS



Moon Pix's: Cat Power's sexy new song



(1) ELLIOTT SMITH

You can't judge a year by its biggest musical acts. If you could, 1998 would come up nothing but Backstreet Boys. Sidewalk asked its critics to vote for the best albums of 1998, and the top vote-getters are all over the cultural map. Whether it's confessional folk, pioneering hip-hop, polished pop-rock or rustic country, excellence comes in all shapes, sizes and sounds. Elliott Smith XOThe indie folkster may have jumped to a major label this year, as well as performed at the Oscars with Celine Dion, but no one listening to these heartbreaking, textured songs will scream 'sellout'.

- (2) PJ HARVEY: Is This Desire?
- (3) HOLE: Celebrity Skin
- (4) R.E.M.: Up
- (5) LUCINDA WILLIAMS: Car Wheels on a Gravel Road
- (6) LAURYN HILL: The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill
- (7) BEASTIE BOYS: Hello Nasty
- (8) LIZ PHAIR: whitechocolatespaceegg
- (9) RUFUS WAINWRIGHT: Rufus Wainwright
- (10) LYLE LOVETT: Step Inside This House

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- BECK, Mutations
- BELLE AND SEBASTIAN, The Boy With the Arab Strap
- BILLY BRAGG & WILCO, Mermaid Avenue

NAJEE Biography

The magical melodies and passionate phrasings that introduced a generation of music lovers to the distinctive sound of the phenomenal reed smith Najee, will once again serenade listeners with his latest offering, **Morning Tenderness**, for Verve Forecast. A musical masterpiece of smooth and sensuous selections, Morning Tenderness marks a triumphant return for the best-selling instrumentalist to contemporary jazz forefront. "To me, this album is a return to traditional Najee." The album was recorded in an eight-month period at both the New York and Los Angeles recording studios of Najee and his younger brother and lifelong collaborator Fared. The ten gorgeous tracks featured on the production are a representation of a man who is in love with life and music. Opening the collection are the sparkling voices of Najee's young sons providing a heartfelt introduction to the song, "Not a Day Goes by." Reflects Najee, "It's a song that says to my children, 'Not a day goes by that I'm not thinking about you, or that you're not in my heart.'" Taking a popular R&B slow jam and making it his own has long been one of Najee's signatures on previous albums. This time around, Najee gives Joe's "All the Things" just the touch of silky soul it deserves. Najee instrumentalization of this sexy classic, brings it to a class all its own. "I've always liked that song and the way Joe sang it," Najee says. "No one had covered it instru-

mentally, and it was a song that I found challenging to play and make my own.' With "Morning Tenderness," Najee got some help from Fared naming what would become the title track. Reflects Najee, "I came up with that song with a friend of mine named Nick Smith, and I kept hearing 'Morning Drive' or 'Morning something' in my head, and my brother said, 'Why don't we call it "Morning Tenderness"?' And I thought about it. The song represents just waking up in the morning with the sun rising, and being refreshed. That's what I want people to think of when they hear the album. I play mostly flute on that particular song and I think it stands apart from all the rest. It's definitive.' Morning Tenderness is Najee's seventh musical offering and follows a slew of critically acclaimed records, including his 1987 debut, Najee's Theme, and most recently, the critically acclaimed Stevie Wonder tribute, Songs in the Key of Life, produced by jazz visionary George Duke.

the past ten years, Najee's formidable talents have afforded him the opportunity to work with an array of musical talents, including Quincy Jones, Stevie Wonder, Al Jarreau, Freddie Jackson, Jonathan Butler, Stanley Clarke, Paul Jackson, Jr., Phyllis Hyman, Patti LaBelle, The O'Jays, Everette Harp, Big Daddy Kane and Bobby Caldwell, and many others. Najee's new association with Verve Records represents the accomplishment of his longtime goal to release records on his own label.



112

It's not difficult to see why 112, "The Gentlemen of Bad Boy," speak so fondly of their native city Atlanta. They are intrinsically ingrained into its rust red soil, lush greenery and proud neighborhood churches. 112's Slim, Mike, Q and Daron are products of their environment, an environment where the most basic, most cherished values of pride, community and brotherhood are instilled from an early age. It's in their voices, their music and their hearts. It's in their soul. Soul is at the core of everything they do and shines with uninhibited splendor on their Bad Boy/Arista sophomore album, **Room 112**, the follow up to their Platinum self-



titled debut. Named after a phrase coined by a former labelmate, the late Notorious B.I.G., **Room 112** relies on a foolproof formula of great songs and phenomenal vocals to make its point. The album ranges from ballads that tug the heart-strings to out and out dance floor anthems. **Room 112** is overflowing with a tender, sweet southern sincerity that helped make singles such as "Cupid" and the tribute to Notorious B.I.G., "I'll Be Missing You," so memorable. There is also a raw edge that was previously unheard, reflecting the considerable maturation the group has undergone during their three whirlwind years in the music industry.

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