

glam funk confection "The Hale Bop," but overall they remain sedate. Longtime fans may be taken aback by the reticence, but frequent spins reveal songs that hold true. (roughtraderecords.com)

river city tanlines

COAST TO COAST

(BIG LEGAL MESS/FAT POSSUM)

River City Tanlines hail from that magical Mecca called Memphis, and does it proud. Led by guitarist **ALICIA TROUT**, they specialize in short, sharp power pop nuggets on *Coast*, with singalong melodies and enough energy to power the Duracell bunny until 2512. "Pretty Please," "Stop My Heart," and "Can You Handle This Heart" revel in crunchy punk pop hooks, while "You Shot Me," "Can't Stand U Anymore," and "I Don't Get It" crank up the riffs for heavier flavor. "Dark Matter" bisects the record with a dark, mostly instrumental, surf-influenced rocker that's unlike anything else. Sitting pretty on the savory spot between The Muffs and Screaming Females, RCT hit hard, fast, and sweet. (biglegalmessrecords.com)

sun river

SUN RIVER

(EL PARAISO)

A spin-off of Danish heavy psych band **CAUSA SUI**, Sun River explores gentler territory. Dreamy melodies float like clouds in the wind, never rushing, but not wafting aimlessly, either. Acoustic guitars dominate the

arrangements, though multi-instrumentalist **JONAS MUNK** provides some electric firepower when required. Singer **MARTIN RUDE** shifts from the ethereal vocalese of "Underwood," to Tim Buckleyesque keening on "Esperanza Villanueva." The band is equally comfortable with the grass-in-the-wind waves of "Dawn Patrol" and "Moon" as with more forceful folk rockers such as "Lines" and "Grey." Best of all, the gorgeous, affecting *Sun* evokes the spirit of late '60s acid folk without sounding retro—no mold in these corners. (elparaisorecords.com)

therapy?

A BRIEF CRACK OF LIGHT

(BLAST)

Therapy? gleefully absorbs punk, metal, industrial, and alt. rock, mishmashing it all together into a distinctive noise that defies easy classification. The Irish trio sticks to its heavier side, as leader **ANDY CAIRNS** affects a harsh vocal tone and bashes out power chords like he caught his guitar diddling his mother. Brutal cuts such as "Why Turbulence?" and "Living in the Shadow of the Terrible Thing" indicate a dark cloud hovering over the band's maniacal grin. But the trio's humor reasserts itself on "Stark Raving Sane" and "Get Your Dead Hand Off My Shoulder," and melody sneaks into "Plague Bell." The odd "Marlow" and "Ecclesiastes" both resonate unlike anything the band has done before. *Light* isn't the best place for newcomers, but it's a solid bet for

fans. (theglobalmusicgroup.com)

the vaccines

COME OF AGE

(COLUMBIA/SONY)

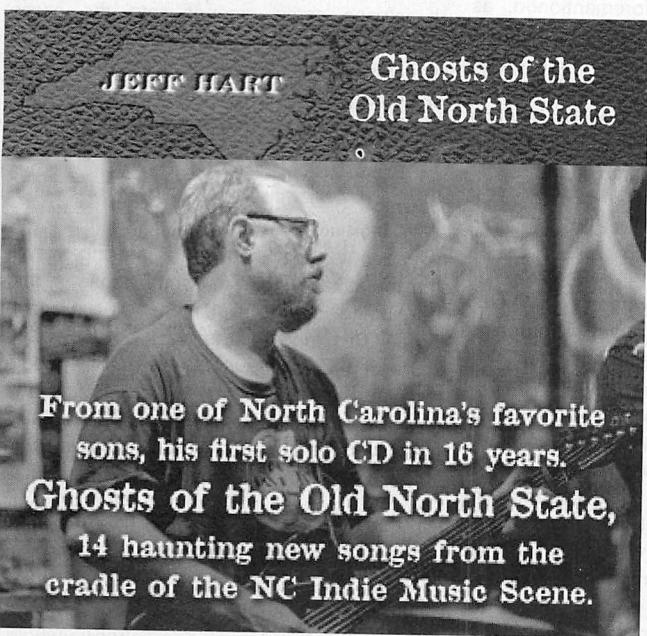
It's tempting to dismiss The Vaccines as merely the latest Next Big Thing in British rock—another iteration on The Smiths guitar pop latticework. (See: Libertines, Arctic Monkeys, etc.) Indeed, there's nothing original on *Come*, the young West London quartet's second LP. Good thing, then, that they have a handle on the most important element of a memorable record: strong songs. The Vaccines excel at head-bobbing hooks and youthful energy, making peppy rockers "Teenage Icon," "Change of Heart Pt. 2," and "Bad Mood" stand out. The band goes winsome on "Aftershave Ocean," "Lonely World," and "All in Vain," moody on "Weirdo" and rootsy on "Ghost Town," all of which serve to make *Come* even more irresistible. This is pure ear candy.

the walkabouts

"SOUL THIEF" 7"

(FIN)

Despite over a quarter century of service, Seattle's Walkabouts are so far off the radar no clichéd metaphor for underappreciated seems adequate. (At least here—in Europe it's different, fortunately.) Hopefully their current series of singles is serving as a good reintroduction. The group's gothic-tinged folk rock is in excellent form on these two songs. "Soul Thief" is a brooding, steely



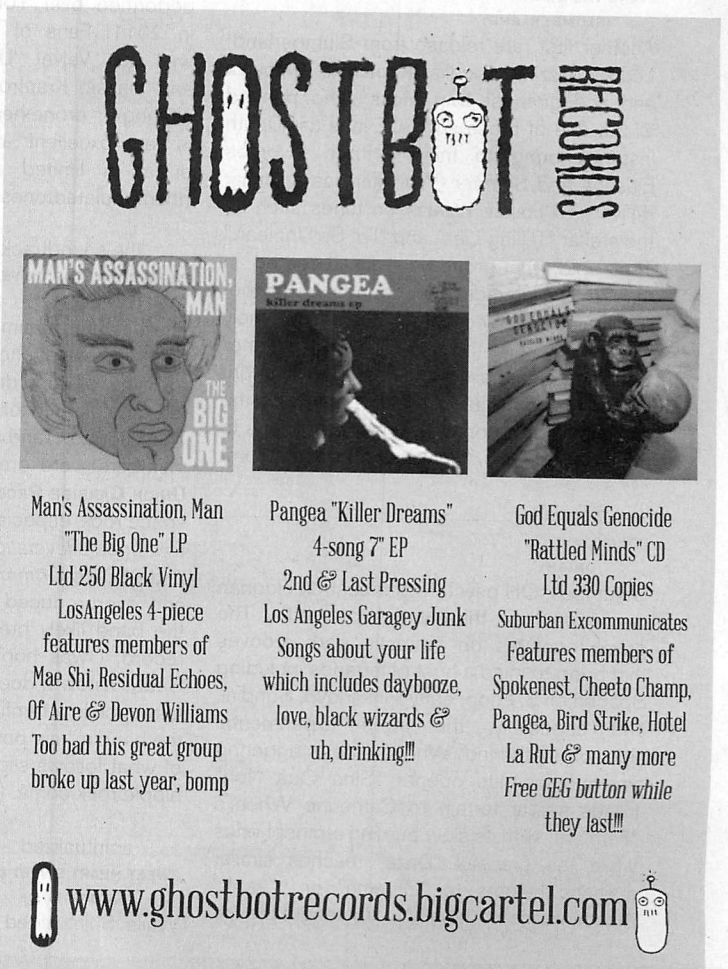
JEFF HART
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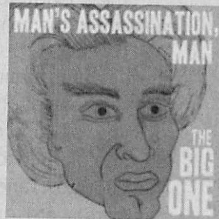

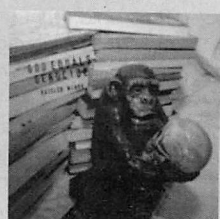
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- Jack Rabid / The Big Takeover

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