



## HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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### CDs/DVDs

## Prickly St. Nick

The *Mirror's* own jolly Holiday elf critiques the latest batch of season-specific releases

by **SANTA CUMMINS**

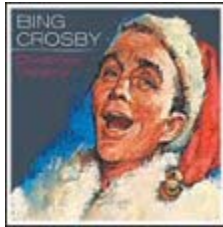
Ho, ho—cough—ho. I've been checking my list and checking it twice, but after listening to the latest laser-guided holiday claptrap, it seems that the majority of these greedy Grinches have been more naughty than nice.

Heading up the naughty list is none other than that pipe-smokin' child abuser Bing Crosby. So if you haven't been a bad little boy or girl, pick up his collection of 16 yuletide chestnuts, *Christmas Classics*, or Crosby's ghost of Christmas past promises to return to give your rump a sound rum-a-pum-pumming.

Speaking of criminals, why not have yourself a merry little Christmas with the sweet falsetto vocals of Aaron Neville and his record, *Christmas Prayer*. His version of "Joy to the World," complete with amazing backing from the Blind Boys of Alabama, is so sweet you almost forget you are listening to a man who spent years fighting off men in prison showers, and has a dagger/amoeba tattooed on his cheek.

One of the ultimate velvet crooners, Nat King Cole of course got into the Xmas carolling racket back before the P.C. heathens took over and

snatched prayers out of our schoolrooms. On *The Christmas Song*, Cole actually makes classics like "O Tannenbaum" and "Away in a Manger" almost well, gosh, listenable. Things aren't that bad on this disc, but I suggest you skip the posthumous duet in which his daughter Natalie digitally exhumed his corpse and added her own vocals to the 1961 title track. Have a creepy Christmas!



The mother-lode of all Christmas carol collections is the exhaustive six-disc Best Christmas 100 set, ideal for the insatiable Christmas freak. Mary Margaret O'Hara, Jeff Beck, the Beach Boys, Nancy Wilson, Jan and Dean, Dean Martin and tons of others go at it in this festive battle royale. Warning: If you are able to listen to the entirety of this collection in one sitting, we suggest you consult your nearest physician as your ear canals may be filled in with cement.

It looks like Sarah McLachlan might need a new house to summer in, and has also got in on the consumer-happy cash-grab holiday—oops, I mean the celebration of the baby Jesus, with her new record *Wintersong*. I hate to lump this Lillith Fair Earth mother in with the rest of the money-grubbers, but if the Birkenstock fits...

And what else do we have here but Aimee Mann's *One More Drifter in the Snow*, which seems to proudly state, "Look at me, I am completely devoid of a soul!" The water's fine in the Lake of Fire, Aimee. Just jump right in.

Another rancid cranberry here from Twisted Sister, who would like to make your night not so silent with *A Twisted Christmas*. Deck the halls with spandex and eye shadow to the amped-up version of "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" and their own "Heavy Metal Christmas." A Twisted Sister Christmas record? Could a Dee Snider-endorsed pregnancy test be far behind?

The shining diamond squeezed from these lumps of coal would definitely be *New Orleans Christmas*, featuring the soul, jazz and blues reworkings of the classics from the best the Big Easy has to offer, and best of all, a portion of the proceeds will go towards repairing the damage done to New Orleans. Finally, a record that actually does have Christmas Spirit.

## Crazy Christmas

**Hip hop, soul jams, classic rock of all eras, roots, reggae, techno and... avant-garde, orchestral White Stripes? There's plenty of great sounds to give this year**

by **RUPERT BOTTENBERG**

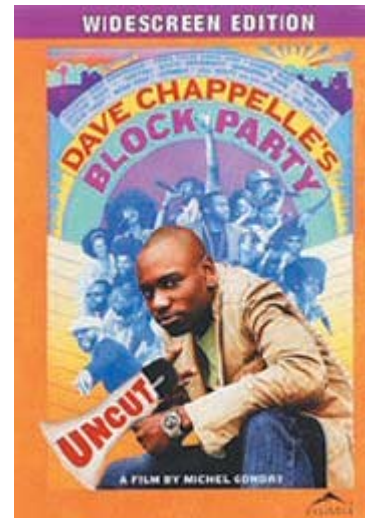
With all due respect to Mr. Timberlake, the definitive pop song of 2006 has to be



"Crazy" by Gnarls Barkley. A copy of their brilliant, platinum-certified debut album, *St. Elsewhere*, would make a nice gift, but better yet would be the new special-edition package, featuring a fat, info-packed booklet, a DVD with five videos, live tracks and a lenticular 3D version of the cover art (you know, like those old Crackerjacks prizes).

If you really want to go, ahem, crazy, back that up with separate material from the two members of Gnarls Barkley, singer Cee-Lo and production wizard Danger Mouse. Cee-Lo saw an anthology of his magnificently soulful solo efforts, *The Collection*, released this year, while Gorillaz—the cartoon band, cooked up by Blur's Damon Albarn and comic artist Jamie Hewlett, whose last album *Demon Days* was produced by Danger Mouse—released two DVDs. The first, *Demon Days Live*, is the flesh-and-blood Gorillaz band in concert in Manchester, and the other is a new package of visual fun (videos, games, rarities, surprises) called *Phase Two: Slowboat to Hades*.

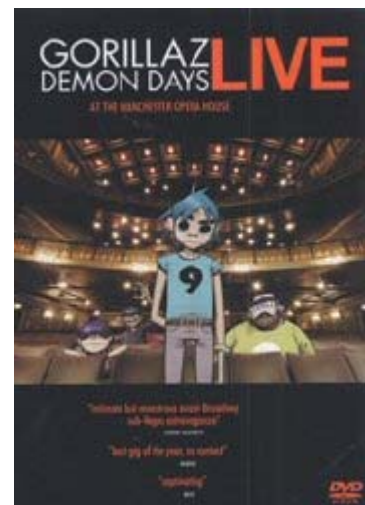
One of the best films of the year was the Michel Gondry-directed documentary about superstar comedian Dave Chappelle's street-level blowout in Brooklyn, which just happened to feature some outrageously good music as well. That's why a two-for-one gift of the DVD and soundtrack CD (boasting the Roots, Dead Prez, Erykah Badu, Common, Mos Def and many more—including, in the film, Kanye West backed by a college marching band) of Dave Chappelle's *Block Party* is a surefire winner.



Other worthwhile rap picks include Jazzy Jeff's *Hip Hop Forever III* CD, with tracks by Gang Starr, Mobb Deep, Redman, Eric B. & Rakim and the Pharcyde (but no Will Smith), the dope *Blackalicious* DVD, *4/20 Live in Seattle* (guess why they chose that particular date...), and on a local note, *Sunglasses Is a Must*, the DVD from Montreal's A-Trak—five-time DMC champ, Kanye West sidekick and obsessive zoo visitor.

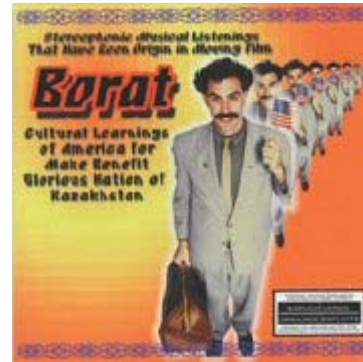
## From Kazakhstan to underwater-land

Also a big box-office hit this year was Borat's big-screen leap. Subtitled *Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, its soundtrack—or rather, "stereophonic musical listenings that have been origin in moving film," offers not just that notorious "Throw the Jew Down the Well" song from Borat's TV days (possibly for Mel Gibson's enjoyment) but some "cultural learnings" too. Not about Kazakhstan, actually, but about the raucous music of the Balkans, which is primed to succeed Brazil, Bollywood and the Buena Vista boys as the next big thing in world music (check the exciting comp *Electric Gypsyland 2*, with the likes of Animal Collective, Nouvelle Vague, Balkan Beat Box, Shantel and Buscemi aboard).

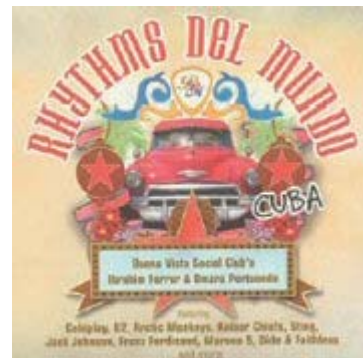


Speaking of Buena Vista Social Club, still-breathing members Ibrahim Ferrer and Omara Portuondo join the likes of Sting, Coldplay, Dido, Arctic Monkeys and Jack Johnson for Rhythms del Mundo: Cuba, a Latin-flavoured fundraiser CD to fight global warming. That's right, a son-style "Clocks" and a spiel from Al Gore, what fun!

Less in the news of late, but certainly not to be ignored, is the continuing struggle of the city and citizens of New Orleans, post-Katrina. Bush, "Brownie" and the bunch weren't much help, but you can be, by giving the gift of great music that comes with a charitable earmark. A guaranteed winner in that respect is Our New Orleans, a Nonesuch compilation boasting not only Allen Toussaint and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, but Randy Newman, Wild Magnolias, Dr. John, Irma Thomas, Buckwheat Zydeco and more. There's also The River in Reverse, a collab between Elvis Costello and Toussaint (who were here to present the material live at the Jazz Fest this past summer), and the Dirty Dozen's legendary adaptation of Marvin Gaye's equally legendary album What's Going On, which features vocal cameos by Chuck D, G. Love, Guru and Ivan Neville.



From a similarly soulful place comes Forever Young, Gifted & Black: Songs of Freedom and Spirit, an impressive anthology of music from the great Nina Simone, who also saw a Remixed & Reimagined compilation this year, featuring Coldcut, Tony Humphries, François K., DJ Logic and more. On a funkier note, check out the impressively packaged What It Is!: Funky Soul & Rare Grooves four-disc box set, boasting 90-odd tracks from the decade between '67 and '77. Big hits like the Bar-Kays' "Soul Finger" rub up against cool rarities and forgotten gems.



On the reggae tip, a couple of sweet ones—the ultra-obscure, self-titled 1979 album by Noel Ellis, son of Jamaican legend Alton Ellis, at last saw wide CD release this year, and the reputation that preceded it is entirely merited. There's also the Trojan label's Let Me Tell You Boy: Soulful Sounds from Reggae's Greatest Female Talents, featuring sweetness from Phyllis Dillon, Marcia Griffiths, Dawn Penn and more. Tragically, another legend of Jamaican soul, Desmond Dekker, the guy who did "007 (Shanty Town)" and "Israelites," passed away this year. His final recordings are out as ...In Memoriam 1941–2006.

## Love isn't all you need

The juggernaut release of the 2006 holiday season is Love, the spectacular revisiting of the Beatles' catalogue that accompanies the Cirque du Soleil show installed in Las Vegas. It's not just that the parade of hits drawn from across the Fab Four's career has never sounded better—gorgeously remastered and presented on both CD and DVD Audio disc, with a big, fat, informative booklet. It's that they've been artfully rearranged, edited and



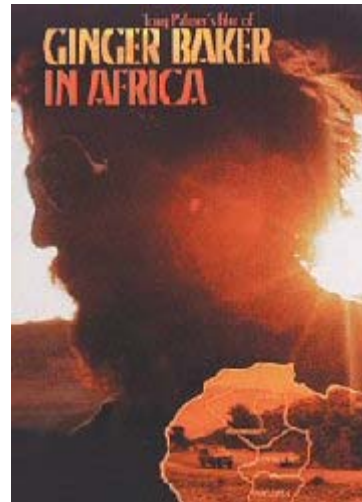
even mashed up by Sir George Martin and his son Giles, to the extent that Love can properly be called a whole new Beatles album.

The counterpoint to what the Beatles were doing in England in the mid-'60s was Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys, which has been again rereleased this year. This latest version of this original orch-pop masterpiece, packaged in a pleasant green fuzzy-felt jacket, features the original mono recordings, with "Hang On to Your Ego" tacked on, as well as a DVD with the audio tracks in stereo, a making-of featurette, interviews with Brian Wilson and George Martin and promo clips from the era.



The Who dropped a new album this year, after a quiet quarter-century, but fans of the old days with the departed Keith Moon and John Entwistle will dig the Live at the Isle of Wight Festival 1970 DVD. Also on the live tip from the same year is the CD Live at the Fillmore East March 6 & 7, 1970 from Neil Young & Crazy Horse, the first in a series of fancy Young concert reissues.

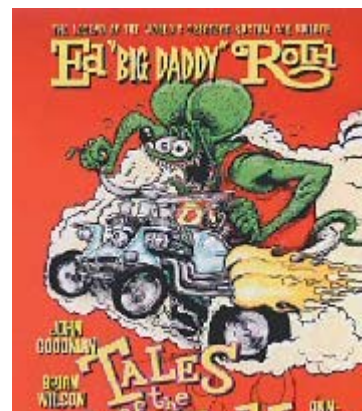
You'll have to reach "way, way down inside" your pocket for Nine Lives, but if there's a Robert Plant fan on your list, the massive 10-disc, covering his entire post-Led Zep career, plus an hour-long DVD should appeal to them. A little easier on the pocketbook is the Sound Stage Presents: Robert Plant and the Strange Sensation DVD, a live one with solo songs supplemented by a couple of Zep numbers. Cream fans, meanwhile, will be psyched to see drummer Ginger Baker in Tony Palmer's film Ginger Baker in Africa, which follows his 1971 trip across Nigeria, including a visit with a young Fela Kuti.



## The King, the Killer and kustom-kar kool

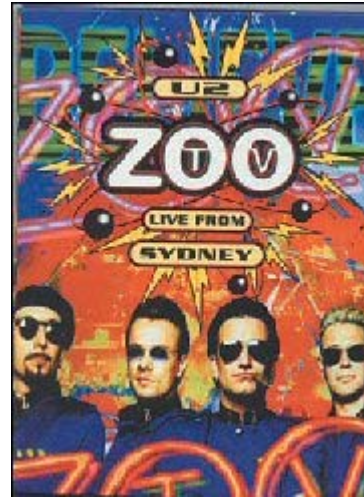
Going back a bit further, this year finally saw a widescale release of The Complete Million Dollar Quartet, the legendary Sun Records sessions that brought together Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash. For anyone hankering for pure gold from the early days of rock 'n' roll and classic country, you can't beat this summit meeting of the biggest names in their field.

Speaking of Cash and Lewis, there's worthy material from both to look into. If you thought that last year's bio-pic had heralded the last huge wave of material from the Man in Black, think again. Forever is an expansive, three-disc box set packaged in a shiny metal case, suitable for the longtime fan and the newbie alike. Jerry Lee Lewis, meanwhile, offered up the brand-new Last Man Standing (and of the Million Dollar Quartet, he is). The album of duets, arriving in a tough, tasteful hardcover jacket, has



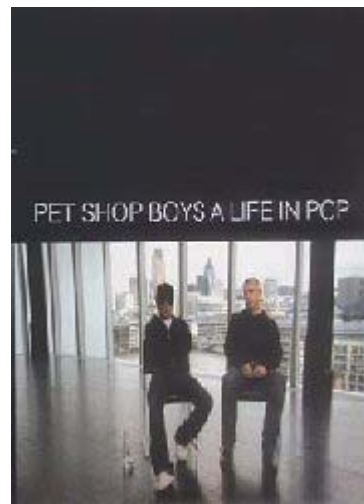
"the Killer" killing it with pretty much everybody—Buddy Guy and BB King, Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart, Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton, Kid Rock and, unfortunately, Don Henley.

Bruce Springsteen's on there too, but his fans might be more pleased with the special American Land edition of *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, what with the extra DVD and all. On a rougher, raunchier note, Tom Waits outdid himself this year with his masterful, three-disc mega-album *Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers and Bastards*—30 unreleased tracks, a ton of rare-as-hen's-teeth tunes and a big, fat booklet to boot.



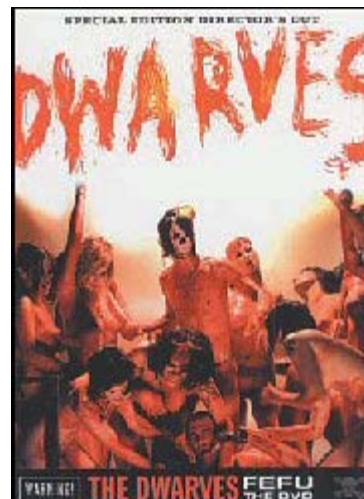
The Destiny's Child of new country, the Dixie Chicks, made a lot of enemies—and new friends—when they badmouthed Bush on stage. On the heels of the film *Shut Up and Sing*, which followed that episode and its fallout, comes the special edition of their latest, *Taking the Long Way* (produced by Rick Rubin!), with a bonus DVD of videos and interviews.

For some maple-flavoured roots action, ya can't beat the Sadies. This genre-jumping twang gang released two albums of note this year. In *Concert Vol. 1* catches them in all their live glory, while *Tales of the Rat Fink Original Soundtrack* has them digging into their dirty, surfy instrumental-rock jones. The latter simply must be accompanied by the DVD of the film by Ron Mann (*Comic Book Confidential*, Grass). It's an "animentary," an animated doc with the voices of John Goodman, Jay Leno, Matt Groening and more, that explores the life, times and disgustipatin' hot-rod monster art of the kustom-kulture deity Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, inventor of Rat Fink and icon to gearheads and goofs the world over. The DVD boasts all manner of neat bonuses, above and beyond Mann's super-cool flick.



## Class of 1984, more or less

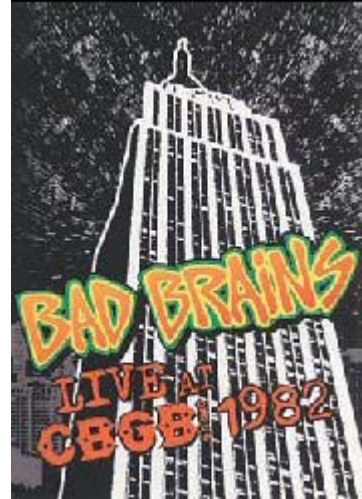
Good ol' Bono's been busy saving the world recently, and props to him for that, but he hasn't been too busy to see the release of some retrospective U2 material. First up is the anthology *18 Singles*, which spans their career, from "Sunday Bloody Sunday" right through to "The Saints are Coming," a jam with Green Day. There's also the *Zoo TV Live from Sydney* DVD, catching the boys at their most bombastic and spectacular in the early '90s.



For the synth-pop obsessive, a guaranteed winner is Depeche Mode's new best-of, called, uh, *The Best of... Volume 1*. It's the

early stuff that truly rules—just can't get enough of "Just Can't Get Enough"—but the comp covers the breadth of the '80s releases.

No greatest-hits comp from Pet Shop Boys this year, just their admirable new album *Fundamental*, but longtime fans will thoroughly enjoy *A Life in Pop*, the new biographical DVD loaded with inside info, rare footage and interviews with not only Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe (what, he talks?!) but compadres like Robbie Williams. Speaking of whom, the DVD *And Through It All* captures a decade of his solo hits, live.



George Michael's *Twentyfive* is a three-disc set, divided into "For Living," "For Loving," and "For the Loyal," covering his massive solo hits, best-known numbers from his time with Wham!, and duets with the likes of Mary J. Blige, Elton John and Paul McCartney. Hugh Cornwell, once the frontman of notorious punk band the Stranglers, likewise offers a three-CD set, *People Places Pieces*—three discs of live tracks from both his solo career and his days with the Stranglers.

For some far nastier punk action, check out the seminal rage-meisters Bad Brains on the DVD *Live at CBGB 1982*, as HR and the lads shred through classics like "Big Takeover" and "Banned in D.C." while the crowd go dangerously wild—a true classic. There's also *Ten Years of Revolutionary Rock 'n' Roll*, a two-hour documentary about Wendy O. Williams and the Plasmatics that borders on Spinal Tap lunacy,



supplemented by insane live footage. The biggest band that nobody seems to remember, *WOW* and co. upstaged Kiss and Alice Cooper in the shock-rock theatrics department while predating the fuck-me—or is that fuck-you?—feminism by years.

## Cool junk for punks

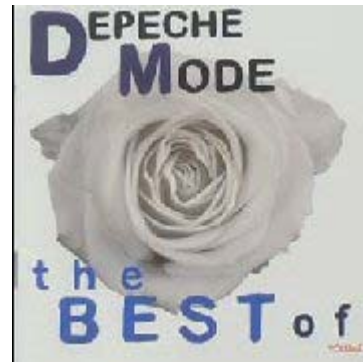
Clearly in the fuck-you column is Washington's baddest bunch of bastards, the Dwarves. While bonuses on FEFU the DVD capture the instant brawls their gigs generally became, the centerpiece is the "dirty version" video for "FEFU," a blood-caked frenzy of sleaze, violence and sacrilege starring the bratty exhibitionists from *Suicide Girls*, and a dancing sex dwarf to boot.



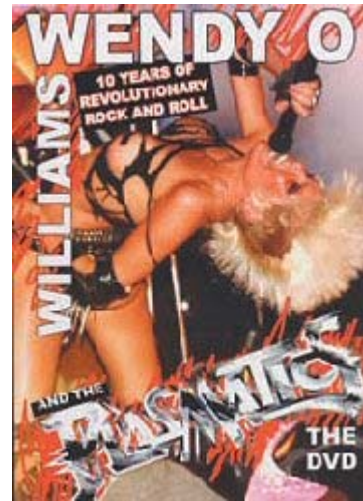
On a Canadian note, Quebec's *Reset* have a best-of CD out called *No Worries No Limits*. Who's *Reset*? Today, you know them as *Simple Plan*. Another notable northern release is *Doot Doola Doot Doo... Doot Doo!*, a grab bag of guerrilla-gooftball interviews (with everyone from Marilyn Manson to Mikhail Gorbachev), live stuff, videos and more, care of garage-rock eminence grise/menace with a microphone/dress-code disaster *Nardwuar the Human Serviette*. Double that up with a copy of

Nard's 2007 Punk Rock Calendar, featuring photos of Black Flag, Ramones and more by celebrated shutterbug Bev Davies.

And after punk came... post-punk. True acolytes of early American alt-rock will drool over the bio-pics *We Jam Econo*, detailing the rise and tragic demise of pinko funk-punks the Minutemen, and *Not a Photograph*, which tells the tale of Mission of Burma. With buzzing six-strings and weighty dynamics, the latter set the stage for the real breakout of the bunch, the Pixies. The story of their 2004 reunion, which zeros in on drummer Dave Lovering's disturbing on-camera disintegration, is caught in the doc *loudQUIETloud*, out on DVD. Back that up with one or both of these DVDs: *Live at the Paradise in Boston*, their '04 homecoming gig, or *Acoustic: Live in Newport*, an unexpectedly un-electric gig from '05.



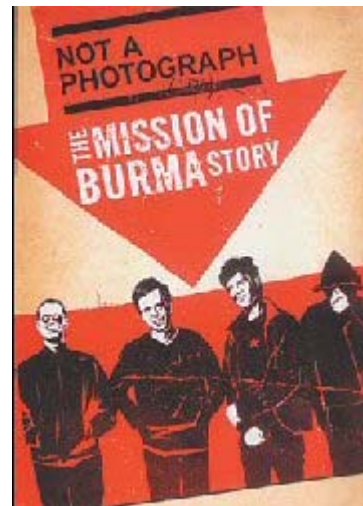
Of course, the big fish in '90s alternative rock was Nirvana, whose *Live! Tonight! Sold Out!*, available in both CD and DVD formats, catches them busting out their biggest hits on stage. For a bit of follow-through, wrap that up with the *Skin and Bones* live CD from Dave Grohl's post-Nirvana effort Foo Fighters.



## Techno trinkets

Some other remnants of the last decade of the last century merit a mention. *Stop the Clocks* gathers 18 hits by the bad boys of Britpop, Oasis, while *They Can't All Be Zingers*, packaged in the manner of processed cheez slices, showcases the wit and weirdness of Primus. A truly exhaustive package is *Everything Under the Sun*, three CDs and a DVD scanning the career of Sublime. The tunes are entirely rarities and outtakes, all previously unreleased, while the DVD boasts rare live footage and the only all-three-guys-at-once interview ever.

The most impressive box set this year, presentation-wise, is *A Piano: The Collection* from Tori Amos. Five discs of her best-loved album tracks, plus demos, b-sides and rarities, join a substantial booklet in this kit, but what's best is that it's packaged in what looks like a mini-keyboard (ideal for accompanying air-piano jams). Toss in a copy of the DVD *Fade to Red*, Tori's 21-song video collection.

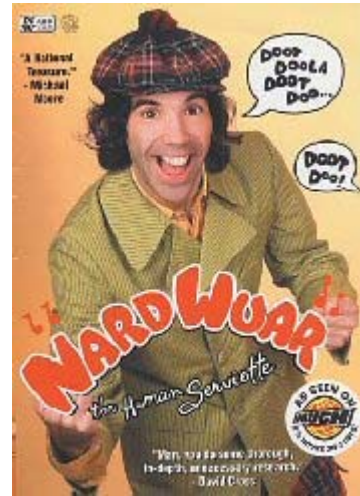


There's also Moby's *Go: The Very Best of...*, which is supplemented by a remix disc, and *High Times: Singles 1992-2006*, 19 tracks from the cat in the Cat in the Hat hat, Jamiroquai. A better call, though, might be the DVD *The Greatest Hits: Why Make Videos* from the godfather of mash-ups, Fatboy Slim, featuring all those cool Spike Jonze clips and



much more.

Since we're in dance-music territory, it merits mentioning the two-disc Retrospective from French techno explorer Laurent Garnier. He also joins up with Carl Craig for the compilation Kings of Techno, which explores both the roots and the branches of Detroit's gifts to electronic music. For house heads, meanwhile, a good call would be Choice: A Collection of Classics, selected by Masters at Work's Kenny "Dope" Gonzales.



Another Gonzales of note, who's dropped the Chilly prename, has tracks on both the New York City and Berlin editions of the The Sex the City the Music series (Barcelona and Las Vegas get the nod too), which supplement clever and on-point music programming with thumbnail guides to eating, shopping, partying and getting laid in their respective towns.

Furthermore, while the Gonzales organ gig at Pop Montreal was a resounding dud, he makes up for it with the neat-o DVD From Major to Minor, which documents his better performances, ranging from snarky music lessons for audience volunteers to a piano face-off against avant-gardist Jean-François Zygel to a climactic jam with his pals Mocky, Feist and Jamie Lidell.



And speaking of avant-garde, let's not forget the neo-classicist on your list. They'd likely dig Aluminum, an ambitious, modern-orchestral rendition of familiar White Stripes songs. But the true hero of the serial-music lover is composer Steve Reich, who this year saw the release of not only Reich: Remixed 2006, the second edition of the series (Four Tet's among the talent involved) but also the weighty, career-spanning five-CD set Phases. Take that, Philip Glass!



## Holiday hot plates

### >> Gift ideas for the jazz aficionado

by **LEN DOBBIN**

The Blue Note label's Ultimate Jazz Christmas would seem to be the pick of the new seasonal releases, with honorary mentions going to Christmas by the Classical Jazz Quartet, the Sultans of Swing's Harlem Nutcracker and Emile-Claire Barlow's Winter Wonderland.



In the “buy Canadian” category, there’s the wonderful Stained Glass by the trio of pianist Geoff Lapp, and Déja Jazz by bassist Michel Donato. Another bassist, Cameron Brown, has Here and How!, featuring the voice of Sheila Jordan, while Roberta Gambarini’s Easy to Love is the vocal CD of the year. Gambarini also turns up on Dizzy’s Business, by a great Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, and for the big-band fancier, there’s also the exciting reissue of Woody Herman’s My Kind of Broadway.

The two-CD set The Essential Jazz Recordings, as chosen by Ross Porter, would make a great gift for the beginner. For the francophone on your list, perhaps Reverence from Henri Salvador, or trumpeter Patrick Artero’s Artero Brel, would be the right thing.

Among box sets, I would suggest Stan Kenton 50th Anniversary Celebration: Back to Balboa, five CDs from a 1991 celebration that consisted of 18 concerts and 10 panel discussions over four days. Literally hundreds of Kenton alumni showed up, including Bill Holman, Lee Konitz, Lennie Niehaus, Shorty Rogers and Pete Rugulo—there’s even a vocal version of “Intermission Riff.”

In the book department, Gary Giddins’s Natural Selection is an easy choice, with a reminder that the Oliver Jones bio is now available in English. There are a number of choice DVDs in the Ralph J. Gleason Jazz Casual collection worth considering, including more from the ‘60s Herman band, one featuring Gerry Mulligan with Bob Brookmeyer, Art Farmer with Jim Hall and an Art Pepper Quartet, as well as a complete collection in an eight-DVD pack. Happy shopping!

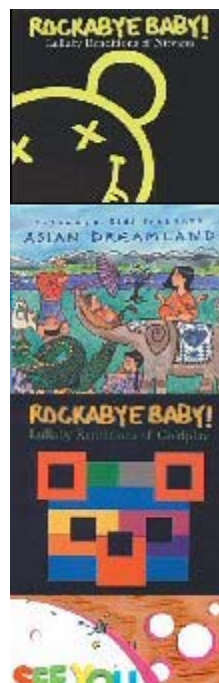
## Smells like tyke spirit

### >> Cool calls for cool kids

by **RUPERT BOTTENBERG**

A fine gift for little kids, and even more so for harried parents, is a nice CD of lullabies to ease the little ones off to slumberland. And what could be more soothing than the music of Nirvana, Metallica and Led Zeppelin? Not much, actually, if you take the Rockabye Baby! CD series into consideration.

The aforementioned hard-rock bands, along with Radiohead, the Cure and Coldplay, see their catalogues revisited by arranger/performer Michael Armstrong for this series. Any preconception of corniness is quickly dispelled by Armstrong’s crafty use of vibraphones, glockenspiels, mellotron keyboards and more, coaxing out the sweet melodies often hidden behind a wall of distorted noise. These genuinely sweet and soothing albums aren’t just knockout pills for toddlers, but treasures for curious music fans of all stripes.



For a hipper trip for kids, and one that's Canadian product to boot, check out the cool, colourful compilation CD *See You on the Moon!*: Songs for Kids of All Ages, from the Paper Bag label. From velvety lullabies to noisy romper-stompers, artists including Sufjan Stevens, Junior Boys, Broken Social Scene (doing "Puff the Magic Dragon"), Hot Chip and Kid Koala jamming with Lederhosen Lucil have a go at making music for children that isn't insulting to listeners old enough to tie their own shoes.

From the Putumayo label come two interesting kids' discs. The first, *New Orleans Playground*, features Big Easy big shots like the Meters, Dr. John, Buckwheat Zydeco and Fats Domino banging out lively jams in the key of kid-friendly. Like other New Orleans-related CDs in the Mirror's 2006 gift guide, a slice of your dollar goes to a worthy cause in Louisiana. Coin from the sales of *Asian Dreamland*, meanwhile, goes to the Worldwide Orphans Foundation—but pick it up first and foremost for the nighty-night numbers by Ali Akbar Khan, erhu player Lei Qiang and numerous Japanese traditionalists-with-a-twist.

## Home-turf holiday

### >> Local music under the tree

by *MIRROR MUSIC STAFF*

There's no shortage of superior-grade sounds coming from Montreal of late. Here are a few 2006 releases that merit a spot on your seasonal gift list:

#### **Frenchi Blanco**

#### ***Haute Surveillance* (FP International/DEP)**

FP Crew member Frenchi Blanco's solo project *Haute Surveillance* reflected the growth of this talented MC, who has shown that he's a force to be reckoned with, whether he's on his own or trading bars with Wu-Tang's Inspectah Deck on "Appel tes connex." All kinds of Montreal joints on here, like "24/24," "Blowmind" and "Dans l'grind." (Scott C)



#### **The Dears**

#### ***Gang of Losers* (MapleMusic)**

Anyone who owns Radiohead's *OK Computer*, Bowie's *Station to Station* and the Smiths' *The Queen Is Dead* needs this album, the Dears' third, best, sunniest and darkest disc yet. Minus the orchestral weight and Britpop pose of old, they're more raucous, soulful and lyrically potent than ever, unafraid to tackle swinging rhythms and racism, sax solos and suicide notes. (Lorraine Carpenter)



#### **Angela Desveaux**

## ***Wandering Eyes (Thrill Jockey)***

Local songstress Desveaux is a safe bet, with a voice that soothes and careens while perfectly translating the language of the heart. Desveaux is an expert at providing the soundtrack for a two-step at a smoky honky tonk, but when it comes to ballads, she can reduce the most callous to a puddle. (Johnson Cummins)



## **Malajube**

### ***Trompe L'oeil (Dare to Care)***

It's an American indie record with quirky French lyrics and fun-loving Quebec attitude. Malajube writes the catchiest pop tunes in the game, but on their second LP, their zany musical ambitions have caught up with their potential. Every song is wildly unique, and every listen uncovers another layer of their dense sound. (Erik Leijon)



## **numéro#**

### ***L'Idéologie des Stars (Saboteur)***

If your little sister is clever enough to draw the line between trashy radio pop and a couple of sarcastic instrumentalists cleverly lampooning it, this disc might just be for her. If, however, she's read up on her Orwell and can appreciate the musical doublethink required to produce an album that is, at the same time, both a snarky stab at pop stardom and a genuine attempt to emulate it, well, hot dog, we have a wiener! (Jack Oatmon)



## **Omnikrom**

### ***FM2: 24 pouces glacés (Magnifiques/LOCAL)***

One of the reasons why Ghislain Poirier's Bounce le Gros is, well, gros, Omnikrom's crunky hip hop has provided reasons for Montrealers to jump up and down even when it's bitterly cold. Forwards galore for these guys as they also no doubt created the flat-out wickedest party song of the year, alongside TTC and Ghislain—"Pour te Rechauffer" simply kills. (Erin MacLeod)



## **Kim Richardson**

### ***Kaleidoscope (Bros)***

Richardson's aptly titled debut disc is a musical smorgasbord that features everything from reggae to rock to ballsy blues. Regardless of style, her powerful voice is in full control throughout this almost evenly bilingual disc. Standouts include the introspective "Backup Singer's Blues" and the superbly soulful "Deep Down Inside." (Gerard Dee)



## Vorpal *Digressions (Sublight)*

Vorpal, aka Andrew Kozloski, relocated here from Philly to enjoy the ladies—okay, one lady—and our wonderful winters where he could hole himself away. The result: *Digressions*, a collage of beats and bleeps organized into chaos. Hyper-loops of digi-tastic breaks and funky blip-hop drill into your cranium. Just right for the dancefloor—if you're stoned enough. (Lateef Martin)



## Patrick Watson *Close to Paradise (Secret City)*

For my money, the next big thing out of Montreal. Watson, he of the honeyed falsetto and lush compositional vision, knows how to raise goosebumps, and together with his remarkable band fashions a distinctive, intensely emotive brew that incorporates cosmic narcosis in the vein of Pink Floyd, the tonal precision of jazz, the complex grandeur of modern classical romanticism and a certain pastoral splendor. (Rupert Bottenberg)



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