



M.I.A. Arular

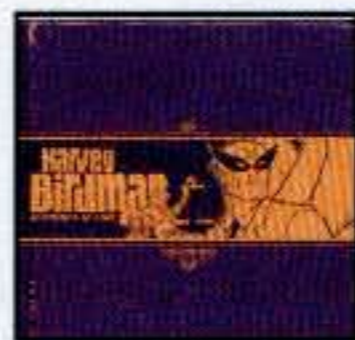
Interscope/XL

Released back in March 2005, *Arular*, the debut full-length from M.I.A. (aka Maya Arulpragasam) has steadily distinguished itself as one of the year's most hyped albums. Luckily, in this case, the buzz is well deserved. It doesn't take many listens to figure out why the album has sent critics into a fawning frenzy and enticed Interscope to slap their logo on the packaging. *Arular's* auteur perhaps put it the most succinctly on "Pull Up the People" when she spits, "I've got the bombs to make you blow/I've got the beats to make it Bang Bang Bang."

The London-born Sri Lankan refugee and daughter of Arul Pragasam, a major figure in the militant Tamil Tigers liberation movement, gets as much ink for her turbulent history as she does for her music, but the latter is strong enough to warrant all the attention she's been getting, with or without the human interest story attached. Choppy beats chortle with clanks, buzzes and static, bursting with a raw, potent enthusiasm that provides the spark for Arulpragasam's vocals. Part dancehall DJ, part carnie barker, Arulpragasam harnesses her fiery bravado with sharp wit, balancing kitschy club bangers and skits ("Galang" and "U.R.A.Q.T.") with equally catchy numbers about the refugee experience ("Amazon"). Though her lyrics consist mostly of simple mantras, Arulpragasam's strength is in her delivery, making effective use of repetitive sounds, like in "Sunshowers" when she chants, "I checked the mouth on him/Fucking checked that gas on him/I had him, cornered him/Fucking shut that gate on him."

Mixing revolutionary rhetoric with sultry party jams, *Arular* is an album equally suited for cred seekers, dance floor freaks and Che Guevara T-shirt jockers. Yeah, believe the hype.

James Barone



Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law Vol. 1

ADULT SWIM/WARNER
HOME VIDEO
2xDVD - Not Rated

Hanna-Barbera's '60s superhero Birdman is reincarnated as *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law*, who now faces his arch-enemies in the courtroom. Harvey is called upon to defend H-B favorites like Scooby Doo and Fred Flintstone, but his cases are much heavier than a stolen pic-a-nic basket. *Daily Show* alum Stephen Colbert plays two hilarious characters—Harvey's boss Phil Ken Sebben, whose Tourette's-like outbursts somehow connect with the conversation ("ha HA! Dangly things!"); and Reducto, the little guy who soothes his insecurity with his shrink gun. The 12 episodes on this DVD are riddled with witty humor, innuendos and boundaries pushed oh so far. When your friends start reciting *Aqua Teen*, school 'em with a little *Harvey Birdman*.

Mandy Johnston

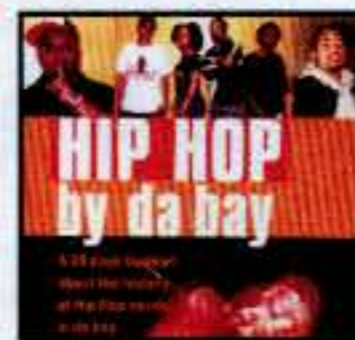


Kool Keith Global Enlightenment Part 1

DVD - Global Warming Filmworks

Hey white kids, Kool Keith has a new DVD. For 35 minutes you can watch and listen to the man who made the album that got you cat dogs into hip-hop...talk about stuff. Yeah, he talks about stuff, it's pretty fucking informative. Entertaining? Yeah, but so is throwing a tennis ball for a dog. "But it's Kool Keith, yo! He made Dr. Octagon!" I don't give a fuck, I'm just waiting for the new Cliche album, and someone please tell Dame Dash to quit being a pussy and drop that MOP album. For the sake of Kool Keith getting richer and making more great business moves, buy this DVD.

Corey Bloom



Hip Hop By da Bay

MUSIC VIDEO
DISTRIBUTORS
DVD - Not Rated

Hip Hop By da Bay features short interviews and live performances from four Bay Area acts, but other than a segment on Zion-I, none of the names will ring a bell. The DVD shows a grassroots movement taking place as we speak, and if there had to be a theme amongst the groups, positivity and consciousness would tie them all together; but each still mixes the party vibe with their message. There is a short book included with the package that breaks down the history of the Bay from Too \$hort to Frontline, however the DVD fails to incorporate this, only focusing on a few acts instead of the scene as a whole.

Corey Bloom



The Hold Steady Separation Sunday

FRENCH KISS

The centerpiece of The Hold Steady's sound is the blaring voice of Craig Finn. His talk-singing style is the result of splicing the DNA of Lou Reed with Jello Biafra. Finn's rants about drugs, religion and women pour over thick guitars and a thin organ that combine with stomping drums to create rock music with an alt-country touch. *Separation Sunday* succeeds because the band forces its alt-countryishness to be so damn fun, something the genre is often not able to do. The bouncing rhythm of "Cattle and the Creeping Things" is accented by horns and piano as Finn barks out a tale of a Revelations-minded rehab couple looking to score. This Sunday school is addictive and fun!

Connell Burton McDaniel



Lindsay Lohan Tomato Ketchup

HEINZ

Never before a staple on my grocery list, through the selling powers of the current Hollywood it-girl, ketchup is now my new favorite condiment. Only a sucker like me, sporting the do Lindsay rocked in *Mean Girls*, would be susceptible to this type of marketing. One quote from the celebrity *du jour* was all it took to introduce me to the many ways ketchup adds that extra kick to pretty much any meal. Thanks Lindsay, it truly is "burger-licious!"

Mary Messina



Minus the Bear Menos El Oso

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

On Minus the Bear's Spanish-ly eponymous new CD, the long-underrated indie rockers manage to incorporate dance-able beats, ample synths and memorable hooks without sounding anything like the multitudes of neo-new wave bands storming the shores of pop music. Though the band has long been known more for their tongue-in-cheek lyrics and song titles, this notoriety has often taken away from the fact that they do kick quite a lot of ass, musically. Like a streamlined version of the Dismemberment Plan, Minus the Bear fill the 50-plus minutes of *Menos El Oso* with enough electronically aided indie funk to kill The Braverys and Killers of the world stone dead. Dancing with crossed arms never seemed so right.

Daniel Taylor