

life after GbV

Having retired his 20-year vehicle **Guided by Voices**, Dayton, OH's **Robert Pollard** has resumed his prolific career. January 24 kicks off his post-GbV, solo-only phase with *From a Compound Eye* on Merge Records. It's a sprawling, unpredictable CD that's so chock full of ideas – a double album on vinyl – it's almost bewildering.

Asked the inevitable question about how he approached this da-capo new beginning, it turns out Pollard went forward *and* backward. "I wrote 11 or 12 new songs; the rest are old songs I found going through my cassettes since the mid-'70s," he tells **ICE**. "I usually brainstorm ideas onto a cassette, pick 15 or 20 and go back and work on them. But in the process of going through these *older* cassettes, I found ideas that to me now are better than the ones I used then.

"And that's also a reason I broke up GbV, because of this record," he continues. "I came up with these songs, and said, 'This record is too good to be on [his low-key offshoot series] *Faded Captain*, this is a good place to start my post-GbV career.' I'm going to start working with new people, is the main thing. When you're in a band, it's like a marriage. On tour you're with them 24 hours a day. And you're not allowed to [play] around with others – well, they'll let you, but they won't be happy about it."

Compound Eye is principally just Pollard (and his guitar) playing with later GbV producer **Todd Tobias**. And the pair has already finished a follow-up, called *Normal Happiness*. By way of preview, Pollard exclaims, "It's the poppiest thing I've ever done. It's all new stuff, 16 two-minute pop songs, and Todd's guitar work on it is fantastic. This is painless, working with him. I make him work harder than I do. I feel like my job is finished when I write the songs. I'm into a relaxed performance."

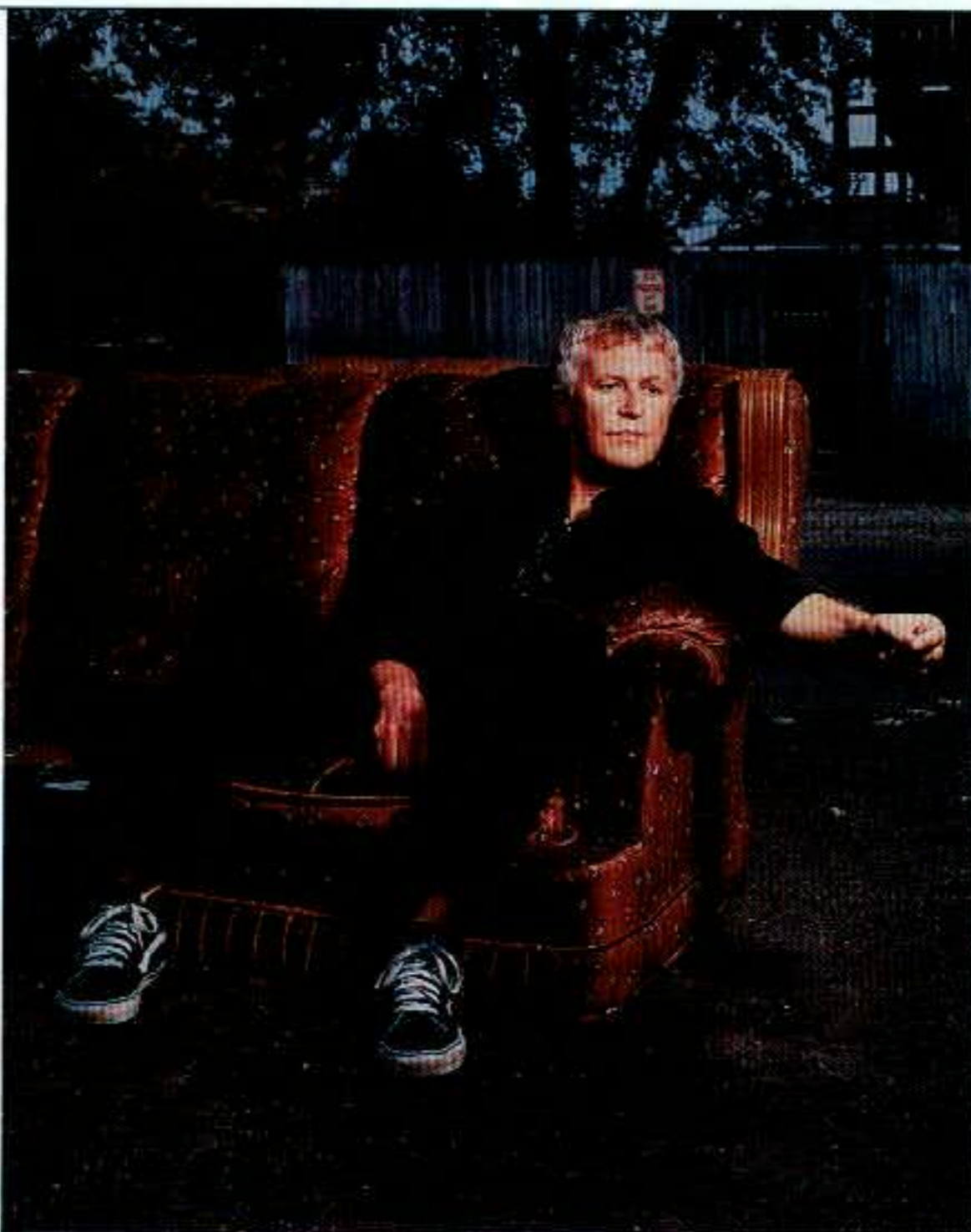
So what "others" was he referring to? "I'm assembling a band to tour," he says. "I have [veteran guitarist] **Tommy Keene**, [**Superchunk** drummer] **Jon Wurster**, [ex-**Verbow** bassist] **Jason Narducy** and another guy. We do 19 dates, starting January 26. Only the U.S. this time." Why so few dates? "I'm getting older [48] so I find myself like an aging athlete with nagging injuries. Six or seven hours a day in a van kills your back. So I think three or four shows at a time is all I can handle."

But more time off the highways means more releases (beyond the three new GbV products mentioned last month: a final live DVD, outtakes box set and *Propeller* reissue). "I have a lot of collaboration projects," Pollard explains. "One with my old bassist, **Chris Slusarenko**, one with Tommy, called the **Keene Brothers**, and another **Circus Devils** album with Todd."

For a man who's moved six times in Dayton since 1998, schlepping 3,000-4,000 vinyl albums each time ("That may be why my back hurts!"), maybe Pollard should just live in a recording studio.

news and notes

Following their recent EPs compilation, *Push Barman to Open Old Wounds*, Scottish popsters **Belle & Sebastian** issue a proper (sixth) LP on Matador February 7. Recorded in L.A. with **Beck** producer Tony Hoffer, *The Life Pursuit* is said to sound more like **Stuart Murdoch** and co.'s first four twee/baroque-pop albums than the big arrangements of 2003's Trevor Horn-produced *Dear Catastrophe Waitress* ■ Speaking of Brit popsters, January 24 brings *Amber*, the third LP by Brighton foursome **Clearlake**. It could be an opus: It was recorded in eight English and French studios and is influenced by the disparate likes of **Queens of the Stone Age**, **Low**, **Neil Young** and **My Bloody Valentine** ■ Considering them the greatest band of the late 1970s (and one that's still great onstage with its modern lineup), we're looking forward to Music Video Distributors' *Live at Shepherds*



■ robert pollard

Bush Empire 2003 DVD by Manchester legends the **Buzzcocks** – out January 24. Recorded April 27, 2003 in Digital 5.1 Surround Sound, the 32-song London concert is augmented by interviews with founding members **Pete Shelley** and **Steve Diggle** tour footage and memorabilia ■ Also due that day on MVD is the **Small Faces' Under Review**, live and studio footage of the greatest '60s mod band this side of **The Who** ■ Sub Pop never sleeps; see **The Elected's** (singer/songwriter **Blake Sennett** of **Rilo Kiley**) new *Sun, Sun, Sun*, out January 24, as well as multi-instrumentalist psych-folk troubadour **Kelley Stoltz's** *Below the Branches* (February 7) ■ Likewise, Drag City is always busy, and January 24 it'll unleash the debut of a brand new band, **Pearls & Brass' The Indian Tower**. It's recorded by **Tim Green** of the **F***ing Champs** ■ And, as long as we're in Chicago, let's mention the EP by the Windy City's **Catfish Heaven**, *Please Come Back*. It's a seven-song re-release on Secretly Canadian, out

January 24, prior to a full-length coming this spring ■ Mute is giving us five more remastered **Can** albums in March. But for now look for the German group's January 24 double-DVD re-release of *The Can DVD*, with a documentary, concert footage, notes, solo recordings, etc ■ Your humble **ICE** columnist appears in it (interviewed holding his cat, no less), so check out *The Shield Around the K*, the documentary about Olympia, WA label K Records – out on DVD on Blank Stare January 24. Meow. ■

icecubes

They may not be heading for rehab, but *Firewater* will be the last drink **The Alkaholiks** are toasting together. The L.A. party rappers are sobering up and calling it quits after the Waxploitation/Koch Records release of their fifth album on January 24, though 'Liks **Tash**, **E-Swift** and **J-Ro** will still get liquefied with a final tour and have left the bar door open to possible future one-off collaborations. *Firewater's* drinking buddies include producers **Danger Mouse** (on "Chaos") and **Evidence** from **Dilated Peoples** ("Handle It") ■ Twentieth-century turn-on: To some, **Ian Whitcomb's** a rock 'n' roll footnote, known primarily for 1965's frantic "You Turn Me On." But, for the last few decades, the pianist/ukulelist has carved out a career performing Tin Pan Alley items from the 'teens, '20s and '30s (as well as composing film scores). Just out on ITW Industries are two compilations, *Words and Music (1967-2005)* and *Old Chestnuts & Rare Treats*, available at retail and at ianwhitcomb.com. In addition, a 35-clip DVD, *Ian Whitcomb on TV (1965-1986)*, gathers performances from *Shindig*, the *Tonight Show* and other programs.

Collector's Corner and CD Watchdog

do not appear in this issue but will return next month.