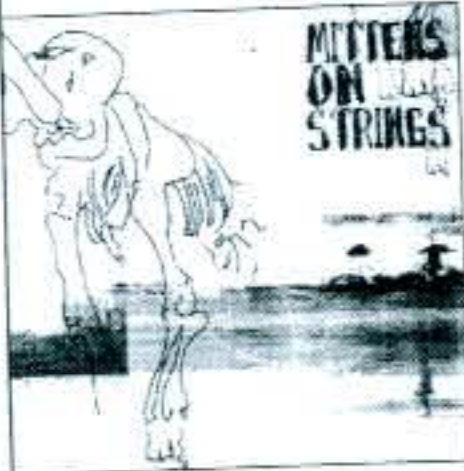


CD REVIEWS



Look Up The Sky
Mittens on Strings
(EMPEROR JONES)

awesome squared

Their first song, "G.I. Dirt Races," opens with a march cadence; therefore, they are awesome.

Their second song, "The Most Complete Skeleton Ever Found," is sung from the perspective of the most complete skeleton ever found and features the chorus, "All the kids will love me."

Again ... awesome.

The rest of the album pretty much sounds like what would happen if you were a mad scientist and were able to fuse the DNA of one of the Johns (probably the short one) from They Might Be Giants and Dean Wareham of Galaxie 500. Let's say that the resultant genetic bouillabaisse not only survived but achieved some form of sentient maturity after years of turbulent incubation. For some reason, you decide to pack "Junior" off to Georgetown for a degree in Music Theory and Composition (and maybe a minor in Cultural Anthropology).

This ... THIS is what your unholy finger-in-the-eye of nature has wrought.

Not bad.

Not bad at all. —Michael Steiger



loudQUIETloud
A film about THE PIXIES
(STICK FIGURE PRODUCTIONS)

tell-all

I couldn't help but feel a bit like those people who get off watching the pedophile stings on "Dateline." Should content like this really be the source of my entertainment? Like a finger in an open wound, "loudQUIETloud" pokes at some of the more sordid details we all want to know about The Pixies. With footage containing everything from Frank Black laying on top of a hotel bed in his underwear, to an informal intervention between the band and drummer David Lovering about his substance abuse, it delivers.

However, it wouldn't be fair to peg this film as simply being based in scandal. For the most part, the narrative is full of realism, and the glimpses into the lives of the band members are as empathetic as they are morbid.

It's the live footage that is the real payoff of this DVD anyway. The sound quality is excellent, and the performances are inspired. —Ben Felker



Crazy Itch Radio
Basement Jaxx
(XL RECORDINGS)

itch scratched

Ever since I heard Khia's sophomore album, *Gangstress*, I've been vehemently opposed to any sort of filler on records. *Gangstress* was so much a ghetto holocaust that it ruined the entire concept for me.

Then I heard *Crazy Itch Radio*. More in the tradition of *The Who Sells Out*, Basement Jaxx synthesizes an urban radio show that showcases their signature brand of seamlessly blended disco/rap/R&B/Latin/jazz/pop. Rather than recording studio banter (I'm talking to you, New Band Things), dumb declarations on society (Thugmisses), or an audience screaming and shouting (ugh, Peter Dinklage), Basement Jaxx instead has a "DJ," dance songs and orchestral introductory pieces. The excellence of the individual songs almost makes up for the fact that some of them are named things like "U R On My Mind" and "Run 4 Cover" (which, oddly, is one of the record's best songs). Hipster tongue-in-cheek only goes so far.

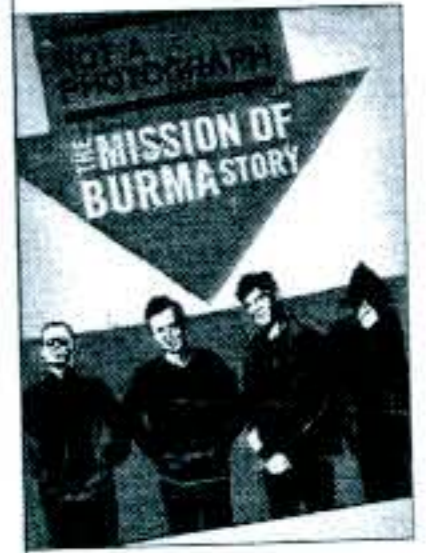
Crazy Itch Radio is the show on public radio you want to tune into but comes on at 3 a.m. Now there's no excuse to miss it. —Kirsten Schofield



Death Songs for the Living
Gob Iron
(TRANSMIT SOUND/LEGACY)

americana

This collaborative project between Jay Farrar and Anders Parker couldn't be more straightforward in concept: Abetted by limited instrumentation, they present 10 songs about death, interwoven with nine instrumental snippets. It's a regimented format, but there's a reason that murder ballads and dying-by-degrees blues are spaced apart in traditional performance programs: Mr. (Ms.?) Reaper is an inveterate scenery-chewer who'll steal an audience through cheap thrills. The emotional sweep or turns of a lyric can often go right past listeners anticipating the next falling body. Farrar and Parker construct a memorably quirky sound. Parker, on "Hills of Mexico" and "Little Girl and Dreadful Snake," evokes rueful grins and poignant shivers worthy of Sam Peckinpah. Farrar gets good mileage out of Stephen Foster's "Hard Times." But the Farrar-led version of A.P. Carter's "East Virginia Blues" just marks time. Perhaps worse, politically motivated lyrics get tucked in among the songs, corroding some credibility the duo had built by staying faithful to their album's theme. —T.E. Lyons



Not a Photograph:
The Mission of Burma Story
Mission of Burma
(ELEMENT PRODUCTIONS)

inspiring noise

"Not a Photograph" is a story of hearing damage, wide-reaching influence and resurrection. The band split up in the early '80s when vocalist and guitarist Roger Miller's hearing damage became too painful to bear. The DVD faithfully follows their quick rise in the 1980s, with footage from a few boyhood shows. A number of their pre-reunion rehearsals were filmed, showing a flawed, humble and vulnerable group of middle-aged men trying to reclaim the noisy sounds of their youth. Bob Weston of Shellac fame, came on board to operate tape loops, an integral part of the original MOB recordings and live shows. The DVD's only true failing is that the archival video of shows MOB played feature one song from each show, ("Peking Spring" performed in a now-defunct Boston venue known as The Space). Overall the DVD is inspiring to listeners and musicians alike, and hopefully will convince both groups to wear earplugs at loud shows. —Danny Slaton

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