

Thomas Lunch *Diagrams Without Instructions*

HI-FI ALLIANCE

by Eric Nagy



www.thomaslunch.com

Something about Thomas Lunch gives me the feeling that he has a coven of diehard fans who really "get" him, hanging on his every synth blip, cryptic refrain and disarming voice crackle. What's not to exalt about someone who looks like a Beck-Ashton Kutcher lovechild and gives his songs names like "Tator Tots and Robots" and "Leonard Nimoy"—so hipstranerdly! And so puckishly cynical to spell "tater" wrong! His lyrics may seem baffling, but it's exactly that coating of incomprehensibility that gives a message like "It does not make sense, very elbow yes I think it is" such gravitas.

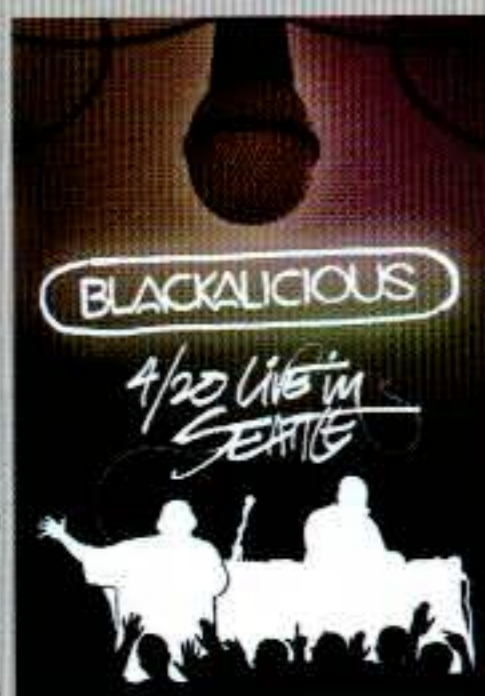
Mockery aside, the Virginia native's debut album is weakest not for its strangeness, but for the music's failure to live up to the promised absurdity. The pieces are there—experimental rhythms, unexpected synthesizer lines, and playfully weird lyrics find their way in every song—but they exist within a banal melodic formula that holds back each track. It's also hard to trust someone who relies so heavily on Trent Reznor's signature effects-laden speak-singing and yet doesn't mention Nine Inch Nails among the several dozen influences listed on his MySpace page.

One standout is "I Love You When You Throw a Fit," with its power-pop throwback vibe and bizarre sweet-talking ("I think you're pretty and you really must know, I think you're pretty with the things that you throw"); other songs including "Mr. Man" and "Oh My" ride on original and memorable rhythms. But in the end, Lunch's songwriting doesn't support his eccentric ambitions.

Blackalicious *4/20 Live in Seattle*

QUANNUM PROJECTS

by Eric Nagy



www.blackalicious.com

Words like "mass spectrograph," "iodine nitrate" and "cyclotron" don't show up too often in rap lyrics, but Blackalicious has never been afraid to operate on the brainier end of the hip-hop spectrum. Almost 15 years after they formed, the Bay Area duo still has plenty of cred with followers like the 1,200 roaring fans who filled Seattle's Showbox Theater for this live concert DVD filmed in April 2006.

Although Blackalicious hasn't reached the old school legend status of groups like De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest, the

group's Gift of Gab and Chief Xcel incorporate a similar fusion of jazz, funk, soul and an experimental rhyming style that sets them apart from current mainstream hip-hop. It also makes for a dynamic, high-energy live performance that really comes through on film, particularly with the addition of Lateef, Pigeon John, LifeSavas and Fat Lip of the Pharcyde, as well as back-up vocalists.

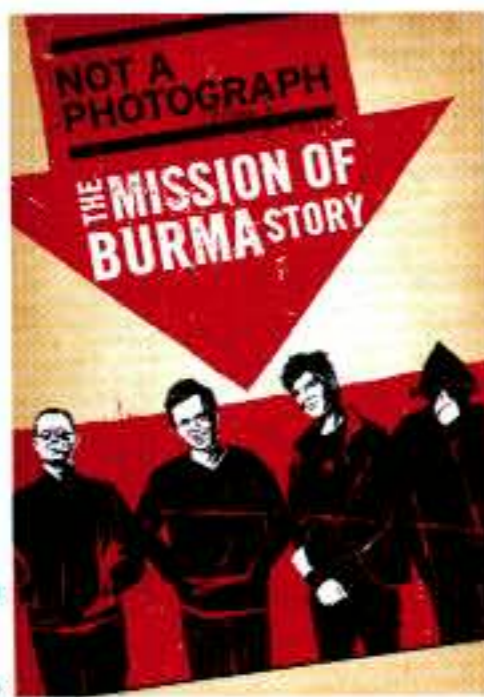
Between songs are excerpts of an interview with Gift of Gab and Chief Xcel in which they discuss their influences, how

they came together, and the evolution of hip-hop. While this includes a little of the obvious ("hip-hop has bridged a lot of cultural gaps," "the internet age is amazing"), the clips are well edited and nicely compliment the concert segments. Special features include introductions on the tour bus and a video for "Deception," a song that criticizes the extravagant behavior of suddenly rich rap stars. Gift of Gab in particular comes off as an adorably nerdy teddy bear, so if you like that in your MCs, you'll like this disc.

Mission of Burma *Not A Photograph*

MVD VISUAL AND
MATADOR RECORDS

by Ginger Hebert



www.notaphotograph.com

Not a Photograph is a well put together documentary about the group Mission of Burma. They were massively significant to the punk rock and sovereign music movement of the late 70s and early 80s. Mission of Burma's tale is recognized to those who know their past, but the story of the Boston band's premature finish—resulting with only one release in 1983—remained a mystery to many.

This DVD, directed by Jeff Iwanicki and David Kleiler, Jr., updates fans on the demise of the band as well as their recent reunion. It

is a 70 minute venture following Mission of Burma's 2002 gathering and their effort to rejuvenate a saga that has by now been etched in the pages of music's history. It highlights adolescent video recordings dating back from as early on as 1979, a time when the repercussions of the death of Elvis and disco were setting in, and the ripple effect of punk rock was being heavily felt by many musicians.

Interviews with bassist Clint Conley and guitarist Roger Miller form the core of this video. They had a lot to say, not only about

their old sound versus their new sound, but about the music industry in general. Even the bonus material is quite interesting. I have watched documentary after documentary on bands and artists for whom I have much respect, and only a handful of them told their own story as well as Mission of Burma.