

DVD

Tim Buckley: My Fleeting House  
Starring Tim Buckley  
MVD Visual  
\$19.95 list price



Before Jeff Buckley, there was his father Tim, an underrated singer-songwriter who tried on baroque folk, avant-garde jazz rock and R&B before a fatal overdose in 1975 at the age of 28. This authorized DVD compiles rare performances and TV appearances along with new interviews.

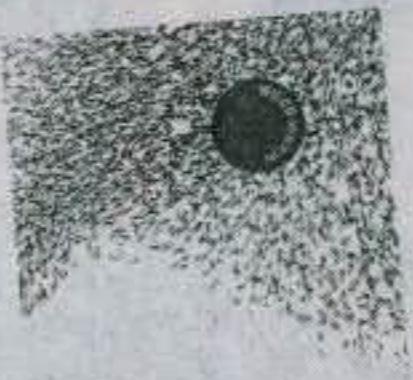
Two TV clips show the '60s generation gap in full view: One of Buckley conversing with actress Jayne Meadows on "The Steve Allen Show," the other a CBS special, "Inside Pop," that has out-of-touch voiceover commentary by host Leonard Bernstein.

As the 11 full-length song clips attest, Tim Buckley was an engaging performer with poetic sensibilities and an aura of tragedy about him—sounds familiar, right? Indeed, the similarities between Tim and Jeff Buckley are striking, and it's eerie how much they look and sound alike.

The interviewees are writing partner Larry Beckett, guitarist Lee Underwood and biographer David Browne. Beckett and Underwood are dull, overly fawning and surprisingly academic and pompous. Where are the musicians Buckley influenced? Or his first wife and Jeff's mother, Mary Gubert?

Jeff Buckley, who was 8 at the time of Tim's death and living with his mother and stepfather, kept his dad's legacy at arm's length, stating in a 1993 interview with the New York Times he had never really known him. **C.D.**

CD



Wilco  
Sky Blue Sky  
Nonesuch Records  
\$18.98 list price

While rumors of Wilco's return to its alt-country roots have been exaggerated, the band's sixth studio album doesn't have the fire of either of their two previous efforts. Jeff Tweedy's moodiness is surrounded by pedal steel, soft piano lines and Nels Cline's fine guitar playing.

The first track released off the record (Internet leaking excluded) was "What Light," a song that would have fit perfectly on Wilco and Billy Bragg's collaborative efforts on the "Mermaid Avenue" albums where the bands recorded the work of Woody Guthrie.

Cline brings agile and coherent guitar work previously overshadowed by Tweedy's affinity for feedback. Listen to the outro on "Side with the Seeds," the guitar harmonies on "Impossibly Germany" and the Allman-esque solo on "Walken." Also enjoy the swampy groove on "Shake It Off."

Are the days of Wilco's grand experimentation gone? With the album that was arguably the band's masterpiece ("Yankee Hotel Foxtrot") now in the rearview mirror, "Sky Blue Sky" carries a strong smell of '70s soft rock influence.

Perhaps the softer sound came from the bassist John Stirratt and multi-instrumentalist Pat Sansone's side project, the Autumn Defense, which just released its third album. **D.P.**

BOOK

The Last Chinese Chef  
By Nicole Mones  
Houghton Mifflin Company  
\$24 list price



While grieving her husband's untimely death, food writer Maggie McElroy learns that he may have fathered a child in Beijing. Investigating in-country leads her to profile a Chinese chef and three generations of his family, and her life is changed by the romance of haute Chinese cuisine.

"Maggie McElroy felt her soul spiral away from her in the year following her husband's death; she felt strange wherever she was. She needed walls to hold her. She could not seem to find an apartment small enough. In the end, she moved to a boat."

Mones opened a textile business in China after the Cultural Revolution and ran it for 18 years, so her knowledge of the Chinese landscape, people and customs is dead on. The best parts of this book are in the descriptions of food, as beautifully crafted and lingering as the dishes themselves.

The story, which is compelling and sweet, can get bogged down in the details of Chinese culinary history. It seems Mones can't decide between a novel, a history and a food review.

Mones also wrote "Lost in Translation," which was made into a feature film with Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson. **E.R.**