

INDIE BEAT
Underdogs sound off



> **KRUMBSNATCHA, LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD** (Golden Eyes) The Beantown MC ain't never scared on his rowdy sophomore effort, which booms with East Coast battle rhymes and appearances by Ghostface, Styles P., and Guru.



> **OLU, BEAUTIFUL PLACE** (AXS) Whether he's singing about love or drug addiction, the delicate voice and warm instrumentals by this one-man R&B band make you feel like everything's gonna be all right.



> **VORDUL MEGA, THE REVOLUTION OF YUNG HAVOKS** (Nature Sounds) Built upon vivid, melancholy poetry and murky production, the solo debut from half of acclaimed underground duo Cannibal Ox sounds like an insomniac walk through the streets of New York.



> **FERTILE GROUND, BLACK IS...** (Blackout) This Baltimore-based seven-piece band's distinctly Afrocentric sound marries Latin rhythms, jazzy horns, and comforting, multi-lingual vocals from songstress Navasha Daya.
Andrew Simon

BLOCK BUSTERS

Zooming in on the latest music DVDs



CHRONICLES OF JUNIOR M.A.F.I.A. (groundzeroent.com)

◀**REW:** The charismatic Lil' Cease tells firsthand stories of B.I.G.'s murder and Bad Boy's heyday; footage of Mase and Jay-Z is priceless.

▶**FF:** Cease and crew's lengthy grousing about label issues and their fall-out with Lil' Kim comes across as sour grapes.

BENZINO - ARCH NEMESIS (urbanworksent.com)

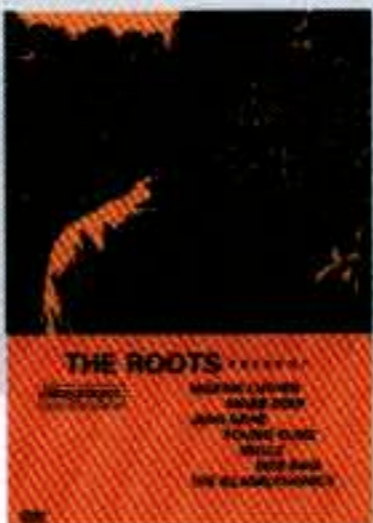
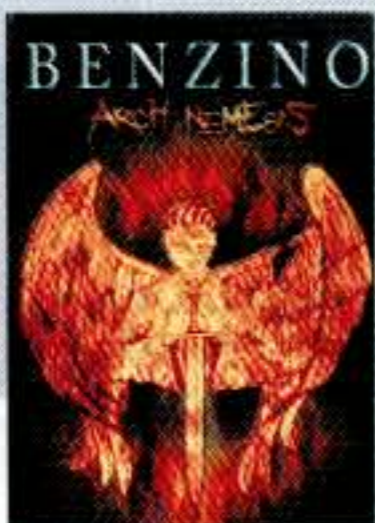
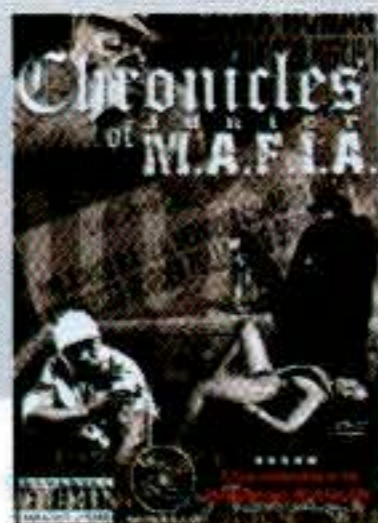
◀**REW:** The much maligned Made Man offers a surprisingly lucid account of his controversial career, on and off the mike.

▶**FF:** Some ridiculous hyperbole, especially in the closing salvo, claims Benzino's beef with Eminem is "disturbing a global plan for world domination."

THE ROOTS: A SONIC EVENT (image-entertainment.com)

◀**REW:** Recorded in N.Y.C. last June, the group's concert flick includes unexpected cameos from Young Gunz and Mobb Deep.

▶**FF:** Seen one of the Roots' shows, seen them all. *Donnie Kwak*



Gerald Levert

GERALD LEVERT
DO I SPEAK FOR THE WORLD

ELEKTRA



Gerald—of the gifted Levert clan—still wants to rock your body, but only after he opens your mind. Before getting you in the mood for love with slow jams like "One Million Times" and "Everyday," the master of the bedroom set preaches social change on "Crucify Me" and "Greater Later." The clichéd histrionics of "Duty Calls" and "So What (If You Got a Baby)" bring the album down a notch. But at the ripe age of 38, Levert is still an R&B workhorse that most ponies in the love-song game can't keep up with.
Orlando Lima

MF DOOM
MM..FOOD

RHYMESAYERS



Got the only tape that come with a free hot plate," declares underground legend MF Doom on his latest LP, *MM..Food*, a culinary concoction he designed with a discerning palate in mind. While sample-driven selections are sure to make comic-crazed turntablists salivate, these moments clash with the disc's original rhythm. Otherwise, Chef Doom satiates as both

a producer and a lyricist, seasoning the retro synth of "Friendz," the soaring guitar of "Rap Snitch Knishez," and the flavorful funk of "Kookiez" with crafty, metaphoric verses.

Justin Monroe

DIPLOMATS
DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY 2

KOCH



For *Diplomatic Immunity 2*, hip hop's most colorful crew, the Diplomats, continually toe the line between being confident and just plain arrogant. Beautiful belligerence from Cam'Ron, Juelz Santana, J.R. Writer, and Jim Jones dominates throughout, as on the epic-sounding "S.A.N.T.A.N.A.," where Juelz taunts doubters, and the intense "Your Way," where Cam, Juelz, and J.R. vividly illustrate the consequences for snitches. *Diplomatic* does drag with half-assed remakes of Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It" and the Ghost Town DJs' "My Boo." But even if Dipset's obnoxious demeanor and cryptic word-play aren't universally appreciated, they're immune to being unentertaining.
Toshitaka Kondo



LEVERT: CHRISTIAN LANTRY; DIPLOMATS: OLUWASEYE