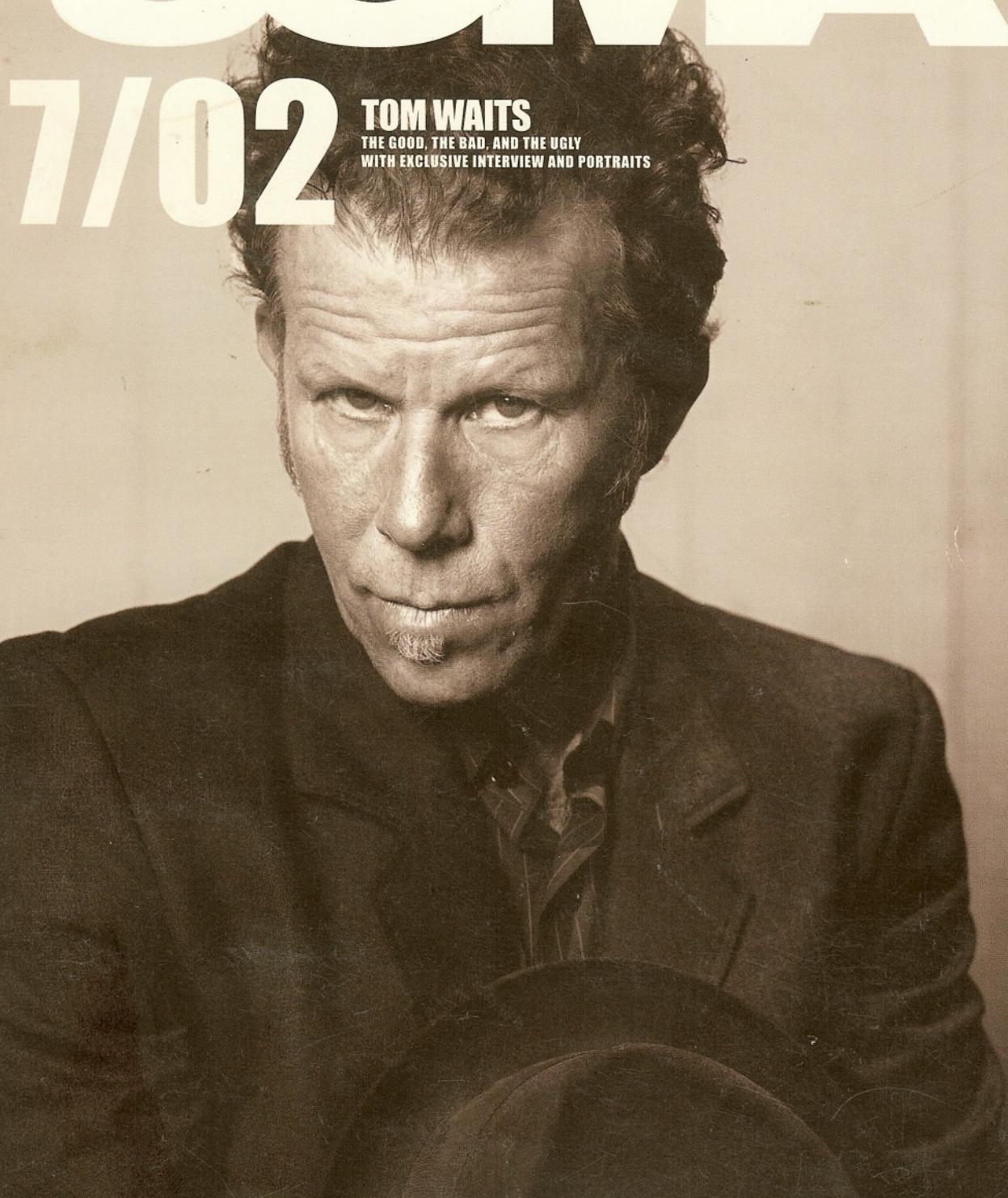


SOMA

7/02

TOM WAITS

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY
WITH EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PORTRAITS



FACTORY RECORDS : MANCHESTER
KARL LAGERFELD : CHICKS ON SPEED
SOUNDTRACKS FOR BUILDINGS



GRANDMASTER FLASH BACK
COUTURE CUTS : COLETTE TO CARDIN
BOB MOULD : DÜ'IN IT SOLO

CHICAGO

In Search of Wandering Leprechauns OR This City has More than Green Beer.

text **Mark von Pfeiffer**

I had been in the Windy City—home to Carl Sandburg, The Sears Tower and the greatest art museum in the world—for two days when my editor communicated to me, via telepathy, that I was to write a comprehensive, all-encompassing field guide to the venues and textures of Chicago's music scene. What followed was a frenzied luge run through a metropolis that has one kinghell of a beautiful spectrum from which to choose. Jazz and house music have bedrock-deep roots in the city and many would argue that industrial sprung from the loins of Chicago. There is so little press in Chicago, it is so undiscovered when set against the turgid juggernauts of LA and NY that owners and managers of venues are likely—when honestly queried, to sit down, buy you a drink and tell you "the straight story." Coming from L.A., Chicago is a welcome break from superclubs and megaconcerts that more resemble Disneyland than musical events. It's a blue-collar town blissfully unaware of its own rich sophistication. Let us pray.

Green Mill

4802 N. Broadway 773.878.5552

Talk about atmosphere. In 1907 The Green Mill became the first jazz club in America and arguably the world. Of equal girth is the fact that Al Capone used the club as the lynchpin for his heroic booze production and distribution system in the 1920s. Thankfully, the Green Mill has been fortunate enough to cycle through a series of owners with an appreciation for history and has been left much the same; its early 20th century trappings have been continuously polished, but not replaced. In the days of yesteryear high lamas such as Charlie Chaplin, Al Jolson, Gloria Swanson and legendary Jazz pianist Jelly Roll Morton

could be found swilling martinis, smoking 14k gold-tipped cigarettes and talking junk at the 45 foot-long bar. It was here that "Machinegun" Kelly put the ill-fated hit on crooner Joe E. Lewis: Four thugs cut off half his tongue, carved his face and neck up, choked him out and left him for dead. To their chagrin—and consequent demise—the plucky little performer made it to a hospital and went on to ride the lightning with Milton Berle and Frank in Vegas. Sinatra's 1957 movie *The Joker Is Wild* will give you Hollywood's take on the story. Last night, tomorrow and most assuredly in ten years old schoolers like Von Freeman, Franz Jackson and Wilbur Campbell along with young bucks such as Kurt Elling, Eric Alexander and Orbert Davis will continue to dish out jazz in all of its soul-cooking varieties: dixieland, traditional, bebop, contemporary progressive—you name it they got it. Arrive early to get a seat at one of the velvet couches stationed stageside. Arrive late and settle your fanny at the well-oiled bar, behind which is a trapdoor that leads to the underground labyrinth through which the infamous gangster ferried his firewater to his network of speakeasies. Either way, you win.

Double Door

1572 N. Milwaukee 773.489.3160

This venue's name is a life raft thrown out to the bewildered minds of its patrons who quite often have mental breakdowns on the sidewalk when faced with the harrowing reality that, when set upon a three-way intersection a place of business can have entrances on two separate streets. In this case Damen and Milwaukee Avenues cross in Wicker Park, a section of the city that is with furious jackhammer precision



Baldwin Brothers

beating the cool out of Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville. If you're breezing through The City of Big Shoulders for a night and yearn with an aching heart to feel the hot lead of the city's indie/alternative scene then this is a good bet. Although house music and jazz abound, the last decade and a half has seen Chicago become a savage wasps' nest of axe-wielding, other-minded up-and-comers. Quid pro quo the Double Door is nothing fancy—architecturally it's a shattered hulk of what looks to be an abandoned meatlocker of colossal proportions, and the sound system sure as shit ain't gonna give you a nosebleed. But...the people who play there are out to prove themselves and that, in and of itself, is damn exciting. I was privileged enough to see the Baldwin Brothers, a Chicago junktronic quartet, scoop the gray matters from the skulls of each and every member of the audience and eat them for desert. Wowie Zowie, if you're looking for a deadly night of cheap drinks and fresh-faced music from groups with names like The Lust, Liquidnumbernine and Orange Goblin then load up the station wagon and truck the family down to the double D. O' course if they of the fresh faces turn out to be goons, you can always play a game of pool.

Green Dolphin Street

2200 N. Ashland 773.395.0066

The Dolphin weighs in as the largest jazz club in Chicago. Quite the opposite of the Green Mill's crowd of well-informed sharks, bent on the consumption of jazz in a gritty atmosphere, the Dolphin caters to a dressier, top-shelf swilling group of elitists that pretend to enjoy the meaty cigars they've no doubt paid too much for. Crowd aside, the

venue whammies the hotel-ballroom-retro-'40s vibe where going out was an event people dressed for. One half-expects Bogey to roll up, one eyebrow raised in a white-jacketed tux, a glass of straight bourbon in hand. Crisp linen and subdued lamps on the sea of tables lead up to a generous, highly polished dancefloor, and the 25 foot-high ceilings can induce vertigo after a couple of stiff Manhattans. Although predominantly a jazz club, the GDS jumps the rails several times a week. On Thursdays prodigal Chicago house label Dust Traxx presents Club Forte: a shuffling of the live and digital, as the soulful house music of respected hometown DJ Glenn Underground meets a rotating line-up of live jazz, house and acid jazz performers. Sundays and Mondays the GDS offers their Intimate Jazz Series in one of their smaller rooms—always acoustic and no cover. Although the drinks can be a bit pricey the cover is reasonable at \$5-10 and is waived if you come to eat; not the worst idea in the world—twentysomething Chef Rick Gresh has been touted as a wizard by Chicago's metromix.com and New City weekly. Or just tell them you've come to eat and stick your fork in their game-breaking list of 20+ champagnes.

Empty Bottle

1035 N. Western 312.276.3600

The Empty Bottle is located in Ukrainian Village—Wicker Park's red-haired cousin. Pleasingly, it's just stumbling distance from my apartment. When asking a "friend" for directions to the venue I got: "It has an Old Style beer sign hanging above the door. You can't miss it." I missed the irony: Those two blocks play host to no less than five bars, each of which boasts an Old Style sign and none I found out, save the Bottle, hire bar-

tenders that can speak anything but Polish. Once there you'll find that although, like the Double Door, it's a burnt-out hole in the wall that boasts a pool table, The EB plays host to a higher-grade of locally and nationally acclaimed undergrounders of widely differing styles. For example, in the same week you might see neo-hip hoppers The Anti-Pop Consortium play alongside knobtwiddling electro-surf heroes Man? Or Astro Man?. The space is smaller than the DD and the sound more intense—apparently during the climax of an Independence Day cookout featuring Tortoise, The Sea and Cake, and 5ive Style the speakers were boggling the crowd's libidos to such an extent that when the building was hit by

Located in uptown, The Riviera along with The Metro offer bases of operation to well-established 'A' league alternativers who don't quite warrant renting out Soldier's Field. Or...it's just too damn cold to play outside—a common problem in Chicago. Built as a movie theater in 1917 it was opened as a nightclub in 1986—thankfully the building was left in disrepair; peeling paint, chipped banisters and tenuously hung chandeliers all contribute to a pleasing urban decay motif reminiscent of Blade Runner. Nerds rejoice. In the last decade power lifters such as: The Beastie Boys, Blondie, David Byrne, Coldplay, The Ramones, Radiohead and Sonic Youth have pandered their particular brands of

"THE CROSSFIRE HURRICANE PRODUCED BY THE ASS-GONGING SOUND SYSTEM SCREAMING UNFETTERED ALONG THE LINES OF THE STRUCTURE'S EXCELLENT NATURAL ACOUSTICS WILL TURN YOUR TYMPANIC MEMBRANES TO MUSH."

lightning no one noticed. Even Chris Farley would call that a party. If you've had a rough night, swing in for a pick me up—the doors open at noon and Carrie Weston, General Manager and sometime bartender, will be more than happy to whip you up an expertly crafted Bloody Mary while she runs her daily gauntlet of interior decorating shows beginning with Trading Spaces hosted by the lovely Page Davis.

Riviera Theatre

4746 N. Racine Ave. 773.275.6800

drop-forged lunacy to fanny spanking crowds. I recommend earplugs here. The crossfire hurricane produced by the ass-gonging sound system screaming unfettered along the lines of the structure's excellent natural acoustics will turn your tympanic membranes to mush. I couldn't hear properly for three days after Garbage had saddled up and ridden the sound waves directly into my hypothalamus with the ferocity of a pack of wolverines on the blood scent of Richard Simmons. But rest easy. Once the concert is over you've dozens of Asian 4 AM sake bars in which to drown your pitiable woes. And so on. ■■■



THE CASE FOR ELECTRONIC MUSIC

text Mark von Pfeiffer photo Dieter Eickelkoth, Ann Weitz

There I was. Amarillo Texas. Days earlier I had set out from LA to travel what remained of Route 66. In the hard light of the 21st century, the once-great superhighway has atrophied to a withered cadaver pimpled here and there with loyalists who continue to stake their financial livelihood on selling pieces of Jesse James' coffin, "magical" crystals, Indian totems and the like: artifacts of a West now gone, or perhaps that never was. When my car broke down (radio and all), I had the opportunity to soliloquize to the man fixing it. Upon perusing my CDs, and not seeing one he recognized, he offered up a grand theory on the importance of guitar music, culminating with the expansive polemic that the electronic music I adore is not, in fact, music at all. Luckily, I had a lengthy response. (and time to revise). ahem:

"Not music? Was Wagner not a musician simply because he didn't sit down, slam a quart of absinthe and wail away on the cello? Was Warhol not a painter because he couldn't draw a stick figure to save his life? Most American twenty and thirtysomethings were brought up (depending

growing list of laws governing our actions, ravers and house kids and djs and club kids just want to enjoy something that gives not the slightest suggestion as to how one should think. Yes there's a snobbery. But it's one borne of blissful ignorance.

"After all, it's not as if we can listen to much electronic music on the radio. Record companies have worked too hard to cudgel the ductile minds of Americans into welcome mats for hyper-produced lunchbox groups and the numbnut farce the indie/alternative scene has become. They've got a good thing going, why throw money at so many samples and blips and repetitive beats? There are, of course, a handful of radio stations that give bad-ass DJs and producers free reign for an hour or two each week: Jason Bentley has a much-respected show on KROQ (not to mention KCRW), Liquid Todd's WXRK is worth a listen and DJ Merritt's KDGE rides the progressive side with wild abandon. And of course there are the download sites...but I've been sworn to secrecy on that subject.

"Which brings me to my next point: even the widely scattered sta-

"SEEING A LIVE BAND, HOWEVER CRAPPY, IS MORE COMFORTING AND HENCE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HEARING A DJ PLAY GOOD MUSIC."

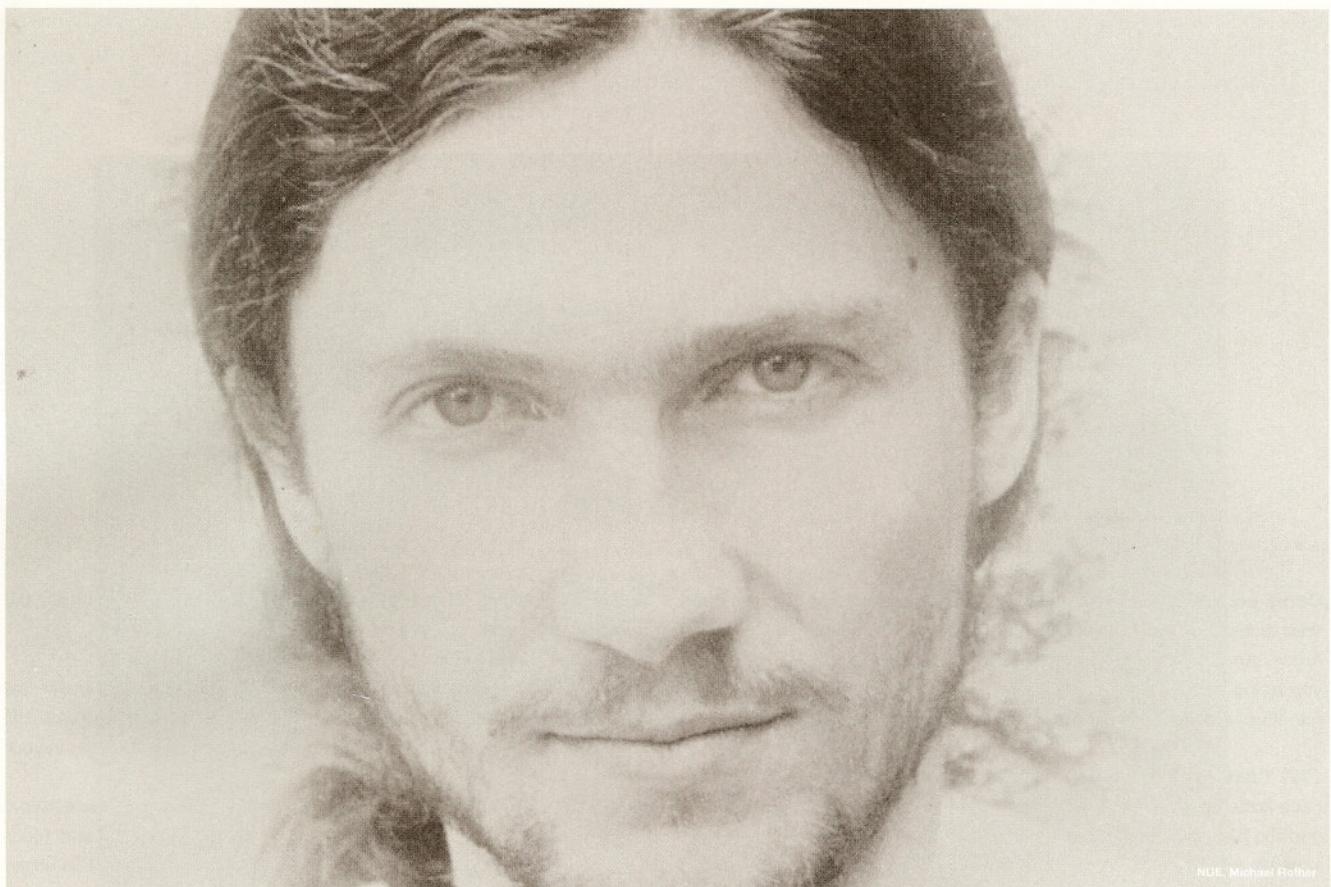
on their economic class and drug usage) listening to their parents' Pink Floyd, Arlo Guthrie, Eagles, Def Leopard or R.E.M records—they were led to believe that it was a prima facia necessity for musicians to play conventional instruments. When their lunch money turned into minimum wage the alternative movement affirmed their suspicions by offering them the "radical" fare of Smashing Pumpkins, The Pixies, Nirvana and Cake. All brilliant bands. All played their own instruments. Watching an experimental electronic band like Autecore mashing buttons on their laptops, many such people are inevitably visited by a creeping fear that at any moment a cheery voice will chime: "You've got mail!" They are suspicious of technology. Also, paying fifty dollars to see some guy play his favorite records isn't very high on the average American's to-do list. Seeing a live band, however crappy, is more comforting and hence more important than hearing a DJ play good music. Ironically they are more than happy to pay sixty dollars to see a quartet of rosy-cheeked trophy boys lip-synching through un-miked headsets as they kick and flail about the stage like a group of half-mad Rockettes. I cannot explain this. Why the artifice matters in one and not the other is completely arbitrary." Scratching his head, my Texan-on-a-tirade responded with, "yeah, well you just say that because you're from the city."

"Look," I retorted, "I grew up on a farm. I am, I proudly admit, a hick at heart. Perhaps even a redneck. But, yes, I have lived in fantastic places called cities: Chicago, Denver, Phoenix and Los Angeles, where people are brazen enough to use wide, spanning definitions of music. Basically, if it comes shrink-wrapped and works in a CD player it's music. Enter electronic—a genre unfettered by sociological imperatives. It is not philosophical, it's not religious and it sure as shit isn't political. It is rhythm and harmony: music in its purest form—without lyrics—it is entirely subjective. A pleasing example of people being brought together by the desire for sounds alone...like Woodstock without all the political yammering. Not unintelligent folk, just unconcerned with the history of Rock 'n' Roll; and perhaps in a time of slogans, cubicles and an ever-

tions that do specialize in all things electronic tend to play crap. Which is defined as anything older than three months. There is no sentiment for beautiful songs long gone. When fresh gear comes out that enables new sounds, what was cool a week ago is instantly outmoded. The fact that just about everyone who listens to electronic music has entertained gleeful fantasies of being the next Derrick Carter or Digweed as they noodle about with a set of turntables and editing software makes for a wide, sloppy field. Also, it creates myriad one-hit-wonders, which in turn makes it difficult for fans to rally around any one performer. Obviously people with enough money to own their own label—with enough connections to force it down the pipe OR with enough true innovation that it's legitimately transcendent—override this rule. Enter irony #455: The core electronic community enjoys its anonymity, which it haughtily interprets as self-imposed elitism, and thus, when a DJ or producer becomes too famous they are immediately scorned and ridiculed (envied?) by the headz. Thus electronic eats its own incisors.

"To wit: the fact that electronic music is categorized as a single genre is debilitating enough; the sub genres are resentful and consequently have developed stilted, often condescending views of one another. Trance is the puddinheaded cousin with an irrational attraction to shiny objects, Drum & Bass the hyperactive red-haired stepchild, downtempo the senile, diaper-wearing geriatric, techno a soulless autistic savant and house is the tired old patriarch everyone wants to push off the crapper. And there they sit. All stacked next to one another, techno producers sentenced to spend eternity languishing next to trance djs that just don't belong on the same rack."

I wiped the spittle which had formed on the side of my chin and stared at the object of my diatribe, who by this point, had turned his back to me and put on his favorite U2 CD. And as the analog delay of "With or Without You" rumbled out of the carport and on to the highway, I thought it was rather appropriate that here on this highway which ignored all possibilities of a future, clinging doggedly to a past that never was, were people who liked U2 for the same reason. ■



NUE. Michael Rollig



NUE. Klaus Dinge

PLAYED OUT

The Jaded World of Music Festivals.

text Kurt Orzeck, Jaan Uhelski, Mark von Pfeiffer, Chris Fortier, and Mikel Jollett

photo Sheila Menezes

We are young. No one can tell us we're wrong. We are but journalists who stand idly next to you in the crowd, taking notes on the music and your wardrobe. Yes our opinions count, and I know that's not fair, but hey, we're poor so fuck you. We live in a bracken netherworld of press tents, interviews, dat recorders, and overused metaphors. There are even concerts (days of them, at that) designed specifically to give us stuff to write about. Here's a list of four such festivals, and our take on the silliness into which our lives, once brimming with promise, have sadly devolved.

South by Southwest. Austin, Texas.

Who goes? A cross-section of the music world and select collegiate folk; fewer in attendance this year as the industry continues to downsize.

Who cares? Label execs and writers seeking the Next Big Thing. Any band on the brink of success, willing to sacrifice a little cred for A&R reps. But with 5-day badge prices at the \$500 mark, no one on a shoestring budget. *The sound?* An eclectic slice of indie rock, with added emphasis on Americana and lo-fi.

The scene? NY and LA corrupt a cozy southern college town: wiry, self-important 45-year-olds dressed in black Vans, with cell phones, the ubiquitous SXSW plastic tote bags, button-down shirts, Armani pants (in 95° weather), stale cologne, corny business cards, laptops, and energy drinks. *This year's best moment?* Aaron North of The Icarus Line at the Hard Rock Café, throwing down his axe in exchange for a mic stand, using said stand as a battering ram against a glass case that housed a guitar by Austin native Stevie Ray Vaughan. Rock 'n' roll. (or...maybe just mescaline).

Transmusicales. Rennes, France (French countryside)

Who goes? French college kids, bands seeking international acclaim, and journalists from around the world, courtesy of the French government.

Who cares? Outside Europe? No one. In Europe? The pantheon of French critics, Spanish journalists, British agents, German publicists, and Australian writers who, for no apparent reason, have the authority to say someone has, in fact, gained "international acclaim."

The sound? Fusion, fusion, fusion—rock meets electronica, with some homegrown American hip-hop thrown in.

The scene? A big international thingy in the middle of a small French town: apple cider, French bread, Heineken, huge tent, white boys with



dreads, lip piercings, mustaches, cigarettes and the ubiquitous thump of bass drums.

Best moment? Casey Spooner (of Fischerspooner), standing on a raised platform, in knee-high boots and black leather briefs, cheeks pale, eyes black—yelling at 5,000 French kids, intoning like an over-worked dance instructor, to "make some more fucking noise or we're leaving." They left.

WMC. Miami, Florida

Who goes? 25,000 techno-filers who plan their holidays around it—madmen dressed as aliens sharing water with gents in suits.

Who cares? Industry people. Just another chance to escape the cubicle and get paid to drink. Electronic headz of every species, because music made of 4/4 time and repeated samples is represented.

The sound? Deep house, progressive house, trance, drum and bass, break-beat, techno—anything you can mix on OS 9.

The scene? Hollywood meets rave—pastels, glow-sticks, e, shrooms, record execs, pacifiers, neon, and lots and lots of bottled water.

Best moment? Danny Teneglia playing a set of funkified '80s music at his end-of-conference party at Club Space from 10 PM to mid-afternoon of the next day. Sweat and headbands and oj for breakfast.

Noisepop. San Francisco, California

Who goes? Disenchanted indie rock bands with nowhere else to go. Disenchanted indie rock kids with nothing else to do. Disenchanted journalists with nothing else to write about. The disenchanted.

Who cares? A remarkable many. Over its ten years, Noisepop has established cred as the little festival that could. But a stepping stone to the dizzy heights of SxSW, it has nonetheless put San Francisco on the musical map.

The sound? Dare we say "indie"? Dischord, textured melodies, punk rhythms, whines, bleeps, electronic arpeggios, slacker lyrics, and spit.

The scene? Greasy, happy-go-lucky underage drinkers with imported beer in hand, cropped hair, green sneakers, Buddy Holly glasses, pimples, undersized Salvation Army apparel, clove cigarettes—the guys who're into this stuff and the girls who date them.

This year's best moment? Simply one private moment of glee: standing next to the bar at the KJKKJ, corona in hand, chatting quietly with Maria Taylor of Azure Ray—black shoes, black eyeliner, and the occasional wisp of tangled black hair brushed nervously from her forehead. ■



The Faint, Noisepop 2002