

The year in music in retrospect

by Tricia Romano

Michael Jackson became Dangerous (Not!), Guns N' Roses reappeared after a three-year absence, James Hetfield of Metallica crooned instead of shrieked and Seattle upstarts Nirvana stole the show.

Such was the year in music in 1991. Listed below are the top 10 most innovative and fresh recordings of the year.

1. Nirvana, *Nevermind*

Despite the band's order to "nevermind," the world did mind, and was happier for it. Nirvana's first major label release shook up a storm in the music industry, sending the likes of Michael Jackson, Mariah Carey and Guns N' Roses to pick up the debris. A collection of highly personal songs fueled with emotional lyrics of rage and passion, *Nevermind* produced a voice for a generation in lead singer/lyricist Kurt Cobain. Cobain's screams of "Entertain us!" in "Smells Like Teen Spirit," rang too true to the

bored youth of the 90s.

2. Guns N' Roses, *Use Your Illusion II*

The twin disks were sold apart and were meant to be listened to as two separate and different albums. Indeed the material on *II* is stronger than *Illusion I*. *Illusion II* contains the most volatile and angst-ridden power of the two. Forget "Don't Cry." The real ballad of this album is the beautiful and mystifying "Estranged," which may quite possibly be nine of the best minutes of music ever recorded. "Locomotive," "Get In the Ring," and the now classic "Civil War" round out the LP nicely.

3. R.E.M., *Out of Time*

Disregard lead singer Michael Stipe's embarrassing aerobic-like dancing in the "Shiny Happy People" video. Although Stipe is a little too politically-correct, he remains ones of rock's most poignant lyricists. He and the other members of R.E.M. breeze through *Out of Time's* cre-

ative harmonies, as they continue to work at perfecting the art of the pop song.

4. U2, *Achtung Baby*

It's been roughly four years since U2's last studio release, and *Achtung Baby* shows that the band has grown since then. They have altered their trademark sound (i.e. the Edge's high-pitched feverish guitar chords), but Bono's breathy vocals remain intact. More danceable, more "alternative" and less political, this is U2's most accessible album to date.

5. Metallica, *Metallica*

The World's Greatest Garage Band recorded with a decidedly un-underground producer, Bob Rock, and lived to see it's rewards. *Metallica* is tight-fisted metal at it's best.

6. Lenny Kravitz, *Mama Said*

Kravitz didn't resort to taking the easy way out on his second LP. Instead he ventured into unknown

territory and the result was some of the freshest and most original pop songs of the year.

7. Public Enemy, *Apocalypse '91: The Empire Strikes Black*

Hardcore rap at it's best. Chuck D and Flavor Flav don't disappoint on this year's most innovative rap LP.

8. Red Hot Chili Peppers, *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*

The Kings of funk metal return with producer Rick Rubin in tow, and offer some of their most slammin' grooves, yet.

9. Skid Row, *Slave to the Grind*

Surviving the sophomore slump appeared to be an easy task for the Skids, as they put out an album containing some of the finest sleaze-rock of '91.

10. Soundgarden, *Badmotorfinger*

The Seattle grunge gods kick major behind with their latest offering. The new disk

features heavy grooves and sonic vocals courtesy of Chris Cornell.

Honorable mentions include Smashing Pumpkins' *Gish*, and PM Dawn's *Of the Heart, of the Soul, and of the Cross: The Utopian Experience*.

Yet another list

1. PEARL JAM - Ten
2. METALLICA - Metallica
3. R.E.M. - Out of Time
4. RUSH - Roll the Bones
5. PRIMUS - Sailing the Seas of Cheese
6. NIRVANA - Nevermind
7. SOUNDGARDEN - Badmotorfinger
8. FISHBONE - The Reality of My Surroundings
9. U2 - Achtung Baby
10. GUNS N' ROSES - Use Your Illusion I

— Ched Whitney

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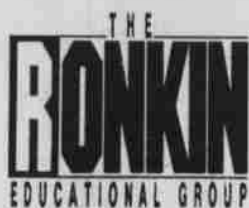
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