

SOUND

James
Wab Wab
Mercury Records



Mercury, James' record label, wants you to know something: "Please, please, please... know that James has not gone off their rocker and dramatically changed their musical style. This is simply an experiment... a one-off for the fans."

Okay, got it? Good. Now forget it, because all it means is that James' newest release *Wab Wab* is so fresh that not even the band's label knows what to do with it. Originally intended as a dual album to be released with 1993's *Laid*, *Wab Wab* features a raw authenticity that many bands would kill for. This album is exhilarating, marginal, uncompromised and yet somehow central to our times. With layered atmospheres, eccentric guitars and the tweaking and production of Brian Eno, *Wab Wab* proves that commercial success needn't mean mediocrity.

■ Brent Busboom, *Sagebrush*, U. of Nevada, Reno

Paris
Guerrilla Funk
Priority Records



Paris, hip-hop's premier Black Panther rapper, lets loose the funk on his third release, *Guerrilla Funk*. The Oakland-based rapper and college graduate

raised more than a few eyebrows with his controversial *Sleeping With The Enemy* CD back in 1992.

This time, Paris comes back with the same hard-hitting, pro-black and anti-establishment lyrics that made him famous — but to a different tune. Instead of his trademark relentless, guitar-laced beats, Paris drops some good old-fashioned funk bass lines on this CD.

The title track (and first single) drops a famous Funkadelic bass line behind typically revolutionary rhymes. On "Bring It To Ya," Paris gets some lyrical help from protégées the Conscious Daughters. Longtime fans and new ones alike will not be disappointed by Paris' venture into the Oaktown sound.

■ Paul Sargentini, *The Mancater*, U. of Missouri, Columbia

Cranes
Loved
Dedicated/Arista



Cranes' Alison Shaw has a smooth, gorgeous voice, but in the band's latest album, *Loved*, it's impossible to understand what she's singing about. And that's a good

thing — her indecipherable lyrics shift your focus from meaning to pure sound.

Ghostly, she croons like a lost spirit on a dark road, a Gothic pixie's song mistaken for wind through the trees. It's a mix of the Sundays' fragile songstress Harriet Williams and Cocteau Twins' ethereal Liz Fraser. The rich texture of Shaw's voice, a melancholy acoustic guitar and ominous bass lines create the relentless rhythm and almost supernatural urgency of songs like "Shining Road" and "Reverie."

Majestic sweeps of synth add romance to this British band's latest album. The three last tracks are bonus remixes by Flood (U2, Depeche Mode) and Michael Brauer (Belly).

■ John Youngs, *Daily Campus*, U. of Connecticut

Megadeth
Youthanasia
Capitol Records



Listen up all you closet head-bangers. It's time for another Megadeth album. Got your poodle haircuts and spandex? All right, let's begin.

On *Youthanasia*, Megadeth's latest release, we see the band trotting out its old aggressive guitars, tortured vocals, driving beats — you get the idea. The only problem is that this time around, the music sounds a bit, well, housebroken.

Unfortunately, *Youthanasia* never achieves the heights of the band's last album; instead it falls into all the worst speed metal clichés. It always seems like Dave Mustaine is this close to being relevant — then he reveals himself once again as a heavy metal warlock.

If Megadeth's not careful, they could easily end up becoming the Sha Na Na of speed metal. Hmm... Bowzer meets Dave Mustaine — now there's an idea for a concept album.

■ Brent Busboom, *Sagebrush*, U. of Nevada, Reno

Our Picks

Listen, U.

Various Artists, CBGB's 20th Anniversary Album — This legendary New York club can make any band sound cool — from old-schoolers the B-52s and The Damned to fresh blood like Helmet and J Mascis.

Various Artists, Jock Rock — All those testosterone-jacked songs that drive muscle-heads crazy — "We Will Rock You," "Na, Na, Hey, Hey," "I Feel Good." Don't let the title turn you off — it rocks! Dude!

The Murmurs, The Murmurs — Kinda Moon Zappa squared, kinda Bananarama, but weirder, more punky. We dunno... Tinkerbelle Rock.

Life Like Feel, Life Like Feel — Last heard on the Rock The Vote benefit CD *Propaganda*, LLF was down with the original Seattle scene — heavy pop. Plus, they're mysterious 'cause we can't figure out the name.

Pete Droge, Necktie Second — Droge writes hook-laden rock songs with a surprising emotional depth, proving that white guys with guitars can still be interesting.

Da Lench Mob, Planet of the Apes — By remaining lyrically positive, Da Lench Mob provides the truly hard line — solidarity and self-knowledge. It's the end of an era — G-Funk, that is.

Pocket Band

Johnny Socko

Mix Parliament, Madness and the Clash, and you get **Johnny Socko**. Backed by a trumpet, saxophone and trombone, Socko race through funk, ska and hard-core punk riffs in wire-tight fashion.

Like most ska-influenced bands, Socko have been bombarded with Fishbone comparisons. "I guess it's more flattering than comparing us to a Flock of Seagulls," says lead vocalist Trout.

Sax-man Joshy-Boy jokes, "We're more like the Banana Splits."

No kidding. Dressed in garb ranging from a Taco Bell uniform to an *Eight is Enough* football-jersey nightgown, Socko unleash high-voltage silliness on their audience.

At an Indianapolis club, Trout recites a few lines from *Pulp Fiction* and verbally hazes a local band for having personalized guitar picks — and sticks a pick up his nose. While the audience laughs, the band goes into a speeded-up version of the theme from *Sanford and Son*.

"You get so high from playing, you forget it's got to end," Joshy-Boy says. The owner of the club tells them twice to close it out.

Labeling their live performance a circus act isn't far off the mark. Trumpet player Damien once antagonized lions under the big top, and guitarist Hombre Rana swung from a trapeze.

All clowning around aside, Socko's love for funk-ska runs rampant on their debut album, *BOVAQUARIUM*. Their funk flavor appears strongest on "Dick Wagner's Rinse Cycle," which sounds like the background music for one of the *Shaft* movies. They even pay homage to their Hoosier roots in the country-song spoof, "I'll only smack ya (whenyagitouttalline)."

When asked if their enormous confidence reflects their current monetary success, the entire band laughs, and Trout says, "Do you know what a musician without a girlfriend is? Homeless."

■ Mike Dawson, Indiana U.



Scot McKim

U. Radio Chart

1. **Liz Phair, Whip-smart**, Matador
2. **R.E.M., Monster**, Warner Bros.
3. **Thinking Fellers Union Local 282, Strangers From The Universe**, Matador
4. **Sinead O'Connor, Universal Mother**, EMI
5. **Compilation, If I Were A Carpenter**, A&M
6. **Sugar, File Under Easy Listening**, Rykodisc
7. **Smashing Pumpkins, Pisces Iscariot**, Virgin
8. **Cop Shoot Cop, Release**, Interscope
9. **Daniel Johnston, Fun**, Atlantic
10. **Shudder To Think, Pony Express Record**, Epic

Chart solely based on college radio airplay. Contributing radio stations: KJHK, U. of Kansas; WFAL, Bowling Green U.; KTRU-FM, Rice U.; KALX, U. of California, Berkeley; KUCB, U. of Colorado; WRFL, U. of Kentucky; KUOM, U. of Minnesota.

★★★★=Scooby Doo ★★★★★=Shaggy ★★★=Velma
★★=Fred/Daphne ★=Scrappy