

Hit List

former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Doc Ellis throwing a no-hitter while tripping on acid.

The real fun, though, happens on cuts like a remake of the Rusty Wier song "Don't It Make You Wanna Dance," where Snider spins a yarn about how he came to be a singer.

A cautionary note; Snider makes ample use of salty language. He also references drugs many times, which doesn't always translate well to record. But that's Snider – the guy with the hippy attitude traveling in a van, singing folks songs. – **JH**



**Big Head Todd
Big Head Blues Club:
100 Years of Robert Johnson**

Ryko

Doing an album of Robert Johnson songs may not be a particularly origi-

nal idea, but it's not a bad one. For this one, Todd Mohr and band have called upon veteran bluesmen to join them on takes that keep the spirit intact.

It's no surprise that B.B. King's slow interpretation of "Crossroads Blues" gets top honor. It's something of a revelation that Mohr and King work together so well. Mohr doesn't undertake the hopeless task of trying to out sing B.B. so his natural vocal style works to complement the veteran. Lightnin' Malcolm and Cedric Burnside appear, with Malcolm's electric slide and Burnside's country blues acoustic and the Monsters' Brian Nevins' drumming making "Come In My Kitchen" a candidate for best example of what Johnson *might* have sounded like today.

Anything that keeps Johnson's music in the popular consciousness and introduces it to a new audience is a good thing; better still when the legacy is in the hands of respectful and capable acolytes like Mohr and his band. – **RA**



**Greg Trooper
Upside-Down Town**

52 Shakes Records

Greg Trooper's music displays a variety of influences – bluesy inflections from R&B coupled with rootsy country melodies and arrangements. On his latest release, he handles most of the acoustic guitar, with veteran guitar-slinger Michael McAdam adding slide and electric guitar.

Co-produced by Trooper, keyboardist Kevin McKendree, and bassist Stewart Lerman, the album's arrangements are designed to let the songs breathe. "First True Love" features Trooper's fingerpicked guitar augmented by a spare bass line and minimalist piano and electric guitar.

Steve Earle, Billy Bragg, Maura O'Connell, Vince Gill, Robert Earl Keen, and Lucy Kaplansky have re-

corded songs written by Trooper. One listen to *Upside-Down Town* and you'll know why. – **SS**



**Barry Cleveland
Hologramatron**

Moonjune Records

Barry Cleveland takes his music to another dimension with *Hologramatron*. It's like a cross between the Velvet Underground and Portishead, but completely unique – and uniquely eccentric.

Cleveland's compositions, arrangements, and guitar work here are a fusion of fusions, as he masterfully treads into ambient, avant-garde metal, psychedelia – even protest music. And the layers of sonic energy that emerge are wondrous.

The band includes bassist Michael Manring, drummer Celso Alberti, vocalist Amy X Neuburg, and Rob-

extra! EXTRA!



**JACOB WISE TRIO,
Jacob Wise Trio
(Self-distributed)**

Traditional jazz

from a young trio, with guitar playing that makes you realize the future is in good hands. Compositions by Wise are smart and memorable, and his playing is a model of efficiency and soul. Expect great things to come from Wise, bassist Aaron Allen, and drummer Andy Beaudoin. – **JH**



**PAUL PIGAT,
Boxcar Campfire
(Little Pig Records)**

Vancouver's Paul Pigat plays the old-time blues as well as rootsy folk and country music on this collection of originals. With fingerpicked guitar, banjo, and slide, it's a great collection of stylish and inspiring playing. – **MD**



**LYNN MILES, Fall
For Beauty (High
Romance Music)**

Canadian singer/songwriter Lynn Miles' latest features 10 original songs produced by guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Ian Lefevre. The arrangements are full of jangly electric guitars and driving rhythms, and Miles' melodies are warm and romantic but have a slightly dark edge. Her lyrics are poetic, yet direct. *Fall For Beauty* should appeal to anyone who appreciates finely honed songwriting. – **SS**



**JOHNNY WINTER,
Live Through
The '80s (MVD
Visual)**

bluesman leads his trio through 16 live performances (and an interview and one music video) in fine form. Rockers like "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and his speed-demon slide arrangement of Dylan's "Highway 61" (maybe the definitive version of the song) are balanced with plenty of blues – from J.B. Lenoir's "Mojo Boogie" to Robert Johnson's "When You've Got A Good Friend." – **DF**



**KURT ROSENWINKEL
AND
OJM, Our Secret
World (Wom-**

music) An idea that could have easily tanked, but worked great, guitarist Rosenwinkel and Portugal's Orquestra Jazz de Matosinhos perform seven of his compositions, with Rosenwinkel playing his usual inspired guitar. It's a treat to hear his music played in a big-band format. – **JH**



**VARIOUS ARTISTS,
Jimmy Dawkins
Presents The Leric
Story (Delmark)**

Until recently, it's been rare for musicians to launch record labels to feature *other* musicians, but that's what Chicago guitarist Jimmy Dawkins did in the early '80s. This 16-cut anthology features such unsung blues

greats as Big Mojo Elem and Queen Sylvia (both featuring Dawkins' unmistakable sting), Johnny Christian, and Tail Dragger. Sister Margo's gospel cuts are especially moving. – **DF**



**JOE MULLINS
& THE RADIO
RAMBLERS,
Hymns from the
Hills (Rebel Records)**

Southern musical tradition hosts two equally powerful schools of gospel music. One can be heard in African-American Baptist churches, the other at bluegrass festivals. Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers perform the latter. Their musicianship instills each tune with fervor and spirit. Cameo appearances by Doyle Lawson, Rhonda Vincent, and Ralph Stanley add additional spice to the album. – **SS**



**BIG SHANTY,
Collection (King
Mojo Records)**

Call it death metal blues or heavy metal funk, Big Shanty plays with ferocity. This two-CD greatest-hits collection sums up his career – and it's suitably loud, at that! – **MD**

**WAYNE AND WILDROOT, One
Hell of a Ride (Self-distributed)**
Nothing fancy, just great blues



and R&B. The focus comes from Pittsburgh's James Dougherty, whose alter ego, James Wildroot Dolan, supplies fiery guitar to back his vocals and those of Bobby Wayne. Eleven cuts of hot, fiery R&B unrelenting in its intensity. – **JH**



**J.D. MCPHERSON,
Signs & Signifiers
(Hi-Style) Roots**

rock fans (be your cup of tea Nick Curran, SCOTS, or Webb Wilder) will dig this Oklahoman. He wrote or co-wrote 10 of the set's dozen songs; screams the rocker "North Side Gal," then croons the ballad "A Gentle Awakening"; and plays lead guitar – summoning Ike Turner on "I Can't Complain" – on all but one cut (which features label head Jimmy Sutton). – **DF**



**MILL CITY TRIO,
Looking Up
(Self-distributed)**

The Mill City Trio includes Greg Passler on guitar and bass, Jamie Dunphy on guitar, and Anthony D'Anna on drums and percussion. They play jazz with rich guitar tones and modern modalities. *Looking Up* is populated with original tunes that at times remind one

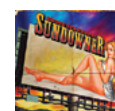
of certain early Larry Coryell compositions. Well-recorded and beautifully played, *Looking Up* is a winner. – **SS**



**THE DIVOTONES,
Cobra Queen
(self-released)**

Billing themselves

as the funniest band on the planet (but refusing to say which planet), the Divotones pump out comedy that truly rocks. With lots of affected attitude and gnarly guitar, this is great fun! – **MD**



**EDDIE SPAGHETTI,
Sundowner (Blood-
shot Records)**

Spaghetti takes time from his normal job as a member of the Supersuckers to record country and country-rock that's succinct and to-the-point. Great vocals, tons of great country guitar, and boatloads of country attitude make *Sundowner* an unexpected treat. – **JH**



**VARIOUS ART-
ISTS, Louisiana
Swamp Stomp
(Honeybee)**

When singer/guitarist Buddy Flett contracted encephalitis, his Louisiana friends decided to throw a party and give the profits to medical research. There's a spirited jam between Sonny Landreth and "Li'l Buck" Sinegal, Little Freddie King's lowdown blues, and more. Special treats are Percy Sledge singing "First You Cry," written by Flett and David Egan, and Flett's impressive solo turn, "Livin' Ain't Easy." – **DF**