



**Nervous Wreck**  
Burnt Black  
Independent

Yarmouth natives Burnt Black have released their first CD, entitled *Nervous Wreck*. This four-piece band have combined heavy distorted guitars with haunting vocals to produce something different from your normal Halifax power pop sound. Alice in Chains or Tool are probably bands that most resemble the thick gooey sound of Burnt Black.

The CD starts with "Purpose Served", a song that lures you in and then pummels you with sound. Another rocker is "Ground Level" with guest backup vocals by Virgil Muir (of Mitch Montana). This song, with its incredibly catchy chorus, had me singing along after only a couple listens, but I must admit that the first time I heard it I thought it was a Kyuss song. Creative usage of effects on "Leaving You" gives an eerie feeling to that song. With its spooky beginning that builds to a fevered climax, it is a great song to see live.

The CD does tend to lose a bit of steam about halfway through, with all the really catchy stuff on the first half. This can be remedied with a bit of creative editing on the CD player.

On the whole, *Nervous Wreck* is a great CD and worth checking out if you are into heavy music, or are tired of the regular local selections.

NEIL FRASER

**illadelph halflife**  
The Roots  
DGC

Albums attain the label of "classic" by achieving one of two requirements: either producing groundbreaking material, or performing a well-known style to near perfection. On the Roots' first album, *Do You Want More* ???, the Roots established themselves as hip hop's funkier live band, with an unorthodox style and sound. On *illadelph halflife*, they have created a memorable album through more conventional meth-



ods of hip hop production.

*illadelph halflife* sees the Roots ease up on the strict focus on live instruments. This time there are sample-based melodies on all but a couple of songs. The distinctive Roots sound is still there however, as the production is done almost entirely by people within the Roots circle (as large a group of

people as that is).

Like the first album, this one is chock full of guests, although this time there is a greater emphasis on vocal guests. Appearances by Q-Tip, Bahamadia, Common, Dice Raw (the corner store terrorist), Ursula Rucker, and vocal percussionist Rahzel the Godfather of Noize — who does with his mouth what Hendrix did with his guitar — all add to the flavour of the album.

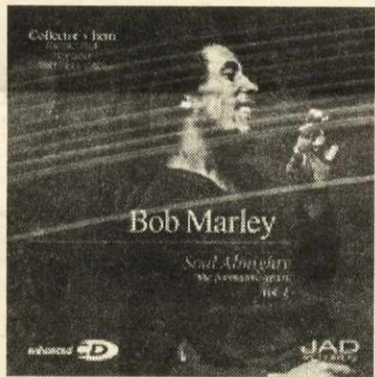
But make no mistake, the Roots emcees, Black Thought and Malik B., are for the most part the stars of this album. Their rhyme styles shift from traditional to decidedly unique, especially on "Section" where Black Thought rhymes reservoir, repertoire, predator, regular, burglar, afar and competitor together. Generally, Malik B. plays Phife to Black Thought's Q-Tip, as he is on about half the tracks.

*illadelph halflife* should elevate the Roots into the upper echelon of hip hop groups, joining the likes of Tribe, De La, Organized and EPMD.

SOHRAB FARID

**Soul Almighty: the formative years**  
Vol. 1  
Bob Marley  
JAD Records

"Here, after three decades, is a long-awaited look at some of the most intriguing and highly anticipated material of Bob Marley's entire career, compelling experiments that have been locked away in the vaults ever since the late 1960s."



For the diehard Bob Marley fan, JAD Records has released the first in a series of three albums of early recordings by Bob Marley and the Wailers. *Soul Almighty: the formative years Vol. 1* was recorded in 1967-68 with the original Wailers: Tuff Gong, Bunny, Rita, Bob and Peter.

The album provides an interesting window into the sounds of the man who developed into the legendary Bob Marley, but this "enhanced" cd leaves me wondering how much of the original sound remains, and how much has been lost in an attempt to turn scratchy 1960s recordings of poor quality into something releasable in the 1990s.

In "Fallin' In And Out Of Love", a previously unreleased song, a loud piano that blocked out Marley's voice in the original recording is completely absent. In fact, many of the original Jamaican musicians have been completely cut out and replaced by contemporary American ones.

The album consists of 16 mediocre soul songs, without the same drive and spirit found in later Marley releases. The voice is that of a man just beginning to find his sound, and the music is straight out of a 1990s recording studio.

*Soul Almighty: the formative years Vol. 1* is a confessed attempt to "expose Marley to a new generation." If you were one of the

people who thought, "Beatles Anthology, gag!" you should probably skip this money-grubbing venture.

GINA STACK

**suddenly i came to my senses**  
Ginger  
EMI

In 1992, the Grapes of Wrath split up, and three of the members formed Ginger. The band's first full-length album, *Far Out*, held true to the Grapes' sound. The group's latest release, *suddenly i came to my senses*, tries to break with the past. This new sound is characterized by hard-driving guitars, drum machines, and whiny vocals.

I was really disappointed with this CD. I'm a real fan of the sound that the Grapes and Ginger crafted over 15 years of experimentation. All bands attempt to redefine themselves at some point in time, but with *suddenly i came to my senses*, Ginger has regressed to a cross between Oasis/Charlatans UK and other quasi-pop bands.

Tom Hooper's vocals are still crisp and clear, but some time in the last two years the band forgot how to play as a unit.

*suddenly i came to my sense* would more appropriately be titled, *suddenly I lost my senses*. If you want save \$15, don't buy this CD.

MICHAEL ALVES

**Stakes is High**

De La Soul  
Tommy Boy  
AND  
Beats, Rhymes and Life  
A Tribe Called Quest  
Jive

Cast your mind back to the days when most rap music was all about gold chains, high-top Adidas sneakers, baseball caps worn backwards and rhymes about how much money, and how many women one could get. It was all very stagnant. With people like Kurtis Blow, Run DMC and Schooly D running things, it was



all very easy for the media to portray rap as a dying fad (of course, they couldn't account for Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions).

Suddenly, out of the blue, came two landmark albums that changed the face of hip hop as we knew it. De La Soul's *3 Feet High and Rising* and A Tribe Called Quest's *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Funk and Rhythm* introduced us to a whole new world of seemingly spaced-out funk. The Native Tongue family had arrived. The hip hop nation was forced to sit up and take notice — and so was white middle-class America.

Now, fresh for '96 come the 4th albums for both groups, and "Ince Again" the "Dog Eat Dog" world has to take note. It's almost déjà vu time as the rap world has

become stagnated with wannabe West Coast gangstas, East Coast heads claiming to keep it real, and a whole proliferation of commercial sell-outs. Both De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest employ similar strategies, hitting us with the same style as before, in conjunction with breathtaking lyrics and slick production. Tracks such as "Phony Rappers" and "Beta Listen" serve as a warning to all those who think rappin' is easy, while "Ince Again" and "4 more" are smoothed out on the R&B tip, just right for boppin' in the Benz. These albums are testament to the fact that hip hop will never die — the Native Tongues have been reinstated.

What makes these two albums truly relevant in 1996, apart from their much needed innovation, are their mature lyrics, their calls for tolerance, and the proof that black music still sets the pace. In the wake of the tragic deaths of two of hip hop's luminaries, Easy E and Tupac Shakur, one wonders whether the images of Chinese kung-fu and Italian mobsters presented by the likes of Wu Tang actually mean a great deal. Who really is keepin' it real?

NIK MADAN

**Are You With Me?**  
Cowboy Mouth  
MCA

Packed with extra light upbeat tracks, you might not notice the cheese till the 2nd or 3rd bite.

Though only one of the four band members sport a pair of two-stepping heels on their back cover, Cowboy Mouth is definitely



a country band in the closet. Their songs on *Are You With Me?* are spiced with a bit of Blue Rodeo and a hint of no-fail Raffi happy-go-luckiness.

Okay, okay, I must admit some tunes are catchy — enough to get impaled in your head — but the lyrics need some pizzazz to give this band its appeal.

*But they gave you cheese when you really didn't order it?*

"Take me back to New Orleans and drop me at my door 'cause I might love you, yea, but I love me more" is just one of the sweet lines written by band members John Thomas Griffith (lead vocalist) and Paul Sanchez. Also, the "sung-through-the nose" half-yodelling style of the lead singer gets a bit irritating after a while. Sad to say, this CD will not disappoint the parents (or kids if you've got any).

JEANNE JU

**Breed**  
Liquid Amber  
Gypsy Records

I had never heard of Liquid Amber before reviewing this CD. The band who is comprised of Andrea Hector on lead vocals and bass, Luke Doucet on guitar, Jerry Wong also on guitar, and Hamish Thomson on drums had the op-

portunity of making a first impression on me.

The lyrics were written by Andrea Hector, and deal primarily with self-hate and cynicism. Hector feeds off her own self-pity to produce redundant lines such as: "Sun won't return now to



bring me tomorrow again..." and "Faked all good intentions, they'd be better off without me still." It seems Hector is exploiting her depression in an attempt at being unique.

The sound of the band could be compared to a funkier version of Alice In Chains. Like Alice In Chains, Liquid Amber's lyrics portray people who are tormented and haunted, and both use similar instrumentation with a grounding in hard rock and slow tempo songs. The similarities stop there, and please don't be misled; Liquid Amber is by no means in the same league as Alice In Chains.

"Stop", "Alone" and "Your Mind" are good songs on their own, however, combined with the other songs on *Breed* the sound becomes very monotonous. Had these songs been mixed with more varied sounds, the CD would have been more interesting. This album is alright, but don't go rushing out there to spend your last twenty bucks on it.

MELISSA BRISTOL

**Antichrist Superstar**  
Marilyn Manson  
MCA

Shock rock of the nineties.

Marilyn Manson is a band that gets more attention for their image than their music. They remind me of a modern day Alice Cooper. Yes, they have make up, a girl's name, dresses, and they want to antagonize society. Personally I think that Mr. Manson looks kind of silly. He doesn't look cool with all of that makeup on and he doesn't have a guillotine and a huge boa constrictor like Alice did.

On to the album: *Antichrist Superstar* is Marilyn Manson's attempt at ending Christianity, but I think he has a long way to go in that department. Produced by Trent Reznor, this album is more industrial than Marilyn Manson's debut release *Portrait of an American Family*. It is also much better.

With thumping bass, soaring keyboards, and catchy riffs, this album takes you through the mind of Marilyn as he writes about all the hatred in his mind. With lyrics such as "Anti Peace, Anti Life, Anti Husband, Anti Wife" and "I am so All-American, I'd sell you suicide, I'm totalitarian, I've got abortion in my eyes", this is not a happy, make you think of pretty little flowers and Woodstock type of album.

But I don't believe anyone is going to get into this album if they have never heard of Manson before. If you like music from NIN or anything in that genre,