

# If you don't blow your amps, you haven't played rock

by Alok Sharma  
and Marcus Parmegiani

"No dumb questions like 'What's your favourite beer?' or its over," we were explicitly instructed backstage at the Concert Hall waiting to interview Pixies lead singer Black Francis.

Welcome to the student press. Francis was modest. "I'm not a rock 'n' roll star," he said. "We're just a band doing the circuit."

Peru Ubu opened for the Pixies with the extremely large and sweaty but limelight-loving Dave Thomas bellowing his songs. The band immediately had the crowd gently swaying through their opening set. They seemed to have impressed people — who were really there to see the Pixies — with their alternative rock-blues tunes.

Pere Ubu jammed with intensity, often going into wild guitar-oriented improvisations. There were many moments when Thomas stepped away from the mike and spewed poetry at a

**concert**  
The Pixies  
The Concert Hall  
Saturday, November 30

crowd that struggled to comprehend. At one point he grabbed a guitar and began rubbing it against an amp for some enlightening feedback. His on-stage antics seemed to be his attempt at making art (his music) a "social activity," his vision of the purpose of a Rock 'n Roll concert.

An hour later, the much-anticipated Pixies appeared speechlessly on stage and began to play. From the first chord to the last note, the crowd ritualistically slam-danced in 'the pit.' For the opening instrumental tunes it seemed as though the band was struggling to keep in sync with each other. They were louder and raunchier than on their albums, with a lead guitar that was way over-amplified.

The band was unusually mellow though, playing some songs at slower than usual tempos, but with sublime,

flowing improvisations. Francis even sang — instead of screaming — the lyrics to many songs, which let his talented voice shine. The usually easy-going bassist Kim Deal was just that; she played in the background, managing to constantly have a lit cigarette in her mouth.

The music progressed until suddenly, after stopping to tune their guitars, one of the amps blew during "Velouria," and Black Francis stormed off stage with the band members in tow. After ten minutes of the fans chanting "bullshit" and "fuck," they returned, apologizing for the "dramatic" exit.

This alternative hard-rock band decided to play many of their more obscure tracks, such as "Crackety Jones," "Something Against You" and "Caribou," from their first album, instead of the well-known hits. The band had a tighter, better, but still raunchy and raw sound.

The crowd in the balcony looked asleep compared to the people in the



Black Francis, lead singer of The Pixies, feels the pressure of blown amps and precocious student journalists hot on the scent of a free barbecue. Life on the road is hard... Alok Sharma

pit. The Pixies don't usually do anything out of the ordinary on stage, and this was no exception. Francis appeared to look above the crowd with concentration as he strummed and sang his music. Being on the balcony,

it was hard not to stare down at the writhing mass of people below as the music put you into a hypnotic trance.

Through the second half of the concert, the Pixies performed seamlessly, right up until the crowd pleasing encores: a cover of "Head On" by Jesus and Mary Chain and "U-Mass," the anthem from their latest album *Trompe le Monde*.

## A Lump of Coal they'll want in their stockings

by Leif Lahtinen

Just in time for Christmas, ready to put in someone's stocking comes *A Lump of Coal*. There are no choirs here, and no Bing Crosby. Just an eclectic bunch of rock bands taking traditional favourites apart.

If you are sick of traditional Christmas song renditions, you'll like this album. The only carol done in a remotely traditional way is "The First Noel," by the Crash Test Dummies. It's soft and slow, done with vocals and piano.

The rest are, I'm afraid, rather untraditional. Energy and enthusiasm — and guitars and drums — are the rule. The songs' lyrics are merely skeletal remains. The music is something else. Carnival Art's version of "Bring a Torch to Jeannette Isabella" is rock with a mild punk influence. So is Wedding Present's "Stepping Into Christmas." Great stuff.

"O Holy Night" is given a country and southern blues mix by Divine Weeks. The Primitives' version of "Silent Night" is sung with an angelic voice, but backed by fast and lovely electric guitars. And has anyone heard

**music**  
various artists  
*A Lump of Coal*  
First warning/BMG

Elvis' version of "Here Comes Santa Claus?" Well, Clockhammer's version is similar, but better.

Henry Rollins ends this album doing "Twas the Night Before Christmas." This is why I wanted to review *A Lump of Coal*. I was intrigued. His version sounds like Christmas in the Vietnam of *Apocalypse Now*. Helicopters, falling shells,

## Album for a rainy Sunday brunch

Christine F. de Leon

There are few albums that go well with brunch on rainy Sunday mornings, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, for example, or Miles Davis' *Kinda Blue*. Van Morrison's *Hymns to the Silence* can now be added to the list.

Gospel, soul and jazz influences on this album add vibrant watercolours to the black and white vignettes of Morrison's story-telling.

The songs on this double album are laden with religious themes. This

bizarre music and distorted voices. Maybe not very Christmassy, but a great interpretation.

*A Lump of Coal* is certainly not for everyone. But if you're sick of Perry Como, Frank Sinatra and the like dominating your holidays, give this a listen. And it's not just for Christians. Take away the sometimes indistinguishable lyrics and you have holiday party tunes for all faiths.

In fact, this album is not about religion. It is about what Christmas is, in part, supposed to honour: the celebration of life.

**music**  
Van Morrison  
*Hymns to the Silence*  
Polygram Records

gets tiresome — repentance through art is typical of rock and roll's dread of hellfire. But the nostalgia of songs like "Hynford Street," which poetically illustrate younger, less jaded days that smell like summertime, are a delight.

Morrison sticks to what he knows best, and it seems he has found his artistic niche. *Hymns to the Silence* is quintessential Morrison, a great addition to any collection, especially for those who have followed him throughout the years.

**CHRY 105.5 FM TOP 20**

- Public Enemy.....*Apocalypse 91*.....Def Jam, Columbia
- Digital Poodle.....*Soul Crush*.....DOV (C)
- Ministry.....*Jesus Built My Hotrod*.....Warner
- Billy Bragg.....*Don't Try This At Home*.....Polygram
- Queen Latifah.....*Nature of a Sista*.....Tommy Boy
- Nirvana.....*Nevermind*.....Geffen, MCA
- Red Hot Chili Peppers.....*Blood Sugar Sex Magik*.....Warner
- Hole.....*Pretty On The Inside*.....Caroline
- Me Mom and Morgentaler.....*Clown Heaven and Hell*.....Chooch(C)
- John Lee Hooker.....*Mr. Lucky*.....Virgin
- Weird Paul.....*Low Fidelity Hi Anxiety*.....Homestead
- Vandals.....*Fear Of A Punk Planet*.....XXX
- A Tribe Called Quest.....*The Low End Theory*.....Jive, BMG
- Naughty By Nature.....*Naughty By Nature*.....Tommy Boy
- Thee Hypnotics.....*Soul Glitter and Sin*.....Polygram
- Lush.....*Nothing Natural*.....4AD, Polygram
- Pixies.....*Trompe Le Monde*.....4AD, Polygram
- Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprosy.....*Television*.....Island
- Voivod.....*Angel Rat*.....Mechanic, MCA (C)
- Look People.....*Boogazm*.....Island (C)

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