

GENRECIDES

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

MICHAEL EDWARDS

↑straighten this up!! (make my name BIGGER!)

Yup, it's that time again. Time for the third annual Genrecide review of the year, and the year in question was 1995. So what was 1995 notable for? Well, it can be more or less summed up in one word - Britpop. It is one of those all-encompassing terms for pop music from Britain (surprise, surprise) that doesn't really tell you much about how the music sounds, just the geographical origin. But nevertheless, 1995 was an incredibly good year for music from the other side of the Atlantic - a few bands made some real progress in the US (including a quartet from Liverpool who could be big one day; I forget their name but it is something to do with insects...) and consolidated their popularity in the UK. Or in other words, yet another British Invasion. After all, it has been at least a year since the last one.

And if you looked at the music press in the UK, it was plain to see who their darlings were. First there was Menswear who took the now usual route of getting a whole bunch of front pages before they sold a single record. And when the album did come out, it seemed that the mod revival they were threatening just wasn't going to happen. I guess that they had more front pages than good songs - something that could be said about quite a few bands really. Then there was Blur and Oasis whose ongoing feud got much more press than it deserved. When their new albums did finally come out, Blur got the better reviews and Oasis got the better sales. My vote goes to Oasis simply for the more accessible music. Other bands jumped in and out of the spotlight in the way that they do over there; bands like Supergrass, Gene and Elastica. And now it is Pulp. Their new album has just been released (too late to make this review), and if it lives up to the high standards of their last it will probably be one of the best of '96.

But that's not to say that there was no good music made outside Britain - there was quite a bit. It just so happened that most of the good stuff wasn't to be found on the major labels. If you were willing to dig about through the indie labels (Matador had a vintage year...), there were some moments of real aural delight just waiting to be discovered. That was particularly true if you had the stamina to slog it through all two hours of *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* where Billy Corgan once more demonstrated that he isn't a happy soul, and wants everyone else to know. Elsewhere in the States, Hootie and The Blowfish were being canonized by just about everyone for no good reason. They even managed to keep their out of court settlement with Bob Dylan from ripping off some of his lyrics for their biggest hit; we wouldn't want their publicity machine grinding to a halt, would we? Give them six more months and they will go the same way as the Spin Doctors.

Anyway, enough of my ramblings - let the games begin.

Record Of The Year



Normally, I wouldn't be so bold as to even try to pick out a single record as the most magnificent thing I have heard during the past year. But this year, I could. It was even quite easy. Inevitable, even. And that record is *Dummy* by Portishead. I have gushed about this record ever since it came out all the way back in January, and it still sounds as wonderful as it ever did - the best thing to come out of Bristol by far. Beth's voice will haunt for days, weeks and even months to come. Call it trip-hop, call it torch songs for the nineties, call it whatever you like; just make sure that you believe all that you have heard about Portishead. Every single household needs to have a copy of this album, and if you don't have one yet then you should go and pick yourself up one as soon as you possibly can. An absolute classic.

people must be sick and tired of hearing you go on about Portishead by now



(space-filling hedgehog)

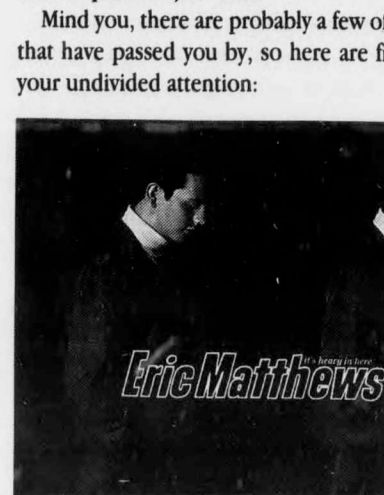
Albums Of The Year

Should I give you my Top 5? Top 50? Top 100? Let's start off with five of the best (in no particular order...)

Teenage Fanclub's *Grand Prix* (their best to date), Radiohead's *The Bends* (no longer just the 'Creep' band), Elastica's *Elastica* (plagerism to the nth degree), PJ Harvey's *To Bring You My Love* (Polly discovers the darker side of the blues) and Yo La Tengo's *Electr-o-Pura* (they are the latest incarnation of the Velvet Underground). And you can add to that a whole bunch more (still in no particular order) like the Jayhawks' *Tomorrow The Green Grass*, Goldie's *Timeless*, Supergrass' *I Should Coco*, Tricky's *Maxinquaye*, Oasis' (*What's The Story*) *Morning Glory*, The Chemical Brothers' *Exit Planet Dust*, Edwyn Collins' *Gorgeous*, Foo Fighters' *Foo Fighters*, The Amps' *Pacer*, The 6ths' *Wasps' Nests*, Superchunk's *Here's Where The Strings Come In*, Tindersticks' *Second Album*, Buffalo Tom's *Sleepy-Eyed*, Lloyd Cole's *Love Story*, Black Grape's *It's Great When You're Straight...Yeah*, The Verve's *A Northern Soul*, Bjork's *Post*, The Cardigan's *Life*, Boo Radleys' *Wake Up!*, Nectarine No. 9's *Saint Jack*, Helium's *The Dirt Of Luck*, Mary Lou Lord's *Kill Rock Stars EP*, Garbage's *Garbage*, Blur's *The Great Escape*, Kendra Smith's *Five Ways Of Disappearing*, Laika's *Silver Apples Of The Moon*, Gene's *Olympian*, The Magnetic Fields' *Get Lost*, Stereolab's *Music For The Amorphous Body Study Centre* and probably a whole bunch more. It can be so hard to pick out just a few.



Mind you, there are probably a few of the more obscure releases that have passed you by, so here are five of those which deserve your undivided attention:



It's Heavy In Here by Eric Matthews - Imagine the voice and songs of Nick Drake, a slight Burt Bacharach influence, and a little bit of trumpet too. These are the sort of songs that nobody seems to want to write any more.

Further by Flying Saucer Attack - Waves of acoustic guitars awash with swirly layers of feedback, and the most gentle of voices weaving in and out of the mix. Gorgeous.

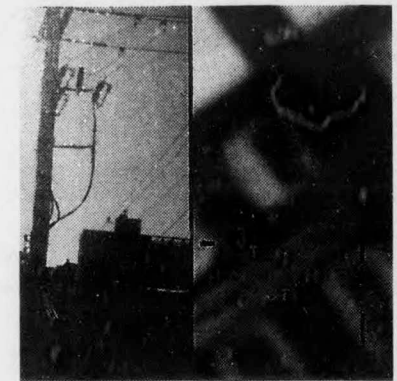
Gideon by the High Llamas - One of the best albums from 1994 finally gets a North American release. It sounds like a time capsule from an alternative world when the Beach Boys' *Smile* did come out, and Brian Wilson was recognised for the genius he is.

Houdini by Long Fin Killie - It is so refreshing to see a band from the UK *not wanting* to sound like anyone else. Completely unique. This bunch of Scots do weird things with weird instruments; it's been called medieval hip-hop, but it is so much more. Out of chaos comes something very special.

Gyral by Scorn - I still can't believe that someone from Napalm Death can make such intriguing ambient music. This is an album full of spooky noises and hypnotic rhythms; after just one listen, it will have you under its spell.

Canadian Artists Of The Year

Another good year for Canadian music starting all the way back in January when Cub released their second full-length *Come Out, Come Out*, and finishing on high note with Alanis Morissette receiving a whole bunch of Grammy nominations. In reality, the year did, in a sense, belong to Alanis as she jumped from relative obscurity to overnight fame. What fuelled this jump? Talent. Plain and simple. *Jagged Little Pill* is a very good album, and anyone who tells you otherwise is listening with a closed mind.



Still, I wouldn't call it my Canadian album of the year. There have been wonderful albums from all kinds of people like Pluto and Huevos Rancheros making it a vintage year for Vancouver's Mint Records. Change Of Heart's *Tummysockle* saw a major label release, just in time for the band to undergo some major personnel shifts while Len made the jump from indie cassette to indie CD with *Superstar*. Hayden's *Everything I Long For* has some great songs, but is best enjoyed in small doses so that depression doesn't set in. Neil Young hooked up with Pearl Jam to return to his noisier ways, (and he had the good sense to let Eddie only sing on one song) while Moxy Fruvous tried their utmost to shake the novelty label with *Wood*. They almost succeeded too. Kim Stuckwood deserves a mention for her debut single 'She's Not In Love' - it's just a pity that the album didn't live up to those high standards. Hardship Post put out their debut album, *Somebody Spoke*, and went on tour reduced to a two piece when their drummer quit two days before the tour started. In the meantime, Jale lost their drummer just as their *Closed* EP came out; she went and joined Hardship Post returning them to a three piece (although she won't be playing drums). Confused? We all were.



But my two favourite Canadian albums of the year were SIANspheric's *Somnium* which did a fine job recreating the glory days of such bands as Slowdive and Ride, and also kd Lang's *All You Can Eat*, an album that is all about love and sex and mushy stuff like that. Country music is so far behind her now, it's hard to believe she wore that wedding dress.

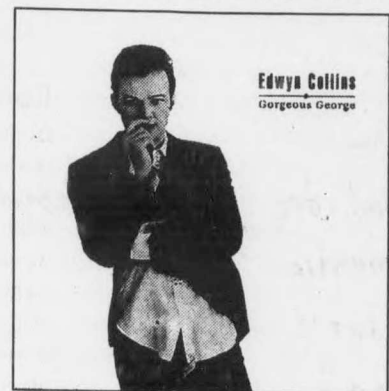
Singles Of The Year

Or the songs that the world just can't live without; just a few minutes of joy that make you feel like life is worthwhile again. This year, there are three songs that made the shortlist and they are (in no particular order...)

'Protection' by Massive Attack - Tracy Thorn from Everything But The Girl joins with the oldest of the Bristol trinity to create eight of the finest minutes to come out in 1995. Starting with a heartbeat, and ending with a rainstorm, 'Protection' soothes, calms and inspires almost effortlessly. This is the best track on their album of the same name, and enough to make its purchase a necessity.

'Gangsta's Paradise' by Coolio - A huge song. Absolutely massive. It takes the melody, and the string sample from Stevie Wonder's 'Pastime Paradise', then updates it thanks to Coolio and L.V. It did suffer from a bit of overexposure because of the advertising campaign for the movie *Dangerous Minds* though. Nevertheless, a wonderful song.

'A Girl Like You' by Edwyn Collins - Wow. An incredible return to form for the ex-Orange Juice leadman. A touch of Motown, a spot of distorted guitar and the most memorable of tunes. And a Sex Pistol on drums too. It was even a hit too, even in America.



What about Scottish artist of the year?

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