

**Straight From My Heart**  
Pebbles  
MCA

Pebbles has grown up. Excuse me while I pick myself up from the floor.

*Straight From My Heart* is very soulful — a pleasant change from the pop drivel she used to put out and became famous for.

Of the album, Pebbles says "The songs all express personal feelings... it was important to me to make an album of feelings, not just an album with a couple of singles."

Pardon me while I throw up.

If you exclude all the sentimental drivel that is being used to promote this CD, you can enjoy the music for what it's worth. It's simple, it's smooth and it's funky. According to the press-release, it's also "lazy", "hypnotic", "insistent", "intimate" and, erm... "creamy" (!).

Overall it has a feel-good vibe about it, especially on tracks such as "Happy," "Soul Replacement," "Like The Last Time," and "Are You Ready?" Well worth a listen.

If only Pebbles would do something about her new Vanessa Williams wannabe image, she could almost be credible...

EUGENIA BAYADA



**The Road Home**  
Heart  
EMI

Retrospectives, b-side compilations, box sets, unpluggeds, reissues, and best-ofs. If you don't have any new music for the new album, you're safe now. Just slap together a bunch of old songs with maybe a "previously unreleased" tune and you've got yourself a cash cow.

Heart almost missed this gravy train, but with the release of *The Road Home* they prove that they can be slouches as well as any Rod Stewart. Hell, they'll even stand up when they play. Isn't that enough? This live acoustic set of best-ofs and covers gives the answer: a resounding "No."

"Straight On" is a half-decent rendition at best on this 71 minute disc and it's the only "standout". It doesn't have the same swagger that makes it great bar music. It does, however, have the great Ann and Nancy ban-shee harmonies. "Crazy on You" and "Barracuda" just weren't made for acoustic guitar. The rest of the disc is blasé. The songs that work well in an acoustic setting blew in the first place. Three good bar tunes does not a repertoire make.

Then there is the John Paul Jones factor. After showing up in the most unexpected places (producing the Butthole Surfers and more recently, accompanying

underworldly- opera-trained singer Diamanda Galas on album and tour), he surfaces with Heart. He adds a string section that really shouldn't have been there, but he did an excellent job in capturing the live sound. Unfortunately there is no substance to go with it.

MIKE GRAHAM

**Totally Crushed Out!**  
that dog.  
Geffen

I was wrong about that dog. When I first saw the packaging for their CD *Totally Crushed Out!*, with its Sweet Valley High novel-style lyric sheets and Judy Blume cover art, I thought for sure I was dealing with just another little girl rock band. A quick and superficial first listen backed me up: there were those Plumtree-style guitars in "He's Kissing Christian," the Veruca Salt wannabe

"Side Part," two or three truly horrible puns, and entire songs with no complete sentences. And heck, the first lyric on the album is, "So he said, 'want to go to a movie?'"!

Then I realized that something really subtle is happening here. that dog. is subverting childhood images and symbols to their own devious ends. Take "One Summer Night": the narrator is fourteen, the romance takes place "in the quad," and yet the song transcends junior high clichés to become a postmodern feminist rejection of misogynistic patriarchy.

Even more deliciously, in "He's Kissing Christian," the cry from childhood games of tag — "come out, come out, wherever you are" — becomes advice to homosexuals everywhere. This song also neatly dismisses religious homophobics by implicating them in the activities they despise.

As well, that dog, occasionally lets slip a mature lyric, like "Tie me down with dental floss...slap some bliss on me" ("Lip Gloss"), "She doesn't know how to go home alone" ("She Doesn't Know How"), and my personal favourite, "He's kissing Christian 'cause he's such a successful bachelor" ("He's Kissing Christian").

This is a fabulous album. Aside from the weird moment in "Rockstar" where for twenty seconds it's a dance song, the music is great, and aside from the rather brief "Michael Jordan," the lyrics are brilliant. I highly recommend this to all — adults and children alike.

JOANNE MERRIAM

**Let's Have A Talk With the Dead**  
Show Business Giants  
Essential Noise/Virgin

I first picked up the Show Business Giants' *Let's Have A Talk With The Dead* because one of the songs is called "I've Got A Crush On Wendy Mesley."

A band made up of West

Coast Punk musicians that can write a tribute to the ex-Mrs. Peter Mansbridge must have its tongue wonderfully cemented in its cheeks. Expecting an album full of satire, I wasn't disappointed but surprised to discover that these artists have a keen knowledge of almost every popular style of rock and roll. It's like listening to 18 different format radio stations at the same time, with oldies hits such as the cover of Nancy Sinatra's "Sugar Town" and "Fireball XL-5" to the samples and Ventures-style picking of "The Other Side of Mr. Sulu."

The Show Business Giants are a mixed bag of nuts that include Tom Holliston and John Wright from NOMEANSNO, Ken Kempster from The Hanson Brothers (which is pretty much NOMEANSNO again), Scott Henderson of Hissanol, and Ford Pier, the new DOA bassist. They have many guests on the album including one called Sam. In the liner notes Sam is defined as a "...mischievous spirit-being forever dwelling in the anteroom between what we call 'life' and the myriad other planes of existence that lie beyond." He is also given credit for all the vocals on the album.

These guys must live, breathe, and sweat sarcasm because it oozes out of every part of the album. There are perfect pop hooks and melodies on "Good-bye Lutwaffe Girl", heavy Doors-like keyboard under lounge singer vocals on "Vampire Hookers", and cajun-like accordion on "I Am The Lickspittle Of The Animal Kingdom." These are super songs in many diverse styles, and there's not one song that is not a fun exploration of a particular genre.

"Soundcheck" is probably the most biting of the tracks in terms of sarcasm. It features a repetitive, hard-rock riff and a horrendous, screaming, long-hair-swinging vocal that is constantly complaining. In the middle of the track there is a fictional soundcheck with a squeaky-voiced techie tweaking the sound of various instruments including Igor Stravinsky and Imru the Tazmanian Devil-like monster. This is so brilliantly done that I really can't even explain it without making it sound incredibly

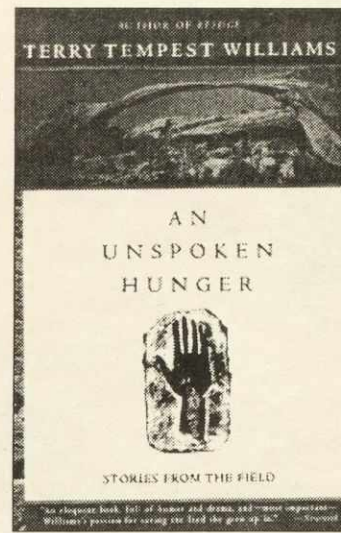


stupid. Trust me, it's great.

I can't stop listening to this album. I think it's because I enjoy a lot of the styles made-fun of on the disc and the satires are done in such accurate detail that unless I was listening to the lyrics, I probably couldn't tell that it was satire. The satire doesn't seem to be malicious in nature, it's just a bunch of friends getting together in a studio in Victoria and fooling around with 50 years of popular music for their own amusement. And mine.

TIM COVERT

# Meditations of an eco-spiritualist



**BOOK**  
**An Unspoken Hunger: Stories from the Field**  
by Terry Tempest Williams  
Vintage Books \$14.00/144 pages

I'll admit it upfront: I love getting into the woods, but I'm not an environmental activist. In fact, I'm leery of proselytizing eco-prophets, I shy away from strident Green-gurus. Hence it was with trepidation that I opened *An Unspoken Hunger* — its author, T.T. Williams, is virtually an eco-saint.

Williams, Naturalist-in-Residence at the Utah Museum of Natural History, is attempting to follow in the footsteps of Rachel Carson. Carson's *Silent Spring* was revolutionary; it was a moving plea to save the planet, and it eventually struck home.

Unfortunately, 30 years and thousands of books, articles and reports later, many people are finding it harder and harder to heed warnings of impending disaster. Have the experts been crying wolf, or have we as a species become inured to the plight of Mother Earth? Williams' book answers "No!" to both counts. She believes that although a lot of damage has been done, and is still being done, we can turn the tide. She's convinced that our anthropocentric species still has strong ties to nature, that each of us feels a "spiritual need to preserve wilderness."

*An Unspoken Hunger* is a collection of 18 essays, or meditations, on the natural world, exploring such diverse locales as the Serengeti Plains, the Bronx, and the American Southwest. The author's memories and observations are dressed in narrative cloaks; hence the book is touted as a work of creative nonfiction.

Some readers may be uneasy with Williams' brand of eco-spiritualism, a sensibility stemming from such nature-lovers as D.H. Lawrence, Edward Abbey, and Georgia O'Keefe. As she explains: "My connection to the natural world is my connection to self-erotic, mysterious, and whole." One night in the desert she sees a lunar rainbow — "...a sweep of stardust within pastel bands of light-pink, lavender, yellow, and blue" — and feels the presence of angels.

On the human connection to bears, she writes: "The bear is free to roam. If we choose to follow the bear, we will be saved from a distractive and domesticated life. The bear becomes our mentor. We must journey out, so that we might journey in."

Such observations may seem trite or overly esoteric, but when taken in context they please rather than grate. Williams' heartfelt love of the wilderness and simple, spare language counteract any flimsiness generated by her spiritual bent.

As Williams notes, conservation is not all solemn soul-searching; there are laughs when worlds collide. After spending the day with friends looking for wetland creatures at Pelham Bay, near the Bronx, a woman comes up to her in Manhattan and says: "I like your look. Do you mind me asking where you purchased your trousers and boots? And the binoculars are a fabulous accessory." Williams answers, "Utah ... I bought them all in Utah." "Utah," the woman repeats, "I don't know that shop."

Williams has a definite eco-axe to grind, yet she writes with poetic grace, with an eye for beauty. After watching the flight of two herons, she muses: "I do not believe they are fearful of love. I do not believe their decisions are based on a terror of loss. They are not docile, loyal, or obedient ... They are feathered Buddhas casting blue shadows on the snow."

Williams is a mystic, but not a hermit-like misanthrope. She wants everyone to experience nature; she has no time for elitist keep-out-of-MY-wilderness types. Come on in, she says, come on down — get an earful and eyeful of nature.

ANDY POTTER

**"I like your look. Do you mind me asking where you purchased your trousers and boots? And the binoculars are a fabulous accessory."**  
**Williams answers,**  
**"Utah ... I bought them all in Utah."**  
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