

# New releases show young bands' talent

With excellent new material out by veteran artists such as Paul Simon, Richard Thompson and R.E.M., it is easy to overlook equally good releases from promising young bands. Debut vinyl from **James**, **Easterhouse** and **Downy Mildew** warrant attention.

**Stutter** is the first American release from the Manchurian quartet James. James has been around for five years, having released two singles and an EP in Britain and honed their skills opening for bands such as Echo and the Bunnymen and The Smiths. Not coincidentally, their music has most

## Steve Balcom

### Albums

often been linked to the latter band — a just comparison.

Nevertheless, **Stutter** is a strong debut album filled with irresistible vocal and guitar hooks, impressive musicianship and equally good songwriting. Songs on the LP range from the uptempo danceability of "Just Hip" to the trivial meandering

of "Scarecrow." Also featured is the single "So Many Ways," which has skyrocketed onto the British charts and can also be seen on (gulp) MTV. Throughout, the music on **Stutter** is accessible and appealing with a refreshing hint of innocence.

Equally impressive is the five-piece band Easterhouse. Their debut LP **Contenders** is a relentless collection of uptempo rockers, showcasing the big guitar sound popularized by such bands as U2, The Cult and Simple Minds. Their music, however, isn't a clone of the aforementioned. Easterhouse moves within this influ-

ence to create a different sound that is entirely their own.

**Contenders** opens with the raw emotion of "Out On Your Own," one of the best cuts of the year. The intensity and emotion conveyed in both the guitar of Ivor Perry and the vocals of his brother Andy are difficult to describe. Rather, they should be heard. The rest of the album rocks in a similar manner, pausing periodically with somewhat slower numbers. It is a combination that highlights the versatility of the band; but more importantly it is a mixture that works. Easterhouse is a great band, one that will undoubtedly be heard from in the future.

Not to be outdone is a Los Angeles-based band called Downy Mildew. Don't let the name fool you; this is a band that exhibits a fresh, new sound on their self-titled debut

EP on the independent label Texas Hotel. Headed by guitarists/vocalists Charlie Baldonado and Jenny Homer, Downy Mildew displays shades of cold-wave originators Echo and the Bunnymen and Diouxsie and the Banshees. The four song EP opens with the manipulative rocker "Experience in the Far Southwest," as Baldonado croons over a relentless line of catchy guitar hooks. The final three cuts are handled by Homer, whose voice rivals Siouxsie's for controlled emotion. The music throughout is harsh but accessible, and at all times entirely pleasing.

Unfortunately, this is the first vinyl offering from the Texas Hotel label and is thus hard to find. Your best bet is to order Downy Mildew from your nearest record store.

All three debut releases are well worth your efforts to obtain them.

# Alley lets underage party

By JAMES BURRUS  
Staff Writer

While many area bars and music clubs are waiting to see how the new drinking law will affect their businesses, Rhythm Alley has implemented a unique policy that allows 18, 19 and 20-year-olds into the music club.

Harry Simmons, owner of the Chapel Hill music club, said he will allow underage people in if they agree to some stringent regulations.

The first rule states that a person between 18 and 20 who wants to enter the club must give an ID card to the person at the door and then sign an agreement stating that he will not drink or attempt to purchase a beer. A bright orange wristband must also be worn at all times, so bartenders can identify underaged customers.

If a person is caught drinking a beer, attempting to purchase an alcoholic beverage or taking off the wristband, the club is authorized to turn his ID card over to the police, Simmons said. The club will also help authorities prosecute the individual, he said.

He also warned that anyone

caught breaking the policy will never be allowed back into the club, even when they turn 21.

Rhythm Alley has undercover employees who watch the activities of underage people, Simmons said. The policy is also enforced at Simmons's other music club, The Brewery in Raleigh. Simmons said the club is forced to have such a tough policy in order to stay in business. "We get fined if they violate the law," he said.

The club decided on 18 as the cutoff age because it is the age

someone can legally sign a document, he said.

So far, neither club has experienced any problems with underage people obeying the policy, Simmons said.

Simmons also said he has not noticed a decrease in 19 and 20-year-olds attending the club's concerts, even though they know they cannot drink.

"We don't feel right depriving people of entertainment just because they cannot drink alcohol," he said.

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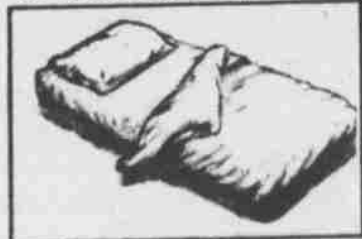
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