

Nirvana's latest CD gives new life to old tunes

Say what you will about Nirvana, but one fact cannot be denied: they were all about rockin' out. And their Kurt Cobain-posthumous latest release, *From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah*, highlights the band at its guitar-crunching best. With 17 live-recorded tracks spanning six years of concert performance, *Wishkah* represents all four of their studio albums. "School," "Drain You," "Aneurysm" and the slightly sped-up "Smells Like Teen Spirit" are all full of gut-wrenching

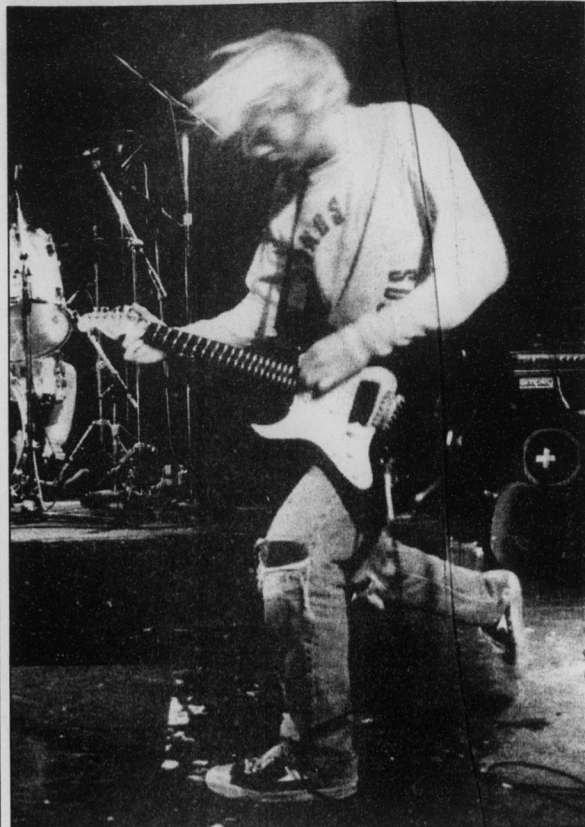
sound and fury. The latter three tracks were taken from a December 1991 show, part of a West Coast tour with The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Pearl Jam — that must have been one heck of a concert.

GREG KALISS
Album Review
 Nirvana
From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah
 Geffen Records
A-

The hook-laden "Been a Son" and "Sliver," both originally from their B-sides collection *Incesticide*, capture a perfect blend of pop and punk, mixing catchy tunes and riffs with the crunching sound that made Nirvana famous. Add the electric version of "Polly," a great cut of "Heart-Shaped Box" (with a rad guitar break) and the thoroughly cool "Negative Creep," and you get near perfection. With its pristine sound quality and lack of interfering crowd noise, *Wishkah*

(named for a river in Seattle, the band's hometown) is one of the best live albums in recent memory. Any complaints are minimal. Putting "Milk It," originally from *In Utero*, on the album is a questionable choice; it's not that great of a song. And the version of "Breed," originally from their breakthrough *Nevermind*, isn't the best. It's also hard not to wish for the inclusion of tunes like "Lounge Act," "In Bloom" and "Rape Me."

All in all, though, this album kicks some butt. It captures the spirit of Nirvana — the growls, the shrieks, the feedback-drenched guitars and the thumping drums — and documents the group's growth throughout its abbreviated career. It's simply well done.



The late Kurt Cobain's music still rocks this live music compilation, which highlights Nirvana's brief but stellar career.

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Jazzy Agents stretch organic 'Roots' while touring circuit

BY BRENT SIMON
 STAFF WRITER

The comparisons to Dave Matthews Band are inevitable. The Richmond-based band Agents of Good Roots does, after all, feature a saxophone in the mix of its funky jazz rock. Likewise, it favors a hard-driving, tour-and-conquer method and frequently plays at Trax in Charlottesville and the Floodzone in Richmond, both familiar haunts of Mr. Matthews and his mates.

But for now, at least, Agents of Good Roots is taking the leisurely road to the big time, touring like fiends and spreading its organic grooves to as many disciples as possible. Its energetic live shows contain a strong rotation of between 30 and 40 tunes, a handful of which can be found on the band's spring debut release, *Where'd You Get That Vibe?*

"We're a rock band first and foremost, but with a lot of (different) influences, including '60s jazz and Motown," said Agents drummer/vocalist Brian Jones in a recent phone interview.

From the funky little atypical love tune "Turtle Dove" to the trippy, riff-laden "Straight" and "Step To The Street," these Agents at once strongly recall artists like 311, Love Jones and G Love & Special Sauce, while still sounding remarkably original.

This can be traced in part to Andrew Winn, the group's lead vocalist/guitarist. First of all, Winn—who has a master's degree in classical guitar—plays an electric guitar with nylon strings, which produces a short, crisp sound. But much more interesting is Winn's distinctive, gravelly voice, the result of an unfortunate run-in with a ski pole when he was 14 years old. No doubt horribly painful then, the result now is a low, catchy rasp that marks Agents' music and carries most of the tunes along.

Recently the group scored a major coup, landing a spot on this fall's H.O.R.D.E. tour, performing for eight dates along the eastern seaboard with Lenny Kravitz, Rusted Root and Blues Traveler. "It was sort of like the minor leaguers being called up to the majors for a few weeks," explained Jones. "It was a fun time—kind of like camp, but still definitely a learning experience."

Well, if touring is learning, then these lads should be earning their doctoral degrees any moment now. "It's good in the sense that we get to play consistently and stretch out musically," said Jones. "And (at Trax and the Floodzone) we work towards that loose feeling (for a crowd that already knows us)."

Not all work is done on the road, however. The Agents are also working on putting out a live CD in early 1997 that will cover numbers from their shows along with a good deal of new material.

"Our studio album worked for us at that point (of release)," Jones said. "But hopefully the new disc will really reflect our sound as it is now, with more interaction and energy. We play so much live that we've really developed." Agents of Good Roots are set to take the stage at 10:30 tonight at the Brewery in Raleigh.

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