

# Eclectic entries pervade year's finest media

BY PHILIP MCFEE  
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Well, as is so often the case, the times are a-doin' what they do best. As students clogged the Pit in August 2003, the dominant pop culture trend was markedly different. Think crunk.

Jerry Bruckheimer had blown the summer movie season out of the water, bankrolling half a billion dollars with his sexed-up, explosion-laced blockbusters. People had discovered that they did, indeed, have tail feathers, and they were shaking the hell out of them.

Clubgoers were partying like it was their birthday, although the word on the street was nobody cared.

This year, it's been a quiet riot. And not just because of the return of Tears for Fears. The media hits of 2004 have been under-the-radar successes that make waves by being less than bombastic. Here's a look at this year's undercover hits.

## Albums: The Folk Freak-Out

Joanna Newsom, *The Milk-Eyed Mender* — Hey, remember when you were 12 and your parents took you to that stupid "concert in the park" crap? I mean, jeez, it was so hot outside and there was that orchestra. I mean, who really cares about a harpist?

Well, a young Joanna Newsom saw that lowly string-plucker and thought, "It's time for somebody to write vulnerable yet mature pop songs with a great sense of narrative over an active harp accompaniment." She was advanced for her age.

Her album, in turn, takes some

maturity to appreciate, but it's so honest it's bound to make you milk-eyed. Whatever that means.

Animal Collective, *Sung Tongs* — Who likes pandas? Do you like pandas? Of course you do! Who the hell don't? Well, get them while they're singing canons with this unique entry into the 2004 field.

It's a veritable festival of sound and light! The latest album from right-field folkies Animal Collective is an unfamiliar extravaganza of polyphonic goodness. Don't take it home to mother — it's a joy ride through some of the most colorful sonic landscapes you'll find nowadays.

Madvillain, *Madvillainy* — If, by this point, you think that KMD is a real slick-like abbreviation for Kool Mo Dee, just leave now. Yeah, that's right, get out.

Alright, if you're down with MF Doom, you know he's the most versatile, prolific MC on the market today. He's hip-hop's Bob Pollard with quality control. The ex-KMD wordsmith was responsible for two of 2003's most infectious records, and he's set to release another LP by the end of the year.

But, for now, fans have *Madvillainy*, his throwback magnum opus tossed off with ace turntabler Madlib. It's a top-notch joint, with enough eclectic rhyming to have G-Unit quivering in their diamond-studded body armor.

P.G. Six, *The Well of Memory* — Here's the skinny, y'all: Make an album that includes a song with "Part 2" in it, and it's golden.

"Untrustable, Pt. 2"; "The Glow, Pt. 2"; "Two-Headed Boy, Pt. 2";

and now idiosyncratic instrumentalist P.G. Six (with title track part ones and two) has given the music community — a community starved for yet another deuce-filled track list — a sizeable gift.

The Sixers have brought together a collection of resonant, haunting melodies that stick with you, clingier than Jeff Buckley's mom to loose change.

Plus, it kicks far more ass than "Dangerously in Love, Pt. 2."

## LPs in Brief

Devendra Banhart, *Rejoicing in the Hands* — Looks like Jesus, sounds like heaven.

Comets on Fire, *Blue Cathedral* — Loud? Loud. Score.

Charalambides, *Joy Shapes* — Free folkies get eerier, scariest, better. Texas oughtn't be messed with.

Sufjan Stevens, *Seven Swans* — "Michigan"-bred singer/songwriter drops the secular mantle, releases a batch of tracks celebrating sisters, swimming, swans.

Ghost, *Hypnotic Underworld* — Japanese rockers channel early Flaming Lips, organic vibes. Pacific Rim, meet Big Muff.

Kanye West, *The College Dropout* — Omni-producer turns all-purpose rapper and does a damn good job of it.

Mission of Burma, *OnOffOn*

— Old folks can rock, too. Sonic Youth, *Sonic Nurse* — See above example.

## The Films: Less is Moore

Last summer's varied batch of documentaries collectively out-flew, outspelled and outgrimed this summer's polemical political flicks, but 2004's batch of exposés deserve attention.

The leaders of the pack are the bloated, overhyped "Fahrenheit 9/11" and its bloated, overhyped director Michael Moore. The Bush-bashing film touts, among its numerous accomplishments, outgrossing the understated art-house hit "White Chicks."

Hey, "Finding Nemo" only made \$400 million. No biggie.

The other two pillars of the season's documentary triumvirate, although better films, merited less attention. The enthralling Al-Jazeera examination "Control Room" shed light on an often-maligned news source, while "The Corporation" took a jazzed-up look at big money.

Unfortunately, Moore's piece, which was about as harrowing as Rush's ballad "Big Money," garnered the most praise. C'est la vie — at least it cut down the Wayans brothers.

"Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" — Music video

directors make movies now. Spike Jonze has given us some of the best films of the past five years, and now lego-snapping visionary Michel Gondry has created one of the most intelligent, touching films to come out in quite some time.

Jim Carrey, alongside the bright-haired Kate Winslet, gives a deep performance that is both emotional and humorous. Sort of like what "The Majestic" and "Bruce Almighty" were missing, respectively.

Just wait until Chris Cunningham's acid-tinged adaptation of Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree," featuring music by Aphex Twin. Ouch.

"Before Sunset" — Not to be confused with upcoming Pierce Brosnan vehicle "After the Sunset," this delicate, breathtaking tale uses minimalist camera work and heavy dialogue to flesh out the real-time tale of a pair of reunited lovers.

Leads Ethan Hawke and Judy Delpy are pitch-perfect in their spindly vulnerability, trading dialogue thick with Parisian preten-

sions. But there's an unquestionable value to each word that makes this 80-minute film still weigh in as a grand accomplishment.

## Movies In Brief

"Napoleon Dynamite" — Awkward teens, tetherball, '80s tunes and delicious, delicious bass (the fish, not the plucky thing). Some people don't like this celluloid coming-of-age story. Those are terrible, terrible people.

"Spider-Man 2" — This slick action movie has all the trademarks of its legendary director Sam Raimi: Visual effects, one-liners and sticky situations.

See, it's funny because spider web is, in fact, sticky.

Thwip.

"Baadasssss!" — Other than John Waters movies, films' titles often don't aptly sum up their vibe. Well, here's your exception.

Required for all cinemaphiles.

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).



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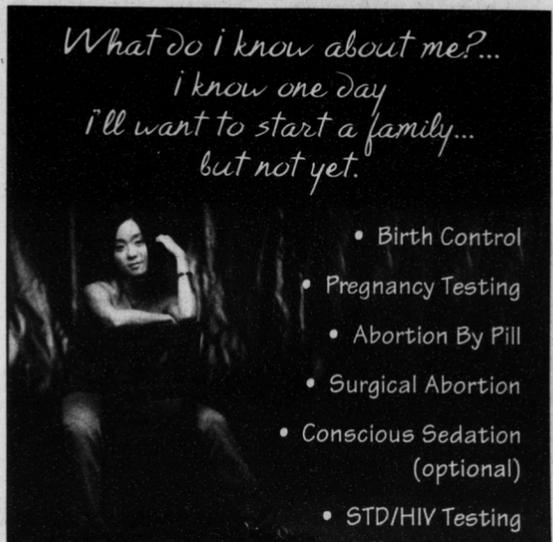
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