

# Layton and Alex square off in war of the briefs

## Goo Goo Dolls

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Caroline Records



**W**oe is the state of punk. Those bands which roamed the earth a decade ago are fossils ready to be made into petroleum by-products. The once mighty Ramones seem to tour only in Europe now, as no one here in the U.S. buys their tired albums. Mick Jones of the Clash, another punk legend, is like some other sad story of the I-used-to-be-cool club. Once he made frat classics like "Should I Stay or Should I Go," and now he drags his burnt-out carcass through B.A.D.II. Fortunately, punk is getting a transfusion of new talent which may even save the genre.

The Goo Goo Dolls, with their re-issued first album, resurrect the Punk sound of the early Replacements. The Goo Goo Dolls released their third album in 1990. It seems to have done well enough for the re-issue of their 1987 debut. Although the third album benefited from experience, this album is just as good. Goo Goo Dolls has the feeling of, in the immortal words of a 1-900 number, "a non-stop party." There are distinct songs, but it is better to listen to this as a whole.

The album boasts two covers: "Sunshine of Your Love," by Cream and "Don't Fear the Reaper," by Blue Oyster Cult. To get an idea of what the Goo Goo Dolls do to these songs, take the originals on a 33 1/3 record

and play them at 78 rpms. The album also has what could pass for an anthem, "Livin' in a Hut." The lyric, "And when I get some money it's already been spent/Oh, I can smoke and drink but I can't pay my rent" could've been the album's title.

One of the cuter songs is "Hammerin' Eggs (the Metal Song)." The beginning of the song has a vocal played backwards so you can have the "satanic message" without all the trouble of getting your turntable to do something it was never meant to do.

The last track is "Don't Beat My Ass (With a Baseball Bat)," a kind of punk version of Dylan's "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35" (the song where "everybody must get stoned"). Sure, it's sophomoric, and people will say, "Gosh, I think I made a record like this at the state fair once in those little booths," but can anyone of those people say they actually went ahead and put it on a real album?

—Alex DeGrand

## Bones of Contention

The SWAMIS

Independent label



Holden Richards' gift for golden pop songwriting shines evident as clangy guitars reverberate and he quickly chimes, "It's already Wednesday..." on the opening track of his band's, The SWAMIS' debut indie release, available at the Hardback Cafe for \$4.99.



The Goo Goo Dolls (l to r) are Robby, George and Johnny — some people can't afford last names

The tune "Already Wednesday" could be the focal point of the record, as could the other eight songs. Richards' impeccable style, though never bland or overwrought, hits the bullseye with each shot, never straying far from traditional pop-hook song structures and upbeat vocals.

Part of The SWAMIS' swamping aptitude in delighting the seasoned pop listener is their ability to waste no time establishing a song's timbre and feel and just as quickly cutting out, like a cat in a hurricane.

Richards has undoubtedly listened to a lot of Beatles, Hollies and Byrds records, and his contemporary influences include the Posies and La's. The SWAMIS, which credits 10 musicians but seem dominated by Richards' craft, resonate cerebrally with thoughtful, disturbing lyrics.

Richards, like most pop artists reluctant to write songs longer than three-and-a-half minutes, dwells on frustrations and life's roadblocks, usually topically stuck in the love rut thing. Songs such as "Alone," "Un-

attainable Girl," and "You Don't Know" reveal relationship angst much like on the Posies' fabulous DGC debut, Dear 23.

—Layton Croft

## THE RATINGS

- — forget it
- — wait for a bargain bin buy
- — tape it from a friend
- — buy it
- — buy two copies

# Anatomy of a Top Ten: Something for all

## LAYTON CROFT

### Tone Def

can pop culture. The changes, though visibly shocking and multiculturally impressive, are just as nebulous as Americans' wallet-willing support of the widening breadth of listener's tastes and the dissemination of "mainstream" domination in popular music, at least according to rankings.

Such a sweeping, possibly near-sighted willingness to enjoy new and different music en masse precludes the similar dissemination, or re-writing, of the term "mainstream" altogether. It seems mainstream music has always been a safeguard categorization simply used to delineate pop from unpop, which usually means music not played on the radio, not franchised by major record labels and thus not marketed the American way.

Layton's note: Stop me before I ... dip too far into the issue of mass marketing schemata that dupe the millions into a manipulated frenzy quickly convinced the "newest, cutting-razor's edge, most rebellious"

music is also the best around, with some kind of charts (sales, really?) to prove it.

Back to the applause.

Regardless of why the top albums in our land are where they are, the issue here is what they are.

The facts: The Top 10 albums according to Billboard Magazine, week ending Jan. 19, by the following artists:

10. Garth Brooks 9. Mariah Carey 8. Boyz II Men 7. Metallica 6. U2 5. Michael Bolton 4. Nirvana 3. Hammer 2. Michael Jackson 1. Garth Brooks

That's right, furrow your skeptical brow, and read it again. Read it backward, it doesn't matter! Bookend bimbo Garth Brooks is country-stompin' America's savings account, but his weighty presence is just the beginning.

No stranger to chart topping, Michael Jackson sits dangerously close to Nirvana with an R&B technified dance album sure to move ya', but refusing to leave seas of security and make any confounded artistic statement insinuating passion or purpose.

Which leads us to No. 6 band U2,

whose new album marks a splendid personal achievement. With *Achtung Baby* the band shuns established trademarks of yore in favor of new and progressive musical styles that just so happen to double as big-buck artistry.

Michael Bolton, an artist who writes like a tofu banana split would taste, rests comfortably at No. 5, making middle-aged content-with-mindless-music mello goers happy.

Hammer, who dropped his MC name (standing for Me, Copy?) has a No. 3 album. The record is refreshingly original, relatively speaking, and speaks well for the bustin'-boogie, breakin'-sweat genre of hyper-dance music that's come to find permanence in Top 10 polls.

Metallica is No. 7. Metallica is No. 7. God save the Queen.

Boyz II Men and Mariah Carey precede Garth Brooks at No. 10, and alas, the myth is clinched; American pop culture, paving new paths, has confounded everyone and seems to have something for everyone, too.

It'd be fitting these days for Top 40 radio personality Casey Kasem, when he records his weekly countdown show, to stop enunciating so damn clearly and start speaking in tongues.

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