

WHAT'S
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IN THE
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THIS
MONTH?

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AUDIO



RY COODER
Chavez Ravine

The songs on this disc loosely relate the saga of three Mexican-American neighborhoods collectively nestled in Chavez Ravine that were bulldozed into oblivion in the late '50s to clear the space that was eventually filled by Dodger Stadium. The story is replete with Big Money politics, cool cats and chicks, corrupt cops, culture clashes, forced evacuations, Red baiting, and even a flying saucer. Cooder tells the tale in a series of cameos that combine original compositions with period music, and his own vocals with those of contemporary singers—one of whom is no longer living. Clever touches, such as the excerpts from *Dragnet* that grace "Don't Call Me Red," provide additional color.

Woven throughout this sonic mélange is Cooder's understated, yet often brilliant guitar playing (he also plays organ, *tres*, *laúd*, and *bajo sexto*), which is in turns bright and bouncy, and dark and menacing. There aren't any guitar solos—unless you count the deconstruction of "Patricia" on "El UFO Cayó"—but Cooder's rhythmic phrasing and timbral colorings are spectacular, as are the song arrangements and performances by the other musicians and vocalists. Another cross-cultural masterpiece from "Mr. Grumpy." Nonesuch/Perro Verde. —Barry Cleveland



BRIAN SETZER
*Rockabilly Riot Vol. 1:
A Tribute to Sun Records*

When it comes to hep-cat guitar—that twangy mix of R&B, blues, and hillbilly music drenched with s-s-shakin'-all-over echo and quivering Bigsby vibrato—no one tops Brian Setzer. If you dig Jeff Beck's *Crazy Legs* (the Brit's fabulous 1993 tribute to Gene Vincent and his fireball lead guitarist, Cliff Gallup), you'll flip your wig over *Rockabilly Riot*. In this loose, spirited set, Setzer pays homage to Sun Records and the 6-string pioneers who cut tracks in

Old cars and guitars—Ry Cooder is a '50s mood



the Memphis studio between 1954 and 1957. Armed with an old Gretsch Duo-Jet, a tape echo unit, and a Supro combo, he tears through 23 of his favorite rockabilly anthems (including such classics as "Red Hot," "Rock 'N' Roll Ruby," and "Blue Suede Shoes"). The rhythm section sounds dead-on authentic—kudos to drummer Bernie Dresel for transcribing and playing all the original drum parts on a period-correct kit—and the vintage mics and tube gear keep the tones warm. Without sounding derivative, Setzer revisits the Sun guitarists' groundbreaking riffs, lines, and licks, bringing a wild mix of tritone double-stops, triplet pull-offs, restless augmented chords, and chugging bass runs to center stage. Go cat, go. *Surfdog*. —Andy Ellis



POLLO DEL MAR
The Golden State

From the proto-punk stylings of Dick Dale, to the majestic soundscapes of the Mermen, it's obvious that surf music can take on many different forms. Northern California quartet Pollo Del Mar, and its guitarists Ferenc Dobronyi and Jono Jones, contribute to the genre's oeuvre by crafting lilting, cinematic vistas, without ever losing sight of surf's classic melodic sensibilities. Harnessing copious amounts of echo, reverb, and (gasp) distortion, Dobronyi and Jones weave around each other beautifully, whether they're going full-on trippy ("As Above, So Below") or playing it straight (the Clash's "Charlie Don't Surf"). Very well done. *Musick*. —Darrin Fox



OZ NOY
Ha!

Simply put, Oz Noy's *Ha!* is the most enjoyable guitar-driven instrumental fusion record to enter

ART THOMPSON
Chab I Sabbah,
Shri Durga
Laurence Juber,
One Wing
Johnny Cash,
On the Air

PATRICK WONG
Shakira, Fijacion Oral
Vol. 1
Jake Shimabukuro,
Crosscurrent
Sons and Daughters,
The Repulsion Box

ALEXANDRA ZEIGLER
Le Tigre, This Island
Sleater-Kinney,
The Woods

my ears since my old guitar teacher hipped me to Jeff Beck's *Blow by Blow*. Noy's tones range from pristine and vintage, to odd, noisy, effect-laden, and otherworldly, and the tunes are fascinating and unpredictable. Mike Stern, who calls Noy "one of the best I've ever seen," makes a cameo on the rollercoaster ride, "Downside Up," and Noy is more than up to the task of playing alongside him as he handles the slipperiest and steepest jazzed-out slopes. But it's Noy's ability to pump a groove deep in the pocket that make this record pure money,

and show him to be a guitar wizard of the highest order. **Magnatude.** —Jimmy Leslie



EUGENE CHADBOURNE

The Hills Have Jazz

When I heard that acoustic guitar madman and musical iconoclast Eugene Chadbourne had recorded a disc of jazz covers by Count Basie, Oliver Lake, Eric Dolphy, Sun Ra, Roscoe Mitchell, and John Coltrane, my interest was definitely piqued. Had Chadbourne rented a tux and hired some straight-ahead session cats? Hardly. As he discloses in the very amusing and entertaining liner notes, the musicians that appear on the CD were assembled in "random" fashion. They include ex-Camper Van Beethoven drummer Rick West, tenor sax man Brian Walsh, flugelhorn and cornet player Dan Clucas, harmonica tormentor Bill Barrett, and wacky electric guitarist Carey Fosse. Chadbourne plays vintage Gibson acoustic that he borrowed from (film director) Wes Craven on many tracks, and banjo on the others. The improvisatory grouping brilliantly disassembles and reconstructs the compositions in a manner that is simultaneously absurd and supremely compelling, making for one of the most engaging and fun musical excursions I've been on this year. **Boxholder.** —Barry Cleveland

JIM WEIDER

Percolator

While prog rock and neo-Baroque shred are still highly abundant these days, quality straight-ahead instrumental rock seems to be in shorter supply. With *Percolator*, though, Jim Weider—a Telecaster devotee and sideman par excellence—seems on a mission to breath new life into the genre pioneered by Jeff Beck and other singer-less rockers. Sure, there are welcome traces of outside musical styles on Weider's new disc—a sprig of fusion here, a snippet of hip-hop there, a mandatory funk breakdown over yonder—but the far crackin' snare drum, all-engulfing Bells, warm glow-bottle guitar tones, compelling riffs, and other timeless elements of straight-up rock refuse to be diluted by an eclecticisms from the outside. The compositions are rich, layered, and complex, and the mix is superb. Weider, who is perhaps best known for being Robbie Robertson's replacement in the re-launch of the Band, never succumbs to the temptation ever

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