

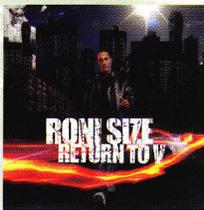
YFEB

LIFESTYLE ART MUSIC FASHION

THE DUOS ISSUE

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RONI SIZE
Return to V

Thrive

"Roni Size is still alive?" my friend asked when I tried impressing him with the advance *Return to V*. "I haven't heard him since I stopped dropping ecstasy." Ditto. Back in the late 90s, a couple fat pills and Drum 'n Bass's 180 beats per minute were my Saturday night recipe. Oh, how I danced! Or flapped my penguin arms before retreating to a corner with a Vicks inhaler and menthol cigarettes. Between raves, I loved wrapping myself in Size's *New Forms*, dreaming of the next black

light-lit night. So, half a decade later, I dug up my Size fixation and spun *Return*. And you know what? Not much changed. Size still spits caffeinated beats that would turn a Chihuahua's heart to jelly, though now *V* is all-vocal. This arrangement works when mixed with soulful vocals, like Beverly Night's suede-smooth "No More" or Jocelyn Brown belting out "Sing." A standout track is "Time," a fresh, bouncy Fruit Loop track sweetened by Darrison's layered lyrical staccato. *V* is a solid outing. On the first listen. But repeated plays, without the aid of pharmaceuticals, are against doctor's orders.

-Joshua Bernstein



THE TWILIGHT SINGERS
She Loves You

One Little Indian

Greg Dulli makes fuckable music. Since his days in Cincinnati, Ohio's great white, chain-smoking, whiskey-gargling Soul hopes Afghan Whigs, Dulli has perfected dirty-crooning sweeties out their wet underwear. And singing unlikely, spot-on versions of the Supreme's "I Hear a Symphony" and TLC's "Creep." While Afghan Whigs have long imploded, Dulli's one-man band, the Twilight Singers, plugs along. On his third long player, Dulli sticks to cover

guns, mixing up unexpected Muzak. Like Fleetwood Mac's "What Makes You Think You're the One?" The 70s elevator ditty is spun sideways into a sad-sack lament served with a growl. Björk's "Hyperballad" may seem ill-suited for a singer who sounds like a Bowery bum on a bender, but he treats the song tenderly, turning the electric ice shimmer into a warm, 4 a.m. embrace. Dulli excels when interpreting tortured-Soul Motown, like Mary J. Blige's "Real Love." The dance-floor grinder's refrain, "I'm searching for a real love," morphs into a plaintive, heart-sick plea. *She Loves You* may be crafted with gloomy crooks and corners, but just around the edge sits a hearty dollop of hope.

-Joshua Bernstein



PS
Double Standards

Speechless Records

In the early 00s in New York, conventional wisdom said if you want to be a Rock Star, you play 3-chord, scuzzy, Garage Rock. Put together some catchy choruses, play small clubs on Sundays at 7:00 p.m. and eventually, you'll be dating some marginally-talented but super-hot actress. Thankfully, no one told NYC quintet ps this rule and we are all better for it. Like Calla with a couple of jolts in 'em, ps fashion out moody, atmospheric Rock built around soaring strings and Ursula

Damm's booming voice. ps can definitely rock when they want as the dual-guitar attack of "Apply" aptly shows. However, it's songs like "Reaching," with its depressing, yet optimistic, lyrics ("Your job is not your life/Your company does not produce your children") and music that crescendos into a brilliant piece of gloom-Rock that will make you take note of ps.

-Jason Newman



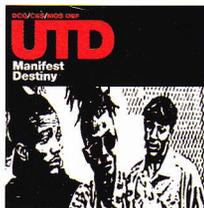
DUB-L
Day of the Mega Beast

Day by Day Entertainment

People, grab your backpacks, Digi turntables, oversized headphones, dictionaries, and the five Wu Tang VHS tapes you own and prepare yourself for the *Day of the Mega Beast*. Rising east of Chinatown, dub-L brings his master production skills out of the Lower Yeast Side to make doe for himself and his eclectic entourage. With guest appearances by Rahzel, Professor X, Hangar 18, DJ JS-1, and The InvizibulMan (to name a few) this eighteen track LP from one half of Ground

Original screams liberal arts campuses, late night pizza runs, the munchies, and drunk phone calls. But, don't be surprised if that "corporate thug or thugette," at the top of "You Name It" Records hasn't stopped to catch a second listen to the witty commentary, satirical lyrics, and Funk influenced beats that got more catchy melodies than your Sprint cell phone. 'Cuz, all in all, if you looking for Trip, or Hip Hop, *Day of the Mega Beast* has something to offer you. Remember though, as Poison Pen states on the album, "This is that sellin' swipes on your metocard, so you can buy a Hero music. And it don't come with the free soda."

-HeneC



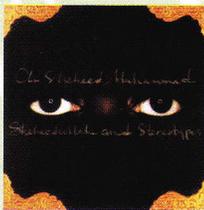
U.T.D.
DCQ/ MOS DEF/CES
Manifest Destiny

Ill Son Media

Welcome back 2 da 90's; No, 2090's. Marty McFly has just dropped a tightly wrapped package on top of the trash in the back of Junior's Restaurant in Brooklyn, New York. Trapped inside its manila jail, Urban Thermo Dynamics' *Manifest Destiny* sits waiting with hot break beats, superhumanly humble lyrics, 3 distinct flows, and a message. "If it ain't in your heart, don't do it for free." - M. DefLead by Pretty Flaco himself, U.T.D., reintroduces skillful MC's to the Hip Hop forefront. The

fearless 3, Mos Def, CES (a female rapper), and DCQ (I guess the Praz in this faction) have brought back the "Yes, Yes, Y' all," to the "Fo Sheezy my Neezy" Era. Dealing with The Thermo expect flawless delivery and a nappy froed, pop lockin', two finger ring sportin', no collabo needin, thought provokin', LP. But beware, they'd rather be creative than commercial. So, if you're lucky enough to be the Biff in this Hip Hop melodrama, scoop up this small portion of the Rap almanac, you just might change the future. And oh, to those who are unconscious in this world, stay sleeping, we'll move on without you.

-HeneC



ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMED
Shaheedullah and Stereotypes

Penalty Recordings

Ali Shaheed Muhammad emerges from his overgrown garden of collaborations with mixing board in hand. His first quasi-solo effort: *Shaheedulla & Stereotypes*, features soulful joints galore. Fans of A Tribe Called Quest and Lucy Pearl will vibe this record. Muhammed, true to form, spins a dizzyingly artistic web of musical styles and thought provoking rhymes. Hardcore Hip Hopster - check yourself. The subject matter on this album is more introspective than explicit; the samples used liberally in other recordings are absent here.

Unfortunately, what is also absent is Muhammed's own rhyming skills. This album is best played in a noisy coffee shop where the solo hits can collaborate with the background noise.

-Blondie

BLUES EXPLOSION

Damage
Sanctuary Records



By chance a week before reviewing Blues Explosion's *Damage* I happened to be jamming' to their *Extra Width* album. That said, I think my expectations were a bit high. Blues Explosion has always been known for being a three-piece band that sounds more like a whirlwind of freight trains crashing through your living room. Even with guest producers like Steve Jordan, Alan Moulder, Dan The Automator, David Holmes, and guest vocalists Chuck D and Martina Topley, B.E.'s sound is much softer. They're not as raw or cutting edge

compared to their earlier albums, but nonetheless they still carry a unique blend of funk and hard-hitting soul. And they chop it up to make some cool sounds. Kinda like Funk in a blender.

The standout tracks on the album are, "Hot Gossip" and "Fed Up & Low Down", they're reminiscent of earlier Blues Explosion records. "Rivals" is one of the best songs on the album with a kick ass tenor sax exploding in the mix; it makes you think that there's still some major UMPH hiding deep down in this three man band. The David Holmes' produced, "Spoiled" and DJ Shadow produced "Rattling" are definitely notable tracks, but songs that Dan The Automator produced tend to lack luster. Kinda like Funk in a 1985 Buick Skylark...unnoticeable.

If you're a Blues Explosion fan, you might ask, "Where's the Beef?" If you just discovered Blues Explosion, you may find yourself in disbelief that there was ever beef to be found with their special funky sound!

-Legs Scrambler