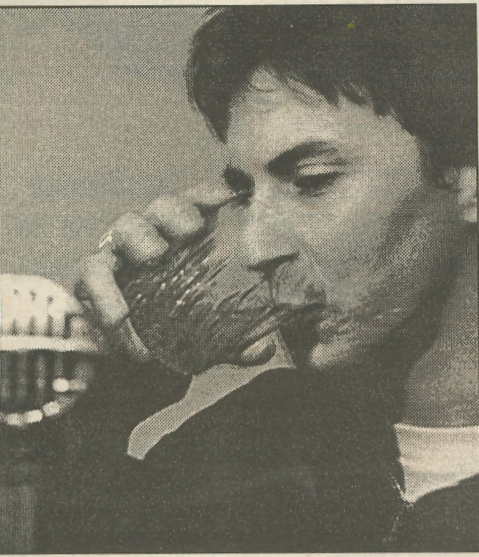


Thin Boys in the Bomb



music, but not the kind of drinking you do when think razorblades and rooms the colour of coal.

is feel-good music, perfectly presented by the Vancouver house music community's favourite local ambassador.

• DEENA COX

Limestone

Five Songs for Our Next CD (Independent)

Somebody seems to be suffering from delusions of grandeur. Emblazoned on *Five Songs for Our Next CD* are the words "Music and lyrics by Eric Hogg who retains the publishing rights". One can only assume that Limestone's young guitarist-singer is covering his bases for when his band blows up bigger than Silverchair.

The scary thing is that's not so far-fetched. Even though Limestone has been together for seven years, the band's three members are still in their teens. That they started playing together before they were old enough to shave has led to the inevitable comparisons; the band's press kit contains two quotes comparing them to the aforementioned Silverchair, one observation that they are a "dark and twisted version of Hanson", and another that they "could be called Hanson meets Metallica". Who am I to argue? These guys are obviously aspiring to something more than headlining all-ages shows in their hometown of Victoria. Limestone rips it up in super-sludgy fashion on the heavier-than-heaven "Burn" and delivers a mini masterpiece with "Time Bomb", a song that blends lurching metal with atmospheric straight off the *Exorcist* soundtrack. Hogg, bassist Chris Sutherland, and drummer Adam Sutherland may still be students of rock 'n' roll, but goddamn if they don't already sound like masters.

• MIKE USINGER

Ray

Incubator (Independent)

This mostly acoustic affair comes across as the kind of thing that would sound best around the fire at a tree planters' camp, but there are some nice touches. Neal Ryan's blues-tinged lead-guitar work is tasty and it sits well against singer-songwriter Robb Smith's acoustic strumming. Carlos Joe Costa is a skilled percussionist, but hearing congas or Latin drumming on nearly every track made me wonder how Ray's music would sound with a standard bass-and-drum-kit rhythm section. One never knows, but I suspect full-band arrangements would be all it would take to elevate these tunes beyond campfire status.

• JOHN LUCAS

Gregg Simpson

Drum Fire (Condition West)

One can't begrudge Gregg Simpson his painting trips to the south of France and gallery showings in Tuscany, but all of this visual-arts activity has significantly reduced his visibility on the local jazz scene. Trained in the avant-garde by local pianist and multimedia pioneer Al Neil, the fiery drummer helped form the massively influential New Orchestra Workshop society before founding Lunar Adventures with old pal Clyde Reed and latter-day NOW leaders Ron Samworth and Coat Cooke; lately, however, he's been largely invisible on the bandstand.

Still, this CD shows him to be as vital as ever. Simpson's not the most subtle of drummers, but his polyrhythmic power and attack remain impressive—and if he obviously admires Elvin Jones, well, who doesn't? A ra-

vous "Conversation" between Simpson and saxophonist Glenn Spearman contains *Drum Fire's* most heated moments, but Paul Cram, Paul Plimley, and George McPetridge manage to hold their own with Simpson's super-charged approach in an album clearly aimed at those who like their jazz wild and free.

• ALEXANDER VARTY

Keith County

A Three Song Sampler (Outlaw)

Periodically, local recording artists will try to grease the wheels for a review by sending gifts along with their CDs. Over the years, I've received a bottle of B.C. sparkling wine (which is sitting unopened in my basement), a 14-ounce bottle of Jack Daniel's (which has spent the past two years in a swag pile on my desk), and a 40-pounder of vodka (which eventually disappeared into the stomach of *Georgia Straight* contributor Verne McDonald). Keith County's *A Three Song Sampler* arrived in a box with two cans of cold Budweiser and a stick of beef jerky. In the interest of full disclosure, I'm going to have to admit I pounded back one of the cans. (Hey, it showed up at quitting time, and I couldn't resist.) The other can went to *Straight* classified representative Aggie Richichi, along with half the beef jerky.

Normally such bribery gets the sender nowhere, but given my predisposition to shit-kicking country—not to mention alcohol—I cracked open the disc. Considering one of the three tracks was titled "Born to Booze" and another was called "Double Shots of Pride", resistance was futile. The verdict: County kicks more ass than a drunk Texas cowboy on payday. The opening lines of the first track, "Born to Booze", are "Well my daddy hung with Daniels/It made him cold and mean/My momma had a lover/His name was Jimmy Beam". Spaghetti-western guitar, loping bass lines, tough-as-rawhide vocals, and an obvious indebtedness to *Exile on Main Street*—era Rolling Stones make this a truly bad-ass western experience. Vancouver roots-rock fans can sit up and take notice, because a new sheriff just rode into town.

• MIKE USINGER

Vince Mai

For All We Know (Mai-Music)

There's nothing unpredictable in this batch of standards plus one original, but trumpet and flügelhorn player Vince Mai has a full-bodied, Freddie Hubbard-inflected sound that makes most of the cuts fly.

The Miles-and-Miles rhythm section—pianist Miles Black with bassist Miles Hill and drummer Dave Robbins—provides smoothly rippling support for Mai and singer Tania Hancheroff, who takes a little while to warm to. Her delivery is sometimes so laconic, as on the downtempo title cut, that you almost forget there's a vocalist on the scene.

The effect turns out to be largely salutary, however, as this shines a brighter light on the leader's horn. And it also catches you by surprise when Hancheroff gets riled up, as she does on a sexy reading of "Teach Me Tonight". Her impact, cumulatively, is both subtle and intriguing, although Mai's bouncy two-minute closer of "All the Things You Are" could have been a bit crisper.

• KEN EISNER

Spacious Couch

Tonal Vision (Independent)

"Oh, great," we can hear you saying. "Another jazz-funk outfit!" Indeed, some creations of this side project for veteran funksters like trombonist Brian Harding and saxophonist Andrew Davies are a bit too ingratiating to take seriously, and the band's musical purpose occasionally seems murky.

It's hard to figure, for example, whether the opening "Revenge of Igor" should be dedicated to Igor Stravinsky or to the guy from *Young Frankenstein*. When they drop the choppy Shuffle Demons shtick, and guitarist Jon Roper plays spiky counterpoint to the smooth horn lines on the convoluted, bossa-beated "Kingscross" or when they stagger like late-night private eyes through "The Loneliest Monk", the Couch becomes a good place to rest for a while. "Ballad for the Jiggy Bits" is a memorable slow blues in the Maceo Parker mould, and Jazz Cellar dweller Corey Weeds gets to work out his alto on the Tower of Power-styled "That Way", which is definitely not the Backstreet Boys song.

• KEN EISNER