

Face to Face Album Gives Influences Their Due

Written by John James

Tuesday, 27 February 2001 18:00

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• As a connoisseur of interesting cover versions, I raise my glass and invite you drink deep from the new Face To Face collection, Standards & Practices, just released on the Vagrant label. Uncovering the band's personal guilty-pleasure nuggets from the new-wave 1980s and more contemporary influences is a real treat on this one – tearing into blistering renditions of selections like The Smiths' "What Difference Does It Make," the Pixies' "Planet of Sound," the Pogues' "Sunny Side of the Street," and the Jam's excellent "That's Entertainment. " Perfectly timed for our age of digital cocooning is a killer version of Fugazi's "Merchandise," one of American punk's most searing socio-political anthems. Highly recommended.

• The "tribute/cover compilation" section in your local record store looks to fatten up even more next month as two more cross-genre CDs are poised to step up and salute the past. The power-punk supergroup Me First & The Gimme Gimmes – made up of Fat Mike from NOFX, Spike Slawson of Swingin' Udders, Joey Cape of Lagwagon, and Chris Shifflet of the Foo Fighters – have reunited (an it feels so good) for a third album of covers, entitled Blow in the Wind. Due March 20 on the Fat Wreck label, the album is a love letter to the 1960s, featuring an intriguing selection of tracks like The Beatles' "All My Loving," Cat Stevens' "Wild World," Tammy Wynette's "Stand By Your Man," the Stone Poneys' "Different Drum," and the Beach Boys' "Sloop John B." Look for the group this summer on the Warped Tour. Looking over its shoulder on the wrong side of the tracks is Radical Records' upcoming cover compilation Too Legit for the Pit: Hardcore Takes the Rap, also due March 20. Proving that the "hood" is an equal-opportunity tearjerker of disenfranchisement, this plucky set features Stretch Armstrong's take on N.W.A.'s "Express Yourself," Movieline's pick of "I Can't Do Nuttin' For Ya Man" by Public Enemy, and – dig this – Diehard Youth's spin at Young MC's "Bust a Move."

• Was your Valentine's Day this year punk, bi-polar, and disorderly? If so, VMS Records has just served up a possible soundtrack to petal-picking memories with its Punked Up Love two-CD set. Split between the "good" side and the "bad" side, the various artist ska, metal, and punk collection features 56 tracks voting "yes" or "no" to love. A few interesting covers are found within as well, like a Dissolute version of Radiohead's "You," Stick Figure Suicide's take on

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Dramarama's "Anything, Anything (I'll Give You)" and the Slackers' spin on Bob Marley's "Mellow Mood."

• My pick of the week is the ultra-pumped-up debut from Brassy entitled *Got It Made* on the Wiiiija/Beggars Banquet label. The energy is mesmerizing, crackling like gate-crashing hooligans on speed with a Moloko/Grace Jones' moxy of struttin' funk, but with a Jock Jams punk cheerleader thing going on. Whew! Fronted by American expatriate Muffin Spencer (sister of the Blues Explosion's Jon Spencer) and formed in Manchester, England, this gender-split quartet of electronic jammers is surprising sexy in its big-beat swagger. Undeniably danceable with lots of buzzing bravado and youthful purr, this feel-good grinder continues the tradition of Cornershop's Wiiiija Records imprint and reputation of excellence. Highly recommended.

Television Alert:

The Tonight Show with Jay Leno hosts Rod Stewart tonight, Chris Isaak on Thursday, Joe and Mystikal on Friday, Common and Macy Gray on Monday, and Beck on Tuesday; The Late Show with David Letterman welcomes Jennifer Lopez on Monday; and Late Night with Conan O'Brien steps into Snoop Dogg's haze on Friday overnight.

New Releases Coming Tuesday, March 6:

... and like the winds, young grasshopper, are subject to change.

112 – Part 3 (Bad Boy/Arista)

Alien Ant Farm – ANThology (New Noise/Dreamworks) on tour now with Papa Roach

The Beatnuts – Take It or Squeeze It (Loud) with guest Method Man

Big Dumb Face – Duke Lion Fights the Terror (Flip/Geffen) new side project from Wes Borland of Limp Bizkit

Big In Japan – Destroy the New Rock (Honest Don's)

Blake Babies – God Bless the Blake Babies (Zoe/Fort Apache) with guest Evan Dando of the Lemonheads

Vinicius Cantuaria – Vinicius (Transparent Music) Brazilian singer-songwriter featuring guest vocals from David Byrne of the Talking Heads and musical guests Bill Frisell and Marc Ribot

Cappadonna – The Yin & the Yang (Epic)

Cash Audio – The Orange Sessions (Orange) formerly known as Cash Money – before the same-named Rap label cried for a lawyer – available on 10-inch vinyl and CD

Alejandro Escovedo – A Man Under the Influence (Bloodshot)

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Fabulous Disaster – Put Out or Get Out (Pink & Black) all-girl San Francisco punk

Steve Fisk – 999 Levels of Undo (Sub Pop)

Gnappy – Gnappy (Harlequin)

Half Japanese – Hello (Alternative Tentacles) all new from Jad Fair and company

Kristen Hersh – Sunny Border Blue (4AD/Beggars Banquet) featuring a cover of Cat Stevens' "Trouble"

Ice Age – Liberation (Magna Carta) Long Island progressive metal

Big Daddy Kane – Smooth Operator: The Very Best of (Rhino)

Love Tractor – The Sky at Night (Razor and Tie) all new from this pop house-party powerhouse from the Athens, Georgia, scene of the early 1980s, featuring guest drummer Bill Berry of R.E.M.

Lunachicks – Babysitters on Acid (Go Kart)

Delbert McClinton – Nothing Personal (New West) all new from the man who taught John Lennon how to play harmonica

Mikaila – Mikaila (Island) new contestant in the teen-queen wars

Mother Superior – Mother Superior (Triple X) hot off their stint as Henry Rollins' backing band on his recent Get Some Go Again album

Laura Nyro – Angel in the Dark (Rounder) 16 tracks she was working on at the time of her death in 1997

Oleander – Unwind (Republic/Universal)

Polar Goldie Cats – Polar Night Stress (Up Records)

Amy Ray – Stag (Daemon) debut solo album from the Indigo Girl with guests Joan Jett, Kate Schellenbach of Luscious Jackson, and Josephine Wiggs of The Breeders

Rockapella – Live (J-Bird) the house band for PBS' Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego covering a fantastic selection of pop standards into their own voice, claps, and snaps sound

Rocket from the Crypt – Group Shots (Vagrant)

Scannerfunk – Wave of Light by Wave of Light (Sulfer/Beggars Banquet) new from Robin Rimbaud a.k.a. Scanner

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Soul Survivors – original motion picture soundtrack (Chapter III) with music from Presidents of the United States of America, Amen, Floodnine and more

Streetwalkin' Cheetahs – Waiting for the Death of My Generation (Triple X) featuring a cover of The Saints' "Know Your Product"

various artists – Girls Group Greats and More Girls Group Greats (Rhino) timed for the PBS-TV's special, each of these new collections features 20 early-1960s riot-girl classics

various artists – Live Fat, Die Young (Fat Wreck) the fifth edition in the label's budget-priced series featuring 21 previously unreleased tracks from Anti-Flag, Mad Caddies, NOFX, Lagwagon, Snuff, Sick of It All, and more