

# POP STOCK

NUMBER SIX  
NOVEMBER 1993  
IT'S FREE

DAVID GRUBBS EATS FALAFEL **7** WONDERS OF THE WORLD! **10** ALTERNATIVE SHMALTERNATIVE!



## POP STOCK MAKES MY POP STOCK

(a dozen allowances)

1. Mikey the Rat to blow \$2400 on Blowin' In The Wind in the third.
2. Paul Molitor, Michael Jordan's adulation.
3. Jiminy Cricket, maybe; but Nettle, The Cuddly Cockroach?
4. Beavis & Butt-Head, The Program, and Howard Stern.
5. \$5.00 a week...if you do your chores.
6. Gastriloquism: any time, any where.
7. You to go to the bathroom.
8. Kowtowing; rowboat-bow rowing; Chairman Mao; Curacao.
9. Tippecanoe and Tyler, too.
10. Mistakes.
11. It.
12. The consideration of the utter uselessness and insipidity of lists of dozens. (Although, ultimately, such thoughts are, undeniably, the work of feeble, embittered minds.)

POP STOCK  
1928 North Sheffield  
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Pop Stock will meet you at the following locations: Lounge AX, Phyllis' Musical Inn, Leo's Lunchroom, Quimby's, Blackout Records, or Quimby's, on or around the 25th of each month. Pop Stock accepts submissions of any recorded or xeroxable material. Pop Stock would love to run your ads. Call 248-6518 for rates. (We're dirt cheap!) Life is a plum, stick in your thumb.

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This issue of Pop Stock is dedicated to Mr. Patrick Monaghan, who, recently, after years of loyal service, resigned his position at Cargo Records. Patrick's love of music, support of bands (both local and not), and his willingness to selflessly share what he has learned, make him the rarest of rarities in his industry: a good and genuine man.

Patrick informs us he plans to take some time off and tend to the comfort of his beautiful wife, Julia, and to the running of his record label, Carrot Top. We wish him great happiness and fulfillment in all his future endeavors. He, more than anyone we know, deserves it.

Falafel with David Grubbs,  
of Gastr del Sol. Their first record: *The  
Serpentine Similar*, came out earlier this year on  
Teen Beat Records. Gastr del Sol's music is  
alternately expansive and compact. It's themes (a  
heady word for "hooks") display great patience in  
exposing themselves. David previously participated in  
Bastro and Squirrel Bait, and his rock sensibilities,  
though recessive, are still apparent. (His storied  
past was well documented in a recent two-partner in New  
City, so I won't be redundant here.) We chatted over  
falafel on Saturday, October 23rd.

Pop Stock: The first time I heard Gastr del Sol was last Friday night at the Metro  
and I thought, since I was going to talk to you today, I'd better get a copy of the  
record, but it proved fairly difficult to get a copy, which you may not be happy to  
hear.

David Grubbs: Yeah.

PS: But I finally got one and I've had about three days to listen to it and I think it's  
great.

DG: I'm glad you liked it. Did the record have much in common with what you  
saw at Metro?

PS: Yeah, it did.

DG: I'm sorry if I'm asking too many questions.

PS: No, no. I don't have any desire to make this too formal, so however this goes  
is o.k. Yeah it did. I think what you play is kind of hard for people who are used  
to going to pop shows to process. But, listening to the record, I found myself  
recognizing a lot of the melodies and a lot of the arrangements. But I guess you  
weren't too happy with the show.

DG: No, not at all. Well, probably just because we were really excited after having  
finished the next album.

PS: It's totally done?

DG: It's totally done. We don't have artwork for it or anything like that. But all  
of the sound is there. The lineup that you saw (Jim O'Rourke, Bundy K. Brown,  
John McEntire, & Grubbs) worked on two rehearsals. Bundy had sworn the show  
before the Metro show would be his last. And he swore that again after this show.

continued next page



PS: He sounds like a complicated man.

DG: He is. He's an extremely complicated man.

PS: I think I've heard Jim O'Rourke's name before, but I don't know exactly in what context.

DG: Jim has done all sorts of things. He has made recordings for solo guitar, prepared guitar. He has recordings of chamber works. He did a CD with Henry Kaiser and he just did a quartet CD with Kaiser, a Japanese violinist named Mari Kamura, I'm not sure how to spell her name (*neither am I-ed.*) and John Oswald on Saxophone. Jim's the only full-time musician in the group--I'm a student and work somewhere else, John works someplace else, and Bundy works three jobs, usually--which is interesting, because I've never worked with a full-time musician before. I never wanted to be a full-time musician.

PS: How did you connect with Jim?

DG: I met him shortly after moving to Chicago. I saw him play with Henry Kaiser and I thought he was great. I thought very seriously about taking guitar lessons with him. I took lessons when I was 14 years old, but Jim had such a strange approach, that that was my response to him. I thought his guitar playing was totally great.

## **Jim O'Rourke called me in the Spring with this crazy idea that he suddenly wanted to be in a rock band.**

I thought he would have no interest in playing in the context of Bastro, or what Bastro had become, or Gastr del Sol. But he called me in the Spring with this crazy idea that he suddenly wanted to be in a rock band. He had never played in a rock band before. We played with a rhythm section for a while, but that didn't work. It was clear we needed alot more time to write material and alot less time to prepare it. So the two of us started writing material and that's what is now **Crookt, Crackt or Fly** which is the album that Drag City will put out. The title is three synonyms for "arduous," taken from a Puritan, anagramatic elegy. There's a line about when times became so difficult, "so crookt, crackt or fly." Which I really like, because I get the sense of "crookt" and "crackt" being synonymous, but I'm not sure about "fly."

PS: Maybe it's a precursor to "fly boy." Where does the name Gastr del Sol come from?

DG: (Laughs) Um, whatever logic there is, is contained in the name itself.

PS: What is the first word?

DG: It's a root--as in stomach. In the OED there's the word "gastriloquism," which means "making it appear that your stomach is speaking." It's a good word--the title for an as-yet-unwritten instrumental. *continued next page*

PS: So, what is it with Louisville?

DG: Are you familiar with or a fan of other bands from Louisville?

PS: Well, I know most of the sort of better-known indie bands that came from there, like Slint, Palace Brothers--I had a Squirrel Bait record back in '86 or '87--who am I forgetting?

DG: King Kong?

PS: King Kong.

DG: Big, hairy, and misunderstood.

PS: Is that their motto?

DG: Yeah, well, right when King Kong started, that Christmas, everybody chipped in and bought Ethan an air-brushed t-shirt from the big heavy metal record store that does air-brushing that had King Kong with a big tear in its eye and on the back, in bamboo writing, it said "BIG, HAIRY, AND MISUNDERSTOOD."

PS: There seems to be a lot of music from Louisville that manages to ignore the trends. Any theories?

DG: Very few touring bands came through Louisville when most of the people who are in The Palace Brothers or Slint or King Kong started listening to music. We were kind of like the second wave of punk rockers in Louisville and we generally started listening to stuff around '82 or '83. There were great original punk rock bands from Louisville. The band Circle X that's still happening in New York is from Louisville. A band called The Endtables. A really great, really pure punk rock band called The Babylon Dance Band. I liked them for the same reasons that a couple of years later I liked Husker Du. Tim (Harris) and Tara (Key), who are now in Antietam were in The Babylon Dance Band. And she's just one of my favorite guitar players. She was my ideal of how to play guitar like when I was 13 or 14 years old.

PS: Well, you don't play like her now. You've failed in the pursuit of your ideal.

DG: (Laughing) I know, I know. It's terrible. I'm still not good enough.

PS: Do you have any formal musical education?

DG: Yeah, I studied classical piano for ten years. But I'm not a very good pianist. Britt (Walford) from Slint, on the other hand, is an extremely good pianist. continued next page

PS: You can hear in the piano pieces (on *The Serpentine Similar*) that it's not a rock guitar-player playing piano. It sounds more like a piano-player...well, it doesn't sound all that much like a piano-player playing piano either. It kind of shies away from all the places a piano-player would go.

DG: Yeah, I think that's true. I'm just not a very good piano player.

PS: Well, you thought it was good enough to put it on the record. You worked with Brian Paulson again on the new record?

DG: Yeah.

PS: Who is he? I see his name all over the place.

DG: He's from Minneapolis. He was in a band called Man-Sized Action in the mid-80's and then he was in an early version of *Breaking Circus*. And I first met him when I was in school in Washington DC because he was doing live sound for Big Black on tour in 1985 and I've kept in touch with him ever since then. He's, so far as my experience goes, really the ideal person to work with. He's very serious, very knowledgeable, very hard-working, very friendly.

PS: How active a producer is he? I don't think it actually says "producer" on the record.

DG: Not very.

PS: He's an engineer, primarily?

DG: Yeah.

PS: What else has Brian done?

DG: He did *Spiderland* for Slint and he did the last Unrest record.

PS: He just did the new Spinnanes record, too, didn't he?

DG: He did.

PS: What's your connection to Mark Robinson (of Unrest) and Teen Beat Records?

DG: Mark Robinson ordered the fanzine I did when I was in high school, *Hit the Trail*, in 1984, and I didn't meet him until 1986. And I didn't remember him having written to me before and he proved it by showing me the letter I had written him in 1984. I played in Unrest for several shows. Billan Buckler from King Kong played bass, I played guitar. It was before the first album came out, but after the first single.

PS: But the new record won't be on Teen Beat?

DG: No. The new record will be on Drag City. There's a single coming out on Teen Beat in about three weeks called *Twenty Songs Less*--kind of an experiment gone awry. Mark asked me to do arrangements of two of the songs from *Perfect Teeth*, the Unrest album on 4AD, because, I guess, 4AD usually gives away free 7-inch vinyl copies. And he called me, after hearing the piano version I'd done of a Codeine song and...you know when I sent Codeine the tape of that, they were saying, "You could put an ad in *The Village Voice*, like *Your Songs Arranged For Piano*" and I thought, "oh, very funny." But right when the record came out, that's exactly what Mark did. He called me up and said, "I want piano versions of two of these songs." A couple of months later I called him and said, "Well, we've recorded it." And he asked which songs we'd done. And I said, "Well, I'll send you the tape and you decide which songs they're versions of."

PS: Is it, in any way, inspired by the Unrest record?

DG: Well...we wouldn't have done a 7-inch otherwise.

PS: I'll let you get away with that. If I was Connie Chung, though, I would've nailed you.

DG: We had the idea to sue Warner Brothers for a million dollars. What we'd say in the lawsuit is this: we sent this single of our original material to this guy, Mark Robinson, to put out on a label called Teen Beat. And the next thing we know, it's being used as a promotional single for his band's record and, furthermore, they're claiming that these masters that we sent are, in fact, versions of Unrest songs and he's claiming to have written them. And we could play the two Unrest songs whose titles he had affixed to these tracks to any jury, side-by-side with our 7-inch and people would know, for sure, that they weren't Unrest compositions.

PS: I think the best use you might make of this would be to film the jury's faces while they listen to compositions and release it as a video.

DG: But that was not a primary impulse in doing this. Eventually he said he didn't want to just slap Unrest titles on it, even though I thought he *would* want to do that.

PS: At this point do you consider there to be a set lineup for Gastr del Sol? continued next page



DG: No.

PS: It's you and whomever you collaborate with?

DG: No, because, in a way, that would be saying there is a set lineup and that lineup is me. Which isn't to say that I've been encouraging Bundy and John McEntire to make a Gastr del Sol record without me, but maybe I ought to be prepared for that eventuality.

PS: Maybe I'll make one.

DG: Yeah, perhaps.

PS: When you went to do the compositions with Jim for the new record, how did you actually start working?

DG: Just with two acoustic guitars.

PS: And did you come in with some ideas or did you come in blank?

DG: I came in with three short ideas, each about a minute long. The first practice we had, when it was still "Jim O'Rourke's rock band..."

PS: There's something charming about that.

## We had this idea to sue Warner Brothers for a million dollars.

DG: Totally, although he was the most bummed out about the real rock character of the Metro show, I mean the rock character of loud stage volume, and the rock character of an amp blowing up in soundcheck, and the rock character of being told to get off the stage.

PS: The real world.

DG: Yeah, it bummed him out more than the rest of us. But the first practice, he showed up with a bunch of tapes and CD's and played Miles Davis' "Rated X" from the Album *Get Up With It*, something from The Art Bears' *Winter Songs*, a song from Nicc's *The Marble Index*, and we talked about Van Dyke Parks alot.

PS: And this was his preface to the rock group?

DG: Yeah.

PS: When you're doing a longer song, to what extent do you have it composed?

DG: In the studio, we had the times for each section written out. Not bar by bar, but something like, "two minute insert". And we used watches: "Let's play this for five minutes." And then we'd cut the tape.

PS: So, in the recorded versions, are there alot of edits?

DG: Yeah.

PS: Knowing, beforehand, there would be edits there?

DG: Roughly, yeah.

PS: Is there much improvisation within the composed parts?

DG: There's almost no two-guitars-otherwise-unaccompanied-improvisation and there's no rock-band-improvisation. There's one part that has piano, organ, bass clarinet, vibes, bowed vibes, accordian, scraped gong, and guitars—those parts are improvised, but what was written was: we knew we wanted a six minute section with these instruments. And we knew the general dynamic we wanted for the section.

PS: And how do you decide that bass clarinet is the instrument that you want.

DG: Jim hears it in his head. (Laughs)

PS: Were you intimidated at all to work with a guy like that?

DG: Oh, sure. I mean, he heard Gene Coleman playing bass clarinet in his head.

PS: Who is Soren Mueller?

DG: My grandfather wrote a couple of books of genealogy and Soren Mueller appears in the book *Gribbs About The Globe*, his second book—the follow-up to *The Gribbs of Kentucky*. The story is that in the 18th century there was a book, by J.P. Jacobsen, called *Lady Marie Gribb: A Woman of The Seventeenth Century*, it was translated into English in 1917 and published by the Oxford Press, and it was her memoirs, talking about leaving her husband for the coachman, Soren Sorenson Mueller.

PS: So, tell me, did Jim ever get to feel like a rock star?

DG: Well he enjoyed it in the studio, I think. He played a synthesizer part that's as close to a Slayer guitar solo as Gastr del Sol ever gets.

PS: Slayer would be very insulted, I'm sure.



# What Makes You Different, Also Makes You Beautiful

*The alternative to the Alternative*



A couple of weeks ago I got a haircut. I went to one of those real haircutting places for the first time in my life. I usually go to George's Barber Shop at Clark and Oakdale because George charges 9 bucks, plays big band and swing cassettes on a boom-box propped on the sink, and shaves my neck. I have always been of the mind that there was little about cutting hair that George, in his 40 years of doing so, wouldn't or couldn't have learned. So paying someone twice or more what I pay George was never even a consideration. But my girlfriend felt that George, though quite probably a delightful man and undoubtedly a fine barber in his day, was sadly out of touch with today's hairstyles. What's more, my relative lack of concern for the fashionability of my hairdo, reminded my girlfriend of the societal pressures placed upon women to always be mindful of their upkeep, while men are allowed to strut about unshaven, untucked, and unkempt.

So, because I want to be attractive, if not to everyone, at least, specifically, to my girlfriend, and because I have no desire to perpetuate gender inequities, I decided to give a "salon" a try. I brought along a picture ripped out of a J Crew catalog of a handsome, active, young man traipsing across what appear to be moors with his handsome, active, young Labrador Retriever. The dog has a stick in his mouth. I had nothing to lose--perhaps these "stylists" did know something George didn't know. I wanted to be handsome, active, and young. I wanted to be traipsing across moors. I wanted a handsome, active, young Lab with a stick in his mouth. And I held out some paltry hope that \$20 and a graduate of the Wilfred Beauty Academy might get me there.

The woman washing my hair said to me, "So, what do you do?"

I don't like this question. I have a day job, I put out a little magazine, I play in a band. I don't consider any of them particularly rife topics for a shampoo conversation.

I said, "I play in a band." Heck, if you can't try to impress the shampoo woman, what's the use of being in a band?

My vanity was promptly punished: "What kind of music do you play?"

"Um," I said (it's my stock response to this question), "It's, y'know, "alternative" rock, I guess."

"Wow," she said, "I love that kind of music!"

"Really?" I said, dubiously, "Which bands do you like?"

The question seemed innocuous enough and might have been answered just as innocuously. But somehow I knew it wouldn't. Even as I asked the question, I knew that the words forming on that woman's tongue would come out covered with sandpaper and would grind me right down to the bone. I have a sensitive spot where what I believe and what I want to believe converge and I know that what she was about to say would strike me exactly there.

"Blind Melon, Lenny Kravitz. I listen to 'XRT' all the time."

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In the mid-70's the record industry endeavored to develop a unified marketing approach for what was known as "Album-Oriented Rock" (AOR). And, while the times may have offered a fairly diverse variety of images and sounds (ranging, as they did, from Led Zeppelin, to The Eagles, to Pink Floyd, to The Rolling Stones, to Lynyrd Skynyrd, to David Bowie) many teenagers' record collections included selections from across the spectrum. Record companies found that, since their consumer base was roughly the same for many different artists, a successful marketing approach could be recycled ad infinitum: one size fits all.

This simpleton's approach was mildly modified and expanded in the 80's to include and encompass bands like U2, Simple Machines, The Police, and Kajagoogoo (well, maybe not Kajagoogoo). These were bands who, like their 70's counterparts, were primarily, if not exclusively, male; whose fan-base was equally male; and whose basic formula of Beatles-inspired takes on the, by now, tried-and-true formula of pop/rock were instantly familiar and readily-consumable. Meanwhile, the parallel marketing plan devised in the 70's for AM radio, was being dragged across the frequencies to FM, and being employed for the promotion and deification of stars such as Michael Jackson, George Michael, Madonna, and Paula Abdul.



There they sat, the record companies, on their velvet-cushioned porch swings, gently rocking themselves to and fro, gazing out upon the gentle flocks of record-buyers they'd raised and subsequently fleeced. And when, in the evening, the cool breezes came down from the hills, they would cozily don the woollen ponchos which, only days or months or, perhaps, years earlier they'd shorn from the backs of their lovely lambs. But, alas, and to the deep chagrin of the record companies, the late 80's saw those winds turn blustery and wicked. Their cushy ponchos seemed, suddenly, thin and flimsy. And their one-size-fits-all marketing plans were now, alternately, baggy and droopy—offering no definition of the product within; or skin-tight and too short in the sleeves and in-seams—making the contents appear gaunt and anemic, while leaving nothing to the imagination.

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Many rock writers and social historians would have us believe that Punk was the beast that spooked the flock. But, it seems to me that Punk was simply one of a number of precursors to the actual agents of change. I know I risk ruffling the feathers of the romantics among us who still hold the theory of Punk's anarchic, anti-consumer, revolution dear and central to their understandings of culture, but Punk was just another straw on the Camel's back. And, frankly, by the time the Camel's back broke, Punk was dead and buried.

So who is to blame (or thank)? I suggest it was a simultaneous, bipolar wave of DIY-ism. (I can hear the Punks yelling "Told you so!") Sorry, folks, DIY didn't start or end with Punk.) Half the wave was encompassed by the upsurge, in the mid-80's, of independent labels and the bands they fostered. The other half consisted of the infiltration of Rap into the mainstream consciousness and, later, into the mainstream itself. The record companies found themselves unexpectedly unequipped to market the music that the public was demanding in ever-increasing quantities.

Michael Stipe is not Robert Plant; Run-DMC is not Earth, Wind, & Fire; and The Cure is not Wings. More importantly and, inevitably, more troubling for the record companies: Fugazi is not Foreigner; Public Enemy is not Marilyn McCoo & Billy Davis Jr.; and Sonic Youth is not The Doobie Brothers.

But where there's a wave there's a way. And they called it "Alternative," and they saw that it was profitable. And the record buyers came forth and multiplied. They attached a fashion to it: *grunge*, and an attitude: *rejection of the mainstream*, and a personality: *charismatic misfits*. The record companies sensed, like pack-dogs on the prowl, another ready-made market/target coup and a killing to be made. "Time" magazine, in its October 25th issue, canonized Alternative's saints and anointed their offspring. The winds are dying down. The record companies are feeling good again.

The End.

But wait! Aren't we forgetting something?

Yes, and we always do. It's so easy to lose sight of why we're here: listening to a band, maybe playing in one, reading and/or writing Pop Stock magazine, etc. The basis for our distinctions and judgments are not the same as those of the record companies. The line between "consumer" and "listener" is thin and blurry, but if music is to matter, or, simply, to matter to us, it's a line that must be recognized.

The "why" of listening is what draws the line. Why do we listen to what we listen to? How does our relationship to the music and its choices affect how we define it and its use to us? Consumers listen to "Alternative" music—as a category. Listeners, on the other hand, identify with independent (alternative) choices within the music. The former identification is external, imposed, and irrelevant; the latter is internal, integral, and essential.

continued next page

Billy Corgan, of Smashing Pumpkins, is quoted in "Time" ~~thusly~~: "A lot of these parameters that are banded about in the alternative music ~~of~~ of criticizing people. And again, it goes back to high school. You know, I don't like the clothes that you wear. That just becomes what alternative music is rebelling against."

Hey, Bill, you're about two egg rolls short of a combination plate there, pal.

Although, perhaps in Smashing Pumpkins' highly-stylized, fully-postured, wholly-conjured take on alternative music this kind of thinking does make sense. Corgan has, after all, fashioned a highly successful "Alternative" rock band. He knows the touchstones and he's touched them. We don't dress him in skin tight mock-turtlenecks and paisley print blouses. Like Urge Overkill, he's mastered the I'm-too-cool-to-care-if-I'm-cool stance. It only takes a thought to realize how invisible that logic is, but often, before we can muster a thought, we're fooled by the attitude. Unlike Groucho Marx's old line about not wanting to join any club that would have him as a member—which masks self-effacement in mock-superiority—Corgan's stance is a keenly-plotted posture masquerading as mock-indifference.

The shampoo woman doesn't try to make the distinction between Corgan's posture and his product; she doesn't care about the difference between "Alternative" (with a big "A"—the Top Ten Albums on Alternative Radio on "120 Minutes") and "alternative" (with a little "a," as in basing choices not on market trends, but on aesthetics). So what? To paraphrase the late, great poet Frank O'Hara: Nobody should experience anything they don't need to, if they don't need indie rock, bulky for them.

But for those of us who do need it, it's important to keep our bullshit sensors off "stunned." We need to *listen*, rather than *consume*. And we need to shop accordingly. We're the only ones who can reward the brave and the ambitious, the inspired and the inspiring. We're the only ones who can insure that the magnificent beast that is *independent music* will continue to survive in the ruthless and inhospitable wild.



HENRY V.







*Don is on assignment in Rangoon this week. He faxed us his column just under deadline. We decided to print it directly from his fax.*

OCT 27 '93 08:33AM LU PUR #45113

8.43

I. the hattifattiners--vogue bambini ep (bad girl, aia mee (dark beloved cloud) b/w dirt rd @ night, w.s., fuzzy wuzzy) i'm getting tired of these inter-band buddy jams where they get together in a studio and piss around for 3 or 4 songs and some nyc hipster label slaps a neat cover on it and releases it as some low-fi wonder! actually, bad girl is a pretty cool song.

\*\*includes members of god is my co-pilot, silver Jews, and growing up skipper

II. sfertic experiments--sci-fi/low-fi ep (goodbye, i must... (drunken fish) b/w white rain, time out of time)

i really get the feeling that these are just fun recordings of a band messing around some saturday afternoon. the songs are really just pointless jams with ranting, recursive singing, not too bad

III. smark dab--lucky b/w big planet, blood in my soul (homestead)

this is not an error. well sorta. i thought about not writing this, but just in case anyone actually was moved to buy this record after reading my review in last month's issue, i feel that i owe it to them. i reviewed the record at the wrong speed. it's not marked on the record! only after seeing the album liner notes did i realize this mistake. the music still sounds great, but i really feel the voice loses something at the faster speed. so, i guess i'll just keep mine at 33 1/3 rpm. thanks.

think about it:

- I. dark beloved cloud 5-16 47th rd. long island city ny 11101
- II. drunken fish 8600 olympic blvd. los angeles, ca 90035



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