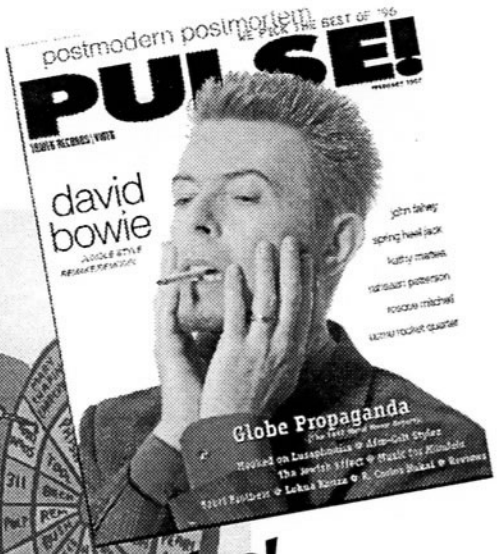
BOB NEUWIRTH

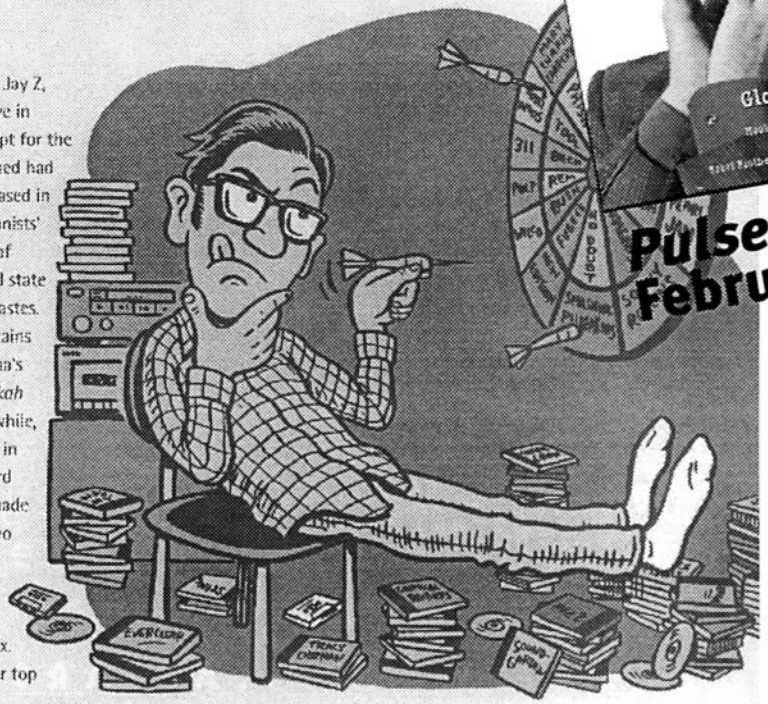


Pulse! February 1997

PULSE! writers' and editors' picks, trends and oddities

What do John Zorn, Les Baxter, Jay Z, Jean-Luc Ponty and Wilco have in common? Well, not much except for the fact that all of the aforementioned had a new album or compilation released in 1996 that made one of our columnists' top 10 lists. Our reviewers—all 21 of 'em—once again revealed the varied state of the music industry ... and music tastes.

Columnist Jon Weiderhorn maintains his controversy cred by citing Nirvana's *From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah* as one of his top metal titles. Meanwhile, our rock/pop columnist found space in his top 10 to hail both Merle Haggard and Curtis Mayfield. Mayfield also made our r&b columnist's list, although two places behind the Artist Formerly Known as Prince. Clearly, not all of our writers are reading the "File Under:" label affixed to the jewel box. Check out the reasoning behind their top picks, or head over to our website (www.towerrecords.com) for the columnists' annotations on all their favorite titles.



Country singers the furthest removed from Hank Williams:

1. John Berry
2. Doug Stone
3. Shania Twain

Artists least likely to be commemorated with a stamp:

1. GG Allin
2. Wesley Willis
3. Marilyn Manson

Illustrations by Ward Sutton

The best albums and videos of 1996

You'd think our video reviewers found life a little on the depressing side this year. Number ones *Crumb*, *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*, *Seven* and *Brazil* aren't exactly what you'd call feel-good.

And on the editors' lists, a few titles just kept coming up (something we now affectionately title the "Cesaria Evora Factor"). Beck, in addition to making our June issue's cover, found himself on more than half of the editors' Top 10 lists with *Odelay*. Following closely behind were the latest platters from Railroad Jerk, Arto Lindsay and Cake. Our year-end conclusion: We need to get out more.

Blues

1. *Promised Land*—Robert "Bilbo" Walke (Ronster). Moaning, badass real Missis pi juke blues with the reverb jacked t
2. *Grateful Heart: Blues & Ballads*—Ronn Earl (Bullseye Blues).
3. *Instrumental Blues Dynamite*—Various artists (Black Top).
4. *Wake Up and Live!*—Floyd Dixon (Alligator).
5. *Lotto Land*—The Holmes Brothers (Sto Plain).
6. *Call Down the Thunder*—Guy Davis (R House) and *I Want You to Know*—Paul Rishell and Annie Raines (Tone Cool).
7. *Come On In This House*—Junior Wells (Telarc Blues).
8. *Homebrew*—Brewer Phillips (Delmark).
9. *Sledgehammer Soul & Down Home Blues* Mighty Sam McClain (AudioQuest).
10. *Have Mercy!*—Michael Hill's Blues M (Alligator). —*Ted Drozdow*

Contemporary Instrumental

1. *Spirit Chaser*—Dead Can Dance (4AD). An ecstatic album of tribal rhythms an primal vocal wails from heaven.

Folk

1. *Revival*—Gillian Welch (Almo Sounds). The reincarnation of Maybelle Carter brings the past to the brink of the 21st century.
2. *Red on Blonde*—Tim O'Brien (Sugar Hill).
3. *The Past Didn't Go Anywhere*—Utah Phillips and Ani DiFranco (Righteous Babe).
4. *Look Up*—Bob Neuwirth (Watermelon).
5. *Dreams Fly Away: A History of Linda Thompson*—Linda Thompson (Hannibal/Rykodisc).
6. *Link in the Chain*—Pete Seeger (Columbia/Legacy).
7. *Shady Grove*—Jerry Garcia and David Grisman (Acoustic Disc).
8. *Selling the Gold*—Elliott Murphy (DejaDisc).
9. *Just When We're Thinking It's Over*—The Cox Family (Asylum).
10. *Klezmer Music: A Marriage of Heaven and Earth*—Various artists (Ellipsis Arts).

—*Larry King*