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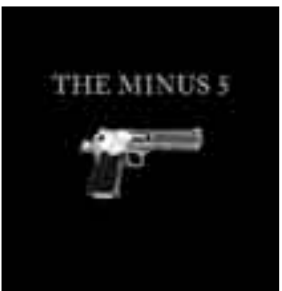
MF Doom
The Special Herbs
Box Set
(Nature Sounds)

When taking apart any of the unconscionably stupid rap hits we've had to endure lately, the lyrics are usually the easiest target (e.g., "shake that laffy taffy," "my lovely lady lumps," "let me see ya grill."). MF Doom's latest release, *the Special Herbs Box Set*, reminds us that while these lyrics take center stage, the music behind them sucks too. If there's a bright side to these artistically retarded moments, it's that they make the good stuff sound even fresher, like Doom's unprecedented mic skills. Before last year's wildly entertaining *The Mouse & The Mask*, a collaboration with producer Danger Mouse and characters from Cartoon Network's brilliant late-night stoner revue, "Adult Swim," the MC/producer had long been operating in the shadows. MF arguably has the most colorful rhymes around, painting pictures of children rapping in the rain and name-dropping everybody from Superfly Snooker to Janeane Garofalo, all in his steady, slightly raspy flow. But ironically, the *Special Herbs Box Set*—a compilation culled from 10 volumes of instrumental tracks that Doom has been releasing since 2002—just might be the biggest testament to his talents. It's not really a "box set" per se; it's a double-disc collection of crackling loops and oddball beats, with nary a rhyme to speak of. While nothing here demands attention quite like the hurtling syllables of a well-polished Doom verse, *Special Herbs* shakes things up in a way that instrumental hip-hop shouldn't, complete with theremin-soaked funk ("Zatar"), twisted marching bands ("Shallots"), epochal strings ("Myrrh") and dissonant Fender Rhodes licks ("Chrysanthemum Flowers"). Much like the aforementioned cartoons, folks in altered states will surely be attracted to these cuts—they're named after *herbs*, for Christ's sake—but they're far from aimless grooves; in fact, they establish MF Doom as one of the premier knob twisters working in hip-hop today. If Black Eyed Peas got him to produce their next piece of dance-floor garbage, they would truly be phunking with my heart.—*joe sweeney*



Ray Davies
Other People's
Lives
(V2)

So here, finally, is what is officially being called Ray Davies' first solo album. Of course, that discounts the famed former-Kinks frontman's previous semi-solo outings—including *The Storyteller*, the recording of his spoken-word show from the late 1990s which inspired the popular MTV/VH-1 program of the same name, and *Return to Waterloo*, the soundtrack for his 1985 television play which inspired very little—both of which have been recently reissued on CD. But let's not quibble about semantics; *Other People's Lives* is widely considered to be Davies' first solo album. I won't lie: I'm a big fan of Davies' previous work. On the other hand, I'm always eager to call out one of my old favorites when they poop in the tuba, so to speak, on a new record. I'm happy to report that Davies' first solo outing is not a bust. Having said that, I cannot tell a lie: The record is not a complete success either. Much has been made of the contemplation of mortality and air of melancholy contained by the lyrics on this album. Some critics have been quick, and incorrect, to link that moodiness to Davies' recent appearance in the news as a victim of a gunshot wound; the songwriter was shot in the leg while chasing a mugger in pre-Katrina New Orleans. Ray's brush with death and the renewed musical vigor exhibited on this album would make for a nice connection, but unfortunately the timeline doesn't work. Most of the songs on this album were recorded long before the shooting and Davies has confessed to slaving over the album for a number of years. As a result, much of the album's production already sounds rather dated (more Brit-pop than British Invasion). Musically, Ray's songs are all over the map: snippets of Tin Pan Alley show tunes, big classic rock numbers and acoustic balladry appear throughout. Ultimately, whether or not the songs on the album actually describe "other people's lives" or facets of Ray's own is impossible to tell. What can be said is that Ray Davies is once again glaring at the world with a skeptic's gaze, cherishing the familiar, simple things in life and waiting for some form of peace and redemption that always seems to be out of reach. Let's hope the next chapter of Davies' story doesn't take so long to write.—*mark norris*



The Minus 5
The Minus 5
(Yep Roc)

Scott Mc Caughey is the ringleader of a rotating cast of musicians dubbed the Minus 5 that sometimes includes neo-folk, roots rock and power pop luminaries Peter Buck (R.E.M.), Jeff Tweedy (Wilco), Ken Stringfellow (the Posies) and John Wesley Harding, among others. In this role, Mc Caughey, the band's sole tunesmith, pays little if any attention to current trends and developments in music. He's quite satisfied to follow familiar roads mapped out by '60s and '70s masters of popcraft that have been immortalized and sanctified beyond reason. Contrary to one school of thinking, the Minus 5 proves that there is still a point to making this kind of music, that its viability didn't end when the Beatles disbanded or the Byrds hung it up. Some of the pop clichés that Mc Caughey and company employ with great skill and success are clean, chiming guitars, relentless pulsation of piano chords with bouncy rhythms, sleigh bells and lots of ooh-la-la-type backing vocals. This is the way many aging punks that stay in music go; accessible songs with classic pop arrangements, various keyboards and some country and folk influence manifested in generous helpings of acoustic guitar strumming and some pedal-steel picking. But Mc Caughey and his stacked deck of a backing band do it better than most, and with a lot less pretension. The raucous, irreverent delivery of "Aw Shit Man" brings Mc Caughey's other band, the Young Fresh Fellows, to mind: equal parts Buzzcocks and the Replacements, but most of the album is comparable to Golden Smog or the Traveling Wilburys. Despite Mc Caughey's lyrical preoccupation with guns, alcohol and self-loathing on *The Minus 5*, his wry, sardonic take on hard knocks, bad decisions and their aftermath exceeds expectations and make this record much more fun than one might imagine.—*matt barber*

Group Name: Thrill Me!

When/Where playing this week?

Thursday, March 9 at the Mohawk Place with Early Man, Priestess, and the Sword. Show starts at 7pm. Don't miss the best rock show to come to Buffalo in a long time...

Band Members Names/instrument...

Johnny Drama-Mouth
Stephen Carveth-Thunder, Bass
Tony Lorenzo-Lightning, Guitar
Bryce March-Smoke, Guitar
Eric Lukasik-Fire, Drums

When did the band form?

Thrill Me! burst through the placenta of their pernicious serpentine mother in the basement of the Babylon Hotel in the late summer of 2005 in the most calamitous fashion.



You might like our music if you like...

Face melting guitar solos, the Stooges, Blouses, Detective Camron, Yoav, blacking out at the Pink, Black Sabbath, riffs that bring you to your knees, Old Grandad, Tony lommi's briefcase, Blood, Sweat, Beers.

List of Recorded Releases

Take the Cash. Stuff a Gash (The early years) – 1975 to 1983

Babylon Basement Sessions – 2005

I'd Like to Snatch a Kiss and Vice Versa (UK Single) – 2006

A Door in Hell Marked "Thrill Me!" – 2006

Upcoming events:

April 25th with High On Fire at the Icon. Rage.

Worst show the band ever played:

We, Thrill Me!, make every performance as passionate and true as possible. We believe every show for us is a unique experience that we can take a...pssh... HAHHAHA! Are you fucking serious? Why does everyone say that? Thankfully we have actually never made a mistake or played poorly. Ever.

Best show the band ever played:

One night after taking dropping way too much acid—I can say acid, right? LSD? Whatever. Okay, we traveled into the future and saw the March 9th show. That show, wow, that show was the best we ever played. But in retrospect the leotards were a bad choice, real bad. Nobody thought it was funny.

Anything else you would like our readers to know about the band?

Rock and roll is supposed to be filthy and evil, don't you people ever forget this...

Contact information:

www.myspace.com/Thrillme1970