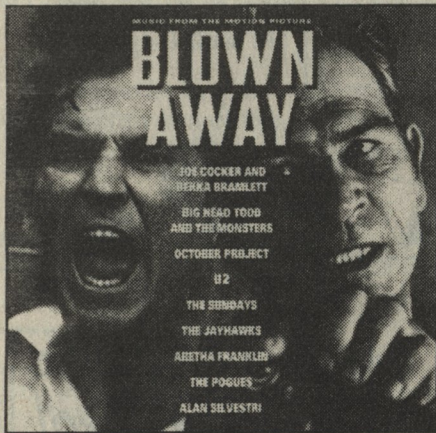


# SMORGASBORD @ TUNES

## MUSICAL MUSINGS BY ALEX K.

In the grand scheme of life the few minutes you will spend reading my subjective thoughts on a slew of musical offerings from around the world will amount to virtually nothing. Nonetheless, I appreciate your taking the time and energy to read what I have to say. If I succeed in encouraging you to sample any or all of these artists, then I am grateful for the privilege; if I only succeed in wasting your valuable time you have my apologies. Now, on to the music...



The first item on the menu is the *Blown Away* soundtrack (Various Artists, EPIC), a tasty dish which includes a wide range of music from The Pogues, U2, the Sundays, Aretha Franklin, and many others. Highlights include "Tuesday Morning" by the Pogues, and "All Night Long" by Aretha. Not every song is a winner and few are new material, but it's a good batch of music overall.

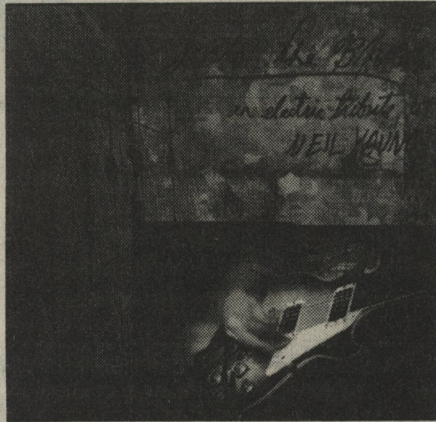
Next up are two volumes of a three-disc set compiling various artists' interpretations of songs written and performed by Neil Young.

*Out of the Blue* (Sony) is the acoustic compilation, while *Into the Black* is the electric collection. All artists' royalties and record company profits from these CD's are being donated to the Bridge School and Safehaven homes for physically and mentally challenged children. These CD's are not only great music, they will help people who need support.

The *Out of the Blue* CD contains performances by The Waltons, Jann Arden, Stephen Fearing, Head and many others. Highlights include "Don't let it bring you down" by Amanda Marshall, "Old Man" by Rose Chronicles, and a great rendition of "Every-



body knows this is Nowhere" performed by The Rheostatics AND the Bourbon Tabernacle Choir.



*Into the Black* (SONY) features such great acts as Big Sugar's "When you dance I can really love" and 54:40's "Cortez the Killer." Other great groups include The Philosopher Kings, Andy Curran, and Colin Linden, among many others.



Next up is Sloan's latest effort, *Twice Removed* (MCA). I like Sloan. I liked *Smeared*, and *Twice Removed* is another great but entirely different album. Some of my favourite songs on this CD include "Pen Pals" (a fun story explained as a melange of two fan letters written to another band) and "Bell's On" (a more sombre adventure). This CD is worth a listen if you haven't already sampled it.

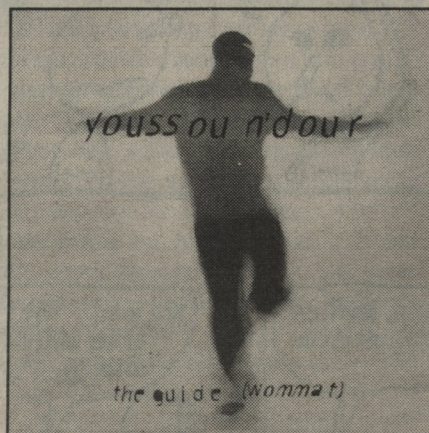
Last week I got my hands on *Project Twinkle* (Indie), a new CD from Guelph Ontario's King Cobb Steelie. This is an independent release and may be a little harder to find than many other music items, but is worth looking into if the opportunity presents itself.

It is difficult to describe KCS's music: the tone is heavy, and the instruments varied, but it works for me. "Slump" is a hard-driven favourite of mine, while "Maynard" is a calmer expression of angst.

*Weezer* (MCA) are a California-based band who have released their self-titled debut album under the illustrious David Geffen label. *Weezer* is a healthy mix of punk, rock, and what is now called grunge (shudder). It's well worth the price of admission. After listening to songs like "Say it ain't so" and "My name is Jonas" I am sure you will agree.

Halifax is home to a rich musical community, and it is from this enclave that *Al Tuck and No Action* spring. *Brave Last Days* (MURDER) is their second release on Murder Records, who describe them as their "moodiest release so far". Coming from the people who handle such great bands as Eric's Trip and Hardship Post, this will probably mean something to you. Listen to "Mr fixit" and "Buddah" and decide for yourself.

Our journey now takes us from the streets of Halifax to the hills and towns of Europe and Africa. World Music is the name given to any and all music that is (a) Not originated from North America, and (b) Not performed in English. The next three CD's to be explored fit this description with ease (Note: this sentence says little).



The first stop on our escapade is Senegal, a country on Africa's west coast. *The Guide* (Wommat) (Sony) is from Youssou N'dour. Youssou's music is melodic, calm, soothing, lively, fun, and jazzy either all at the same time or at points throughout. All the songs by him and his band The Super Etoile

are wondrous, warm and unique. Included on the CD are the translations of his lyrics; they are wonderfully poetic, and his philosophical insight is both simple and truthful all at once. This is a very special experience.

*The Gipsy Kings Greatest Hits* (Columbia): need I say more? The rich and captivating sounds of their steel and acoustic guitars are so alive and free that it will make you like dancing. The spirit of Spain, its culture and music are so well represented by the Reyes and Baliardo brothers that they deserve space on a postage stamp. "Bamboleo", "Soy(my way)", "Baila Mami" and all the other classic Gipsy King songs here on a CD the whole family will enjoy.



The final destination of my musical caravan is Algeria, nestled on the shores of the warm Mediterranean Sea in northern Africa. *N'ssi n'ssi* (Barclay) is the latest release from Algerian musician Khaled, an artist by the definition of the word. His music is so wondrously powerful that he is banned by certain authorities in northern Africa because his music has such a profound influence on its youth. His poetic words and his calls to "take the beauty and enjoy life make Khaled someone worth listening to. Even those who cannot speak his language will feel his music's force, and his message.

This concludes my musical review. I have not used the note on music ratings: I have not used the rank because I believe rank has no importance or meaning in regards to music. Music is expression, not competition. I hope it always remains that way-- it will for me.

-- Alex Keaveny