

Spill It

BY MIKE BREEN

Galore-ious Debut

The year in local music CD releases is ending with a bang on Saturday as Northern Kentucky's **Morals Galore** unleash their magnificent Indie Pop debut, *Donerail*. Or is it the first great local disc of 2003? Either way, fans of the local guitar Pop scene will have a new favorite band once they hear it.

The CD is named after a notorious Kentucky Derby long-shot winner, but *Donerail* is a surefire success from a creative standpoint, brimming with fantastically melodic, unforgettable Pop/Rock songs. They've got the snap and pop of a young Weezer, but there's a looser vibe that gives *Morals Galore* their crackle. Like Sebadoh, Guided By Voices or Apples In Stereo, the band knows the power of not only one good hook per song, but a busload scattered throughout. And there's a genuine and intimate quality to the performances and vocal delivery that sets the group apart from their peers. While there's an emotive slant to the band's approach, the CD is largely void of all of the earnestness and wounded-boy qualities you'll find in your average "Emo" band.

It's a cohesive, solid effort from start to finish, but some of the many highlights include "Aristotle," an airy, keyboard-and-acoustic-guitar-driven floater that's gorgeously lush and dreamy, the percussion-littered "Check Your Head," which has an almost Beatles-y BritPop flair, and "Rock Star," with it's Moog-ish key flutters and ropery, plodding rhythms. Also lacquered throughout this dazzling debut is some tasty guitar radiance, the glue that holds the disc's bountiful dynamics in check. It's CDs like *Donerail* that let you know that the future of the local music scene is in good hands.

Saturday's CD release party is a refreshing break from the night-club norm. The band has rented the American Legion hall (22 E. Sixth St.) in Newport for the 8:30 p.m. event, with all ages invited. And instead of using the release show as a way to rake in some supplementary dough, the band will donate proceeds to the Starfire Council, which organizes recreational outings for teens and adults with disabilities. Haleymill and Dr. Jim Esmail open the show. For more info, slink on over to www.moralsgalore.com.

Local Notes

- DJ **Scott Carrelli**, onetime Cincinnati resident currently living and working in San Francisco, returns home on Saturday to spin at the Spy Club. Carrelli is fresh off his second tour of Australia where he is building a strong following (he even had one of his shows taped for national broadcast), and he has been on bills with heavyweights like Paul Van Dyk, Sasha and John Digweed.

- Locals-gone-national **July For Kings** (previously known as Swim) had a great 2002 — MCA Records released their major label debut, *Swim*, on Nov. 5 and they've been touring in support ever since, opening for acts like Collective Soul and Days of the New. Swing by Bogart's on Thursday and buy them a congratulatory round of drinks as JFK does a big homecoming concert with special guests **Saving Ray**, **Coping With Ignorance** and **Blue Karma**.

- Debunkfest, a benefit concert presented by Deliberately Insane Records, hits the Void on Saturday. The all-ages show kicks off at 3 p.m. and will feature Punk bands like Brazil, Amazing Transparent Man, Bottom Line,

Lightweight Holiday, Farkus and Hello Shelby. Proceeds benefit Cincinnati Anti-Racist Action, Louisville Crusade For Children and other organizations. To pre-order tickets, go to deliberatelyinsane.com.

- Local favorites **Pearlene** and the **Wolverton Brothers** put on a free X-mas concert at The Comet on Friday. This will be Pearlene's first show in a while, with members returning to town after touring Europe with Boom Bip and the Soledad Brothers.

- Stanley's Pub hosts a New Year's Eve Eve party on Monday, for those who won't or can't go out on the big night. Local Rock bands **Big Whiskey** and **Ossified** provide the music. The \$15 ticket gets you unlimited food and beer.

- Roots rockers **The Stapletons** will play an in-store show at Shake It Records on Saturday at 3 p.m. to promote their fantastic new release, *Low Dealers ... and Hangers On*. The show is free and the record store will provide food and drink.

CONTACT MIKE BREEN: mbreen@citybeat.com

COAST TO COAST

The best local artist CDs that were released on a national level

BY MIKE BREEN

• The Greenhornes — *Dual Mono* (TelStar)

They lost their keyboardist and a key singing/songwriting contributor, but The Greenhornes managed their best record yet on this magnificent slab of retro-fied Garage Rock. And they couldn't have picked a better time, with the ears of the world primed open by the band's constant press praise and musical contributions to *The Sopranos* (thanks to fan "Little" Steven Van Zandt) and a Jack Daniels' commercial. *Dual Mono* has a slightly cleaner production quality than past

Greenhornes efforts, which surprisingly works to the songs' advantage. Highlights include the energetic opener "Satisfy My Mind," the shady, slinky "Three Faint Calls," and the soul-bursting "Too Much Sorrow." The album is made even better by some versatile closing numbers — "There Is an End" features sexy, goose-bumpy vocals by guest vocalist Holly

Golightly; the rolling harpsichord on "Don't Come Running to Me" is perfect; and Golightly and singer Craig Fox close the disc with "Gonna Get Me Someone," a buzzing, back-and-forth duet that ends the proceedings on a playful, grin-inducing note.

• Boom Bip — *Seed to Sun* (Warp)

On his solo debut, Boom Bip stakes his claim as a diverse solo artist unconcerned

with boundaries and genre specifics. Like DJ Shadow's best work, *Seed to Sun* is a collection of original musical compositions that incorporate "real" instruments (guitars, keyboards) with some sample and beat manipulations. Bip creates a remarkably ethereal sense of melancholy even amidst the kinetic beats on cuts like the bubbling "Closed Shoulders" and the manic "Awaiting an Accident." As good as he is with being ambient, he also shows a superb knack for the majestic, especially evident on the opener,

"Woods Must Roll." While much of it's danceable, this isn't the stuff of Techno or Disco. Attesting to his eclecticism as a composer, Bip would be more at home on a bill with a Post Rock band like Tortoise or BritRock expanders Super Furry Animals (who he toured the states with earlier this year) than spinning in a college campus dance club. *Seed to Sun*, drawing praise from the global music press (and winning Best Album from the 2002 Cincinnati

Entertainment Awards), is sure to be a milestone record for Boom Bip, an artist with unlimited potential and enough heart and soul in his music to ensure integrity.

• Moth — *Provisions, Fiction and Gear* (Virgin)

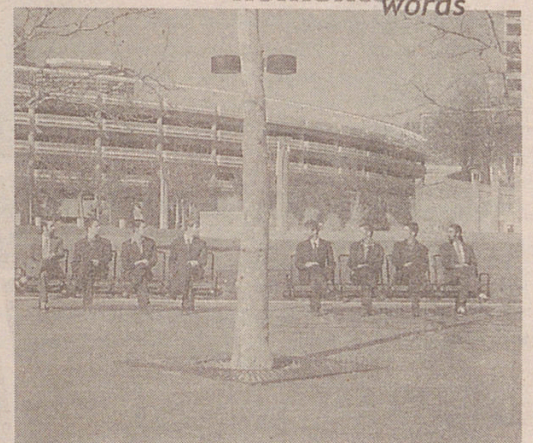
Local boys done good, Moth were the first locally based band to release an album on a major label this year. *Provisions* is a dynam-

ic album, split between spacious ballads and adrenalized rockers, with melody and singer Brad Stenz's raw, almost wounded vocals being the main consistency factor. The record starts with a mighty 1-2-3 punch of AltRock radio-friendliness. "I See Sound," the record's first single, sets the tone. On the more expansive songs, Stenz is able to show an emotional range that's harder to fit into a quick three-minute Pop tune, especially with all of the curves this band throws in. Guitarist Bob Gayol also has a chance to show off his skillful playing, which drips across the tracks like sweet sonic drizzle.

• Sonny Moorman — *Sonny's Blues* (Atlas)

Sonny's Blues, released by Macon, Ga.-based Atlas Records, is essentially a "greatest hits" package containing digitally remastered material from Moorman's previous four albums. It's a brilliant collection of both live and studio material, largely consisting of his reworkings of songs by various artists, plus a few originals. The album is yet another chance for the guitarist/singer to showcase his soulful, often awe-inspiring guitar abilities — he's certainly the best Blues/Rock guitarist in the region and has to rank as one of the best in the country. Like the greats of Blues/Rock (Page, Allman, Beck, Clapton), Moorman's body of recorded work shows that, while he has a loving respect for Blues tradition, he's not afraid to let his own personality and interpretation take a song to the next level.

homunculus words



• July For Kings — *Swim* (MCA)

They began as a Modern Rock band from Middletown called Swim. Just a few years later, they've changed their name to July For Kings and joined the MCA Records stable. With accessible, radio-friendly songs, JFK have the kind of package that could lead to chart-topping success. *Swim* hasn't caught fire yet, but with the right exposure it certainly has the makings of a money-maker.

• Homunculus — *Words* (Howling)

OK, this one came out locally in 2001. But it was picked up for a national release this year. On their third album, Homunculus develop their charming groove-meets-melody blend and write the best songs of their career. While it's easy to see why they'd appeal to the Jam Rock fans, with their music's heavily rhythmic backbeat the band manages to find a perfect balance of funky flow and addictive melodic hooks. With *Words* out on a national level now, it shouldn't be long before the rest of the country gets in on one of the area's best, most consistent artists. ©