

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEW MUSIC

# CMJ

NEW MUSIC  
MONTHLY™

BEST NEW MUSIC

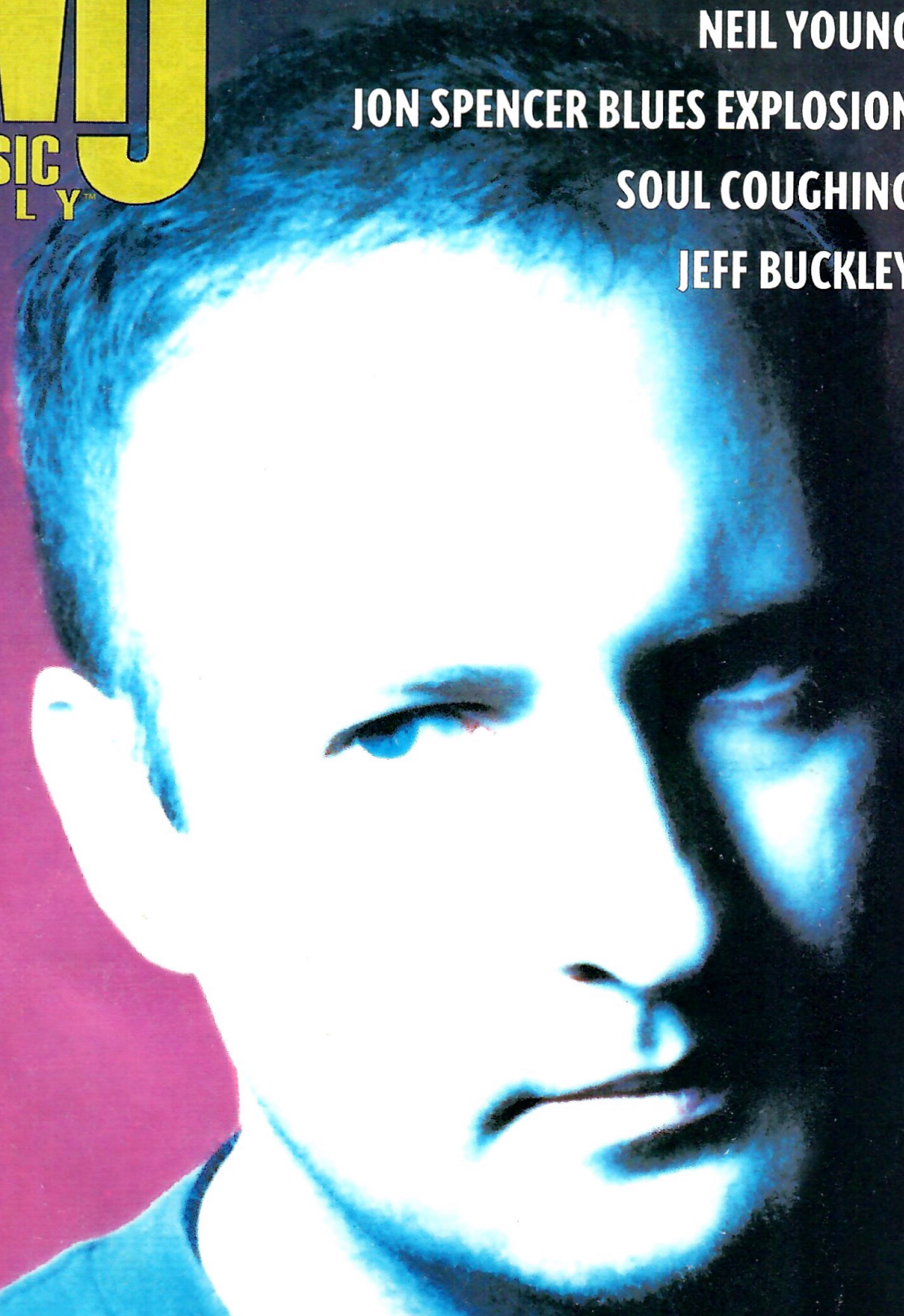
LIZ PHAIR

NEIL YOUNG

JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

SOUL COUGHING

JEFF BUCKLEY



# SUGAR

CONSOLIDATED AND SPEARHEAD

# SEBADOH



SAMIAM

PALACE BROTHERS

49 REVIEWS

\$4.99 U.S./\$7.99 CAN OCT. 1994



## "THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN FREAK AND CELEBRITY"

AMY TALKINGTON GETS COZY WITH L7

"Aren't you the one who asked why I always hide my face?" Donita Sparks asks me, looking up through her novelty-style yellow-tinted glasses with thick black rims. While she speaks, I notice a black crown covering one of her front teeth. At first, I think it's an olive stuck to her tooth, a remnant from the everything-on-it pizza she's chomping. Of course, that's probably the point.

"Yeah, that was me," I say, referring to the first time I interviewed the band, two years ago. "But what was your answer?"

Once again, L7's straight-shooting frontwoman avoids the question. Instead, she devours the small pizza. Digging her fingers through the layers of cheese, she unhappily finds that they forgot the eggplant. Dee, the drummer, offers a sweet-and-sour-soaked eggplant from her Chinese lunch. Donita declines.

The band's hair colors alone liven up the beige corporate setting of a conference room in the Time Warner Building, Rockefeller Center, Manhattan. Dee's hair is a rainbow of greens, Donita's is flat black, and Suzi is the never-changing blonde.

L7 is an odd mixture of California attitude: Cars and TV. Pop culture and pioneer spirit. Youth.

### CARS

"Well," Donita explains, "we're in our cars all the time, so we write about being in our cars... and fast cars."

On the new album *Hungry For Stink* (Slash), bassist Jennifer Finch sings homage to drag racer Shirley Muldowney in "Shirley." Finch found her inspiration in the 1983 movie *Heart Like A Wheel*, constructing the song around re-recorded quotes from the movie. Between them, she screeches, "How many times must you be told—there's nowhere we don't go!"

Hesitantly, each band member divulges her set of wheels. Donita drives a '68 Cougar. Jennifer drives an 11-year-old Wagoneer. Dee cruises in an '84 Toyota Tercel which has "been in so many accidents that it looks like a little accordion and is held together with massive amounts of stickers." Suzi says she drives a '73 Duster... but I'm not sure if I believe her. Was there ever even a car called a Duster? [Yes, a Plymouth.-ed.]

### TV

Suzi: "I watch TV... talk shows."

Donita: "Richard Bey. He's out of Jersey. He has the lowest common denominator audience of any talk show. They're all *Married To The Mob*-looking people and all the subjects are boyfriends and girlfriends who don't get along."

Dee: "I like Jenny Johnson."

Suzi: "They're all good, you just have to pick the good topics. I like the most confrontational topics... the weirdest oddball things... the most fucked-up situations."

Donita: "I like the inbreds."

Dee: "Jenny has a lot of inbreds!"

Suzi: "Yeah, I like the inbred love triangles... like when the mother marries the daughter's boyfriend... It's like a freak show."

Donita: "I saw Zsa Zsa Gabor on Donahue yesterday and she was showing her exercise video. It was great! She was doing push-ups on the back of a Mr. Universe-looking guy saying 'you have to work it, dah-ling' and she's not at all in shape... I mean she's not a slender woman."

Dee: "And she was wearing high heels, right?"

Donita: "Yeah, exercising in pumps and a catsuit!"

Jennifer: "Do you think she's serious?"

Donita: "Oh, she's laughing at herself, I'm sure—laughing all the way to the bank."

### IRONY

Jennifer: "One thing that a lot of critics and writers don't talk about is that L7 is an ironic band. There is a lot of contradiction and irony in the songwriting. We have a very ironic sense of humor."

Suzi: "That's true, because a lot of times it's like Spinal Tap—things go wrong. Just take a situation where we go to the airport and have to check ourselves in. That seems like an easy enough thing to do..."

Dee: "But it's not."

Suzi: "And... we get treated like shit because of the way we look—because we don't have business suits on."

Donita: "The stewardesses are usually nice when they find out you're in a rock band, but if we're scattered, the treatment isn't as nice. There's a fine line between freak and celebrity."

### STINK

L7 love to talk about gross stuff.

Appropriately, the new album is called

#### **Hungry For Stink.**

Jennifer: "We have an insatiable appetite for that which smells."

Suzi: "You went on tour... you know the smell that's a part of our life."

Suzi describes the smell of a tour bus's toilet, in detail, until hushed by Donita: "I'm eating!"

After the interview, I meet the band at MTV's studio to see their taping for *120 Minutes*.

Before they perform the requisite three songs (which, by the way, rock), they do an interview. They tell what seems to be their favorite story of the moment: While working on the John Waters film *Serial Mom*, the members of L7 were asked to wear some very tight beige pants. As the story goes, the pants didn't look so hot, so they sent some Teamster out to get control-top hose. After three days in the hose, they all got yeast infections and sent the poor Teamster out again to get a case of Gynelotromin. They love this story. Courtney Love, a friend of Jennifer Finch's, is sitting on the sidelines of the set chain-smoking Dunhills. She breaks out laughing, spasmodically.

### FUTURE

Suzi: "In twenty years, we'll be on the aluminum walker tour."

Jennifer: "The steel wheels tour."

Dee: "We'll be playing the lounge of the Ramada Inn."

Donita: "We're looking forward to being Golden Girls... I'll be Bea!"

Dee: "I'll be Rose!"

Jennifer: "I'll be Betty David... no, what's her name?"

Donita: "Betty White."

Jennifer: "Yeah, Betty White."

"So who am I? Am I the one that likes to fuck?" Suzi laughs, content with her choice for the future. She wears sunglasses with shiny pink rims and opaque purple reflecting lenses. She pulls out a red lip liner, lines her lips and smudges it on like lipstick. Then, she straightens her face, "We've put in nine years... and it'd be cool to do another nine."