

Review

Helmet
aftertaste
(Interscope)

"It's Easy To Get Bored"! Isn't fitting that the best song on this disk pretty much sums it up. There are a couple of songs that start with good musical grooves but most of the music tends to blend together. The lyrics are poorly written and I find myself cringing at the mixing of the music. From the attempt at social commentary "Driving Nowhere" to the angry "Crisis King", this disk is a disappointment. Whoever thought this disk was good enough to release should consider shock treatment. I give it 1 star out of five.

Lost Highway
(Nothing/Interscope)

This is the CD soundtrack for David Lynch's newest movie "Lost Highway". The soundtrack has an impressive roster of musicians like David Bowie, Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, and Smashing Pumpkins. What really impressed me about this Cd however was not these musicians, but the instrumental songs done by Angelo Badalamenti and Barry Adamson. Two really hot tracks from these two musicians are "Red Bats With Teeth" and "Mr. Eddie's Theme". Overall this dark, sinister, slow grooving disk is great for a late night on a lonely highway. I give it 3 1/2 out 5 stars.

Finley Martin



anatomy of a label: Ramona Records

By KAREN RAWLINES

The most visible independent labels today are those which boast "flagship" bands leading their fleet of indie musicians. The lesser known the flagship, the more difficult it is to get serious attention. Patrick Wilkins of the Kitchener-Waterloo area is the driving force behind Ramona Records -- perhaps a lesser known indie label, but one that exemplifies the spirit of the movement strongly nonetheless.

On November 30, 1995, Patrick first met Craig Cardiff at a local CD release party for a local compilation. Craig later appeared on Patrick's radio show, playing several originals and writing two new songs between sets. After a few more appearances on the show, Craig asked if Patrick would be interested in helping him release his next CD.

Ramona truly began when Patrick was considering that if he was to be helping Craig Cardiff and local folkies, Henry, put out their albums, then it should all be done under one name. Patrick explains, "the idea for a label was around all summer... in late August/early September. After much deliberation, I chose 'Ramona'. That's the name that goes on the back of all the CDs and 7"s, and also on all the posters, distribution, and anything else that I can do in the music world." Patrick was 18.

Ramona took its name from Bruce McDonald's film, "Roadkill" -- Patrick's favourite movie. "The lead character is named Ramona. She's an innocent Toronto girl who travels up to Northern Ontario to find a degenerate rock band and put on one final concert. I love the movie because it's about Northern Ontario, where I'm from, and because it's about rock 'n' roll... and

Ramona is one awesome chick"

Ramona Records maintains a simple philosophy, one that stays true to the original indie goals. "We don't try to make money at it. The artists pay for their recording and pressing themselves. They pay for their own promotional expenses and keep all the profits. It's a hobby, not a business. The point is to have fun, and in the meantime, to promote good musicians, especially local and/or young musicians."

At present, Craig Cardiff, Henry and Wilt round out Ramona's roster. "I would say we're a 'folk' label, but I've twisted the definitions for that. Ramona's main three artists are all, at heart, solo acoustic guitarists. They may play with bands, but they can entertain just as well with only a guitar."

The common folk theme that unites these bands still has its precarious divisions that separates each artist into his own niche.

"Our propaganda calls Henry an 'acid folkie', which means he plays the occasional 'City of New Orleans', or even a reworded 'The Cat Came Back.' Craig refers to his sound as 'plugged folk' -- his songwriting style comes out of the 1950s, quite innocent and simplistically melodic. He enjoys covering cheesy 80s bands, but in a smooth way that brings out the soul behind the jangle. Wilt's not a folkie. He's an "anti-folk" guy. The term comes from New York City in the late 80's, when folks like Beck were pushing the limits of what can be done with a guitar. The music is dissonant and grating, the lyrics are discontinuous, the vocals anything but smooth -- it's a rebellion against the conventions of folk songwriting."

Ramona's first release was Craig Cardiff's *Stuck up in Outerspace* CD of January 1997. This is to be followed with Henry's *Bus Trip Song Book*, due out this month, while Wilt has a 7" in the works for April 1997. If the current roster gets established, Patrick might take on a fourth person, or perhaps a band. Ramona currently entails releases, promotion, booking/management, distribution for other labels, and putting on shows.

"Most of what we've done so far is put on shows. Part of our philosophy is to help as many good musicians as we can, and there's no better way to do that than to do shows. If you don't have an album out, all you can do is play shows, and if you do have an album out, you've got to play shows in order to do that."

In the biased era of legal-drinking-age shows, there isn't always a welcoming environment for the younger sect. Being a minor himself, Patrick can empathize.

"The day before I turn 19, I want to hold a 'nineteen-minus' show -- get a really amazing band to play the Korova and not let anyone in who's older than nineteen, unless they sneak in the back door or have a friend in the band."

Judging by the maturity beyond his years with which Patrick handles his hobby, Ramona looks to operate only to grow.

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Send him some food.