The Best of the 90's

opinons on what was

Twenty Albums
by Tim Lea

The Jayhawks-"Tomorrow the Green Grass"
Romantically laced and gut wrenchingly honest rock roll/this is music that reads the omens of life and adjusts itself for the journey/ like a river flowing over and around fallen trees

Wilco - "Being There"
Carved from a wall of sound with the most primitive of the modern world's technological wonders/this album will stick to your heels like an old dog that loves you more than anything in the world.

Ron Sexsmith - "Ron Sexsmith"
Delicate and sharp songs composed and sung and heard in a childish spirit of rediscovery/like finding five dollars in you pocket that you forgot you had.

Blue Rodeo - "Five Days in July"
Exudes the thick and joyous aromas of summer wildflowers, fast rain on hot pavement and singing out loud with people you love/suitable at a barbeque or at a funeral.

Beck - "Odelay"
...and a man came out of the wreckage of the fallen empire with a wheelbarrow full of noises like nuts and bolts, and a selection of songs like they were written by heroes too eccentric for history/he laid it all down, everybody looked upon it, and couldn't help but call it good for it was funky and rollicking and smooth.

Grant Lee Buffalo - "Fuzzy"
Tiptoes with confidence on the thin line of sound waves that exists between quiet, reflective folk and wired, swampy sonic noise/ peppered along the way by rants both political and social.

Tom Waits - "Bone Machine"
Creeks and screams and wails and cries like a weathered and thinned out grey barn that is only held afloat by a collection of rusty old nails/ inventive and courageous music that tips it's hat, without personal motive, to the tradition of fluid and honest songwriting that has kept people singing with tears in their eyes and a smile on their faces since time immemorial.

Skydiggers - "Just Over This Mountain"
Although not reflective of the swagger that drips from the 'diggers live act, this collection of steamy and concise pop songs delivers with confidence the mood that was once held in monopoly by Saturday afternoon sunbeams that fall through windows to land on lush rugs where the one that you love lies napping.

Lucinda Williams " Car Wheels on a Gravel Road"
This music is a reminder of three things: 1. How hard it is to get rid of something that you hate.
2. How hard it is to hold on to something you love and 3. That there is a solitary and powerful light that shines with hope upon all living things.

RufusWainwright - "Rufus Wainwright"
Songs with flourishes and gestures that are as broad, extravagant and delicious as a great mountain constructed entirely from chocolate and whiskey and red satin / a style of music that cannot be imitated.

Billy Bragg and Wilco - "Mermaid Avenue"
Much more that a tribute to Woody Guthrie; and extension and rebirth of a legacy/mucic about Ingrid Bergman, faithful horses and hollow trees delivered with both a drunken romp and a sober reflection.

Nirvana - "Nevermind"
Nevermind everything you've heard/listen again/ to the first clean and immaculately constructed pop album to combine the prerequisites of melody and hook with the before unheard of elements of guttural buzz and passionate angst.

Blue Rodeo - "Lost Together"
Fist and heart pumping rants, sad and weary ballads, psychedelic and paranoid epics, chair rocking and beer drinking country, straight ahead three chord rock and roll, complete with oral weary, yet pure a fresh spring water, harmonies / that's all.

Beth Orton - "Central Reservation"
Syrupy bitter /a strolling amble through a n old storage room full of the musty smell of memory and regret/akin to the finest qualities of folk and jazz and techno.

The Tragically Hip - "Road Apples"
A recording of songs that draws from oral history, written history, and a quirky left-handed wisdom to spice and garnish the finest brand of hockey rink, small town bar, summer barbecue rock and roll that has yet been delivered.

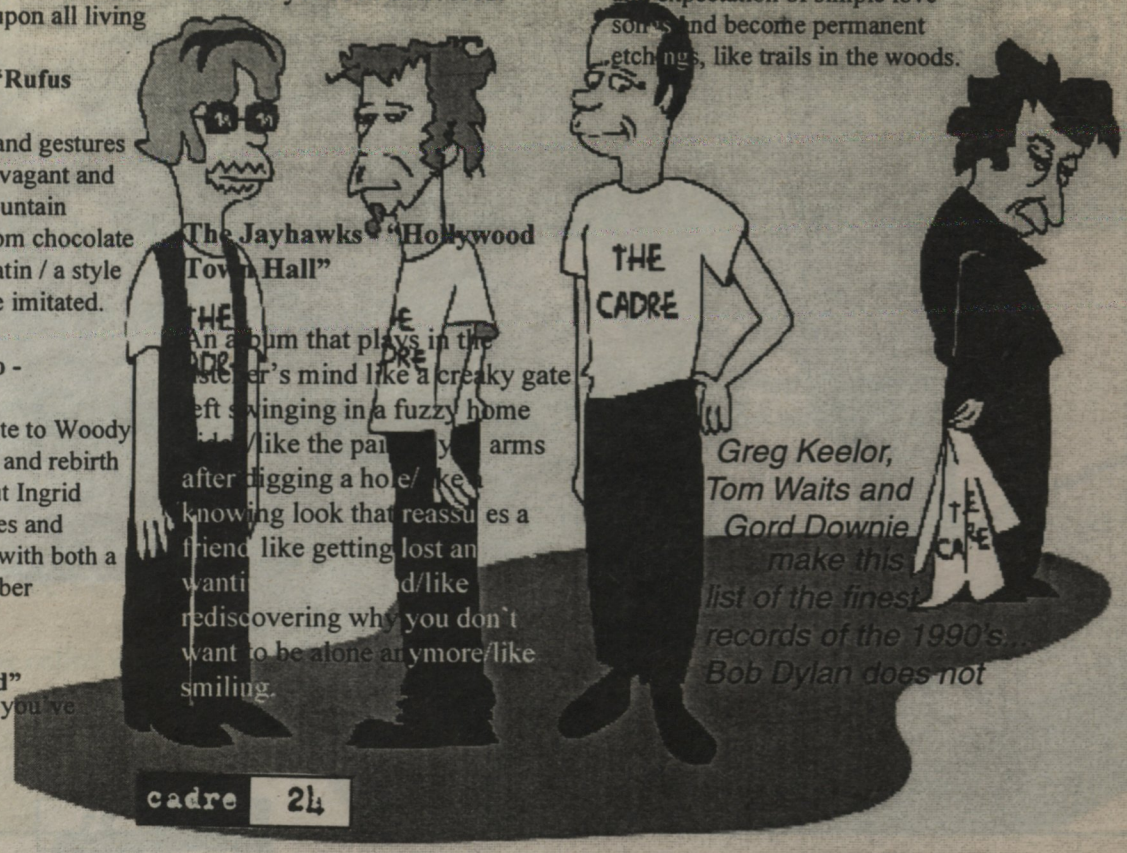
John Bottomley - "Blackberry"
Finds solace and comfort in trees, loved ones, rivers, shadows, oceans and the encompassing spirit that belongs to all/a declaration of loss and rebirth that celebrates happiness without slipping into condescending sentimentalities.

Los Lobos - "Kiko"
Surreal and atmospheric Latin dream blues/tells stories in quick rich strokes of the narrative brush like an illustrated children's book that you cannot forget.

Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds - "The Boatman's Call"
the solemn delivery of prayer from a man who seems driven from churches and temples towards dark and smoky theatres and riverbanks lined with lime trees/songs of enormous feelings of bitterness, struggle, comfort and vast love.

Jules Shear - "Between Us"
fifteen duets about the cavernous spaces that make up the human heart delivered with such conviction, gravity and musical prowess that they rise above the call and expectation of simple love songs and become permanent etchings, like trails in the woods.

The Jayhawks - "Hollywood Town Hall"
An album that plays in the listener's mind like a creaky gate left swinging in a fuzzy home video/like the pain in my arms after digging a hole/like a knowing look that reassures a friend like getting lost and wanting to be found/like rediscovering why you don't want to be alone anymore/like smiling.



Greg Keelor, Tom Waits and Gord Downie make this list of the finest records of the 1990's... Bob Dylan does not