

THE alternative

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN HIP-HOP AND R&B



TV ON THE RADIO

WHO: Visual artists-slash-musicians Tunde Adebimpe (vocals) and David Andrew Sitek (multi-instrumentalist) formed the core group, later adding guitarist-slash-vocalist Kyp Malone.

WHAT: There's a reason these guys have wowed both fans and critics alike — they've created a fusion of sounds that is quite unlike anything before it, avoiding the pitfalls that typically come with mixing punk, indie rock, electronic and doo-wop — that's right, doo-wop. The overall sound is dark and atmospheric, matched with Tunde's smooth-yet-powerful vocals. But you've really got to hear these guys harmonize on an a cappella track to fully understand.

WHEN: These guys have kept it weird since 2001, but didn't release their critically-lauded debut EP, *Young Liars*, until 2003. They followed that up with their breakthrough full-length debut, *Desperate Youth, Blood Thirsty Babes* in 2004.

WHERE: It all started in a communal artist loft in Brooklyn.

WHY: Quite simply, making music for money was better than selling paintings in the street. Adebimpe is an NYU Film graduate (who actually created the stop-motion-animated "Pin" video for the Yeah Yeah Yeahs) who met Sitek (whose production credits include the Yeah Yeah Yeahs) after Sitek moved into the same building. Adebimpe's loft became artist central until they realized their various music skills worked extremely well together. Now they're poster boys for New York City's indie rock scene.

4th AVENUE JONES

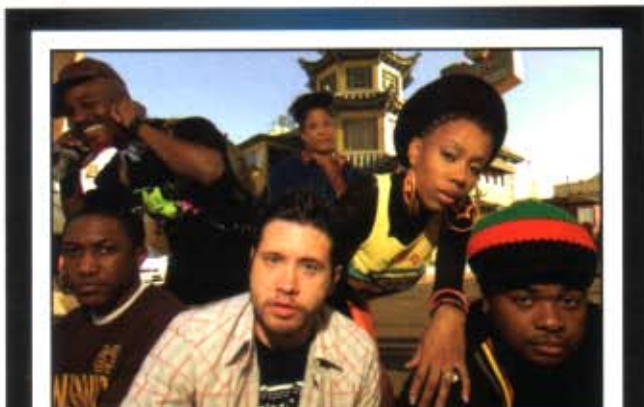
WHO: Consisting of a whopping six members, 4th Ave Jones manages to keep the stage as packed as any two-bit rapper and his pointless entourage. Vocals are handled by hubby and wife Ahmad and Tena Jones, with Timmy Shakes (guitar), Gailybird (violin), Al Parker (bass) and Derrick Calloway (drums) providing the grooves.

WHAT: The group calls their sound "hiprocksoul." This band is all about pushing music to its limit and utilizing any and all styles available to them. From hip-hop and soul to hard rock and new wave electronic, Ahmad stresses that anything goes. "In the band we feed off one another's influences and are always introducing each other to artists we dig, like A Tribe Called Quest, Depeche Mode, Public Enemy, The Cure, Rachmaninoff, Sibelius, Stevie Wonder, Prince, Rage Against the Machine, Radiohead and almost every artist that ever appeared on *YO! MTV Raps*."

WHEN: Ahmad's career as a hip-hop artist began in '94, but the group wouldn't meet until '97. By the year 2000, they were official.

WHERE: The band name came from the Jones' home located at 4th Avenue and Jefferson in South Central Los Angeles — but don't expect any faux West Coast gangsta posturing from this happily-married couple!

WHY: Frustration was the name of the Jones game. Frustration plagued his solo career, which made him attempt a collaborative project. The rehearsals at his 4th Avenue home wound up in the creation of their independent debut, *No Plan B*. Feedback was overwhelming and they released a second album under Interscope Records. However, frustration reared its ugly head once again as the band battled to be released from the label. Now in 2005 they have all the musical freedom they could ever imagine and their latest release, *Stereo: The Evolution of Hiprocksoul*, proves that not even frustration can hold them down.



GENERAL PATTON VS. THE X-ECUTIONERS

WHO: Mike Patton declares all-out-war against The X-Executioners: Grandmaster Roc Raida, DJ Rob Swift and DJ Total Eclipse.

WHAT: Patton, one of rock's most eclectic (and weird) frontmen produced, arranged and mixed his vocals over the turntable fury of hip-hop's legendary X-Executioners DJ crew. The resulting music is an amalgamation of electronica, jazz, lounge, Latin, B-movie madness and hip-hop.

WHEN: Joined forces in 2004, Patton's been in the music biz since 1982, jump-starting his career with hard rockers Faith No More (though he was previously in the band, Mr. Bungle) and has since been in too many side projects to keep count of. The X-Men have been destroying vinyl since 1989 and though they experienced a slight line-up change in 2002 with the loss of Mista Sinista, the trio has continued to hold it down for crate diggers across the globe.

WHERE: The X-Men got New York City on lock. Mike hails from Cali. East meets West, baby!

WHY: Seeing as how Patton has virtually done it all, from funk/rap metal and movie soundtrack covers (with a death/speed metal edge) to bizarre surf rock and hip-hop flavored loungey R&B (with Dan the Automator), it's really no surprise he'd do something with the X-Men. They've got a penchant for mashing things up too, from hip-hop and pop to punk and metal, even doing their own version of White Zombie's "More Human Than Human." This is what happens when genres go to war.



Black Beat 23

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BLOC PARTY

WHO: Before they were known as Bloc Party, vocalist/guitarist Kele Okereke, guitarist Russell Lissack, bassist/singer Gordon Moakes and drummer Matt Tong, were known as Angel Range and Union. Bloc Party is just much more rowkin' of a name.

WHAT: You can say they serve up a hot dish of art-punk. Or you can say they taste a little bit like new wave funk. Either way, what makes a great post punk block party? Take the best aspects of The Cure, Gang of Four and Joy Division and you're on to something.

WHEN: The foursome's first demo arrived in 2003. They started gaining popularity as the demo made its rounds and they started playing more and more shows. Kele sent the demo to Franz Ferdinand (who themselves are current leaders in the new wave revival), which landed Bloc Party a spot on the Domino Tenth Anniversary bash. By 2004 they'd recorded a full-length that was released in the UK, followed by the release of their first two singles in the states. 2005 marks the year the U.S. of A. was introduced to their full-length CD (via Vice Records) full of their dark, jagged, danceable brand of angular pop.

WHERE: Yo, these cats are reppin' the Dirty South — South London, that is. All 'ya blokes best recognize.

WHY: Okereke and Lissack met each other through mutual friends at the Reading Festival. In addition to having friends in common, it turned out that they had matching tastes in music. Moakes and Tong entered the fray shortly after to record the demo. It's been a virtual non-stop block party (note: poor use of pun) ever since.



EL PUS

WHO: El Pus (pronounced: L-Poose) founders Cbroun and Cufi (Cufrock) call themselves "the frontmen slash songwriters slash emcees slash instrumentalists slash groupie mongers." The Woodchuck slaps the bass, C.J. shreds on the guitar and Young Pete bangs the drums.

WHAT: The quickest way to describe this five-member group is to say they perform "ghetto rock." Meaning, they've got the alternative and punk rock aesthetics and energy of legendary Black rock groups such as the Bad Brains and Fishbone, but stir in hip-hop flavors via their rhymes and fashion.

WHEN: They first started rockin' the 'hoods and projects of Atlanta, Georgia back in 1999. In 2004 they released their debut EP, *What Is El Pus?* and are scheduled to drop their first full-length this year.

WHERE: These boys are reppin' the Crunk Capital of the world with some good ol' rock 'n' roll. While *Hotlanta* may currently be known for its plethora of hard-partying rappers, El Pus wants to put their nappy-headed brand of rock on the map.

WHY: The story goes something like this: Cbroun and Cufi had their drum machine stolen right before a show they were to perform. Rather than give-up for the night, they decided to ask the opening rock band if they'd provide some live instrumentation for them to rap over. The adrenaline rush and crowd response made everything clear: from that point on, El Pus shall supply the world with endless supplies of ghetto rock.

