

BLOGSPOTTER

BEST OF THE WEEK'S BLOGS

BRUCE NEWMAN

WWW.MERCEXTRA.COM/BNEWMAN

Perhaps Keri Russell and Tom Cruise's new girlfriend, Katie Holmes, have patched up their differences by now, but in 1998 — when they were the reigning prom queens of the WB Network on "Felicity" and "Dawson's Creek" — their relationship got off to a bumpy start. Russell criticized Holmes to a reporter, then realized popping off had been a mistake, and tried to un-criticize her. For good measure, Russell had her manager call the reporter and ask him not to print what she had said.

I was the reporter.

BRAD KAVA

WWW.MERCEXTRA.COM/BKAVA

The more I listen to "Loveline" co-host Adam Carolla, the more I think he is a poet of the radio. He fills the show he shares with Dr. Drew Pinsky (heard Sundays through Thursdays, 10 p.m. to midnight on KITS-FM (105.3) and in Monterey and Santa Cruz at 103.9) with these brilliant little observations that work better on the airwaves than in print or on television.

CHARLIE MCCOLLUM

WWW.MERCEXTRA.COM/CMCCOLLUM

Fresh installments of "Iron Chef America" are on the way. The new episodes will begin July 10 (9 p.m. on the Food Network) with a showdown between Mario Batali and challenger Todd English, who has his own competition cooking show ("Cooking Under Fire") on PBS. Although I still like the original better, I have to admit I've become something of a fan of the American version.

MARIAN LIU

WWW.MERCEXTRA.COM/MLIU

Dizmas, "On a Search in America": The Christian heavy metal group's album dropped today. ... I usually don't listen to heavy metal, but an editor here tipped me off to it because he wasn't sure if they were really Christian or simply mocking the religion. After checking their site, and seeing that these Southern Cali rockers were honest about their faith, I was intrigued and started listening to the album.

06.24 DROPS

DVD | FILM

'GUNNER PALACE'

UMVD/VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Filmmaker Michael Tucker spent two months with the 2/3 Field Artillery, a.k.a. "The Gunners." In this documentary, Tucker captures the lives and humanity of these soldiers whose home is the bombed-out palace of Uday Hussein (nicknamed Gunner Palace), located in the most dangerous section of Baghdad. **Coming Tuesday.**



MICHAEL TUCKER

Spec. Richmond Shaw looks out on the Gunner Palace swimming pool.

DVD | TV

'THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART — INDECISION 2004'

PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO



A compilation of election coverage by the late-night "news" anchor and his correspondents. Some bonus DVD highlights: the national anthem sung in four-correspondent harmony, the first presidential debate ("The Squabble in Coral Gables"), and Election Night '04 ("Prelude to a Re-count"). **Coming Tuesday.**

MUSIC | CD

'THE COOKBOOK'

MISSY ELLIOTT
Atlantic

The latest from the reigning hip-hop queen includes tracks featuring Fatman Scoop, the Neptunes, Slick Rick and Mike Jones. **Coming Tuesday.**



QUICK HITS

READERS REVIEW THE LATEST IN POP CULTURE
WANT TO GET HEARD? WWW.MERCEXTRA.COM/AEIREVIEWS

★★★

'HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE'

BUENA VISTA

For anyone who thinks hand-drawn animation is dead or obsolete, consider "Howl" 's evidence to the contrary. The plot, which features intriguing twists, can be confusing and illogical; don't think about it too much, and you'll be fine. Don't ask yourself why this movie seems to take place in Bavaria, or why the airplanes appear to be propelled by giant tongues. Just sit back and let yourself get lost in this intriguing alternative to the usual summer blockbuster.



COURTESY OF NIBARIKI

EMILY SCHNIPPER
Palo Alto

Read the full review: www.merextra.com/aeireviews

★★★★

'RESIDENT EVIL 4'

GAMECUBE

Stunning — a word that describes RE4's graphics pretty well. It's pretty amazing that the game can get this much out of the aging GameCube hardware. In fact, I'll even go as far as to say that if the game had a little higher-resolution textures and some more lighting effects, RE4's graphics would rival "Half-Life 2."

Of course, what would a horror game be without the sound? RE4's sound is awesome: The Spanish ramblings of the villagers, the shot of a rifle, the splat of a head shot and more all sound completely real. The music is also very well done. "Resident Evil 4" is definitely scary, not by the cheap shock tricks that the previous REs used, but by making you feel as if you are constantly in danger. But guess what? Even if



COURTESY OF CAPCOM

RE4 wasn't scary, I would still give two thumbs up. It's just a fun game. More importantly it's the revival of what was a dying franchise.

PRASHANT JAYARAMAN

Read the full review: www.merextra.com/aeireviews

★★★★

'GET BEHIND ME SATAN'

THE WHITE STRIPES

This album is sort of "anti-Stripes." Jack and Meg, who on their previous four albums are well known for jammin' loud and grinding out riff after riff, take a completely different approach: focusing more on storytelling and experimenting with instruments outside of their traditional drums, guitar and vocals. We hear egg shakers, tambourines, marimbas and even a grand piano. A handful of songs are some of Jack White's best written and prove that he is one of the best songwriters of our time. "The Denial Twist" begins with "If you think that a kiss is all in the lips, you got it all wrong man." "Forever for Her (Is Over for Me)" sounds as if it could be hinting toward former lover Renée Zellweger or current love Karen Elson. Most fans could be disappointed by the lack of guitar in this album, but if you are a fan of old-fashioned rock 'n' roll, this is a must-have.



NATE MAGAT
GILROY

The experimental White Stripes: rockers Meg White and Jack White.

Read the full review: www.merextra.com/aeireviews

MUSIC | REVIEW



ALEX GARCIA — CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Billy Corgan's solo debut is steeped in isolation and despair.

★★

'THE FUTURE EMBRACE'

BILLY CORGAN

Leave it to Smashing Pumpkins' founder Billy Corgan, a man of constant contradictions, to throw another knuckleball. Tuesday, the day he released his first solo album, "The Future Embrace" (Reprise), he took out full-page ads in the Chicago newspapers announcing he will reform the Pumpkins.

It's always been a shell game with Corgan: Look here, no, here. The announcement is a relief after this album, which sounds as if it were created during years locked in a dark bedroom with only a synthesizer for company. Filled with layers of electronic effects, "The Future Embrace" has moments of clear, true atmospheric and moody songwriting — "Now (and Then)," "The Camera Eye" — but more often, during its 47 minutes, the disc threatens to collapse under the weight of Corgan's isolation, despair and solipsism.

BRAD KAVA

Read the full review and tell us what you think:
www.merextra.com/bkava

MUSIC | REVIEW

★★★½

'MASTER OF DISASTER'

John Hiatt

Like the masked wrestler on the album's cover, John Hiatt has built a solid 30-year career with minimal face recognition. Oh, fellow musicians know he's the real deal, routinely making hits of his songs. (Think Bonnie Raitt's "Thing Called Love," Buddy Guy's "Feels Like Rain" and Iggy Pop's "Something Wild.")

But the cult of Hiatt should love his 18th album, "Master of Disaster" (New West Records), which retraces familiar ground but sounds fresh. Hiatt comfortably slips and slides from rock to ragtime, soul to stone-cold country, melding the style to each of 11 new songs. He crafts simple, beautiful melodies to convey grown-up subjects — addiction, abandonment and the complexities of love.

There are plenty of songs to love on first listen — the title song with its greasy sax, "Thunderbird" with its catchy hook and "Find You at Last" with its hints of Hiatt's old "Perfectly Good Guitar" sweetened by horns. But your real favorites might emerge with songs like "Cold River" and "Love's Not Where We Thought We Left It."



NEW WEST RECORDS

John Hiatt

MARK WHITTINGTON

Tell us what you think: www.merextra.com/aei