

# TIME

THOSE FABULOUS  
PHILLIES

## All The Rage

Angry young rockers like  
**PEARL JAM** give voice to  
the passions and  
fears of a generation

Pearl Jam's lead singer  
Eddie Vedder





What makes Wall St. savvy enough to always be in touch with the latest dynamics of companies, industries, currencies, commodities and all those other strange things most of us don't understand?

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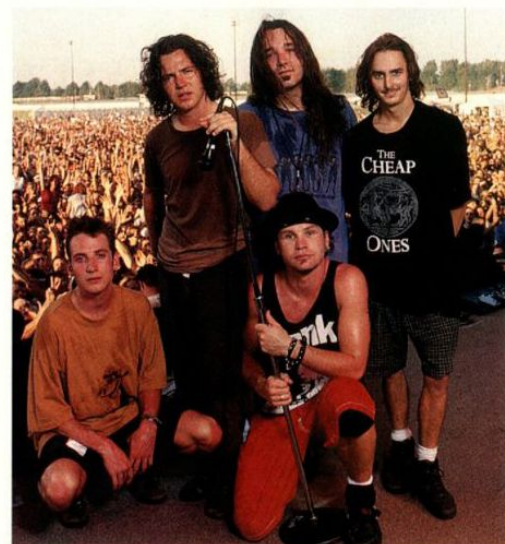
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# ROCK'S ANXIOUS REBELS

A young, vibrant alternative scene has turned music on its ear. But are the new stars too hot to be cool?

By CHRISTOPHER JOHN FARLEY

**T**HIS IS THE STORY OF HOW A GAS-station attendant and high school dropout grossed more than \$50 million for a record company and found himself in the middle of rock's noisiest controversy.

Only three years ago, Eddie Vedder was working the night shift at a service station in San Diego, sometimes telling people he was a security guard to impress them. He doesn't have to worry about that anymore. Today the 28-year-old singer and lyricist for the alternative-metal band Pearl Jam is rock's newest demigod. His group's debut album, *Ten*, has sold nearly 6 million copies and still ranks in the Top 30 of the *Billboard* album chart more than 90 weeks after its release. This week the Seattle-based quintet will release its second album, called simply *Vs.*, which is expected to be one of the biggest-selling albums of the year.

They haven't built that Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, yet, but when they do, they'd better save a room for Vedder. He's got all the rock-idol moves down. Does he have a painful, shadowy past? Check. Does he have an air of danger and sensuality reminiscent of Jim Morrison? You bet. Does he refuse to adopt the trappings of a rock star, thus demonstrating that he's such a genuine article he doesn't need stardom? Absolutely. Is he happy to be on the cover of *TIME*? No way.

Vedder is a product of the thriving world of alternative rock, a musical genre that rejects the commercial values of mainstream pop. Alternative has no strict definition, but it has a feel. Its musicians reject show-biz glitz. They support progressive social causes. Many of them avoid dating groupies and models. Their music is usually guitar-driven, with experimental touches. While pop songs are often about love, alternative lyrics are usually about tougher feelings: despair, lust, con-



## PEARL JAM

The Seattle band imported lead vocalist Vedder from San Diego. Says he: "Sometimes when I see my face taking up a whole page of a magazine, I hate that guy."

fusion. Alternative rock is a reaction, especially among the twentysomething generation, to all the years of being subjected to Madonna's changing hair color and MTV close-ups of George Michael's butt.

Alternative rock has been simmering for years, ready for this moment of boiling over. The Georgia-based band R.E.M. was an alternative pioneer in the mid-'80s that went mainstream years before Pearl Jam was even formed. What's new is that the record charts are now crowded with alternative bands ranging from the arty-rock quartet Smashing Pumpkins to the folktinged Soul Asylum. MTV's *Alternative Nation* program and the Lollapalooza road tour, which feature the new breed, have become the hippest venues going.

And therein lies the controversy: alternative music is currently one of the most potent forces in the mainstream, which has triggered an identity crisis and rancorous debate among musicians and fans. If these rockers are stars now, fans ask, haven't they become everything we're against? Nothing better symbolizes the struggle for this musical genre's soul than the success of Pearl Jam, a band adored by followers but reviled by some fellow musicians as sellouts, poseurs or opportunists riding on the fame of their fellow Seattleites, Nirvana. Nirvana leader Kurt Cobain has said that bands like Pearl Jam are "jumping on the alternative bandwagon." Cobain and his crew have released a new album, *In Utero*, that is deliberately abrasive (three weeks after its release, it ranks No. 3 on the *Billboard* chart).

Vedder, who has already had his share of inner conflict, has been dizzied by the transformation from outsider to idol. "Any kinda quick success of the kind we had is inevitably bound to provoke some degree of contempt," he told Britain's *Melody Maker* newspaper. "I end up having a lot of difficulties with it myself. I'm being honest when I say that sometimes when I see a picture of the band or a picture of my face taking up a



### URGE OVERKILL

A hipster unit from Chicago's hot music scene; they plan to tour with Pearl Jam. Says singer Roeser: "It's not their fault that they're commercially huge."



### PORNO FOR PYROS

Alternative rock propelled by funk rhythms. Group leader Perry Farrell is a key figure in the spread of underground music—he founded Lollapalooza.

whole page of a magazine, I hate that guy."

In keeping with rock tradition, alternative is defiant. The twist is what it's rebelling against. What angers today's rockers and their fans is that life is so unjust, which they learned at a vulnerable age. Alternative rock is the sound of homes breaking. If you are in your teens or 20s, chances are your family has been through a divorce. Alternative music has become an emotional sound track, speaking directly to unresolved issues of abandonment and unfairness. "I tried hard to have a father/ But instead I had a dad," Nirvana's Cobain sings in *In Utero*. One of Pearl Jam's biggest hits, *Jeremy*, is a song about a boy who kills himself in a classroom: "Daddy didn't give attention/ To the fact that Mommy didn't care." Pearl Jam's keen sense of angst has garnered the band comparisons with the Who and U2.

Can they survive the hype? While Pearl Jam, Nirvana and their colleagues have a real message to deliver, most of this was overlooked during the past two years by trend watchers who were more interested in the way they dressed and the Seattle scene they came from. Style mavens fixed upon the thrift-shop wardrobe of flannel shirts and torn corduroy jackets, dubbing it the grunge look. For a fashion shoot, *Vanity Fair* dressed Manhattan socialites and celebrities in flannel and denim. All this ex-

## VEDDER LISTENED TO THE TAPE, THEN HE WENT SURFING. LYRICS CAME TO HIM.

### THE BREEDERS

A postfeminist group that mixes pop and loopy experimentalism. On a visit to the Conan O'Brien show, bassist Josephine Wiggs gave the host a hickey.



ploitation made the term grunge deeply unfashionable among American youth, but bands like Pearl Jam have shaken off the label, becoming better known for their music than their baggy shorts.

In terms of influence, alternative musicians borrow from the rough edges of rock's history. Out of the 1960s comes the spirit of social protest and artistic freedom. From the late 1970s come the primitive, do-it-yourself sensibility of punk and the slam-dancing and stage-diving mayhem that went with it. "We rip off everyone equally," says Shannon Hoon, lead singer of Blind Melon, which has sold more than 1 million copies of its first album this year. The trick is to sample riffs from somebody who's so long gone that the modern repetition of it sounds fresh and new. Even the theatrical group Kiss—whose members wore demonic makeup onstage—is cited as an influence by today's alternative rockers. "I had the worst crush on the God of Thunder, [Kiss bassist] Gene Simmons," says Kat Bjelland, lead singer for the punkette group Babes in Toyland. "They appealed to me because they're really basic. Plus they're so evil!"

Alternative rockers keep a clear conscience about all the borrowing because their hodgepodge sound is homemade, not the formula of a record company. "I don't

### SMASHING PUMPKINS

Singer Corgan says indie-world dogmatism surprised him, "because in the beginning, at least, it seemed to me that I could be whoever and whatever I wanted to be."



### NIRVANA

Edgy producer Steve Albini liked working with the band on *In Utero*, but says, "This is the most scrutinized record I have ever worked on."



like labels," warns alternative rocker Juliana Hatfield, a winsome woman with a girlish voice and a guitar that barks. "But if you want to put me in that category, it's O.K. with me, because being labeled alternative has a certain amount of respect that goes along with it. It means that you've started out on your own, the ethic of doing everything yourself."

**T**HE ALTERNATIVE MOVEMENT WAS dependent on the entrepreneurship of dozens of independent record labels, or indies, that sprang up during the 1980s as major labels focused more on such superstars as Bruce Springsteen and Madonna. Seattle's Sub Pop Records was founded in 1986 to capture the musical moment, market it and move on to the next moment. Sub Pop co-founders Jonathan Poneman and Bruce Pavitt envisioned their small record company as a kind of Motown of the Pacific Northwest. "The problem with the music industry in the '80s was that the major labels had their doors shut to new ideas," says Pavitt, who used to work for Muzak, the elevator-music company.

Sub Pop's proprietors had keen ears. They produced some of the first recordings by a whole string of bands that went on to national success: Nirvana, Smashing

Pumpkins, Soundgarden and Alice in Chains. As soon as the bands became widely heard, however, they jumped to major labels. After Sub Pop's most promising band, Nirvana, left the company and released the huge hit *Nevermind* (more than 4 million copies sold) on the Geffen label, other major labels began an indie-band feeding frenzy. Bands that had been playing in taverns were being offered \$300,000 contracts. Many of these groups were founded on the principle that mainstream music was bankrupt, which only made them more attractive to mainstream labels.

Pearl Jam came together as a serendipitous offshoot of a Sub Pop band called Green River. Rock legend, passed along by the resentful, has it that bassist Jeff Ament and guitarist Stone Gossard split from that band because the lead vocalist wanted to stay true to the experimental spirit of alternative rock, while Ament and Gossard wanted to become big-time rock stars. The band they formed, Mother Love Bone, combined a heavy-metal sound with bouncy tunes. Just as the group seemed ready to break through in 1990, its lead singer died of a heroin overdose.

Enter Eddie Vedder. He was living in San Diego, fronting an all too fittingly named band called Bad Radio. A musician friend gave him a cassette marked simply

STONE GOSSARD DEMOS '91 and told him the guitarists on the tape were looking for a singer. Vedder listened to the tape, then went surfing. Lyrics came to him. "Son, she said/ Have I got a little story for you." Vedder rushed back to his apartment, wrote three songs and recorded himself singing the lyrics over the melodies. Vedder sent the demo tape back to Seattle, where bassist Ament listened to the deep, intense growl of the California stranger. As he recalls that day in *Rolling Stone*, he played the tape three times, then picked up the phone. "Stone," he told his pal, "you better get over here."

One of the songs would later become one of Pearl Jam's biggest hits: *Alive*. The song is about a mother who has disturbing news for her son: "While you were sitting home alone at age thirteen/ Your real daddy was dying." The emotions in *Alive* were torn from Vedder's own life. Vedder was born in Chicago, the oldest of four children. The first records he can remember enjoying were Motown records, songs by the young Michael Jackson. Neil Young came next, and the Who's album *Quadrophenia*. He identified with its portrayal of adolescent trauma. Vedder never knew his real father. He was raised by a man who he thought was his father and with whom he often clashed. By the time his



## THE CRANBERRIES

An Irish band with a dreamlike sound. Says vocalist Dolores O'Riordan: "If it hadn't been for the church [choir], I wouldn't have thought of music as a career in the first place."

mother told him the truth, Vedder had migrated to San Diego, and his biological father had died of multiple sclerosis.

Vedder followed the tape to Seattle, where guitarist Mike McCready and drummer Dave Krusen rounded out the new band's lineup (Krusen was later replaced by Dave Abbruzzese). The group landed a deal with a major label, Sony's Epic, but when its first album came out in 1991, the musicians found themselves in the midst of the hype storm about Seattle bands. Nirvana exploded into prominence first, with its anthemic *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. When Pearl Jam drew attention as the Next Big Seattle Sound, Nirvana's Cobain seemed to bristle at sharing the limelight, dismissing Pearl Jam as retro-rockers and copycats.

"Everyone was kind of taken aback because Pearl Jam was such a complete success right away," recalls Eddie Roeser, lead singer of the Chicago-based band Urge Overkill. "They want to make honest music—it's not their fault that they're commercially huge."

Pearl Jam's fame built steadily with such hits as *Alive*, *Even Flow* and *Jeremy*. What really put the band over the top was its live performances, dominated by Vedder's vocal power and mesmerizing stage presence. He reminded fans of an animal trying to escape from a leash. Especially in the first year or so, he hurled himself into crowds, surfing on upraised hands. He climbed the scaffolds around a stage, dangling from dangerous heights. He stood still in front of a microphone, folded into himself, tearing emotions out of himself as he sang. "I'm kind of a cynic about these guys who cross their arms when they sing," Soundgarden's Kim Thayil says of the first time he heard Vedder sing in a Seattle club. "But there were songs that Eddie sang that sent shivers up my spine." Pearl Jam cemented its reputation as a heavyweight contender in August at the MTV Music Video Awards, where the band won four awards, including best video of the year for *Jeremy*, and joined Neil Young for a stirring version of his song *Rockin' in the Free World*.

Pearl Jam's new album, which is full of animal confrontation, was called *Five*

*Against One* until the band changed the name to *Vs.* at the last minute. (As a result, the first pressing will be devoid of title.) The new disc combines politically correct views with punk-inspired belligerence. The music is layered with guitars and strong percussion; the tunes have the power of heavy metal but the melodic flavoring of great pop. Several of the songs are vitriolic attacks on patriarchal society.

*Glorified G.* is a slam against rural lugs and their weaponry: "Got a gun/ Fact I got two/ That's okay man, 'cause I love God." The song *W.M.A.* is a critique of an actual crime in which a black man named Malice Green was beaten to death with flashlights by Detroit police. "White Male American/ Do no wrong," the song goes. "Dirty hands it comes right off."

The irony is that the initials W.M.A. could stand for many of the people who will buy Pearl Jam's album. In fact, they stand for all the members of the band, as well as most of the people in the alternative rock scene, though female musicians have grown in prominence. In the liner notes to the Nirvana compilation *Incesticide*, lead singer Cobain wrote, "If any of you in any way hate homosexuals, people of a different color, or women, please do this one favor for us—leave us the f— alone!" And Scott Weiland, the flame-haired singer for Stone Temple Pilots—grungelike newcomers who have an anti-rap song called *Sex Type Thing*—recalls feeling disturbed at a recent concert when

he looked out into a crowd made up of the kind of good-looking, middle-class guys who used to beat him up in high school.

Alternative musicians are a far cry from the strutting, white-male rockers of decades gone by. They tend to be anti-sexist, pro-tolerance and pro-underdog, whether it's animals or humans. The same goes for female rockers. When Chicago hyperintellectual singer Liz Phair, 26, played her explicit debut album *Excite from Guyville* for her parents, she was surprised at the reaction. "The first time my mother heard it, she wept," says Phair. "Not because she was shocked, but because she was so moved at hearing something so revealing from her daughter."

Many alternative rockers have tried as well to broaden the demographic reach of their music to be more inclusive. The annual traveling rock carnival Lollapalooza, which helps bring regional acts to a national audience, has made a point of including rap acts such as Arrested Development and Ice Cube. "A lot of white kids will not go to a black show," says Ted Gardener, producer of Lollapalooza. "They'll buy the records, but they won't go see the band. They're afraid they might get killed. And some black kids feel the same way about white shows. Our attempt is to try to bring new styles of music together." The sound track to the movie *Judgment Night* features collaborations between rappers and rockers, including one by Seattle rapper Sir Mix-A-Lot and local band Mudhoney. "Alternative and rap grew out of the same thing," says Sir Mix-A-Lot. "We both did our thing in a basement, and it grew and grew until the major labels took notice."

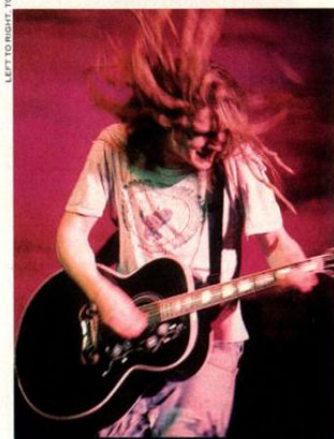
Yet any movement that pays so much homage to purity and anticommmercialism is bound to be divided by charges of hypocrisy, especially when the lure of big bucks is at hand. The movement now finds itself drifting from the ideals that gave it birth: to express anti-Establishment ideas and make music for misfits. "It appealed to me and my friends because our generation is so dead to the world. There's nothing waiting for us when we get out of school," says Bonnie O'Shea, 21, a student disc jockey at the State University of New York at Oneonta. But when 5 million people buy an album, they can't all be outcasts. Some of them are going to be Rush Limbaugh fans who just like the beat. "I don't think all of these new fans know what they're listening to," says O'Shea. "I hope it's a short-term thing. I want my music back."

Whose music is it anyway? Adults are always trying to find out what kids are up to, replicate it, and then sell it back to them. The kids like rap? Let's give them Vanilla Ice! Usually the youth-oriented products that adults come up with are all too obviously a grownup's conception of what a young person wants. The suits are,



## STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

Alternative? "It's really a stupid word, actually," says the hard-rocking group's lead singer, Scott Weiland. "It's not underground anymore."



## SOUL ASYLUM

Hailing from Minneapolis, this band has been around for a decade and has just snagged platinum success. Their music blends punk energy and folk melodies.



## BELLY

Singer-guitarist Tanya Donnelly has a soft, angelic voice that contrasts with the group's sometimes disturbing lyrics: "Don't you have someone you'd die for?"

after all, suits. Getting a handle on youthful culture is like trying to hold onto one's adolescence. It slips away—it's meant to.

As a result, the debate over who's fake in the alternative world rages on. The following exchange took place on MTV's cartoon series *Beavis and Butt-head*:

*Beavis* (watching Stone Temple Pilots' video *Push*): Is this Pearl Jam?

*Butt-head*: This guy makes faces like Eddie Vedder.

*Beavis*: No, Eddie Vedder makes faces like this guy.

*Butt-head*: I heard these guys, like, came first and Pearl Jam ripped them off.

*Beavis*: No, Pearl Jam came first.

*Butt-head*: Well, they both suck.

ALL SHOOK UP				
Rock bands hate labels, so here we go:				
	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s
<b>GLAM ROCK</b>	The Velvet Underground	David Bowie Queen	Roxy Music Kiss	Suede Smashing Pumpkins
<b>HARD ROCK</b>	Led Zeppelin Eric Clapton	AC/DC	Def Leppard Guns 'N Roses	Living Colour Stone Temple Pilots
<b>ARENA FILLERS</b>	Chicago	Fleetwood Mac Boston	Eric Clapton The Police	Eric Clapton U2
<b>PARTY ANIMALS</b>	Rolling Stones Rod Stewart	Eric Clapton	Bon Jovi Van Halen	The Black Crowes B-52s
<b>TUNESMITHS</b>	Beatles	The Eagles Steely Dan	XTC Squeeze	Soul Asylum The Cranberries
<b>TEENAGE WASTELAND</b>	The Who	The Clash	The Replacements	Pearl Jam
<b>PUNK</b>	The Stooges	The Ramones Sex Pistols Patti Smith	X The Melvins Hüsker Dü	Nirvana Babes in Toyland Rage Against the Machine
<b>PERKY POP</b>	The Beach Boys	Jackson 5 ABBA	Michael Jackson The Bangles	Janet Jackson Urge Overkill
<b>ACID ROCK</b>	Jimi Hendrix	Robin Trower	Pink Floyd	Lenny Kravitz
<b>FUNK</b>	Sly and the Family Stone James Brown	Parliament/ Funkadelic Rick James	Prince	Porno for Pyros Red Hot Chili Peppers
<b>HIPPIES</b>	Grateful Dead	Grateful Dead Crosby, Stills & Nash	Grateful Dead	Grateful Dead Blind Melon
<b>HEAVY MESSENGERS</b>	Bob Dylan Neil Young	Elvis Costello	U2 Bruce Springsteen	R.E.M.

TIME Graphic by Steve Hart

derided. This year the critically acclaimed band Smashing Pumpkins had a hit single called *Cherub Rock*, an attack on alternative dogmatism: "Stay cool/ And be somebody's fool this year."

"A lot of these parameters that are bandied about in the alternative-music community are ways of criticizing people," says Smashing Pumpkins singer Billy Corgan. "And again, it goes back to high school. You know, I don't like the clothes that you wear. That just becomes what alternative music is rebelling against."

If alternative bands keep flooding into the mainstream, then the word alternative may go out of style, just as "progressive rock" became passé in the 1980s. "Alternative" has become a marketing tool. "Five minutes ago, I saw an ad for Bud Dry: 'The alternative beer with the alternative taste,'" says Jim Pitt, who books musical acts for NBC's *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. "Pretty soon you'll see an ad where they're moshing. 'Out of the mosh pit and into a Buick.' It's the cycle of American pop culture. Things get absorbed."

Pearl Jam is now on probation, forced to prove that success hasn't spoiled it. The group and its record label have responded by promoting the new album very little and even holding off on making rock videos for the time being. Some critics of the band claim its members have handled their fame poorly. "I've heard Eddie Vedder complain about MTV, as if he had been bound and gagged to make the video for *Jeremy* and forced to sign a record contract with a major label," gripes *Alternative Nation's* veejay, who goes by the name of Kennedy. Her advice: "Don't bite the hand that feeds you, and if you're not hungry, get the hell out of the kitchen."

Yet in most respects, Vedder is showing a surfer's balance. His only visible excess is that he has taken to lugging a bottle of wine around stage when he performs. He has the same girlfriend, Beth Lieblich, that he's had for nine years. Even the spat with Nirvana is patched up. "That's all been taken care of now, that whole relationship," he told *Melody Maker*.

On Pearl Jam's first album is a song called *Release*, for which no lyrics are given, perhaps because the subject matter is too painful for Vedder to see in print. It captures the feeling of embracing the past, with all its hurt and controversy, and setting out on a new course. "I'll ride the wave/ Where it takes me," Vedder sings, imagining he is singing to his lost father, dreaming that he is uniquely himself but still somehow an amalgam of his father and his past. "I'll hold the pain/ Release me." It's a healthy attitude in a music genre ruled by high school passions. If he keeps it, the dropout who became a rock star may be ready for the head of the class. —With reporting by Patrick E. Cole/ Los Angeles and Lisa McLaughlin/New York

## WHERE'S THE NEXT SEATTLE?



### SUB POP RECORDS

*Pavitt and Poneman, founders of the savviest boutique label around, launched the careers of many a Puget Sound misfit*

SOMETIME IN 1991, SEATTLE BECAME MORE THAN A QUINTESSENTIALLY LIVABLE city where the coffee was strong, the people were friendly and the plastic was recycled. The unleashing of bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam beyond the Pacific Northwest transformed Seattle into an adjective inextricably linked to the word sound, a marketable life-style packaged in flannel and devoid of shampoo.

What turns a city into a seminal music scene? Minneapolis, Minnesota, the home of proto-alternative rockers like the Replacements and Hüsker Dü, had its moment a few years ago. So did Austin, Texas, ground zero for the Butthole Surfers; and Athens, Georgia, the birthplace of R.E.M. and the B-52s. One necessary ingredient they all share is a healthy slacker class. Like Seattle, they are home to large universities, and they have been able to support an infrastructure of mom-and-pop record shops, cutting-edge clubs, vintage-clothing stores and alternative newspapers. They are also far enough away from New York City and Los Angeles to consider themselves cool, and unincorporate enough to make room for the strikingly unconventional. A homegrown record label can make a huge difference too, like Seattle's Sub Pop, which produced Nirvana's early recordings.

Ultimately, it's the big national labels that cash in on local sounds. Primed by their success with Seattle, the record companies are now grazing hungrily in college towns, those intrinsically hip places where collective shoe preference may run the narrow gamut from Birkenstocks to Doc Martens but ears are all wide open. The academic triangle of Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina, boasts popular alternative bands like Superchunk, not to mention a label, Mammoth Records. Jay Faires, founder of Mammoth, set up shop in the area quite simply because "there are a lot of 18- to 22-year-olds who don't have much to do, who smoke a lot of pot and who eventually pick up a guitar." Record executives are also looking at Halifax, Nova Scotia, a five-college town with dozens of hometown bands, as well as Portland, Oregon—Gus Van Sant-land and a grunge Mecca in the making.

But formulas aren't foolproof. San Diego, with its proximity to L.A. and its image as a dumb blond of a city, would seem like an improbable locale for a thriving anti-Establishment culture. But in fact it has spawned bands with names like Rocket from the Crypt and rust; both have signed with major labels. Explains Kane (that's just Kane), president of Headhunter Records, a local label: "There's a lot less attitude down here, people are less jaded, there's a freshness." Keep your eye on Toledo, Ohio.

—By *Ginia Bellafante*