

over with their dizzy melodies. It's no surprise they've been dubbed the leaders and innovators of the "New Rave/Flourescent Rock" scene.

-Patricia Wysopal



CHUCK RAGAN Los Feliz Sideonedummy Records

When Hot Water Music split up (temporarily, they say) last year, its fans were left disappointed but perhaps not surprised. But when three of the band's members re-formed as The Draft without deep-voiced singer/guitarist Chuck Ragan, questions arose: had Ragan left the band or been forced out? would the new group sound like classic Hot Water Music?; and where would Ragan end up? With Chuck Ragan's solo debut *Los Feliz*, the final question is answered. Ragan's solo debut is likely more of departure from his work with HWM than most would anticipate.

Los Feliz has its moments, but as a whole it's nothing more than a needless recording of a live folk concert by Ragan and a few friends. About half of the songs are just Ragan and his guitar, and half incorporate the likes of cello, banjo, and harmonica. Across the record, his voice doesn't pair well with his guitar, his lyrics can be simplistic to the point of distraction, and his vocal delivery sounds unnatural. All signs point to this being a briefly lived experiment along Ragan's musical path.

-Nate Seltenrich



STINKING LIZAVETA Scream of the Iron Iconoclast At A Loss Recordings

Punk-jazz fusions can be the stuff of dreams, or nightmares, or wonderful nightmares. The Steve Albini-produced *Scream of the Iron Iconoclast* is the stuff of the latter. The Philadelphia-based band, the brainchild of brothers Yanni (mostly guitar) and Alexi (upright bass) Pappopoulos and Cheshire Agusta (drums), samples from thrash, surf-guitar, nu-jazz tempo and key changes, and just plain straight-ahead rawk music.

Remember when we were all telling our friends about how Rage Against the Machine sampled from jazz riffs, how it could be metal but still be good music? The first thirty seconds of *Scream of the Iron Iconoclast* echo that song, the musical brilliance and the straight-up angry passion.

The bombast doesn't slow until "Willie Nelson (Tired of the War)," a little less than halfway through the 16-track opus, but even then, the trio's musical fluidity and creativity are evident. Ideal place to play these songs: an intimate dinner date with the perfect chick, the one who's even more fucked up than you are.

-Matthue Roth



EINSTUERZENDE NEUBAUTEN Palast der Republik DVD MVD

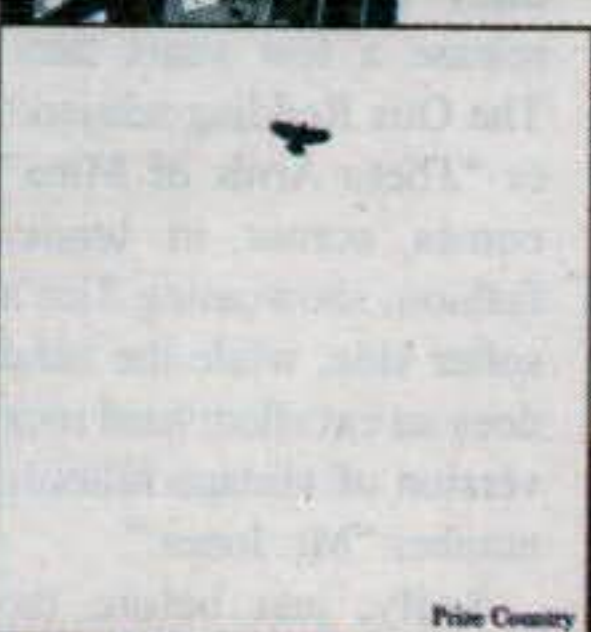
German experimental music. Who loves it? Who can't? Einstuerzende Neubauten, who since 1980 have been pioneers of the form, recorded this DVD three years ago at the Palast der Republik, the former East German Parliament building. What that's symbolic for is anyone's guess, but the several-member collective, fronted by Birthday Party and Bad Seeds former member Blixa Bargeld, makes music that is driven, droning, rhythm-driven and intense.

The songs aren't exactly songs, and they aren't exactly art pieces, but they're kind of a hybrid of the two...they kind of start and stop existing, and in the time between, there's a maddening, super-rhythmic churning. Its members perform in all black and barefoot (of course) but they turn everything they can into a percussion instrument, from industrial-size cans of food and gas to the steel skeleton of the building itself.

About halfway through, they use the entire 100-member crowd of "supporters" (remember: German and art-rock) as a single, united lead vocalist. It's a weird, compelling blend of nihilist, fascist and anti-fascist philosophy-cum-music, like a postmodern army band covering Devo. And if you understood that, you'll understand the Neubauten.

-Matthue Roth

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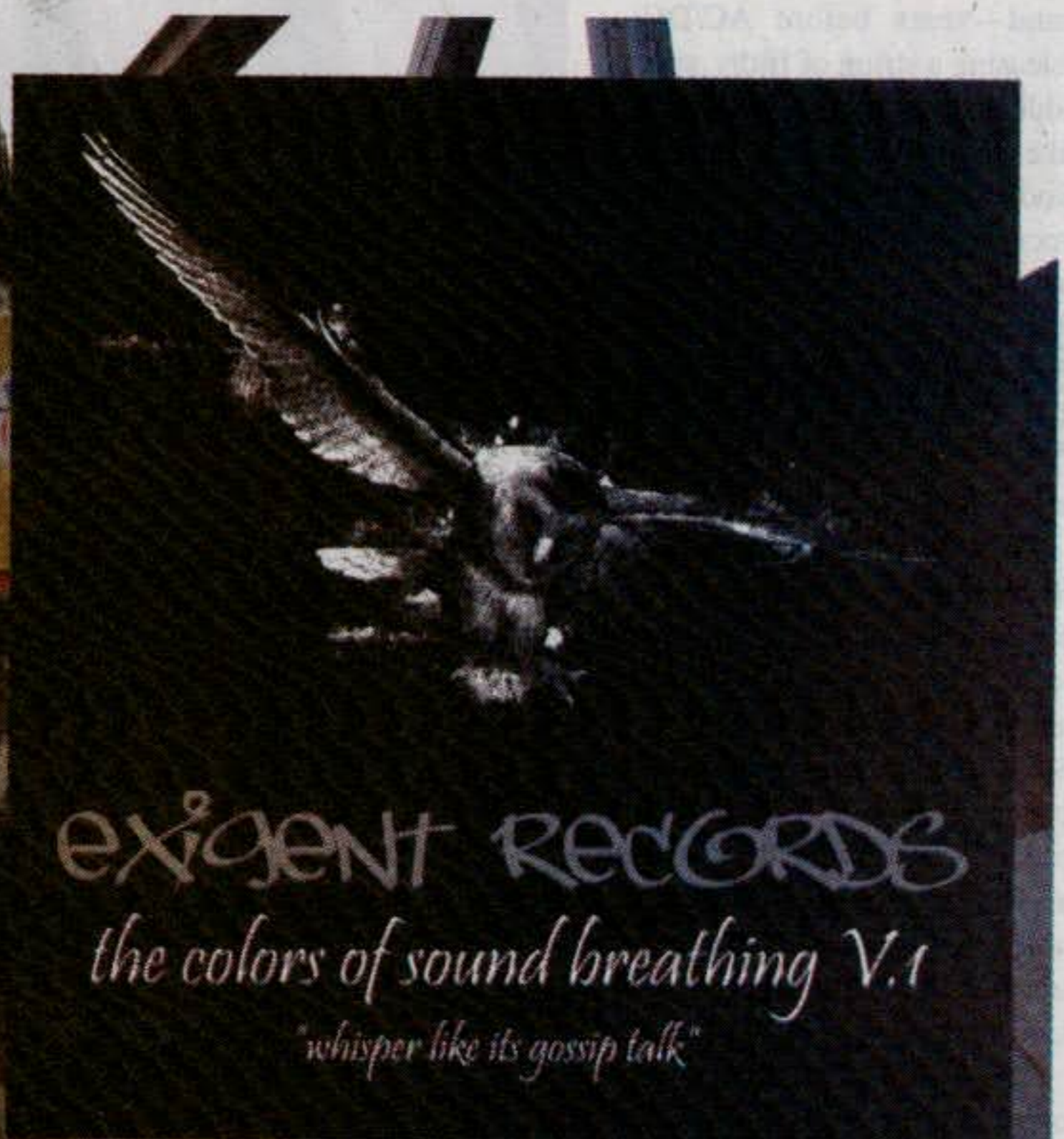


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