

# Iodine

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"We're Radio Iodine from St. Louis," Ellen told the crowd. Then, they began to play.

The dark gothic sound entranced, capturing the ear. Ellen Persyn had a stage presence about her that kept the small audience's attention.

Despite a couple of problems, the show went off marvelously. A snare drum head snapped, and Ellen Persyn began blithering to the audience about her childhood while Held fled off and back onto the stage, changing the snare.

One of the songs began with Held rapping his sticks across the metal rims of the drums, which sounded exotic. It was one of the most unique moments of the show.

Ellen Persyn also slipped in comments between songs that made the audience ... well, it was something else. "This is the part of the show where you are invited to square dance" and "this is the part of the show where the whole audience gets naked" were just a couple of memorable examples.

The best aspect of the show, however, was that they were having fun. Tony Persyn began the show stomping around and spent part of the time dueling with Bramer.

At the end of the show, Berry's microphone went out, and she and Ellen went cheek to cheek, singing their guts out as the show came to a crashing climax. The whole show, having built up to this moment, left the tiny audience wishing for more.

Also playing that night was Heroes and Villains, who unfortunately paled in comparison. Next to Radio Iodine, whose stage presence reached to every corner of the room, Heroes and Villains were almost out of touch with about half the audience.

Despite the marvelous guitar work, their set did not really build. It unfortunately fell flat. Granted, for a moment, when they played the song, "Mrs. Nelson," they had their moment.

But in the monstrous shadow of Radio Iodine's overwhelming performance, Heroes and Villains simply didn't have enough spark to shine.

# Music Reviews



**Machines Of Loving Grace "Gilt"**  
Mammoth Records  
Grade: C+

After their last album, "Concentration," and "Golgotha Tenement Blues," the song from "The Crow" soundtrack, one would have high hopes for Machines Of Loving Grace's new album "Gilt." But instead they take a slight fall from grace with a less than solid album.

The band's conscious effort to try to use fewer electronics in song writing is a detraction as the band seems to lose some of its coherence. At some points, the group seems almost chaotic, as if no one could hear what the others were doing.

A dark gothic feel still hangs over the whole album, but at moments, that presence is set aside in favor of a much more direct rock approach. At these times, the band fails to capture the ear. Clean rockers, these boys are not.

"Richest Junkie Still Alive" is a deceptive opening track. With a rhythmic crashing drum, a searing electric guitar and some buzzing electronic noises in the background, it's obvious why this is the first single. Scott Benzel's whispered vocals plead for someone to understand the pain, and for almost four minutes, you can.

"Kiss Destroyer," however, is flatly the worst track on the album. The guitar is flooded through a bad processor, the bass line is much louder than everything else, the drums are practically a straight sample, and none of this flows well together. Add in the fact that it has no hook and you have a track to skip past.

The better part of the rest of the album depends on the mood you may be in before you listen to it. "Suicide King" is reminiscent of the older, better days of the band. This track is definitely for the late nights when you feel anger welling up in you. Here the band is coherent, playing like a team again.

Who knows what they were thinking of when they wrote "Animal Mass." One might compare it to water torture; long, painful, repetitive, pointless and agonizing. This track itself drags the album

down a great deal, until the vocals are gone, and a half-way decent instrumental emerges.

As a droning guitar hums and fades in and out like a mantra, Benzel's throaty pleas begin again, a drum beat thuds, the bass begins to throb and the final guitar comes stomping in. That's the way "The Soft Collision" carries itself, and its problem is in its inconsistency. The chorus is large and powerful, but in the moments between choruses, it's almost as though you are on pause, with only the bass to console you.

"Solar Temple" shares this same problem. A great deal of the time, when the band is simply jamming and there are no vocals, the song sounds so much better. Parts of this song are magnificent, and others feel out of place, like they are for another song.

Happily, not all the album shares this feel. "Tryst" is a true gothic rock song, brooding and wicked, angry and violent. When everyone stops playing except the drummer and Benzel sings "This is a tryst/this is the discipline/the discipline of the flowers always takes me in," it is a part of the song, not an added footnote.

While "Casual User" may start a touch unusually, it's well worth getting through the first ten seconds. When Benzel chimes in "I'm never going back/I didn't mean it this time," the drug addiction attitude seeps into your veins and you can sympathize with the pain.

Exactly what to make of "Two-fold Godhead," it's hard to be sure. At moments, the song is an instrumental, with vocals added in, but it is too basic to be just an instrumental. If it was background music, then it would do fine, but as a conscious song, it's very hard to focus on.

"Last" begins with a snipping noise, and Benzel begins to whisper. It is an excellent track and should have been the last track on the album, but "Serpico" is worthless. It tries to be depressing without being angry, much like the Nine Inch Nails track "hurt" but Machines of Loving Grace are unable to pull it off convincingly.

"Gilt" is not a bad album. But its problem is that it isn't a good album either. Industrial music fans will like about half of this album, and those who like to experiment will enjoy about the same amount. Wait to buy it used, however, because it isn't worth the new price.

— Cliff A. Hicks



**Southern Culture on the Skids "Dirt Track Date"**  
Geffen Records  
Grade: B+

One of the least appealing aspects of most rock music today is an undermining sense of self-gratification and superiority.

Bands, for the most part, seem to have taken the roads most traveled; the "more indie than thou" bandwagon or the "aren't we charming?" schtick have grown cold and old for the more observant listener as the years have dragged by.

But with "Dirt Track Date," a fiery trio that goes by the name of Southern Culture on the Skids dispels all of that layered-on public imagery for some stripped-down, old fashioned rock 'n' roll.

Consisting of David Hartman (drums, vocals), Mary Huff (bass, vocals), and Rick Miller (guitar, vocals), SCOTS is about as basic as you can get.

Their sound lies somewhere within the parameters of rockabilly Elvis Presley, Dick Dale and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, with a bit of Les Claypool's sly humor thrown in.

To put it more simply — these guys rock.

OK, so that may be a bit too simplistic, but that also is the most likely description the members of the band would offer.

Highbrow hardly seems to be the catchword on this album, with song titles like "Skullbucket," "Fried Chicken and Gasoline," and "Camel Walk," high society probably wouldn't welcome this band to the debutante ball.

But it's this lack of refinement that gives SCOTS its absolutely perfect charm.

Tossing aside the facades of other supposedly raw bands, who have been inevitably aided in their efforts to become less glamorous by equally ambitious producers (i.e. Steve Albini), SCOTS manages to get to the bare bones of rock 'n' roll all by themselves, thank you very much.

— Jeff Randall

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**'ER' outshined by 'NYPD Blue' at the Emmys**

RADNOR, Pa. (AP) — Folks in the "ER" are licking their wounds over their Emmy snub.

George Clooney, who plays Dr. Doug Ross, said he was surprised when the NBC hit lost out to "NYPD Blue" for best drama. He was even more surprised when a rival TV doc, Mandy Patinkin of "Chicago Hope," beat both him and "ER" co-star Anthony Edwards for best actor.

"Tony Edwards should have won best actor," Clooney said in the Oct. 14 issue of TV Guide. "It's as simple as that. He captured the best show on television for a year."

Julianna Margulies, who won a best supporting actress Emmy for her role as Nurse Carol Hathaway on "ER," was surprised but philosophical about the "NYPD Blue" win.

"They should have won last year and they didn't. So maybe next year is for us."