

## The History of Rock Music: 1989-2001

Raves, grunge, post-rock

---

[History of Rock Music](#) | [1955-66](#) | [1967-69](#) | [1970-75](#) | [1976-89](#) | [The early 1990s](#) | [The late 1990s](#) | [The 2000s](#) | [Alpha index](#)

---

Musicians of [1955-66](#) | [1967-69](#) | [1970-76](#) | [1977-89](#) | [1990s in the US](#) | [1990s outside the US](#) | [2000s](#)

---

[Back to the main Music page](#)

---

(Copyright © 2009 Piero Scaruffi)

---

### Psychedelic Songwriting

---

(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance Music"](#))

---

#### *East Coast 1988-94*

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

Psychedelic music was the single greatest invention of the 1960s and remained the dominant genre in the 1990s. The 1960s coined a number of psychedelic styles, and they were still the basic psychedelic styles of the 1990s: the psychedelic pop of the Doors, the psychedelic freak-out of the Red Crayola, the psychedelic trance of the Velvet Underground, and the acid jam of the Grateful Dead. Among the innovations introduced during the 1980s, dream-pop and shoegazing were still popular in the 1990s. Far from merely plagiarizing the classics, the most significant bands of the decade contributed to re-define the art of the sonic trip.

Boston's [Galaxie 500](#) (12), comprised of guitarist Dean Wareham, bassist Naomi Yang and drummer Damon Krukowski, went against the trend when they created an anti-theatrical style devoted to urban alienation. **Today** (1988) was a moonlit tide of languid litanies and whispered singalongs. It was expressionism turned upside down: angst and terror, but in the form of a bloodless stupor, not a loud scream. The trio played back the third Velvet Underground album, Pink Floyd's *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun* and Television's *Torn Curtain*, but filtered of any residual vitality. **On Fire** (1989), their most personal work, was an existential anesthetic. There were echoes of the (acid-rock) past but they were ethereal, sleepy and ghostly: they had been reduced to an inner language of the subconscious. The setting was a wasteland roamed by zombies devoid of any passion, resigned to their emotional impotence and moral isolation, capable only of articulating the emptiness of their lives in a vocabulary of negative words. These were confessions of people who did not even know anymore how to grieve for their own sorrow. These dirges were the exact opposite of the anthemic call to arms of rock'n'roll.

An excessive trance dazzled the acid jams of **This Is Our Music** (1990), the most ambitious but also terminal leg of their "trip". Parting ways with Wareham, the former rhythm section of Galaxie 500, Yang and Krukowski assumed the moniker [Damon & Naomi](#) (1) and recorded **More Sad Hits** (1992), whose gentle breeze was the ideal appendix to Galaxie 500's mission.

[Mercury Rev](#) (111), originating from upstate New York and featuring John Donahue on guitar and Dave Fridmann on bass, achieved a synthesis of historical proportions. **Yerself Is Steam** (1991) was a psychedelic extravaganza that spanned three decades and three continents. Emotionally, it ran the gamut from Red Crayola's anarchic freak-outs to contemplative/meditative ecstasies in the vein of new-age music. Technically, it blended and alternated pop melody, ambient droning, mind-boggling distortion, oneiric folk, martial tempos, pastoral passages, infernal noise and lyrical lullabies. Far from being merely a nostalgic tribute to an age, Mercury Rev's operation started with the hippie vision of nirvana on the other side of a swirling and chaotic music, but tempered the optimism of that program with an awareness of the human condition, and poisoned it with fits of neurosis and decadent atmospheres. The fantasies of **Boces** (1993) were even more variegated and imaginative, veritable collages of sonic events. The dense and busy arrangements, that owed more and more to Fridmann's command of keyboards and orchestration, did not interfere with what was fundamentally a much gentler mood, a distant relative of Kevin Ayers' fairy-tales. The progress towards a joyful and serene sound continued on **See You On The Other Side** (1995), which frequently embraced poppy melodies and facile rhythms, whereas **Deserter's Songs** (1998) marked the zenith of their phantasmagoric orchestrations.

[Luna](#) (1), formed by Galaxie 500's guitarist and vocalist Dean Wareham, Feelies' drummer Stanley Demeski and Chills' bassist Justin Harwood, specialized in shy, tender, whispered/conversational pop tunes, best on **Bewitched** (1994).

In Minnesota, [Polara](#) (1), the project of 27 Various' guitarist Ed Ackerson, bridged late Sonic Youth, Jesus & Mary Chain's feedback-pop and the "Madchester" sound on **Polara** (1995).

In Indiana, [Arson Garden](#) (1) sounded like the Jefferson Airplane performing renaissance psalms on **Under Towers** (1990).

Flaming Lips' lunatic pop influenced New Jersey's [Tadpoles](#) (1), whose **He Fell Into The Sky** (1994) matched the demented grandeur of the masters; while Kramer's school of psychedelic pop continued to yield cauldrons of melodic oddities, for example [Uncle Wiggly's](#) **There Was An Elk** (1993).

Minneapolis' [Shift](#), the brainchild of keyboardists Marc Ostermeier and Eric Ostermeier, harked back to a lyrical version of shoegaze and dream-pop with the EP **A Folding Sieve** (1995). Eric Ostermeier's [Motion Picture](#) (2) achieved zen-like grandeur with the fragile folk-rock embedded in quasi-classical grace and quasi classical arrangements of **Every Last Romance** (1998), and employed a chamber quartet of cello, violin, French horn and English horn on **A Paper Gift** (2001).

In Pennsylvania, Original Sins' bizarre leader John Terlesky created one of the most irrational corpus of music ever recorded under the moniker [Brother J.T.](#) (2). Albums such as **Vibrolux** (1994) and **Music For The Other Head** (1996) conceived composition as an utter mess. Mostly, his "songs" were a hysterical rambling over cacophonous imitations of rock'n'roll. The longer tracks sounded like hippie music of the Sixties sucked, chewed and defecated by a psychedelic black-hole. It was a (hazy, incoherent, deranged) mental state, not an art.

### ***West Coast 1988-95***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

Towards the end of the decade in the USA, psychedelic rock mutated into a whole new genre, less involved with studio trickery and/or guitar mayhem, more focused on songwriting while still preoccupied with textures and soundscapes.

[Medicine](#) (1), formed in Los Angeles by Brad Laner, ex-Savage Republic's drummer but now on guitars and keyboards, delivered **Shot Forth Self Living** (1992), a therapeutic shock that owed both to My Bloody Valentine and to Sonic Youth. Trance and noise were also the pillars of follow-up **The Buried Life** (1993).

Seattle's [Sky Cries Mary](#) (11), which had adopted an eclectic fusion of jazz, funk, world-music and acid-rock on the EP **Exit At The Axis** (1992), converted to hippie/new-age spirituality with **A Return To The Inner Experience** (1993), which blended Klaus Schulze's cosmic music, David Byrne's African polyrhythms and Nico's catatonic ballads, thereby coining an anti-rhetorical form of psychedelia, one that was more an ambience than an ideology. Their masterpiece, **This Timeless Turning** (1994), focused on the intersection between early Pink Floyd and dance music, but hip-hop beats, Hendrix-ian riffs, industrial tornados and ancestral rites percolated through the loose, flaccid lattice.

[Quasi](#), formed in Oregon by Donner Party's guitarist and Heatmiser's bassist Sam Coomes, specialized in applying old-fashioned, and frequently out-of-tune, keyboards to catchy pop tunes, for example on **Early Recordings** (1995).

The dominant styles of the 1980s and 1990s were still being revised, but the well was clearly drying up.

### ***USA shoegazing 1992-94***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

The influence of My Bloody Valentine and of the whole "shoegazing" movement became pervasive in the USA from 1992 on. Notable among the early albums of the genre were [Fudge](#)'s **The Ferocious Rhythm Of Precise Laziness** (1992) in Virginia, and [Drop Nineteens](#)'s **Delaware** (1992) in Boston.

Pennsylvania's [Lilys](#) (1) evolved from the quiet transcendental bliss of **In**

**The Presence Of Nothing** (1992) to the dilated, majestic amorphous melodies of **Ecstasy The Photon Band** (1995).

Boston's [Swirlies](#) (1) added mellotron, Moog and found noises to the guitar tremolos of **Blonder Tongue Audio Baton** (1993).

Chicago's [Catherine](#) (1) bridged shoegazing and grunge on **Sorry** (1994).

[Windy & Carl](#) (12), the project of Detroit's guitarist Carl Hultgren, added Windy Weber's ethereal vocals to the equation. **Portal** (1994) indulged in the angelic hypnosis of the shoegazers, but the drifting nebulae of **Drawing Of Sound** (1996) created friendly soundscapes for vocals to roam, despite the monumental spires of guitar distortion and the absence of rhythm. By demoting the guitars to the background and promoting the electronic keyboards to the forefront, the three lengthy tracks of **Antarctica** (1997) veered towards German "kosmische musik" of the 1970s. The organic and fibrillating **Depths** (1998) developed that idea into a full-fledged marriage of heaven (the cosmic drones) and hell (the menacing density of the sound).

### ***Beyond space-rock 1992-94***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

By fusing the extreme styles of psychedelia that favored the extended, free-form jam (acid-rock, space-rock and raga-rock) over the oddly-arranged tune, a number of groups sculpted epic sonic endeavors.

Lengthy and mostly improvised space jams took up ambitious albums such as: [Fuzzhead's Mind Soup](#) (1993) from Ohio; [Lorelei's Everyone Must Touch The Stove](#) (1996) from Virginia; [Temple Of Bon Matin](#) (1)'s **Bullet Into Mesmer's Brain** (1997) from Pennsylvania; etc.

[Crawlspace](#) (2), the creature of Indiana-via-L.A. singer Eddie Flowers, produced works such as **Sphereality** (1992) and **The Exquisite Fucking Beauty** (1995), both anarchic and erudite, that went even further into the formulation of psychedelic free-jazz.

[Mooseheart Faith](#), formed by the Angry Samoans' bassist Todd Homer (now on autoharp) and (black) guitarist Larry Robinson, squeezed the entire psychedelic vocabulary (from space-rock rave-ups to dilated ballads, from catchy ditties to abstract electronic passages) into **Magic Square of the Sun** (1991).

A group of Los Angeles musicians straddled the line between industrial music and acid-rock, and produced intriguing works such as [Pressurehed's Sudden Vertigo](#) (1994), featuring vocalist Tommy Grenas and keyboardist Len Del Rio. Del Rio also played on the [Anubian Lights' The Eternal Sky](#) (1995), while Grenas played on [Farflung's 25,000 Feet Per Second](#) (1995).

Chicago's [Sabalon Glitz](#) (1), led by keyboardist Chris Holmes and vocalist Carla Bruce, offered a more electronic version of Hawkwind's space-rock on **Ufonic** (1994).

Detroit's [Gravitar](#) (12) were the noisiest of the bunch, and one of the noisiest groups of all times. **Chinga Su Corazon** (1993) and **Gravitar** (1995), totally improvised, were maelstroms of cacophony. Truculent rock'n'roll progressions built thick walls of noise. Each piece (especially on the second album) was a symphony of spectral dissonances harking back to Throbbing Gristle's macabre "industrial" rituals. Gravitar had endowed Lou Reed's **Metal Machine Music** with a rhythm. **Now The Road Of Knives** (1997), featuring a new guitarist, brought a bit of structure into their abominable chaos, revealing Chrome and Jimi Hendrix as the band's role models.

### *Texas 1990-95*

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

By far the most active scene was in Texas. Texan psychedelia had been the craziest since the 1960s, and it claimed again that supremacy in the 1990s, led, of course, by the achievements of the Butthole Surfers. Except that, during the 1990s, this school diverged from punk-rock and moved towards a more experimental form of music, hardly "rock" at all. Spearheading the renaissance were severely irrational Butthole-ian bands.

There were three distinct schools of psychedelic rock in Texas: one based in Austin (Ed Hall, ST 37), one in Houston and one in Dallas.

If possible, [Ed Hall](#) (14) even increased the psychedelic-madness quotient of the Butthole Surfers, beginning with the repellent bacchanals and hallucinations of **Albert** (1988). At the least, they grotesquely increased volume and speed on their classic **Love Poke Here** (1990), a gargantuan, shameless blunder that evoked Captain Beefheart's blues, voodoo exorcisms, drunk cowboys' hoedowns, Jimi Hendrix, breakneck hardcore and redneck boogie. **Gloryhole** (1991) was the punk equivalent of Beckett's absurd theater. The slightly more serious (at times even melodramatic) **Motherscratcher** (1993) and the slightly better structured (at times even linear) **La-La-Land** (1995) were also their densest stews of heretical sonic events.

The [Cherubs](#) (1), a spin-off of Ed Hall, added sampling, dissonance and hard-rock riffs to Ed Hall's already explosive mix, particularly on their second album **Heroin Man** (1994).

[ST 37](#) (1), instead, followed in the footsteps of lysergic cosmic couriers à la Hawkwind on albums such as **Glare** (1995).

Among the elders of Dallas' psychedelic tribe were [Bag](#), documented on **Midnight Juice** (1991), and [Lithium Xmas](#), represented by **Helldorado** (1994). But the glory days of Dallas' psychedelia came a bit later with the Vas Deferens Organization and its offsprings.

The Houston school was centered around one group: [Mike Gunn](#) (1) displayed a morbid fascination with Black Sabbath and Jimi Hendrix on **Hemp For Victory** (1991) and capitalized on it for the slow-motion ragas of their most original work, **Almaron** (1993). Mike Gunn's bassist Scott Grimm became [Dunlavy](#), devoted to instrumental space-rock.



Mike Gunn's guitarist Tom Carter started [Charalambides](#) (3), who experimented with deranged ballads, bizarre samples, guitar freak-outs and tape manipulation on the 100-minute cassette **Our Bed Is Green** (1992) and especially the double record **Market Square** (1995). The monolithic psychological explorations of **Joy Shapes** (2004), recorded by a trio of guitarists, even ventured into avantgarde music and free-jazz. Pared down to the duo of Christina and Tom Carter, Charalambides eventually achieved the naked melodic quintessence of **A Vintage Burden** (2006), that almost sounded like the negation of their original "acid" program.

[Linus Pauling Quartet](#) (1), who originated from the same proto-group as Mike Gunn, filled **Immortal Classics Chinese Music** (1995) with languid, whacky ballads à la Flaming Lips but the extended jams *Improvise Now* (1996) and *The Great Singularity* off their best album, **Killing You With Rock** (1998), aligned them with the boldest sonic surgeons of their era.

### ***San Francisco's noise psychedelia, 1991-92***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

[Mason Jones](#) was a San Francisco-based guru of noisy, post-psychedelic, post-ambient, post-cosmic and post-industrial music. His manifestos were the first two collections of experiments released under the moniker [Trance](#) (1), **Automatism** (1991) and particularly **Audiography** (1993), whose compositions range from symphonic movement to ethnic watercolor. The formidable wall of noise of **Delicate Membrane** (1996) began the saga of Jones' [Subarachnoid Space](#) (12), featuring Melynda Jackson on guitar. The pieces were fully improvised, the sound was majestic, and the mood ranged from suspenseful trance to sheer horror. **Ether Or** (1997) showed that the distance between their therapeutic mayhems and free jazz was negligible. The idea was further refined on **Almost Invisible** (1997), a massive hodgepodge of astral chaos, frantic ragas, oceanic psalms and abstract soundpainting that represented an ideal soundtrack for the marriage of heaven and hell. Jones had virtually resurrected early Pink Floyd and provided their biography with an alternative ending: a terrible mutation of *A Saucerful Of Secrets* rather than **Dark Side Of The Moon**. **Endless Renovation** (1998), their first studio recording and a more sophisticated variant on that idea (that quoted casually from Frank Zappa, Terry Riley or Colosseum) and **The Sleeping Sickness** (1999), a collaboration with the Walking Timebombs (the Pain Teens' Scott Ayers), simply increased the stylistic confusion around Jones' and Jackson's wild guitar distortions.

[Mandible Chatter](#) unleashed Helios Creed-ian guitar fury on the black mass **Serenade For Anton** (1992), before turning to sound manipulation on **Hair Hair Lock & Lore** (1994).

### ***The golden age of British psychedelia, 1989-94***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

The golden age of British psychedelia was not the 1960s: it was the 1990s.

Never had England witnessed such a deluge of psychedelic bands. The scene of raves created an inexhaustible demand for drug-induced, drug-related and drug-facilitating music.

The poppy version of psychedelia (the one that wrapped facile melodies in eccentric arrangements) went hand in hand with the booming phenomenon of Brit-pop: the [Telescopes](#)'s **Taste** (1989), a more robust version of shoegazing; the [Inspiral Carpets](#), who focused on the nostalgic Farfisa-driven sound on **The Beast Inside** (1991); [Verve](#)'s **A Storm In Heaven** (1993), which predated their world-wide hit *Bitter Sweet Symphony* (1997); [Sundial](#)'s **Reflector** (1992), a bridge between California's Paisley Underground and British shoegazers; the [Auteurs](#)'s **New Wave** (1993), a nostalgic tribute to the hippie era; [Whipping Boy](#)'s **Heartworm** (1995), in Ireland, a work drenched in neoclassical melancholy. What was truly remarkable about these bands is how derivative and predictable they could sound.

A more sophisticated form of psychedelic pop song was devised by [Curve](#) (1), whose **Doppelganger** (1992) aimed for a lush, catchy and dance-oriented form of dream-pop; the [Cranberries](#) (1), an Irish band whose **No Need To Argue** (1994) was an album of desolate lullabies propelled by the operatic, guttural and melismatic vocals of Dolores O'Riordan; [Rollerskate Skinny](#) (1), also from Ireland, who were among the few bands to match the soulful madness of Mercury Rev on **Shoulder Voices** (1993). In Belgium, [dEUS](#) crafted the eclectic and baroque **Worst Case Scenario** (1994).

The hippie spirit, and their favorite style, raga-rock, was resurrected by [Gorky's Zygotic Mynci](#), particularly with the eccentric **Tatay** (1994), which Euros Rowlands's keyboards and John Lawrence's guitar turned into, alternatively, a poppier Incredible String Band, a less caustic Bonzo Band, or a more bizarre Brian Wilson. The latter's orchestrations would provide the inspiration for the more conventional **Barafundle** (1997) and **Gorky 5** (1998).

Far less successful commercially, although far more creative, in Britain was the noisy and free-form version of psychedelia that wed Hawkwind's space-rock and early Pink Floyd's interstellar ragas.

[Porcupine Tree](#) (2), the project of guitarist Steven Wilson, went through three stages. **On The Sunday Of Life** (1992) was a compendium of Pink Floyd-ian sounds, from Syd Barrett's oblique ballads to **Ummagumma**'s symphonic pieces. Then Japan's keyboardist Richard Barbieri helped fine-tune the languid, fluid and transcendental mini-concertos of **The Sky Moves Sideways** (1994). And, finally, a cohesive combo crafted **Signify** (1996) and **Stupid Dream** (1999) in a fashion reminiscent of early King Crimson's majestic ambience, an idea that eventually led to the slick production of **In Absentia** (2002).

[Terminal Cheesecake](#) (2) played space-rock the way avantgarde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen would have played it. Echoes of Chrome, Pop Group and Throbbing Gristle turned **Johnny Town Mouse** (1989) and **Angels In Pigtales** (1991) into nightmarish experiences.

[Skullflower](#), a loose group of musicians affiliated with guitarist Matthew Bower, performed heavy, droning psychedelic music on **Obsidian Shaking Codex** (1993) and **Argon** (1995), a symphony in four movements. Another Matthew Bower project was [Sunroof](#), devoted to a psychotic version of cosmic music on the double-disc **Delicate Autobahns Under Construction** (2000). After a hiatus of seven years, Bower resurrected Skullflower to erect the impressive walls of noise of **Exquisite Fucking Boredom** (2003), containing the four-part super-doom suite *Celestial Highway*, **Orange Canyon Mind** (2004) and **Tribulation** (2006), slowly drifting towards the idea of music as one long modulated massive distortion.

Latter-period shoegazers abounded. [Ride](#) (1) adjusted the cliché to the era of raves on **Nowhere** (1990). So did Ride's best imitators, [Blind Mr Jones](#), on the mostly instrumental **Stereo Musicale** (1992). [Swervedriver](#) (1) turned guitar distortions into an art of quasi-zen vespers, best on **Mezcal Head** (1993), while bridging the gap between the shoegazing acid-rock of My Bloody Valentine and the hard-edged garage-rock of the Stooges. The Times' mastermind Ed Ball formed the [Teenage Filmstars](#) to play eccentric shoegaze music overloaded with studio effects on **Star** (1992).

Both Loop and Spacemen 3 spawned a new generation of bands:

Spacemen 3's guitarist Jason Pierce formed [Spiritualized](#) (3) as the natural sequel to his old band, with the same rhythm section, Mark Refoy on guitar and newcomer Kate Radley on keyboards. **Lazer Guided Melodies** (1992) was notable for the wildly schizophrenic dynamics that flung most songs between acoustic and quasi-symphonic passages. Pierce's abuse of drones and tremolos to create hypnotic lullabies and wavering ragas reached an almost baroque peak on **Pure Phase** (1995), recorded by the trio of Pierce, Radley and bassist Sean Cook. By then, Pierce had developed a process of scientific layering of sounds that was, basically, an exaggeration of Phil Spector's and Brian Wilson's production styles of yore. The lush trance-pop of **Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space** (1997) was almost the antithesis of his old "shoegazing" style. Overflowing with quotations from multiple genres, traditions and styles (and a penchant for gospel music), it exuded grace and majesty, even when it indulged in instrumental orgies. Pierce's cynical reappropriation of other people's music induced a Babylonian merry-go-round that outdid everybody at their own game while not playing their games at all. Abandoned by both Cook and Radley, Pierce recorded **Let It Come Down** (2001) with help from dozens of external musicians, but the result was a concept album on the subject of "getting high" that did not break any new ground. In general, the point with [Spiritualized](#) was whether theirs was art or technology.

Other spin-offs were [Darkside](#), formed by Spacemen 3's bassist Pete "Bassman" Bain, [Alpha Stone](#), formed by the same Bain, [Hair And Skin Trading Co.](#), formed by Loop's rhythm section, [Slipstream](#), formed by Mark Refoy, the veteran Spacemen 3 and [Spiritualized](#) member, and [Lupine Howl](#), formed by [Spiritualized](#) bassist Sean Cook. They marked the meeting point of shoegazing and ambient music.

Dream-pop was no less popular than shoegazing. The influence of the



Cocteau Twins was felt on works as different as [Kitchens Of Distinction's Love Is Hell](#) (1989) and [Miranda Sex Garden's Suspiria](#) (1992), a disco-oriented reconstruction of medieval music, [Lush's Spooky](#) (1992), scoured by the abrasive guitars and sugary vocals of Emma Anderson and Miki Berenyi, [Earwig's Under My Skin I Am Laughing](#) (1992), and the [Cranes' Loved](#) (1994).

A few acts matched, if not surpassed, the masters of dream-pop, while exploring different nuances of the genre.

The [Pale Saints](#) (1), who had debuted in the ethereal and oneiric style of **The Comforts Of Madness** (1990), introduced hard-rock into dream-pop on **In Ribbons** (1992).

The trance administered by [Slowdive](#) (11) relied on the vocal harmonies of Neil Halstead and Rachel Goswell, and on triple-guitar arrangements. The hypnotic, velvety whispers, and the smooth, bright sound of **Just For A Day** (1991) reached for a psychological and even mystical level, that a game of echoes and reverbs merely enhanced. **Souvlaki** (1993) reinterpreted shoegazing as an abstraction of two formats: Strauss' symphonic poem and Brian Eno's ambient music.

[Levitation](#) (1), led by former House Of Love guitarist Terry Bickers, were reminiscent of Echo & The Bunnymen's baroque hypnosis on **Coterie** (1991).

[Catherine Wheel](#) (1) debuted with a formidable synthesis of Neil Young's neurotic folk and Brian Wilson's eccentric pop, **Ferment** (1992), whose hammering mandalas wove colossal braids of distortions around naive refrains.

Graham Sutton's [Bark Psychosis](#) (10) upped the ante of dream-pop with the extended singles *All Different Things* (1990) and *Scum* (1993), which were abstract mini-concertos built around ineffable melodies. The method was refined with the slow, lengthy sonic puzzles of **Hex** (1994), which fused dissonances, electronics, swirling ragas, jazz drumming, ghostly drones, lounge music, soft funk polyrhythms and so forth, into an organic whole.

Whether the pop, shoegazing or dream-pop variation, England was awash in psychedelic rock as never before.

### ***Hyper-psychedelia in the Pacific, 1992-94***

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved.

Perhaps the most intriguing take on psychedelia came from New Zealand. One of the most significant musicians of the 1990s, [Roy Montgomery](#) (23) created a successful hybrid of all these styles with his ensembles [Dadamah](#) (10), [Dissolve](#) (1), and Hash Jar Tempo (the collaboration with Bardo Pond). Dadamah's **This Is Not A Dream** (1992), featuring bassist Kim Pieters, keyboardist Janine Stagg and Scorched Earth Policy's drummer Peter Stapleton, was a magic recreation of the Velvet Underground's psychedelic trance, updated to the new-wave zeitgeist of the Modern

Lovers, sprinkled with effervescent oddities in the surreal vein of Pere Ubu. Dissolve's **That That Is** (1995) was merely an ectoplasm for two guitars, but their **Third Album For The Sun** (1997), by adding keyboards, percussions and cello to the guitar jamming, attained a spiritual solemnity.

In the meantime, Montgomery's solo albums walked an even more arduous path: the impressionistic vignettes of **Scenes From The South Island** (1995) harked back to the transcendental spirit of John Fahey, to the divine introspection of Peter Green, and to the dreamy psalms of David Crosby; while an obscure, symbol-drenched metaphysics and an obsessive preoccupation with the afterlife led Montgomery through the stages of the imaginary Calvary of **Temple IV** (1996). His song-oriented career peaked with **And Now The Rain Sounds Like Life Is Falling Down Through It** (1998), which contrasted introspective melody and metaphysical setting, resulting in a set of rarified, hermetic prayers, each wrapped into a different universe of haunting sound effects. But his philosophy was better expressed with the free-form soundpainting of **True** (1999). **The Allegory of Hearing** (2000) overflowed with innovative guitar techniques and included the 17-minute tour de force of *Resolution Island Suite*, which recapitulated Montgomery's theory of transcendental harmony the same way that the *Art of the Fugue* summarized Bach's and *Rainbow In Curved Air* summarized Terry Riley's. The sonic mandala of *For A Small Blue Orb*, off **Silver Wheel Of Prayer** (2001) continued his exploration of the individual's relationship with the eternal.

[Dean Roberts](#) (1) pursued similar experiments, first with [Thela](#)'s two albums of lengthy artsy/noisy jams, **Thela** (1995) and **Argentina** (1996), then with his solo project [White Winged Moth](#), that devoted albums such as **I Can See Inside Your House** (1996) to instrumental vignettes located halfway between John Fahey and Derek Bailey, and finally with the spiritual, ambient, psychedelic and ethnic collections under his own name, such as **Moth Park** (1998) and **All Cracked Medias** (1999), his masterpiece.

The saga of the bands built around Scorched Earth Policy's drummer Peter Stapleton was one of the most intriguing and influential of New Zealand. He joined forces again with guitarist Brian Cook for the second album by the [Terminals](#) (1), the spaced-out **Touch** (1992), derailed by tribal drumming and dissonant organ. At the same time, Stapleton recorded the Dadamah album with Roy Montgomery. [Flies Inside The Sun](#) (1) were born from the ashes of Dadamah (Stapleton, Pieters, Cook and guitarist/keyboardist Danny Butt), but **An Audience Of Others** (1995) and especially **Flies Inside The Sun** (1996) and **Le Mal D'Archive** (2001), the first one without Pieters, dramatically increased the degree of improvisation and cacophony: dissonant and disjointed music halfway between free-jazz improvisation a` la Art Ensemble of Chicago, psychedelic freak-outs a` la Red Krayola and atonal chamber music. In fact, Stapleton, Pieters and Butt recorded the even more abstract **Sediment** (1996), this time credited to [Rain](#), with the guitars replaced by synthesizers; and then the trio of Stapleton on drums, Pieters on bass and Dead C's Bruce Russell on guitar formed a (free-noise) "supergroup" that recorded the six instrumental improvisations of **Last Glass** (1994). Finally, Stapleton and Pieters launched the project [Sleep \(NZ\)](#) with **Enfolded in Luxury** (1999).

New Zealand's [Alastair Galbraith](#) (1) recorded albums, particularly between **Talisman** (1994) and **Cry** (2000), that were not so much collections of songs as experiments on sound.

[RST](#) was the solo project of New Zealand's guitarist Andrew Moon who, inspired by Skullflower and Sunn O))), experimented with overdubbing and manipulating his electric guitar into hostile soundscapes of heavy drones on **Event Horizon** (1995) and especially in the three hyper-diluted colossal suites of the triple-disc **Other Machines** (2007).

### *Post-noise in Japan, 1990-92*

The most extreme kind of psychedelia (free-form jams that hark back to Grateful Dead, Red Crayola, early Pink Floyd and Hawkwind) was practiced mainly in Japan. The most imitated band was High Rise, but the man who, over a 30-year career, propelled Japanese acid-rock to the top of the world was Keiji Haino, whose numerous projects were rediscovered during the 1990s.

The all-female band [Angel In Heavy Syrup](#) (1), fronted by guitarists Mine Nakao and Fusao Toda, toyed with Pink Floyd's neurotic trips, Gong's lysergic kaleidoscopes and Amon Duul's tribal propulsion on **III** (1995).

[Shizuka](#), led by a female vocalist and featuring Fushitsusha's second guitarist Maki Miura and Fushitsusha's drummer Jun Kosugi, were Japan's answer to My Bloody Valentine's shoegazing-rock for melodic distorted guitar on **Heavenly Persona** (1994).

Maso Yamazaki's [Masonna](#) represented the link with the previous generation of noise-makers on albums devoted to lengthy free-form jams such as **Shinsen Na Clitoris** (1990) and **Noisextra** (1995).

Similar to Fushitsusha were guitarist Kaneko Jutok's [Kousokuya](#) (1), whose **Kousokuya** (1991) indulged even more in free-jazz improvisation.

[Ghost](#) (12), led by guitarist and vocalist Masaki Batoh, fused Japanese folk music and ambient music on **Ghost** (1990). The surreal orchestration and "ghostly" effects of **Lama Rabi Rabi** (1996), increased the gothic quotient, while the four-part title-track of **Hypnotic Underworld** (2004) was the crowning formal achievement of a group of visionary jazz-rock musicians, equally adept at pop songwriting and bizarre avantgarde. In **Stormy Nights** (2007) featured the 28-minute collage of *Hemicyclic Anthelion*, constructed in studio by Batoh assembling snippets of live performances.

Michio Kurihara's [White Heaven](#) (1) continued the tradition of High Rise with **Out** (1991), inspired by the same demigods (Blue Cheer, Iron Butterfly and Jimi Hendrix).

[L](#) (Japanese singer-songwriter Hiroyuki Usui) released a pioneering work of acid folk and blues, **Holy Letters** (1992), replete with Tibetan monks.

The most original interpretation of space-rock of the 1970s was perhaps advanced by Japan's gothic punks [Death Comes Along](#) in the two suites of

## **Heavy Psychedelic Schizoid God (1994).**

---

[continues...](#) | [back...](#) | [Index](#)