

Readers Poll: And the Winners Are...

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Recipe: Mix a dab of country, a pinch of blues, a teaspoon of grunge, a few heaping cups of spontaneous, energetic punk, and the schizophrenic toot of a bugle. Whaddaya get? Cows—Minneapolis rock dementia at its finest.

"It's so easy to put songs together," singer Shannon Selberg explains. "We might as well make them fun."

Cows' compositions are pure power—maelstroms with enough momentum to

moo revolutions

make you flush your Pearl Jam discs down the toilet. The band has gotten better with every record—from the sheer power of its 1989 sludgifest, *Daddy Has a Tail!*, to 1991's crazed *Peacetika* to its new gem, the tamer, experimental, tighter-than-bark-on-a-tree *Cunning Stunts*. And live, Cows are tops. If the beautifully intense playing doesn't grab you, the goofballish, sometimes violent antics of the band members will.



"When you're at our level, there's lots of times you're playing with no one there," says Selberg. "You've got to entertain yourself. If we stay entertained"—which for Cows means Magic Marker tattoos, buck-tooth dentures, red felt cowboy hats, 33 AA bras, and spitting on the crowd—"the audience will be entertained."

"When it's physical enough, it's kind of titillating," bassist Kevin Rutmanis adds. "Like rough sex. We all unite into a beautiful brotherhood."

DANIEL FIDLER

Live milkmen.

The Cows,

from left:

Kevin Rutmanis,

Norm Rogers,

Thor Eisentrager,

and Shannon

Selberg.



The real McCoy, Juliana Hatfield.

Juliana Hatfield is wearing fake eyelashes and a boyish, navy-blue windbreaker zipped all the way up. The first thing she does is blame the eyelashes on the fashion magazine photo shoot she's just finished. "They put these eyelashes on me and had all these clothes they wanted me to try—stuff I'd never wear, like little minidresses. I ended up convincing them I should wear my own clothes."

Although Hatfield has just finished her first solo album (on leave from her role as singer and bassist for Blake Babies), she isn't terribly impressed with herself. When asked if she's happy with *Hey Babe*, she says she's "not real upset about it." And later, she describes herself as "kind of blah."

In fact, after meeting Hatfield, I'm less apt to believe she's being truthful when she chimes "I'm not a loser" in "I See You" than when she sings "I'm ugly with a capital U" in "Ugly." It's clear that Hatfield's self-doubt is more of a reality than sonorous theatricality.

"*Hey Babe*," she admits, "seems like an album motivated by low self-esteem. It's easier for me to make music than to be a good person. You can tell that in my music."

True. The sounds of *Hey Babe* modestly flaunt Hatfield's talent as a songwriter, and her sugar-sweet voice gropes at the lyrics in an act of excruciating self-examination. The songs show an admitted weak spot for the "really sweet harmonies of Wilson Phillips" (whom she insists she "really likes"), with a penchant for the heavier sounds of fellow Bostonians such as Dinosaur Jr. Hatfield wants to head in the direction of the latter, as she does on rougher tracks such as "Nirvana" and "Quit," but she feels that her childlike voice sets limitations.

"The lyrics have to have more substance and the music has to be harder just to counteract my voice. I could fall in the trap of being way too pop because of it."

Talking to this fragile-faced beauty, I can't help but ask if she's scared of getting twisted into something that she's not:

"I can see I'm getting pushed around by people, into situations that aren't natural—like clothes or something. It's just because I don't know what I want. I've got to be strong and figure it out. Once I know, I'll have no problem enforcing it."

Having found her way into a solid solo album and out of a minidress, Juliana Hatfield knows more about what she wants than she realizes.

AMY TALKINGTON

JUST SAY JULIANA