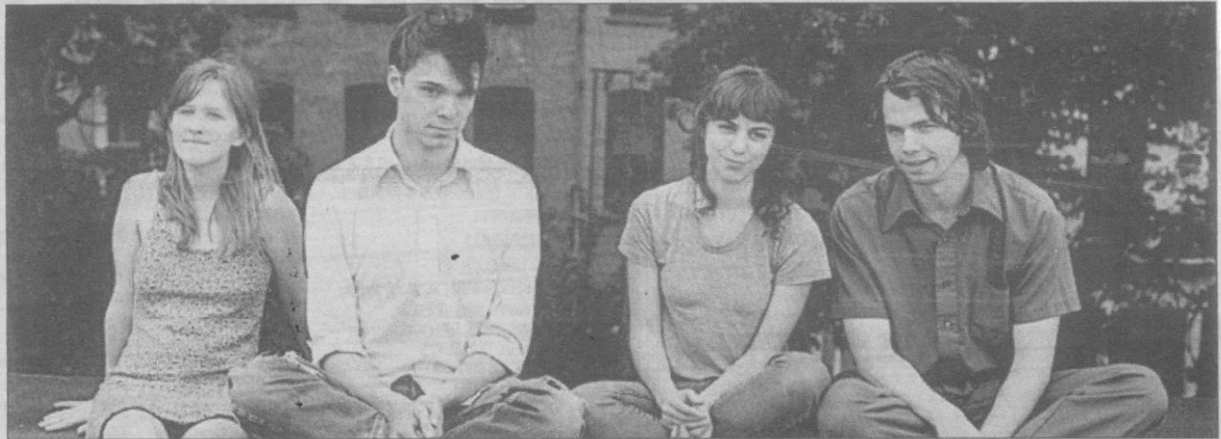


RECORDINGS



BY MIA FERAI

The Dirty Projectors (from left, Amber Coffman, Dave Longstreth, Angel Deradoorian and Brian McOmber) boldly "Rise Above."

THE DIRTY PROJECTORS

"Rise Above"
 Dead Oceans 11309

ONE OF THE RARE experimental indie-pop albums that justifies its ambitions, the Dirty Projectors' new "Rise Above" sometimes resembles a classic soul record, but that's just part of its tangled musical provenance. Mastermind Dave Longstreth, the only permanent Projector, sings mostly in falsetto, while two female vocalists slip between gospel and choral music. Strings sweeten several numbers, and the guitars emulate the chiming tones of West African pop, only to subvert the music's delicacy with bursts of feedback and clamorous chords. It's almost incidental that all 10 tracks are remakes of songs from Black Flag's "Damaged," the seminal L.A. hardcore-punk band's best album.

Black Flag fans could easily hear this disc without fathoming the connection; even people who know the story could forget it while listening.

Longstreth doesn't keep much of the original music, and the lyrics rarely register. Once the flute fanfare ends, "Police Story" does faithfully deliver the original's saga of conflict with cops. "Six Pack" and the title song, however, transform Black Flag's adolescent frustration into something rapturous and nearly abstract. The Projectors' previous releases seemed more concerned with being unusual than being coherent. "Rise Above" doesn't skimp on the unusual, but it's also delightfully bold and lucid.

— Mark Jenkins

Appearing Wednesday at the Black Cat with Ecstatic Sunshine.

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set, as Roney leads the charge on the cleverly orchestrated, genre-blurring opening track, "Vater Time." What's more, unlike the usual attempts to integrate acoustic jazz with scratch riffs, samples and electronic beats, the performance doesn't come off as a production-generated patchwork or, worse, sounding gratuitously hip. For another thing, since "Jazz" is very much a family affair, longtime Roney fans have some reliable treats in store whenever the focus shifts to the marvelous pianist Geri Allen, the trumpeter's wife, and versatile reedman/younger sibling Antoine Roney. Both musicians play a significant role in refreshing Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," which also features trumpeter Roney in crisp, darting form, and in bringing a soulful luster to the waltz "Her Story." The latter, composed by the trumpeter, is also subtly enhanced by bassist Raasaan Carter and drummer Eric Allen. Add to the lineup keyboardist Robert Irving III, who colorfully conjures seminal jazz fusion sounds on Sly Stone's "Stand," and you have an album that a wide range of listeners will find satisfying and surprising.

— Mike Joyce

Appearing Thursday through Sept. 30 at Blues Alley.

17 HIPPIES

"Heimlich"
 Hipster

LIKE BRAZILIAN GIRLS, 17 Hippies are doomed to a career's worth of questions about their name: Do they really have 17 members, and are they really hippies? (The answers: no and maybe.) The stylistically diverse Berlin ensemble began a dozen years ago, in revolt against the city's techno fixation but also in opposition to the musicians' own rock and classical experience; one early tactic was to encourage members to play instruments they'd never touched. There's no sign of such conceptual perversity on "Heimlich," the group's latest album. The Hippies, who currently number 13, remain eclectic but are no longer amateurish.

One of the group's major inspirations is Eastern European folk music, and the CD opens with "Schattenmann," a jaunty romp that draws on klezmer and Gypsy music. But the disc also includes "Moving Song," whose vocal melody could have been composed by George Harrison, circa 1966; a version of "Apache," a 1961 cowboy-movie instrumental hit; and two quiet ballads, including the title tune, sung by soprano Kiki Sauer. Although German is the principal language, there are songs in French and English. The musical idioms are far more disparate, yet the mix is never incoherent. The 17 Hippies have learned how to fuse sundry musics into one.

— Mark Jenkins

Appearing Sunday at the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage.