

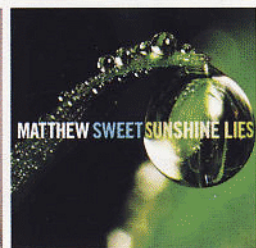
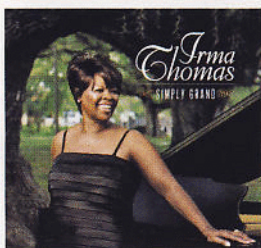
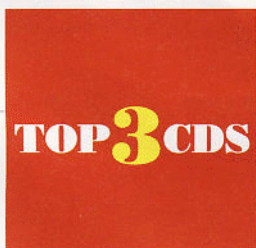


PROFILE
DANCE MASTERS

MSTRKRFT always brings down the house!

After playing in a variety of groups for years, Jesse Keeler knew that something was missing. “I was in all these punk bands, but I had a secret love for house music!” says the 31-year-old Toronto native. His old friend and Death From Above 1979 producer Al Puodziukas harboured a similar secret crush, so they teamed up to form MSTRKRFT (pronounced “mastercraft”). The pair got to work in Puodziukas’ studio, using computers to crank out their compositions. “This method has its benefits,” says Keeler. “It’s being recorded as it’s being ‘written,’ so that way, if something great happens, it’s not just an accident; it’s saved forever.” These raw tracks spread via peer-sharing websites and a handful of

U.K.-released singles and spawned a rabid following in Europe’s dance-crazy scene. This led to packed performance schedules in cities like Tokyo, London, Berlin and Stockholm. “We realized ‘Hey, we’re not playing to crowds of 10,000 in Canada!’” says Keeler. Their mix of hard-hitting beats and dirty synths eventually landed them a record deal with Toronto’s Last Gang Records, and before long they’d recorded their first album, *The Looks*. “We called it *The Looks* rather than *The Brains* or *The Talent* as it was a little rushed—but it was a good beginning,” says Keeler, laughing. Their new album (which is still untitled) is scheduled to be released in October and draws from an array of influences, such as rap, dancehall, disco and electro-R&B. “It has a very urban sound,” says Keeler. “It’s a lot tougher—and with better instrumentation this time!” MSTRKRFT continue their globetrotting this fall with a world tour. They also need to keep up with their high-profile remix schedule: As in-demand DJs, they have put together remixes for everyone from Usher to André 3000 and John Legend. And, whether it’s a remix or an original, they know when it works. “If you’ve got a room full of people, it just isn’t good if they’re not all dancing,” says Keeler. BRIONY SMITH



● **Irma Thomas**, the legendary soul queen of New Orleans and originator of classics like “Time Is on My Side,” pays tribute to the music of her hometown on *Simply Grand* (Rounder/Universal Music Canada). The album focuses on Thomas’ weathered, soulful voice and virtuoso blues-jazz-honky-tonk piano backing from Marcia Ball, Ellis Marsalis, Randy Newman, Norah Jones and Dr. John, who also played on Thomas’ first hit, released in 1960, “You Can Have My Husband (But Please Don’t Mess With My Man).” ● **Black Kids** dance between light American pop and dark English synth-pop by throwing different influences into a high-energy pop-disco mix and demanding that we all dance to it. On *Partie Traumatic* (Columbia Records/Red Ink), the quartet from Jacksonville, Fla., will win you over with crazy keyboards, Reggie Youngblood’s heartbroken lyrics and outrageously singable tunes like “I’m Not Going to Teach Your Boyfriend How to Dance With You.” ● On *Sunshine Lies* (Shout! Factory/Universal Music Canada), **Matthew Sweet** gathers a standout collection of musicians—Richard Lloyd, Ric Menck, Ivan Julian and Greg Leisz—to back up his catchy melodies, but there’s a freewheeling, almost psychedelic sensibility that sets his 10th album apart. It’s like Sweet is channeling the multi-faceted pop of the ’60s, and he hasn’t been this exuberant or fun in years. MARY DICKIE

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