



PROFILE

ELECTRO-SPARKS

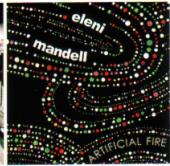
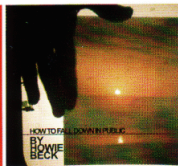


balls,” says Salam. That said, they’re the first to admit that they’re an unlikely duo. “I’m a big, loud person, and he’s this timid little man,” says Salam, laughing. A technological mix-up brought the pair together. After years in the hip-hop scene, Bertie, 31, returned to electro, his first love, in 2006. He was anxious for some feedback, so he created a MySpace page for his “band,” Thunderheist. “But there was no band—it was just me!” says Bertie. In the meantime, he’d been chatting online with Salam—a solo hip-hop artist—but he didn’t share his Thunderheist tracks with her for fear that she’d tease him for making dance music. One night, however, he dragged an unfinished song into the wrong chat window, and it ended up in Salam’s hands. He needn’t have worried about her reaction because she immediately recorded some vocals over the track.

Thunderheist had toured Europe, made it into high-profile festivals like SXSW and had their song “Jerk It” included in the hit film *The Wrestler*—all before releasing even one album. Now, the Toronto twosome can check that off their list; their debut self-titled CD (Big Dada/Outside Music) hit stores in March. On the CD, Isis Salam’s husky voice purrs over Graham Bertie’s thumping beats in club bangers like “Sweet 16.” “We do electro-pop with

the two decided to meet up in real life and join forces to make good on their name: Thunderheist, or the act of stealing everyone else’s thunder. It worked: The funktastic tracks they posted on MySpace resulted in plenty of Canadian gigs and several U.S. and European tours. “There was no love between us at the beginning of our first tour,” says Salam. “We both said, ‘I can’t deal with this person!’ But we just had to learn how to be in a room together so that we could build this thing.”

BRIONY SMITH



- Previously known for three lovely, quietly introspective albums he made in his Toronto bedroom, **Howie Beck** broke the mould for *How to Fall Down in Public* (Cloud 13 Records/Fontana North). The multi-talented multi-instrumentalist went to Paris to work with Gonzales and returned with his most sophisticated—and swinging—collection of songs yet. Be prepared to be bowled over by the understated country twang of “Over and Under,” the bouncy pop of “Watch Out for the Fuzz” and the midnight melancholy of “Beside This Life.”
- Inuit rocker **Lucie Idol** explores many kinds of cultural and sexual conflicts on her spirited second album, *Swagger* (Sun Rev Records). The Baffin Island-raised singer-songwriter puts a fresh spin on hard-edged American alternative rock and raw English blues, adding her high-energy vocals to deceptively upbeat songs like the devastating “Lovely Irene,” which deals with abuse.
- Sultry, L.A.-based singer **Eleni Mandell** moves beyond the intimate sound of her earlier albums to embrace a wider palette on *Artificial Fire* (Zedtone Records). Working with a talented band that includes guitarist Jeremy Drake and X’s DJ Bonebrake on vibes, plus various horn and string players, Mandell sings about God, love, romance and forgiveness on fast-paced songs like “Bigger Burn,” as well as the sadly sweet “Don’t Let It Happen” and “In the Doorway.”

MARY DICKIE

music