



# EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC

It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it—now you can too

By Lester Christgau

THERE IS NO MUSIC-WRITER'S GUILD. THERE'S no powerful lobby working to standardize per-word rates at a livable level or to get us adequate benefits: You think these designer dork glasses are cheap, friend? And do you have any idea what nicotine patches and regular blood work will run an uninsured music writer over the course of a year? We don't even want to begin to think about the cost of the cochlear implant we're going to need before 50.

Sitting in your cubicle, you may be having a hard time working up any sympathy for us: "Oh, yeah, it's gotta suck; what, with all the free CDs and the late nights hanging out with musicians in rock clubs drinking beer. And the waking up at 10:30 to write a paid opinion in your underpants—that's torture, right?"

Well, sure, it's a racket; but it's a tough racket. We're not going to clobber you with the details of our miserable lives, though. We'll suck it up, because we've no other marketable skills and it beats folding sweaters at the mall, or substitute teaching—or sitting in a cubicle.

So, as a public service, we're offering you an opportunity to actually change your life and enter the rarefied ranks of the professional music critics. Quit your day job, quit right now.

No musical training? No problem, don't need it. In fact, it'd only be an impediment. Not really knowledgeable about music history? Don't sweat it, we're here to help. Can't really write? Pshaw. Suffered major head trauma? Broca's Area of your brain nothing but slag? You won't even be using it.

Just take the template below, attend a show (hell, or don't, just check the local listings and pull a band name at random), and fill it in with the words at the right. Simple. Look at that, you're a rock critic, the envy of your friends and the life of the party.

Oh, by the way, that last expression is only metaphorical. Whatever you do, for God's sake, don't dance.

We've got no union, but we've got ethics.

From their \_\_\_\_\_ first number, \_\_\_\_\_, to their \_\_\_\_\_ last, \_\_\_\_\_ perfectly illustrated why they have been referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

Lead singer \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_ vocals intertwined with (where they didn't confront head-on) guitarist \_\_\_\_\_ licks. All the while, bassist \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_ work augmented \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_ approach to the skins.

Particular highlights were \_\_\_\_\_, in which \_\_\_\_\_ changed things up a bit with a \_\_\_\_\_ figure that was almost \_\_\_\_\_, and the truly \_\_\_\_\_, which drew whoops and cries from even the wallflowers and barflies.

For easy reference, think \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_.

Catch this band soon, so you'll be able to say later, "I saw \_\_\_\_\_ back \_\_\_\_\_."

## Adjectives &

### ALL-PURPOSE ADJECTIVES:

Provocative, effervescent, swaggering, lush, well-crafted, challenging, hypnotic, ambitious, organic, breezy, fierce, drop-dead gorgeous, raucous, autumnal, atmospheric, brooding, manic, experimental, seminal, free-wheeling, epic, druggy, quirky

### BUZZ NOUNS:

clown princes, legends, saviors, darlings, laughingstock, bastard children, pall-bearers

### PREFIX:

post-, proto-, ur-, neo-, nü-

### GENRE:

punk, cabaret, dancehall, arena rock, electroclash, metal, psychobilly, new wave, calypso, goth, emo, slowcore, funk, noise rock, dub, math rock, vegan death metal

### VOX:

howling, crooning, keening, five-octave spanning, soulful, ethereal, reedy, plaintive, larynx-shredding, soothing, rousing, virtuosic

### GUITAR:

jangly, slashing, chugging, grinding, angular, twangy, snarling, chiming, choogling, virtuosic

### BASS:

loping, insistent, meaty, slack, woozy, complex, rollicking, virtuosic

### DRUM:

thundering, tasteful

### EMBARRASSING PERFORMER:

A-ha, the Monkees, Duran Duran, Seals & Crofts; Cletus Judd, 1910 Fruitgum Company, Poison, the Go-Gos, Enuf Z'Nuff, Rick Dees, Ace of Bass, Meat Loaf, Dinah Shore, Cowboy Mouth, Mission U.K.

### CRITICAL FAVE:

Captain Beefheart, Big Star, Gram Parsons, Brian Eno, John Fahey, Stockhausen, Public Image Ltd., Hüsker Dü, Pere Ubu, Tom Waits, Randy Newman, Big Black, the Replacements, Sloan, Dusty Springfield, Solomon Burke

### CLOSER:

when they were young and hungry; before that bitch broke up the band; before the drugs ruined 'em; before rehab ruined 'em; before the Verizon commercials; before they had to go back to working at Starbucks

