

## Listen up

## A year of magical concerts, CDs

By Jon Bream  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

When I look back at 1997, magical concerts stand out:

Erykah Badu's organic voodoo at the Fine Line before her album came out; LeAnn Rimes' breathtaking voice in St. Cloud; Beck's wacky inventiveness at Edgefest and H.O.R.D.E.; the overwhelming vibe of Lilith Fair; Prodigy's electronic powerhouse at Lollapalooza in Denver; Vince Gill's emotional State Fair performance; Bob Dylan bouncing back from hospitalization with chilling emotion at Midway Stadium; John Fogerty's timeless, incendiary swamp rock at the Historic State Theatre; Radiohead's scary sonic serenade at the State; U2 proving what a great four-piece band it is, in the mammoth Metrodome; the Rolling Stones igniting Minnesota with Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" at the Dome; Prince's dazzling, inspired comeback at Target Center followed by an even more impressive musical triumph later that night at Paisley Park.

Ah, but readers invariably want those 10 best albums of the year:

➤ **1. Bob Dylan, "Time Out of Mind."** The old master reaches unexpected new heights with a brooding, often bleak blues collection about disillusionment with love and life. To hear an audio sample, dial 673-9050, then press 5311.



Photo provided by Universal Records  
Erykah Badu's jazzy "Baduizm" makes her rookie of the year.

➤ **2. Erykah Badu, "Baduizm."** She incorporates musical and cultural history into a contemporary context with the most original, organic new sound of 1997 — jazzy boho-hop soul. Her end-of-the-year concert album, "Erykah Badu Live," reinforces her emergence as rookie of the year. 5312

➤ **3. Radiohead, "OK Computer."** A deep, inscrutable album of chilling, thought-provoking futuristic pop about the troubled future of humankind. 5313

➤ **4. U2, "Pop."** Sure, these rock giants jumped on the electronica bandwagon, but their sonic experimentation had songs and spirituality at the core. Forget the hype of the Pop Mart tour; this is a superior pop album. 5314

➤ **5. Sneaker Pimps, "Becoming X."** British trip-hop

pop that's upsetting and soothing at the same time. "6 Underground" was one of the year's coolest singles. 5315

➤ **6. Janet Jackson, "The Velvet Rope."** Her beats are fresh, her flavas many and her topics challenging — from domestic abuse to lesbian love. A career album. 5316

➤ **7. Richard Buckner, "Devotion + Doubt."** Call this alternative country or art-folk, as the San Francisco singer-songwriter captures those despairing moments when love fades. 5317

➤ **8. Missy Elliott, "Supa Dupa Fly."** A soulful groove and smarts in the studio and on the streets make Missy the most valuable/versatile/visible player in hip-hop in '97. 5318

➤ **9. Roni Size/Reprazent, "New Forms."** More than 130 minutes of state-of-the-nation rhythms (jungle, drum 'n' bass, etc.) from England, infused occasionally with soulful vocals by Onaltee and Bahamadia. Conceptually fascinating. 5319

➤ **10. (t.e) Marianne Faithfull, "20th Century Blues" 5320 and Portishead, "Portishead" 5321.** It's a tossup between these pop noir entries. Come to the cabaret to hear the parched-voice princess capture the ethos of Kurt Weill on the concert disc, "20th Century Blues." "Portishead" is the British trip-hop equivalent of Dylan's disc — bleak, bittersweet minimalist obsessions with love and loneliness.

## Local scene was hopping in '97



Mike Merz lit up the town, and the mini-studio movement.

By Jim Meyer

Here's one opinion on the best local discs from a year that saw outpourings of electronica, rap and blues CDs, plus hundreds of rock and pop discs.

➤ **Mike Merz and the C@n o' Worms, "Buzzkill Nation."** Merz's talents were obscured in the acoustic trio Pimentos for Gus. Here, he melds the techno foolery of Beck and the savage wit of Elvis Costello. The boundless song forms and acute social criticism showed the exciting potential of the mini-studio movement. To hear an audio sample, dial 673-9050, then press 5322.

➤ **Michael Monroe, "As Far As I Can See."** Monroe, a rich-voiced eco-folkie, played all the instruments on this touching hymn to nature, recorded at his solar-powered studio. A work of art straight from the heart. 5323

➤ **Various artists, "Freeloaded Wednesdays."** Ambient hip-hop, rugged rap, modern soul, smooth jazz and happy funk all co-existed on this breakthrough compilation, which served as a musical map of the new underground. 5324

➤ **The Sandwiches, "Hey Cats, We're the Sandwiches."** Smart, childlike pop for those in need of an innocence implant. 5325

➤ **Willie Murphy and the Angel Headed Hipsters, "Monkey in the Zoo" 5326 and John Casev.**

"Super America" 5332. Two local treasures, one funky, one kind of folky, assess the state of the nation, while taking time to live along the way.

➤ **Reynold D. Philipsek, "20th Century Good-Bye."** Move over, Chuck Berry — and Paul McCartney. Thanks to the magic of multitracking, witty songwriter and guitar wiz Philipsek created this snappy symphony, and made authentic grandeur look easy. "Encore!" 5327

➤ **Probable Cause, "They On Somethin' "** The dam finally broke for local hip-hop recordings, but this hook-filled cassette soared above the crowd on superior verbal arrangement and airtight execution. 5328

➤ **Vicki Victoria, "I'm Having a Good Time."** Jonny Lang gave hundreds of bar bands renewed hope, but Victoria came back from hiatus to give vintage blues and jazz new vitality. 5329

➤ **Happy Apple, "Blown Shockwaves and Crash Flow."** Once again there were many quality jazz sessions that deserved a listen, but one group in particular seemed to demand attention. The two-horn quartet with no pianist took some getting used to, but Happy Apple's multimedical and polyrhythmic attack was a fresh departure from smooth pop. 5330 (Also: Motion Poets, "Standard of Living," and Jay Epstein with Anthony Cox and Bill Carrothers, "Long Ago.")

➤ **Ousia, "Why Is That a Four" 5331, Mindphase, "A Wave Length Away" and various artists, "Future Perfect: Music for Listening."** Maybe all the great lyrics have been written. If so, just listen to the psychedelic science and instrumental mindwarp that flowed from the local scene's crucial electronic and instrumental label, UltraModern/TRG.

➤ **Honorable mention: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, "The Great Game."** Information Society's Paul Robb and singer-songwriter Barbara Cohen teamed up on a mesmerizing concept album, which will get a well-deserved touchup on a major label next year.

— Jim Meyer is the Star Tribune's local-music columnist.