

play it

By John Lewis



Carroll County native **Tod Lippy** has done it again. The fourth and most recent installment (the "Imaginary Friends" issue) of **Esopus**, Lippy's magazine/art project, may be the best yet. It includes new work by artist Edward Ruscha, a poster by Germany's Ati Maier, fiction by Ethan Rutherford, Depression-era correspondence, and other intriguing surprises, along with a CD of inspired new songs by the Mekons' Jon Langford ("W"), B-52s Kate Pierson and Pat Irwin ("Bunnies"), Hüsker Dü's Grant Hart ("Barbara"), Animal Collective's Avey Tare ("Judy Blworker"), and other indie rock luminaries. Anyone with kids, or an active imagination, will probably enjoy these offbeat tunes about make believe rabbits, mice, and playmates. They're as curious and extraordinary as the magazine itself.

Ray Jozwiak plays each week at The Belvedere's 13th Floor, but he's hardly your typical lounge pianist. In fact, Jozwiak bills himself as a "gonzo" pianist, and the tag fits, as his latest CD, **Critic's Choice**, attests. Throughout the disc, Jozwiak displays a fractured, Monk-ish melodicism that's balanced by a steady left hand. All eight songs have a peculiar charm, and "Back Porch" injects a peculiar Joe Jackson-like vocal into what is basically a solo piano recording. Somehow, it all works and the disc qualifies as a most pleasant surprise.



It takes a band of swaggering retro geeks with exquisite taste and chops to cover Junior Walker's "Cleo's Mood," Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island," and Henry Mancini's "Soft Sounds" on the same disc. Baltimore's mighty Swingin' Swamis do just that on their new disc, **Sookie! Sookie!** An infectious groove cut by keyboardist Snackie Hillman, drummer Zak Fusciello, and saxophonist John Dierker anchors most of the material, and singer Melissa Sharlat adds a carefree sophistication to tunes

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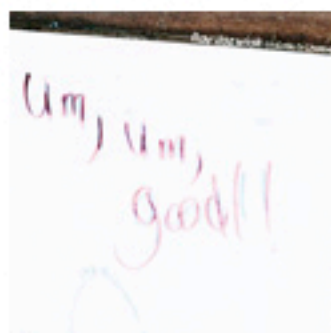
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