

home

radio

classifieds

features

citystate

hot spot

nation

ny mirror

sports

art

books

dance

film/movieclock

music

theater

horoscope

the best of nyc

eats

nightguide

letters

personals

work at the voice

about us

ny mirror

Fly Life

by Tricia Romano

Monsters Rock

November 20 - 26, 2002



Tuber ligations: Kapu Big Battal's Silver Potato
(photo: Rahav Segal)

Times are tough for the music industry, but even tougher for local indie record stores. Techno shop Temple Records closed down this past May, following the demise of Beyond Bass and Dubspot last year. It looked like Throb Records, which was forced to leave its longtime location on East 14th Street after losing its lease late last month, was next. But after a grueling search for a new storefront, owner Aldo Hernandez has found a space at 47 Orchard Street in Chinatown.

The store, which has been open nearly eight years, is a favorite among local DJs, but like other local indie shops, it was hurt by rapid declines in sales, both in-store and online. If the stock market hits weren't enough to spur a downward spiral, then 9-11 was, as Hernandez says, "the nail in the coffin. People who were part-time DJs lost their jobs. They'd come in and stare at everything for days. They couldn't afford to splurge anymore."

Scott Richmond, the CEO of Satellite Records and a former business partner of Hernandez, says that the dance industry's been particularly hard hit. "After September 11, we lost 75 percent of our business."

The increasing popularity of MP3s and CD burning has been another thorn in the industry's side. A study by comScore Media Matrix released earlier this month showed that online music sales fell 20 percent over the first half of 2002—compared to 6 percent for traditional CD sales. For a house producer, says Richmond, "a 20 percent drop is the difference between eating and not eating." MP3s particularly affect the dance music industry—especially with the

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Fly Life - "Monsters Rock"

By Tricia Romano

The Village Voice, November 20-26, 2002

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The answer might be lowering record prices—at least temporarily: Hernandez is knocking 30 percent off "old" records (anything from October or earlier), and in a happy twist of fate, the new Throb—which had its grand opening last Friday—is bigger than the previous space. And the rent is cheaper. Hallelujah.

We all know that rock critics really want to be rock stars. They got their shot Monday night at Arlene Grocery in the Battle of the Bands, a hot Star Search-style contest between Spin and Blender sponsored by www.Mediabistro.com.

Like any fight, there had to be some trash-talking. Caryn Ganz, the guitar player for the Spin band, Spinotaur, thumbed her nose at the competition. "We were contemplating a set of horrible LeAnn Rimes covers, but Blender already beat us to it," she sniffed.

Andy Pemberton, Blender ed in chief and bass player for Hookers 'n' Blow, countered: "I am sure Spin's covers will do better onstage than they do on the newsstand."

Judges Robert Christgau of the Voice, Kalefa Sanneh of The New York Times, and Suchin Pak of MTV News settled the dispute. They awarded the prize to Spinotaur, which gamely made their way through covers of "Genie in a Bottle" and the Raptures' "House of Jealous Lovers" without injuring themselves or the audience. The songs were unscathed, too.

Another supremely important showdown took place last Thursday, this one involving large monsters and soup cans. Yes, it was the pseudo-Japanese freak show Kaiju Big Battel, which transformed the Roxy into a super-wrestling arena with a giant cage in the middle of the dancefloor and two huge screens on either side. The room was packed with 1800 rabid fans chanting "Fight! Fight! Fight!"—they promptly booed when told they had to wait a few more minutes for the show to start.

Strains of "Eye of the Tiger" blared over the sound system and the battels began in earnest. The grossest moment came when the **Gomi-Man** tossed slime into the crowd—which was, I guess, his way of ingratiating himself with the audience. The best fight had the injured **American Beetle**—who was brought out in a wheelchair by a busty nurse—defeating the evil **Call Me Kevin** by nabbing the lucky charm from the giant cereal box. He was helped by a small leprechaun in a green suit—yes, I'm serious—and the indie-hipster crowd's patriotic shouts of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" The big championship match saw defending champion **Silver Potato** fighting to the death against **Uchu Chu the Space Bug**. The Silver Potato—a notorious hip-hop head who demonstrated break-dancing moves in between body slams—won the people's hearts. Fighting to the strains of "It's Like That," he raised a Run-D.M.C. shirt over his head in victory, and they roared in approval.