

## New 'Wave

**By Elaine McArdle** / It starts with weird feedback and a heavy drumbeat, then segues into a dream-like swirl of sound, with the drums anchoring it in something hard and real and alive. It's like you're dozing in and out of a throbbing consciousness that's even better than your dreams.

If there's a better song right now than "Day Sleeper," there's hope yet for radio. And that's just the first song on *Day Sleeper*, the EP released last fall by Longwave, a New York City band that's attracted some powerful admirers. The



Steve Schiltz, Mike James, Shannon Ferguson and Dave Marchese

other three are just as compelling: "Everywhere You Turn" is straight-ahead rock, heavy on the distortion; "Pool Song" is sort of Britpop sounding, catchy and tragic, while "State of Mind" showcases the heartfelt vocals of songwriter/guitarist Steve Schiltz. That this band is really good is something on which many people agree, including RCA, which in March released their full-length CD, *The Strangest Things*. Flaming Lips producer Dave Fridmann, who produced it and the EP, and both the Strokes (with whom Longwave share a manager) and the Vines took Longwave out on tour last year. (Plus Longwave's lawyer is Rosemary Carroll, who represents a bunch of famous musicians and is married to poet/lyricist/wildboy Jim Carroll.)

So who are these guys, and why is RCA counting on them being the next big thing? Let's ask Schiltz: "What if a woman walked up to you at a party and asked you what your music is like? What would you say?" Schiltz laughs. "Sometimes I say we're a guitar rock band with pop songs, but not Celine Dion pop songs," he answers. Thank God for that. But really, how would he answer that faux woman? "I would just say we sound like early U2 or Radiohead," Schiltz says. "And then, if she was someone I wanted to talk to, she'd think in her head, 'Yeah, right.' And I wouldn't be able to ever prove it, really, but if she heard us ...." Schiltz pauses. "Those are the bands of things we aspire to."

Schiltz is being modest. As soon as the woman heard the band's sound-drenched, dreamy yet punk, distortion-racked sound, she'd be another in a growing legion of believers. Many bands might want to try that kind of sound, but Longwave actually achieves it. What's the secret? "It is hard to hit, 'cause Bono is an amazing singer. That's not something I'm aspiring to, simply because I think they're amazing. I'm just trying to do something on my own," he says.

Schiltz, 24, just wanted to avoid the fate of everybody else in his hometown of Rochester, N.Y. — a job at Kodak after high school — when he started a band and began writing songs. At 18, he formed a band and was touring and cutting demos for Capitol; at 19, that group broke up and he moved to New York. Soon thereafter, he and guitarist Shannon Ferguson (whom he met as a fellow Citibank temp), bassist Dave Marchese and drummer Mike James hooked up and are riding a growing wave of success.

The band released the *Day Sleeper* EP so it would have something to tour behind last fall while waiting for the album to come out. Fenway Recordings, a small label in Boston, could produce the EP fast, and RCA didn't mind the band giving listeners a taste of something to come. (Three of the four songs on the EP are also on the album, although two have slightly different mixes.) Right now, Longwave is touring in both the U.S. and the U.K. with the Donnas and OK Go, and catching some serious radio time on college stations. In March and April, they're doing a CMI-sponsored college tour with the Ravenettes and the Moonie Suzuki.

Schiltz is especially proud that the EP and album were produced by Fridmann, who's also worked with Mercury Rev. "The first time we had to tell him we didn't like one of his ideas, it was a real crisis," Schiltz says. "The four of us had to sit down and go, 'I don't like it, do you like it? How are we gonna tell him, it's Dave Fridmann!'" But Fridmann was fine with it. "He was like, 'OK,'" Schiltz imitates in a low-key voice. "He's a normal guy."

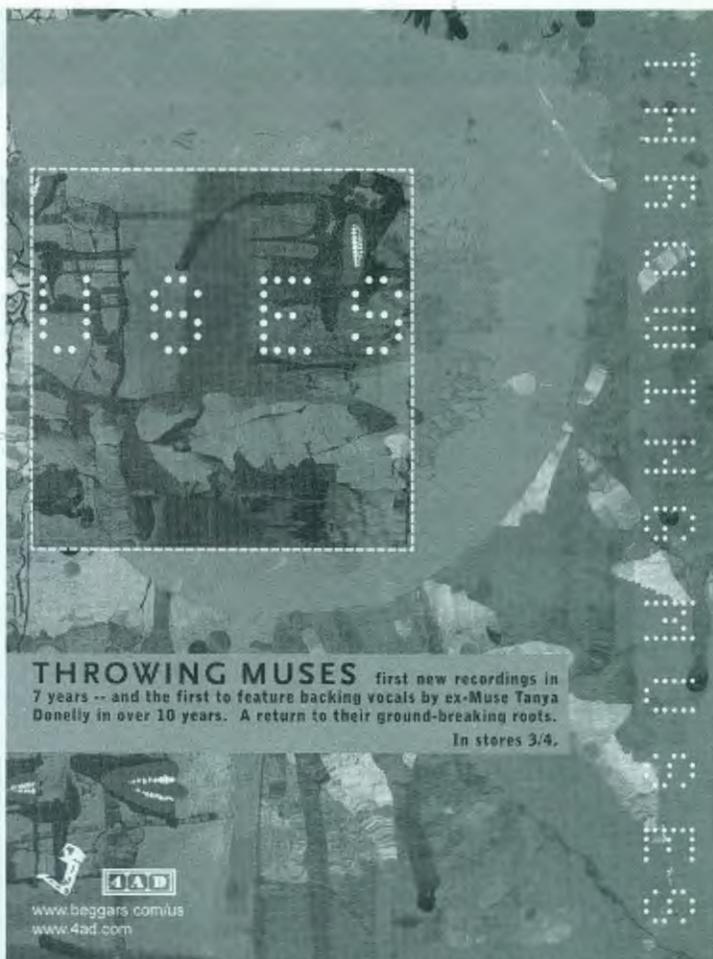
Fridmann was a primary reason the band signed with RCA, Schiltz adds. "They knew who he was, they were like, 'That's perfect,' so we thought, 'You get it, you do understand us,'" Schiltz says. "When I

**I don't like it, do you like it? How are we gonna tell him? It's Dave Fridmann!**

think about the record and everything we're doing right now, none of us knows what's gonna happen, but we all agree we made a record we really like, with a guy we really like. Everything so far's been completely the opposite of the major-label horror stories of new bands. So many bands get deals and then their sound completely changes and they make a record they really hate. We feel really fortunate."

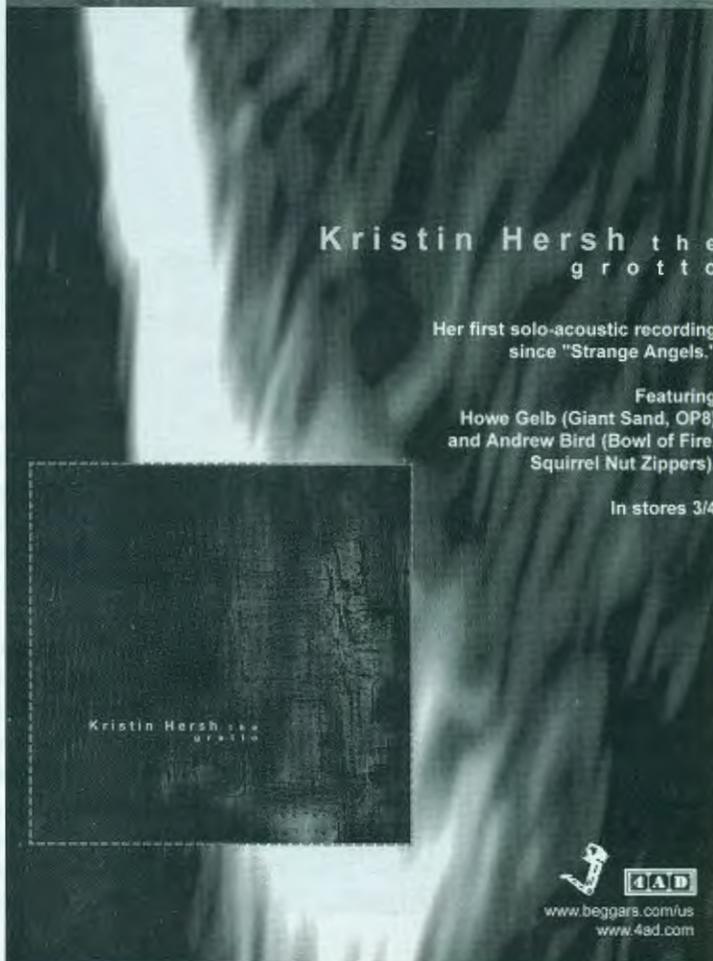
As for the apparently rosy future? "I would to hope to just be continuing to play music for the rest of my days, if I can work it out," says Schiltz. "I love being in the band, everyone loves the band, we're all happy with it, and happy with the record we made. Hopefully, it will sell enough to make RCA happy, so we can make another record and another record.

"If it doesn't, for whatever reason, I'll just keep playing." 



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