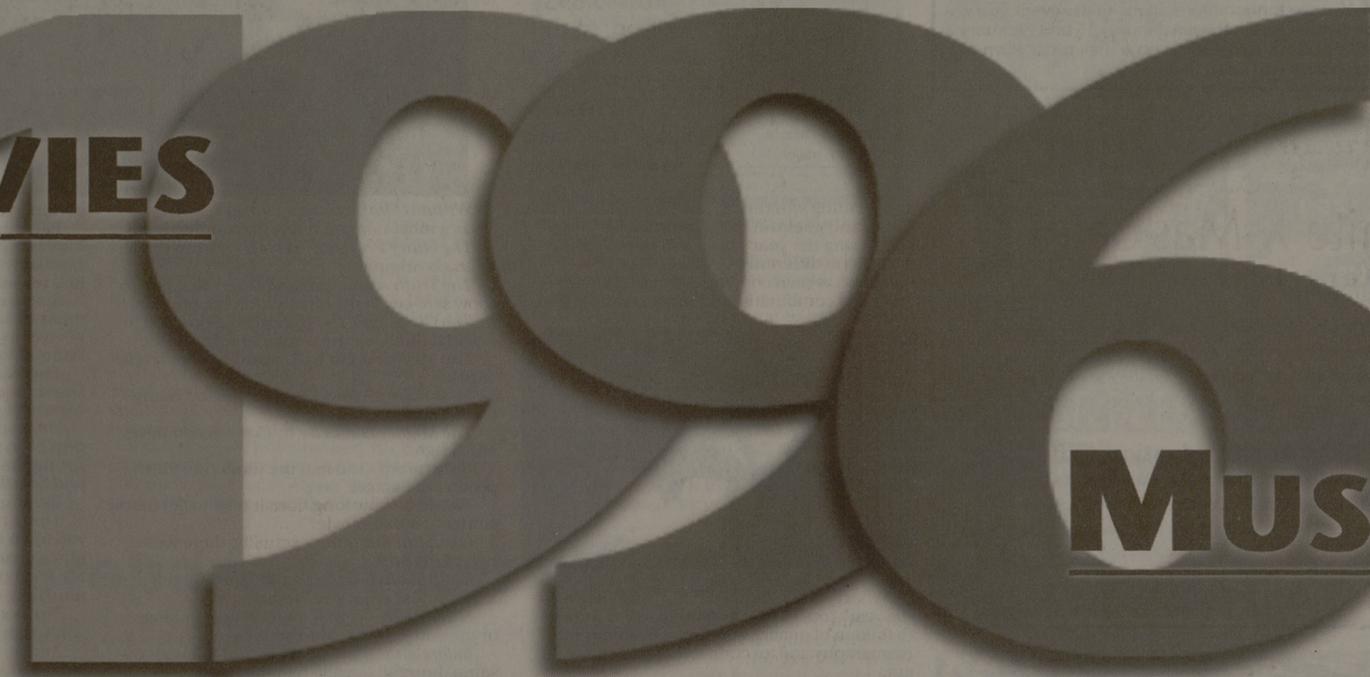


# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## MOVIES

## MUSIC



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1996 held few musical surprises, except the deaths of many talented artists. Heroin is back and has again gnawed its way into pop culture. Violence continues to claim artists. And MTV still has its filthy clutches on all current popular music. The following may seem like a music eulogy, but is really just a protest. Take up my cause; get a hearty helping of this suggested music — they're good bands you probably didn't hear this year. Enjoy, and bring on 1997.

## Pics of '96

Sting, *Mercury Falling* (A&M) — Not as good as *Ten Summoners Tales*, but more mature. Sting is a classic storyteller, and writes good studying music. *Mercury Falling* even includes some country-inspired tracks.

Cannibal Corpse, *Vile* (Metal Blade) — Aggressive, revolting and oh so entertaining. Get past the screaming, and listen to the guitar work: pure genius, and more musical than might be expected. But be forewarned — *Vile* is only for the most hard-core of music fans.

*Surrender to the Air* (Elektra) — One of the best experimental jazz albums in recent years. Musicians and their instruments, nothing more. Young and fresh, it features such musical czars as Jon Fishman and Trey Anastasio of Phish and John Medeski of Medeski, Martin & Wood.

MU330, *Chumps on Parade* (Dill) — Wow! MU330 proves there's more to high energy music than techno. A good album for those who have never heard ska (a reggae-ish offshoot), because MU330 makes ska more palatable by including lots of rock and catchy horn tunes. For ska fans, MU330 finally takes the genre in a new, rhythm-powered direction.

Descendents, *Everything Sucks* (Epitaph) — Descendents, pop punk rulers of the '80s, returned this year after a eight-year hiatus to kick some sense into the overblown punk scene. If you like Green Day (or any pop punk, for that matter), you'll like Descendents, because these guys did it first.

Mike Patton, *Adult Themes for Voice* (Tzadic) — Raise your hand if you remember Faith No More. Mike Patton, that now-defunct band's singer and frontman of Mr. Bungle, stretches the limits of listenability and sanity on this self-produced effort. Hey, there are no instruments — just pasted-together samples of Patton's vocal noise — but at least it's original.

Wesley Willis, *Feel the Power* (American) — Speaking of sanity, this guy has none. A paranoid schizophrenic, Willis belts out truly honest tunes about some of his favorite things. The music is exactly the same but is played at different tempos on all 20-something tracks.

Tool, *Enima* (Zoo) — Truly creepy. There's no telling where Tool gets this stuff, but they can't be beaten in the musical torture-evil-weird department. Marilyn Manson could learn from these guys: The reason Tool's music is so disturbing is because they are for real.

Beck, *Odelay* (DGC) — Not what you might expect. In other words, this is no "I'm a Loser"-type record. This former Austin street musician turns the simplest sounds and beats into the catchiest tunes. Lots of swaggy hip-hop, some country. A great "chill" album.

Fishbone, *Chim Chim's Bad Ass Revenge* (Rowdy) — Yes, these guys are old, but they still rock like wired teenagers. Big drums, big guitars, big horns and big attitude. Very Fishbone. Enough said.



Beck!



Stone Temple Pilots singer Scott Weiland had to enter rehab to battle his heroin addiction

## Costly Habit

Bands suffer when musicians fall victim to drug addiction.

As 1996 draws to a close, music is weeping. It has been five modern years since Nirvana brought grunge and alternative to the forefront of music. Five years since music has been turned on its head. Music has come to a standstill.

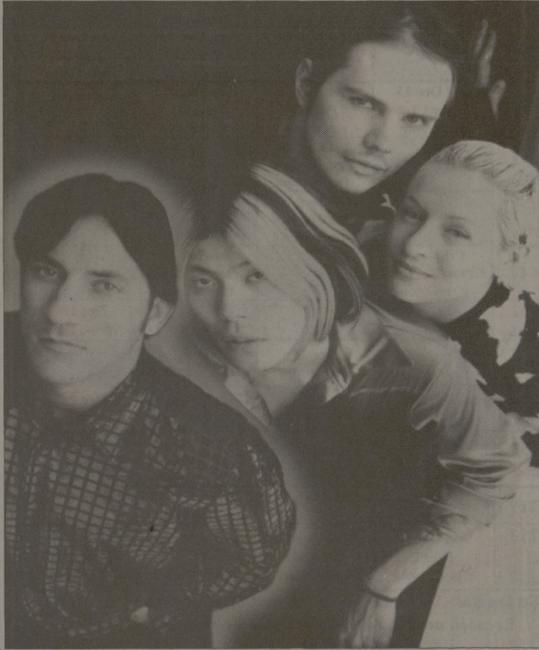
Maybe it has to do with all the heroin that's been going around. As if you needed a reminder, here's a recap of "the year in junk":

Stone Temple Pilot's lead singer Scott Weiland continued to struggle with his addiction. The band was forced to cancel its summer tour opening for KISS. This coupled with bad publicity because of the heroin issue probably contributed to the disappointing sales of *Tiny Music ... Songs from the Vatican Gift Shop*. It's a shame, too, because STP was finally developing a more unique sound (see: "Big Bang Baby").

But Stone Temple Pilots wasn't the only group rocked by heroin use this year. The bigger story was probably Smashing Pumpkins. Also at a career peak, the Pumpkins were touring in support of the hugely successful double album *Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* (one of the biggest double discs of all time at over 3 million copies sold) when they lost keyboardist Jonathan Melvoin to an overdose July 12. Adding insult to injury, drummer Jimmy Chamberlin was arrested for heroin possession and was subsequently booted out of the band.

Sublime, an up-and-coming punk-ska combo out of southern California, lost its lead singer Brad Nowell to a heroin overdose in May. This was quite a shame, too, because *Sublime*, released after Nowell's death, spawned the radio hit "What I Got."

Depeche Mode saw lead singer David Gahan's addiction come to a head this summer with his possession arrest following a cocaine-heroin overdose. While not the musical icon he used to be, Gahan offered the following in a July 21 article in the Los Angeles Times: "People seem to believe the myth that if you do it just once, you're fine, and now many people seem to be going straight to heroin, bypassing pot and all that and going straight to the devil."



Smashing Pumpkins drummer Jimmy Chamberlin was kicked out of the band after being caught with heroin by police.

## SILENCED

Heroin wasn't the only scourge of music in 1996. In September, violence claimed the life of Tupac Shakur, one of the most controversial but successful rap artists in recent years. Shakur was gunned down as he rode in a car driven by Marion "Suge" Knight, chief of Death Row Records. Shakur was 25 years old.

