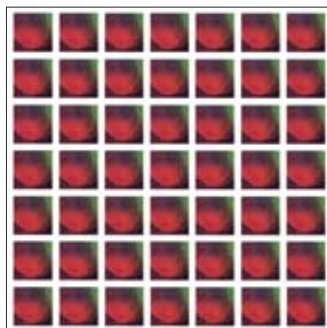


D U N G E N
4

<KEMADO RECORDS>

Not everyone can transcend genre and stretch the definition of the rock song like Dungen. On 4, the Swedish band exchanges its usual '60s-style jams for tightly orchestrated songs composed of jazz drums, glockenspiels, and grand pianos. Gone are the repeating verse-choruses of traditional rock, but the core Dungen sound remains intact, due largely to virtuosic composer Gustav Ejstes, who helms these delicate, yet powerful pieces by writing the arrangements and playing most of the instruments. The songs delve into folk rhythms and jazz cadences with Zappaesque vision, as Ejstes's soaring vocals transcend language (he sings in Swedish) to deliver the raw emotion of 4's songs. He makes his guitar sing, too, as the languorous notes fade into lush feedback, draping the album's solid foundation of piano music with another layer of gentle



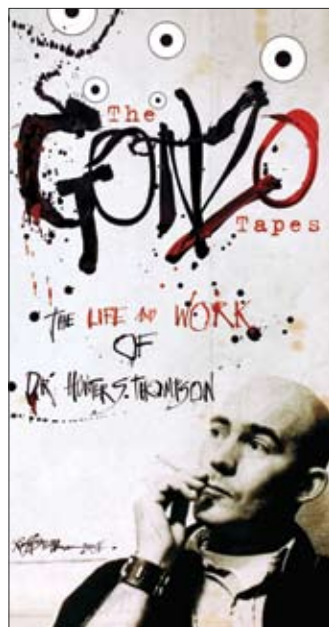
noise. Dungen's 4 is fiercely uncompromising and dramatic, without pretension—an entirely fearless album that is not afraid to wander into the unfamiliar.

HUNTER S. THOMPSON
THE GONZO TAPES:
THE LIFE + WORK OF
DR. HUNTER S. THOMPSON

<SHOUT! FACTORY>

Truth and fiction were fluid concepts for seminal "Gonzo" journalist Hunter S. Thompson. But, despite Thompson's penchant for exaggeration, there was

usually a morsel of truth in his drug-induced ramblings, political diatribes, and flights of fancy. This five-disc set was



painstakingly extracted from the mess of audio recordings left behind by "The Good Doctor," after his suicide in 2005. Assembled by director Alex Gibney, producer Eva Orner, and archivist Don Fleming, who received exclusive access to Thompson's archives for Gibney's upcoming documentary on the writer, the tapes span Thompson's most formative years: 1965–1975. *The Gonzo Tapes* begin with dispatches by Thompson as he stows away with the Hells Angels, talking quickly and quietly, as the Angels shout and bark like dogs around him. "I'm worn out from this goddamn weekend," he says, as he reminds himself to call his first wife, Sandy Conklin. What's captured on tape after that takes a depraved turn when Thompson and hell-raising lawyer Oscar Zeta Acosta take a trip to Las Vegas in their search for the American Dream. This trip inspired the sprawling opus, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, but the tapes also capture the solid reporting of Thompson the journalist, giving his iconoclastic

view of Las Vegas and the social climate of the time. Thompson and Acosta stop by Terry's Taco Stand, USA ("Don't judge your taco by its price," Acosta says. "I advise you to get a taco burger."), and hit it off with the waitress and chef, as they all discuss the American Dream. And, like these folks, the people and culture captured on the Vegas tapes would later become brushstrokes in Thompson's impressionistic masterwork. And these audio vignettes of him at work (the other discs follow him to Africa and Saigon) prove that behind his outrageous persona, Thompson had the substance to back up his always over-the-top style.

DARKER MY LOVE
2

<DANGEROUS BIRD RECORDS>

If Syd Barrett, the late singer of Pink Floyd, had gotten the opportunity to sit in with Mudhoney, something resembling *Darker My Love* might have been the result. The Los Angeles-based band's latest release, 2, alternates between muddy, haze-filled stoner jams and British psychedelia fit for lounging around a milk bar with George Harrison and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. "Add One to the Other One" grows from delicate atmospheric into a searing Black Sabbath-style song, with fierce electric guitar that approximates a blues harmonica.



The band pushes into more lush arrangements, complementing Tim Presley's spaced-out vocals with bouncing Clavinet and organ lines by new member, Will Canzoneri. *Darker My Love*

eschews the peripatetic listening habits of the iPod Generation by creating a perfectly realized and phenomenal record: good from needle drop to vinyl flip.

B I G B A N G
FROM ACID TO ZEN

<GRAND SPORT/OGLIO RECORDS>

Sometimes the best Americana doesn't come from America. Norway's BigBang captures the crunchy guitars, harmonized vocals, and anthemic drumming that filled stadiums in the heyday of arena rock in the United States. There are guitar solos aplenty (check out the old-school jam on "Where the World Comes to an End") to go along with singer Øystein Greni's country



sensibility that often seems to channel Ryan Adams. Range is the name of the game: *From Acid to Zen* wanders from funky blues strums on "My First Time" to '70s prog on "Savior Soul." Yet, at BigBang's core is a down-home rock sound—drawing on artists from Neil Young to the Black Rebel Motorcycle Club—that balances the raucous with the melodic. The sound could have come from the American South, but instead, it came from Scandinavia. But the feeling and *idea* of an American dream—not that pulling-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps business, but, instead, the quintessential American freedoms of extended summer roadtrips, lazy afternoons drinking beers on the porch, starting a band in your garage—holds together every BigBang song. They're the United States of Rockitude.