

Breaking up is hard to do, but when stars regroup, striking new constellations appear

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ON THE
RECORD

Long, long ago, survivors of major rock-group break-ups would scramble from the wreckage, dust themselves off and look around for someone new to perform with. As a result we'd get "supergroups" like Blind Faith or Crosby, Stills, Nash and occasionally Young or the early Jefferson Starship.

And the hoopla would commence.

Today we get some of the hoopla, but neither the musicians nor the fans seem to take these rock 'n' roll summits quite so seriously. Often, new combinations like Damned Yankees and Bad English have to prove themselves once again. Others, like country's Trio and The Highwaymen and pop's Traveling Wilburys, are immediately accepted but seen as "special events" more than long-term bands.

Three new albums demonstrate how varied the "supergroup" phenomenon is in the '90s.

THE TRAVELING WILBURYS: "Volume 3" (Wilbury Records/Warner Bros.); produced by Spike and Clayton Wilbury. ★★★½

Anyone looking for intense rock 'n' roll from the Traveling Wilburys need only take note of the superstar pickup band's second album's title: "Volume 3." Then give a listen to "The Wilbury Twist" — a demented-danceable descendant of both "The Loco-Motion" and "The Time Warp" — and you'll know for a fact that the Wilbury boys have a penchant for the silly.

Yet they're charmers. "Volume 3" may not be quite as fresh and ingratiating as "Volume 1" (that would be nigh on impossible), but it's still packed with smiles and 3-minute songs. George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne (Spike, Boo, Muddy and Clayton Wilbury, respectively — formerly Otis, Lucky, Charlie T. and Nelson ...) get together for a good time, and together make delightful good-time music.

Comparisons with "Volume 1" are inevitable. The trade-off lead vocals and now-distinctive Wilbury background chorus are reprised throughout "Volume 3" (fascinating, isn't it, how such famous voices and styles can mix to create something new?), and the group-acoustic guitars continue to ring and resonate. But Lefty Wilbury — the late Roy Orbison — is much missed. His emotive solos and lyricality pushed the first album a notch higher than his buddies can

achieve without him. Also, earlier songs like "Dirty World" and Dylan's Springsteen satire "Tweeter and the Monkey Man" had a bite not found in the new batch.

So, "Volume 3" is no clone. In fact, the lead-off track/first single, "She's My Baby," shows off a harder-rocking bent, with help from guest blue-rock guitarist Gary Moore. Subsequent songs are sprinkled with word play, inside jokes and '60s homages. Dylan's "7 Deadly Sins" is sort of a reverse "Book of Love," for instance — and isn't particularly successful. The lighter "New Blue Moon" works better. The four tunefully take on more serious topics in "The Devil's Been Busy" (toxic waste and police violence, among other things) and the hillbilly rocker "Poor House" (about d-i-v-o-r-c-e). "If You Belonged to Me" and "You Took My Breath Away" offer nice harmonies and not a little wistfulness.

One thing that's surprising is the vocal dominance of Dylan and Petty. Lynne's often present, especially in the choruses, but, except for a few of the trade-off leads. George Harrison's warble seems hardly a major factor. His trademark guitar is readily identifiable, though.

HINDU LOVE GODS: "Hindu Love Gods" (Giant-Reprise); produced by Andrew Slater and Niko Bolas. ★★★½

Warren Zevon can qualify as "super," and R.E.M. can certainly qualify as a "group." So if you get them all together (minus Michael Stipe), can you really call them a supergroup?

No, you call them the Hindu Love Gods. And the surprising blues-rooted, down-and-ragged rock 'n' roll on their new album is nothing short of spectacular.

Following the lead of Neil Young's "Ragged Glory," the Hindu Love Gods took the garage-band approach to recording their self-titled debut. Said folk-rocker Zevon, "It goes against my compulsive nature to cut an album straight through in one day, mistakes and all. But I guess that's what contributed to the album's freshness."

Zevon and his 'terminally hip R.E.M. buddies go back to early 1984, when Zevon met members of the Athens, Ga., band when they were still just a curiosity on the college music scene. They eventually got around to pickin' some tunes.

In the case of the Hindu Love Gods, the pickin' involves covers of an unlikely mix, most of them virtually dripping in the blues. There's a cover of Woody Guthrie's "Vigilante Man," Willie Dixon's "Wang Dang Doodle," Muddy Waters' "Mannish



Traveling Wilburys, above, consist of Jeff Lynne, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, George Harrison. Their "Volume 3" contains delightful, good-time tunes. Hindu Love Gods, right, featuring Peter Buck, Bill Berry, Mike Mills and Warren Zevon, offer spectacular, blues-drenched melodies.



Boy" and Robert Johnson's "Walkin' Blues" and "Travelin' Riverside Blues."

And just to keep things mixed up good, there's a cover of the Georgia Satellites' "Battleship Chains" and Prince's "Raspberry Beret."

A spontaneous jam session it is. But it's much more. It brings the blues to life.

TEXAS TORNADOS (Reprise Records); produced by Bill Halverson and Texas Tornados. ★★★

For the Traveling Wilburys and Hindu Love Gods, "supergroup" projects are a lark, a bit of maybe-profitable fun on the side. They surely had no trouble stirring record company interest.

For the Texas Tornados it's undoubtedly a different story. These graybeards aren't guys on top of the music world — they're nearly ghosts. They must've had a huge mucky-muck enthusiastic about what they were up to for there to be an album

to review.

And thank goodness there was. The 10 songs on this album by Doug Sahm, Freddie Fender, Flaco Jimenez and Augie Meyers may not appeal to the vast mainstream attuned to the Wilburys, but this is a pleasurable musical creation — a swinging evocation of north-and-south-of-the-border Tex-Mex bar music.

Sahm, long admired for his multi-genre skills, was leader of the Sir Douglas Quintet, purveyors of "She's About a Mover," "Mendocino" and other tasty '60s tunes. Fender, of course, was prince of the tear-in-your-root-beer weeper in the '70s, singing "Before the Next Teardrop Falls" and "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." Jimenez is an accordionist far-famed for his Mexican dance music and Meyers was the influential organist of the Sir Douglas Quintet.

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Elektra releases the soundtrack to 'Civil War' series

NEW YORK (AP) — Elektra Nonesuch has released the official soundtrack recording to "The Civil War," the five-part documentary by Ken Burns that has become the most popular offering ever presented on public television.

The series, which made its debut the week of Sept. 23, traces the personal and political fortunes of both the leaders and the soldiers who were involved in America's greatest internal conflict.

Among the well-known American songs featured in "The Civil War" are "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Dixie," "Shenandoah" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

The theme music to the series, "Ashokan Farewell," a haunting fiddle tune, opens and closes the 30-track recording. It also includes two spoken word excerpts — an opening track taken from writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and a reading of a love letter from a Union soldier to his wife which serves as the finale of the recording.

"The Civil War" will be rebroadcast in its entirety on most PBS stations beginning in mid-December and continuing into early 1991.

A wily Fox gives the nod to a multiyear contract

HOLLYWOOD (UPI) — Michael J. Fox has entered into a multiyear contract with Universal Pictures and Universal Television that gives the two organizations the rights to the first look at all projects developed by his Snowback Productions.

Fox's services as an actor will be exclusive to Universal for up to two additional pictures following completion of "The Hard Way" for Universal and "Doc Hollywood" for Warner Bros.

Fox and Universal have enjoyed a successful and profitable relationship. He has starred in four films for Universal: three "Back to the Future" pictures and "The Secret of My Success."

Jackson plans USSR shows

Scrrips Howard News Service

HOLLYWOOD — Swamped by thousands of letters from fans in the Soviet Union, Michael Jackson says he wants to add stops in Russia to his next European tour.

"I'm more than willing to moonwalk across whatever Checkpoint Charles get in the way," says the Gloved One.

