

U.K., I'm O.K.

The Stone Roses: The band's 1989 debut, [The Stone Roses](#), blew open the Manchester scene and pumped life into a British pop scene on life support. While the Roses inexplicably waited over five years to release their second album (they broke up soon after), the exuberant innocence of their debut stills holds up today.

Oasis: Their debut [Definitely Maybe](#) (1994) re-energized the British scene, and the hit-packed ([What's the Story](#)) [Morning Glory?](#) (1995) broke the group internationally, but don't look past what could be Oasis' final release, [Standing on the Shoulder of Giants](#) (2000).

Radiohead: The finest group in the world right now, hands down. Radiohead's willingness to experiment and vocalist/guitarist Thom Yorke's emotional genius make [My Iron Lung](#) (EP) (1994), [The Bends](#) (1995) and [OK Computer](#) (1997) three essential purchases.

The Verve: Fueled by the epic "Bitter Sweet Symphony" and [Richard Ashcroft's](#) world-weary vocals, [Urban Hymns](#) (1997) is an album of powerful beauty. Fans should also check out Ashcroft's just-released solo effort, [Alone with Everybody](#) (2000).

Ride: [Nowhere](#) (1990)

Cocteau Twins: [Heaven or Las Vegas](#) (1990)

Swervedriver: [Mezcal Head](#) (1993)

Portishead: [Dummy](#) (1994), [Portishead](#) (1997)

Tricky: [Maxinquaye](#) (1995)

Stereolab: [Emperor Tomato Ketchup](#) (1996)

Supergrass: [In It for the Money](#) (1997), [Supergrass](#) (2000)

Massive Attack: [Mezzanine](#) (1998)

Seattle Sounds

Nirvana: With Seattle's vital late '80s/early '90s scene now seemingly light years away, it's easy to forget the incredible impact [Nevermind](#) (1991) had on the business in '91 and '92. Most importantly for the alternative scene, the album's unexpected success made it possible for young bands and noise to thrive on the charts again. All of Nirvana's albums remain classics, including [Bleach](#) (1989) and [In Utero](#) (1993).

Pearl Jam: Commercially, Pearl Jam played Robin to Nirvana's Batman as the Seattle scene exploded in 1991. Their debut, [Ten](#) (1991), and songs like "Even Flow" and "Jeremy" hit the airwaves with a vitality sorely missing at the time. Pearl Jam's latest North American tour will kick off this August, in support of their sixth studio album, [Binaural](#) (2000).

Soundgarden: Easily the best album of Soundgarden's career, [Superunknown](#) (1994) is a sonic stunner that dominated radio in '94 with tracks like "Black Hole Sun," "Fell on Black Days" and "The Day I Tried to Live."

Alice in Chains: Alice in Chains broke through with the gritty and often excellent [Dirt](#) (1992), but I'll take the more reflective [Jar of Flies](#) (EP) (1994) for one of my desert island discs.

Sunny Day Real Estate: Formed just after the Seattle scene broke open, Sunny Day Real Estate deserves far more attention for [How It Feels to Be Something On](#) (1998) and [The Rising Tide](#) (2000), two albums I've been spinning again and again while writing this article.

Harder, Noisier, Edgier

Nine Inch Nails: Trent Reznor brought a wicked blend of industrial, metal rave and Prince-styled pop to the top of the charts with [The Downward Spiral](#) (1994). His latest two-disc opus, [The Fragile](#) (1999), is even more intense and