

## NAVIGATOR

\*= new section!

[Personals](#)  
[Classified](#)  
[How to Reach Us](#)  
[Letters](#)

**Web Exclusive:**

[Web Directory](#)  
[Cool Sites of the Week](#)  
[Archive](#)  
[Best of Portland](#)  
[King-56 crash stories](#)

**News:**

[500 Words](#)  
[News Buzz](#)  
[Healthcare: hospice care](#)  
[Business: local CEOs](#)

**Music:**

[HeadOut](#)  
[CD Review: Jeff Buckley](#)  
[Rock: Dirty Three](#)  
[Recorded Music Reviews](#)  
[Capsule reviews](#)

**Screen:**

[The Truman Show](#)  
[Capsule Reviews](#)

**Food and Drink:**

[Food Story: Wild Eating](#)  
[Dish Listings](#)  
 \* [Beervana](#)  
[Recommended Restaurants](#)

**Words:**

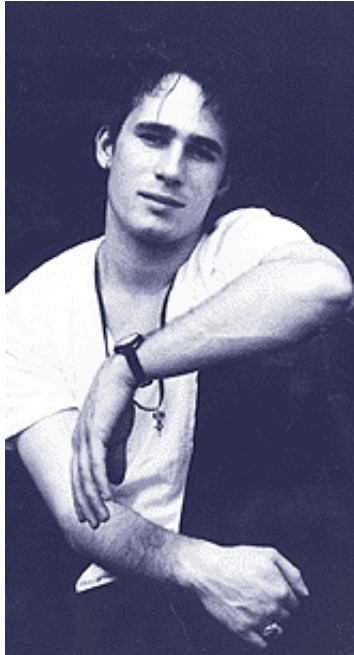
\* [Books of the Month](#)  
[Words listings](#)

**Performance:**

[Dance Review](#)  
[Performance listings](#)

\* **Visual Arts:**

[Art review](#)  
[Visual Arts listings](#)



## Music

CD REVIEW

### Graceful Exit

The posthumous release of Jeff Buckley's unfinished final album only deepens the loss of a legend in the making.

BY KAREN E. STEEN

[ksteen@wweek.com](mailto:ksteen@wweek.com)

### Sketches for My Sweetheart the Drunk

**Jeff Buckley**  
 (Columbia)

In the end, where he went was almost as mysterious as where he had come from. Though the son of musicians taught himself to play guitar at age 5, Jeff Buckley seemed to come out of nowhere in 1993, when his stunning debut, *Grace*, revealed a massive talent already full-grown. Last year, when he took a reckless swim in Memphis, Tenn.'s Wolf River and drowned at age 30, his life came to mirror the arc of his transfixing multi-octave voice: an unpredictable trajectory that soared, seemingly unweighted by concern for where the note--the song, his promising career--would end up.

Buckley left behind an unfinished album, and the decision of what to do with the material was difficult. Fans who had already waited four years for a follow-up desperately wanted to hear it, but his family and friends hesitated to publish a work in progress. A year later Columbia has released a two-disc album as *Sketches for My Sweetheart the Drunk*, emphasizing that this is not the finished product Buckley envisioned. The first disc features songs Buckley had recorded and mixed but was unsatisfied with; the second contains alternate mixes and some primitive 4-track recordings he made solo, in preparation for an upcoming session with his band.

It's hard to know how the real *My Sweetheart the Drunk* would have compared to *Grace*. Even in its current form, it's no sophomore

**Culture Buzz:**

\* [SUMMER GUIDE](#)

\* [Savage Love](#)

\* [Real Astrology](#)

[Walkabout](#)

slump. In the opener, "The Sky Is a Landfill," Buckley leads off with Led Zep-like bombast, showing the bravado of a man who would jump into a river fully clothed. Throughout the album, the bold moves keep reemerging: a thunder of kick drum on "Nightmares by the Sea"; metaly guitar squeals on "Yard of Blonde Girls"; Middle Eastern-sounding vocals wavering up and down the scale on "You & I"; charged and trembling emotion on the luminescent "Morning Theft."

Though too innovative to be mainstream rock, Buckley's music doesn't approach the indie realm, either: His influences are too varied. The supersexy R&B smoker "Everybody Here Wants You" nods to early Prince. The anthemic "Haven't You Heard," recalls Rush and Queen, while shades of Robert Plant thread through almost every vocal reach. The late Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, to whom the album is dedicated, comes to mind when Buckley works his range on the raga-like "New Year's Prayer."



[top of the page](#)

The second disc is not one for CD-shuffle mode. Most of the songs Buckley recorded by himself are unlistenable; only "I Know We Could Have Been So Happy Baby" and "Jewel Box"--both similar to the songs on the first disc in scope and arrangement--begin to give a glimpse of what could have been. The closer, the blues standard "Satisfied Mind," is the album's best opportunity to hear Buckley's guitar work, usually overshadowed by his vocal talents. It also leaves his fans with perhaps the only comfort available: "One thing's for certain when it comes my time," he sings, "I'll leave this old world with a satisfied mind."

Earlier, on the lost-love song "Morning Theft," Buckley sings, "There's no relief in this/I miss my beautiful friend," which is exactly how devotees will feel as they listen to these parting shots. The album's moments of piercing beauty don't offer consolation as much as they add to a great loss.

Originally published: *Willamette Week* - June 10, 1998

Originally published: *Willamette Week* - June 10, 1998

ÿ