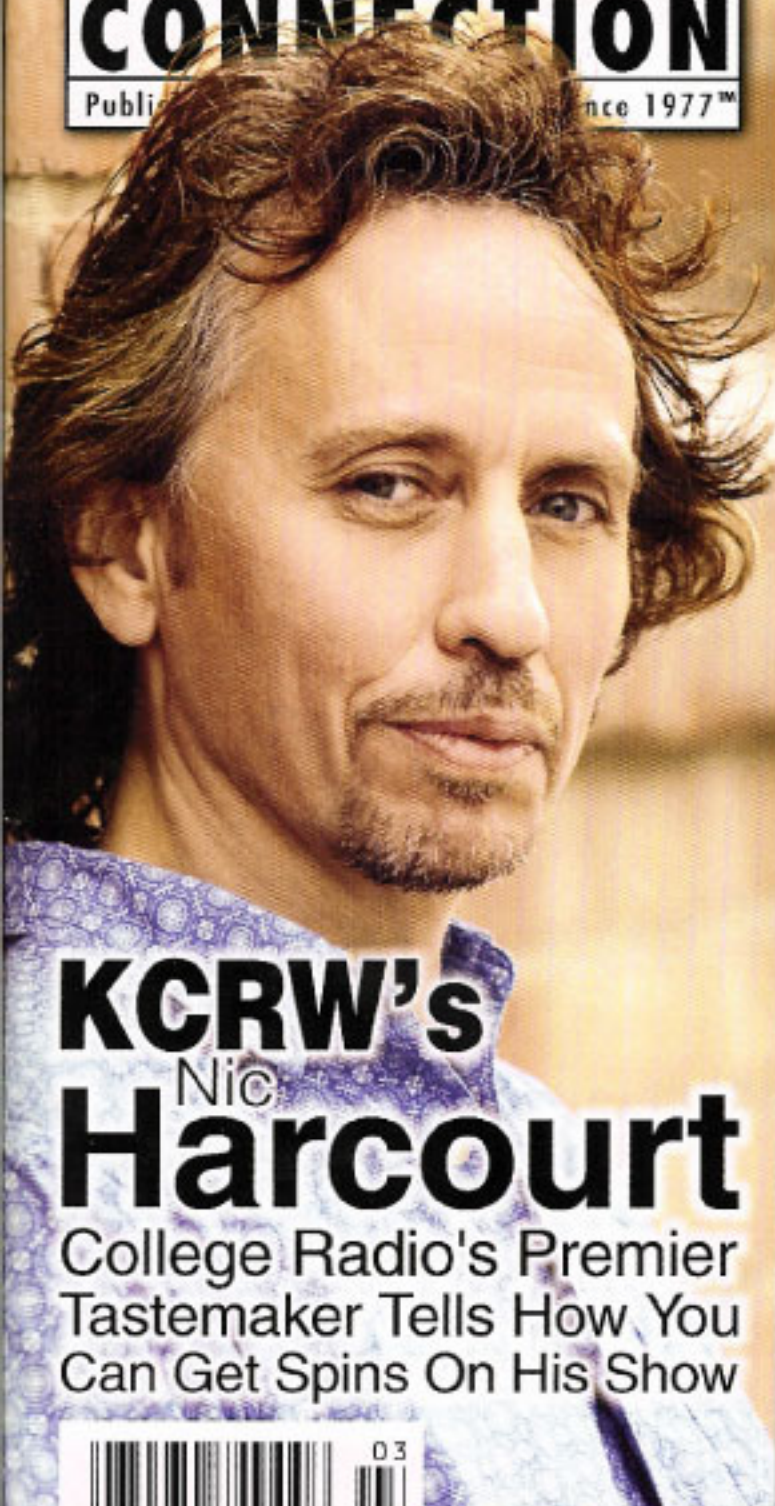


# DOUBLE DIRECTORY: College Radio / Indie Promoters

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**MUSIC**  
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**A&R REPORT • CLASSIFIEDS • REVIEWS**

## DEMO CRITIQUES

Music Connection's executive committee rates demos on a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 represents the lowest possible score, 10 represents the highest possible score. A final score of 5 denotes an average, competent artist demo. For more information, see Demo Submission Guidelines below.



### Ruthie Bram

Contact: Gail Bram, 818-613-4542; 818-766-1974; brammdpa@msn.com  
Web: NA  
Seeking: Label/Prod./Booking Agt.  
Style: Pop/Dance

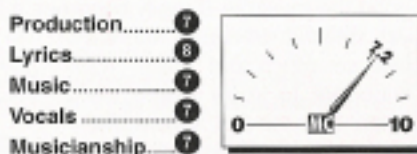
Though just 15, this singer/songwriter/co-producer shows a remarkable grasp of her genre on these novice recordings. "Groove To The Music," though formulaic dance-floor fodder, is hooky and tight. The ballad, "I Want To Sing For You," shows she has a strong voice and point of view beyond her years — call it mature teen-pop. A party song, "Break Out," like the others, is a well-crafted cut. Scary to think what a seasoned, connected producer could do with this.



### Amber Estrada

Contact: 707-252-6862  
Web: shoestringangel.com  
Seeking: Label Deal  
Style: Pop/Rock/Folk

Based on this six-tune disc, Estrada's style is blues-based pop with rock edges ("Don't Tell My Heart" and "Sorry For Nothing") that sometimes echoes the work of Stevie Nicks, Sheryl Crow, and perhaps Melissa Etheridge. Meanwhile, the smoky, late-night "Chaotic Sanctity" suggests it's a song that Noreah Jones could take a crack at. Estrada's own voice is an appealing instrument, and her tendency to dip in pitch somehow works for her.



### Michael Benfield

Contact: 310-390-1153; BruceMoni@yahoo.com  
Web: NA  
Seeking: Label/Publishing  
Style: Blues-Pop/Americana

Produced at top Hollywood studios with pro backup talent, this disc has plenty of skills on display. Most compelling to our ears is "A God of Your Own," an intimate song with a string arrangement that evokes comparisons to Cat Stevens and the Moody Blues. "Dog Eat Dog" and "Monkey..." however, underscore what handicaps this project — the artist's voice does little to elevate these songs. Still, Benfield could open some publishers' doors with this CD.



### Speed of Sound

Contact: 323-655-4346; pgervasi@netzero.com  
Web: www.speedofsoundmusic.com  
Seeking: Label/Mgmt.  
Style: Modern Rock

A four-song disc from this talented, muscular fivesome could have been much better if they'd taken it a couple steps higher in terms of production quality. As it is, the material here, which is promising stuff, is dragged through the mud by poor recording. We hear good things — passion, dynamics, musicianship, hooks, melodies — that remind us of Filter. The band should turn the knobs over to a producer who can capture their potential.



### J.C. & Amphibius

Contact: 817-806-2031; wct.contact@jc-amphibius.com; kisschase01@hotmail.com  
Web: www.jc-amphibius.com  
Seeking: Label/Distr./Publishing  
Style: Alt-Pop

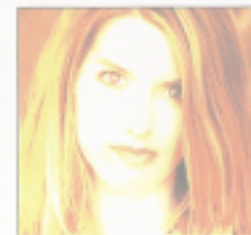
Somber shades of Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, John Cale, and Lou (Berlin) Reed color this lounge-y, altogether fetching album, *Resurrection Jingles*, by a pair of English stylists. No one can out-melancholy the Brits, and vocalist J.C. has that heart-breaking, yet somehow hopeful, tone that grows on you and could connect with the Morrissey legion. Pianist Amphibius complements with skill and sensitivity. KCRW should check out this well-travelled duo.



### Arren B.

Contact: Curtis Russell/Emage, 312-339-2366; musicexecutive@aol.com  
Web: NA  
Seeking: Label Deal  
Style: R&B/Pop/Funk

Arren B. has a deftly realized project that shows imagination in weaving unexpected elements into his material. Front and center is B.'s assured presence as a lead vocalist. The funky, bluesy "Here We Go Again" is a good opener. The percussive dance cut, "Throw Your Hands Up," has a strong Middle Eastern flair. A wet, bassy hip-hop synth-line hovers heavily over "Can't Take No More." This artist still needs to come up with a killer single, though.



### Alicia Grant

Contact: Maribel Music, 310-269-0007; contact@aliciagrants.com  
Web: aliciagrants.com  
Seeking: Label/Distribution  
Style: Pop/Rock/Alt.

Grant's disc shifts in mood and texture from song to song, yielding a result that is hit and miss. Her opener, "Jezebel," is not her strongest song, and it turned us off with its clichéd chorus lyric. Better is "Solo," whose voice-effects help create a mysterious, more alternative outing. Best is "Why Do I Fall," a really nice, melodic track that works on many levels. This attractively packaged album captures a solid singer with clear, clean production quality.



## DEMO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Send package to: Demo Critiques c/o Music Connection, 16130 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 540, Encino, CA 91436. All submissions should include the following four items:

1. CD or Cassette, no more than three songs will be reviewed.
2. Unreleased photograph (no larger than 6x10).
3. Brief biography with a contact name and phone number.
4. Legible lyric sheet for the three songs being submitted.

Send us the identical package you plan to send out to the A&R community, management companies, publishers and attorneys. All packages are selected at random and reviewed by an executive committee. Packages are not selected in advance, but rather, at the very time they are to be critiqued for a given issue. All submissions become the property of Music Connection and will not be returned. Because of the tremendous amount of packages we receive, we unfortunately cannot guarantee that each and every demo will be reviewed. If you are submitting an indie CD for review and do not have distribution with an established distributor, your product will be reviewed in Demo Critiques. If your indie CD does have distribution with an established distributor, it will be reviewed in Disc Reviews.