downstairs in a dressing room at Chicago’s Double Door. Wilco frontman Jeff Tweedy has just been propositioned. Cynthia Plastercaster, the infamous Chicago sculptress, would like to add Tweedy’s penis to her collection for a documentary, the camera shoots expectantly, and his wife, Sue, asks tentatively, “Honey,” she asks tentatively, “Yes, I want my penis cast?” Tweedy retorts, “No, you don’t!” she yells.

“I do, too,” Tweedy insists. The True Adventures of the Plastercaster. “I don’t think your fans should see the girth of your manhood.” “I’m willing to accept reality.” Finally Plastercaster, typically Chicagoan. This is a scene one might expect to encounter in Chicago, where roots figure into local avant-garde/Sonic You Tubing. Noise Pop Chicago 2000, a free music festival, was scheduled in the same community as the Tweedy’s. Sue Miller isn’t just another rock wife: She and Julia Adams operated the recently closed Lounge Ax, a hugely loved venue for indie bands. Adams is married to Patrick Monaghan, head of the indie Carrot Top label. Alt-country bumpkins the Handsome Family were recruited to Carrot Top after a few drunken shows at Lounge Ax; Tweedy lent them equipment early on. Of such connections an entire infrastructure of scenes has evolved. In fact, Noise Pop drew the bulk of its acts from Chicago labels: Touch and Go, Thrill Jockey, Bloodshot, Carrot Top, Okka, Drag City, Sugar Free, Kranky, Minty Fresh, even longtime jazz and blues cultivator Delmark.

The last, which dates to the ’80s, points to the city’s deep indie roots, which include the seminal blues/early-rock Chess label and the influential ’60s free-jazz think tank the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). It’s no accident that post-rockers like Tortoise and O’Rourke began rediscovering jazz here; in true Chicago...