

Elsewhere, it's mostly about Kuroda, whose music hints at the likes of '70s Miles and Donald Byrd, with blues-edged playing sometimes suggesting Lee Morgan. Fender Rhodes skronk, hand claps, swirling synthesizers, rolling percussion, deep bass synth and **Nate Smith's** sticky drum-kit funk set the stage for Kuroda and trombonist **Corey King** on the title track, and guest guitarist **Lionel Loueke** amps the Afrobeat textures of "Afro Blues." The acoustic "Mala" and mellow closer "Call" are among their standout numbers. *Philip Booth*

Supersuckers

Get The Hell REPTILIAN/ACETATE

For 25 years, the **Supersuckers** have roared through the badlands of college radio as the rootiest, tootiniest, rowdiest cow-punks on either side of the Rio Grande. And on their first new work in a good half-decade, **Eddie Spaghetti** and company wrangle into famed, Willie Nelson-associated Arlyn Studio in Austin, Texas with **Blag Dahlia** of The Dwarves behind the mixing board to charge through their toughest set since the Sub Pop days. Barreling cuts like "Gluttonous," "High Tonight" and wild covers of Depeche Mode's "Never Let Me Down Again" and Gary Glitter's "Rock On" are total throwbacks to the days when the 'Suckers shared dingy stages with the likes of Social Distortion, Bad Religion and the Butthole Surfers. *Get The Hell* is a welcome return for the self-proclaimed "Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band in the World." *Ron Hart*

Glenn Kotche

Adventureland CANTALOUPE

On 2006's *Mobile*, **Glenn Kotche's** coming-out as a modern percussionist/composer ready for the avant-festival circuit, the Wilco drummer built around his swirling three-part title suite and a dramatic version of the Balinese "Monkey Chant" ceremony arranged for a solo performer with more-massive-than-Carl-Palmer-but-smaller-than-Mickey-Hart drum set-up. On the new follow-up, *Adventureland*, Kotche dreams even bigger, threading the seven-part **Kronos Quartet** collaboration "Anomaly" throughout and creating a narrative architecture that moves through Kotche's various modes of performance and plays like a larger piece of music. Some pieces, like the rich gamelan approximation of "The Travelling Turtle," connect to Kotche's day job as a drummer. Many others, like the

piano-driven "The Haunted Viaduct," serve to both remind the listener that the piano is traditionally considered part of the rhythm section and that Glenn Kotche is far more than a percussionist. *Jesse Jarnow*

Mehliana

Taming The Dragon NONESUCH



Brad Mehldau has always been keen on manipulating musical textures, whether it's exploring the art of the piano trio, going solo, or melding with the likes of guitarist Pat Metheny, soprano singer Renee Fleming, a chamber ensemble or others. For *Taming The Dragon*, he turns his attention to edgy jazz electronica, playing his Fender Rhodes and synthesizers in tandem with the drums and effects of **Mark Guiliana**. The duo's synchronicity is apparent—they move as one in propulsive ballets of surging and receding rhythms. Billowing synths, with occasional interjections of grungy keyboard squiggles and dense backbeats, undergird the spoken-word tale of a quirky SoCal car trip on the title track, while "Hungry Ghost," a darting jazz improvisation on the Rhodes skips atop the cascading, descending chords—the sound later giving way to deep grooves and dirty synths. These trippy rhythms, mutating colors and sampled vocals start and stop, cycle and recycle, to oft-fascinating effect. *Philip Booth*

Wye Oak

Shriek MERGE



Leave it to a rock band to create one of the best pop records this year. Baltimore duo **Wye Oak** made its name

on guitar-centric indie rock. That sound is dead on *Shriek*, as the band wades through icy-cold electronics, plodding rhythms and patches of dissonance. While plenty of bands farm the '80s for synth-rock inspiration, Wye Oak blow past nostalgia, turning those synths into a spacious, flurrying mix of slow-motion, echoing grooves and **Jenn Wasner's** beautiful, ghostly hooks. In other words, it is something wholly their own. With two players, *Shriek* is sparse but spread out, as if it were bouncing off the walls of a cathedral—the opposite of typically overstuffed pop. Sure, the album lacks variety; as a singular statement, though, it's a success. *Justin Jacobs*

Kevin Drew

Darlings ARTS & CRAFTS



Broken Social Scene's **Kevin Drew** has always reveled in painfully raw details—exploring sex through body fluids ("Lover's Spit," the piss-drinking in "I'm Still Your Fag"), approaching love like a fumbling teenager. But the opening moments of *Darlings*, his second solo LP, are more startling than usual: "Get the body butter, baby," he croons over a creaky acoustic strum. No psychedelic guitar solos, no poly-rhythmic thrust—just a man, his guitar and his sex oils. *Darlings* is Drew's most stripped-down work to date—a conscious effort to pare back the sonic messiness of his main band. On "Good Sex" and "You Gotta Feel It," that focus is stirring, as Drew daydreams about physical intimacy over droning pianos and static strings. Overall, though, it's hard not to crave his trademark

sprawl—after all, clutter is Drew's milieu. *Ryan Reed*

Axxa/Abraxas

Axxa/Abraxas CAPTURED TRACKS



A "music and art project" from 23-year-old **Ben Asbury** of Atlanta, Ga., **Axxa/Abraxas** is the product of the artist's fascination with the evolution of psychedelia from the '60s on through to the Elephant 6 era and further enhanced by his outstanding silk-screen art. Asbury wrote many of the tracks on Axxa's eponymous debut while he was in college. However, with the production help of **Jarvis Taveniere** of Woods, songs like "Going Forth," "Beyond The Wind" and "Painted Blue" are fashioned into scrappy pop gems that come off like Alex Chilton if he had gone right from the Box Tops to working on The Cramps' *Gravest Hits* EP. From the sound of *Axxa/Abraxas*, this is only the tip of the iceberg for this bright new talent in the Captured Tracks family. *Ron Hart*

Hurray for the Riff Raff

Small Town Heroes ATO



"I've got Louisiana on my mind," sings **Hurray for the Riff Raff's Alynda Lee Segarra** on "Crash on the Highway" from her band's ATO debut. There is no doubt that she means it. Throughout the album, she not only sings about her New Orleans home and the rocky plight of Americans pursuing their dreams in the South—possibly a microcosm of America as a whole—but also offers songs with an authority gained in the heat of the battle. Segarra's stunningly commanding and arresting singing voice grabs your attention with maturity and intelligence that finds her coming into her own as a singer-songwriter. Her voice floats over magnificently stirring Americana and folk melodies. On the title track, she reminds us that fighting for the little man (or woman) still matters in 2014. The truth isn't always pleasant but with Segarra leading, there's a burning sense of hope, too. *Joshua M. Miller*

Johnny Neel

Every Kinda' Blues...But What You're Used To SILVERWOLF/BREAKIN'



Pianist-singer **Johnny Neel's** forte is Southern blues, rock and soul, and he amply demonstrates his mettle in that arena on his latest set of tunes, all of which he co-wrote. Neel, best known for his work with



Big Gigantic