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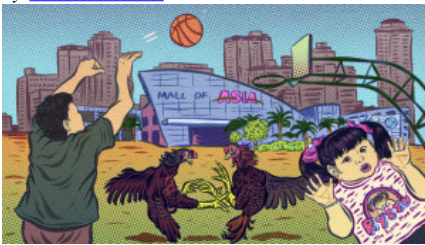


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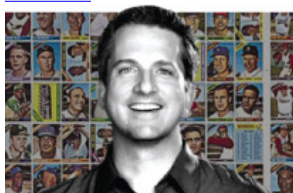
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Bill Simmons is the editor-in-chief of Grantland and the author of the *New York Times* no. 1 best seller *The Book of Basketball*.



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HOLLYWOOD PROSPECTUS

Songs of the Week: Coldplay Is Back to Infiltrate All Your Delicate Souls

[Music](#)

March 7, 2014

by [Steven Hyden](#)

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Coldplay, “Magic”

Much as was the case with the album-introducing single U2 recently debuted [during Super Bowl weekend](#), Coldplay is hardly swinging for the fences with “Magic,” a low-key preview of the new *Ghost Stories*, set for release in May. It starts quietly and never builds to the Coldplay-esque emotional crescendo you assume must be coming, settling instead on a nice medium boil. Does this suggest that *Ghost Stories* is Coldplay’s “mood” record, the “difficult” *Kid A* to Mylo Xyloto’s grandiose *OK Computer*? At this point, it’s just “Magic,” so you know, never believe it’s not so.

tUnE-yArDs, *Nikki Nack* Megamix

Here’s something I thought I’d never say: I really like the new tUnE-yArDs record. It’s not that I *disliked* Merrill Garbus’s vocally virtuosic, relentlessly percussive, and oft-abrasive music before hearing her forthcoming LP, *Nikki Nack*. I admired her energy as a live performer and recognized the confrontational verve of records like 2011’s critically worshipped *whokill*. It’s just that, for me, the baseline requirement for music — that it be, you know, fun to listen to — wasn’t being fulfilled here. As much as I respected the vision of *whokill*, putting it on felt like work. And a headache. A really discomfoting headache. It was strictly “easier to admire than like” stuff, as far as I was concerned. In that regard, *Nikki Nack* is a significant improvement. It’s certainly an easier album to appreciate — the vocals are smoother, and the beats are simpler and more pop. It sounds to me like Garbus’s *Merriweather Post Pavilion* move — an accessible triumph from a difficult artist designed to finally win over weary skeptics. It is also one of 2014’s standout headphone

records, though I suspect it will score more than a few parties this summer.

Robert Ellis, “Steady as the Rising Sun”

Since we’re on the subject of giving artists second chances, I want to give it up for Nashville singer-songwriter Robert Ellis, whose recent LP *The Lights From the Chemical Plant* I initially passed over because I found his previous record, 2011’s *Photographs*, a rather mundane and undercooked Americana record. But after a couple of friendly nudges, I stuck with *Chemical Plant*, and while the LP does occasionally slip into a log-cabin malaise, it has enough gently wandering, warmly jazzy numbers like “Steady as the Rising Sun” to keep me coming back.

The Orwells, “Dirty Sheets”

This Chicago’s band’s [Letterman appearance](#) from January was one of the great recent rock-group talk-show performances. In terms of presenting a professional and well-honed musical act, it was a disaster. But being a disaster is essentially the Orwells’ aesthetic, as the group’s knuckle-dragging LP *Disgraceland* attests. “Dirty Sheets” is typical of the album’s mind-numbingly simple Neanderthal-rock yawps, and yet these guys sound like they barely know how to get through their own material. It’s possible this incompetence is affected, because it’s responsible for most of *Disgraceland*’s charm. “We ain’t the worst, we ain’t the best,” immaculately disheveled frontman Mario Cuomo sings, and he’s absolutely correct. If you’ve been wishing for a band that makes the Seeds sound like the Mars Volta, voilà.

The Fresh & Onlys, “Bells of Paonia”

This dreamy San Francisco psych band has one of the most underrated discographies of any rock band in the past 10 years. The group's previous record, 2012's *Long Slow Dance*, was its prettiest and most romantic yet. But the Fresh & Onlys also have a dark side, and if drone-drenched first single "Bells of Paonia" is any indication, the upcoming *House of Spirits* will be just as seductively evil as its predecessor was blessedly sweet.

Ringworm, "One of Us Is Going to Have to Die"



RelapseRecords
Ringworm - One Of Us Is Going To Have To Die

SOUNDCLOUD

14,716

Your midcolumn heavy metal smoke break, courtesy of Ringworm's forthcoming album, *Hammer of the Witch*.

Hans Chew, "Tom Hughes Town"



At The Helm Records
Hans Chew - Tom Hughes Town

SOUNDCLOUD

550

Chew is a 38-year-old rock-and-roll pianist who has played with excellent guitarists (Jack Rose and Chris Forsyth) and backwoods country-folkies (Hiss Golden Messenger and D. Charles Speer). On his own 2010 record *Tennessee and Other Stories* ... he went the thoughtful singer-songwriter route, which was nice but (to my ears anyway) not as grabby as the forthcoming *Life & Love*, which finds him exploring a hard-rocking, Elton John–circa-11-17-70 vibe.

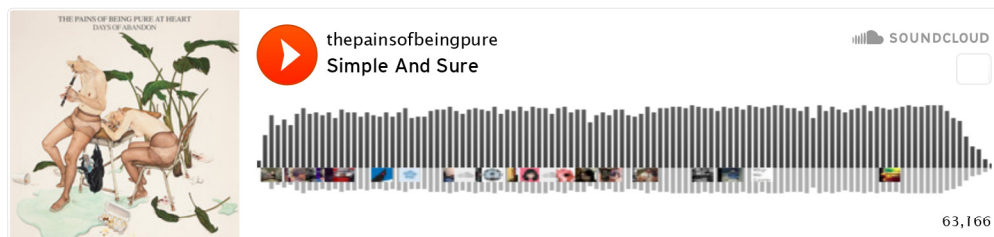
Todd Terje, "Delorean Dynamite"

As an avowed devotee of Air's *Moon Safari*, I'm always game for the latest example of self-aware, retro-futurist lounge pop. The best I've heard of this admittedly niche genre in a while is *It's Album Time* (due April 8), the debut LP by Norwegian super-producer Todd Terje. "Delorean Dynamite" is an unabashed Giorgio Moroder tribute, and unlike Daft Punk, Terje doesn't let the real Moroder get in the way of the disco goodness with historical pontificating. "Delorean Dynamite" is an exercise in groovy insinuation custom made for your next imaginary binge session on cocaine and caviar.

Slough Feg, "Laser Enforcer"

The mastermind of this long-running San Francisco metal band is Mike Scalzi, a professor and writer who specializes in blazing Celtic-accented riff machines that reference both Iron Maiden and Bertrand Russell. This just proves, once again, that it takes very smart people to successfully pull off a rock song as brilliantly stupid as “Laser Enforcer.”

The Pains of Being Pure at Heart, “Simple and Sure”



THE PAINS OF BEING PURE AT HEART
DAYS OF ABANDON

▶ thepainsofbeingpure
Simple And Sure

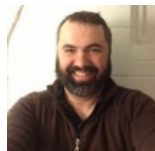
SOUND CLOUD

63,166

The most accurately named song of 2014’s first quarter.

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Steven Hyden is a staff writer at Grantland.

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 **Clinton Verley** · Follow · PSCU Financial Services
 You compared Mylo Xyloto to OK Computer...this makes no sense either stylistically or especially in terms of quality. WTF?
[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · Edited · March 7 at 2:48pm


 **Cameron Lewis** · Georgia Tech
 Which still isn't as bad as comparing whatever the hell I just listened to to Kid A.
[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · March 7 at 3:41pm


 **Steven Hyden** · Top Commenter · Staff Writer at Grantland
 Hey Clinton: C'mon man! It's obviously not really an in-depth comparison. It's more metaphorical than anything else. (And kinda jokey, too. Hence the reference to the Pilot song at the end.) At any rate, sorry to get your blood boiling. For the record, OKC > MX
[Reply](#) · [2](#) · [Like](#) · March 7 at 3:57pm


 **Sam Lloyd** · Top Commenter · Portland State University
 "I would still give my left [testicle] to write anything as good as OK Computer."
 "Does this suggest that Ghost Stories is Coldplay's "mood" record, the "difficult" Kid A to Mylo Xyloto's grandiose OK Computer?"
 Hmmm.
[Reply](#) · [1](#) · [Like](#) · March 7 at 5:33pm

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 **Jason Gutierrez** · Follow · Middlebury
 Terje has had a three year run of pretty unassailable singles and EPs. It's good to know we can expect more of the same.
[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · March 7 at 8:28pm

 **Sean Edwin**
 This would be great as a spotify playlist as well
[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · Yesterday at 9:22am

 **Ryan Redding** · Top Commenter
 No Amos = no hip-hop :(
[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · March 7 at 2:12pm

 **Justin Freeman** · Top Commenter · Eastern Illinois University
 No Amos = no Kanye :)
[Reply](#) · [1](#) · [Like](#) · March 7 at 7:12pm

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