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KETCHUP PT. 4

by Michael Toland

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More quick takes on albums worthy of being more than just units in a discard pile.

TOM DYER – *Songs From Academia Vol. 1: Songs With Singing, 1981-2009 / Songs From Academia Vol. 2: Instrumental and Spoken Word, 1980-2008* (Green Monkey)

TOM DYER curated Seattle's Green Monkey Records for years before becoming an educator. After reactivating the label with the sterling best-of *It Crawled From the Basement*, he's culled his own musical archives. *Vol. 1* is pretty sweet, full of quirky rock/pop songs from a variety of projects – the band **BEAUTIMUS** deserves its own anthology. *Vol. 2* is wordless more often than not, with a jazzy/folky/psychedelic/experimental smorgasbord of shapes, scents and colors, including an electronic interpretation of a painting. Not as accessible as *Vol. 1*, perhaps, but just as entertaining if you give it a chance.

HOLLANDS – *Mother* (self-released)

The follow-up to the indie band's previous EP *Faces*, *Mother* modifies the group's postmodern postpunk approach, slowing down, reducing the volume and generally featuring the song over the sound. The melodic and sedate atmosphere, coupled with leader **JOHN-PAUL NORPOTH**'s plainspoken croon, resembles no one so much as **DAVID MEAD**, especially on the last two songs. Not a bad thing, actually.

WILL KIMBROUGH – *Wings* (Daphne)

Nashville-based **WILL KIMBROUGH** makes his living as a guitar slinger for **RODNEY CROWELL**, **TODD SNIDER**, **JIMMY BUFFET** and others, but he's disseminated his own songs for 20-odd years, since his days fronting **WILL AND THE BUSHMEN**. *Wings* is his fifth solo record, and largely abandons his electric pop leanings for quiet, amiable folk rock. While dull and uninspired to my ears, fans of rootsy singer/songwriters like **SLAID CLEAVES** might find *Wings* as sweet as orange blossom honey.

KITES WITH LIGHTS – *The Weight of Your Heart* (24 Hour Service Station)

JONAH CORDY, AKA **KITES WITH LIGHTS**, makes electropop the old fashioned way: by writing solid pop songs first and adding the digital sounds afterward. Thus while the relentless drum machine thump may become maddening, *Cordy's* melancholy-tinged melodies save the day – cf. "A Mystery," which would surely have been a hit when **NEW ORDER** ruled the charts. And at only five songs, *The Weight of Your Heart* never wears out its welcome.

TIJUANA HERCULES – *The Almanack of Bad Luck* (Black Pisces)

A psych-tinged, junkyard roots rock ensemble, Chicago's **TIJUANA HERCULES** makes use of the proverbial kitchen sink on *The Almanack of Bad Luck*. The freewheeling noise conjures everything from **TOM WAITS** (especially with **JOHN VERNON FORBE**'s raspy growl) to the **POGUES** to circus music, and the tight focus on the songs keeps the chaos from becoming cacophony.

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