

Reviews

Jim Weider and **John Kimock**, on a collection of 13 far-reaching songs primarily written by bassist **Tim Kerrigan** and guitarist **Leo McClusky**. The album's strongest moments come in the form of instrumental tracks that are brought to impressive heights through improvised in-studio jams. "L.A. Shakedown," the album opener, is an immediate highlight, with surf rock tones and blistering guitar solos. The saxophone-heavy, funky "Frequinox" and Southern rock-flavored closer "Coal Town Hughie" are two other standouts. The album's weaker tracks are the non-instrumentals, which sound bland next to the inventiveness of their non-lyrical counterparts. The tracks are certainly eclectic, but the album's cohesiveness suffers as the musicians try to cover too much ground. Nevertheless, if BJB's studio jamming is any indication of their talent, then let's hope that this group decides to bring their act on the road soon. **Lilli Friedman**

Eleanor Friedberger

Personal Record MERGE



Eleanor Friedberger, best known as one half of the New York indie-rock group **The Fiery Furnaces**, initially

ventured into a solo career on 2011's *Last Summer*, a collection of classically minded rock songs. *Personal Record*, the musician's second solo effort, extends those formative tracks, veering grandly from introspective acoustic folk ("Echo Or Encore") to boisterous indie pop ("She's A Mirror"). It's the sort of album that could originate from and exist in any decade, each song reflecting a notable timelessness that resonates throughout the album. "I'll Never Be Happy Again," the disc's standout, pulls seemingly vintage production into a contemporary track, with Friedberger's smoky vocals falling somewhere between Joni Mitchell and Patti Smith. "Love is an exquisite kind of pain," the singer moans—an ageless sentiment that seems even more so here.

Emily Zemler

Beth Hart

Bang Bang Boom Boom PROVOCUE



Beth Hart is an impressive songwriter and pianist, but it's her passionate vocal style that makes her a star.

Her voice takes center stage on *Bang Bang Boom Boom* over 11 stunning tracks. On "Baddest Blues," her growling vocal goes toe to toe with the metallic attack of guitarist **Randy Flowers**. The blistering emotion sets a high bar and the rest of the album lives up to it. Bluesy numbers like the racy "Better Man" complement the

DVDs

Various Artists

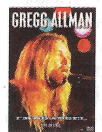
LOVE FOR LEVON STAR VISTA



The idea behind this show was simple: Take a couple dozen of Levon Helm's favorite performers and bring them together for one night at New Jersey's Izod Center to raise some cash to help save a much smaller but undeniably more vital venue, the barn and studio where Levon's Rambles were held. The parade of talent here is astounding and includes **Lucinda Williams**, **Jorma Kaukonen**, **John Prine**, **Mavis Staples**, **Gregg Allman**, **John Mayer**, **Garth Hudson** and many others. In each performance, the adulation for Helm is palpable. **Joe Walsh** and **Robert Randolph** rip through "Up on Cripple Creek," **Grace Potter** gives a soulful reading of "I Shall Be Released," **Roger Waters** (teamed with **My Morning Jacket**), **John Hiatt**, **Warren Haynes** and others all pitch in to pay their respects. There's a ton of music here—two DVDs, two CDs—and although the guy at the center of it all couldn't be there, he was there anyway. Think of it as *The Last Waltz II*. **Jeff Tamarkin**

Gregg Allman

I'm No Angel—Live On Stage CHERRY RED FILMS



"It was one of the most easygoing organizations that I've ever been in," **Gregg Allman** said in his 2012 memoir about the group who back him on the 52-minute *I'm No Angel* DVD. The band, filmed in 1988 in Nashville—Allman's hometown at the time—features ABB family regulars like the late brothers, guitarist **Dan Toler** and drummer **Frankie Toler**. And, while a puffy faced Allman sometimes seems slightly foggy, the group is agile and in sync. Drawing from two solo albums and The Allman Brothers Band's repertoire, the sextet offers music that's more bluesy rock and roll than jam-intensive, with Danny using his '58 sunburst Les Paul to do much of the heavy lifting. "It's Not My Cross to Bear," "Before the Bullets Fly," "Statesboro Blues" (featuring **Tim Heding**'s dynamic piano work), the title track and a closing, nicely sprawling "One Way Out" are among the show's highlights. **Philipp Booth**

smoldering R&B of "With You Everyday" and the gospel-tinged "Everything Must Change," a heartfelt hymn to recovery and salvation. Hart shows off her lighter side on the title track, a bright mix of gypsy swing and spaghetti-western twang with sexy, tongue-in-cheek lyrics. **J. Poet**

John Grant

Pale Green Ghosts PARTISAN



With the assistance of the folk-prog tunesmiths in **Midlake**, singer/songwriter **John Grant** released

his debut album, *Queen Of Denmark*, to quiet critical praise back in 2010. But that elegant '70s rock scope has all but evaporated on *Pale Green Ghosts*, a clusterfuck of goopy electro-pop goofiness and awkward experimentation. The six-minute title track sets the template: Grant's oddly rigid vocals bounce through the minor-key scale like a pinball, chased by gurgling synths and random orchestral samples. A few songs later, on the ridiculous "Sensitive New Age Guy," he's pseudo-rapping over cartoonish electronic squiggles—it's a spastic silliness that undercuts the soft-rock emoting on "GMF" or "It Doesn't Matter to Him." "What you

got is a black belt in BS," Grant croons on the monotonous synth-bass crawl of "Blackbelt." Sounds about right. **Ryan Reed**

Camera Obscura

Desire Lines 4AD



Four years since their 4AD debut, *My Maudlin Career*, Glasgow's **Camera Obscura** return with album five

where they take the lessons of the past and fatten them up with the help of producer **Tucker Martine**. He smooths the rough edges of the quintet, turning their keyboard lines into lush orchestrations and sending the guitars to the back of the mix with enough reverb that when they do poke out on "New Year's Resolution," it never disrupts the overall pillowed scheme. **Neko Case** and **Jim James** guest on the album, but it's not as if the band needs help. **Tracyanne Campbell** is more than capable of leading the songs into dreamlike states. Even an aggressive tune like "Do It Again" allows the instruments to be put into soft focus, except for the drums that cut through everything. They've rejected the retro-twee angle and created modern easy listening pop. **Rob O'Connor**

Tippy Toes

Tippy Toes LET'S PLAY HOUSE



Deadmau5 was mostly right when he famously stated that he and his EDM ilk "all hit play." In the modern era of

electronic music, the vast majority is built, sequenced and performed on computers and other digital tools. Enter **Tippy Toes** who create classic Chicago house via an arsenal of analog sound generators. The duo is comprised of **Abe Seiferth** and **Morgan Wiley**, who met while engineering and playing keyboards in the employ of DFA-head James Murphy. Theirs is a world composed of oscillators, sine waves and natural electro-mechanical decay, all malleable live in the moment. Whereas most of the currently popular EDM artists traffic in low-end wobbles synced to complex light shows, Tippy Toes bring the genre back to its techno roots while also creating new and interesting sounds along the way. **Wayan Zoey**

John Brown's Body

Kings And Queens EASY STAR



On *Kings And Queens*, their first full-length studio album since 2008, reggae octet **John Brown's Body**

nod to a variety of influences. Bandleader **Elliot Martin** (lead vocals/percussion/programming) sets the tone for most songs with his versatile tenor vocals, which range in style from Matisyahu (circa 2006) to Nick Hexum of the rock-reggae fusion group 311. The horn and woodwind section comprised of **Drew Sayers** (tenor/baritone saxophone), **Sam Dechenne** (trumpet) and **Scott Flynn** (trombone) complements Martin's vocals well, particularly on "Step Inside," "Plantation" and "Old John Brown." **Mike Keenan** (guitar), **Jon Petronzio** (keyboards), **Tommy Benedetti** (drums) and **Nate Edgar** (bass) provide the classic syncopated rhythm associated with reggae in most songs, yet they are more experimental on tunes like "Invitation," "Empty Hands" and "Starver." **Evan Krasner**

Alex Bleeker & The Freaks

How Far Away WOODSIST



Though it's hard to imagine, **Alex Bleeker & The Freaks'** dreamy *How Far Away* sounds even more musically laid back and relaxed than the airy jams of Bleeker's other band, Real Estate. The 11-song album is stacked with a series of mellow, warbling