

The Kidcrash mixes the emo and math-rock trademarks of lightly discordant guitars with expressive lyrics and energetic drums. *New Ruins* launches with "Your Valley Is Our Volcano," a tightly constructed opener that displays the band's cohesion. Other standout tracks are "Scalpel Cuts Concrete" and "Drowning Swan Song."

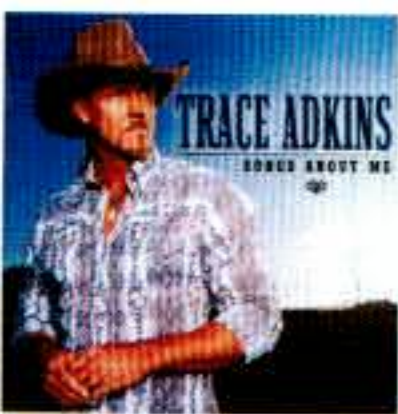
Despite the slight flaw of excessive similarity among songs, *New Ruins* shows The Kidcrash's enormous potential within their genre. Having moved to Olympia, WA, the band is in the emo-rock cradle responsible for Sunny Day Real Estate and Death Cab For Cutie. With a new home and album, The Kidcrash is finding its place in a world of lukewarm bliss.

—Matt Gunn

With vocals akin to Dave Matthews and Eddie Vedder, Fritz does show some signs of earnest emotion in delicate acoustic ballads like "Memory" and "One More Day," but utterly discredits them with tracks like "Bitch," in which he matter-of-factly states, "You're a bitch | A fucking bitch." Heart-wrenching, dude, honestly.

In its entirety, Fritz's fourth release plays as a mere compromise, instead of the adroit groundbreaker it could've been.

—Tamara McCullough



**Trace Adkins: *Songs About Me***  
Capitol Records

Trace Adkins's seventh release embodies both what has always been right about country music and what is so wrong with contemporary pop-country. Adkins's working-class anthems touch a chord in his fans, but the roots to which he so fervently clings are present in word only. The small-town | big-truck | gotta-find-me-a-good-woman themes might sound familiar to Hank and Merle, but the sound—that timeworn, evocative twang that pulls at your heart—is sadly missing.

Adkins's blue-collar background, rich baritone, and knack for selecting memorable songs about "loving and living—and family and God" have cemented his stardom. Like the narrator of the title track, Trace wants us to understand why country music is important, declaring "This is my chance to stand up for this genre." And stand up he does, with songs that, despite the stadium-friendly sound, clearly remember where they're from. The fiddle may be missing, but the down-home heart and soul is still there

—Jessie Shires



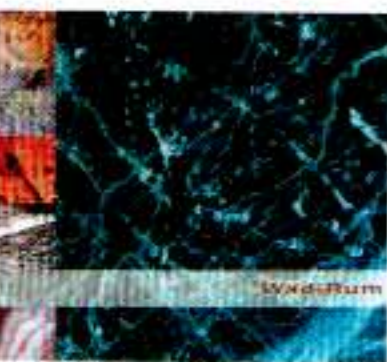
**Black Pegasus: *Knuckle Up***  
Brass Knuckle Entertainment

Robert Houston II, a.k.a. Black Pegasus, knows precisely what he wants out of life. He simply wants to go down in history as the MC who marched from jam-band friendly Colorado Springs to mainstream hip-hop superstardom.

A tall order? Sure. But if Houston consistently pumps out system-bumping gems like "Ladies Say (LaLa)" and hometown anthems like "Knuckle Up," he will get what he wants. He's already the biggest name in Colorado hip-hop, thanks to his domination of the state's battle circuit and opening slots for any national rap act that rolls through. In April, that means shows with Rahzel, the Pharcyde and Living Legends.

*Knuckle Up* is full of the free-association similes and one-liners expected from a champion freestyle wit, but the studio isn't quite as friendly to Black P as the stage. More specifically, the production throughout *Knuckle Up* lags behind the lyrical talent and sometimes fails to match style with substance. Not that it matters much. This guy is just getting started.

—John Hult



**Wadi Rum: *eponymous***  
wadirummusic.com

Named as they are after a Middle Eastern mountain region, I expected Colorado's Wadi Rum to exude an Eastern sound, but they have more in common with the folk scene of '60s New York City. It's folk music with a flourish. They imbue the singer-songwriter

genre with enough personal touch to (mostly) escape the clichés which plague that sound.

The eerie intro to the first track, "Dirt," is a great entrance to the rest of the CD. In particular I liked the 10th song "Strange Behavior," with its guitar sound reminiscent of the Indigo Girls. In regards to the vocal duties split by Jill Pilon and Stewart Erlich, who also plays acoustic and electric guitars, I found the latter to be comfortingly honest and the former to be a bit affected. But joined by Jesse Varner on bass and Lisa Haney on cello, Wadi Rum's songs make good listening.

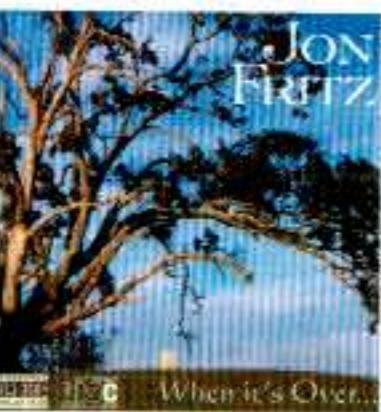
—Stella Meredith



**Nosotros: *eponymous***  
Taj Stone Records [www.nosotrosmusic.net](http://www.nosotrosmusic.net)

Nosotros's third album links the metaphor of their name and the ecstasy of their music, resulting in an absolutely beat-bending experience. Nosotros's inspiring blend of hip pulsating "Afro-Latin percussion" and Spanish Gypsy style beckons todos Nosotros para bailar! My passion magnifies with every instinctual move of David Diaz's melodious voice and reed, and the unbelievably familiar, yet foreign sounds of Shane Derk, Randy Sanchez, Justin McLaughlin, and Dennis Jasso. The sound of Nosotros is not to be explained; it is to be felt from the pit of nuestras almas! Would one prefer the more traditional, yet unique sounds of "La Romeria," or sense the romantic osculation to the ear of "Cinco Sentidos," or perhaps strum and dance the night away to the sound of Nosotros' songs "Entre Mis Dedos" or "Nosotros?" Anyone who has a deep desire for music, regardless if they understand the romantic language of Spanish or know how to dance, will not be able to listen without moving and wishing they were dancing the night away with Nosotros.

—M.E Schenck



**Jon Fritz: *When It's Over***

Parishioners of generic folk-tinged jam rock, unite! Your new savior of mediocrity has arrived, all the way from Boston, carrying a guitar in one hand and a bottle of MGD in the other. Jon Fritz is his name and lacking edge is his game.

If you're a middle-aged, divorced female with a bad eye job who likes to spill draft beer on strangers' feet during drunken hip shakes at dive bars, then Fritz's latest release, *When It's Over*, is the ideal soundtrack for that lower-back tattoo you plan on getting next Thursday.



**Devo: *Live in the Land of the Rising Sun*** (DVD)  
Music Video Distributors [www.mutato.com](http://www.mutato.com)

Talk about being big in Japan. Potential groupies may not have been quite as turned on by Devo's middle-aged members this time around, but the applause meter still was. Two decades ago, Devo demonstrated that nerds could be rock stars too, and, apparently, that message resonated better in East Asia than any other place. Evidently, the message resonated so well that it was passed down to the next generation like a priceless family heirloom. The hands-down highlight of this particular flick are the people watching possibilities—which only exist when the cameras cut away from the stage. Long live the Asian invasion.

—orange peel moses

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