

# Music

## Playback

### Aaron Neville

#### **Bring It On Home... The Soul Classics** (Burgundy)

Since Hurricane Katrina, Aaron Neville's New Orleans band, the Neville Brothers, has been quiet. Aaron, meanwhile, has gone into the studio to record 13 R&B favorites — which is like Michael McDonald tackling Motown: warm, friendly, and not very ambitious.

Two predictable Sam Cooke classics — “You Send Me” and “A Change Is Gonna Come” — set the CD's easy-listening tone. Some renditions (“Rainy Night in Georgia,” “When a Man Loves a Woman,” “Stand by Me,” “My Girl”) are so laid-back, you might confuse them with “lite” radio fare or even Muzak. The album finally awakens with a lush arrangement of Al Green's “Let's Stay Together,” pairing Neville with Chaka Khan.

Neville picks up the pace somewhat on “Respect Yourself” (Mavis Staples joins him for a duet), “It's All Right,” and “Ain't That Peculiar.” Missing are a couple New Orleans staples (“Night People,” “Mother-in-Law”). And he might have chosen to cut a modern-day version of his own '60s soul hit, “Tell It Like It Is.” Unfortunately, *Bring It On Home* never gets off the couch. — **Steve Bloom**

### The Mars Volta

#### **Amputecture**

(Universal Motown)

The first two full-length music features from the Mars Volta (2003's *De-Loused in the Comatorium* and 2005's *Frances the Mute*) were amazing and strange rock operas. Both concept albums sounded like surreal sci-fi soundtracks — Fellini's version of *Flash Gordon* — written and scored by the Latin Queen, aka Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez. The records probed a heady new form of hardcore punk rock, akin to *At the Drive-In* (of which the two were former members), recast into

neo-prog-rock sagas that feast on free-flowing jazz structures, bizarre true-life gothic tales, and Bixler-Zavala's piercing vocals (sung in both Spanish and English).

Equally absurd and beautiful art-rock overtures can be found throughout *Amputecture*. “Tetragrammaton” is signature Mars Volta, a cerebral 17-minute opus based on the real murder of a Romanian nun, who was killed because she was supposedly possessed by the devil. It's broken into symphonic movements interspersed with indulgent guitar solos, otherworldly studio effects, and Bixler-Zavala's creepy screams.

“Viscera Eyes,” the most accessible single, may begin with catchy rapid-fire guitar (played by the Red Hot Chili Peppers' John Frusciante), but it devolves into a nine-minute Yes edifice that ends in white noise and wah-wah pedals. The other songs are just as exhausting and extraordinary, requiring the

patience and endurance of an audiophile who enjoys the hedonism of such art noise. — **Keith Gribbins**



### Grizzly Bear

#### **Yellow House**

(Warp)

Bettering the already respectable showing of *Horn of Plenty*, its '04 debut, Brooklyn's Grizzly Bear journeys down an evocative and

fertile path, which is partially (and purposely) obscured by misty turbulence on its follow-up, *Yellow House*. Just as elaborate and transcendent as its predecessor, this latest effort is less reliant on tape-looped fragments, subliminal still-frames, and whimsical secondhand thoughts, concentrating instead on troubled romantic illusions. Singer-songwriter Edward Droste's ensemble combines simple acoustic warmth with abrupt icy discord, forging a post-psychedelic mood that pervades the album.

“Lullabye” floats like a chiming neoclassical reinvention of Simon & Garfunkel's “Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme,” until thick, percussive guitar chunks tumble down. A fuzzy piano coda seals “Knife,” a hazy, narcotic requiem. By the time it reaches the ominously whistled premonition “Plans,” *Yellow House* becomes noticeably more downcast. The bluesy piano dirge “Marla” recalls Nick Cave's mustiest mantras, sans the morbid baritone bravura. Over the course of several close listens, the solemn panorama speaks with greater eloquence and a majestic charm. The stark yearning of this tenderly

rendered Goth noir (and the infrequent chamber-pop asides) makes it the star-crossed soundtrack for a stormy late-night phantasm. — **John Fortunato**

### Quantic

#### **An Announcement to Answer**

(Tru Thoughts)

Will “Quantic” Holland is a rare breed. The U.K. programmer and multi-instrumentalist is a downtempo version of Prince. His latest release deemphasizes the trip-hop of 2002's *Apricot Morning* and 2004's *Mishaps Happening* in favor of something warmer and more organic. While Quantic's fourth effort does offer a couple shots of breakbeat vertigo (“Blow Your Horn,” “Bomb in a Trumpet Factory”), they're all that remain of those early heroics.

Instead, *An Announcement to Answer* emphasizes its erotic mystique — reminiscent of Verve's *Remixed* series — focusing on loose, jazzy atmospherics. Songs overflow with sounds ranging from stout, sprinkled loops to resplendent horns. Asian strings on “Absence Heard, Presence Felt” set the tone for some fabulous world-beat grooves, Brazilian jazz, and electronica that envelop the listener. A St. Germain-Mr. Scruff-Fila Brazillia jam session wouldn't yield this much cosmopolitan cool. Best of all, Quantic's *Sign o' the Times* is still to come. — **Peter Chakerian**

## VISUAL NOISE

### Bad Brains, Live at CBGB 1982

(MVD Visual)

Anybody who saw Bad Brains live — Henry Rollins, the Beastie Boys, and *Big Takeover* publisher Jack Rabid, to name three — swears that the group put on the most amazing live show in the history of rock and roll. *Live at CBGB 1982* proves that's no exaggeration. You can't say that the four black Rastafarian reggae musicians set the standard for the nascent punk hardcore offshoot, because a quarter of a century later, their stage presence, instrumental proficiency, and across-the-board speed still hasn't been matched by anyone in the lily-white subculture.

Drummer Earl Hudson makes any other percussionist look slow and lazy, but the concert's star is frontman H.R., a legendary should-have-been who never kept his act together for long. Here, he's at his best. An unpredictable force of nature, H.R. goes from sedate to wild-eyed in less than a heartbeat at the start of songs, spasming across the stage, apparently unrestricted by any kind of conventional skeletal structure. Seldom have a performance and song title matched each other as well as “Supertouch Shitfit.” — **D.X. Ferris**

## What's Playing

**Top 10 spins on WAPS-FM 91.3 for September 6-12:**

1. Landon Pigg, “Can't Let Go”
2. Corinne Bailey Ray, “Put Your Records On”
3. Ray Lamontagne, “Three More Days”
4. Gnarls Barkley, “Crazy”

## What's Moving

**Top 10 sellers at Square Records (824 West Market Street, Akron) for September 6-12:**

1. Black Keys, *Magic Potion*
2. Yo La Tengo, *I Am Not Afraid of You and I Will Beat Your Ass*
3. TV on the Radio, *Return to Cookie Mountain*
4. Mountain Goats, *Get Lonely*