



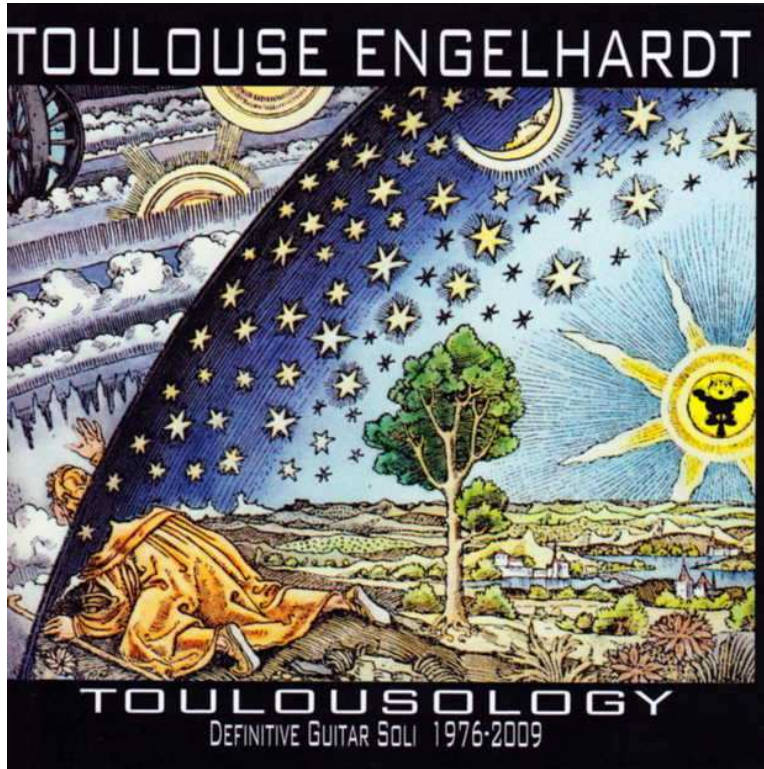
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A big Duran Duran show, western meets country again, honky-tonk tunes from

A long winter's nap in the middle of summer

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This first August Sound Check kicks with an interesting new release from a genre-jumping new to me band followed by a tense, disturbing Parental Advisory movie. The movie version of the Hendrix concert reviewed a few weeks back is reviewed next; then, a live recording from Staind and an acoustic guitar retrospective from Toulouse Engelhardt winds things up.

'Hello Hum,' Wintersleep (Roll Call Records/ILG, HHHH)

This CD arrived early in June, and its release date was June 12. It straddles and crosses over several lines: world music, wall-of-sound, progressive stuff and more. The vocal harmonies are nice, and the words seem to be chanted as often as they're sung early in the first few minutes and parts of other songs.

The band (Loel Campbell/drums, Paul Murphy/guitar & vocals, Tim D'eon/guitar & keyboards, Mike Bigelow/bass and Jon Samuel/keyboards, backing vocals & guitar) make a lot of noise both coherent and not; but it's nearly impossible to pigeonhole their sound into one genre. Perhaps they're truly "alternative."

Fortunately, things settle into an overproduced Brit-Pop groove after awhile. The opening/title song is a highlight, along with the drifting closer "Smoke," the folky "Saving Song" and the up-tempo "Someone, Somewhere."

In other words, this is a band that hums but occasionally rocks.

'Jimi Plays Berkeley: Expanded Edition,' Jimi Hendrix Experience (Experience Hendrix LLC/Legacy, HHHH)

A few weeks back, when reviewing the second show concert released July 10 on CD along with this documentary film, I hinted that listeners would enjoy the video version of the early show more. The documentary, which captures the cultural unrest at the time with protesters on the Berkeley streets, is hampered by not-so-effective camera work and odd sequencing. Much of the concert footage consists of extreme close-ups of Jimi that inexplicably switch angles. Excellent drummer Mitch Mitchell and steady bassist Billy Cox are rarely and briefly shown. Blurry out-of-focus shots frequently interrupt compositional flow, indicating that camera operators and substances were probably combined.

Mitch's "Machine Gun" playing here doesn't hold the groove, so things seem to falter at times. The blazing version of "Johnny B. Goode" is my favorite tune here; but those who want all the Hendrix video footage available will enjoy this more than your intrepid reviewer did.

'Headspace: Director's Cut,' (MVDvisual, HHH)

The premise of this Parental Advisory June 19 DVD is comparatively simple: Alex (Christopher Denham) meets a mysterious stranger and begins to get smarter every day.

This stranger is a chess master who meets and beats all comers on a daily basis in a city park, and eventually Alex beats him. However, there's enough blood and guts in the first few minutes of this feature for responsible parents to prohibit it; not to mention the nudity that happens early but not too often. An extremely tense, award-winning film with a crummy ending involving cheesy costumes is what you'll get here.

'Toulousology,' Toulouse Engelhardt (Lost Grove Arts, HHHH)

This May 22 collection of finger-style guitar by the "Segovia of Surf" has been here since late April; so it's time to give it a listen. This is a new audio retrospective from "one of the greatest finger-style guitarists living today."

It spans forty years of Toulouse's career and contains seventeen songs chosen by music critics and fans alike and re-mastered from original recordings dating from 1976-2009. The opener, ""Fire in O'Doodlee's Popcorn Factory" shows how big one lone classical guitar can sound and is featured as a live version later. "Blind Watchmaker" contains sections reminiscent of one of ELP's classical adaptations; and both the "River Eclectium" songs and the three songs in the "Mosrite Devotion" suite are priceless.

Guitar junkies and fans of adventurous acoustic music will enjoy this non-surfing release.

'Live From Mohegan Sun,' Staind (Armoury Records/Atlantic/Eagle Rock Entertainment, HH 1/2)

This July 10 CD (with DVD and Blu-Ray to follow on Aug. 14) presents frequent Coast visitors Staind (singer/guitarist Aaron Lewis, lead guitarist Mike Mushok, bassist Johnny April and new drummer Sal Giancarelli) recorded last November in Connecticut.

My disdain for most nineties "alternative" rock is illustrated by the opening song "Eyes Wide Open," with Lewis hollering "Cookie Monster" style before what may be choruses. "It's Been Awhile," which was previously the only Staind song I had heard, is the best one here besides the closer, "Something to Remind You."

"Failing," "Paper Wings" and the aptly-titled "Not Again" may peak readers' interest.

This is a well-recorded live album, but not my cup of tea.

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[Back to Top](#)
[< Previous Story](#)

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[Next Story >](#)



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