

gems. And all of this using the mere talents of two drummers (Warren Huegel and Jonathan Holland), a bassist (Tomo Yasuda) and a knob-twiddler (Nathan Burazer). Add the iconic percussion additions of Liquid Liquid's Sal Principato and Dennis Young to the closing track, "Pow," and the album rounds out to a colorful ball of dance-pop made to enjoy, not to impress. And yet, that's exactly what it does in the end. **KENDAH EL-ALI**

DAYLIGHT'S FOR THE BIRDS
Trouble Everywhere

86%



THIS GENERATION TAPES

Sometimes I sit back and ponder my belly button. Why am I an innie? Would it be weird to be an outie? If I got pregnant (which is impossible given the organ another foot down from my belly button), would I turn into an outie? What if I just got really fat? Then I go all meta on myself, wondering how the soundtrack to my drifting thoughts would sound. A little ethereal? It might have a soaring female voice whose tone evokes beauty and heartache and self-awareness as it tumbles through the tunnels of my psyche (and my belly button). The wall of melody and noise behind her might be embryonic, as if my journey has led me back into the womb to meditate on life and love and my very existence. As my comfort and sadness grow, I might drift off to sleep, losing the impression of the songs as separate entities but remembering the peace and familiarity the entirety has brought upon me. Which sounds a lot like the nocturnally inclined and beautiful debut from Daylight's for the Birds. **JEREMY MOEHLMANN**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Plague Songs

86%



4AD

In *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot despairingly entreats, "Do only the dying notice how vapid and pretentious are all of our accomplishments here, where nothing is allowed to be as it is meant to be?" When held up to the soul-crushing cultural and social fraudulence that engulfs us in this, our 21st Century, those words ring forth with a harrowing poignancy. Thus, in choosing to address Biblical plagues, one might have to consider if we aren't veritably living many modern manifestations—AIDS, obesity, American Idol, Wal-Mart—at this very moment. A timely concept, then, is *Plague Songs*, a rather curious though not altogether cohesive collection of self-anointed prophets having a go at musically interpreting the wrath of God (or the mythology of it, for us godless sorts).

A few fall decidedly short of the mark (the persistently annoying Stephen Merritt's phony synth-pop take on The Plague of Lice, is, well, characteristically annoying), but those artists who would seem well-chosen for the task do, indeed, rise...or rather, plunge to the occasion. "Katonah" (The Death of the Firstborn) is Rufus Wainwright at his mournful best; Laurie Anderson conjures a haunting sense of dread on "The Fifth Plague" (The Death of Livestock); and Scott Walker's stark, gruesome "Darkness" (The Plague of Darkness) will likely send you screaming for the nearest confessional booth. Imogen Heap, rapper Klashnekoff, and the duo of Brian Eno & Robert Wyatt also make stirring contributions. (Though it is hard not to wonder what the great gothic tragedists like Nick Cave or Diamanda Galas might have done.)

It must be said, of course, that it has been and always will be humankind's shocking arrogance that serves to bring down upon us plagues of any and all manner, be they locusts, global warming, or "cheese" that comes in a spray can. And humanity—weak, pathetic, bound to moral failure—is always left to ponder: Shall we change or shall we die? Here then, finally, a proper soundtrack to our doomed existential deliberations.

Oh, and have a nice day. **KEN SCRUDATO**

WHITE MAGIC
Dat Rosa Mel Apibus

87%



DRAG CITY

Two years after conjuring up their spook-folk debut EP, *Through the Sun Door*, White Magic finally reach into their bag of mysterioso for a proper album's worth of tunes. While the new album's title translates to "The Rose Gives the Bees Honey," *Dat Rosa Mel Apibus*' mystic and plodding songs go far beyond any mere genial attraction. Mira Billotte's distinct and robust Cat Power-meets-Nico vocals effortlessly carouse with a mix of everything from Eastern strings to Wild West bar-beaten piano. "The Light" focuses on tribal chants, then

presto! "All the World Went" is the Beatles circa Krishna, and kazam! "Palm and Wine" slinks along like a wry Elliott Smith song. And finally for the grand finale, rabbits and doves fly out of your CD player and the show is over! Maybe not. But that's one of the few things left that could make this album any better. **DAVID C. OBENOUR**

BUSDRIVER
RoadKillOvercoat

84%



EPITAPH

Ridiculous, articulate, erudite and blistering, Busdriver's flow cannot be called into question. And this, his fifth solo record, might actually be his most palatable work (in no small part due to expert production by Nobody and Boom-Bip). Previous albums' apparent

REAL LIVE SENIOR ROCK DEATHMATCH

BAD BRAINS

Live at CBGB 1982



MVD

versus

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE

Live at the Fillmore East



REPRISE

When the voice first speaks, it comes through creaky and curmudgeonly: "Yeah, I think there must be some mistake for tonight's show. I can't find the 14 jars of Nutella I asked for. And who are these punks reading my buffalo literature?" It's Neil Young, folk-rock icon and friend to farmers everywhere. "For the tenth time, there's no mistake, sir," answers an exasperated stagehand. "Tonight's headliners are the Bad Brains. They wrote the book on D.C. hardcore and afro-punk. Twelve years after you hit the Fillmore they were ripping up CBGB. And since they're reforming for this one night, they headline. Which means you're in no place to make demands."

Suddenly a wild-eyed figure bursts into the room. "You talkin' trash 'bout my buff-curious bandmates, gramps?" asked the dreadlocked stranger. "I'm Dr. Know. And I know you weren't hatin' on my Bad Brains. Now, we want that crowd bumpin' tonight. Your straw hat's a good start." "Look here, son," says Young. "I've been doing this stuff my whole life. The drugs, I mean. And they're telling me that I'm more important than you. I bet you're not even a licensed physician."

The show begins. Young kills his set, squeezing all six songs into his hour of stage time. "Neil's a pro like that," he thinks. "Neil brings it." Dr. Know is looking Neil's way. "I can hear you," he says. Young hadn't realized he was talking aloud. Or that he was drooling on himself. "Listen to yourself, Old Man," says Doc. "We get it. You drowned your baby down by the freakin' river. But, shit, holmes—it didn't take you 13 minutes to do the deed, did it? And I don't care if your 'Cowgirl in the Sand' was Beyonce. You need to ed-it."

The Brains hit the stage and it's fury, mayhem and weird mellow bits. Yeah, it sort of sounds like shit and Young has no idea what the deranged fellow eating the microphone is saying, but even Neil feels the rock taking him back to 1982. Or thereabouts. He can't remember what that year was like. "You kids have potential," he says. "This 'Meek Shall Inherit' stuff ain't half bad." "Glad you dig it, man," says Doc. "It was hard being mean to you earlier. We believe in unity, after all." With that he extends a hand Young's way and the pair grip and shake. But Dr. Know clasps hard, twisting Young's arm violently and whipping him into the first row. The Doctor glares: "But that don't mean you can share my stage." **TRISTAN STADDON**

CONCLUSION:

YOUNG KNEELS TO BAD BRAINS