



## Prince ★★★ 1/2

HiTnRUN Phase 2

It can be hard to keep pace with Prince. But you can play catchup with *HiTnRUN Phase 2*. Like its September predecessor, it's mostly a lighthearted, loosey-goosey funk mixtape of odds, sods and online singles — from timely topical fare (*Baltimore*) and recast recent singles (*RocknRoll Love Affair*) to resurrected rarities (*Xtraloveable*). Get up 2 speed.

## Psy ★★★ 1/2

7th Album

One-hit wonderdom has its perks. Take K-Pop phenom Psy. His seventh album has North American distribution, a will.i.am production and a revamp of Ed Sheeran's *Sing*. What it doesn't have is a cut half as infectious as *Gangnam Style* — unless you count the *Daddy* (Her: "Where'd you get that body?" Him: "I got it from my Daddy!"). Yeah, cause that's not creepy. Bye, Psy.



PSY

## Kid Cudi ★★★ 1/2

Speedin' Bullet to Heaven

He's doin' it for the Kid, not the kids. Cudi plays by his own rules on his fifth album, forsaking hip-hop for (get this) 90 minutes of guitar-driven alt-rock, punk and grunge reminiscent of Kurt Cobain demos — intercut with Beavis and Buttthead cameos. Purists and fans will hate it; but the openminded might hear Heaven as Kudi's answer to *Montage of Heck*. Heh-heh.

## Rick Ross ★★★ 1/2

Black Market

Sometimes it's tough to buy what Rozay is selling. Not this time. The Teflon Don brings it to his eighth album, confidently unspooling his gangster tales with more enthusiasm than he often summons. Slow-rolling grooves and lush strings — along with cameos by everyone from CeeLo and John Legend to Mariah and Mary J — don't hurt either. Worth scoring.



## David Bowie ★★★★★

★

The new year is a time of rebirth. Rejuvenation. Reinvention. In short, the perfect time for a new David Bowie album. Especially an album like ★ (or *Blackstar*, if you're not into the whole symbolic brevity thing). Released Friday on his 69th birthday, it is the thin white duke's 25th studio album — and second release since returning to semi-active duty in 2013 following a decade-long hiatus. And it is an album that makes it abundantly clear Bowie remains a rebel (rebel) who is no more interested in resting on laurels or repeating himself than he was the first time around. Which is to say: The adventurous and artful seven-song work is every bit as enigmatic and impossible to pigeonhole as the man himself. It is full of skittery drum 'n' bass-style rhythms and percussion, but it is not an EDM album. It has guitars that growl and basslines that groove, but it is neither a rock nor a funk outing. It was cut with a band of New York jazz musicians, but it does not swing. It prominently features the work of saxophone player Donny McCaslin,

but it's not some sort of retro-soul or R&B workout. There are brief moments that recall classics like *Changes* and his '70s soul days, but this is definitely not an exercise in nostalgia. It has some of Bowie's laugh-out-loud funniest lyrics — "Man, she punched me like a dude" and "Where the f— did Monday go?" being just a couple of standouts — yet it is anything but frivolous. And it has some of his most distinctive and unusual vocal performances, as his familiar croon jumps between registers while playing fast and loose with traditional time signatures and melodic constructions, deploying an avant-garde approach that reminds you of Scott Walker. Fuse those elements and perhaps it's only logical that you get songs that not only defy categorization, but also pay little heed to traditional structures and pop-music mechanics. You won't find big singalong choruses or stadium-sized hooks here, nor music meant to be played in the background while you clean house. Instead, this is an album that's meant to be actively and consciously listened to — preferably through headphones — in order to fully plumb its depths, untangle its knots and become familiar with its twists and turns. In short, it's another great David Bowie album. And the first great album of the new year.

# ALBUMS OF THE WEEK



DAN AUERBACH

## The Arcs ★★★★★

Arcs vs. Inventors

In this corner: Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach and his trippy side project. In that corner: Fellow travellers Dr. John and Los Lobos singer-guitarist David Hidalgo. The main event: A six-track EP of dubby, freewheeling collaborations that infuse the former's psychedelic-garage tracks with the latter's hoodoo voodoo. The result: A draw with no losers.

## Cage the Elephant ★★★★★

Tell Me I'm Pretty

No rest for the restless. The Kentucky alt-rockers continue to evolve with their fourth full-length

— and first with Dan Auerbach as producer. No surprise: The hired gun brings his shape-shifting '60s psychedelia and garage-rock to the party. Also no surprise: They dovetail with the band's eccentric ditties. Pretty trippy.

## 30th Century Records Vol. 1 ★★★★★

Various Artists

Danger Mouse has always been ahead of his time. But with his aptly named new 30th Century label, star producer Brian Burton proves he's not alone. The imprint's introductory anthology succinctly showcases its roster of similarly spaced-out psyche-rock acts like Dan Auerbach's Arcs, Autolux, Apache Sun, Maybird and many more. So far, so cool.

## Chris Brown ★★

Royalty

Fatherhood changes a man. Unless that man is Chris Brown. The seventh solo disc from R&B's crassest clown prince is named for his baby girl (who also adorns the cover). But fear not, fans: The usual litany of X-rated fantasies, blatant misogyny and pathetic boasting make it clear Brown won't be earning that World's Greatest Dad mug anytime soon.

## G-Eazy ★★★★★

When It's Dark Out

"What if I did my own thing?" ponders G-Eazy on his second major-label album. What indeed. While the Cali rapper possesses beaucoup potential via his introspective intelligence, creaky pipes and bouncing flow, he takes the path of least resistance too often here, spinning stereotypical tales of sex, excess and avarice. Ultimately, Eazy doesn't always do it.

## Hurricane #1 ★★★★★ 1/2

Find What You Love and Let it Kill You

What doesn't kill you makes you write the happiest music of your career. That's how it worked out for singer-guitarist Alex Lowe. Following a battle with cancer, the reunited Hurricane (minus founder Andy Bell) return after 16 years with a set of deliberately sunny jangle-pop and shoegaze straight from the heyday of Oasis, Posies and R.E.M. Find it.



JEREMIH

## Jeremih ★★★★★ 1/2

Late Nights: The Album

Night time is still the right time for Jeremih. And for you. Picking up the mood from right where he left off on his 2012 mixtape of the same name, Chicago's R&B lover man puts the smooth moves on you once again, crooning in your ear with his creamy pipes as he slowly slides his hands all over your body. Close your eyes, lie back and enjoy.

## Avett Brothers ★★★★★ 1/2

Live Vol. 4

Better late than never. Released late in 2015, the sibling-led roots outfit's latest concert disc captures a 2014 New Year's Eve gig in Carolina, blunting its post-holiday appeal. But the CD/DVD twofer more than makes up for it with a typically jubilant set, two superior new songs, and a rockin' cover of *The Boys Are Back in Town*. Auld Lang Syne, y'all.

## Cam ★★★★★

Untamed

Lemons and lemonade. Rising country-pop star Cam is pictured drinking straight from the former with a straw on her major-label debut. But she makes the latter on this personable outing, thanks to her ability to blend classic Nashville roots and sincere '70s singer-songwriter pop — then spike the brew with contemporary production. No sweetener required.



CAM

## The Hateful Eight: Original Soundtrack ★★★★★ 1/2

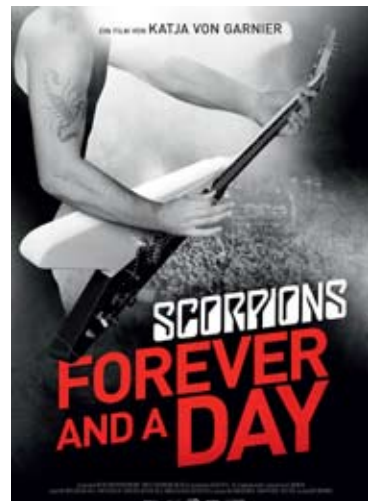
Various Artists

Quentin Tarantino and Ennio Morricone know the score. And after years of flirtation, the maverick director and the legendary composer finally join forces. So instead of QT's usual pop-song soundtrack, you get a lush, tightly wound orchestral score peppered with the usual dialogue snippets and a few cuts from Roy Orbison, White Stripes and others. Stirring.

## Soulsavers ★★★★★

Kubrick

What's your favourite Kubrick movie quote? Doesn't matter; you won't hear it here. The British duo's followup to October's *Angels & Ghosts* pays homage to the director and his characters in its song titles. But musically, these gorgeous classically based instrumentals are less homage than scores for films that could have been. Open the pod-bay doors.



## Scorpions ★★★★★ 1/2

Forever & A Day

Hallo everybody!! We are Scorpions band!! And here is a 105-minute German doc on our career, our first *Farewell Tour* — and beyond!! Yes!! It contains many vintage footages of us making the rocking!! There are interviewings of current members — and many who are not!! If it does not rock you like a hurricay-eene, our next *Farewell Tour* definitely will!! Thank you!!

## UFO ★★★★★

Live at Rockpalast

Schenker or no Schenker? That is always the question with UFO reissues. For this 1980 appearance on the German TV series *Rockpalast*, the answer is no — mercurial guitar hero Michael Schenker had flown the coop back in 1978 (eventually rejoining his brother Rudolf in The Scorpions). But the 72-minute CD/DVD set (previously released as *Hardrock Legends Vol. 1*) compensates for his absence with a slate of guitar-rock classics like *Rock Bottom*, *Doctor, Doctor*, *Lights Out* and *Only You Can Rock Me*. Come on back now.



## Sun Ra ★★★★★

A Joyful Noise

Space is still the place. And it's never looked better. Newly restored and upgraded to HD, the hour-long 2008 doc *A Joyful Noise* orbits the outlandish jazz keyboardist and his crew, mixing colourful and freewheeling performances with Sun's intergalactic-Egyptian jibber-jabber. Pity it never delves beyond the self-styled mystery to get at the real history.

## Golden Earring ★★★★★

The Hague

They had a thing called *Radar Love* in 1973. But you already knew that. What you need to know now is they've still got it. Now celebrating 55 years in existence — with a core lineup that hasn't changed since 1970 — these Dutch vets deliver the goods with this solidly rocking five-track EP named for their hometown. Crank it up on the car stereo.

## Love ★★★★★

Reel to Reel

Love is better the second time around. This reissue of the L.A. band's 1974 swan song finds troubled leader Arthur Lee and co. trading the acid-rock iconoclasm of 1967's *Forever Changes* for soul, funk and R&B (including a cover of *Be Thankful for What You've Got*). Even better: It adds a dozen outtakes, rehearsals and alternate mixes. Give thanks.



JOE COCKER

## Joe Cocker ★★★★★ 1/2

The Life of a Man: The Ultimate Hits 1968-2013

It's a luxury you can afford. There have obviously been dozens of Cocker comps over the decades, but this two-discer is the first one that encompasses the bluesy rocker's entire career, from early hits like *Marjorie* and *Feeling Alright* to final singles like *Fire It Up*. It would be better if it were all in chronological order, but on the whole, it's better than all right.

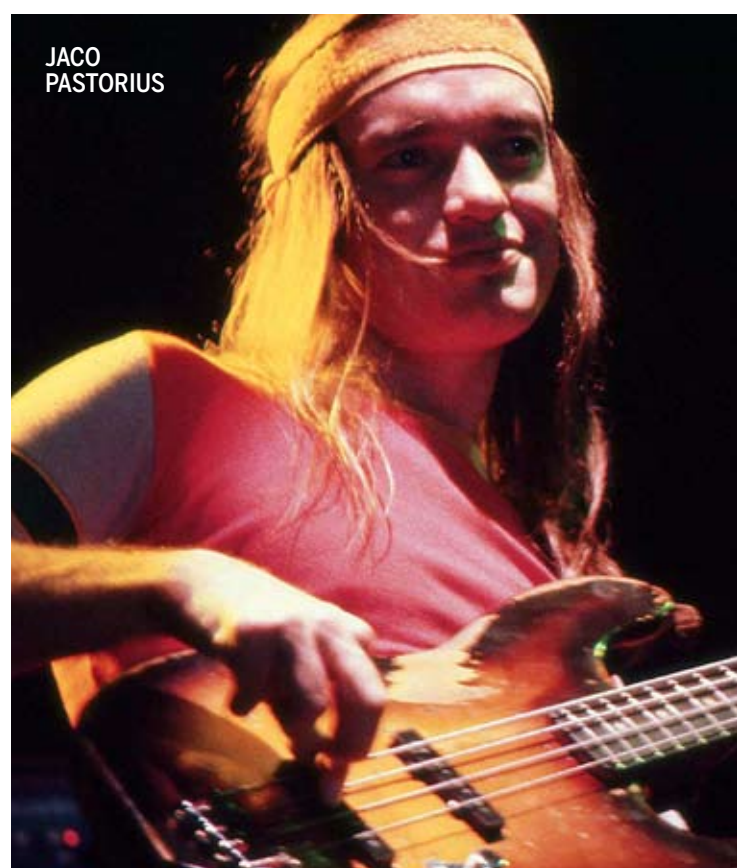
## The Beach Boys ★★★★★ 1/2

Beach Boys' Party! Uncovered and Unplugged

Missing from that title: Unearthed, unadorned and (almost) unstoppable. Five decades after its 1965 release, the surf-rockers' studio-recorded faux-party disc returns minus the overdrubbed chatter — but with nearly 70 bonus cuts, including umpteen outtakes and covers of *Satisfaction*, *Twist & Shout*, *Hang on Sloopy* and tons more. Party on, boys.



# DVDS OF THE WEEK



JACO PASTORIUS

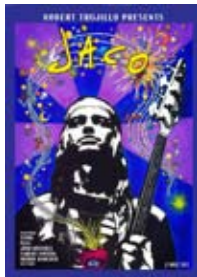
## Jaco Pastorius

Robert Trujillo Presents: Jaco

★★★★★

Jaco: Original Soundtrack

★★★★ 1/2



Bassists and jazzbos already know. Now it's the world's turn to learn. Produced by Metallica's Robert Trujillo, the biographical *Jaco* shines a much-deserved spotlight on troubled bass virtuoso Jaco Pastorius. Tracking his life and career from his dues-paying days with Wayne Cochran to his landmark work with Weather Report and his tragic, untimely death at 35 after bouts with mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness, the two-hour doc offers a riveting and revealing portrait of a musical maverick whose talent couldn't conquer his demons. For more on the audio side, grab the soundtrack, which mixes Pastorius originals with his session work for everyone from Ian Hunter to Joni Mitchell, along with new reinterpretations from Trujillo, Tech N9ne and more.