



An advertisement for Hollywood Tans. On the left is a photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a bikini, lying down. To the right of the photo, the text reads 'TEXT TAN TO 38714 FOR a FREE TAN'. Above this text is the website 'www.HollywoodTansAtlanta.com'. At the bottom right of the ad are logos for 'MYSTIC' and 'HOLLYWOOD TANS. LOVE AMAZING EVERYWHERE.'

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COLUMNS:

MUSIC REVIEWS

Dean's List= Highest Achievers

A= Excellent

B= There may be hope for you yet!

C= Pathetically average

D= Probation: One more like this and. . .

F= Pack your shit bro, the party's over.

By B. Love, DeMarco Williams, John Moore and Sacha Dzuba

ON THE DEAN'S LIST

JÓNSI

GO (XL RECORDINGS)

Dazzling solo debuts.

BL You may not know Icelandic art-rockers Sigur Rós by name, but if you've seen films like *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* or TV shows like *24* or *CSI*, you've probably heard their ethereal sound. Combining elements of experimental post-rock, atmospheric ambient music and neo-classical arrangements, their expansive compositions echo influences ranging from Cocteau Twins and Björk to Brian Eno and Steve Reich. Yet, with his angelic falsetto, otherworldly guitar and made-up "Hopelandic" language, frontman Jón Pór "Jónsi" Birgisson gives Sigur Rós a distinctive feel that separates them from any of the bands (Radiohead, to name one) with whom they're often compared. After 15 years with the band, *Go* marks Jónsi's solo debut, and it's arguably his most accessible work to date... which isn't to say it's altogether mainstream accessible. The album finds Birgisson singing primarily in English for the first time, though his impossibly high range (which could give Mariah Carey a run for her money) will still leave you struggling to decode the lyrics.



Opening with the chirping electronics, bird-like flute and pounding percussion of "Go Do," the generally shorter songs here explore a diverse array of moods, from the insistent driving rhythm of "Animal Arithmetic" to the transcendent music box balladry of "BoyLilikoi." My favorite track, "Sinking Friendships," is the sort of epic for which Birgisson's band is known, building dynamic tension and gradually adding layers of sound and unfolding into a thing of majestic beauty. "It's the end of the end of the end," he sings halfway through. We can only hope he's not referring to Sigur Rós, which clearly needs Jónsi worse than he needs them.

CORINNE BAILEY RAE

THE SEA (CAPITOL)

The soulful morning after the mourning.

DW You can't tell a person how to handle the loss of a loved one. Some people can crack jokes at the funeral. Others curl up to a dark corner and never quite reappear. Corinne Bailey Rae can certainly relate to the latter, as she found herself questioning everything with the shocking March '08 death of her husband, Jason Rae. Thankfully, after some serious reflection, the English chanteuse began making her way back to the music. *The Sea* is what those heart-opening sessions came to be.

But let's get one thing straight about Rae's sophomore effort: *The Sea* isn't this wholly dark collection some in the media have made it out to be. One could even argue how plucky tracks like "Paris Nights/New York Mornings" wouldn't be totally out of place on Corinne's delightful '06 debut.

How this album would be better described is more mature. Now, if said tag means less Pop 40 whim and more reflective gems, so be it. Moments like "Are You Here" drip with sorrow, but show a pinch of sunlight. "The Blackest Lily" is an almost cynical of love, but not to the point ears are discouraged.

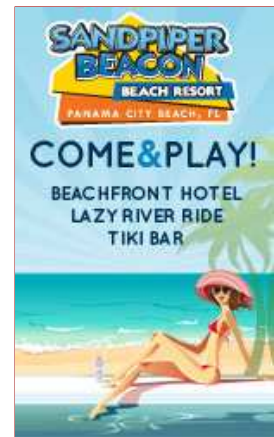
Really, no matter the emotion, from the turbulent ("Diving For Hearts") to the triumphant ("I'll Do It All Again"), every track here is made a treat by fiery guitars, well-placed organs and the most pleasant instrument of them all, a 30-year-old's supple tone. While fans can be pleased in hearing that, they should flat-out rejoice knowing Corinne Bailey Rae made it from her personal tragedy with her gift of song still intact.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

FIRE IN MY BONES: RAW, RARE + OTHERWORLDLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN GOSPEL [1944-2007] (TOMKINS SQUARE)

BL Benefiting the New Orleans Musician Relief Fund, *Fire In My Bones* is an exceptional 3-CD collection documenting the stylistic evolution of gospel music over the past 60 years. Equally impressive in scope and style (with Art Direction by Atlanta's Susan Archie), Tomkins Square's set is designed to collect some of the more neglected sounds of black gospel music recorded between the genre's post-WWII heyday and the present. Produced by Mike McConigal, the compilation veers among various gospel traditions, from solo performances to congregational recordings to hellfire-and-brimstone sermons that will make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. It also veers from major label tracks to field recordings, and from rural Georgia to urban California, showcasing the sheer diversity of the gospel sound.

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From The Phillips' Specials' furiously funky "I'm A Soldier" and Precious Bryant's folk-blues take on "When the Saints Go Marching In" to the Georgia Fife & Drum Band's bizarrely militaristic "Why Sorrow Done Passed Me Around" and Grant & Ella's version of the slave-era spiritual "John Saw," the Peach State is well represented among the 80 awesome tracks collected here. But if there's one central message this killer compilation conveys, it's that where you're from ain't nearly as important as where you're going.

ACRASSICAUDA

ONLY THE DEAD SEE THE END OF THE WAR (VICE)

Raw, explosive metal from war torn Baghdad
SD Acrassicauda has literally been to hell and back to bring you their music. The Iraqi band (whose name is Latin for a species of black scorpion) conquered all odds and became the metal band they always dreamed of being, touring here in America.



The subject of the documentary Heavy Metal in Baghdad, Acrassicauda's day-to-day adventures of living in a war zone are a gritty, in-your-face reality. The film covers three years of their lives, struggling to survive war. Their practice space was bombed, they received death threats over their music, were threatened with arrest for head-banging (due to its similarities to Jewish prayer), and they spent two years as refugees in Syria and Turkey. They now live in America and, after an inspiring meeting with their heroes in Metallica, they're releasing their debut EP.

The effort is incredible, showing they've come a long way from the rough demos heard in the film. The drumming of Marwan Riyadh is driving, with tight double-kick bass; guitarist Tony Aziz has great thrash metal chops; and vocalist Faisal Talal does a great job of alternating between growling, guttural vocals and clean singing. You can hear influences from Master of Puppets-era Metallica, older Pantera and Iron Maiden, with shades of Mastodon and Nile. But Acrassicauda truly has a heavy, raw, passionate sound all their own. This is what they have literally fought for with tears, sweat, and blood. This is their dream.

Perhaps bassist Firas al-Lateef says it best: "A lot of heavy metal bands talk and sing about war and death and destruction, but they haven't experienced it. We have." **(B+)**

X-RAY SPEX

LIVE AT THE ROUNDHOUSE LONDON (FUTURE NOISE)

The return of the '70s punk legends.

JM England's X-Ray Spex may not have garnered as much respect or attention over the long haul as The Sex Pistols or The Clash, but they had their hand in influencing a whole generation of future punk- and indie-rockers, from Concrete Blonde to Le Tigre.

Recorded in 2008, the Live at the Roundhouse London CD/DVD beautifully captures the energy from this landmark late '70s pop-punk band, which was reunited after more than a decade apart. Led by charismatic front-woman Poly Styrene, the band has always been in flux. Formed in 1976, they broke up three years later, only to resurface sporadically over the course of the '90s. So there were not a ton of songs to pick from for this live set.

Regardless, the crowd is enthusiastic and the band sounds great (Poly Styrene in particular). And they even manage to pull off two different versions of their biggest hit, "Oh Bondage Up Yours!" **(B)**

STS9

AD EXPLORATA (1320 RECORDS)

In sounds from WAY out.

BL Sound Tribe Sector 9 was founded in the late '90s, when their unique brand of dub-influenced, improvisational breakbeats established them as peers of rising jam bands such as Disco Biscuits and Lake Trout. They quickly attracted a national following, and by 2001 they'd relocated to northern California and taken a deeper interest in spirituality and mysticism.

With Ad Explorata, STS9 has also taken an interest in shortwave radios, as the album was inspired by (and features samples of) transmissions found while tooling around with one. They reportedly stumbled onto an artificial female voice counting off numbers, then learned these transmissions came from numbers stations designed to transmit coded messages from government organizations to spies overseas (in 2001 the U.S. tried the Cuban Five for spying using info received from a Cuban station).

Enlisting the help of a crypto-hacker friend, STS9 found that the numbers corresponded with the coordinates of a military installation in Big Sur. Following a trail to an abandoned bunker, they found a rusted metal box containing several items, including the photo that became the cover of their "Atlas" single and a black ops military patch for a unit that gathered signal intelligence from other countries and, perhaps, galaxies. Their motto: "Ad Explorata, Forward Into The Unexplored."

Whether you believe this extraordinary story or not, it's hard to argue with the conceptual impact on Ad Explorata's blend of jazz, funk, IDM, prog rock and spaced-out psychedelia, which creates some of the band's most dynamic jams to date. From the Aphex Twin-like alien vibe of the opening "Phoneme" and the metallic guitar thrust of "Heavy" to the hypnotic dub groove of "Crypto City" and the tweaked-out glitch-hop of "Central," this is the deepest, most intriguing effort of STS9's career. If there is life on other planets, you can only imagine that this might be just the sort of transmission they'd love to hear. **(B)**

JAHEIM

ANOTHER ROUND (ATLANTIC)

Singing your heart out to women never sounded so manly.

DW Teddy Pendergrass' January 13 passing didn't cause a fraction of the shockwaves that Michael Jackson's did.

The media slight no less reflects the impact the smooth Philly singer had on Urban America's conception rates in the 70s or its lasting effect on 21st century crooners like Jaheim. You can see Teddy P's influence all over Ja's manicured yet masculine exterior. And with his polished, powerful pipes on full display on this fifth album, Another

Round, you can hear it too.

Leaving that soft, breathy chanting to your little sister's favorite acts, Jaheim's approach to courting is more old school, like how your uncle used to do it. He'll tease a bit ("Ain't Leavin' Without You," "Whoa"). He'll even talk dirty ("Closer") when the lights dim. But be it romancing the ladies, expecting a new baby ("Il Pink Lines") or finding true love ("Till It Happens To You"), it all comes down to making women comfortable. Another Round does that most of the way. It's amazing what a husky voice and uncluttered, grown-up production can do. Somewhere in the heavens Teddy Pendergrass is smiling. **(B+)**

GRANT HART
HOT WAX (CON D'OR)

We waited 10 years for this?!

JM Former Hüsker Dü drummer Grant Hart has a bit of a reputation for being a tad erratic when it comes to releases, so the fact that he hasn't put out a proper album in 10 years should come as little surprise. *Hot Wax*, his fourth solo effort, is not a drastic departure from his previous albums.

While his solo work is not nearly as aggressive or groundbreaking as the songs in his influential post-punk band's canon, Hart does have a knack for writing strong pop melodies. That talent is particularly evident here on tunes such as The Kinks-esque "Barbara" and "Charles Hollis Jones." *Hot Wax* is a pleasant enough album— not particularly remarkable or memorable, but nine decent pop songs nonetheless. Still, in the end, it hardly seems like it was worth the decade-long wait. **(C)**

DAVID BERKELEY
STRANGE LIGHT (STRAW MAN/THIRTY TIGERS)

A melodic sense of melancholy.

BL Equally influenced by Nick Drake and Damien Rice, this promising singer-songwriter's third album has an achingly melodic sense of melancholy that should appeal to fans of Elliott Smith, Joshua Radin and their modern folk ilk.

Produced by Brian Deck (Iron & Wine, Modest Mouse), with a guest appearance from Nickel Creek's Sara Watkins, the album pays tribute to landmarks from the nomadic Berkeley's past and present hometowns, from the dynamic build of "Willis Avenue Bridge" (which connects the Bronx and Manhattan) to the sweet, soulful horns that adorn his paean to Atlanta's "Sweet Auburn."

A Harvard grad who studied literature and philosophy before working as a river rafting guide in Idaho and a writer in Alaska, Berkeley's led an intriguing life. Though he may be settled with wife and child these days, you can hear the richness of his experiences in every intimate, well-crafted track. **(B+)**

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