

**Mudvayne – Mudvayne**  
(Epic)

★★



Easily the most interesting aspect of this, the Peoria, Illinois-grown band of alt/nu-metal half-wits, is the album art. The Edvard Munch-like, fly-eyed, creepy guy on the cover is visible only under a black light. A neat trick, I suppose, for an otherwise forgettable, trite and predictable collection of eleven tracks that continue the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's first decade of this all-too-ubiquitous genre. Why won't it die? Kids who might have liked this stuff (or even some of the band's decent stuff on early records such as *L.D. 50* and *The End of All Things to Come*) are now out of college, having, I suppose, moved on to other things than the blunt and stupid, formulaic crap they might have enjoyed when being a tortured soul was something they wore on their sleeve.

If there's a track to perhaps download, it's "I Can't Wait," a death metal drenched song that offers a few minutes of enjoyment, I guess. But the rest, especially the end, a pathetic, acoustic ditty called – what else? – "Dead Inside," is something to skip altogether, unless you're an avid fan who must own everything by the band. And if this is you, then you'll ignore any criticism or praise for this self-titled thingamabob.

-- PAUL DOCKERY

**Pelican – What We All Come To Need**  
(Southern Lord)

★★★★

Chicago's progressive/metal act migrates to Southern Lord for their forth album, and this one follows much in the path of their past work – lengthy, intricately-developed instrumental rock that takes aspects of heavy indie, doom metal, drone, and even math rock and adds a monumental heaviness that will endear

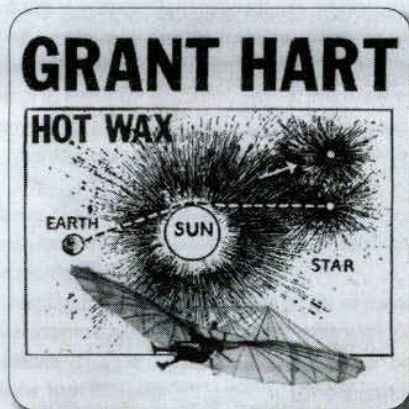


them to fans of kindred spirits like Tool, Isis, Jesu, Mono, or Sunn o))). "The Creeper" features some guest guitars from Greg Anderson, himself of Sunn o))), but the music is purely Pelican. The twin guitar attack of Laurent Schroeder-Lebec and Trevor de Brauw interweaves delicate melodies below seas of monolithic riff. Pelican's heavy (and heady) music leaves behind any semblance of ego or pretense, as these players create songs that sometimes sweep and float, at other times twist into a tumultuous firestorm of angst and thunderous momentum. Tracks like "Strung up From the Sky" epitomize everything that Pelican stands for – strong, muscular, and tight riffing, softer passages, a monstrous rhythm section, and melodies wafting around the gargantuan (song) structure. Nothing here is tired, rote, overplayed, or showy. Superb work, and perhaps Pelican's finest thus far.

-- TODD ZACHRITZ

**Grant Hart – Hot Wax**  
(MVD Audio)

★★★★



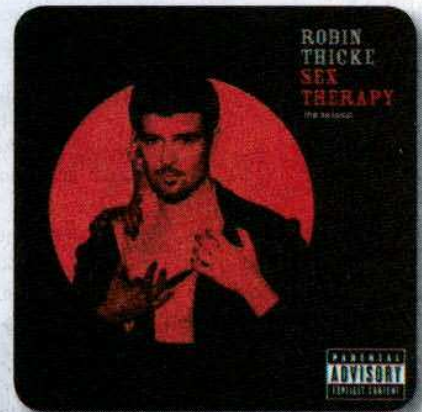
Best-known as drummer for Minneapolis punk icons Husker Du, some would be surprised to hear this new solo record from Hart, his first in nine years. All but abandoning his more raucous punk roots, *Hot Wax* sees collaborations with members of Canadian post-rock acts Godspeed You Black Emperor/A Silver

Mt. Zion, but even this is overshadowed – probably for the better, due to Hart's fine, mature, and well-developed songwriting skills. "You're The Reflection of The Moon on The Water" is a superb, raved-up rock song that admittedly owes much to Patti Smith. "Barbara" is a sweet bit of 60's-style English baroque pop, and "School Buses Are For Children" is a well-written and heartfelt classic rock-style song that showcases Hart's considerable skills as a vocalist – a fact seemingly forgotten and overshadowed by his years in the background. "California Zephyr" is a simple pop song that's effectively catchy and narrative, as is the 60's pop of "Sailor Jack." Taken as a whole, *Hot Wax* is an amazingly well-composed collection of diverse, tuneful, clever, and timeless songs that will withstand. Full accolades!

-- TODD ZACHRITZ

**Robin Thicke – Sex Therapy:**  
*The Experience*  
(Star Trak, LLC)

★



The progeny of Alan Thicke (who played a therapist on the hokey-ass sitcom *Growing Pains*... I wonder if there's a subliminal connection with that and the title of Thicke the Younger's new album?) offers a step *backward* in his career as a rather polished and professional purveyor of pop/R&B. *Sex Therapy: The Experience* is a flat-footed *homage* to all things carnal. What's more, it seems designed to appeal to tweens and kiddos in general, which is an immature U-Turn away from the sounds of the successful and critically-acclaimed *The Evolution of Robin Thicke*, which had an appeal to older fans of R&B.

Here, we get inane lyrics such as the title track's "You are my love, you are my love/Let me be your medicine..." and "The doctor's here for you/ Take you like Twilight, I'll bite your neck." Ugh.

I'm the farthest thing from a prude, but the content on *Sex Therapy*... is so obviously engineered to appeal to kids, the explicit content – which is never ironic, funny or even that sexy – just rubs me the wrong way. Contributions from Snoop Dogg, Kid Cudi and Nicki Minaj not only don't kick