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## Bill's Best of 2008!

Article posted on Jan 11, 2009 by [Ian Lashbrook](#)

**By: Bill Jones**

### Top 5 Albums of 2008

1. The Gaslight Anthem - *The 59 Sound*





It seems almost guaranteed this album will be at the top of more than a few year-end lists for 2008, and it is well deserved. The band lived up to its hype and more in a SideOneDummy debut that doesn't let go. The production may be a bit overdone, but the blue-collar-Jersey-meets-punk-meets-folk songwriting trumps almost any flaws. So good.

## 2. The Copyrights - *Learn the Hard Way*



It can be hard to keep three-chord pop-punk truly interesting and fresh. After all, there are only three chords with which to work. The Copyrights manage to get me more interested in the genre than I have been in years with *Learn the Hard Way*. The album is catchy, mosh-inducing and filled with great sing-along lyrics. What more could one want?

## 3. Off With Their Heads - *From the Bottom*



Off With Their Heads has always been great, but *From the Bottom* is a near perfect culmination of the pain, catchiness and the gruff No Idea sound that makes the band so awesome. It's incredible from start to finish.

## 4. The Briggs - *Come All You Madmen*





The Briggs seem to just get better with every effort, and *Come All You Madmen* stepped it up once again. It is an incredibly catchy street punk album from start to finish, and the band turns out great performances.

#### 5. Jason Webley - *The Cost of Living*



Webley weaves beautiful lyrics through eerie folk melodies with incredible instrumentation driven by his accordion. With *The Cost of Living* Webley uses 42 minutes of space to craft moody compositions that never get dull. Not bad for a guy who used to play as a busker on the streets of Seattle.

### Worst Albums of 2008

Unwritten Law - *Live and Lawless*

Mostly because it makes anyone who watches it realize why this band shouldn't even be around anymore.

Lustmord - *[Other]*

Painfully, obnoxiously self-indulgent album of low tones with satanic flavor.

The Bloodsugars - *BQEP*

This just sucks, for so many reasons.

Hit the Lights - *Skip School Start Fights*

Fuck this band once because they suck. Twice for putting out this album. And a third time because their name has made more people than I care to count question the quality of Hit the Switch, a much different (read: good) band that had a short stint with Nitro before the label's quiet, apparent demise.

### Biggest Disappointments

### Goldfinger - *Hello Destiny*

I wouldn't say I got my hopes up, but I think everyone who remembers the good old (read: decent) days of Goldfinger was hoping Charlie would give the band a much needed boost. Some of the album found its way back to decent, but there was enough crap to keep it down.

### Lagwagon - *I Think My Older Brother Used to Listen to Lagwagon*

I'm a fan of Joey Cape's songwriting, and probably get too excited for anything Lagwagon. I loved *Resolve*, a lot, which is probably why this seemingly half-hearted effort felt like a bit of a dud.

### No Use for a Name - *Feel Good Record of the Year*

I'm sorry Fat Wreck Chords; I swear I still love you. This is another one that was by no means "bad," but I think after getting the *Best Songs* compilation and being overwhelmed by how awesome NUFAN is, a new album of so-so material kind of got me down.

## Biggest Revelations

### Dr. Manhattan

Awesome band from the Chicago area, weird tempos, piano work - not the usual stuff I find myself into, but good songwriting, quirky personalities and catchy hooks won me over.

### Sidekicks

*So Long, Soggy Dog* is an awesome album. So go buy it if you haven't yet. This band kicks ass, and I can't wait for more.

### Jackson United

*Harmony and Dissidence* is, I think, the Lagwagon and NUFAN albums I was looking for rolled into one.

### Feels Like Fire and Blacklist Royals

I often get emails from bands asking me to listen to their shit. Feels Like Fire and Blacklist Royals are two of them this year that actually proved worthwhile. Both kick ass - check out the reviews on this site ([here](#) and [here](#)) and then buy their stuff so they can keep making new tunes.

## A DVD Worth Noting

*Punk's Not Dead* - Great documentary, great filmmaking. Really stands out as a high-quality, unbiased look at punk.

## Best Shows

*AC/DC - Allstate Arena in Chicago*

I'm not sure what it says about me/the music scene that this was my favorite show of the year. I know classic rock bands, in general, need to just retire instead of reuniting every X amount of years to sell ridiculously priced tickets at large arenas, and yet AC/DC was entirely different. A) They never "broke up." They've just been chilling and taking their time writing a new album which is very much like every other AC/DC album you've ever heard and better for it. B) I was lucky enough to snatch a seat in the first 15 rows, a couple seats away from the ramp, so I could actually see the band up close, not just on jumbo screens, and I can honestly say they outperformed many of today's younger bands. It was pure energy from everyone on stage, and it was evident - despite the fact that, yes, they are banking some huge paychecks on this door - the band is mostly back out on the road because they love to perform. The theatrics were extravagant, but awesomely so, and the band performed hit after hit after hit. If there was ever a ridiculous classic rock arena show to catch, it was this one.

### *Video Games Live - Chicago Theater in Chicago*

This was a phenomenal experience for the huge nerd that I am. A classic orchestra performs video game compositions, but instead of the haughty environment one might associate with classical music, there were people in costumes, games played on stage during the performances and it was just ridiculous, artsy fun.

### *Revival Tour - Reggie's Rock Room in Chicago*

Despite the venue in Chicago being way too small and overbooked for this show, to the point that a virtually motionless crowd was packed like sardines, and the fact that everyone overstayed their welcome just a bit with a four-hour set, Chuck Ragan and company still deserve recognition for putting together one of the coolest tours of the year. Stripping things down to acoustic, forgoing set changes and great crossover performances by stellar musicians made for a great time.

### *Less Than Jake, Goldfinger, Big D and the Kids Table - House of Blues in Chicago*

Goldfinger's new album turned out to be another dud, but the band still has it live, and yes, Darren is still asking people to eat Twinkies out of his ass...and people are still dumb enough to do it for a few seconds of attention. Less Than Jake new album was surprisingly good and the band is always solid live. Big D, while playing a short set, was a great way to round out the lineup.

### *Bayside, Punchline (Acoustic)*

The frontmen of Bayside and Punchline are both great songwriters, so it makes sense that the two deciding to do a tour without the bands, grabbing acoustic guitars and hitting the road together worked so well.

## **Most Anticipated of 2009**

### **Bomb the Music Industry**

I think these guys were on my most anticipated for 2008, just on the assumption that they would release another album, and they made me look like a fool by not putting out a new one in '08. Oh well. Apparently they're putting the finishing touches on their latest, so '09 is looking like the year.

### **Green Day**

Not 100 percent sure if a new Green Day album is planned for release in '09, but the band is in the studio, so unless it is their *Chinese Democracy*, I would think so. Green Day hasn't put out a bad album yet, in my book, and *American Idiot* was a huge (and successful) departure from the band's repertoire, so I'm very interested to

see how they follow it.

### MC Lars - *This Gigantic Robot Kills*

MC Lars is awesome, if you're into really smart, nerdy rap, which I am. *The Graduate* was mostly good, though slightly disappointing following the stellar *Laptop EP*. But Lars has been doing some great stuff lately, and I'm excited about the new album - the title of which is an homage to the great Wesley Willis.

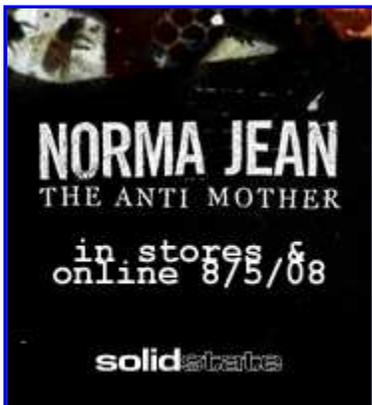
### Fake Problems - *It's Great to Be Alive*

Fake Problems is amazing. They have signed to SideOneDummy. Here's hoping their SideOneDummy debut is just as amazing.

## User Comments

[Wade](#) that punk's not dead dvd is decent. i think it could have been better, but i was impressed. Jan 12, 2009

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## Articles Staff

Carsten

[carsten@jacobsen.org](mailto:carsten@jacobsen.org)

Eddie Cash

[ederlenmeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:ederlenmeyer@yahoo.com)

Ian Lashbrook

[ian\\_lashbrook@yahoo.com](mailto:ian_lashbrook@yahoo.com)

Jamie Arthurs

[jjartistsmanager@aol.com](mailto:jjartistsmanager@aol.com)



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