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## September 2008 Reviews by **LMNOP®**

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### RATING SYSTEM:



= UNBELIEVABLY INCREDIBLE



= EXCELLENT



= VERY GOOD



= GOODIE TWO SHOES



= FAIRY FAIRY WHERE ART THOU?



= SHITTY SHITTY BLACK AND PRETTY

### **Matthew Ballard** - *Midnight Drive* (Independently released CD, Pop/country/Americana)

Simple and straightforward melodic country pop. **Matthew Ballard** has a sound and style that could easily appeal to millions of listeners. His smooth, melodic guitar pop flows by comfortably...without unnecessary ingredients muddying up the mix. This is Ballard's second full-length album. The disc is full of pedal steel and cool rhythm guitars. At the heart of the tunes are Matthew's super smooth vocals. This guy has a really nice velvety voice that is the perfect centerpiece for his subdued guitar pop. Unlike a lot of underground artists who tread into weird and experimental territory...this guy is creating purely accessible music that doesn't require a lot of thought and/or patience. All you need to do to enjoy the music is just pop the disc in and turn up the volume. And in today's complicated musical climate...that, indeed, can be a *very good thing*. Cool soft rockers include "Run Away With Me," "Forget About You," "Never Here Again," and "Where Do I Go From Here." (Rating: 5)



### **Bears** - *Simple Machinery* (CD, **Pink Teeth**, Pop)

**Charlie McArthur** and **Craig Ramsey** (the two gentlemen who created **Bears**) have come a long way in a short amount of time. These fellows began recording and releasing music in 2005 and since that time have generated some very positive remarks from some very influential people. As of the release of this album the band now also includes **Pat McNulty**, **Devon Coffee**, **Patrick Tripto**, and **Sean Sullivan**. *Simple Machinery* is the most focused and mature Bears disc we have heard to date. The album features nice, smooth, hummable pop tunes with simple, appropriate arrangements and cool, understated vocals. Some of the tracks on this album sound slightly similar to **The Beach Boys**...while others remind us of some of the cool underground Athens, Georgia pop bands from the 1990s. The band's sound is characterized by smooth flowing rhythms and exceptionally pleasing harmony vocals. The songs on this album don't immediately grab your attention with power and strangeness...but rather and instead slowly sink into your subconscious and make a real impression. Pleasantly pleasing compositions include "Please Don't," "So Go," "Subtle Way," and "Our Time." (Rating: 5)



## BITCHES AND BASTARDS

Bitches teach.

Bastards play sports.

Bitches cook.

Bastards drink beer.

Bitches embrace diversity.

Bastards donate to charities.

(Rating: 1)



### **The Break and Repair Method** - *Milk the Bee* (CD, [Bluhammock](#), Pop)

Exceptionally upbeat and melodic positive pop. On the first couple of spins we weren't latching onto the vibes on *Milk the Bee*...but five spins later we found ourselves happily humming along and tapping our toesies to the tantalizing tunes of **The Break and Repair Method**. This band is the project created by **Paul Doucette** who elicits support from a wide variety of supporting singers and players on this album. Doucette writes thoughtful smart pop tunes that are incredibly infectious...and he has a really great sincere voice that really makes his tunes *work*. Although his sound is actually quite different in many ways, in terms of the overall vibe we could compare Doucette's tunes to **Elvis Costello**. The arrangements on this album are appropriate and impeccable. Using mostly traditional instruments, Paul manages to come up with modern classic pop tunes that could appeal to a broad cross section of listeners. This album is housed in a nice slick digipak sleeve and includes a lyric sheet. Top picks: "This City (Is Bound To Do Us In)," "Forget About the Brightside," "Life Gets Beautiful," "The Most Somebody Can Know." (Rating: 5+)



### **Julia Brown** - *Strange Scars* (Independently released CD, Pop)

When we initially scoped out this package...we felt that this individual would probably be just another average generic new female artist. After all, the CD cover and accompanying materials looked just like any one of thousands of submissions we receive each year. But our opinion quickly changed...as the songs on *Strange Scars* proved us completely and totally *wrong*. **Julia Brown** is engaging and credible...and her music absolutely *cooks*. Produced by **Anton Fier (Golden Palaminos)**, this is one *hell* of an album. It is impressive indeed that this is an independently released disc...because *Scars* sounds as good or better than anything released by major labels these days. But sound quality isn't what makes this album so desirable...it is rather,

and indeed, the essence and soul of Ms. Brown herself. Julia writes songs with real substance and she has a killer voice that is effective and real. Her timbre is sometimes reminiscent of Britain's **Linda Lewis**. Some of the tracks have commercial appeal...while others are more moody and slightly peculiar. In an age of throwaway artists, *Strange Scars* proves without a doubt that Julia Brown is a credible artist with real, genuine talent. Smooth inviting cuts include "Unburden," "Hole," "Pieces of the Species," and "In Hurt's Arms." Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



### **Ane Brun** - *Changing of the Seasons* (Import CD, **Determine**, Soft progressive pop)

Interesting...and quite different from the average twenty-first century female singer/songwriter. Norwegian **Ane Brun** (who now lives in Sweden) is bound to capture people's attention with her strangely captivating sound...and her uniquely peculiar voice (she has an odd warble that will sound decidedly unfamiliar to the average American listener). Ms. Brun impressed a lot of folks with her second album (*A Temporary Dive*) in 2006. *Changing of the Seasons* will most definitely please her original fans as well as bring in legions more. In a world full of throwaway artists Ane stands out because her music has substance. When you hear her music, you *won't* get the feeling that you have heard it all before. The songs on *Changing of the Seasons* are already impressive...but they are pushed to the next level by some extraordinary sounding arrangements. Thirteen challenging tracks here including "The Treehouse Song," "Ten Seconds," "Armour," and "Linger With Pleasure." *Interesting stuff...!* (Rating: 5+)



### **Caves** - *Get On With It* (Independently released CD, Pop/rock)

The guys in **The Caves** have a sound and style that is reminiscent of the early days of **The Police**. The tunes on *Get On With It* are, for the most part, direct and straightforward...heavily based on precise rhythms and intricate guitar riffs. In many ways the tunes on this album bear a strong resemblance to British guitar bands from the late 1970s and early 1980s. The arrangements are smart and appropriate...and the lead singer has a voice that could easily appeal to millions of fans. Eleven tracks here including "Curiosity," "Optimist Pessimist," "Closure," and "You (Plus) Me." (Rating: 4++)



### **Commodor** - *Driving Out of Focus* (CD, **Distile**, Hard progressive rock)

Interesting hard progressive rock from Switzerland. **Commodor** is the trio consisting of **Adriano Perlini** (guitar, vocals), **Tim Robert-Charrue** (bass, keyboards), and **Christophe Henchoz** (drums). Although the songs on *Driving Out of Focus* rely much more on sizzling hot crazy guitars, the band's overall sound reminds us very much of **The Young Gods**. These folks write and record unconventional rock music. If you're looking for familiar song structures and samey sounding riffs you *won't* find them here. The songs on this album are harsh, jagged, and



unpredictable. There are so many generic sounding hard rock bands in the world today. Coming across a cool and genuinely talented band like Commodore is a refreshing slap in the face. Eight crazy rockers including "Liquid Fire," "Goats on the Cliff," "Dune," and "Everlasting Swamps of Sorrow." (Rating: 5)



### **Cornflakes Heroes** - *Dear Mr Painkillers* (CD, [Greed Recordings](#), Pop)

We rarely hear that many French underground pop bands lately. Not sure why this is...? As a result, we were pleasantly surprised to receive a package from the Greed Recordings label in France. *Dear Mr Painkillers* is the second full-length release from this nifty and obscure little band. **Cornflakes Heroes** tunes are a bit difficult to pigeonhole. The music definitely fits within the realm of underground pop...and the songs (and most certainly the vocals) remind us of some of the early recorded work of **Howard Devoto** and **Pete Shelley**. These songs have a nice, loose feel that is a refreshing change of pace from pop bands whose music sounds entirely too perfect for words. The band's sound is a bit of an acquired taste (i.e., it takes more than a couple of spins to begin to get into the music). Cool inspired tunes include "Sex on Channel #4," "Bloody Valentine," "Dig A Hole," and "Shabu Shabu." Funny, quirky, and melodic. (Rating: 5)



### **Chris Cotton** - *The Big Sea* (Independently released CD, Pop/folk/blues/roots)

Love the artwork on the CD itself...the information is scribbled in someone's handwriting making it look exactly like a homemade CD-R. For folks who may be finding **Devendra Banhart's** music from the past couple of years a bit too calculated and self-absorbed...**Chris Cotton** may sound similar while being more refreshing overall. Mr. Cotton writes and plays loose acoustic bluesy pop that harkens back to the sound of artists from the 1930s and 1940s. There are definite elements of ragtime in his music. There are a lot of artists delving into this area of music with varying results. Chris comes across sounding genuine and *real*. He's got a good voice and he knows how to use it. Ten feelgood hummable tracks here including "Blues and Sadness," "What Would You Do?", and "The Big Sea." (Rating: 4+++++)



### **Dancer vs. Politician** - *A City Half-Lost* (Independently released CD-R, Soft pop)

Although she calls Athens, Georgia her home, **Sanni Baumgaertner** (the young lady who calls herself **Dancer vs. Politician**) is originally from Germany. But unlike many overseas artists who plant their roots in American soil, Baumgaertner continues to sing in German (although she also includes tunes here sung in English). Recorded over a two-year period, *A City Half-Lost* features nice, smart, mature, soft, introspective pop tunes that emphasize Sanni's understated and provocative voice. Players on the album include members of **Phosphorescent**, **The Olivia Tremor Control**, **The Glands**, and **Five-Eight**. Baumgaertner might best be described as an

"artist's artist." Her sound is probably a bit too odd for the casual listener...but our guess is that writers and other musicians will eat this stuff right off the plate without using utensils. Neat, moody, subdued tracks include "Mach Dich Los," "Keine Zeit," "Happiness," and "Homeless Mind." Nice smooth stuff... (Rating: 5)



### **Steve Dawson** - *Telescope* (CD, [Black Hen Music](#), Progressive/instrumental)

Although widely respected and rather successful in Canada where he resides, **Steve Dawson** remains relatively unknown in the United States. This fact will undoubtedly change over time. *Telescope* is the companion album to Dawson's recently released *Waiting For the Lights To Come Up*...mainly because both were recorded during the same time period...but that is where the similarities end. While *Waiting* features the cool, hummable guitar tunes Steve is mainly known for, *Telescope* takes off in a completely different direction. In 2005 Dawson began studying pedal steel guitar with guru **Greg Leinsz** (one of the most recorded steel players of all time). He eventually became comfortable enough with the instrument to record this album with supporting players **Keith Lowe** (bass), **Chris Gestrin** (keyboards), and **Scott Amendola** (drums). It was no shock to find that **Tom Verlaine**, **Bill Frisell**, and **Brian Eno** were influential in the creation of this music...but we were pleasantly surprised to note that Steve was also influenced by steel pioneers **Japancakes**. While *Telescopes* expands the uses of steel guitar, the album is by no means a noisy art creation. Mr. Dawson always provides quality *listenable* music...and there is plenty to be found on this album. Smooth, provocative tunes include "Caballero's Dream," "Speaker Damage," "Nailbiter," and "1000 Year Old Egg." Smooth and exotic. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



### **Eric Durrance** - *Angels Fly Away* (CD, [Wind-Up](#), Country/pop)

Nice, smooth, hummable, accessible country pop. The cover letter that accompanied this CD was written by **Teddy Gentry** of the band **Alabama** (who also co-produced the album)...quite an endorsement for a new up-and-coming country artist. *Angels Fly Away* is an extremely commercial sounding album. These recordings are so professional and slick that you could ice skate on 'em. So if you don't like that kinda thing you might be inclined to steer away from this album. But if you're the kinda person who likes their country pop delivered nice and easy with no glaring surprises along the way...well then, you may very well be blown away by **Eric Durrance**. One thing is certain. He's got the voice, songs, and personality to be a *big* success. Eleven tracks include "Someone I Can't Live Without," "Life Is Hard," "This Side of Sober," and "It's Gotta Be Love." (Rating: 4++++)



### **The Faint** - *Fascination* (CD, **Blank.wav**, Progressive dance pop/rock)

This CD arrived in our pompous little mailbox without any accompanying press release or specific information about the band...which is just fine with us because the music of **The Faint** speaks for itself. The first thing about *Fascination* that caught our attention was the nice, big, thick bass sound. The guys in this band record cool, upbeat modern dance rock/pop that is instantly catchy and hummable. The overall sound of these tunes recalls some of the best techno bands from the 1980s without ever sounding tired or retrospective. Folks into vintage keyboard and synth sounds will find a lot to love here. This band uses driving steady rhythms as a basis for their sound and then layer thick meaty keyboards over the top. The vocals are occasionally distant and slightly impersonal...giving the songs a slight robotic kind of feel. Imagine a cross between **Kraftwerk** and **New Order**...and you may have some idea of what this band sounds like. Neat infectious cuts include "Get Seduced," "Machine in the Ghost," "I Treat You Wrong," and "A Battle Hymn for Children." Cool stuff...! (Rating: 5+)



## FAMILY-ORIENTED ENTERTAINMENT

Family-oriented entertainment

Is entertainment that is

Bland and

Boring.

(Rating: 1)



### **Johnny Flynn** - *A Larum* (CD, **Lost Highway** / **Vertigo**, Pop)

We were hesitant to label this as pop because such a category might tend to give people the impression that the music is shallow and/or superficial...neither of which is the case with *A Larum*. **Johnny Flynn**'s music sounds something like a more intelligent, pensive, and subdued **Billy Bragg**. His narrative-style tunes are smart and mature...and the more familiar they are the more interesting they become. He has a great voice that comes across sounding completely genuine and sincere. In some ways, the tunes on this album are similar to the music of **John Vanderslice**. We admire any artist who creates music out of a pure love of doing so...and our guess is that this is certainly the case with Flynn. In an age of throwaway pop stars, this guy easily stands out from the pack because his music has substance and style. Thirteen cool, clean tracks here including "The Box," "Brown Trout Blues," "Wayne Rooney," and "All the Dogs Are Lying Down." (Rating: 5)



**Mark Geary** - *Opium* (CD, [Sona Blast!](#), Soft pop)

If you're looking for the most unique and original artist on the planet, **Mark Geary** isn't it. But if you're in the mood for some clean, safe, instantly familiar sounding soft music that is bound to put you in a good frame of mind...well, then, you might just want *Opium*. The accompanying press release gives a good indication of where Geary is coming from, comparing his music to **David Gray** and **Elliott Smith**. Mark left his native Ireland in 1995 and moved to New York. Since that time he has had a great deal of success with his music. *Opium* is bound to please existing fans as well as bring in hoards more. Geary writes genuinely sincere tunes that go down easy...and he has a great, laidback style of singing that is most inviting. Soft and serene, *Opium* is a very strong album from start to finish. Cool contemplative tunes include "Cold Little Fire," "Angel," "Always," and "The King of Swords." (Rating: 5+)



## GO TO THE BATHROOM

Go to the bathroom

In your hand.

Go to the bathroom

In your shoe.

Go to the bathroom

In Japan.

Go to the bathroom

In Peru.

(Rating: 1)



**Hot Lava** - *Lavalogy* (CD, [Bar/None](#), Pop/rock)

The folks in **Hot Lava** write some very interesting and substantial songs...but you might have to play *Lavalogy* a few times before the substance sinks in. We were very hot and cool toward this disc initially...probably because it seemed to us that the folks in the band were burying their songs in noise and effects. To be certain, there are lots of slightly noisy sounds going on here and a bit more vocal processing than we would like to hear. But when you dig beneath the surface, you will find that the folks in this band are actually very good songwriters. Many of the tracks on *Lavalogy* bear a slight melodic resemblance to tunes by **The Kinks** from the 1960s and 1970s...but the overall sound is markedly different. Although the tracks on this album will probably mainly appeal to younger listeners...with a bit of tweaking, our guess is that Hot Lava



tunes could easily appeal to a wide cross section of fans. Nice hummable tunes include "Blue Dragon" (our favorite), "Mummy Beach," "Resolutions '08," and "Ghosties." (Rating: 4+++++)



## HURRICANE

Hurricane blew my  
Kids away.  
Thank you  
Hurricane.

(Rating: 1)



## I WANNA HOLD

I wanna hold your hand.  
I wanna hold your liver.  
I wanna hold your spinal cord.  
I wanna hold your lungs.  
I wanna hold your tongue.  
I wanna hold your intestines.

(Rating: 1)



**Juxta Phona & [Offthesky](#)** - *!Escape Kit!* (CD, [Somnia Sound](#), Noise/sound manipulation)

We can save conservative listeners some time here. Those who like their music safe and simple will probably *not* like the music of **Juxta Phona & Offthesky**. These folks create obtuse sound manipulation pieces that twist and expand ideas. However, unlike some noise excursion artists whose music is almost unbearable and impossible to grasp, the songs on *!Escape Kit!* are surprisingly listenable. This is probably due to the fact that many of the sounds on this album are at least somewhat smooth and digestible. That is not to say, however, that there isn't some

experimentation going on here. This is definitely challenging music...but it is tempered with enough musical elements to make it palpable and entertaining. This is a limited edition pressing of only 777 copies so...click on Somnia Sound's link above to get your nervous little paws on this one fast... (Rating: 4+++++)



**The Korgis** - *Something About The Korgis: Sound & Vision* (CD + DVD, [Angel Air](#), Pop)  
**Andy Davis** and **James Warren** are busy guys these days. Not only have they and their associates revived the critically acclaimed **Stackridge** but they are also continuing to play and record with their "other" band **The Korgis**. Many comparisons have been made between the two bands but the main differences can be summed up simply. Whereas Stackridge is a more adventurous outfit with an obvious sense of humor, The Korgis is mainly a pop band with more broad commercial appeal. In terms of consistency, we have always found Stackridge albums to be more consistent overall. But when The Korgis hit the target...well, at that point pop music just doesn't get much better than this. Like Stackridge, the band never had much success in the United States despite the fact that a couple of their tunes ("If I Had You," "Everybody's Got To Learn Sometime") did very well in other parts of the world. *Something About The Korgis* is the perfect companion to the recently released Stackridge double disc set *Anyone For Tennis?* Like that set, *Something* includes a nineteen track "best of" CD that offers a precise overview of the band's career as well as a DVD of the band playing live (unplugged in a recording studio). Additionally, the DVD also includes bonus promo videos and a documentary of the band. The unplugged performances of Korgis tunes is a real treat as the guys offer stripped down versions of their tunes that showcase their exceptional melodies and intelligent lyrics. Thankfully the music of The Korgis has not gotten lost in the shuffle of modern day technology (i.e., too much music in too many places). Top notch stuff... (Rating: 5++)



**Lady Dottie and the Diamonds** - *Lady Dottie and the Diamonds* (Advance CD, **Hi-Speed Soul**, Soul/pop/rock)

We sure *hate it* that we received an advance of this one because if we had received the complete release it would have been *an easy top pick* for this month. **Lady Dottie** is a 60-year-old black lady from Alabama who can belt out a tune like nobody's business. Listening to this CD, we couldn't help but be reminded of the lovely and always enchanting **Lisa Kekaula** of **The Bellrays**. While Dottie isn't as much of a screamer, she's got the same kind of intense spunk and gusto that make The Bellrays such a mindblowing experience. This self-titled album has all the personality of the best soul releases of the 1970s...pumped and fueled with a clean modern energy and sound. You won't believe Dottie is in her 60s when you hear this. She has an *amazing* voice that'll blow your mind. And her backing band is *the best*. This one *definitely* gets a thumbs up...but only a partial review because we received only part of the actual final product... (Not Rated)

## LET THEM EAT CRAP

Crap is what  
They are hungry for so  
Let them eat it.

(Rating: 1)



### [Makeout Party](#) - *Lengths and Limits* (Independently released CD, Pop)

Based in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, **Makeout Party** is the five piece band consisting of **Neil Aitkenhead** (bass), **Daniel Bogan** (drums), **Carmen Cirignano** (vocals, guitar), **Dustin Isbert** (keys, guitar), and **Joseph Ryan** (guitar, vocals). This band's tunes feature smooth rhythms, cool guitars, and nice smooth vocals. Some of the melody lines in the tunes on *Lengths and Limits* occasionally remind us of the music of **John Vanderslice**. Enclosed in a well designed digipak sleeve, the CD also includes a lyric sheet that makes it easy to follow along with the music. Nice flowing pop tracks include "Sparks," "Left You Behind," "Don't Hold Your Breath," and "When You Find It Let Me Know." (Rating: 4+++)



### [Mardeen](#) - *Read Less Minds* (CD, **Collagen Rock**, Rock/pop)

Canada's **Mardeen** is a guitar pop band consisting of three brothers who grew up in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. **Matt Ellis**, **Travis Ellis**, and **Jon Pearo** write and play what might best be described as hard pop. Their tunes occasionally recall underground American guitar pop bands from the 1990s. The vocals take center stage, but the instruments are by no means shoved into the background. The nice chunky guitars are decidedly loud and up front in the mix. The press release that accompanied this disc compared the band's music to **Built To Spill**, **Teenage Fanclub**, **My Bloody Valentine**, and **Bob Pollard**...all of which hold true to some degree. On the first spin you might be inclined to think *Read Less Minds* sounds like too many other pop bands. But, if your end reaction is similar to ours, you will eventually find that there is a lot more going on here than first meets the ears. Nice smart gliding tracks include "Come Back," "You Feel It," "We're Moving Eyes," and "Keep On." Very cool sounding stuff. (Rating: 5)



### [Jeremy Messersmith](#) - *The Silver City* (CD, [Princess](#), Folk/pop)

Writers and other musicians all seem to be united in their unwavering support of **Jeremy Messersmith**. It will be interesting to see whether or not the public at large follows suit. After

all, as genuinely good as his music is, Jeremy writes and records music that is so soft and personal that it just doesn't fit in with what the average twenty-first century listener wants. In an age of throwaway meaningless pop, Messersmith may very well find himself the darling of a small group but incredibly devoted group of listeners...while the majority of folks lack the ability to comprehend what he is doing. *The Silver City* is another amazing album from this incredibly talented young man. Instead of creating canned crap to please the masses, Messersmith writes and records smart, genuine, personal soft pop that is incredibly well-crafted and *real*. This extraordinarily subdued album is full of fantastic melodies and sincere lyrics. The more we hear from Jeremy...the more intrigued we are. Killer tunes include "The Silver City," "Dead End Job," "Love You To Pieces," and "Virginia." Highly recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



**Milosh** - *iii* (CD, [Plug Research](#), Soft progressive pop)

**Milosh...lite?** On his last album (*Meme*, 2006), Milosh explored ideas and feelings generated by the end of a relationship. On *iii* he seems to have lightened up a bit in terms of material...but the songs are every bit as strong. This young Canadian artist creates soft electronic pop music that is surprisingly warm and organic. Instead of predictable dance/techno, Milosh uses sounds more like colors on a palette. The subtleties of his music are what make it unique. In terms of overall sound, *iii* is smooth and absorbing. In terms of melodies...spinning the album may give the listener the same feeling as, say, laying in the grass on a cool afternoon watching the clouds pass by overhead. Milosh has a great understated way of singing...in many cases his voice almost seems to merge with the keyboards and become an instrument itself. Nine cool heady tracks here including "Awful Game," "Remember the Good Things," "Hold My Breath," and "The World." (Rating: 5+)



**The Minor White** - *Old Theatrics* (CD, [Prairie Queen](#), Progressive)

Summing up the sound and idea of **The Minor White** is, indeed, a difficult task. With most bands, you can summarize their sound with a few words. After spinning *Old Theatrics* several times, we still can't quite come up with words to describe what is going on. And that just may be what makes this disc such an intriguing spin. While we can't quite come up with words to describe these tunes...in some way or another, the folks in this band have managed to effectively capture their sound with the title of this, their debut album. No, this isn't show music...although there are some vague similarities. It isn't pop, because it is too unpredictable. It isn't folk because the sound is big. It isn't truly progressive because the music is easily accessible. In the end, the folks in Minor White are simply creating good, credible, quality music. Songs are what make the band, of course...and songs are the greatest strength of *Old Theatrics*. Critics and listeners will no doubt be scratching their heads trying to figure out what genre this belongs in. We ultimately don't care *what* category it fits in because it is irrelevant. Originality is a rarity in today's world. And The Minor White is a *truly credible and original band*. This album features cool, flowing, hummable tracks that sound better the more familiar they become. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)





**The Mint Chicks** - *Crazy? Yes! Dumb? No!* (CD, **Flying Nun**, Pop/rock)

Fresh, energetic, exciting, vibrant pop/rock from **The Mint Chicks**. Although they currently reside in Portland, Oregon, the folks in this band are originally from New Zealand where *Crazy? Yes! Dumb? No!* was originally released in 2007. The album is being released for the first time in the United States in 2008 on the Milan label. Mint Chicks tunes remind us in many ways of songs from the first couple of albums by Canada's **New Pornographers**. These guys write hooky pop tunes featuring meaty fuzzy instruments, chunky rhythms, and cool vocal melodies. The overall sound is much rawer than the average twenty-first century pop band...and the tunes grow on you the more familiar they become. Some of these songs recall some of the more adventurous British bands from the late 1970s and early 1980s...except the overall sound is much more modern. These folks have apparently made quite an impression on folks in Portland. With the American release of this album they are hoping to expand the enthusiasm. This album is a great big ball of fun with plenty of surprises thrown in. The fourteenth track is surprisingly peculiar and *odd*. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



**Mirrors** - *Original Motion Picture Score: Music by Javier Navarrete* (CD, **Lakeshore**, Film score)

A truly great motion picture score makes you want to immediately run out and see a film...and the score to *Mirrors* does *just that*. This film is a remake of the 2003 South Korean horror film *Into the Mirror* that involves the story of an evil spirit that a security guard finds in an abandoned department store. **Javier Navarrete** has done an amazing job here of creating edgy, suspenseful, eerie music that will have viewers sitting on the edge of their seats. The tracks on this CD feature some wildly nervous sounding violins and unconventional arrangements that are full of surprises. There's a lot to take in here...twenty-five tracks clocking in at over 70 minutes. We should mention that this is one of those discs that you can enjoy despite whether or not you have an interest in the film. This music is exciting and ultimately mentally *riveting*. Sensational cuts include "Subway," "The Dressing Room," "The Quest," and "Possession." After hearing this, we can't *wait* to see the film...! (Rating: 5++)



**Mufuti Twins** - *Crooning Over Sperrmull Tapes* (Import CD, **All Score Media**, Pop)

We have heard thousands upon thousands of artists over the past few years whose music recalls artists like **The Beatles**, **The Ramones**, **Ben Folds**, **T. Rex**, **Pink Floyd**, **The Kinks**, **Dusty Springfield**, **Badfinger**, and more...but this is probably the *first time* that we have heard a band whose main mission is to bring back the odd sound of schmaltzy 1970s artists like **Tom Jones** (!?!). Truth is stranger than fiction...and the truth here is that the folks in **Mufuti Twins** have

managed to recreate a sound that is surprisingly realistic. The story goes like this... **Christopher Kochs** and **Markus Mehr** found some mysterious tapes lying around that contained recordings of an orchestra and band that were created in the 1970s. They obtained the rights to the music...and then proceeded to rearrange the tracks, layering in extra percussion, guitar, harmonica, and then, ultimately those strangely realistic Tom Jones-ish vocals. The idea *works*. Folks into this particular style of music are bound to be wowed by this disc. Instead of sounding like a reenactment, these tracks actually and truly do sound like authentic 1970s recordings. Fifteen intriguing cuts here including "Love Is Just A Word," "Girl On A Tree," "Easy Going Freak," and "Cold Goodbye." Well done. (Rating: 5)



### **New Radiant Storm King** - *Drinking in the Moonlight* (CD, [Darla](#), Progressive pop)

Though it may be somewhat difficult to comprehend, the guys in **New Radiant Storm King** have now been making music for almost 20 years. But from the sounds on *Drinking in the Moonlight*, you would never know it. Instead of burning out or fading away, these folks have managed to come up with yet another fresh and uniquely satisfying collection of songs. The tracks on this album are clear, clean, precise, and ultimately melodic...and they feature some of the niftiest sounding pop guitars on the planet. This disc is extremely consistent...making it very difficult to pick out favorites. Each song stands squarely on its own and seems to make its own statement. If you're looking for some totally cool, upbeat, uplifting, smart pop music that is certain to put you in a *fantastic* mood...we would highly recommend *Drinking in the Moonlight*. Thirteen killer cuts here including "Soporific Slump," "Senseless," "Anything Can Happen," "Eight Steps Closer," and "Fall Prey." An easy...and *obvious*...top pick for this month... (Rating: 5+++)



## **NOMO HOMO NOMO**

No more homosexual in  
World no more.  
They very tiring things  
So decision was making for  
Shut them out.  
Phony artificial lifestyle  
No longer have ability  
To infect total and  
Perfect reality.

Now when homo near  
We no make eye contact  
And only speak  
When absolute for  
Necessary.

(Rating: 1)



## OSTRICH

Here an ostrich.  
There an ostrich.  
Everyone's an  
Ostrich ostrich.

(Rating: 1)



## **Pillars and Tongues** - *Protection* (CD, [Contraphonic](#), Progressive)

We have learned to expect the unexpected from the folks at Contraphonic...but this band is an odd commodity by virtually *anyone's* standards. **Pillars and Tongues** is the trio consisting of **Mark Trecka**, **Evan Hydzyk**, and **Elizabeth Remis**...three folks who obviously don't give a rat's ass about making money and becoming hugely successful overnight. These three individuals dabble in a multitude of musical styles. Everything from folk to modern classical to blues to experimental to underground pop to jazz and beyond...is cultivated and reconstructed. The idea here is apparently to create first out of a pure desire to create...and then let the band and their listeners form impressions afterwards. There's a lot of spontaneous improvisation going on here, so if you're the kind of listener who likes everything safely planned out...consider yourself forewarned. This is a difficult album to digest and summarize...and a lot of the music is strangely calming and dreamlike. There are lots of nuances layered into these tunes...making it sound better each time you hear it. Intriguing. (Rating: 5)



## [Proud Simon](#) - *Night of Criminals* (Independently released CD, Pop)

Underground pop music that sounds like anything *but* underground pop music. **Proud Simon** was formed in Rochester, New York and this is their third full-length release. True to the claim of the press release that accompanied this CD, the music is in the same general category as artists like **Wilco**, **Fleetwood Mac**, and **The Decemberists**...which might place it in the category Americana pop. Despite the fact that there are a great many players on this album (sixteen contributing musicians are listed), the album has a surprisingly open and clean sound. The songs are melodic and smart...and the vocals are present and up front in the mix. Unlike a lot of up-and-coming bands, the guys in Proud Simon could easily be catapulted into celebrities if the timing is right. Strong songs abound here. Some of our favorites include "Newspaper Boat," "Everywhere," and "Last One Left." (Rating: 4++++)



### **The Residents** - *The Bunny Boy* (CD, [MVD Audio](#), Progressive)

We've been taking in the music of **The Residents** since their early 1970s releases when their recordings were almost non-musical. In the twenty-first century, the band has been taking a slightly more conventional approach to their art. As a result, some original fans have been resistant to the changes and have reacted with hostility. While slightly more odd than we were expecting, *The Bunny Boy* seems to explore musical terrain similar to what the band was experimenting with on *Demons Dance Alone* (which is a remarkable album). Fans of the band's old sound should note that many of the sounds and ideas on *The Bunny Boy* harken back to the early days of The Residents. This time around the recordings were made with the assistance of special guests **Carla Fabrizio**, **Nolan Cook**, and **Joshua Raoul Brody**. *Bunny* presents nineteen tracks that rely on that ever-so-slightly atonal sound the band is known for and that unmistakable Residents voice. As is the case with all Residents albums, *Bunny* will take many spins to fully soak in. This may not be the most genre-bending album the band has ever released...but there's a *hell of a lot* here to admire. The Residents remain one of the most artistically successful bands that has ever existed. (Rating: 5++)



### **Rework** - *Pleasure Is Pretty* (Import CD, [All Score Media](#), Pop)

**Rework** is an interesting trio treading in territory often forgotten in the world of popular music. The tracks on *Pleasure Is Pretty* recall very early new wave bands from the late 1970s and early 1980s when drum machines were beginning to surface and folks were just starting to make purely electronic pop music. The dated percussion is a dead giveaway of the band's influences. The tinny, odd rhythms are way out-of-synch with the sounds one normally hears on twenty-first century recordings. Add to that the strangely impersonal vocals of **Sascha Hedgehog**...and you have a band that is creating an odd brand of simple electronic drone pop that most listeners probably never even knew existed in the first place. It's an interesting concept that plays out rather well. Intriguing cuts include "Wrong In All Our Ways," "Losing Myself," "Come On," and "Busdriver." (Rating: 4++++)





**Stacie Rose** - *Shotgun Daisy* (CD, **Enchanted**, Pop)

It would have been very easy to have tossed this disc aside without a second thought. After all, **Stacie Rose** creates hummable smooth pop that sounds very similar to thousands of other artists. But instead of throwing this disc to the side we continued spinning it until...the songs eventually had a real impact on us and we realized that we *had* to cover *Shotgun Daisy*. True, these songs are very safe and sound very familiar...but in the end the intent behind the music is what makes this album such a pleasing and rewarding spin. Stacie surrounds herself with a multitude of top notch players and she writes songs that could easily be appreciated by the masses. But instead of penning mere fluff, her songs have depth and seem to come from her soul. Add in the fact that this young lady has an absolutely *killer* voice...and you have a cool, uplifting album that will surely stand the test of time. Smooth pop cuts include "Find Your Way," "Hope," "Wreck At Best," and "Hit Me in the Head." Nice, smooth, hummable stuff... (Rating: 5)



**Todd Rundgren** - *Arena* (Advance CD-R, **Hi Fi Recordings**, Pop/rock)

In direct contrast to many of his albums of the past few years, **Todd Rundgren** created *Arena* to please his fans. And our guess is that, for the most part, this album will achieve its intended effect. Considering what an incredibly gifted guitar player Todd has always been, it seemed disappointing that his past few albums haven't featured much guitar. *Arena* is an abrupt change of pace...as the album's tunes are centered around those wonderfully fluid guitar sounds that harken back to the days of **Utopia**. Rundgren got the idea for creating a guitar-based rock album after his stint playing in **The New Cars** (a move that we still find confusing). Fans still waiting for another *Ballad of Todd Rundgren* or *Something/Anything?* won't get their fix here... But for Todd's fans who aren't expecting or wanting a rehash of the past, *Arena* is bound to please. Hell, even if you don't care for the *songs*...just about anyone who loves great guitar playing can appreciate these tracks. We would have liked to have seen the actual complete release on this one rather than an advance CD-R. As such, this one *definitely* gets a thumbs up...but only a partial review because we received only part of the actual final product... (Not Rated)

## SHIT TO THE MUSIC

Okay everybody,  
Lemme hear you.  
Put your hands together now.  
Okay lemme hear you  
Shit to the music.

I can't hear you,  
C'mon everybody.  
All together now.  
Shit to the music.

(Rating: 1)



**Silent Kids** - *Dinosaurs Turn Into Birds* (CD, [Two Sheds Music](#), Pop)

Cool hummable pop with slight hints of psychedelia. Atlanta's **Silent Kids** create nice, smooth, intelligent pop music that is not unlike some of the more accessible stuff released by **The Flaming Lips** in the 1990s. While the tunes on *Dinosaurs Turn Into Birds* are, for the most part, straightforward pop...the folks in this band are not above throwing all kinds of odd audio surprises into their music. And instead of using familiar standard arrangements, they are amazingly creative with their instruments. Recorded output has been somewhat sporadic thus far. The band's debut self-titled album was released in 2001 with a 2003 follow-up (*Tomorrow Waits*)...then a five year lapse before this album came out. This is probably because the band members have also been involved in various other projects. We can only hope that *Dinosaurs* really captures peoples' attention. This is an *extremely* strong album full of cool hooks and really nifty guitar sounds...and the vocals are out-of-this world. Pop lovers will go apeshit over clever tracks like "Stars and Rust," "The Marble Faun," "Radio Was Unplugged," "The Hissing of the Summer Grass," and "One Hundred Years From Now." Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



**Silver Darling** - *Your Ghost Fits My Skin* (CD, [Crossbill](#), Progressive pop)

There are tons upon tons of bands playing the style of music that the guys in **Silver Darling** play. Accordingly, the world of sparse, subdued, progressive folk/pop/alt-country can be somewhat of a dangerous territory to be in. Songs are at the heart of it all, however, and songs are what make *Your Ghost Fits My Skin* an interesting and intriguing spin. Vocalist/guitarist **Kevin Lee Florence** seems to have more to say than the average underground alt-country artist...and in many cases the *way he says it* is a helluva lot more interesting. He has a nice loose sounding voice that comes across sounding spontaneous and ever-so-slightly unrehearsed. Florence writes tunes that recall music from the 1930s and 1940s...but the band has a decidedly twenty-first century sound and style. Fourteen interesting cuts here including "Living For Breath," "Interlude," "My Hidden Wife," and "Hanging Rest." (Rating: 5)



**Small White** - *Do It Till It Ends* (CD, UF, Progressive pop)

Interesting and different. **Small White** is the Twin Cities, Minnesota duo consisting of **Alex** and **Chout**. The album begins with the curious experimental "Intro." But immediately afterward these two individuals launch into aggressive underground guitar pop. The sound of Small White is similar in some ways to **Devo**...particularly the vocals. Some of the songwriting is slightly reminiscent of early **Flaming Lips**. The song titles are great...makes us wish that this album had included a lyric sheet. The decidedly underground sound of the tunes on *Do It Till It Ends* is appropriate for these odd pop ditties. Thirteen smart little oddities including "Screens," "Melting Microphones," "Leave It All Behind," and "Drowning Poseur." (Rating: 4++++)



**Stackridge** - *Anyone For Tennis? Sound & Vision* (CD + DVD, [Angel Air](#), Pop)

**Stackridge** is probably one of the most criminally overlooked bands outside of their native Great Britain. Despite the fact that these fellows have written and recorded some of the most stellar and timeless pop tunes of our time, they largely remain unknown and overlooked in other parts of the world. Nowadays there seems to be a revival and renewed interest however, in large part because the band has begun playing together again. For those who aren't familiar with Stackridge, the band's tunes sound very similar to a perfect cross between **The Beatles**, **Squeeze**, and **The Bonzo Dog Band**. The double disc set *Anyone For Tennis?* serves as an almost perfect introduction to this uniquely intriguing band. The CD in the set offers an overview of the band's music featuring fifteen tunes taken from all seven of their studio albums. This disc is chock full of great memories for those who already know the music. For those who don't...it's a total and real taste treat. The DVD features the band playing their hits at a sold out concert in 2007 at the Rondo Theatre in Bath, England. These guys obviously spent a great deal of time preparing for this show. The recreations are impeccable...sounding as fresh and inspired as when they were originally recorded. The two young ladies on violin seem to be having a particularly great time during this show. Considering how many amazing Stackridge songs there are...it seems utterly *amazing* that the band never had even one single hit tune or well-selling album in the United States. Perhaps younger listeners in this country will be inspired by releases like this to explore some of the more uniquely British acts that never received the attention they obviously deserve. This release makes us want to gather up all of the CD reissues of the band's albums... (Rating: 5+++)



**Cat Stevens** - *A Classic Concert: Tea For the Tillerman Live* (DVD, **Wienerworld** / [MVD Visual](#))

This is an incredible snapshot of **Cat Stevens** when he was in tip top form. Although Stevens had already had a career earlier in life as a schmaltzy pop star in Great Britain and had also lived through a life threatening illness, it was only when the tune "Wild World" became a hit that people in the United States first became aware of his existence. To capitalize on his newfound American success in 1971, Cat was flown to KCET Studios in Los Angeles to film this intimate show. The concert is short, lasting only about half an hour. But in that amount of time a young

Cat Stevens managed to captivate and impact an audience who would never forget his name and his music. All but one tune ("Moonshadow") are from his *Tea For the Tillerman* album. These incredibly strong renditions are, in many ways, even stronger than the studio recordings. Particular standout tracks include the riveting "On the Road To Find Out," "Miles From Nowhere," "Longer Boats," and the tune that still evokes strong emotions in most Stevens fans, "Father and Son." Cat Stevens was a rare breed of musician who was able to write and record commercial songs that were also artistically viable and have weathered the test of time. Although most people tend to label his music folk or pop, in actuality it was neither. Instead of preachy folk he presented simple concrete ideas that most people could identify with using an acoustic guitar. But unlike pop music, his songs had real depth and character. If you ever loved this fellow's music, this DVD is an absolute *must have*. Even though it is very short (even with the inclusion of the *Teaser and the Firecat* short it only last slightly over 30 minutes), this is absolutely essential viewing material. Highly recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



**Teen Titans: Trouble in Tokyo** - *Original Score from the Animated Feature: Music Composed by **Kristopher Carter**, **Michael McCuistion**, **Lolita Ritmanis*** (CD, [La-La Land](#), Soundtrack)

The score to the film *Teen Titans: Trouble in Tokyo* was recorded by **Dynamic Music Partners** which is the trio consisting of **Kristopher Carter**, **Michael McCuistion**, and **Lolita Ritmanis**. Although the sounds on this CD are similar and familiar to those found on other twenty-first century film soundtracks, there is one major difference: The songs are centered around the main instrument which is an electric guitar. It's a bit of a clash of styles in a way...and somewhat reminiscent of some of the progressive rock dinosaurs from the late 1970s. Our guess is that Carter, McCuistion, and Ritmanis wrote this music to appeal to a very young audience...those folks who are most likely to see and enjoy *Teen Titans*. This is an intriguing and different twenty-one track score that doesn't sound like all the rest. And that, in and of itself, is somewhat of a miracle. Fun, upbeat, and occasionally thought provoking... (Rating: 4++++)



## TO BROADWAY

Give my regards to Broadway.  
Give my leotards to Broadway.  
Give my cigars to Broadway.  
Give my bowel movements  
To Broadway.



(Rating: 1)



## TOILET BABY

Wash your baby  
In the toilet.  
Use feces for soap  
And use urine  
To rinse.

(Rating: 1)



**Topaz & Mudphonic** - *Music for Dorothy* (Independently released CD, Pop/blues /groove)

This album by Topaz and Mudphonic came to us at just the right time. After hearing a non-stop plethora of ultra creative and totally weird artistic recordings...*Music for Dorothy* was like getting hit in the face with a bucket of cold water. The folks in these bands play cool inviting blues/groove pop music *demands* movement from listeners. These four fellows (**Topaz McGarrigle, John Branch, Bobby Perkins, Alex Marrero**) play music that is decidedly direct and unpretentious. Their tunes are full of slightly funky rhythms and foot-stomping harmonica. In a world where technology is so often used to hide the fact that the artist has no credible songs...*Music for Dorothy* is refreshingly organic and *real*. Cool toe tappers include "Lonely," "Sunshine," "Twin Oaks," and "Brothers." (Rating: 5+)



## TURN INTO SHIT

Animals turn into shit.  
Plants turn into shit.  
Clouds turn into shit.  
People turn into shit.

(Rating: 1)



**Camren Von Davis** - *Bobby Barbados* (Independently released CD, Progressive pop)

Imagine crossing the music of **Vivian Stanshall** with **The Frogs**...and you may begin to have some idea of what **Camren Von Davis** sounds like. "Cactus Lizard," the opening track on this album, immediately caught our attention by posing the curious question "*Everybody is a cactus so why am I a lizard?*" *Bobby Barbados* is, first and foremost, an artistic creation. Von Davis isn't recording music with the idea of making a fortune. Instead, he writes and records oddball underground pop that will only appeal to a small cross section of the population. If you're looking for a quick easy fix, you probably *won't* find it here. We had to spin this CD about a dozen times or more before the strange qualities of the music began to fully sink in. But the time was well spent...because the more familiar these tunes become the more meaningful they seem. Thirteen curiosities here including "Clouds of Poison," "Pickle Jar," "Microchip," and "Feeling Good." Strangely compelling stuff... (Rating: 5+)



**Andy Vought** - *Where Moonlight Resides* (Independently released CD-R, Soft folky pop)

If there is one word we would use to describe this album that word would be...*inspired*. Independently recorded, produced, and released, *Where Moonlight Resides* is a surprisingly mature and listenable album. And unlike almost every other home recording artist in the United States, **Andy Vought** is *not* writing and recording upbeat catchy pop. Instead, his tunes are surprisingly sparse, restrained, genuine, and personal. Andy knows just how to piece his songs together in such a way as to get the point across...without annoying unnecessary details getting in the way. His restrained acoustic guitar sounds are *excellent*. We hate not adding a link here, but at this point Vought only has a MySpace.com web site (and we don't link to that site). Instead, here is a contact e-mail address: **andyyv1@cox.net**. A very talented young fellow with an uncanny knack for writing honest, personal, real music. (Rating: 4+++++)



## Additional Items Received:

Absentee - Victory shorts

Arch Cupcake - Ugly sweater party mixtape volume I

Ariel Abshire - Exclamation love

Action Design - Never say

Joe Bace - Mono-A-mono EP-A

Batman Gotham Knight - Soundtrack from the DC universe animated original movie

Bens Jazz Kit - Dizzy minds  
Mark Berube and the Patriotic Few - What the boat gave the river  
Marie Black - Water me  
Cameron Blake - Over and over  
Jim Boggia - Misadventures in stereo  
Botticellis - "Table by the window" b/w "Awaiting on you all"  
Chesterfield - Death grip  
Chop Chop - Screens  
College - Original motion picture soundtrack  
Dylan Champagne - New equation  
Destination: Oblivion - The bridge to no where  
Doc Thomas Group - The Italian job  
Lila Downs - Shake away  
Dregs - ...the river cityi rock and roll ep...  
Dub Gabriel - Anarchy & alchemy  
The Duchess - Music from the motion picture  
James Dunn - The long ride home  
E. Joseph and the Phantom Heart - All the medicine in the world...  
Elegy - Original motion picture soundtrack  
Empty Mirror - Overwhelm  
End of the World - French exit  
Eureka - Original soundtrack  
Fenix Down - Broken hero  
Folklore - Carpenter's falls  
Forizblue - Showdown  
Grayceon - This grand show  
Guernica - Who are your songs for?  
Brent Gunter - Andalucia  
Mary O. Harrison - Factory of days  
Henry Poole Is Here - Original motion picture soundtrack  
Honeycomb - Worldwide electric inventor's kit  
Hush Arbors - Hush Arbors  
Killroy - Football chants and angry rants  
Koufax - Strugglers  
Lampshades Are Alright - Lampshades Are Alright  
Laydownmains - Mama, go rest on high  
Libera - New dawn  
Linfinity - A manual for free living: installation  
Listing Ship - A hull full of oil and bone  
Lost Horizons - The continuing adventures of abney park  
Lucky Ghost - Network stars  
Luxury Sweets "Wishing Well" b/w The Greatest Hits "For Our Hearts"  
Magnificents - Year of explorers  
Moose Jaw - Seduce and paralyze  
Muy Cansado - Stars and garters

New Duncan Imperials - End of phase one  
New Up - Broken machine  
NYpoleon - The warm up  
Play> - Play>  
Prodigy - H.N.I.C. Pt. 2  
Pro Tools - GZA/genius  
Push Button For - Chemistry sex/guessing games  
Radio Freedom - This is radio freedom  
Jody Raffoul - Big sky  
Religious Knives - The door  
Saved by Saskatoon - Saved by Saskatoon  
Michael Scott - Ray ray's juke joint  
Sharks and Sailors - Builds brand new  
Paco Shipp - One in a million  
Keaton Simons - Can you hear me  
Sisterhood of the traveling pants 2 - Music from the motion picture  
Soft War - Soft War  
Son of Dave - Son of Dave  
Jessie Sparks - Breathe easy  
Alex Statan - Go big or go home  
Stratocruiser - Egg shells  
Strive - Fire  
Tim Young Band - The cost  
Tin Veil - Hand in the dark  
Touchers - Blithe  
Tough Shits - "Flash art," "Heard she kisses on the mouth" b/w The Greatest Hits "Electric  
blanket boogie," "I'm coming down again"  
McCarthy Trenching - Calamity drenching  
Unwritten Law - Live and lawless  
Various Artists - Mohawk bomb records no lip vol. 1 compilation  
VIR - Shadow of a mountain  
Phil Wilson - Industrial strength  
Alex Woodard - Alex Woodard

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