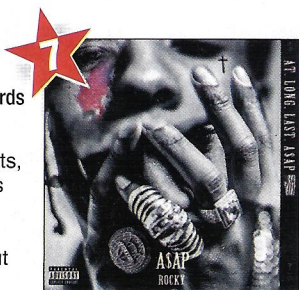


A\$AP Rocky

A.L.L.A. (At.Long.Last.A\$AP)

A\$AP Worldwide/Polo Grounds Music/RCA Records
Producers: Various

With talented producers and special guests, A\$AP Rocky (Rakim Mayers) releases his sophomore album—actually a tribute to the God MC of hip-hop, Rakim. Rocky's mom named him after Rakim, and he's out to stake his claim to greatness with "Holy Ghost," "Back Home" and "Wavybone." The rest, however, seems scattered, perhaps due to the recent passing of long-time friend A\$AP Yams. *A.L.L.A.* has highs and lows, lacking direction; nonetheless, Rocky is proving himself to be an artist's artist, possibly the new Andy Warhol of rap. — **Adam Seyum**



Peak Experience Jazz

Live At Lucy's Place

Joystring Music
Producers: Mike & Lucy Peak, Peggy Duquesnel

Founded by bassist Mike Peak, this powerhouse collective of top jazz musicians and vocalists has for years brought their joyous and soulful swinging energy to corporate events, local festivals and "Lucy's Place," the name of the live performance room at Peak's home. Driven by sax (Rickey Woodard, Ann Patterson), piano (Ron Kobayashi) and drum solos (Kendall Kay) galore and the exquisite, inviting vocals of Andrea Miller, this spirited concert, featuring a colorful mix of standards and originals, perfectly captures the ensemble's eclectic pop/R&B meets jazz vibe. — **Jonathan Widran**

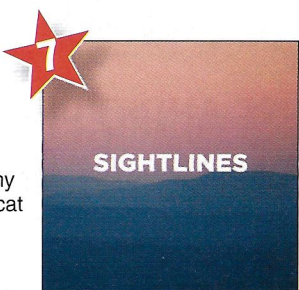


Steve Benjamins

Sightlines

Sndcld
Producers: Steve Benjamins and Brian Chan

Listening to the new song, "We Used To Live," by Toronto artist Steve Benjamins, my first thought was, "Oh great, another copycat popish tune that sounds like just about everything else in its genre." And I nearly ditched the idea of listening to the rest of Benjamins' new EP, *Sightlines*, but I'm glad I didn't. Sure, the music breaks no new ground, but this artist's voice is intoxicating, and he's a talented songwriter who has crafted some solid tunes here. "Steamroller," for example, is a beautiful track. If you like indie music with a luscious pop twist, this EP is worth a listen. — **Scott Binder**



Dawes

All Your Favorite Bands

Hub Records
Producer: David Rawlings

Lead vocalist Taylor Goldsmith has a robust, yet whispery tenor that can grab one's ear with the utterance of one line or phrase. There is a poetic flow to the way this seasoned quartet joins in with him on harmonies and melodic interplay that transcends a majority of modern pop and rock. This is takes their Laurel Canyon/Jackson Browne sound to new heights. The single "Things Happen" is emotionally powerful. And "To Be Completely Honest" blends Crazy Horse-like guitar bravado with an astute lyrical perspective that will stop you in your tracks. — **Eric A. Harabadian**



Barrence Whitfield & the Savages

Under the Savage Sky

Bloodshot Records
Producer: Peter Greenberg

The latest from this veteran Boston band continues a long trek of excellence that began in the mid-'80s. This is a hard-hitting mix of vintage rock and R&B with a punk attitude. Whitfield has a mountain of a voice and can bowl one over with his soulful attack. Imagine Little Richard and Muddy Waters filtered through early Stones and The Stooges. As the tunes clock in slightly past the three-minute mark, there is a singles-savvy approach that's a firm shock to the system. Nothing groundbreaking here, but if you've come to party, this be the place! — **Eric A. Harabadian**

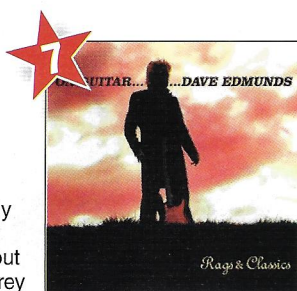


Dave Edmunds

Rags And Classics

RPM Records
Producer: Dave Edmunds

Known for his impeccable taste and skill, veteran rocker Dave Edmunds interprets some of his favorite tunes through a purely instrumental approach, and like Jeff Beck he can make his guitar sing and cry without the aid of pesky vocals. A few tunes fall prey to the home studio trap of artificial drum and cliched keyboard sounds (no loop/program sequencing, though), but his guitar sounds great throughout. Superb song choices here (Moody Blues, Beach Boys, Booker T and more), and his take on Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" is truly inspired. — **David Arnson**



Biters

Electric Blood

Earache Records
Producer: Dan Dixon

Aptly named, this Atlanta-based band seems to think that any bunch of guys with dyed black hair can pick up instruments and draw interest by copping looks from vintage Ramones LP covers and attempting to be the next Slade. It takes more than that to compel an audience, or gain some cred. Simply referencing ancient glam/punk rock with song titles such as "1975" and "Space Age Wasteland" does not do credit to that great era of music if you can't pull it off musically. The band's sound does resemble a Thin Lizzy cover band, full of mis-directed testosterone, but without the songwriting chops. Just one pretty good song here, "Time to Bleed." — **Brett Bush**

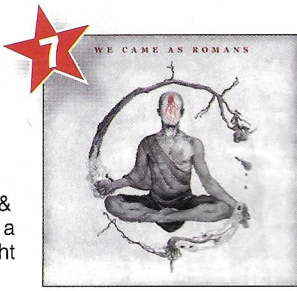


We Came As Romans

We Came As Romans

Equal Vision Records
Producer: David Bendeth

This isn't the WCAR You Used To Know. For their fourth studio album, the melodic metalcore sextet partner up with Of Mice & Men producer David Bendeth and pursue a different direction, a sound older fans might not be able to identify the band with. Unclean vocalist Dave Stephens tackles clean vocals rather successfully, which adds to the album's more commercial appeal. The band continues to craft anthems about self-preservation and rallying together to face the world that could potentially grace Hard Rock radio airwaves, as opposed to moshing in a circle pit—unless you're jamming to headbangers like "Redemption" and "Defiance." — **Siri Svay**



To be considered for review in the Album Reviews section, you must have a record deal with a major label or an independent label with an established distributor. If you do not, please see our New Music Critiques section.