

Read all about Tuesday's releases on our Monday Discs page!

EUROPE

Secret Society
Sanctuary | EMI

Yes, that Europe. The Swedish hair farmers who made *The Final Countdown*, named one of the Most Awesomely Bad Songs of All Time by VH1. Not content to rest on that laurel, they're back. Actually, they've been back for a while. *Secret Society* is the reunited '80s quintet's second CD of the millennium. That tells you how much most people care about a Europe reunion. We doubt this 11-track set will change their minds. Though, truth be told, most of these pop-rockers find the band toning down the bombastic keyboards in favour of heavier, guitar-driven anthems from the Styx and Def Leppard slush pile. OK, it's pretty anachronistic. And still pretty bad. But not awesomely bad.

★★

BOWLING FOR SOUP

The Great Burrito Extortion Case
Jive | Sony BMG

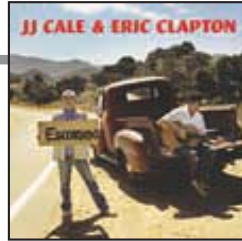
"I think rock 'n' roll is really funny when it's serious." That's about as close as Bowling for Soup get to being serious on their sixth album *The Great Burrito Extortion Case*. The rest of the time, they're mostly trying to be seriously funny. So these Texas pop-punks with the crunchy guitars and the atrocious band name crack wise about Val Kilmer, the dual meaning of the word gay, John Mellencamp, bad breakups and how high school never really ends. But thanks to their singer's naggingly familiar nasal vocals and pop-culture lyrical fixation, most of these songs sound like bad 'Weird Al' Yankovic parodies of hits you never heard in the first place. But Al would never be dumb enough to think that most of these gags were funny. Or to name his band Bowling for Soup in the first place.

★★

DESMOND DEKKER

In Memoriam 1941 - 2006
Secret | MVD

We have no idea why Jamaican ska and reggae legend Desmond Dekker took his band into a London studio in 2004 to recruit a whole roster of his '60s and '70s hits. But since he died of a heart attack earlier this year, we can just be glad he did — because now we have crystal-clear versions of blue-beat classics like *007 (Shanty Town)*, *Unity*, *Rudy Got Soul*, *Sabotage*, *Sing a Little Song* — the original title of this set when it was released back in 2004 —



ARMY OF ANYONE

Army of Anyone
Capitol | EMI

Not many rock groups put you in mind of Donald Rumsfeld. But Army of Anyone aren't just any rock group — they're modern rock's latest supergroup, with former members of Stone Temple Pilots, Filter and David Lee Roth's band. But listening to their Audioslavish self-titled debut (in stores Tuesday) brings to mind Rummy's famous words: "You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want." Recruitment also seems to be the main problem with this boys' Army. Don't blame former STP guitarist Dan DeLeo and his bassist



brother Robert, the joint chiefs of the band. Most of the 11 tracks on this Bob Ezrin-produced disc are driven by the same dino-roar post-grunge riffs of STP. Admittedly, the DeLeos' stadium-rock arsenal is a tad dated these days — but it still contains weapons of mass destruction. Problem is, former Filter frontman

Richard Patrick's generically raspy modern-rock wail is more Perry Farrell or Layne Staley than Scott Weiland — and doesn't suit the DeLeos' menacing material nearly as well. Kinetic drummer Ray Luzier is also a poor fit — it seems he's spent so many years aping Alex Van Halen behind Roth that he's stuck in overdrive, frantically bashing away and yanking the band in his wake instead of laying back and giving these songs the anchors they need. Bottom line: Having the DeLeos back in action is great, but before they take their Army into battle again, they might want to recruit some fresh blood instead of just taking anyone.

★★★

JOSH GROBAN

Awake
Reprise | Warner

It's a new day for Josh Groban. After selling 13 million copies of his first two studio albums, the classical-pop vocal phenom expands his musical horizons on *Awake*. Along with the usual suspects like mentor David Foster, Groban welcomes a more contemporary and eclectic slate of artists, including Glen Ballard, Dave Matthews, Herbie Hancock, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Imogen Heap and Five for Fighting's John Ondrasik. Fear not, fans; the bulk of the disc still consists of the sweeping, semi-operatic ballads — sung in English, Spanish and Italian — that make the moms swoon. But the swirly electronica backdrops of *In Her Eyes* and

Now or Never, the lush vocals and African ambience of *Lullaby* and *Weeping*, the poppier vibe of *So She Dances* and the smoky, horn-flecked soul of *Machine* conspire to make *Awake* a disc that might also appeal to the younger, hipper members of the family.

★★★

THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

Superbi
Sony BMG

Like the majority of British artists, The Beautiful South are barely a blip on North American radar. But unlike the majority of British artists, they don't seem to care. They just keep their heads down and get on with it, issuing album after album of intelligent, impeccable indie-pop tunes that go Top 10 back home while being criminally

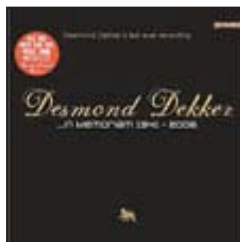
overlooked on these shores. The uniquely titled *Superbi*, their ninth disc of original material, offers more of what the band's few fans in this part of the world know and love: Wry, biting tales of fractured romance set to gorgeously bittersweet melodies and voiced by the band's co-ed trio of soulful vocalists. On the whole, these dozen cuts are a little less complex and a little more country than past efforts, with plenty of twangy guitar licks, two-step beats, tinkly honky-tonk pianos and even a melody borrowed from *Harper Valley PTA*. All of that, ironically, makes this The Beautiful South's most commercial and American-sounding disc in some time. Not that they — or anyone else, it seems — will care.

★★★★

JOHNNY RIVERS

Secret Agent Man: The Ultimate Anthology
Shout! Factory | Sony BMG

Having an artist involved in his own retrospective isn't always the best idea. Case in point: Johnny Rivers' self-produced *Secret Agent Man*. The first CD in this two-disc compilation has pretty much every one of the '60s covermeister's hits and classics: *Memphis*, *Maybelline*, *Midnight Special*, *Secret Agent Man*, *Sea Cruise*, *Rockin' Pneumonia - Boogie Woogie Flu*, *Swayin' to the Music* and even a cover of



ALBERT KUVEZIN & YAT-KHA

Re-Covers
World Village | Fusion III

Maybe you've heard Tuvan throat singing — those multitone, rumbling vocals midway between an idling Harley, a digeridoo and Leonard Cohen at half-speed. But you've never heard Tuvan throat singing the way Albert Kuvezin & Yat-Kha do it on *Re-Covers*. Forget traditional ethnic melodies and indecipherable lyrics; here, Kuvezin and co. tackle classics like Led Zep's *When the Levee Breaks*, Iron Butterfly's *In a Gadda da Vida*, Joy Division's *Love Will Tear us Apart* and even Motörhead's *Orgasmatron*. Sung in English, set to hypnotic grooves and played with ramshackle grace on a mix of Eastern and Western instruments, these 14 Tom Waitsian cuts retain enough of their DNA to be identifiable. But they're also exotic enough to make this a truly strange — and strangely cool — experience. If you buy one Tuvan throat singing album this year — or in your life — make it this one.

★★★★

PLAGUE SONGS

Various Artists
4AD | Beggars Group

We've heard of Bible songs, but this is a new one. *Plague Songs*, true to its title, is a concept album inspired by the 10 plagues of the book of Exodus. Also inspired: The eclectic roster of artists and styles on this set. Klashnekoff spills *Blood* with hard-hitting hip-hop; Stepin Merritt explains *The Meaning of Lice* to an electro-pop groove; Eno and Robert Wyatt bring a buzzy ambience to *Flies*; Laurie Anderson mourns *The Death of Livestock*; Scott Walker conjures up some spooky *Darkness*; and Rufus Wainwright turns *The Death of the Firstborn* into a country-waltz lament. Sublime — and more than a little divine.

★★★★

Dylan's *Positively 4th Street* (which Zimmy himself praised in his recent autobiography). But the second disc in the set mostly consists of stuff that seems to have been included less for historical value than to please Rivers himself. You get Sun rockabilly covers he cut in the '90s, a bunch of songs from his last couple of unremarkable discs and even a pair of rockin' new tunes intended to show he's still got it. Decent as most of that stuff is, it's hardly essential. Next time, Rivers might want to leave it to one disc. Or to the experts.

★★★1/2

DARRYL'S PICK

THE HARRY SMITH PROJECT: ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC REVISITED

Various Artists
Shout! Factory | Sony BMG

First, the history: The original *Anthology of American Folk Music* was compiled in 1952 by Harry Smith, a record collector who organized 84 obscure folk, gospel and blues 78s into a six-LP set. The landmark release helped spark the folk-music boom of the '60s, influenced generations of musicians from Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia to Jeff Tweedy and Nick Cave, and was reissued on CD in 1997, just in time to boost the alt-country movement. Then, in 1999 and 2001, producer Hal Willner — the man behind tributes to artists like Kurt Weill, Carl Stalling and more recently, Leonard Cohen — organized Smith concerts in New York, London and L.A. The marathon shows gathered an eclectic slate of roots, pop, rock, jazz and punk artists who reinterpreted songs from the *Anthology*. Which brings us to today's news: The long-overdue release of *The Harry Smith Project recordings*. This four-



disc box collects about three dozen tunes from Willner's shows on two CDs and one DVD, and puts the whole affair in perspective with a well-researched documentary. The breadth of the live performances is as impressive as the list of players: Elvis Costello, Steve Earle, Lou Reed, Marianne Faithfull, Wilco, Nick Cave, David Johansen, Beck, Richard Thompson and Sonic Youth are just some of the artists who put their individual stamps on to traditional songs such as *Last Fair Deal Gone Down*, *See That My Grave is Kept Clean*, *Fishing Blues*, *Oh Death Where is Thy Sting?*, *My Baby Done Left Me*, *No Depression in Heaven* and *John the Revelator*. On the downside, many of the songs appear both on CD and DVD — with more than 27 hours of material in the can, you'd think they could have avoided duplication. Even so, much like its predecessor, this \$60 set easily qualifies as a landmark release in its own right. (For those on a tighter budget, the two-hour live DVD is available separately.)

★★★★1/2