

current shoegaze scene a much needed kick in the balls on their stunning debut LP. The band takes no prisoners on the pulverizing Stooges-like gems "No Heaven Like Hell" and "Maker," which smack you head-on like prime time Mike Tyson punches. Equally great is the slow burning "Painkiller," a heady combination of big beats, fuzzy guitars, and soothing vocals. At other times, the band takes on a more hypnotic space rock vibe on "Drone Refusenik" and, especially, "Kill Me (Before I Kill You)," a six-minute-plus masterpiece that holds its own with similarly inclined epics such as Primal Scream's "Higher Than The Sun" and The Verve's "A Man Called Sun." (thedecembersound.com)

dave dill

FOLLOW THE SUMMER
(PICKLED SUN)

I seem to be getting a lot of solo guys recording alone this issue, but fortunately there's talent involved. This is Cranston, RI native Dill's fifth such LP, and a writer at *Absolute Powerpop* compared Dill to Brian Wilson, his backing Wondermints, and Jon Brion—three L.A. luminaries that popped into my head (maybe a little Emmitt Rhodes post Merry-Go-Round, too). But there's also teeny bits of the four horsemen, Beatles, Badfinger, Todd Rundgren, and Big Star—if they'd been recording cheery, feel-good, mellow soft-psych pop with Wilson circa *20/20*, instead. There's also three songs, interestingly enough, co-written with **DEREK HOLT** of '70s Brits **CLIMAX BLUES BAND** (remember 1977 #3 "Couldn't Get it Right?"). Dill's voice reminds of Gerry Rafferty of Steelers' Wheel ("Stuck in the Middle With You) and solo ("Baker Street"), only more harmonies-driven. Very pleasant little disc! (davedill.net)

dime box

FIVE AND DIME WALTZ
(AVEBURY)

This female country-folk quintet is led by **KRISTI CALLAN**, ex-frontwoman of the much different L.A. *Warfrat Tales* garage-pop scene band **WEDNESDAY WEEK** (see the cover of our 1987 issue 22 circa their lone LP, *What We Had*). Sharp-eyed trainspotters note that the song "Betsy" here, about a missed relocated friend, is the same BFF of WW's 1983 *Betsy's House* EP title track. Callan's voice and songs are of a similar down-home homespun quality; they're just set to a genre that works particularly well, enlivened by colorful mandolin solos and fiddle from the sublime **EDIE MURPHY**. Even the more uptempo, Texas-twangy R&B numbers have a spry giddyup, as does a mandolin-ified **DOLLY PARTON** cover. Callan hasn't lost her observational touch on frayed relationships, either ("You didn't smoke or drink/But you sure could complain"), but new parents will especially enjoy the tables-turned considerations of "Mama." (aveburyrecords.com)

nick drake

UNDER REVIEW (DVD)

(SEXY INTELLECTUAL/MVDVISUAL)

The mysterious manic depressive Nicholas Rodney Drake (June 19, 1948-November 25, 1974) left an immense hurdle for directors; since he initially sold just a few thousand of his three LPs (to his immense dismay, contributing to his demise at 26 from an overdose of the antidepressant amitriptyline—ruled a suicide, though we'll never know), and partly because he barely cooperated in their promotion (rarely playing live or with any relish, granting *one* tight-lipped interview, then retreating reclusively to his well-off parents home in rural Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire, where he died), we have no footage of him doing... well... anything! So it's only photos, others' recollections, and snatches of his affecting music that remains, 34 years later.

Following **JOROEN BERKVEN'S** shorter 2000 Drake bio film, *A Skin Too Few*, Drake's entry in the *Under Review* series interviews a different cast with a different focus. *Skin* relied on the principals: actress sister **GABRIELLE**, producer and engineer **JOE BOYD** and **JOHN WOOD**, and college musicians chums like key string arranger **ROBERT KIRBY**. But since *Under* is not authorized by Drake's estate or Island Records, it calls instead on his two biographers, critics like **JERRY GILBERT** who did the interview for *Sounds*, and esteemed Britfolk peers **RALPH McTELL**, **JOHN RENBOURN**, and musicians from **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** (who backed Drake on record, including **ASHLEY HUTCHINS** who discovered Drake), and **INCREDIBLE STRING BAND**. *Under* thus goes lighter on biography to explore the music, technical aspects like Drake's development of myriad alternate tunings, and demonstrations of Drake's maverick jazz-influenced style, having come at guitar from sax and piano. Now that the moody genius is a cult star, *Under* is fascinating fable, not fatuous fanboy fluff. (mvdvisual.com)

echo & the bunnymen

DANCING HORSES; LIVE AT SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE (DVD)

(SECRET/MVDVISUAL)

Unlike most modern reunions of halcyon legends, Liverpool's Bunnymen have regrettably *not* been the astonishing greats they were on stage from 1980-1988. One badly misses the sadly deceased **PETE DE FREITAS**'s neck-snapping drum destruction and the staccato, hefty basslines of the sadly fallen-out **LES PATTINSON**. Still present is singer **IAN McCULLOCH**, who should never have given up playing rhythm guitar; statuesque and hiding behind shades and overcoat, big Mac appears sedate, lazy, and bored, whereas he once radiated mystery and sexuality. He's gone from the star who might steal your girlfriend to the guy who can't be bothered.

Nevertheless, *Dancing* reminds they are still well worth seeing. Filmed in London, November 1, 2005, of these 19 songs, 14 are oldies—which is crucial (and four of the five others are from their only good

comeback LP, 2005's *Siberia*). And though they avoid their three '80s live zenith epics, the once-frightening "Over the Wall" and the twin ten-minute extended punishments of "Crocodiles" and "Do it Clean" (all require De Freitas!), this vintage material is immediately reanimated by **WILL SERGEANT**'s still-dazzling array of lead guitar sounds. Meanwhile, McCulloch's distinctive pipes (albeit with a slight rasp these days) sound great on 1980 *Crocodiles*' classics "Going Up," "All That Jazz," "Rescue," and "Villiers Terrace," or more complicated stompers like "Show of Strength" and "The Cutter." Like 2002's *Live in Liverpool* import DVD, their four contemporary bandmates can't collectively match the old rhythm section's dynamism, but all acquit themselves forcibly, nonetheless.

So if we'd trade *Dancing* for more vintage '80s footage a la *Shine So Hard*, the retrofitted dog still barks. (mvdvisual.com)

the failures' union

SINKER

(ONE PERCENT PRESS)

The sticker promises fun for GBV, Buffalo Tom, and Lemonheads fans—and a moonlighting **LEMURIA** member. And for once, a band has actually gotten a "RIYD" list right. On the Buffalo trio's first LP, songs such as "Give Way" and "The Worst" could be "Alison's Starting to Happen" if throaty Bill Janovitz beat Evan Dando over the head and took over—in other words, Lemonheads were never this thick, and Buffalo Tom never this finger-snapping poppy. Meanwhile, Robert Pollard was off getting drunk and missed the faster numbers, but he could cover slower-hooky numbers like "Burned to Last" and "Love to Leave It" (though not the surprising Lap Steel C&W-measured "Useless Facts" and "Carry It Well"). Leader **TONY FLAMINIO** has a delightfully effective voice, a little syrupy the way you like it (think Archers of Loaf), and he writes strapping riffs like knocking down pins. Excellent debut! (onepercentpress.com)

foxhole

WE THE WINTERING TREE

(BURNT TOAST)

Here's another Midwestern (mostly) instrumental post-rock band, from the hotbed of the genre outside of Chicago, greater Louisville (Bowling Green, KY in this case). And just when you thought the genre might be tapped, comes Foxhole's devotion to lighter textures opening into harder ones like shifts in climate—for example, the opening tap tap tap of ride cymbal and guitar of "At Right Angles" feels like rain—and most of all, their ubiquitous *majestic* trumpets evoke giant cloudless skies, mountain peaks, valleys, gulches, canyons, and little brooks. Classical in nature, and as beautiful as *Forever Changes*, these horns amplify everything the quartet does with herky-jerky rhythms, circular guitar phrases, and mathematical devotion to repetition. Far from any dint of banal background banter,