

In Tune

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STELLAR STELLING

Singer/songwriter shows promise with debut CD 'Songs of Praise and Scorn'

CHRISTOPHER PAUL STELLING, "Songs of Praise and Scorn" (Mecca Lecca) ☆☆☆☆ — I first heard singer/songwriter Christopher Paul Stelling last spring with the release of his 20-track digital debut. I instantly warmed to his emotional tunes and looked forward to a proper full-length debut. "Songs of Praise and Scorn" is that album and Stelling further cements his status as an up-and-coming talent blossoming from the crowded Brooklyn music scene.

Almost every song on the 10-track release is a winner, with none better than opener "Mourning Train to Memphis." Additional standouts include "Flawless Executioner," "The Ocean Stole My Love Away," "Strange Darkness," "Little Broken Birds," "Poor Leviathan" and "King Is Dead." With consistently compelling vocals and always-impressive guitar work, Stelling has a winning effort on his hands. (Jeffrey Sisk)



prise the record should ring true with U.S. listeners and bode well for their future.

First single "I Could Be a King" is the high point of the 11-track release, but the Dunwells come close to matching that level of awesomeness on the title track and keepsers "Only Me," "Elizabeth," "In the Moment," "Goodnight My City" and "Perfect Timing." Great stuff. (JS)



FRANKIE ROSE, "Interstellar" (Slumberland) ☆☆☆☆ — Frankie Rose already proved she could revive the girl group aesthetic on her last record, but on her new opus "Interstellar," she breathes life into synth-based pop rock with a vengeance on an effort that sounds like it could exist along New Order and Depeche Mode three decades ago without anyone blinking.

The 10-track disc is atmospheric, moody and very fitting for nighttime driving, and Rose's voice allures and charms on songs such as the dreamy title cut; the catchy, gothic "Know Me"; the Icelandic pop-driven "Daylight Sky"; and angelic, moving "Apples for the Sun." Rose is a true talent, and whether she's by herself and with the Outs, she stands out as a voice you must acknowledge. (Brian Krasman)



EARTH, "Angels of Darkness, Demons of Light II" (Southern Lord) ☆☆☆☆ — Ever since Earth returned as a blues-based, psyche-led instrumental band in 2005, the Dylan Carlson-led group has put out some of the most thought-provoking, mentally stimulating music of anyone in the so-called "extreme metal" genre. Earth goes so much further than that.

On "Angels II," recorded in the same time span as the first volume, Carlson and his troops take you on a gentle, pulsating ride, opening with the interlude "Sigil of Brass" and leading toward "His Teeth Did Brightly Shine," a cut where the guitar work seems in conversation. "Waltz (A Multiplicity of Doors)" is jazzy and Midwestern-flavored; "The Corascene Dog" is somber and melodic; and closer "The Rakehell" feels like it was plucked from the desert. Earth's gifts are plentiful and never fail to captivate. (BK)



HEARTLESS BASTARDS, "Arrow" (Partisan) ☆☆☆ — Erika Wennerstrom nearly stole the show from the Decemberists when they opened for that band a few years ago at the Byham. Her Heartless Bastards seemed like a band on the cusp of stardom, making "Arrow" one of the most anticipated records of 2012. Would they build on their momentum? Not particularly.

"Arrow" is a great guitar record, and Wennerstrom and her band made an album that will sound incredible in the spring and summer months. But lyrically, the album's hollow. "Arrow" sounds like a strong record musically that Wennerstrom couldn't hammer home with her words. It'll sound fine if you don't pay too much attention to what's going on, but if you live and die on the band's words, you'll find yourself somewhat disappointed in this band that should have taken a gigantic step forward. (BK)

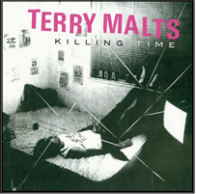


PONTIAK, "Echo Ono" (Thrill Jockey) ☆☆☆ — The Carney brothers decided to let loose and just rock out on their new album "Echo Ono," and the results are nothing short of stunning. The record is loud, pushy, and swaggering, with some bluesy, Led Zep-style rock allowed to bleed over. Seriously, try not to air-guitar. You'll fail every time.

The nine-track disc is the band's most organic and loose, as the dudes sound like they just plugged in and let come what may. "The North Coast" has a tasty, psychedelic finish; "Across the Steppe" sounds like it was inspired by Jimmy Page; "Silver Shadow" has some nice slide guitar and acoustics built into the puzzle; "Royal Colors" sounds like classic Pink Floyd and Deep Purple; and "Panoptica" is loud, spontaneous and noodling. This is one heck of a punchy Pontiak record, and it'll be certain to find new listeners who just want to be pummeled. (BK)

Adele's '21' gets boost from Grammy

NEW YORK (AP) — Adele's album "21" has spent 21 weeks atop Billboard's Top 200 albums chart — and its 21st week is the biggest one yet. Nielsen SoundScan said Nielsen her sophomore album sold 730,000 copies the week after her Grammy Awards sweep. It's the longest stint for a woman at the top of Billboard's album chart, displacing Whitney Houston's "The Bodyguard." It's also now sold 7.3 million copies.



TERRY MALTS, "Killing Time" (Slumberland) ☆☆☆ — Despite a somewhat misleading band name, punk-leaning garage rockers Terry Malts are, in fact, a trio hailing from the Bay Area and their "Killing Time" debut is one of the more promising first efforts thus far in 2012. It's raw and

dirty (that's a compliment, folks) and gives every indication this talented threesome has a bright future.

"Something About You" sets the tone for the 14-track release that zips by in a crisp 33 minutes. Terry Malts also deliver the goods on "Not Far From It," "Where Is the Weekend," "Not a Christian," "Waiting Room," "Nauseous" and "Mall Dreams." The momentum wanes down the stretch a little, but the band ends the slab on a high note with "No Big Deal." Keep an eye on Terry Malts. (JS)



ONE FINGER RIOT, "Come Drag Me Down" (Post Planetary) ☆☆☆ — Faris McReynolds impressed with his Exdetectives release "Take My Forever" a couple weeks ago and he's back with his other one-man band, One Finger Riot. I warmed to the earlier release, but found "Come Drag

Me Down" to be slightly less engaging. McReynolds is undoubtedly a talented guy, but One Finger Riot takes a more avant-garde approach than I'd like.

That said, there are some really nice moments to be found on the record. Tunes like "Dressed Up," "Fever," "It Never Comes" and "Work-Drink/Sleep" are pretty enjoyable and make up for misfires "Try Me," "Last Up" and "Columbo." Solid enough effort, though not quite essential. (JS)



"From Straight to Bizarre: Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and L.A.'s Lunatic Fringe" (MVD Visual) ☆☆☆ — I've never particularly cared for the music of Frank Zappa, but this fascinating documentary is a must-see for anyone who appreciates music history.

"From Straight to Bizarre" chronicles Zappa's influence on the California "freak" scene and traces the evolution of his Bizarre and later Straight record labels. In addition to putting out albums by Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Bizarre and Straight helped launch the careers of Captain Beefheart and Alice Cooper, and put out live recordings from the likes of Lenny Bruce and Lord Buckley.

Zappa was a control freak and often alienated the artists he'd signed to the label by placing his distinctive fingerprints all over their recordings. Sometimes it worked, as was the case with Alice Cooper's "Pretties for You," but just as often it left promising musicians in the dustbin of history. Beefheart and Zappa had a notorious love/hate relationship, but their professional partnership yielded the former's acclaimed (though in my opinion, unlistenable) "Trout Mask Replica."

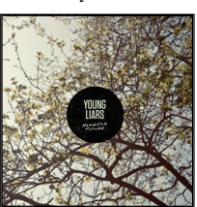
At 161 minutes, the film is exhaustive — and over-stuffed by about 45 minutes — and features interviews with many key figures of the era. Of course, Zappa has been dead for almost 20 years and Beefheart (aka Don Van Vliet) passed away in 2010, depriving viewers of their unique perspectives. But there's enough compelling insight and archival footage to fill in most of the gaps. (JS)



JONQUIL, "Point of Go" (Dovecot) ☆☆☆ — Melodic indie pop quartet Jonquil have a very British sound, which at first blush might make them sound a lot like so many of their peers. But a closer examination of the band, namely third full-length "Point of Go," reveals a talented group that

tweaks the formula just enough to maintain their own identity.

The smooth vocals of Hugo Manuel anchor the proceedings as Jonquil shine on "Swells," "Getaway," the two-part title track, "This Innocent," "Real Cold" and "History of Headaches." It's not music that'll get your pulse racing or propel you out onto the dancefloor, but a spin or two of "Point of Go" is a pleasant way to spend a leisurely afternoon. (JS)



YOUNG LIARS, "Homesick Future" (Nettwerk) ☆☆☆ — Canadian indie pop newcomers Young Liars rely on the kind of synth-fueled melodies that are all the rage these days. Fortunately, the five-piece do it better than most, as evidenced by rock-solid debut EP "Homesick Future."

This seven-track slab whisks by in a too-quick 27 minutes, but there's enough here to have me anxious to hear more from this talented collective.

"Echoists" gets things off to a nice start, but Young Liars find their groove on the superb "Marathon." Additional highlights include "Colours," "Newton, Forgive Me" and "Great Green Light." The Internet is abuzz with praise for the young band. Young Liars live up to the hype. (JS)



MOOT DAVIS, "Man About Town" (Highway Kind) ☆☆☆ — If your taste in country music leans toward the old-school honky-tonk approach of Dwight Yoakam, then seek out the latest gem from crooner Moot Davis. "Man About Town" is a 13-track collection of tunes that might

have been sung by the late great Hank Williams in another era.

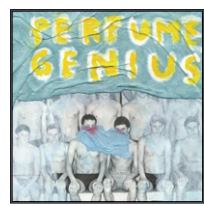
Songs like "Rags to Rhinestones," "Day the World Shook My Hand," "Queensbury Rules," "Crazy in Love With You," "Black & White Picture," "Rust" and "Everybody's Gal" are nothing short of fantastic, as Davis shows off his singing and songwriting skills. Hard to believe a New Jersey native could develop such a dynamite country drawl, but Davis has done it. Enjoy, y'all. (JS)

THE IVEYS, "Days & Nights" (self-released) ☆☆☆ — The 2009 self-titled debut from brother and sister (sister) trio the Iveys showed a great deal of promise and



I've been waiting for another release from the talented siblings ever since. The "Days and Nights" EP finds the Iveys back at it and though the sweet harmonies still abound, it feels like they're treading water on the six-track slab.

Songs like "Lady Made of Stone," "Shadows," "Keeping Me Strong" and "In the Dark" are first-rate, but opener "Falling" and closer "On This Night" fail to make much of an impression. The pieces are in place for a great Iveys album. Perhaps the siblings will deliver it next time out. (JS)



PERFUME GENIUS, "Put Your Back N 2 It" (Matador) ☆☆☆ — Seattle-based singer/songwriter Mike Hadreas records under the Perfume Genius moniker and his star seemed on the rise with the release of his 2010 debut "Learning." The songs were deeply personal and Hadreas didn't

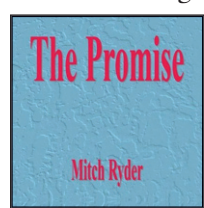
hesitate to let his vulnerability show. On sophomore effort "Put Your Back N 2 It," Perfume Genius take a less personal approach and, though the 12 songs still sound good, the album pales slightly in comparison to its predecessor.

That's not to say there aren't some lovely moments on the 32-minute release. After a middling start with "AWOL Marine," Hadreas serves up standouts "Normal Song," "Take Me Home," "Dirge," "All Waters" and "Floating Spit." Almost relentlessly mellow throughout, you'll have to be in the right frame of mind when you take "Put Your Back N 2 It" for a spin. It's a worthy investment of your time. (JS)



BARNA HOWARD, self-titled (Mama Bird) ☆☆☆ — Take note of the name Barna Howard because this Missouri native figures to be a player on the indie folk scene for a long, long time. His self-titled debut album is pure magic, as he finger-picks and croons his way through 10 uniformly excellent tunes. There's a hint of Dylan in his voice, though Howard is a better singer, and it works with lyrics that make the youngster seem wiser than his years.

The opening salvo of tunes — "Horizons Fade," "I'll Let You Pick a Window," "Tinker Creek" and "I Don't Fall Much, Anymore" — are magnificent, and Howard is almost as good on "Promise I Won't Laugh," "It Hurts to Know," "Turns Around the Bottle" and "Timber Nail and Tears." Highly recommended. (JS)



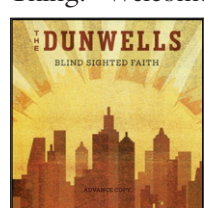
MITCH RYDER, "The Promise" (self-released) ☆☆☆ — In the mid-to-late-1960s, Detroit's Mitch Ryder was a fixture on the rock scene with his soulful voice and high-octane records. It's been 30 years since he released an album in the U.S. (though he has a loyal following in Europe), and he makes a triumphant return with "The Promise." Ryder's voice remains strong at age 66 as he effortlessly weaves his way through these 12 tunes.

The rollicking "Thank You Mama" gets things started and Ryder rolls through the title track, "Everybody Loses," "My Heart Belongs to Me," "Crazy Beautiful," "If My Baby Don't Stop Crying," "What Becomes of the Broken Hearted" and "The Way We Were." Kudos to Ryder for keeping at it all these years — and for making one of the best albums of his distinguished career. (JS)



FIELD MUSIC, "Plumb" (Memphis Industries) ☆☆☆ — Having taken things to the extreme with 2010's overstuffed "Field Music (Measure)" release, brothers Peter and David Brewis return to their formula that worked so well on their first two albums. Having (wisely) trimmed back to a duo, Field Music have crafted a delightful slice of indie pop on "Plumb," a 15-track, 35-minute release.

Opens "Start the Day Right," "It's Okay to Change" and "Sorry Again Mate" lure you in, and the brothers Brewis score with "A New Town," "Guillotine," "So Long Then" and "(I Keep Thinking About) A New Thing." Welcome back, lads.



THE DUNWELLS, "Blind Sighted Faith" (Playing in Traffic) ☆☆☆ — In 2010, British collective Mumford & Sons exploded into the mainstream by showing that you don't have to be American to play great Americana music. Countrymen the Dunwells make a similar (though less twangy) first impression with "Blind Sighted Faith," their debut full-length. The folk-leaning rock tunes that com-