

Reviews


Eels

Wonderful, Glorious VAGRANT

 Well-documented loner **Mark Oliver Everett** shaved away his Unabomber-look and established a working relationship with his touring group. His connection to his touring ensemble is so strong he's even allowed his drummer to write songs with him. Recorded at "The Compound," his multi-floor recording studio, *Wonderful, Glorious* is still plenty desperate and dire, with a mania bordering on insanity. Thick, nasty keyboard lines crash the mix when necessary ("Kinda Fuzzy," "Stick Together") and throw the sound off its rocker. Everett's lyrics settle on characters who've been kicked to the gutters of society with their fertile imaginations and thirst for revenge intact. So, "Bombs Away," "On The Ropes" and "The Turnaround" sound like messages that would give intelligence agencies pause. "True Original" drifts gently as an **Eels** ballad until we hear that there's a gun being pointed. "Open My Present" expresses joy, but it's with a touch of Tom Waits-like aggression. Everett counts his blessings, but it's because he's an obsessive. **Rob O'Connor**


Unknown Mortal Orchestra

II JAGJAGUWAR

 Kiwi expatriate **Ruban Nielson** continues to perfect his fine fondue of abstract breakbeat science and bedroom psych pop charm as **Unknown Mortal Orchestra**, joining the ranks of Soft Machine, Led Zeppelin and Bob James by naming his second LP after the number two. But UMO's first release with Jagjaguwar certainly earns his dust on the shelf among such great wax. Across a taut 10 songs, Nielson advances his search to find a way from Wu-Tang Clan's "Killa Hill" to *Abbey Road*, chronicling the anxiety and isolation he experienced while on tour supporting the Portland, Ore.-based band's 2011 debut, evidenced on such key tracks as "Swim and Sleep (Like a Shark)," "Monki" and "Secret Xtians," despite their trippy Zombies-with-an-MPC bounce. And with *II*, Nielson gives the world his *Odyssey & Oracle*. **Ron Hart**

Tegan and Sara

Heartthrob WARNER BROS.

 Though these sisters got their start opening for Neil Young, **Tegan and Sara** don't have much in common with

their fellow Canadian. With six albums in the last 13 years, the duo documented their neuroses and heartbreaks over indie beats, but their creative stamina eventually stalled. In need of a change, Tegan and Sara wrote the songs together but brought in three producers to amp up the energy. *Heartthrob* is chock-full of heavily produced, dance club-worthy tracks, obviously influenced by Robyn and Madonna, with synth-y keyboard melodies and vocals that are a flashback to the female pop of the 1980s. They still create the smart, witty, thoughtful music they made when they began, but with a bit of a mainstream makeover. **Grace Beehler**

Guards

In Guards We Trust BLACK BELL

 When **Guards** dropped their eponymous first EP as a free download, it scored the New York City indie trio far more exposure than it would have by means of brick and mortar. But now, the group is ready for record shop domination given the fevered anticipation for their full-length debut. And *In Guards We Trust* certainly lives up to its hype, as **Richie Follin**, **Kaylie Church** and **Loren Humphrey** ride the shoegaze movement into a new level of high ended gleam. Key songs like "Coming True" and "Silver Lining" sound like the Jesus and Mary Chain if they were produced by Mickie Most. This is throwback alt-rock of the highest order, emitting a measured balance of bubblegum and shotgun that appears more ready for prime-time than any of their peers on the scene. **Ron Hart**

Sinkane

Mars DFA

 **Sinkane**, the moniker of **Ahmed Gallab**, traces its routes back to Gallab's home country of Sudan via deep grooves and soulful Afro-beat. His newest release, *Mars*, feels like a whirlwind trip around the world. The eight tracks on the album—which total only 34 minutes—aren't exactly catchy; rather, they're ambient and experimental, mixing a variety of Caribbean, dub and Afro-beat influences. Gallab is credited to at least four instruments on each track, but he does enlist help from Twin Shadow's **George Lewis Jr.** and Yeasayer's **Ira Wolf Tuton**. Twangy guitar lines in "Jeeper Creeper" tie the song back to Africa, while the percussion on "Love Sick" sends the listener to Brazil. Though the album is full of consistent talent, his sound will most likely be tossed into the vast, vague genre of "world music." **Grace Beehler**


DVDs

Bob Dylan and The Band:


Down in the Flood SEXY INTELLECTUAL

 **Bob Dylan's** collaboration with The Band altered American music. After alienating fans by going electric, Dylan retreated, working in 1967 with members of The Band on covers—old time, blues and country—while penning a batch of strange, silly and haunting songs eventually released as *The Basement Tapes*. Set against the Summer of Love, Dylan's material sounded radical—stark, traditional, visionary and spooky. Dylan's songwriting in this period pointed to many of his future shifts in direction—his Nashville phase, his religious phase and his family-man phase. The collaboration established The Band as progenitors of Americana, giving the group authority as Dylan interpreters, and inspiring **Robbie Robertson** to tackle ambitious story songs. Fans might hope to learn more about things like, say, the role of **Rick Danko**, and the recording of 1974's *Planet Waves*. But the film serves as a reminder of the power the sporadic, and relatively brief pairings Dylan and The Band had on both parties and on popular music. **John Adamian**

Brian Wilson Songwriter 1969-1982

 The saga of **Brian Wilson** has been told often enough that even the most casual of rock fans should know it inside out: Sidelined by nervous exhaustion, he stopped touring with the **Beach Boys** in 1964, crafted his masterpiece *Pet Sounds* two years later, attempted to follow it up with the doomed *Smile*, and then, withdrew into a solitary life of mental illness and inactivity as his former group carried on without him. *Songwriter 1969-1982*, the sequel to a volume that covered Wilson's early years, makes a somewhat convincing case for much of that narrative being hogwash. Through statements from a series of associates and experts, and various clips, the program, for more than two hours, cites examples of Wilson's continuing—albeit changed—songcraft as he slowly regained the strength and confidence to revive his artistry in the '80s. **Jeff Tamarkin**


The Beatles Magical Mystery Tour

 Widely dismissed at the time of its 1967 release as a rambling, psychedelic hodgepodge, the charm of *Magical Mystery Tour* four-and-a-half decades later lies in the fact that it is a rambling, psychedelic hodgepodge—one that just happens to have been conceived by and stars **The Beatles**. That there's not much of a story is beside the point: This glorified 53-minute Merry Pranksters-inspired home movie captures the Summer of Love spirit not by going for the hippie-trippy but by letting The Beatles be The Beatles, absurdist humor at the fore. And, of course, there's the music—songs like "The Fool on the Hill," "I Am the Walrus" and "Blue Jay Way" become even more poignant when presented with original visuals attached. Extras include "the making of," period TV clips and more. Roll up! **Jeff Tamarkin**

The Rolling Stones

Under Review: 1975-1983, The Ronnie Wood Years, Pt. 1

SEXY INTERNATIONAL

 Considering how riveting the recent HBO **Rolling Stones** documentary *Crossfire Hurricane* was—covering the first 15 explosive years of the band's career—it might seem unreasonable to expect an equally lengthy look at **Ron Wood's** first eight years in the band to hold much interest. And it doesn't. When Wood replaced Mick Taylor on lead guitar in 1975, the Stones had just come off an unparalleled creative run that resulted in such classic albums as *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile on Main Street*. While Wood undeniably reenergized the band, the years covered here, 1975-83, simply were not as exciting or newsworthy. The live footage and videos included can't hold a candle to the earlier footage in the HBO doc, and there's only so much rhapsodizing by critics and cohorts that can convince otherwise. And this is only part one. **Jeff Tamarkin**