

comparison to like-minded contemporaries such as Squeeze or Duran Duran. Even a telling lyric like "I hear you got a new girlfriend/How's the wife taking it?" (from "Moving") suggests elusive intent within the framework of these minor chord crescendos, fidgety rhythms and Dolby's atmospheric sonic designs.

Still, peel back the shimmering arrangements, and the sheer beauty of McAloon's tunefulness becomes increasingly clear. Both soothing and seductive, "Faron Young," "Bonny," "When Love Breaks Down" and "Desire As" boast nimble refrains that cast their allure through repeated hearings. The remixed versions hint at those lush designs, but it's the re-recorded acoustic versions of eight of the album's 11 tracks — etched on a bonus disc accompanying the reissue — that ultimately illuminate their emotional sway. [www.sonylegacy.com](http://www.sonylegacy.com)

— Lee Zimmerman

## The Damned

### *Damned Damned Damned*

Castle Music/Sanctuary (02182-36287-2)

Grade: ★★★★★

The Damned are credited with the first U.K. punk album, and, arguably, the first punk album proper anywhere, if folks exclude the Stooges, New York Dolls or, more problematically, the Ramones.

In any event, *Damned Damned Damned*, issued February 1977, is a corker, revved like The Who on an amphetamine jag, the four personalities in the

band each stoking their respective engine rooms with loopy, unpredictable energy, most notably drummer Rat Scabies who beats everything within arm shot into submission. And Castle studiously loads us up, offering three fully packed discs, the extras being a lo-fi live show from mid-'76, plus a disc of 26 B-sides, live tracks, rarities and demos, many of these quite serviceable and illustrative about how the band assimilated all (irreverent) manner of music influence around them and then bashed it out in manic and panicked fashion.

The four-panel digipak additionally houses a 16-page booklet that couldn't have made better use of the space, offering shots of posters, ads, labels, the band live and goofing off, as well as interview bits and meticulous track-by-track credits.

— Martin Popoff

## Joe Henry

### *Civilians*

Anti- (86890-2)

Grade: ★★★★★

After 10 albums and several high-profile productions (Solomon Burke, Ani DiFranco, Elvis Costello and Allen Toussaint etc.), Joe Henry now ranks among those rarified artists — Tom Waits, John Hiatt, Randy Newman and Loudon Wainwright being prime examples — whose wry observations delineate an especially insightful worldview.

His latest, *Civilians*, is aptly described as one of 2007's true masterpieces, an



Melanie Nissen

Joe Henry

album with a searing imprint that brings to mind no less a classic than Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*.

Henry doesn't simply write great

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## DVD Review

# Johnny Cash

## Johnny Cash

### *The Best of the Johnny Cash Show*

Columbia Legacy (88697 04026 9)

Grade: ★★★★★

Of all the archival Johnny Cash material released following the Man in Black's 2003 death, this two-DVD collection of footage from Cash's seminal television show ranks among the most significant. The Johnny Cash Show premiered on ABC-TV to rave reviews on June 7, 1969, with a rare appearance by camera-wary Bob Dylan. Across 58 episodes, through March 31, 1971, Cash broadened America's musical tastes with performances by both new and established artists as diverse as Charley Pride, Neil Diamond, Ray Price and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Highlights from this nearly four-hour collection of more than 65 clips (remarkably restored from two-inch quad videotape that's nonexistent today) include a youthful Neil Young receiving a standing ovation for "The Needle and the Damage Done," Cash and a frail Louis Armstrong eight months before his death reworking Jimmie Rodgers' 1930 tune "Blue Yodel #9," Derek and the Dominos blazing through Carl Perkins' "Matchbox" with Cash and Perkins, and — in an exchange that would never air today — Hank Williams Jr. presenting his daddy's old friend with a prized pearl-handled six-shooter, which literally made Cash drop his guitar. It's mesmerizing stuff that should be required viewing for anyone who appreciates American music. [www.legacyrecordings.com](http://www.legacyrecordings.com)

— Michael Popke