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From a whisper to a scream and stages in between

A big box of Heart, Lisa's blues, the dark side of disco/camping and a cabin by the sea

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This week's column contains reviews of an excellent collection from Heart, the most recent recording from Lisa Mills, two parental-advisory slasher flicks and a sunny summer album from The Dirty Heads. Enjoy!

'Strange Euphoria,' Heart(Epic/Legacy, HHHHH)

This three-CD, one-DVD box set, curated by Ann and Nancy Wilson, was released June 5. It's a career-spanning retrospective containing best-loved songs, deep catalog treasures, many unreleased demos, rarities and live performance material. The sisters include insightful anecdotes via liner-note commentary.

Disc 1 presents a lot of demos, and a few live songs, including an early club favorite called "White Lightning and Wine" and a smoking version of "Barracuda."

Other highlights show the evolution of "the Heart sound;" including their first record "Through Eyes and Glass," demos of "Magic Man," "How Deep It Goes," "Crazy on You" and their first collaboration with lyricist/friend Sue Ennis, an acoustic "Dog and Butterfly" demo.

Disc 2 shows the sisters on the road, pressed for quality songwriting time; but there are plenty of

highlights: "Even It Up," "City's Burning," a live "Never" with John Paul Jones, Nancy's lead vocal "These Dreams," the anguished "Alone" plus four demos showing different sides of Heart's musical personality.

Disc 3 has solo songs, Lovemongers' songs, and other tunes recorded before and during sessions for 2010's Red Velvet Car.

Highlights include the twangy "Kiss," the live "She Still Believes," a horn-packed demo of "Any Woman's Blues" and the sexy "Skin to Skin."

The DVD comes from a 1976 KWSU program titled "The Second Ending-featuring Heart." Highlights include the opening instrumental, featuring Ann on flute along with the classic Heart band lineup. A medley of "Dreamboat Annie," "Silver Wheels" and "Crazy on You" is my favorite segment. This package is dynamite for devoted Heart fans and curious investigators.

'Tempered in Fire' Lisa Mills (Independent release, HHH½)

This CD was "initially officially released with distribution through a company in Portland, Ore., called Burnside last October," according to Lisa. One of her friends dropped it off at the paper for me. There have been some changes since the interview at Coffee Fusion right after Katrina.

Andy Fairweather Low, Eric Clapton's former right-hand guitarist and an excellent singer, is here on guitars and backing vocals. Wet Willie guitarist Ricky Hirsch isn't on board this time as a player, but Lisa covers two of that band's most well-known songs, "Keep on Smilin'" and "Countryside of Life."

"Countryside" is more successful. Other highlights include "Blue Guitars of Texas," "Someone Very Close" and "Why Do I Still Love You?"

I'm sure Lisa will be back playing locally before long, and fans of folksy blues will dig this album.

'The Disco Exorcist,'(MVDvisual, HHH)

'Kids Go To The Woods ... Kids Get Dead,' (MVDvisual, HHH)

These two June 19 DVD parental advisory releases explore two different sides of slasher movies.

The first one shows what happens when disco and voodoo mix together: Many of the clichés of that already-horrible musical time period blend with elements of horror and mental derangement.

The second one follows a crew of teenagers to a picturesque lakeside cabin where predictable things happen during a horror movie hosted by a flirty but vapid local-TV host.

Fans of Jason, Halloween and Friday the 13th movies will want to check out these lower-budget variations on the maniacal, almost-indestructible killer theme.

'Cabin By The Sea,'The Dirty Heads(Five Seven Music, HHHH)

This June 19 CD is the follow-up to The Dirty Heads' incredibly popular debut that I never heard. Their summer tour with Matisyahu starts July 7 and makes it to Mobile's Soul Kitchen on Aug. 27. The band consists of front man Jared "Dirty J" Watson, guitarist Dustin "Duddy B" Bushnell, percussionist Jon Olazabal, drummer Matt Ochoa and bassist David Foral. A bonus DVD features "behind the scenes" footage about the making of the album plus three hidden vignettes.

The band's positive message comes through on the mostly acoustic opener, "Arrival," which segues with seagull sounds into the reggae-powered title song.

Several songs feature marquee guest stars (Kymani Marley, Matisyahu, Del the Funky Homosapien and Rome), but they don't make much difference.

Other highlights include the first single "Spread Too Thin," "Notice," "Burn By Myself" (check that percussion) and the instrumental "Farewell."

I must add a parental advisory for filmed pot smoking and recorded profanity.

Coming attractions

The next few columns will feature reviews of releases from singer/songwriters Rob Baird and Marc Berger, bands including The Spring Standards, River City Tanlines, Norwegian progressive rockers Gazpacho and a country-rock opera from Giant Giant Sand.

Finally, I'll be opining on the newest CD from 2010 Top Ten Plus listers, Teenage Renegade.

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