

### Senses Fail - Let it Enfold You (Vagrant)

I've decided that the time has come. Eighteen years ago, I bought a long-haired hamster with allowance money that I had saved up. He was never intended as a pet. I locked him in his cage and hid him in a dark corner of my closet. Every couple of days, I would take him out and experiment on him. At first, it was purely psychological. I would yell at him for hours straight until he was pissing uncontrollably. I would take his food and put it in his cage, but take it out every time he walked up close to it. Those games got boring quickly. I found a discarded hypodermic needle on the way home from school one day and immediately started putting it to use. My first experiment was with kool-aid. I injected some of the blue shit into the critter. It didn't do much. As time went by, I injected a little bit of this and a little bit of that into the furball. Drugs. Blood. Booze. Vinegar. The hamster got bigger and developed a weird twitching. One day, I reached in to take out its food bowl and it bit me. I had been bitten by rodents before, but never like that. It bruised my entire finger and ripped out a good chunk of flesh. The third phase of the experiments began. In addition to random psychological experiments and injections, I began feeding the critter human flesh. As the years have gone by, it has gotten too big for its cage. It can barely turn around. I try to experiment now and it stares at me with its yellow eyes dripping pus and I know that I can't put my hand near it any longer. Feeding has to be done with a long spoon. A while back, I started wondering what to do with it, as it was no longer within my realm of understanding and could easily break free and destroy me at any time. Then, I got this Senses Fail CD in the mail. I started playing it for my little beast. The critter's mouth would froth at every listen. I am now waiting for them to stop nearby on tour so my rabid hamster of death can fulfill its destiny by gnawing the soft brains from inside the band members' skulls.

### Anti-Flag - Death of a Nation DVD (A-F Records)

Live DVDs of punk shows are always going to be lacking. It's an all-sensory experience translated into a format that only utilizes a couple senses. All of the urgency is lost. Sure, you can hear the band play "Die for the Government" and watch as a bearded guy wearing only boxers jumps into the crowd, but it's not the same as standing there as his sweaty gut slides across your ear as you're trying to sing along. Where's the stench of teenage b.o.? Not on this DVD, that's for sure. And, no matter how good the sound quality is, the feeling of being in the middle of a crowd that is singing along to every word of a song can not be replicated.

None of this is important though. What is important is that this DVD makes it perfectly clear that Anti-Flag are not humans. They couldn't possibly be. My first clue was that they look exactly the same as they did when I saw them on tour for their first album, six years ago. Then, in the interview, they said they were 19 years old. That

would mean that they were like eleven when they started the band, and I'm pretty sure that eleven year olds can't tour the country no matter how DIY they are. The only logical conclusion is that they are some sort of strange cyborgs created by a crazy, leftist mad scientist. Now that I think of it, I had always thought it was weird that, when I saw them way back when, they had to cut their set short because their singer said, "I'm sorry, our guitar player has shorted out."

### Words that Burn - Spawning Ground for Hatred (Crimes Against Humanity)

Words that Burn's intense collision of brooding crust and fast hardcore is like some sort of swamp creature. It emerges from the murk, its thick muscles dripping with green plant matter. Unlike the typical swamp beast, it's a quick moving bastard. When you think it should be lurking through the shadows to sneak up on its victim, it decides to take to the trees and move swiftly through the branches to a position just above where it wants to be, then it dives down onto soft human flesh and quickly excavates a steaming pile of guts before moving back to the grimy depths it came from.

### Munly and the Lee Lewis Harlots - ST (Alternative Tentacles)

A thin man in a stetson is sitting on the sidewalk, drinking bottles of beer as cars go by. Constant frowning has wrinkled his face and made the scowl permanent. He's got a bowie knife in his hand and he's running the dull blade across his chin, rarely slicing his flesh. Another man walks toward the cowboy thinking, "there's a fella who's got something on his mind." Before he can ask the stranger what his sorrow is for, he finds a knife jammed into his stomach. The cowboy takes the man to the ground, drags him into the street and tosses him onto the pile of bodies he's been working on. He shakes his head and goes back to drinking. Good country music is rarely cheerful, but Munly makes you wonder, is it depression you're wallowing in, or is it blood?

### This Robot Life - Becoming Work Revolutionaries (Automoton Records)

This is a series of basement recordings from these Milwaukee weirdos. They are obviously using the template set up by some of the tougher emo hardcore bands, but they deviate from it in a spot where most bands try to stay as close as possible: the vocals. While you get some poorly recorded emo-guitar and bass cruising over drums that are sort of hanging on, the singing is fucked up. Sure, sometimes these bands get a little gruff sounding, like they're choking on mashed potatoes or something, but This Robot Life goes a little further. The singer is clearly choking on something more solid, froot loops, perhaps. They have a really rough texture and if you get a spoonful of them jammed in your throat without chewing, they'll draw blood. These guys try really hard to cough up blood.